

KRISHNA: THE SAVIOUR

SHUKADEVA WAS NARRATING TO PAREEKSHIT THE EVENTS FOLLOWING THE RAJASOOYA YAJNA OF YUDHISHTHIRA.



"SHALVA WAS A FRIEND OF SHISHUPALA'S AND HAD ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE SWAYAMVARA OF RUKMINI. WHEN KRISHNA DEFEATED THEM ALL AND TOOK AWAY RUKMINI, SHALVA HAD VOWED —



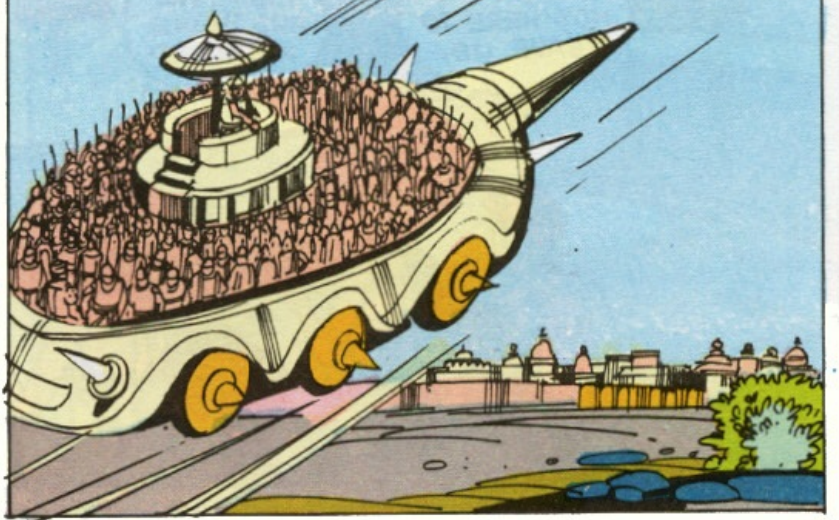
"HE THEN BEGAN A SEVERE PENANCE. AFTER HE HAD PRACTISED AUSTERITIES FOR A YEAR, LORD SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE HIM.



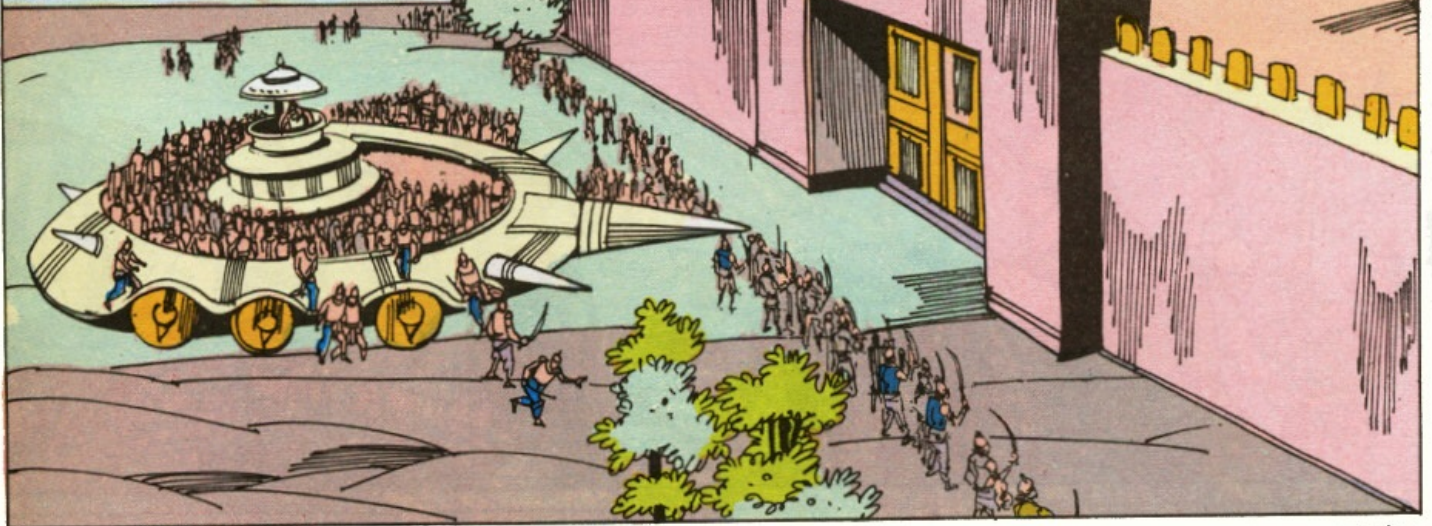
"SAUBHA, THE INDESTRUCTIBLE VEHICLE, MADE SHALVA ARROGANT. IT COULD CARRY THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS.

IT CAN TAKE ME WHEREVER I WISH TO GO. I AM INVINCIBLE NOW.

"WHEN HE HEARD OF HIS FRIEND, SHISHUPALA'S DEATH, HE BECAME FURIOUS. SEATED IN SAUBHA, HE ATTACKED DWARAKA.



"THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS GOT DOWN FROM THE VEHICLE AND SURROUNDED THE CITY.



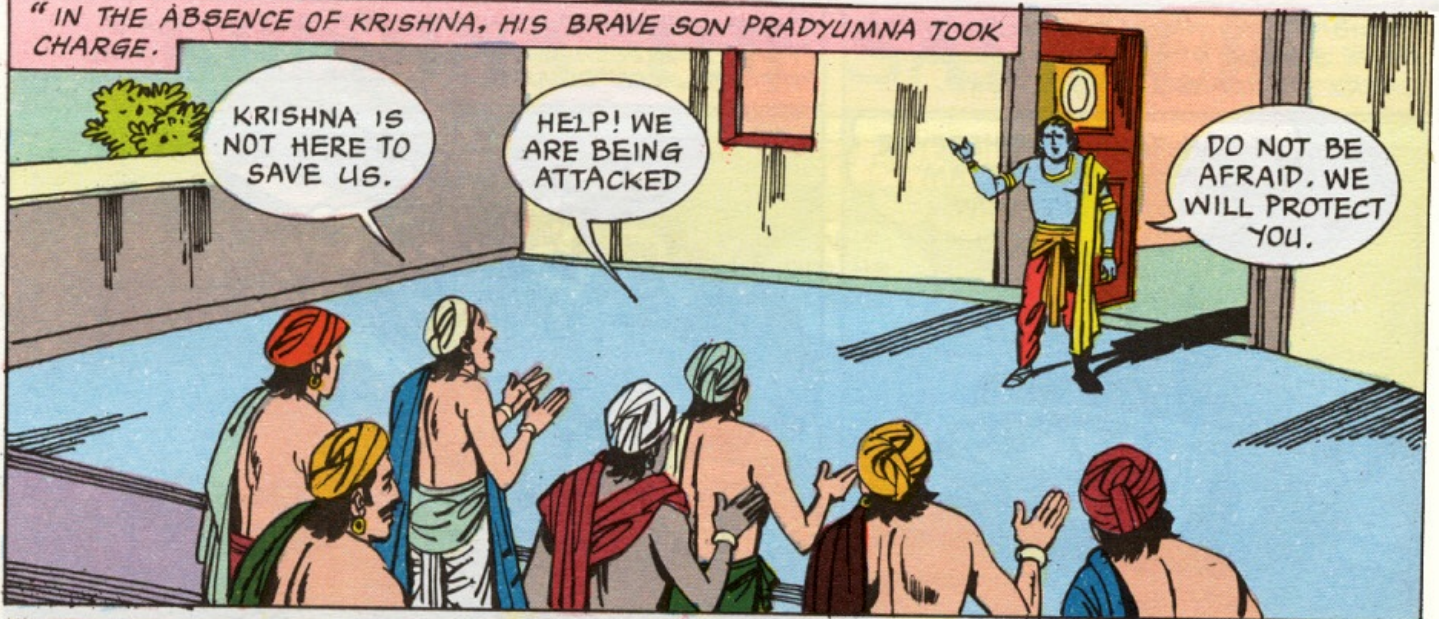
"FROM HIS AIRBORNE VEHICLE, SHALVA RAINED DOWN STRANGE OBJECTS ON THE CITIZENS BELOW.



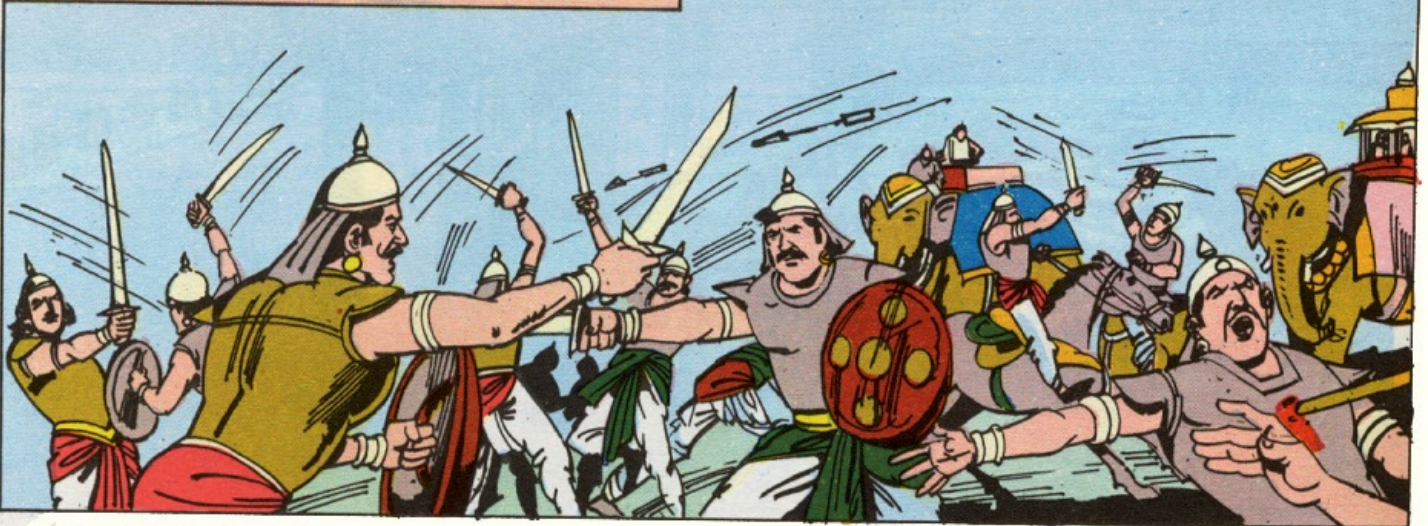
RUN! HUGE STONES, SERPENTS AND TREES ARE RAINING DOWN FROM THE SKIES!

THERE IS SO MUCH OF DUST AROUND US THAT WE CAN HARDLY SEE A THING.

"IN THE ABSENCE OF KRISHNA, HIS BRAVE SON PRADYUMNA TOOK CHARGE."



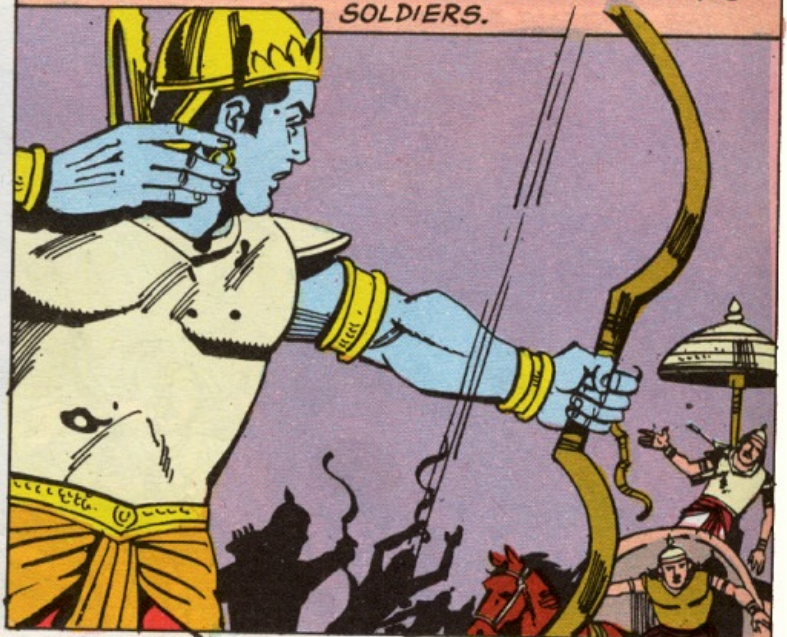
"FOLLOWED BY HIS BROTHERS AND OTHER BRAVE YADAVA WARRIORS, PRADYUMNA MET SHALVA'S ARMY IN A FIERCE BATTLE."



"WELL VERSED AS HE WAS IN THE ART OF USING CELESTIAL WEAPONS, PRADYUMNA DESTROYED THE ILLUSIONS CREATED BY SHALVA."



"WITH HIS SHARP, IRON-TIPPED ARROWS, HE WOUNDED SHALVA'S COMMANDER AS WELL AS HIS SOLDIERS."



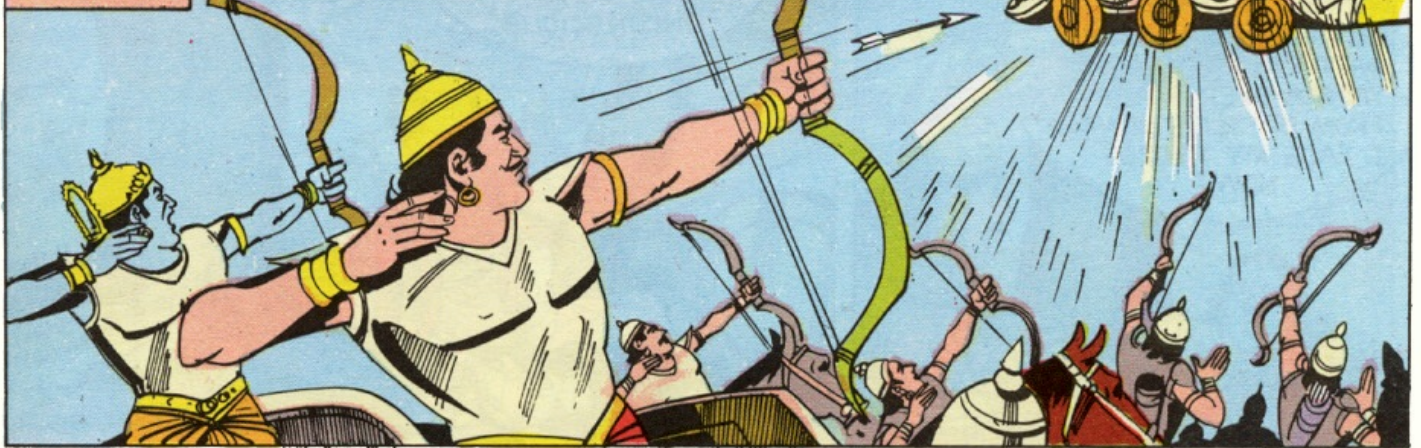
"BUT SHALVA IN HIS AIRBORNE VEHICLE APPEARED TO BE INVINCIBLE. THE VEHICLE WOULD MAGICALLY DISAPPEAR..."



"... AND THEN SUDDENLY APPEAR IN ANOTHER SPOT. ONE MINUTE IT WOULD BE FLYING THROUGH THE AIR, THE NEXT IT WOULD BE IN WATER."



"WHENEVER IT WAS SIGHTED, THE YADAVAS SHOT A VOLLEY OF ARROWS AT IT CAUSING MUCH DISTRESS TO SHALVA AND HIS SOLDIERS."



