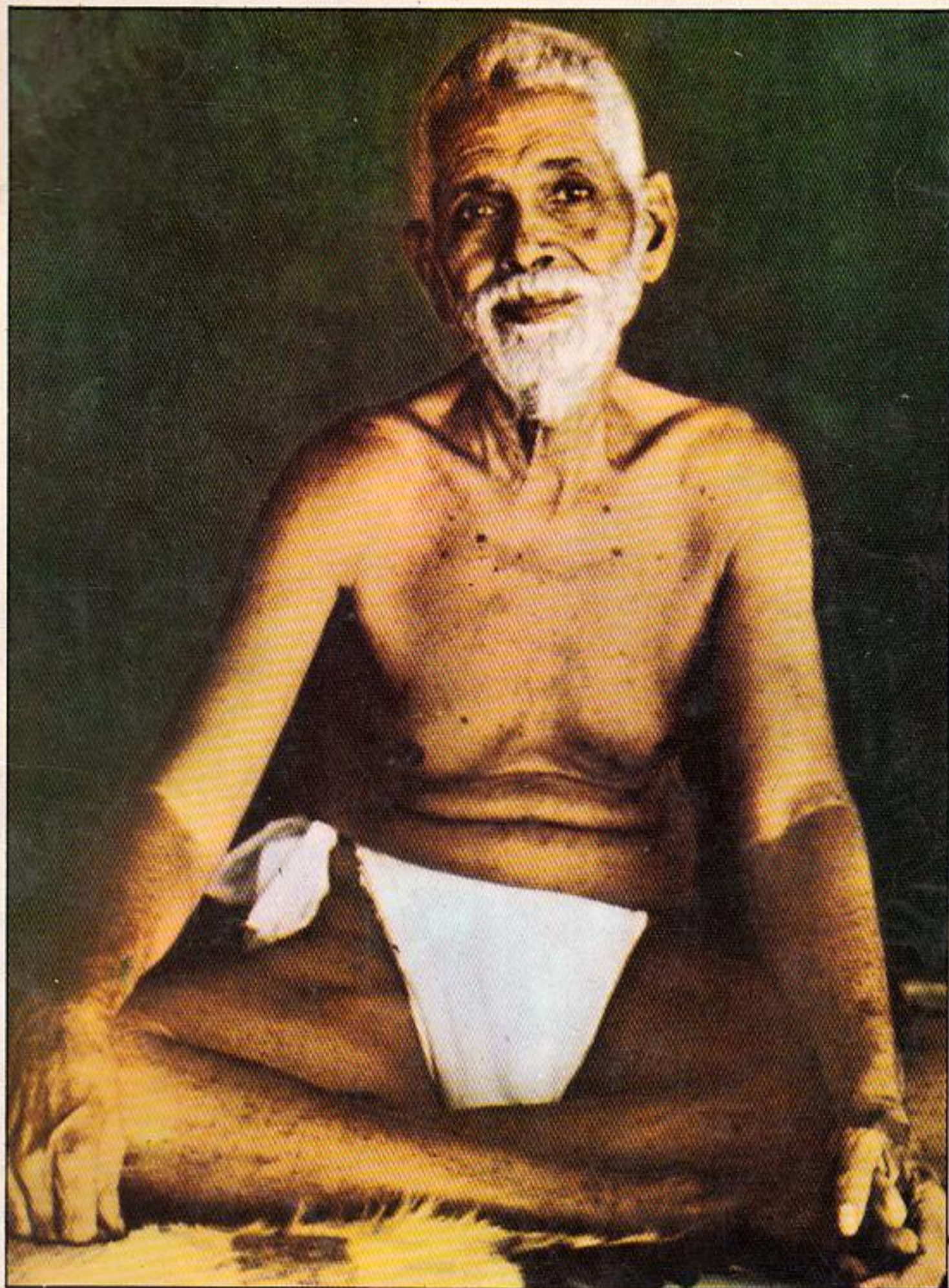




Ramana Maharshi

Vol. 628 Rs 25



Amar Chitra Katha: The Glorious Heritage of India



RAMANA MAHARSHI

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was a saint, mystic and *jnani*. He became spiritually awakened at the age of 16, after which he came to Tiruvannamalai where the sacred Arunachala Hill is located. At Tiruvannamalai thousands came to him, from all parts of the world, seeking spiritual guidance and solace. Even today seekers of truth find a haven at Sri Ramanasramam where he had lived for nearly three decades.

Script:

Gayatri Madan Dutt

Artworks:

G.R. Naik



AMAR CHITRA KATHA:

The Route to Your Roots

Over 80 million copies have been sold so far

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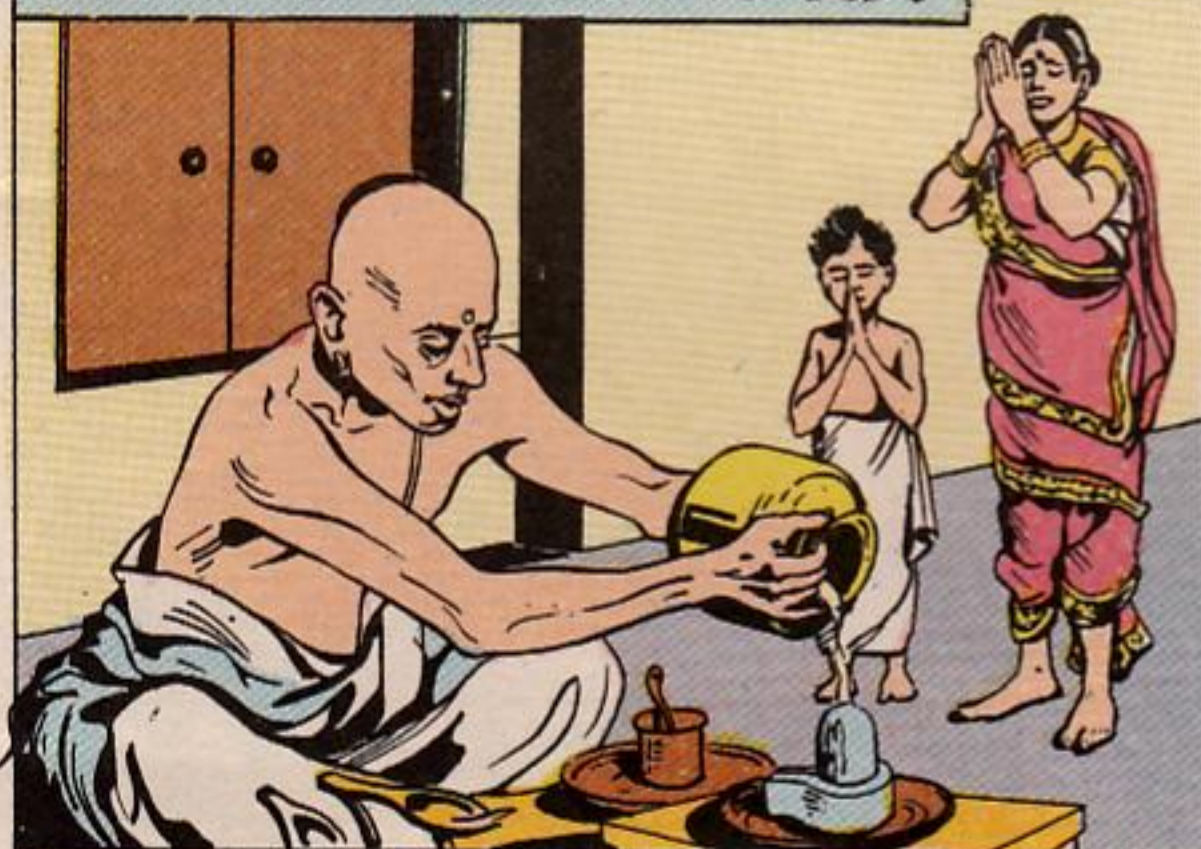
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RAMANA MAHARSHI

ON DECEMBER 30, 1879, IN THE VILLAGE OF TIRUCHUZHI, A CHILD WAS BORN TO SUNDARAM IYER AND HIS WIFE, ALAGAMMAL. IT WAS THE DAY OF ARDRA DARSHAN— THE DAY ON WHICH LORD SHIVA APPEARS BEFORE HIS DEVOTEES.



THE CHILD WAS NAMED VENKATARAMAN. HIS PARENTS WERE DEVOUT PEOPLE AND HE GREW UP IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVE AND DEVOTION TO GOD.



BUT SOON, TRAGEDY STRUCK THIS HAPPY FAMILY. SUNDARAM IYER DIED. ALAGAMMAL DECIDED TO SEND VENKATARAMAN AND HIS ELDER BROTHER TO MADURAI TO STAY WITH THEIR UNCLE.

NAGASWAMI, TAKE CARE OF VENKATARAMAN. MY SONS, KEEP OUT OF MISCHIEF. BE OF HELP TO YOUR AUNT.



YES, MOTHER, WE WILL.

AT MADURAI, VENKATARAMAN JOINED THE AMERICAN MISSION HIGH SCHOOL.



VENKATARAMAN WAS A STRONG, HIGH-SPIRITED BOY.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, DEAR?

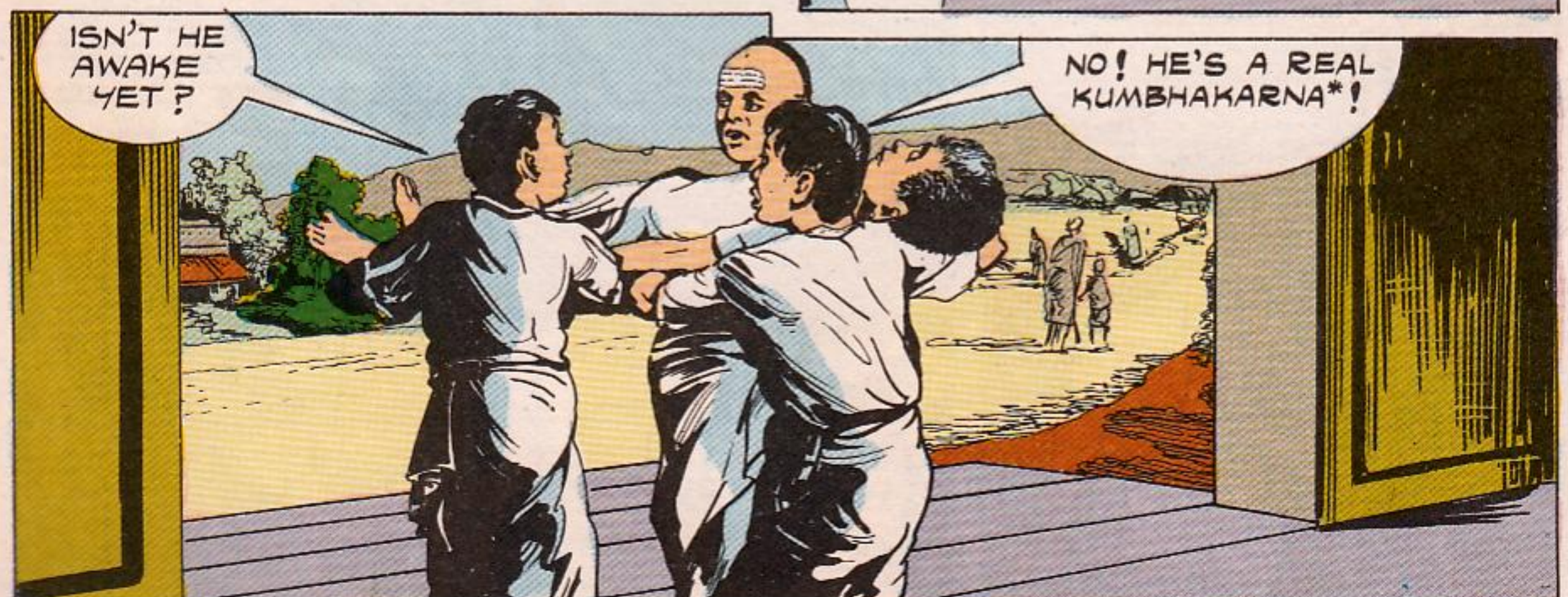
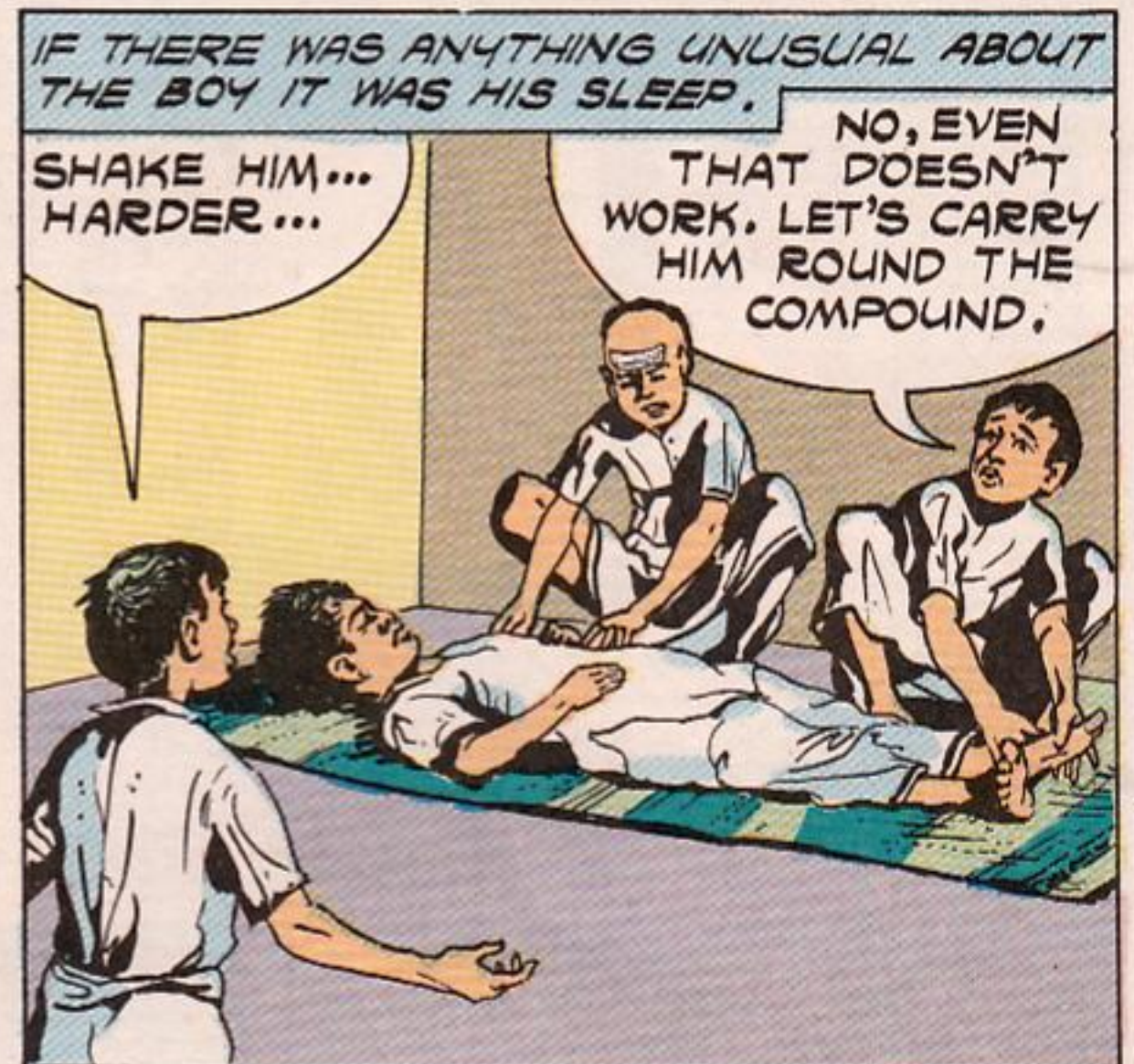
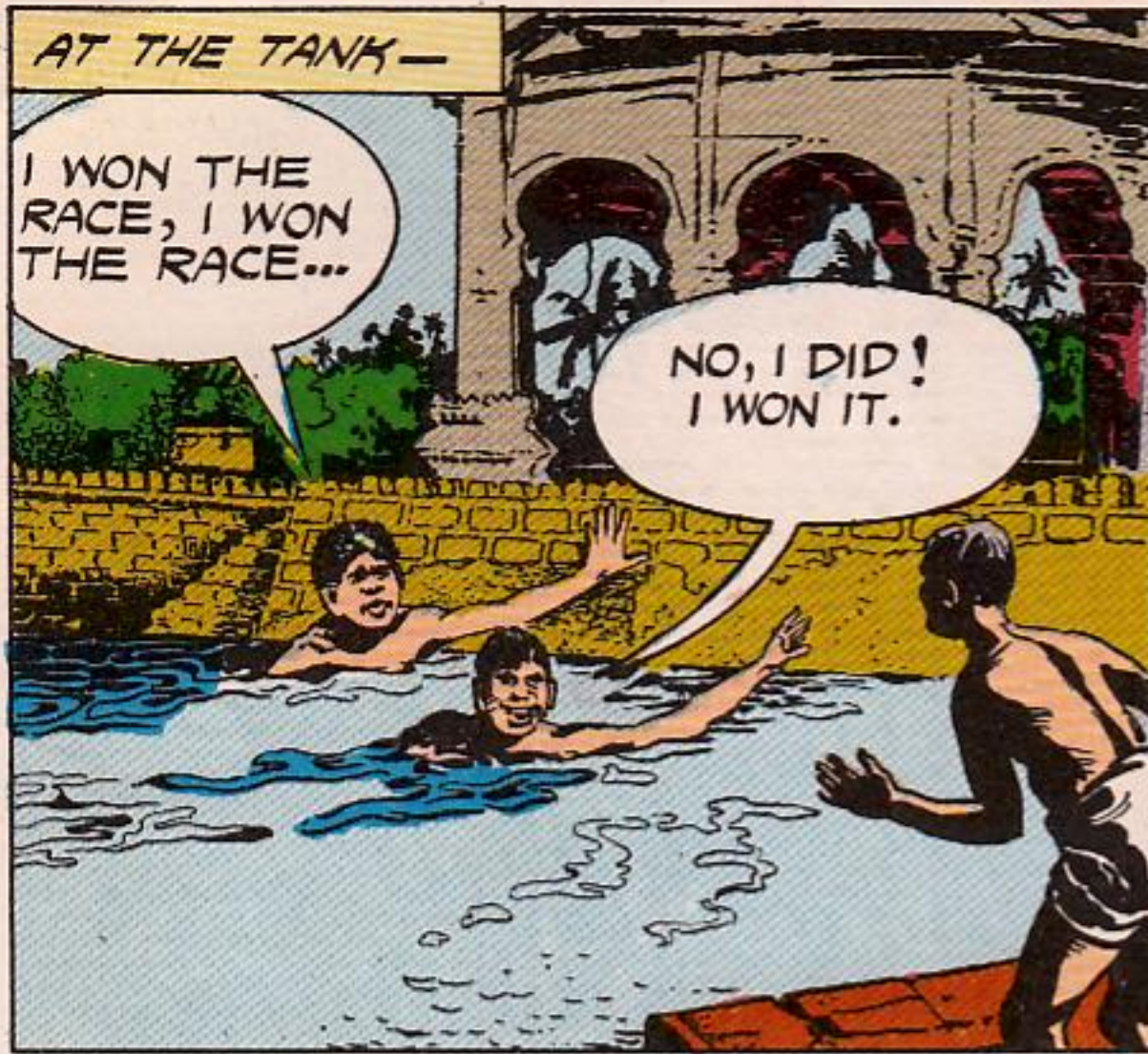
TO SWIM IN THE MARIAMMAN TANK.



BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR LESSONS?

LATER, AUNT. MY FRIENDS ARE WAITING FOR ME...





* THE BROTHER OF RAVANA WHO SLEPT FOR MONTHS AT A STRETCH

AND THEN, ONE DAY, A RELATIVE CAME TO VISIT THEM AT MADURAI.

UNCLE, WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?

I COME FROM ARUNACHALA.



ARUNACHALA!



HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF IT BEFORE? IT IS ANOTHER NAME FOR THE TEMPLE-TOWN OF TIRUVANNAMALAI!

I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE ONE AND THE SAME PLACE.



VENKATARAMAN HAD HEARD THIS NAME BEFORE, BUT ONLY NOW DID HE REALISE THAT IT WAS NOT SOME LEGENDARY CITY, BUT AN ACTUAL PLACE ON EARTH! THE NAME TOUCHED A DEEP CHORD IN HIM.



SOME TIME LATER, VENKATARAMAN CAME UPON A BOOK.

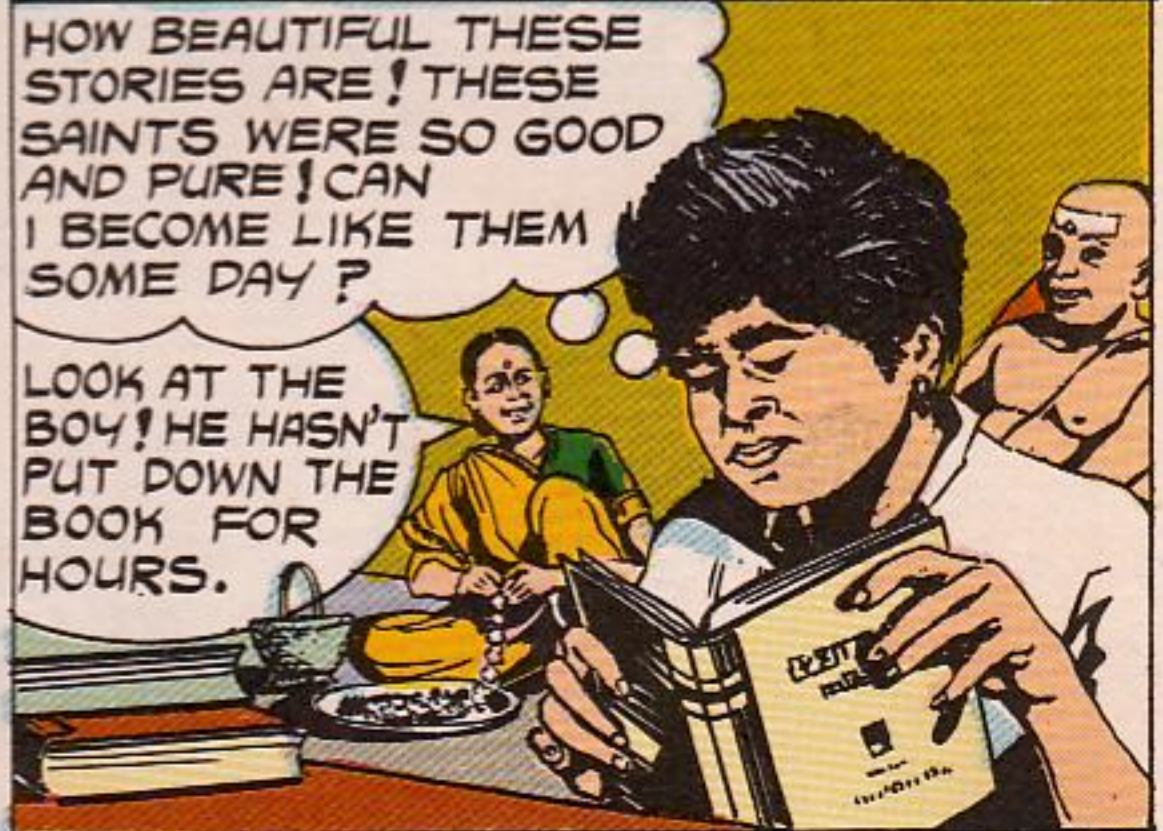
WHAT BOOK IS THIS? THE PERIAPURANAM? I WONDER WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT.



THE PERIAPURANAM IS ABOUT THE LIVES OF THE SIXTY-THREE GREAT SHIVA SAINTS, THE NAYANMARS. VENKATARAMAN READ THROUGH THE BOOK.

HOW BEAUTIFUL THESE STORIES ARE! THESE SAINTS WERE SO GOOD AND PURE! CAN I BECOME LIKE THEM SOME DAY?

LOOK AT THE BOY! HE HASN'T PUT DOWN THE BOOK FOR HOURS.

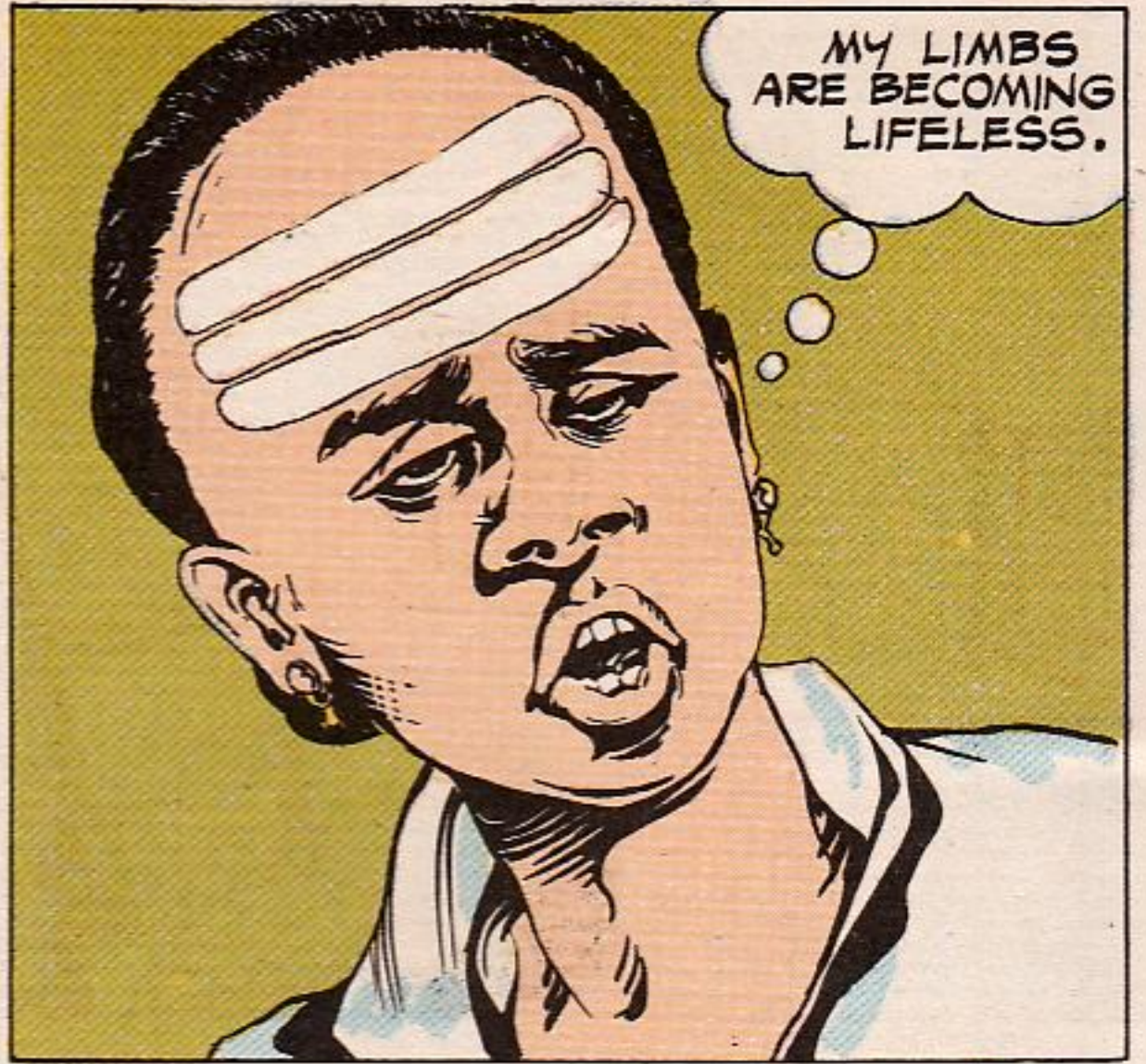


THE THOUGHT OF ARUNACHALA AND THE LIVES OF THE SHAIVA SAINTS MADE VENKATARAMAN A DIFFERENT BOY. ONE DAY, IT WAS JULY 16, 1896, HE WAS ALL ALONE AT HOME, WHEN, SUDDENLY—

WHAT IS THIS? WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME? I CANNOT BREATHE. MY HANDS HAVE BECOME NUMB...



MY LIMBS ARE BECOMING LIFELESS.



I AM DYING? BUT WHAT... WHAT IS THIS THING—DEATH?



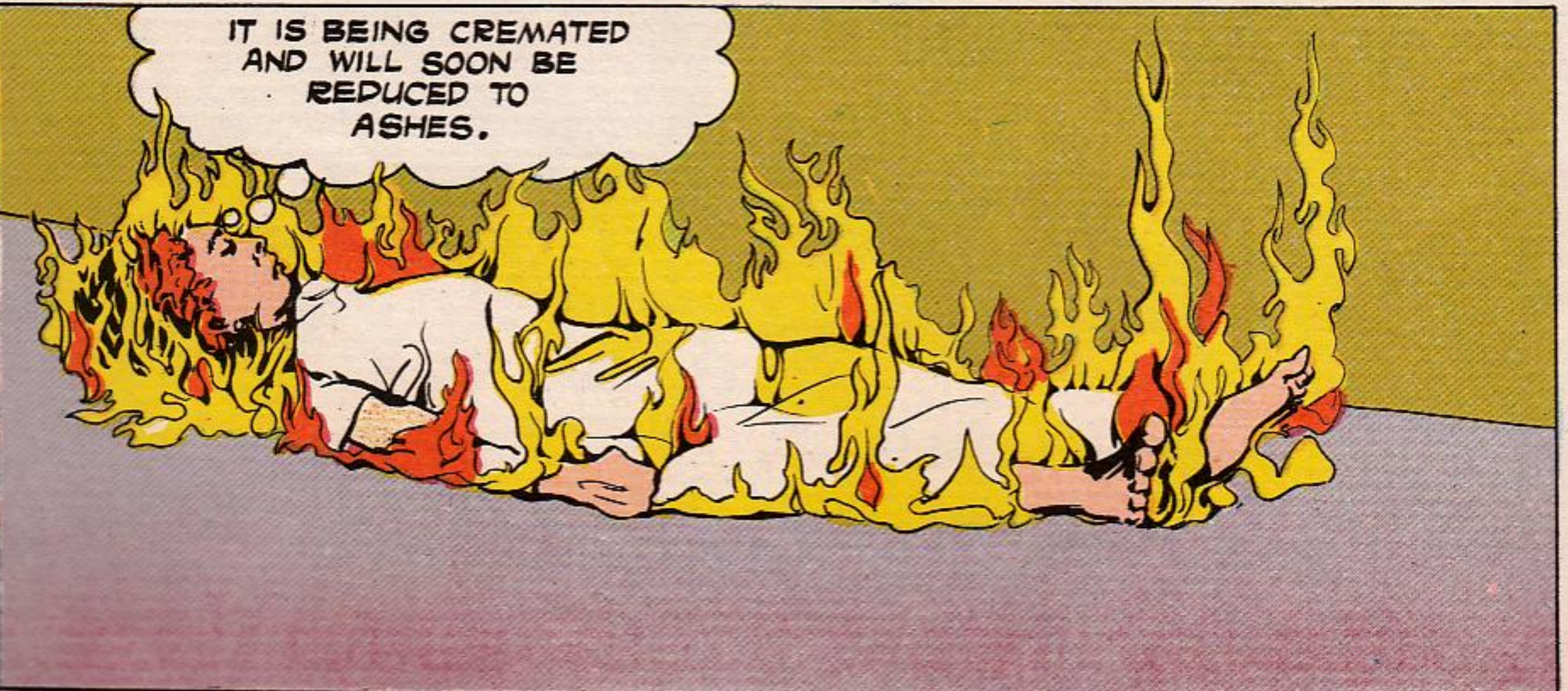
THE ENERGY THAT DRAINED OUT OF HIS LIMBS, CONVERGED ON THIS QUESTION WITH SUCH INTENSITY...

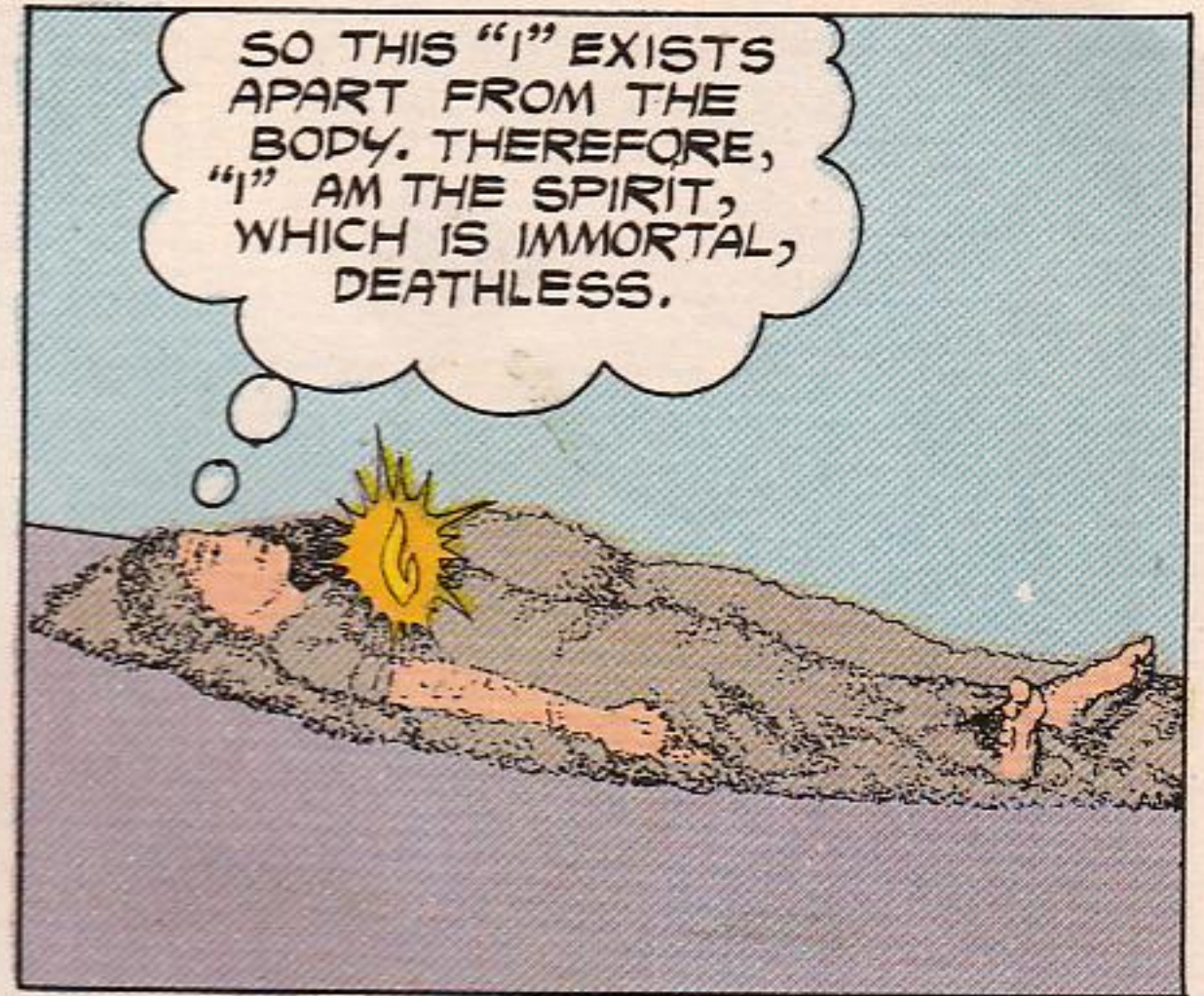
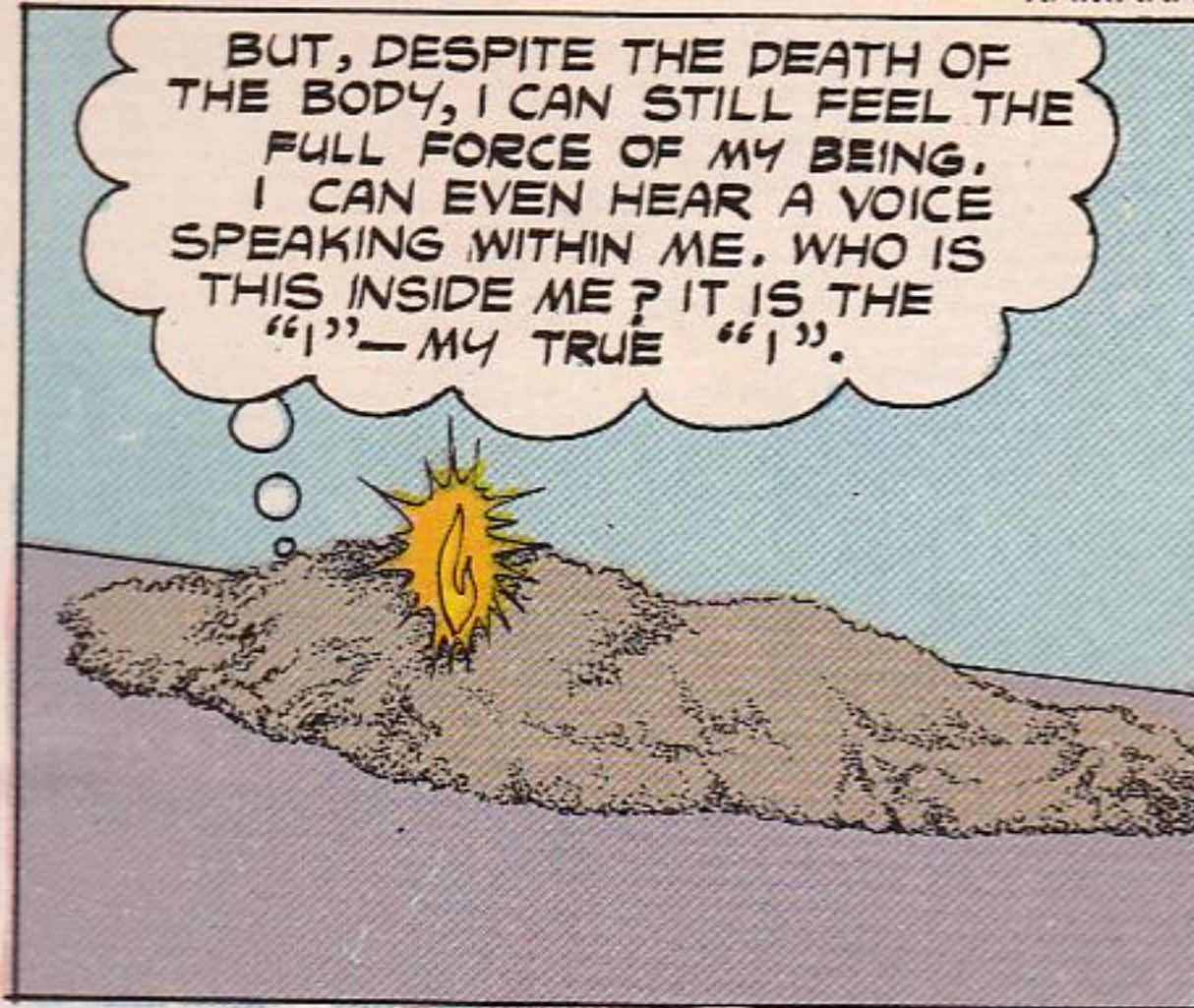
... THAT IN LIFE ITSELF, DEATH CAME TO VENKATARAMAN AS A DIRECT EXPERIENCE.

THIS BODY IS DEAD.

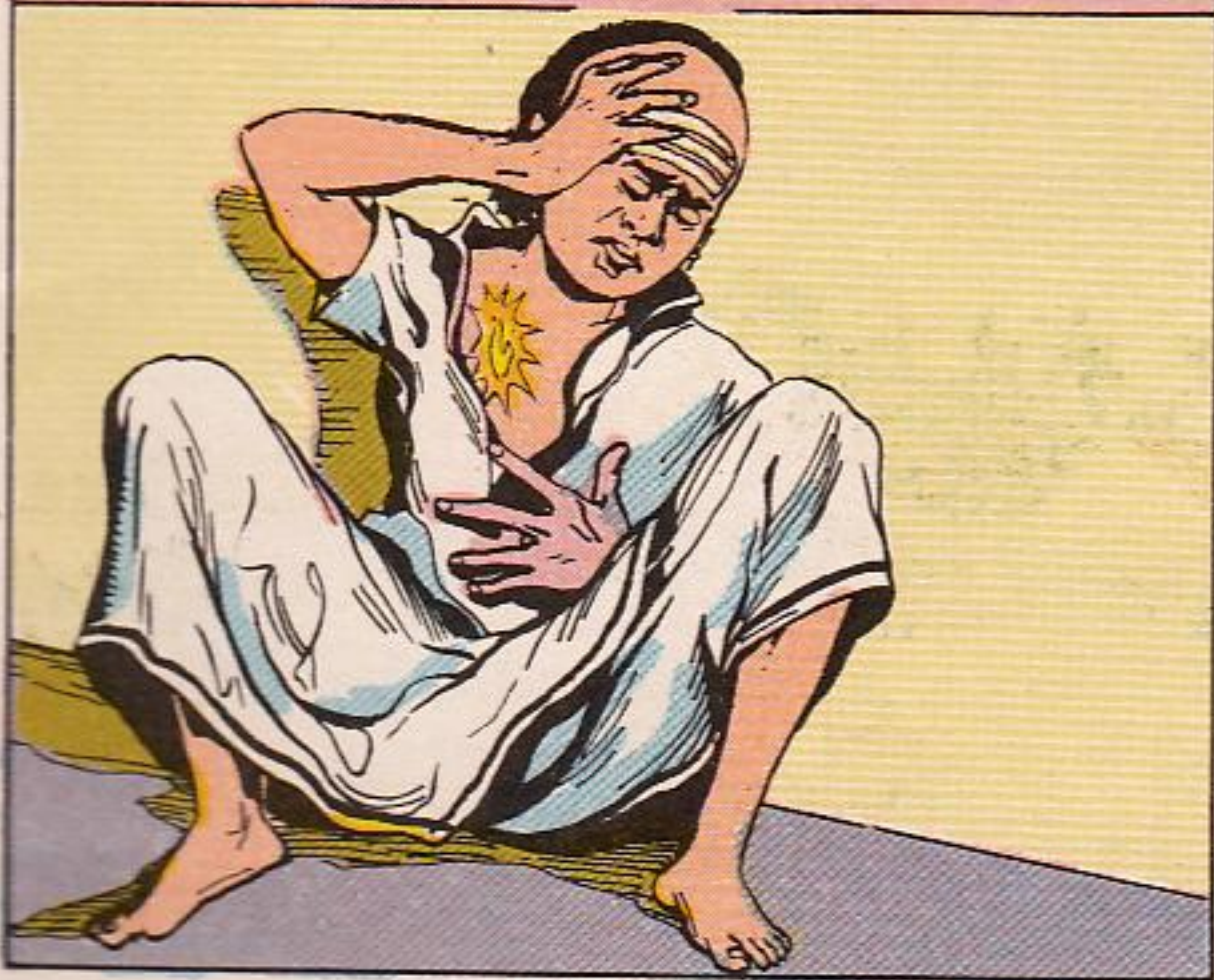


IT IS BEING CREMATED AND WILL SOON BE REDUCED TO ASHES.

