

Series 1
Book 10

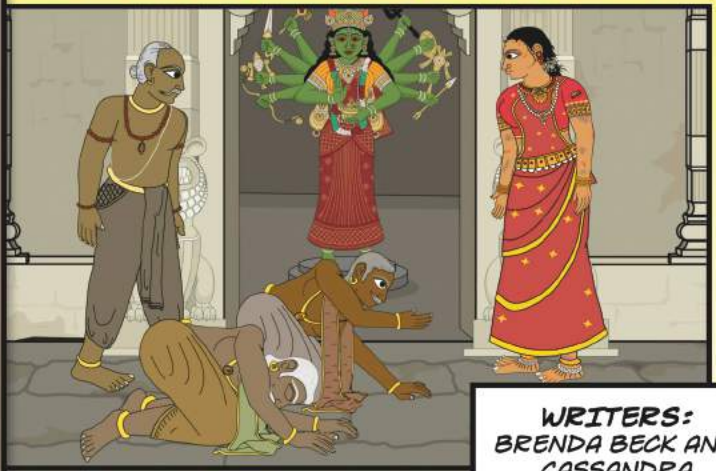
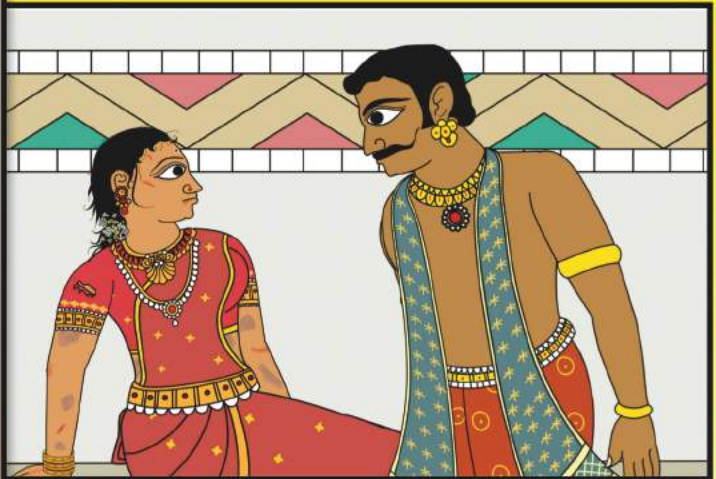
The Legend of
Ponnivala



The Pillar of Destruction

**THE PILLAR OF
SELF
DESTRUCTION**
SERIES 1 COMIC 10

A YOUNG QUEEN,
INSULTED AND
BEATEN AT HER OWN
BROTHERS' ORDERS,
VISITS THE TEMPLE
OF THE GODDESS
KALI. HER
BROTHERS FOLLOW
HER THERE TO BEG
FORGIVENESS. SHE
THEN LIFTS THE
CURSE SHE LAID ON
THEIR FAMILY. BUT,
RETURNING HOME,
SHE FINDS HER OWN
HUSBAND NOW IS
ANGRY WITH HER.
CAST OUT, THE
QUEEN BECOMES
VERY DEPRESSED.
FORTUNATELY, LORD
VISHNU OFFERS HER
HELP...



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The Pillar of Destruction



QUEEN TAMARAI BEGS THE GODDESS KALI FOR HELP ...



OH KALI! I AM STANDING AT YOUR DOOR. PLEASE COME TO MY SIDE. MY BODY IS BRUISED, MY HEART IS CRUSHED!

MY OWN BROTHERS HAVE WRONGED ME AND ORDERED ME BEATEN. ALL I ASKED WAS TO BE WELCOMED INTO MY OWN NATAL HOME, AS IS MY RIGHT!

INSTEAD, I FOUND THE GATE LOCKED. THE GUARD WAS ORDERED TO ATTACK ME! OH GREAT GODDESS, HELP ME NOW! I MUST RIGHT THIS WRONG!



The Legend of Ponnivala



IT IS EARLY MORNING. THE LOCAL VALAVANDI BRAHMAN AWAKENS AND MAKES HIS MORNING PREPARATIONS. THEN HE HEADS TO THE KALI TEMPLE NEARBY.



ONCE HE ARRIVES, HE NOTICES THAT SOMETHING IS AMISS. THINGS ARE NOT AS HE HAD LEFT THEM. HE DOES NOT NOTICE TAMARAI SITTING NEARBY.



The Pillar of Destruction





LOOK AT THE BLOOD ON MY BODY!

THE VILLAINS!



HOW COULD THOSE TWO MEN ORDER THE BEATING OF THEIR OWN SISTER?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S BECOME OF THOSE MEN!

LADY, I MUST GO GET SOME CAMPHOR FOR MY PUJA. PLEASE STAY HERE AND WAIT FOR MY RETURN!

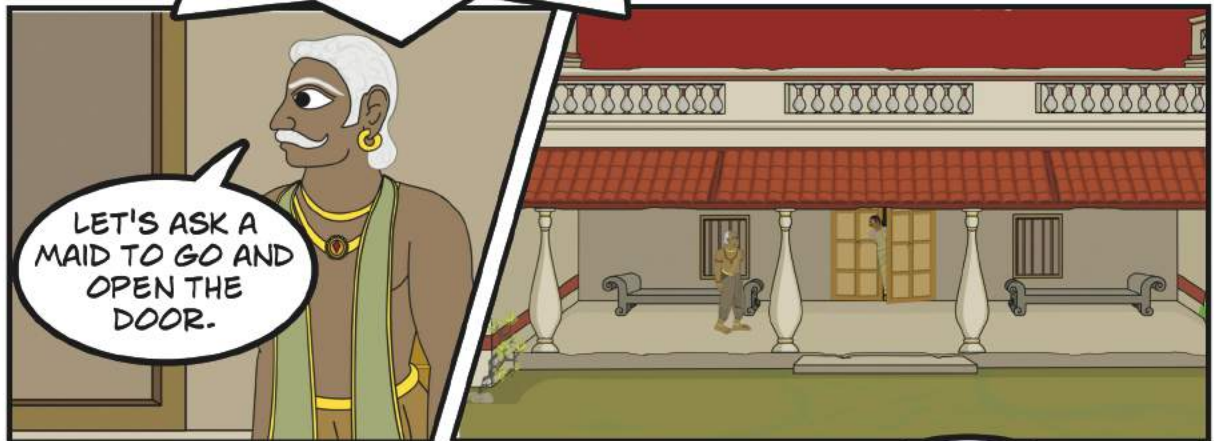
BUT THE BRAHMAN DOES NOT GO TO GET CAMPHOR... INSTEAD HE GOES STRAIGHT TO THE PALACE OF TWO BROTHERS!