"AT LAST THEIR ARROWS FOUND THEIR MARK AND SHALVA FELL INTO A FAINT."

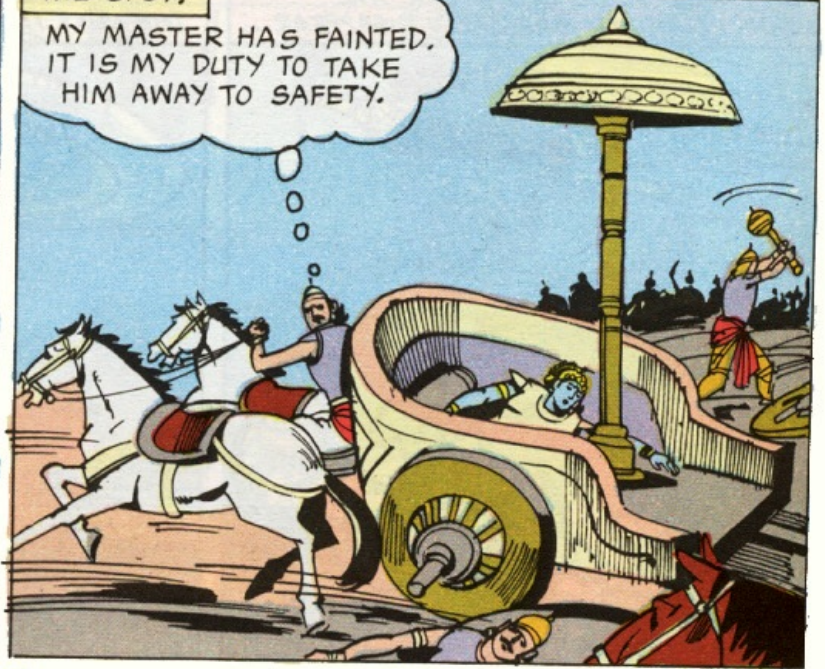


"NOW DYUMAN, A MINISTER OF SHALVA, ATTACKED PRADYUMNA."



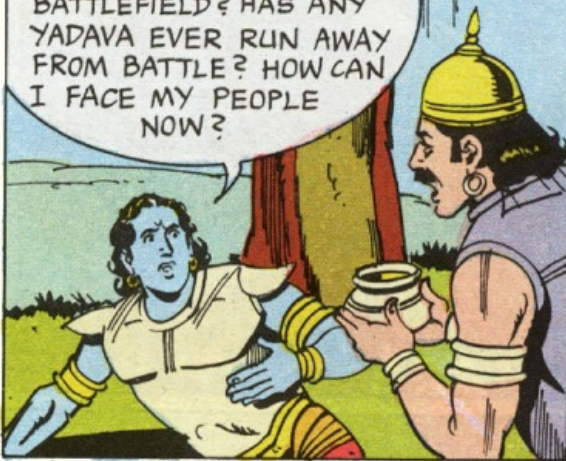
"PRADYUMNA'S CHARIOTEER CARRIED HIM AWAY FROM THE SPOT."

MY MASTER HAS FAINTED. IT IS MY DUTY TO TAKE HIM AWAY TO SAFETY.



"WHEN PRADYUMNA REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, HE WAS FURIOUS."

WHY DID YOU BRING ME AWAY FROM THE BATTLEFIELD? HAS ANY YADAVA EVER RUN AWAY FROM BATTLE? HOW CAN I FACE MY PEOPLE NOW?

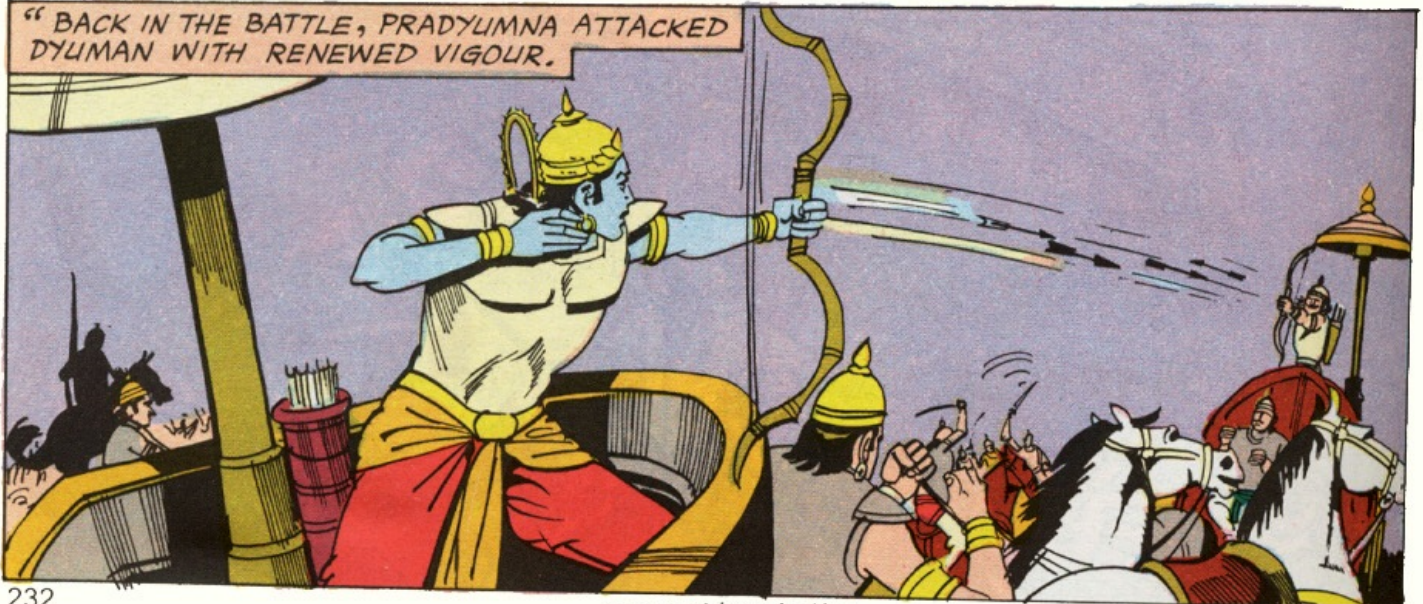


BUT IT WAS MY DUTY TO PROTECT YOU, WHEN YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS.

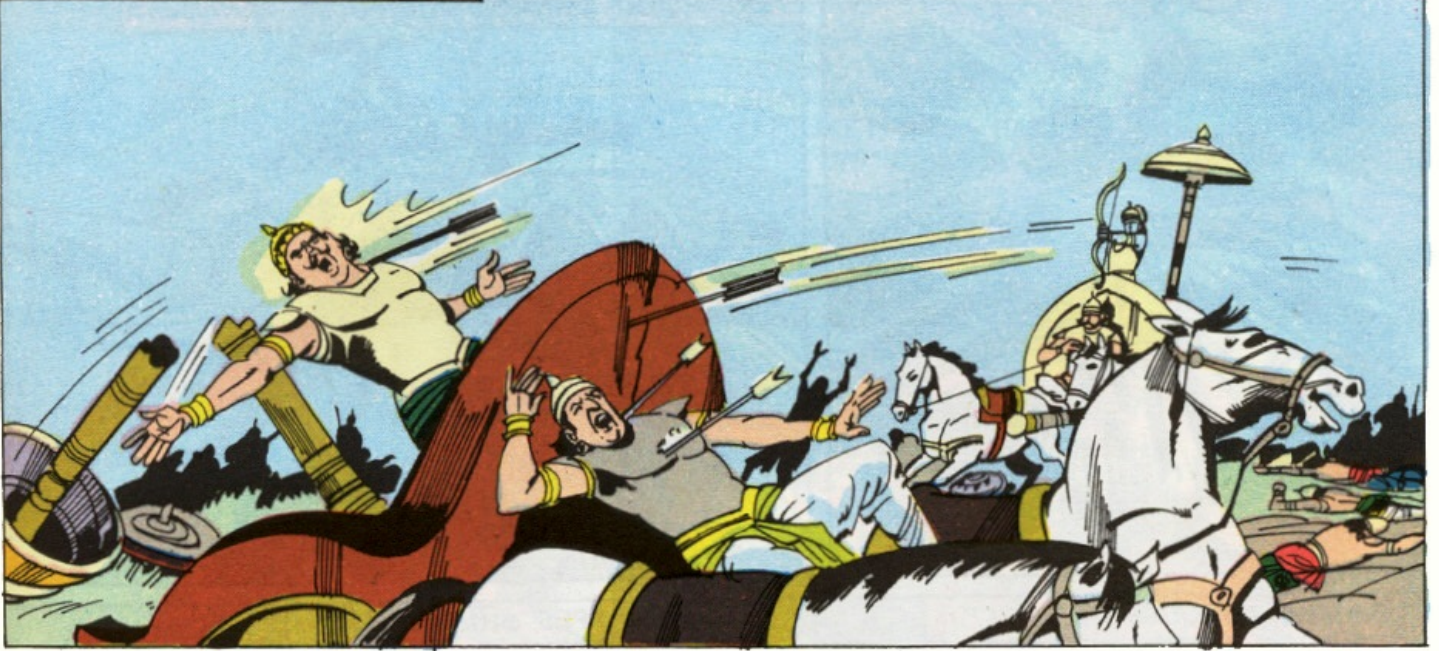
LET US GO BACK AT ONCE.



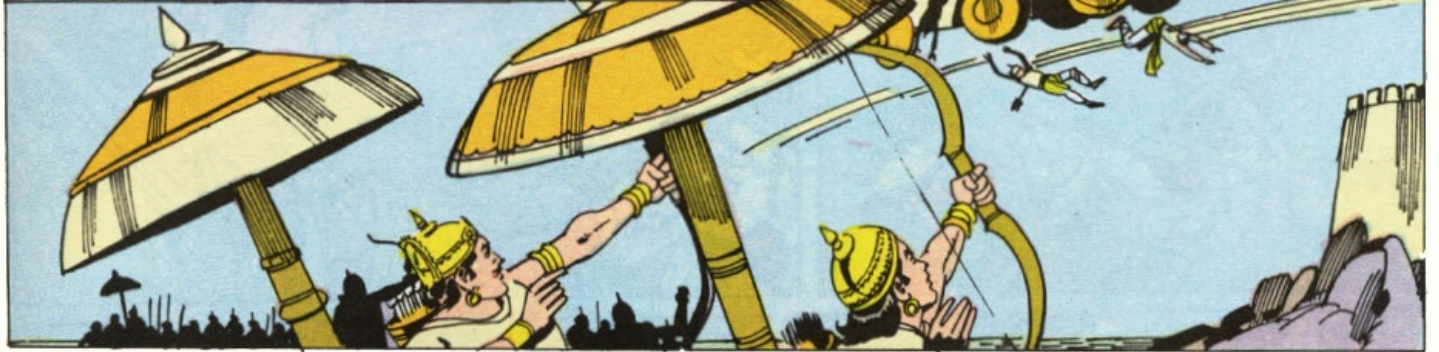
"BACK IN THE BATTLE, PRADYUMNA ATTACKED DYUMAN WITH RENEWED VIGOUR."



"SOON, DYUMAN'S HORSES AND CHARIOT WERE DESTROYED. FINALLY THE BRAVE DYUMAN TOO FELL."



"MEANWHILE THE OTHER YADAVA WARRIORS INCLUDING GADA, SATYAKI AND SAMBA, KEPT UP THEIR ATTACK ON SHALVA'S FORCES AND DECIMATED THEIR SOLDIERS, WHO WERE RAINING ARROWS ON THEM FROM THE AIRBORNE VEHICLE. FOR TWENTY-SEVEN LONG DAYS, THE FIERCE BATTLE CONTINUED."



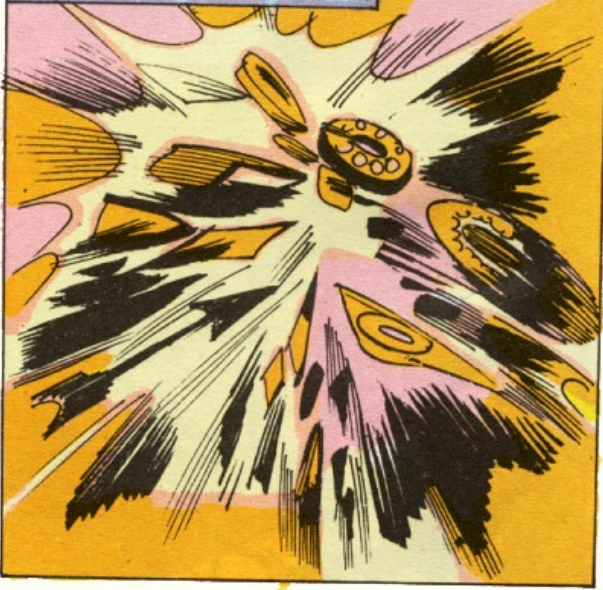
"WHEN KRISHNA AND BALARAMA RETURNED FROM INDRAPRASTHA, THEY FOUND THEIR BELOVED CITY DWARAKA UNDER SIEGE."



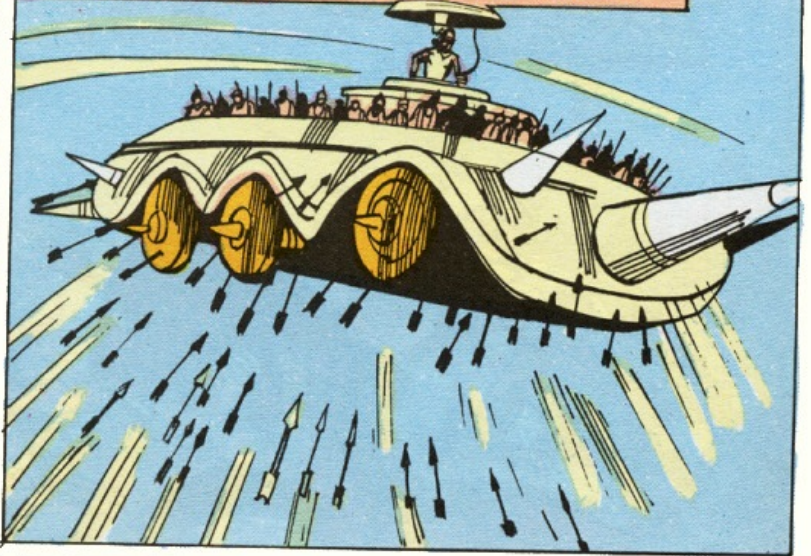
"AS SOON AS HE SAW KRISHNA, SHALVA AIMED THE POWERFUL WEAPON, SHAKTI, AT DARUKA, KRISHNA'S CHARIOTEER."



"BUT KRISHNA'S ARROWS REDUCED IT TO A THOUSAND BITS."



