



# Kapala Kundala





## Illustrated Classics From India

### Kapala Kundala

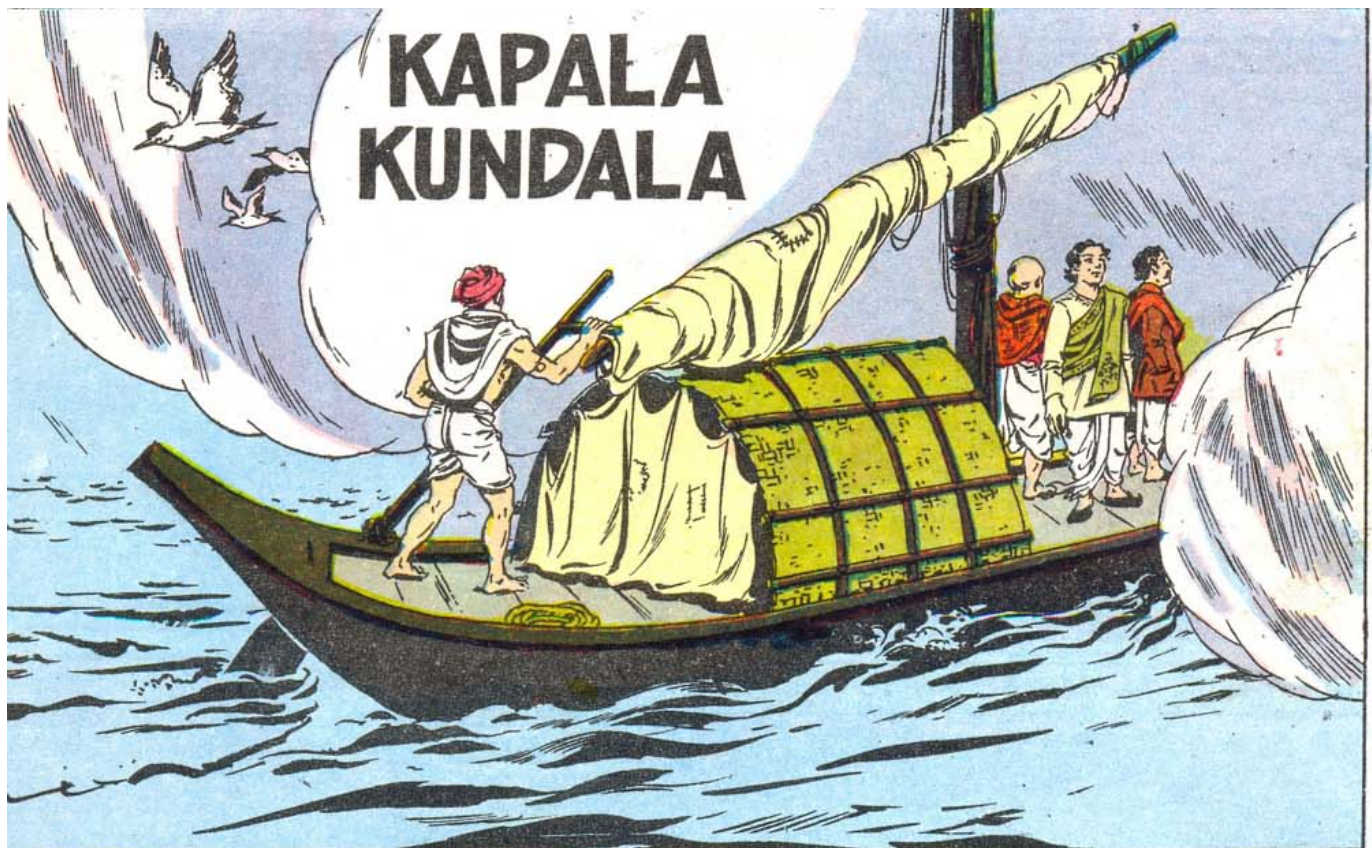
Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) is considered to be one of the greatest writers in the world of Bengali literature. He wrote *Kapala Kundala*, his second novel, when he was only 28 years old.

It is said that when Bankim Chandra lived in Kanthi, on the coast of southwest Bengal, a *kapalik* (a *Tantric* worshipper of Kali or Shiva) frequently visited him. The mystery surrounding the *kapalik* made a deep impression on Bankim. He conceived the idea of writing a novel about a girl brought up by a *kapalik* in complete isolation from the civilised world.

The name *Kapala Kundala* has been taken from the Sanskrit play, *Malati-Madhava*. In the play, Kapala is the associate of the evil *kapalik*, Aghora Ghanta, and she is as heinous as her mentor. But although our heroine in *Kapala Kundala* was also brought up by an evil *kapalik*, she is full human affection and kindness.

This story is full of romantic and interesting characters. While presenting this fascinating tale of romance, certain events and characters have been omitted and the story has been modified to make it suitable for children.

Script: Debrani Mitra   Illustrations: Souren Roy



# KAPALA KUNDALA

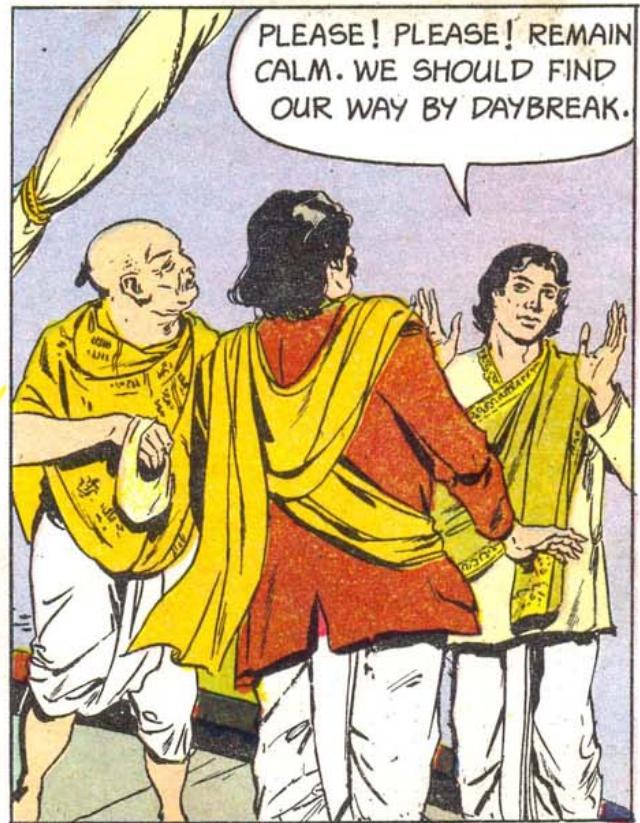
DURING THE REIGN OF AKBAR THE GREAT, A LONE BOAT WAS RETURNING FROM A VOYAGE OF PILGRIMAGE TO GANGASAGAR.\* A DENSE FOG HAD DESCENDED AND, THOUGH IT WAS EARLY IN THE MORNING, NOTHING COULD BE SEEN FOR MILES. THE BOAT HAD LOST ITS WAY.

OH GOD! WE ARE LOST IF WE STRIKE AGAINST A ROCK!

IT WILL BE WORSE IF WE ARE WASHED ASHORE. THEN WE'LL BE AT THE MERCY OF WILD BEASTS IN THE JUNGLES.



PLEASE! PLEASE! REMAIN CALM. WE SHOULD FIND OUR WAY BY DAYBREAK.



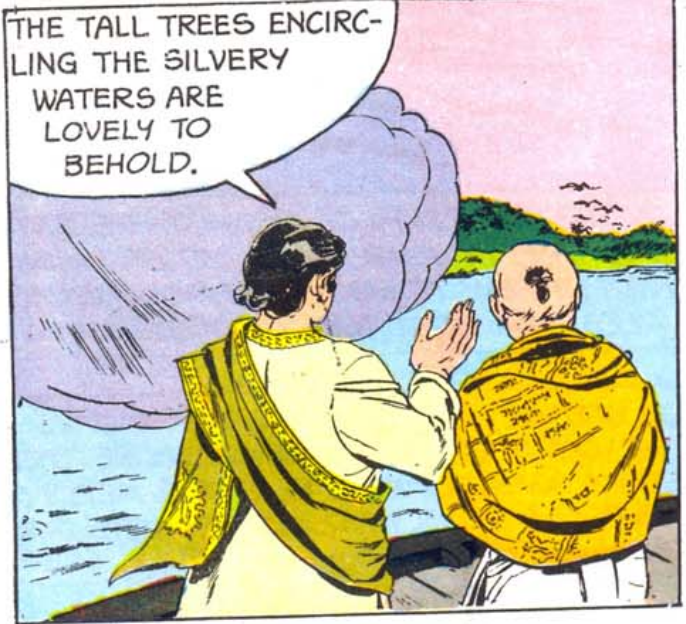
\* THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER HOOGLHY



THE FOG GRADUALLY BEGAN TO CLEAR.



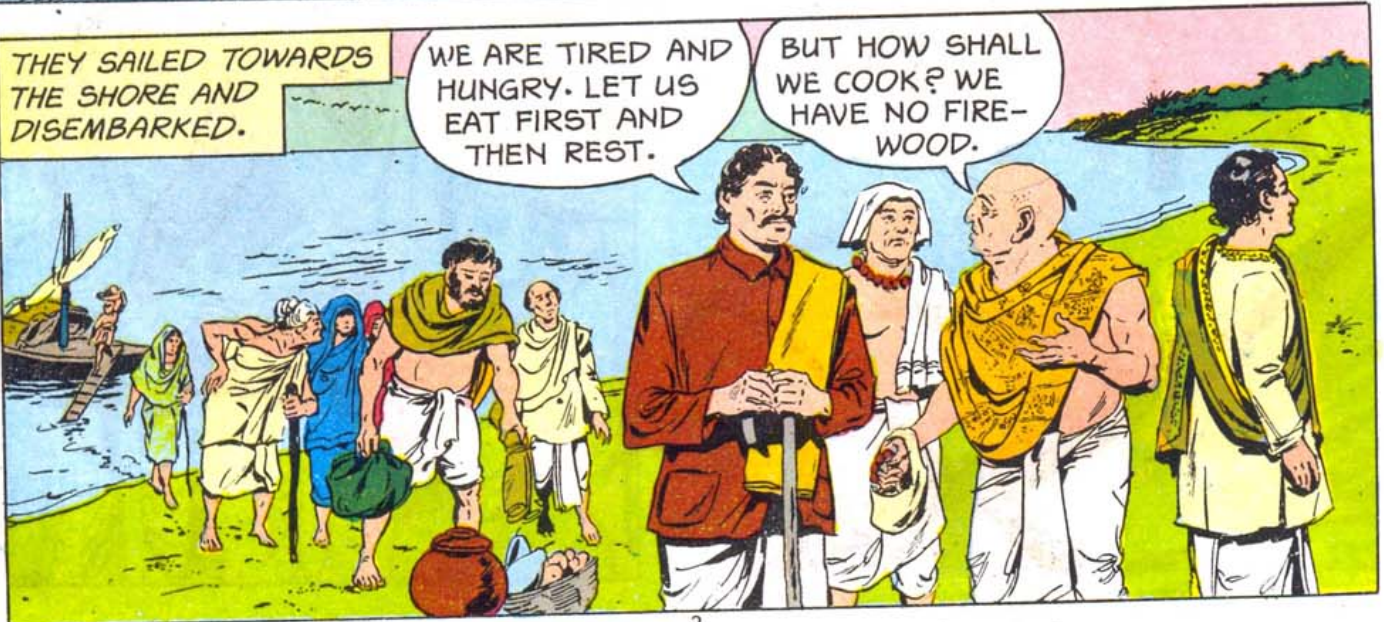
THE TALL TREES ENCIRCLING THE SILVERY WATERS ARE LOVELY TO BEHOLD.

