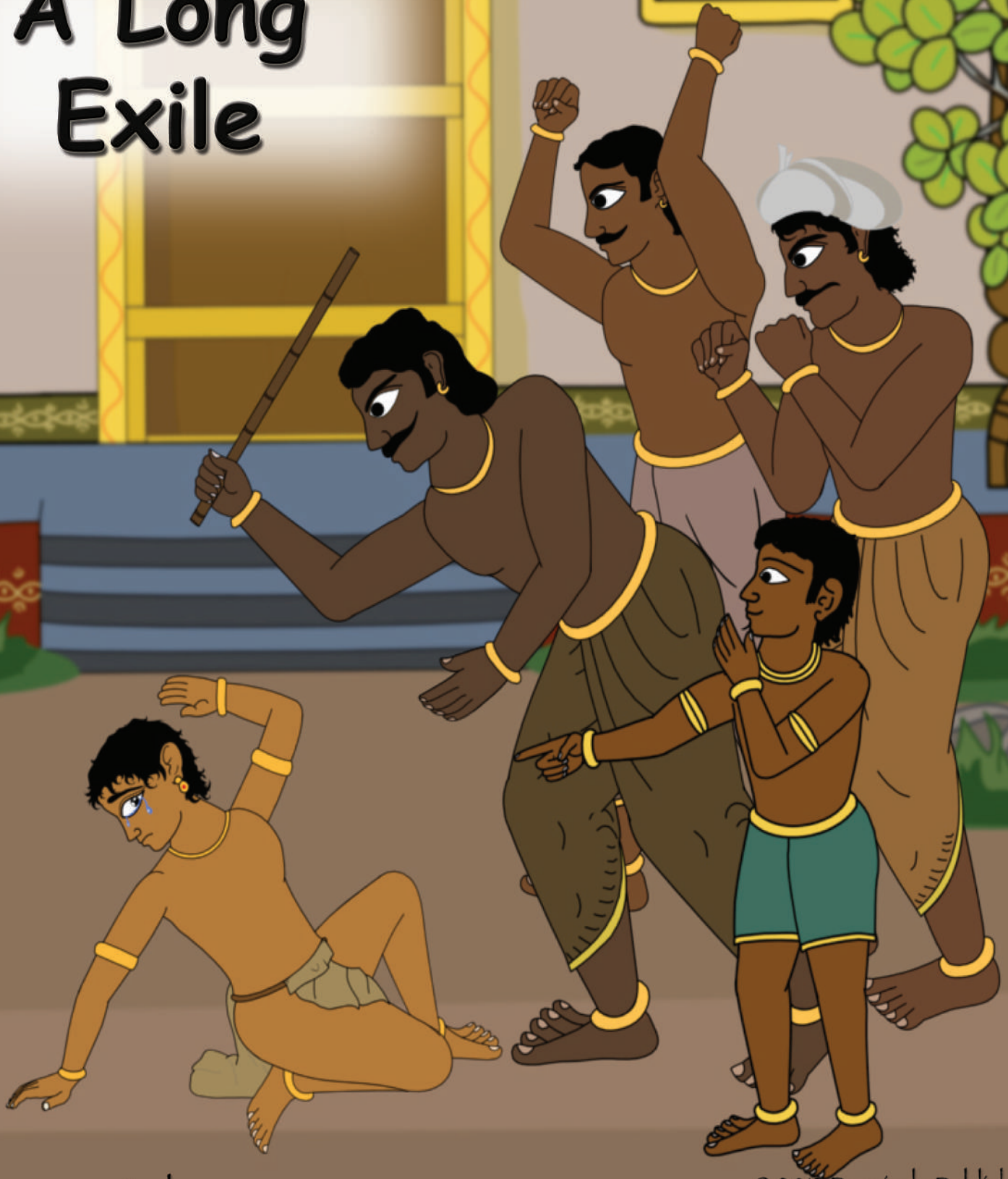


Series 1
Book 3

The Legend of
Ponnivala



A Long Exile



A LONG EXILE
SERIES 1 COMIC 3

A YOUNG ORPHAN IS TREATED BADLY BY HIS CLANSMEN AND IS FORCED TO RUN FROM PLACE TO PLACE. THE MISTREATMENT CONTINUES NO MATTER WHERE HE GOES, BUT THE BOY IS A SURVIVOR. HE SUMMONS HIS COURAGE AND HAS SOME SUCCESSES. FINALLY HE SEES A NEW VILLAGE WITH A FINE TEMPLE ON THE HORIZON. FRESH HOPE RISES IN THIS ORPHAN'S HEART ...



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THE CHOLA KING CONSIDERS THE FORTUNES OF THE ORPHAN BOY KUNNUTAIYA ...




ALAS! THAT FINE FARMER, KOLATTA GOUNDER, AND HIS LOVELY WIFE ARIYANACCI ARE NO MORE.



THAT OUTSTANDING FAMILY RULED THE BEAUTIFUL LANDS OF PONNIVALA WELL, AND ALWAYS SUPPORTED ME.



KOLATTA GRADUALLY RAISED A FAMILY UP, BUT NOW THAT HE IS GONE, HE LEAVES A FIVE-YEAR-OLD SON BEHIND.



I WILL DO MY BEST TO PROTECT THEIR POOR CHILD, BUT I SEE GREED IN KOLATTA'S CLANSMEN'S EYES. I THINK THEY WILL TRY TO SEIZE THE LANDS THOUGHT BY RIGHT TO BE THEIRS!

NOW I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THINGS WILL GO WELL FOR THAT SAD LITTLE ORPHAN...

IN TANGAVALA, THE CLANSMEN ARE SCHEMING...

HEY, DO YOU REMEMBER OUR CLAN HISTORY?

LONG AGO, THE CHOLA KING DIVIDED THE LANDS OF THIS WHOLE AREA BETWEEN OUR FATHERS' BROTHERS.

THE ELDEST OF THOSE NINE SONS WAS NAMED KOLATTA, AND HE WAS GRANTED PONNIVALA, WHILE OUR FATHERS WERE GIVEN TANGAVALA.



