



MALAVIKA

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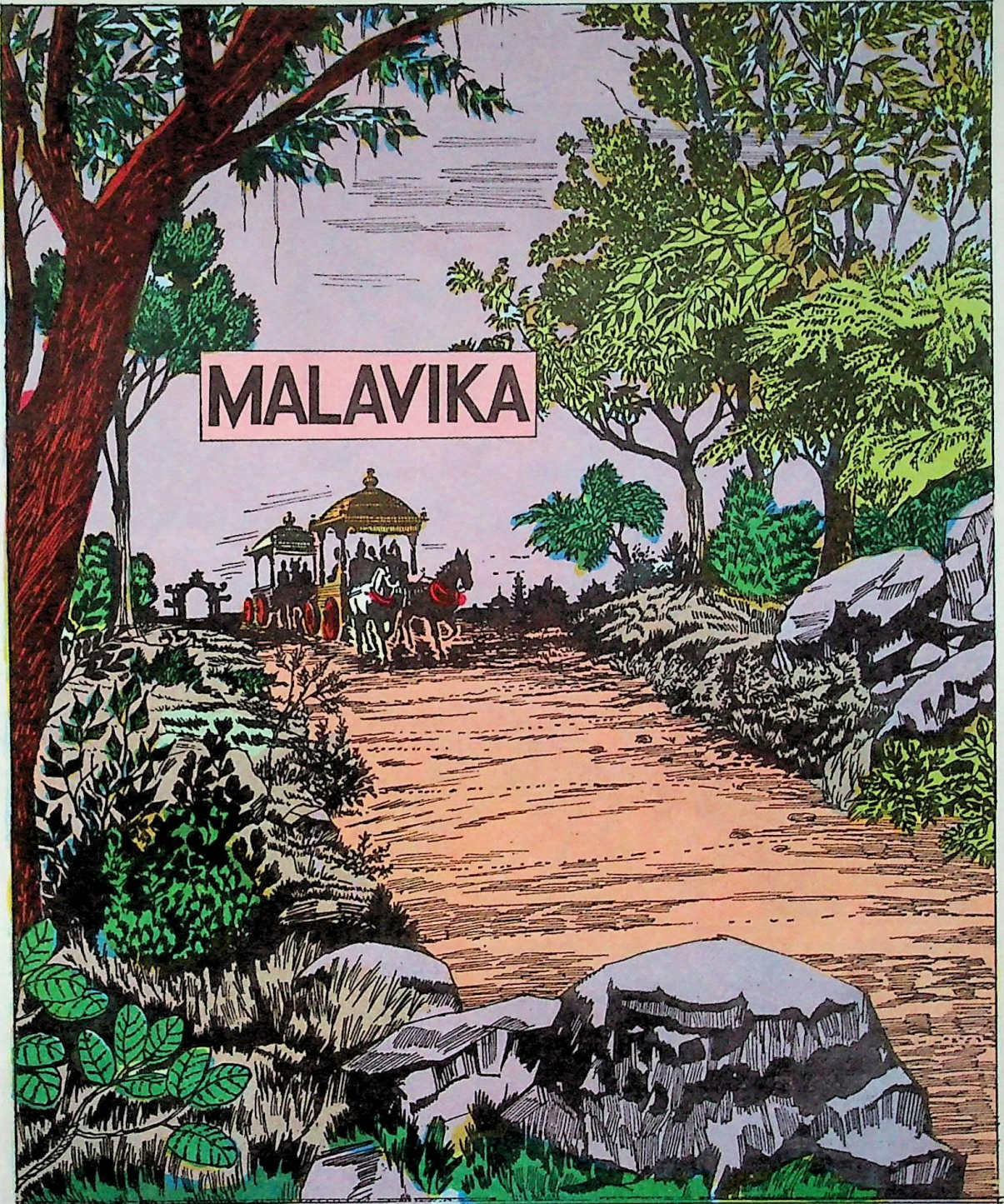
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MALAVIKA



DURING THE SECOND CENTURY B.C. THE TWO COUSINS, YAJNASENA AND MADHAVASENA WERE ENGAGED IN A STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE OF VIDARBHA. ONE DAY, AT DUSK, TWO CHARIOTS STOLE AWAY FROM VIDARBHA AND TOOK THE ROAD TO VIDISHA, A NEIGHBOURING KINGDOM RULED BY AGNIMITRA. ONE OF THE CHARIOTS CARRIED PRINCE MADHAVASENA; PRINCESS MALAVIKA, HIS SISTER; SUMATI, HIS MINISTER AND KAUSHIKI SUMATI'S SISTER; THE OTHER, THEIR ATTENDANTS.

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AS THEY RODE ON -

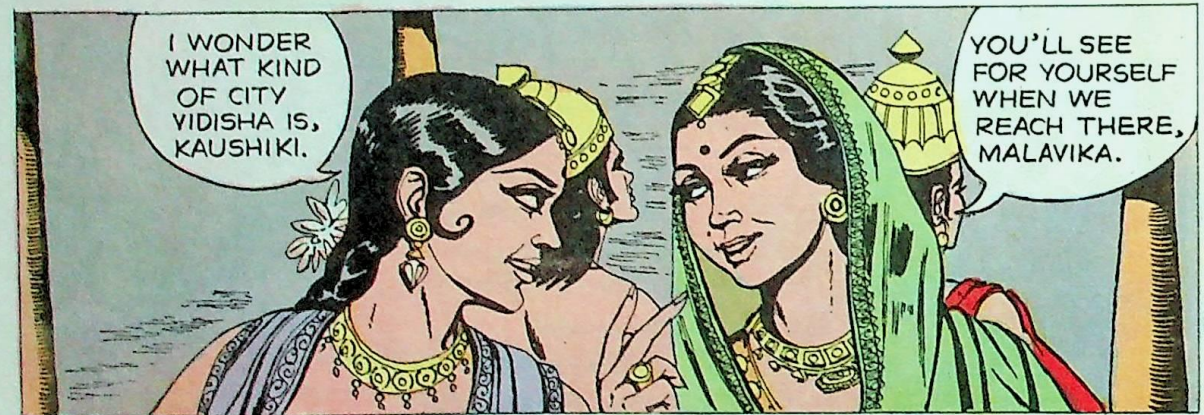
I WISH I COULD FLY TO VIDISHA, SUMATI. UNTIL I SUCCEED IN MY MISSION, I'LL KNOW NO PEACE.

YOU WILL SUCCEED, MY LORD.



I WONDER WHAT KIND OF CITY VIDISHA IS, KAUSHIKI.

YOU'LL SEE FOR YOURSELF WHEN WE REACH THERE, MALAVIKA.



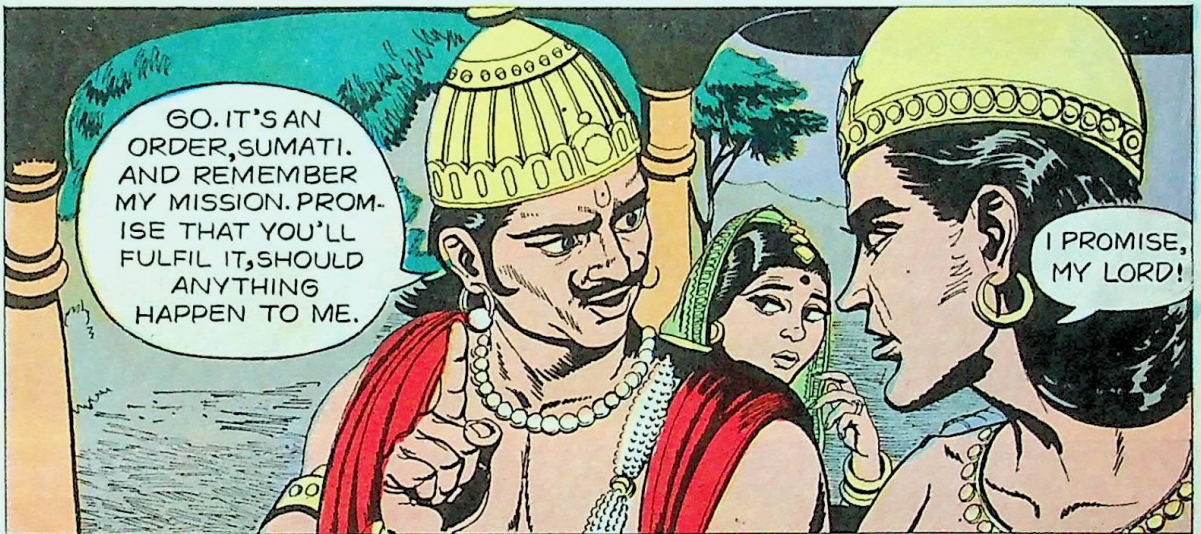
A LITTLE LATER, AS THEY TURNED A BEND IN THE ROAD, MADHAVASENA SUDDENLY STARTED.

SUMATI, DO YOU SEE THOSE MEN THERE?

I DO. THEY'RE SOLDIERS.

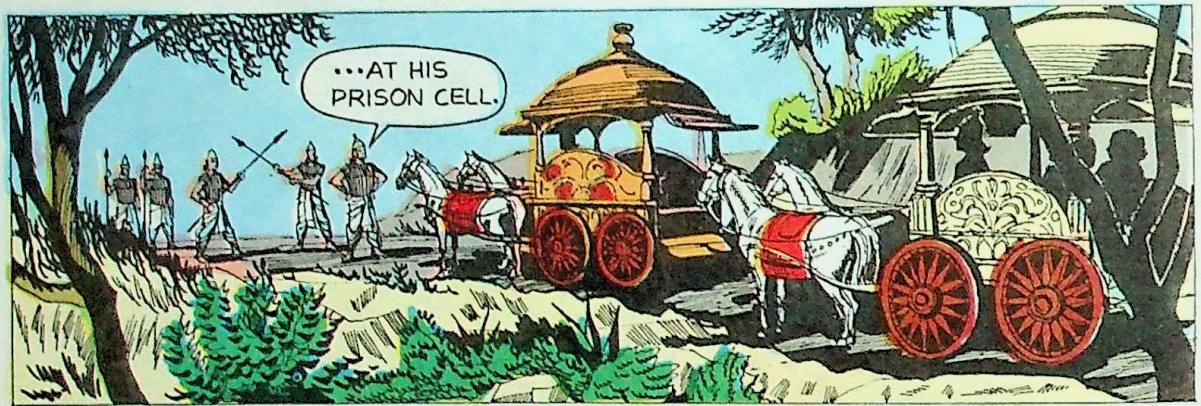


MALAVIKA



A FEW MINUTES LATER—

WELCOME, MADHAVA-
SENA, YAJNASENA, THE
KING OF VIDARBHA,
INVITES YOU TO BE HIS
HONoured GUEST...



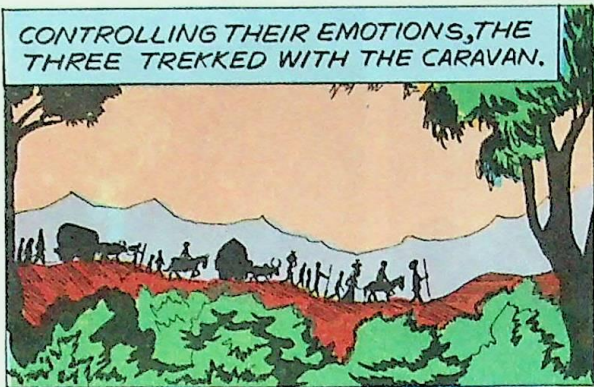
AND THE SOLDIERS MARCHED AWAY WITH MADHAVASENA, HIS CHARIOTS AND HIS ATTENDANTS.

COME, MY
CHILD, I SEE
A CARAVAN
MOVING
TOWARDS
VIDISHA.
WE'LL JOIN
THEM.



MALAVIKA

CONTROLLING THEIR EMOTIONS, THE THREE TREKKED WITH THE CARAVAN.



WHEN NIGHT FELL —

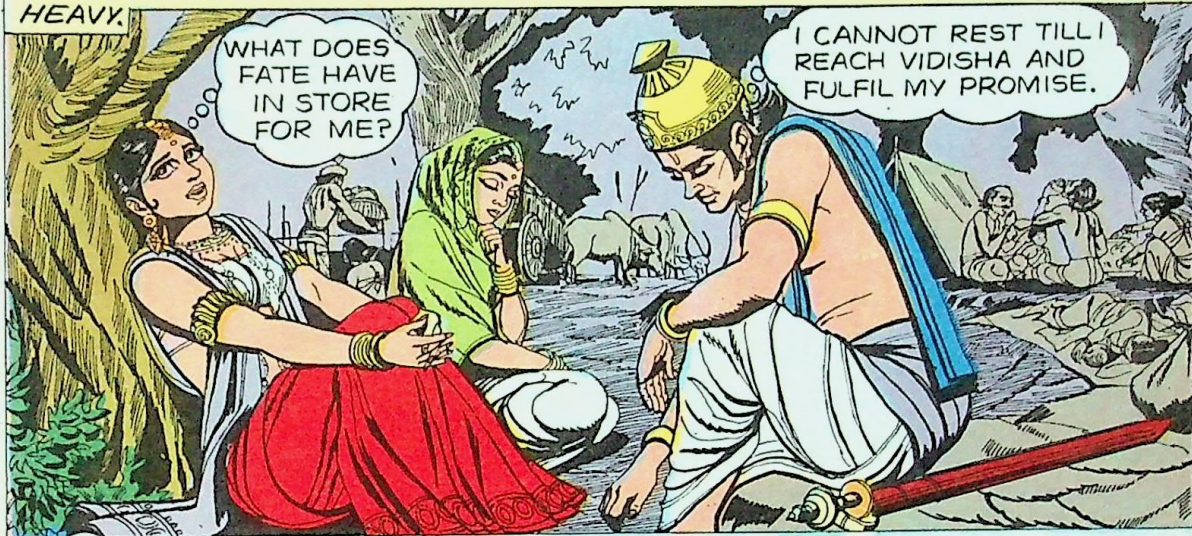
WE'LL HALT NOW, MY FRIEND. WE'LL MOVE ON AGAIN TOMORROW MORNING.



SUMATI, KAUSHIKI AND MALAVIKA TRIED TO RELAX BUT THEIR HEARTS WERE HEAVY.

WHAT DOES FATE HAVE IN STORE FOR ME?

