

Series 1  
Book 1

The Legend of  
**Ponnivala**



# In The Beginning





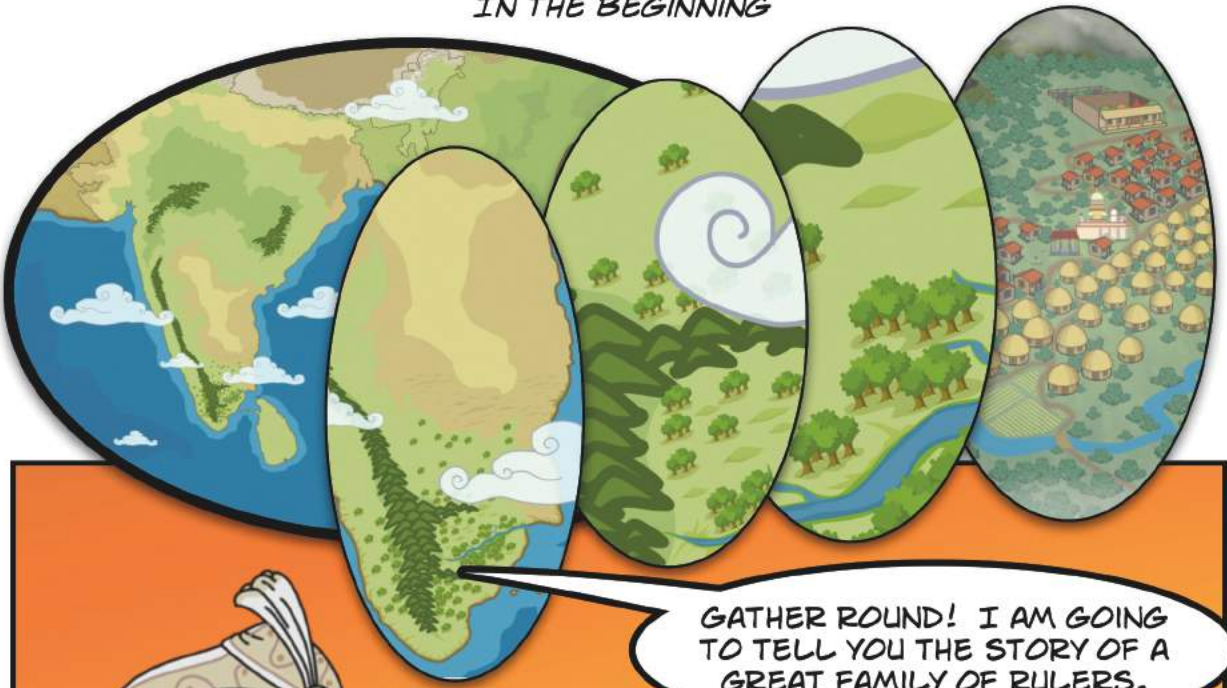


**IN THE  
BEGINNING**  
SERIES 1 COMIC 1

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**THE GODDESS  
PARVATI CREATES  
NINE FARMER-  
BROTHERS. A  
CHOLA KING GIVES  
THEM LAND IN  
PONNIVALA. LORD  
VISHNU HELPS  
THEM ESTABLISH A  
SOCIAL CONTRACT  
WITH PEOPLE  
ALREADY RESIDENT  
IN THE AREA.  
THEN LORD SHIVA  
CURSES THE  
ELDEST FARMER,  
DUE TO THE  
ACCIDENTAL DEATH  
OF SOME COWS.  
THE SURVIVAL OF  
THIS FAMILY HANGS  
IN THE BALANCE,  
NOW THE BARD  
BEGINS TO  
SPEAK....**



GATHER ROUND! I AM GOING TO TELL YOU THE STORY OF A GREAT FAMILY OF RULERS.

IT WASN'T IN MY TIME, IT WASN'T IN YOUR TIME, IT WAS LONG AGO, DEEP INSIDE SOUTH INDIA, IN THE TIME OF THE GREAT CHOLA KINGS.

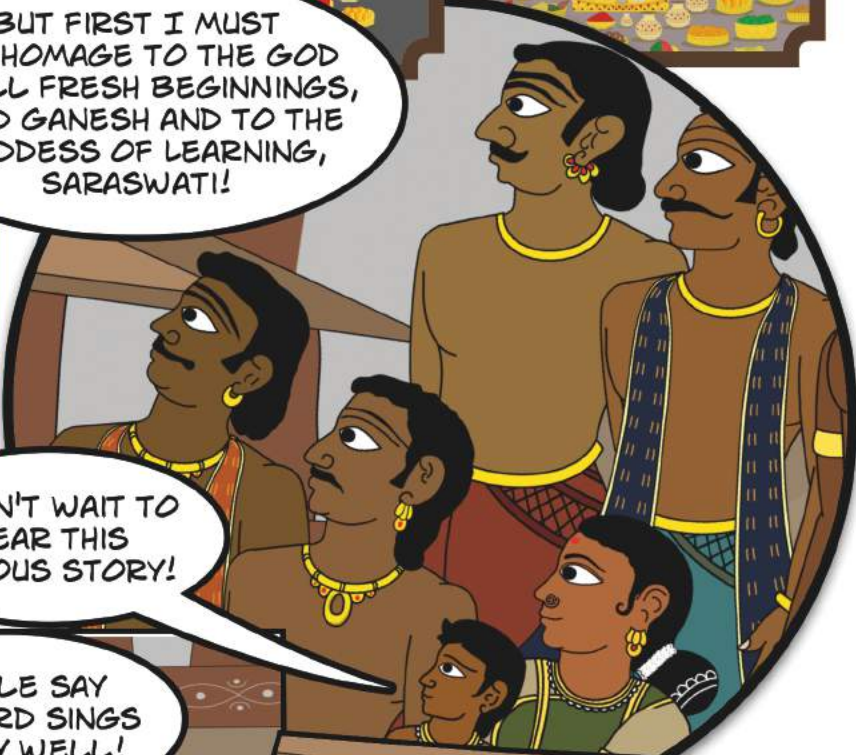
THERE LIVED AN IMPORTANT FAMILY WHO RULED THE LAND OF PONNIVALA; A LUSH, FERTILE AREA WATERED BY THE KAVERI RIVER ...



THE LEGEND OF PONNIVALA



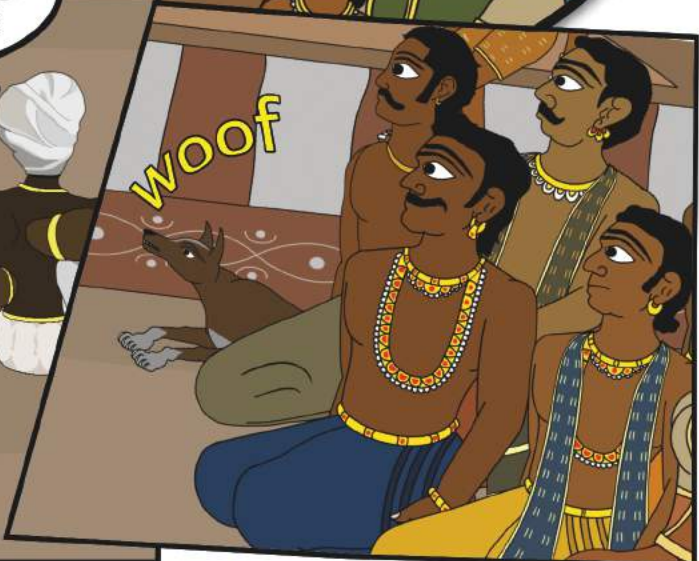
BUT FIRST I MUST  
PAY HOMAGE TO THE GOD  
OF ALL FRESH BEGINNINGS,  
LORD GANESH AND TO THE  
GODDESS OF LEARNING,  
SARASWATI!



I CAN'T WAIT TO  
HEAR THIS  
FAMOUS STORY!



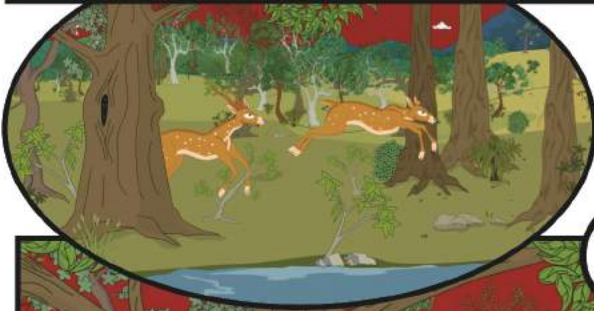
PEOPLE SAY  
THIS BARD SINGS  
REALLY WELL!





