

Virgin
COMICS

ISSUE 1

THE
Sardhu

CHOPRA | KANG

THE SAADHU

VIRGIN COMICS

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Shakti

SHAKTI IS THE FEMININE FACE OF GOD. SHAKTI IS THE WOMB OF CREATION FROM WHICH THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS BORN. SHAKTI IS POWER. SHAKTI IS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL. SHE COMES IN MANY FORMS:

Chitta Shakti is the power of pure consciousness. Chitta Shakti is experienced as profound peace and centered awareness in the midst of chaos, turbulence, and danger. Established in Being, it performs in action. It is the spiritual warrior in all of us.

Ichcha Shakti is the power of intention and the manifestation inherent in desire. Those that master ichcha shakti garner the infinite organizing power of intention that weaves the tapestry of the universe.

Kriya Shakti is spontaneous right action without anticipation of response – knowing what to do and when to do it with finesse. It is the power of intuition – a form of intelligence that is holistic, nurturing, relational and contextual and that eavesdrops on the mind of the cosmos and has a computing power that is far beyond linear rational thought.

Ananda Shakti is inner bliss and contentment. It is bliss that radiates from Being as light from a bonfire, transforming all who are enveloped by it.

Gyan Shakti is understanding the laws of nature and knowing that the elements and forces of the cosmos 'out there' are the same as the elements and forces within us. By harnessing these elements and forces, it becomes possible to influence nature herself through our awareness.

When Shakti awakens in us, she manifests as the Goddesses

1. Siddhi - *the Goddess with supernatural powers in the world* and
2. Riddhi - *the Goddess who controls the elements and forces of the Universe.*

As humanity evolves into a wisdom-based culture, the forces of good, truth, and harmony will continue to battle the dark forces. These epic battles will be fought in the domain of consciousness where even the most powerful technologies of destruction will be rendered impotent. Shakti will provide new raw materials for the collective imagination of humanity and give birth to an age that even Homer or Valmiki never dreamed of.

THE SADHU PROLOGUE



1850s PENANG, INDIA: A LAND AND PEOPLE EXPLOITED BY THE DANABHANGI (LANDLORDS) AND THE BRITISH EAST INDIA TRADING COMPANY.

BUT A FEW MEN DECIDED TO FIGHT BACK—FOR JUSTICE. THEY WERE KNOWN THROUGH THE LAND AS DANABHANGI, SHALLOO MARITAL ARTISTS CARRYING NO OTHER WEAPON BUT A STAFF OF WOOD, WHICH THEY CALLED 'SARTH'.

BUT THE ADVENTURES THE DANABHANGI FACED WERE NOT SO EASILY OVERCOME.

THEIR LEADER WAS A MAN OF WISDOM, A MYSTIC... OR SADHU. HIS FOLLOWERS KNEW HIM AS 'DADATHAKUR,' OR AFFECTIONATELY 'DADAJI'--GRANDFATHER.

DADATHAKUR, WE LOST SIX BOYS IN THE RAID. THEY SEEMED TO KNOW WE WERE COMING. THEY WERE GUARDED WITH GUN WIELDING SENTRIES.

SUCH ARE THE WHEELS OF KARMA, MOHAN BHAI.

DADATHAKUR--WITHOUT GUNS, WE'VE NO CHANCE AGAINST THEM. SURELY YOU DON'T BELIEVE IT IS OUR KARMA TO BE SLAUGHTERED?

THERE IS NO TRIUMPH IN A WAR IN WHICH BOTH SIDES LOSE. WE ROB FROM THOSE WHO HAVE EXCESS AND SHARE IT WITH THE STARVED. GUNS WON'T HELP US ACHIEVE THAT.

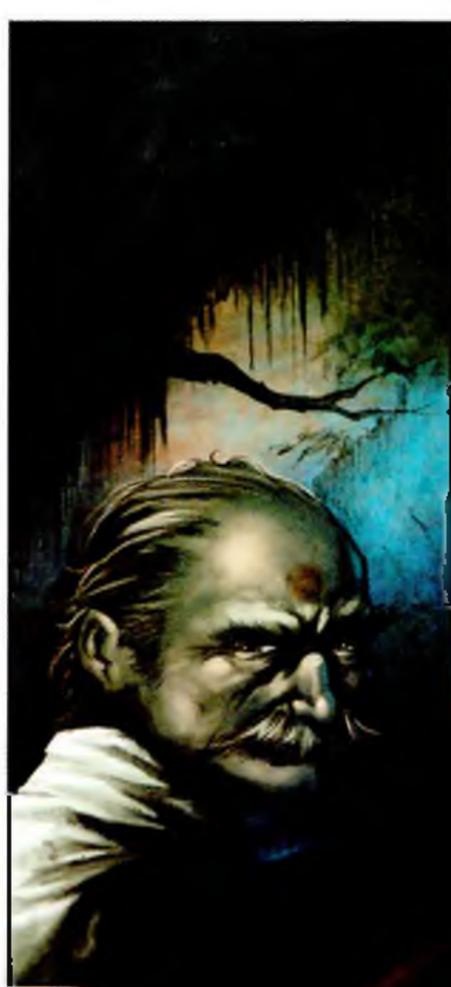
ARE YOU WILLING TO SACRIFICE THEM IN THE NAME OF YOUR CODE? WE CANNOT FIGHT GUNS WITH OUR WOODEN STAFFS. THEY CAN SLAUGHTER US FROM AFAR. IT WILL BE THE END OF OUR KIND.

