



Ajay said, 'Her hands are so tiny.'

Salil said, 'See, Neha is looking at us.'

Neha said, 'Boooo ...!'

'Hey! She does not have any teeth,' remarked Minu.

Everybody laughed.

'Newborns do not have teeth,' explained Ma.

I love Neha very much. I am her elder sister, her *didì*. I have now started taking her on my lap. When I shake the rattle, she laughs a lot. I also sing her songs. When I come home from school, Neha says, 'Vauuvau!' I know the meaning. She says, 'My didi has come.' Neha speaks a different language.

Neha drinks milk from a bottle. Sometimes, Ma lets me hold the bottle and feed her. Neha is getting very naughty. She makes bubbles in the milk by blowing back into the bottle, while making a noise that sounds like 'foo ...'

rattle: a baby's toy that makes noise when shaken

This game seems to greatly amuse her. When I kiss her, she smiles. There is a small bell attached to the cradle that rings whenever the cradle is rocked. It is a véry soothing sound.

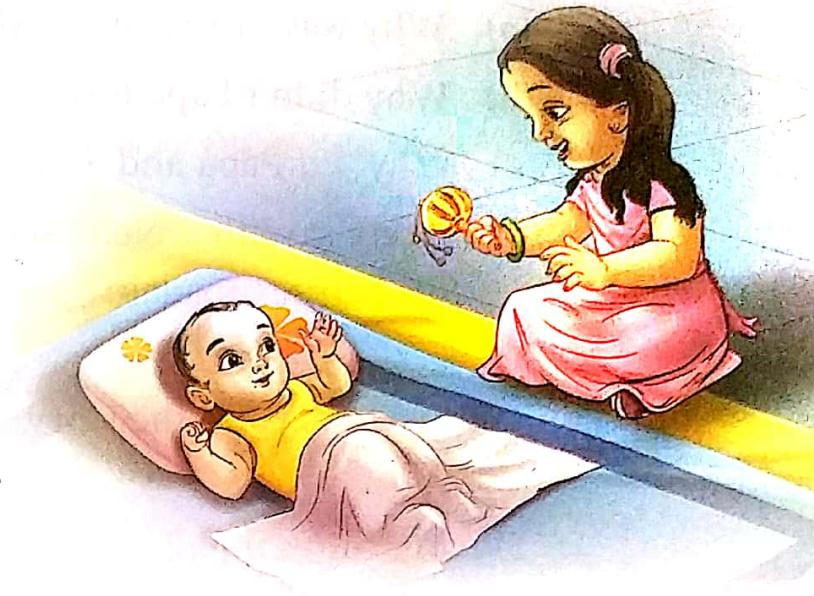
I softly sing with Ma:

*Sleep my doll*

*In a red cradle you sleep*

*The moon will shine in your dream*

*With chocolates full of milk and cream...*



Neha closes her eyes. She smiles all of a sudden. Finally, she goes to sleep.

– Madhu B. Joshi