



SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

MODERN LIFE MEETS ANCIENT WISDOM

Vol 732





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SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

It was the end of a warm summer's day, in 1916. The large rambling family house cooled down as the pleasant breeze wafted in through the wide verandahs of sun-dried mudbricks in Ernakulam, Kerala.

To the soft murmur of swaying palms and whispering waves was added a new sound — the hearty cry of a new-born baby.

The birth of the first-born was an occasion for much joy and celebration for Kuttan Menon and Manku.

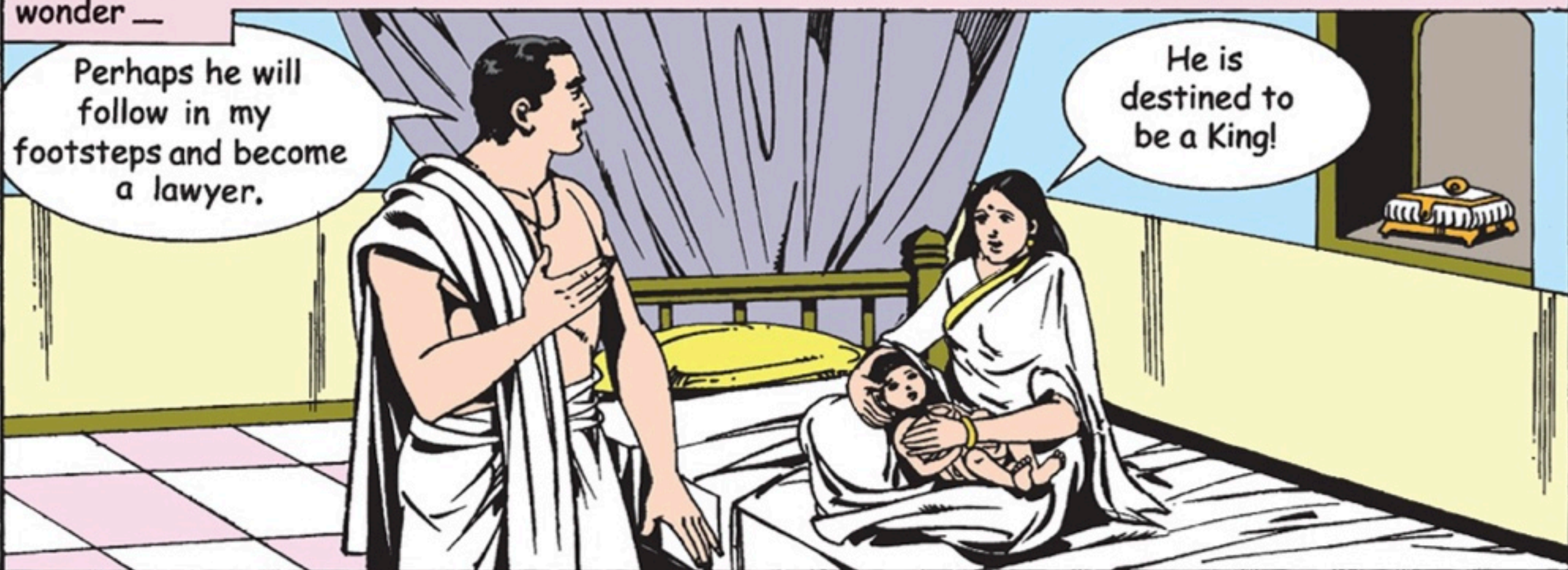
Kuttan! It's a boy!
As predicted!

But of course!
Just as our family
priest foretold.

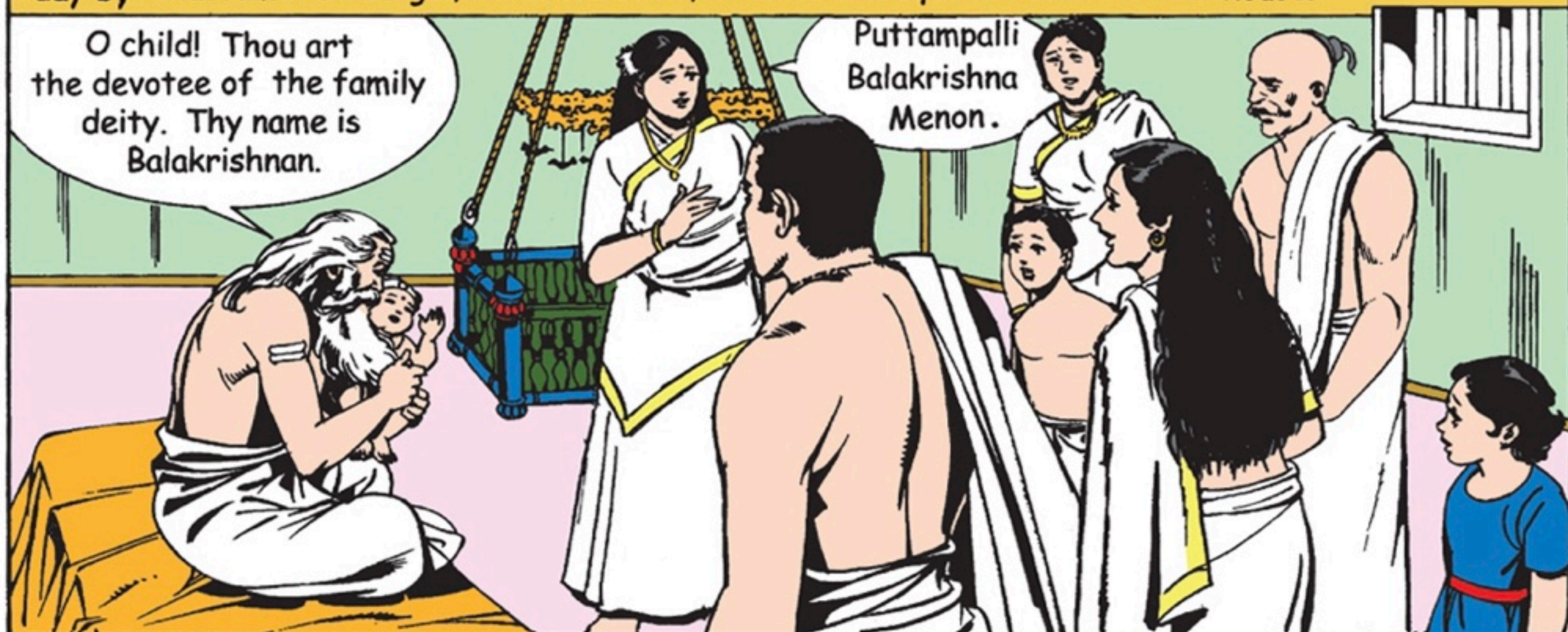
At once, an astrologer was sent for to cast the baby's horoscope.

Let me see
the position of the
stars. 26th *mesham* 1091
of the *Kollum* era. At 7:30
the star *Pushya* ascending
in the *Raja Yoga*. Hm!
Auspicious birth
indeed!

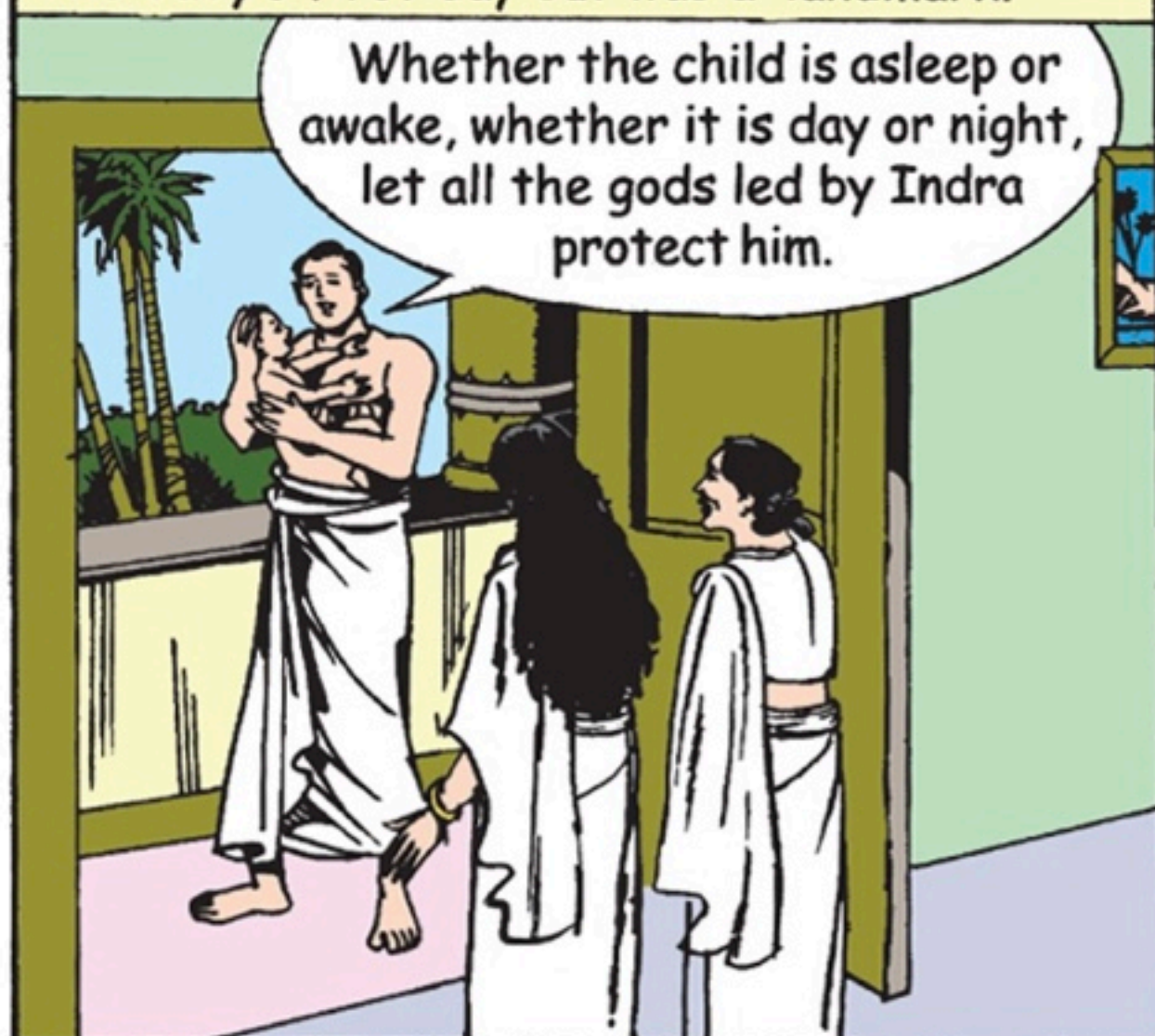
The new father's chest swelled with pride. Vadakke Kurupath Kuttan Menon was a judge at the local court in Ernakulam. While Manku, or Parukutti Amma, gazed at her newborn with affection and wonder —



The family lived at Poothampalli House belonging to Manku's father, Choppully Kunikuttan Menon, a devout, generous man. The *namakarana samskara*, or naming ceremony, was performed on the fourth day by Chattambi Swamigal, a learned saint, who was a frequent visitor to the house.



The baby's first day out was a landmark.



His head was shaved and his ears were pierced and adorned with gold earrings. Even the first morsel of solid food was a celebration.



Balakrishnan, Balan for short, received all the rituals prescribed by the scriptures.

* The day on which cooked rice is first served

Whenever Chattambi Swamigal visited the house, his favourite child was Balan. He would place Balan on his chest and rock him gently while rolling his head from side to side.



Both of them prattled on endlessly.

Balan's mother was mystified by these strange conversations.

What on earth do you say to him?

It's between him and me. I've taught him everything!



The memory of this bond of love and peace remained in the boy's mind all his life.

Little Balan was initiated to the world of letters. Into a tray of unhusked rice, his stubby little finger was guided to trace the first letter.

Balan, this is Om!
Say Om thrice.

Om!Om!Om!



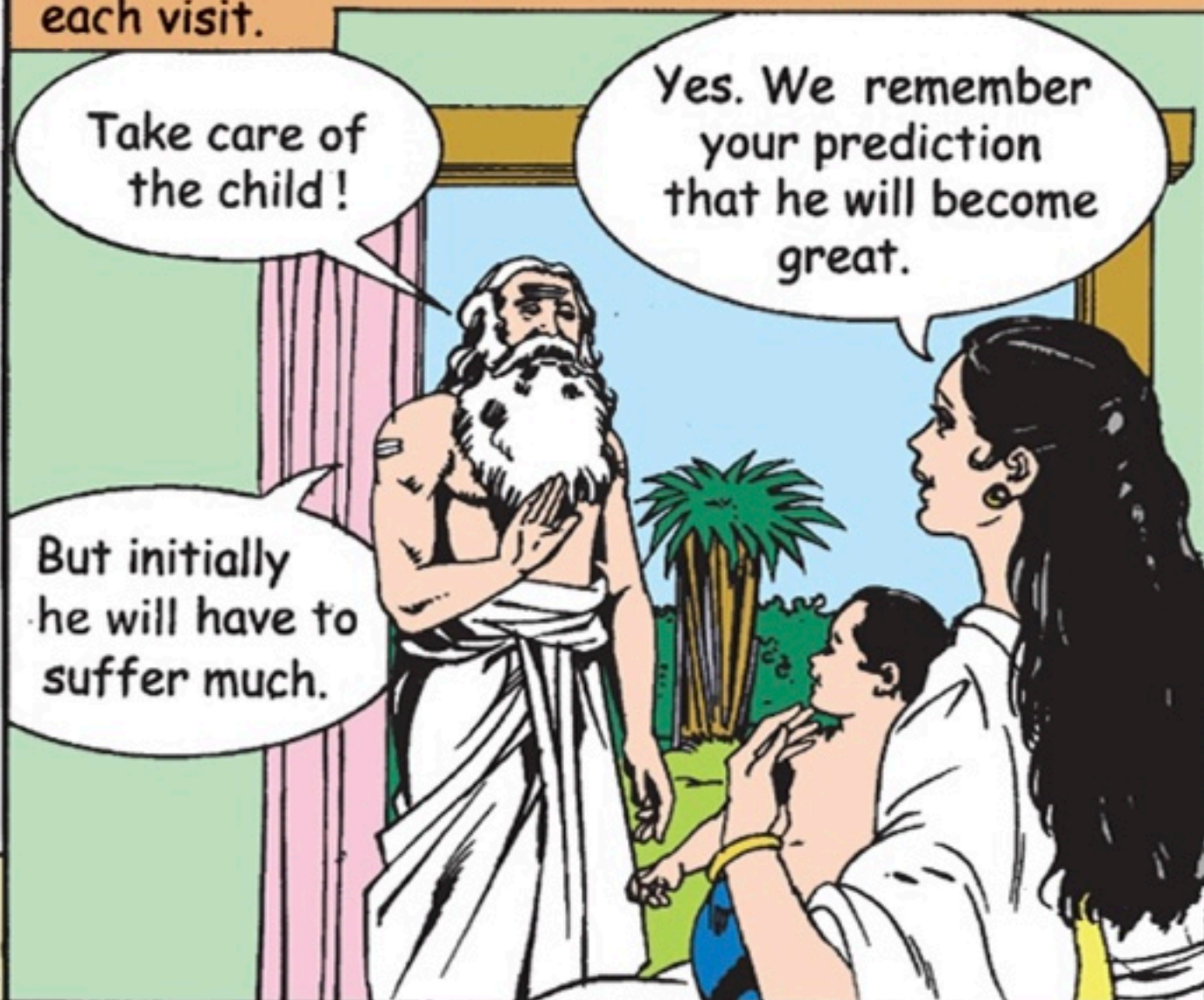
The ritual initiation was to reap rich rewards of exceptional oratory and a unique way with words.

Swamigal always repeated the same phrase after each visit.

Take care of the child!

Yes. We remember your prediction that he will become great.

But initially he will have to suffer much.



To the group of six cousins who loved to play with Balan were added two sisters of his own, Padmini and Kanakam.

A healthy baby girl!
Both mother and daughter are fine.

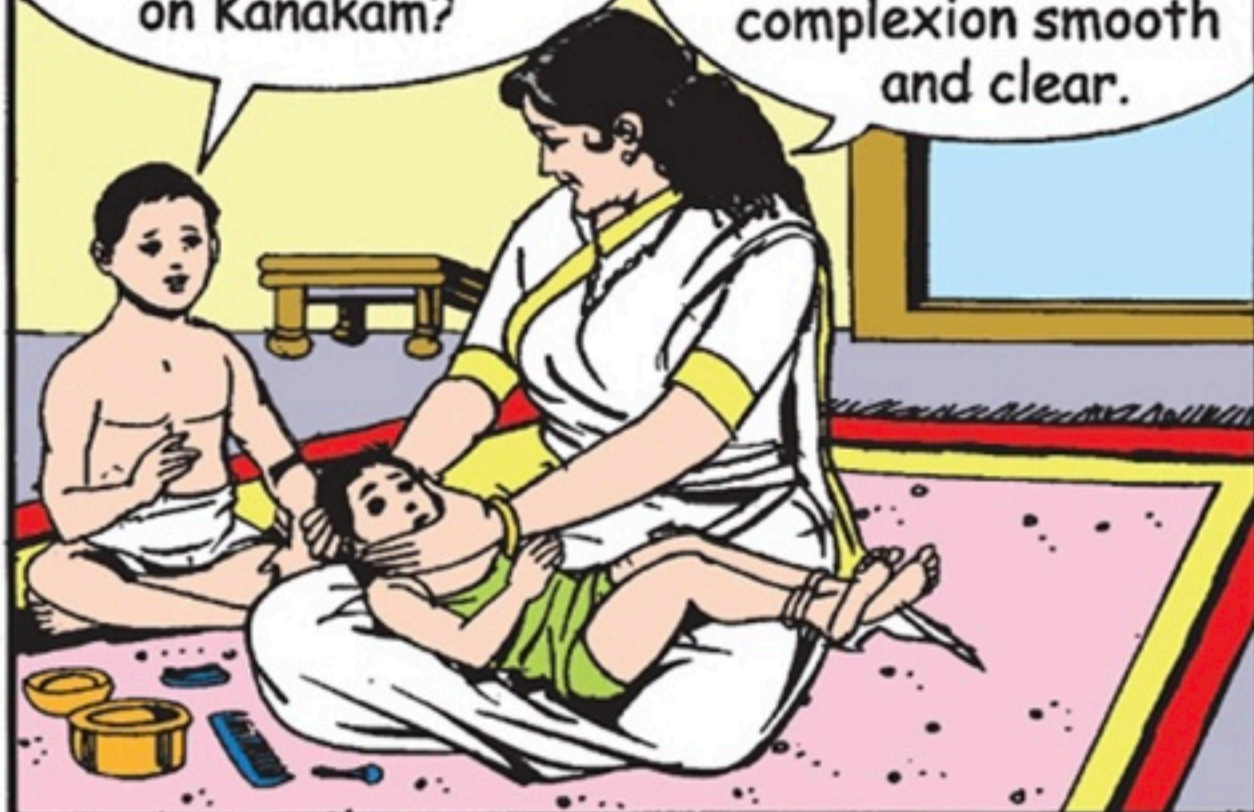


However, just after the birth, Balan's mother died.

No one could replace his own mother. But at Poothampalli house, he and his sisters received abundant love and affection from their aunt.

Kochu Amma! Why are you putting that paste on Kanakam?

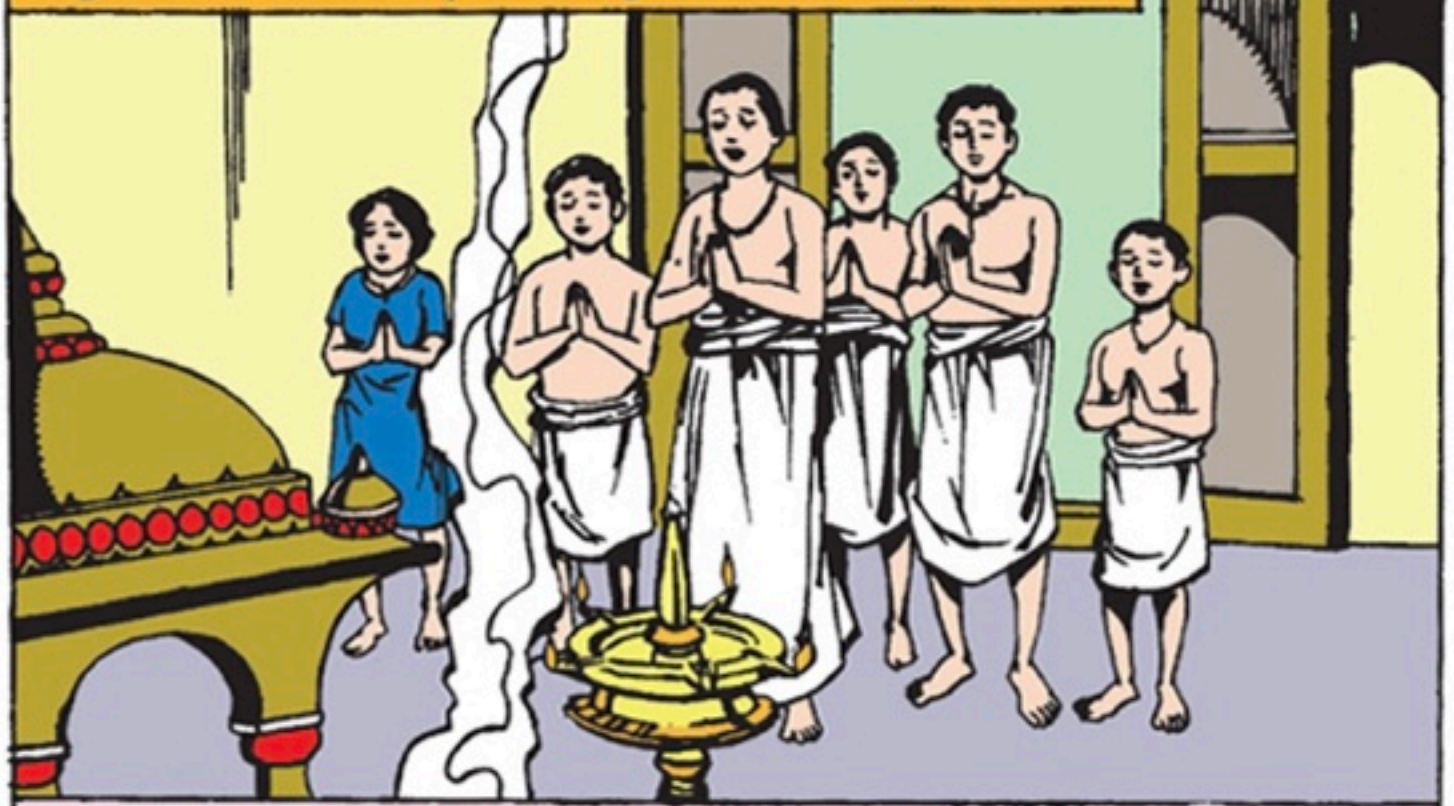
This Vayambu paste will make her complexion smooth and clear.



Kochu Amma, his aunt, took over the entire mothering.



As the sun shed its orange rays across the lagoons and rice fields, it was time to light the oil lamps and gather for prayers.



Freshly bathed, Balan lined up in the family prayer room, along with the other children.

It was not out of choice but compulsion. No prayer, no dinner. It started with a simple prayer song, or bhajan.

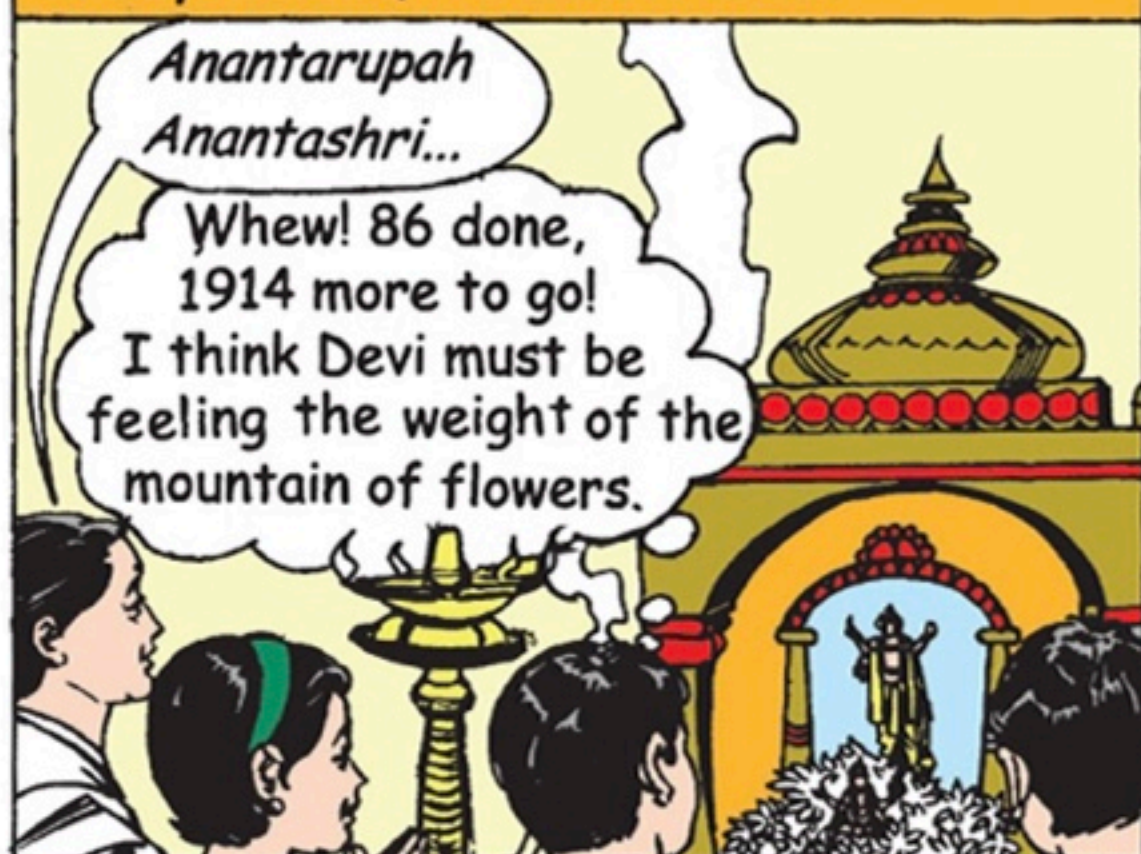


For fifteen minutes the kids sang with gusto, each trying to sing the loudest.



It was time for the main service.

The women of the household chanted the one thousand names each of the two family deities, Vishnu and Devi.



With each name, a flower petal was offered to the deity. It was tough for a ten-year-old child to sit through two hours of prayers.

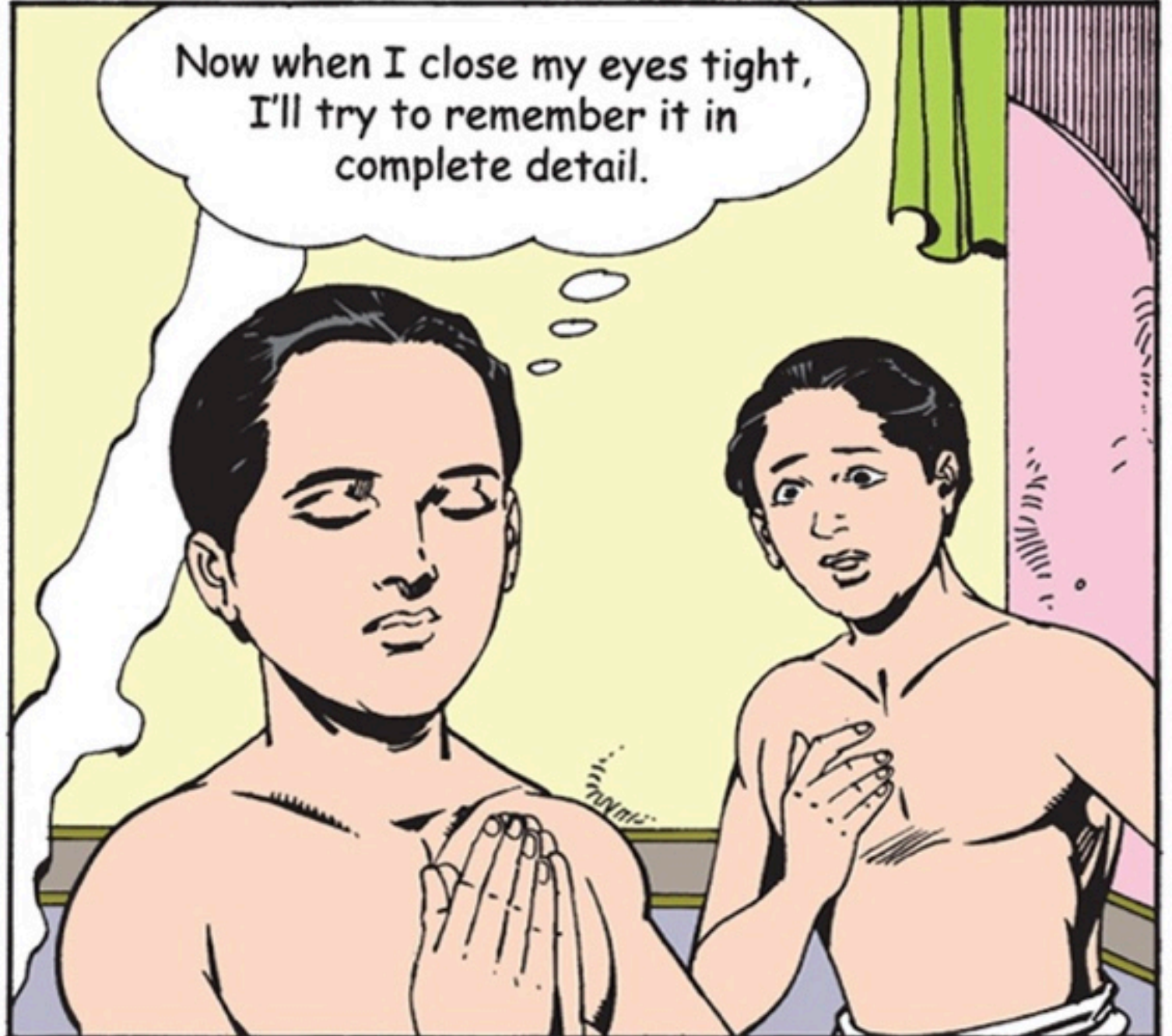
To keep himself alert, Balan began to day-dream and invent private games about the gods lined up on the wall.



The picture before him was of Lord Shiva with the water of the holy Ganga springing from His matted hair, a crescent moon on His forehead, a serpent around His blue neck and a tender smile on his face.



Now when I close my eyes tight, I'll try to remember it in complete detail.



