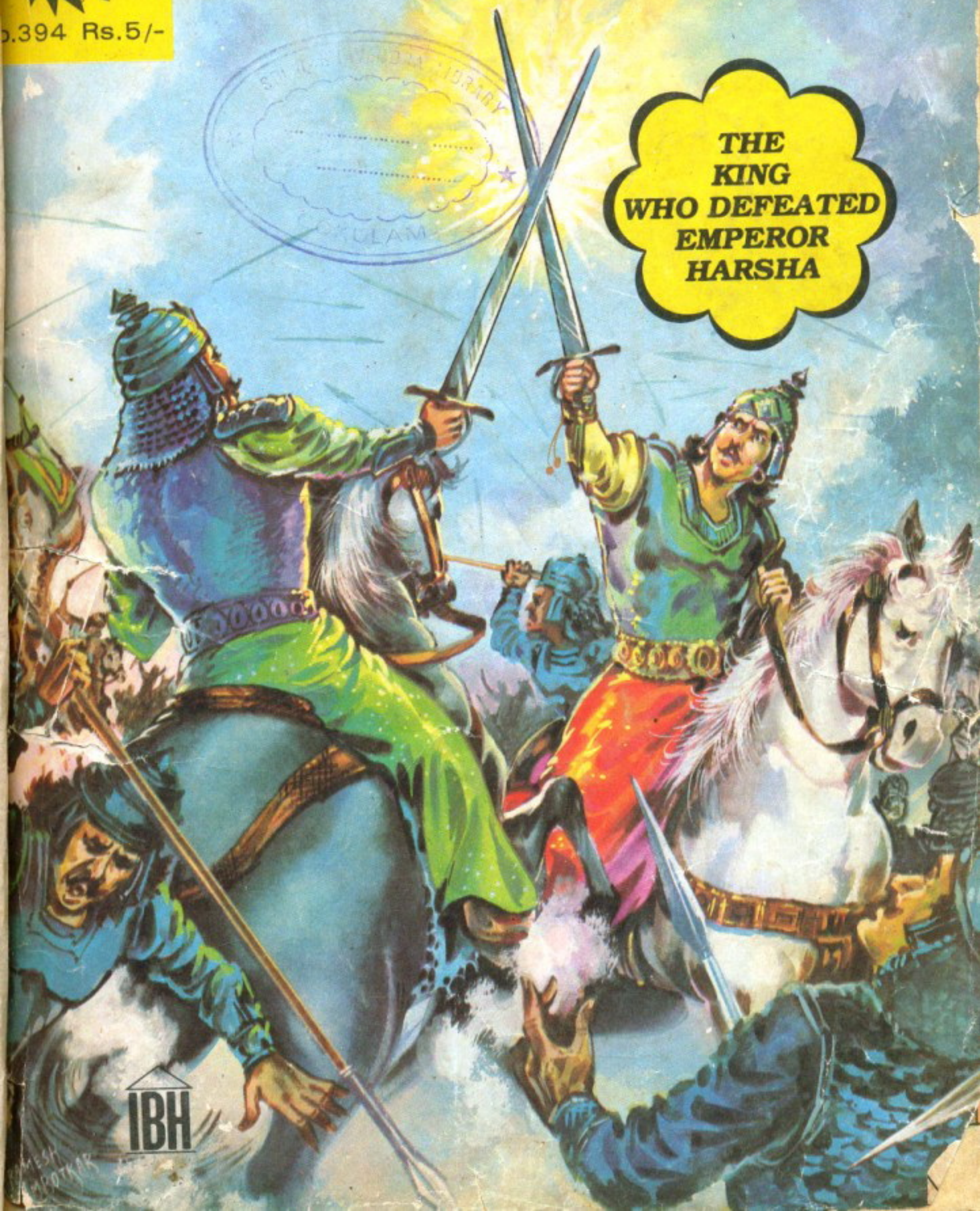


AMAR
CHITRA
KATHA
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PULAKESHI-II

THE
KING
WHO DEFEATED
EMPEROR
HARSHA



IBH

Associate Editor

MARGIE SASTRY

Assistant Editor

SHUBHA KHANDEKAR

Material provided by

DR. B.R. GOPAL

Script

GAYATRI MADAN DUTT

Artworks

SOUREN ROY

Art Consultant

RAM WAEERKAR

Production Assistance

ANURADHA SARKAR

Reference Assistance

SHOBHA RAO



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PULAKESHI—II

Pulakeshi II, who ruled from A.D. 610 to 642, is celebrated in history for inflicting a defeat on the mighty Harshavardhana of Thaneswar on the banks of the Narmada.

During his career as king, Pulakeshi fought war after war to win laurels. Yet, Pulakeshi's story is such as to illustrate the futility of war. Pulakeshi fought a battle with the Pallava king Mahendravarman I, in which the latter was defeated and killed. This in turn led to Narasimhavarman I, son of Mahendravarman I, taking revenge on Pulakeshi. In this second encounter with the Pallavas, Pulakeshi was defeated and killed.

The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang has left us an account of his travels in Pulakeshi's kingdom. He says, ".....the people, who are tall of stature and have a stern and vindictive character, are honest and simple, are grateful to their benefactors and ruthless to their enemies." We have depicted Pulakeshi's relationship with his uncle Mangalesha, in the light of the latter part of this statement.

OUR NEXT TITLE :

December, 15, 1987

MAHABHARATA—34

THE SLAYING OF ABHIMANYU

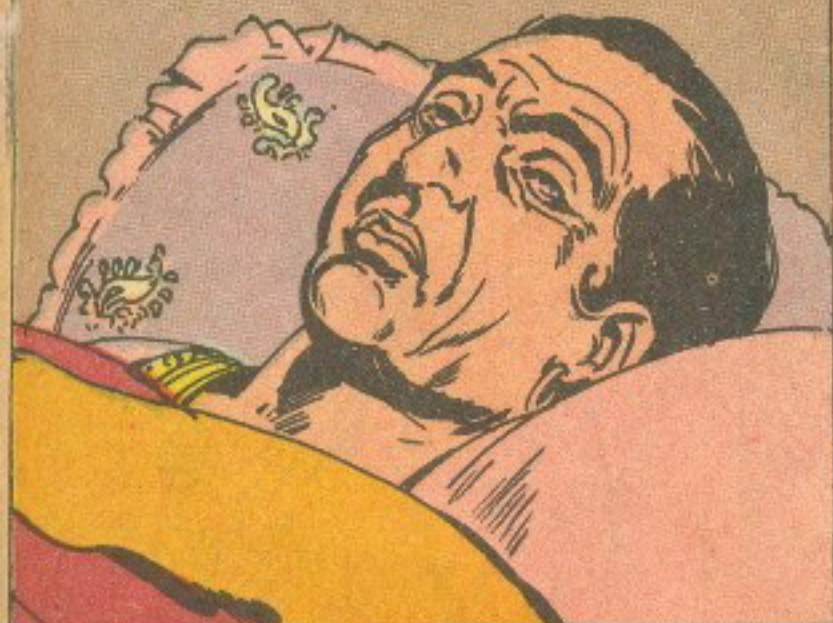
Pulakeshi-II



IN THE SIXTH CENTURY A.D., VATAPI* WAS THE FORTIFIED CAPITAL OF THE EARLY WESTERN CHALUKYAS. IT WAS FOUNDED BY THE MIGHTY KING PULAKESHI I. HE, AND AFTER HIS DEATH, HIS SON KEERTIVARMAN I, HAD DONE MUCH TO BUILD IT INTO A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS EMPIRE.

BUT NOW, KEERTIVARMAN LAY DYING.

SO MANY DREAMS LEFT UNFULFILLED... MY THREE YOUNG SONS... MY PULAKESHI... WHAT WILL BECOME OF HIM?

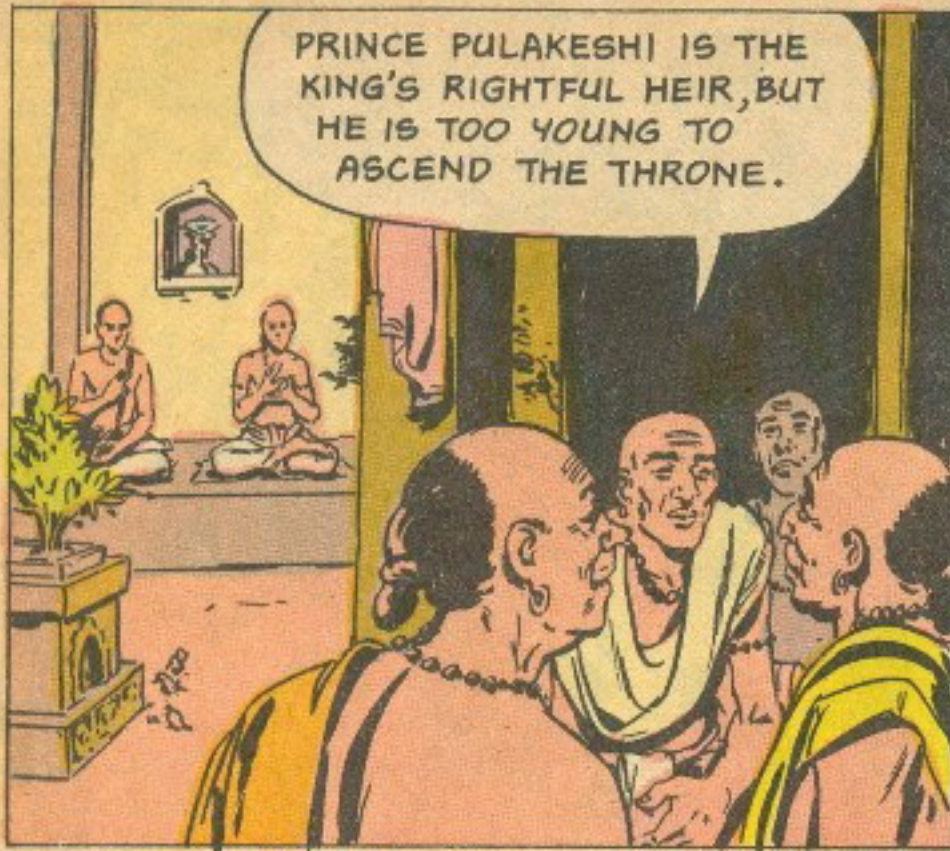


PULAKESHI, HIS ELDEST SON, WAS ONLY FIVE WHEN KEERTIVARMAN DIED.



* MODERN BADAMI IN KARNATAKA

PRINCE PULAKESHI IS THE KING'S RIGHTFUL HEIR, BUT HE IS TOO YOUNG TO ASCEND THE THRONE.



A REGENT WILL PROBABLY BE APPOINTED FOR THE PRINCE. IT WILL NATURALLY BE HIS UNCLE, MANGALESHA.



MANGALESHA WAS KEERTIVARMAN'S YOUNGER BROTHER.

MY BELOVED BROTHER DIED WORRYING ABOUT HIS SONS.



I WILL TREAT THEM LIKE MY OWN SONS.



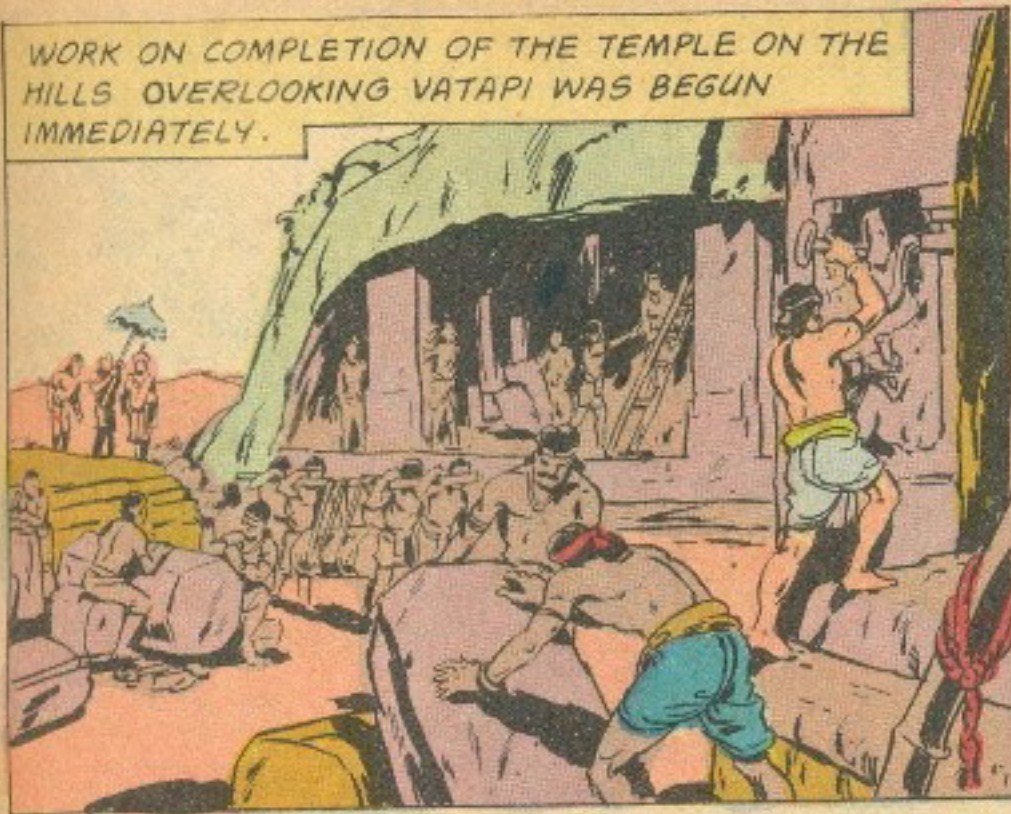
SOON, WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE MINISTERS, MANGALESHA ASCENDED THE THRONE AS REGENT TO PULAKESHI.



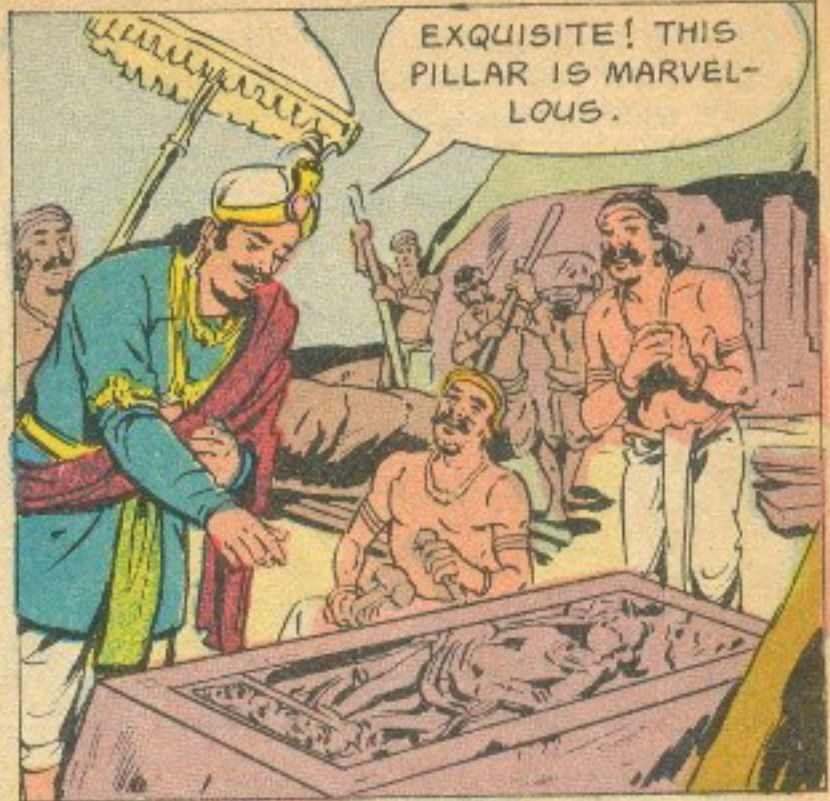
MY FIRST DUTY IS TO COMPLETE THE VISHNU TEMPLE LEFT UNFINISHED BY MY BROTHER.



WORK ON COMPLETION OF THE TEMPLE ON THE HILLS OVERLOOKING VATAPI WAS BEGUN IMMEDIATELY.



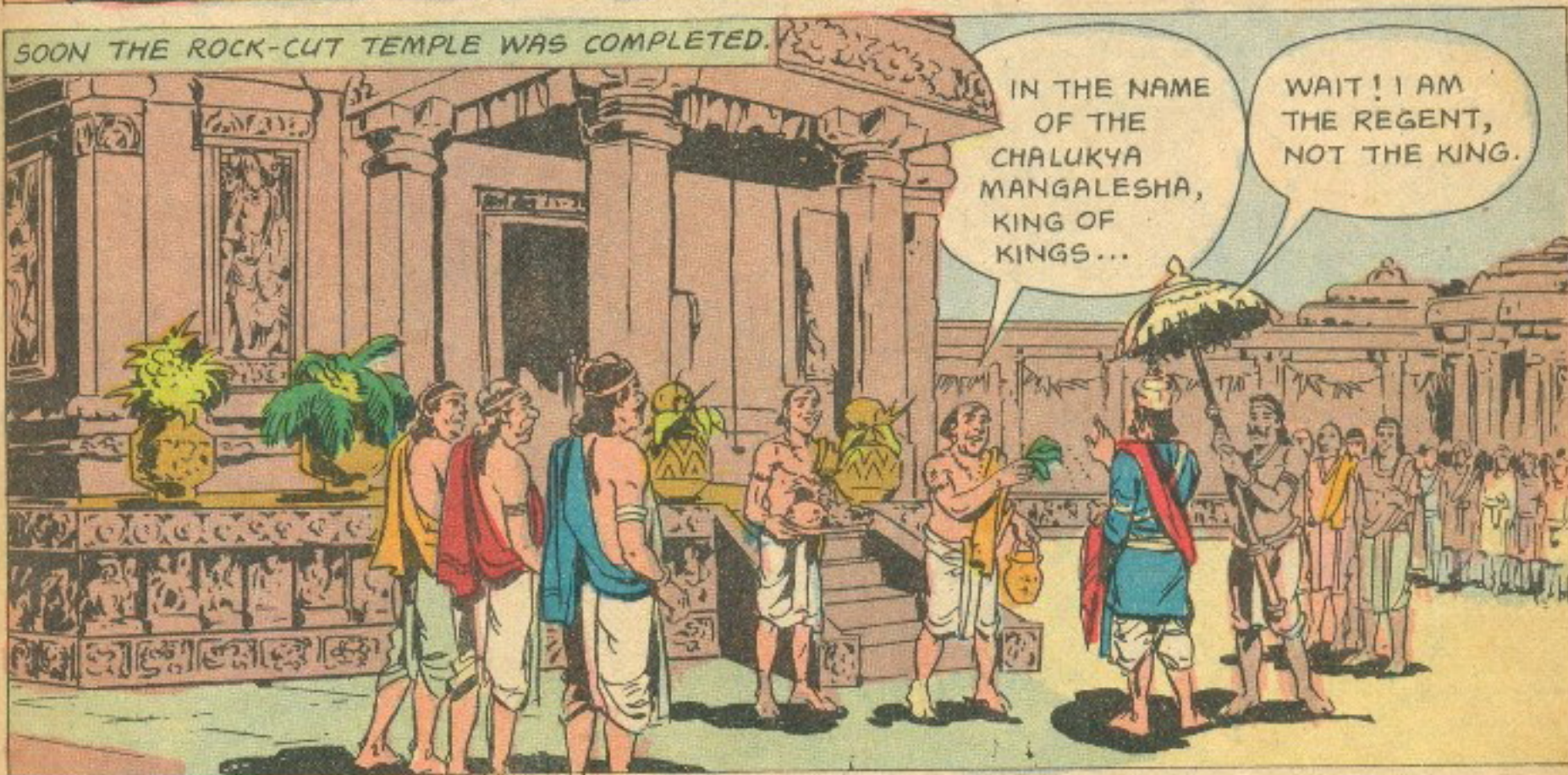
EXQUISITE! THIS PILLAR IS MARVELOUS.



SOON THE ROCK-CUT TEMPLE WAS COMPLETED.

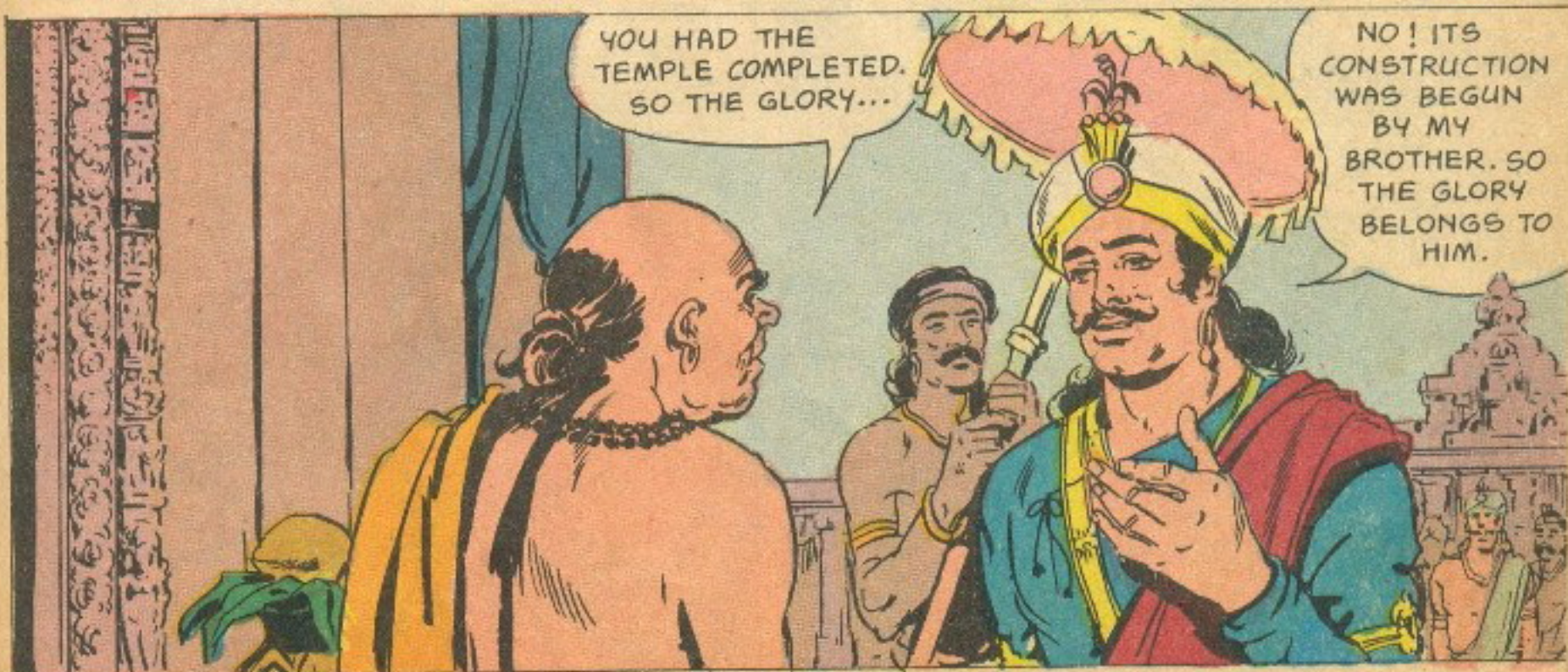
IN THE NAME OF THE CHALUKYA MANGALESHA, KING OF KINGS...

