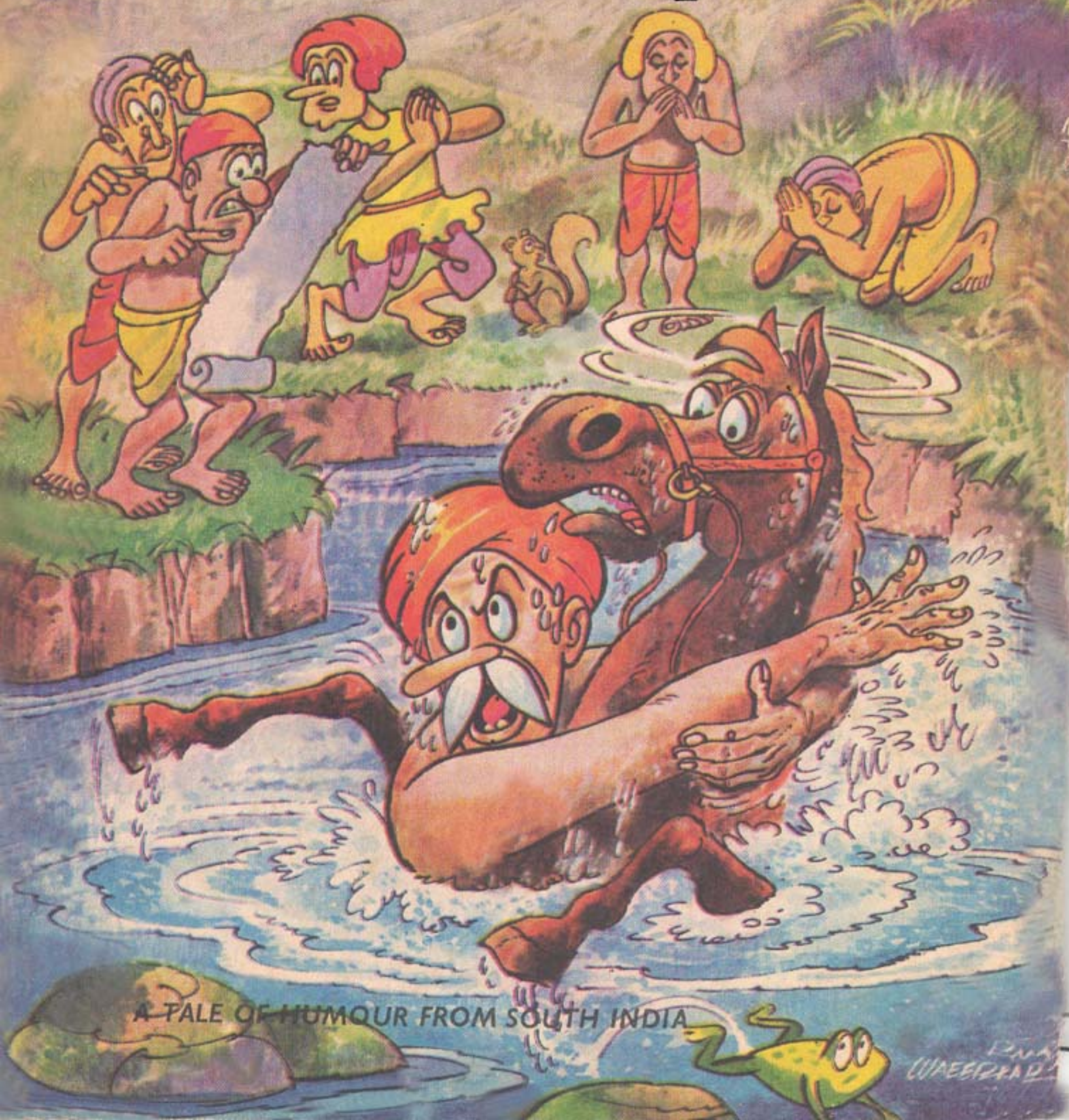




No. 261

The Fool's Disciples



A TALE OF HUMOUR FROM SOUTH INDIA

WAABERAD

This Chitra Katha is adapted from a Tamil book written by an Italian priest, Fr. C. J. Beschi. The book is one of the earliest prose works in the Tamil language.

Fr. Beschi, or Veeramamunivar as he was known, came to India in the 17th century and settled down in Madurai. He studied Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil and became proficient in all three languages.

Besides *Paramartha Guru* he has several other books to his credit. He also wrote the first dictionary in Tamil and a treatise on Tamil grammar.

Whatever might have been the intention of Fr. Beschi in writing these tales, over the years they gained increasing popularity in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. *The Guru* is known by the name Paramananda in Andhra Pradesh and as Gampa Gurū in Karnataka. In Kannada several stories, skits and essays have been written with the Gampa Guru as the central character. In fact a distinct school of humour named *Gampa Sahitya* has come into being in Kannada.

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Artworks: Ram Waeerkar

THE FOOL'S DISCIPLES



LONG LONG AGO, IN A VILLAGE IN SOUTH INDIA, THERE LIVED A POOR, AGED SIMPLETON. HE CALLED HIMSELF PARAMARTHA. HE WAS GOOD-NATURED AND HARMLESS.

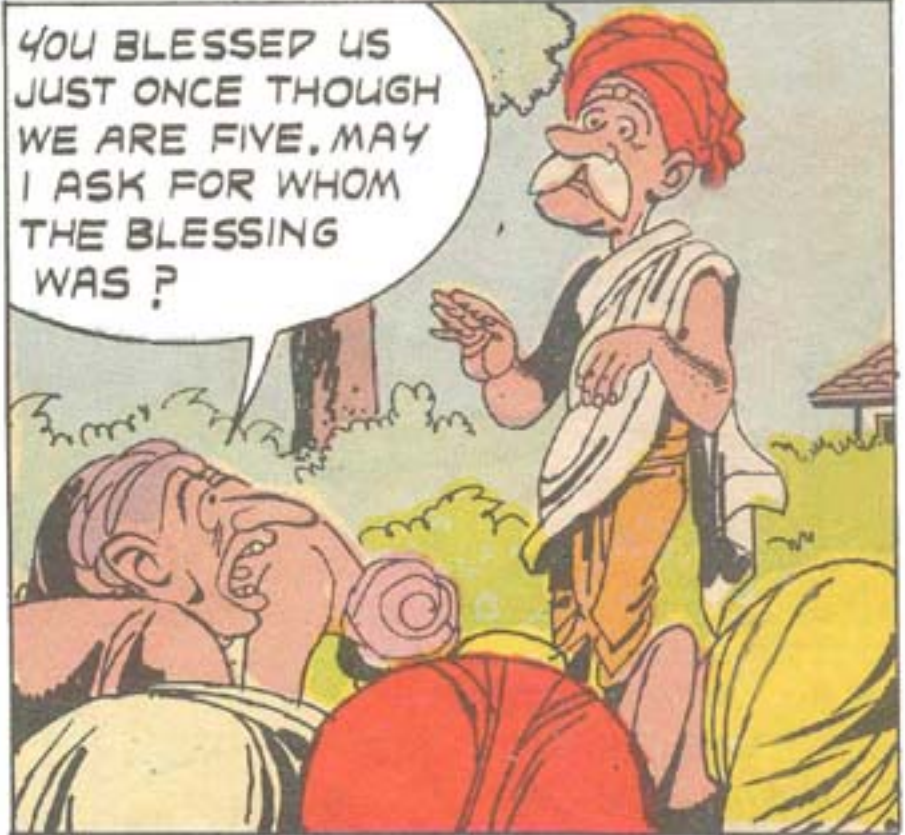
ONE DAY, AS HE WAS WALKING ALONG THE ROAD—

BLESS US,
O MAHATMA.

MAY GOD'S
GRACE BE
WITH YOU.



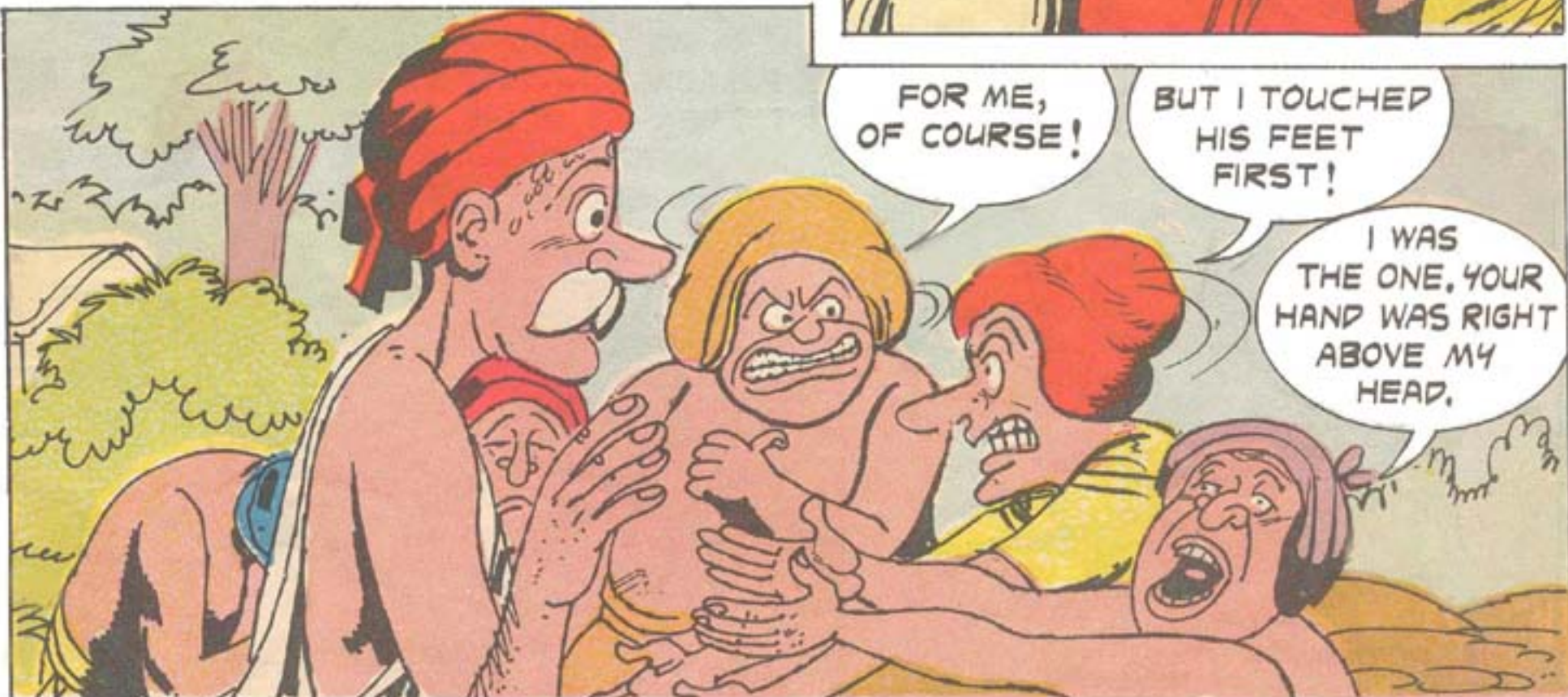
YOU BLESSED US
JUST ONCE THOUGH
WE ARE FIVE. MAY
I ASK FOR WHOM
THE BLESSING
WAS ?

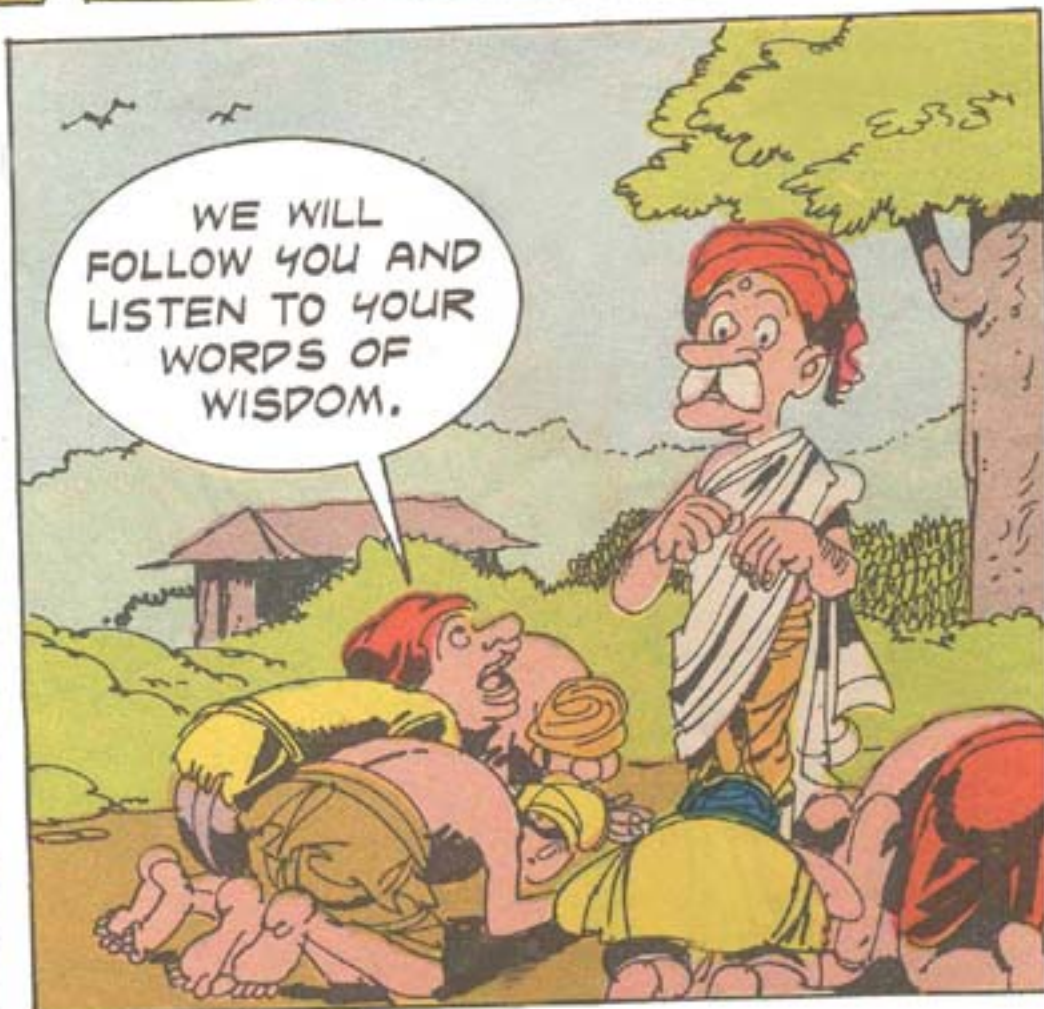


FOR ME,
OF COURSE!

BUT I TOUCHED
HIS FEET
FIRST!

I WAS
THE ONE, YOUR
HAND WAS RIGHT
ABOVE MY
HEAD.

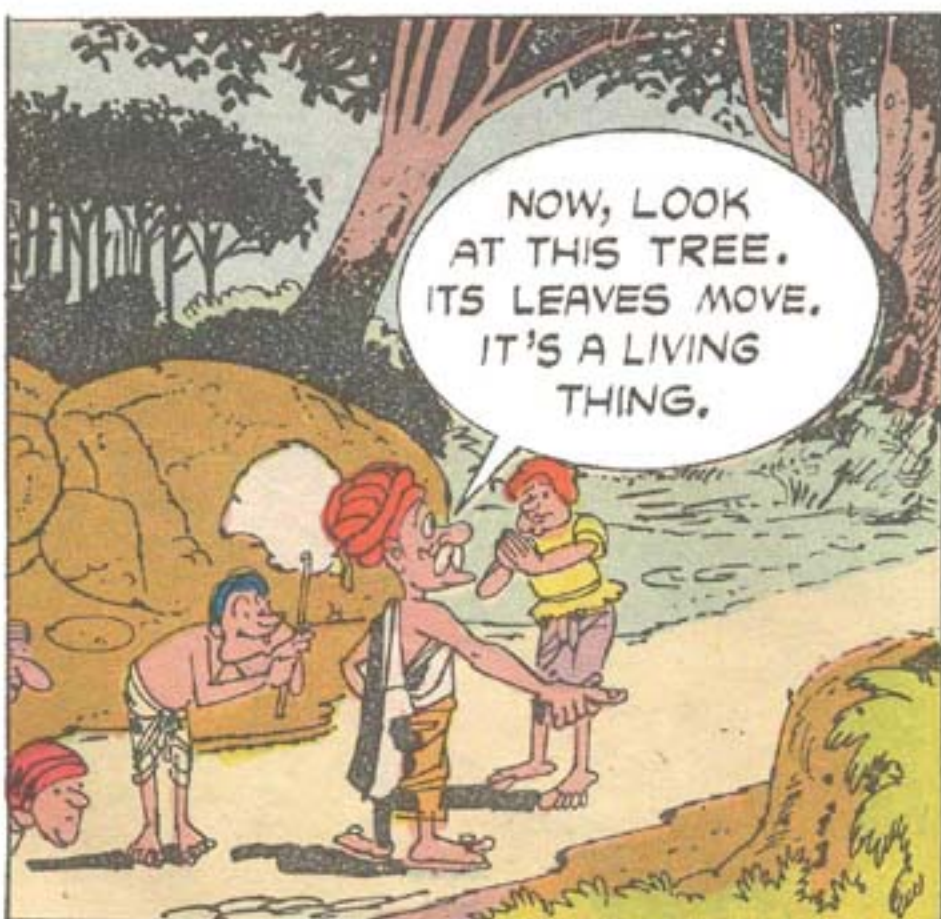




THUS, OVERNIGHT, PARAMARTHA, THE SIMPLETON, BECAME GURU PARAMARTHA. HE NAMED HIS FIVE FOOLISH DISCIPLES, MADDI, MADHAYA, MILECHA, MOODHA AND PEDDA. AND SINCE ALL GURUS AND THEIR DISCIPLES LIVE IN ASHRAMS, THE SIX OF THEM BUILT ONE AND STARTED LIVING IN IT.