IN THE BEGINNING

LORD SHIVA AND HIS WIFE PARVATI ARE SITTING IN THEIR MOUNTAIN ABODE WATCHING THE WORLD BELOW. THIS GREAT ASCETIC GURU IS MOSTLY INTERESTED IN MEDITATION, BUT THE GODDESS WANTS TO HELP LIFE PROSPER... EVERYWHERE.



LOOK AT THAT BEAUTIFUL FOREST DOWN THERE!



chatter  
chatter

gurgle  
gurgle

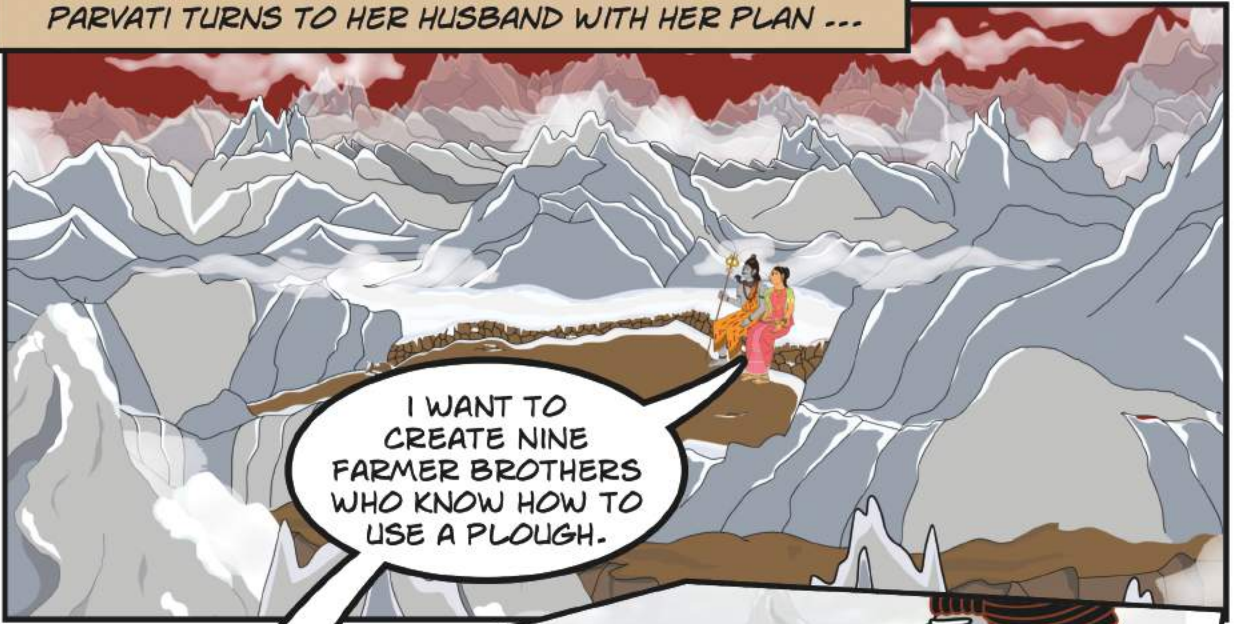


IT IS LOVELY, BUT I DO NOT SEE ANY PLOUGHED FIELDS! THERE ARE NO CROPS BEING GROWN.

I WANT TO SEE THIS BEAUTIFUL AREA BECOME BOUNTIFUL.



PARVATI TURNS TO HER HUSBAND WITH HER PLAN ...



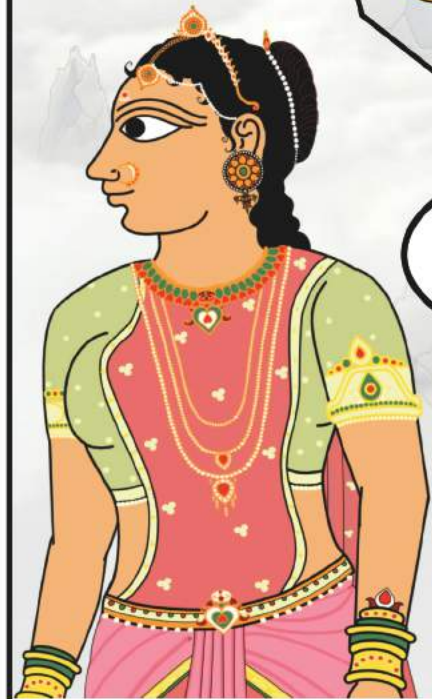
I WANT TO  
CREATE NINE  
FARMER BROTHERS  
WHO KNOW HOW TO  
USE A PLOUGH.

LET THEM TILL  
THE SWEET EARTH SO  
THAT EVERY SEASON THE  
FIELDS WILL BE GREEN  
AND LUSH.

IS THIS  
YOUR  
WISH?



OKAY. IF  
IT PLEASES YOU,  
THEN USE YOUR  
POWERS AS YOU  
WISH.



AND SO PARVATI STEPS FORTH AND SUMMONS HER GREAT POWERS.

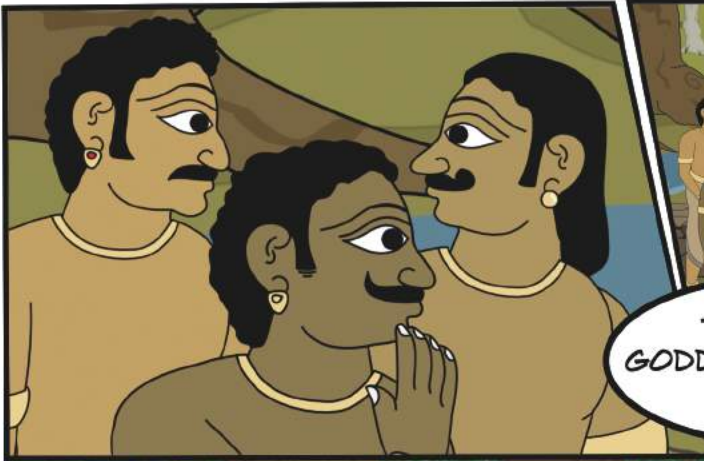


SHE CREATES NINE FARMERS. THESE NINE MEN APPEAR NEAR THE LOCAL TEMPLE. PARVATI CALLS TO THE BROTHERS FROM HEAVEN.





THE LEGEND OF PONNIVALA



THE GREAT  
GODDESS GAVE US A  
PLOUGH!



SHE WANTS US TO TILL THE  
SOIL AND BRING FORTH FINE CROPS.  
IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO LOOK  
AFTER THIS LAND WELL.



THERE ARE SO MANY TREES!  
WHERE SHALL WE START?



IN THE BEGINNING

THE NINE BROTHERS REALIZE THAT THEY NEEDED A HOME THAT COULD SHELTER THEM FROM THE SUN AND FROM THE RAIN. ...

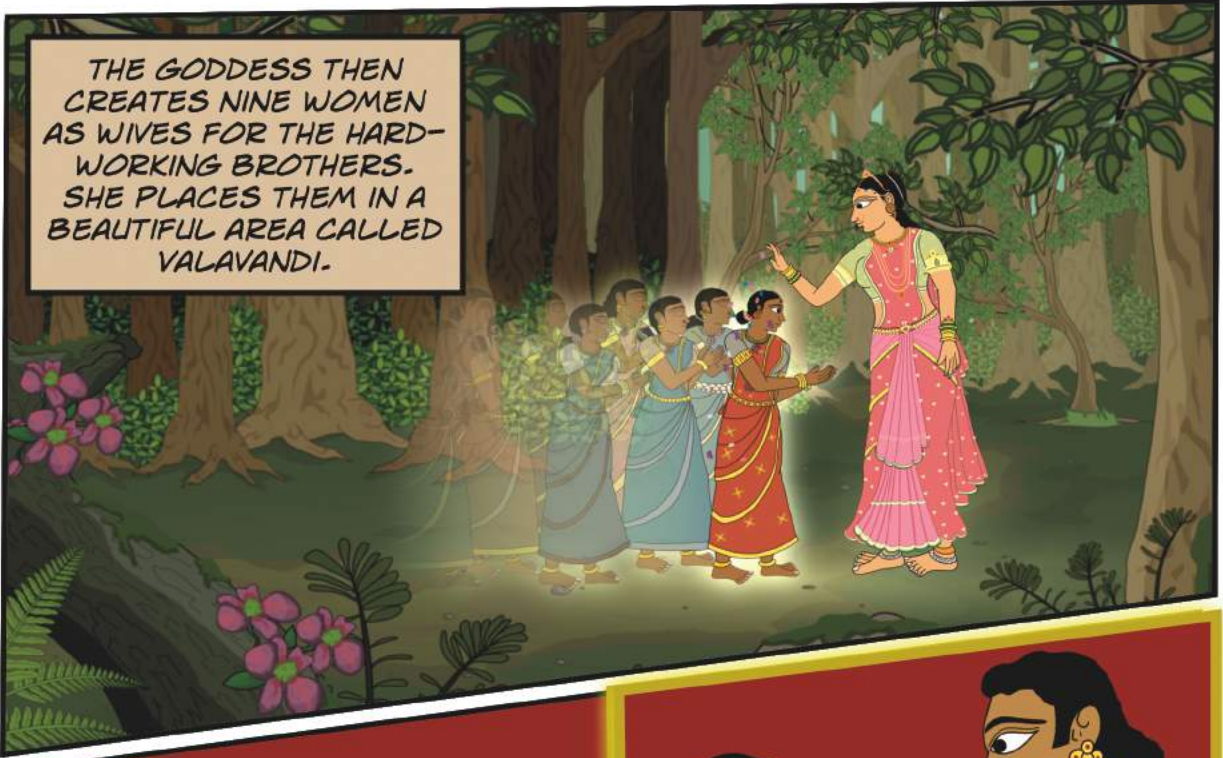
HOLD STILL WHILE I TIE THIS ROPE TIGHT!