WAIT! I AM THE REGENT, NOT THE KING.



YOU HAD THE TEMPLE COMPLETED. SO THE GLORY...

NO! ITS CONSTRUCTION WAS BEGUN BY MY BROTHER. SO THE GLORY BELONGS TO HIM.



MANGALESHA THEN APPOINTED PANDITS TO TEACH LITTLE PULAKESHI AND PREPARE HIM TO TAKE OVER THE REINS OF THE KINGDOM.

A KING MUST ALWAYS LOOK TO THE WELL-BEING OF HIS SUBJECTS. HE MUST BE LIKE A PARENT TO THEM.



OH! IT'S THE KING HIMSELF ARRIVING.

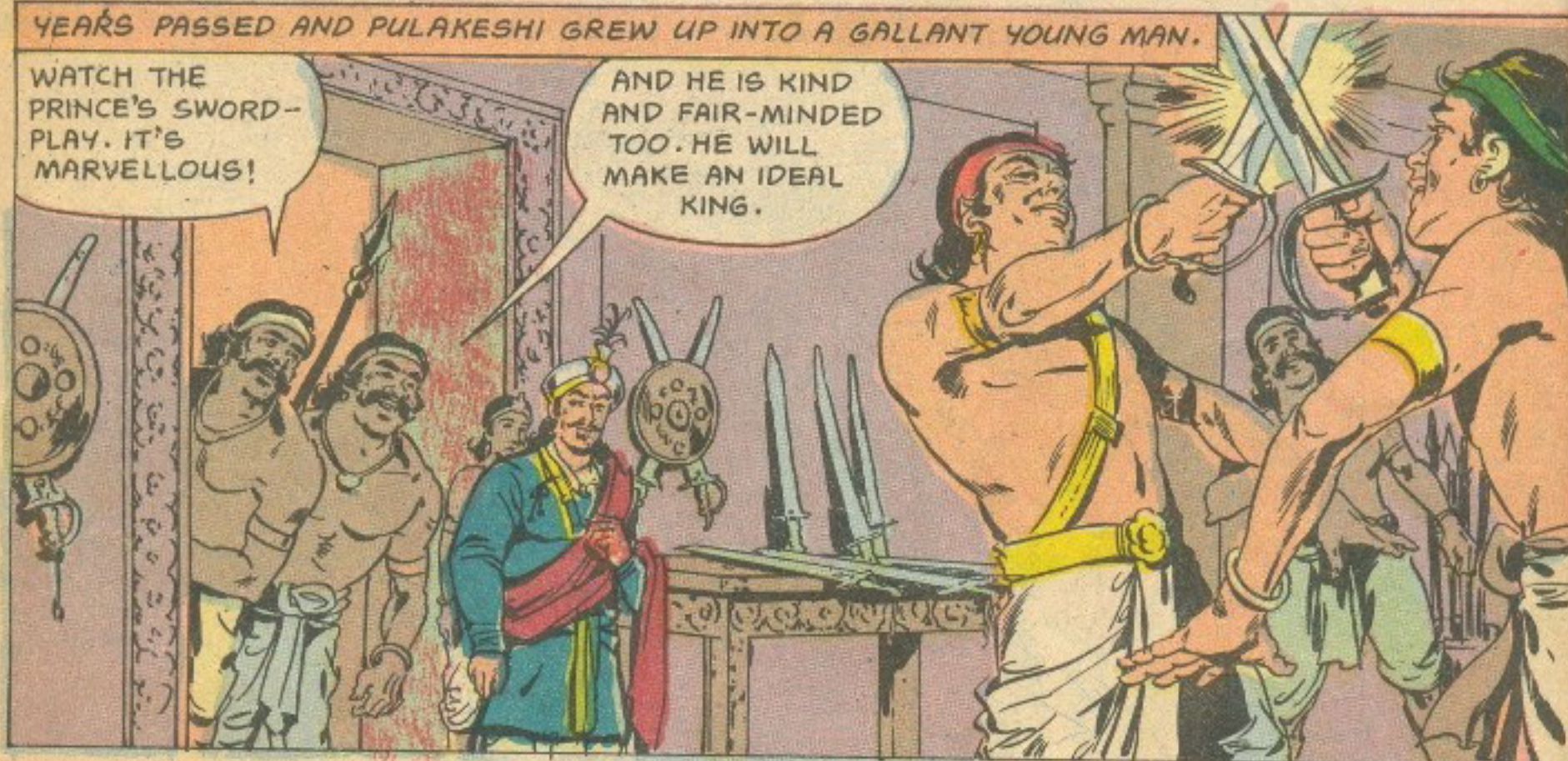
REGENT, NOT KING. PLEASE CONTINUE, SIR. I'VE COME TO SEE HOW YOUR PUPIL IS GETTING ON.



YEARS PASSED AND PULAKESHI GREW UP INTO A GALLANT YOUNG MAN.

WATCH THE PRINCE'S SWORD-PLAY. IT'S MARVELLOUS!

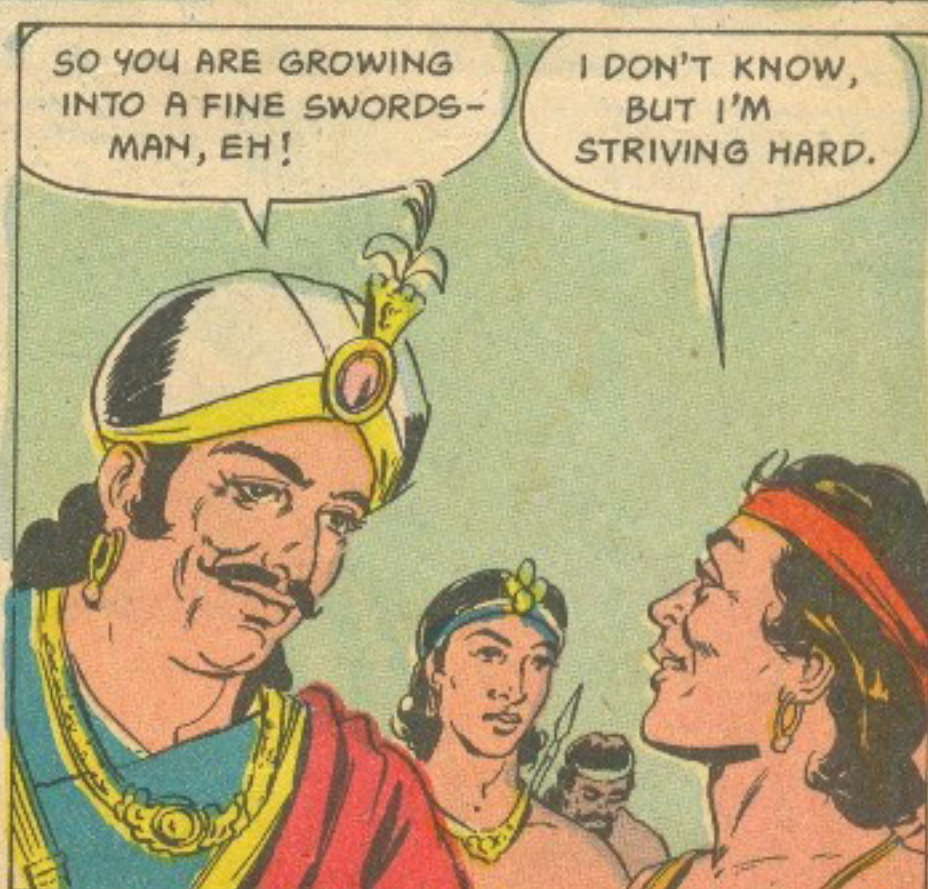
AND HE IS KIND AND FAIR-MINDED TOO. HE WILL MAKE AN IDEAL KING.

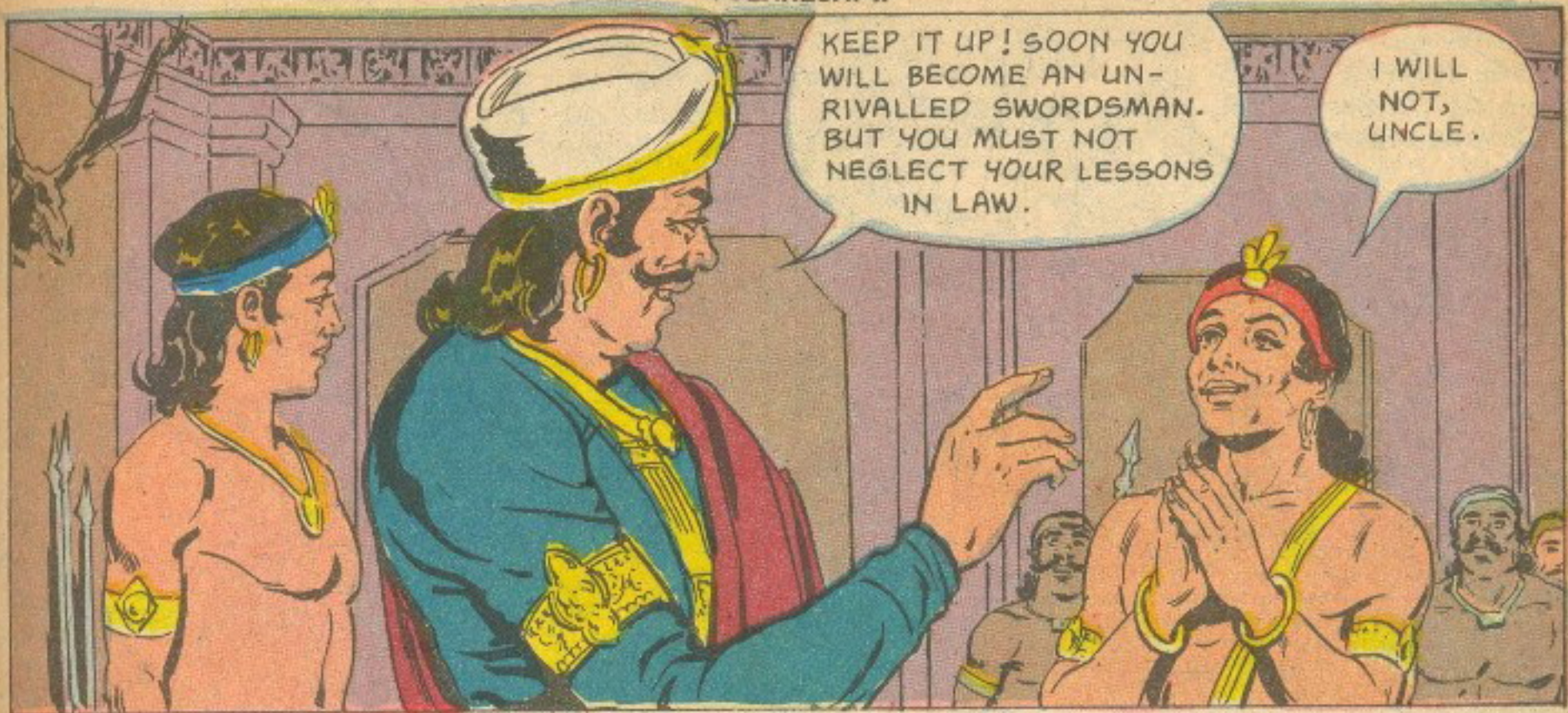


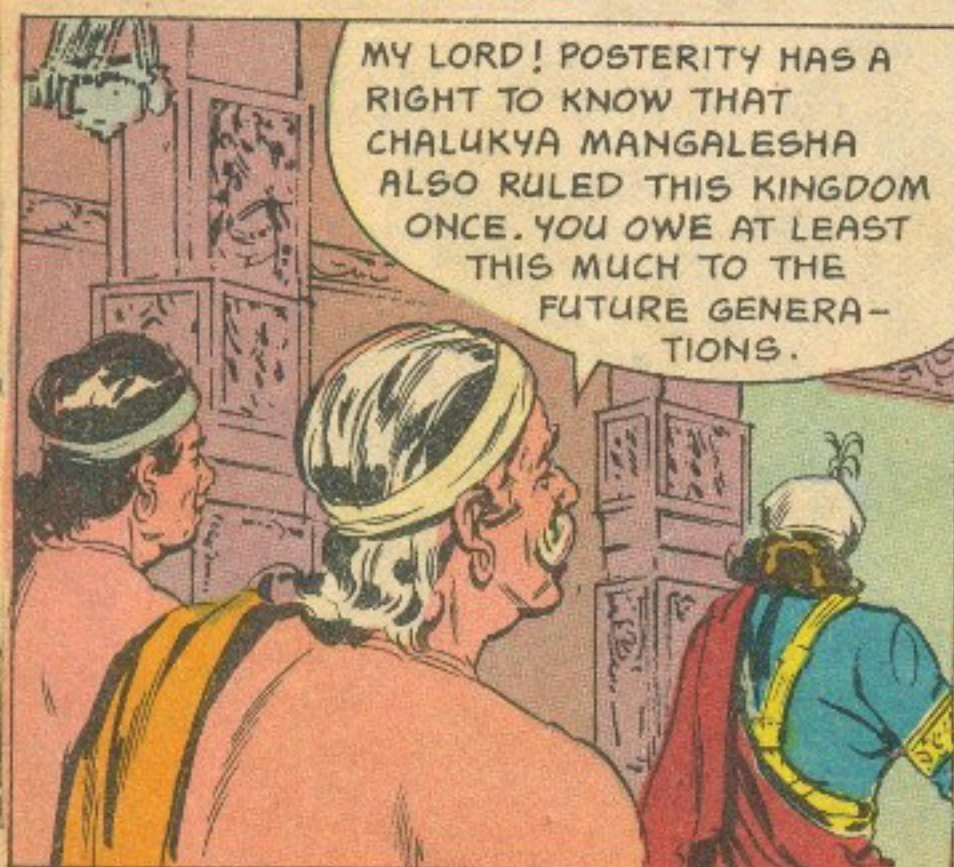
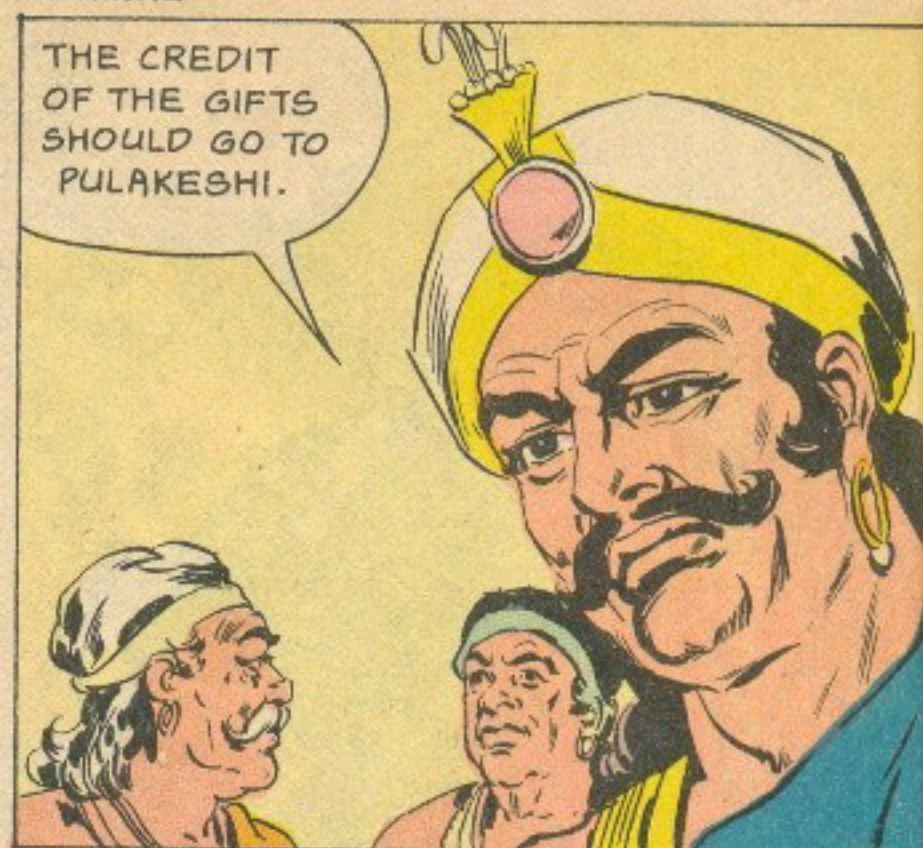
UNCLE!

SO YOU ARE GROWING INTO A FINE SWORDS-MAN, EH!

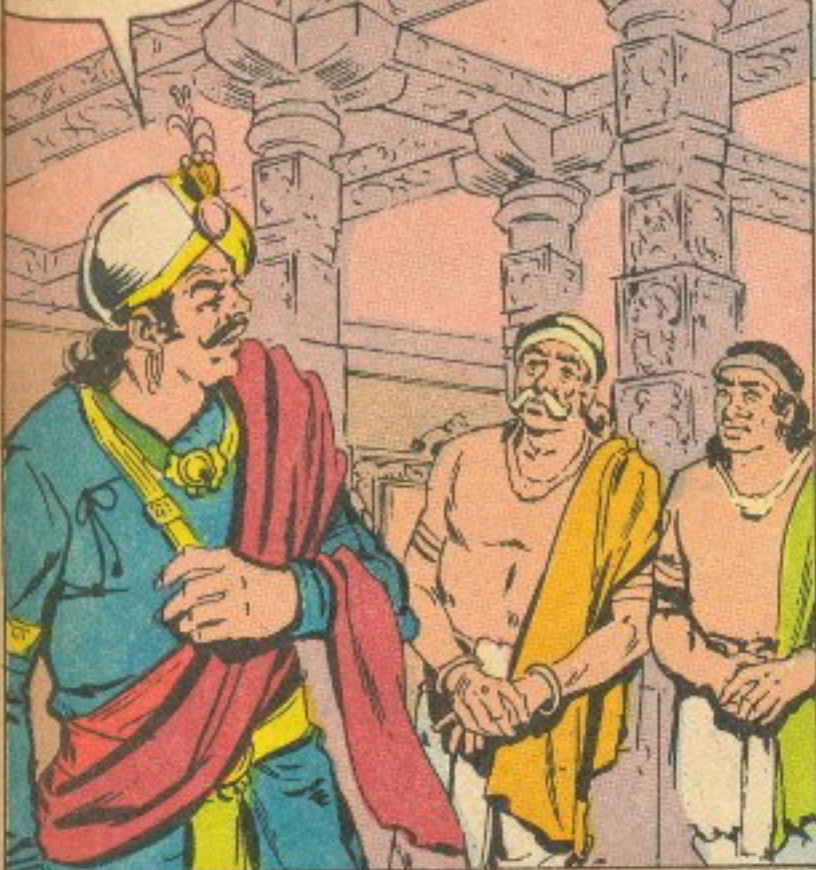
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M STRIVING HARD.







AND SEND THE GENERAL TO ME. THE NEIGHBOURING KING HAS BEEN CREATING TROUBLE. HE MUST BE TAUGHT A LESSON.



EVERY KING WITH WHOM HE FOUGHT HAD TO GIVE IN TO MANGALESHA.

YOU HAVE DEFEATED ALL THE NEIGHBOURING KINGS IN BATTLE, MAHARAJ.

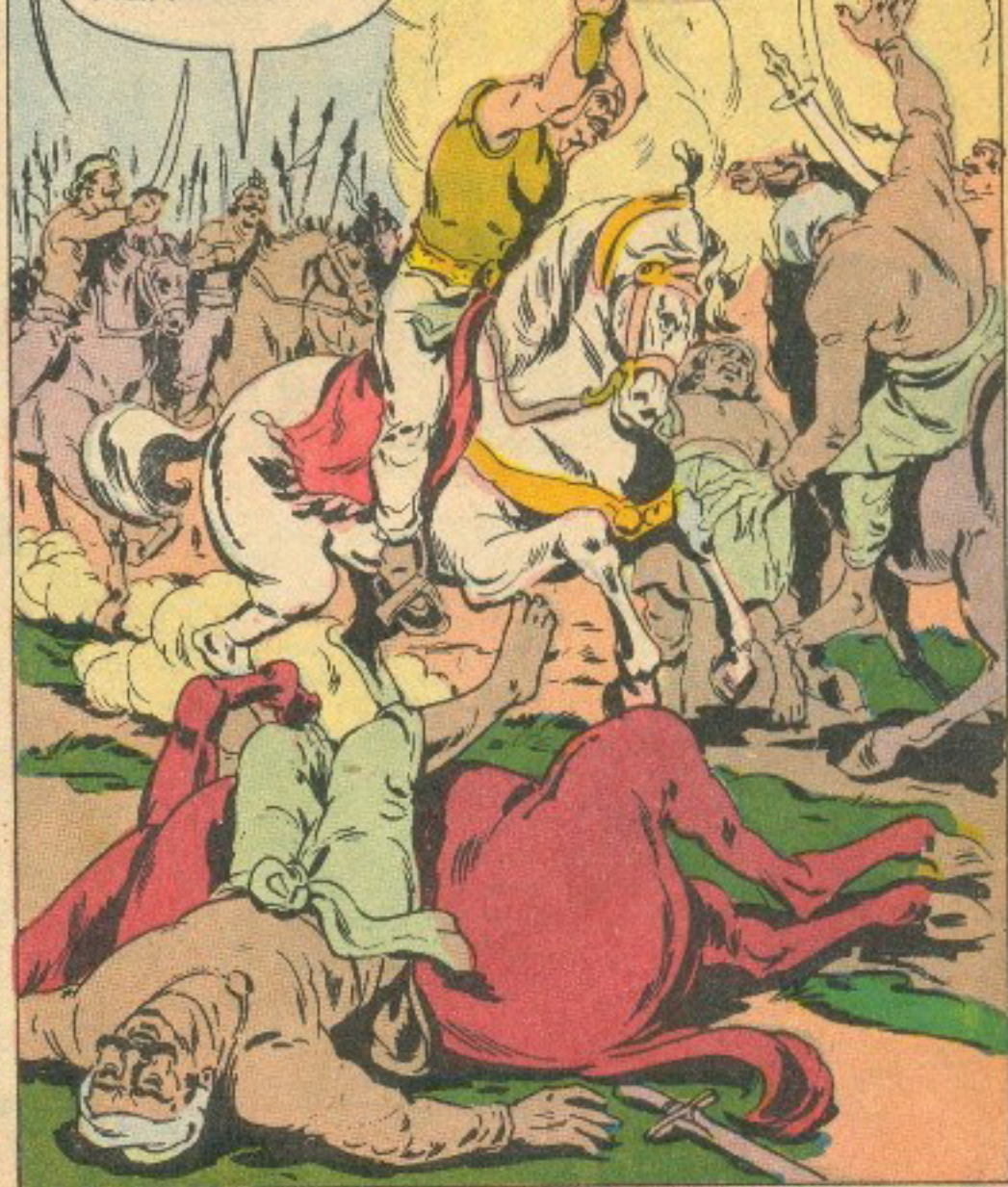
MY AMBITION NOW IS TO LEAD AN EXPEDITION TO THE SHORES OF THE GANGA AND ERECT A PILLAR OF VICTORY THERE.