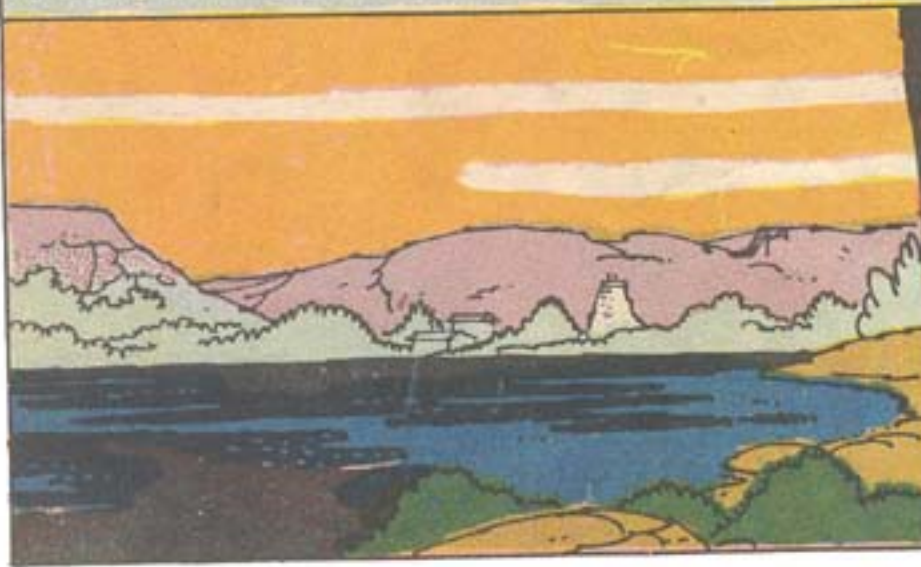
ONE DAY, THE GURU AND HIS DISCIPLES SET OUT FOR A TEMPLE IN A NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE. ON THE WAY —



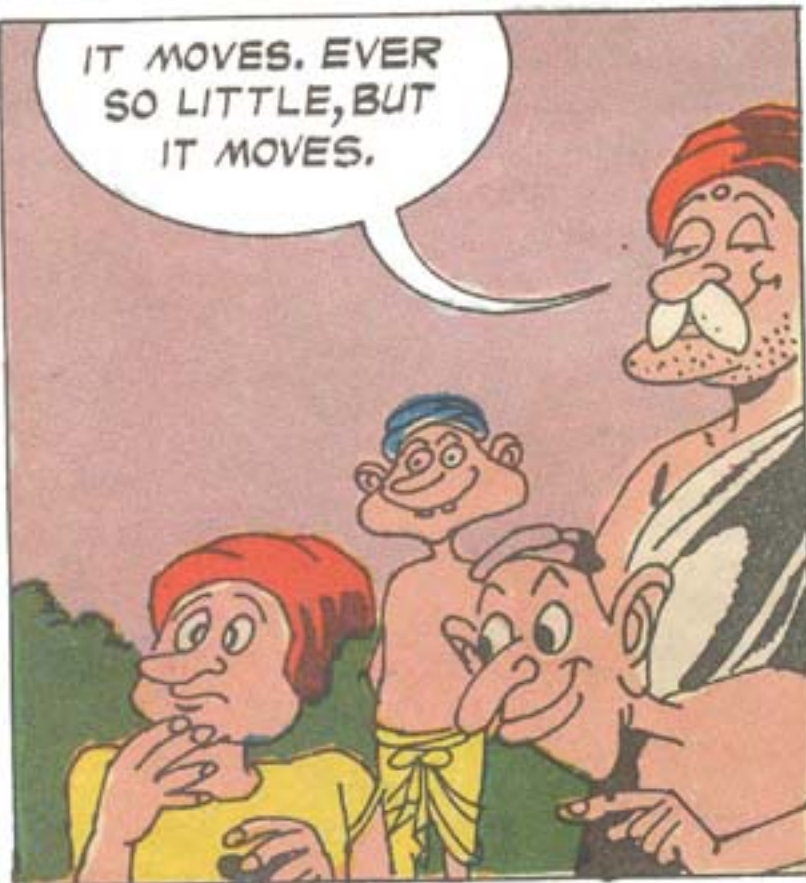
LATER IN THE EVENING, THE GURU AND HIS DISCIPLES HAD TO CROSS A RIVER.

IS THIS RIVER
A LIVING
THING?

OF COURSE, CAN'T
YOU SEE IT
MOVING?



IT MOVES. EVER
SO LITTLE, BUT
IT MOVES.



WOULD IT BE
ANGRY IF WE
CROSSED
IT?

WE MUST CROSS IT
ONLY WHEN IT'S
ASLEEP.



THEN I'LL GO AND
SEE WHETHER IT'S
ASLEEP.

WE'LL
WAIT HERE
FOR YOU.



I'LL PROD IT
WITH MY
TORCH.







LATER, ON THE OPPOSITE BANK—

AT LAST! MADHAYA,
SEE IF ALL OF US
ARE HERE.

MADHAYA STARTED COUNTING.

ONE,
GURU...

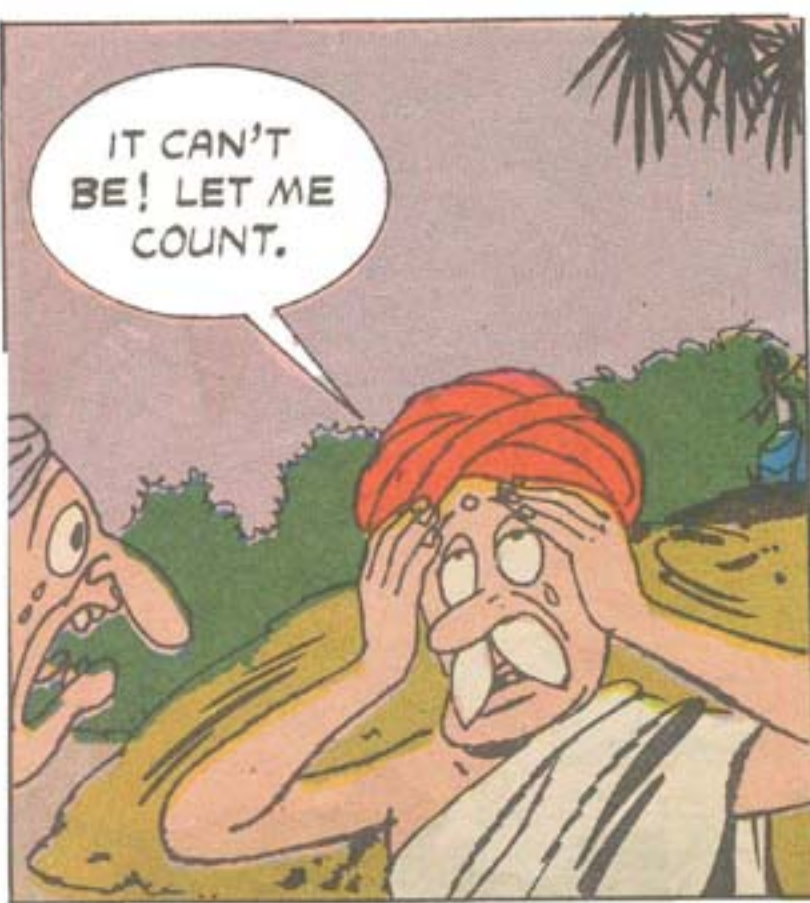
... TWO,
MOODHA...

... THREE,
PEDDA...

... FOUR,
MILECHA...

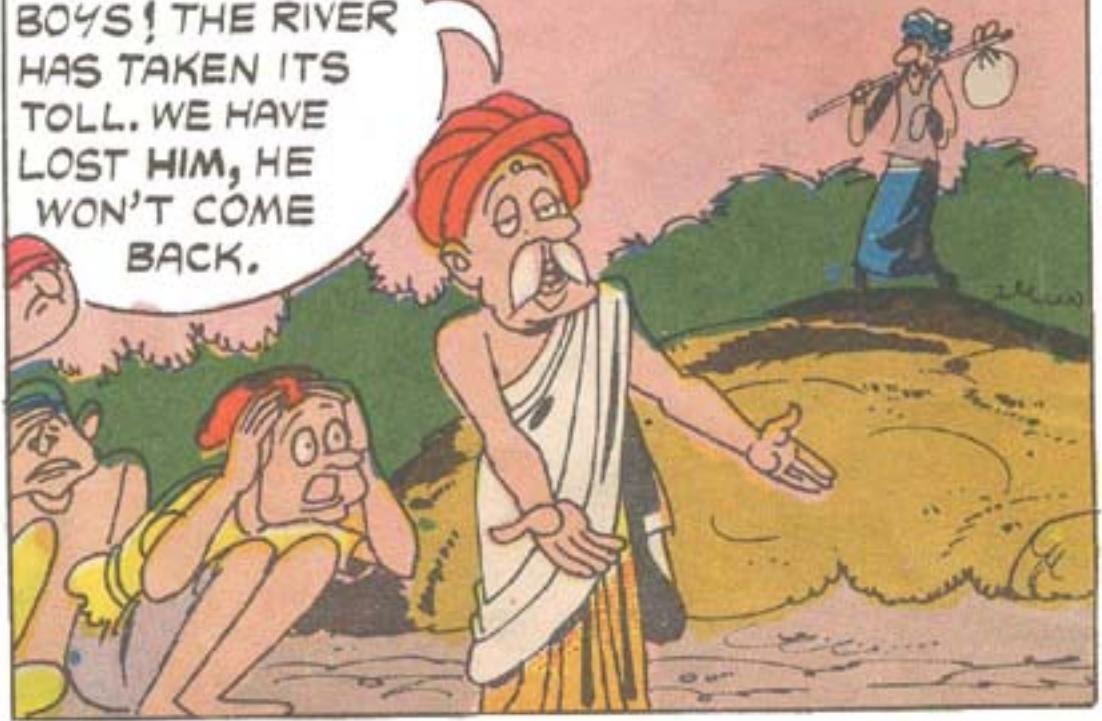
... FIVE,
MADDI...

HEY! ONE OF US
IS MISSING!



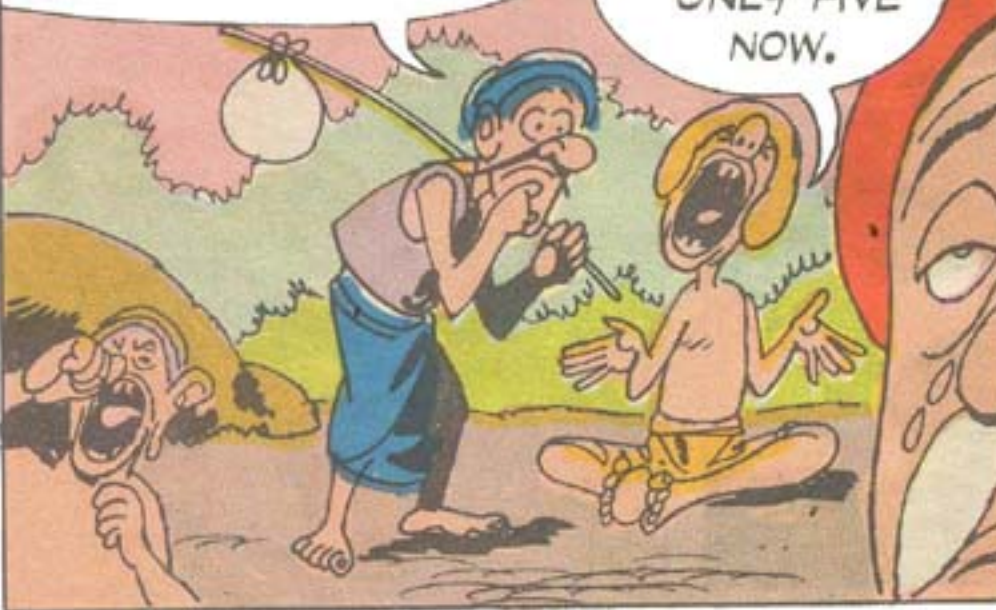
PARAMARTHA LIKE MADHAYA, COUNTED EVERYONE EXCEPT HIMSELF.

ALAS, MY DEAR BOYS! THE RIVER HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL. WE HAVE LOST HIM, HE WON'T COME BACK.



WHY ARE YOU WAILING, MY FRIENDS? WHAT'S THE MATTER?

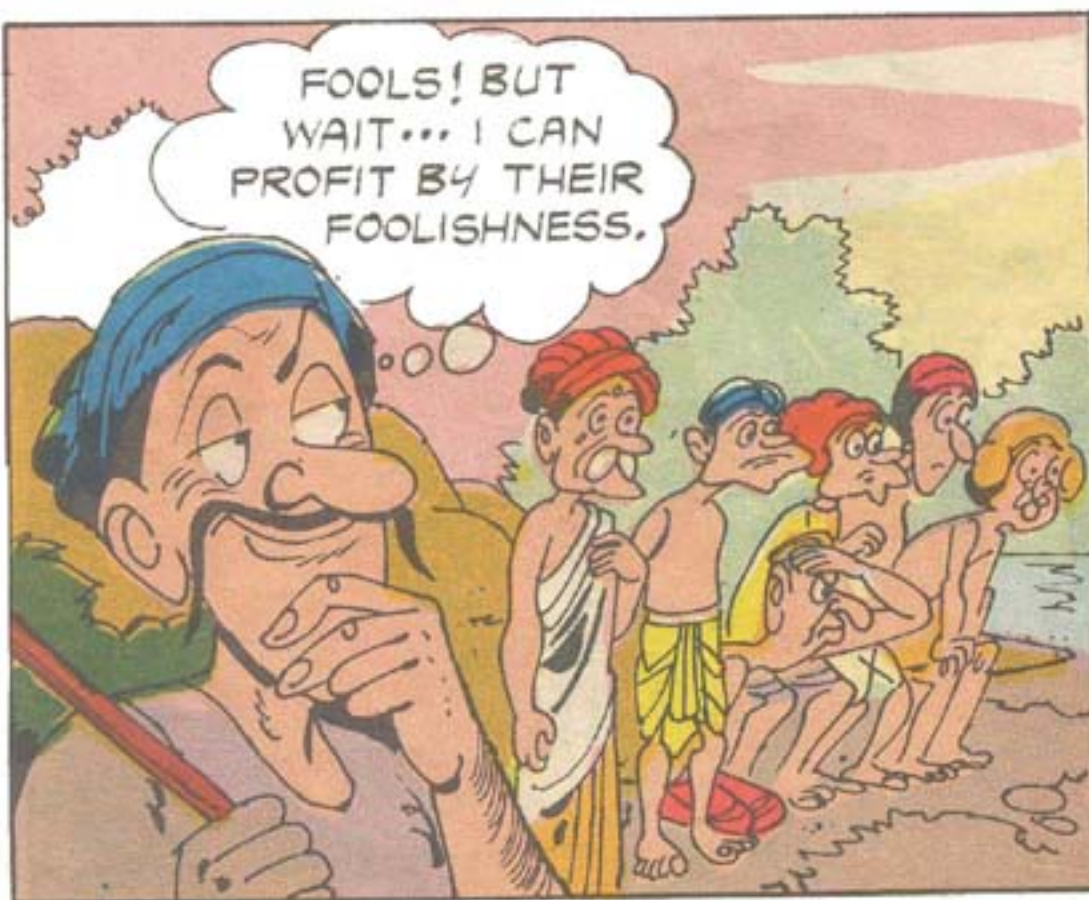
WE WERE SIX. WE ARE ONLY FIVE NOW.



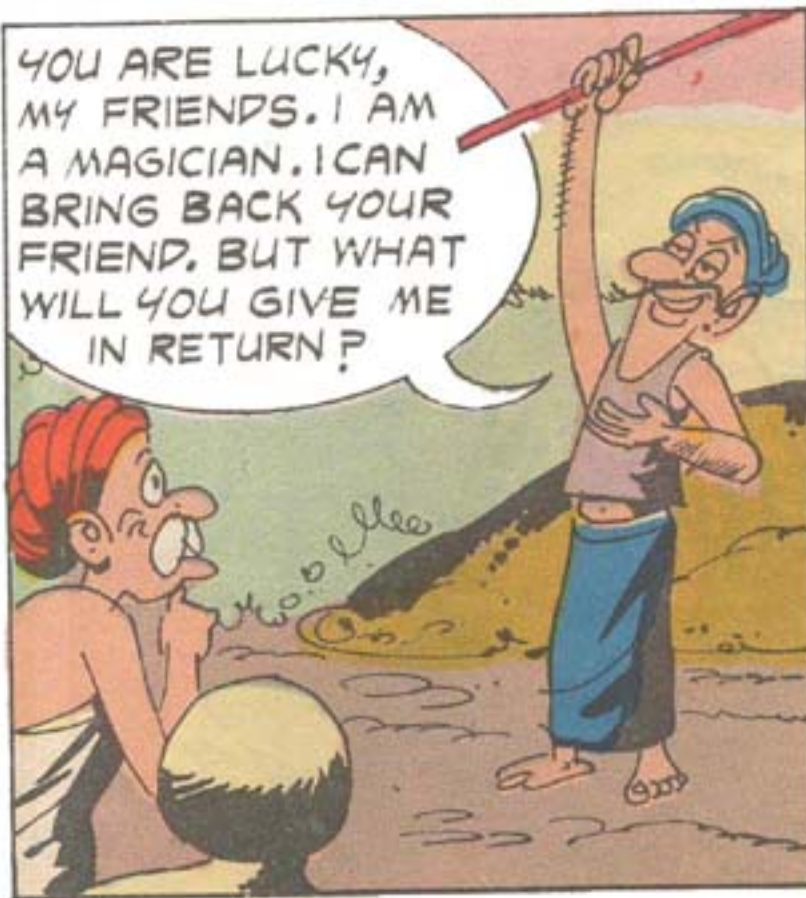
YES, WE WERE SIX. THE RIVER CLAIMED ONE OF US.

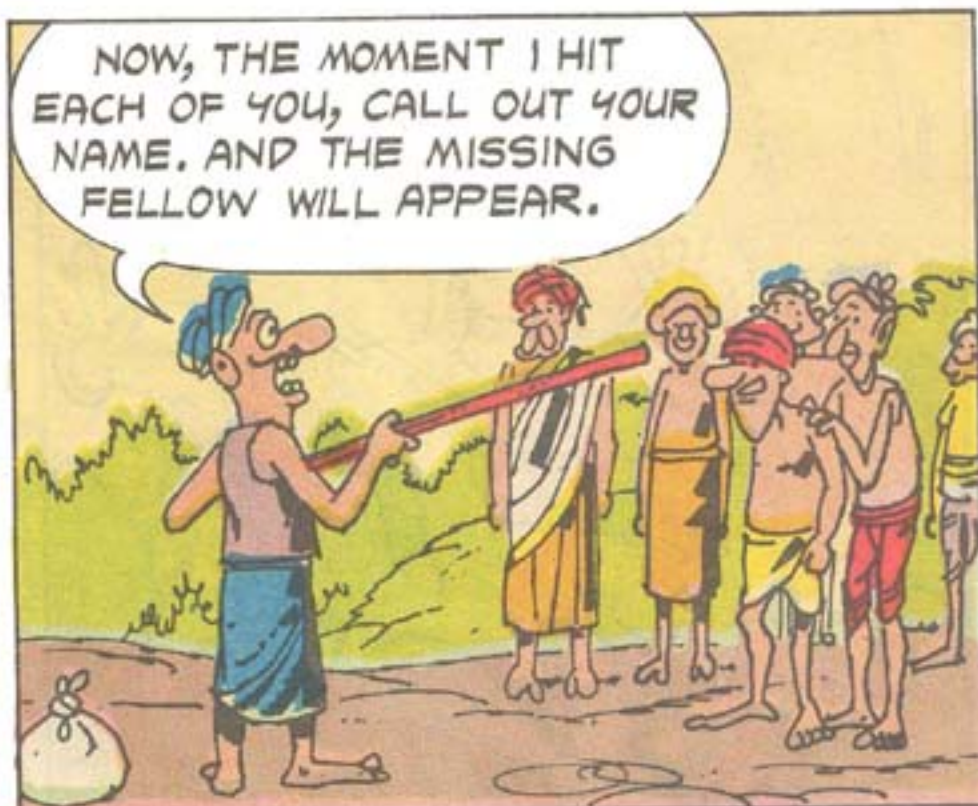
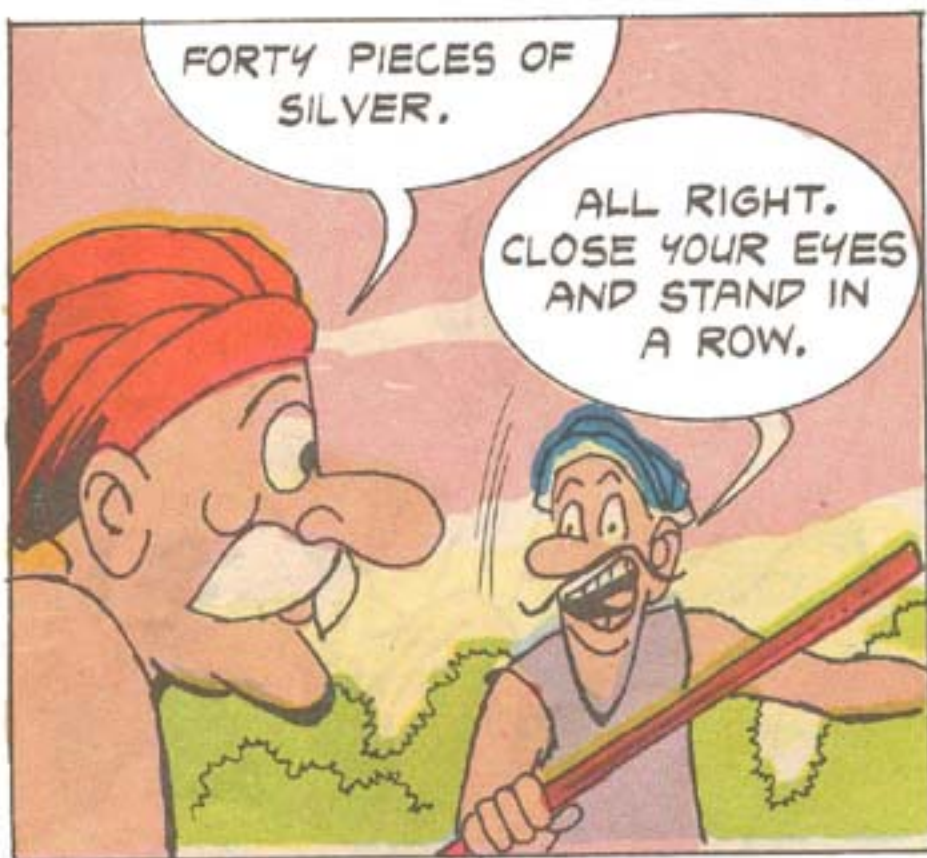


