

RATNAVALI



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Ratnavali



Amar Chitra Katha: the Glorious Heritage of India





Illustrated Classics From India

Ratnavali A Sanskrit Play

The story Ratnavali is attributed to Emperor Harsha, who ruled from Kanauj in the 7th century AD. Princess Ratnavali of Simhala is shipwrecked en route to Kaushambi where she was going in order to marry King Udayana, her betrothed. The king's wise minister, Yaugandharayana, recognises her, but to bide for time he entrusts her to Queen Vasavadatta, her own cousin, as a maid named Sagarika.

King Harsha was a great patron of art and literature. Renowned Sanskrit poets like Bana Bhatta were in his court. Harsha himself was a poet and playwright. He wrote three Sanskrit plays: Nagananda, Priyadarshika and Ratnavali.

Harsha obtained material for these plays from Gunadhya's Brihatkatha, which was a treasure house of stories. Ratnavali and Priyadarshika have similar plots. Udayana, the legendary king of Kaushambi, is the hero in both plays. Stories of King Udayana and Queen Vasavadatta were well-known in the world of ancient Indian literature. Harsha was adept at contriving dramatic situations and intrigue. This earned him the title *Nipuna Kavi* or the skilful poet.

Script: Subba Rao Illustrations: Pratap Mulick

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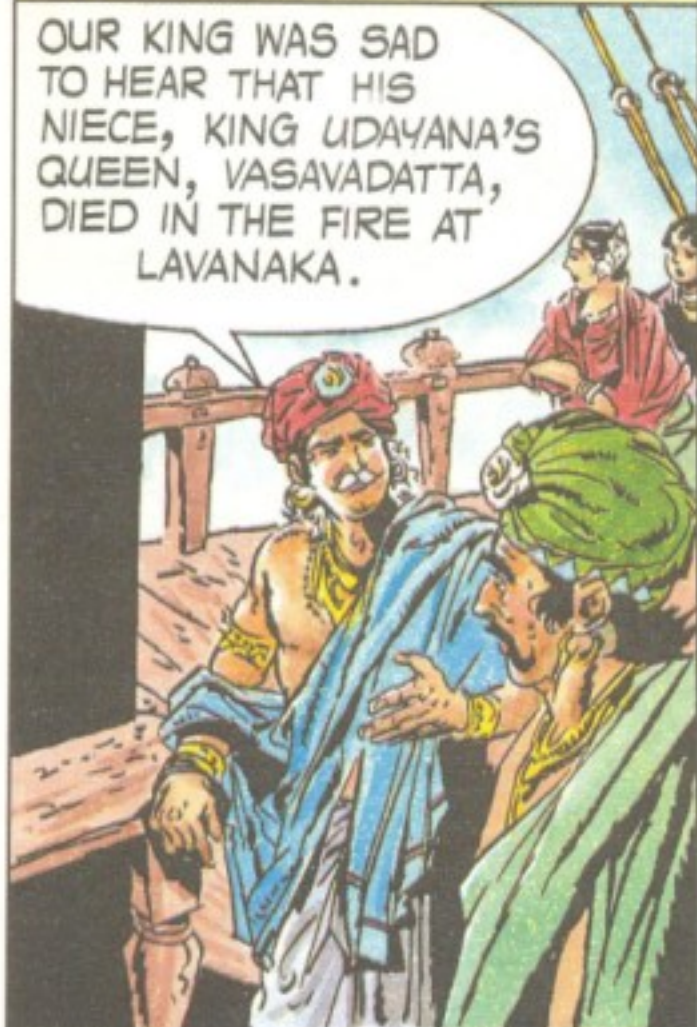
RATNAVALI



PRINCESS RATNAVALI, THE DAUGHTER OF VIKRAMABAHU, KING OF SIMHALA, WAS GOING TO KAUSHAMBI TO MARRY KING UDAYANA.

VASUBHUTI, THE KING'S MINISTER, WHO WAS ESCORTING RATNAVALI, TURNED TO BABHRAYYA, THE ENVOY FROM KAUSHAMBI.

OUR KING WAS SAD TO HEAR THAT HIS NIECE, KING UDAYANA'S QUEEN, VASAVADATTA, DIED IN THE FIRE AT LAVANAKA.



SO KING VIKRAMABAHU BELIEVES THE RUMOUR SPREAD BY THE MINISTER YAUGANDHARAYANA!



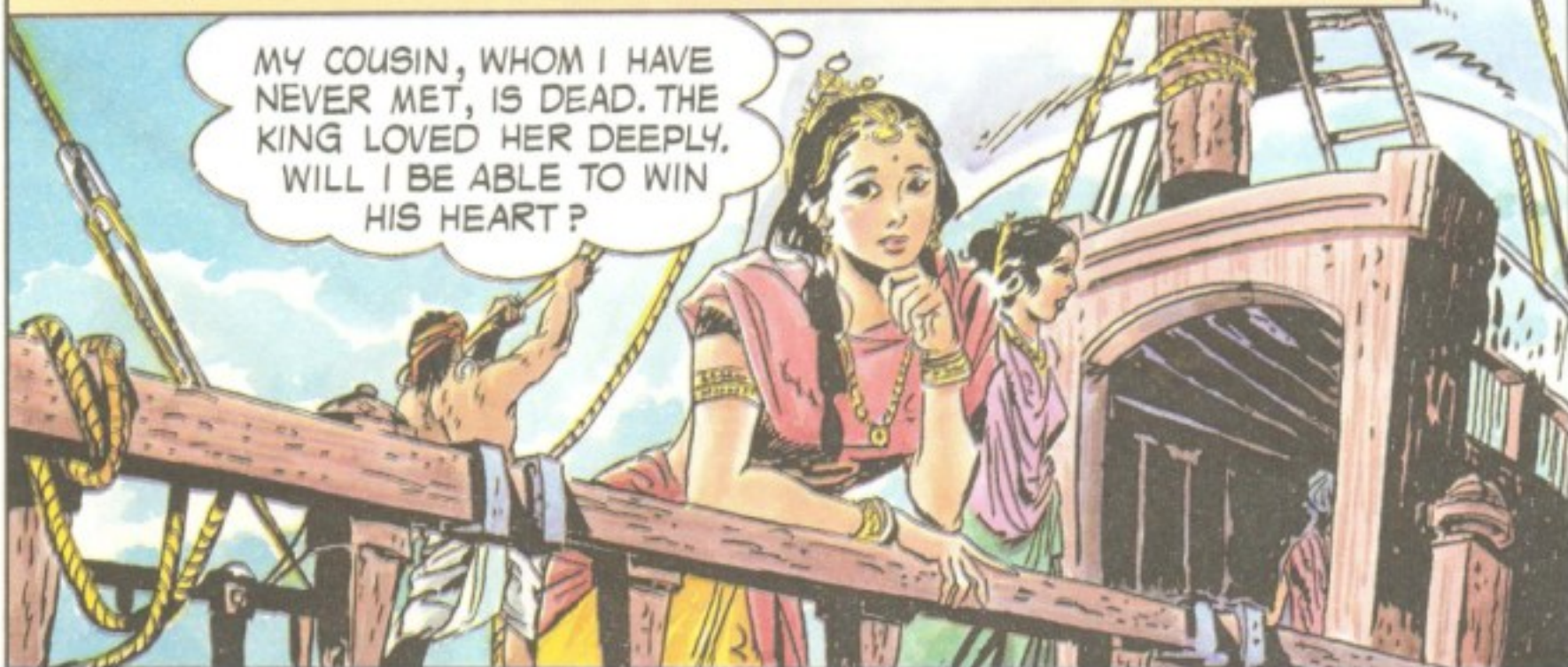
TO KEEP THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO FAMILIES ALIVE, HE HAS AGREED TO SEND OUR PRINCESS TO KAUSHAMBI.



