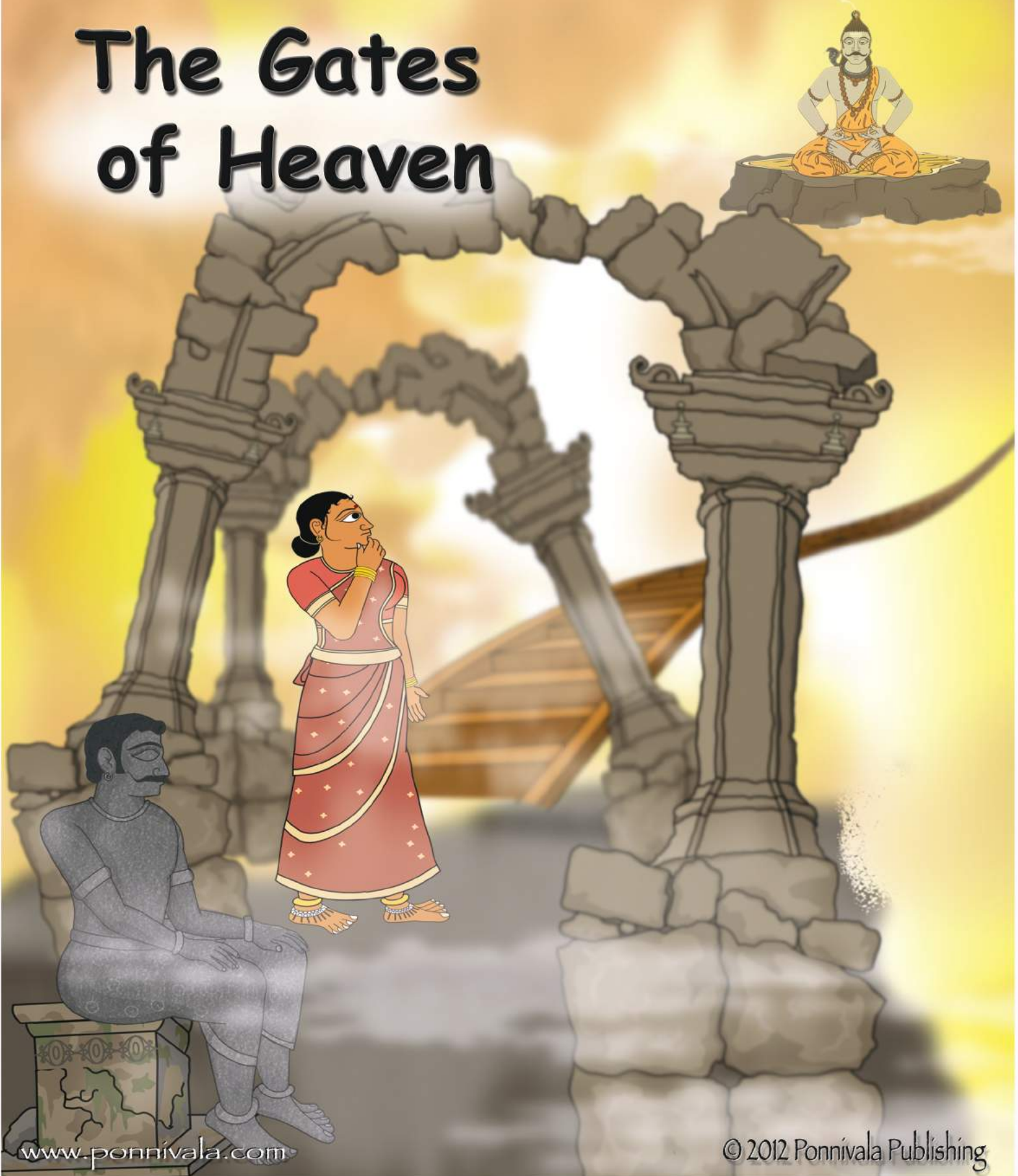


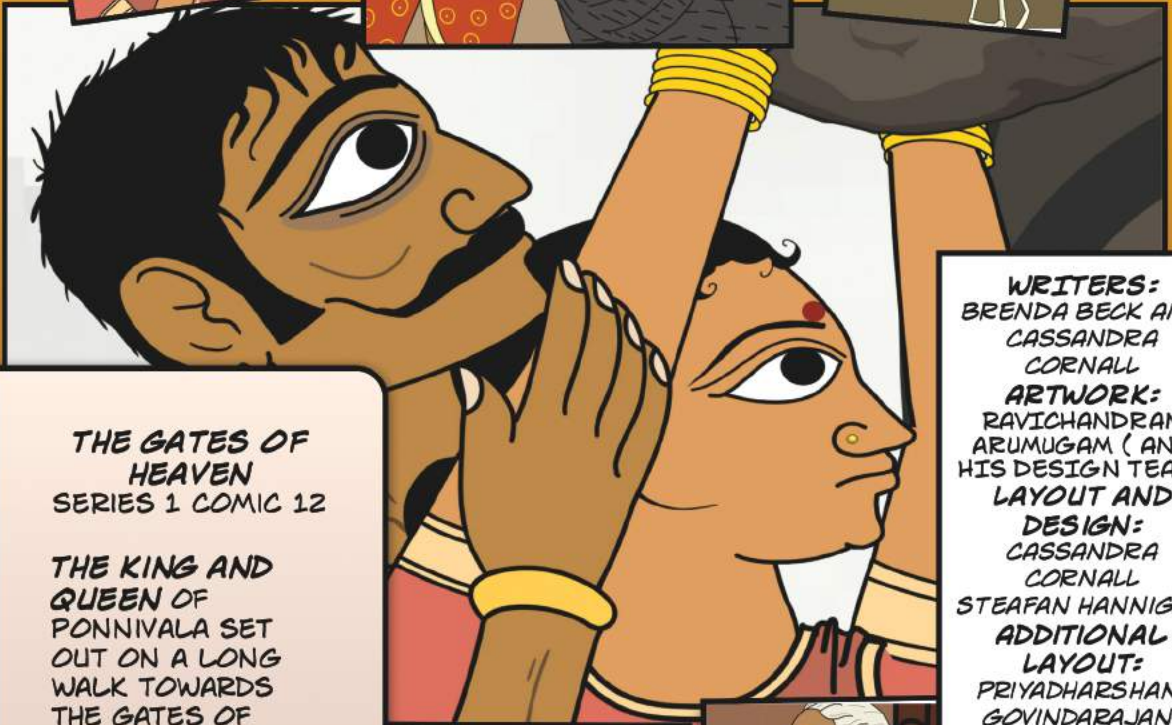
Series 1
Book 12

The Legend of
Ponnivala



The Gates of Heaven





THE GATES OF HEAVEN
SERIES 1 COMIC 12

THE KING AND QUEEN OF PONNIVALA SET OUT ON A LONG WALK TOWARDS THE GATES OF HEAVEN, HOPING FOR AN END TO THEIR CHILDLESS CONDITION. THEY MEET WITH MANY ADVENTURES. THE QUEEN EVEN CARRIES HER HUSBAND ON HER BACK. SADLY HE GROWS TOO WEAK TO CONTINUE AND HAS TO STOP PART WAY. FINALLY, WITH LORD VISHNU'S HELP, THE QUEEN REACHES THEIR DESTINATION ALONE ...



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LORD VISNU CONSIDERS WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR THE PONNIVALA COUPLE



LOOK! THERE ARE QUEEN TAMARAI AND KING KUNNUTAIYA. I HAVE SPENT MANY MONTHS TESTING THE TWO OF THEM, ASKING THEM TO PERFORM ACTS OF CHARITY.

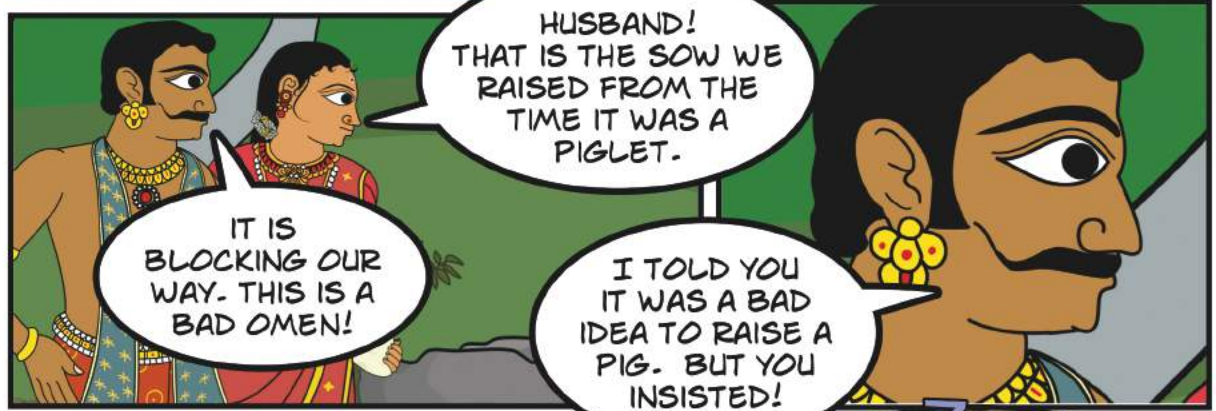
THEY HAVE PROVEN THEIR GENEROSITY. NOW THEY ARE STARTING ON THEIR LAST ASSIGNMENT, A PILGRIMAGE TO THE GATES OF SHIVA'S PRIVATE RESIDENCE, KAILASA ITSELF!