How thrilled he was to recall the splendid image in his mind whenever he wished! Accidentally, Balan had discovered a technique of meditation—

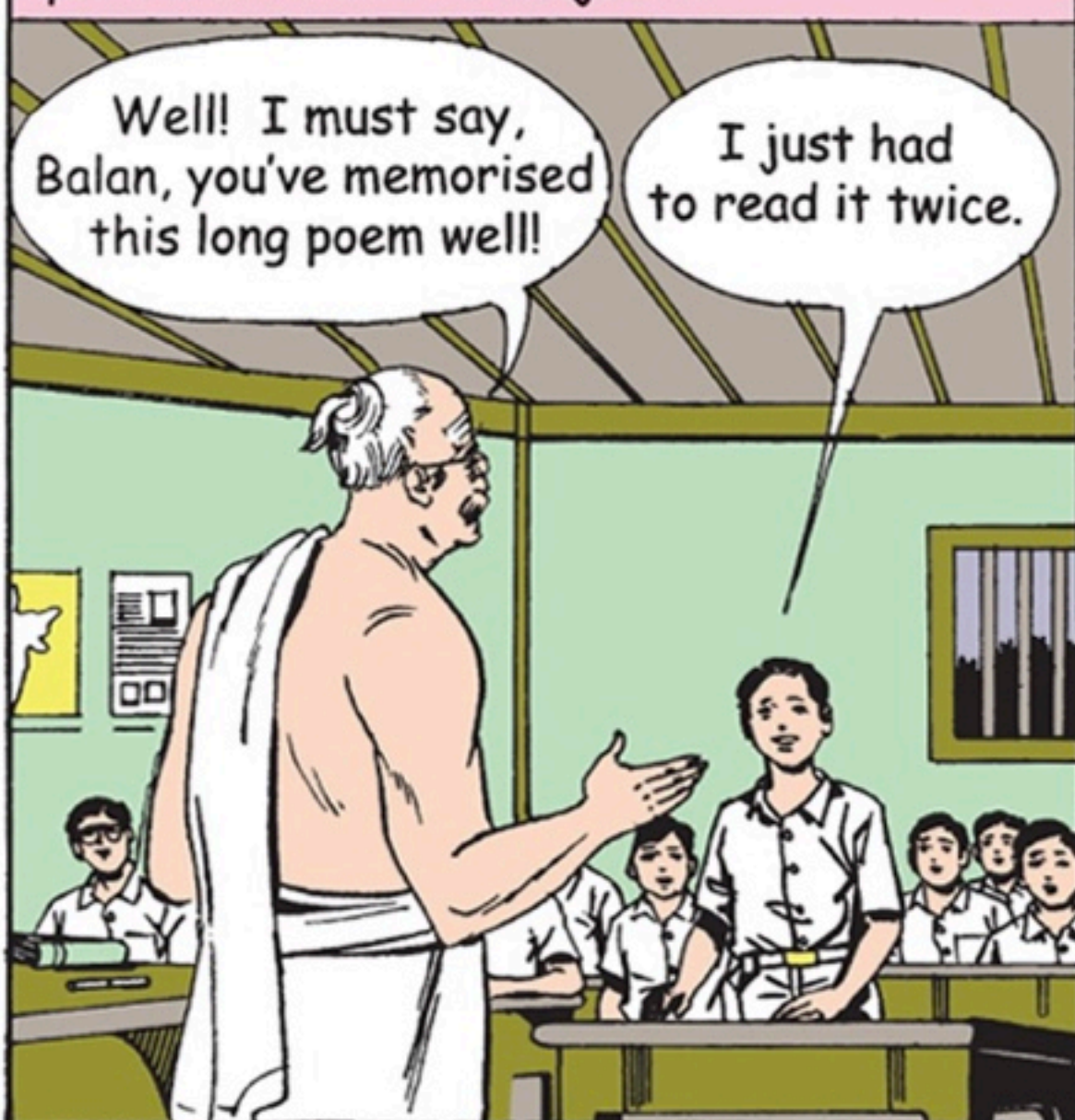


The game he had devised to pass time was a powerful tool for spiritual upliftment.

At the age of five, he began school. Every morning after a meal of *sambar* and rice, Balan and the other boys would go to Sri Rama Varma Boys' School.



Schoolwork was easy for Balan and he did quite well in all the subjects.



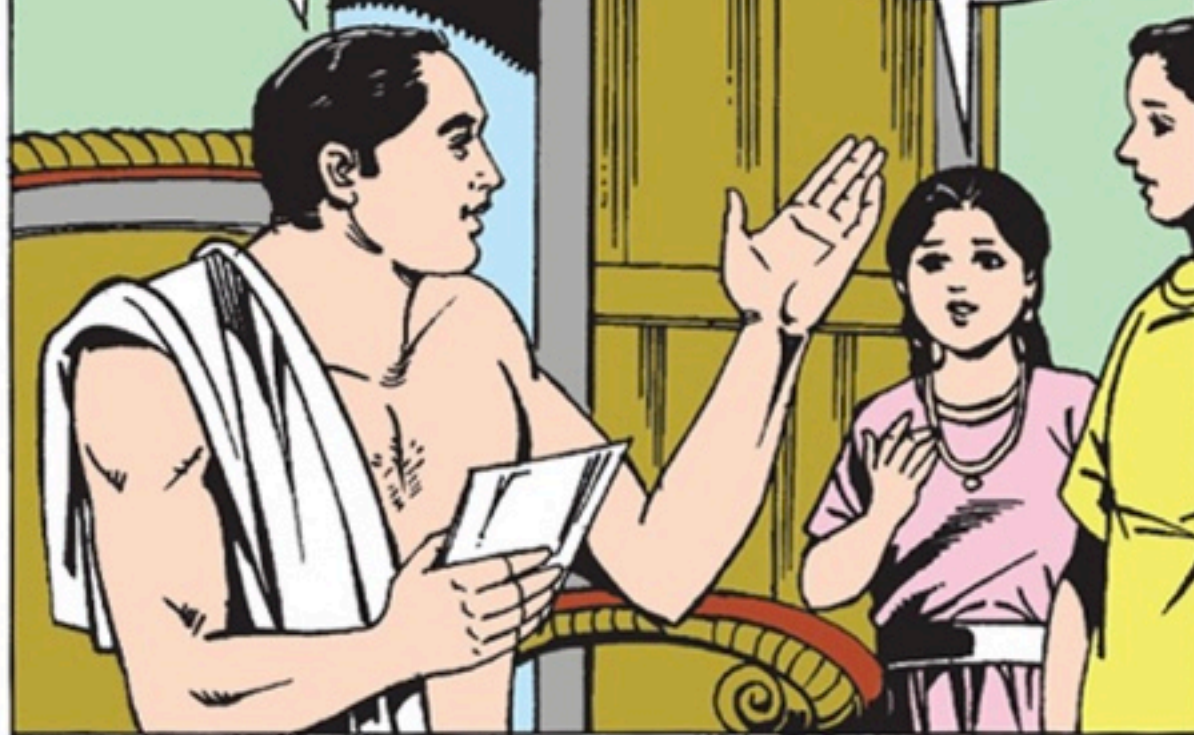
After school, they raced home and were quick to run out and play.



His school reports always did him proud.

Well, well! Balan has once again topped the score in Malayalam and English.

When on earth does he study? I always find him playing.



He also managed to find time to help his kid sisters with their homework.

Baletta*, just look at this awful maths exercise. I just can't get it right.

Up to your tricks again, Padmini?



There! As usual, you've tricked me into doing a bit of your homework! But you'd better do the rest on your own.

If I do it right, will you tell us another ghost story?



No! No! I'll get nightmares!

Little Kanakam was petrified of ghosts and all creatures of the dark, real or imaginary. Her brother fetched her a bit of red string and —

This is a special amulet blessed by Lord Shiva. No evil will come near you as long as it is on your wrist.



He had learnt that faith could dispel fear.

Their favourite holiday spot was the palatial home of their aunt who was married into the royal family of Cochin.

I love the big gardens of Paru Kuttiamma's house.

And the huge rooms.



Balan and his cousins managed to create as much noise as would an entire royal army.

Wherever Balan went, there was noise and laughter. During the ceremonial celebration of the 60th birthday of an uncle, the children had a lot of fun.

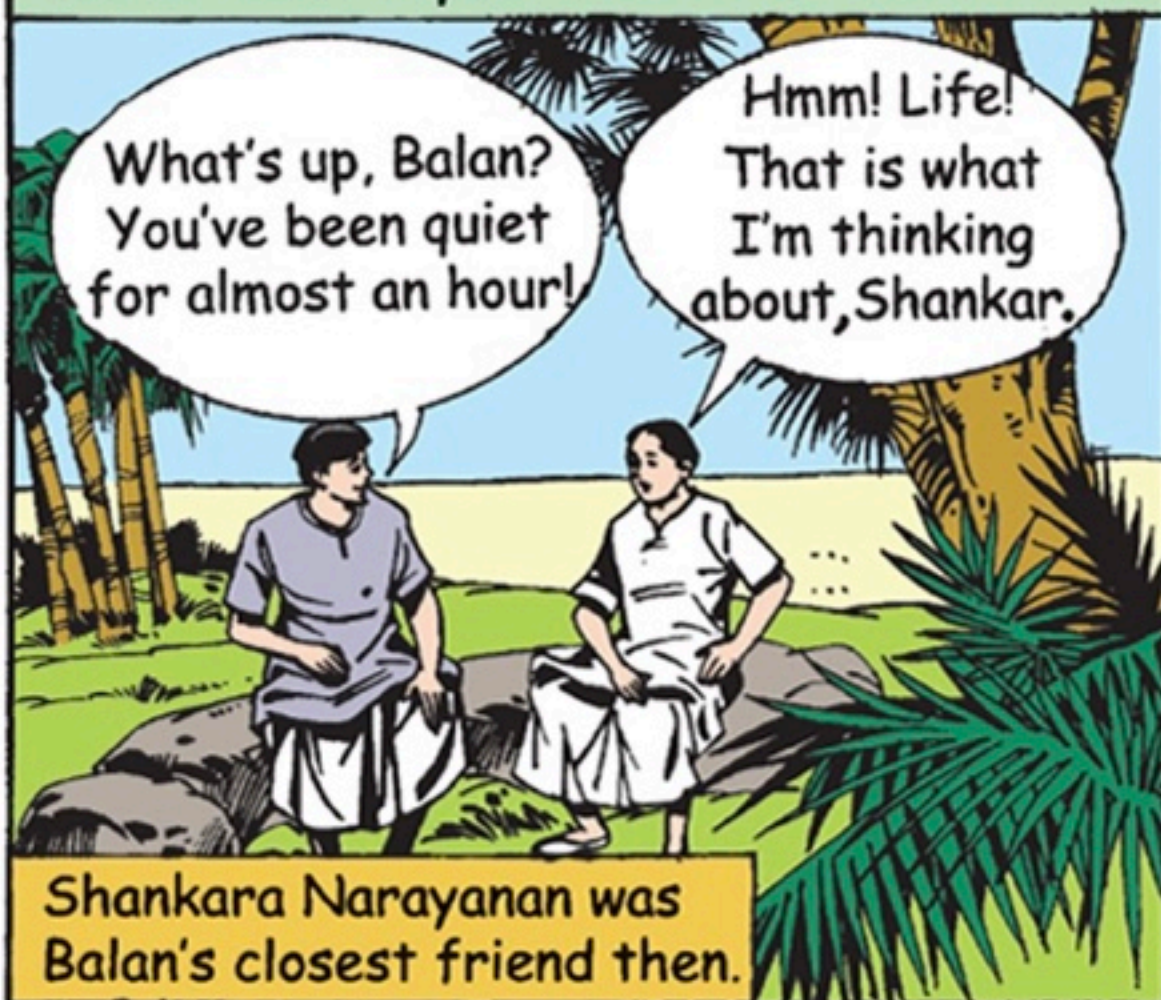
Oh! You've eaten up all the plantains meant for the feast! Where will we get some more?

From the plants.

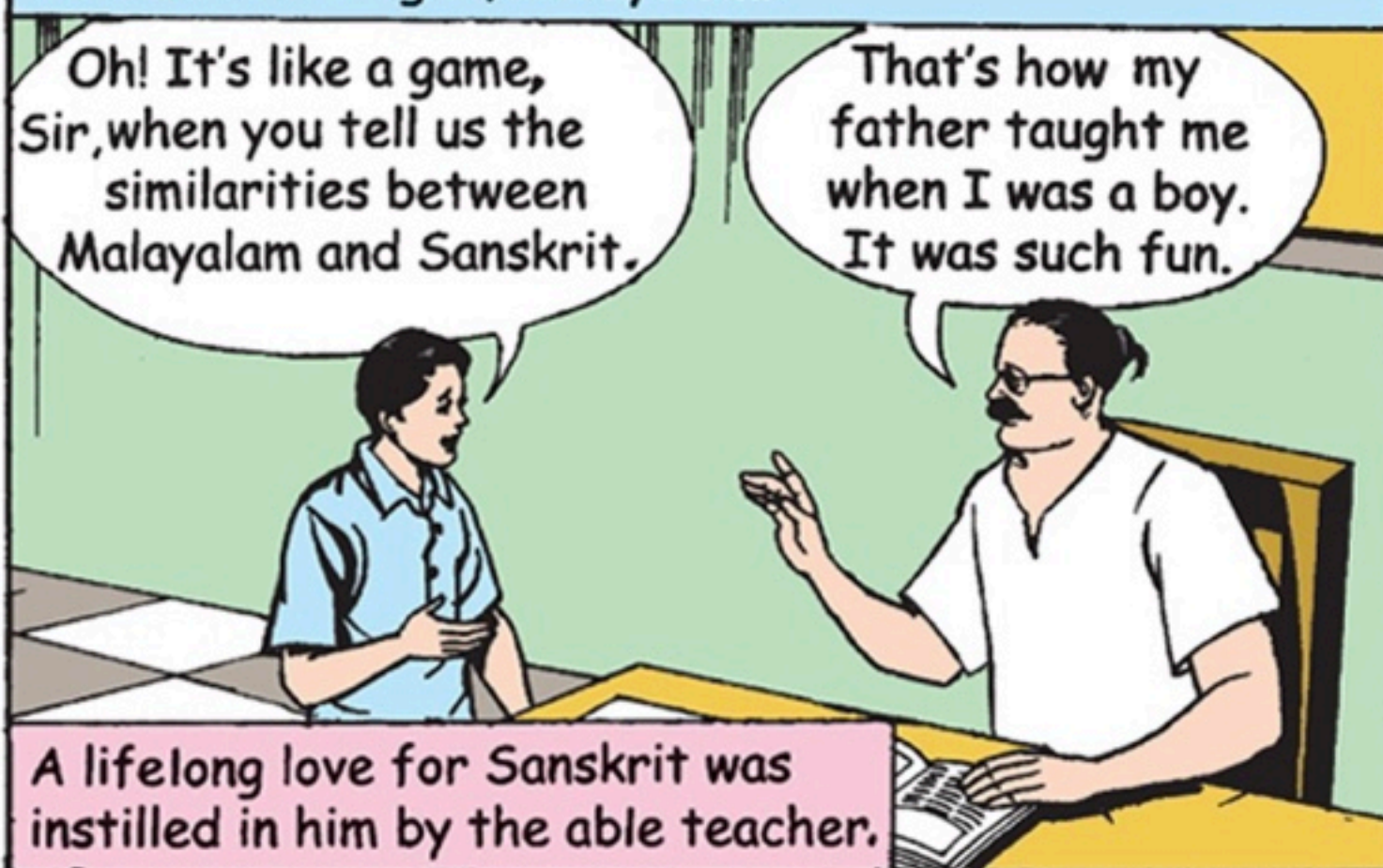


* Etta means elder brother

But there was also a serious side to this mischievous boy.



Balan's favourite subject was Sanskrit. His teacher made the difficult subject easy by comparing it with his mother tongue, Malayalam.



When Balan was twelve, he spent the summer with his cousin Kuttappan in a large rambling country estate.



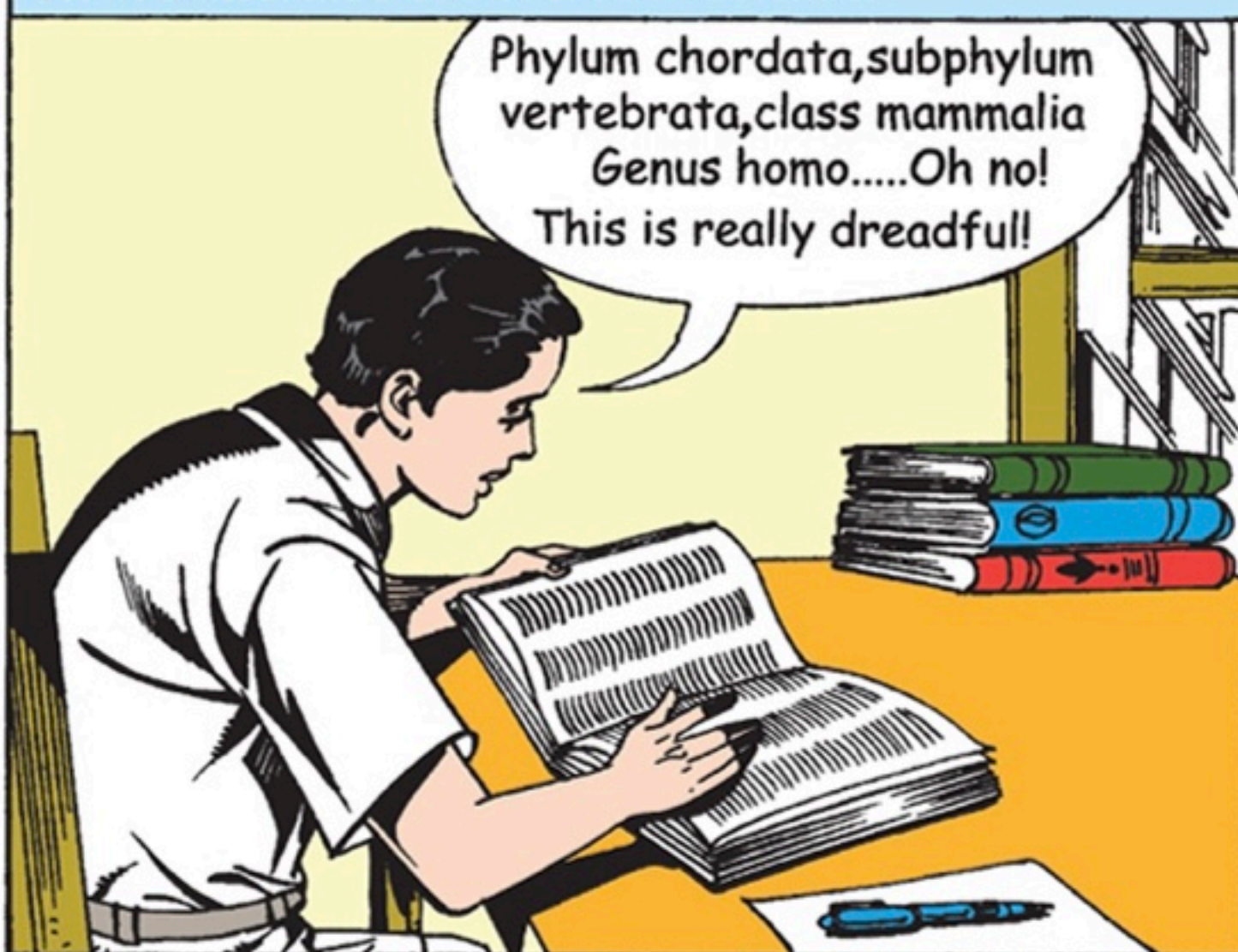
Throughout his childhood, he had a mind of his own.



Yet, without fail, every night before going to sleep he chanted Lord Shiva's name.



Balan began classes at Maharaja College, Ernakulam, for his intermediate course in science.



The result was not unexpected.

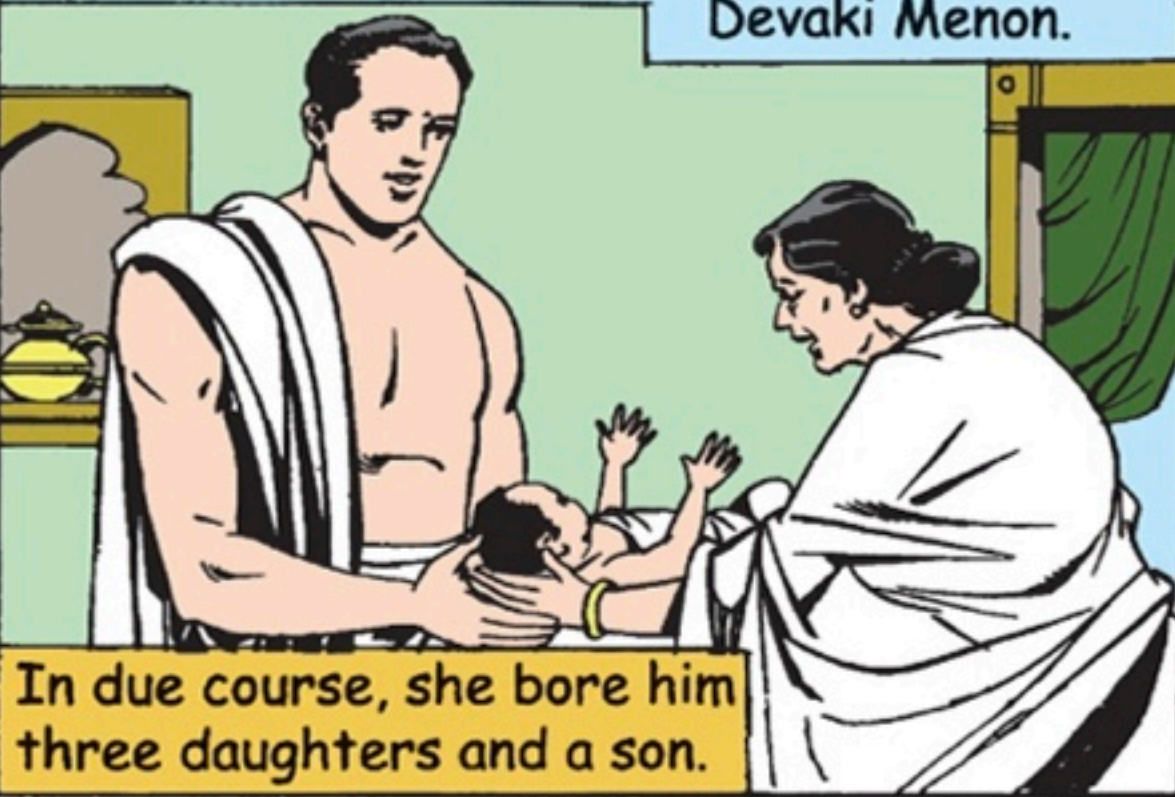
Balan! You obviously cannot manage Science! You've barely passed!

I have!

His father moved to Thrissur and Balan enrolled in St. Thomas College to study Liberal Arts.

Thank goodness! No more dissections! No more Science.

His father was promoted to a higher position in the Thrissur court. He then married Devaki Menon.



In due course, she bore him three daughters and a son.

As a teenager, Balan considered himself quite an intellectual.

Balan, we are going to the tank for the evening bath.

Not me! Just wet my towel in the water.

The evening bath before prayer was a daily ritual in the household.

His stepmother was busy.

Balan, I see you've had your bath. Get me some fresh banana leaves for the puja.

Oh dear! I'd better have a quick dip.

Outwardly agnostic, Balan imbibed the spiritual ambience of the tradition-bound family. He also continued his evening *japa*.

College life in Thrissur made Balan a flamboyant young man.

It's so hot! How can you bear to wear that silk shirt?

Ah! But silk suits a handsome young man like me.

It was fashionable in those days to have plastered hair.

So much oil! It's almost dripping from your head. So much hair dressing will make you bald some day.

Then I shan't need any oil.

What will become of him! He's so intelligent, charming and witty but he's not the least bit interested in studies.

Check and mate!!

Balan was fascinated by his grandmother, who sat peacefully all day on the upstairs balcony.

Don't you get bored sitting here all day? Come out, it's Pooram.

No! I have Lord Krishna's name on my lips and his image in my heart.

Pooram, at Thrissur, is a special festival. There are games, an orchestra, fireworks and an elephant parade.

Balan! Come. We are going to see the elephant parade.

Aha! Girls watch the elephants. Boys watch the girls!

His uncle Neelakanta Menon was the police Commissioner of Cochin and later the Chief Justice one of the few who owned a car.

Balan! Did you trace that funny sound?

Yes! It was a little nut!

Balan was good at tinkering with the car and as a reward, got to drive it.

His uncle was a graduate from Oxford Law School and hoped his nephew would follow in his footsteps.

Balan, you like the good things in life but for that you need a career — hard work.

There's a lot of time to think about a career.

His childhood habit of questioning everything grew with age.

Why should there be a God?

God is the sum of all knowledge and goodness. We are each of us a ray of that sun.

The arrogance of adolescence warped all such ideas.

If I am a ray of God, it is my presence that makes the existence of God visible. So Balan is the source of God, not God the source of Balan.

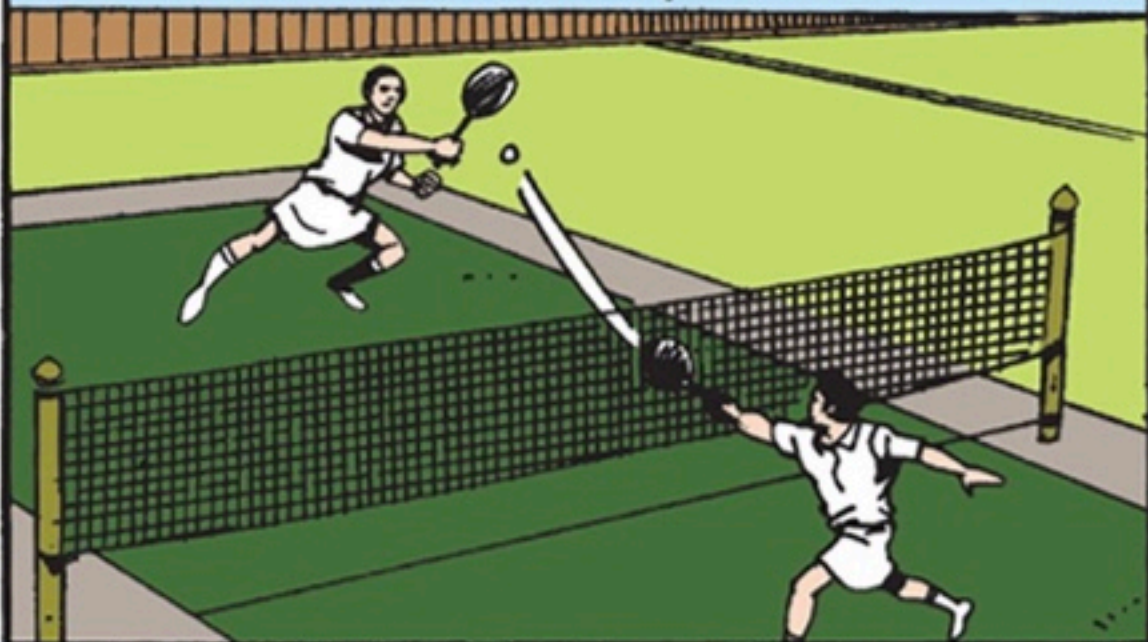
Balan, why have you decided to do postgraduation in literature and law from Lucknow? Why leave home?

Simple! I didn't qualify for admission here.

Balan excelled in his literature courses. His personal favourites were Shelley and George Bernard Shaw.

Men are wise in proportion not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience. If we could learn from mere experience, the stones of London would be wiser than the wisest man.

But he managed a lot of time for tennis and was on the University team.



He represented Lucknow University in singles matches against Ghaus Mohmed, who represented India at Wimbledon.

Problems were looming large on the national scene. Mahatma Gandhi had launched the Quit India Movement in 1942.



There were mass strikes, protest marches, and demonstrations. Students left schools and colleges to join the movement.

Among them was Balakrishna Menon.



Balan, all our classmates are leaving college.

Well, so should we, Shroff! Our first priority is our country!

Shroff was his roommate and a close friend.

Soon, Balan was deeply involved in the movement—writing and distributing pamphlets and giving speeches.



The British quelled the movement with whips, guns and arrests.



Within a week, hundreds were dead and thousands imprisoned in jails.



Menon was from Kerala and therefore a Malayali but referring to all South Indians as Madrasis was a common practice.

News of his imminent arrest reached Balan.



Balan, the British are after you.

Oh! I'd better go underground, somewhere far off.

For a whole year, Balan stayed in Kashmir.



Lovely place! But what a reason to be here.

He was constantly on the move to avoid causing suspicion. Only occasionally did he travel to Delhi to meet Shroff.

Whew! What a pleasure to have a good meal and wear fresh clothes.

Well! Eat, while I tell you the latest political developments.



But these journeys were not very safe. Once on the way to Delhi by bus in Abbottabad

Did anyone see a Madrasi enter here?

Oh no! I'd better get off.



In the strange town, he had nowhere to go. Then he saw a sign.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

Gosh! I do need to earn! Let me try my luck!



It was the office of the British Military Intelligence Communication Centre. Menon pretended to be a young man looking for a job.

He was hired immediately as a machine operator for relaying coded messages.

Young man! You are good at your job. Too good! Why did you settle for this job?

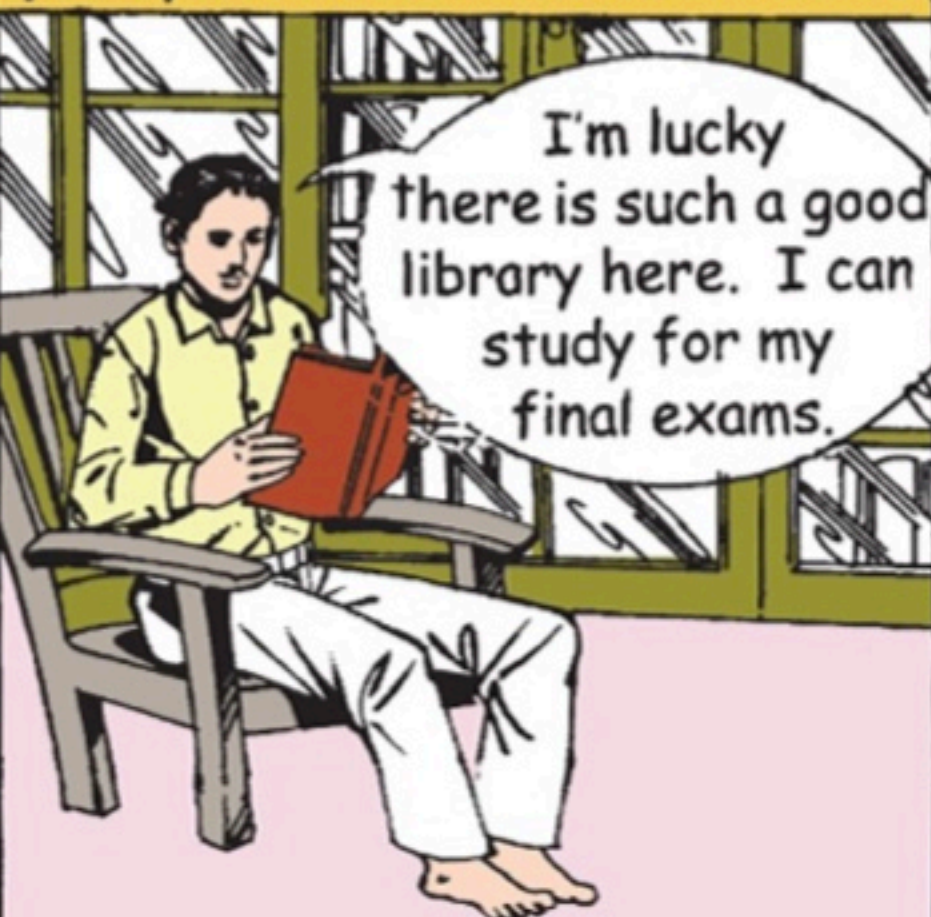
Dare I trust him?



