

DURGESH NANDINI

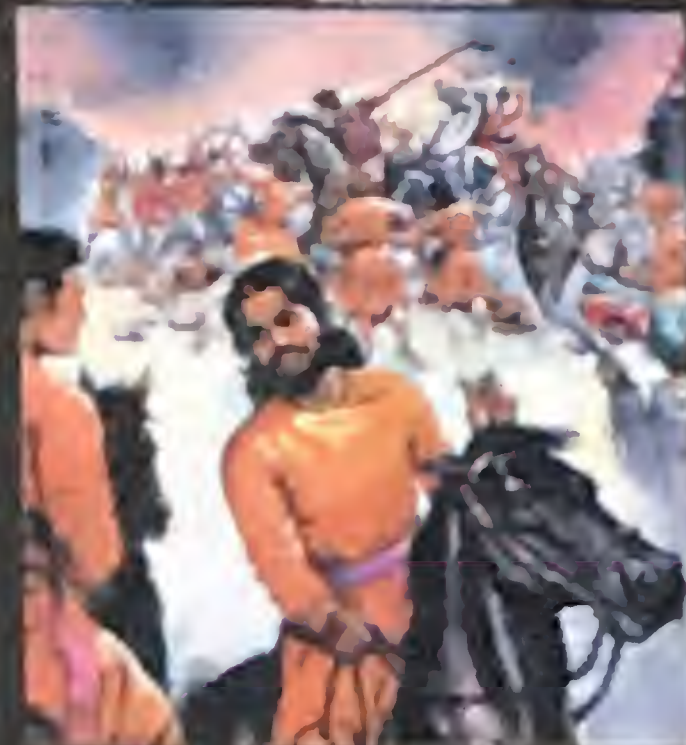
Jagat Singh, a Rajput prince, has been sent by the Mughal Emperor, Akbar, to stop Katlu Khan, the Pathan ruler of Orissa, from capturing Bengal. While sheltering in a temple, he meets Durgesh Nandini, the daughter of a Bengali nobleman and falls deeply in love with her. Unfortunately, her father is a sworn enemy of Jagat Singh's father.

In this climate of war and hatred, their love must survive.

Durgesh Nandini is an adaptation of a novel, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894). Hugely popular when published in 1864, it is the first ever novel in Bengali.

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DURGESH NANDINI

A STORY BY BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAY

Vol 824 | ₹50



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DURGESH NANDINI

LATE ONE SUMMER AFTERNOON, DURING EMPEROR AKBAR'S REIGN, A RAJPUT YOUTH WAS RIDING FROM VISHNUPUR * TO MANDARAN*.

THE EMPEROR HAS SENT US HERE TO REGAIN ORISSA FROM KATLU KHAN...



...AND KATLU KHAN IS OUT TO TAKE BENGAL AS WELL... HM.M.M...



SUDDENLY, THE SKY DARKENED.

IT'S GOING TO RAIN, I MUST HURRY!



THEN IT STARTED POURING.

I MUST SEEK SHELTER SOMEWHERE. BUT I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING...



JUST THEN A FLASH OF LIGHTNING LIT UP THE PLACE.

AH!
A TEMPLE!

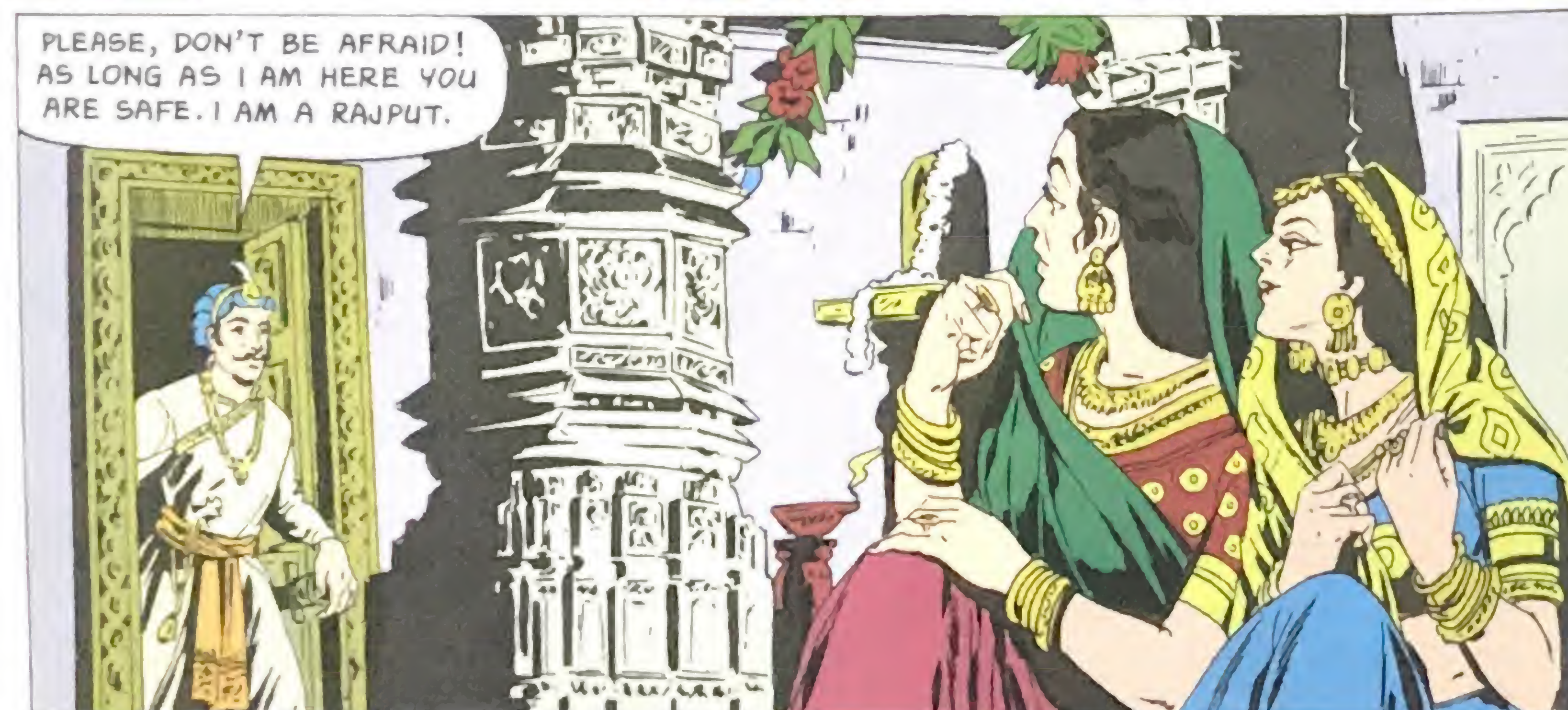




THE YOUTH DISMOUNTED, TETHERED HIS HORSE AND RAN UP TO THE TEMPLE.



WH-WHO IS IT?



PLEASE, DON'T BE AFRAID! AS LONG AS I AM HERE YOU ARE SAFE. I AM A RAJPUT.



THANK YOU, SIR! WE CAME HERE TO WORSHIP LORD SHAILESHWAR. OUR ATTENDANTS MUST HAVE SOUGHT SHELTER ELSEWHERE.



AS THE OLDER WOMAN SPOKE, THE YOUTH GAZED AT THE YOUNGER ONE.

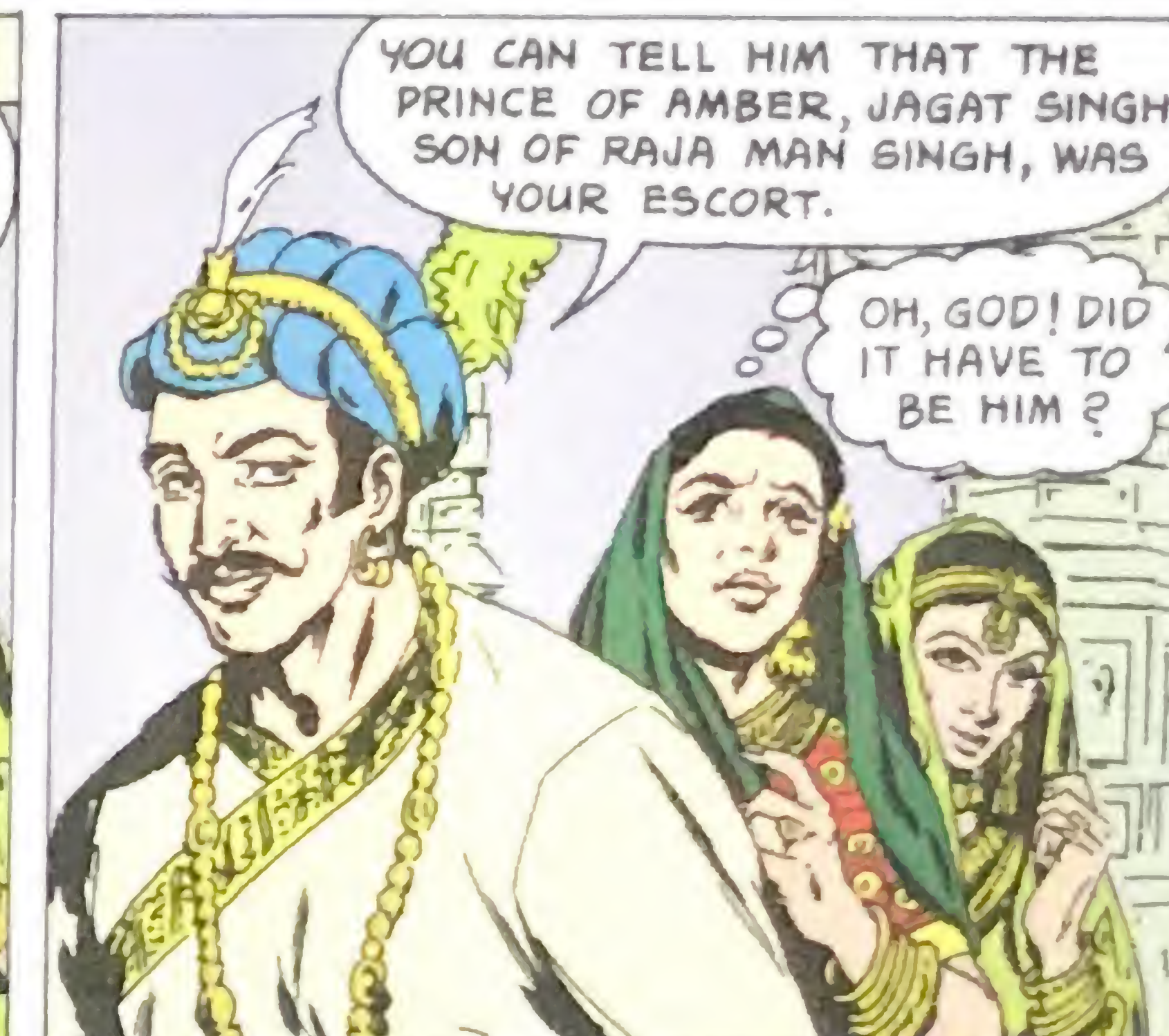
IS SHE AN ANGEL? ...A FAIRY... OR A GODDESS...?



WHEN AT LAST THE STORM ABATED —

COME, I'LL SEE YOU HOME.

THANK YOU, SIR. BUT WHEN MY MASTER, THIS LADY'S FATHER, ASKS US WHO BROUGHT US BACK WHAT SHOULD I TELL HIM?



YOU CAN TELL HIM THAT THE PRINCE OF AMBER, JAGAT SINGH, SON OF RAJA MAN SINGH, WAS YOUR ESCORT.

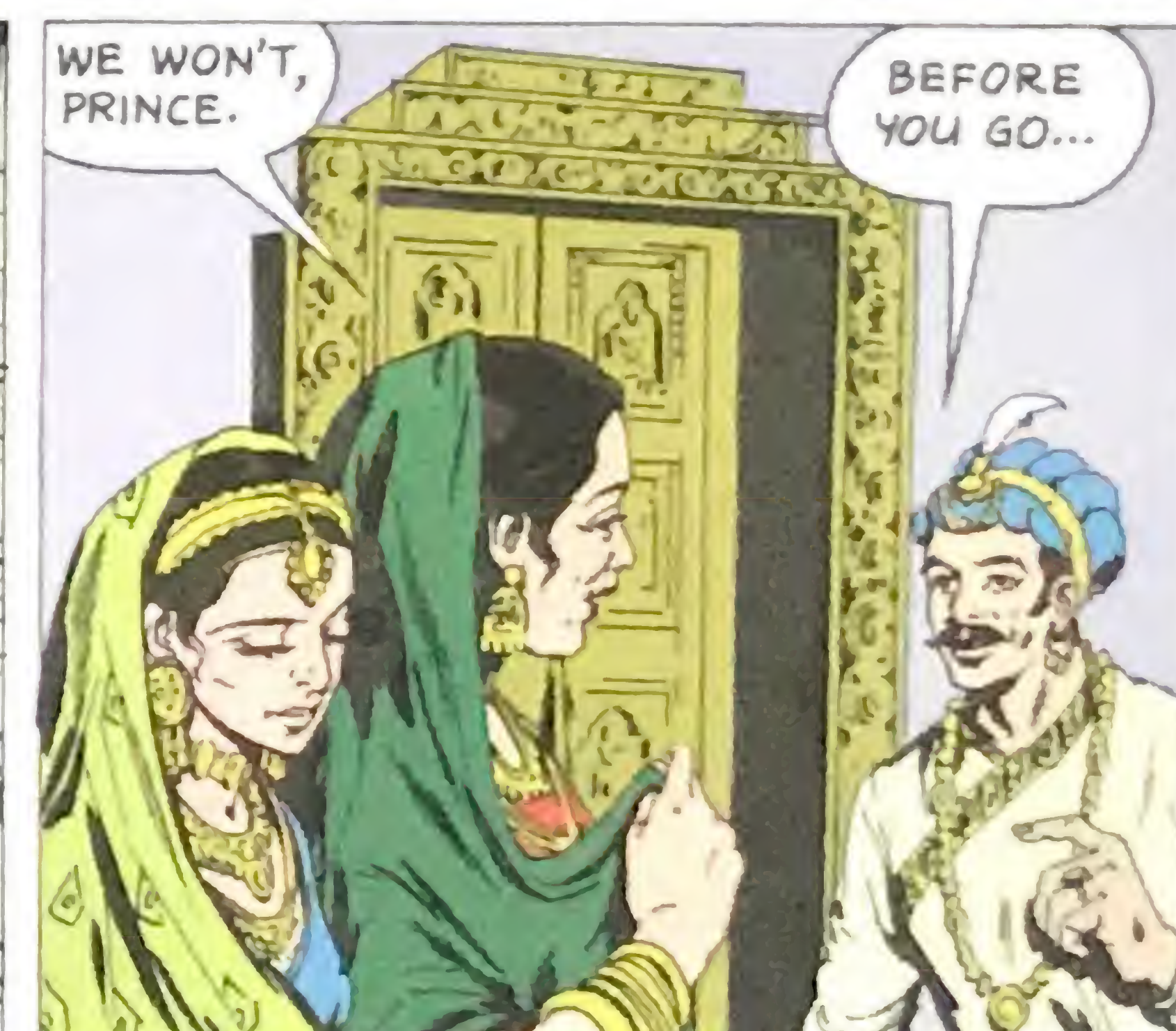
OH, GOD! DID IT HAVE TO BE HIM?