THAT DIVISION WAS UNFAIR! PONNIVALA IS A VERY FERTILE AREA - OUR LAND IS LESS BOUNTIFUL!

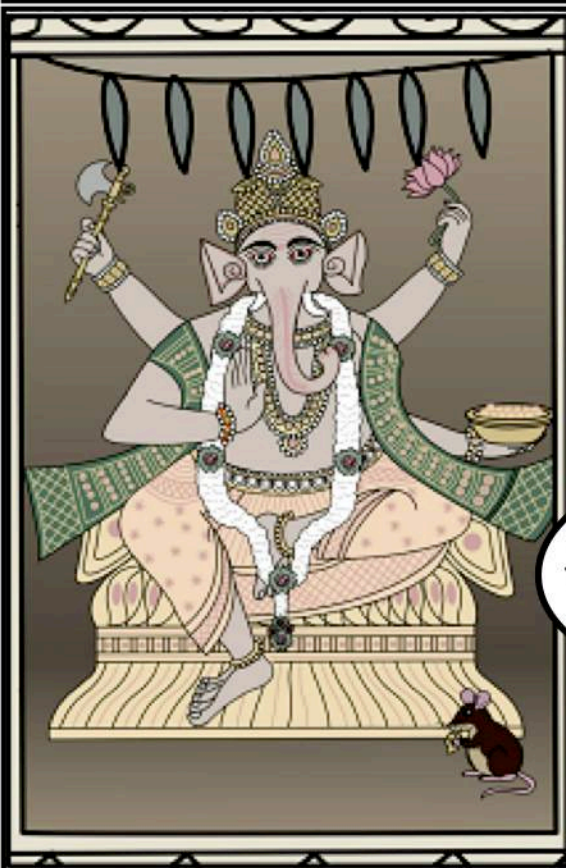
AND THINK ABOUT THIS! KOLATTA'S WIFE WAS BARREN, SHE HAS NEVER GIVEN BIRTH TO A SON. THEY TOOK AN ORPHAN THEY FOUND UNDER A STONE TO BE THEIR HEIR! HA!

KOLATTA AND HIS WIFE WERE TAKEN TO HEAVEN BY YEMAN. THAT LITTLE BOY MUST BE ALL ALONE IN THAT BIG PALACE NOW!

THIS IS OUR BIG CHANCE! THAT LITTLE BOY CAN DO NOTHING - LET US TAKE OVER THOSE FIELDS WHICH ARE RIGHTFULLY OURS!



THE TANGAVALA CLANSMEN LEAVE AND START TOWARDS PONNIVALA.



The Legend of Ponnivala



THE CHOLA KING IS COMING!



GREETINGS EVERYONE!

TANGAVALA FARMERS, WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

OH KING! KUNNUTAIYA IS AN ADOPTED CHILD. WE ARE THE NATURAL MALE HEIRS, AND ARE HERE TO CLAIM OUR RIGHTS

WE SHOULD INHERIT THE PONNIVALA LANDS NOW THAT KOLATTA AND ARIYANACCI ARE DEAD.

OH GOUNDER CLANSMEN, IF YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO INHERIT THESE LANDS THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE SPOKEN UP MUCH EARLIER.


THIS BOY HAS BEEN IN THE PALACE FOR FIVE YEARS. WHY ARE YOU ONLY ANNOUNCING YOUR CLAIM AFTER KUNNUTAIYA'S PARENTS ARE DEAD?




DID YOU NOT HAVE THE
COURAGE TO SPEAK TO HIS FACE
ABOUT THIS MATTER?

YOU HAVE NOW LOST YOUR
RIGHT TO TAKE PONNIVALA AWAY
FROM THIS BOY AND SHARE HIS
INHERITANCE AMONGST
YOURSELVES.

I KNOW HOW YOU WILL LOOK AFTER THIS BOY.
IN YOUR HEARTS, YOU WILL ALWAYS BE THINKING ABOUT
HOW TO TAKE HIS LAND AWAY.



LORD! THIS IS THE TIME
FOR HARVESTING! THAT BOY
IS NOT OLD ENOUGH TO
SUPERVISE THIS WORK.



WE ARE HIS
RIGHTFUL RELATIVES
AND WE WILL LOOK
AFTER HIM WELL!



OKAY
MEN!

YOU WILL
ASSIGN
ONE GOOD SHARE OF
LAND TO THIS BOY
NOW.

WHEN KUNNUTAIYA IS
OLD ENOUGH TO MANAGE
MATTERS HIMSELF, THEN YOU
MUST GIVE THE REST OF
PONNIVALA BACK TO HIM.





IF KUNNUTAIYA LIVES, WE MUST EVENTUALLY RETURN THE LAND TO HIM!

OH BROTHERS, DID YOU HEAR WHAT THE CHOLA KING SAID?



IF HE SEES THIS PALACE AGAIN IT WILL REMIND HIM OF HIS PARENTS AND OF WHAT WAS ONCE THEIRS!



LET US KNOCK DOWN THE PALACE RIGHT NOW, PLOUGH IT OVER AND PLANT CASTOR OIL SEEDS ON THE LAND THAT SITS BENEATH IT!

