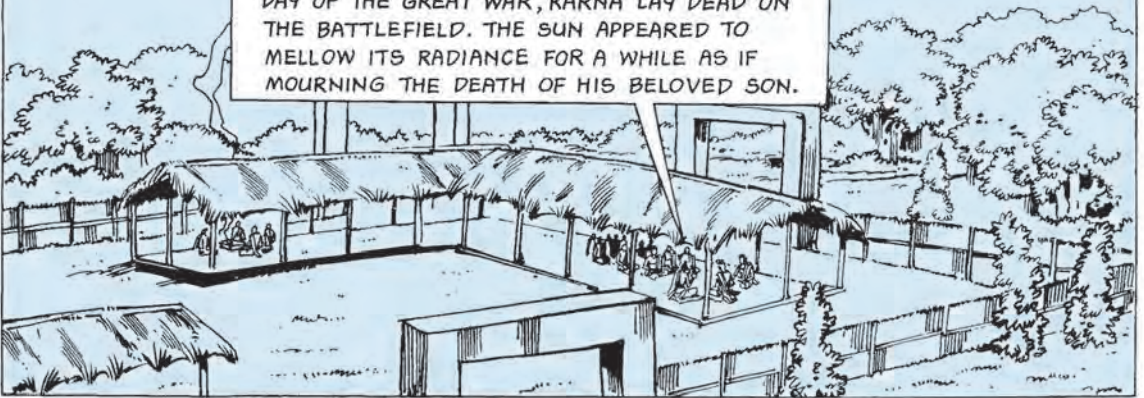


Mahabharata-38

THE KURUS ROUTED

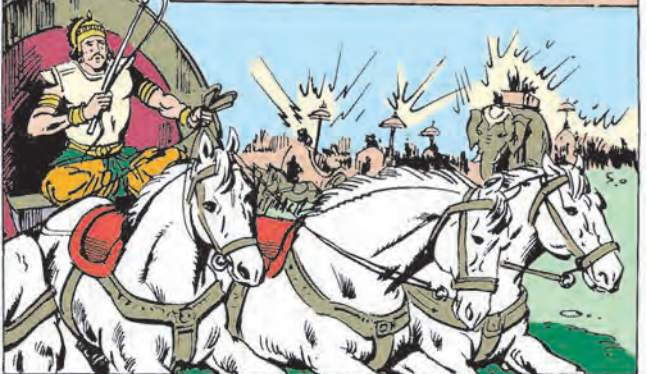
THUS ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE GREAT WAR, KARNA LAY DEAD ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THE SUN APPEARED TO MELLOW ITS RADIANCE FOR A WHILE AS IF MOURNING THE DEATH OF HIS BELOVED SON.



"A TEARFUL SHALYA DROVE THE CHARIOT BACK, DIVESTED OF BOTH ITS BANNER AND OWNER."



"HIS EARS WERE FILLED WITH THE TRIUMPHANT CRIES OF REJOICING EMANATING FROM THE PANDAVA FORCES CELEBRATING THEIR VICTORY."



"DHRTARASHTRA ASKED SANJAYA —

WHAT WAS THE STATE OF OUR ARMY AFTER THE FEARSOME DUEL BETWEEN KARNA AND ARJUNA?

OUR SOLDIERS WERE LIKE A HERD OF BULLS SHORN OF THEIR HORNS OR LIKE SERPENTS DEPRIVED OF THEIR FANGS. THE ARMY WAS IN TOTAL DISARRAY.



"TO RALLY HIS FORCES AGAIN, DURYODHANA HAD TO TAKE THE LEAD."

TAKE MY CHARIOT AHEAD. I WILL KILL ARJUNA, KRISHNA AND THAT CONCEITED BHEEMA, AND AVENGE THE DEATH OF KARNA.



"BHEEMA JUMPED DOWN FROM HIS CHARIOT AND WITH HIS MACE MERCILESSLY KILLED THE SOLDIERS ON FOOT..."



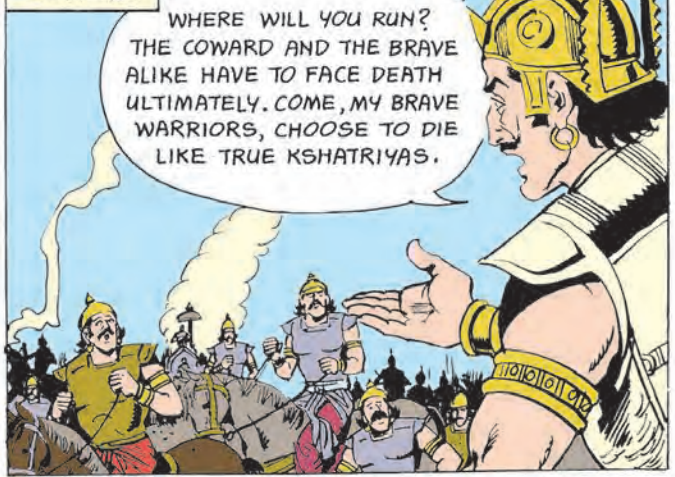
...WHILE ARJUNA ATTACKED THE WARRIORS ON CHARIOTS.



"TORMENTED BY THE ARROWS OF DHRISTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA, THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS BEGAN TO FLEE THE BATTLEFIELD.



"DURYODHANA ADDRESSED THE FLEEING SOLDIERS.



WHERE WILL YOU RUN? THE COWARD AND THE BRAVE ALIKE HAVE TO FACE DEATH ULTIMATELY. COME, MY BRAVE WARRIORS, CHOOSE TO DIE LIKE TRUE KSHATRIYAS.

"BUT THE WOUNDED AND FRIGHTENED SOLDIERS WERE IN NO MOOD TO HEAR HIS DISCOURSE. THEY RAN AS FAST AS THEIR FEET COULD TAKE THEM. SHALYA SAID TO DURYODHANA —



BEHOLD, O KING! THE FIELD IS STREWN WITH FALLEN SOLDIERS. COME, LET US RETURN TO CAMP. ALLOW THE SOLDIERS TO GO BACK.

"DURYODHANA COULD NOT CONTROL HIS TEARS AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO THEIR CAMP. HE COULD NOT GET OVER KARNA'S DEATH.



OH! KARNA! KARNA!

"IN A JUBILANT MOOD, KRISHNA AND ARJUNA RETURNED TO THE CAMP.



"THEY RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA'S TENT TO CONVEY THE NEWS OF KARNA'S DEATH.



"KRISHNA SAID—

IT IS INDEED FORTUNATE THAT ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA, SAHADEVA AND YOU HAVE EMERGED UNSCATHED IN THE BATTLE. COME, LET US HASTEN TO FINISH THE TASK IN HAND. YOU MUST PREPARE YOURSELF TO RULE THE EARTH NOW.



"YUDHISHTHIRA AFFECTIONATELY HELD KRISHNA'S HAND AND SAID —

WITH YOU ON OUR SIDE, OUR VICTORY WAS CERTAIN, O LORD! TONIGHT, AFTER THIRTEEN LONG YEARS, WE WILL SLEEP WITHOUT A WORRY.



"IN THE KAURAVA CAMP THE VENERABLE KRIPACHARYA COUNSELLED DURYODHANA.

TO FIGHT IN BATTLE IS INDEED THE PRIME DUTY OF A KSHATRIYA. BUT NOW BHEESHMA, DRONA, KARNA, JAYADRATHA AND ALL YOUR BROTHERS HAVE BEEN KILLED. EVEN YOUR SON LAKSHMANA HAS BEEN KILLED.

SEVENTEEN LONG DAYS OF DREADFUL BATTLE HAVE PASSED. LIKE A RAGING FOREST FIRE, ARJUNA HAS DESTROYED YOUR ARMY. MAKE PEACE WITH THE PANDAVAS. THIS IS MY SINCERE ADVICE TO YOU.

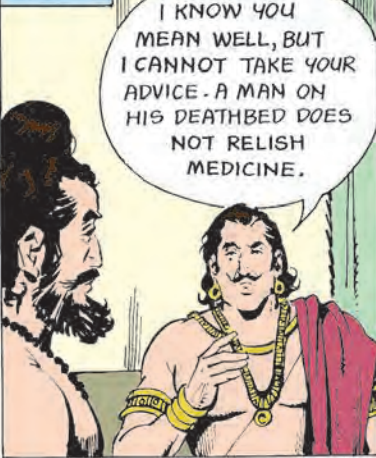


"FOR A WHILE, DURYODHANA SAT SILENT. THEN WITH A SIGH HE SAID —

I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL, BUT I CANNOT TAKE YOUR ADVICE. A MAN ON HIS DEATHBED DOES NOT RELISH MEDICINE.

HAVING RULED OVER THE ENTIRE EARTH, HOW CAN I BE A DEPENDANT OF THE PANDAVAS. TO DIE PEACEFULLY IN BED IS SHAMEFUL FOR A TRUE KSHATRIYA. SO FIGHT I MUST AND DIE A GLORIOUS DEATH.

"HIS SOLDIERS HAILED HIS DECISION AND RESOLVING TO FIGHT THE NEXT DAY THEY ALL RETIRED FOR THE NIGHT.



"NEXT MORNING, DURYODHANA CONSULTED ASHWATTHAMA.

I SEEK YOUR ADVICE AS THE SON OF OUR GURU. WHO DO YOU SUGGEST SHOULD LEAD OUR ARMY NOW?

BRAVE SHALYA SHOULD BE OUR COMMANDER.



"DURYODHANA REQUESTED SHALYA TO TAKE CHARGE.

THIS IS A TESTING TIME FOR US. PLEASE TAKE COMMAND AND LEAD US TO VICTORY.

I SHALL DO MY BEST FOR YOU. EITHER WIN THE WAR OR DIE IN THE BATTLEFIELD.



"THE KAURAVAS THEN PLANNED THEIR STRATEGY—

REFRAIN FROM SINGLE COMBATS. WE WILL FIGHT NO DUELS TODAY. OUR WARRIORS WILL FIGHT IN UNISON AND PROTECT ONE ANOTHER.



"WHEN THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS LEARNT THAT SHALYA WOULD BE THEIR COMMANDER, THEY CHEERED SO LOUDLY THAT YUDHISHTHIRA COULD HEAR THEM.

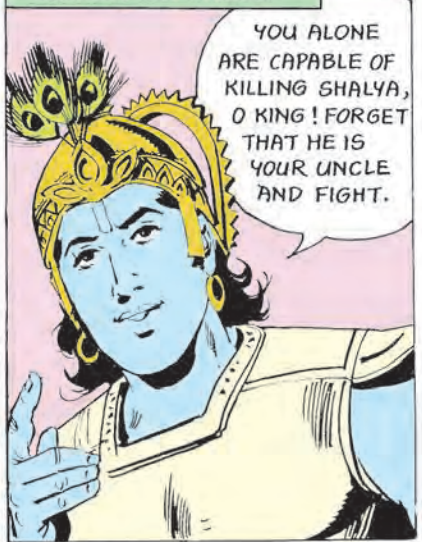
I THINK SHALYA, THE ACE ARCHER, HAS BEEN PUT IN COMMAND. O KRISHNA, WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE SHOULD DO?

SHALYA IS INDEED SUPERIOR TO STALWARTS LIKE SHIKHANDI.

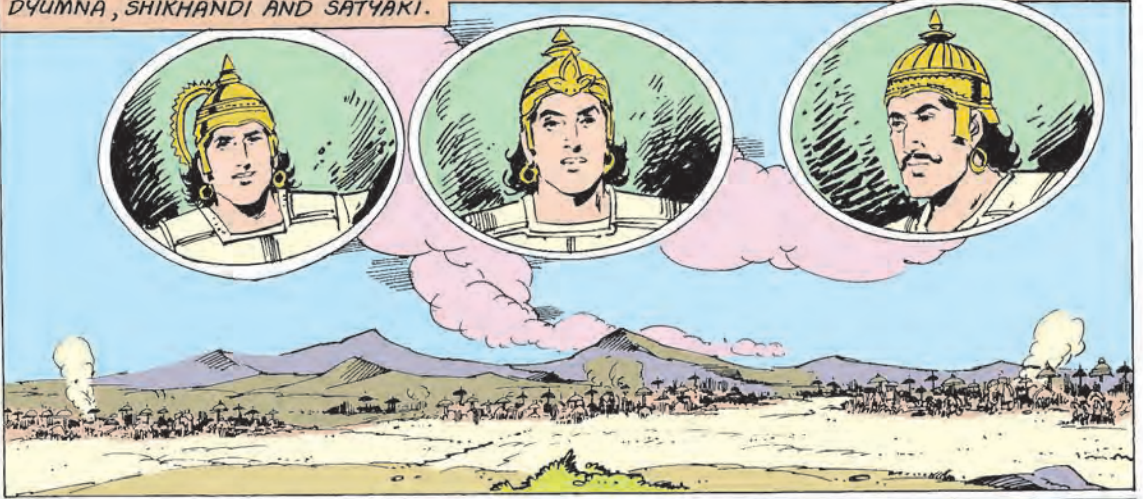


"KRISHNA CONTINUED —

YOU ALONE ARE CAPABLE OF KILLING SHALYA, O KING! FORGET THAT HE IS YOUR UNCLE AND FIGHT.



"THE PANDAVAS DIVIDED THEIR FORCES INTO THREE DIVISIONS, HEADED BY DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI.



"IN HIS IMPATIENCE TO KILL SHALYA, YUDHISHTHIRA RAPIDLY ADVANCED TOWARDS HIM.



"ARJUNA ATTACKED THE SAMSHAPATAKAS AND BHEEMA FELL UPON SHAKUNI.



"DHRTARASHTRA INTERRUPTED SANJAYA'S NARRATION.

HOW MANY SOLDIERS REMAINED IN THE TWO ARMIES?

IN YOUR ARMY THERE WERE ELEVEN THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SEVENTEEN THOUSAND ELEPHANTS, TWO LAKH HORSES AND THREE CRORE INFANTRY MEN. AMONG THE PANDAVAS THERE WERE SIX THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SIX THOUSAND ELEPHANTS, TEN THOUSAND HORSES AND TWO CRORE SOLDIERS.



"WITH YUDHISHTHIRA LEADING THE WAY, DHRISHTADYUMNA AND SHIKHANDI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA TOGETHER FELL UPON SHALYA.



"THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE FRIGHTENED OF THIS COMBINED ATTACK. BUT SHALYA WAS UNDAUNTED. HE TOLD HIS CHARIOTEER.

LEAD ME ON TO YUDHISHTHIRA AND WATCH ME IN ACTION TODAY.



"INDEED SHALYA ALONE WAS CAPABLE OF RESTRAINING THE SURGING PANDAVA FORCES.



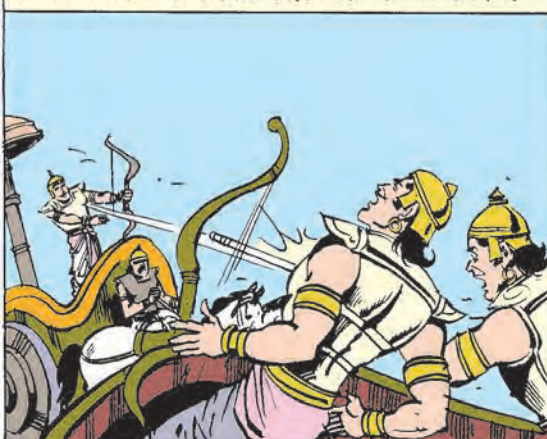
"JUST THEN, NAKULA ATTACKED KARNA'S SON, CHITRASENA. BEING EQUALLY WELL-MATCHED IN PROWESS, THEIR DUEL WAS LONG DRAWN AND FURIOUS. NAKULA'S CHARIOT WAS DESTROYED. WITH HIS SWORD HELD ALOFT, HE ADVANCED TOWARDS CHITRASENA.



"SUDDENLY, HE LEAPED ONTO CHITRASENA'S CHARIOT, AND WITH A FATAL BLOW FROM HIS SWORD, BEHEADED HIM.



"CHITRASENA'S BROTHERS, SUSHENA AND SATYASENA ATTACKED NAKULA, BUT SOON MET WITH THE SAME FATE AS CHITRASENA.



"SEEING SHALYA BEING ATTACKED BY THE PANDAVAS, KRITAVARMA, KRIPA, SHARUNI AND ASHWATTHAMA CAME TO HIS HELP.



"AN ENRAGED KRITAVARMA
INFLECTED A WOUND ON
BHEEMA.



"KRIPACHARYA WORRI-
ED DHRISTADYUMNA
WITH A VOLLEY OF
ARROWS...



"... AND ASHWATTHAMA ATTACKED
NAKULA AND SAHADEVA.



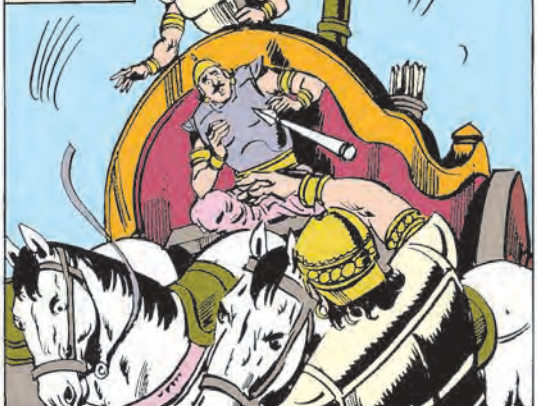
"WHEN BHEEMA'S HORSES WERE KILLED BY KRITAVARMA, HE JUMPED DOWN FROM THE
CHARIOT, BRANDISHING HIS MACE.



"AFTER CHASING AWAY KRITAVARMA, BHEEMA
TURNED TO SHALYA AND KILLED HIS HORSES.
SHALYA SKILFULLY THREW A SPEAR AT
BHEEMA.



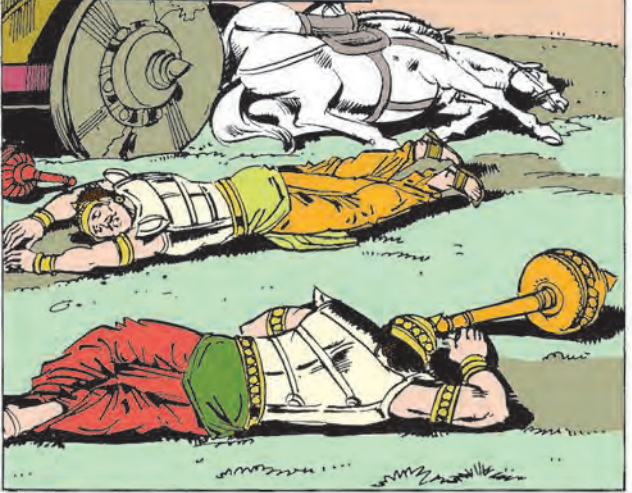
"UNRUFFLED, BHEEMA CAUGHT THE WEAPON
IN HIS HAND AND THREW IT BACK AT
SHALYA'S CHARIOTEER SO SWIFTLY THAT HE
FELL OFF.



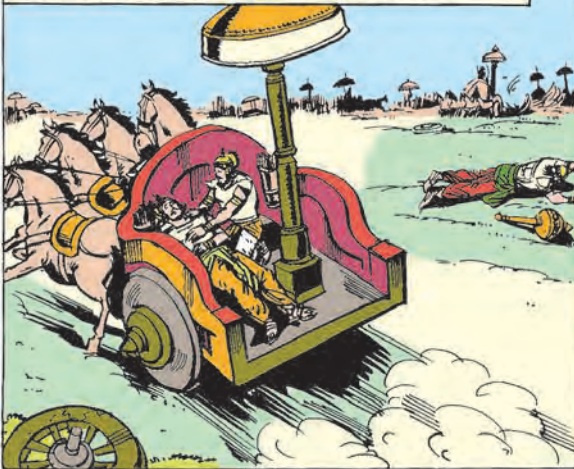
"SHALYA THEN TOOK UP A MACE STANDING TALL LIKE A MOUNTAIN. THE TWO WARRIORS RESEMBLED TWO ENRAGED BULLS RARING FOR A FIGHT."



"SPARKS FLEW EACH TIME THEIR MACES CLASHED. WOUNDED AND BLEEDING PROFUSELY, THEY CIRCLED, REARED AND ATTACKED TILL BOTH OF THEM COLLAPSED SIMULTANEOUSLY."



"KRIPACHARYA QUICKLY PUT SHALYA ON HIS OWN CHARIOT AND TOOK HIM AWAY."



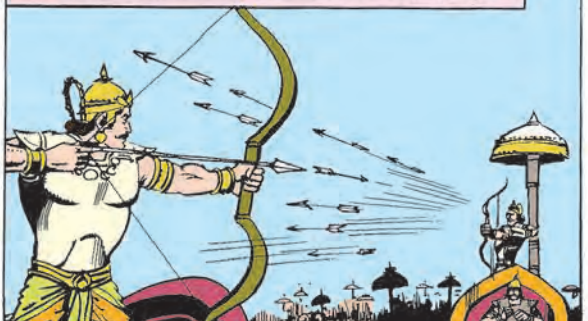
"ON RECOVERING, BHEEMA SPRANG UP WITH A ROAR, READY FOR THE FRAY AGAIN."



"THE ENTHUSED SOLDIERS FROM BOTH ARMIES SEEMED ALL EAGER TO EMBRACE DEATH. THE BATTLEFIELD RESOUNDED WITH THEIR BLOOD-CURDLING CRIES."



"SHALYA AND YUDHISHTHIRA WERE ONCE AGAIN IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION; WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA CUT OFF SHALYA'S BANNER WITH A WELL-AIMED SPEAR, HE RETALIATED BY COVERING HIM WITH A CLOUD OF ARROWS."



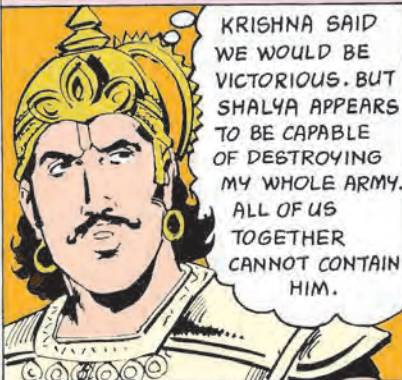
"SATYAKI, BHEEMA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA'S SIDE AND HARASSED SHALYA.



"BUT SHALYA TOOK GOOD CARE OF HIMSELF, ATTACKING SATYAKI, BHEEMA AND NAKULA WITH A SHOWER OF ARROWS.



"THE PANDAVAS TRIED VARIOUS WEAPONS ON SHALYA, BUT HE LIVED UP TO HIS REPUTATION OF A GREAT WARRIOR. HE QUELLED THEM ALL. A NIGGLING DOUBT BEGAN TO TORMENT YUDHISHTHIRA.



KRISHNA SAID WE WOULD BE VICTORIOUS. BUT SHALYA APPEARS TO BE CAPABLE OF DESTROYING MY WHOLE ARMY. ALL OF US TOGETHER CANNOT CONTAIN HIM.

"MEANWHILE, ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA WERE LOCKED IN COMBAT. ARJUNA'S CHARIOT WAS BARELY VISIBLE UNDER THE ARROWS.

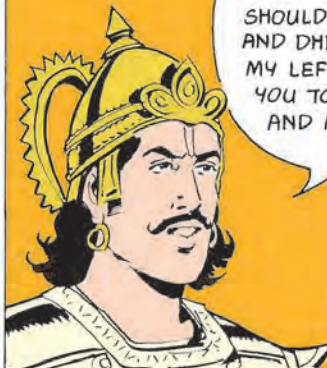


"NOTING SHALYA'S PROWESS, YUDHISHTHIRA CALLED HIS BROTHERS TOGETHER.

BHEESHMA, DRONA, KARNA AND OTHER WARRIORS FELL BECAUSE OF YOUR EFFORTS. NOW SHALYA ALONE REMAINS. LEAVE THIS TASK TO ME.



I WANT NAKULA AND SAHADEVA TO GUARD MY CHARIOT WHEELS. SATYAKI SHOULD BE ON MY RIGHT AND DHRISTADYUMNA ON MY LEFT. BHEEMA, I WANT YOU TO BE AHEAD OF ME, AND ARJUNA BEHIND ME.



"READILY, THE BROTHERS AGREED. LIKE TWO HUNGRY LIONS POUNCING ON A PREY, YUDHISHTHIRA AND SHALYA LUNGED AT EACH OTHER.



"THE MILD AND CALM YUDHISHTHIRA APPEARED TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO A DETERMINED AND FORMIDABLE FOE.



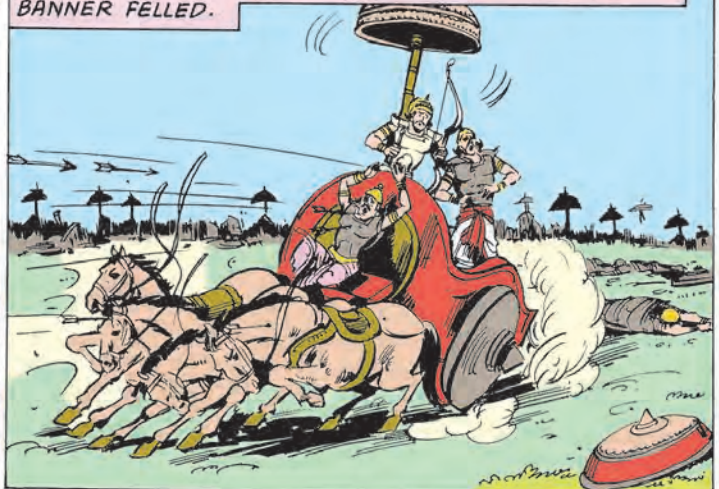
"LIKE A STRONG GUST OF WIND DISPELLING CLOUDS, YUDHISHTHIRA PLAYED HAVOC WITH THE KAURAVA ARMY.



"SO GALLANTLY DID YUDHISHTHIRA AND SHALYA FIGHT THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHO WOULD WIN IN THE DUEL.



"SHALYA FIRED A HUNDRED ARROWS ON YUDHISHTHIRA WHO RETALIATED WITH THREE HUNDRED. SOON SHALYA'S REAR GUARDS WERE KILLED, HIS HORSES SLAIN AND BANNER FELLED.



"NOTING SHALYA'S PLIGHT, ASHWATTHAMA QUICKLY PUT HIM ON HIS OWN CHARIOT AND CARRIED HIM AWAY.



"YUDHISHTHIRA ROARED LIKE A LION AS HE SAW HIS ADVERSARY GETTING AWAY. BUT SOON SHALYA WAS BACK ON ANOTHER CHARIOT.



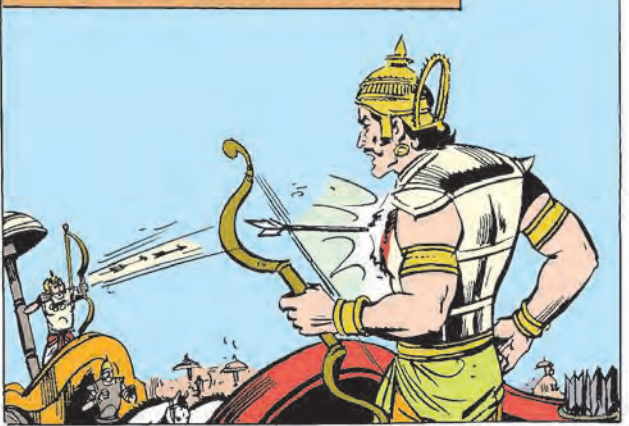
"BHEEMA, SATYAKI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA FORMED A PROTECTIVE RING ROUND YUDHISHTHIRA AND CHALLENGED SHALYA TO FIGHT.



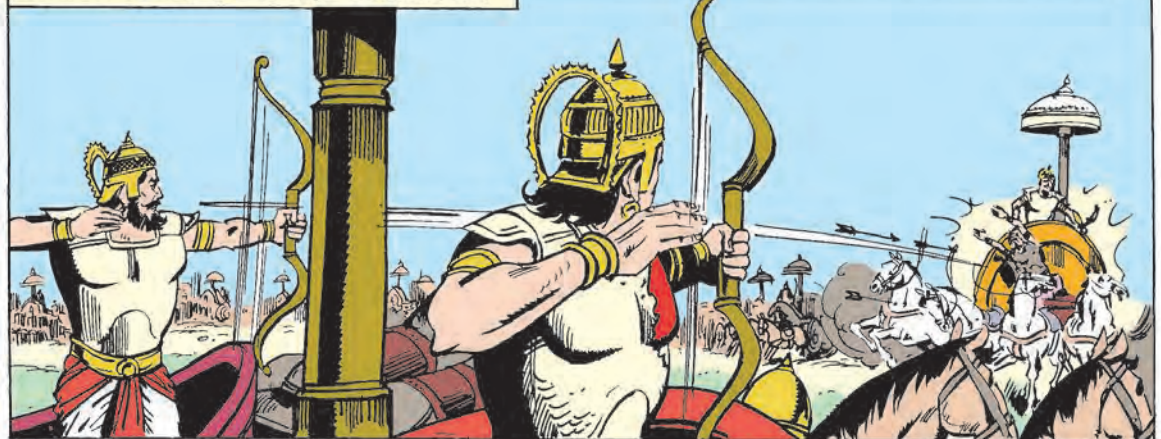
"UNDER YUDHISHTHIRA'S ATTACK SHALYA BECAME UNCONSCIOUS. HOWEVER, HE QUICKLY RECOVERED AND DISCHARGED A HUNDRED ARROWS AT YUDHISHTHIRA.



"WITH NINE WELL-AIMED ARROWS, YUDHISHTHIRA TORE OFF SHALYA'S ARMOUR. IN RETALIATION, SHALYA BROKE YUDHISHTHIRA'S BOW.



"SOON, SHALYA'S ARROWS RENT ASUNDER YUDHISHTHIRA'S GOLDEN ARMOUR AND KILLED HIS HORSES. KRIPA KILLED HIS CHARIOTEER.



"BHEEMA BEGAN TO HARASS SHALYA. WITH A SINGLE SWIFT ARROW, HE BROKE SHALYA'S BOW AND WITH ANOTHER KILLED THE CHARIOTEER. SOON THE FOUR HORSES TOO FELL.



"SHALYA NOW JUMPED DOWN, SWORD IN ONE HAND AND SHIELD IN THE OTHER.



"DHRSHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI SURROUNDED SHALYA WHILE BHEEMA BROKE HIS SHIELD TO PIECES AND KNOCKED HIS SWORD OFF.



"THE FRIGHTENED KAURAVA SOLDIERS RAN PELL-MELL IN ALL DIRECTIONS. SHALYA CHARGED TOWARDS YUDHISHTHIRA.



"YUDHISHTHIRA PICKED UP A FIERCE LOOKING GOLDEN JAVELIN, STUDDED WITH GEMS, AND THREW IT AT SHALYA'S BROAD CHEST.



"WITH HIS ARMS SPREAD OUT, SHALYA FELL DOWN. THE VERY EARTH APPEARED TO RISE TO WELCOME HIM.



"IN HIS WARLIKE FERVOUR YUDHISHTHIRA CONTINUED TO ATTACK THE KAURAVA ARMY.



"SHALYA'S ARMY RALLIED TOGETHER TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS.



"SHAKUNI ASKED DURYODHANA —

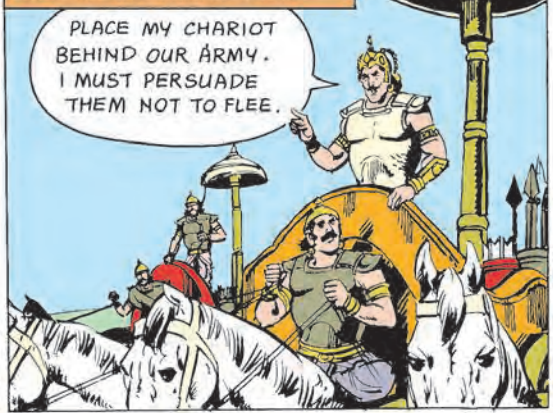
WHY DID YOU ALLOW SHALYA'S ARMY TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS? HAD WE NOT ALL DECIDED TO FIGHT IN UNISON?

I DID TRY, BUT THEY DID NOT HEED ME. LOOK NOW, THEY HAVE ALL FALLEN AND LIE DEAD.



"SEEING HIS ARMY DEMORALISED BY THE FALL OF THEIR COMMANDER, DURYODHANA SAID TO HIS CHARIOTEER —

PLACE MY CHARIOT BEHIND OUR ARMY. I MUST PERSUADE THEM NOT TO FLEE.



"SEEING DURYODHANA TAKING CHARGE, TWENTY ONE THOUSAND KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE INFUSED WITH CONFIDENCE AGAIN TO FACE THE ENEMY.

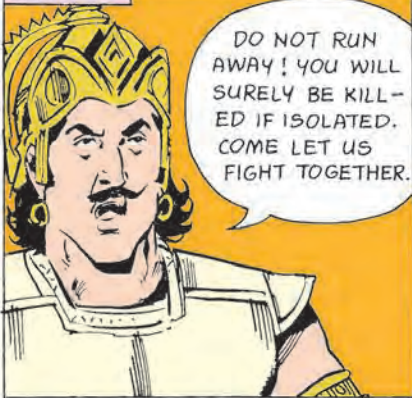
HERE COMES THE MIGHTY DURYODHANA TO LEAD US. LET US ATTACK THE PANDAVAS!



"BHEEMA SAW THE ROARING MASS APPROACHING, AND QUICKLY DESCENDED FROM HIS CHARIOT. WITH HIS MACE, HE SOON MANAGED TO KILL MOST OF THEM.



"THE KAURAVA KINGS TOO BEGAN TO FLEE. DURYODHANA CALLED OUT—



DO NOT RUN AWAY! YOU WILL SURELY BE KILLED IF ISOLATED. COME LET US FIGHT TOGETHER.

"PERSUADED BY DURYODHANA, THE KAURAVA KINGS PREPARED TO FACE THE ENEMY.



"ADDRESSING KRISHNA, ARJUNA SAID—

FOR EIGHTEEN DAYS, THIS BATTLE HAS BEEN GOING ON. TODAY I MUST DESTROY THE WHOLE KAURAVA ARMY AND PUT AN END TO IT.



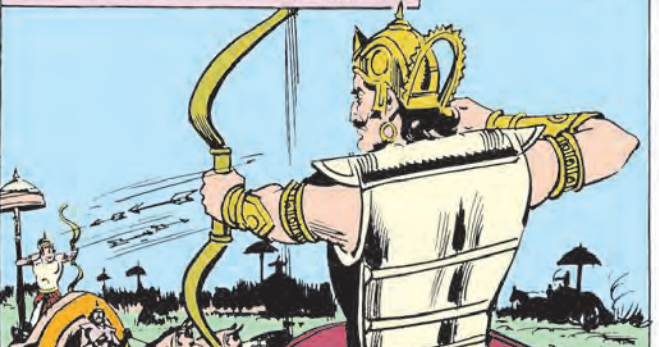
"SOON, THE ARROWS, EMERGING IN A RAPID VOLLEY FROM THE GANDEEVA, COVERED THE ENTIRE BATTLEFIELD.



"TORTURED BY ARJUNA'S ARROWS, THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE AGAIN READY TO FLEE.



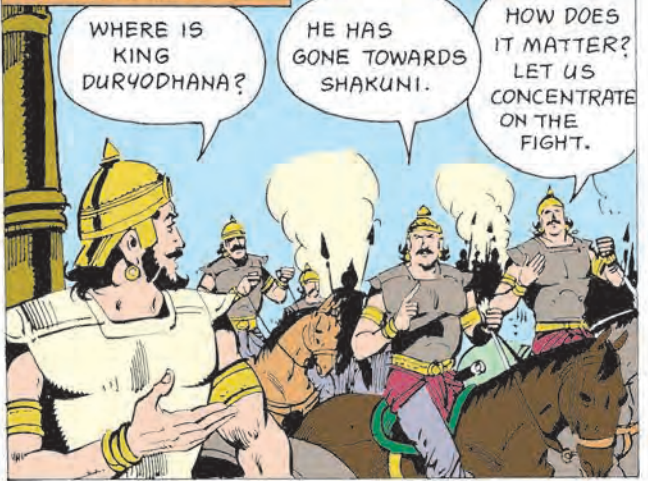
"DURYODHANA TRIED TO REPEL DHRISTADYUMNA WHO WAS ATTACKING THE ARMY.



