

AMAR  
CHITRA  
KATHA

# KUMANAN

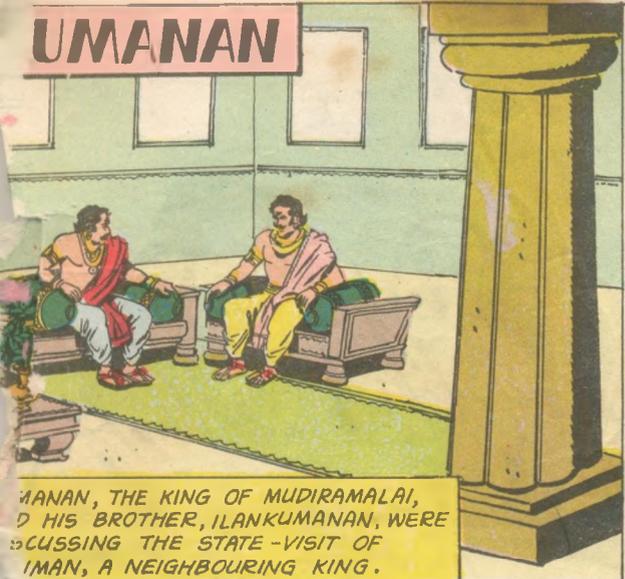
THE GENEROUS TAMIL KING OF THE SANGAM AGE

No. 280 Rs. 3.50



*D. S. Srinivasan*

# UMANAN



HE SHOULD BE HERE ANY MOMENT. YOU WILL HAVE TO RECEIVE HIM AS I HAVE SOME URGENT WORK TO DO.

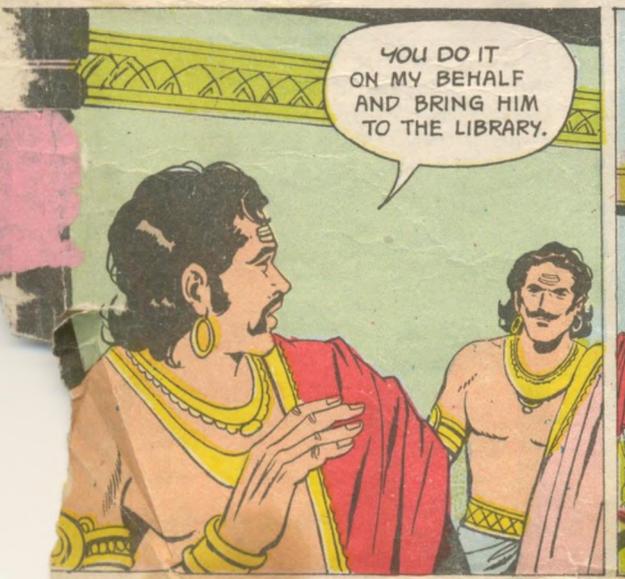
UMANAN, THE KING OF MUDIRAMALAI, AND HIS BROTHER, ILANKUMANAN, WERE DISCUSSING THE STATE-VISIT OF VELIMAN, A NEIGHBOURING KING.



OUR LIBRARIAN HAS SECURED A RARE MANUSCRIPT. I WANT TO HAVE A LOOK AT IT.



BUT, BROTHER, YOU SHOULD RECEIVE VELIMAN!

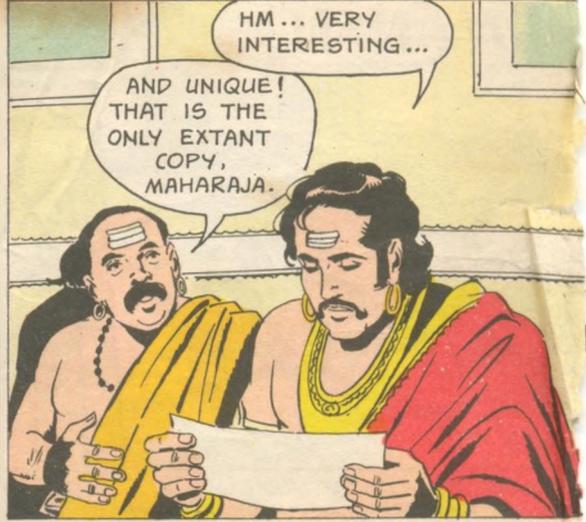
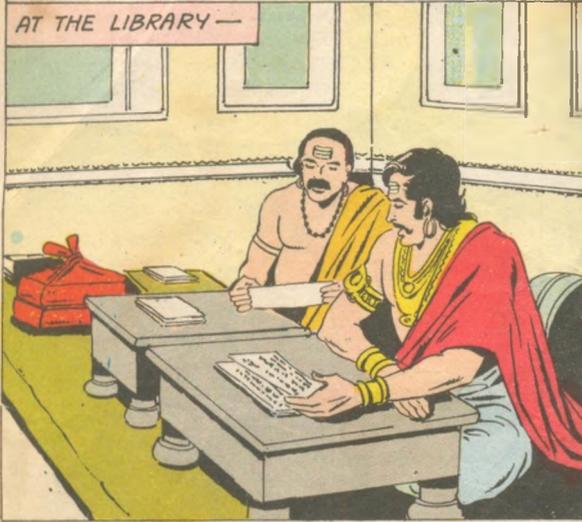


YOU DO IT ON MY BEHALF AND BRING HIM TO THE LIBRARY.



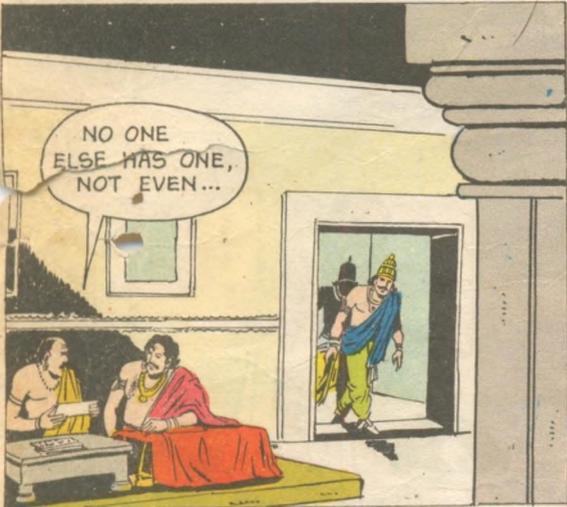
POETS! PARCHMENTS! PALM-LEAVES! THAT IS THE MUSTY WORLD OF MY BROTHER THE KING!

AT THE LIBRARY —

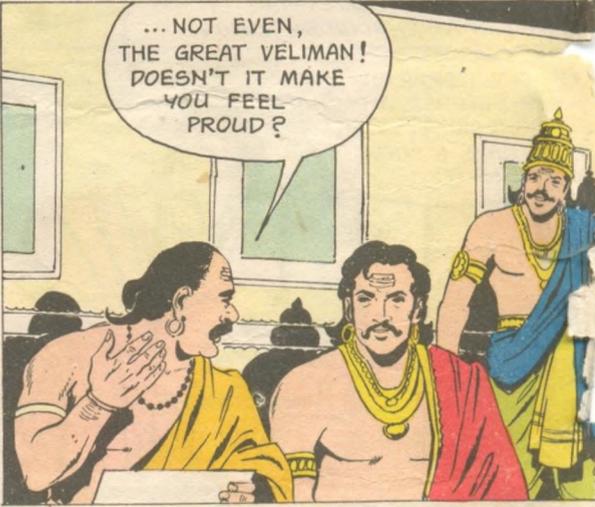


HM... VERY INTERESTING...

AND UNIQUE!  
THAT IS THE ONLY EXTANT COPY, MAHARAJA.



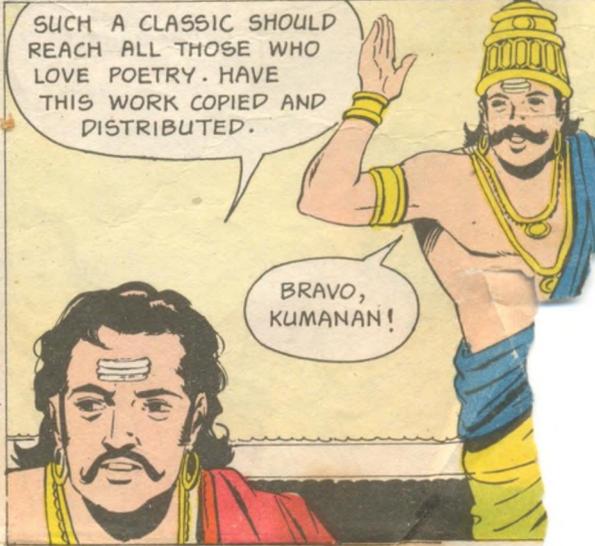
NO ONE ELSE HAS ONE, NOT EVEN...



... NOT EVEN, THE GREAT VELIMAN! DOESN'T IT MAKE YOU FEEL PROUD?



NO!! I FEEL ASHAMED!



SUCH A CLASSIC SHOULD REACH ALL THOSE WHO LOVE POETRY. HAVE THIS WORK COPIED AND DISTRIBUTED.

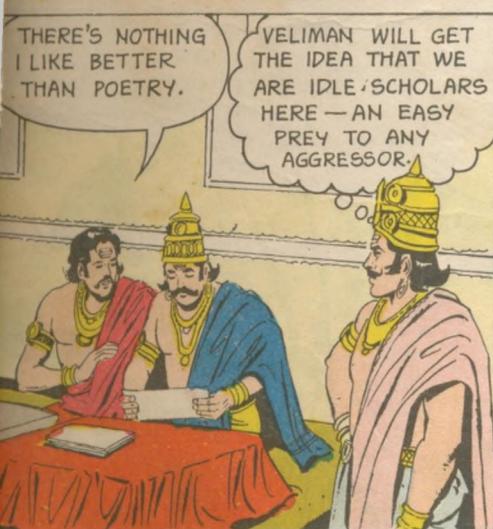
BRAVO, KUMANAN!



VELIMAN!



COME, MY FRIEND. SHARE THE WEALTH OF THIS CLASSIC TREASURY OF MANUSCRIPTS.



THERE'S NOTHING I LIKE BETTER THAN POETRY.

VELIMAN WILL GET THE IDEA THAT WE ARE IDLE SCHOLARS HERE — AN EASY PREY TO ANY AGGRESSOR.



SOMETIME LATER —

NOW YOU MAY TAKE OUR GUEST TO THE HALL OF EXHIBITS, ILANKUMANAN. I WILL JOIN YOU PRESENTLY.

AND LOOK!  
HERE ARE THE  
HEADS OF  
ANIMALS I HAVE  
HUNTED.

WONDERFUL!  
BUT I FIND ONE  
HEAD MISSING...

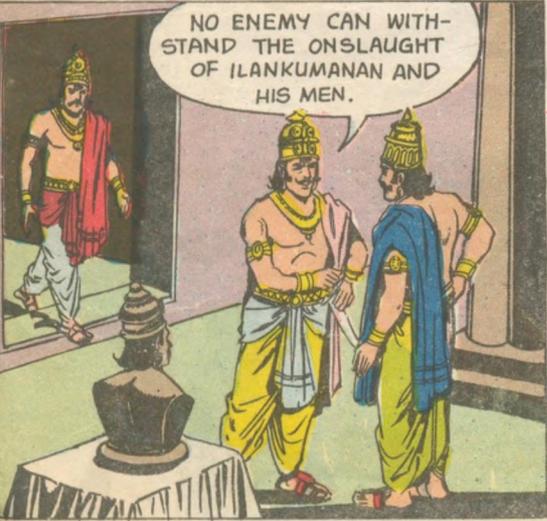


HEAD!

I WOULD HAVE  
BAGGED EVEN THAT  
IF I HAD MY WAY.  
I AM ITCHING FOR  
FIGHTS, BATTLES,  
CONQUESTS! .



NO ENEMY CAN WITH-  
STAND THE ONSLAUGHT  
OF ILANKUMANAN AND  
HIS MEN.

