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A JATAKA TALE

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Amar Chitra Katha

No. 362 August 1, 1986

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The Priceless Gem

All living creatures die to be born again, so the Hindus believe. Siddhartha who became the Buddha was no exception. It is believed several lifetimes as a Bodhisattva go into the making of the Buddha, the Enlightened One.

The Bodhisattva has come in many forms—man, monkey, deer, elephant, lion. Whatever his mortal body, he has spread the message of justice and wisdom, tempered with compassion. This wisdom, of right thinking and right living, is preserved in the Jataka tales.

These tales are based on the folklore, legends and ballads of ancient India. We cannot assign a definite date to the Jataka stories. Taking into account archaeological and literary evidence it appears that they were compiled in the period, the third century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. They give us invaluable information about ancient Indian civilization, culture and philosophy.

According to the **Maha Ummagga Jataka**, the Bodhisattva was once born as Aushadha Kumar who was endowed with celestial knowledge and superhuman powers. The present issue of Amar Chitra Katha presents the second set of the tales connected with Aushadha Kumar.

The first title (No. 342) **The Battle of Wits** presented the tales connected with the childhood of Aushadha Kumar. This issue presents stories of Aushadha Kumar at the court of Mithila.

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AUSHADHA KUMAR WAS A REINCARNATION OF THE BODHISATTVA.



HE WAS NAMED AUSHADHA KUMAR, BECAUSE HE WAS BORN HOLDING A DIVINE HERB WHICH HAD SUPER-NATURAL HEALING POWERS.



A YEAR BEFORE AUSHADHA KUMAR'S BIRTH, KING VAIDEHA OF MITHILA HAD A DREAM SIGNIFYING THE ADVENT OF A GREAT SOUL WHOSE WISDOM WOULD BE UNSURPASSED.

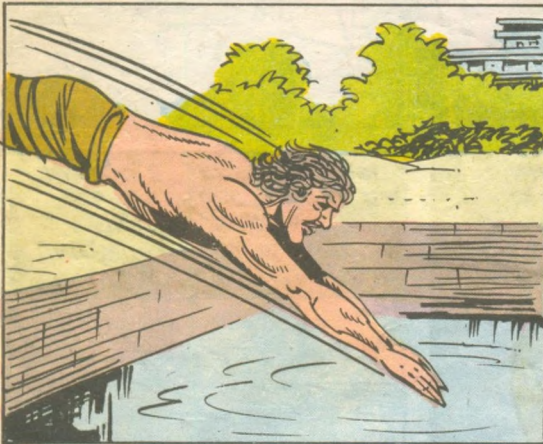
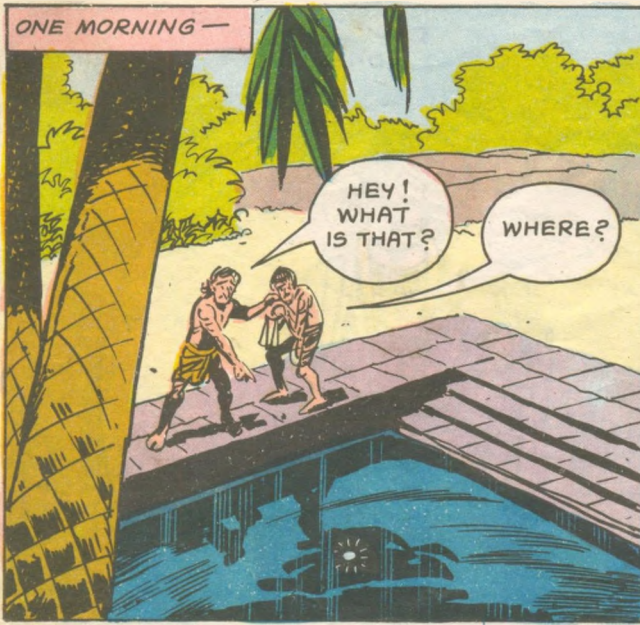


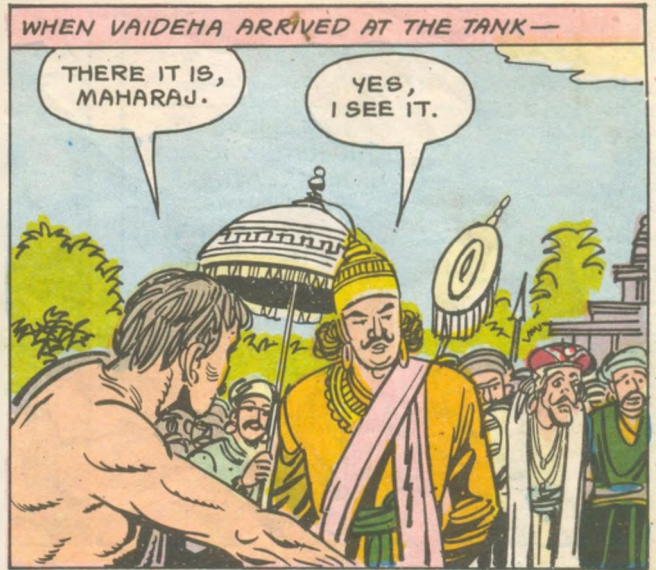
EIGHT YEARS LATER, CONVINCED THAT AUSHADHA WAS THAT GREAT SOUL, KING VAIDEHA ADOPTED HIM AND BROUGHT HIM TO MITHILA.



AT MITHILA, WHILE AUSHADHA GREW UP INTO A HANDSOME YOUNGSTER, THE PANDITS OF THE COURT, WHO NEVER WANTED HIM THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE BECAME ENVIOUS OF HIM.

ONE MORNING —





SENAKA, A COURT PANDIT AND THE CHIEF COUNSELLOR, OBSERVED THAT VAIDEHA'S HEART WAS SET ON THE GEM.

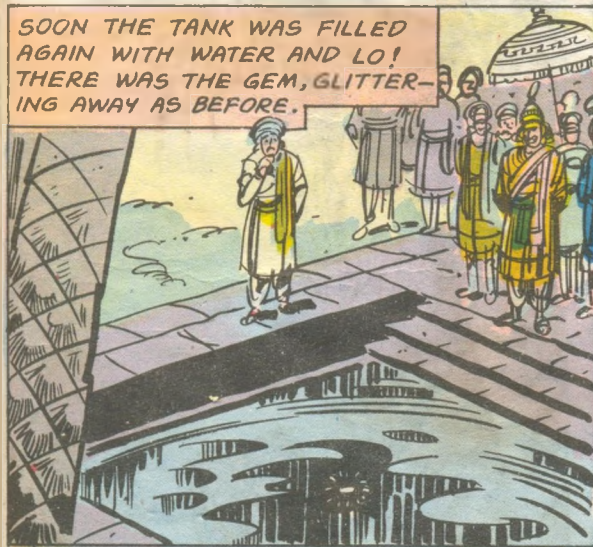
IF I RETRIEVE IT, THE KING WILL HAVE GREATER FAITH IN ME THAN HE HAS IN AUSHADHA KUMAR.

