

Series 2
Book 1

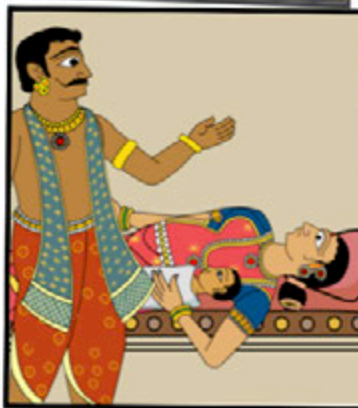
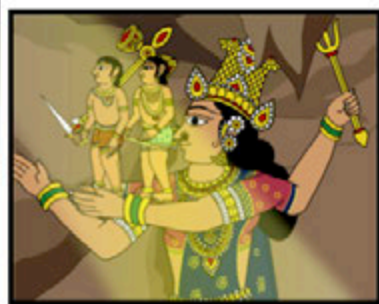
The Legend of
Ponnivala



The Temple Secret

THE TEMPLE
SECRET
SERIES 2 COMIC 1

A SCHEMING
MIDWIFE TRIES
TO KILL THE TWIN
SONS BORN TO
THE QUEEN OF
PONNIVALA. BUT
THE FAMILY
GODDESS,
CELATTA,
RESCUES THEM IN
SECRET AND THEN
PROTECTS THEM
BENEATH HER
TEMPLE. THE
BOYS DINE ON
MAGICAL TIGER'S
MILK AND RECEIVE
MARTIAL ARTS
LESSONS. A
BABY GIRL BORN
IN THE PALACE
MINUTES LATER IS
ACCEPTED AS THE
QUEEN'S ONLY
CHILD. SHE IS
RAISED WITH LOVE
BY HER PARENTS.



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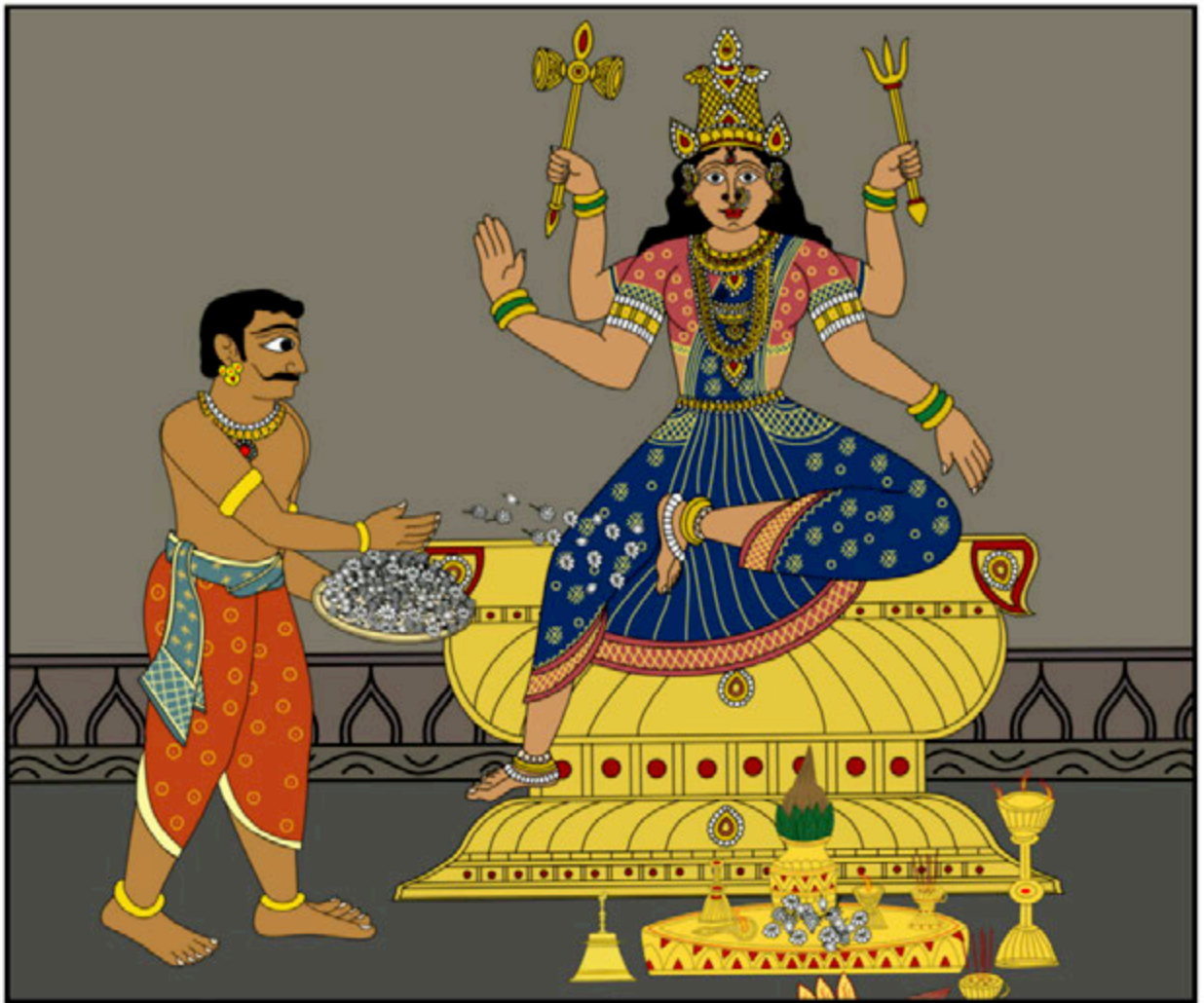


WATCHING THE FUTURE UNFOLD ON EARTH IS GOING TO KEEP ME BUSY!

I HAVE ALWAYS PROTECTED TAMARAI AND HELPED HER A LOT.

SOON SHE WILL BEAR THREE CHILDREN. BUT I FEAR OTHERS WILL TRY TO ATTACK THEM. THE PONNIVALA PALACE FAMILY IS GOING TO NEED MY ASSISTANCE!

The Legend of Ponnivala



IT IS A TIME OF PEACE IN THE LAND OF PONNIVALA. KING KUNNUTAIYA RULES WITH KINDNESS AND IS BELOVED BY THE PEOPLE. EVERY DAY WITHOUT FAIL, HE WORSHIPS HIS FAMILY GODDESS CELATTA.

The Temple Secret

THE KING RETURNS HOME TO HIS WIFE, TAMARAI, WHO IS SEVEN MONTHS PREGNANT.

OH HUSBAND, SOON WE SHALL HAVE OUR TWO SONS AND DAUGHTER.

YES, WE ARE IN FOR GOOD TIMES.

