



No. 93 Rs.4.00

KANNAGI



ADAPTED FROM THE FAMOUS TAMIL EPIC
SILAPPADIKARAM

KANNAGI, a gem of a housewife, a 'paragon of chastity', has been immortalized in the pages of *SILAPPADIKAARAM*, the famous Tamil epic of Ilango, the Chera prince-turned-ascetic. It is the story of a clash between three anklets: the anklet of the home, the anklet of the stage, and the anklet of the palace.

An ill-fated housewife, KANNAGI loses her husband, KOVALAN, to the art of a dancer, MADHAVI, and finds him again only to lose him to the blind law of a king. Her story is set in the three ancient cities of South India—POOMPUHAR the Chola capital where she grew up; MADURAI the Pandya capital where she fell; and VANJI the Chera capital which placed her on a pedestal.

The epic is a rich record of a great civilisation, vivid with descriptions of edifices shrines, docks, market-places, squares, of laws and rituals, of "Natya Shastra," (Science of Dance), musicology and musical instruments of the day. Known for its high dramatic content, *SILAPPADIKAARAM* is a shining jewel in Tamil literature.

The memory of Ilango and his immortal classic has recently been perpetuated by the Tamil Nadu Government by erecting, at Kaveripattinam, a magnificent seven-story art gallery, *Silappadikaaram Kalaikoodam*, in ancient Dravidian architectural style. The structure narrates the story in stone carvings.

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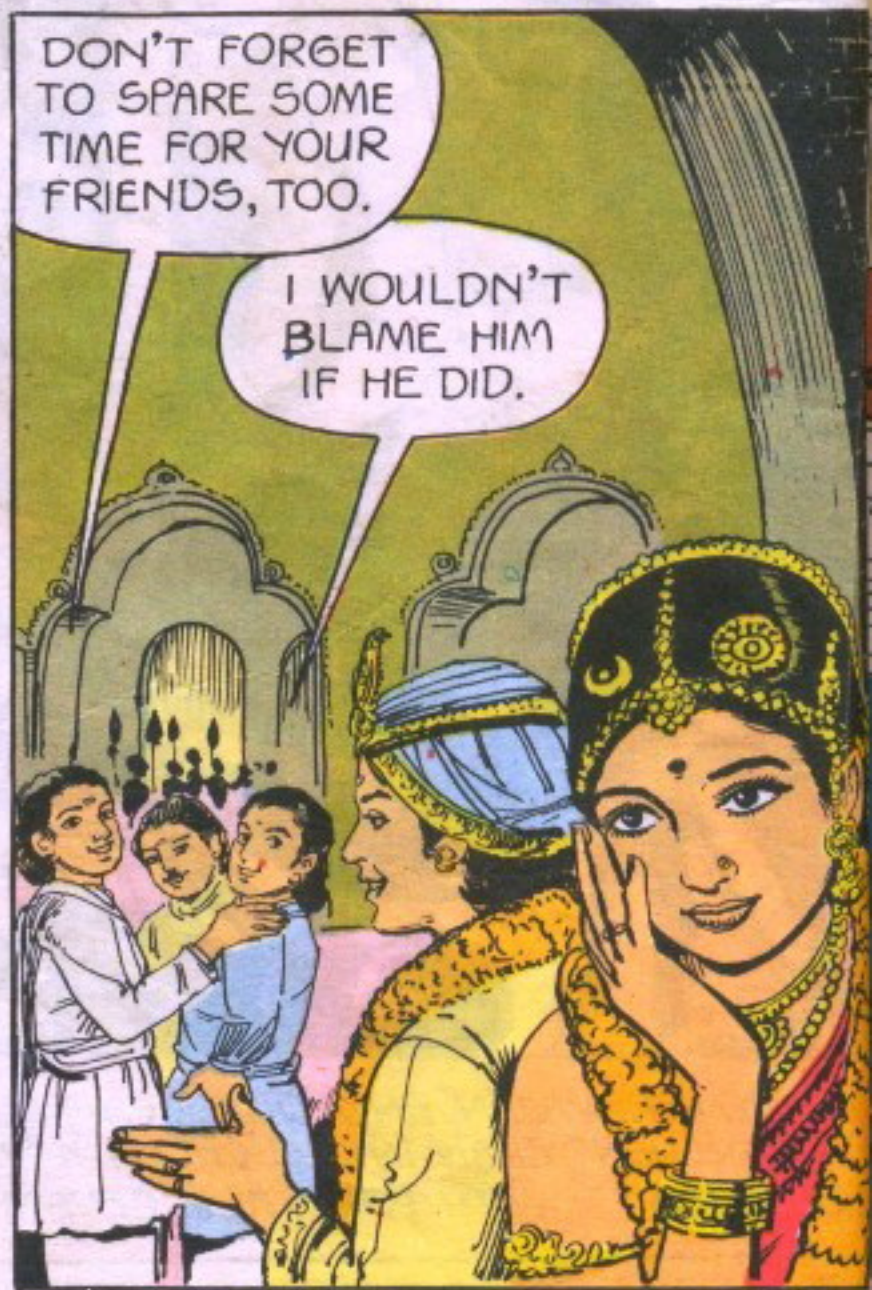
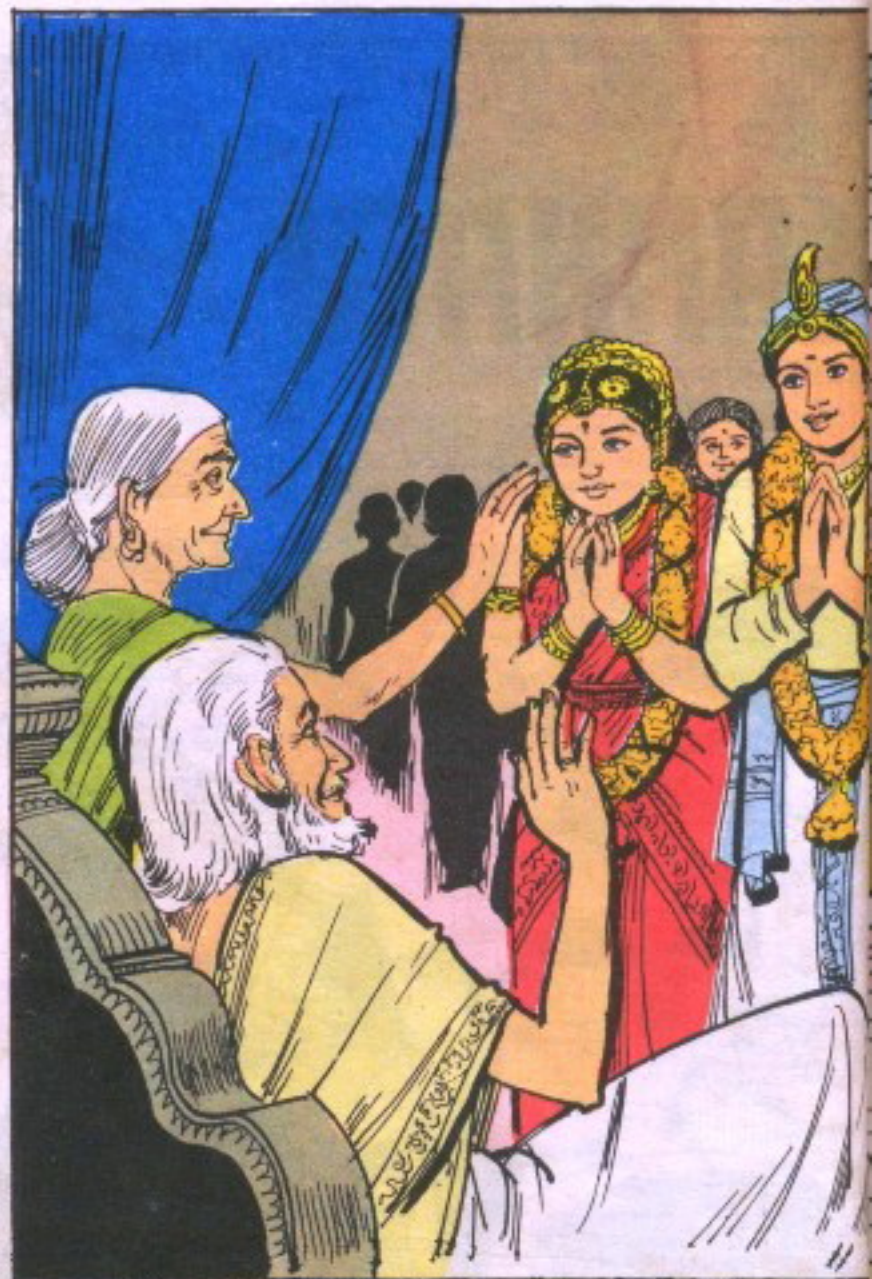
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KANNAGI



HANDSOME KOVALAN AND QUIET, CHARMING KANNAGI, OF A MERCHANT CLAN IN THE CHOLA KINGDOM, WERE MARRIED WITH POMP AND CEREMONY.



THE NEXT DAY—

KANNAGI, SHALL WE
TAKE A WALK BY
THE RIVER?

NO, AS YOU
WISH, THAT IS
WHAT MATTERS.

AS YOU WISH,
MY LORD.

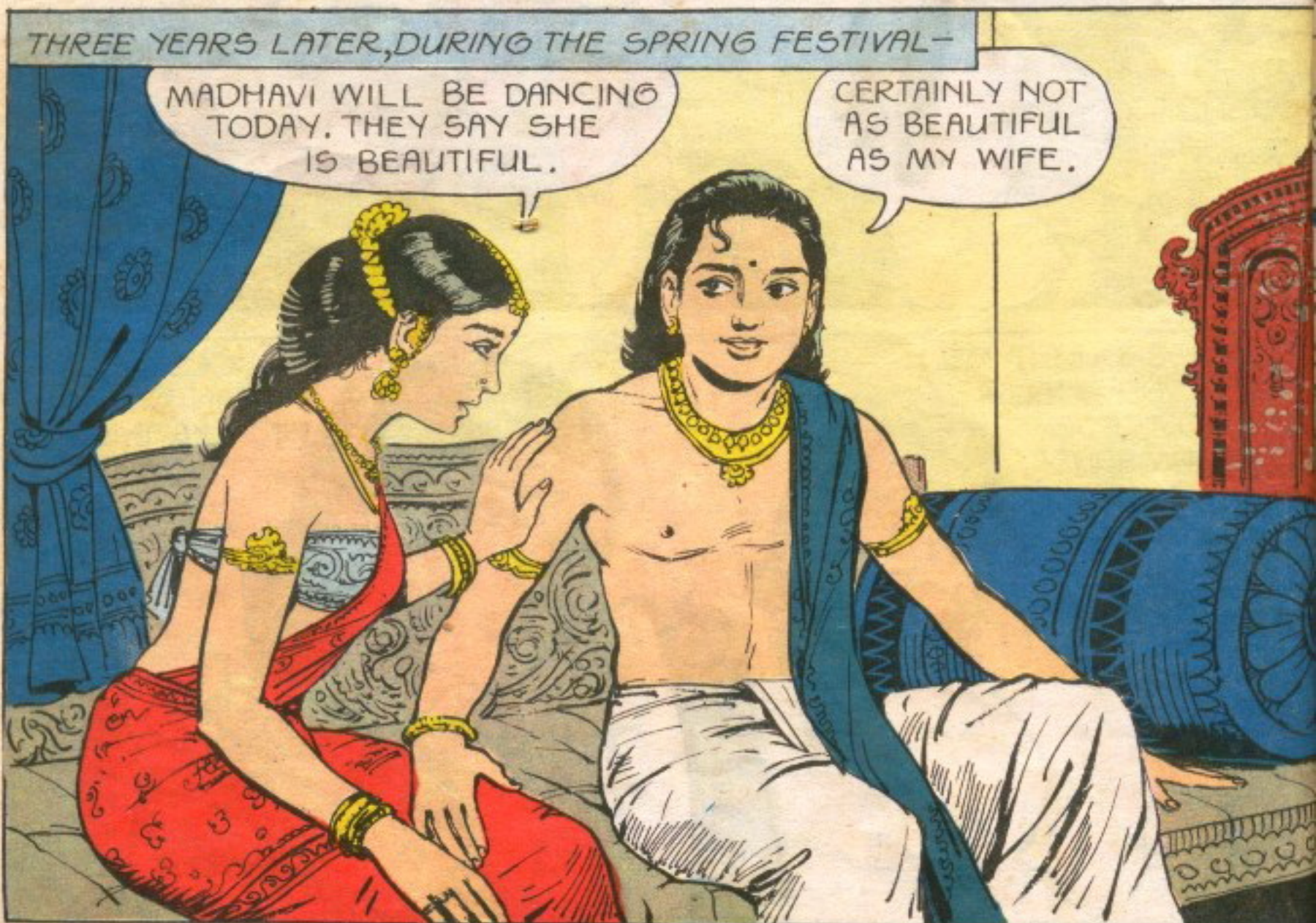
A MONTH LATER—

KANNAGI, LISTEN.
I HAVE JUST CON-
CLUDED A DEAL
WORTH LAKHS
OF RUPEES.

NOW WE CAN BUY
THAT HOUSE BY
THE RIVER!

YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME
LUCK, SO YOU SHALL
BE THE MISTRESS
OF THE NEW HOUSE.

DOES THAT
MEAN WE HAVE
TO LEAVE YOUR
PARENTS?



BUT WHEN KOVALAN SAW MADHAVI PERFORM—

YES. SHE IS BEAUTIFUL.

HE HASN'T TAKEN HIS EYES OFF HER.

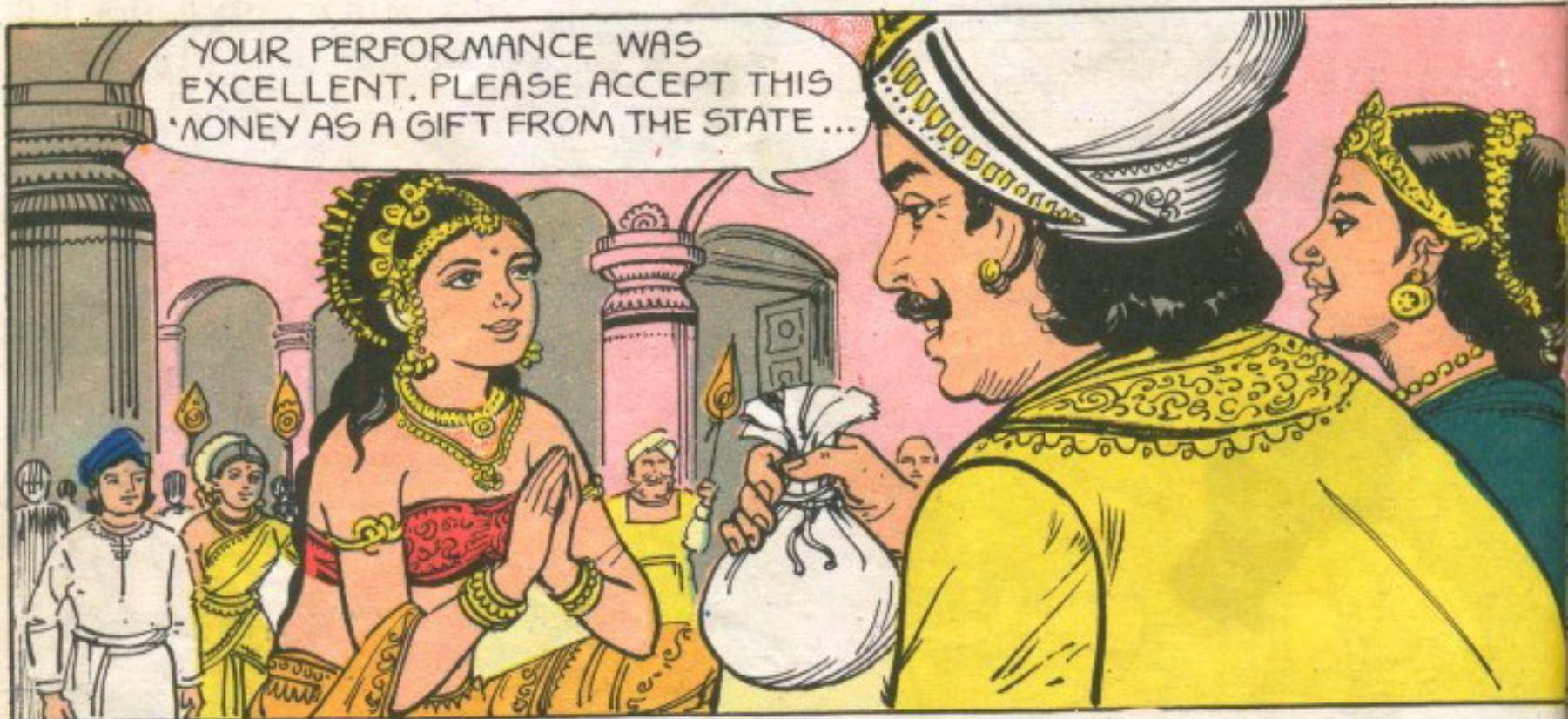


WHAT AN EXCELLENT DANCER!

PERFECT! HER TECHNIQUE IS PERFECT!



YOUR PERFORMANCE WAS
EXCELLENT. PLEASE ACCEPT THIS
MONEY AS A GIFT FROM THE STATE ...