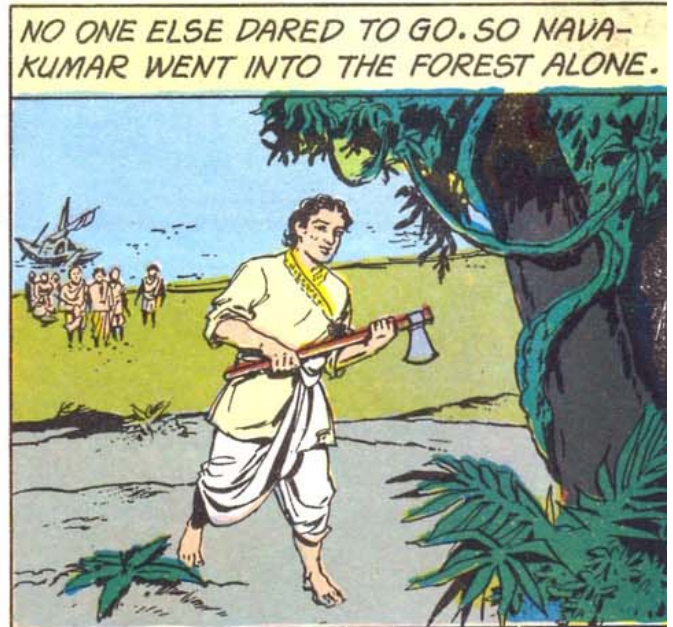
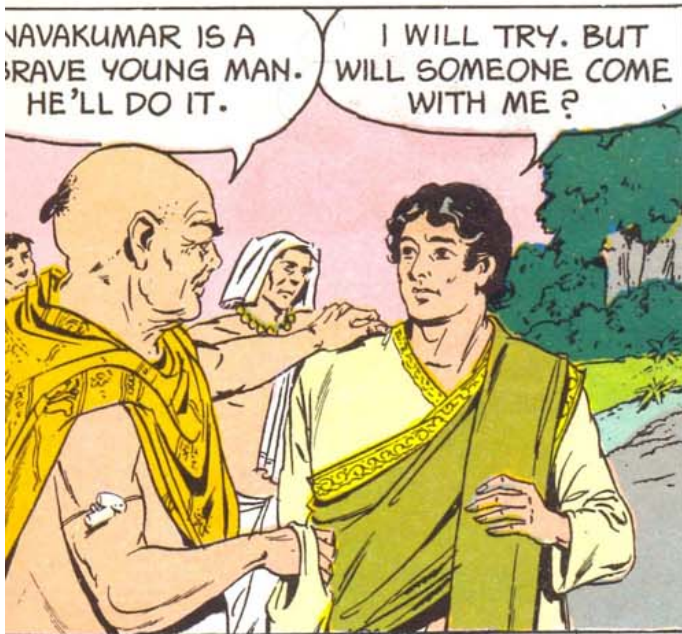
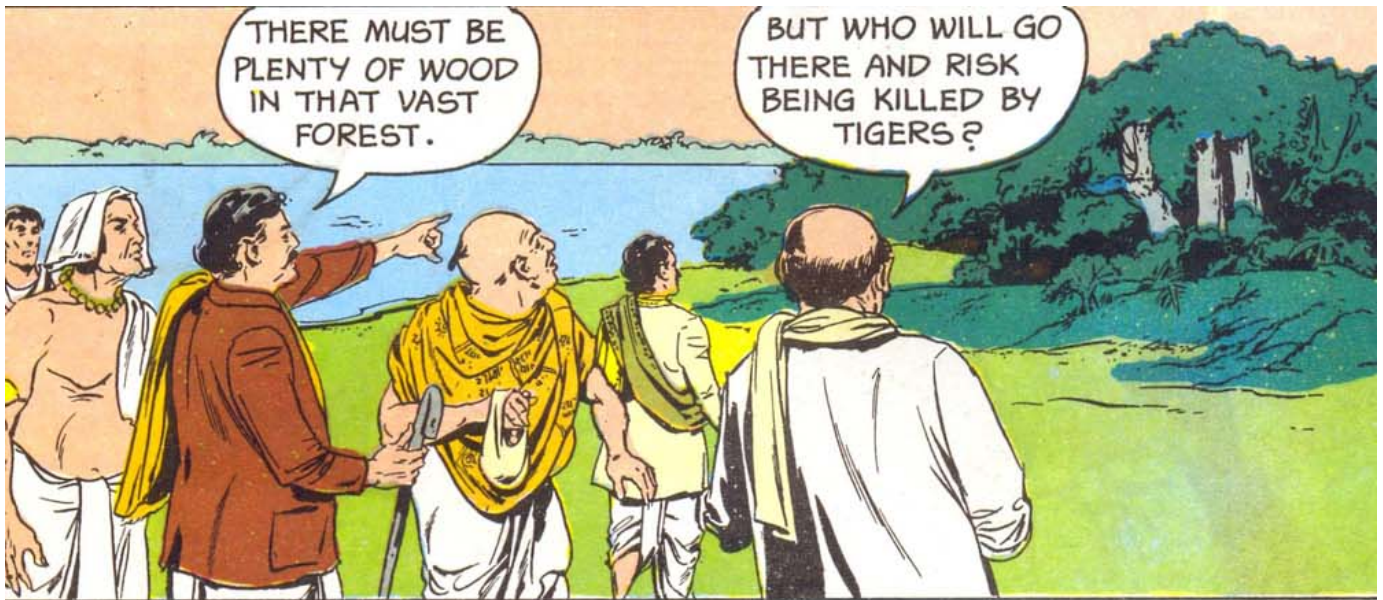


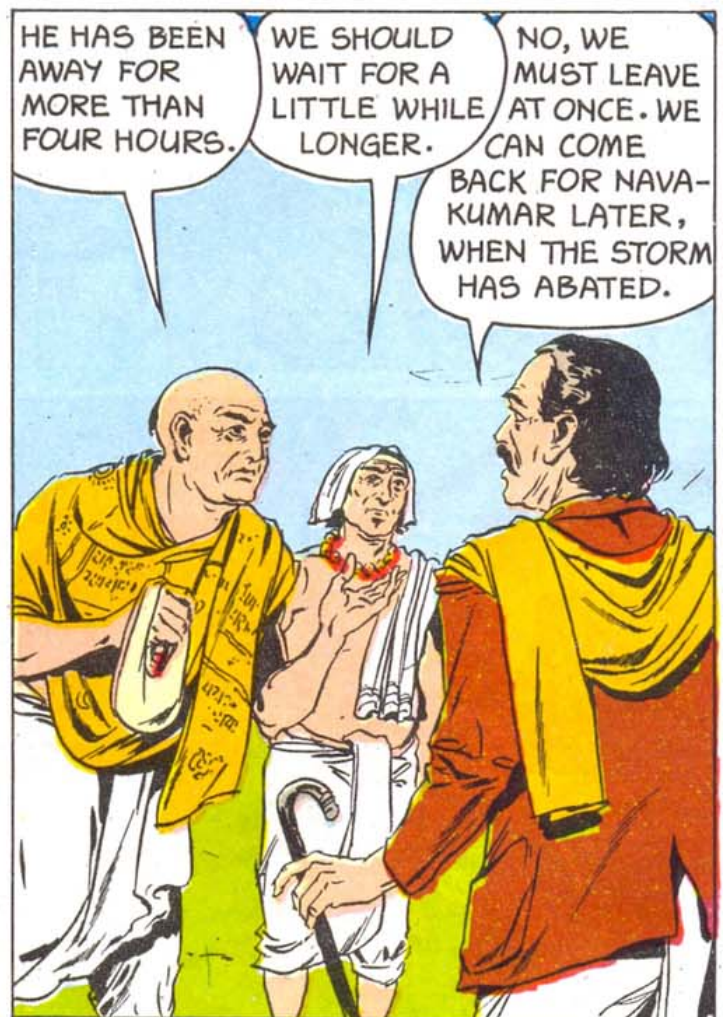
THEY SAILED TOWARDS THE SHORE AND DISEMBARKED.

WE ARE TIRED AND HUNGRY. LET US EAT FIRST AND THEN REST.

BUT HOW SHALL WE COOK? WE HAVE NO FIRE-WOOD.



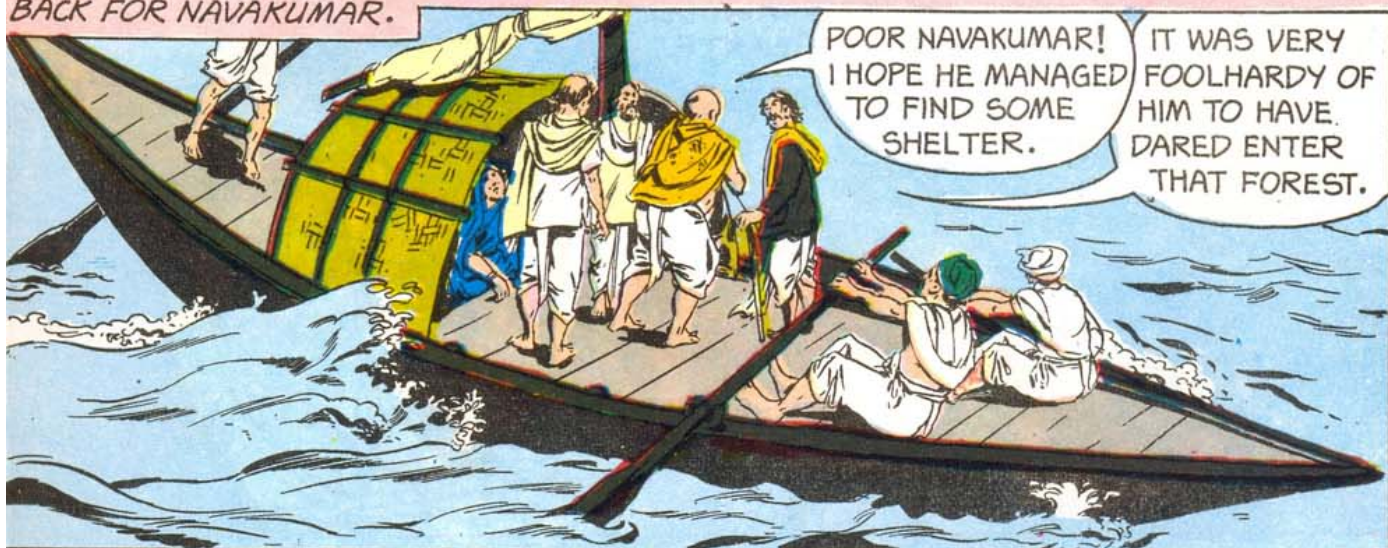




THE STORMY WATERS UNNERVED THEM AND THE PASSENGERS RUSHED TO THE BOAT.



THEY WERE DRIVEN A LONG WAY OFF THE COAST AND THEY DECIDED NOT TO COME BACK FOR NAVAKUMAR.



POOR NAVAKUMAR!  
I HOPE HE MANAGED  
TO FIND SOME  
SHELTER.

IT WAS VERY  
FOOLHARDY OF  
HIM TO HAVE  
DARED ENTER  
THAT FOREST.

IT WAS LATE IN THE EVENING WHEN NAVAKUMAR RETURNED TO FIND HIS COMPANIONS GONE.



NO SIGN OF  
THEM! THEY  
HAVE BEEN  
SWEEPED AWAY  
BY THE SEA!

OR, PERHAPS, THEY'VE  
DESERTED ME! ANYWAY,  
I MUST FIND  
SHELTER FOR  
THE NIGHT.



LOOKING FOR SHELTER IN THE FOREST, NAVAKUMAR SAW A FIRE FLICKERING IN THE DISTANCE.



AS HE DREW NEARER, HE SAW A KAPALIK\* MEDITATING BEFORE THE FIRE.



AFTER A WHILE —



THE KAPALIK TOOK NAVAKUMAR TO HIS COTTAGE.



NAVAKUMAR WAS SO TIRED THAT HE SLEPT TILL THE NEXT EVENING.



\* A VOTARY OF THE GODDESS KALI WHO OFFERS HUMAN SACRIFICE

WHEN HE FINALLY WOKE UP —



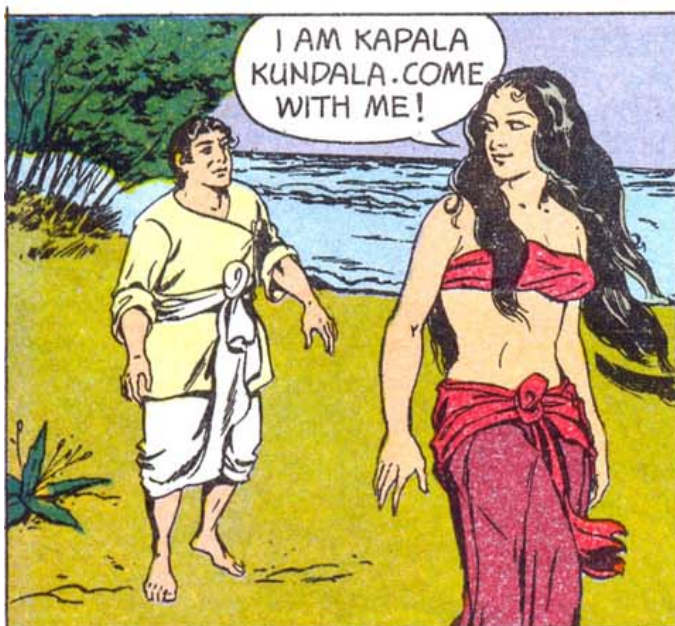
HE WENT OUT IN SEARCH OF FOOD.



BUT HE LOST HIS WAY IN THE FOREST.