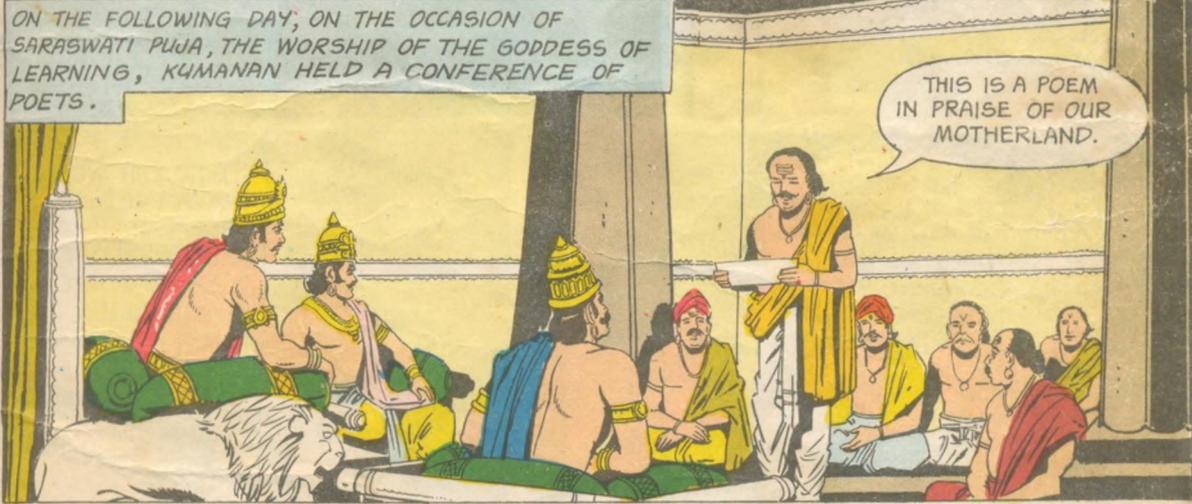




OH, WHAT HAVE I DONE ! BROTHER, FORGIVE ME. IT WAS AN ACCIDENT . I DID NOT MEAN IT.

NEVER MIND. IT IS ONLY MY IMAGE THAT YOU'VE STRUCK.

ON THE FOLLOWING DAY, ON THE OCCASION OF SARASWATI PUJA, THE WORSHIP OF THE GODDESS OF LEARNING, KUMANAN HELD A CONFERENCE OF POETS .



THIS IS A POEM IN PRAISE OF OUR MOTHERLAND.

AS THE POET FINISHED HIS SONG, THE KING PRESENTED HIM WITH A BAG OF GOLD COINS.



PLEASE ACCEPT THIS. IT IS BUT A MEAGRE REWARD.

YOU ARE A GREAT PATRON OF POETS, O KUMANAN!



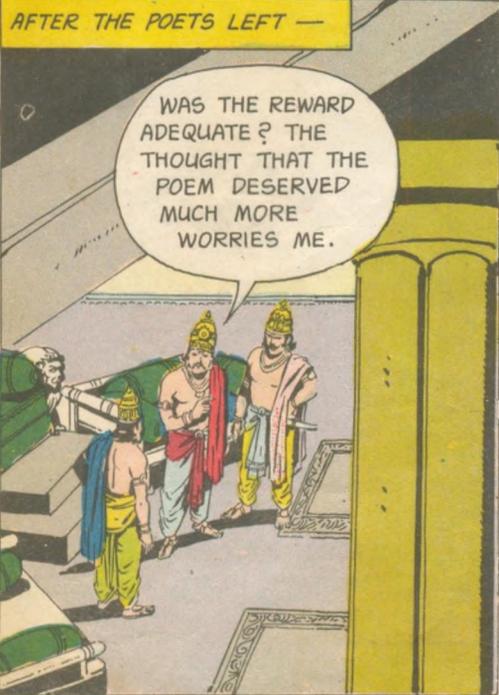
CAN ANYTHING GIVE KEENER PLEASURE THAN POETRY, ILANKUMANAN?

YES ! THE SWORD !

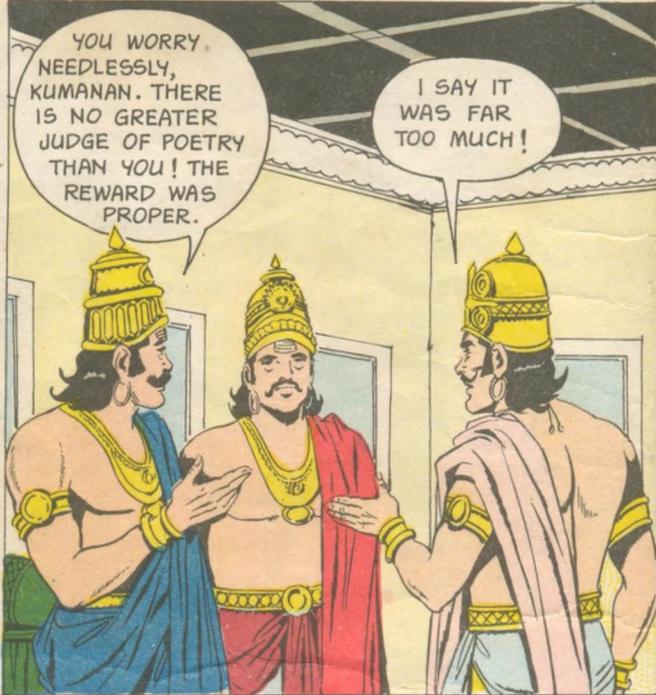


EACH TO HIS OWN TASTE . BUT LET US NOT ARGUE.

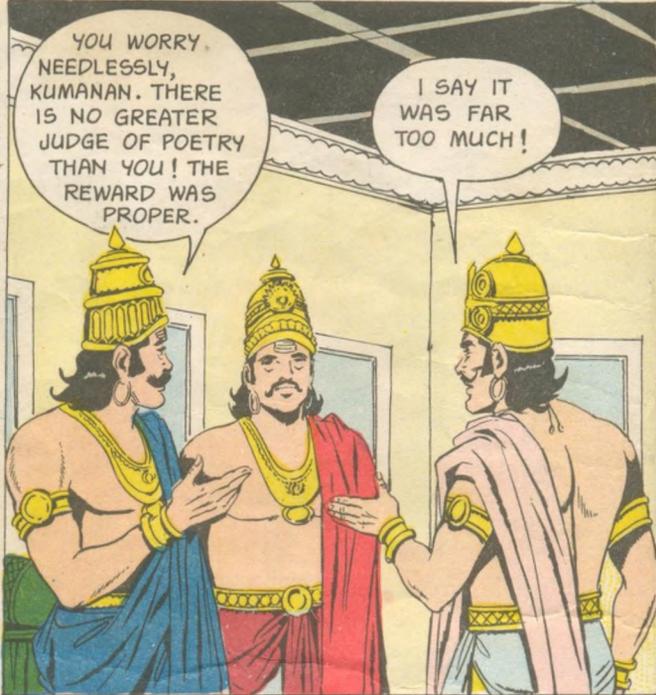
AFTER THE POETS LEFT —



WAS THE REWARD ADEQUATE? THE THOUGHT THAT THE POEM DESERVED MUCH MORE WORRIES ME.



YOU WORRY NEEDLESSLY, KUMANAN. THERE IS NO GREATER JUDGE OF POETRY THAN YOU! THE REWARD WAS PROPER.



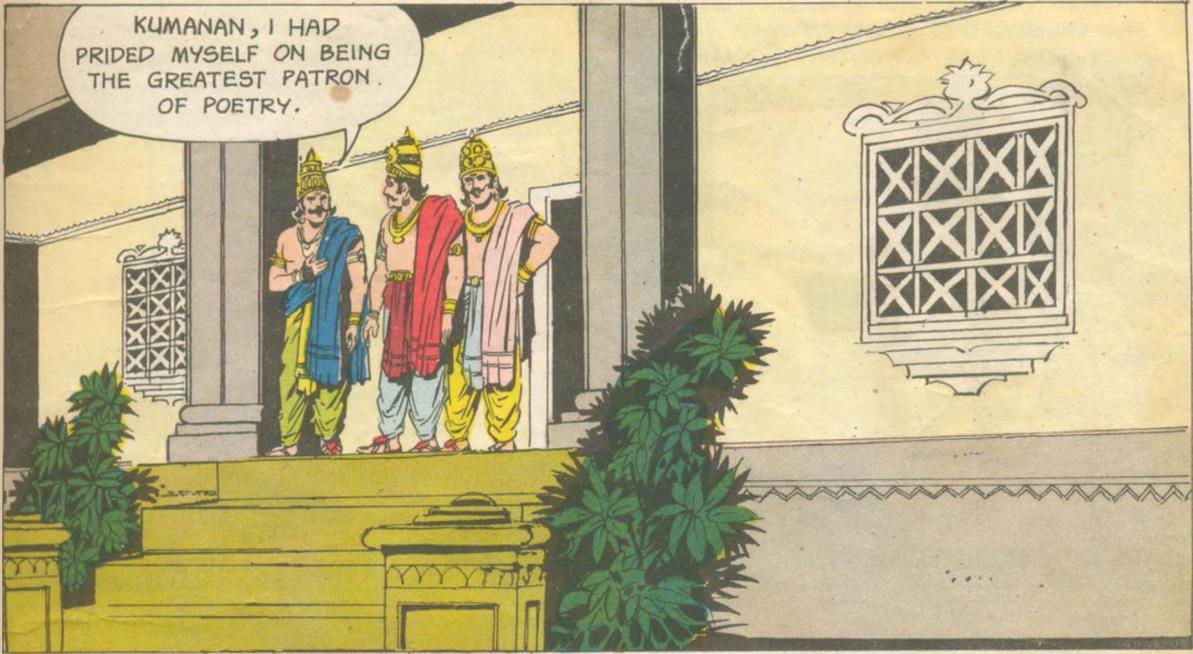
I SAY IT WAS FAR TOO MUCH!



WAS IT? GRAIN WE CAN MEASURE. GOLD WE CAN WEIGH. BUT GENIUS?



HOW CAN WE SET A PRICE ON A POEM OF GREAT MERIT? ON THE WORK OF A GREAT MIND?



KUMANAN, I HAD PRIDED MYSELF ON BEING THE GREATEST PATRON OF POETRY.



BUT YOUR QUESTIONS PRICK THE BUBBLE OF MY PRIDE BECAUSE THEY ARE THE QUESTIONS OF A WISE KING.



NOT ONLY A WISE KING BUT ALSO A STRONG ONE. IF YOU STAY ON TILL AYUDHA PUJA\* YOU WILL SEE THE IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF OUR ARMS AND WEAPONS.

PARDON ME, MY YOUNG FRIEND.



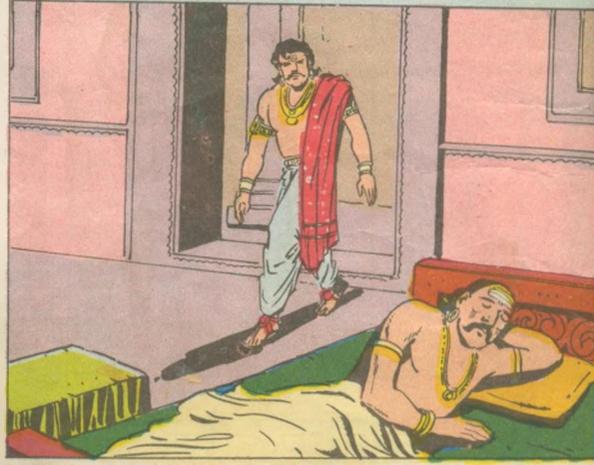
I WOULD RATHER CARRY WITH ME THE PLEASANT MEMORY OF THE POEMS I HEARD AT KUMANAN'S COURT.