MANGALESHA SOON LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND THE CHALUKYA EMPIRE.

LOOK, HOW THE KING FIGHTS.

HE SEEMS POSSESSED, SO FIERCE HE IS.



AND I'M SURE WE WILL DO THAT TOO!!



WHEN MANGALESHA RETURNED TO VATAPI, THERE WAS MUCH REJOICING IN THE CAPITAL. PULAKESHI, NOW 23, JOINED IN THE FESTIVITY.

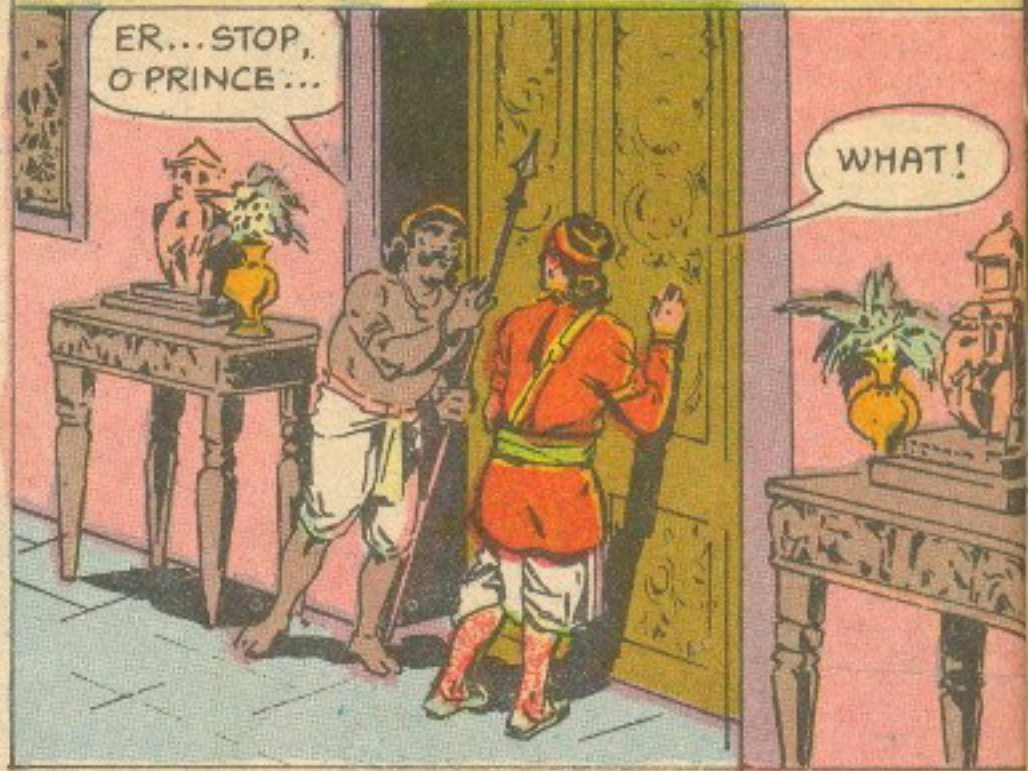
UNCLE HAS BROUGHT GLORY TO THE CHALUKYAS. I WILL GO TO GREET HIM.



WHEN PULAKESHI WENT TO SEE HIS UNCLE —

ER... STOP, O PRINCE...

WHAT!



THE KING IS A LITTLE ... ER... INDISPOSED TODAY. HE DOES NOT WANT TO SEE ANYONE.



NOT EVEN ME?

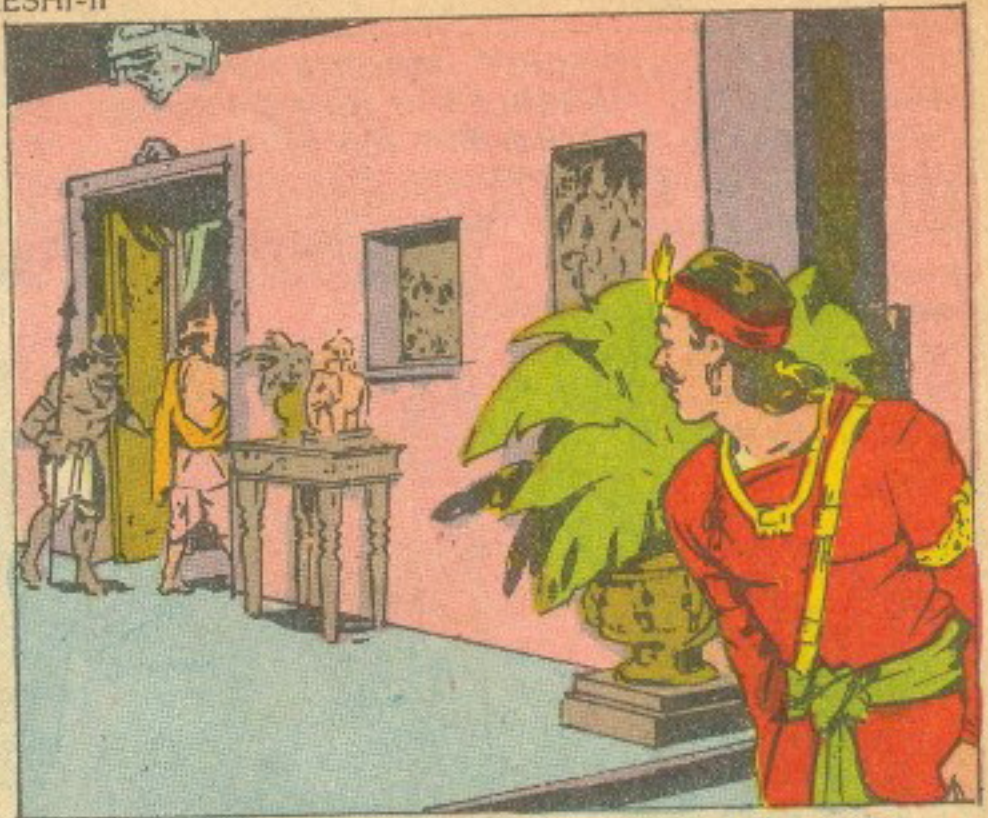


ER... YOU SEE...

IT DOESN'T MATTER! I'LL COME LATER.



OH! IT IS YOU, SIR.
PLEASE GO IN. THE KING
IS EXPECTING YOU.



HE WILL SEE
A MINISTER,
BUT NOT ME?
WHY?



IS UNCLE ANGRY
WITH ME? WHAT
HAVE I DONE?



OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THE CONFUSED HEIR OF THE CHALUKYA THRONE WATCHED A
SUBTLE CHANGE COME OVER THE WHOLE COURT.

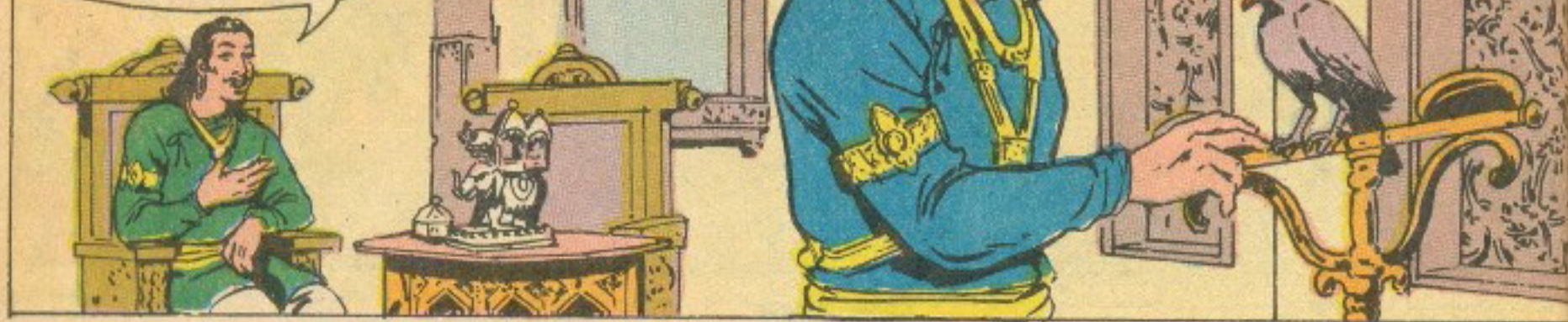
I FEEL EVERYONE IGNORES
ME. EVEN THE GUARDS
SEEM TO MOCK AT ME.
OR AM I IMAGINING
THINGS?



IT WAS NOT PULAKESHI'S IMAGINATION. THE COURTIER'S HAD CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDE TO HIM BECAUSE MANGALESHA HAD CHANGED. FOR POWER HAD GONE TO THE HEAD OF THE ONCE SINCERE AND HONEST MANGALESHA.

FATHER, A RULER IS ONE WHO EARNS HIS KINGSHIP. YOU HAVE TRULY EARNED IT. WITH YOUR WISDOM, LOVE OF JUSTICE AND VALOUR, YOU DESERVE TO BE KING.

YOU ARE RIGHT, SON. WHY SHOULD I BE REGENT? WHY NOT KING? AND SHOULD I NOT DO SOMETHING FOR MY SON?



OH GOD! PULAKESHI HAS BECOME A THORN IN MY FLESH.



AND MANGALESHA TOOK A STEP FROM WHICH THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK.

ONE DAY —

PRINCE!
PRINCE!



O PRINCE! DO NOT WASTE A MOMENT. LEAVE VATAPI AT ONCE.

LEAVE VATAPI? ARE YOU MAD?



YOUR UNCLE IS PLOTTING TO KILL YOU AND KEEP THE THRONE TO HIMSELF AND HIS OWN SON.

NO!

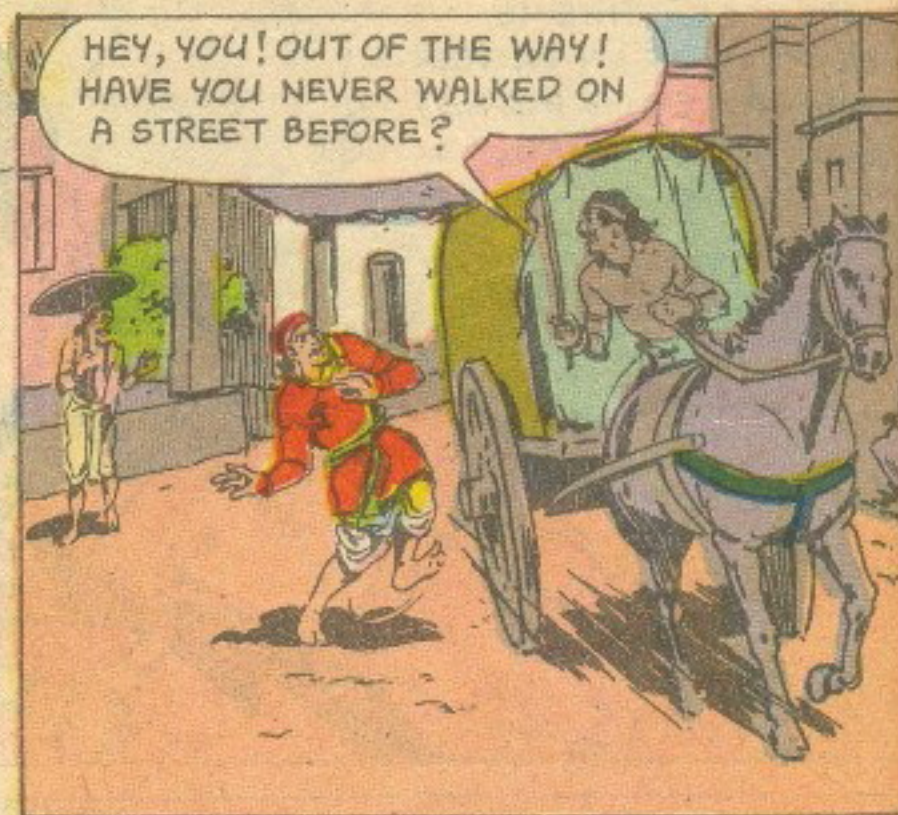
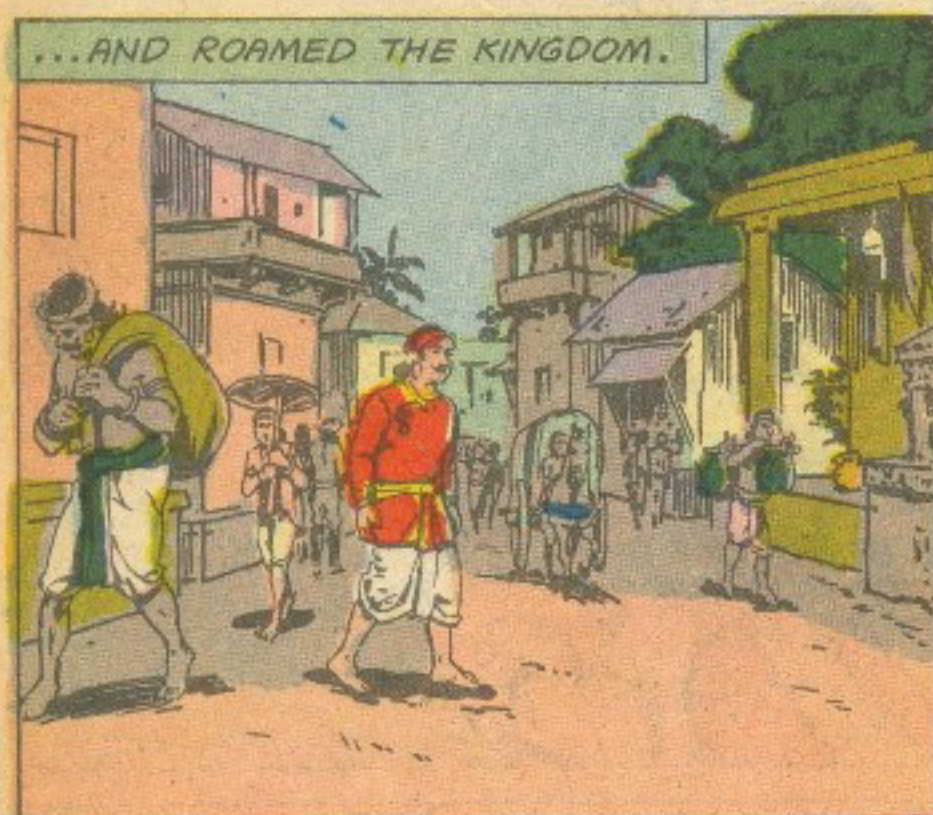
SO THAT IS WHY HE HAS CHANGED. MY UNCLE WHO BROUGHT ME UP LIKE HIS OWN SON—DOING THIS TO ME NOW...

TREASON! THIS IS BETRAYAL OF MY FATHER AND OF ME, HIS ELDEST SON AND RIGHTFUL HEIR.

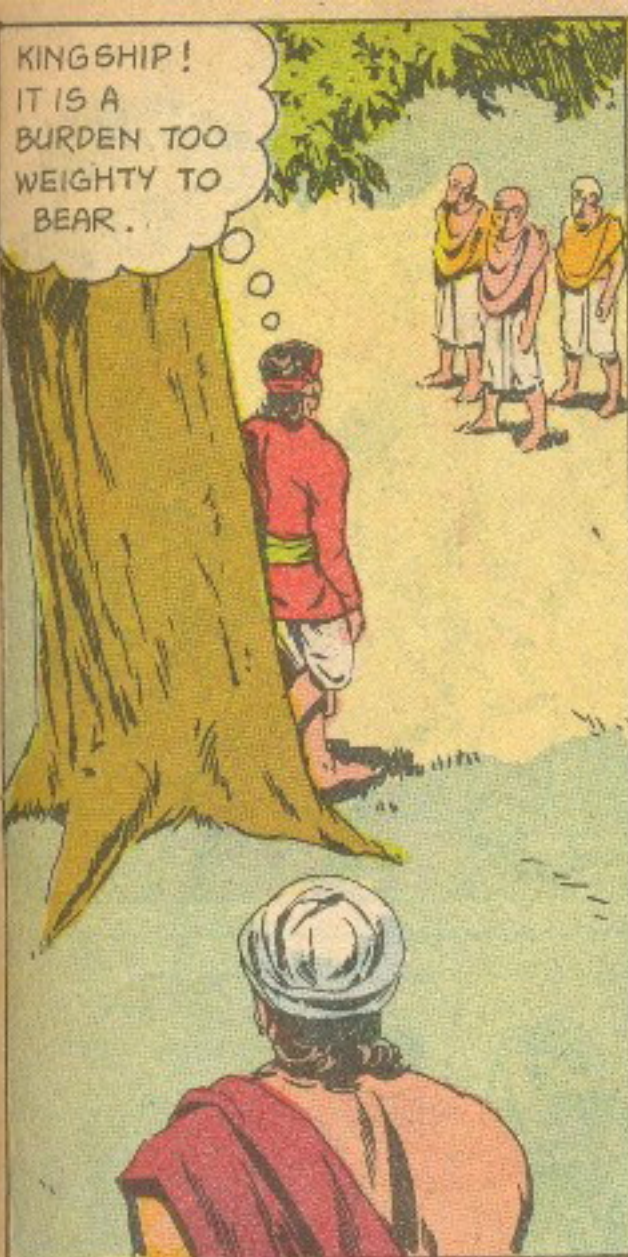
UNCLE... I CANNOT CALL HIM UNCLE NOW... HE IS NO LONGER REGENT... HE IS A TRAITOR... AN ENEMY OF THE STATE AND I WILL DEAL WITH HIM AS SUCH.

BUT LEAVE VATAPI FOR THE TIME BEING. YOU ARE ONE AGAINST MANY HERE.

YES, I WILL FLEE THE PLACE NOW. BUT...



KINGSHIP!
IT IS A
BURDEN TOO
WEIGHTY TO
BEAR.



GOOD DAY,
STRANGER. WHERE
ARE YOU FROM?

I COME FROM
VATAPI.

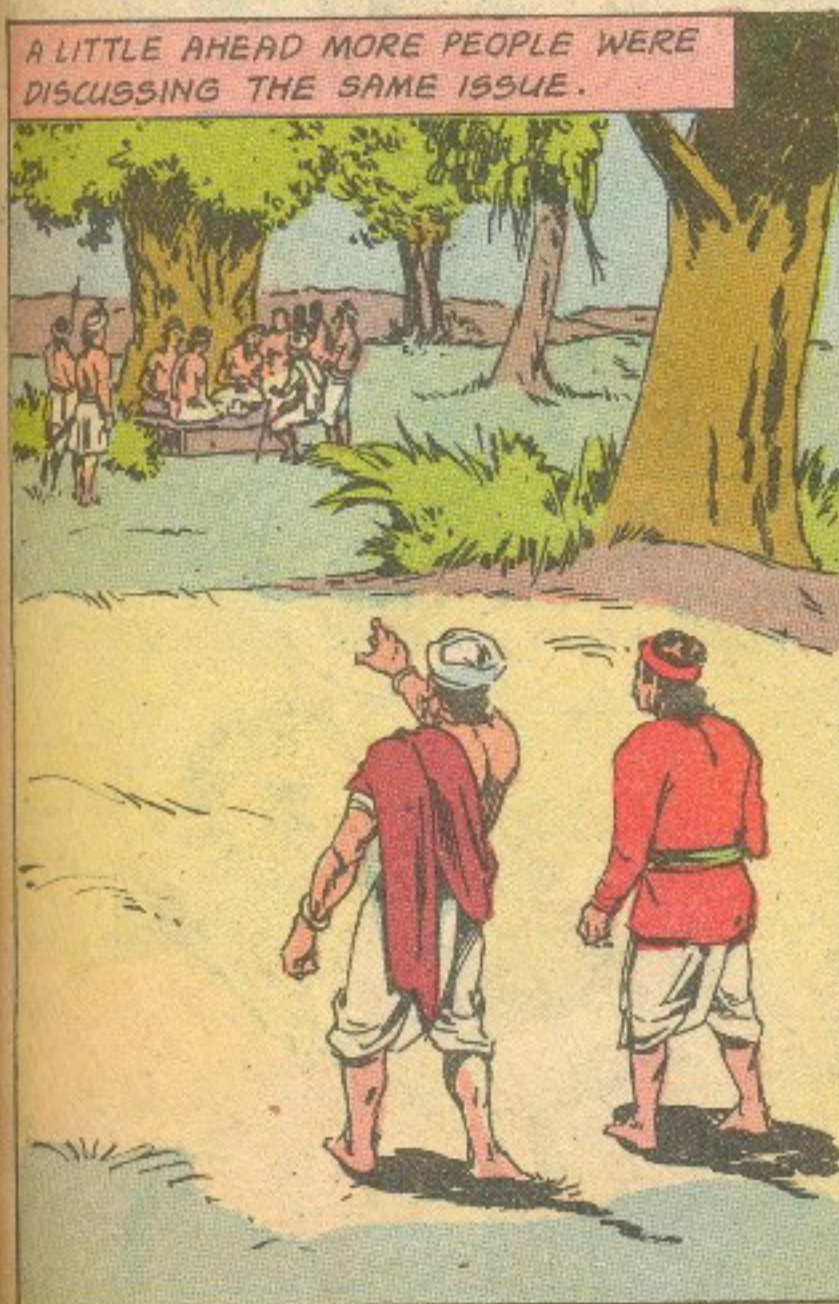


AH! THAT NEST OF
SNAKES! MANGALESHA
WILL NOT GET AWAY
WITH WHAT HE HAS
DONE!

SO THE NEWS
HAS SPREAD!

