

## Introduction to Folktales:

A **folktale** or **folk tale** is a folklore genre that typically consists of a story passed down from generation to generation orally. A folktale is a **story created by the "folk" or common people**. Folktales are passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. A fairy tale is a particular type of folktale that features supernatural elements such as spirits, talking animals, and magic.

What is the origin of folktales?

Generally speaking, folk tales **originated among peasants and villagers without much formal education**. These stories were shared among generations as a way of presenting everyday life lessons and useful information in an easy-to-understand format.

What is folk tale?

Folktales are **stories in the oral tradition, or tales that people tell each other out loud, rather than stories in written form**. They're closely related to many storytelling traditions, including fables, myths, and fairy tales.

**A traditional narrative, usually anonymous, handed down orally** - e.g., fables, fairy tales, legends, etc. A tall tale is a special kind of hero story because the heroes of tall tales are 'larger than life'.

Folk tales are **shared to entertain, educate people and protect the culture in every society**. They are considered valuable both for national and universal culture. Folk tales should be regarded as good instruments for understanding and increasing the exchange between diverse cultures.

### Characteristics of Folktales:

- All folktales originally began as stories told by word of mouth.
- All folktales have a moral or teach a lesson.
- Many old folktales explain how something came to be. ...
- Characters in folktales are usually animals or people.
- Usually a character in a folktale must face an impossible test.

What are the main points of folk tales?

- Shared orally for generations.
- Follow straight forward plotlines.
- Incorporate simple characters.
- Solve a central conflict or problem.
- Demonstrate decision making.
- Reinforce consequences.
- Highlight shared values or moral lessons.

## FOLK TALES FROM INDIA

### Bengal: The Bald Wife

This story is part of the [Bengali Folktales unit](#). Story source: *Folk-Tales of Bengal* by the Rev. Lal Behari Day, with illustrations by Warwick Goble (1912).

#### *The Bald Wife*

A certain man had two wives, the younger of whom he loved more than the elder. The younger wife had two tufts of hair on her head, and the elder only one. The man went to a distant town for merchandise, so the two wives lived together in the house. But they hated each other: the younger one, who was her husband's favourite, ill-treated the other. She made her do all the menial work in the house, rebuked her all day and night, and did not give her enough to eat.

One day the younger wife said to the elder, "Come and take away all the lice from the hair of my head." While the elder wife was searching among the younger one's hair for the vermin, one lock of hair by chance gave way, on which the younger one, mightily incensed, tore off the single tuft that was on the head of the elder wife and drove her away from the house.

The elder wife, now become completely bald, determined to go into the forest and there either die of starvation or be devoured by some wild beast. On her way she passed by a cotton plant. She stopped near it, made for herself a broom with some sticks which lay about, and swept clean the ground round about the plant. The plant was much pleased, and gave her a blessing.

She wended on her way and now saw a plantain tree. She swept the ground round about the plantain tree which, being pleased with her, gave her a blessing.

As she went on, she saw the shed of a Brahmani bull. As the shed was very dirty, she swept the place clean, on which the bull, being much pleased, blessed her.

She next saw a tulasi plant, bowed herself down before it and cleaned the place round about, on which the plant gave her a blessing.

As she was going on in her journey, she saw a hut made of branches of trees and leaves and, near it, a man sitting cross-legged, apparently absorbed in meditation. She stood for a moment behind the venerable muni.

"Whoever you may be," he said, "come before me; do not stand behind me: if you do, I will reduce you to ashes."

The woman, trembling with fear, stood before the muni. "What is your petition?" asked the muni.

"Father Muni," answered the woman, "thou knowest how miserable I am, since thou art all-

knowing. My husband does not love me, and his other wife, having torn off the only tuft of hair on my head, has driven me away from the house. Have pity upon me, Father Muni!”

The muni, continuing sitting, said, “Go into the tank which you see yonder. Plunge into the water only once, and then come to me again.”

The woman went to the tank, washed in it, and plunged into the water only once, according to the bidding of the muni.

When she got out of the water, what a change was seen in her! Her head was full of jet black hair, which was so long that it touched her heels, her complexion had become perfectly fair, and she looked young and beautiful.

Filled with joy and gratitude, she went to the muni and bowed herself to the ground. The muni said to her, “Rise, woman. Go inside the hut, and you will find a number of wicker baskets, and bring out any you like.”

The woman went into the hut and selected a modest-looking basket. The muni said, “Open the basket.”

She opened it and found it filled with ingots of gold, pearls and all sorts of precious stones. The muni said, “Woman, take that basket with you. It will never get empty. When you take away the present contents, their room will be supplied by another set, and that by another, and that by another, and the basket will never become empty. Daughter, go in peace.”

The woman bowed herself down to the ground in profound but silent gratitude, and went away.

As she was returning homewards with the basket in her hand, she passed by the tulasi plant whose bottom she had swept. The tulasi plant said to her, “Go in peace, child! thy husband will love thee warmly.”