\* WORSHIP OF WEAPONS

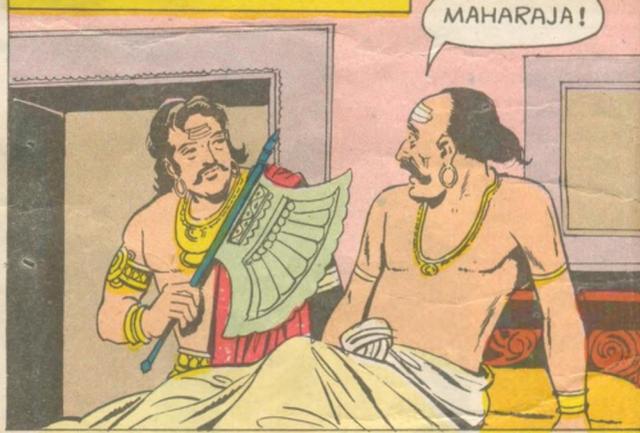
A FEW DAYS LATER KUMANAN HAD ANOTHER VISITOR, THE POET PERUNCHITTIRANAR.



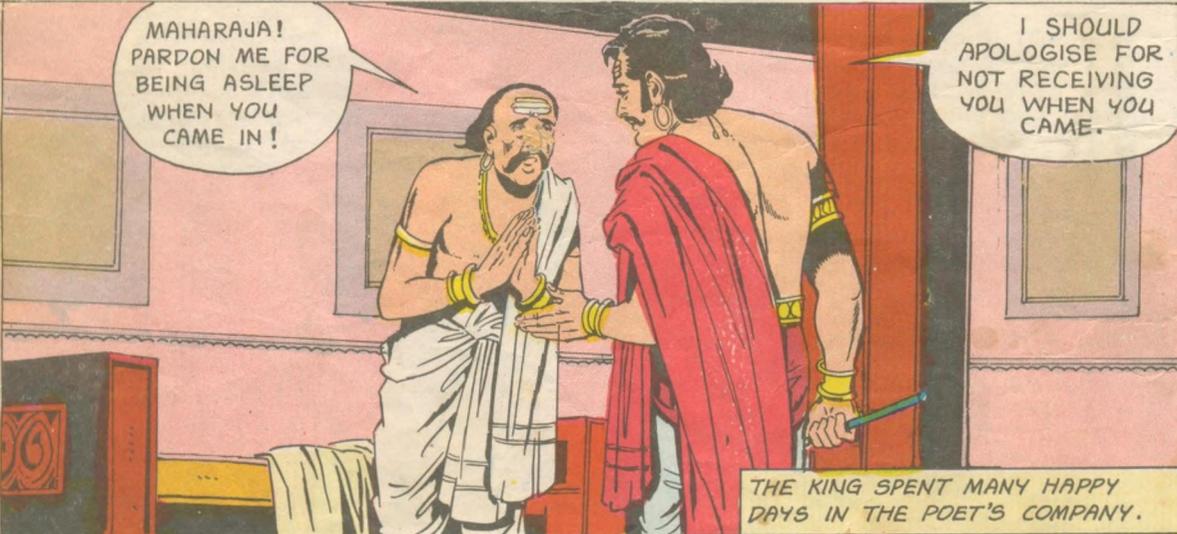
THE POET WAS TREATED LIKE A KING. AFTER A BATH AND A DELICIOUS MEAL THE POET LAY DOWN TO REST. HE WAS FAST ASLEEP WHEN KUMANAN CAME.



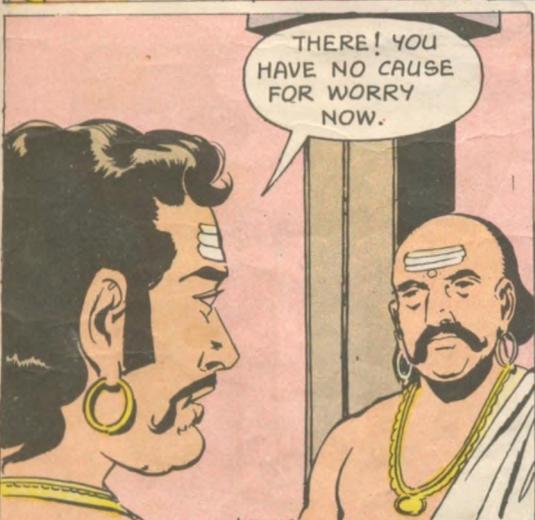
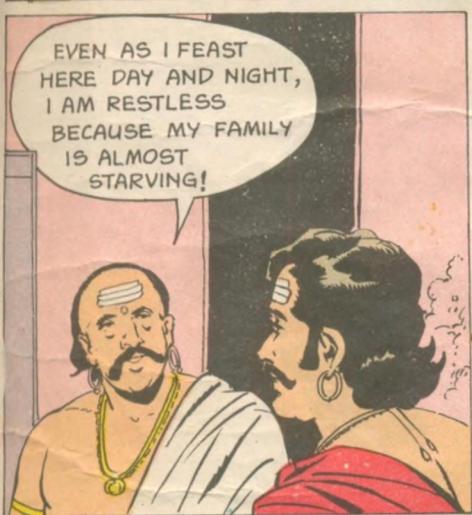
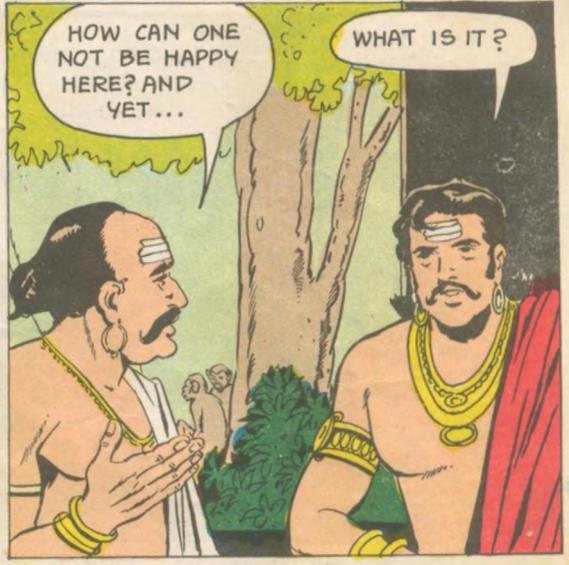
WHEN THE POET WOKE UP —

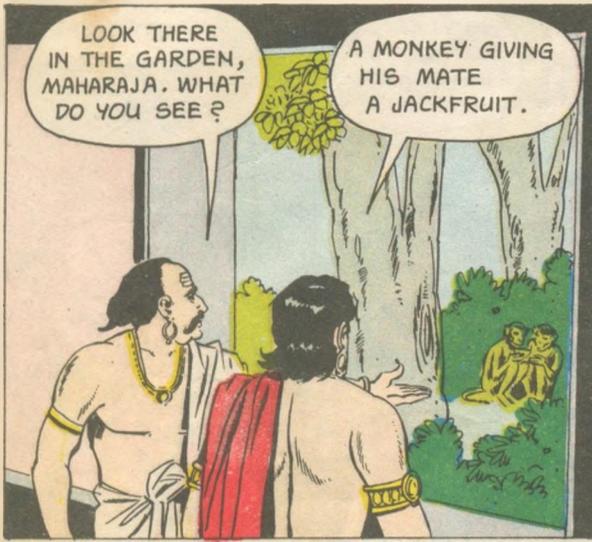


MAHARAJA! PARDON ME FOR BEING ASLEEP WHEN YOU CAME IN!



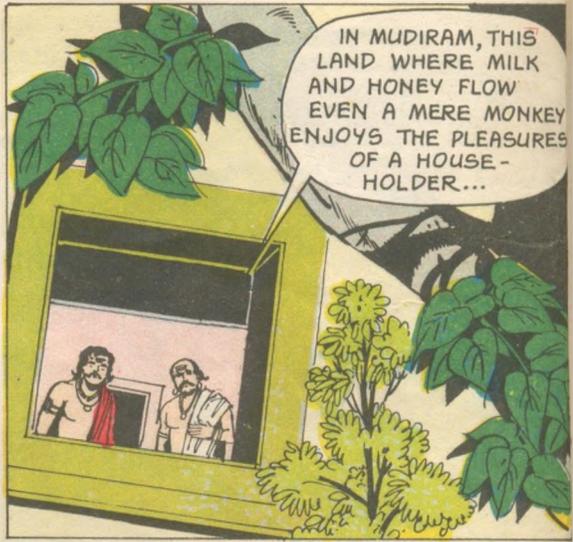
THE KING SPENT MANY HAPPY DAYS IN THE POET'S COMPANY.





LOOK THERE IN THE GARDEN, MAHARAJA. WHAT DO YOU SEE ?

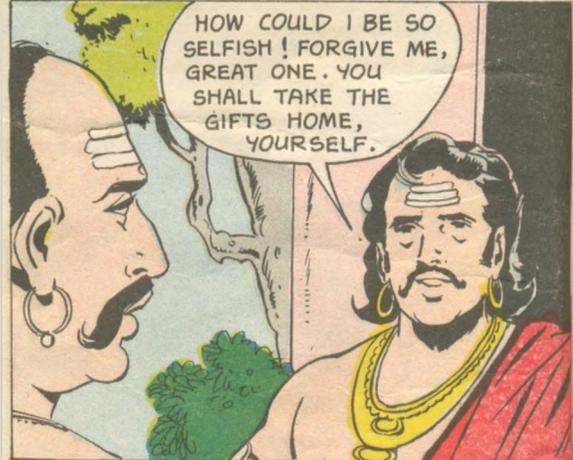
A MONKEY GIVING HIS MATE A JACKFRUIT.



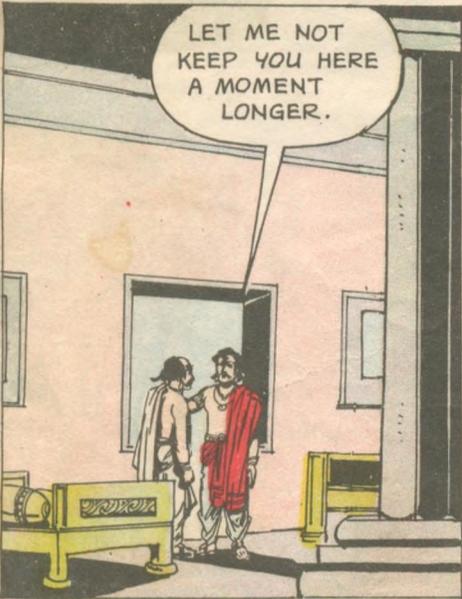
IN MUDIRAM, THIS LAND WHERE MILK AND HONEY FLOW EVEN A MERE MONKEY ENJOYS THE PLEASURES OF A HOUSE-HOLDER...



...THE PLEASURE OF WITNESSING HIS MATE'S JOY WHEN HE SECURES SOMETHING FOR HER.



HOW COULD I BE SO SELFISH ! FORGIVE ME, GREAT ONE. YOU SHALL TAKE THE GIFTS HOME, YOURSELF.



LET ME NOT KEEP YOU HERE A MOMENT LONGER.



AS THE POET WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE —

YOU MUST COME AGAIN SOON!

OF COURSE, YOU WILL — FOR MORE LOOT.

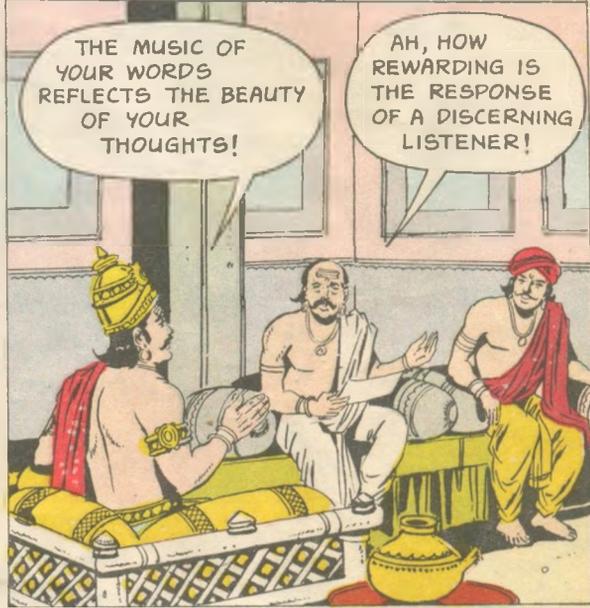
I WILL, MAHARAJA.