IT IS LORD SHIVA, MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, WHO MUST AGREE TO COMPROMISE. UPON SEEING SUCH SINCERE PILGRIMS, THE COUPLE HOPE HIS HEART WILL SOFTEN.

ONLY HE CAN LIFT THE TERRIBLE CURSE OF BARRENNESS THAT IS RESTING ON THEIR SHOULDERS.



TAMARAI AND KUNNUTAIYA, THE RULING COUPLE OF PONNIVALA, ARE ON A 21 YEAR LONG PILGRIMAGE TO SHIVA'S COUNCIL CHAMBERS. THEY ARE HOPING TO BE GIVEN TWO SONS, TO BREAK THE CURSE OF BARRENNESS THAT HAS BEEN PLACED ON THEIR FAMILY. THEY STOP WHEN THEY COME TO A PIG, BLOCKING THEIR PATH.



IN HER ANGER, TAMARAI KICKS THE SOW!



The Gates of Heaven



YOU VILLAIN!

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO ASK YOU FOR A GIFT, BUT BEFORE I COULD WAKE UP, YOU KICKED ME INSOLENTLY!



FORGIVE ME!

YOU ARE LEAVING FOR KASI. YOU WILL BE DOING PENANCE AT THE GATES OF HEAVEN.



YES. I AM HOPING FOR THE LORD'S GRACE!