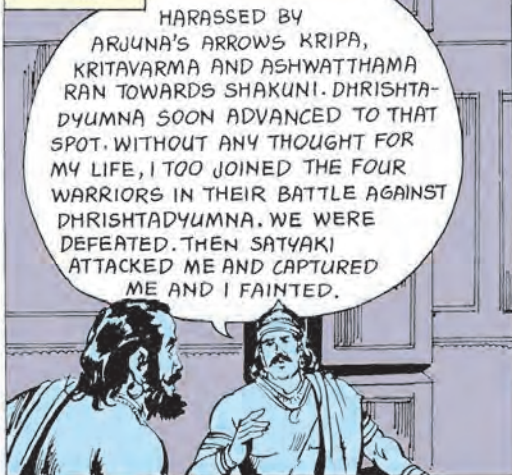
"WHEN DHRISHTADYUMNA KILLED HIS HORSES AND CHARIOTEER, DURYODHANA RODE AWAY ON HORSEBACK.



"ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA NOTED HIS ABSENCE.



"SANJAYA NARRATED THE SUBSEQUENT EVENTS *.



HARASSED BY ARJUNA'S ARROWS KRIPA, KRITAVARMA AND ASHWATTHAMA RAN TOWARDS SHAKUNI. DHRISHTADYUMNA SOON ADVANCED TO THAT SPOT. WITHOUT ANY THOUGHT FOR MY LIFE, I TOO JOINED THE FOUR WARRIORS IN THEIR BATTLE AGAINST DHRISHTADYUMNA. WE WERE DEFEATED. THEN SATYAKI ATTACKED ME AND CAPTURED ME AND I FAINTED.

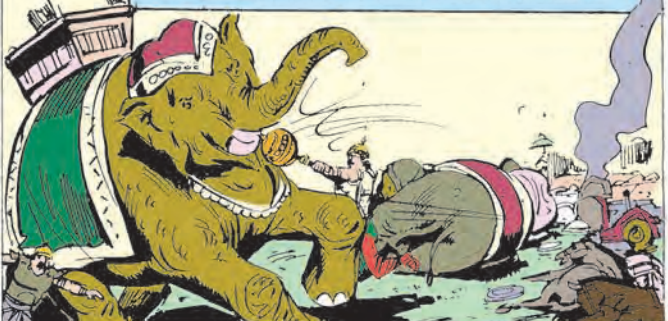
"AFTER DESTROYING OUR ENTIRE ARMY OF ELEPHANTS, BHEEMA ATTACKED DURYODHANA'S BROTHERS.



"UNITED THEY TRIED TO REPEL HIS ATTACK, BUT SOON THEY WERE STRUCK DOWN BY HIS ARROWS AND FELL LIKE TREES UPROOTED ON A MOUNTAINSIDE IN A STRONG GALE.



"ON THIS EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE TERRIBLE WAR, BHEEMA WAS IN HIS ELEMENT. AFTER PUTTING TO DEATH ALMOST ALL OF THE KAURAVA BROTHERS, HE TURNED TO THE REST OF THE ENEMY ARMY. SOON THE BATTLEFIELD AROUND HIM WAS STREWN WITH THE BODIES OF COUNTLESS ELEPHANTS, HORSES AND SOLDIERS THAT SUCCEMPTED TO HIS MIGHTY MACE.



* SANJAY MIGHT HAVE NARRATED THIS AFTER THE DAY'S BATTLE

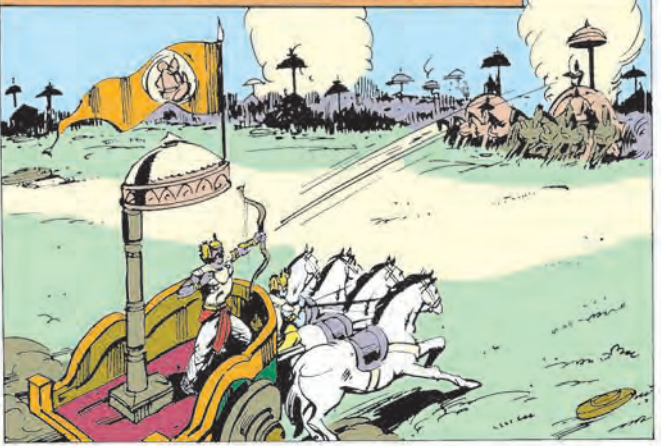
"KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —

BEHOLD DURYODHANA AND SUDARSHANA AMIDST THE HORSEMEN. KILL THEM!

O, KRISHNA, ONLY THESE TWO REMAIN OF ALL DHRITARASHTRA'S SONS. THEY TOO WILL DIE TODAY; REST ASSURED.



"ARJUNA THEN ATTACKED THE TRIGARTA ARMY, WHICH HAD BEEN HARASSING HIM ALL THESE DAYS.



"AT LAST HE KILLED SUSHARMA, THUS ENDING THE TRIGARTA SAGA.



"BHEEMA KILLED SUDARSHANA WITH SHARP ARROWS. DURYODHANA ALONE REMAINED AMONG THE KAURAVA BROTHERS.



"SHAKUNI AND HIS SON ULOOKA ATTACKED BHEEMA AND SAHADEVA.



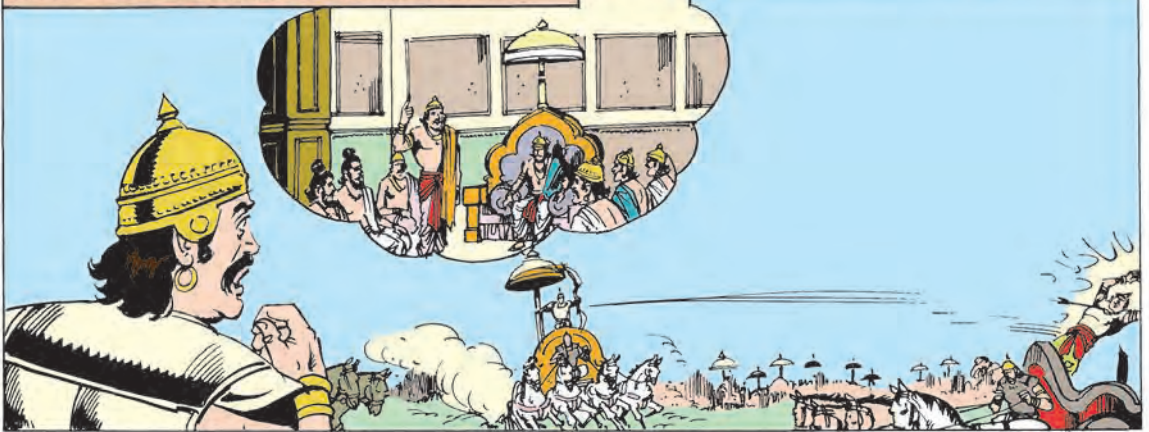
"SO NUMEROUS WERE THE ARROWS SENT BY SAHADEVA IN RESPONSE THAT THEY COVERED THE SKY LIKE A SWARM OF LOCUSTS.



"ULOOKA SHOT SEVEN ARROWS AT BHEEMA AND SEVENTY AT SAHADEVA. SAHADEVA RETALIATED SUITABLY.



"HE BEHEADED ULOOKA WITH HIS SPEAR. SHAKUNI'S EYES BRIMMED OVER WITH TEARS. WITH A DEEP SIGH HE RECALLED VIDURA'S WORDS."



"AN ENRAGED SHAKUNI ATTACKED SAHADEVA WITH VARIOUS WEAPONS, BUT HIS ATTEMPTS WERE OF NO AVAIL."

"HIS DAGGER WAS CUT—



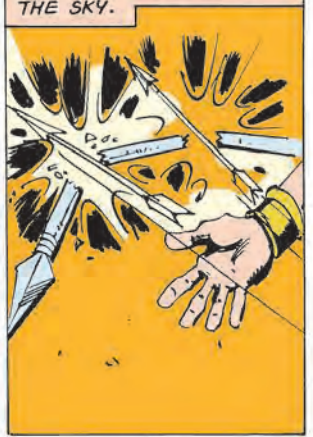
"HIS BOW WAS BROKEN—



"HIS MACE WAS FELLED—



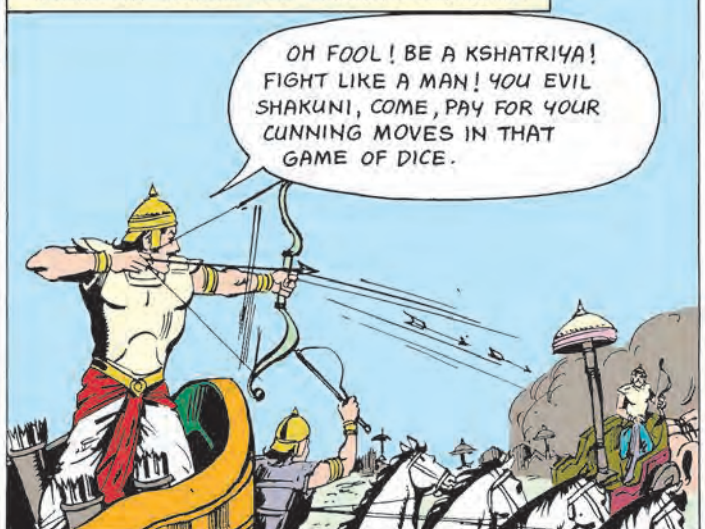
"AND HIS SPEAR FELL LIKE LIGHTNING FROM THE SKY."



"FILLED WITH FEAR, SHAKUNI AND HIS MEN RAN AWAY. THE PANDAVAS REJOICED IN THEIR VICTORY."



"SAHADEVA CHASED THE FLEEING SHAKUNI."



"SAHADEVA CONTINUED TO RAIN ARROWS AND TAUNTS AT SHAKUNI."

ALL THOSE WHO MOCKED
US HAVE BEEN KILLED.
ONLY YOU AND DURYODHANA
REMAIN.



"THEN WITH A VICIOUS-LOOKING IRON SPEAR, BEDECKED WITH GOLDEN FEATHERS, SAHADEVA BEHEADED SHAKUNI."



"DRY-MOUTHED WITH TERROR, THE KAUARVA WARRIORS BEGAN TO RUN AWAY. THE PANDAVA SOLDIERS CHEERED SAHADEVA."

BRAVO! YOU HAVE KILLED
THE WICKED SHAKUNI
AND HIS SON IN
BATTLE.



"ONCE AGAIN DURYODHANA PERSUADED HIS SOLDIERS TO RETURN, BUT THEY COULD NOT FACE THEIR FOES FOR LONG."



SOON THE KAURAVA FORCES
WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED. OF AN ARMY OF ELEVEN
AKSHAUHINIS, NOT A
SINGLE SOLDIER REMAINED.



"DURYODHANA STOOD ALONE, WITHOUT AN ARMY OR A CHARIOT, FORLORN AND WOUNDED."



"THERE HE WAS, THE LONE WARRIOR FACING AN ARMY OF TWO THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SEVEN HUNDRED ELEPHANTS, FIVE THOUSAND HORSES AND TEN THOUSAND SOLDIERS WITH DHRISTADYUMNA IN COMMAND. THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION REVERBERATED IN HIS EARS."



"WHEN HE LOOKED AROUND, HE SAW THE BATTLEFIELD STREWN WITH HIS FALLEN SOLDIERS. PETRIFIED WITH FEAR, HE TOOK TO HIS HEELS."



"A MIGHTY KING PROTECTED BY ELEVEN AKSHAUHNIS NOW HAD JUST A MACE OVER HIS SHOULDER TO DEFEND HIM. HE RECALLED VIDURA'S WORDS."

VIDURA, IN HIS WISDOM, HAD REALISED THE OUTCOME OF THIS BATTLE!



"RUNNING NORTHWARDS, HE CAME UPON A LAKE AND DECIDED TO IMMERSE HIMSELF IN IT.



"MEANWHILE, ON SAGE VYASA'S BIDDING, SATYAKI RELEASED SANJAYA AND LET HIM GO.



"WHILE SANJAYA WAS RETURNING TO THE CITY, HE ESPIED DURYODHANA, ALONE AND WOUNDED.



"SANJAYA RECALLED THE SCENE LATER.

I WAS DUMBSTRUCK WITH SHOCK AND SORROW AT HIS STATE. TO SEE A MIGHTY KING, WHOSE POMP AND GLORY WERE ONCE UNRIVALLED, REDUCED TO A PITIABLE CONDITION.



"SANJAYA NARRATED TO DURYODHANA THE TALE OF HIS CAPTURE AND SUBSEQUENT RELEASE.

VYASA TOLD ME THAT ONLY THREE MAHARATHIS* NOW REMAIN ON OUR SIDE.



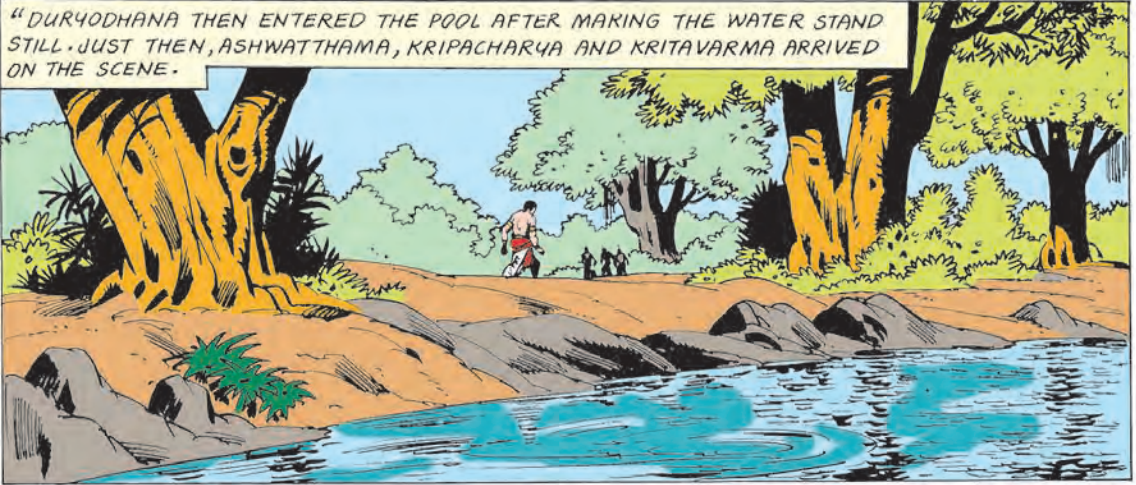
"DURYODHANA SIGHED DEEPLY AND SAID —

THERE IS NO ONE BUT YOU WHOM I CAN CALL MY OWN NOW. CONVEY MY MESSAGE TO MY FATHER THAT I HAVE ENTERED THE DEPTHS OF THIS LAKE.



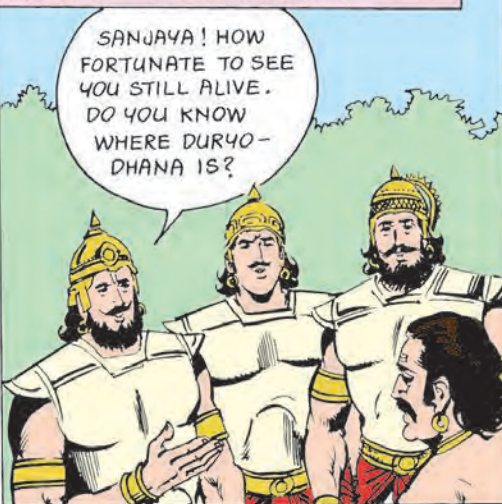
* THE HIGHEST HONOUR BESTOWED ON A WARRIOR.

"DURYODHANA THEN ENTERED THE POOL AFTER MAKING THE WATER STAND STILL. JUST THEN, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE."



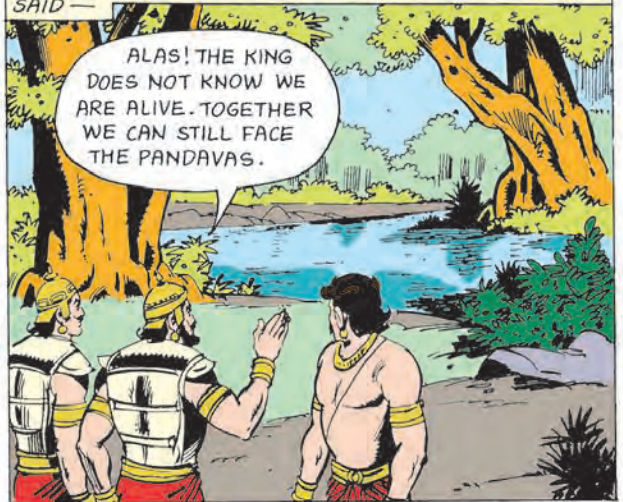
"WOUNDED AND WEARY, THEY WERE SURPRISED TO SEE SANJAYA."

SANJAYA! HOW FORTUNATE TO SEE YOU STILL ALIVE. DO YOU KNOW WHERE DURYODHANA IS?



"SANJAYA GAVE THEM DURYODHANA'S MESSAGE. ASHWATTHAMA LOOKED TOWARDS THE LAKE AND SAID —

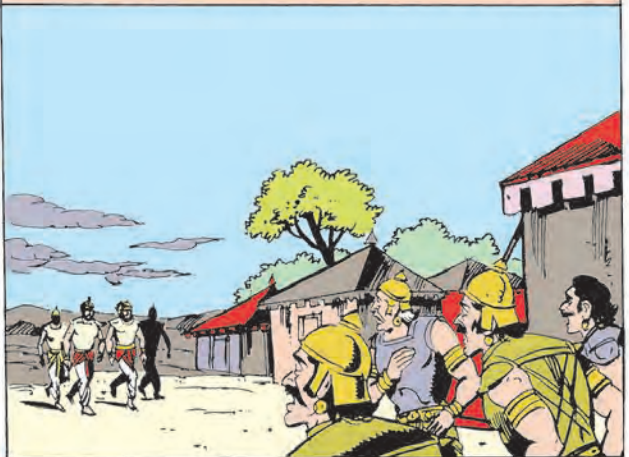
ALAS! THE KING DOES NOT KNOW WE ARE ALIVE. TOGETHER WE CAN STILL FACE THE PANDAVAS.



"THE THREE WARRIORS WAITED AWHILE, BEMOANING DURYODHANA'S DECISION. BUT WHEN THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF SOLDIERS APPROACHING, THEY WENT AWAY."



"ALONG WITH SANJAYA, THEY RETURNED TO THE CAMP. ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE DEFEAT, THE GUARDS, ALREADY SHAKEN WITH WORRY, BROKE DOWN."



"THE OLDER MEN OF THE CAMP, WHO WERE LOOKING AFTER THE LADIES, MADE PREPARATIONS TO RETURN TO HASTINAPURA.



"CRYING AND WAILING, THE WOMEN WERE ESCORTED TO THE CITY BY THE SENTRY'S AND THE OLD MINISTERS.



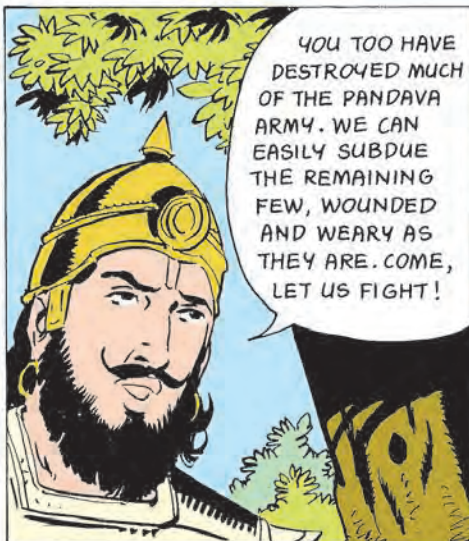
"UNABLE TO BEAR THE LONELINESS OF THE DESERTED CAMP, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA RETURNED TO THE LAKE SIDE.



"ON REACHING THE LAKE, THEY SOFTLY CALLED OUT TO DURYODHANA.

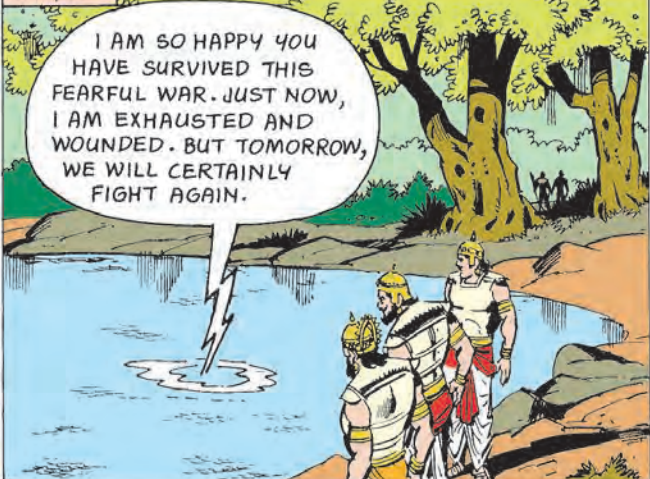


ARISE O KING!
COME WITH US TO
FIGHT YUDHISHTHIRA,
WIN AND CONQUER,
OR DIE IN GLORY.



YOU TOO HAVE
DESTROYED MUCH
OF THE PANDAVA
ARMY. WE CAN
EASILY SUBDUCE
THE REMAINING
FEW, WOUNDED
AND WEARY AS
THEY ARE. COME,
LET US FIGHT!

"DURYODHANA'S VOICE WAS HEARD FROM UNDER THE WATER.



I AM SO HAPPY YOU
HAVE SURVIVED THIS
FEARFUL WAR. JUST NOW,
I AM EXHAUSTED AND
WOUNDED. BUT TOMORROW,
WE WILL CERTAINLY
FIGHT AGAIN.

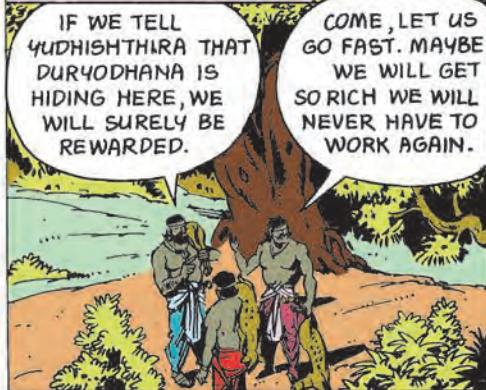
"DELIGHTED AT DURYODHANA'S DECISION TO FIGHT, ASHWATTHAMA DECLARED —



"SOME HUNTERS WHO HAPPENED TO COME TO THE LAKE TO QUENCH THEIR THIRST OVERHEARD THE CONVERSATION.



"THEY CONCLUDED THAT DURYODHANA WAS HIDDEN IN THE LAKE AND WAS BEING INVITED TO FIGHT AGAIN. TALKING IN WHISPERS, THEY SAID —



"MEANWHILE, YUDHISHTHIRA REALISED THAT DURYODHANA WAS MISSING AND SENT HIS SPIES IN ALL DIRECTIONS.



"WHEN THEY RETURNED WITHOUT ANY CLUE OF DURYODHANA'S WHEREABOUTS, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS WORRIED INDEED.



"JUST THEN THE HUNTERS ARRIVED AT THE CAMP. IGNORING THE PROTESTS OF THE GUARDS, THEY FORCED THEIR WAY IN.



"THEY NARRATED THE EVENTS AT THE LAKESIDE TO BHEEMA WHO REWARDED THEM HANDSOMELY.



"BHEEMA WENT OVER TO YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID —

MY MEN HAVE LOCATED DURYODHANA. HE IS HIDING IN LAKE DWAIPAYANA.

GOOD! LET US GO THERE AT ONCE.



"WITH KRISHNA IN THE LEAD, THE PANDAVAS PROCEEDED TO DWAIPAYANA.



"FORGETTING THEIR FATIGUE, ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA, SAHADEVA, DHRISTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI WENT WITH YUDHISHTHIRA.



"WHEN THE SOUND OF APPROACHING ARMY REACHED THEIR EARS, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA TOLD DURYODHANA —

THE VICTORIOUS PANDAVAS APPEAR TO BE COMING HERE. ALLOW US TO GO, O KING.

AS YOU WISH.



"THE THREE WARRIORS MOVED AWAY AND RESTED UNDER A BANYAN TREE.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO DURYODHANA NOW? WHAT WILL THE PANDAVAS DO, I WONDER.



"ON REACHING THE LAKE, YUDHISHTHIRA REMARKED —

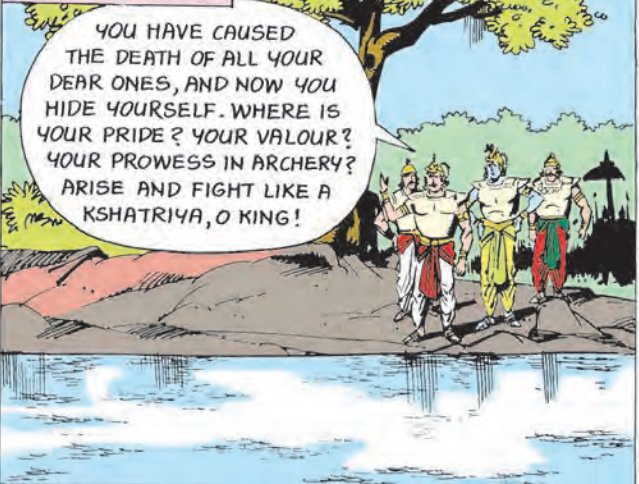
LOOK, O KRISHNA, HOW THE WATERS HAVE BEEN STILL BY DURYODHANA. LET HIM USE ALL HIS DEVISIVE WAYS, I WILL GET HIM IN THE END.

YOU TOO CAN USE ALL YOUR SKILLS AGAINST HIM.



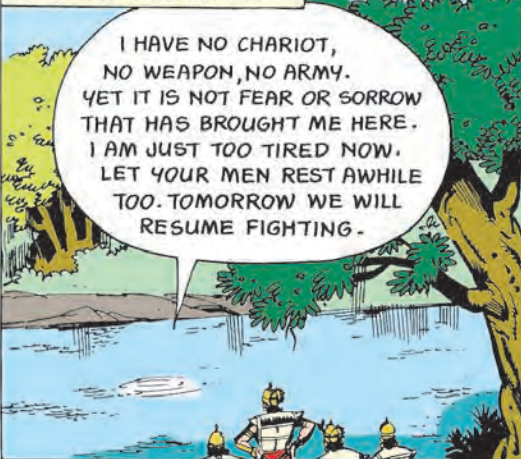
"REASSURED BY KRISHNA, YUDHISHTHIRA CALLED OUT TO DURYODHANA.

YOU HAVE CAUSED THE DEATH OF ALL YOUR DEAR ONES, AND NOW YOU HIDE YOURSELF. WHERE IS YOUR PRIDE? YOUR VALOUR? YOUR PROWESS IN ARCHERY? ARISE AND FIGHT LIKE A KSHATRIYA, O KING!



"DURYODHANA RESPONDED FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE WATER —

I HAVE NO CHARIOT, NO WEAPON, NO ARMY. YET IT IS NOT FEAR OR SORROW THAT HAS BROUGHT ME HERE. I AM JUST TOO TIRED NOW. LET YOUR MEN REST AWHILE TOO. TOMORROW WE WILL RESUME FIGHTING.



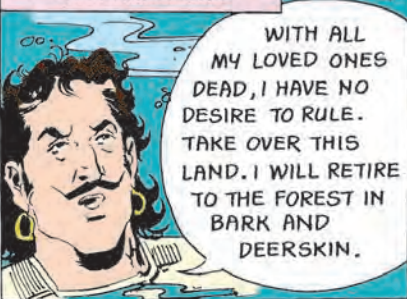
"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED —

WE HAVE RESTED ENOUGH. COME OUT AND FIGHT. CONQUER US AND RULE, OR BE KILLED LIKE A WARRIOR.



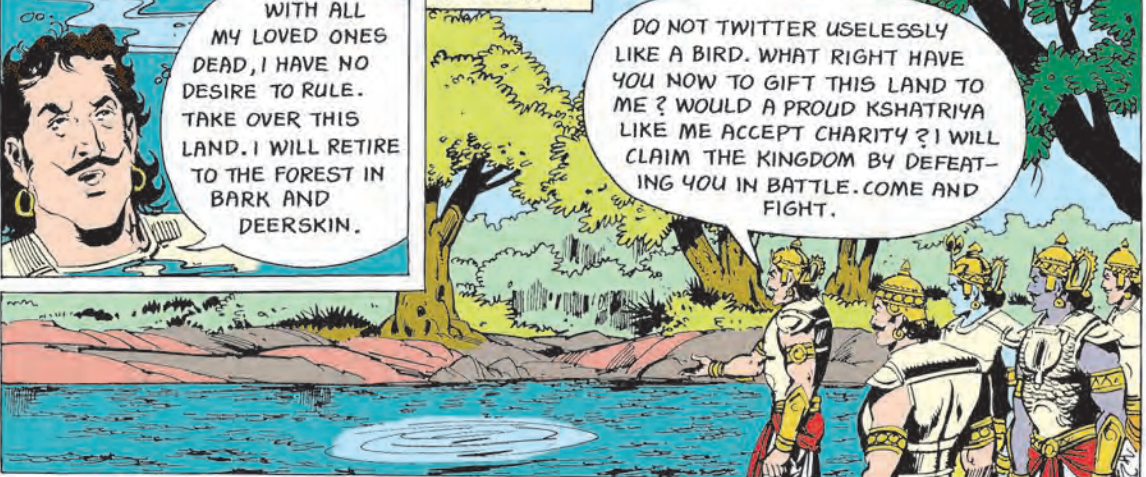
"DURYODHANA SAID —

WITH ALL MY LOVED ONES DEAD, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO RULE. TAKE OVER THIS LAND. I WILL RETIRE TO THE FOREST IN BARK AND DEERSKIN.



"YUDHISHTHIRA SHOUTED IN ANGER —

DO NOT TWITTER USELESSLY LIKE A BIRD. WHAT RIGHT HAVE YOU NOW TO GIFT THIS LAND TO ME? WOULD A PROUD KSHATRIYA LIKE ME ACCEPT CHARITY? I WILL CLAIM THE KINGDOM BY DEFEATING YOU IN BATTLE. COME AND FIGHT.

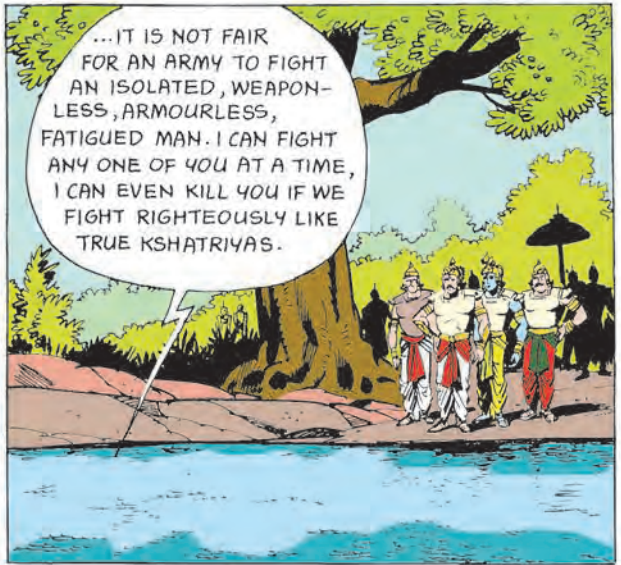


"DURYODHANA FLAILED AROUND HIS ARMS IN FRUSTRATION, SIGHED REPEATEDLY, BUT REMAINED INSIDE. HE SAID —

YOU HAVE YOUR ARMY, CHARIOTS AND WEAPONS. I AM ALONE, OUT-NUMBERED AND WITHOUT A CHARIOT. HOW CAN I POSSIBLY FIGHT...

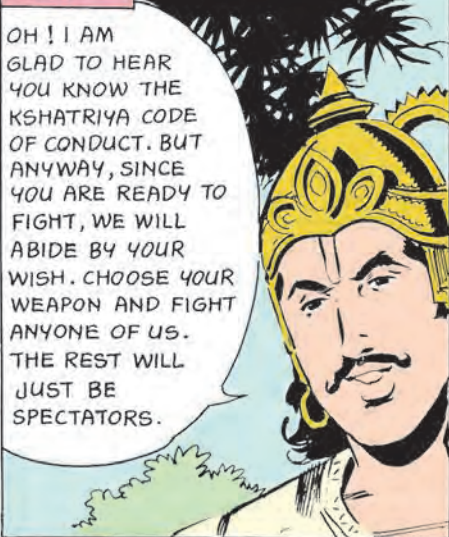


...IT IS NOT FAIR FOR AN ARMY TO FIGHT AN ISOLATED, WEAPONLESS, ARMOURLESS, FATIGUED MAN. I CAN FIGHT ANY ONE OF YOU AT A TIME, I CAN EVEN KILL YOU IF WE FIGHT RIGHTEOUSLY LIKE TRUE KSHATRIYAS.



"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED SARCASTICALLY —

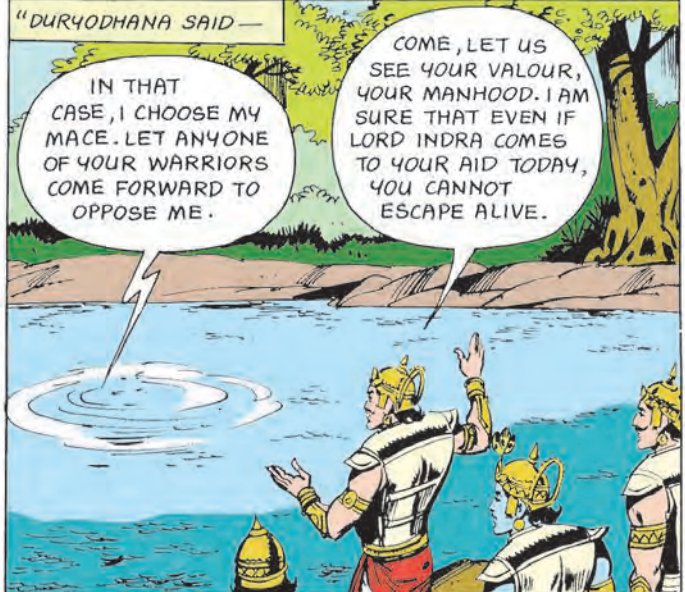
OH ! I AM GLAD TO HEAR YOU KNOW THE KSHATRIYA CODE OF CONDUCT. BUT ANYWAY, SINCE YOU ARE READY TO FIGHT, WE WILL ABIDE BY YOUR WISH. CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON AND FIGHT ANYONE OF US. THE REST WILL JUST BE SPECTATORS.



"DURYODHANA SAID —

IN THAT CASE, I CHOOSE MY MACE. LET ANYONE OF YOUR WARRIORS COME FORWARD TO OPPOSE ME.

COME, LET US SEE YOUR VALOUR, YOUR MANHOOD. I AM SURE THAT EVEN IF LORD INDRA COMES TO YOUR AID TODAY, YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ALIVE.



"THUS TAUNTED, DURYODHANA ROSE UP AND APPEARED ON THE SURFACE LIKE THE RISING SUN. HE HAD AN IRON MACE IN HIS HAND.



"THRILLED TO SEE DURYODHANA EMERGE AT LAST, THE PANDAVAS REJOICED AND CLASPED ONE ANOTHER'S HANDS.



"DURYODHANA DECLARED —

I WILL FIGHT ALL OF YOU BUT ONE AT A TIME. YOU RIGHTEOUS WARRIORS KNOW THE RULES OF CONDUCT.

BUT DID YOU NOT KNOW THE RULES OF CONDUCT WHEN YOU SURROUNDED ABHIMANYU? ONLY WHEN THEY FACE A PROBLEM THEMSELVES, DO MEN QUOTE FROM LAW BOOKS.



"YUDHISHTHIRA THEN MADE A MAGNANIMOUS OFFER —

YOU MAY CHOOSE ANY ONE OF US TO FIGHT WITH YOU. AND IF YOU KILL ONE OF US IN THE FIGHT, WE WILL ANOINT YOU KING.



"DURYODHANA PUT ON THE GOLDEN ARMOUR AND THE HEADGEAR OFFERED TO HIM.



"KRISHNA, WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING SILENTLY FOR A WHILE, SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH EXTREME ANGER —

HOW COULD YOU ASK HIM TO FIGHT ANY ONE OF YOU? ONLY BHEEMA IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO FACE DURYODHANA IN A MACE COMBAT, BUT HE HAS NO PRACTICE. DURYODHANA HAS BEEN PRACTISING FOR THIRTEEN YEARS WITH AN IRON IMAGE OF BHEEMA...



...THIS IS GOING TO BE ANOTHER GAME OF DICE. YOU KNOW THAT PRACTICE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SKILL IN A DUEL. NO ONE CAN BEAT DURYODHANA IN A FAIR MACE FIGHT.



"BHEEMA CAME FORWARD AND REASSURED KRISHNA —

DO NOT WORRY,
O KRISHNA. I WILL
DEFINITELY KILL
DURYODHANA
TODAY.



"KRISHNA WAS OVERJOYED.