The Legend of Ponnivala



A Long Exile



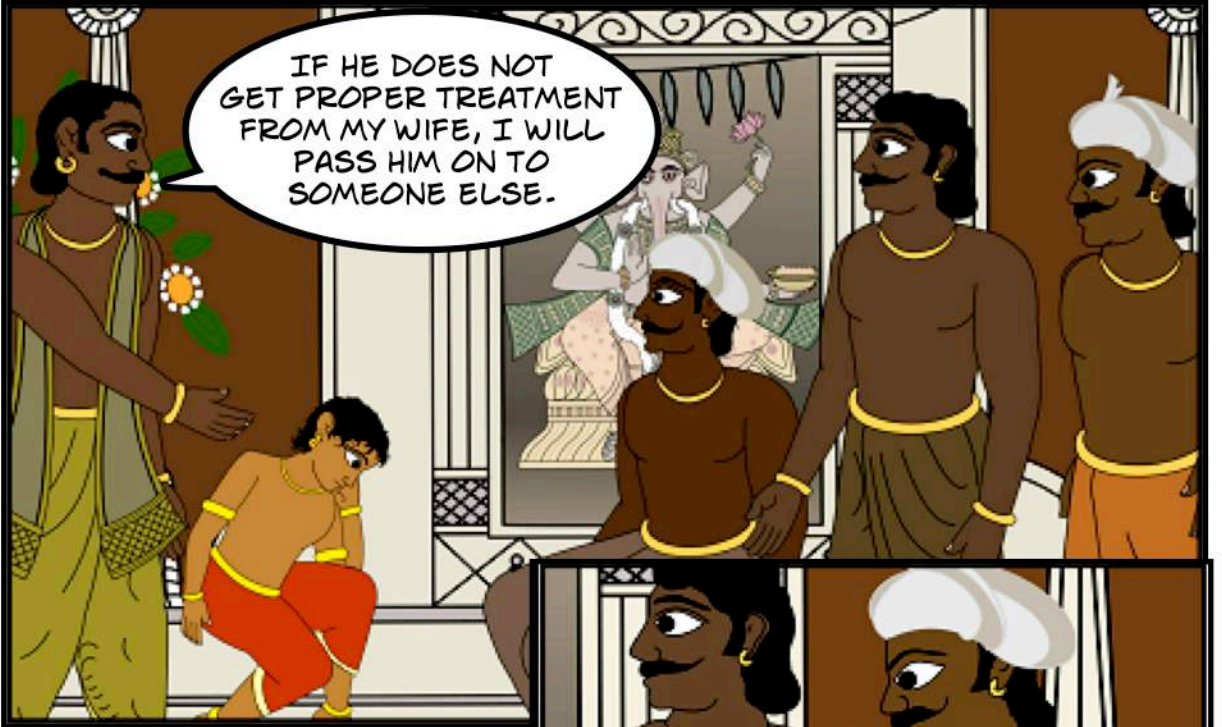
NEXT THE CLANSMEN
PLANT CASTER OIL SEEDS
WHERE THE PALACE USED
TO STAND. THEN THEY
RETURN TO THE GANESH
TEMPLE TO DISCUSS THE
MATTER OF WHO WILL
CARE FOR THE BOY.



OH
ELDER BROTHER,
YOU FEED THIS BOY
FOR US! IN EXCHANGE
YOU CAN HAVE HIS
SHARE OF THE
LAND.



THE CLANSMEN ARGUE BACK AND FORTH ABOUT WHO WILL TAKE THE CHILD. FINALLY IT IS DECIDED THAT THE ELDEST WILL CARE FOR HIM.



HERE IS A SMALL LOIN CLOTH. HERE BOY! TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES AND PUT THIS ON INSTEAD! LET'S GET GOING!

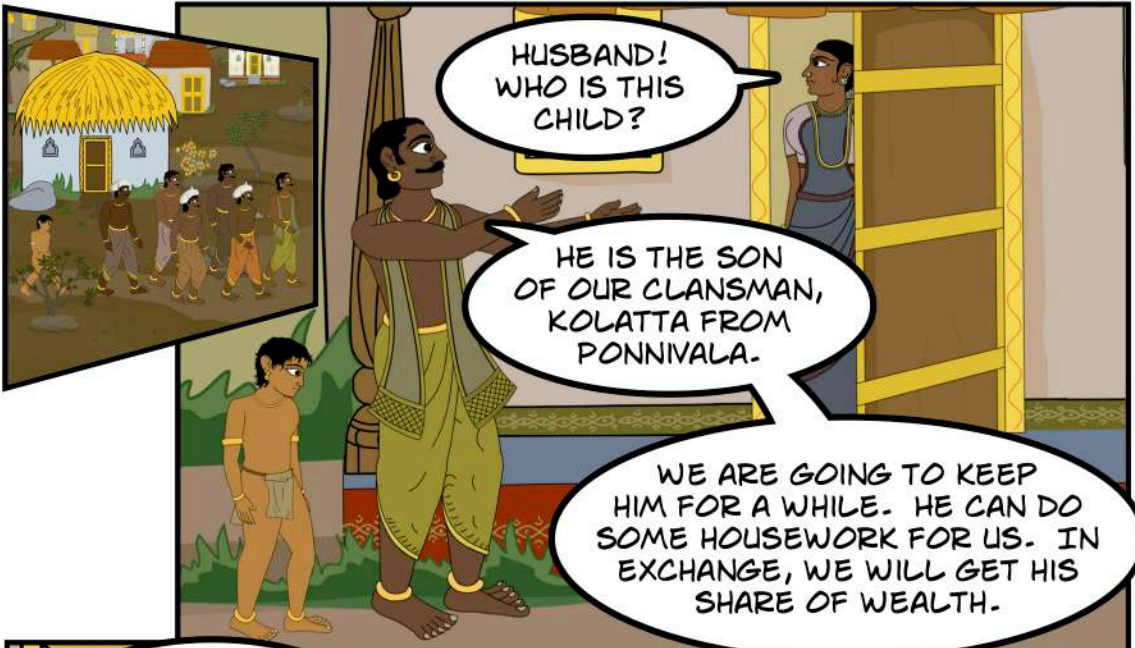


A Long Exile



SO, THEIR DECISION MADE, THE CLANSMEN HEAD BACK TO TANGAVALA.







The Legend of Ponnivala



OH MY LORD
VISHNU, LOOK AT HOW I
AM SUFFERING!

I USED TO
EAT RICE WITH
TENDER
VEGETABLES
AND MILK.

IS IT MY FATE
THAT I MUST
NOW DRINK OLD
MILLET GRUEL?