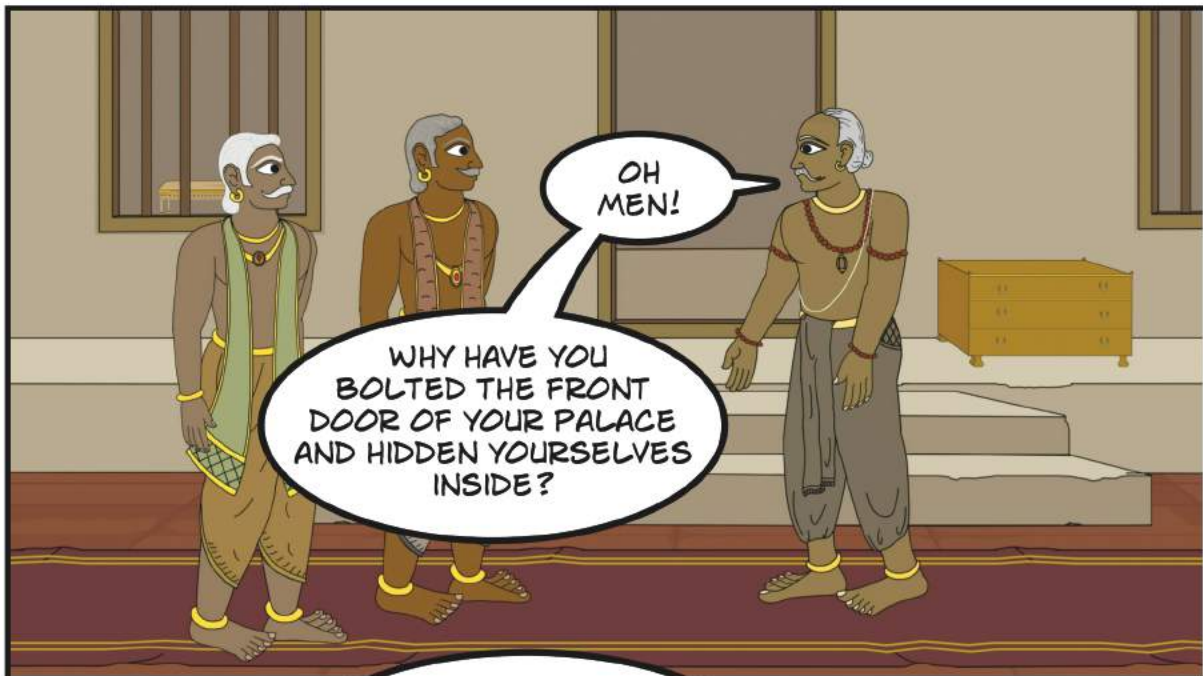


MY, THIS IS ODD!

THE GATES ON ALL FOUR SIDES ARE LOCKED!

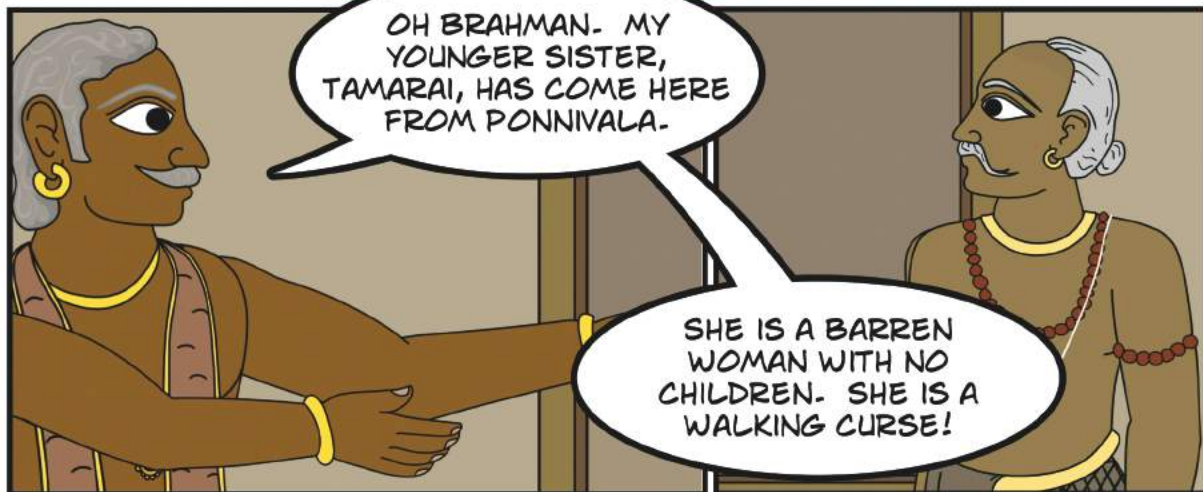
THE BRAHMAN GOES TO THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE AND KNOCKS LOUDLY.





OH MEN!

WHY HAVE YOU BOLTED THE FRONT DOOR OF YOUR PALACE AND HIDDEN YOURSELVES INSIDE?



OH BRAHMAN. MY YOUNGER SISTER, TAMARAI, HAS COME HERE FROM PONNIVALA.

SHE IS A BARREN WOMAN WITH NO CHILDREN. SHE IS A WALKING CURSE!



IF SHE COMES INSIDE THE PALACE AND LOOKS AT OUR CHILDREN, THEY WILL DEVELOP SORES!

SHE MIGHT EVEN TRY TO KIDNAP A CHILD TO TAKE HOME WITH HER.

WE WILL NOT ALLOW HER INSIDE THE COMPOUND GATE!

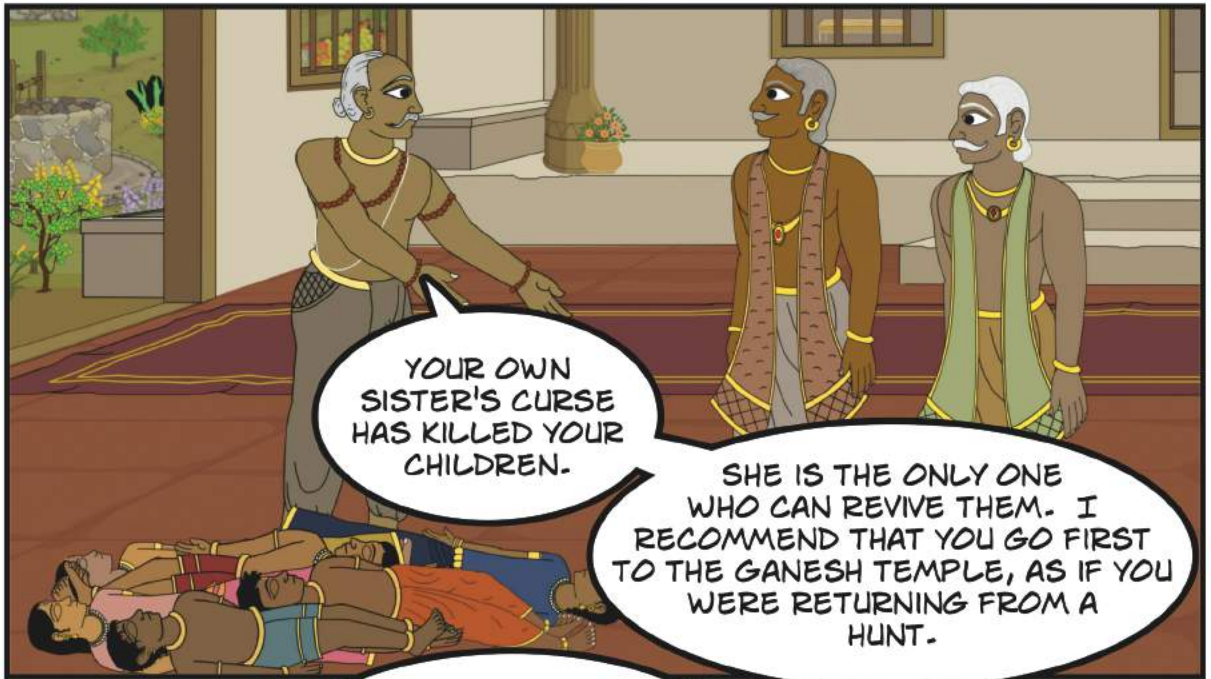
The Pillar of Destruction



THE BRAHMAN ASKS TO SEE THE CHILDREN UNDER THE BASKET. THE KINGS LEAD HIM TO IT, AND LIFT THE GIANT BASKET UP. TO THEIR SHOCK, THEY FIND THAT EVERY ONE OF THEIR CHILDREN IS DEAD!