She next came to the shed of the Brahmani bull, who gave her two shell ornaments which were twined round its horns, saying, “Daughter, take these shells, put them on your wrists, and whenever you shake either of them you will get whatever ornaments you wish to obtain.”

She then came to the plantain tree, which gave her one of its broad leaves, saying, “Take, child, this leaf; and when you move it you will get not only all sorts of delicious plantains, but all kinds of agreeable food.”

She came last of all to the cotton plant, which gave her one of its own branches, saying, “Daughter, take this branch, and when you shake it, you will get not only all sorts of cotton clothes, but also of silk and purple. Shake it now in my presence.” She shook the branch, and a fabric of the finest glossy silk fell on her lap. She put on that silk cloth and wended on her way with the shells on her wrists and the basket and the branch and the leaf in her hands.

The younger wife was standing at the door of her house when she saw a beautiful woman approach her. She could scarcely believe her eyes. What a change! The old, bald hag turned

into the very Queen of Beauty herself!

The elder wife, now grown rich and beautiful, treated the younger wife with kindness. She gave her fine clothes, costly ornaments, and the richest viands. But all to no purpose. The younger wife envied the beauty and hair of her associate.

Having heard that she got it all from Father Muni in the forest, she determined to go there. Accordingly she started on her journey. She saw the cotton plant, but did nothing to it; she passed by the plantain tree, the shed of the Brahmani bull, and the tulasi plant, without taking any notice of them.

She approached the muni. The muni told her to bathe in the tank and plunge only once into the water. She gave one plunge, at which she got a glorious head of hair and a beautifully fair complexion.

She thought a second plunge would make her still more beautiful. Accordingly she plunged into the water again and came out as bald and ugly as before.

She came to the muni, and wept. The sage drove her away, saying, “Be off, you disobedient woman. You will get no boon from me.”

She went back to her house mad with grief. The lord of the two women returned from his travels and was struck with the long locks and beauty of his first wife. He loved her dearly, and when he saw her secret and untold resources and her incredible wealth, he almost adored her.

They lived together happily for many years, and had for their maid-servant the younger woman, who had been formerly his best beloved.

(1300 words)

## **The Fortune-Teller**

### **(An Assamese Folktale)**

Once in a village there was a farmer called Phoring. His wife was rather selfish. The husband and the wife were the only members of the family. They did not have any children. It was the month of *Magh*, and there was a little drizzle. Phoring got up early in the morning and said to his wife, “It’s cloudy

today. I feel like having rice-cakes. Can't you bake some for me? I think I'll not have rice today."

The wife said, "But where is *bara dhan* for making rice-cakes? We don't have any in the granary."

"Well, it seems we can't have rice-cakes, then," the husband said.

The wife then said, "Please go out and see if *bara dhan* is being threshed in any household. Please go and ask for some."

The husband thought for some time and made a plan. He wrapped an *eri* warmer around his body and went out. Seeing that the threshing of *bara dhan* (a sticky variety of rice) was going on at a neighbour's place, Phoring went in. He had sat near the threshing floor and initiated a chatter with the householder about this and that. He sat there for quite some time, continuing the chatting. Meanwhile, the grains of rice got separated from the stalks. The householder shook the straws free of the grains and pushed them aside. Just then Phoring, complaining of a griping pain, rolled over the heap of paddy with the *eri* wrapper still around his body. The grains of *bara dhan* were covered by very fine bristles so that the grains of rice got stuck to the *eri* wrapper which had a rough surface. Phoring rolled three or four times over the heap of rice before leaving for home, pretending to be writhing in agony.



On reaching home, Phoring shook the *eri* wrapper and got a basketful of *bara dhan*. The wife was very happy to see the basket of rice. She at once boiled them, then sunned them and

then removed the husks by beating the dried grains. And then she ground the sticky rice. In the evening, after cooking and serving meal to her husband, she took to prepare for baking rice-cakes. After food Phoring was sleepy and so he went to bed.

The wife baked twelve scores of cakes and put them on a bamboo tray. Then, she ate most of the cakes and put away the remaining few in a bowl. Before going to bed she woke her husband up and said, “I’ve finished baking rice-cakes, but I want to set a condition: Whoever gets up earlier tomorrow will eat one third of the cakes, and whoever wakes up late will get the two-thirds.” Phoring agreed and went back to sleep.

Next morning none of them was ready to get up from bed. The sun was getting hotter, yet both went on snoring, pretending to be asleep. In the end, Phoring realized that he could not afford to go on sleeping like this by neglecting his work in the field. Let his wife have two-thirds of the rice-cakes, he would have just one-third, he thought and got up. Seeing him getting out of bed, his wife said, “You’ve got up before me. So you’ll have only one-third of the cakes.”

“It’s all right, you have two-thirds,” said her husband.

