



Nala Damayanti





Illustrated Classics From India

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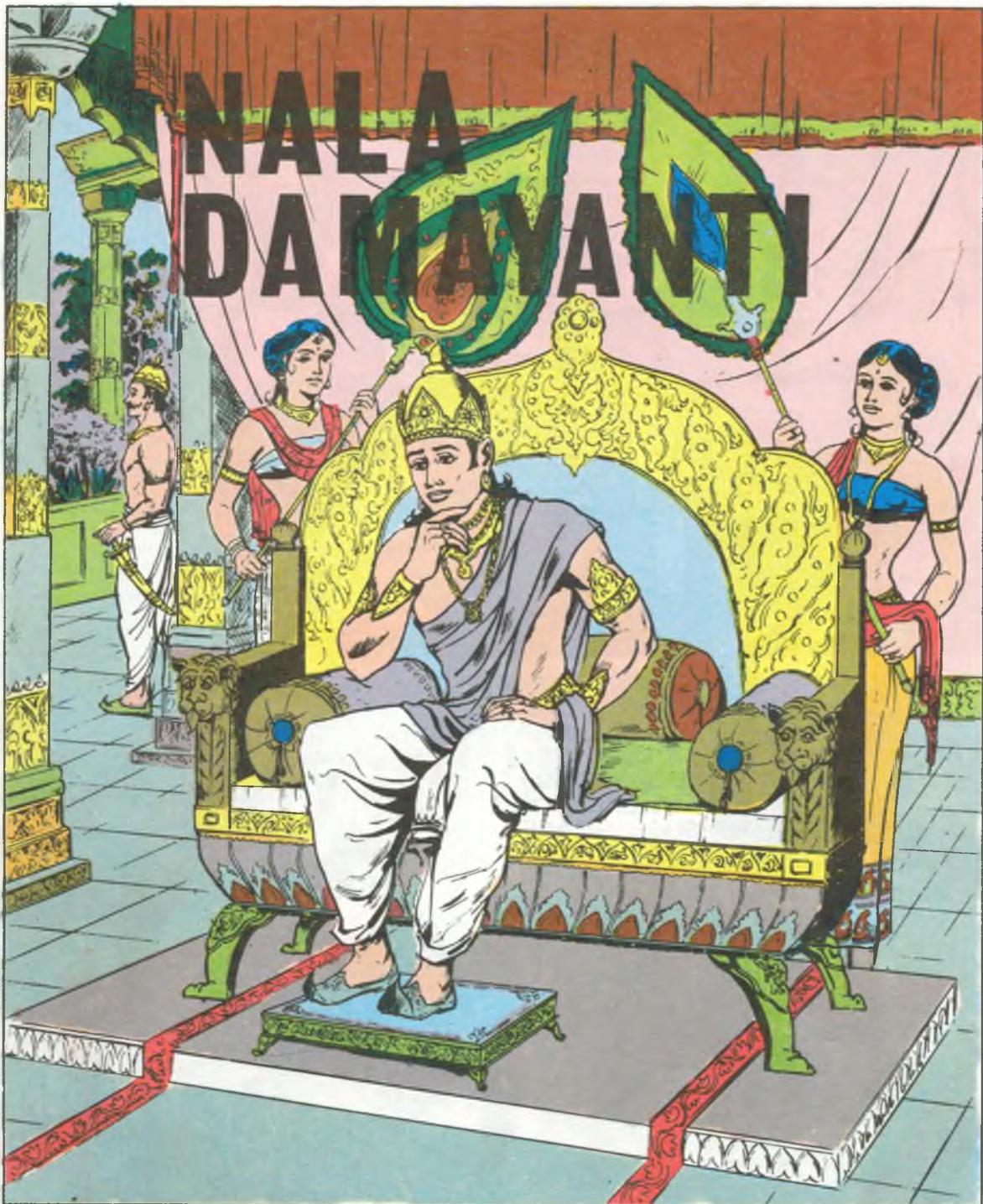
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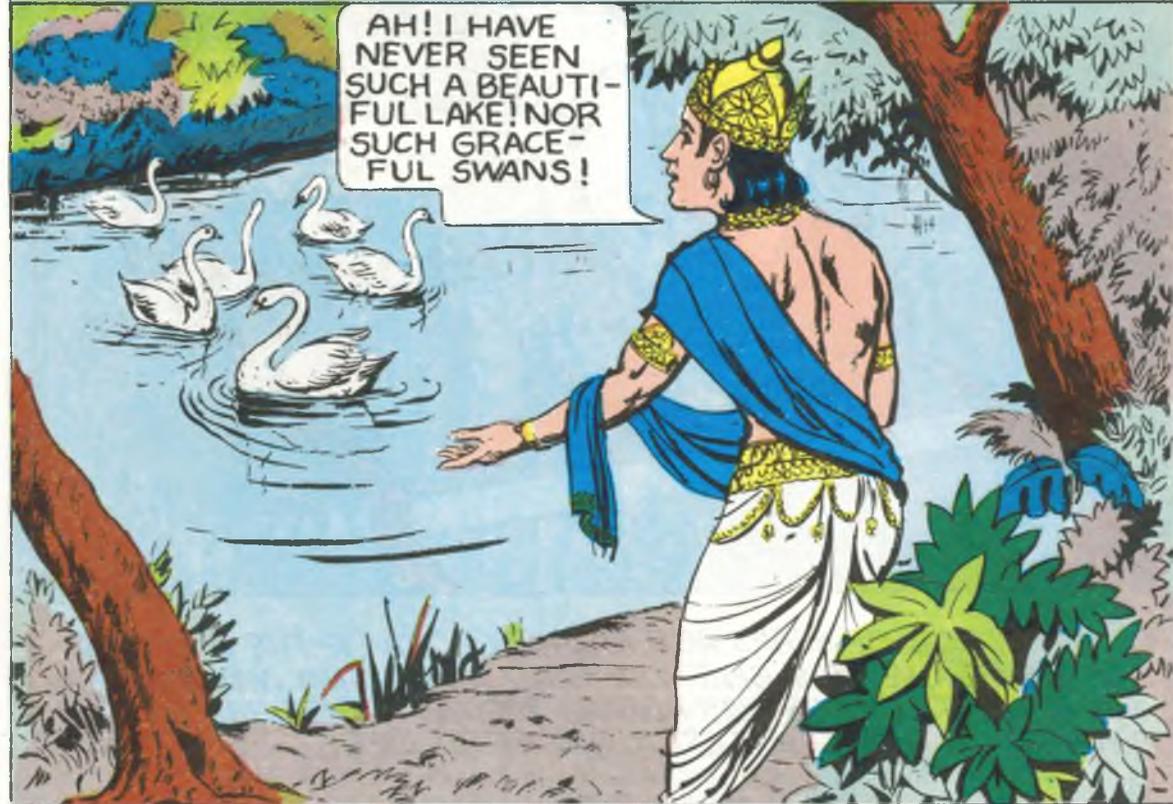


THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, NALA RULED OVER THE KINGDOM OF NISHADA. HE WAS GENEROUS AND NOBLE AND WAS LOVED BY HIS SUBJECTS. BUT HE WAS ALWAYS SAD. HIS FATHER HAD GONE TO A FOREST TO SPEND THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

NALA'S COUSIN, PUSHKARA, ENVIED HIM HIS FAME.



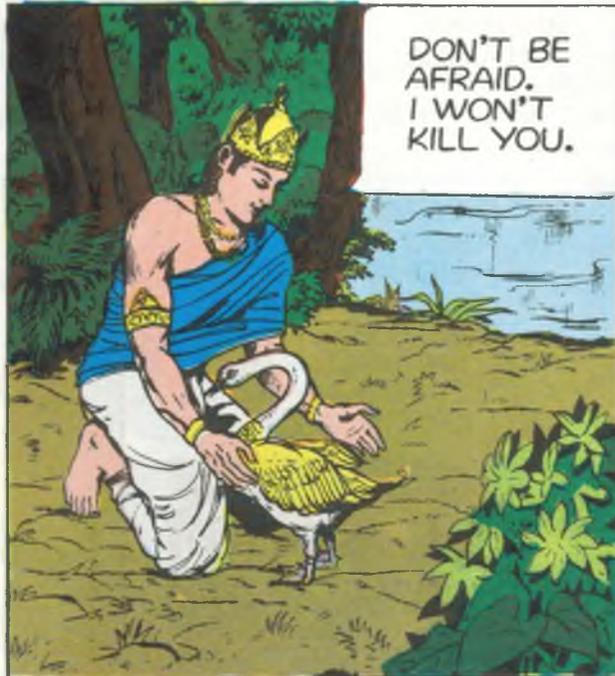
NALA WAS LONELY AND WANDERED FROM PLACE TO PLACE. ONE DAY—





WHY! THAT
DAINTY SWAN
HAS GOLDEN
PLUMES!

SLOWLY AND SOFTLY HE
CREPT FORWARD.



DON'T BE
AFRAID.
I WON'T
KILL YOU.



I SHALL KEEP
YOU IN MY
PALACE AND
GIVE YOU
PEARLS.

