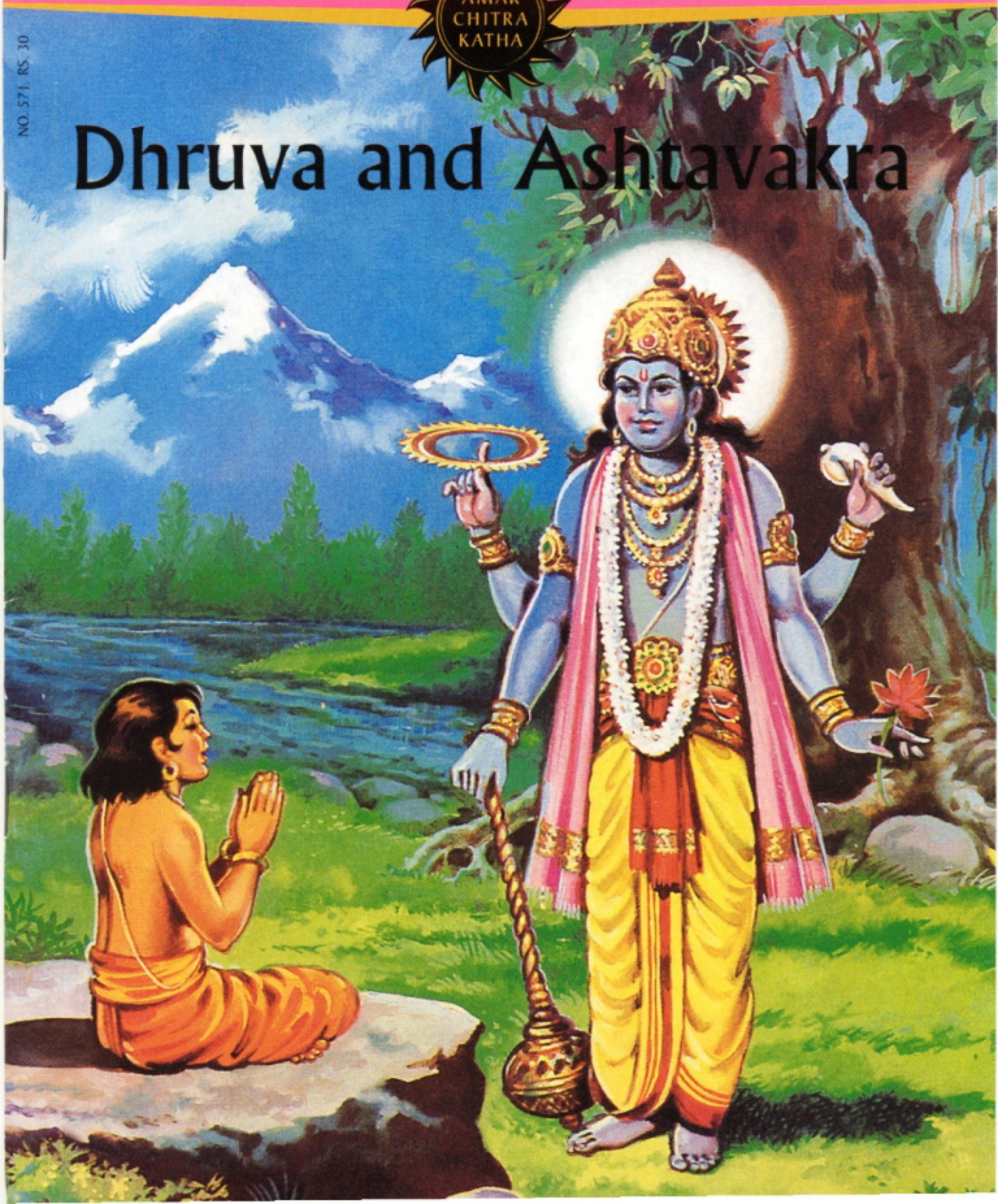


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Dhruva and Ashtavakra





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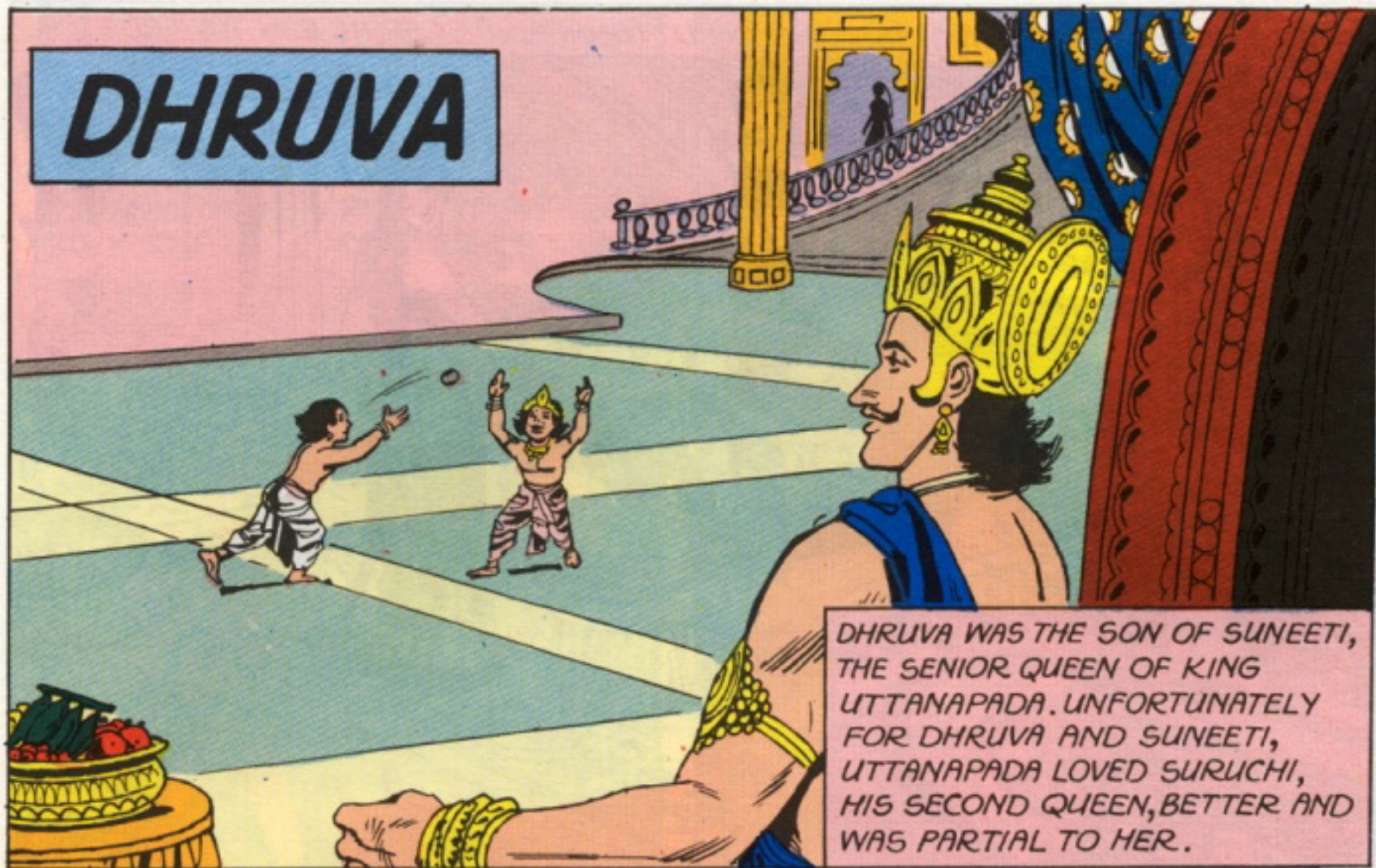
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DHRUVA



DHRUVA WAS THE SON OF SUNEETI, THE SENIOR QUEEN OF KING UTTANAPADA. UNFORTUNATELY FOR DHRUVA AND SUNEETI, UTTANAPADA LOVED SURUCHI, HIS SECOND QUEEN, BETTER AND WAS PARTIAL TO HER.

AH! HERE COMES QUEEN SURUCHI.

HER ONE AIM IS TO SEE HER SON, UTTAMA, CROWNED KING. POOR DHRUVA.



AS SURUCHI WALKED UP TO HER SON—

MOTHER, FATHER IS FREE. MAY I GO AND SIT ON HIS LAP?

CERTAINLY, MY SON. IT IS YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS THE FUTURE KING.



WHEN DHRUVA SAW UTTAMA SITTING ON UTTANAPADA'S LAP, HE RAN TOWARDS THEM.



* ANOTHER NAME FOR VISHNU.

STUNG BY HER WORDS, DHRUVA RAN CRYING TO HIS MOTHER.

WHY ARE YOU CRYING, DHRUVA? HAS ANYONE HURT YOU?

MOTHER SURUCHI SAID I HAD NO RIGHT TO SIT ON MY FATHER'S LAP.



SHE SAID ONLY UTTAMA HAD THE RIGHT TO SIT ON THE KING'S LAP.

SHE'S RIGHT, DHRUVA.