HOW WILL HE REACT WHEN HE DISCOVERS THAT VASAVADATTA IS VERY MUCH ALIVE?

YOUNG RATNAVALI WAS THINKING ABOUT VASAVADATTA AND KING UDAYANA.

MY COUSIN, WHOM I HAVE NEVER MET, IS DEAD. THE KING LOVED HER DEEPLY. WILL I BE ABLE TO WIN HIS HEART?



SUDDENLY —

WHAT'S HAPPENING? THE SHIP HAS STARTED TO ROLL!



A SUDDEN STORM HAD BEGUN. THE HUGE WAVES TOSSED THE SHIP ABOUT...

HELP!



...AND IT BROKE INTO A THOUSAND PIECES.

OH GOD!



RATNAVALI MANAGED TO CLUTCH
A PLANK...



... AND KEEP AFLOAT.



FORTUNATELY, SOON AFTER,
SHE SPOTTED ANOTHER SHIP.



THE MASTER OF THE SHIP, A MERCHANT WHO
WAS SAILING TO KAUSHAMBI, HEARD THE CRY.



HE ORDERED THE SHIP TO TURN
AROUND TOWARDS HER...



... AND HELPED HER ABOARD.



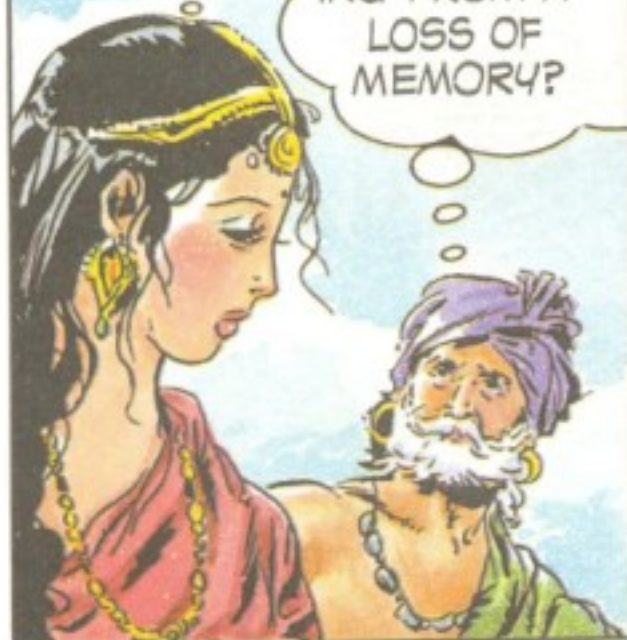
WHO ARE YOU?



RATNAVALI REMAINED SILENT.

HOW CAN I TELL HIM THAT I AM THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA? SEEING ME IN MY PRESENT STATE, WOULD HE BELIEVE ME?

WHY DOESN'T SHE ANSWER? IS SHE SUFFERING FROM A LOSS OF MEMORY?



ANYWAY FROM THE NECKLACE OF PRECIOUS STONES SHE IS WEARING, IT IS CLEAR THAT SHE IS A LADY OF NOBLE BIRTH.



MEANWHILE AT KAUSHAMBI, YAUGANDHARAYANA, KING UDAYANA'S LOYAL MINISTER, WAS ANXIOUSLY PACING UP AND DOWN HIS CHAMBER.

PRINCESS RATNAVALI WILL SOON BE HERE. AND I HAVE NOT YET SPOKEN TO THE KING ABOUT HER.



HE LOVES VASAVADATTA TOO MUCH. HE WILL NOT AGREE TO MARRY ANOTHER WOMAN AND YET....



JUST THEN A GUARD ENTERED.

SIR, A MERCHANT WANTS TO MEET YOU.

BRING HIM IN



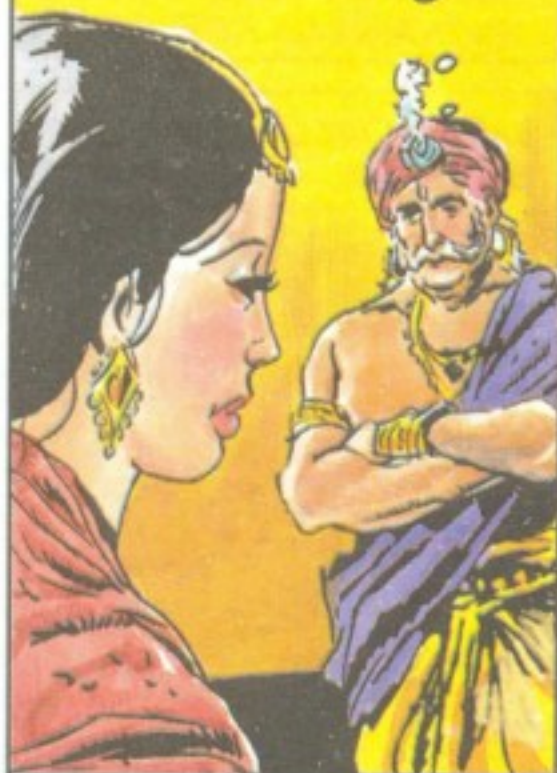
THE MERCHANT WALKED IN, BRINGING RATNAVALI WITH HIM.

SIR, I RESCUED THIS LADY FROM A SHIP-WRECK. I DON'T KNOW WHO SHE IS, BUT COULD I ENTRUST HER TO YOUR CARE?

THAT NECKLACE! SHE MUST BE RATNAVALI!



I WILL NOT LET HER SEE THAT I KNOW WHO SHE IS. I WILL TAKE HER TO THE QUEEN AND....



Y AUGANDHARAYANA TOOK RATNAVALI TO QUEEN VASAVADATTA'S CHAMBERS.



O QUEEN, THIS IS SAGARIKA. SHE HAS NO ONE TO TURN TO MAY I ENTRUST HER TO YOUR CARE?

QUEEN VASAVADATTA LOOKED AFFECTIONATELY AT THE GIRL.



SHE WILL BE MY COMPANION.

YOU ARE VERY KIND. PERMIT ME TO TAKE YOUR LEAVE.

VASAVADATTA DID NOT KNOW THAT SAGARIKA WAS NONE OTHER THAN RATNAVALI, HER COUSIN.

AS Y AUGANDHARAYANA LEFT—



EXCELLENT! RATNAVALI IS NOW BOUND TO COME ACROSS THE KING AND THEN I WILL LET MATTERS TAKE THEIR OWN COURSE.

SAGARIKA IS VERY CHARMING! I SHOULD TAKE CARE THAT THE KING DOESN'T MEET HER.

VASAVADATTA TURNED TO SAGARIKA.



MY FRIEND, I WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY HERE. YOU SHALL BE IN CHARGE OF MEDHAVINI, OUR BELOVED TALKING-BIRD. SUSANGATA WILL SHOW YOU WHERE IT IS.