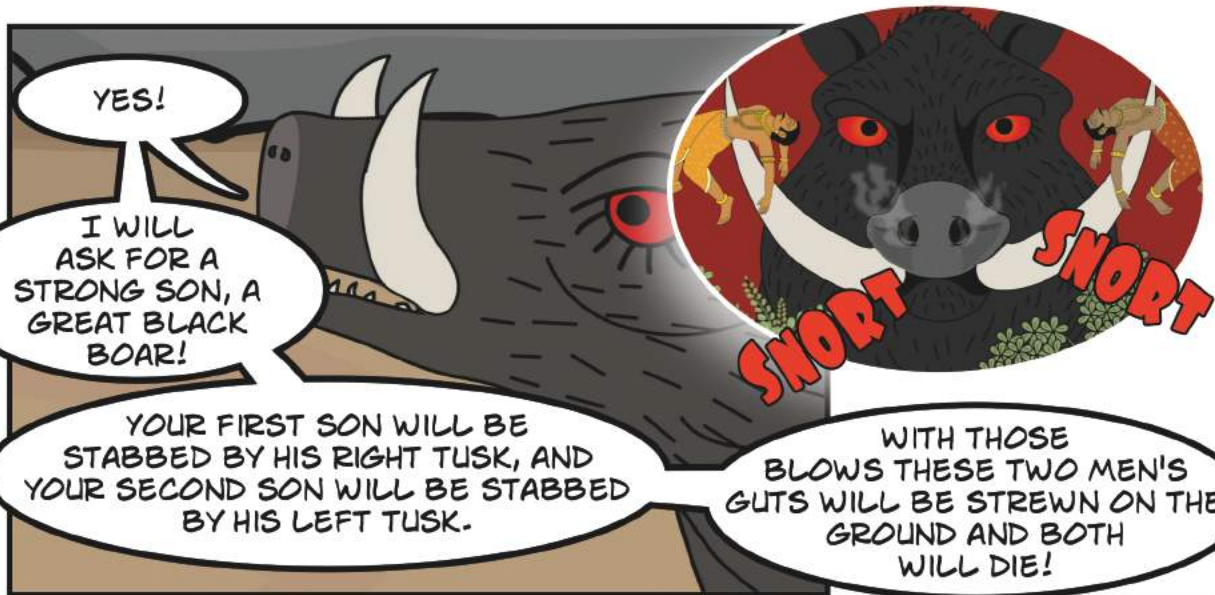
BUT WHILE THIS IS HAPPENING, I WILL BE IN THE VETTUVA KINGDOM OF VIRAPPUR.



I WILL TAKE REFUGE WITH THE KING'S SISTER VIRATANGAL. THEN I WILL DO PENANCE TOO!



YOU ARE GOING TO PRAY TO THE GODS?



YES!

I WILL ASK FOR A STRONG SON, A GREAT BLACK BOAR!

YOUR FIRST SON WILL BE STABBED BY HIS RIGHT TUSK, AND YOUR SECOND SON WILL BE STABBED BY HIS LEFT TUSK.

WITH THOSE BLOWS THESE TWO MEN'S GUTS WILL BE STREWN ON THE GROUND AND BOTH WILL DIE!



HUSBAND!

HOW CAN THIS BE?

WE HAVE STRUGGLED SO MUCH!

NOW THE CURSE OF ONE ANGRY PIG THREATENS TO SPOIL IT ALL!



OH TAMARAI, LET'S GO!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, IT'S JUST A SOW

HEY! GO AWAY!

OR I WILL KILL YOU RIGHT HERE!



A TIME WILL COME WHEN YOU WILL REGRET THIS ...

I WILL LOOK FORWARD TO THAT MOMENT!



LOOK! THERE IS OUR PALACE DOG.

TAMARAI AND KUNNUTAIYA CONTINUE ALONG THEIR PATH. SOON, THEY FIND THE PALACE DOG, WHO HAS COME TO FIND THEM, SEEKING A GIFT OF HER OWN!



GREAT LADY! WHY DO YOU LOOK SO DISCOURAGED?



I WILL TELL YOU...

TAMARAI EXPLAINS TO THE DOG WHAT THE SOW HAS JUST TOLD HER.



OH LADY! OH QUEEN, DO NOT BE SAD!



WHEN YOU REACH KASI, PLEASE ASK FOR A DAUGHTER FOR ME



BUT IF MY SONS ARE GOING TO DIE IN THIS TERRIBLE WAY, THEN WHAT IS THE POINT OF THIS PILGRIMAGE?



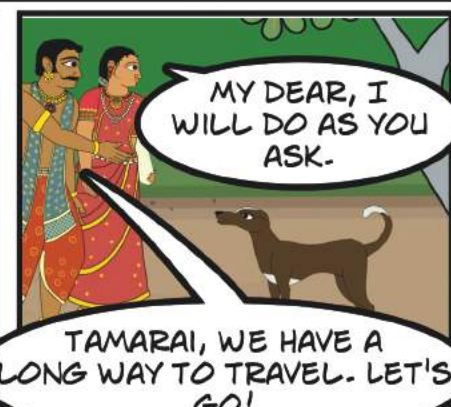
IF MY DAUGHTER IS SENT TO CONFRONT THAT BOAR, SHE WILL BE ABLE TO KILL IT.



MY SWEETHEART, ARE YOU SURE?



YES. SHE WILL BE SMALL, BUT SHE WILL HAVE POISON IN HER TEETH!