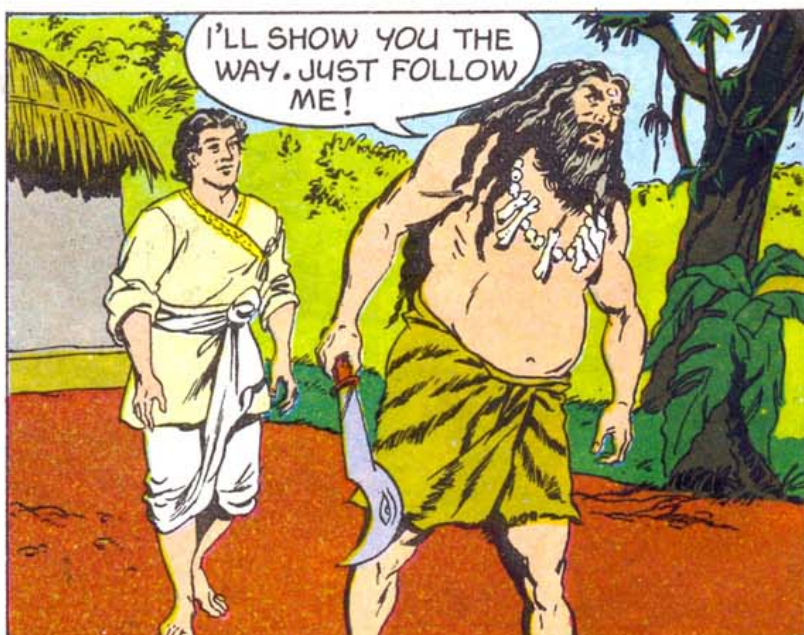
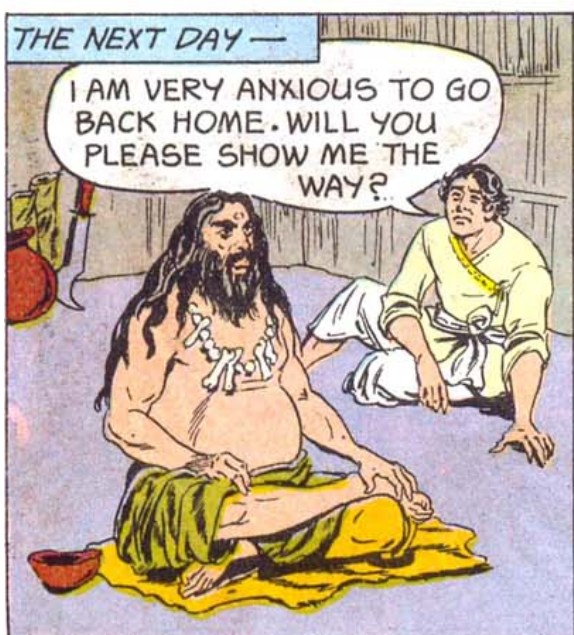
SUDDENLY —



NAVAKUMAR FOLLOWED HER AS IF IN A TRANCE. AFTER LEADING HIM TO THE COTTAGE, THE BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN STEPPED BEHIND A BUSH AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE FOREST.



THE NEXT DAY —



THEY STARTED WALKING THROUGH THE FOREST. SUDDENLY NAVAKUMAR HEARD SOMEONE WHISPER BEHIND HIM —



THE KAPALIK HEARD THE LOW WHISPERS.



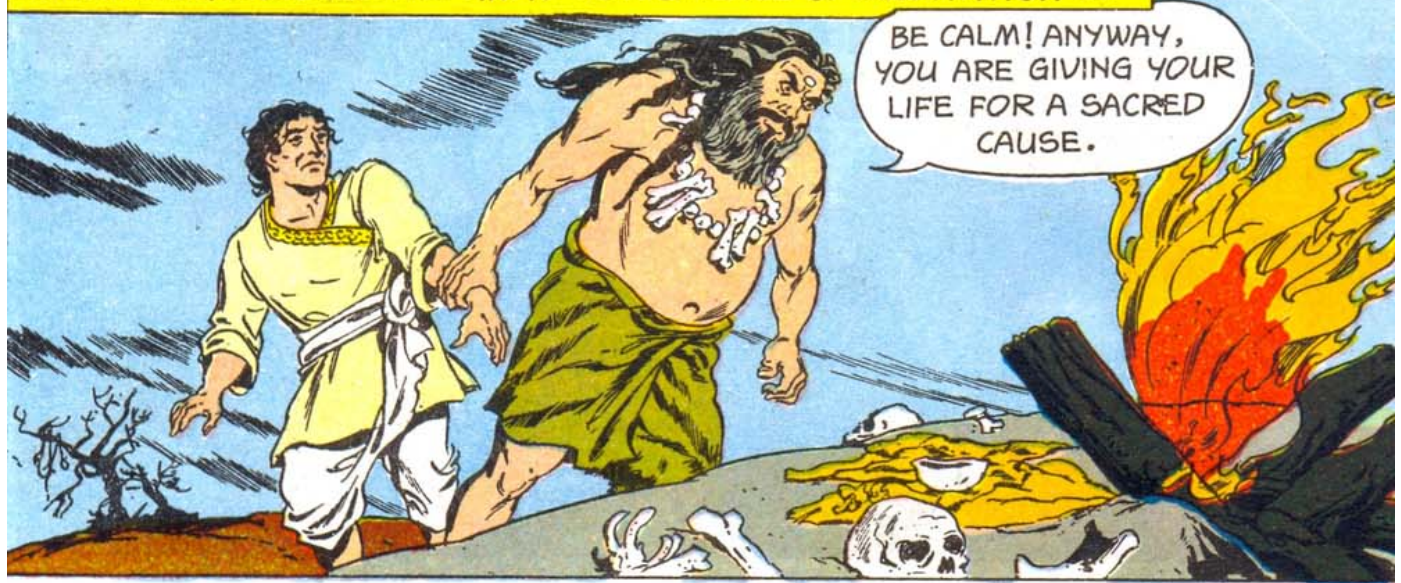
THE GIRL FLED LIKE A FRIGHTENED DEER.



BUT THE KAPALIK CAUGHT HOLD OF NAVAKUMAR.



THE KAPALIK DRAGGED HIM AWAY TO HIS PLACE OF MEDITATION...



...AND BOUND HIM FIRMLY.



AFTER HIS PREPARATIONS FOR THE SACRIFICE WERE COMPLETED —



THE KAPALIK WENT AWAY TO LOOK FOR THE SCIMITAR...



... WHEN KAPALA KUNDALA SUDDENLY APPEARED WITH THE SCIMITAR!

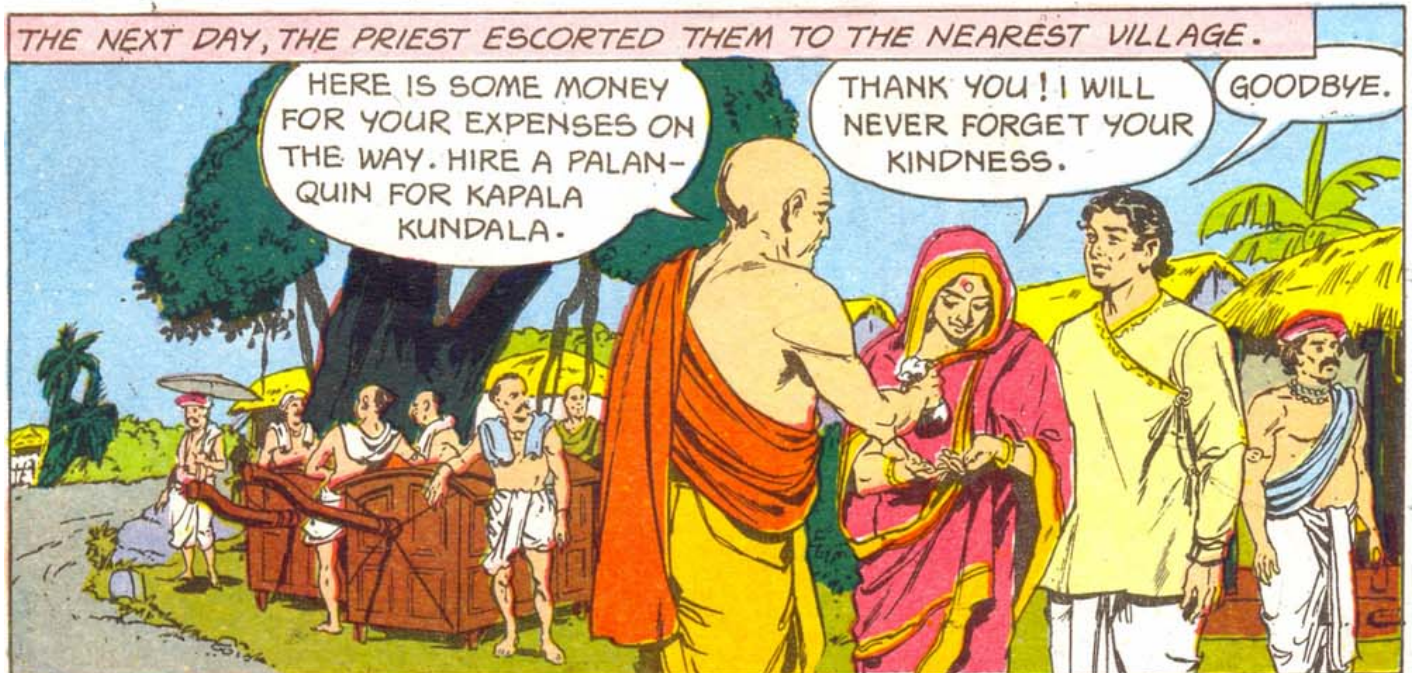
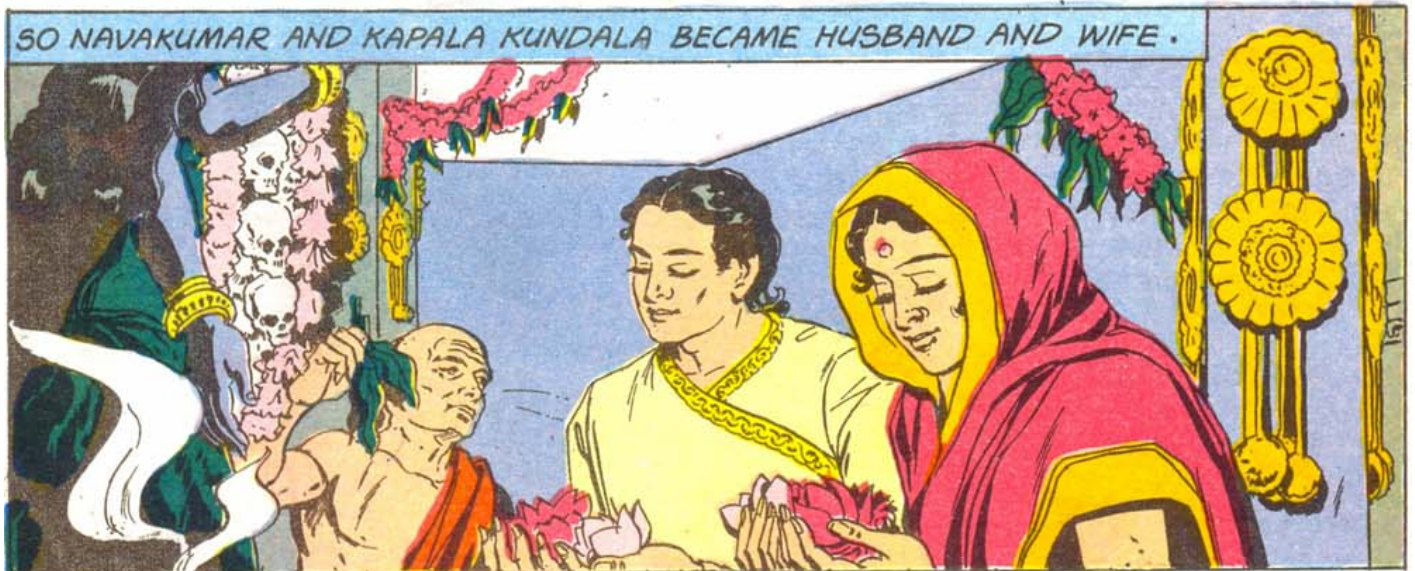
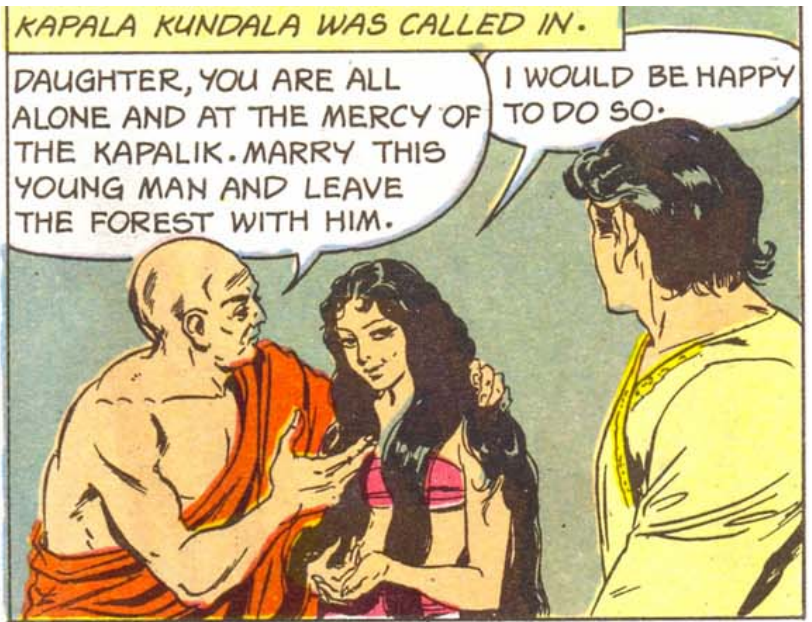
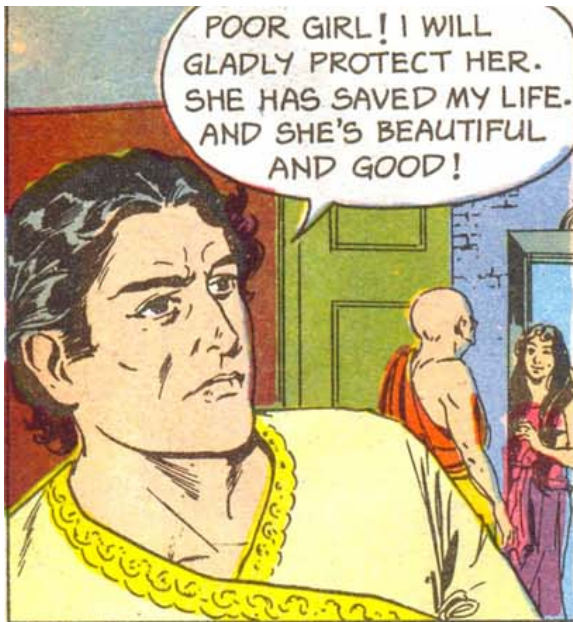


KAPALA KUNDALA THEN LED NAVAKUMAR TO A TEMPLE IN THE FOREST AND TOLD THE PRIEST THERE THE WHOLE STORY.