HERE! GRAB THIS LOAD OF MUD I SCRAPED FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR WELL!

THE NINE BROTHERS START TO PLOUGH. THEY WORK HARD AND THEY SOON SETTLED IN TO THEIR NEW LIFE.



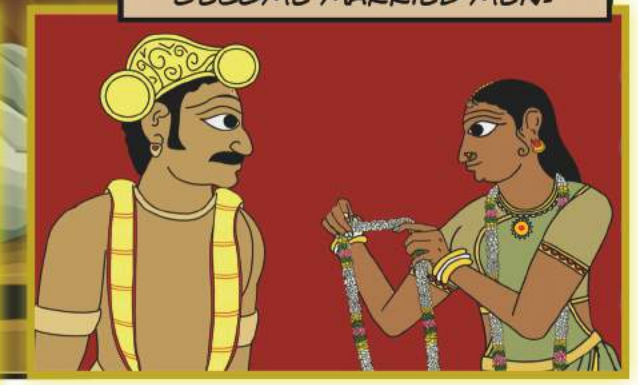
THE GODDESS THEN CREATES NINE WOMEN AS WIVES FOR THE HARD-WORKING BROTHERS. SHE PLACES THEM IN A BEAUTIFUL AREA CALLED VALAVANDI.



SOON ALL NINE BROTHERS PLACE GARLANDS OVER THESE WOMEN'S NECKS AND BECOME MARRIED MEN.



OH SWEETHEART! I WANT YOU TO BE MY WIFE!





## IN THE BEGINNING

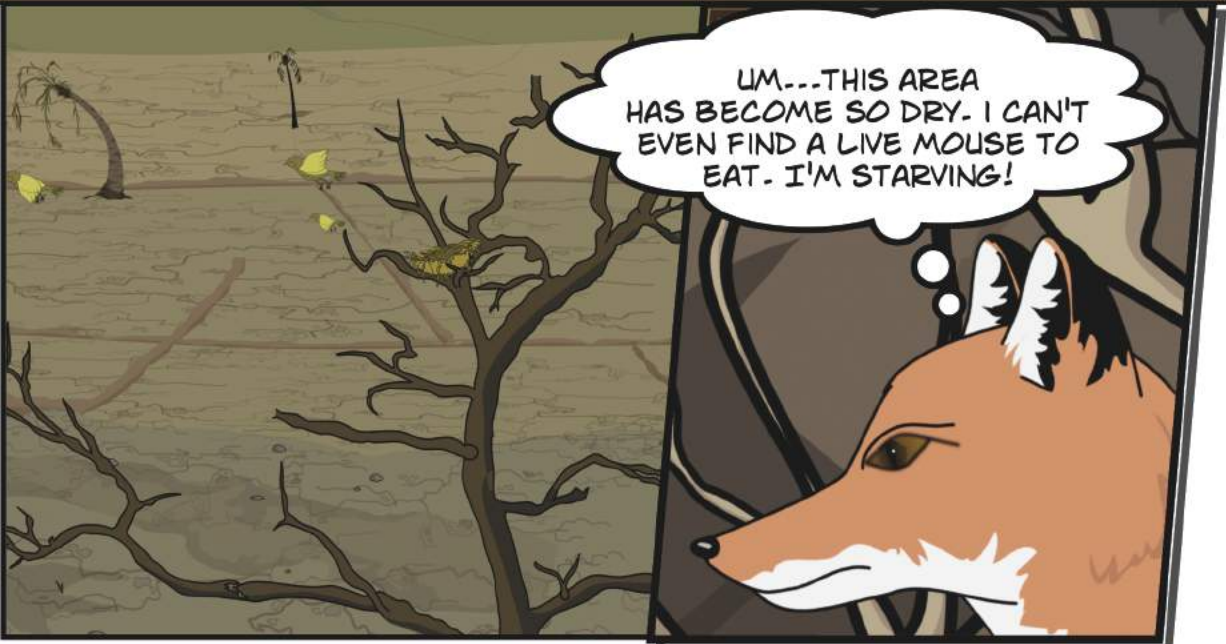


THE FARMERS FOLLOW PARVATI'S INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. THEY LABOUR HARD TO CREATE PROSPEROUS FARM FIELDS. EVERYONE FEELS GOOD ABOUT THE WORK THEY ARE DOING. THE NINE BROTHERS ALL HAVE WIVES NOW, AND NEW FAMILIES ARE STARTED.



scrape  
scrape

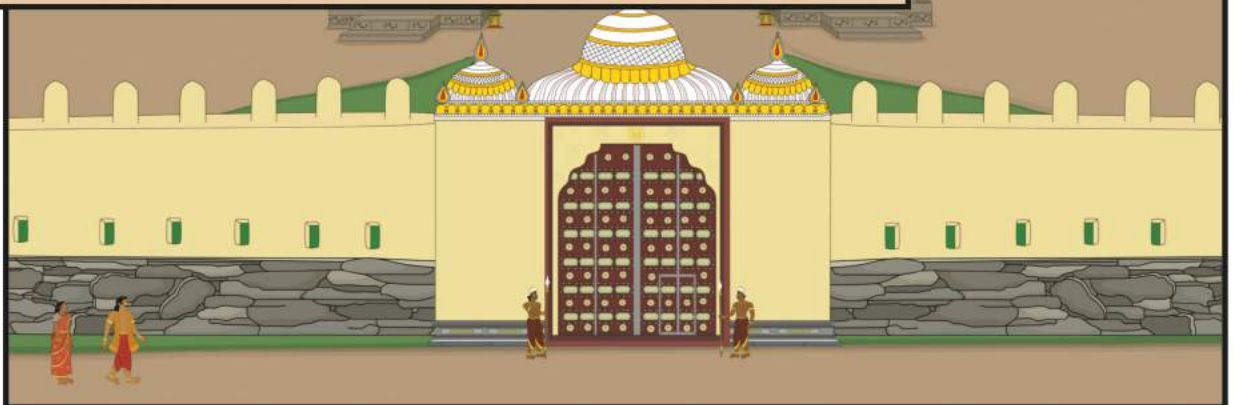
BUT THEN A TERRIBLE THING HAPPENS. IT DOES NOT RAIN, AND A GREAT FAMINE SPREADS THROUGH THE AREA. THERE IS NO FOOD LEFT ANYWHERE. KOLATTA, THE ELDEST BROTHER, NOW BECOMES DESPERATE.







AND SO KOLATTA AND HIS WIFE ARIYANACCI SET OFF  
FOR THE CHOLA KINGDOM, HOPEFUL OF FINDING WORK.





IN THE BEGINNING

THE THREE GREAT KINGS, CHOLA, CHERA, AND PANDIYA, ARE TOGETHER FOR A MEETING.

GREETINGS TO YOU! WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

MY NAME IS KOLATTA, AND I AM FROM THE LAND CALLED VELLIVALA.

OUR FIELDS HAVE BEEN STRUCK BY A TERRIBLE DROUGHT, AND I AM UNABLE TO FARM ANY LONGER.