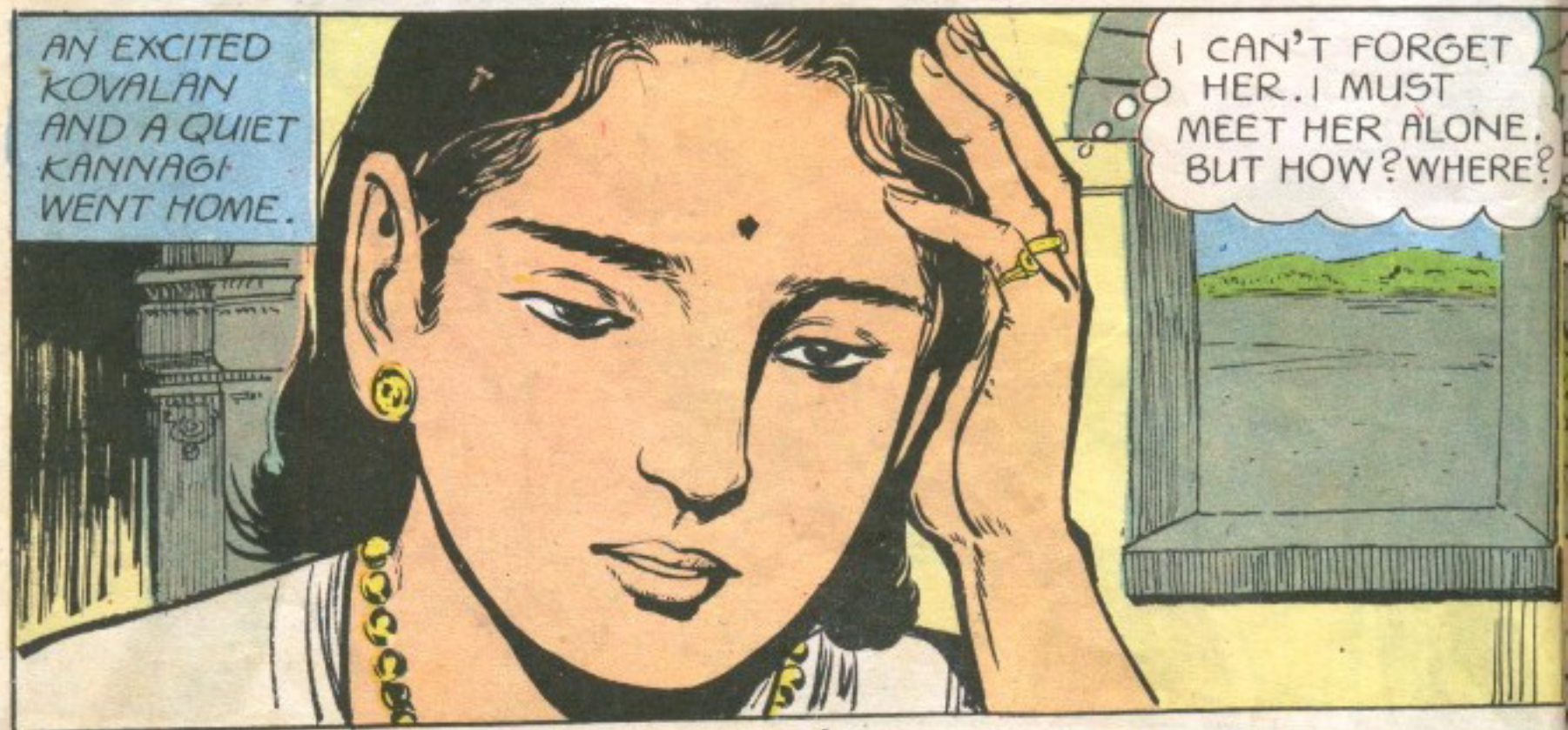
...AND MY EMERALD NECK-
LACE AS A PERSONAL
TRIBUTE.

I AM HONOURED,
YOUR MAJESTY.



AN EXCITED
KOVALAN
AND A QUIET
KANNAGI
WENT HOME.

I CAN'T FORGET
HER. I MUST
MEET HER ALONE.
BUT HOW? WHERE?



THE NEXT DAY—

KOONI, TAKE THIS EMERALD NECKLACE AND SELL IT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER. ONLY HE WOULD BE WORTHY OF HAVING MADHAVI.

LEAVE IT TO ME TO CHOOSE A HANDSOME RICH MAN.

BUY MADHAVI'S NECKLACE AND BECOME HER LORD.

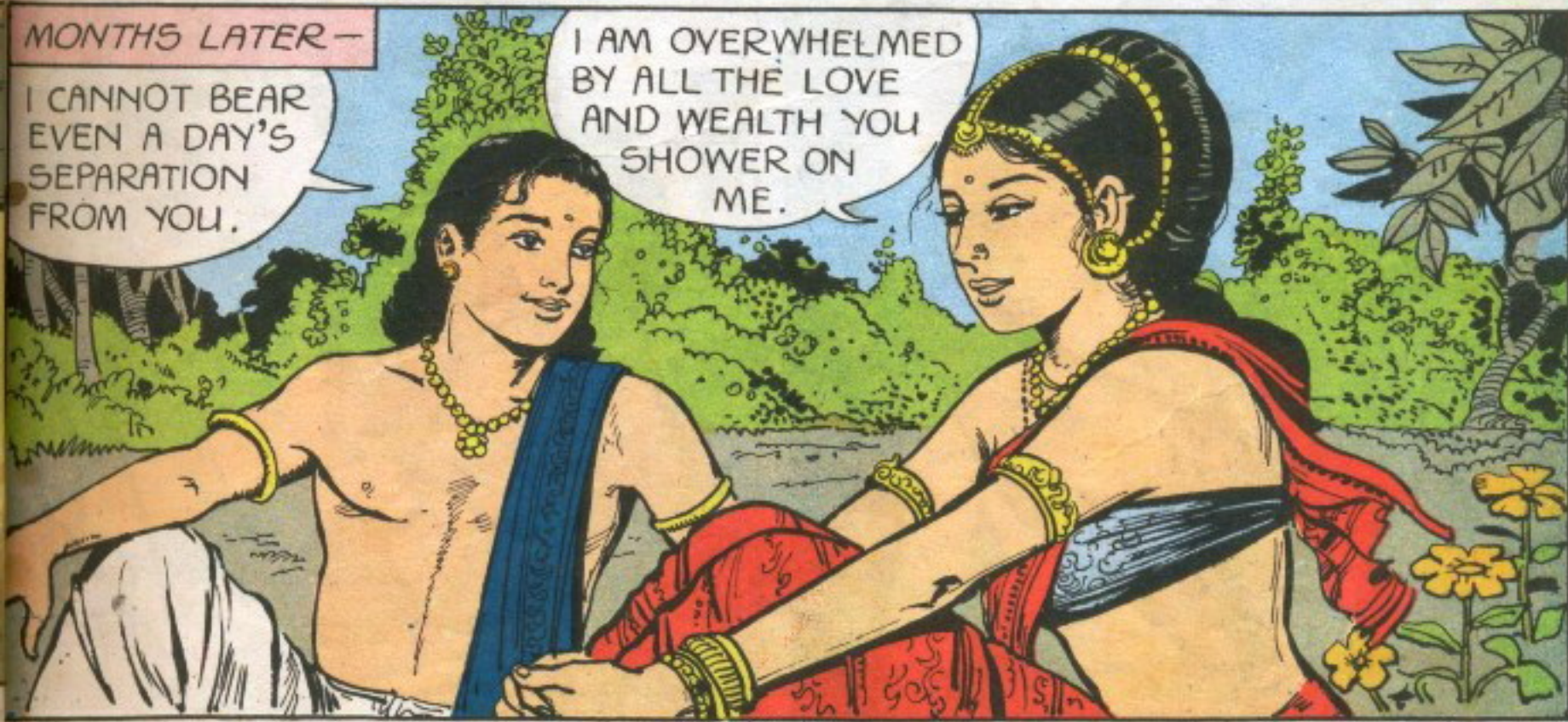
IS THAT ALL ONE NEED DO TO GET HER? I'LL BUY IT.

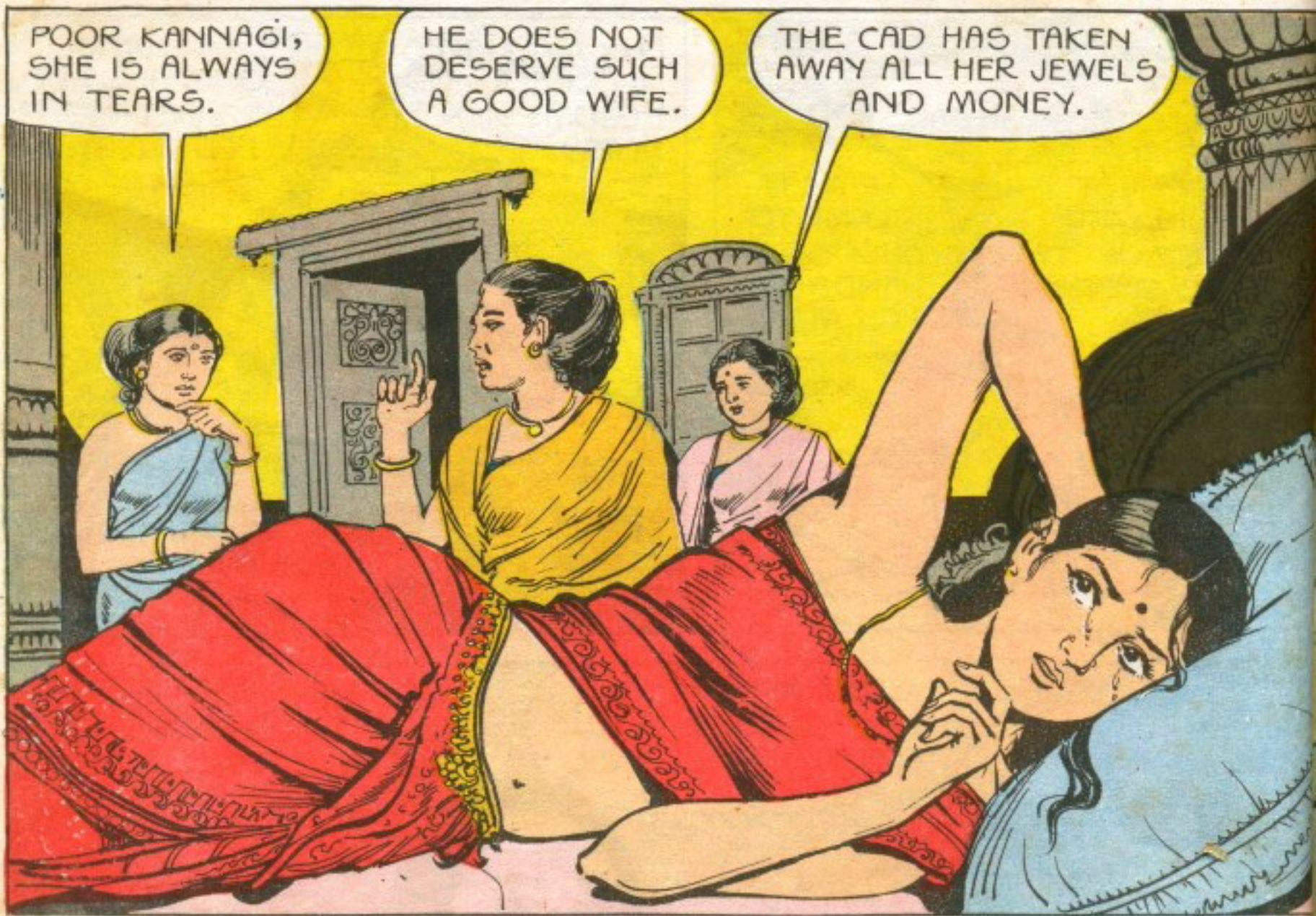


MONTHS LATER—

I CANNOT BEAR EVEN A DAY'S SEPARATION FROM YOU.

I AM OVERWHELMED BY ALL THE LOVE AND WEALTH YOU SHOWER ON ME.





YEARS WENT BY. MADHAVI, IMMERSED IN HER LOVE, NEGLECTED HER PROFESSION.

MY DAUGHTER, AREN'T YOU READY? THE CROWD OUT THERE IS SHOUTING FOR YOU.

I AM IN NO MOOD TO DANCE.

MOOD OR NO MOOD, YOU'LL HAVE TO.

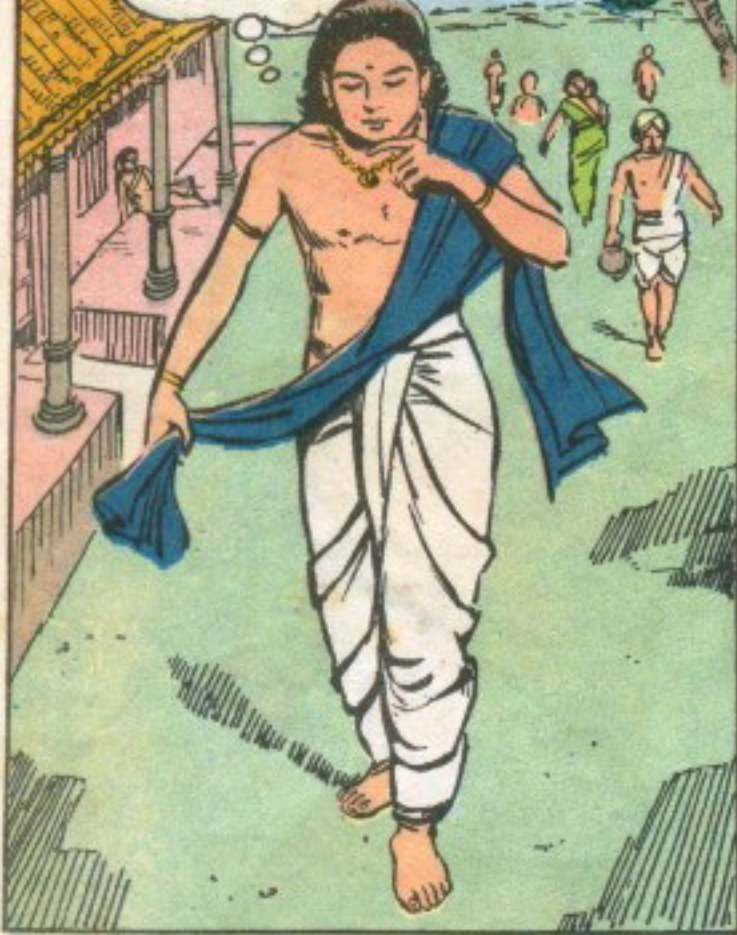
ONE DAY, WHEN MADHAVI WAS SINGING FOR KOVALAN—

I AM HERE AND HER SONG IS FOR A MISSING LOVER? IS SHE YEARNING FOR ANOTHER?

UTTERLY DISILLUSIONED KOVALAN WALKED AWAY FROM HER FOREVER.



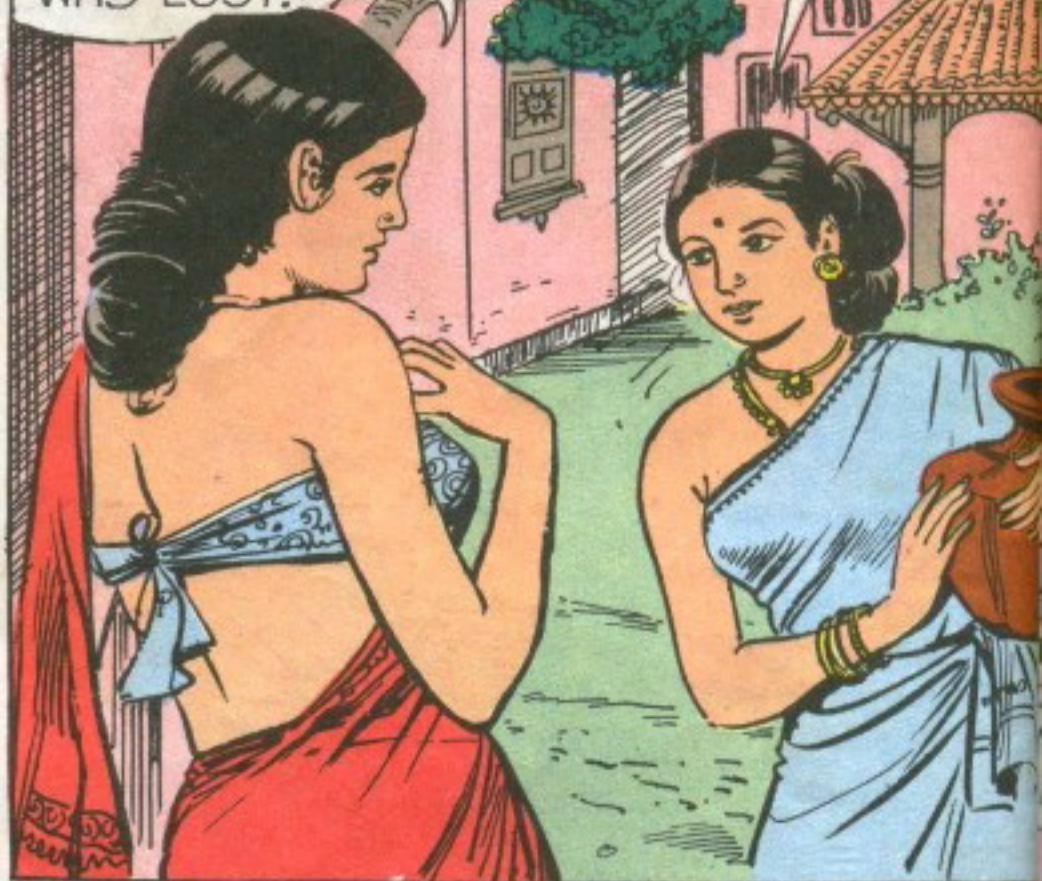
SHE IS JUST ANOTHER DANCER. I WAS FOOLISH TO HAVE LOST MY HEART TO HER...TO HAVE SQUANDERED ALL MY MONEY ON HER.



MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE HIS HOUSE, KANNAGI WAS TALKING TO A FRIEND.

I DREAMT THAT HE CAME BACK TO ME. BUT...HE TOOK ME AWAY TO A NEW LAND AND...AND THEN WAS LOST.

DON'T PANIC. TRUST IN GODDESS PARVATI. SHE WILL PROTECT YOU.