SO BEFORE VAIDEHA COULD APPROACH AUSHADHA KUMAR —

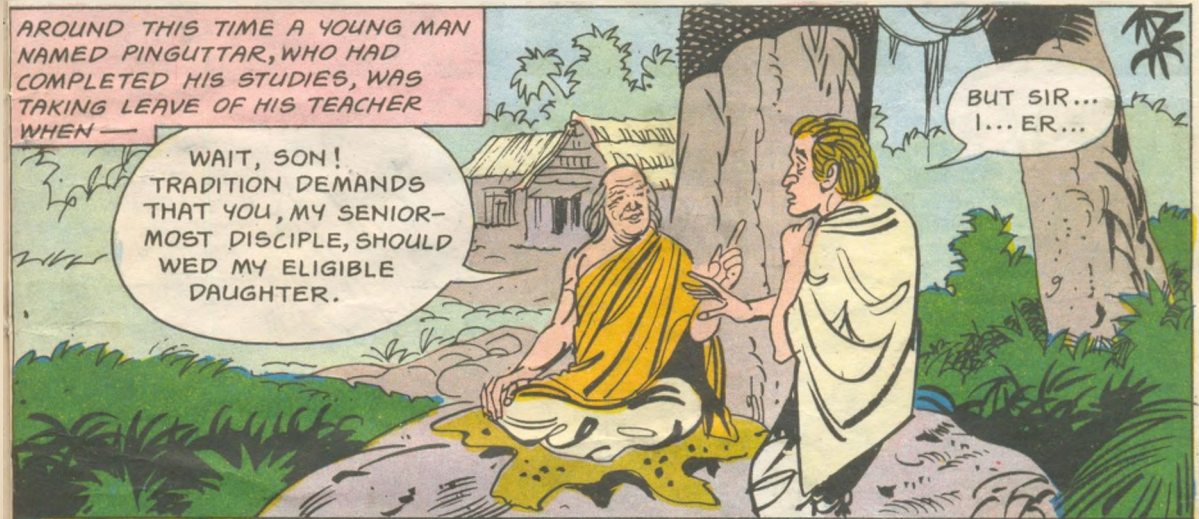
I SHALL RECOVER THE GEM RIGHT AWAY, MAHARAJ.

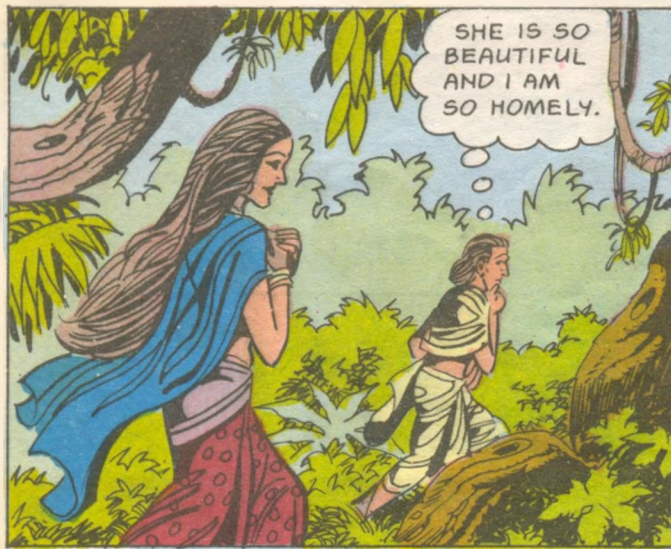
ALL RIGHT, SENAKA.

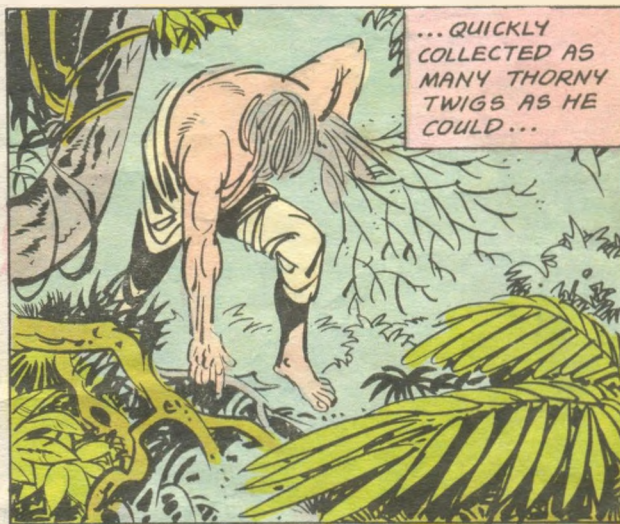
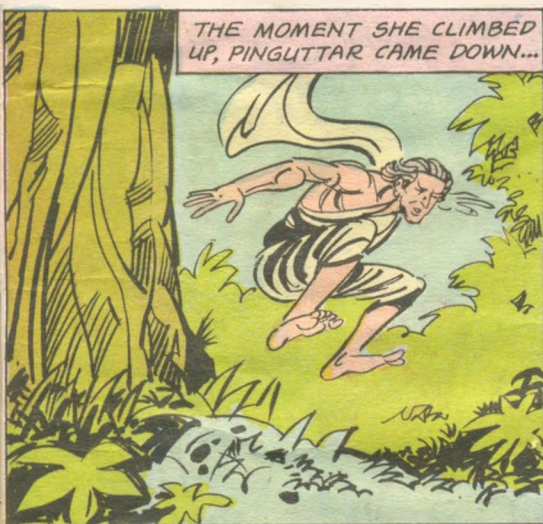
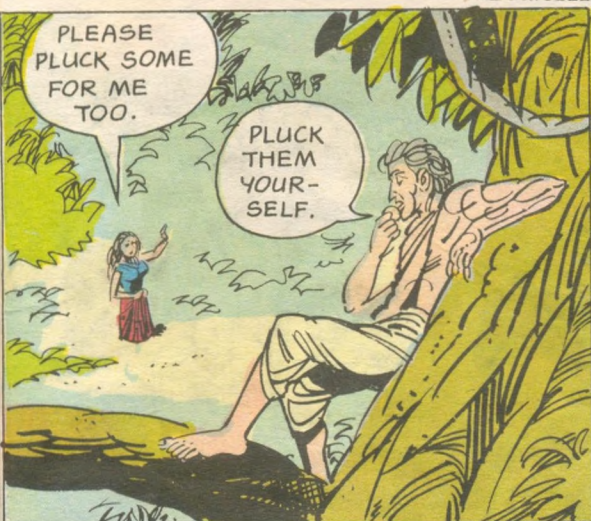