JUST THEN —

AH! VOICES! I THINK OUR ATTENDANTS HAVE RETURNED.

PLEASE DO NOT TELL ANYONE YOU MET ME HERE.



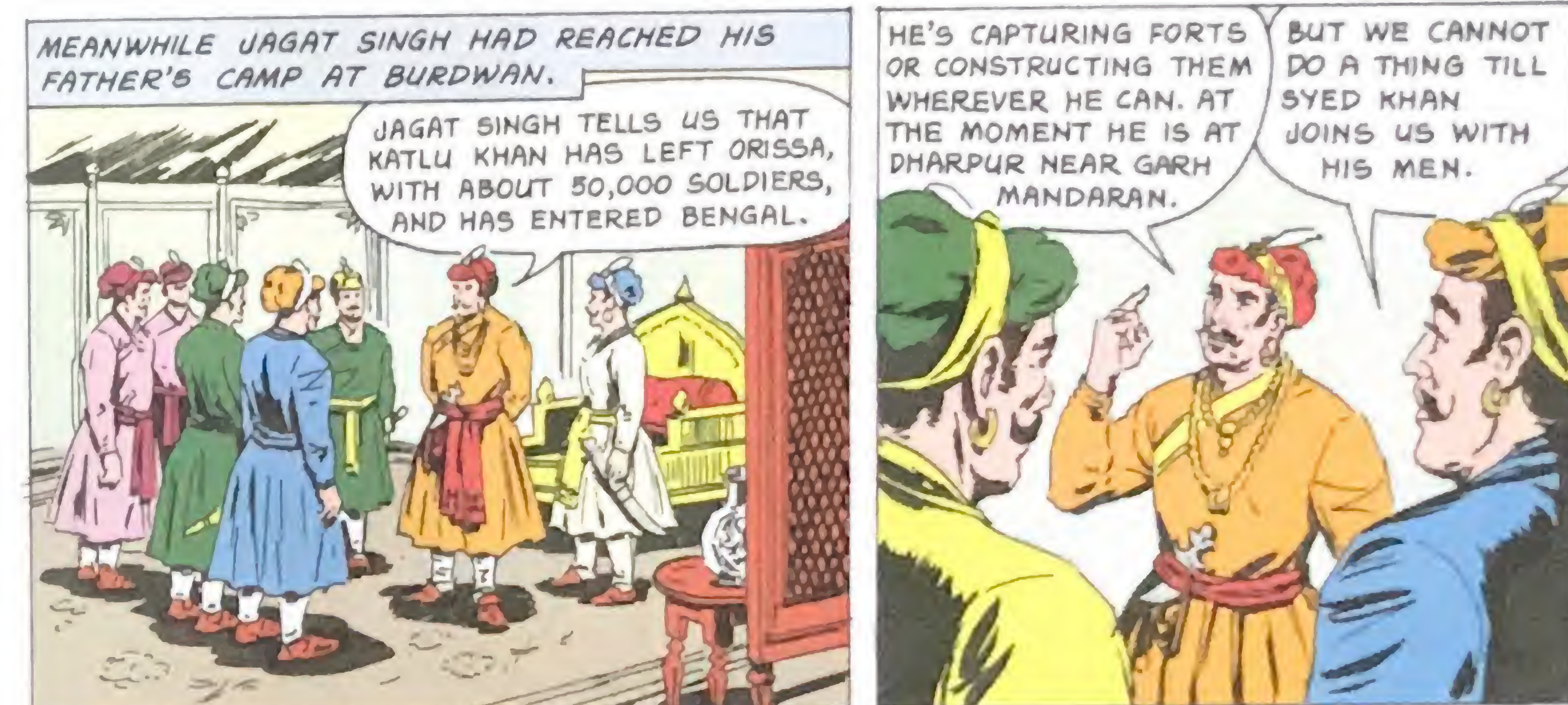
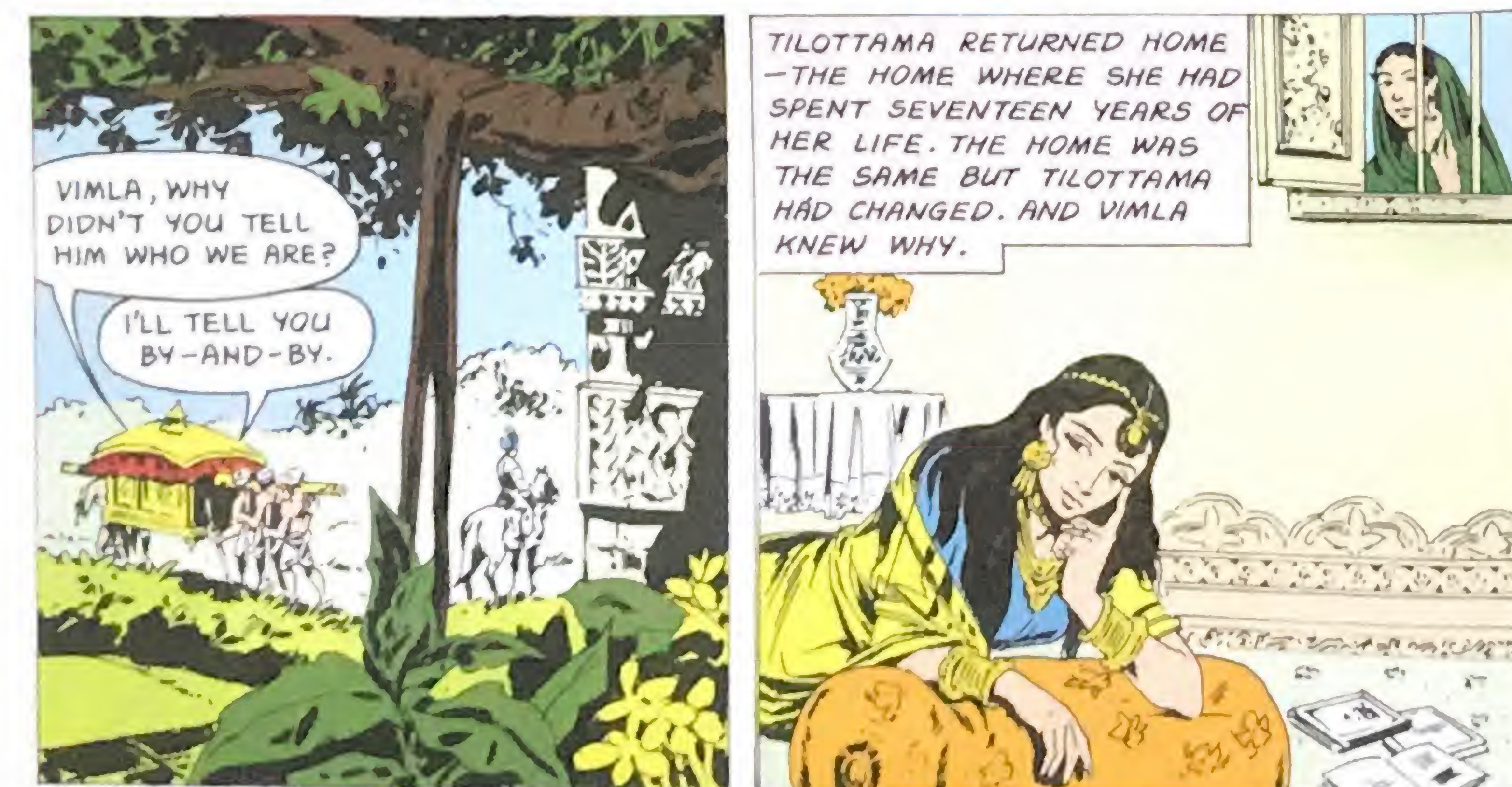
WE WON'T, PRINCE.

BEFORE YOU GO...



... MAY I KNOW WHOM I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF MEETING?

NO, SIR. YOU'D BEST NOT KNOW FOR THE PRESENT. BUT...



A FEW DAYS LATER AT GARH MANDARAN —

RAJA VIRENDRA SINGH, DO YOU KNOW THAT A GREAT BATTLE BETWEEN THE MUGHALS AND THE PATHANS IS IN THE OFFING?

SO, I UNDERSTAND, GURUDEV! BUT I PLAN TO REMAIN NEUTRAL.

WITH YOUR COMPARATIVELY SMALL FORCE YOU CANNOT SURVIVE BY REMAINING NEUTRAL.

I HAVE NO CHOICE. YOU KNOW I'LL NEVER JOIN MAN SINGH! IF I HAVE TO TAKE SIDES, I'D PICK THE PATHANS.

ARE YOU JOINING THE PATHANS THEN?

I WOULD HAVE BUT FOR KATLU KHAN'S AUDACITY.

HE HAS THREATENED TO ATTACK US IF I DON'T JOIN HIM. AND I DON'T LIKE THREATS.

SO?

I HAVE REFUSED TO JOIN HIM.

A WEEK LATER, AT THE SHAILESHWAR TEMPLE —

TODAY, MAY I KNOW WHO STANDS BEFORE ME AND WHO HER YOUNG MISTRESS IS?

I AM VIMLA. SHE IS DURGESH NANDINI * TILOTTAMA, THE DAUGHTER OF RAJA VIRENDRA SINGH OF GARH MANDARAN.

RAJA VIREDNRA SINGH! MY FATHER'S SWORN ENEMY! OH NO!

COULD I MEET HER JUST ONCE MORE, VIMLA? IS IT POSSIBLE?

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT... UNLESS...

...YOU COME WITH ME TO THE FORT. TONIGHT!