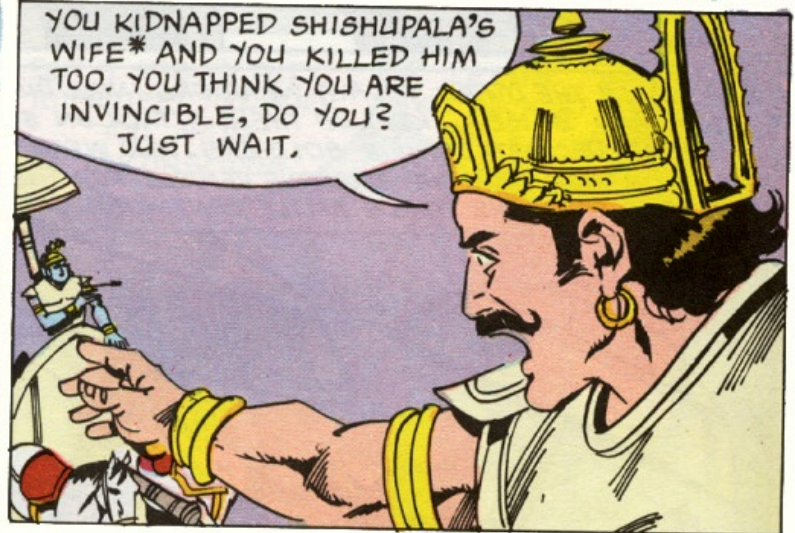
"LIKE THE SUN'S RAYS PERVADING THROUGH THE DARK SKIES, KRISHNA'S SHARP ARROWS PENETRATED SHALVA'S WONDROUS VEHICLE."



"SHALVA HIT KRISHNA'S LEFT SHOULDER."



"YOU KIDNAPPED SHISHUPALA'S WIFE* AND YOU KILLED HIM TOO. YOU THINK YOU ARE INVINCIBLE, DO YOU? JUST WAIT,"



"FOOL, USE YOUR WEAPONS, NOT YOUR TONGUE."



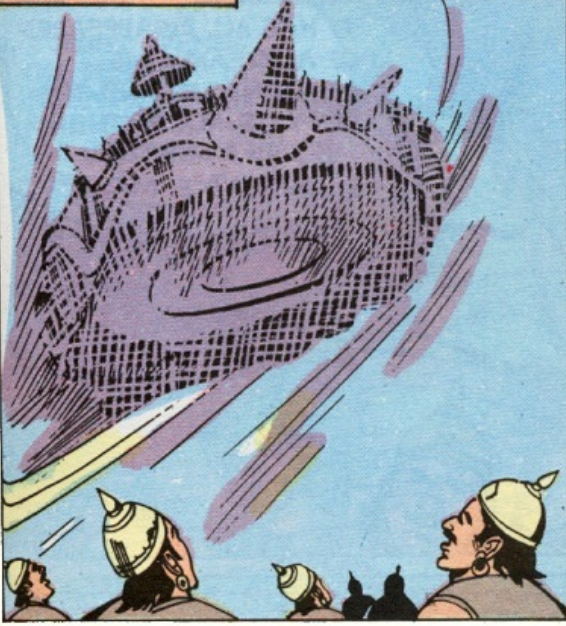
"KRISHNA HURLED HIS MACE AND HIT SHALVA ON HIS COLLAR BONE..."



"... AND THE MACE RETURNED TO KRISHNA."

* REFERENCE TO RUKMİNĪ, WHO WAS BETROTHED TO SHISHUPALA.

"SHALVA WAS BADLY INJURED BUT WITH HIS MAGIC VEHICLE, HE SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED."



"SOON A MESSENGER RUSHED TO KRISHNA, WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES."



"KRISHNA BECAME SAD LIKE AN ORDINARY MORTAL."

HOW COULD SHALVA OVERPOWER BALARAMA AND KIDNAP MY FATHER?

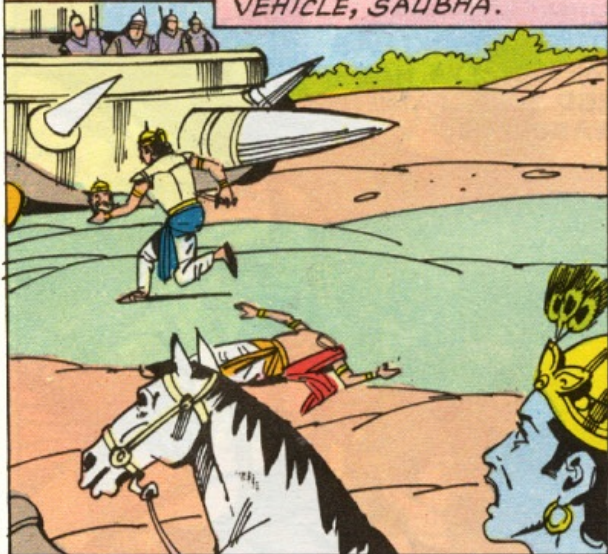


"SHALVA THEN REAPPEARED CLASPING VASUDEVA."

SEE! HERE IS YOUR DEAR FATHER. I WILL BEHEAD HIM BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES.



"BEFORE KRISHNA COULD LIFT HIS BOW, SHALVA CUT OFF THE HEAD OF VASUDEVA AND FLED WITH IT BACK INTO HIS VEHICLE, SAUBHA.



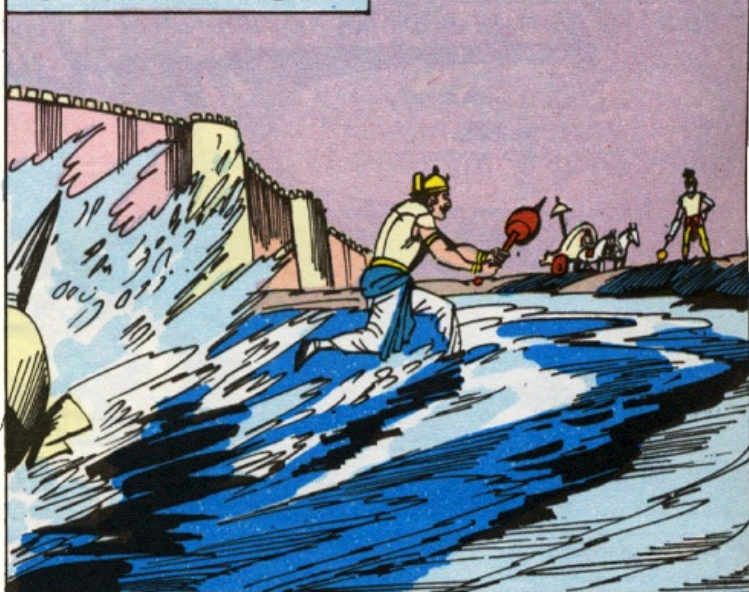
"WHEN KRISHNA RECOVERED FROM THE SHOCK HE REALISED THAT THE WHOLE INCIDENT HAD BEEN AN ILLUSION.



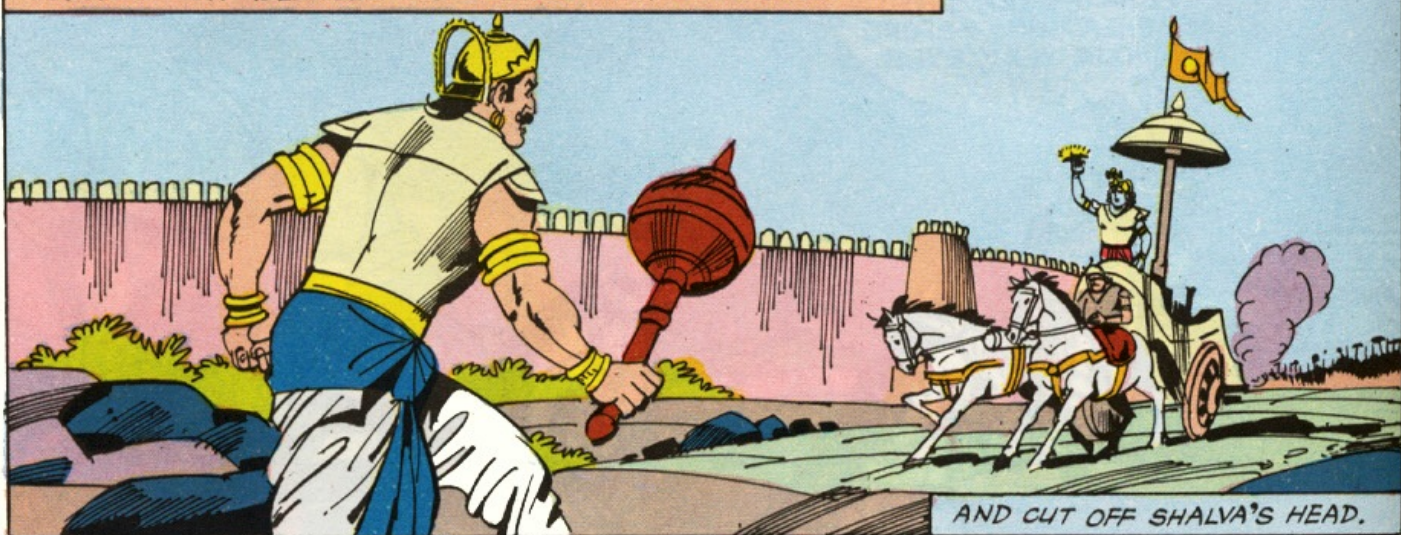
"ENRAGED, KRISHNA ATTACKED SHALVA'S VEHICLE WITH HIS MACE, TILL IT SHATTERED TO BITS AND FELL INTO THE OCEAN.



"BUT IN THE NICK OF TIME, SHALVA JUMPED OFF TO CONFRONT KRISHNA.

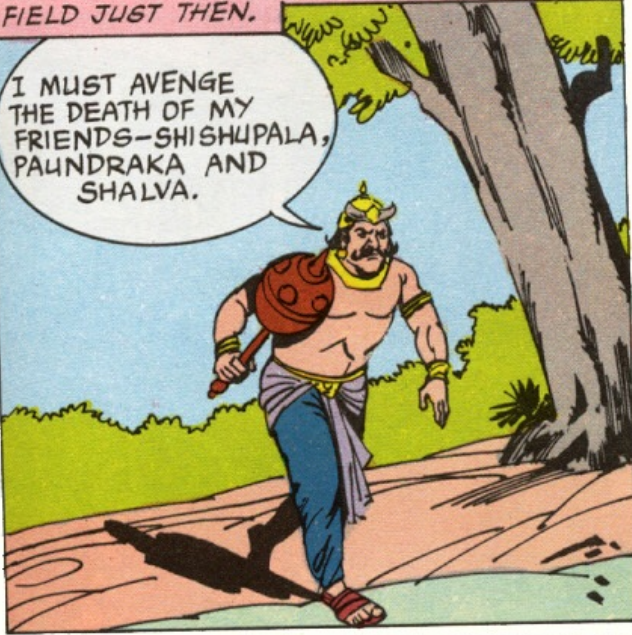


"KRISHNA NOW RELEASED HIS SUDARSHANA CHAKRA*"



"DANTAVAKRA, ANOTHER FRIEND OF SHISHUPALA'S, ARRIVED ON THE BATTLE FIELD JUST THEN.

I MUST AVENGE THE DEATH OF MY FRIENDS-SHISHUPALA, PAUNDRKA AND SHALVA.

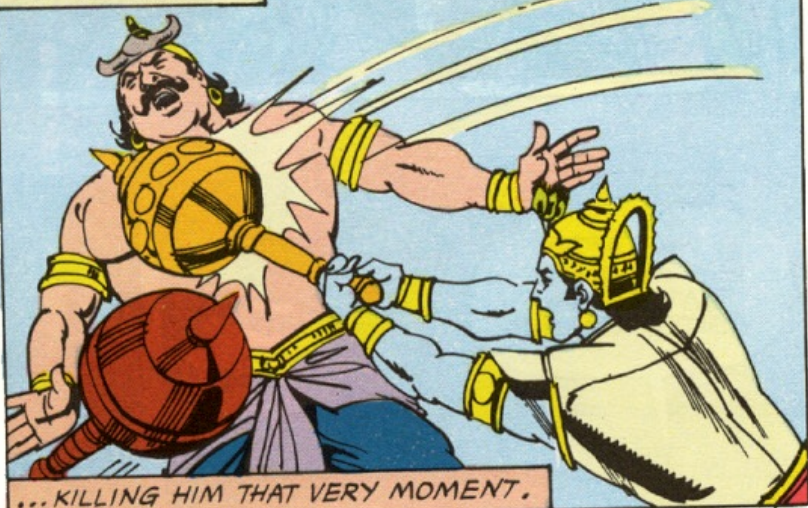


"THOUGH HE WAS ARMED WITH ONLY A MACE, DANTAVAKRA'S HEAVY STEPS MADE THE VERY EARTH TREMBLE.

THE ONLY WAY I CAN DO IT IS BY KILLING YOU.

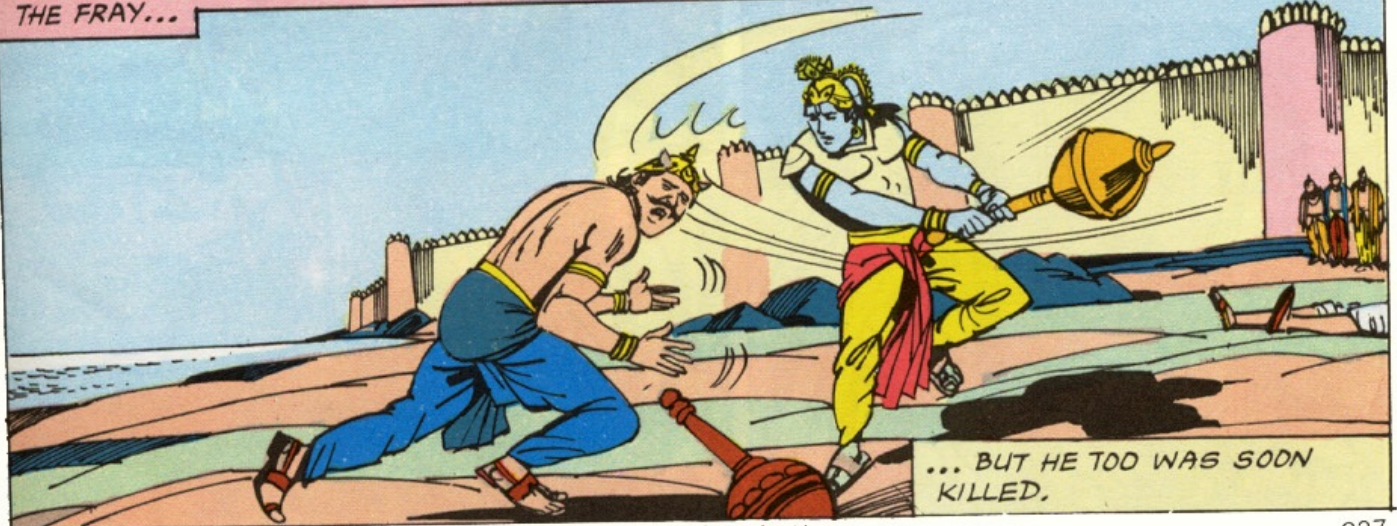


"BUT IN SPITE OF THE HEAVY BLOW, KRISHNA WAS UNRUFFLED. TAKING CAREFUL AIM, HE HIT DANTAVAKRA ON THE CHEST...