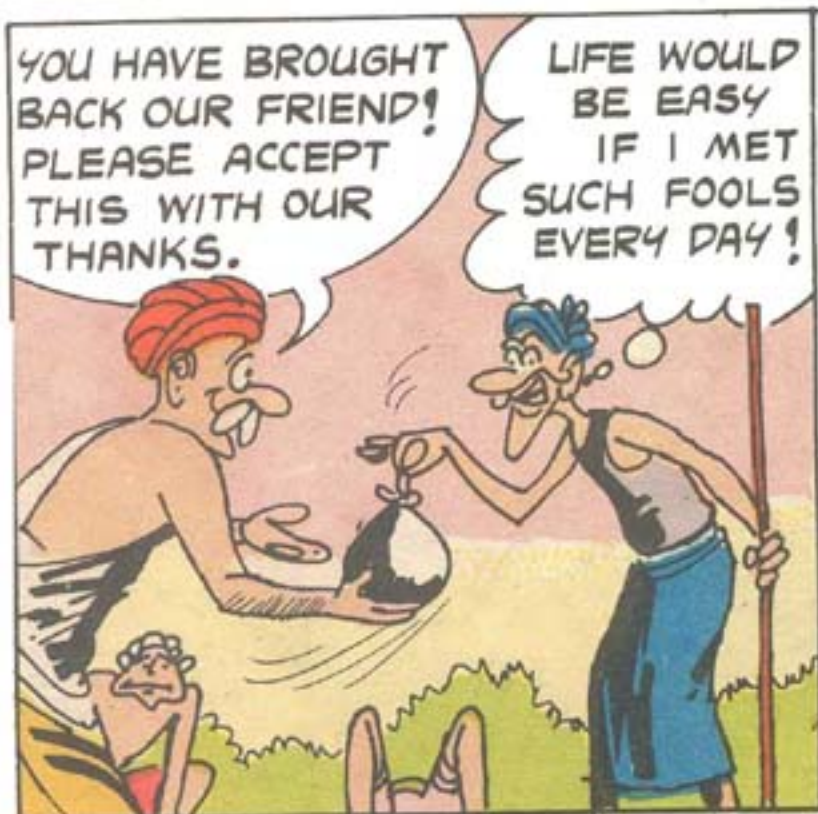
FOOLS! BUT WAIT... I CAN PROFIT BY THEIR FOOLISHNESS.

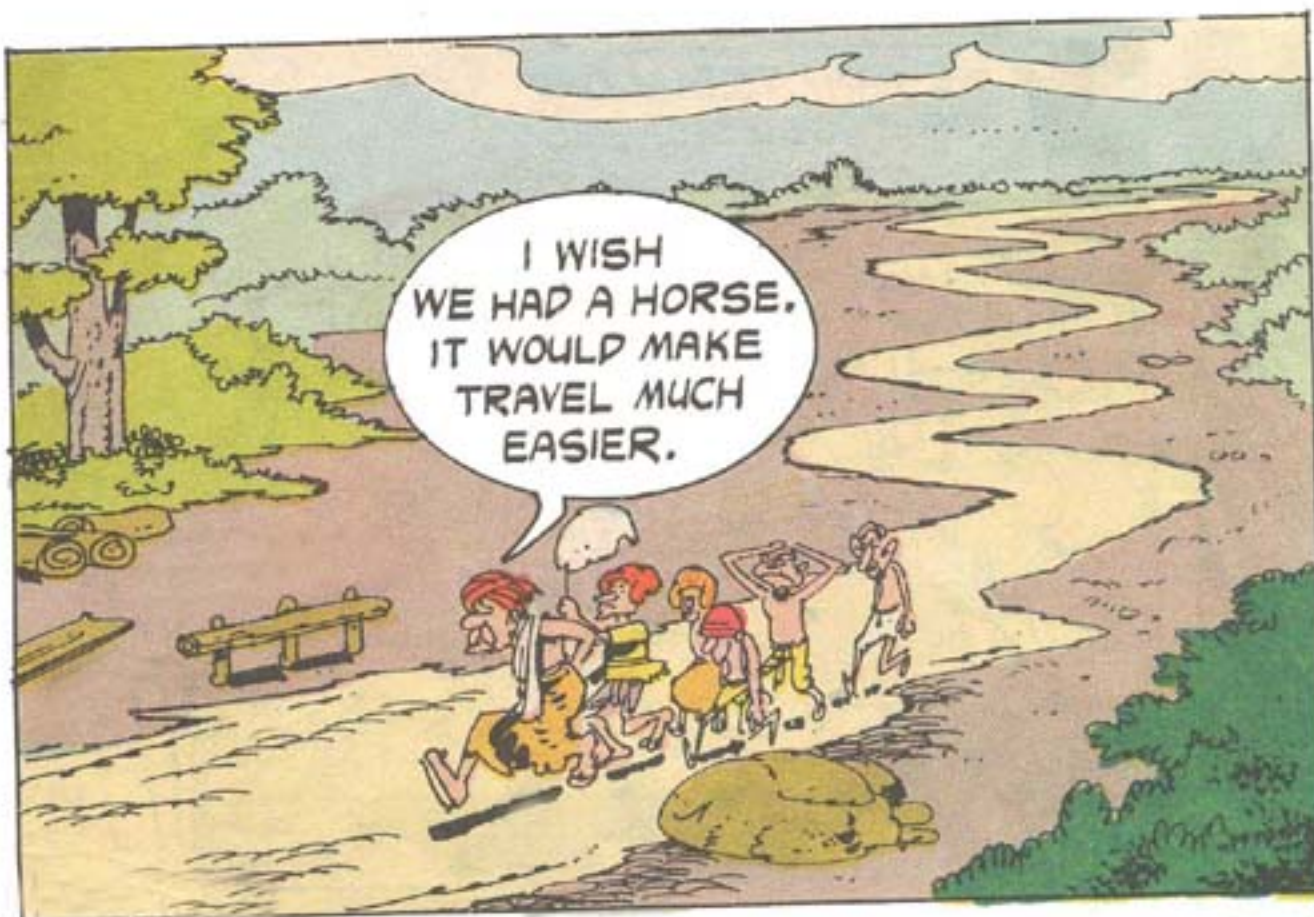


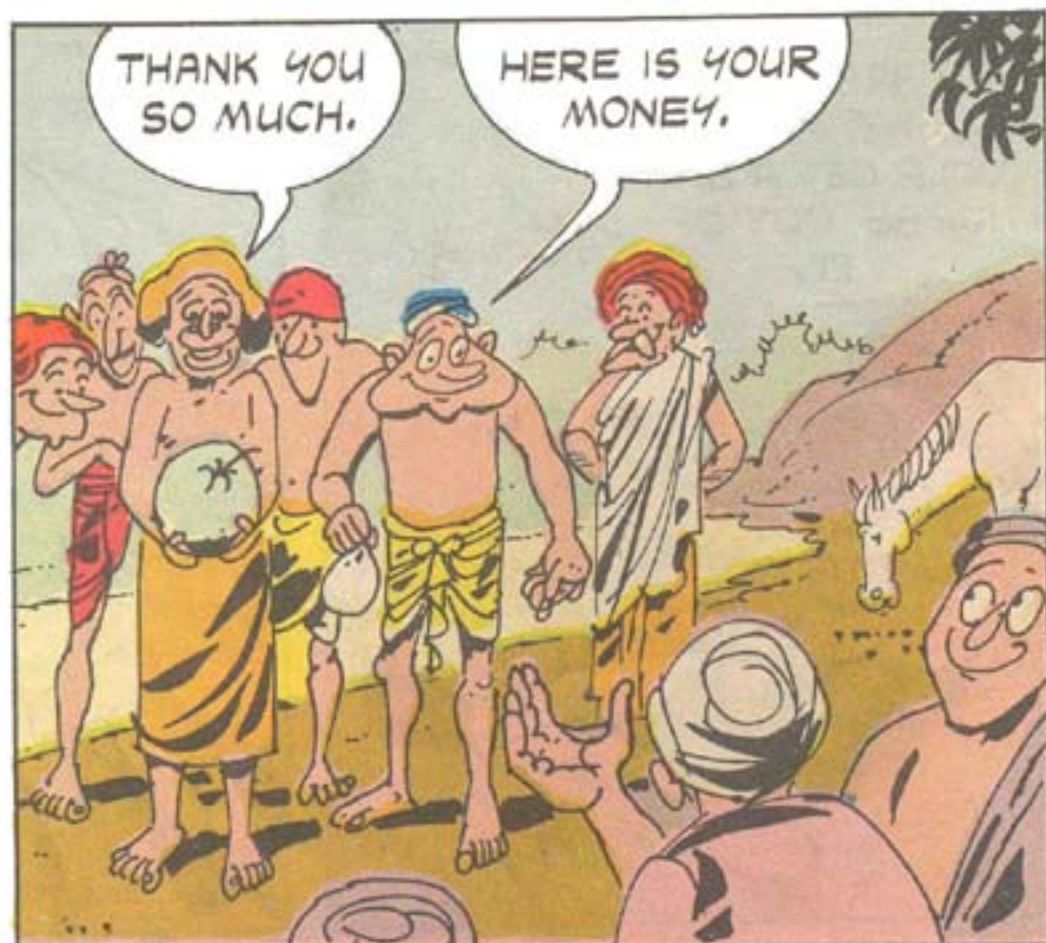
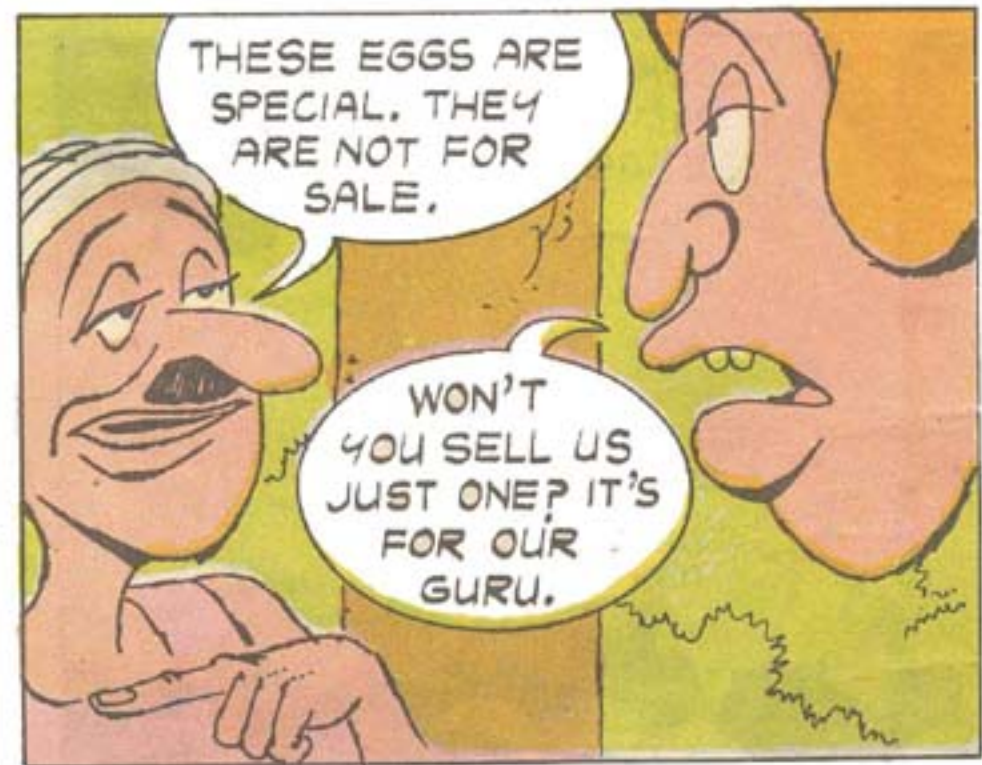
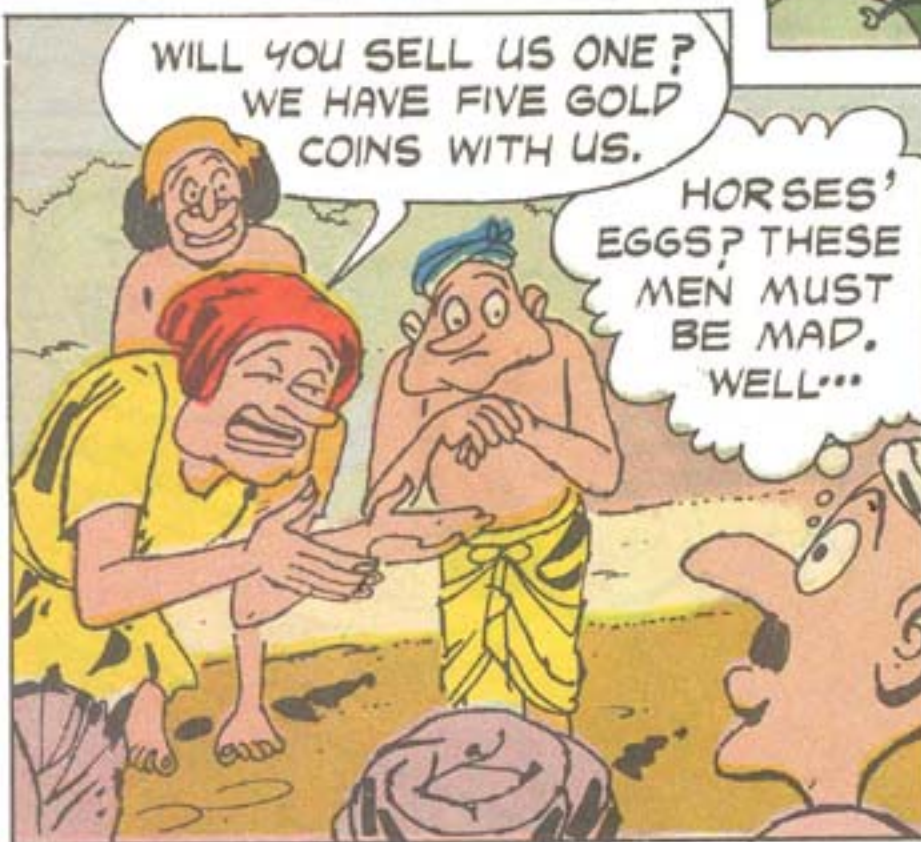
YOU ARE LUCKY, MY FRIENDS. I AM A MAGICIAN. I CAN BRING BACK YOUR FRIEND. BUT WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME IN RETURN?





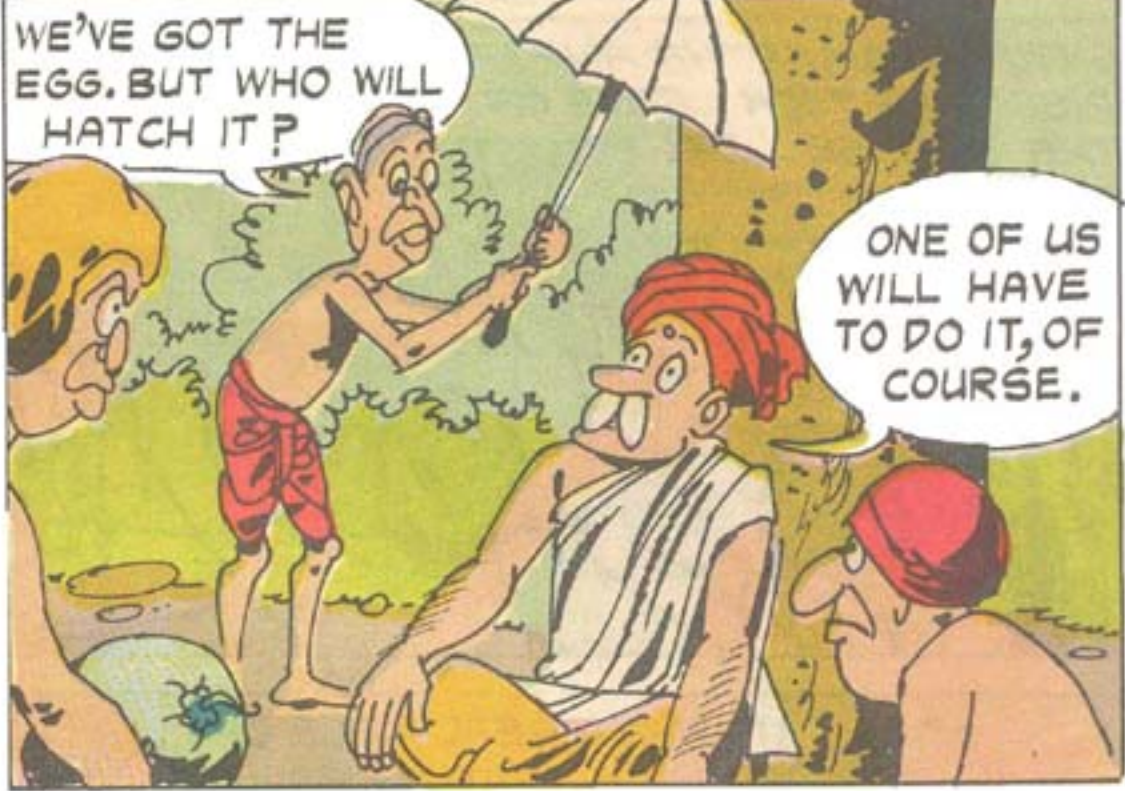








THAT WAS AN
EXCELLENT BARGAIN.
NOW LET US REST
FOR A WHILE.



WE'VE GOT THE
EGG. BUT WHO WILL
HATCH IT?

ONE OF US
WILL HAVE
TO DO IT, OF
COURSE.

EACH ONE OF THE LAZY
DISCIPLES HAD HIS OWN
EXCUSE.



I HAVE NO TIME. I'M
ALWAYS BUSY WITH
PREPARATIONS FOR
THE POOJA.

I AND
MADDI HAVE THE
GARDEN AND THE
GROCERY TO
ATTEND TO.



I AM BUSY
THE WHOLE
DAY COOKING
FOR ALL OF
US...