BUT IT HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN SO...

DURING MY FATHER'S REIGN, THE AREA EAST OF HERE EXPERIENCED A SEVERE FAMINE.

THE GREAT CHOLA KING WAS FORCED TO LET LOOSE HIS BEST COWS, SO THAT THEY COULD FIND FOOD.



THESE COWS MADE THEIR WAY INTO PONNIVALA, AND DISCOVERED MY FATHER'S SUGARCANE FIELD.



THE HUNGRY ANIMALS ATE THE SUGARCANE...MY FATHER DISCOVERED THE DESTRUCTION, BUT DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TYPE OF BEAST HAD CHEWED UP HIS CROP.



...SO HE HAD A FENCE BUILT TO PROTECT HIS FINE PLANTS.

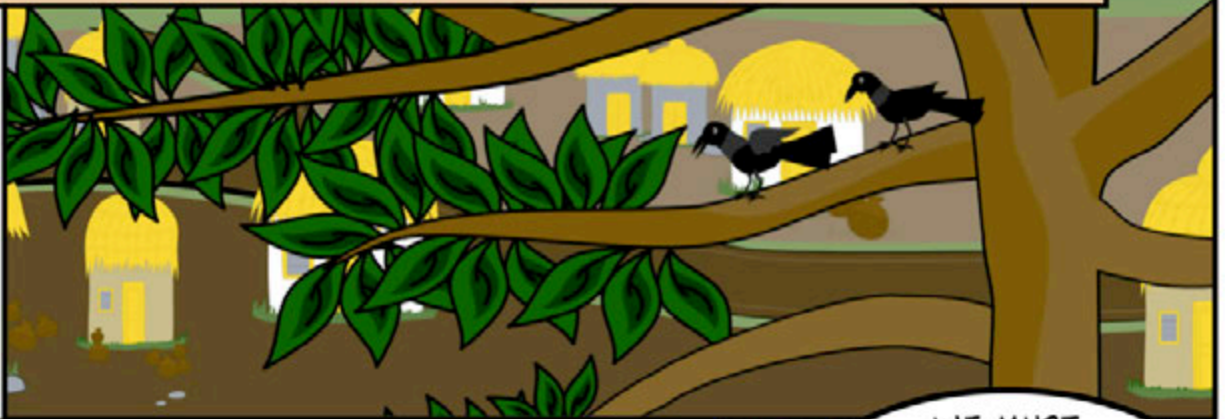
UNFORTUNATELY, THE COWS WERE SO HUNGRY THAT THEY TRIED TO JUMP THAT FENCE. THE POOR CREATURES WERE KILLED BY ITS SHARP POINTS.





The Temple Secret

BUT IN THE NEARBY AREA OF TANGAVALA, TROUBLE IS BREWING. THIS IS WHERE KING KUNNUTAIYA'S CLANSMEN LIVE. THESE MEN ARE JEALOUS OF THEIR COUSIN-BROTHER'S FINE LANDS AND SUBSTANTIAL WEALTH.



RUMORS OF QUEEN TAMARAI'S PREGNANCY HAVE REACHED THEM, AND SO THEY HAVE ASSEMBLED AT A LOCAL TEMPLE.

WE MUST DO SOMETHING ABOUT QUEEN TAMARAI'S PREGNANCY!



GO AND FETCH KUPPI, THE MIDWIFE!

I WILL GET HER!



THEY BEGIN TO SCHEME...

KUPPI, WHEN QUEEN TAMARAI CALLS FOR YOU, YOU MUST KILL ANY MALE BABIES SHE BEARS, BUT GIRL CHILDREN ARE TO BE LEFT UNHARMED!

THE CLANSMEN DEVISE A PLOT TO STEAL THE PONNIVALA LANDS TO DIVIDE AMONG THEMSELVES. TO SUCCEED THEY MUST ENSURE THAT KUNNUTAIYA'S FAMILY HAVE NO MALE OFFSPRING. WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW IS THAT VISHNU IS WATCHING...

IF YOU DO THIS, WE WILL SHARE THE WEALTH OF PONNIVALA WITH YOU. WILL YOU DO IT?

YES.

THI S LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE ...

LORD VISHNU OVERHEARS THE MEN TALKING ABOUT THEIR TERRIBLE PLAN. HE QUICKLY FLIES TO EARTH TO TRY TO HELP THE RULING FAMILY.

I MUST DO ALL I CAN TO AVERT THIS DISASTER!

VISHNU GOES TO THE TEMPLE OF CELATTA, THE HOME OF HIS SISTER.



CELATTA!



WHAT IS WRONG, BROTHER?

KING KUNNUTAIYA'S FAMILY IS IN TROUBLE!

WHAT CAN I DO?

AND SO CELATTA DOES AS HER BROTHER ASKS...



I NEED YOU TO DIG A TUNNEL THAT WILL CONNECT THIS TEMPLE TO THE PALACE BIRTHING ROOM. BUILD A LARGE SECRET SPACE UNDER YOUR SHRINE.



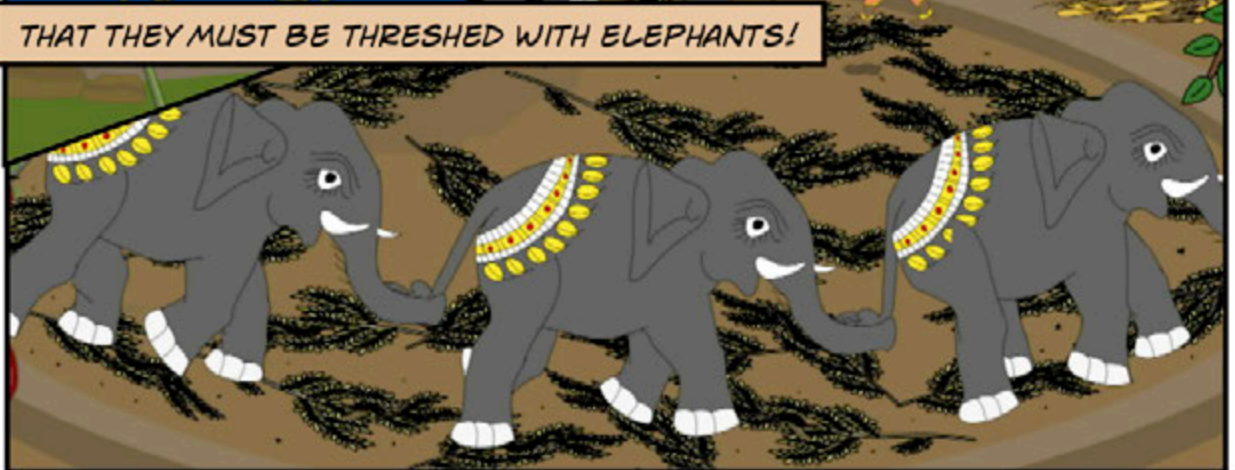
IT IS A GOOD TIME...