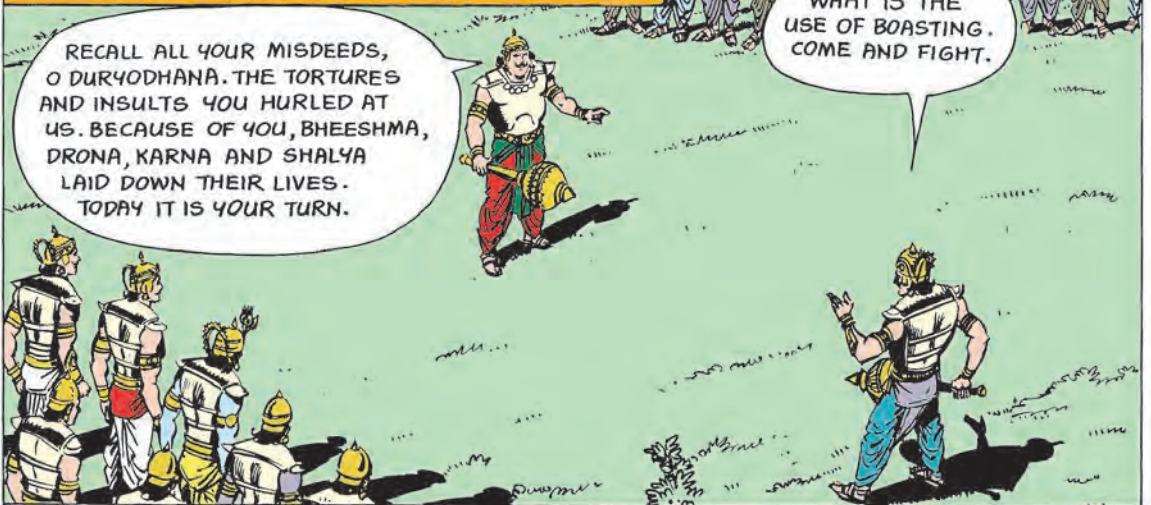
YES! BHEEMA. IT IS YOU
WHO KILLED THE OTHER SONS OF
DHRTIRASHTRA. NOW KILL DURYO-
DHANA AND PLACE THE WORLD AT
YUDHISHTHIRA'S FEET. BUT TAKE
CARE! DURYODHANA HAS BOTH
SKILL AND EXPERIENCE.



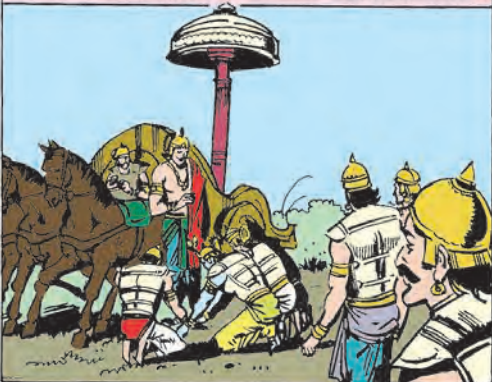
"BHEEMA WENT UP TO DURYODHANA AND DECLARED —

RECALL ALL YOUR MISDEEDS,
O DURYODHANA. THE TORTURES
AND INSULTS YOU HURLED AT
US. BECAUSE OF YOU, BHEESHMA,
DRONA, KARNA AND SHALYA
LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES.
TODAY IT IS YOUR TURN.

WHAT IS THE
USE OF BOASTING.
COME AND FIGHT.



"THE FIGHT WAS ABOUT TO START, WHEN
BALARAMA, WHO HAD BEEN AWAY ON A
PILGRIMAGE, ARRIVED THERE. KRISHNA
AND THE PANDAVAS RUSHED TO GREET HIM.



"KRISHNA SAID —

COME AND
WATCH YOUR
DISCIPLES
IN ACTION.

I HAVE RETURNED
AFTER FORTYTWO DAYS
ON PILGRIMAGE. I AM
ANXIOUS TO SEE MY
PUPILS.



"BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA RAISED THEIR MACES IN A GREETING TO BALARAMA.



"AFTER DESCRIBING THE PILGRIMAGE AT LENGTH, BALARAMA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA.



I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT SAMANTAPANCHAKA IS THE MOST HOLY SPOT.

IT IS QUITE CLOSE BY. LET THE DUEL TAKE PLACE THERE. FOR THOSE WHO DIE THERE ARE SURE TO ATTAIN HEAVEN.

SO BE IT!



"ALL OF THEM PROCEEDED THERE. DURYODHANA, WITH HIS HEAD HELD HIGH AND MACE ALOFT, WALKED PROUDLY AMONG THE PANDAVAS. SOON THEY REACHED THE BANKS OF THE RIVER SARASWATI. BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA GOT READY FOR THE DUEL.



"LIKE TWO ENRAGED ELEPHANTS, THEY FACED EACH OTHER. TWO HANDSOME MEN, WITH MACES UPRAISED, BENT ON DESTRUCTION.

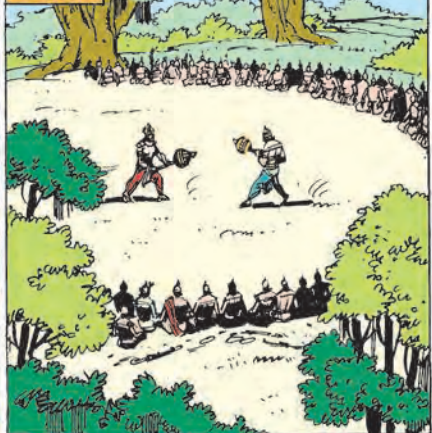


"ADDRESSING YUDHISHTHIRA, DURYODHANA SAID PROUDLY—



BRAVE WARRIORS! SIT NEAR US AND WITNESS THE FIGHT.

"SO THEY ALL SAT AROUND THE ARENA. THE BLUE-CLAD BALARAMA LOOKED LIKE THE RESPLENDENT MOON.



"THE FIGHT WAS FIERCE. SOON WITH MIGHTY BLOWS OF THEIR MACES, THEY WERE BOTH WOUNDED AND THEY BLED PROFUSELY."

THEY FOUGHT IN A FAIR AND JUST MANNER.

NOW CIRCLING EACH OTHER.

NOW LEAPING IN THE AIR.

NOW RUSHING AT EACH OTHER.

NOW DUCKING TO ESCAPE A BLOW.

NOW TRYING TO PUSH EACH OTHER DOWN.

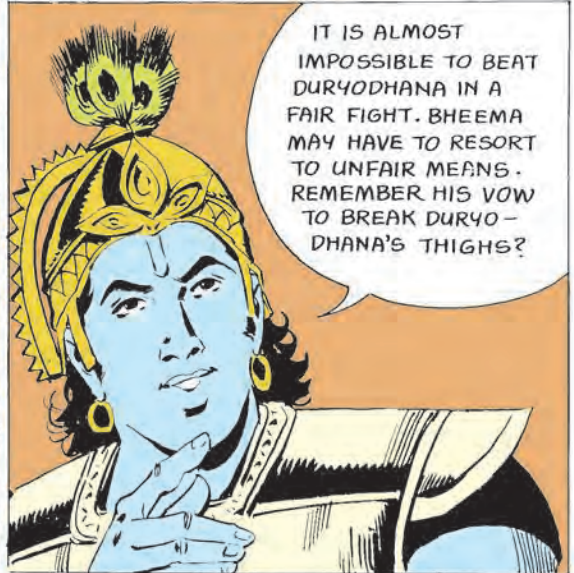
"WHILE BALARAMA PROUDLY WATCHED HIS PUPILS, ARJUNA ASKED KRISHNA ANXIOUSLY.

TELL ME, KRISHNA, WHO IS THE SUPERIOR OF THE TWO?

BOTH OF THEM ARE TRAINED BY MY BROTHER BALARAMA. BHEEMA IS MORE POWERFUL BUT DURYODHANA IS FAR AHEAD IN SKILL AND EXPERIENCE.



IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BEAT DURYODHANA IN A FAIR FIGHT. BHEEMA MAY HAVE TO RESORT TO UNFAIR MEANS. REMEMBER HIS VOW TO BREAK DURYODHANA'S THIGHS?



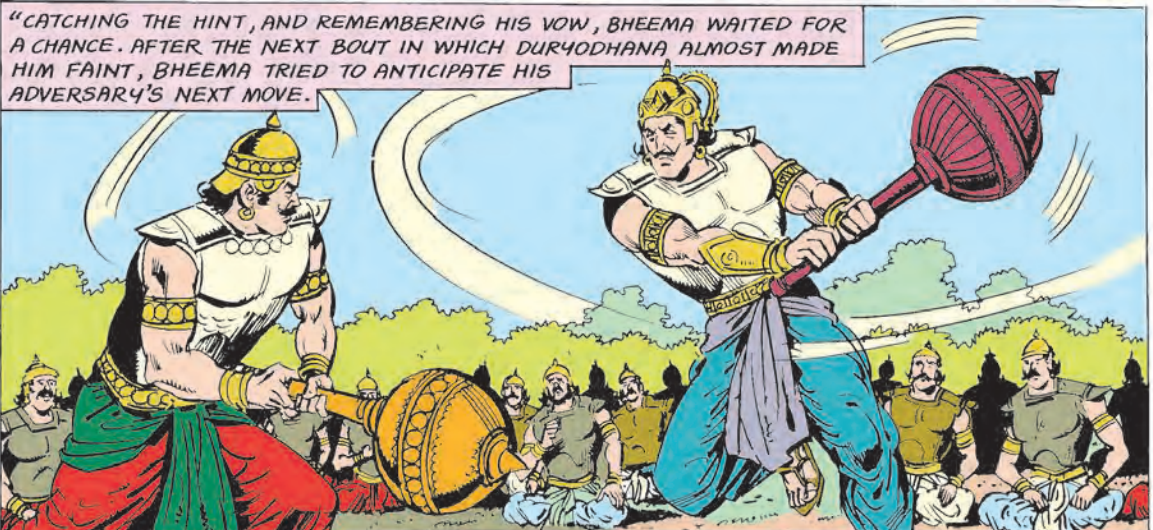
"BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA WERE MEANWHILE FIGHTING FIERCELY. DURYODHANA SPRANG UP IN THE AIR TO DODGE A BLOW.



"CATCHING BHEEMA'S EYE, ARJUNA MEANINGFULLY STRUCK HIS OWN THIGH FORCEFULLY.



"CATCHING THE HINT, AND REMEMBERING HIS VOW, BHEEMA WAITED FOR A CHANCE. AFTER THE NEXT BOUT IN WHICH DURYODHANA ALMOST MADE HIM FAINT, BHEEMA TRIED TO ANTICIPATE HIS ADVERSARY'S NEXT MOVE.



"WHEN DURYODHANA JUMPED UP NEXT TIME, BHEEMA HIT OUT FORCEFULLY AT HIS THIGHS.



"WITH HIS THIGHS BROKEN, DURYODHANA COLLAPSED TO THE GROUND.



"THE ELATED PANDAVAS CAME CLOSER TO SEE THE FALLEN HERO. PROUDLY BHEEMA KICKED DURYODHANA'S CROWN AND PUT HIS FOOT ON HIS HEAD.

YOU WICKED MAN!
YOU CHEAT! SUFFER
FOR ALL THE INSULTS
YOU HURLED AT US.

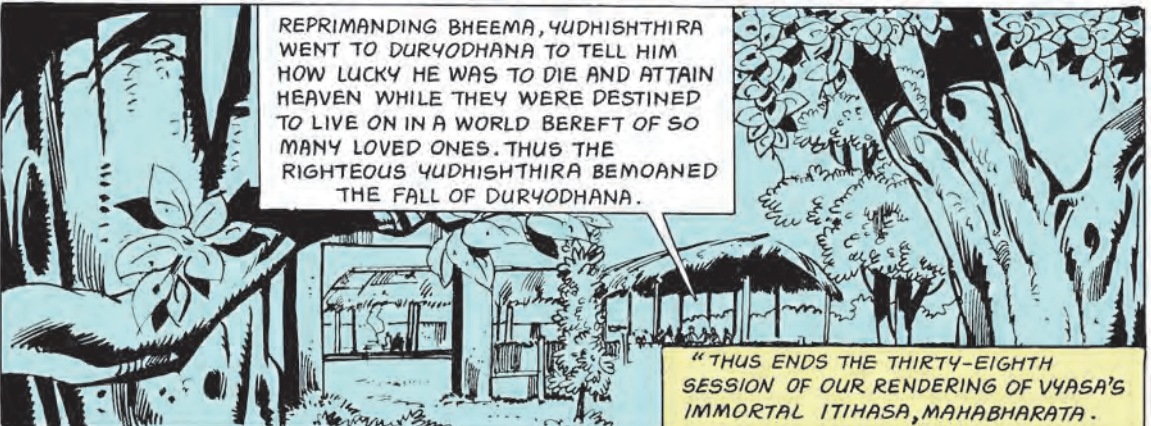


"YUDHISHTHIRA STEPPED FORWARD.

ENOUGH! BHEEMA,
YOU HAVE FULFILLED
YOUR VOW. DO NOT INSULT
HIM SO. AFTER ALL HE IS
OUR BROTHER, A KING AND
THE LORD OF ELEVEN
AKSHAUHINIS.



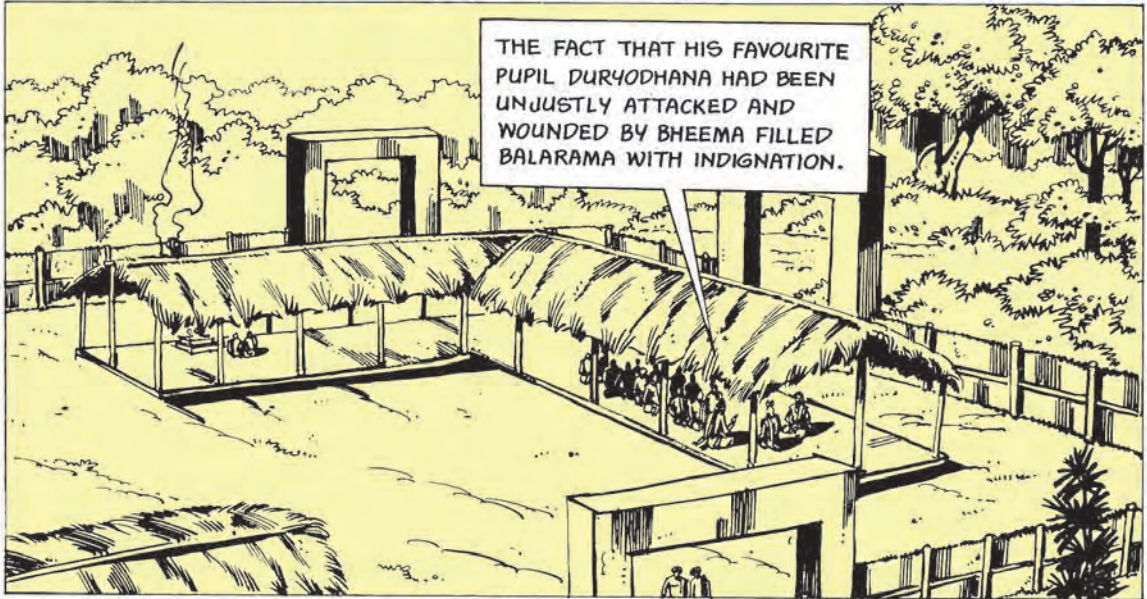
REPRIMANDING BHEEMA, YUDHISHTHIRA WENT TO DURYODHANA TO TELL HIM HOW LUCKY HE WAS TO DIE AND ATTAIN HEAVEN WHILE THEY WERE DESTINED TO LIVE ON IN A WORLD BEREFT OF SO MANY LOVED ONES. THUS THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA BEOANED THE FALL OF DURYODHANA.



"THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, MAHABHARATA.

Mahabharata - 39

AFTER THE WAR



"SHAKING WITH FURY, HE ADDRESSED BHEEMA —

SHAME ON YOU,
BHEEMA!
SHAME ON YOU!



HITTING BELOW THE NAVEL
IS AGAINST THE RULES OF A
DUEL WITH MACES. O KRISHNA,
DURYODHANA WAS AS STRONG
AS I BUT BHEEMA FLOUTED
THE RULES OF COMBAT.



"IN HIS RAGE, HE RUSHED AT BHEEMA WITH HIS PLOUGH* HELD ALOFT."



"KRISHNA TRIED TO RESTRAIN HIM."

THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH A DISPLAY OF ANGER AGAINST BHEEMA. REMEMBER HOW HE HAD VOWED TO CRUSH DURYODHANA'S THIGH WHEN DRAUPADI WAS DISGRACED?



YOU CANNOT TOLERATE THIS SINGLE OFFENCE. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW THE KAURAVAS KILLED ABHIMANYU? COME, CALM YOURSELF, DEAR BROTHER.



"BALARAMA, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT BE PACIFIED."

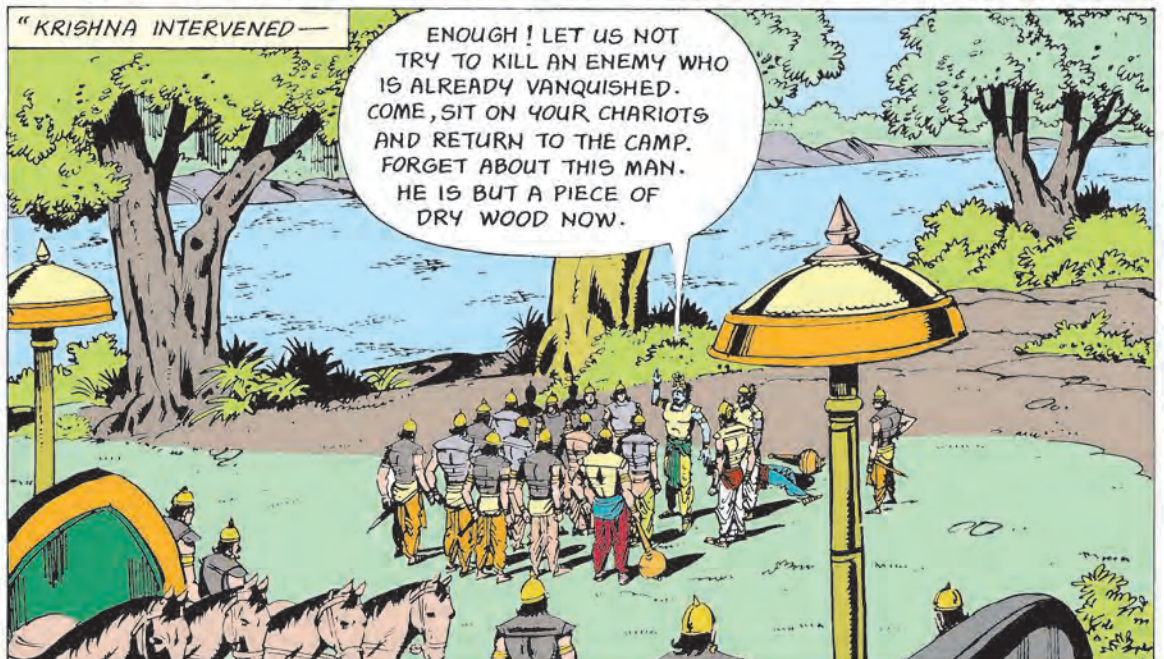
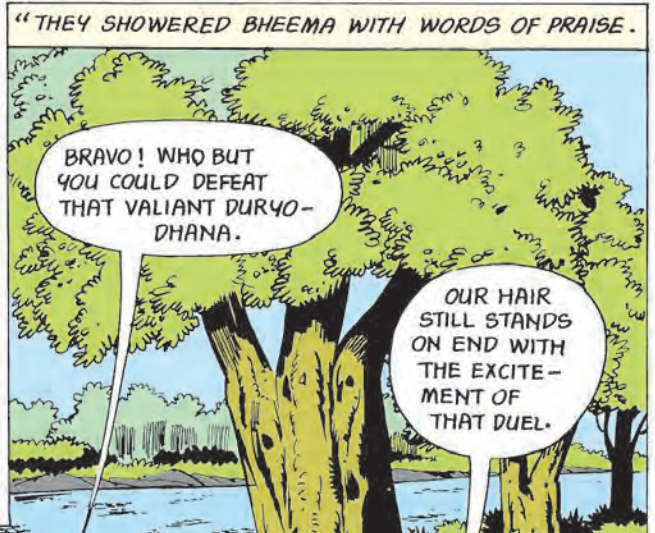
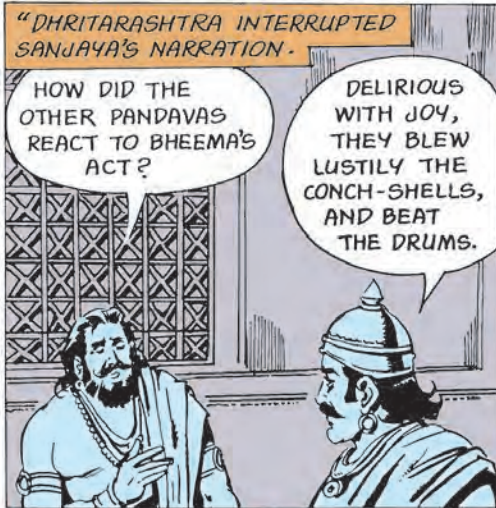
I DECLARE BHEEMA'S CONDUCT IN THE WAR AS UNWORTHY OF A KSHATRIYA.



"BALARAMA ASCENDED HIS CHARIOT AND LEFT IN A HUFF."



* THE PLOUGH WAS BALARAMA'S PERSONAL WEAPON



"ON HEARING KRISHNA SPEAK THUS, DURYODHANA PUSHED HIMSELF UPRIGHT AND EXCLAIMED—

O YOU SON OF A SLAVE ! ARE YOU NOT ASHAMED OF YOURSELF ? YOU HAVE BEEN UNJUST AND UNKIND TO US ALL THROUGH .

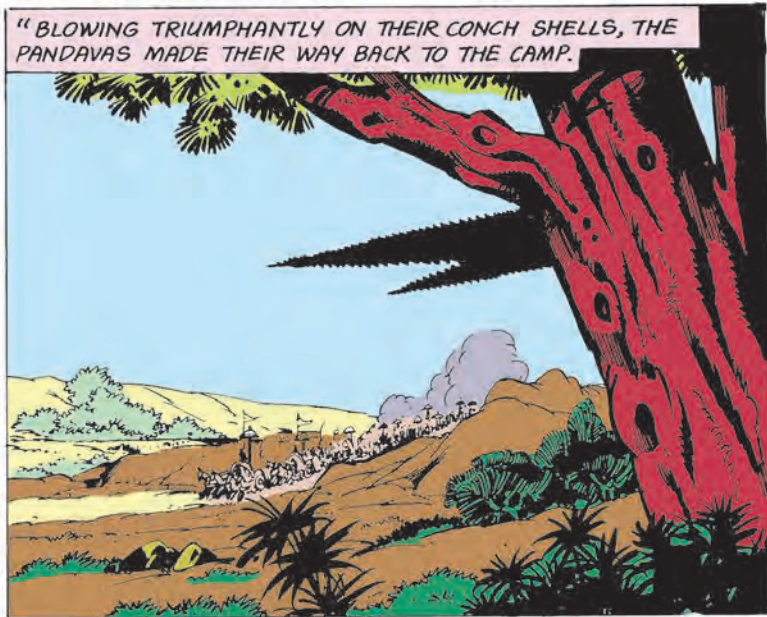
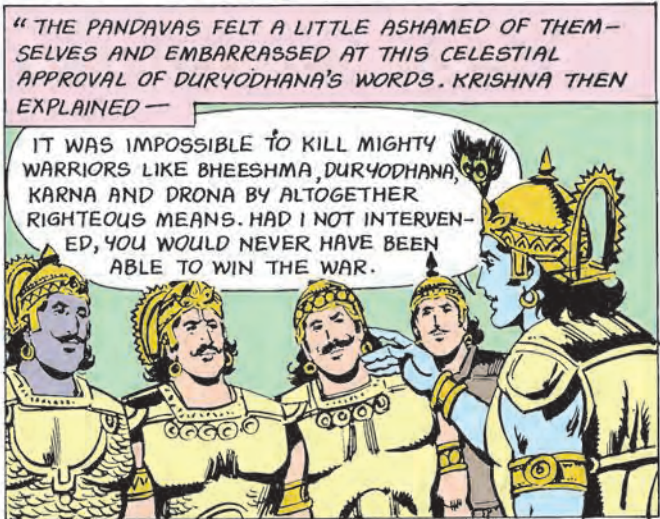
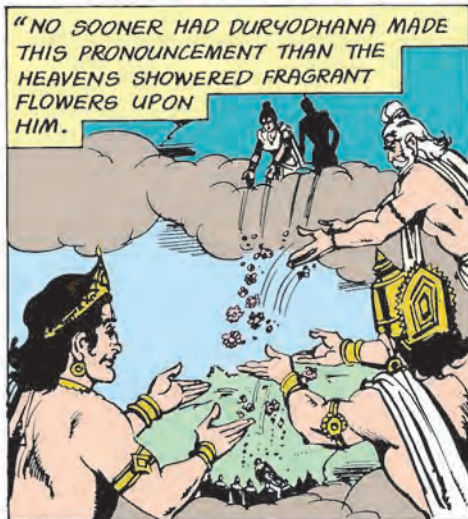
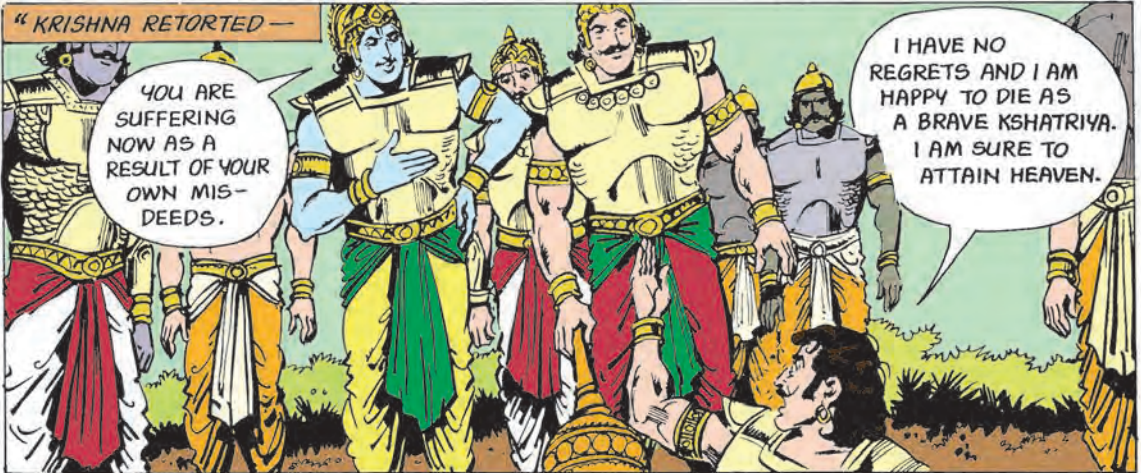
IT WAS YOU WHO REMINDED BHEEMA ABOUT HIS VOW TO BREAK MY THIGHS.

IT WAS YOU WHO CAUSED BHEESHMA'S DOWNFALL BY USING SHIKHANDI AS A FRONT.

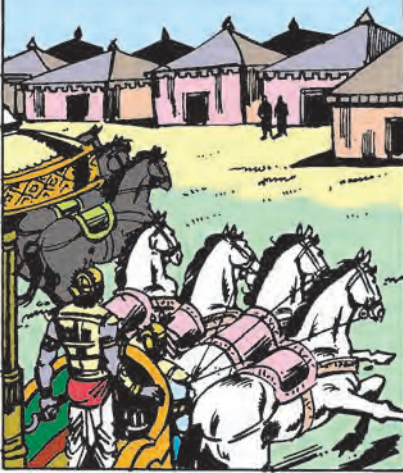
WAS IT NOT YOUR IDEA TO MAKE THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA TELL A LIE THAT ASHWATTHAMA WAS DEAD AND MAKE DRONA TO LAY DOWN ARMS ?

YOU LED KARNA TO USE HIS SHAKTI AGAINST GHATOTKACHA, THUS SAVING YOUR OWN DEAR ARJUNA.





"THEY FIRST WENT TO DURYODHANA'S QUARTERS, NOW DESERTED AND DESOLATE.



"THE OTHERS GOT DOWN FROM THEIR CHARIOTS. KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —

REMOVE YOUR GANDEEVA AND THE CELESTIAL QUIVERS FROM THE CHARIOT AND COME DOWN.



"AS SOON AS KRISHNA DESCENDED FROM THE CHARIOT, THE MONKEY WHICH HAD ADORNED THE BANNER SO FAR SUDDENLY VANISHED.



"AND THE GREAT CHARIOT, WHICH HAD WITHSTOOD THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS OF DRONA AND KARNA, WENT UP IN FLAMES.



"IN AN INSTANT THE ENTIRE CHARIOT INCLUDING THE HORSES AND REINS WAS REDUCED TO ASHES."



"WHILE THE REST OF THE PANDAVAS WATCHED THIS MIRACLE WITH AWE AND FEAR, ARJUNA FELL AT KRISHNA'S FEET."

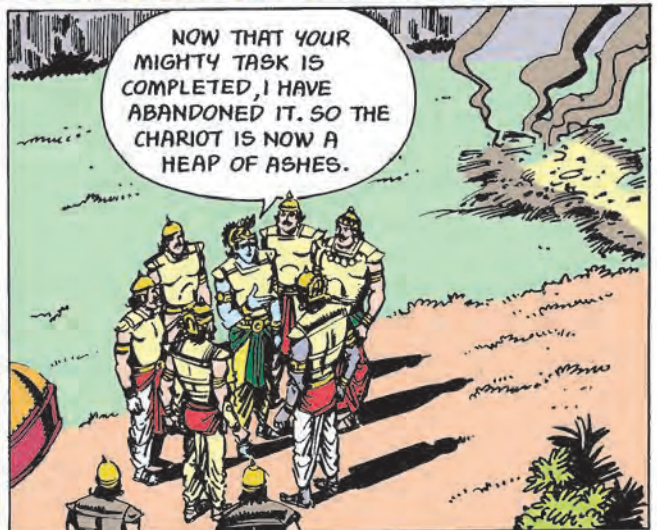


O KRISHNA ! HOW DID THIS HAPPEN ? HOW COULD THE CHARIOT SUDDENLY BE BURNT DOWN ?

"KRISHNA GENTLY EXPLAINED —



THIS CHARIOT HAD ALREADY BEEN BURN'T AND CHARRED BY THE REPEATED ONSLAUGHT OF THE ENEMY'S WEAPONS. BUT AS LONG AS I SAT IN IT, IT APPEARED TO BE INTACT.



NOW THAT YOUR MIGHTY TASK IS COMPLETED, I HAVE ABANDONED IT. SO THE CHARIOT IS NOW A HEAP OF ASHES.

"SMILING, KRISHNA THEN EMBRACED YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID —



IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE EMERGED VICTORIOUS IN THIS WAR. REMEMBER HOW YOU HAD ASKED ME TO PROTECT ARJUNA ? HERE HE HAS EMERGED UNSCATHED FROM THE TERRIBLE WAR AND IS SAFE AND SOUND WITH ALL HIS BROTHERS.

IT IS BY YOUR GRACE, O LORD, THAT WE HAVE WON THIS WAR.



"KRISHNA READILY AGREED AND LEFT FOR HASTINAPURA ON HIS CHARIOT."



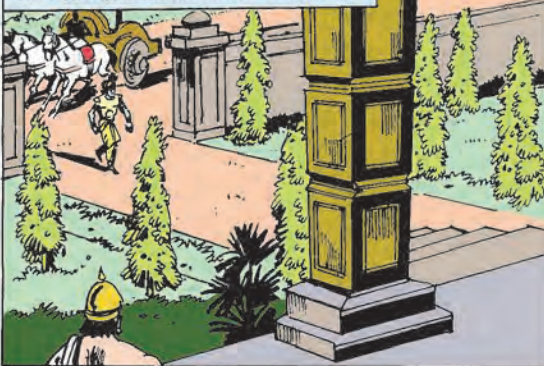
JANAMEJAYA INTERRUPTED
VAISHAMPAYANA —

WAS IT NECESSARY
TO SEND KRISHNA
FOR THIS TASK ?

YES, IT WAS. YUDHISHTHIRA
REALISED HOW GANDHARI
WOULD HAVE BEEN AFFECTED
BY THE NEWS OF THE DEATH
OF HER SONS. UNASSUAGED,
THAT VIRTUOUS WOMAN'S
ANGER COULD ANNIHILATE
THE WHOLE WORLD. THAT IS
WHY YUDHISHTHIRA REQUESTED
THE LORD HIMSELF TO RUSH
TO HASTINAPURA AND SAVE
THE SITUATION.



"ON REACHING HASTINAPURA, KRISHNA WENT
TO DHRTIRASHTRA'S PALACE."



"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO THE AGED KING, HE
GREETED SAGE VYASA AND GANDHARI WHO
WERE ALSO SEATED THERE."



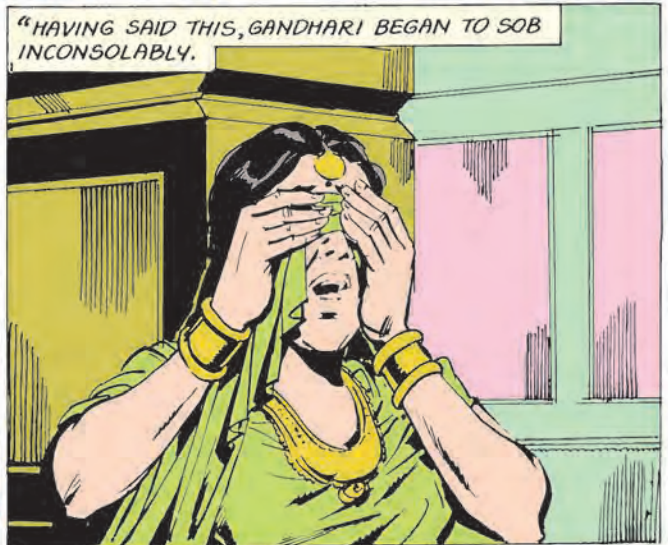
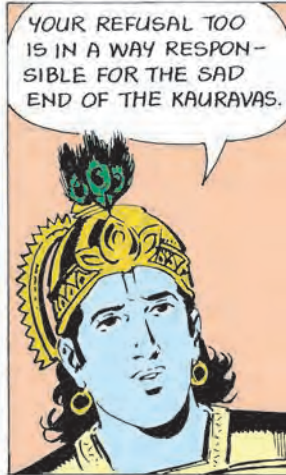
"HOLDING DHRTIRASHTRA'S HAND IN
HIS OWN, KRISHNA WEPT IN SYMPATHY.
THEN CONTROLLING HIS EMOTIONS,
HE SAID AFTER A WHILE —

BELIEVE ME, THE
PANDAVAS DID TRY
THEIR BEST TO
PREVENT THIS
DESTRUCTION OF
YOUR RACE.

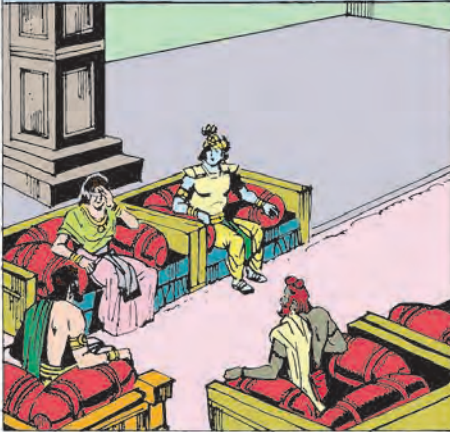


THEY BORE ALL THE INSULTS
HEAPED ON THEM BY THE
KAURAVAS AND SPENT SO
MANY YEARS IN THE FOREST.





"KRISHNA SAT FOR A WHILE TRYING TO CONSOLE THE AGED KING AND THE DESOLATE MOTHER WITH HIS SOOTHING WORDS AND GENTLE MANNER.



"JUST THEN, HE DIVINED THE EVIL PLOT EVOLVING IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. STANDING UP WITH A START, HE SAID TO SAGE VYASA.



"BOTH GANDHARI AND DHRITARASHTRA ASKED HIM TO GO.



"KRISHNA THEN RETURNED TO THE PANDAVAS AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



"MEANWHILE, ACCOMPANIED BY KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA, ASHWATTHAMA RUSHED TO SEE THE DYING DURYODHANA.



"THEY FOUND DURYODHANA BLEEDING PROFUSELY AND TOSsing AND TURNING HELPLESSLY IN AGONY."



"QUICKLY THEY GOT OFF FROM THE CHARIOT AND SAT BESIDE HIM."