A COUPLE OF YEARS LATER —



WELCOME, PERUNCHITTIRANAR! I HAVE BEEN LONGING TO LISTEN TO MORE OF YOUR POETRY.

THE POET AND THE KING SPENT MANY MORE HAPPY DAYS TOGETHER.



THE MUSIC OF YOUR WORDS REFLECTS THE BEAUTY OF YOUR THOUGHTS!

AH, HOW REWARDING IS THE RESPONSE OF A DISCERNING LISTENER!



YOU AND I WILL PASS ON, BUT YOUR WORK WILL LIVE FOR EVER. IT WILL NEVER PERISH!

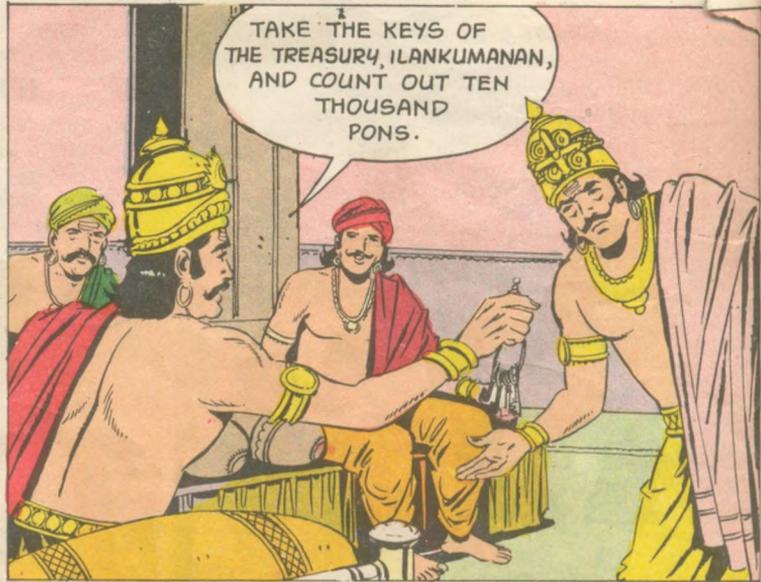


CAN ANYONE HERE TELL ME WHAT GIFT I MAY GIVE THAT NEVER PERISHES?

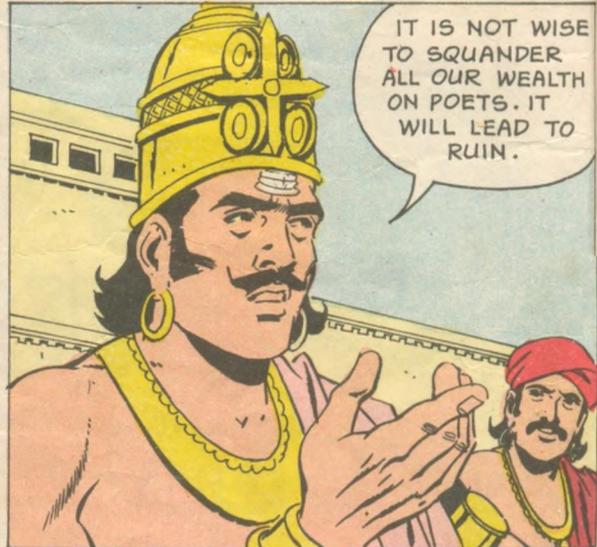
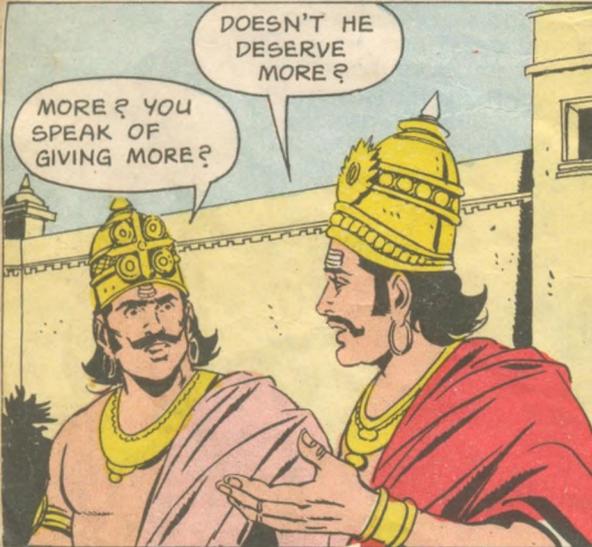
IS IT NOT SAID THAT THE ELEPHANT IS WORTH A THOUSAND PONS\* WHEN ALIVE, AND A THOUSAND PONS WHEN DEAD?



\* THE PREVALENT CURRENCY

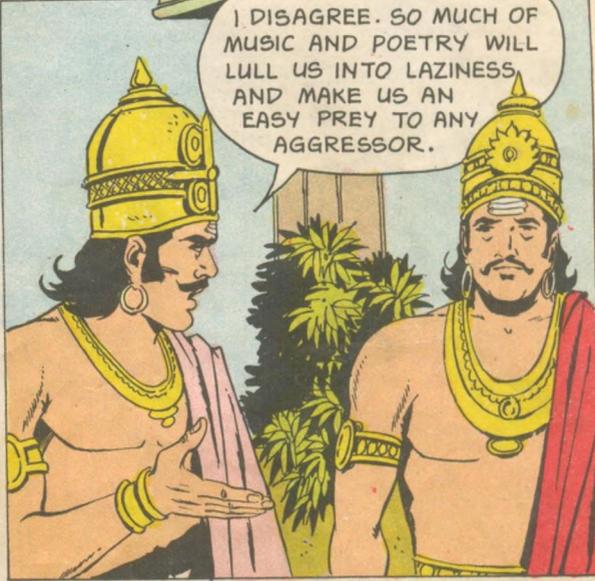


THUS PERUNCHITTIRANAR LEFT, RICHLY REWARDED. BUT KUMANAN WAS BESET BY THE SAME DOUBTS.

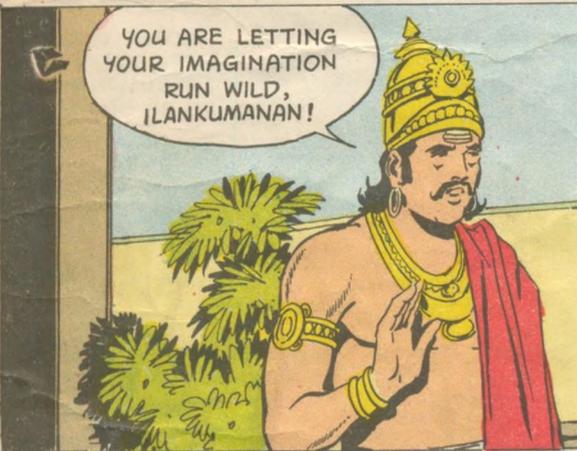




ON THE CONTRARY, WHEN A COUNTRY'S CULTURE IS NOT NOURISHED, ITS LIFE-GIVING SPRINGS RUN DRY. AND THAT WILL LEAD TO RUIN!



I DISAGREE. SO MUCH OF MUSIC AND POETRY WILL LULL US INTO LAZINESS AND MAKE US AN EASY PREY TO ANY AGGRESSOR.



YOU ARE LETTING YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD, ILANKUMANAN!



NO! I AM TRYING TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF OUR KINGDOM.



THEN OUR GOAL IS ONE.

BUT OUR IDEAS DIFFER. DIVIDE THE KINGDOM AND GIVE ME MY SHARE, TO RULE AS I THINK BEST.



IF YOU INSIST, SO BE IT! IT PAINS ME, BUT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.

YES. IT IS THE ONLY WAY.

PEOPLE WERE UNHAPPY WHEN THEY HEARD THE NEWS OF THE PARTITION OF THE COUNTRY.



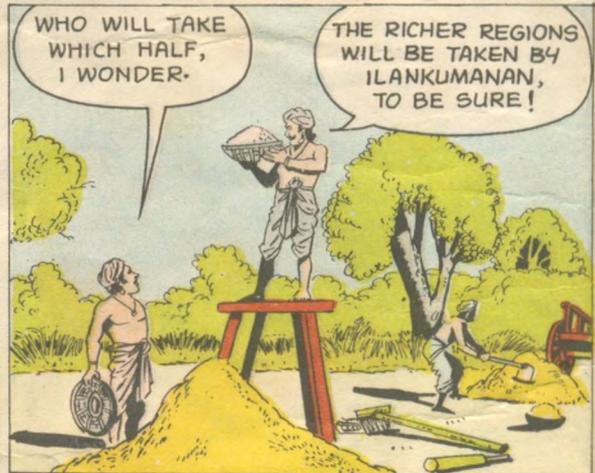
THE KINGDOM IS TO BE DIVIDED! HOW SHOCKING!

INDEED! ILANKUMANAN DEMANDED HIS SHARE, AND KUMANAN HAS GIVEN IT!



HOW GENEROUS A KING! NO ONE WHO GOES WITH A PETITION TO HIM IS EVER TURNED AWAY.

NO, NOT EVEN IF HE ASKS FOR HALF THE KINGDOM.



WHO WILL TAKE WHICH HALF, I WONDER-

THE RICHER REGIONS WILL BE TAKEN BY ILANKUMANAN, TO BE SURE!

AT THE PALACE —



MAHARAJA, THE PEOPLE ARE AGITATED OVER THE PARTITION.



MEANWHILE ILANKUMANAN GAVE ALL HIS ATTENTION TO HIS ARMY.



THE COST OF MAINTAINING THE ARMY IS MOUNTING.

WE MUST BE MORE STRICT IN COLLECTING TAXES!

YOUR TAXES ARE LONG OVERDUE.

GIVE ME TIME, GOOD SIR! TRADE IS POOR; MY LOOMS ARE IDLE.



OUR ORDERS ARE TO TAKE AWAY THE POSSESSIONS OF ALL DEFAULTERS.

WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW? O WHAT A FATE IS OURS!

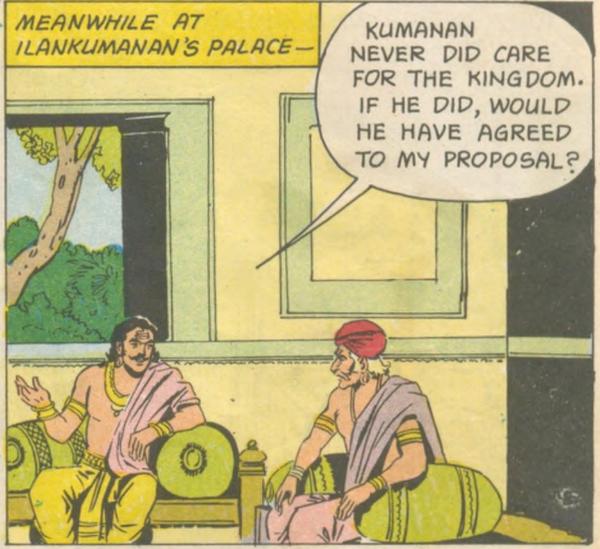
WE'LL GO TO KUMANAN!



AND SOON THERE WAS AN EXODUS TO KUMANAN'S TERRITORY.



MEANWHILE AT ILANKUMANAN'S PALACE—

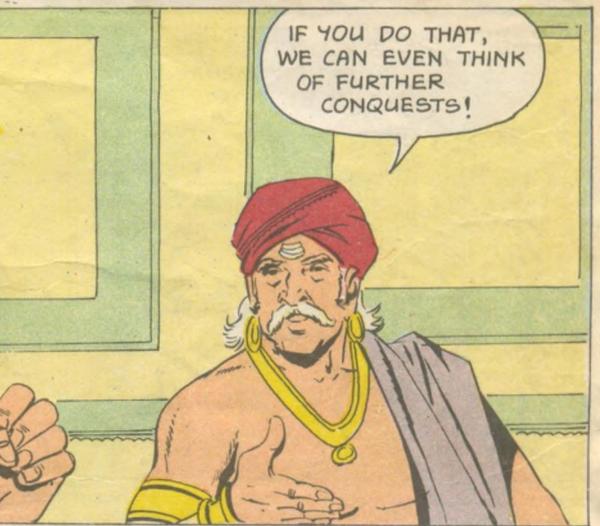


KUMANAN NEVER DID CARE FOR THE KINGDOM. IF HE DID, WOULD HE HAVE AGREED TO MY PROPOSAL?

