

The Talking Apple

Translated by Maham

Once upon a time there was a king. He had a beautiful daughter, but when she grew up, she refused to speak to anyone. The King announced that whosoever would make my daughter talk, I would marry her to that person. When the prince of the neighboring country heard the announcement, he decided that he would make the princess speak. He started his journey to the princess' kingdom and on the way, he stopped to quench his thirst. He went near the stream to get some water when he saw an apple floating in it. He grabbed the apple to bite it when the apple started talking. The apple pleaded that if you would eat me, I would just be an apple satisfying your hunger, but if you would spare me, I would help you in your endeavour. The prince put the magical apple in his pocket and went on his way.

The prince soon reached the King's court and informed the King about his intention of marrying the princess by fulfilling the condition of making her speak. He announced that he accepted the challenge and vowed to make her speak. In the evening, the prince went to meet the princess, with a minister and a lawyer as the witnesses. The prince took the apple out of his pocket and hid the apple near the lamp closest to the princess. He asked the minister and the lawyer to start the conversation. But they replied that they had just come as witnesses to prove whether the prince fulfilled the condition or not. Thus, it is the turn of the prince to initiate a conversation to make the princess speak. Then the prince announced that the lamp of the princess would narrate a story in his stead. The apple hidden near the lamp started to narrate a story.

The Apple started with the story of a king. In his kingdom, there was a merchant living with his beautiful wife. A lord in that kingdom was infatuated with the merchant's wife and wanted to marry her. She did not want to betray her husband so she would refuse the lord's proposal. Meanwhile, the merchant had to go for an important trade journey to a faraway land. The merchant told his wife that he would return exactly one year later, on the same day and the same time. But, if he did not return after a year then the wife is free to remarry anyone she wanted to. Then, he left for his trade abroad.

The lord sent a message to the merchant's wife and asked her to meet him. The merchant's wife replied that she could not publicly come to his residence to meet him. She suggested him to dig a tunnel from his house to her place, so that she could come through that tunnel to meet him. The lord spent months and finally dug a tunnel linking his home with her abode. When the merchant's wife saw the newly dug tunnel, she complained that she was not a rat, passing through dark and dingy tunnels. Thus, she demanded that the lord should have the tunnel painted and lit with lights so that she could easily move in the tunnel.

The lord agreed and started the process of painting and decorating the tunnel. The construction and decoration of the tunnel was a long process which easily took a year. Finally, the day came when the merchant was supposed to return from his trade business. The lord sent her expensive clothes and precious jewelry so that she could wear it and finally come to meet him through the tunnel. The merchant's wife got ready and sat near the door of the house, waiting for her

husband's return. She kept waiting until the evening. When the merchant did not show up, she finally decided to leave the house and go to the lord's residence.

She was about to leave when she saw the merchant arriving there, sitting on his camel. When she saw her husband, she started to cry with relief. The merchant enquired about her emotional reaction, and she explained the whole ordeal to him. The merchant replied that the wife had remained faithful to him throughout the year and had not betrayed him. Thus, he declared her free to go to the lord's residence and be with him.

The merchant's wife acquiesced and decided to go to the lord's residence through the tunnel, still crying about her dilemma. She was passing through the tunnel built for her by the lord when a thief appeared. The thief had dug a tunnel elsewhere, but his tunnel had opened into the tunnel built by the lord. The thief was surprised to see a beautiful woman, wearing expensive clothes and precious gold jewelry passing through the tunnel, all the way crying.

The thief enquired about her dilemma, and she explained the whole situation to him, leaving it up to him to either let her go, or keep her. The thief told her that she was like a sister to him and therefore, he extended his protection to her. She kept crying and completed the journey to the lord's residence with a heavy heart. The lord was overjoyed to find her there, but he was shocked to see her crying.

When the lord asked her why she was crying she poured her heart out to him. She told him that she was waiting for her husband, and that was the reason why she asked the lord to dig up the tunnel and then decorate it; she wanted the year to pass by and she would finally reunite with her husband. Finally, when the year had passed by and the merchant returned, he asked her wife .

But, when the merchant heard about her dilemma, the merchant gave her the permission to go to the lord's residence. The lord was disturbed to see her so sad. So, he vowed to leave her alone and allowed her to go back to her husband. She happily returned and reunited with her husband. When the talking apple concluded the story, the Prince then asked the audience, the minister, the lawyer and the princess, about the male character who earned power in the story. Whether it was the lord, the merchant, or the thief. The minister said that it was the merchant, because he let his wife go, but ultimately, he got her back for good. The lawyer said that it was the lord because he spent a year building and decorating the tunnel for the merchant's wife, but when he observed that she was unhappy, he let her go back to the merchant.

Finally, the princess spoke that both the minister as well as the lawyer are simpletons, and wondered why her father, the King, gave them such esteemed positions. The princess eventually spoke and gave her point of view that it was the thief who was the most powerful character in the story because if he wanted, he could easily keep the merchant's wife; In this case, the merchant would have thought that his wife is with the lord, while the lord would think that the lady is with the merchant. Both these men would have never found out that the thief had the lady. Hence, it was the thief who had more power in that situation.

The people in the audience started cheering because the princess had finally spoken. This is how the prince fulfilled the condition and the King arranged the marriage of the prince and the princess.