He confided in his boss, who was luckily supportive and made Balan his personal assistant, with a good salary and a safe place to stay in the military compound.

It was a comfortable life, and the work was light, so he got plenty of time to read and think.

I'm lucky there is such a good library here. I can study for my final exams.



The military dining hall offered him an enjoyable interlude with good company. One day —

The Air Force is conducting an exam for pilot-training in Cochin. You can try too.



Much to his disappointment, he was disqualified because of poor eyesight.

After eight months of service, Balan had saved some money. He now left the job and joined the Quit India movement.

After two years I'm sure my case is forgotten.



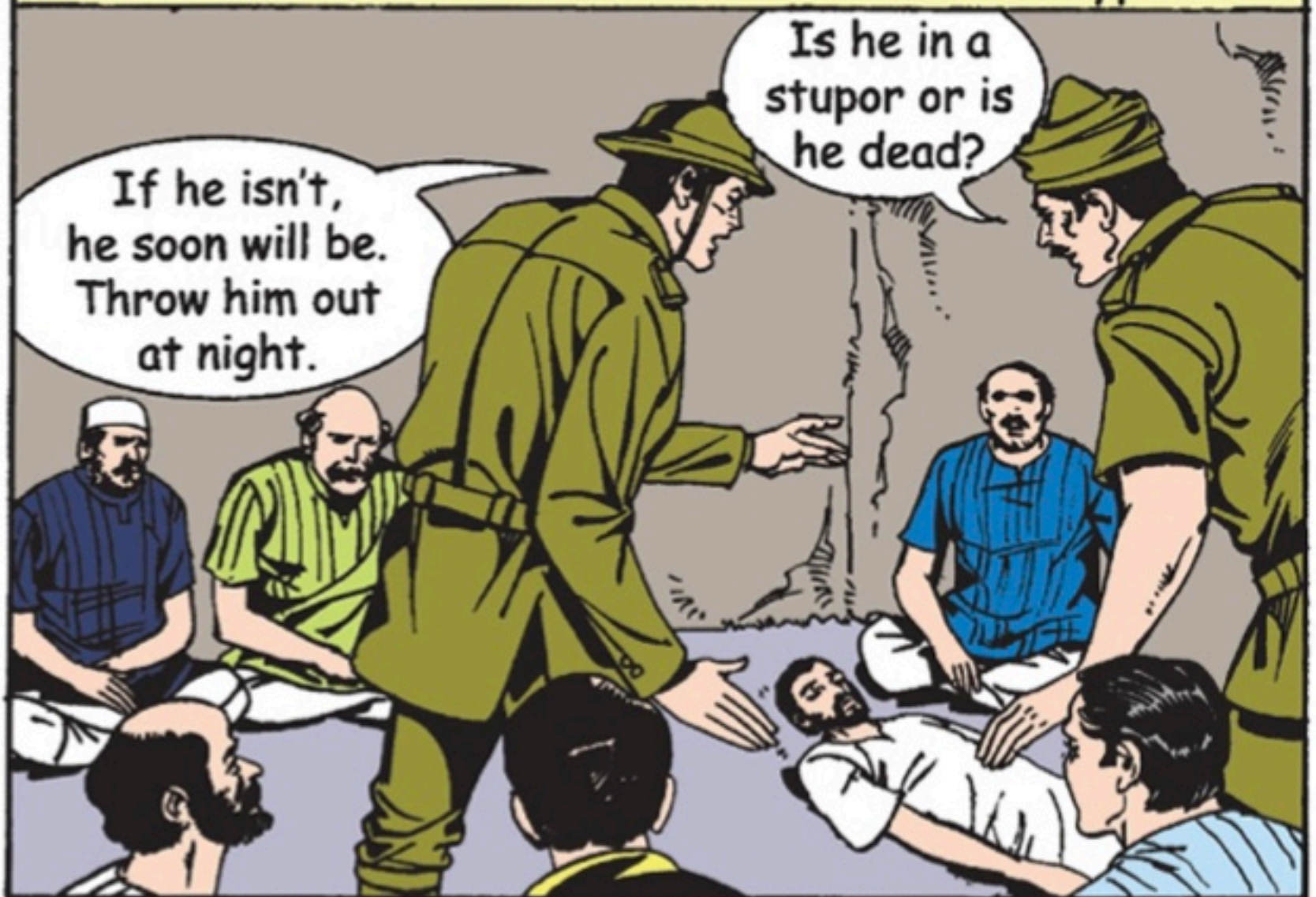
He was recognized and put into prison with other freedom fighters.

Balan was confined to a cold, dark cell with poor food and little hygiene.



Disease was rampant and many political prisoners died each day.

The British did not want to admit or deal with the increasing prison deaths. Balan, too, fell ill with typhus.



If he isn't, he soon will be. Throw him out at night.

Is he in a stupor or is he dead?

The next morning a feeble man lay on the roadside, immobile. Just then —



Stop! Driver!

That boy! His profile is just like my son's.

It was a Christian lady whose son was with the Indian troops in Europe.

She saw the man was in rags, burning with fever, but alive.



Not my son... but somebody's son. I must help him.

She took him home and gave him proper food and medicine and looked after him like her own son.

After several weeks, Balan recovered and could move about.

I can never thank you enough for saving my life. But now I must leave.



It's not safe for you. That's why I refused to let you go to the hospital. Where will you go?

Balan convinced her that he would be all right.

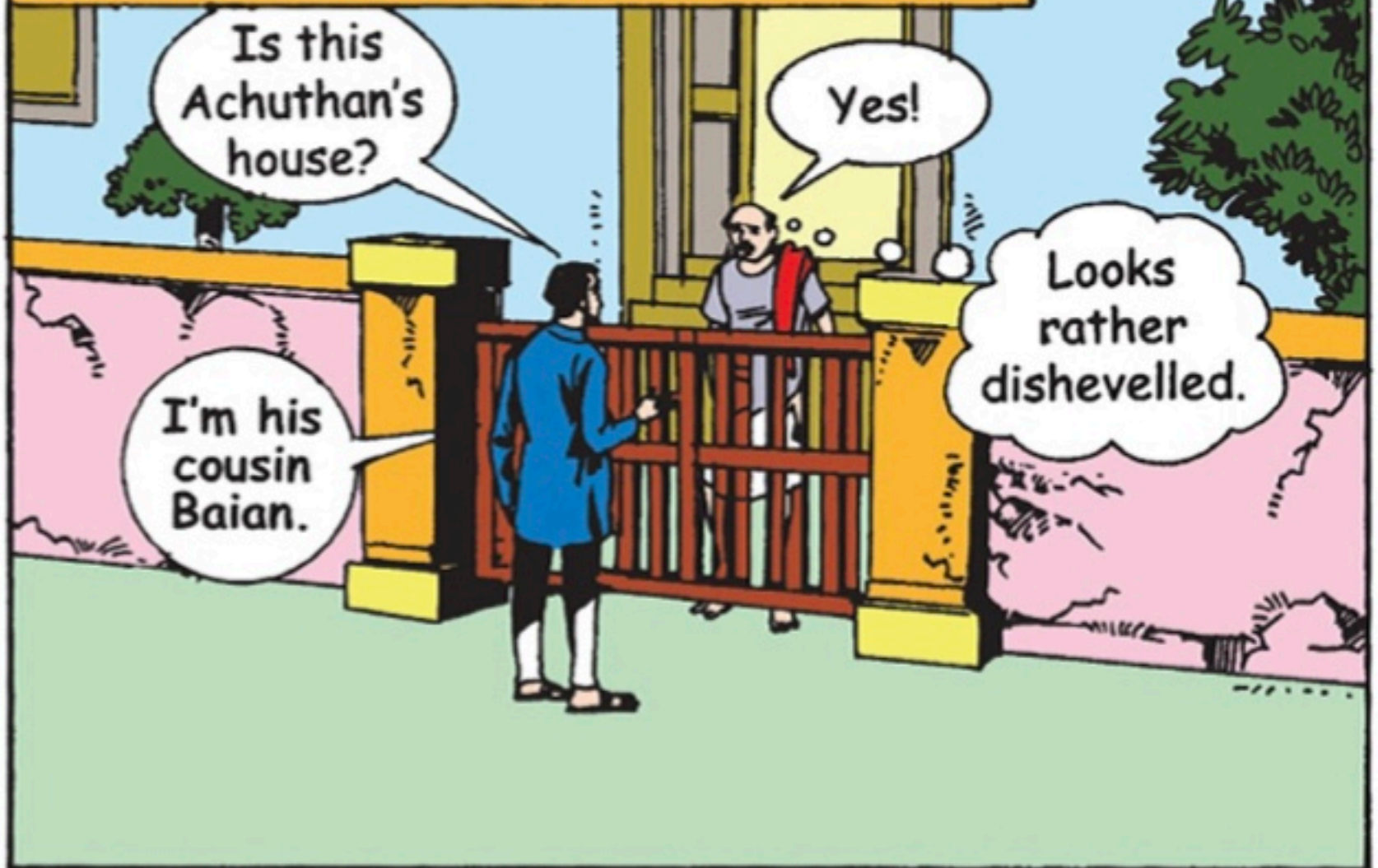
Dressed in an old suit of his saviour's son, he caught a train to Baroda.



How strange life is! Saved by the nose! It reminded her of her soldier son.

The kind lady hardly realised that she had saved the life of a future Hindu sage who would become a renowned global teacher.

In Baroda lived his cousin Achutha Menon, a forest officer who was away at work when Balan arrived at his house.



Is this Achuthan's house?

Yes!

Looks rather dishevelled.

I'm his cousin Balan.

The servant made Balan wait outside. All afternoon, Balan lingered at the gate. In the evening-



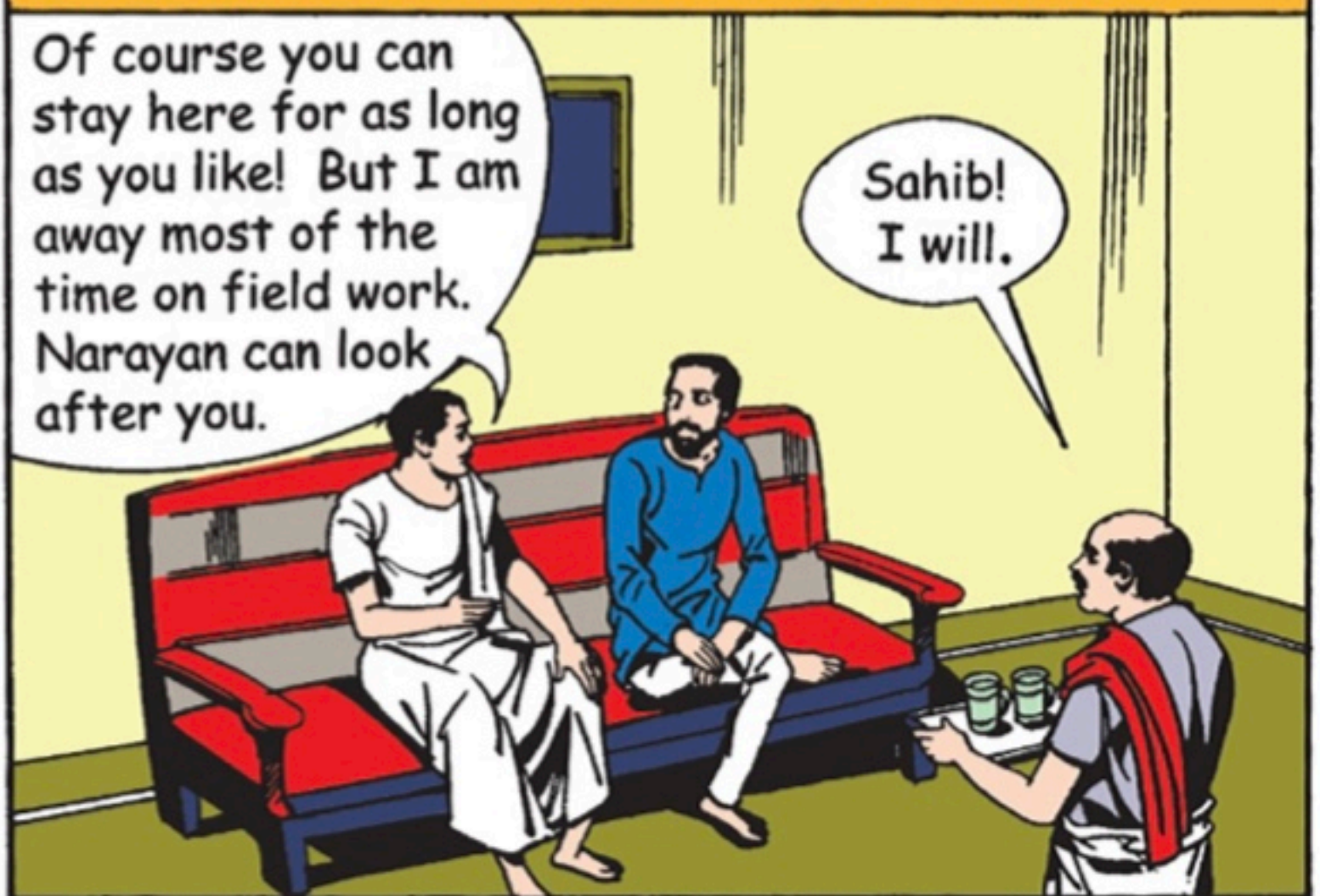
Achu!

Balan! You look like a ghost.

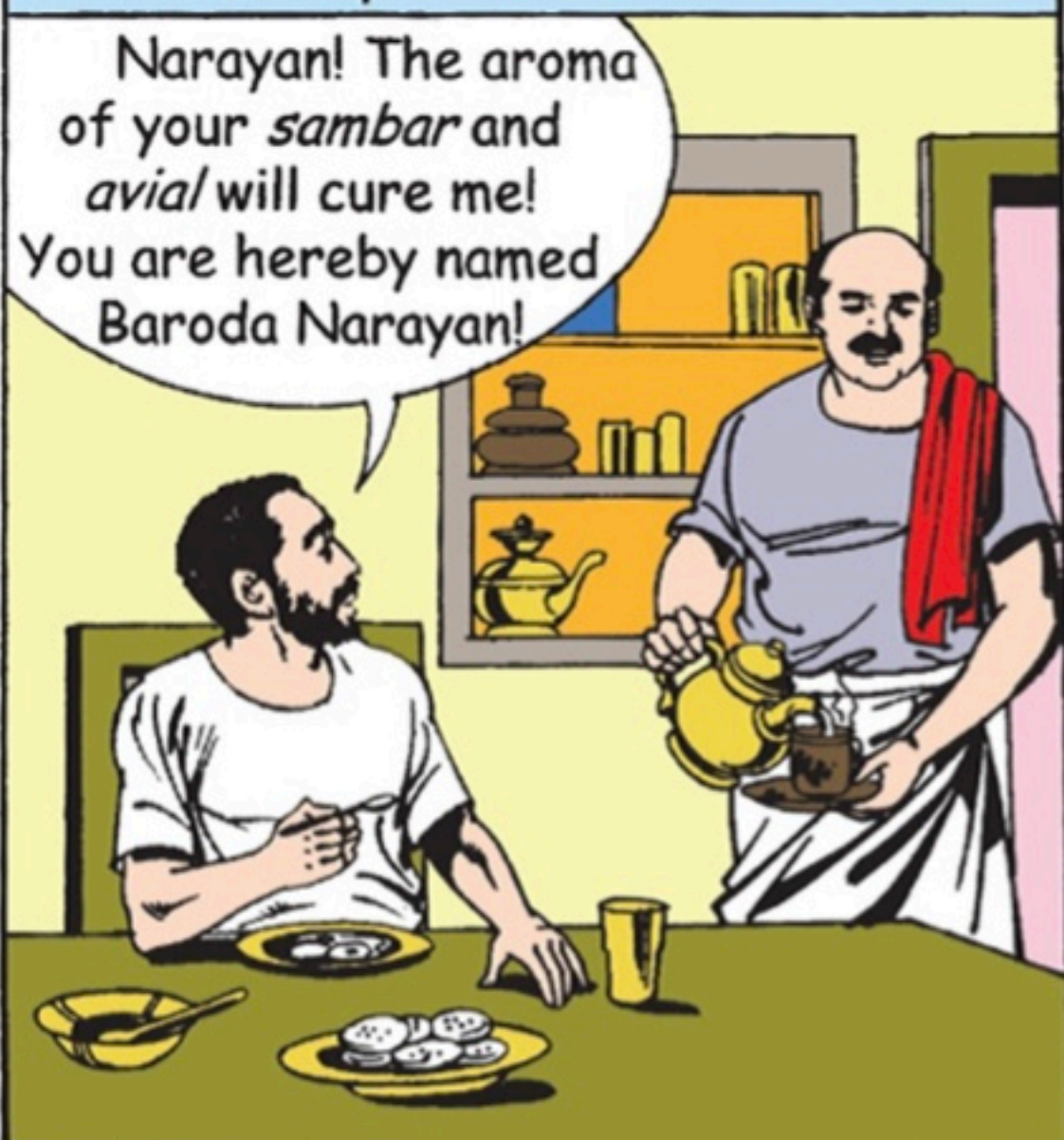
Balan narrated to his cousin all his adventures.

Of course you can stay here for as long as you like! But I am away most of the time on field work. Narayan can look after you.

Sahib! I will.

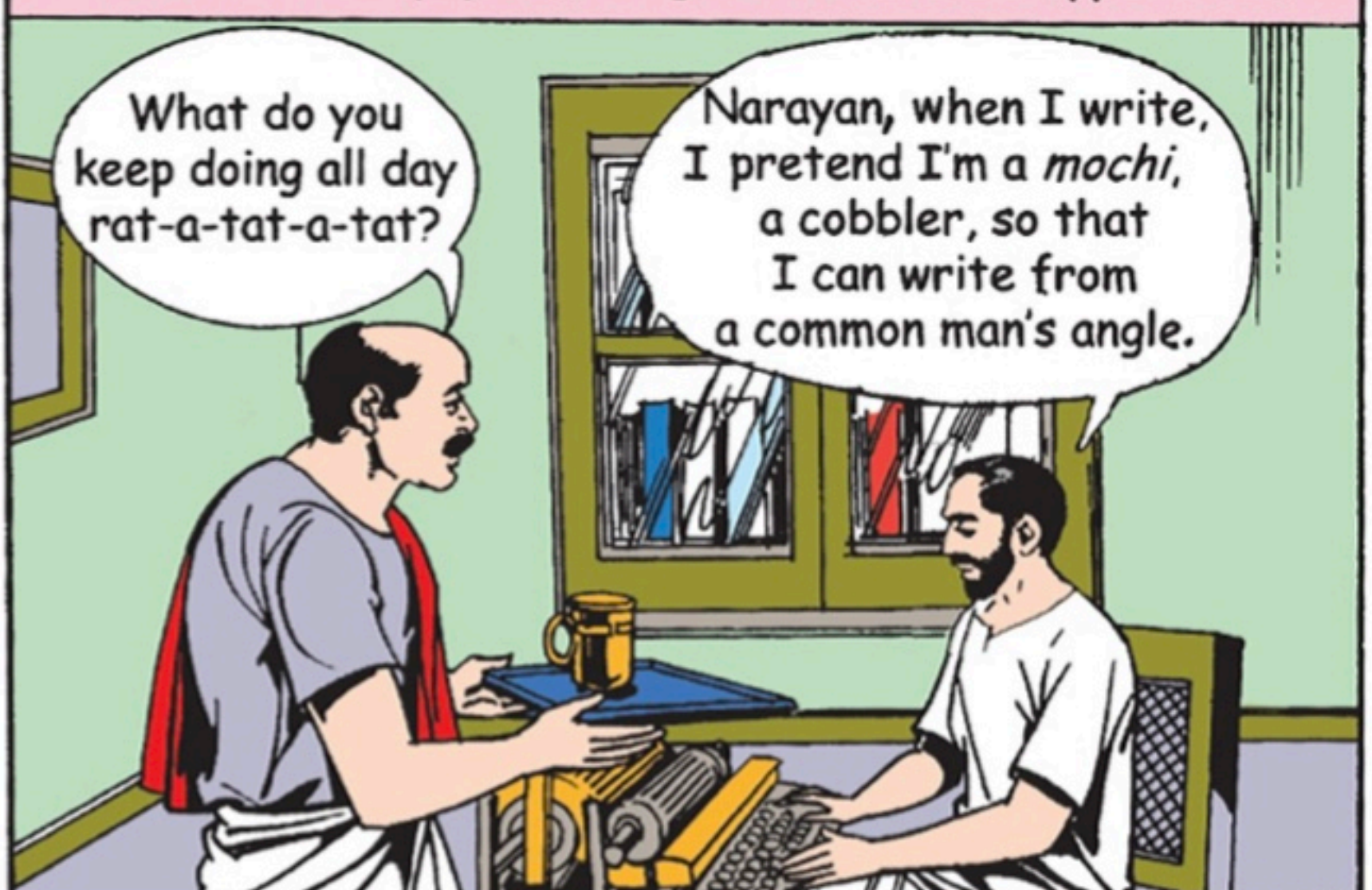


Narayan plied Balan with fruits and milk and Kerala cuisine typical of his childhood days.



Narayan! The aroma of your *sambar* and *avial* will cure me! You are hereby named Baroda Narayan!

With a lot of time on hand, Balan began to write articles for newspapers, using Achuthan's old typewriter.



What do you keep doing all day rat-a-tat-a-tat?

Narayan, when I write, I pretend I'm a *mochi*, a cobbler, so that I can write from a common man's angle.

Balan's articles were welcomed and published in national newspapers.

It was his writing that fetched him money, but it was reading that gave meaning to his life. Looking for reading matter, he found some magazines belonging to Achuthan's wife, who was away.



As soon as he was fit, he went back to Lucknow and completed his Master's degree in English, with honours, in journalism.

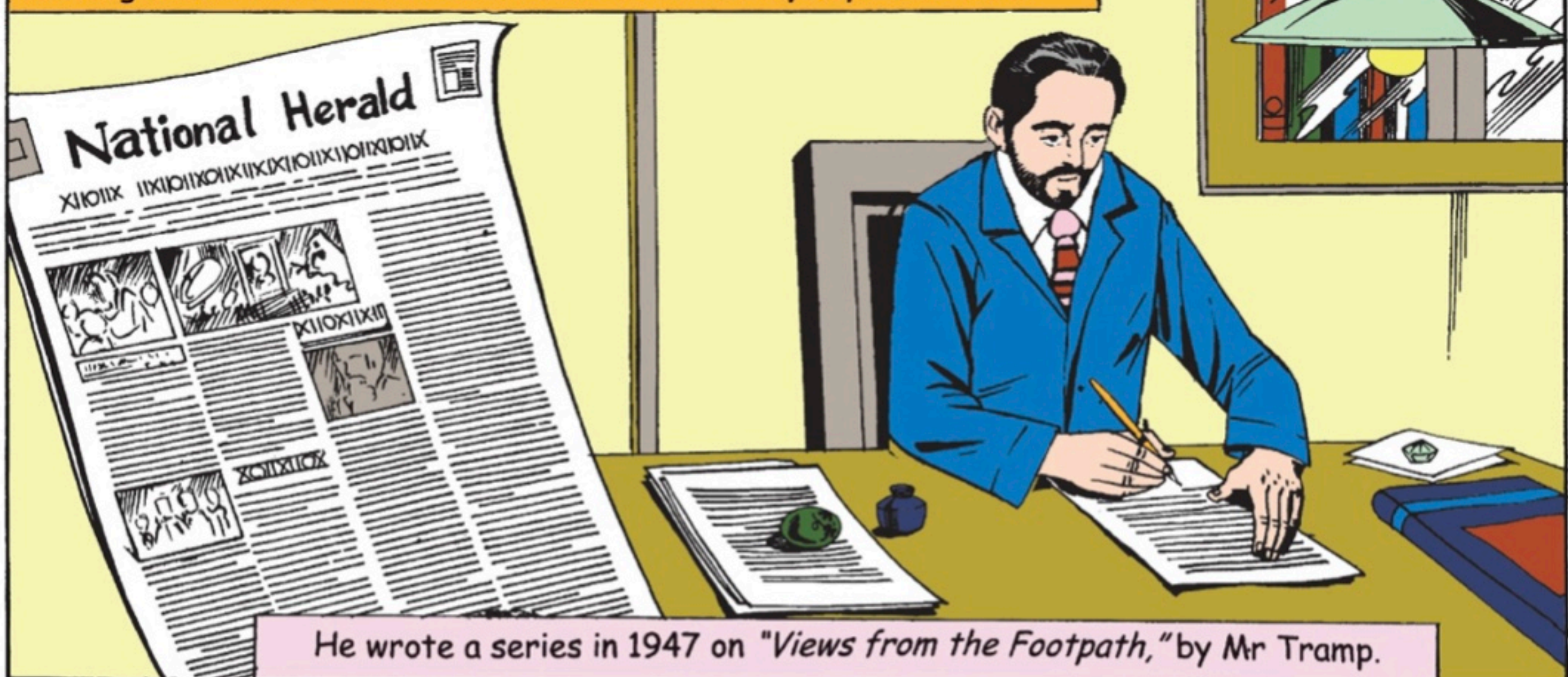


Balan went to Bombay to join a newspaper, and quickly learnt all the areas of work.



His ideas were radical. He soon left the paper and returned to Delhi, the centre of political activity.

He worked for the National Herald, the newspaper started by Jawaharlal Nehru. Menon, as he was now called, was a man about town, wearing fashionable suits. Yet he wrote about every aspect of life.



He wrote a series in 1947 on "Views from the Footpath," by Mr Tramp.

Fascinated by his wit and intelligence, the wealthy often invited him to their gatherings.

What a hollow life!
So unsatisfactory.



Throughout the day he was engrossed in his work. However, the evenings found him studying philosophy.

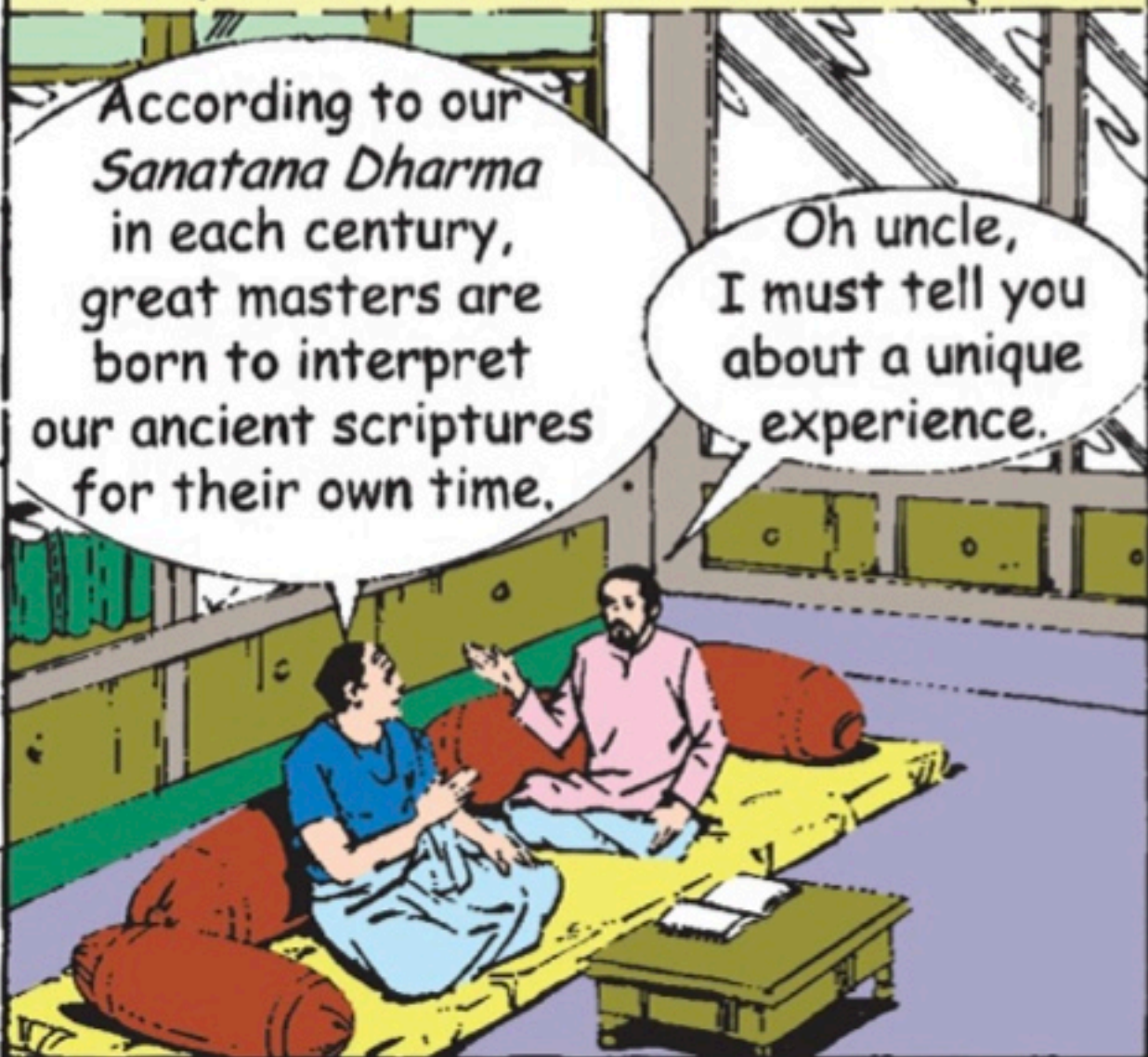


There was unrest in his heart, which led him to return to his childhood *mantra* — *Om Namah Shivaya*.

