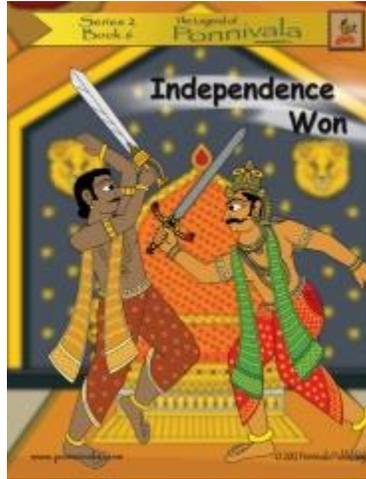


## Episode 19 – Independence Won (Sub Stories a, b, c, d and e)

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



### 19-a The Humble, Tribute-Paying Elder Brother Is Thrown In Jail!

As a consequence the elder sibling takes the humbling gift to the Chola palace by himself, accompanied only by the loyal family assistant. The great king accepts the payment but he is not happy. He has not won the submission of the younger twin, the one he really wants to humiliate. So he develops his own scheme and throws the elder twin in jail. The king reasons that when the younger twin gets word of this he will come to his palace in search of his missing brother. Back at the palace the younger sister has a dream in which she learns that the brother who took the tribute to the Chola has been jailed there. She tells her other brother who angrily takes off to rescue his twin.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES:** The king has used a clever trick. How would you get someone to come to your palace and beg for your respect, especially if they didn't want to submit to your authority? This would be something like the police, who know you are a friend of a thief they have in jail, laying a trap for you so that you will come and talk to them. Maybe you can think of a modern story where the opposite happens, that is a story about a friend of a person in jail who tricks the police in order to help that friend escape.

**COMMENTARY:** There is a kind of “bargaining” going on here between the Chola ruler and the two kings who dominate the smaller outlying area called Ponnivala. This “argument” symbolizes that a change in the relationship has occurred. In the father's generation there was friendship and respect. The Chola trusted his ally but expected periodic gestures of submission to his greater authority. Now the two kings have ignored the tradition of tribute payment (which they surely knew about... though this is not directly stated). One is willing to meet the Chola's demand, the other is not. This is a sign that the outlying kingdom is feeling “rebellious.” A show down is coming.....

### 19-b The Younger Brother Rides To His Elder's Rescue

The young king rides at full speed towards the Chola's palace. When the younger king arrives he finds the assistant still waiting patiently outside the palace. He knows

nothing of the “jailing” story. He stops to vent some of his anger on him. Meanwhile the Chola, knowing that the younger twin is prone to violence, gets worried. So decides to pretend that nothing is wrong. He releases his brother and prepares a feast. Pretending that he wants to honor the elder brother he decorates him by putting rings on his toes, seating him on a throne, and so forth. But, in fact, there are several more tricks up this monarch’s sleeve. He is not willing to let the younger brother “off the hook.”

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: If you were a king and you wanted your distant allies to show their loyalty and their submission to your higher authority what would you do?**

**COMMENTARY:** In this episode the Chola king is made to look rather weak and silly. Perhaps he is a “son” of the former king (we don’t know that he is the same “king”). That man proved himself a kind generous ruler who was an ally (as well as an overlord) in the eyes of the heroes’ father. Now there is a change on this side of the “fence” too (as discussed in 19-a referring to the attitude of the twin brothers). Now the Chola seems a bit foolish and rather scared. He doesn’t think through his “tricks” and therefore they are unconvincing. The younger twin trusts his sister, not what he sees the king do when he gets to the palace. Her “dreams” are reliable visions, and they are always “true.” Thus he is suspicious, while the elder brother, true to his character, remains the more gullible one.

#### **19-c The Dishonest King Attempts Many Kinds of Treachery**

First the Chola king tries to poison his two guests while offering them a pretentious palace “feast.” Foiled by a cat (an envoy of Lord Vishnu) the Chola then tries another trick. This time he hopes to get them to sit on a chair that has been cunningly tied over a deep pit and is designed to dump its occupant into that hole. But one of the Chola’s own sons falls into that deep hole instead. Finally the Chola proposes a trip to a mountain shrine near by. Eventually he traps the two brothers there, stranding them on a high cliff. He helps them climb up by providing a long ladder, but then pulls it away. Then the Chola runs gleefully back to his palace, believing his “enemy-guests” will die on the isolated mountain. But the two heroes are not ready to give up. As usual they call on Lord Vishnu for help once more. The Lord starts to fly towards earth.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: This is a very mean trick for someone in high authority to use. Can you think of a story where a weak king does something foolish and dishonorable?**

**COMMENTARY:** This substory functions to make the Chola king look bad. In this way it builds a justification” for the heroes’ actions at the end of this episode (when they attack the monarch and kill him). The heroes are first “wronged” and this will make them look justified (later) when they take revenge. The series of three tricks used first the classic folktale pattern... building suspense and also a sense of disgust at the monarch’s lack of ethical principles.

