Mogudu Pellala Katha
(The story of Husband and Wife) (Version 1)

The husband is a farmer and the wife stays at home looking after their young child. They both have to work hard to earn their livelihood. Every day, the farmer wakes up early, drinks his soup, packs his lunch and goes to his field on a bullock cart. He returns late in the evening, takes a hot bath, eats and sleeps. The wife gets up before the dawn, cleans the cattle shed, feeds and milks the cows. She prepares soup and makes gruel from the rice cooked the previous night. After her husband leaves she cleans the house, fetches water, collects vegetables and cooks food. She bathes her child and feeds her. She goes to the pastures around the village to graze cattle, carrying her child on her back.

She feeds the child and puts her to sleep before her husband returns. She also milks the cows and sells the milk to neighbours. As soon as her husband comes, she arranges his hot water bath and gives him food. This was their daily routine for a long time.

After some time, both of them grew tired of the monotony in their work. One day, the farmer said, “I have been working for a long time, harder than a bull in an oil mill. I break my bones with strenuous work in the field. You stay safely at home cooking, eating or chitchatting with the neighbours. Anybody can cook. I can cook better than you. From tomorrow, I will be at home and you should go to the field.”

His wife told him, “I too think the same. What do you know about my predicaments? Do you think that the skimpy grain you bring home from the fields is sufficient to feed us? I work hard at home. You only stand near the bulls while they till the soil. You eat and sleep happily in the field and house. Like a king, you return home on your cart. I have to walk many miles to do my duties. From tomorrow, I will be at home and you should go to the field.”

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The husband woke up only after his wife awoke and reminded him of their decision. She asked him to give her some soup. He gave her soup and packed lunch for her. He went into the cattle shed to clean and feed the cattle. He could not bear the smell of dung and urine of cattle. One of his neighbours asked him, “Brother, why are you doing this? Where is your wife?” The farmer proudly told him, “From today, my wife will go to the field for tilling”.

The wife brought out the oxen with great difficulty and fixed them to the cart, before getting into it. She looked proudly at her husband and the neighbours staring at her.

After his wife left for the field, the husband went into the cattle shed to milk the cow. The cow did not allow him to touch it. He tried again. It kicked him with its hind legs and he fell on the dung heap. He got up slowly as his back was sprained. A woman neighbor laughed at him. He grew wild and was about to beat the cow. The cow was ready to wound him with its horns.

The farmer gave up and went to the kitchen to cook. Meanwhile, his daughter woke up and started crying for milk. He tried to soothe her. She continued screaming at an increased pitch. He searched for milk. He remembered that his wife gave fresh cow milk to the baby. He is afraid to go near the cow. He wanted to ask the woman neighbour for milk, but remembered that she laughed at him.

He decided to give cooked rice to the child. He searched for rice and saw some in a pot. He put some rice in a winnowing pan. Suddenly, he remembered a sound that accompanied his wife while she winnowed rice. He thought that the sound was from an instrument. He did not know that the noise is a sound created by rhythmic upward and downward movements of the thumb and middle finger. He searched every inch of the house for the instrument. Meanwhile his daughter crawled near the hearth and put her hand into the smouldering ashes. She burnt her hand and began screaming more. The farmer lost his temper and beat her up. He could neither console her nor give her something to eat. A neighbour heard the noise and took the child to her home. ‘A husband without his wife is equal to an ox whose testicles are crushed,’ she said. He became furious. He was restless the rest of the afternoon. He was very hungry. The cattle began lowing for fodder. He did not know if his wife gave them fresh fodder or if she took them for grazing. Some neighbours came for milk. He did not have any to give. They cursed and went away.

He was unable to complete any work that should have been completed before his wife came. He eagerly waited for his wife so that he could beat her for not enlightening him about the routine tasks at home.
On the other side, the wife arrogantly whipped the bulls on the way to the field. Everyone stared at her. She thought they were jealous of her. The bulls were unable to bear the whipping, since the farmer never beat them while driving. They became angry and scampered around. She was unable to manage them. They finally threw her in mud.

With great difficulty, she got up. Some women lifted her from the mud and the men soothed the bulls and tied them to the cart. She told them she could drive. They wondered at her pride. She drove the cart to her field and reached there by lunchtime. The sun was overhead. The bulls were hungry. She tied them to a plough. Two hours later, she found that the field was not ploughed. The men working in the field stared at her, they tried not to laugh. She rudely shouted at them to mind their business. An elderly man told her, “My child, you forgot to fix the gorru (a wooden instrument with two to six projections of wood or iron, that help effective ploughing) Family life and farming cannot be successful without man and gorru.” She became irritated and stopped work to eat lunch. Since the food was not seasoned properly, it had been spoiled. She could not ask anyone else for food since they had already finished lunch. She did not know that her husband gave fodder to the bulls and took them to drink water at lunchtime. The bulls were hungry and thirsty and began to make a lot of noise. The other farmers took the bulls for fodder and water without telling her. By the time the bulls returned, the others had begun to pack up.