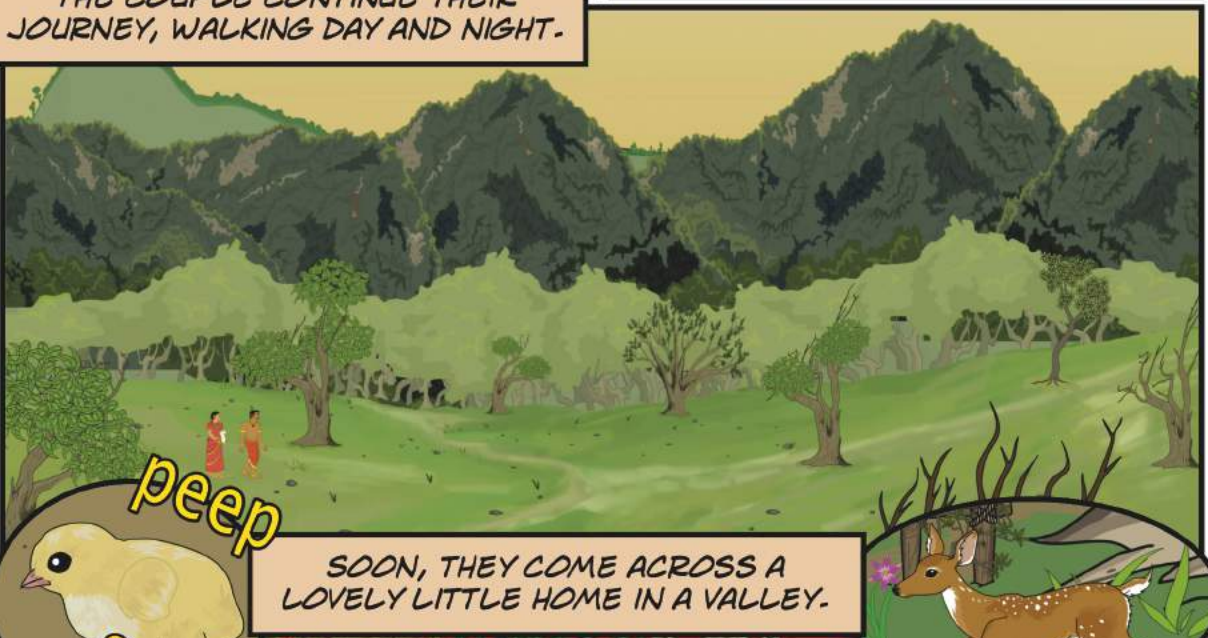


MY DEAR, I WILL DO AS YOU ASK.

TAMARAI, WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO TRAVEL. LET'S GO!



THE COUPLE CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY, WALKING DAY AND NIGHT.



SOON, THEY COME ACROSS A LOVELY LITTLE HOME IN A VALLEY.



THEY DECIDE TO ASK THE ELDERLY COUPLE THERE IF THEY MAY REST.

The Gates of Heaven



KUNNUTAIYA AND TAMARAI GREET THE ELDERLY COUPLE, WHO ARE SURPRISED TO HAVE GUESTS.



WE ARE TRAVELLING TO KASI. MAY WE REST HERE?



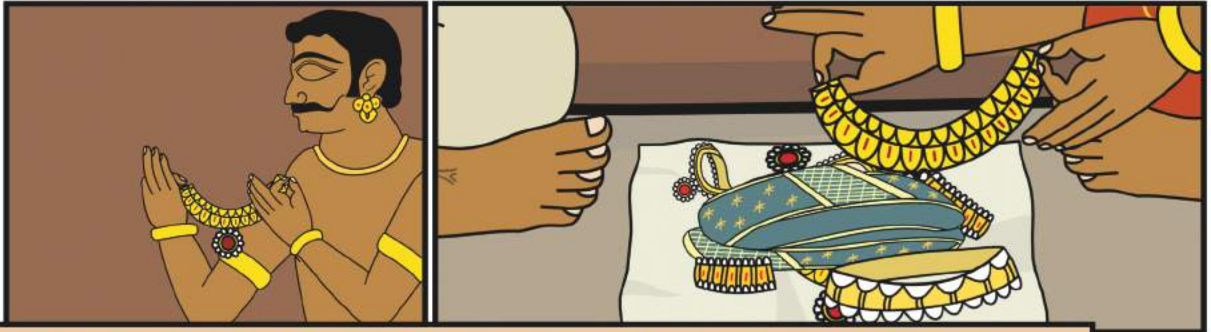
ALL THE WAY TO KASI? YOU MUST FIRST HAVE A MEAL WITH US!

OH MY!



THANK YOU FOR THE MEAL!





TO SHOW THEIR GRATITUDE, TAMARAI AND KUNNUTAIYA REMOVE ALL THEIR JEWELS AND WEALTH. THEY WILL NOT NEED THEM NOW.

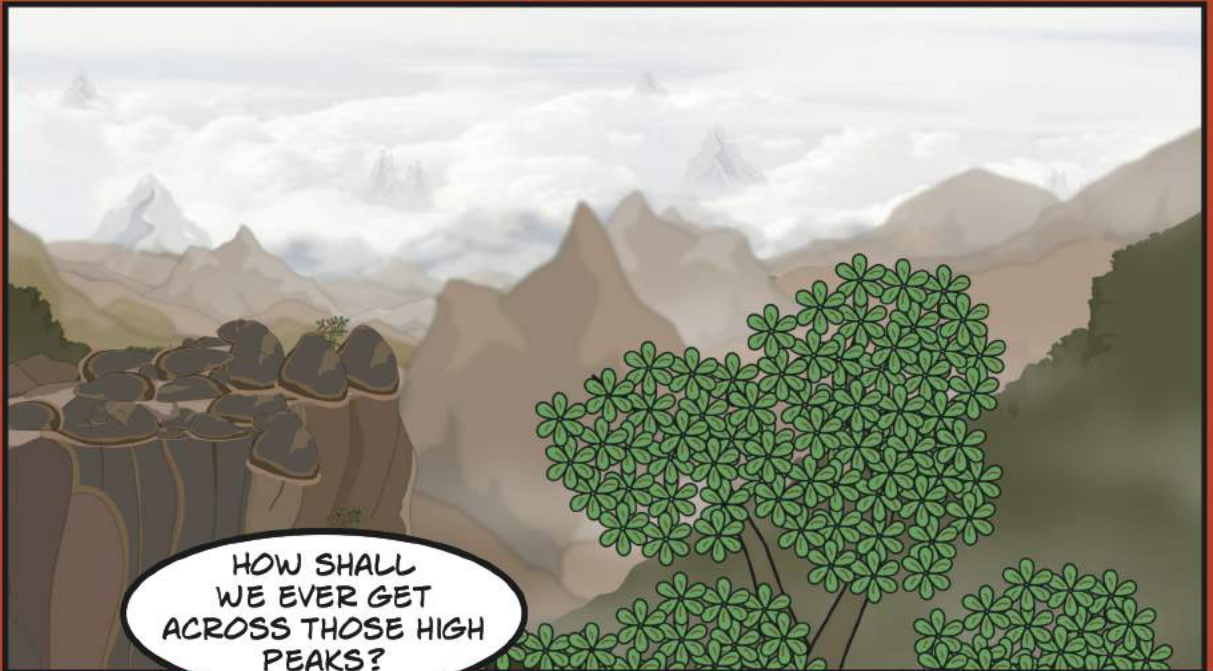


BUT THE PONNIVALA COUPLE INSIST THE ELDERLY COUPLE TAKE THE BUNDLE. THEN, KUNNUTAIYA AND TAMARAI CONTINUE ON THEIR WAY.