SUDDENLY—

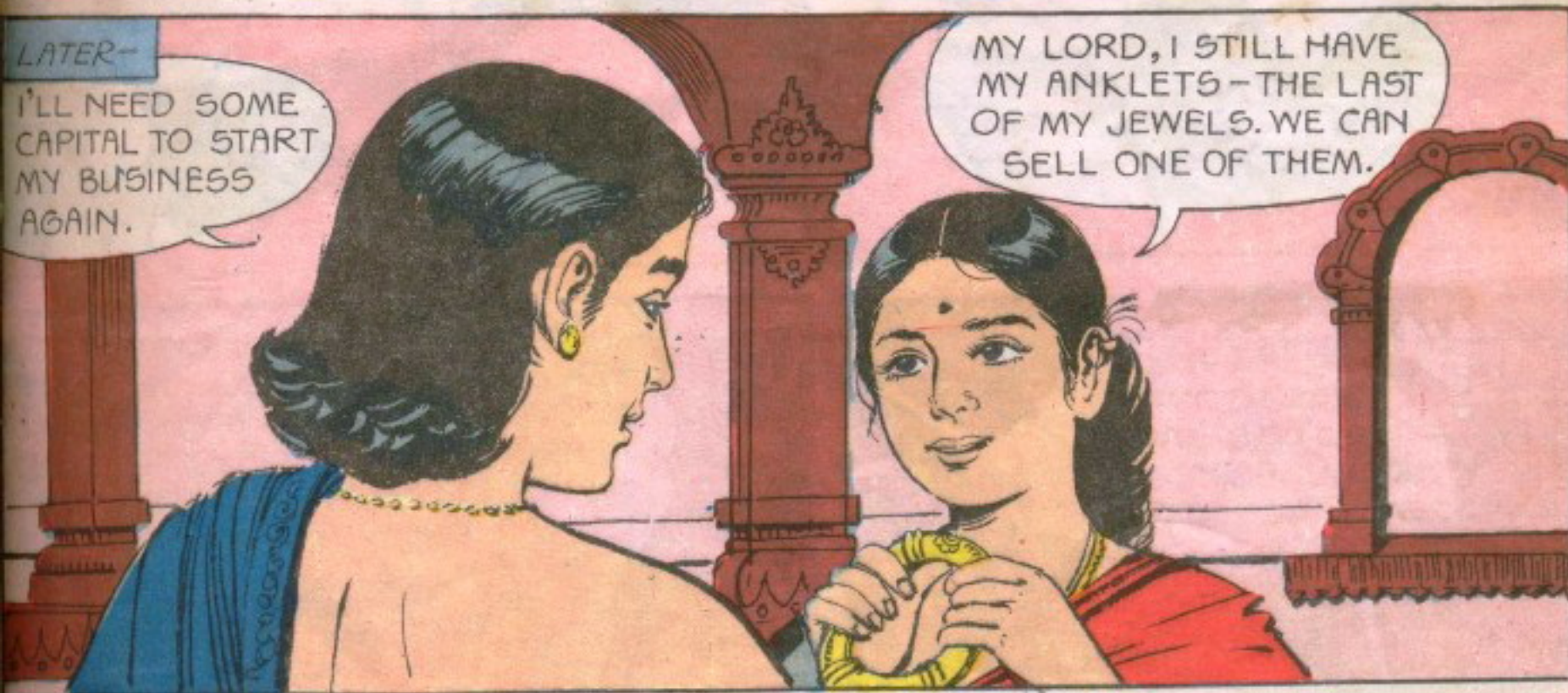
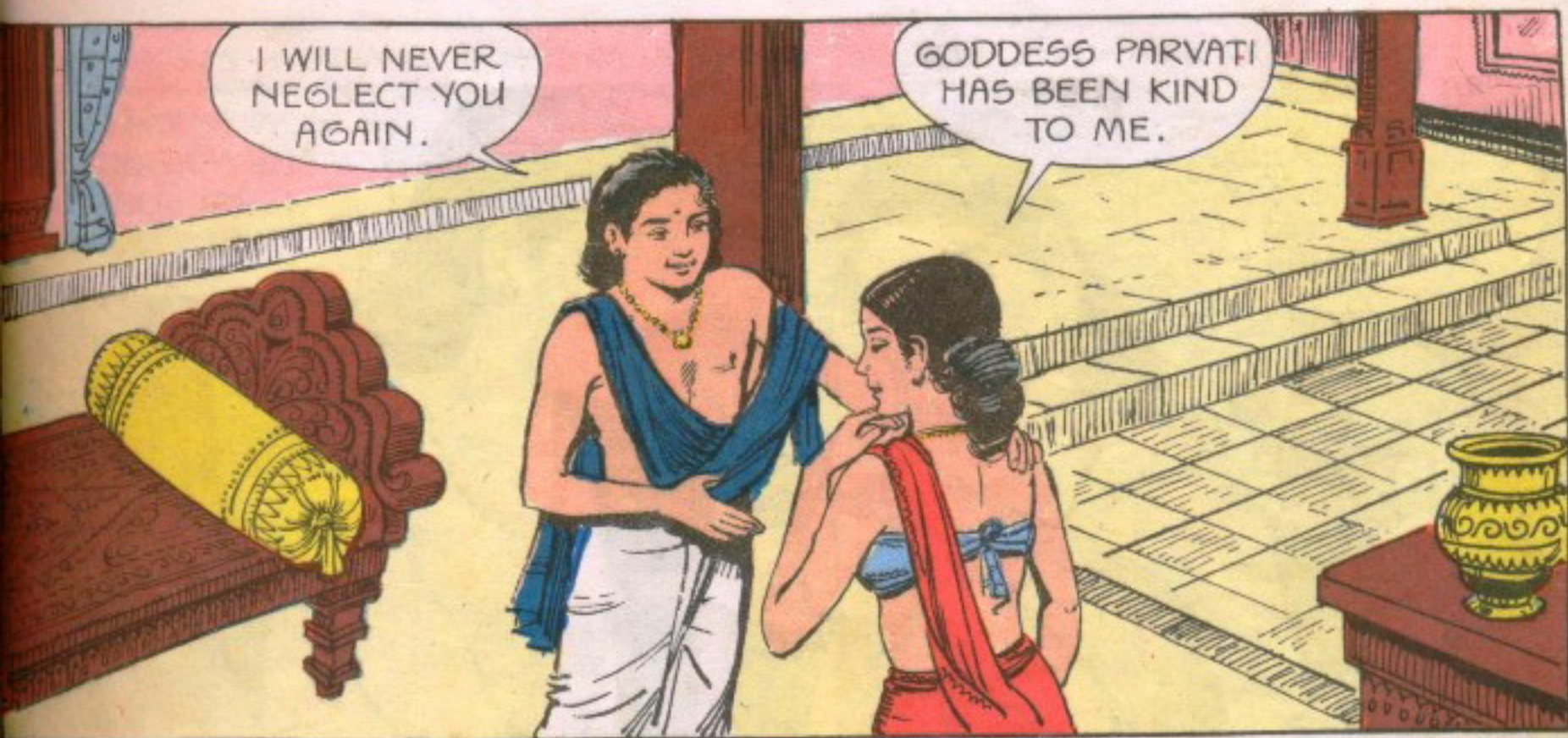
MISTRESS, THE MASTER IS COMING THIS WAY. HE LOOKS SAD.



KANNAGI RAN INDOORS AND WAITED FOR HER HUSBAND. AS SOON AS HE CAME IN—

KANNAGI, I WAS A FOOL TO HAVE LEFT YOU.

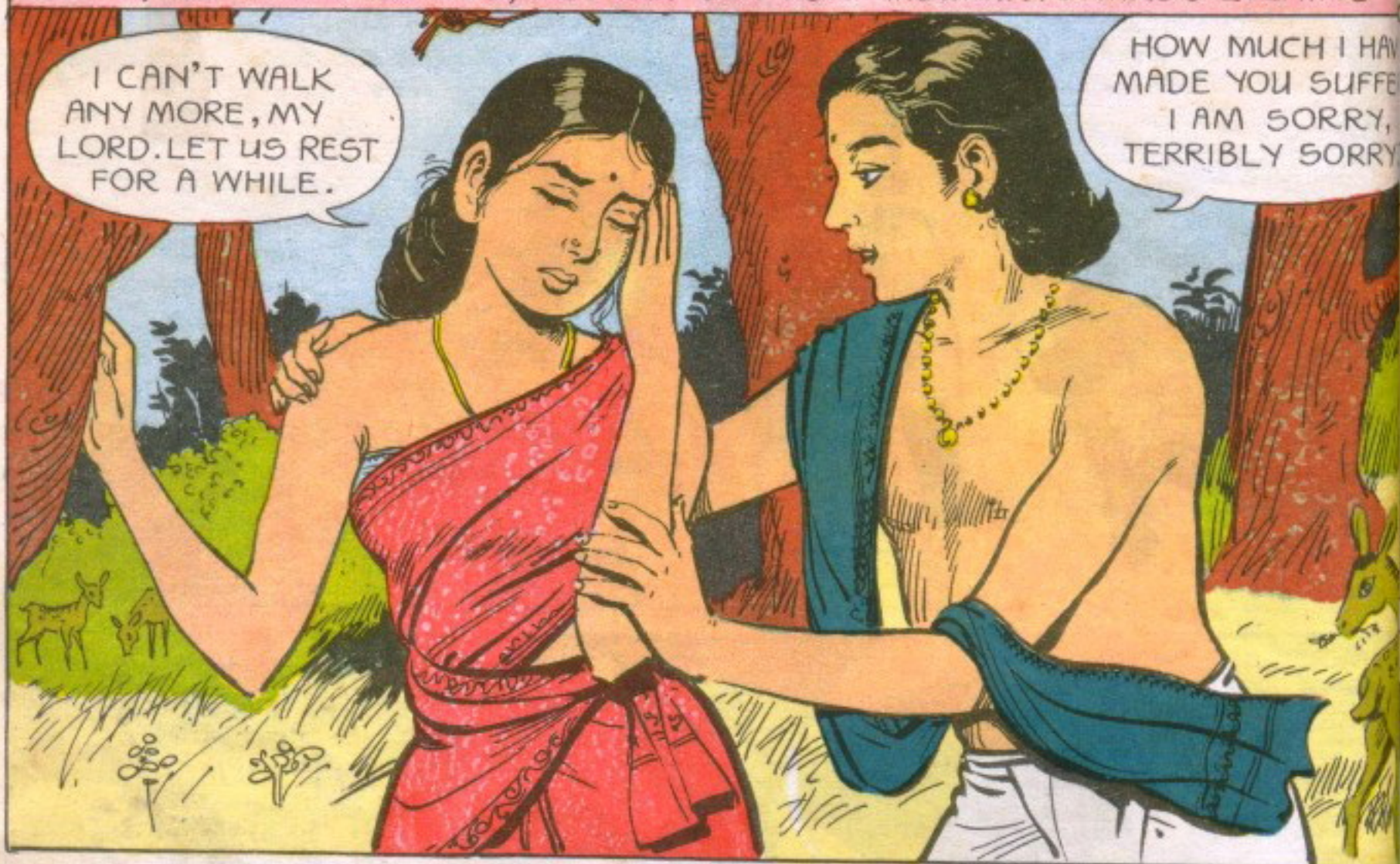




EARLY, THE NEXT MORNING, THEY SET OUT FOR MADURAI. TOWARDS EVENING—

I CAN'T WALK ANY MORE, MY LORD. LET US REST FOR A WHILE.

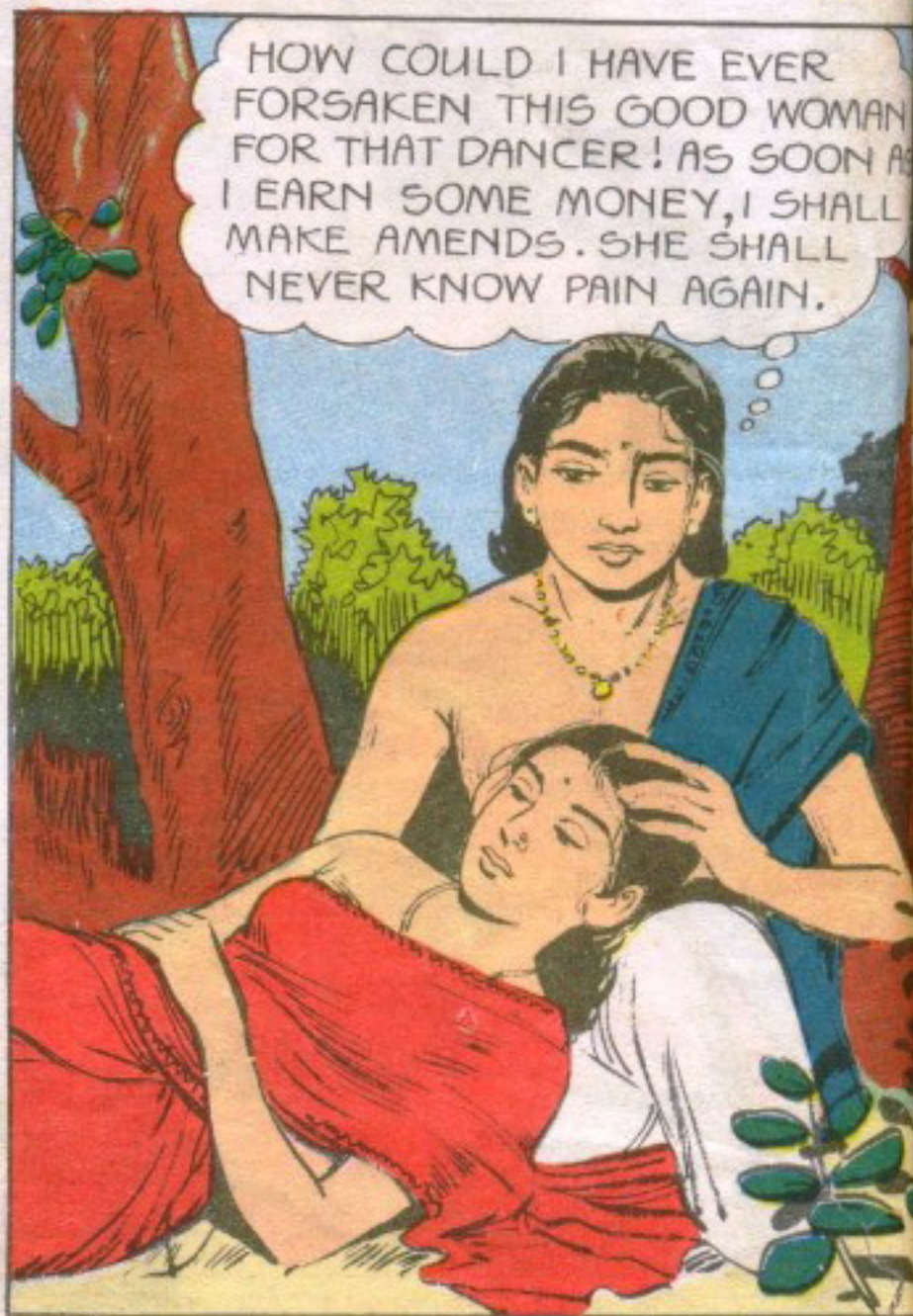
HOW MUCH I HAVE MADE YOU SUFFER. I AM SORRY, TERRIBLY SORRY.



DON'T SAY THAT. YOU HAVE COME BACK TO ME. I AM HAPPY.



HOW COULD I HAVE EVER FORSAKEN THIS GOOD WOMAN FOR THAT DANCER! AS SOON AS I EARN SOME MONEY, I SHALL MAKE AMENDS. SHE SHALL NEVER KNOW PAIN AGAIN.



THE NEXT MORNING—

COME, KANNAGI. THERE IS A TEMPLE NEAR BY. LET US PRAY TO THE GODDESS THERE.



AT THE TEMPLE—

IS THE AARATI* OVER?

NO, NOT YET. YOU ARE JUST IN TIME.



LOOK! THE ORACLE OF THE GODDESS.

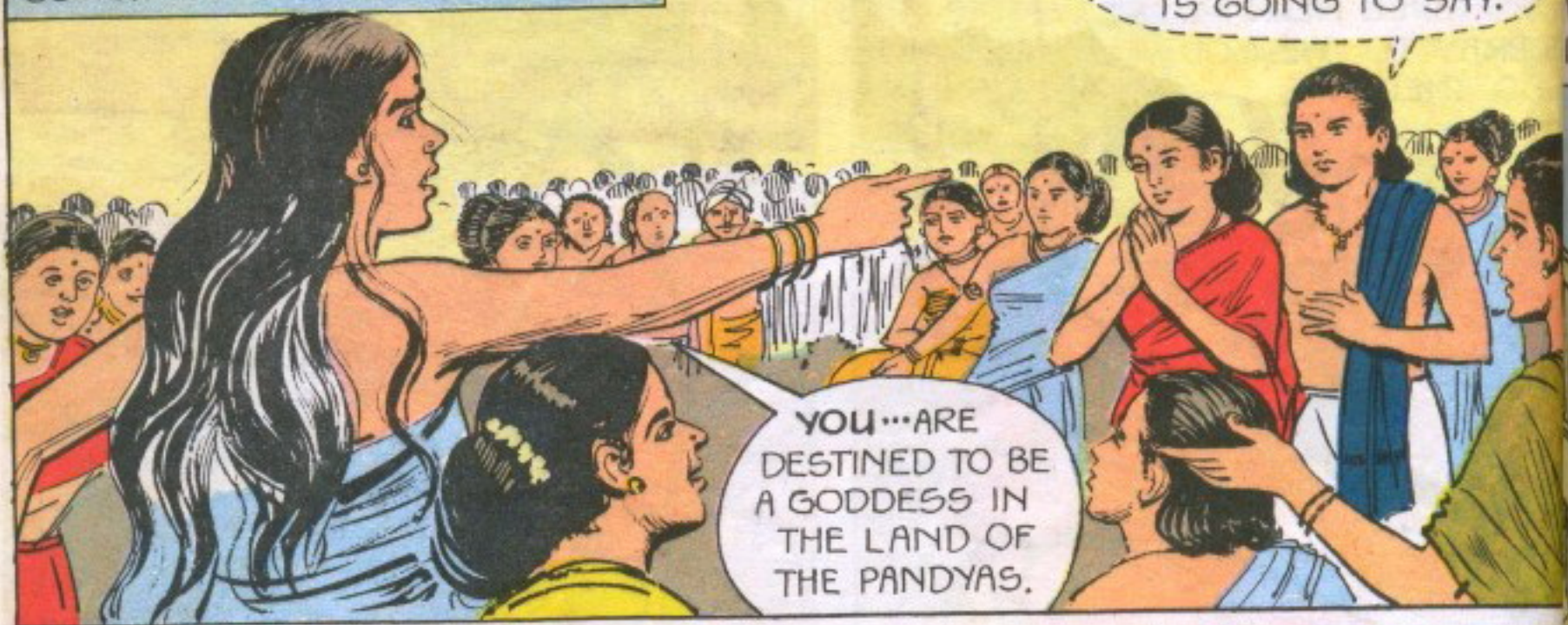
SHE SEEMS TO BE UNDER A DIVINE TRANCE.