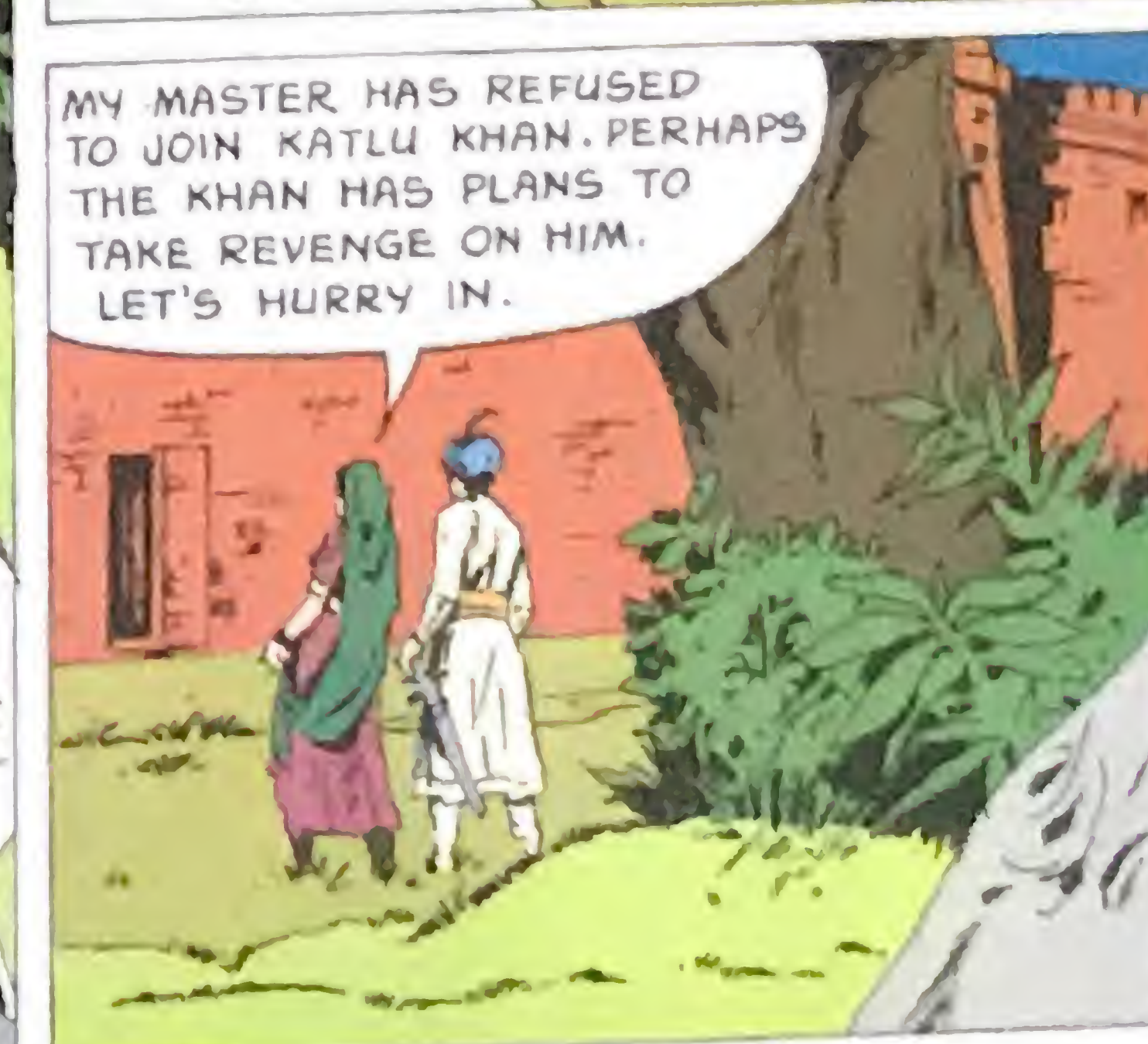
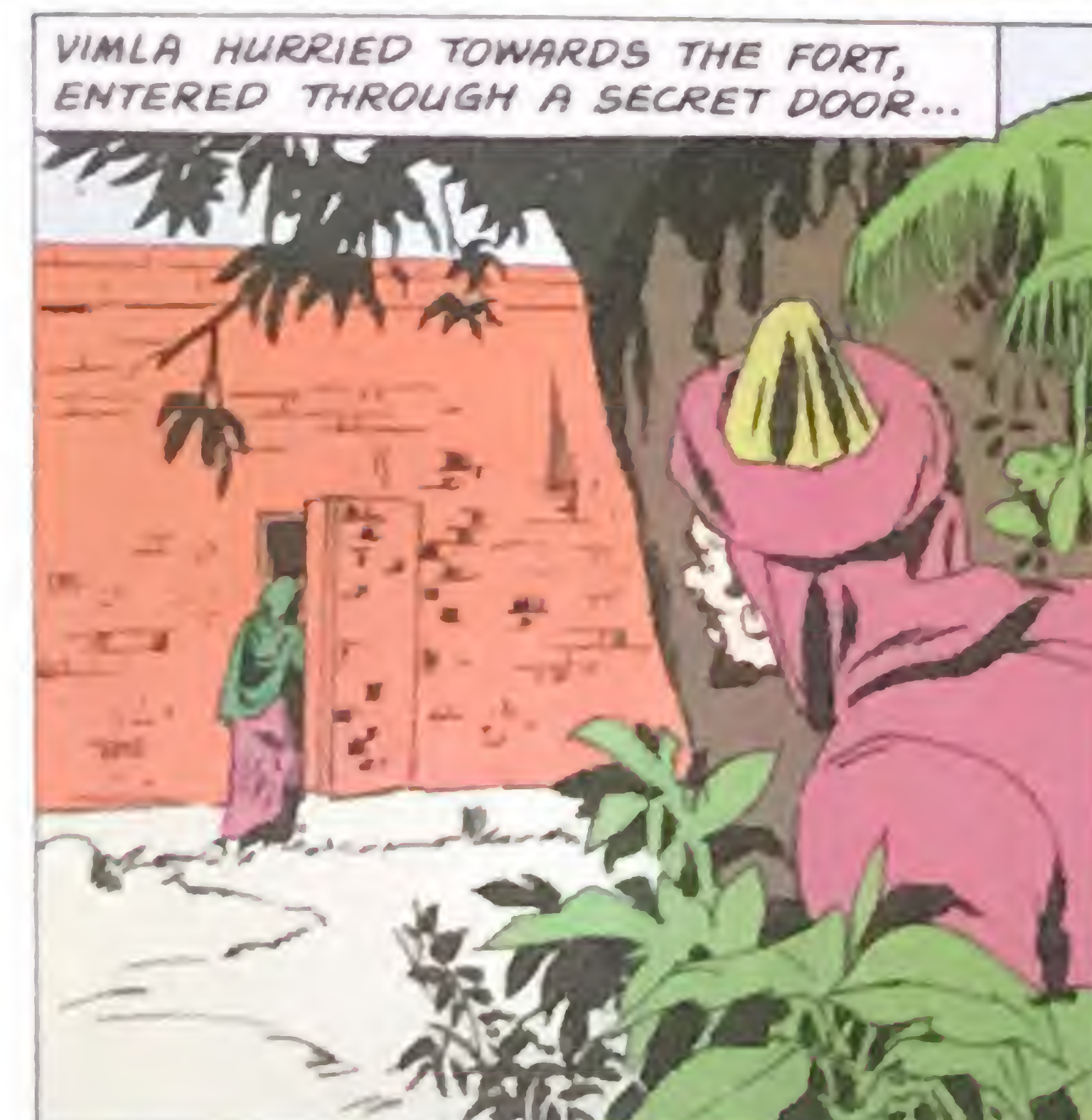
AT MIDNIGHT? LIKE A THIEF?

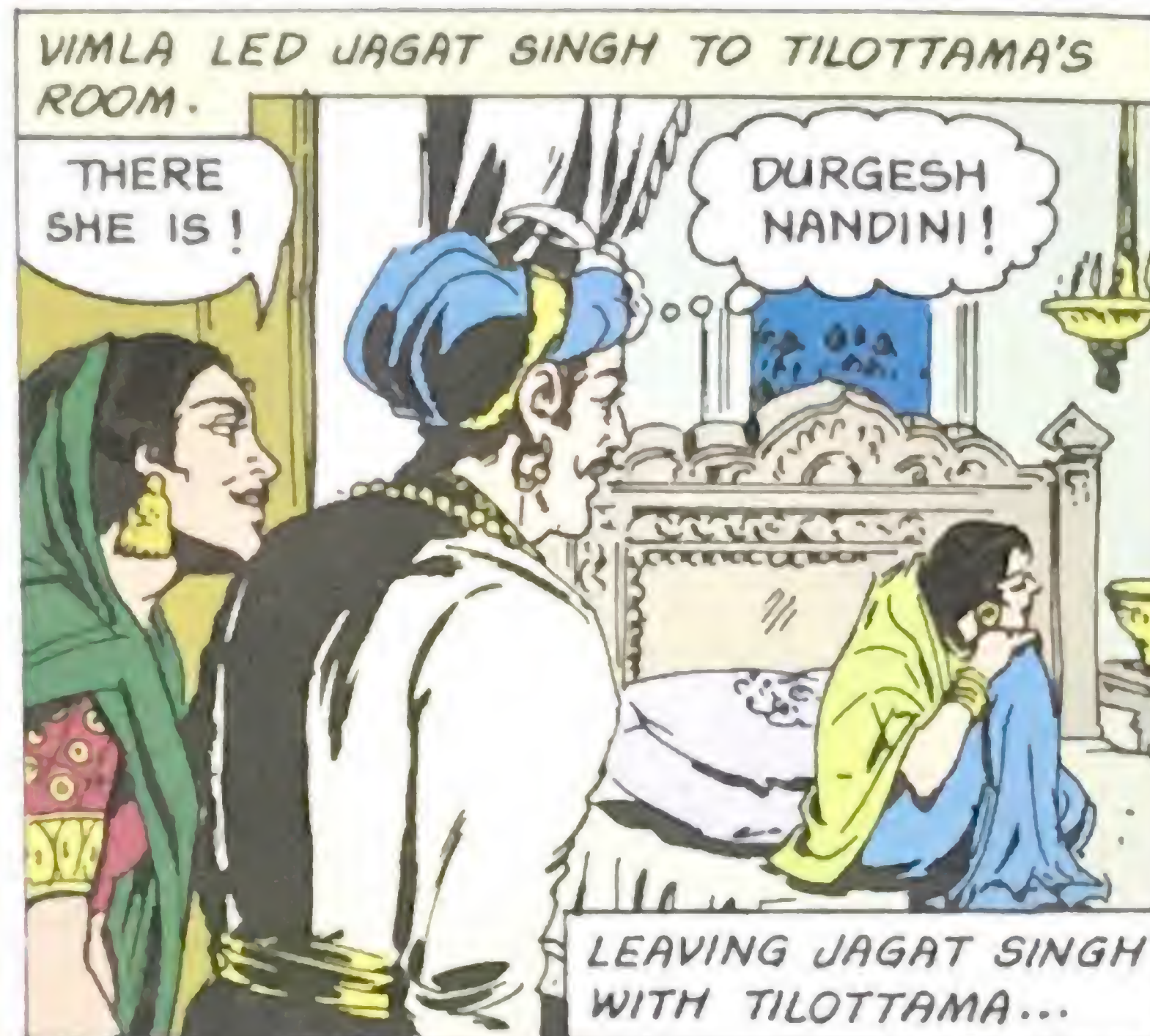
THERE IS NO OTHER WAY, PRINCE. BESIDES, YOU'LL BE MY GUEST. I COMMAND CERTAIN RESPECT AT THE FORT.

AS JAGAT SINGH AND VIMLA WALKED TOWARDS GARH MANDARAN —

VIMLA, I SUSPECT YOU ARE MORE THAN A MERE MAID.

SSH! FOOTSTEPS!



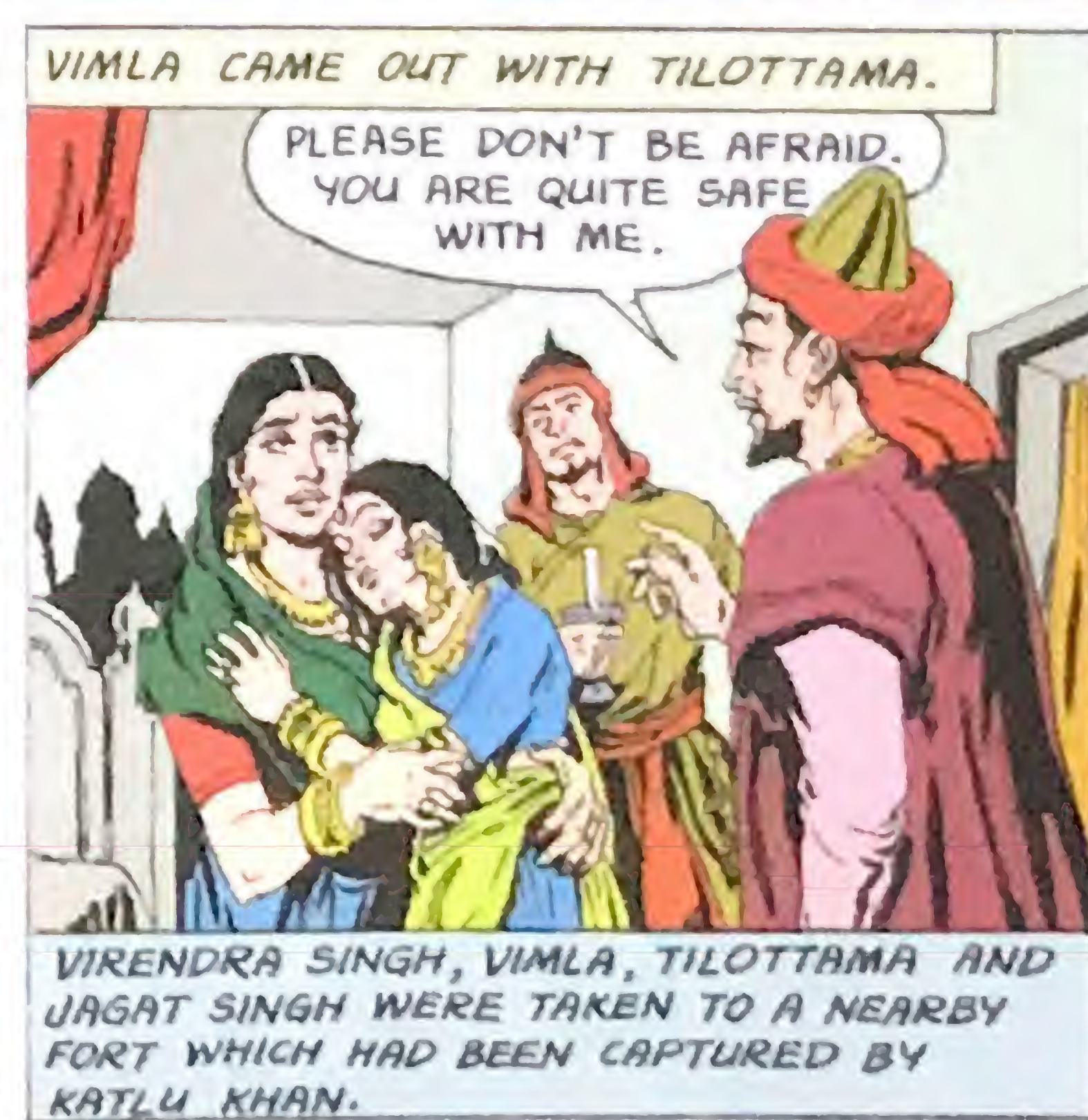
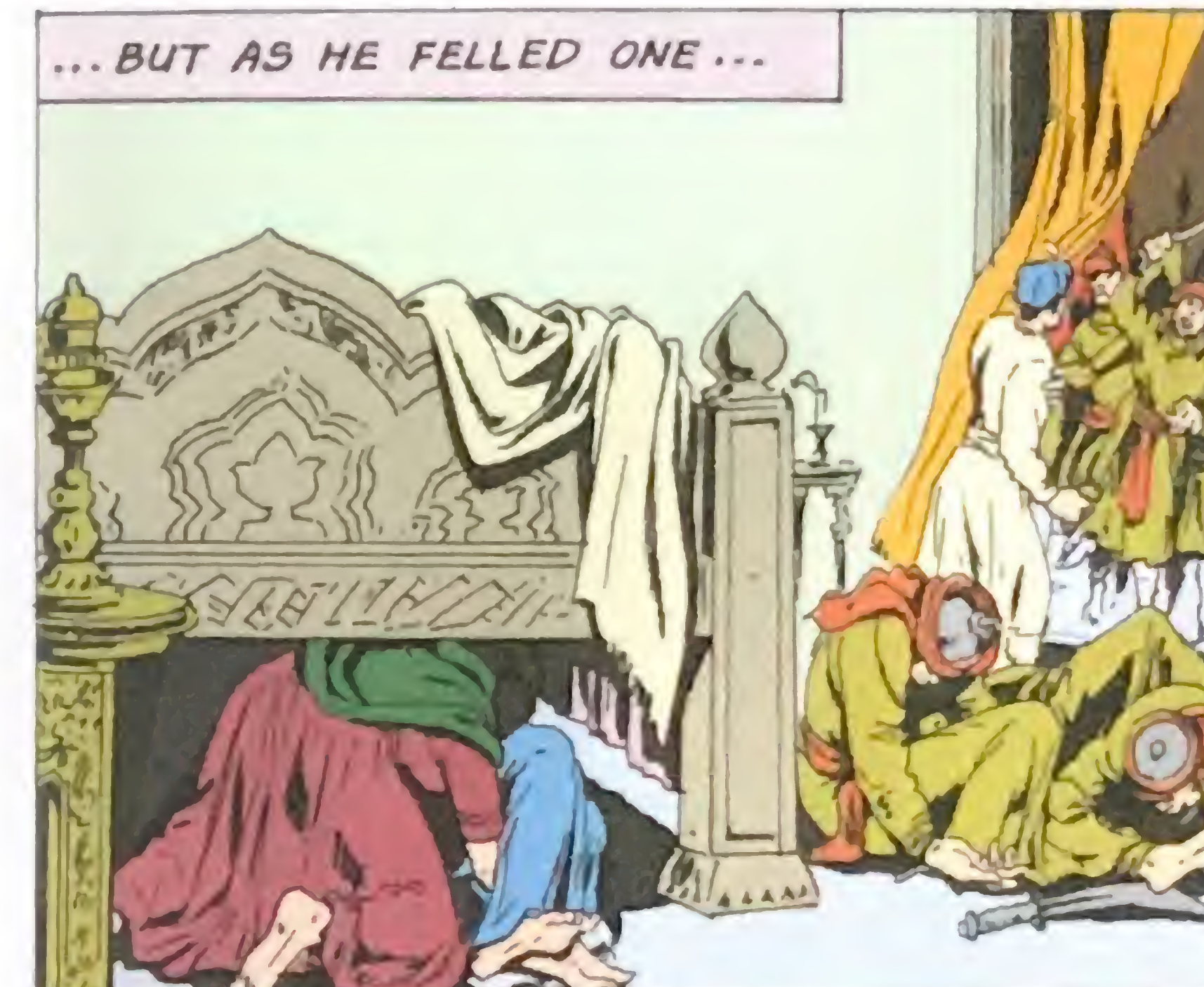