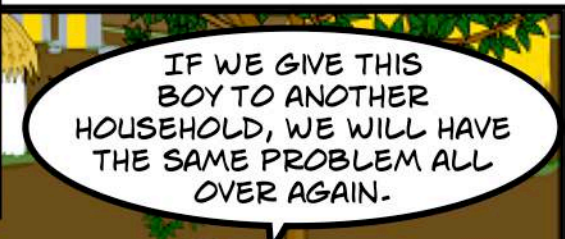
MANY DAYS PASS LIKE THIS. ALL
THE FARMER'S WIFE FEEDS HIM ARE
TWO TUMBLERS OF GRUEL, ONE IN THE
MORNING, AND ONE IN THE EVENING.



FINALLY THE ELDEST CLANSMAN BEGINS TO FEEL
BADLY FOR THE BOY AND SO HE CALLS A MEETING
OF HIS BROTHERS TO DISCUSS WHAT TO DO.

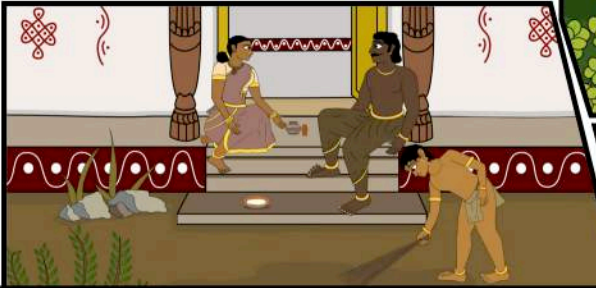
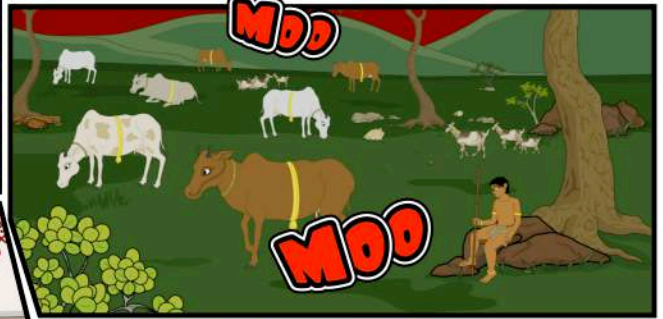


THE CLANSMEN MEET AT THE TANGAVALA GANESH TEMPLE. THEY AGAIN DISCUSS WHO WILL CARE FOR THE BOY.



The Legend of Ponnivala

DAYS, WEEKS, AND MONTHS GO BY.
KUNNUTAIYA SLEEPS IN A SHED.
EVERY DAY, HE TAKES THE VILLAGE
COWS OUT TO GRAZE.



HE CLEANS FOR HIS CLANSMEN, AND
CARRIES HEAVY BUCKETS OF WATER.



EVERY DAY HE MUST BEG FOR HIS FOOD. HE
IS BEATEN, TEASED, AND TORMENTED.



HE IS THIN, TIRED
AND HUNGRY AND
OFTEN ALONE.





The Legend of Ponnivala



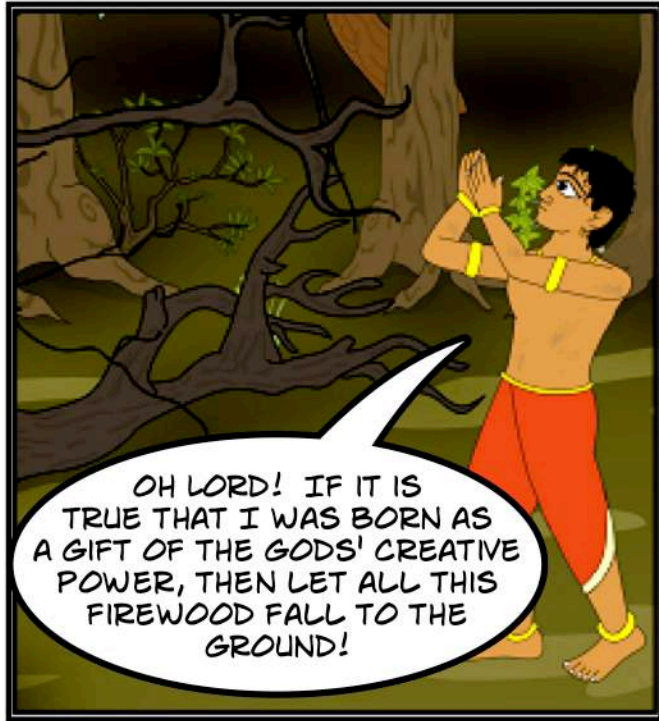
FOR FIVE YEARS THESE PEOPLE HAVE FED ME ONLY MILLET GRUEL.

I'M OLD ENOUGH NOW, WHY DON'T I JUST RUN AWAY?

FIVE YEARS PASS THIS WAY. KUNNUTAIYA IS NOW TENS YEARS OLD. ONE DAY, HE IS WALKING IN A FOREST AND MAKES A DISCOVERY.



THIS TREE IS SO DRY. MAYBE I CAN CUT IT UP AND SELL IT AS FIREWOOD!



OH LORD! IF IT IS TRUE THAT I WAS BORN AS A GIFT OF THE GODS' CREATIVE POWER, THEN LET ALL THIS FIREWOOD FALL TO THE GROUND!

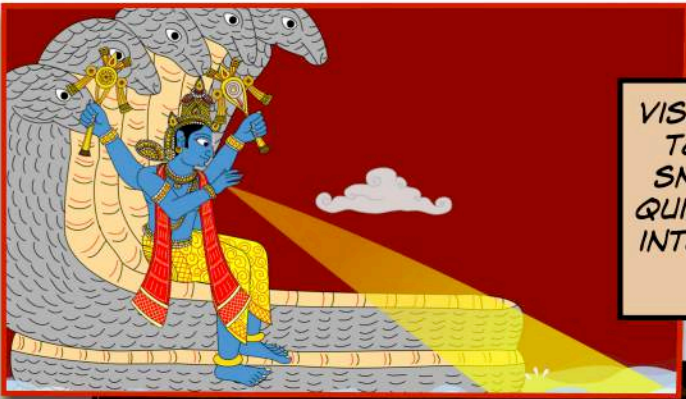


HMM... LOOKS LIKE KUNNUTAIYA NEEDS ME.