THE CONCLUDING RITE IN RITUAL WORSHIP.

KOVALAN AND KANNAGI STEPPED FORWARD TO MAKE OBEISANCE TO HER. SUDDENLY—

SHE IS POINTING TO YOU. I WONDER WHAT SHE IS GOING TO SAY.



YOU...ARE DESTINED TO BE A GODDESS IN THE LAND OF THE PANDYAS.

KOVALAN WAS HAPPY BUT KANNAGI'S HEART WAS FILLED WITH A VAGUE DREAD. SHE REMEMBERED HER DREAM.

MY LORD, I AM AFRAID OF THE FUTURE.

YOU SHOULD BE THE GODDESS HERSELF. HA! BLESSED YOU!



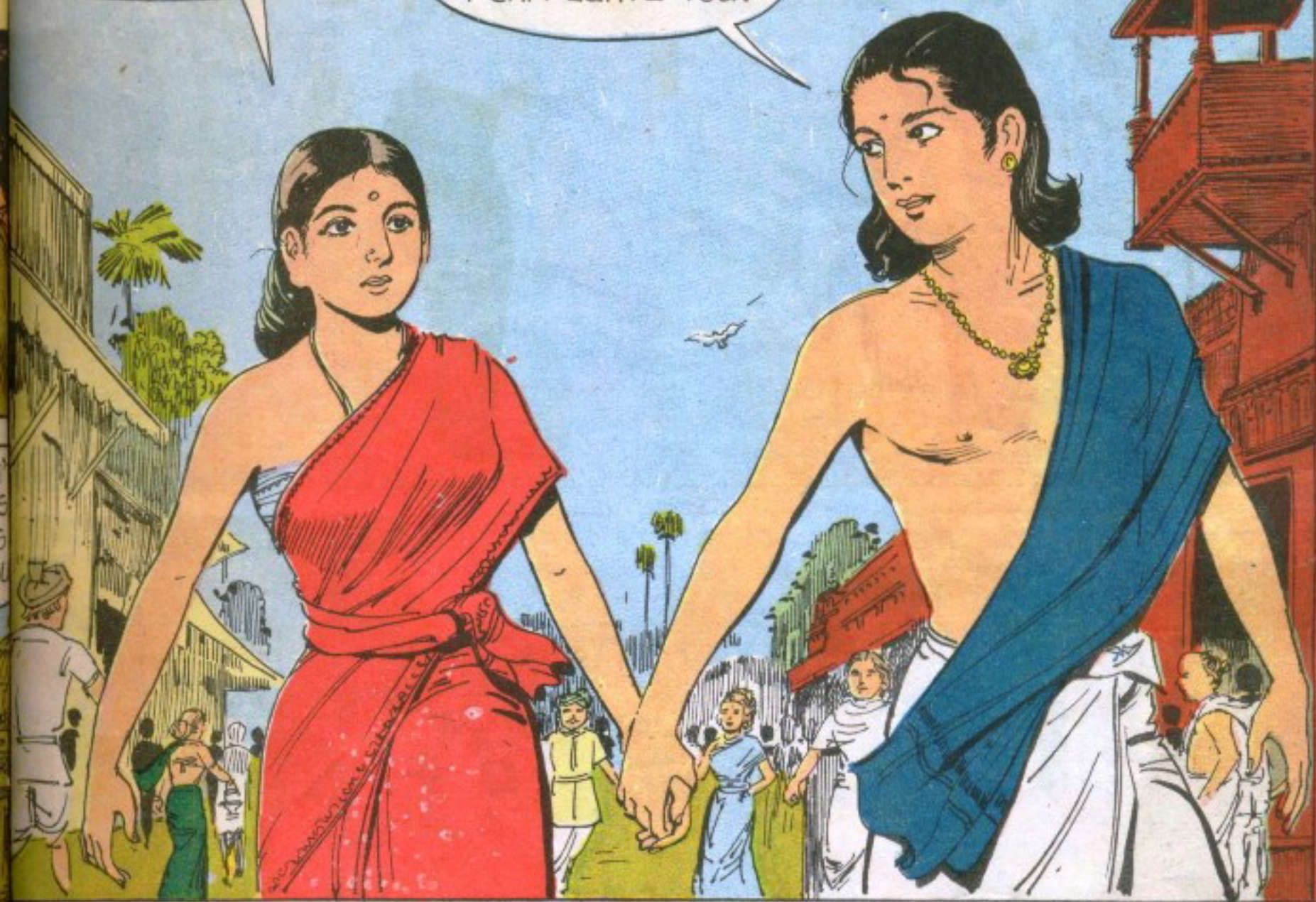
BETTER DAYS LIE AHEAD OF US. COME, LET US HASTEN TO MADURAI.



AT MADURAI-

WHAT A BIG CITY!
I FEEL LOST HERE.

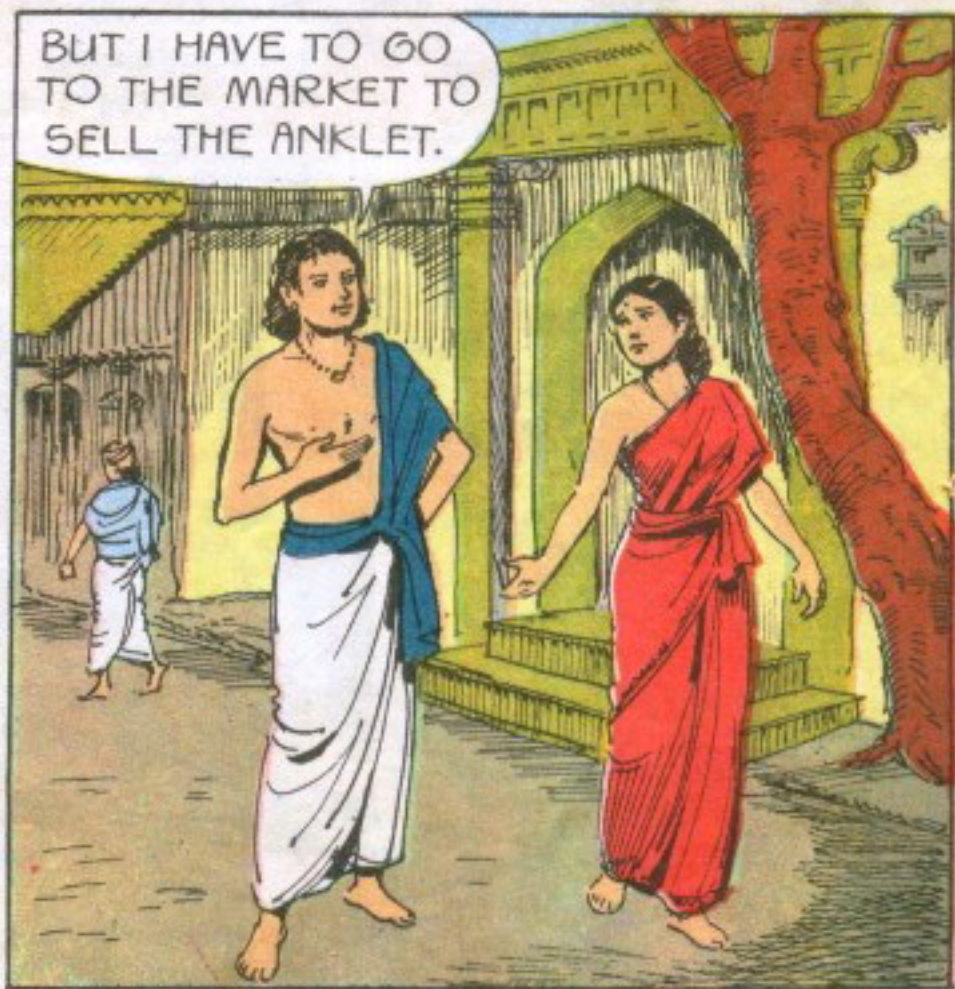
'YOU ARE SO TIMID.
COME, LET ME FIND
SOME GOOD PEOPLE
IN WHOSE CARE
I CAN LEAVE YOU.'



PLEASE DON'T LEAVE
ME AND GO AWAY.



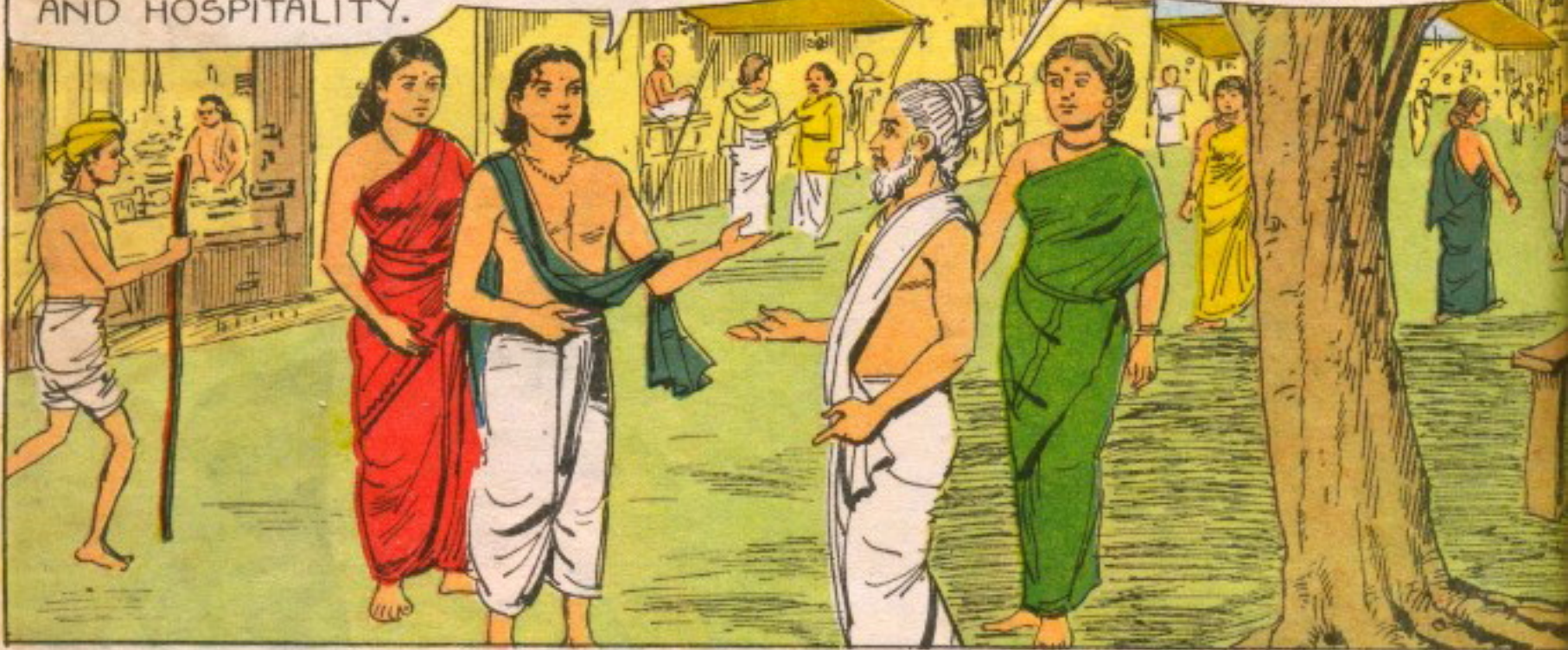
BUT I HAVE TO GO
TO THE MARKET TO
SELL THE ANKLET.



KOVALAN APPROACHED A KIND-LOOKING COUPLE.

SIR, MY NAME IS KOVALAN. I AM A STRANGER TO THIS CITY. I SEEK YOUR HELP AND HOSPITALITY.

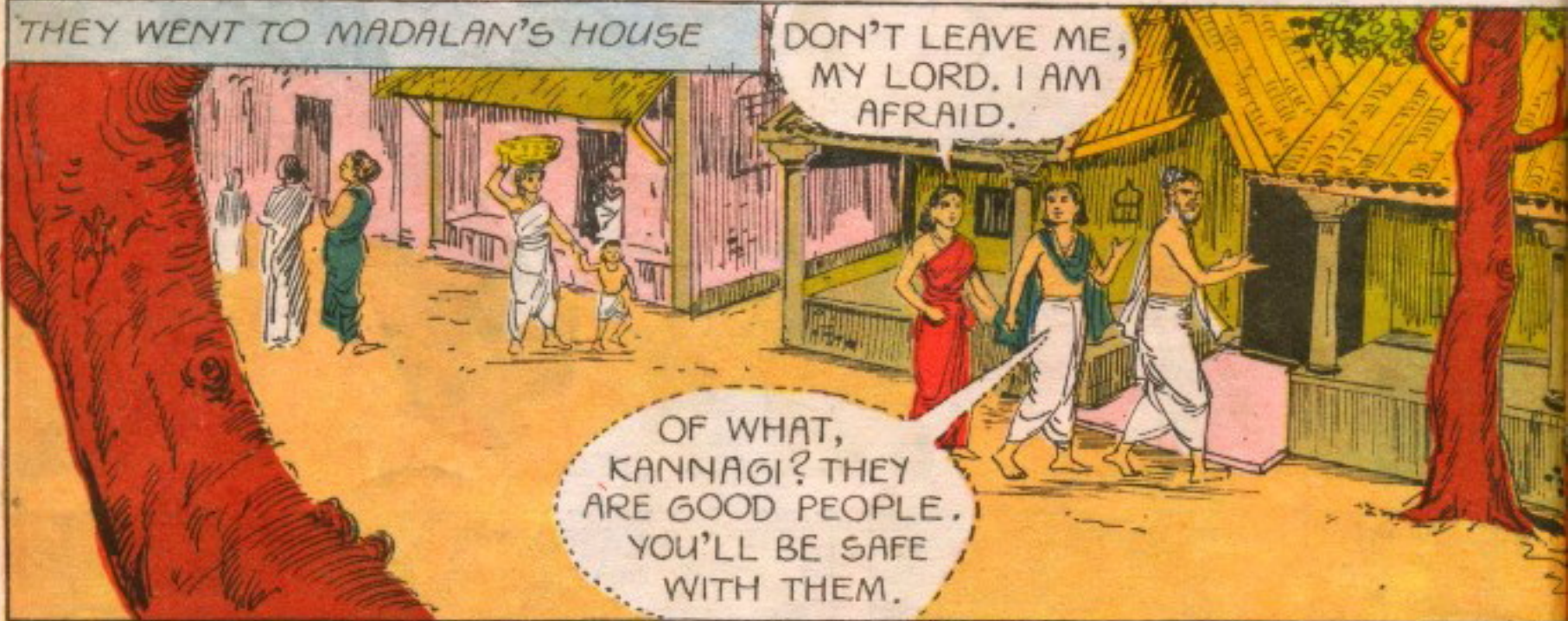
I AM MADALAN. YOU ARE WELCOME TO MAKE MY HUMBLE HOME YOURS.



