

# Ecological Tales from India



## Learn about FRIENDLY SPIDERS

Many folktales around the world tell stories about spiders. The most famous is probably Anansi, the clever spider. Despite their small size, spiders can be very intelligent, wise and useful to solve the most difficult problems! Note other famous spiders from children's literature.

Have a short discussion with your students about their experiences with spiders. How many of them are scared of spiders? How many of them find spiders repulsive? How many of them love spiders? How many of them find spiders beautiful?

Take students on a spider walk in the school compound, or in a nearby park...

Ask students to collect spiders for a spider jar. Inside a glass jar, keep stones, leaves, damp moss and a branching twig for the spiders to weave webs. Keep the jar in a dark corner. Cover the mouth of the jar with a piece of nylon stocking. Don't forget to feed your spiders with small insects.

After the students have had an opportunity to observe spiders, ask them to consult books at the library to discover more facts about spiders and find answers to the following questions:

Are spiders insects?  
Do all spiders weave webs?  
Are spiders poisonous?  
Where do spiders live?  
How do spiders eat?  
Are spiders useful?

In our story *The Friendly Spider*, we learn that spiders contribute a very important pest control service.

Discuss with students about insect pests. Show them leaves that have been nibbled by insects such as caterpillars. Show an apple, a tomato or an eggplant in which worms have dug their holes. Can they eat vegetables with a worm inside? Can a farmer sell his crop if most of it has been destroyed by insect pests?

Launch the discussion:

What can a farmer do to stop insect pests from damaging his crops??

❖ Is spraying pesticides the solution?

No, because

- pesticides kill not only insects but also birds, wildlife and even people.
- insects become resistant to pesticides. Farmers are compelled to spray more and more pesticides on their fields to get rid of the insect pests.

❖ How to get rid of pests without having to sprinkle pesticides?

First of all protect spiders and other friendly insects. Spiders are beneficial creatures since they feed mostly on insect pests. Propose to your students an action plan to preserve spiders, even at home!!

Write the story of another friendly insect (bee, ladybug, ant, worm...)  
Imagine how it helped the farmer.

While teaching good health habits to your students, teach them how to avoid pesticides.

- Explain how vegetables should first be soaked in warm water and then washed under running water.

- Ask them to choose fruits and vegetables that can be peeled.
- Avoid fruits and vegetables like cauliflower, grapes, okra, apples, brinjals because they are heavily sprinkled with pesticides. Vegetables with less pesticide residues are gourds like lauki, pumpkins, ridge gourds, fenugreek, suran, carrots, and small eggplants. Always prefer the seasonal vegetables that grow in your region.

While on a visit to the supermarket, show children the shelves where organic foods are kept. Ask them to make an inventory of the organic foods available. Ask them to read what is written on the packets.

Design an awareness poster with a slogan asking people to stop using pesticides and promote organic agriculture.

Visit an organic farm and ask children to search for spiders.