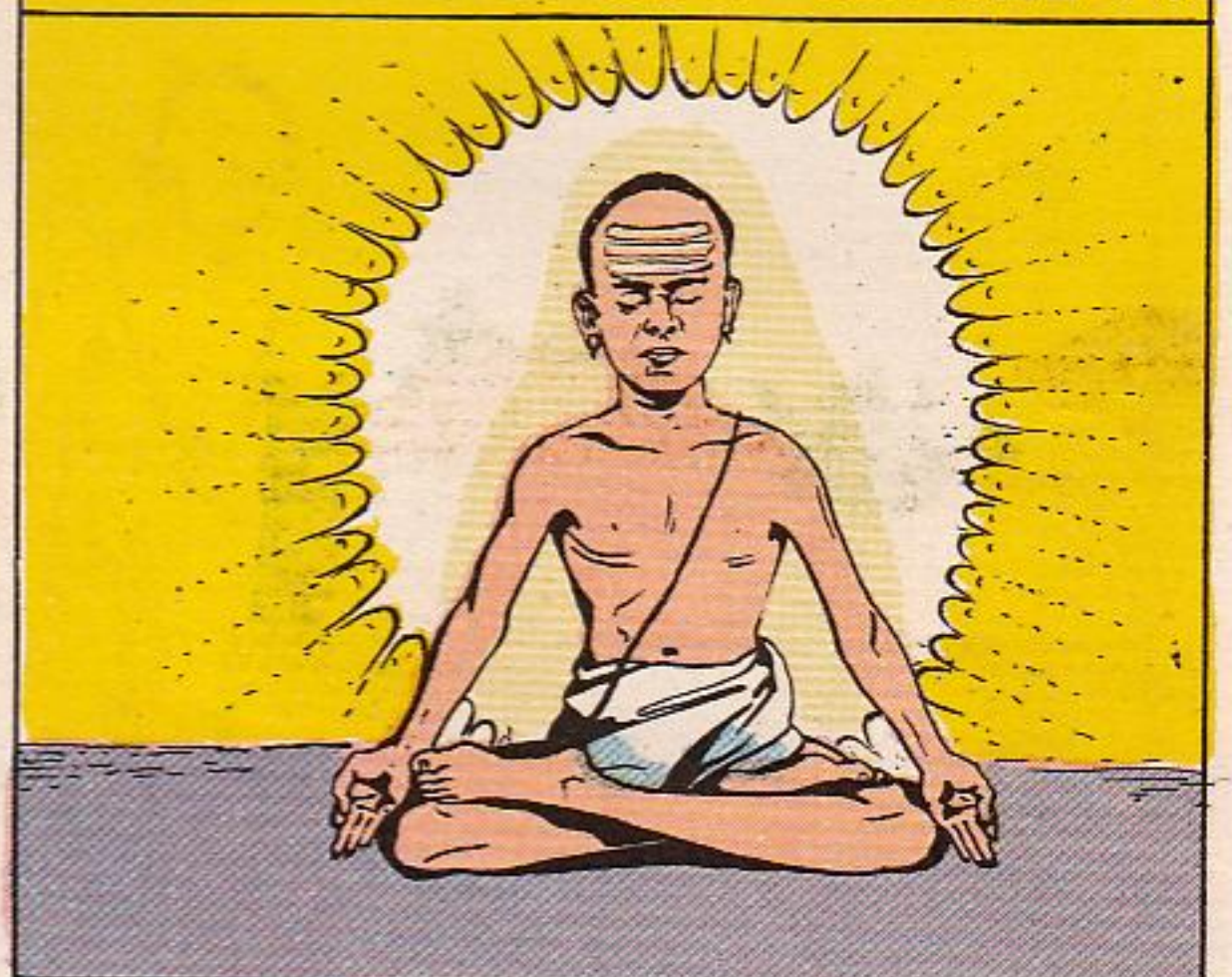




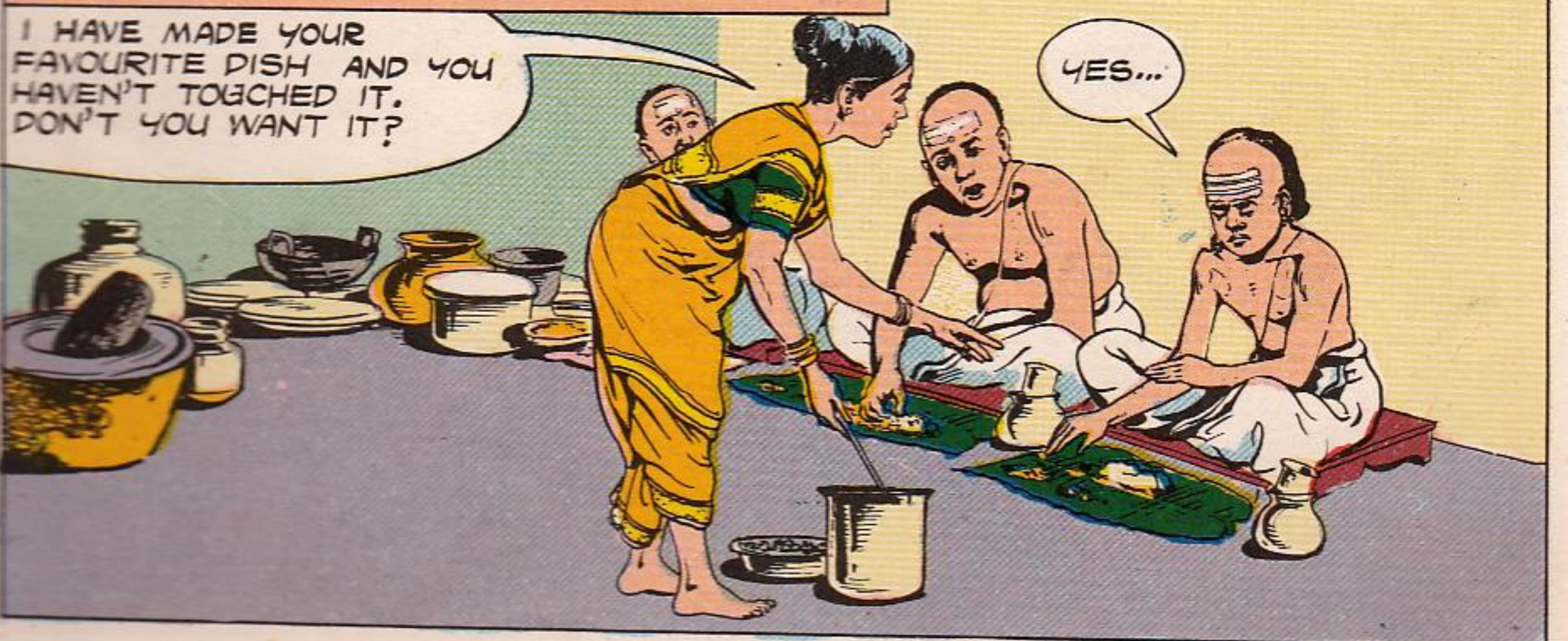
THEN THE BLOOD FLOWED THROUGH HIS LIMBS AGAIN AND HE BEGAN TO BREATHE. THE DEATH EXPERIENCE WAS OVER.



BUT DURING THAT INTENSE HALF-HOUR, THE PLAYFUL YOUNG SCHOOLBOY HAD ATTAINED REALISATION OF THE TRUE "I".



NOTHING COULD BE THE SAME AGAIN FOR VENKATARAMAN. EVERYONE NOTICED THE DIFFERENCE IN HIM.



AND VENKATARAMAN QUIETLY ATE THE FOOD ON HIS LEAF.

WON'T YOU HAVE SOME MORE?

NO...



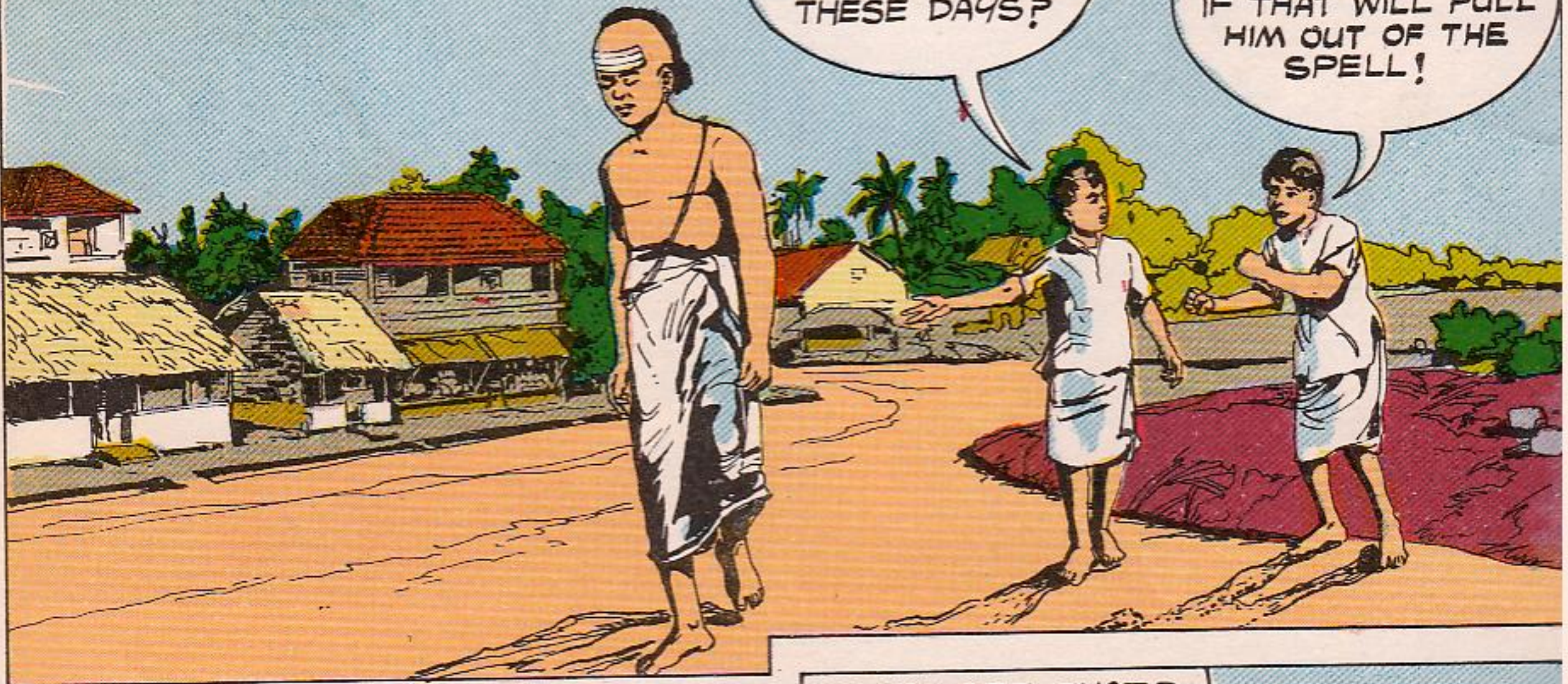
I AM WORRIED. VENKATARAMAN HAS CHANGED. HE RARELY GOES OUT TO PLAY. HE SITS IN A CORNER, LOST IN THOUGHT.



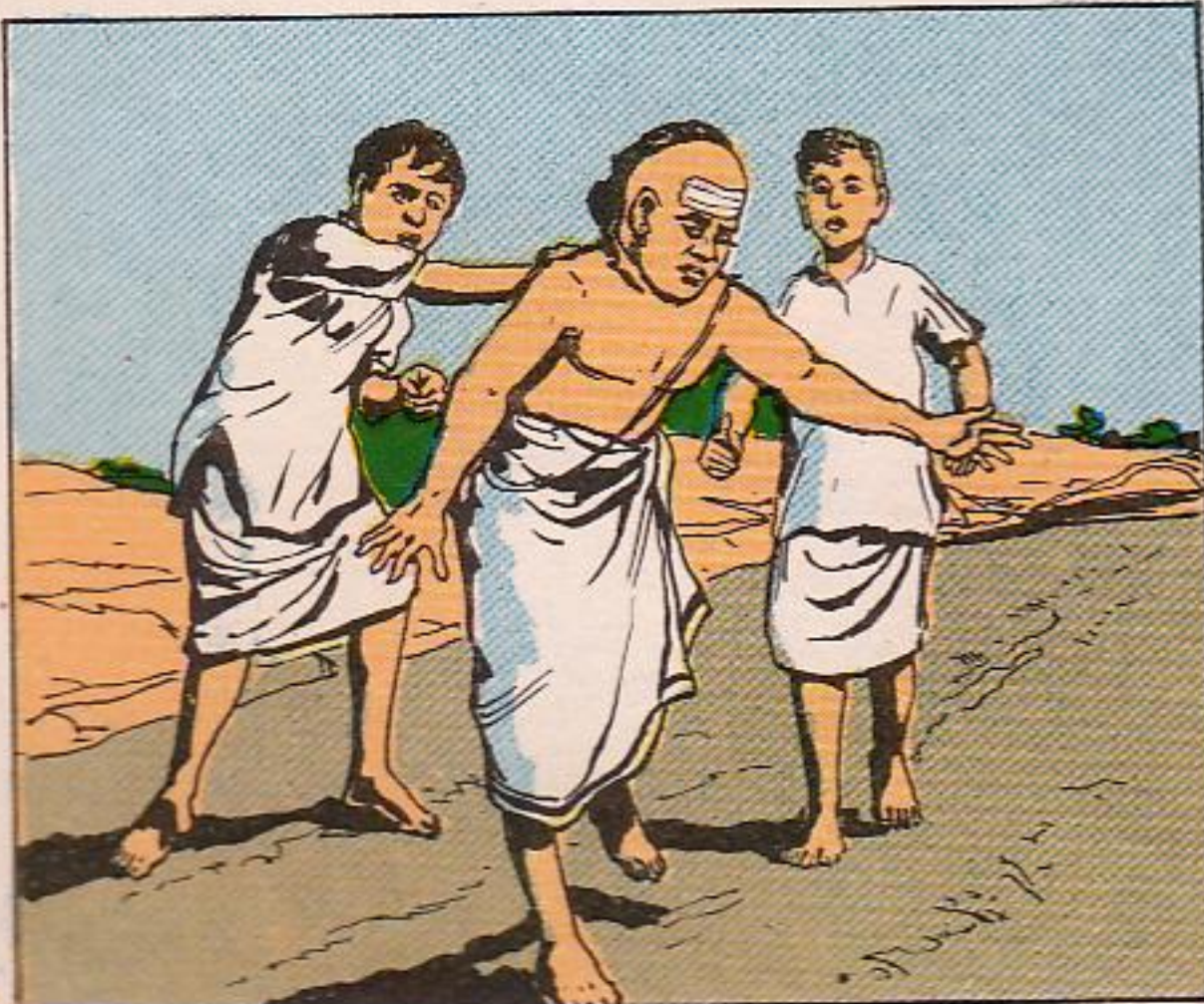
HIS FRIENDS, TOO, NOTICED THE CHANGE.

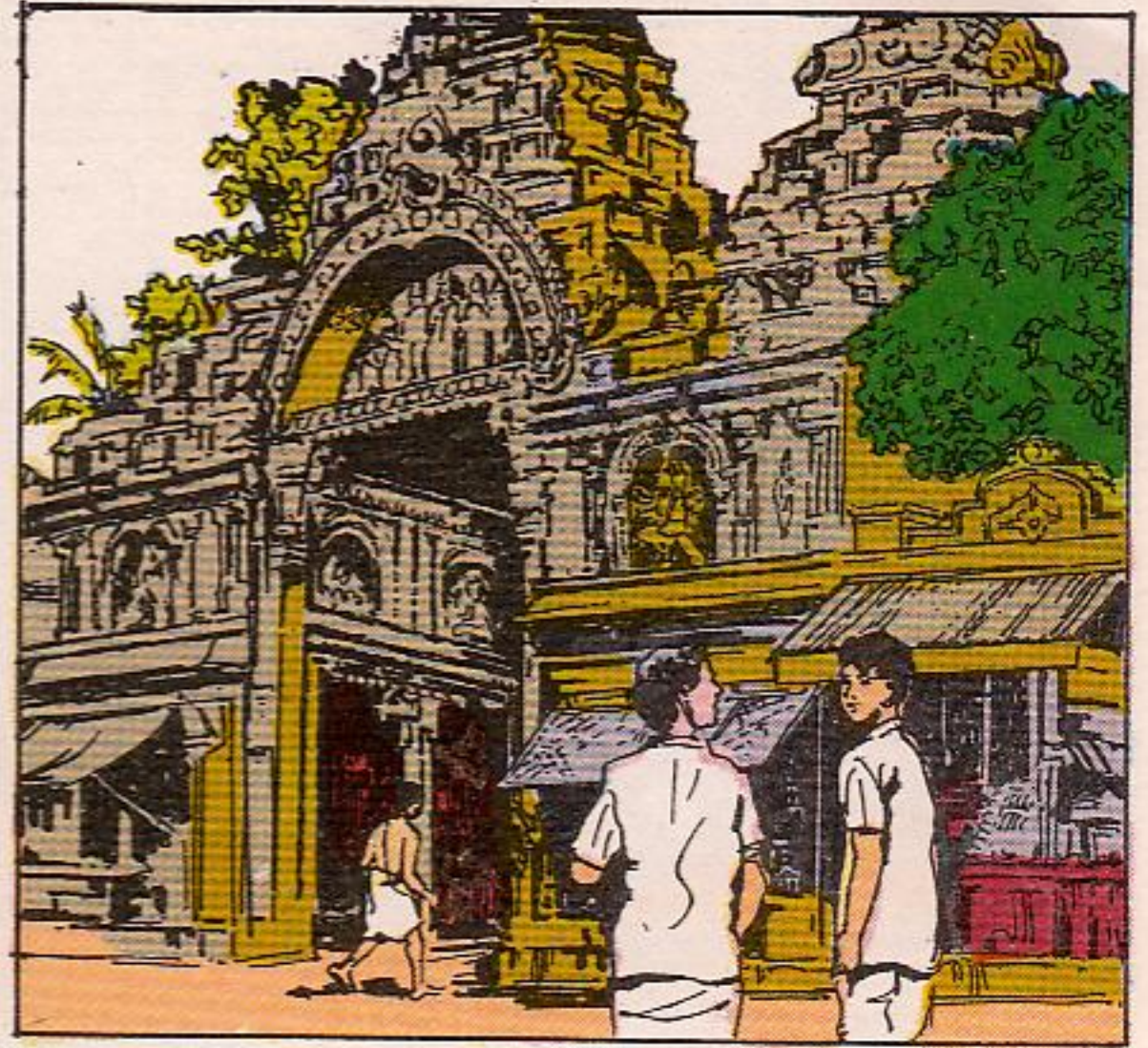
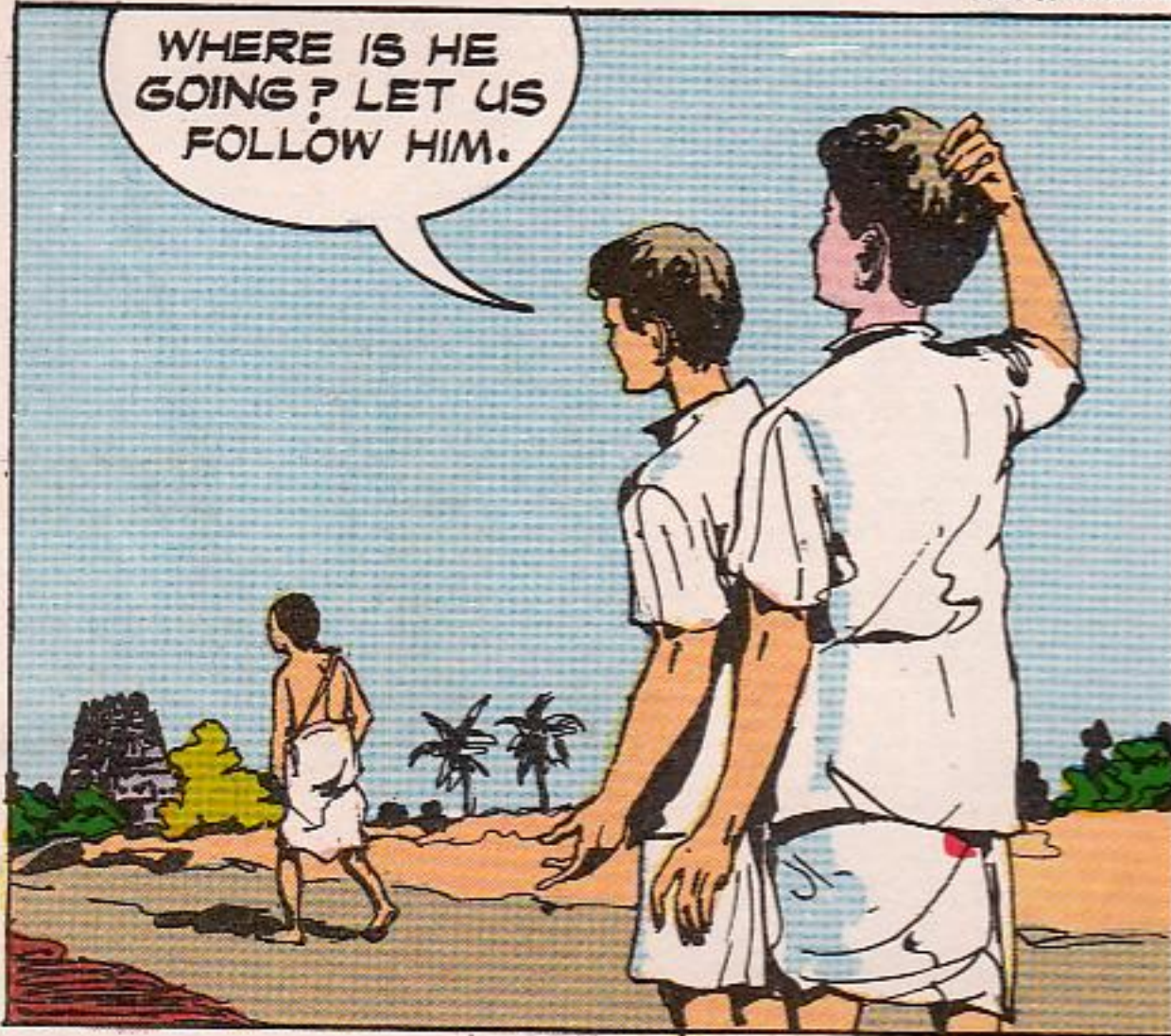
WHY DOES VENKATARAMAN LOOK SO DREAMY THESE DAYS?

I'LL GIVE HIM A GOOD PUSH. LET'S SEE IF THAT WILL PULL HIM OUT OF THE SPELL!

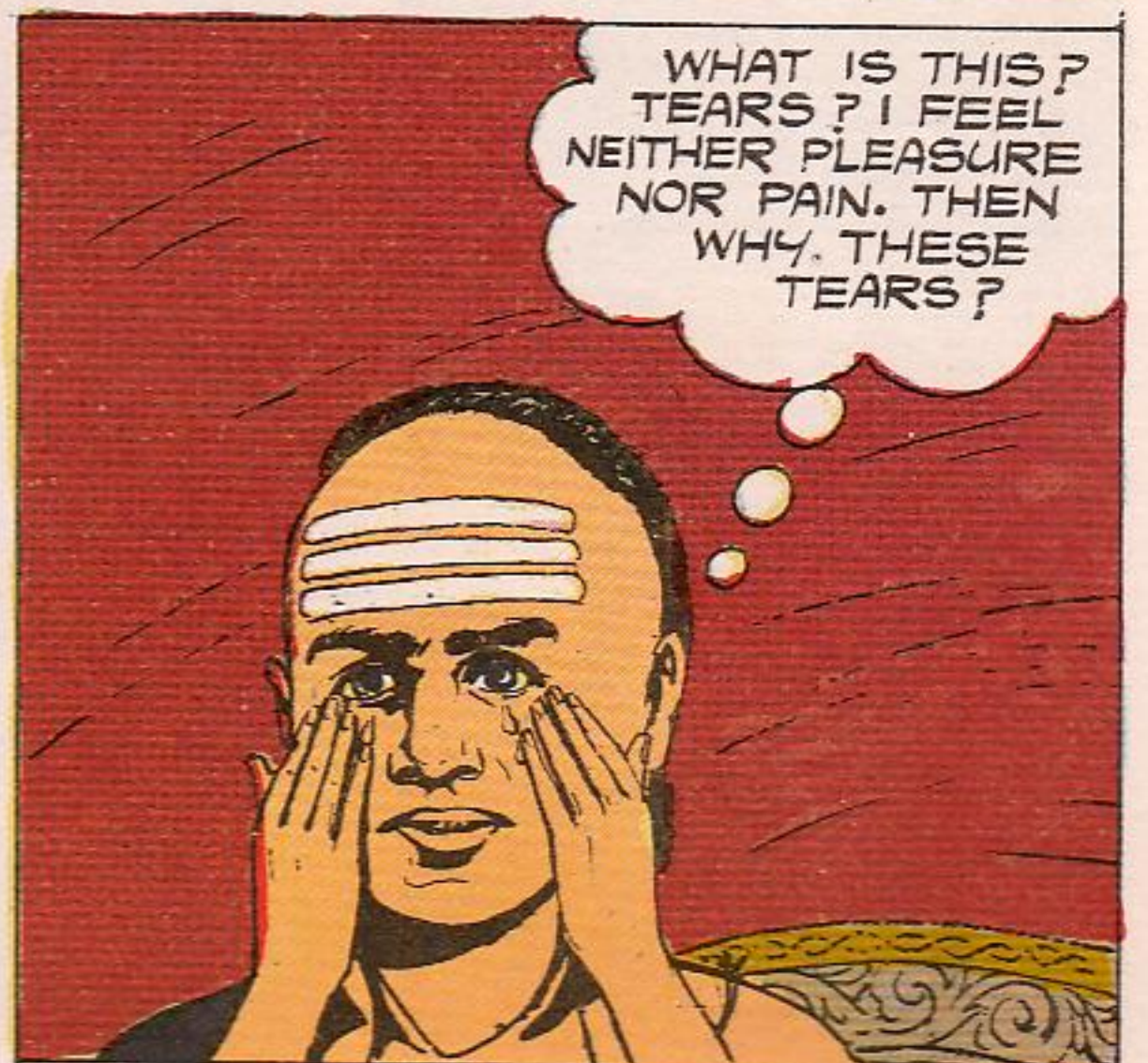
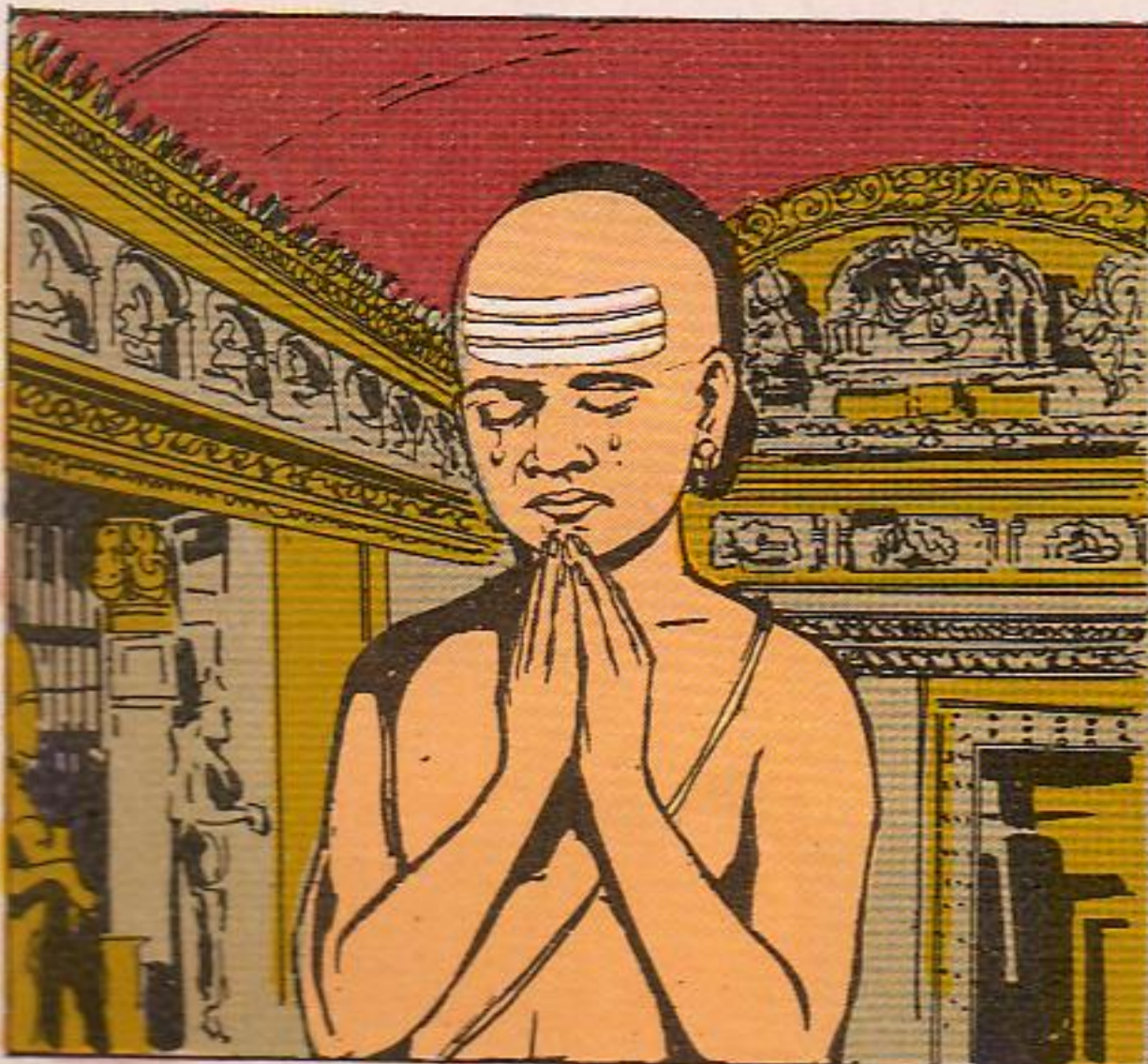
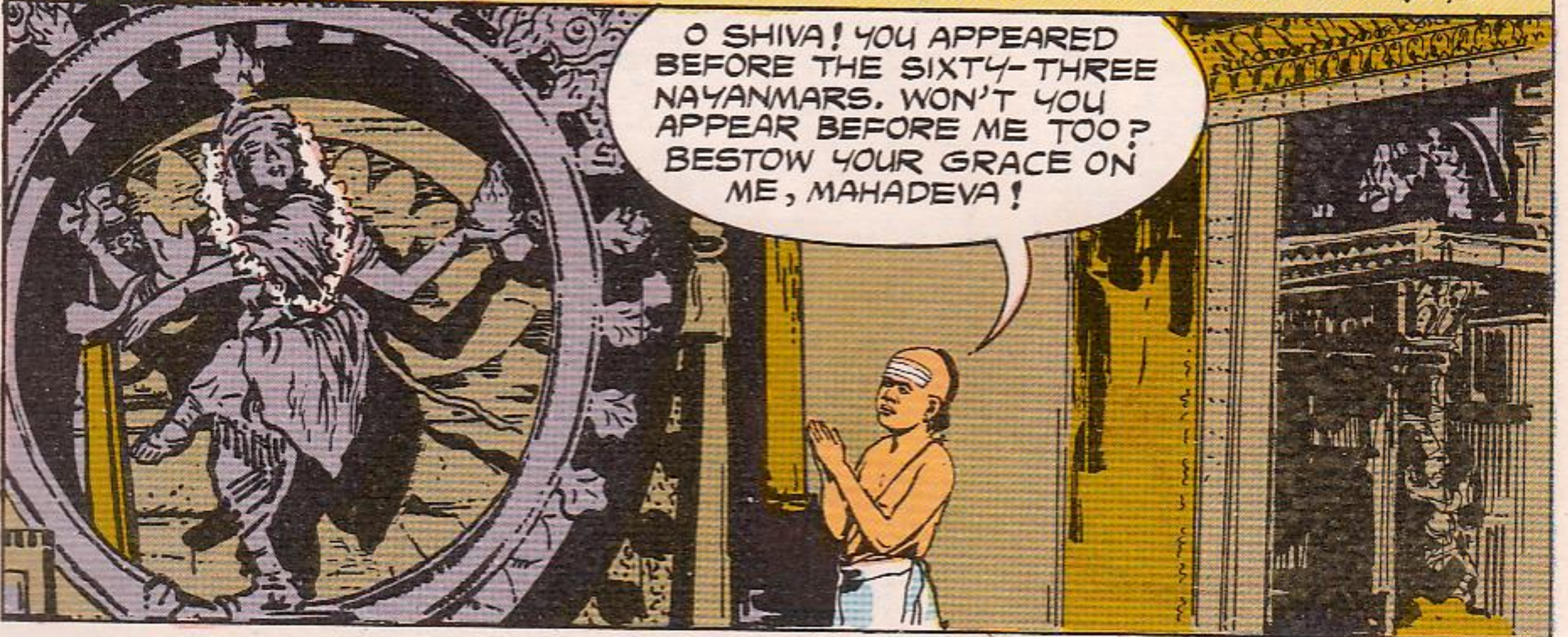


DID YOU SEE THAT? HE JUST WALKED ON AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED!

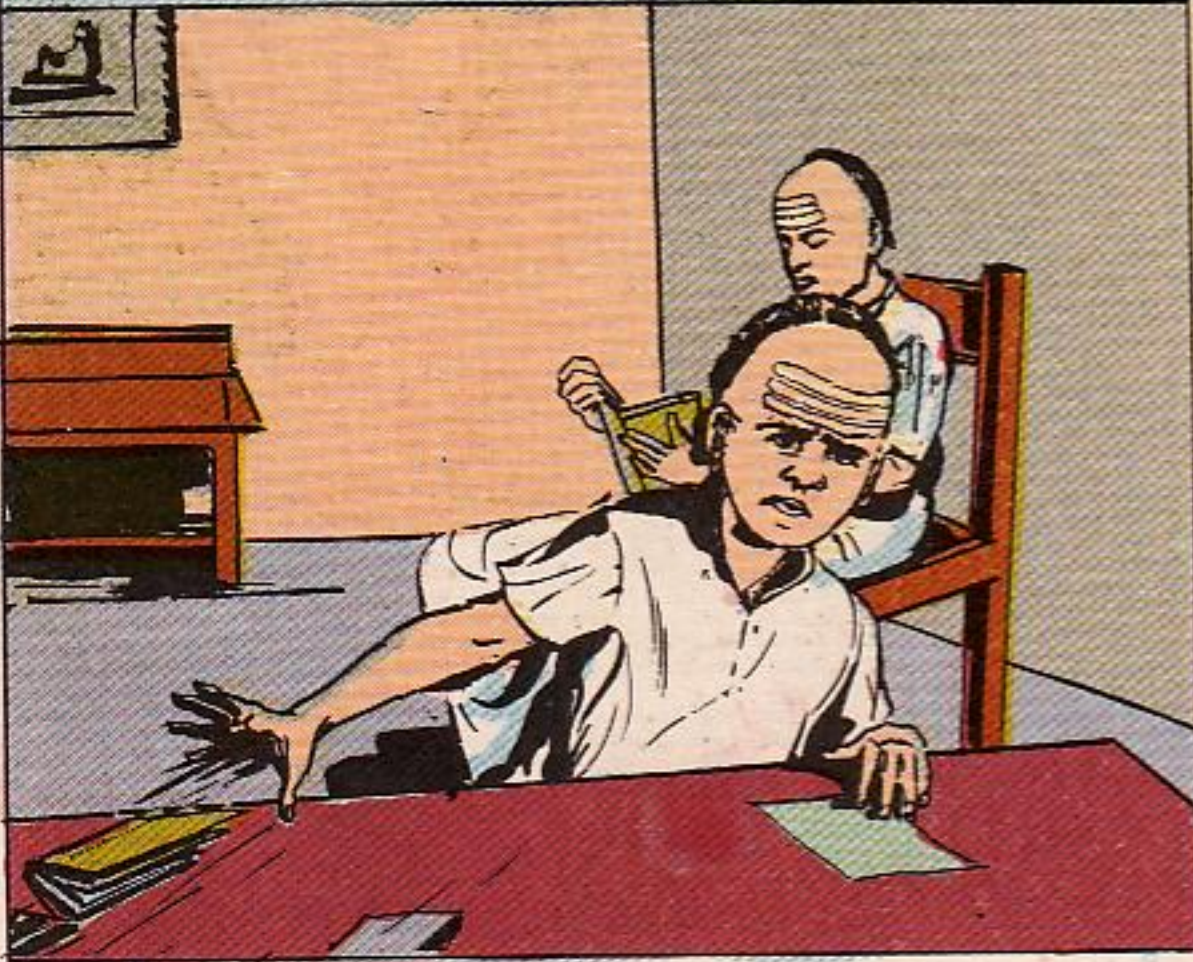




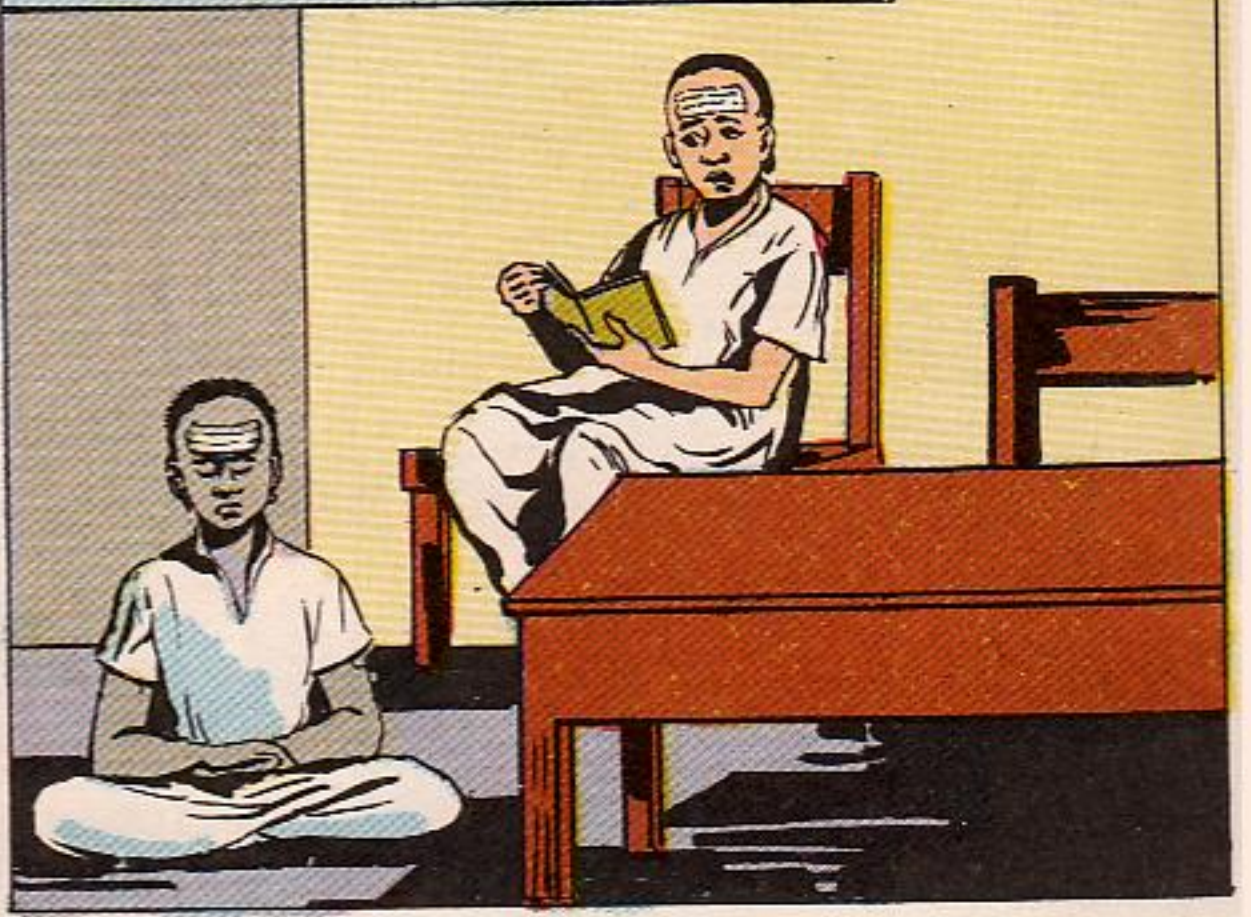
THE SAME BOY WHO WENT TO THE TEMPLE FOR PLAY, NOW WENT THERE TO PRAY.



SO ENGROSSED WAS HE IN HIS INNER LIFE THAT HE OFTEN CAST AWAY HIS BOOKS...



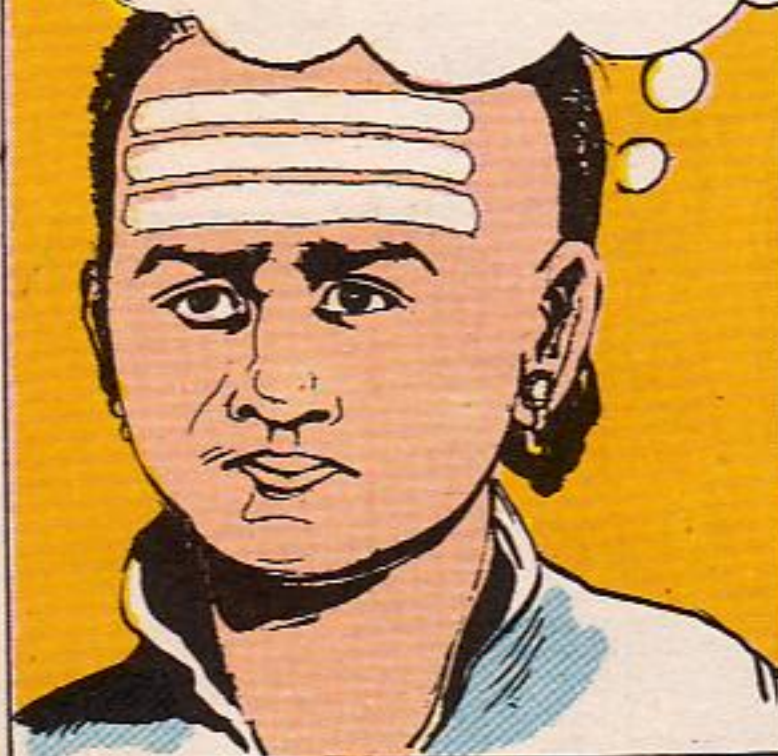
...AND BEGAN INSTEAD TO MEDITATE. THAT WAS WHEN NAGASWAMI, HIS ELDER BROTHER, LOST HIS PATIENCE.



IF YOU WANT TO BEHAVE LIKE A SAGE, WHY DON'T YOU BECOME ONE?



HE IS RIGHT. WHY DO I CONTINUE TO LIVE THIS KIND OF LIFE, WHEN MY HEART IS IN ARUNACHALA?

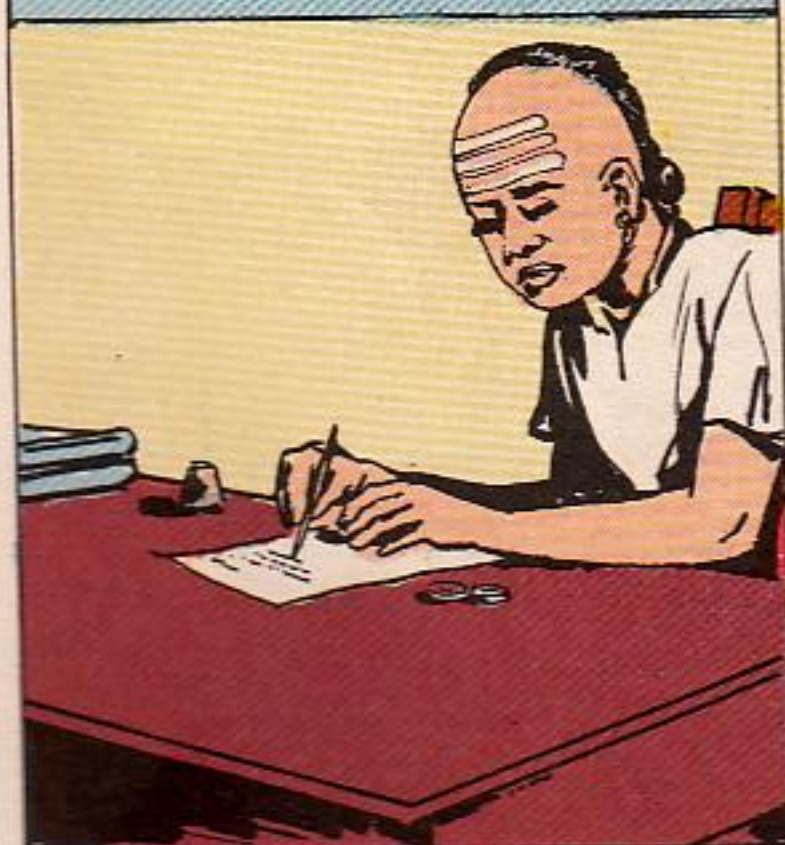


VENKATARAMAN QUICKLY LOOKED UP A MAP.

HERE IS TIRUVANNAMALAI! MY ARUNACHALA! TRAINS DON'T SEEM TO GO THERE. THE NEAREST STATION IS... TINDIVANAM.

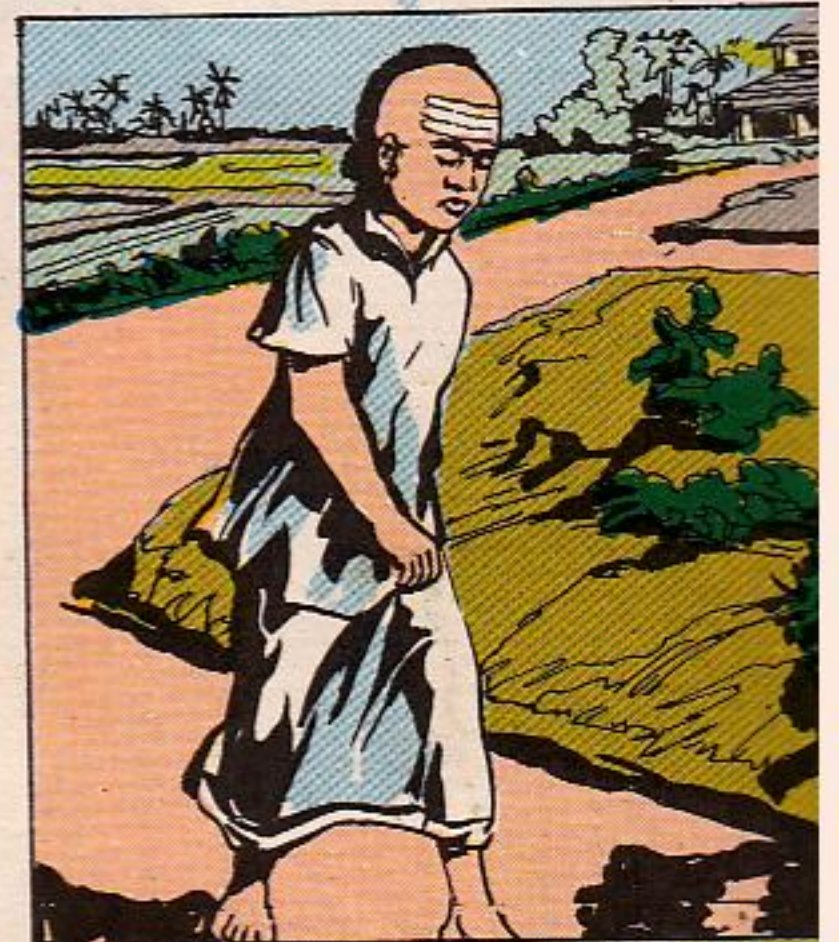


HE TOOK THREE RUPEES FROM THE FIVE RUPEES WHICH HE HAD BEEN GIVEN TO PAY HIS BROTHER'S COLLEGE FEES AND THEN WROTE OUT A NOTE.



I have set out in search of my Father and his command. Let no one grieve over this act, and let no money be spent in search of this. Your college fees have not been paid. Rs. 2 are kept with this note.

THE LETTER BEGAN WITH AN 'I', BUT SOON PASSED INTO 'THIS'. AND THERE WAS NO SIGNATURE.



VENKATARAMAN LEFT MADURAI FOR ARUNACHALAM ON AUGUST 29, 1896.

GIVE ME
A TICKET TO
TINDIVANAM,
PLEASE.