THEY WENT TO MADALAN'S HOUSE

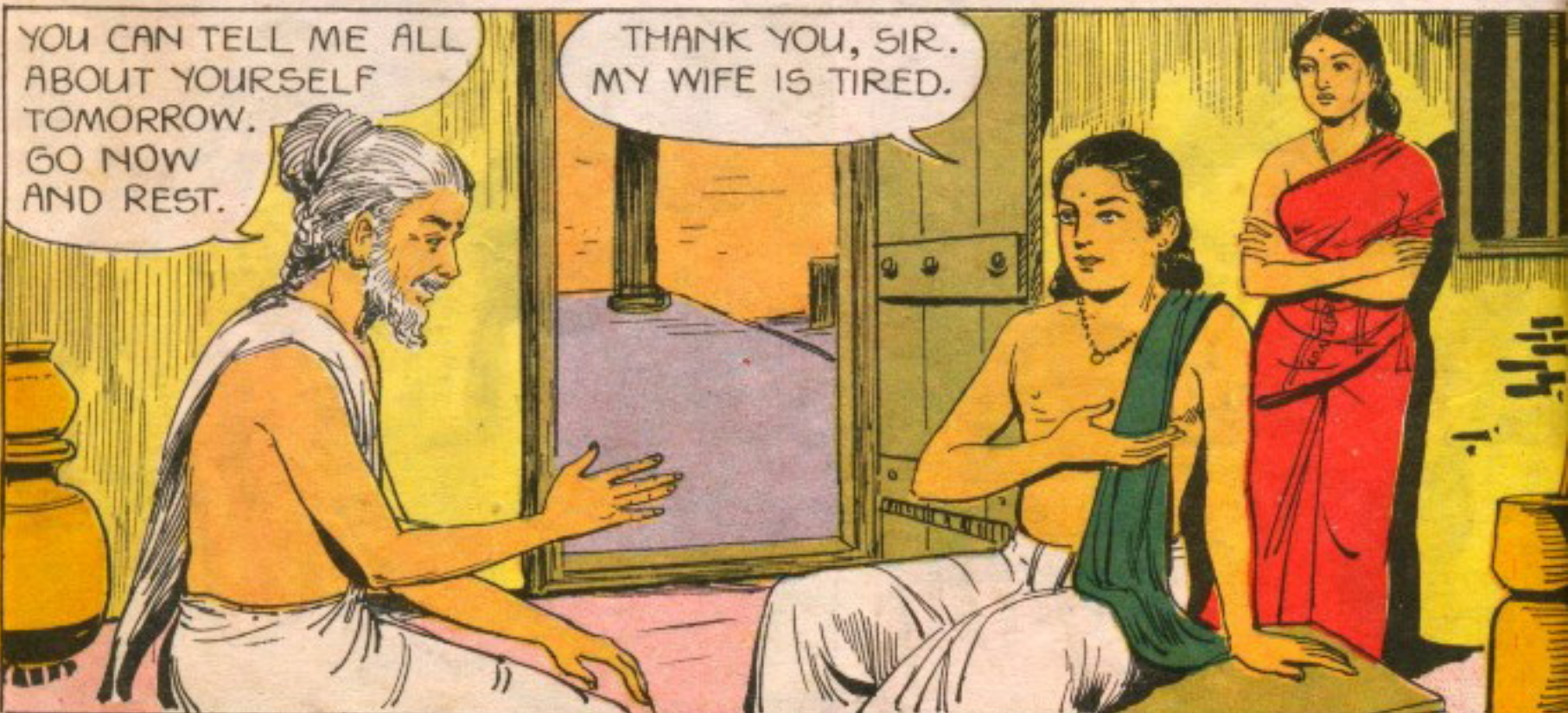
DON'T LEAVE ME, MY LORD. I AM AFRAID.

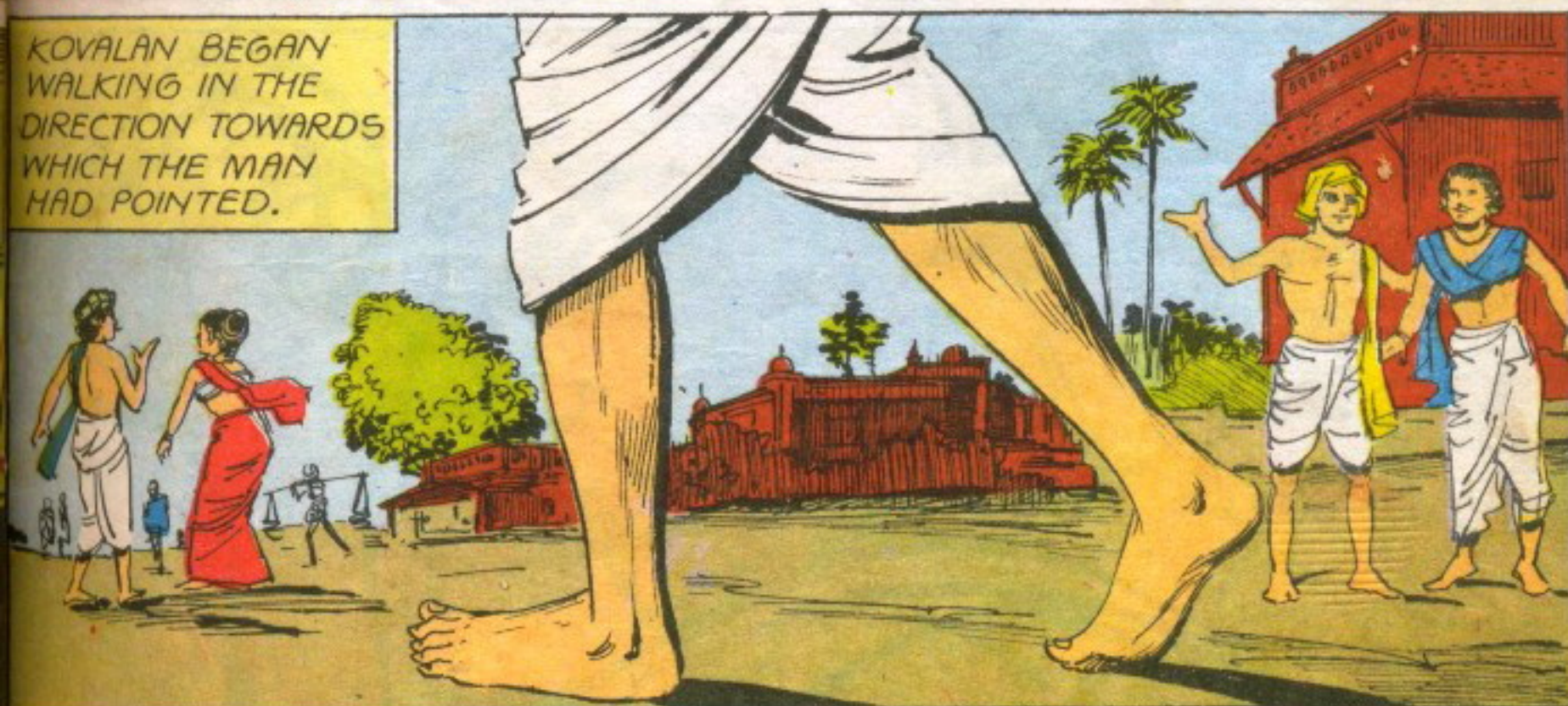
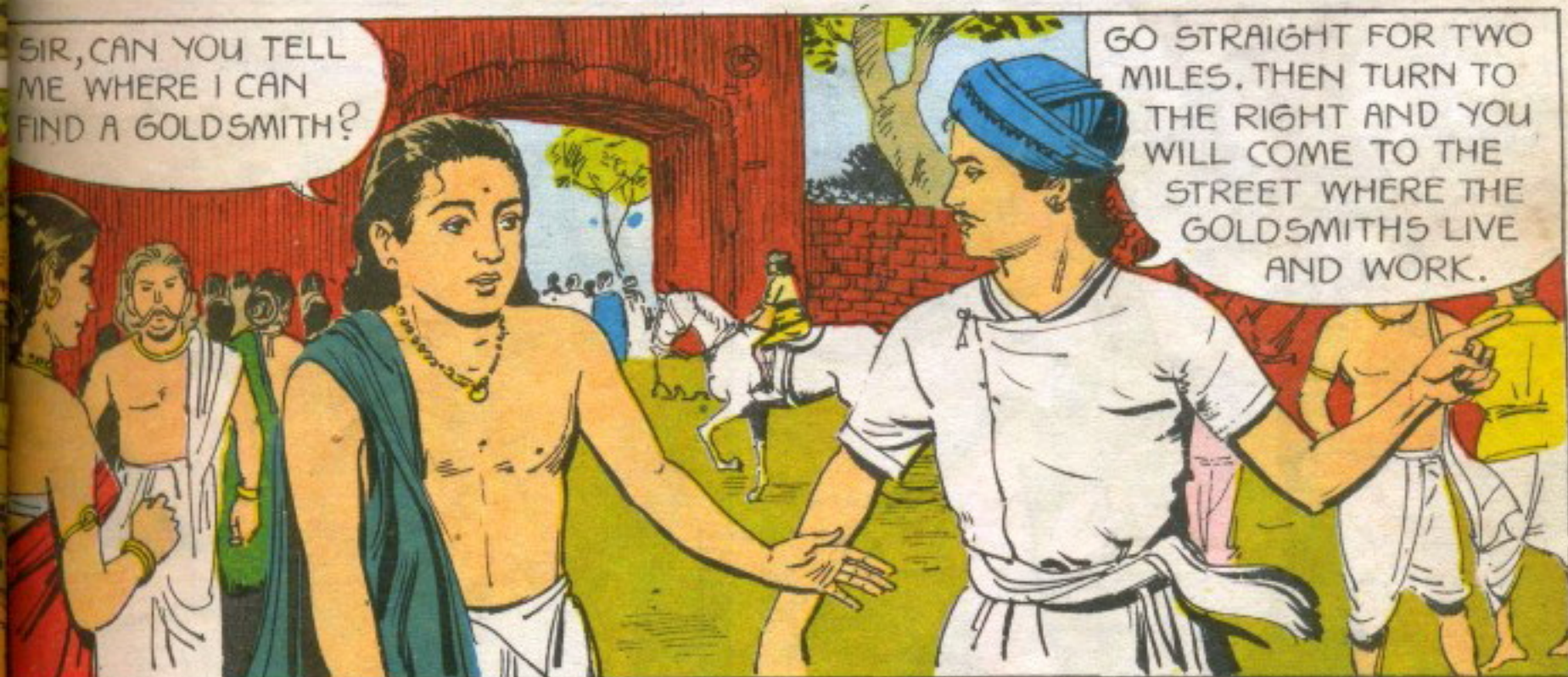
OF WHAT, KANNAGI? THEY ARE GOOD PEOPLE. YOU'LL BE SAFE WITH THEM.



YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT YOURSELF TOMORROW. GO NOW AND REST.

THANK YOU, SIR. MY WIFE IS TIRED.

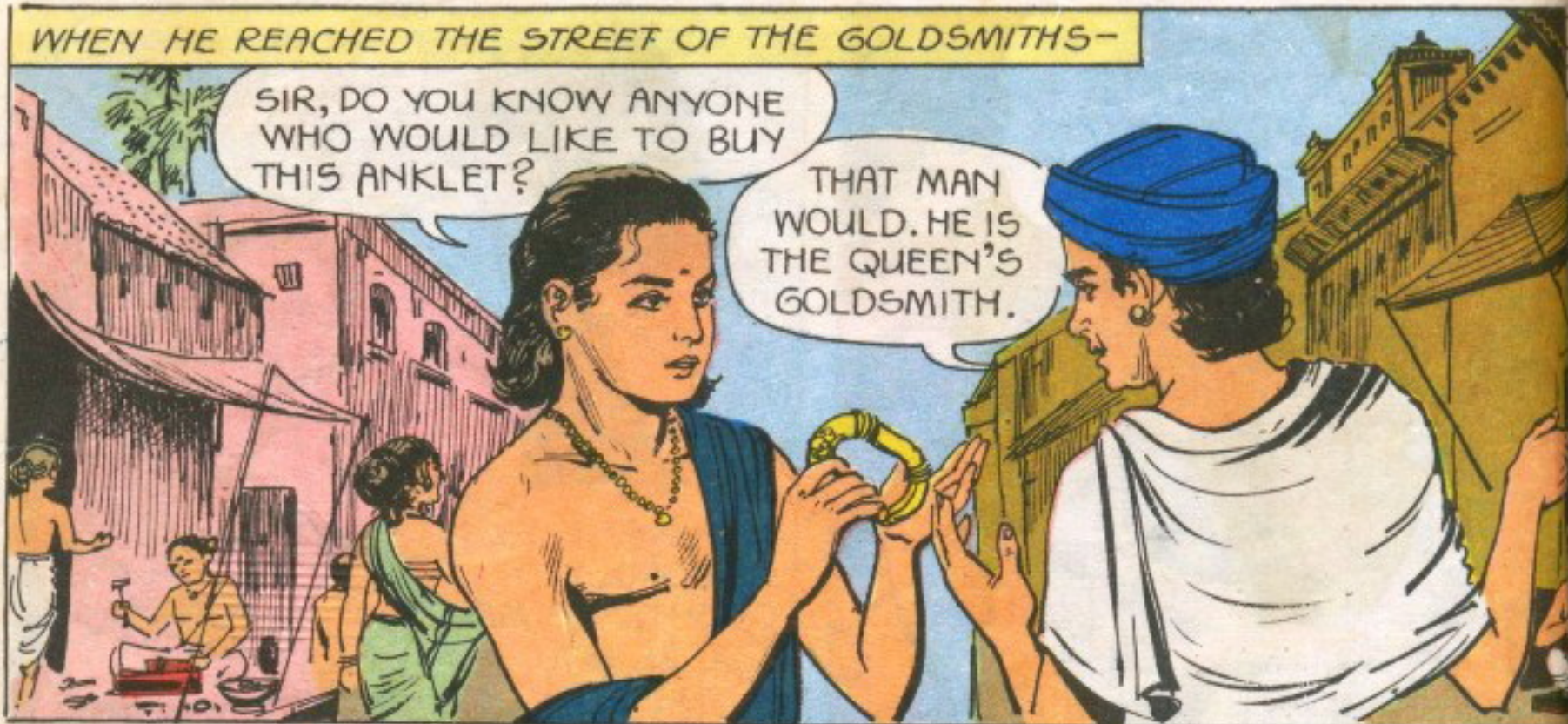




WHEN HE REACHED THE STREET OF THE GOLDSMITHS—

SIR, DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO BUY THIS ANKLET?

THAT MAN WOULD. HE IS THE QUEEN'S GOLDSMITH.



I WOULD LIKE TO SELL THIS ANKLET.

IT'S BEAUTIFUL.



IT'S EXACTLY LIKE THE QUEEN'S ANKLET! THE ONE MY WIFE HAS BEEN YEARNING FOR.

PLEASE WAIT HERE WHILE I VALUE IT.



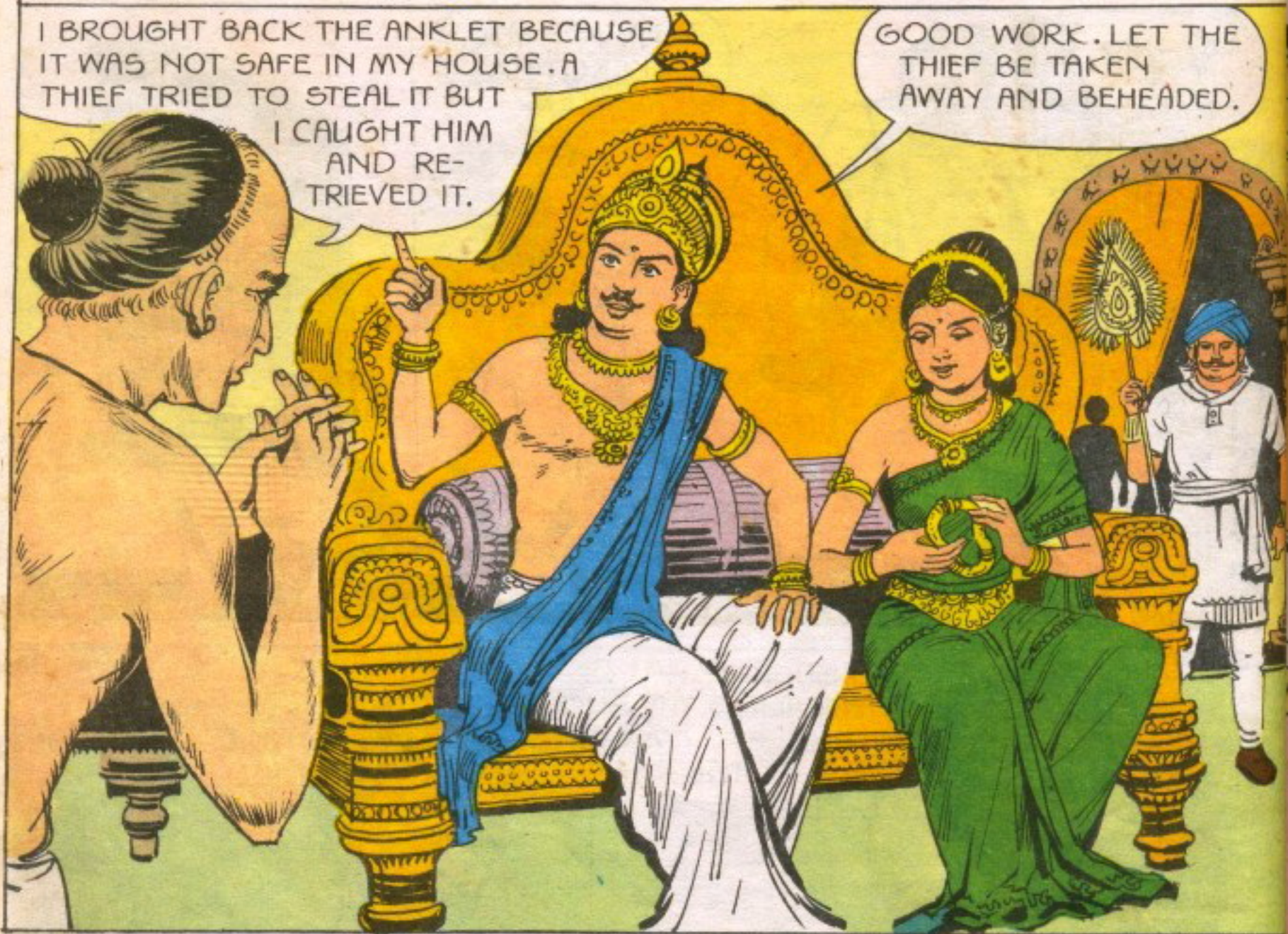
I'LL GIVE THE QUEEN'S ANKLET TO MY WIFE...AND RETURN THIS ONE TO THE QUEEN, SAYING THAT THIS STRANGER TRIED TO STEAL IT.