HOLDING BACK HER TEARS, SUNEETI HUGGED HIM AND CARRIED HIM IN.

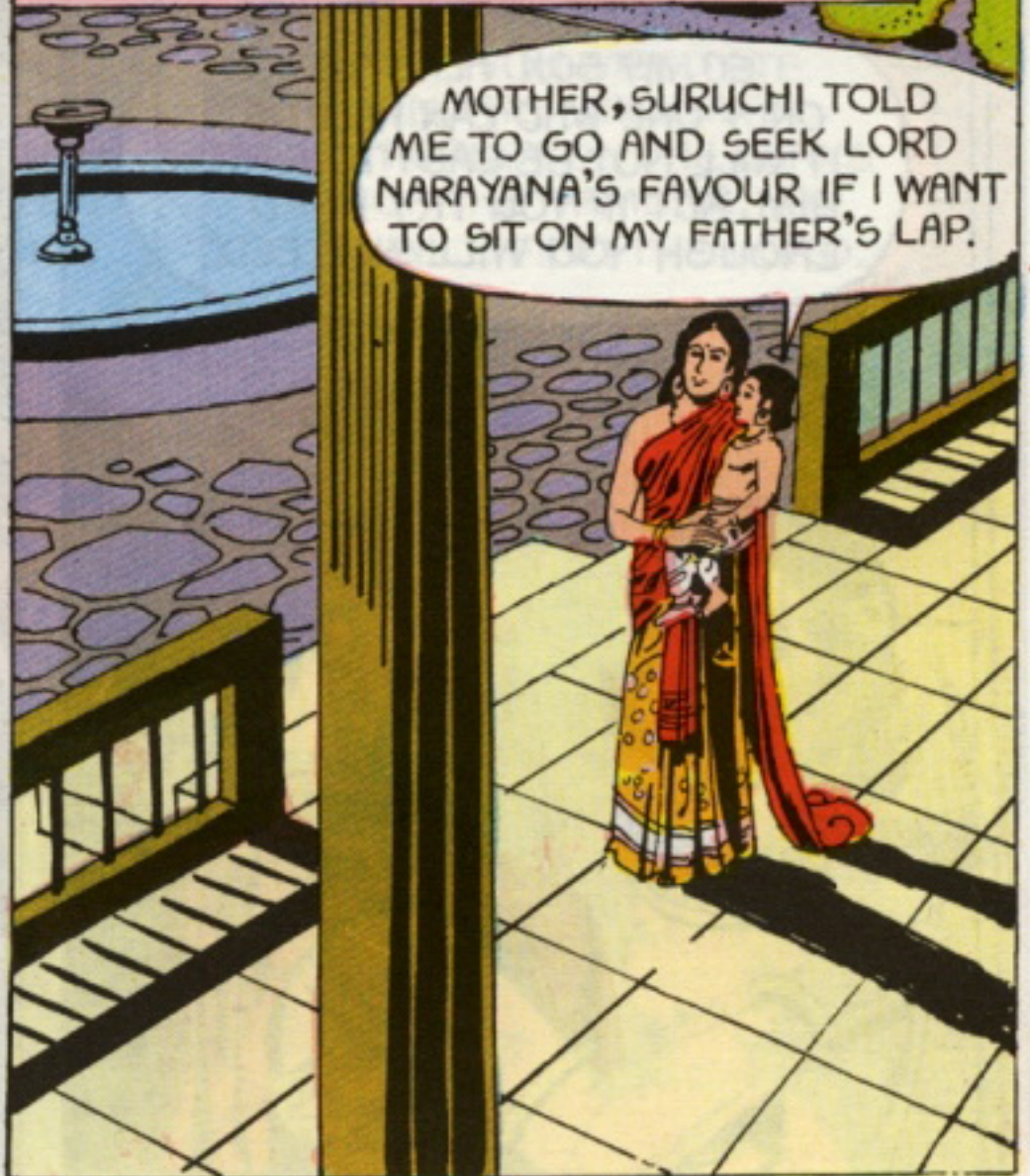
I AM A KSHATRIYA PRINCE, AM I NOT, MOTHER?

YES, MY CHILD.



SECURE IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS, DHRUVA BECAME CALM AND THOUGHTFUL.

MOTHER, SURUCHI TOLD ME TO GO AND SEEK LORD NARAYANA'S FAVOUR IF I WANT TO SIT ON MY FATHER'S LAP.





MEANWHILE, SAGE NARADA CAME TO KNOW ABOUT SURUCHI'S HARSH WORDS AND DHRUVA'S RESOLVE.

HE IS A TRUE KSHATRIYA INDEED. THOUGH A MERE CHILD, HE WILL NOT BROOK THE INSULTS OF HIS STEP-MOTHER. YET WHAT HE SEEKS IS IMPOSSIBLE. I MUST SPEAK TO HIM.

NARADA WENT TO SEE DHRUVA.

MY CHILD, WHY DON'T YOU ACCEPT YOUR FATE AND GO BACK TO YOUR MOTHER?

O MASTER, I AM DHRUVA, THE SON OF MIGHTY UTTANAPADA, A KSHATRIYA. AND I AM DETERMINED TO WIN THE LORD'S FAVOUR.



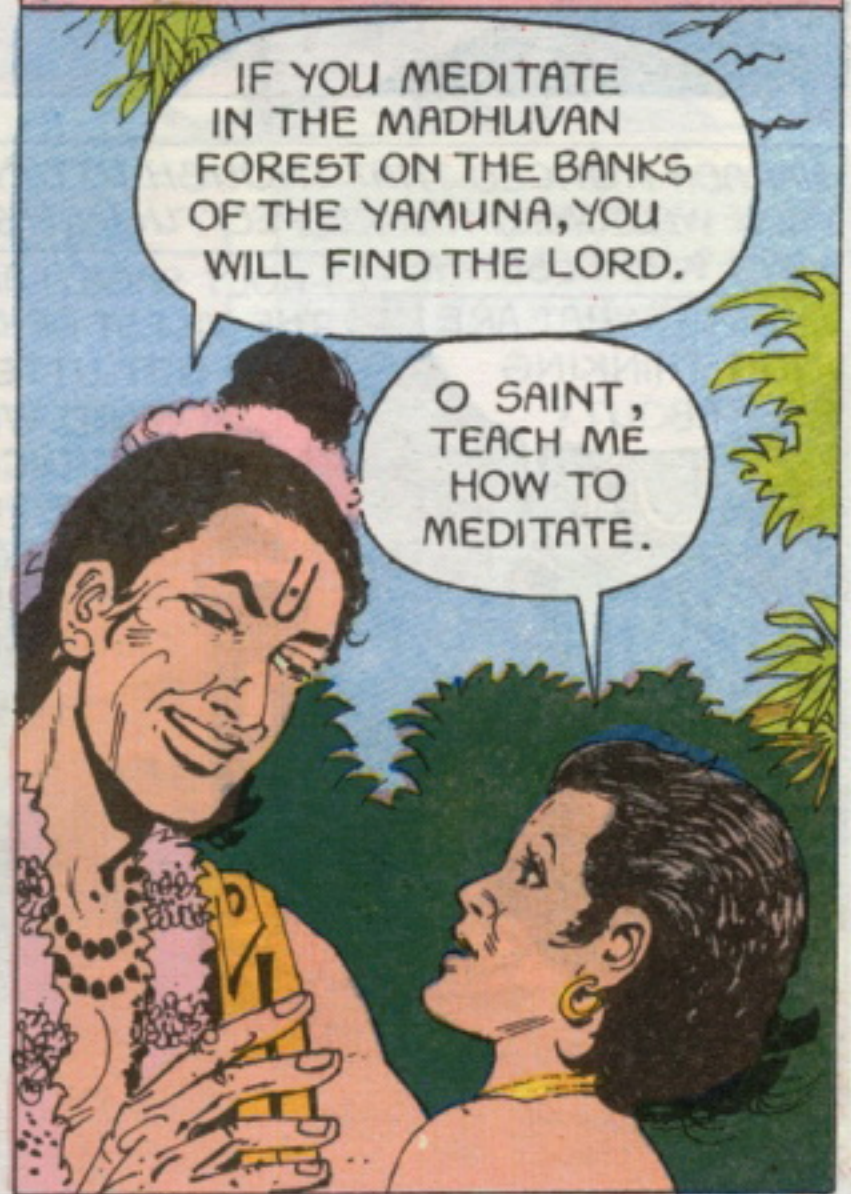
I AM AWARE OF THAT, MY CHILD. BUT YOU ARE TOO YOUNG. IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND LORD NARAYANA. WHY DON'T YOU WAIT TILL YOU ARE A LITTLE OLDER?