THE LAND IS FERTILE AND GREEN. CROPS GROW IN SUCH ABUNDANCE...



THAT THEY MUST BE THRESHED WITH ELEPHANTS!



EVERYWHERE THERE ARE NEW BIRTHS. AND THE QUEEN'S BELLY IS EXPANDING EVERY DAY!

THEN ONE DAY, TAMARAI'S LABOR PAINS BEGIN. SHE CRIES FOR HER HUSBAND AND BEGS FOR THE MIDWIFE KUPPI.



THE GOOD KING KUNNUTAIYA RUNS AS QUICKLY AS HE CAN TO FETCH KUPPI. THE HOT NOON SUN BEATS DOWN UPON HIM, BUT HE RUNS TO TANGAVALA WITHOUT THINKING OF HIS DISCOMFORT.



KUNNUTAIYA ARRIVES IN TANGAVALA AND IS MET BY HIS CLANSMEN.

PLEASE FETCH
KUPPI THE MIDWIFE RIGHT
AWAY!

OF COURSE, DEAR
BROTHER!

IS EVERYTHING
ALRIGHT? HOW IS QUEEN
TAMARAI?

I SHALL
FETCH HER FOR
YOU.

NOT WELL AT ALL!
HER LABOR HAS BEGUN!
FOLLOW ME!

PSST! HEY, KUPPI!
DO NOT FORGET OUR
BARGAIN!

YOU MUST
KILL ANY MALE
BABIES BORN TO QUEEN
TAMARAI. DO NOT GET
CAUGHT, AND DO NOT
FORGET OUR
INSTRUCTIONS!

KING KUNNUTAIYA HAD SET OFF TOO QUICKLY TO HEAR THE CLANSMEN'S NASTY PLOT. HE CONTINUES HIS RUN, THINKING ONLY OF HIS QUEEN...

WE MUST
HURRY!

OOOOOOOH!
THE PAIN!

OH MY, WHAT
WAS THAT
HORRIBLE SOUND?

THAT WAS MY WIFE.
SHE IS IN TERRIBLE PAIN!
YOU MUST HURRY TO HER
CHAMBERS.

I AM HERE
NOW!

OH...

THE QUEEN IS IN GREAT AGONY. KUPPI GOES STRAIGHT TO THE QUEEN'S SIDE. BUT SHE HAS NOT FORGOTTEN HER PACT, AND STILL PLANS TO KILL ANY MALE CHILD BORN TO THE QUEEN.

LORD VISHNU IS ALERTED BY THE COMMOTION AND QUICKLY FLIES TO CELATTA'S TEMPLE.

THE QUEEN IS ABOUT TO GIVE BIRTH. GO INTO YOUR TUNNEL AND WAIT AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE BIRTHING ROOM.

WAIT THERE UNTIL I CALL FOR YOU!

CELATTA DOES AS VISHNU ASKS. THEN VISHNU TRANSFORMS HIMSELF INTO A FLY AND LANDS ON THE CEILING OF THE BIRTHING CHAMBER.

BUZZ

VISHNU WATCHES FROM HIS PLACE ON THE CEILING, WAITING FOR THE PERFECT MOMENT TO PUT HIS PLAN INTO ACTION...



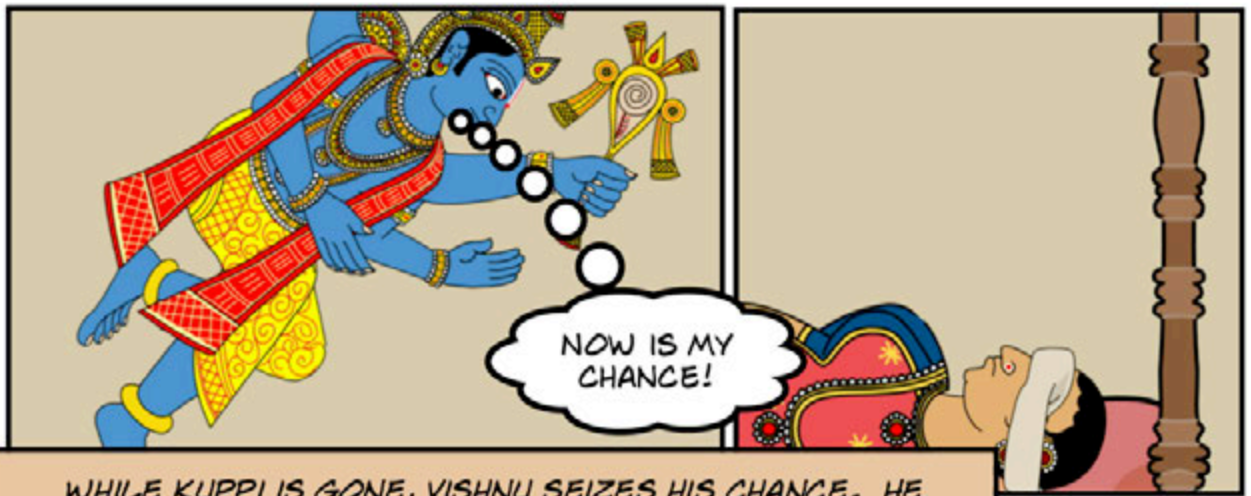
KUPPI TELLS QUEEN TAMARAI TO GRAB ONTO A ROPE TO EASE HER PAIN. SHE THEN TIES A BLINDFOLD AROUND TAMARAI'S EYES.

WHAT MUST I DO?

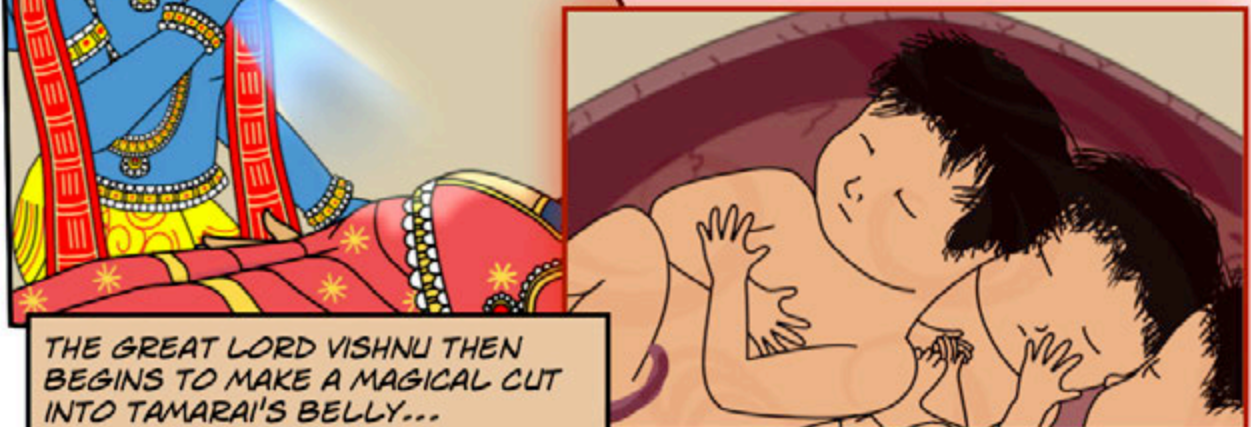
GRAB ONTO THIS ROPE AND PULL ON IT EVERY TIME YOU HAVE A CONTRACTION. THIS WILL HELP EASE THE PAIN.