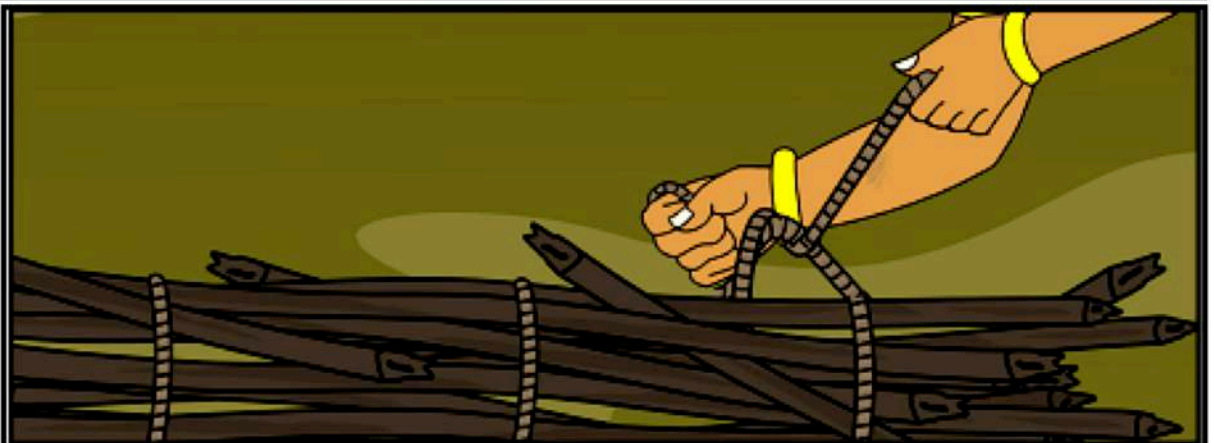



THIS SHOULD HELP HIM!

A Long Exile




VISHNU USES HIS DIVINE POWERS TO CAUSE THE DEAD TREE TO SNAP AND BREAK. KUNNUTAIYA QUICKLY THROWS THE BRANCHES INTO A PILE AND TIES THE WOOD INTO A BUNDLE.






KUNNUTAIYA BALANCES THE WOOD ON HIS HEAD, AND SETS OFF. HE WANTS TO LEAVE TANGAVALA AND HIS CRUEL CLANSMEN FAR BEHIND HIM. HE IS ON A SEARCH FOR FOOD AND FOR A FAMILY TO CARE FOR HIM.

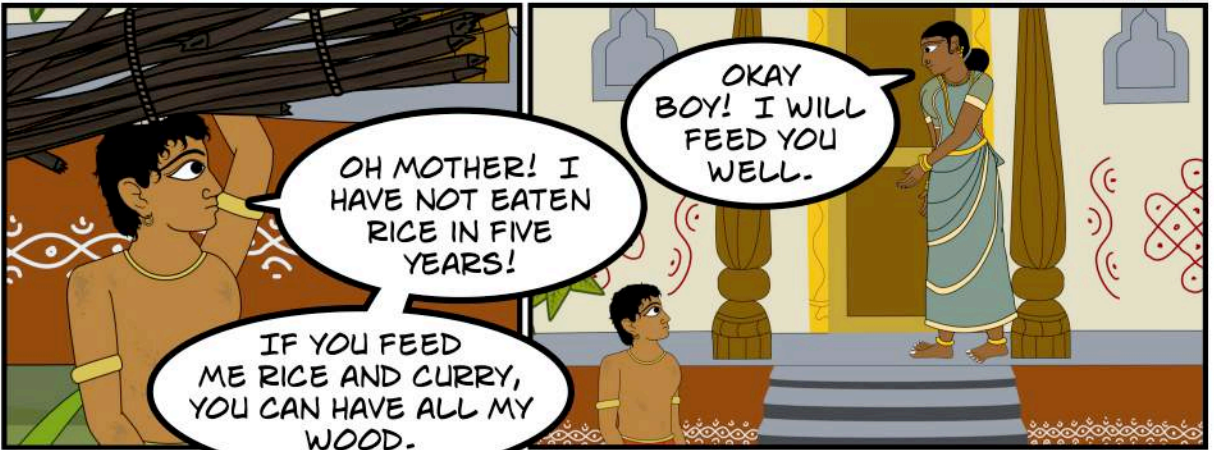


HE WALKS AND WALKS THROUGH THE DARK FOREST, ON THE LOOKOUT FOR A VILLAGE CUSTOMER.



I'M SO HUNGRY AND THIS WOOD IS VERY HEAVY. I HOPE I FIND SOMEONE TO BUY IT BEFORE I BECOME COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED!







THE WOMAN'S HUSBAND ARRIVES, FURIOUS TO FIND THAT HIS WIFE IS FEEDING AN ORPHAN. HE MAKES A HUGE FUSS, KNOCKING THE BOWL OF CURRY AND RICE OVER IN HIS RAGE. KUNNUTAIYA, FRIGHTENED BY THE DISPLAY, RUNS BACK INTO THE FOREST. HIS BOWL OF FOOD HAS GONE UNTOUCHED, AND THE BOY IS STILL VERY HUNGRY.