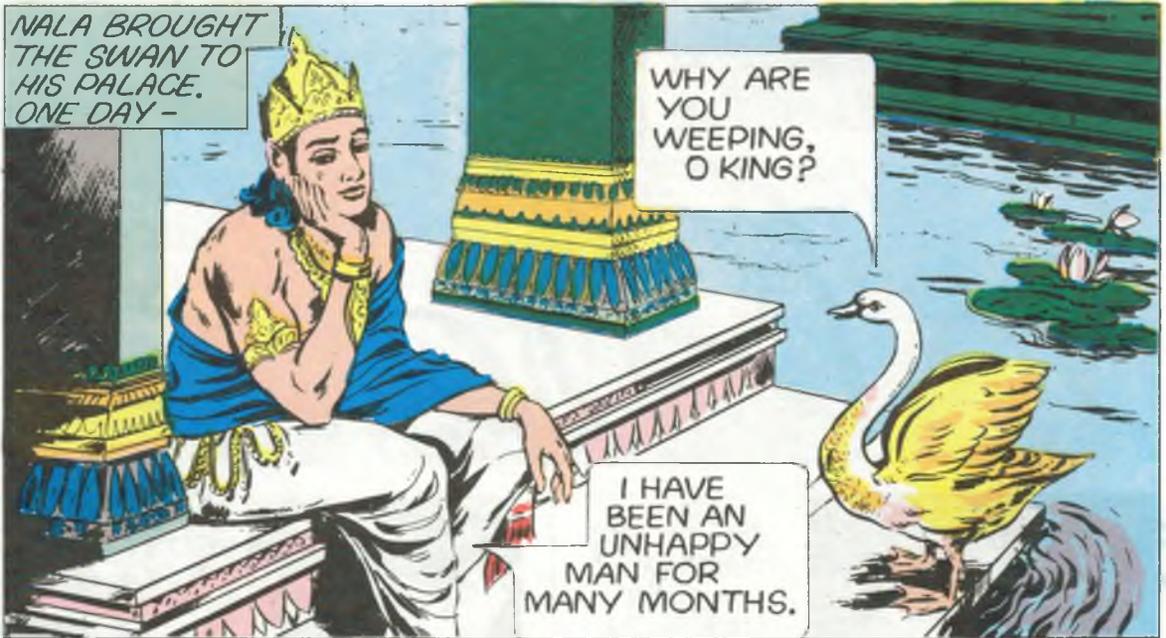
HE CAUGHT THE SWAN BY ITS LEG. THE
BIRD CRIED OUT IN PAIN. THE OTHER
SWANS LOOKED HELPLESSLY ON.

THE SWAN CONSOLED HIS WAILING
MATES.



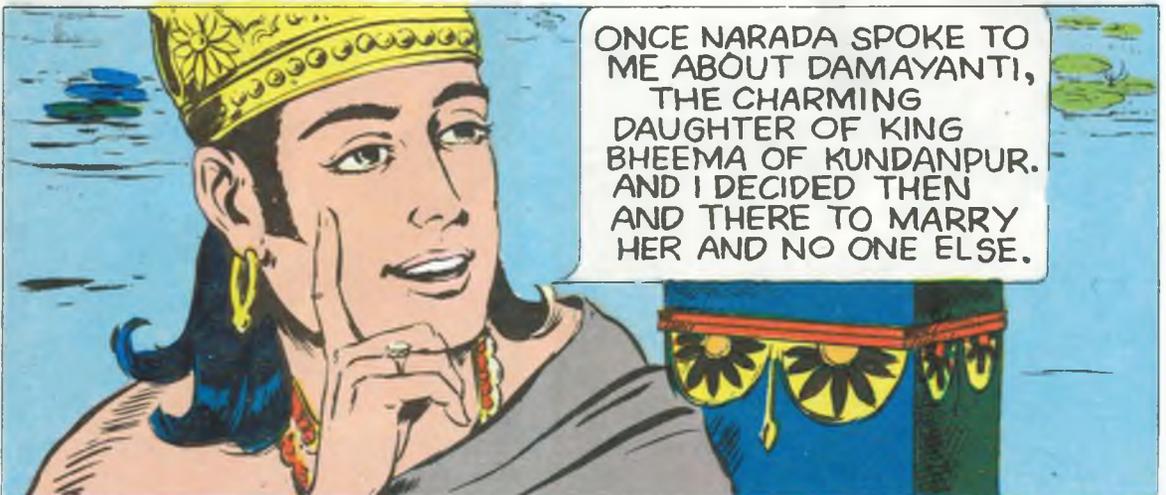
I HAVE TO GO WITH
THE KING TO KEEP
A PROMISE I
MADE IN MY LAST
BIRTH. I SHALL
RETURN THE
MOMENT MY
WORK IS
DONE.

NALA BROUGHT
THE SWAN TO
HIS PALACE.
ONE DAY -



WHY ARE
YOU
WEEPING,
O KING?

I HAVE
BEEN AN
UNHAPPY
MAN FOR
MANY MONTHS.



ONCE NARADA SPOKE TO
ME ABOUT DAMAYANTI,
THE CHARMING
DAUGHTER OF KING
BHEEMA OF KUNDANPUR.
AND I DECIDED THEN
AND THERE TO MARRY
HER AND NO ONE ELSE.

IS THAT ALL THAT TROUBLES YOU? MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE WEDDING AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME. I'LL RETURN IN A WEEK.



THE SWAN FLEW AWAY INTO THE SKY...

... AND REACHED THE KINGDOM OF KUNDANPUR.



ENTERING THE ROYAL GARDEN,
IT BEGAN CHANTING NALA'S NAME.
DAMAYANTI LOOKED UP.



AH!
WHAT A
DEAR SWAN!
IF ONLY
I COULD
HAVE IT!

AS DAMAYANTI WENT FORWARD TO
CATCH THE SWAN, IT MOVED
FARTHER AWAY.



AT LAST, WITH A SWIFT
MOVEMENT, SHE CAUGHT IT.

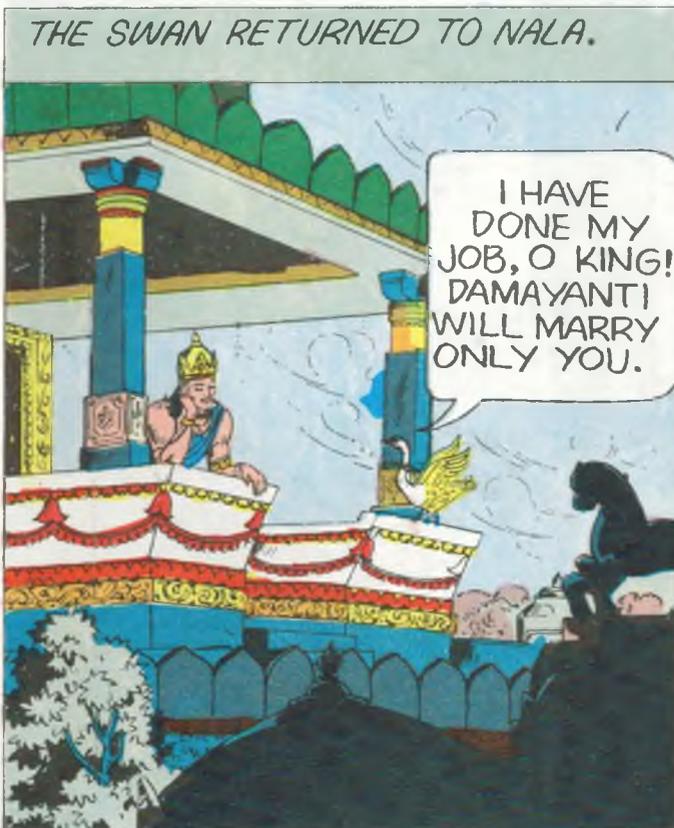


YOU'VE BEEN REPEATING THE NAME 'NALA.' WHO IS HE?



THE SWAN SPOKE OF NALA AND PRAISED HIM HIGHLY.

KING NALA MUST BE A WONDERFUL MAN! I'LL MARRY HIM AND NONE OTHER.



THE SWAN RETURNED TO NALA.

I HAVE DONE MY JOB, O KING! DAMAYANTI WILL MARRY ONLY YOU.



I HAVE KEPT MY PROMISE. LET ME NOW GO BACK TO MY COMPANIONS.

I WILL MISS YOU, MY FRIEND, BUT I DON'T WANT TO KEEP YOU AWAY FROM YOUR FRIENDS.

NALA WAS SOON INVITED TO DAMAYANTI'S SWAYAMVARA.

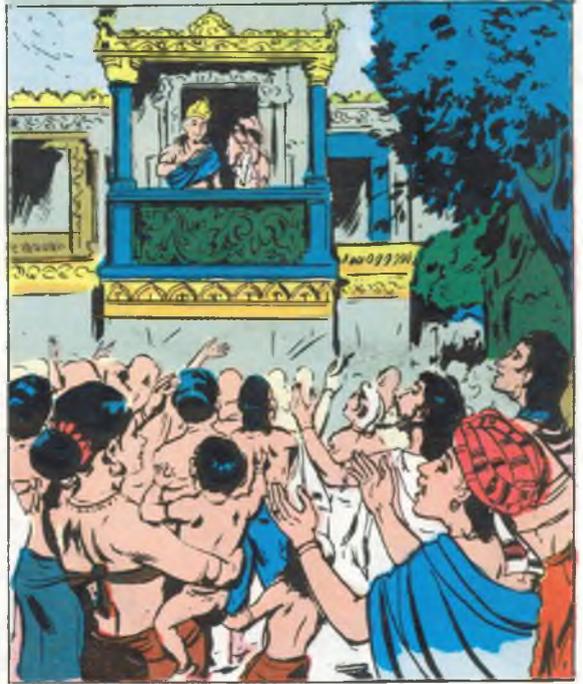


PRINCES FROM FAR AND NEAR HAD GATHERED IN THE SWAYAMVARA HALL. DAMAYANTI ENTERED WITH THE GARLAND. THE PRINCES WERE RESTLESS. LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THAT DAMAYANTI'S GARLAND WAS MEANT ONLY FOR NALA.