SINCE THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME GIVING BIRTH, THE BLINDFOLD WILL HELP YOU TO FEEL LESS AFRAID.

BUT WHILE TAMARAI IS BLINDFOLDED, KUPPI GOES INTO THE BACK ROOM TO SHARPEN HER BUTCHER'S KNIFE...

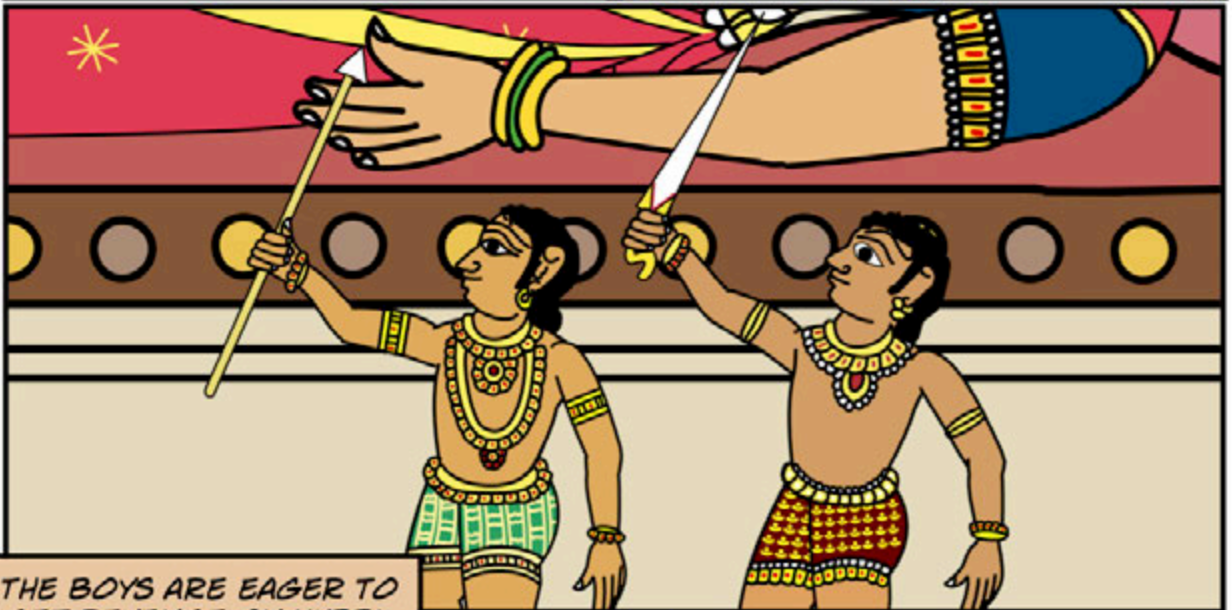


WHILE KUPPI IS GONE, VISHNU SEIZES HIS CHANCE. HE REVERTS TO HIS TRUE FORM AND GOES TO TAMARAI'S SIDE.



The Temple Secret

VISHNU QUICKLY REMOVES THE TWO BOYS. THEY ARE MAGICALLY CLOTHED AND HAVE A TINY SWORD AND SPEAR. BOTH ARE FULL OF ENERGY!



THE BOYS ARE EAGER TO GET REVENGE ON KUPPI. THEY IMMEDIATELY RUN OFF IN SEARCH OF HER.



The Legend of Ponnivala

THE BOYS ARE ON THE ATTACK! THEY THREATEN KUPPI AND GIVE HER A HUGE FRIGHT!

WHAT IS THIS?

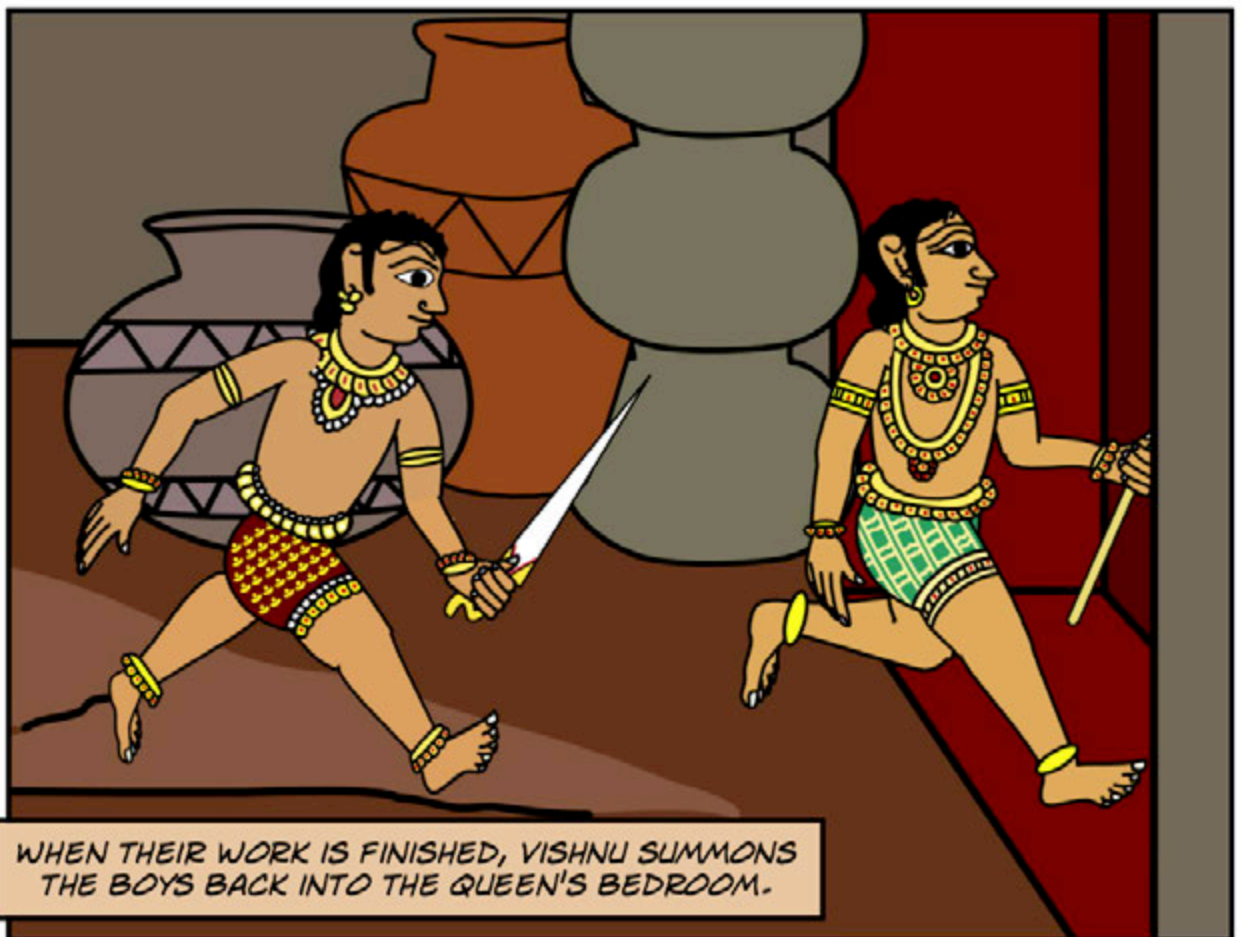
OH MY!