YES, I HAVE HEARD OF THIS FAMINE. IT IS A TERRIBLE THING!

WE DID NOT KNOW THERE WERE FARMERS IN VELLIVALA!

IF YOU WISH, WE HAVE WORK FOR YOU HERE. WE CAN PAY 20 MEASURES OF GRAIN A MONTH!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS, GREAT KING!





ALTHOUGH KOLATTA HAS FOUND WORK IN THE CHOLA KINGDOM, HIS EIGHT BROTHERS ARE STILL STARVING IN VELLIVALA. THEY WONDER WHERE THEIR ELDER BROTHER HAS GONE.



WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM OUR ELDER BROTHER IN SO LONG!

PERHAPS HE HAS GONE TO WORK IN THE CHOLA KINGDOM?

LET US GO AND FIND HIM!

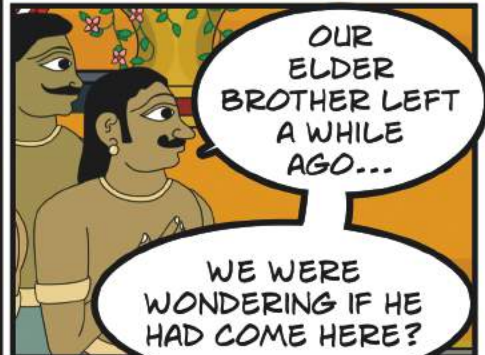


BLESSINGS TO YOU ALL! WHO ARE YOU?

GREAT KING, WE ARE FARMERS FROM THE VELLIVALA REGION. OUR LANDS HAVE SUFFERED A TERRIBLE DROUGHT!



YES, I HAVE HEARD!



OUR ELDER BROTHER LEFT A WHILE AGO...

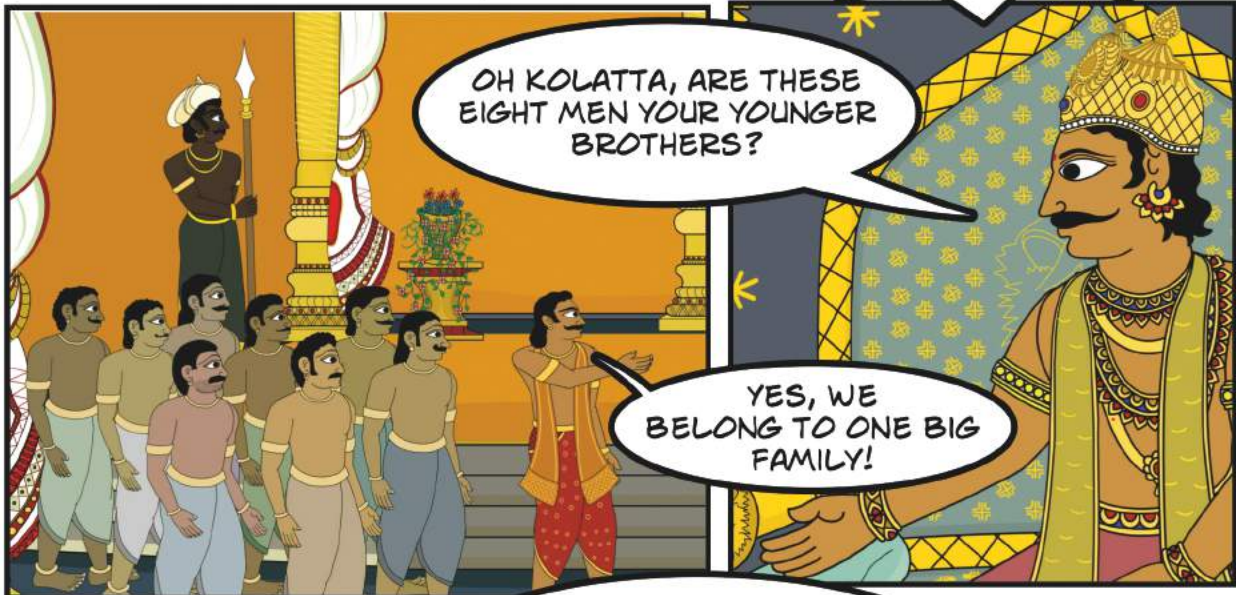
WE WERE WONDERING IF HE HAD COME HERE?





SO KOLATTA IS YOUR ELDER BROTHER! YES, HE IS HERE...

SERVANT! GO AND FETCH KOLATTA!



OH KOLATTA, ARE THESE EIGHT MEN YOUR YOUNGER BROTHERS?

YES, WE BELONG TO ONE BIG FAMILY!



VERY WELL THEN. WILL ALL EIGHT OF YOU ALSO WORK FOR ME ?

I WILL PAY YOU AT THE SAME RATE AS YOUR ELDER BROTHER.

WE WILL!

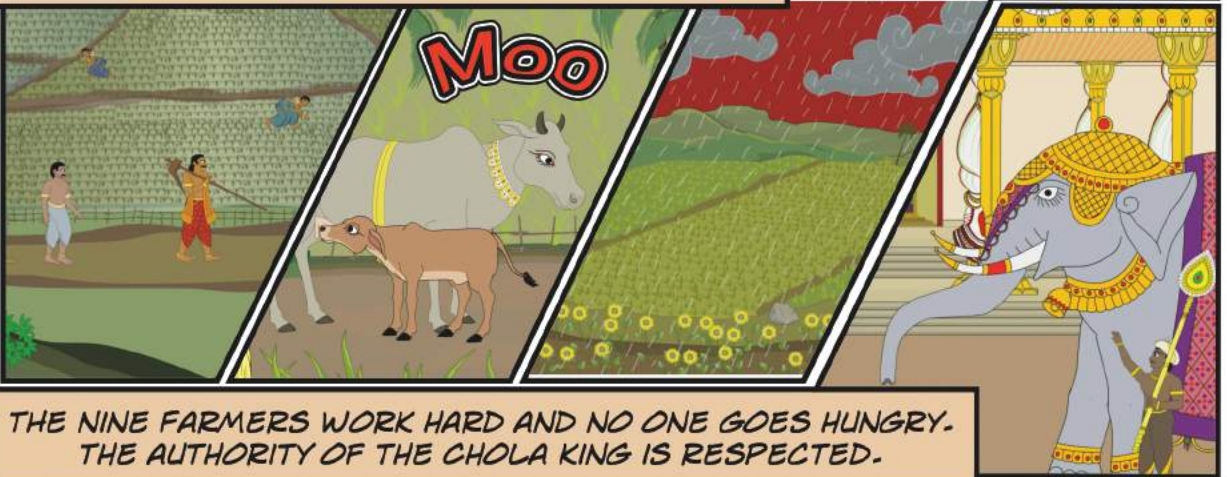
OH KING THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING!



# THE LEGEND OF PONNIVALA



TIME PASSES AND IT CONTINUES TO RAIN WELL. THE LANDS OF THE CHOLA MONARCH PROSPER.



THE NINE FARMERS WORK HARD AND NO ONE GOES HUNGRY. THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHOLA KING IS RESPECTED.



IT PLEASURES ME TO SEE PROSPERITY ALL ACROSS OUR BEAUTIFUL LANDS!

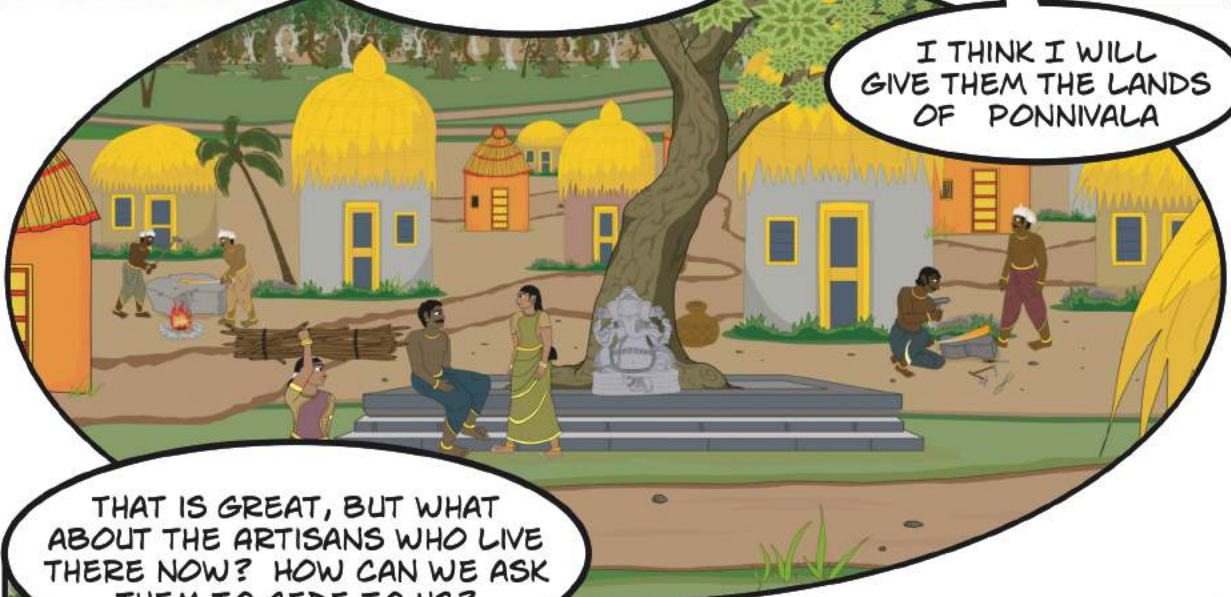




EVER SINCE THOSE SKILLED FARMERS HAVE COME TO US, OUR FIELDS HAVE FLOURISHED!