The Pillar of Destruction



A PALACE SERVANT COVERS THE BODIES OF THE CHILDREN UP WITH A WHITE CLOTH. THE TWO KINGS HEAD OUT FOR THE GANESH TEMPLE. THE BRAHMAN GOES STRAIGHT TO KALI'S SHRINE, SO AS TO REACH TAMARAI FIRST.







OH LADY TAMARAI. FORGIVE YOUR BROTHERS' MISTAKE.

OH GREAT GODDESS! I WILL ACCEPT YOUR ADVICE.

YOU HAVE COME SUCH A LONG WAY.

YOU SHOULD NOT LEAVE WITHOUT SEEING THE HOUSE YOU WERE BORN IN.

I WILL GO TO THE PALACE.



BUT I NEVER WANT TO SEE THESE TWO MEN AGAIN!

TELL THEM TO GET UP AND RUN OFF!

THE TWO KINGS RETURN TO THE PALACE, AHEAD OF TAMARAI AND THE PRIEST.



YOU SHOULD GO TO AN INNER ROOM AND JOIN YOUR WIVES.

OH KINGS!



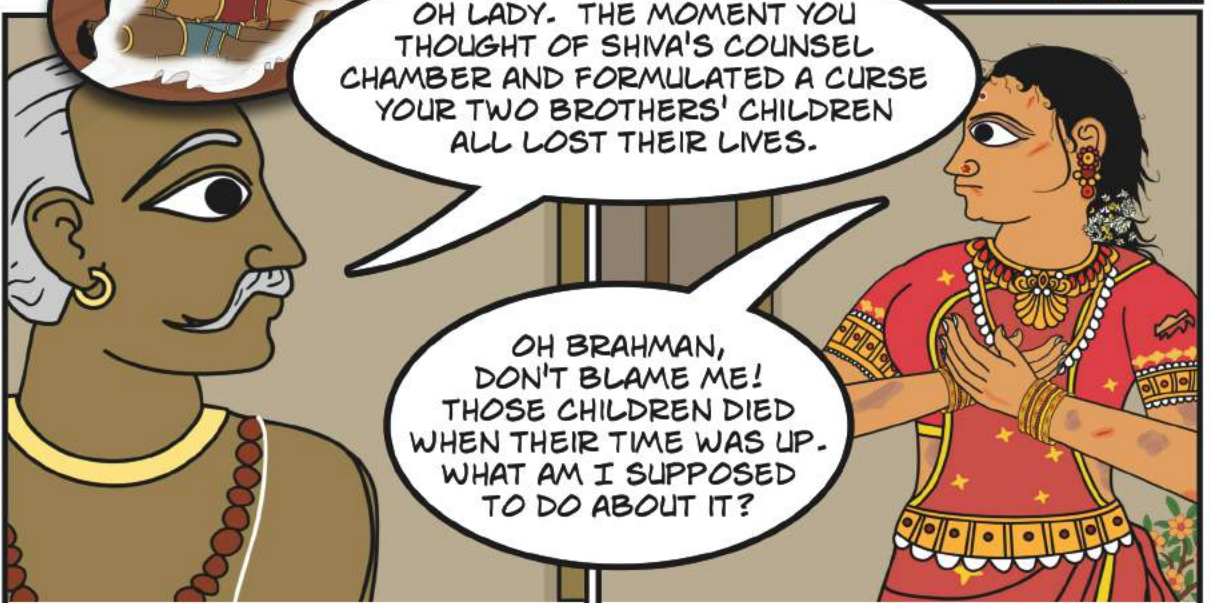
DON'T COME OUT. TAMARAI IS REALLY ANGRY - SHE COULD BE DANGEROUS!



PLEASE BRING OUR CHILDREN BACK TO LIFE!



I WILL DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM. YOU HIDE INSIDE.



The Pillar of Destruction



LADY! IT WAS YOUR CURSE.

OH PRIEST! WHAT GAME ARE YOU PLAYING?

YOU MUST REVIVE THESE CHILDREN!

DO YOU THINK THAT I HAVE THE POWERS OF LORD SHIVA?



FINE WOMAN! YOU WERE BORN OF GOD'S CREATIVE POWER.

IF YOU PUT YOUR HEART INTO THIS, YOU CAN REVIVE ALL THESE CHILDREN!

ALL RIGHT!

BUT IN RETURN FOR REVIVING THEM, I MUST TAKE MY TWO RIGHTFUL DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW WITH ME...RIGHT NOW!

TAMARAI AGREES TO TRY TO BRING THE CHILDREN BACK TO LIFE, BUT ONLY IF SHE IS GIVEN TWO YOUNG NIECES RIGHT AWAY, GIRLS WHO SHE HOPES WILL LATER BECOME HER DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW.