SAGARIKA WAS HAPPY AND ENJOYED HER LIGHT DUTIES.

THE QUEEN IS KIND AND GENTLE.



THEN CAME THE FESTIVAL OF MADANA, THE GOD OF LOVE.

SAGARIKA, TODAY THE QUEEN WILL WORSHIP MADANA IN THE GARDEN.

O SUSANGATA, I WOULD LOVE TO BE THERE, BUT I HAVE TO LOOK AFTER MEDHAVINI.



I WILL DO THAT FOR YOU, SAGARIKA. GO AND ATTEND THE CEREMONY.

SUSANGATA, YOU ARE SO GOOD.



SO CARRYING MATERIALS FOR WORSHIP, SAGARIKA FOLLOWED THE QUEEN INTO THE GARDEN.



MEANWHILE, PEOPLE WERE OUT IN THE STREETS, CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL BY THROWING COLOURS AT ONE ANOTHER. FROM THE PALACE KING UDAYANA WATCHED THE MERRY-MAKING WITH VASANTAKA, THE COURT JESTER



JUST THEN TWO OF THE QUEEN'S MAIDS ENTERED.

VICTORY TO YOUR MAJESTY! THE QUEEN COMMANDS... NO, NO... THE QUEEN REQUESTS....

THE WORD 'COMMANDS' IS MORE APPROPRIATE ON MADANA'S FESTIVAL. TELL ME WHAT THE QUEEN COMMANDS.



THE QUEEN REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE AT MAKARANDA GARDEN WHERE SHE WILL BE WORSHIPPING THE GOD OF LOVE.

WE WILL COME AT ONCE.



WHEN THE KING REACHED THE GARDEN—



FRIEND, FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM AND THE HUMMING OF BEES SOUNDS LIKE THE JINGLE OF WOMEN'S ANKLETS.





SUDDENLY SAGARIKA SAW THE KING —



THEN SAGARIKA OFFERED HER FLOWERS FROM WHERE SHE STOOD.

SALUTATIONS TO YOU, MADANA!
MAY THIS VISION
OF YOU BRING
JOY TO MY LIFE!



THEN, AS SHE SET OUT FOR THE PALACE, SHE HEARD
A GUARD CALLING OUT—

...MANY PRINCES ARE
WAITING TO PAY THEIR
RESPECTS TO KING
UDAYANA...



SAGARIKA TURNED BACK.

SO THAT WAS KING
UDAYANA AND I AM
BETROTHED TO
HIM! THEN THE
QUEEN MUST BE MY
COUSIN, VASAVA-
DATTA!



BUT IT CAN'T BE!
VASAVADATTA DIED
IN THE FIRE



AS UDAYANA AND VASAVADATTA PASSED BY —

HOW
HELPLESS
I AM. I CAN'T
EVEN LOOK
UPON HIM, LET
ALONE TALK
TO HIM.

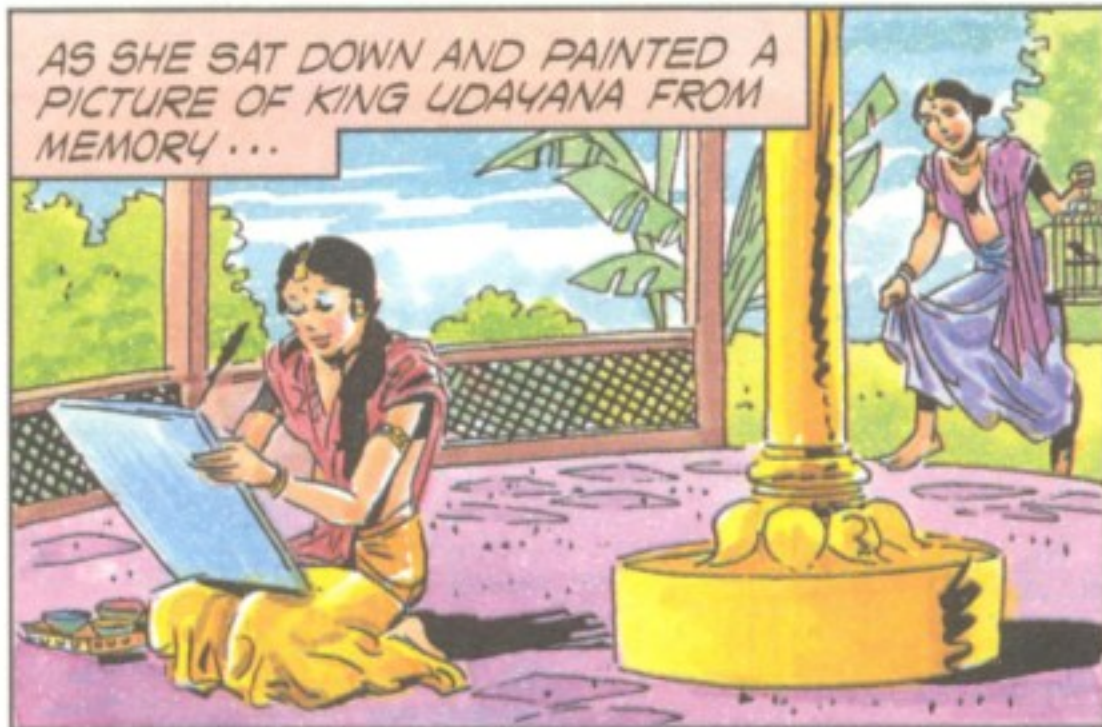


UDAYANA'S FACE HAUNTED SAGARIKA
AND SHE HARDLY SLEPT THAT NIGHT.
THE NEXT MORNING SHE WENT TO
THE GARDEN HOUSE TAKING WITH HER
A DRAWING BOARD, BRUSHES AND
COLOURS.



I SAW HIM BUT
FOR A MOMENT. YET
MY HEART YEARNS
FOR HIM.

AS SHE SAT DOWN AND PAINTED A
PICTURE OF KING UDAYANA FROM
MEMORY ...