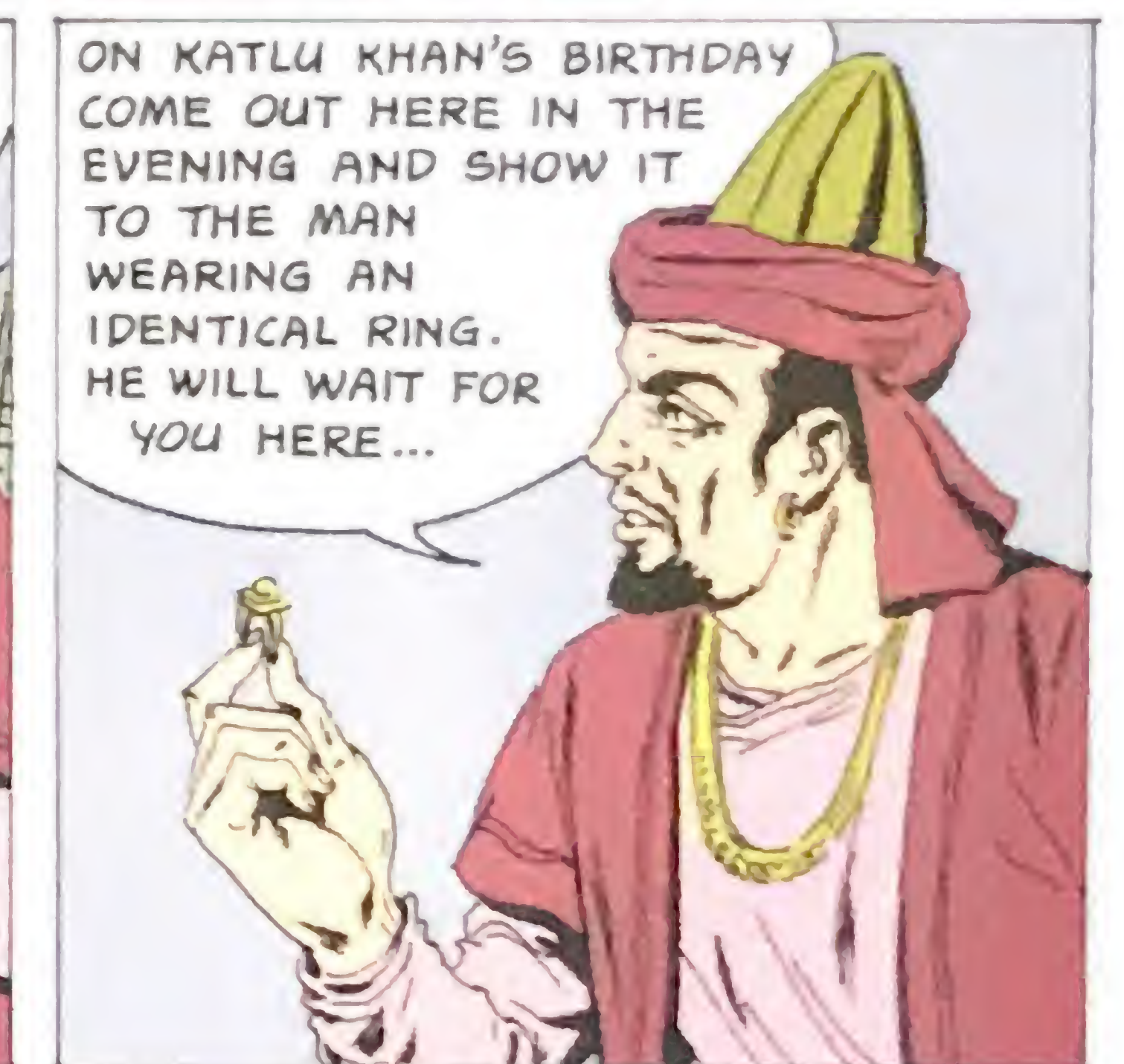
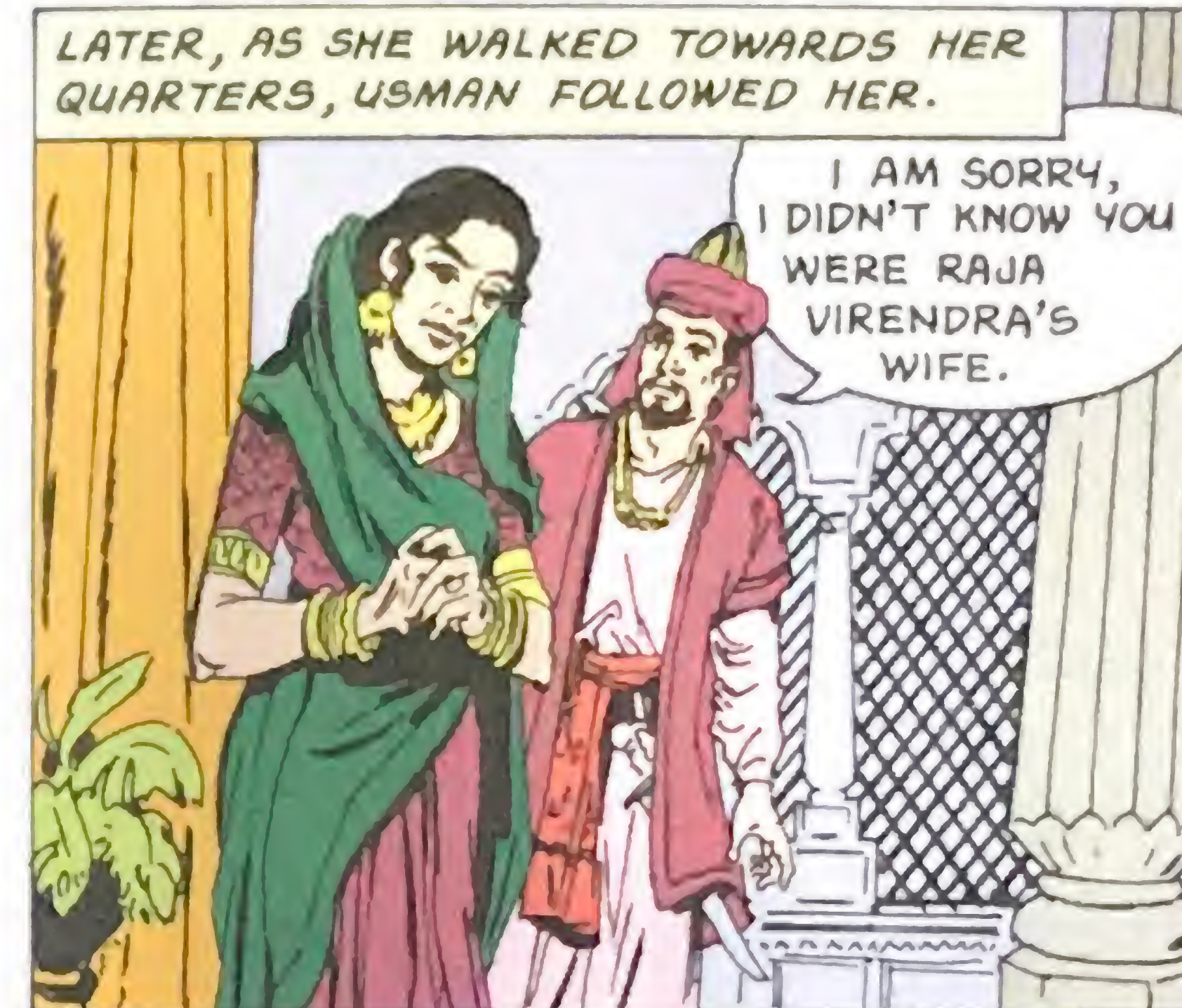
LEAVING VIMLA ON THE TERRACE, USMAN KHAN OPENED THE SECRET DOOR AND LET IN HIS TROOPS.

