

KING KUSHA



King Kusha

A Buddhist Tale



KING KUSHA



SHEELAVATI, THE CHIEF QUEEN OF THE HEIRLESS KING OKKAKA OF KUSHAVATI, WAS OFFERED A BOON BY INDRA, KING OF THE GODS.



YOU SHALL HAVE TWO SONS. ONE WISE BUT UGLY, THE OTHER HANDSOME BUT A FOOL. WHICH WILL YOU HAVE FIRST?

THE WISE ONE, MY LORD.



IN DUE COURSE, SHEELAVATI GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.

HE SHALL BE CALLED KUSHA.

TWO YEARS LATER, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO THE SECOND SON — JAYAMPATI.

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL BABY!



EVEN AS A CHILD, KUSHA WAS CONSCIOUS OF HIS APPEARANCE.

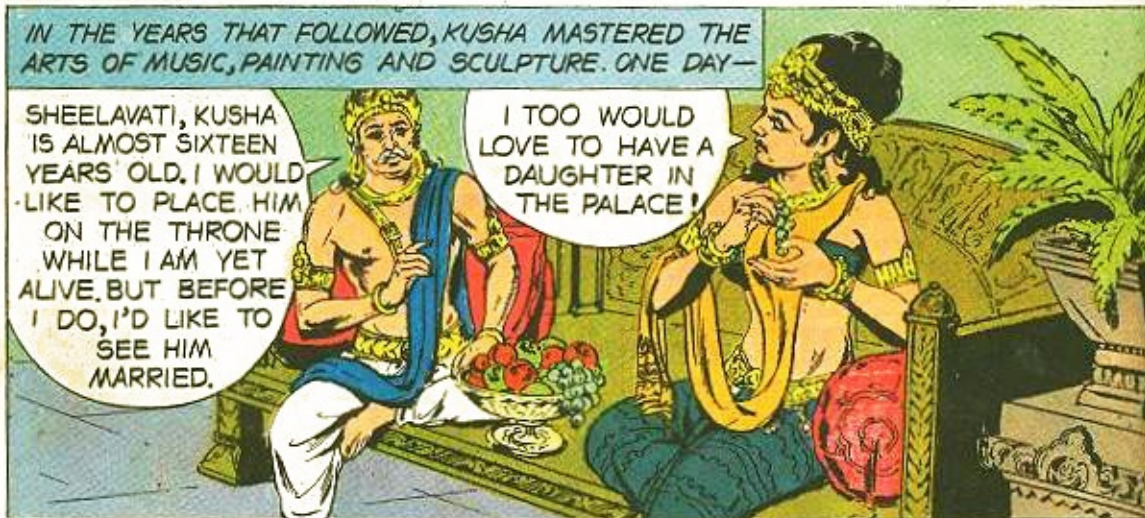
I MUST EXCEL IN ALL THE ARTS TO MAKE UP FOR MY UGLY LOOKS.



IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, KUSHA MASTERED THE ARTS OF MUSIC, PAINTING AND SCULPTURE. ONE DAY—

SHEELAVATI, KUSHA IS ALMOST SIXTEEN YEARS OLD. I WOULD LIKE TO PLACE HIM ON THE THRONE WHILE I AM YET ALIVE. BUT BEFORE I DO, I'D LIKE TO SEE HIM MARRIED.

I TOO WOULD LOVE TO HAVE A DAUGHTER IN THE PALACE!



WHEN KUSHA LEARNT OF HIS PARENTS' WISHES HE WAS SAD.

WOULD ANY PRINCESS MARRY AN UGLY FELLOW LIKE ME?





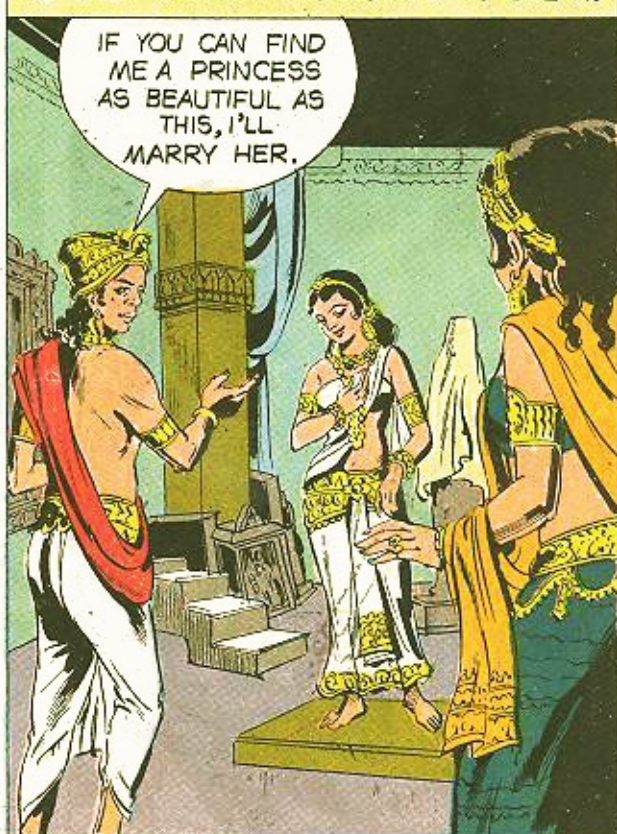
AFTER GIVING THE MATTER A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHT, HE HIT UPON A PLAN.



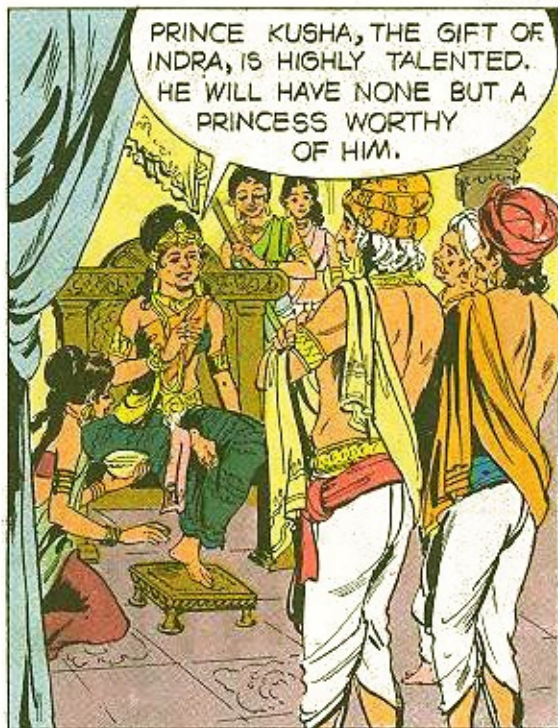
WHEN THE IMAGE WAS COMPLETED, KUSHA COULD NOT HELP ADMIRING HIS OWN WORK.



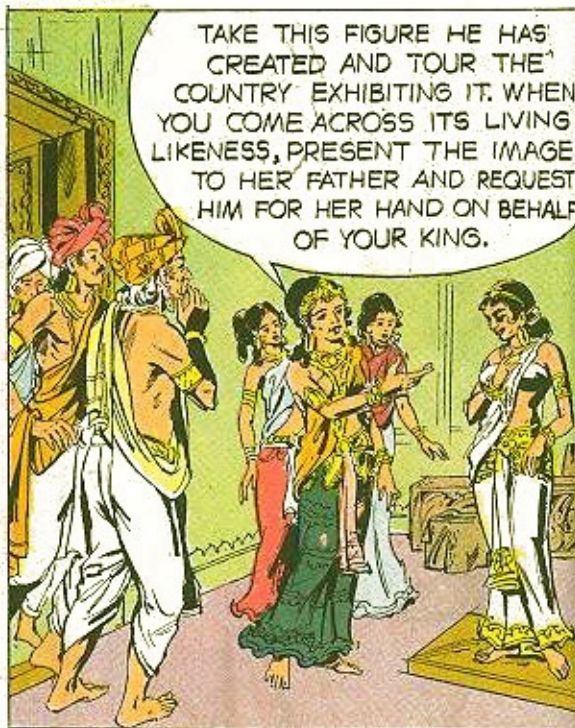
HE THEN BROUGHT HIS MOTHER TO SEE IT.