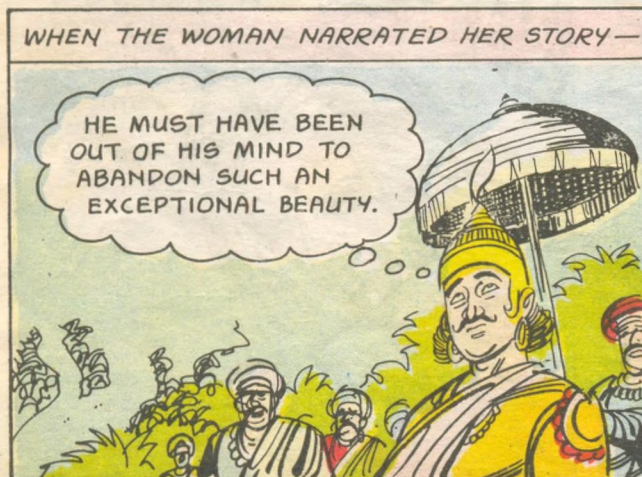
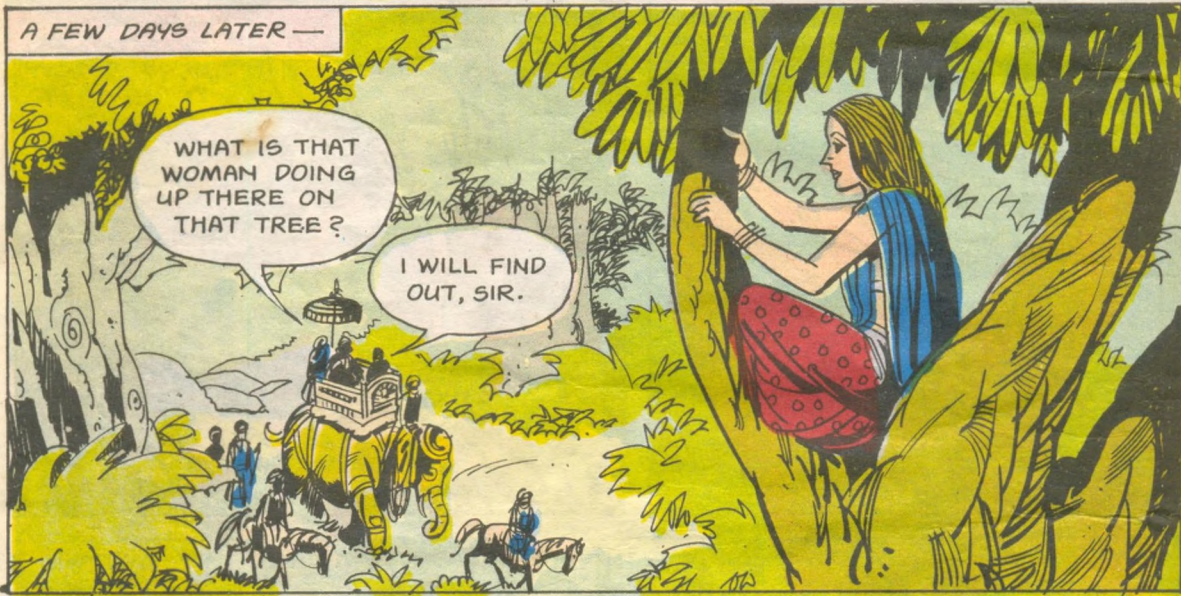
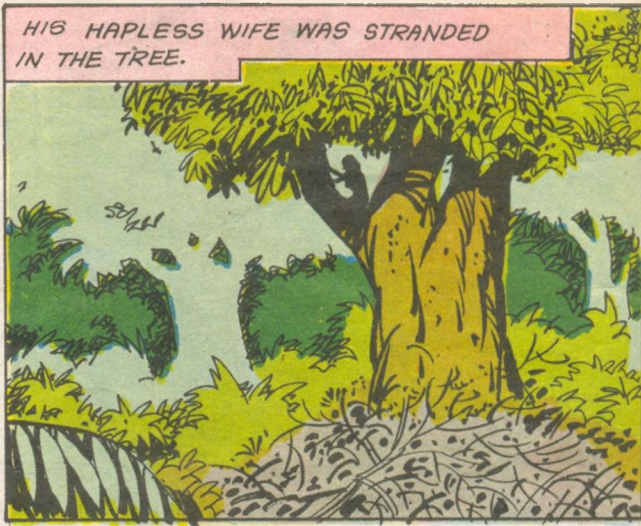


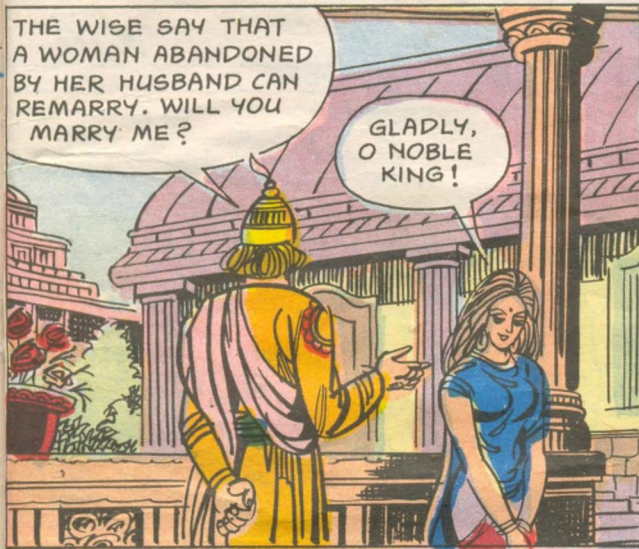










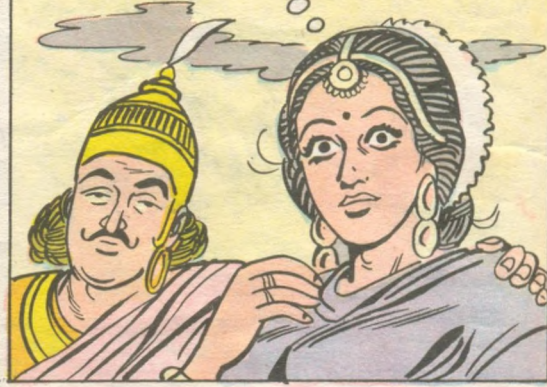


KING VAIDEHA AND QUEEN UDUMBARA DEVI LED A HAPPY LIFE FOR SOME TIME.



THEN, ONE DAY —

THAT MAN?
HE LOOKS
LIKE...



YES,
IT IS HIM.
WHAT A
FATE!

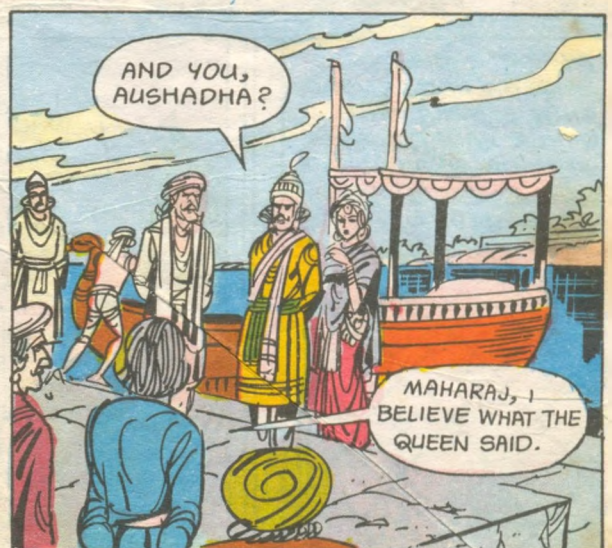
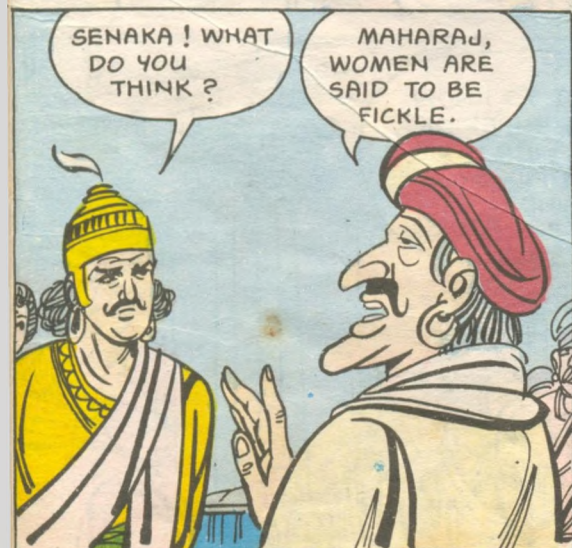
AND THE QUEEN SUDDENLY SMILED.
THE KING SAW HER SMILE AND
BECAME ANGRY.