... SUSANGATA CREPT UP
FROM BEHIND HER —

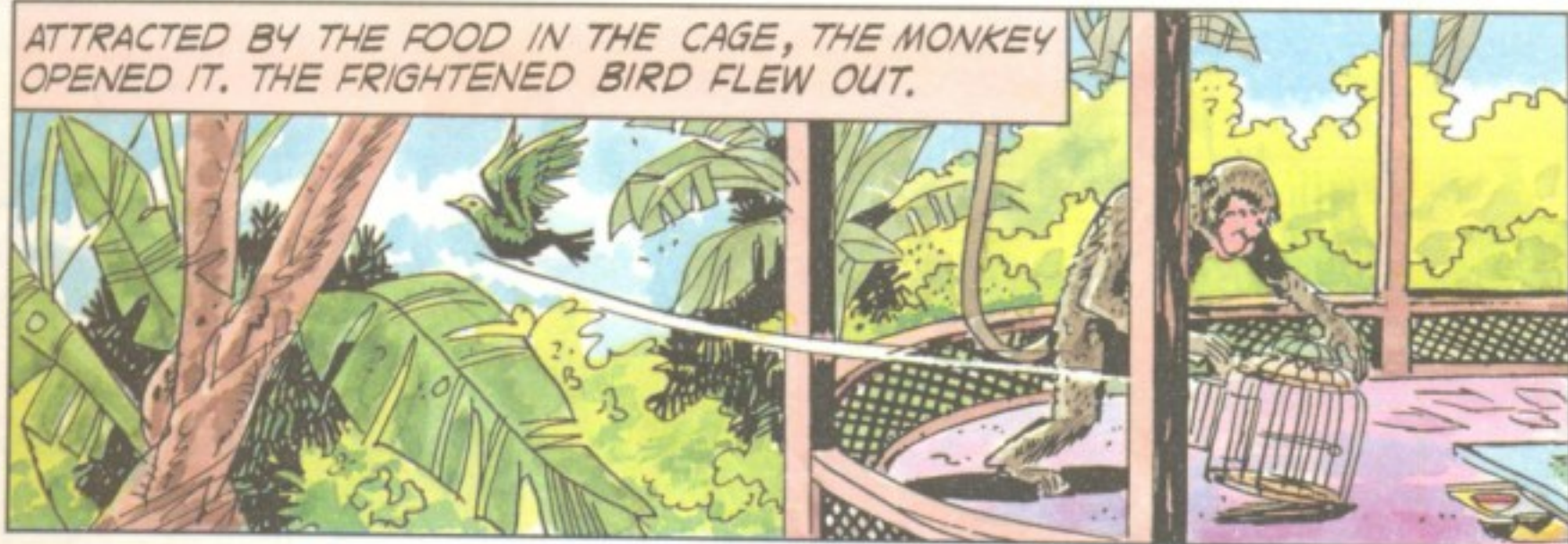
WHAT ARE YOU
PAINTING,
SAGARIKA?







ATTRACTED BY THE FOOD IN THE CAGE, THE MONKEY OPENED IT. THE FRIGHTENED BIRD FLEW OUT.



MEANWHILE OUTSIDE —

SUSANGATA, SOMEONE MAY SEE THE DRAWING. WE SHOULD HAVE RUBBED IT OFF.

YOU HAVE SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS THAN THAT TO WORRY ABOUT. LOOK! MEDHAVINI HAS FLOWN AWAY.



AND WHAT IS WORSE, SHE HAS HEARD EVERY WORD WE UTTERED. WE MUST CATCH HER.



MEANWHILE, UDAYANA ACCOMPANIED BY VASANTAKA, WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE GARDEN, WHEN VASANTAKA STOPPED ABRUPTLY.

THERE IS A GHOST IN THIS BAKULA TREE. LET'S RUN AWAY.

WHAT NONSENSE!

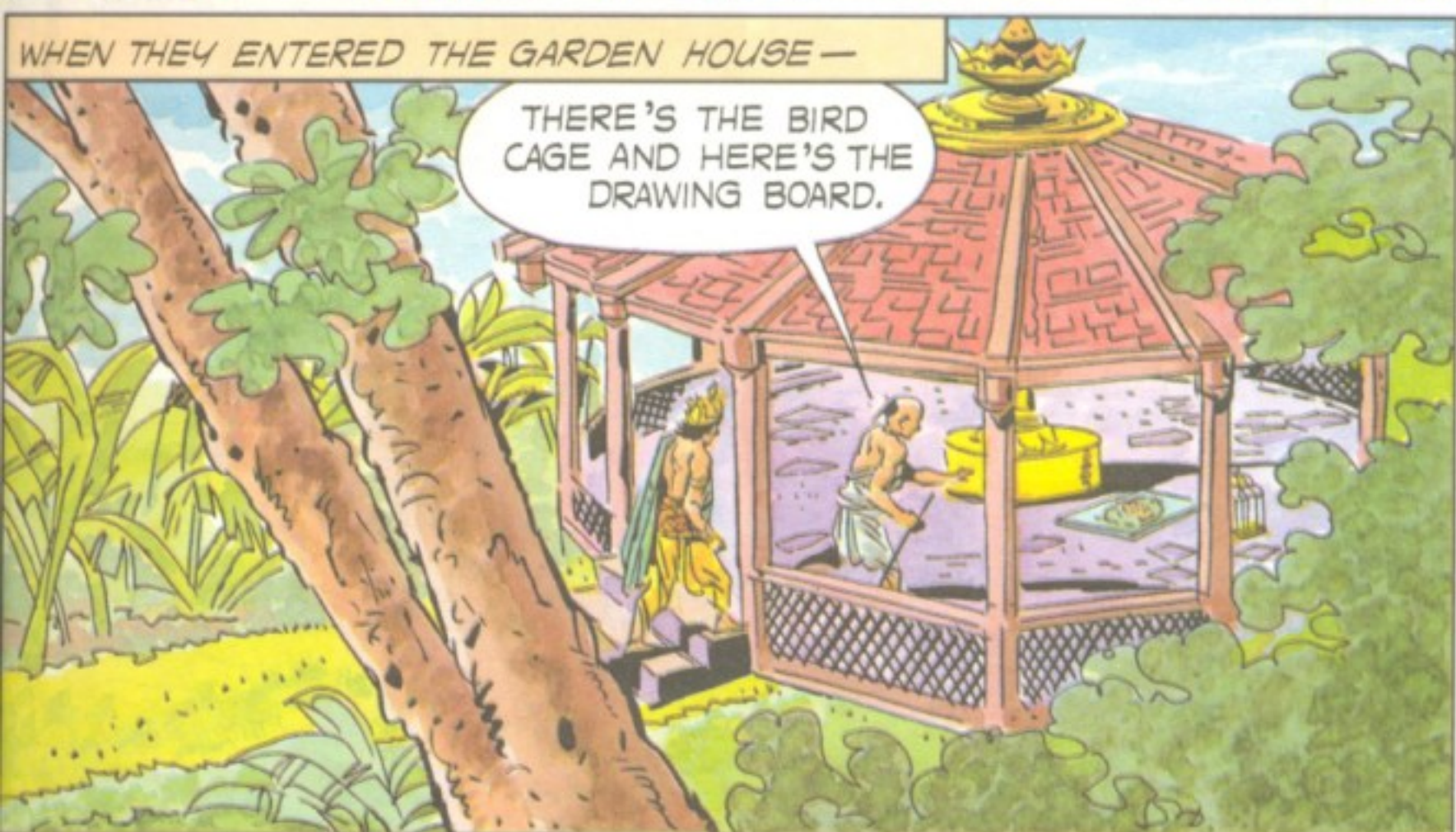


LOOK! IT'S ONLY A TALKING BIRD!

WHAT!

O SILLY BIRD, DID YOU THINK I WAS REALLY AFRAID OF YOU? WAIT, I WILL KNOCK YOU DOWN FROM THIS BAKULA TREE.

FOOL! SHE IS SAYING SOMETHING PLEASANT. LET'S LISTEN.



MEANWHILE SAGARIKA AND SUSANGATA NOT FINDING THE BIRD, WERE RETURNING TO THE GARDEN HOUSE FOR THE PAINTING.

THAT IS VASANTAKA SPEAKING. THE KING MUST BE HERE, TOO LET'S HIDE AND LISTEN TO THEM.

IT IS YOUR PORTRAIT!
AND THAT OF A
MAIDEN TOO!



MEANWHILE UDAYANA HAD TAKEN THE PAINTING.

