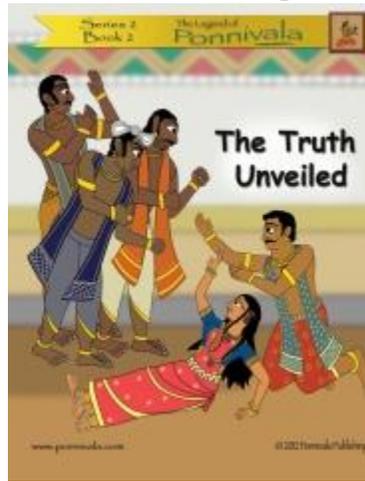


Episode 15 – The Truth Unveiled (Sub Stories a, b, and c)

Resource Materials: Individual comic books, a graphic novel set, or 26 videos

VISIT our SHOP: Choose the retelling that works best for you



15-a The Royal Couple Are Forced Into Exile

The scheming clansmen now begin to threaten the king, using the excuse that he has no male heirs. They beat and bully the family mercilessly until the latter become resigned to leaving their lands and to seek refuge elsewhere. They first go to the village where they have traditional ties and loyal workers. But these allies warn that their presence puts them all in danger of being beaten and further harassed by the same clansmen who just pushed the couple out of their palace.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: If you were pushed out of your home by a landlord, or someone else who didn't want you there, where would you go? Who would you turn to for help?

COMMENTARY: In medieval India villages were grouped into clusters (called naadus). Each of these territorial units was considered to be a functioning entity that shared temple festivals and whose residents exchanged goods, labor and a common political identity. A rough parallel might be the French "Canton." Often such a unit was identified with one particularly powerful landowner in the area. Ponnivala (naadu) was such an area and one of its key settlements was called Aniyappur. There were a lot of artisans living in Aniyappur. The "clansmen" in this story live in a different cluster which is called Tangavala (naadu). The heroes' family thought they would be "safe" in Aniyappur because this was an "allied settlement." But the locals knew that the royal couple would be vulnerable to attack there because neighboring Tangavala wasn't far away.

15-b The Wandering Family Finds Refuge in a Horse Stable

The king, queen and their little baby daughter now leave their familiar Ponnivala territory all together. They decide to retreat to the forested hills where a group of tribal hunters live. There they are offered safe haven and a good meal. But a problem soon appears. The destitute family is offered food by their hunter-hosts, but they try (politely) to refuse. The hunter king suspects (correctly) that this refusal is for caste reasons. In simple terms the farmers perceive themselves to be superior to a group of hunters and don't want to take

food from the hands of this “inferior” community. Now the hunter king gets angry and the only refuge he will offer the destitute couple is to set up house in an old horse stable.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: It isn’t always easy to find a welcoming host when you are a new comer without pocket money. New immigrants often end up in second-rate housing because they lack the knowledge and power to command better. Do you know a story of an immigrant family that you can compare to this story about the homeless king and queen?

COMMENTARY: Food refusal was a very common way of claiming status in medieval India. Remnants of this way of thinking persist in India today. Food exchange can be a very “political” minefield. Hosts want you to take food from their homes, but doing as a stranger can put you in a “dependent” relationship. Some castes (basically occupational groupings) are more sensitive to this kind of symbolism than others. Food is a powerful symbol because it is going “inside” the body and can be seen as affecting your degree of personal “purity.”

15-c **Two Hidden Sons Learn The Truth About Their Parents**

They have no food and the wife of the king is forced to offer to do common labor (pounding rice) in exchange for food supplies. The other women of the village reject her as too frail and inexperienced to do hard work, but with the help of Lord Vishnu she manages to husk prodigious amounts of paddy rice. Meanwhile the boys grow fast, cared for lovingly by the goddess. One day she is singing a lullaby to the boys that makes a vague reference to their parentage. The younger son (the aggressive one) instantly demands to know who their real parents are and where they are located. The goddess now reveals to the boys their true identity and promises to return the twins to their parents as soon as she can discover their whereabouts.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Outwardly the queen looks like she has never done hard physical work. But the other working women who see her do not know about her amazing inner determination. Do you know a story about a woman who had to support her family and who surprised everyone with her huge success?

COMMENTARY: The queen is very determined. She also has some magical help from Lord Vishnu. Just like the story of her trip to the gates of heaven and her twenty one years of penance there, this woman again surprises all with her inner strength. Again (as in Ep. 12-b through Ep. 13-d) she is the pillar of strength in a time of struggle and hardship. Her husband, though well-meaning, contributes little. She must carry and support him through her efforts. This is a good episode to use if you want students to discuss the “power of women.”