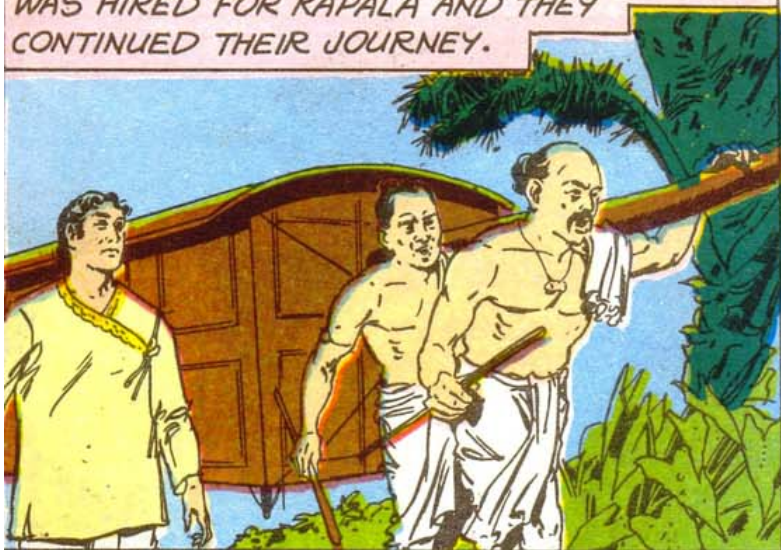


THE PRIEST TOOK NAVAKUMAR INTO THE TEMPLE.





AFTER THE PRIEST HAD LEFT, A PALANQUIN WAS HIRED FOR KAPALA AND THEY CONTINUED THEIR JOURNEY.



I HOPE WE REACH THE NEXT VILLAGE SOON. MY FEET ARE ACHING....



GRADUALLY HE LOST PACE WITH THE PALANQUIN.

THEY'LL WAIT FOR ME AT THE VILLAGE INN. I CAN'T HURRY. I AM FAR TOO TIRED.



BUT BY NIGHTFALL NAVAKUMAR BECAME WORRIED. THE VILLAGE WAS NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

I HOPE KAPALA HAS ARRIVED SAFELY AT THE INN. I AM WORRIED ABOUT DACOITS.



HIS ANXIETY INCREASED WHEN HE STUMBLED UPON A BROKEN PALANQUIN.

KAPALA KUNDALA! IS IT YOU?



LOOKING INSIDE, HE SAW A LADY WHOSE HANDS AND FEET WERE BOUND.

PLEASE UNTIE THESE ROPES.

OH! IT'S NOT KAPALA!

MY SERVANTS HAD JUST LEFT ME AND GONE AHEAD TO MAKE PREPARATIONS AT THE VILLAGE INN...

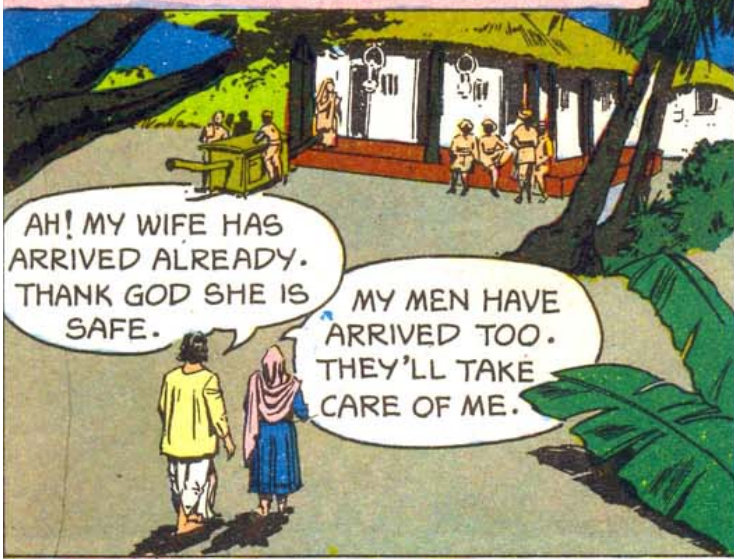
...WHEN SUDDENLY DACOITS ATTACKED.

THEY TOOK AWAY ALL MY BELONGINGS, WHILE MY PALANQUIN-BEARERS FLED.

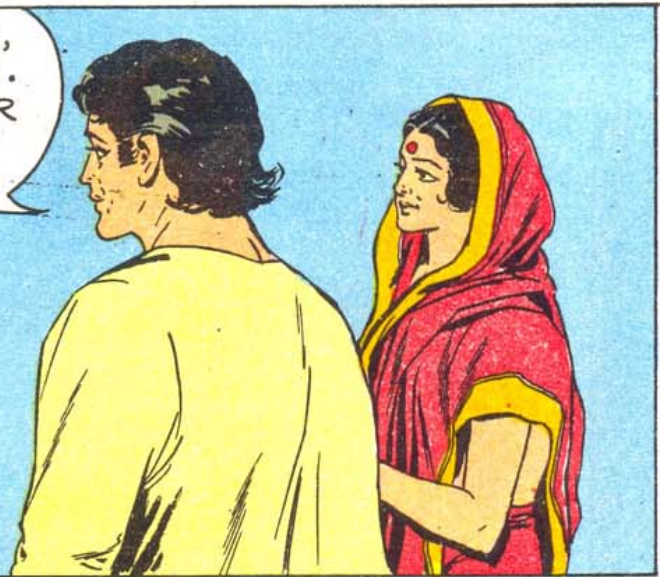
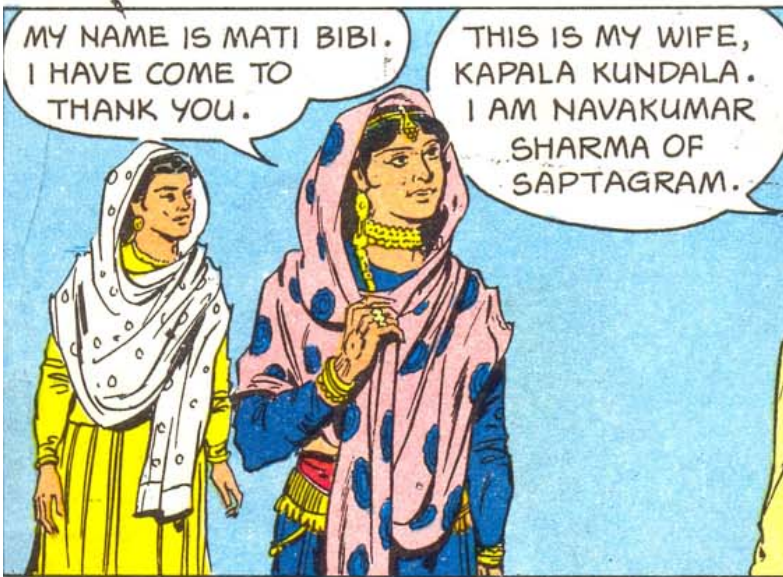
HOW SHALL I REACH THE INN NOW?

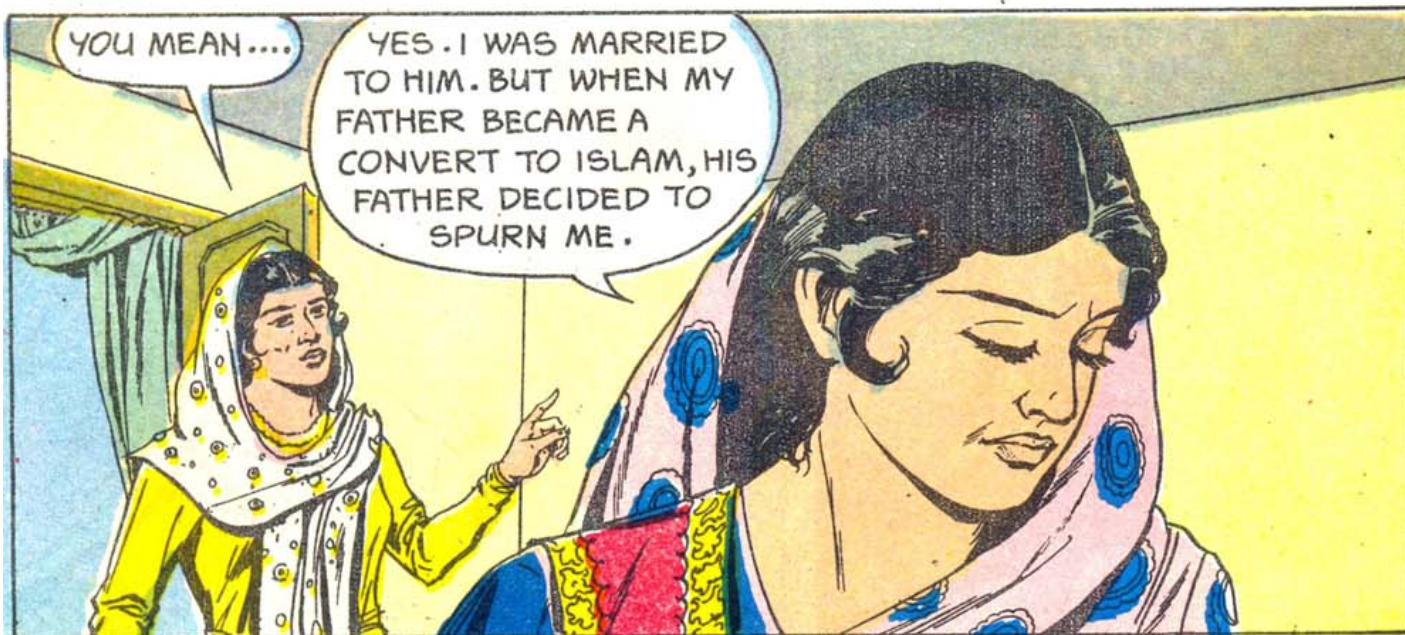
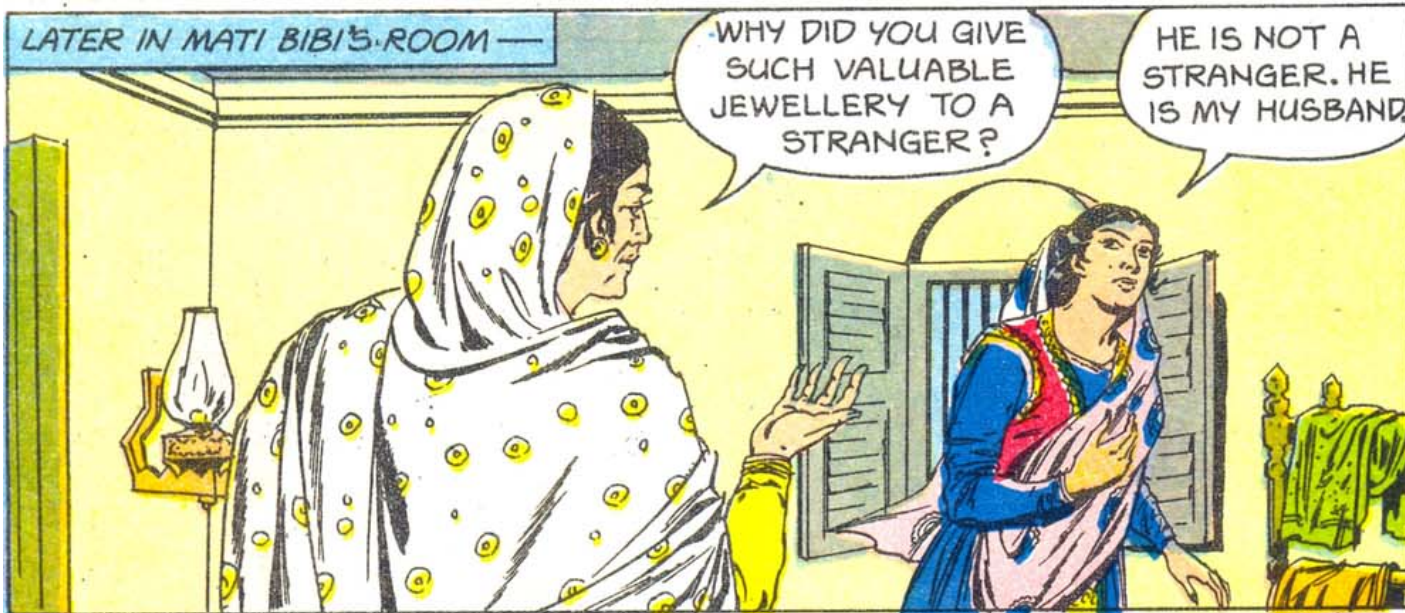
YOU CAN COME WITH ME. I AM GOING TO THE INN TO JOIN MY WIFE. I HOPE SHE IS SAFE.