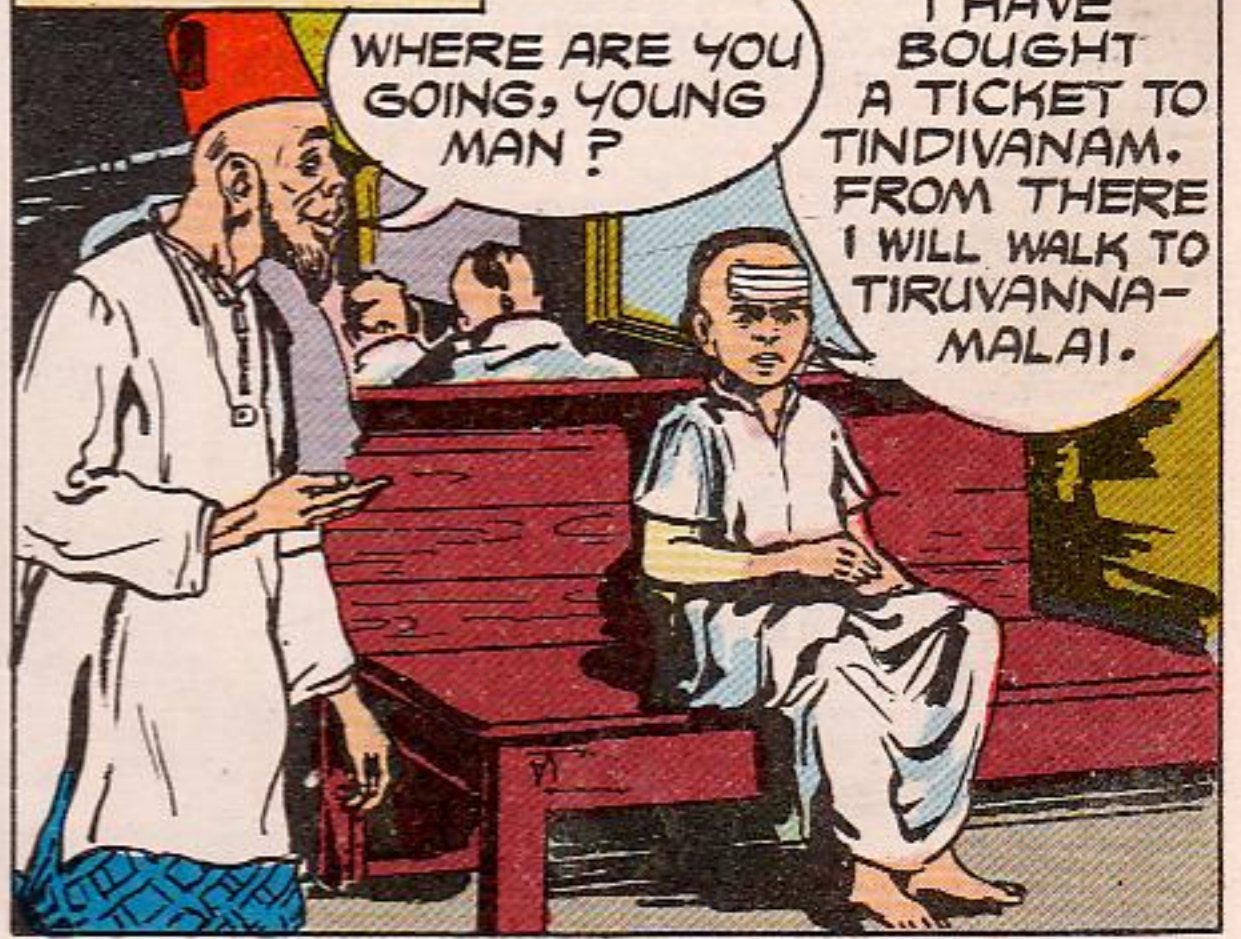
IT WILL COST
YOU TWO RUPEES
AND THIRTEEN
ANNAS*.



VENKATARAMAN BOARDED THE TRAIN.
A LITTLE LATER, A MAULVI GOT INTO THE
COMPARTMENT.

WHERE ARE YOU
GOING, YOUNG
MAN?

I HAVE
BOUGHT
A TICKET TO
TINDIVANAM.
FROM THERE
I WILL WALK TO
TIRUVANNA-
MALAI.



BUT THERE IS A NEW
LINE FROM VILLUPURAM
THAT GOES PAST
TIRUVANNAMALAI.

THANK YOU FOR
THE INFORMATION.
THEN I WILL
GET DOWN AT
VILLUPURAM.



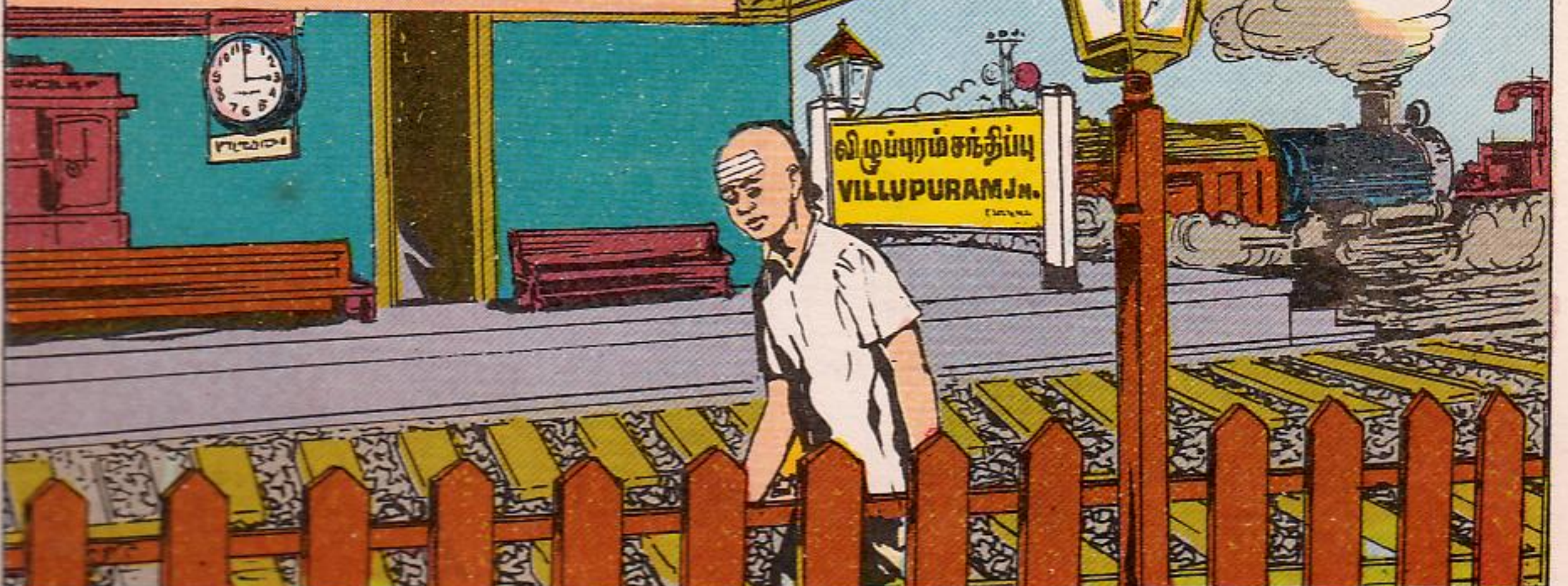
LATER, AS THE TRAIN WAS PULLING OUT—

WHERE IS THE KIND-HEARTED
MAULVI? I THOUGHT HE
WOULD BE TRAVELLING
WITH ME.



BUT THE MAULVI HAD DISAPPEARED. IT
SEEMED AS IF HE HAD COME TO GUIDE
VENKATARAMAN ON HIS JOURNEY.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, VENKATARAMAN
GOT OFF AT VILLUPURAM. BUT HE HAD NO
MONEY LEFT. SO HE BEGAN TO WALK.



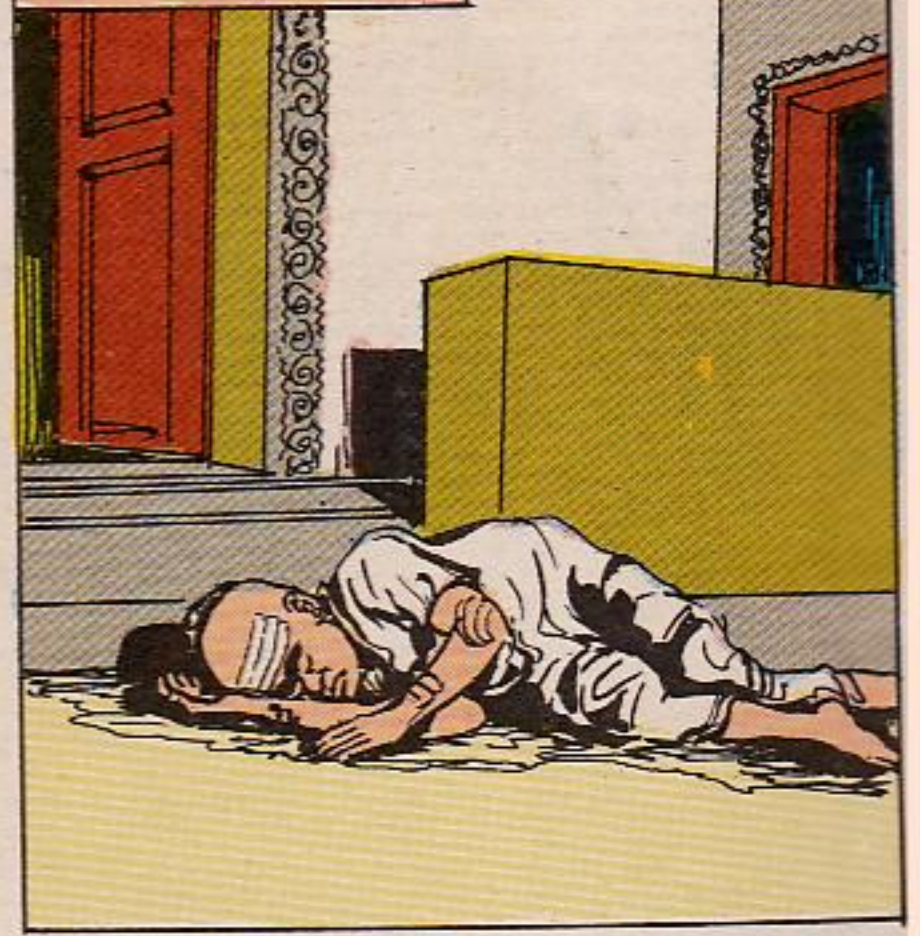
* AN ANNA IS EQUAL TO SIX PAISE.

BY THE TIME HE REACHED THE VILLAGE OF KILUR, HE WAS EXHAUSTED.

ARUNACHALA!
ARUNACHALA!
ARUNACHALA!

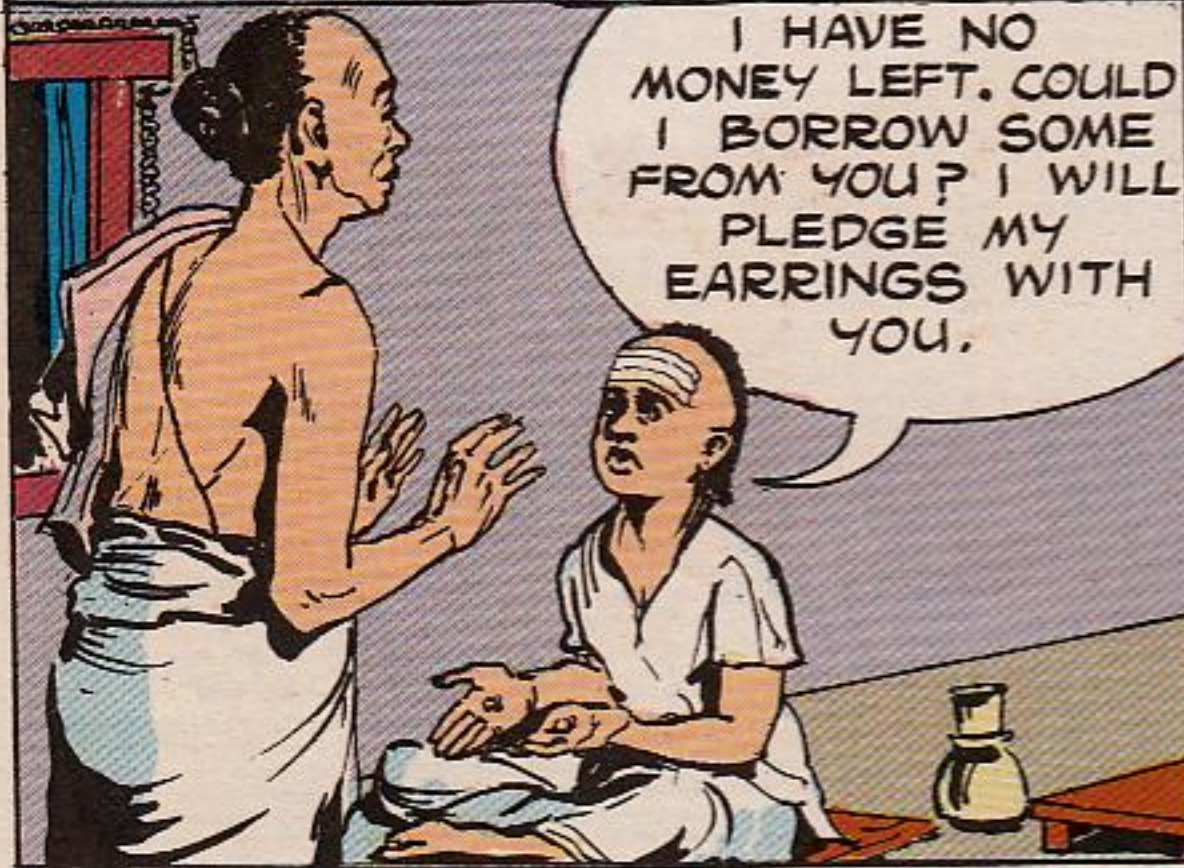


WEAK WITH HUNGER, HE FAINTED AT THE DOOR OF A HOUSE.



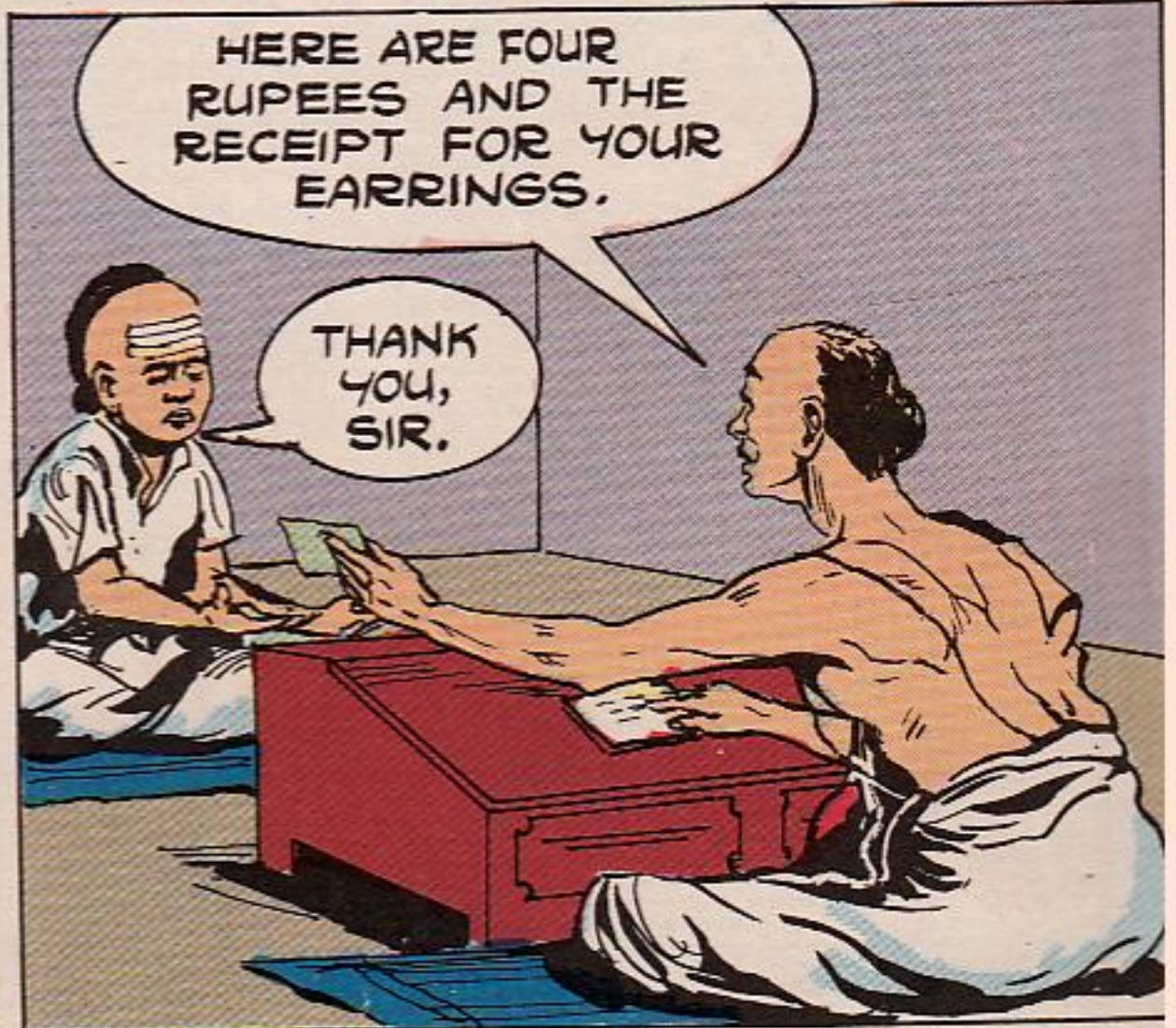
A KIND-HEARTED MAN SAW VENKATARAMAN AND GAVE HIM A GOOD MEAL. WHEN VENKATARAMAN HAD EATEN AND FELT REFRESHED, HE TOLD HIS STORY.

I HAVE NO
MONEY LEFT. COULD
I BORROW SOME
FROM YOU? I WILL
PLEDGE MY
EARRINGS WITH
YOU.



HERE ARE FOUR
RUPEES AND THE
RECEIPT FOR YOUR
EARRINGS.

THANK
YOU,
SIR.

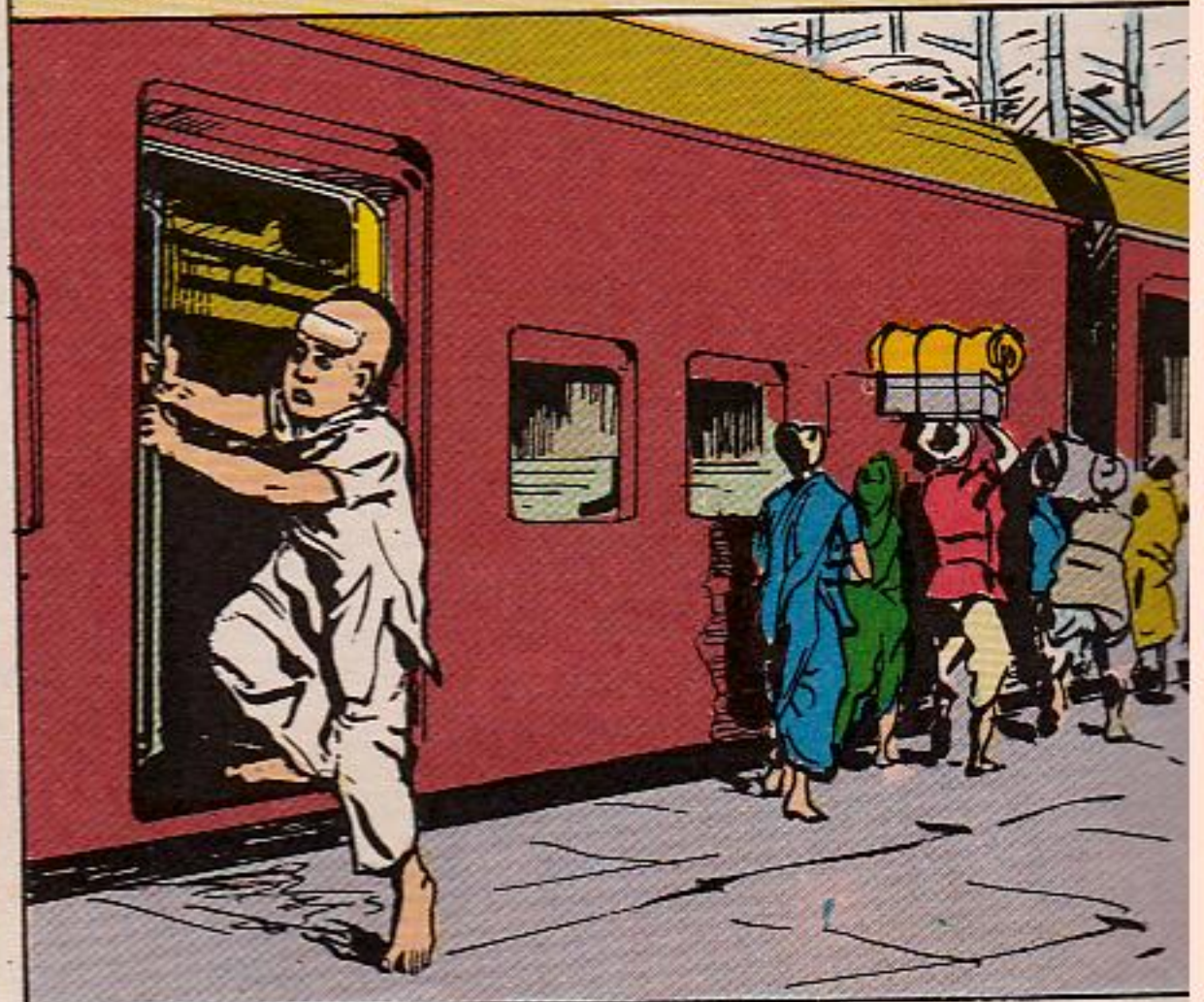


EVEN BEFORE HE REACHED KILUR STATION, VENKATARAMAN TORE UP THE RECEIPT.

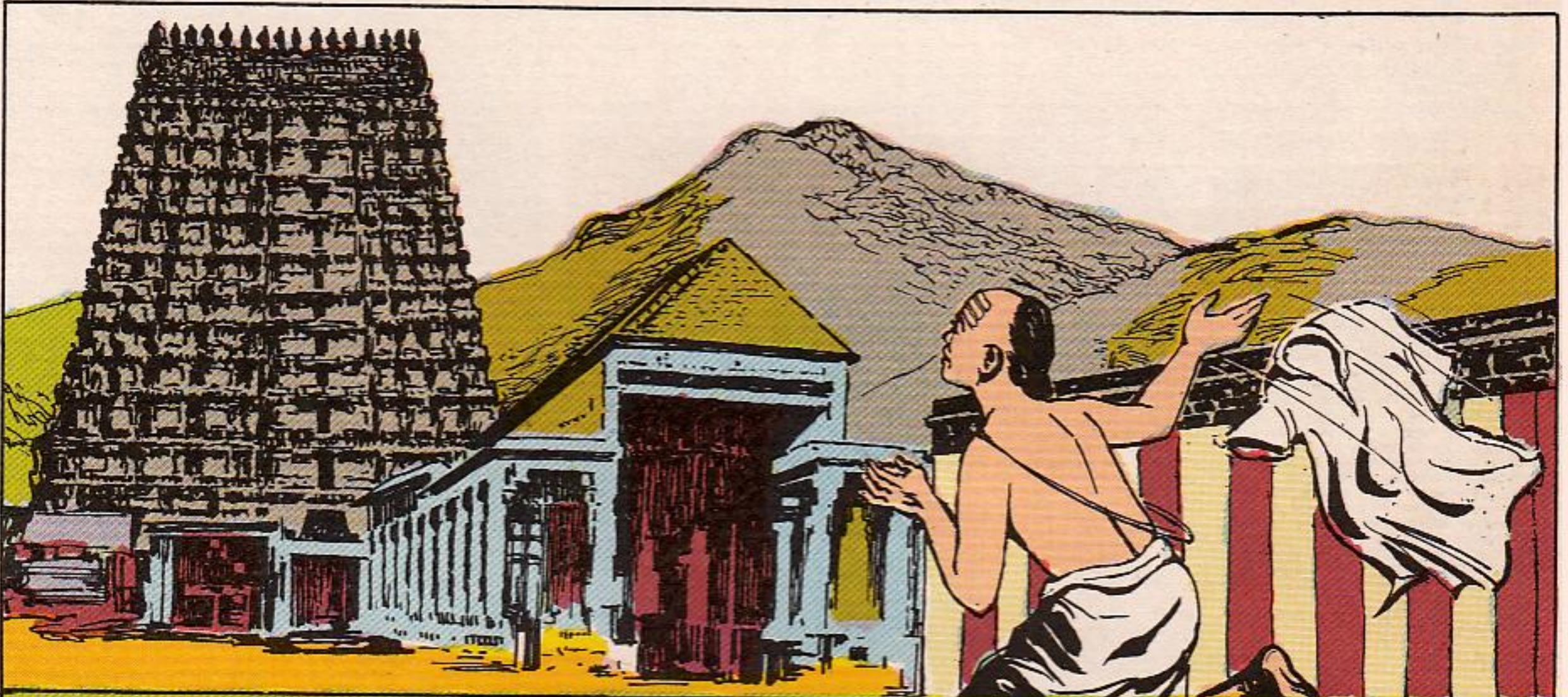
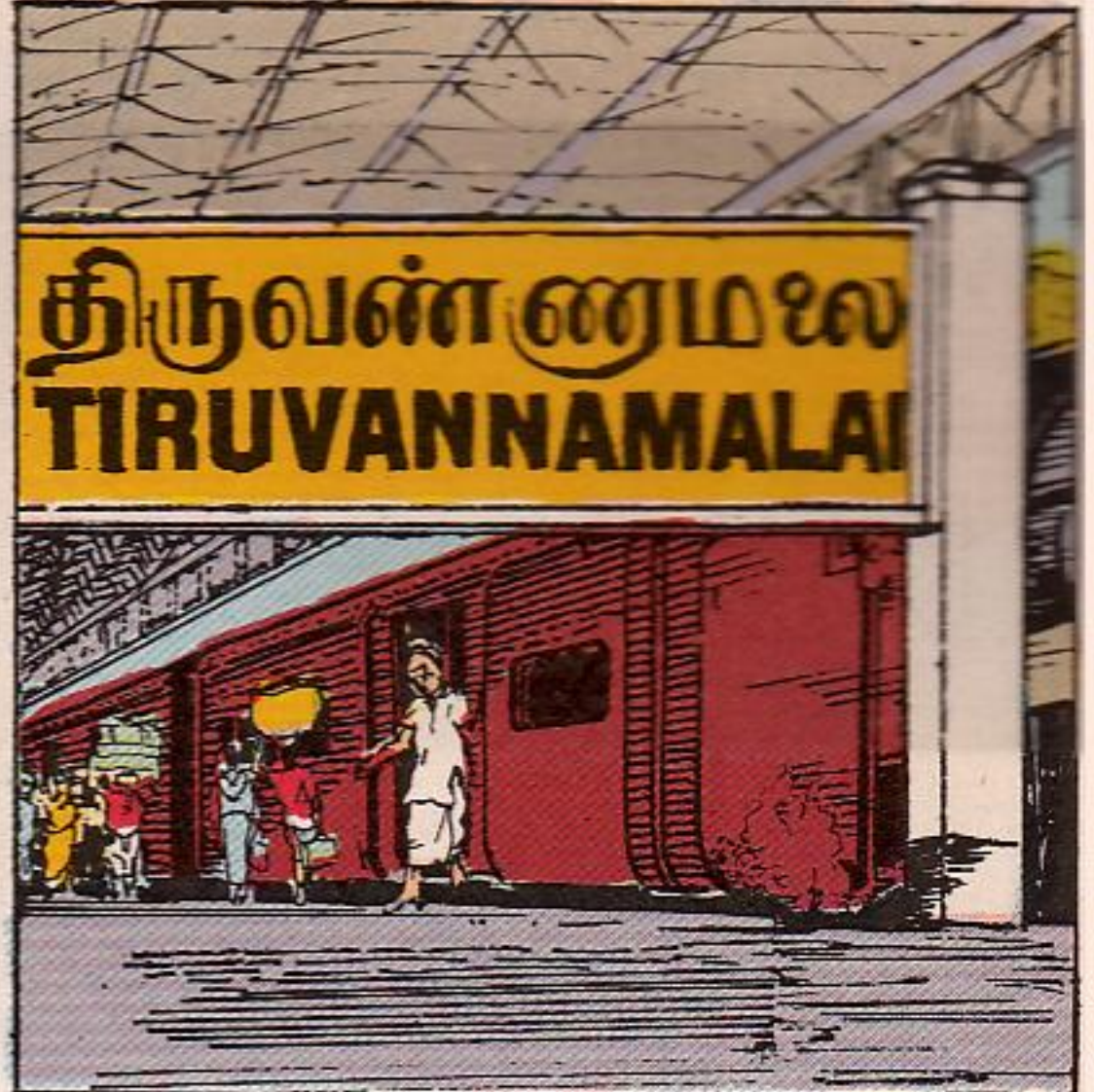
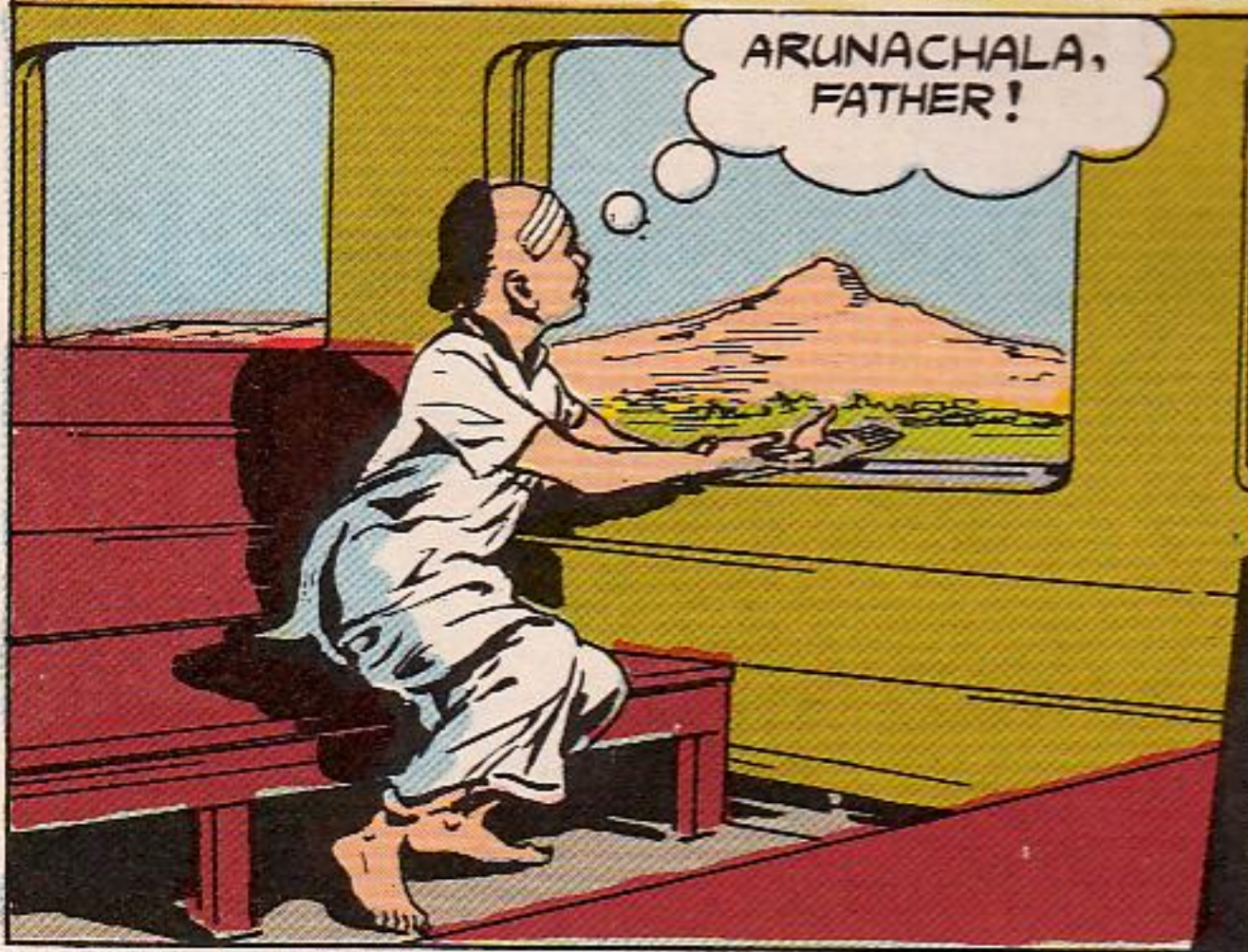
WHAT NEED
HAVE I NOW
FOR THOSE
EARRINGS?



HE CAUGHT THE TRAIN FOR TIRUVANNAMALAI.

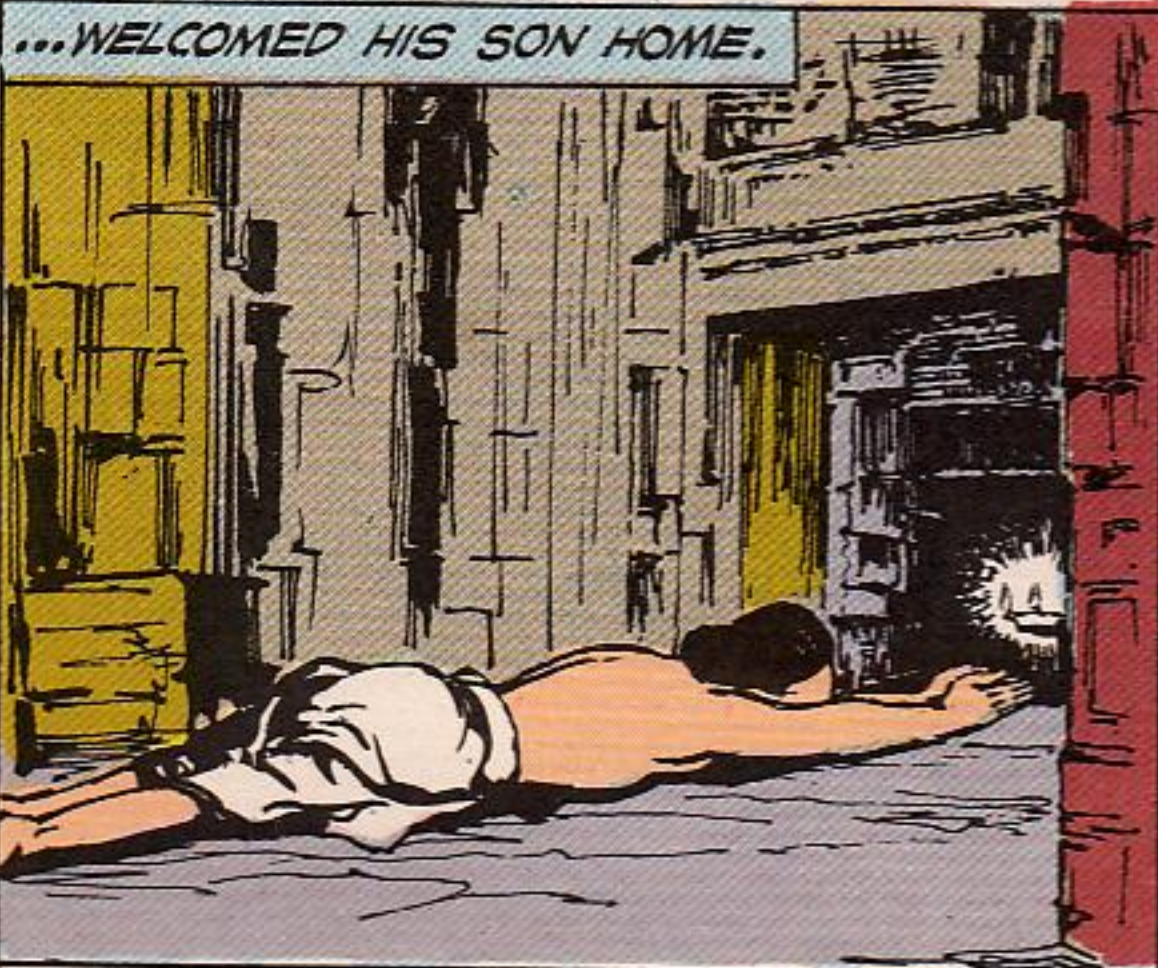


THE NEXT DAY, SEPTEMBER 1, THE GREAT HILL OF ARUNACHALA APPEARED IN THE DISTANCE.



THERE WAS NOT A SOUL IN THE TEMPLE. THE MIDDAY WORSHIP WAS OVER AND THE DOORS SHOULD HAVE BEEN CLOSED, BUT THEY WERE WIDE OPEN. AND THUS THE LORD...

...WELCOMED HIS SON HOME.

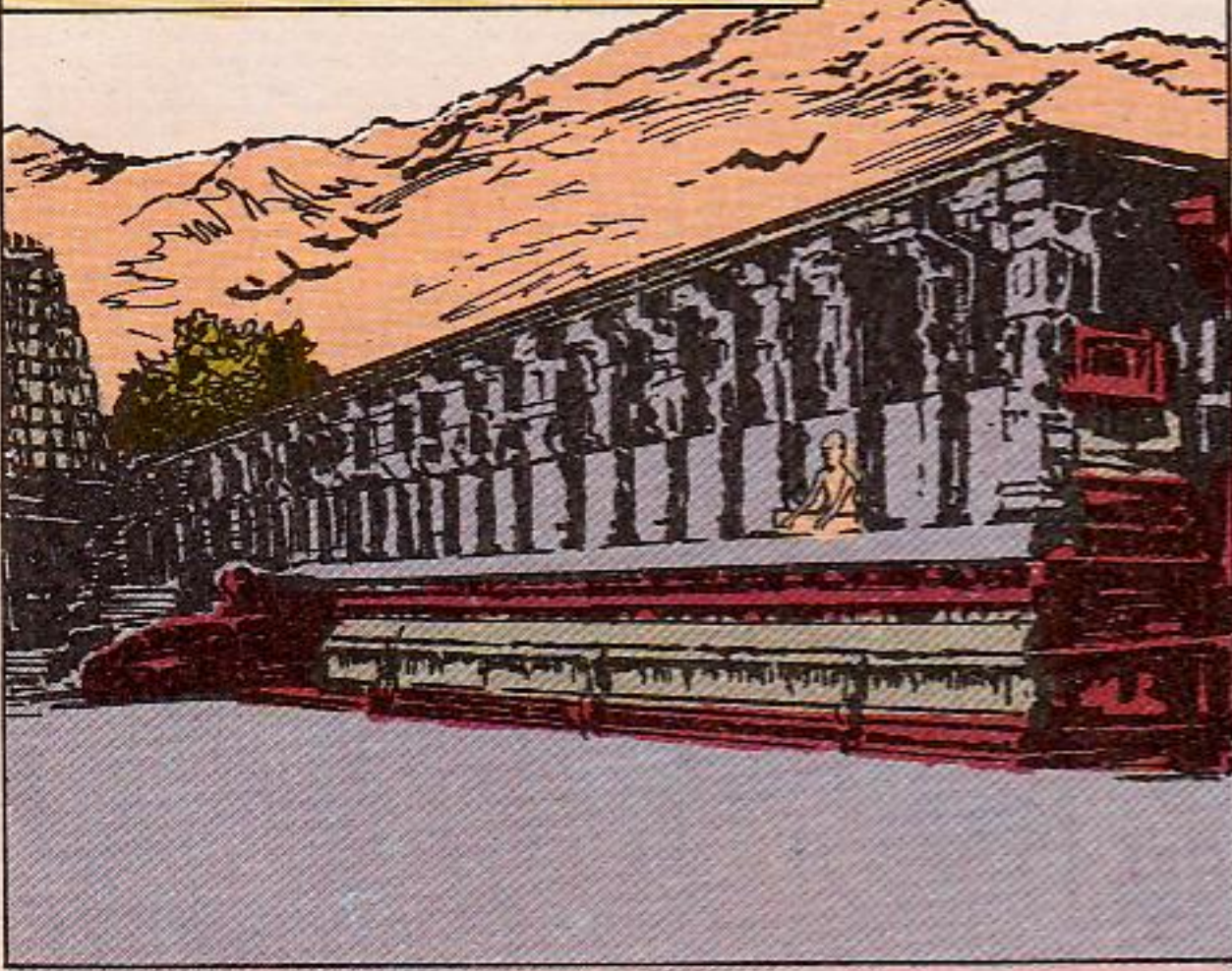


MUCH LATER, VENKATARAMAN CAME OUT OF THE TEMPLE. AT THE AYYANKULAM TANK, HE HAD HIS HEAD SHAVED AND CAST AWAY HIS BELONGINGS.

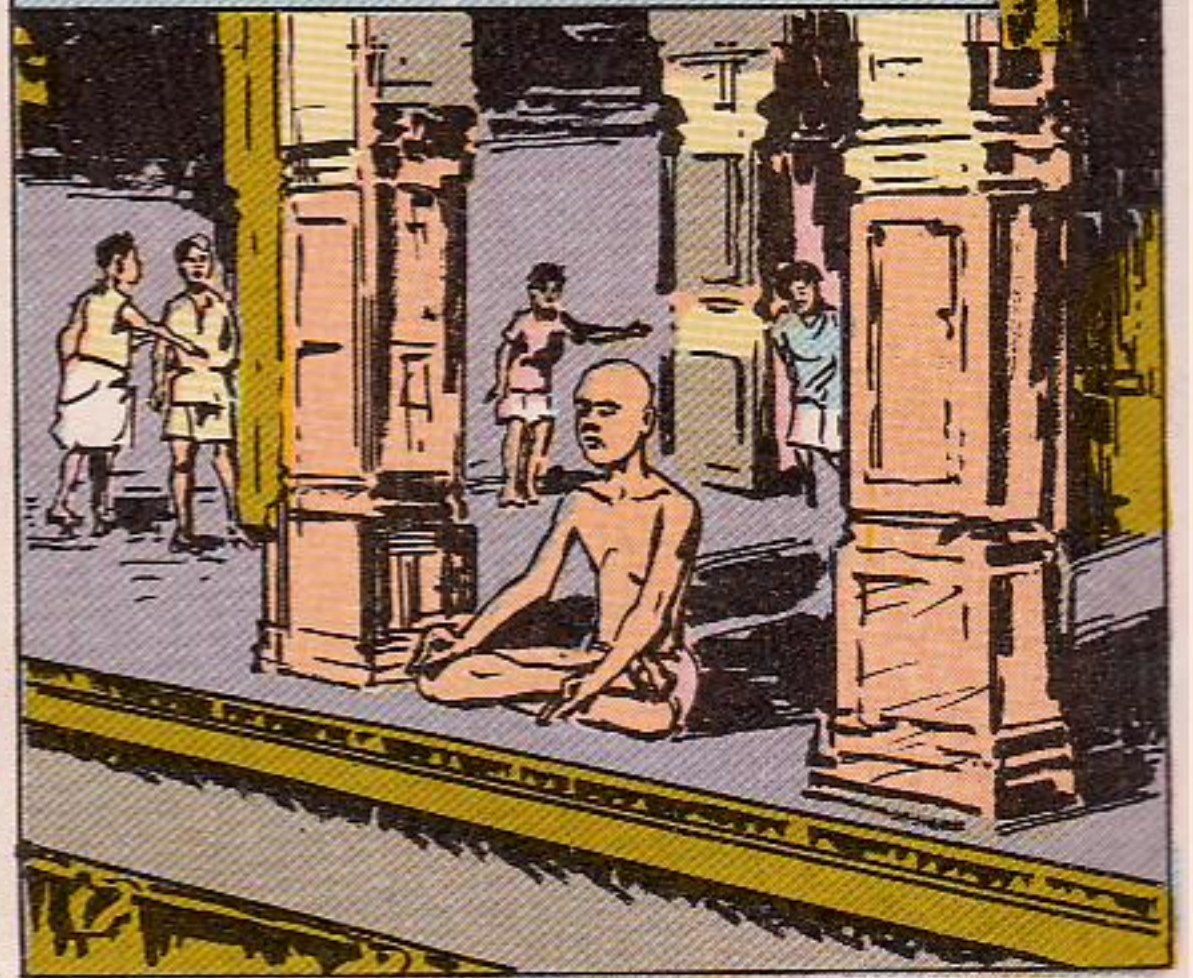


* LOIN - CLOTH

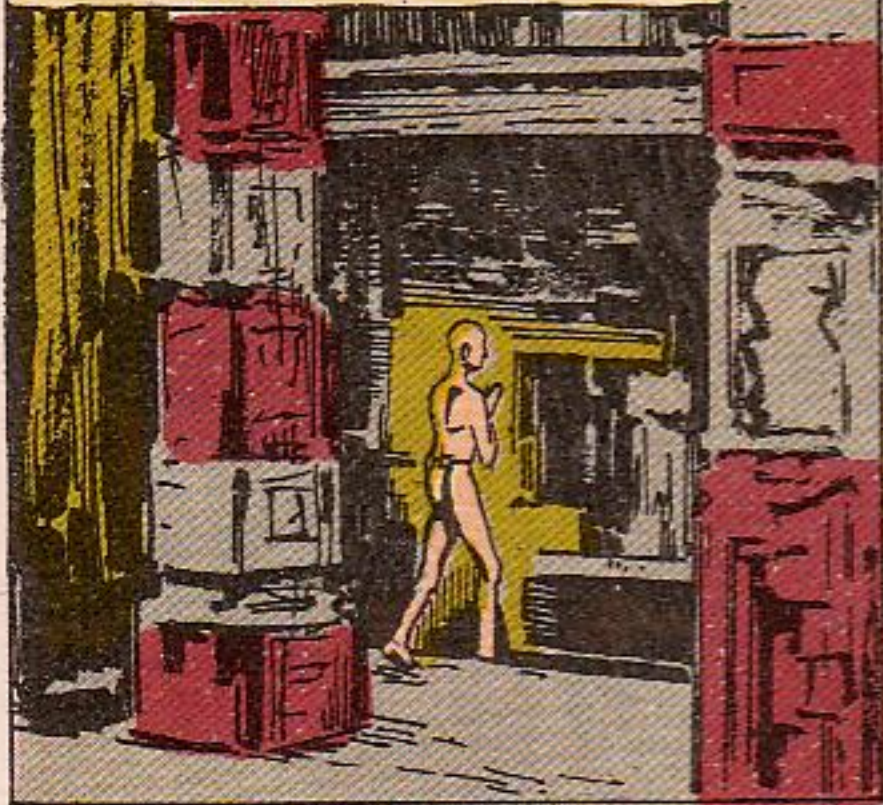
IN THE HALL OF A THOUSAND PILLARS,
HE SAT DOWN TO MEDITATE.