HELP!

THE SECOND BORN CHILD GIVES KUPPI'S BACK A POWERFUL KICK.

THE KICK STRAIGHTENS OUT HER "EIGHTEEN BENDS" AND FORCES ALL THE EVIL OUT OF HER.

KUPPI IS NO LONGER A HUNCHBACK!



VISHNU CALLS FOR CELATTA, AND SHE ARRIVES THROUGH A HOLE IN THE FLOOR.



CELATTA TAKES THE TWIN BROTHERS AND RETREATS BACK INTO HER TUNNEL.



TAKE THESE BOYS WITH YOU IN YOUR TUNNEL. PROTECT THEM UNTIL THEY CAN BE SAFELY RETURNED TO THEIR PARENTS.



CELATTA TAKES THE BOYS INTO THE HOLLOWED OUT AREA UNDER HER TEMPLE. THERE THEY COME ACROSS CELATTA'S COMPANION, HER TIGER.



THE BOYS IMMEDIATELY WANT TO PET AND PLAY WITH THE TIGER. CELATTA ALLOWS THIS, SO THEY START STROKING THE TIGER'S HEAD.



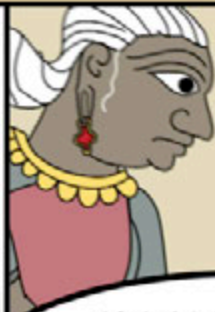
MEANWHILE, KUPPI RETURNS TO THE BIRTHING CHAMBER. THE QUEEN IS HAVING YET MORE CONTRACTIONS. SOON THE QUEEN HAS A "NATURALLY" BORN CHILD.



KUPPI HELPS THE NEW BABY TO START BREATHING, THEN WRAPS HER IN A SWADDLING CLOTH AND LAYS HER AT TAMARAI'S SIDE.



QUEEN TAMARAI IS SHOCKED TO DISCOVER THAT SHE HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER.



IT IS YOUR DAUGHTER.

BUT LORD SHIVA PROMISED ME TWO SONS!

YOU GAVE BIRTH TO TWO EVIL SPIRITS FIRST, BUT THEY RAN OFF. YOU HAVE ONLY ONE DAUGHTER.

WHAT IS THIS?



QUEEN TAMARAI IS HEARTBROKEN AT THE NEWS. SHE BEGINS TO CRY.



OH, WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?

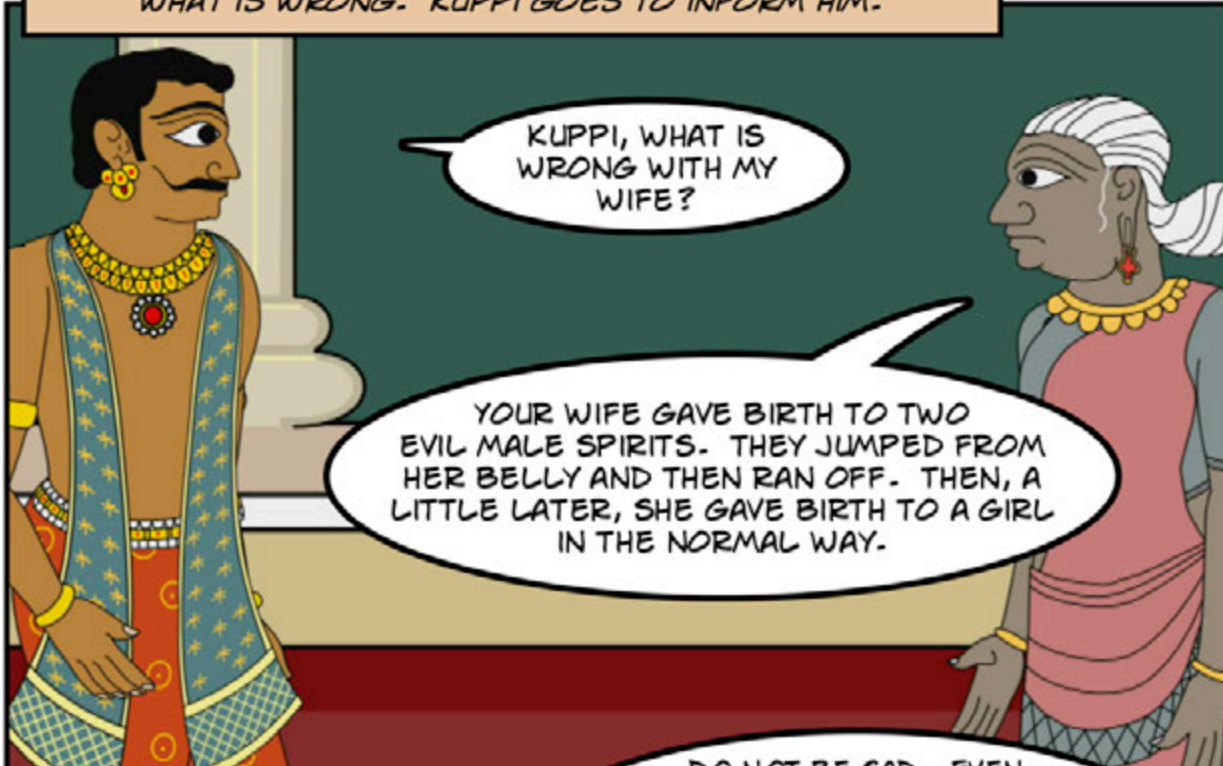
OH QUEEN, JUST ACCEPT YOUR FATE!