The wife tied the bulls to the cart and reached home late in the evening. All the way home, she cursed her husband and was eager to quarrel with him for not telling her the about the process of tilling and the technique of driving a bullock-cart. Her husband was waiting at the door. Before she opened her mouth, he slapped her. She gave him a blow with the whip. Everybody in the neighbourhood came out to watch the scene. He remembered all the mockery his neighbours had directed at him since early morning and hence he dragged his wife on to the floor and beat her. She accepted and decided to teach him a lesson. The husband could not do anything as in the previous version of the tale. He beat her up badly since she did not tell him anything about the kitchen. She didn’t respond, finished all the work at home and offered him a hot water bath and delicious food. She soothed her child and put her to sleep. Then the husband realized his mistake and begged her pardon for not understanding the roles determined by elders for men and women in family and society.

Komatiolla-Raju Katha
(merchant girl and king’s story)

Once there was a pair of crows in a village. There was continuous drought and famine for seven years. All living things began to perish from starvation. The male crow said to the female crow, “Let us go to some place where we can get abundant food”. The female crow refused to go and told him, “Where can we go leaving native place and friends behind? We may have a good future right here.”

The male crow abandoned his family to their fate. After the male crow left the village, there was a big rain, as big as an ocean. The female crow and her female child found shelter in a tree in the kitchen garden of a Komati couple (belonging to trading community). They spent peaceful days eating the leftover food from the house. Three years later, the male crow returned and asked her to live with him. The female crow refused, saying, “You left us in distress. You did not even bother if your wife and child were dead or alive. Now when everything is normal, you come back and ask me to stay with you.” The male crow went to madhyastham (mediation) and asked the judge to call his wife for trial. The male crow asked the judge, “Who owns the child?” The judge gave the verdict that the father owns the child, not the mother. The male crow took the child and flew away. The female crow took a copy of the judgment with her and returned home with grief. She preserved the document in the thatched roof of her protector’s front hall. The crow pined away in the sorrow of losing her child and finally died. The Komati couple performed the funeral for the female crow. They did not have children till then. Now the wife conceived and gave birth to a female child. The girl
was brought up with affection and good discipline. The girl grew to an age of puberty. On a full moon day, she was sitting under a tree where the crow lived formerly. Looking at the dismantled crow nest, the girl asked her father suddenly, “Father, how many cows are there in the cattle shed of our king?” The father told her, “My dear little girl, there are hundred cows in the cattle shed of the king.” She told him, “Father, purchase a strong, sturdy and healthy calf.” Her father brought a young male calf. She fed that calf with rich fodder- coconut cakes, cottonseeds, and green grass. The calf grew into a handsome and healthy ox. One day she put her ox into the king’s herd of cows. After three months, all hundred cows gave birth to hundred young calves. One day, the girl sent her servants and brought all the calves to her cattle shed. All the cows cried for their calves. The king sent word through his servants, “Hand over our calves to us immediately. Our cows are weeping for their calves. Calves belong to cows.” The girl refused to hand over them and replied adamantly, “Come for madhyastham (mediation). Let us finalise there”.

In ‘madhyastham’, the case was adjudicated. The girl showed the judgment document given by the same king while he was dealing with the case of crow and its family. His verdict was, “Father owns the child, not the mother”. The king could not say anything. The girl took away all her calves. Since the cows could not survive without their calves, the king sent them also to her.

The king had a son who felt insulted by the event. He told his father, “I will put down her pride by marrying her. I will take revenge on her for the humiliation that she inflicted on you.” The king sent his men with marriage proposal to her parents. The Komati refused the proposal. The prince himself went and convinced her father.

The girl understood the situation and consented to marry him since they should not deny the king’s proposal. The girl who had been observing the temperament of prince from the beginning told her father, “Father, dig an underground tunnel from our house to the cattle shed of the king’s palace”.

After marriage, the prince did not even look at the face of the girl and ignored her completely. She did all her duties as a daughter-in-law and slept in the cattle shed. She went to her parents through the tunnel, ate food and returned by the time her husband reached the palace.

One day, the prince was leaving the country for a longer time. The girl went to help him in soaping his back while he was taking his bath. He ridiculed her and asked, “Who are you to touch me?” She replied, “I am your wife and you are my husband.” He burst into laughter and told her, “He who eats your chewed and spitted tambula (made of betel leaves, nut powder, lime and spices like elachi, cloves, camphor) is your husband, I am not. He who carries your sandals behind you, is your husband, I am not. He who walks behind you on the bed of the thorns of the ‘palleru’ plant on twelve ‘kuntas’ (0.3 acres) of land is your husband, I am not. Go and search for him.”