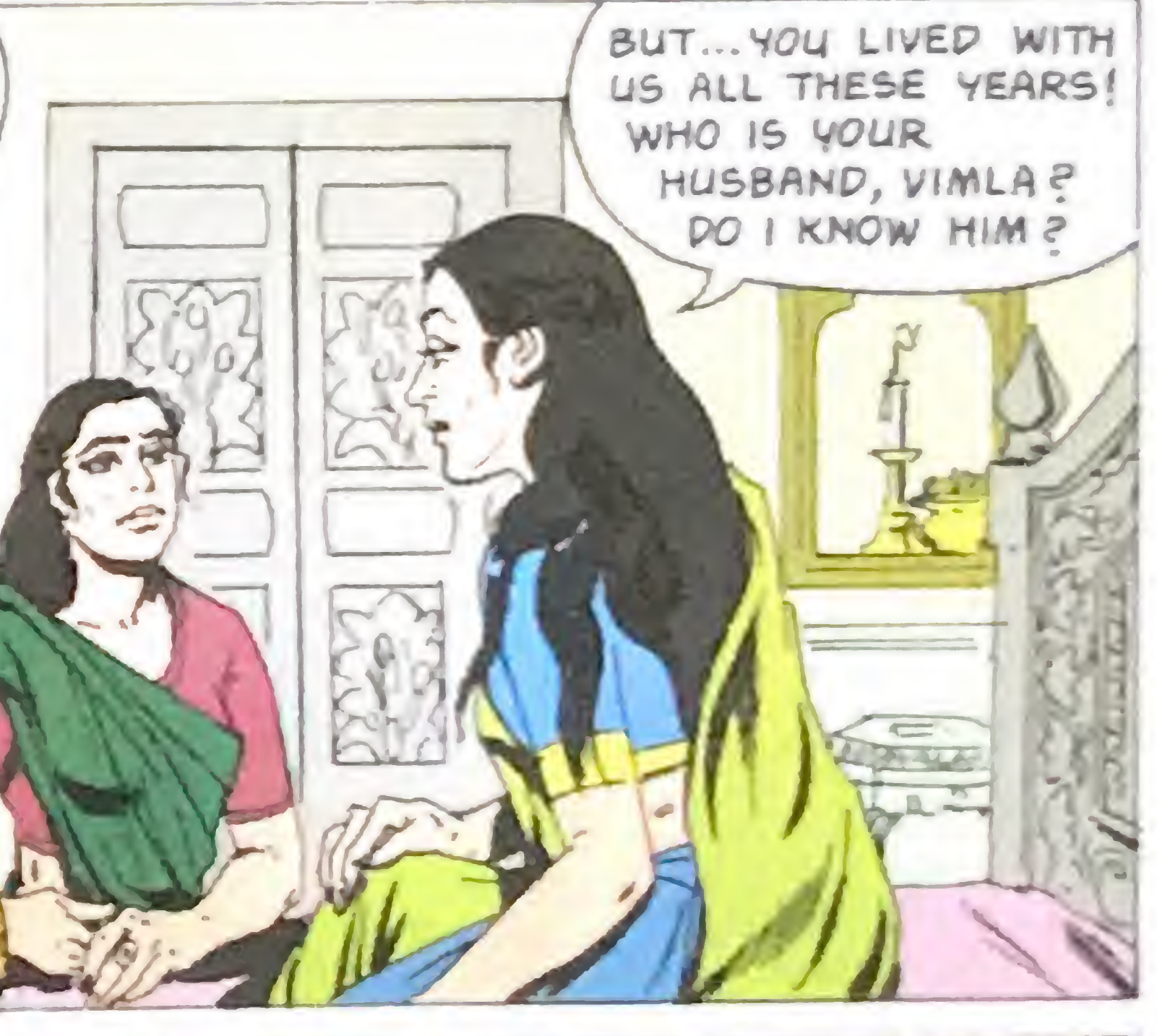
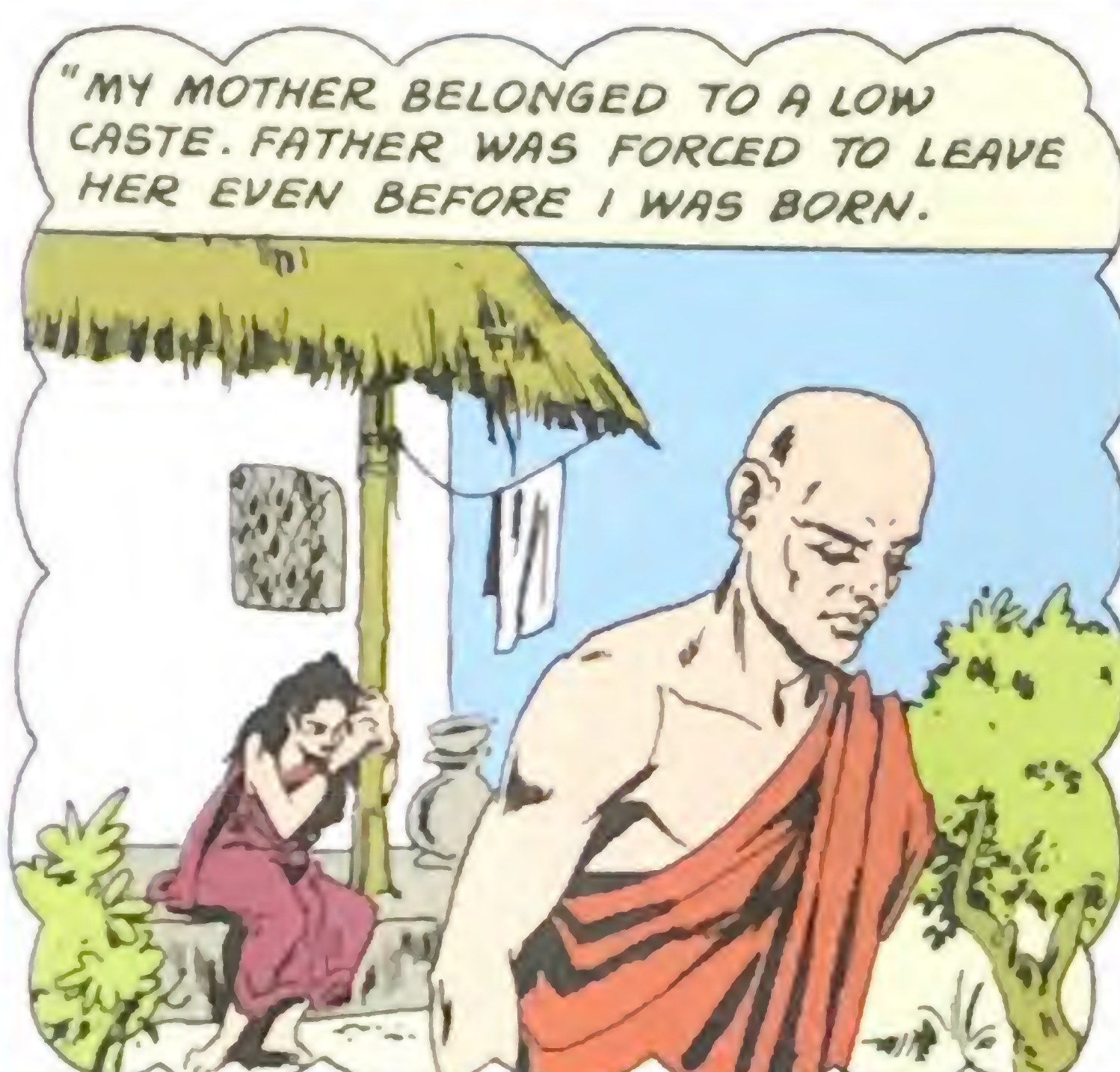
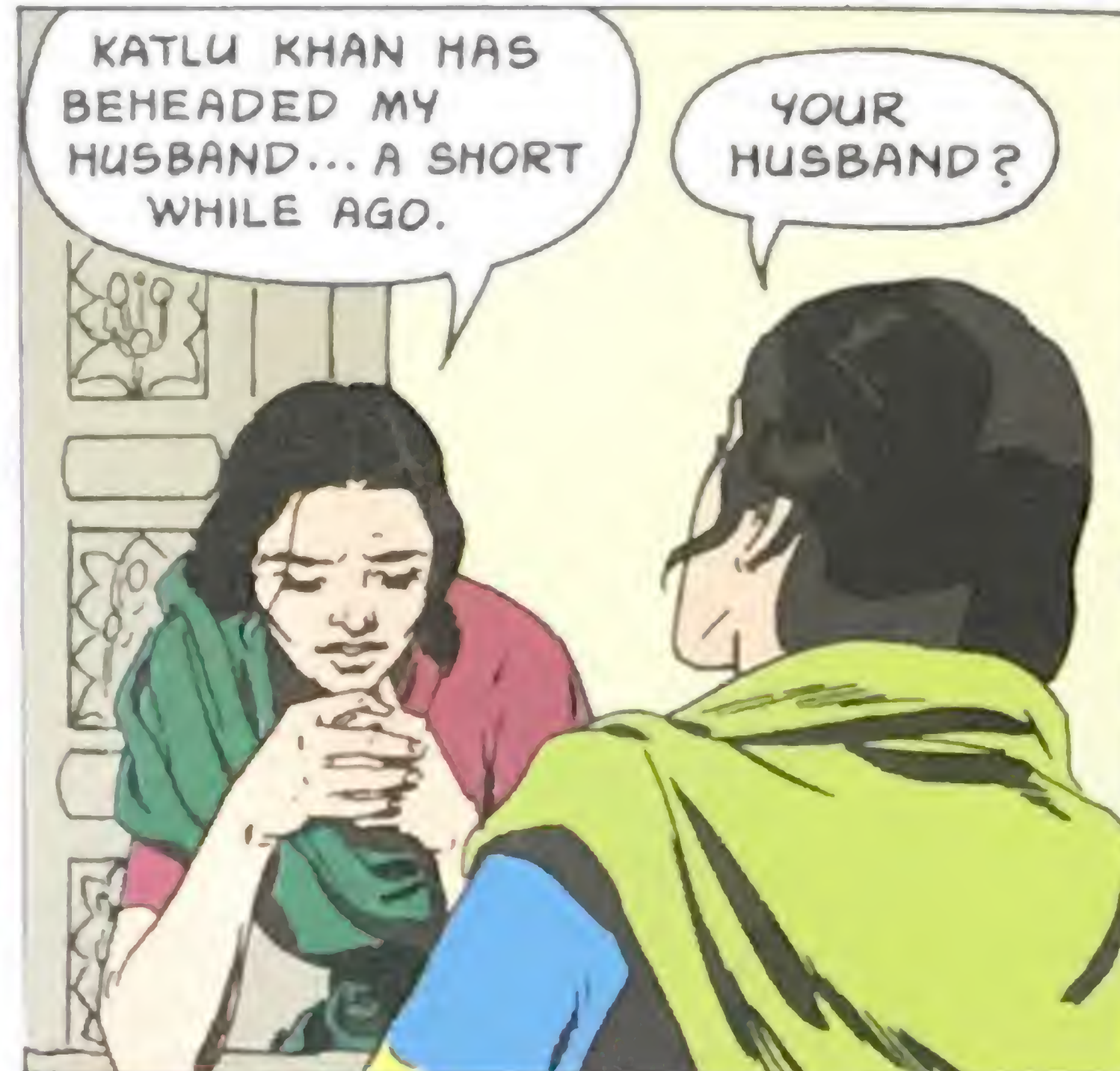


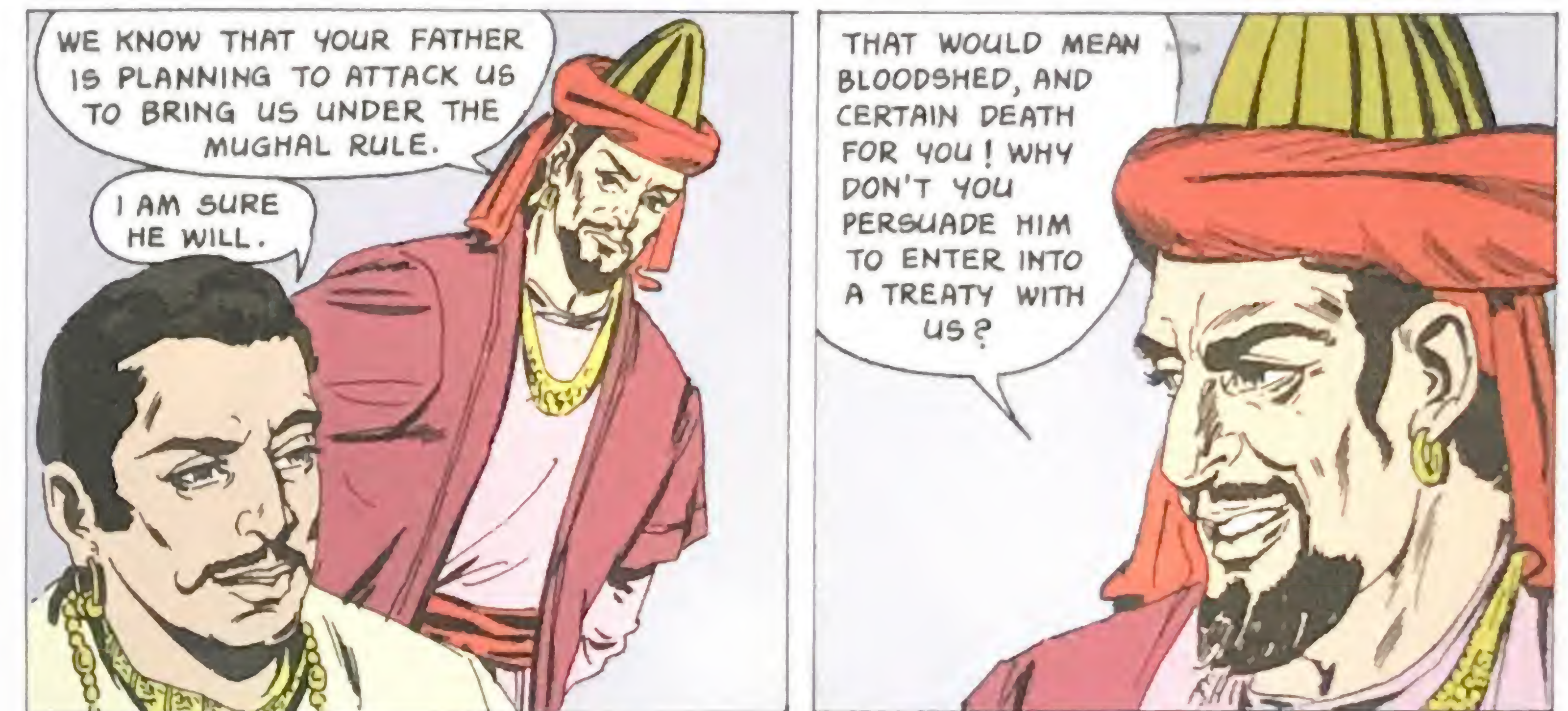
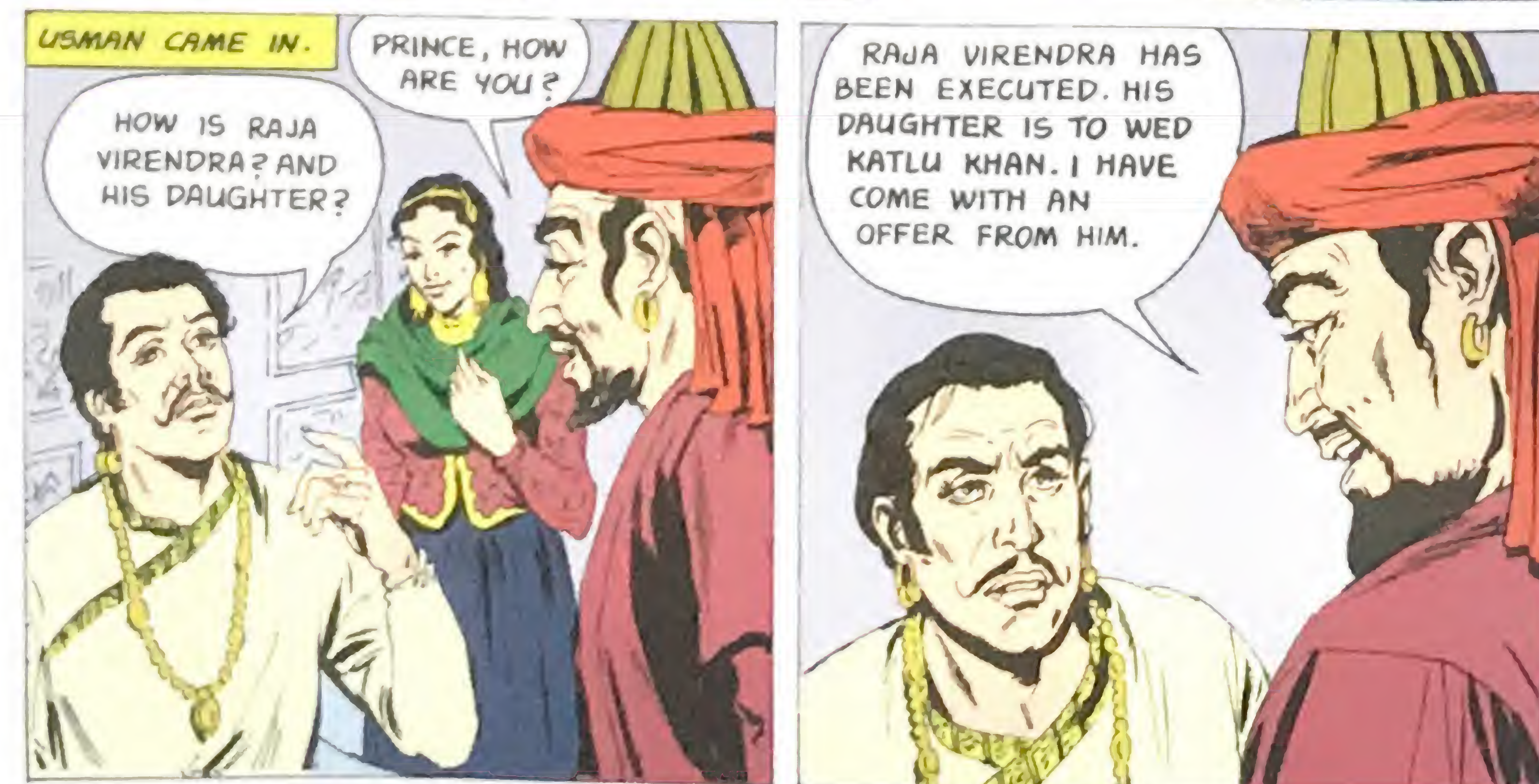
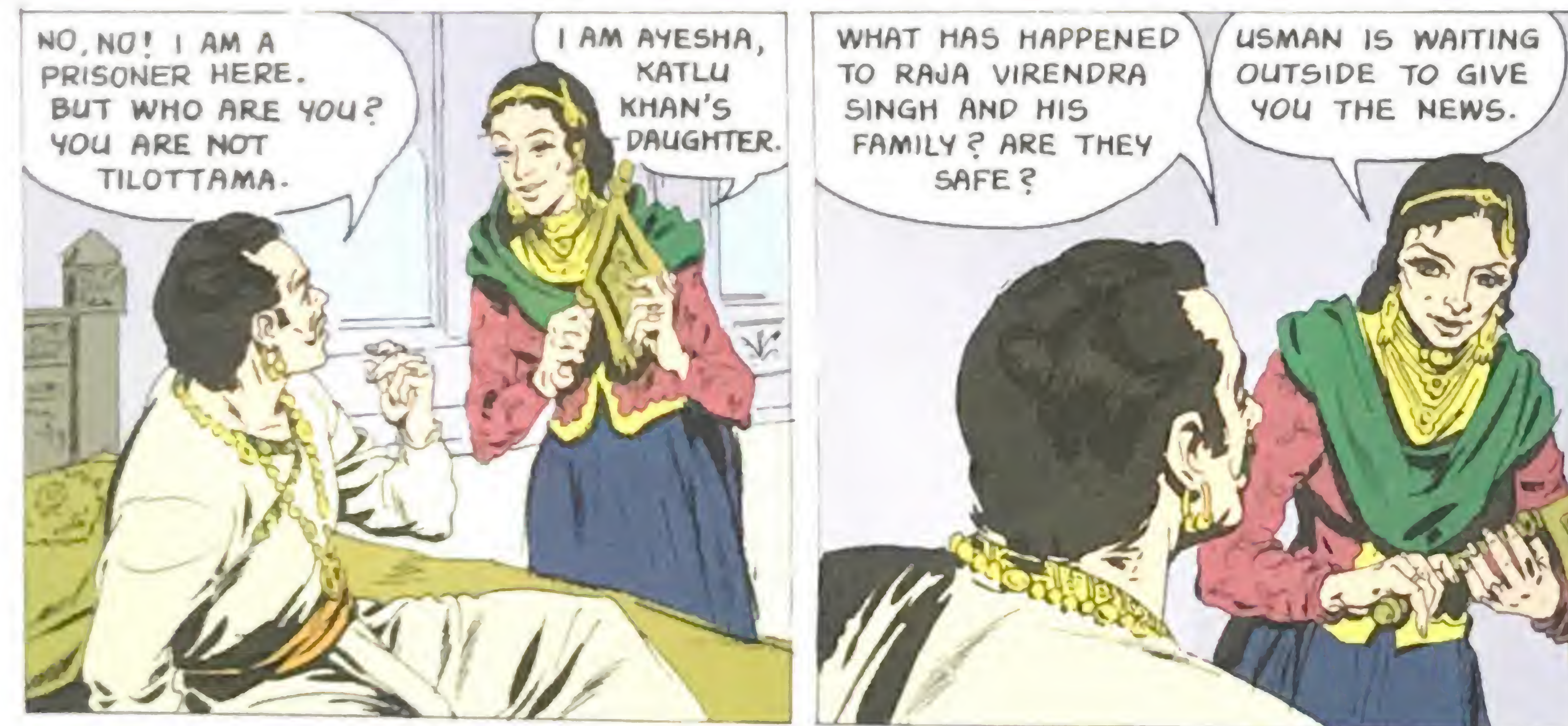
MEANWHILE, VIMLA HAD MANAGED TO FREE HERSELF. SHE RAN TOWARDS VIRENDRA SINGH'S ROOM.