Phoring went to the kitchen to eat his share of rice-cakes and found that there were only a few. He asked his wife, “Where are the remaining rice-cakes?”

“Remaining rice-cakes? All the rice-cakes that I had made are there in the bowl. Have one third and keep the rest for me”, she said.

How strange, thought Phoring, only these few cakes from a basketful of rice. Suddenly his eyes fell on the round bamboo

tray hanging from the wall. He saw there the impressions left by the rice-cakes. He counted them up to find that they were three scores in total. Without saying anything to his wife he came out and sat down outside. His wife brought the *bota*, the bell-metal tray, and offered sliced areca nuts, paan and slices of *sali* bark to her husband. As he took them from the tray Phoring recited a proverb:

Divine the future with the plough

Drive with sticks the spirits out

Someone ate cakes three scores

Who can tell who knows?

His wife had understood the hidden meaning of the lines. She was ashamed of herself and immediately left the place to fetch water from the river. She met a number of women at the river landing and confided the story of rice-cakes to them. She concluded her narration by saying that her husband was in fact a fortune-teller. The word quickly spread, first among the village women, and then all the villagers came to know that Phoring was a fortune-teller.

A villager had lost one black cow of his. When he had failed to find the cow after searching for five days, the man approached Phoring, who he had meanwhile heard to be a fortune-teller. The man asked him if he could find some clue. Co-incidentally, that morning Phoring saw that black cow grazing in the field filled with tall reed-like grasses behind his homestead. So Phoring told the man, “Go and find your cow behind my homestead.” The man followed his advice and immediately found his cow. After this incident it got well

grounded all around that Phoring was an accomplished fortune-teller.

The news soon reached the King. Incidentally, the king had lost a gold necklace worth one hundred thousand coins. He searched it in every nook and cranny of the palace but the chain was not to be found. So, the King summoned Phoring to the court and asked him to find the lost gold chain.

When the King's messenger conveyed the King's order to Phoring, he was about to faint. If he refuses to go, the King will execute him. The King will execute him even if he goes but fails to find out the chain, or confesses that he is not a fortune-teller. He was completely at a loss, unable to decide what to do. So, by leaving everything to destiny and God he had left his home and presented himself before the King.

The King warmly welcomed the fortune-teller and ordered that he should be taken inside and served refreshments. Phoring was served such tasty foods as *doi*, milk, softened rice, molasses and other delicacies.

The King had two queens; one was called Madoi, the other Hadoi. It was Hadoi who had stolen the gold chain and hidden it somewhere. Learning that the fortune-teller had arrived, she was utterly terrified, apprehending that she would get caught. So she stood near the room where Phoring was eating and observed him through a chink in the wall. Phoring was equally frightened. When he saw the bowl of softened rice and *doi* (curd), he said to himself, aloud, “Uh-huh--*doi*! Eat well today; who knows what the King is going to do to you tomorrow!”





When the junior queen heard these words she thought, “O, I’m done for, the fortune-teller has got me.” She came out and said, holding his hand, “O Fortune-teller, please do not reveal this secret. I’ll give you whatever you want.”

It was immediately clear to the fortune-teller that queen Hadoi was the thief. He said to the queen, “Your Majesty, I’ll not divulge the secret but you must bring the chain immediately and put it in the King’s handy box.” Then and there the queen followed his instruction.

Next day the King summoned the fortune-teller and asked him to tell who had stolen the necklace. The fortune-teller bowed to the king and said, “My Lord, I don’t see anyone stealing the necklace. I think it is in your lordship’s handy box.”

The King had his handy box brought to him. When it was opened the gold chain was found to be lying there. Everybody was astounded at this. The King honoured him by making him a courtier and by generously rewarding him with lands, cash and other goods.

One day the king caught a *phoring*, a grasshopper, and held it in his fist and then asked the fortune-teller, “Tell me what I have here in my fist.”

The fortune-teller thought his days were over. So he said in a saddened voice:

One I predicted by counting

Another by seeing

Saying *ha-doi* brought out the chain

Now Phoring, your life comes to an end.

The King did not know the fortune-teller's name. So he thought that by "phoring" he meant the grasshopper. The King released the grasshopper and gifted the fortune teller with his own dress.

One day the King hid a *xeluk*, the root of a water-lily, in his palm and said to the fortune-teller, "Tell me what I have in my fist." Utterly nervous, Phoring muttered, *barepoti xolako*, meaning, "I escape somehow every time!" The King heard it as the proverb, *burepati xeluk*, meaning "I find the root of a water-lily at every dip." The King rewarded the fortune-teller once more with a handsome amount of gold and silver.

Our clothes got blackened and so we came back home.

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By [Nalin Verma](#)  
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## The Sparrow and Her Crumbs

Long ago, there lived a sparrow. Once, she picked up a grain of gram and carried it to a stone grinder to break it into two bits. In the process of grinding, a part of the grain came out while the rest of it remained stuck in the wooden pricket that worked as the grinder's pivot.