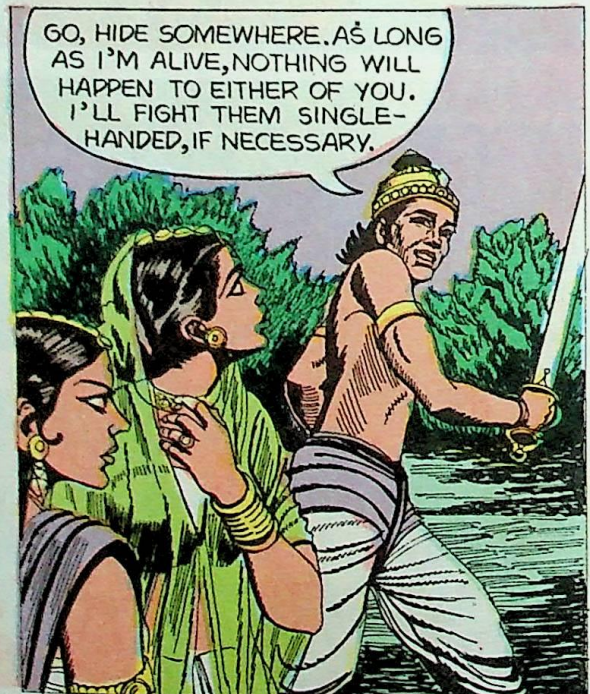
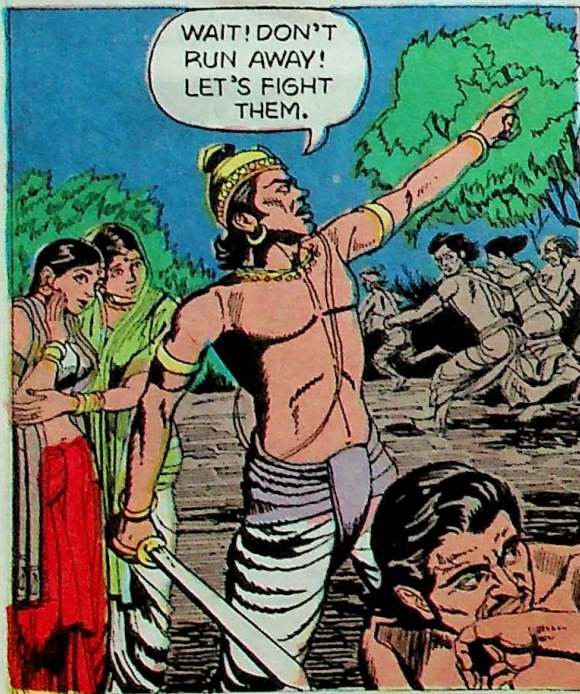
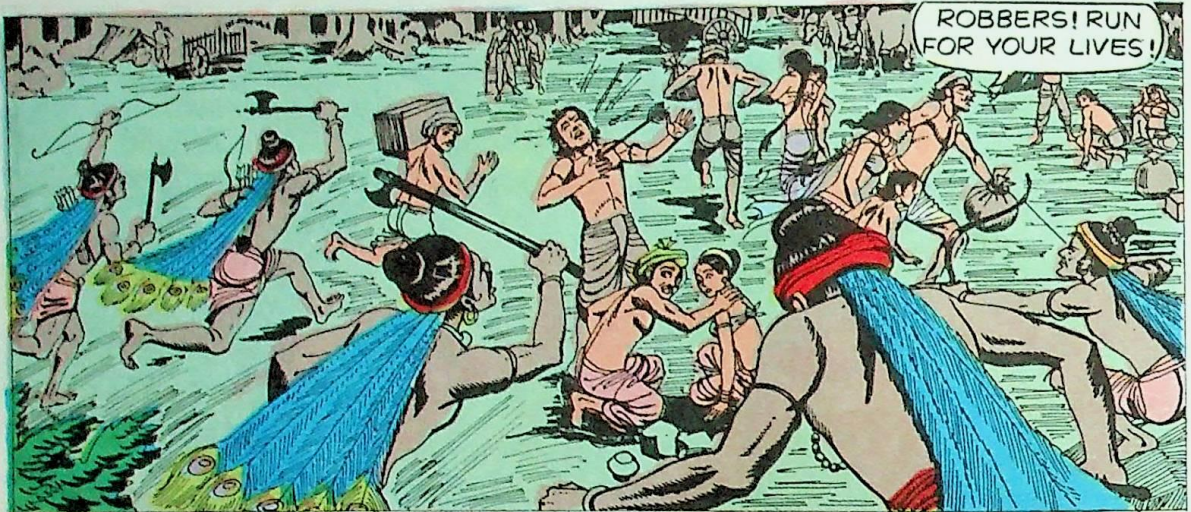
I CANNOT REST TILL I REACH VIDISHA AND FULFIL MY PROMISE.



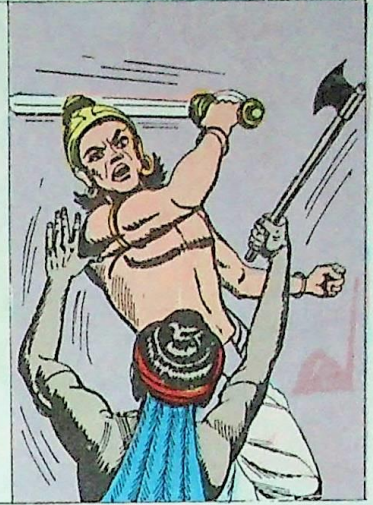
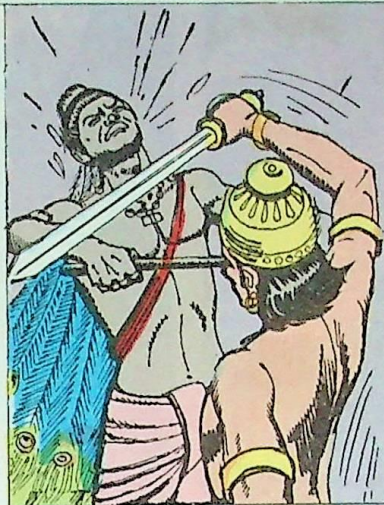
SUDDENLY—

WHAT IS THIS? WHERE DID IT COME FROM?





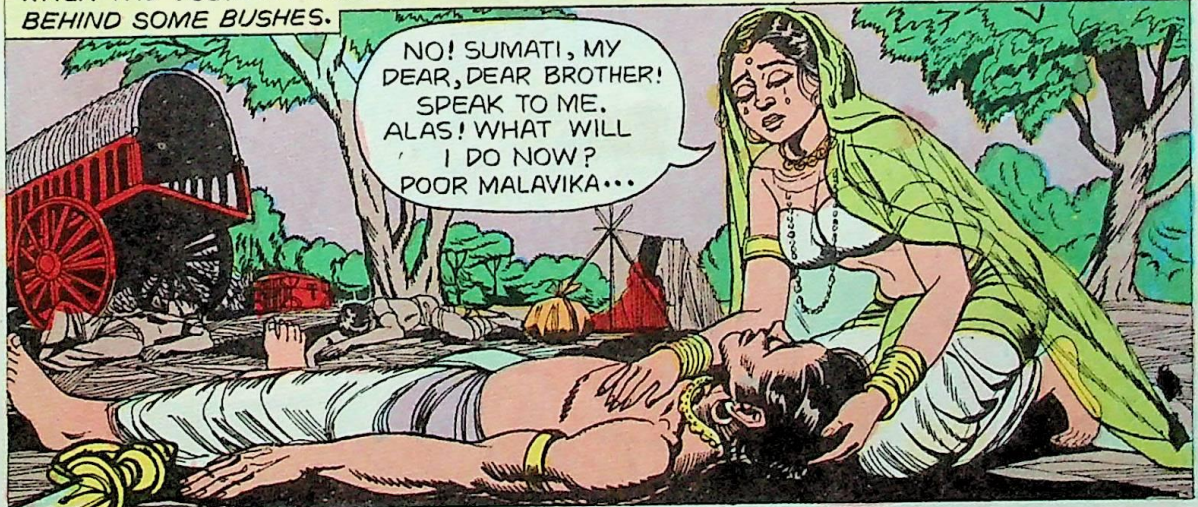
SUMATI PUT UP A BRAVE FIGHT.

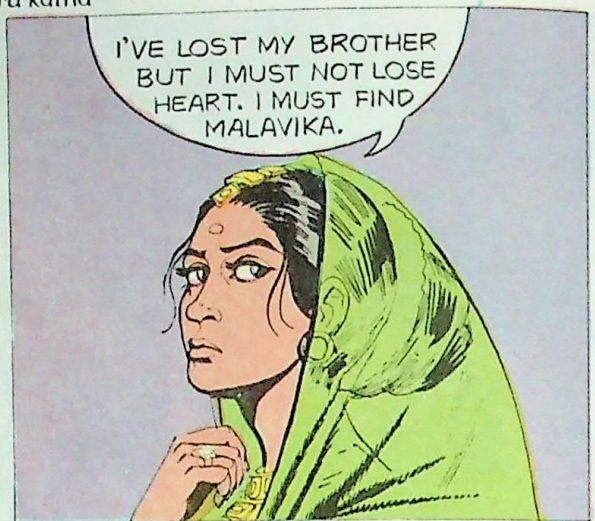
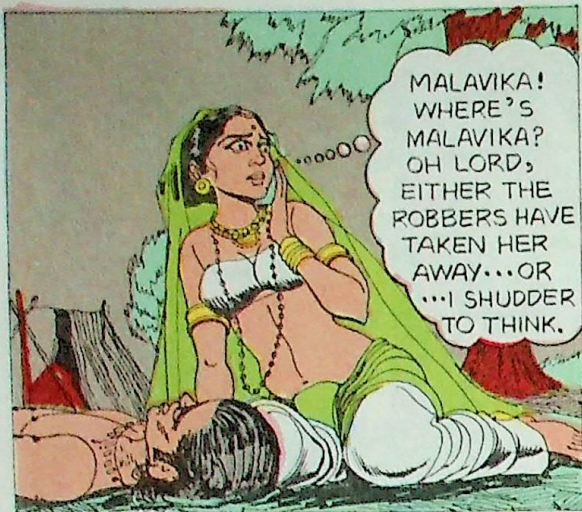


A FEW OTHERS FROM THE CARAVAN JOINED HIM BUT THE ROBBERS PROVED TO BE STRONGER.



WHEN THE JUBILANT ROBBERS LEFT WITH THEIR BOOTY, KAUSHIKI CAME OUT FROM BEHIND SOME BUSHES.

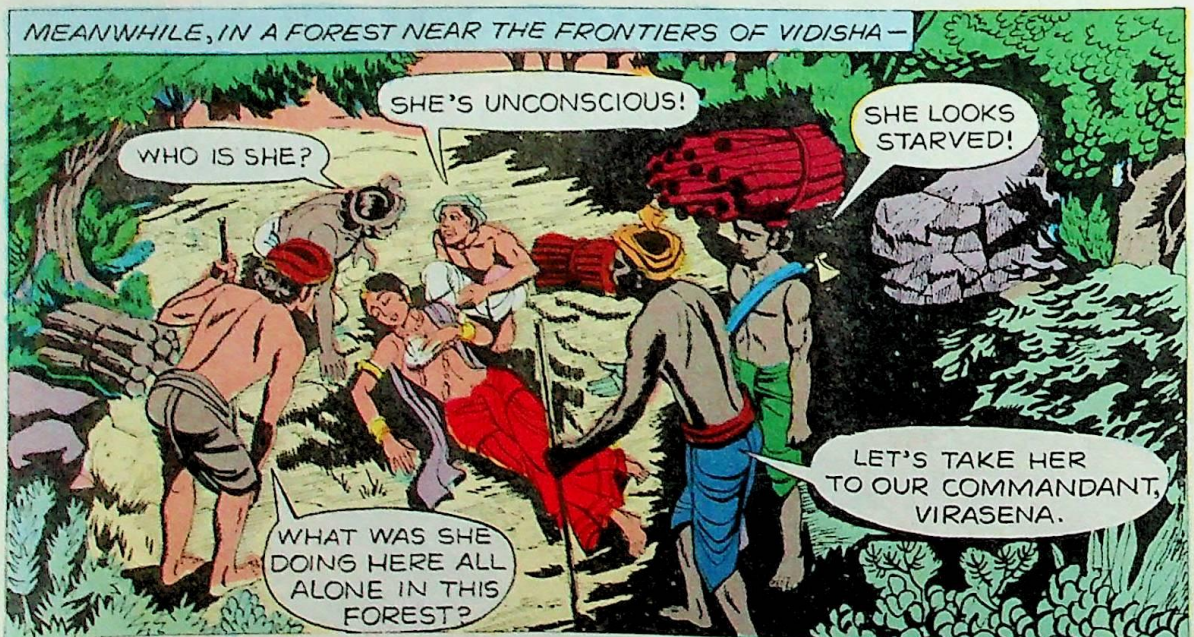




AS THE FLAMES LICKED THE BODY OF HER BROTHER, KAUSHIKI'S DETERMINATION GREW STRONGER.

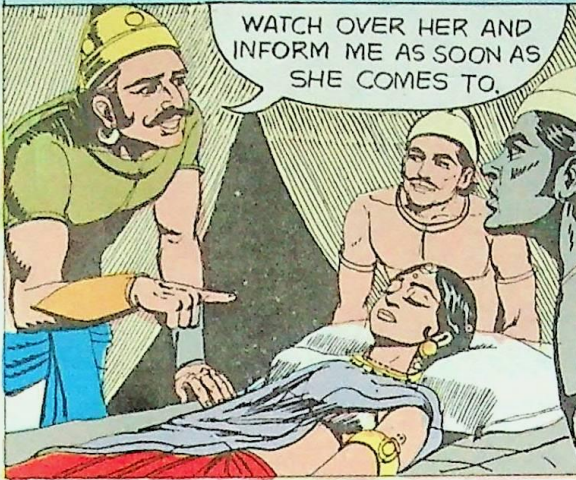


MEANWHILE, IN A FOREST NEAR THE FRONTIERS OF VIDISHA—



MALAVIKA

VIRASENA, FRONTIER COMMANDANT OF VIDISHA, TOOK CHARGE OF THE GIRL.