... AND I HAVE
TO ATTEND TO
THE GUESTS.

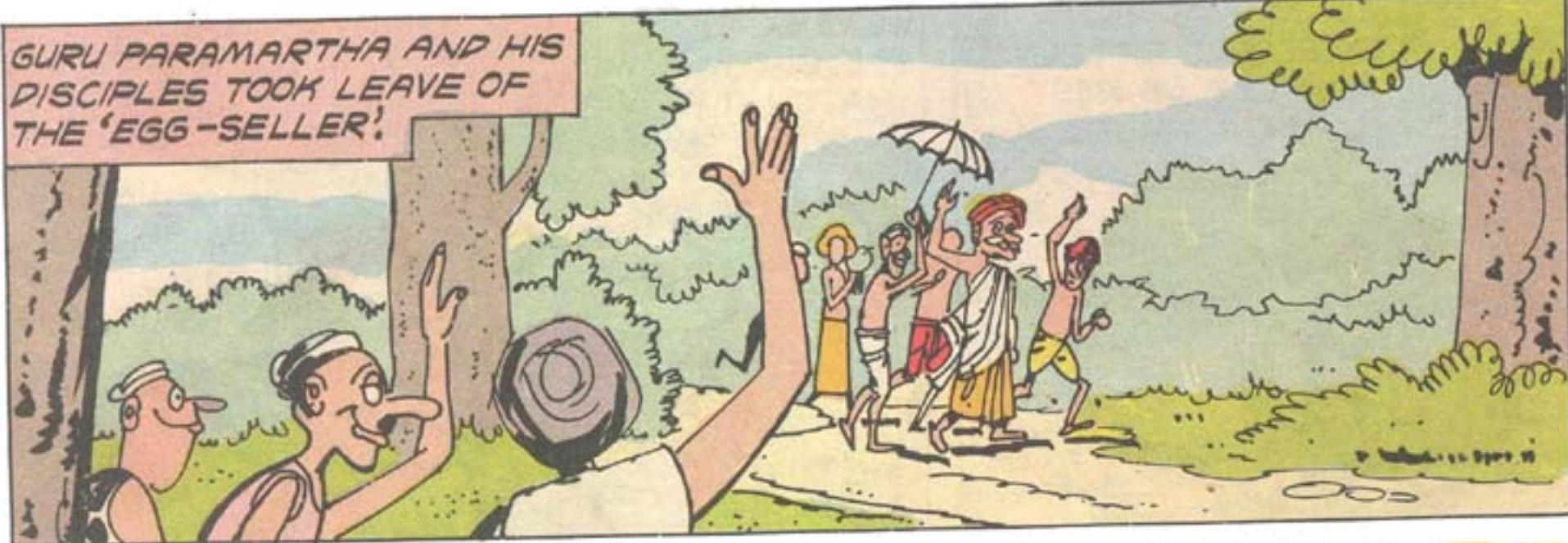


DON'T WORRY, MY
BOYS. I AM ALWAYS
FREE. I WILL HATCH
IT.



IF THE EGG IS
HATCHED BY YOU,
O MAHATMA, A FINE
HORSE IS SURE TO
COME OUT.

GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS DISCIPLES TOOK LEAVE OF THE 'EGG-SELLER'.



IT WAS A REAL PIECE OF LUCK THAT WE SAW THOSE EGGS.

IT'S ALL GOD'S WORK. HE KNEW HOW MUCH I LONGED FOR A HORSE.



AS THEY TRUDGED ON—

OOOH!
HELP! OW! THE
EGG!

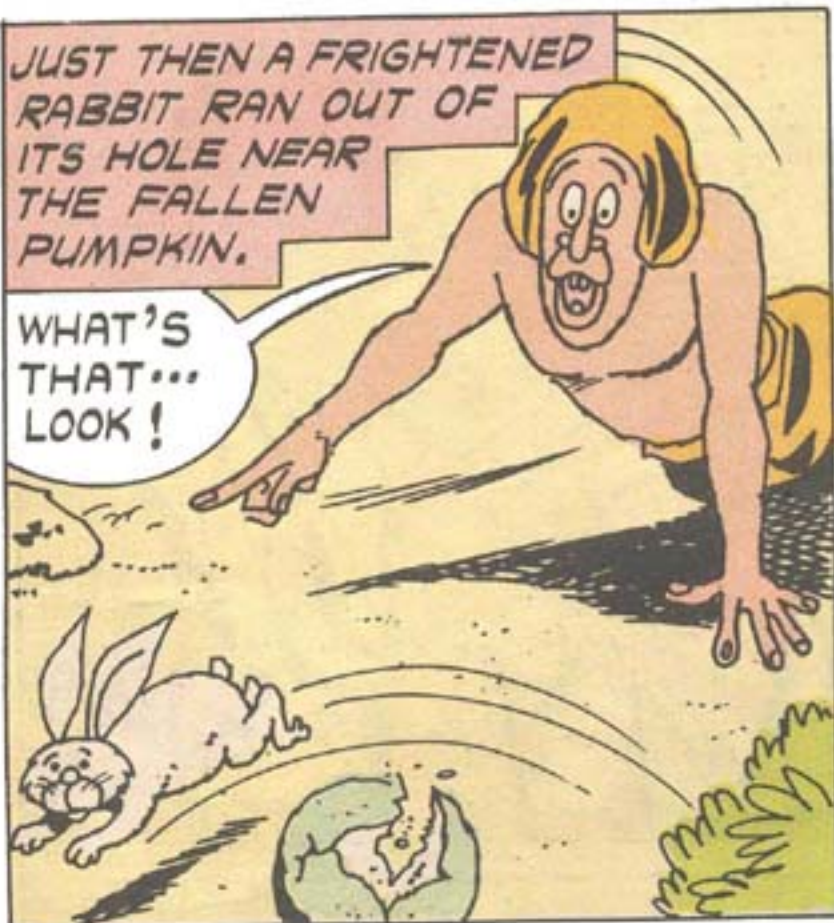


OH, NO! IT'S
BROKEN!



JUST THEN A FRIGHTENED RABBIT RAN OUT OF ITS HOLE NEAR THE FALLEN PUMPKIN.

WHAT'S THAT... LOOK!



IT'S THE BABY HORSE! DON'T LET IT GET AWAY!



WHERE HAS IT GONE? WE MUST FIND IT. WE'LL GO THIS WAY. YOU GO THAT WAY. QUICK!



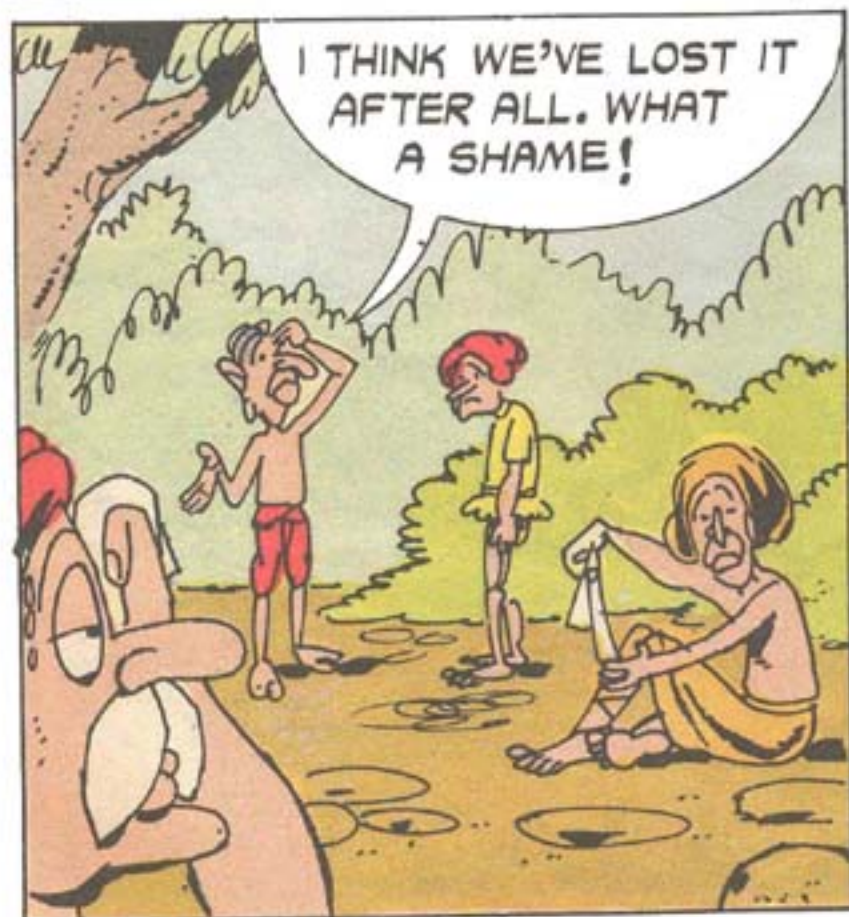
LATER—

IT'S NOT HERE!

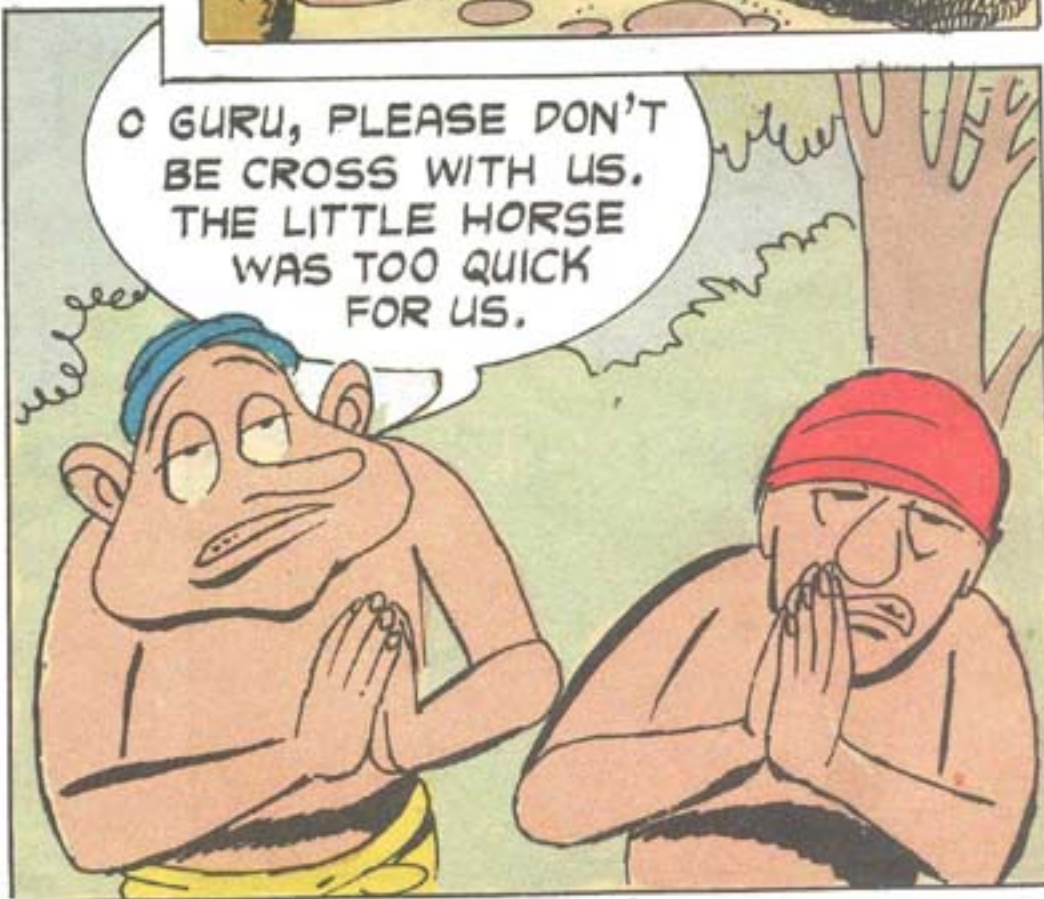
IT'S NOT HERE EITHER. LET'S GO BACK TO THE OTHERS.

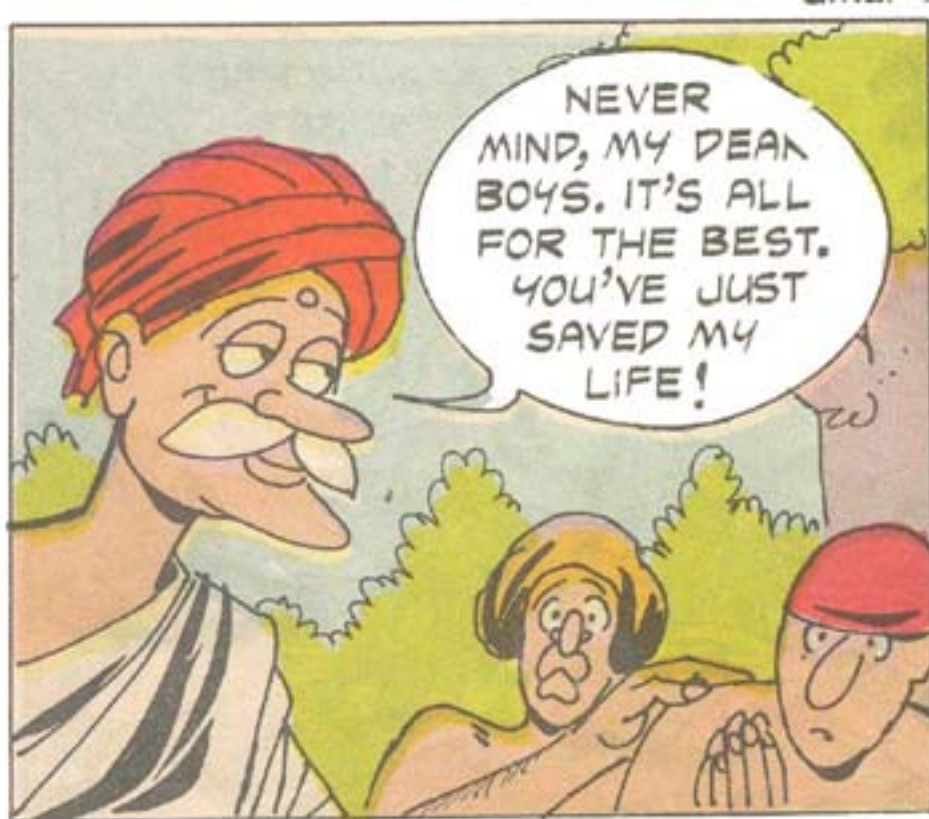


I THINK WE'VE LOST IT AFTER ALL. WHAT A SHAME!

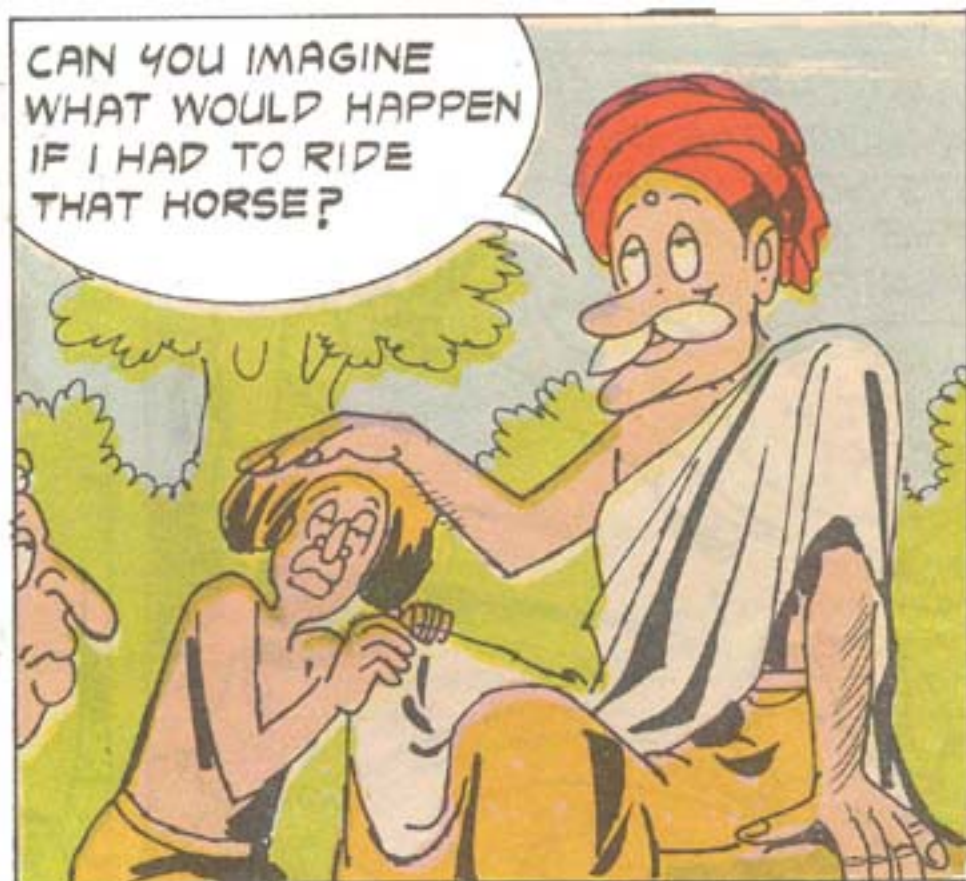


O GURU, PLEASE DON'T BE CROSS WITH US. THE LITTLE HORSE WAS TOO QUICK FOR US.





NEVER
MIND, MY DEAR
BOYS. IT'S ALL
FOR THE BEST.
YOU'VE JUST
SAVED MY
LIFE!



CAN YOU IMAGINE
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN
IF I HAD TO RIDE
THAT HORSE?



YOU WOULD BE
THROWN OFF AND
GET KILLED!

OH, NO!
THANK GOD,
WE LOST THE
HORSE!



YES.
THANK HIM WITH
ALL YOUR HEART
AND SOUL.

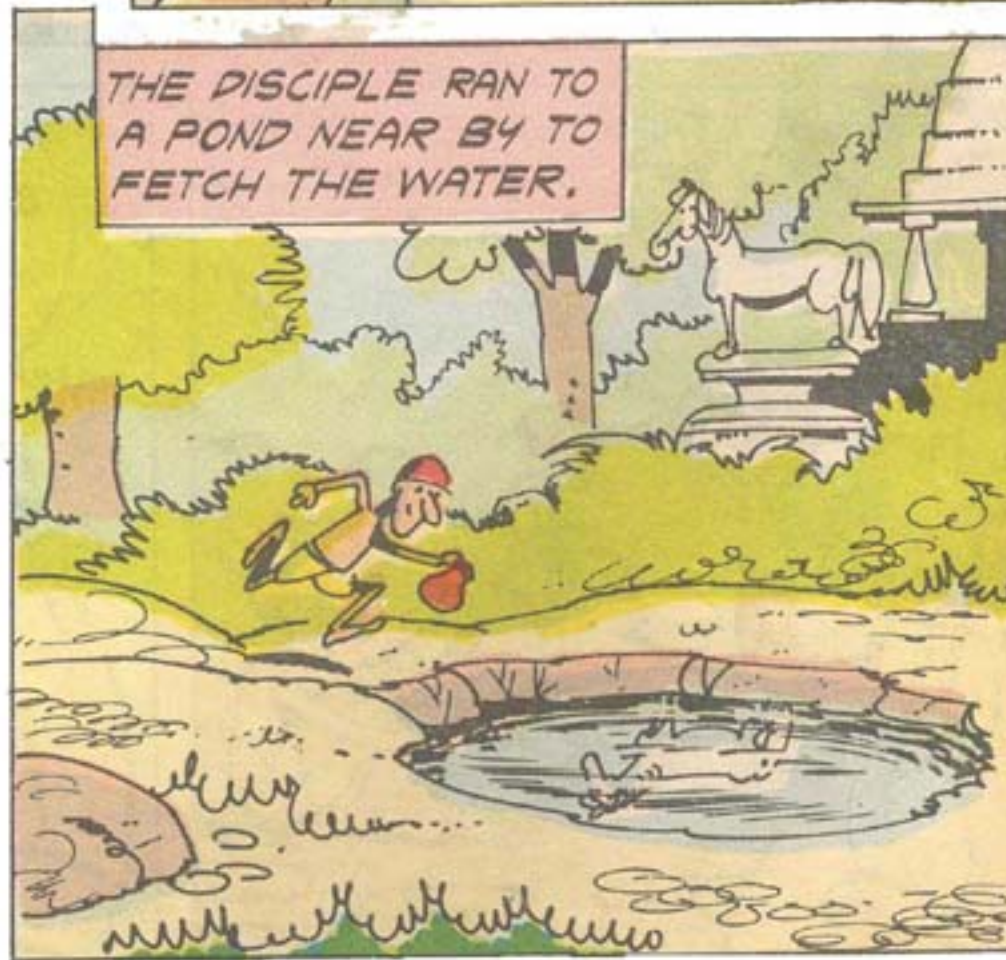
AND THE GURU AND HIS
DISCIPLES CONTINUED
THEIR JOURNEY.