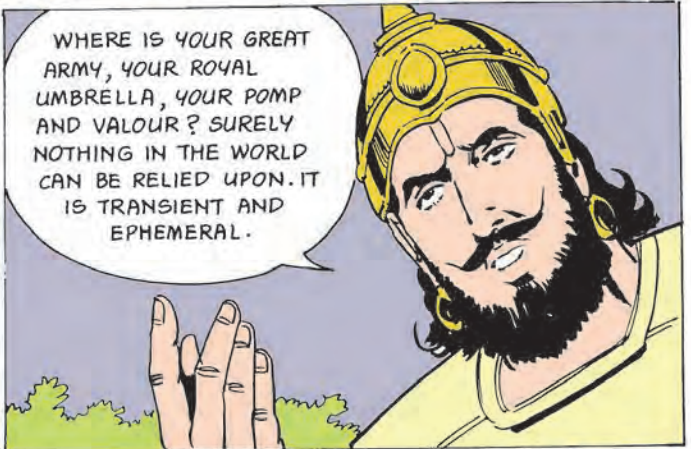


"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THE KING IN THIS PATHETIC STATE. WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES, HE SAID—



OH! WHAT IS THIS WORLD WHERE A KING OF YOUR MIGHT AND STATURE CAN BE LEFT TO ROLL IN THE DUST.

WHERE IS YOUR GREAT ARMY, YOUR ROYAL UMBRELLA, YOUR POMP AND VALOUR? SURELY NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN BE RELIED UPON. IT IS TRANSIENT AND EPHEMERAL.



"DURUYODHANA TOO BROKE DOWN AT ASHWATTHAMA'S DISPLAY OF SORROW.



EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD IS DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION. APPARENTLY MY MOMENT OF DOOM HAS ALSO COME. HENCE YOU FIND ME IN THIS STATE.

YET I AM HAPPY THAT NEVER ONCE DID I TURN MY BACK IN WAR. IT WAS ONLY BY CHEATING THAT THE ENEMY COULD DESTROY ME. I HAVE BEEN TRUE TO MY DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA. SO DO NOT GRIEVE FOR ME, FRIENDS.



"THE TEARS IN DURYODHANA'S EYES FILLED ASHWATTHAMA WITH RAGE.

EVEN MY FATHER'S DEATH BROUGHT ABOUT BY DECEIT DID NOT HURT ME AS MUCH AS YOUR DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF THOSE WICKED PANDAVAS...



CLENCHING HIS FISTS HE SAID —

...I SWEAR TO YOU BY EVERYTHING SACRED THAT I WILL SEND ALL THE PANCHALAS AND THE PANDAVAS TO DEATH TONIGHT. GIVE ME YOUR PERMISSION TO DO SO.



"DURYODHANA WAS TOUCHED. ADDRESSING KRIPA, HE SAID —

ACHARYA, PLEASE BRING WATER IN A VESSEL.



"WHEN KRIPACHARYA DID SO, DURYODHANA SAID FORMALLY —

I REQUEST YOU TO INSTALL ASHWATTHAMA AS THE COMMANDER OF OUR ARMY.



"KRIPACHARYA POURED THE WATER OVER ASHWATTHAMA AS A RITUAL OF THE CEREMONIAL BATH."



"ASHWATTHAMA EMBRACED THE PROSTRATE DURYODHANA IN FAREWELL AND THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE KING TO SPEND THE DARK NIGHT ALONE."



"SOON THEY SIGHTED THE CAMP, BUT WARY OF THE PANDAVAS, THEY HALTED IN A NEARBY FOREST."



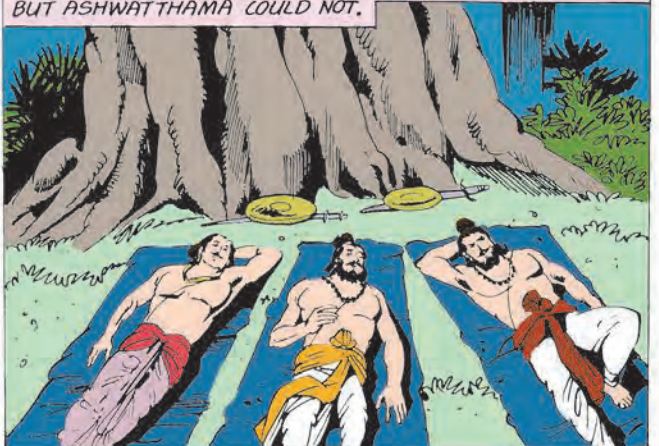
"THEY RESTED FOR A WHILE. SOON THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION FROM THE PANDAVA CAMP PUT FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS AND THEY MOVED DEEPER INTO THE FOREST."



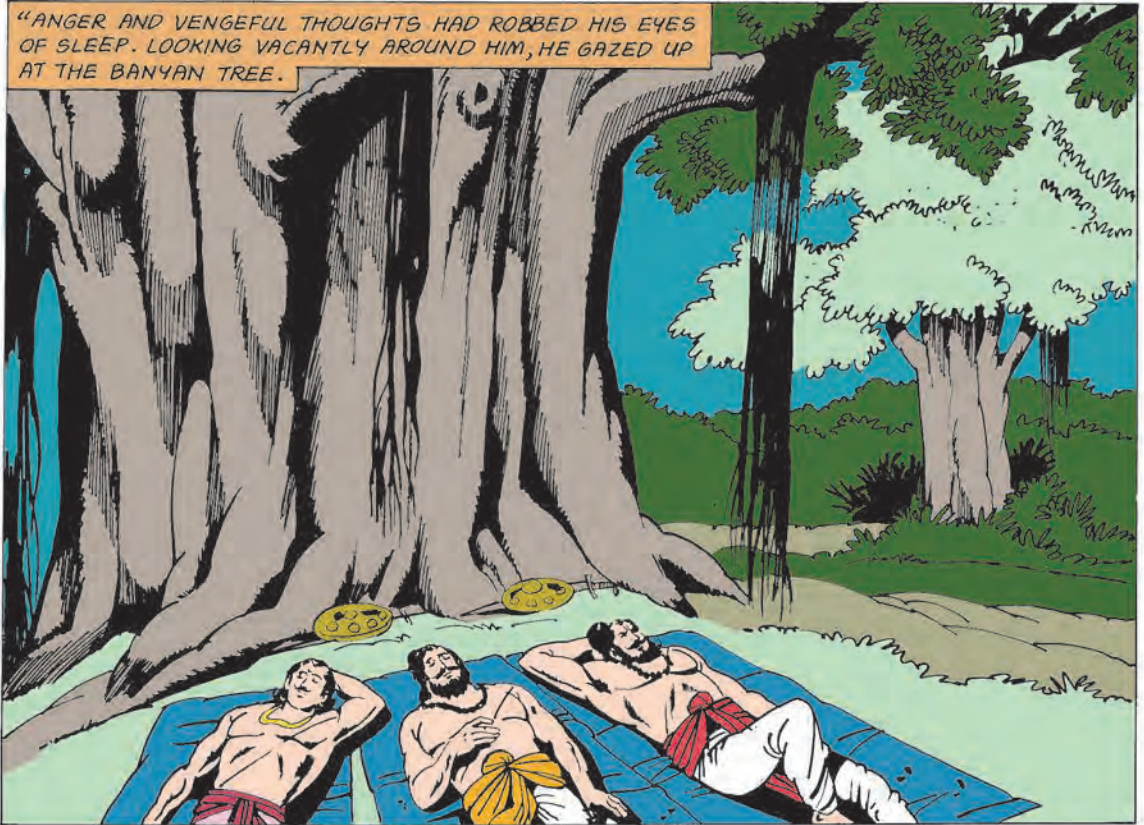
"SAFE IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST, THEY REFRESHED THEIR HORSES AND DECIDED TO REST UNDER A SPREADING BANYAN TREE."



"WEARY AND WOUNDED, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA FELL ASLEEP AS SOON AS THEY LAY DOWN. BUT ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT."



"ANGER AND VENGEFUL THOUGHTS HAD ROBBED HIS EYES OF SLEEP. LOOKING VACANTLY AROUND HIM, HE GAZED UP AT THE BANYAN TREE."



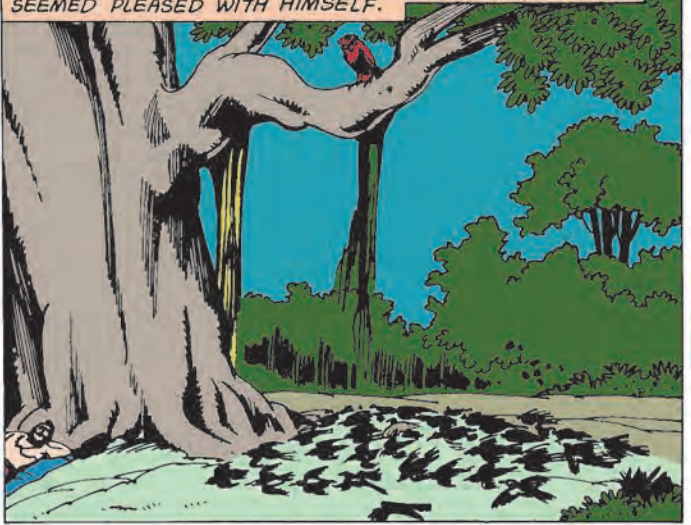
"MANY CROWS WERE PERCHED PEACEFULLY IN THEIR NESTS ON THE MYRIAD BRANCHES OF THE OLD BANYAN TREE. PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY REIGNED IN THE DARK FOREST. SUDDENLY THE SILENCE WAS PIERCED BY THE SCREECH OF A TERRIBLE-LOOKING OWL."



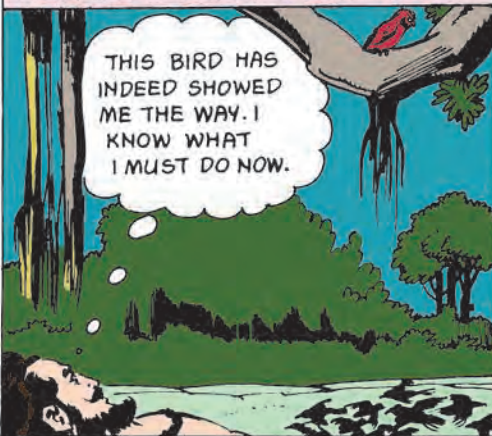
"HE SWEEPED DOWN ON THE SLEEPING CROWS AND ATTACKED THEM WITHOUT MERCY.



"IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE PLACE WAS STREWN WITH THE REMAINS OF A MYRIAD CROWS. THE OWL SEEMED PLEASED WITH HIMSELF.

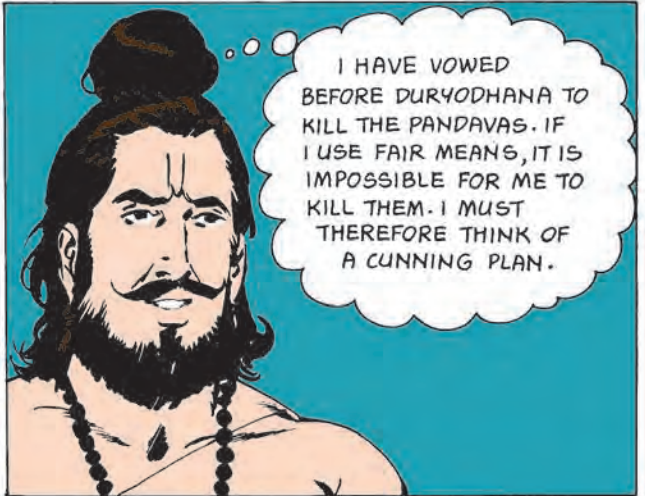


"WATCHING THIS FROM BELOW, AN IDEA TOOK ROOT IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND.

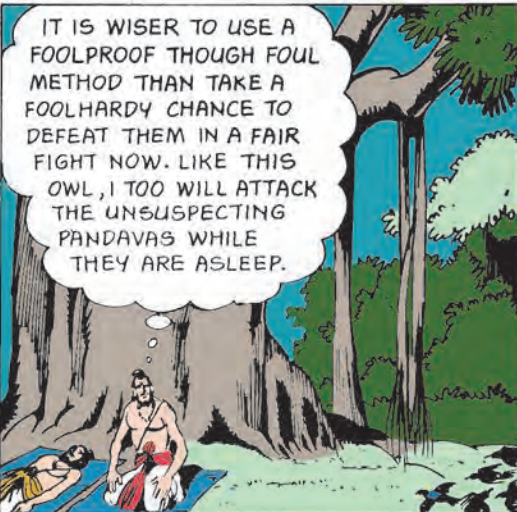


THIS BIRD HAS INDEED SHOWED ME THE WAY. I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO NOW.

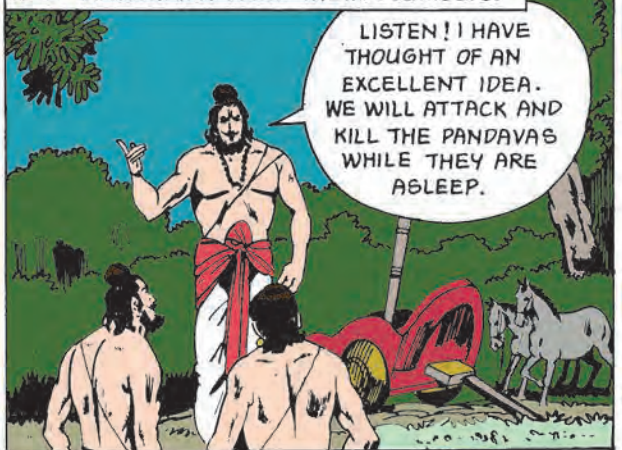
I HAVE VOWED BEFORE DURYODHANA TO KILL THE PANDAVAS. IF I USE FAIR MEANS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO KILL THEM. I MUST THEREFORE THINK OF A CUNNING PLAN.



IT IS WISER TO USE A FOOLPROOF THOUGH FOUL METHOD THAN TAKE A FOOLHARDY CHANCE TO DEFEAT THEM IN A FAIR FIGHT NOW. LIKE THIS OWL, I TOO WILL ATTACK THE UNSUSPECTING PANDAVAS WHILE THEY ARE ASLEEP.



"EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT, HE ROUSED KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA FROM THEIR SLUMBER.



LISTEN! I HAVE THOUGHT OF AN EXCELLENT IDEA. WE WILL ATTACK AND KILL THE PANDAVAS WHILE THEY ARE ASLEEP.

"HORRIFIED AT HIS SUGGESTION, THEY GAZED AT HIM SPEECHLESS WITH SHOCK. ASHWATTHAMA SAID—

A MIGHTY RULER OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHNIS LIES IN THE DUST. ONLY THREE OF US NOW REMAIN FROM THAT ARMY. WHAT DO YOU THINK WE CAN DO NOW TO SET MATTERS RIGHT?



"KRIPACHARYA TRIED TO COUNSEL THE EXCITED ASHWATTHAMA.

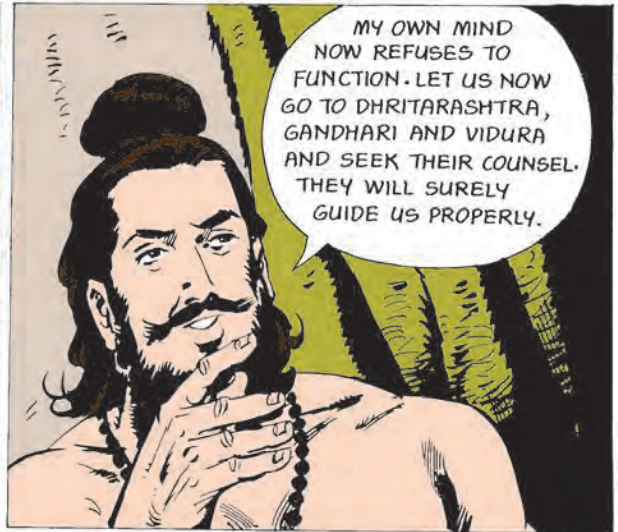
VALOUR AND VIRTUE ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL FOR A MAN. IT IS FUTILE MERELY TO THINK OF A GOOD DEED WITHOUT TAKING ANY ACTION. IT IS EQUALLY FOOLISH TO PLUNGE INTO ACTIVITY WITHOUT ANY CONSIDERATION OF RIGHT AND WRONG.



DURYODHANA WAS GREEDY AND ILL-ADVISED. CRUEL AND IMPATIENT, HE REFUSED TO LISTEN TO WELL-MEANING FRIENDS AND MADE ENEMIES OF THE PANDAVAS. WE FOLLOWED HIM AND HAVE REACHED THIS SORRY STATE.



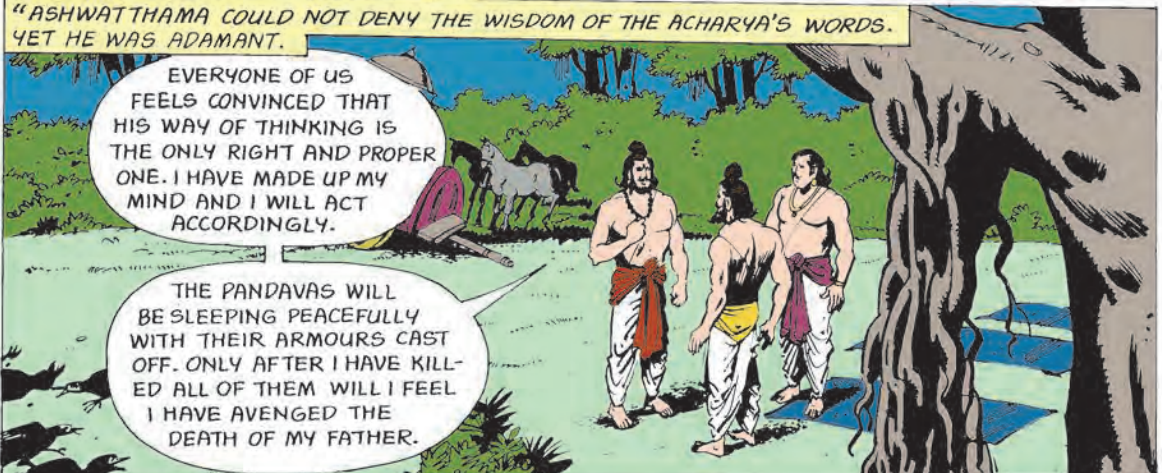
MY OWN MIND NOW REFUSES TO FUNCTION. LET US NOW GO TO DHRTIRASHTRA, GANDHARI AND VIDURA AND SEEK THEIR COUNSEL. THEY WILL SURELY GUIDE US PROPERLY.



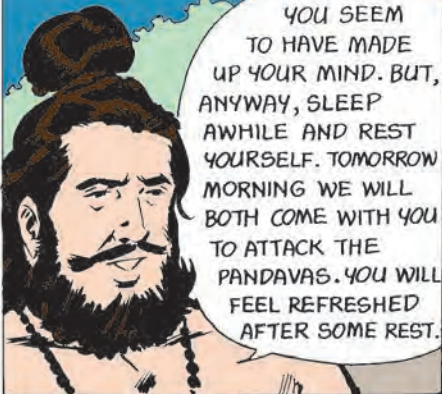
"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT DENY THE WISDOM OF THE ACHARYA'S WORDS. YET HE WAS ADAMANT.

EVERYONE OF US FEELS CONVINCED THAT HIS WAY OF THINKING IS THE ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER ONE. I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND AND I WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY.

THE PANDAVAS WILL BE SLEEPING PEACEFULLY WITH THEIR ARMOURS CAST OFF. ONLY AFTER I HAVE KILLED ALL OF THEM WILL I FEEL I HAVE AVENGED THE DEATH OF MY FATHER.

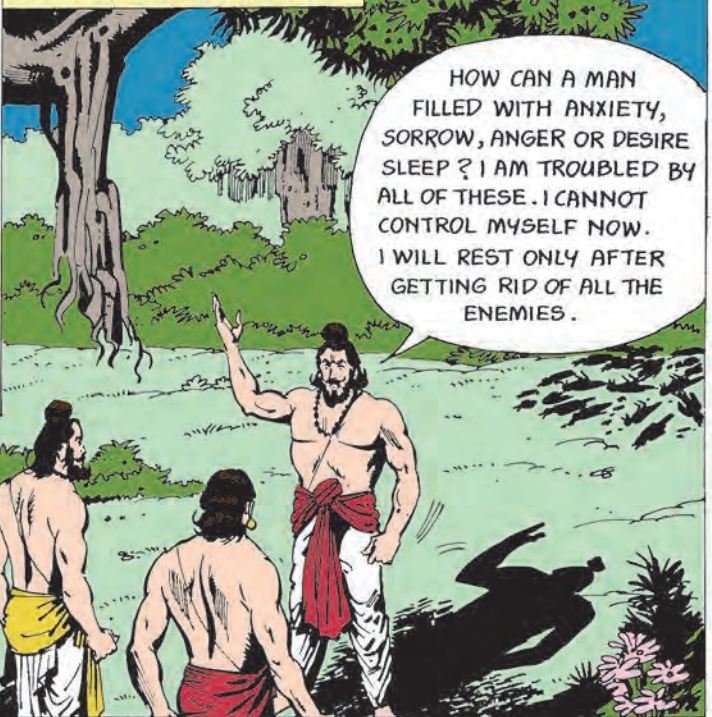


"KRIPACHARYA SAID —



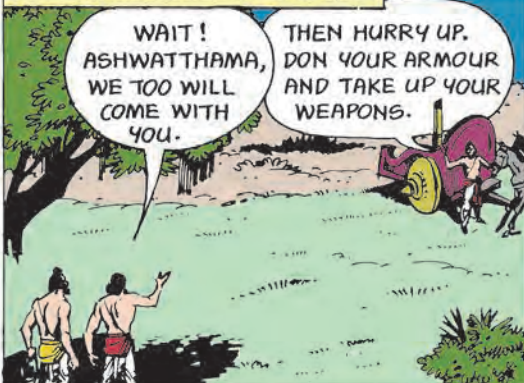
YOU SEEM TO HAVE MADE UP YOUR MIND. BUT, ANYWAY, SLEEP AWHILE AND REST YOURSELF. TOMORROW MORNING WE WILL BOTH COME WITH YOU TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS. YOU WILL FEEL REFRESHED AFTER SOME REST.

"ASHWATTHAMA SAW THROUGH THE ACHARYA'S GENTLE PERSUASION. HE SHOUTED —



HOW CAN A MAN FILLED WITH ANXIETY, SORROW, ANGER OR DESIRE SLEEP? I AM TROUBLED BY ALL OF THESE. I CANNOT CONTROL MYSELF NOW. I WILL REST ONLY AFTER GETTING RID OF ALL THE ENEMIES.

"WHEN ASHWATTHAMA BEGAN TO HARNESS THE HORSES TO HIS CHARIOT, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA TOO GOT UP.



WAIT! ASHWATTHAMA, WE TOO WILL COME WITH YOU.

THEN HURRY UP. DON YOUR ARMOUR AND TAKE UP YOUR WEAPONS.

"THE THREE OF THEM PROCEEDED TO THE PANDAVA CAMP.



"ASHWATTHAMA WHISPERED TO HIS COMPANIONS —



YOU GUARD THE GATE OF THE CAMP. I WILL ENTER THE CAMP NOW AND CREATE HAVOC. YOU TWO MAKE SURE NO ONE ESCAPES.

"AT THE GATE OF THE CAMP, A STRANGE SIGHT MET THEIR EYES. AN ENORMOUS MONSTER LOOMED LARGE IN THEIR PATH.



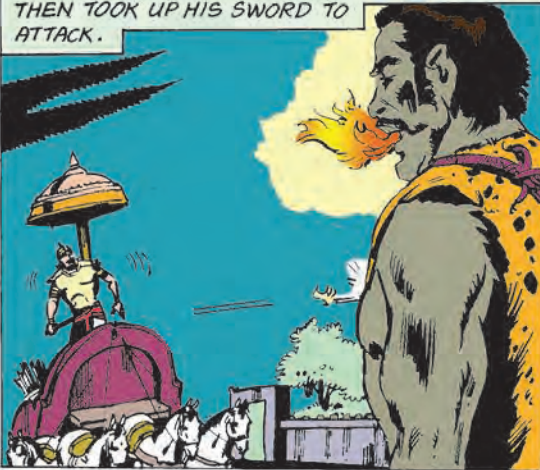
"UNAFRAID AND UNFLINCHING, ASHWATTHAMA RAINED A SHOWER OF ARROWS ON THE CREATURE."



"BUT THE MONSTER SWALLOWED UP ALL THE ARROWS EFFORTLESSLY."



"EVEN THE RATHASHAKTI SENT BY ASHWATTHAMA, FAILED TO MAKE ANY IMPACT. HE THEN TOOK UP HIS SWORD TO ATTACK."

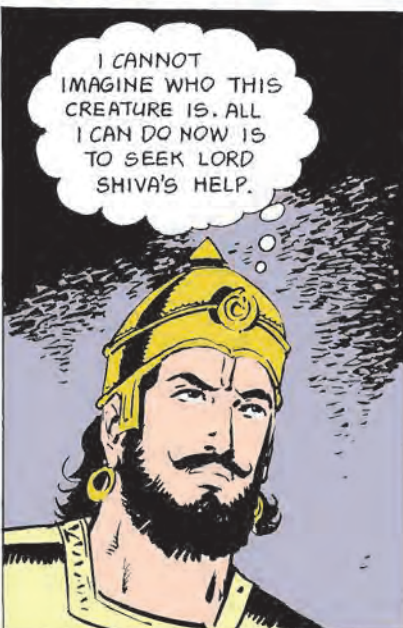


"THE SWORD TOO DISAPPEARED INTO THE MOUTH OF THE MONSTER AS DID THE MACE THAT HE TRIED NEXT."

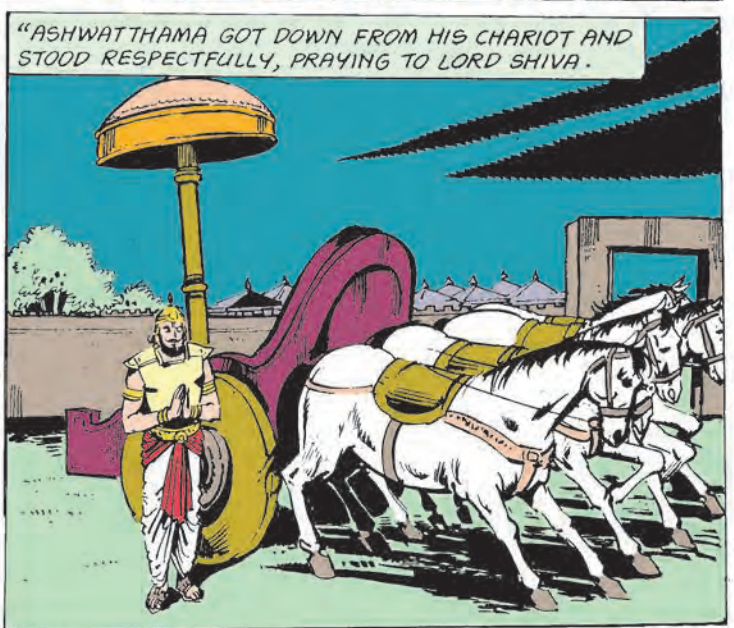


NOW ALL MY WEAPONS ARE EXHAUSTED. PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA.

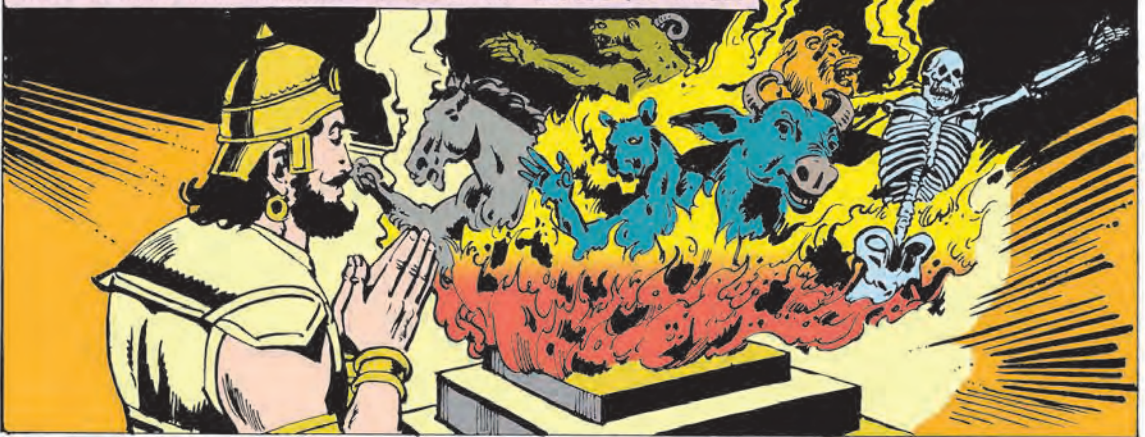
I CANNOT IMAGINE WHO THIS CREATURE IS. ALL I CAN DO NOW IS TO SEEK LORD SHIVA'S HELP.



"ASHWATTHAMA GOT DOWN FROM HIS CHARIOT AND STOOD RESPECTFULLY, PRAYING TO LORD SHIVA."



"WHEN HE MEDITATED FOR A WHILE, A GOLDEN ALTAR APPEARED BEFORE HIM. FROM IT EMERGED HUGE BEINGS WITH STRANGE FEATURES AND GROTESQUE LIMBS."



"THE GHASTLY CREATURES WHO DANCED AND ROMPED BEFORE HIM WERE ACTUALLY ATTENDANTS OF LORD SHIVA."



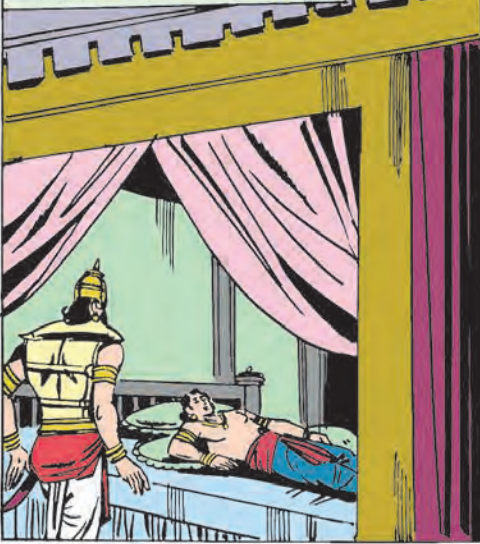
"REALISING THIS, ASHWATTHAMA CLIMBED INTO THE BLAZING ALTAR."



"LORD SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE HIM, AND SAID WITH A LAUGH—"



"ASHWATTHAMA WENT STRAIGHT TO DHRISHTADYUMNA'S TENT."



"WITH A SWIFT KICK, ASHWATTHAMA ROUSED THE SLEEPING DHRISHTADYUMNA."



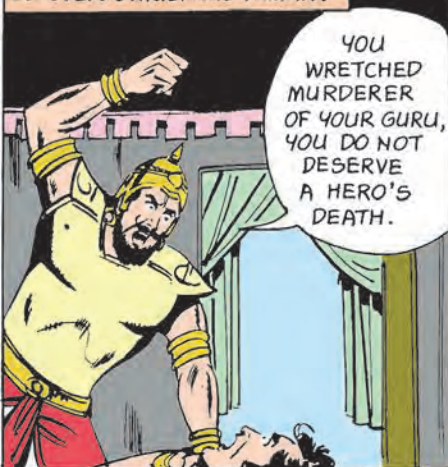
"HE WOKE UP WITH A START AND TRIED TO GET UP. ASHWATTHAMA PULLED HIM BY THE HAIR AND THREW HIM DOWN ON THE FLOOR."



"ASHWATTHAMA PRESSED DHRISHTADYUMNA DOWN WITH HIS FEET AND BEGAN TO RAIN BLOWS ON HIM."



"HE LAUGHED CRUELLY AS HE STOMPED OVER DHRISHTADYUMNA."



"THUS, AFTER KICKING AND CRUSHING DHRISHTADYUMNA TO DEATH, ASHWATTHAMA BEGAN ATTACKING THE OTHER WARRIORS."



"THE SAME CRUEL PROCESS WAS REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN."

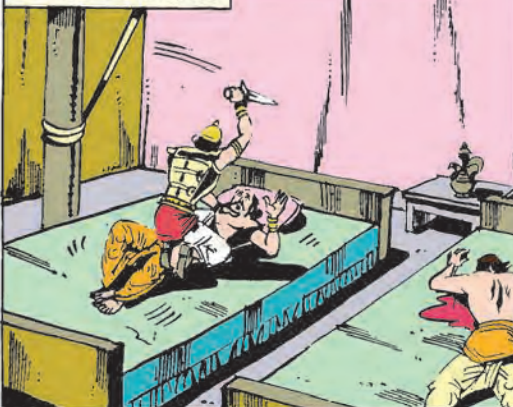


"THE CRY OF THE VICTIMS WOKE UP THE GUARDS AND THE WOMENFOLK. THEY SCREAMED ALOUD."



HURRY UP! RUN!
RUN! SOME RAKSHASA HAS
ENTERED THE CAMP AND
KILLED DHRISTADYUMNA.

"LIKE MUTE AND HELPLESS ANIMALS,
MANY WARRIORS WERE SLAUGHTERED
BY ASHWATTHAMA."



"SOON SHIKHANDI AND THE OTHER WARRIORS,
WHO HAD EARLIER ESCAPED THE MIGHTY BATTLE
UNSCATHED, WERE KILLED WHILE STILL HALF
ASLEEP."



"ONE BY ONE, ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI
AND ALL THE PANCHALAS WERE KILLED."



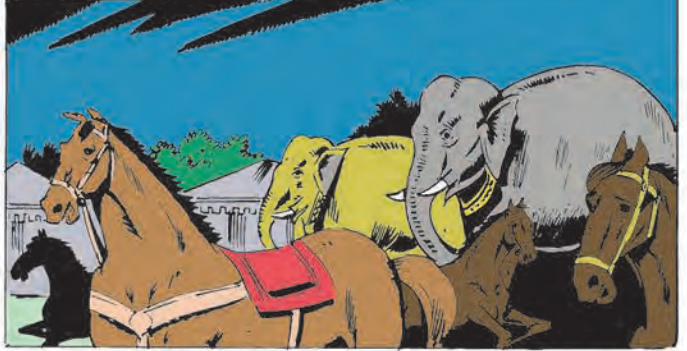
"IN HIS FURY, ASHWATTHAMA ATTACKED EVEN THE
ANIMALS OF THE ENEMY CAMP."



"ASHWATTHAMA WAS LIKE DEATH INCARNATE, RUNNING HITHER AND THITHER, SWORD IN HAND.



"THE SOLDIERS WHO ESCAPED HIS FURY WERE CRUSHED UNDER THE ANIMALS WHO RAN AMOK IN THE DARK NIGHT.



"SLEEPY AND CONFUSED WITH FEAR, SOME SOLDIERS TRIED TO RUN OUT OF THE CAMP. BUT KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA WERE READY TO CATCH THEM.



"IN A BID TO HELP ASHWATTHAMA, THEY SET FIRE TO THE CAMP FROM THREE SIDES.



"IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF THE RAGING FIRE ASHWATTHAMA MANAGED TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE ARMY..."



"...SO THAT WHEN HE EMERGED AT DAYBREAK AFTER THE MASSACRE, THE CAMP LAY AS SILENT AS IT HAD BEEN WHEN HE HAD ENTERED IT EARLIER IN THE NIGHT."



"ASHWATTHAMA, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA PIERCED THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT WITH THEIR CRIES OF REJOICING."

WE HAVE DONE IT! WE HAVE FINISHED OUR TASK.

COME, LET US HURRY TO KING DURYODHANA WITH THE GOOD NEWS.



"WHEN THEY REACHED DURYODHANA, THEY FOUND HIM BARELY BREATHING."



"ASHWATTHAMA WIPED THE BLOOD SPOUTING FROM DURYODHANA'S MOUTH AND SAID —

LISTEN, O KING! ALL THE PANCHALAS AND ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI ARE DEAD. I HAVE KILLED THAT WICKED DHRIKHTA-DYUMNA TOO.



NOW ONLY THE FIVE PANDAVAS, KRISHNA AND SATYAKI REMAIN AMONG THE PANDAVAS, AND THE THREE OF US FROM OUR ARMY.



"THE NEWS REVIVED DURYODHANA LONG ENOUGH TO SAY —

ASHWATTHAMA!
YOU HAVE DONE
FOR ME WHAT
BHEESHMA,
DRONA OR KARNA
COULD NOT DO.
BLESS YOU!
NOW WE WILL
ALL MEET IN
HEAVEN.



"WITH THESE WORDS,
DURYODHANA BREATHED
HIS LAST. THE MIGHTY
WARRIOR WHO HAD BEEN
THE FIRST TO ENTER THE
BATTLEFIELD WAS AMONG
THE LAST TO DIE.