LORD VISHNU, WHAT HAVE I DONE WRONG?

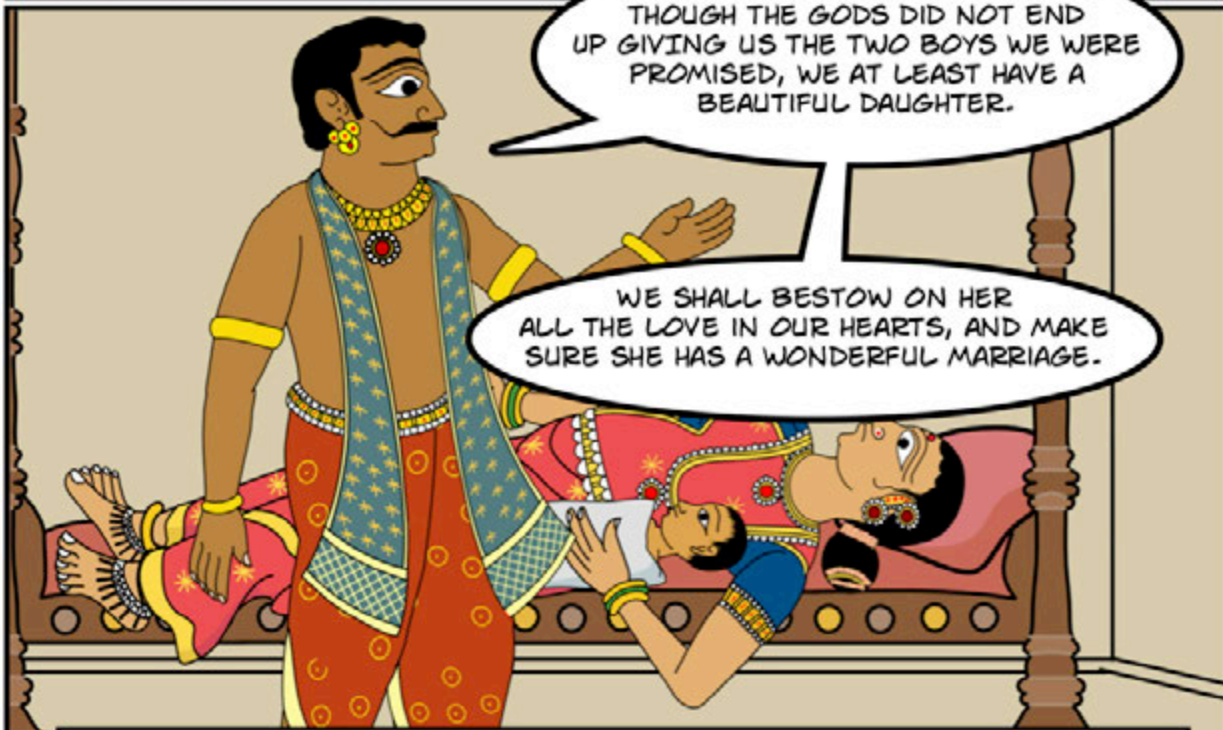


KING KUNNUTAIYA HEARS THE QUEEN'S SOBS AND WONDERS WHAT IS WRONG. KUPPI GOES TO INFORM HIM.



KUPPI, WHAT IS WRONG WITH MY WIFE?

YOUR WIFE GAVE BIRTH TO TWO EVIL MALE SPIRITS. THEY JUMPED FROM HER BELLY AND THEN RAN OFF. THEN, A LITTLE LATER, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A GIRL IN THE NORMAL WAY.