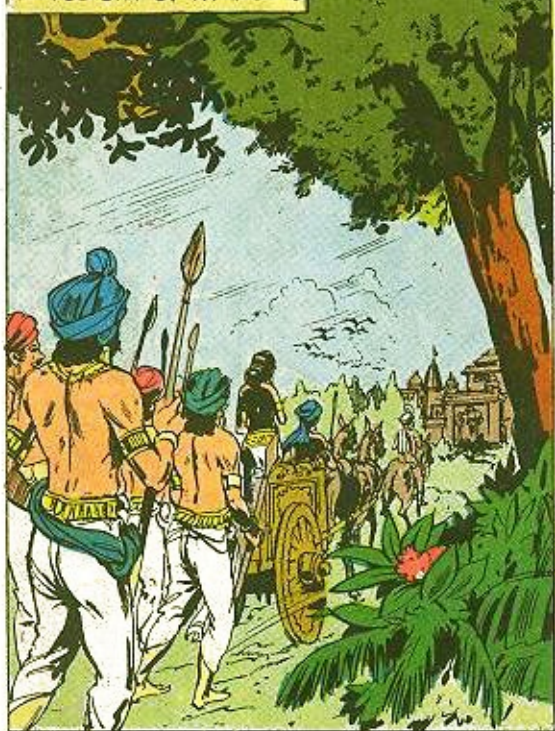
PRINCE KUSHA, THE GIFT OF INDRA, IS HIGHLY TALENTED. HE WILL HAVE NONE BUT A PRINCESS WORTHY OF HIM.



TAKE THIS FIGURE HE HAS CREATED AND TOUR THE COUNTRY EXHIBITING IT. WHEN YOU COME ACROSS ITS LIVING LIKENESS, PRESENT THE IMAGE TO HER FATHER AND REQUEST HIM FOR HER HAND ON BEHALF OF YOUR KING.



THE COUNCILLORS TRAVELLED FROM KINGDOM TO KINGDOM, EXHIBITING THE IMAGE, TILL AT LAST THEY ARRIVED AT SAGALA, THE CAPITAL OF THE KINGDOM OF MADDA.



AS USUAL, THEY PLACED THE IMAGE AT A CONSPICUOUS SPOT. THEN—

NOW LET US STAND AWAY FROM IT AND OVERHEAR THE COMMENTS OF THOSE WHO PASS BY.



AFTER A WHILE, A HUNCHBACK FOLLOWED BY SEVEN OR EIGHT MAIDS CAME BY.



PRABHAVATI !
WHAT ON EARTH
ARE YOU DOING
ALONE HERE AT
THIS HOUR? SHOULD
YOUR FATHER HEAR
OF THIS IT WILL
BE THE END
OF US.



OO--OO--OO !
MY HAND!



IT'S A
METAL IMAGE!



MADAM! WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOUR HAND! IT'S BRUISED AND BROKEN!



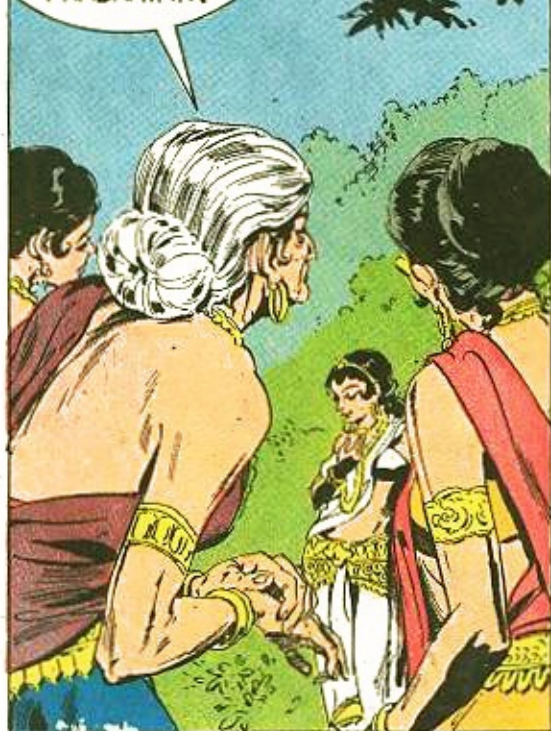
BUT THE OLD HUNCHBACK SOON RECOVERED HER COMPOSURE.

HA! HA! HA! WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN. I MISTOOK THIS CHEAP IMAGE TO BE THE PRINCESS.

HA! HA! HOW COULD YOU?



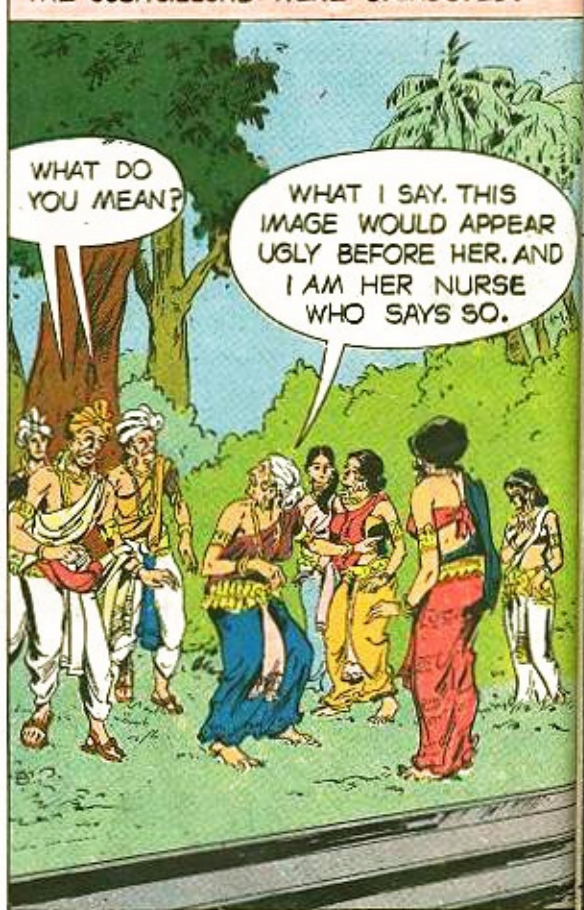
I HAVE HURT MY HANDS FOR INSULTING HER. WHAT IS THIS WORTHLESS IMAGE COMPARED TO MY DARLING PRABHAVATI!



THE COUNCILLORS WERE OVERJOYED.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

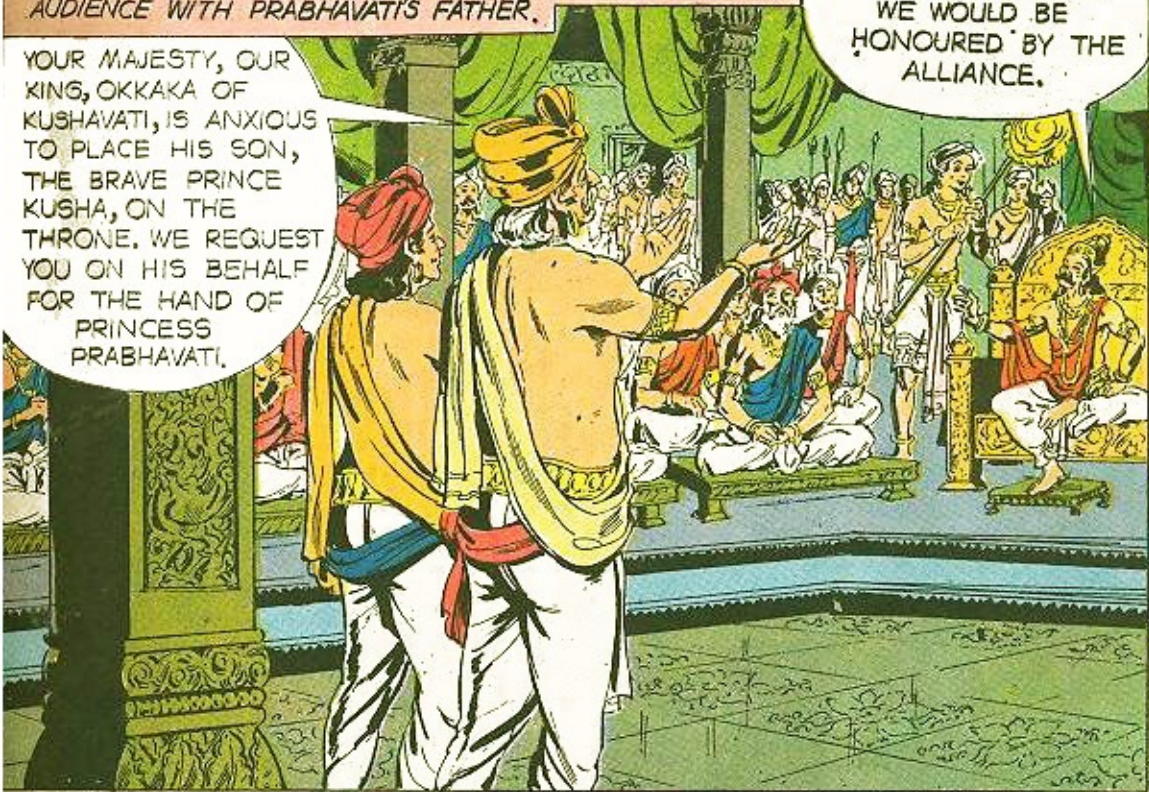
WHAT I SAY. THIS IMAGE WOULD APPEAR UGLY BEFORE HER. AND I AM HER NURSE WHO SAYS SO.