DAMAYANTI GARLANDED NALA.

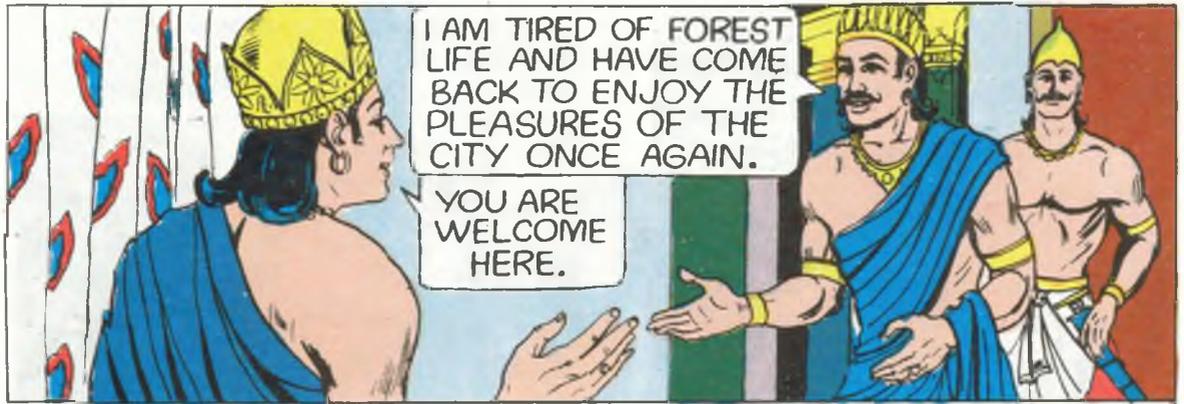


NALA BROUGHT DAMAYANTI TO HIS PALACE. PEOPLE, YOUNG AND OLD, DANCED WITH JOY.



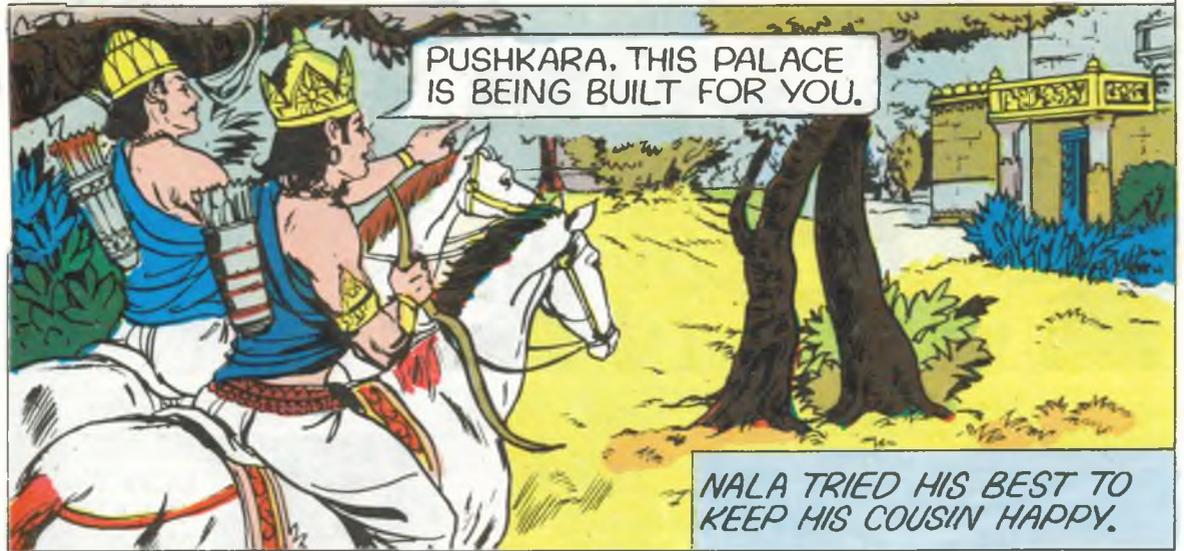
HAPPY TIMES PASS QUICKLY. SOON, TWELVE YEARS WERE OVER. ONE DAY—





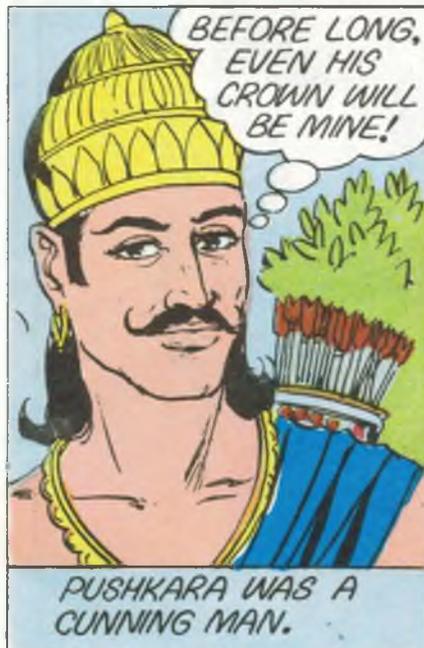
I AM TIRED OF FOREST LIFE AND HAVE COME BACK TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF THE CITY ONCE AGAIN.

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE.



PUSHKARA, THIS PALACE IS BEING BUILT FOR YOU.

NALA TRIED HIS BEST TO KEEP HIS COUSIN HAPPY.



BEFORE LONG, EVEN HIS CROWN WILL BE MINE!

PUSHKARA WAS A CUNNING MAN.



PUSHKARA INVITED NALA TO GAMBLE WITH HIM NOW AND AGAIN.

BUT NALA KEPT ON LOSING.

NOW FOR THE LAST ROUND. THE WINNER GETS THE CROWN AND THE LOSER SPENDS THREE YEARS IN THE FOREST -

AGREED!

AGREED?



THE DICE WERE CAST.

I HAVE WON! HA... HA... HA...! I'M THE RULER NOW!



NALA GAVE UP THE KINGDOM. DAMAYANTI SENT THE CHILDREN TO HER PARENTS AND WENT AWAY WITH NALA.



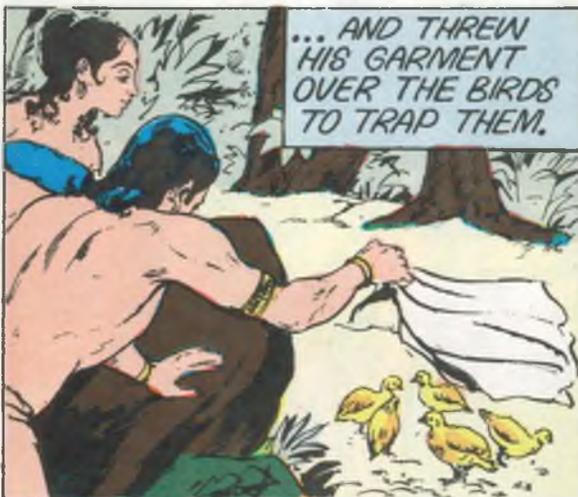
THEY WANDERED IN THE FOREST
WITHOUT FOOD AND WATER.



ONE DAY NALA
NOTICED A
FLOCK OF
GOLDEN BIRDS...



... AND THREW
HIS GARMENT
OVER THE BIRDS
TO TRAP THEM.



AS HE LEANED FORWARD, THE
BIRDS FLEW AWAY WITH THE
GARMENT— NALA'S ONLY
BELONGING!





DON'T WORRY
MY KING.
WE CAN'T
FIGHT
FATE!

I'M WORRIED
ABOUT YOU.
WHY SHOULD
YOU SUFFER
FOR MY SAKE?