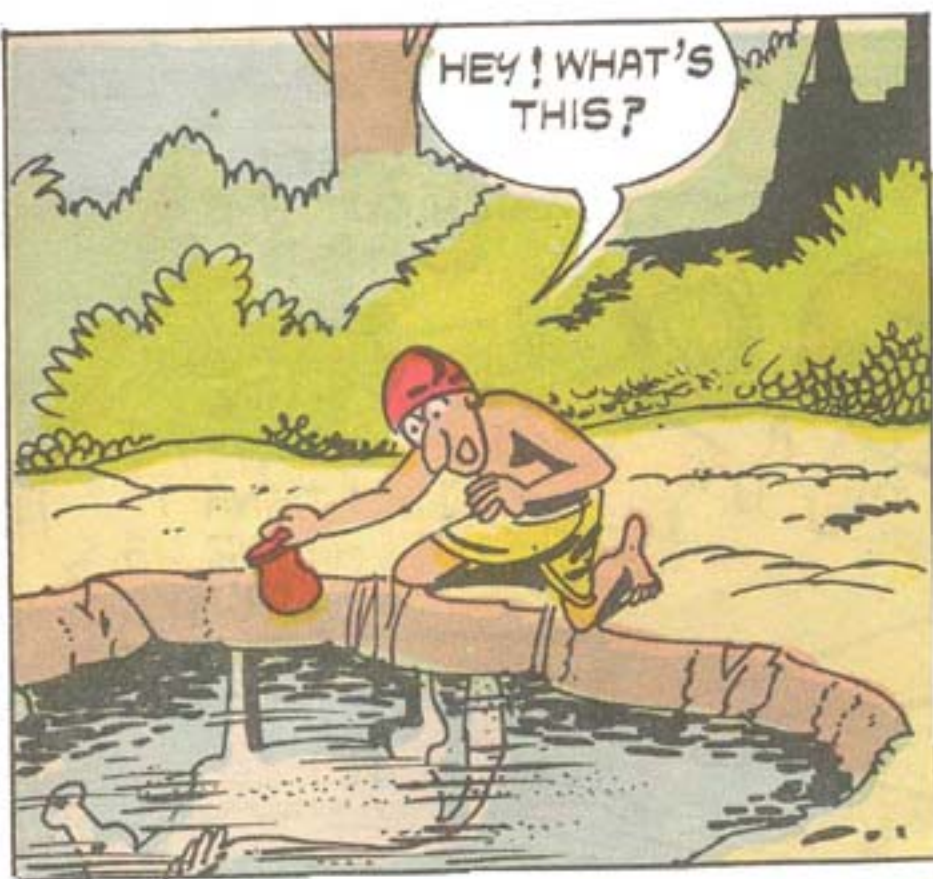
AS THE DAY GREW
WARMER—

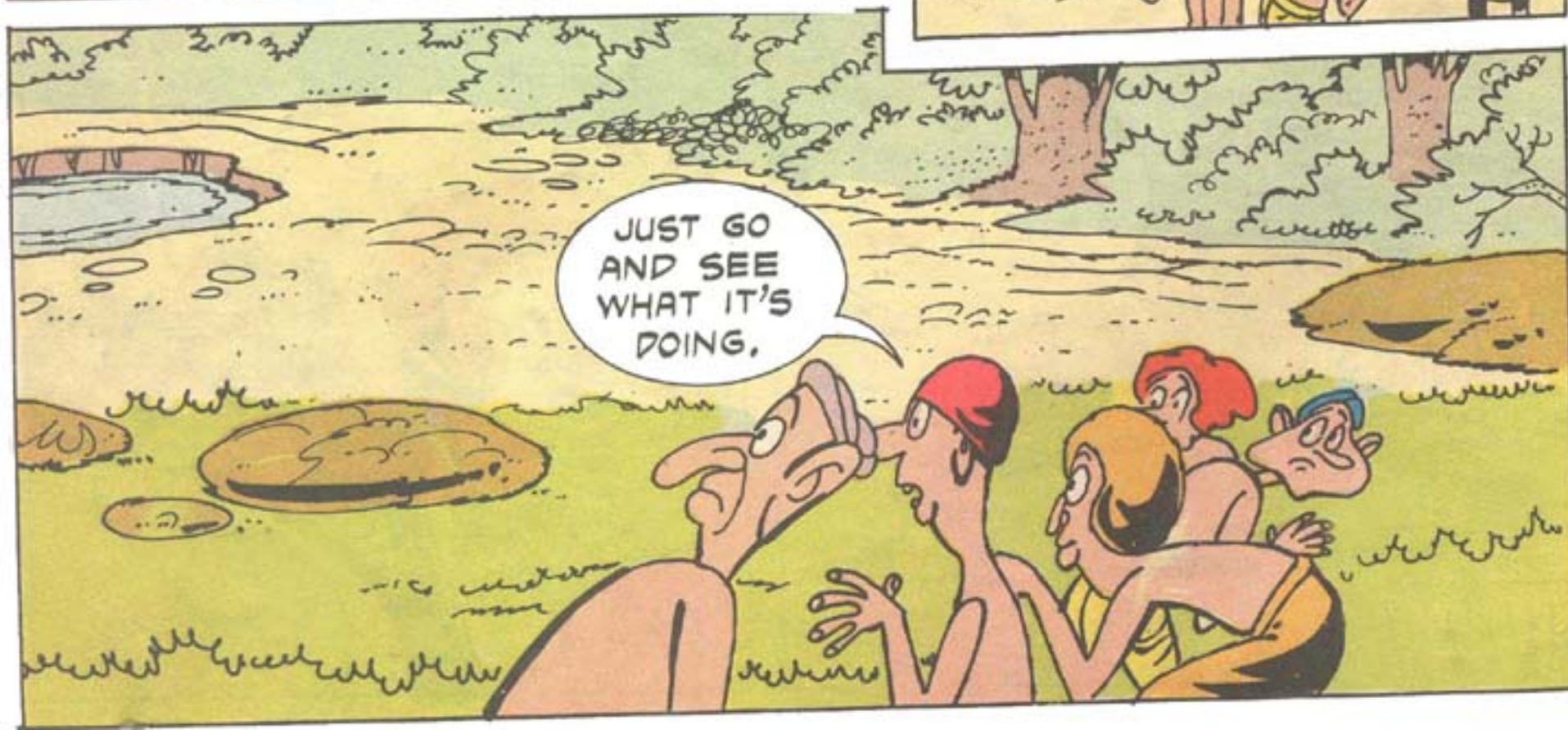
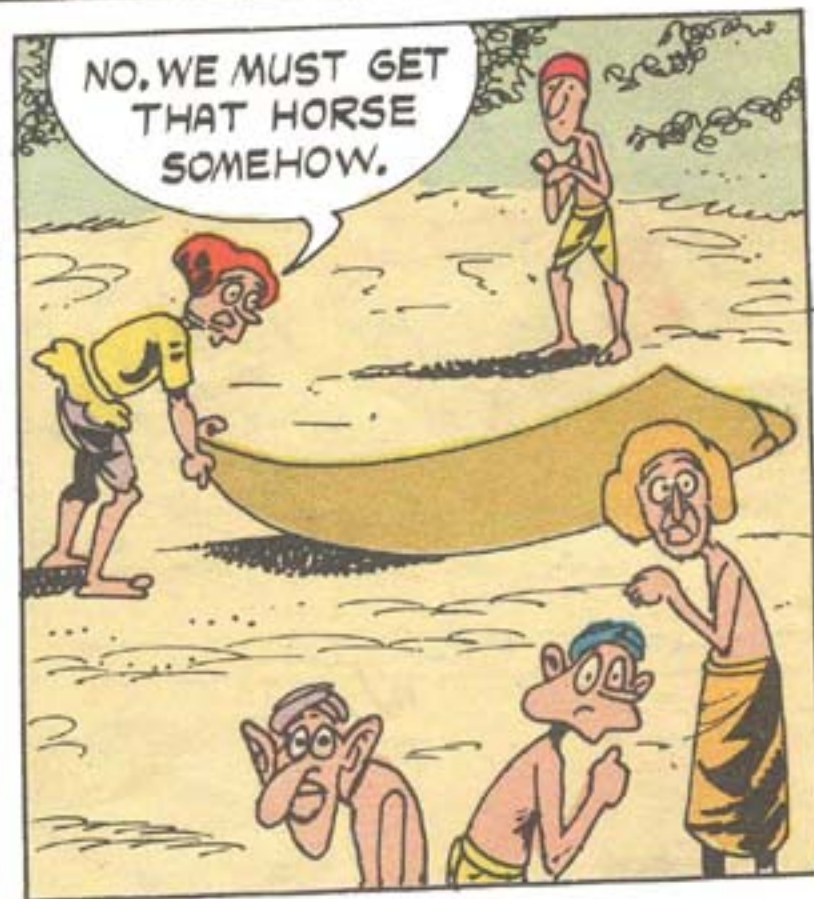
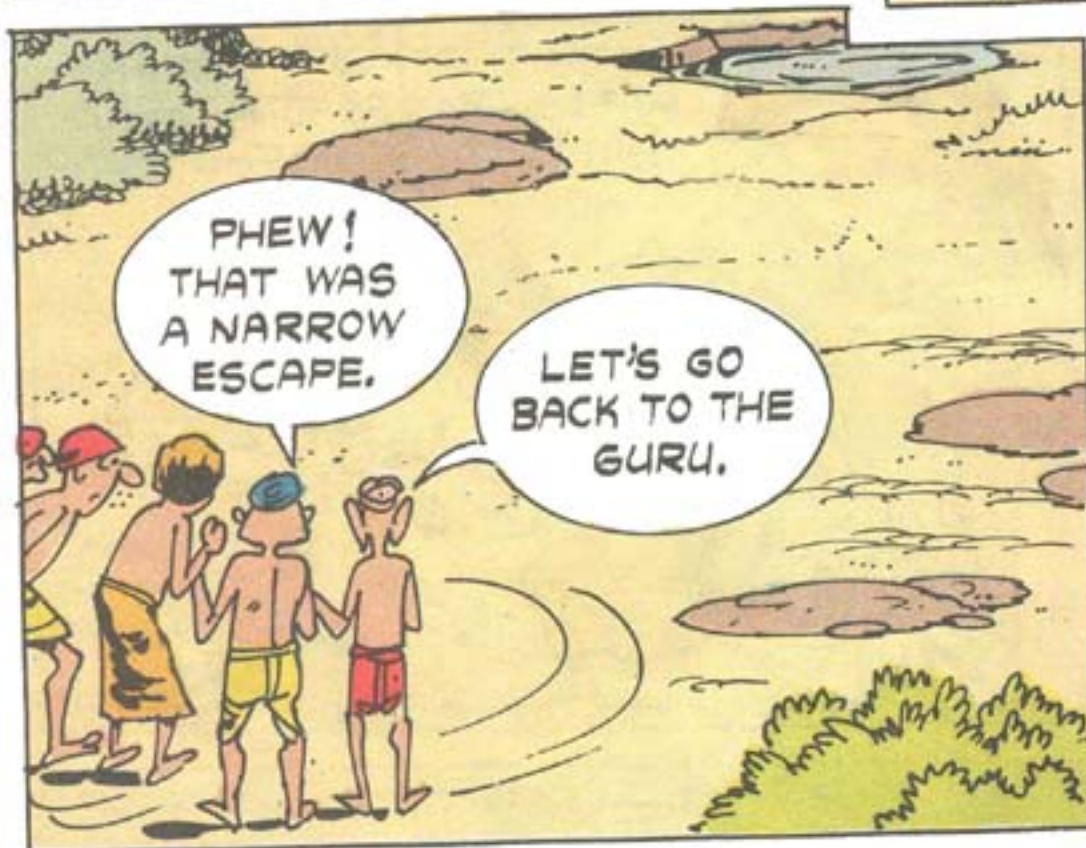
PHEW!
I AM DYING
OF THIRST.

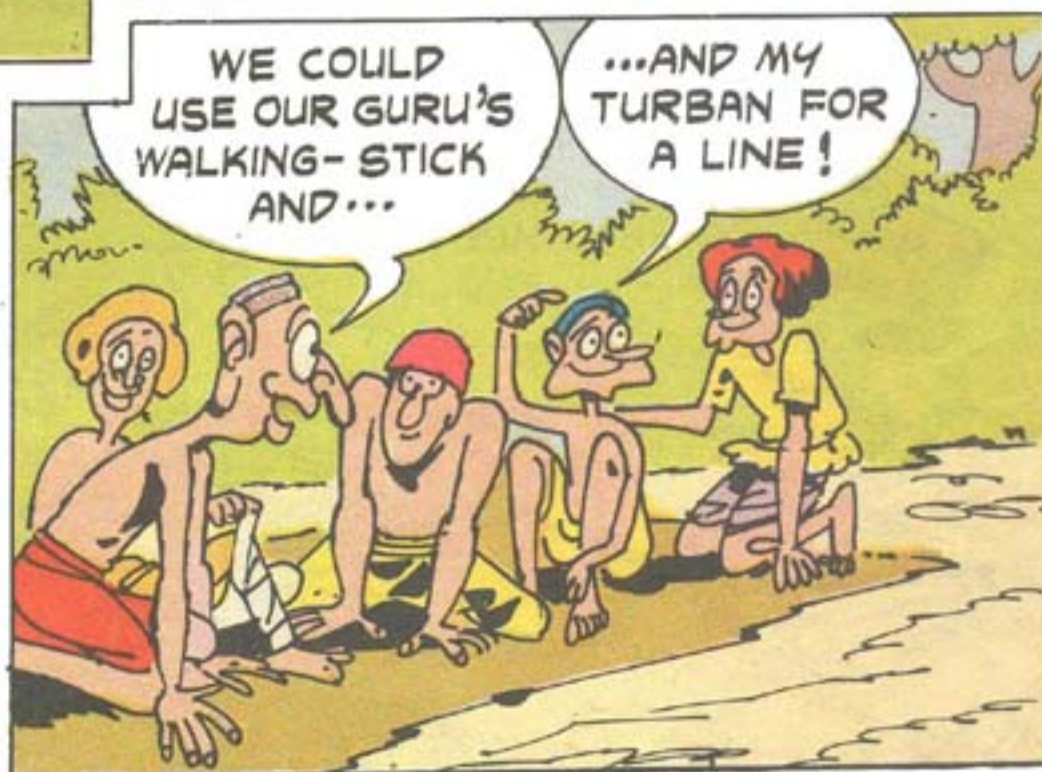
I'LL GET
YOU SOME
WATER.

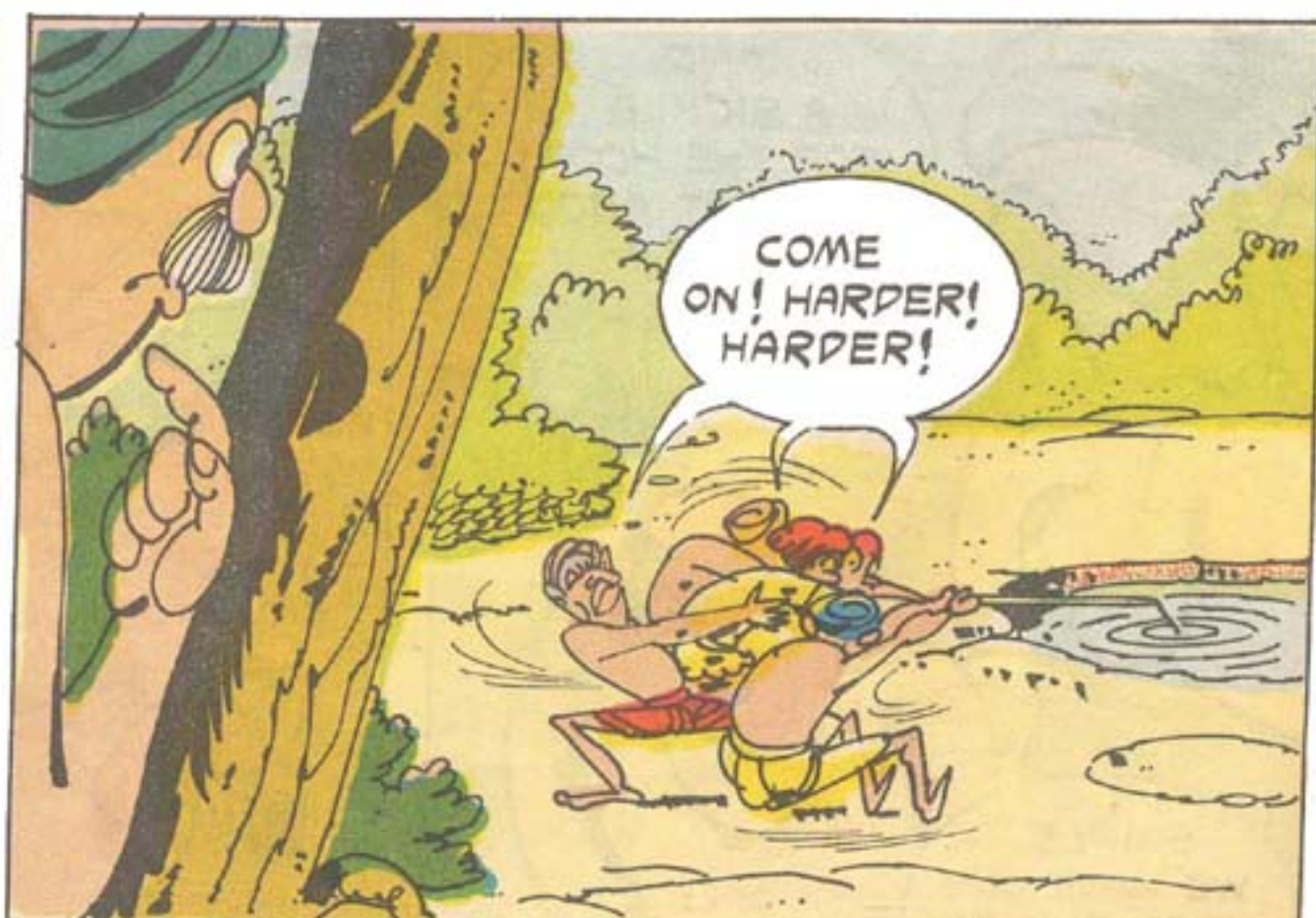
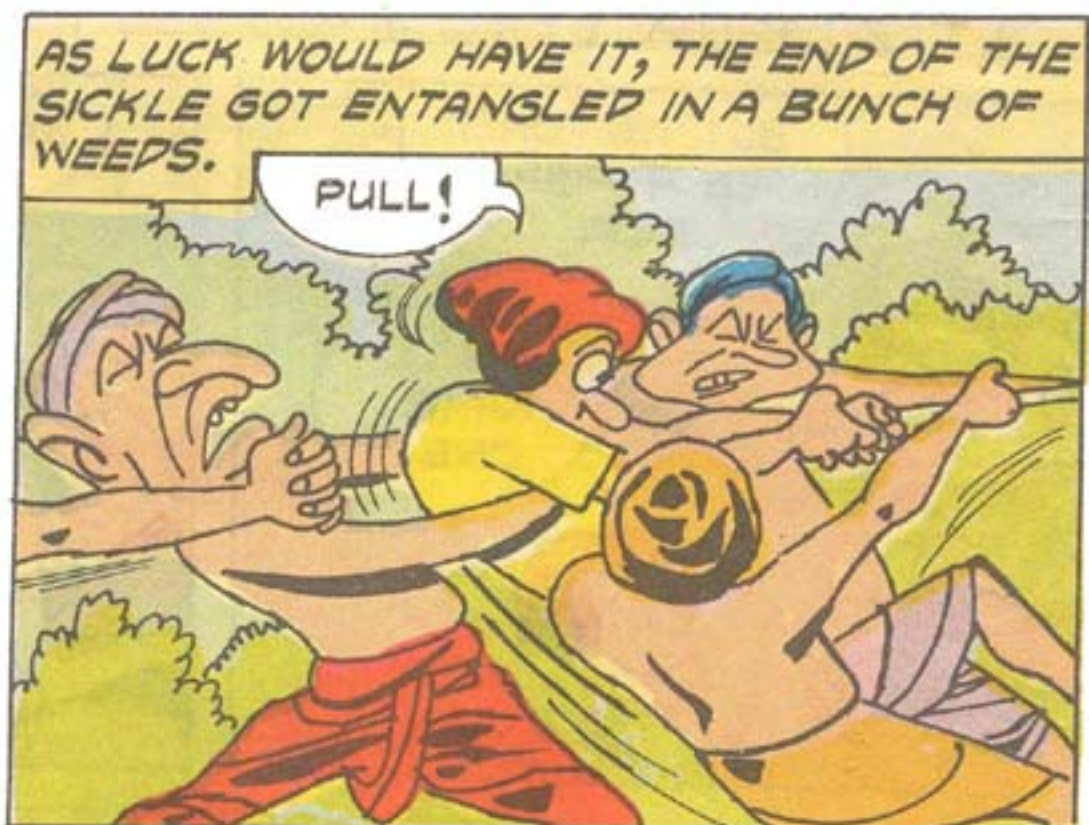