A Long Exile



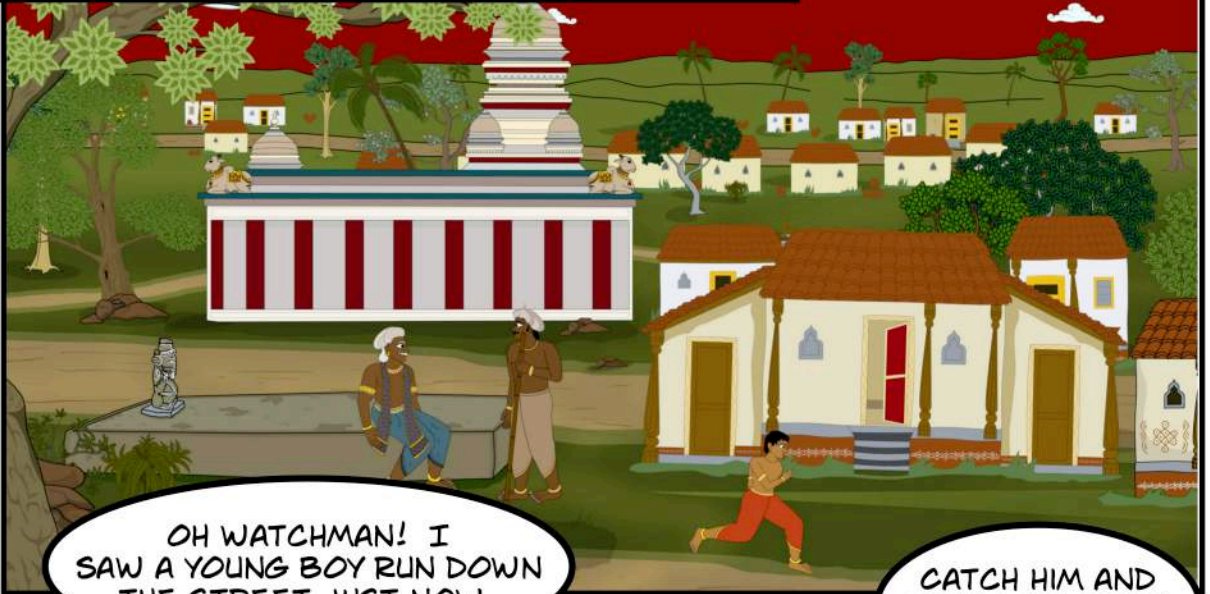
THE LITTLE BOY TRAVELS NORTH. HE RUNS... AND RUNS..... THROUGH FOREST AND FIELD.



HE STOPS ONLY TO DRINK AND WASH AT A SMALL POND.



FINALLY, KUNNUTAIYA REACHES A SECOND TOWN.



OH WATCHMAN! I SAW A YOUNG BOY RUN DOWN THE STREET JUST NOW.

CATCH HIM AND BRING HIM BACK HERE!



OH BOY! DON'T RUN ANY FURTHER!

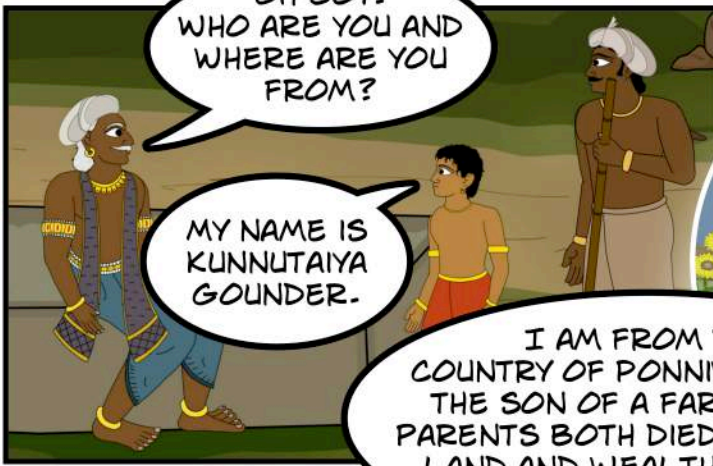
KUNNUTAIYA RUNS IN FRIGHT UNTIL A BIG WATCHMAN STOPS HIM. HE TURNS OBEDIENTLY AND WALKS BACK WITH HIM.



THE FARMER OF THE BIGGEST HOUSE IN TOWN IS ASKING FOR YOU!

COME WITH ME! HE IS SEATED AT THE GANESH TEMPLE AND HE SAW YOU RUN BY.





OH BOY!
WHO ARE YOU AND
WHERE ARE YOU
FROM?

MY NAME IS
KUNNUTAIYA
GOUNDER.

I AM FROM THE
COUNTRY OF PONNIVALA, I AM
THE SON OF A FARMER. MY
PARENTS BOTH DIED, AND THEIR
LAND AND WEALTH WENT TO
OUR CLASMEN.



FOR FIVE YEARS
THOSE MEN MADE ME HERD
BUFFALO, AND THEY GAVE ME
ONLY MILLET GRUEL TO
DRINK!



WHY DID YOU LEAVE
YOUR CLASMEN'S
VILLAGE?

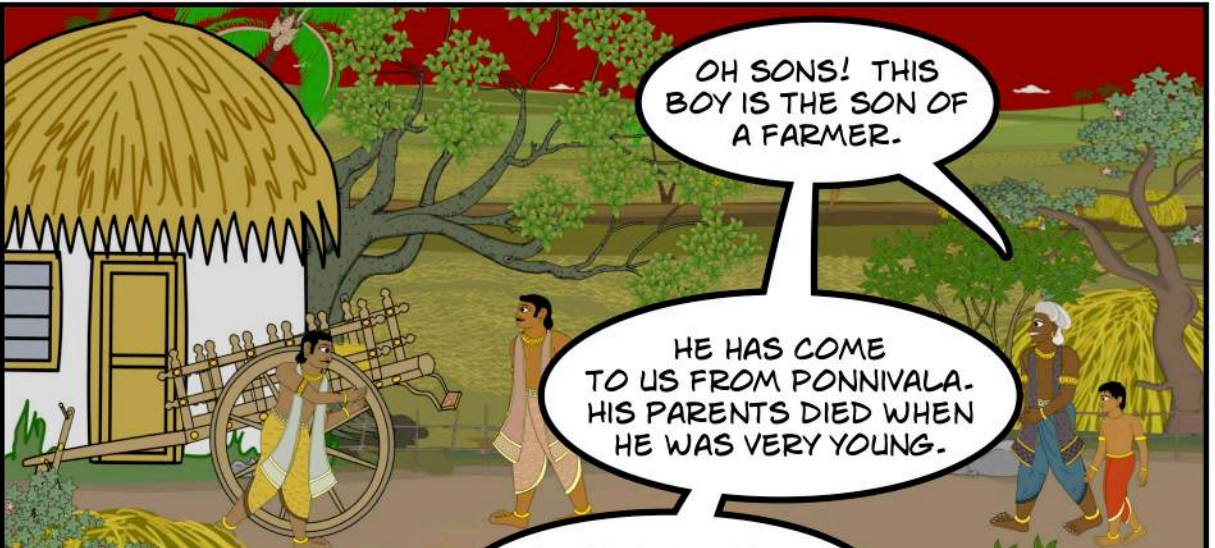
I WAS HUNGRY, I
HAD NOT EATEN CURRY
AND RICE FOR FIVE
YEARS!