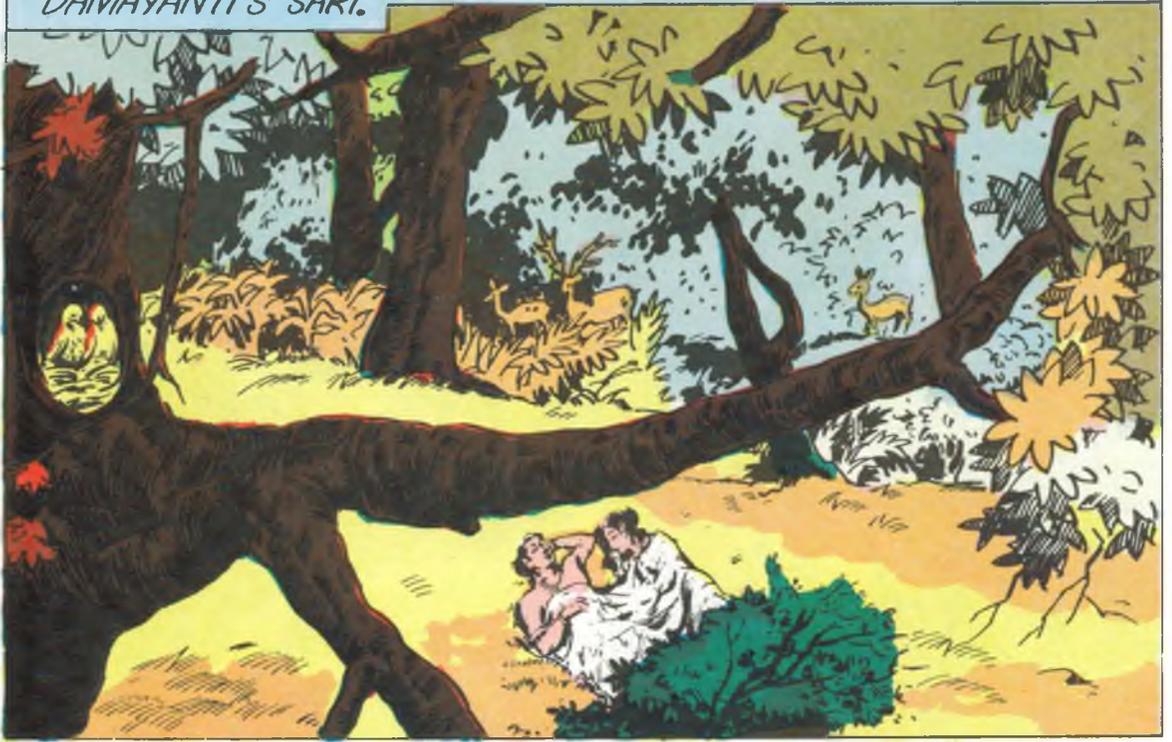
NALA GREW SAD.

LISTEN, THIS
IS THE WAY TO
YOUR FATHER'S
KINGDOM.
YOU
SHOULD...

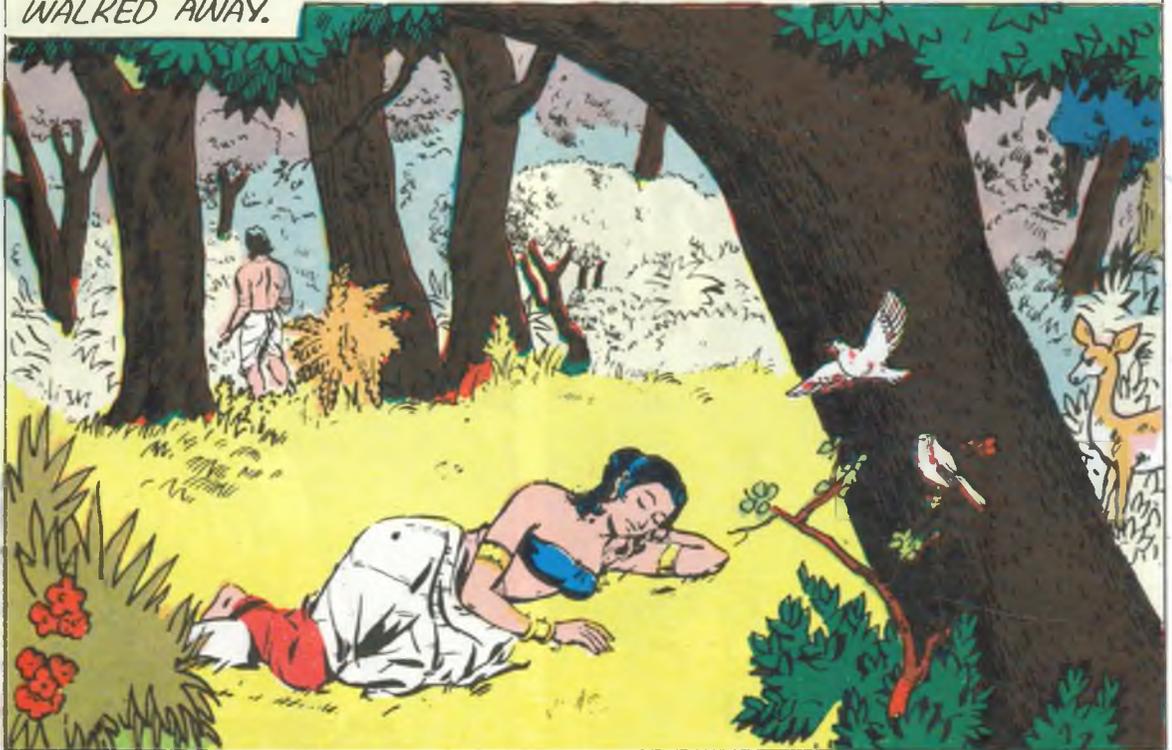


OH, NO!
I WILL
NOT LEAVE
YOU
HERE
ALONE.

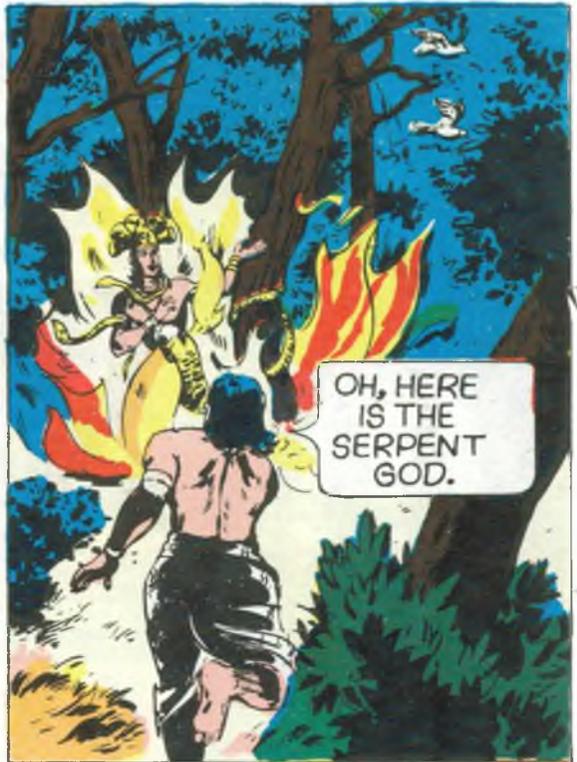
AT NIGHT THEY SLEPT ON THE BARE GROUND COVERED BY DAMAYANTI'S SARI.



EARLY NEXT MORNING, WHEN NALA WOKE UP, HE TORE A PIECE FROM DAMAYANTI'S SARI. WRAPPING HIMSELF IN IT, HE QUIETLY WALKED AWAY.

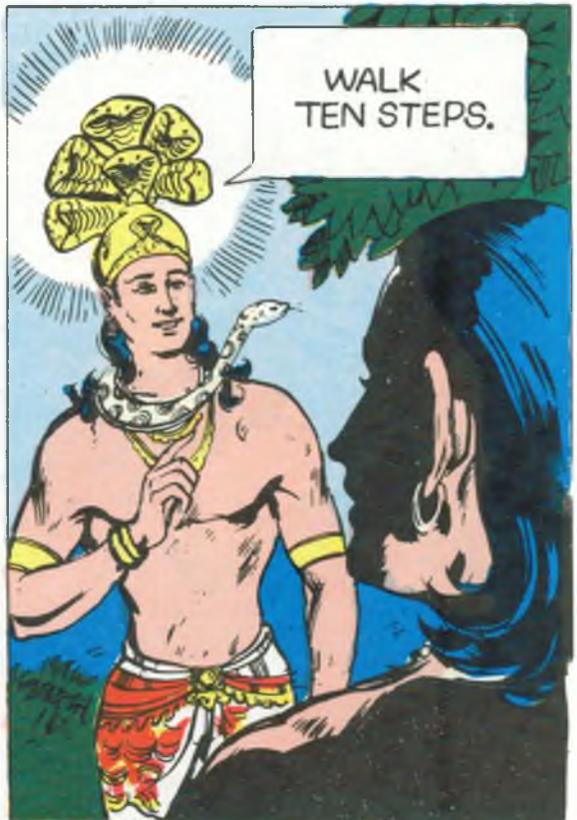


HE WALKED FOR A LONG TIME.
SUDDENLY—



NALA JUMPED INTO THE FIRE.

A LITTLE LATER—



NALA WALKED TEN STEPS AND...

OH!
SERPENT
GOD, WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE?

I CHANGED YOUR
FORM SO THAT
YOU WON'T BE
RECOGNISED.
YOU'RE BAAHUK
FROM TODAY.



KING RITUPARNA OF
AYODHYA IS VERY
GOOD AT THE
GAME OF DICE.
GO TO HIM IF
YOU WISH TO
KNOW THE
SECRET OF
THE GAME!



AND, PUT ON
THIS MAGIC
DRESS WHEN
YOU WANT
TO BECOME
YOUR OLD SELF.



MEANWHILE DAMAYANTI WOKE UP.



WHERE HAS NALA GONE?
WHY HAS HE LEFT ME ALONE
IN THE FOREST?



NALA! OH, NALA!

DAMAYANTI ASKED THE ANIMALS
AND BIRDS.

DAMAYANTI WANDERED IN
THE FOREST CRYING FOR NALA.