KUNNUTAIYA AND TAMARAI HAVE BEEN WALKING FOR A LONG TIME. KUNNUTAIYA BEGINS TO FEEL WEARY FROM THE JOURNEY.





The Gates of Heaven

THE WALK IS DIFFICULT AND UNENDING. KUNNUTAIYA AND TAMARAI ARE BOTH VERY TIRED, BUT THEIR DESIRE FOR CHILDREN KEEPS THEM GOING.



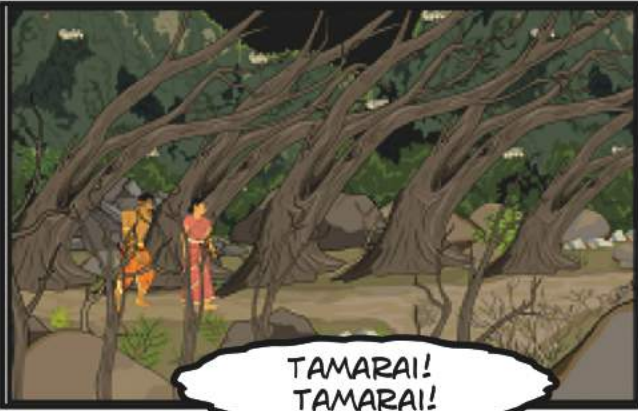
THEY DO NOT ABANDON HOPE.

TAMARAI AND KUNNUTAIYA WALK FOR MANY, MANY MORE DAYS AND NIGHTS.



KUNNUTAIYA IS INJURED, AND LIMPS THE WHOLE WAY. ONE NIGHT, HE IS STUNG BY A SCORPION AND HAS FEVERED DREAMS ABOUT DEMONS. HIS STRENGTH IS WEARING OUT.





TAMARAI!
TAMARAI!



THE COUPLE FINALLY COME TO THE BASE OF A VERY TALL MOUNTAIN. KUNNUTAIYA IS EXHAUSTED AND CAN BARELY MOVE FORWARD. TAMARAI CONTINUES TO WALK WITH RESOLVE. BUT THERE IS NO PATH UP THIS MOUNTAIN---



THERE IS NO PATH.
WE SHOULD RETURN HOME.

WE HAVE COME
SO FAR. WE MUST NOT
TURN AROUND NOW.

TAMARAI IS UNDETERRED. SHE IS EXHAUSTED, BUT DETERMINED TO CONTINUE. SHE ENCOURAGES KUNNUTAIYA, BUT HE IS TOO WEAK TO MAKE THE TREK UP THE MOUNTAIN.



I WILL TIE YOU TO MY BACK IF I HAVE TO, AND THEN CRAWL UP THE MOUNTAIN ON ALL FOURS!

TAMARAI STRAPS KUNNUTAIYA TO HER BACK AND BEGINS THE LONG CLIMB UP THE MOUNTAIN.



HUFF
HUFF!

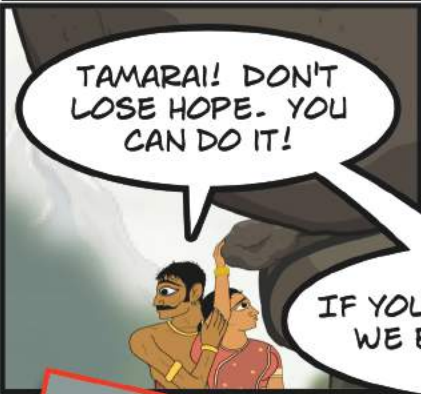


SHE PAUSES AT THE TOP TO CATCH HER BREATH BEFORE CONTINUING DOWN THE MUCH STEEPER OTHER SIDE.





OH MY! MY HANDS ARE SLIPPING! I AM GOING TO FALL DOWN!



TAMARAI! DON'T LOSE HOPE. YOU CAN DO IT!



IF YOU LOSE YOUR GRIP WE BOTH WILL DIE!



I CAN'T.... HOLD ON! MY HANDS ARE SLIPPING!



AAAAAAAAAAH!

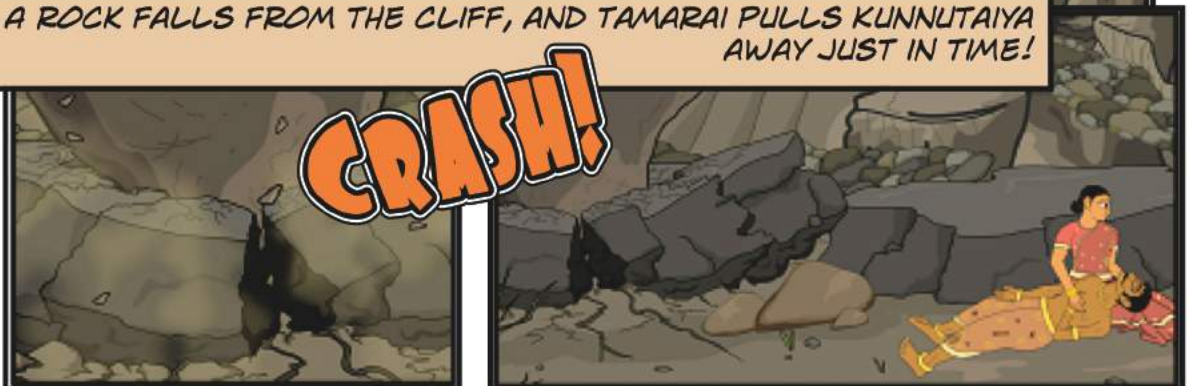
TAMARAI AND KUNNUTAIYA PLUMMET TO THE GROUND BELOW!



TAMARAI LANDS SAFELY ON A TREE BRANCH- KUNNUTAIYA LANDS ON STONE-



A ROCK FALLS FROM THE CLIFF, AND TAMARAI PULLS KUNNUTAIYA AWAY JUST IN TIME!





OH GOD! MY HUSBAND! HE IS DEAD!



I LOST MY HUSBAND IN THE STRUGGLE FOR CHILDREN!