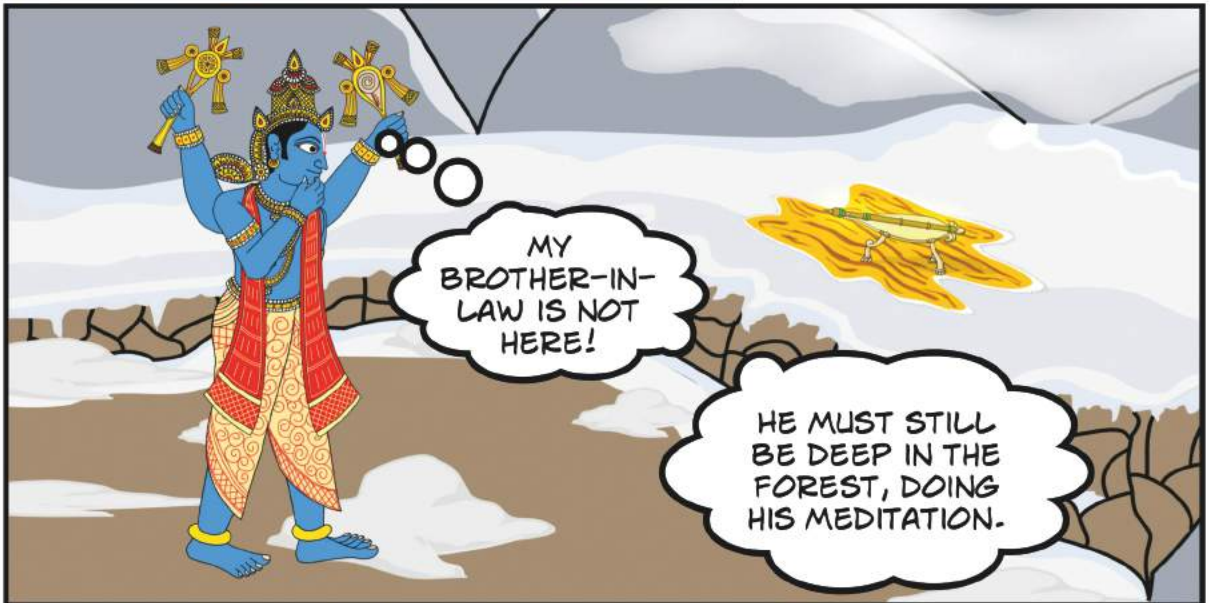


LADY, IF YOU WISH YOU CAN TAKE TWO OF YOUR BROTHERS' YOUNG GIRLS WITH YOU...

AS SOON AS YOU BRING THEM BACK TO LIFE!

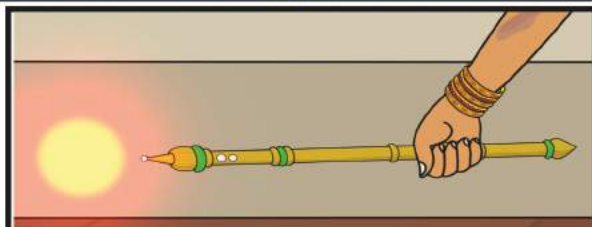


TAMARAI SENDS A PRAYER TO LORD VISHNU, AND HE GOES TO FIND HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, SHIVA. VISHNU KNOWS THAT TAMARAI NEEDS SHIVA'S MAGIC WAND IN ORDER TO REVIVE THE CHILDREN.



The Pillar of Destruction

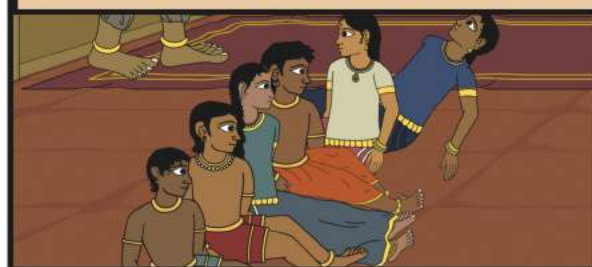
TAMARAI CATCHES THE WAND WHEN IT MAGICALLY APPEARS IN THE HOUSE.

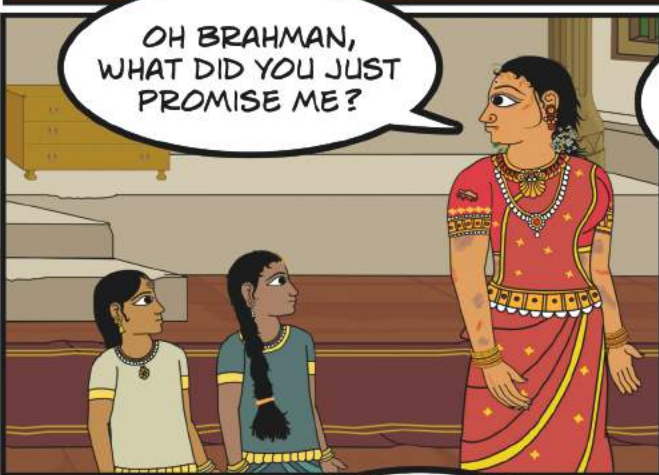


TAMARAI SENDS A BEAM OF LIGHT TOWARDS THE CHILDREN...



AND THEY MIRACULOUSLY AWAKEN!





The Pillar of Destruction

TAMARAI BRINGS THE TWO GIRLS TO THE GANESH TEMPLE.



OH LORD!

OH VISHNU!
LORD OF
CONJEEPURAM.

LET THESE
WOMEN STAND
HERE LIKE
STONES!

WHEN MY SONS HAVE BEEN
BORN AND HAVE REACHED A
MARRIAGEABLE AGE, I WILL COME TO
FETCH THEM. YOU MARRIED ME IN
THIS AREA.

IN THE SAME WAY,
WHEN I HAVE SONS I WILL
BRING THEM BACK HERE, TO BE
MARRIED IN VALAVANDI.

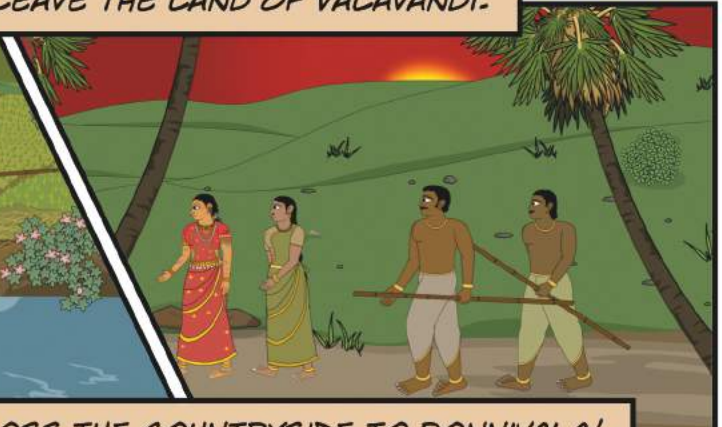


VISHNU HEARS TAMARAI'S PRAYER. HE SENDS A
BEAM OF LIGHT AND TURNS THE GIRLS TO STONE!





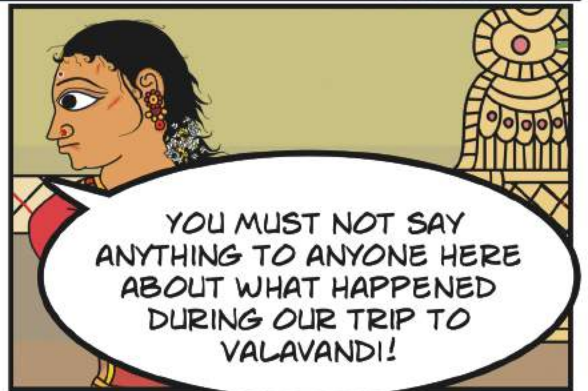
TAMARAI AND HER SERVANTS LEAVE THE LAND OF VALAVANDI.

