



THE BEST DOLL FESTIVAL - EVER!

Shamim Padamsee

Pictures: Ashok Rajagopalan



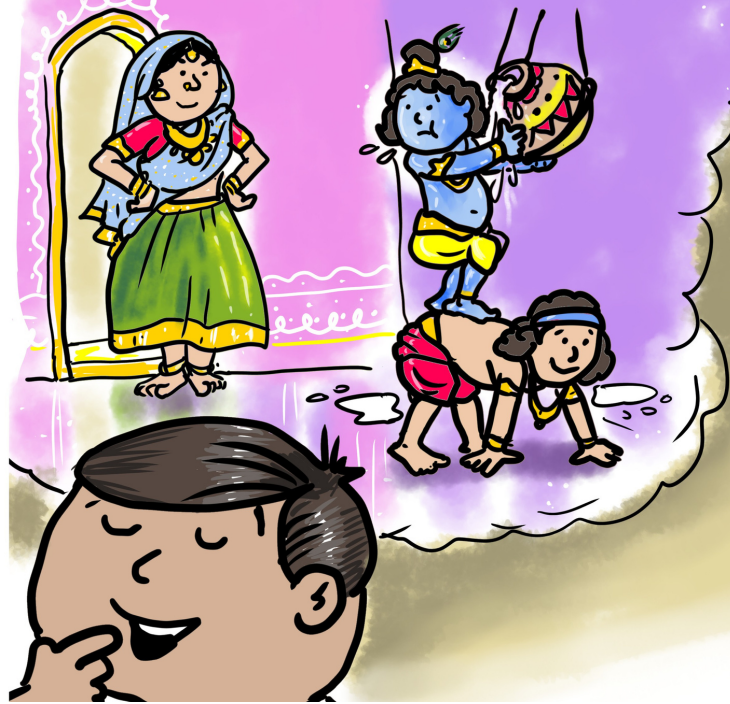
“Golu is my favorite festival,” said Ravi to his sister Rani, as they walked home from school. “I love helping Amma set up the dolls. She makes such fun themes.”



“Mine too. My favorite theme was the wedding procession that she set up when Aunt Saryu was getting married. The groom seated on a horse, a band of musicians, and women dressed in colorful silk sarees. It was so grand,” said Rani with a sigh.



"I love the stories of little Krishna, and how he used to steal butter," said Ravi.



"But...no Golu this year. Amma is not well and Appa is away on duty."

"Hey, let's give Amma a surprise and set up the Golu ourselves," said Rani.

"Great idea! But we don't have the dolls. If we ask Amma our secret will be out," said Ravi.



"We can buy them," suggested Rani. So, they emptied out their money-box. But there wasn't enough money.

"Oh-oh. Now what?" asked Ravi.

"We will make them," said Rani firmly. "Where there's a will, there's a way."



So off they went to the tailor.

"Tailor uncle," they said. "Can we have some fabric? We want to make dolls for Golu."