THE DELIGHTED COUNCILLORS IMMEDIATELY SOUGHT AN AUDIENCE WITH PRABHAVATI'S FATHER.

YOUR MAJESTY, OUR KING, OKKAKA OF KUSHAVATI, IS ANXIOUS TO PLACE HIS SON, THE BRAVE PRINCE KUSHA, ON THE THRONE. WE REQUEST YOU ON HIS BEHALF FOR THE HAND OF PRINCESS PRABHAVATI.

WE GLADLY AGREE. WE WOULD BE HONoured BY THE ALLIANCE.



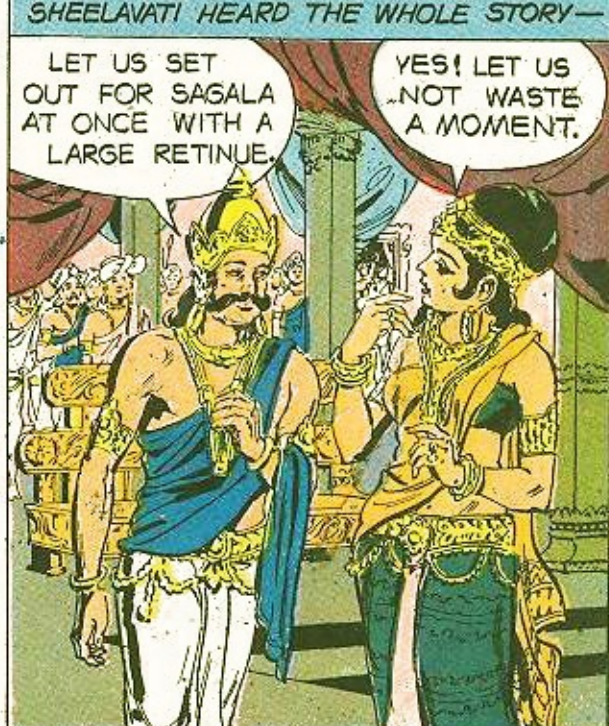
BACK AT KUSHAVATI—

YOUR MAJESTY, WE HAVE FOUND HER—A PRINCESS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE IMAGE!

WHEN KING OKKAKA AND QUEEN SHEELAVATI HEARD THE WHOLE STORY—

LET US SET OUT FOR SAGALA AT ONCE WITH A LARGE RETINUE.

YES! LET US NOT WASTE A MOMENT.



WHEN THEY REACHED SAGALA, THEY WERE RECEIVED GRACIOUSLY BY THE KING, THE QUEEN, PRINCESS PRABHAVATI AND HER SEVEN YOUNGER SISTERS.



LATER, WHEN PRABHAVATI CAME TO PAY HER RESPECTS TO SHEELAVATI —

SHOULD THIS DAZZLING BEAUTY SEE MY SON'S FACE, SHE WILL RUN AWAY FROM HIM THAT VERY MOMENT. YET I MUST NOT FAIL MY SON. LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN DO.



WHEN PRABHAVATI HAD LEFT, SHEELAVATI SPOKE TO THE KING OF MADDA.

YOUR DAUGHTER IS WORTHY OF MY SON, BUT...

YES?

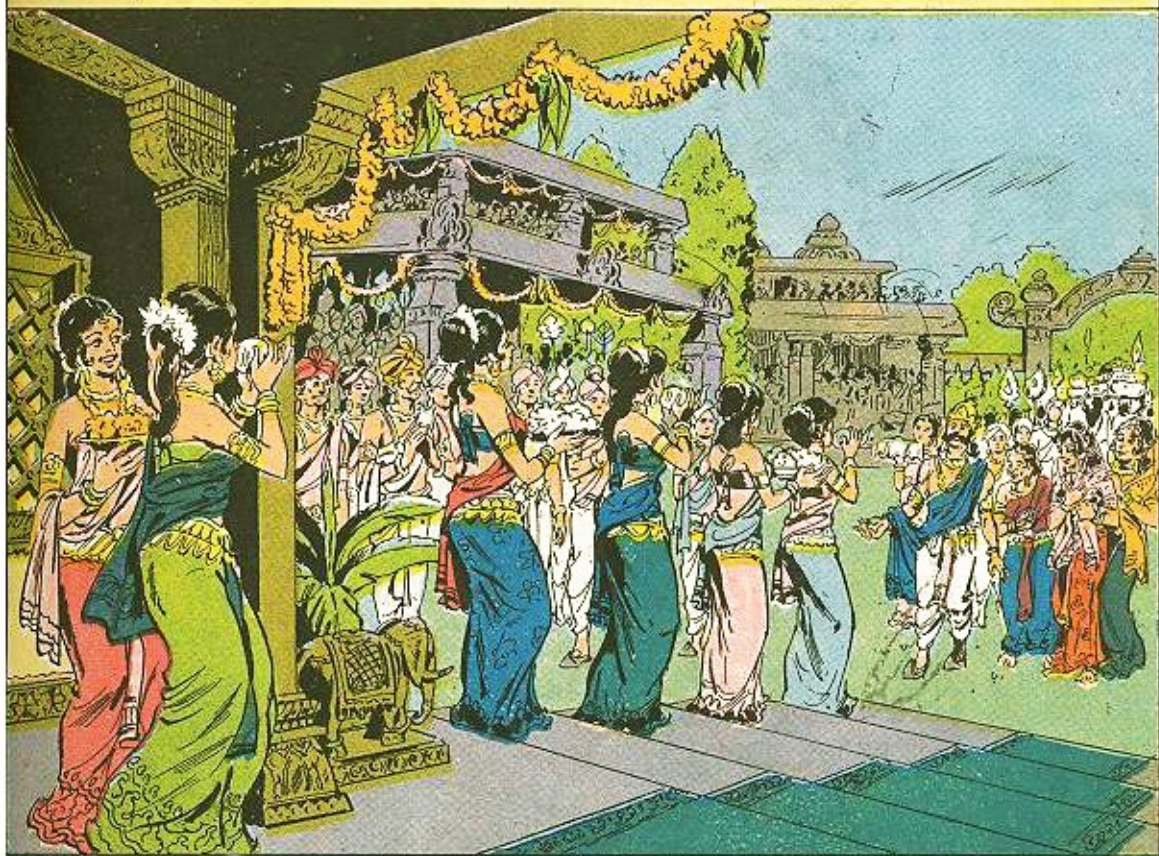


WE HAVE AN UNUSUAL TRADITION. IF SHE WILL AGREE TO OBSERVE IT WE WILL TAKE HER AS OUR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

WHAT IS THE TRADITION?

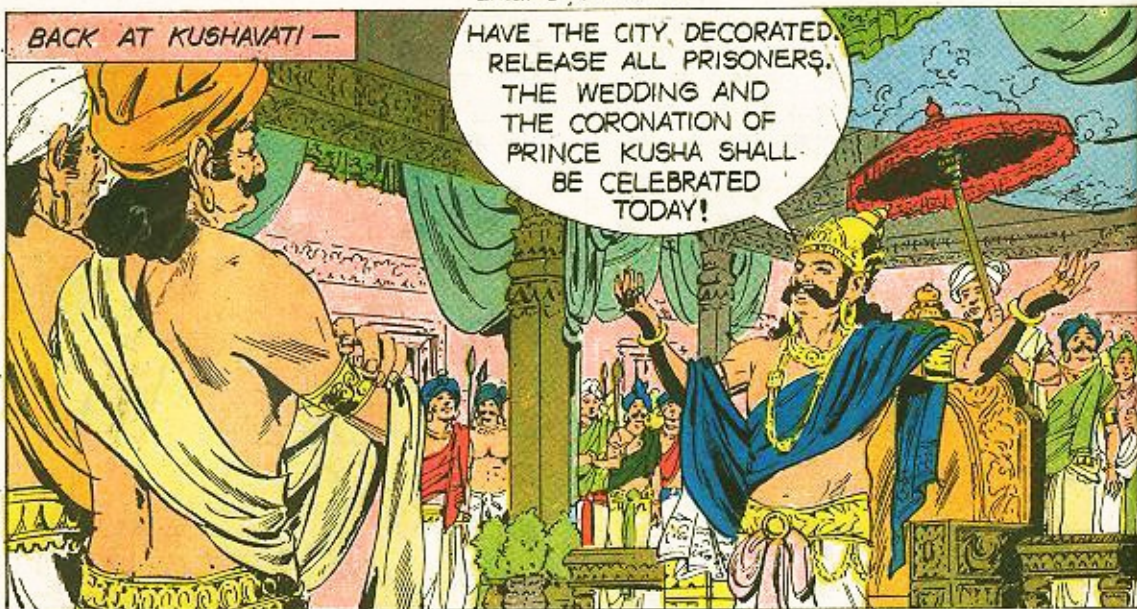
A WIFE IS NOT PERMITTED TO SEE HER HUSBAND'S FACE TILL SHE HAS CONCEIVED. WILL SHE AGREE?