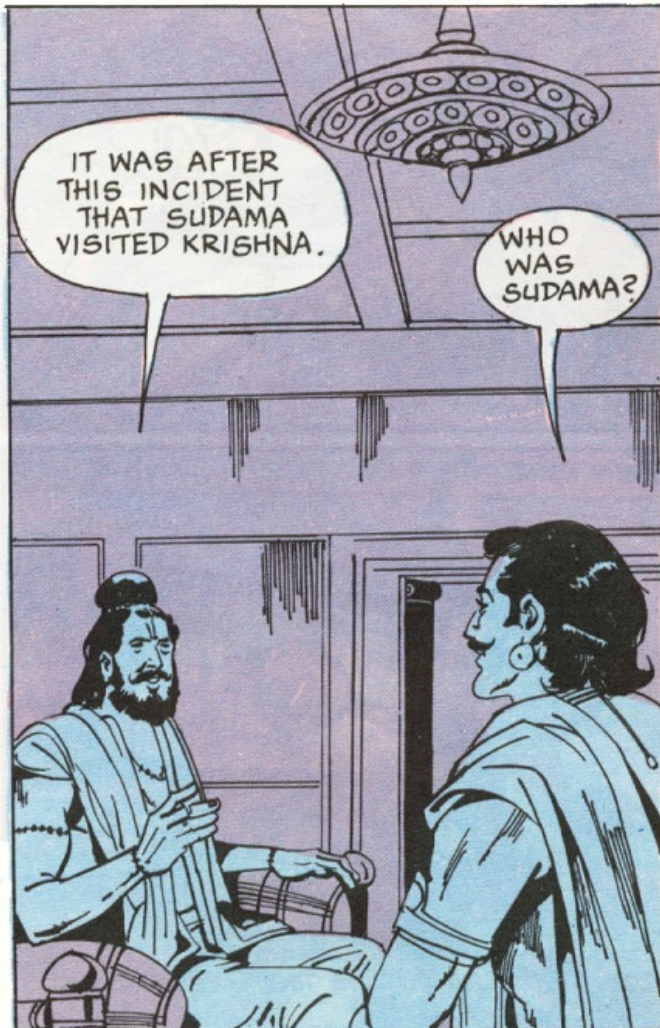
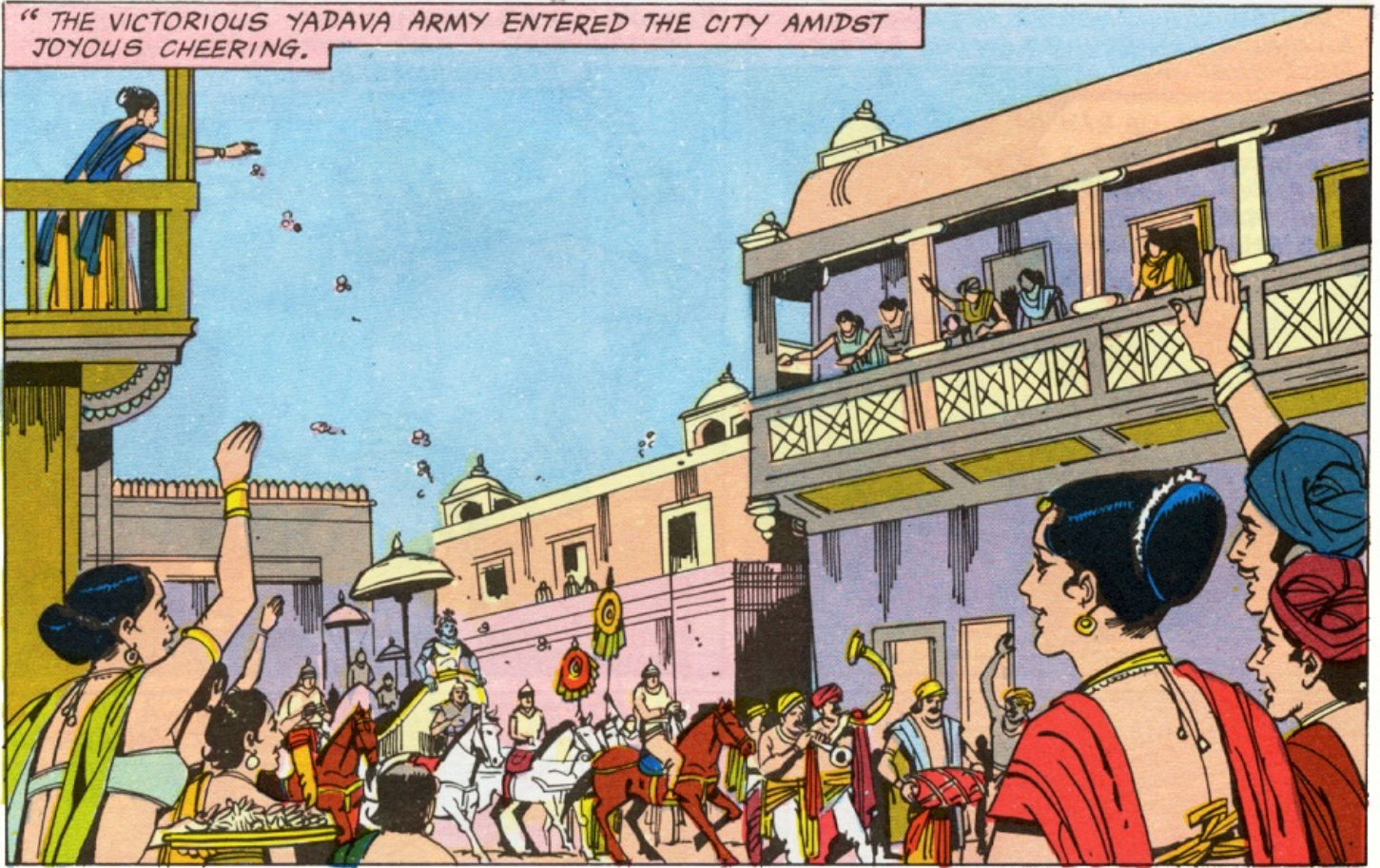
...KILLING HIM THAT VERY MOMENT.

"NOW VIDURATHA, THE BROTHER OF DANTAVAKRA ENTERED THE FRAY...



... BUT HE TOO WAS SOON KILLED.

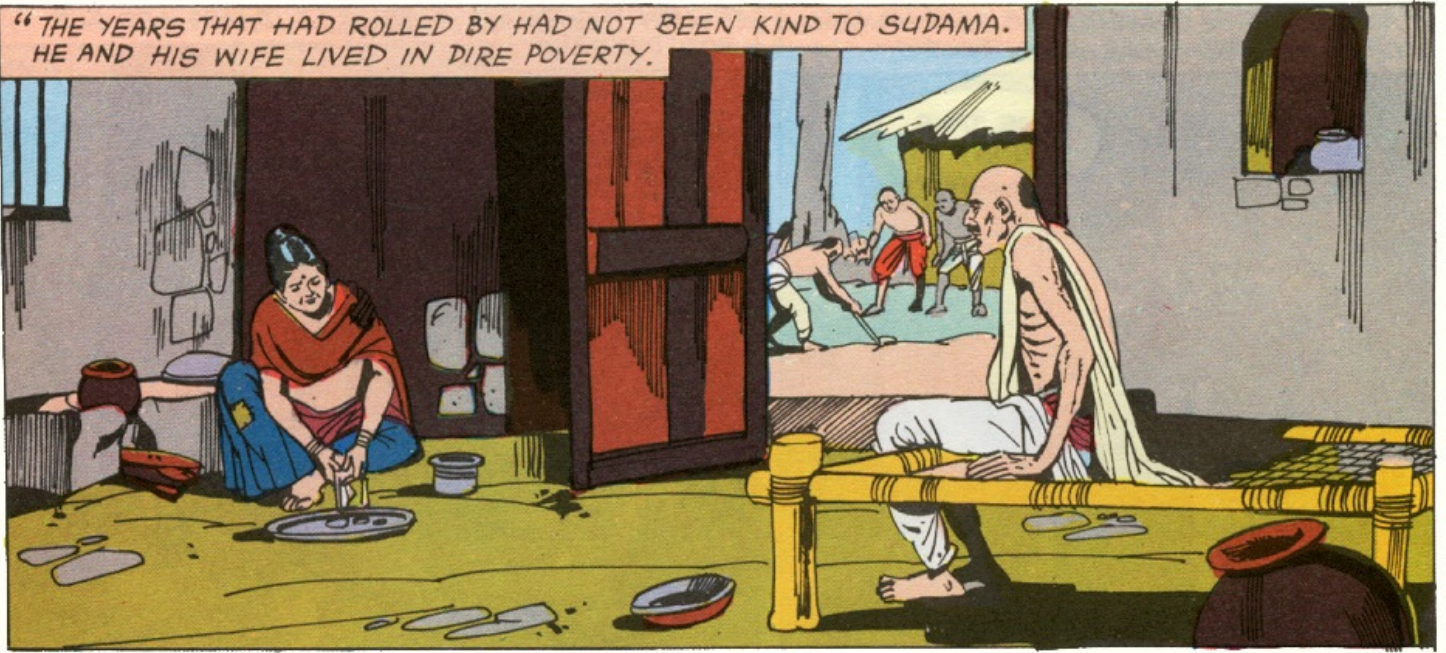
"THE VICTORIOUS YADAVA ARMY ENTERED THE CITY AMIDST JOYOUS CHEERING."



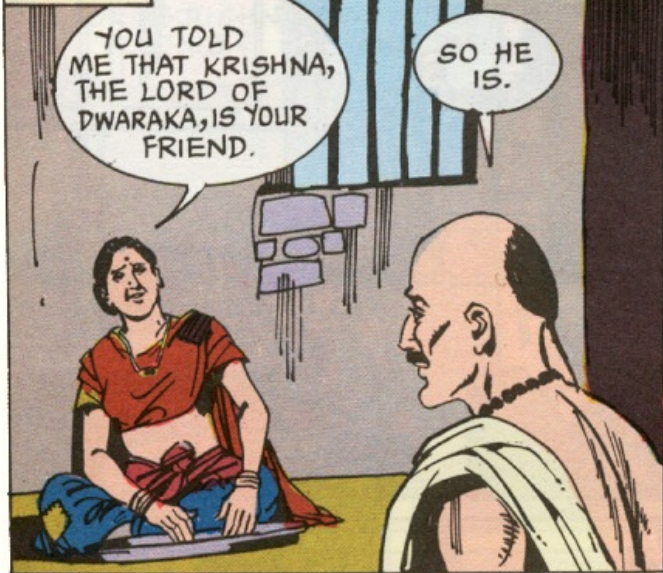
"SUDAMA WAS A BRAHMIN WHO HAD BEEN A CHILDHOOD FRIEND OF KRISHNA."



"THE YEARS THAT HAD ROLLED BY HAD NOT BEEN KIND TO SUDAMA. HE AND HIS WIFE LIVED IN DIRE POVERTY."



"THOUGH SHE WAS ALWAYS IN TATTERED CLOTHES AND STARVING, FOR LONG SUDAMA'S WIFE BORE HER SUFFERING PATIENTLY. ONE DAY —"



"YOU TOLD ME THAT KRISHNA, THE LORD OF DWARAKA, IS YOUR FRIEND."

"SO HE IS."



"WHY DON'T YOU GO AND MEET HIM? WHEN HE COMES TO KNOW THAT YOU HAVE A FAMILY TO SUPPORT, HE WILL SURELY HELP YOU."

"SUDAMA'S WIFE REPEATEDLY REQUESTED HIM TO GO TO KRISHNA."



"THE VERY THOUGHT OF MEETING MY FRIEND KRISHNA MAKES ME HAPPY. INDEED I MUST GO."



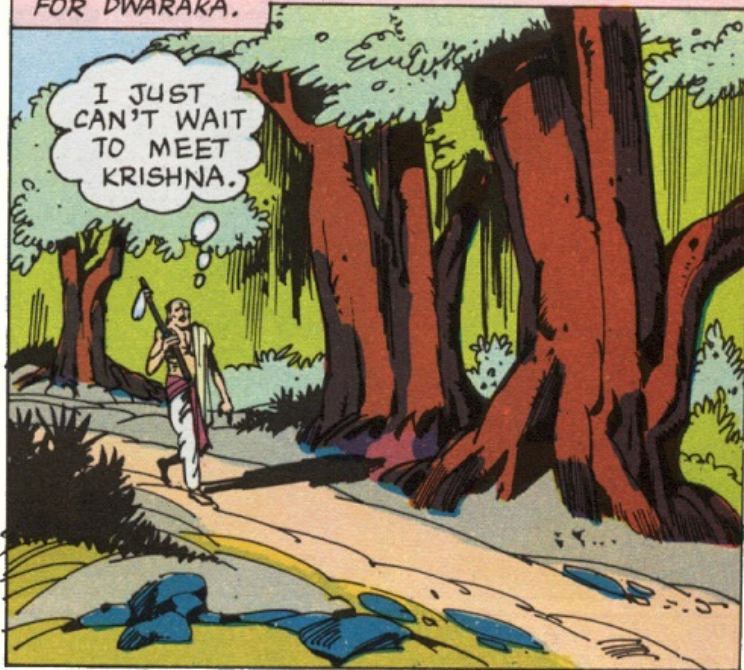
"IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE HOUSE WHICH I CAN TAKE AS A GIFT?"

"WAIT!"

"QUICKLY SHE COLLECTED A FEW HANDFUL OF POWA* FROM HER NEIGHBOURS.



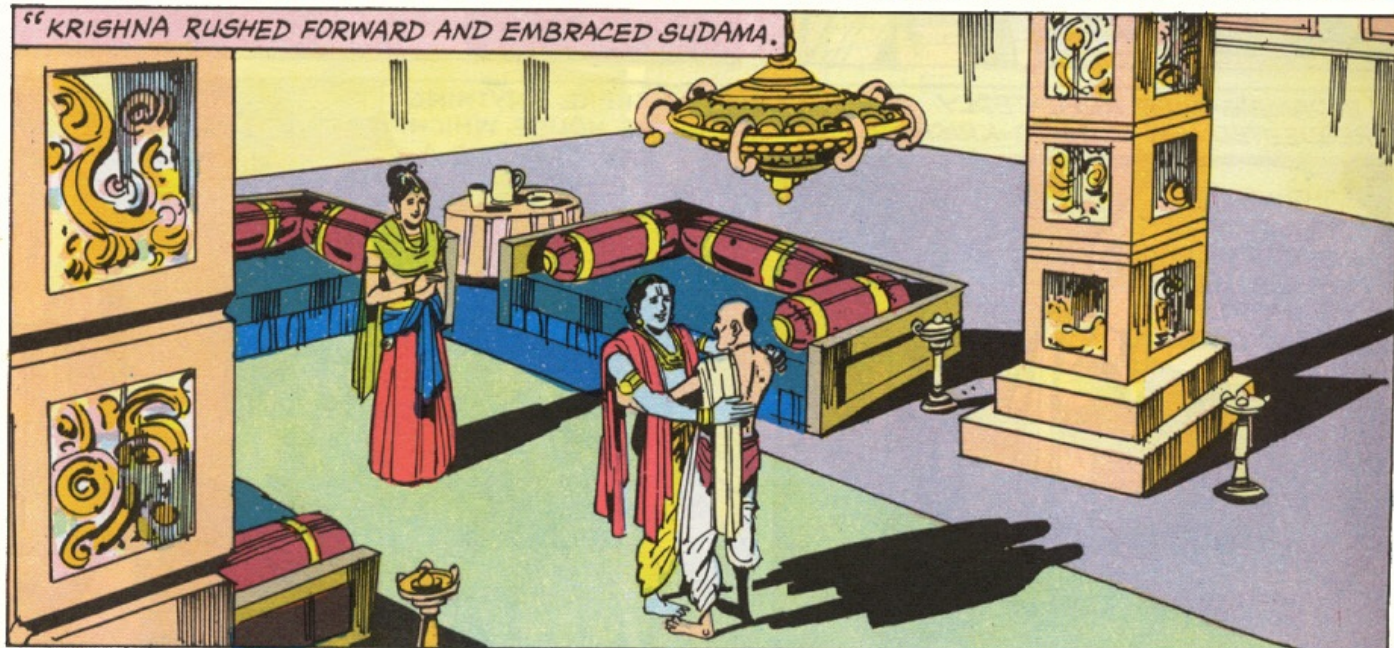
"WITH THE SMALL BUNDLE, SUDAMA SET OUT FOR DWARAKA.