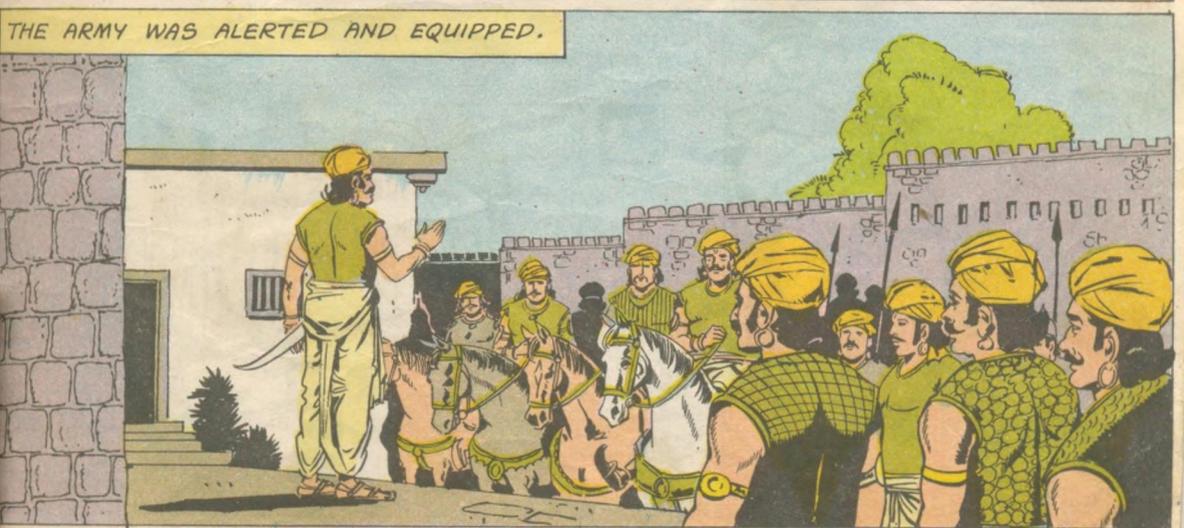
A GOOD KING KNOWS THAT A KINGDOM DIVIDED IS AS GOOD AS A KINGDOM LOST. I WILL HAVE TO BRING HIS TERRITORY UNDER MY RULE.



IF YOU DO THAT, WE CAN EVEN THINK OF FURTHER CONQUESTS!

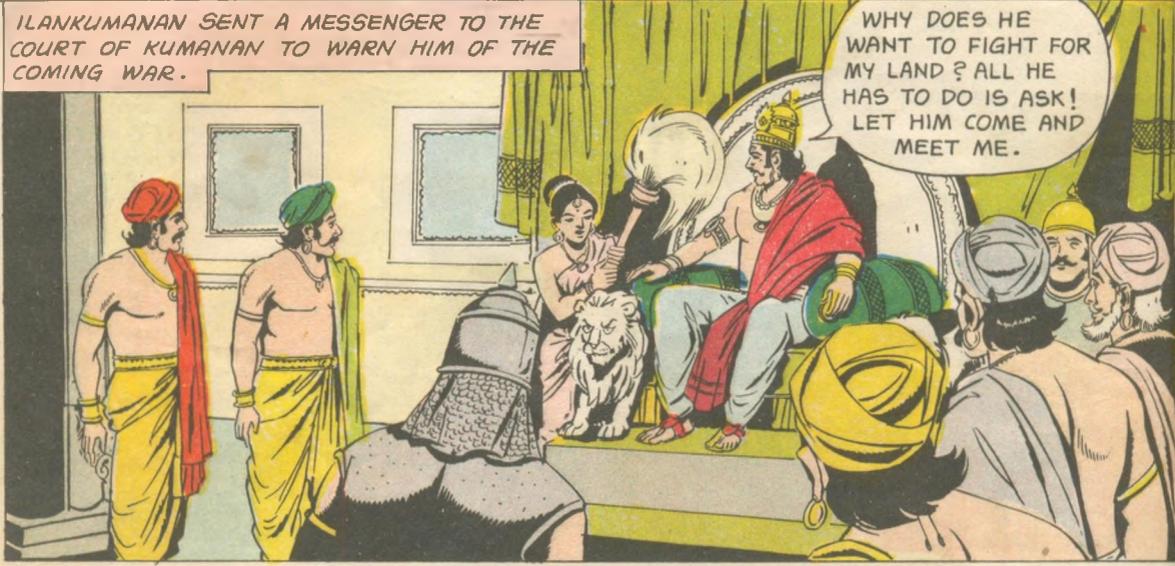


THE ARMY WAS ALERTED AND EQUIPPED.



ILANKUMANAN SENT A MESSENGER TO THE COURT OF KUMANAN TO WARN HIM OF THE COMING WAR.

WHY DOES HE WANT TO FIGHT FOR MY LAND? ALL HE HAS TO DO IS ASK! LET HIM COME AND MEET ME.



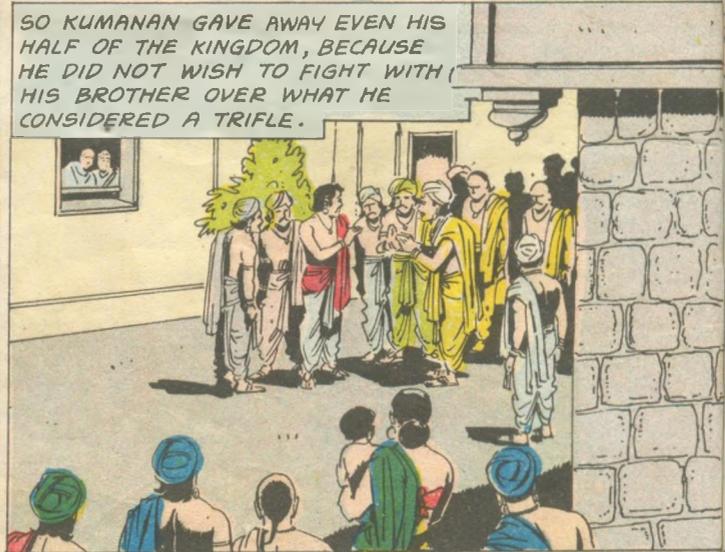
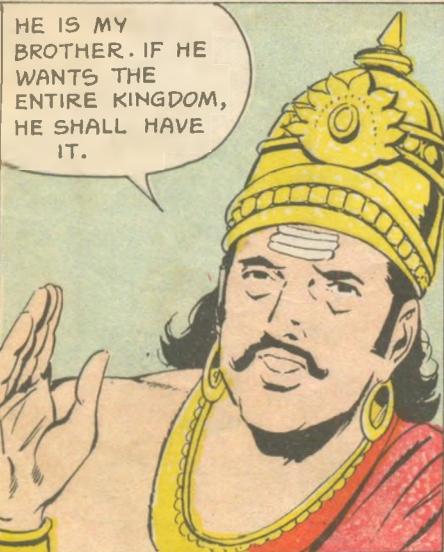
ARE YOU GOING TO SURRENDER, MAHARAJA? LET IT BE WAR.

BETWEEN BROTHERS? NEVER!



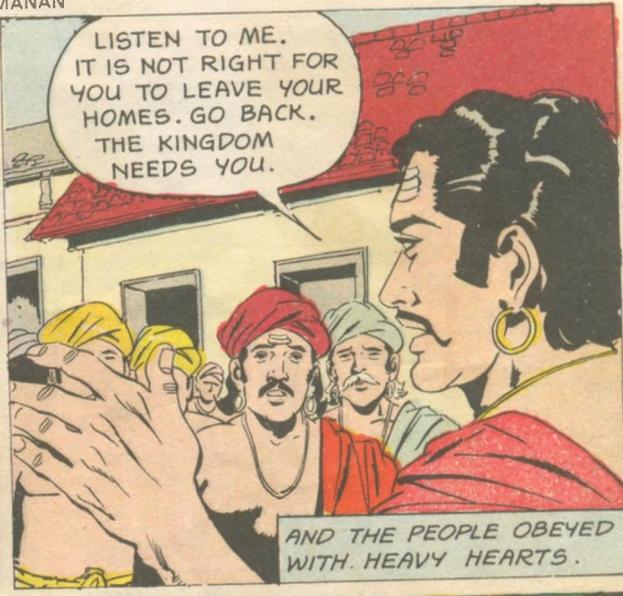
HE IS MY BROTHER. IF HE WANTS THE ENTIRE KINGDOM, HE SHALL HAVE IT.

SO KUMANAN GAVE AWAY EVEN HIS HALF OF THE KINGDOM, BECAUSE HE DID NOT WISH TO FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHER OVER WHAT HE CONSIDERED A TRIFLE.





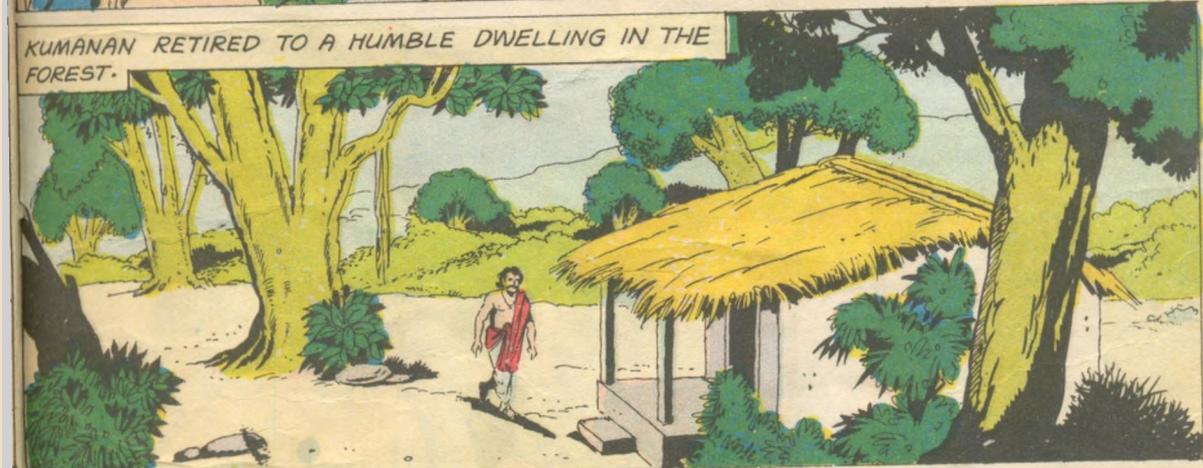
WE WILL COME WITH YOU, O KING.



LISTEN TO ME. IT IS NOT RIGHT FOR YOU TO LEAVE YOUR HOMES. GO BACK. THE KINGDOM NEEDS YOU.

AND THE PEOPLE OBEYED WITH HEAVY HEARTS.