HOW DARE YOU
SMILE AT A
STRANGE MAN?

HE IS THE
MAN WHO
ABANDONED
ME.





BEING A WOMAN OF NOBLE CHARACTER, SHE COULD NOT HAVE LEFT HER HUSBAND. AND...



... IF HER HUSBAND HAD NOT ABANDONED HER, SHE WOULD BE LEADING A MISERABLE LIFE TODAY.



SO, WHEN I SAW THE PLIGHT OF THE MAN, I COULD NOT HELP BEING PLEASED WITH MY FATE. THAT IS WHY I SMILED.

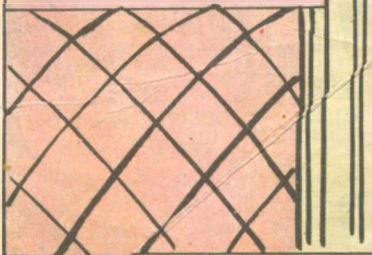


WHEN THE FACTS WERE VERIFIED, THE KING WAS SATISFIED.



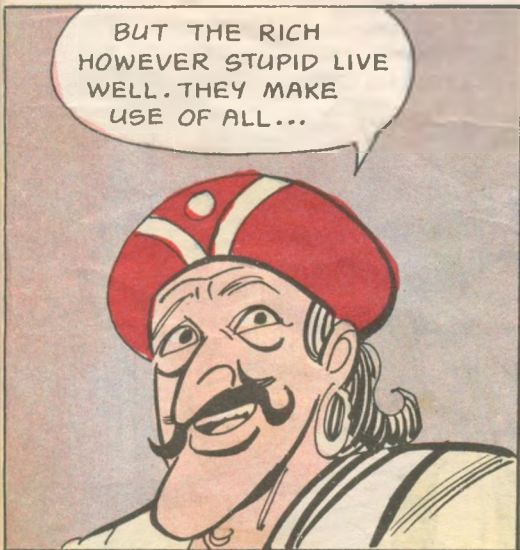
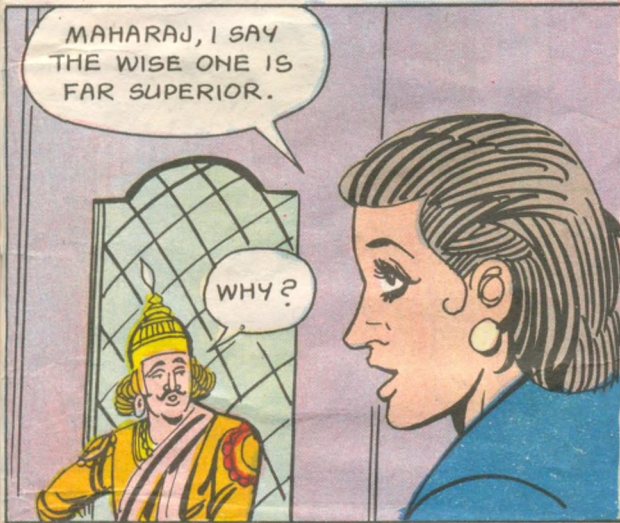
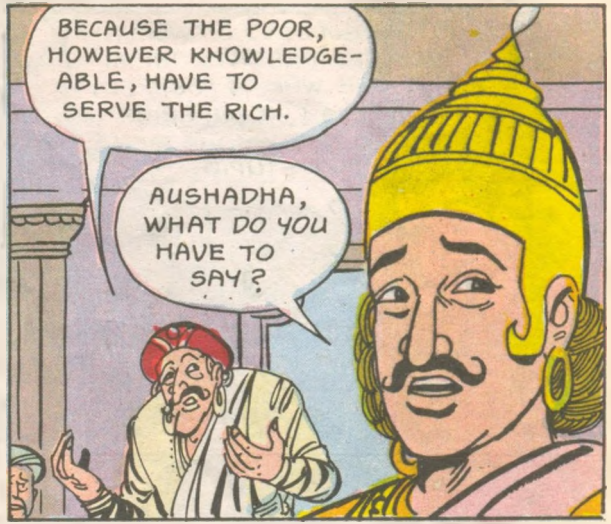
THANK YOU, AUSHADHA. BUT FOR YOU I WOULD HAVE LOST A GEM AMONG WOMEN.

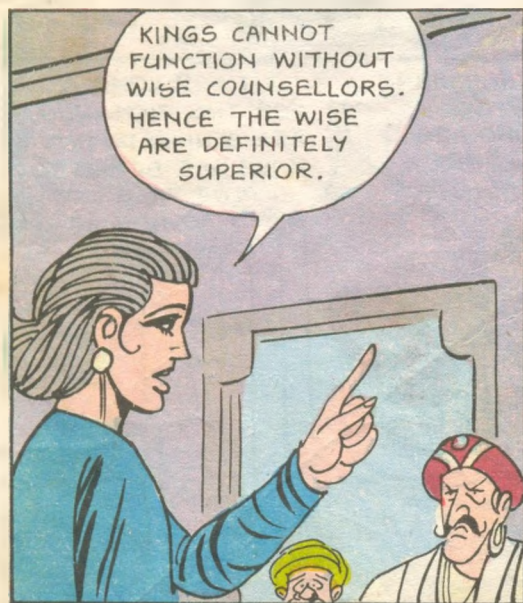
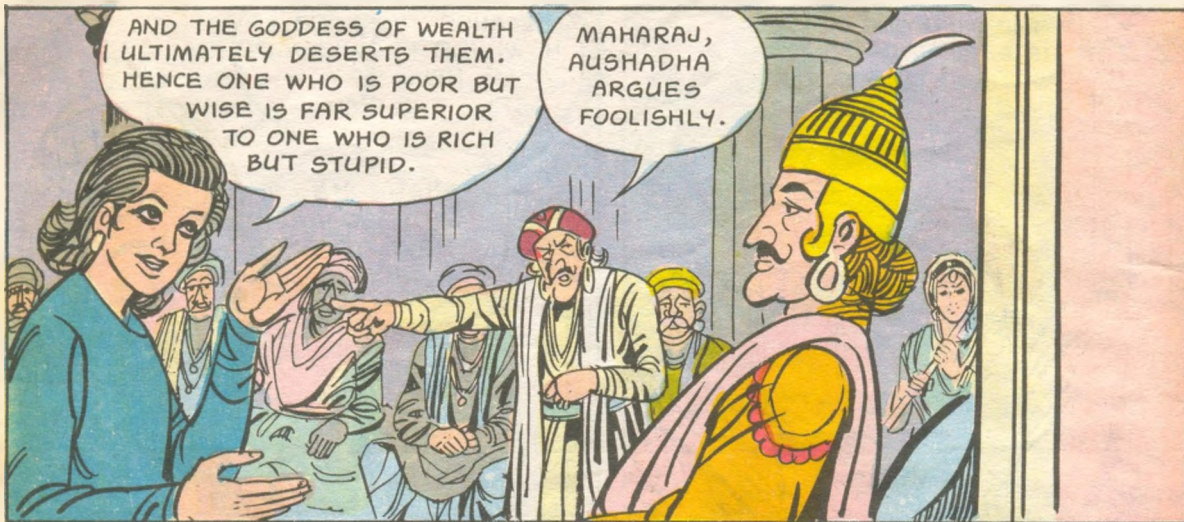
BY THEN, KING VAIDEHA HAD SENSED THAT SENAKA AND OTHER PANDITS WERE ENVIOUS OF AUSHADHA. TO PROVE AUSHADHA'S WISDOM, VAIDEHA POSED A RIDDLE TO THEM.