PRABHAVATI AGREED TO RESPECT THE TRADITION AND AFTER MUCH GIVING AND RECEIVING OF GIFTS, OKKAKA AND SHEELAVATI ESCORTED THEIR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, ALONG WITH HER NURSE AND A VAST RETINUE, TO KUSHAVATI.



BACK AT KUSHAVATI —

HAVE THE CITY DECORATED.
RELEASE ALL PRISONERS.
THE WEDDING AND
THE CORONATION OF
PRINCE KUSHA SHALL
BE CELEBRATED
TODAY!



NEITHER KUSHA NOR PRABHAVATI SAW EACH OTHER'S FACE, BUT—

HOW WELL HE
PLAYS THE VEENA!
HE MUST HAVE
THE SENSITIVE
FACE OF A
MUSICIAN.



AH! I CAN ONLY
IMAGINE HOW SHE
LOOKS BY THINKING
OF MY GOLDEN
IMAGE.



A FEW DAYS AFTER THE WEDDING, KING KUSHA CAME TO SHEELAVATI.

MOTHER, PLEASE PERMIT
ME TO LOOK AT MY WIFE
BUT ONCE.

YOU WILL HAVE TO
WAIT UNTIL SHE HAS
CONCEIVED.



I CANNOT WAIT
TILL THEN,
MOTHER.

ALL RIGHT. GO TO THE
ELEPHANT STALLS DISGUISED
AS A KEEPER. I WILL
BRING PRABHAVATI THERE.
BUT SEE THAT YOU DO
NOT MAKE YOURSELF
KNOWN TO HER.

SHEELAVATI THEN WENT TO
PRABHAVATI.

YOU HAVE NOT
YET SEEN YOUR
LORD'S ELEPHANTS.
COME, I WILL SHOW
THEM TO YOU.

WHEN KUSHA SAW PRABHAVATI AS SHE WALKED
BEHIND HIS MOTHER, HE WAS ENCHANTED.

IS SHE A
PRINCESS OR
A GODDESS?

DETERMINED TO FIND OUT, HE PICKED UP A HANDFUL OF DUNG AND FLUNG IT
AT HER.



POOR KUSHA WAS NOT GOING TO MISS THE CHANCE OF SEEING HIS WIFE AGAIN.

DRESSED AS AN ELEPHANT-KEEPER, I WILL RIDE BEHIND JAYAMPATI.

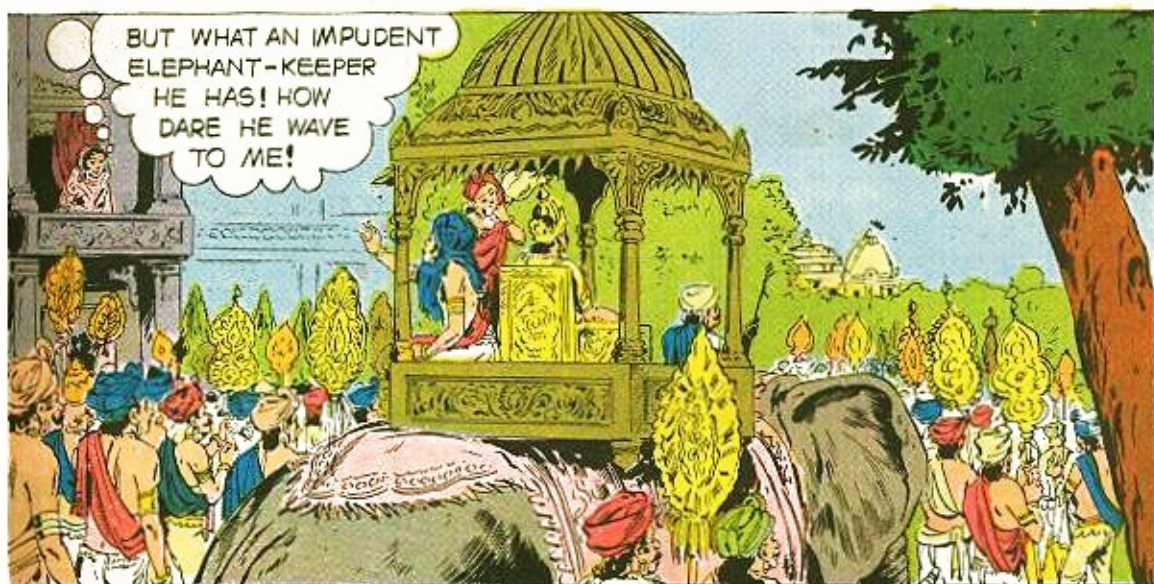


THE NEXT DAY WHEN PRABHAVATI SAW JAYAMPATI —

HOW HANDSOME MY HUSBAND IS! INDEED! I AM PROUD OF HIM.



BUT WHAT AN IMPUDENT ELEPHANT-KEEPER HE HAS! HOW DARE HE WAVE TO ME!



WHEN THE PROCESSION HAD PASSED BY, PRABHAVATI TURNED AWAY FROM THE WINDOW.

DID YOU SEE YOUR LORD?

I DID, MOTHER. BUT WHY DO THEY LET SUCH AN UGLY, IMPUDENT, MAN RIDE BEHIND HIM?



DON'T BE MISLED BY LOOKS. THAT MAN IS CAPABLE AND THE KING MUST HAVE A CAPABLE MAN SITTING BEHIND HIM.



BUT PRABHAVATI WAS NOT CONVINCED.

NO MAN WOULD BE ALLOWED TO BEHAVE LIKE THAT HOWEVER EXCELLENT HIS SERVICES MIGHT BE. CAN IT BE THAT HE IS KING KUSHA AND THEY DO NOT LET ME SEE HIM BECAUSE HE IS SO UGLY?



SHE TURNED TO HER NURSE.

RUN, MY DEAR. FIND OUT WHO WAS THE KING—THE MAN IN FRONT OR THE ONE BEHIND.

HOW AM I TO FIND OUT?



THE KING WILL BE THE FIRST TO ALIGHT FROM THE ELEPHANT. GO. DON'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME.



WHEN THE NURSE SAW KUSHA ALIGHT FIRST, SHE WAS SHOCKED.

WHAT! IS THAT HIDEOUS ONE KING KUSHA!

AH! ISN'T THAT PRABHAVATI'S NURSE? SHE IS HERE TO SPY ON ME.



HE SENT FOR HER.

I CHARGE YOU ON PAIN OF DEATH NOT TO REVEAL MY SECRET.



SHE WENT BACK TO PRABHAVATI WHO EAGERLY AWAITED HER RETURN.

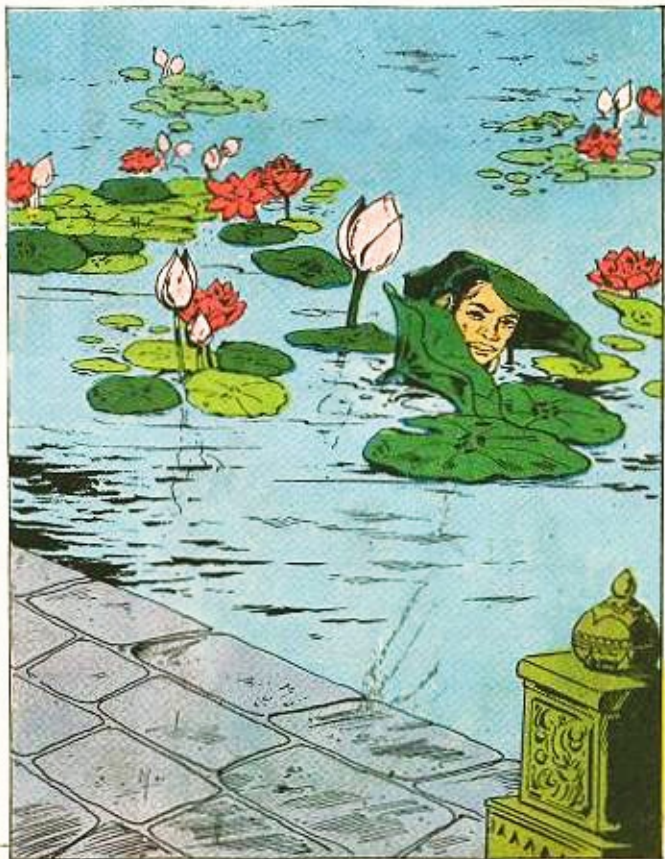
THE ONE THAT SAT IN FRONT WAS THE FIRST TO ALIGHT.

THANK GOD!