"BRIEFLY EMBRACING THE
DEPARTED KING DURYODHANA
THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE
PLACE.



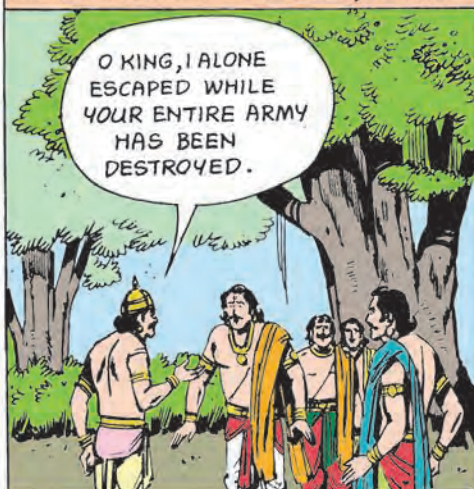
"VAISHAMPAYANA
CONTINUED HIS
NARRATION —

WHEN SANJAYA HEARD THE NEWS OF
DURYODHANA'S DEATH, HE LOST THE
POWER OF THE DIVINE VISION BESTOWED
ON HIM BY SAGE VYASA. MEANWHILE,
DHRISTADYUMNA'S CHARIOTEER HAD
SOMEHOW ESCAPED THE MASSACRE AND
RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH THE
TERRIBLE NEWS.



"RELATING THE GRUESOME DETAILS
OF THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE, HE SAID—

O KING, I ALONE
ESCAPED WHILE
YOUR ENTIRE ARMY
HAS BEEN
DESTROYED.



"YUDHISHTHIRA FAINTED WITH SHOCK. SATYAKI
CAUGHT HIM AS HE FELL.

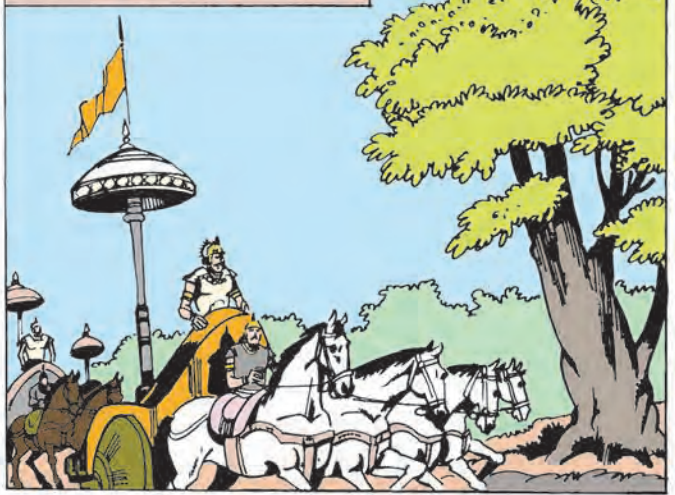


"ON RECOVERING, YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED ALOUD—

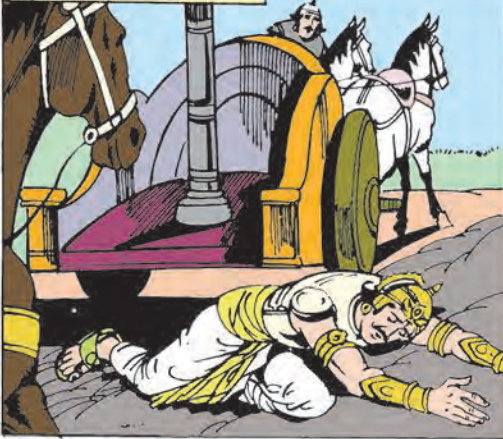
ALAS ! I HAVE LOST ALL AFTER WINNING THE WAR. MY WARRIORS WHO HAD ESCAPED THE ARROWS OF THE MIGHTY KARNA AND DRONA HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THEIR OWN CARELESSNESS.



"AFTER SENDING NAKULA TO FETCH DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA SORROWFULLY WENT TO HIS CAMP WITH HIS OTHER BROTHERS.



"HE COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THAT AWFUL SIGHT AND, CRYING INCONSOLABLY FELL DOWN IN A SWOON.



"EVEN AS THE OTHER PANDAVAS TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM, NAKULA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE WITH DRAUPADI.



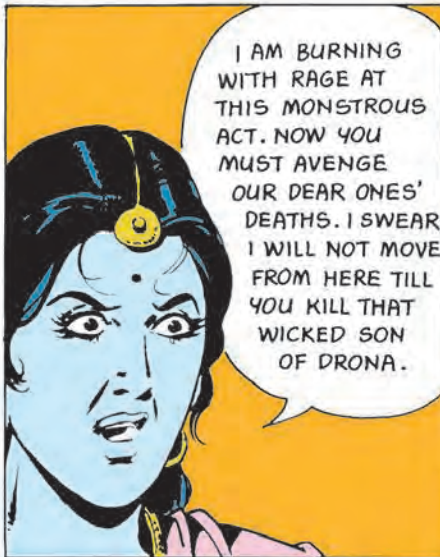
"AGITATED AS SHE WAS WITH THE NEWS, THE SCENE OF MASSACRE WAS TOO TRAGIC A SIGHT FOR HER. BHEEMA CAUGHT HER JUST IN TIME AS SHE FAINTED.



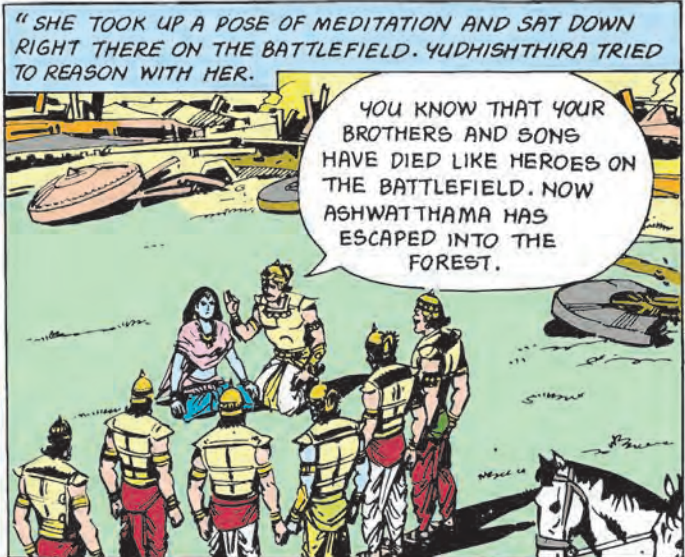
"WHEN SHE RECOVERED A LITTLE, SHE GLARED AT YUDHISHTHIRA, AND SAID —

SHOULD I CONGRATULATE YOU ON CONQUERING THE EARTH AFTER SACRIFICING YOUR SONS?



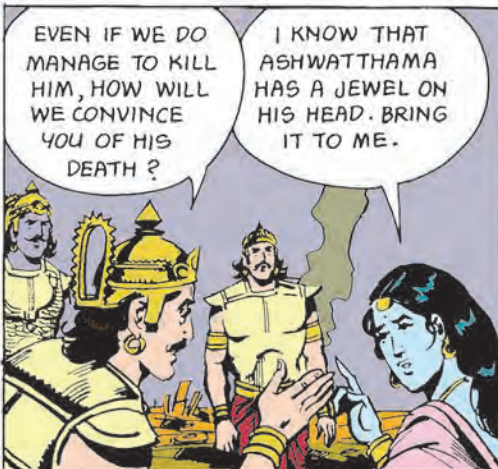


I AM BURNING WITH RAGE AT THIS MONSTROUS ACT. NOW YOU MUST AVENGE OUR DEAR ONES' DEATHS. I SWEAR I WILL NOT MOVE FROM HERE TILL YOU KILL THAT WICKED SON OF DRONA.



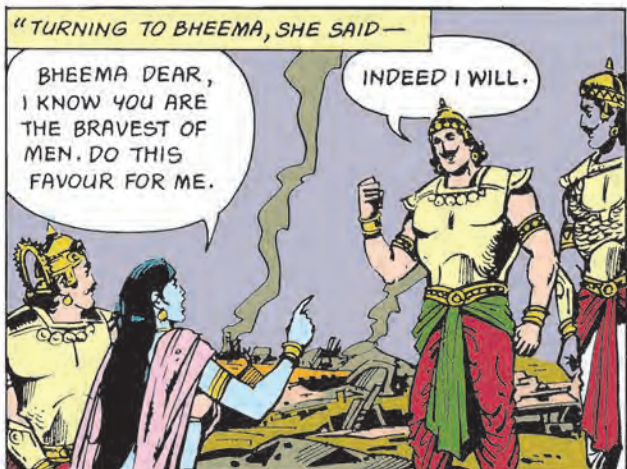
"SHE TOOK UP A POSE OF MEDITATION AND SAT DOWN RIGHT THERE ON THE BATTLEFIELD. YUDHISHTHIRA TRIED TO REASON WITH HER.

YOU KNOW THAT YOUR BROTHERS AND SONS HAVE DIED LIKE HEROES ON THE BATTLEFIELD. NOW ASHWATTHAMA HAS ESCAPED INTO THE FOREST.



EVEN IF WE DO MANAGE TO KILL HIM, HOW WILL WE CONVINCE YOU OF HIS DEATH ?

I KNOW THAT ASHWATTHAMA HAS A JEWEL ON HIS HEAD. BRING IT TO ME.



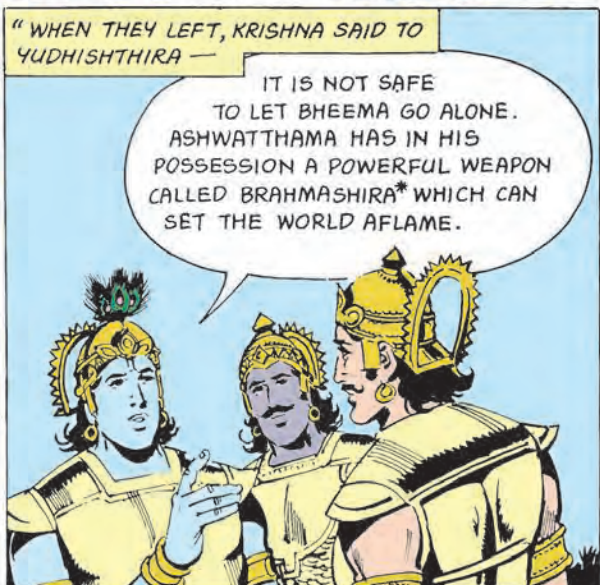
"TURNING TO BHEEMA, SHE SAID —

BHEEMA DEAR, I KNOW YOU ARE THE BRAVEST OF MEN. DO THIS FAVOUR FOR ME.

INDEED I WILL.

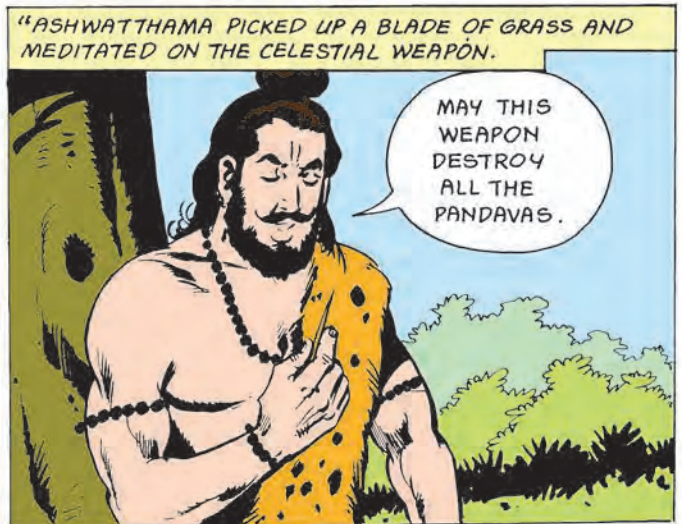
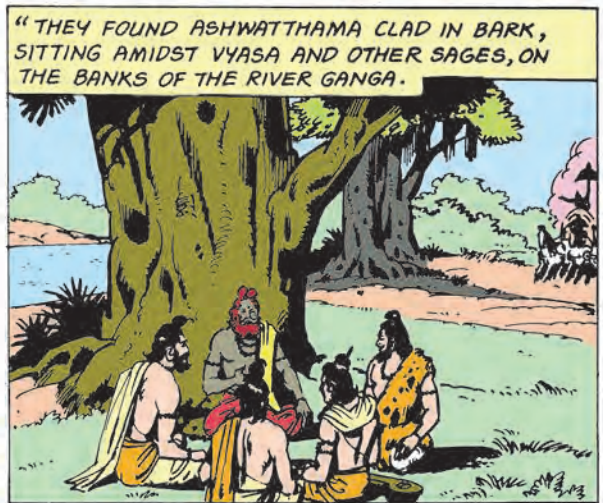
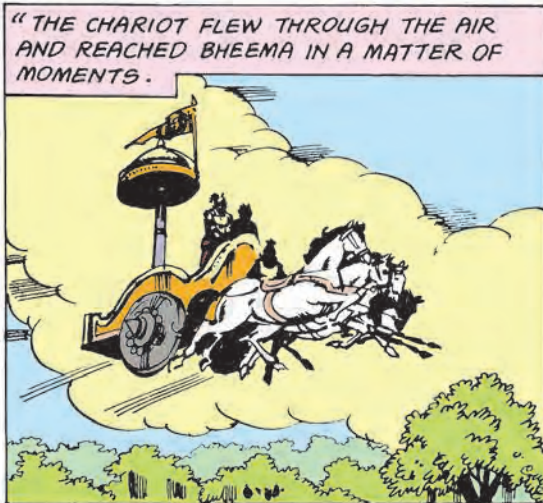
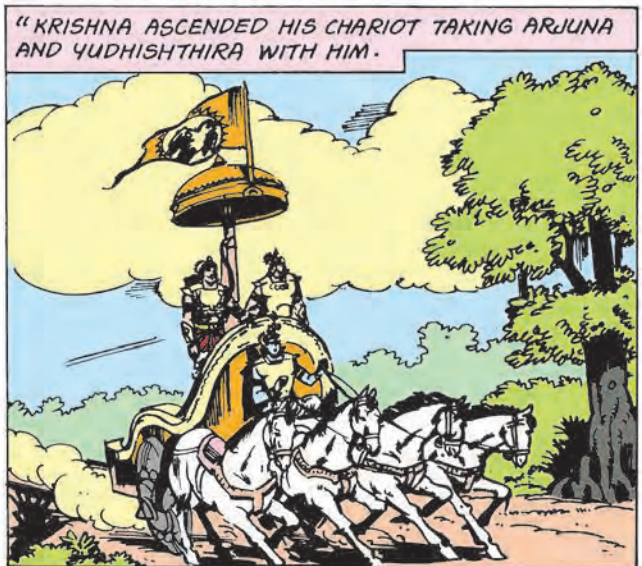
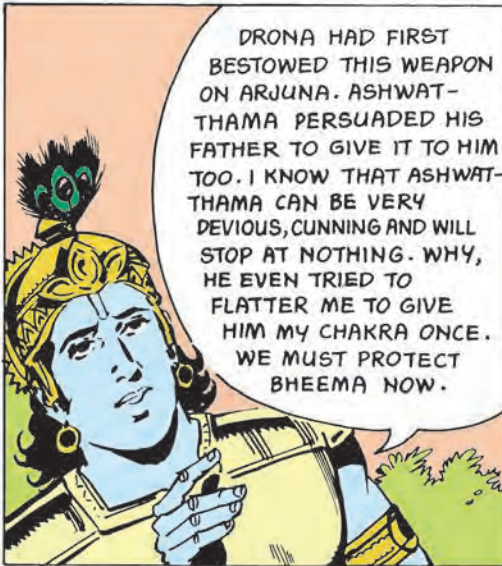


"AT ONCE BHEEMA MOUNTED HIS CHARIOT AND, WITH NAKULA AS HIS CHARIOTEER, SET OUT TO FOLLOW ASHWATTHAMA'S TRAIL.



"WHEN THEY LEFT, KRISHNA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA —

IT IS NOT SAFE TO LET BHEEMA GO ALONE. ASHWATTHAMA HAS IN HIS POSSESSION A POWERFUL WEAPON CALLED BRAHMASHIRA* WHICH CAN SET THE WORLD AFLAME.



"NO SOONER HAD HE SAID THIS THAN ENORMOUS FLAMES BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM THAT BLADE OF GRASS.



"KRISHNA HAD READ ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. HE SAID TO ARJUNA —



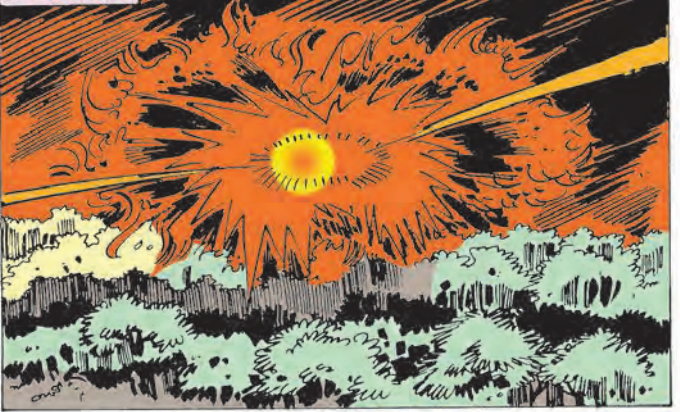
YOU TOO RECEIVED THIS WEAPON FROM DRONA. NOW IS THE TIME TO USE IT.

"JUMPING DOWN FROM THE CHARIOT, ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROW.



MAY THIS WEAPON COUNTER ASHWATTHAMA'S WEAPON.

"THE ENTIRE WORLD APPEARED TO SHAKE AND TREMBLE WITH THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS.



"JUST THEN, THE SAGES VYASA AND NARADA, GOT UP AND STOOD BETWEEN ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA.



NO ONE IN THE PAST HAS EVER DARED TO USE THIS WEAPON ON HUMAN BEINGS. HOW COULD BOTH OF YOU DO SO?

"ARJUNA SAID —



I USED IT TO COUNTER ASHWATTHAMA'S ATTACK. NOW I WILL CERTAINLY DO AS YOU SAY. I WILL TRY MY BEST TO RECALL IT.

"IT WAS NOT AN EASY WEAPON TO RECALL. HAVING OBTAINED IT AFTER SEVERE AUSTERITIES, ARJUNA HAD THE POWER AND ABILITY TO WITHDRAW IT.



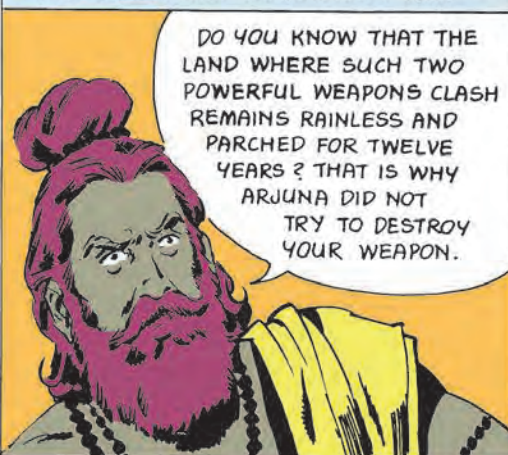
"ASHWATTHAMA HOWEVER COULD NOT DO SO, MUCH AS HE TRIED. HE APPEALED TO VYASA.

I USED THIS WEAPON IN FEAR OF BHEEMA, SAYING, NOW MAY ALL PANDAVAS BE DESTROYED. BUT NOW I CANNOT WITHDRAW IT.

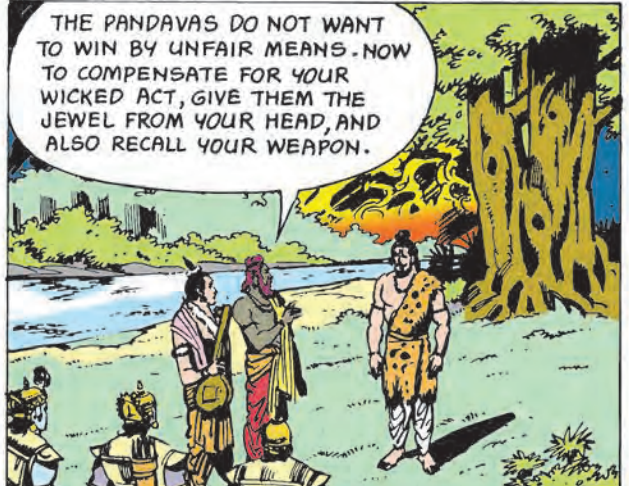


"SAGE VYASA SAID TO ASHWATTHAMA —

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE LAND WHERE SUCH TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS CLASH REMAINS RAINLESS AND PARCHED FOR TWELVE YEARS? THAT IS WHY ARJUNA DID NOT TRY TO DESTROY YOUR WEAPON.



THE PANDAVAS DO NOT WANT TO WIN BY UNFAIR MEANS. NOW TO COMPENSATE FOR YOUR WICKED ACT, GIVE THEM THE JEWEL FROM YOUR HEAD, AND ALSO RECALL YOUR WEAPON.



"ASHWATTHAMA REPLIED —

OH! THIS GEM IS MOST PRECIOUS TO ME. BUT I WILL GIVE IT UP IN DEFERENCE TO YOUR WISHES.

AS FOR THE WEAPON, I CANNOT RECALL IT. LET ITS EFFECT BE DIRECTED TO THE FUTURE PROGENY OF THE PANDAVAS IF NOT TO THEM.

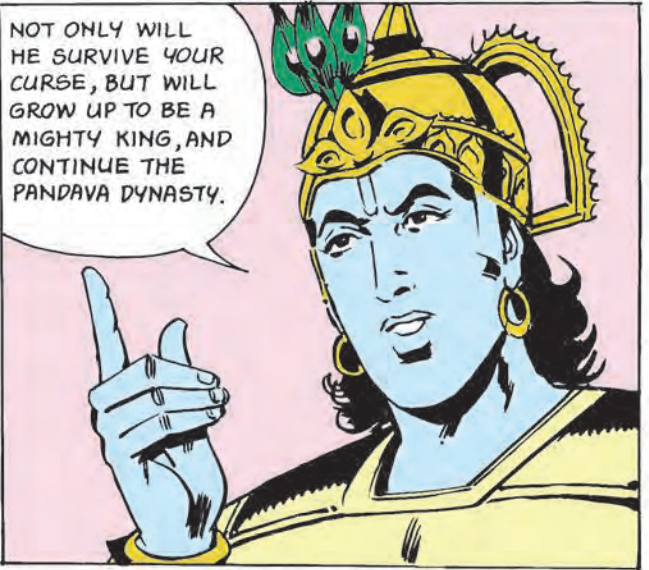


"ASHWATTHAMA'S CURSE WOULD HAVE AFFECTED THE UNBORN BABY OF UTTARA, ABHIMANYU'S WIDOW, BUT KRISHNA INTERVENED IN TIME —

YOU WICKED ASHWATTHAMA, DESPITE YOUR CURSE, THIS SON OF UTTARA WILL BE REVIVED AT BIRTH.



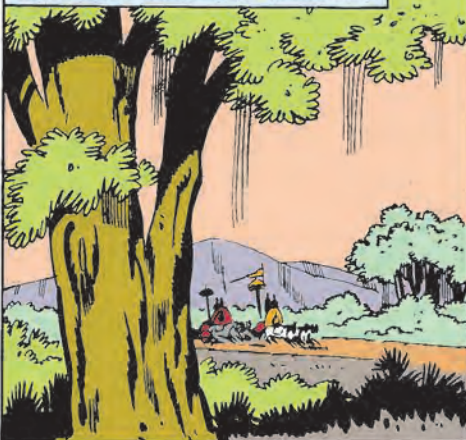
NOT ONLY WILL HE SURVIVE YOUR CURSE, BUT WILL GROW UP TO BE A MIGHTY KING, AND CONTINUE THE PANDAVA DYNASTY.



I TOO BLESS THE BOY WHO WILL BE CALLED PAREEKSHIT.



"THE PANDAVAS RETURNED IN HASTE TO DRAUPADI WITH THE PRECIOUS JEWEL. ASHWATTHAMA WENT MOROSELY INTO THE JUNGLE.

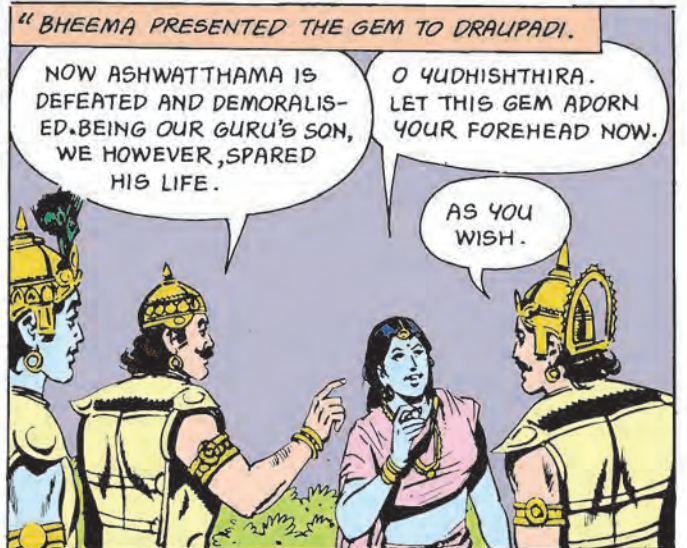


"BHEEMA PRESENTED THE GEM TO DRAUPADI.

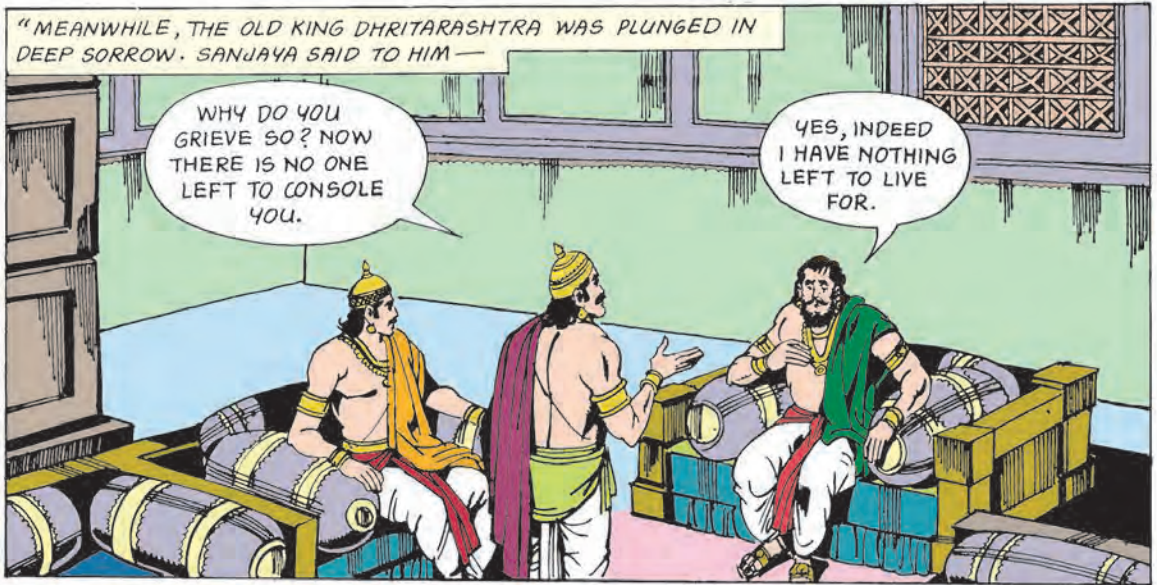
NOW ASHWATTHAMA IS DEFEATED AND DEMORALISED. BEING OUR GURU'S SON, WE HOWEVER, SPARED HIS LIFE.

O YUDHISHTHIRA. LET THIS GEM ADORN YOUR FOREHEAD NOW.

AS YOU WISH.



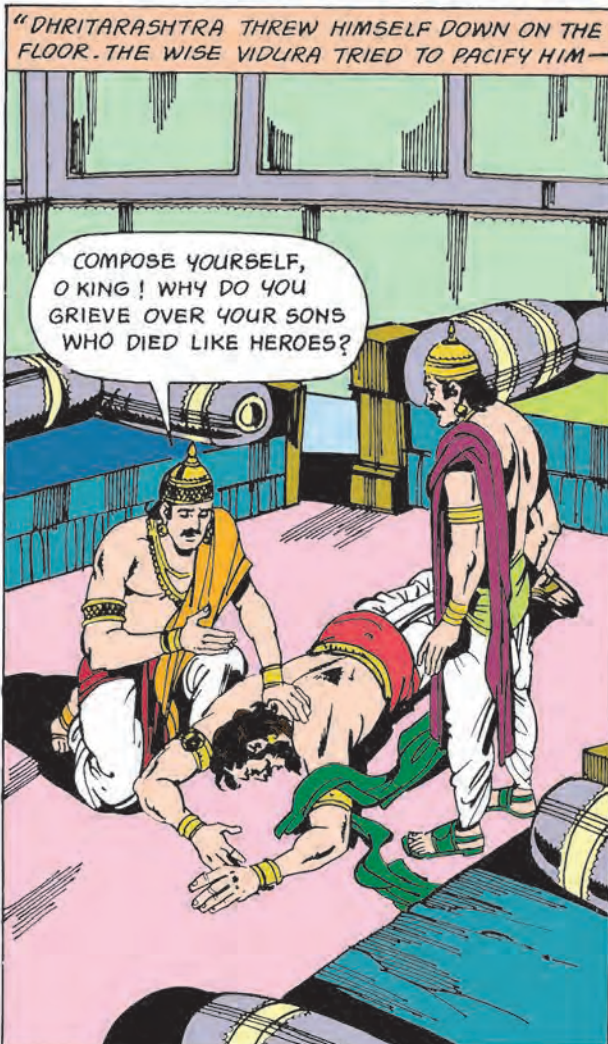
"MEANWHILE, THE OLD KING DHRITARASHTRA WAS PLUNGED IN DEEP SORROW. SANJAYA SAID TO HIM —



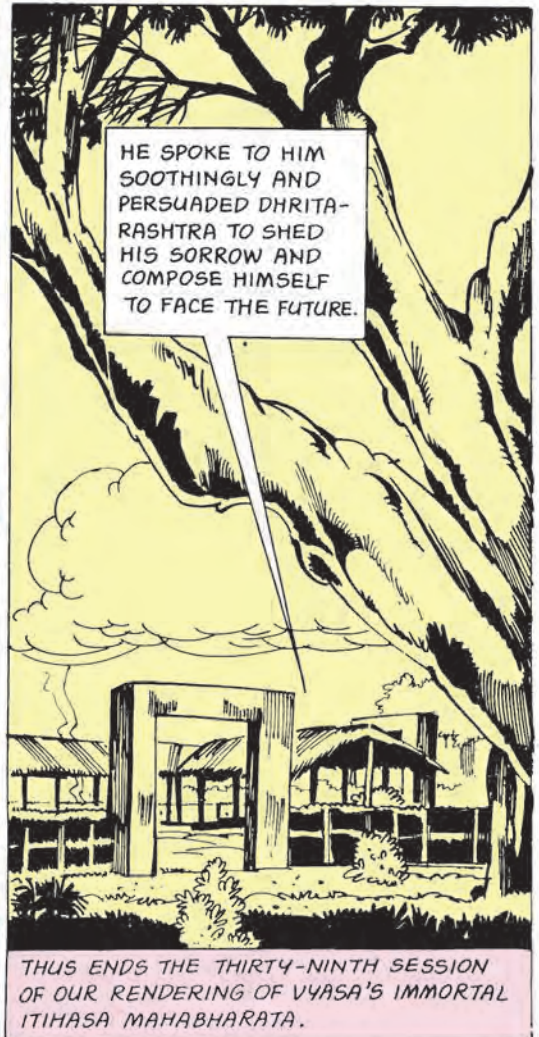
WHY DO YOU GRIEVE SO? NOW THERE IS NO ONE LEFT TO CONSOLE YOU.

YES, INDEED I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR.

"DHRITARASHTRA THREW HIMSELF DOWN ON THE FLOOR. THE WISE VIDURA TRIED TO PACIFY HIM —



COMPOSE YOURSELF, O KING ! WHY DO YOU GRIEVE OVER YOUR SONS WHO DIED LIKE HEROES?

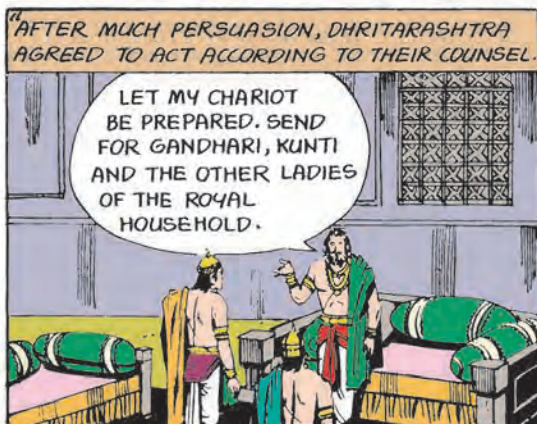
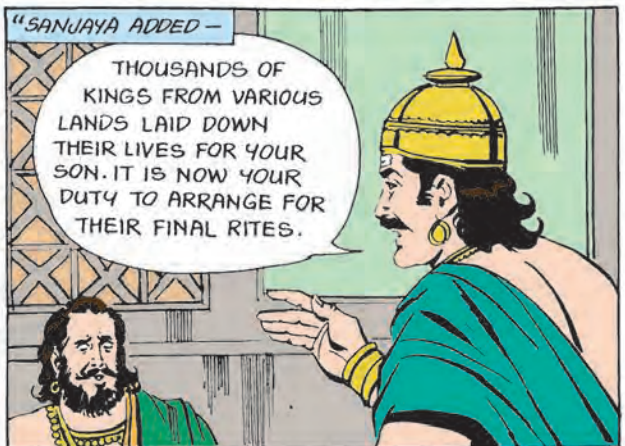
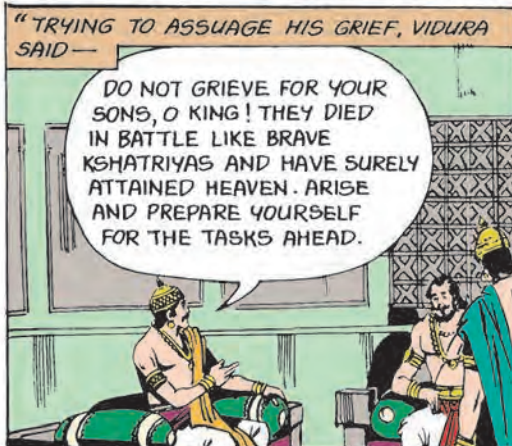
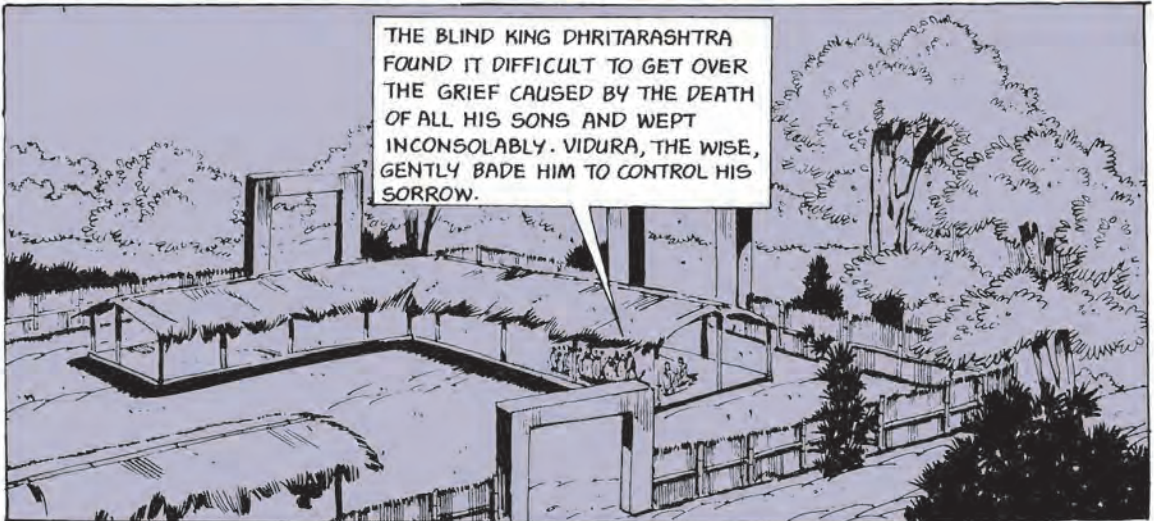


HE SPOKE TO HIM SOOTHINGLY AND PERSUADED DHRITARASHTRA TO SHED HIS SORROW AND COMPOSE HIMSELF TO FACE THE FUTURE.