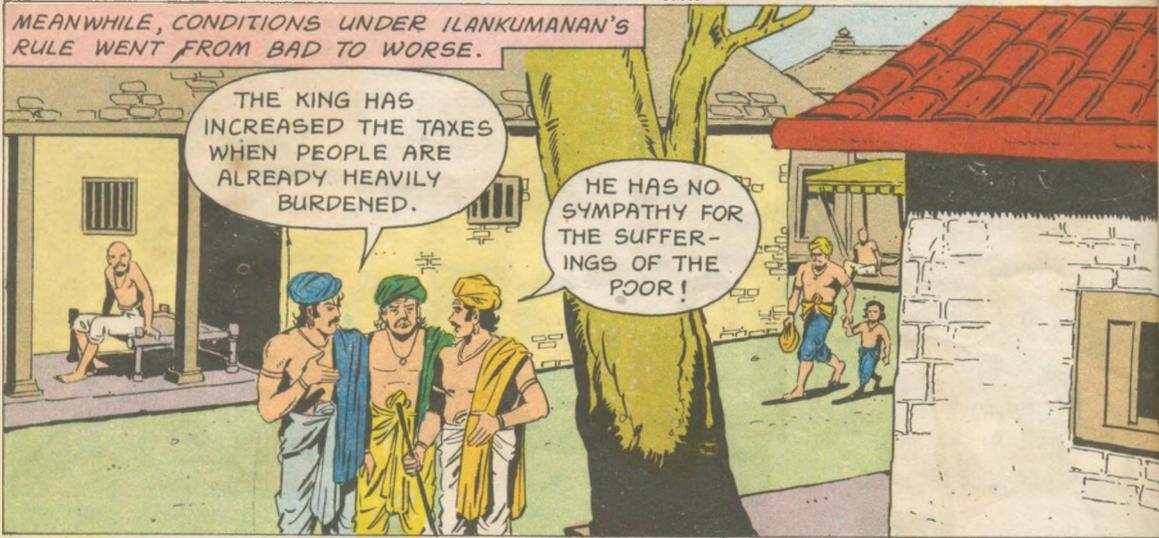
KUMANAN RETIRED TO A HUMBLE DWELLING IN THE FOREST.



THE GENEROUS KUMANAN NOW LIVED ON THE GENEROSITY OF HIS SUBJECTS!



MEANWHILE, CONDITIONS UNDER ILANKUMANAN'S RULE WENT FROM BAD TO WORSE.



THE KING HAS INCREASED THE TAXES WHEN PEOPLE ARE ALREADY HEAVILY BURDENED.

HE HAS NO SYMPATHY FOR THE SUFFERINGS OF THE POOR!

THE CROPS FAILED AND THERE WAS FAMINE.

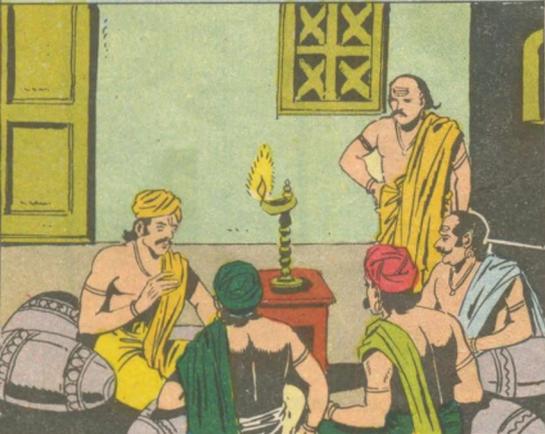


THE GODS ARE ANGRY WITH US.

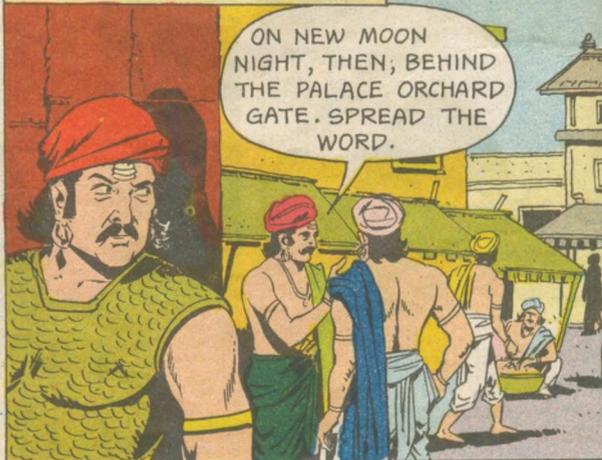
ONLY A GOOD KING ON THE THRONE CAN HAVE GOD'S GRACE.

YES. WE MUST BRING KUMANAN BACK.

THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO PLOT AGAINST THE KING, AT FIRST IN SECRET...

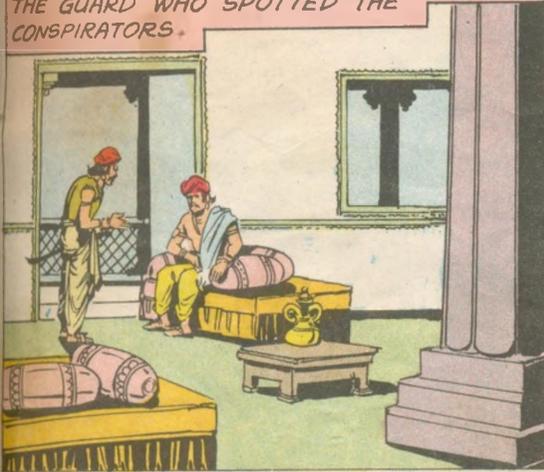


... AND SOON IN THE OPEN.



ON NEW MOON NIGHT, THEN, BEHIND THE PALACE ORCHARD GATE. SPREAD THE WORD.

THE THREATENED PLOT WAS EXPOSED BY THE GUARD WHO SPOTTED THE CONSPIRATORS.



THE CONSPIRATORS KNEW THEY WERE IN DANGER AND FLED AT DEAD OF NIGHT.



THE CRIMINALS HAVE FLED. THE THREAT IS OVER.



NO. IT IS NOT.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THE REAL THREAT IS KUMANAN. YOU CAN ONLY BE SECURE WHEN KUMANAN IS NO MORE!



THAT EVENING —

HEAR YE! THE KING HAS OFFERED A REWARD OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND PONS FOR KUMANAN'S HEAD!

A HUNDRED THOUSAND CURSES ON THE HEAD OF ILANKUMANAN!



THE ANNOUNCEMENT ONLY MADE MATTERS WORSE, AND THE PEOPLE BECAME EVEN MORE UNHAPPY.

WE CANNOT TOLERATE THIS ANY MORE.

LET US PERSUADE KUMANAN TO RETURN FOR THE SAKE OF THE PEOPLE.



A DELEGATION MET KUMANAN AND EXPLAINED THE SITUATION IN THE LAND.

A HUNDRED THOUSAND PONS FOR THIS HEAD! RATHER OVER-PRICED, ISN'T IT?

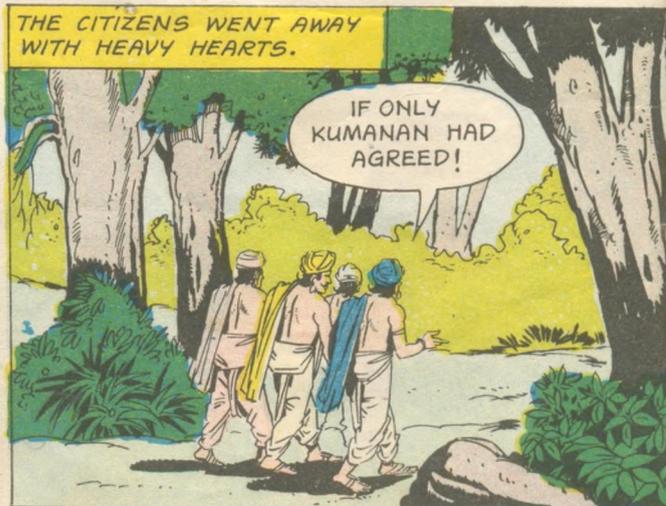
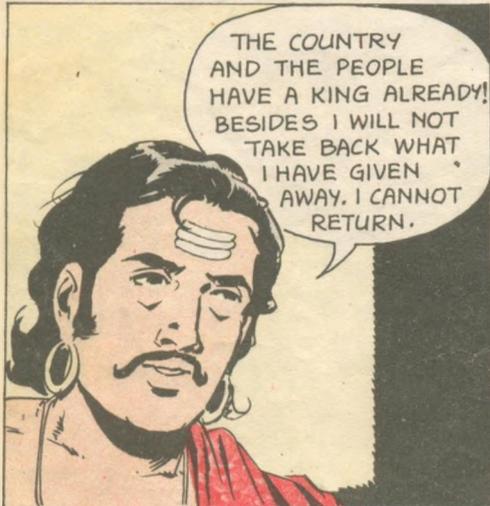
THIS IS NO TIME FOR JOKES, MAHARAJA. YOU MUST RETURN. THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE NEED YOU. YOU MUST NOT FAIL THEM.



THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE HAVE A KING ALREADY! BESIDES I WILL NOT TAKE BACK WHAT I HAVE GIVEN AWAY. I CANNOT RETURN.

THE CITIZENS WENT AWAY WITH HEAVY HEARTS.

IF ONLY KUMANAN HAD AGREED!



A FEW DAYS LATER KUMANAN HAD ANOTHER VISITOR—POET PERUNTHALAI CHATTANAR.

THE GOOD KING BANISHED TO THE FOREST, AND THE YOUNGER BROTHER ON THE THRONE. THIS IS NOT FAIR!

BUT NOW I CAN DEVOTE MYSELF ENTIRELY TO MATTERS I VALUE. I CAN NOW ENJOY YOUR COMPANY UNHINDERED. DO BEGIN.

THE POET SANG AND KUMANAN LISTENED, ENTHRALLED.

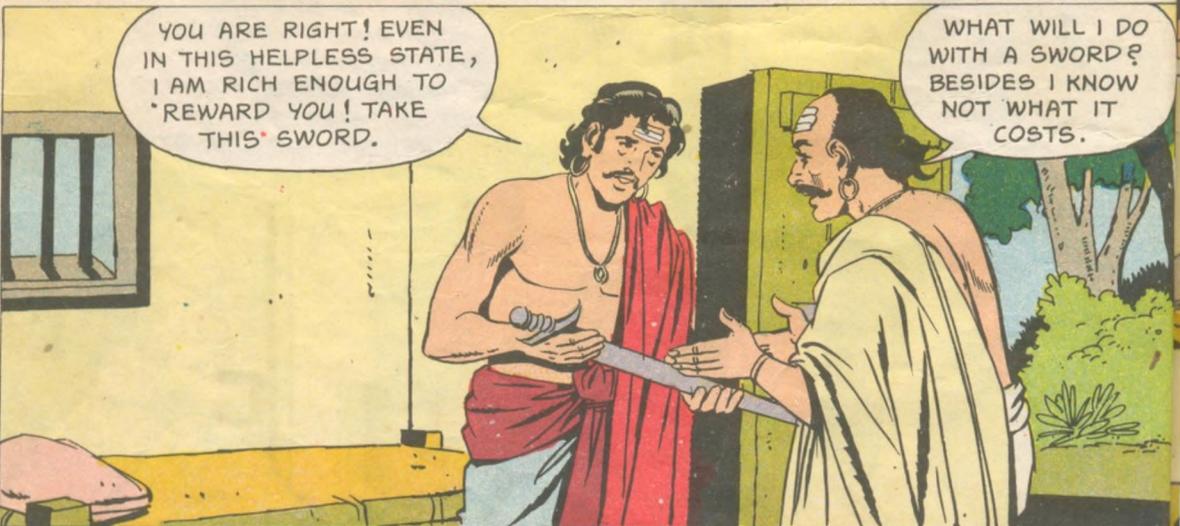
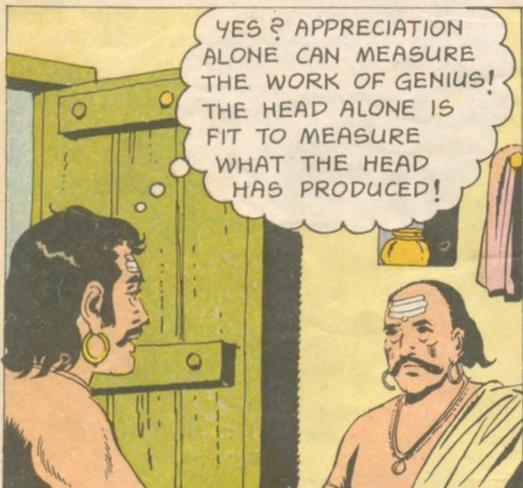
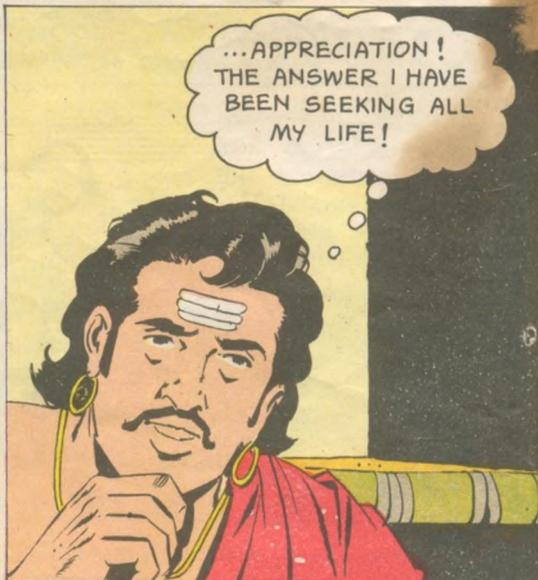
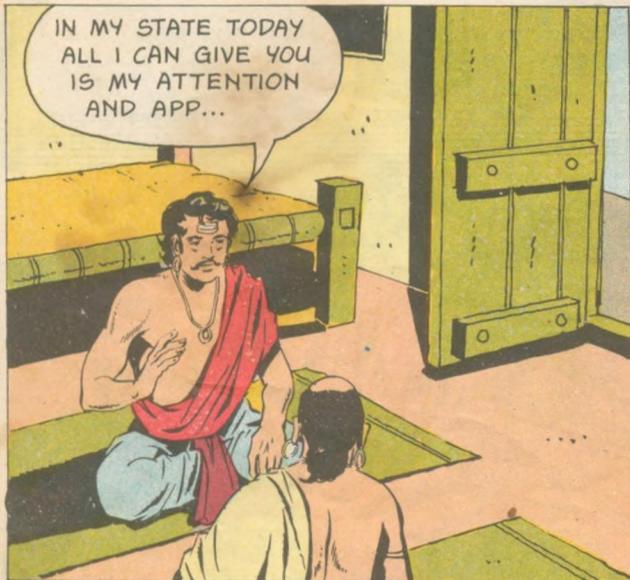
FINALLY—

