

Mysteriously, a path opens before him, as if gifted to him alone.

He passes by the homes of Krishna's most intimate associates—the Andhakās, the Vṛṣṇis—places no ordinary visitor could approach so freely.

Yet he advances unhindered.

He is spellbound.

Something here is beyond reason. Invisible hands seem to guide him closer with every movement... toward Krishna.

*Sometimes grace begins moving toward us
before we even know how to move forward.*

Learn to recognize unseen help.

The Right Place, Always

Soon, the very foundation of his second fear crumbles. For there he stands—before an unmatched palace.

Magnificent... golden... radiant with splendor.

It appears divine hands have brushed each stone, each pillar.

And beyond what his eyes can behold, he senses something more.

A presence.

An inexplicable certainty draws him onward.

Krishna is here.

He feels it in his bones.

An urging arises.

Go on. Climb.

Yet humility makes him stop.

He steps back, choosing caution over impulse.

Better to ask.

Turning to a nearby guard, he speaks with hesitation.

“Where... does Lord Krishna reside?”

The guard looks at him.

“Where do you wish to go?” he asks politely. “Lord Sri Krishna... has sixteen thousand residences.”

Sudama freezes for an instant. A flicker of doubt passes through him.

But then—a memory stirs. And before he can weigh it, the words leave his lips.

“Sri Rukmini’s palace.”

He pauses, then adds—more firmly, more simply.

“That is the only one I know.”

The guard observes him anew.

His stare lingers on the poor brahmana’s worn clothes—his simple bearing, his bony frame, his frail body...

Then, in a courteous voice, he says, “You are fortunate.”

He gestures toward the very palace before them.

“Here you stand—right before the abode of Krishna and Rukmini.”

At that instant, everything falls into place.

The pull he felt.

The path that opened.

This was no accident. The Lord Himself had brought him here.

Love Moves Anyway

Sudama takes a deep breath. Every step now feels unbearably real.

As he ascends the palace steps, tension builds with every footfall. Cool marble touches his feet, but his unease only deepens.

Will Krishna recognize me?

Will He remember?

What if He doesn't?

The thoughts do not trickle in—they crash over him relentlessly. His heart beats faster. His pace alters.

Suddenly, he stops.

What if... everything I have carried all these years... exists only for me?

What if the friend I walk toward... no longer walks toward me?

The fear tightens—deep, unbearable.

In a flash, a desperate resolve takes hold of him.

If there is but the slightest sign... the tiniest hesitation... I will turn away.

Yes.

I will not stay.

I cannot wait to see recognition fade... or fail to arise at all.

No.

I will leave at once—before the truth can fully reveal itself.

Better to run.

Better to protect what remains.

Better to return with an illusion intact... than to watch it

shatter before me.

*Better to believe forever that Krishna is my friend... than
to stand there and discover...*

“Madhava...” he whispers, almost helplessly.

Gathering what little hope remains, he climbs, chanting
Krishna’s names under his breath—

Jaya Govinda Jaya Gopala Keshava Madhava Dina-dayal...

He feels himself being pulled onward by a force he cannot
see.

It is love.

Love does not wait for certainty. It does not protect itself
with reason. It leaps anyway.

It hopes, even when collapse seems near.

Reason may call this foolishness.

Love moves anyway.

Love does not wait.

It moves—

even when it trembles.

Act from love, despite uncertainty.

At the Threshold

He reaches the top of the stairs.

In that indescribable moment, he begins tasting the peace
of *brahmānanda*—the bliss of liberation itself.

A state where nothing is lacking.

A state where nothing is feared.

Only peace...
full and undisturbed.
And yet, something sweeter awaits.
He comes closer and looks inside.

~~~

## Turning Within

Let us pause for a while.

- What are you moving toward in your life—and why?
- Are you seeking something... or someone?
- Where do you assume you are unworthy, even before trying?
- What fears arise when you approach something extremely meaningful?
- Where are you rushing instead of fully experiencing the moment?
- Have you ever sensed guidance, even when the path ahead was unclear?

## CHAPTER FOUR



# When the Eyes Meet

## Before a Word Was Spoken

At the entrance stands the unassuming brahmana, looking in.

And deep within the palace—appearing as if He had been waiting for him all along—is Lord Krishna, sweetness personified, already gazing in his direction.

Their eyes meet.

And before the fear can rise—

*Does He recognize me?*

—it melts away in the Lord's affectionate smile.

Sudama simply stands there...

overwhelmed.

*madhuraṁ madhuraṁ vapur asya vibhor  
madhuraṁ madhuraṁ vadanam madhuraṁ  
madhu-gandhi mṛdu-smitam etad aho  
madhuraṁ madhuraṁ madhuraṁ madhuraṁ  
(Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta, 92)*

The transcendental form of Krishna, dark as a fresh raincloud, is *madhuraṁ, madhuraṁ*—sweet, sweet beyond compare.

And His face is sweeter still... *madhuraṁ, madhuraṁ, madhuraṁ*—sweetness spoken again and again, as though language itself cannot stop tasting it.

Yet sweeter than even His face is His honey-fragrant smile.

*Madhuraṁ, madhuraṁ, madhuraṁ, madhuraṁ.*

Sudama is submerged in that ocean of sweetness.

Krishna, who never fails to reciprocate with His dear ones, immediately rises from His seat upon the royal bed.

Jewels shift as silken garments fall around Him.