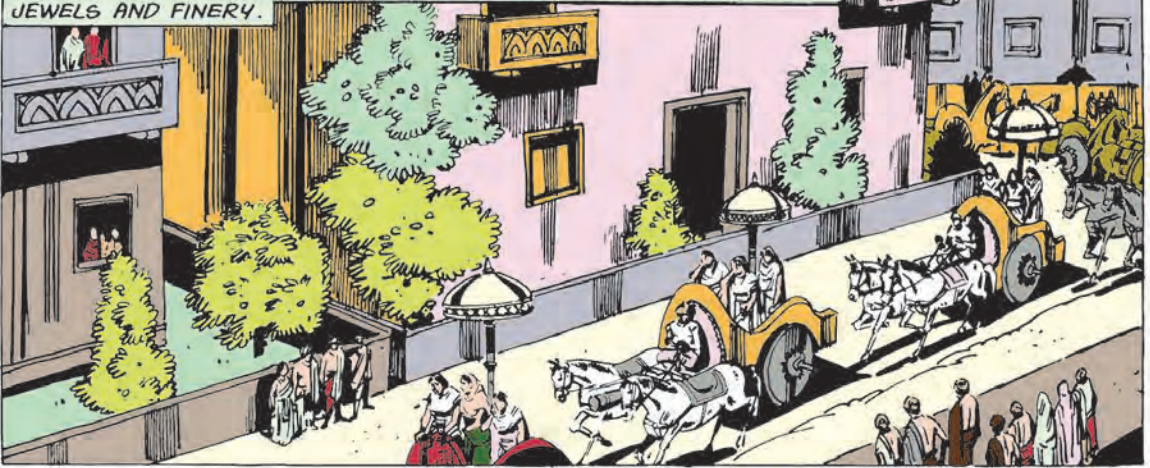
THIS ENDS THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA MAHABHARATA.

Mahabharata - 40

YUDHISHTHIRA'S CORONATION



"WITH TEARS STREAMING DOWN THEIR FACES, THE WOMEN ASCENDED THE CHARIOTS. THESE LADIES OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD WHO HAD NEVER BEFORE APPEARED IN PUBLIC NOW PASSED THROUGH THE MAIN STREET TO THE BATTLEFIELD, DRESSED IN MOURNING, UNADORNED BY JEWELS AND FINERY."

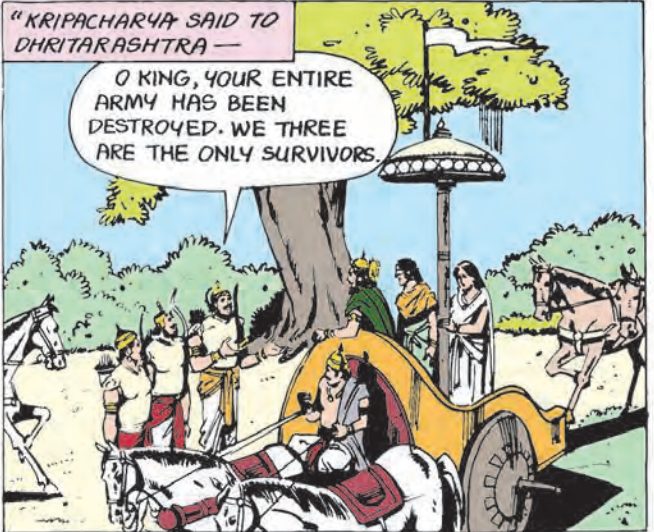


"ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF HASTINAPURA THEY MET KRIPACHARYA, KRITAVARMA AND ASHWATTHAMA."



"KRIPACHARYA SAID TO DHRTARASHTRA —

O KING, YOUR ENTIRE ARMY HAS BEEN DESTROYED. WE THREE ARE THE ONLY SURVIVORS."

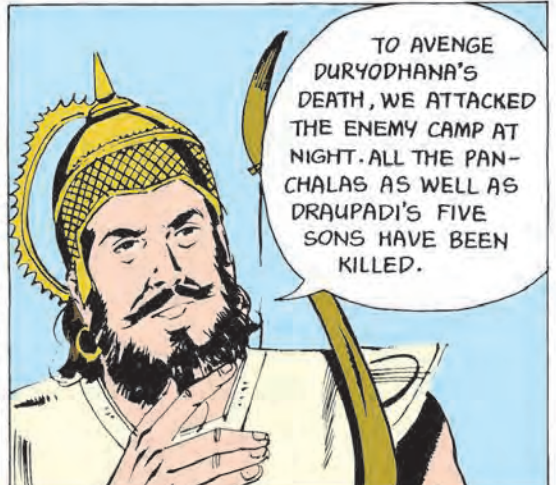


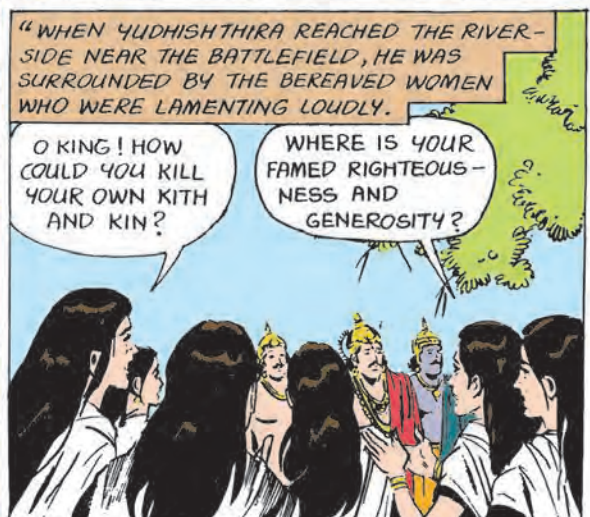
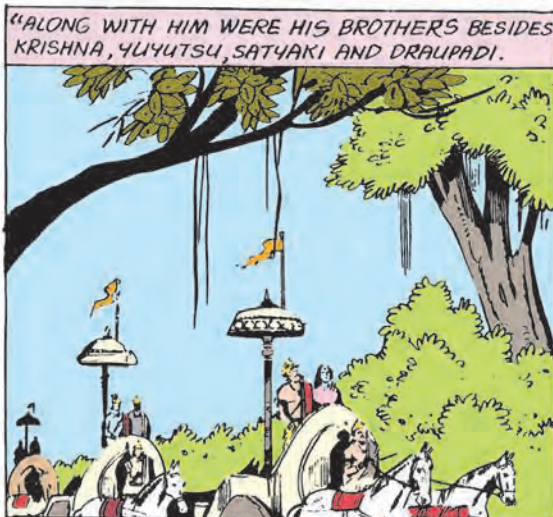
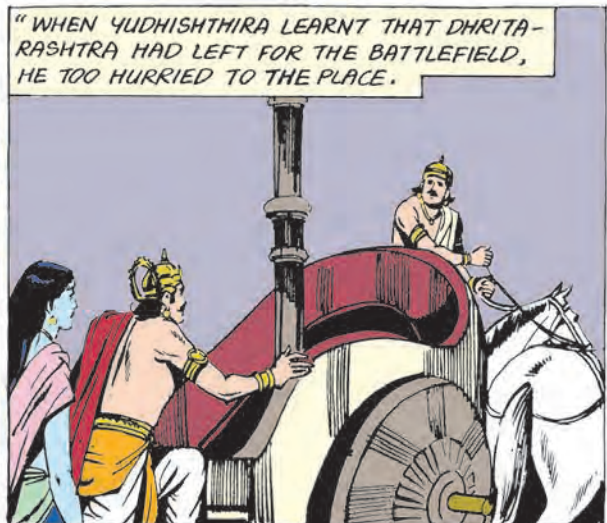
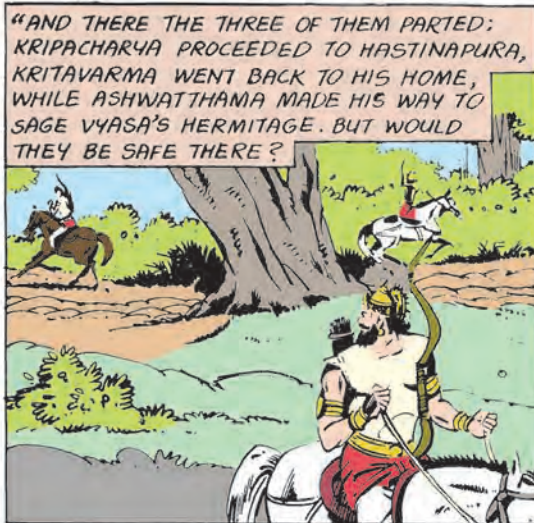
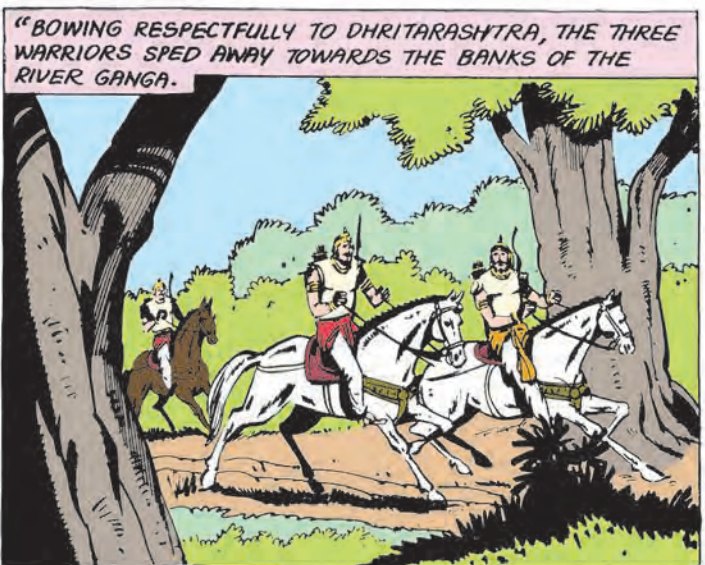
"ADDRESSING GANDHARI, HE SAID —

YOUR SONS FOUGHT BRAVELY AND LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES LIKE TRUE WARRIORS. THEY MUST HAVE SURELY ATTAINED HEAVEN."



TO AVENGE DURYODHANA'S DEATH, WE ATTACKED THE ENEMY CAMP AT NIGHT. ALL THE PAN-CHALAS AS WELL AS DRAUPADI'S FIVE SONS HAVE BEEN KILLED."

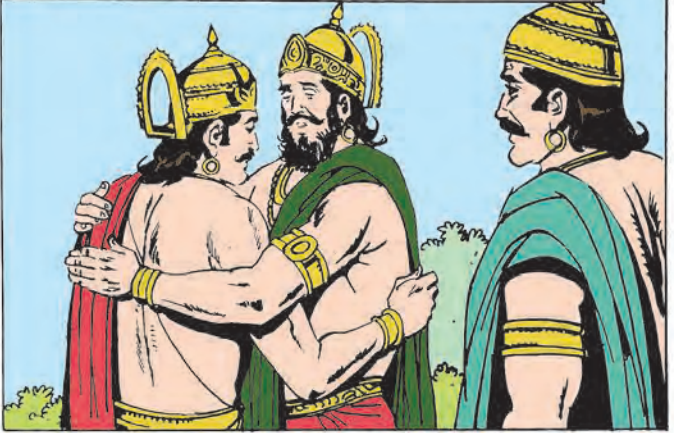




"KEEN TO SPEAK TO HIS UNCLE
DHRITARASHTRA, YUDHISHTHIRA
WALKED PAST THEM..."



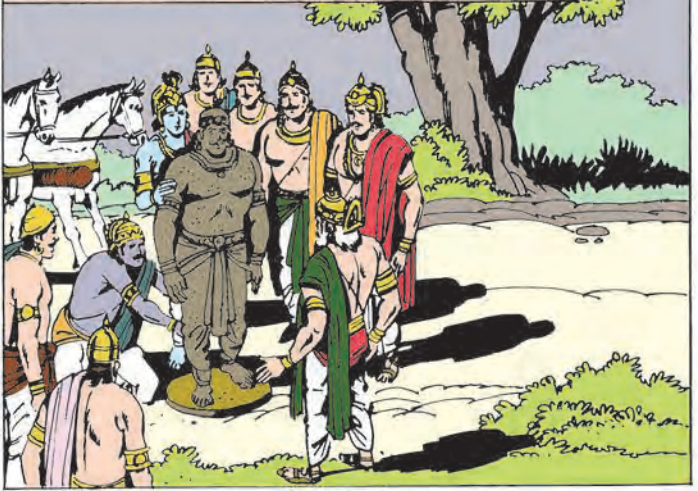
"...AND WENT STRAIGHT TO DHRITARASHTRA. HE AND
HIS BROTHERS PAID THEIR RESPECTS TO THE OLD
KING. DHRITARASHTRA EMBRACED YUDHISHTHIRA.
BUT THERE WAS NO AFFECTION IN THE GESTURE."



"THE BLIND KING APPEARED TO BE
SEEKING SOMEONE. GUESSING HIS
INTENTION KRISHNA QUICKLY PUSHED
BHEEMA ASIDE."



"WITH A NIMBLE GESTURE, HE PLACED BEFORE
DHRITARASHTRA AN IRON IMAGE OF BHEEMA."



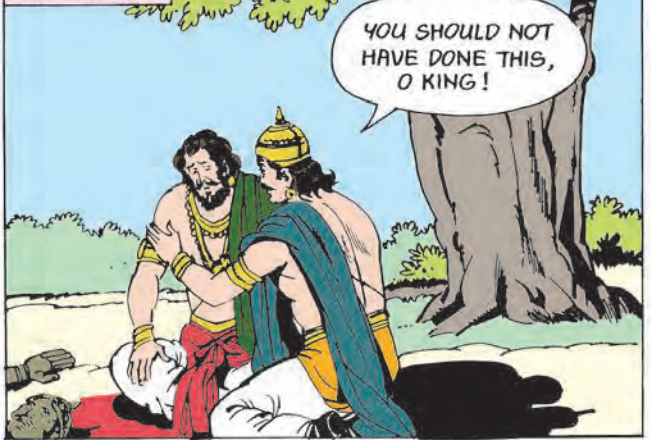
"WITH SUCH FORCE DID DHRITARASHTRA CLASP THE IMAGE TO HIS BOSOM, THAT IT
BROKE INTO PIECES."



GASPING FOR BREATH AND WITH BLOOD STREAMING OUT OF HIS MOUTH, DHRTARASHTRA COLLAPSED.



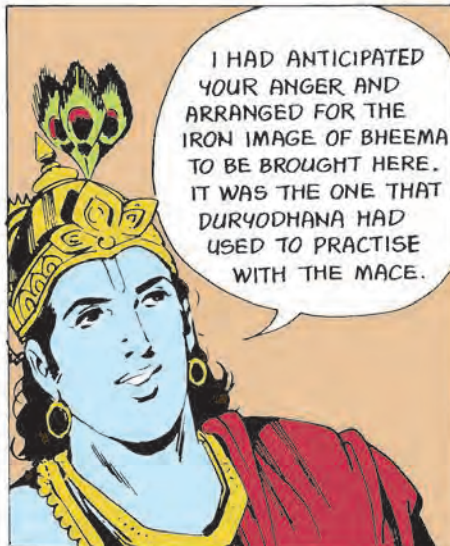
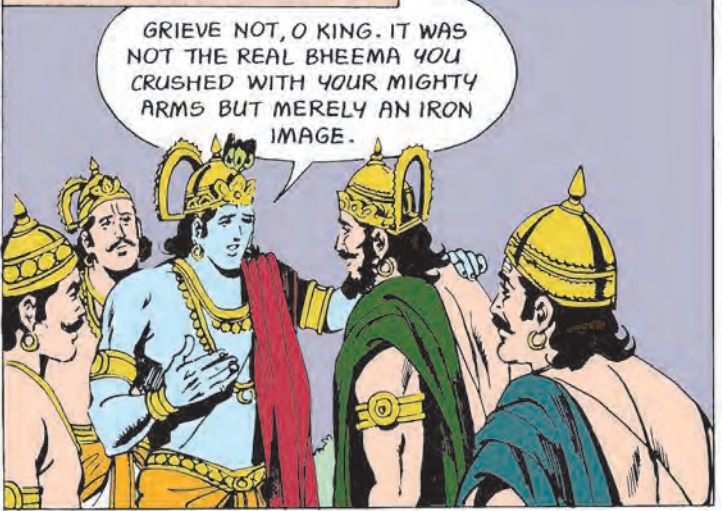
"THE FAITHFUL SANJAYA HELPED HIM TO GET UP AND SAID —



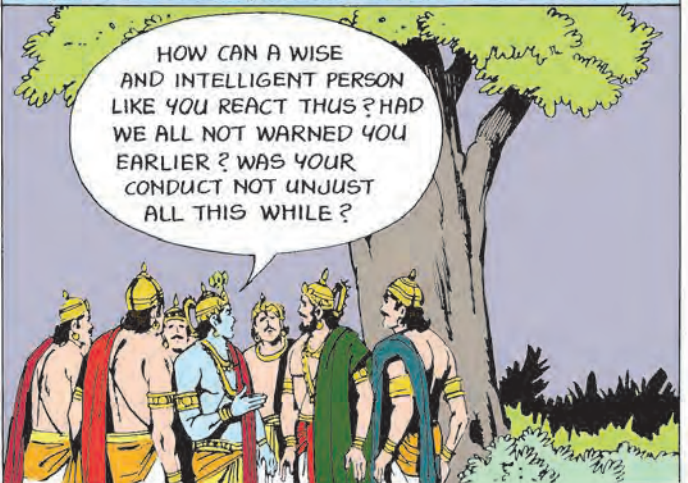
"HIS ANGER ABATED, DHRTARASHTRA WAS NOW FILLED WITH REMORSE.



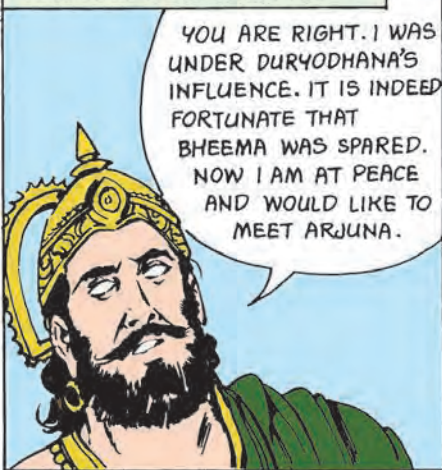
"LORD KRISHNA CONSOLED HIM.



"AFTER DHRTARASHTRA HAD RESTED AWHILE AND REFRESHED HIMSELF, KRISHNA SPOKE TO HIM AT LENGTH.



"DHRTIRASHTRA ADMITTED —



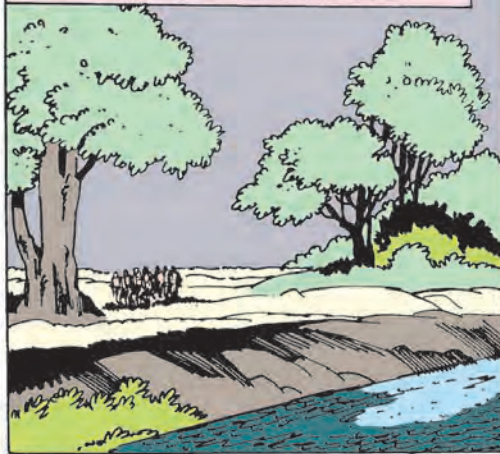
YOU ARE RIGHT. I WAS UNDER DURYODHANA'S INFLUENCE. IT IS INDEED FORTUNATE THAT BHEEMA WAS SPARED. NOW I AM AT PEACE AND WOULD LIKE TO MEET ARJUNA.

"THE OLD KING THEN EMBRACED ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA.



BLESS YOU! WITH MY SONS ALL DEAD, MY AFFECTION AND CONCERN WILL BE DIRECTED TO YOU, O SONS OF PANDU.

"RESPECTFULLY TAKING LEAVE OF DHRTIRASHTRA, THE PANDAVAS AND KRISHNA WENT UP TO GANDHARI.



"BURNING WITH SORROW OVER THE LOSS OF ALL HER SONS, GANDHARI WAS ABOUT TO UTTER A CURSE ON THE PANDAVAS.



"READING HER MIND, SAGE VYASA INTERVENED IN TIME.



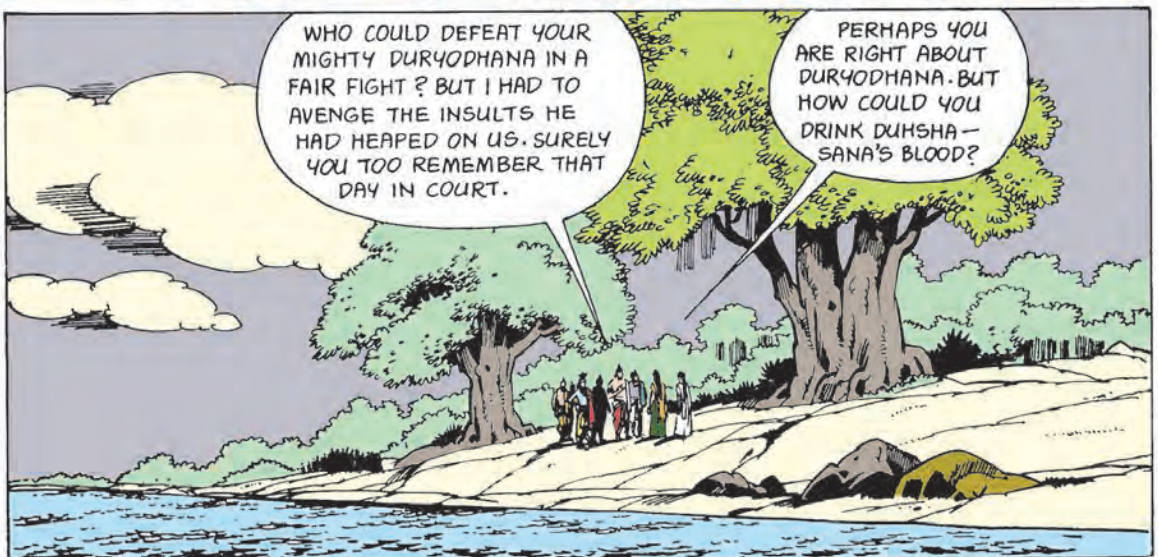
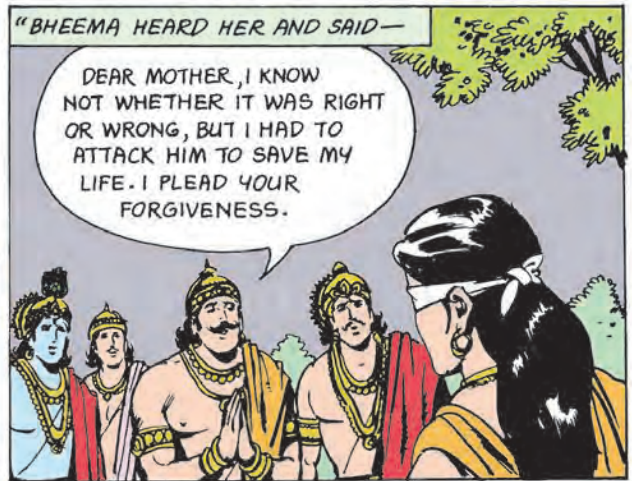
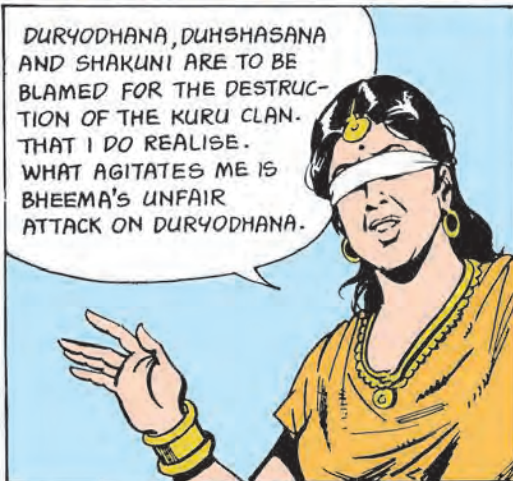
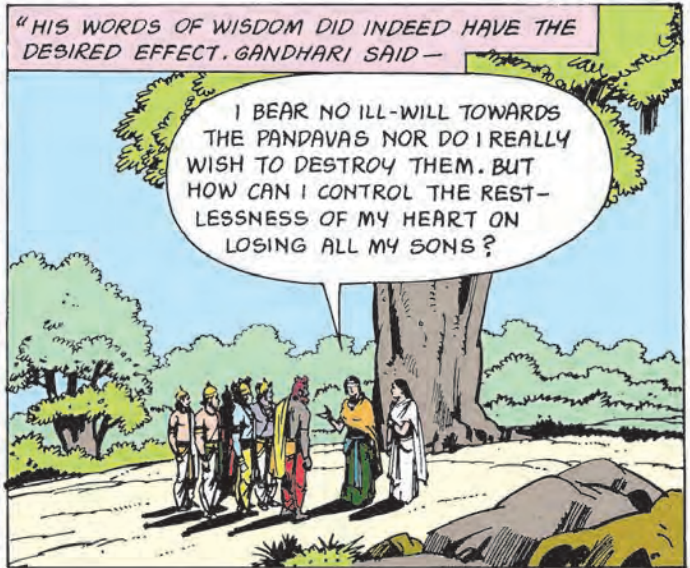
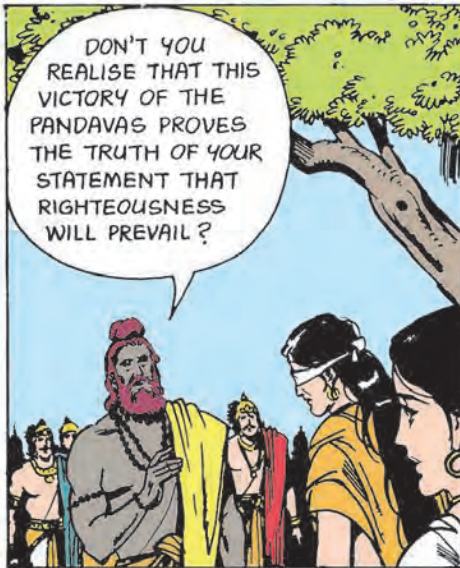
CALM YOURSELF. BEFORE YOU UTTER THE WORDS OF ANGER, HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY TO YOU.

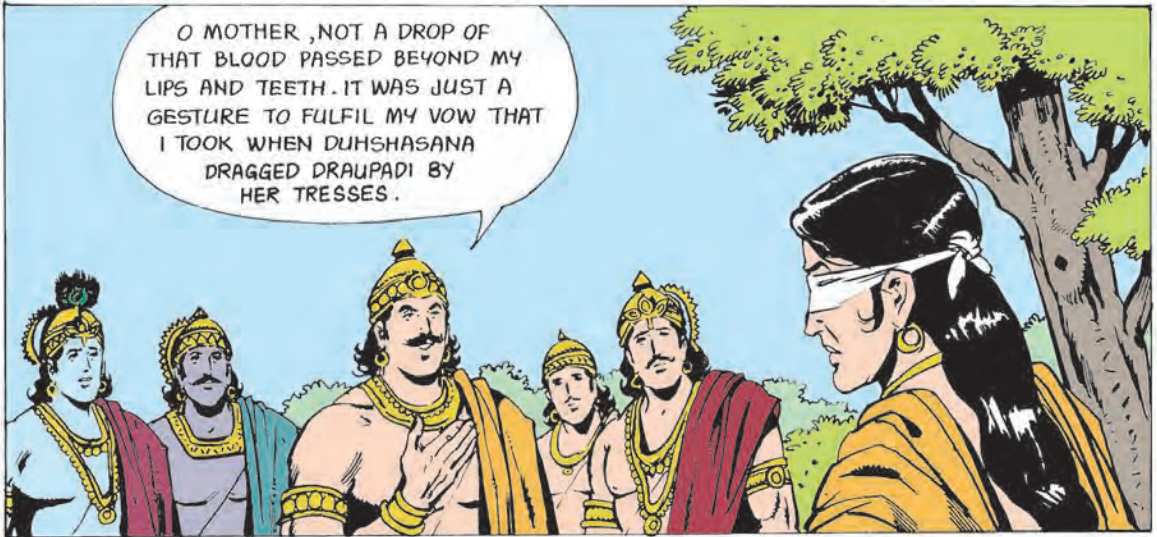
FOR THE LAST EIGHTEEN DAYS, YOUR SON DURYODHANA USED TO SEEK YOUR BLESSING BEFORE FACING THE ENEMY.



EACH DAY, YOU RIGHTLY TOLD HIM — WHERE THERE IS DHARMA*, THERE WILL BE VICTORY.







"BHEEMA TRIED HIS BEST TO PACIFY GANDHARI.

MOTHER GANDHARI, YOU DID NOT STOP YOUR SONS WHEN THEY TORMENTED US. NOW WHY DO YOU BLAME ME?

OH! WHY DID YOU NOT SPARE AT LEAST ONE SON OF MINE.



"HER PAINFUL MEMORIES REVIVED WITH THIS EXCHANGE OF WORDS WITH BHEEMA. SHE CRIED OUT IN ANGER.

WHERE IS THAT KING YUDHISHTHIRA?



"WITH FOLDED HANDS AND TREMBLING WITH FEAR, YUDHISHTHIRA STEPPED AHEAD. IN HIS SWEET VOICE HE SAID —

HERE I AM, GUILTY OF THE DEATH OF YOUR SONS. GO AHEAD AND CURSE ME FOR I DESERVE TO BE CURSED.



"SEEING YUDHISHTHIRA SO PENITENT, GANDHARI'S ANGER VANISHED. SHE BEGAN INSTEAD TO SOB AND SIGH ALOUD.



"AS YUDHISHTHIRA STOOD BOWING BEFORE HER, GANDHARI'S BURNING GAZE FELL ON THE TIP OF HIS TOES.



"SO INTENSE WAS THE POWER OF HER GAZE, THAT YUDHISHTHIRA'S BEAUTIFUL TOENAILS CHARRED THAT VERY INSTANT.



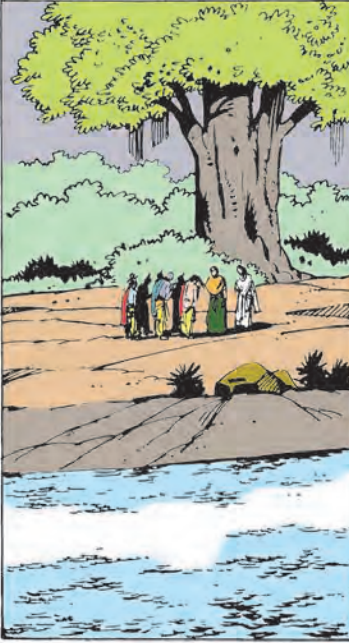
"AT THIS, ARJUNA BECAME AGITATED AND NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS TO BE DONE, QUICKLY HID BEHIND LORD KRISHNA IN FEAR.



"FROM BEHIND HER BLINDFOLD, GANDHARI COULD PERCEIVE HIS FLURRIED ACTION. THAT THE BRAVE ARJUNA COULD BE SO FEARFUL AND DESPERATE MADE GANDHARI'S TEMPER TURN TO MATERNAL CONCERN.



"WHEN THEY TOOK HER LEAVE TO GO TO THEIR MOTHER, SHE BLESSED THEM WITH AFFECTION."



"WHEN KUNTI BEHELD HER SONS AFTER MANY DAYS, HER EYES BRIMMED OVER WITH TEARS."



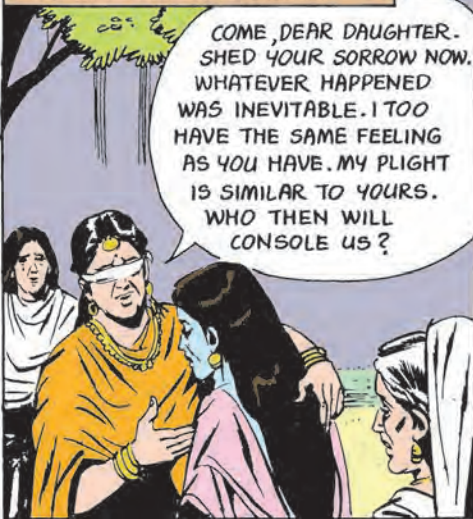
"GENTLY, SHE STROKED THEIR WOUNDS AND BEGAN LAMENTING FOR DRAUPADI, ALL OF WHOSE SONS HAD BEEN KILLED."



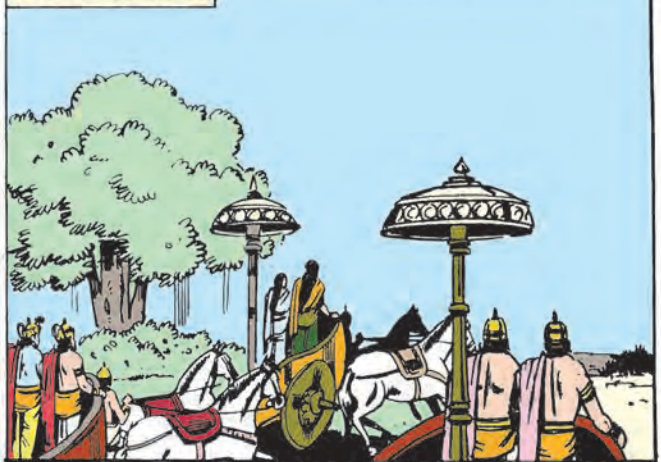
"SHARING THEIR GRIEF AND EMBRACING ONE ANOTHER, THEY WENT TO GANDHARI AGAIN."



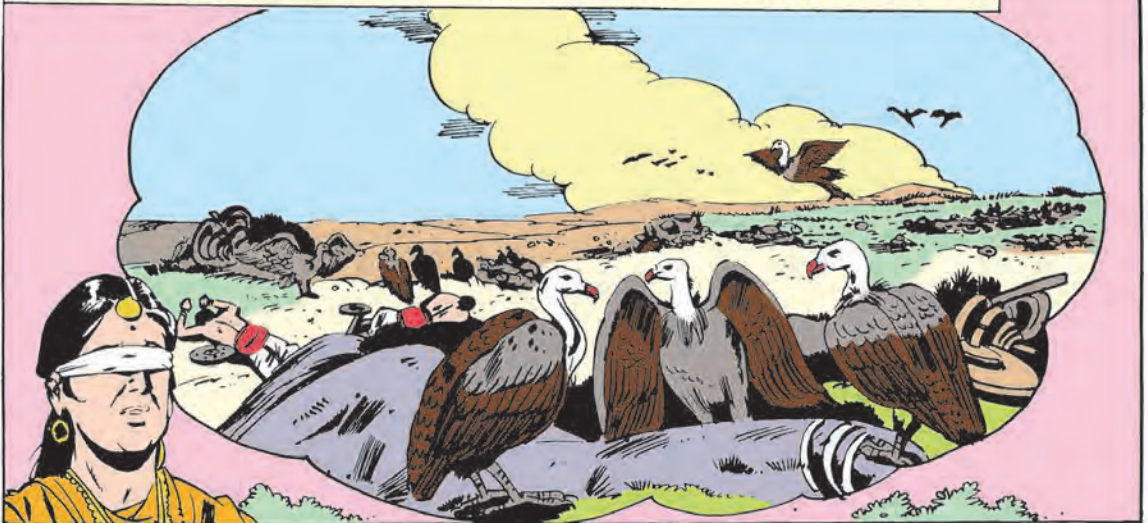
"GANDHARI SAID TO DRAUPADI —



"AS THEY ALL MADE THEIR WAY TO THE SITE OF THE BATTLE, GANDHARI BEHELD THE SCENE WITH HER DIVINE VISION.



"IT WAS INDEED A GRUESOME SIGHT WITH COUNTLESS BODIES STREWN ALL OVER.



"WIVES AND MOTHERS OF THE FALLEN SOLDIERS WERE SEEN WEeping AND CRYING.



"AMIDST THEIR HEART-RENDING CRIES, GANDHARI SPOKE TO KRISHNA —



"WHEN SHE SAW DURYODHANA, GANDHARI COLLAPSED LIKE A FELLED TREE."



"ON RECOVERING, SHE HELD HIS LIFELESS FORM IN HER ARMS AND CRIED OUT."



"KRISHNA STOOD BESIDE HER IN SILENCE. GANDHARI POINTED TO HIM THE VARIOUS WOEFUL SIGHTS."

