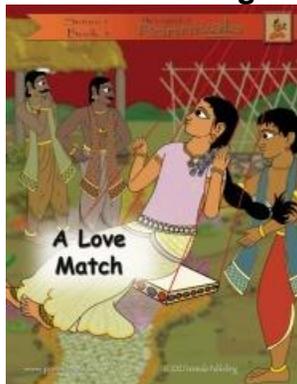


Episode 4 – A Love Match (Sub Stories a, b, c and d)

Resource Materials: Graphic comic books, ipad books, + videos)

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



4-a) REFUGE FOUND AT LAST

The little hero now runs towards a temple he sees on the horizon. On the outskirts of that village he finds a wealthy farmer sitting at the local (Ganesh) temple. The man strikes up a conversation and asks the boy where he is from. Learning that he is an orphan from a farming family he decides to take him in. He is treated kindly for a change. He is offered a bath and food and then hired on as a shepherd. He is treated well and (we learn later) he stays there for some twenty years.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Can you find a story in the news or on the internet about an orphan or an adopted child and the challenges they have suffered? Did someone kind take them in?

COMMENTARY: Many orphanages, children's aid groups and "shelters" serve this kind of role today. They also "place" kids with foster parents. Most of these people are happy to share their positive stories. This is a happy outcome tale. It provides a counterpoint to the misery we see the hero undergo in substory 3a. You could select any story about a 'good Samaritan' who takes in a waif and treats that boy or girl with love and compassion to use as a good discussion parallel here.

4-b) THE HERO FALLS IN LOVE WITH A GIRL WHOSE SOCIAL RANK IS MUCH TOO HIGH

The boy-hero finally finds refuge with a kind family of rich landowners. He is assigned work as a shepherd and also asked to push a garden swing for his two bosses' lovely young daughter. The hero notices her charms and gradually falls in love. But the boy does not dare to show his interest. He is a mere worker in the eyes of these powerful farmers. Time passes. He keeps his feelings of affection hidden.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Do you know the story of someone, especially a boy, who "fell in love" with a girl who was socially "out of reach?" Maybe she was from a different country? Maybe her parents didn't approve of his "background." Did he hide his affection for her for many years?

COMMENTARY: This is the classic story of love "strings true" across all social barriers. This particular mismatch is made all the more poignant because it features a boy in love

with a woman of high status. Usually it is less radical for a girl to think of “marrying up,” than for a man to dream of this. India fits the common pattern. Women of high status are well-protected from the advances of would-be lovers of lower status than their own. Though very “radical,” the “romance” in this story is also very innocent. Nothing at all inappropriate happens between these two lovers. On the contrary, the girl’s exceptional innocence and purity is carefully preserved. Their dilemma, therefore, has to be “solved” by some type of exterior intervention.

4-c) **THE HERO’S TRUE STATUS IS REVEALED TO HIM BY A GOD**

The goddess who looks after the boy’s (unknown) former family lands is unhappy. Her temple on earth has not had a good cleaning for twenty years. So she goes to her brother, Lord Vishnu, to seek his advice. Promising to help, Vishnu takes the form of an elderly beggar and visits the shepherd boy at the cattlefold where he sleeps. He now “reveals” that the girl the hero admires is really an appropriate marriage mate (because he is an orphan he doesn’t know about his true parents, who were also local farmer-kings). The shepherd is shocked at this amazing news. At first he drives the mendicant away. Trying a second time, Lord Vishnu casts a spell over the boy. In this way he manages to persuade the humble shepherd/hero to request the hand of the girl he loves, in marriage.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Can you continue the story above? What happened? Did the parents of the girl finally come to know about the boy who was in love with their daughter? Did the girl return the affection? How did the situation evolve? Did the family finally come to accept the boy as their daughter’s suitor? What did they learn that made them grow to respect him?

COMMENTARY: This is the classic “revelation” event. Various folk stories from around the world chose to reveal situation-shattering news in many different ways. In this case the details that solve the hero’s dilemma are delivered by a god. But there is also teasing and testing in this important sub-story. Lord Vishnu is having fun. He is behaving like a trickster, egging on a reluctant subject while testing the hero’s inner self-confidence at every step. At first he will fail..... As is typical of most folk traditions, the test will eventually happen three times....

4-d) **TRIAL #1: THE HERO SUMMONS HIS COURAGE BUT FAILS TO SUSTAIN IT**

The hero, given courage, follows Vishnu to the palace in the early morning and stands on the path where her two elder brothers will soon pass on their way to their local temple to pray. But his steps are tentative. When the men see him he loses his courage to speak out.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Do you know the story of someone who was asked to make a declaration in front of elders (perhaps a judge, or a boss at work) about his real identity but was just too afraid to speak out? Maybe he has something to say about others, some wrong that he saw that others do not want revealed.

COMMENTARY: Here again we have a classic “folktale” scenario. The godlike figure “tests” the hero. The first time the young man fails. He is thoroughly intimidated by his two land-owning bosses. Any story where a person’s inner strength and conviction are tested will work in this situation. It is the old scenario... “if at first you don’t succeed try, and then try again.”