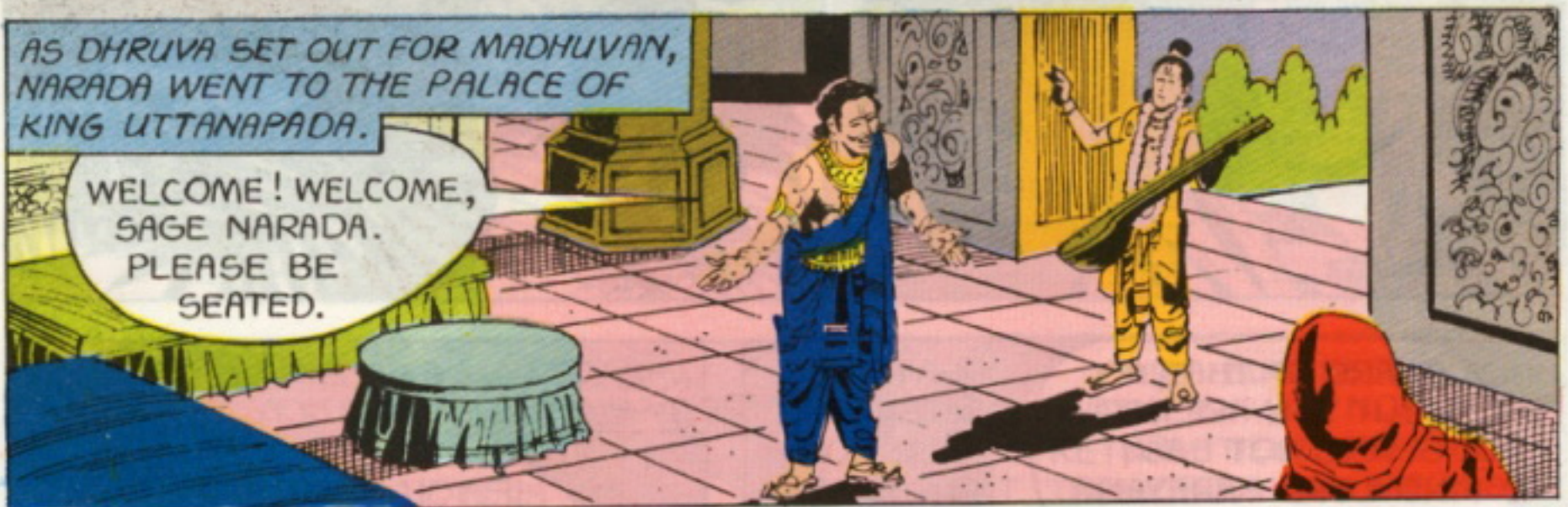
FORGIVE ME, MASTER, BUT I WILL NOT TURN BACK. O WISE ONE, TELL ME HOW I CAN SUCCEED IN MY RESOLVE.

NARADA WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED BY HIS DETERMINATION.

IF YOU MEDITATE IN THE MADHUVAN FOREST ON THE BANKS OF THE YAMUNA, YOU WILL FIND THE LORD.

O SAINT, TEACH ME HOW TO MEDITATE.





MEANWHILE, DHRUVA HAD REACHED MADHUVAN.

I SHALL
SIT HERE AND
BEGIN MY
MEDITATION.



IN THE FIRST MONTH, HE
LIVED ONLY ON THE FRUITS
HE COULD FIND IN THE
FOREST.



GRADUALLY HE GAVE
UP EVEN THAT AND
ATE ONLY GRASS
AND LEAVES.



IN THE THIRD MONTH, HE
STOPPED EATING AND
LIVED ONLY ON WATER.



IN THE FOURTH MONTH, HE GAVE UP EVEN THAT AND LIVED ON AIR. THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD HE REPEATED THE MANTRA OVER AND OVER AGAIN.



IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH MONTHS, HE EVEN STOPPED BREATHING.



DHRUVA'S CONCENTRATION STOPPED THE VERY AIR FROM FLOWING. THERE WAS PANIC IN HEAVEN...





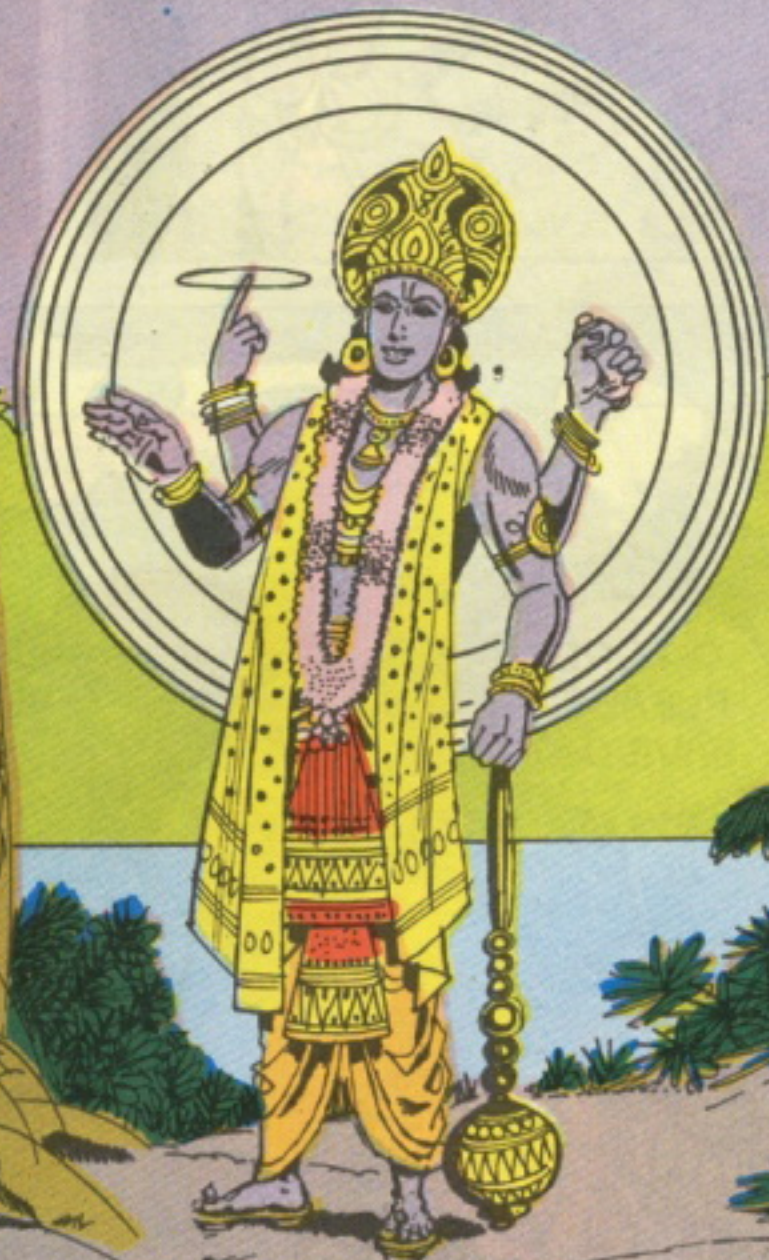
MEANWHILE, AS DHRUVA MEDITATED —

LORD, I THOUGHT
I HAD FOUND YOU BUT
YOU'VE SUDDENLY VAN-
ISHED. HAVE I FAILED IN
MY WORSHIP? HAVE I
DISPLEASED YOU? THEN
I SHALL START MEDI-
TATING ALL OVER OF
AGAIN.



AND DHRUVA OPENED HIS EYES.

THE LORD
HAS COME
TO ME!

