

A TAMIL STORY



This carving can be seen in many Christian homes and offices in the Diocese of Vellore – before you find out about it, let's see what you think is happening:

- Who do you think the two people are?
- What is going on?
- What is round the neck of the larger figure?
- Can you make up a story which makes sense of this carving?
- Do you like the carving or not? Why?

This is a carving of a famous Christian story from Sri Lanka, where they speak Tamil– because of this it is also well-known in those parts of India where they speak Tamil, like Vellore.

The two figures are Jesus and a murderer. The difference in size is to show how much more important Jesus is than the man. (Did you think the smaller figure was a child?) The murderer has become a Christian and the carving shows Jesus welcoming him.

The thing round Jesus' neck which looks like a huge collar is actually a scythe. A scythe is a sharp bladed farming tool, but it was used by this murderer to slit the throats of his victims. Jesus is wearing the scythe as a sign that all the man's terrible crimes have been forgiven and taken away – Christians believe that by dying Jesus took on himself the sins of the world, and here he has taken the murderer's sins on himself.

Christians in Vellore Diocese love this carving because it tells them that Jesus accepts everyone, however bad they have been.

Have your feelings about the carving changed now that you know the story?