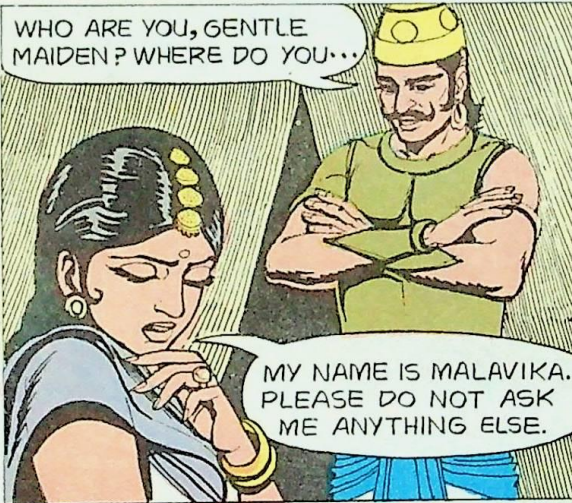
WATCH OVER HER AND INFORM ME AS SOON AS SHE COMES TO.

A LITTLE LATER —

SIR, SHE'S OPENED HER EYES!



WHO ARE YOU, GENTLE MAIDEN? WHERE DO YOU...

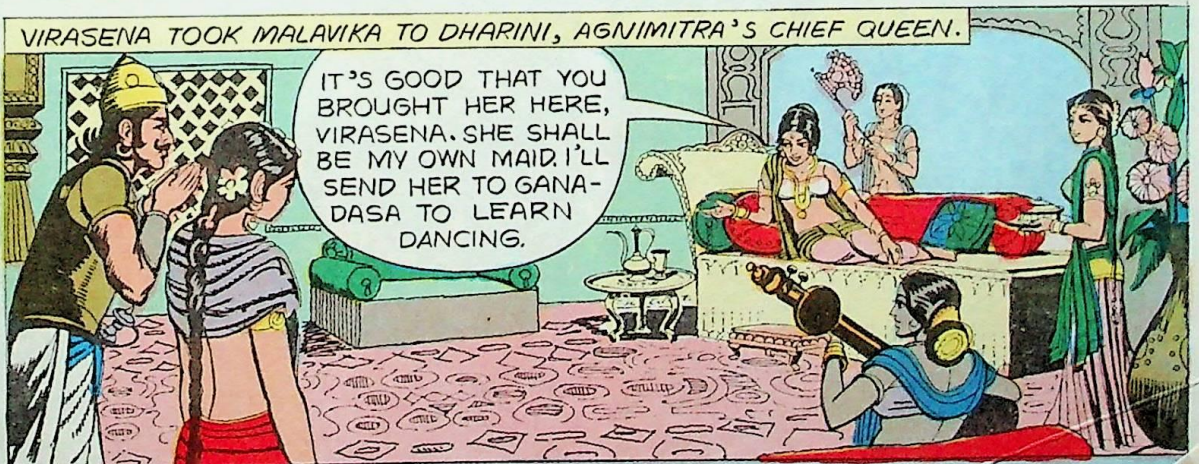


MY NAME IS MALAVIKA. PLEASE DO NOT ASK ME ANYTHING ELSE.

AS YOU WISH. I WILL TAKE YOU TO OUR QUEEN. YOU WILL BE SAFE WITH HER.



VIRASENA TOOK MALAVIKA TO DHARINI, AGNIMITRA'S CHIEF QUEEN.

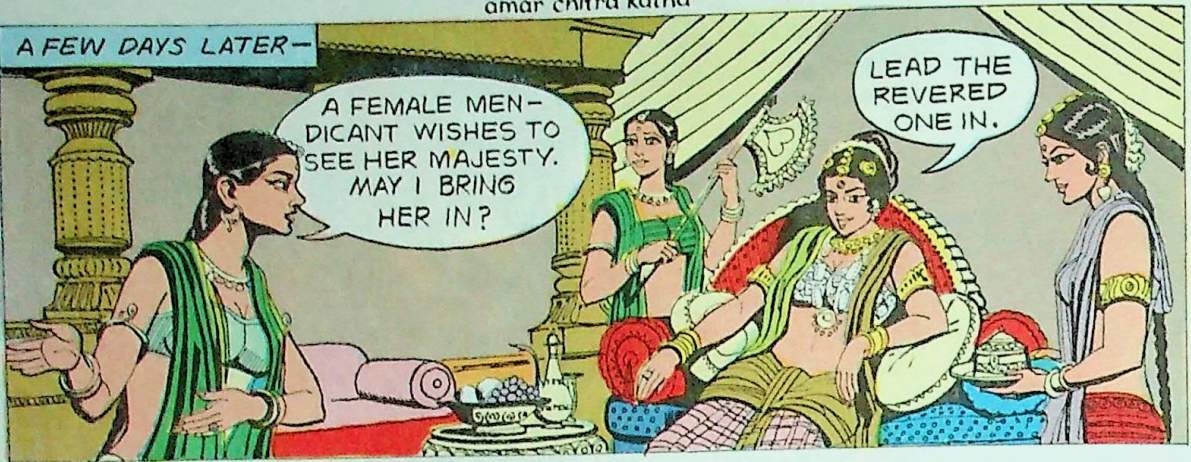


IT'S GOOD THAT YOU BROUGHT HER HERE, VIRASENA. SHE SHALL BE MY OWN MAID. I'LL SEND HER TO GANADASA TO LEARN DANCING.

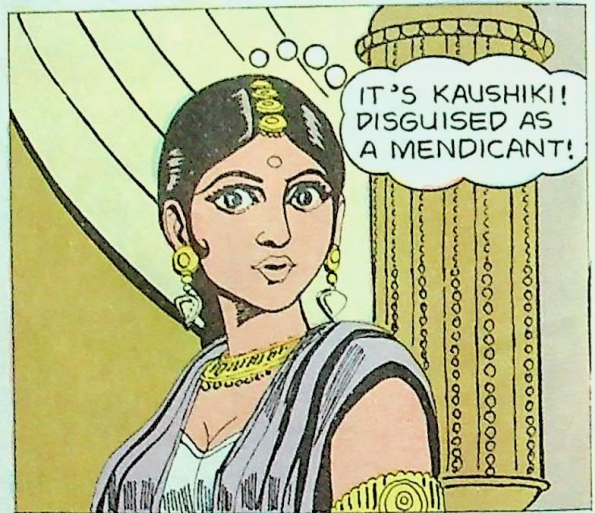
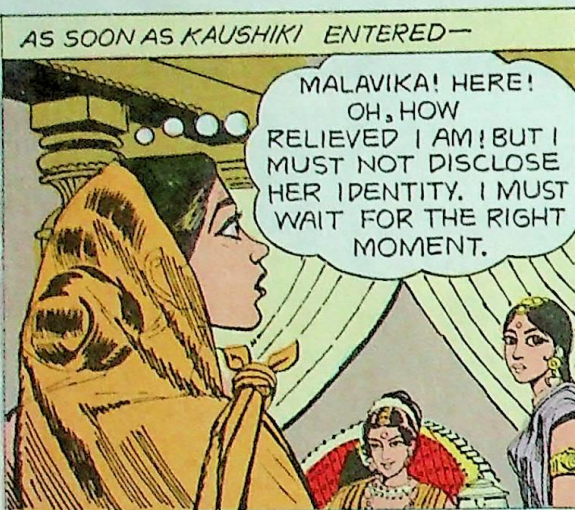
THUS THE TURN DESTINY TOOK FINALLY LANDED MALAVIKA IN THE PALACE AT VIDISHA, HER DESTINATION, BUT IN A ROLE SHE HAD NEVER DREAMT OF.

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A FEW DAYS LATER—



AS SOON AS KAUSHIKI ENTERED—

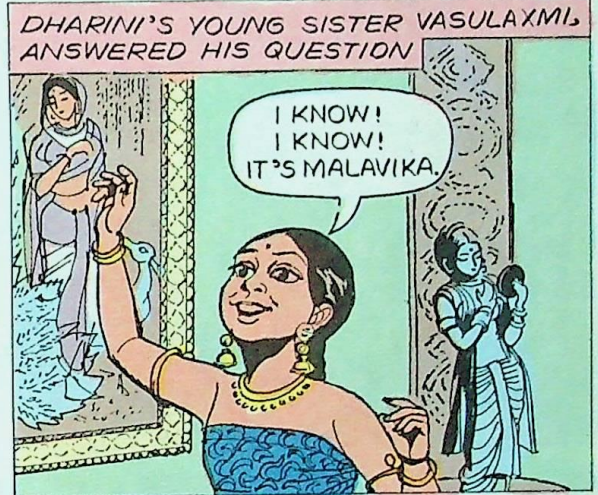
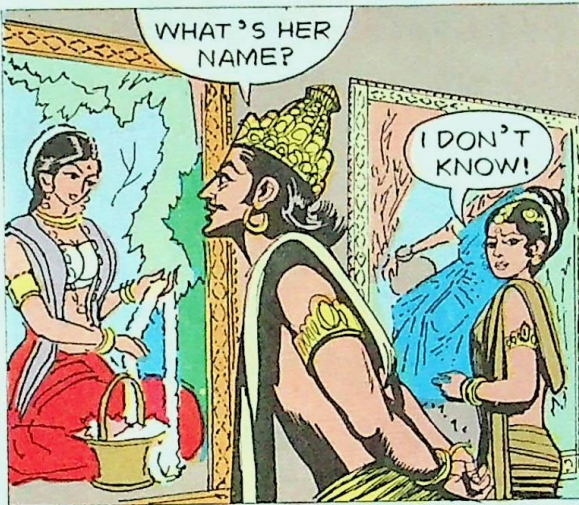


AS DHARINI TURNED TO GIVE THE
MAID ORDERS...

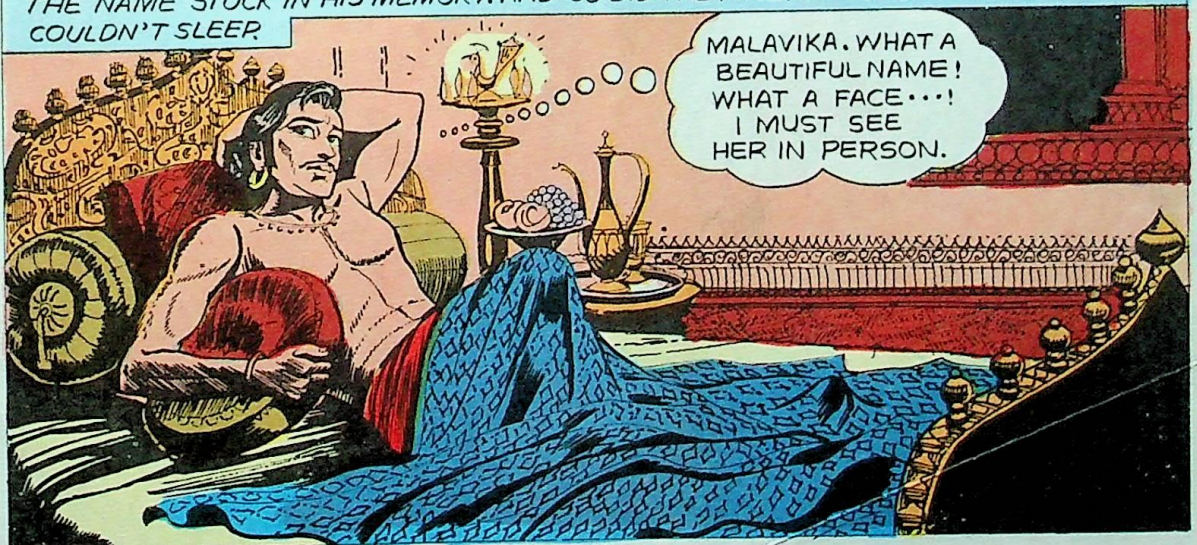


MALAVIKA

ONE DAY, WHILE HE WAS ADMIRING THE PAINTINGS IN THE PICTURE-HALL WITH QUEEN DHARINI, AGNIMITRA'S EYES CAUGHT SIGHT OF A STRANGE BUT BEAUTIFUL FACE.



THE NAME STUCK IN HIS MEMORY. AND SO DID THE FACE. THAT NIGHT AGNIMITRA COULDN'T SLEEP



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THE NEXT DAY, HE SENT FOR GAUTAMA, HIS VIDUSHAKA.*

GAUTAMA, I NEED YOUR HELP. I SAW MALAVIKA'S PORTRAIT, ACCIDENTALLY, AND NOW, I CRAVE TO SEE HER.

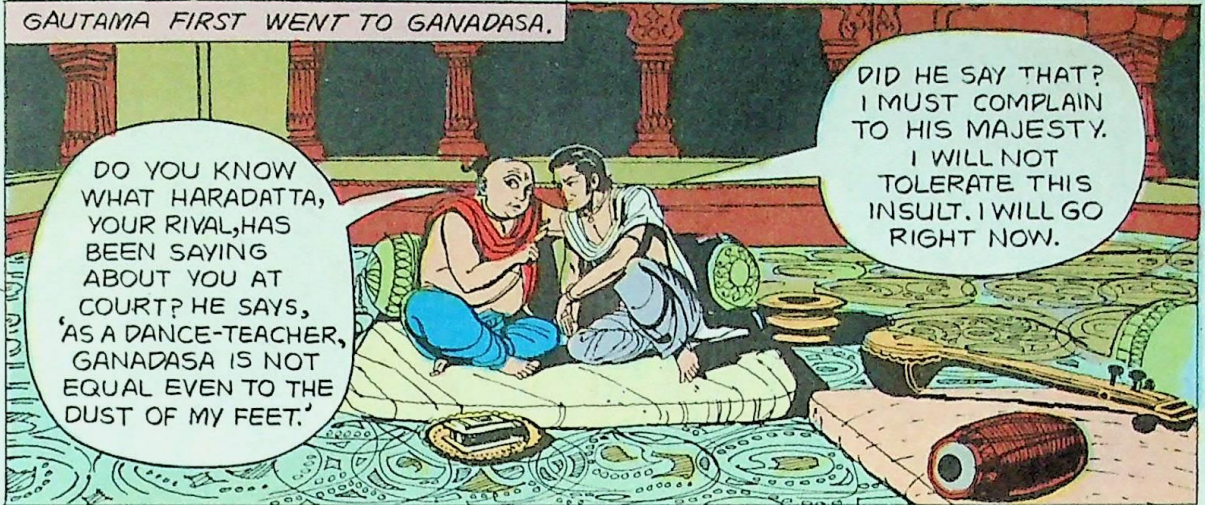
THAT'S EASILY DONE, MY LORD.