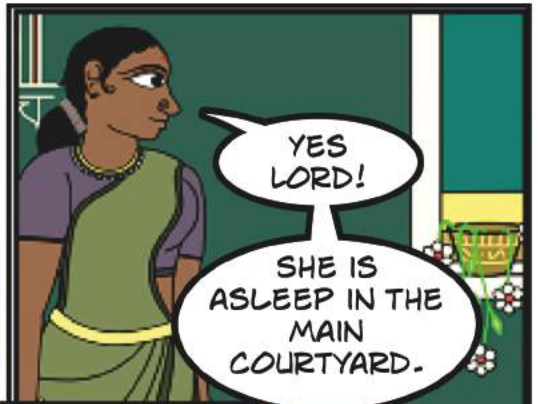
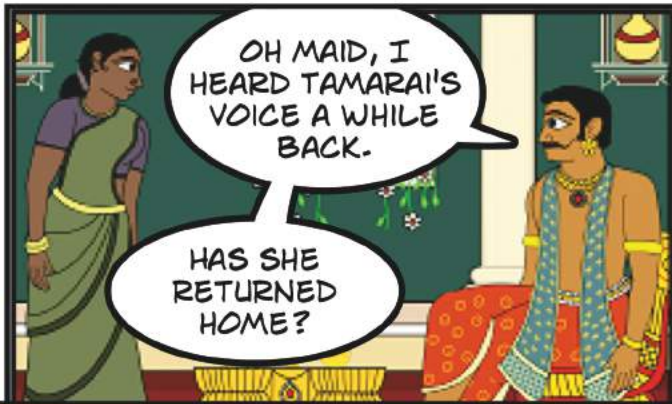


TAMARAI LEADS THE WAY ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE TO PONNIVALA!

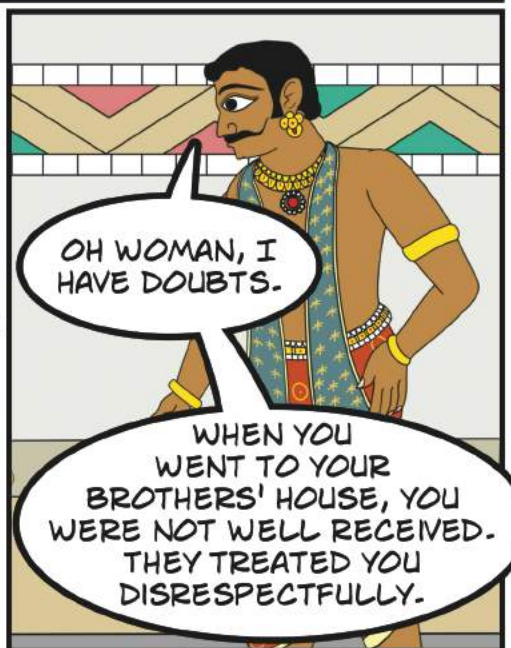


The Pillar of Destruction





KUNNUTAIYA GOES TO THE MAIN COURTYARD OF HIS PALACE.





OH NO!
I AM FINE.



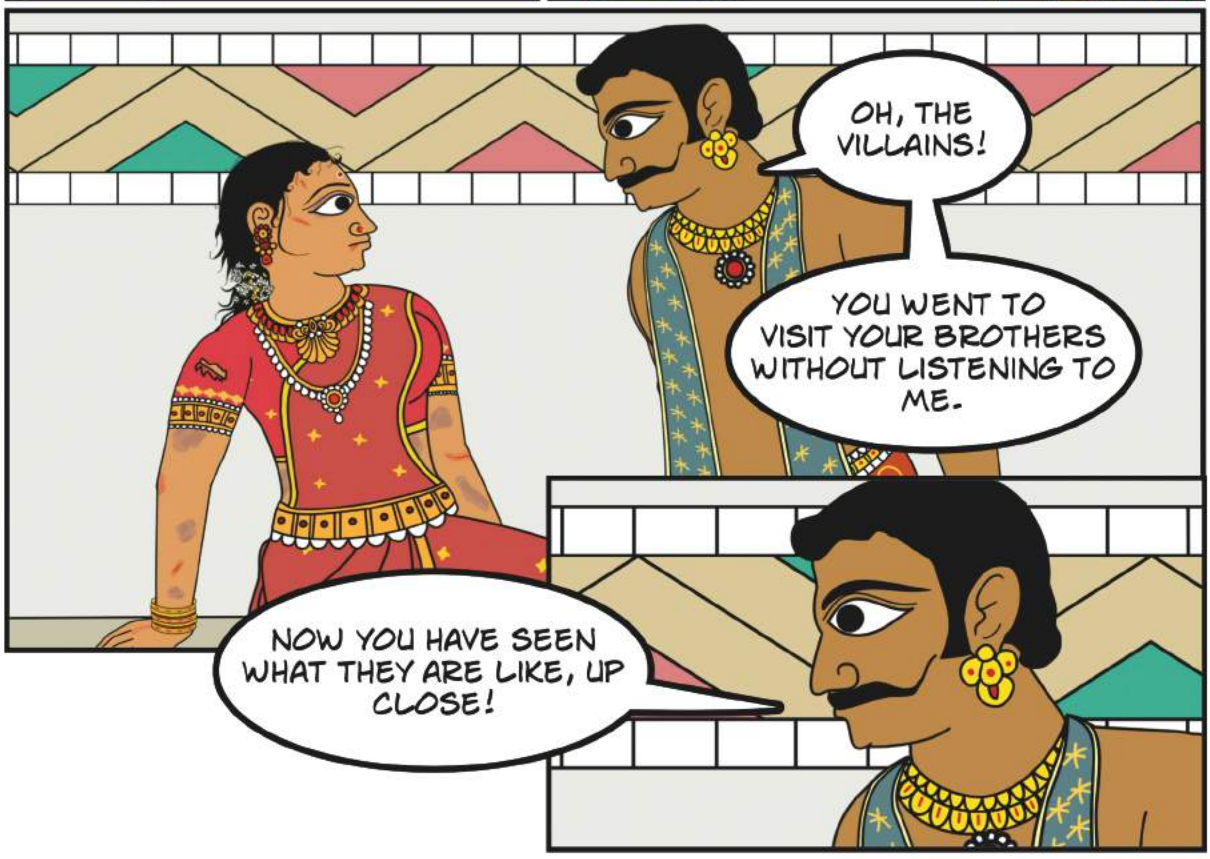
YOU ARE NOT
FEELING WELL. THIS
IS WHY YOU SLEPT
WITHOUT COMING TO
SEE ME!

KUNNUTAIYA PULLS BACK TAMARAI'S SARI. HE SEES HER MANY WOUNDS!



OH HUSBAND, I
WALKED TOO FAR IN
THE SUN!

MY BODY IS
BLISTERED.



OH, THE
VILLAINS!

YOU WENT TO
VISIT YOUR BROTHERS
WITHOUT LISTENING TO
ME.

NOW YOU HAVE SEEN
WHAT THEY ARE LIKE, UP
CLOSE!



TAMARAI IS VERY UPSET. BUT KUNNUTAIYA WILL NOT COMPROMISE. HE IS ANGRY AND JUST WALKS AWAY.

TAMARAI SITS ON HER PORCH AND CRIES. SHE THINKS ABOUT HER PAST WITH GREAT SADNESS.

BOO HOO
HOO!

MY HUSBAND PREDICTED THAT I WOULD SUFFER BY GOING TO VALAVANDI. HE WAS RIGHT. MY BROTHERS WERE CRUEL TO ME.

NOW I HAVE COME HOME WITH BRUISES - I WILL GIVE MY HUSBAND A BAD NAME!