THE DISCIPLE RAN TO
A POND NEAR BY TO
FETCH THE WATER.

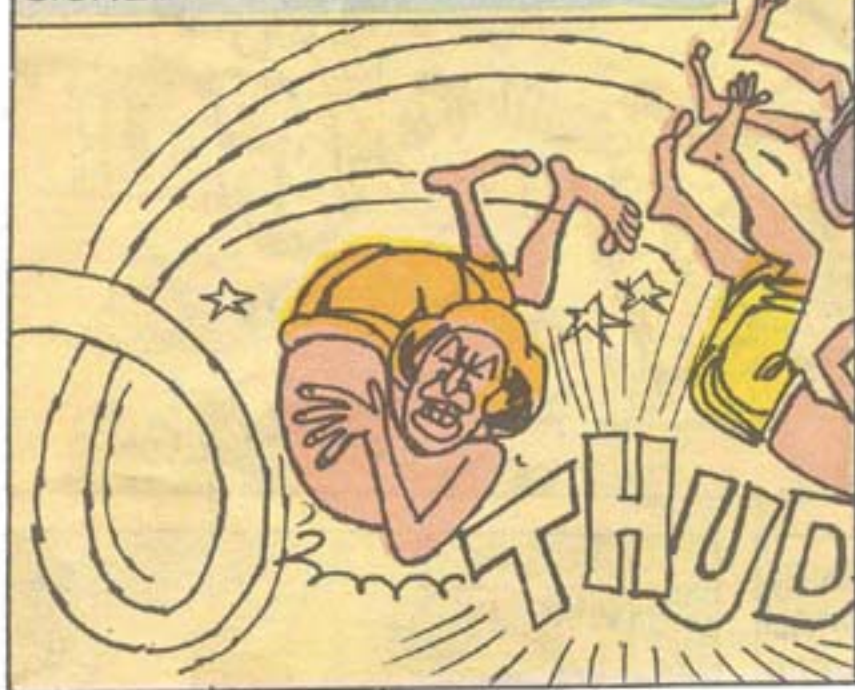








THEY PULLED SO HARD THAT THE SICKLE CAME LOOSE AND—



WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU UP TO?



THEY TOLD THE STRANGER ALL ABOUT THEIR 'FISHING EXPEDITION'!

YOU POOR FELLOWS!
WHAT YOU SAW WAS
ONLY A SHADOW!
WAIT!



LOOK
INTO THE
POND,
NOW.



IT'S GONE! THE
CLOTH MUST HAVE
FRIGHTENED IT.



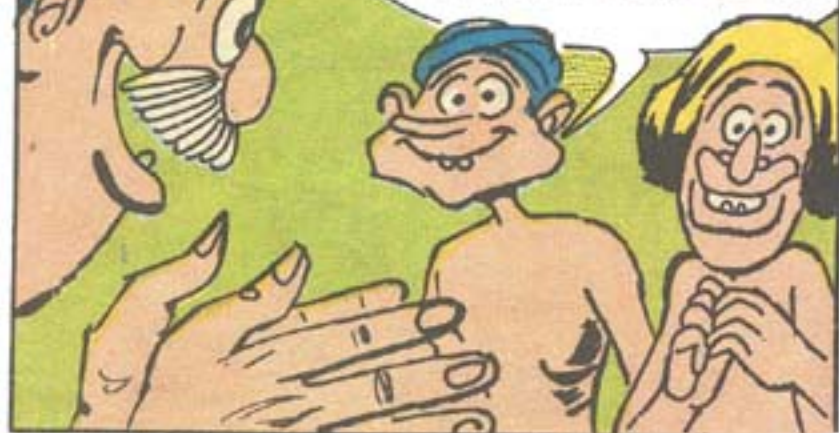
I HAVE NEVER
SEEN SUCH
SIMPLETONS!

WHAT A SHAME!
WE WANTED IT FOR
OUR LEARNED GURU.
WE WANTED TO
SURPRISE HIM
WITH IT.



I HAVE AN OLD HORSE TO SPARE... YOU CAN COME AND TAKE IT IF YOU WANT.

OH, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, SIR. I'LL FETCH OUR GURU.



GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS DISCIPLES WENT WITH THE STRANGER...

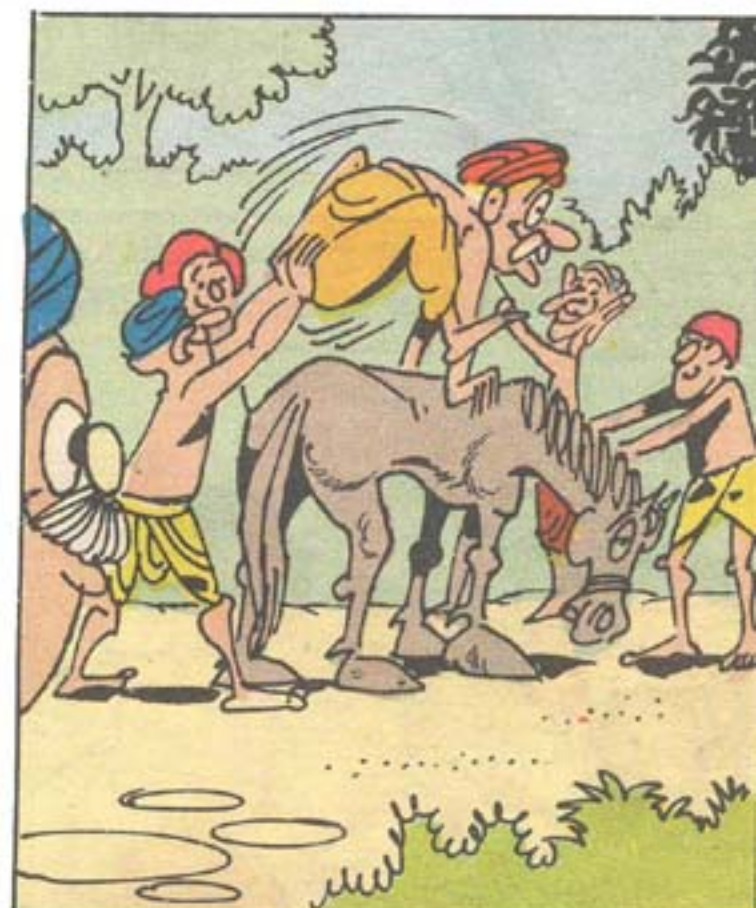


WHAT A FINE, NOBLE ANIMAL! WILL YOU HELP ME MOUNT HIM.



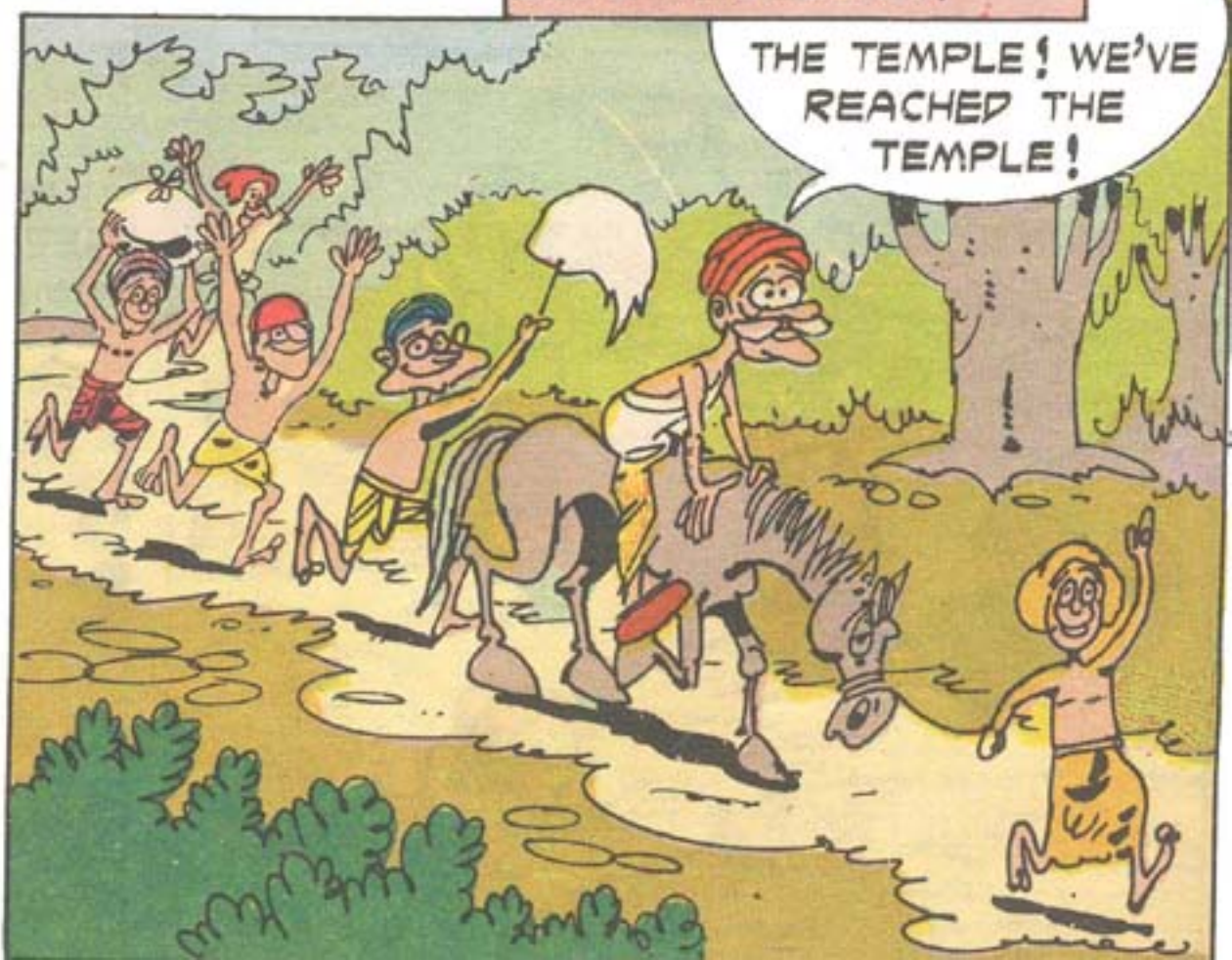
... TO HIS HOUSE.

HERE! HE'S ALL YOURS.



SOME TIME LATER —

THE TEMPLE! WE'VE REACHED THE TEMPLE!



NOW LET US GO ON.



A FEW DAYS LATER, GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE DISCUSSING A MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.



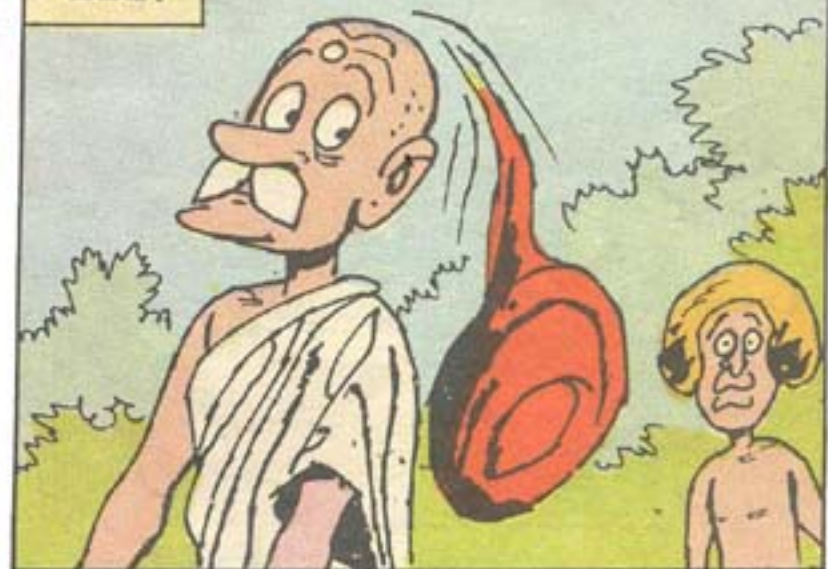
WE CAN'T SIT HERE AND WAIT FOR THEM TO COME AND DONATE GIFTS. WE MUST GO TO THEM.



SO NEXT MORNING, GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS DISCIPLES SET OUT ON A FUND-RAISING TOUR.



ON THE WAY, THE GURU'S TURBAN SLIPPED FROM HIS HEAD AND FELL.



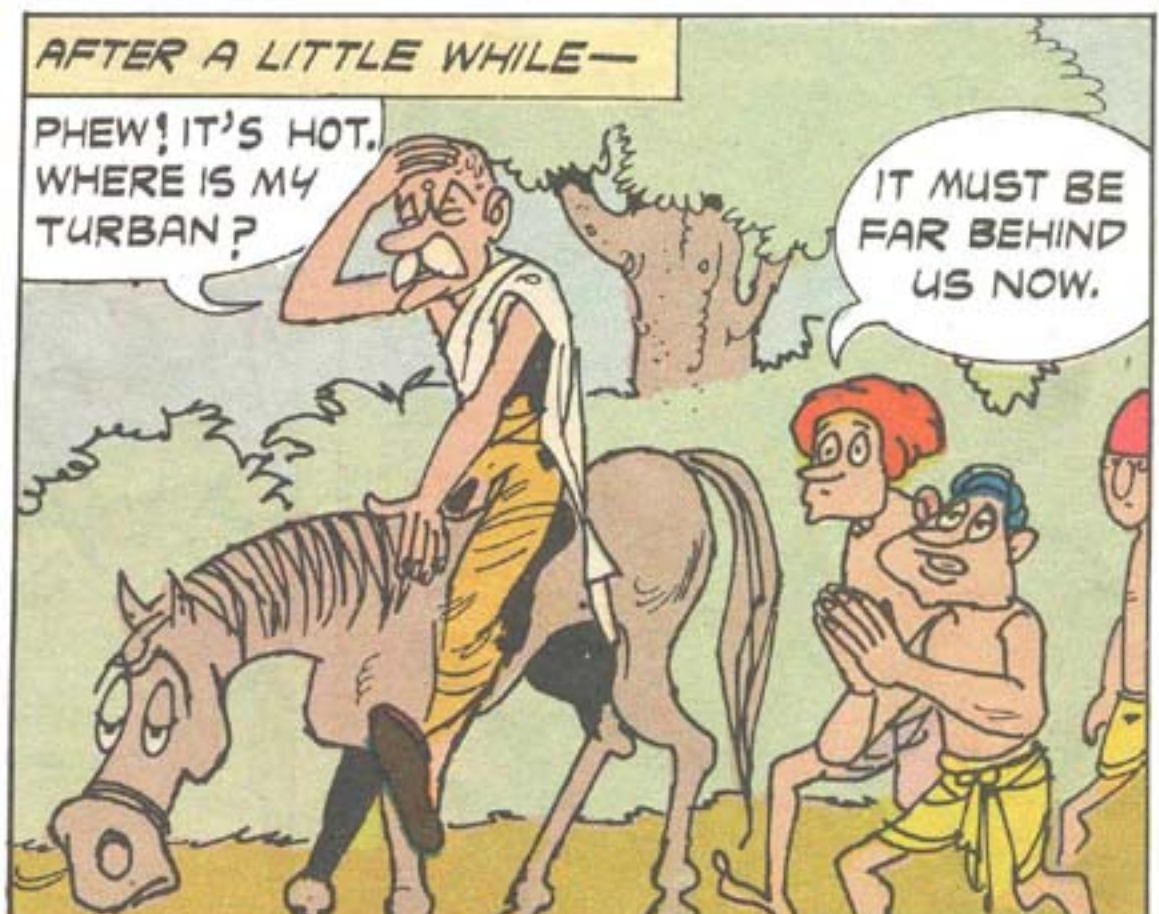
WHAT A NUISANCE! ONE OF THEM IS SURE TO PICK IT UP.



AFTER A LITTLE WHILE—

PHEW! IT'S HOT. WHERE IS MY TURBAN?

IT MUST BE FAR BEHIND US NOW.



FOOLS! DIDN'T YOU HAVE THE SENSE TO PICK IT UP?

FORGIVE US, GURU. I'LL RUN BACK AND PICK IT UP.

THEN GO. AND IN FUTURE PICK UP ANYTHING THAT'S DROPPED ON THE WAY AND GIVE IT TO ME.

THE TURBAN WAS SOON RESTORED TO THE GURU AND THE GROUP WALKED ON.

AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME DISTANCE, THE GURU'S HORSE DROPPED SOME PUNG.

QUICK! PICK IT UP.