The sparrow repeatedly pecked into the pricket, trying to extricate the trapped morsel, but failed. Exhausted, she rushed to a woodcutter and pleaded, 'O woodcutter! Rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

The woodcutter, agitated at the bird's request, retorted, 'Get lost! Am I a fool that I will rip the whole pricket for a piece of grain?'

The sparrow, too, lost her temper. She approached the king and pleaded, 'O king! Punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter wouldn't rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

The king rejected the sparrow's plea, arguing that it was unjust to punish the woodcutter for a morsel of grain. Fluttering and chirping, the sparrow went to the queen and entreated, 'O queen! Counsel the king. The king wouldn't punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter wouldn't rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

The queen, too, refused to entertain the sparrow's request, 'I can't counsel the king for such a small thing.'

The sparrow then went to a snake and pleaded, 'O snake! Bite the queen. The queen wouldn't counsel the king. The king wouldn't punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter wouldn't rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

'Are you insane? How can I bite the queen for a morsel of grain?' hissed the snake, turning down the sparrow's plea. Disappointed, the sparrow went to a stick and begged, 'O stick! Kill the snake. The snake wouldn't bite the queen. The queen wouldn't counsel the king. The king wouldn't punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter wouldn't rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

The stick, too, refused to help the sparrow. Not willing to give up hope, she shouted out to the fire, 'O fire! Burn the stick. The stick wouldn't kill the snake. The snake wouldn't bite the queen. The queen wouldn't counsel the king. The king wouldn't punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter wouldn't rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

'Get out. I will not burn the stick for a morsel of grain,' shouted back the fire.

The sparrow approached the ocean, 'O ocean! Extinguish the fire. The fire wouldn't burn the stick. The stick wouldn't kill the snake. The snake wouldn't bite the queen. The queen wouldn't counsel the king. The king wouldn't punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter

wouldn't rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

As the ocean snubbed the sparrow, she flew to an elephant. 'O elephant! Please swallow the ocean. The ocean wouldn't extinguish the fire. The fire would not burn the stick. The stick wouldn't kill the snake. The snake wouldn't bite the queen. The queen would not counsel the king. The king wouldn't punish the woodcutter. The woodcutter wouldn't rip the pricket. My crumb is in the pricket. What shall I eat and what shall I carry for my journey overseas?'

Already thirsty, the elephant thought it could achieve two goals if it fulfilled the sparrow's wish. Its thirst would be quenched and the sparrow would be obliged. So, the elephant headed towards the ocean with the sparrow in tow.

The ocean was scared to see the elephant approach it menacingly. The ocean implored, 'Do not swallow me, please. I will extinguish the fire.'

The ocean went to the fire. The fire got nervous and pleaded, 'Do not extinguish me, please. I will burn the stick.'

As the fire leapt to burn the stick, the stick begged for mercy, 'Do not burn me, please. I will kill the snake.'

When the stick went to kill the snake, the snake pleaded, 'Have mercy on me, please. I will bite the queen.'

As the snake crawled to dig its fangs into the queen, the queen said, 'Spare my life, please. I will counsel the king.'

When the queen went to counsel the king, he said, 'Cheer up, dear. I will punish the woodcutter.'

As the king called the woodcutter to punish him, the woodcutter said, 'Do not punish me, please. I will rip the pricket.'

When the woodcutter went to rip the pricket, the pricket pleaded, 'No one should rip me apart. I am splitting on my own.'

The pricket split, throwing the crumb out. The sparrow picked up the crumb and flew off merrily.

*Be positive and never give up—success will come to you.*

## **The Blessing [Folktale from Orissa] from Book**

## Folktales from Western India

### The Banjaran Mother [A folktale from Rajasthan]

Long long ago, somewhere in Rajasthan there lived a nomad who owned a big herd of sheep, goats and oxen. Owing to his possession of these cattle, he came to be popularly known as Lakhi Banjara (nomad with ten thousand cattle).

In those days, oxen were the most common and conventional mode of transport and Lakhi Banjara conducted business as a transporter of various good from one province to another.

Lakhi was a big businessman and lived in great opulence. Once, after having bought salt from the Samphar area, he was taking it to Sindh and expected to make a good profit. His wife, the Banjaran and Lakhi were seated on a camel's back when they noticed a small shepherd boy looking after his sheep as they grazed on the nearby pastures. There was a pond nearby. The shepherd who was thirsty went to the edge of the pond and prostrated himself to lap up water from it. **Lakhi Banjaran** noticed it and promptly drew his Banjaran's attention towards the boy saying, "See this is what is called a hereditary characteristic." "No," said the Banjaran, "How can it be? After all the boy is not a progeny of the cattle? It is only the impact of the company and not the inheritance."

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"No, no", said Lakhi Banjara, "This is now in his blood and can be termed as nothing else but a hereditary characteristic."