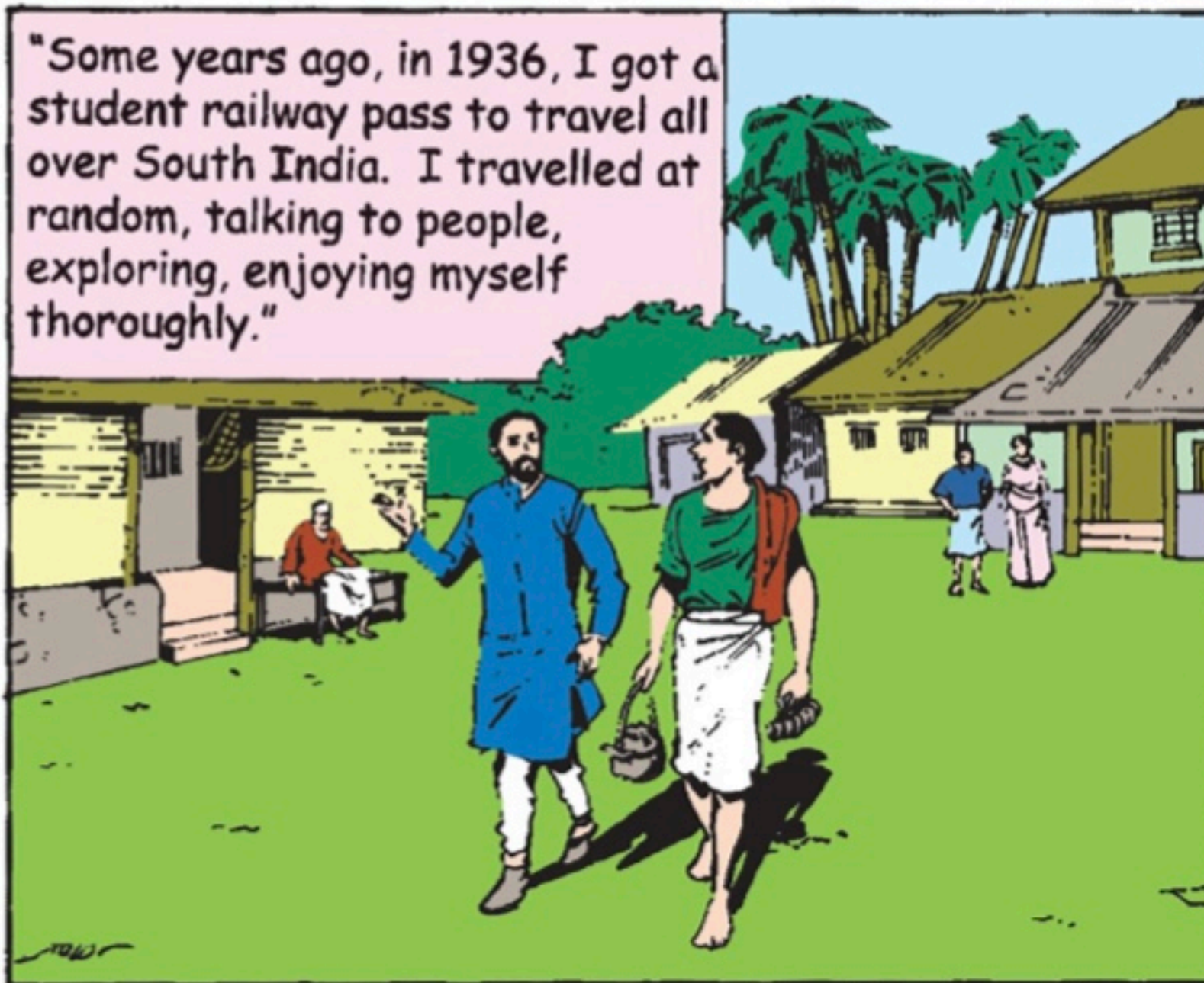
He was living with his uncle V.K. Govinda Menon, who was a scholar of the scriptures.

According to our *Sanatana Dharma* in each century, great masters are born to interpret our ancient scriptures for their own time.

Oh uncle, I must tell you about a unique experience.



"Some years ago, in 1936, I got a student railway pass to travel all over South India. I travelled at random, talking to people, exploring, enjoying myself thoroughly."



"At a desolate place, I saw a barren red mountain, which everyone in the train rushed to the windows to see."

What's that?

It's Arunachala Hill, the centre of the earth according to the *Puranas*. A great sage Ramana Maharshi lives there.

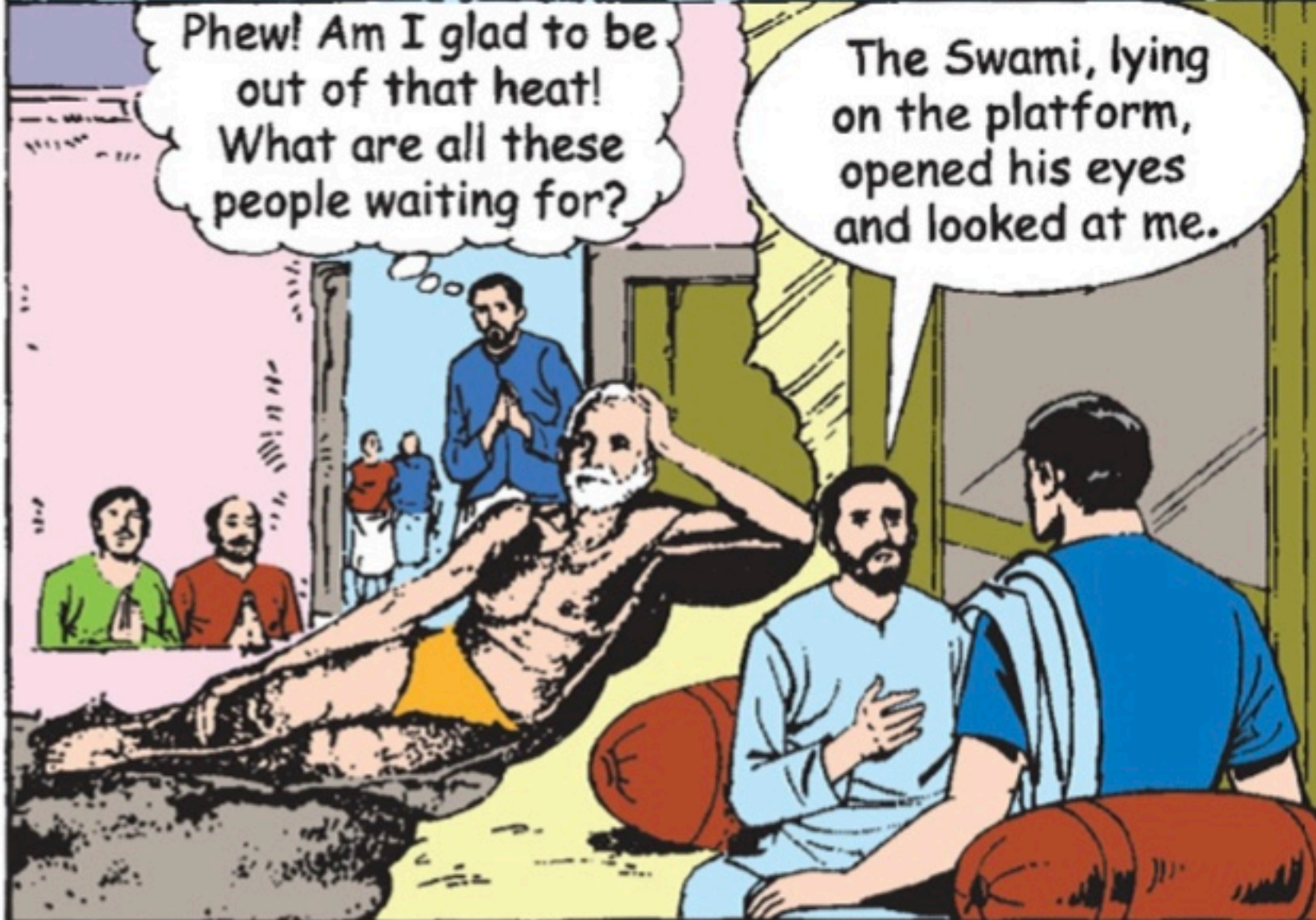


"I was curious and decided to get off."

"It was a hot day in June and I was glad to reach the large, thatched hut after plodding on foot for hours. In the dark I saw a form on a raised platform."

Phew! Am I glad to be out of that heat! What are all these people waiting for?

The Swami, lying on the platform, opened his eyes and looked at me.



I still recall that feeling—
as if my whole life had
gone up in a wave.
It was quite some
time before I recovered
enough to move.

That was
Ramana Maharshi,
Balan, a great
sage of profound
wisdom.

It was only later that Balan understood
this experience.

On the other hand, he noticed many *sadhus* ignorant
about the lofty Hindu ideals. In the summer of 1947
Balakrishna Menon set out for Rishikesh in the
Himalayas —

I'm going to find out
how those holy men
are keeping up
the bluff!

You are going
to interview
sages? God help
them.

Balan was astonished to observe the life
at Swami Sivananda's ashram.

It's a tough life. Swamiji
is so different from
what I expected. He
gives such elevating
spiritual discourses,
yet humbly serves
fruits and tea to
visitors! He
exudes such
dynamic peace.

God gave you such
intelligence! Why
don't you use it
for Him? You can
join us and become
a *sannyasi*.

I'm not so sure.
However, I do like your
formula - serve,
love, purify, meditate,
realise and be free.

It was a changed man that returned to Delhi
and the routine of journalism.

This is almost a
holiday compared to
the busy life at
the ashram.

However, he often returned to Rishikesh.

Look, Shroff, they
have invited me to
edit a souvenir for
Swamiji's
*shashtiabdh
purti**. I certainly
must go.

So! The sages
beckon you
again!

The souvenir was completed in time and even
after Swami Sivananda's 60th birthday celebra-
tions, Balan stayed on for a while. One evening—

Come! Say a
few words!

Who? Me?
What will I talk
about? I don't
know much about
spirituality. That's
why I'm here.

So talk of
anything. Maybe
your trip
to Rishikesh.

Well,
I came from
Delhi.....

Oh God!
I can't think
of a single
word to say.

Balan found himself completely tongue-tied.

* completion of sixty years

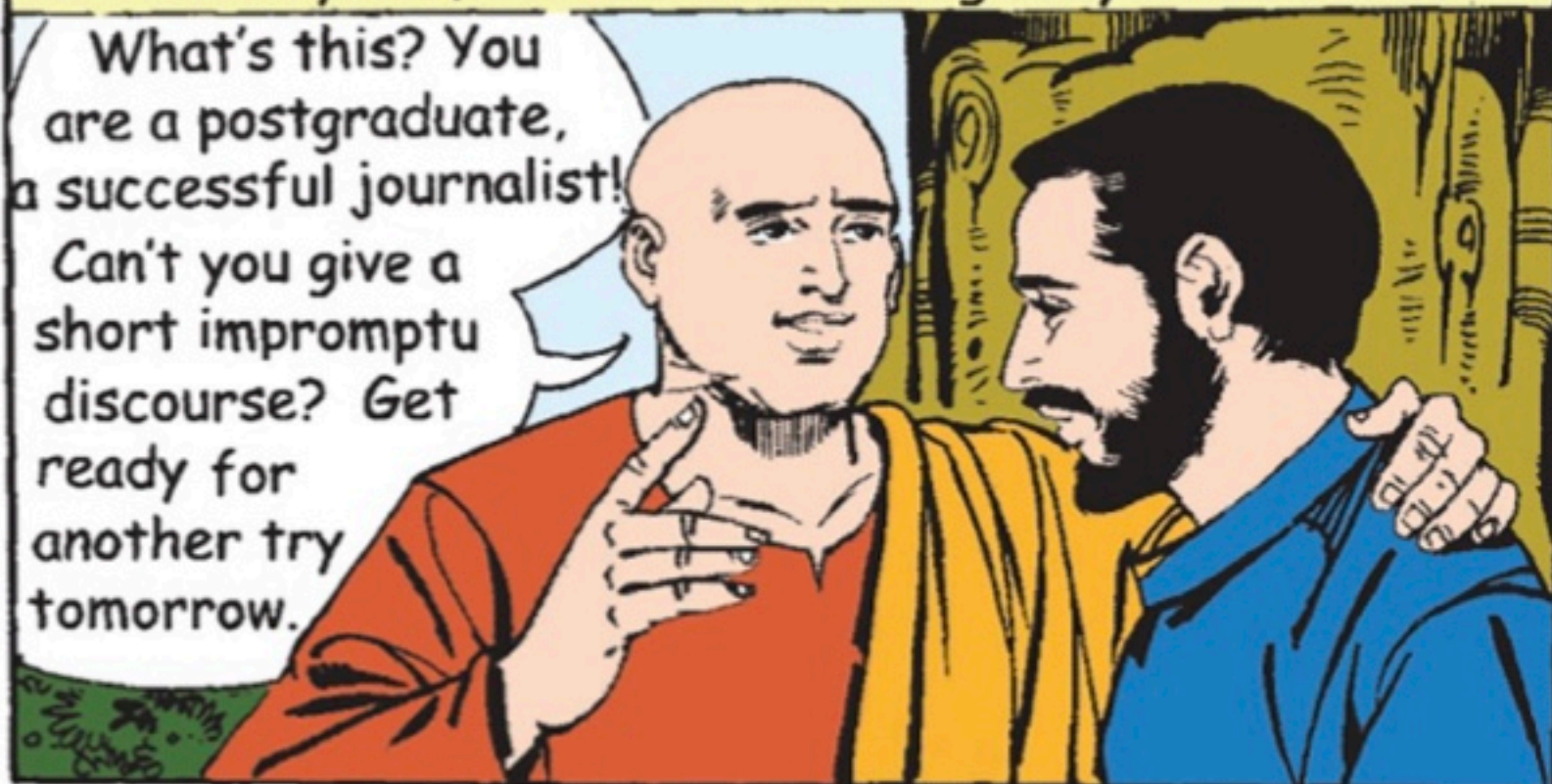
There was a long silence. At last —

Don't worry, you will get another chance.



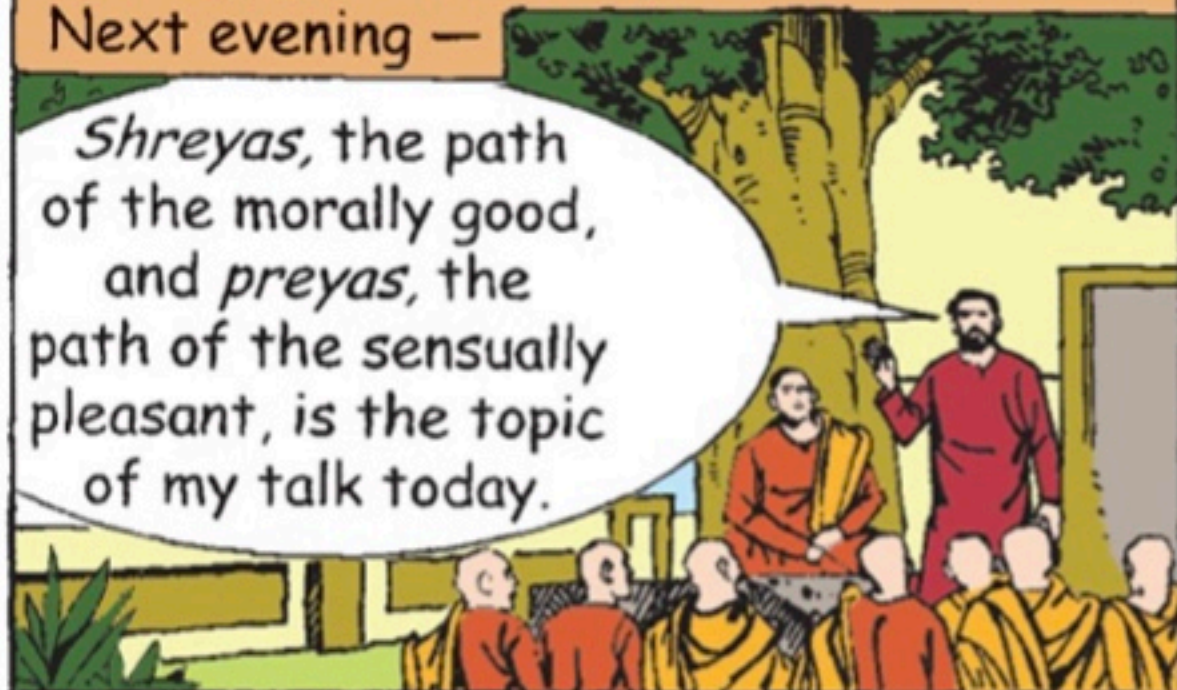
On the way out, Swami Sivananda gently chided him.

What's this? You are a postgraduate, a successful journalist! Can't you give a short impromptu discourse? Get ready for another try tomorrow.



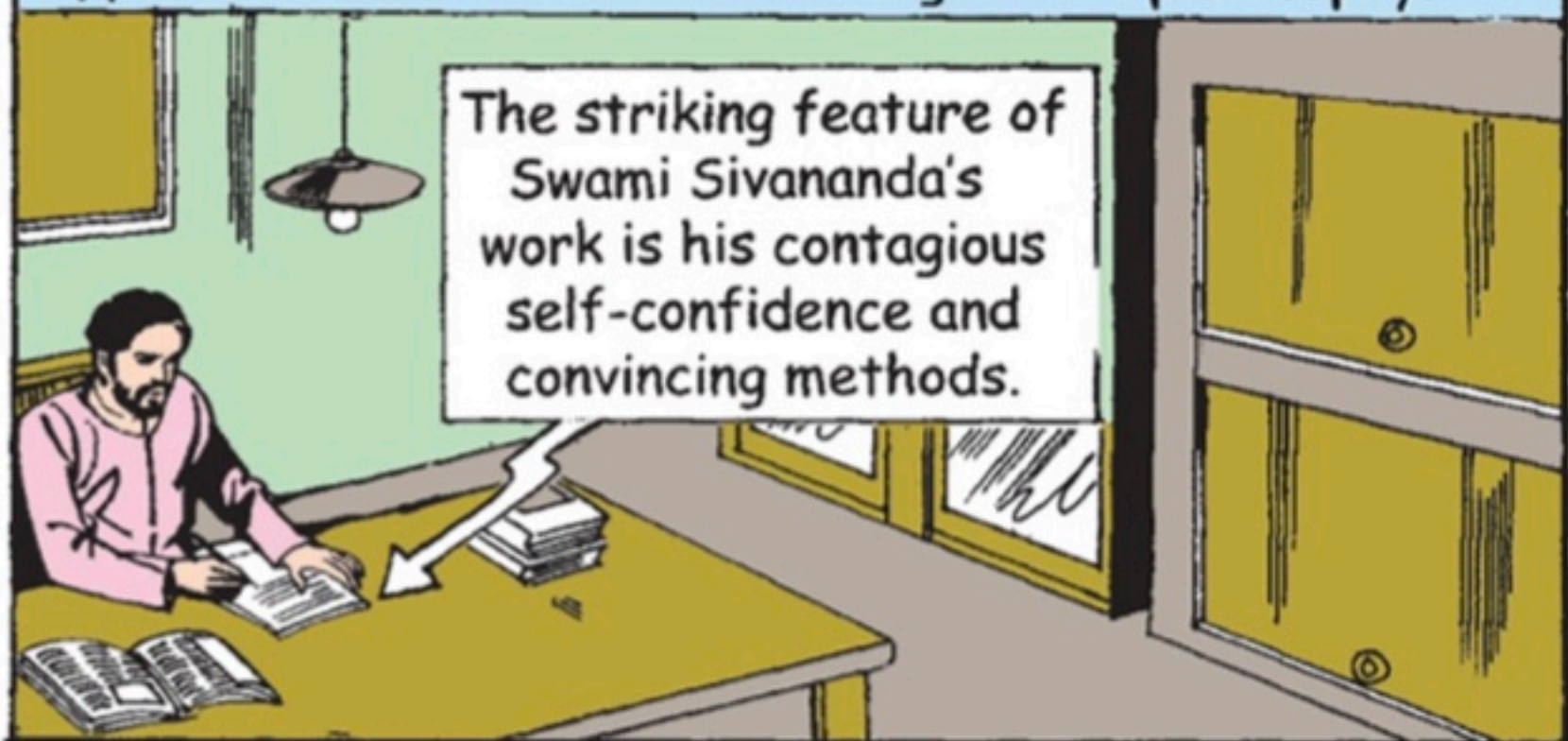
Swamiji gave him a topic to talk on. Next evening —

Shreyas, the path of the morally good, and *preyas*, the path of the sensually pleasant, is the topic of my talk today.



Swami Sivananda had launched Bala-krishna Menon on a lifetime work of delivering succinct spiritual discourses.

When he left for Delhi, it was with a pile of books by Swami Sivananda. In his newspaper column there now appeared reviews of books on religion and philosophy.



In Delhi, his long-time friend, Shroff, was terminally ill.

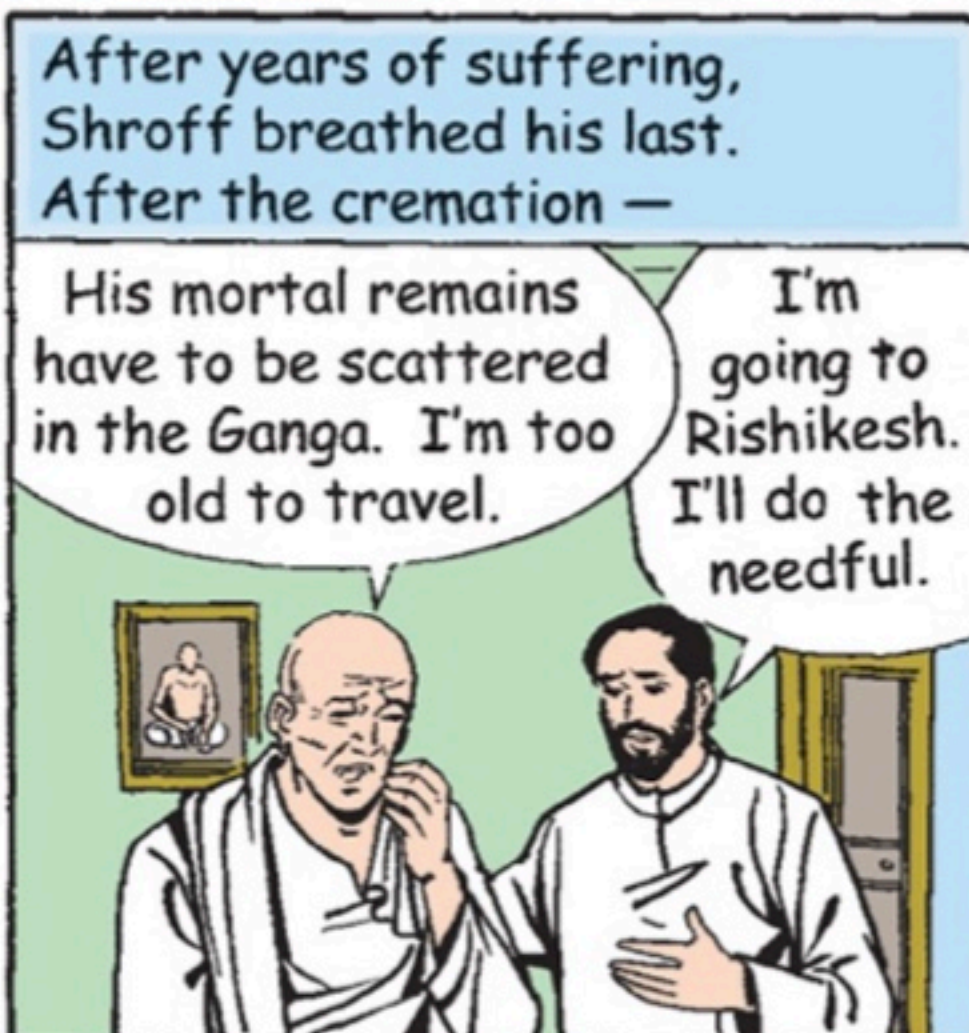
He has wealth, social status, loving parents, wife and child, but nothing can console him in his pain.



After years of suffering, Shroff breathed his last. After the cremation —

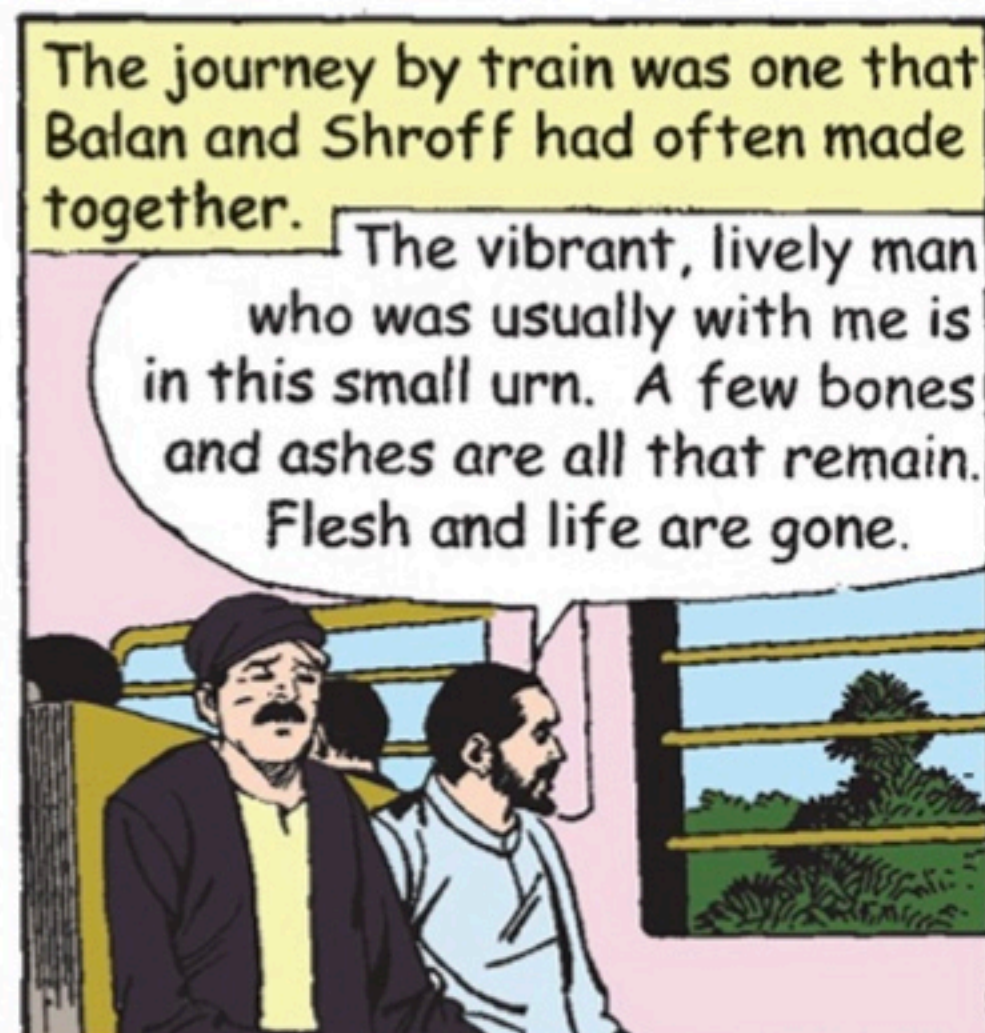
His mortal remains have to be scattered in the Ganga. I'm too old to travel.

I'm going to Rishikesh. I'll do the needful.



The journey by train was one that Balan and Shroff had often made together.

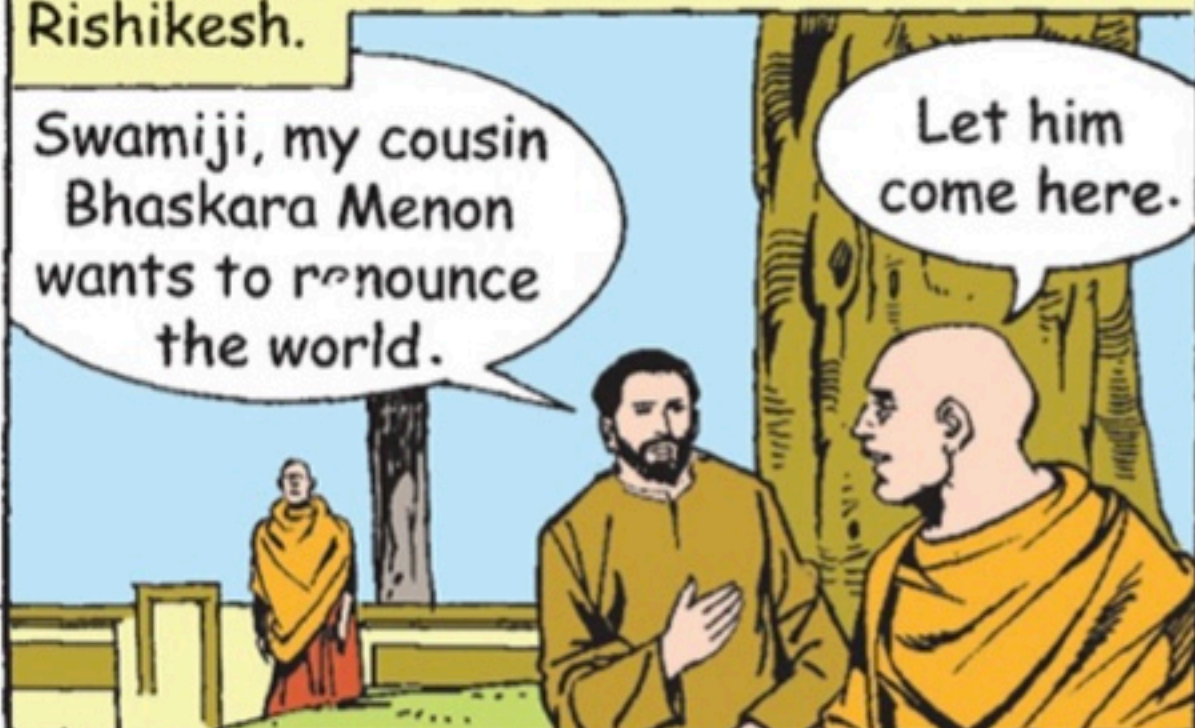
The vibrant, lively man who was usually with me is in this small urn. A few bones and ashes are all that remain. Flesh and life are gone.



Menon divided his time between Rishikesh and Delhi. By 1948, he had settled in Rishikesh.

Swamiji, my cousin Bhaskara Menon wants to renounce the world.

Let him come here.



Bhaskara Menon was received at Rishikesh and initiated as a *sannyasi*.

From today, you will be known as Swami Jnanananda

I would like to visit all the famous pilgrimage sites.



He convinced Balan to join him, as a journalist.

On 24th April, 1948, Balan and Swami Jnanananda set out for Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

Balan, we will reach Yamunotri before your birthday.

Imagine! My 32nd Birthday at 11,000 feet above sea level!

The route passed through Uttarkashi, the dwelling place of Swami Tapovanam, a master of the scriptures.

During your travel, maintain constant reflection on *Brahman*.

It was his first meeting with the great master who would become his guru and mentor.

He lived in a simple hut, without disciples, yet...

Do you need anything? Warm clothes?

Thank you. We have all we need.