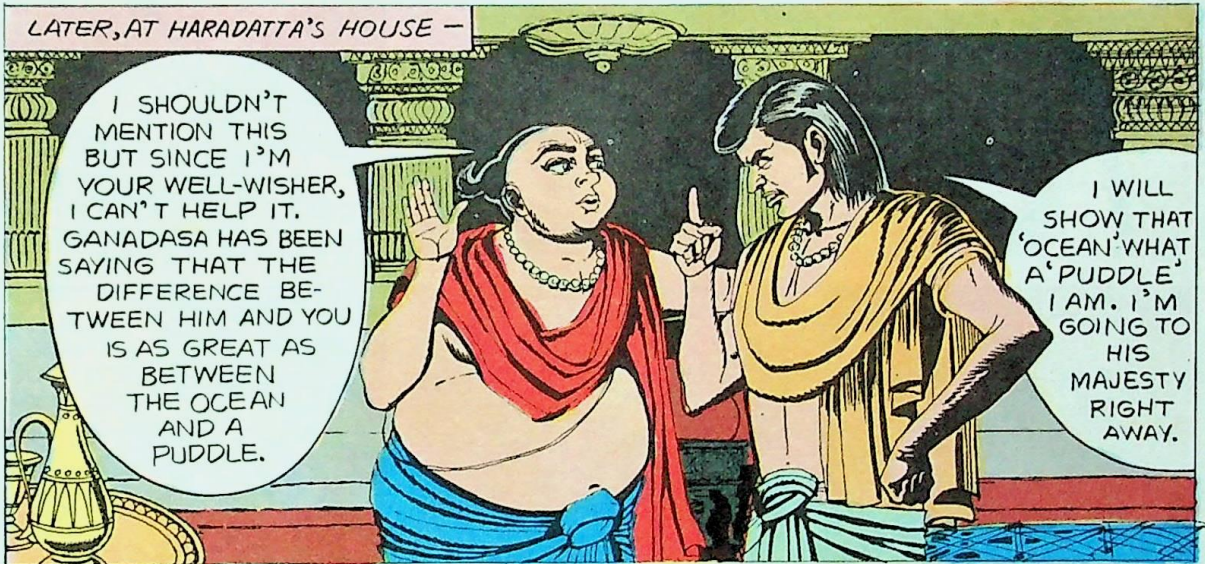
* KING'S JESTER.

MALAVIKA

GAUTAMA FIRST WENT TO GANADASA.



LATER, AT HARADATTA'S HOUSE -



AT AGNIMITRA'S PALACE -



A CONTEST WAS ARRANGED. KAUSHIKI WAS SELECTED TO JUDGE THE PERFORMANCES. GANADASA'S PUPIL, MALAVIKA, WAS THE FIRST TO PERFORM.

MY BELOVED
IS HERE, YET
HOW CAN I
APPROACH HIM?
WHAT A
HOPELESS
LOVE IS MINE!



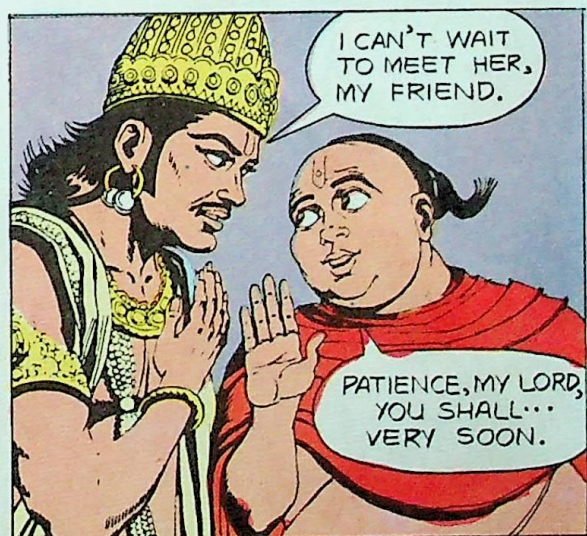
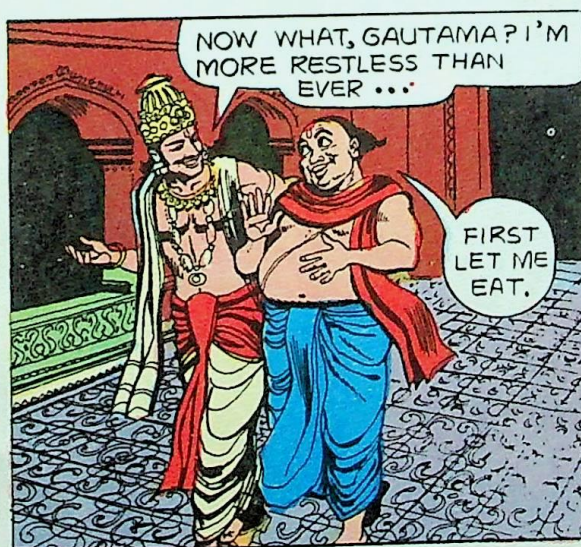
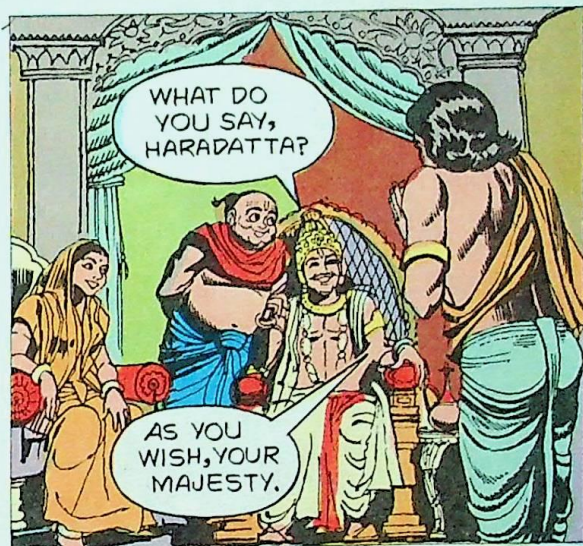
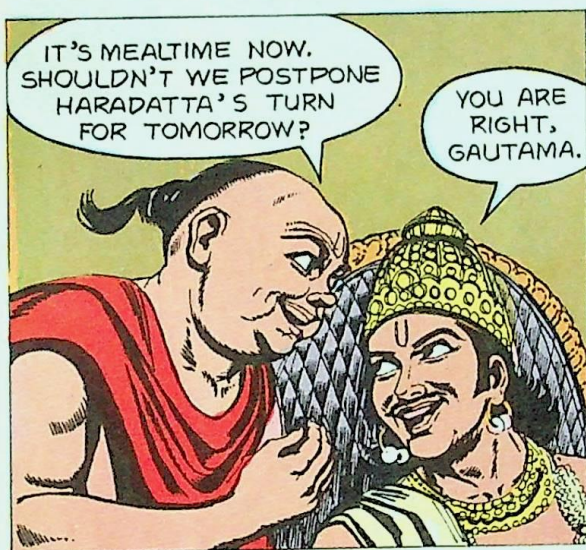
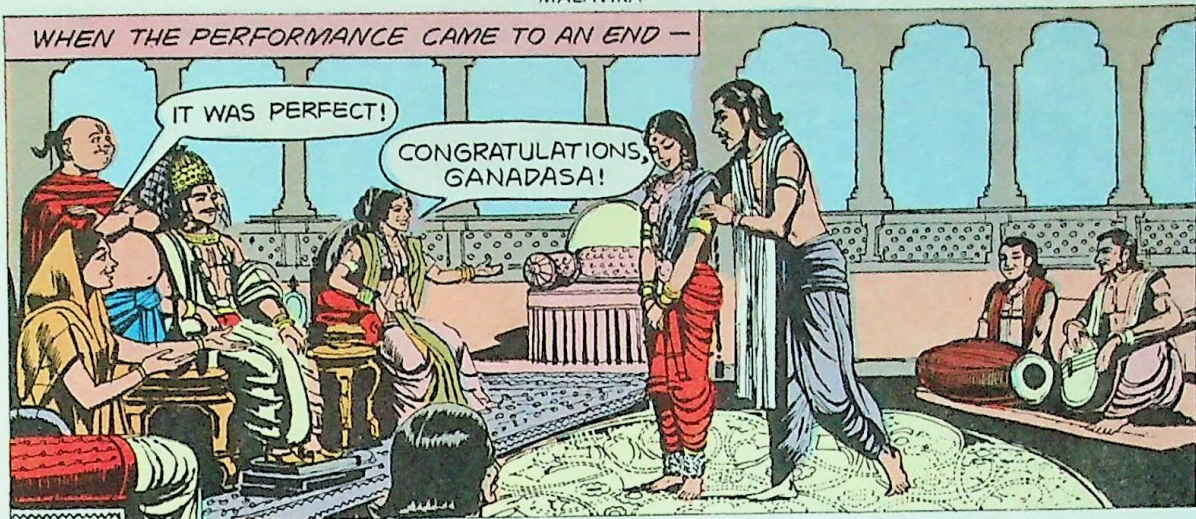
KNOW, MY
BELOVED,
THAT I YEARN
FOR YOU.



THE WORDS OF THE SONG
EXPRESSED MALAVIKA'S
OWN FEELINGS.



I, TOO,
YEARN
FOR YOU,
MALAVIKA.

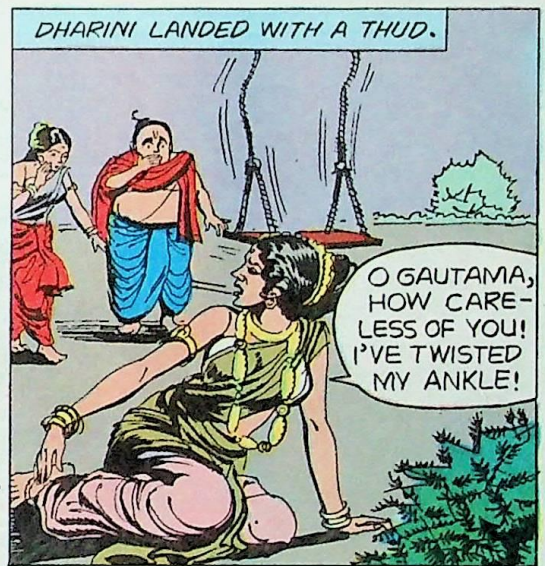


A FEW DAYS LATER, THE PALACE GARDENS RESOUNDED WITH LAUGHTER AS THE WOMEN OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, BATHED IN THE FRAGRANCE OF FRESH BLOSSOMS, CELEBRATED THE SPRING FESTIVAL.



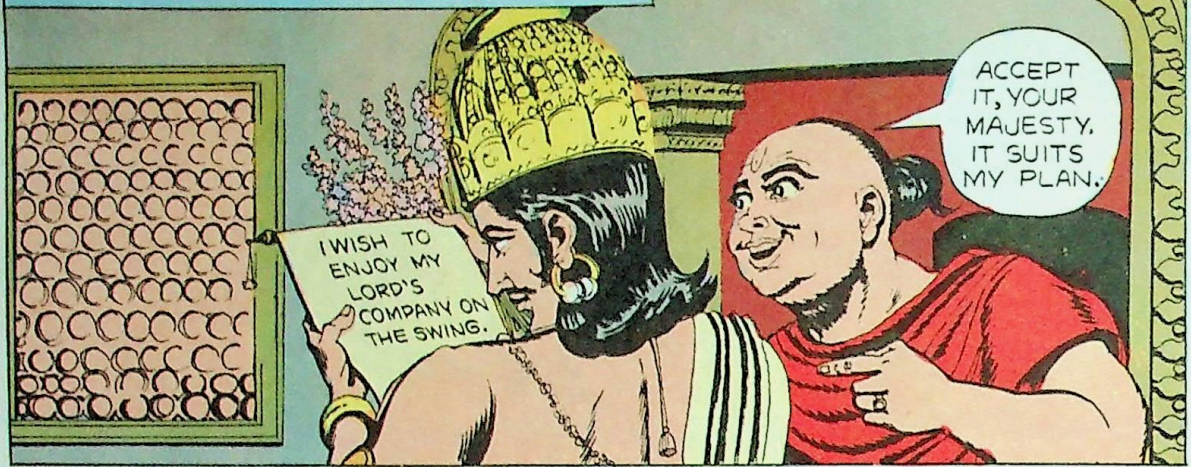
MALAVIKA

DHARINI TOO WAS THERE, WITH MALAVIKA ATTENDING ON HER. SUDDENLY, GAUTAMA CAME UPON THE SCENE.

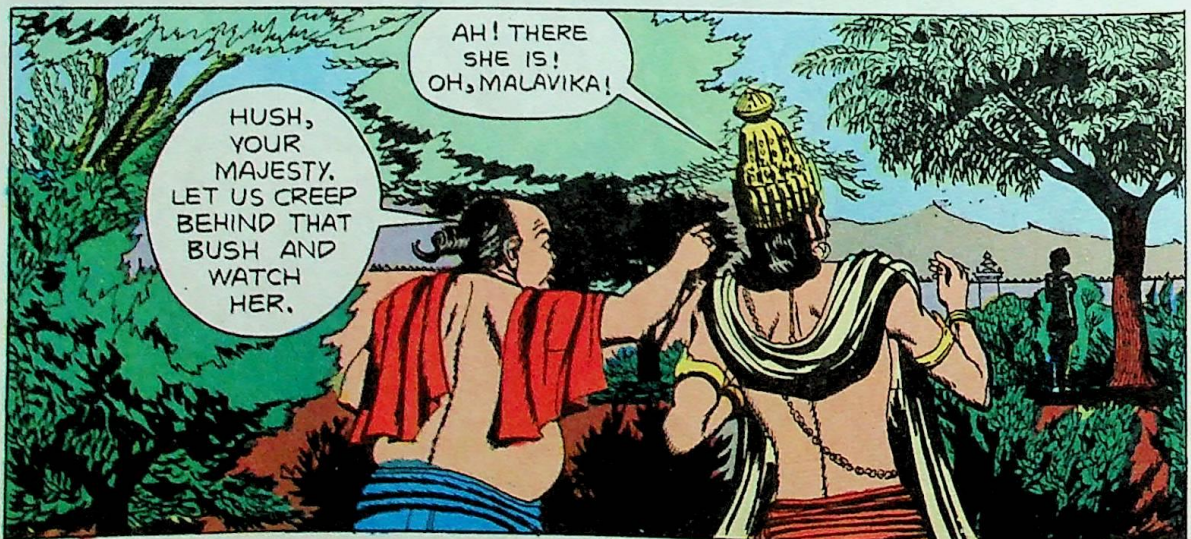
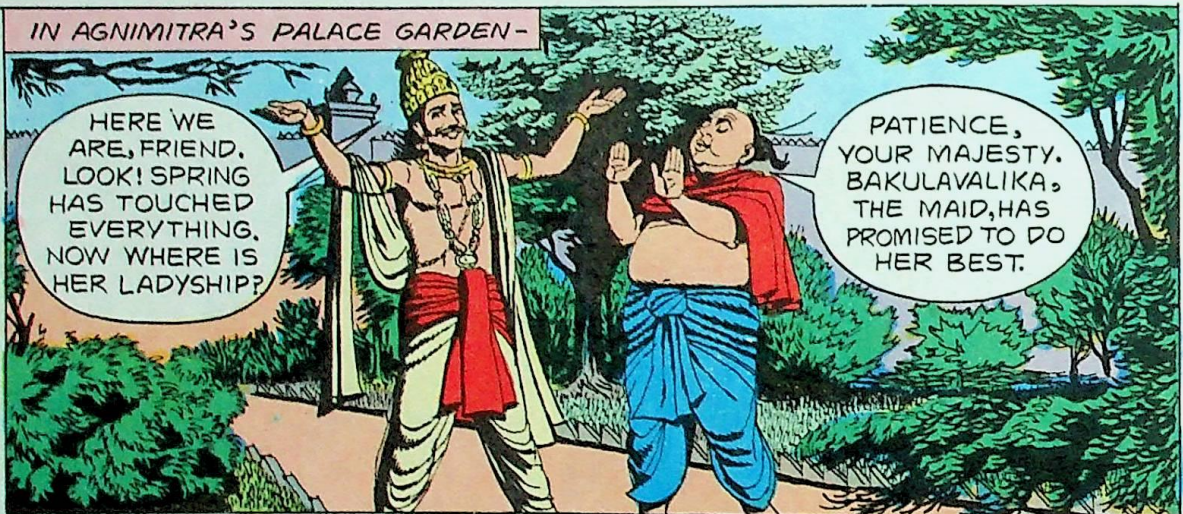