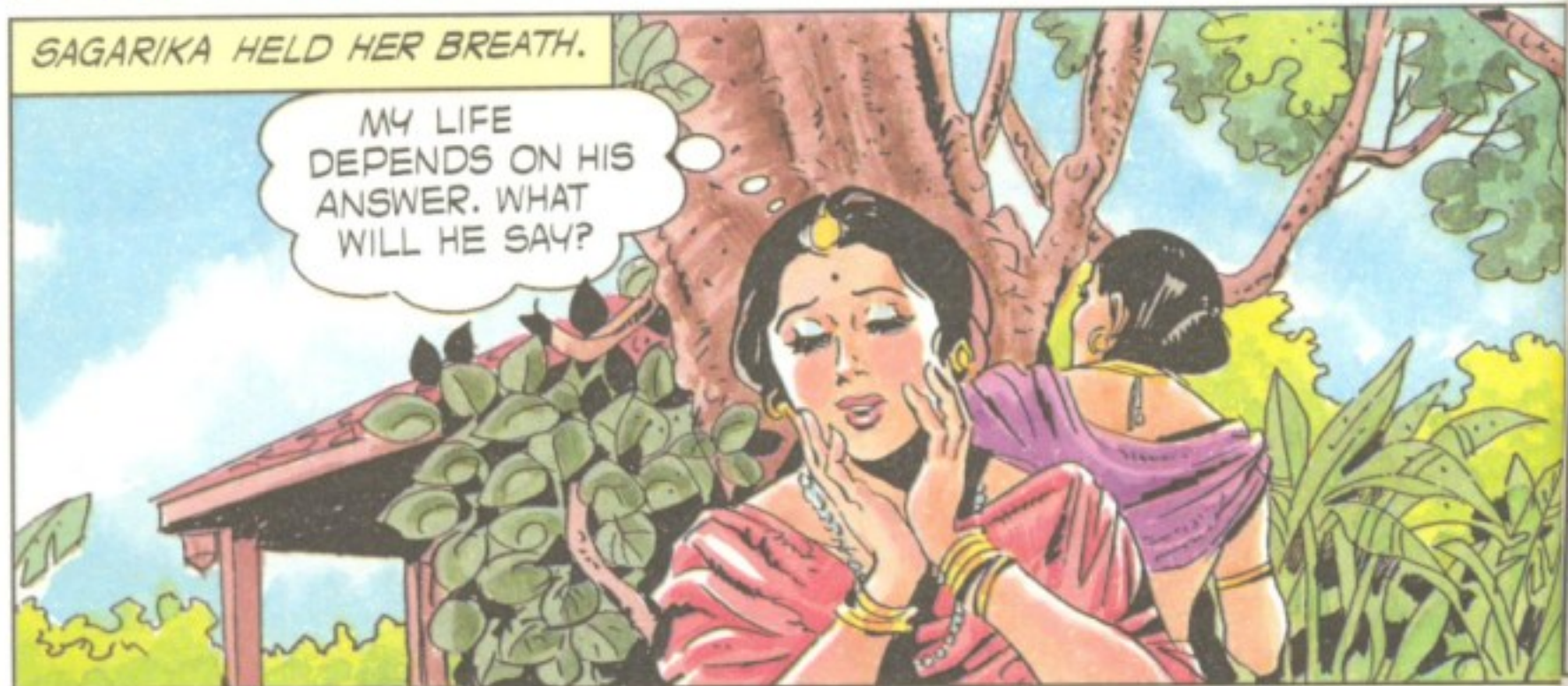


O UDAYANA,
YOU SEEM
SPELLBOUND!
WHY DOES
THE PORTRAIT
HOLD SUCH
FASCINATION
FOR YOU?



SAGARIKA HELD HER BREATH.

MY LIFE
DEPENDS ON HIS
ANSWER. WHAT
WILL HE SAY?





THIS MAIDEN EXCELS
LAKSHMI IN GRACE. SHE
HAS CAPTIVATED MY
HEART.



HOW
SOOTHING
HIS WORDS
ARE !



I MUST FIND
A WAY OF
BRINGING THE
KING AND MY
FRIEND
TOGETHER.



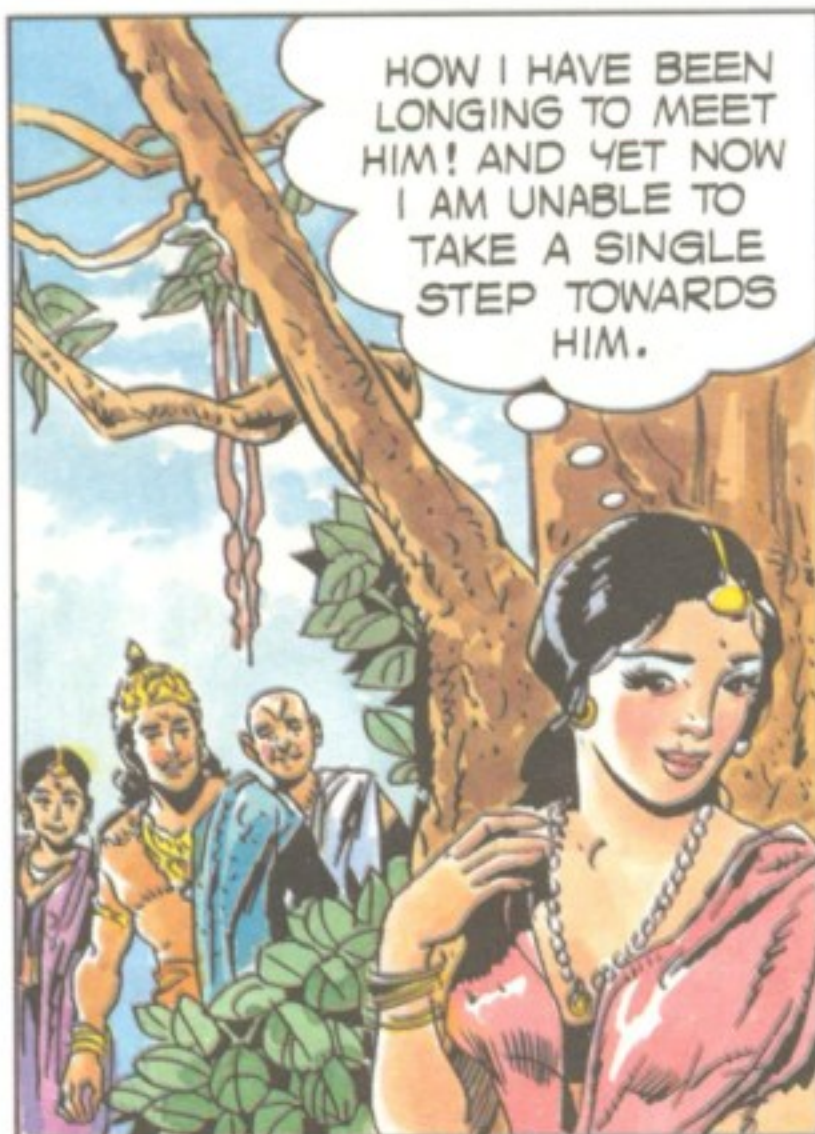
SAGARIKA, WAIT
HERE. I WILL
GO AND GET THE
PORTRAIT.

ALL RIGHT,
BUT PLEASE COME
BACK SOON.

SUSANGATA WENT INTO THE GARDEN HOUSE AND CAME OUT AFTER A LITTLE WHILE WITH THE KING AND VASANTAKA.



THE KING IS COMING
THIS WAY ! I HOPE
SUSANGATA HASN'T
TOLD HIM IT WAS
I WHO DREW HIS
PORTRAIT.