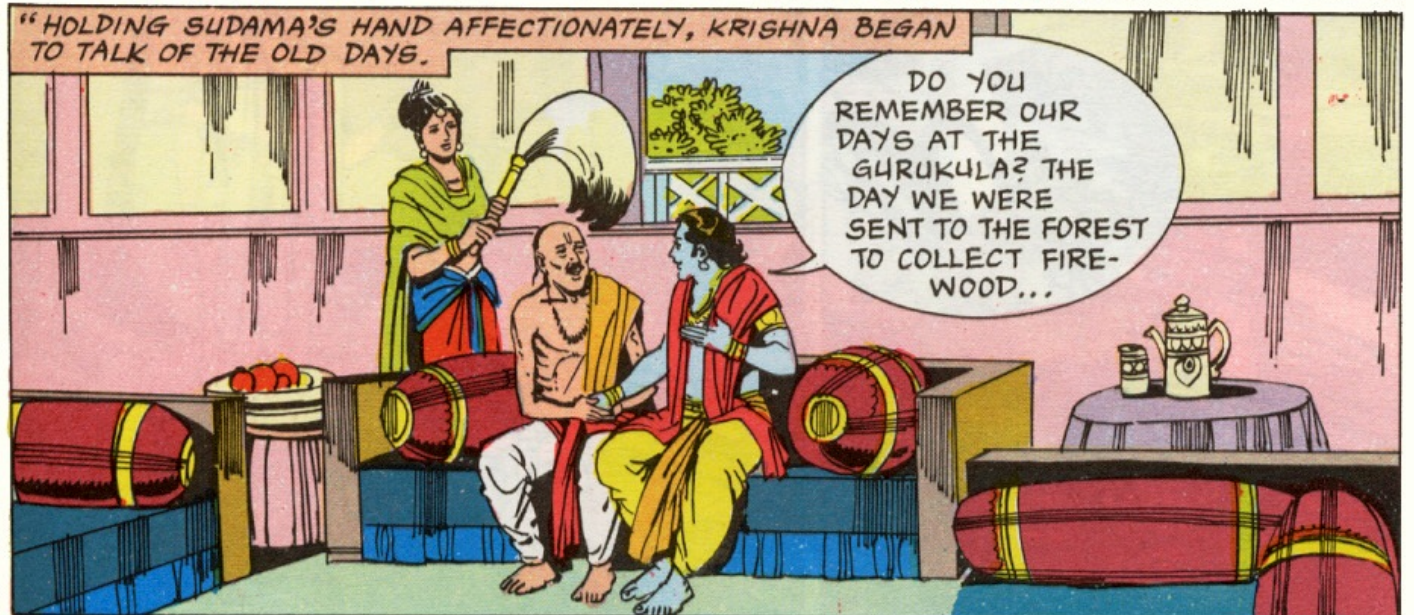
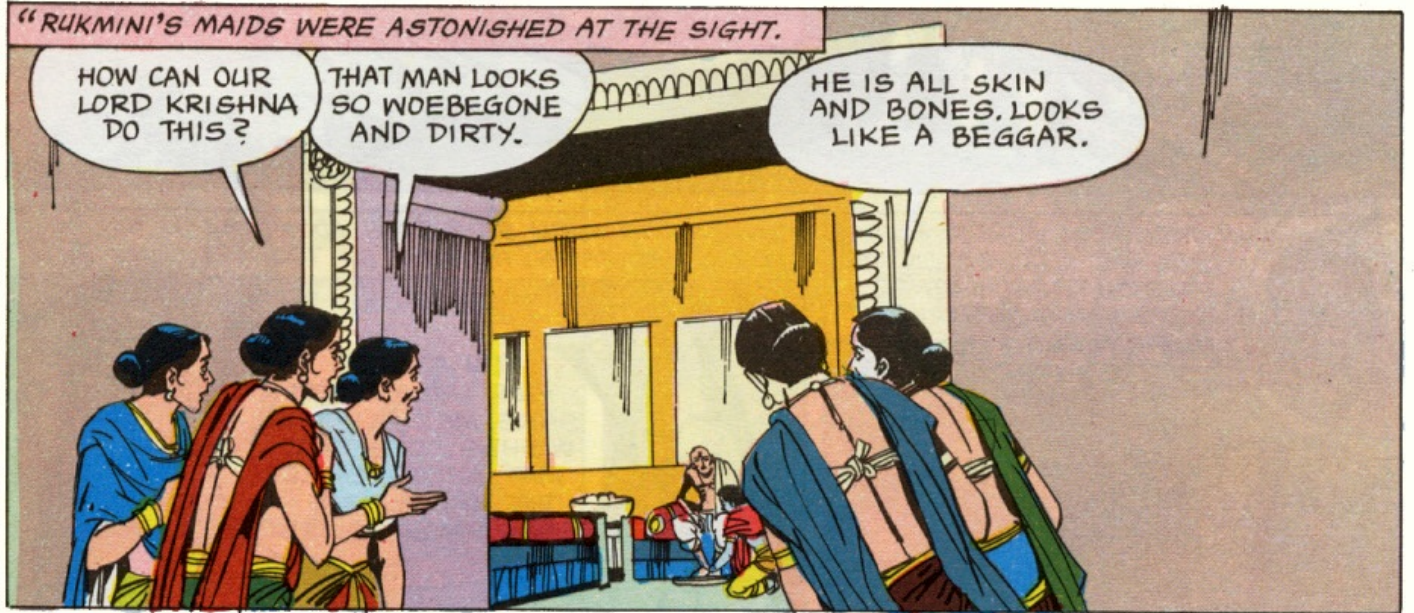
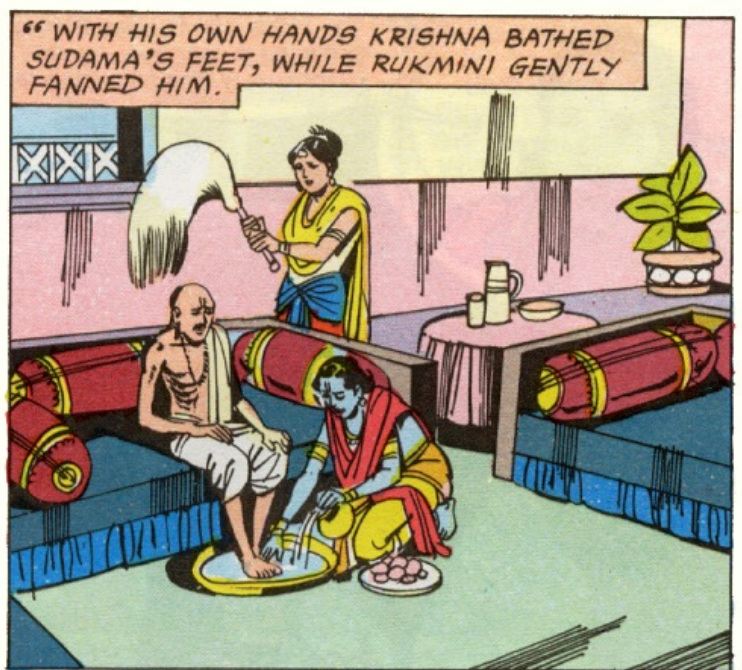
AT LAST HE REACHED DWARAKA. HE FOUND KRISHNA IN RUKMINI'S BEAUTIFUL PALACE.

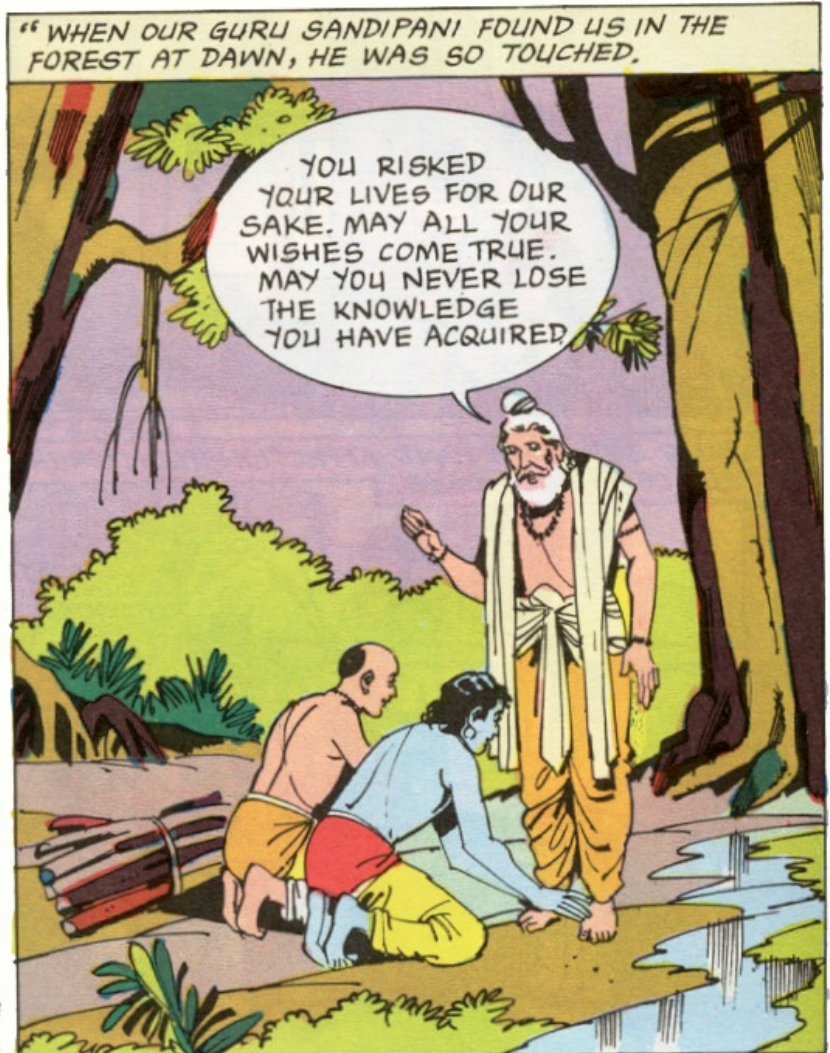
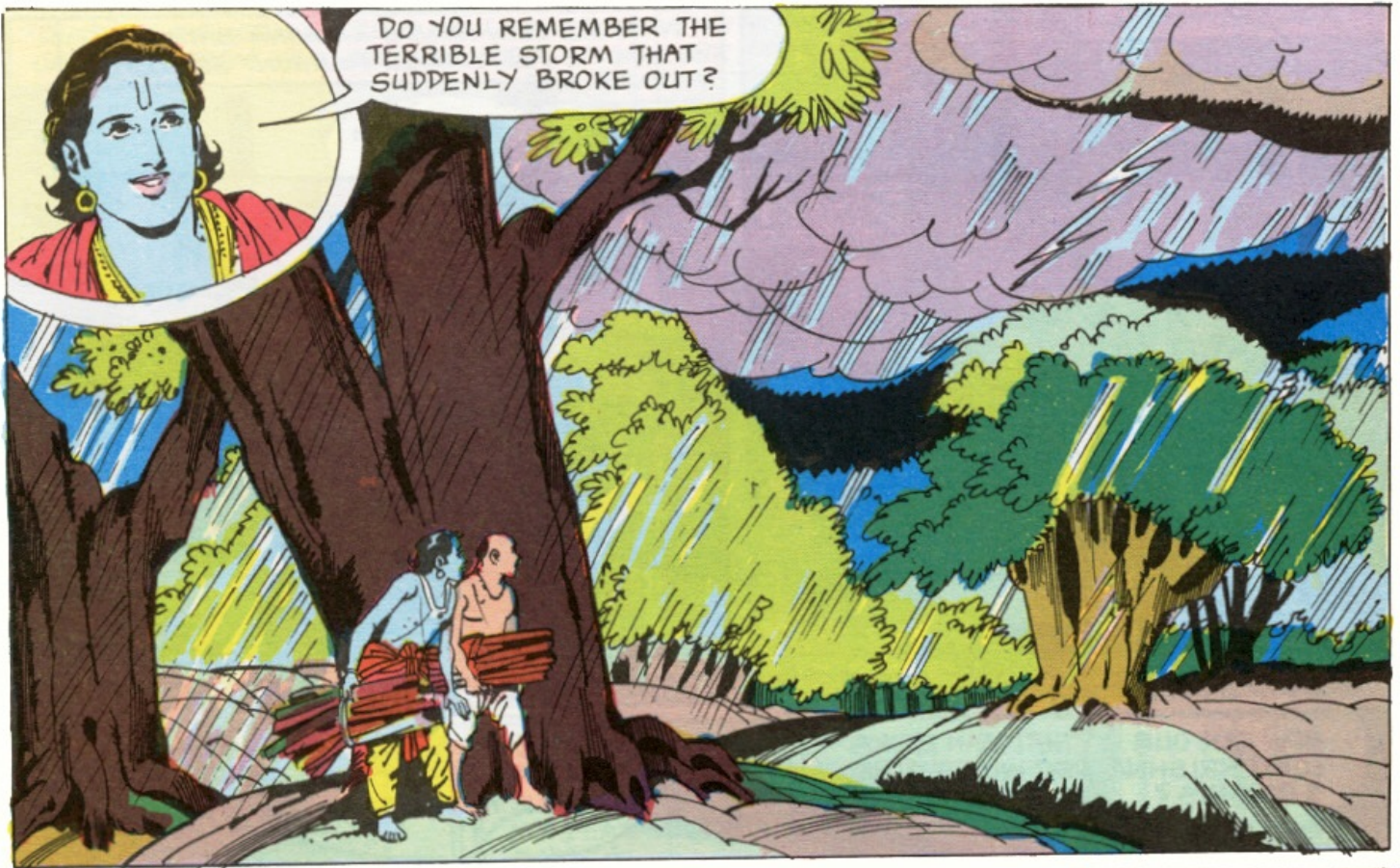


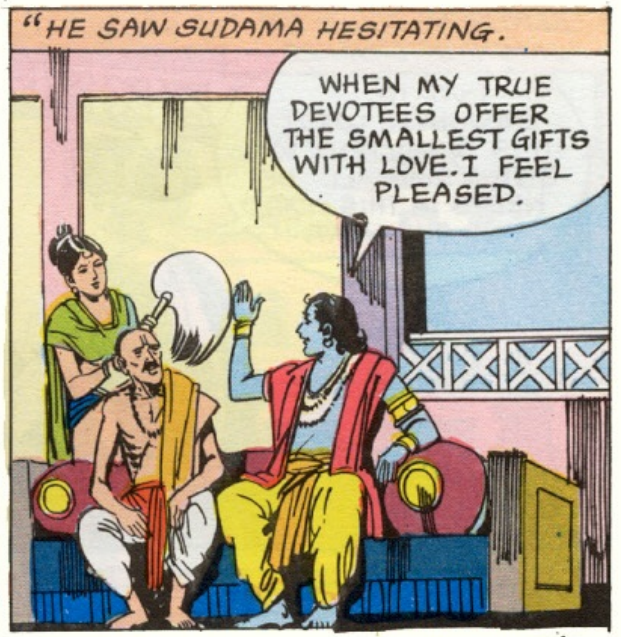
"KRISHNA RUSHED FORWARD AND EMBRACED SUDAMA.