THEIR HARD WORK HAS CAUSED THIS WHOLE LAND TO BECOME GREEN AND BEAUTIFUL!

I FEEL I SHOULD REWARD THESE MEN FOR THEIR DEDICATION!



I THINK I WILL GIVE THEM THE LANDS OF PONNIVALA

THAT IS GREAT, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ARTISANS WHO LIVE THERE NOW? HOW CAN WE ASK THEM TO CEDE TO US?



PERHAPS IF WE TALK TO THE ARTISANS WE CAN SOLVE THIS PROBLEM!

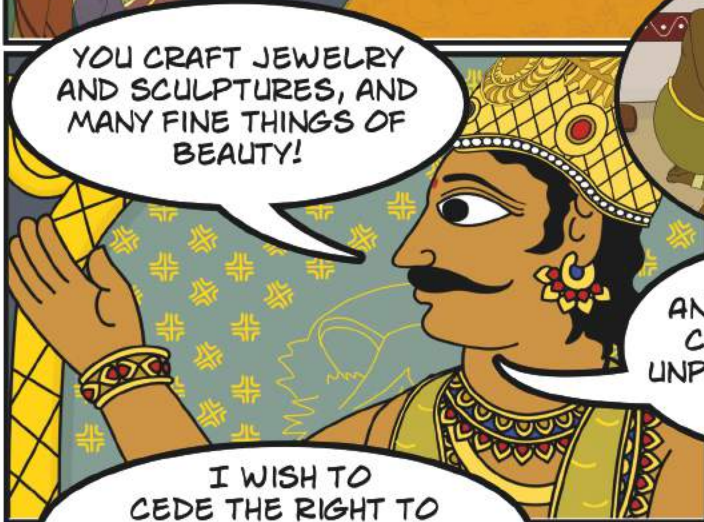
I SHALL HAVE A MEMBER FROM EACH OF THOSE POWERFUL FAMILIES SUMMONED HERE.



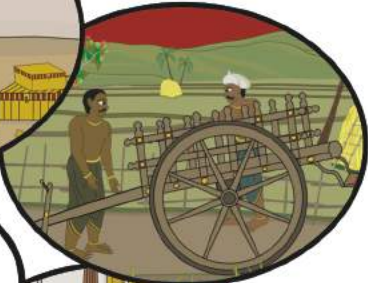


THANK YOU ALL FOR GATHERING HERE. THE FARMERS STANDING BEFORE ME ARE EXPERT PLOUGHMEN.

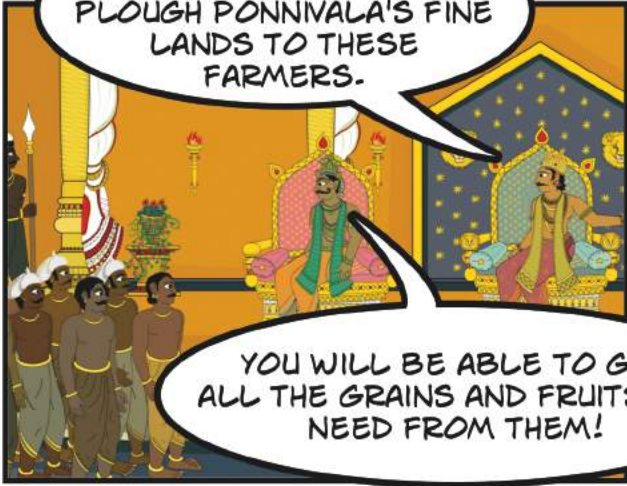
YOU ARTISANS ARE GIFTED WITH OTHER SKILLS!



YOU CRAFT JEWELRY AND SCULPTURES, AND MANY FINE THINGS OF BEAUTY!



AND YOUR OX CARTS ARE UNPARALLELED



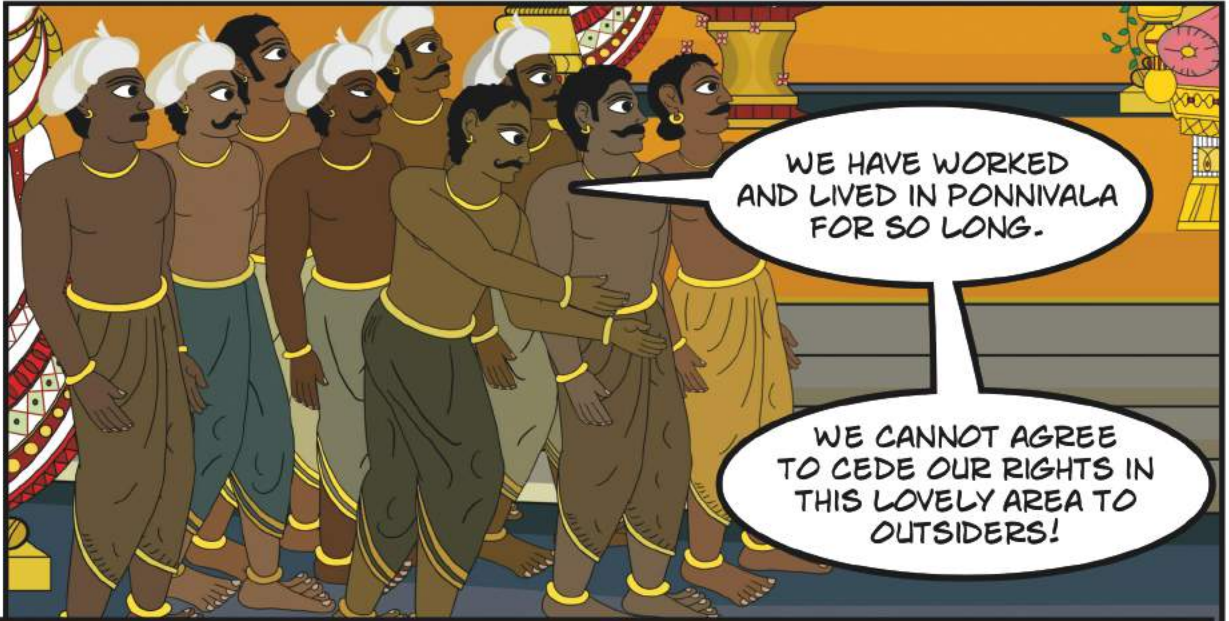
I WISH TO CEDE THE RIGHT TO PLOUGH PONNIVALA'S FINE LANDS TO THESE FARMERS.

YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GET ALL THE GRAINS AND FRUITS YOU NEED FROM THEM!



OH NO, MY KING!





WE HAVE WORKED AND LIVED IN PONNIVALA FOR SO LONG.

WE CANNOT AGREE TO CEDE OUR RIGHTS IN THIS LOVELY AREA TO OUTSIDERS!

THE DEBATE LASTS FOR DAYS, AND NO VERDICT IS REACHED. FINALLY, THE CHOLA KING LEAVES THE PALACE AND CALLS ON LORD VISHNU.



OH GREAT VISHNU! RULER OF THE UNIVERSE!

WE NEED YOUR HELP IN DECIDING AN IMPORTANT MATTER!



VISHNU HEARS THE PLEA...



AND FLIES DOWN TO HELP!







OH KING, BLESSINGS TO YOU. WHY HAVE YOU CALLED ME HERE?