BUT THE CLUMSY VASANTAKA DROPPED THE PORTRAIT.

LET'S GO TOGETHER.

MY LORD, I CAME THIS WAY TO SEE IF THE NAVAMALIKA CREEPER HAS BLOSSOMED.

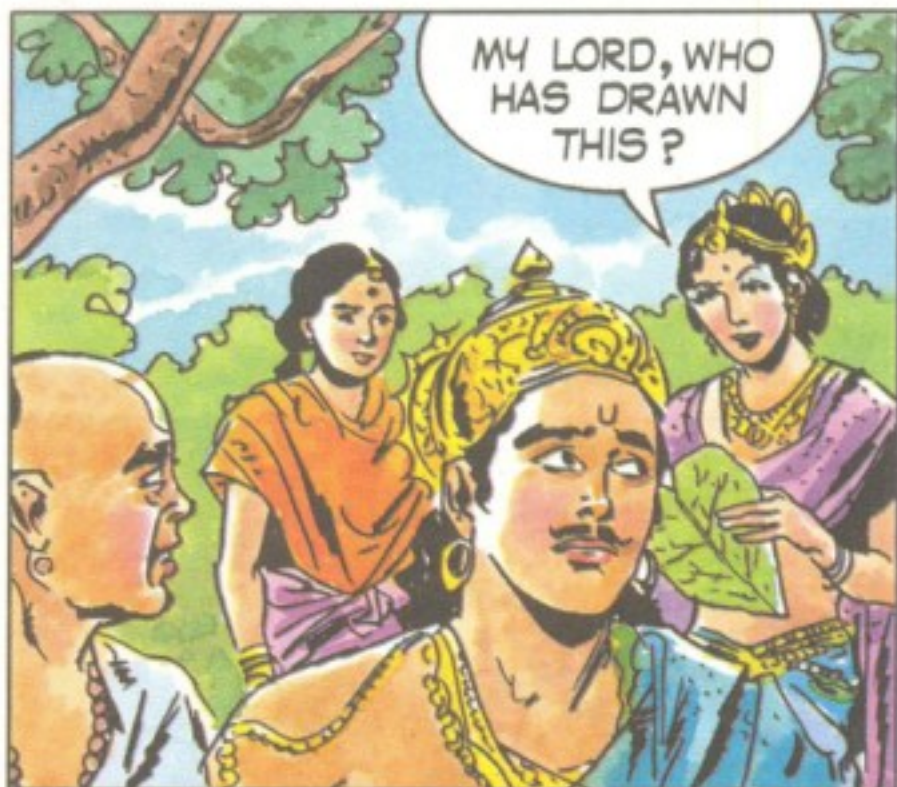


KANCHANA MALA, THE QUEEN'S COMPANION, PICKED UP THE PORTRAIT AND SHOWED IT TO THE QUEEN.

IT'S MY LORD AND SAGARIKA!



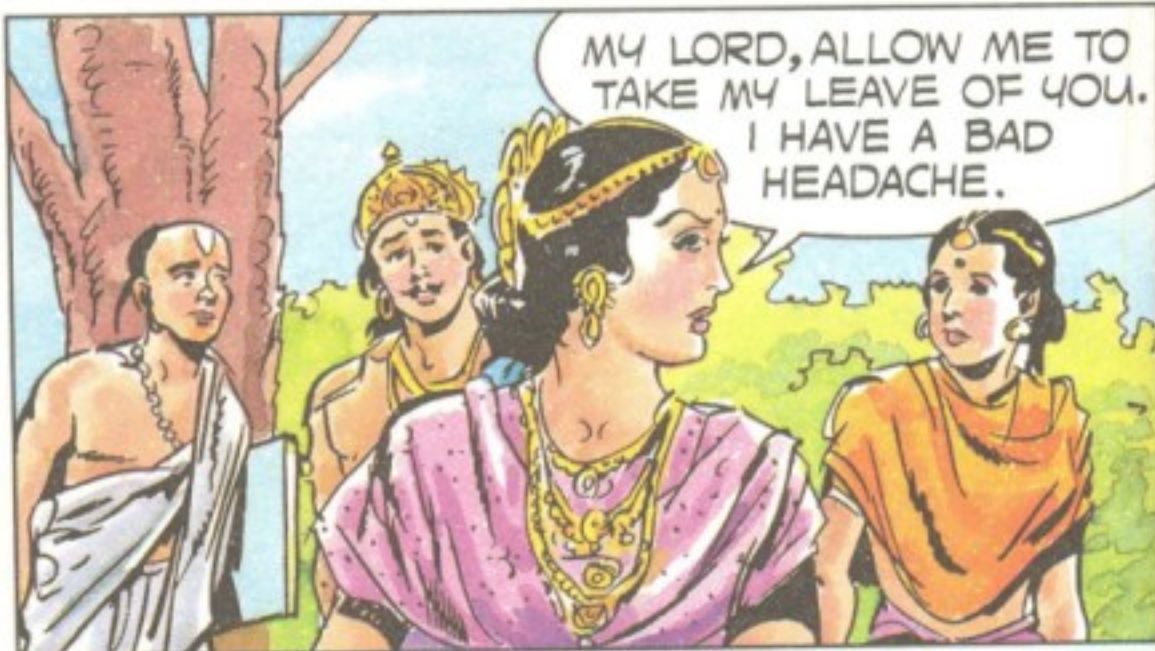
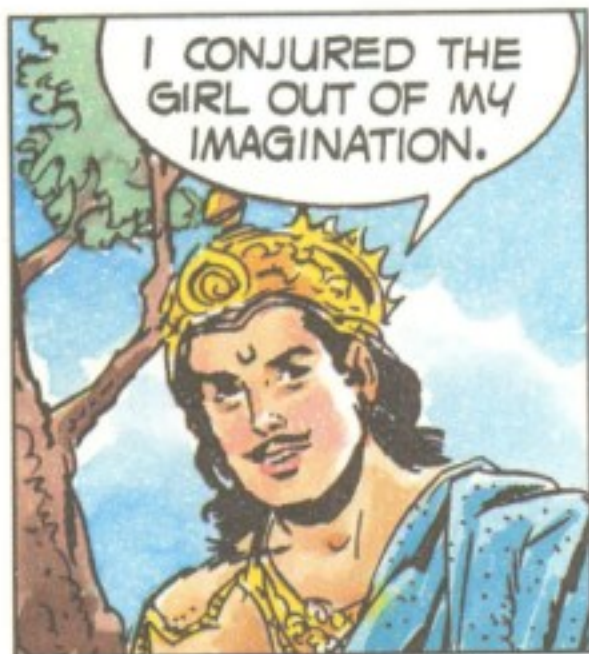
MY LORD, WHO HAS DRAWN THIS?



I TOLD THE KING THAT A SELF-PORTRAIT IS DIFFICULT TO DO. HE DISAGREED - AND TO PROVE HIS POINT HE DREW HIS OWN PORTRAIT.

AND THE GIRL?





THE NEXT DAY VASANTAKA MET SUSANGATA.

SUSANGATA, MY FRIEND PINES FOR SAGARIKA. CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

THIS EVENING I WILL BRING SAGARIKA TO THE MADHAVI BOWER, DRESSED IN THE QUEEN'S ROBES AND I MYSELF WILL BE IN KANCHANA MALA'S DRESS.