I WANT TO KNOW WHO IS SUPERIOR, A MAN WHO IS RICH BUT STUPID OR A MAN WHO IS WISE BUT POOR.







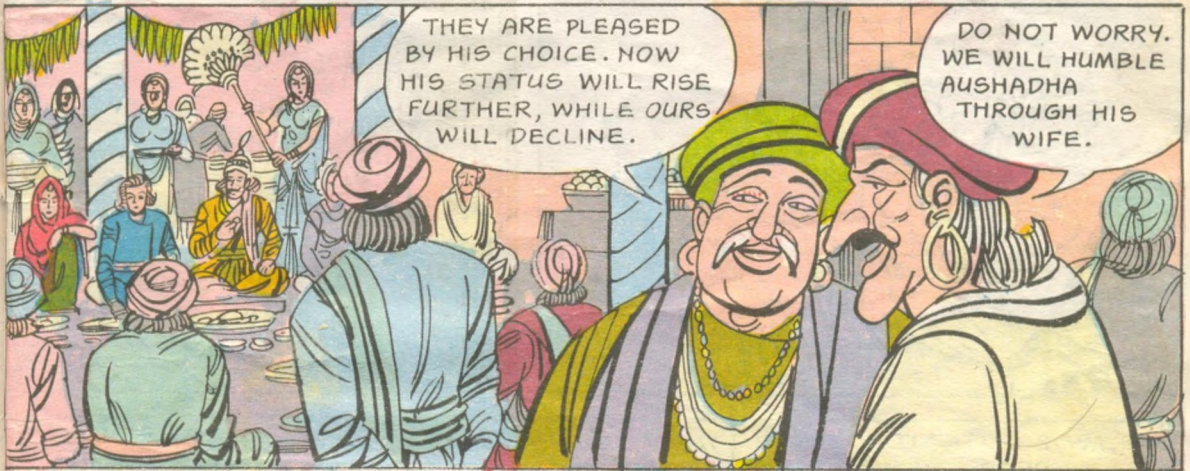
QUEEN UDUMBARA DEVI WAS HAPPY WITH THE GROWING STATUS OF AUSHADHA KUMAR.

YOU SHOULD GET MARRIED NOW. SHALL I FIND A BRIDE FOR YOU?

O QUEEN, I WILL FIND ONE MYSELF.

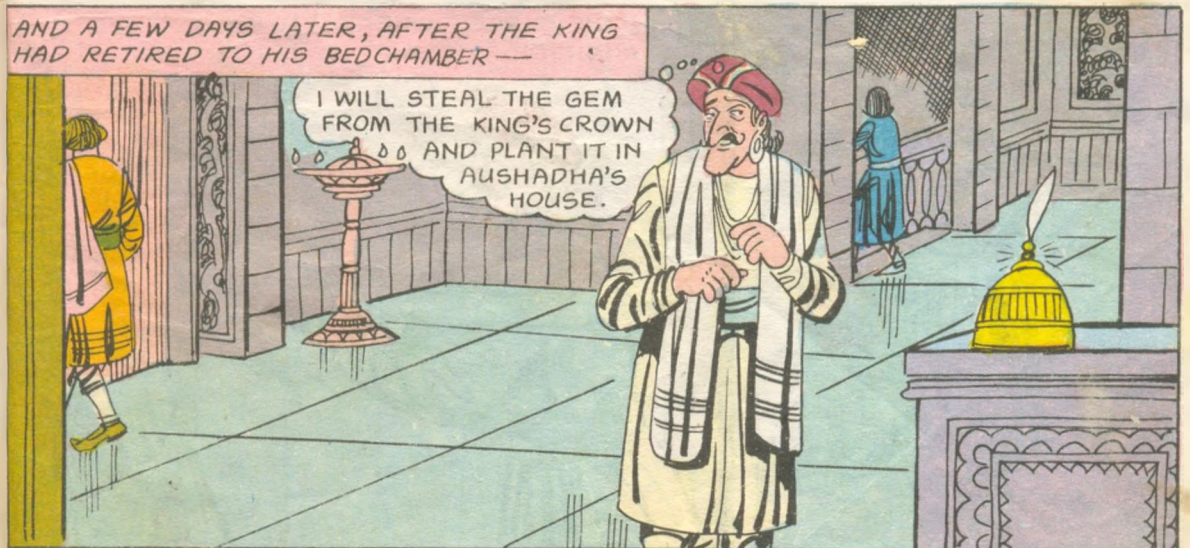
AND HE MARRIED AMARA DEVI, AN EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT GIRL OF A POOR FAMILY.

MAY YOU BOTH EVER PROSPER. I AM HAPPY FOR YOU.



AND A FEW DAYS LATER, AFTER THE KING HAD RETIRED TO HIS BEDCHAMBER —

I WILL STEAL THE GEM FROM THE KING'S CROWN AND PLANT IT IN AUSHADHA'S HOUSE.





NOW TO FIX THE
ARTIFICIAL GEM
IN ITS PLACE.



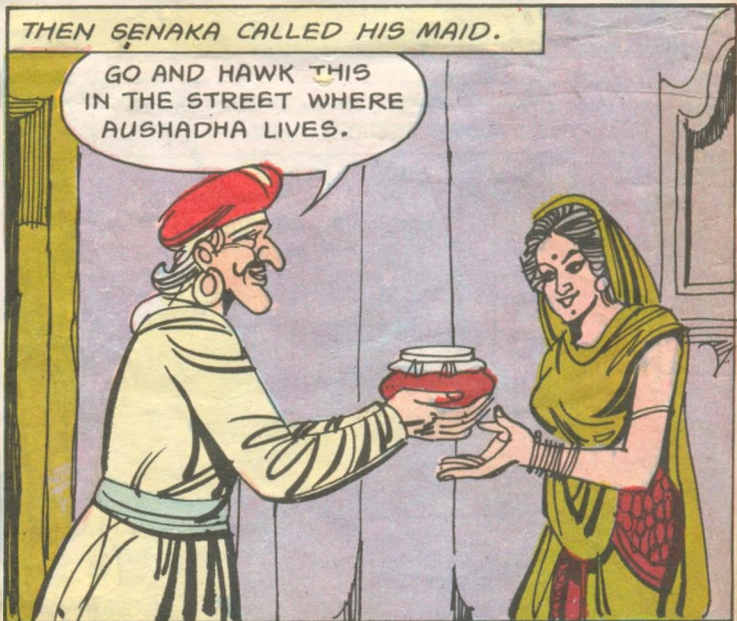
WHAT A GENIUS
I AM!



HEH! HEH!
NOW FOR THE
NEXT MOVE!