FOR MANY YEARS, THE ARTISANS HAVE HELD CONTROL OF PONNIVALA.

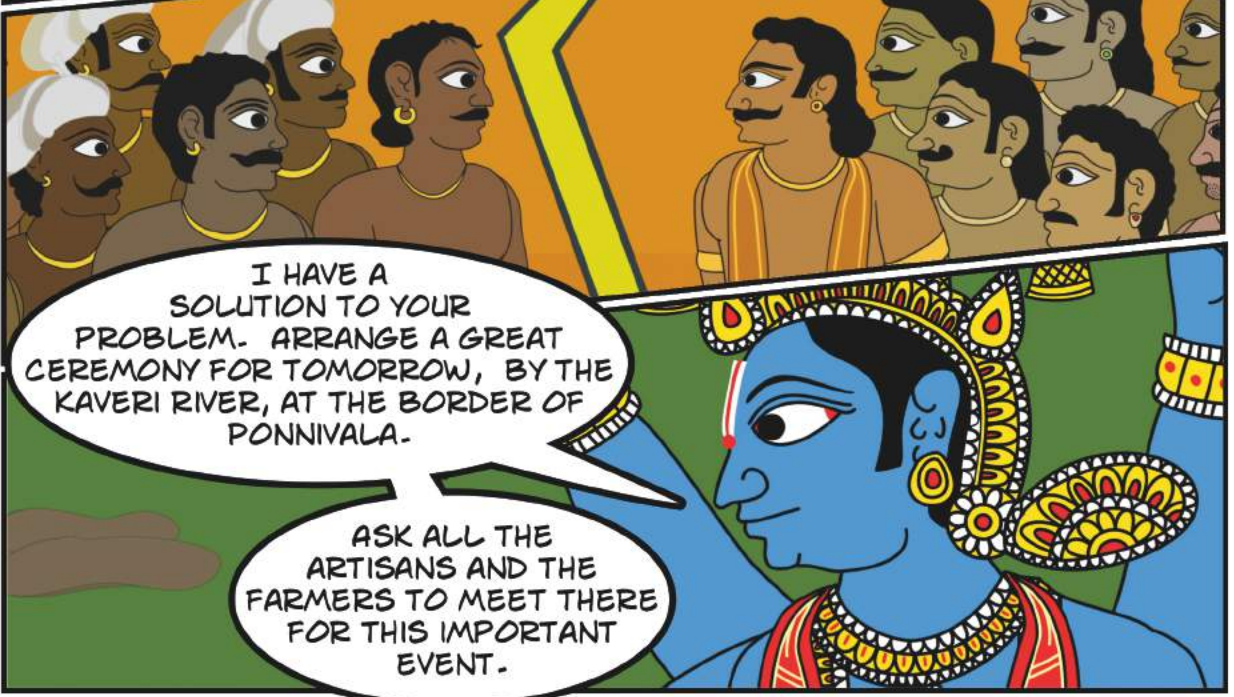
BUT NOW A GROUP OF FARMERS HAS COME TO ME FROM VELLIVALA.

HMMM... I UNDERSTAND.



THESE FARMERS HAVE HELPED MY KINGDOM PROSPER. AS A REWARD, I WANT TO GRANT THEM THE LANDS OF PONNIVALA.

BUT THE ARTISANS REFUSE TO GIVE UP THE AREA!



I HAVE A SOLUTION TO YOUR PROBLEM. ARRANGE A GREAT CEREMONY FOR TOMORROW, BY THE KAVERI RIVER, AT THE BORDER OF PONNIVALA.

ASK ALL THE ARTISANS AND THE FARMERS TO MEET THERE FOR THIS IMPORTANT EVENT.



THE NEXT DAY,  
EVERYONE  
GATHERS FOR  
THE CEREMONY.  
THEY CALL UPON  
VISHNU ...

OH LORD! OH VISHNU!

OH VISHNU!  
LORD OF THE  
UNIVERSE!

ARTISANS! THE  
CHOLA KING HAS ASKED YOU  
TO HAND OVER THE LANDS OF  
PONNIVALA TO THESE NINE  
FARMERS.

BLESSINGS TO  
EVERYONE!

BUT YOU  
HAVE  
REFUSED!

OH LORD,  
WE WILL NOT  
GIVE UP OUR  
HOME!

IF YOU  
SUCCEED, CONTROL OF  
THE AREA WILL REMAIN  
YOURS. IF YOU FAIL, THE  
LAND BELONGS TO THE  
FARMERS.

THE BEST  
FIGHTERS AMONG YOU  
WILL HAVE ONE CHANCE  
TO SEVER HIS HEAD.

I WILL  
CREATE A CONTEST  
WHICH WILL DECIDE  
THE OUTCOME OF  
THIS MATTER.

THERE  
WILL BE A  
PUJA OF 18 OFFERINGS.  
THEN I WILL MAKE THE  
ELDEST OF THESE FARMERS  
RISE UP FROM THE  
LAND.



THE ARTISANS AND FARMERS AGREE TO THE TERMS AND THE ARTISANS CHOOSE THEIR FOUR BEST FIGHTERS. EACH MAN STANDS, READY. VISHNU MAKES A HOLE IN THE EARTH FROM WHICH KOLATTA WILL RISE.



WHAT DO YOU THINK LORD VISHNU HAS PLANNED?

OH, THIS WILL BE TOUGH!

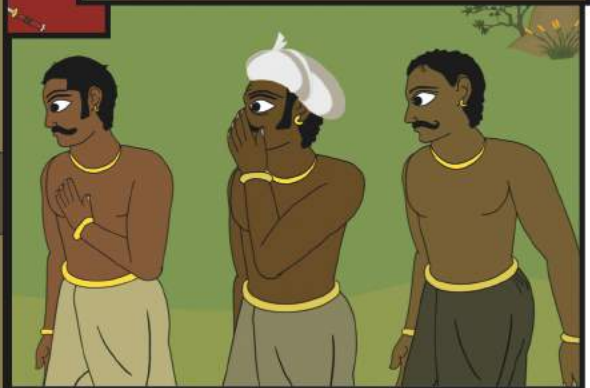
WHATEVER IT IS, WE MUST FOLLOW HIS WORD. IT MUST BE FOR THE GOOD OF ALL.



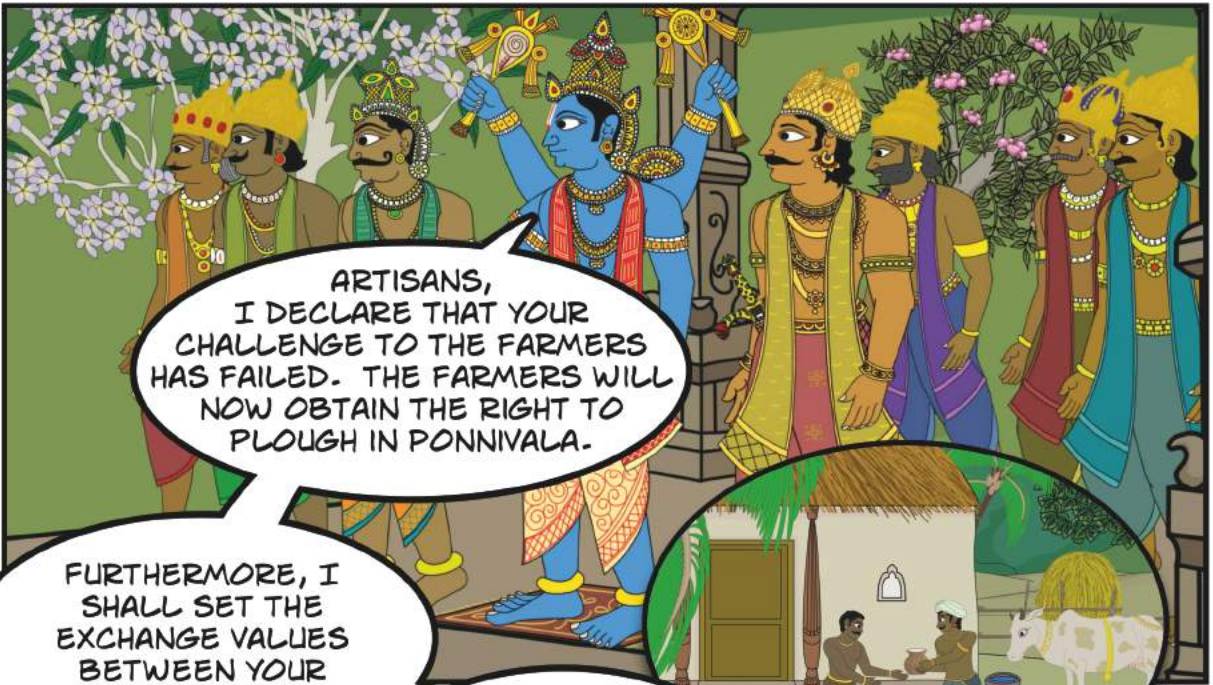
VISHNU CAUSES KOLATTA TO RISE. THE ARTISANS THROW THEIR SWORDS STRAIGHT AT HIS HEAD!