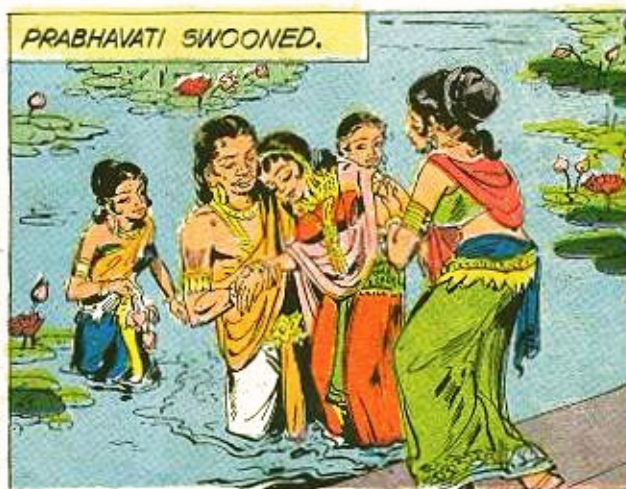
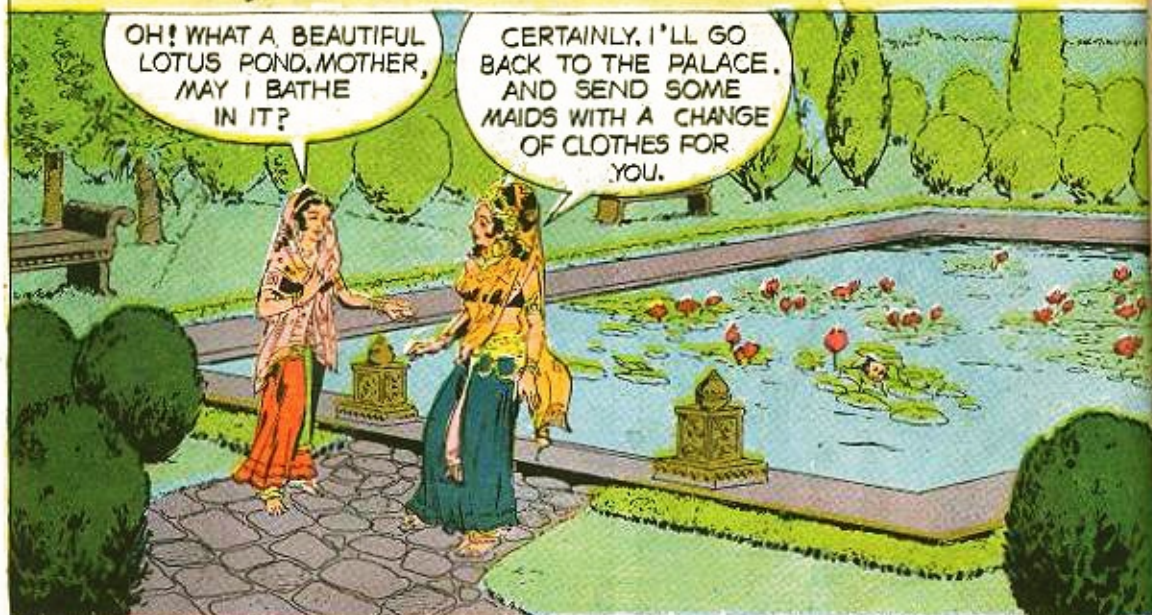


THE SECOND SIGHT OF PRABHAVATI MADE KUSHA WANT TO SEE HER YET AGAIN. HE SPOKE TO HIS MOTHER.

WELL THEN, IF YOU MUST, ENTER THE LOTUS POOL, CONCEAL YOURSELF AND WAIT.



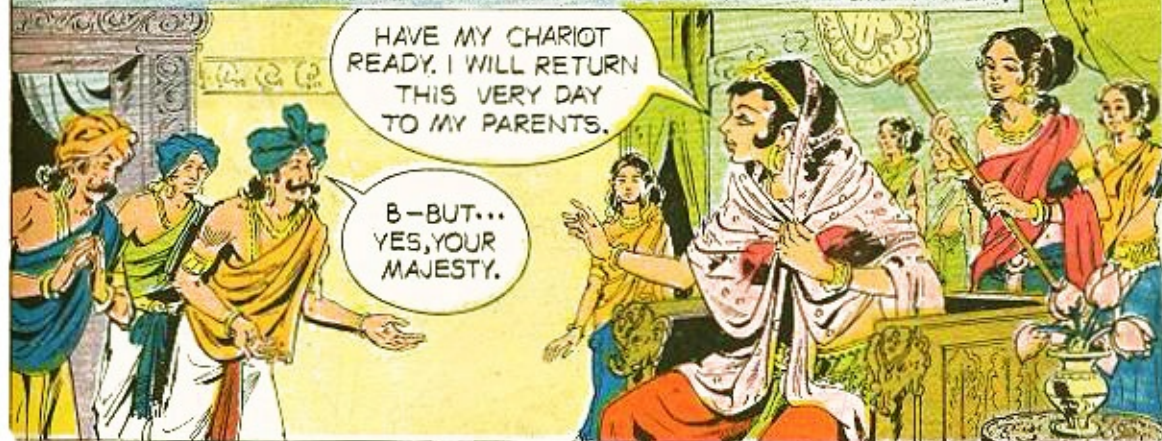
A LITTLE LATER, SHEELAVATI BROUGHT PRABHAVATI TO THE GARDEN.



WHEN SHE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, SHE FOUND HERSELF IN HER CHAMBER SURROUNDED BY HER NURSE AND HER MAIDS.



SHE SUMMONED THE COUNCILLORS WHO HAD SPOKEN TO HER FATHER.



NOT KNOWING WHAT TO DO, THEY WENT AND CONSULTED KUSHA.



THOUGH KUSHA SO KIND-HEARTEDLY LET PRABHAVATI GO, HE WAS DESOLATE. TWO DAYS LATER —

BY THIS TIME SHE WILL HAVE REACHED SAGALA.



HE WENT TO HIS MOTHER.

MOTHER, I WILL GO AND BRING PRABHAVATI BACK, WITH HER CONSENT.

GO, MY SON. BUT TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.



EQUIPPING HIMSELF WITH ALL THAT HE WOULD NEED, KUSHA SET OUT FOR SAGALA.

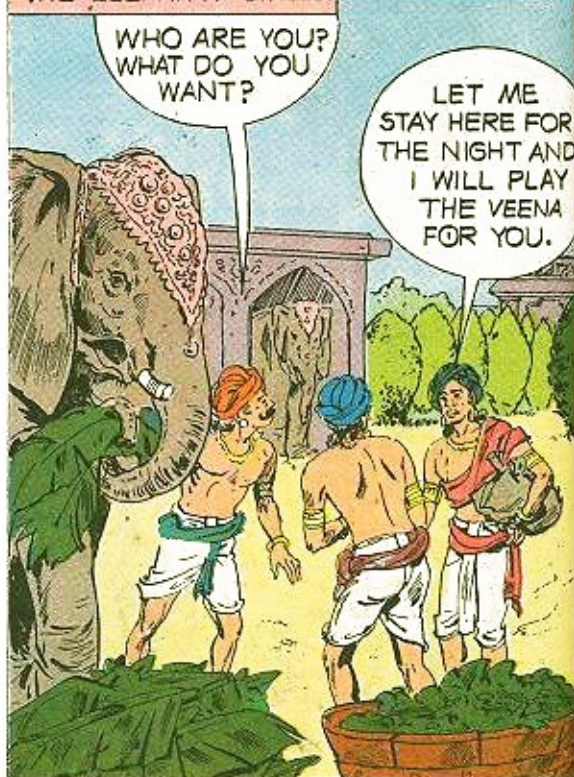
I WILL NOT REST TILL I WIN HER LOVE.



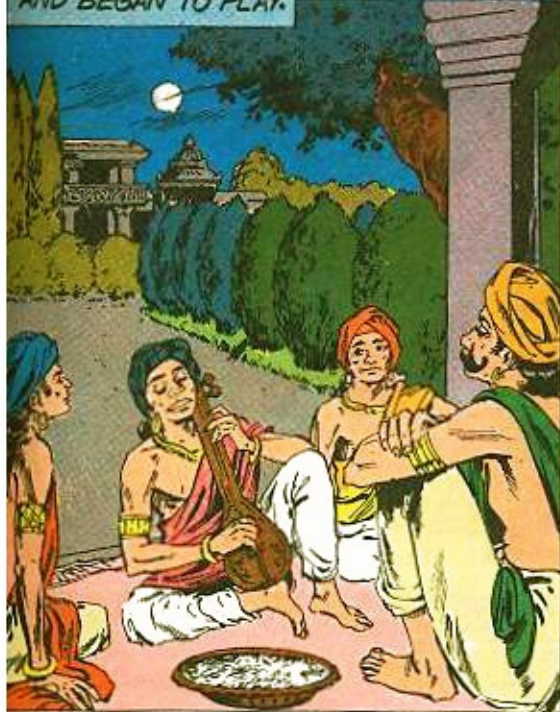
WHEN HE REACHED SAGALA, HE ENTERED THE PALACE AND FOUND HIS WAY TO THE ELEPHANT STALLS.