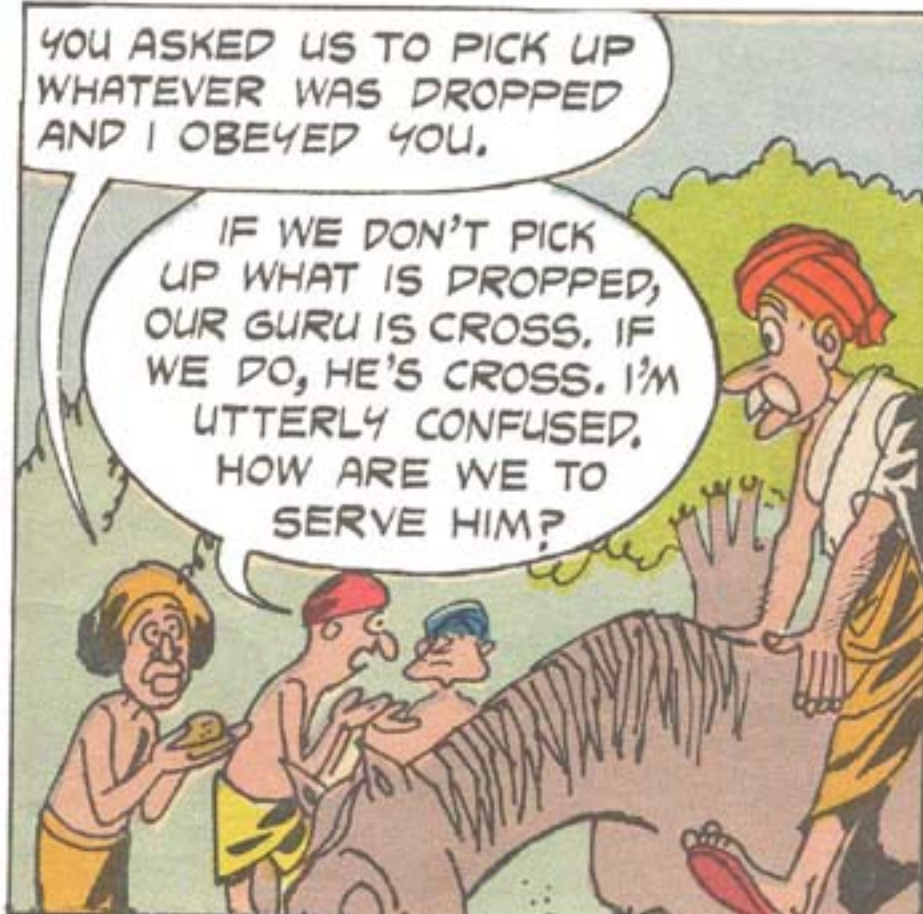
THE HORSE DROPPED THIS ON THE WAY.

GOD HELP ME! NOW ISN'T THIS THE LIMIT!

WHY ARE YOU CROSS WITH ME?

YOU ASKED US TO PICK UP WHATEVER WAS DROPPED AND I OBEYED YOU.

IF WE DON'T PICK UP WHAT IS DROPPED, OUR GURU IS CROSS. IF WE DO, HE'S CROSS. I'M UTTERLY CONFUSED. HOW ARE WE TO SERVE HIM?



DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL LEARN BY EXPERIENCE AND I AM ALWAYS THERE TO GUIDE YOU.

PERHAPS IF YOU GIVE US A LIST OF ALL THE THINGS WHICH HAVE TO BE PICKED UP, WE COULD SERVE YOU BETTER.



GURU PARAMARTHA MADE THE LIST AND GAVE IT TO HIS DISCIPLES.

SEE THAT YOU FOLLOW IT STRICTLY. GO BY THE RULE. ALWAYS.

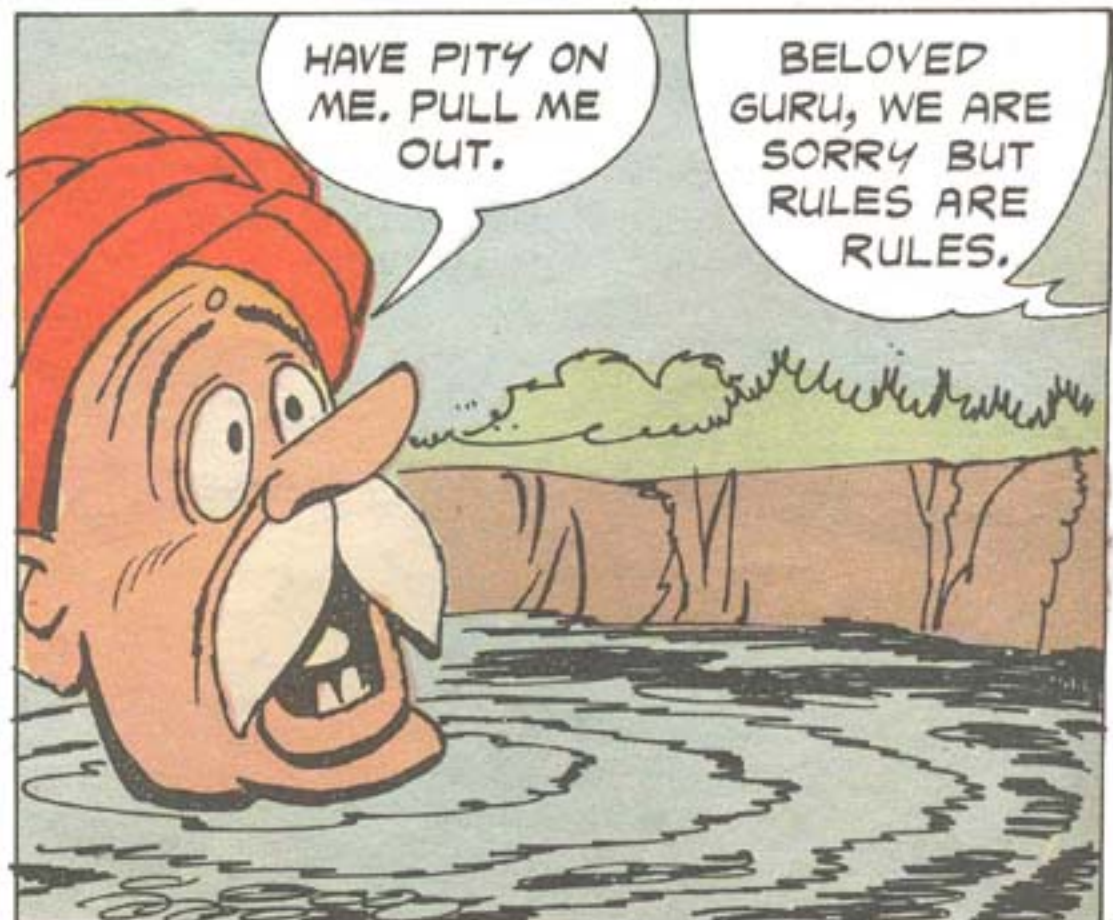
DON'T WORRY GURU. RULES ARE RULES AND WE WILL NEVER BREAK THEM.

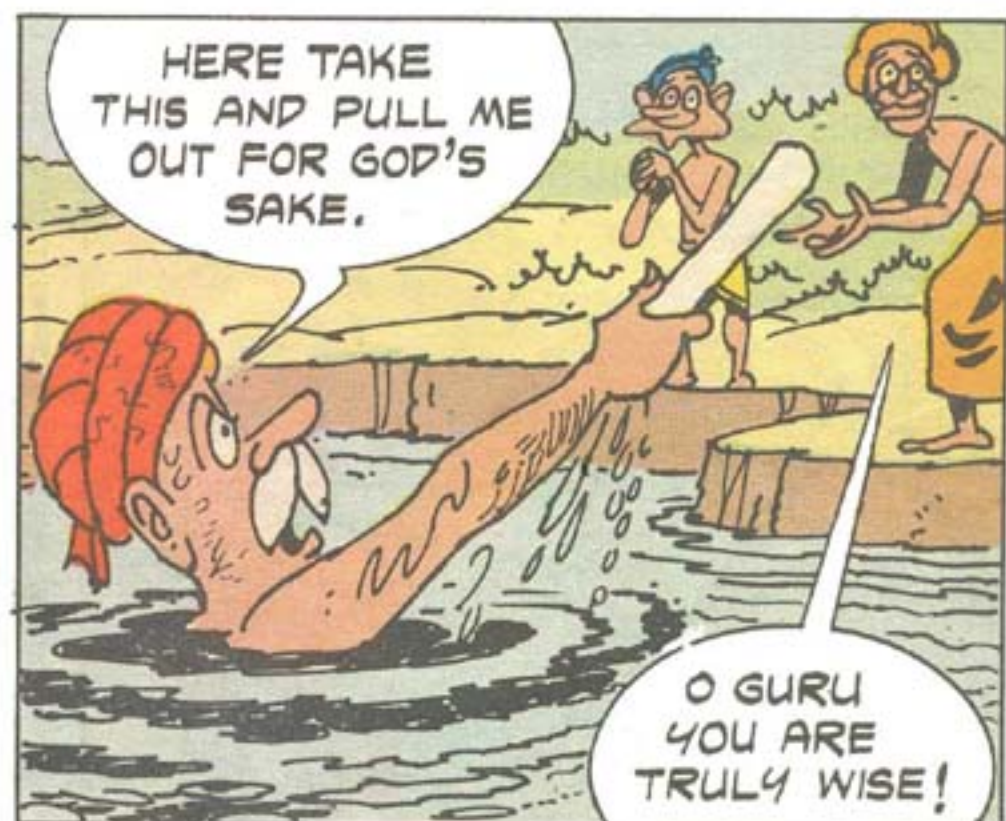
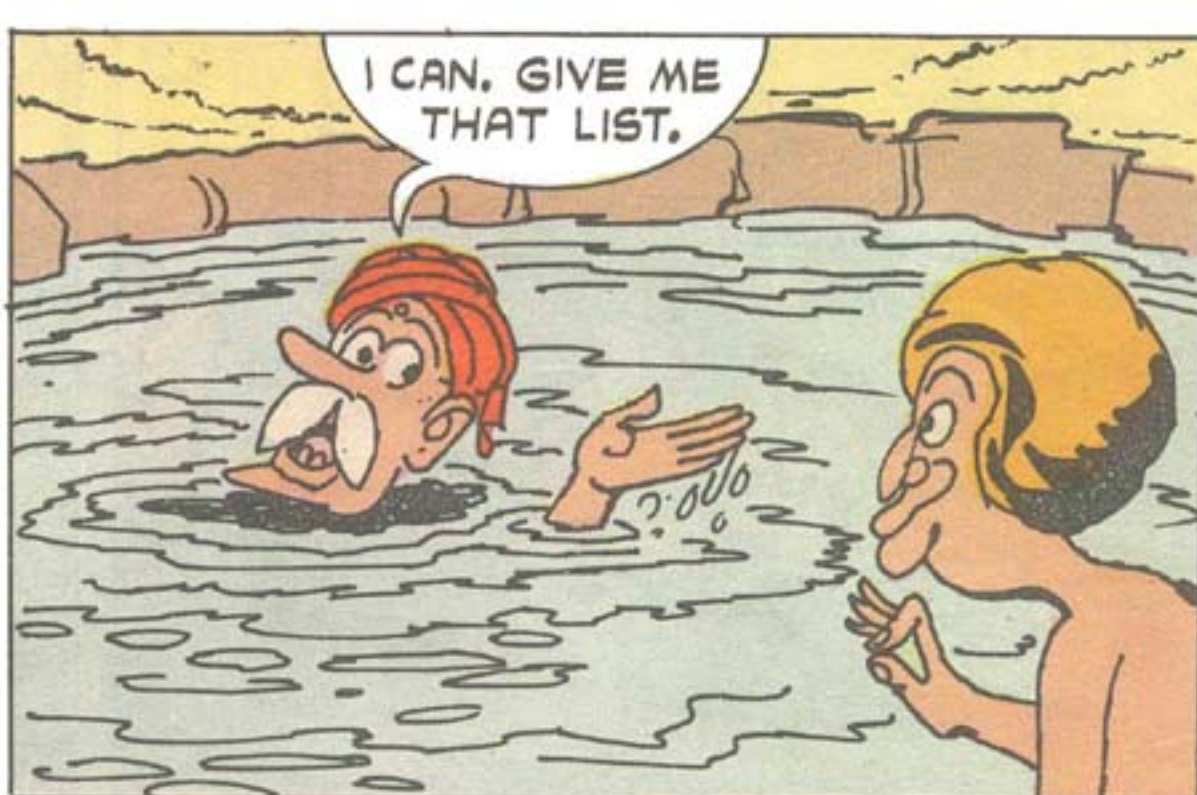


AS THEY WENT FURTHER ALONG THE ROUGH ROAD, THE HORSE STUMBLER.

MADDI, MOODHA, PEDDA...
HOLD ME! HOLD ME,
SOMEONE!





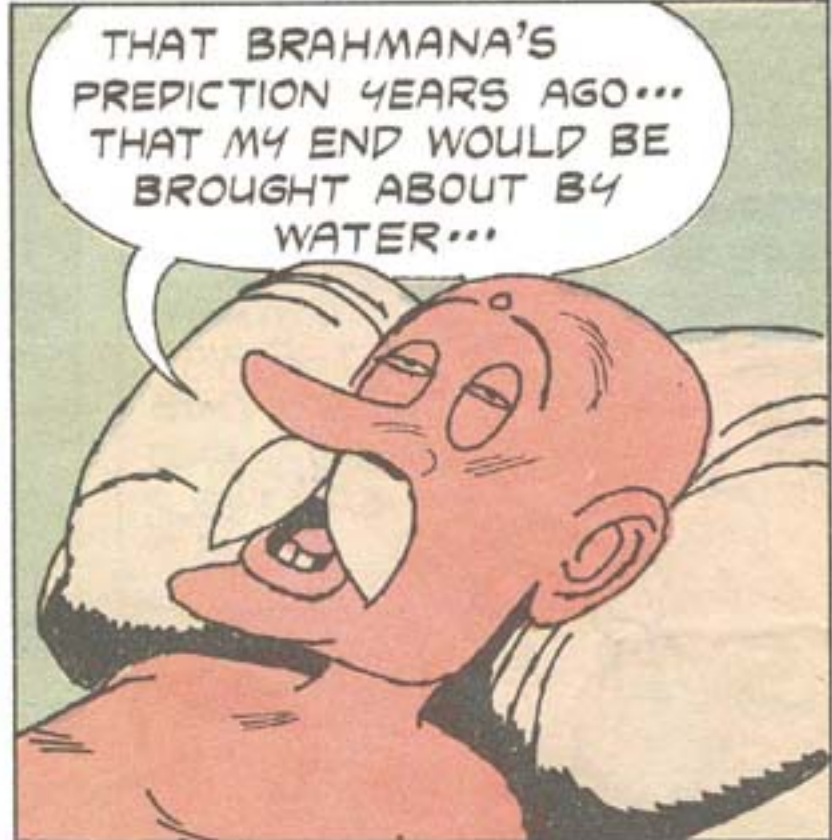


AT LAST GURU PARAMARTHA WAS PULLED OUT OF THE DITCH AND TAKEN BACK TO THE ASHRAM.

AH! IT ALL COMES BACK TO ME NOW!



THAT BRAHMANA'S PREDICTION YEARS AGO... THAT MY END WOULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY WATER...



LEAVE ME ALONE, DEAR BOYS. I MUST WAIT FOR MY END.



THE DISCIPLES OBEYED HIM AND GAVE HIM NEITHER FOOD NOR WATER TILL ONE DAY HE COLLAPSED.

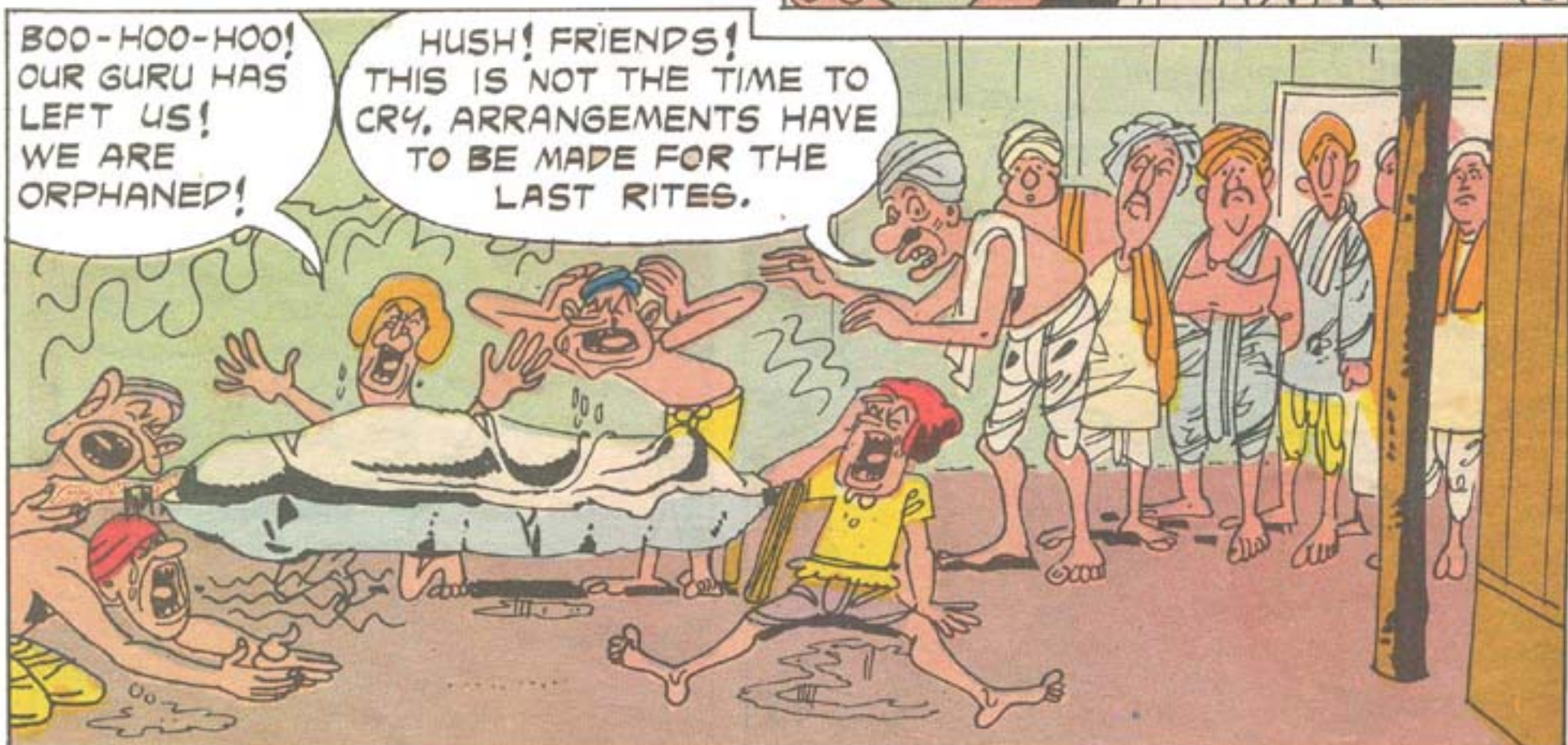
I THINK THE END HAS COME.

HE IS ONE WITH GOD NOW.



BOO-HOO-HOO! OUR GURU HAS LEFT US! WE ARE ORPHANED!

HUSH! FRIENDS! THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO CRY. ARRANGEMENTS HAVE TO BE MADE FOR THE LAST RITES.



THERE'S
A LOT TO BE
DONE.

THE GREAT
MAHATMA MUST
HAVE A GRAND
FUNERAL.

SOLEMNLY THEY CARRIED THE
BODY TO THE CREMATORY...