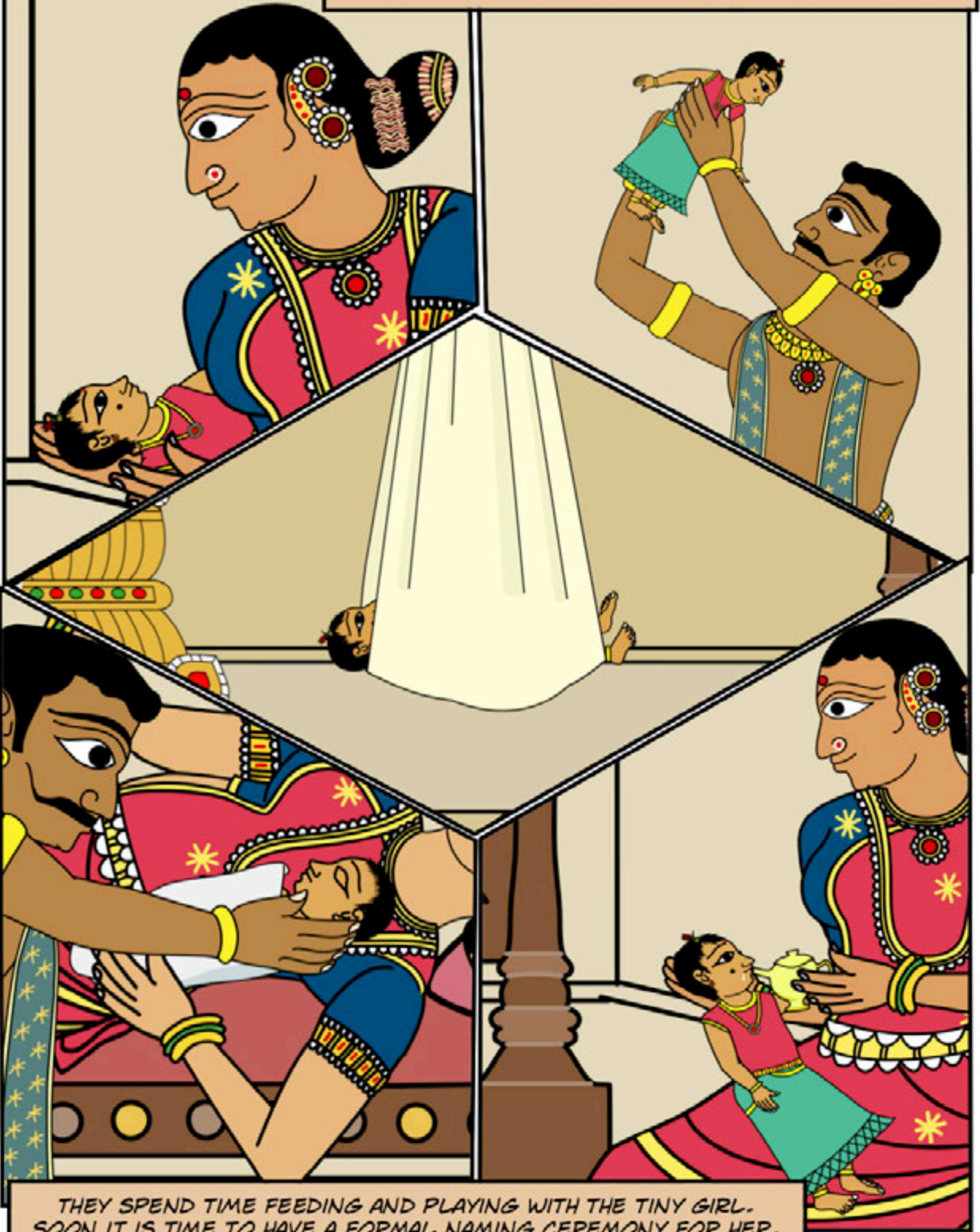


DO NOT BE SAD. EVEN THOUGH THE GODS DID NOT END UP GIVING US THE TWO BOYS WE WERE PROMISED, WE AT LEAST HAVE A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER.

WE SHALL BESTOW ON HER ALL THE LOVE IN OUR HEARTS, AND MAKE SURE SHE HAS A WONDERFUL MARRIAGE.

THE KING CONSOLES HIS WIFE, AND THE COUPLE BECOME RESIGNED TO THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE ONLY ONE CHILD, A DAUGHTER.

IT IS NOT LONG BEFORE THE COUPLE GROW TO LOVE THEIR DAUGHTER AND ENJOY HER COMPANY.



THEY SPEND TIME FEEDING AND PLAYING WITH THE TINY GIRL. SOON IT IS TIME TO HAVE A FORMAL NAMING CEREMONY FOR HER.

THE KING SUMMONS A SERVANT TO ASSIGN HIM A SPECIAL TASK.



THE SERVANT VISITS ALL THE NEARBY VILLAGES TO ISSUE THE KING'S INVITATION. THE MAIDS DECORATE THE PALACE IN PREPARATION FOR THE EVENT.



The Temple Secret

THE KING BATHES AND WORSHIPS THE FAMILY GODDESS TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR THE CEREMONY.



OH
CELATTA,
BLESS OUR LANDS AND
OUR FAMILY...



IT IS NOT LONG BEFORE THE PRIESTS ARRIVE TO PERFORM THE CEREMONY. THEY GREET THE KING AND QUEEN BEFORE SETTING TO WORK.

WELCOME.

BLESSINGS TO YOU BOTH! WE ARE AT YOUR SERVICE.

MANY PEOPLE COME TO WITNESS THE SPECIAL EVENT. MAIDS BRING FINE FRUITS AND FLOWERS TO BE USED AS OFFERINGS.



THE CEREMONY HAS BEGUN!



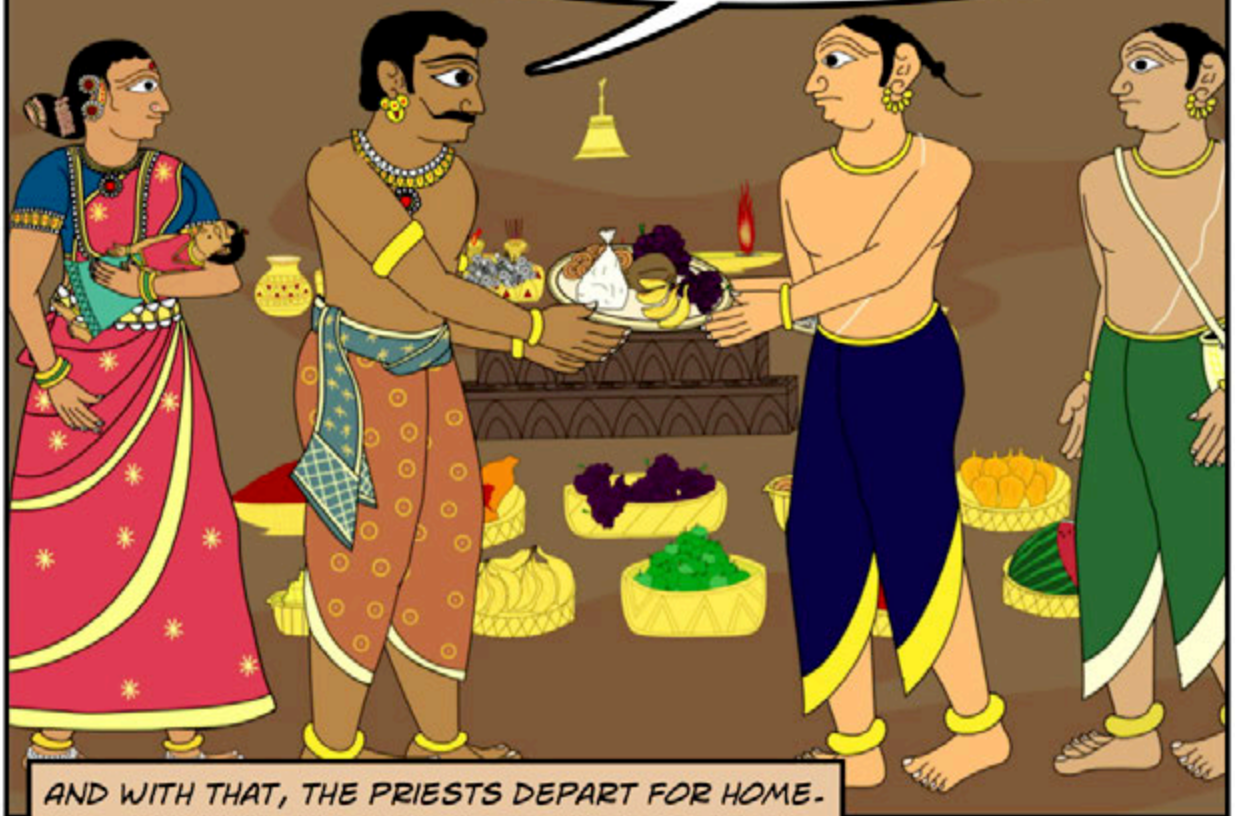
YOU MUST NOW SPEAK THE CHILD'S NAME THREE TIMES!

TANGAL! TANGAL!
TANGAL!