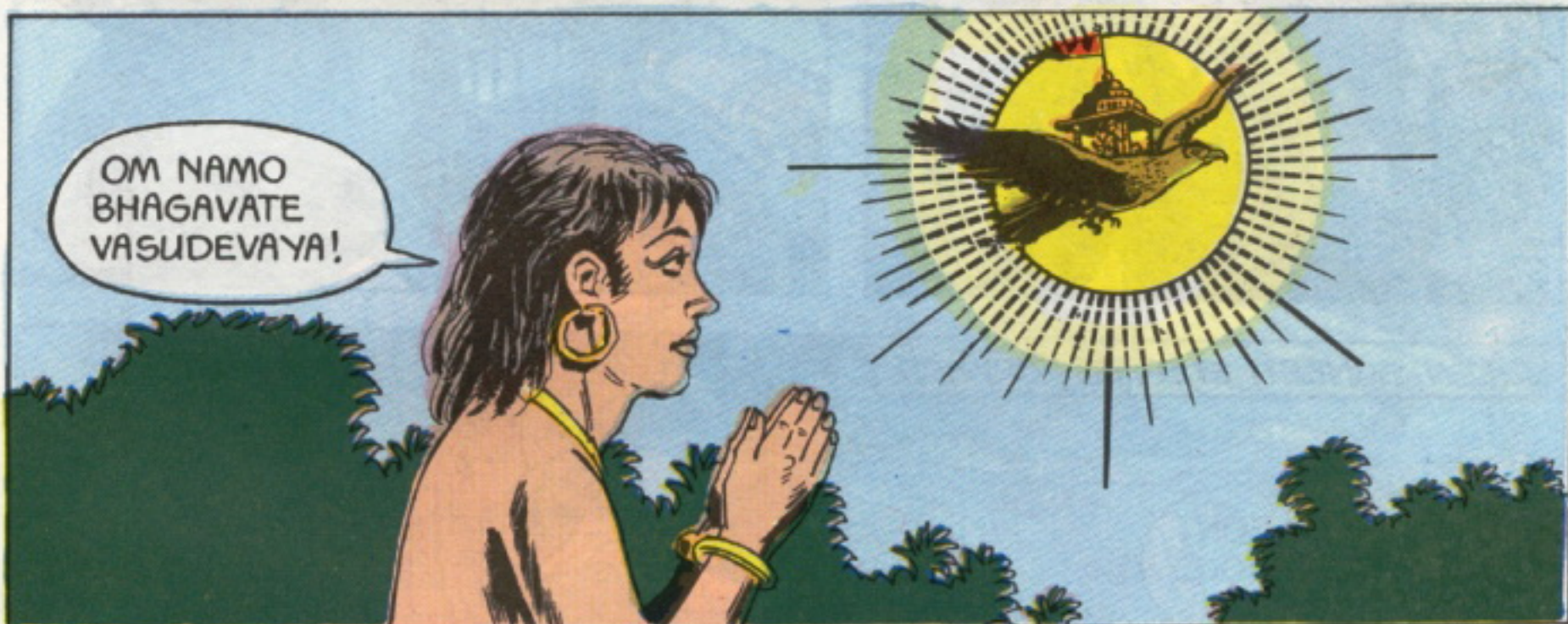




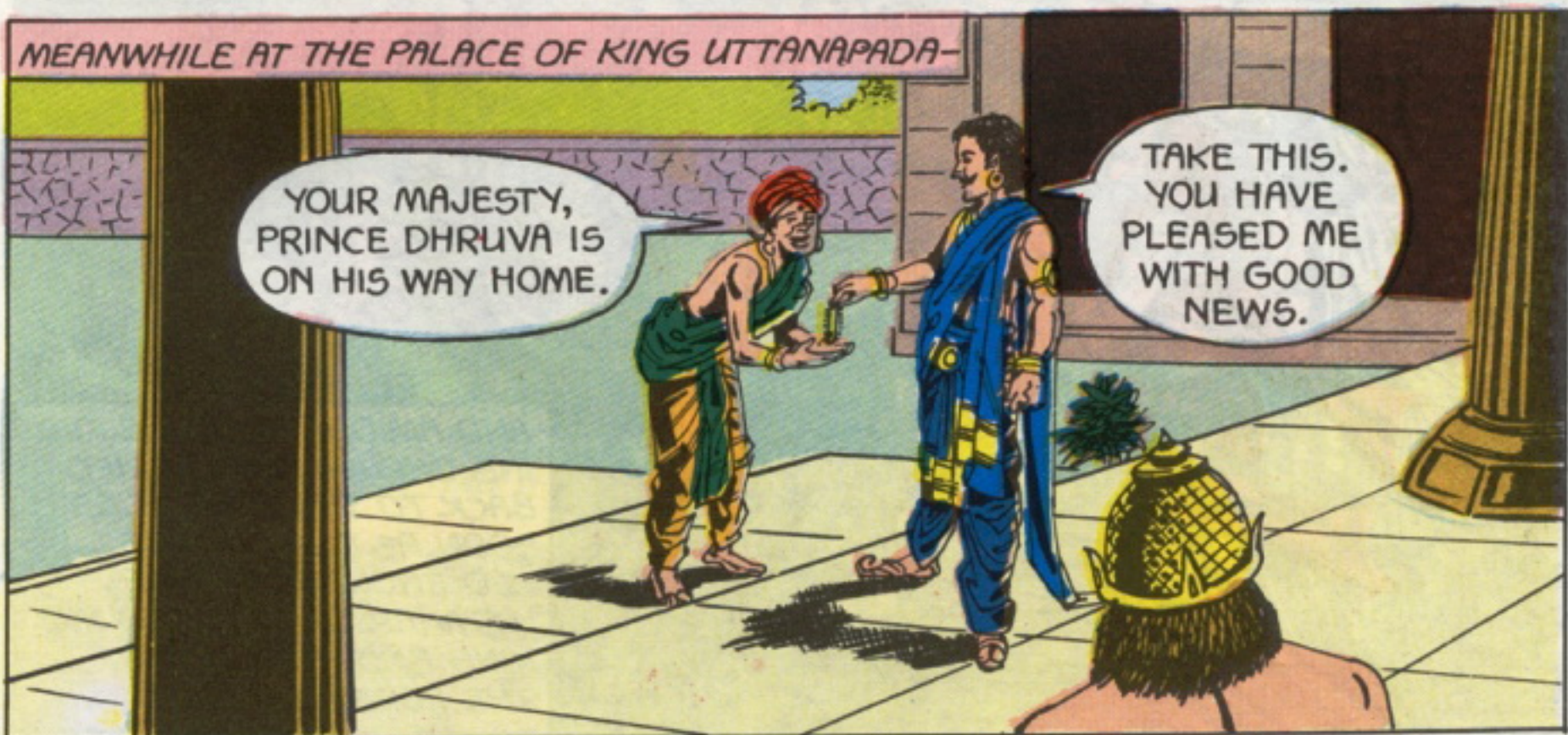
I KNOW WHAT HAS BROUGHT YOU TO MADHUVAN. YOUR WISH WILL BE FULFILLED. YOU SHALL BE A GREAT KING.



YOU SHALL RULE FOR 36,000 YEARS. THEN WILL I GIVE YOU A PLACE IN HEAVEN WHERE YOU SHALL STAY FOREVER.*



OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VASUDEVAYA!

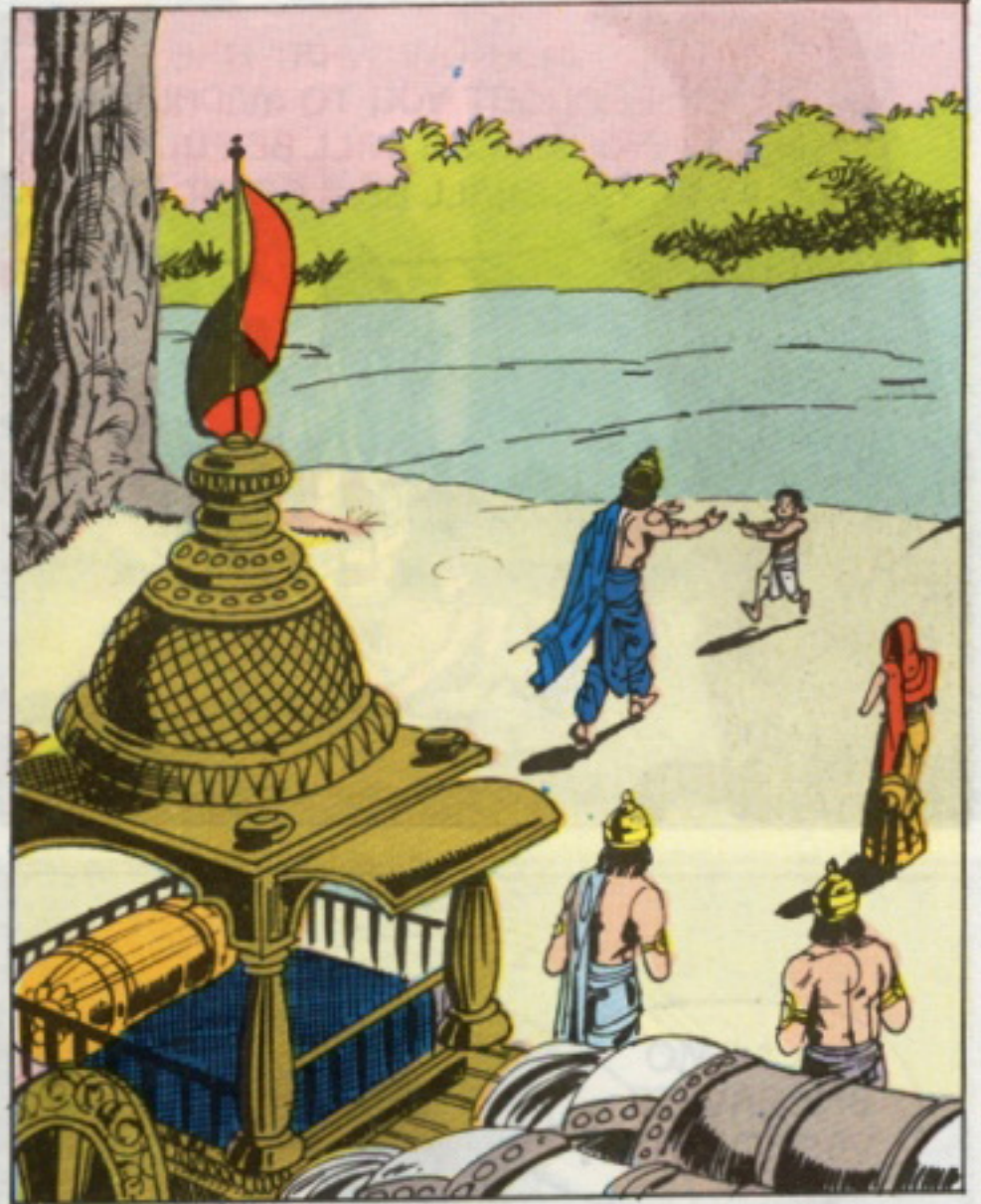


MEANWHILE AT THE PALACE OF KING UTTANAPADA-

YOUR MAJESTY, PRINCE DHURUVA IS ON HIS WAY HOME.