*A TREE WHICH WOULD BLOSSOM ONLY IF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN STRUCK IT WITH A DECORATED FOOT. 17

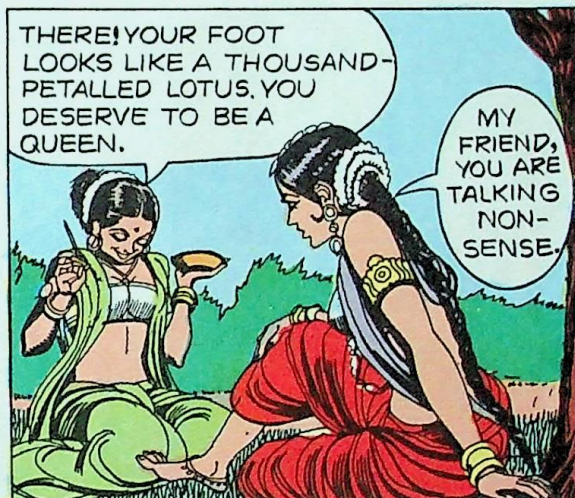
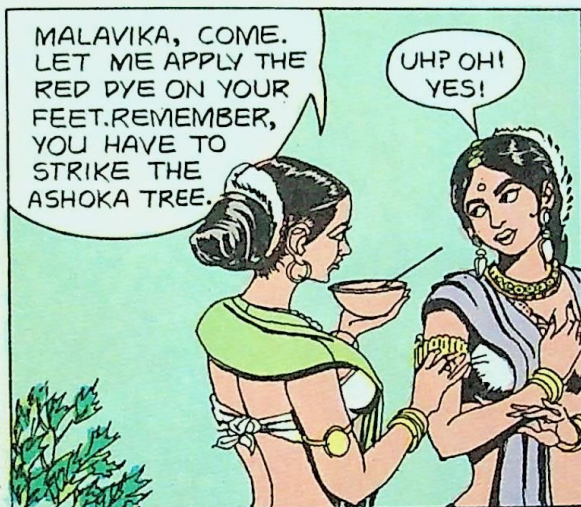
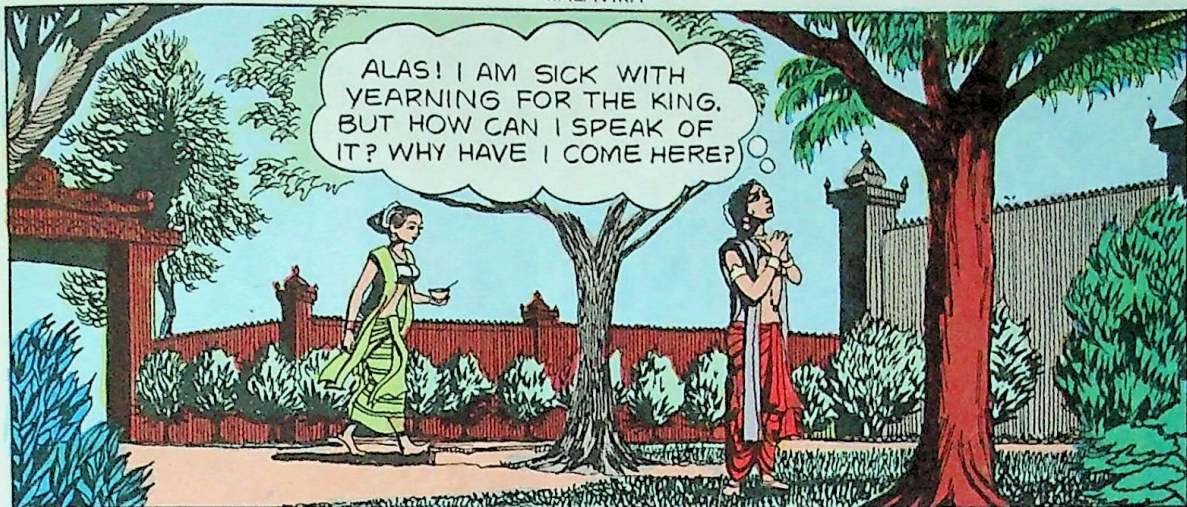
MEANWHILE, IRAVATI, AGNIMITRA'S SECOND WIFE, SENT HIM A GIFT OF RED ASHOKA BLOSSOMS ALONG WITH AN INVITATION

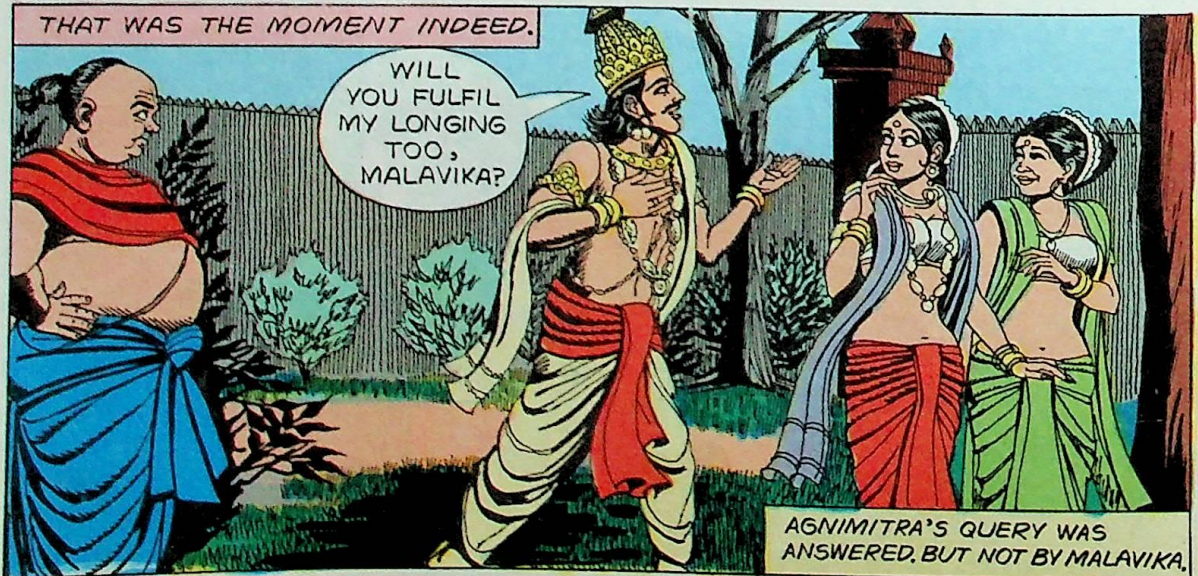
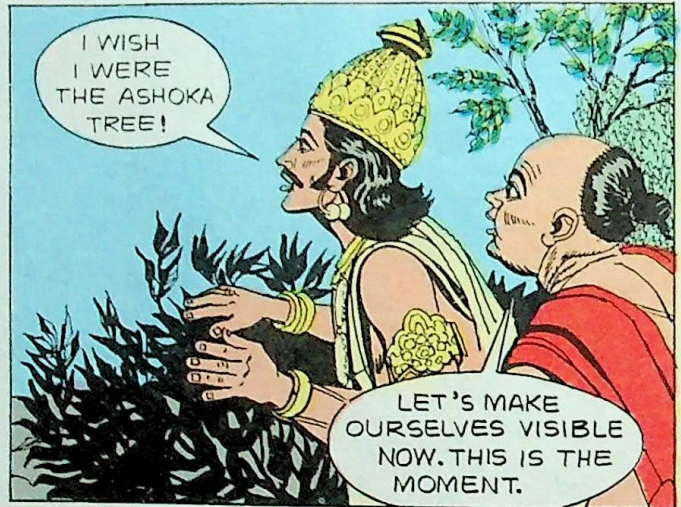
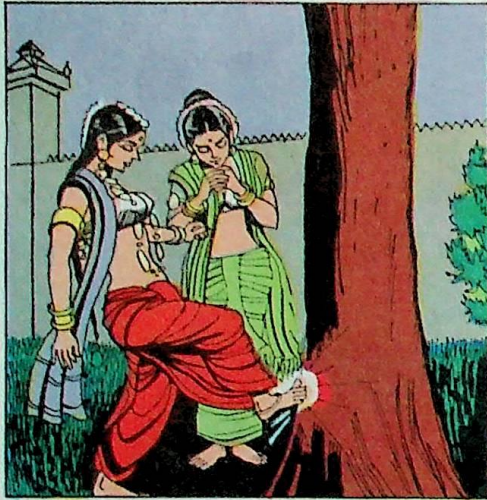
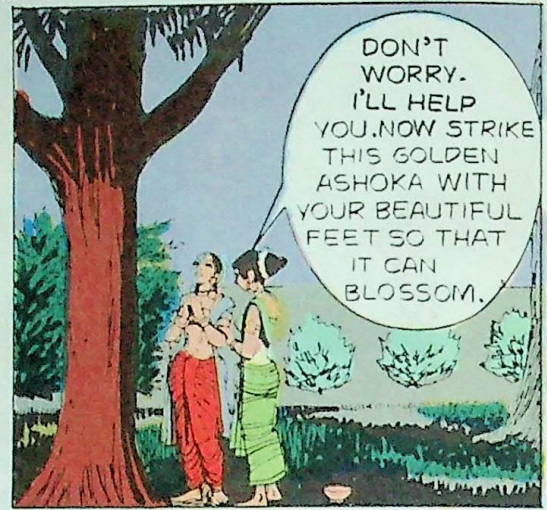


IN AGNIMITRA'S PALACE GARDEN -

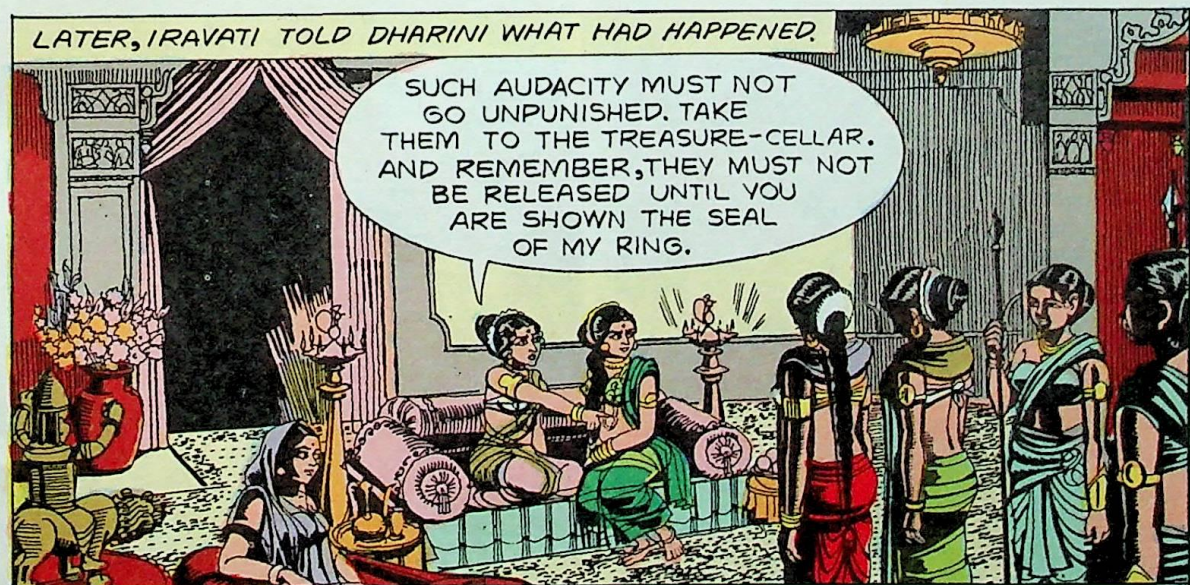
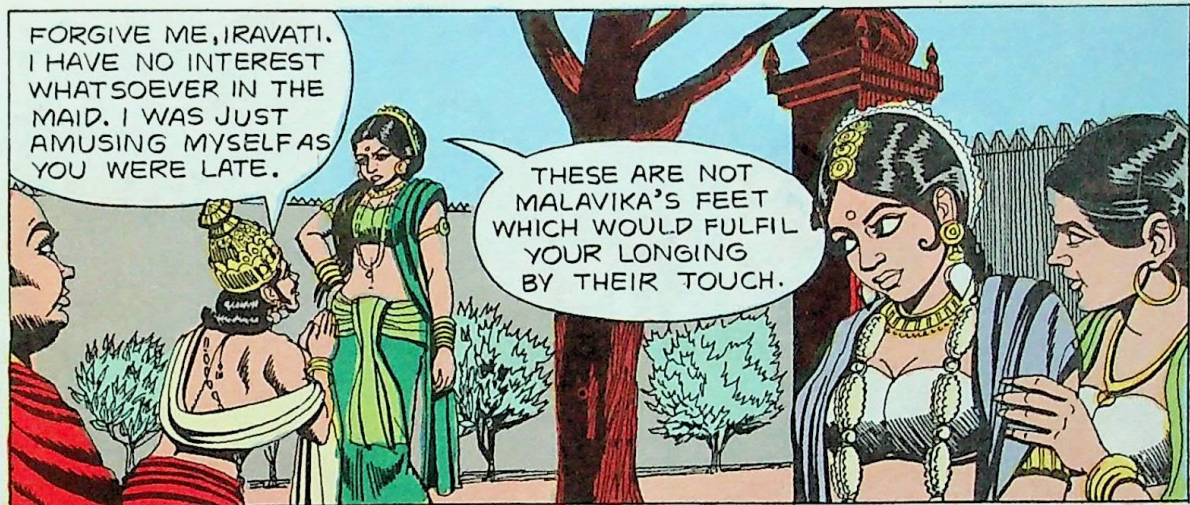
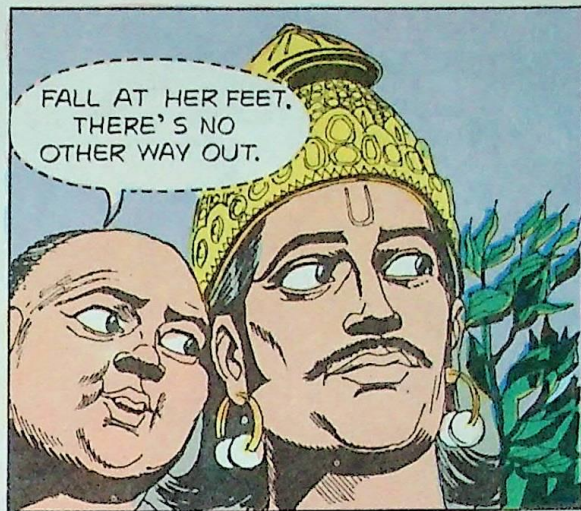
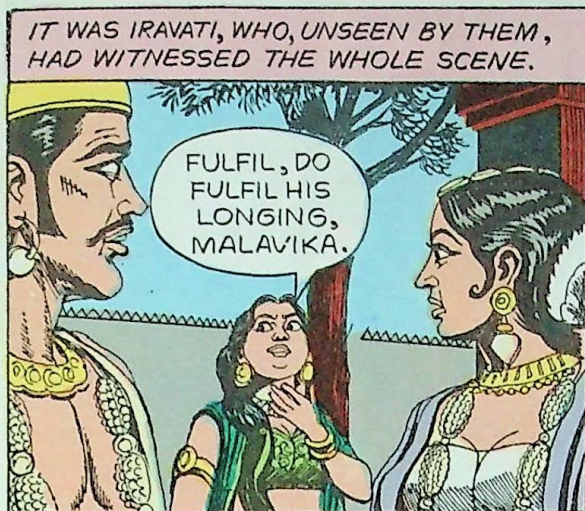