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

LET ME STAY HERE FOR THE NIGHT AND I WILL PLAY THE VEENA FOR YOU.



THEY AGREED. KUSHA TUNED HIS VEENA AND BEGAN TO PLAY.



IN THE PALACE, PRABHAVATI SUDDENLY WOKE UP.

THOSE PURE NOTES. THEY CAN ONLY COME FROM HIS VEENA. HOW I LOVED TO HEAR THEM TILL I SAW HIS FACE. HE HAS FOLLOWED ME HERE.



EARLY NEXT MORNING, KUSHA WOKE UP.

I MUST NOW TRY TO MEET PRABHAVATI WITHOUT LETTING ANYONE KNOW WHO I AM.



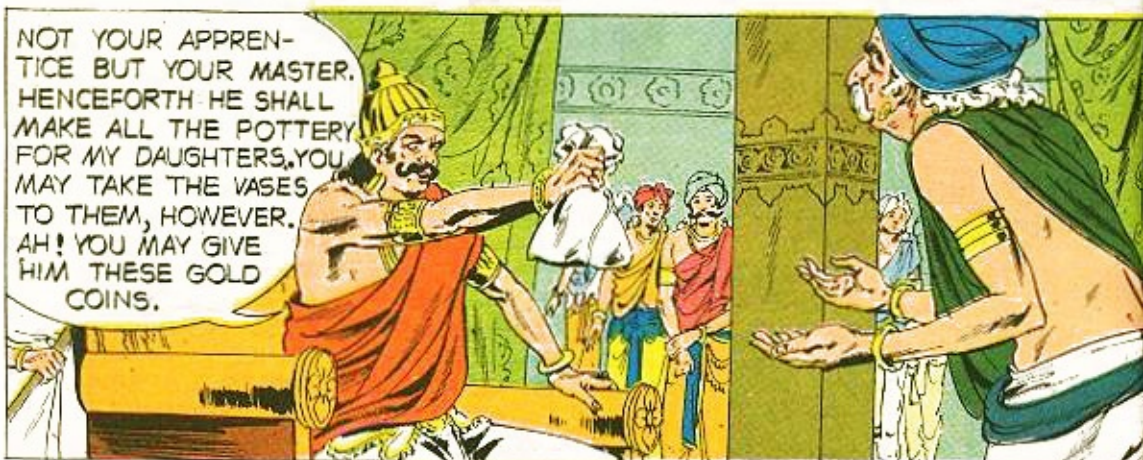
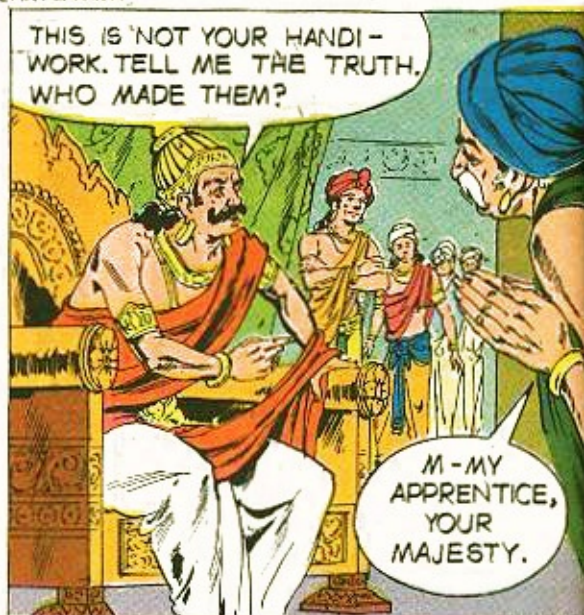
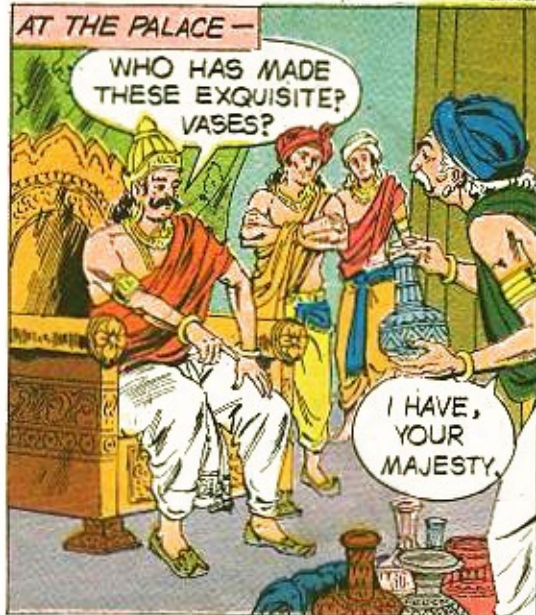
HE WENT TO THE ROYAL POTTER AND BECAME HIS APPRENTICE. A FEW DAYS LATER—

WHY, MY SON, YOU ARE TALENTED! THESE VASES ARE BEAUTIFUL! I SHALL TAKE THEM TO THE PALACE RIGHT AWAY.

MASTER, DO NOT FORGET. THIS ONE WITH THESE FIGURES IS FOR PRINCESS PRABHAVATI. I MADE IT SPECIALLY FOR HER.



AT THE PALACE —



THE POTTER CAME UP TO PRABHAVATI.

THIS HE MADE
SPECIALLY
FOR YOU,
O PRINCESS
PRABHAVATI.

WHY, THESE
FIGURES...! THEY
RESEMBLE ME AND
MY NURSE... ONLY
HE COULD HAVE
MADE THESE!

SHE BECAME TERRIBLY ANGRY AND FLUNG THE VASE TO THE FLOOR.

I DON'T WANT IT.
IT'S HIDEOUS.

HA! HA! OUR
SISTER BEHAVES
AS IF IT WERE
A GIFT FROM
KING KUSHA
HIMSELF.

THE POTTER RETURNED AND TOLD KUSHA ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED AT THE PALACE.

...BUT THE KING
CERTAINLY LIKED
YOUR WORK. HERE,
THESE GOLD COINS
ARE A GIFT TO
YOU FROM HIM.

YOU MAY
KEEP THE
MONEY.

IT'S NO USE MY
STAYING HERE.
I'D BETTER TRY
FROM ELSEWHERE.

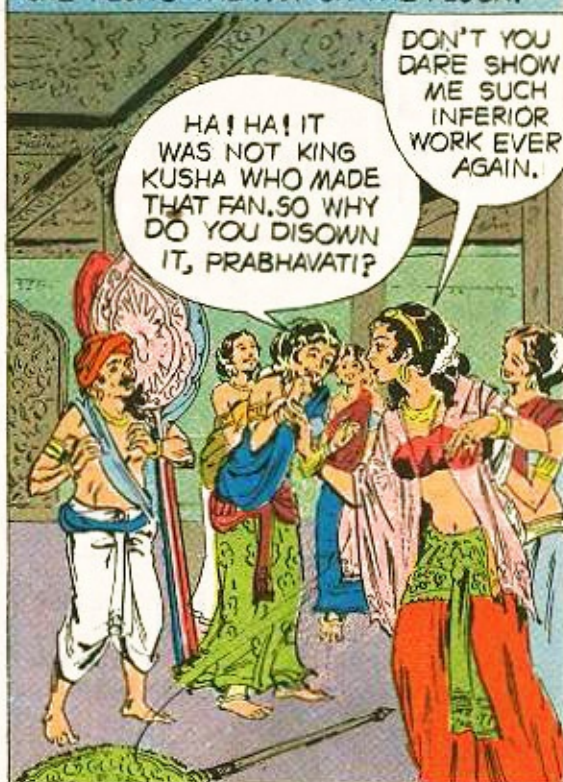
KUSHA LEFT THE POTTER AND APPRENTICED HIMSELF TO THE ROYAL WICKER-
WORKER. A FEW DAYS LATER —



THE MOMENT PRABHAVATI SAW THE FAN, HOWEVER—



SHE FLUNG THE FAN ON THE FLOOR.



THE WICKER-WORKER RETURNED, AND TOLD KUSHA ALL THAT HAPPENED AT THE PALACE.

...WOMEN ARE STRANGE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE
THREW IT ON THE
FLOOR IN A RAGE.



KUSHA KNEW.

I WILL HAVE TO TRY
SOME OTHER MEANS
TO MEET HER.



HE PONDERED FOR A WHILE, THEN—

I KNOW WHAT. I SHALL SEEK SERVICE IN THE ROYAL KITCHEN. PERHAPS...



KUSHA WAS LUCKY. THE ROYAL COOK HAD SACKED ONE OF HIS ASSISTANTS THAT VERY DAY.