"How can it go into his blood?" objected the Banjaran. "Groomed properly and given proper education he can become an able person. And he can then carry on business just as you do."

Lakhi Banjara was hurt at this pointed remarks: "He can transact business like me. What a brainless woman you are!" he retorted.

The Banjaran got irritated at this remark, and threw another missile. "He can not only transact business like you, but also he can become your boss as well and rule over you."

This was too much for Lakhi Banjara. He said, "O. K. can you do this transformation in this boy by giving him your good company?"

"What not?" replied the Banjaran confidently.

"Go, then let us see how you make an able man out of this shepherd boy", said Lakhi and helped the Banjaran to get down the camel's back.

Leaving the Banjaran alone in the wilderness, Lakhi hastened away on his journey. The Banjaran did not despair. She gathered courage and went to the shepherd boy. The boy was taken aback when he saw a Banjaran decked heavily with gold ornaments, coming towards him. But soon his trepidation was over. In the evening the Banjaran took the boy to a nearby village market and got him some new clothes. She then bought fresh groceries and prepared good food for him.

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As time passed, the painstakingly taught him etiquette, the way of intelligent conversation, reading, writing and horse riding. Through many tales, she also made him wiser in worldly matters. He responded warmly and soon, he was a changed man. He was now able to attend the **Royal Court** and could get nearer high officials there. Every evening the Banjaran reviewed the happenings and gave her comments thus helping the boy grow in all possible direction.

Once the king planned to go for a hunt. The Banjaran having come to know of it told the boy to accompany the hunt party. In a tiffin box, she packed some sweets and also gave him a container in which he could carry water. During the hunt, while chasing a deer, the king got separated from his party. The shepherd boy, however kept close behind him, when the king got thirsty and felt hungry, the boy offered him what his Banjaran mother had packed for him. At night as the king slept on the saddle of the horse, the boy kept a constant vigil as a result, the king became very pleased with him and asked him what he would like as a reward. After some hesitation, the boy said that he would consult his 'mother' and let the king know the next morning.

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Next morning, on the advice of his Banjaran mother the boy asked the king to allow him to serve as incharge of the toll tax. This was a very prestigious position, since any businessman who wanted to take his goods across the border had to seek permission of the incharge. Until all taxes were settled, no trader could cross the border. The Banjaran instructed the boy not to allow any one to go across without consulting her.

She knew when Lakhi Banjara would cross the border check post.

Lakhi Banjara came one day. The boy consulted his mother who advised him to keep his case pending for three days. "Try to postpone the matter on one pretext or the other", she said.

The boy acted accordingly. Lakhi Banjara got fed up with excessive expenditure on his oxen and men. The delay for him meant loss of money. But the toll tax incharge was not bothered. On the fourth day, the Banjara went to the incharge's house. He waited for half an hour at the gate when he was asked to enter. The incharge was seated on a high seat. Lakhi Banjara bowed down and saluted him. After two minutes when the incharge turned towards him, Lakhi lamented, "Sir, I am suffering unprecedented loses due to non-clearance of toll tax, please accept the taxes so that I may proceed on my journey. I am losing valuable business due to this delay. I may get totally ruined if I am not given permission to cross the border immediately. While Lakhi was thus imploring a servant came in and informed that his (incharge's) mother wanted to be there. At the door was standing the Banjaran.

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As the incharge lowered himself at her feet, Lakhi Banjara was filled with surprise and saw that it was no other but the Banjaran.

“See, this is the effect of good company. This is the same shepherd boy to whom you are begging”.

The Banjara remembered the face of the boy. He apologized to his wife who advised him to give up the cattle and the roaming profession and start some other business. Thereafter they lived happily and earned a great name and fame in the area.

The Banjaran Mother – Rajasthani Folktales

## Folktales from Maharashtra: The Magic Ring

Text by Nanditha Chandraprakash

**Animals are a necessary and integral part of everyday life in a village, according to the folk tales and art of the Warli Adivasis**

Scenes from everyday life, which include the integration of many different animals, are the main theme of Warli paintings, an ancient folkart form from Maharashtra. Photo: From Warli tribe archives, courtesy Prof. Pradip Prabhu.

*The Warlis are Adivasis from Maharashtra. They believe that conserving nature and taking care of animals is not an act of selflessness on the part of humans, but the only way to protect their own future and well-being. This folk tale is narrated by Prof. Pradip Prabhu, former Dean, School of Rural Development, TISS, and founder member of Kashtakari Sanghatana, the voice of the millions of tribals in Maharashtra.*

Walking through a forest in search of fruits and berries, a poor man chanced upon a pig being attacked by a tiger. The man helped it escape by driving the tiger away. Filled with gratitude, the pig said, “I am very grateful—you have saved my life today. I must repay my debt to you. Please follow me.”

The man followed the pig who led him to a cave, from which the animal brought out a ring and said, “Take this ring and tie it to the top of your house and good fortune will follow you.” The man accepted the gift, thanked the pig, and made his way home.