HE SAID WE SHOULD RETURN HOME, BUT I DIDN'T LISTEN TO HIM...



NOW HE IS DEAD!

LORD, WHY ARE YOU MAKING MY LIFE SO PAINFUL?

TAKE MY LIFE TOO!



MAYBE SOME WATER WOULD REVIVE MY DEAR HUSBAND.



I HEAR A PEACOCK. I KNOW THEY LIKE MOIST GROUND. LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN FIND.

IT IS NOT LONG BEFORE TAMARAI FINDS A SMALL POND OF COOL WATER. SHE RUSHES TO THE EDGE, READY TO SCOOP UP SOME OF THE REFRESHING LIQUID.



BUT WHEN TAMARAI TRIES TO GET THE WATER, IT RECEDES AWAY!



TAMARAI TRIES TO PICK SOME LEAVES FROM A NEARBY PLANT. BUT AS SHE REACHES FOR THE LEAVES, THE PLANT MOVES OUT OF THE WAY!



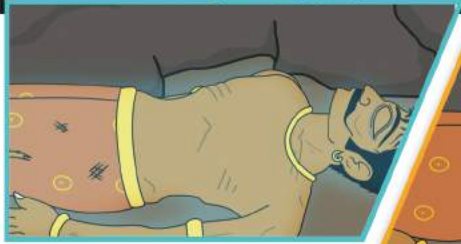
AT LEAST I COULD PICK THOSE LEAVES AND SQUEEZE THEIR JUICES INTO MY HUSBAND'S MOUTH!







VISHNU USES HIS GREAT POWERS TO RESTORE LIFE TO KUNNUTAIYA. THE KING OF PONNIVALA AWAKENS, REJUVENATED AND DISORIENTED. HIS WIFE TAMARAI BEAMS, FILLED WITH JOY TO HAVE HER HUSBAND BACK!



WITH KUNNUTAIYA BACK TO NORMAL, THE PAIR CAN CONTINUE WITH THEIR PILGRIMAGE. KAILASA IS NOT FAR NOW!





BLESSINGS TO YOU!

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO CROSS THIS MOUNTAIN. WE CANNOT DO IT ALONE!

LORD!



TAMARAI, YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO CROSS THE HIMALAYAS OF YOUR OWN ACCORD.

I AM GOING TO ASSIST YOU. YOU WILL BOTH BECOME FLIES.

VISHNU USES HIS POWERS, AND THE THREE OF THEM BECOME FLIES.

BUZZ



THEY FLY OVER THE MOUNTAINS AND LAND ON THE OTHER SIDE.

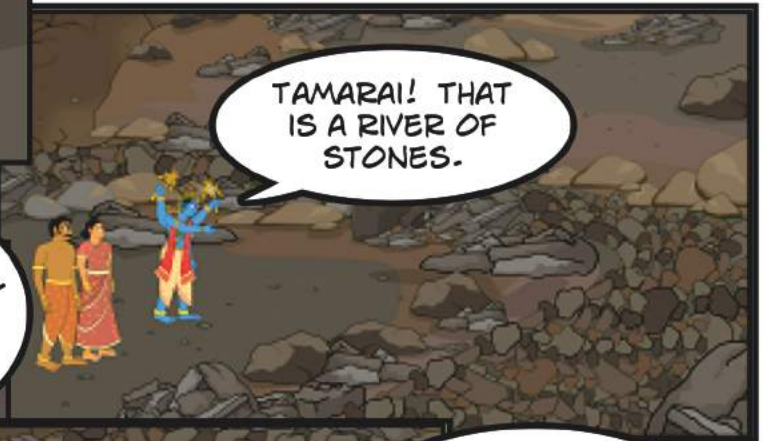


THEY COME TO A PECULIAR PLACE FULL OF STONES. A FLOWING RIVER OF STONE CHURNS VIOLENTLY NEAR BY ...



OH LORD VISHNU.

WHAT IS THAT I SEE OVER THERE?



TAMARAI! THAT IS A RIVER OF STONES.



AFTER THAT YOU WILL COME TO A RIVER OF THORNS.

NEXT WILL BE A RIVER OF BUTTER OIL.

AND FINALLY, YOU WILL HAVE TO CROSS A RIVER OF FIRE!



LORD! I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO CROSS ALL FOUR RIVERS WITHOUT YOUR HELP!



ALRIGHT! I WILL LEAD THE WAY!

VISHNU TURNS EVERYONE INTO FLIES.



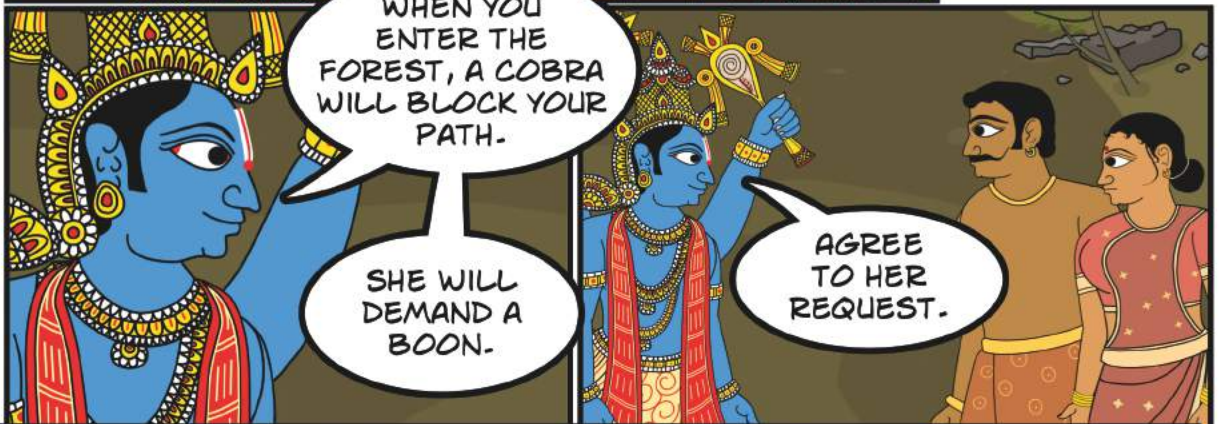
AS FLIES, THE TRIO PASS OVER THE FIRST RIVER, STONES CHURNING VIOLENTLY BELOW. THEN THEY PASS THE SECOND RIVER, RAZOR-SHARP THORNS MOVING DANGEROUSLY BELOW THEM!