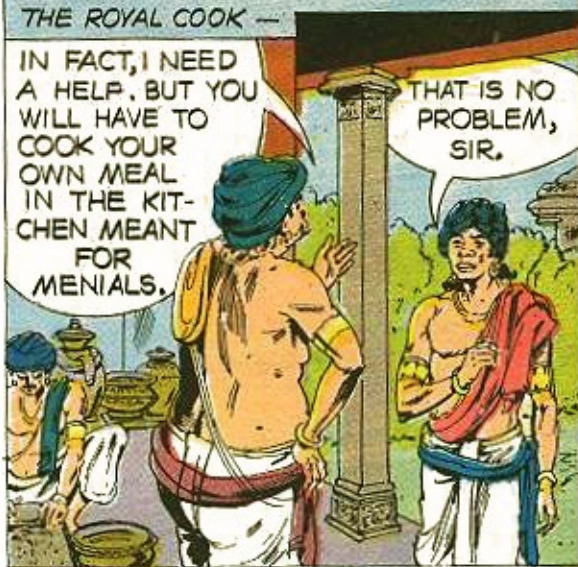
AND DON'T EVER LET ME SEE YOU NEAR THE ROYAL KITCHEN AGAIN.



SO THE MOMENT KUSHA APPROACHED THE ROYAL COOK —

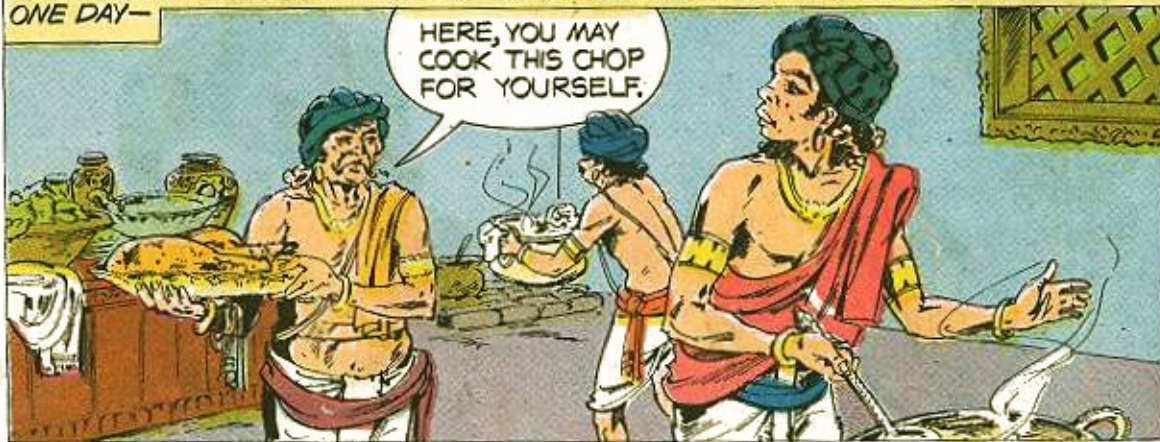
IN FACT, I NEED A HELP, BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO COOK YOUR OWN MEAL IN THE KITCHEN MEANT FOR MENIALS.

THAT IS NO PROBLEM, SIR,



KUSHA SOON BECAME AN EXPERT COOK—BETTER EVEN THAN HIS MASTER. ONE DAY—

HERE, YOU MAY COOK THIS CHOP FOR YOURSELF.



AN HOUR LATER, AS THE KING WAS BEING SERVED—



AFTER THE KING HAD TASTED IT—

HENCEFORTH YOUR ASSISTANT SHALL COOK FOR ME AND MY DAUGHTERS AH! AND GIVE HIM THESE GOLD COINS.



KUSHA WAS EXTREMELY HAPPY WHEN HE HEARD ABOUT THE KING'S ORDER.



THE NEXT DAY—



I FEEL SORRY FOR HIM.
YET I MUST NOT LET
HIM KNOW THAT I
DO OR HE WILL
STAY ON, THINKING
I'VE YIELDED.



KUSHA, I CAN'T BEAR
THE SIGHT OF YOUR
UGLY FACE. GO BACK
TO KUSHAVATI. IT IS
NOT RIGHT FOR
YOU TO WASTE
YOUR TIME HERE.

I AM NOT GOING BACK
WITHOUT YOU. I WANT
YOUR LOVE AND NOT
THE THRONE. I WOULD
GLADLY GIVE UP CROWN
AND THRONE TO
LIVE NEAR YOU.

WHEN PRABHAVATI HEARD THIS SHE WAS ALARMED.

SUPPOSE HE DECLARES
"I AM KING KUSHA" AND
SEIZES MY HAND. NO
ONE WILL STOP HIM.
BESIDES, SOMEONE
MIGHT OVERHEAR
OUR TALK.



TO DISCOURAGE ANY FURTHER DIALOGUE, SHE CLOSED THE DOOR AND BOLTED IT.



KUSHA GAZED FOR A MOMENT AT THE CLOSED DOOR, AND THEN WENT DOWN.



BUT SEVEN LONG MONTHS PASSED AND KUSHA TOILED ON. AT LAST—

IN SEVEN MONTHS, SHE HAS NOT SO MUCH AS LET ME HAVE A GLIMPSE OF HER. WHY DO I PINE FOR HER? SHE IS HARSH AND CRUEL. I WILL RETURN TO MY KINGDOM AND MY PARENTS.



AT THAT MOMENT, REALISING HOW DISAPPOINTED KUSHA WAS, INDRA DECIDED TO HELP HIM.



I WILL SEND THE SAME MESSAGE TO SEVEN DIFFERENT KINGS, SAYING "PRABHAVATI HAS LEFT KING KUSHA AND RETURNED HOME. I OFFER HER HAND TO YOU."



TELL EACH KING THAT YOU COME FROM THE COURT OF MADDA.



WHEN THE SEVEN KINGS ARRIVED AT SAGALA WITH THEIR RETINUES AND DISCOVERED THAT THEY WERE ALL THERE FOR THE SAME PURPOSE, THEY WERE FURIOUS.

HE HAS DELIBERATELY HUMILIATED US!

HE WILL HAVE TO KEEP HIS WORD TO EACH ONE OF US!



THEY SENT A MESSAGE TO THE KING.

GIVE PRABHAVATI TO ALL SEVEN OF US OR PREPARE FOR WAR.



THE KING WAS ALARMED.

I WILL HAVE TO CUT HER UP INTO SEVEN PIECES AND SEND ONE TO EACH MONARCH.



HOW CAN YOU DO SUCH A CRUEL THING TO YOUR OWN DAUGHTER?

IF I SEND HER TO ANY ONE OF THEM IT WILL BE WAR WITH THE OTHER SIX.



WHEN PRABHAVATI HEARD OF HER FATHER'S DECISION, SHE WAS TERRIFIED.



SHE RAN TO HER MOTHER'S CHAMBER.



HE IS HERE, MOTHER: COME I'LL TAKE YOU TO HIM.



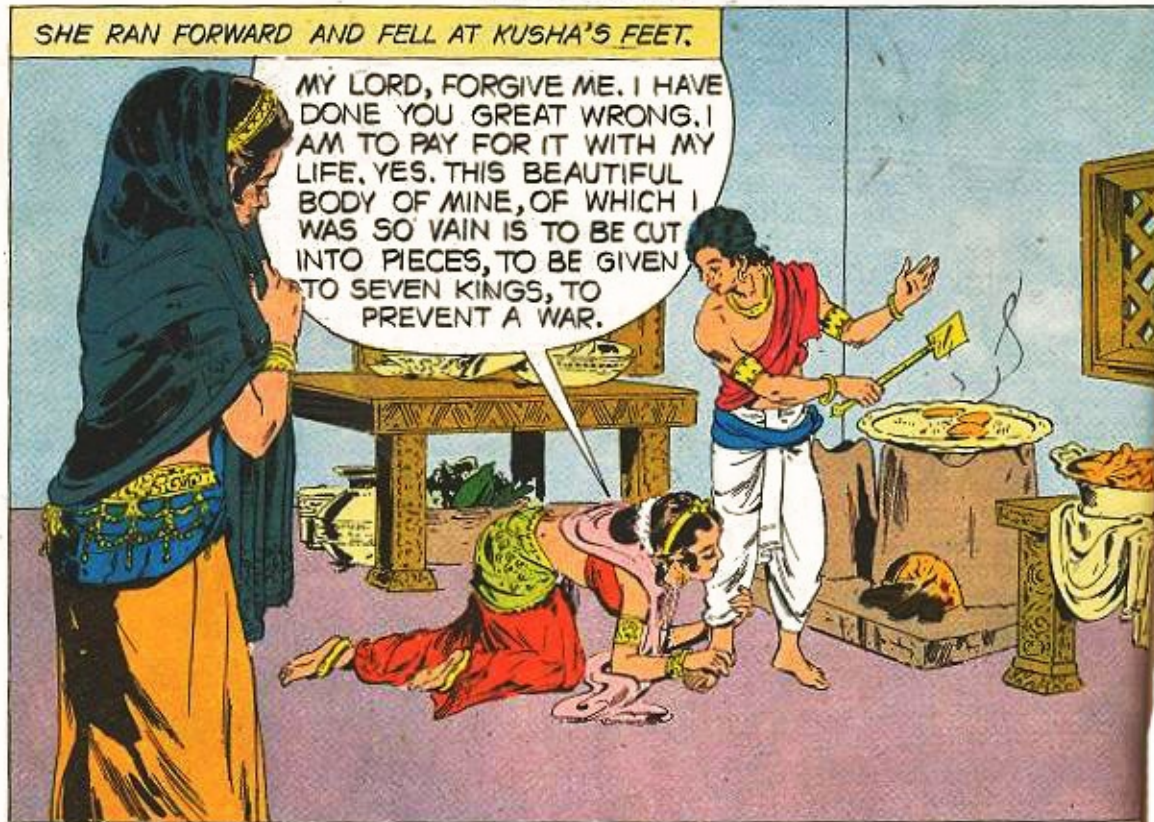
PRABHAVATI LED HER MOTHER TO THE KITCHEN.