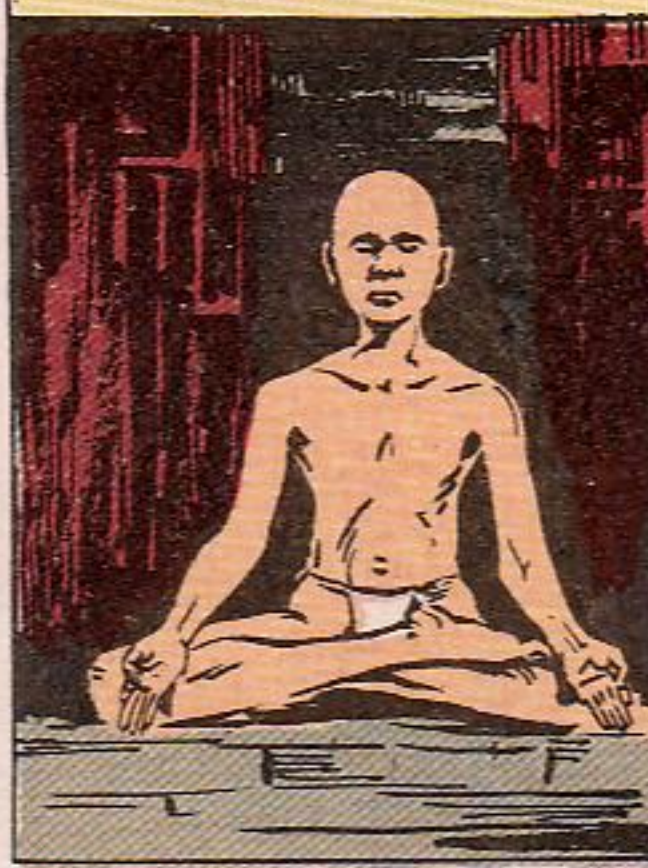
BUT MISCHIEVOUS BOYS BEGAN TO TROUBLE
HIM BY THROWING STONES AT HIM.



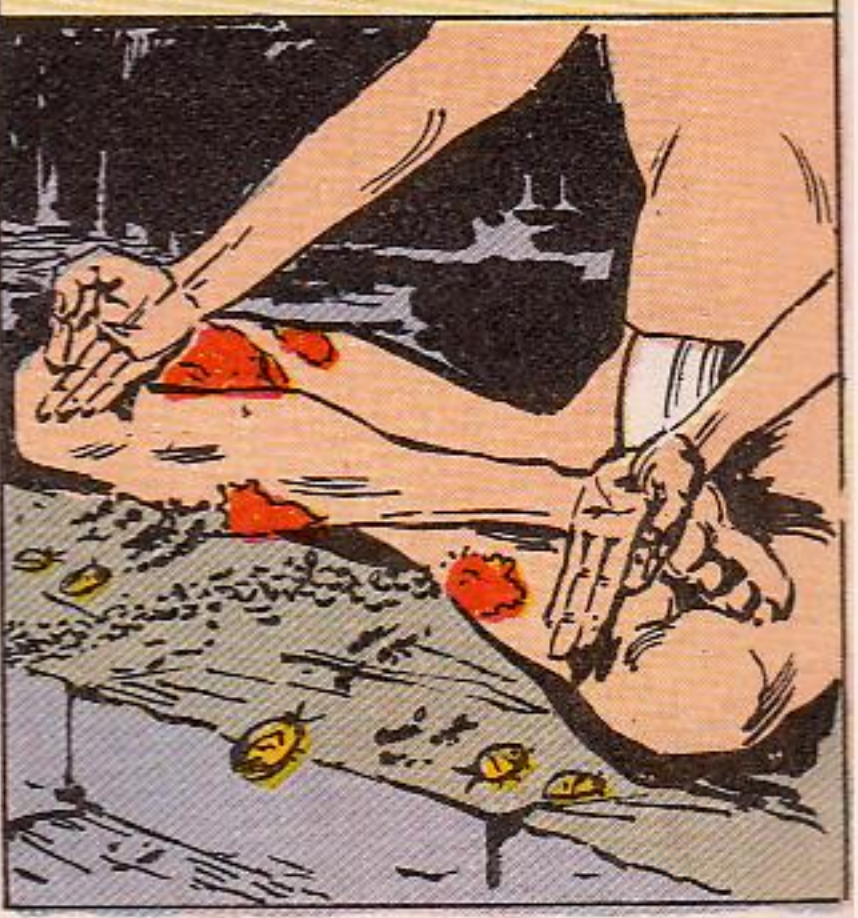
SO, VENKATARAMAN CHOSE
AN ISOLATED PLACE WHERE HE
COULD BE ALONE — THE PATALA
LINGAM — A DARK,
UNDERGROUND CELLAR.



DAYS PASSED. THE
YOUNG MAN, LOST IN
MEDITATION, WAS
CONSCIOUS OF NOTHING...



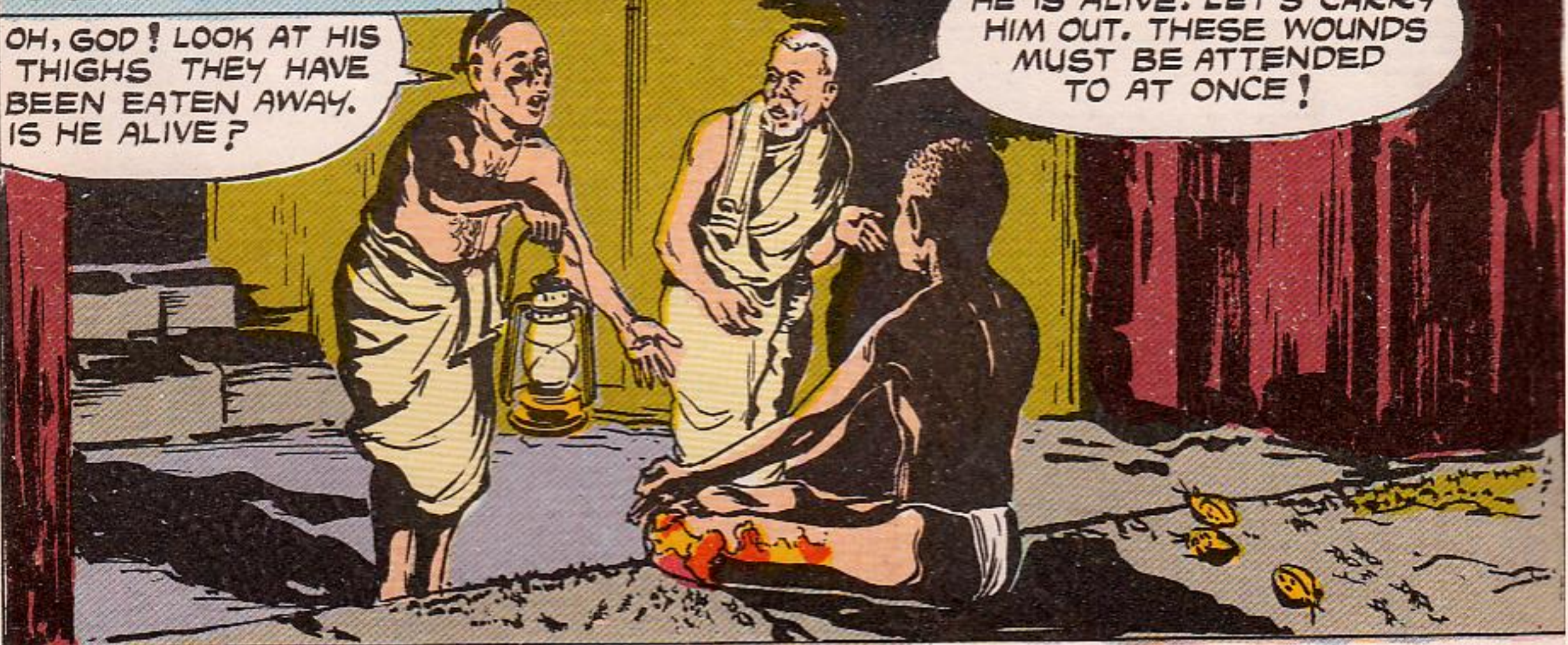
...NOT EVEN OF THE VERMIN
THAT NIBBLED AWAY AT HIS
MOTIONLESS LEGS...



...TILL, ONE DAY, A HOLY MAN NAMED SESHADRI SWAMI AND SOME PRIESTS WHO HAPPENED
TO COME THERE FOUND HIM.

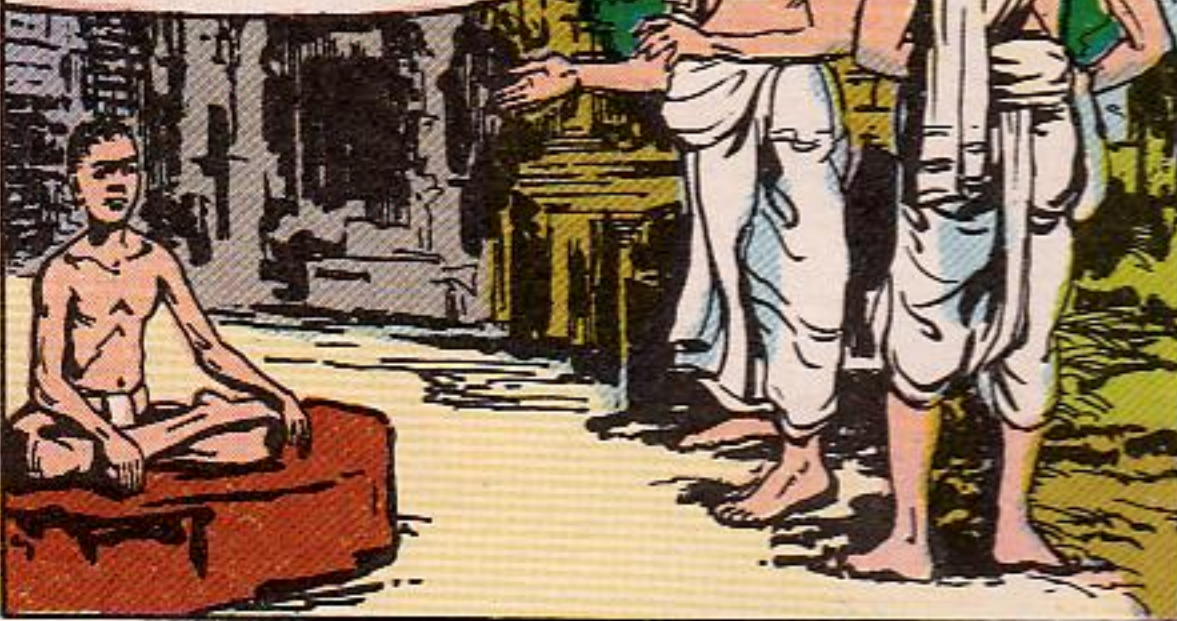
OH, GOD! LOOK AT HIS
THIGHS THEY HAVE
BEEN EATEN AWAY.
IS HE ALIVE?

HE IS ALIVE. LET'S CARRY
HIM OUT. THESE WOUNDS
MUST BE ATTENDED
TO AT ONCE!

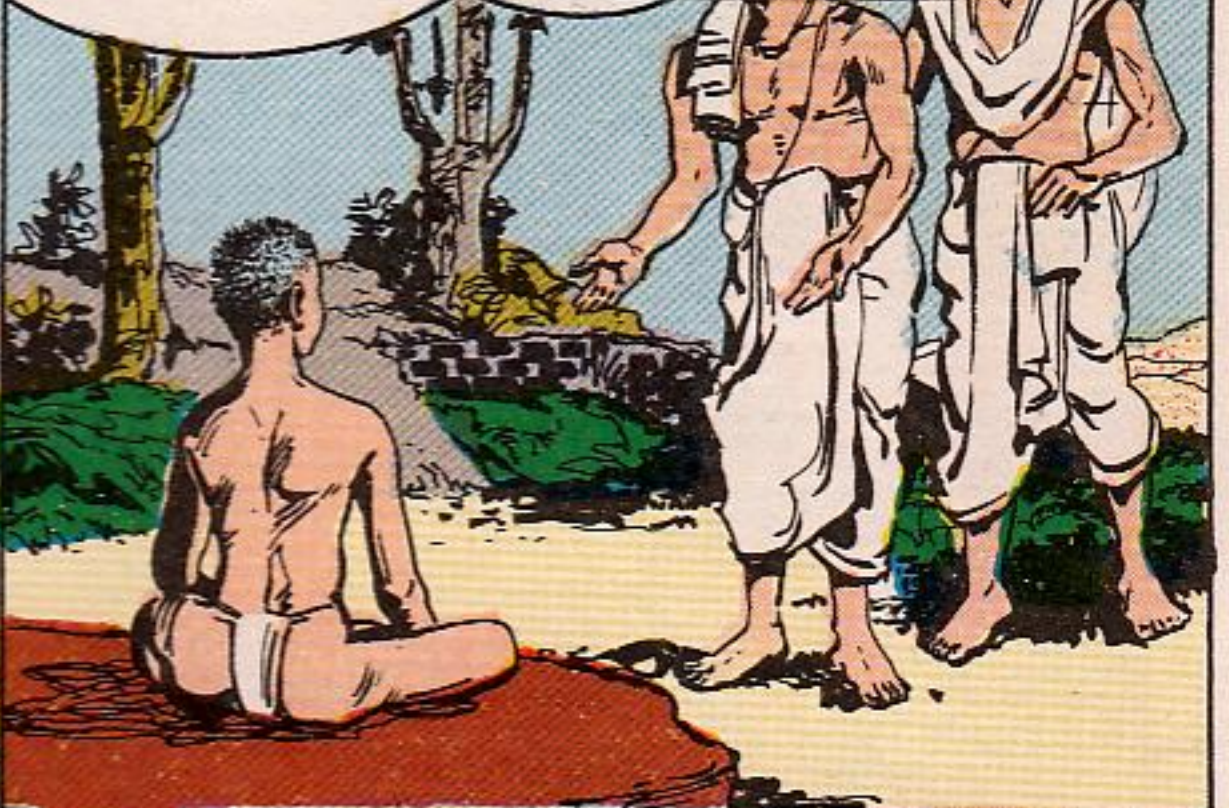


THEY NURSED HIM BACK TO HEALTH. WHEN HE WAS QUITE WELL AGAIN THE TEMPLE PRIESTS BEGAN TO QUESTION HIM.

MY BOY, YOU ARE TOO YOUNG TO GO THROUGH SO MUCH. TELL US YOUR NAME. WE WILL SEND YOU HOME.

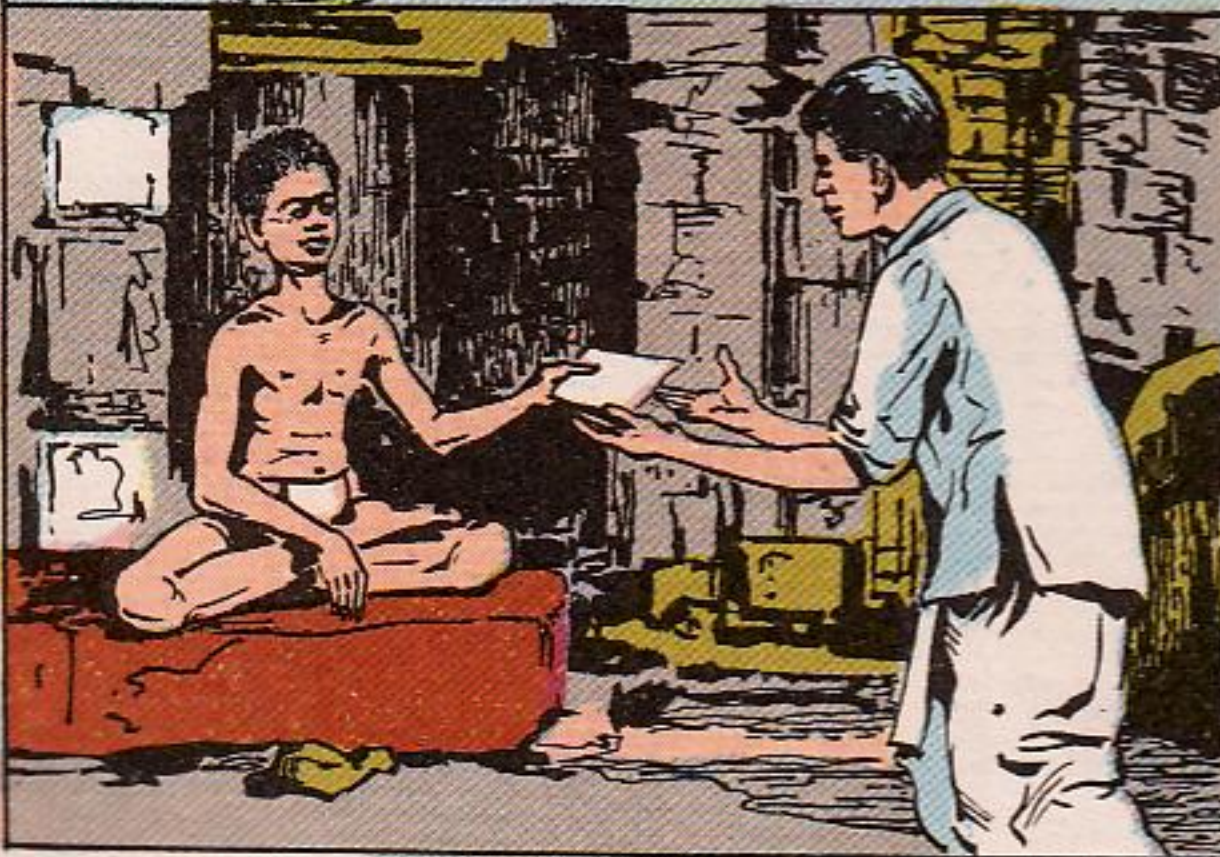


TELL US WHERE YOU COME FROM, YOUNG SWAMI. WON'T YOU SPEAK?

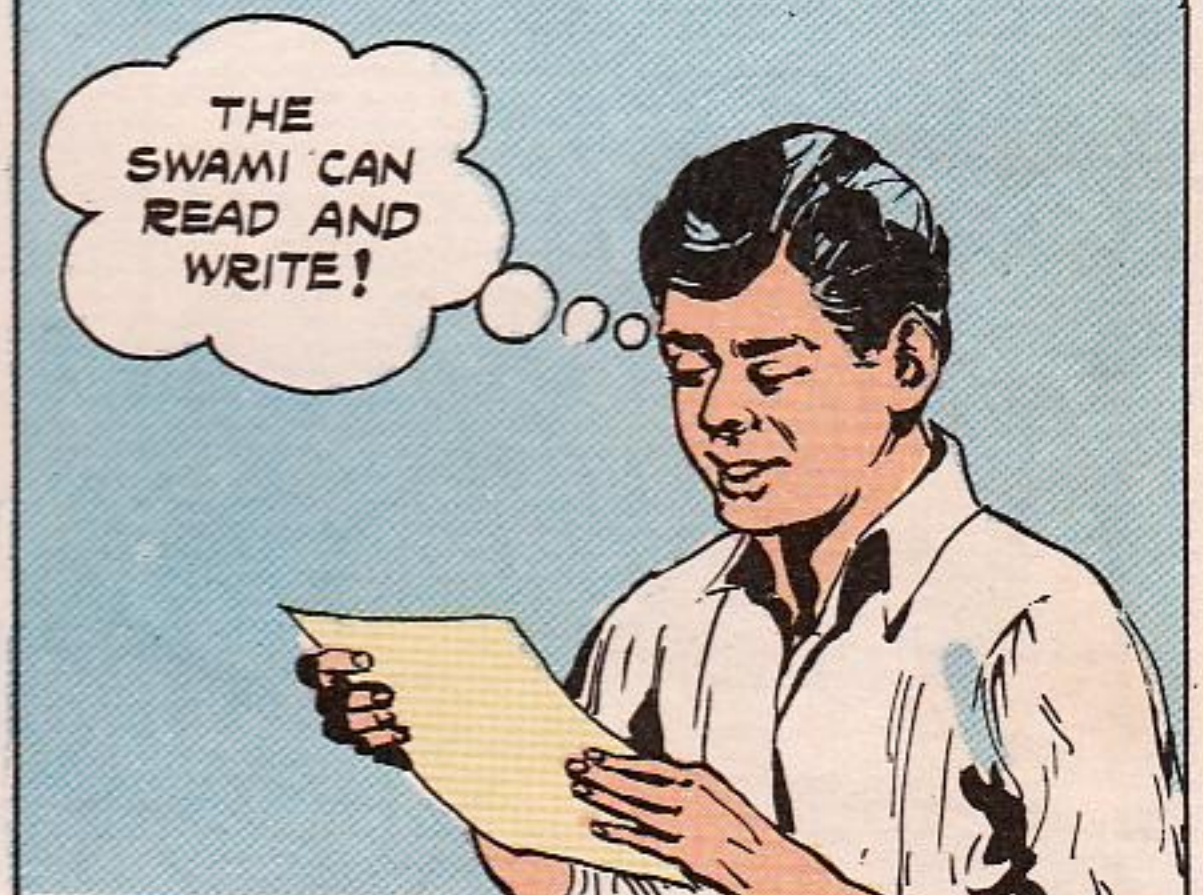


BUT THE YOUNG SWAMI MAINTAINED AN ABSOLUTE SILENCE.

ONE VISITOR PERSISTED IN QUESTIONING THE SWAMI ABOUT HIS IDENTITY. AT LAST, VENKATARAMAN GAVE HIM THE INFORMATION HE WANTED ON A PIECE OF PAPER.

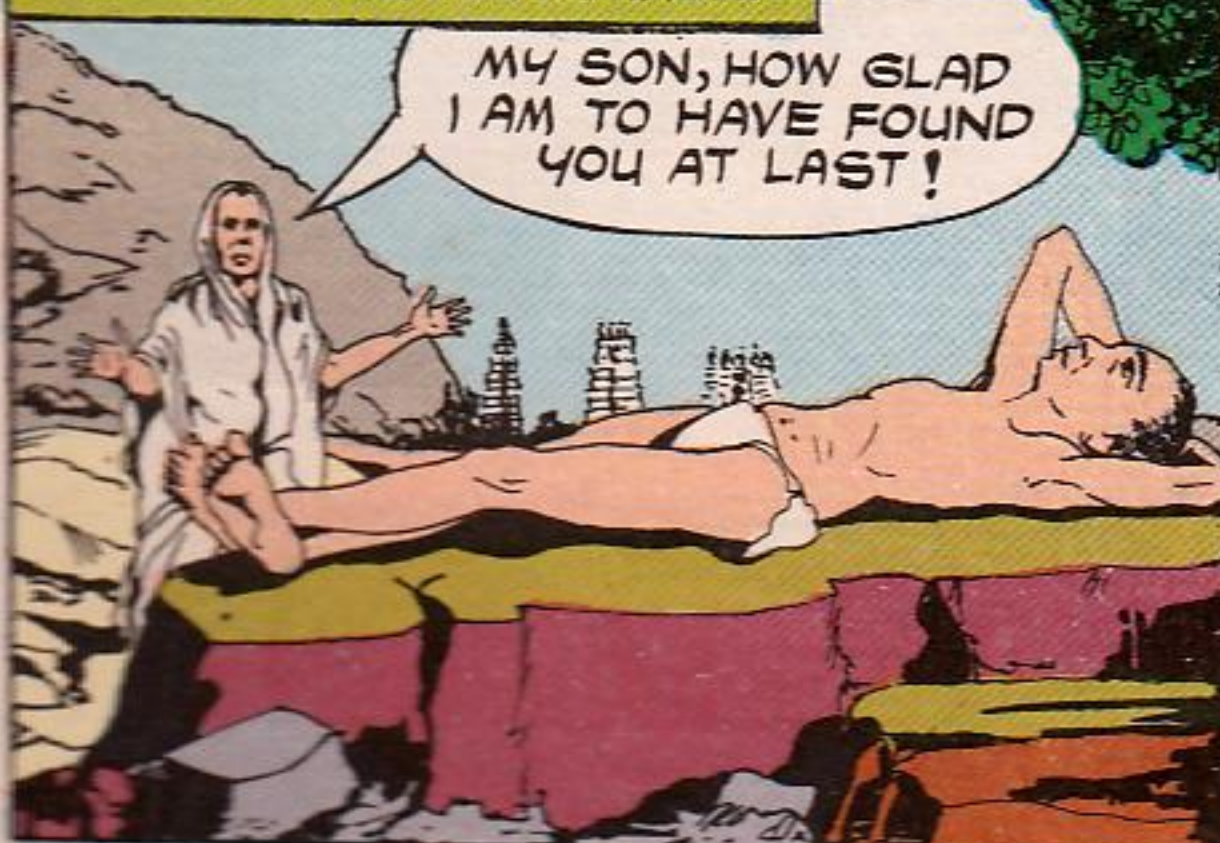


THE SWAMI CAN READ AND WRITE!

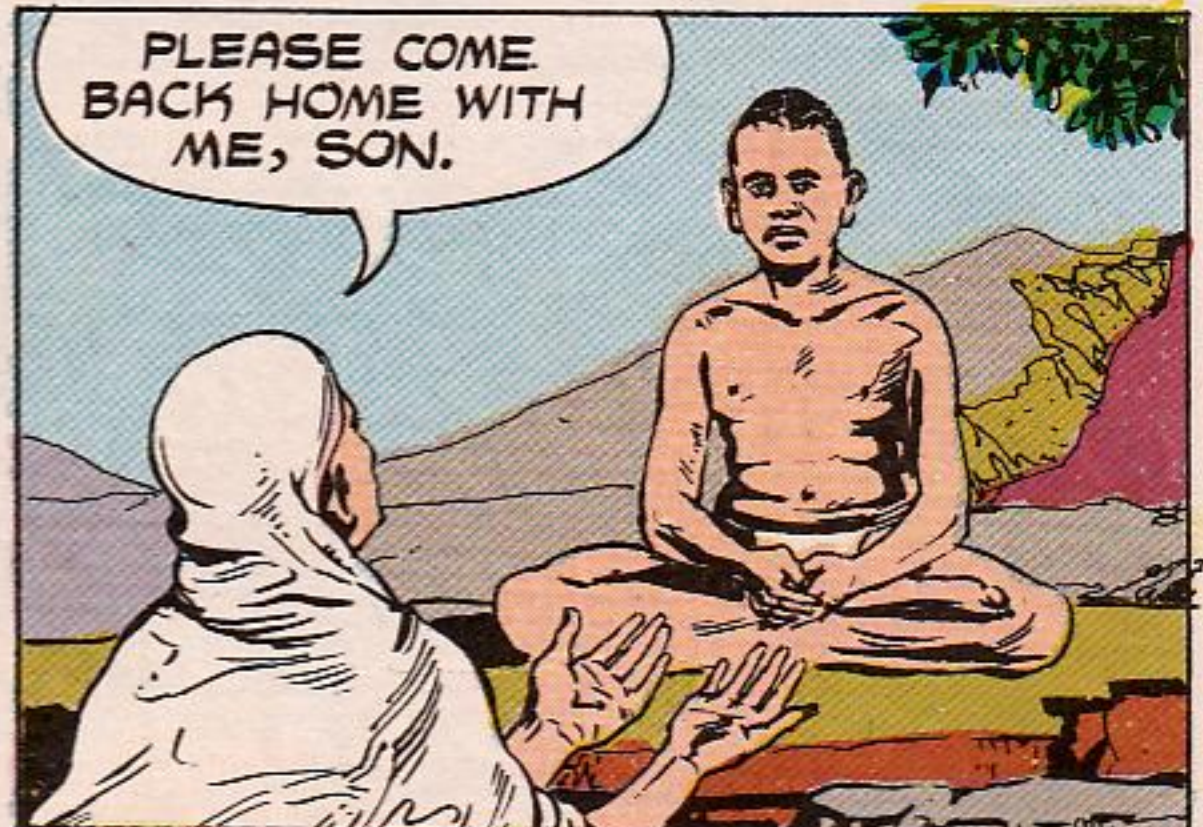


THE NEWS THAT THE SWAMI'S NAME WAS VENKATARAMAN AND THAT HE CAME FROM TIRUCHUZHAI SPREAD, TILL IT REACHED THE EARS OF HIS MOTHER. ALAGAMMAL CAME TO TIRUVANNAMALAI.

MY SON, HOW GLAD I AM TO HAVE FOUND YOU AT LAST!

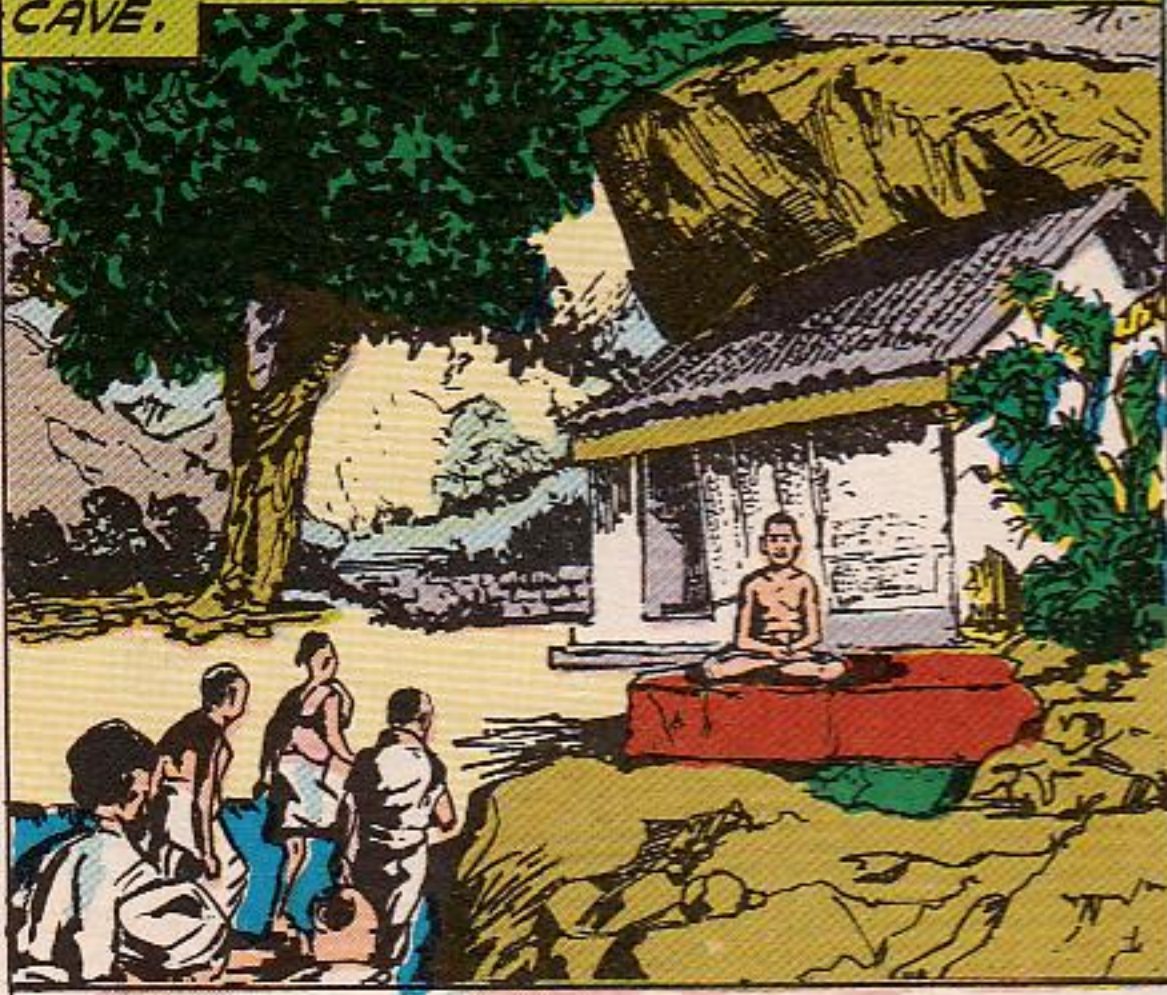


PLEASE COME BACK HOME WITH ME, SON.



BUT A SWAMI IS A MAN OF GOD. HE HAS NEITHER FATHER NOR MOTHER; NEITHER HAS HE A HOME. RAMANA ONLY LOOKED AT HER IN SILENCE. SO ALAGAMMAL HAD TO RETURN HOME DISAPPOINTED.

THOUGH THE SWAMI SPOKE NOT A WORD, PEOPLE BEGAN TO FLOCK TO HIM. HE MOVED FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER ON THE HILL AND REACHED VIRUPAKSHA CAVE.

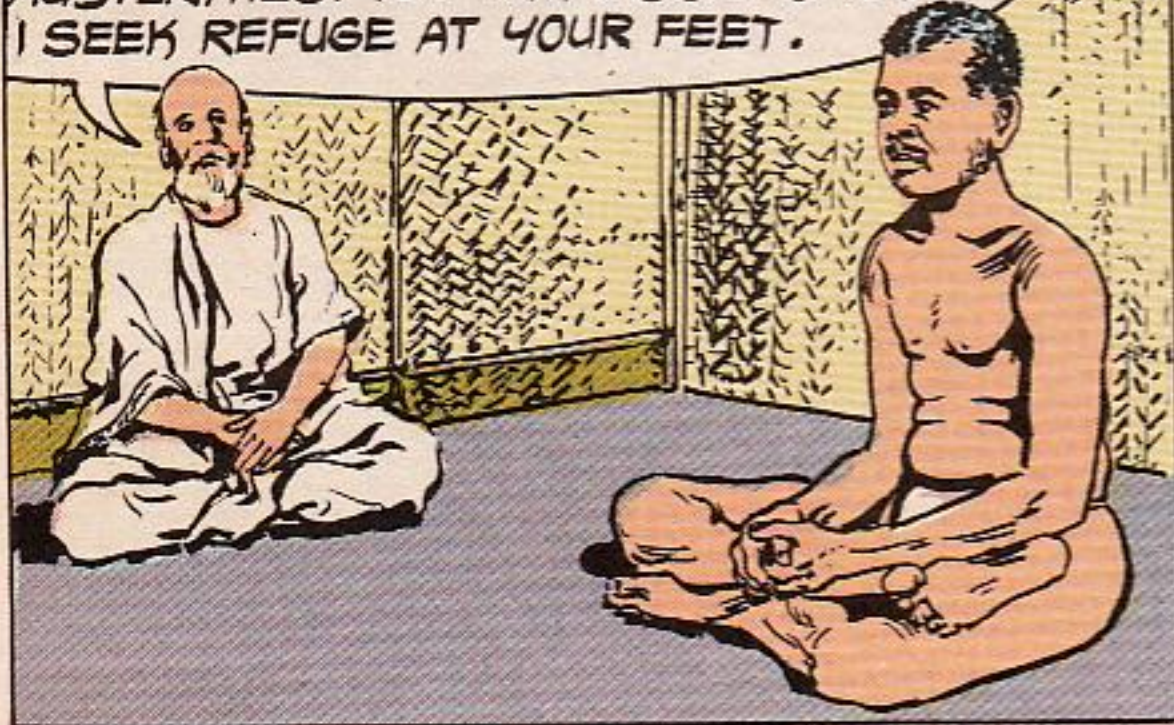


THOUGH HE PREFERRED TO REMAIN IN SILENCE HE ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS AND CLEARED THE DOUBTS OF HIS DEVOTEES.



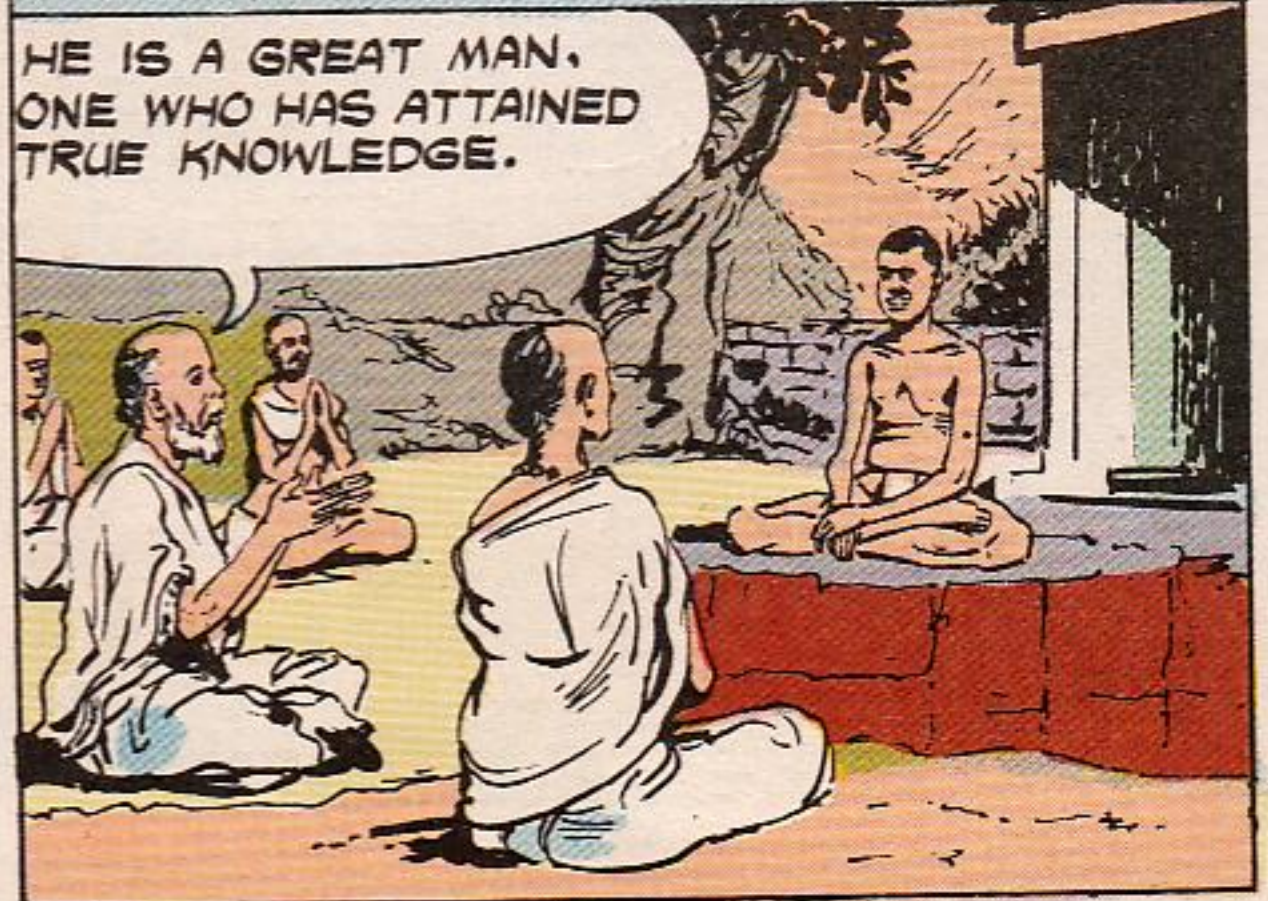
AT THIS TIME, A GREAT SCHOLAR, GANAPATI MUNI, CAME TO SEE THE SWAMI.

I HAVE READ ALL THAT NEEDS TO BE READ. I HAVE STUDIED THE WHOLE OF THE VEDANTA AND PRACTISED SEVERE AUSTERITIES. YET I AM DISSATISFIED. I SEEK REFUGE AT YOUR FEET.

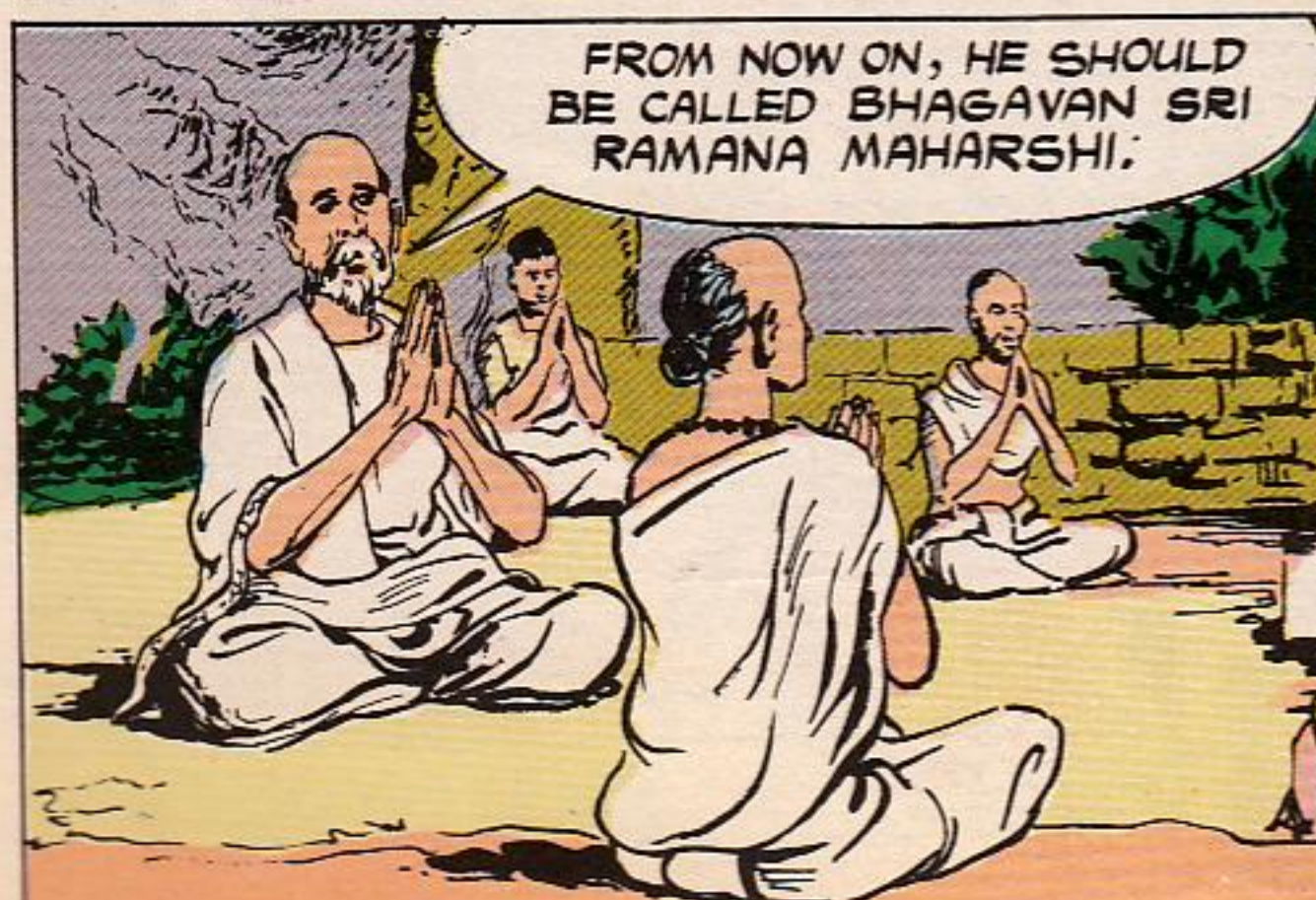


THE YOUNG SWAMI SPOKE A FEW WORDS TO THE SCHOLAR AND GANAPATI MUNI FOUND THE PEACE HE HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR.

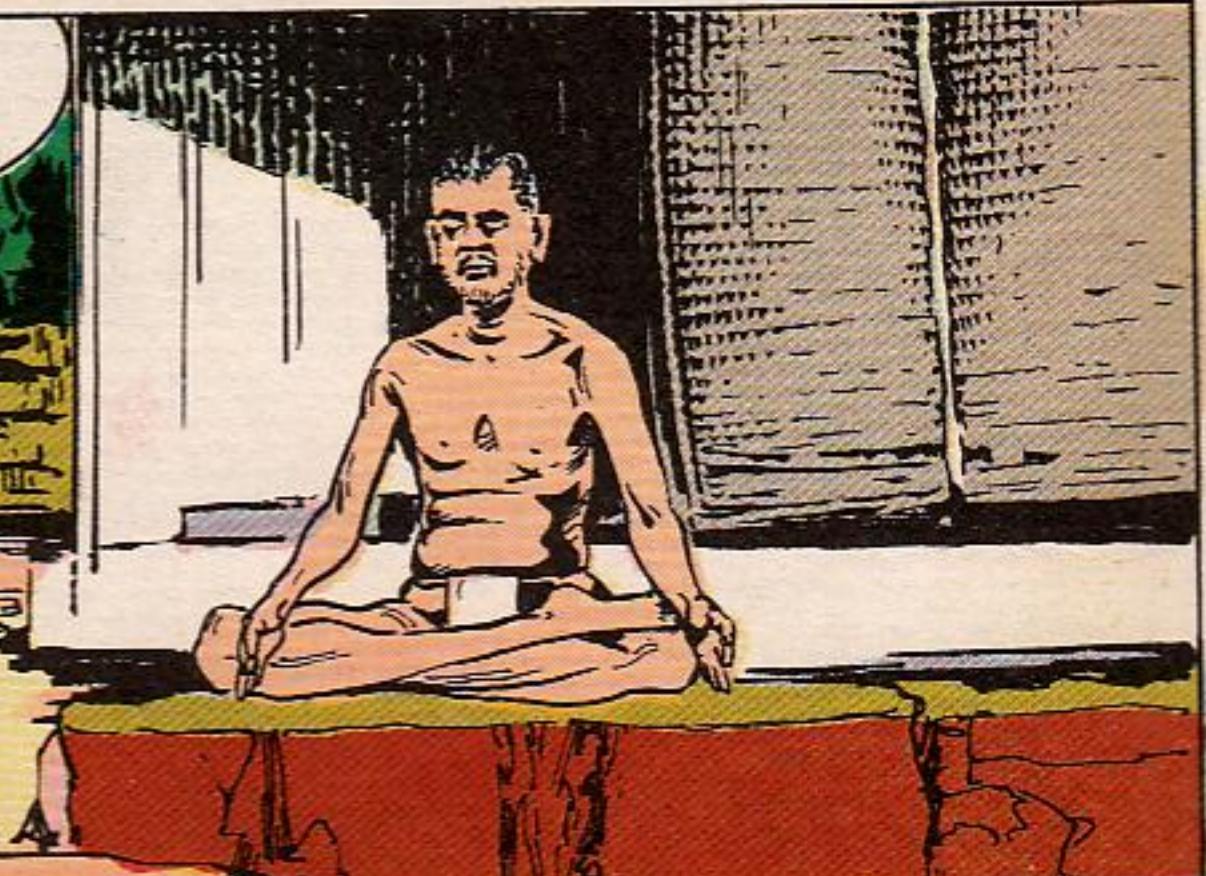
HE IS A GREAT MAN, ONE WHO HAS ATTAINED TRUE KNOWLEDGE.