Though Balan did not know it then, Swami Tapovanam was familiar with his newspaper articles and reviews.

The trek through Uttarakhand was tiring to the body, but uplifting to the soul. Menon kept a journal of this journey.

As we turned the corner, we heard the inimitable, celestial music of the River Ganga bringing exultation and utter peace.

Two hours of meditation beside the Ganga gave him a taste of bliss.

May I drink deeper at the fountain of eternal Divine nectar.

At Badrinath, Balan stayed for the month of July, meeting several holy men. This had a profound influence on the path he chose to follow.

When he returned to Sivananda Ashram in August, he knew he was ready for *sannyasa*.

You must write to your father for permission.

He wrote a long letter to his father explaining the events.

The elder Menon was surprised, yet pleased.

At first, he lived like a prince. Now he wants to be a monk.

Will you give your permission?

Certainly. He is doing what I never had the courage to do.

On 25th February, 1949, on Shivaratri day, Balakrishna Menon was initiated into *sannyasa*.

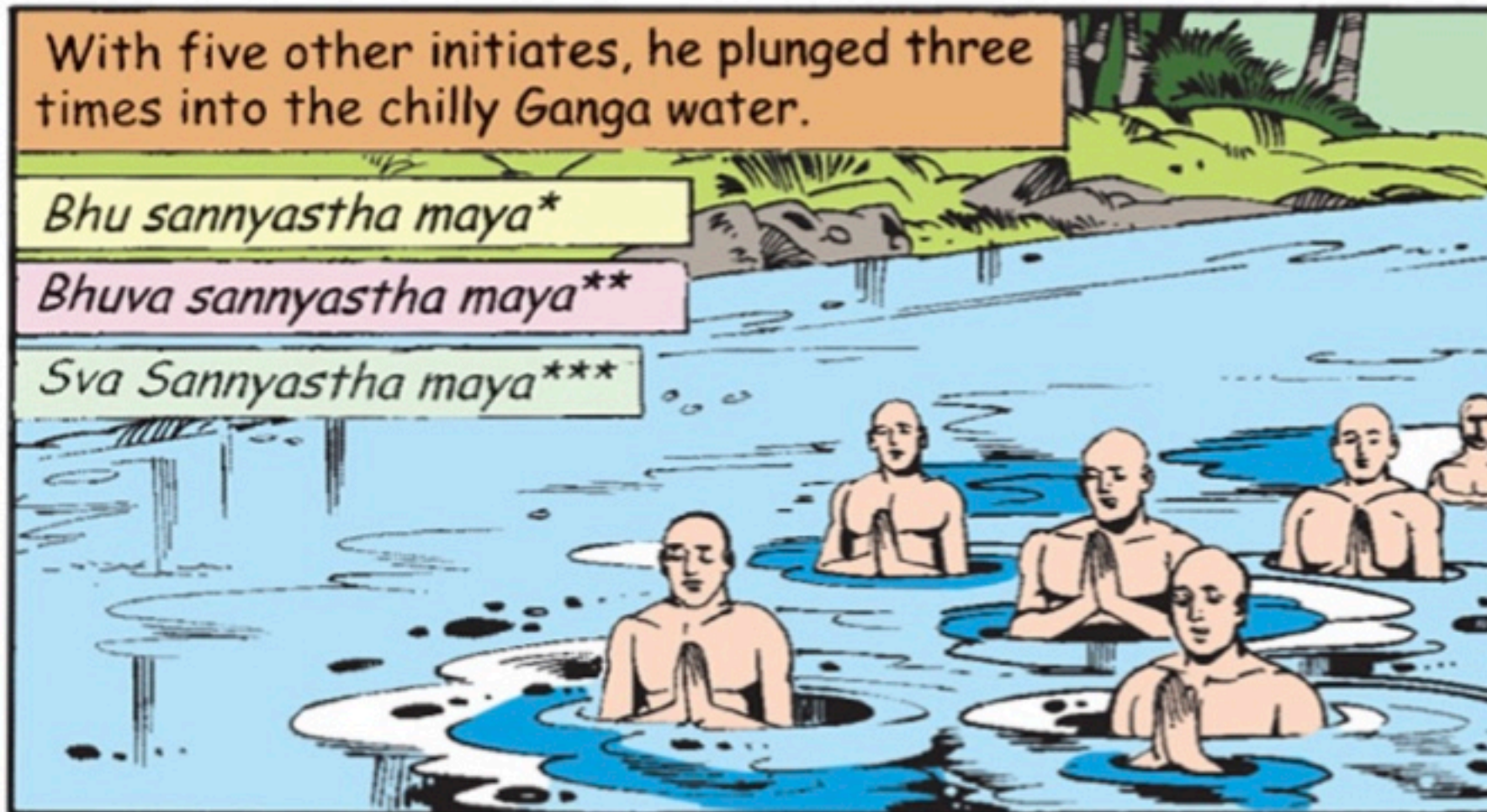
I renounce all desire for wealth, spouse, name or fame.

With five other initiates, he plunged three times into the chilly Ganga water.

*Bhu sannyastha maya**

*Bhuva sannyastha maya***

*Sva Sannyastha maya****



You will be called Chinmayananda Saraswati.



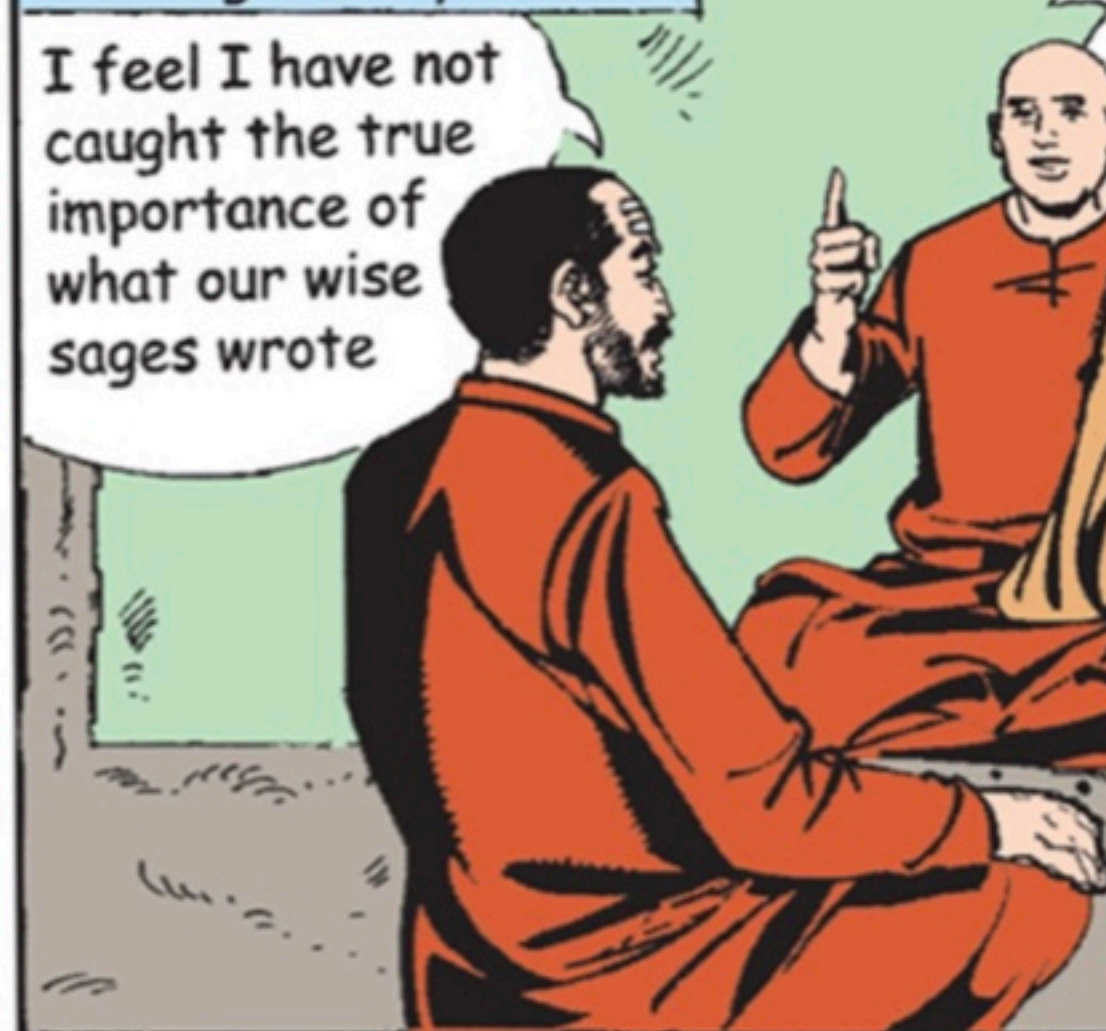
His past life faded like a dream. Swami Chinmayananda set out to gain mastery over the Hindu scriptures.



His questioning mind was not satisfied with a mere reading of holy books.

I feel I have not caught the true importance of what our wise sages wrote

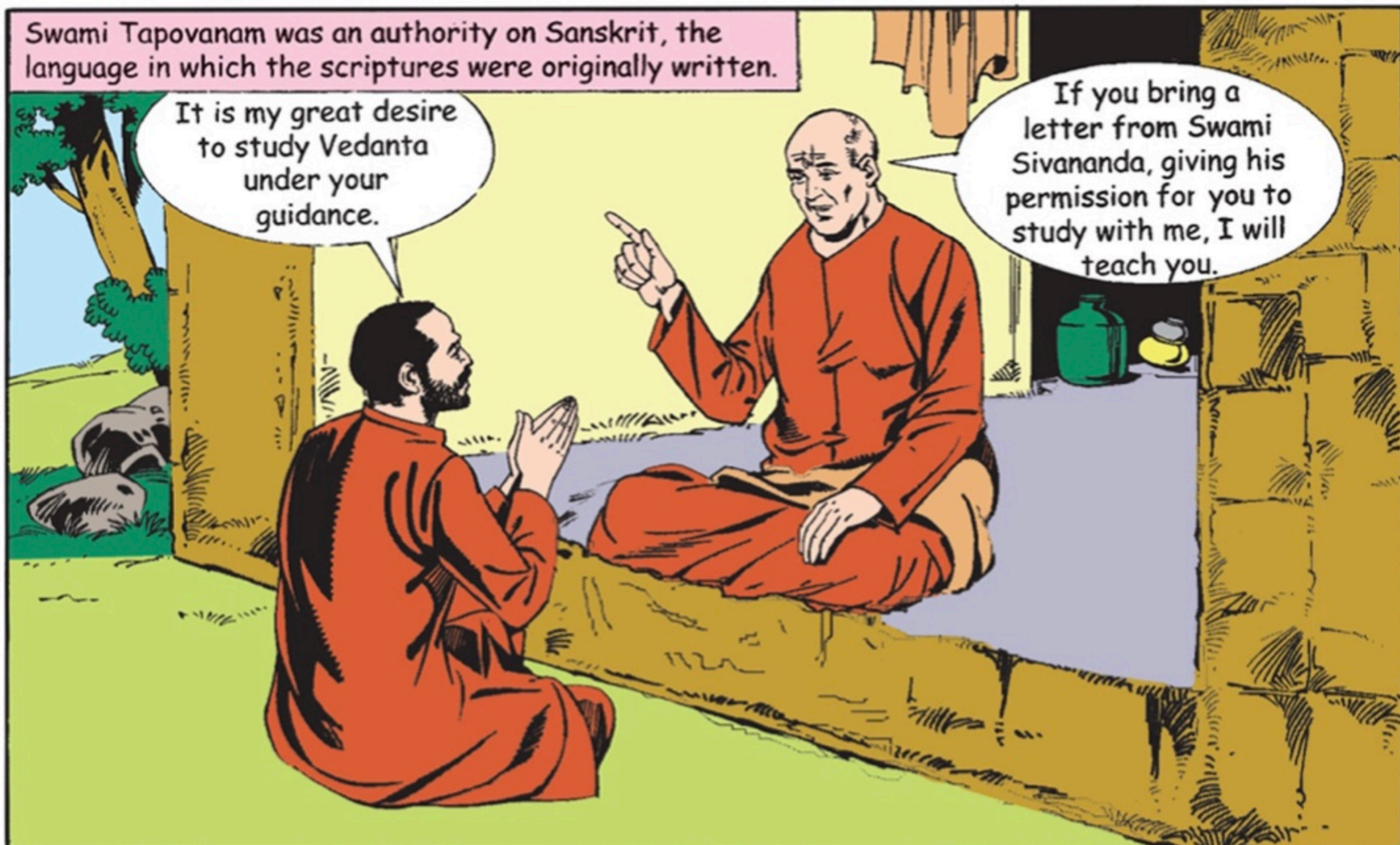
Then you should become a disciple of Swami Tapovanam. He is the master of Jnana Yoga.



Swami Tapovanam was an authority on Sanskrit, the language in which the scriptures were originally written.

It is my great desire to study Vedanta under your guidance.

If you bring a letter from Swami Sivananda, giving his permission for you to study with me, I will teach you.



Swami Chinmayananda walked down the mountains to Rishikesh, obtained the letter giving Swami Sivananda's permission for him to be a disciple of Swami Tapovanam and walked all the way back.



Swami Tapovanam was a loving yet strict teacher who lived an austere life.

What a contrast to the bustle of Sivananda ashram! He lives in a cowshed with a stone for a pillow!



At 3000 metres above sea level at Gangotri, the committed study began. It was a tough life and demanding, too. If the student did not understand the first time, he would have to leave the class.



Swami Chinmayananda bathed in the freezing water twice a day, ate the meagre alms he got, did all the chores of the ashram, slept little and studied a lot.



With his guru, he moved between Rishikesh, Uttarkashi and Gangotri.

They often met *sadhus* from cities and towns. Chinmayananda was shocked at their inadequate understanding of the scriptures.

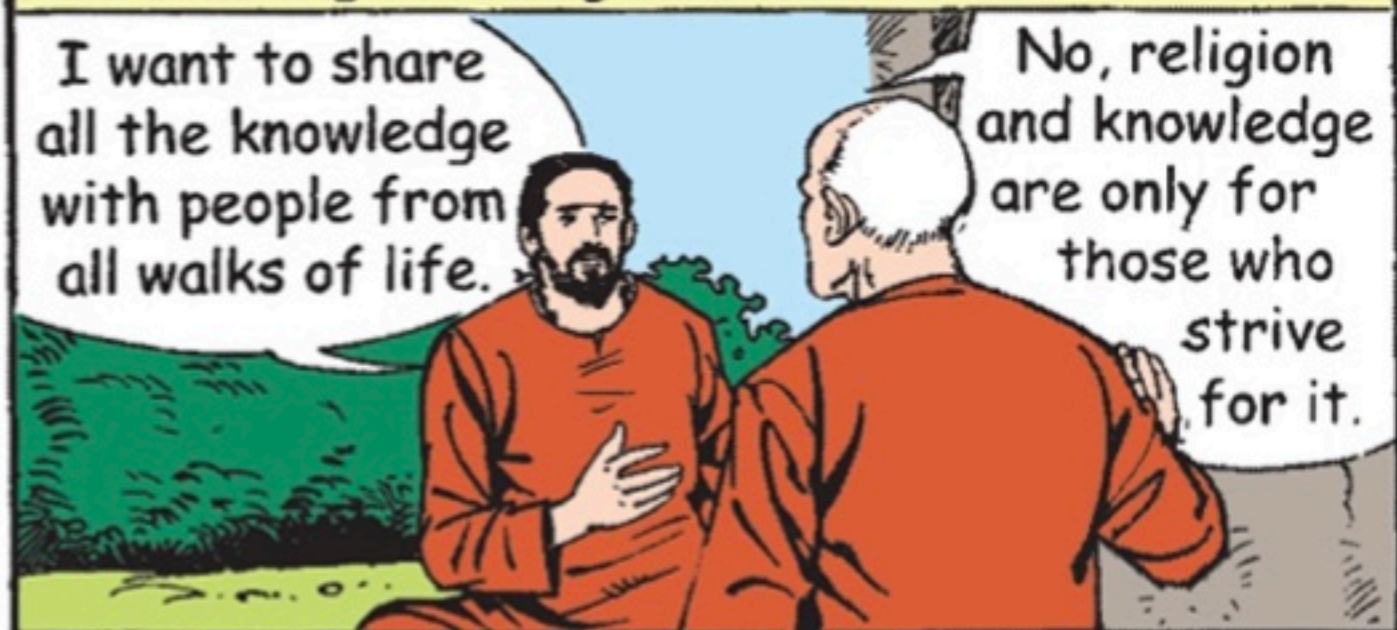
Is this what they are doing out as Hinduism? The real truth needs to be taken to the masses. Can I do it?



His love for his countrymen prompted him to ask his guru for guidance.

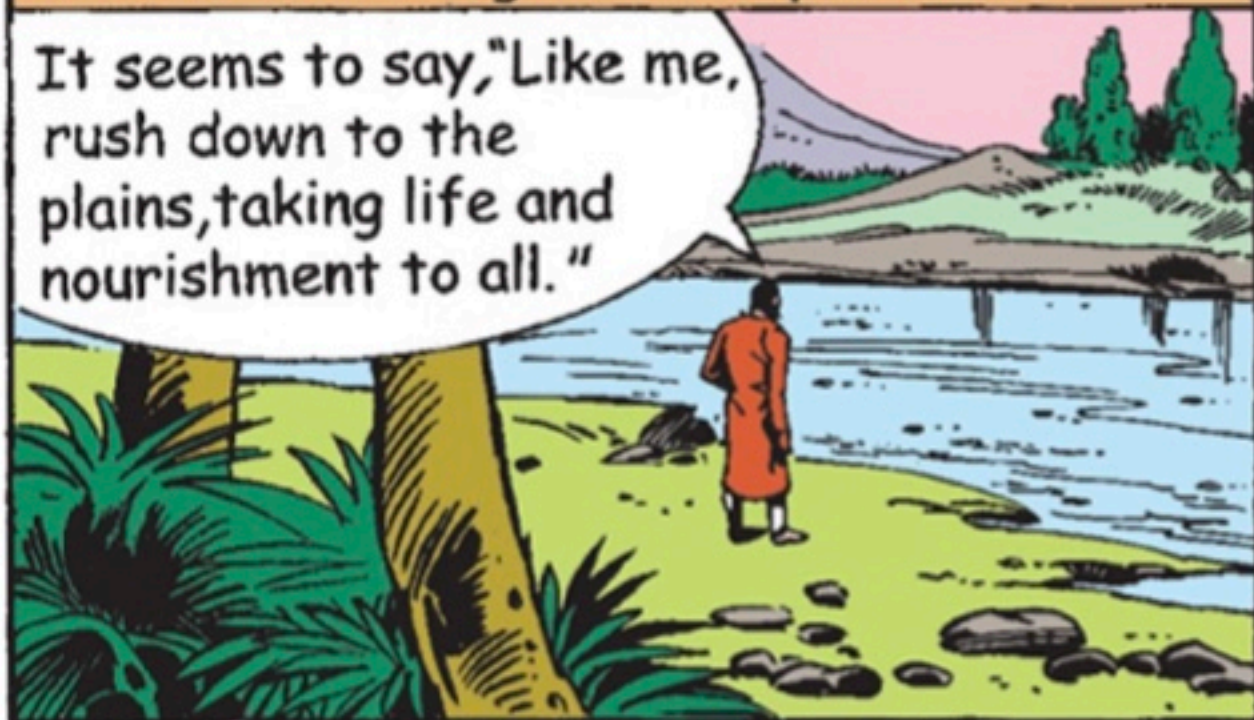
I want to share all the knowledge with people from all walks of life.

No, religion and knowledge are only for those who strive for it.



It was river Ganga that inspired him.

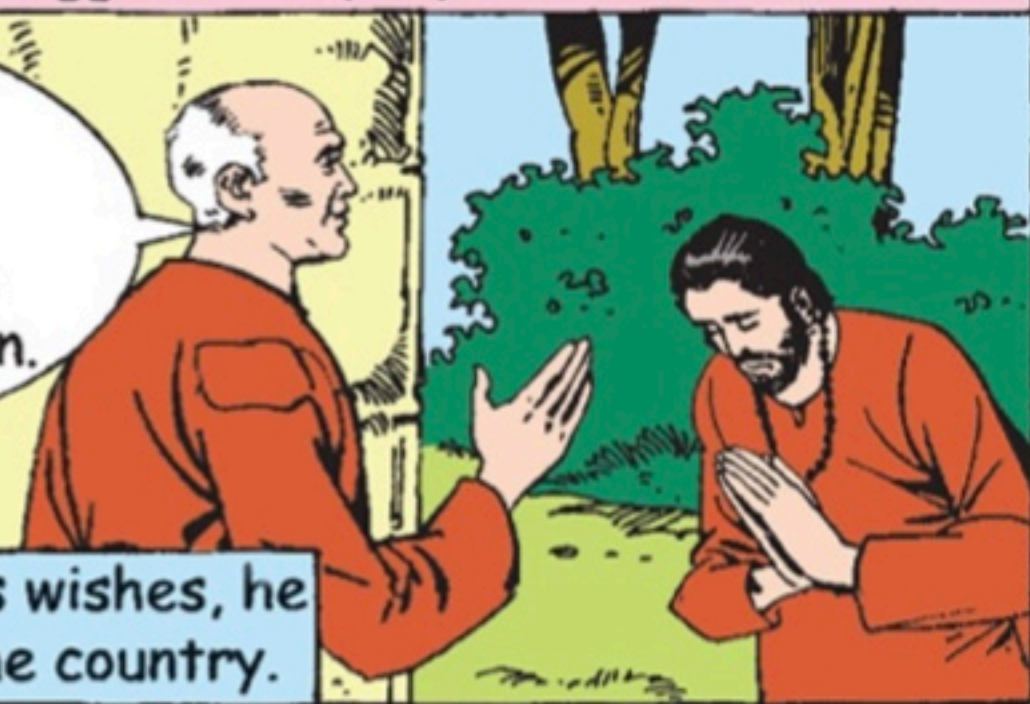
It seems to say, "Like me, rush down to the plains, taking life and nourishment to all."



Swami Tapovanam suggested a preparatory stage.

Travel! Go to many parts of India as a *sannyasi* before you make a decision.

Following his guru's wishes, he travelled across the country.



He faced hunger, hardship and mockery during his seven months' travel.

People all over the country are ignorant of their rich spiritual legacy. I will reintroduce Hinduism to the Hindus.

In the year 1951, he decided to take the knowledge of the Vedas directly to the people

I will hold a series of lectures in the main towns and cities.

Swamiji wanted the teachings to be accessible to all people, not only the priests.

But what language will you use? We have no common language.

With English I can reach across the length and breadth of the country.

Finally, he convinced his guru -

I will try to do what I can. I will conduct *Jnana Yajnas* all over the country.

It's a mammoth task. You have my blessings for this gigantic, glorious mission. Make sure you have at least four people in the audience.

After centuries of foreign rule, Indians were totally out of touch with their religion, philosophy and culture.

It's my dream to make Indians proud of their ancient and glorious culture.

National pride was conspicuous by its absence. Indians had begun to look down upon themselves.

With a trunk full of notes and books, he arrived in Pune with only 25 paise in his pocket. His first *Jnana Yajna* of 100 days was held in Pune from 23rd December, 1951, at the Ganesha Temple, and was organised by Susheela Mudaliar. His introduction to the *Yajna* was -

A Hindu swami to talk! A Hindu temple as the background. The subject "Let us be Hindus." Strange! It sounds like a paradox.

Only seven listeners sat around the young swami during the first few days.

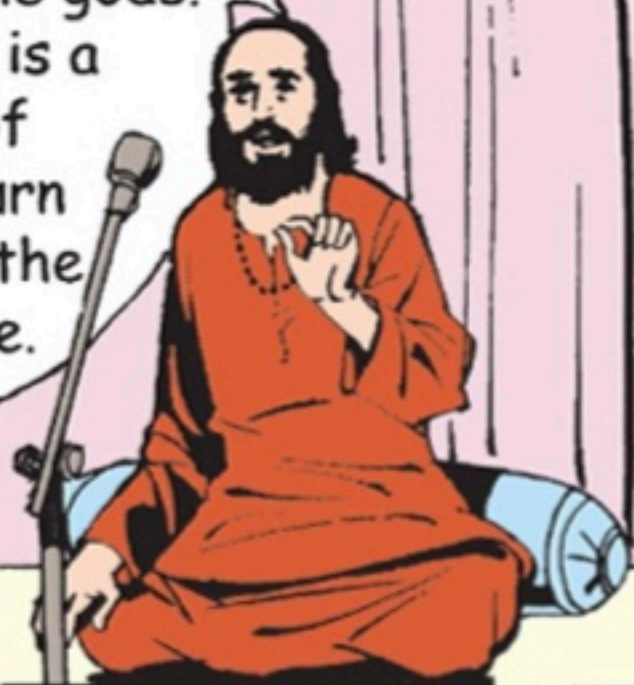
Soon the word spread about his clarity of thought and dynamism of speech and wit.

Through the instruments of BMI (body, mind, intellect), you, the *jiva*, the PFT (perceiver, feeler, thinker) contact the world of OET (objects, emotions, thoughts)

Vedic texts were shrouded in secrecy and Sanskrit. Swami Chinmayananda explained them in English, much to the anger of the priests who thought they should be taught only to a select few and only in Sanskrit.

Interpreting the Vedic rituals for modern times, Swamiji called his talks *Jnana Yajnas*.

In the old days, *Yajnas*, or fire sacrifices, were held to honour the gods. Our *Jnana Yajna* is a different form of sacrifice. We burn our ignorance in the fire of knowledge.



The Lord is the Eye of the eye and the Ear of the ear. He is the power because of which the eye can see, and the ear can hear.

I feel my whole life is changed.



Swamiji received a letter —

"Go! Roar like Vivekananda!"
This is the message sent by my *diksha guru** Swami Sivananda.



Continuous chanting of the Lord's name was conducted in relay for 41 days by seekers. Meditation classes were started.

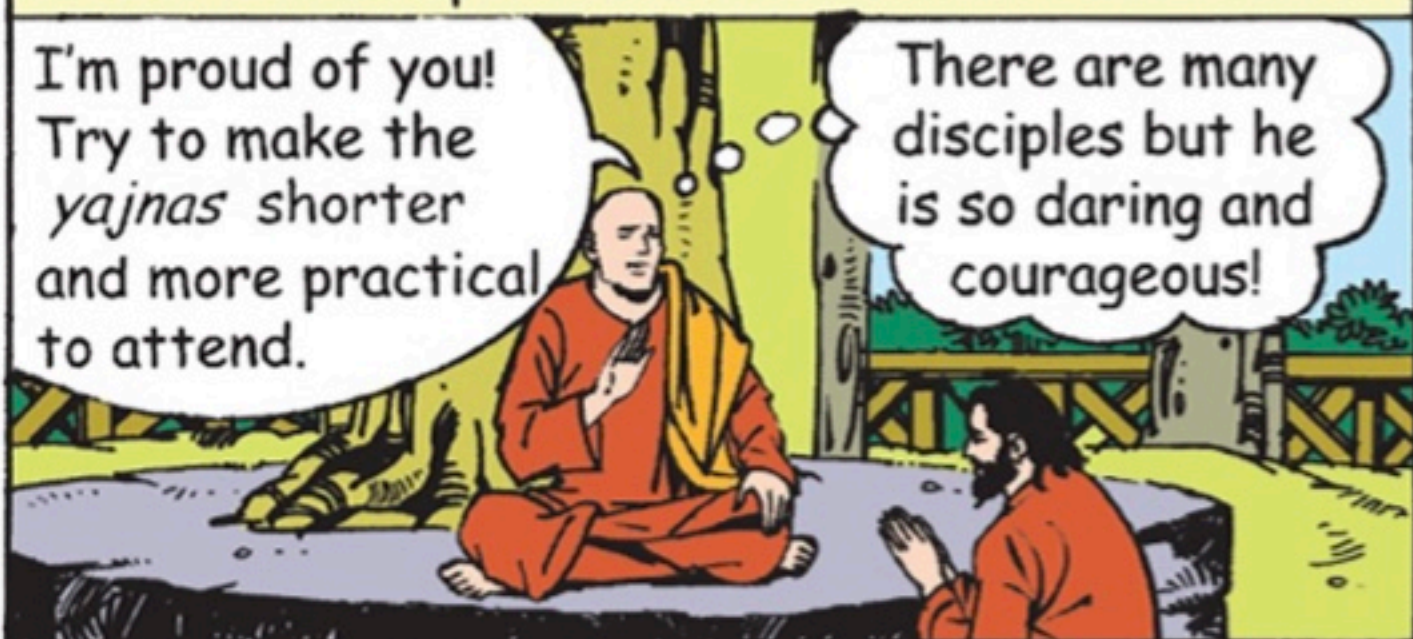


Faithful devotees took down his speeches and printed them in booklets for free distribution all around.

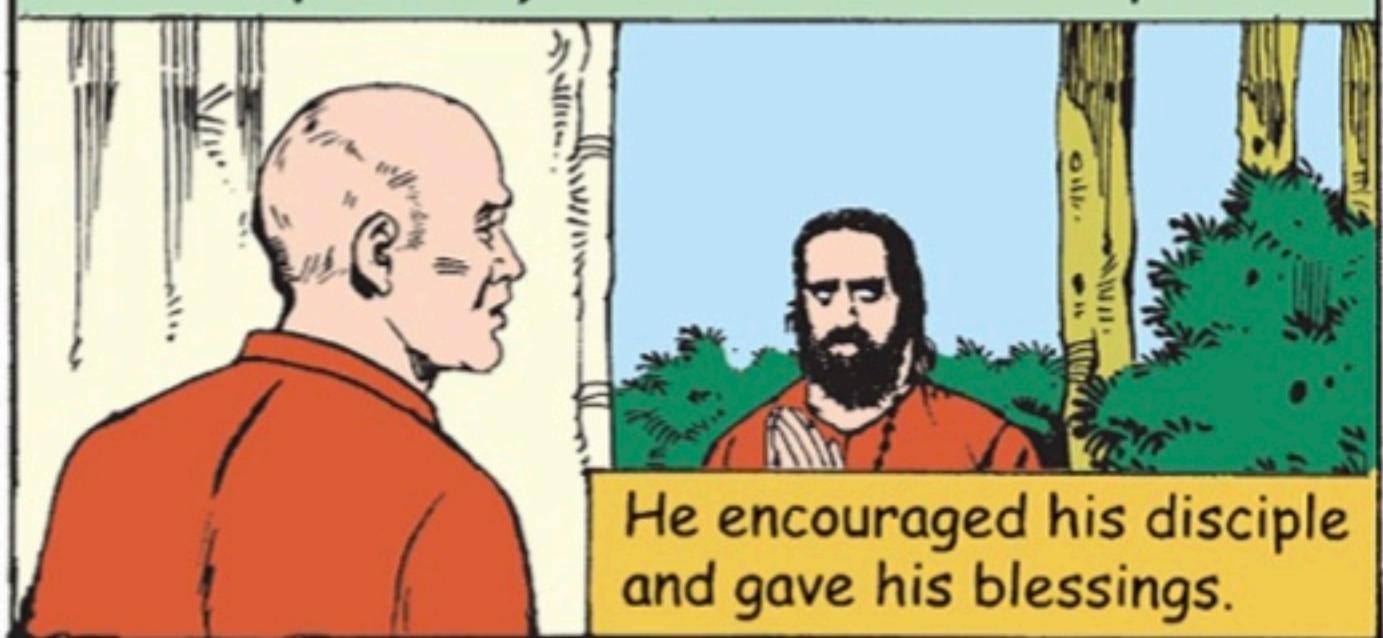
After the first *yajna*, he went back to Swami Sivananda to report about it.