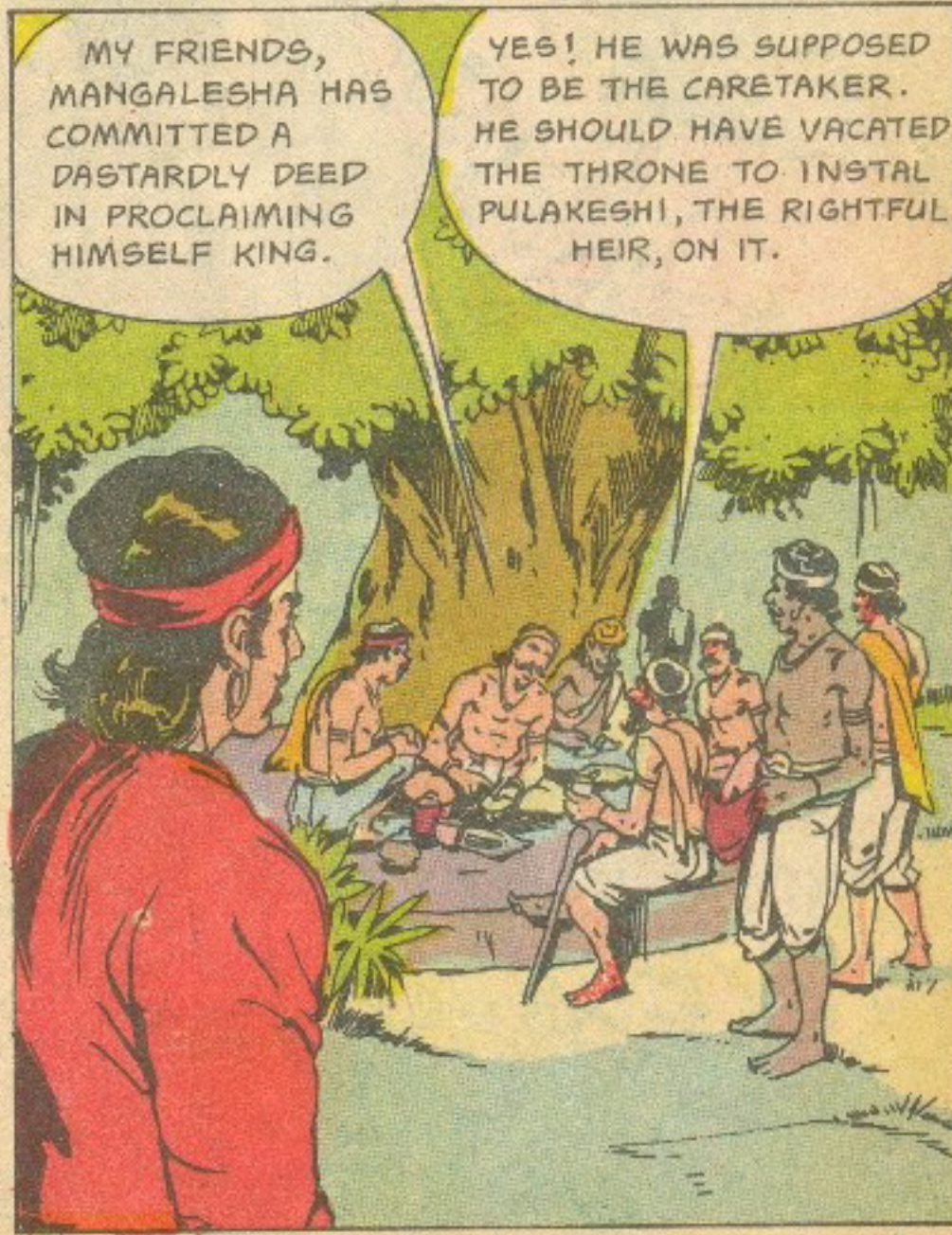


A LITTLE AHEAD MORE PEOPLE WERE
DISCUSSING THE SAME ISSUE.



MY FRIENDS,
MANGALESHA HAS
COMMITTED A
DASTARDLY DEED
IN PROCLAIMING
HIMSELF KING.

YES! HE WAS SUPPOSED
TO BE THE CARETAKER.
HE SHOULD HAVE VACATED
THE THRONE TO INSTAL
PULAKESHI, THE RIGHTFUL
HEIR, ON IT.

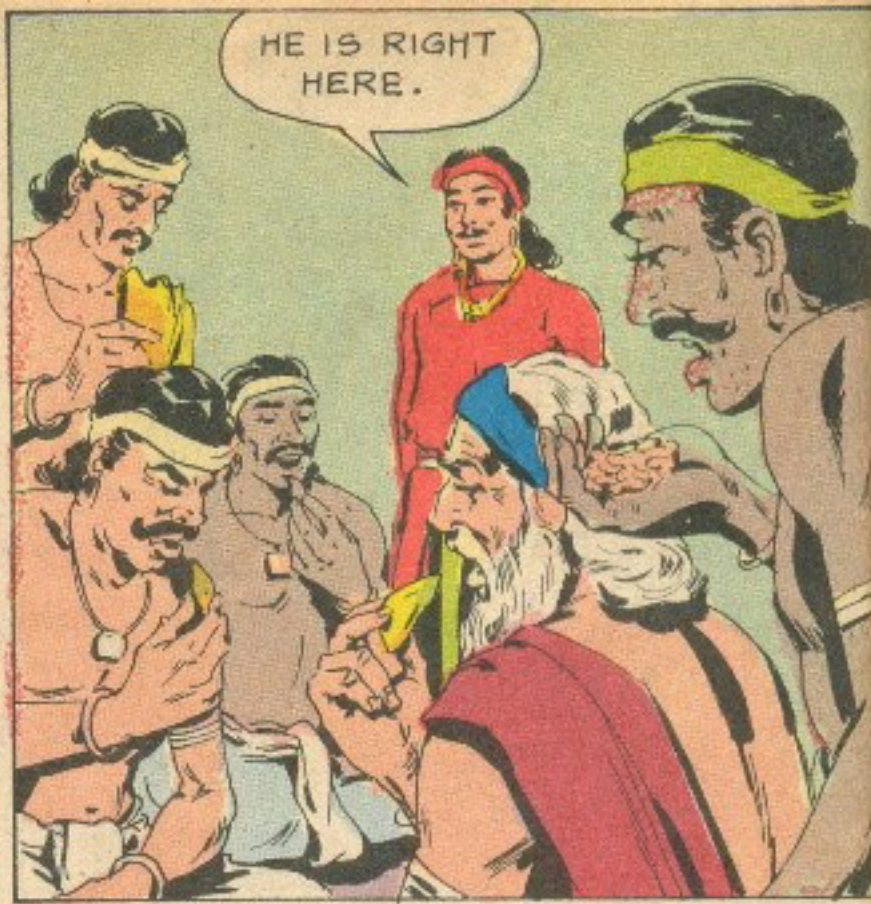


BUT DO ALL PEOPLE FEEL
LIKE THIS ?

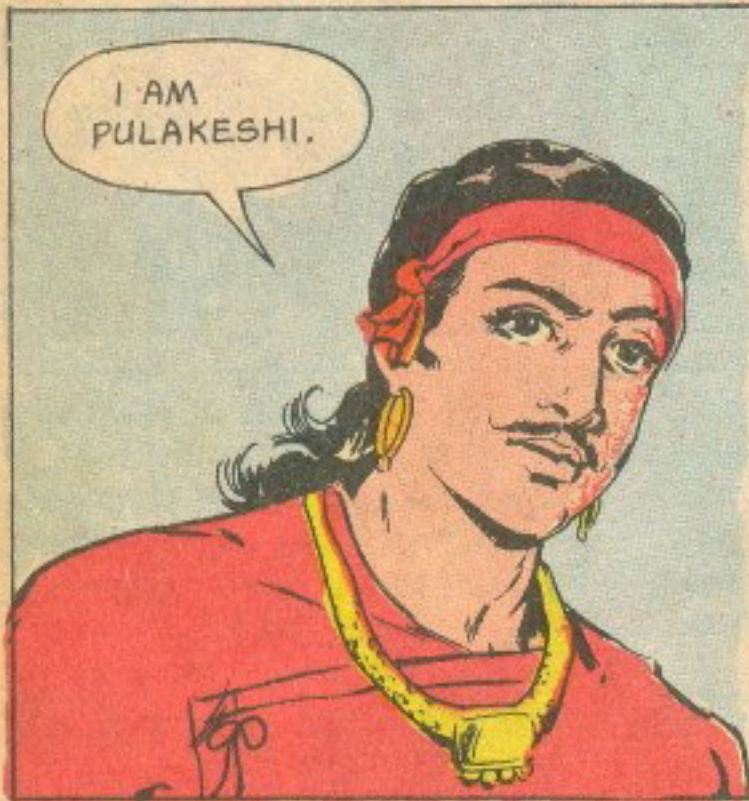
YES, OF COURSE ! EVERY
RIGHT-THINKING CITIZEN WILL
REMAIN LOYAL TO PRINCE PULAKESHI.
I WONDER WHERE OUR UNFORTUNATE
PRINCE IS NOW ?



HE IS RIGHT
HERE.

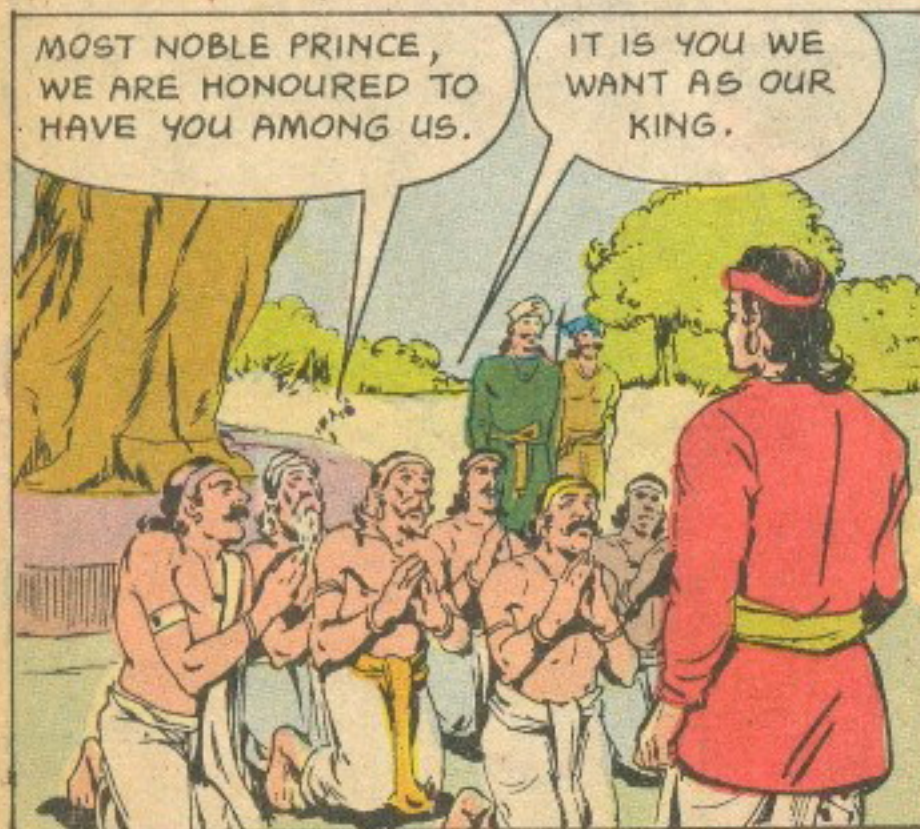


I AM
PULAKESHI.



MOST NOBLE PRINCE,
WE ARE HONOURED TO
HAVE YOU AMONG US.

IT IS YOU WE
WANT AS OUR
KING.



I CANNOT FORGET YOUR
GRANDFATHER, THE FIRST
PULAKESHI, OR YOUR FATHER,
THE NOBLE KEERTIVARMAN.



AND YOU REPRESENT
THEM NOW, YOUNG
PRINCE.

GOOD CITIZENS, I PROMISE YOU
WHEN I REGAIN THE THRONE,
I SHALL NOT FORGET
YOUR LOVE AND LOYALTY.
NEVER!

NOBLE PRINCE, I AM THE COMMANDING
OFFICER OF THE GARRISON POSTED IN
THIS REGION. WE CAN MOBILIZE
OURSELVES WITHIN A DAY'S TIME
TO FIGHT FOR YOU.

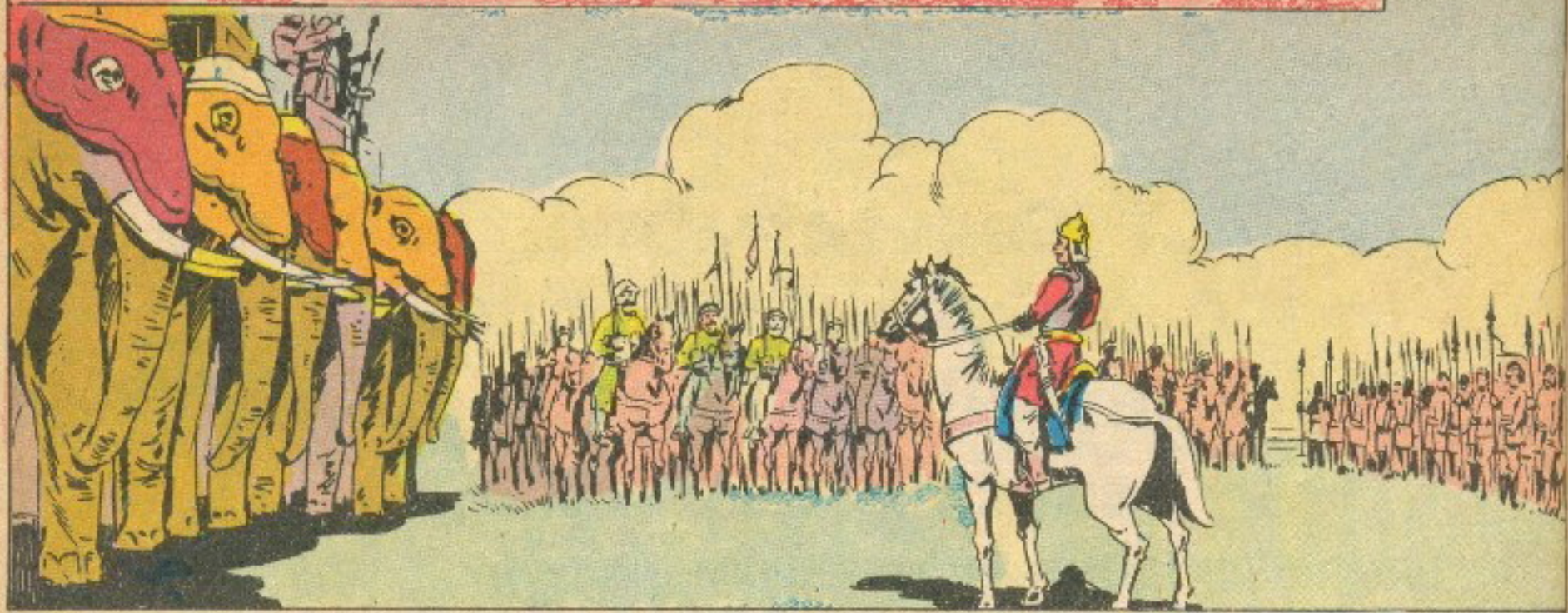
YES, TAKE THE HELP
OF THE ARMY. GET
BACK YOUR THRONE.
BY FORCE.

FORCE! YES, THAT
IS THE ONLY WAY
TO DEAL WITH
THE TRAITOR.

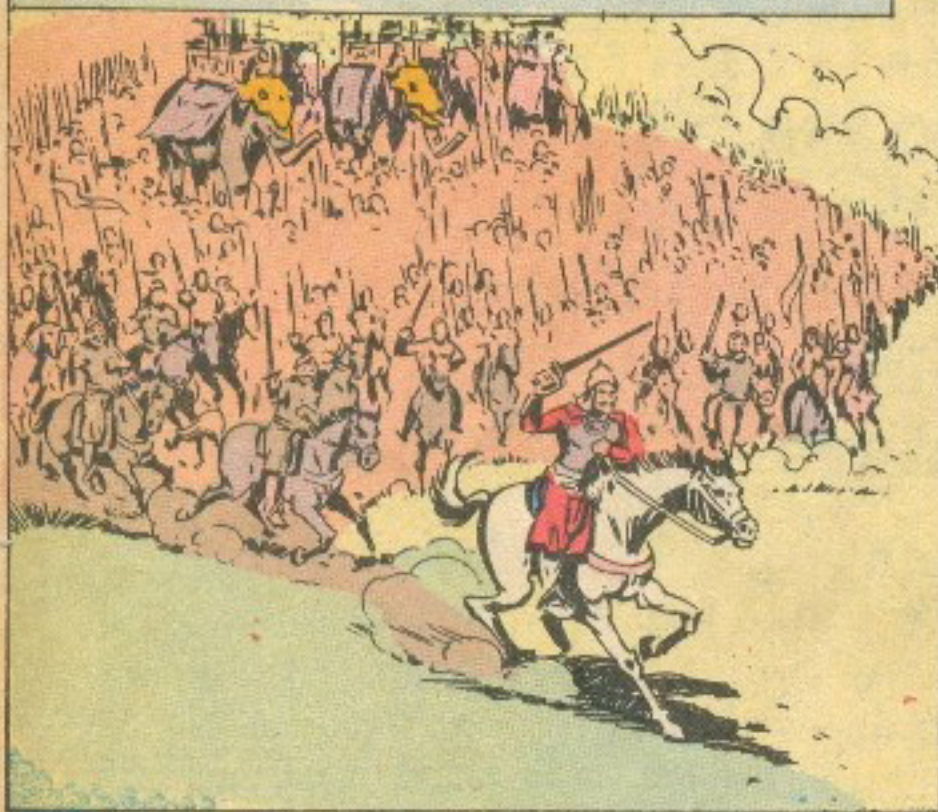
COMMANDER, MOBILIZE YOUR MEN.
BUT MAINTAIN THE GREATEST SECRECY,
AND DO NOTHING TILL I GIVE THE WORD.

AS YOU
COMMAND.

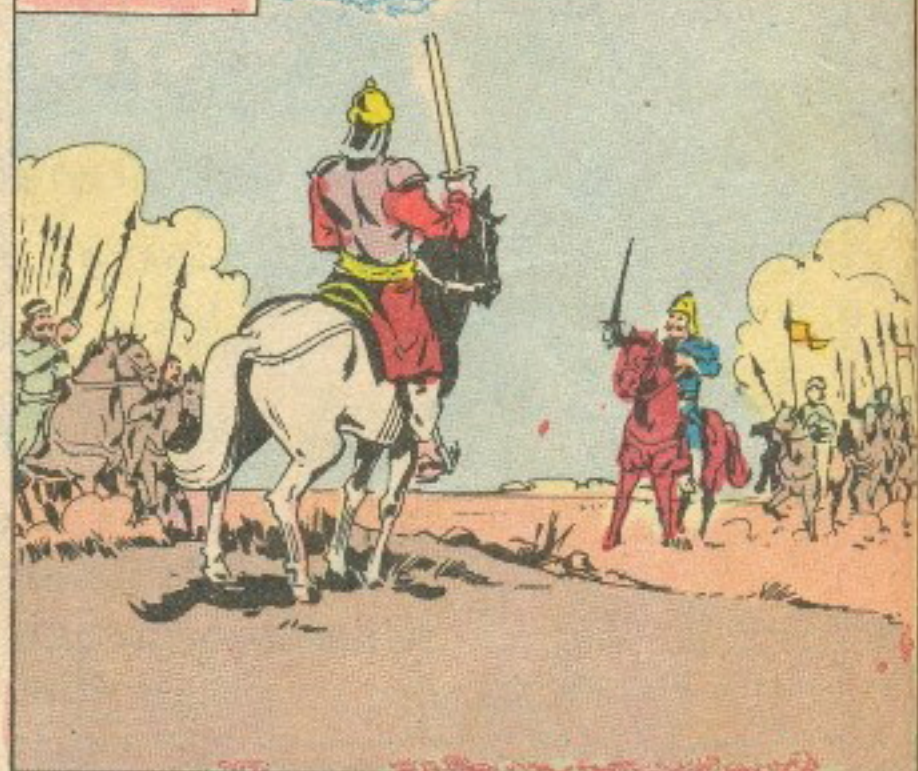
BEFORE LONG PULAKESHI GATHERED TOGETHER A HUGE ARMY OF SUPPORTERS...



... AND LED IT TO THE BATTLEFIELD *



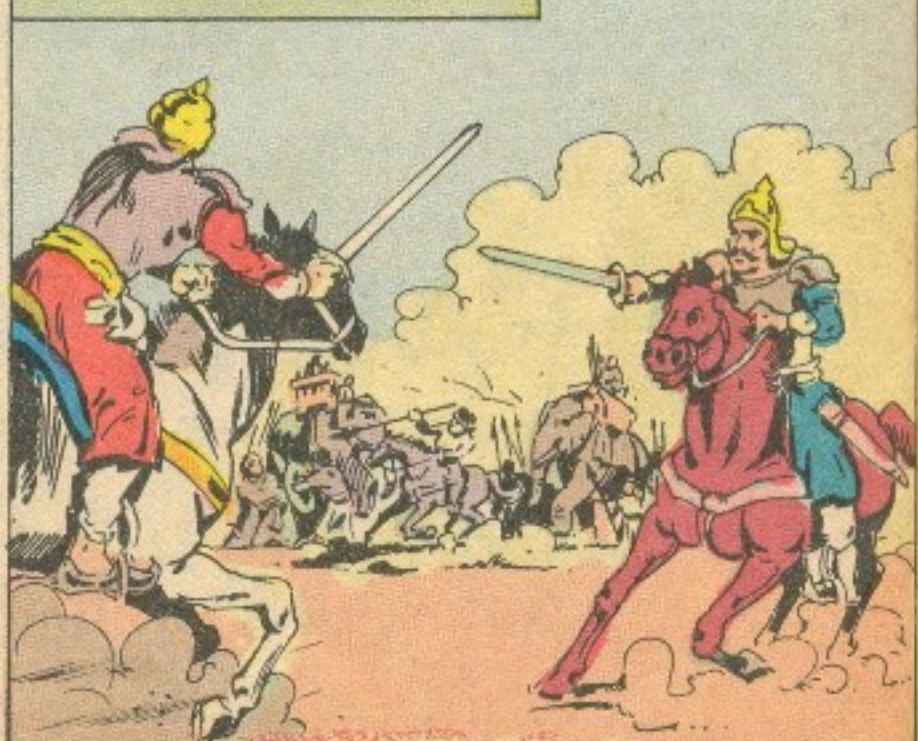
... WHERE NEPHEW AND UNCLE MET FACE TO FACE.