I HAVE NOT PRODUCED ANY CHILDREN, AND HE TELLS ME TO LEAVE ALTOGETHER.

HOW CAN I BEAR SO MUCH? I DON'T WANT TO LIVE ANY LONGER!

SERVANT!

GO AND FETCH A GROUP OF STONE MASONS AND ARTISANS.

TAMARAI CALLS FOR A SERVANT AND A MAID. SHE HAS MADE A DECISION, AND WANTS TO PUT IT INTO ACTION IMMEDIATELY.

MAID!

BRING ME A MEASURE OF PEARLS, SOME BETEL LEAVES, AND SOME ARECA NUTS.

THE ARTISANS AND STONE MASONS ARRIVE.

OH STONE MASONS AND ARTISANS!

I WANT YOU TO BUILD A PILLAR THAT IS GO FEET HIGH AND IS SQUARE ON ITS FOUR SIDES.

THERE SHOULD BE GO STEPS THAT CIRCLE AROUND IT AND LEAD TO ITS SUMMIT.

I WANT YOU TO MAKE MANY METAL SPIKES AND TO PLACE A SPEAR-LIKE HEAD ON EACH ONE.

PLANT THESE SPIKES ALL AROUND THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE TOWER.

WHERE AND WHEN DO YOU WANT THIS DONE?

I WANT YOU TO BUILD THIS PILLAR IN FRONT OF THE GANESH TEMPLE.

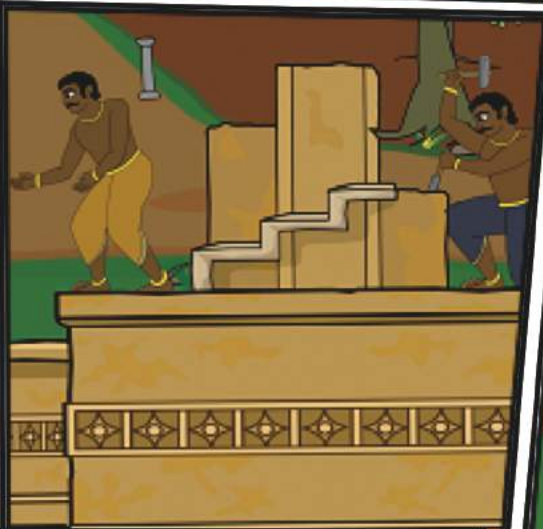
BE SURE TO FINISH IN 15 DAYS.

OKAY MEN! BEGIN YOUR WORK THIS COMING MONDAY!

LADY! WE WILL DO AS YOU HAVE ASKED.

The Pillar of Destruction

THE WORK STARTS AND IT PROGRESSES VERY QUICKLY.



A LARGE STONE STRUCTURE STARTS TO RISE UP.

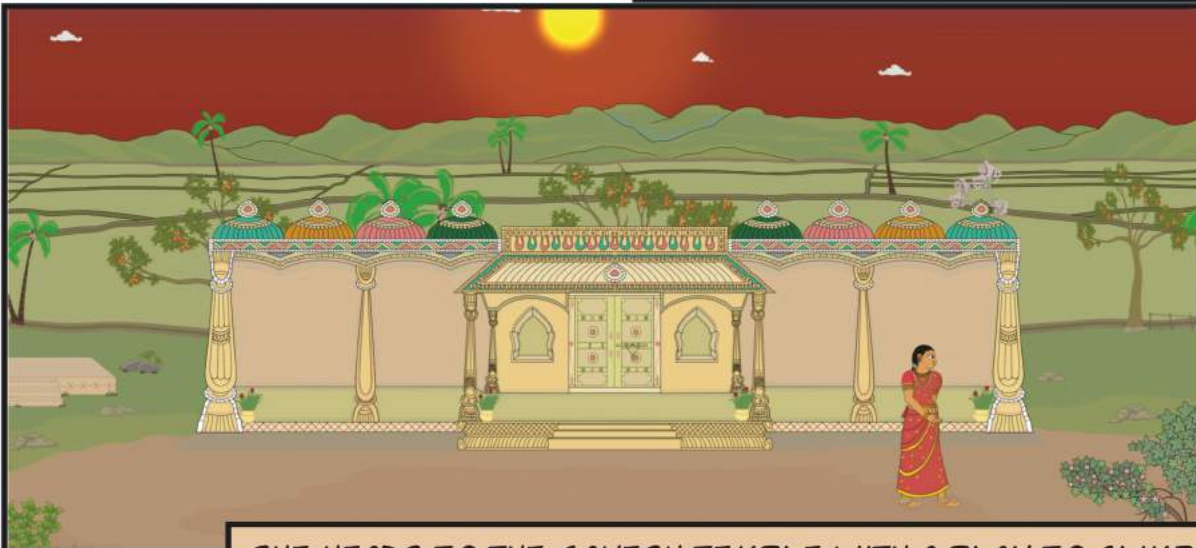


WITHIN 15 DAYS, THE FINE WORK IS DONE.

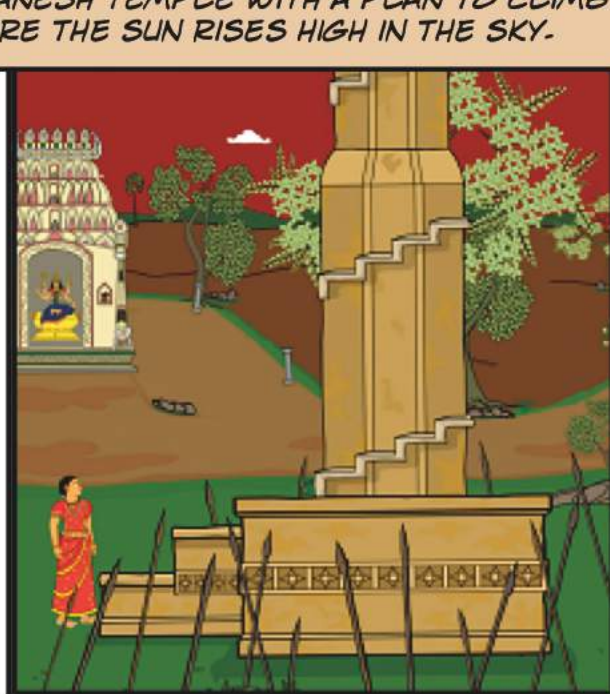
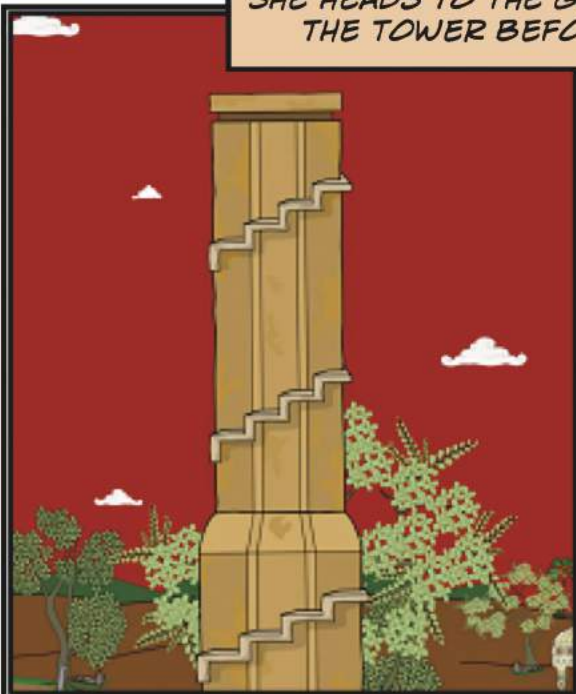
THE NEXT MORNING, TAMARAI GETS UP SILENTLY.