I'm proud of you! Try to make the *yajnas* shorter and more practical to attend.

There are many disciples but he is so daring and courageous!



He then went to Uttarkashi to pay respects to Swami Tapovanam, who listened in silent pride.



He encouraged his disciple and gave his blessings.

He went to Kerala and met his father and then on to Madras, the most orthodox of cities.**

The only place available for a discourse is a haunted house belonging to a Muslim.

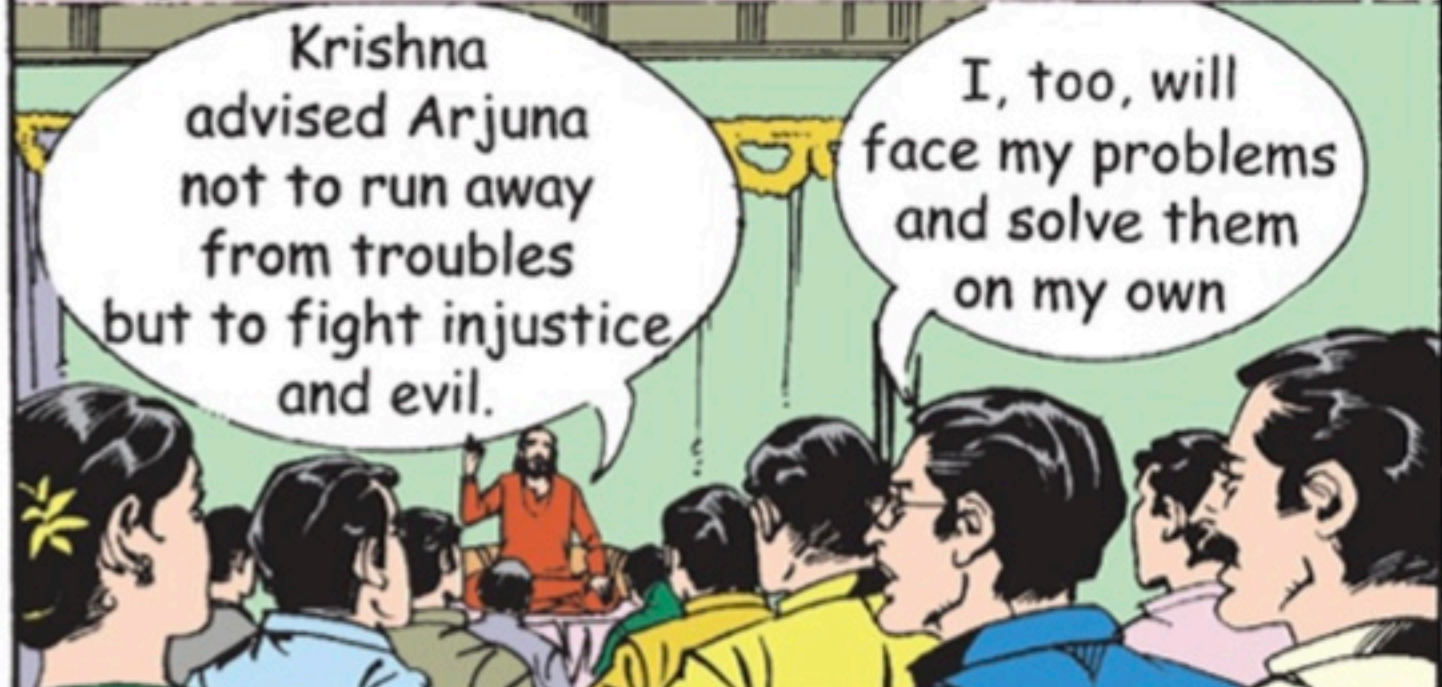
Don't worry! I'll catch the ghost!!



The talks were printed and distributed as *yajna prasad*. His teachings on the *Bhagavad Gita* brought it back to life and relevance.

Krishna advised Arjuna not to run away from troubles but to fight injustice and evil.

I, too, will face my problems and solve them on my own



* Guru who confers *sannyasa* ** The priests did not approve of the *Shastras* being explained in the English language. They relented when the Shankaracharya of Kanchi approved of it

Study groups were formed by devotees in towns across the country. They met regularly to discuss, learn and share the wisdom and knowledge of the scriptures.



In 1953, a group of devotees in Madras organised themselves as "Chinmaya Mission."

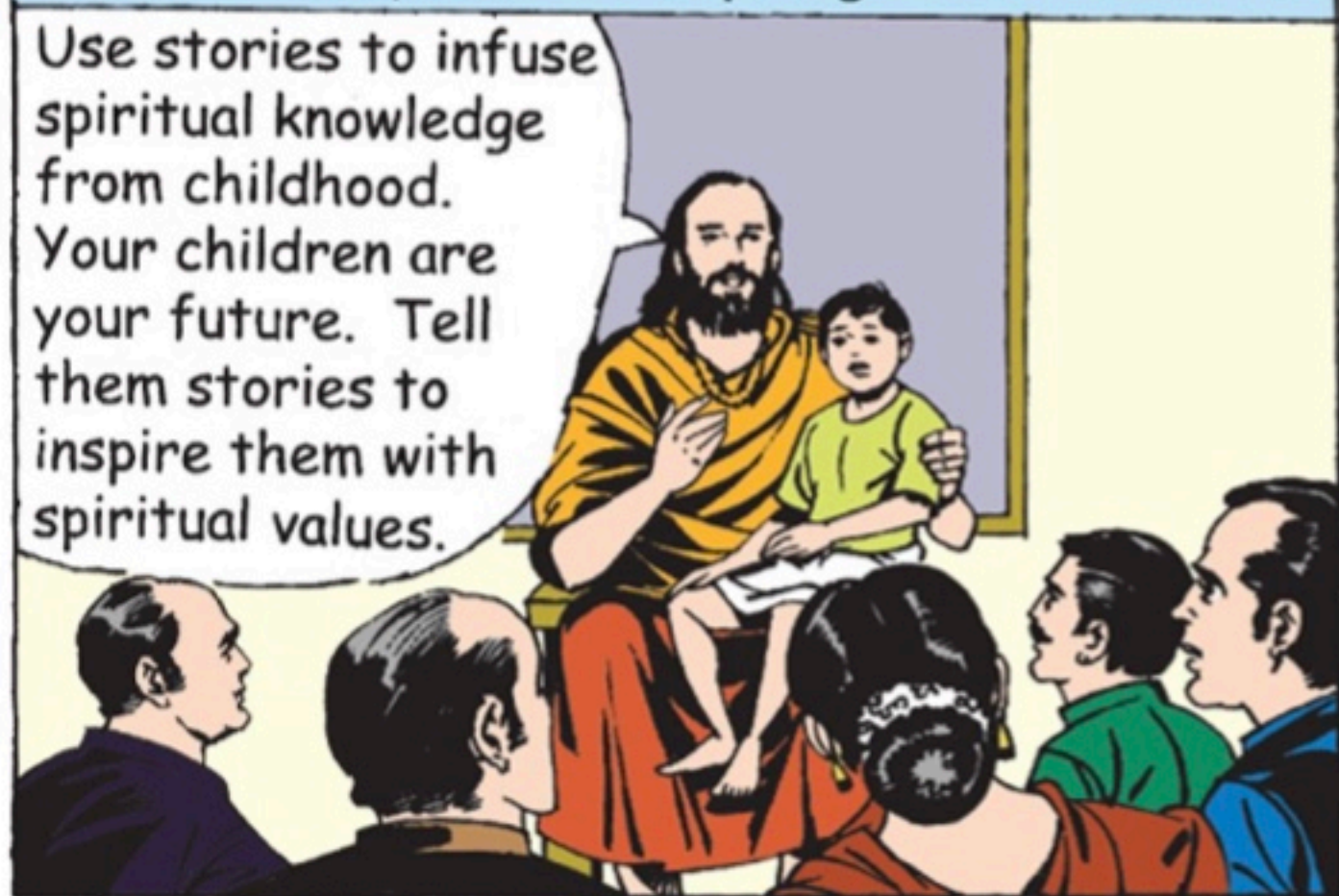
Do not name the Mission after me. I've not come here to be institutionalized.

But 'Chinmaya' means true knowledge. We are calling ourselves Chinmaya Mission as seekers of true knowledge.



When he met parents during *satsang*, he stressed the potential of young minds.

Use stories to infuse spiritual knowledge from childhood. Your children are your future. Tell them stories to inspire them with spiritual values.



Study groups formed Balavihar classes for children. Stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were told and simple *bhajans* sung.

Hari Om!

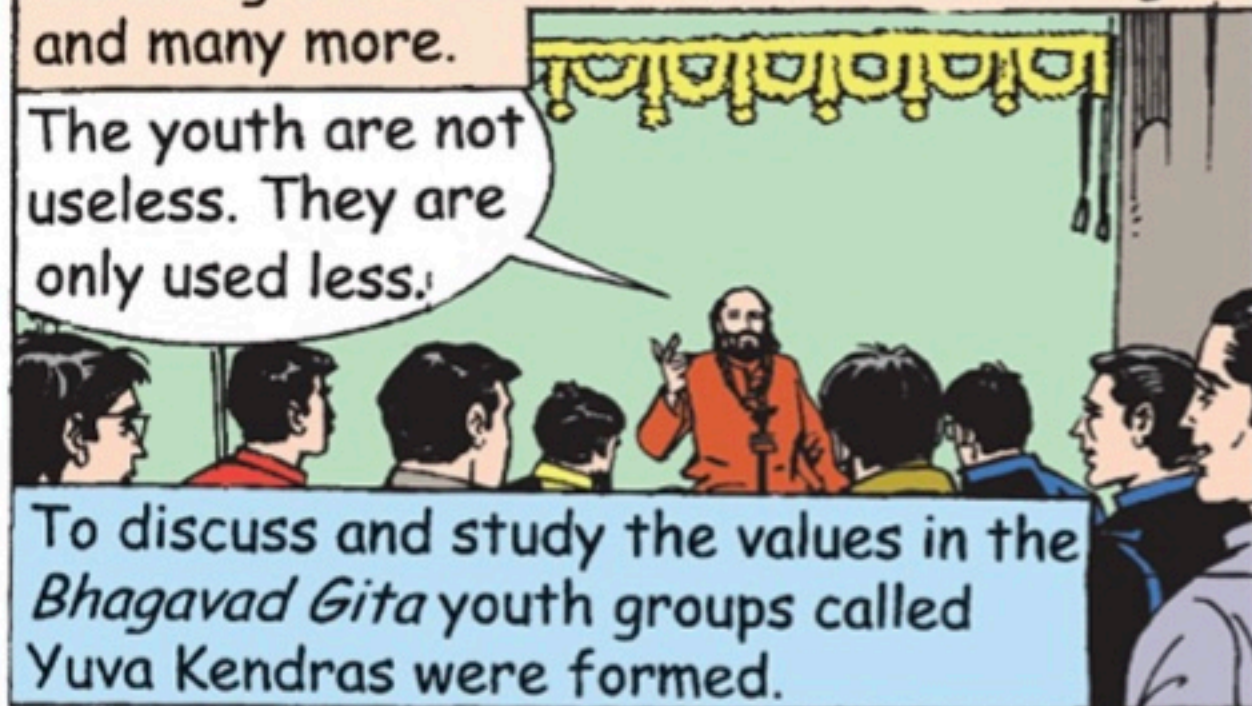
How lucky our children are! We had no Balavihars when we were young.



A number of stories for children told by Swamiji were published.

For the youth he held a series of talks including those on the Art of Man-making and many more.

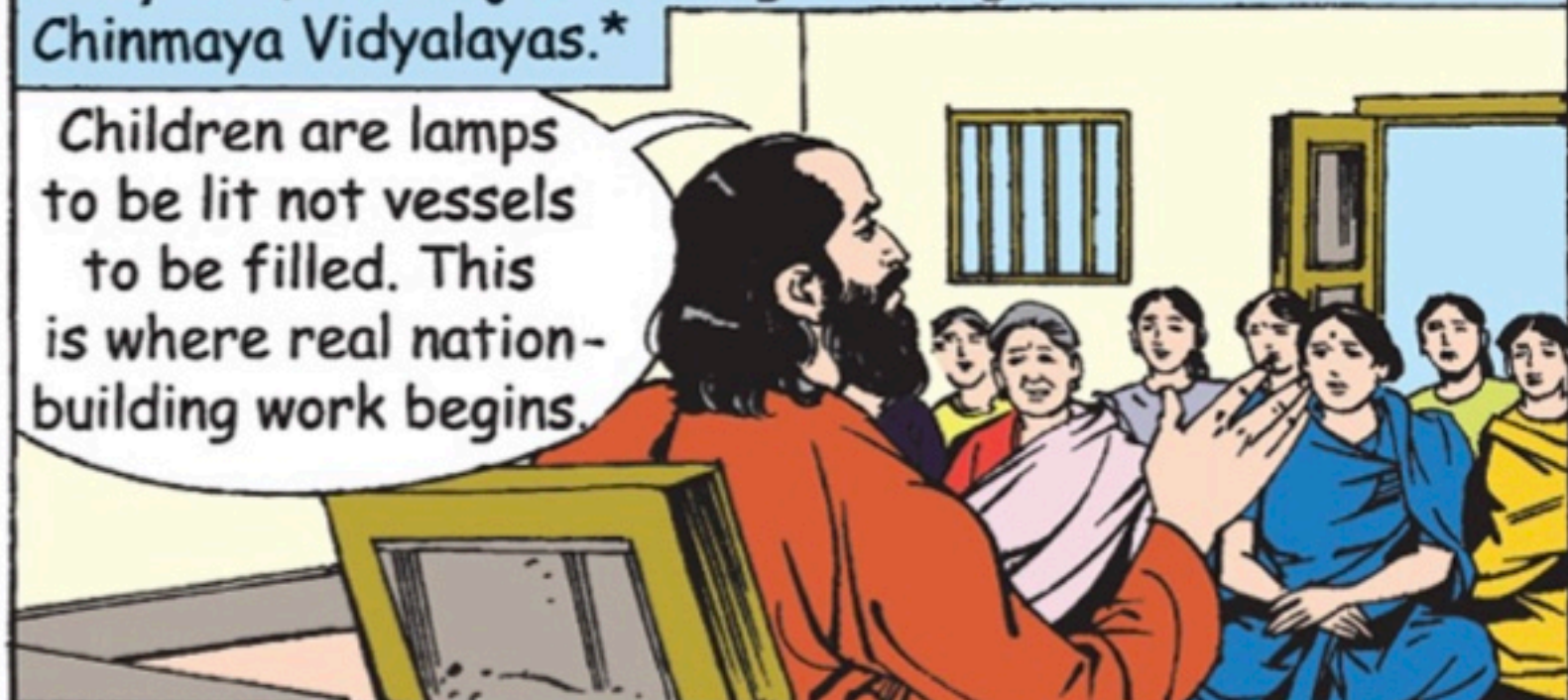
The youth are not useless. They are only used less.



To discuss and study the values in the *Bhagavad Gita* youth groups called Yuva Kendras were formed.

Realizing the importance of value-based education in early life, Swamiji encouraged the growth of Chinmaya Vidyalyayas.*

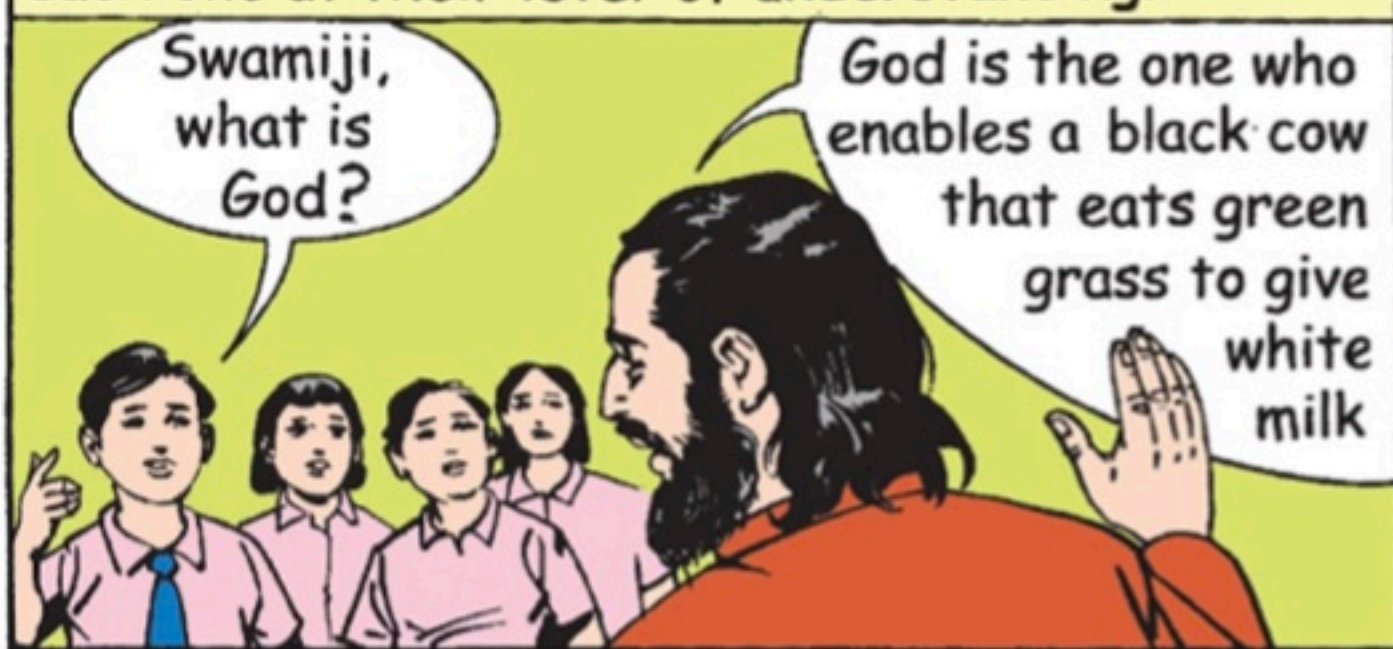
Children are lamps to be lit not vessels to be filled. This is where real nation-building work begins.



Swamiji loved children's questions and answered each one at their level of understanding.

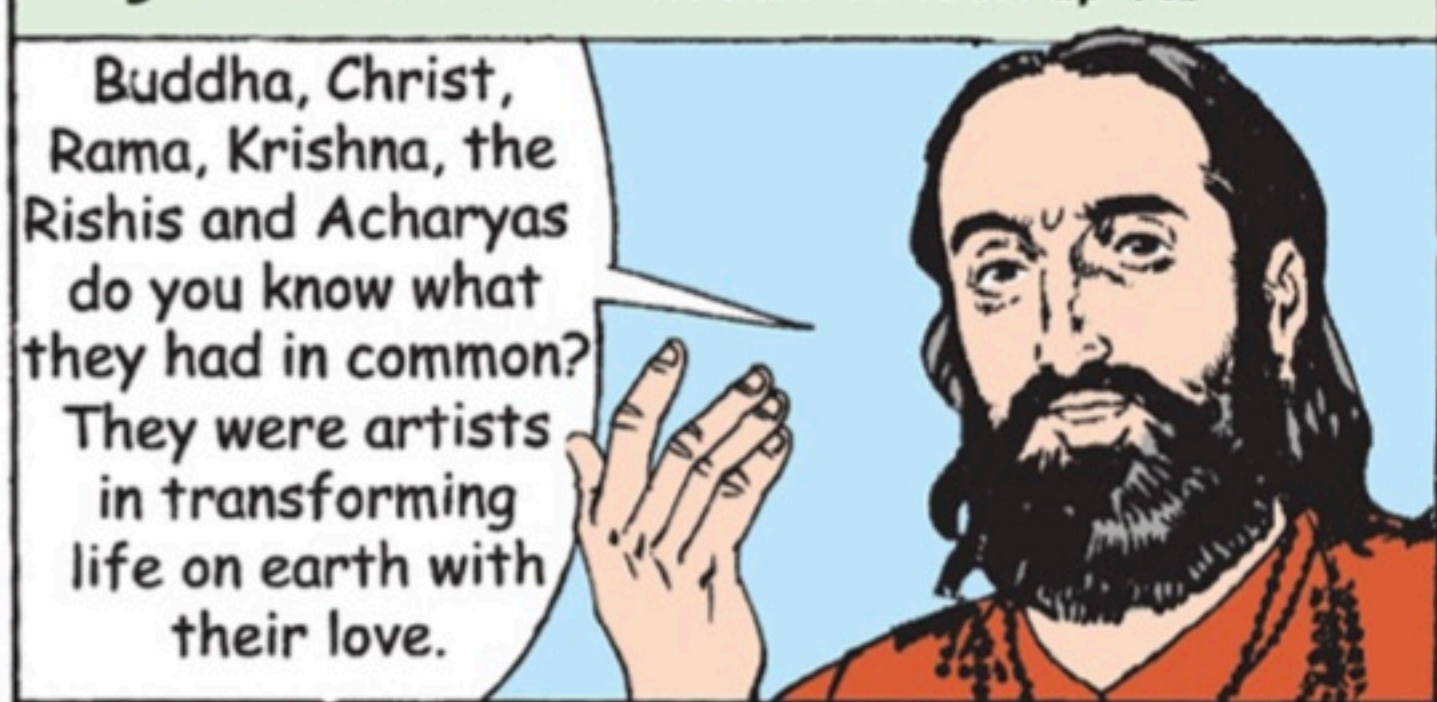
Swamiji, what is God?

God is the one who enables a black cow that eats green grass to give white milk



He gave children role models to look up to.

Buddha, Christ, Rama, Krishna, the Rishis and Acharyas do you know what they had in common? They were artists in transforming life on earth with their love.



* Schools

He wrote a collection of letters addressed to *Bala Vihars* and even found time to answer the questions sent by children.

Smile at life and life smiles.
As you give to life, so shall
life give unto you.



He explained the symbolism before each ritual worship.

Pick up a petal.
Bring it to your heart.
Chant the name of
the Lord while offering
the flower to any picture
or symbol of the Lord.
With each name of
the Lord, you give up a
wrong or sad thought.



Swamiji was particular that people sat in perfect rows.

The 1955 yajna held in Delhi was inaugurated by the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

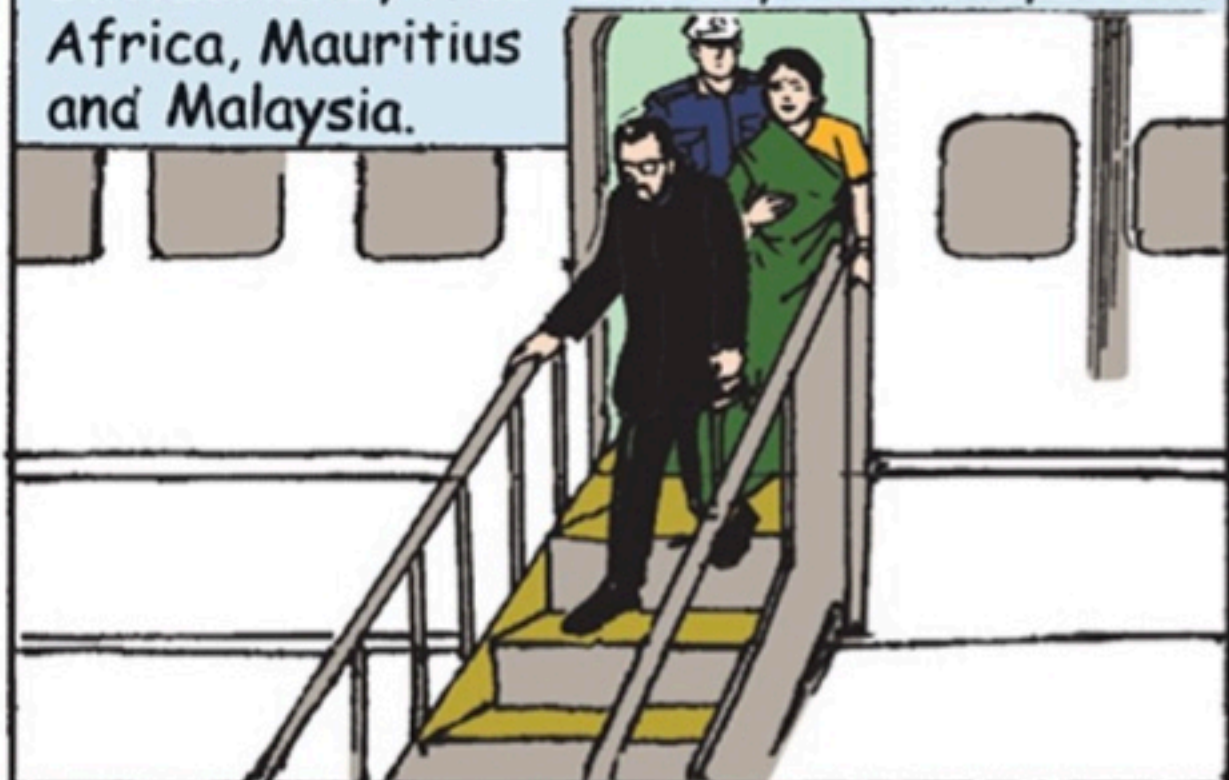


To train teachers to spread Vedanta, Swamiji envisioned a *gurukula** style institute. He named the school Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, after Lord Krishna's guru, Sandeepany.



In 1964, the Jagadeeshwara temple was built at the Sandeepany site and classes began.

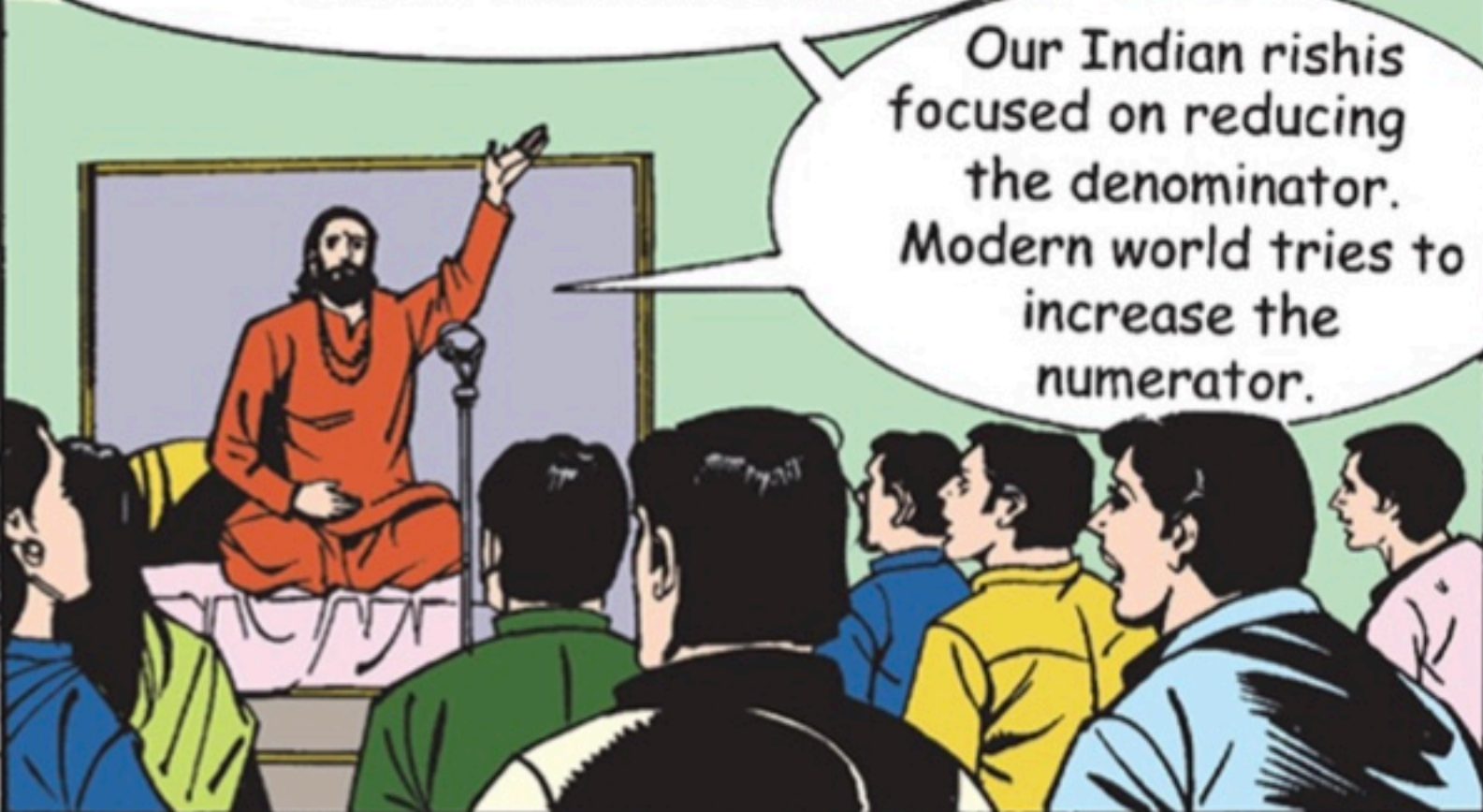
In March, 1965, he set out for a global tour of 12 countries, including USA, Switzerland, West Indies, Thailand, South Africa, Mauritius and Malaysia.



People of all faiths thronged to hear him—not just Hindus. Many lectures were held in churches.

His foreign tours were so successful that over the years, he was invited to speak at academic institutions such as MIT, Stanford and Harvard.