As night fell, the man and his wife went to sleep. The next morning, their once empty house had grown in prosperity with sacks of pulses and spices in the attic, and vegetables in the kitchen. They could finally eat their fill and feed their pets. With the family’s good fortune, the couple and their pets lived comfortably.

As weeks passed, onlookers became curious and neighbours wondered at the unexpected good fortune of the household. A crafty villager spied on them and found out about the magic ring. That night, he snuck into the house and stole the ring.

The fate of the house quickly reversed back to its impoverished state. The woman was upset as she couldn't feed her cat and dog anymore. She said to them, "Please go away, there's nothing for you here. Find another home!"

The dog asked the cat, "How did our fate change? What do we do?" The cat recalled, "There used to be a ring tied to the roof, but it isn't there anymore. I think we should find it."

The duo set out in search of the ring. They searched their village and the surrounding villages, even crossing a trickle of a stream. They were determined to find the ring and take it back to the kind couple.

Soon they came upon a prosperous house. The dog guessed that the house was newly prosperous, because there was a wedding of rats on right next to it, and it was an odd season for weddings. This was surely the thief's house, they concluded.

As they stood wondering what to do, the cat had an idea. She caught the rat bridegroom from next door. The other rats panicked and pleaded with the cat, "Please, please let the groom go! Please do not harm him." The dog replied, "We mean him no harm. The cat will let him go in return for a favour. We need the ring that is tied to the roof of the rich man's house." The rats scampered onto the thief's roof, detached the ring from there and brought it to the dog. The cat kept her word and let go of the groom. The wedding celebrations continued with merriment.

As the cat and the dog made their way back with the ring, it began to rain heavily and frogs croaked joyfully all around them. Water levels at the trickle of a stream they had crossed earlier had risen, and it had become a torrent. They had no choice but to brave the current. The cat jumped in first and the dog followed. As they were crossing the gushing waters, the ring slipped out of his mouth. Once they reached the shore, they had to think quickly about how they would retrieve the ring from the depths of the stream.

Soon the rain stopped and they spotted a wedding ceremony of river frogs nearby—a common occurrence during the rains. They repeated their trick, catching hold of the bridegroom. The other frogs begged, "please let our groom go, please do not hurt him!" Now it was the frogs' turn to fetch the ring from the depths of the stream in return for an unhurt groom. They dived into the stream and brought the ring out. Once the dog had the ring in his mouth again, the groom frog was released, and the wedding party resumed.

Without any more untoward incidents, the cat and dog reached their home. The cat climbed to the roof and tied the ring where it used to be. The woman was happy to see her pets again. This is how the cat and the dog returned the ring to their house, and brought prosperity back to the family.

*The Adivasis believe that cats, dogs, pigs, rats and frogs are the cause of prosperity. Every creature, big and small, has a role to play in making the world a better place for all to live in. We may not see it all the time, but if we care to look and learn, we will find that without them, our chances of survival are at risk. Through this tale, community elders teach the next generation that animals should be considered part of the family, and are also part of the*



*family's prosperity. Taking care of them does not eat into one's wealth; it is not a loss to have them.*

## **Attulem Ani Bittulem : A Goan's Folk Tale**

April 21, 2012 [Placido](#) [Leave a comment](#) [Go to comments](#)

*This is to keep you folks watching my blog.....some kid stuff. Placido de Souza*

**Goa's most popular folk tale from the book "FOLK TALES OF GOA" by Arthur Francis "Meurin" Santos.**

There were once two sisters called Attulem and Bittulem. They lived in a house close to the forest. They were orphans. They loved each other. They were kind and sweet. Everyone loved these children and brought them gifts of fruit and vegetables. The squirrel brought nuts, the monkey brought mangoes and jack fruit. The bat brought guavas. The elephant brought firewood, vegetables and the tender shoots of bamboo to make their favourite bamboo-shoot pickle.

Vag Mam, the tiger, was very jealous. One day, while passing, he sniffed the air.

"Ah!" he roared. "Someone is making sannas, my favourite dish. I must have some."

Poor Attulem and Bittulem shivered with fright and looked around to hide themselves. There were two large jars in the kitchen. Attulem jumped into one. Bittulem leapt into the other.

Vag Mam entered the house with a deafening roar. He ate up all the sannas.

"Where are the two sisters?" he asked aloud. "My stomach is still not full." Poor Attulem and Bittulem quaked with fear. They bent deeper into the jars.

"What wonderful jars," said the tiger. "I must take one home to pickle my meat." He picked up the jar with Attulem and placed it on his back. Bittulem peeped out of her jar. She could not bear to be separated from her sister. So she quickly got out of her jar and jumped into the other jar. Attulem made place for her.

"Gosh!" said the tiger. "This jar has suddenly become twice its weight. I hope I will be able to reach my den safely."