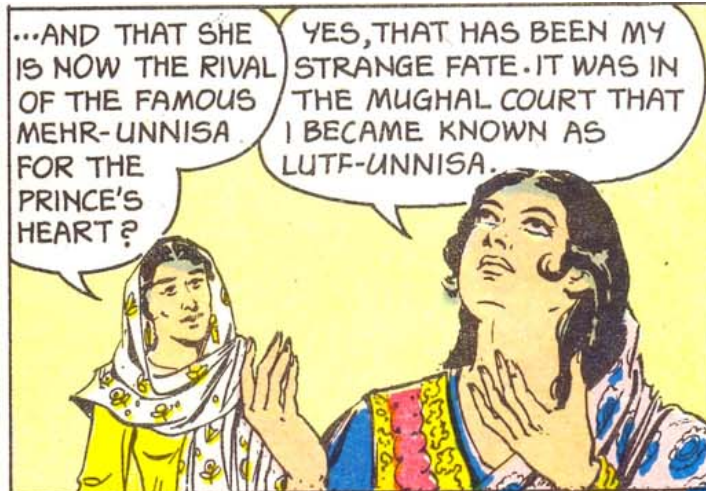
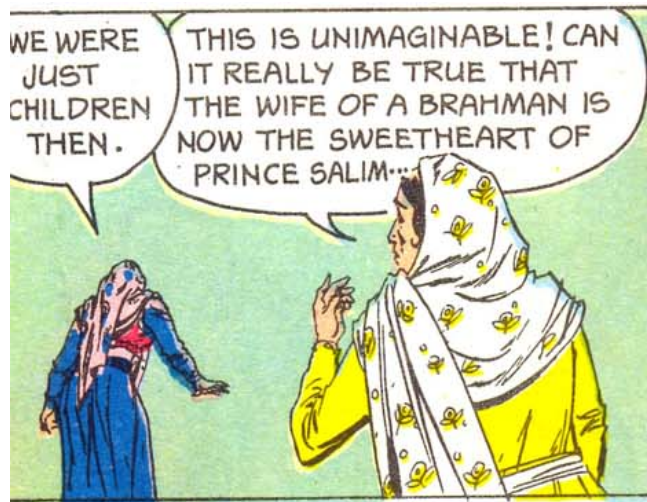
THE INN WAS, AFTER ALL, NOT VERY FAR AWAY, AND THEY SOON REACHED IT.



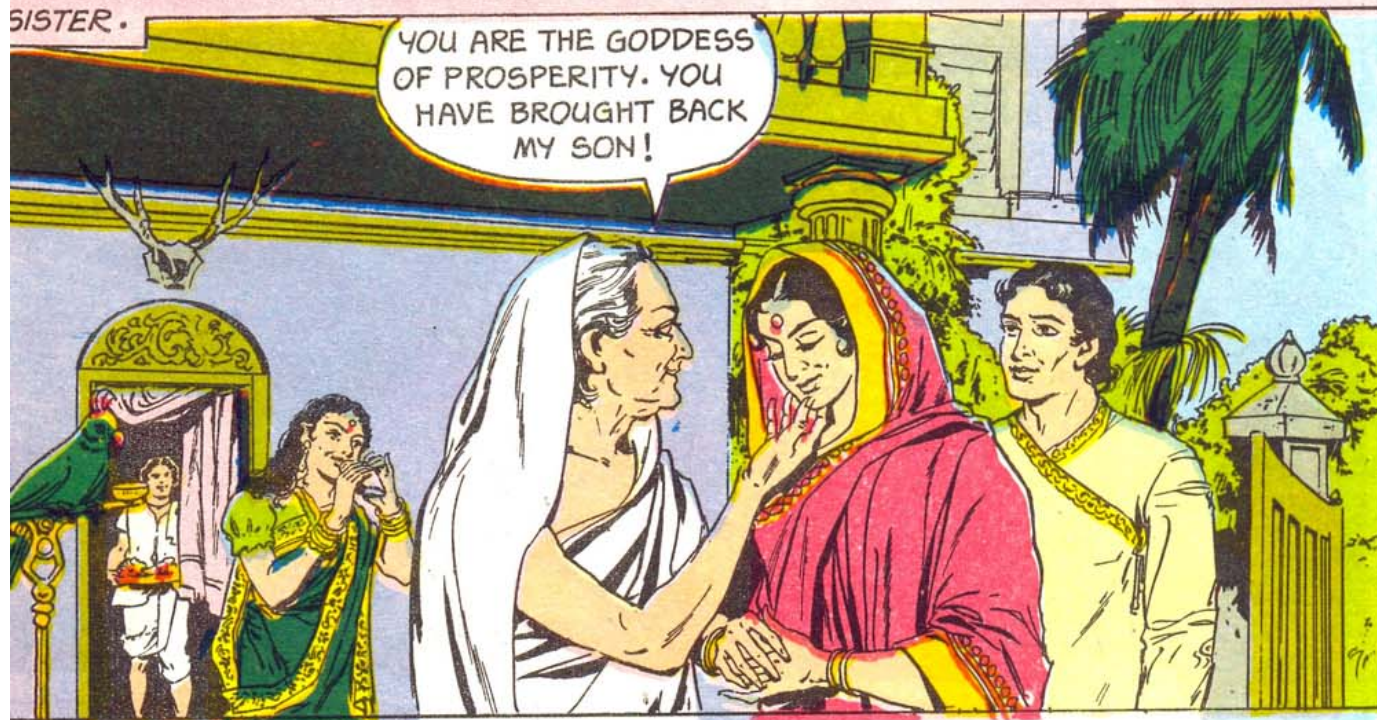
LATER AT THE INN —

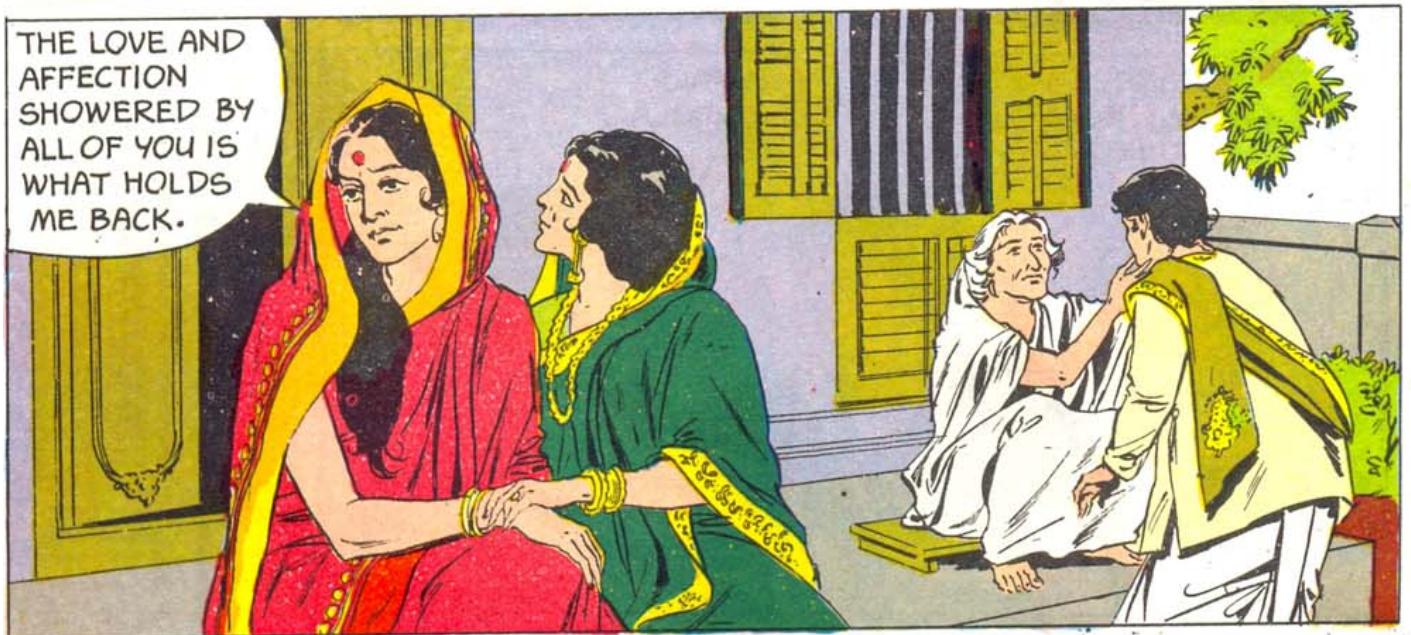
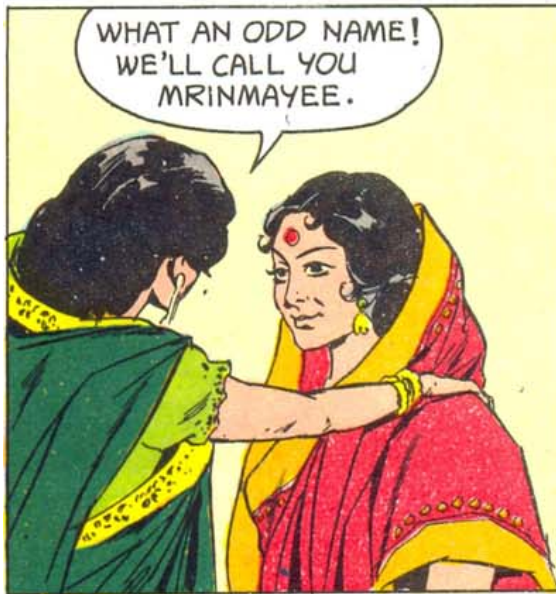


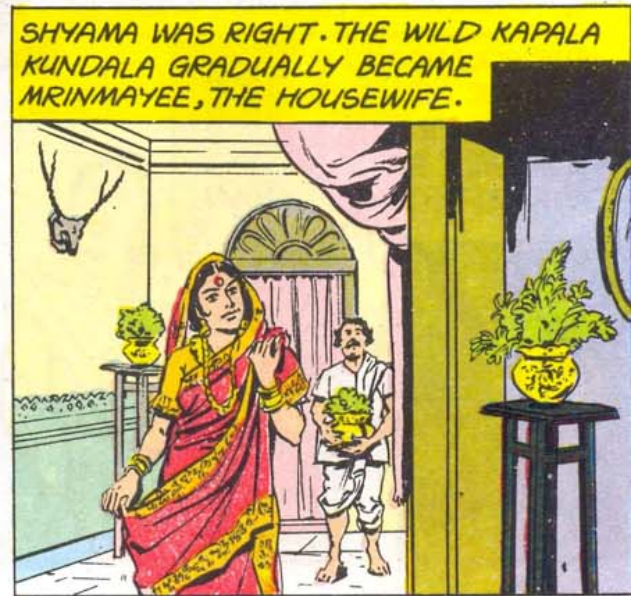
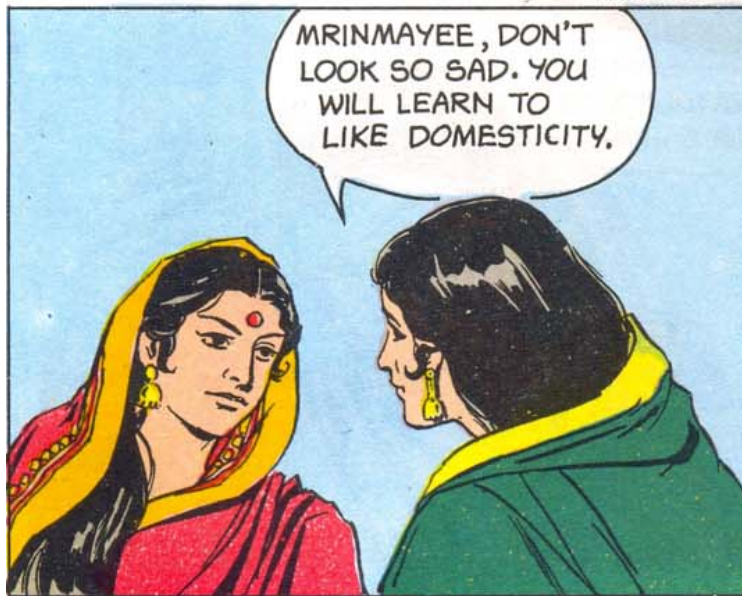