BUT THE SWORDS MAGICALLY STOP WHEN THEY REACH KOLATTA! THE ARTISANS KNOW THEY HAVE LOST.





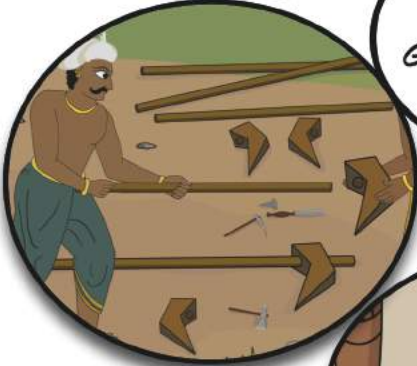


ARTISANS,  
I DECLARE THAT YOUR  
CHALLENGE TO THE FARMERS  
HAS FAILED. THE FARMERS WILL  
NOW OBTAIN THE RIGHT TO  
PLOUGH IN PONNIVALA.

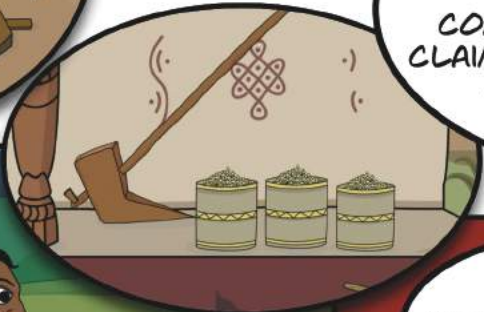
FURTHERMORE, I  
SHALL SET THE  
EXCHANGE VALUES  
BETWEEN YOUR  
TWO COMMUNITIES.



ONE PLOUGH  
SHALL BE WORTH  
FOUR MEASURES OF  
GRAIN. THE ASSEMBLY  
OF A PLOUGH IS  
WORTH THREE.



AN ARTISAN  
SHALL ALSO BE DUE  
ENOUGH DAIRY PRODUCE TO  
SUSTAIN HIS FAMILY  
COMFORTABLY, AND HE MAY  
CLAIM THREE EXTRA MEASURES  
OF GRAIN A YEAR AS A  
RETAINER.



YES LORD. YOU  
ARE THE ONE WHO  
KNOWS EVERYTHING.  
WE WILL OBEY YOUR  
WORDS.



THIS  
MATTER  
HAS BEEN DECIDED!  
BLESSINGS TO  
YOU ALL!



THE LEGEND OF PONNIVALA

THE LANDS OF PONNIVALA ARE GRANTED TO KOLATTA, THE ELDEST FARMER BROTHER.

BE SURE TO PRESENT AN OFFERING AT THE CELATTA TEMPLE THERE, THREE TIMES EACH DAY.

KOLATTA!  
TAKE CARE OF  
PONNIVALA!

I BELIEVE THIS LOVELY  
GODDESS HAS NOT RECEIVED  
ANY OFFERINGS FOR AT LEAST  
THREE GENERATIONS.

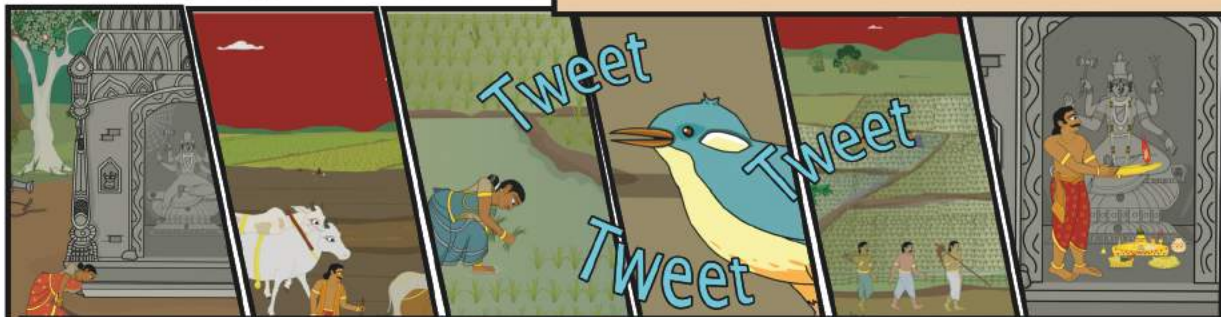
TREAT HER  
WELL, AND SHE WILL  
HELP YOU IN TIMES OF  
NEED.

YES, OH KING! WE WILL  
DO AS YOU SAY!

HIS YOUNGER BROTHERS INHERIT  
THE NEIGHBOURING REGION  
KNOWN AS TANGAVALA.



A STONE IS ERECTED TO MARK THE  
BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE TWO REGIONS.



KOLATTA REMEMBERS THE KING'S WORDS. HE PERFORMS A PUJA THREE  
TIMES EACH DAY. SOON THE COUNTRYSIDE OF PONNIVALA IS GREEN AND  
LUSH. FINE CROPS GROW EVERYWHERE.



IN THE BEGINNING



BUT SOON HARDSHIP FALLS ON THE CHOLA KING. A SERIOUS FAMINE ERUPTS ON HIS LANDS, AND THE EARTH IS SO DRY, HIS WORKERS CANNOT BREAK IT WITH THEIR PLOUGHS. AS A RESULT, THE KING CANNOT FIND ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED HIS 12 FAVOURITE COWS.



Moo

Moo

Moo

OH SERVANT, CALL MY SCRIBE!

SCRIBE! WRITE DOWN THESE WORDS!

"THIS COW BELONGS TO THE CHOLA KING. IT IS HUNGRY AND HAS BEEN SET LOOSE DUE TO A GREAT FAMINE ACROSS THE LAND. IF YOU FIND IT, PLEASE FEED IT AND CARE FOR IT WELL."

NOW MAKE 12 COPIES OF THAT MESSAGE AND ATTACH IT TO THE HORNS OF EACH OF MY COWS! THEN SET THEM LOOSE TO WANDER WHERE THEY WILL.

YES, MY LORD!

CLOMP

CLOMP

CLOMP

FAREWELL, MY BELOVED ONES! I SHALL MISS YOU!



THE LEGEND OF PONNIVALA

THE COWS WANDER IN SEARCH OF FOOD, AND SOON FIND A SUGARCANE FIELD IN PONNIVALA ---



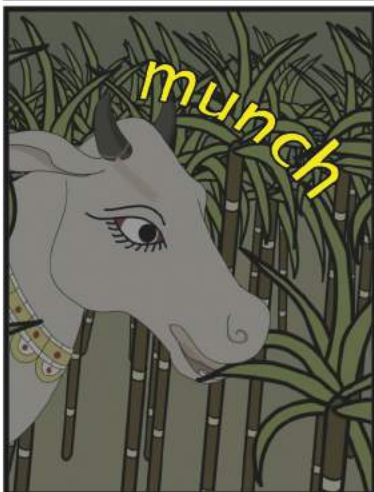
SISTERS! THE OWNER OF THIS FIELD WILL BEAT US IF HE FINDS US CHEWING ON THESE SWEET STALKS.



LET US HIDE OVER THERE IN THE FOREST. WE CAN RETURN AFTER DARK TO EAT OUR FILL!



THE COWS REST IN THE FOREST UNTIL DUSK FALLS. THEN, THEY MAKE THEIR WAY BACK TO THE SUGARCANE FIELD. THERE THEY EAT THEIR FILL.



AT DAWN, THE COWS RETURN TO THE FOREST ---



cocka-doodle-doo

OH MY!

LOOK AT MY FINE SUGARCANE FIELD! IT HAS BEEN HORRIBLY TRAMPLED! WHAT KIND OF ANIMAL COULD HAVE DONE THIS?

WATCHMAN! GO TO TANGAVALA AND BRING THE ARTISANS HERE IMMEDIATELY!

I NEED A FENCE BUILT!

OH ARTISANS! THE KING OF PONNIVALA HAS ORDERED YOU TO BRING YOUR TOOLS AND COME TO HIS KINGDOM.