TAKE THIS. YOU HAVE PLEASED ME WITH GOOD NEWS.

*THE POLE STAR TO THIS DAY IS KNOWN AS DHURUVA.



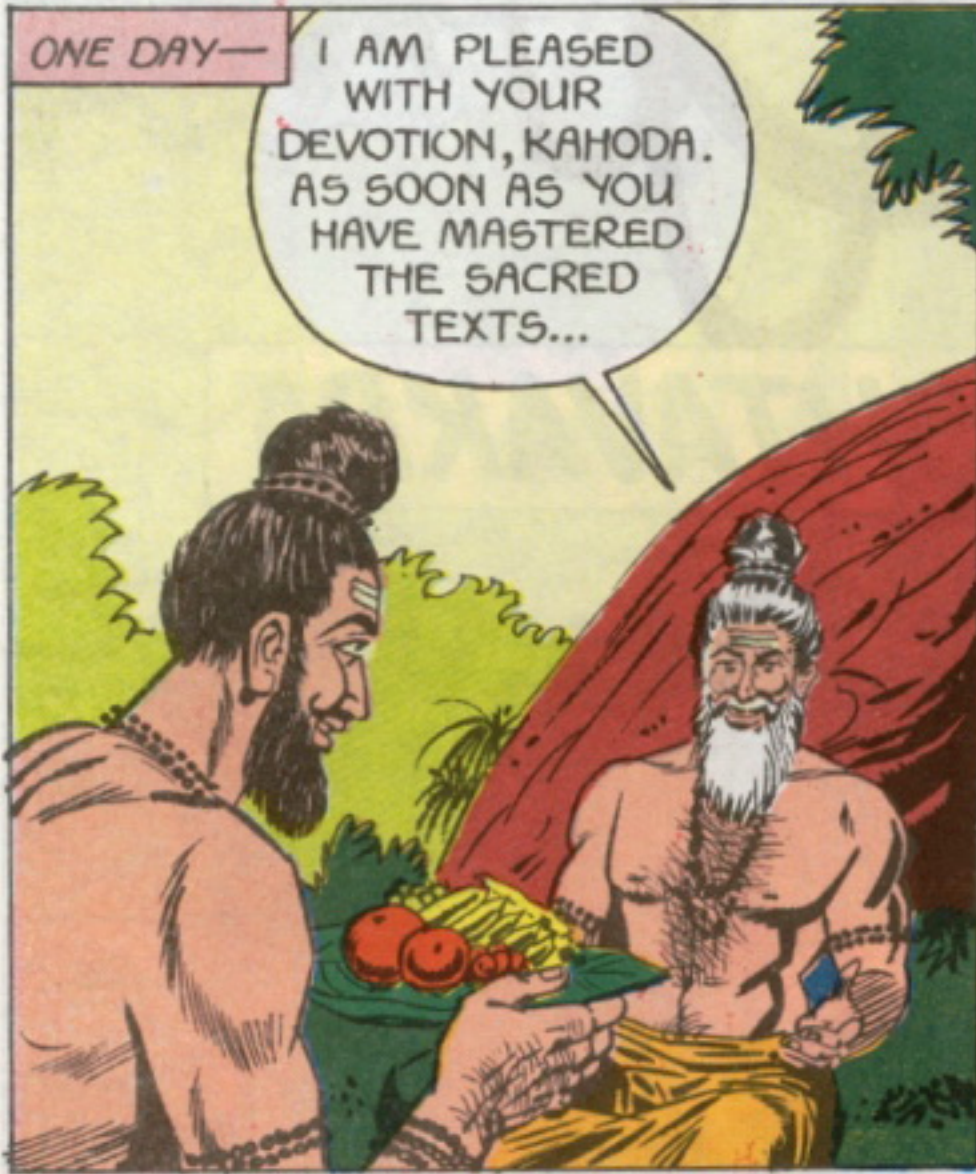
ASHTAVAKRA



KAHODA WAS THE FAVOURITE DISCIPLE OF UDDALAKA, A RENOWNED SCHOLAR IN THE VEDAS. UDDALAKA HAD A DAUGHTER CALLED SUJATA.

ONE DAY—

I AM PLEASED WITH YOUR DEVOTION, KAHODA. AS SOON AS YOU HAVE MASTERED THE SACRED TEXTS...



...YOU SHALL HAVE MY DAUGHTER, SUJATA, FOR A WIFE



KAHODA WAS CLEVER AND HARD-WORKING AND SOON MASTERED THE TEXTS. AS HIS GURU HAD PROMISED HE WAS MARRIED TO SUJATA.

YOU MAY CONTINUE TO LIVE HERE AT THE ASHRAM, AND TEACH YOUR DISCIPLES.



THOUGH THEY HAD TO LEAD AN AUSTERE LIFE, KAHODA AND SUJATA WERE HAPPY IN SAGE UDDALAKA'S HERMITAGE.

MY LORD, WHEN WE HAVE A SON, HE MUST MASTER THE SACRED TEXTS AS YOU HAVE.

I SHALL SPARE NO PAINS TO TEACH HIM ALL I KNOW.



A FEW MONTHS LATER, SUJATA BECAME PREGNANT.

I MUST EXPOSE MY CHILD TO THE SACRED INFLUENCE OF THE HYMNS EVEN WHILE HE IS IN THE WOMB.



SO SUJATA SAT BY HER HUSBAND AS HE RECITED VERSES FROM THE SCRIPTURES; AND THE CHILD IN HER WOMB SILENTLY ABSORBED WHAT THE LEARNED FATHER RECITED.



ONE DAY AS KAHODA SAT AMONG HIS DISCIPLES, INSTRUCTING THEM—

THAT'S NOT THE WAY TO CHANT THAT HYMN, FATHER.





FURIOUS WITH HIS SON FOR PUT-
TING HIM TO SHAME BEFORE HIS
DISCIPLES, KAHODA CURSED HIM.

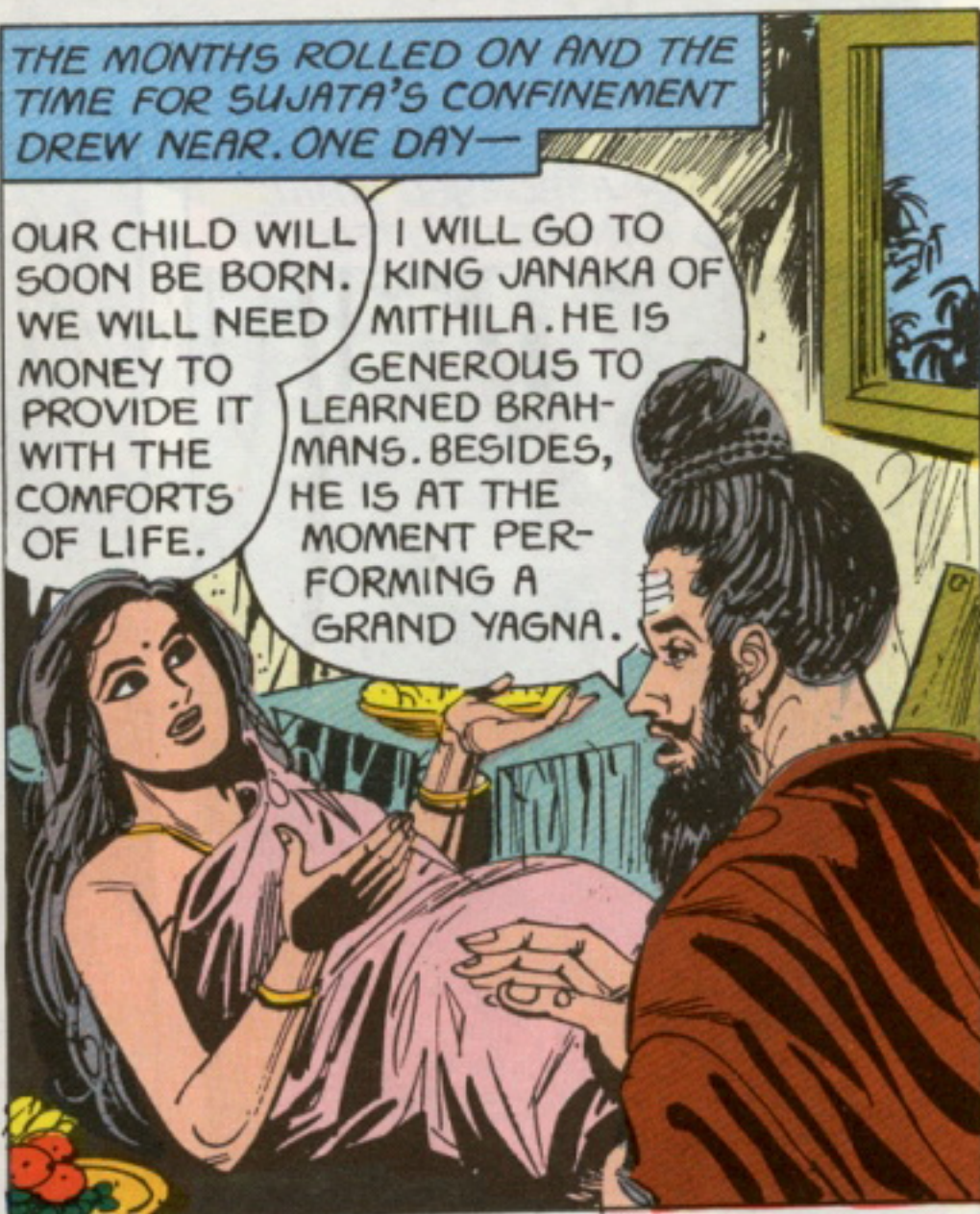
O VAIN SOUL! MAY YOU
BE BORN DEFORMED—
MAY YOUR BODY BE
TWISTED IN EIGHT
PLACES!