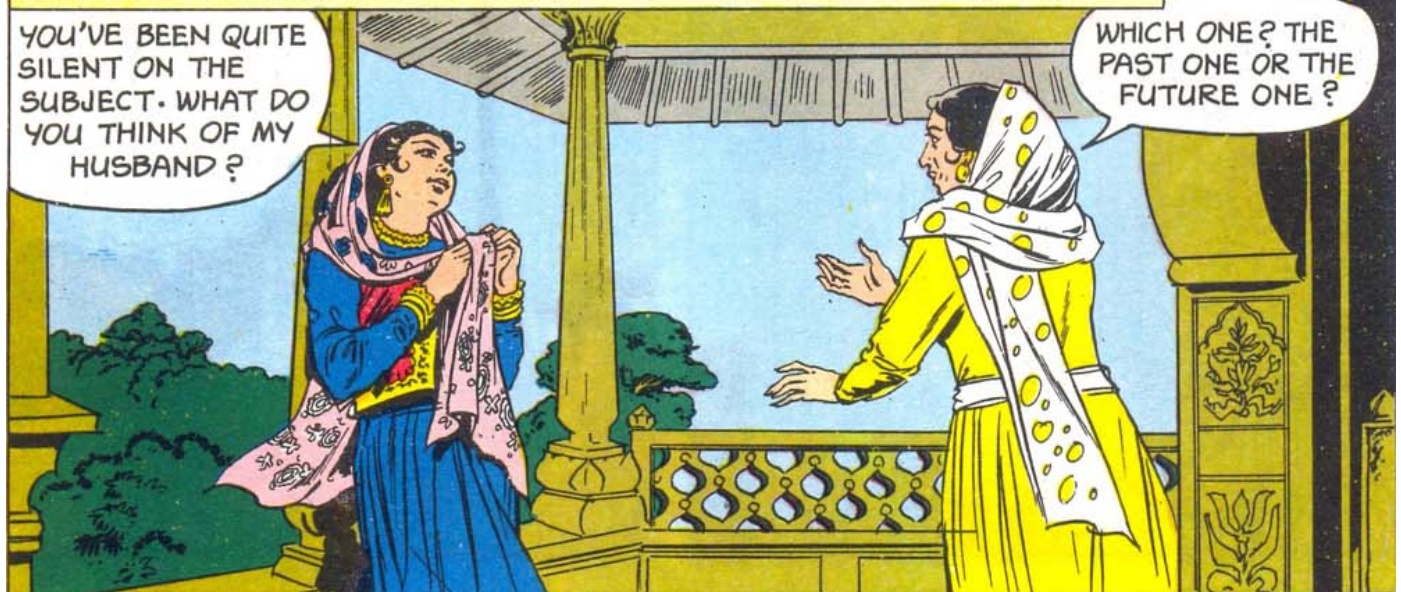
A FEW DAYS LATER, NAVAKUMAR ARRIVED AT SAPTAGRAM WITH HIS BRIDE. ON REACHING HOME, THEY RECEIVED A JOYOUS WELCOME FROM HIS MOTHER AND SISTER.







IN THE MEAN TIME, MATI BIBI HAD RETURNED TO AGRA; BUT HER THOUGHTS WERE STILL WITH NAVAKUMAR. ONE DAY SHE WAS TALKING TO HER MAID —



JUST THEN AN ATTENDANT CAME IN.

HAVE YOU HEARD?  
EMPEROR AKBAR IS  
NO MORE. PRINCE  
SALIM WILL BE  
CROWNED SOON.

CONGRATULATIONS,  
BEGUM SAHIBA.



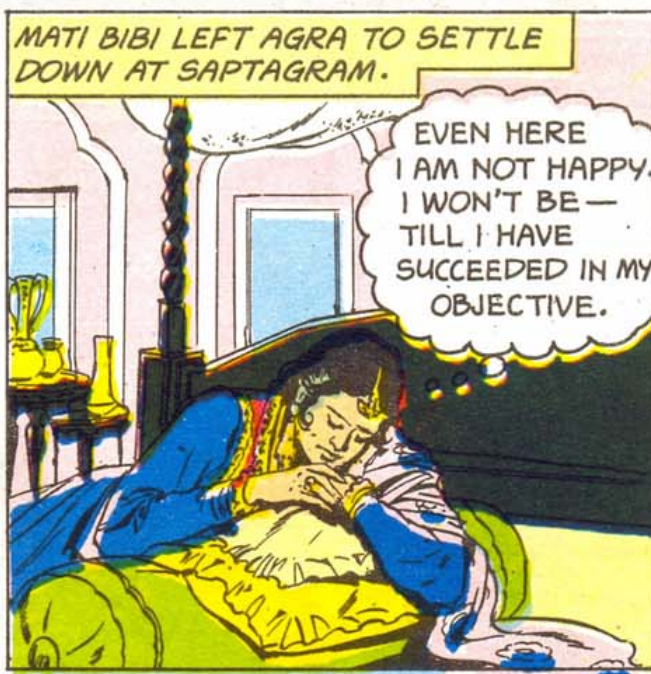
I AM NOT A BEGUM.  
I AM LEAVING AGRA  
RIGHT NOW!

YOU MUST BE  
OUT OF YOUR  
MIND!



MATI BIBI LEFT AGRA TO SETTLE  
DOWN AT SAPTAGRAM.

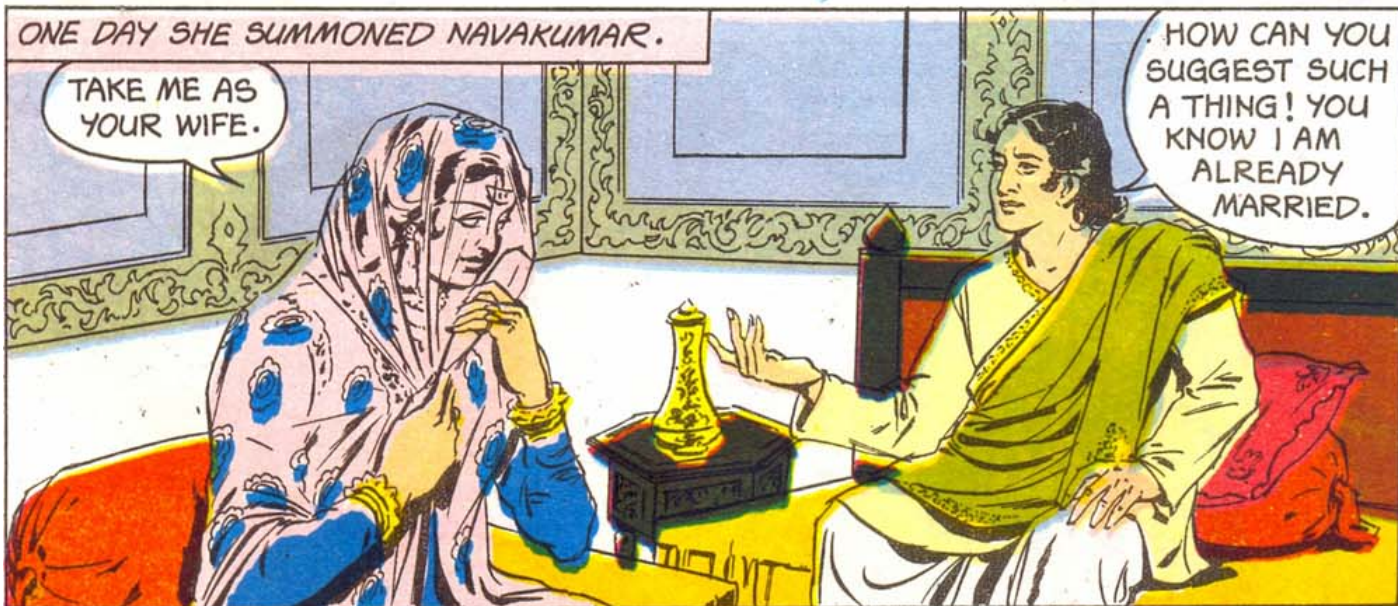
EVEN HERE  
I AM NOT HAPPY.  
I WON'T BE —  
TILL I HAVE  
SUCCEEDED IN MY  
OBJECTIVE.



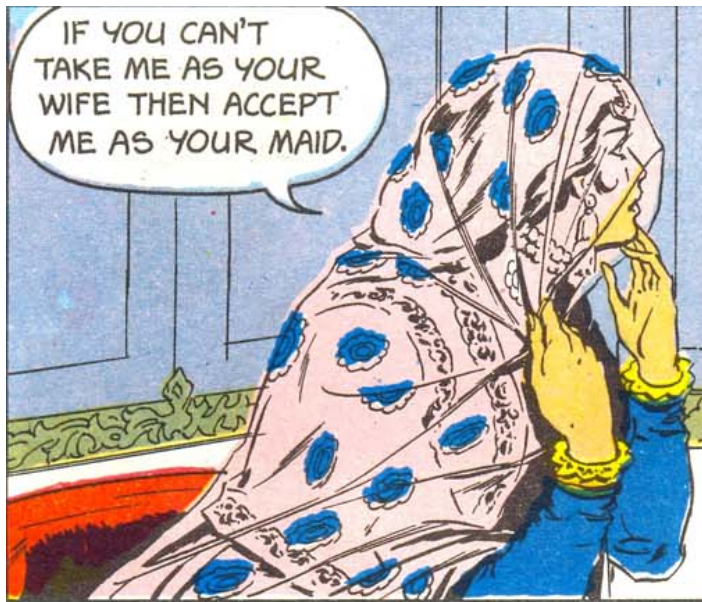
ONE DAY SHE SUMMONED NAVAKUMAR.

TAKE ME AS  
YOUR WIFE.

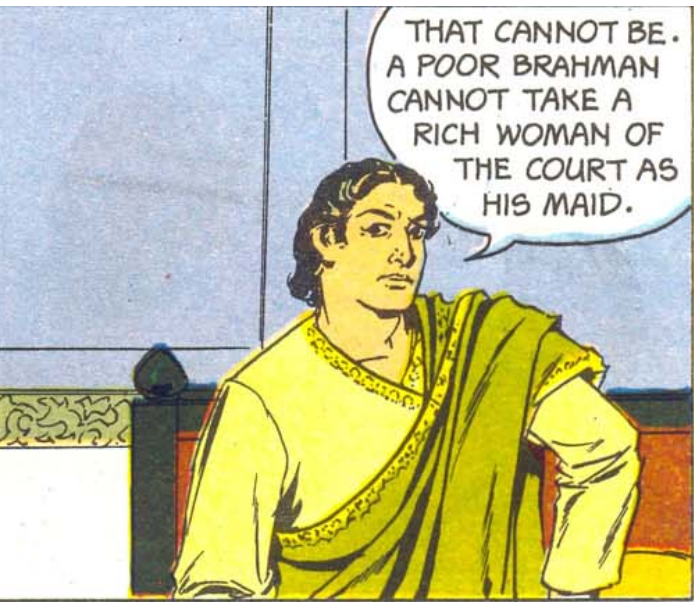
HOW CAN YOU  
SUGGEST SUCH  
A THING! YOU  
KNOW I AM  
ALREADY  
MARRIED.



IF YOU CAN'T  
TAKE ME AS YOUR  
WIFE THEN ACCEPT  
ME AS YOUR MAID.



THAT CANNOT BE.  
A POOR BRAHMAN  
CANNOT TAKE A  
RICH WOMAN OF  
THE COURT AS  
HIS MAID.



I WILL OFFER ALL MY  
BELONGINGS TO YOU.  
DON'T YOU SEE THAT  
I HAVE GIVEN UP EVEN  
THE THRONE  
OF AGRA  
FOR YOU?

YOU ARE FREE TO  
GO BACK TO AGRA.



MATI BIBI BECAME VERY ANGRY.

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE  
ME. WHEN I WANT  
SOMETHING,  
I GET IT.



HER ANGRY GESTURE REVIVED A CHILDHOOD MEMORY IN NAVAKUMAR.

JUST BECAUSE I AM  
YOUR WIFE YOU CANNOT  
ORDER ME AROUND  
LIKE THIS!



HE LOOKED AT HER KEENLY.

WHO ARE YOU?  
ANSWER ME!

I AM  
PADMAVATI.  
YOU  
REMEMBER  
ME NOW?