MALAVIKA





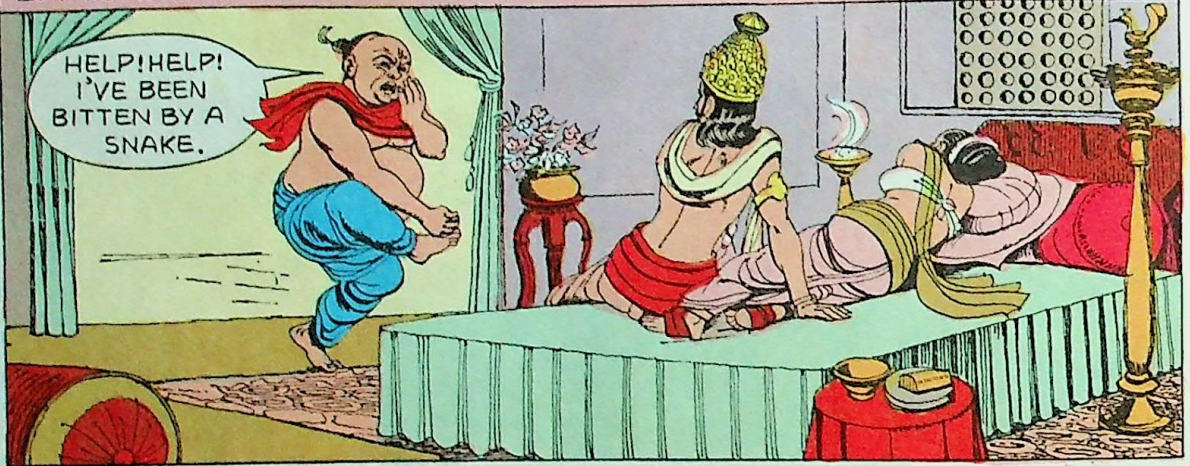
MALAVIKA



IN THE CELLAR -



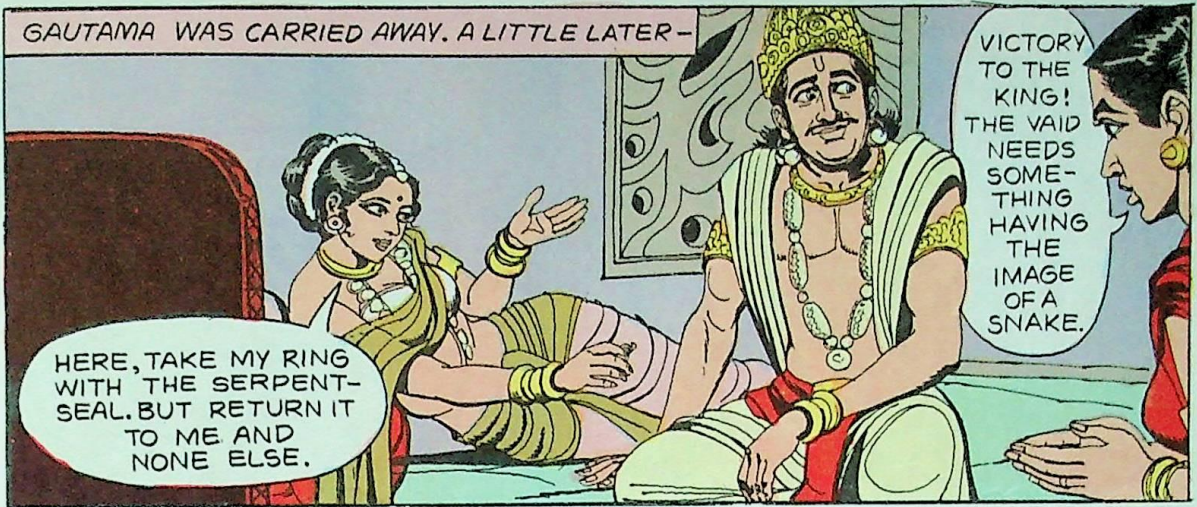
BAKULAVALIKA WAS RIGHT. THE KING WAS VISITING THE INJURED DHARINI WHEN -



*PHYSICIAN

MALAVIKA

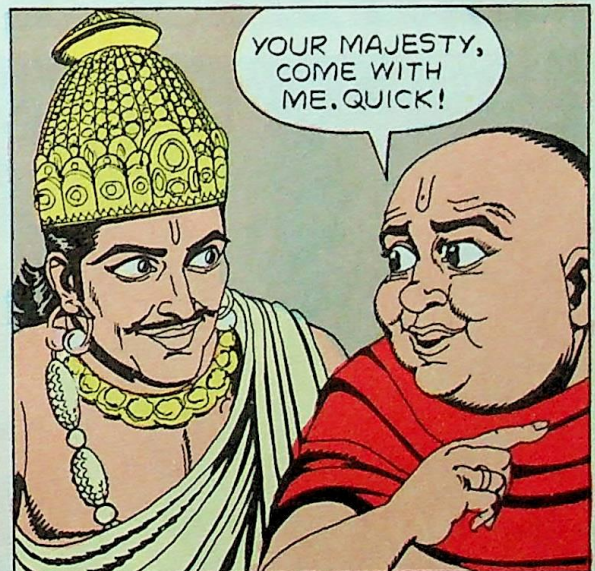
GAUTAMA WAS CARRIED AWAY. A LITTLE LATER -



WITHIN MOMENTS, GAUTAMA, WHO WAS ONLY PRETENDING, WAS AT THE DOOR OF THE TREASURE-CELLAR WITH THE RING.

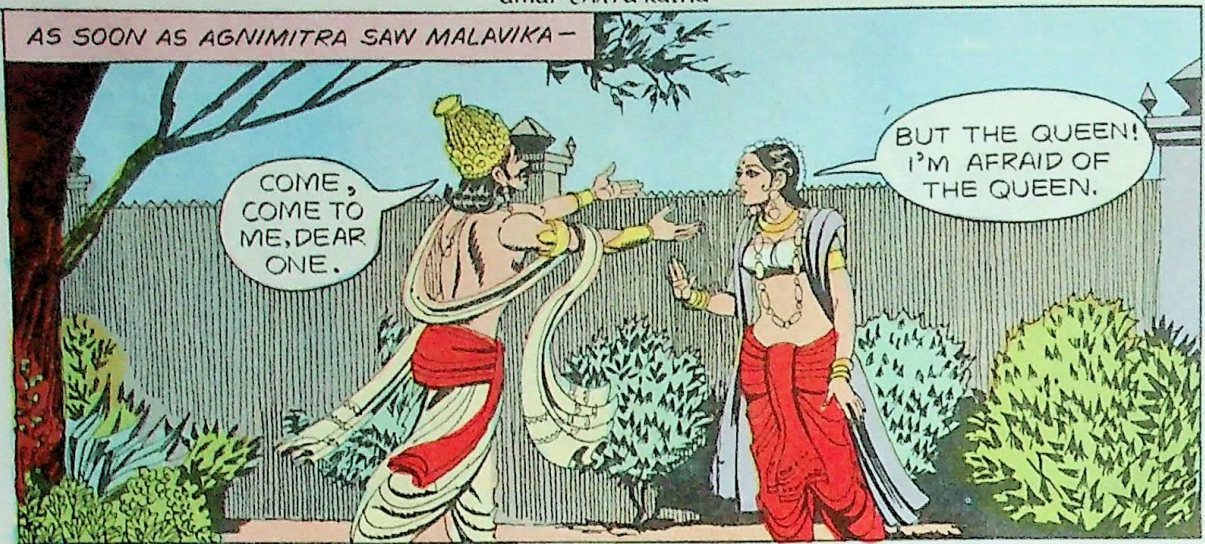


LATER IN THE GARDEN -



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AS SOON AS AGNIMITRA SAW MALAVIKA -



BEFORE IRAVATI COULD SAY ANOTHER WORD—

YOUR MAJESTY, YOUR MAJESTY,
PRINCESS VASULAXMI IS
UNCONSCIOUS. SHE WAS
FRIGHTENED BY A MONKEY.

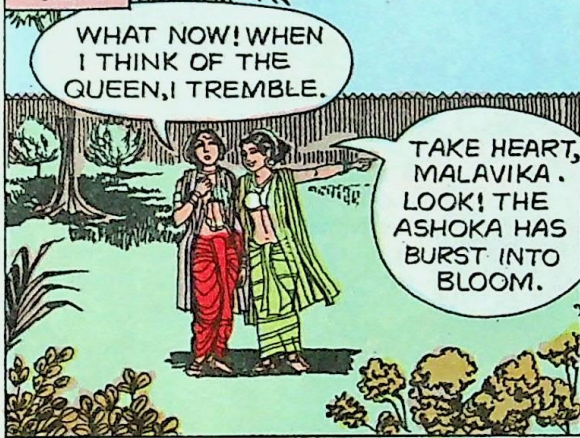
I MUST
RUSH
TO HER.



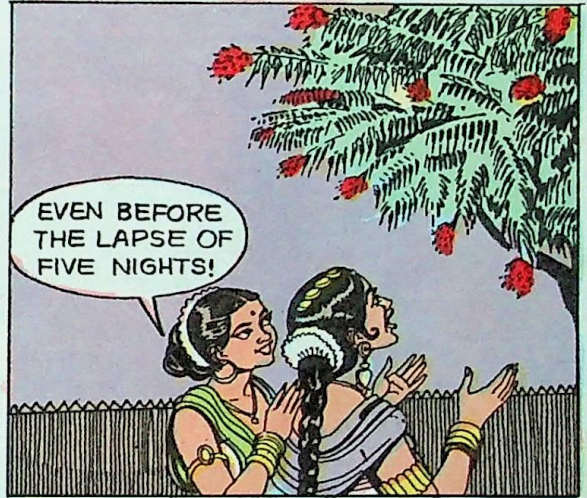
MALAVIKA AND BAKULA WERE LEFT
ALONE.

WHAT NOW! WHEN
I THINK OF THE
QUEEN, I TREMBLE.

TAKE HEART,
MALAVIKA.
LOOK! THE
ASHOKA HAS
BURST INTO
BLOOM.



EVEN BEFORE
THE LAPSE OF
FIVE NIGHTS!



AND THE QUEEN
IS ONE WHO KEEPS
A PROMISE,
MALAVIKA!