* BEATEN RICE







"BEFORE HE COULD EAT THE SECOND FISTFUL, RUKMINI INTERVENED—

THAT IS ENOUGH, MY LORD! IT IS SUFFICIENT TO GIVE A MAN ALL HE NEEDS IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.



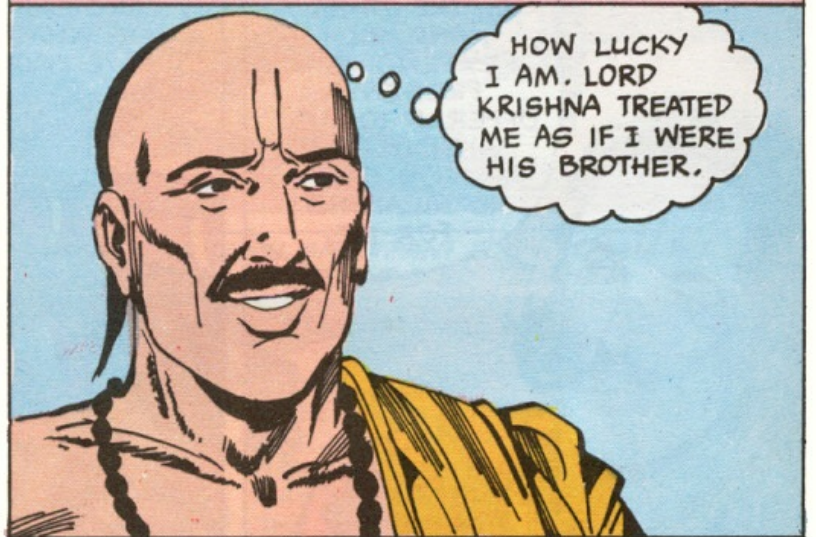
"SUDAMA SPENT THE NIGHT IN KRISHNA'S PALACE.

WHAT COMFORT AND LUXURY! I FEEL I AM IN HEAVEN.



"ALTHOUGH HE HAD ASKED FOR NOTHING AND RECEIVED NOTHING FROM KRISHNA, SUDAMA WAS HAPPY WHEN HE LEFT NEXT MORNING.

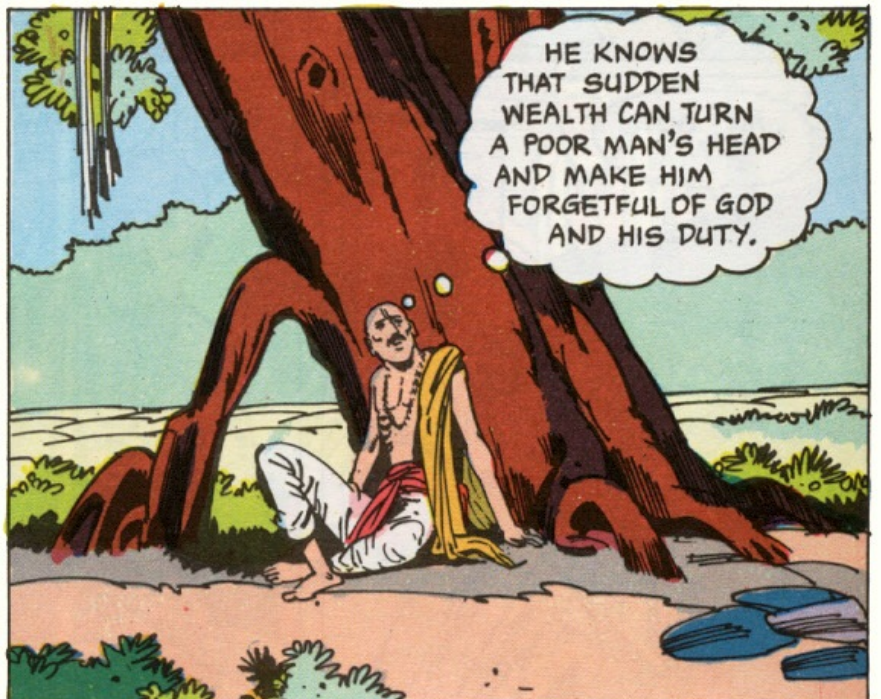
HOW LUCKY I AM. LORD KRISHNA TREATED ME AS IF I WERE HIS BROTHER.



THOUGH HE IS FAMED FOR HIS GENEROSITY, HE PURPOSELY DID NOT GIVE ME WEALTH.



HE KNOWS THAT SUDDEN WEALTH CAN TURN A POOR MAN'S HEAD AND MAKE HIM FORGETFUL OF GOD AND HIS DUTY.

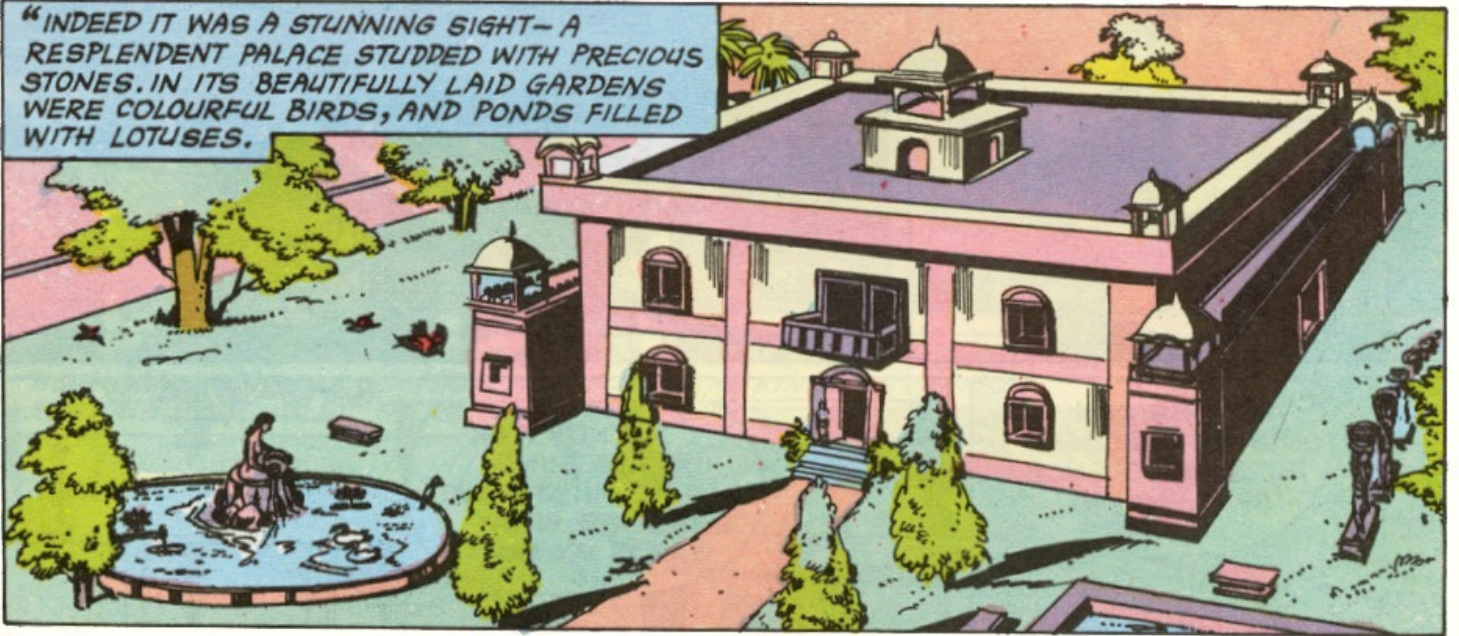


"WHEN HE REACHED HIS VILLAGE AT LAST—

I MUST HAVE
LOST MY WAY. I HAVE
NEVER SEEN SUCH
A WONDERFUL PALACE
BEFORE.



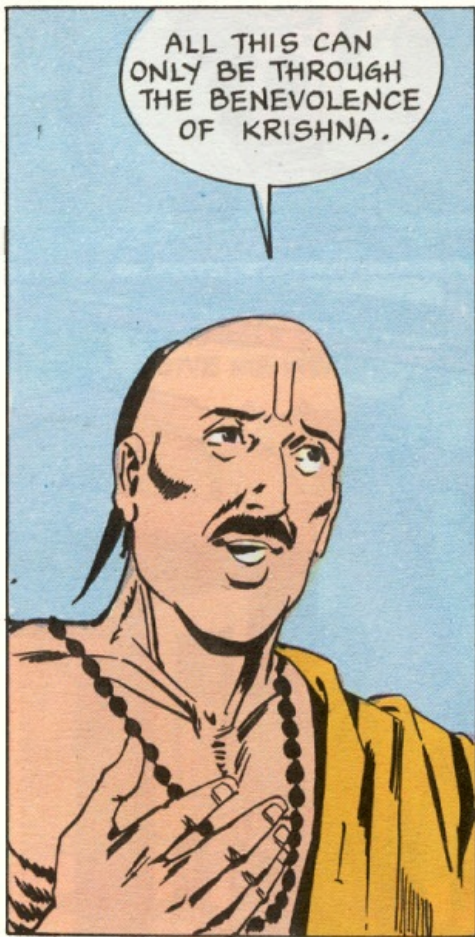
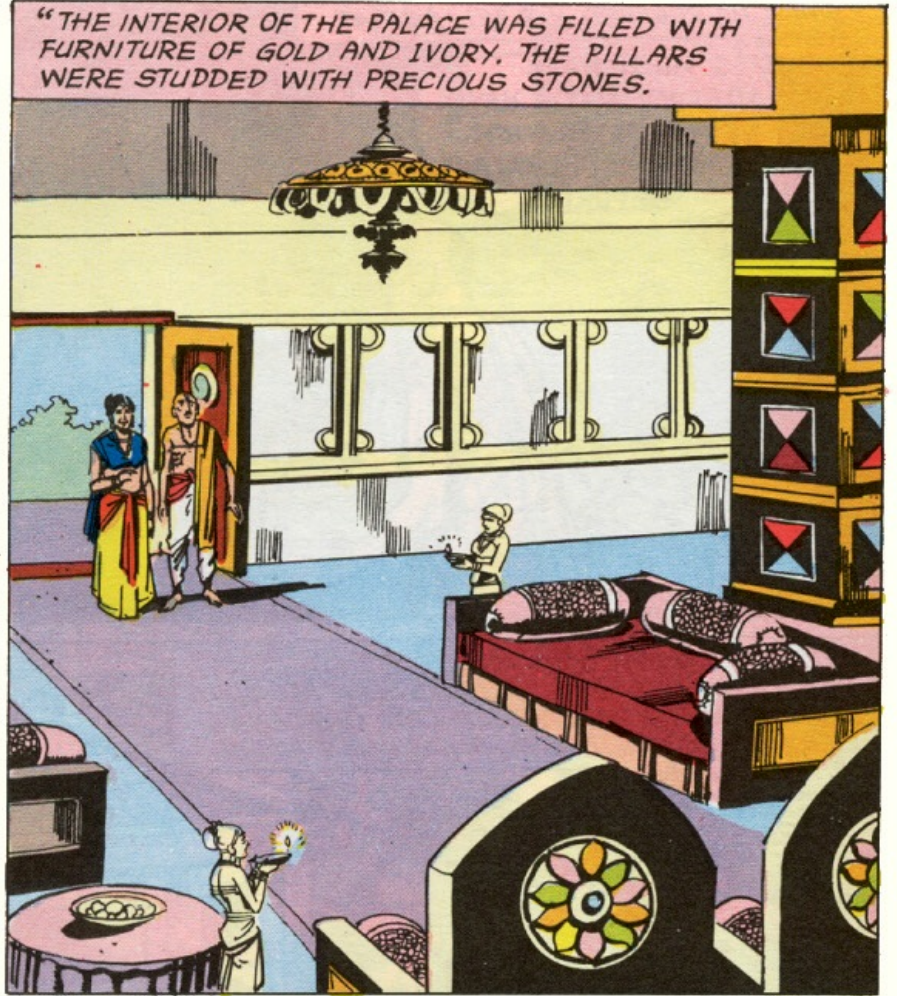
"INDEED IT WAS A STUNNING SIGHT— A
RESPLENDENT PALACE STUDDED WITH PRECIOUS
STONES. IN ITS BEAUTIFULLY LAID GARDENS
WERE COLOURFUL BIRDS, AND PONDS FILLED
WITH LOTUSES.



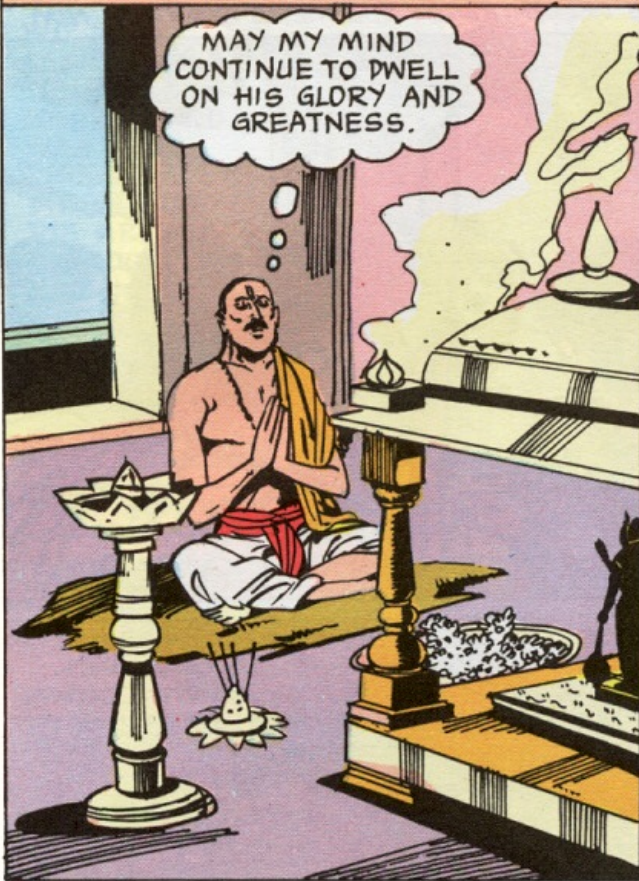
"JUST THEN, GUDAMA'S WIFE CAME OUT FROM THE PALACE TO
RECEIVE HIM. THERE WAS A BIG RETINUE OF SERVANTS.

I CAN HARDLY
RECOGNIZE YOU IN
THESE FINE CLOTHES
AND GOLD
ORNAMENTS.