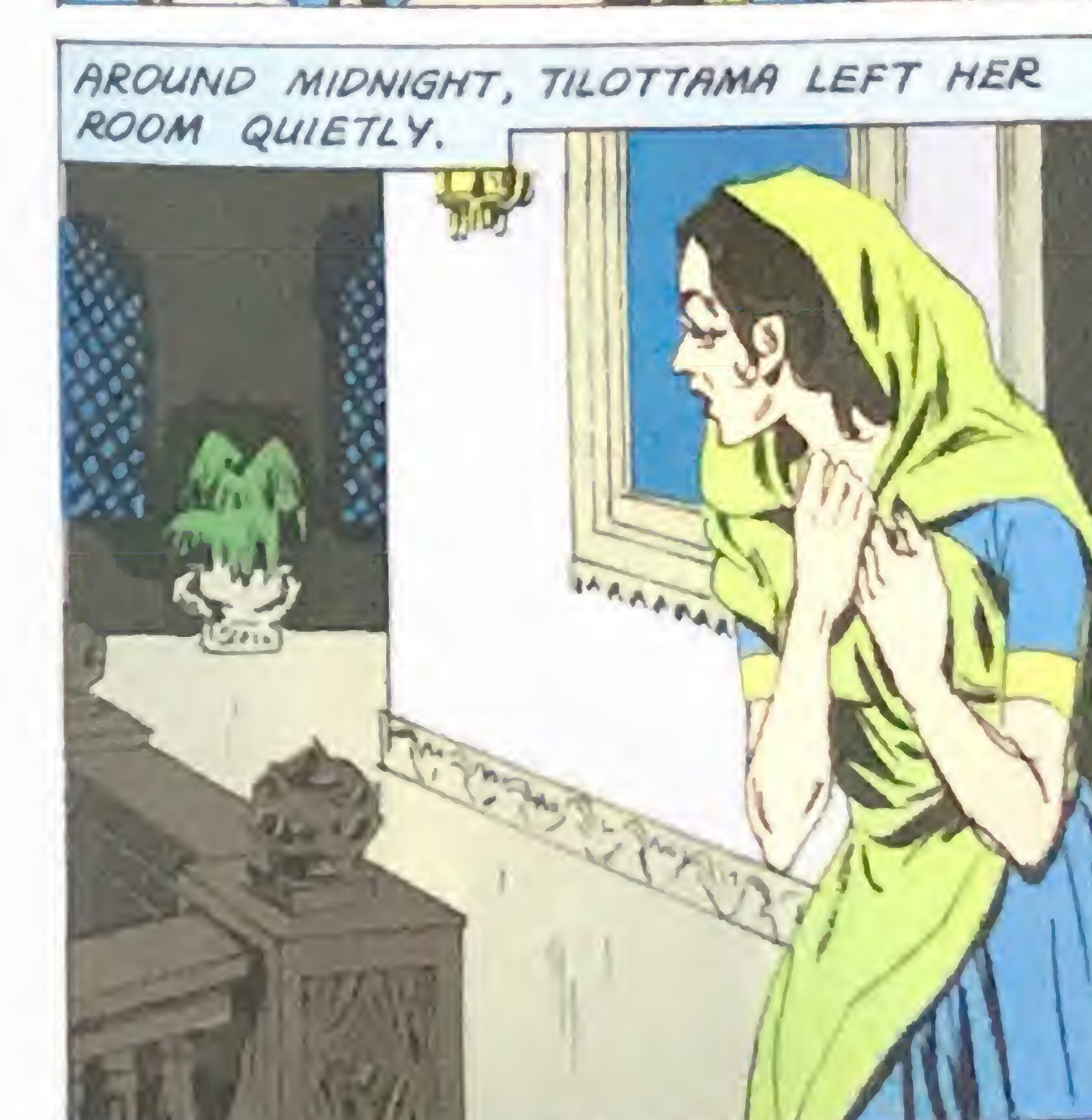
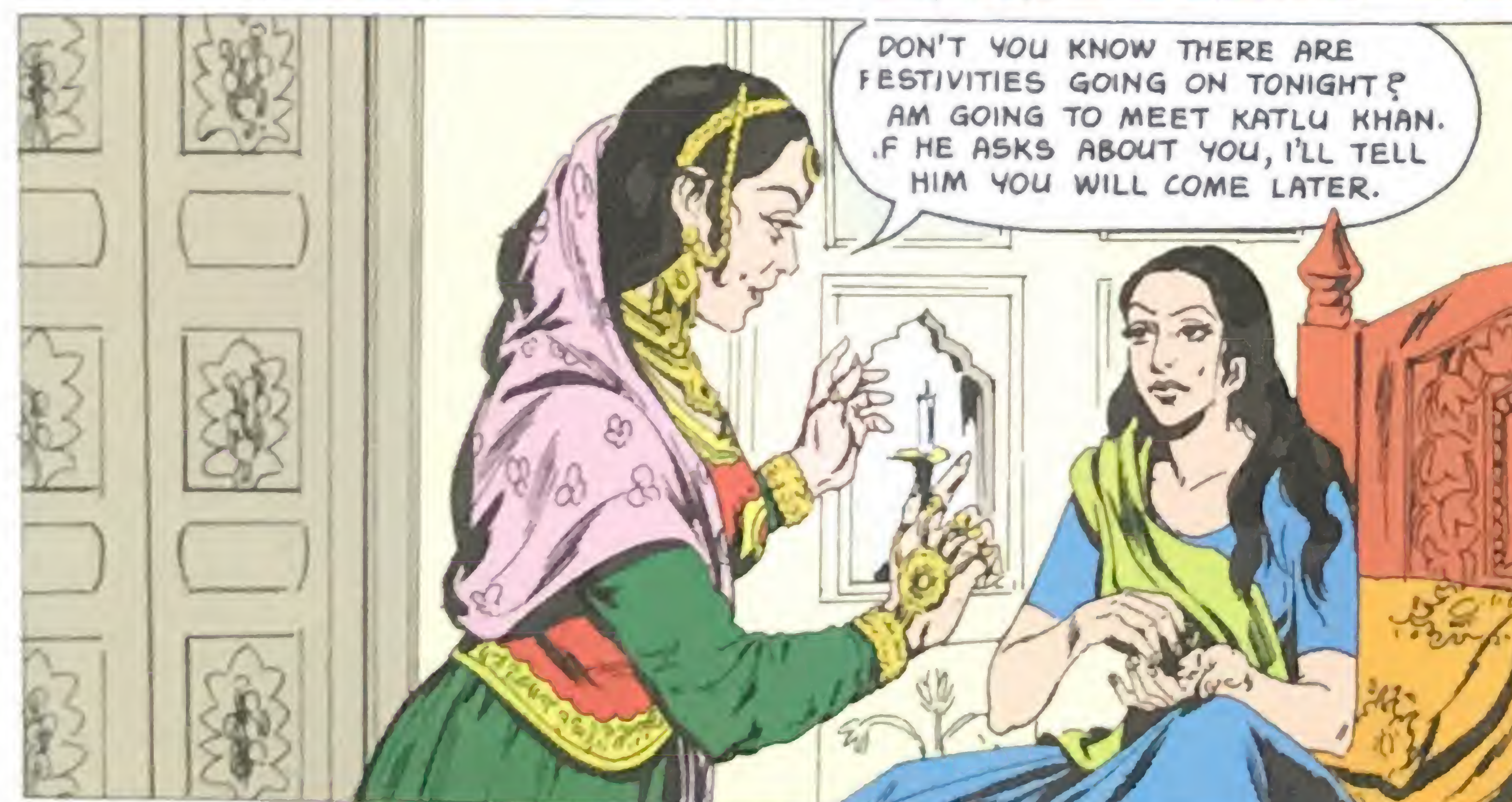