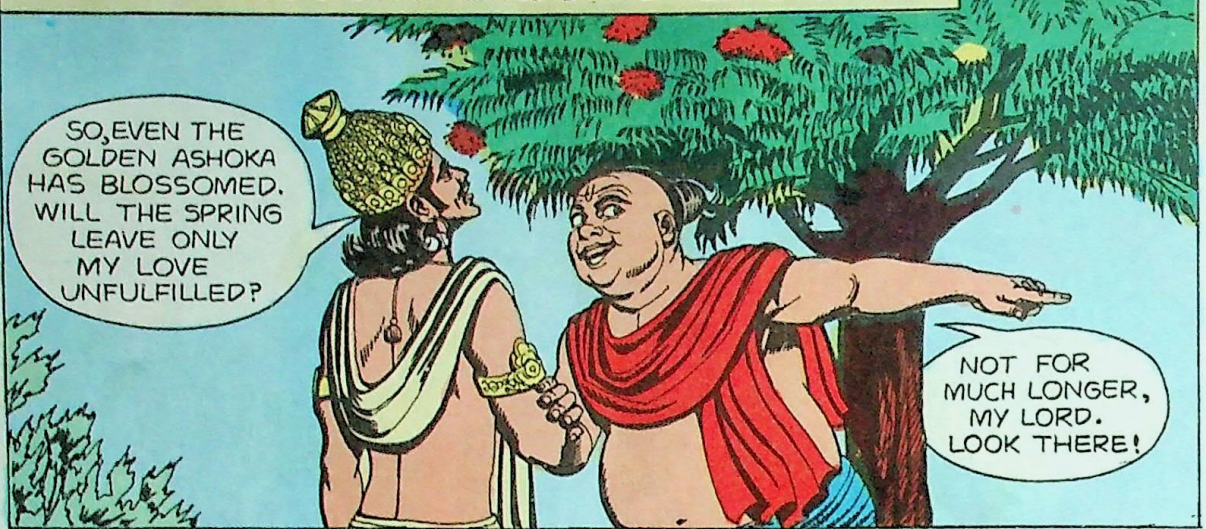


WHEN DHARINI HEARD THE GOOD
NEWS—

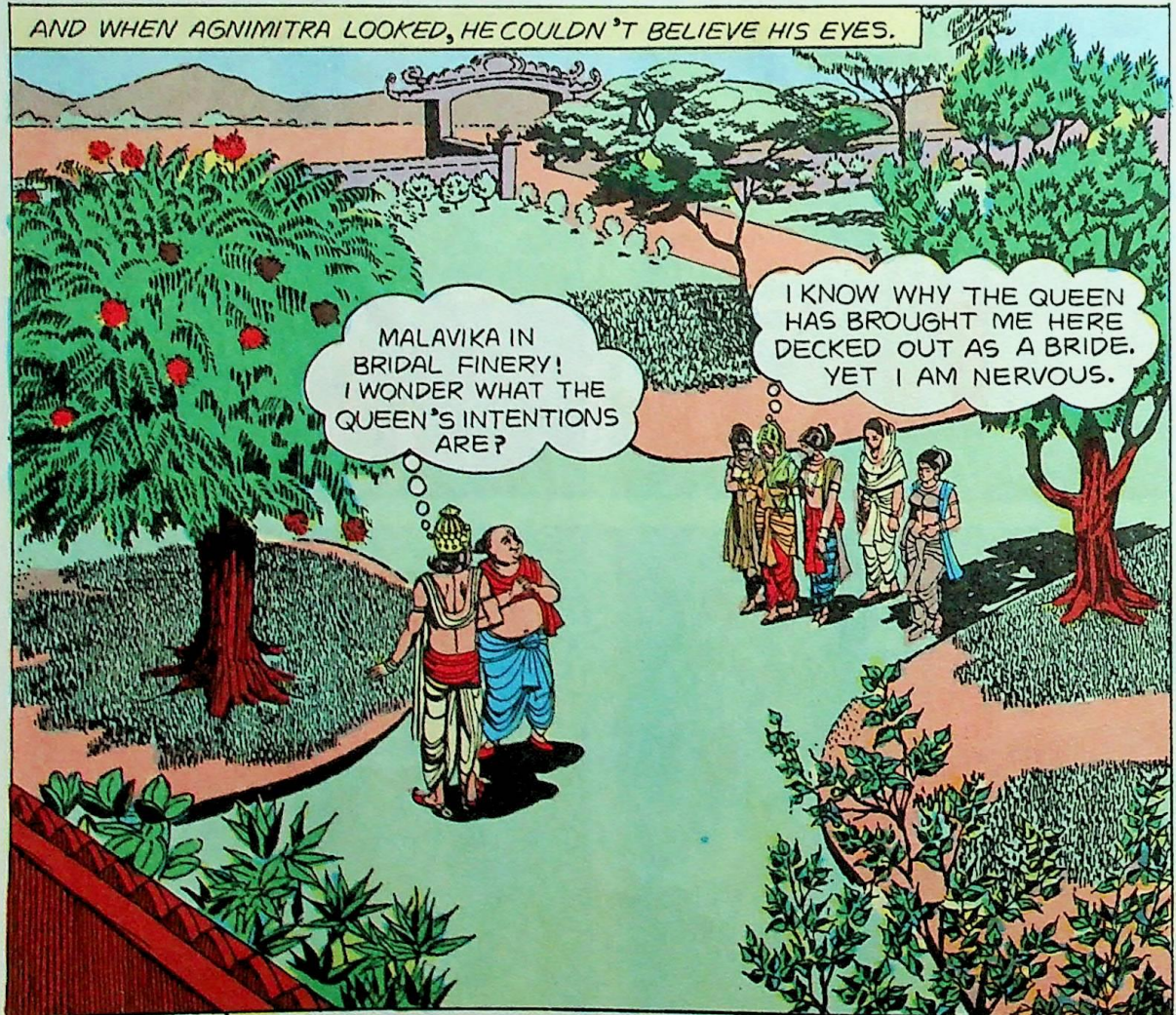
REQUEST MY LORD TO MEET
ME BY THE FLOWERING
TREE. TOGETHER WE
SHALL WITNESS THE
SPLENDOR OF THE
BLOSSOMS.



AS AGNIMITRA AND GAUTAMA WAITED BY THE TREE FOR DHARINI -



AND WHEN AGNIMITRA LOOKED, HE COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES.



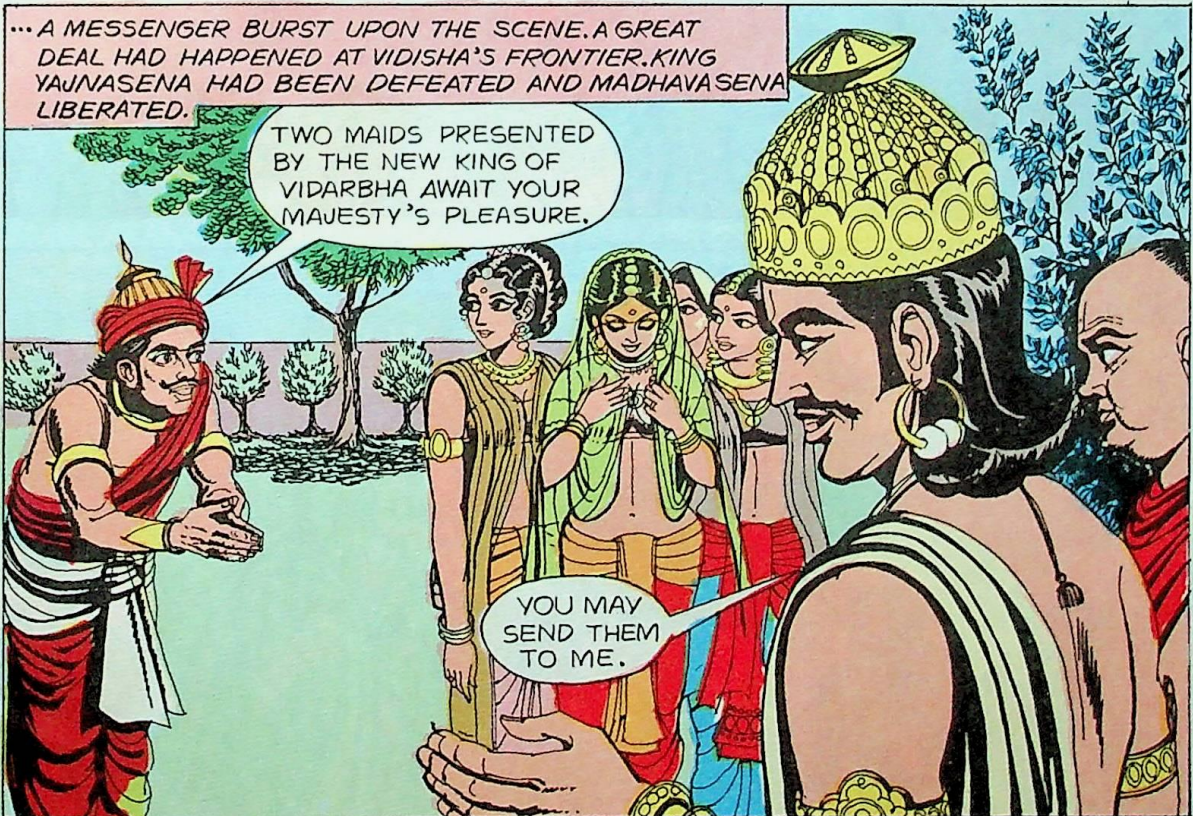
MALAVIKA

JUST AS DHARINI TURNED TO TAKE ONE LAST LOOK AT MALAVIKA BEFORE ADDRESSING THE KING...

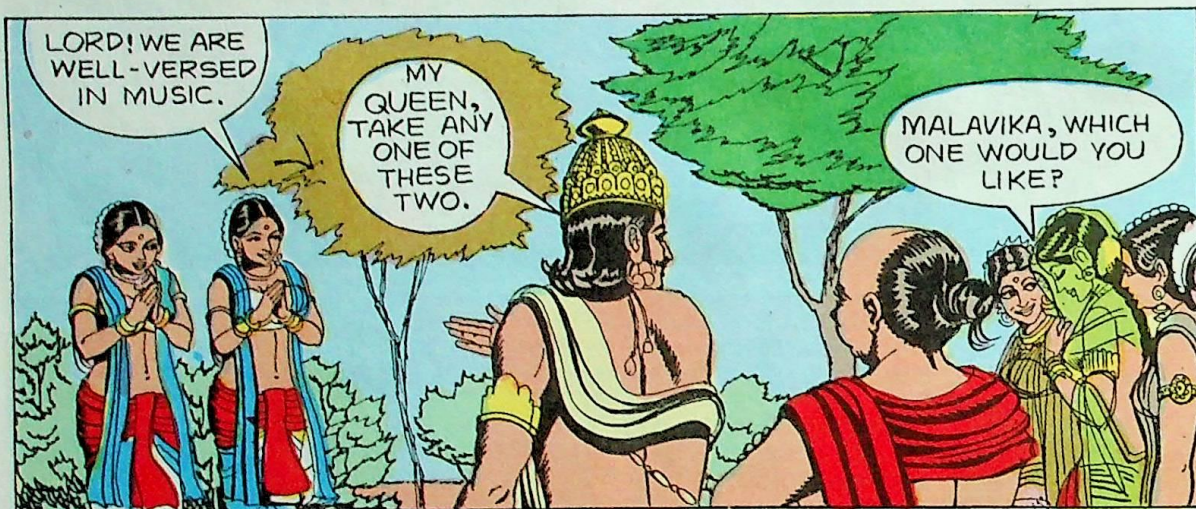
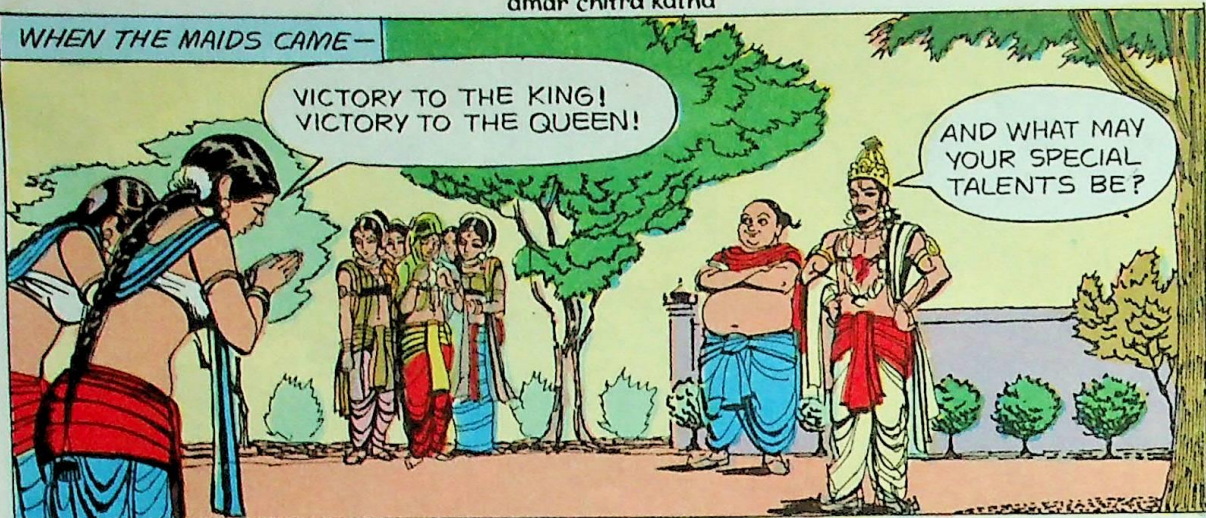


... A MESSENGER BURST UPON THE SCENE. A GREAT DEAL HAD HAPPENED AT VIDISHA'S FRONTIER. KING YAJNASENA HAD BEEN DEFEATED AND MADHAVASENA LIBERATED.

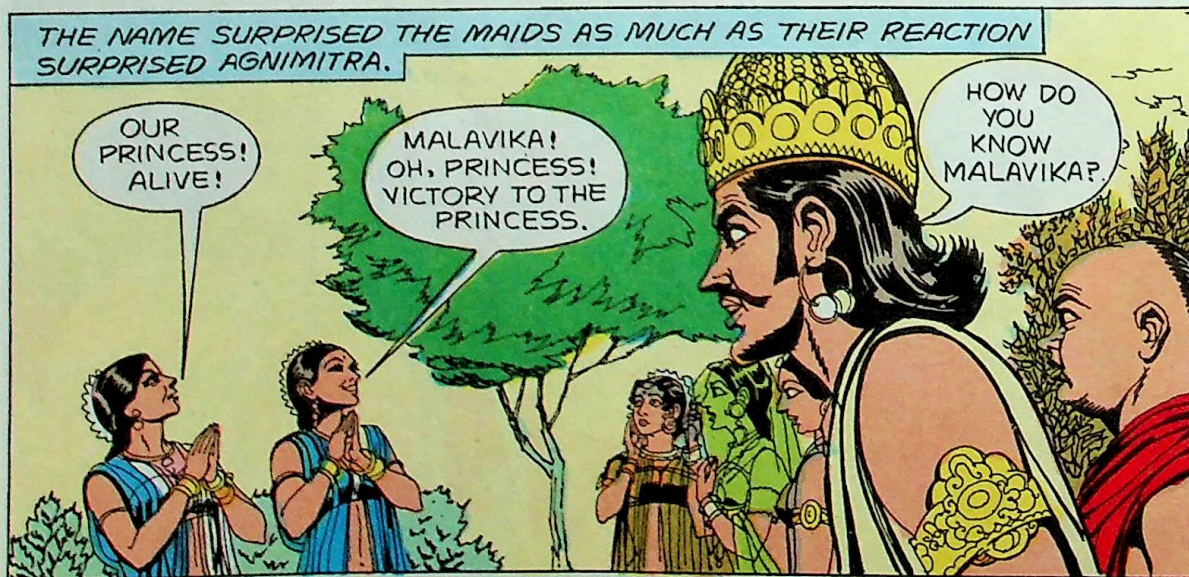
TWO MAIDS PRESENTED BY THE NEW KING OF VIDARBHA AWAIT YOUR MAJESTY'S PLEASURE.