O JUMPING
DEER!
O LITTLE
SPARROW!
HAVE YOU
SEEN MY
NALA?

A DEADLY PYTHON SAW DAMA-
YANTI AND OPENED ITS JAWS.

IT CAUGHT DAMAYANTI'S LEG.



SUDDENLY A HUNTER'S ARROW HIT AND KILLED THE PYTHON.

THEN -



WHO ARE YOU?
A GODDESS?
A HEAVENLY
DAMSEL?
MARRY ME!



OH, MY MISFORTUNE!
I WISH THE PYTHON
HAD KILLED ME...!
STAY WHERE YOU
ARE. IF YOU TAKE
ONE STEP FURTHER,
YOU WILL BE BURNT.

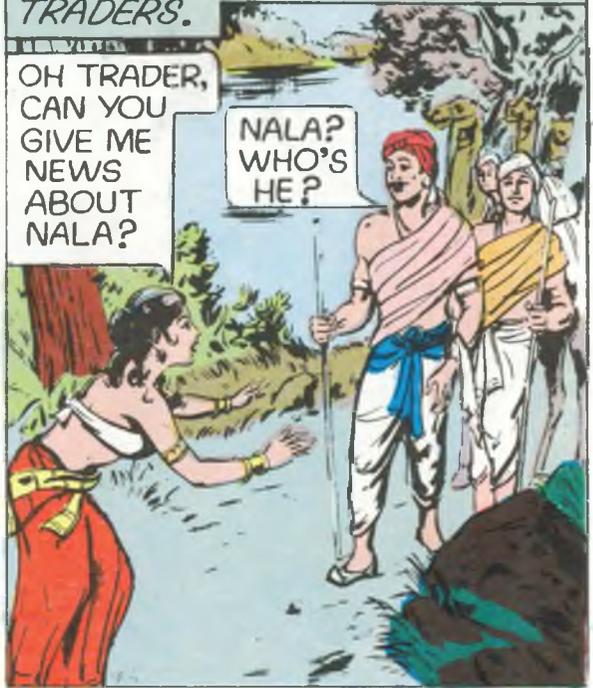


BY HER CURSE, THE HUNTER WAS BURN'T TO ASHES.

STUMBLING AND FALLING, DAMA-YANTI REACHED THE RIVER BANK. THERE SHE MET A GROUP OF TRADERS.

OH TRADER, CAN YOU GIVE ME NEWS ABOUT NALA?

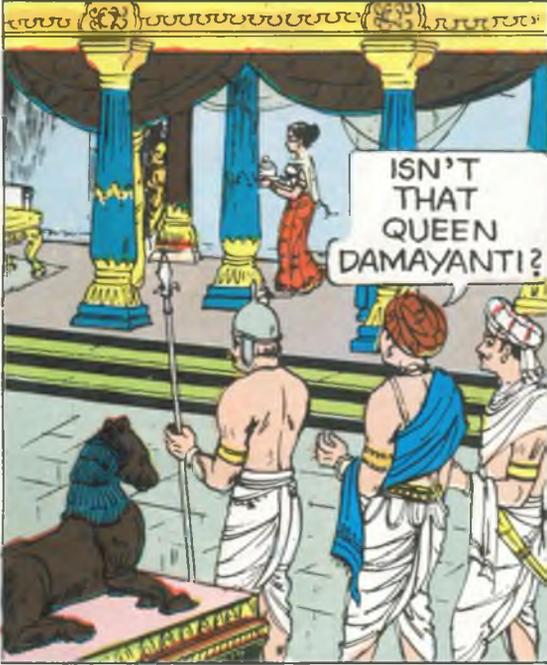
NALA? WHO'S HE?



AT NIGHT WHEN THE TRADERS WERE ASLEEP, A HERD OF ELEPHANTS CAME THAT WAY AND DESTROYED ALL THAT THEY CARRIED.

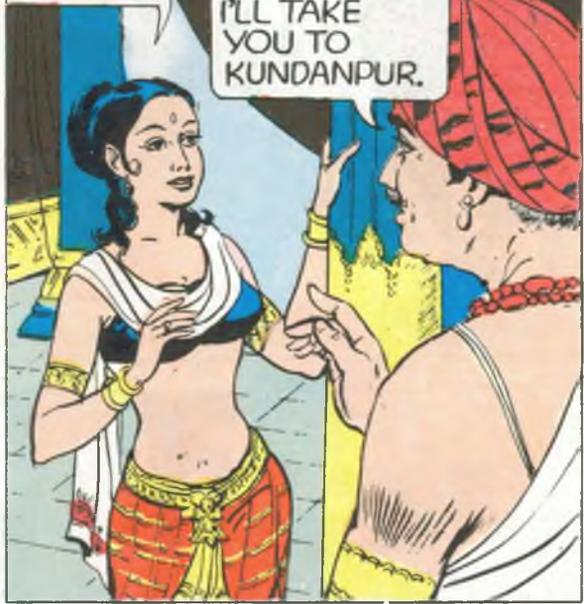


ONE DAY, THE MINISTER OF KUNDANPUR CAME TO VIPRAPUR.



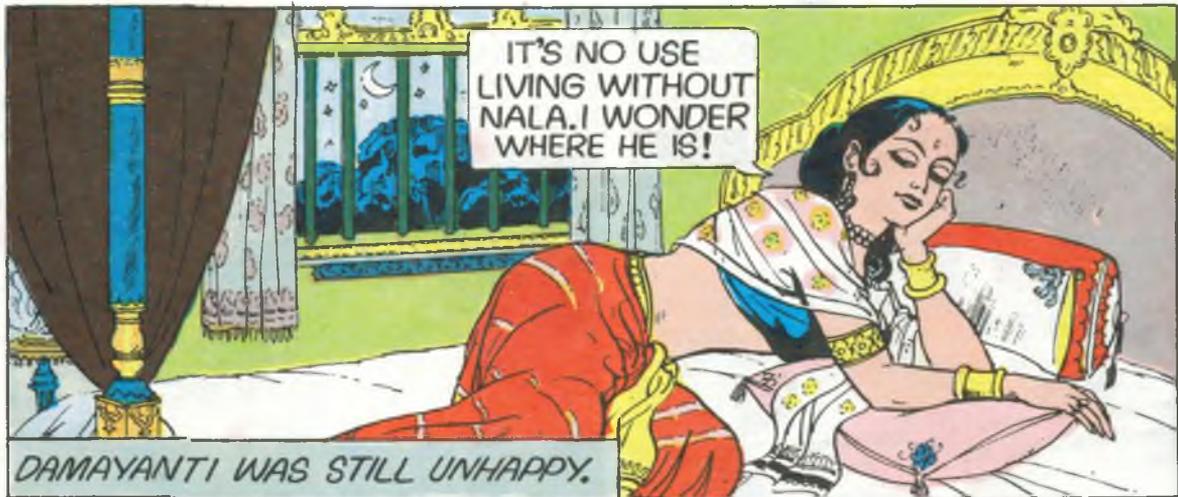
HOW DID YOU COME HERE?

I'VE BEEN SEARCHING A LONG TIME FOR YOU. I'LL TAKE YOU TO KUNDANPUR.



DAMAYANTI CAME TO KUNDANPUR. HER CHILDREN HAD GROWN UP. SHE WATCHED THEM AT PLAY AND MISSED NALA.