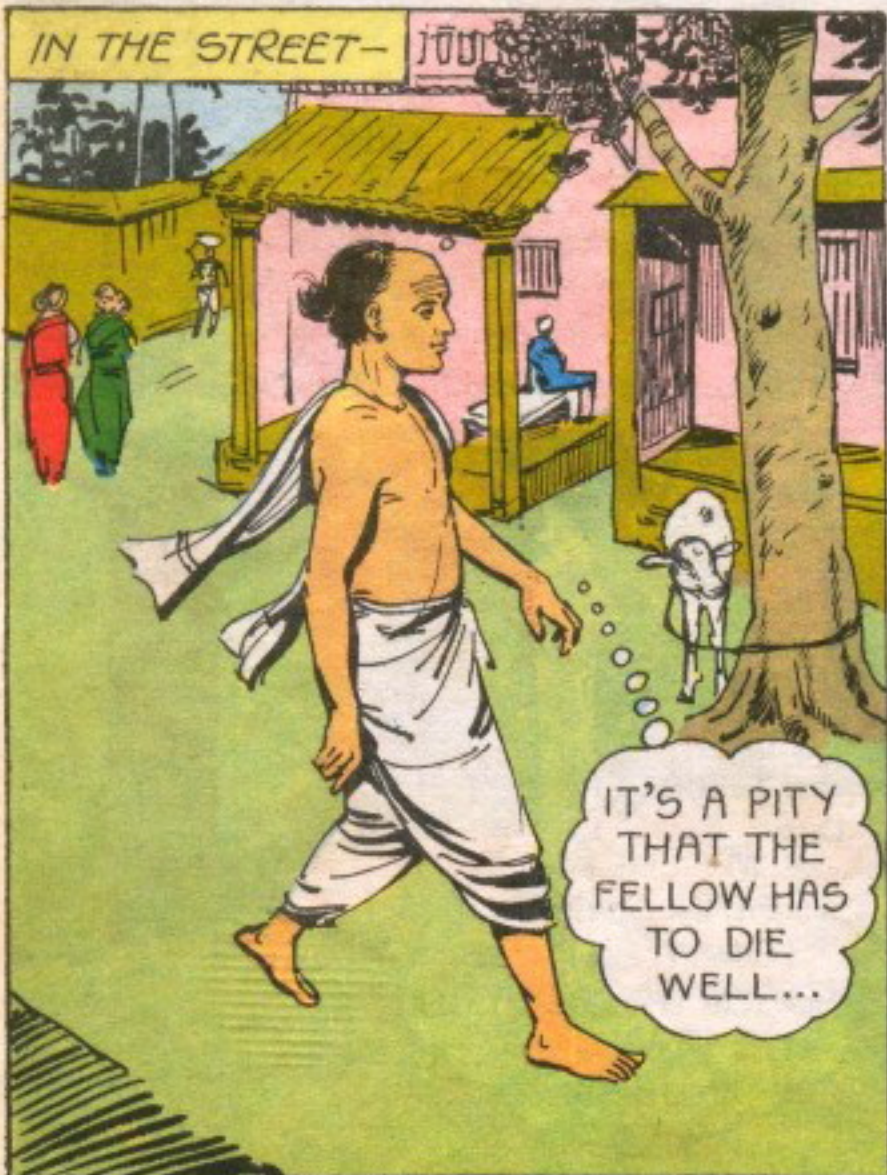


I BROUGHT BACK THE ANKLET BECAUSE
IT WAS NOT SAFE IN MY HOUSE. A
THIEF TRIED TO STEAL IT BUT
I CAUGHT HIM
AND RE-
TRIEVED IT.

GOOD WORK. LET THE
THIEF BE TAKEN
AWAY AND BEHEADED.

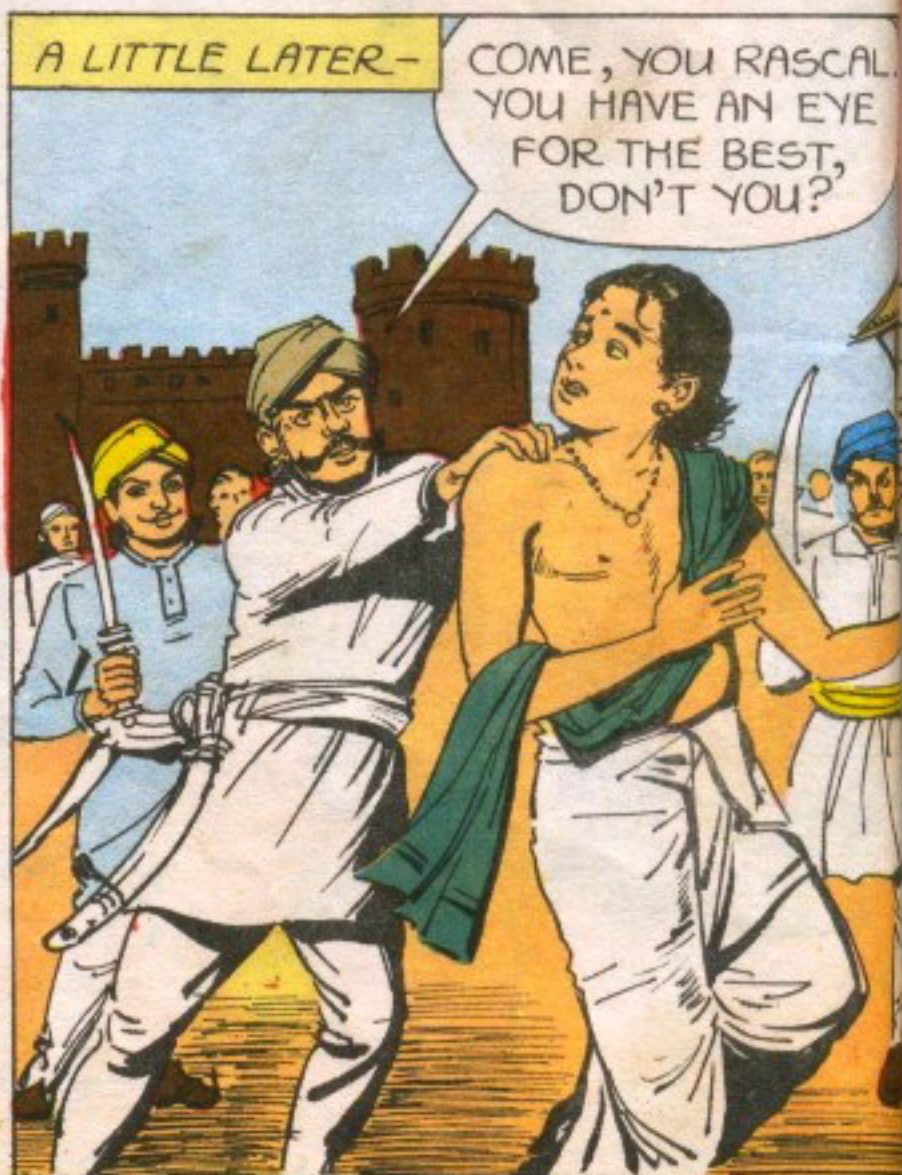


IN THE STREET—

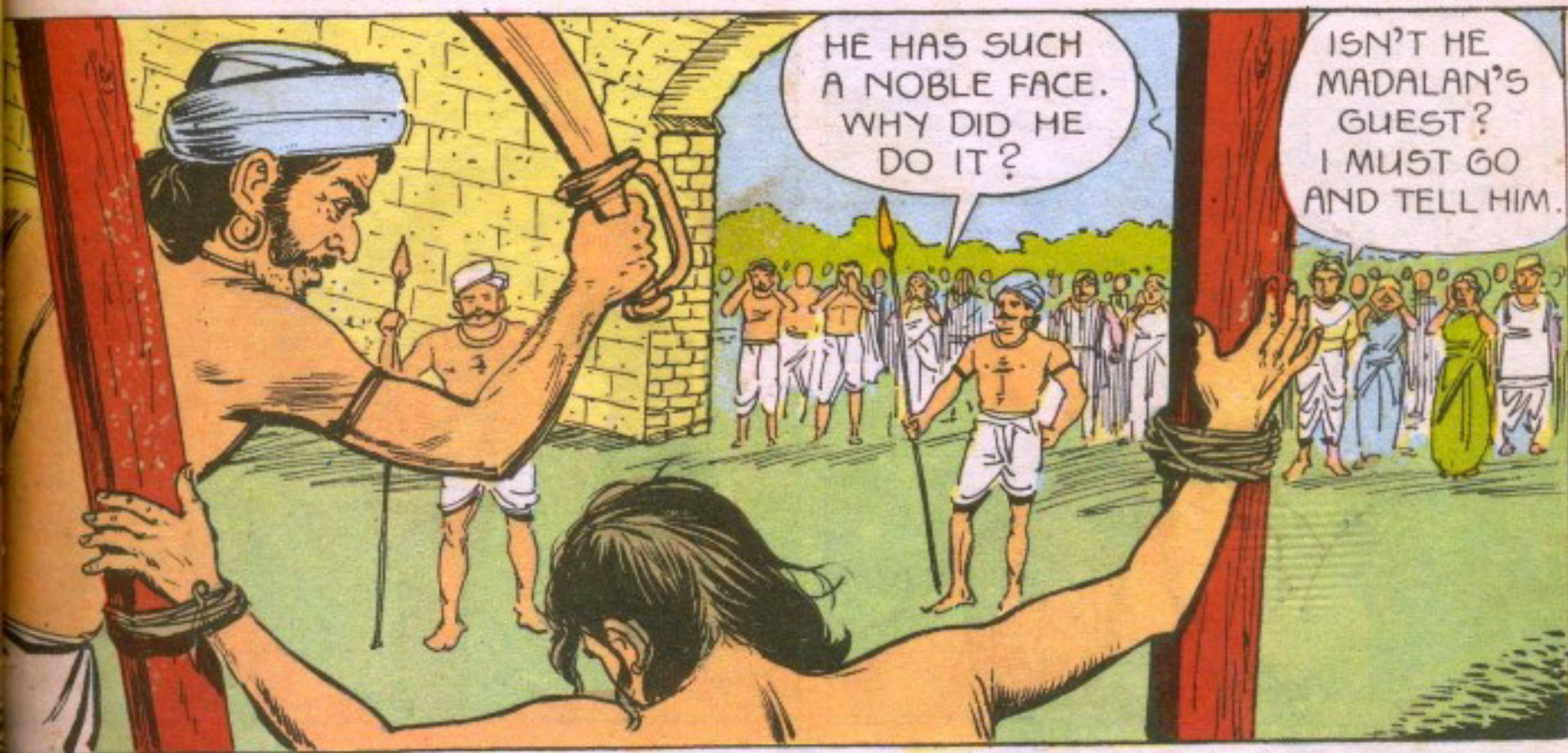


IT'S A PITY
THAT THE
FELLOW HAS
TO DIE
WELL...

A LITTLE LATER—



COME, YOU RASCAL.
YOU HAVE AN EYE
FOR THE BEST,
DON'T YOU?



HE HAS SUCH
A NOBLE FACE.
WHY DID HE
DO IT?

ISN'T HE
MADALAN'S
GUEST?
I MUST GO
AND TELL HIM.

THE MAN RUSHED TO MADALAN'S HOUSE -



YOUR GUEST
IS DEAD.

NO!

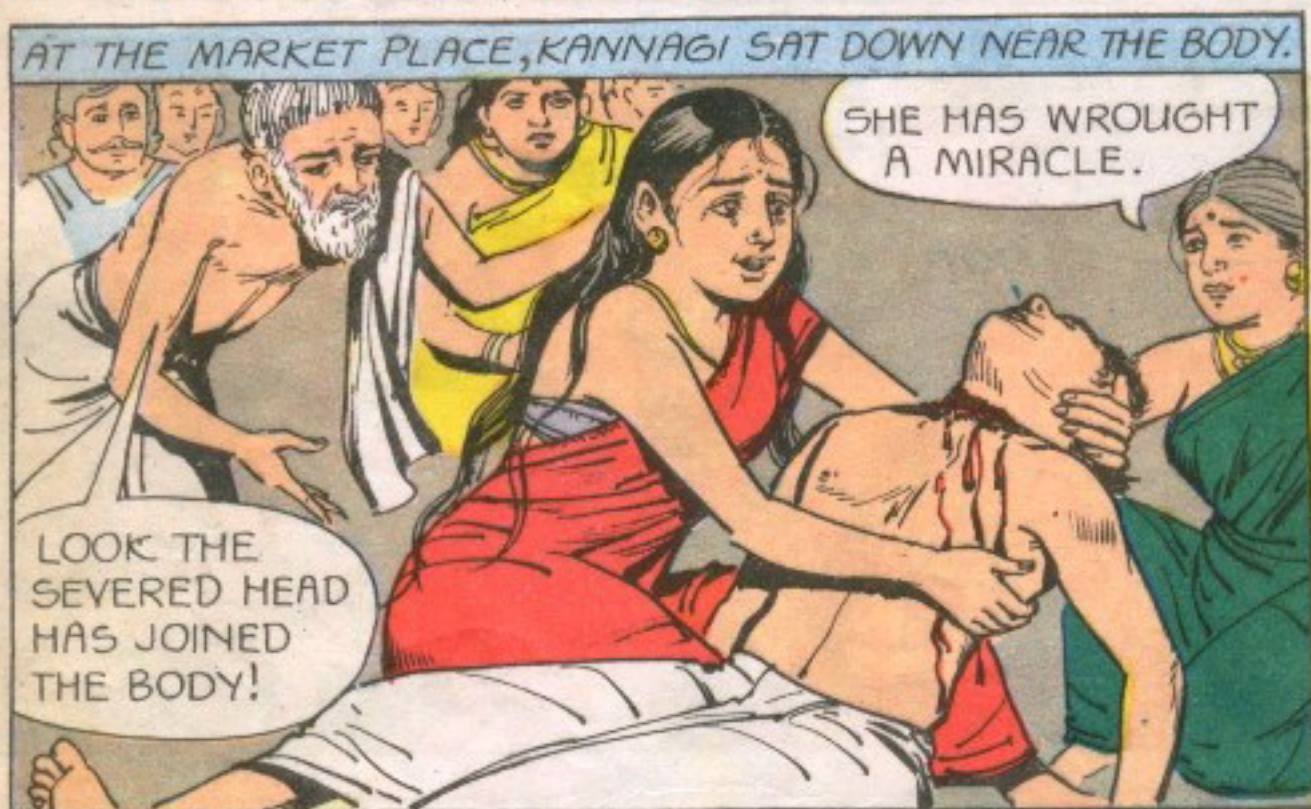
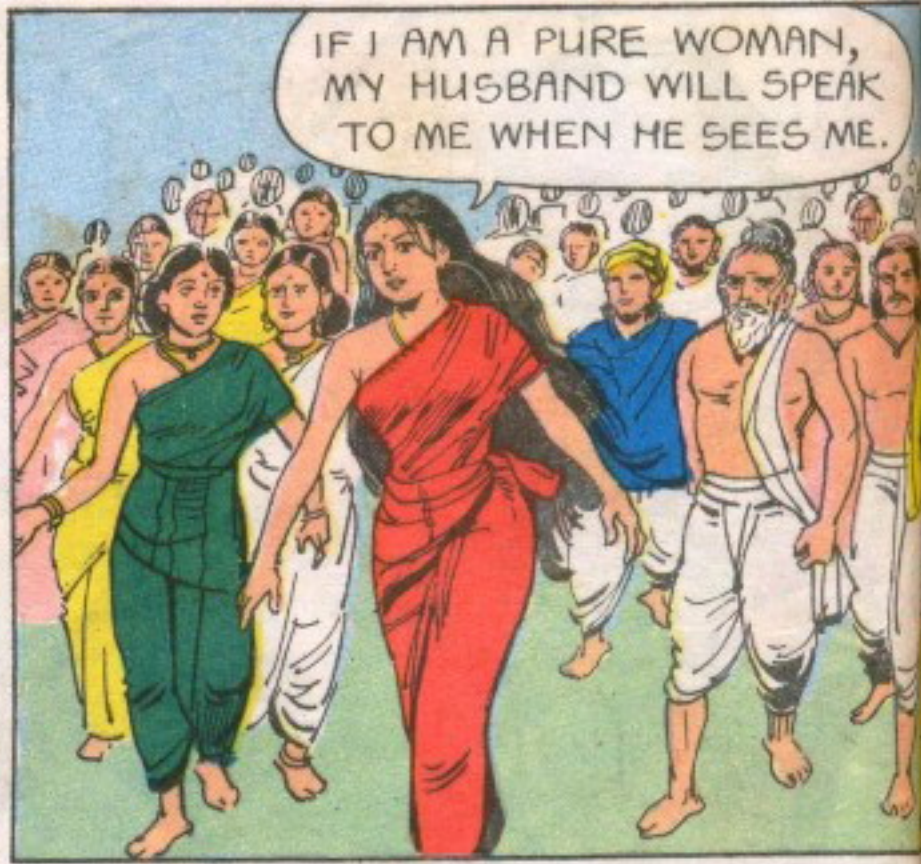
DEAD? WHAT
HAPPENED?