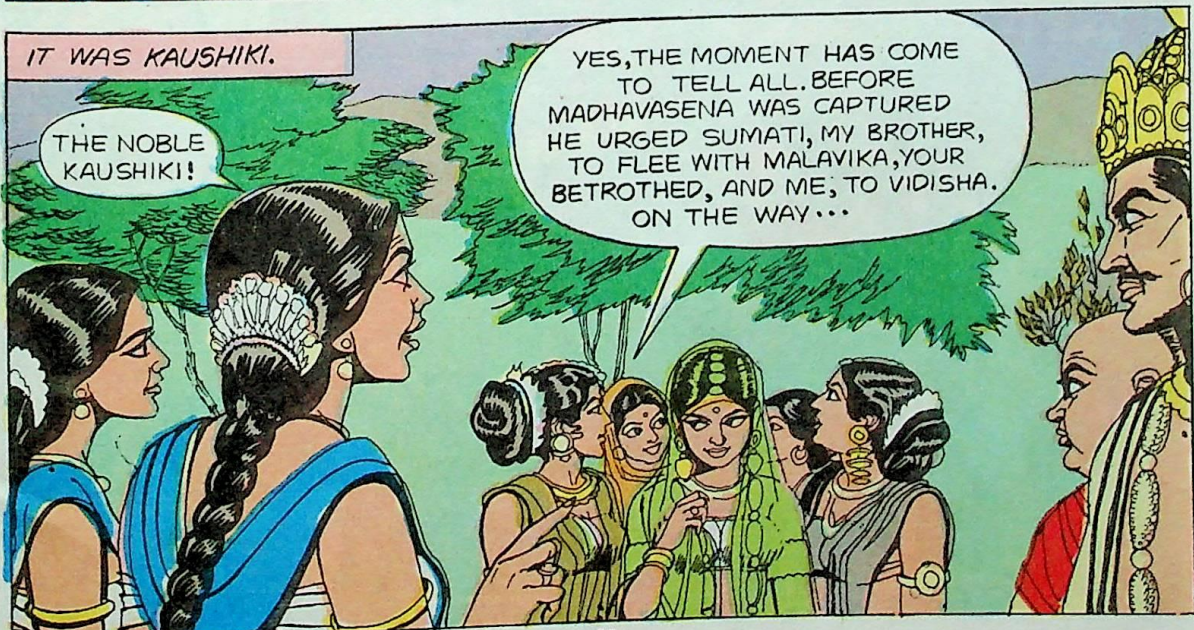
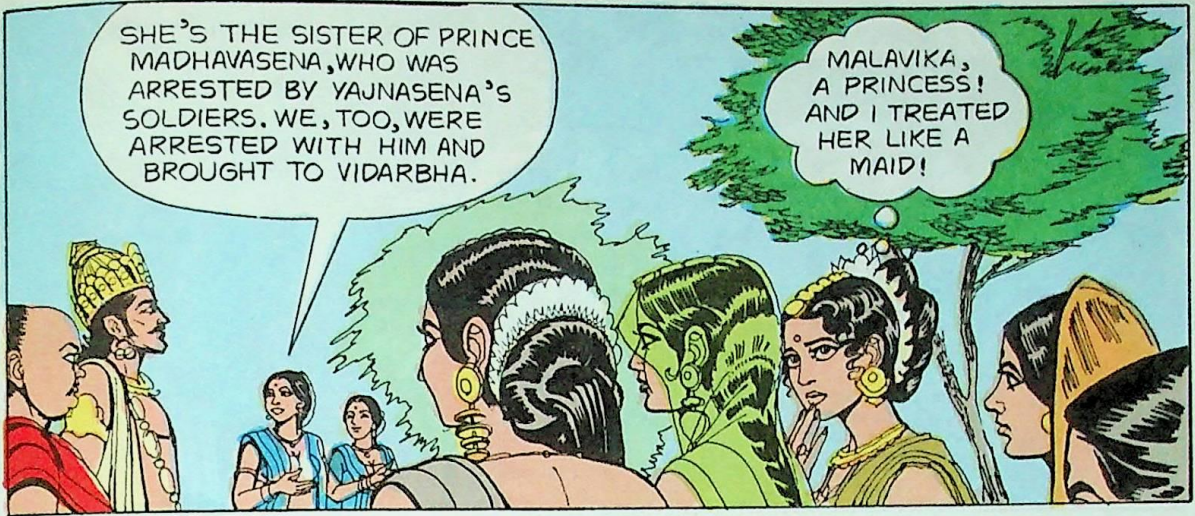
WHEN THE MAIDS CAME—



THE NAME SURPRISED THE MAIDS AS MUCH AS THEIR REACTION SURPRISED AGNIMITRA.



MALAVIKA



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AS KAUSHIKI ENDED HER TALE—

WELL, THAT'S
ANOTHER
STORY.

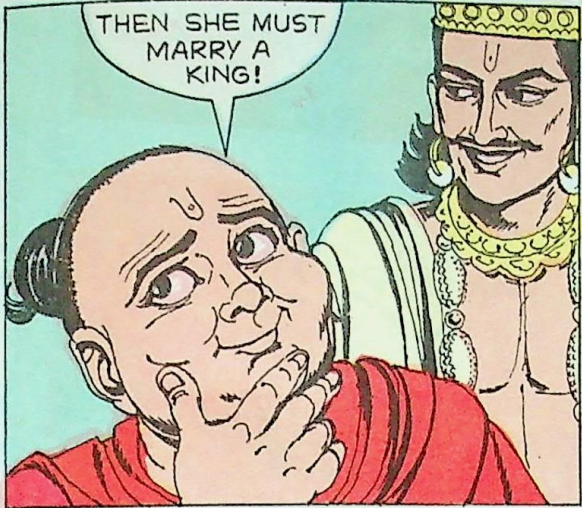
BUT WHY DIDN'T YOU
TELL US ALL THIS
EARLIER?

WHEN MALAVIKA WAS A CHILD,
IT WAS PROPHESED THAT SHE
WOULD GO THROUGH THE STATUS
OF A SERVANT FOR ONE YEAR.
THEN SHE WOULD MARRY A KING.

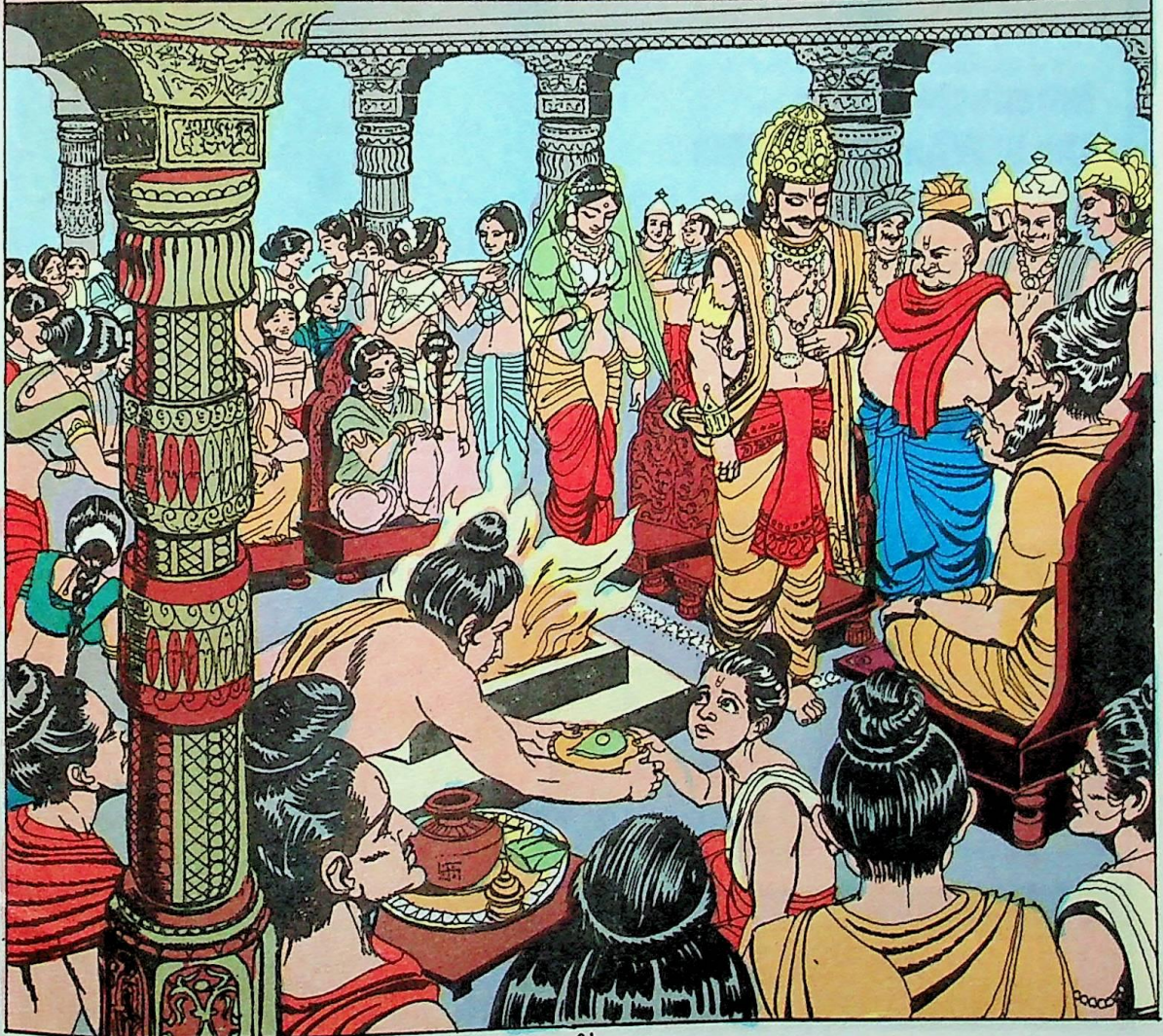
THAT'S WHY I,
KEPT THE SECRET FOR
A WHOLE YEAR.

YOU DID WELL,
TO KEEP THE
SECRET.

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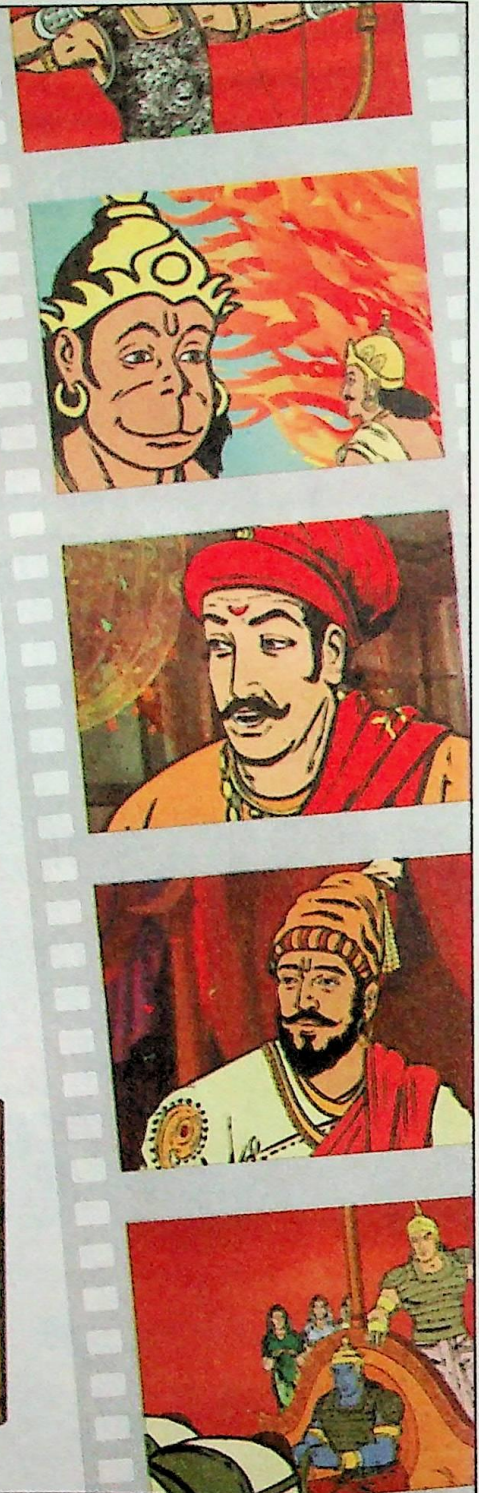
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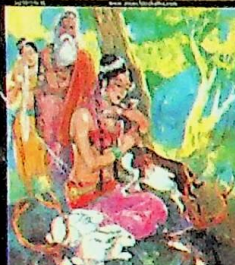


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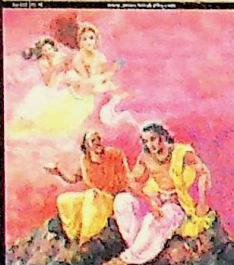
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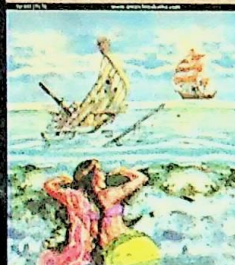
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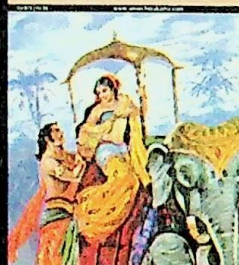
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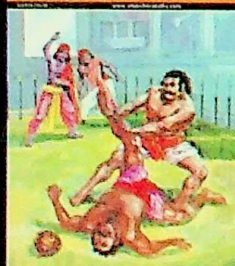


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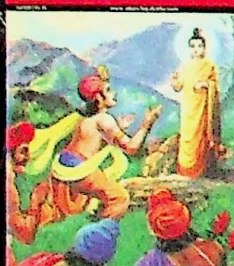
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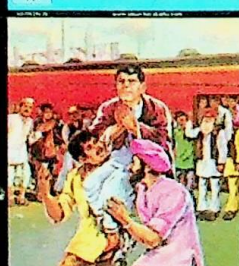
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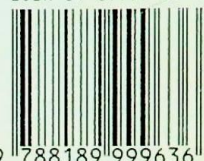
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