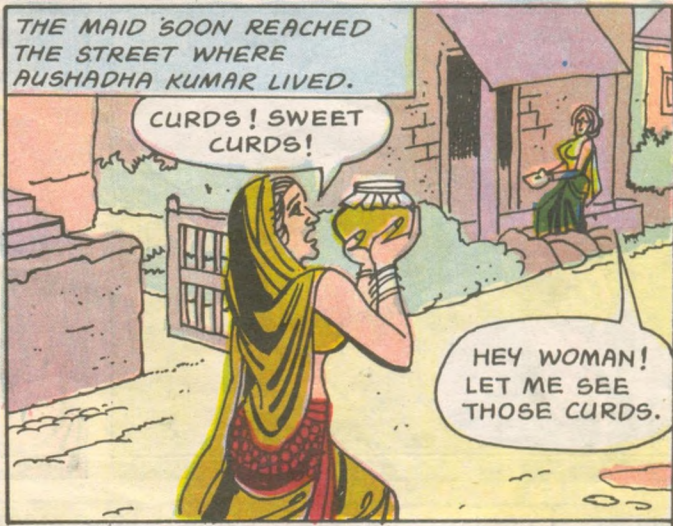
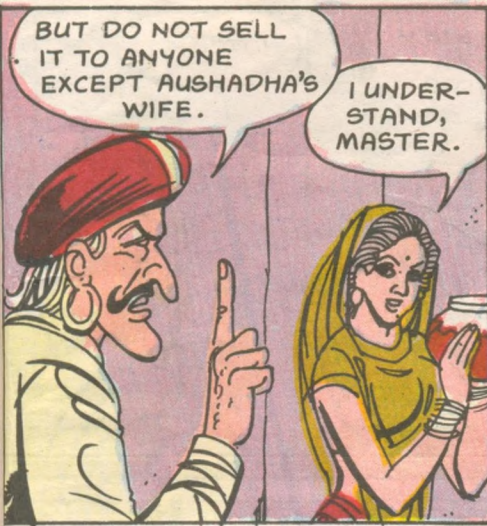


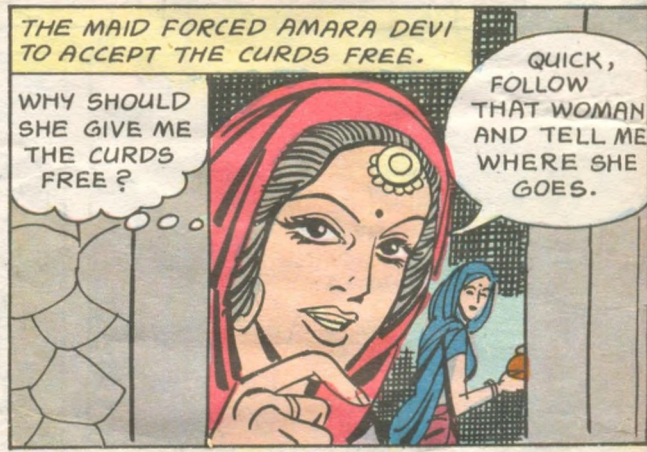
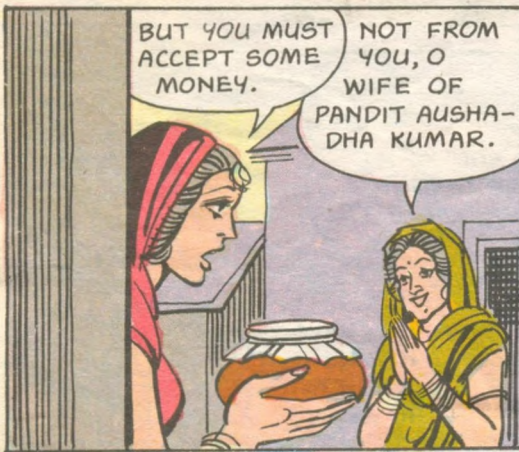
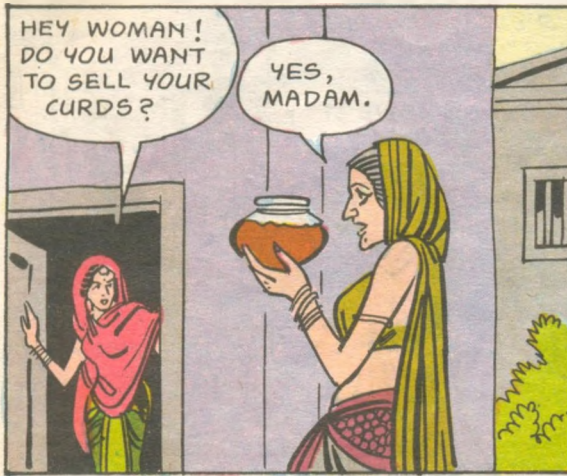
AH, MY BEAUTY! IT HURTS
ME TO DROP YOU INTO
THIS POT OF CURDS.

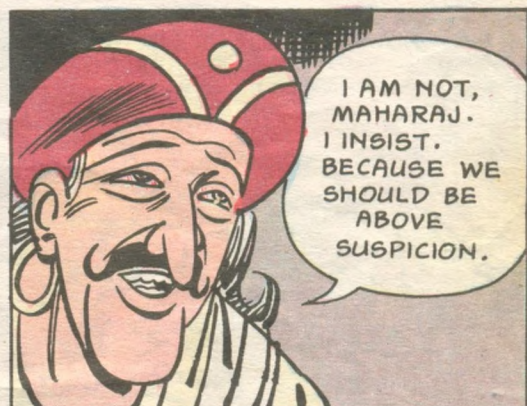


THEN SENAKA CALLED HIS MAID.

GO AND HAWK THIS
IN THE STREET WHERE
AUSHADHA LIVES.

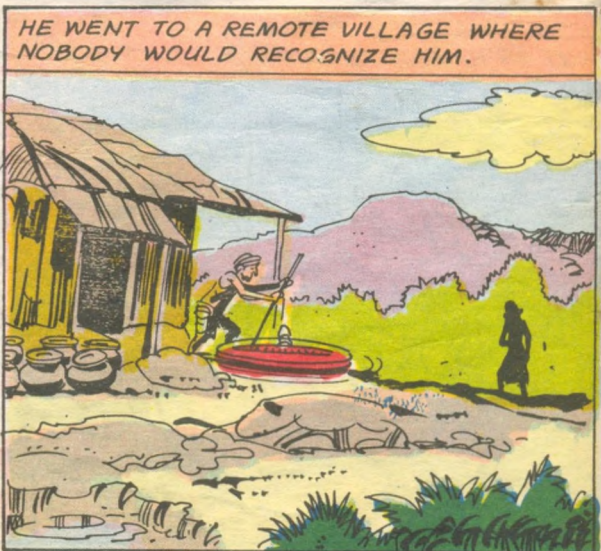
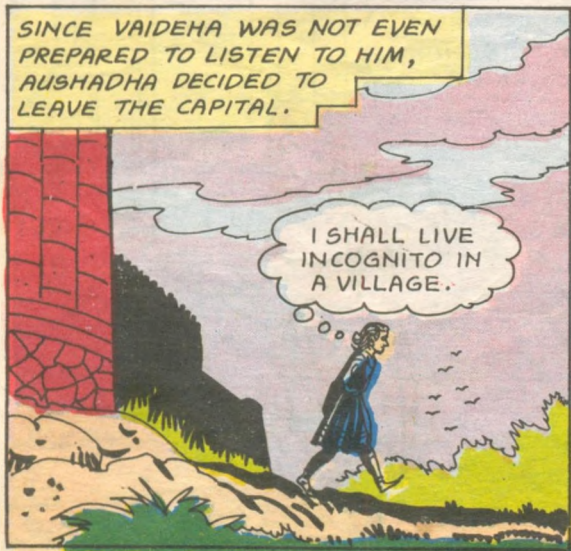
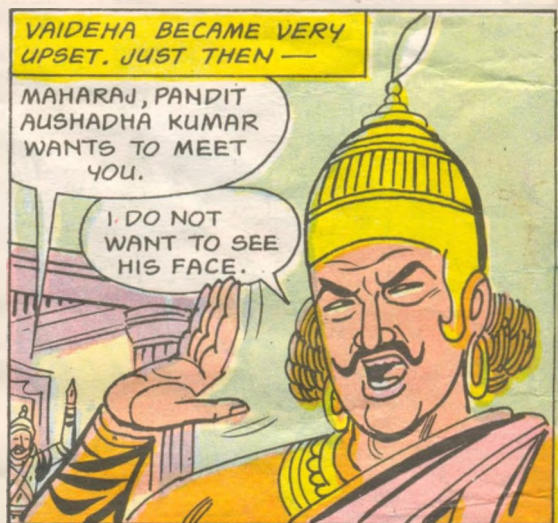