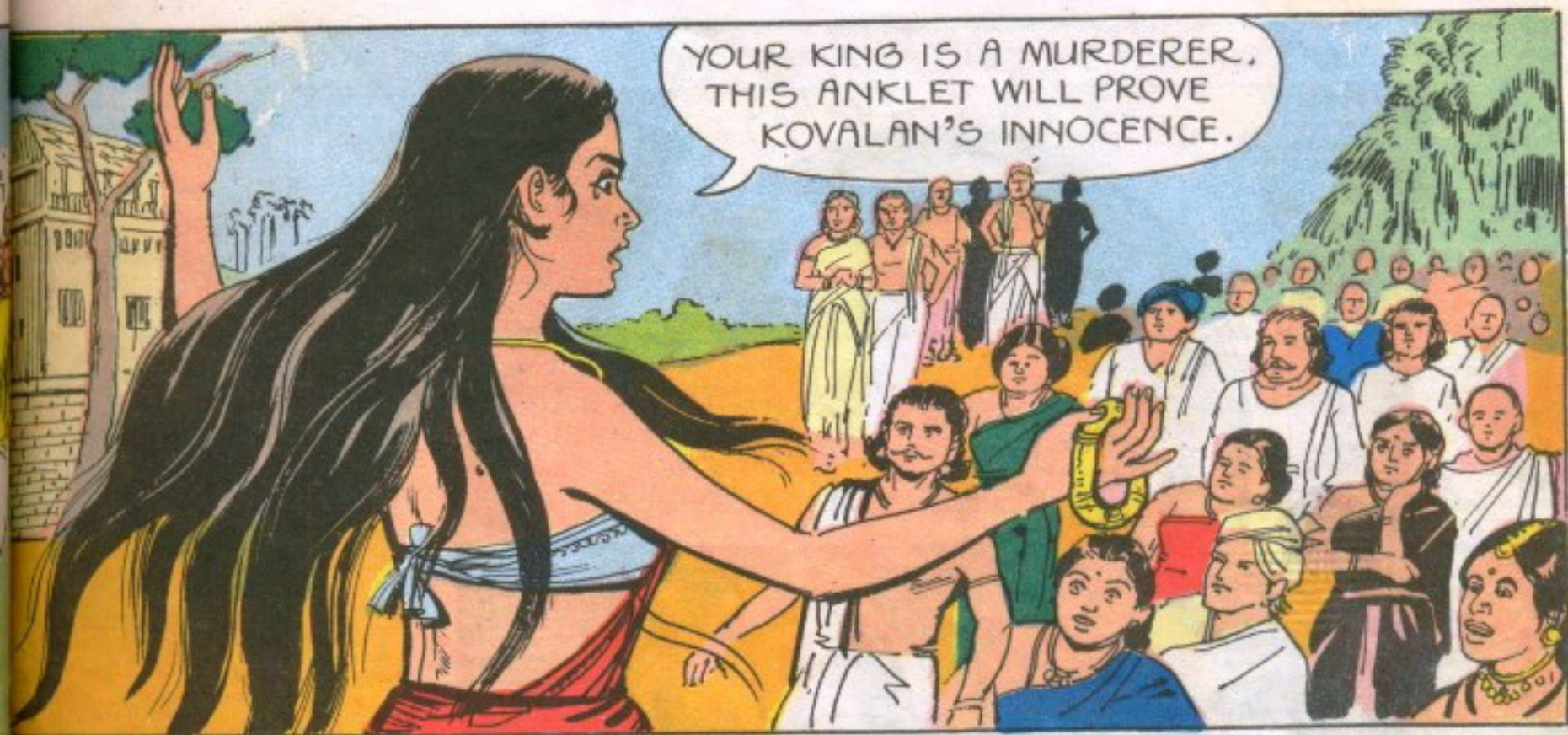
HE WAS BEHEADED. THE
KING'S ORDERS. HE
STOLE THE QUEEN'S
ANKLET.



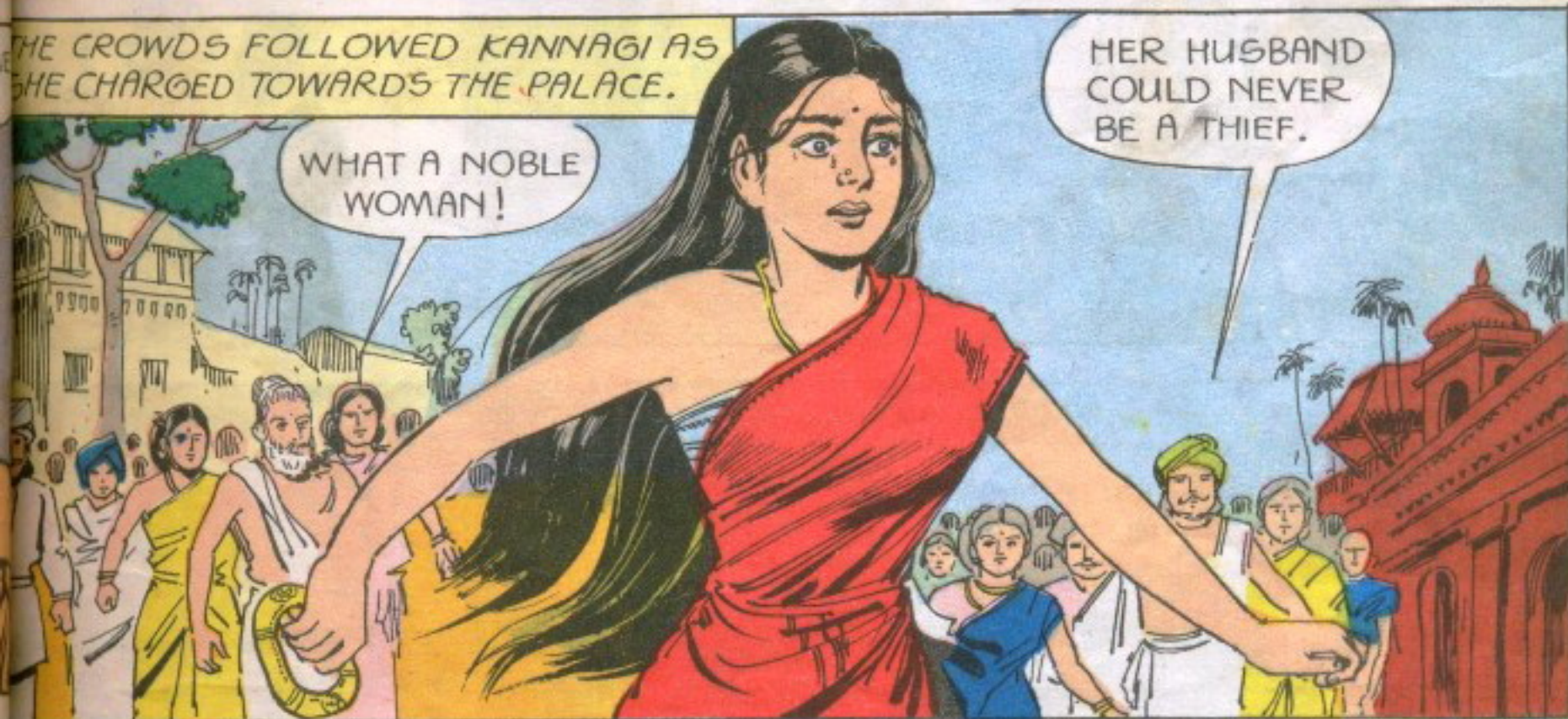
NO. IT CANNOT BE.

POOR KANNAGI.
SHE HAS
FAINTED.





THE CROWDS FOLLOWED KANNAGI AS
SHE CHARGED TOWARDS THE PALACE.

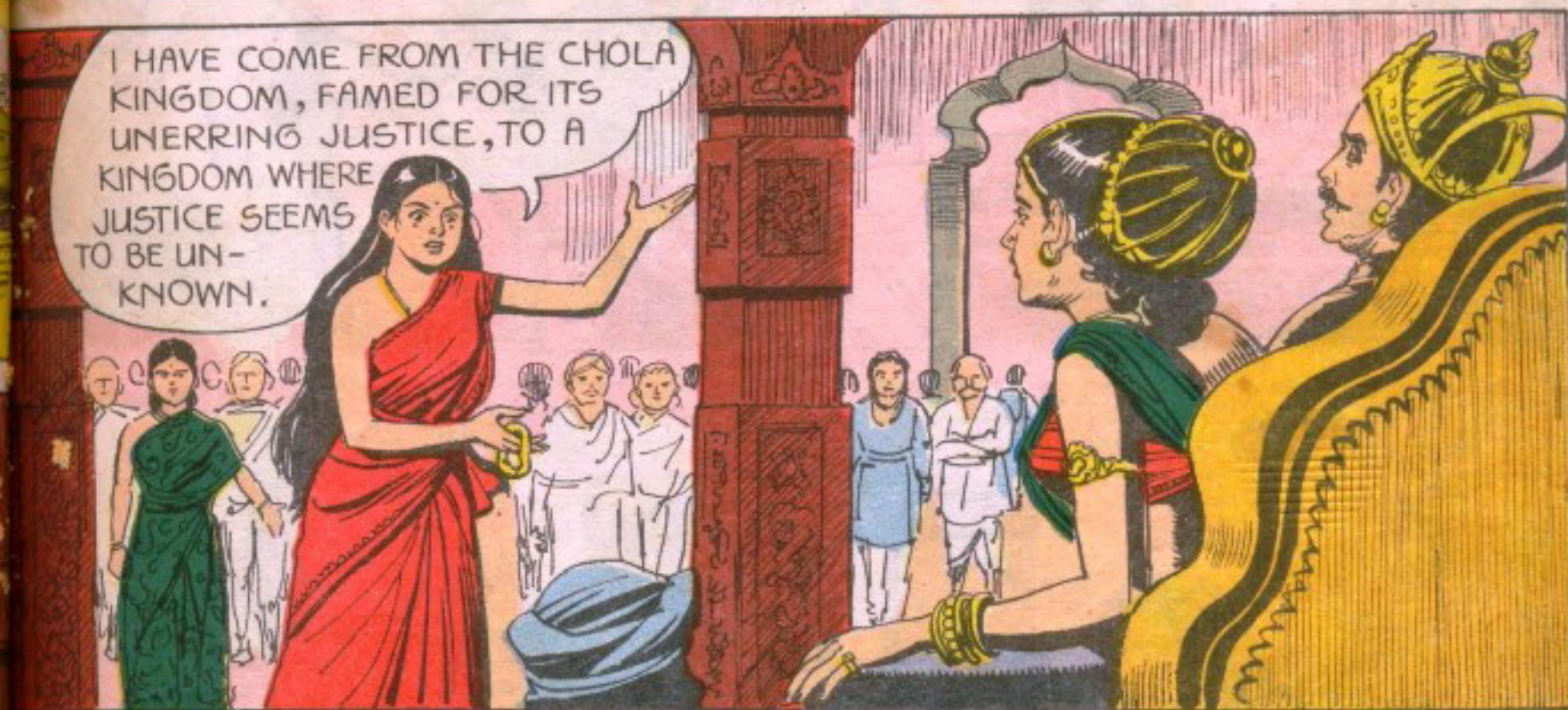
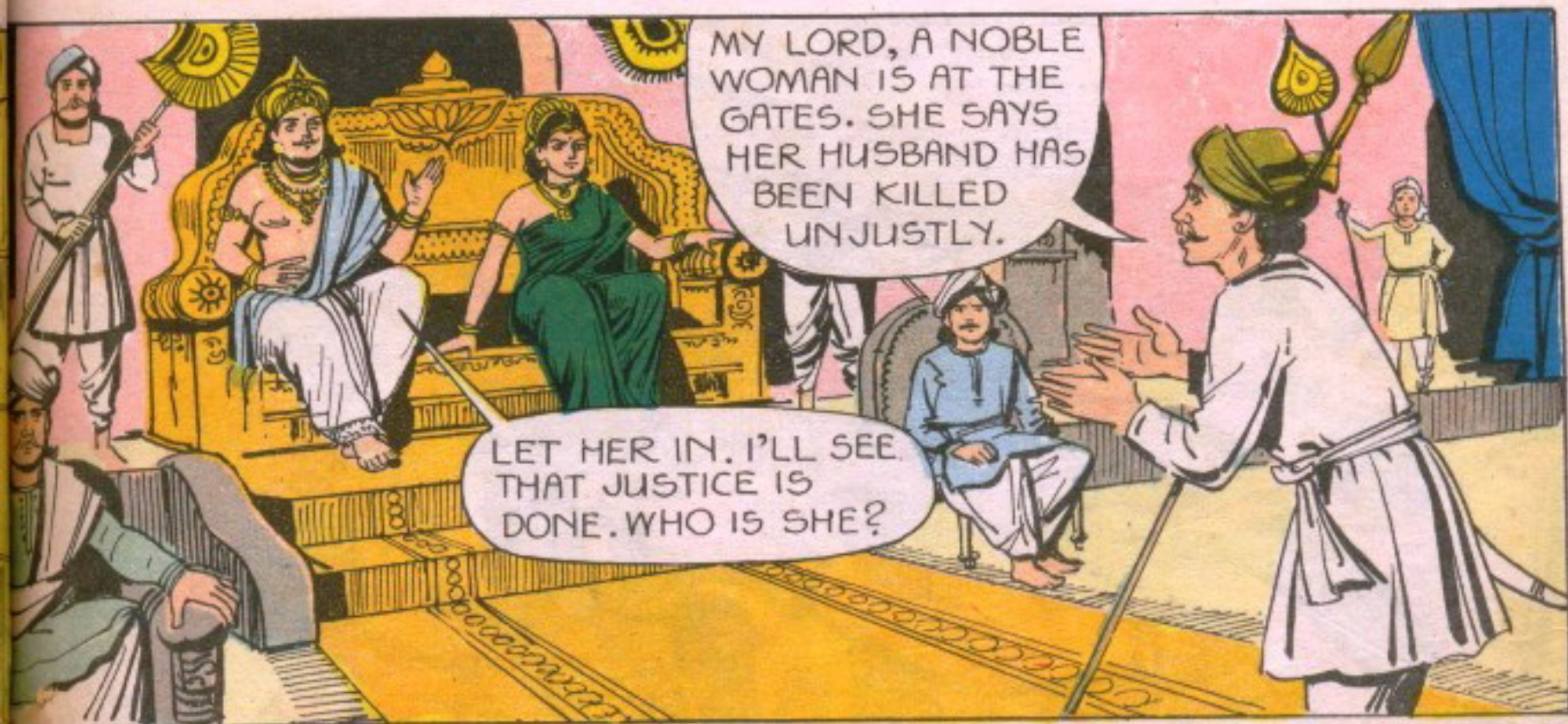


AT LAST SHE REACHED THE GATES OF THE PALACE.



AS KANNAGI STRODE FORWARD MENACINGLY-



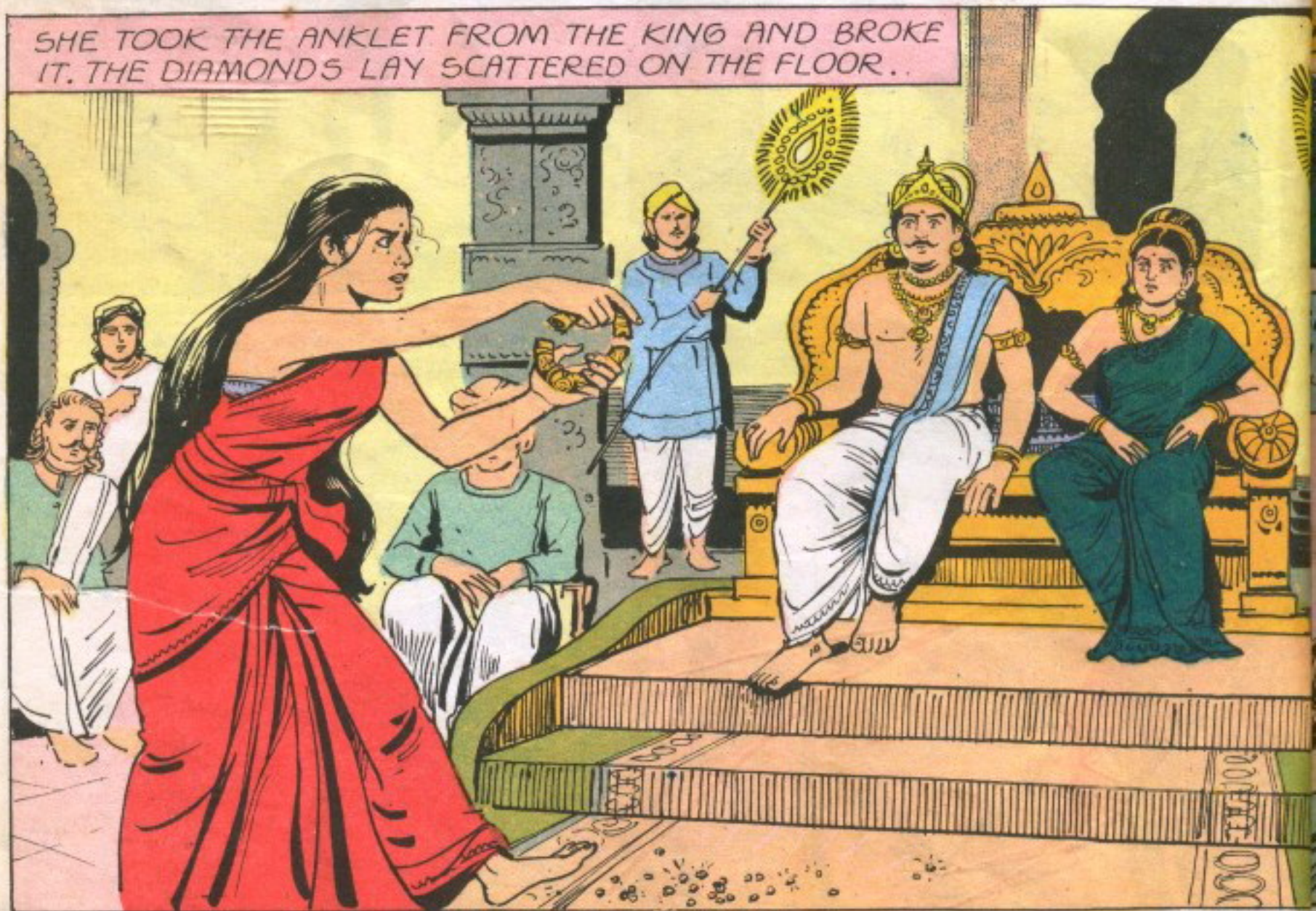


SO YOU ARE THE THIEF'S WIFE.
HE STOLE THIS, MY QUEEN'S
GOLD ANKLET WHICH HAS
PEARLS INSIDE.