COME WITH ME. I
WILL FEED YOU AS MUCH
CURRY AND RICE AS YOU
CAN EAT!



IF YOU
TREAT ME WELL,
THEN I WILL WORK
FOR YOU.

FINE! COME
WITH ME, BOY. WE
WILL VISIT MY FIELDS
AND THEN GO TO MY
HOUSE!



OH SONS! THIS BOY IS THE SON OF A FARMER.

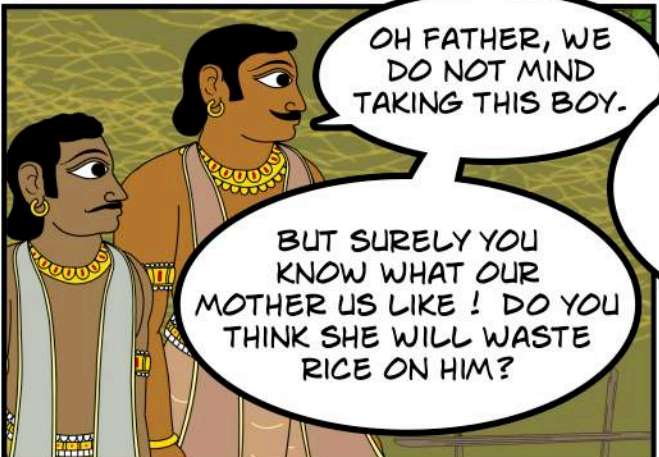
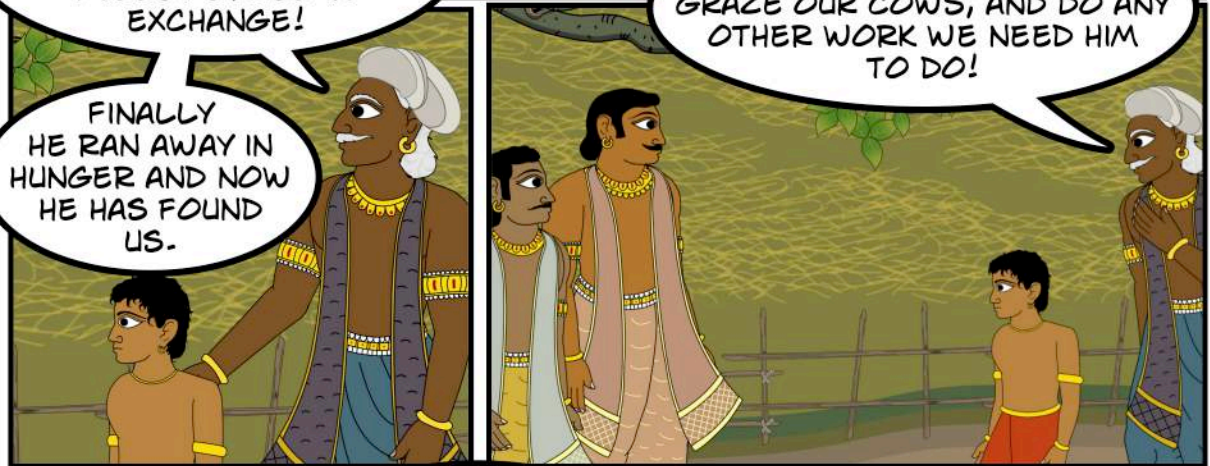
HE HAS COME TO US FROM PONNIVALA. HIS PARENTS DIED WHEN HE WAS VERY YOUNG.

THEN HIS CLANSMEN GRABBED HIS FAMILY LANDS!

WE WILL TAKE THIS BOY IN. HE CAN GRAZE OUR COWS, AND DO ANY OTHER WORK WE NEED HIM TO DO!

HE WAS TOLD TO GRAZE BUFFALOES FOR THEM, BUT WAS ONLY FED MILLET GRUEL IN EXCHANGE!

FINALLY HE RAN AWAY IN HUNGER AND NOW HE HAS FOUND US.

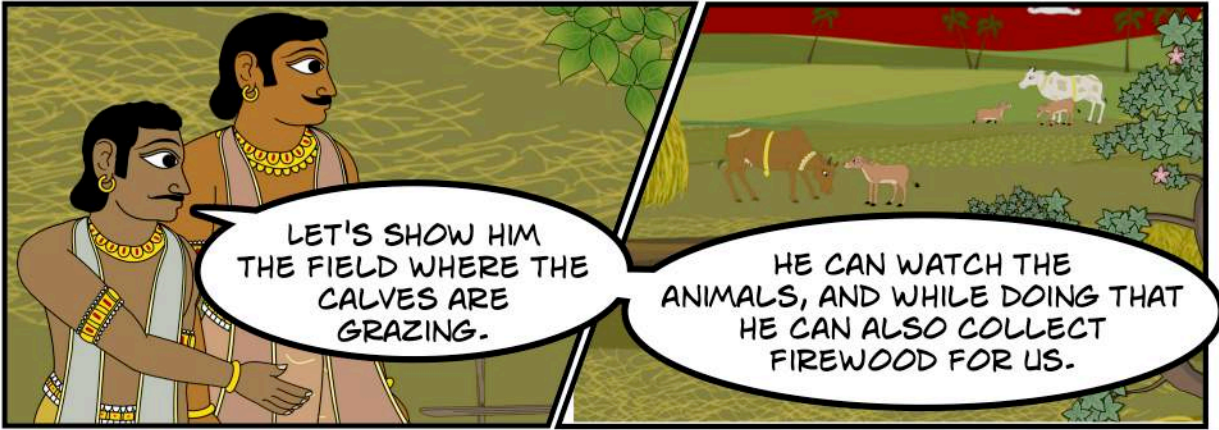


OH FATHER, WE DO NOT MIND TAKING THIS BOY.