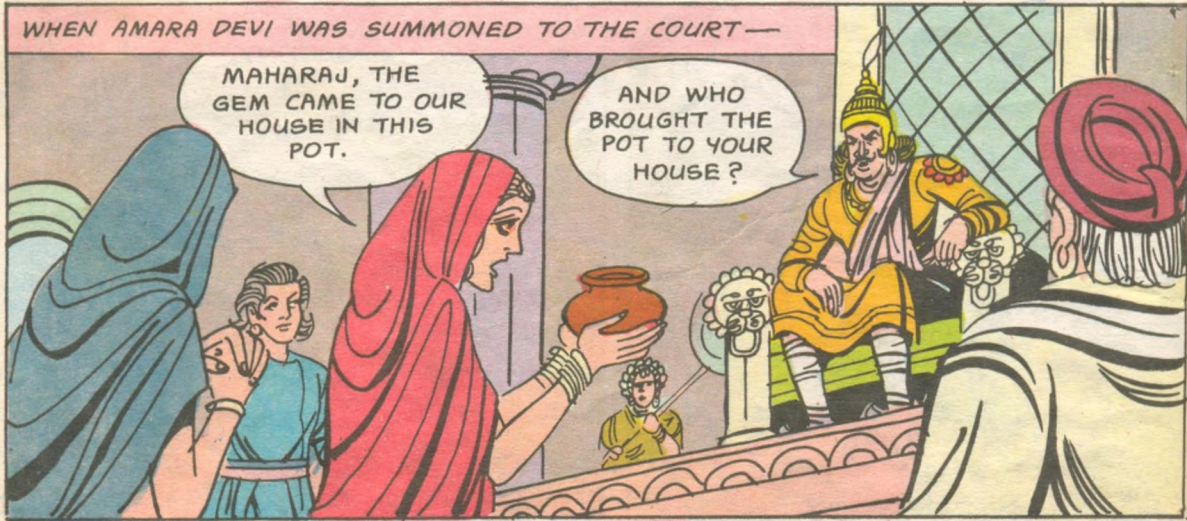
THE HOUSES OF THE FOUR PANDITS WERE SEARCHED, OBVIOUSLY WITH NO RESULTS.

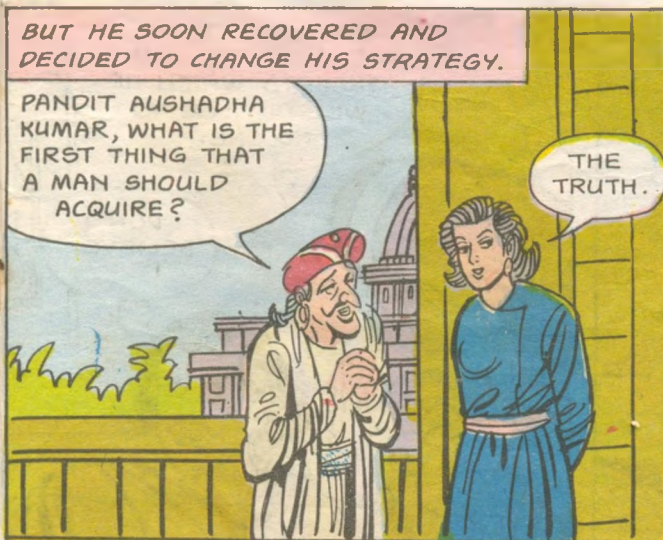
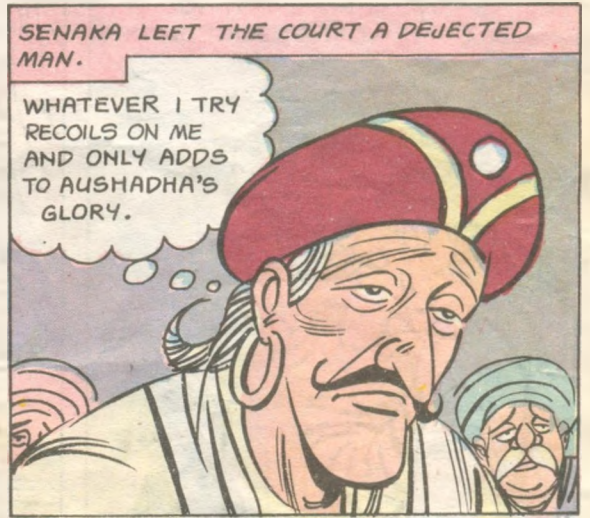
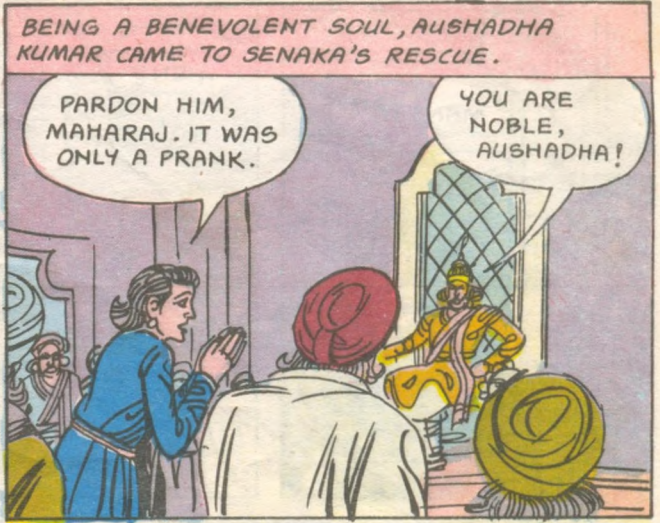