MY GOLD
ANKLET HAS
DIAMONDS
INSIDE. HERE
IS THE SECOND
OF THE PAIR

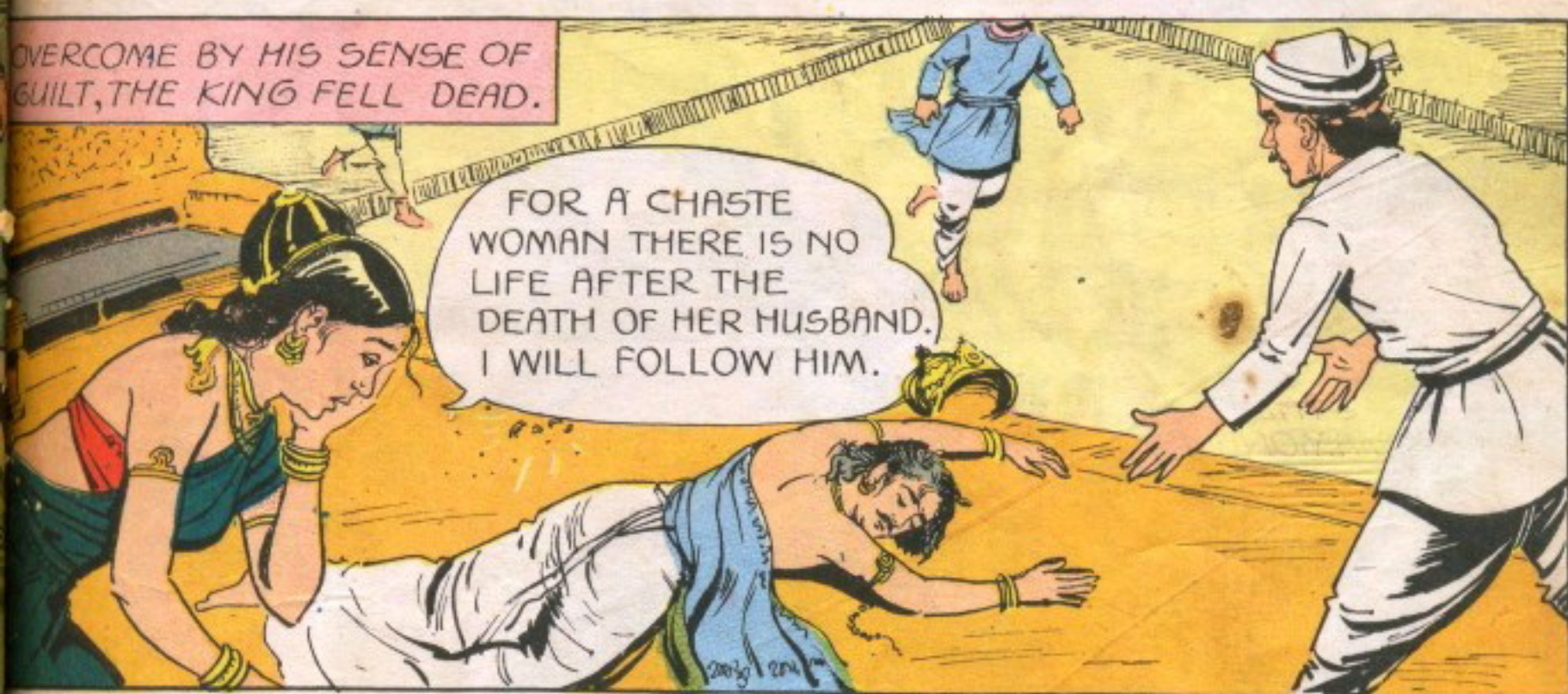


SHE TOOK THE ANKLET FROM THE KING AND BROKE
IT. THE DIAMONDS LAY SCATTERED ON THE FLOOR.



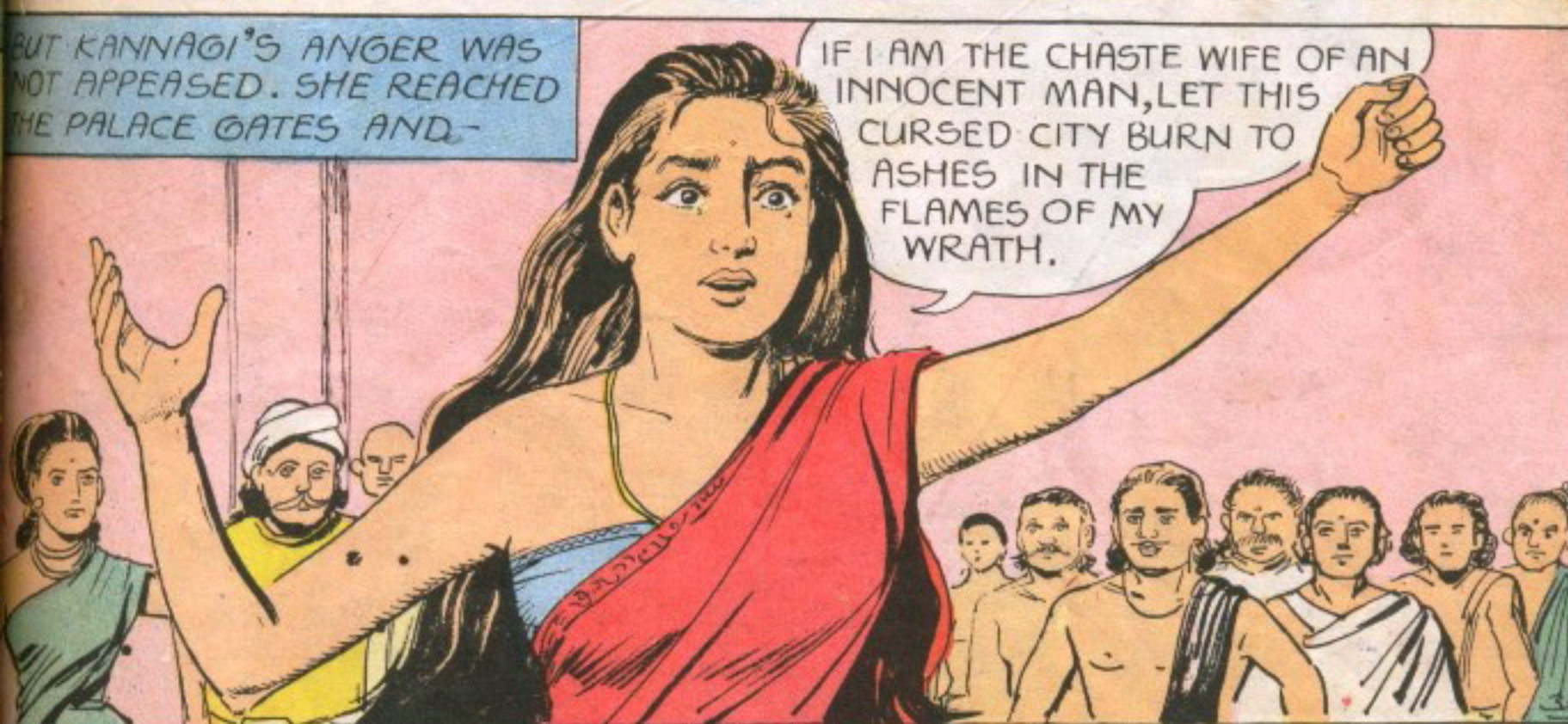


WHAT HAVE I DONE ! I HAVE
KILLED AN INNOCENT
MAN. I CAN ATONE
ONLY BY MY
OWN
DEATH.



OVERCOME BY HIS SENSE OF
GUILT, THE KING FELL DEAD.

FOR A CHASTE
WOMAN THERE IS NO
LIFE AFTER THE
DEATH OF HER HUSBAND.
I WILL FOLLOW HIM.

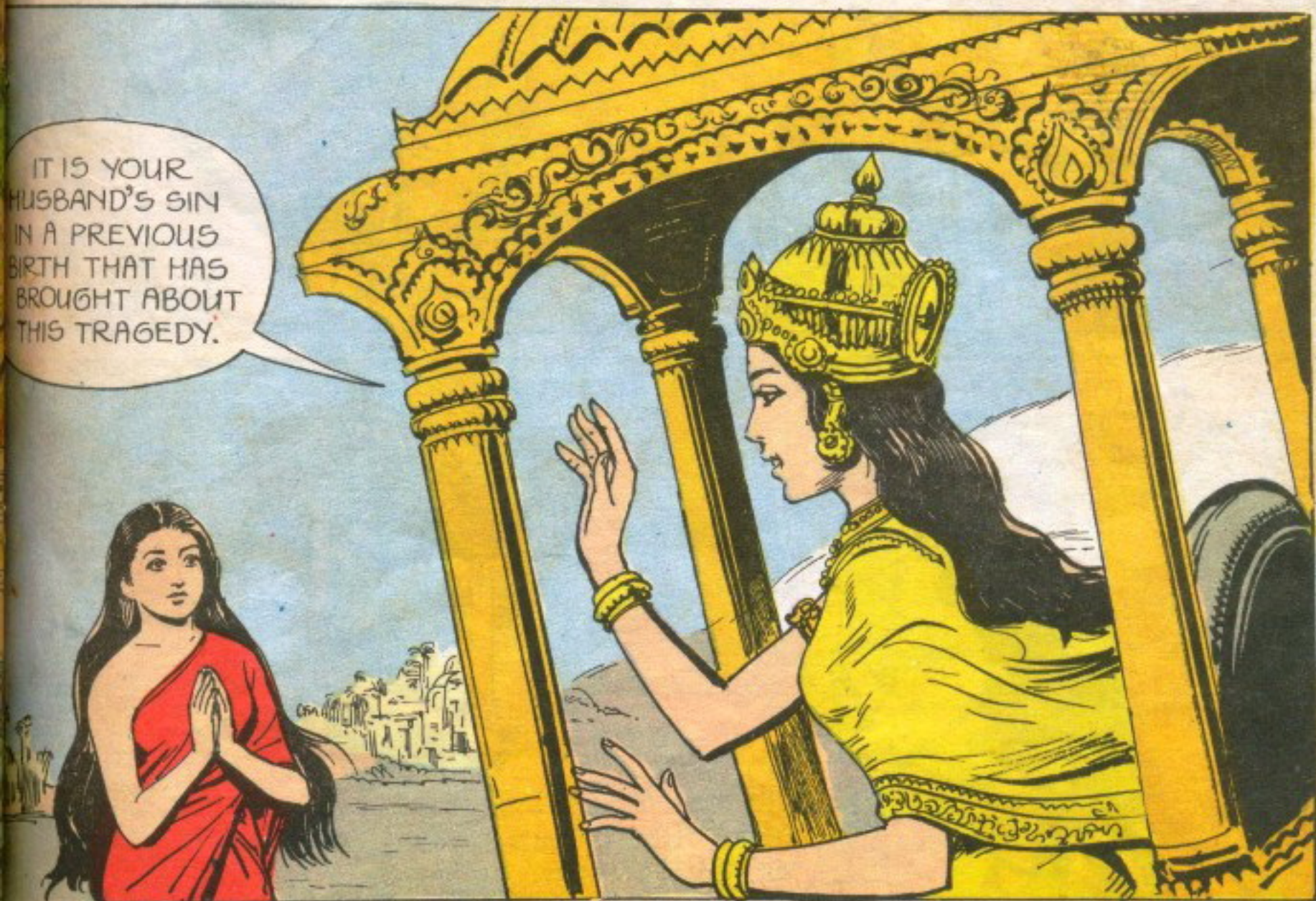


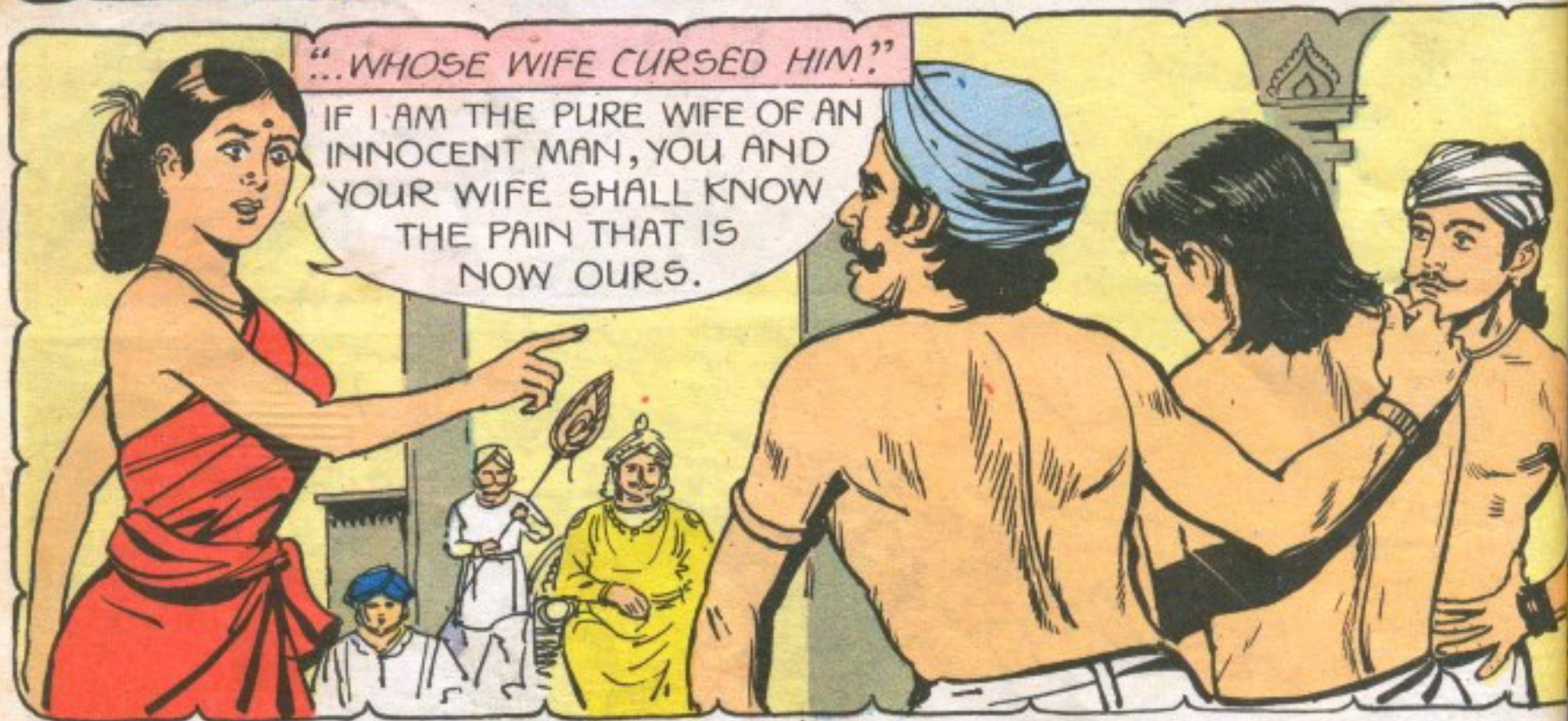
BUT KANNAGI'S ANGER WAS
NOT APPEASED. SHE REACHED
THE PALACE GATES AND-

IF I AM THE CHASTE WIFE OF AN
INNOCENT MAN, LET THIS
CURSED CITY BURN TO
ASHES IN THE
FLAMES OF MY
WRATH.



THE GODDESS OF MADURAI CAME DOWN.

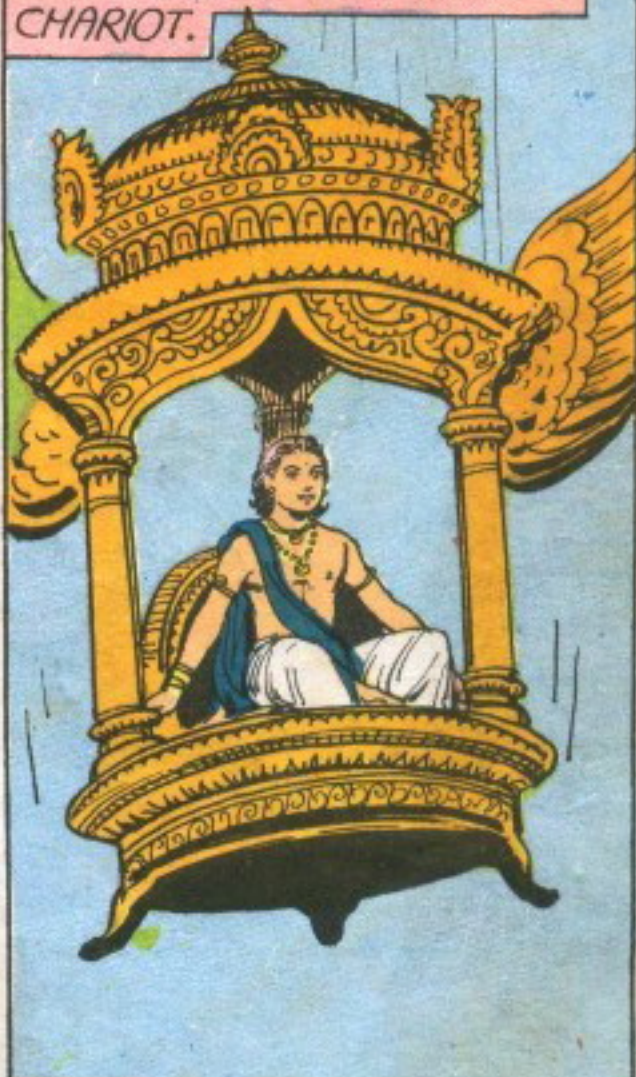






YOU WILL GO TO HEAVEN WITH YOUR HUSBAND. HE WILL COME DOWN AND TAKE YOU. MADURAI WILL BE REBUILT.

AS PROMISED BY THE GODDESS, KOVALAN CAME DOWN IN A WINGED CHARIOT.



KANNAGI, WE ARE NOW FREE OF ALL EARTHLY PAINS AND PLEASURES.

YEARS LATER, TEMPLES WERE BUILT TO HONOUR THE DIVINITY OF KANNAGI. EVEN TO THIS DAY PEOPLE WORSHIP HER.

