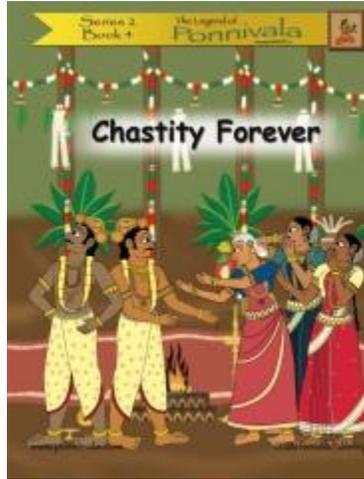


Episode 17 – Chastity Forever (Sub Stories a, b, and c)

Resource Materials: Individual comic books, a graphic novel set, or 26 videos
VISIT our SHOP: Choose the retelling that works best for you



17-a A Very Strange Wedding Occurs

The big wedding day is arranged. The two girls that are being held in waiting as the brides (see episode #10) are returned from their “stone” forms to flesh and blood for the event. The wedding is “simple” by Indian standards and quickly completed. Most important is the fact that neither groom sees his wife’s face during the ceremony. Furthermore, they never touch, as silver “finger extensions” are used at the point when a couple would normally link hands. The younger twin stays only the minimal amount of time at the event. Soon afterwards the two wives are “jailed” in a remote and very plain palace. There they live alone and are forced to spin endless hanks of cotton thread day after day

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Have you ever heard of brides that were forced to spin thread day after day in a locked palace? Try looking up “spinning in myths and folktales,” on the internet for some interesting contrasts (and parallels)

COMMENTARY: This forced spinning in a kind of jail may seem like a cruel fate for the heroes’ wives. It is. But looked at symbolically it is interesting. First off, spinning is often associated with “fertility” in myth. Just as the twin heroes store up their sexual power through abstinence, perhaps their wives store up extra fertility through spinning. The story doesn’t provide a rationale, but we can guess. There is a possible parallel with the queen (the heroes’ mother) who stores up her energies by sitting on a high pillar for 21 years and then receives so much “fertility power” from the gods that she can distribute it throughout her kingdom. The heroes’ sister (as we shall see) never marries at all. In a sense she also stores up her fertility for later. Taking another tack, this is the “beginning of a much greater family breakdown that the heroes’ actions result in ... and that can be seen as the story progresses. Just as the kingdom can have no legitimate heirs with the two key wives locked up, so do social bonds more generally begin to unravel from this point forward.

17-b The Parents Make Their Death-Bed Wishes Known

Meanwhile the twin brothers return to a pleasant and carefree life in their much grander palace. In particular, they pass the time by playing dice with Lord Vishnu, who descends from heaven to visit them for just this purpose. The two young men also gradually begin to concern themselves with the affairs of their parent's kingdom. Foreseeing their own death, this kind and gentle senior couple now counsel their sons. They ask them to refrain from pursuing any grudges. They request that they be wise, gentle and calm rulers. In particular, the parents ask their sons never to pick a fight with family rivals. They also ask that they take good care of their sister and see that she is well married. Soon, however, the last rites for these two seniors are performed. The great Yeman, Lord of death, is sent to down by the great god Shiva. His "accountant" has told him that his book states that the days this couple can spend on earth are now used up. So Shiva asks Yeman to bring the lives of these two quickly back to his Himalayan abode.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: This is like the heroes' parents' "last will and Testament." Is it good advice? Would you change anything they say? Would you add anything to fit better with modern times?

COMMENTARY: The advice that the parents give their sons will be critical in the coming episodes, mainly because each and every piece of advice they give will be ignored. This could be taken as an indication of a "rift" or a change between generations. It can also be understood as presaging the change for a society of small and relatively peaceable kingdoms to one where warfare will dominate. When conducting war brave warriors are needed. The two brothers (plus their wives and their sister) could be understood to be "storing up their powers" for just such an eventuality (see episode 17-a).

17-c The Sons Ignore Their Parents' Final Words

Not long afterwards, the younger twin wants to begin settling old family scores. He singles out the enemy clansmen, the same men who once forced his parents into exile. The elder brother is very reluctant to endorse this move, but he is soon pulled into action by his fiery younger sibling. The two of them go to the palace dressing room and prepare for an attack. They wrap their fine turbans on their heads, put their swords in their scabbards, and call for their powerful horses. Their assistant (son of the untouchable described earlier...who is also their guardian) helps with these preparations. The two young kings soon leave the palace on horseback for the clansmen's key village. Their powerful assistant follows at a run behind them.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Why do you think the heroes decide to ignore their parents' advice so quickly? Would it be hard to write a good story where these two men just decide to do everything their parents told them to do?

COMMENTARY: The parents' advice obviously "sets up" the heroes to break their mould in some way. They want to be different from their parents. But it is important to look more closely. Actually this is where the difference between the two brothers begins to take on real importance. One can suggest that they are meant to define two kinds of kingship: the older son is gentle, loving and patient, the younger one is aggressive and impulsive. He is focused on defending the family's honor and good name. The elder son is much like his father (and we know he was gentle and trusting to a fault). The other sibling represents a new model, perhaps a new age. He is the "ring leader" and (as we will see) he usually gets his way.