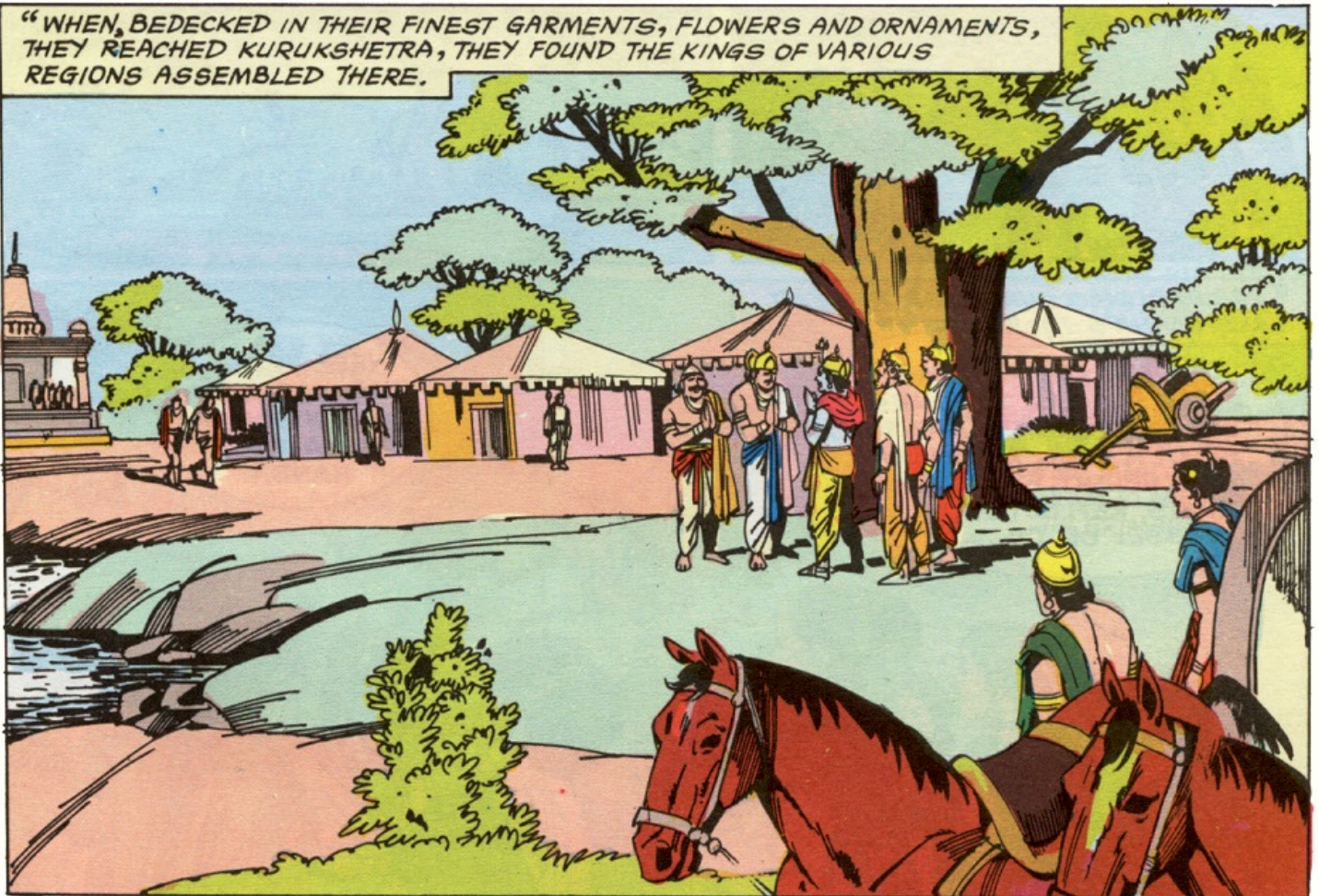
"AMIDST THE SPLENDOUR, SUDAMA CONTINUED HIS SIMPLE LIFE.



WHILE KRISHNA AND BALARAMA WERE IN DWARAKA, A TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN WAS PREDICTED. AS TRADITION DEMANDED, THE YADAVAS DECIDED TO GO TO THE HOLY SPOT OF SAMANTAPANCHAKA AT KURUKSHETRA, LEAVING ANIRUDDHA AND THE ARMY COMMANDER KRITAVARMA IN CHARGE OF DWARAKA.



"WHEN, BEDECKED IN THEIR FINEST GARMENTS, FLOWERS AND ORNAMENTS, THEY REACHED KURUKSHETRA, THEY FOUND THE KINGS OF VARIOUS REGIONS ASSEMBLED THERE.



"THEY WERE DELIGHTED TO BEHOLD NANDA, YASHODA AND OTHER KINSMEN. THE KAURAVAS AND PANDAVAS WERE ALSO THERE.



"IT WAS A SCENE OF JOYOUS REUNION. THE GOPIS* BEHELD THEIR DEAR KRISHNA AFTER A LONG TIME AND WERE DELIGHTED BY THE MERE SIGHT OF HIM.

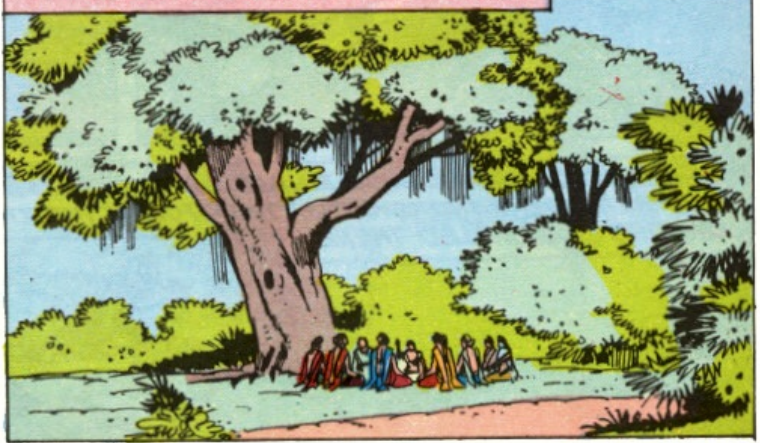


"THE WOMEN FOLK OF THE YADAVA AND THE KAURAVA CLANS CHATTED EXCITEDLY.



DO TELL US HOW KRISHNA MARRIED YOU.

"ONE BY ONE, SATYABHAMA, RUKMINI, JAMBAVATI, SATYA, KALINDI, LAKSHMANA, MITRAVINDA AND BHADRA NARRATED THE EXCITING EVENTS LEADING TO THEIR MARRIAGE WITH KRISHNA.



"DRAUPADI WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR LAKSHMANA'S TALE.

MY SWAYAMVARA WAS QUITE SIMILAR TO YOURS. THE CONTESTANTS HAD TO SHOOT A FISH, REVOLVING AT A HEIGHT, BY LOOKING AT ITS REFLECTION IN A VESSEL OF OIL.

YES! YES! THAT WAS THE TEST BY WHICH ARJUNA WON MY HAND.†



* COWHERDESSES † MAHABHARATA GIVES A DIFFERENT VERSION OF THIS.

"LAKSHMANA CONTINUED —

BUT IN MY CASE, THAT FISH WAS COVERED AND WAS NOT DIRECTLY VISIBLE TO THE ARCHER. HE COULD SEE ONLY ITS REFLECTION.

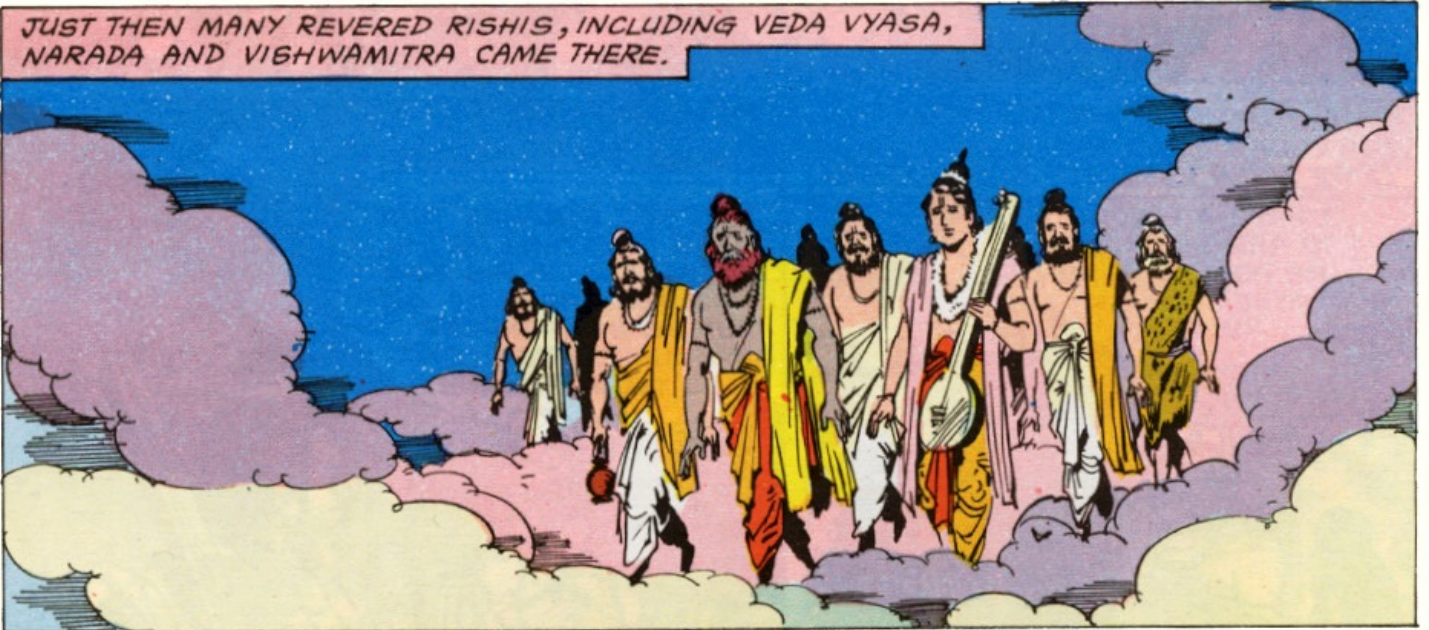


MANY BRAVE MEN INCLUDING DURYODHANA, JARASANDHA, SHISHUPALA AND KARNA TRIED THEIR HAND BUT THEY COULD NOT FELL THE FISH. BUT KRISHNA DID IT SO EFFORTLESSLY.



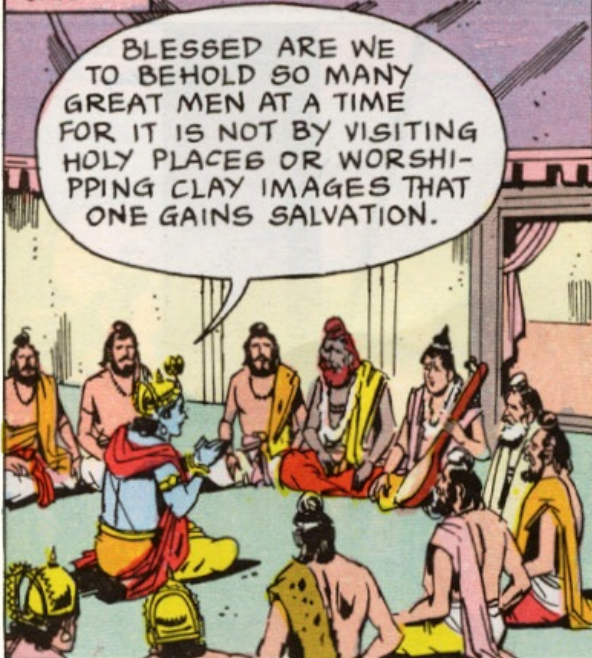
"DRAUPADI, KUNTI AND GANDHARI WERE MOVED TO HEAR THE DEVOTION SHOWN TO KRISHNA BY HIS MANY WIVES.

JUST THEN MANY REVERED RISHIS, INCLUDING VEDA VYASA, NARADA AND VISHWAMITRA CAME THERE.



"AFTER THEY WERE RECEIVED WITH DUE HONOUR AND CEREMONY, KRISHNA SAID —

BLESSED ARE WE TO BEHOLD SO MANY GREAT MEN AT A TIME FOR IT IS NOT BY VISITING HOLY PLACES OR WORSHIPPING CLAY IMAGES THAT ONE GAINS SALVATION.

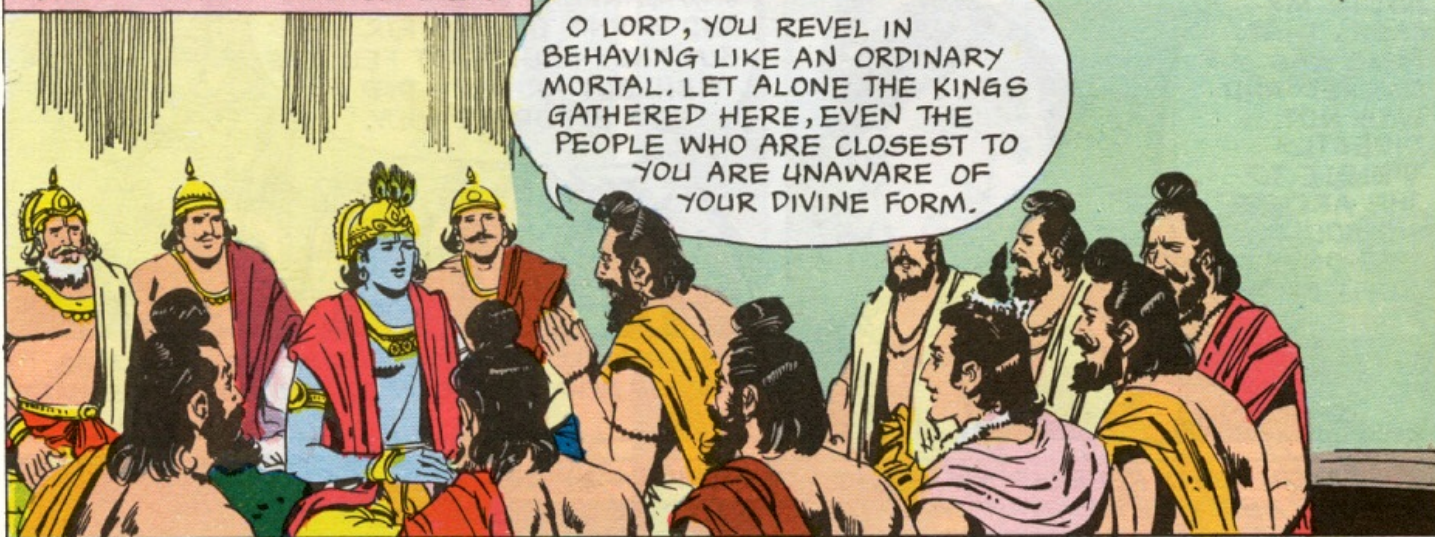


HE WHO IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH HIS BODY AND NOT WITH THE SOUL IS AN ASS. SO IS THE PERSON WHO CONSIDERS THE WATER OF THE RIVER MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE GREAT RISHIS AND WISE MEN GATHERED AT SUCH PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE.



"AT FIRST THE RISHIS, WHO HAD COME TO OFFER WORSHIP TO KRISHNA, WERE SURPRISED BY THE REVERENCE SHOWN BY KRISHNA. THEN REALISATION DAWNED ON THEM.

O LORD, YOU REVEL IN BEHAVING LIKE AN ORDINARY MORTAL. LET ALONE THE KINGS GATHERED HERE, EVEN THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CLOSEST TO YOU ARE UNAWARE OF YOUR DIVINE FORM.



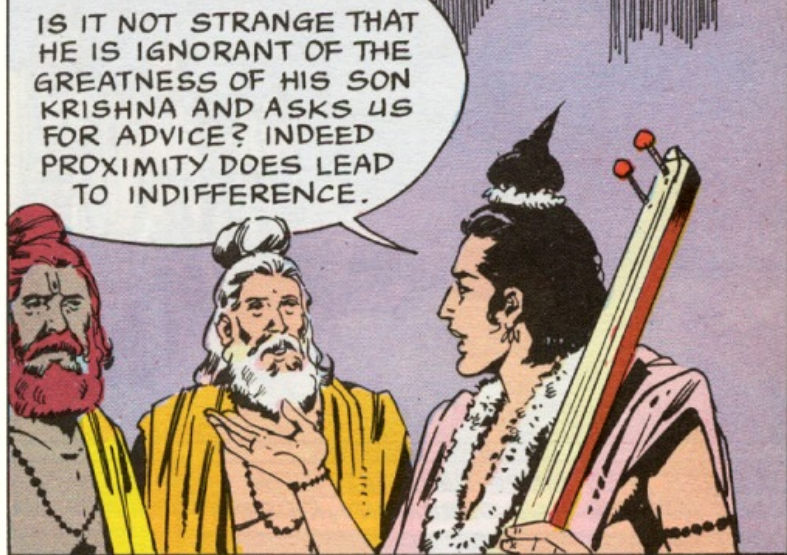
"AFTER OFFERING HOMAGE TO KRISHNA, THE RISHIS WERE ABOUT TO TAKE LEAVE WHEN VASUDEVA STOPPED THEM.