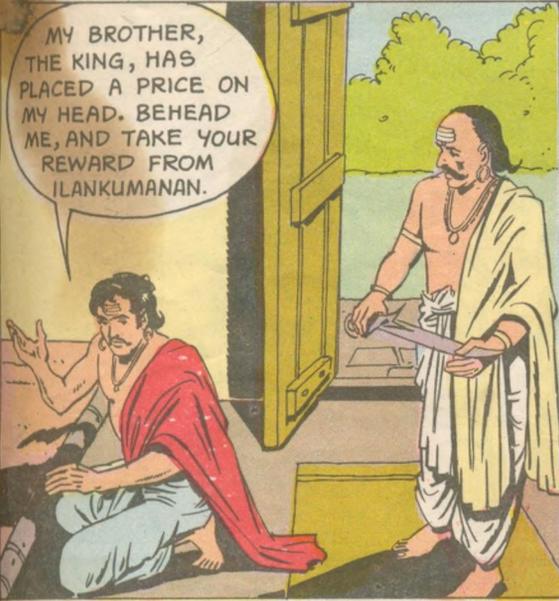
AH! HOW EXQUISITELY BEAUTIFUL! I FEEL A LITTLE SAD AT YOUR SONG, BUT IT IS STRANGELY SWEET AND STIMULATING.

YOU, O KING, ARE THE KING OF CONNOISSEURS TOO.

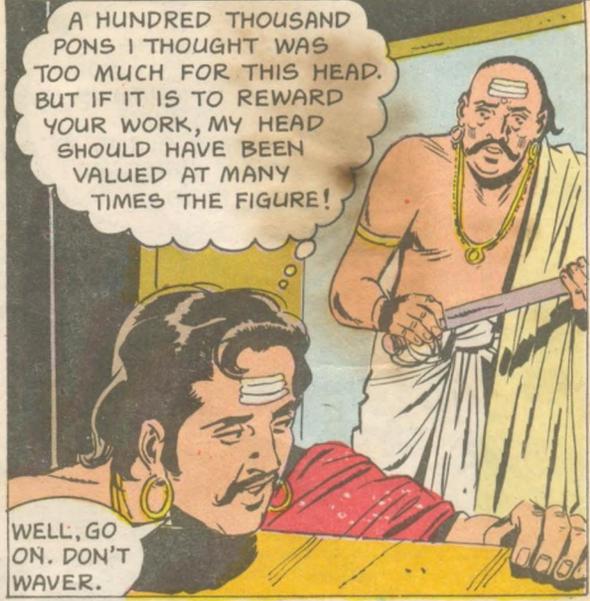
HOW I WISH YOU HAD COME EARLIER WHEN I COULD HAVE SENT YOU BACK WITH YOUR HANDS FULL OF GIFTS YOU SO RICHLY DESERVE!

THE WATERS OF THE RIVER DRY UP ON THE SURFACE BUT PERENNIAL SPRINGS RUN DEEP BELOW. POOR THOUGH YOU BE, YOU ARE NOT SO HELPLESS THAT A REWARD YOU CANNOT BESTOW!



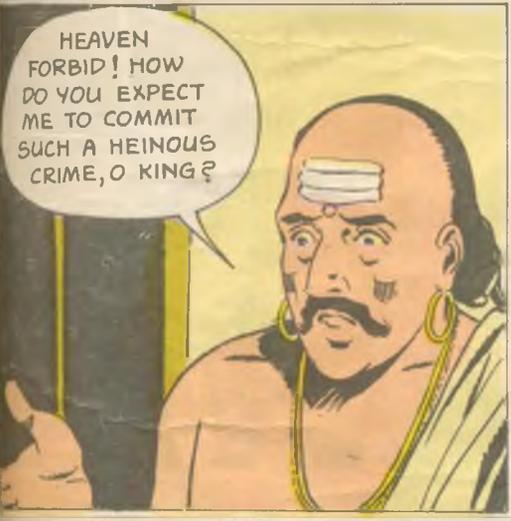


MY BROTHER, THE KING, HAS PLACED A PRICE ON MY HEAD. BEHEAD ME, AND TAKE YOUR REWARD FROM ILANKUMANAN.



A HUNDRED THOUSAND PONS I THOUGHT WAS TOO MUCH FOR THIS HEAD. BUT IF IT IS TO REWARD YOUR WORK, MY HEAD SHOULD HAVE BEEN VALUED AT MANY TIMES THE FIGURE!

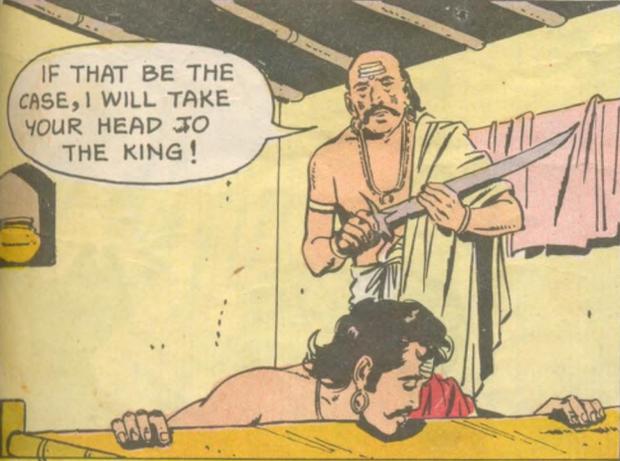
WELL, GO ON. DON'T WAVER.



HEAVEN FORBID! HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO COMMIT SUCH A HEINOUS CRIME, O KING?



NAY, NAY! SOME RUFFIAN SOME DAY WILL WANT TO CLAIM THE REWARD. WHY NOT A DESERVING POET LIKE YOU?



IF THAT BE THE CASE, I WILL TAKE YOUR HEAD TO THE KING!

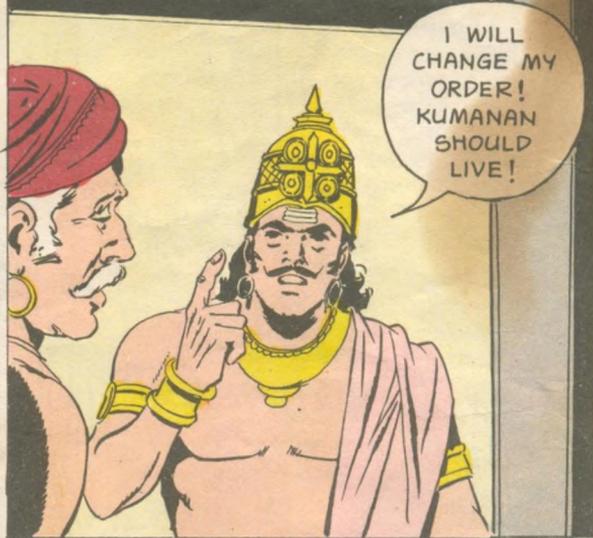


MEANWHILE, ILANKUMANAN HAD SECOND THOUGHTS.

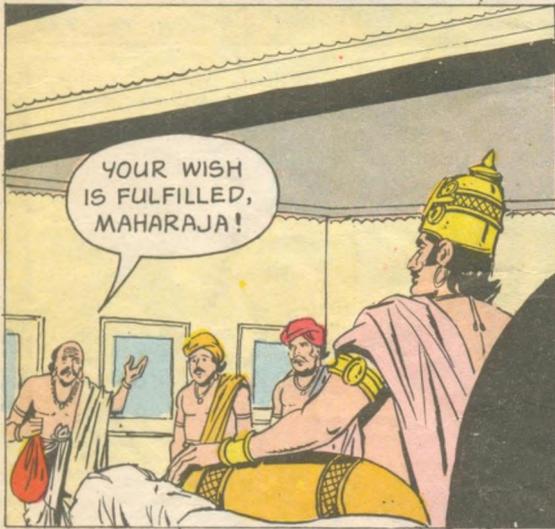
NOTHING SEEMS TO WORK. THE KINGDOM IS FACING RUIN. PEOPLE BLAME ME AND CURSE ME FOR IT.



I WILL CHANGE MY ORDER! KUMANAN SHOULD LIVE!



YOUR WISH IS FULFILLED, MAHARAJA!

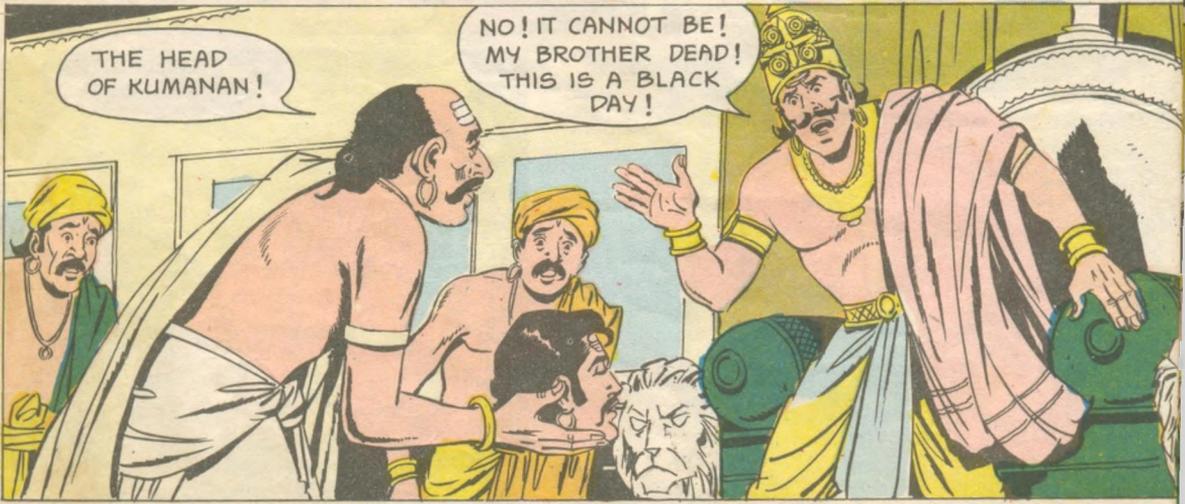


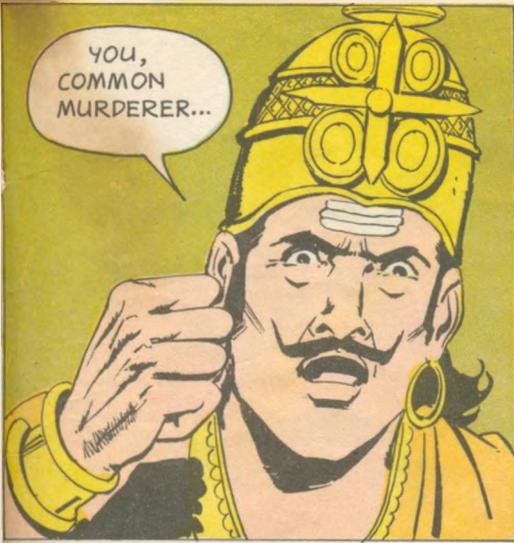
HERE IS THE HEAD.