The sisters embraced each other. They trembled with fear as they were jolted from side to side. "I want to sneeze," said Attulem. "Sh-sh... please don't. The tiger will hear your and eat us up," said Bittulem. After some time, Bittulem said, "I'm dying to sneeze." Attulem said, "Please don't. The tiger will hear you."

"What's is this?" said the tiger. "This jar is a talking jar. I hear voices." He stopped and put down the jar. He sniffed and peeped inside.

“Ach-choo,” sneezed Attulem.

“Ach-choo,” sneezed Bittulem.

The jar broke into a thousand fragments. Hundreds of pieces entered Vag Mam’s eyes. He was completely blind. He roared with rage and pain, clawing and biting every thing within reach.

Everyone rushed to the spot with sticks, stones and knives. They beat the hated Vag Mam within an inch of his life. Vag Mam ran blindly through the forest.

“Never again will I go anywhere near those kids,” he vowed. “This beating will keep me in bed for a month.”

Attulem and Bittulem were escorted home in triumph!

INFO: Mario, couldn't help wondering if you know the person mention below. He has a "Jubbulpore" connection. Don't know which year this book came out, perhaps in the 1960s or 1970s. Goanetter George Menezes has written the foreword. FN

Folk Tales of Goa.

By Meurin. Pp 61. Rs 2. Bombay Photocopy of original.

Stories like that of Kolo-Koli (the foxy couple), Kolo-Manghem, Attulem Bittulem, Siumami, and two Goan devil stories. Arthur Francis 'Meurin' Santos collected folk-tales as he travelled through life as a migrant Goan in Igatpuri, Jubbulpore and Bombay.

## “Queen Vrajkunwar Ba” from Book

# The Wilted Kaafal

## The soulful folk tale of Uttarakhand



[Tharani Theertha](#)

[Sep 13, 2020·4 min read](#)

Fairy tales are more than true; Not because they tell us that dragons exist; But because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.

A folktale is an old story that's been told again and again, often for generations. Most of these are fables, myths, and fairy tales.



Every human society has its own folktales; these well-known stories are handed down between generations, are an important way of passing along knowledge, information, and history and most importantly the cultural heritage of a region.

Here we take a look at one of the folk tales from Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand is blessed with magnificent glaciers, majestic mountains of striking beauty with valleys filled with dense flora and fauna. The people are proud of their environment and worship nature as the divine. The Kumaon valley in northern India is also known as the fruit basket of the state of Uttarakhand.

# The Kaafal Is Wilted

## Kaafal

Uttarakhand gives birth to a revitalizing fruit called Kafal, containing a variety of qualities it draws the attention of people easily. In the month of Chaita, the sun gathers heat and all kinds of berries ripen in the woods. Among these is the luscious red kaafal. It grows on a leafy tree, also known for its bark with medicinal values, which stands out amongst the pines and deodars.

## Introduction

When the hard green kaafal berries begin to turn red and juicy in the sun, the sounds of two birds echo through the hills and valleys of Uttarakhand. One of them calls out “Kafal pako, maile na chakho! (The kaafal is ripe, but I never tasted it!)”, while the other says, “Pur, putai, pure, pur! (They are all there, daughter, they are there, all there!). The people believe that the cry of two birds is actually a girl, “Haruli” appealing to her mother “Saru”.

## The Story

There are many variations in story. But here’s one-

This is an interesting folklore that is set in the month of Chaita or March. In this season the sun shines directly above the trees of Uttarakhand and ripens many berries, the most famous of them being Kaafal. It all begins when Saru, accompanied by Haruli, goes in search of Kaafal as a source of additional income. Their expedition becomes fruitful when they stumble across a tree laden with berries. They quickly gathered them and returned to finish the household chores of the house. Saru does her chores while Haruli watches over the luscious berries, to guard it from birds, while she plays with her doll merrily.

In the afternoon, after her daily toil, Saru is shocked to see the level of the basket filled with the berries reduce by a fourth. Naturally, assuming Haru to eat the berries, she becomes furious and begins to scold Haru. Haruli, being innocent honestly says that she hadn’t eaten any and flees, frightened by her mother’s demeanor. Saru runs after her with long strides and catches up in no time. When Saru was about to grab Haruli, Haruli shrieked and surprisingly shrank to the size of a bird and flew away, leaving Saru stupefied.

Saru is mystified and travels further hoping to find Haruli. Finally after a protracted and tedious search Saru begins to wonder if all of this was her imagination playing tricks with her and returns home hoping to find Haruli still playing with her doll. When she returns her eyes fall on the basket of berries and she is shocked to see them full.

She realizes that the strong heat of the sun wilted and shrank the berries thereby reducing the volume occupied by the Kaafals. Now, they became fresh and plump and juicy just as they had been earlier. This makes her regret her harsh actions towards her daughter who had been

innocent all along. So strong was her desire to make up for her actions towards Haruli, that she too turned into a bird and took off in search of her daughter.