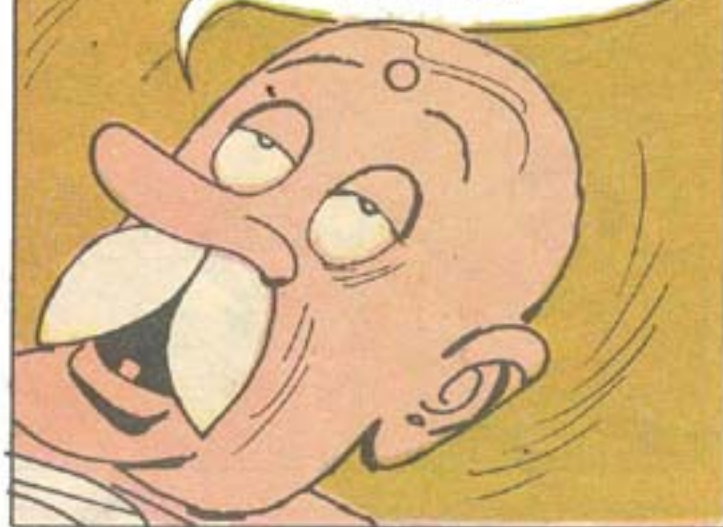


...AND PLACED IT ON THE
PYRE. THEN THEY BEGAN
CHANTING HYMNS.



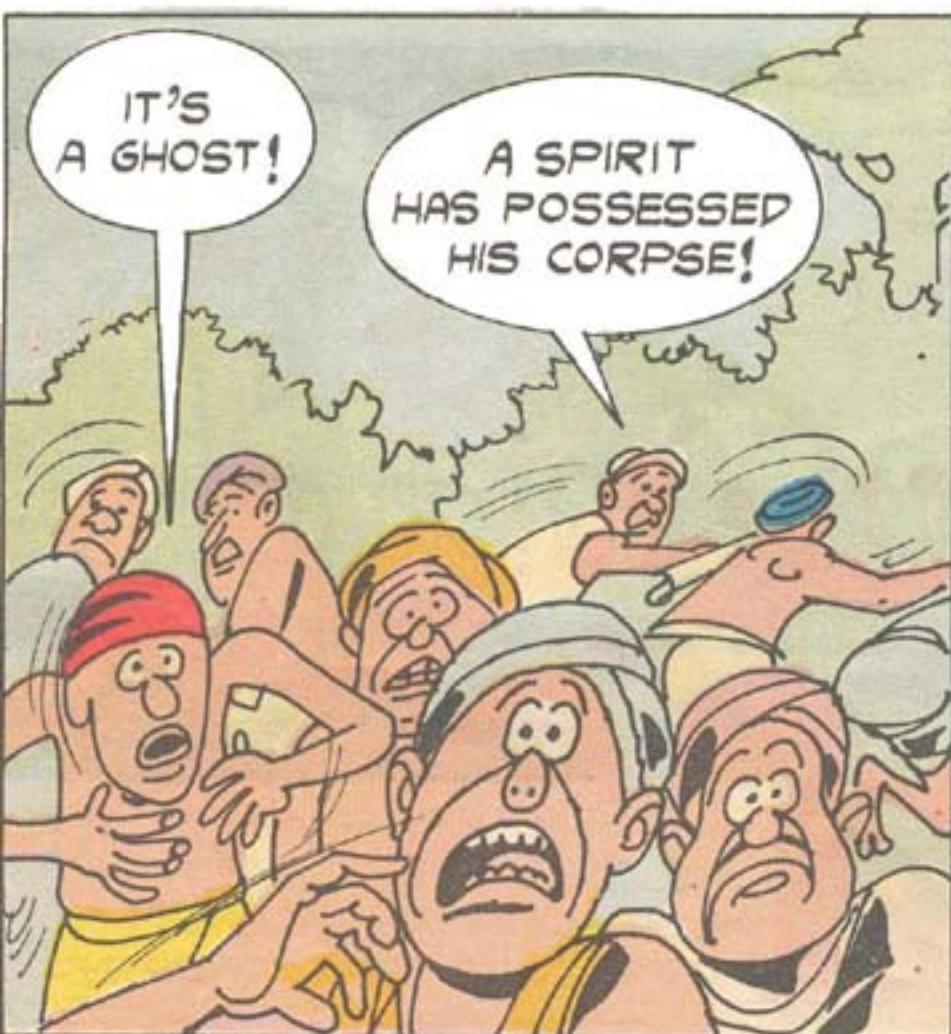
AS THEIR VOICES GREW
LOUPEL AND LOUPEL—

WHERE AM I? WATER,
WATER.



IT'S
A GHOST!

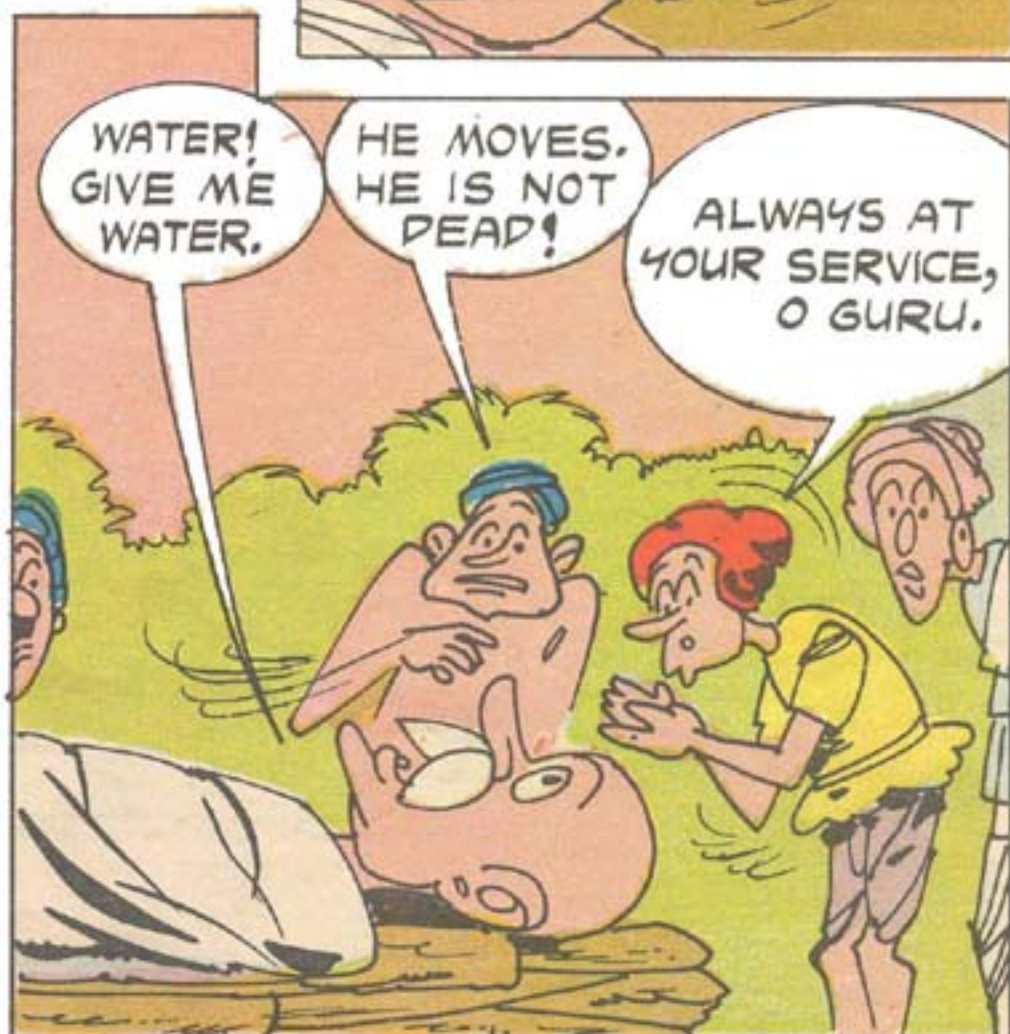
A SPIRIT
HAS POSSESSED
HIS CORPSE!

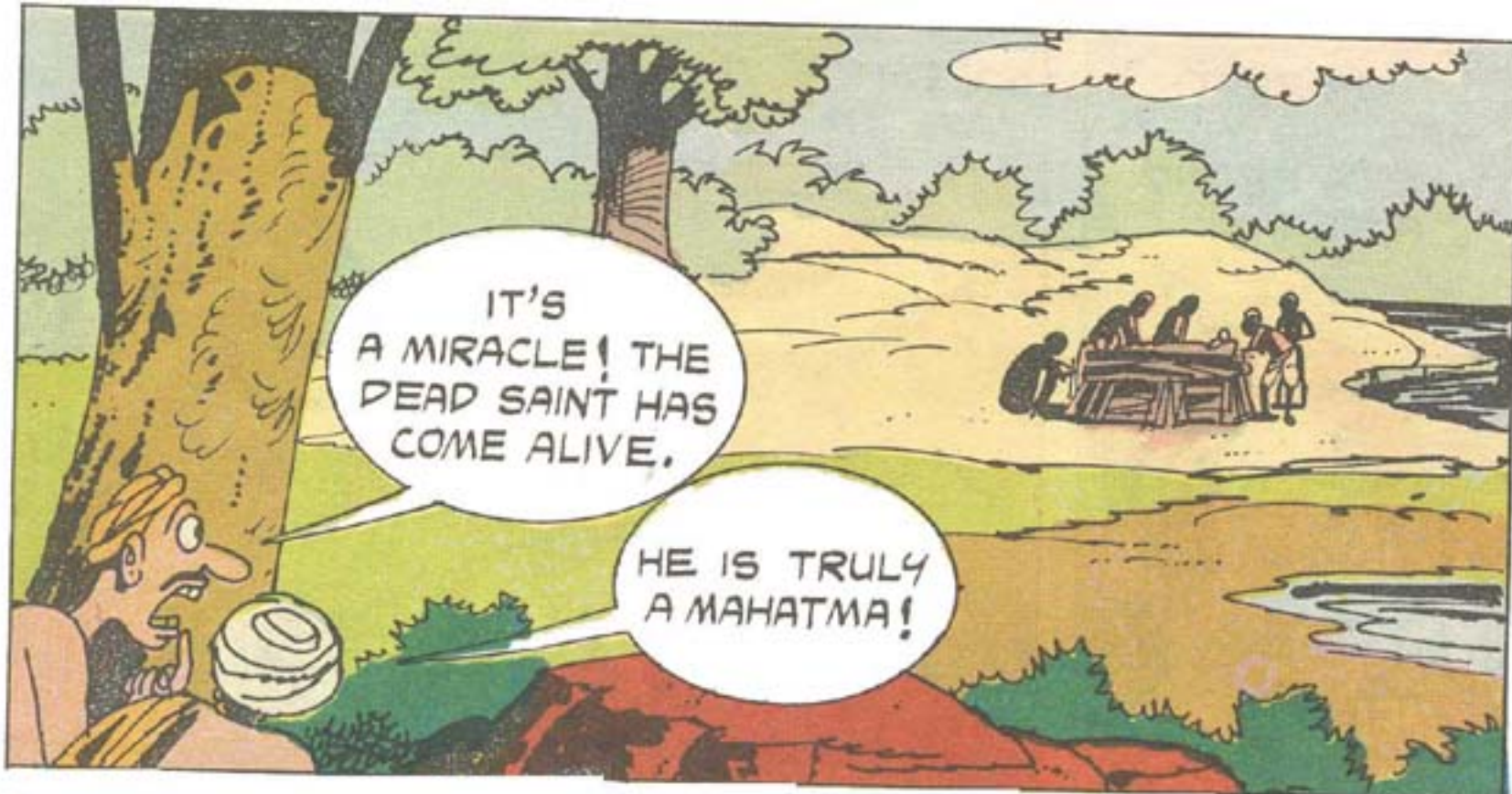


WATER!
GIVE ME
WATER.

HE MOVES.
HE IS NOT
DEAD!

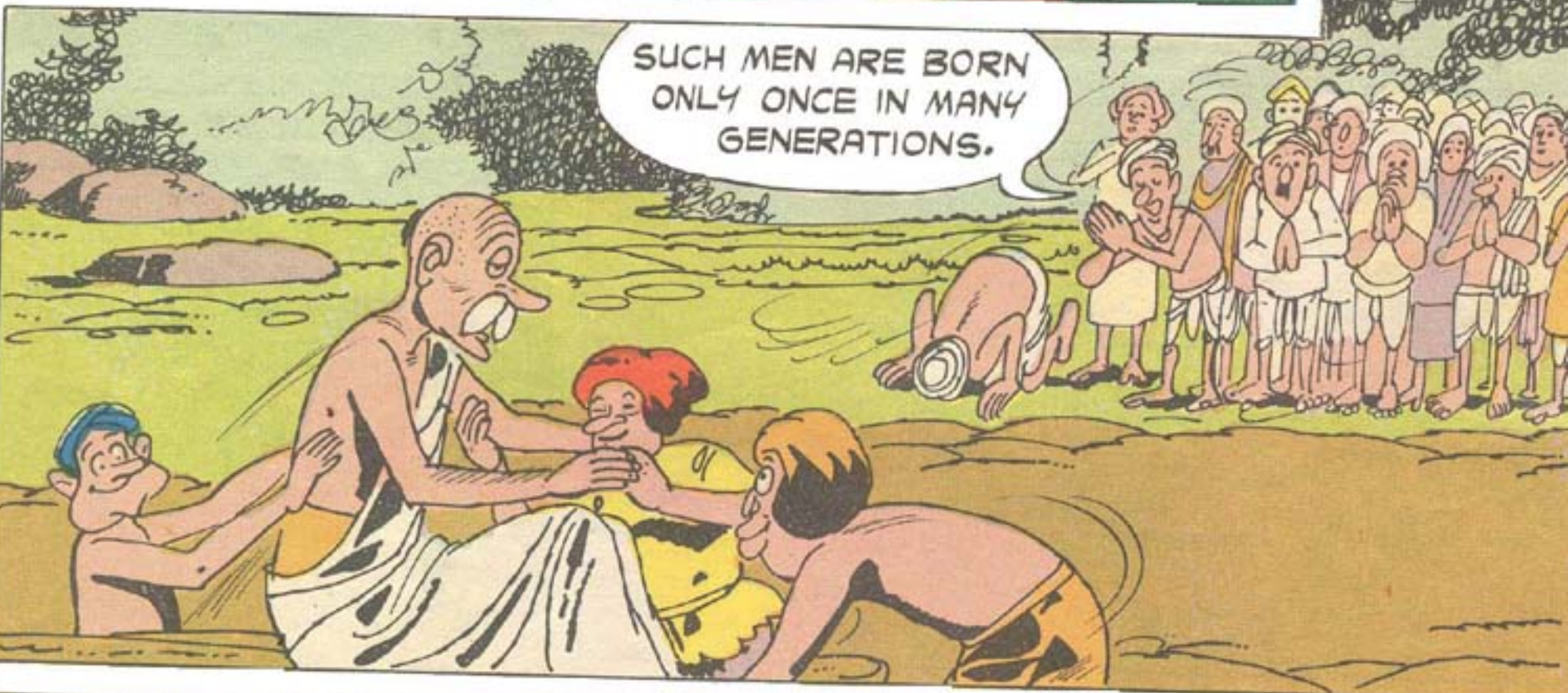
ALWAYS AT
YOUR SERVICE,
O GURU.





IT'S
A MIRACLE! THE
DEAD SAINT HAS
COME ALIVE.

HE IS TRULY
A MAHATMA!



SUCH MEN ARE BORN
ONLY ONCE IN MANY
GENERATIONS.

GURU PARAMARTHA WAS TAKEN BACK TO THE
ASHRAM WITH POMP AND CEREMONY.

LONG LIVE GURU PARAMARTHA!
LONG LIVE THE MAHATMA!



AND GURU PARAMARTHA AND
HIS LOYAL DISCIPLES LIVED
IN PEACE AND PROSPERITY
FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.

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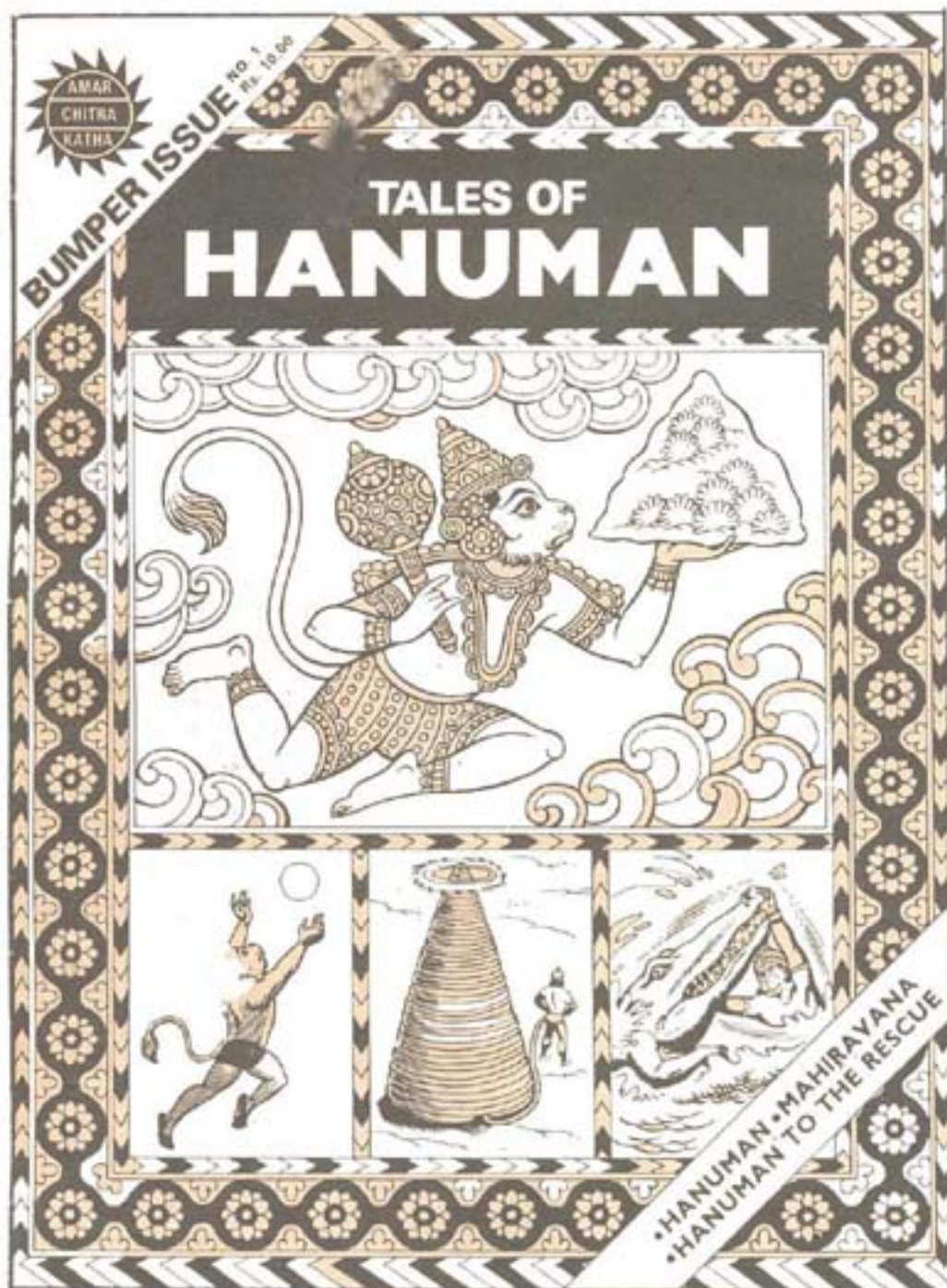
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