THEN THE THIRD RIVER APPEARS, WHERE HOT BUTTER OIL IS FLOWING WILDLY BY. THE FOURTH RIVER BUBBLES AND BOILS WITH FIRE, BUT THE THREE FLIES PASS OVER ALL THIS, UNHARMED.



FINALLY, THE TRIO REACHES SAFETY.



TAMARAI AND KUNNUTAIYA LISTEN TO VISHNU CAREFULLY, AND HEED HIS WORDS. THEN, THEY SET OFF ON THEIR OWN INTO THE COBRA FOREST.



THE RULING COUPLE OF PONNIVALA CONTINUE ON THEIR WAY, UNTIL THEY COME TO THE BASE OF A LONG SET OF STAIRS. THERE THEY MEET VISHNU.





VISHNU QUICKLY TAKES KUNNUTAIYA'S LIFE AND PLACES IT IN HIS LITTLE GOLDEN BOX. KUNNUTAIYA'S BODY THEN TURNS TO STONE, PRESERVED IN PLACE WHERE IT WILL AWAIT TAMARAI'S RETURN.



The Gates of Heaven



TAMARAI AND VISHNU THEN SET OFF UP THE LONG SET OF STAIRS TOWARDS THE GODS' COUNCIL CHAMBERS. THEY CLIMB AND CLIMB IN AN ENDLESS WALK UPWARDS.



FINALLY, THEY REACH A LARGE AND OMINOUS-LOOKING STONE ENTRANCE. THERE, VISHNU PAUSES TO GIVE TAMARAI A WARNING.

TAMARAI, NEAR THE COUNCIL CHAMBER IS A HELL PIT.



WE HAVE TO WALK PAST IT. AT THAT TIME I WANT YOU TO KEEP YOUR EYE STRICTLY ON ME. DO NOT LOOK AROUND!



YES, LORD. I WILL DO AS YOU HAVE JUST TOLD ME.





AIEEE!

NOOOO!

AHHH!

HELP ME!



NO!
PLEASE!

HELP!
HELP!
HELP!

OH
SHIVA!
SAVE ME!

OH! IT
BURNS!



LORD! WHAT SINS
DID THESE PEOPLE
COMMIT...

THAT THEY HAVE
BEEN SENT TO THE
HELL PIT TO SUFFER SO
MUCH?...



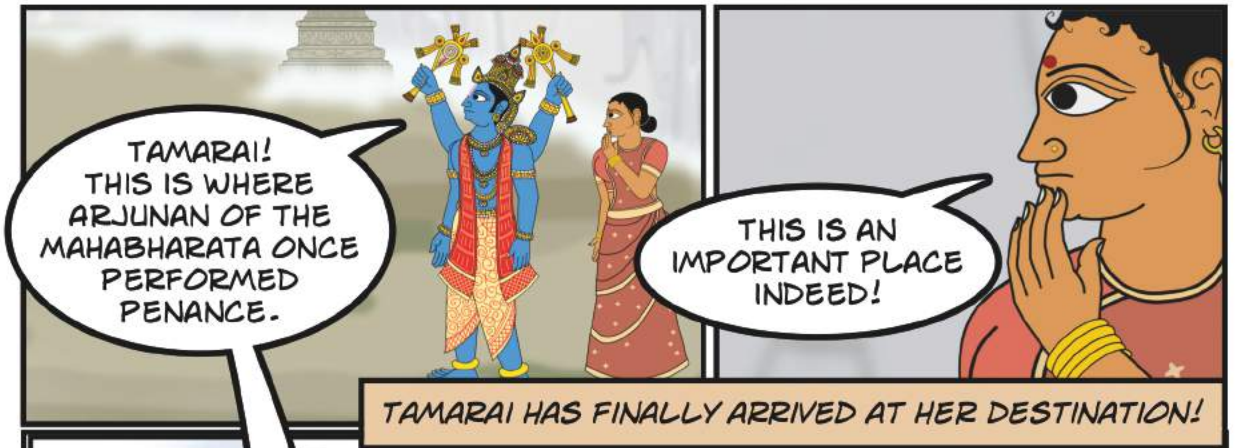


THE HELL-PIT IS FILLED WITH MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE COMMITTED HEINOUS ACTS.

SOME HAVE MURDERED OTHERS FOR THEIR WEALTH. SOME HAVE STOLEN ANOTHER'S LAND.



SOME HAVE STOLEN ANOTHER'S WIFE. STILL OTHERS HAVE BEEN UNFAITHFUL. ALL ARE PUNISHED IN THE HELL-PIT.