FROM NOW ON, HE SHOULD BE CALLED BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI.



AND IT IS BY THIS NAME THAT HE HAS COME TO BE KNOWN.



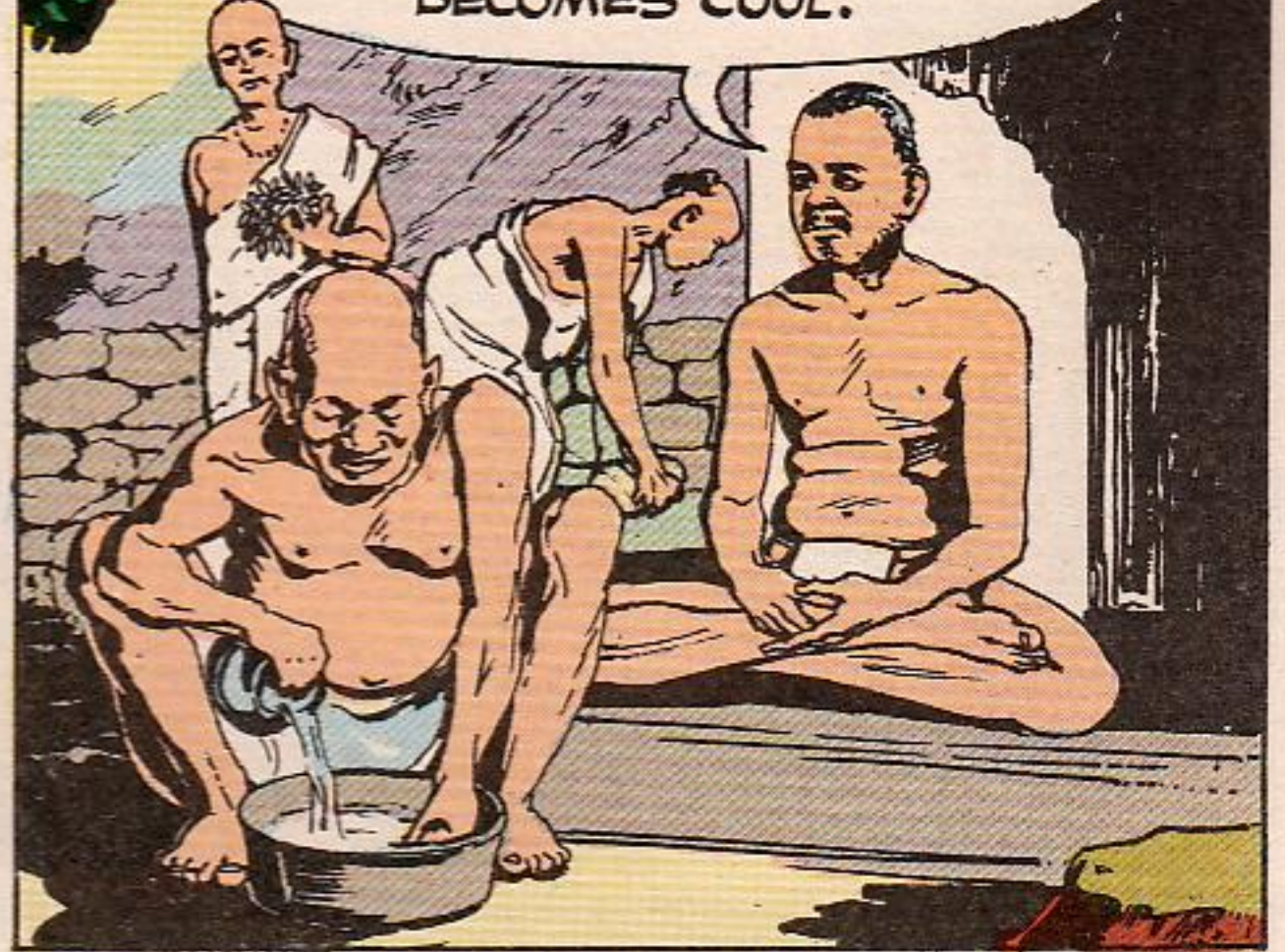
A SMALL GROUP OF DEVOTEES, HEADED BY PALANISWAMI, MADE THE LITTLE CAVE THEIR HOME.

BHAGAVAN, HERE IS THE RICE WE GOT AS ALMS IN THE TOWN.

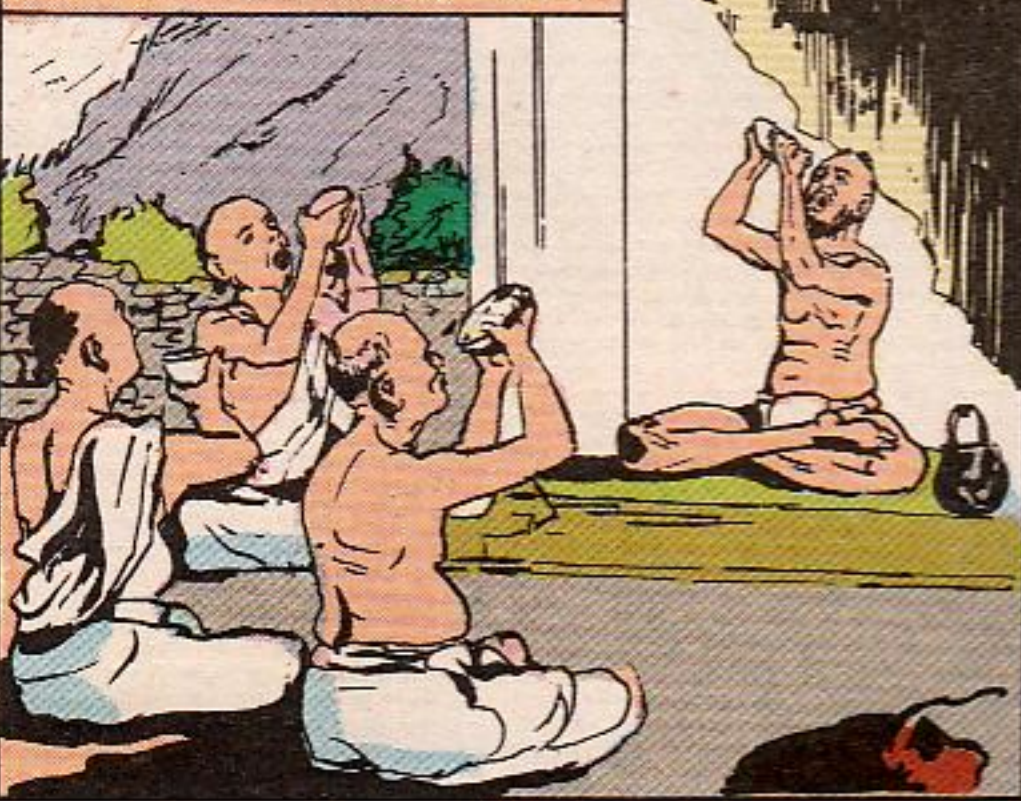
IT'S NOT ENOUGH FOR US ALL. ADD A LOT OF WATER AND MAKE A THIN GRUEL.



ADD SOME GINGER AND LEMON LEAVES. WE'LL DRINK IT IN THE EVENING WHEN IT BECOMES COOL.

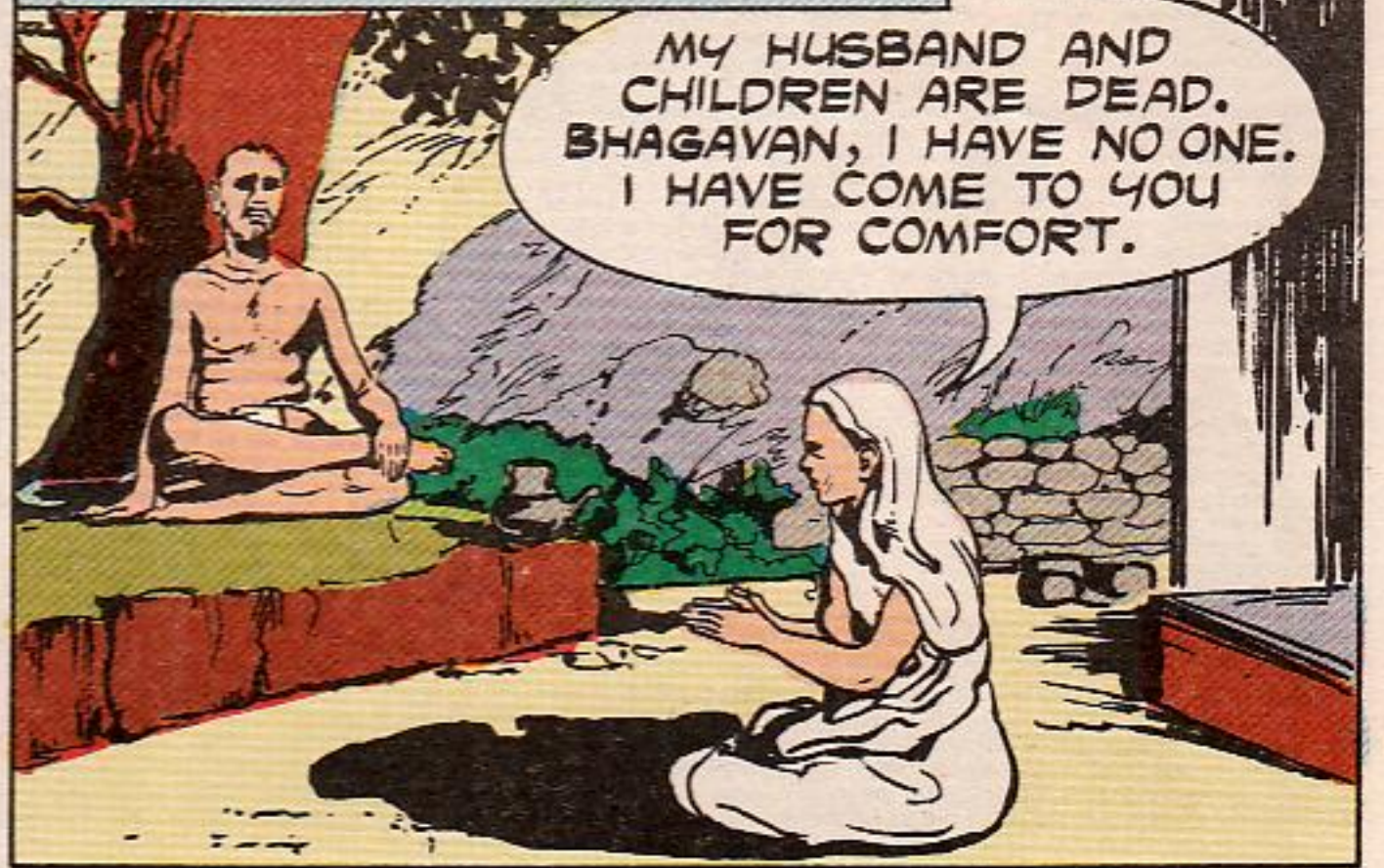


AND IN THE EVENING, THE COOL GRUEL WOULD TASTE DELICIOUS, AND ALL WERE SATISFIED WITH THE SIMPLE MEAL.



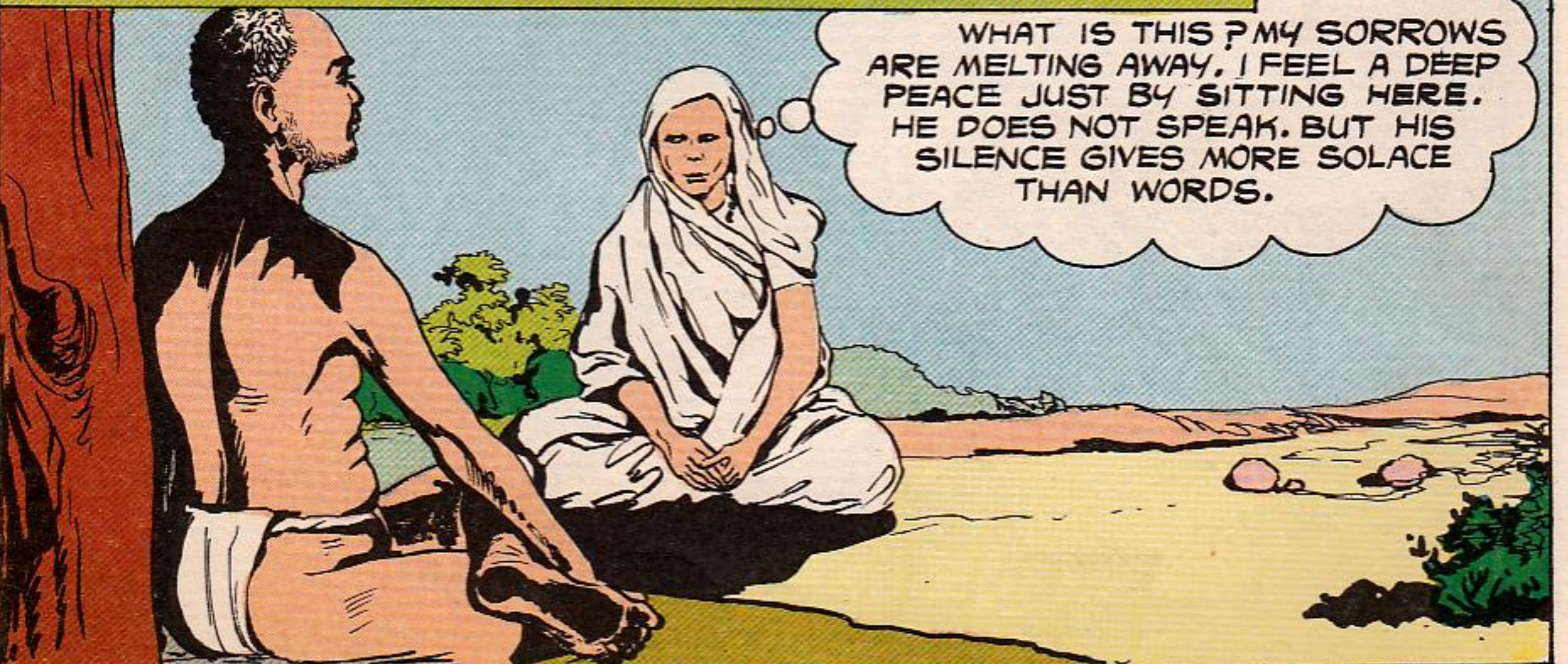
ONE OF THE MAHARSHI'S EARLY DEVOTEES WAS ECHAMMAL.

MY HUSBAND AND CHILDREN ARE DEAD. BHAGAVAN, I HAVE NO ONE. I HAVE COME TO YOU FOR COMFORT.



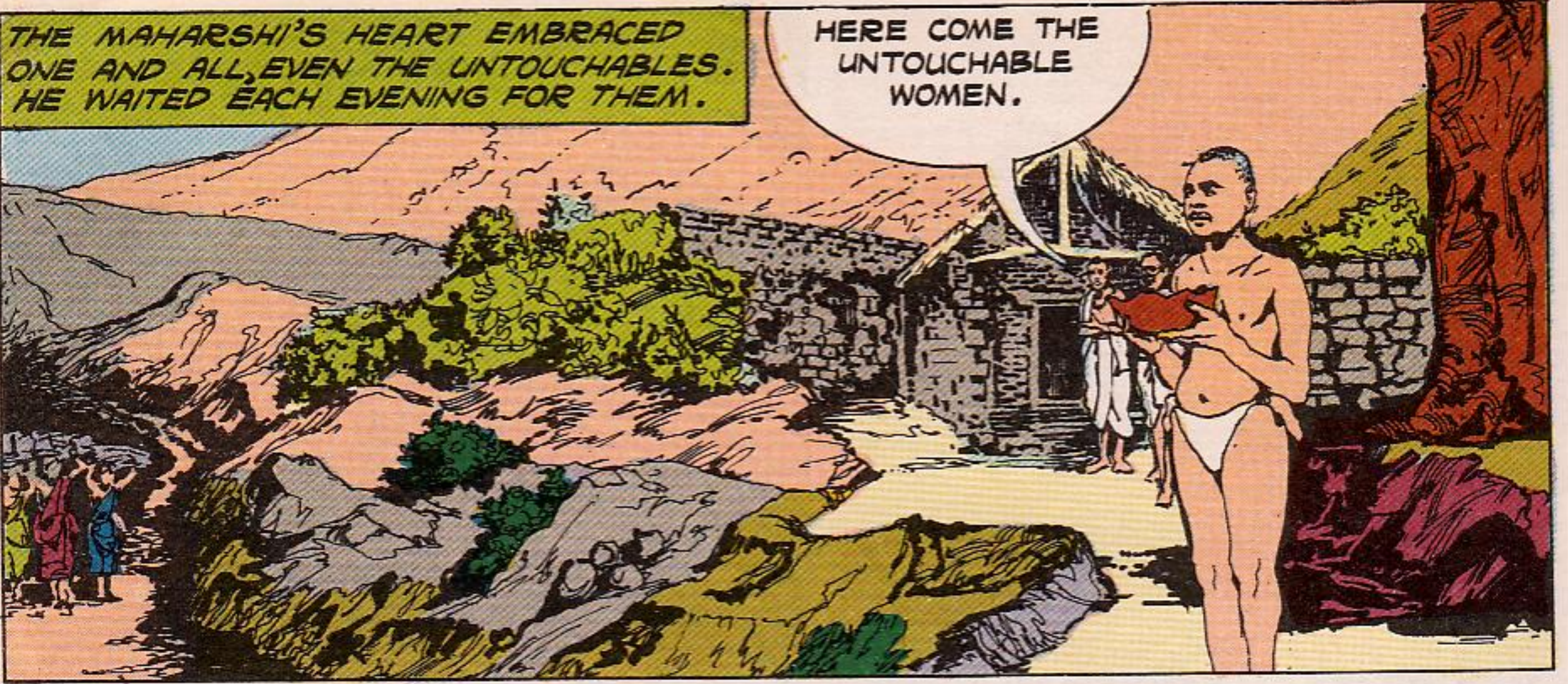
THE MAHARSHI DID NOT SPEAK. ECHAMMAL WAITED. THEN SUDDENLY—

WHAT IS THIS? MY SORROWS ARE MELTING AWAY. I FEEL A DEEP PEACE JUST BY SITTING HERE. HE DOES NOT SPEAK. BUT HIS SILENCE GIVES MORE SOLACE THAN WORDS.



THE MAHARSHI'S HEART EMBRACED ONE AND ALL, EVEN THE UNTOUCHABLES. HE WAITED EACH EVENING FOR THEM.

HERE COME THE UNTOUCHABLE WOMEN.



OH, BHAGAVAN, WE WORKED ALL DAY. THE SUN HAS BURNT US TO THE BONE. PLEASE THROW WATER ON OUR BACKS.

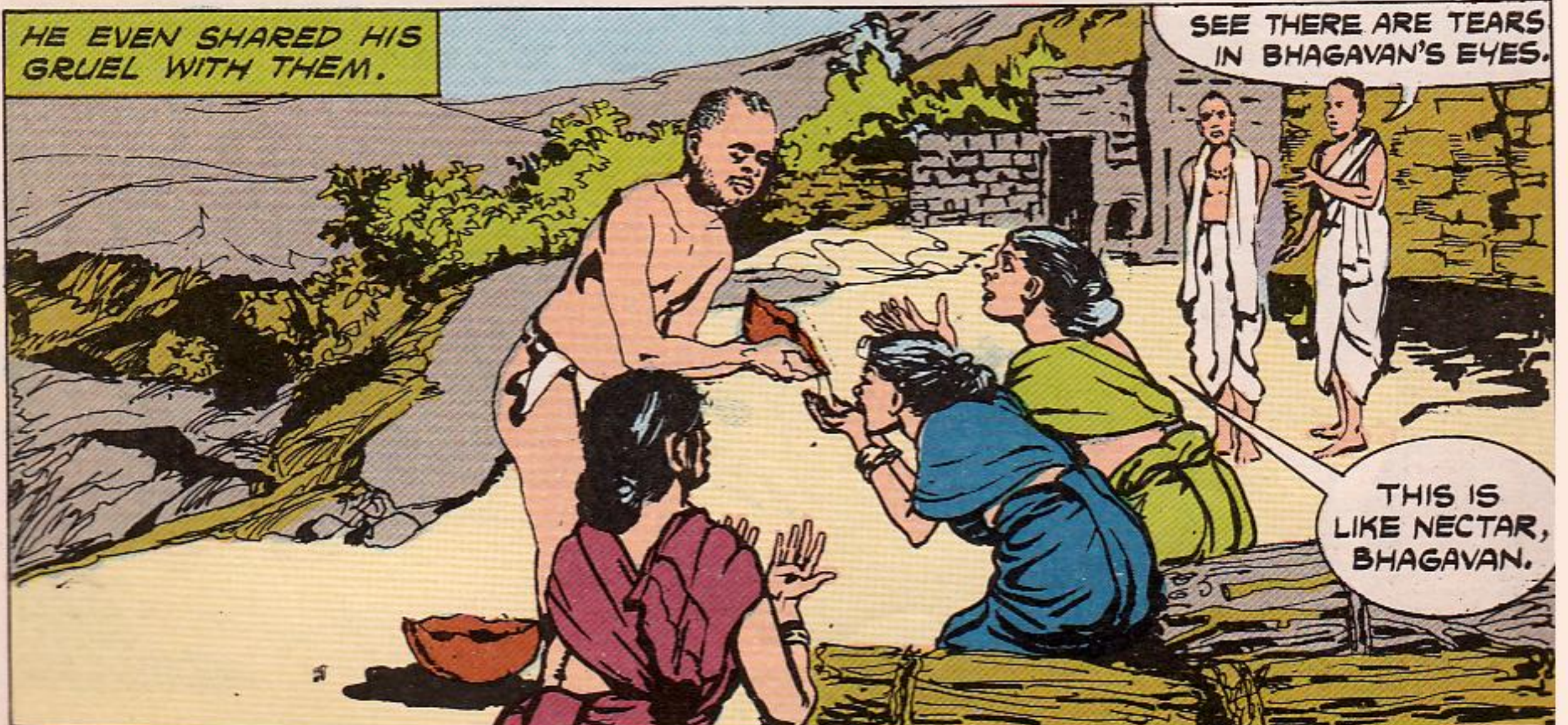


AH! HOW WONDERFUL THAT FEELS!



HE EVEN SHARED HIS GRUEL WITH THEM.

SEE THERE ARE TEARS IN BHAGAVAN'S EYES.



THIS IS LIKE NECTAR, BHAGAVAN.

THE MAHARSHI'S MOST EAGER VISITORS WERE LITTLE CHILDREN.

BHAGAVAN, YOU PROMISED TO PLAY MARBLES WITH ME!

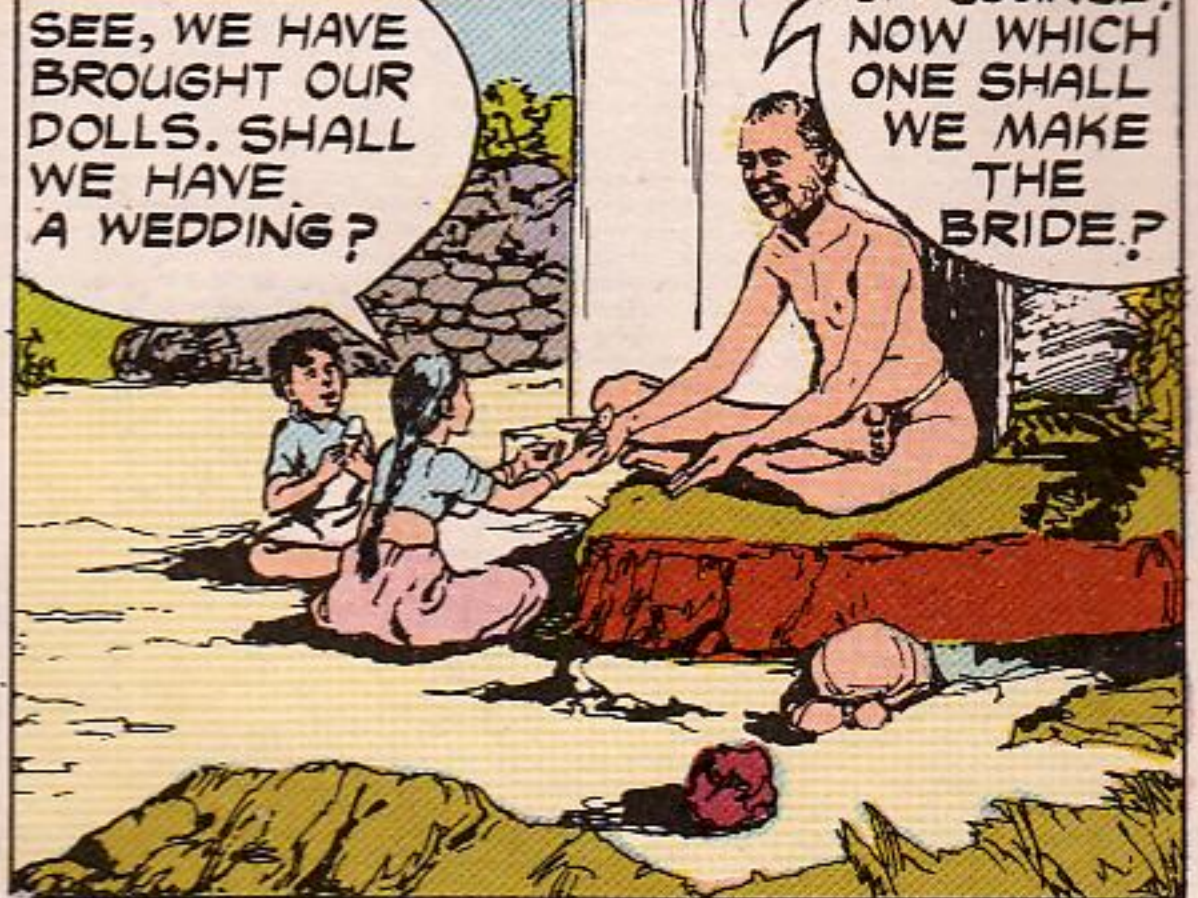
DIG THE HOLE. I AM COMING IN A MINUTE.



THE LITTLE ONES CLIMBED UP THE STEEP HILL TO VIRUPAKSHA CAVE, JUST TO BE WITH HIM.

SEE, WE HAVE BROUGHT OUR DOLLS. SHALL WE HAVE A WEDDING?

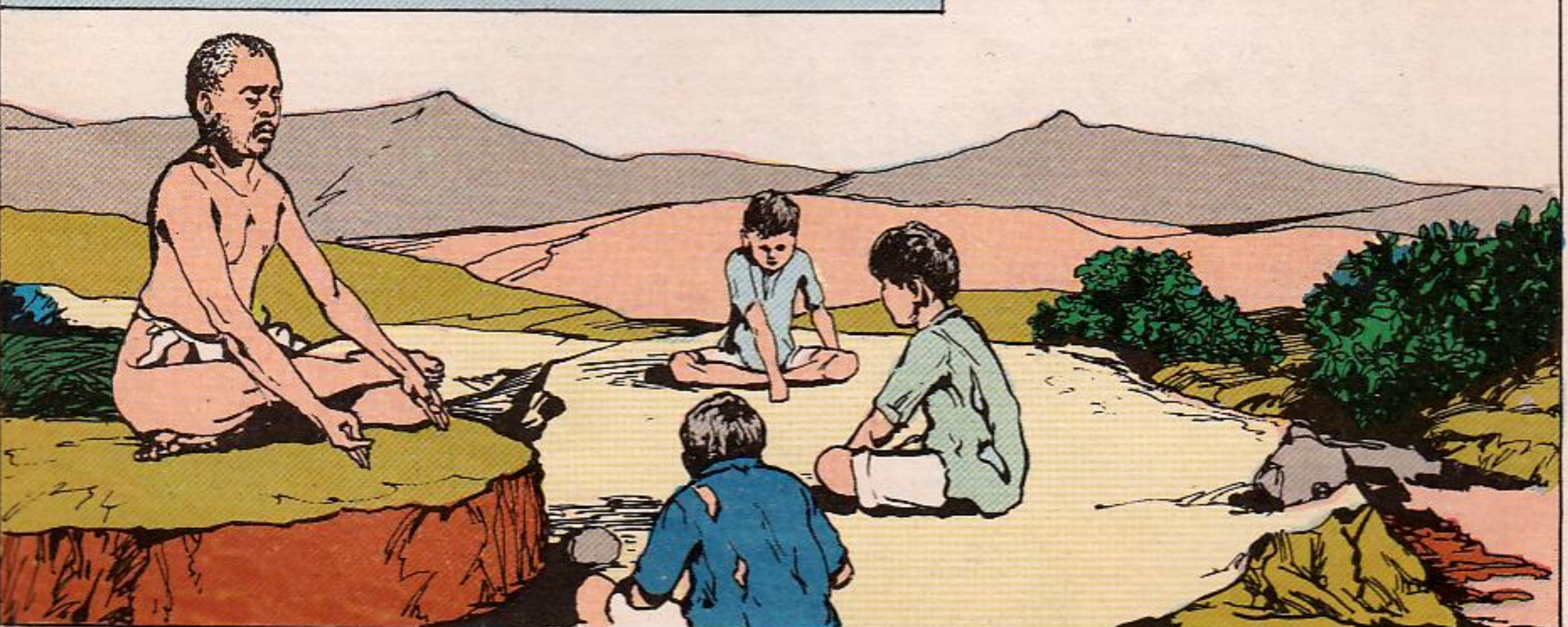
OF COURSE! NOW WHICH ONE SHALL WE MAKE THE BRIDE?



DURING DEEPAVALI, THEY BROUGHT THE MAHARSHI A FEW OF THEIR CRACKERS AS HIS "SHARE", AND EVERYBODY LIT THEM TOGETHER.

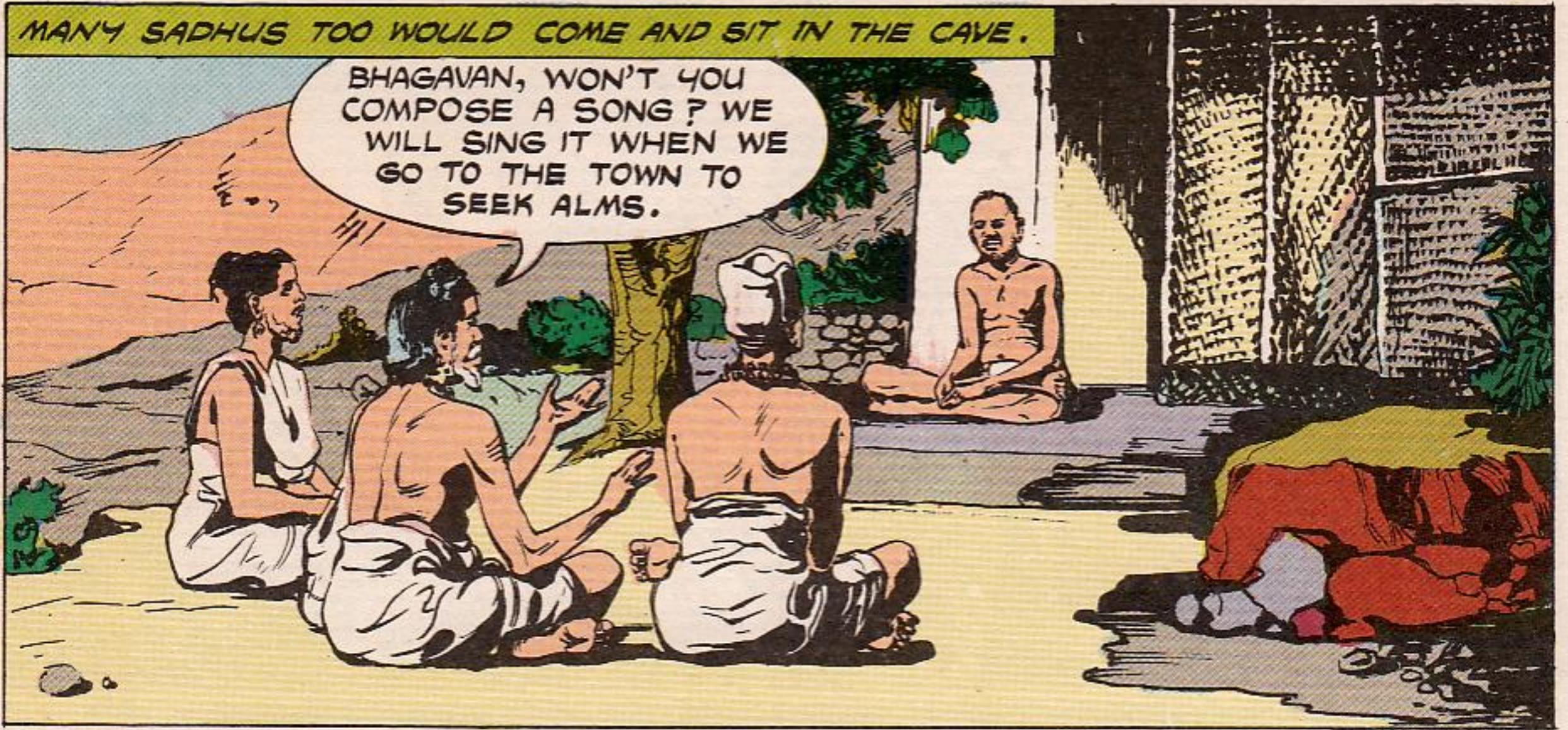


AND IN THE MAHARSHI'S QUIET MOMENTS, WHEN HE REMAINED SILENT THEY TOO SAT QUIETLY AT HIS FEET.



MANY SADHUS TOO WOULD COME AND SIT IN THE CAVE.

BHAGAVAN, WON'T YOU COMPOSE A SONG? WE WILL SING IT WHEN WE GO TO THE TOWN TO SEEK ALMS.



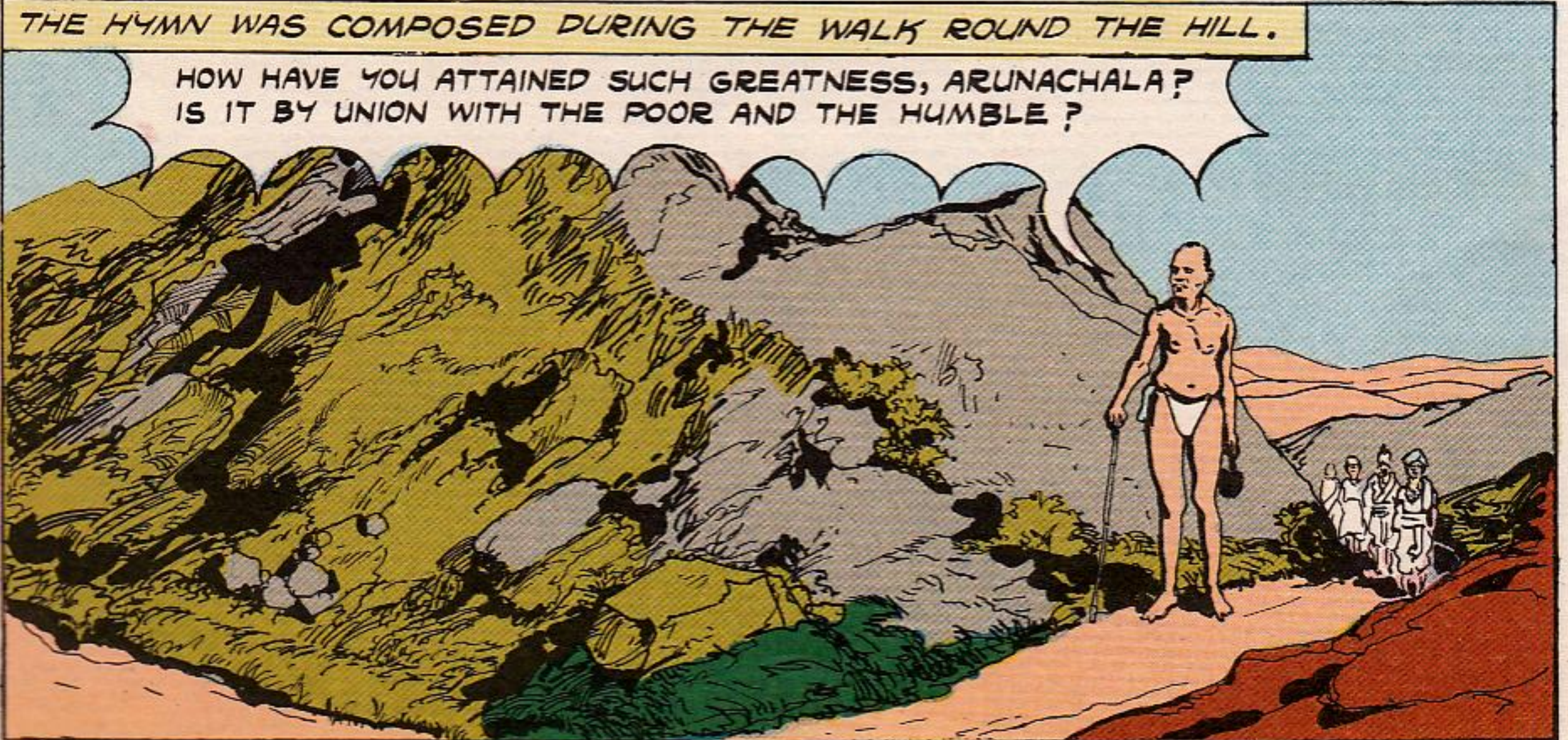
AT THEIR REQUEST, THE MAHARSHI COMPOSED HIS BEAUTIFUL HYMN TO ARUNACHALA — THE AKSHARA-MANA-MALAI*.

BEFORE YOUR FIRE BURNS ME TO ASHES, RAIN DOWN ON ME YOUR SHOWER OF GRACE, O ARUNACHALA!

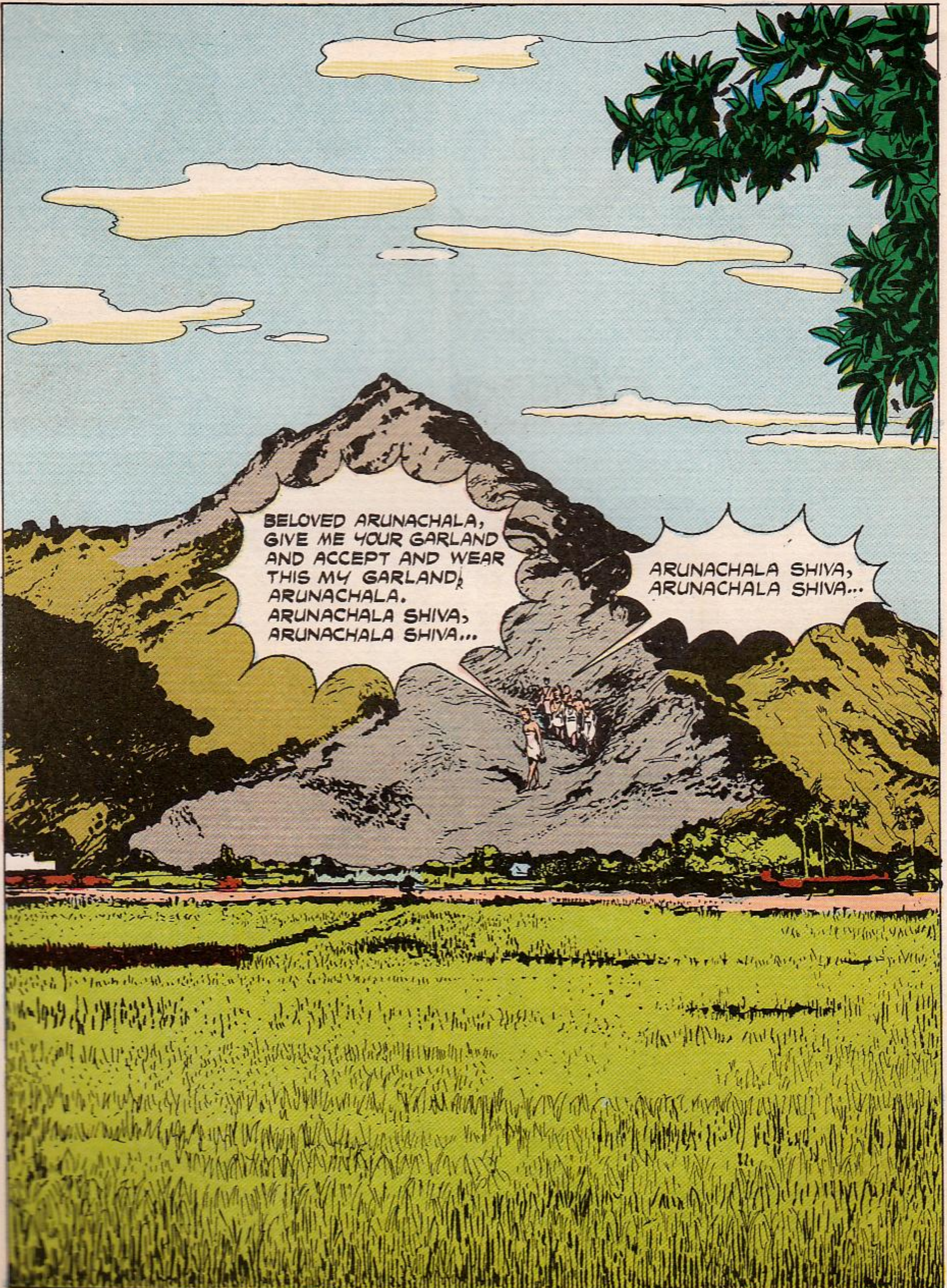


THE HYMN WAS COMPOSED DURING THE WALK ROUND THE HILL.

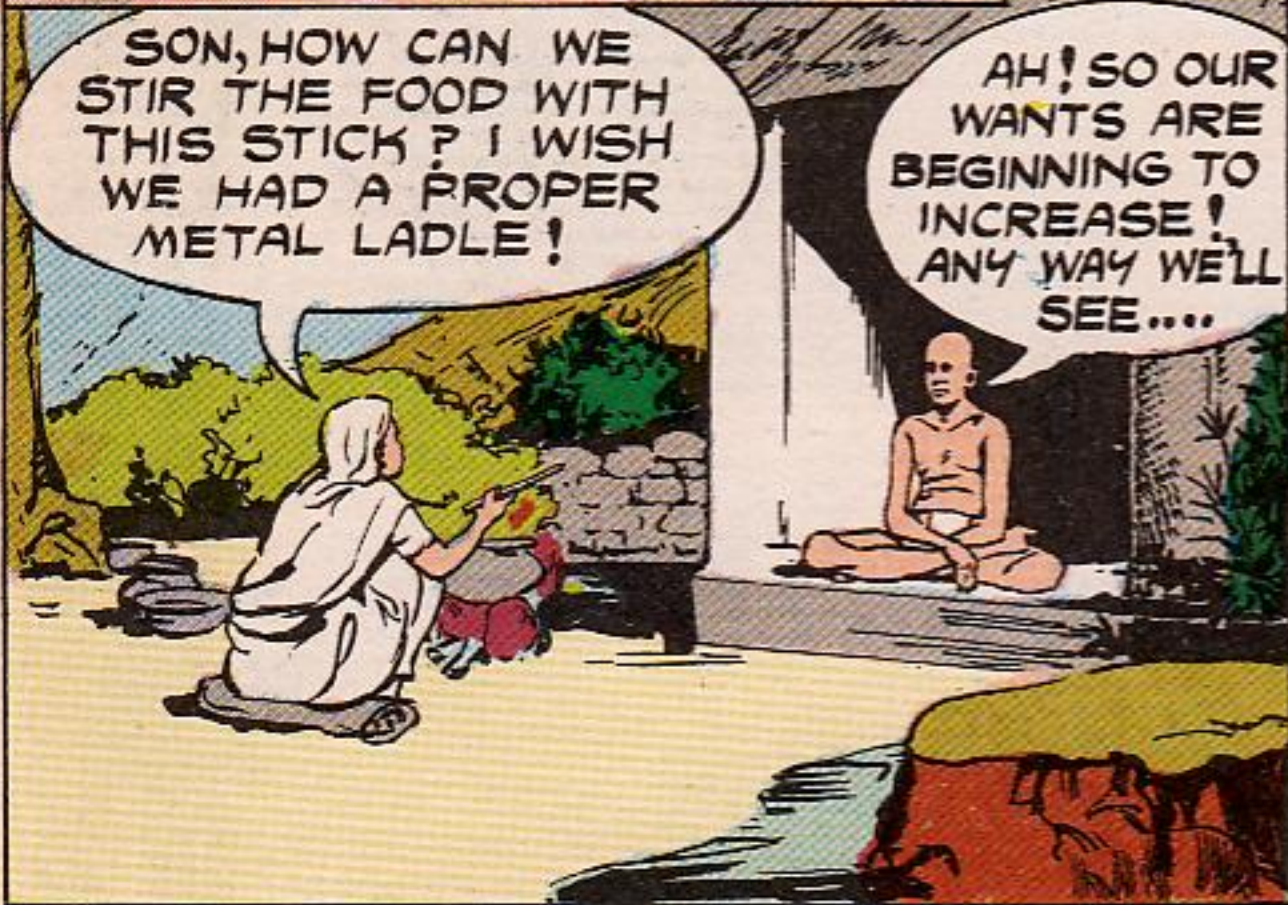
HOW HAVE YOU ATTAINED SUCH GREATNESS, ARUNACHALA? IS IT BY UNION WITH THE POOR AND THE HUMBLE?