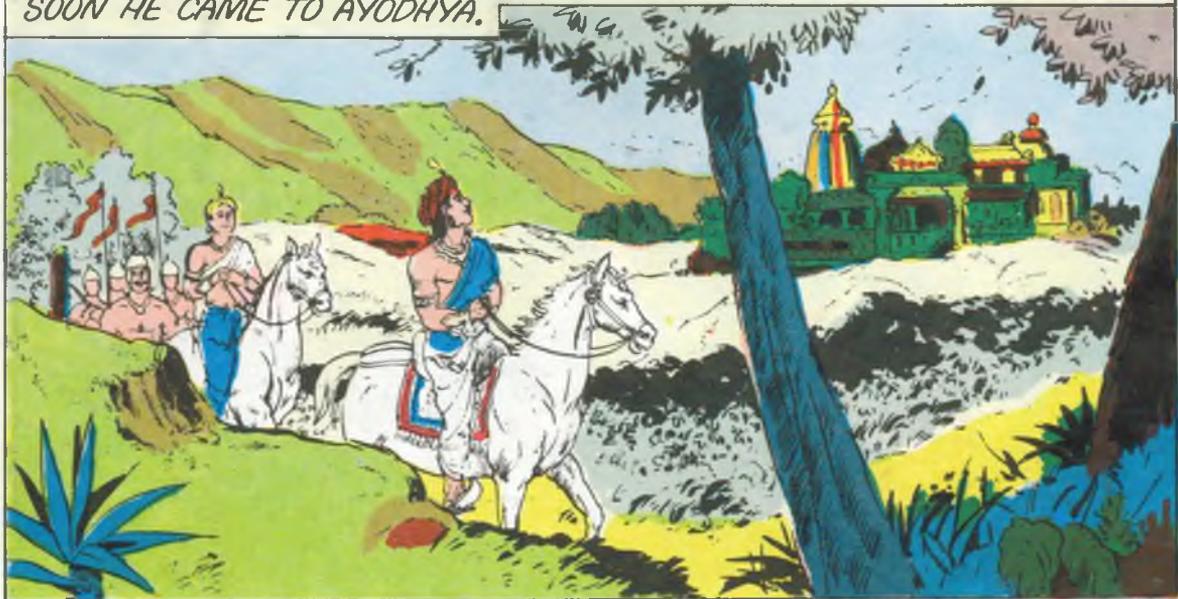


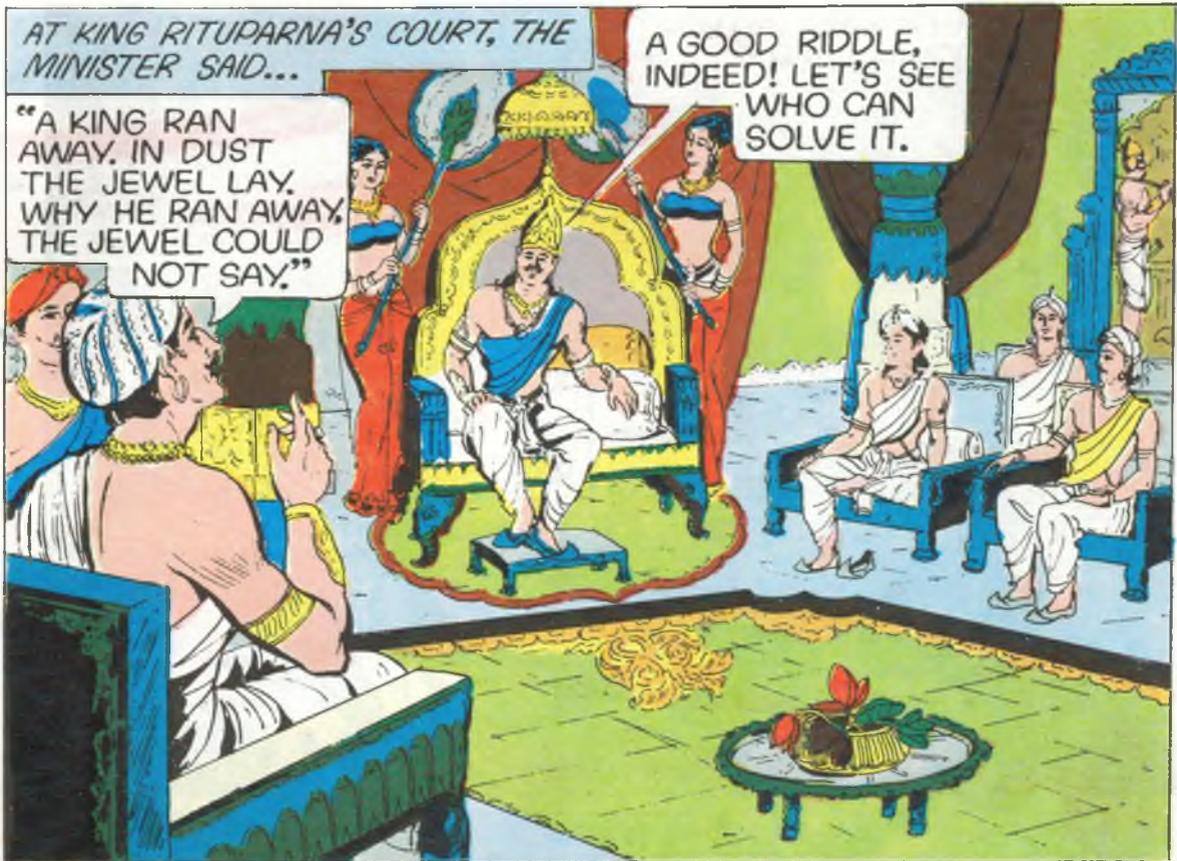
DAMAYANTI WAS STILL UNHAPPY.



HER FATHER CONSOLED HER.

ONE DAY, THE KING'S MINISTER SET OUT IN SEARCH OF NALA.
SOON HE CAME TO AYODHYA.





AT KING RITUPARNA'S COURT, THE MINISTER SAID...

"A KING RAN AWAY. IN DUST THE JEWEL LAY. WHY HE RAN AWAY, THE JEWEL COULD NOT SAY."

A GOOD RIDDLE, INDEED! LET'S SEE WHO CAN SOLVE IT.



THE RIDDLE HAS GOT TO BE SOLVED!

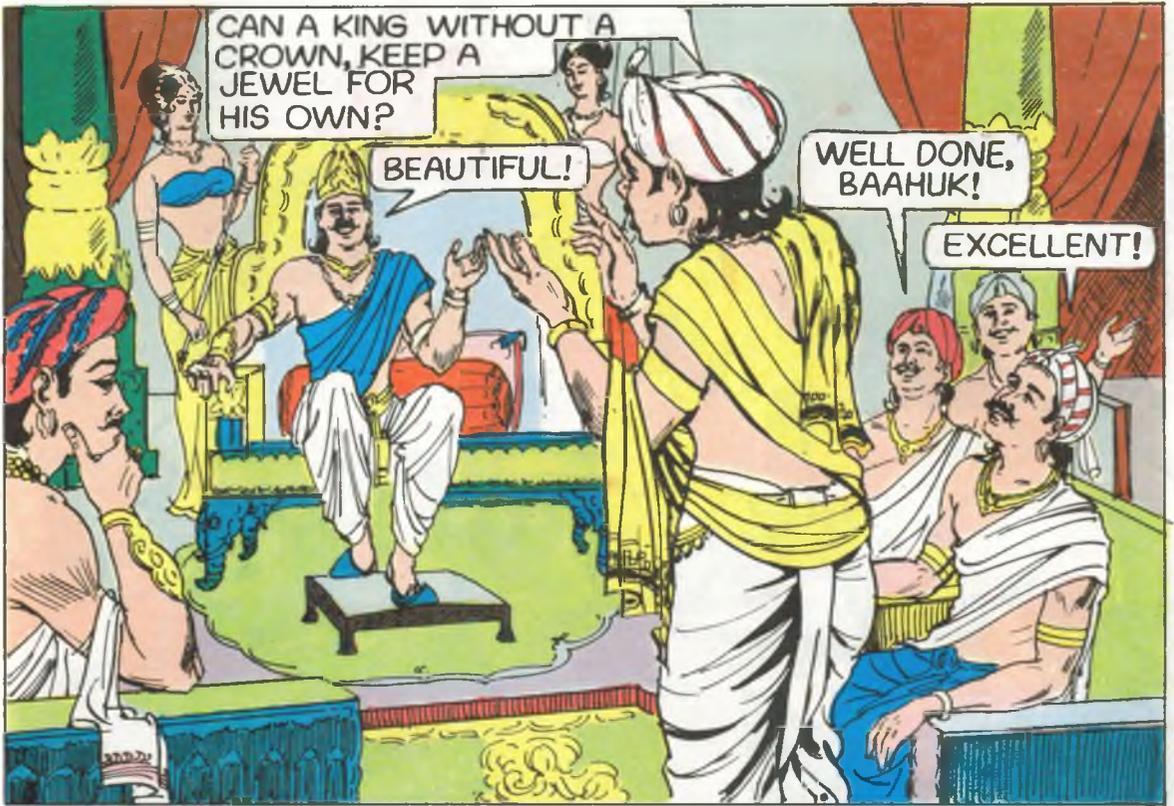
EVERYONE WONDERED AT THE STRANGE WORDS OF THE MINISTER.



SUDDENLY-

MY LORD! PERMIT ME...

IT WAS NONE OTHER THAN NALA, WHO HAD ASSUMED THE NAME OF BAAHUK.



CAN A KING WITHOUT A CROWN, KEEP A JEWEL FOR HIS OWN?

BEAUTIFUL!

WELL DONE, BAAHUK!

EXCELLENT!