This sorrowful tale forewarns one to think twice before doing anything with a feverish haste. Actions done when one's vexed or downcast are reckless and can have a deleterious impact/effect.

## Uttarpradesh Folk Tale

### The Four Blind Men

Long long ago there was a wise and benevolent King in some part of Uttar Pradesh. He kept the welfare of his subjects uppermost in his mind and was in turn doted upon by them. One day when he was returning from the hunt he met on the way four blind men. They were famished with hunger, and hearing the sound of the hooves of the King's horse, begged for alms. The King took pity on them and asked his soldiers to take them along so that he could get them something from the city to eat. After they had proceeded some distance they reached the city, and seeing a sweetmeat shop the King asked his man to buy four kilos of sweets for the blind men. When the shopkeeper was weighing the sweets, the King saw that his scales were not right, and got them tested. The sweetmeat seller was found to be charging for more weight, so the King warned him to set his scales right. When he was about to go, the men said ; "Sir, you are known for your generosity, if you give us a room to live in your palace, we will pray for you all our lives. We can also be useful to you." The King smiled and said : "How so? Seeing that all of you are blind what work can you do?". The blind men said : "Sir, each of us has an exceptional gift". "Indeed!" the King exclaimed in disbelief, "and what are these gifts, pray?" The blind men said : "One of us can distinguish a real pearl from a false one; one can tell merely by touching whether a horse is good or not; one can discriminate between a true woman and a false one, while one of us can find out by instinct whether a man is faithful or treacherous." The King said : "Friends, it is difficult for anyone to believe that a blind man can do all this. I would first like to test you before I admit you into the palace." "We don't fear being put to the test," the blindmen said.

The four blind men were ordered to present themselves in the royal durbar. When they came the King sent for a jeweller and asked him to put two identical pearls velvet cushions – one being real and the other an imitation. The pearls were put before the first blind

man. He felt both of them with his hands in turn, and instantly pointed out the one which was real. All the courtiers gathered in the durbar applauded the blind man, and the King praised him and said : "From now on you will be my minister." Then the King ordered the keeper of the stable to bring a highly bred horse. When it came, he asked the second blind man to tell if this was a genuine breed or not. The blind man felt him thoroughly all over his back and neck and then said : "Sir, this is a horse of low breed, not fit for your Majesty's stable." The King was greatly surprised. He called for the dealer from whom the horse had been purchased, asked him on pain of death to say truly if the horse was of low breed or not. The dealer looked at the horse and said ; "Sir, this is not the horse I sold to the stable-keeper. It is some other horse." The King turned his gaze to the keeper of the stable, who began to tremble and flinging himself on his feet said : "Sir, I beg your mercy. I was tempted by the fine horse the dealer sold me, and so I substituted it with this one. The trader's horse is at my home." "Bring it at once," the King ordered sternly, and dismissed the keeper from his service. Turning to the blind man he said : "You have indeed an exceptional gift. From today I make you my minister." Then came the turn of the third blind man. The King was very eager to know how he could differentiate between a good and a bad woman. The blind man said : "Bring the chief maid-in-waiting here". The King ordered her to be brought before him. The blind man groped on her back with his hand and said : "Your plan has been foiled. Fetch the crown jewels where you have hidden them, and deliver them to the King." Everyone in the durbar was aghast to hear these words, and the woman turned pale. The King sent his son to see if the jewels were safe, and lo! he came back with the news that they had disappeared. Then the King ordered the room of the chief maid to be searched and the jewels were found hidden in a covered alcove. He banished the maid from his kingdom and said to the blind man, "You have given ample proof of your extraordinary gift. I appoint you my minister."

Last of all the fourth blind man appeared in the durbar. The King was all agog to know the result of his test, seeing that the other three had proved themselves. The blind man said : "Sir, if you don't take ill at what I do, I may proceed with the test." The King assured him, and then he said; "If it pleases you I would like the chief minister to be called." The King was somewhat taken aback by this insolence but because he had given his word, he asked the chief minister, who was his most trusted^ and faithful man, to be summoned. When he came, the blind man felt his back and his chest and said : "It does not behave you to be a traitor to such a benevolent and trusting king." The chief minister flared up and said ; "What do you mean by your insolent words? I will get you hanged for this." The blind man said : "If you are innocent then why have you stored the phial of poison in your purse?" Hearing this the chief minister began to tremble with fear. The King ordered the purse to be produced, and sure enough, the phial of

poison was found in it. The blind man said : "Sire, the chief minister had planned to put you to death and he was aiming to usurp the throne. He was to mix this poison today in your cup of wine." The King was dumbfounded, and calling the executioners told them to take the chief minister away to the dungeon. Turning to the blind man he said : "You have saved my life as well as my kingdom. I appoint you my chief minister. The four blind men began to serve the King, and he never had any occasion to regret his choice. \_"

Acknowledgement: Collected from various open sources