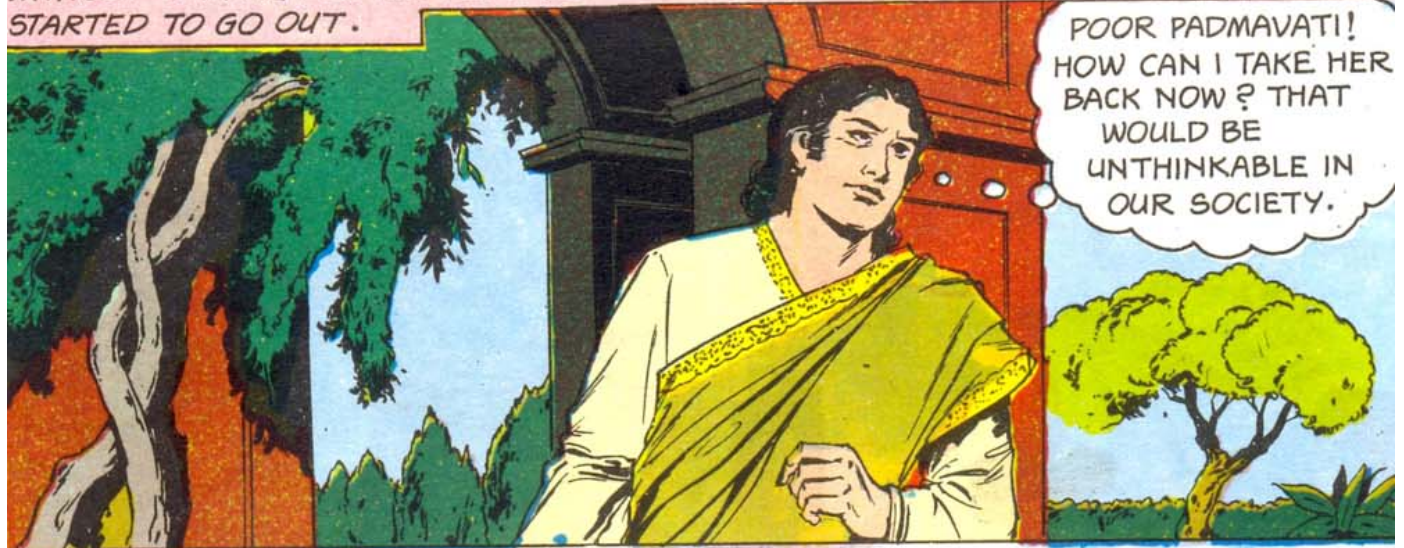


PADMAVATI!  
MY GOD!

YOU'LL HEAR  
FROM ME SOON.  
GOODBYE!



WITHOUT WAITING FOR HIS REPLY, SHE LEFT THE ROOM. DUMBFOUNDED, NAVAKUMAR STARTED TO GO OUT.



POOR PADMAVATI!  
HOW CAN I TAKE HER  
BACK NOW? THAT  
WOULD BE  
UNTHINKABLE IN  
OUR SOCIETY.

TWO DAYS LATER —

HOW DO YOU  
LIKE MY  
DISGUISE?

EXCELLENT!  
BUT WHAT ARE  
YOU AFTER?



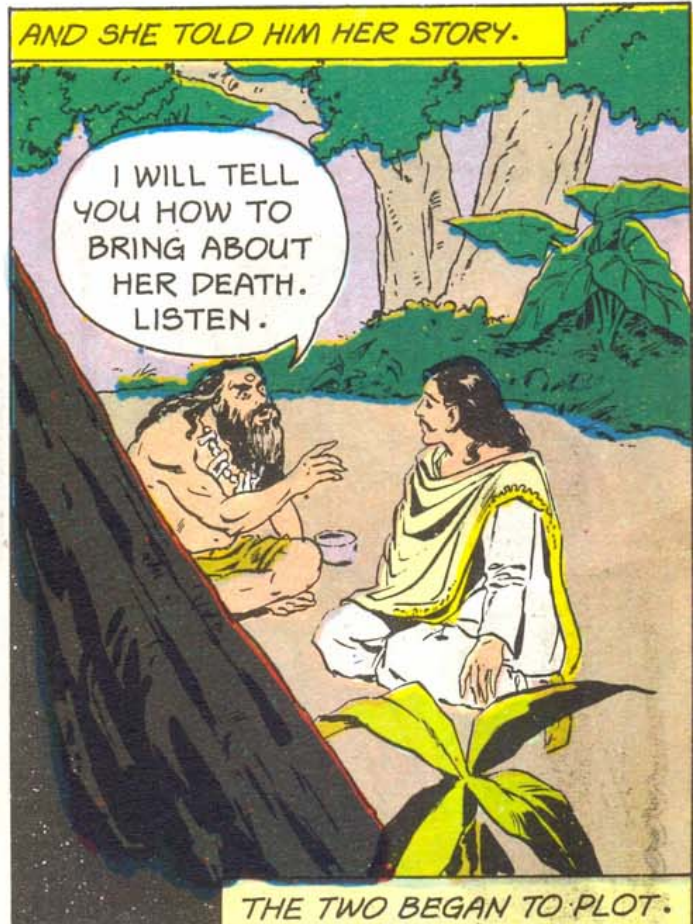
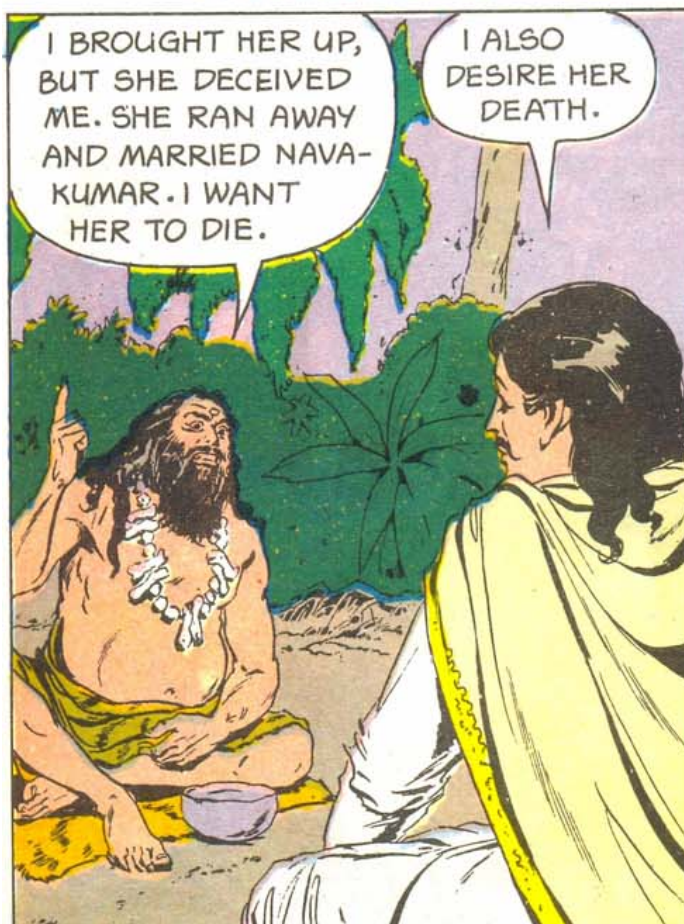
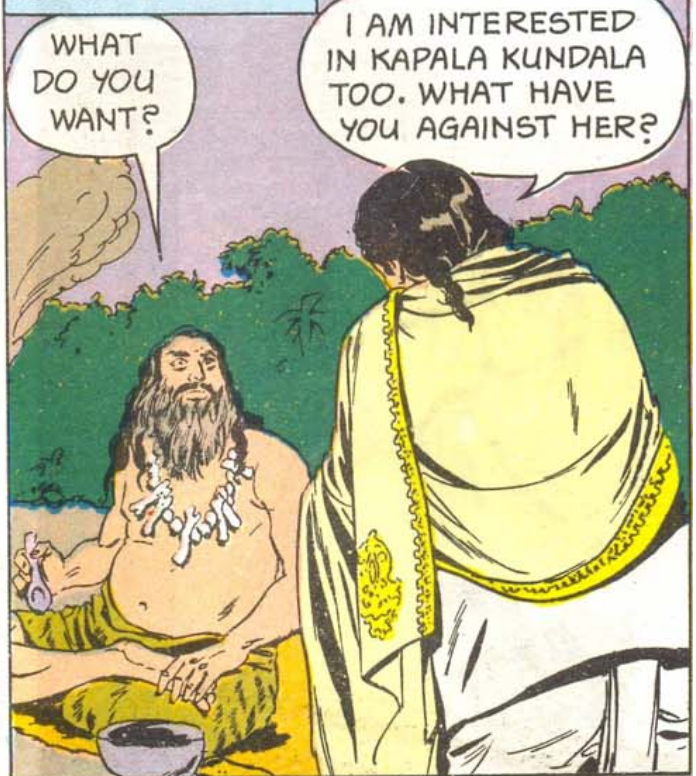
FIRST, KAPALA  
KUNDALA'S  
DEATH. SECOND,  
REUNION WITH  
MY HUSBAND.



DISGUISED AS A MAN, MATI BIBI WENT TO THE FOREST NEAR NAVAKUMAR'S HOUSE TO WAIT FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO CARRY OUT HER PLANS. HOWEVER, HER ATTENTION WAS DIVERTED.



GOING NEARER SHE SAW THE KAPALIK PERFORMING SOME RITES AND CHANTING THE NAME "KAPALA KUNDALA" REPEATEDLY. SUDDENLY THE KAPALIK BECAME AWARE OF HER.



MEANWHILE —

MRINMAYEE, I NEED A MEDICINAL HERB FROM THE FOREST. BUT IT'S GOING TO BE DIFFICULT....

WHY? WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, SHYAMA?



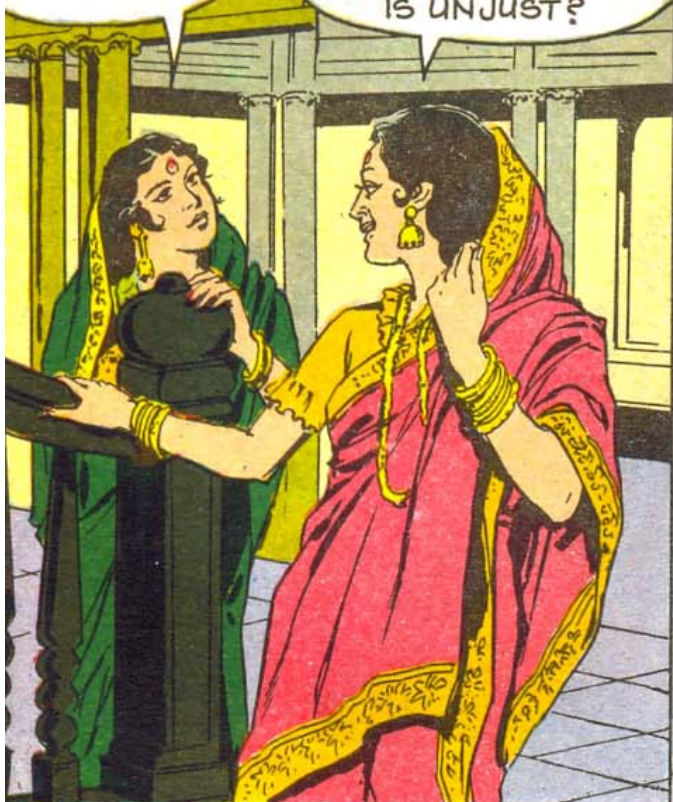
THE HERB MUST BE PLUCKED BY A WOMAN EXACTLY AT MIDNIGHT. AND SHE MUST BE ALONE. OTHERWISE IT WON'T HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT.

YOU KNOW THAT I DON'T FEAR THE JUNGLE. I'LL GET IT FOR YOU.



BUT MY BROTHER MAY OBJECT.

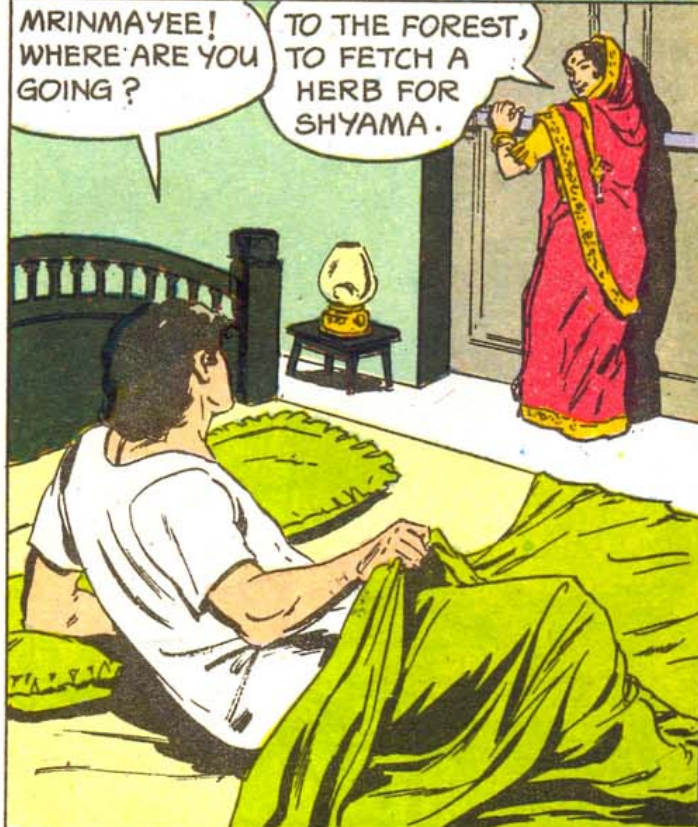
WHY SHOULD HE? AND IF HE DOES, SHOULD I OBEY HIM EVEN IF HE IS UNJUST?