Cock-a-Doodle-Do



SHE HEADS TO THE GANESH TEMPLE WITH A PLAN TO CLIMB THE TOWER BEFORE THE SUN RISES HIGH IN THE SKY.





OH LORD OF ALL THE WORLDS IN THIS UNIVERSE!

OH HE WHO HOLDS THE CONCH AND THE DISCUS.

WHEN I HAVE CLIMBED THIS 60 FOOT TOWER AND JUMPED OFF, LET MY HEAD AND MY FEET AND MY HANDS BECOME SEPARATED.

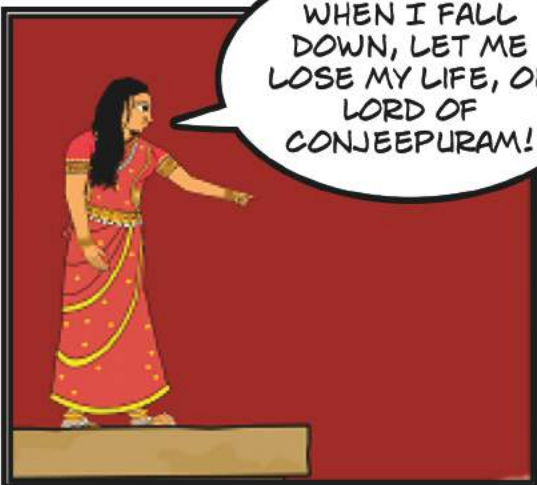


MY VISHNU, MY PERUMAL!

TAMARAI CLIMBS THE TOWER AND LETS HER HAIR DOWN.

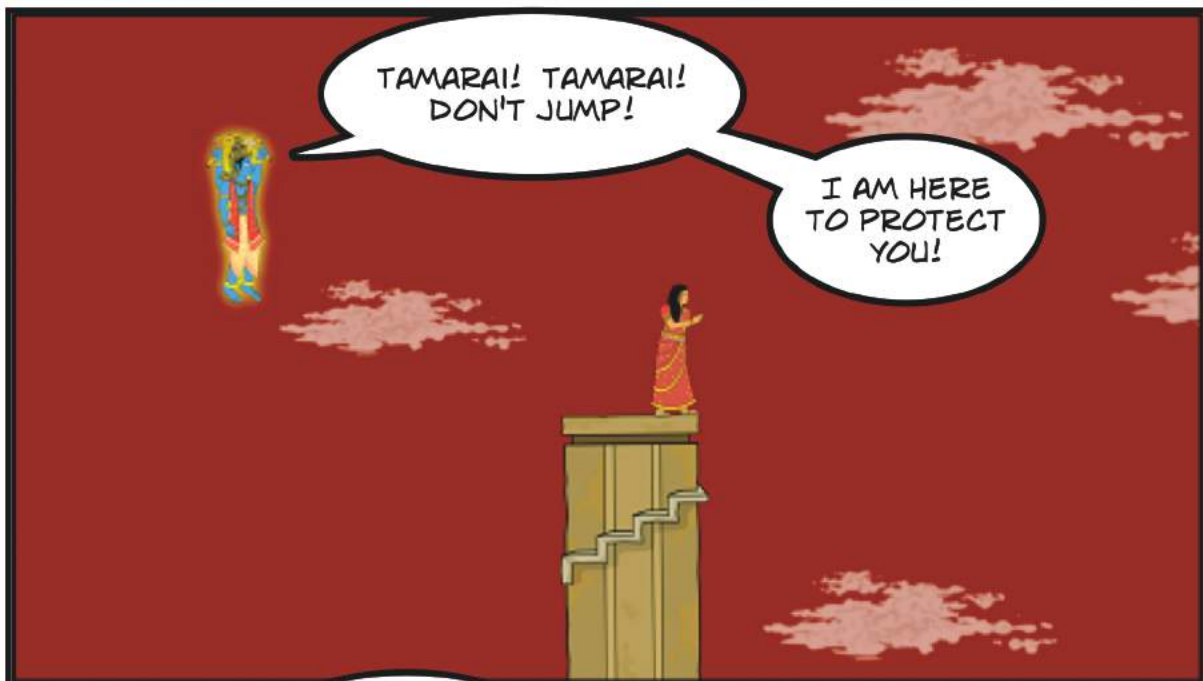


OH SEER OF BALA MOUNTAIN! OH SUPREME PENITENT!



WHEN I FALL DOWN, LET ME LOSE MY LIFE, OH LORD OF CONJEEPURAM!





TAMARAI HEARS VISHNU'S WORDS AND CLIMBS DOWN THE PILLAR.

The Pillar of Destruction



TAMARAI EXPLAINS THE SITUATION TO KUNNUTAIYA, AND HE AGREES TO HELP.

THE PUJA IS ARRANGED, AND SOON VISHNU ARRIVES.


Vishnu, with blue skin and wearing a crown and jewelry, stands on the left, performing a puja. He is holding a conch shell and a mace. In the center, a woman in a red sari (Tamarai) and a man in a blue and red dhoti (Kannan) are performing a puja. They are both holding conch shells and maces. In the background, there is a decorated altar with a lamp and other offerings.

TAMARAI! SPLIT
OPEN THE COCONUTS
AND PERFORM A
PUJA!

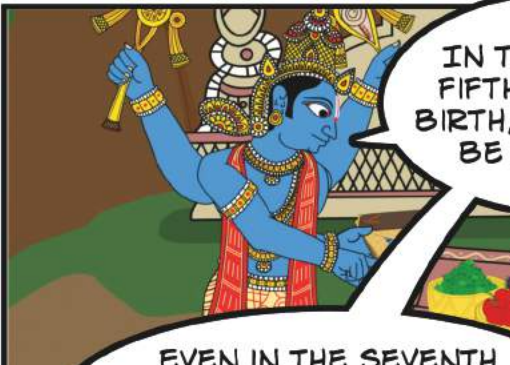
NOW VISHNU READS FROM HIS ALMANAC...

A close-up of Vishnu's hand holding an open book (the almanac). He is wearing a blue sleeve with gold jewelry.

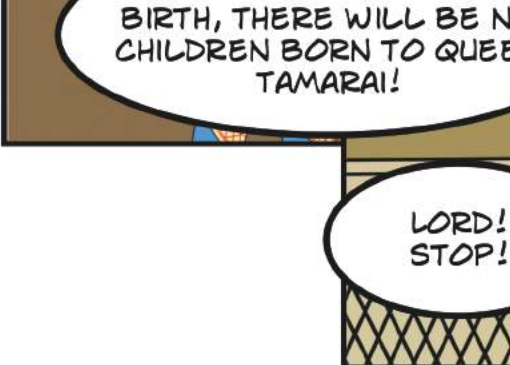
IN THIS
BIRTH, TAMARAI
WILL HAVE NO
SONS.