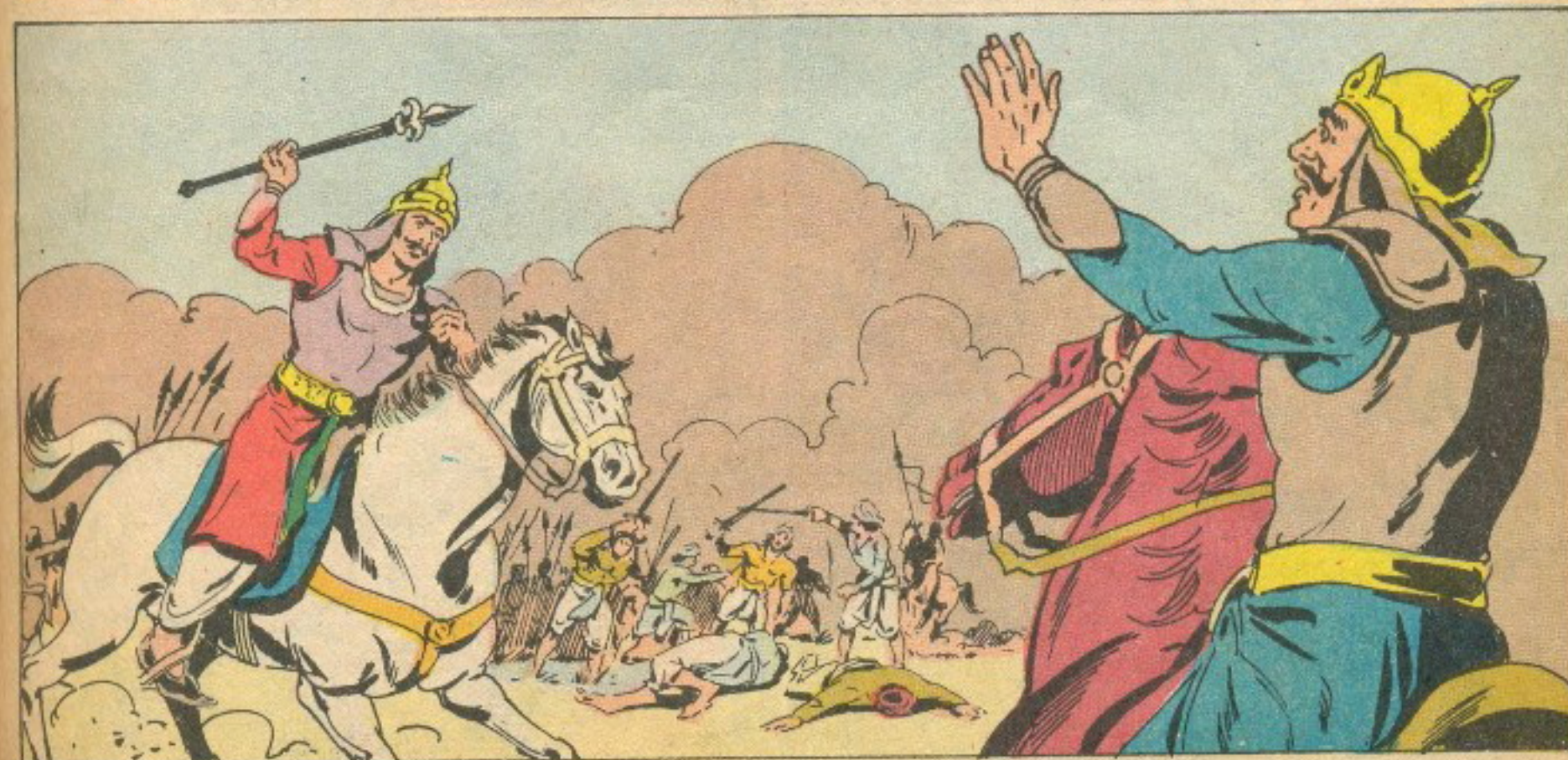
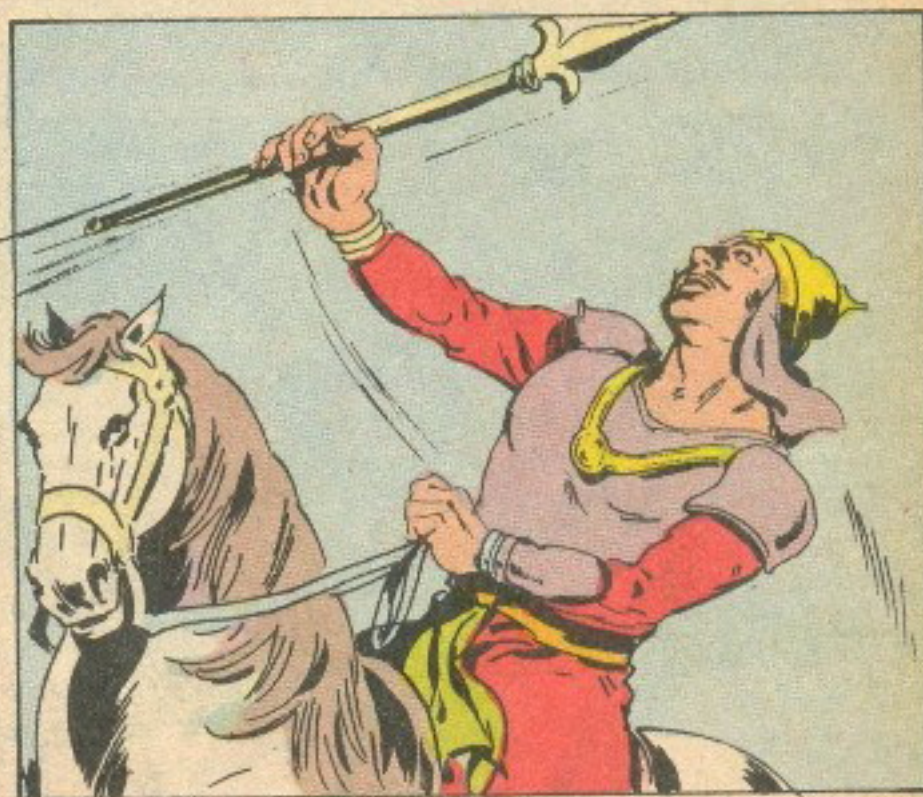
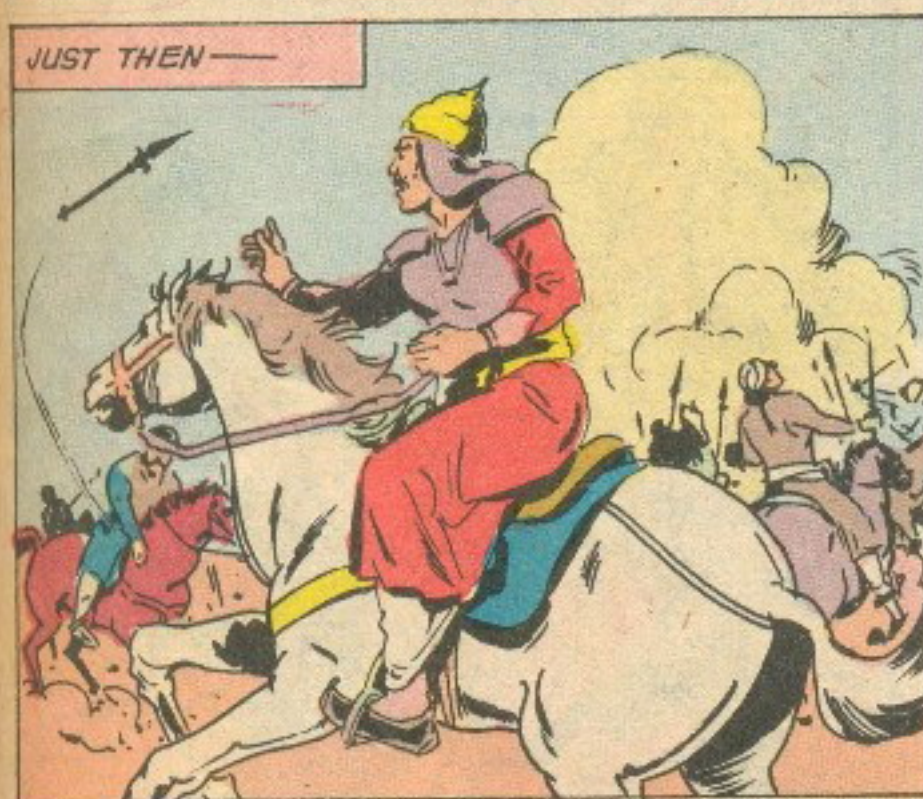
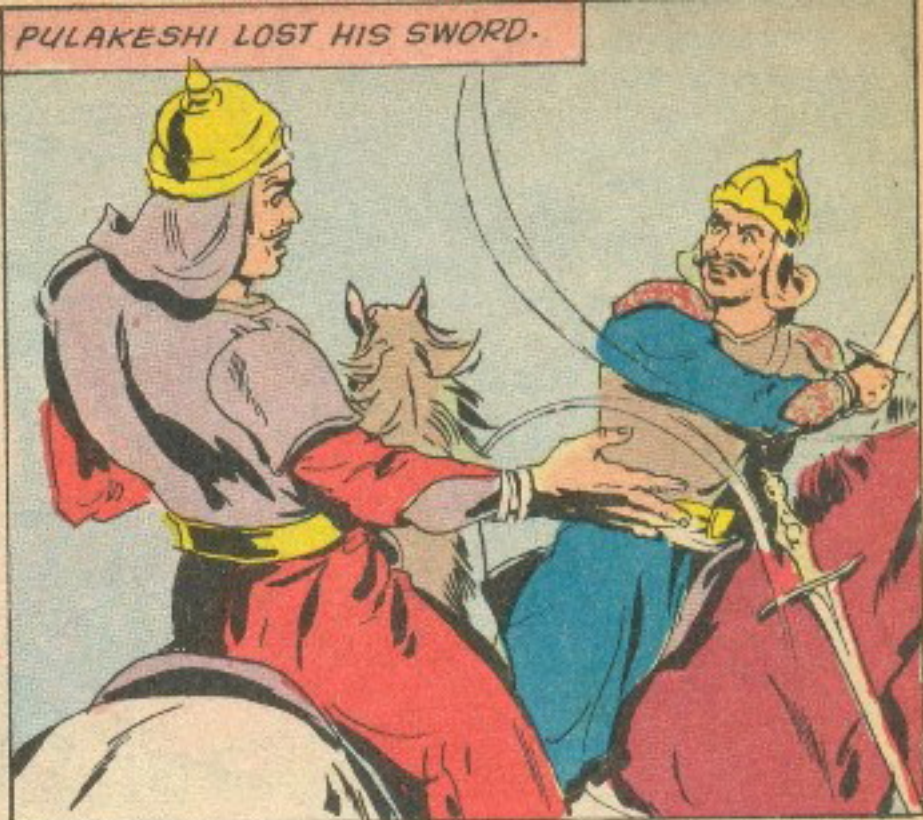
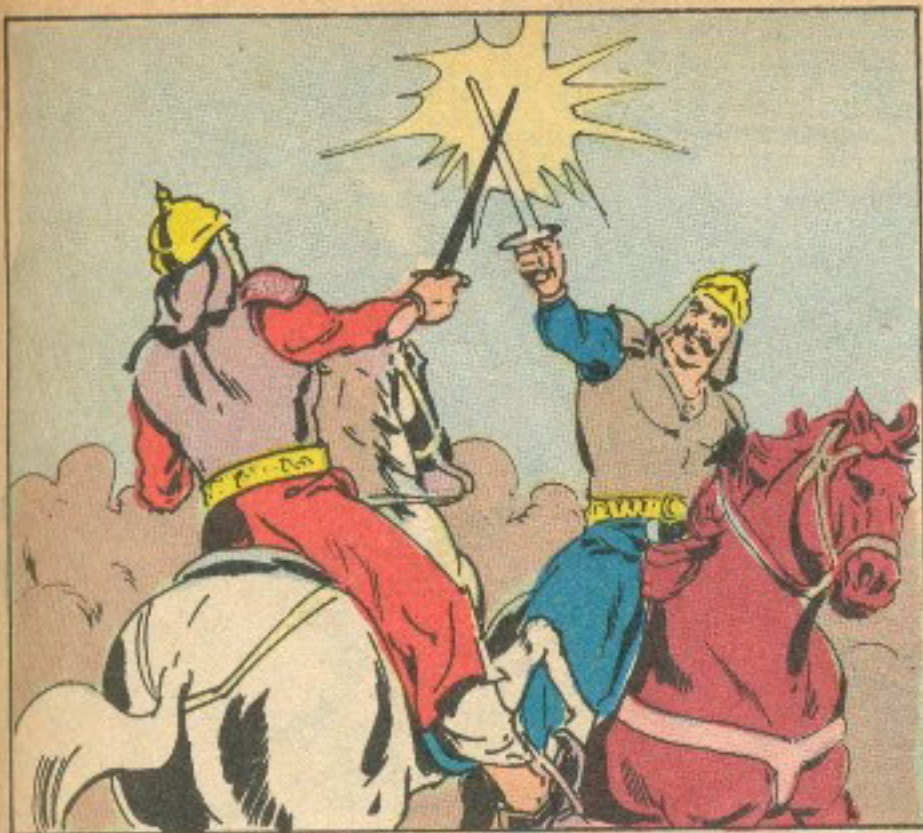
IN THE BLOODY BATTLE THAT FOLLOWED
MANY MEN AND ANIMALS WERE LOST.



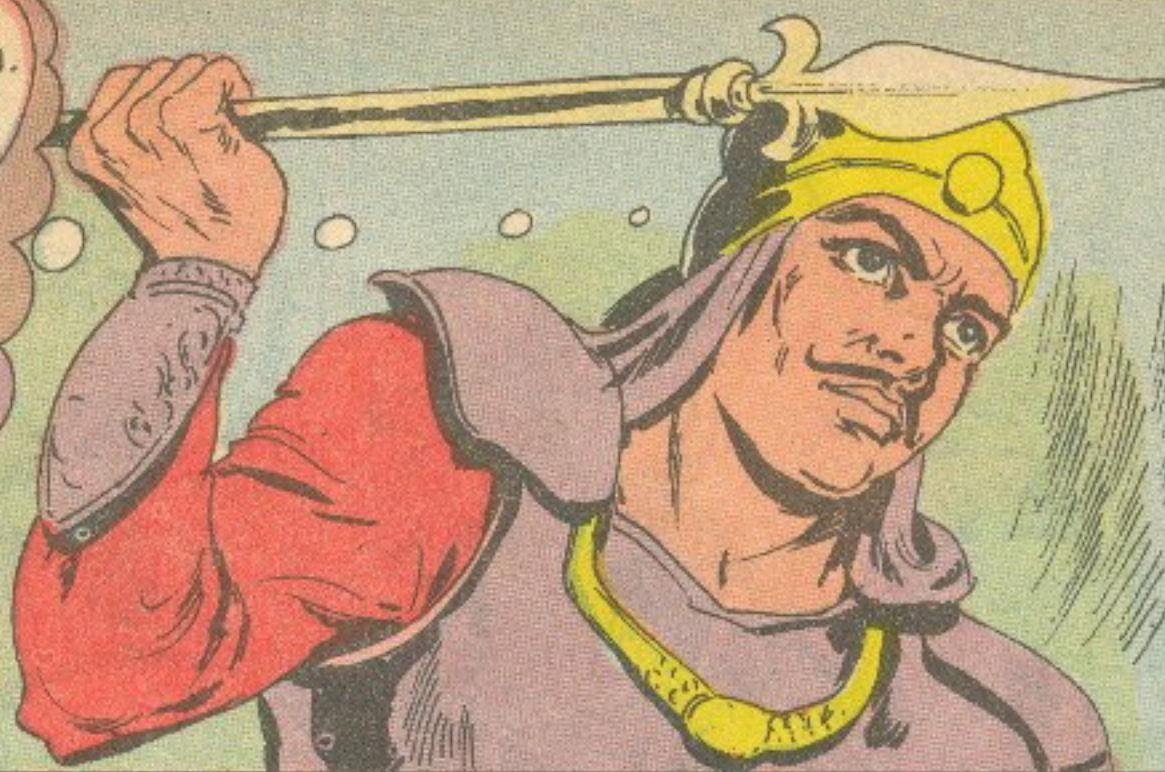
PULAKESHI AND MANGALESHA ADVANCED
TOWARDS EACH OTHER.



* IDENTIFIED IN ANANTPUR DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH



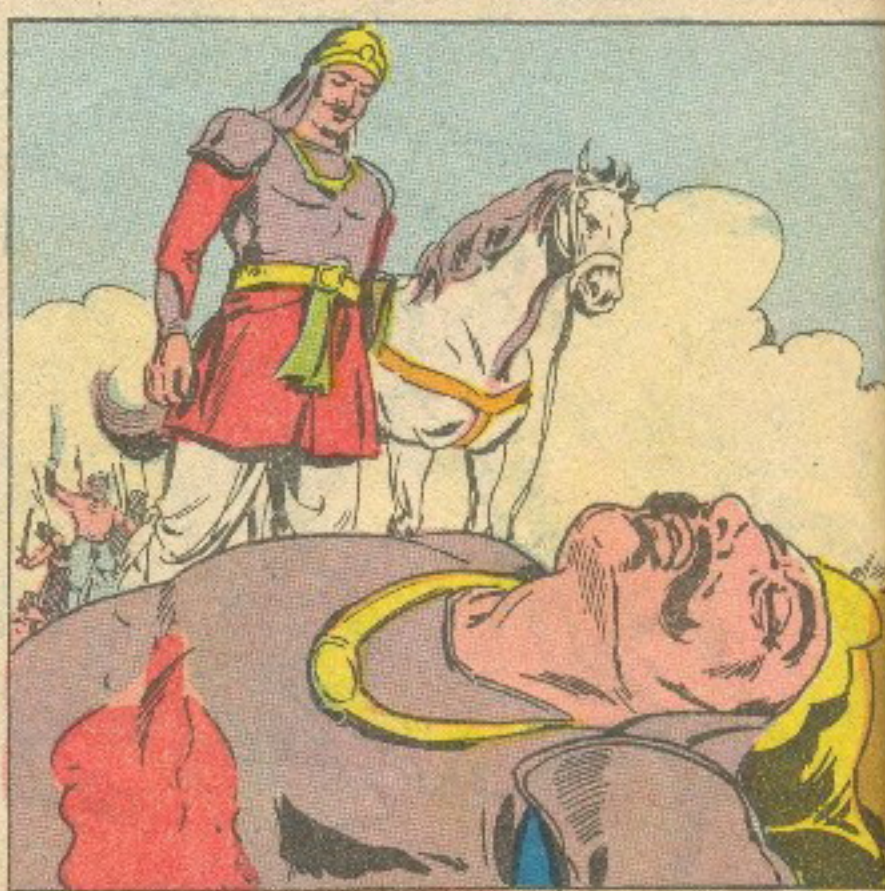
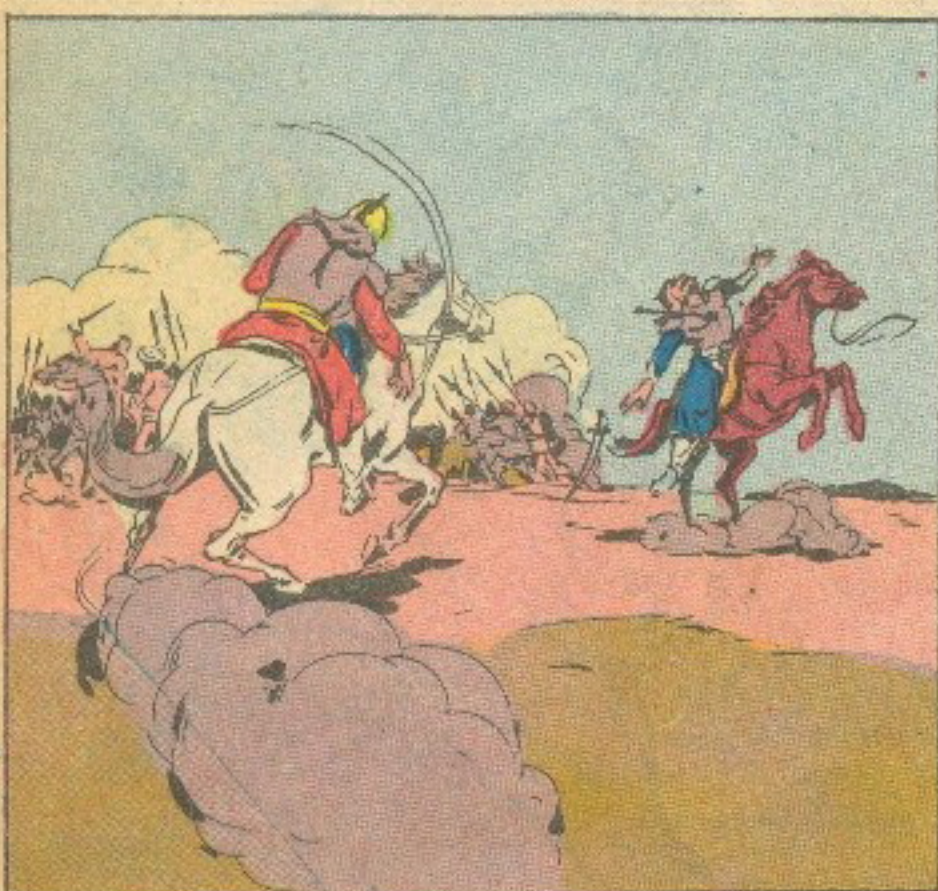
SOON YOU WILL BECOME
AN UNBEATABLE SWORDSMAN.
BUT YOU MUST NOT
NEGLECT YOUR
LESSONS IN LAW.