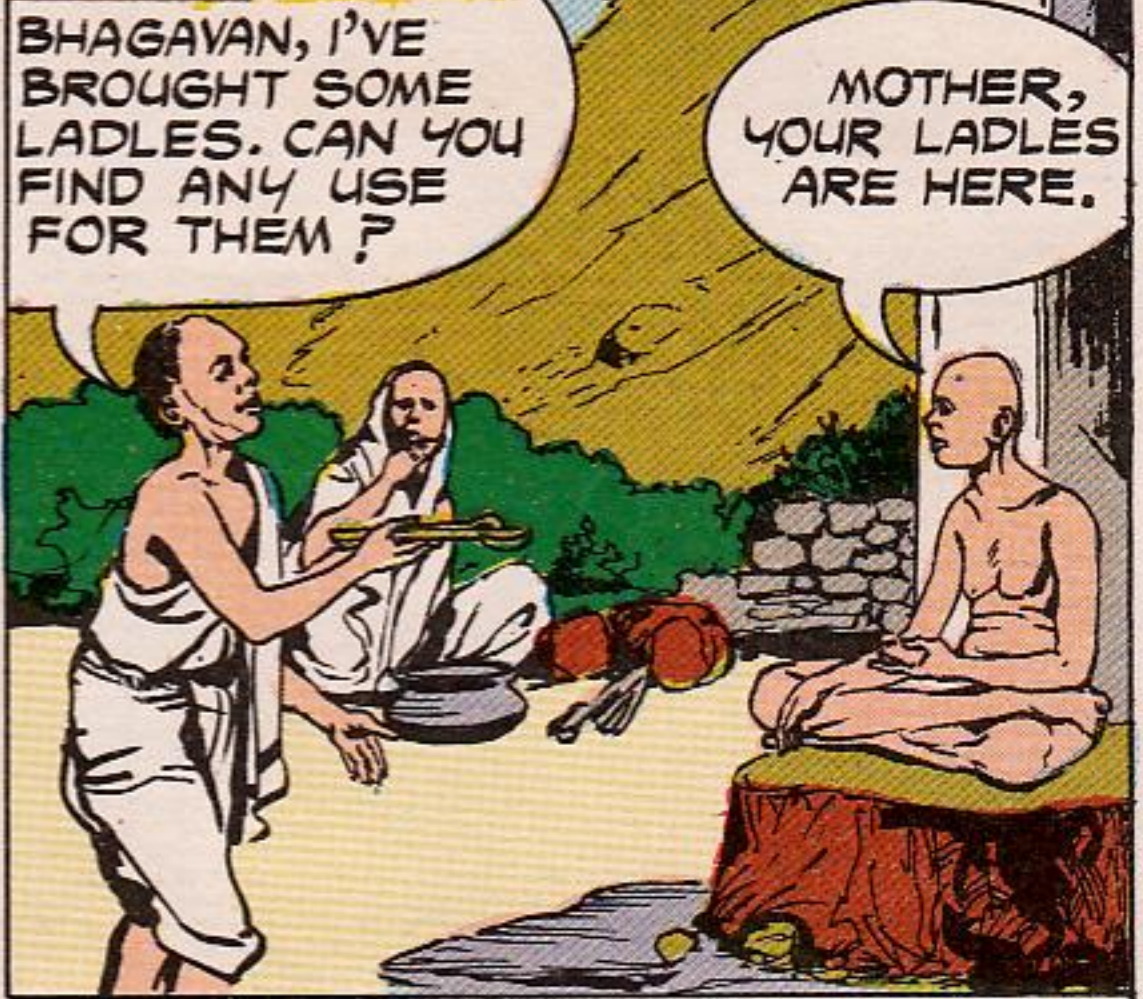
*THE MARITAL GARLAND OF WORDS OR LETTERS



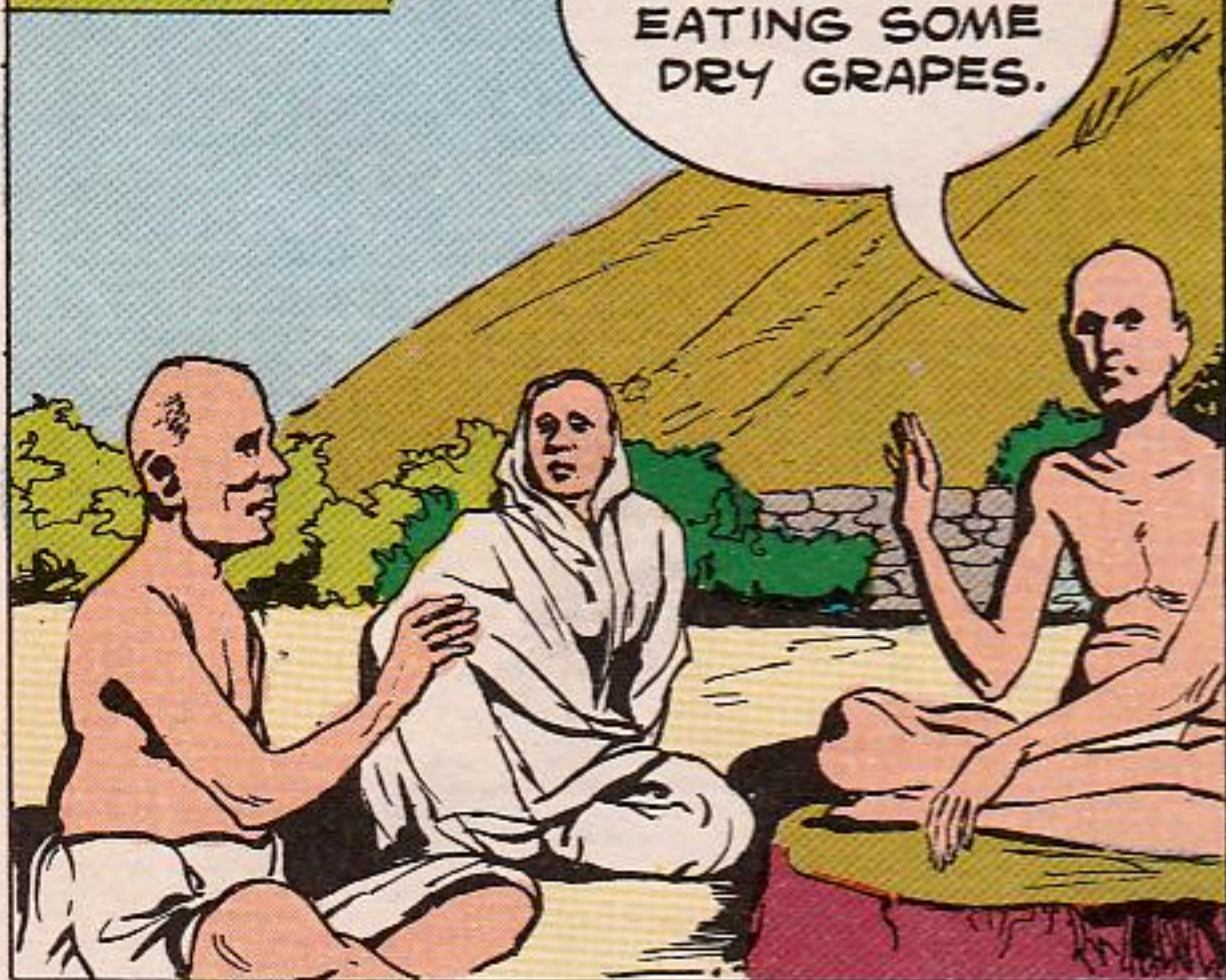
A FEW YEARS LATER, ALAGAMMAL CAME TO LIVE WITH HER SON. WITH HER COMING, THE CAVE BECAME MORE OF A HOME, FOR SHE BEGAN TO COOK FOR EVERYONE.



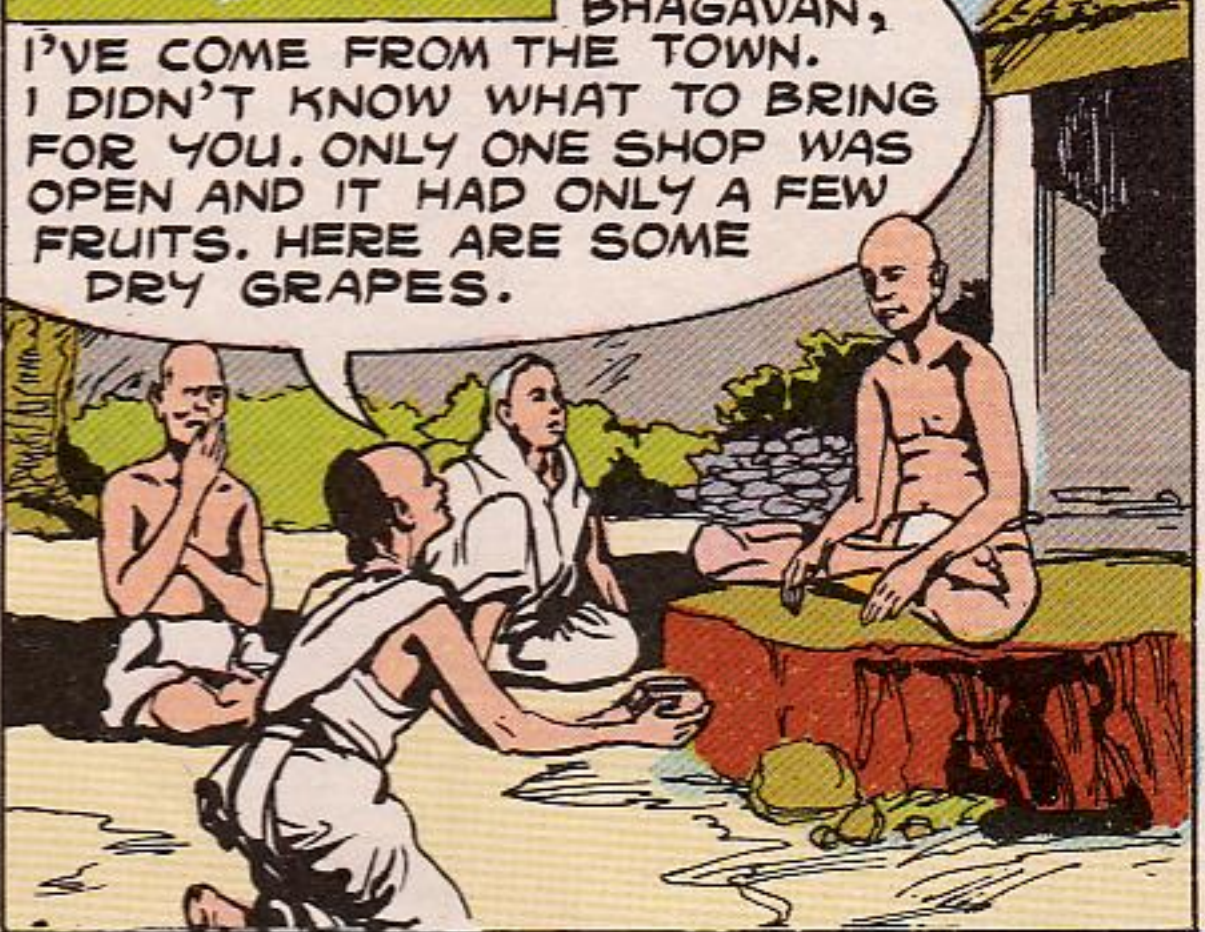
A FEW DAYS LATER, A DEVOTEE CAME THERE.



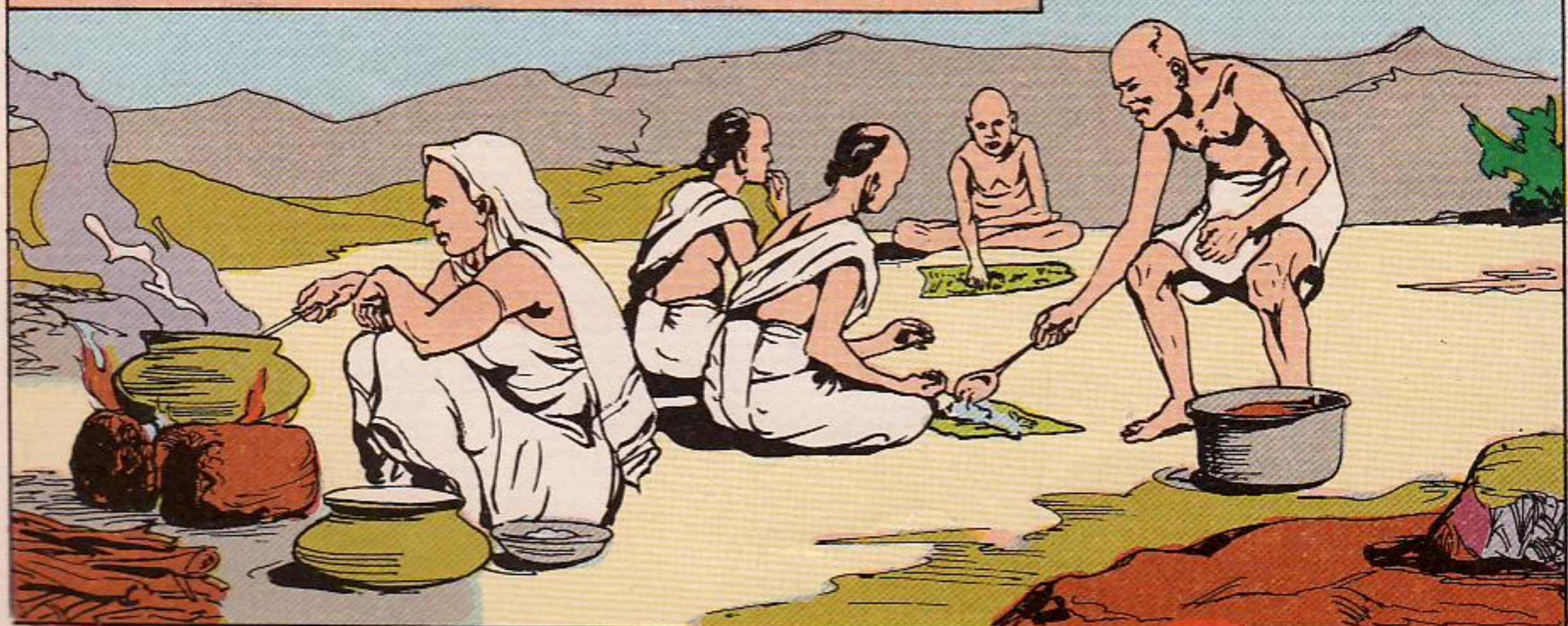
ONE DAY—



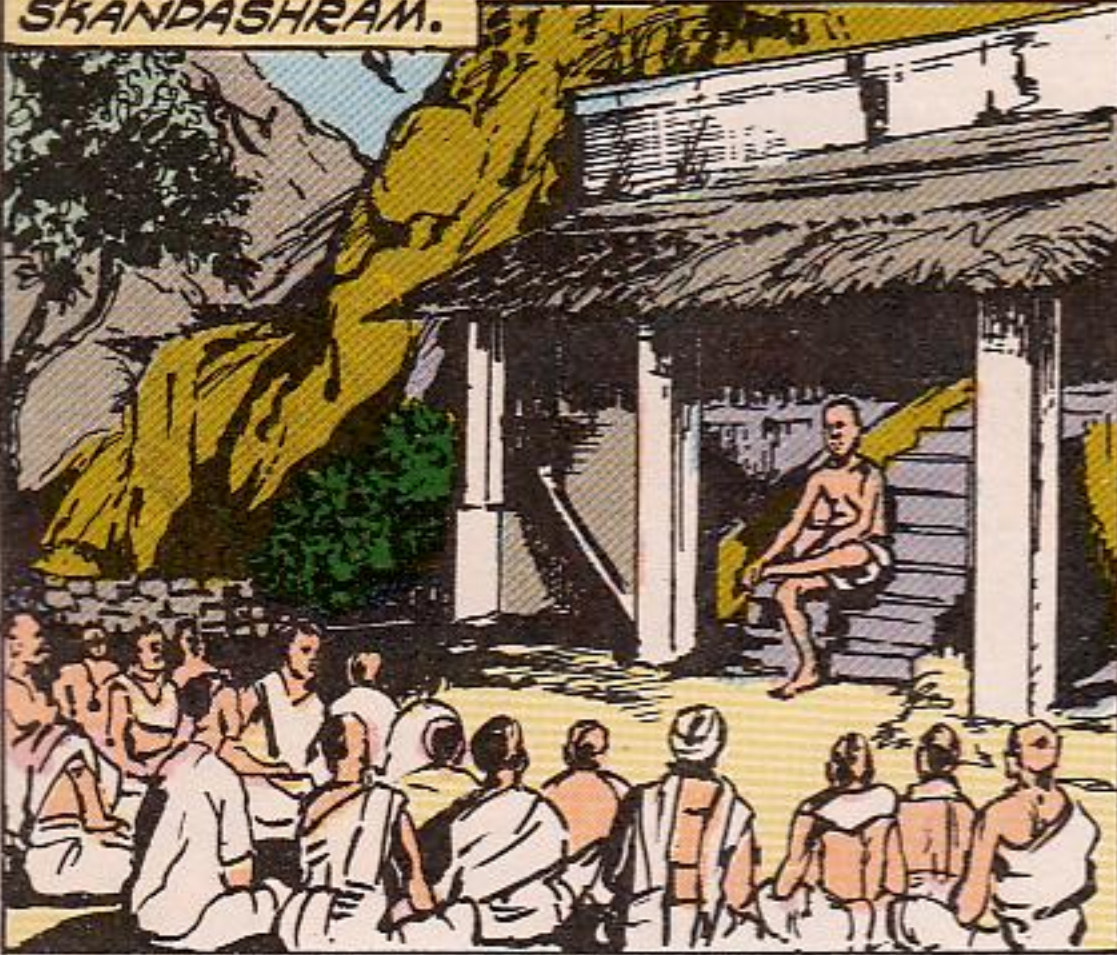
HARDLY HAD THE MAHARSHI EXPRESSED THE WISH THEN—



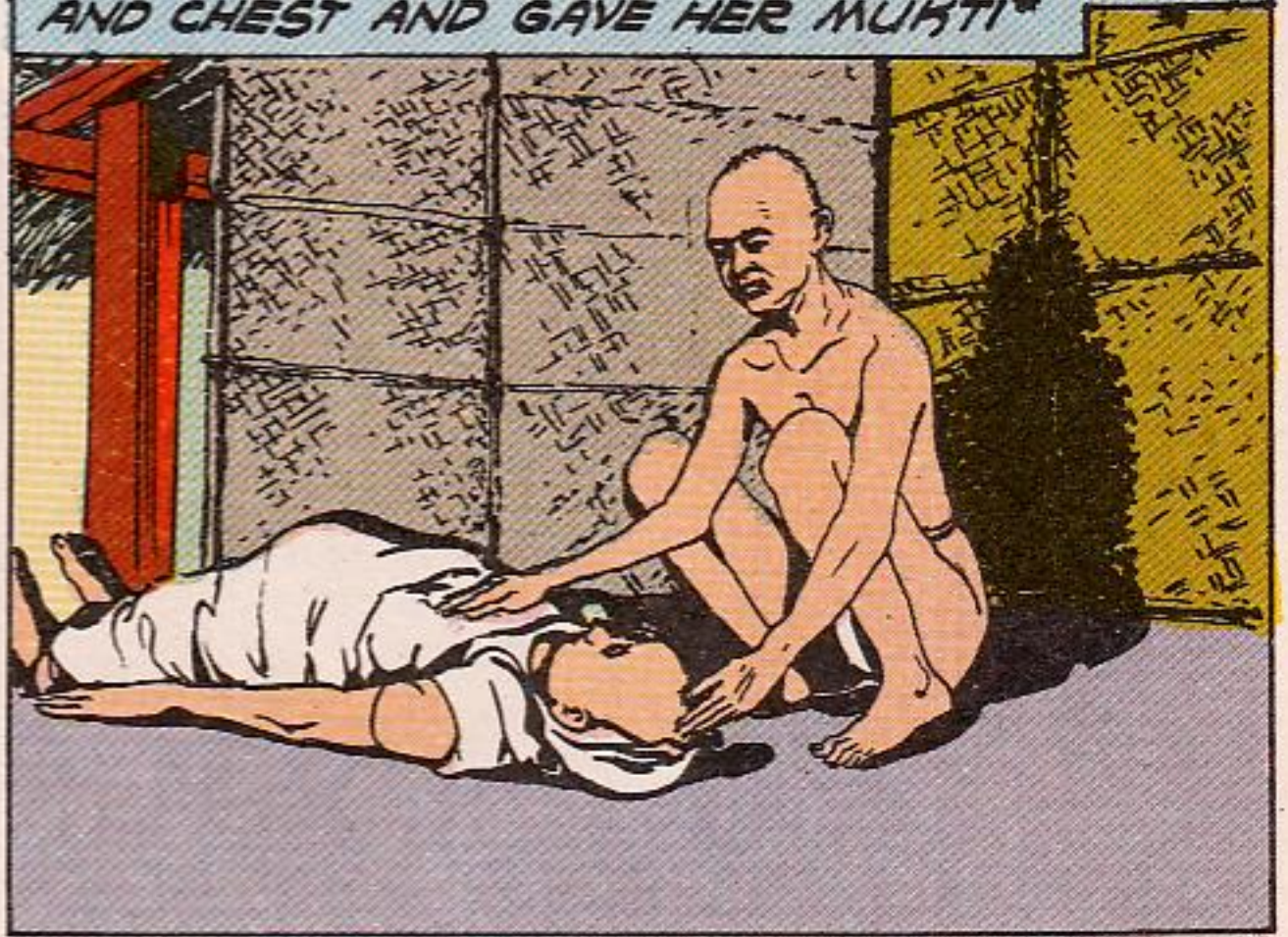
LADLES, FRUITS, VESSELS—ALL BEGAN TO FLOW IN THUS LAYING DOWN THE BEGINNINGS OF AN ASHRAM.



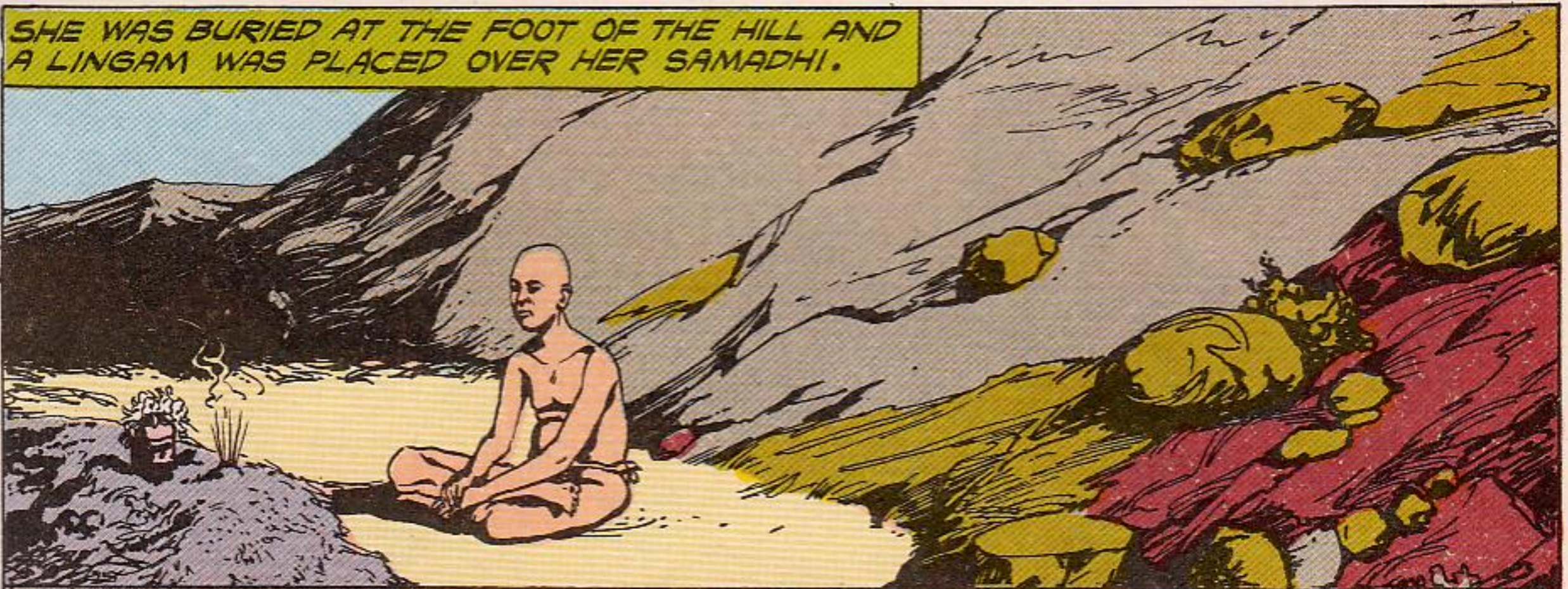
SOON, THE NEED FOR A BIGGER ASHRAM WAS FELT. IT WAS BUILT A LITTLE ABOVE VIRUPAKSHA CAVE AND WAS NAMED SKANDASHRAM.



SOME YEARS LATER, ALAGAMMAL FELL SERIOUSLY ILL. AS DEATH APPROACHED, THE MAHARSHI PLACED HIS HANDS ON HER HEAD AND CHEST AND GAVE HER MUKTI*

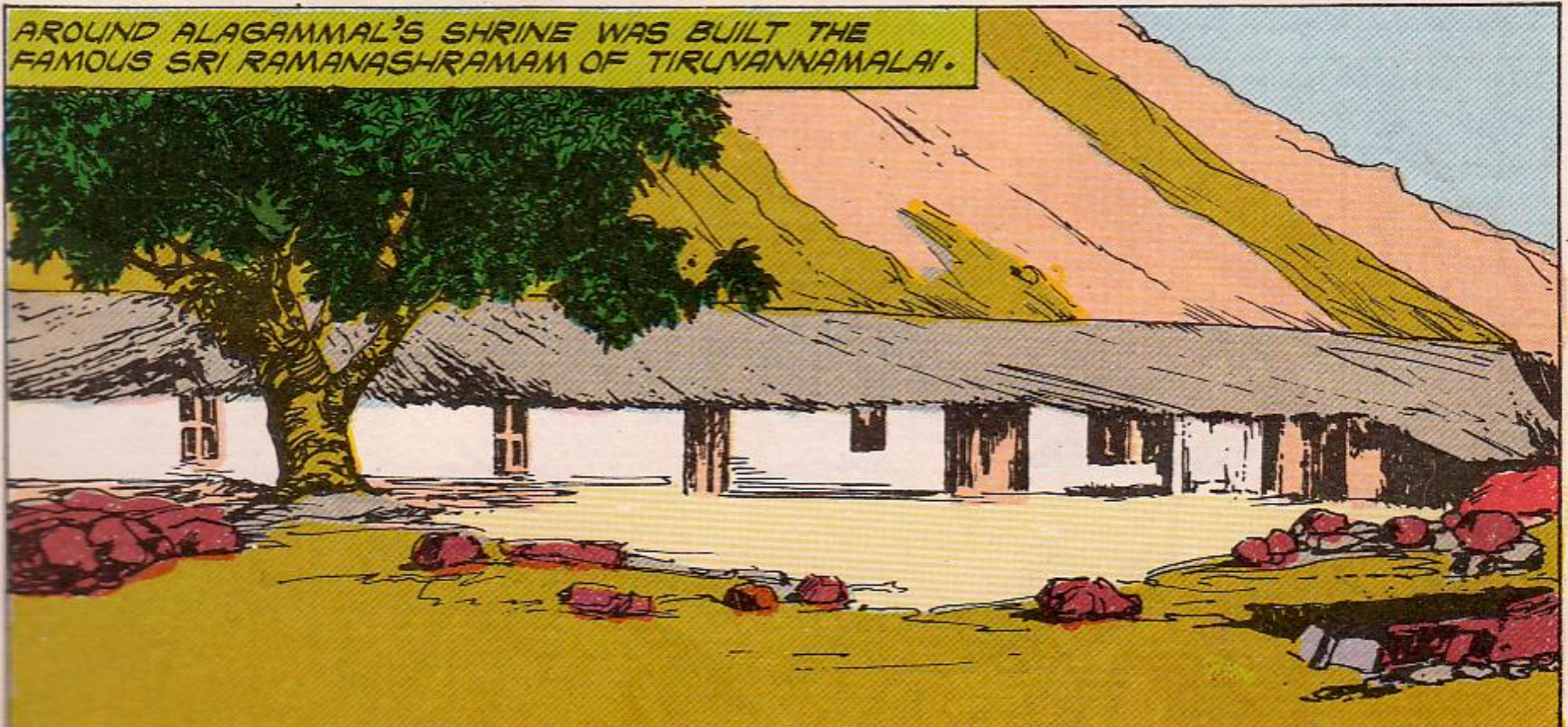


SHE WAS BURIED AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL AND A LINGAM WAS PLACED OVER HER SAMADHI.



AND, ONE DAY, THE MAHARSHI LEFT SKANDASHRAM AND CAME TO LIVE BY THIS SHRINE.

AROUND ALAGAMMAL'S SHRINE WAS BUILT THE FAMOUS SRI RAMANASHRAMAM OF TIRUVANNAMALAI.



THE ASHRAM GREW AND BEGAN TO FEED AND ACCOMMODATE DEVOTEES. ONE NIGHT, THIEVES RAIDED IT.

COME ON! GET UP!
WE WANT YOUR BELONGINGS—
ALL OF THEM!

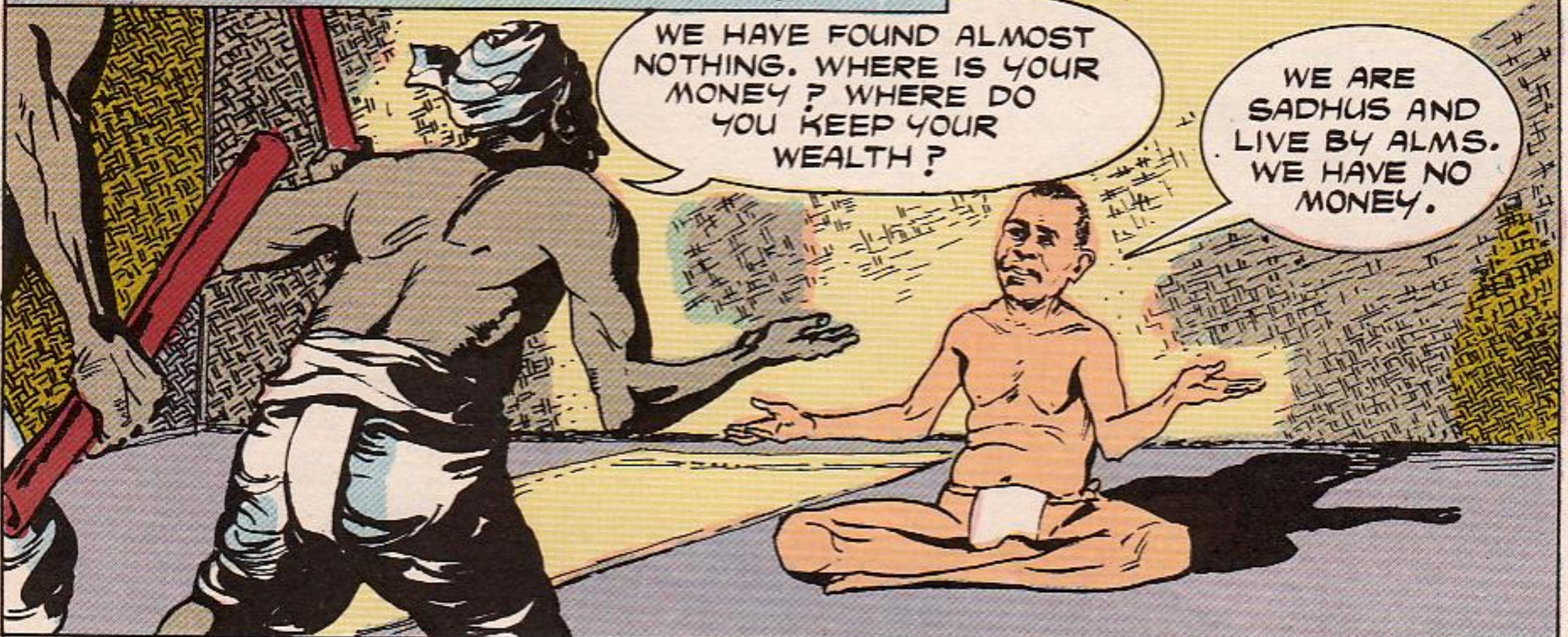
YOU CAN TAKE
WHATEVER YOU LIKE.
TAKE THAT LANTERN
AND SEARCH OUR SHED,
TOO, IF YOU WISH.



THE THIEVES MADE A THOROUGH SEARCH, BUT—

WE HAVE FOUND ALMOST
NOTHING. WHERE IS YOUR
MONEY? WHERE DO
YOU KEEP YOUR
WEALTH?

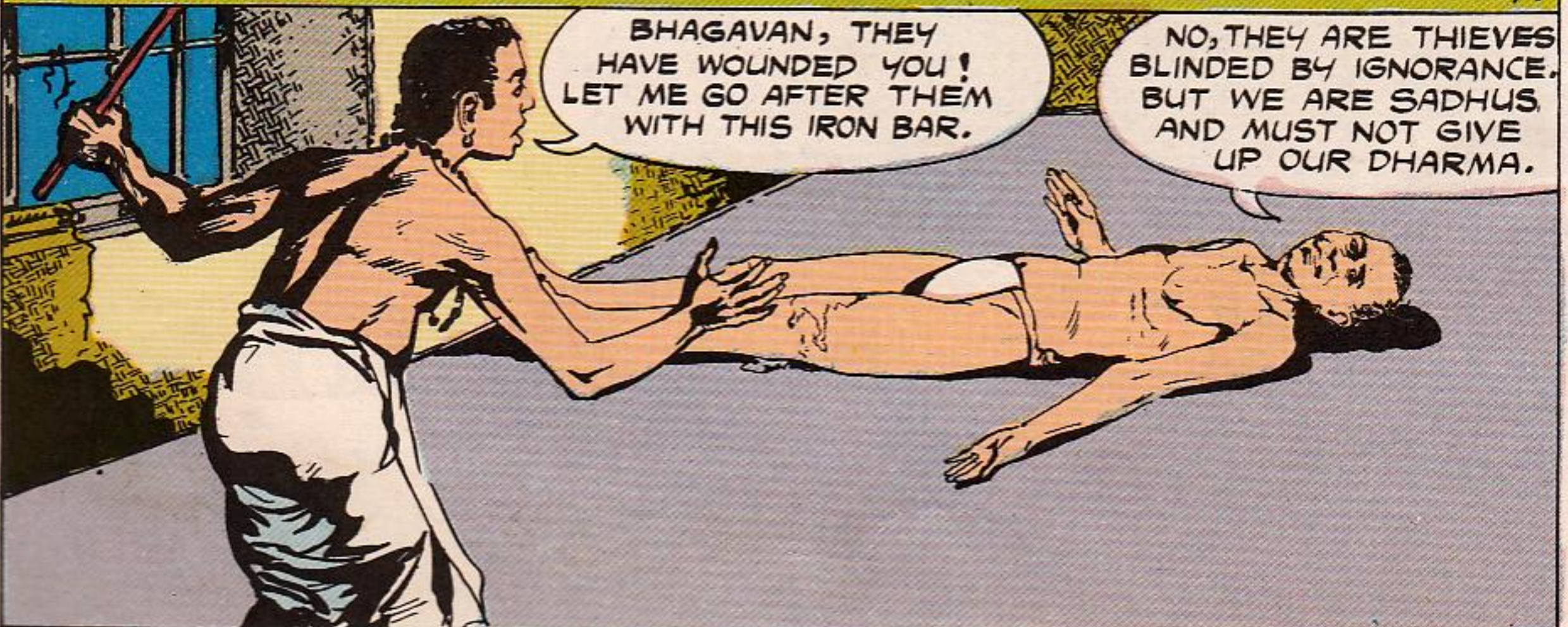
WE ARE
SADHUS AND
LIVE BY ALMS.
WE HAVE NO
MONEY.



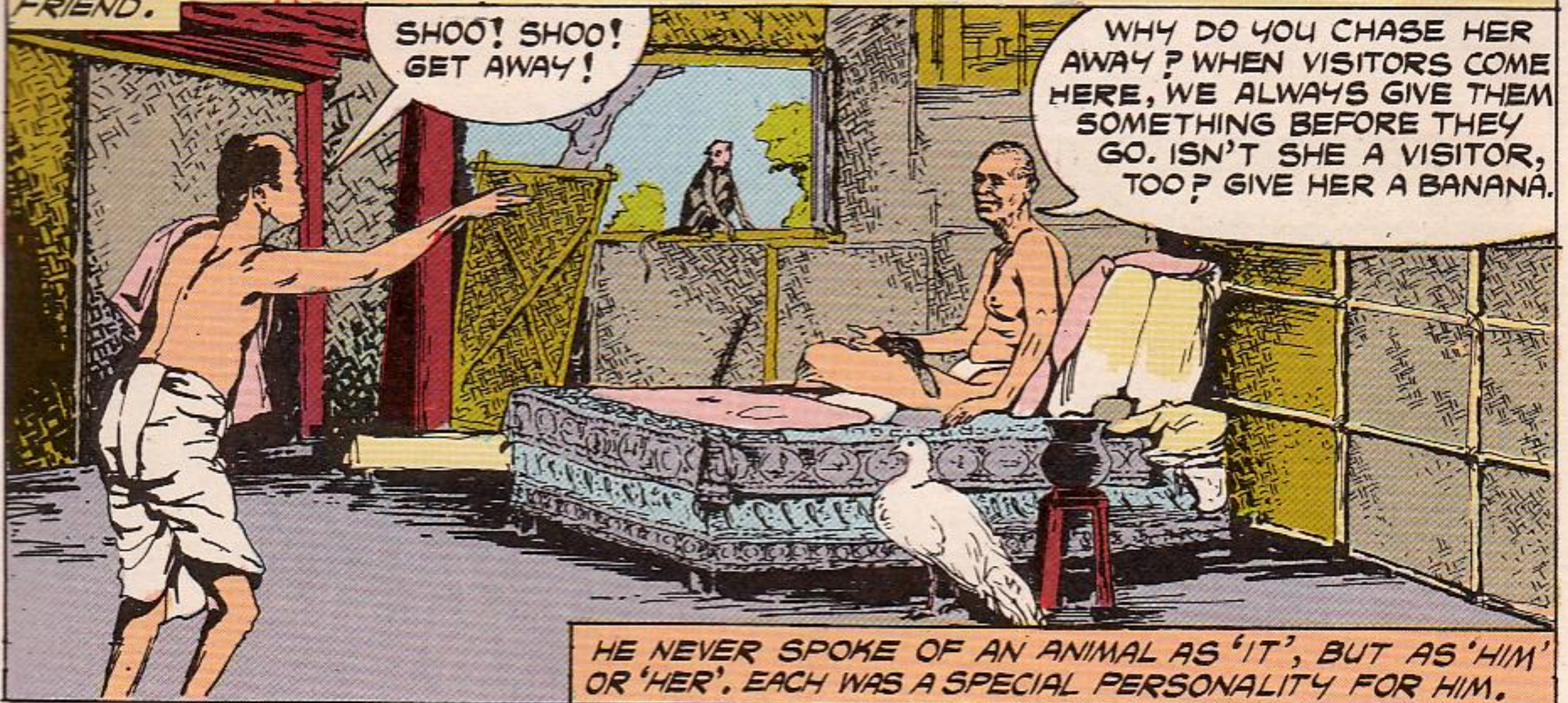
THE ANGRY THIEVES BEAT THE MAHARSHI AND THE ASHRAM INMATES AND WENT AWAY.

BHAGAVAN, THEY
HAVE WOUNDED YOU!
LET ME GO AFTER THEM
WITH THIS IRON BAR.

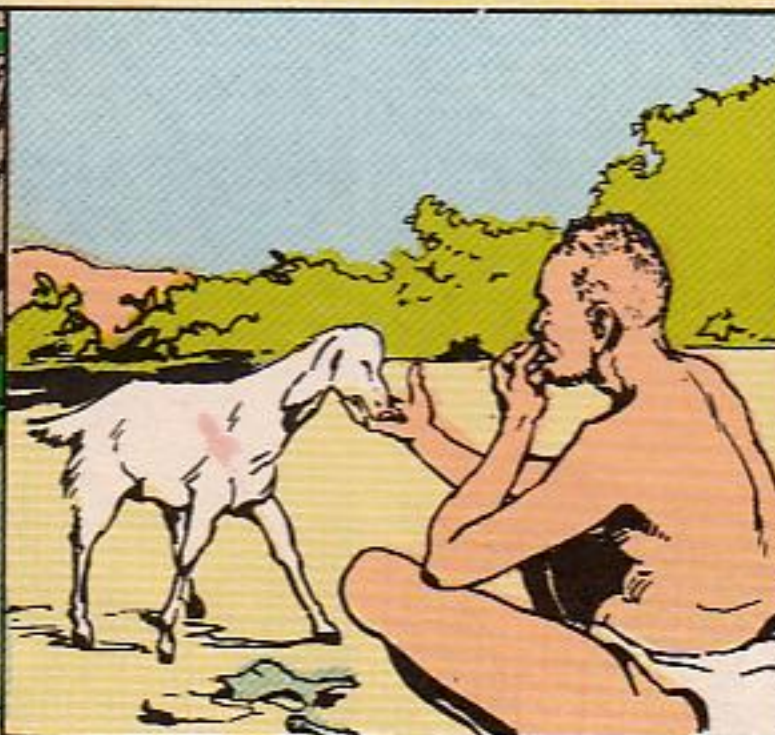
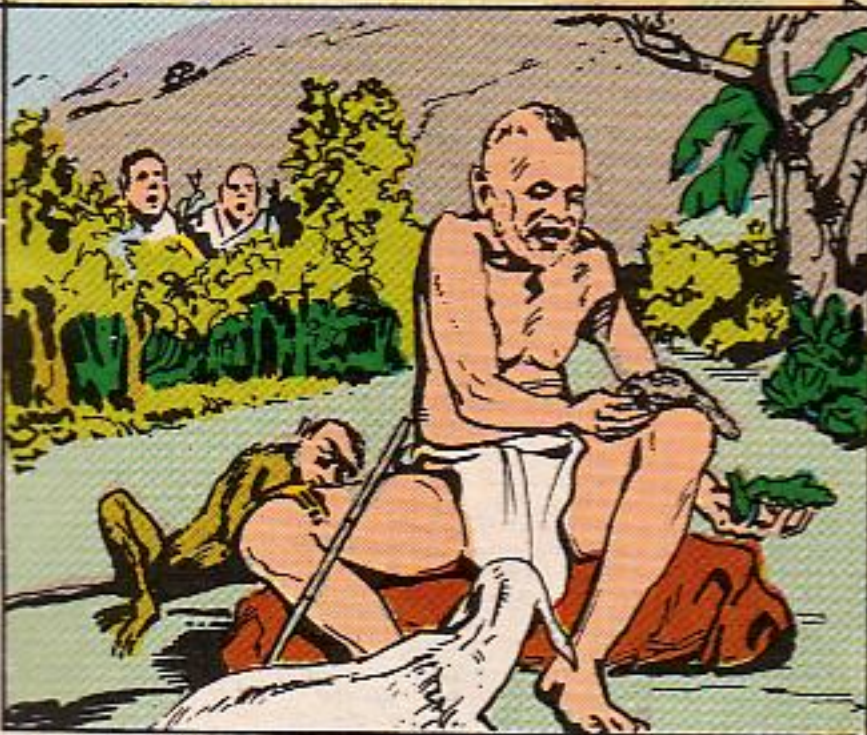
NO, THEY ARE THIEVES
BLINDED BY IGNORANCE.
BUT WE ARE SADHUS
AND MUST NOT GIVE
UP OUR DHARMA.



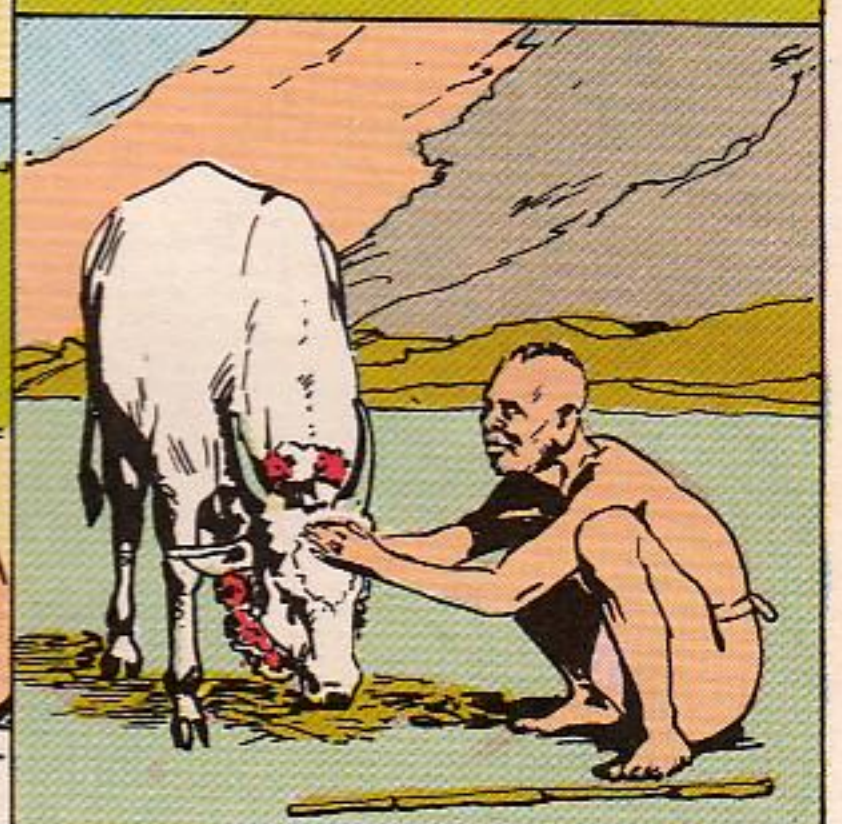
ANIMALS, TOO, WERE ATTRACTED TO THE MAHARSHI. THEY SAW IN HIM, A TRUSTED FRIEND.