THE HEAD OF KUMANAN!

NO! IT CANNOT BE! MY BROTHER DEAD! THIS IS A BLACK DAY!





YOU,  
COMMON  
MURDERER...

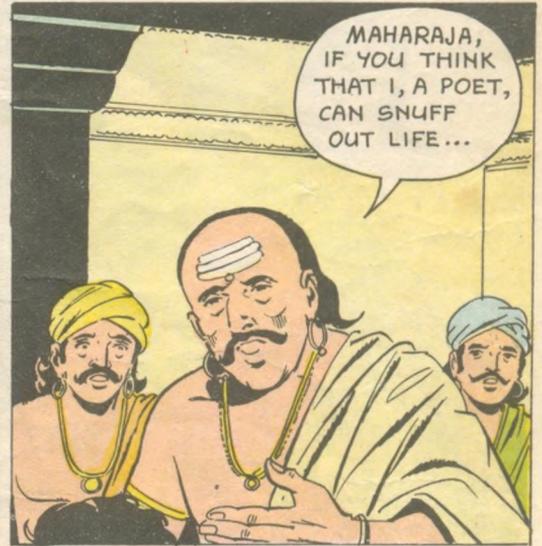


BUT MAHARAJA,  
YOU  
PROCLAIMED...

IT WAS DONE IN  
A FIT OF RAGE.  
BUT YOU...



YOU WILL  
DIE IN THE PUBLIC  
SQUARE AT SUN-  
RISE TOMORROW,  
YOU MURDERER.



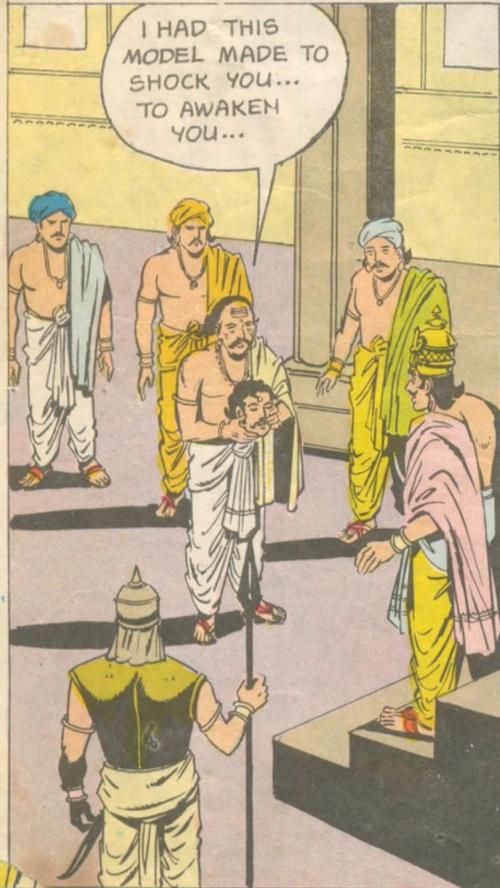
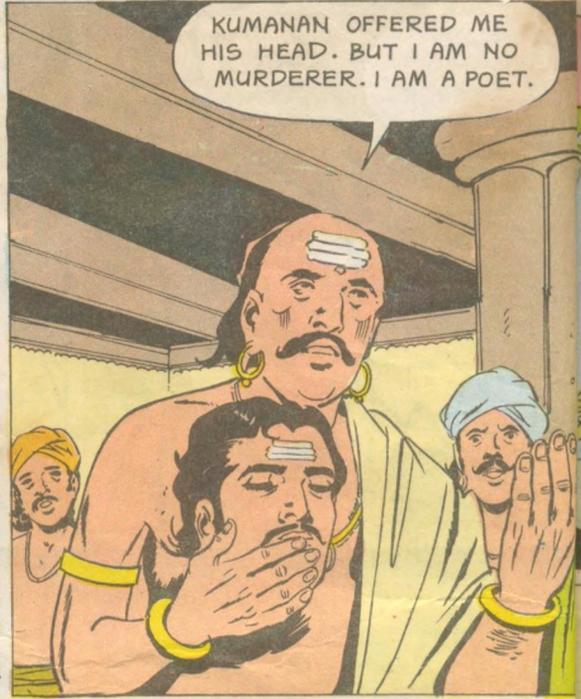
MAHARAJA,  
IF YOU THINK  
THAT I, A POET,  
CAN SNUFF  
OUT LIFE...



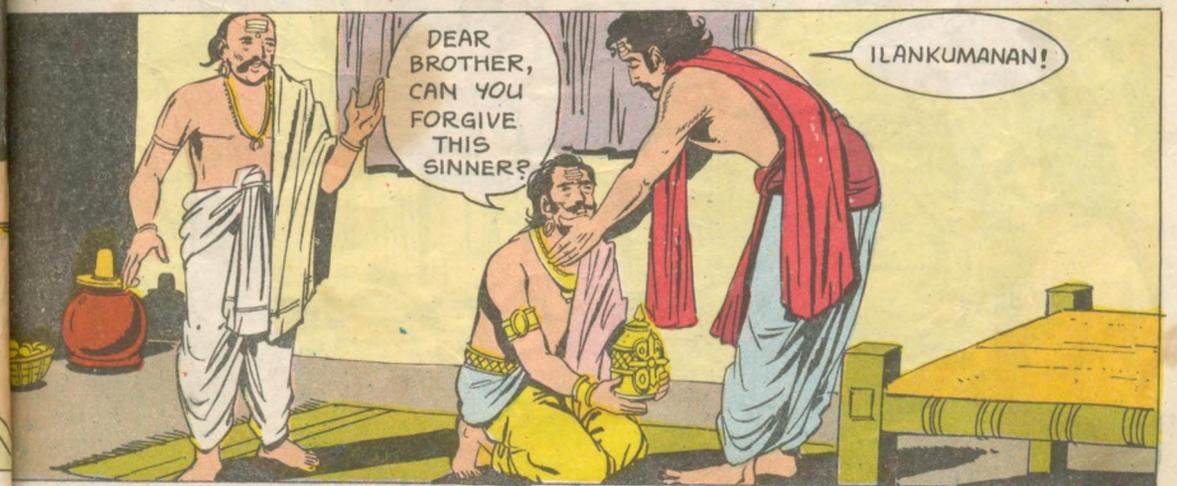
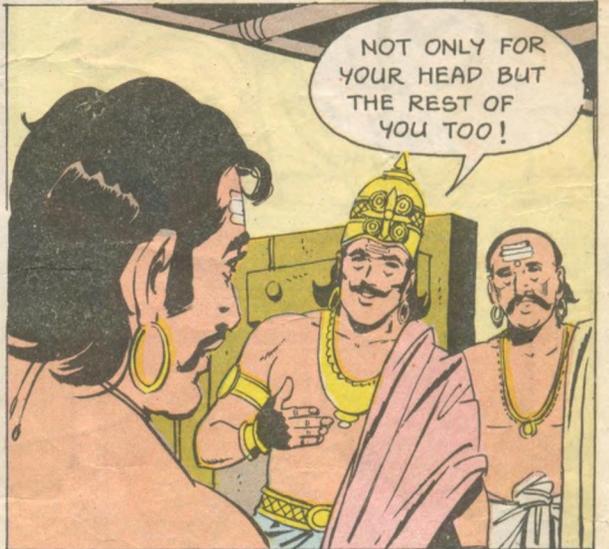
... YOU CAN AS  
WELL PRESUME  
THAT I CAN  
REKINDLE IT.

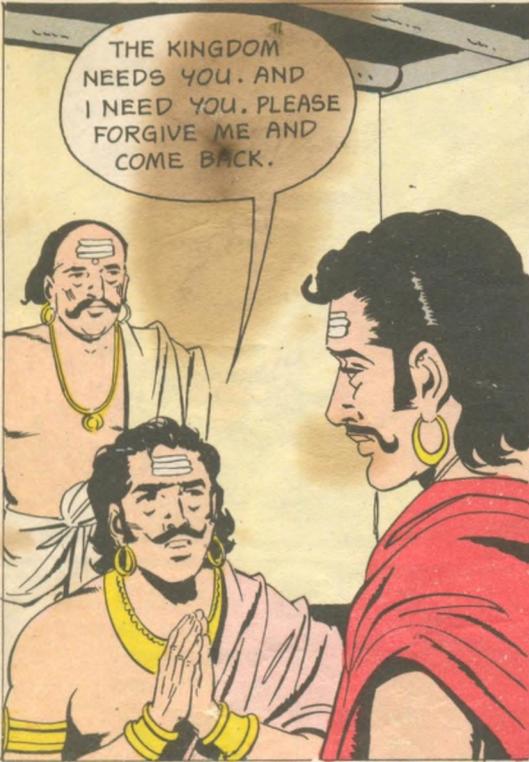


IS IT POSSIBLE ?  
IF SO I WILL GIVE  
YOU DOUBLE  
THE REWARD.

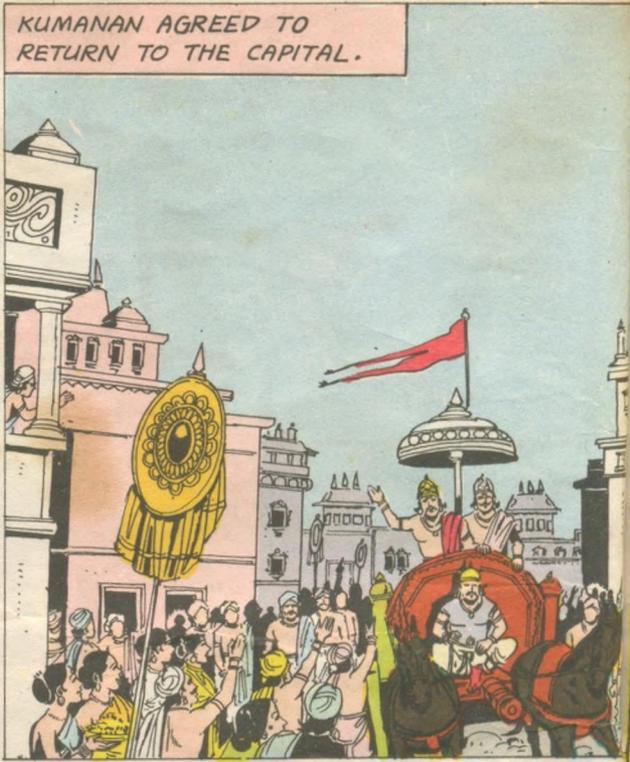


ILANKUMANAN WITH HIS RETINUE THEN PROCEEDED TO THE FOREST TO MEET KUMANAN.





THE KINGDOM NEEDS YOU. AND I NEED YOU. PLEASE FORGIVE ME AND COME BACK.



KUMANAN AGREED TO RETURN TO THE CAPITAL.

PERUNTHALAI CHATTANAR RECEIVED HIS REWARD AND DEPARTED WITH FULL HONOURS.