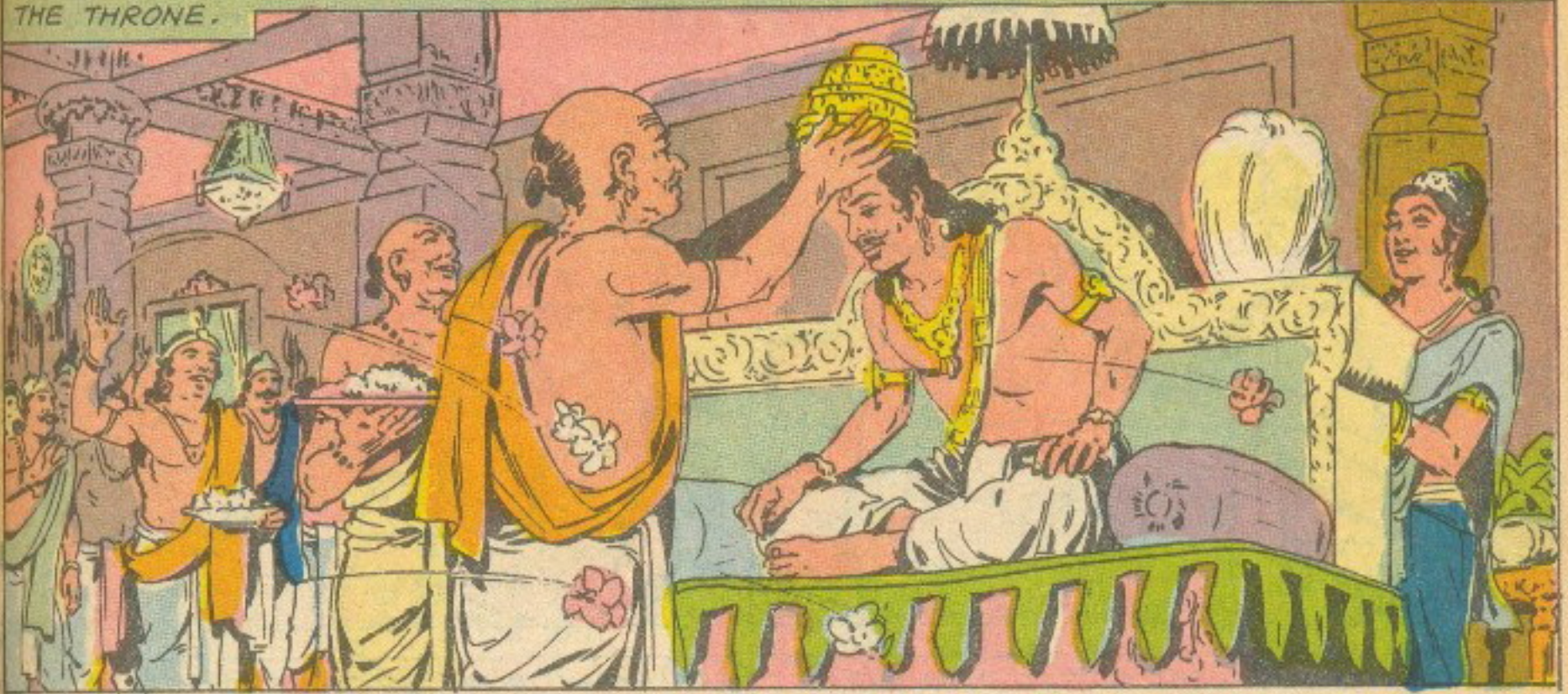
I CANNOT...



BUT I MUST...
I WILL...

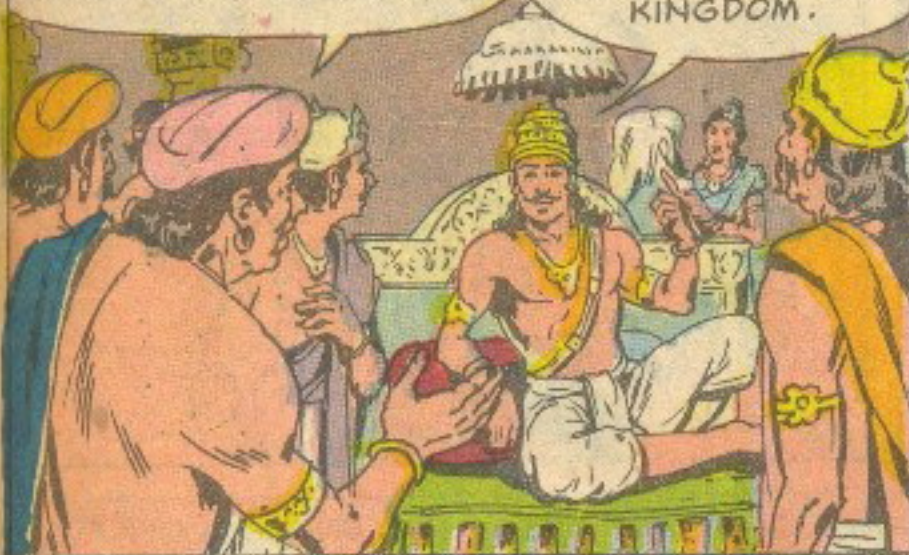


THE RIGHTFUL HEIR WON THE WAR. AND AMID GREAT REJOICING, PULAKESHI II ASCENDED THE THRONE.

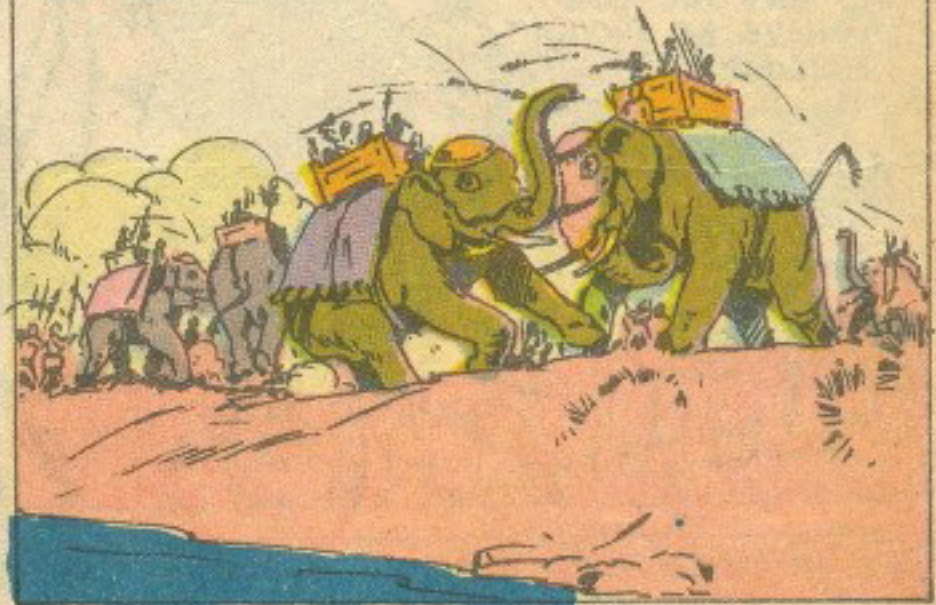


MY LORD, THIS CRIPPLING CIVIL WAR HAS DISRUPTED THE ENTIRE KINGDOM. WE ARE SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES ON ALL SIDES. OUR VASSALS ARE REVOLTING.

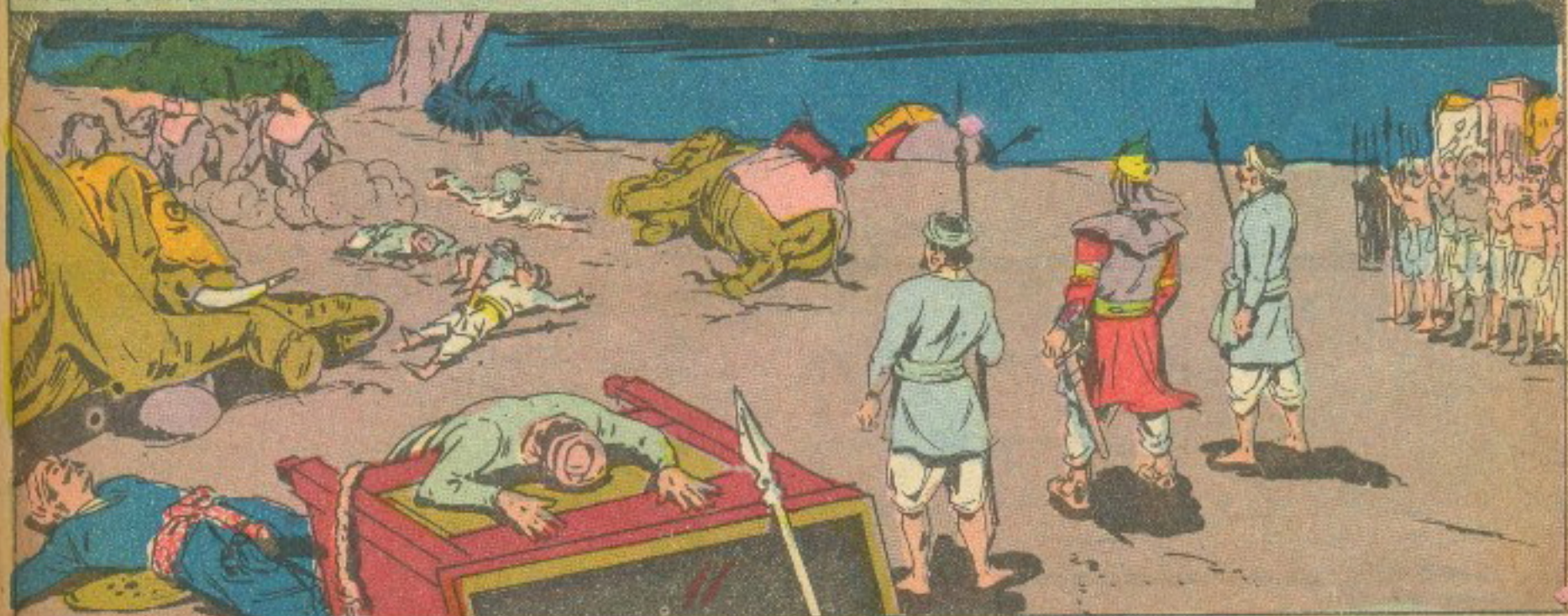
THEY WILL BE DEALT WITH APPROPRIATELY. I WILL BRING BACK PEACE AND STABILITY TO MY KINGDOM.



PULAKESHI SET OUT TO DEAL WITH HIS FOES AND QUELL THE REVOLTS. HE MARCHED FIRST AGAINST THE TWO REBEL CHIEFS APPAYIKA AND GOVINDA.



PULAKESHI BROUGHT THEM TO THEIR KNEES IN A BATTLE ON THE BANKS OF THE BHAIMARTHI* RIVER. IT WAS A BATTLE IN WHICH BOTH SIDES FOUGHT ON ELEPHANT BACKS.

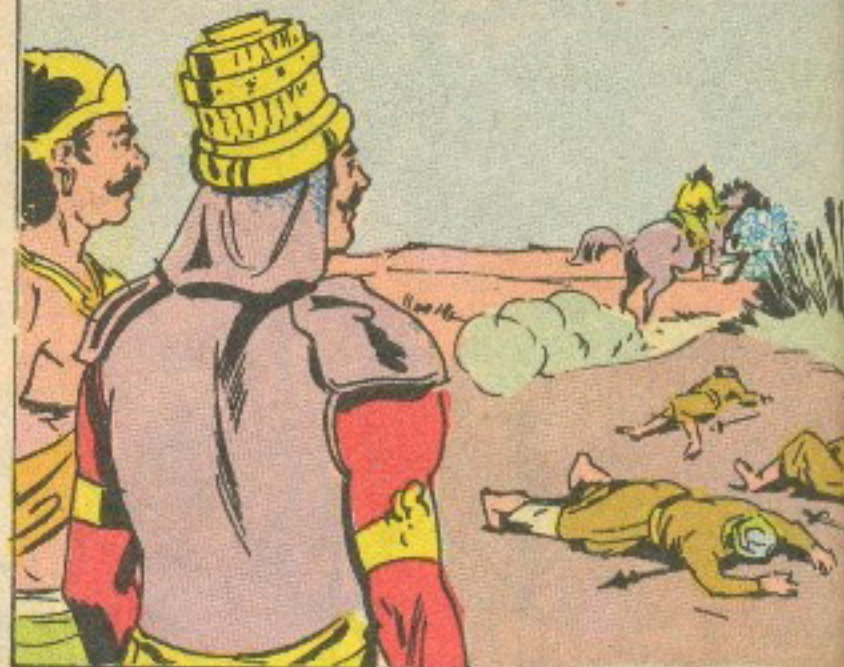


* RIVER BHIMA.

HE BEFRIENDED GOVINDA...



...WHILE APPAYIKA HAD TO RUN FOR HIS LIFE.



THEN THE ALUPAS WERE FORCED INTO SUBMISSION. THE KING * WAS IMPRESSED BY PULAKESHI'S VALOUR.

PULAKESHI, I ACCEPT YOUR SUZERAINTY. TAKE MY DAUGHTER AS YOUR WIFE. AND MAY OUR TWO FAMILIES BE BROUGHT CLOSER.



PULAKESHI ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL AND MARRIED HIS DAUGHTER, KADAMBA.



HE RESUMED HIS CAMPAIGN AND CONQUERED MANY KINGDOMS INCLUDING GHARAPURI **



HE MARCHED NORTHWARDS AND EXTENDED HIS BORDERS RIGHT UPTO THE RIVER REVA.*

GREAT KING, WE GIVE IN TO YOU. WE WOULD PREFER TO BE UNDER YOUR UMBRELLA RATHER THAN THE OTHER ONE THAT THREATENS TO OVER-SHADOW US.

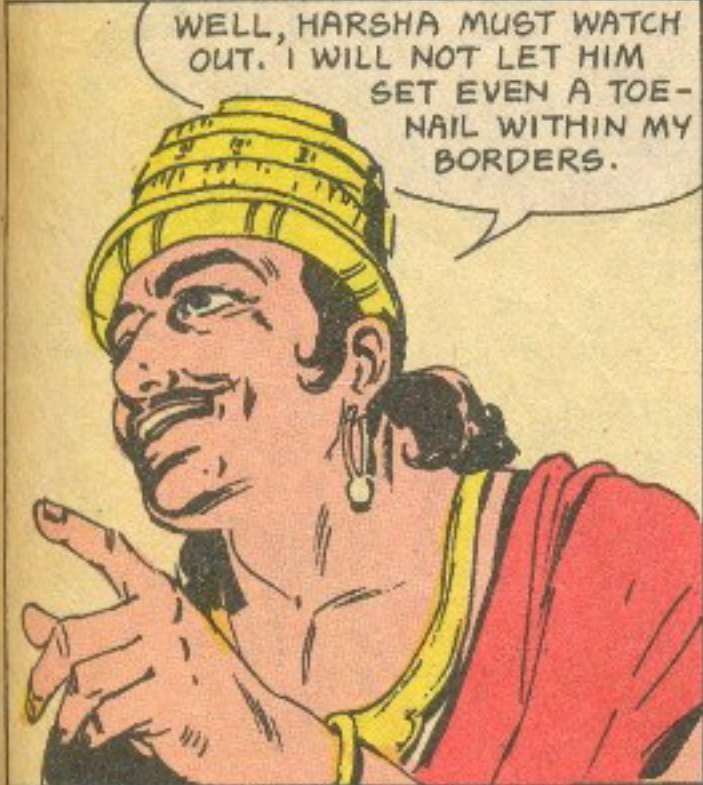


THE OTHER ONE? AH! YOU MEAN HARSHAVARDHANA?

YES, HARSHA, THE LORD OF THE NORTH, IS ALREADY CASTING GREEDY EYES ON THE SOUTH. HE IS CAMPED WITH HIS VAST ARMY JUST NORTH OF THE RIVER.



WELL, HARSHA MUST WATCH OUT. I WILL NOT LET HIM SET EVEN A TOE-NAIL WITHIN MY BORDERS.



BUT HARSHAVARDHANA OF KANAUJ WAS BENT ON CONQUEST.

SO PULAKESHI IS CAMPING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE REVA, IS HE? I HAVE HEARD A LOT ABOUT HIM.

BUT WHO STANDS A CHANCE AGAINST YOU, MY LORD? NOT ONCE HAVE YOU LOST A BATTLE.



AND I DON'T INTEND LOSING ANY IN THE FUTURE EITHER. I HAVE LONG DREAMT OF CONQUERING THE SOUTH.

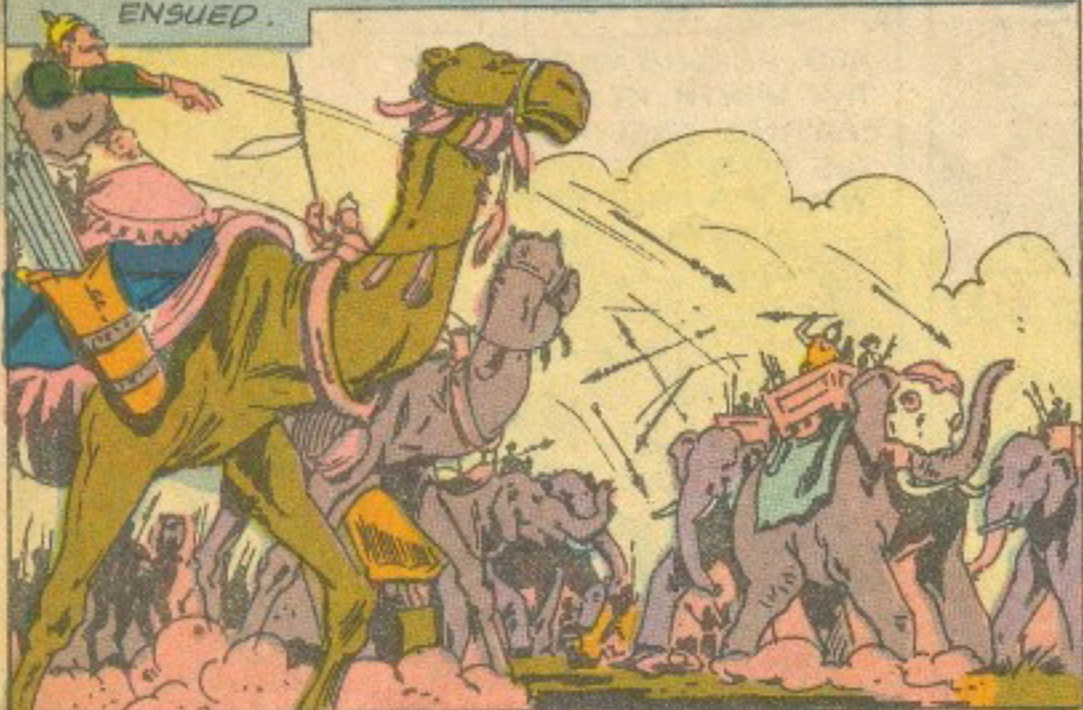


PREPARE TO ATTACK PULAKESHI.

I PITY PULAKESHI. HE WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT HIM!



THE NEXT DAY, THE TWO ARMIES CONFRONTED EACH OTHER ACROSS THE RIVER AND A FIERCE BATTLE ENSUED.



AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY, IN HARSHA'S CAMP—

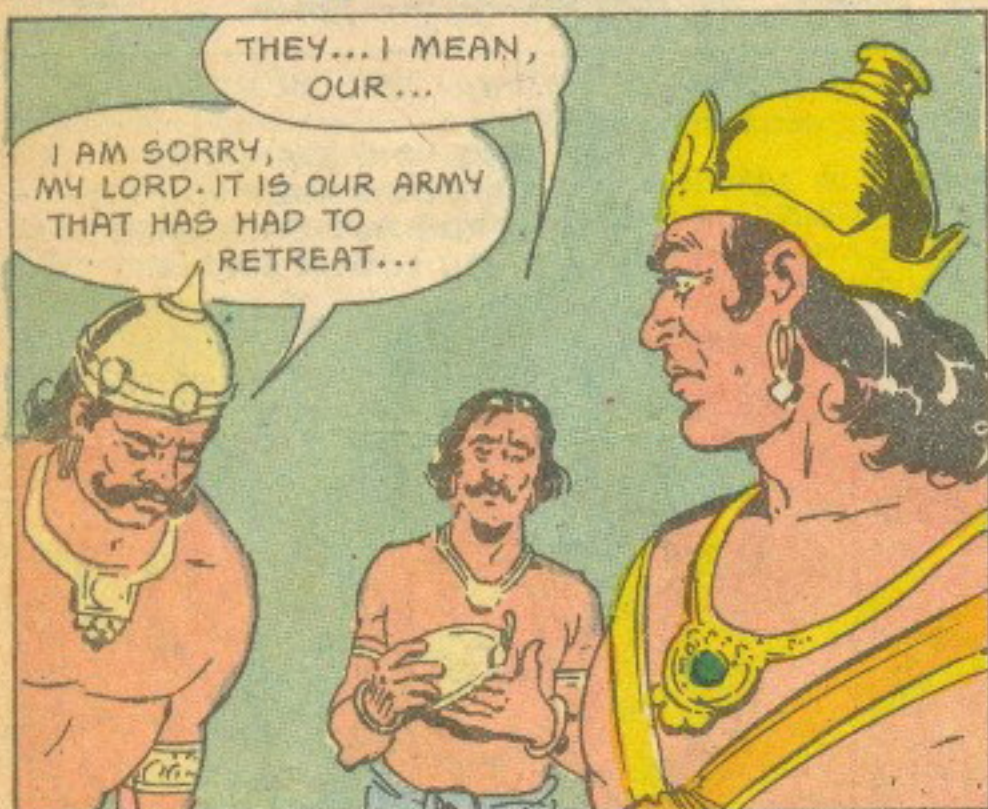
MY LORD, THEY ... WE ... THAT IS ... OUR ... WE ...

SPEAK CLEARLY, MAN. WHAT IS ALL THE EXCITEMENT ABOUT? IT IS OUR DAY, IS IT NOT?



THEY... I MEAN, OUR...

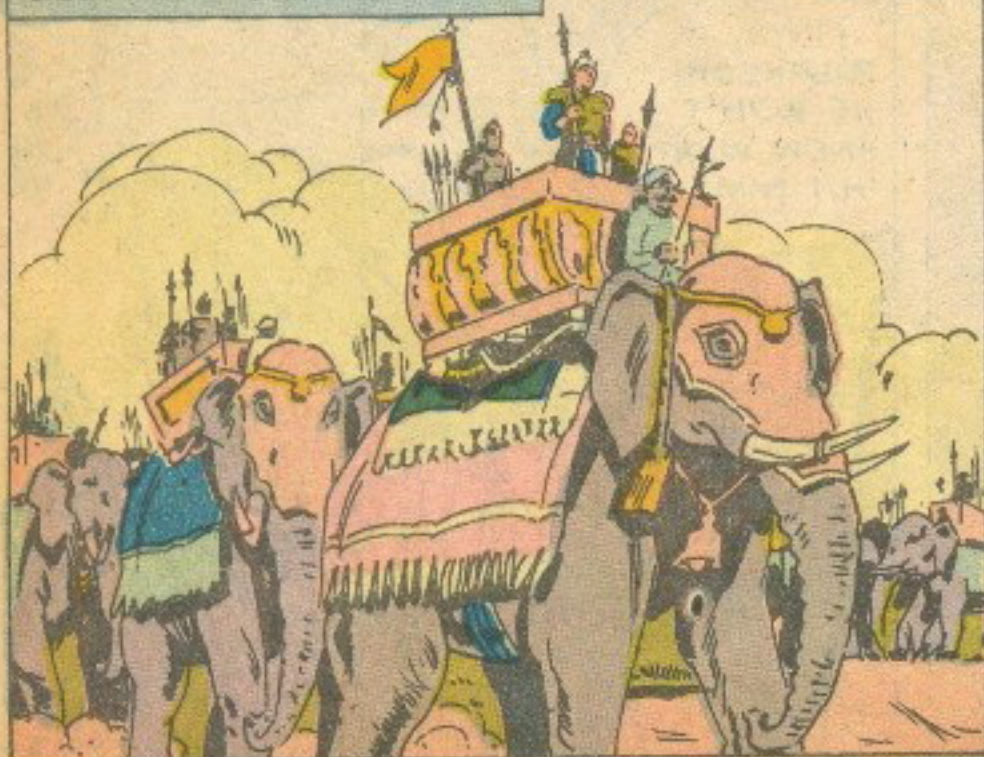
I AM SORRY, MY LORD. IT IS OUR ARMY THAT HAS HAD TO RETREAT...