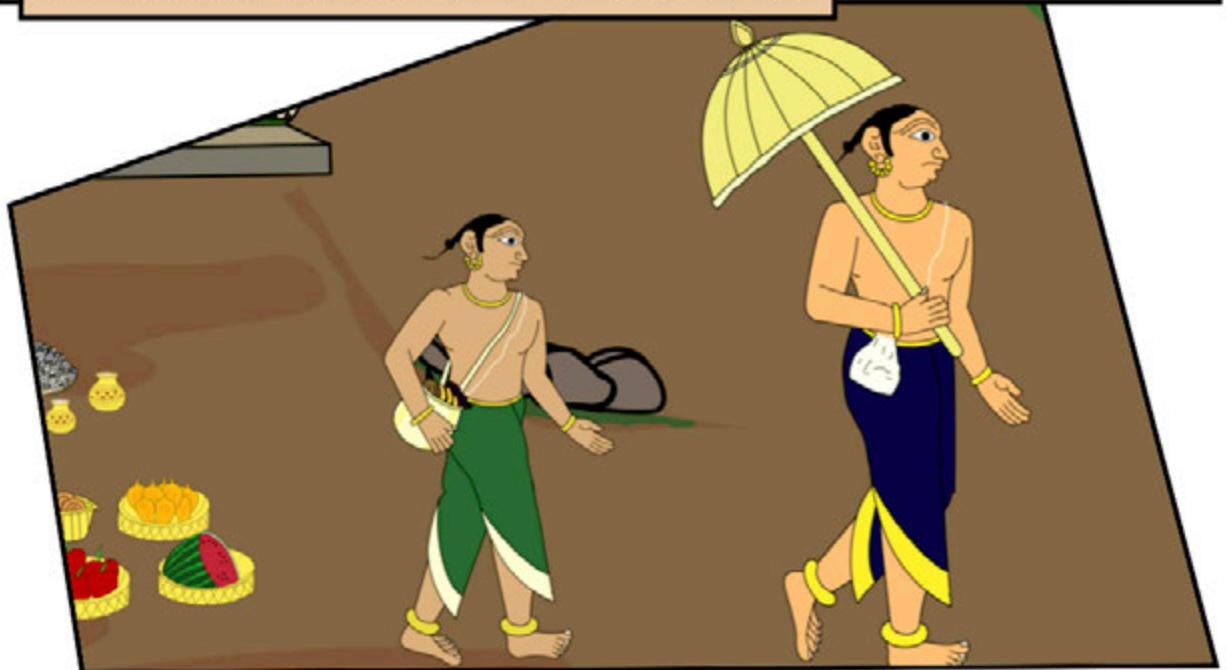


WHEN THE CEREMONY IS OVER, THE RULING FAMILY GIVE THE PRIESTS THEIR PAYMENT, AS WELL AS A GENEROUS GIFT OF FRUITS AND FLOWERS.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING!



AND WITH THAT, THE PRIESTS DEPART FOR HOME.



THE MIDWIFE KUPPI ALSO LEAVES ONCE THE CEREMONY HAS ENDED.

MY WORK HERE IS DONE. I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE.

THANK YOU AND GOODBYE, KUPPI.

BUT WHERE ARE YOUR EIGHTEEN BENDS? YOU ARE LYING! OH BROTHER, GET ME MY SICKLE!

SHE RETURNS TO TANGAVALA, BUT THE CLANSMEN ARE NOT PLEASED.

KUPPI, DID YOU KEEP YOUR BARGAIN?

OH YES, I KILLED THE TWO BOYS BORN TO THE QUEEN.

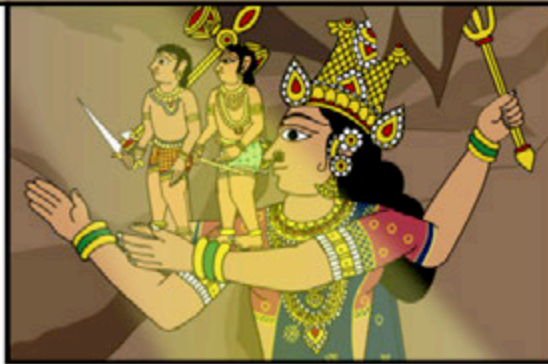
OH PLEASE DON'T HURT ME!

YOU DID NOT KEEP YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN! LEAVE THIS PLACE AND NEVER RETURN... OR THERE WILL BE TROUBLE FOR YOU!

I WANT NOTHING! JUST LET ME LIVE! I SHALL NEVER RETURN HERE AGAIN!

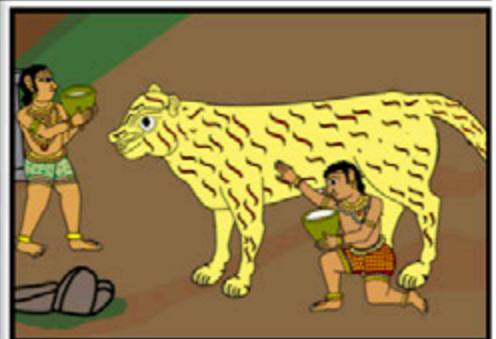
THE CLANSMEN THREATEN KUPPI WITH A HUGE KNIFE. SHE RUNS AWAY FROM THE CLANSMEN OF TANGAVALA IN A FRIGHT. THERE IS SO MUCH NOISE, EVEN THE CROWS ARE SCARED AND THEY FLY OFF.

BACK AT CELATTA'S CAVE, THE BOYS ARE PLAYING HAPPILY.



THE BOYS HAVE NO IDEA OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE PALACE IN THE MONTHS SINCE THEIR BIRTH. THEY DO NOT EVEN KNOW WHO THEIR REAL PARENTS ARE! THEY ARE CONTENT TO PLAY WITH THE GODDESS' ELEPHANT. THEY GROW UP STRONG ON TIGER'S MILK, COMING OUTSIDE TO PLAY ONLY WHEN NO ONE IS AROUND.

BUT WILL THEY EVER DISCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT THE VAST WEALTH AND LOVELY LANDS THEIR PARENTS HAVE? AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN PONNIVALA WHEN THIS IMPORTANT SECRET FINALLY GETS OUT?



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/comic14

The Legend of
Ponnivala

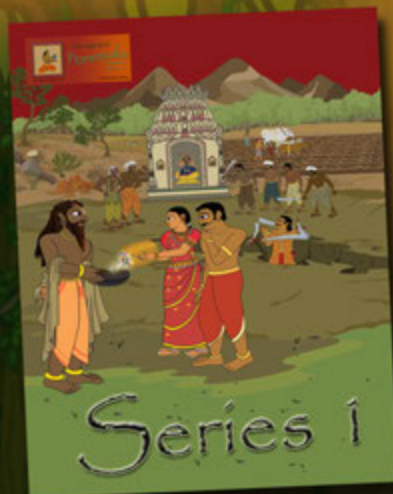
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