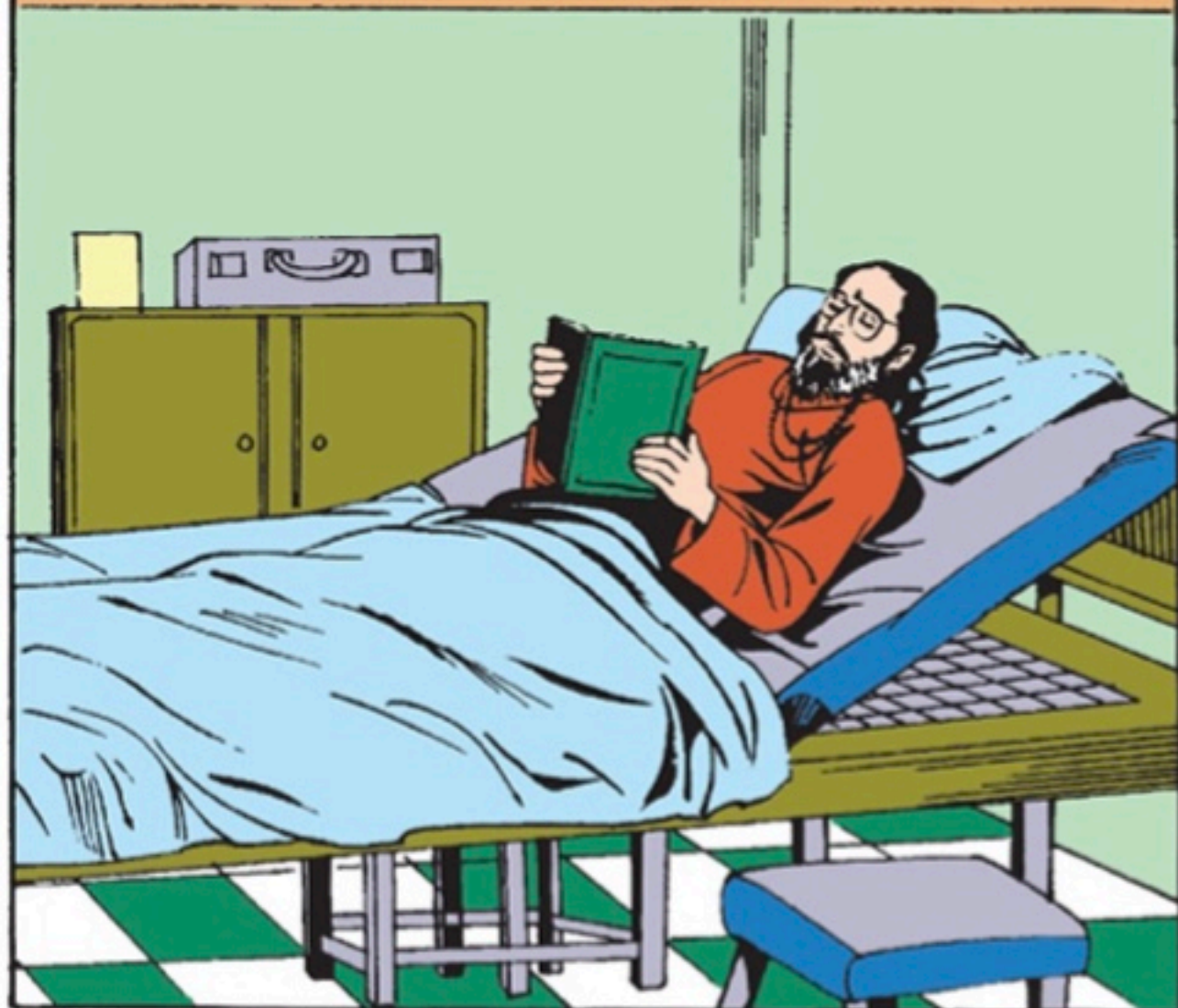
Happiness = $\frac{\text{Number of desires fulfilled}}{\text{Number of desires entertained}}$



Our Indian rishis
focused on reducing
the denominator.
Modern world tries to
increase the
numerator.

* Vedic style university with students living at the teacher's abode.

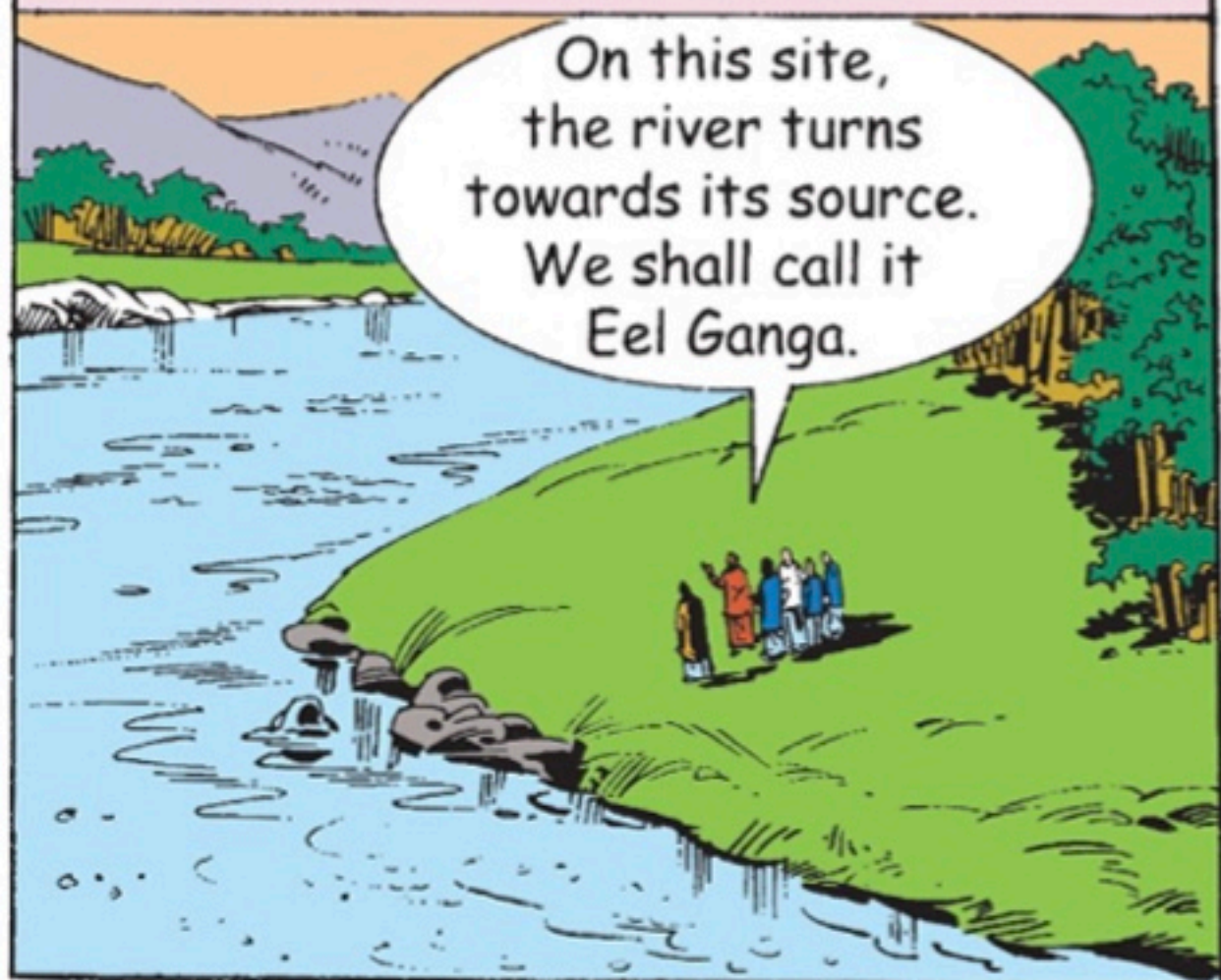
His heart was large and arms long enough to embrace the whole world. But his health was failing. He had his first heart attack in 1970 but did not reduce his workload.



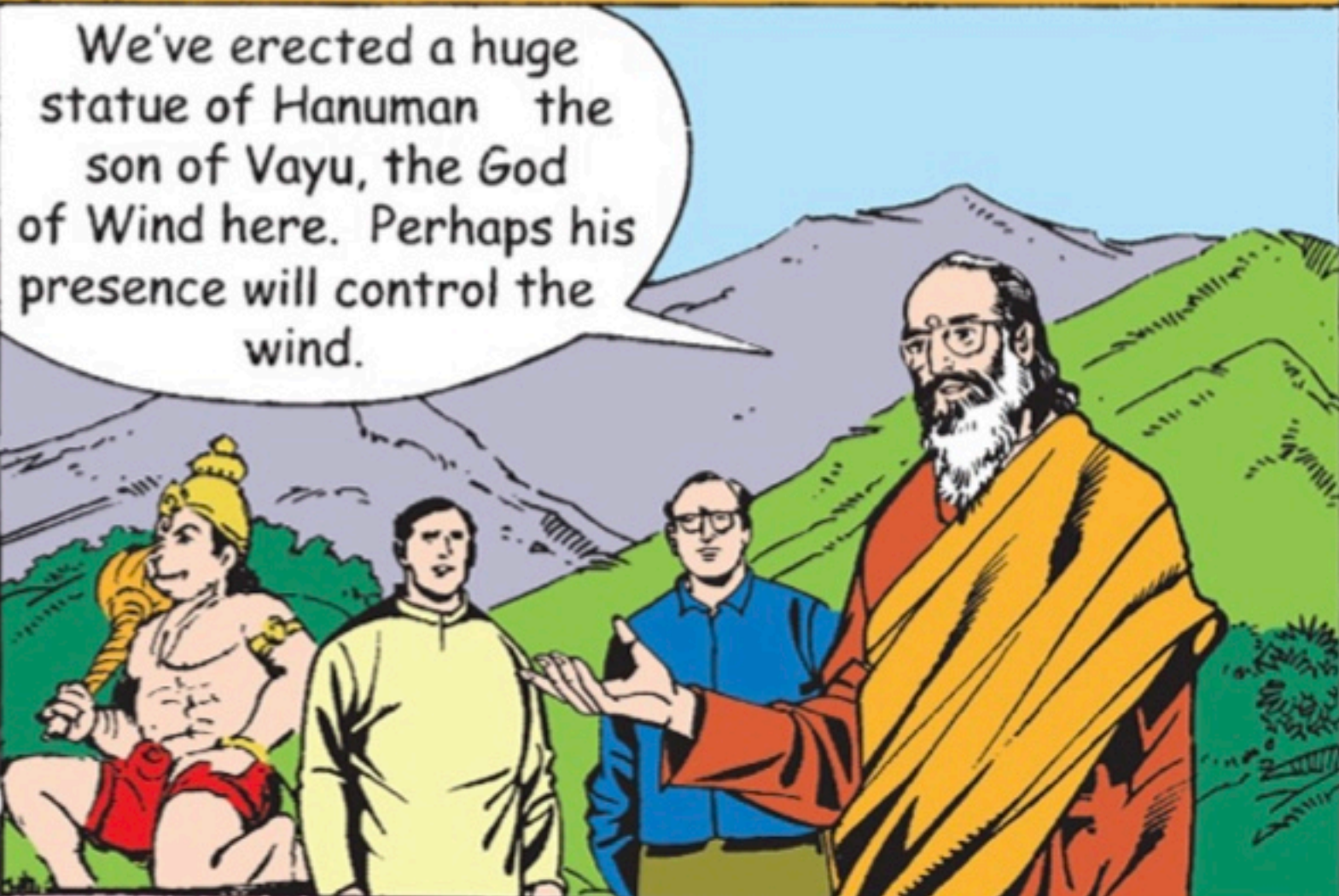
In 1975, the activities of Swamiji's disciples in the West were formally organised in the U.S.A. under Chinmaya Mission West.



In 1978, Chinmaya Mission West purchased property in Northern California, on the banks of the Eel River. Here citizens from USA and Canada were trained to become teachers of Vedanta.



Constructing the ashram at the windy Sidhabari * site was difficult.



The wind subsided and the ashram flourished. Here, Vedanta teachers' training is conducted in Hindi.

He established several temples and his advice was sought by other organisations on their temple plans.



On several occasions, Swami Chinmayananda brought together religious leaders from different faiths and from different sections of Hinduism.

* in Himachal Pradesh

As the years rolled by, Swamiji's devotees multiplied. Each devotee was charmed by his wit and logic in making the knowledge of the Vedas so easy to understand in a modern language—simple and persuasive.

Recognise your real enemies, desire and anger.

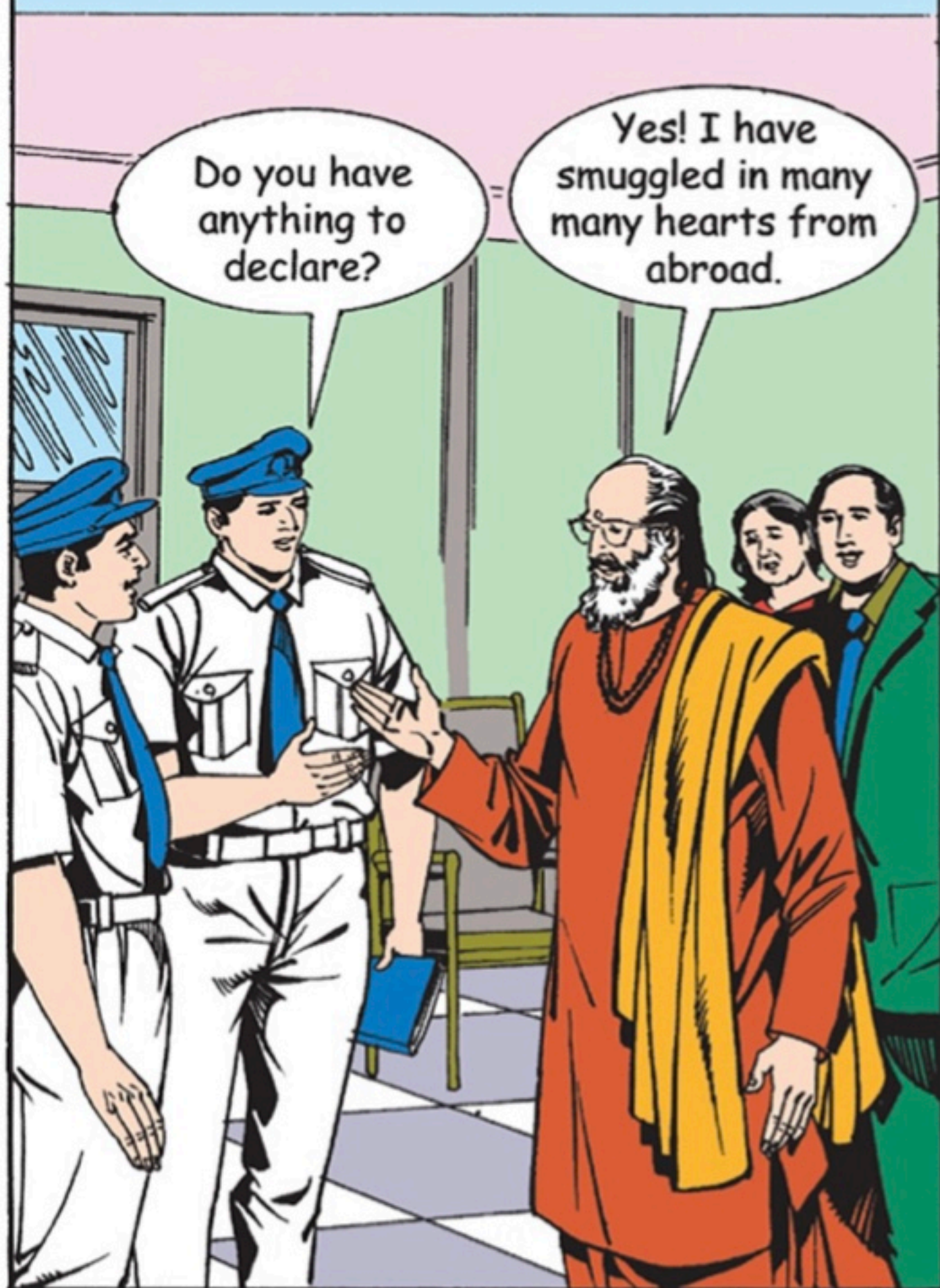
I feel he is reading my mind and speaking only to me!



He had mastered the scriptures, was an exceptional orator and also had a unique sense of humour. Once at an airport —

Do you have anything to declare?

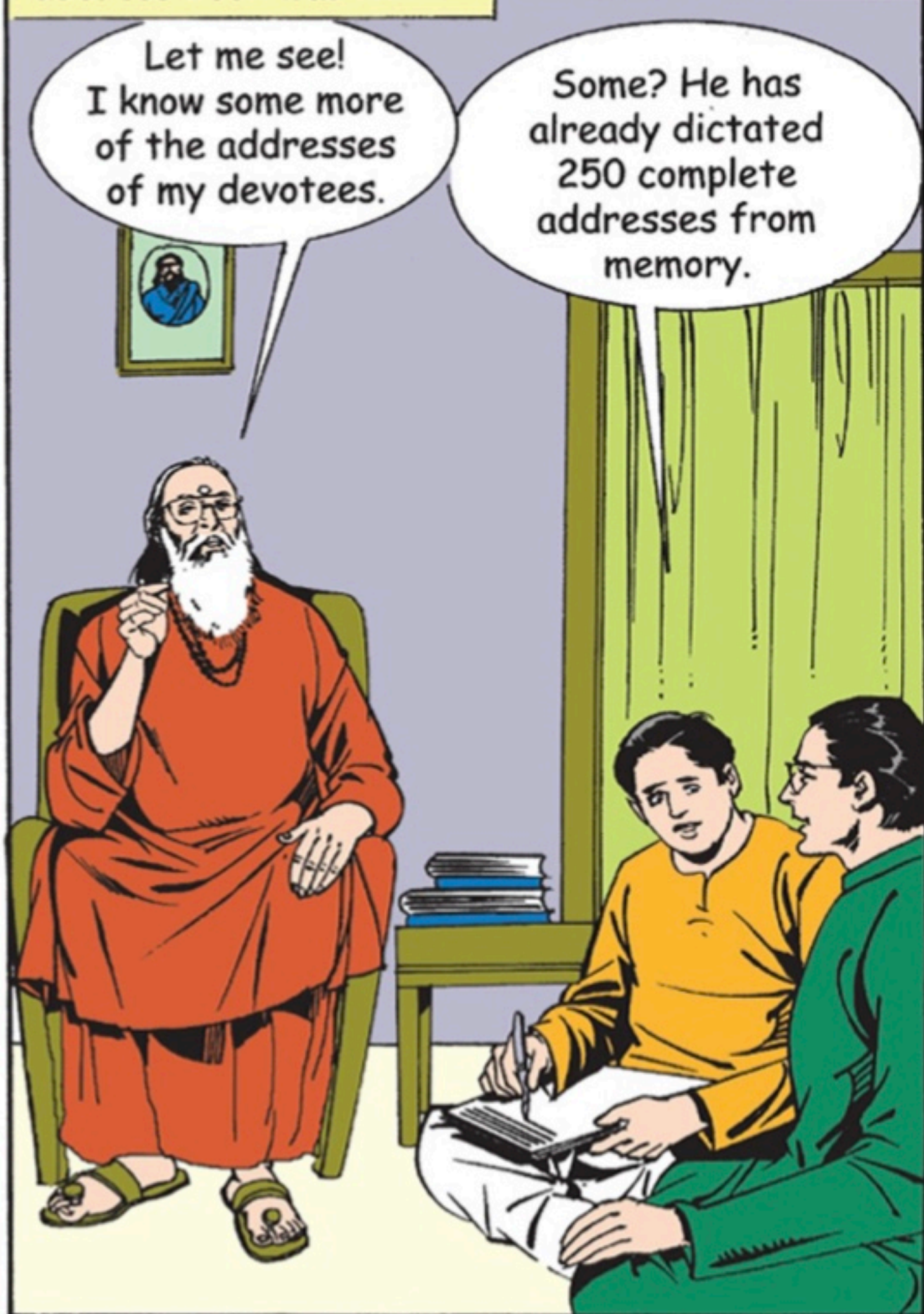
Yes! I have smuggled in many many hearts from abroad.



He had a phenomenal memory. Once when his address book was lost —

Let me see! I know some more of the addresses of my devotees.

Some? He has already dictated 250 complete addresses from memory.



He was extremely punctual and was always on time for his lectures.

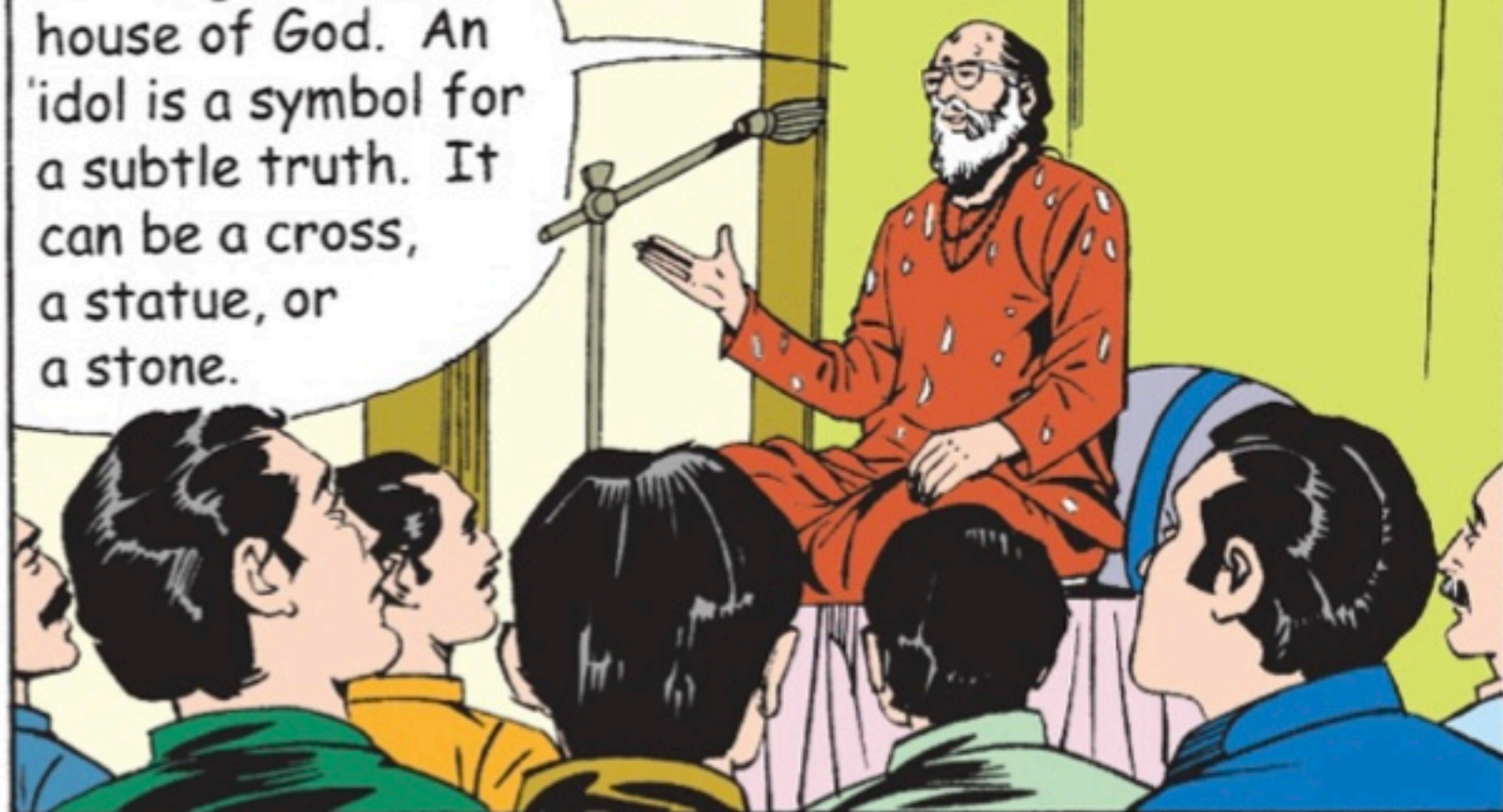
It's 6:29 p.m.
His *yajna* is to start at 6:30 p.m.!

You can set your watch by Swamiji's arrival.



Once, while arriving for the lecture, Swamiji was completely drenched in pouring rain. He walked straight to the platform, dripping wet, and began his talk exactly on time.

All religions have a house of God. An 'idol is a symbol for a subtle truth. It can be a cross, a statue, or a stone.



In 1980, while on a lecture tour in U.S.A., Swamiji suffered another heart attack. He underwent bypass surgery in Houston, Texas.

He's recovering from a bypass. Yet his room light is on at 3 in the night! Where does he get his energy from?



He was advised to slow down and rest. But he continued his work at the earlier pace.

He travelled constantly to meet his devotees.

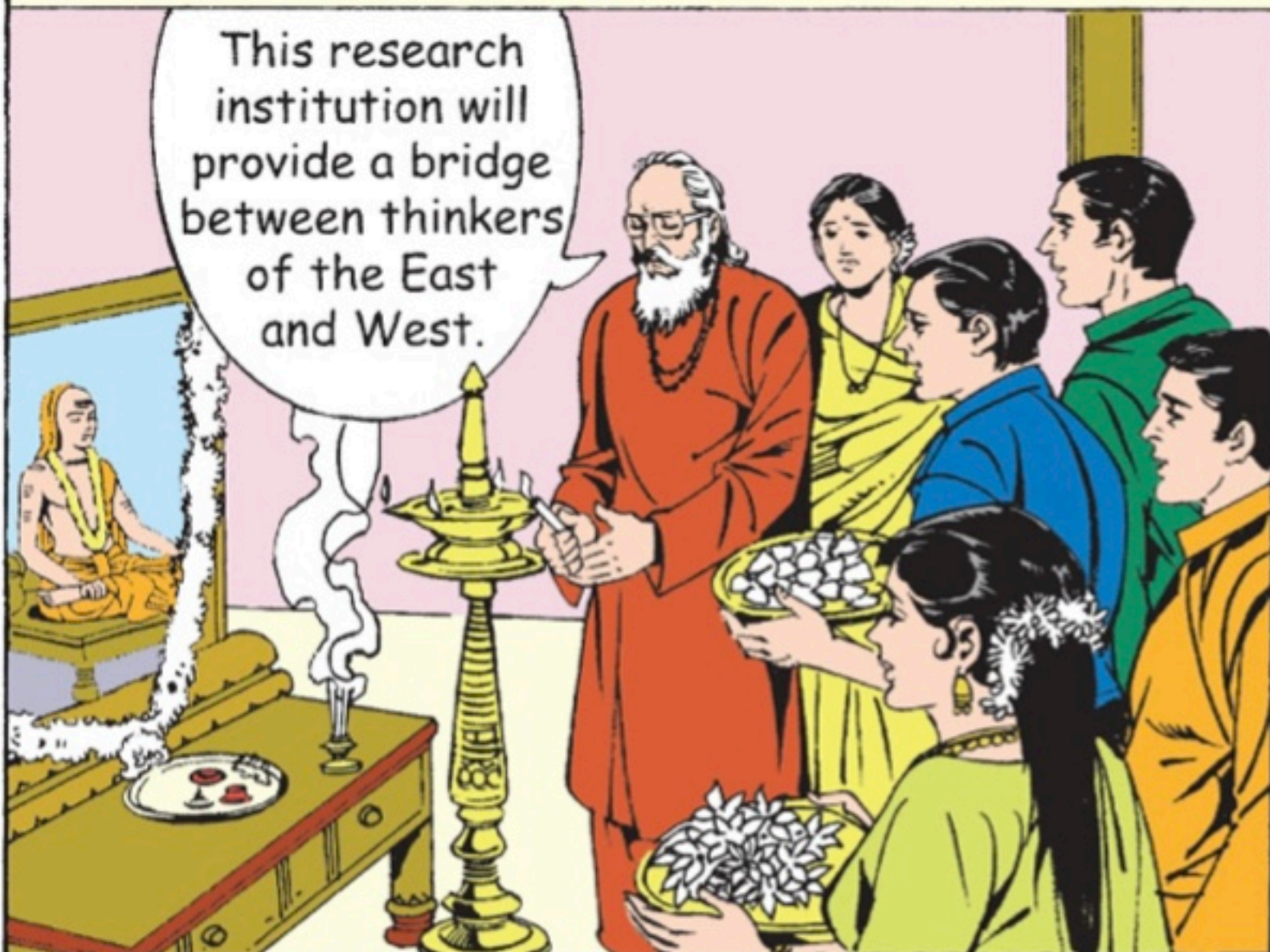
Swamiji, where do you live?

Mostly at airports and stations!



In 1989, the Chinmaya International Foundation was set up in Veliyanad, Kerala, in the ancestral maternal home of the spiritual missionary, Adi Shankaracharya.

This research institution will provide a bridge between thinkers of the East and West.

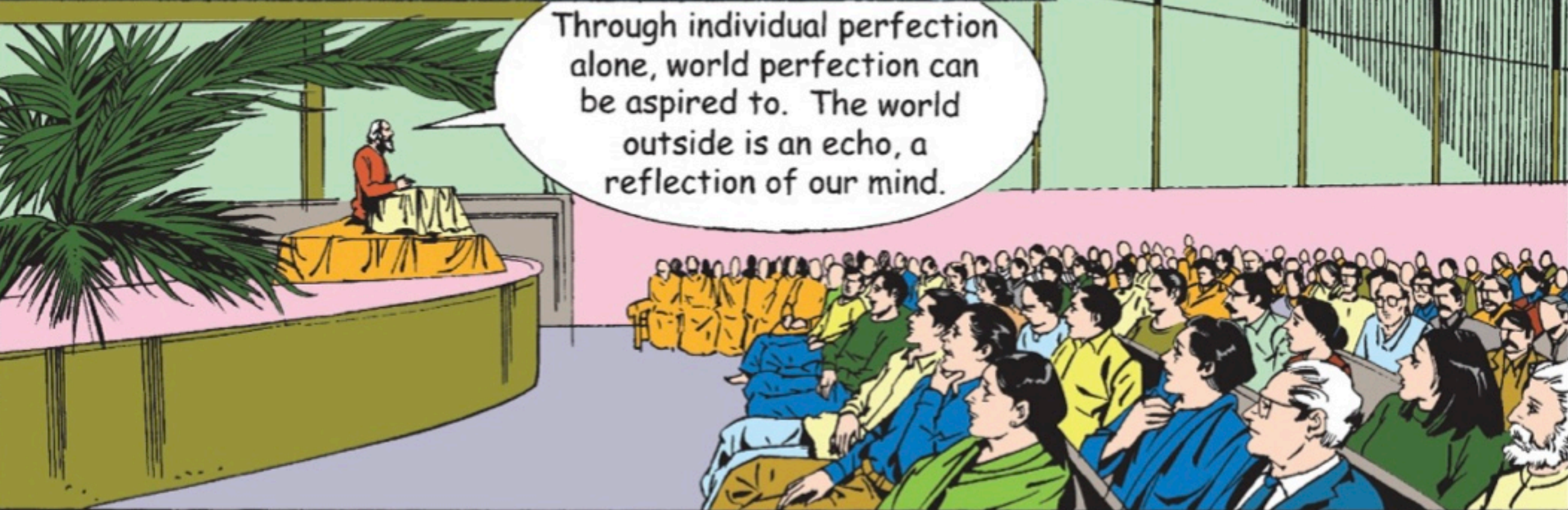


His lectures on the entire *Bhagavad Gita* were professionally recorded in 1991 in California at Krishnalaya, and continue to be a source of inspiration to all.



In November 1992, Swamiji visited 12 renowned universities in the USA and gave a talk at the United Nations in New York.