#### **19-d Lord Vishnu Rescues the Heroes From A Lonely Mountain Top**

Vishnu rescues the stranded royal twins from the top of the cliff where they are stranded. He appears to them as a beggar with very long hair, walking along a path at the foot of that cliff.

Hearing the two stranded me call out, the beggar then braids his hair and throws his magically long plaits up to them. The two men scramble down those braids readily. As soon as they are “free,” however, they have only one thought: They want to attack the Chola king in revenge. An all out fight ensues.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES:** This is like a “dream sequence” where something fun but totally unrealistic happens. Can you describe a movie or a dream where one or more heroes fly thru the air in a magical and totally surprising way? **ALTERNATIVE IDEA:** Hair is a frequently used symbol in folk tales. What stories do you know where someone magically grows long hair? Was that person male or female? Do you think there is a difference between stories about hair that feature a character of one type or the other?

**COMMENTARY:** The pattern of Vishnu appearing to the heroes (or the heroine) in disguise runs throughout this legend. Usually the great lord takes the form of a beggar or a fortune teller. This is part of the Hindu tradition of “play” or “illusion” which the gods love. Such stories make the point that “things may not be quite what they appear to be at first glance.” They also suggest that all beggars should be respected, as you never know who they might really be. One small point (not in the summary) is that the younger brother threatens his elder, just after they have been stranded on the cliff, blaming him for the predicament they are in. This is part of a gradual “build” in the story of incidents where the younger brother expresses aggression towards his sibling. Meanwhile the elder pleads for restraint. He worries (by contrast) about their “little” sister. This is part of the wider “family dynamic” between the twin heroes and is also expressive of their very different personalities.

Differing lengths and styles of hair are used to convey symbolic messages in many cultures. Here Lord Vishnu grows “long braids” in order to rescue the heroes. Generally, according to Indian Hindu traditions, long hair should be kept tied up in some way or other. This represents a “safe” and controlled state. Evil influences (and smells) do not enter tightly bound hair, but loose hair is like a magnet that attracts such energies. The heroine lets down her hair when she is angry and upset (Ep. 26a and also Ep. 9b-c. This symbolizes the fact that she is “dangerous” and about to burn others with her fiery magic. A discussion of various common hair styles the students are familiar with and what their cultural “connotations are” would be appropriate here. You could ask the students for an essay comparing Rapunzel and how she uses her long hair, with how Lord Vishnu uses his!

Finally, it is important to note that Lord Vishnu himself (not in this summary) sanctions the heroes’ attack on the king. This supplies them the divine backing they need and justifies (to the story’s audience) their initiation of such a dangerous (and rebellious) mission.

### 19-e **A Battle Royal With The King Which the Heroes Win**

The heroes are without their horses. So they run at full speed towards the Chola’s palace. When arrive both the wicked Chola king and the angry clansmen are inside the palace gates. There is a major attack by the skilful heroes and their huge assistant. At the end of the scuffle the Chola king lies dead, along with all of the rival clansmen who initially brought their complaint to him. The twins return home victorious. They have now

freed themselves from the requirement to show submission to an onerous overlord. Peace reigns throughout the kingdom.

**SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES:** The heroes were trained in traditional South Indian marshal arts. Some of their battle “tricks” are visible in this battle scene. Can you point them out? How do their actions compare with other marshal arts techniques you know about?

**COMMENTARY:** This battle scene is a “classic” one. There are two against many. The underdogs are attacking their oppressive overlord. After a great struggle, the heroes win. They kill the despot and gain their freedom. A time of peace is ushered in. Many historical wars are cast in this light. Modern political leaders often refer to this “model” in their campaign rhetoric. It is also worth noting that the heroes do “summersaults” and use other athletic tricks during the battle. These usual “positions” and attack strategies reference the martial arts, in which both heroes are said to be experts. There are several important marshal art traditions that are popular in South India, a major one being “*Silambam*.”