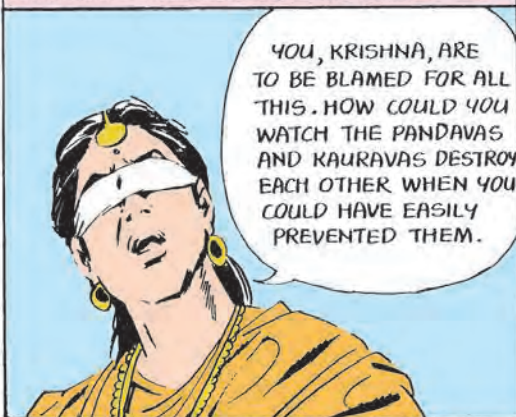
SEE HOW DURYODHANA'S WIFE IS TORN BETWEEN GRIEF FOR HER SON AND FOR HER HUSBAND.

BEHOLD UTTARA LAMENTING THE DEATH OF HER BRAVE, YOUNG HUSBAND, ABHIMANYU. POOR THING, THEY WERE MARRIED JUST SIX MONTHS AGO.



"AS SHE DESCRIBED THE SCENES AROUND, GANDHARI'S ANGER SUDDENLY FLARED UP."

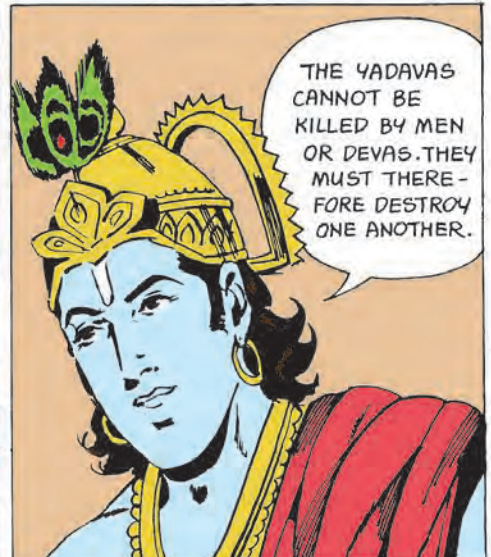
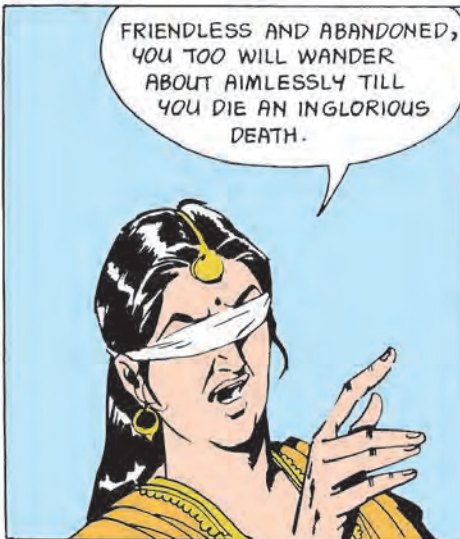
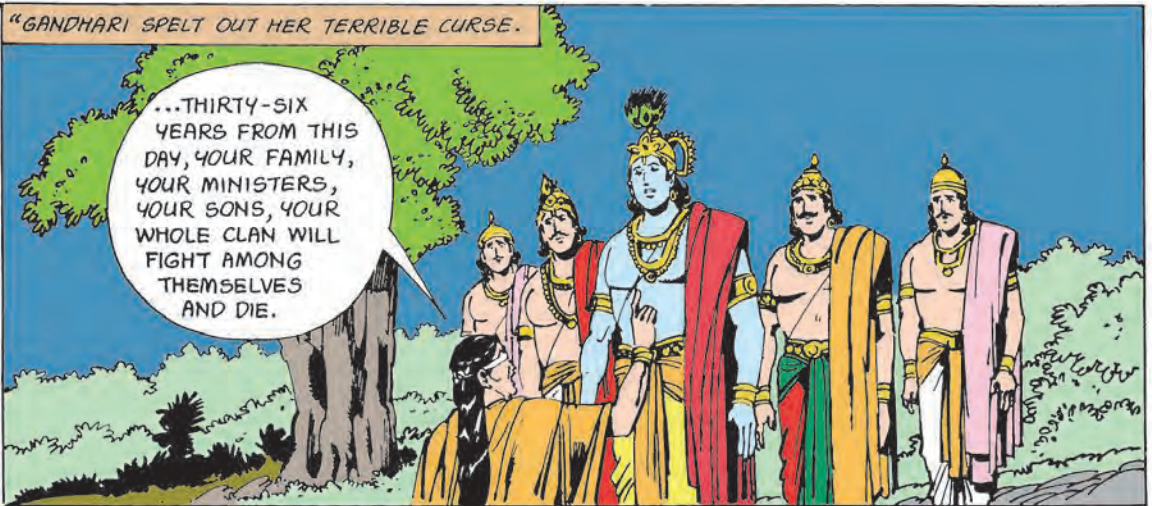
YOU, KRISHNA, ARE TO BE BLAMED FOR ALL THIS. HOW COULD YOU WATCH THE PANDAVAS AND KURAVAS DESTROY EACH OTHER WHEN YOU COULD HAVE EASILY PREVENTED THEM.



YOU MUST ATONE FOR IT NOW. WITH ALL THE POWERS ATTAINED BY MY PENANCE, I CURSE YOU...

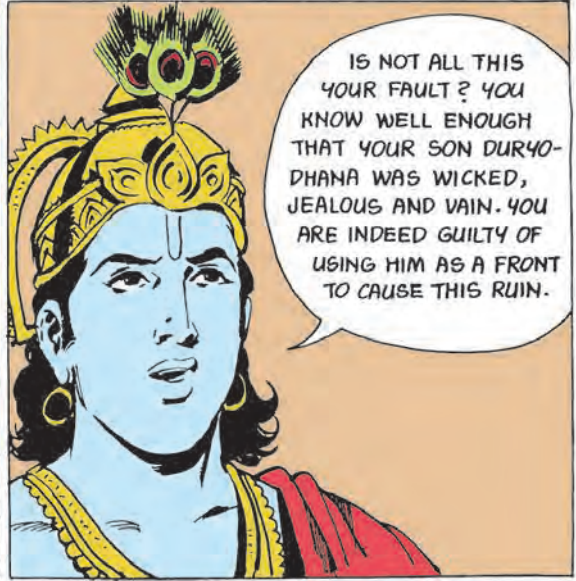
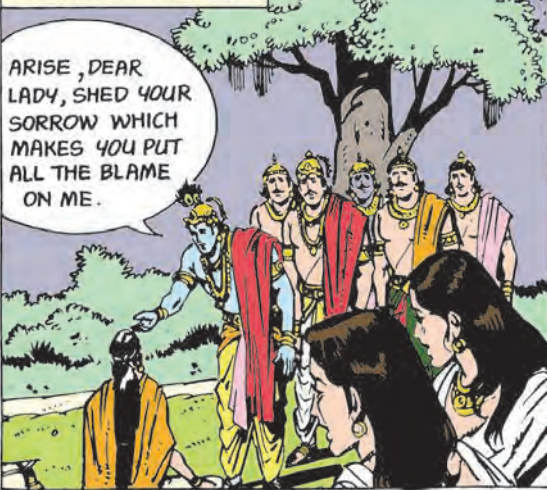


"GANDHARI SPELT OUT HER TERRIBLE CURSE."



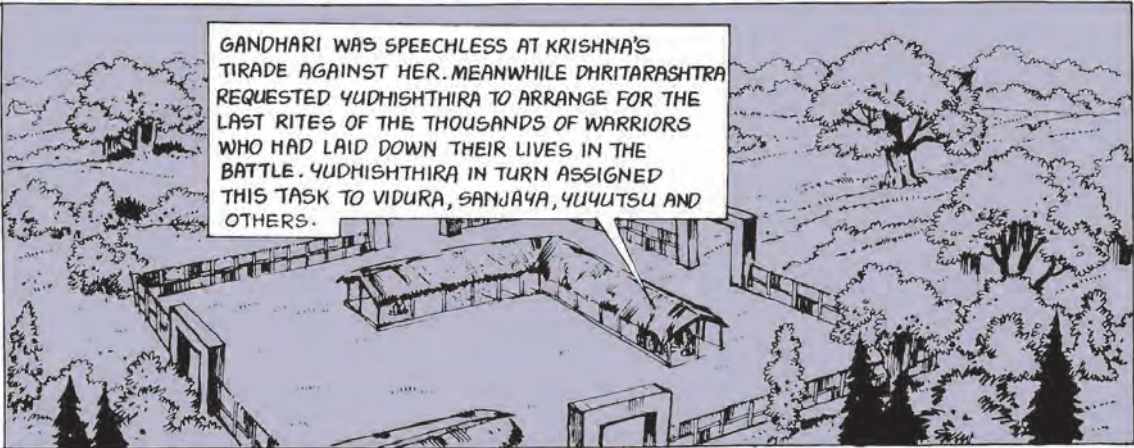
"THE PANDAVAS WERE GREATLY DISTURBED AT THIS EXCHANGE OF WORDS. KRISHNA, HOWEVER, CONTINUED CALMLY.

ARISE, DEAR LADY, SHED YOUR SORROW WHICH MAKES YOU PUT ALL THE BLAME ON ME.

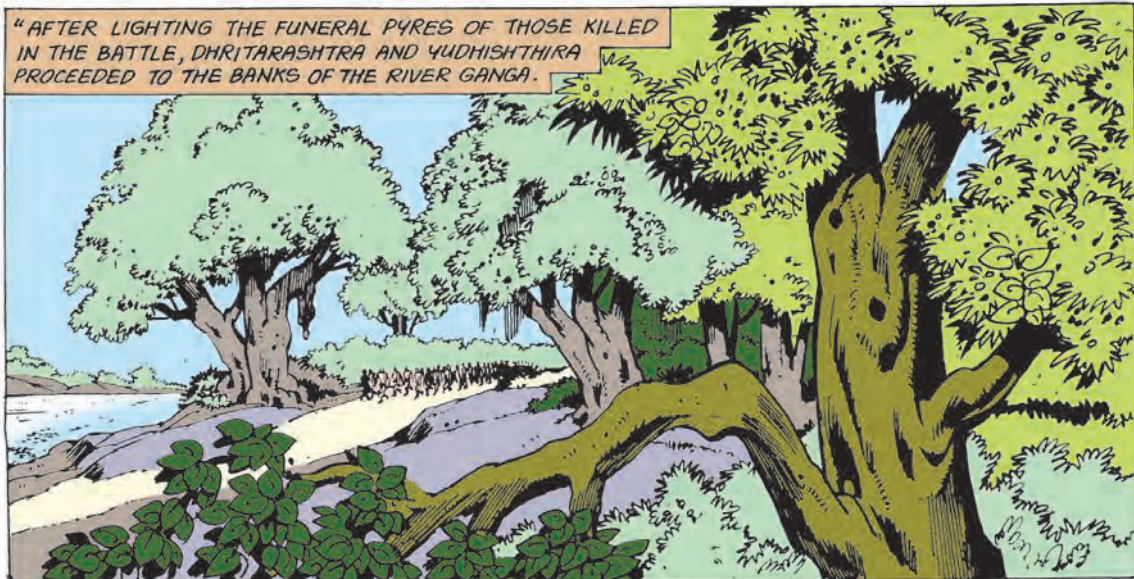


IS NOT ALL THIS YOUR FAULT? YOU KNOW WELL ENOUGH THAT YOUR SON DURYO-DHANA WAS WICKED, JEALOUS AND VAIN. YOU ARE INDEED GUILTY OF USING HIM AS A FRONT TO CAUSE THIS RUIN.

GANDHARI WAS SPEECHLESS AT KRISHNA'S TIRADE AGAINST HER. MEANWHILE DHRTIRASHTRA REQUESTED YUDHISHTHIRA TO ARRANGE FOR THE LAST RITES OF THE THOUSANDS OF WARRIORS WHO HAD LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES IN THE BATTLE. YUDHISHTHIRA IN TURN ASSIGNED THIS TASK TO VIDURA, SANJAYA, UYUYUTSU AND OTHERS.



"AFTER LIGHTING THE FUNERAL PYRES OF THOSE KILLED IN THE BATTLE, DHRTIRASHTRA AND YUDHISHTHIRA PROCEEDED TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER GANGA.



"THE MEN LAID ASIDE THEIR JEWELS AND SILKS TO OFFER OBOLATIONS TO THE DEAD."



"THE WOMEN SHED COPIOUS TEARS AS THEY LIFTED THEIR PALMS TO OFFER OBOLATIONS."



"JUST THEN, IN SOFT TONES, THE SORROWING KUNTI ADDRESSSED HER SONS :

O PANDAVAS,
THERE REMAINS ONE
PERSON FOR WHOM
YOU MUST MAKE
OFFERINGS .



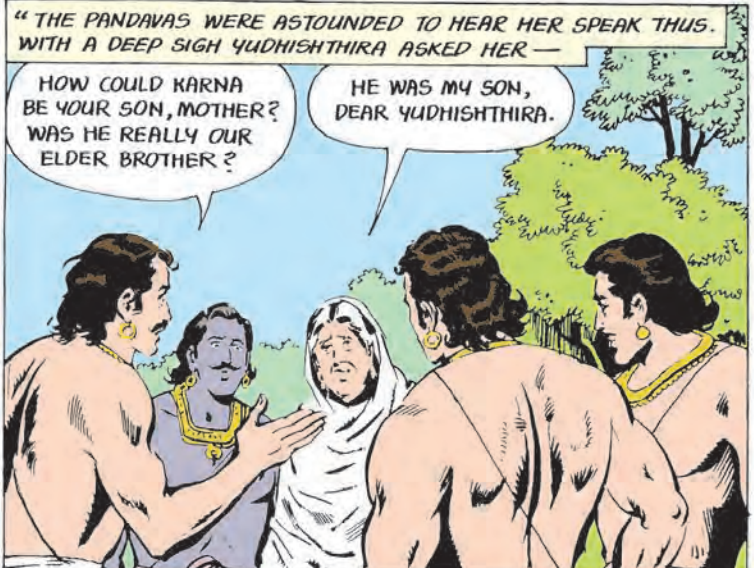
THE ONE WHO DEFIED
ARJUNA, THE ONE WHO
SHONE RESPLENDENT LIKE
THE VERY SUN IN THE
BATTLEFIELD, THE ONE WHO
WAS UNRIVALLED IN STRENGTH
AND VALOUR. KARNA, THE BRAVE:
HIS RITES MUST BE PERFORMED
BY YOU. HE WAS YOUR ELDER
BROTHER. I GAVE BIRTH TO
HIM, THE SON OF SURYA .

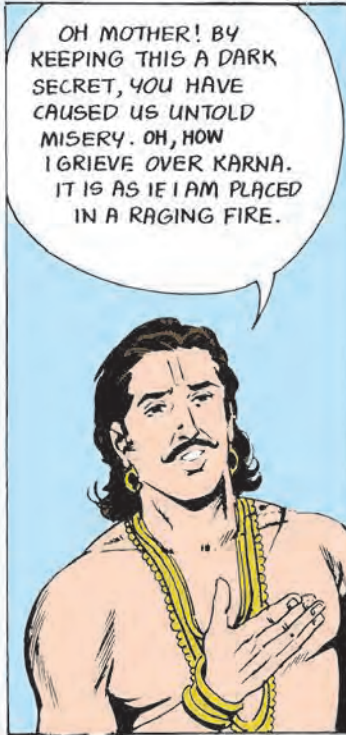


"THE PANDAVAS WERE ASTOUNDED TO HEAR HER SPEAK THUS. WITH A DEEP SIGH YUDHISHTHIRA ASKED HER —

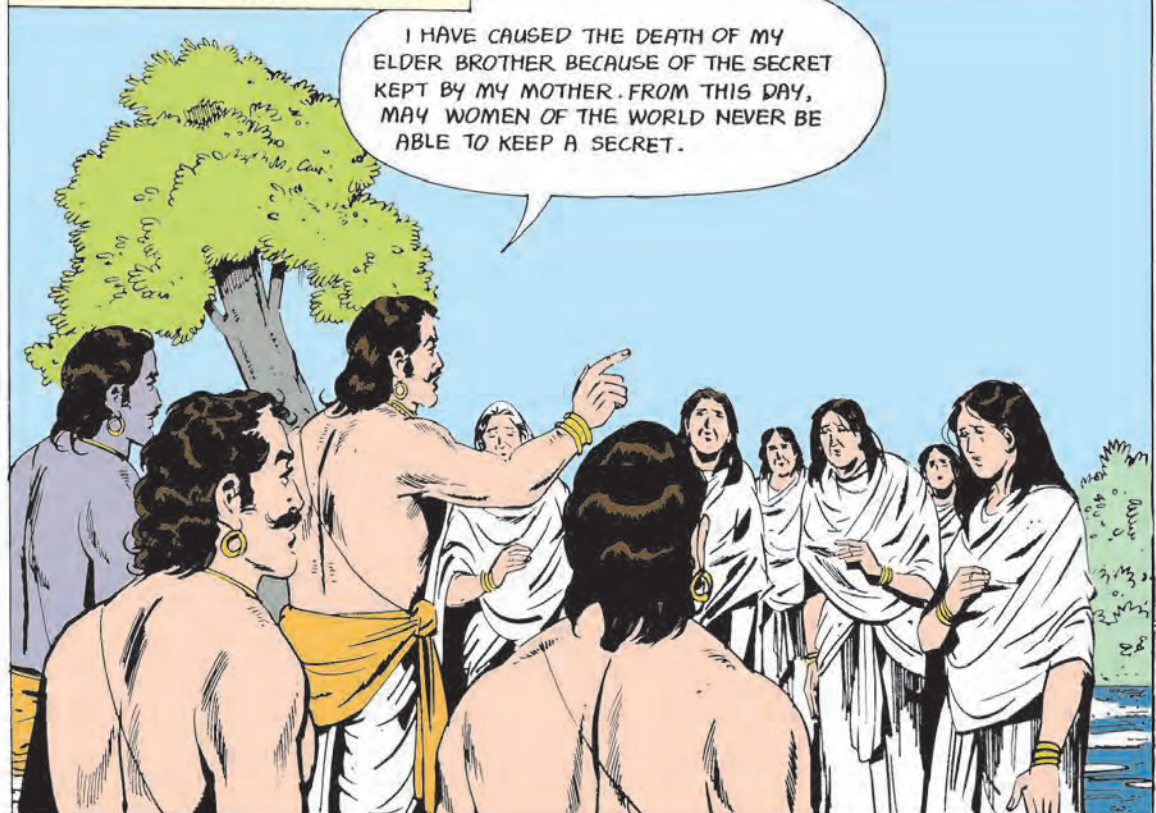
HOW COULD KARNA
BE YOUR SON, MOTHER?
WAS HE REALLY OUR
ELDER BROTHER ?

HE WAS MY SON,
DEAR YUDHISHTHIRA.





"THE WOMEN AROUND HIM TOOK UP THE REFRAIN AND BEGAN CRYING AND WAILING. AMIDST THEIR CRIES YUDHISHTHIRA PRONOUNCED —



"WITH THESE WORDS, YUDHISHTHIRA STEPPED OUT OF THE WATER, FOLLOWED BY HIS BROTHERS."



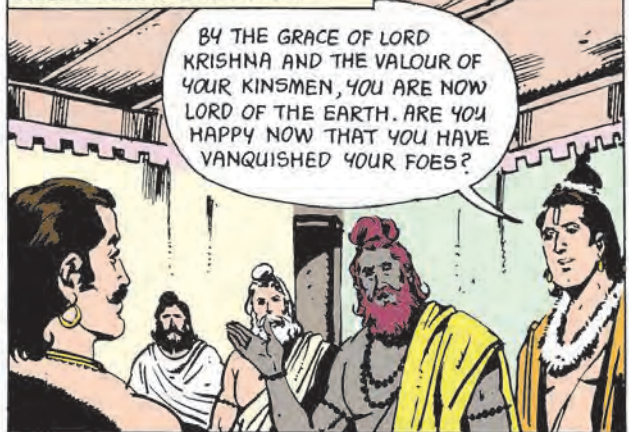
"AFTER THE FUNERAL RITES WERE OVER, THE PANDAVAS DECIDED TO STAY AWAY FROM THE CITY FOR A MONTH. SO THEY SET UP CAMP ON THE BANK OF THE GANGA AND LIVED THERE."



"AT THIS TEMPORARY ABODE, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS VISITED BY SEVERAL SAGES INCLUDING VYASA, NARADA AND KANVA."

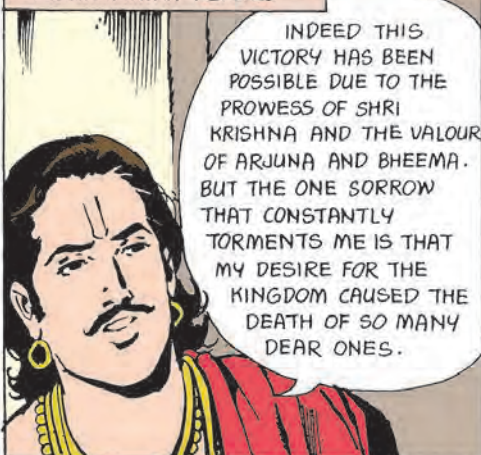


"SEVERAL SCHOLARS, BRAHMANAS AND HOUSEHOLDERS CAME TO VISIT YUDHISHTHIRA AND CONSOLE HIM IN HIS GRIEF. NARADA SPOKE FIRST —"

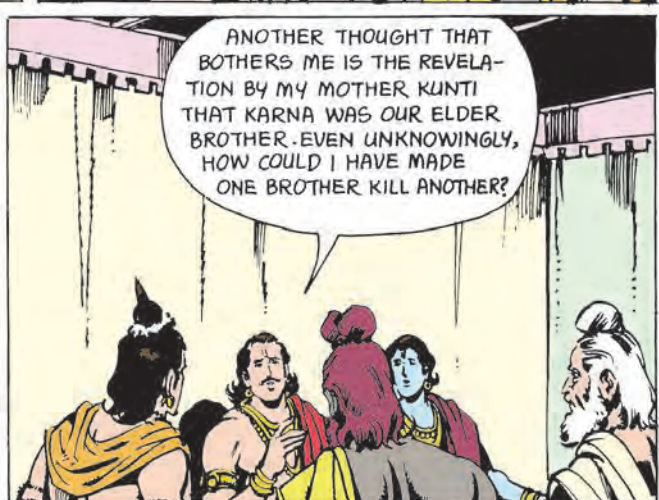


BY THE GRACE OF LORD KRISHNA AND THE VALOUR OF YOUR KINSMEN, YOU ARE NOW LORD OF THE EARTH. ARE YOU HAPPY NOW THAT YOU HAVE VANQUISHED YOUR FOES?

"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED —"



INDEED THIS VICTORY HAS BEEN POSSIBLE DUE TO THE PROWESS OF SHRI KRISHNA AND THE VALOUR OF ARJUNA AND BHEEMA. BUT THE ONE SORROW THAT CONSTANTLY TORMENTS ME IS THAT MY DESIRE FOR THE KINGDOM CAUSED THE DEATH OF SO MANY DEAR ONES.



ANOTHER THOUGHT THAT BOTHERS ME IS THE REVELATION BY MY MOTHER KUNTI THAT KARNA WAS OUR ELDER BROTHER. EVEN UNKNOWNINGLY, HOW COULD I HAVE MADE ONE BROTHER KILL ANOTHER?

"YUDHISHTHIRA'S THOUGHTS WENT BACK TO THE PAST."

I REMEMBER THAT DAY IN THE COURT AT HASTINAPURA. HOW MY ANGER VANISHED WHEN I BEHELD KARNA, ESPECIALLY WHEN I SAW HIS FEET. THEY REMINDED ME OF MOTHER KUNTI'S FEET AND I WAS PUZZLED BY THE SIMILARITY.



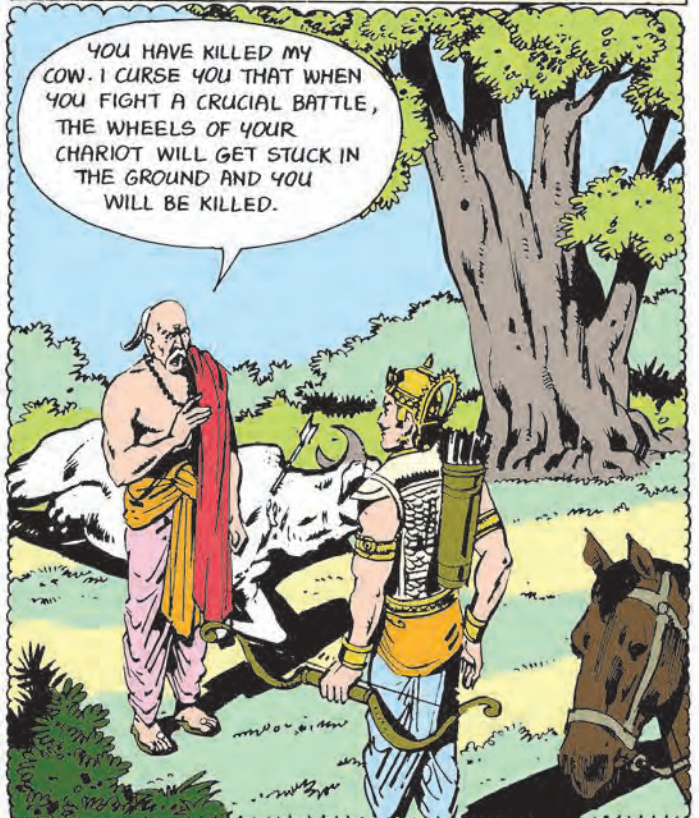
"YUDHISHTHIRA'S MIND WAS AGITATED WITH MANY QUESTIONS AND HE ASKED VYASA ABOUT THEM."

BUT WHY DID KARNA'S CHARIOT WHEEL GET STUCK IN THE GROUND? DO TELL ME ALL THIS IN DETAIL.

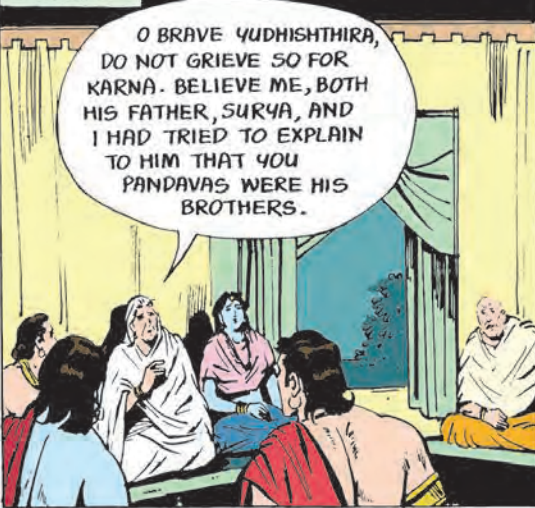


"SAGE VYASA THEN NARRATED TO YUDHISHTHIRA THE STORY OF HOW KARNA CAME UNDER A CURSE."

YOU HAVE KILLED MY COW. I CURSE YOU THAT WHEN YOU FIGHT A CRUCIAL BATTLE, THE WHEELS OF YOUR CHARIOT WILL GET STUCK IN THE GROUND AND YOU WILL BE KILLED.



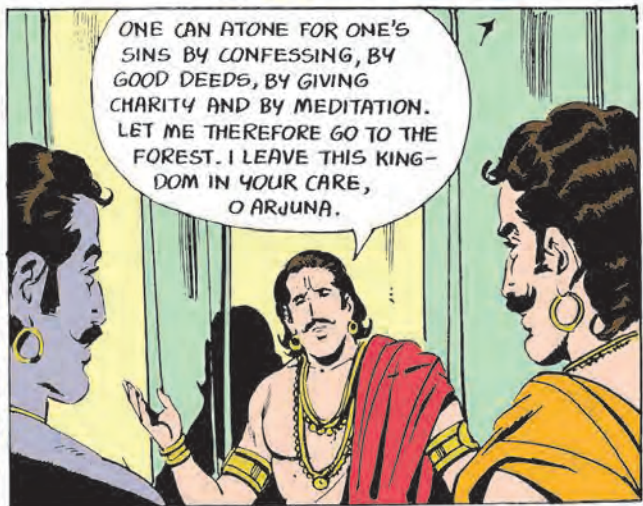
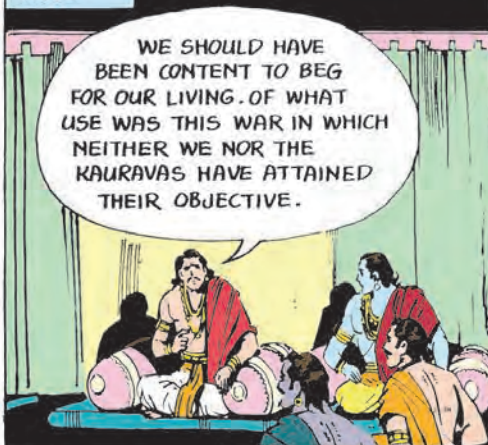
"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS HOWEVER PLUNGED IN A DEEPER GLOOM ON HEARING THE STORY FROM VYASA. KUNTI COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE HIM SO DESOLATE."



"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS TOO AGITATED AND UNHAPPY TO BE THUS CONSOLED. REPEATING HIS EARLIER CURSE ON WOMEN, HE SAT THERE SIGHING DEEPLY."



"TURNING TO ARJUNA HE SAID IN A SAD VOICE —"

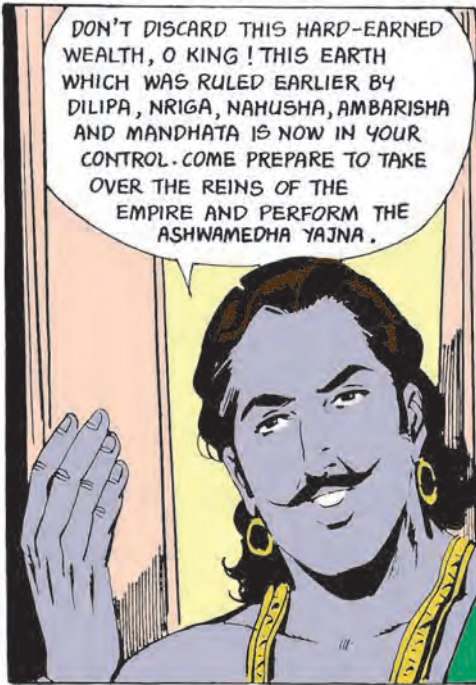


"ARJUNA WAS STARTLED AS ONE ACCUSED OF WRONG-DOING. THEN TAKING A THEATRICAL STANCE, HE STOOD UP TALL AND SMILING."

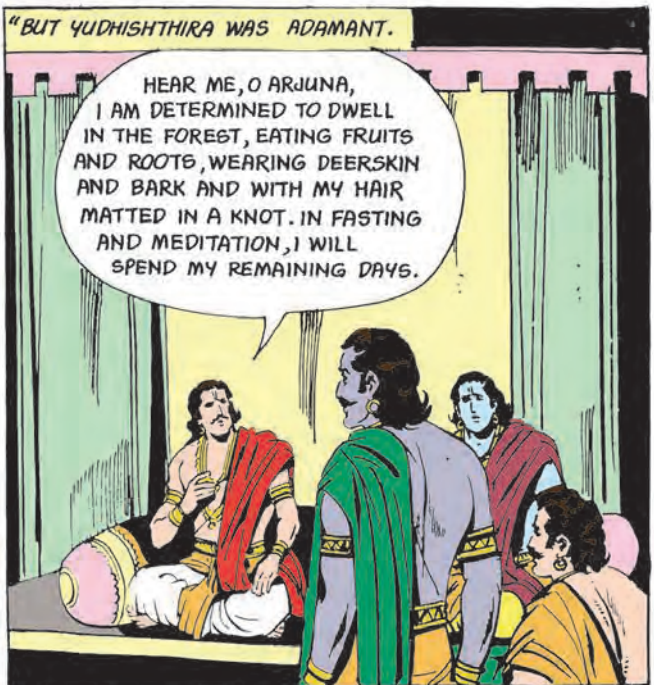


"IF YOU WANTED TO GO AROUND WITH A BEGGING BOWL, WHY DID YOU LET SO MANY KINGS DIE IN BATTLE? BEGGING FOR ALMS IS ALL RIGHT FOR BRAHMANAS, BUT IT DOES NOT BEFIT A KSHATRIYA LIKE YOU."





DON'T DISCARD THIS HARD-EARNED WEALTH, O KING ! THIS EARTH WHICH WAS RULED EARLIER BY DILIPA, NRIGA, NAHUSHA, AMBARISHA AND MANDHATA IS NOW IN YOUR CONTROL. COME PREPARE TO TAKE OVER THE REINS OF THE EMPIRE AND PERFORM THE ASHWAMEDHA YAJNA .



"BUT YUDHISHTHIRA WAS ADAMANT.

HEAR ME, O ARJUNA, I AM DETERMINED TO DWELL IN THE FOREST, EATING FRUITS AND ROOTS, WEARING DEERSKIN AND BARK AND WITH MY HAIR MATTED IN A KNOT. IN FASTING AND MEDITATION, I WILL SPEND MY REMAINING DAYS.

"BHEEMA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA ALSO TRIED TO DISSUADE YUDHISHTHIRA FROM HIS RESOLVE, BUT HE REMAINED STUBBORNLY SILENT. THEN DRAUPADI ADDRESSED HIM IN HER SWEET VOICE —



LIKE THE "CHATAKA" BIRDS*, YOUR BROTHERS ARE REPEATEDLY BESEECHING YOU TO ACCEPT THE THRONE. WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN TO THEIR ENTREATIES?

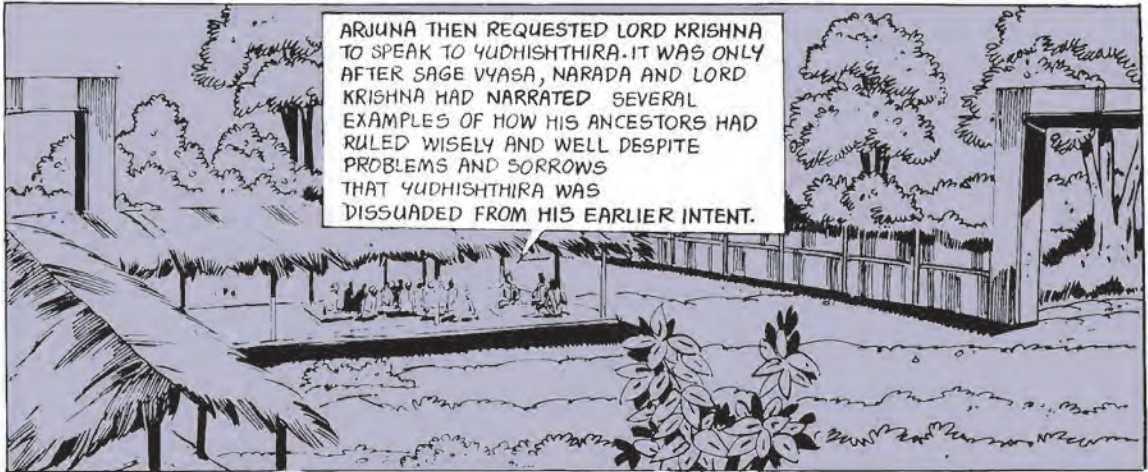


THEY HAVE GONE THROUGH SO MUCH SUFFERING FOR YOUR SAKE. DID YOU NOT PROMISE THEM THAT YOU WOULD DEFEAT THE KAURAVAS IN BATTLE AND CONQUER THE EARTH ? WHY DO YOU DISAPPOINT US NOW ?

"THEN VYASA SPOKE TO YUDHISHTHIRA AT LENGTH. WITH INSPIRING TALES AND WISE COUNSEL, HE TRIED TO PERSUADE HIM TO RETURN TO THE CITY AND TAKE UP HIS DUTIES AS A KING .