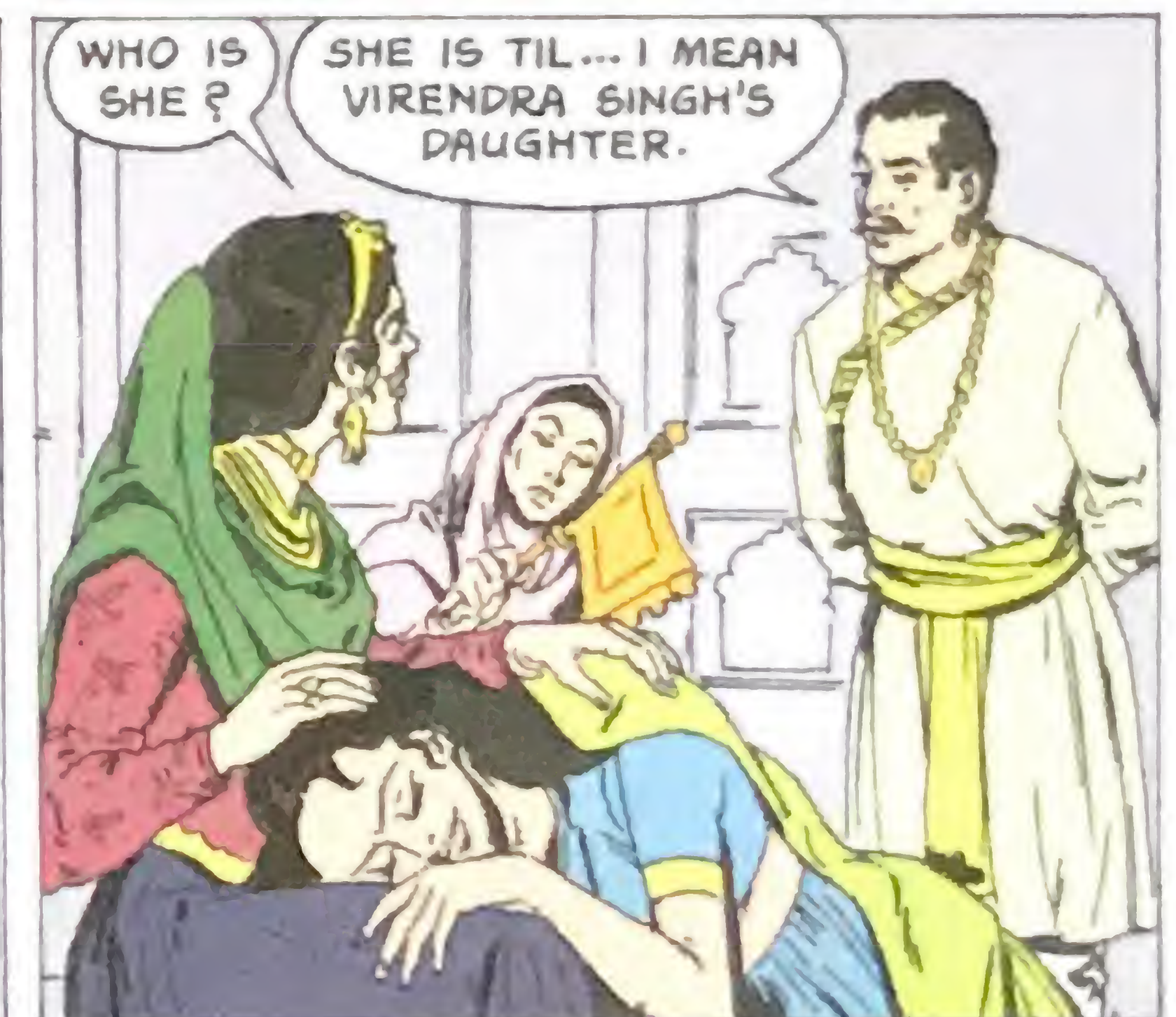
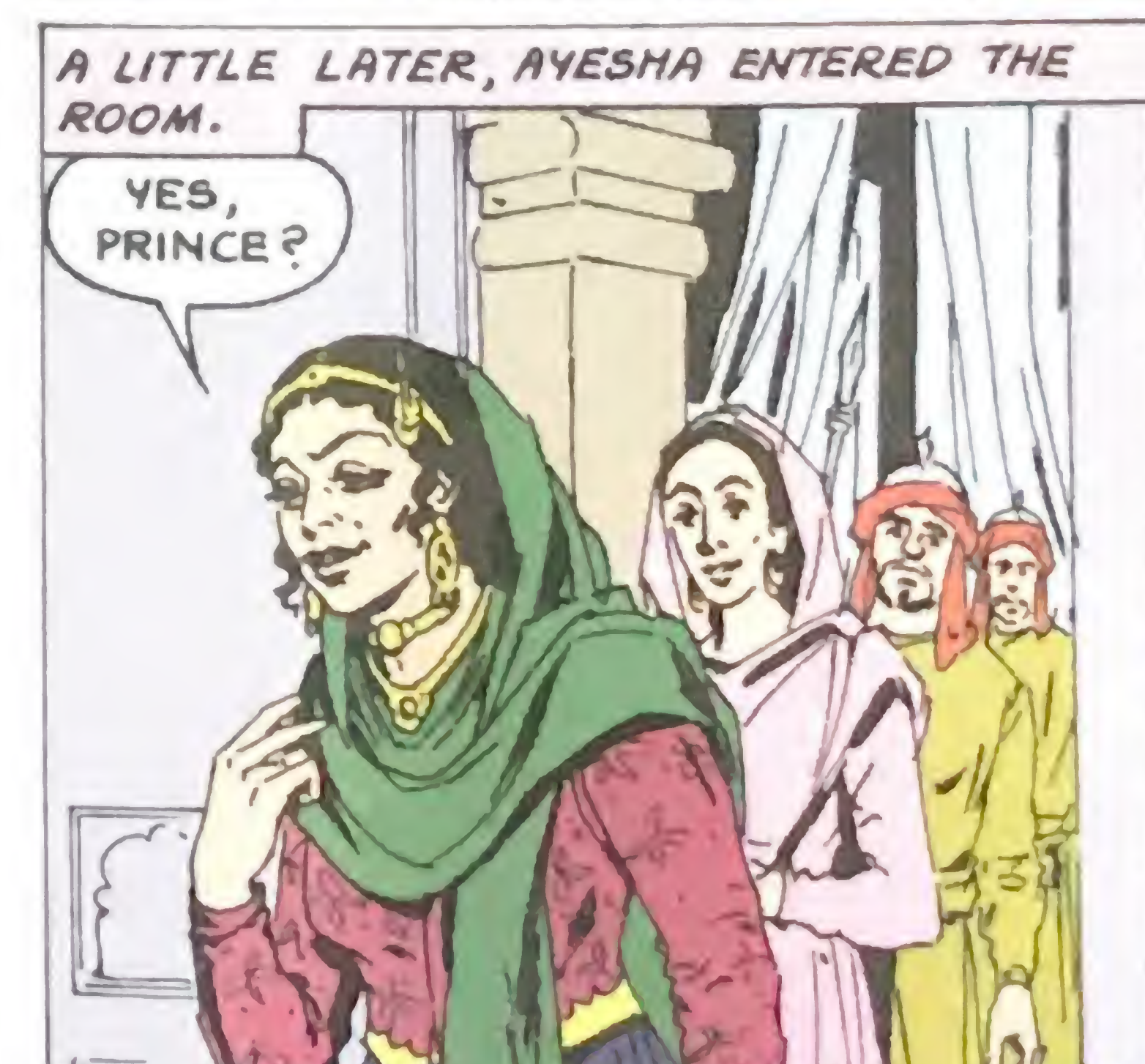


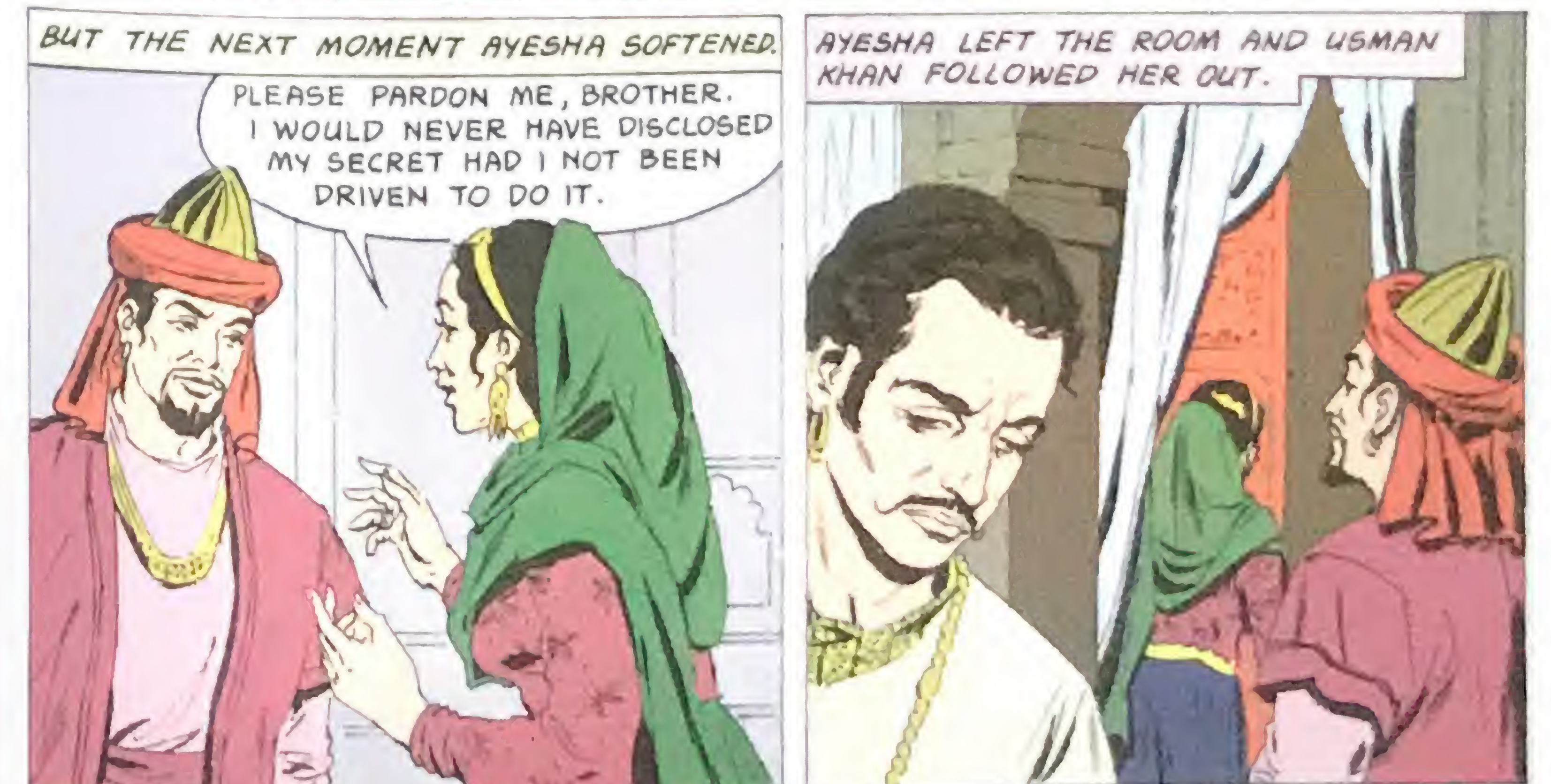
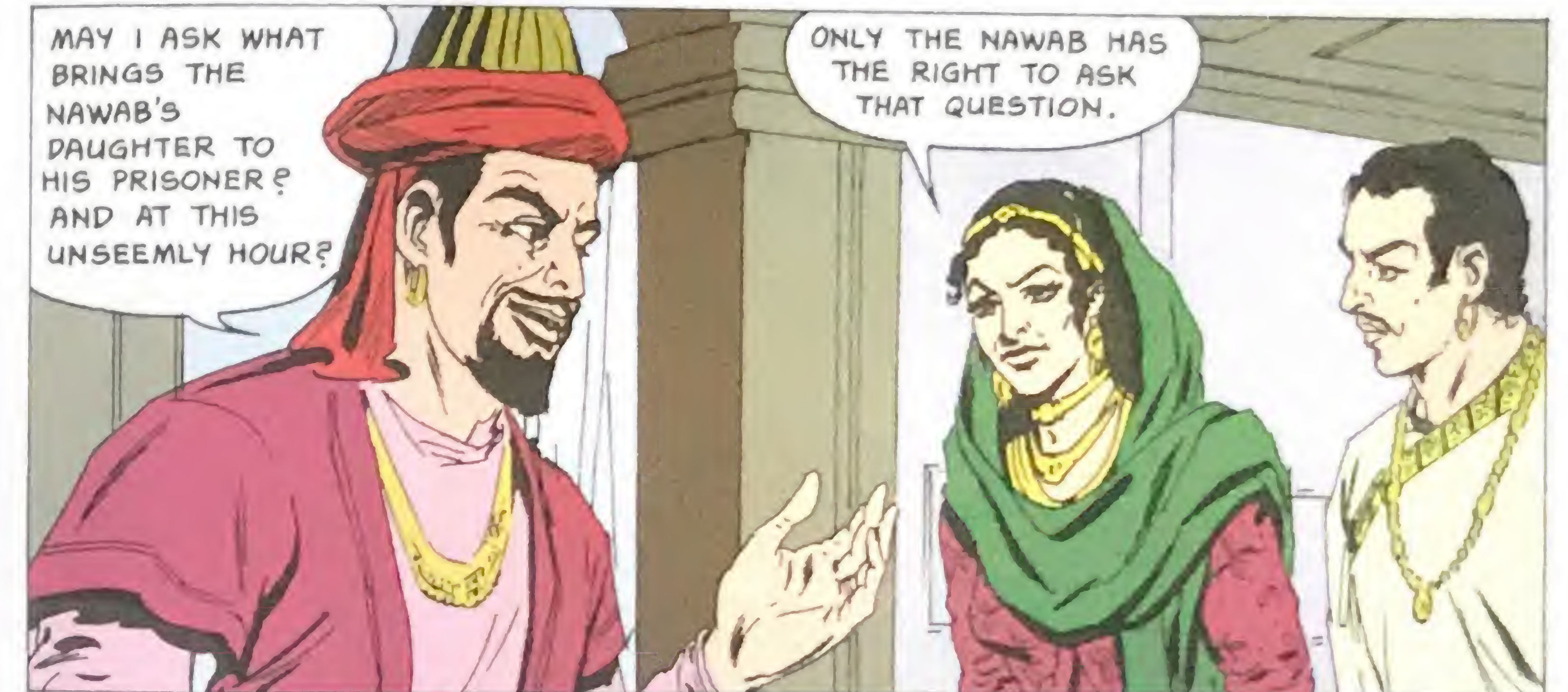
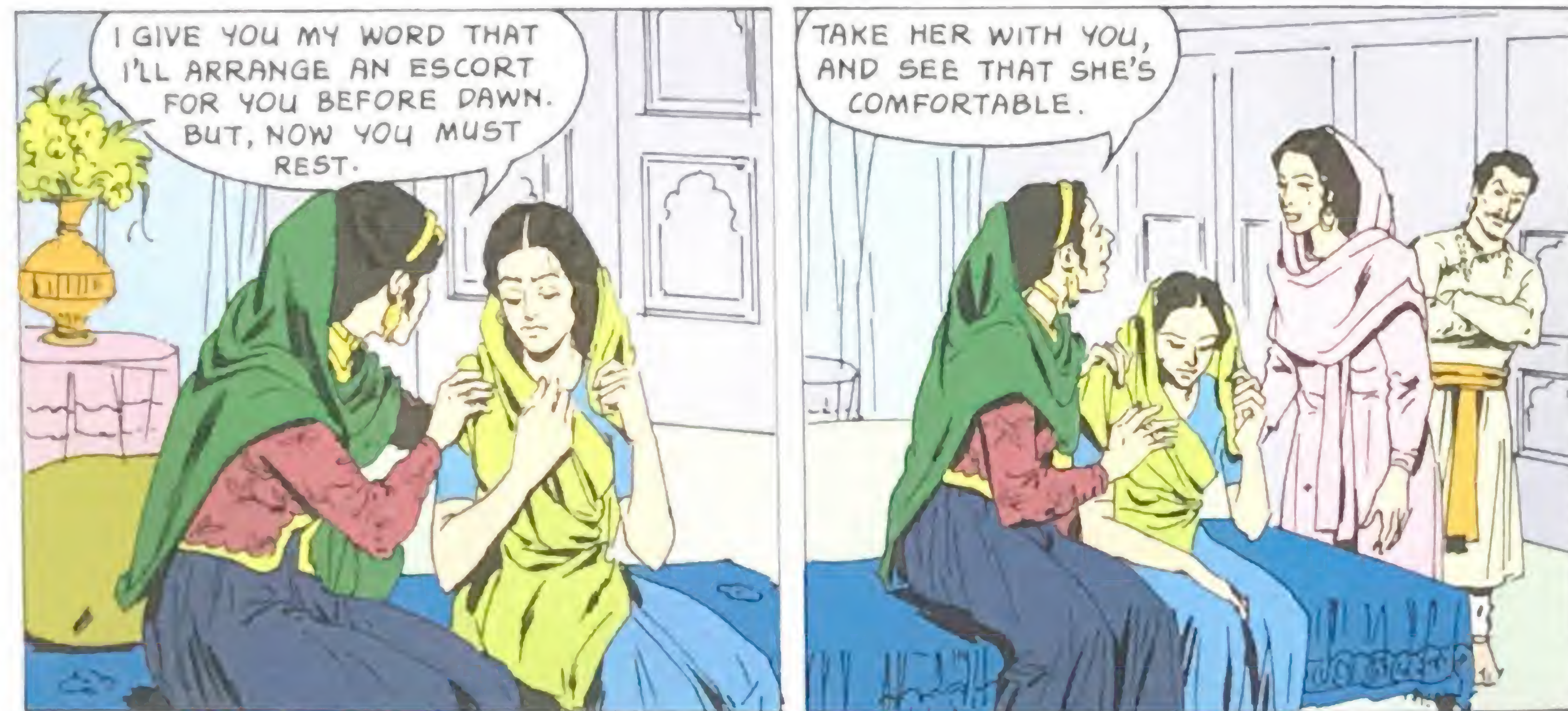