Vishnu is performing a puja, holding a conch shell and a mace. He is looking towards the right. In the background, there is a decorated altar with a lamp and other offerings.

FOR ANOTHER
TWO BIRTHS, SHE
WILL HAVE NO
CHILDREN.

Vishnu is performing a puja, holding a conch shell and a mace. He is looking towards the right. In the background, there is a decorated altar with a lamp and other offerings.

IN THE FOURTH,
FIFTH, AND SIXTH
BIRTH, THERE IS TO
BE NO SON...

Vishnu is performing a puja, holding a conch shell and a mace. He is looking towards the right. In the background, there is a decorated altar with a lamp and other offerings.

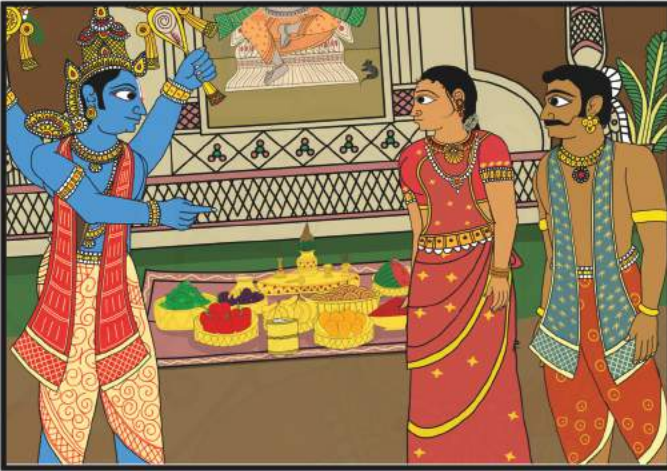
EVEN IN THE SEVENTH
BIRTH, THERE WILL BE NO
CHILDREN BORN TO QUEEN
TAMARAI!

Tamarai and Kannan are shown in a close-up, looking distressed. Tamarai is on the left, with her hand to her face, and Kannan is on the right, looking towards her.

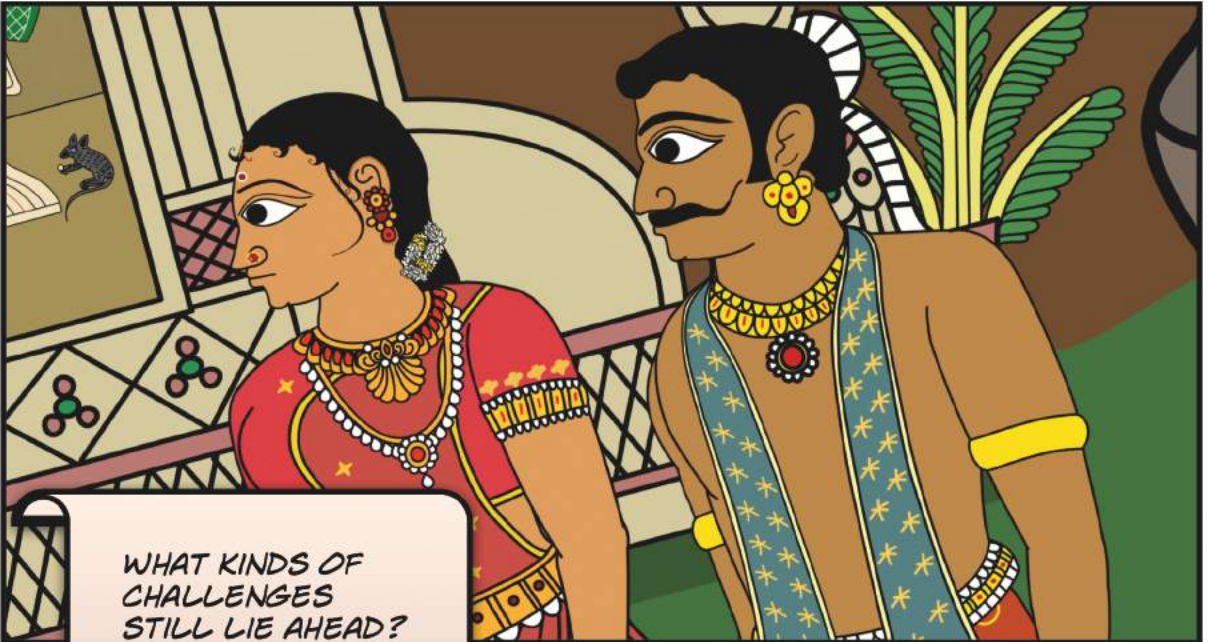
LORD!
STOP!

The Pillar of Destruction





VISHNU CONTINUES TO TELL THE COUPLE WHAT THEY MUST DO IN ORDER TO BEAR A CHILD. KUNNUTAIYA AND HIS WIFE KNOW THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT, BUT THEY ARE WILLING TO UNDERGO ANY KIND OF HARDSHIP THE LORD MIGHT PRESCRIBE, IN ORDER TO HEAR THE LAUGHTER OF A CHILD IN THEIR PALACE.



WHAT KINDS OF CHALLENGES STILL LIE AHEAD? WILL THE RULING COUPLE BE ABLE TO OVERCOME THESE MANY TRIALS? AND WHEN ALL IS FINISHED, WILL THEY FINALLY HAVE A CHILD TO CALL THEIR OWN? WHAT PROBLEMS WILL THE KING AND QUEEN OF PONNIVALA FACE NEXT?



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/comic9

The Legend of
Ponnivala

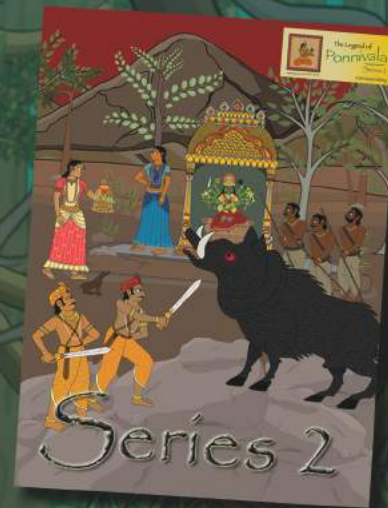
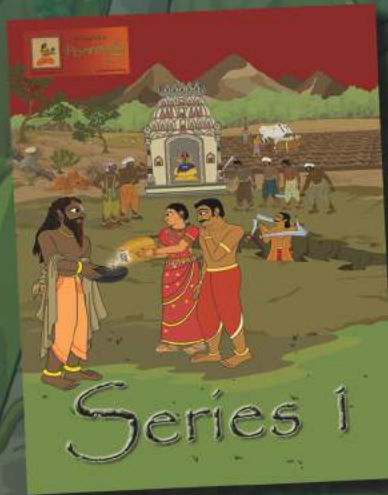
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