

SATTI

“Maybe you should change the story’s title,” said Tirumala Rao after reading his wife Satyawati’s short story.

Tirumala Rao had read none of her stories before they were married. When he had first gone to see his future wife he learnt from her elder brother that Satyawati was a good short story writer. Tirumala Rao, since his childhood, had never paid much attention to tattle-tales or rumor-mongering; he was curious to know only about the people and events happening around him and their causes. He used to digest a lot of books to understand people’s psychology, their character and motives. Later, that skill helped him in his career as a police official.

His first reaction on hearing about Satyawati’s literary skill was to seek comfort in the thought, “Well, she can follow her hobby as long as she doesn’t bother me!”

Since their marriage, Satyawati had never asked her husband to read her stories; he was too busy with his work. Whatever time was available to the couple it left them little to indulge in joyful company. Tirumala Rao was on call duty and he had to be in uniform always to answer an emergency. When they were together Satyawati talked only about her husband and his work rather than her stories; she felt the case studies and events she heard from him were more interesting than her own stories.

She penned a story based on one of the case studies she heard from her husband and asked him to read it, and offer his opinion.

“What can I tell you about your stories?” he tried to dodge her. “You’re a successful writer. Why do you need my opinion?” But Satyawati didn’t leave him off the hook. She insisted and, finally, begged him for a comment.

He relented, either because of fondness for his wife or curiosity about her story. He read the story and, even as he praised her, he edited some of the dialogues and offered his opinion that she might consider changing the title.

“What better title can you think of?” Satyawati countered him. “The major theme of the story has to do with the flaw in the protagonist and how he was humbled by his opponent; I think the title *Balahaenata* (*Fraithies*) is very fitting.”

“I agree; still it seems a feeble one to me,” Tirumala Rao spoke as if he were a professional reviewer. “Think again.”

“Please, suggest a new title.”
“Call it ‘*A Weak Point*’. That’s a more attractive title, I would say.”

“Why do we need an English title for a Telugu story - as if we can’t think of good words in Telugu?”