LOOK! THERE HE IS— IN THE GUISE OF A COOK. HE CAME HERE FOR MY SAKE.



SHE RAN FORWARD AND FELL AT KUSHA'S FEET.

MY LORD, FORGIVE ME. I HAVE DONE YOU GREAT WRONG. I AM TO PAY FOR IT WITH MY LIFE. YES. THIS BEAUTIFUL BODY OF MINE, OF WHICH I WAS SO VAIN IS TO BE CUT INTO PIECES, TO BE GIVEN TO SEVEN KINGS, TO PREVENT A WAR.



WHAT! WILL ANYONE DARE TOUCH MY DEAR WIFE WHEN I AM YET ALIVE!

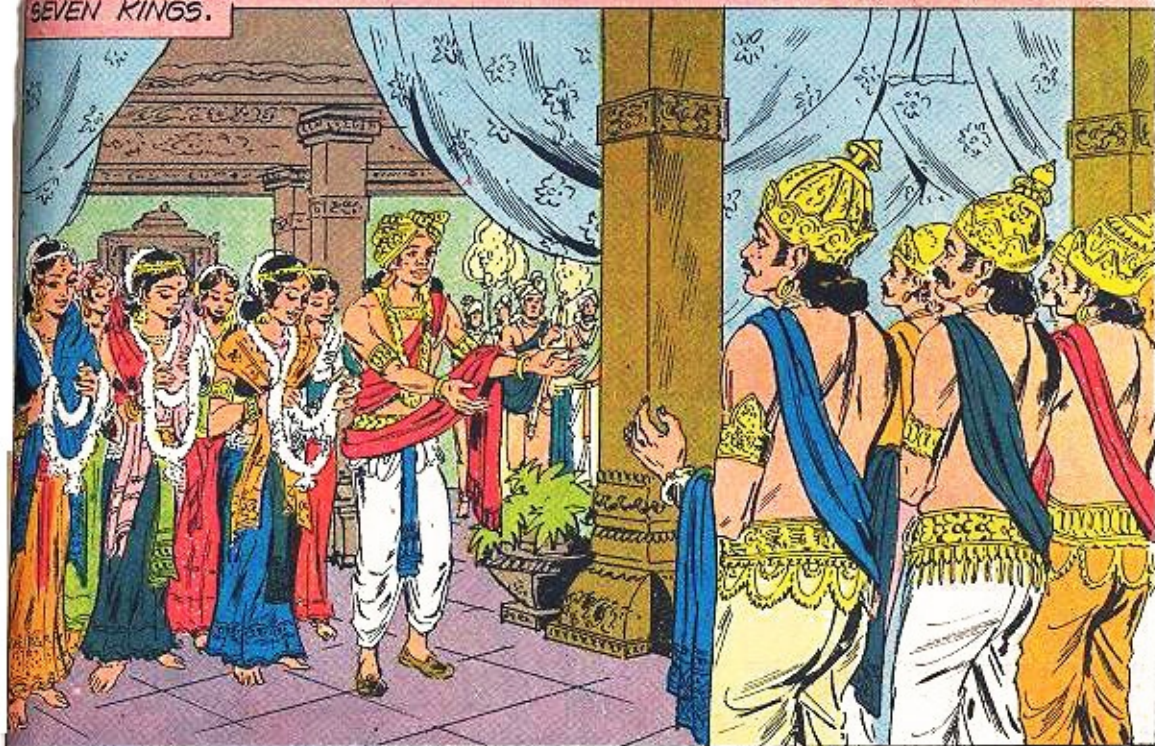
B-BUT! WH - WHAT ABOUT THE SEVEN KINGS?



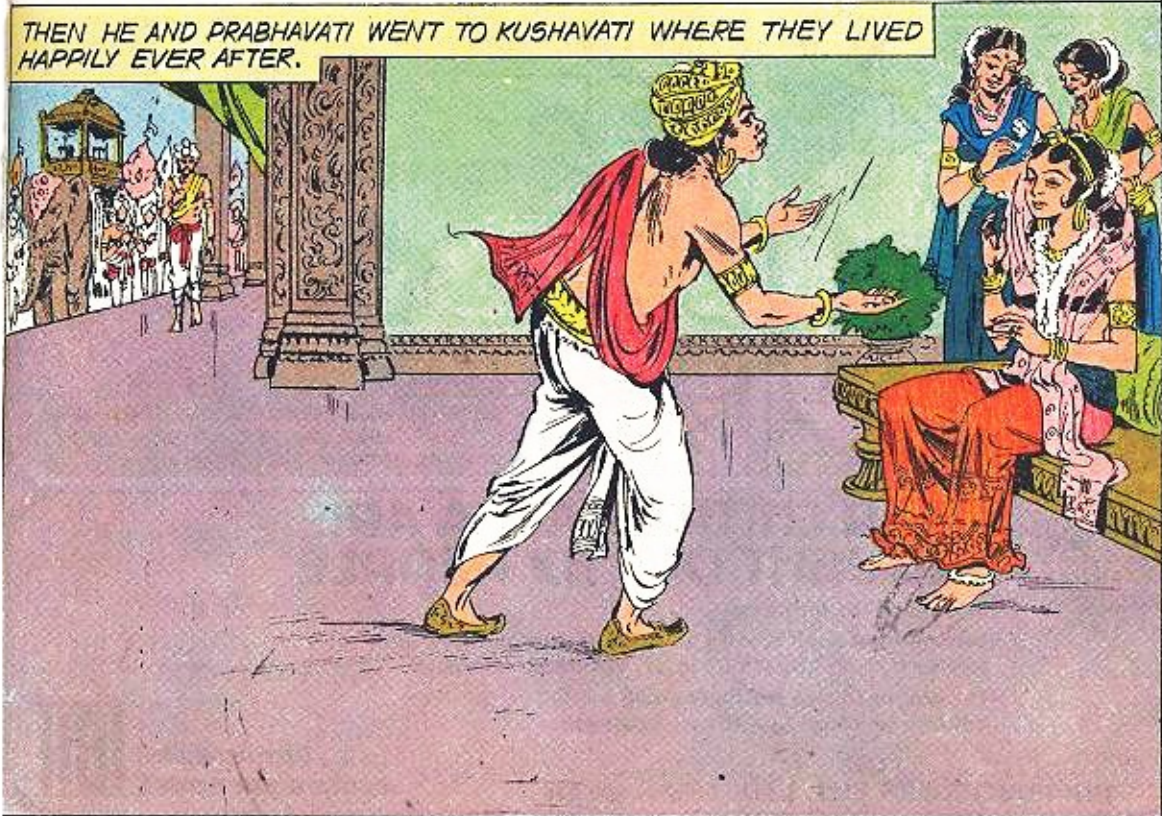
LEAVE THAT TO ME. GO. BATHE AND ADORN YOURSELF AND WAIT FOR ME IN YOUR PALACE.



KUSHA SETTLED MATTERS BY OFFERING HIS SEVEN SISTERS-IN-LAW TO THE SEVEN KINGS.



THEN HE AND PRABHAVATI WENT TO KUSHAVATI WHERE THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.



RAMU TURNS DETECTIVE

AT THE BOOK-SHOP —



RAMU EXAMINES THE BOOKS.



A LITTLE LATER —



LIKE RAMU KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN WHEN YOU BUY AMAR CHITRA KATHA. LOOK FOR THIS STAMP OF EXCELLENCE.



AMAR CHITRA KATHA ARE BROUGHT OUT BY PEOPLE

- who care for children
- who screen each word and each picture as they have a lasting impact on impressionable minds.
- for whom Chitra Katha is more a vehicle of education than a business.

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