He left the palace without informing her when he would be back. He travelled a lot. On his way, he found many people carrying red soil in pans on their heads to the tank bund under construction. He went to the house of an old lady and enquired about them. She told him of a courtesan who earned ninety thousand rupees from men without allowing them to touch her. She set a condition that those who wanted to enjoy her body should defeat her in dice. She would surrender herself and her property to the winner. The losers should carry red soil to the tank. She had a cat and placed a burning lamp on its head. The game is played in that light. If the cat moves in the middle of the game, she has been defeated. If the cat sits still, the customer is defeated.

The prince wanted to participate in the game. He was defeated and carried soil to the tank bund. Two or three months passed. His wife determined to search for him. She put on male attire, rode a horse and left the palace through the tunnel in search of her husband.

After long travel, she reached the village and found her husband near the tank bund carrying soil on his head. She found out what the matter was and got back to her village. She asked her father to raise a crop of ‘palleru’ plants in twelve kuntas of land (0.3 acres) on the way to their village and spread out the thorny fruit.

She bought two rats, removed their teeth and kept them in her pocket. Then she went to the courtesan and agreed to play her game. When the game was in full swing, the girl removed the rats from her pocket and let them before the cat. The cat jumped after the rat and the courtesan was defeated. The girl went to the tank bund and released the slaves who were carrying baskets of soil. All left for their homes except the prince.

The Komati girl noticed her husband standing with bent head beside her. She enquired about him without revealing her identity. He told her about his native place. She told him, “I have to travel the same way. Let us travel together.” The prince agreed and sat on the horse behind her. After some time, she ate her food and gave the remaining to him. He also ate. The girl chewed tambula and spat it on a stone. Before she climbed back on the horse, she told him that she had forgotten her sandals and asked him to pick them up. She saw the betel nut she had spat and ate it. Then he gave her sandals to her. They travelled together for many days.

When they drew near her village she asked him to get down as she had other work to do there. The girl disappeared from his sight before he turned back to see...
where she was going. He went into the village, walking over the twelve kuntas land covered with the thorns. The girl reached home and wrote down all experiences of her life from her wedding till the moment she dropped her husband near the village. The next day, she called her husband for madhyastham (mediation) and showed the paper to the elders.

Then she asked her husband before the elders:

“Have you not eaten the tambulam I spat out?” The girl asked.

“Yes”, the prince replied.

“Have you not carried my sandals”, the girl asked.

“Yes”, the prince replied.

“Have you not walked behind me on thorns?”, the girl asked.

“Yes”, the prince replied.

“Now, are you not my husband?”, the girl questioned.

“Yes, I am your husband”, the prince replied.

Then both of them went home and lived happily together.

Archana, Department of Archaeology, Deccan College of Post Graduation and Research Institute, Pune

The images of deities and animate and inanimate beings have been transposed to the children’s world as toys in Andhra Pradesh. Kondapalli, Nirmal and Etikoppaka toys are the most significant wooden toys made in the state.

Kondapalli toys are made in the Kondapalli village that is 17 km away from Vijayawada in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. The artisans who make these toys are known as ‘Aryakshtriya’. It is said that these craftsmen migrated from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh to Kondapalli around the 16th century. The toys are known as ‘koyya bommalu’ meaning wooden toys. The wood used for this purpose is the Poniki wood which is soft and light in weight and are also available in the nearby forests.

The wood is cut into the required size and dried for 15 or 20 days to make the wood light. The pieces are kept on a wire frame over a terracotta bowl with burning sawdust to make it warm and easy to carve. The body of the toy is carved and again exposed to heat for moisture to evaporate. The detailing is sculpted after all the parts are joined to the main body and dried. Earlier a vegetable gum made out of a paste of tamarind seeds was used to join the components which has now been replaced by Fevicol. The toy is given a smooth finish by filing. Brown paper or newspaper or other fabric is stuck on the cracked areas using maida solution. After it dries, it is smoothed with sandpaper.

Sudda mitti (white paste) solution that has calcium carbonate and acacia gum is applied as a first coat. Once dried, the toys are painted, usually by women using vegetable colours or enamel colours and brushes made of goat’s hair. A coat of linseed oil is given to toys painted with vegetable colours to make them water proof.

Every member of the family participates in the process of making Kondapalli toys. The toys can roughly be categorized as those representing scenes from actual life, those representing deities and others that capture animal figures. The first type of the toys consists of scenes which contain more than one figure. For example, it is common to find a simple single hut with a woman cooking, man climbing a palm tree, a woman milking a cow or pounding grain or spinning a wheel or men guarding sheep. The second type of toys is connected to animal figures both domestic and wild. The third type is usually related to mythological stories. The popular ones are the ten dolls that represent the ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Representations of Shiva and all other gods of the Hindu pantheon are also common.

Nirmal toys:

Nirmal, a village in the Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh is famous for its toys and paintings. Nirmal toys are also carved in lightweight Poniki wood. The wooden blocks are soaked overnight and dried to lighten the colour of wood. Various components of the toys are joined together. Lacquer chips and bamboo are used for parts such as beaks of birds or stems of fruit. Sandpaper is used to smooth the surface. Sawdust and paste of tamarind seeds are applied on the toy.