RETREAT? RETREAT! I HAVE NEVER KNOWN SUCH A WORD! ADVANCE TEN STEPS TOMORROW THEN TO COMPENSATE FOR TODAY'S RETREAT!



BUT OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, DESPITE HARSHA HIMSELF LEADING HIS ARMY WITH THE FAMOUS ELEPHANT BATTALION...



... HE WAS ROUTED BY PULAKESHI.

THE FIRST DEFEAT IN MY LIFE! PULAKESHI—I'VE MET MY MATCH IN YOU.



AND IN PULAKESHI'S CAMP, THERE WAS JUBILATION.

ELEPHANTS CAPTURED FROM THE GREAT HARSHA HIMSELF! HMM... PRECIOUS BOOTY INDEED!

HARSHA WILL NOT DARE TO STEP ON THE SOIL OF OUR KINGDOM AGAIN.

AFTER THIS SUCCESSFUL ENCOUNTER AGAINST HARSHA, PULAKESHI RETURNED TO VATAPI.

I HAVE KEPT MY WORD. IN THREE YEARS, I HAVE ACHIEVED VICTORY OVER ALL ENEMIES. MY PEOPLE CAN NOW HOLD THEIR HEADS HIGH.

HAIL PULAKESHI PARAMESHVARA!*

LONG LIVE THE PARAMESHVARA OF THE THREE MAHARASHTRAKAS.**

AH! HOW SWEET IS THE TASTE OF VICTORY!

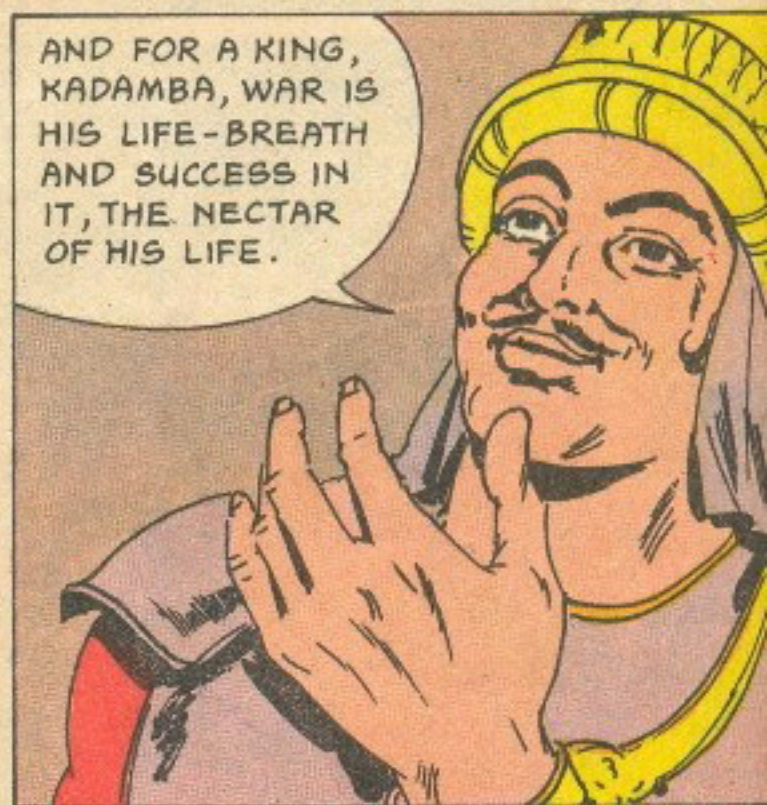
WHEN PULAKESHI REACHED HIS PALACE —

WELCOME, MY LORD! HOW WAS YOUR CAMPAIGN?

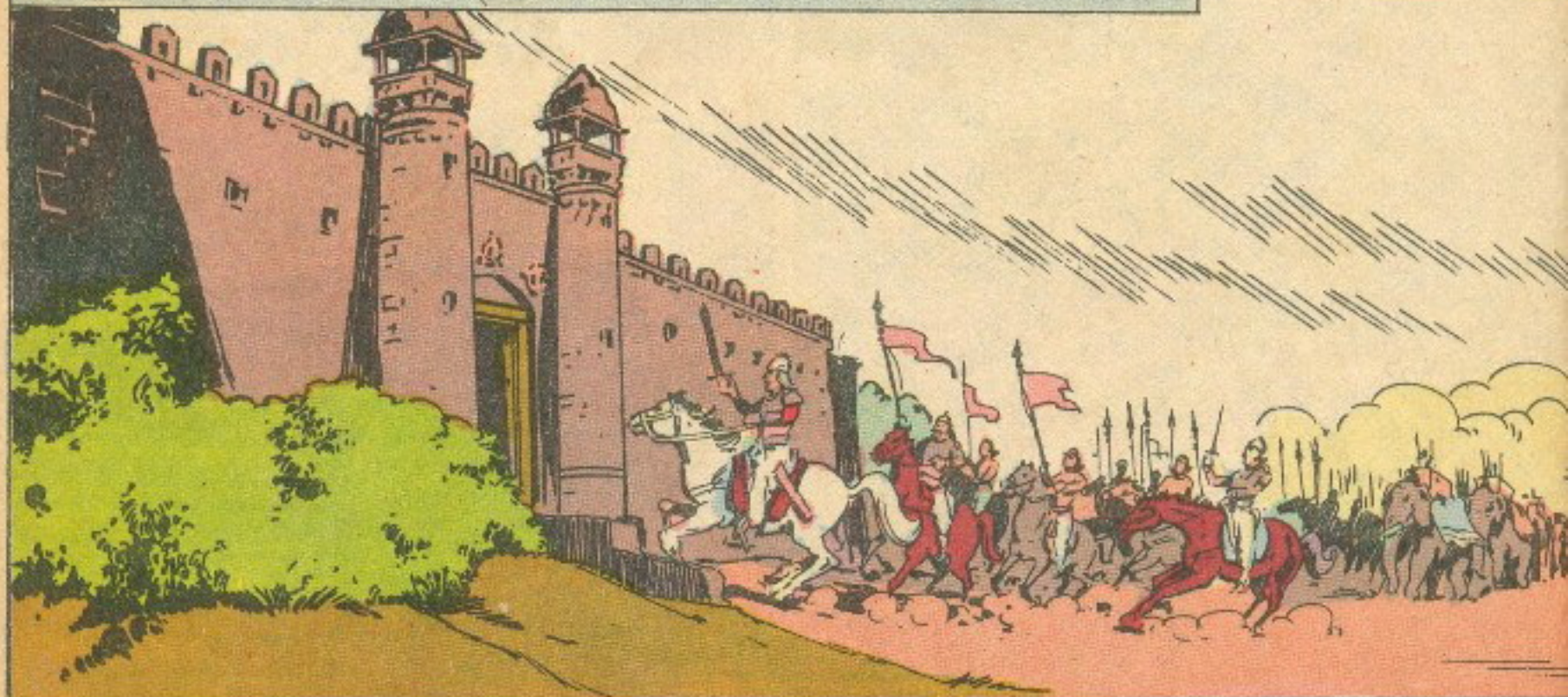
TRIUMPHANT, MY QUEEN...

* SUPREME LORD (THE TITLE PULAKESHI ASSUMED)

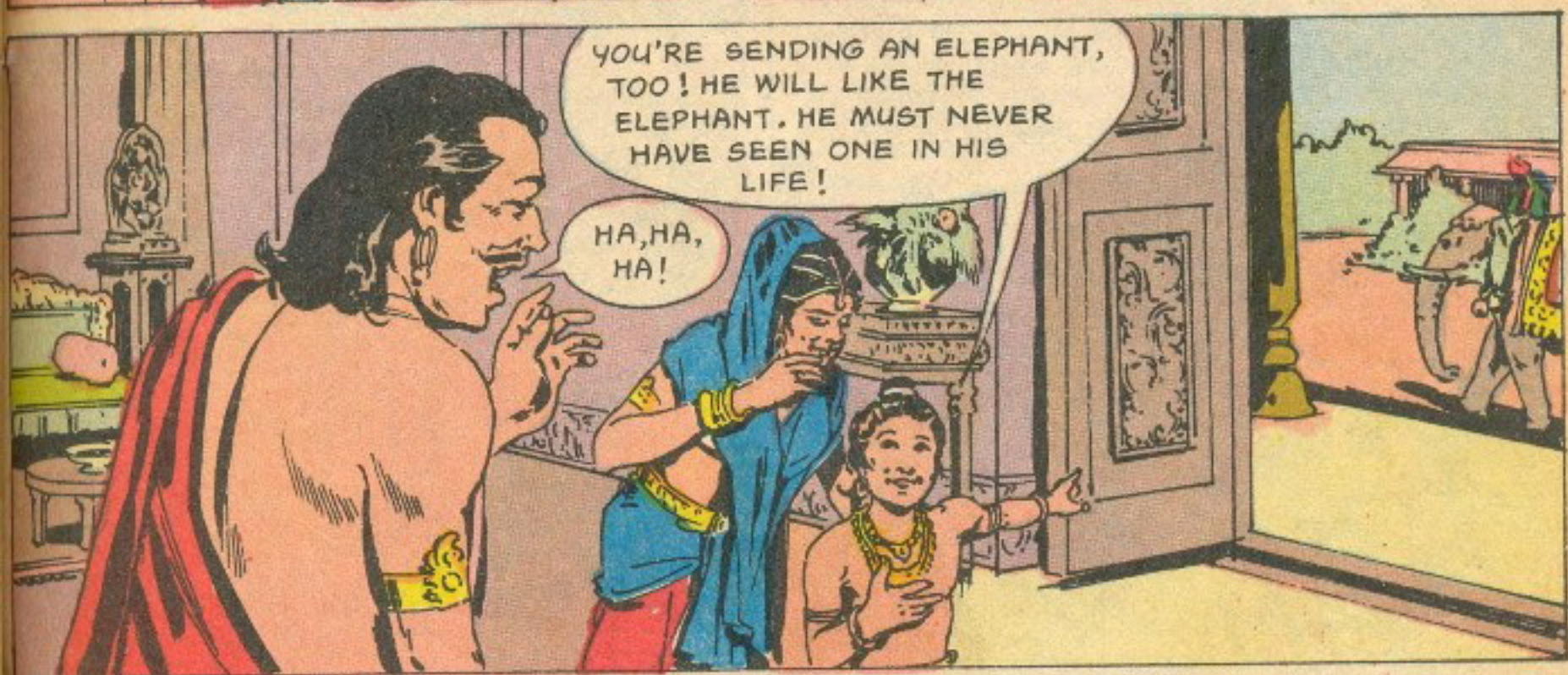
** TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS (KARNATAKA, MAHARASHTRA AND KONKAN)



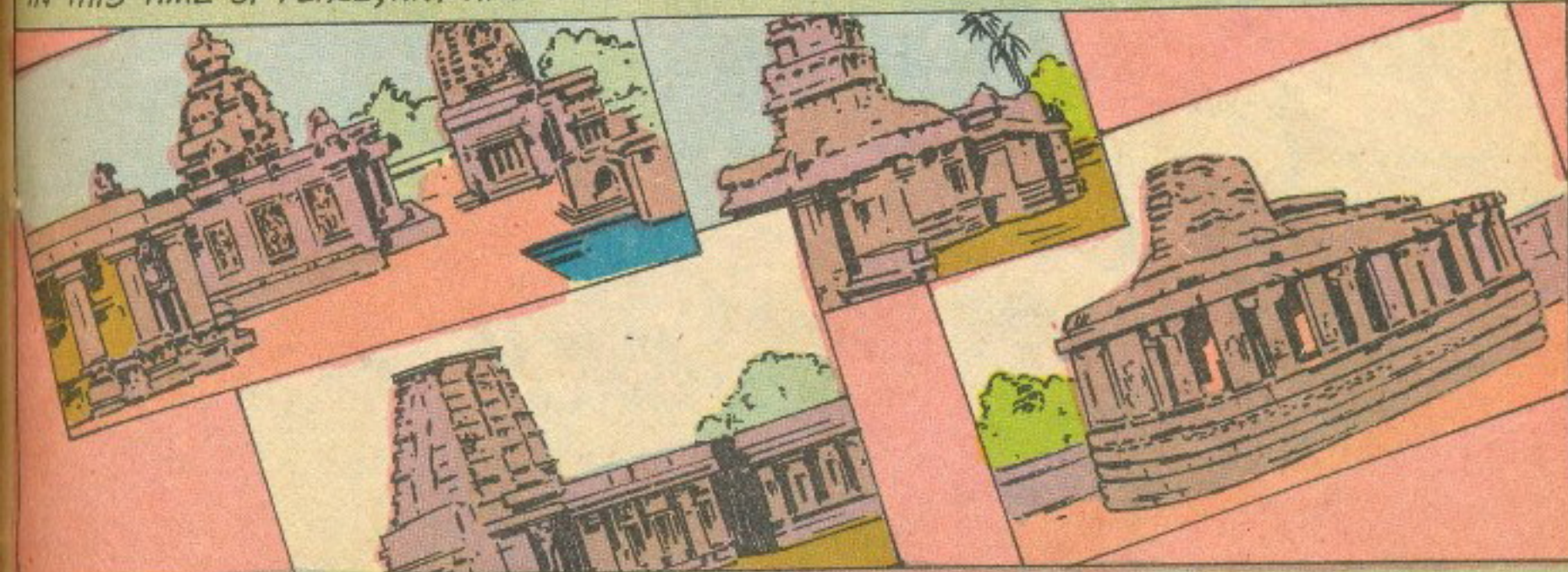
AND SOON AFTER, PULAKESHI SET OUT ON A CAMPAIGN. HE OVERRAN KOSALA, KALINGA, PISHTAPURA AND VENGU AND WAS VICTORIOUS IN EVERY ENCOUNTER.



FOR ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS THEREAFTER, PULAKESHI RULED PEACEFULLY. HE FOUND TIME TO SPEND WITH HIS FAMILY AND HIS FAVOURITE SON, VIKRAMADITYA.*



IN THIS TIME OF PEACE, ART AND ARCHITECTURE FLOURISHED UNDER PULAKESHI'S PATRONAGE.

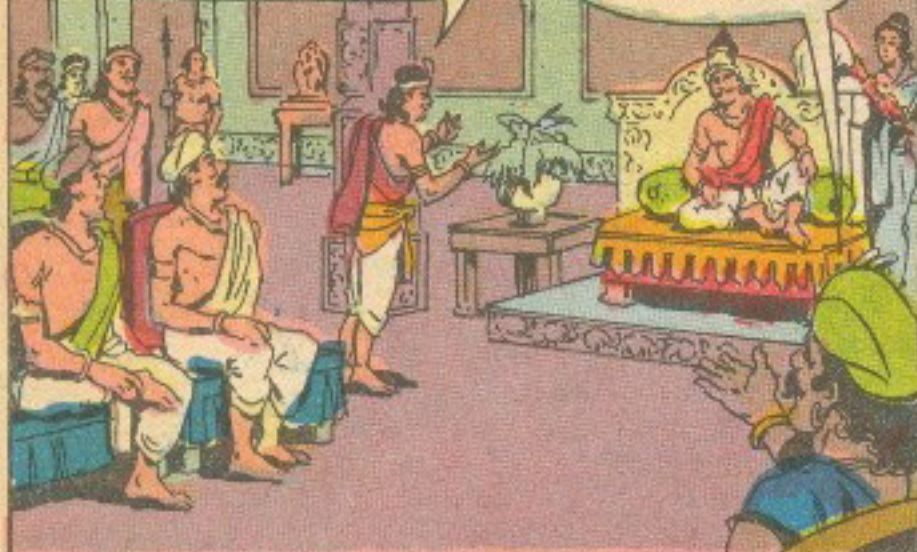


PULAKESHI GAVE AS MUCH PATRONAGE TO JAINA AND SHAIVA TEMPLES AS HE DID TO SHRINES DEDICATED TO VISHNU, THE DEITY WORSHIPPED BY HIM.

POETRY TOO FOUND AN APPRECIATIVE PATRON IN HIM. HIS COURT POET WAS THE BRILLIANT JAINA, RAVIKEERTI.

OUR KING MADE HARSHA LOSE HIS 'HARSHA'*

HA! HA! EXCELLENT! WELL PUT!



...AND GROUND PISHTAPURA INTO 'PISHTA'**.



RAVIKEERTI, WHY DON'T YOU COMPILE A BOOK CONSISTING OF YOUR VERSES?

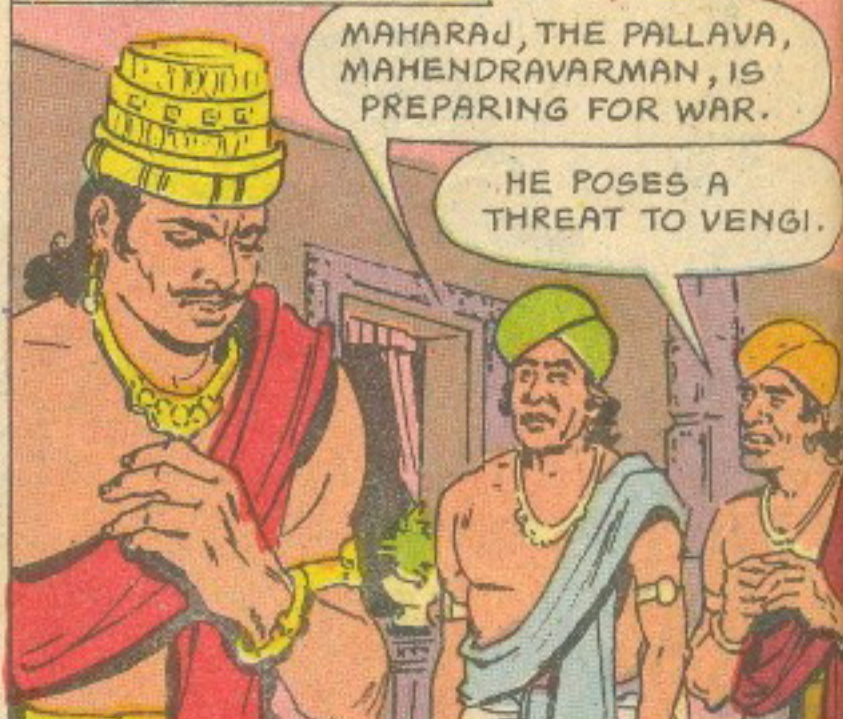
I HAVE BEEN PLANNING TO, MY LORD. I WILL CALL IT THE AIHOLE PRASHASTI AND WRITE IT IN PRAISE OF YOU.



BUT PEACE WAS NOT DESTINED TO LAST LONG FOR PULAKESHI.

MAHARAJ, THE PALLAVA, MAHENDRAVARMAN, IS PREPARING FOR WAR.

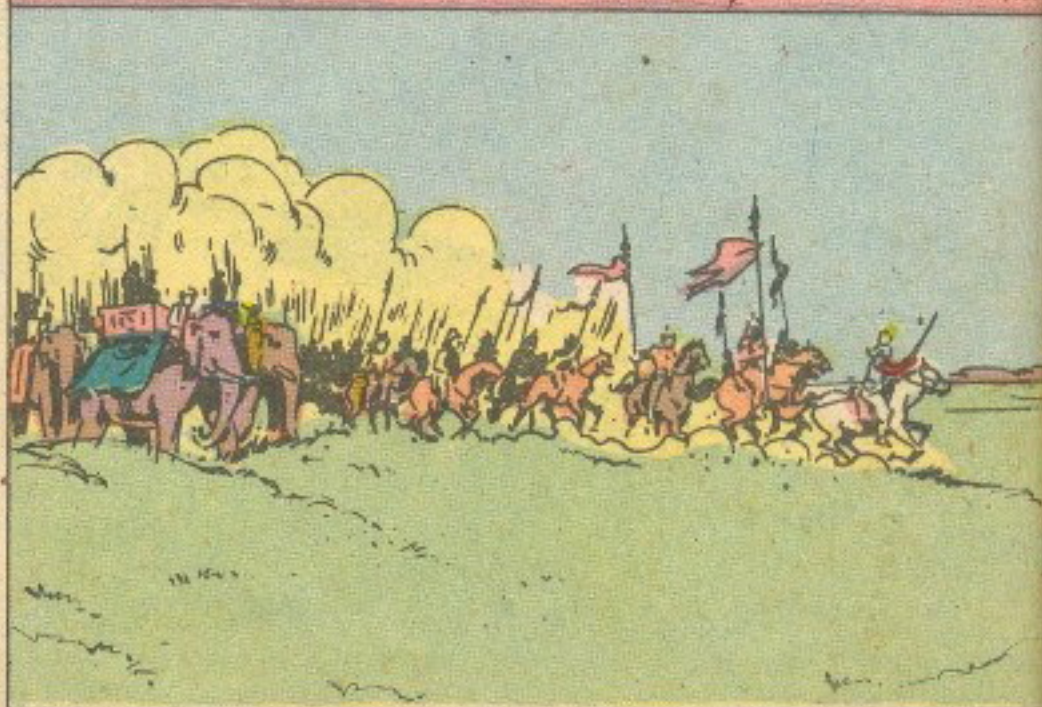
HE POSES A THREAT TO VENGI.



WE WILL STRIKE BEFORE HE MAKES THE FIRST MOVE.



PULAKESHI WITH HIS STRONG ARMY MARCHED STRAIGHT ON THE PALLAVA CAPITAL, KANCHEEPURAM.



* HARSHA ALSO MEANS MIRTH OR HAPPINESS (JOY)
** PISHTA ALSO MEANS FLOUR.

AT PULLALUR NEAR KANCHEEPURAM,
MAHENDRAVARMAN MET PULAKESHI...



...AND WAS DEFEATED. HE HAD TO HASTILY
WITHDRAW FROM THE BATTLEFIELD.