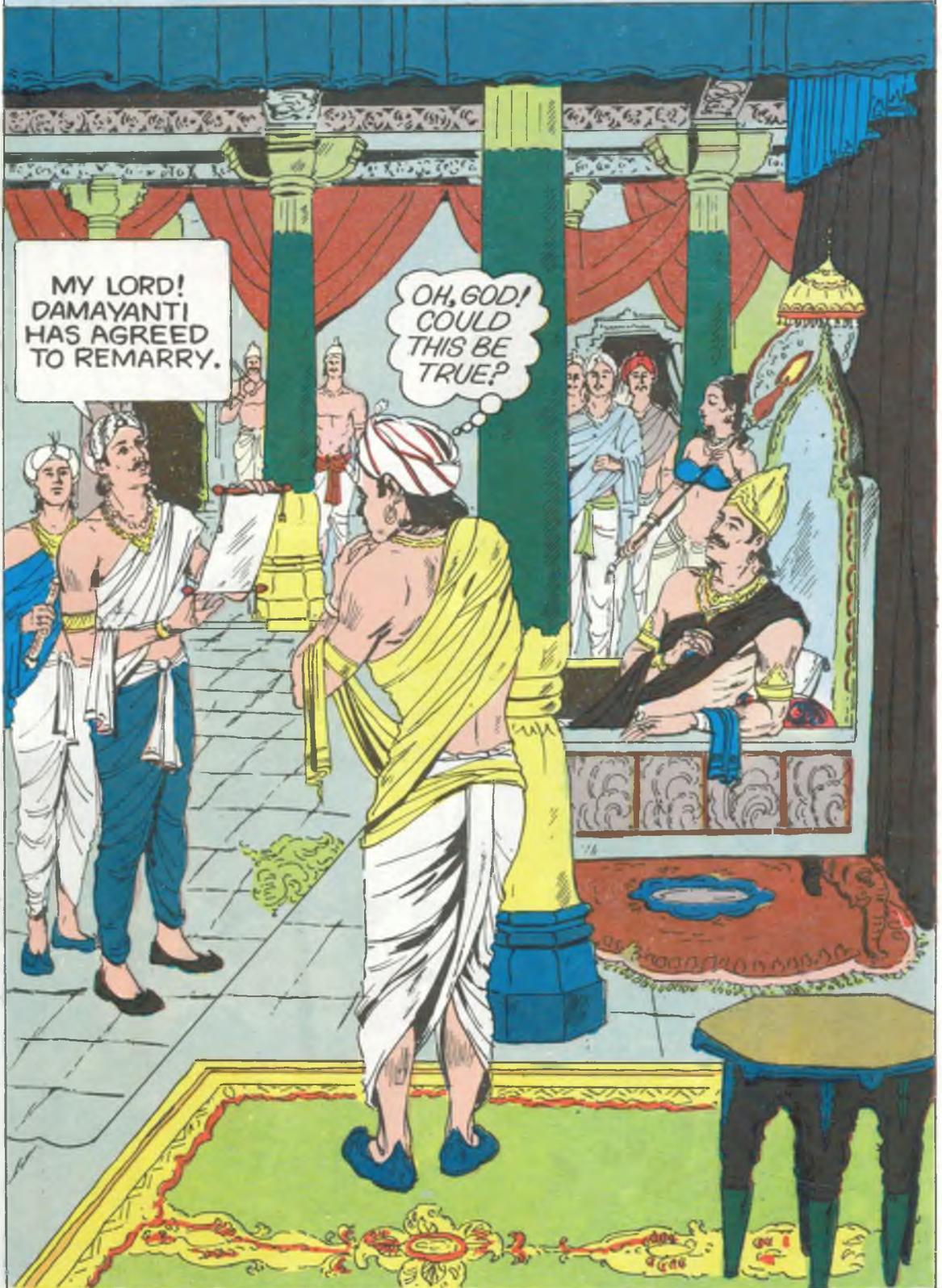
THE MINISTER RETURNED TO KUNDANPUR AND NARRATED THE EVENTS TO DAMAYANTI.



WHO CARES IF HE IS UGLY AND DEFORMED... I AM SURE, HE IS NALA.

IN THAT CASE WE'LL CALL HIM HERE AND FIND OUT.

THE MINISTER AGAIN WENT TO AYODHYA.





THE SWAYAMVARA IS FIXED FOR TOMORROW AND THE INVITATION COMES TODAY! HOW CAN I MAKE IT?

DON'T WORRY, MY LORD! I WILL TAKE YOU AS FAST AS THE WIND!

AND SURELY ENOUGH, THE HORSES SEEMED TO FLY IN THE AIR. NALA WAS A GREAT CHARIOTEER.



AH, WHAT SPEED! THIS IS THRILLING!

BAAHUK, TEACH ME
THE SECRET OF
DRIVING HORSES SO
FAST AND I'LL SHOW
YOU MY TRICKS IN
THE GAME OF DICE.

CERTAINLY,
MY LORD!

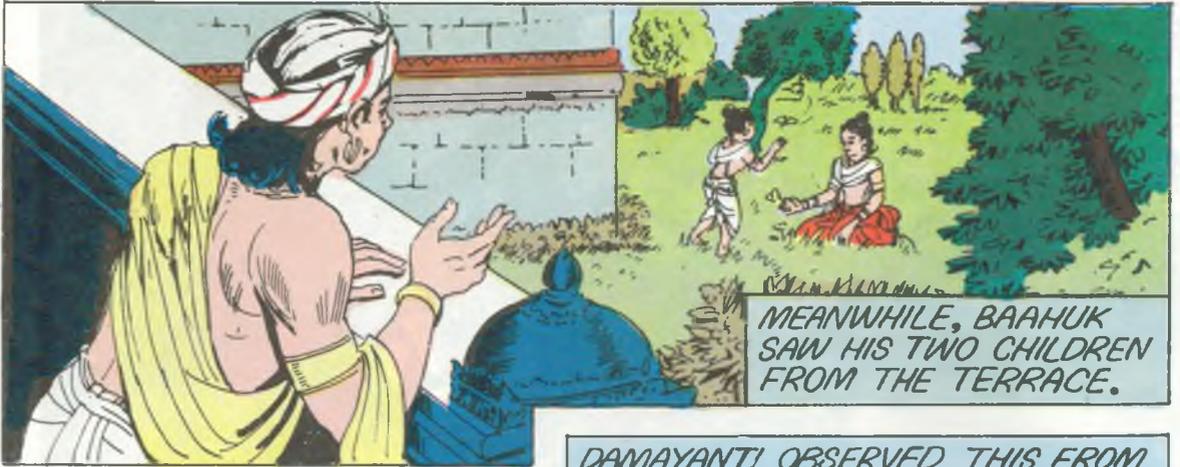


BY THE TIME THEY REACHED KUNDANPUR, THEY HAD
EXCHANGED THEIR SECRETS.



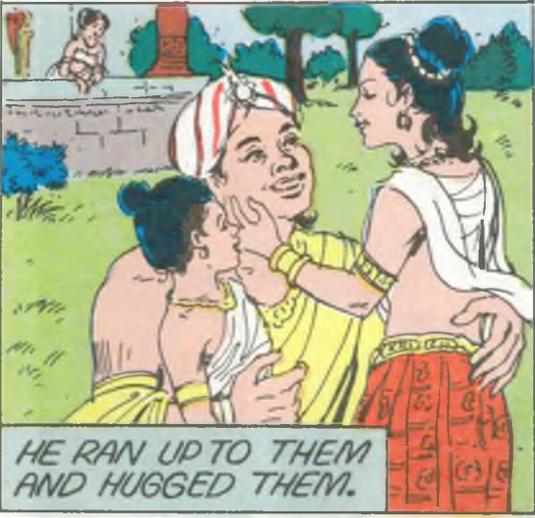
NO BRIDE AND NO
SWAYAMVARA! IS
THE SWAYAMVARA
ARRANGED IN A
DIFFERENT CITY?

OH, NO!
THERE
ARE NO FESTIVITIES
BECAUSE IT IS THE
SECOND SWAYAMVARA!



MEANWHILE, BAAHUK SAW HIS TWO CHILDREN FROM THE TERRACE.

DAMAYANTI OBSERVED THIS FROM THE PALACE. SHE CAME RUNNING TO MEET HIM.



HE RAN UP TO THEM AND HUGGED THEM.



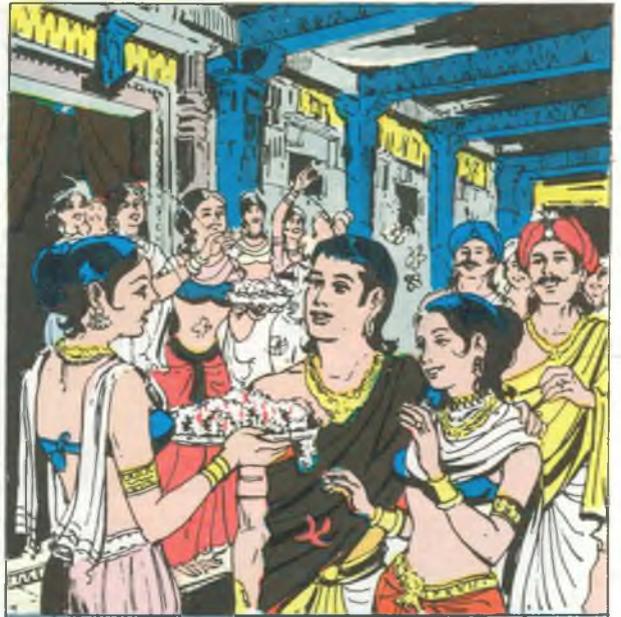
I'M SURE YOU ARE NALA! HOW CAN I THANK YOU FOR COMING!



BUT WERE YOU GOING TO MARRY AGAIN, DAMAYANTI?!