BUT SURELY YOU KNOW WHAT OUR MOTHER US LIKE ! DO YOU THINK SHE WILL WASTE RICE ON HIM?



ANYWAY, LET'S ASK HIM TO DO SOME WORK AND THEN WE CAN AT LEAST GIVE HIM SOME LUNCH.



LET'S SHOW HIM THE FIELD WHERE THE CALVES ARE GRAZING.

HE CAN WATCH THE ANIMALS, AND WHILE DOING THAT HE CAN ALSO COLLECT FIREWOOD FOR US.



THE FATHER GIVES KUNNUTAIYA A SHARP SICKLE TO CUT OFF THE BRANCHES. THEY THEN SEND HIM TO THE FIELD WHERE THICK BUSHES GROW.



THESE BRANCHES ARE SO DENSE! HOW WILL I EVER CUT THEM DOWN?

OH VISHNU!

IF I WAS TRULY BORN OF THE GODS' SPECIAL CREATIVE POWER..



THEN LET ALL THE BRANCHES ON THESE THORN BUSHES FALL TO THE GROUND WITH JUST ONE THWACK FROM MY KNIFE!



Whoosh



VISHNU HEARS KUNNUTAIYA'S PRAYER AND USES HIS POWER TO CUT DOWN THE BRANCHES.

WE MUST GIVE THIS BOY REGULAR WORK.

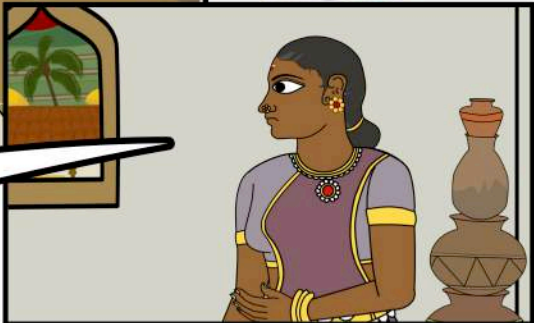
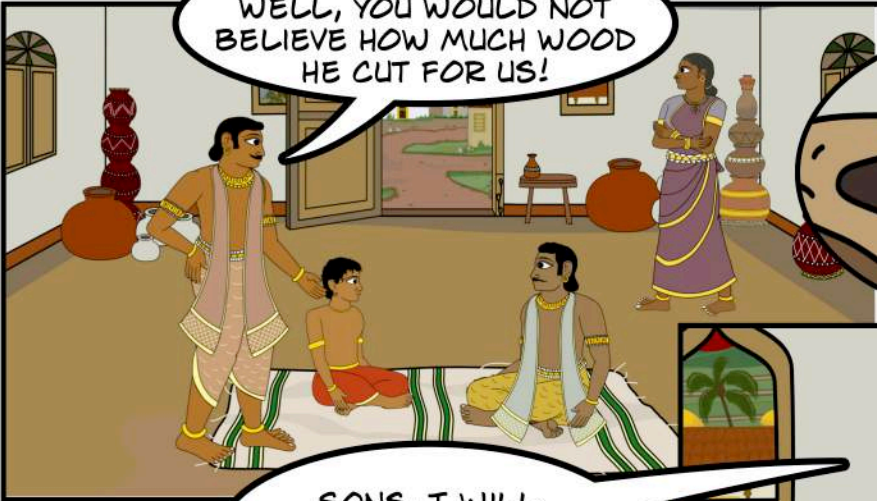
FIFTY MEN WORKING FOR DAYS COULD NOT HAVE CUT THIS MANY BRANCHES!



LOOK AT THE SPEED WITH WHICH HE CAN GATHER WOOD! WE MUST NOT LET THIS BOY GO!



THE MEN BRING KUNNUTAIYA TO THEIR HOME, WHERE THE FARMER'S WIFE IS NOT HAPPY TO SEE THE YOUNG ORPHAN.



BUT AS SOON AS THE BOYS ARE GONE, THEIR MOTHER UNLEASHES HER ANGER ON THE BOY. SHE VIOLENTLY GRABS KUNNUTAIYA AND THROWS HIM AGAINST A WALL.



YOU VILLAIN!
COME HERE!



HEY
YOU!

DON'T YOU LIKE MY COOKING?
DRINK THIS UP RIGHT AWAY!

THE WOMAN THEN THRUSTS THE MILLET GRUEL AT HIM, AND EXPECTS THE POOR ORPHAN TO EAT IT. SHE DOESN'T REALIZE THAT HER SON IS WATCHING FROM THE DOORWAY.





THE ELDER SON GRABS HIS MOTHER'S HAIR, AND STRIKES HER FOUR TIMES ON THE CHEEK. KUNNUTAIYA SEES HIS CHANCE, AND RUNS AWAY AGAIN.





KUNNUTAIYA RUNS AND RUNS. HE HAS NOT FOUND A PLACE TO LIVE. HE STOPS TO REST ON A FLAT STONE, AND THINKS OF SHIVA. HE IS SCARED, LONELY, AND VERY HUNGRY.



OH LORD! HOW LONG MUST I LIVE LIKE THIS? I AM STARVING! I AM TIRED AND I HAVE NO FRIENDS. PLEASE DO SOMETHING TO HELP ME!

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO POOR KUNNUTAIYA NOW? WILL HIS SAD CIRCUMSTANCES IMPROVE? WILL THE LONELY, HUNGRY ORPHAN EVER FIND A PLACE TO SETTLE DOWN? WILL HE EVER ENJOY GOOD FOOD AND THE PRAISE OF A GENTLE MASTER?



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/comic3

The Legend of
Ponnivala

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