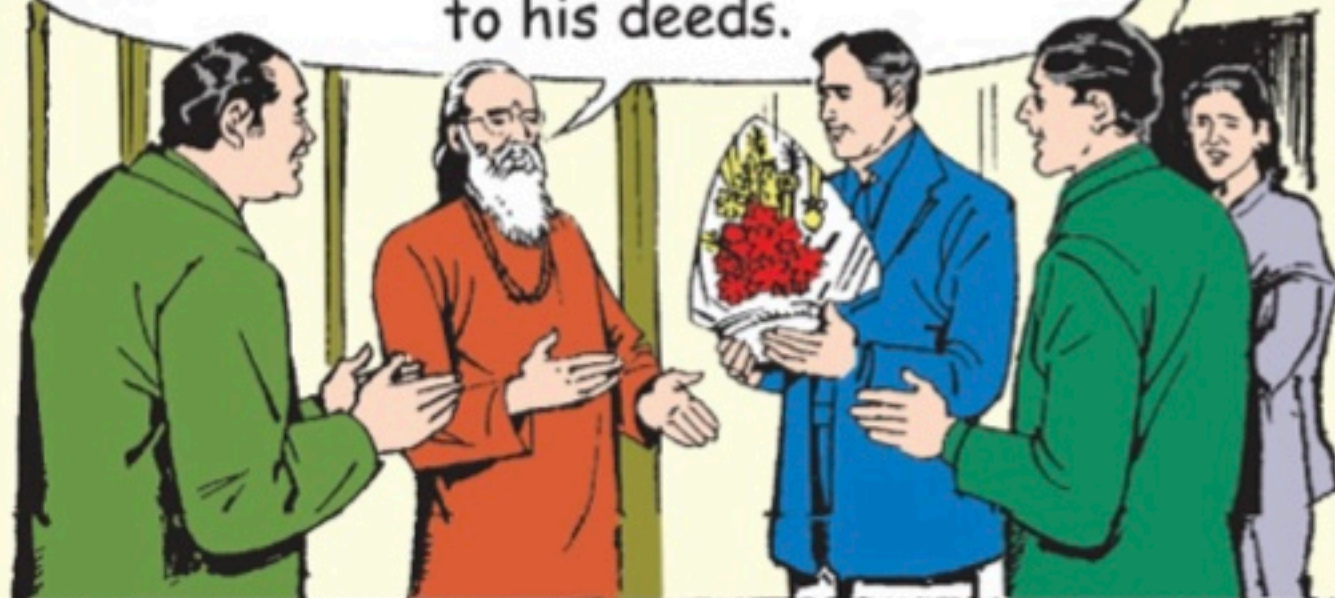
Through individual perfection alone, world perfection can be aspired to. The world outside is an echo, a reflection of our mind.



Swamiji was approachable anywhere by anyone, always ready to answer a doubt, even while accepting the many awards that came his way.

Can birth determine an outcast or a high-caste man?

No, he becomes high or low according to his deeds.



Indians abroad wanted a school where their children could imbibe the culture and values of India. Swamiji initiated the plans for a Chinmaya International Residential School with international academic standards, value-based education and Indian culture.



The school was completed in 1996 in Coimbatore, India.

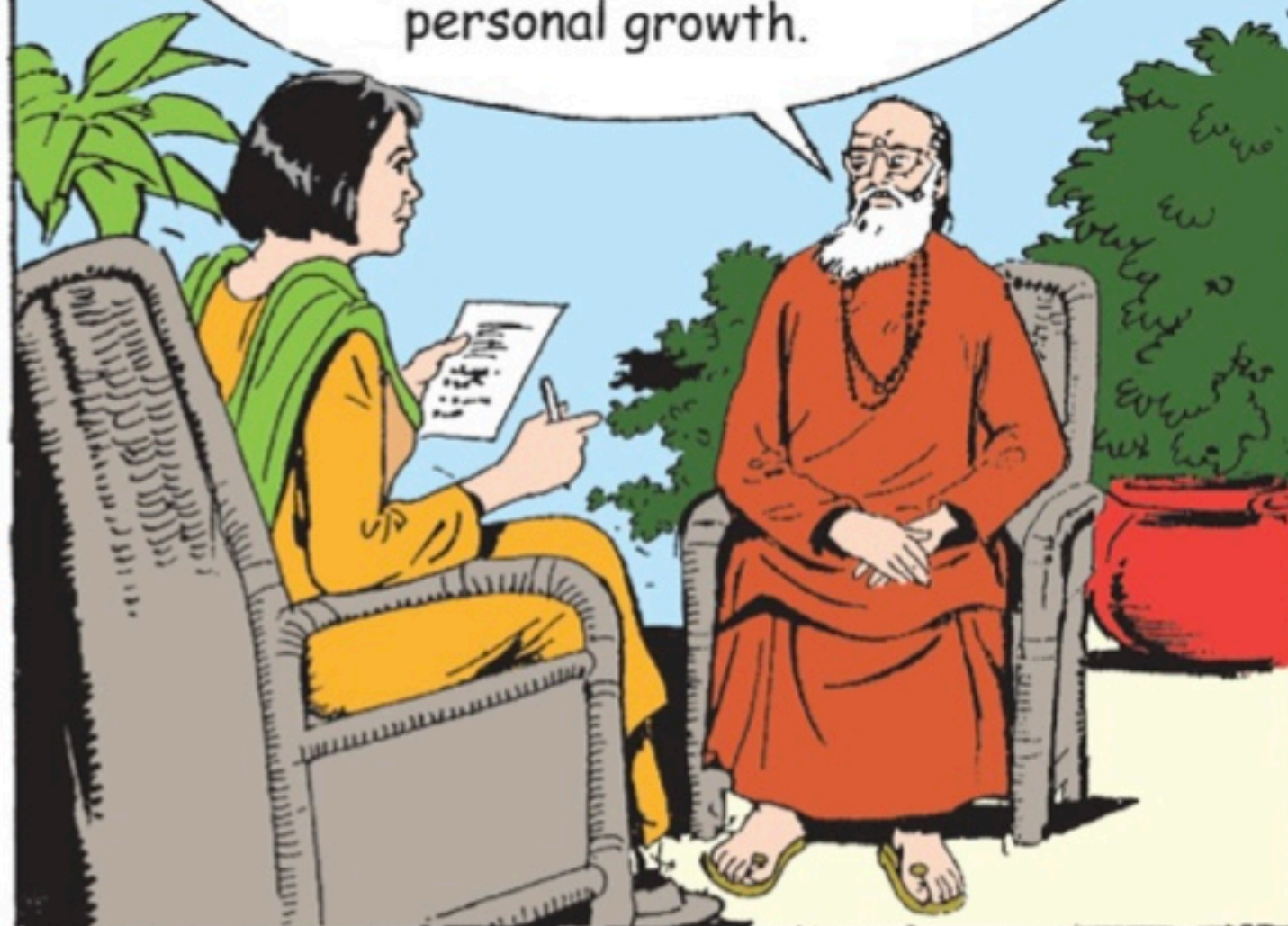
On July 9, 1993, at a Chinmaya Mission West Board meeting in New Jersey, Swamiji asked Swami Tejomayananda to get up off the floor and sit beside him —

Now there should be no doubt as to who will carry on with my work after me.



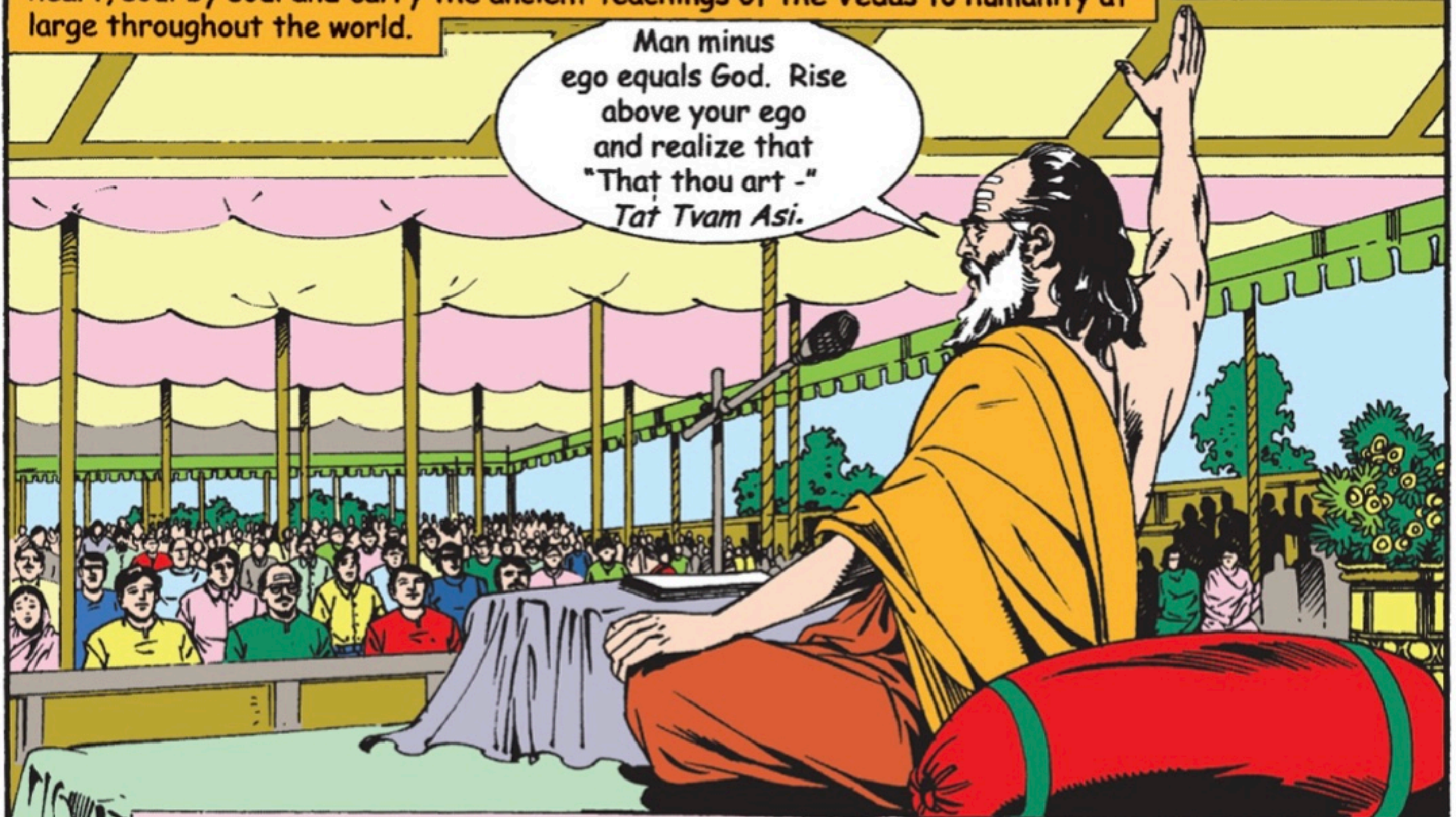
He had a vision for the future.

The family must be the unit, and a community is the home. We must rebuild a future where the younger generation has a better sense of compassion, of love, of concern, of involvement in social welfare, and not only one's personal profit or personal growth.



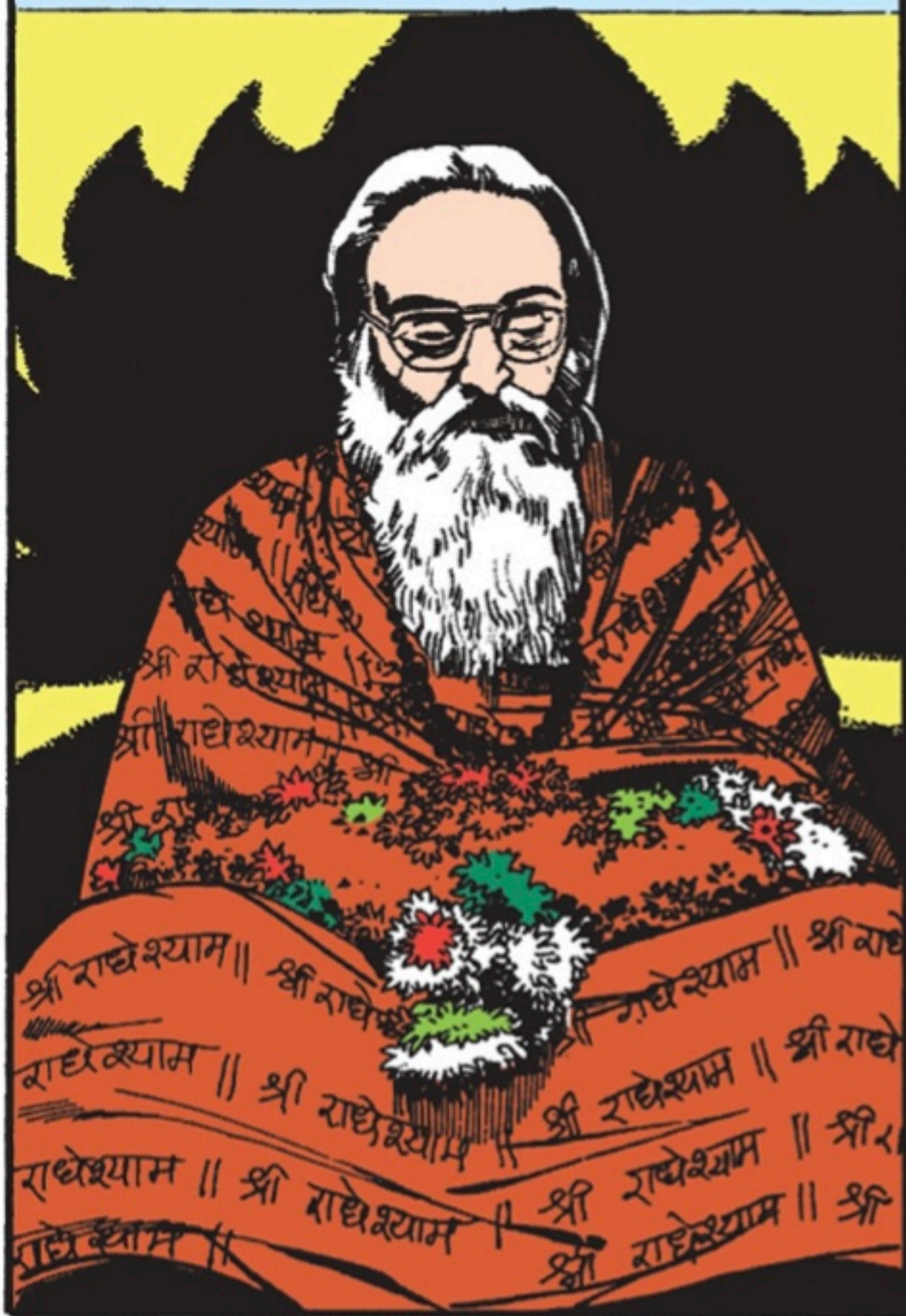
With words as his tools, Swamiji worked for 42 years to rebuild India, heart by heart, soul by soul and carry the ancient teachings of the Vedas to humanity at large throughout the world.

Man minus
ego equals God. Rise
above your ego
and realize that
"That thou art -"
Tat Tvam Asi.



By the end of his life, Swamiji had held 576 *jnana yajnas* in India and hundreds more abroad.

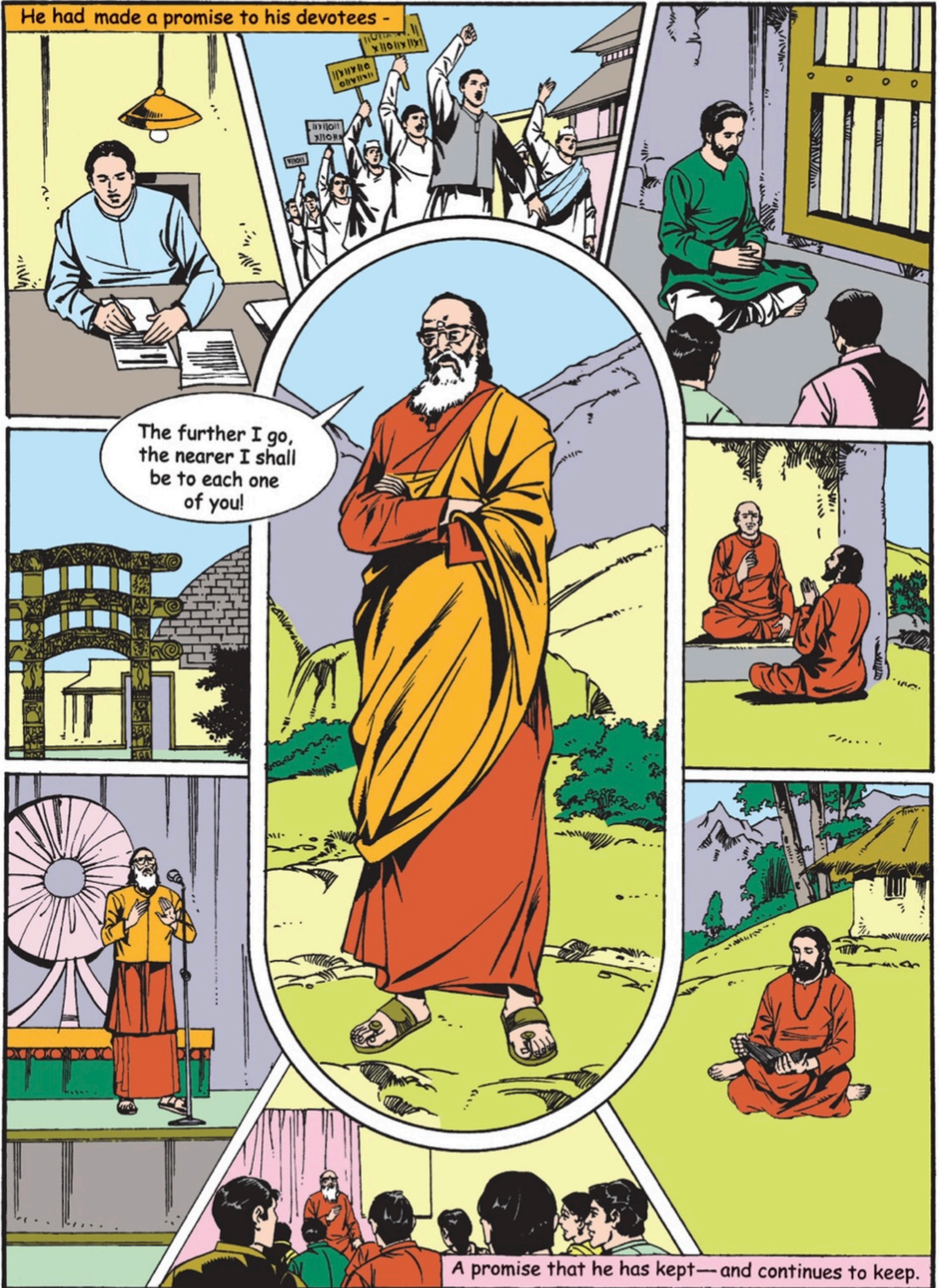
At 5:45 p.m. on August 3, 1993 at San Diego, California, USA, Swamiji left his mortal frame and attained *Mahasamadhi*.



His mortal remains were carried to Sidhabari. His *samadhi* overlooks the spectacular mountains he loved.



He had made a promise to his devotees -



The further I go,
the nearer I shall
be to each one
of you!

A promise that he has kept—and continues to keep.

Chinmaya Mission Pledge

We stand as one family
Bound to each other with love and respect

We serve as an army
Courageous and disciplined
Ever ready to fight against all low tendencies
And false values, within and without us.

We live honestly
The noble life of sacrifice and service
Producing more than what we consume
And giving more than what we take.

We seek the Lord's grace
To keep us on the path of virtue, courage and wisdom.
May Thy grace and blessings flow through us
To the world around us.

We believe that the service of our country
Is the service of the Lord of lords
And devotion to the people
Is the devotion to the Supreme Self.

We know our responsibilities
Give us the ability and courage to fulfill them.

Om Tat Sat

WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

EPICS AND MYTHOLOGY <i>Best known stories from the Epics and the Puranas</i> Abhimanyu Agastya Andhaka Aniruddha Aruni And Uttanka Ashwini Kumars Ayyappan Bahubali Bhanumati Bheema And Hanuman Bheeshma Chandrahassa Dasharatha Dhruva And Ashtavakra Draupadi Drona Elephanta Gandhari Ganesha Ganesha And The Moon Ganga Garuda Ghatotkacha Hanuman Hanuman To The Rescue Harischandra Heroes Of Hampi Indra And Shachi Indra And Shibi Indra And Vritra Jagannatha Of Puri Jayadratha Kacha And Devayani Karna Karttikeya Konark Krishna Krishna And Jarasandha Krishna And Narakasura Krishna And Rukmini Krishna And Shishupala Krishna And The False Vaasudeva Kubera Kumbhakarna Mahabharata Mahiravana Nachiketa Nahusha Nala Damayanti Pareekshit Parashurama Prabhavati Pradyumna Pralhad Purushottam Dev And Padmavati Rama Ravana Humbled Saraswati Sati And Shiva Savitri Shiva Parvati Stories of Creation Subhadra Sudama Sukanya Surya Tales From The Upanishads Tales Of Arjuna Tales Of Balarama Tales Of Durga Tales Of Indra Tales Of Narada	Tales Of Shiva Tales Of Vishnu Tales Of Yudhishtira Tapati Thanjavur The Churning Of The Ocean The Gita The Golden Mongoose The King In A Parrot's Body The Lord Of Lanka The Pandava Princes The Pandavas In Hiding The Parijata Tree The Sons Of Rama The Syamantaka Gem Tirupati Tripura Uloopi Vaishno Devi Vali Vishwamitra Yayati VISIONARIES <i>Inspiring tales of thinkers, social reformers and nation builders</i> Adi Shankara Albert Einstein Anant Pai Babasaheb Ambedkar Basaveshwara Buddha Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Chanakya Chokha Mela Dayananda Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das Eknath Fa Hien Ghanshyamdas Birla Guru Arjan Guru Gobind Singh Guru Har Gobind Guru Nanak Guru Tegh Bahadur Hiuen Tsang J.R.D Tata Jagadis Chandra Bose Jamsetji Tata Jawaharlal Nehru Jayaprakash Narayan Jim Corbett Jnaneshwar Kabir Kalidasa Lal Bahadur Shastri Lokmanya Tilak M. 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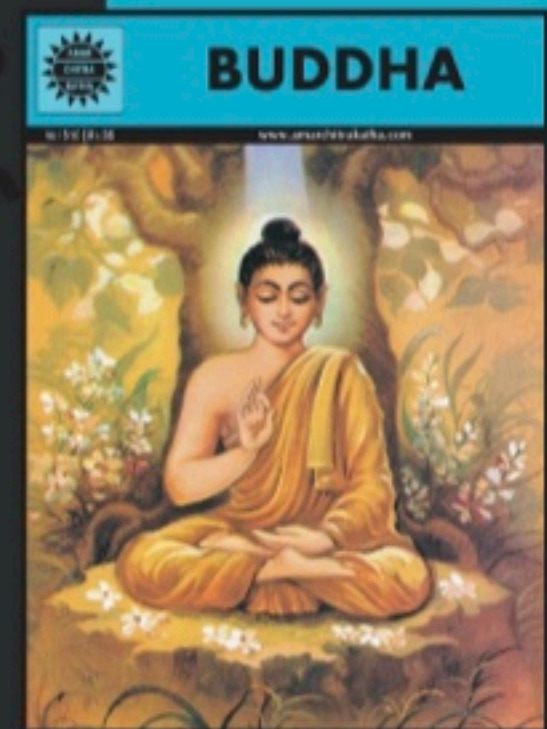
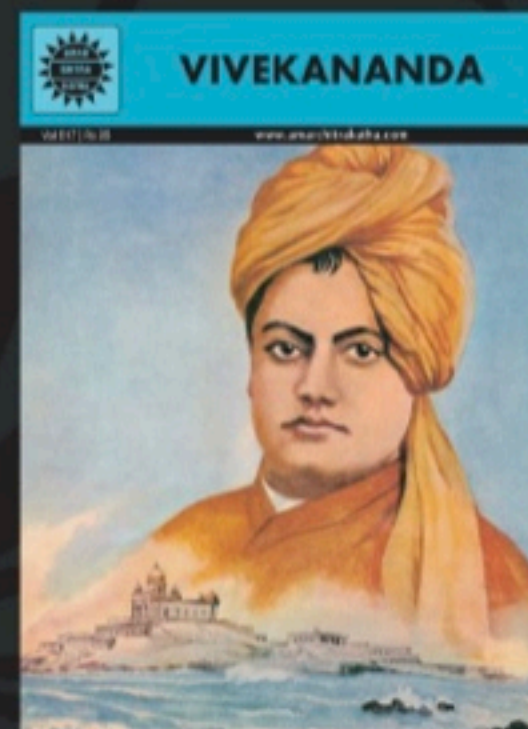
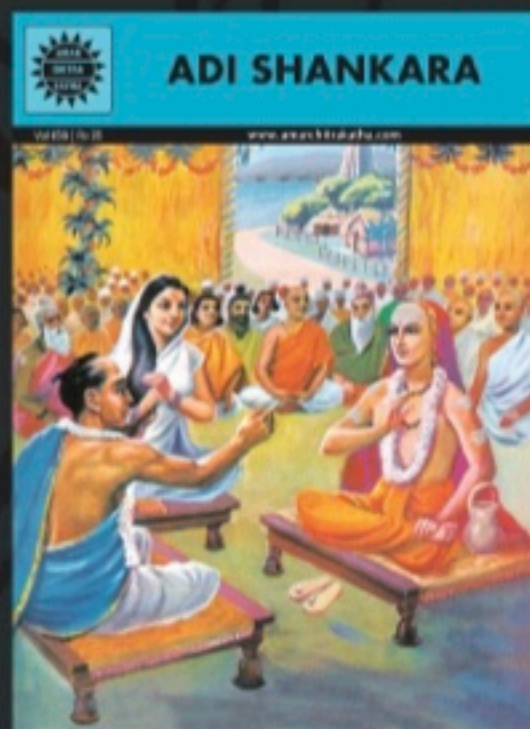


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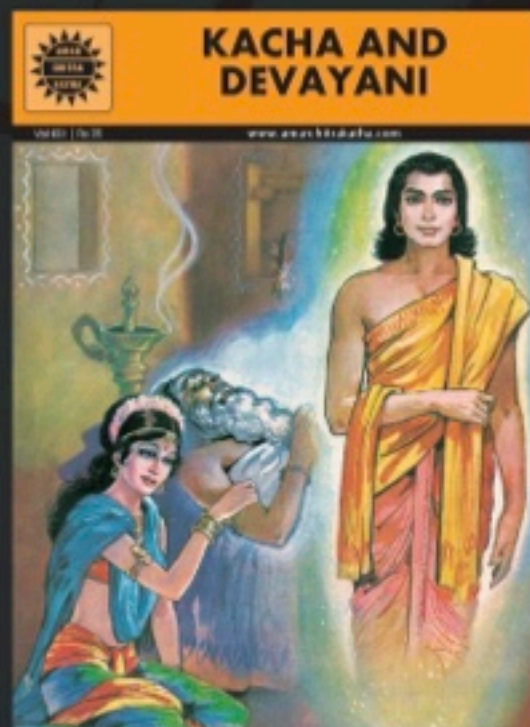
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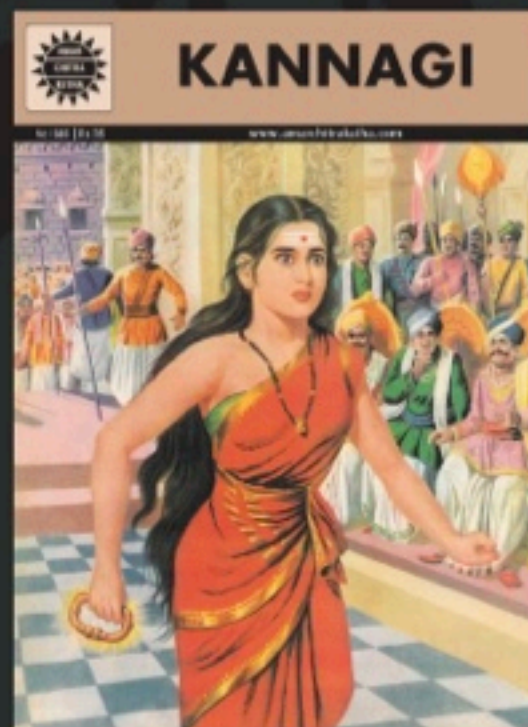
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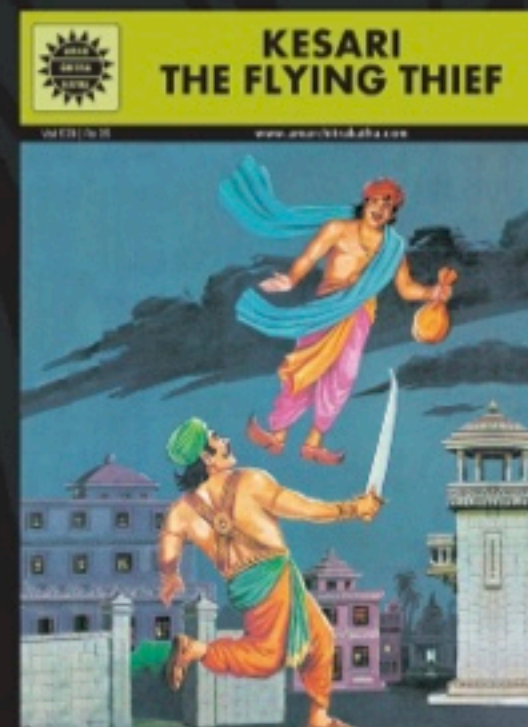
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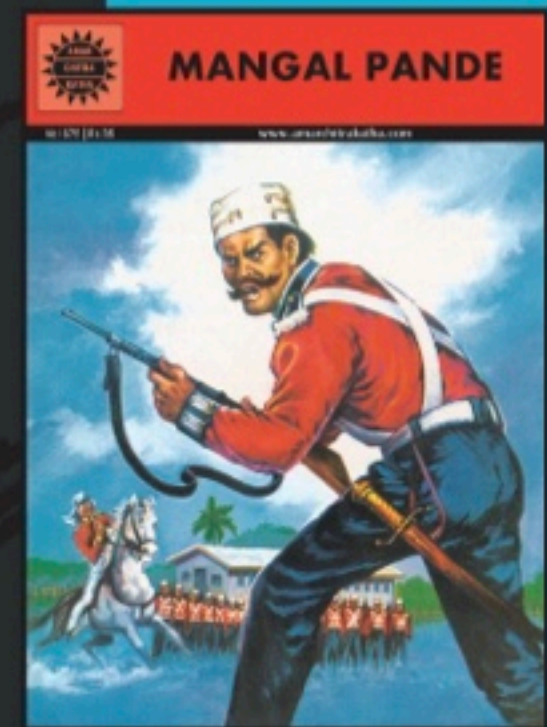
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