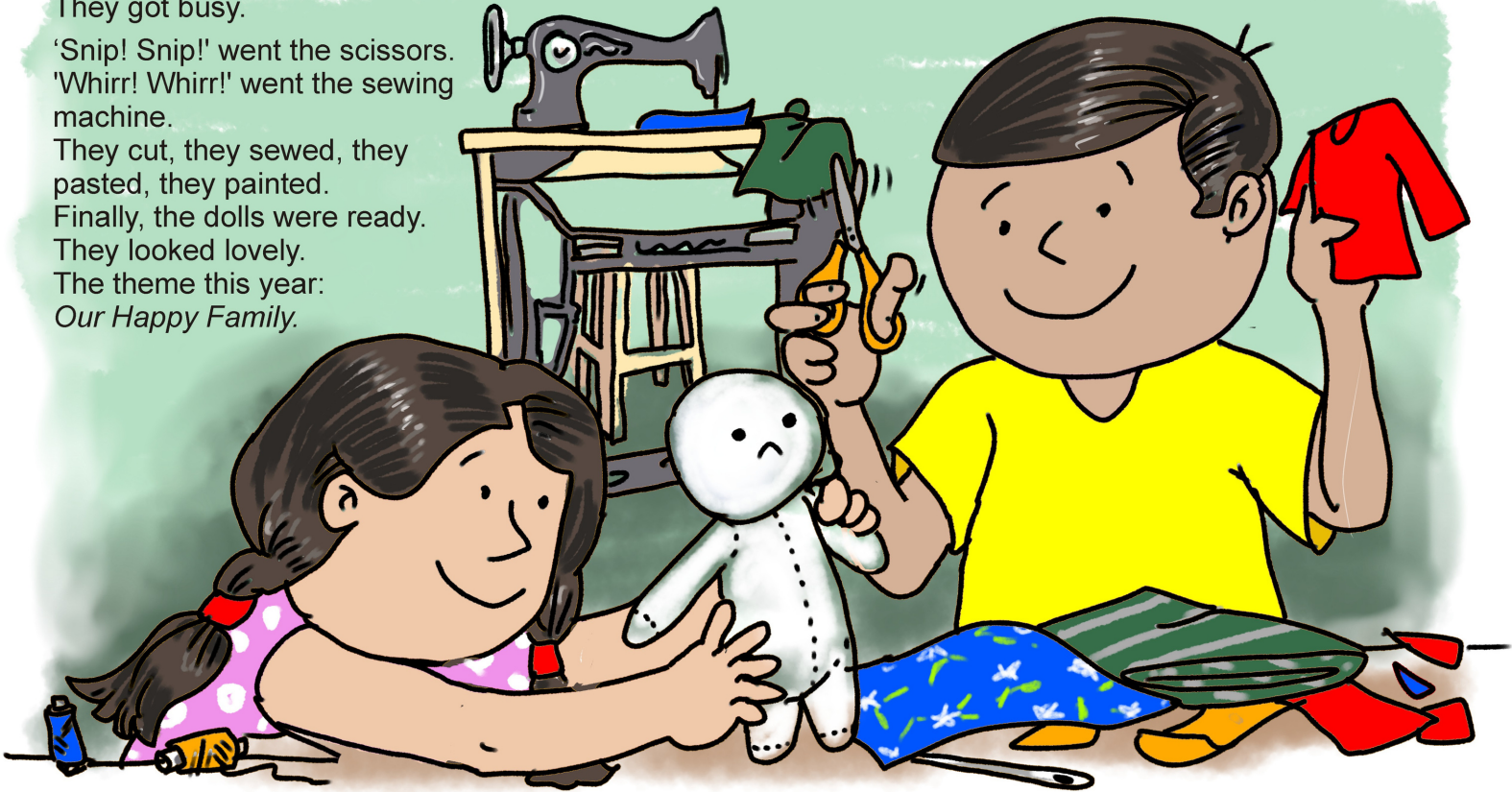
The tailor gave them a big bag full.



They got busy.

'Snip! Snip!' went the scissors.
'Whirr! Whirr!' went the sewing machine.

They cut, they sewed, they pasted, they painted.
Finally, the dolls were ready.
They looked lovely.
The theme this year:
Our Happy Family.



Next, they made furniture out of empty boxes and paper.
Tables, chairs, beds, couches, and even a little TV!
They painted everything - bright and colorful.



Soon, it was festival time. Strings of golden yellow flowers were strung across all doors. Lamps were lit. The entrance to the homes were decorated with intricate kolam designs.



That evening, accompanied by Thatha and Paati, their grandparents, they wheeled Amma into the guest room. "We have a surprise for you, Amma." When she saw the Golu, tears of joy rolled down her cheeks. She hugged them both. "You kids are amazing!"



"Hey Rani, the Appa doll is missing," said Ravi.

"Oh no, I forgot it in my room."

As she was running back with it, she bumped into someone.

"In a hurry, young lady?" said a familiar voice.
"Appa! It's y-you! I-I thought you were on duty."

"Shh! Not a word more. Shall we go in and surprise everyone?" he said taking the Appa doll from her hand.



As they walked into the guest room, Appa called out, "Can someone tell me where I should place this doll?"

Everyone was overjoyed. They were one big happy family again.

That year's Doll Festival was the best one, after all!





India is a land of festivals. One of them in South India is called **Bomma Golu – The Festival of Dolls!**

Families set up steps to display their dolls - gods and goddesses, dancing dolls, and more. Some create scenes from everyday life – village scenes, temples, family life, kids playing street games and even nursery rhymes. The dolls maybe made of cloth, papier mache or wood. Family, friends and neighbors visit and participate in the pooja. Special dishes are prepared for the occasion.

This festival is part of the Navaratri celebrations. The first three days of Navaratri are dedicated to Durga, the next three days to Lakshmi and the last three days to Saraswati – all goddesses!

Interestingly, Japan too has a doll festival, it's called Hinamatsuri.

(To know more read our blogpost)

Glossary

- Amma** - Mother
- Appa** - Father
- Thatha** - Grandfather
- Paati** - Grandmother
- Pooja** - An act of worship that can be performed individually or in a group. At home or in a temple.
- Kolam** - An intricate design made from rice powder composed of straight lines, curves and loops, drawn around a grid pattern of dots.
- Navaratri** - a nine-day festival celebrated throughout India. It ends with Dusshera, also known as Vijayadashami, on the 10th day.