ONE DAY, WHEN SOME DEVOTEES LOOKED INTO THE KITCHEN GARDEN, THEY WERE SURPRISED TO SEE THE MAHARSHI FEEDING GROUNDNUTS TO A GOAT, A SQUIRREL AND A MONKEY AND EATING SOME HIMSELF—SAINT AND ANIMALS THOROUGHLY ENJOYING THEIR GARDEN PARTY.



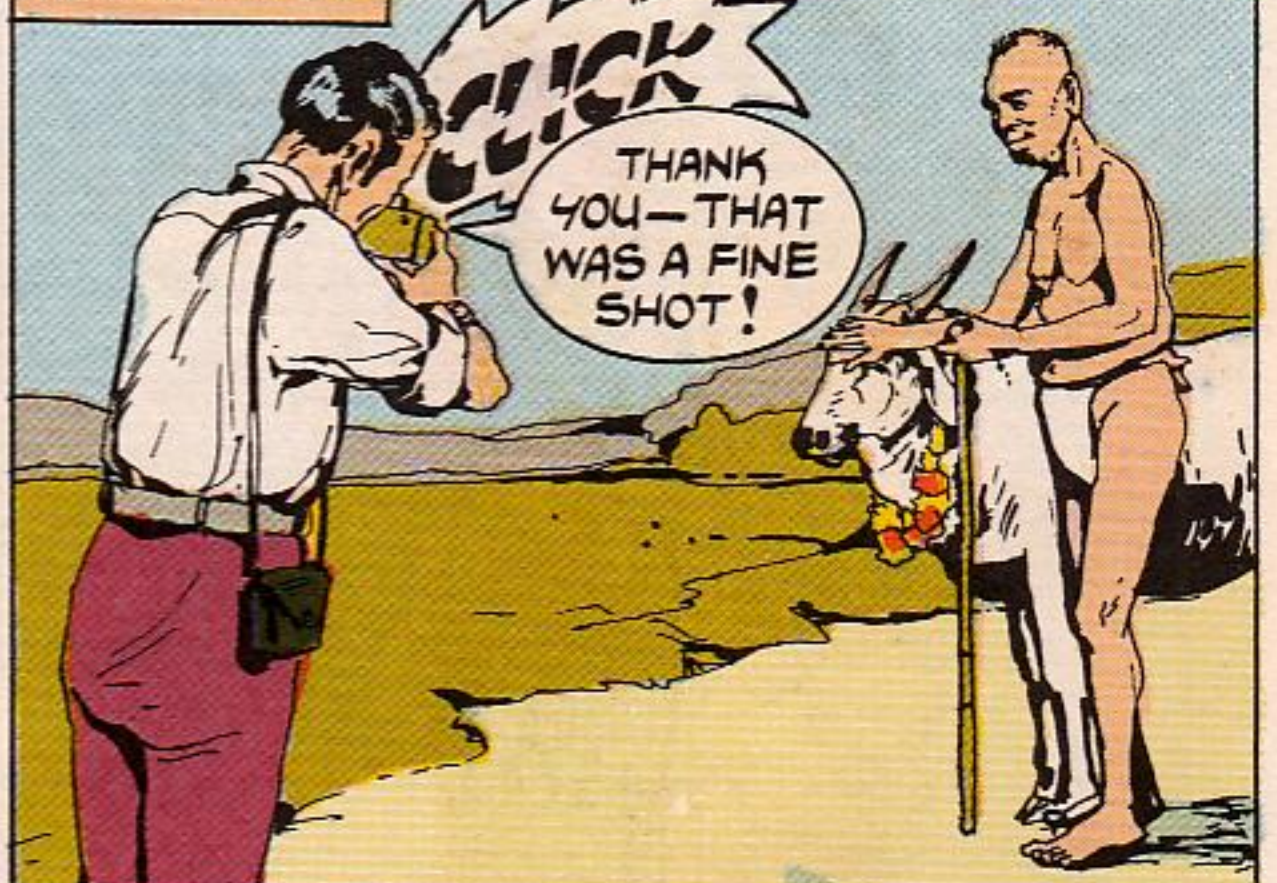
BEAUTIFUL LAKSHMI WAS THE ASHRAM'S FIRST COW. SHE ADORED THE MAHARSHI.



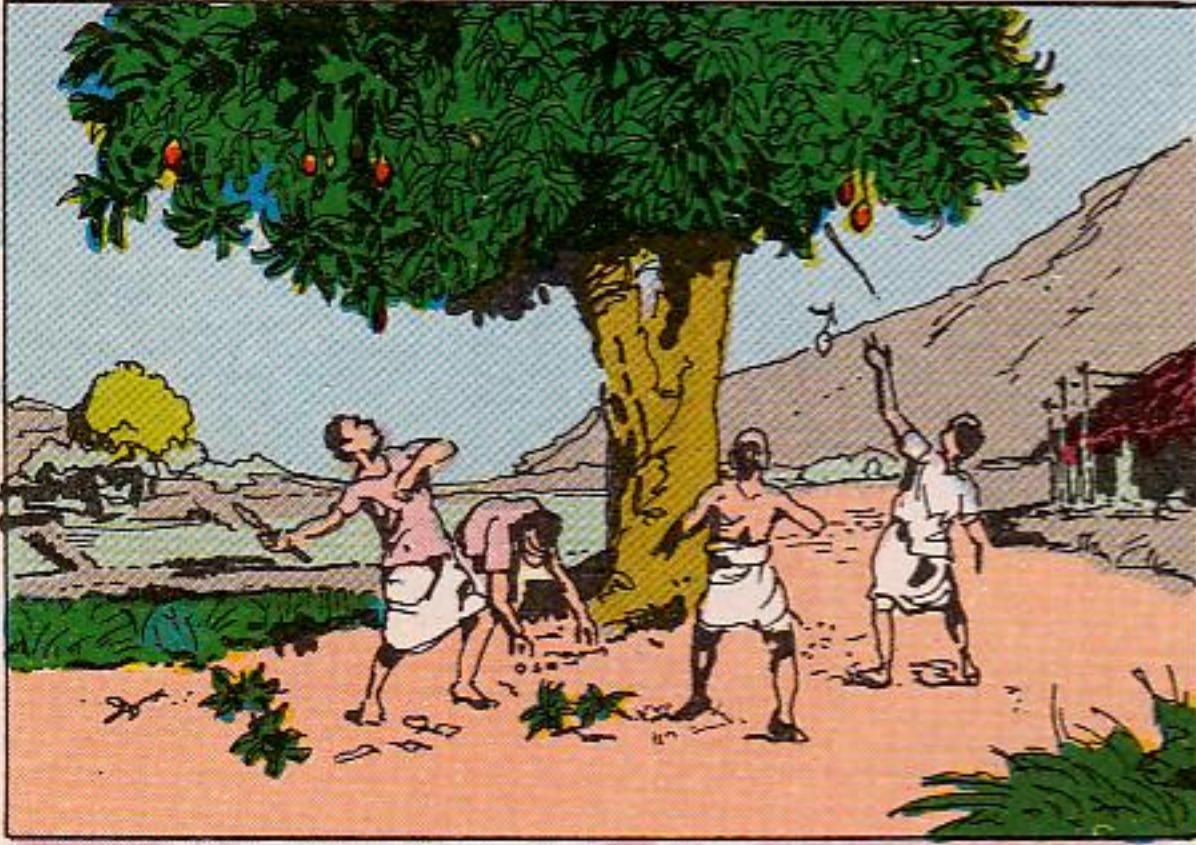
ONE MAATU PONGAL DAY*, A PHOTOGRAPHER WAS VERY KEEN TO TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH, BUT LAKSHMI WAS RESTLESS.



THE MOMENT SHE HEARD THOSE CALMING WORDS, LAKSHMI STOOD STILL AT ONCE AND CLOSED HER EYES AS IF SHE WERE MEDITATING.

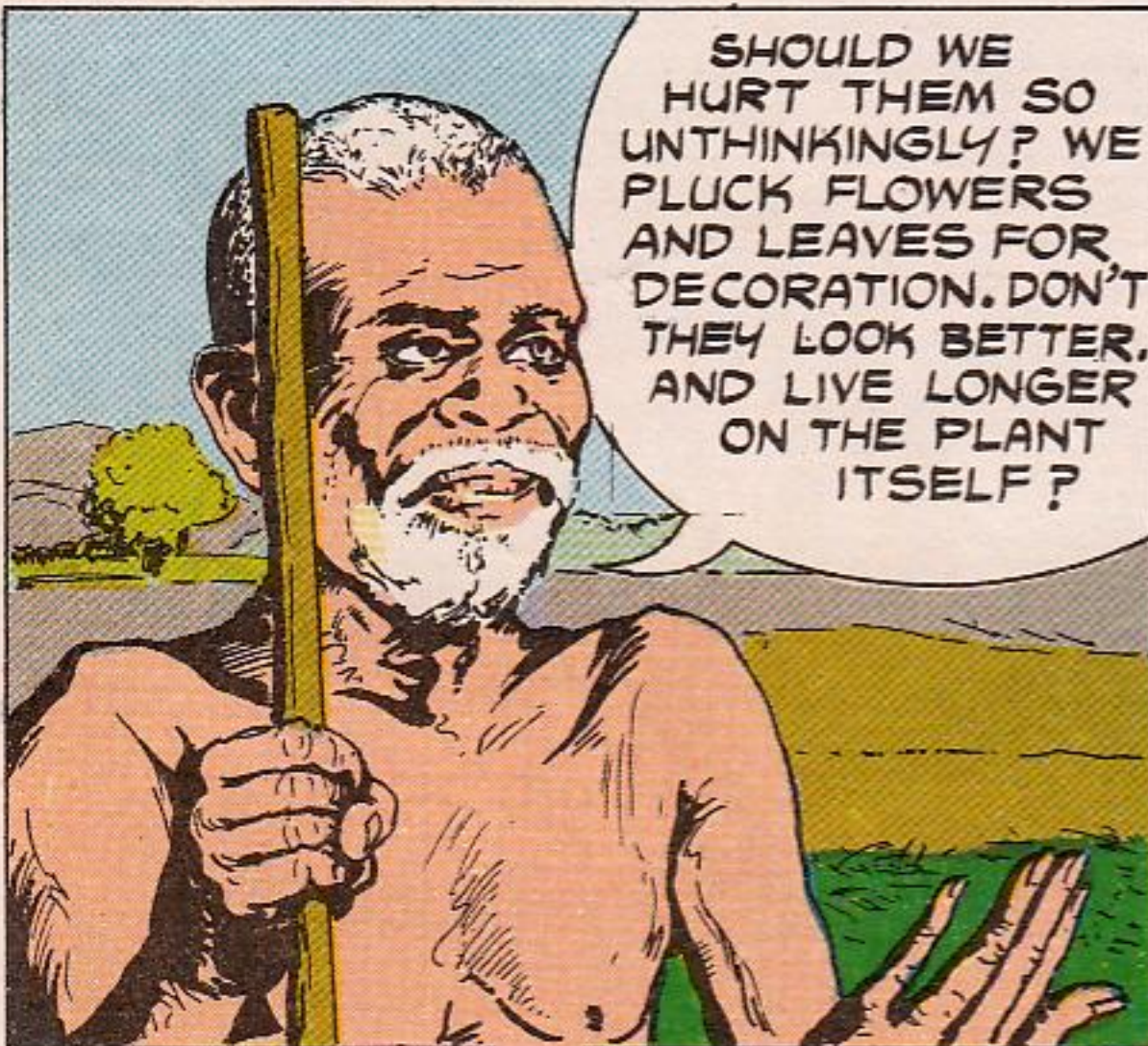
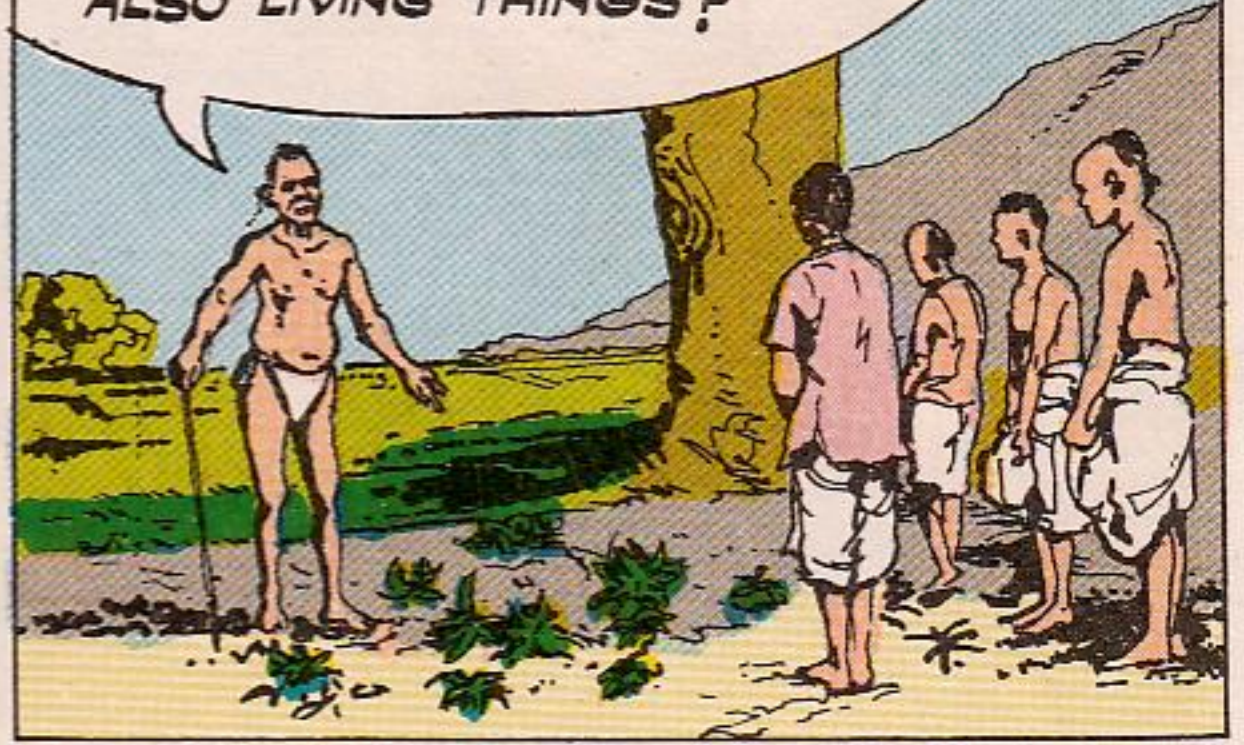


IT WAS NOT FOR ANIMALS ALONE THAT THE MAHARSHI FELT DEEP AFFECTION, BUT FOR ALL LIVING THINGS. ONE DAY, SOME MEN WERE THROWING STONES TO BRING DOWN FRUIT FROM A MANGO TREE.



JUST THEN THE MAHARSHI CAME THERE AND HIS SAINTLY CALM GAVE WAY TO A RARE FURY.

THIS TREE GIVES US ITS FRUIT. IS IT TO BE STONED IN RETURN? ARE NOT TREES AND LEAVES ALSO LIVING THINGS?

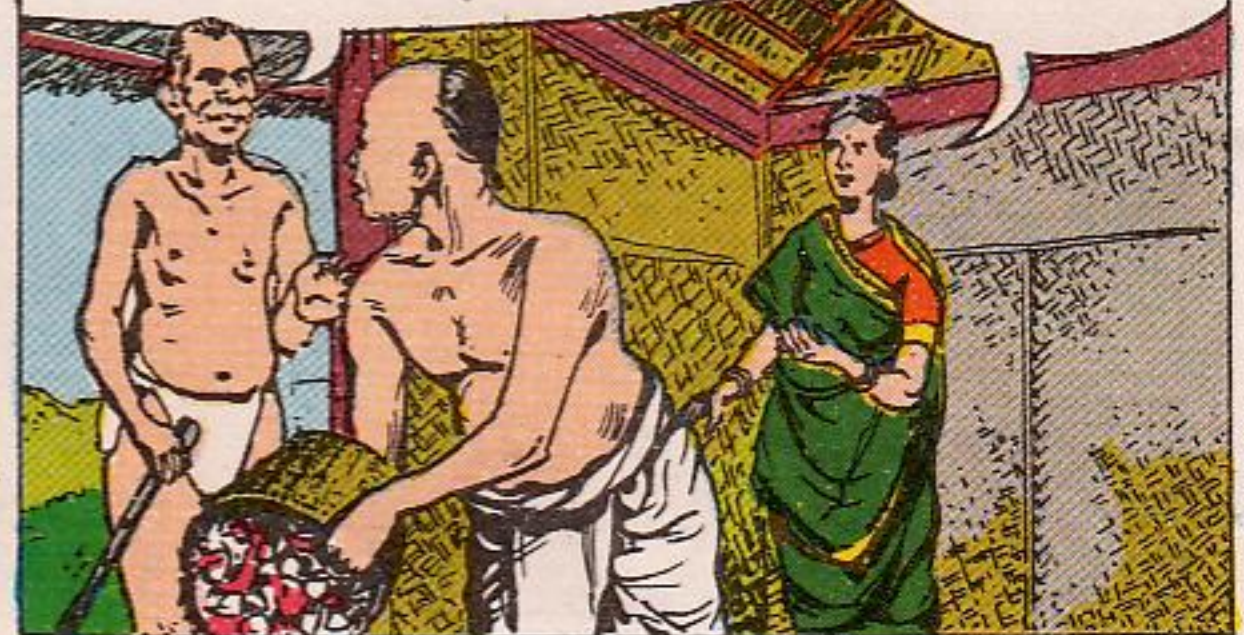


SHOULD WE HURT THEM SO UNTHINKINGLY? WE PLUCK FLOWERS AND LEAVES FOR DECORATION. DON'T THEY LOOK BETTER, AND LIVE LONGER ON THE PLANT ITSELF?

ANOTHER HABIT THE MAHARSHI FIRMLY DISCOURAGED WAS WASTE. EVERY PIN AND LOOSE PAPER WAS CAREFULLY LAID AWAY FOR FUTURE USE. ONE DAY —

WHY ARE THOSE ROSE PETALS BEING THROWN AWAY? LET US USE THEM. PUT THEM IN TODAY'S PAYASAM*.

DRIED ROSE PETALS? BUT... BUT... BHAGAVAN...



HOWEVER, THE PETALS WERE USED IN THE PAYASAM. LATER, WHEN IT WAS SERVED —

THEY SEEM TO BE ENJOYING IT VERY MUCH!

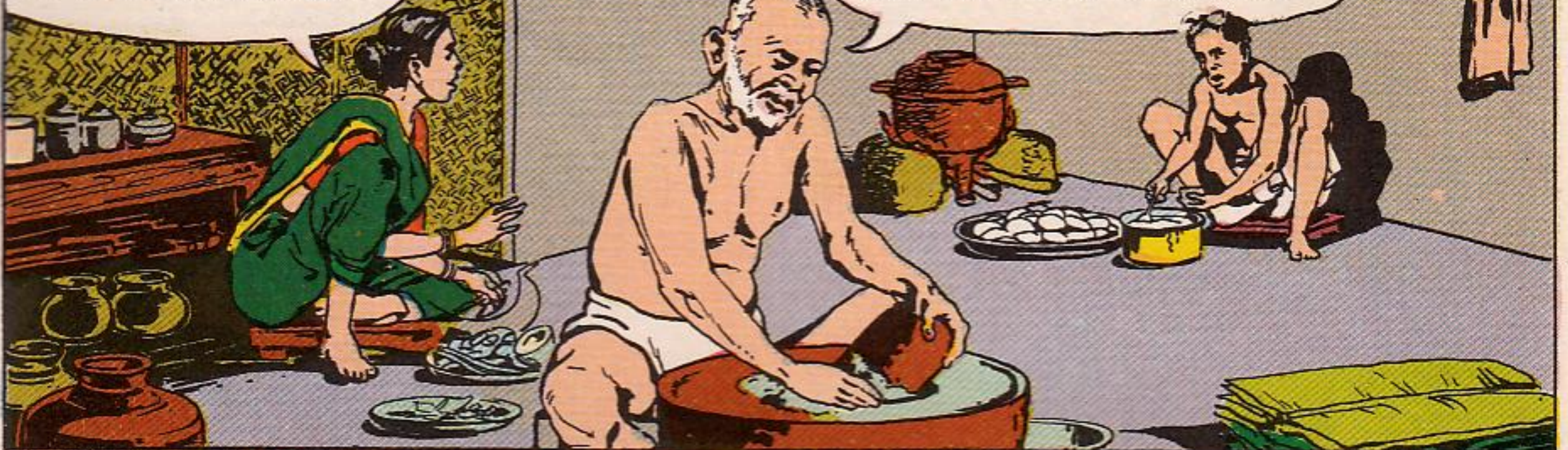
DO YOU THINK THERE IS MORE FOR A SECOND HELPING?



THE MAHARSHI HELPED IN CHOPPING VEGETABLES AND IN GRINDING TASTY CHUTNEYS. HE NEVER LET THE PREVIOUS DAY'S FOOD GO WASTE.

THAT SAMBAR* IS YESTERDAY'S. I'LL GIVE IT TO THE BEGGARS.

WHY SHOULD ONLY BEGGARS EAT LEFT-OVERS? ARE THEY ANY DIFFERENT FROM US?

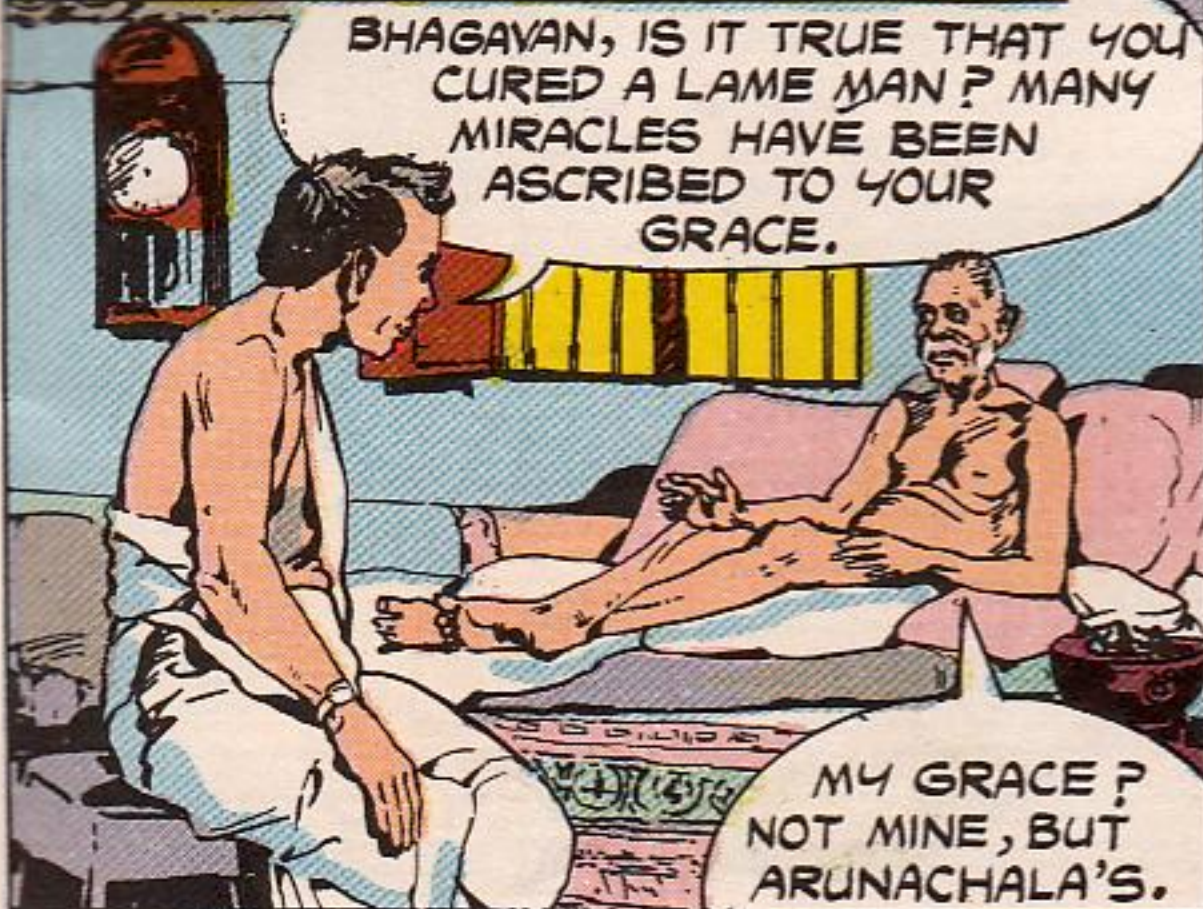


AND THE MAHARSHI HEATED THE SAMBAR HIMSELF! IN THIS WAY, HE GENTLY CORRECTED THE STRICT, ORTHODOX BELIEFS OF SOME OF HIS DEVOTEES. AND HIS PRESENCE IN THE KITCHEN MADE COOKING NOT A TIRESOME CHORE, BUT A PLEASURE!

HE ALSO DISCOURAGED PEOPLE FROM ATTRIBUTING MIRACLES TO HIM.

BHAGAVAN, IS IT TRUE THAT YOU CURED A LAME MAN? MANY MIRACLES HAVE BEEN ASCRIBED TO YOUR GRACE.

MY GRACE? NOT MINE, BUT ARUNACHALA'S.



PEOPLE FROM ALL PARTS OF INDIA AND ABROAD CAME TO THE MAHARSHI.

HOW CAN I ATTAIN THE TRUTH?

ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTION: 'WHO AM I?' THE TRUTH LIES WITHIN YOU. DON'T SEEK IT OUTSIDE. IT IS ALWAYS THERE IN YOU.



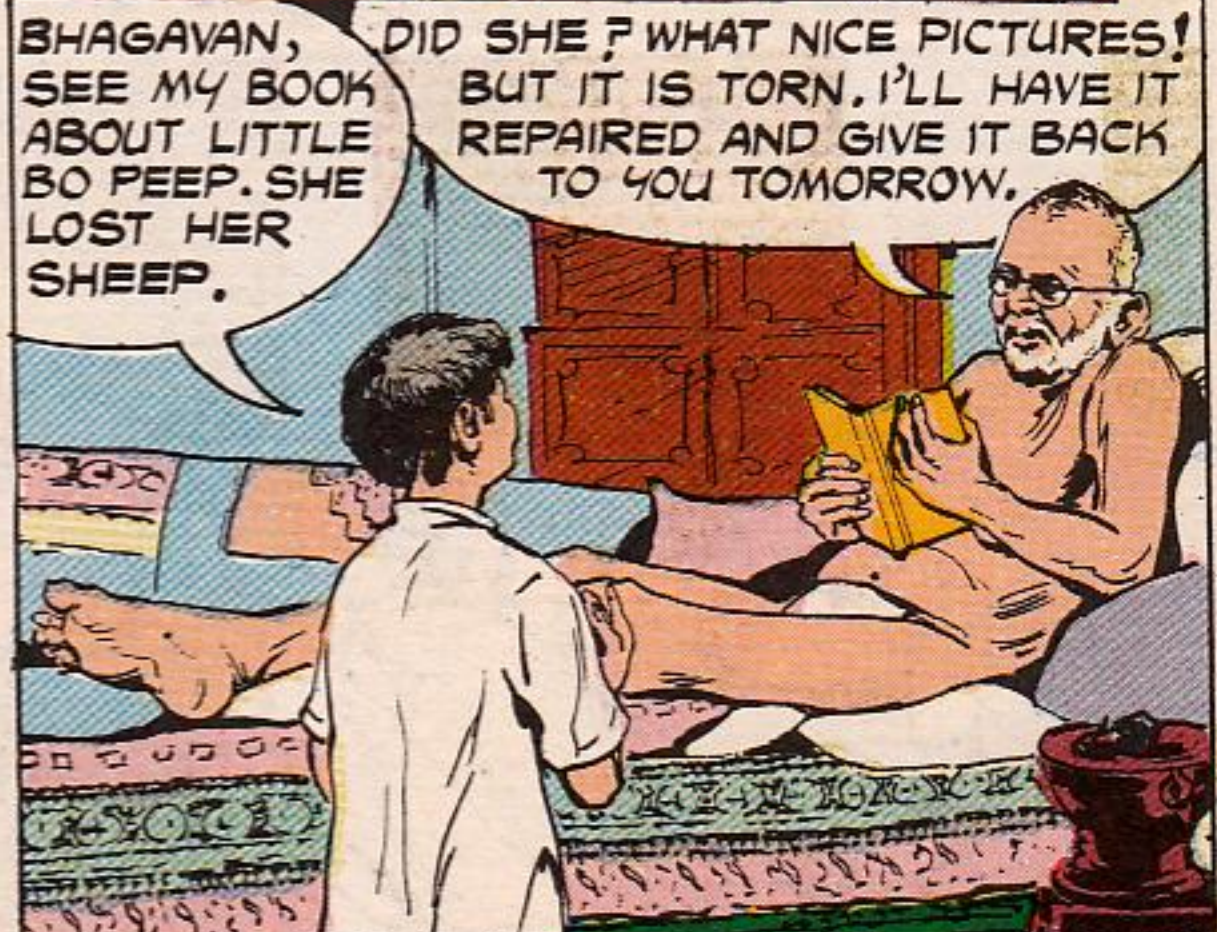
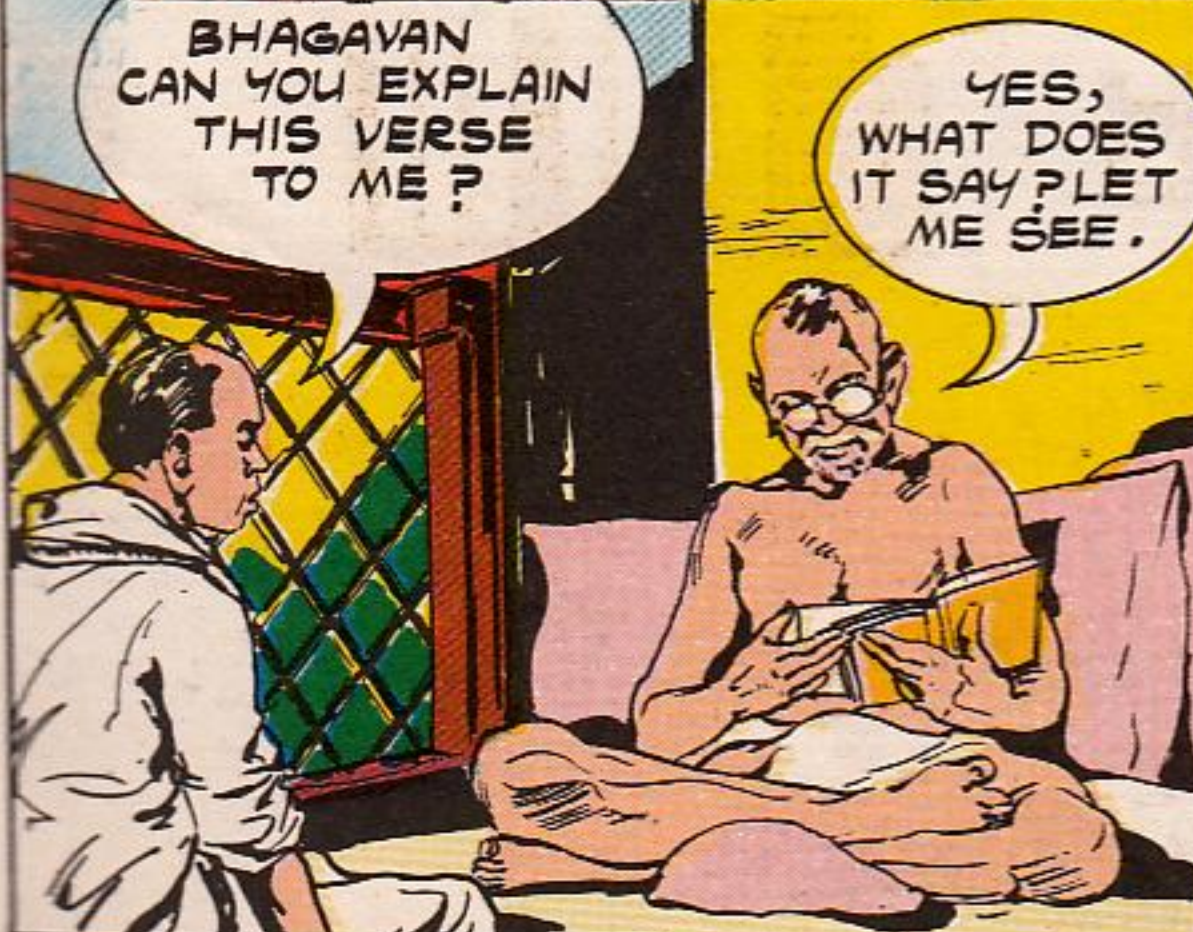
ALL WERE ALIKE TO BHAGAVAN, SCHOLAR OR SIMPLETON, OLD MAN OR CHILD.

BHAGAVAN CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS VERSE TO ME?

YES, WHAT DOES IT SAY? LET ME SEE.

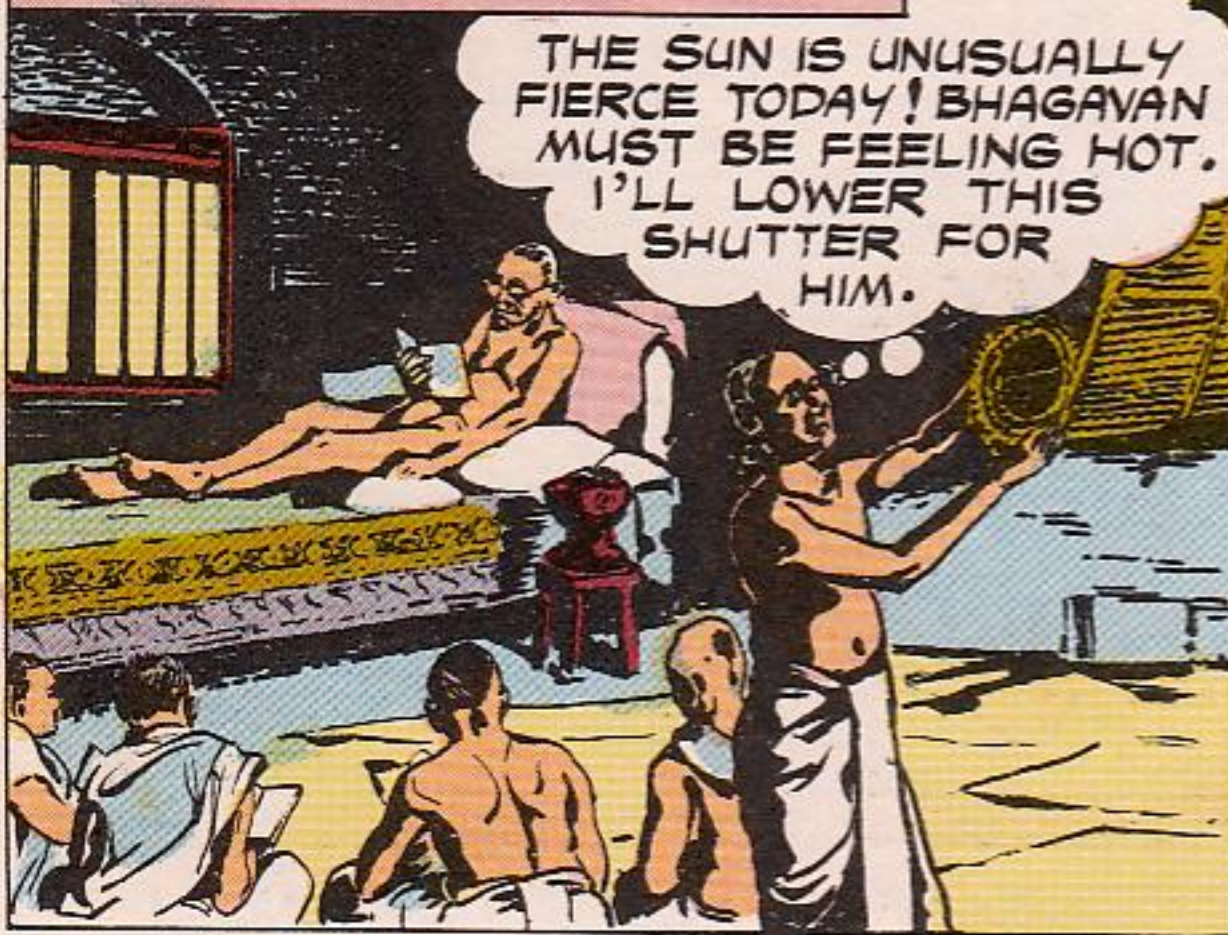
BHAGAVAN, SEE MY BOOK ABOUT LITTLE BO PEEP. SHE LOST HER SHEEP.

DID SHE? WHAT NICE PICTURES! BUT IT IS TORN. I'LL HAVE IT REPAIRED AND GIVE IT BACK TO YOU TOMORROW.



*A LENTIL CURRY

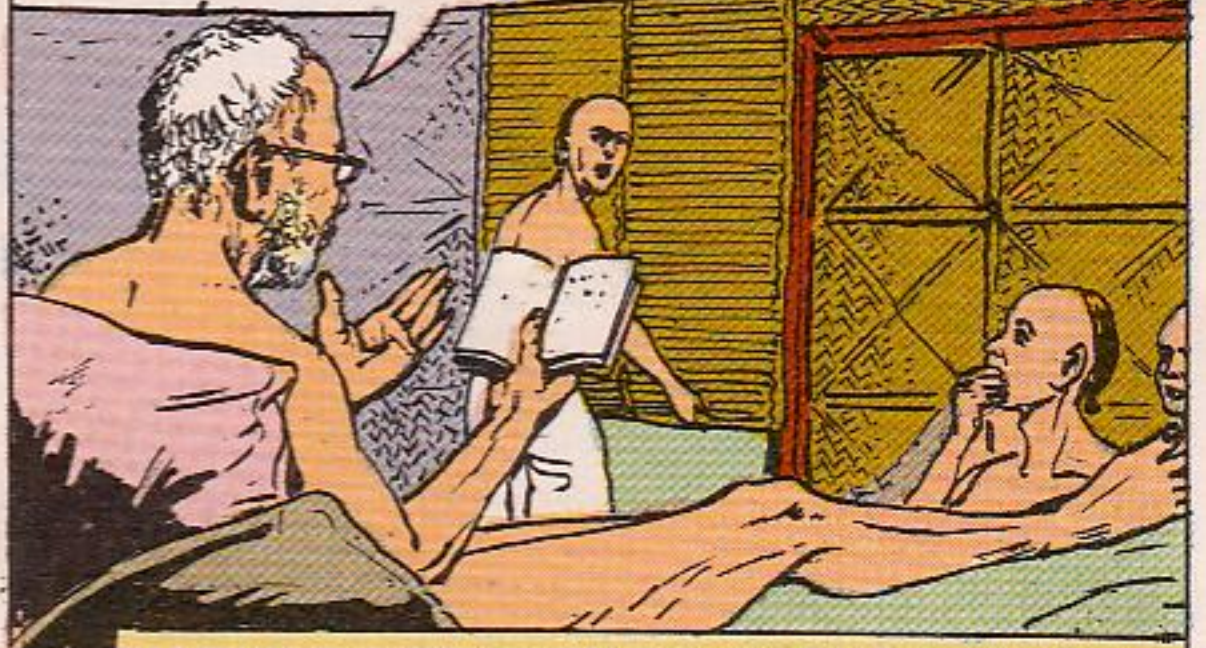
SUCH A GREAT SAGE AS THE MAHARSHI WAS BOUND TO BE TREATED WITH SPECIAL CARE. ONE DAY —



THE SUN IS UNUSUALLY FIERCE TODAY! BHAGAVAN MUST BE FEELING HOT. I'LL LOWER THIS SHUTTER FOR HIM.

THE MAHARSHI NOTICED THIS AT ONCE.

WHY HAVE YOU LOWERED ONLY THE SHUTTER ON MY SIDE OF THE ROOM? A SWAMI MUST NOT BE EXPOSED TO THE SUN OR THE WIND; BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER IF OTHERS ARE IS THAT IT?

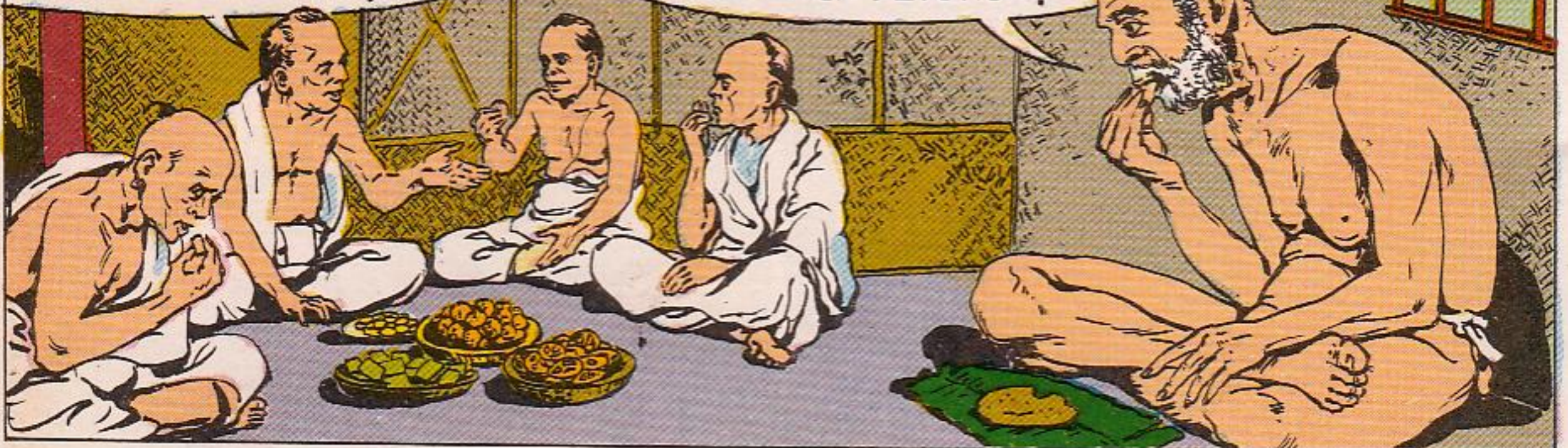


THESE LITTLE ATTENTIONS UPSET THE MAHARSHI VERY MUCH.

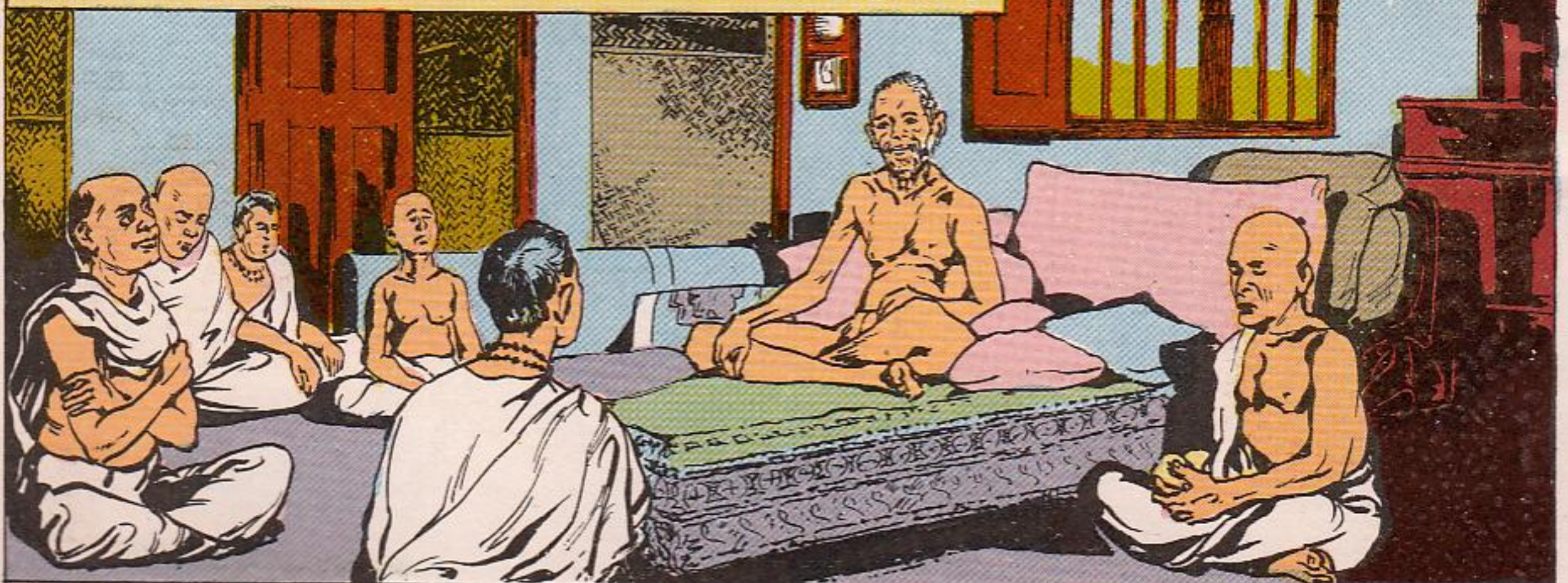
BUT BEHIND HIS REPROACHES WAS HIS LOVE FOR HIS DEVOTEES.

LOOK AT US EATING THESE EXCELLENT SWEETS AND LOOK AT YOU, BHAGAVAN, EATING SOME DRY, BADLY COOKED FOOD! IS THAT FAIR?

THERE ARE ALWAYS PEOPLE TO EAT SWEETS BUT WHO WILL EAT THIS SIMPLE FOOD WHICH A VERY OLD WOMAN BROUGHT WITH SO MUCH DEVOTION?