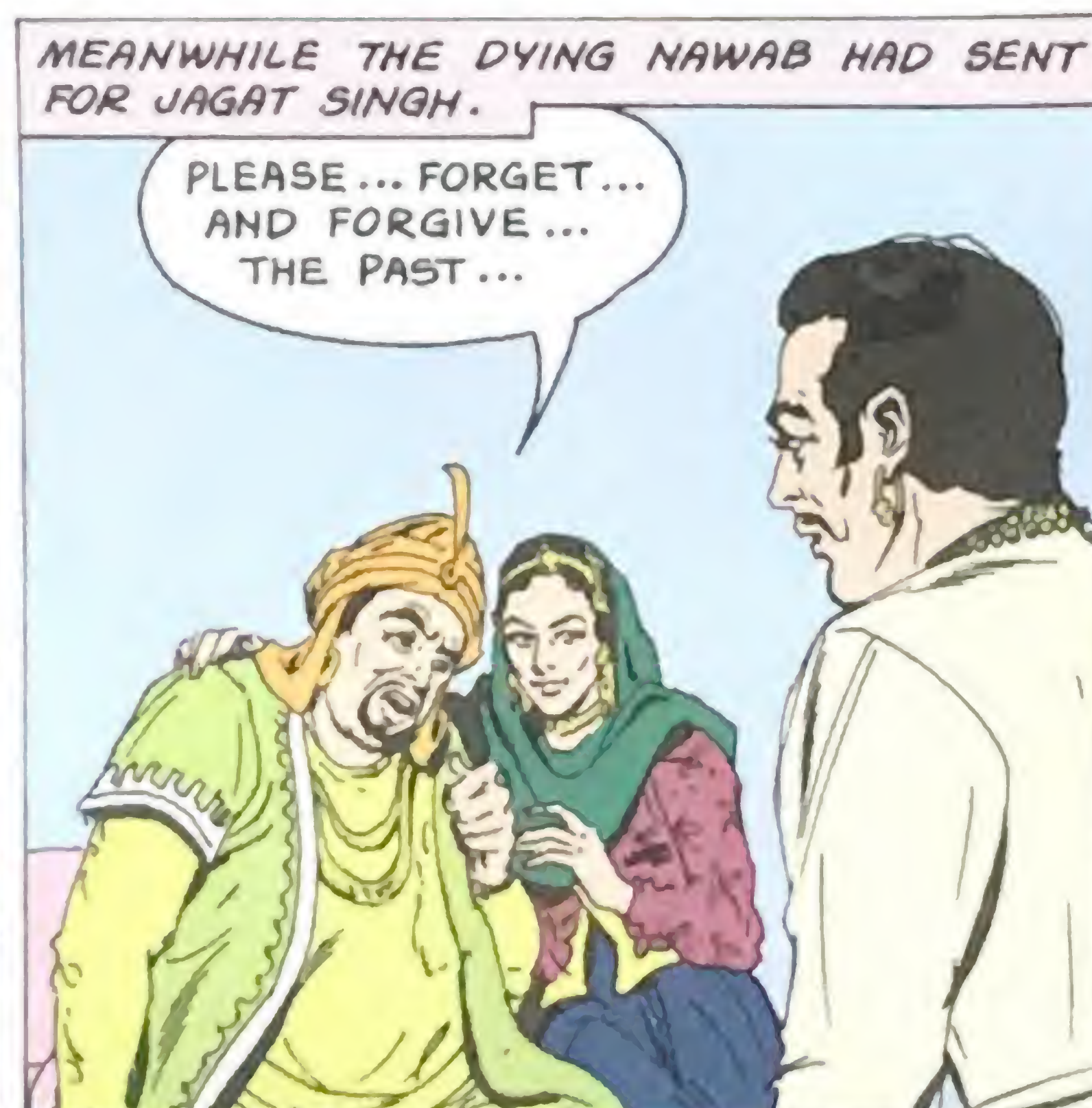












IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, AN AGREEMENT WAS REACHED BETWEEN THE PATHANS AND THE MUGHALS, WITH MAN SINGH REPRESENTING THE MUGHAL EMPEROR.



JAGAT SINGH AND TILOTTAMA WERE UNITED IN MARRIAGE.



ON THEIR WEDDING DAY, AYESHA'S GIFT TO TILOTTAMA WAS A CASKET OF PRICELESS JEWELLERY.

THEY ARE BEAUTIFUL, SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL, SISTER. THANK YOU!

WELL, THEY ARE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE JEWEL YOU HAVE ACQUIRED TODAY.



AFTER FOND FAREWELL'S, AYESHA LEFT GARH MANDARAN.

THIS IS THE ONLY PIECE OF JEWELLERY LEFT WITH ME NOW... THIS RING FILLED WITH POISON!

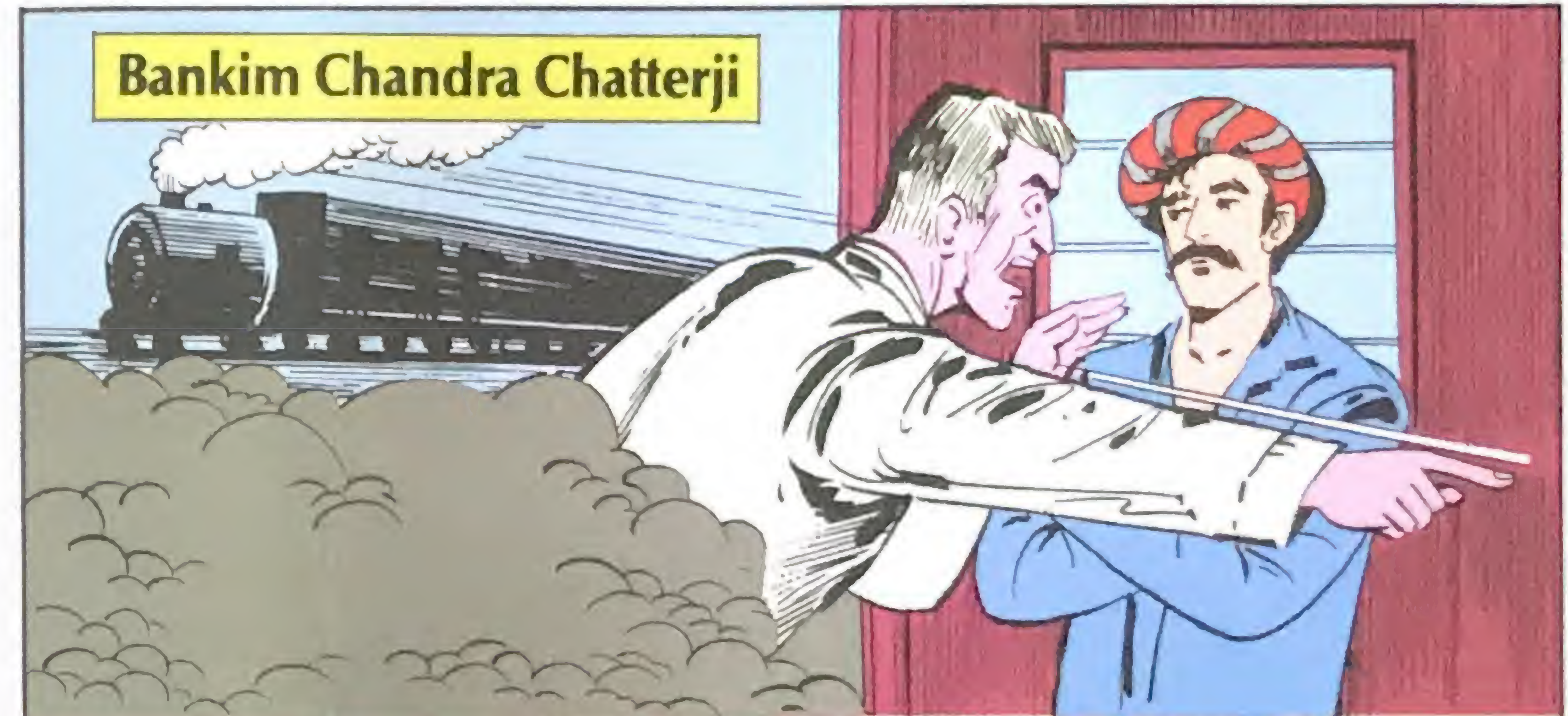


AND I DON'T NEED IT. I HAVE FOUND PEACE AND HAPPINESS IN THE HAPPINESS OF JAGAT SINGH AND TILOTTAMA.



AND AYESHA FLUNG THE RING IN THE RIVER FLOWING GENTLY BY.

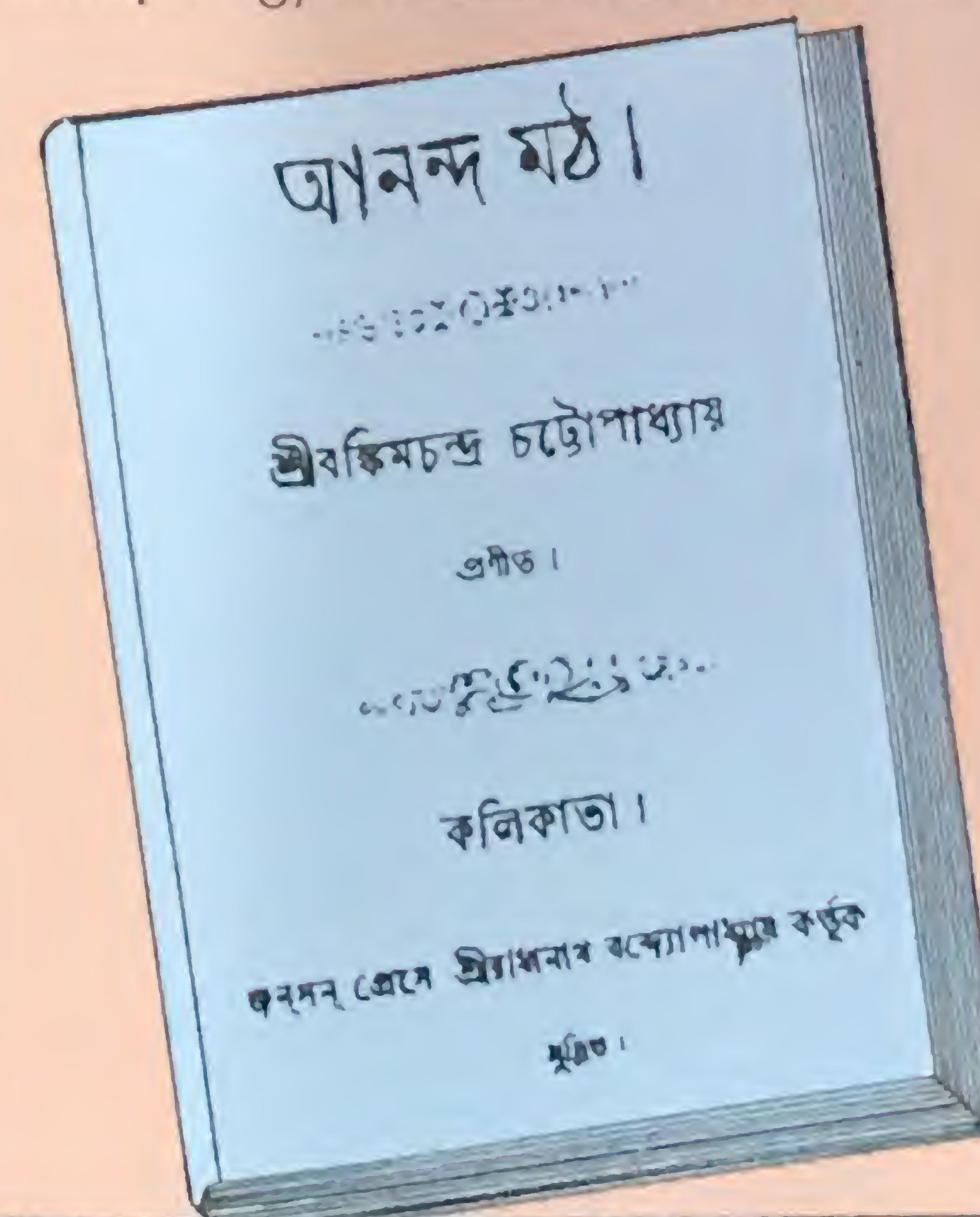
Bankim Chandra Chatterji



In the latter half of the nineteenth century, when British Rule in India was at its peak, a few Englishmen were making merry in a moving train when one of them suddenly spotted a young Bengali in their compartment. He swaggered up to the man and shouted, "How dare you travel in this compartment! Get out! Fast!" And he began pushing the man towards the door.

Without a trace of panic, the man calmly turned round, faced the Englishman and said in a firm, quiet voice, "If you can show me how to get off a running train, I'll follow. And if you need any help, I can always give you a push."

The Englishman was taken aback. No Indian had talked to him like that before. He hadn't the faintest idea how he should react. So he murmured an apology and stumbled back to his companions.



The young Bengali was none other than the poet and novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji. It was his pen that gave us VANDE MATARAM – the song that inspired those who fought for our independence. Durgesh Nandini was his very first novel and he is revered to this day as the father of the Bengali Novel.