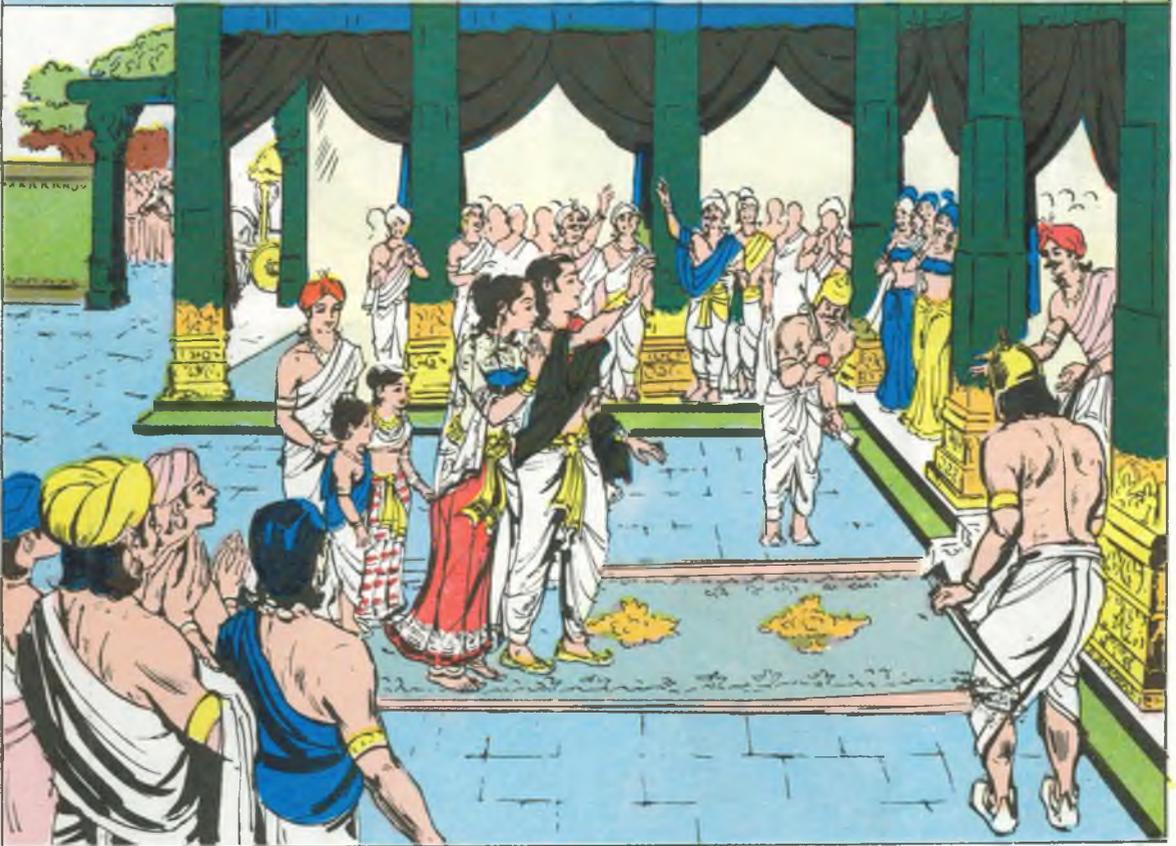
NO. IT WAS A TRICK TO GET YOU HERE. WHO ELSE BUT YOU COULD TRAVEL SUCH A LONG DISTANCE IN ONE DAY?

NALA PUT ON THE
MAGIC DRESS AND—



SEEING NALA SAFE AND SOUND, THE
PEOPLE WENT CRAZY WITH JOY.

NALA RETURNED TO HIS PALACE WITH DAMAYANTI AND THE CHILDREN.



PUSHKARA! I HAVE SPENT MY THREE YEARS IN THE FOREST. COME, LET'S HAVE ANOTHER GAME OF DICE.



VERY WELL! THE WINNER WILL HAVE THE KINGDOM AND THE LOSER WILL GO TO THE FOREST.

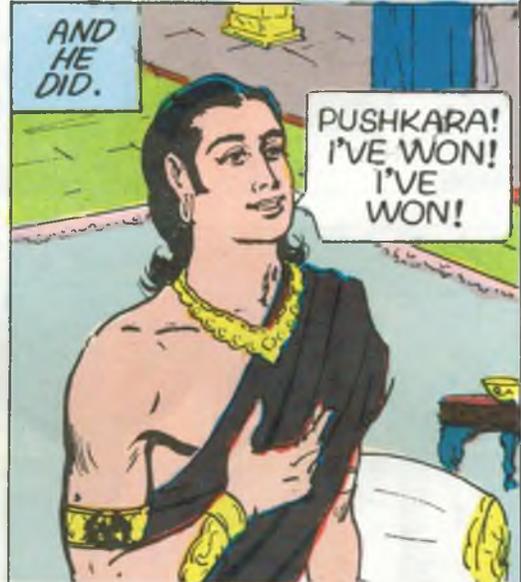


THEY SETTLED DOWN TO THE GAME. NALA HAD MASTERED THE GAME OF DICE WITH THE HELP OF KING RITUPARNA. IT WAS PUSHKARA'S TURN TO LOSE.



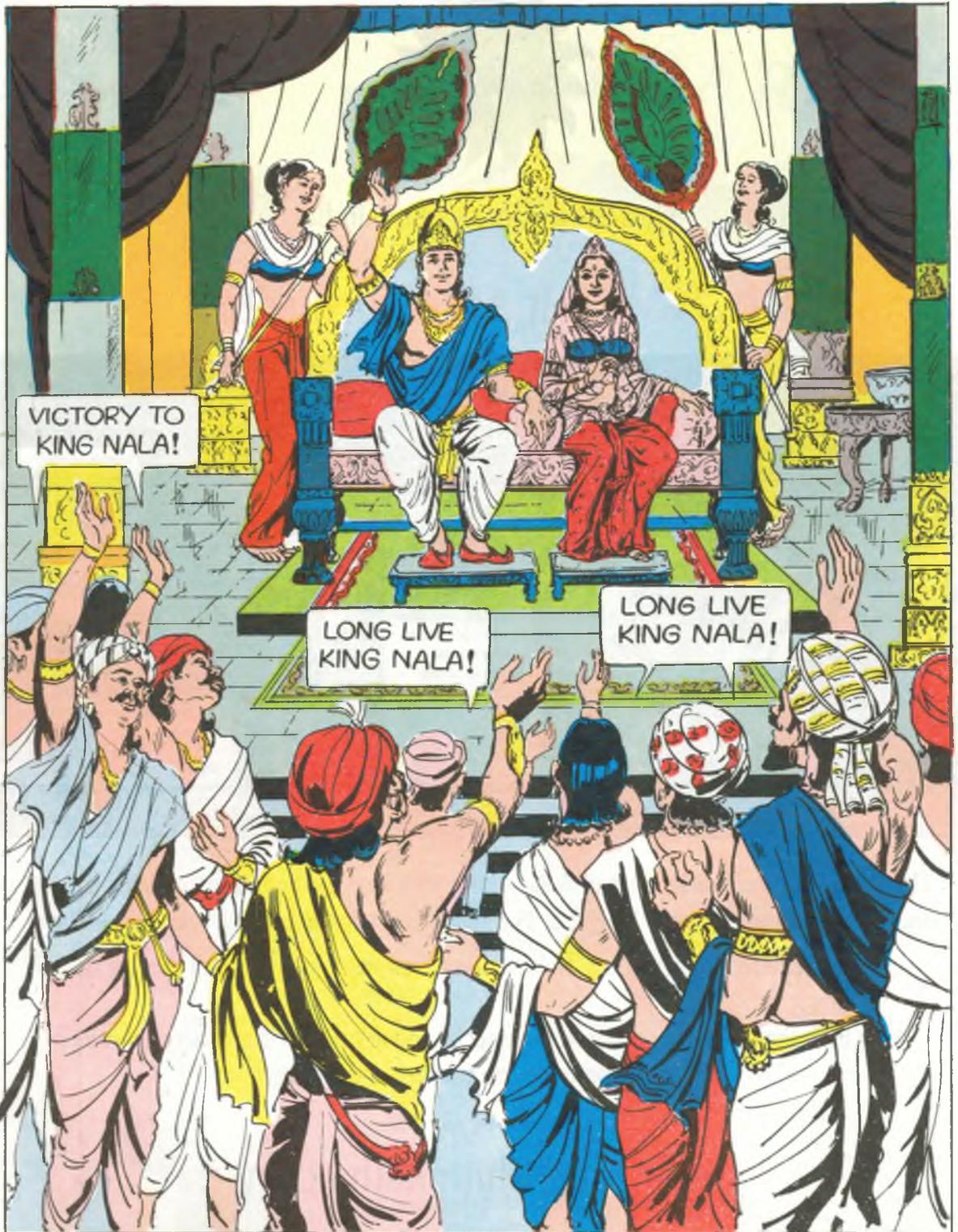
AND HE DID.

PUSHKARA! I'VE WON! I'VE WON!



BUT, I WON'T SEND YOU TO THE FOREST. YOU MAY CONTINUE TO LIVE HERE!





ONCE AGAIN, NALA WORE THE CROWN. DAMAYANTI WAS HIS QUEEN. THEY LIVED HAPPILY FOR MANY YEARS AND RULED THE COUNTRY WELL.



Illustrated Classics From India

Nala and Damayanti

The story of Nala and Damayanti is one of the more romantic episodes narrated in the great epic, the Mahabharata. In the epic, Yudhishtira, having lost everything in a game of dice against his wily cousins, had to retire to the jungle along with his brothers. There a rishi (ascetic) tells him the story of Nala and Damayanti.

Nala was a brave and handsome young Nishada king, skilled in the use of arms and the management of horses. Damayanti, the only daughter of the King of Vidarbha, in Eastern Maharashtra, was beautiful and accomplished. When Nala heard of her beauty he began pining for her and it was a delicate golden swan that carried his messages of love to his beloved. Damayanti too began yearning for her unseen lover.

The story of Nala and Damayanti has so much romance and pathos in it that it has attracted the attention of writers and poets not only in India, but also in distant lands. It has been translated into Latin by Bopp and into English verse by Dean Milman.

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