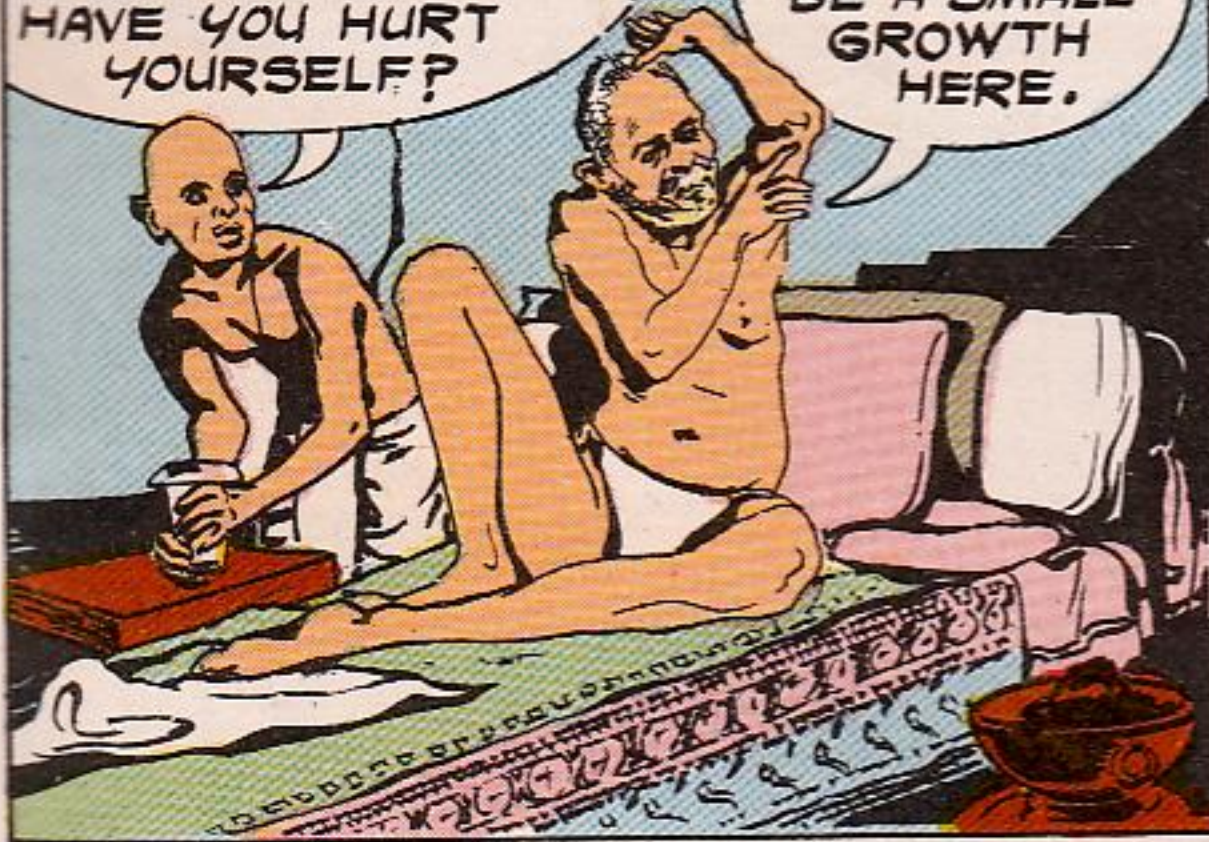
MOST OF THE TIME THE MAHARSHI SPOKE VERY LITTLE. IN THE SILENT MEDITATION HALL, A DEEP PEACE WOULD ENVELOP EVERYONE PRESENT. ONE GLANCE FROM HIM WAS ENOUGH TO GIVE CONSOLATION AND HOPE TO THE AFFLICTED.



ONE DAY —

BHAGAVAN, YOU HAVE BEEN RUBBING YOUR LEFT ELBOW THESE PAST FEW DAYS. HAVE YOU HURT YOURSELF?

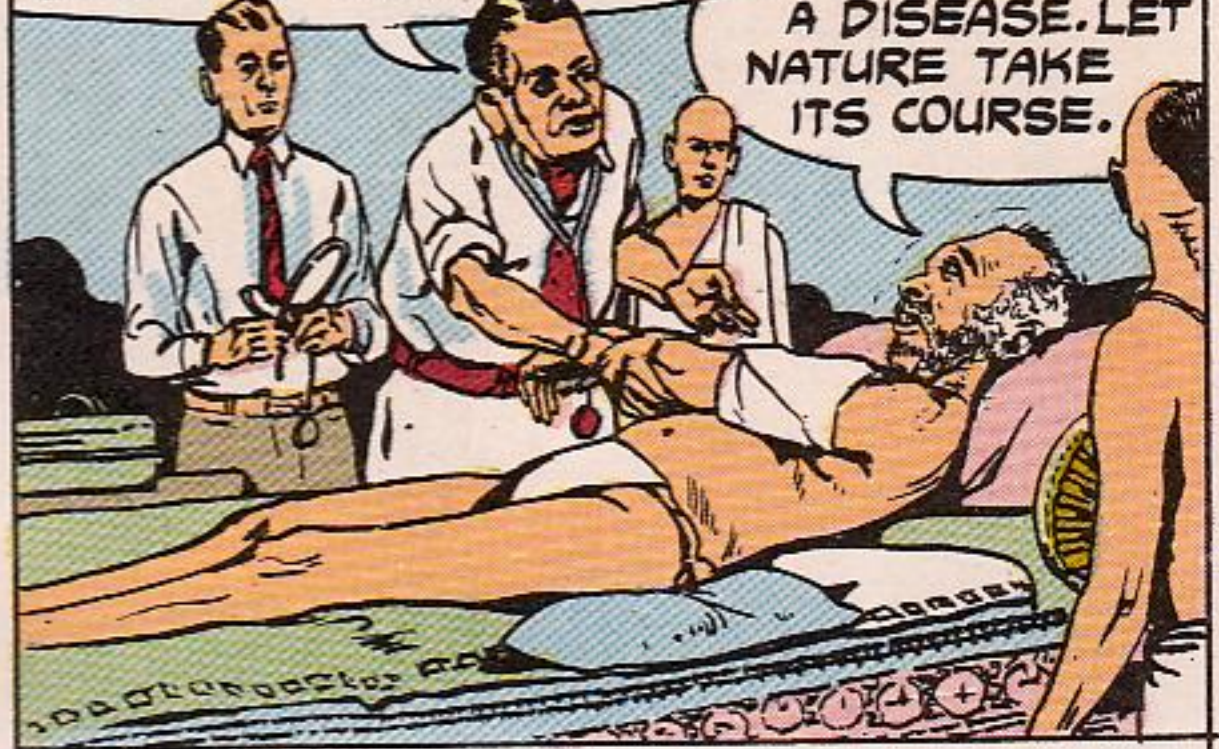
THERE SEEMS TO BE A SMALL GROWTH HERE.



THE GROWTH BEGAN TO INCREASE IN SIZE. THEN TO EVERYONE'S SHOCK, IT WAS DIAGNOSED AS CANCER.

BHAGAVAN, WE WILL HAVE TO REMOVE THE GROWTH SURGICALLY. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO CURB THIS DISEASE.

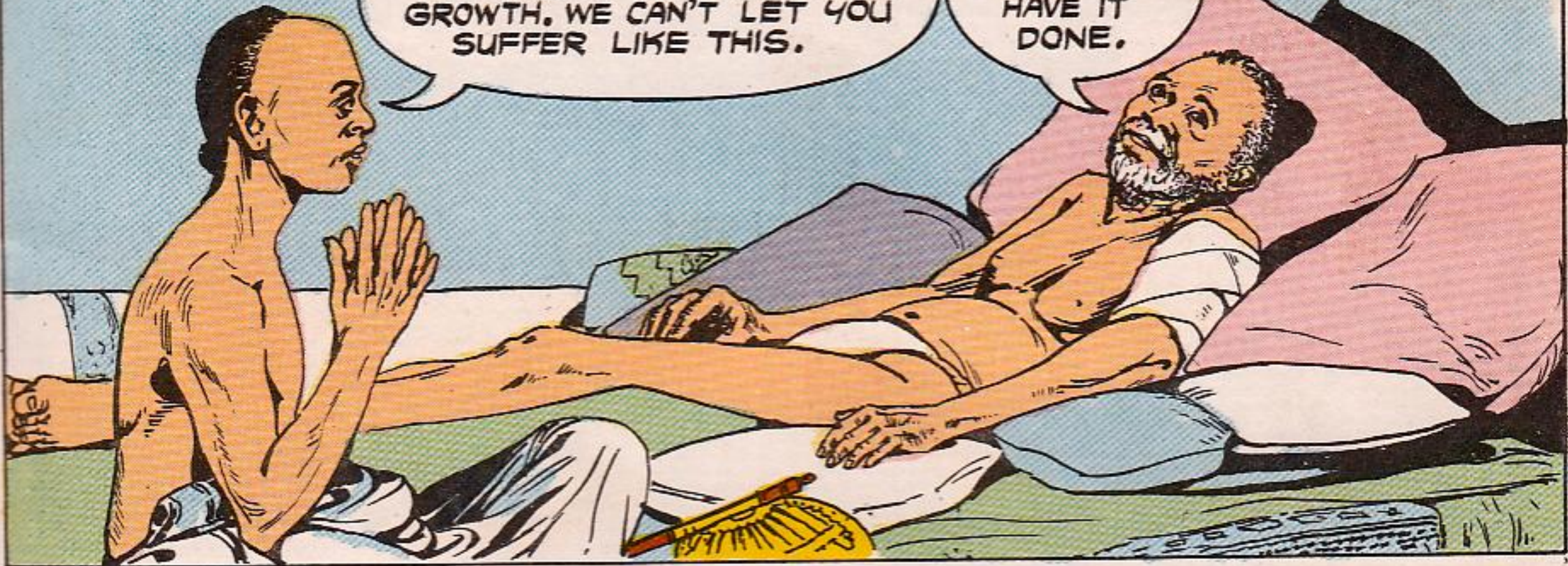
THE BODY ITSELF IS A DISEASE. LET NATURE TAKE ITS COURSE.



BUT THE DISEASE BEGAN TO SPREAD RAPIDLY. FINALLY —

MAHARSHI, PLEASE ALLOW THE DOCTOR TO REMOVE THE GROWTH. WE CAN'T LET YOU SUFFER LIKE THIS.

ALL RIGHT. YOU MAY HAVE IT DONE.



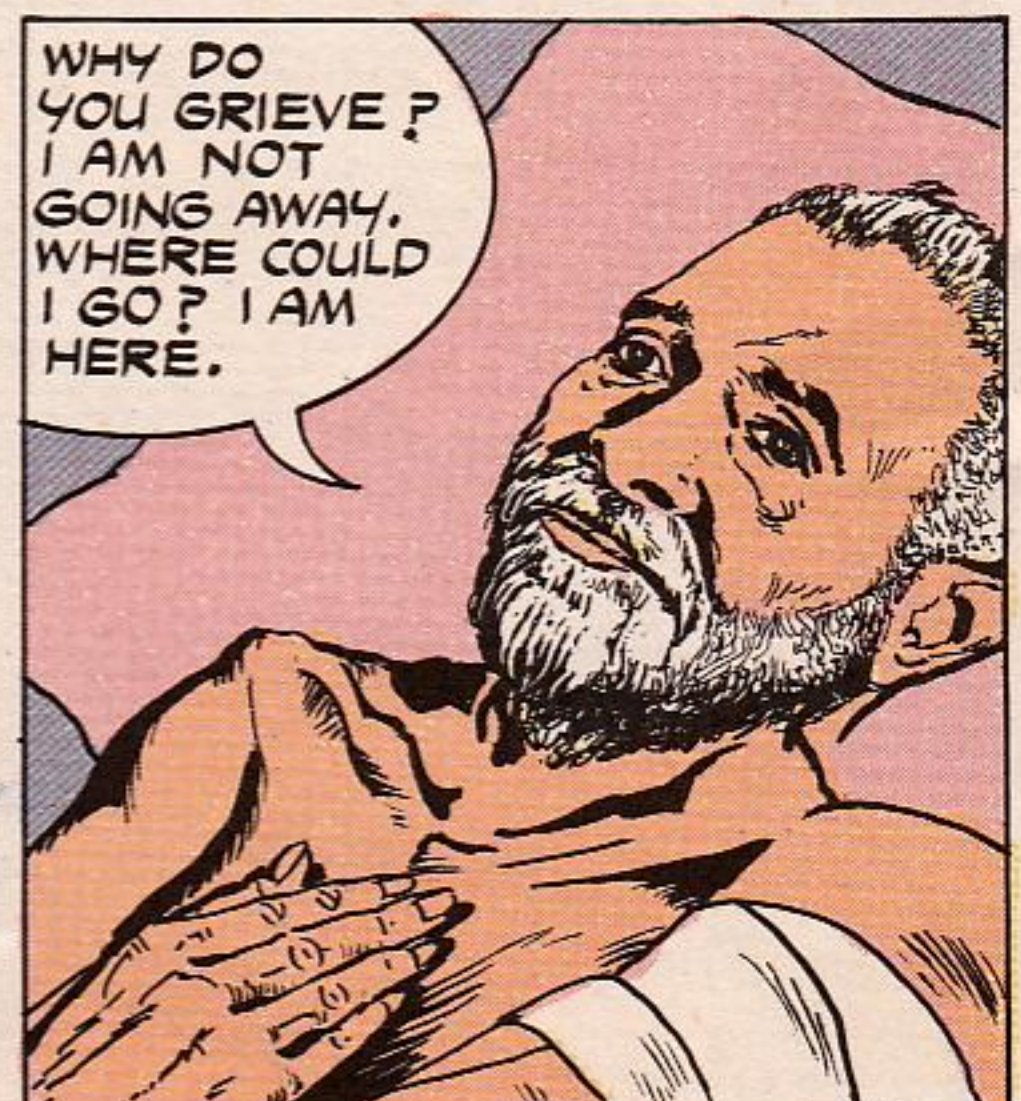
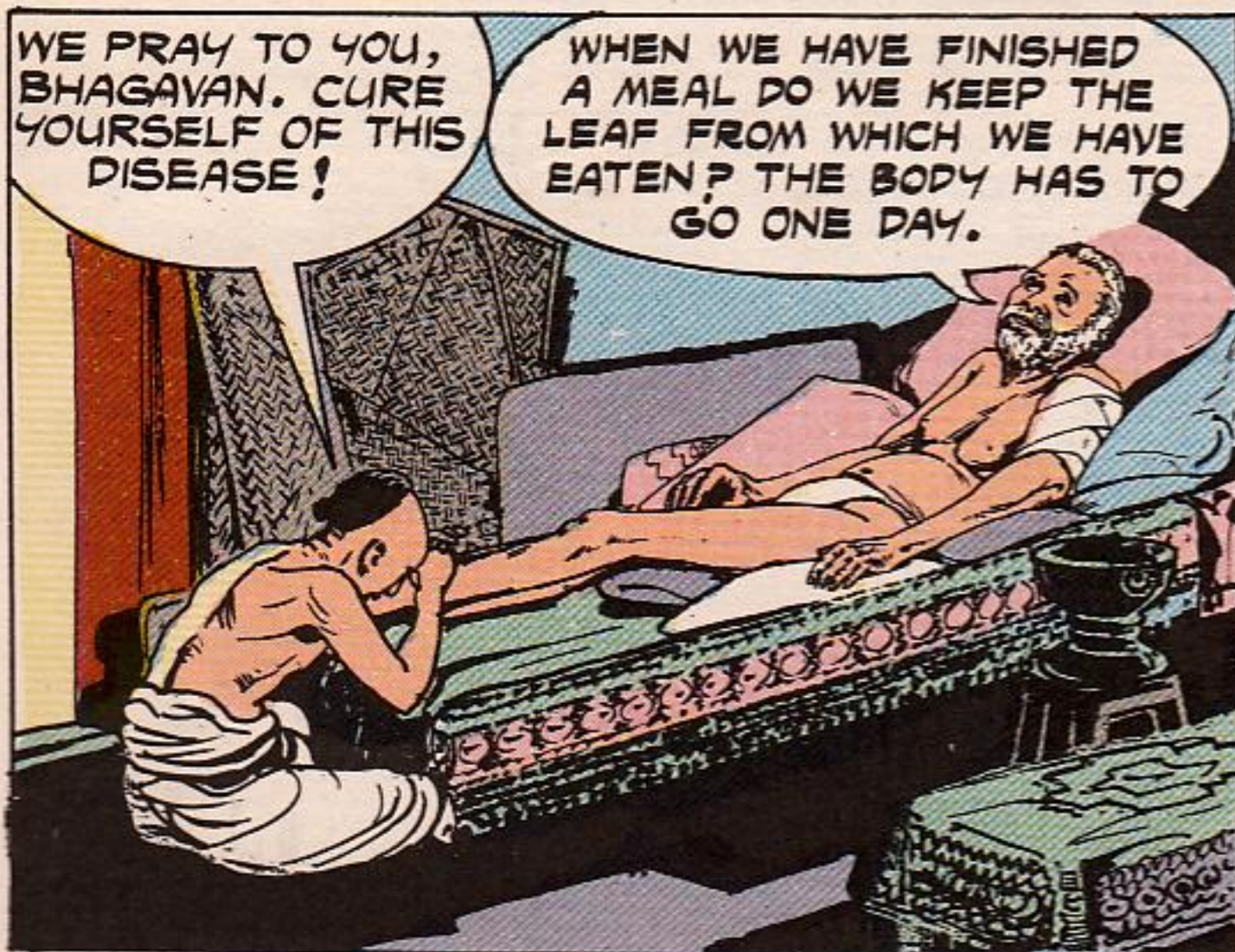
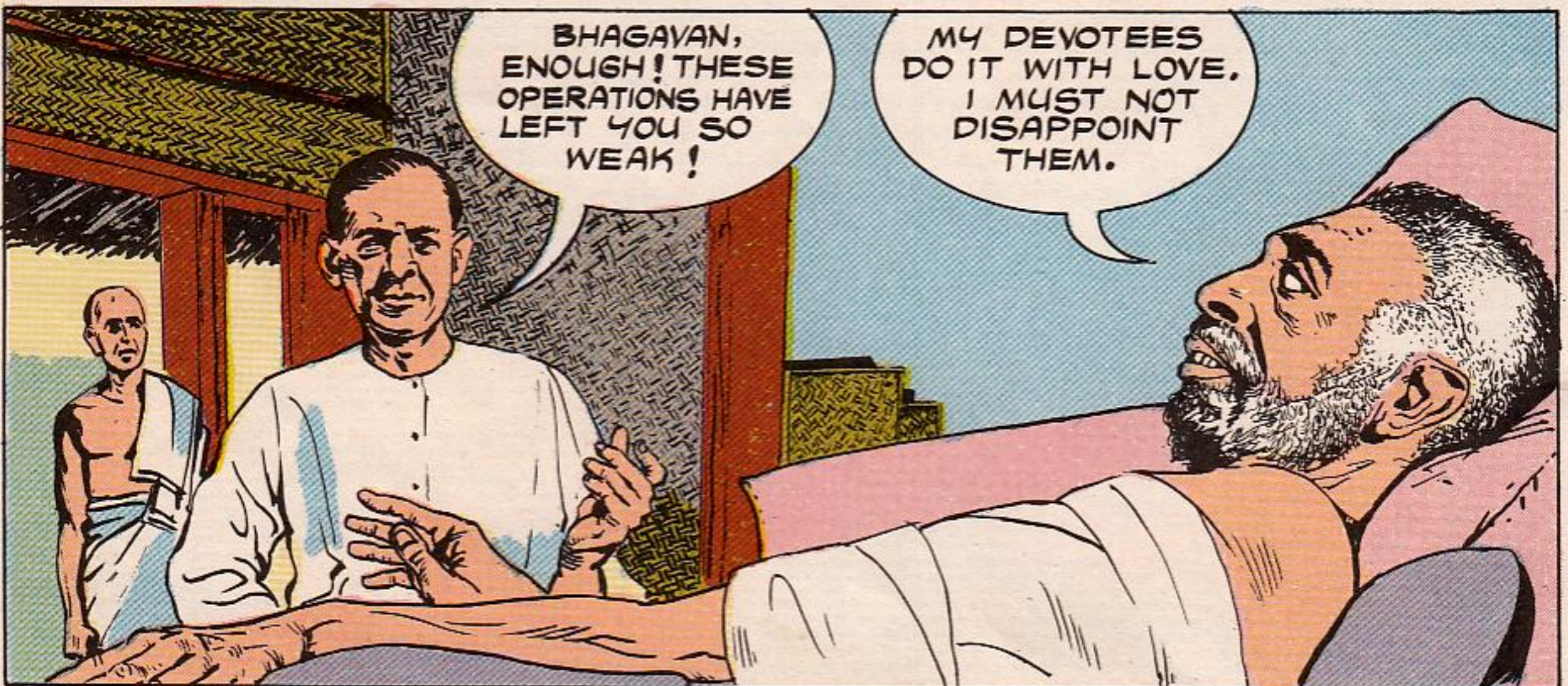
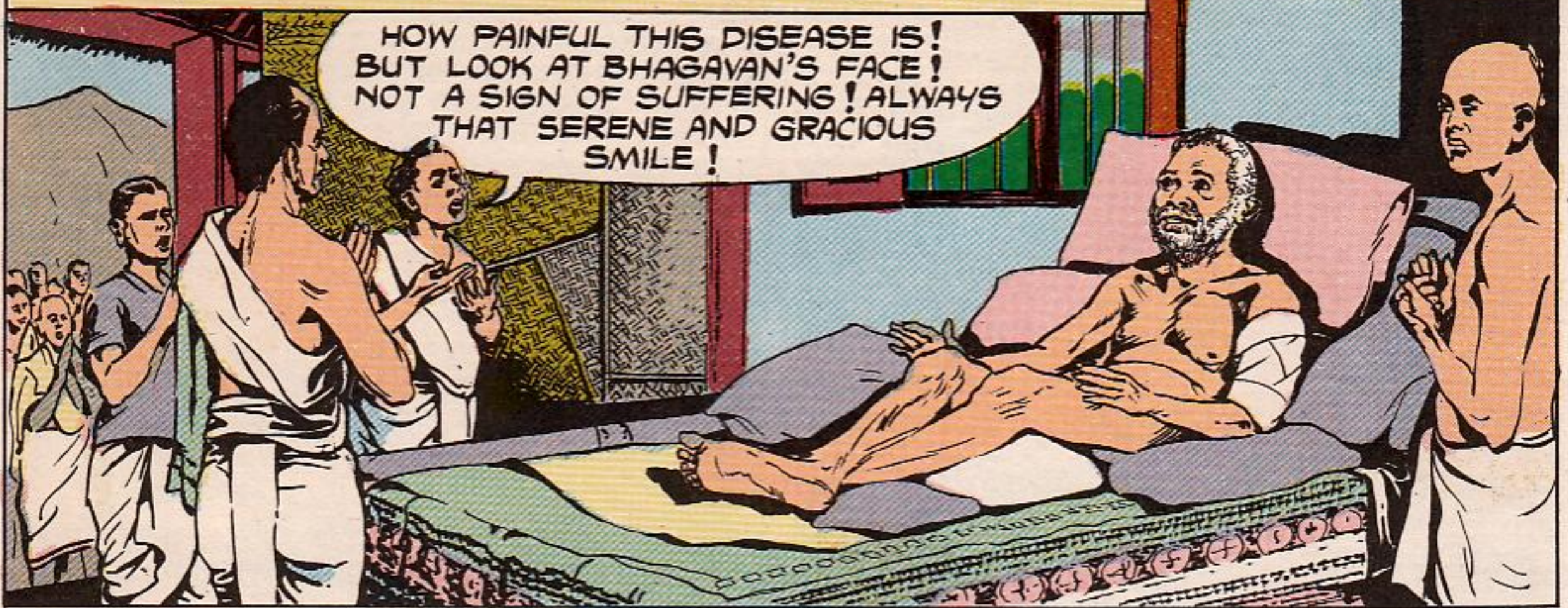
THE OPERATION WAS PERFORMED. BUT AFTER SOME TIME, ANOTHER GROWTH APPEARED.

BHAGAVAN, WHAT SHALL WE DO? NOTHING SEEMS TO WORK, NEITHER SURGERY, NOR HOMOEOPATHY NOR HERBAL TREATMENT.

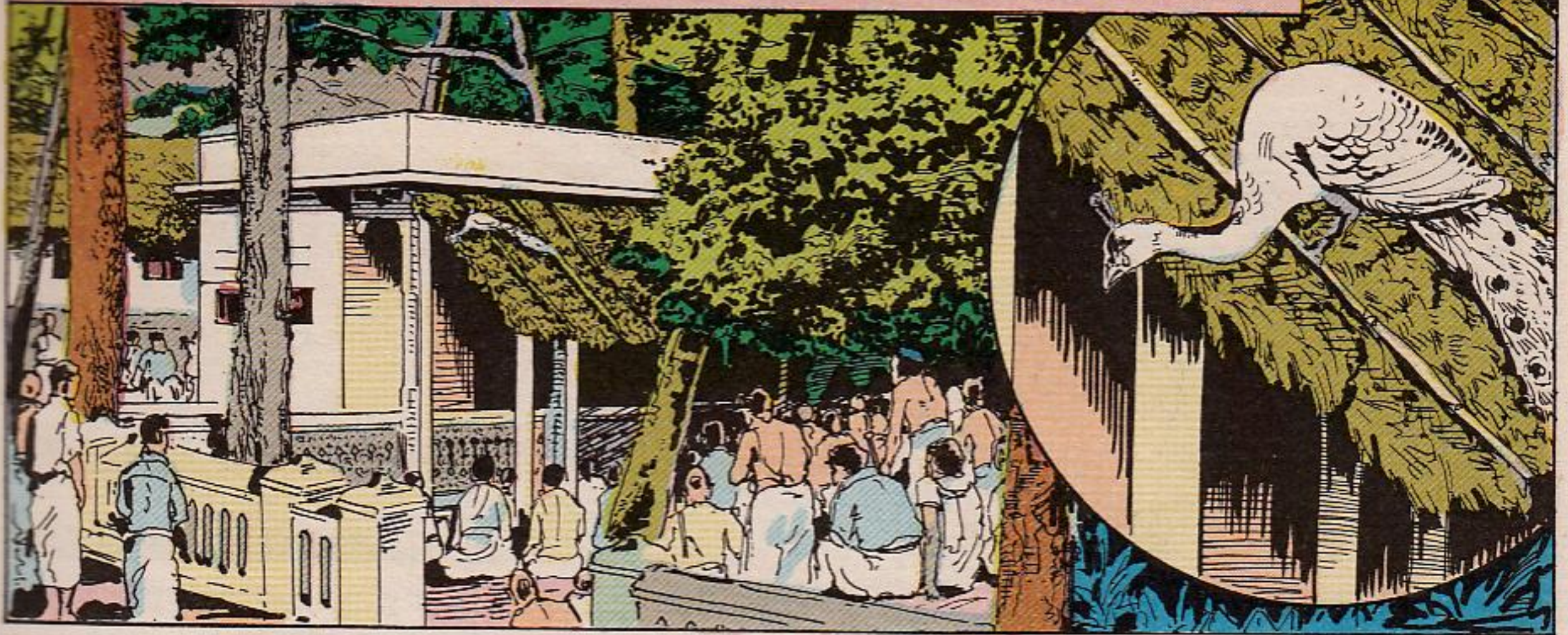
FROM THE BEGINNING, I WANTED THINGS TO TAKE THEIR COURSE.



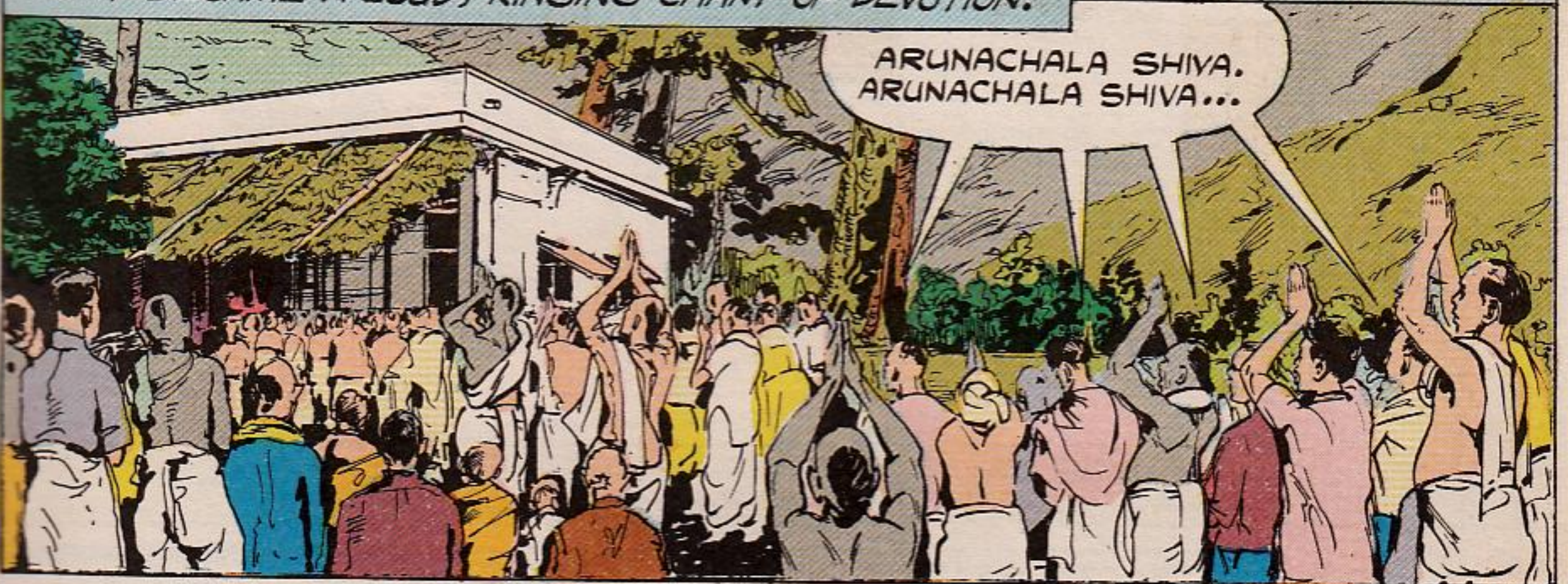
TO PLEASE HIS DEVOTEES, THE MAHARSHI UNDERWENT FURTHER OPERATIONS. THERE WAS NO IMPROVEMENT IN HIS CONDITION. BUT HOWEVER WEAK HE FELT, HE ALWAYS MADE HIMSELF AVAILABLE TO HIS DEVOTEES.



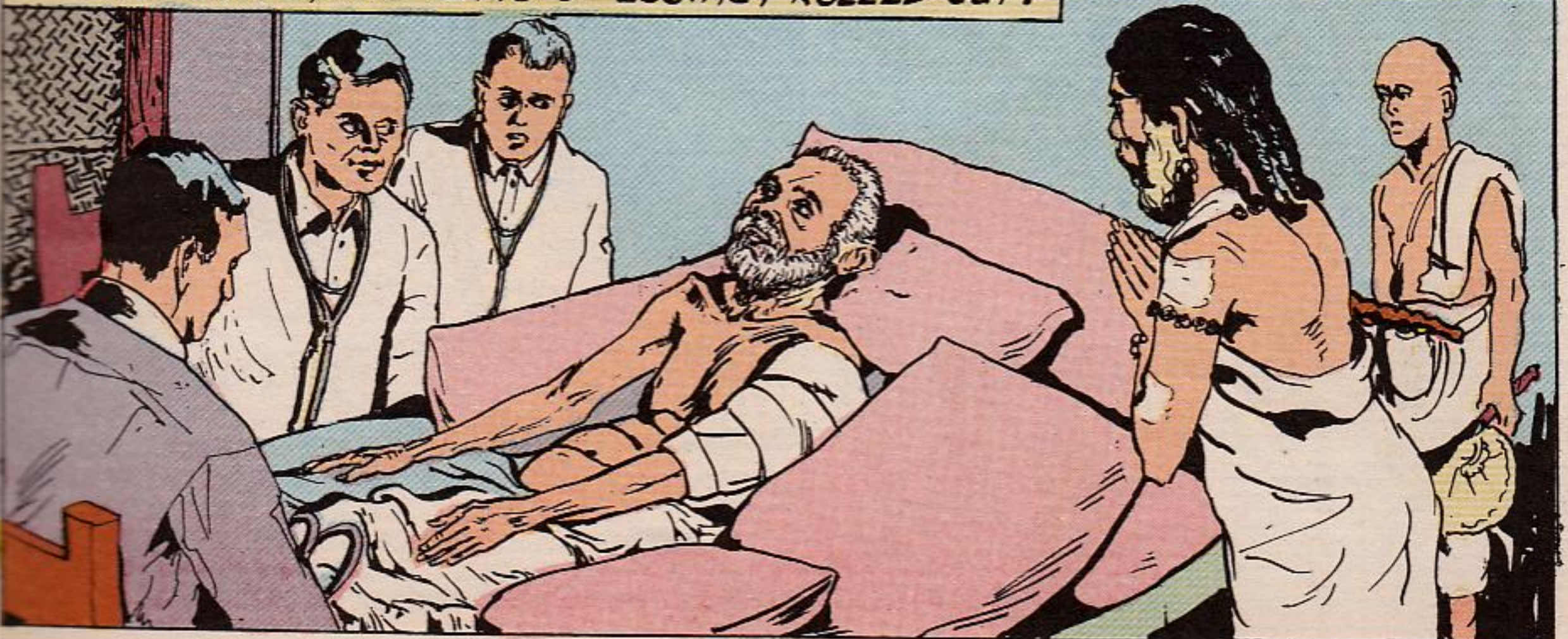
IT WAS THE EVENING OF APRIL 14, 1950.. ON THE ROOF OF THE SMALL ROOM WHERE THE MAHARSHI LAY, HIS PET PEACOCK WAS WAILING.



HUNDREDS OF GRIEVING DEVOTEES HAD FLOCKED TO TIRUVANNAMALAI. SOME OF THEM BEGAN TO SING THE MAHARSHI'S HYMN. IT WAS TAKEN UP BY EVERYONE TILL IT BECAME A LOUD, RINGING CHANT OF DEVOTION.



INSIDE THE ROOM, THE MAHARSHI OPENED HIS EYES A LITTLE. THE EYES SEEMED TO FLASH BRIEFLY AND TEARS OF ECSTASY ROLLED OUT.



OUTSIDE, A FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER LOOKED UP CASUALLY AT THE DARKENING SKY. THEN HE POINTED EXCITEDLY UPWARDS.

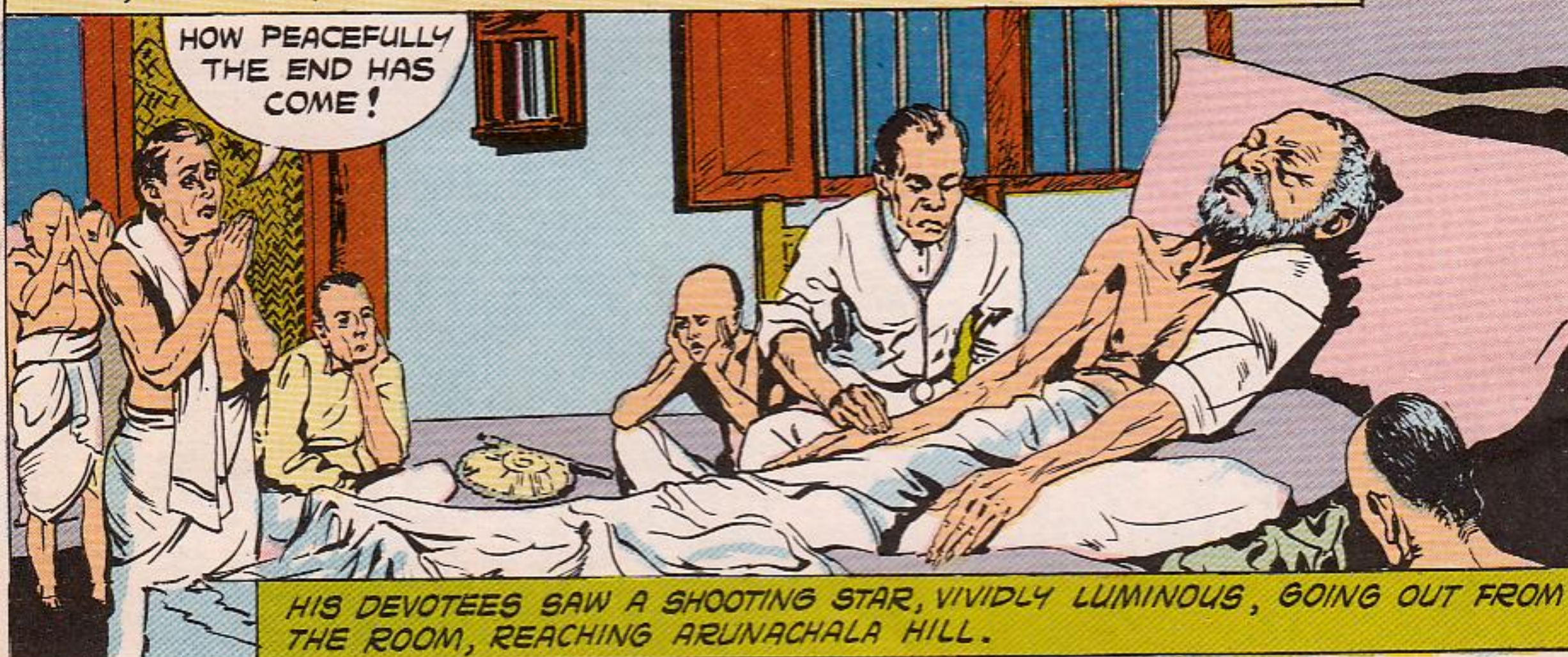
DO YOU SEE THAT? A METEOR CUTTING A PATH ACROSS THE SKY BEHIND ARUNACHALA HILL!

IT IS EXACTLY 8-47 BY MY WATCH.



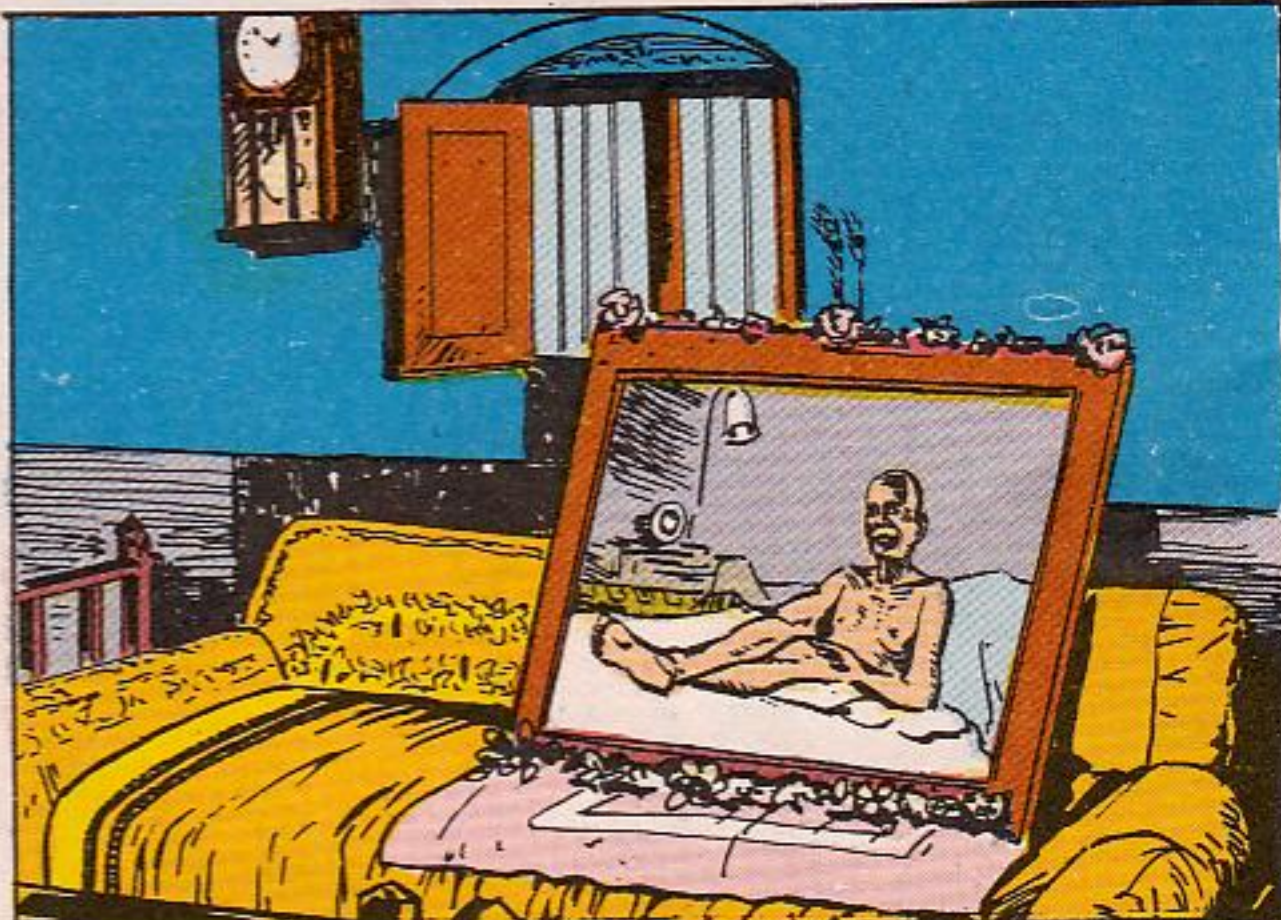
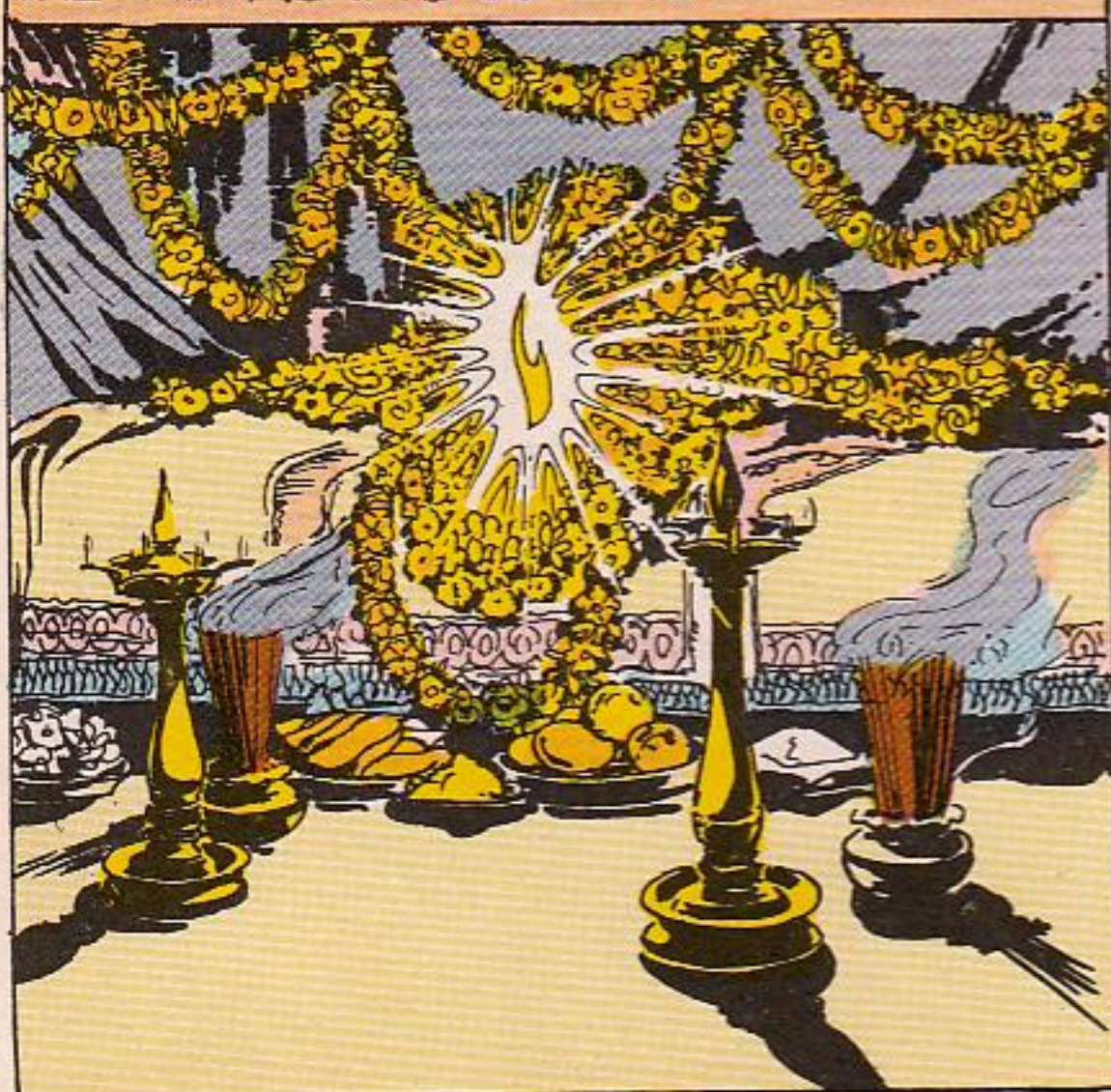
INSIDE, PRECISELY AT THAT MOMENT, THE MAHARSHI'S BREATHING STOPPED.

HOW PEACEFULLY THE END HAS COME!



HIS DEVOTEES SAW A SHOOTING STAR, VIVIDLY LUMINOUS, GOING OUT FROM THE ROOM, REACHING ARUNACHALA HILL.

THE MAHARSHI IS GONE. YET HE IS HERE.



ON THE COUCH WHERE HE HAD SAT FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS, HIS LIFE-LIKE PORTRAIT HAS BEEN PLACED. HERE HIS DEVOTEES STILL FEEL HIS PRESENCE, AS COMFORTING AND PEACE-GIVING AS BEFORE.