LITTLE DID THEY REALISE THAT KANCHANA MALA, WHO HAPPENED TO BE PASSING BY HAD HEARD EVERY WORD.

SHE TOLD THE QUEEN WHAT SHE HAD OVERHEARD —

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

YOU WILL, IF YOU VISIT THE MADHAVI BOWER THIS EVENING.

THAT EVENING AT THE MADHAVI BOWER —

SUSANGATA, YOU LOOK QUITE CHARMING DRESSED IN KANCHANA MALA'S CLOTHES AND SAGARIKA LOOKS JUST LIKE THE QUEEN. COME, THE KING IS WAITING.

WHEN VASANTAKA LED THEM TO UDAYANA-



LOOK CAREFULLY, MY LORD! DOES EVERYONE LOOK LIKE SAGARIKA TO YOU?

YOU, VASAVADATTA!



WITHOUT SAYING ANOTHER WORD, VASAVADATTA WENT AWAY.

VASAVADATTA LOVES ME. SHE MUST BE HEART-BROKEN. SHE MAY EVEN KILL HERSELF....



MEANWHILE, SAGARIKA APPROACHED THE MADHAVI BOWER DRESSED IN THE QUEEN'S CLOTHES.



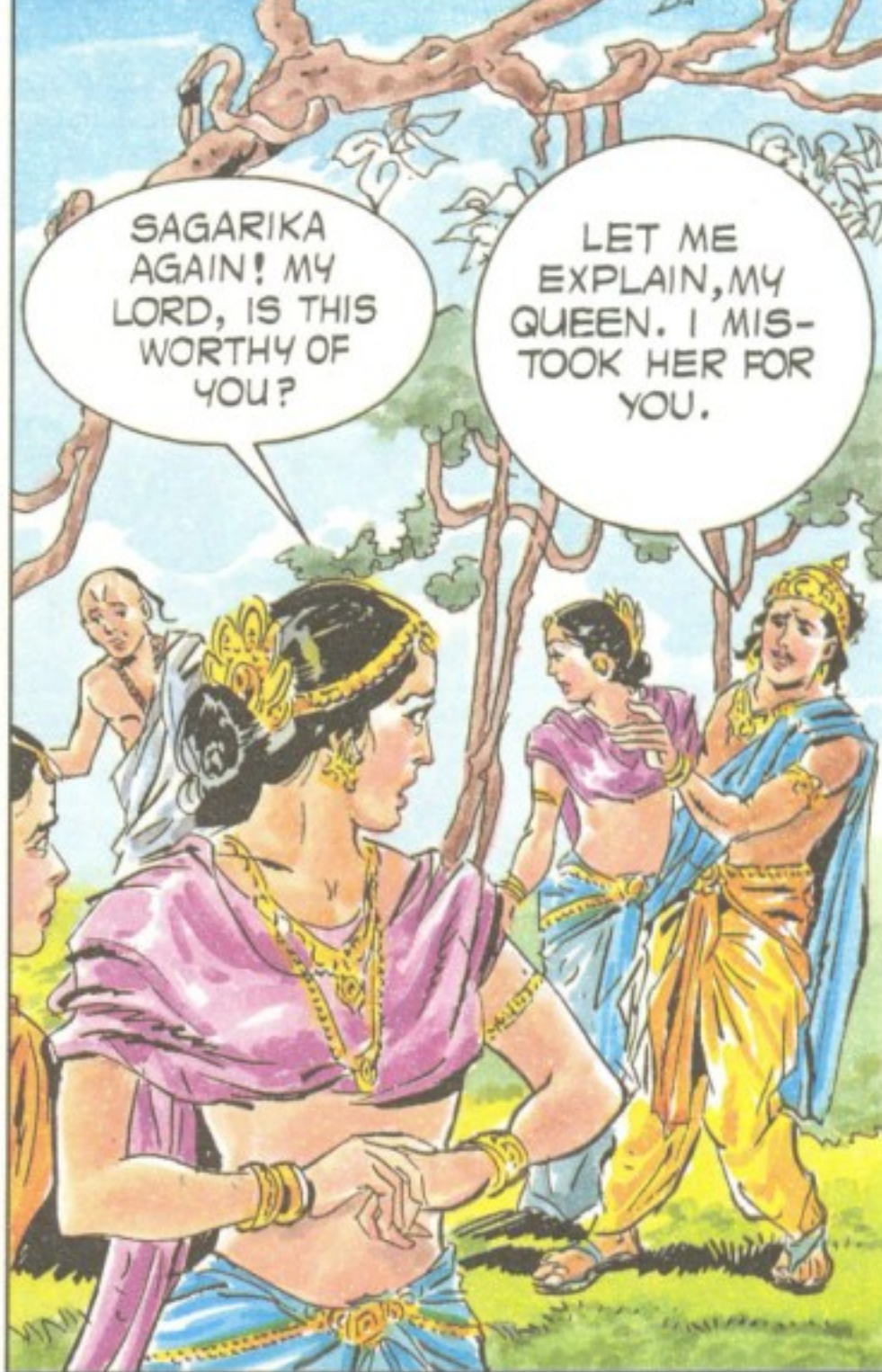


MEANWHILE, THE QUEEN HAD DECIDED TO RETURN.

I SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN CRUEL TO MY HUSBAND. HE WAS FULL OF REMORSE. I WILL GO BACK TO HIM.



BUT WHEN SHE REACHED THERE —





AND I BROUGHT HIM HERE ONLY BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU.

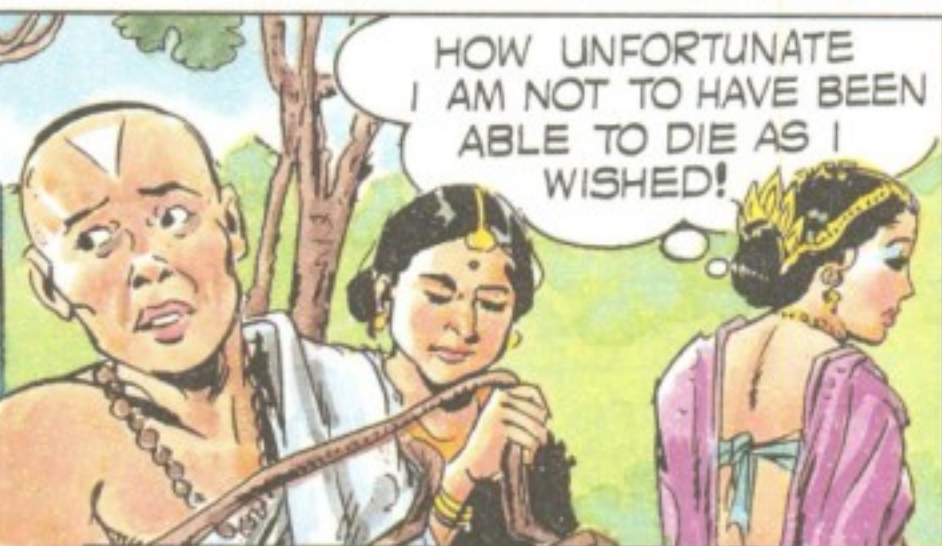


AND HERE IS THE PROOF. LOOK AT THIS NOOSE!

KANCHANA MALA, BIND HIM WITH THIS VERY NOOSE...