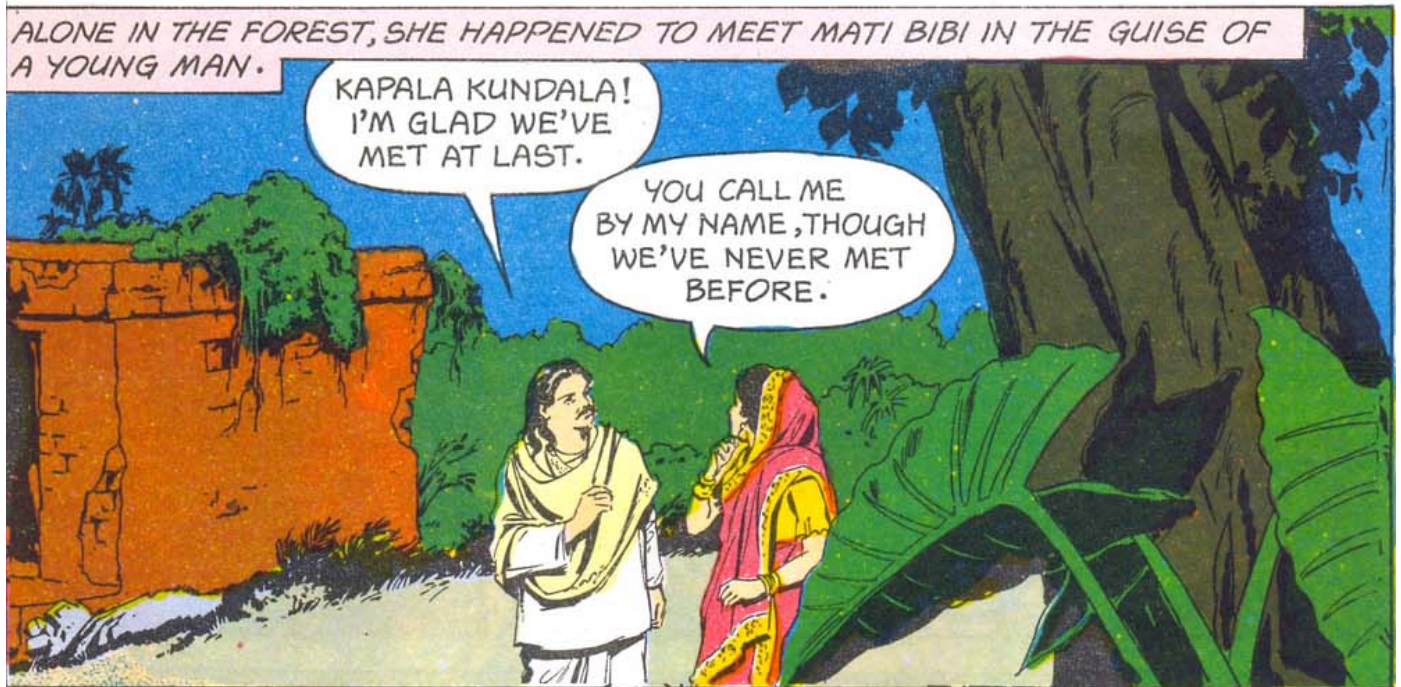


THAT NIGHT SHE WAS PREPARING TO STEAL AWAY INTO THE FOREST, BUT —

MRINMAYEE! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

TO THE FOREST, TO FETCH A HERB FOR SHYAMA.





MATI BIBI LED KAPALA KUNDALA TO THE PLACE WHERE THE KAPALIK WAS PERFORMING HIS RITES.

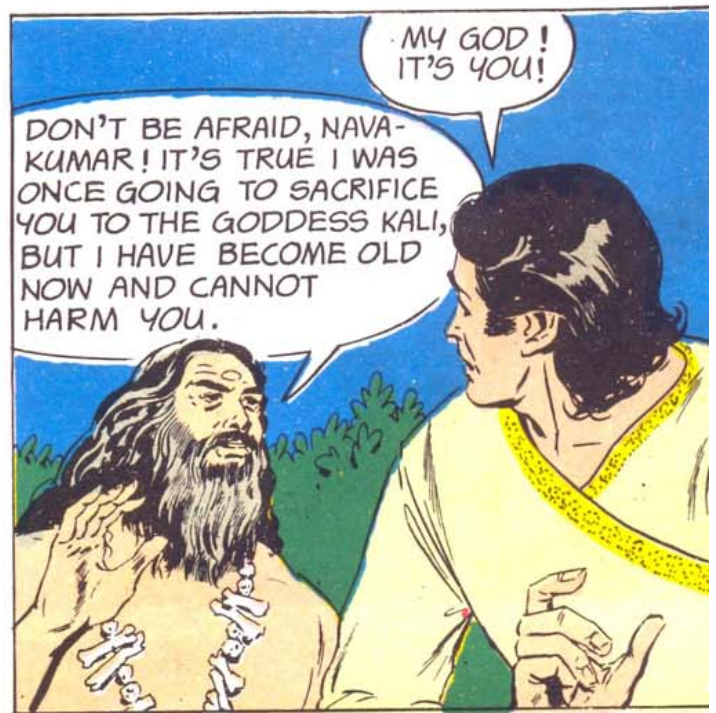


KAPALA KUNDALA RECOGNISED THE KAPALIK IMMEDIATELY AND WAS PETRIFIED.



KAPALA KUNDALA KEPT HER WORD, BUT SHE SAID NOTHING ABOUT IT TO HER HUSBAND. A FEW DAYS LATER —







THE NEXT EVENING—

MRINMAYEE!  
COME HERE.



WHAT IS IT? I'M BUSY.  
I'M JUST GETTING  
READY TO GO OUT.



I KNOW WHERE YOU  
ARE GOING! YOU ARE  
GOING TO THE  
FOREST!



WHAT!



I'LL TAKE  
YOU THERE.

NAVAKUMAR FORCED HER TO ACCOMPANY HIM.

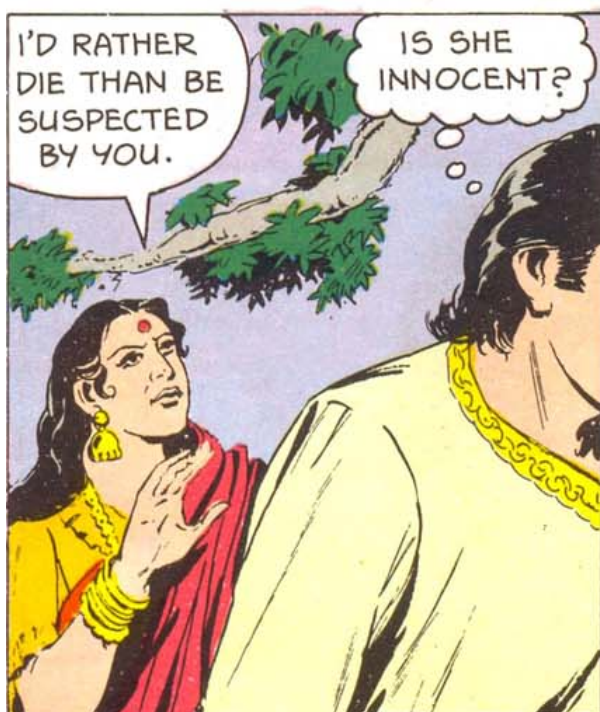
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND....

MRINMAYEE! THE TIME HAS COME TO ANSWER FOR YOUR SINS. I AM TAKING YOU TO THE KAPALIK.



YOU HAVE BEEN UNFAITHFUL TO ME.

THAT'S NOT TRUE. HOWEVER, I DON'T WISH TO DEFEND MYSELF....



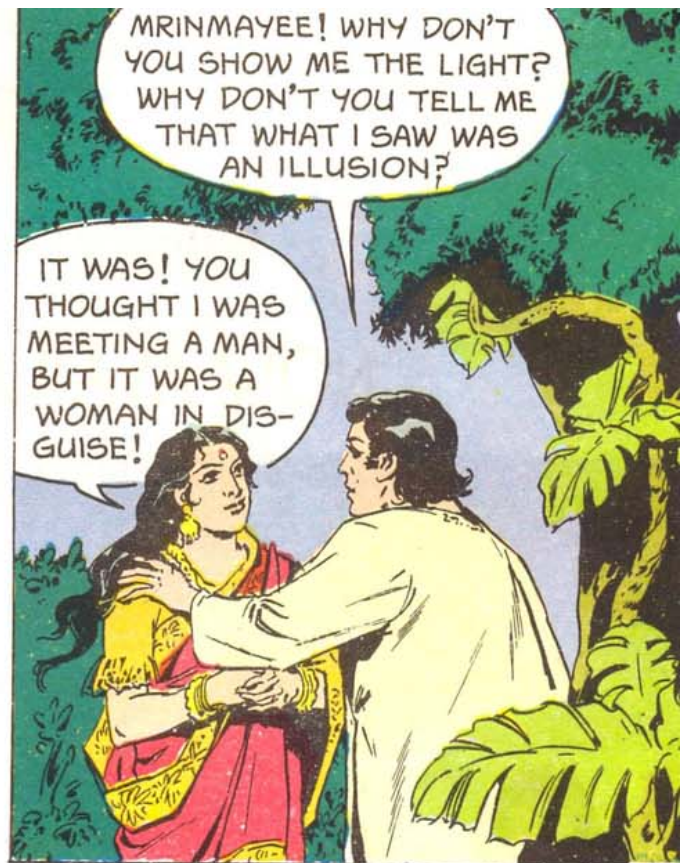
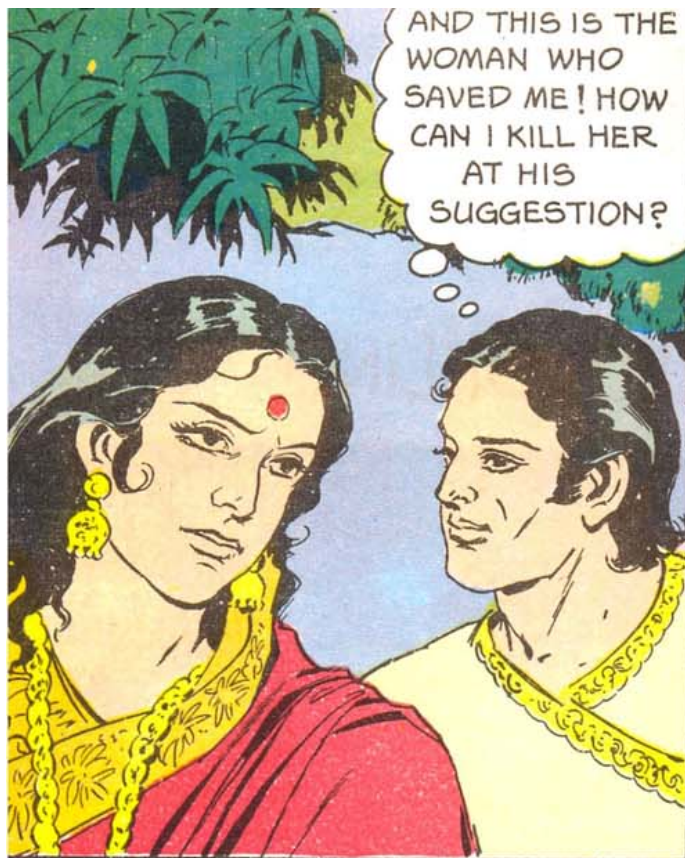
I'D RATHER DIE THAN BE SUSPECTED BY YOU.

IS SHE INNOCENT?

AS THEY CAME NEAR THE PLACE OF SACRIFICE, NAVAKUMAR SUDDENLY CAME TO HIS SENSES.

THAT IS THE MAN WHO WANTED TO KILL ME!





IT HAD ALL STARTED IN THE FOREST AND WAS ABOUT TO END IN THE FOREST. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS TO THE EVIL KAPALIK AND MATI BIBI. THEY WERE LEFT IN THE DARK WHILE NAVAKUMAR AND KAPALA KUNDALA CAME BACK TO THE LIGHT.



## Illustrated Classics From India

### Bengali Classics

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) is considered to be one of the greatest writers in the world of Bengali literature. This Amar Chitra Katha volume presents three of his famous stories.

The first, *Ananda Math*, is considered to be a milestone in the history of modern fiction in India. It received such wide acclaim in the late 19th century that Bankim Chandra, its author, was referred to as the Walter Scott of India. This story vividly depicts the struggle for freedom in 1773 Bengal. In the face of all the misery, one man named Satyananda yearned for truth, justice and freedom. Translations of this story appeared in Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Hindi and Urdu. The song *Vande Mataram*, which Bankim Chandra first wrote in this novel, echoed through the Indian freedom movement; during the Non-Cooperation movement the song was heard on the lips of many, while they braved the lathis of the British police force.

Bankim Chandra wrote *Kapala Kundala* when he was only 28 years old. The name *Kapala Kundala* has been taken from the Sanskrit play, *Malati-Madhava*. In the play, Kapala is the associate of the evil *kapalik*, Aghora Ghanta, and she is as heinous as her mentor. But although our heroine in *Kapala Kundala* was also brought up by an evil *kapalik*, she is full human affection and kindness. While presenting this fascinating tale of romance, certain events and characters have been omitted and the story has been modified to make it suitable for children.

The third story *Devi Choudhurani* is an enthralling, adventurous and romantic story. Both Devi Choudhurani and her mentor, Bhavani Pathak, are historical characters who figure in the report of Lieutenant Brennan, quoted by Hunter in his 'Statistical Account of Bengal'. There is no historical explanation of what converted the young, vulnerable Prafulla into the great Devi Choudhurani in the first place, and what made her give it up later. However, Bankim Chandra's fertile imagination has provided answers to these puzzling questions in his novel, on which our tale is based.

Editor: Anant Pai

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