THE MONTHS ROLLED ON AND THE
TIME FOR SUJATA'S CONFINEMENT
DREW NEAR. ONE DAY—

OUR CHILD WILL
SOON BE BORN.
WE WILL NEED
MONEY TO
PROVIDE IT
WITH THE
COMFORTS
OF LIFE.

I WILL GO TO
KING JANAKA OF
MITHILA. HE IS
GENEROUS TO
LEARNED BRAH-
MANS. BESIDES,
HE IS AT THE
MOMENT PER-
FORMING A
GRAND YAGNA.



WHEN KAHODA REACHED MITHILA,
JANAKA WELCOMED HIM.

O REVERED SAGE, YOU
HAVE COME AT THE
RIGHT MOMENT.



A SCHOLAR NAMED
BANDHI HAS COME
TO MITHILA. NO
ONE CAN DEFEAT
HIM IN DEBATE.

LET ME
TRY,
O KING.



THINK IT OVER CAREFULLY.
THOUGH YOU WILL BE
WELL REWARDED IF
YOU WIN...



...YOU WILL BE
DROWNED IN THE
RIVER IF YOU DON'T.
AND MANY SCHOLARS
HAVE LOST THEIR
LIVES.

I ACCEPT
THE
CHALLENGE.



THE DEBATE BEGAN BUT DID NOT CONTINUE FOR LONG.
KAHODA WAS NO MATCH FOR BANDHI.

BANDHI HAS WON
AGAIN. POOR KAHODA
WILL BE DROWNED
LIKE ALL THE
OTHERS.



BANDHI WAS TRIUMPHANT.

MY MISSION
HERE IS PROVING
TO BE VERY
SUCCESSFUL.
I HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO DISPATCH
ONE MORE
SAGE.

BUT JANAKA WAS UNHAPPY.

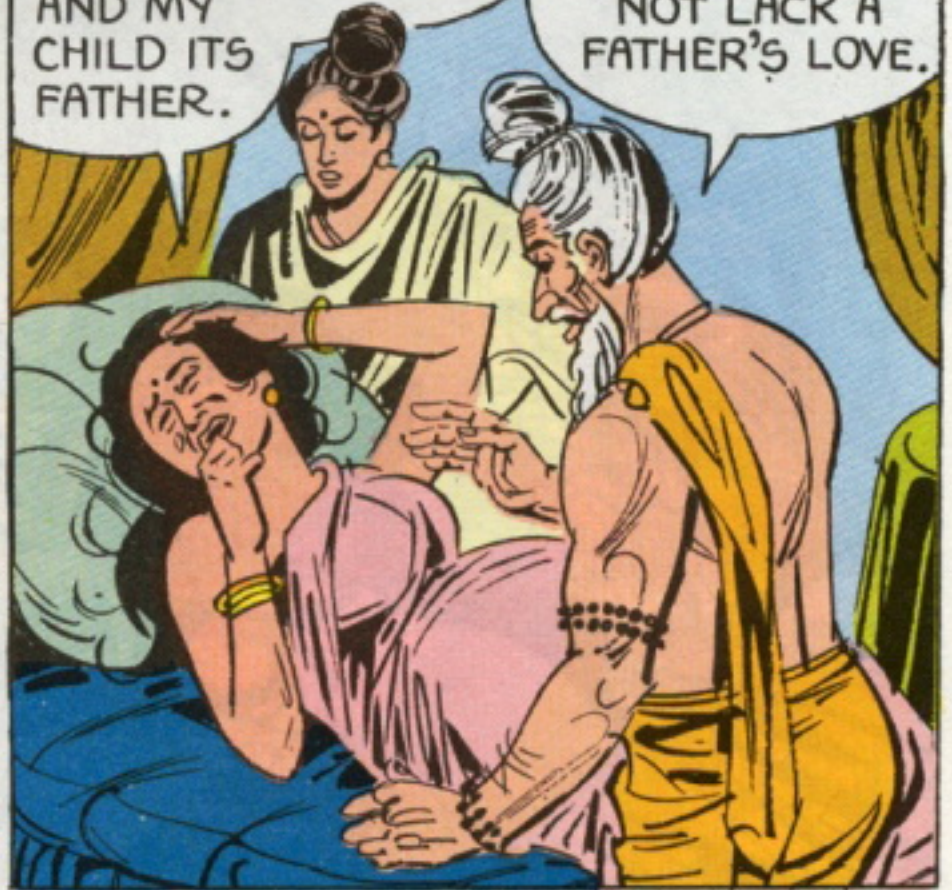
ALAS! I HAVE LOST ONE MORE SAGE WHO CAME TO ATTEND THE YAGNA. HOW WILL THE YAGNA BE A SUCCESS?



WHEN THE NEWS REACHED SUJATA, SHE BROKE DOWN.

ALAS! MY DESIRE FOR WEALTH HAS COST ME MY HUSBAND AND MY CHILD ITS FATHER.

DON'T GRIEVE, SUJATA. YOUR CHILD SHALL NOT LACK A FATHER'S LOVE.



A FEW DAYS LATER SUJATA HAD A BABY.

ALAS! HIS BODY IS DEFORMED IN EIGHT PLACES.

LET HIM BE CALLED ASHTAVAKRA*. MY WIFE TOO HAS JUST BEEN BLESSED WITH A SON. WE HAVE NAMED HIM SHWETAKETU.



GROWING UP UNDER THE TENDER, LOVING CARE OF UDDALAKA...



* CROOKED IN EIGHT PLACES.

...ASHTAVAKRA SOON BEGAN TO
LOOK UPON HIM AS HIS FATHER.



THE YEARS ROLLED ON.
UDDALAKA TAUGHT ASHTA-
VAKRA AND SHWETAKETU.



WHEN THE BOYS WERE TWELVE YEARS OLD —

YOU
HAVE MASTERED
THE VEDAS. I AM
PROUD OF YOU,
MY SON.





AND SUJATA TOLD HIM ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.

I MUST
DEFEAT BANDHI
AND HAVE HIM
DROWNED.



THAT NIGHT—

COME ON, SHWETAKETU.
LET US GO TO MITHILA. IT
WILL BE A GOOD EXPERI-
ENCE FOR US. KING
JANAKA HAS NOT BEEN
ABLE TO COMPLETE THE
YAGNA HE STARTED
TWELVE YEARS AGO.