... AND TAKE AWAY SAGARIKA AND LOCK HER UP.



HOW UNFORTUNATE I AM NOT TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DIE AS I WISHED!

AND KANCHANA MALA LED VASANTAKA AND SAGARIKA AWAY AS UDAYANA WATCHED HELPLESSLY.

BUT THE NEXT DAY THE QUEEN SET VASANTAKA FREE. SUSANGATA WENT TO MEET HIM.

SAGARIKA HAS SENT YOU THIS. YOU HAVE BEEN VERY SYMPATHETIC TO HER. PLEASE ACCEPT IT.

THE JEWEL-NECKLACE? THE SIGHT OF THIS MAY COMFORT MY FRIEND.

VASANTAKA TOOK THE NECKLACE TO KING UDAYANA —

VASANTAKA, YOU MUST PUT IT ON. LOOKING AT IT, I SHALL TRY TO TAKE COURAGE.

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, A MAGICIAN FROM UJJAYINI CAME TO THE PALACE TO PERFORM BEFORE KING UDAYANA AND QUEEN VASAVADATTA.



HERE YOU SEE BRAHMA, VISHNU AND MAHESHWARA, AND THERE — THE APSARAS DANCING.

YOU FOOL, SHOW SAGARIKA IF YOU WANT TO PLEASE THE KING!

JUST THEN AN ATTENDANT CAME IN.

I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR INTERRUPTING, YOUR MAJESTY. BUT VASUBHUTI, THE MINISTER FROM SIMHALA, SEEKS AN AUDIENCE.

MY UNCLE'S MINISTER! WE SHOULD SEE HIM AT ONCE!

BUT, YOUR MAJESTY, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN MY BEST ITEM! PERMIT ME . . .

LATER, NOT NOW.



THEN VASUBHUTI ENTERED AND PAID HIS RESPECTS TO UDAYANA.

I BRING BAD NEWS:
OUR SHIP HAS SUNK.
ONLY YOUR ENVOY AND
I MANAGED TO SURVIVE.
YOUR BETROTHED,
PRINCESS RATNAVALI,
WHOM WE WERE
BRINGING TO KAUSHAMBI
WAS DROWNED IN
THE STORMY SEA.

MY BETROTHED...

MY DEAR
COUSIN!
NO!!

JUST THEN—

FIRE! FIRE!
THERE IS A FIRE IN
THE INNER
APARTMENT.

MY LORD! SAVE
SAGARIKA! HER HANDS
AND FEET HAVE BEEN
BOUND ON MY ORDERS.

UDAYANA DASHED INTO THE INNER APARTMENTS.

SAGARIKA!



THEN VASUBHUTI EXPLAINED HOW RATNAVALI CAME TO BE BETROTHED TO KING UDAYANA ON THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY YAUGANDHARAYANA.

MY LORD, I WONDER WHY YAUGANDHARAYANA TOLD US NOTHING.

HE MUST HAVE HAD HIS REASONS. WE'LL SEND FOR HIM.

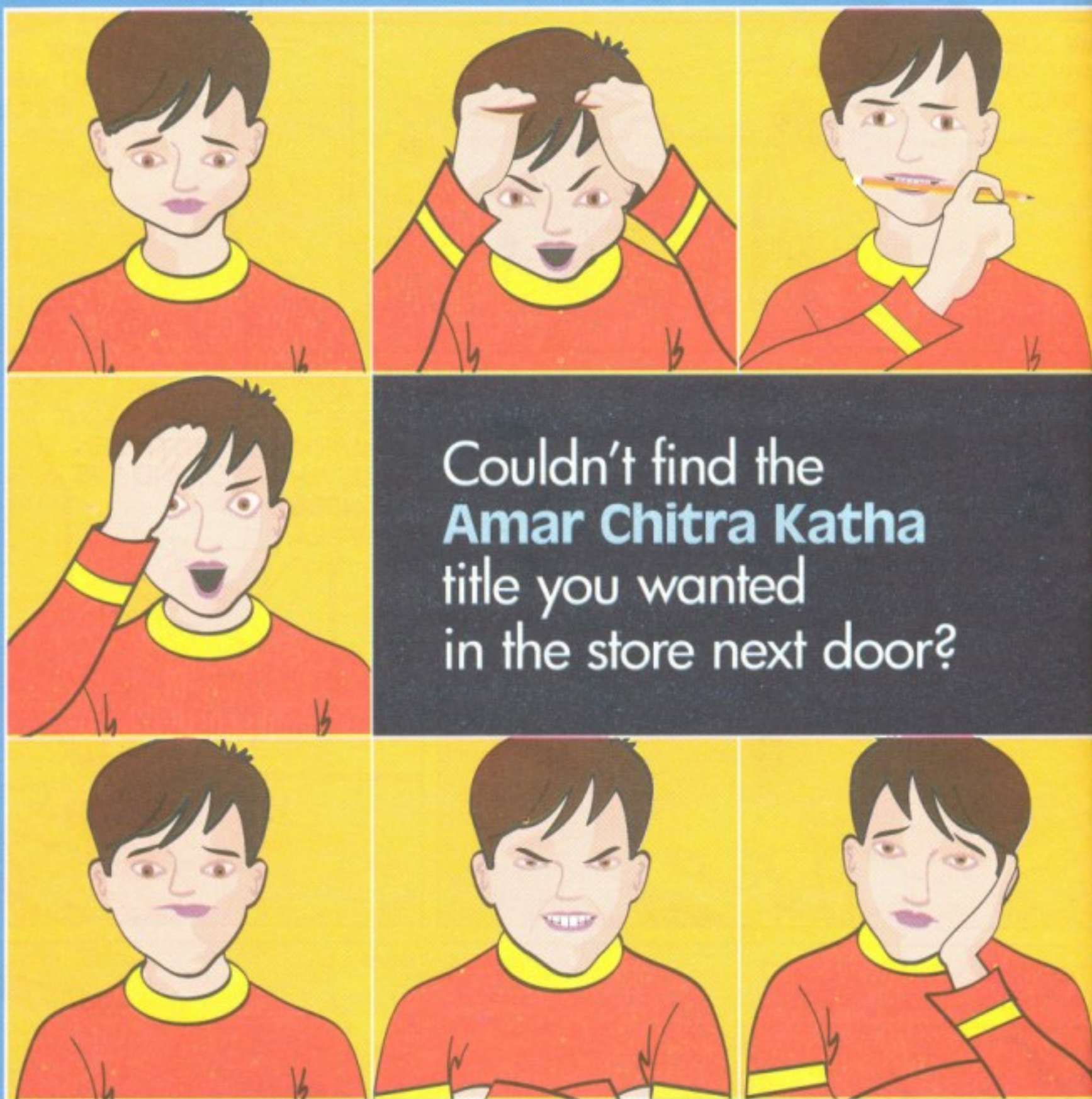
YAUGANDHARAYANA CAME AT ONCE —

I HEARD A SAGE PROPHECY THAT THE MAN WHO MARRIES RATNAVALI WILL BECOME THE GREATEST OF KINGS...

...AND THAT'S WHY I TRIED TO BRING ABOUT A MARRIAGE BETWEEN YOU, MY LORD, AND THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA.

THEN VASAVADATTA LED RATNAVALI TO UDAYANA.

MY LORD, ACCEPT MY COUSIN AS YOUR WIFE.



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