I HAVE A FAVOUR TO ASK. INSTRUCT ME HOW I CAN RID MYSELF OF SIN-FULNESS.



"NARADA SAID IN A WHISPERED UNDERTONE TO HIS COMPANION RISHIS.

IS IT NOT STRANGE THAT HE IS IGNORANT OF THE GREATNESS OF HIS SON KRISHNA AND ASKS US FOR ADVICE? INDEED PROXIMITY DOES LEAD TO INDIFFERENCE.



"ALOUD HE SAID—

YOU SHOULD WORSHIP LORD VISHNU BY PERFORMING A YAJNA.



"UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE RISHIS, VASUDEVA BEGAN A YAJNA AT THE HOLY SPOT."



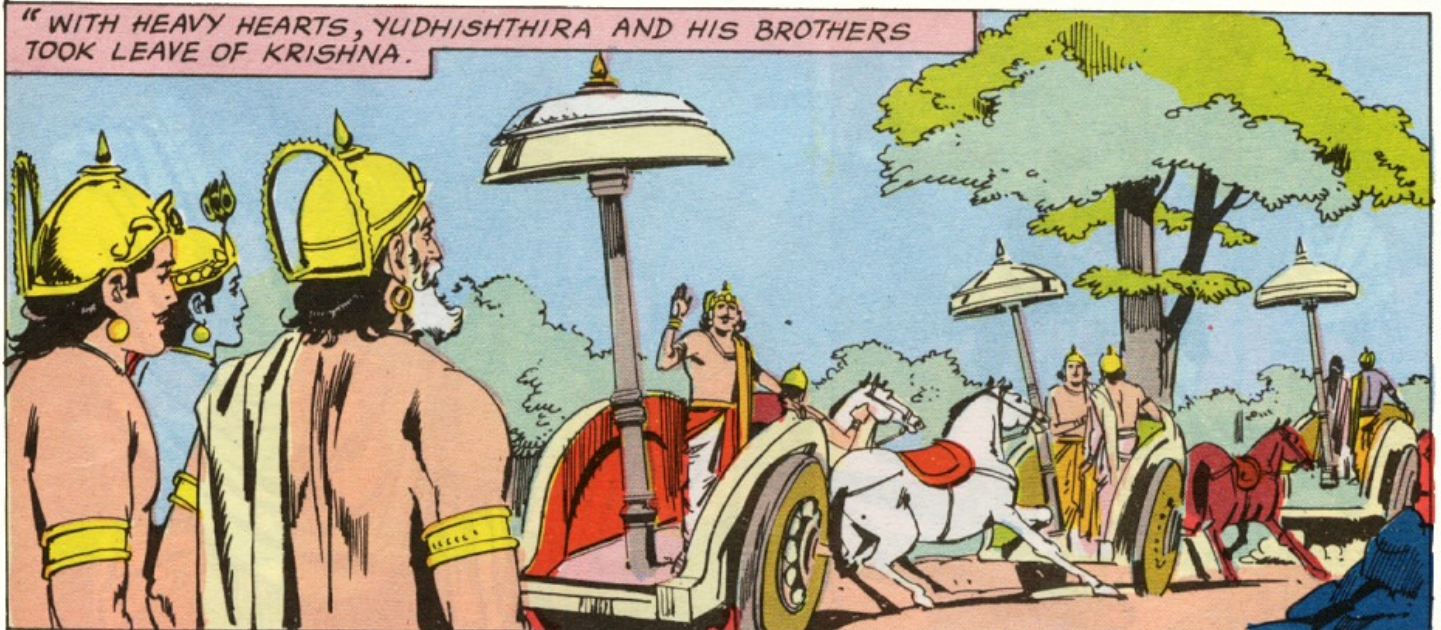
"AFTER APPLYING CORYLLIUM IN HIS EYES AND SMEARING HIS BODY WITH BUTTER, VASUDEVA PERFORMED THE YAJNA DRESSED IN DEERSKIN WHILE HIS WIVES WERE DECKED IN SILKEN GARMENTS AND BEJEWELLED ORNAMENTS."

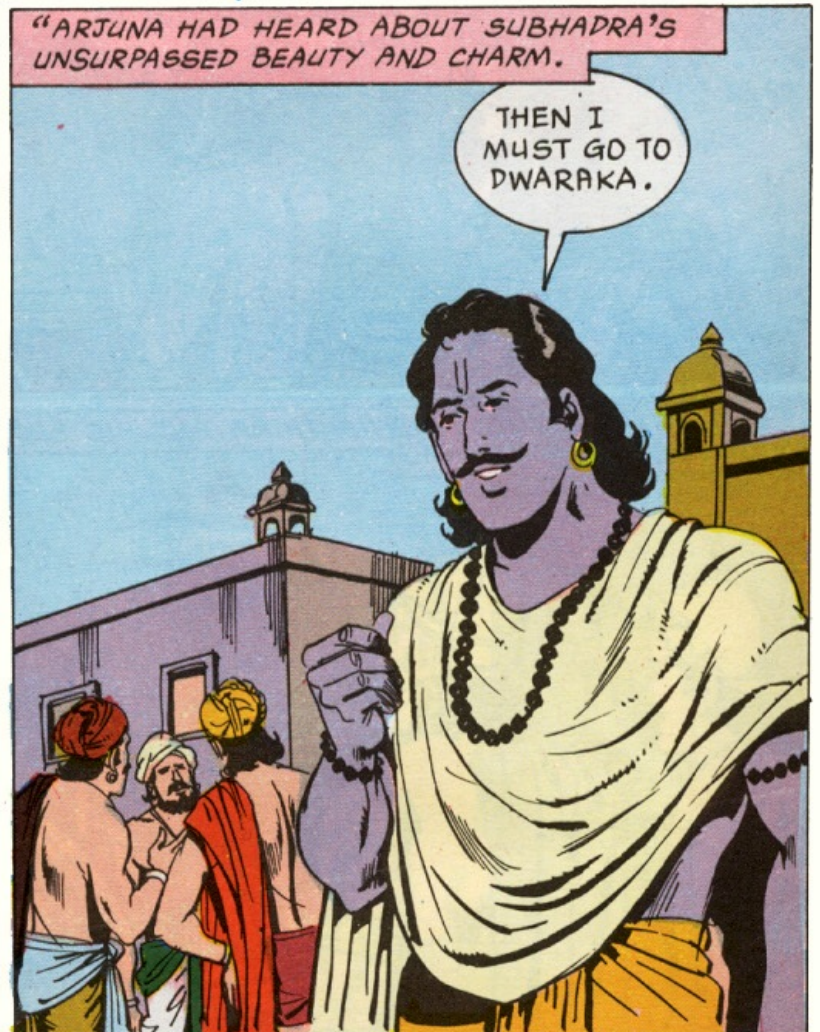
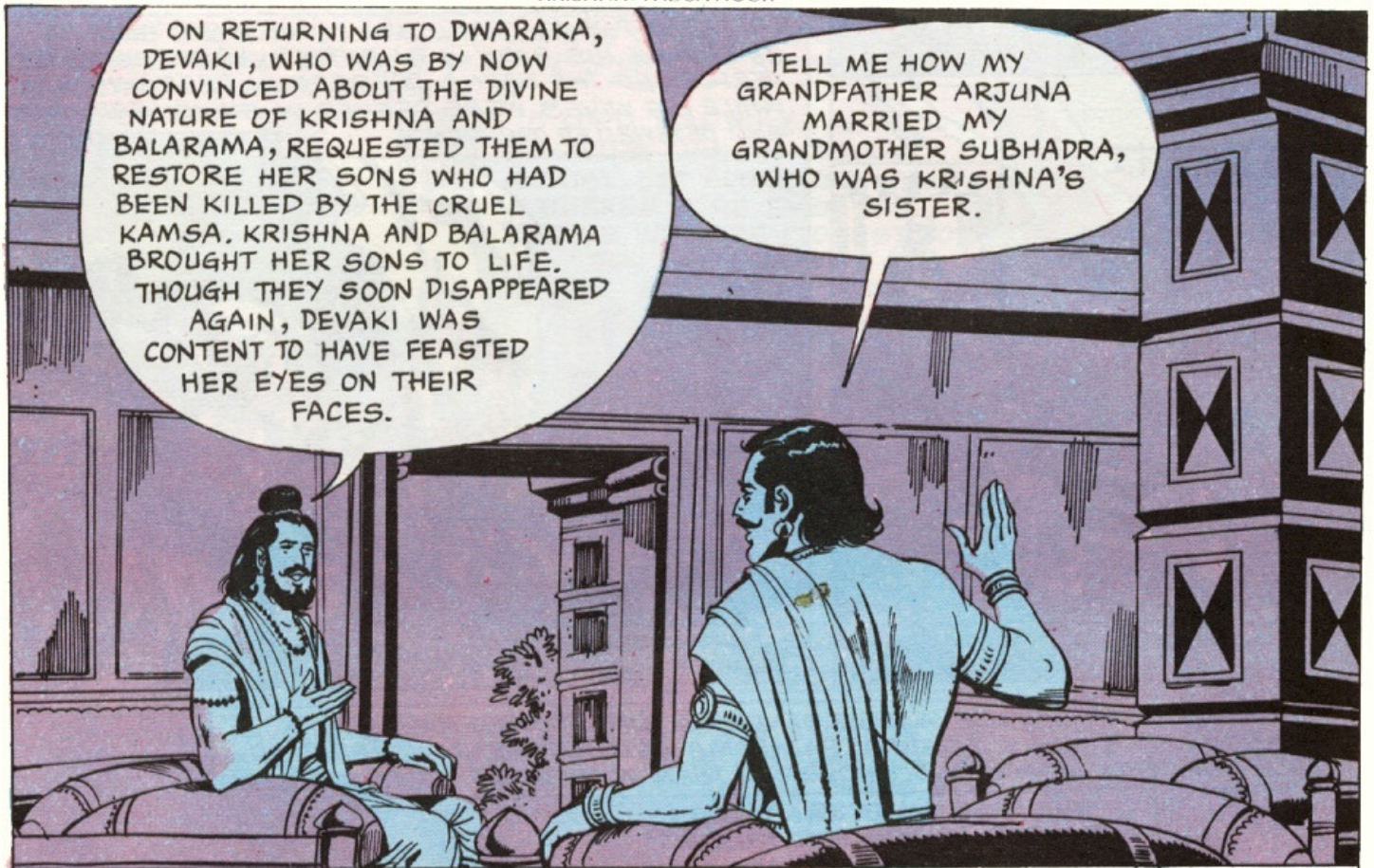


"AFTER THE YAJNA, VASUDEVA GAVE GENEROUS GIFTS TO THE RISHIS AND THE ASSEMBLED KINGS. KRISHNA, BALARAMA AND UGRASENA WORSHIPPED NANDA AND OTHER GOPAS AND SHOWERED THEM WITH GIFTS."

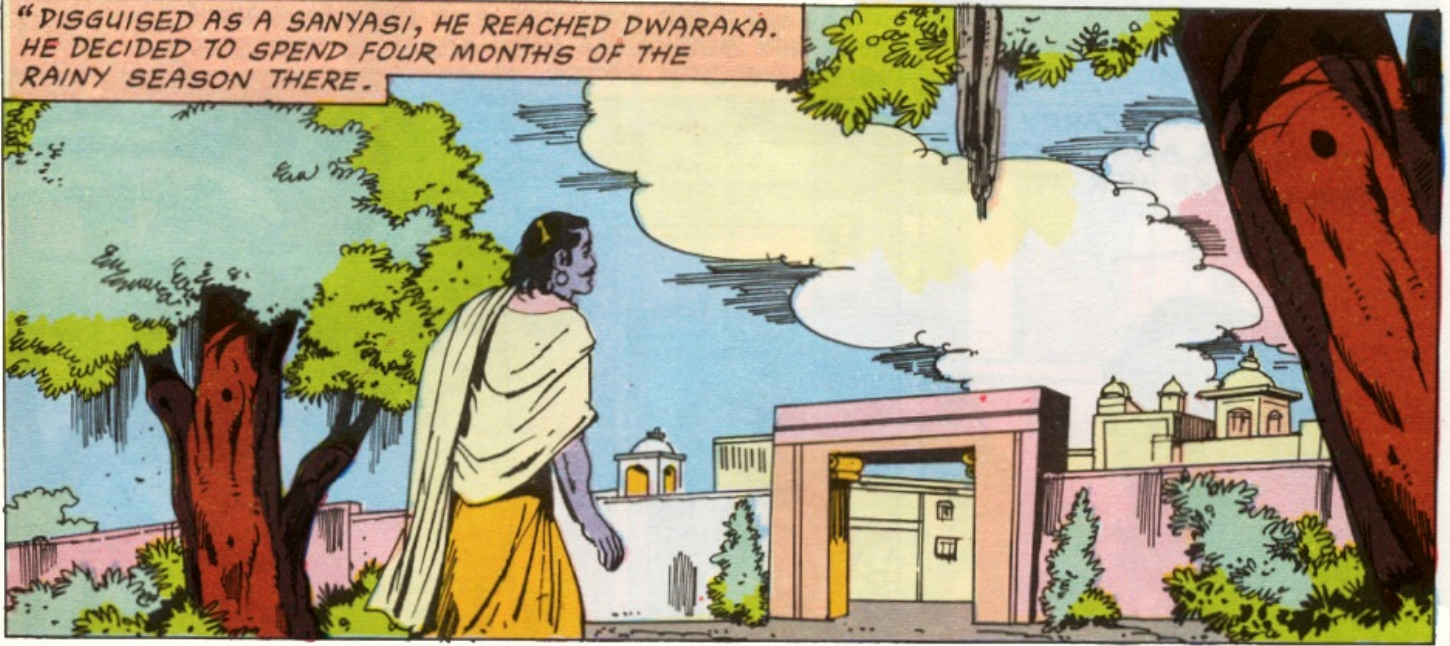


"WITH HEAVY HEARTS, YUDHISHTHIRA AND HIS BROTHERS TOOK LEAVE OF KRISHNA."





"DISGUISED AS A SANYASI, HE REACHED DWARAKA. HE DECIDED TO SPEND FOUR MONTHS OF THE RAINY SEASON THERE."



"BELIEVING HIM TO BE AN ASCETIC, BALARAMA INVITED HIM FOR A MEAL TO HIS PALACE."



"IT WAS THEN THAT ARJUNA FIRST BEHELD SUBHADRA WHO, ACCORDING TO TRADITION WAITED ON THE HONOURED GUESTS."

HOW LOVELY SHE LOOKS.



"SUBHADRA TOO WAS SMITTEN BY LOVE FOR THE HANDSOME FORM OF ARJUNA*"

I WILL MARRY NONE OTHER.



* ACCORDING TO A MAHABHARATA VERSION, ARJUNA REVEALS HIS REAL IDENTITY TO HER.



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Editor: Anant Pai

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