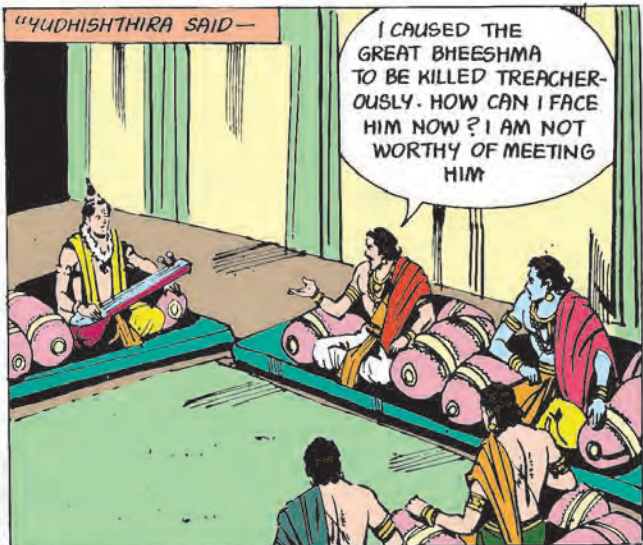
* A BIRD OF BLACKISH COLOUR REFERRED TO IN CLASSICAL POETRY



"WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA REQUESTED VYASA TO EXPLAIN TO HIM HIS KINGLY DUTIES, THE SAGE SAID —



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —



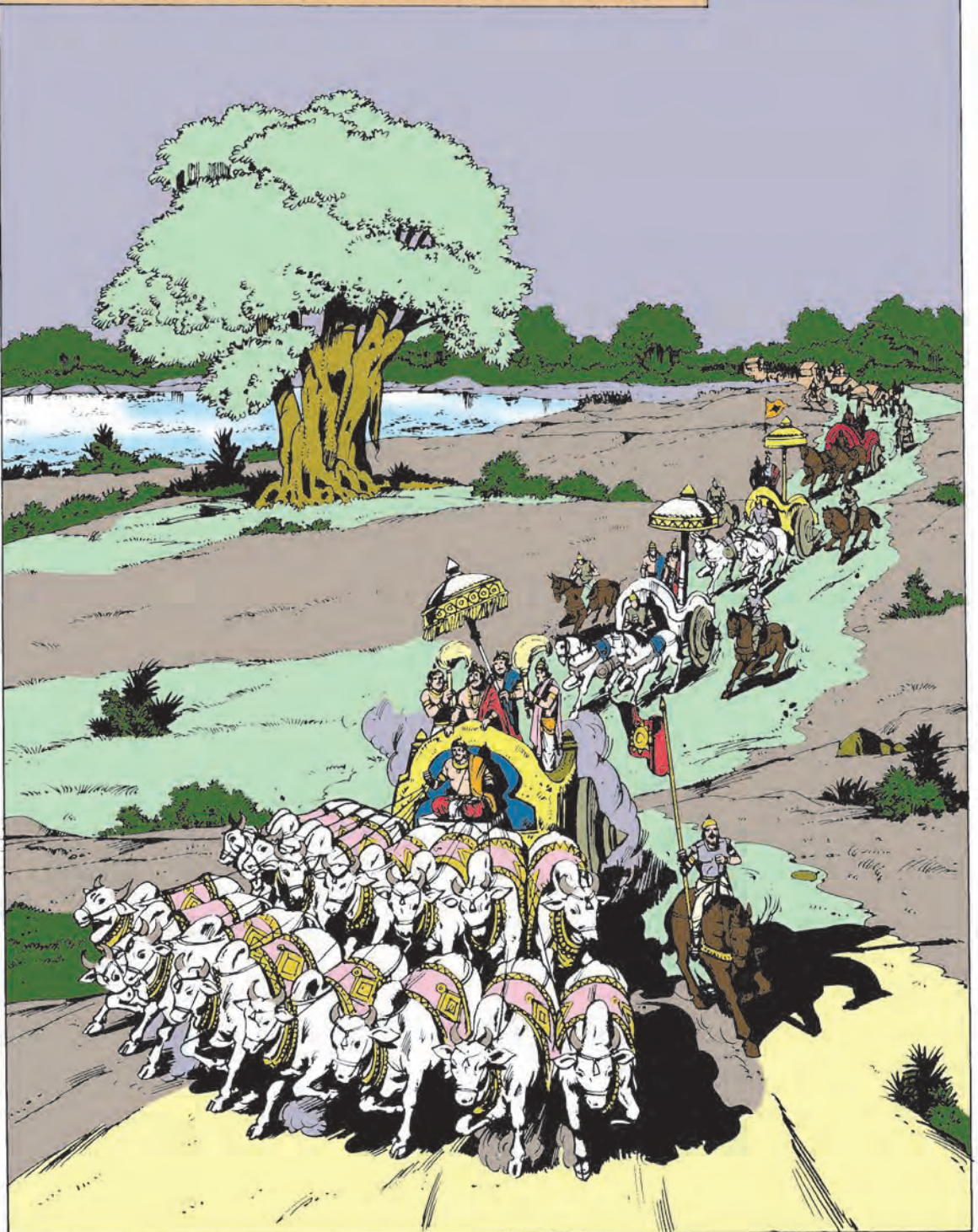
"KRISHNA INTERVENED —



"AT LAST YUDHISHTHIRA WAS COMFORTED AND HIS MIND WAS AT PEACE. SHEDDING HIS SORROW, HE AROSE WITH A BECALMED COUNTENANCE TO RETURN TO HASTINAPURA.



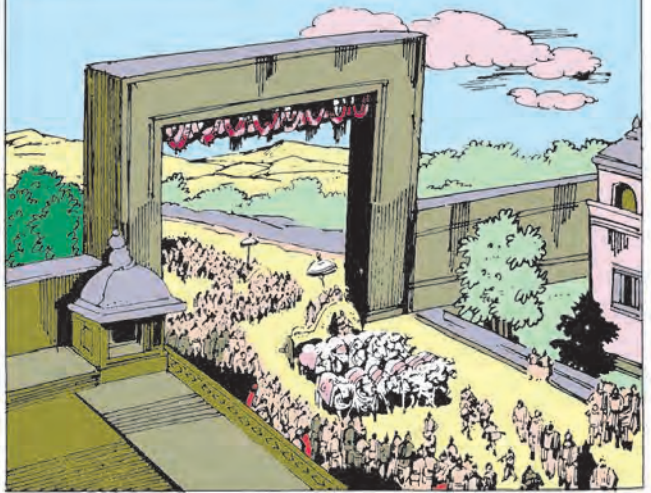
" THEY RETURNED TO THEIR CAPITAL IN A MAGNIFICENT PROCESSION. AS THEY ENTERED THE GATES OF THE CITY, YUDHISHTHIRA MOUNTED A NEW CHARIOT DRIVEN BY SIXTEEN WHITE BULLOCKS, BHEEMA HELD THE REINS, AND ARJUNA A WHITE UMBRELLA, WHILE NAKULA AND SAHADEVA CARRIED CHAMARAS * ON EITHER SIDE OF THE KING. YUYUTSU, THE SOLE SURVIVING SON OF DHRTIRASHTRA, FOLLOWED IN A WHITE CHARIOT. ON A GOLDEN CHARIOT WERE KRISHNA AND SATYAKI FOLLOWED BY A LONG RETINUE IN CHARIOTS AND PALANQUINS.



"THE CROWDS THROGGED THE CITY GATES TO WELCOME THE KING."



"AMIDST THE CHANTING OF VEDAS AND MUSIC AND THE WELCOMING CHEERS OF THE CITIZENS, YUDHISHTHIRA ENTERED THE CITY."



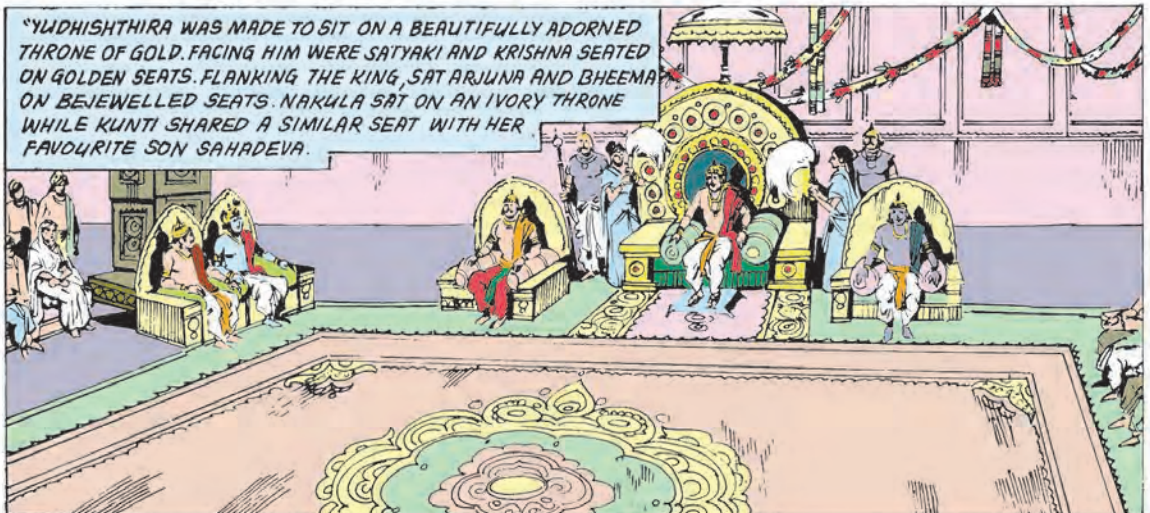
"THE STREETS WERE GAILY DECORATED WITH WHITE BANNERS AND STREAMERS AND THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE FRAGRANCE OF FRESH FLOWERS AND INCENSE."



"AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE PALACE, THEY WERE GREETED CEREMONIOUSLY BY THE BRAHMANAS."



"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS MADE TO SIT ON A BEAUTIFULLY ADORNED THRONE OF GOLD. FACING HIM WERE SATYAKI AND KRISHNA SEATED ON GOLDEN SEATS. FLANKING THE KING, SAT ARJUNA AND BHEEMA ON BEJEWELLED SEATS. NAKULA SAT ON AN IVORY THRONE WHILE KUNTI SHARED A SIMILAR SEAT WITH HER FAVOURITE SON SAHADEVA."



"ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM KRISHNA, DHAUMYA, THE ROYAL PRIEST, CONSTRUCTED AN ALTAR AND REQUESTED YUDHISHTHIRA AND DRAUPADI TO SIT BESIDE IT."



"HOLDING ALOFT HIS CONCH-SHELL PANCHAJANYA, KRISHNA CEREMONIOUSLY POURED WATER ON YUDHISHTHIRA'S HEAD."



"WHEN THE CORONATION RITES WERE COMPLETED, YUDHISHTHIRA GAVE AWAY A THOUSAND GOLD COINS TO THE PRESIDING PRIESTS."



"THEY IN TURN SHOWERED HIM WITH PRAISE AND FELICITATION."



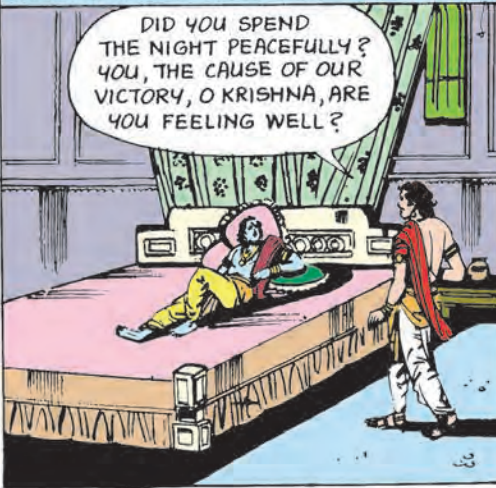
"HAVING TAKEN OVER AS THE KING, YUDHISHTHIRA THEN SET ABOUT ALLOCATING DUTIES TO HIS BROTHERS AND OTHERS. HE APPOINTED BHEEMA YUVARAJA."



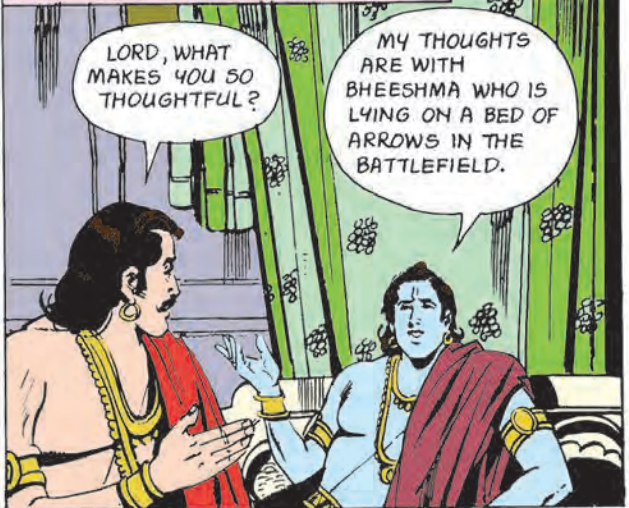
"THE WISE VIDURA WAS MADE MINISTER. SANJAYA WAS PUT IN CHARGE OF FINANCE, NAKULA WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ARMY OF WHICH ARJUNA WAS NOW THE COMMANDER. TO SAHADEVA HE SAID —



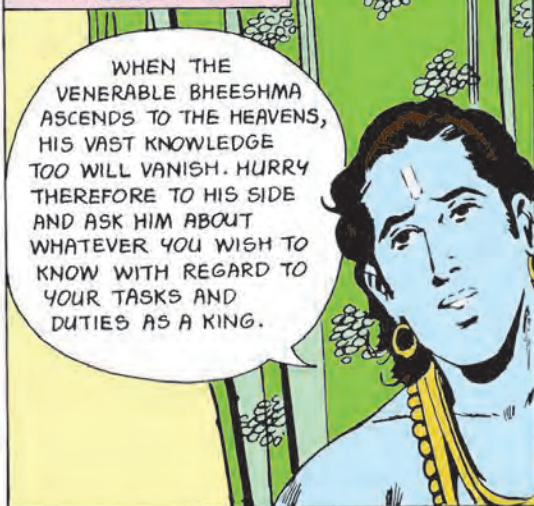
"THE NEXT MORNING WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA WENT TO GREET KRISHNA, HE FOUND HIM IN A THOUGHTFUL MOOD. SAID YUDHISHTHIRA—



"BUT WHEN HIS QUERIES WERE MET WITH A PENSIVE SILENCE, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS PUZZLED.



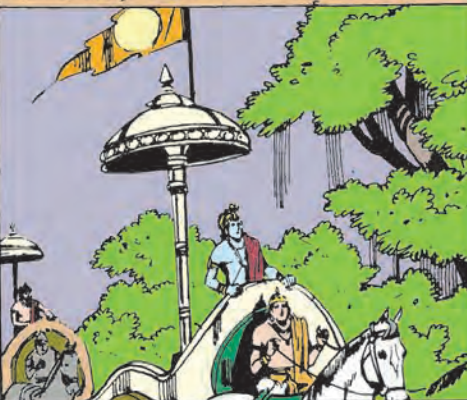
"KRISHNA CONTINUED—



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—



"KRISHNA THEN ORDERED HIS CHARIOT TO BE MADE READY, ACCOMPANIED BY THE PANDAVAS, HE WENT TO THE BATTLEFIELD.

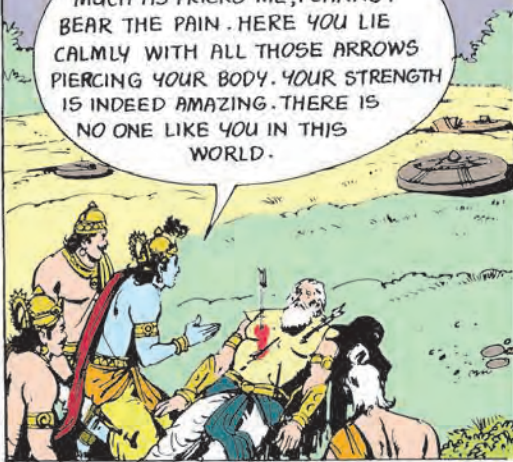


"LYING ON HIS BED OF ARROWS, BHEESHMA WAS SURROUNDED BY SEVERAL SAGES.



"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO BHEESHMA, THE PANDAVAS TOO SAT BESIDE HIM. KRISHNA SAID —

IF A NEEDLE AS MUCH AS PRICKS ME, I CANNOT BEAR THE PAIN. HERE YOU LIE CALMLY WITH ALL THOSE ARROWS PIERCING YOUR BODY. YOUR STRENGTH IS INDEED AMAZING. THERE IS NO ONE LIKE YOU IN THIS WORLD.



"KRISHNA THEN EXPLAINED THE REASON FOR THEIR VISIT.

YUDHISHTHIRA IS GREATLY DISTURBED BY THE DEATH OF SO MANY OF HIS KINSMEN. CONSOLE HIM, O BHEESHMA, WITH YOUR WORDS OF WISDOM.



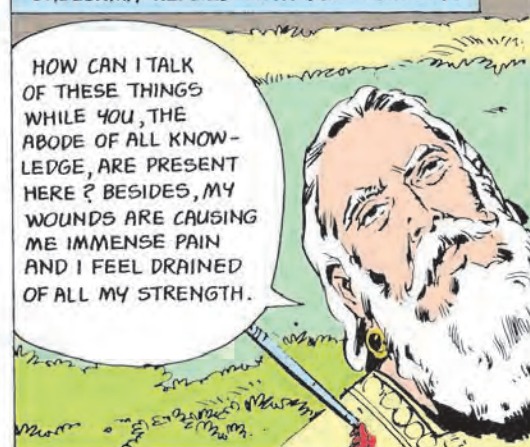
"BHEESHMA RAISED HIS HEAD A LITTLE ON HEARING KRISHNA'S WORDS, AND GREETED HIM RESPECTFULLY. KRISHNA SAID —

NOW ONLY FIFTY-SIX DAYS REMAIN BEFORE YOUR SOUL ASCENDS TO HEAVEN. WITH YOU, ALL YOUR KNOWLEDGE TOO WILL DISAPPEAR. THEREFORE ALL THESE PEOPLE HAVE COME TO BE ENLIGHTENED BY YOU. WILL YOU INSTRUCT THEM IN DHARMA, ARTHA AND YOGA ?



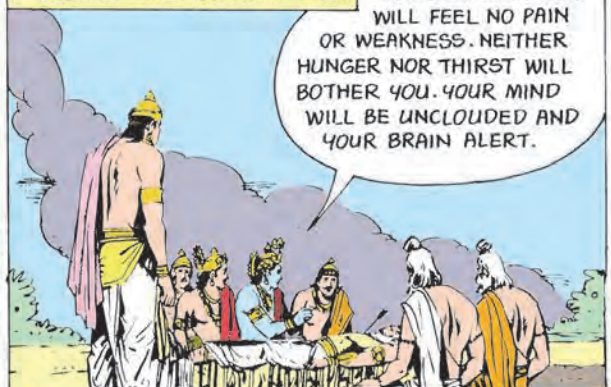
"BHEESHMA REPLIED WITH DUE MODESTY.

HOW CAN I TALK OF THESE THINGS WHILE YOU, THE ABODE OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, ARE PRESENT HERE ? BESIDES, MY WOUNDS ARE CAUSING ME IMMENSE PAIN AND I FEEL DRAINED OF ALL MY STRENGTH.



"KRISHNA THEN BLESSED HIM.

FROM NOW ON YOU WILL FEEL NO PAIN OR WEAKNESS. NEITHER HUNGER NOR THIRST WILL BOTHER YOU. YOUR MIND WILL BE UNCLOUDED AND YOUR BRAIN ALERT.

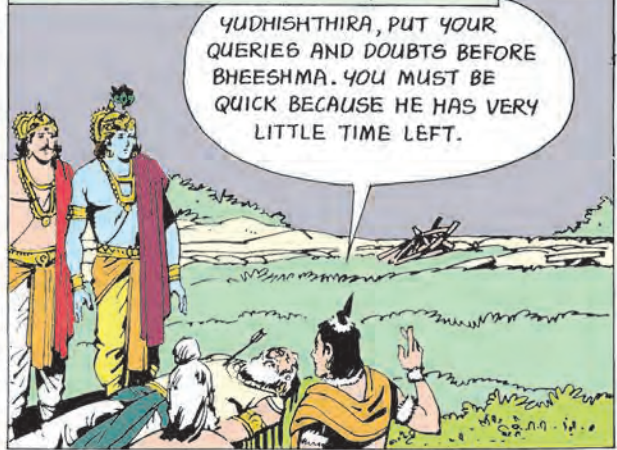


"WITH THESE WORDS, KRISHNA AND THE PANDAVAS TOOK LEAVE OF BHEESHMA.

"EARLY NEXT MORNING, DISPENSING WITH THEIR RETINUE OF SOLDIERS, THE PANDAVAS FOLLOWED KRISHNA TO THE BATTLEFIELD.



"NARADA, WHO WAS SEATED WITH THE OTHER RISHIS WHO WERE AROUND BHEESHMA, SAID —



YUDHISHTHIRA, PUT YOUR QUERIES AND DOUBTS BEFORE BHEESHMA. YOU MUST BE QUICK BECAUSE HE HAS VERY LITTLE TIME LEFT.

"AS THE SAGE SPOKE THUS, ALL THE PEOPLE SURROUNDING BHEESHMA DREW CLOSER, BUT NONE DARED TO SPEAK. THEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —



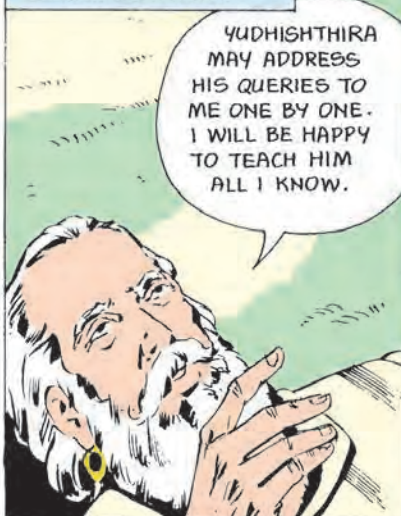
O KRISHNA, YOU ALONE CAN BEGIN THIS DISCUSSION ON OUR BEHALF.

"AFTER GREETING HIM WITH DUE RESPECT, KRISHNA REQUESTED BHEESHMA —



O BHEESHMA, YUDHISHTHIRA AND HIS BROTHERS ARE EAGER TO HEAR YOU SPEAK.

"BHEESHMA REPLIED —



YUDHISHTHIRA MAY ADDRESS HIS QUERIES TO ME ONE BY ONE. I WILL BE HAPPY TO TEACH HIM ALL I KNOW.

"KRISHNA SAID —



YUDHISHTHIRA IS TOO EMBARRASSED AND SCARED TO FACE YOU.

BUT SURELY HE HAS DONE NO WRONG. IT IS THE DUTY OF EVERY KSHATRIYA TO KILL HIS ENEMIES.

OVERWHELMED BY THESE WORDS, YUDHISHTHIRA TOUCHED BHEESHMA'S FEET RESPECTFULLY.

SIT DOWN, SON. DO NOT BE AFRAID. ASK ME ANYTHING YOU WANT.



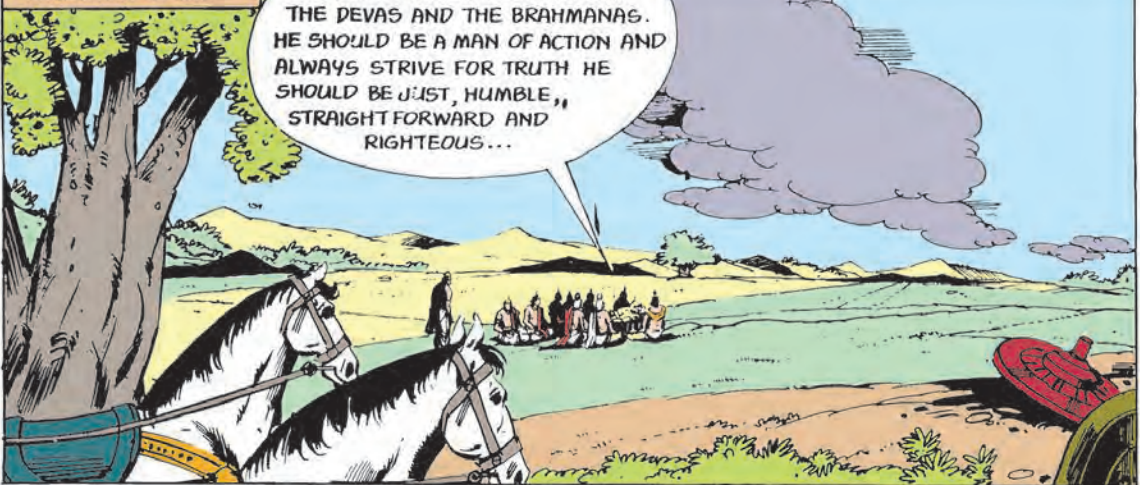
"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

THE DUTIES OF A KING ARE SAID TO BE OF THE HIGHEST ORDER. PLEASE DESCRIBE THEM TO ME.



"BHEESHMA BEGAN —

A KING SHOULD DULY HONOUR THE DEVAS AND THE BRAHMANAS. HE SHOULD BE A MAN OF ACTION AND ALWAYS STRIVE FOR TRUTH. HE SHOULD BE JUST, HUMBLE, STRAIGHTFORWARD AND RIGHTEOUS...



"FOR LONG DID THE WISE BHEESHMA SPEAK TO YUDHISHTHIRA, ABOUT THE DUTIES OF A KING. THE SUN WAS ABOUT TO SET IN THE WEST, YET BHEESHMA'S NARRATION WAS NOT YET OVER. SUMMING UP HIS DAY-LONG DISCOURSE HE SAID —

THIS IS THE MERE ESSENCE OF KINGLY DUTIES. ASK ME ANY QUESTIONS YOU WANT, O YUDHISHTHIRA.

THANK YOU, O GRANDSIRE. THE SUN IS ABOUT TO SET AND I MUST TAKE YOUR LEAVE FOR TODAY.



"THE NEXT MORNING THE PANDAVAS EAGERLY RUSHED BACK TO BHEESHMA. YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

COULD YOU EXPLAIN TO ME THE MEANING OF THE WORD 'RAJAN'? WHY IS A KING NECESSARY?

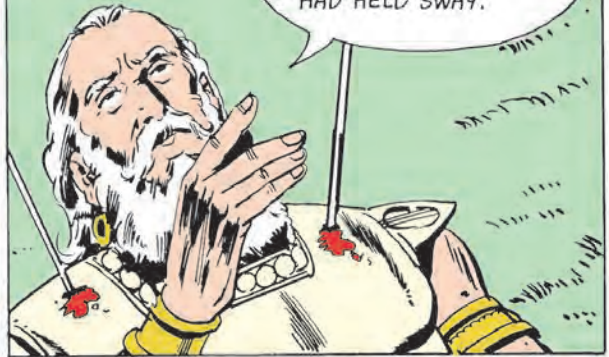


"BHEESHMA THEN SPOKE OF THE DAYS OF YORE —

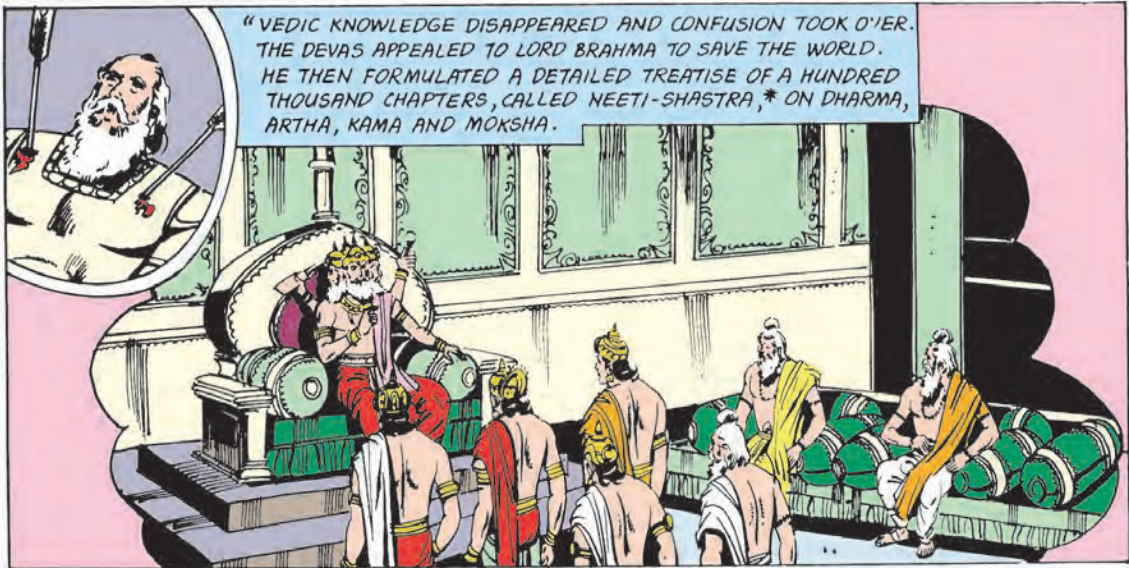
LONG, LONG AGO THERE WAS NEITHER KING NOR KINGDOM. NEITHER PUNISHMENT, NOR ANYONE TO METE IT OUT. THE PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER THEIR OWN WELFARE.



AS TIME WENT BY, HOWEVER, EVIL ENTERED THE HEARTS OF MEN. FIRST COVETOUSNESS THEN LUST, THEN WRATH REPLACED RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH HAD HELD SWAY.



"VEDIC KNOWLEDGE DISAPPEARED AND CONFUSION TOOK OVER. THE DEVAS APPEALED TO LORD BRAHMA TO SAVE THE WORLD. HE THEN FORMULATED A DETAILED TREATISE OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND CHAPTERS, CALLED NEETI-SHASTRA,* ON DHARMA, ARTHA, KAMA AND MOKSHA.



"THE LONG TREATISE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CONDENSED INTO A THOUSAND CHAPTERS BY VARIOUS SCHOLARS. THE DEVAS WENT TO LORD VISHNU AND REQUESTED HIM TO SELECT THE BEST OF MEN TO RULE OVER THE WORLD. AFTER MUCH DELIBERATION, A MAN CALLED VENA WAS SELECTED. FROM HIS RIGHT ARM WAS BORN PRITHU, WHO LOOKED LIKE LORD INDRA HIMSELF. AT BIRTH HE HAD NOT ONLY WEAPONS AND ARMOUR, BUT HAD IMBIBED THE ENTIRE KNOWLEDGE OF THE NEETI-SHASTRA. LORD VISHNU, THE DEVAS AND RISHIS APPOINTED PRITHU AS THE KING. THUS WAS ESTABLISHED THE CUSTOM OF APPOINTING A KING.



* A CODE OF CONDUCT

"THUS FOR SEVERAL DAYS DID BHEESHMA-CHARYA INSTRUCT YUDHISHTHIRA, ANSWERING HIS QUERIES, REMOVING HIS DOUBTS AND EXPLAINING THE CODE OF CONDUCT WITH STORIES AND NARRATIVES, DIALOGUES AND DISCUSSIONS FROM HIS VAST FUND OF KNOWLEDGE.*



"WHEN BHEESHMA LAY SILENT AFTER INSTRUCTING YUDHISHTHIRA, SAGE VYASA SAID —

NOW YUDHISHTHIRA'S CONFIDENCE HAS BEEN RESTORED. ALLOW HIM TO RETURN TO HASTINAPURA, O BHEESHMA.



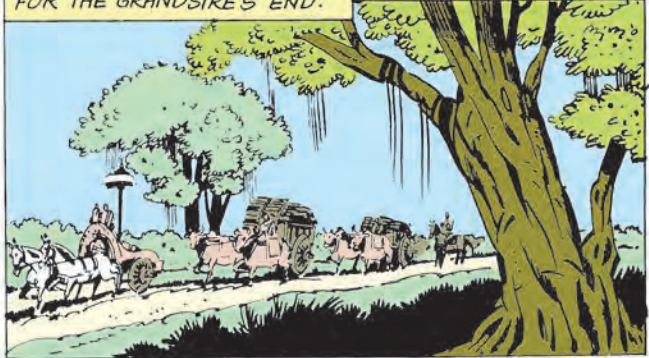
"BHEESHMA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA —

YOU MAY GO BACK AND RULE YOUR KINGDOM LIKE THE GREAT KINGS BEFORE YOU. WHEN THE SUN BEGINS ITS NORTHWARD JOURNEY, COME BACK TO ME.

I WILL DO SO.



"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO BHEESHMA, YUDHISHTHIRA RETURNED TO HASTINAPURA. FIFTY DAYS LATER, HE RECALLED BHEESHMA'S WORDS AND SENT FLOWERS AND INCENSE, SILKS AND SANDALWOOD IN PREPARATION FOR THE GRANDSIRE'S END.



"WITH GANDHARI AND DHRTIRASHTRA LEADING THE WAY, YUDHISHTHIRA MADE HIS WAY TO THE BATTLEFIELD ACCOMPANIED BY HIS BROTHERS AND LORD KRISHNA TO PAY HIS LAST RESPECTS TO THE VENERABLE BHEESHMA.



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

HERE I AM WITH MY BROTHERS AND LORD KRISHNA. KING DHRTIRASHTRA, MINISTERS OF THE COURT ARE HERE TOO ALONG WITH THE CITIZENS OF HASTINAPURA. PLEASE OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK AT US.



* THIS INSTRUCTION OF BHEESHMA TO KING YUDHISHTHIRA IS THE FAMOUS SHANTIPARVA OF MAHABHARATA

"BHEESHMA OPENED HIS WEARY EYES AND SAID —

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE ARRIVED HERE IN TIME. I HAVE BEEN LYING FOR FIFTY-EIGHT DAYS ON THIS BED OF SHARP ARROWS, BUT I FEEL I HAVE BEEN HERE FOR A HUNDRED YEARS. AT LONG LAST, THE SUN HAS TURNED HIS CHARIOT TOWARDS THE NORTH.



"TURNING TO DHRTIRASHTRA, HE SAID —

WISE AND LEARNED AS YOU ARE, DO NOT GRIEVE OVER YOUR SONS. WHAT-EVER HAPPENED WAS INEVITABLE. CONSIDER THE PANDAVAS TO BE YOUR OWN CHILDREN.



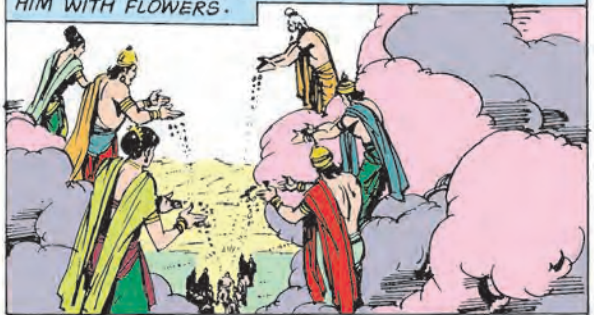
"BHEESHMA THEN ADDRESSED KRISHNA —

ALLOW ME, O LORD, OF THE UNIVERSE, TO LEAVE THIS BODY OF MINE.

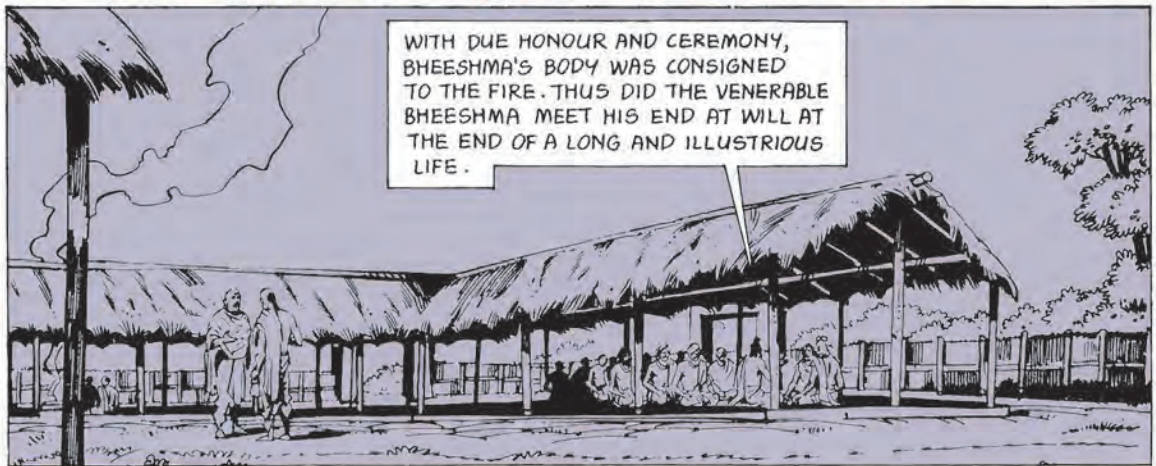
I GRANT YOU YOUR WISH, YOU HAVE THE POWER TO SUMMON DEATH AT WILL.



"BHEESHMA'S FACE SHONE WITH AN ETHEREAL SMILE. WITH HIS YOGIC POWERS, HE WILLED HIMSELF TO DIE. THE ONLOOKERS BEHELD A STRANGE PHENOMENON. AS EACH PART OF HIS BODY BECAME LIFELESS, THE ARROWS THEREIN FELL OFF AND THE WOUNDS WERE HEALED. WHEN THE LIFE FORCE FINALLY ESCAPED THROUGH HIS SKULL, THE HEAVENS RESOUNDED WITH CELESTIAL MUSIC AND SHOWERED HIM WITH FLOWERS.



WITH DUE HONOUR AND CEREMONY, BHEESHMA'S BODY WAS CONSIGNED TO THE FIRE. THUS DID THE VENERABLE BHEESHMA MEET HIS END AT WILL AT THE END OF A LONG AND ILLUSTRIOUS LIFE.



THUS ENDS THE FORTIETH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA MAHABHARATA.