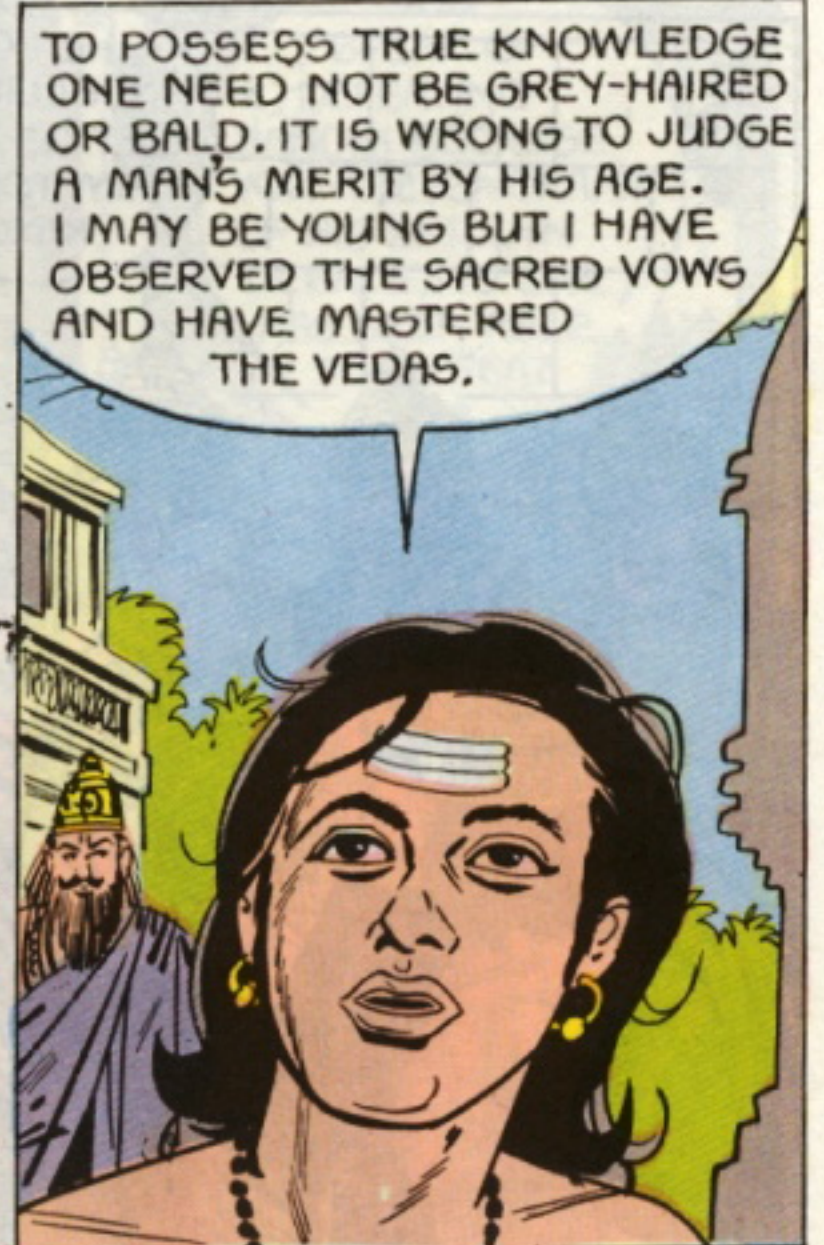
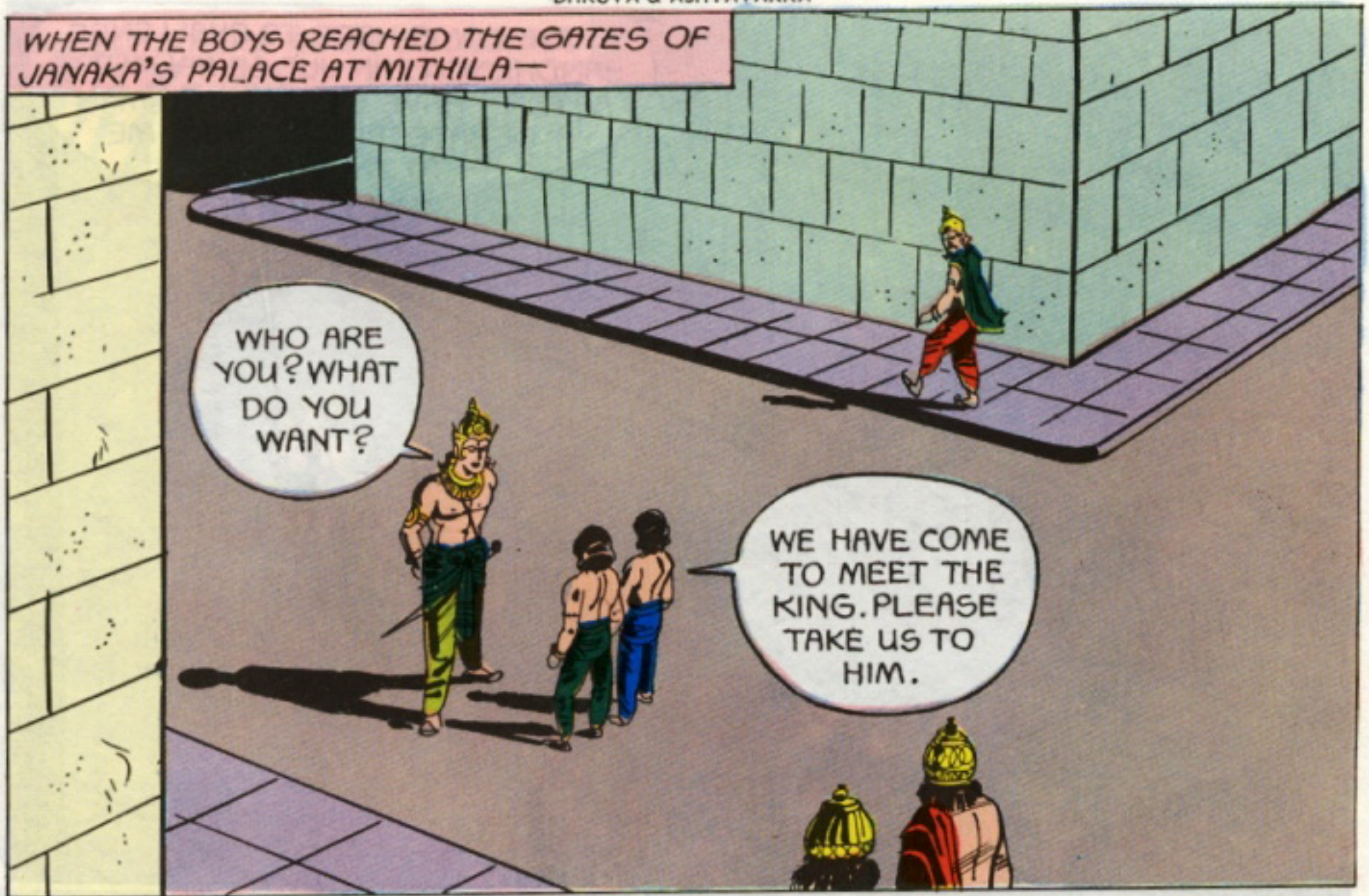
SHWETAKETU WAS WILLING.

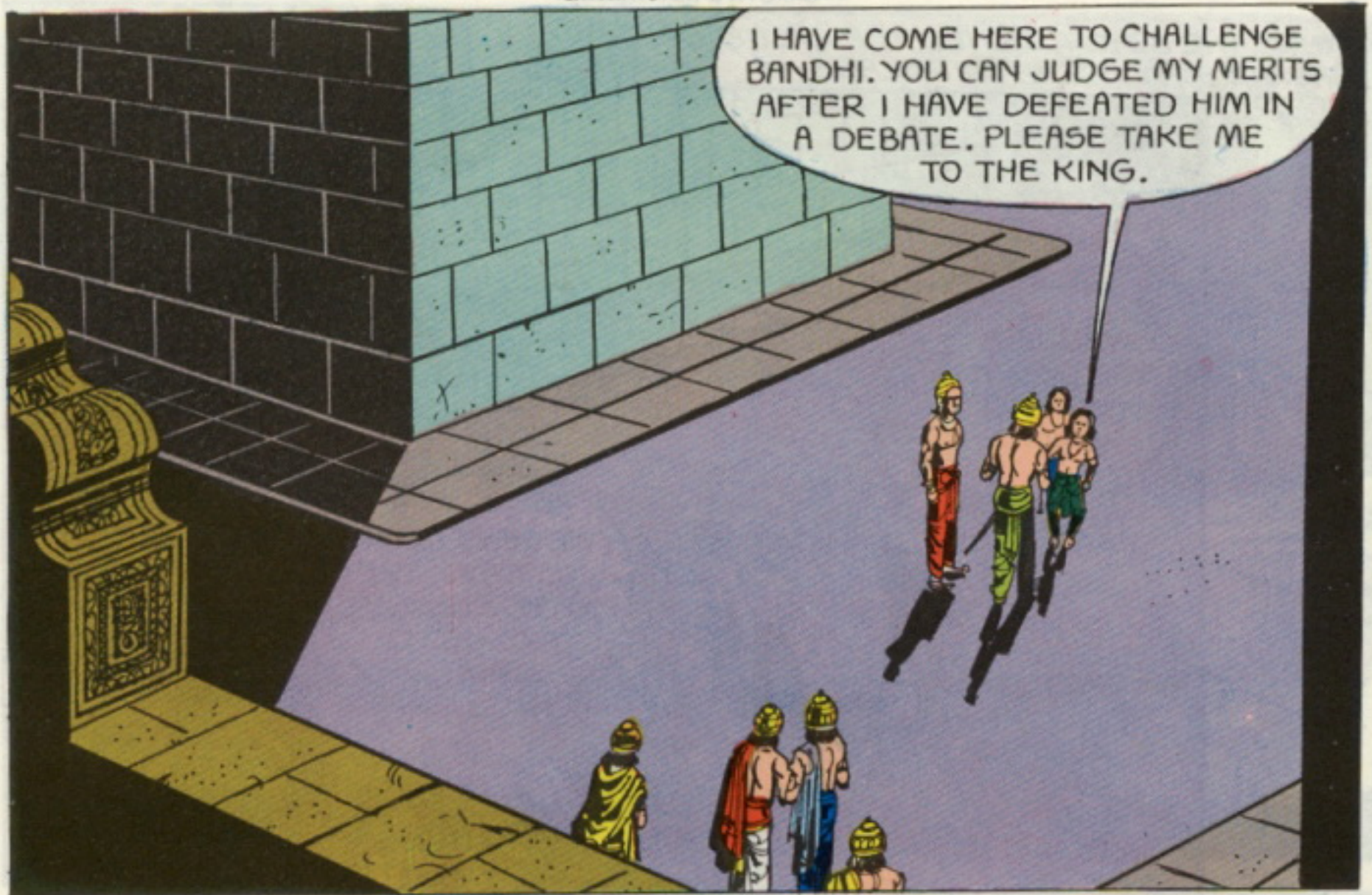
WHEN
DO YOU
WANT TO
LEAVE?

AT
ONCE.