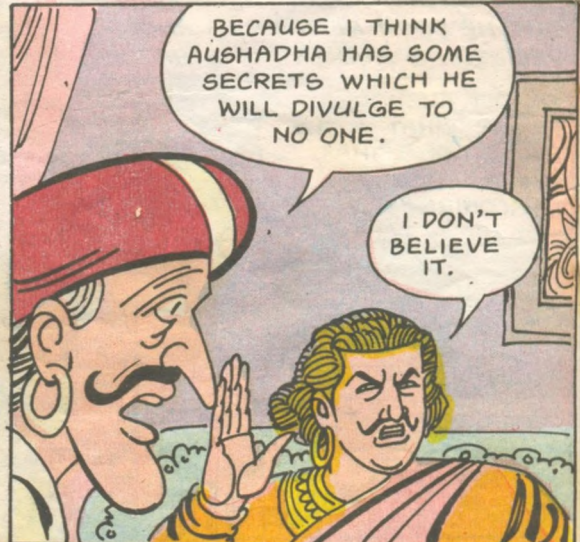
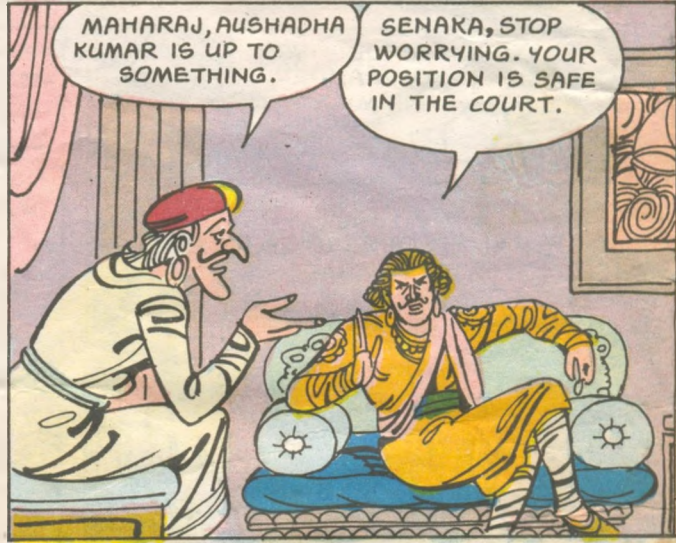




WHEN AMARA DEVI WAS SUMMONED TO THE COURT —







THE NEXT DAY AT THE COURT—

PANDIT AUSHADHA KUMAR, TO WHOM WOULD YOU CONFIDE YOUR SECRETS?

NO ONE.



NOT EVEN TO THE KING?

YES, NOT EVEN TO THE KING.



AFTER THE COURT WAS ADJOURNED—

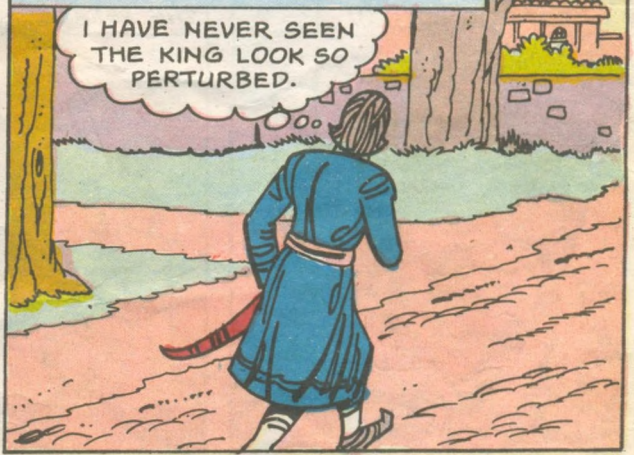
THE COMMANDER OF MY ARMY IS SECRETIVE WITH ME! THIS IS AN ALARMING REVELATION INDEED!

DON'T WORRY, MAHARAJ. I WILL TAKE CARE OF THINGS.

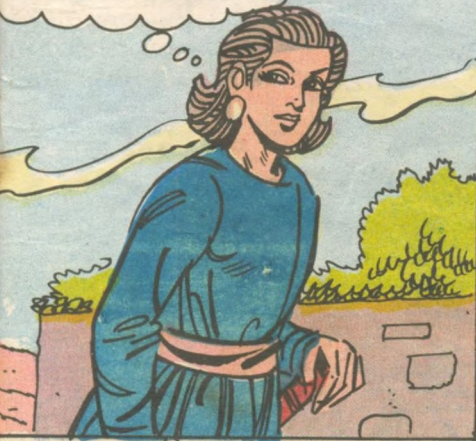


MEANWHILE, AS AUSHADHA KUMAR RETURNED HOMEWARDS—

I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE KING LOOK SO PERTURBED.

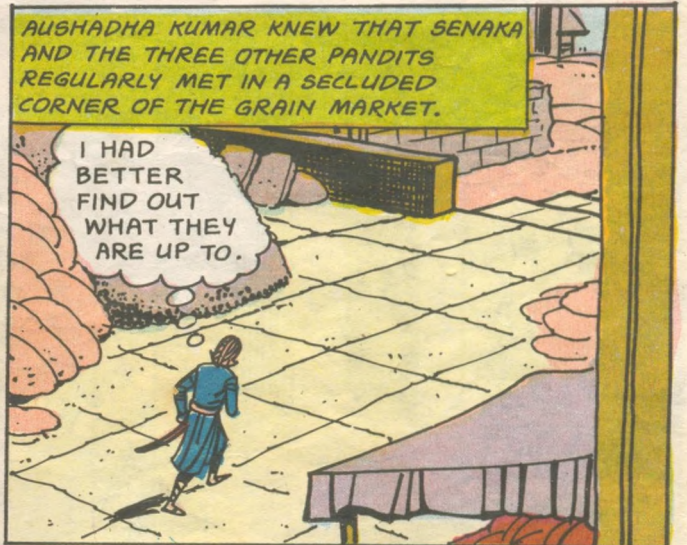


THIS TIME SENAKA IS UP TO SOMETHING FAR MORE SERIOUS.



AUSHADHA KUMAR KNEW THAT SENAKA AND THE THREE OTHER PANDITS REGULARLY MET IN A SECLUDED CORNER OF THE GRAIN MARKET.

I HAD BETTER FIND OUT WHAT THEY ARE UP TO.





HE HID HIM-
SELF IN A
HEAP OF
GRAIN AND
WAITED.



SOON THE FOUR PANDITS
ARRIVED.

I HAVE HATCHED
A SECRET PLAN.
WE SHALL HAVE
AUSHADHA
MURDERED.

WILL THE
KING
APPROVE
OF OUR
ACT?



HE WILL. BECAUSE
I HAVE IMPRESSED
UPON HIM THAT
AUSHADHA HAS
HIS EYES SET ON
THE THRONE.

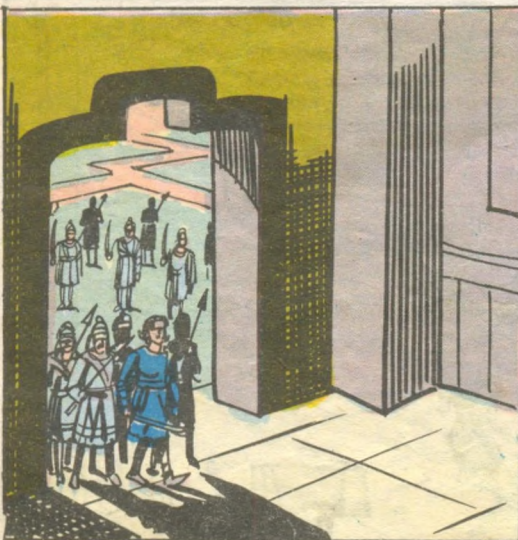


THIS SITUATION
CALLS FOR
DRASTIC ACTION.



AUSHADHA KUMAR GATHERED
THE TROOPS AND SURROUNDED
THE PALACE.

SEE THAT NO
ONE ESCAPES.



AFTER ESTABLISHING HIS CONTROL
OVER THE CITY, AUSHADHA KUMAR
WENT TO MEET THE KING.

GLORY TO,
KING
VAIDEHA!

YOU
HYPOCRITE!
WHY DO YOU
SHOUT MY
PRAISES
WHEN YOU
ARE OUT TO
DO ME
HARM.