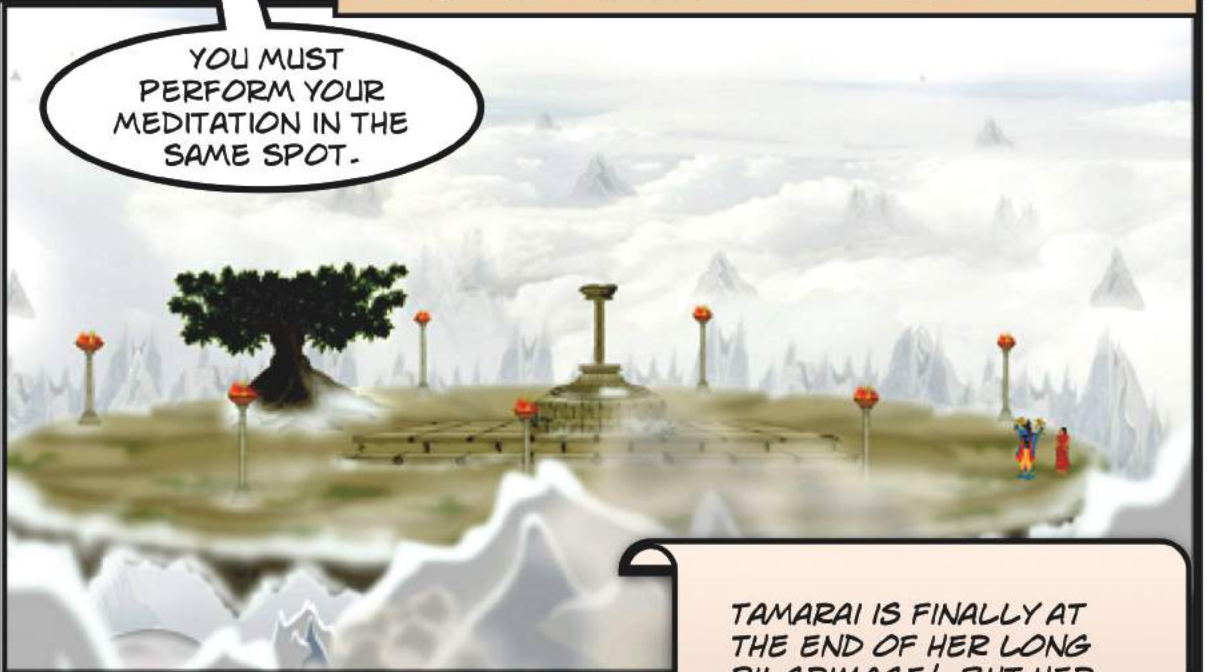


TAMARAI!
THIS IS WHERE
ARJUNAN OF THE
MAHABHARATA ONCE
PERFORMED
PENANCE.

THIS IS AN
IMPORTANT PLACE
INDEED!

TAMARAI HAS FINALLY ARRIVED AT HER DESTINATION!

YOU MUST
PERFORM YOUR
MEDITATION IN THE
SAME SPOT.



TAMARAI IS FINALLY AT THE END OF HER LONG PILGRIMAGE! BUT HER TRIALS ARE NOT YET FINISHED. NOW THAT SHE HAS REACHED HER PLACE OF PENANCE, SHE WILL HAVE TO SPEND MANY YEARS IN AUSTERE MEDITATION. AFTER ALL THIS EFFORT, WILL LORD SHIVA FINALLY LIFT THE CURSE OF BARRENNESS HE ONCE LAID UPON HER FAMILY? DOES A GIFT OF CHIKDREN LIE ON THE HORIZON - OR ONLY MORE SUFFERING?



The Importance of The Legend of Ponnivala

This is an ancient epic, stemming from a long tradition of local village storytelling and passed down as a lively oral tradition. Its roots can be traced back to medieval times, well before the coming of the British to India. Its content was memorized by bards who first spent many years as apprentices. They learned from more experienced singers, eventually become leaders themselves, gaining the respect and even adulation of whole villages of eager listeners.

The primary source for this new compressed retelling is a tape recording made in 1965 over 18 consecutive nights in a village where music and song were still the primary means of after dark entertainment. At that time, electricity was scarce in the region and there were no televisions, computers, or CD players. Skilled bards provided the village entertainment, and served as the area's history teachers. They shaped the local understanding of the past by telling stories.

For the first time the Legend of Ponnivala is presented here as a connected chain of 26 short episodes. These sequential tales describe the rich past of Kongunadu through a chain of events that impact one local family. Its heroes and heroines are farmers who live in this specific cultural and geographic region. The larger Legend covers a period of roughly six centuries of South Indian medieval history. As a story it compresses what is known into three generations. Basically, the life of the grandfather covers the period from 1,000 to 1,200 CE, the father's adventures represent the events between 1,200 CE and 1,400, while the experiences of the sons match local events occurring between 1,400 CE and 1,600 CE. This is a story rich in cultural and sociological detail. Several events parallel real social upheavals documented by contemporary historical accounts.

The Legend of Ponnivala also presents a simplified template for a much larger idea - that all life is cyclical. A basic concept that underlies folk Hinduism is that cosmic rhythms move in great cycles. Each begins with the creation of a good age. Subsequently, various acts of human selfishness cause deterioration. After a considerable period, such a cycle must end, often helped by divine intervention. Via their deputies or incarnations, these deities kill all that is evil, washing and cleansing the earth and then setting in motion a new era. Our series presents a genuine folk model of how cosmic energies work. In a sense it tries to depict the very nature of human life on earth!

For website extras such as character details and name and place pronunciations unique to this graphic novel please visit the webpage below:

www.ponnivala.com/comic12

The Legend of
Ponnivala

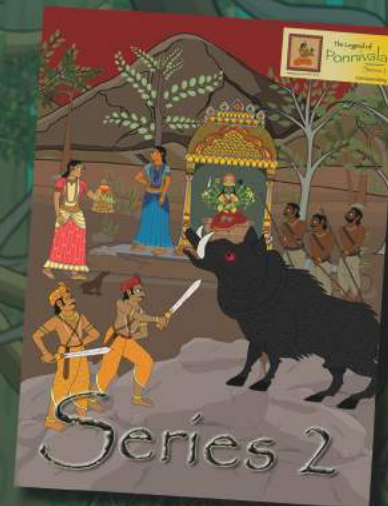
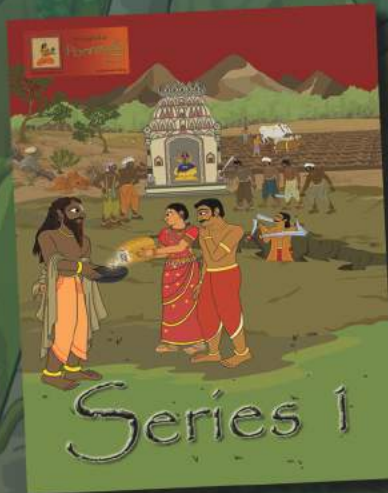
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