WHEN THE BOYS REACHED THE GATES OF JANAKA'S PALACE AT MITHILA—





THE BOYS WERE TAKEN TO JANAKA.

O KING, I HAVE HEARD OF BANDHI'S CHALLENGE AND THE FATE OF THOSE WHO FAILED TO MEET IT. I HAVE COME TO CHALLENGE BANDHI AND TO SEE HIM DESTROYED.



JANAKA WAS ASTONISHED.

HE IS JUST A CHILD. IT IS MY DUTY TO WARN HIM.



YOU SPEAK OF DEFEATING BANDHI BECAUSE YOU ARE IGNORANT OF HIS SKILL IN DEBATE. NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO DEFEAT HIM.



THAT'S BECAUSE HE WAS NEVER CONFRONTED WITH A SCHOLAR OF MY CALIBRE. I WILL NOT GO BACK TILL I SEE HIM DEFEATED AND DROWNED.



WHEN JANAKA SAW THAT ASHTAVAKRA WAS ADAMANT—



THE BOY IS CONFIDENT. I WILL TEST HIS INTELLIGENCE BY ASKING HIM A FEW QUESTIONS.

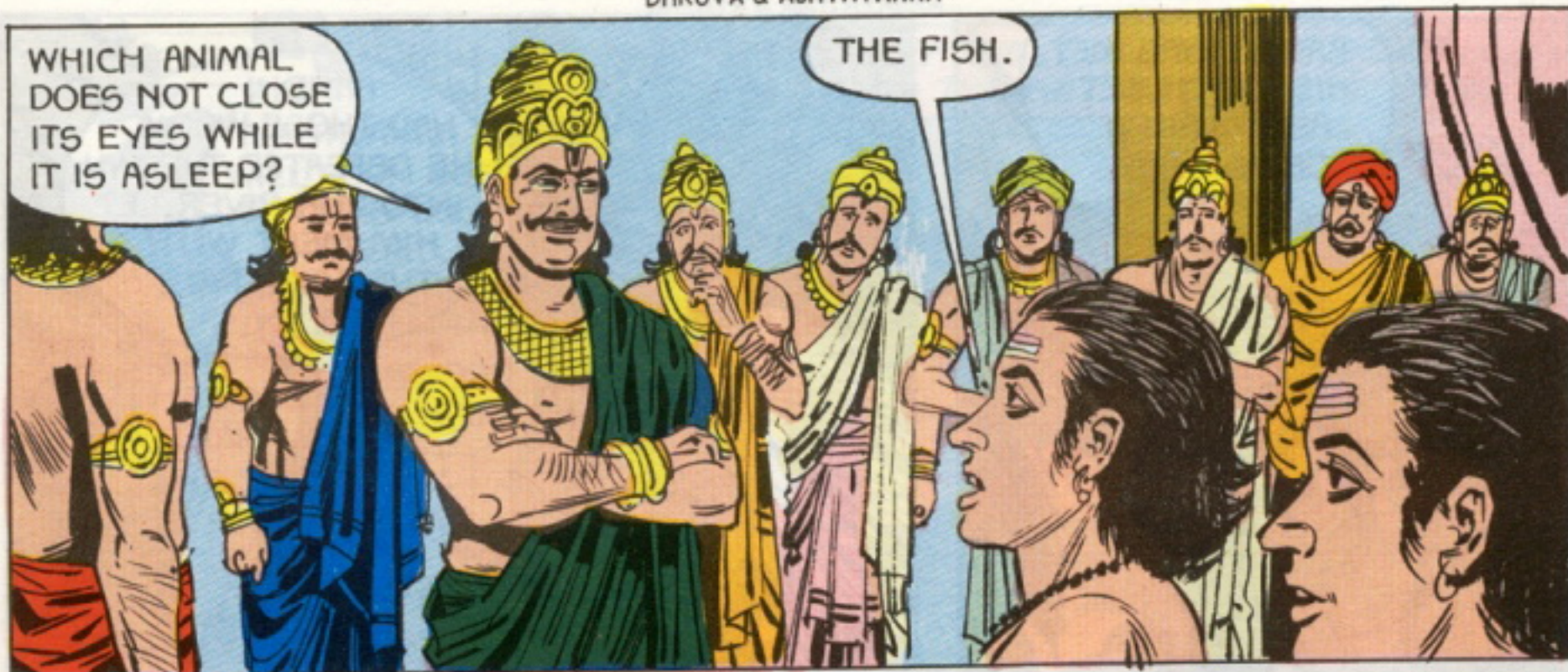
IF YOU CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS I'LL LET YOU MEET BANDHI.

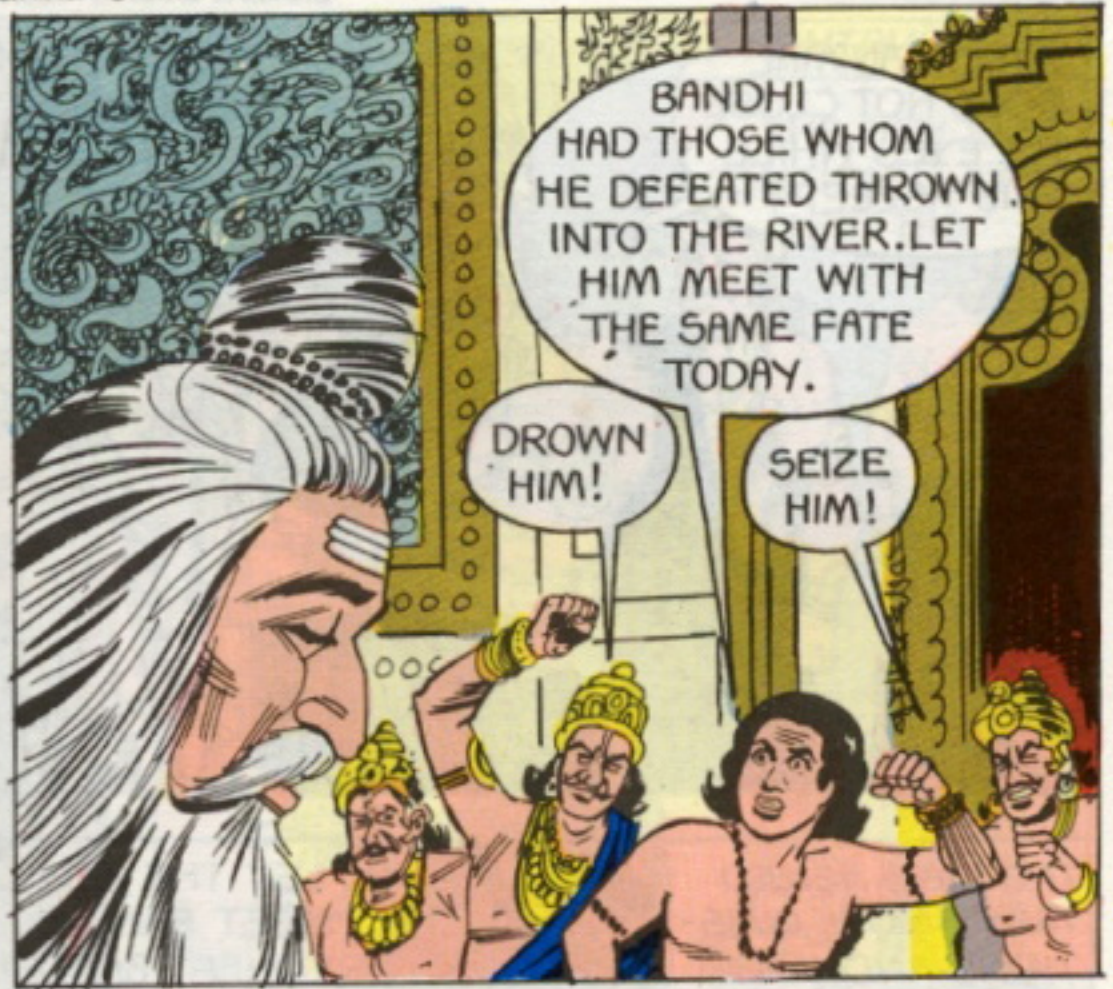


WHAT IS IT THAT DOES NOT MOVE WHEN BORN?

AN EGG.









NOW WITH YOUR PERMISSION, O KING, I WILL GO BACK TO MY FATHER'S KINGDOM.



THEN AS THEY WATCHED, BANDHI JUMPED INTO THE WATER...



KAHODA, ASHTAVAKRA AND SHWETAKETU RETURNED TO THE HERMITAGE. AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVED THERE, KAHODA TOOK SUJATA AND ASHTAVAKRA TO THE RIVER FLOWING NEAR BY.

ASHTAVAKRA, TAKE A QUICK PLUNGE INTO THE RIVER AND COME OUT.



ASHTAVAKRA DID AS HE WAS TOLD. A SECOND LATER,
AS HE EMERGED FROM THE WATER—



THEY WENT TO UDDALAKA.



UDDALAKA REJOICED TO SEE HIS GRANDSON'S BODY STRAIGHT AND TALL. THE
HERMITAGE ONCE AGAIN BECAME THE HAVEN OF PEACE IT USED TO BE.



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