PULAKESHI RETURNED TO VATAPI IN TRIUMPH.



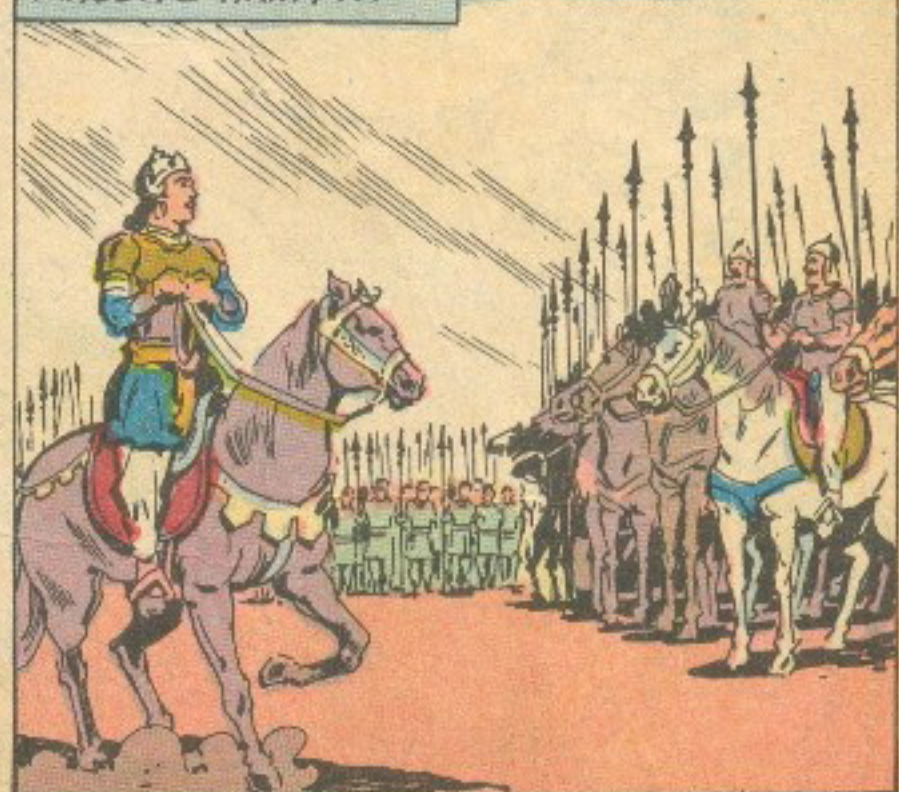
AT KANCHEEPURAM THE PALLAVA KING
NEVER RECOVERED FROM THE SHOCK AND
HUMILIATION OF DEFEAT INFLICTED ON HIM
BY PULAKESHI.



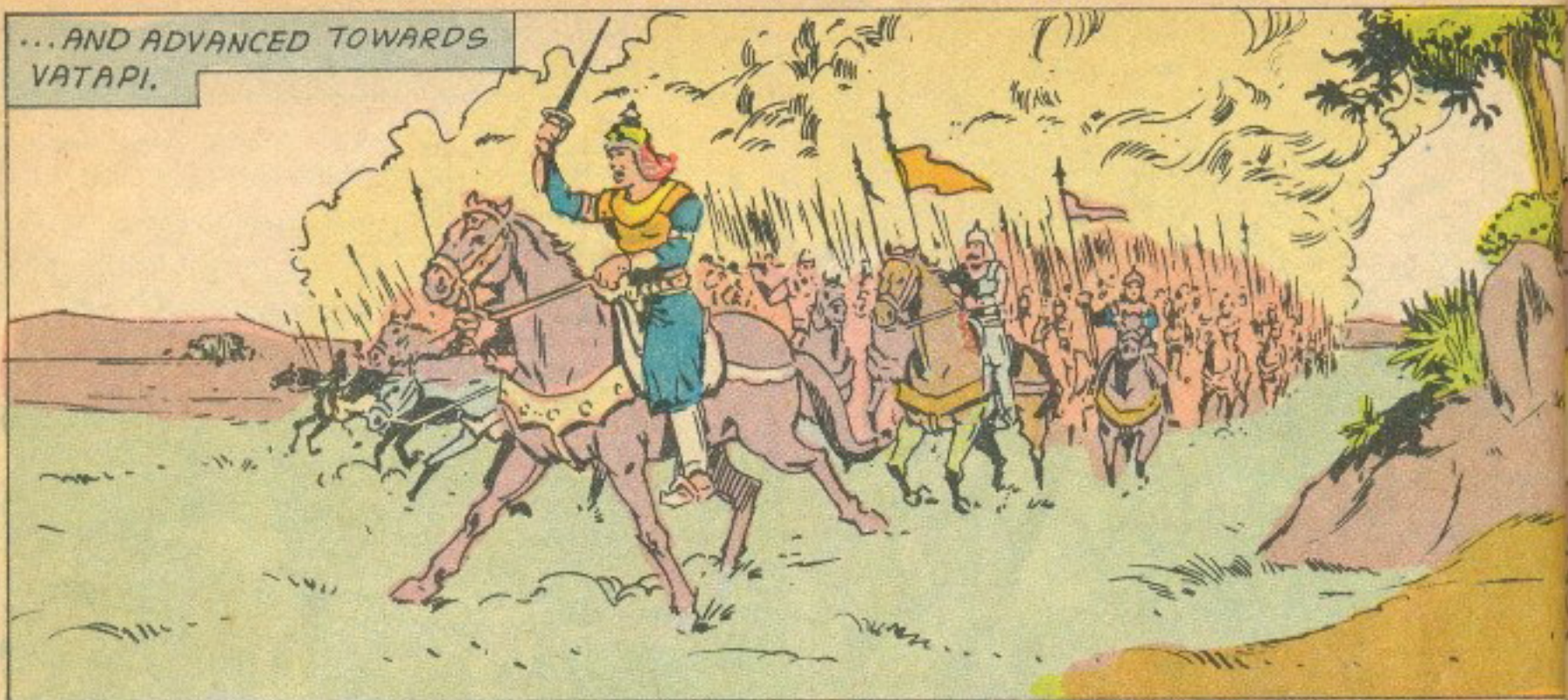
MAHENDRAVARMAN DIED A BROKEN-HEARTED
MAN.



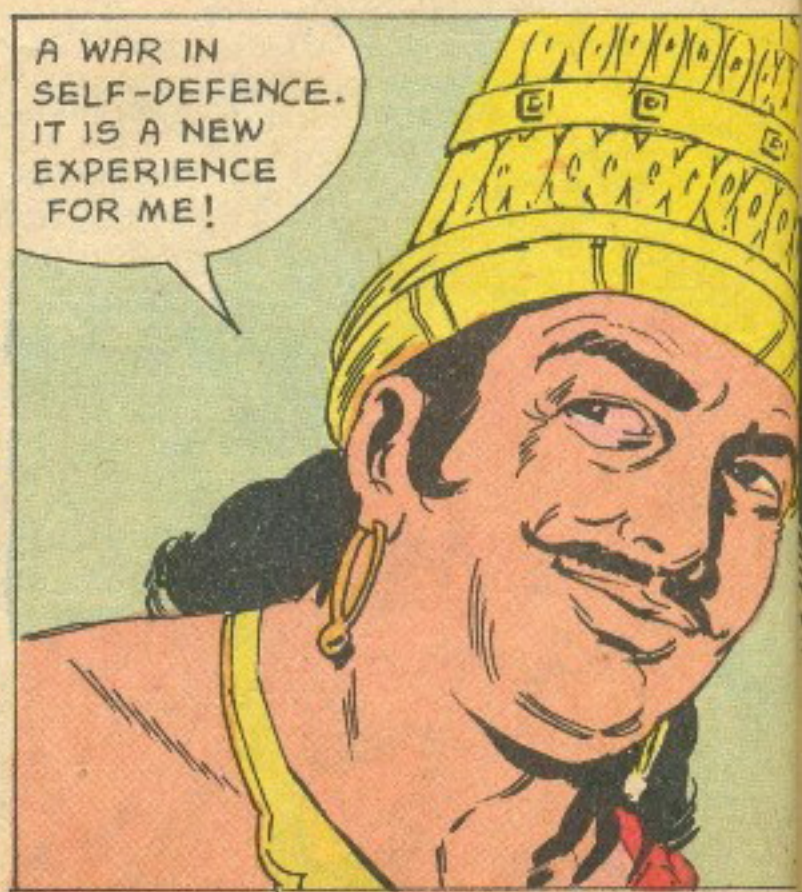
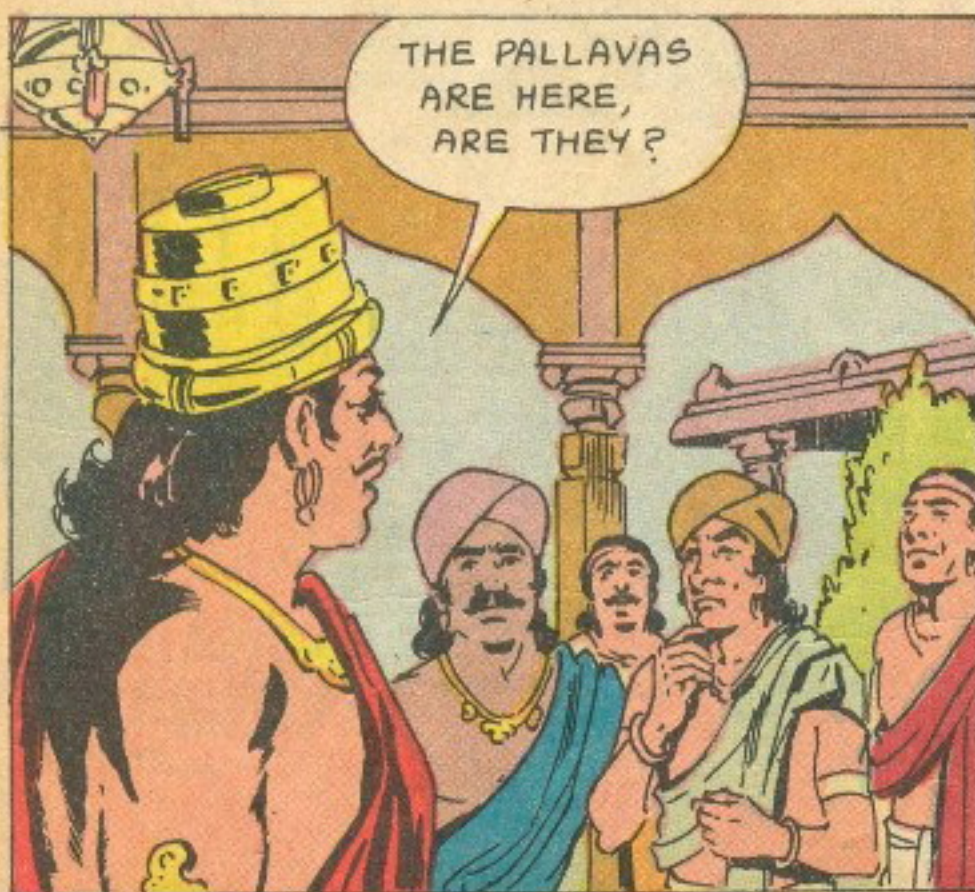
PALLAVA NARASIMHAVARMAN RAISED A
MASSIVE ARMY...

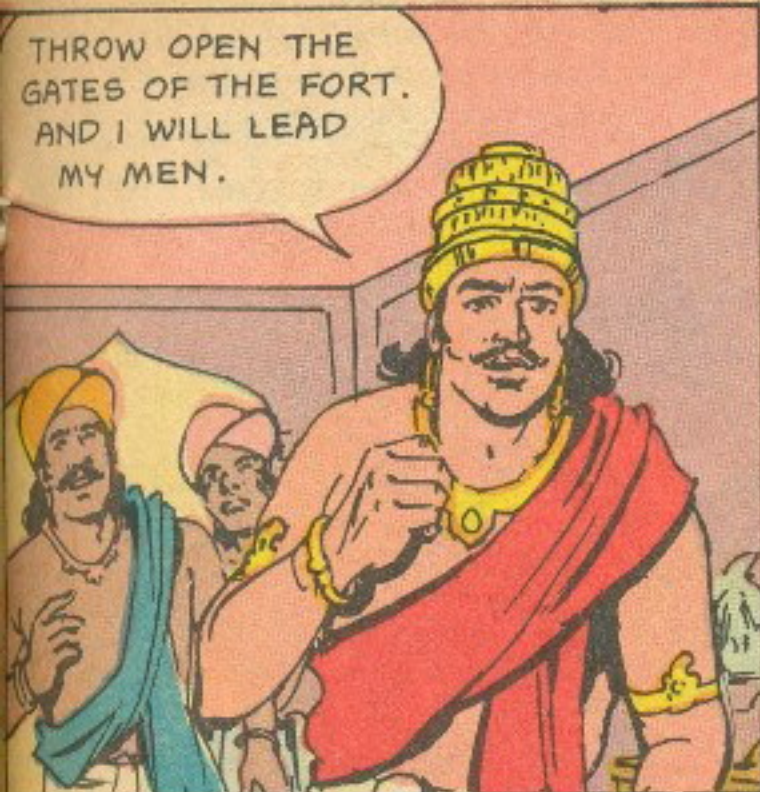


...AND ADVANCED TOWARDS
VATAPI.

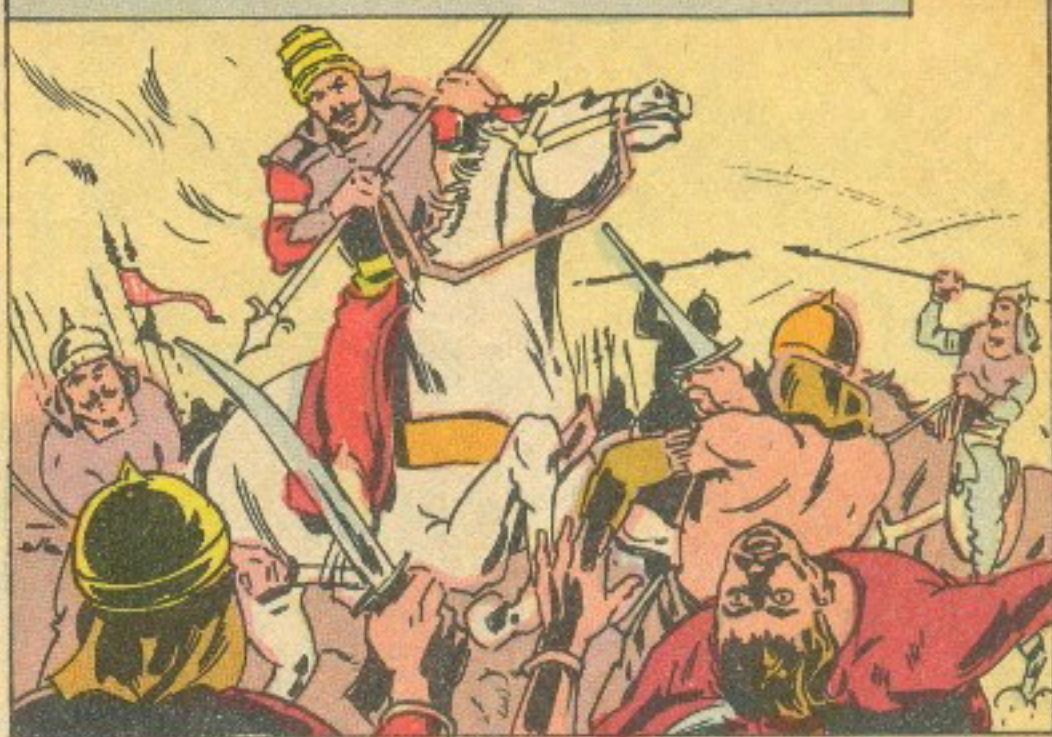


AND IN A SERIES OF QUICK, UNEXPECTED ATTACKS THAT TOOK PULAKESHI ALMOST
UNAWARES, NARASIMHA FINALLY CAME TO THE VERY GATES OF VATAPI.





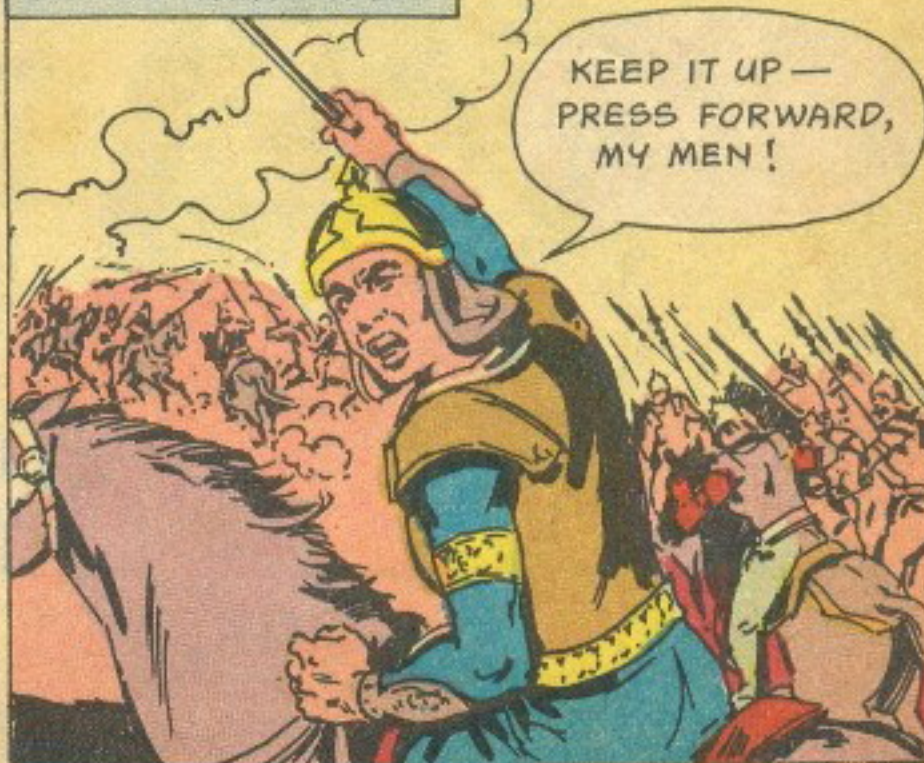
PULAKESHI FOUGHT FOR HIS HONOUR ...



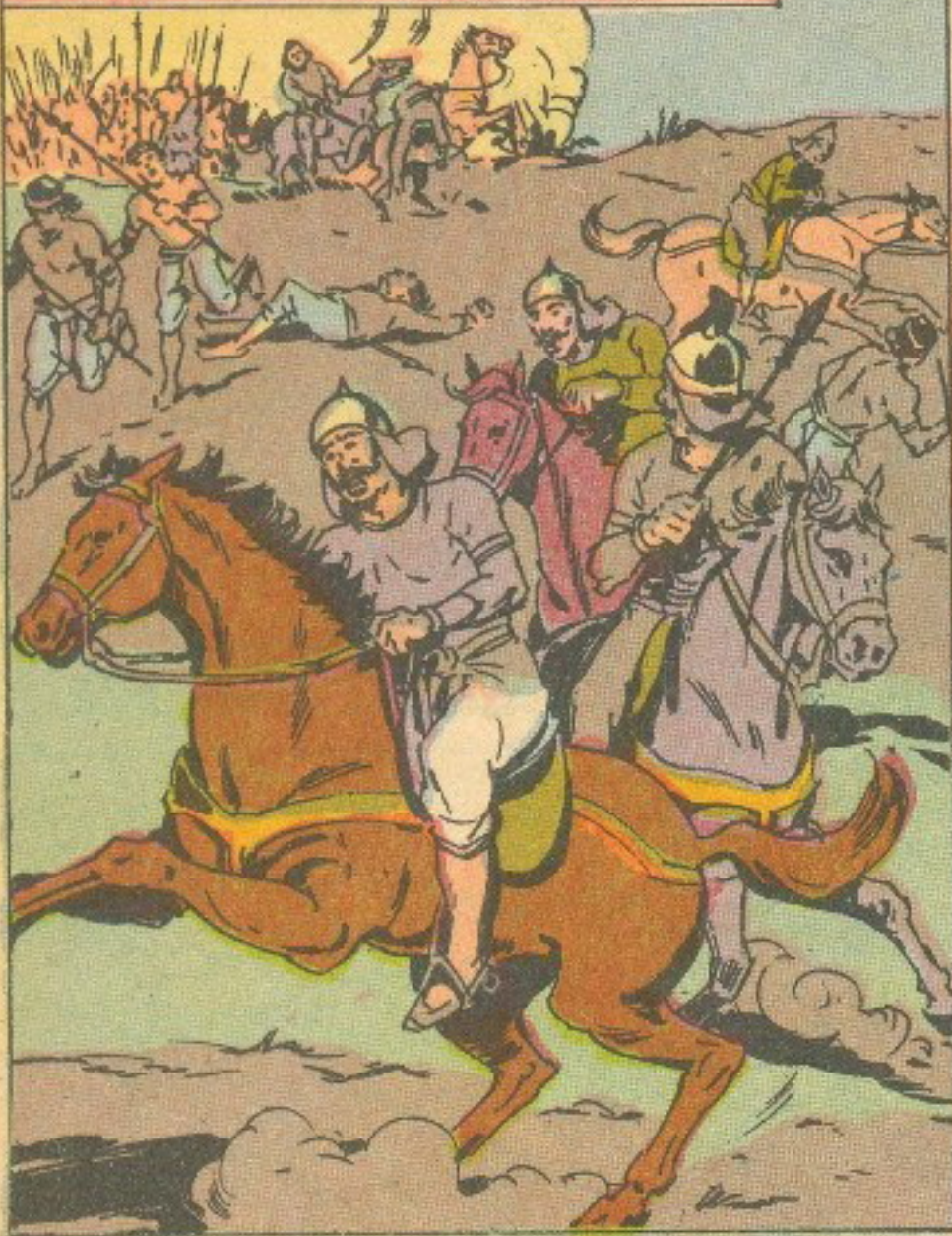
...AND NARASIMHA TO SETTLE AN OLD SCORE.



SHOUTING WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS MEN, NARASIMHA KEPT UP THE PRESSURE ON THE CHALUKYAS.



PULAKESHI'S MEN BEGAN TO FLEE...



...AND THE TRUTH DAWNED ON PULAKESHI WITH THE FORCE OF A THUNDERBOLT.



AFTER THIS, WE DON'T COME ACROSS PULAKESHI IN HISTORY. THE STONE INSCRIPTIONS AND RAVIKEERTI'S AIHOLE PRASHASTI WHICH GIVE US ALL THIS INFORMATION BECOME SILENT, AS IF NOT WANTING TO DISCLOSE THE TRAGIC END OF A GREAT KING.