OH MEN, BLESSINGS TO YOU! I NEED A FENCE BUILT AROUND MY RIPE SUGARCANE.

LAST NIGHT SOME ANIMALS CAME AND RAVAGED IT! THE SITUATION IS SERIOUS.



HOW WOULD YOU LIKE US TO DESIGN THE FENCE?

I NEED A POST EVERY THREE FEET, WITH A SPEAR POINT ON EACH ONE!



THE ARTISANS BEGIN WORK IMMEDIATELY AND SOON THE FENCE IS COMPLETE.









OH SISTERS,  
LOOK AT THOSE  
SPIKES!

WHAT KIND OF  
LANDOWNER WOULD  
DO THIS?



THAT FENCING  
DOESN'T LOOK TOO HIGH.  
I THINK WE CAN ALL JUMP  
OVER IT!

AS EVENING  
FALLS, THE COWS  
RETURN TO THE  
SUGARCANE FIELD.  
THEY ATTEMPT TO  
JUMP OVER THE  
NEWLY-BUILT  
FENCE, BUT THEY  
DO NOT MAKE IT.  
EACH ONE DIES ON  
THE SPIKES.



OH  
SHIVA! HELP  
ME!





OH COWS! WHY HAVE YOU COME TO SEE ME?

WE WERE FEASTING ON THE SUGARCANE FIELDS OF PONNIVALA. BUT THE FARMER THERE BUILT A FENCE MADE OF POINTED STAKES!

WE WERE SO HUNGRY, WE TRIED TO JUMP INTO THE SUGARCANE...BUT WE ALL DIED!



THIS IS AN OUTRAGE! ..... THERE WILL BE A SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR THIS TERRIBLE OFFENCE.









CITTIRAPUTRA!  
LOOK IN THE BOOK  
OF FATE AND FIND  
OUT WHO IS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR THIS!



WHAT A  
HORRIBLE THING TO  
HAVE HAPPENED TO  
YOU!




OH LORD! KOLATTA,  
THE ELDEST OF THE NINE GOUNDER  
BROTHERS OF PONNIVALA AND TANGAVALA,  
IS THE ONE WHO DID THIS!



I AM GOING  
TO CURSE KOLATTA  
FOR THIS SIN OF  
COW-KILLING!



FOR SEVEN  
GENERATIONS...

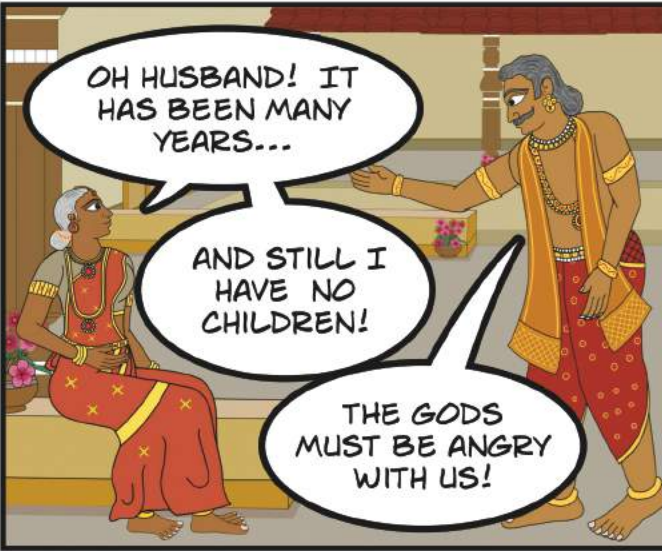


NO  
CHILDREN SHALL BE  
BORN OF THE WOMBS OF  
WOMEN IN HIS  
FAMILY!





YEARS PASS IN PONNIVALA, AND STILL NOT A SINGLE CHILD'S VOICE CAN BE HEARD THERE. KOLATTA AND HIS WIFE BECOME WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE.



OH HUSBAND! IT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS...

AND STILL I HAVE NO CHILDREN!

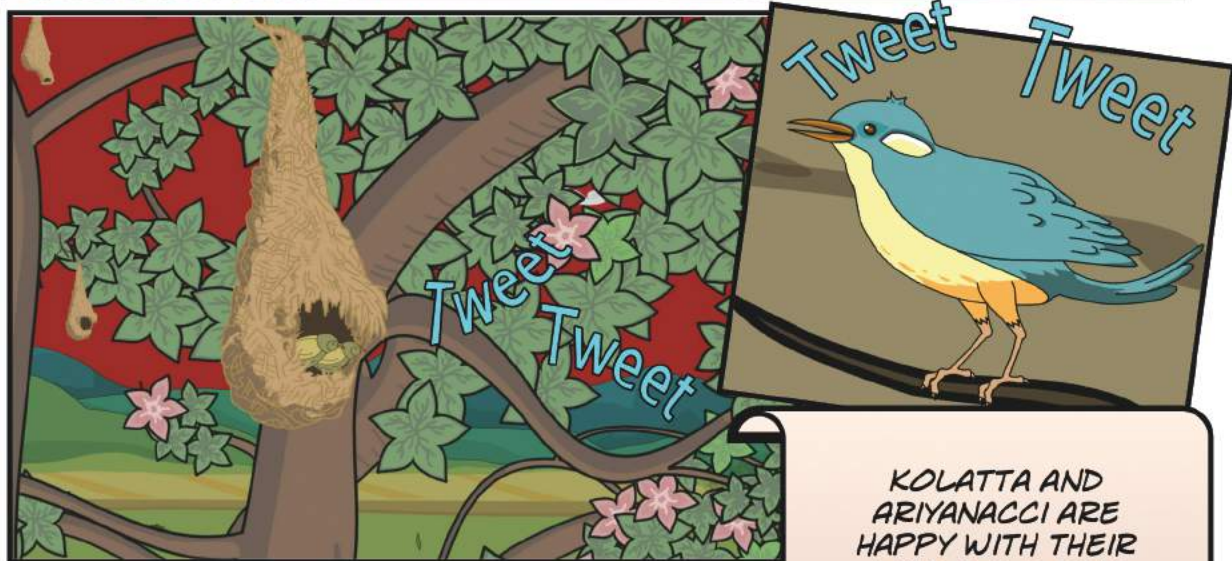
THE GODS MUST BE ANGRY WITH US!



HOW WILL WE PASS THESE BEAUTIFUL LANDS DOWN IN OUR FAMILY WITHOUT AN HEIR?

THE QUEEN WEEPS AT THEIR MISFORTUNE. HOW SHE LONGS TO HOLD A CHILD IN HER ARMS!





KOLATTA AND ARIYANACCI ARE HAPPY WITH THEIR LANDS AND FINE CROPS. BUT THEY ARE GROWING OLD. HOW WILL THEY PASS THEIR LANDS DOWN IN THEIR FAMILY? HOW WILL THEY MANAGE TO HOLD ON TO THEIR RIGHTS TO THE BEAUTIFUL FIELDS OF PONNIVALA WITHOUT A SON? WILL THEY EVER HEAR A CHILD'S VOICE IN THEIR HOME?



## 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/comic1](http://www.ponnivala.com/comic1)

The Legend of  
**Ponnivala**

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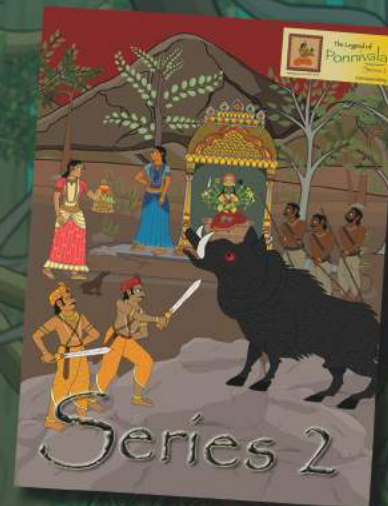
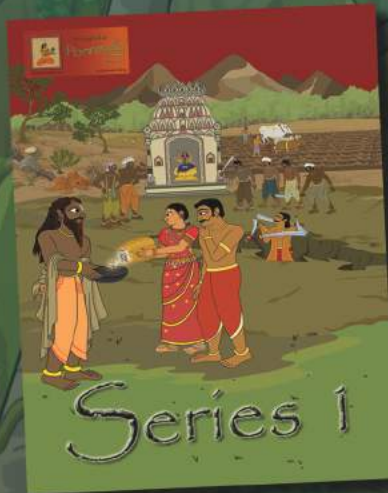






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