COURAGE, MOHAN-BHAI, IS OUR ONLY REAL WEAPON.

GATHER THE BOYS AND LEAD THEM BACK TO THE BASE. THE BRITISH SOLDIERS ARE HUNTING US.

AND YOU... DADAJI, WILL YOU BE JOINING US?

SHORTLY, MOHAN BHAI. SHORTLY.



DADAJI,
HAVE YOU LOST
YOUR WAY?

I NEVER LOSE
MY WAY, DEAR ONE. THE
PATH JUST GETS LONGER, AND
I HAVE FEW COMPANIONS IN
MY LONELY TRAVAILS.



YOU SHALL
BE LONELY NO MORE
DADAJI... THE TORCH THAT YOU
BEAR WILL BE CARRIED
FORTH BY ANOTHER.

SAVE AN OLD
MAN SUCH SUSPENSE. WHO
IS THE ONE YOU SPEAK OF?
FROM WHERE WILL
HE COME?



PATIENCE DADAJI,
HE IS COMING.

END OF PROLOGUE

BEGINNINGS ARE ARBITRARY



WE CHOOSE STARTING POINTS, WHEN IN TRUTH EVERY MOMENT EXISTS IN THE CONTEXT OF EVERY SINGLE MOMENT THROUGHOUT TIME THAT PRECEDES AND FOLLOWS IT. TIME IS A TAPESTRY WITH NEITHER BEGINNING NOR END. WE LIKE TO THINK STORIES START AT A SINGLE POINT, BUT IN TRUTH, IT'S ALL ONE ETERNAL TALE...

I WILL BEGIN MY TALE IN LONDON, IN TIME
IN 1858, ON THE DAY I WAS BORN, AND I
WAS - OTHERS TITLED - SEARCHING FOR
SOMEONE TO START TO A NEW LIFE.

WHERE'S IT
FROM?

INDIA...

IT'S
THE BLOODY DEVIL,
BOYS! SHADE
YOUR EYES.

IF YOU ASKED ME BACK THEN
WHERE INDIA WAS ON A MAP, I
PROBABLY COULDN'T'VE TOLD YOU.
IT WAS SOME FAR OFF LAND
WHERE OUR KINGS AND QUEENS
INDULGED THEIR EGOS BY
SETTING UP A COLONY.

AND YET INDIA WAS
SOMEHOW ALREADY A
PART OF ME.

OR PERHAPS I SHOULD SAY,
I WAS BORN THERE, IN IT.

THEY SAY THAT LIFE IS AN
ACT OF PERCEPTION.
BUT WHAT IF YOUR
PERSPECTIVE IS SHAPED
BY A PLACE THAT YOU'VE
NEVER ACTUALLY BEEN?
WHAT THEN DOES THAT
SAY ABOUT YOUR LIFE?

BUT BEFORE I DRIET TOO FAR OFF--AND
I WILL EVENTUALLY AS WE ALL
SHOULD--I'LL KEEP YOU HERE...

JAMES JENSEN--
GET YOUR
HANDS OFF THAT
INDIAN PIECE
OF SHIT..

I'M NOT
PAYING YOU
BLOKES TO STAND
AROUND AND
CURATE ART!

...WITH ME AND MY
YOUNGER BROTHER
WILLIAM, BORN ABOUT
NINE MONTHS AND ONE
DAY APART.

YOU'RE WILLIAM, RIGHT?
THE LESSER OF THE
JENSEN BROTHERS.

YOU'RE RELIEVED
OF YOUR WORK.

YOU'RE
HARDLY PAYING
US AT ALL...

YOU CAN'T DO THAT
I NEED THE MONEY AND
I'M THE BEST YOU'VE
GOT OUT HERE.

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD
HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE
YOU YAPPED. THERE ARE PLENTY OF
BLOKES HAPPY TO TAKE YOUR
PLACE AND THE LORD KNOWS I'M
HAPPIER TO TAKE THEM.

BROTHER,
STOP!

YOU
BLOODY--

GET OFF MY
YARD, BEFORE I PAY
SOME FELLAS TO TAKE
YOU OFF!

WILLIAM TAUGHT ME A VERY VALUABLE
LESSON THAT I'VE NEVER FORGOTTEN.
MAYBE ONE DAY I'LL MEET THE FELLAS
WHO CAN BRING ME BACK TO MY TRUCK.

BECAUSE WHEN HE HAS A
RAGE INSIDE OF HIM.

THWAKKK

--THAT NEEDS TO
COME OUT--

WILL, NO!

--THE OBJECT OF THAT RAGE
IS INCONSEQUENTIAL--

GET HIM
OUT OF HERE, JENSEN.
BOTH OF YOU--
GET LOST.

THE RAGE WILL EVENTUALLY SUBSIDE.

LET ME
AT THAT FAT
BASTARD!

AND DON'T
BOTHR COMING
BACK!

LONDON, EAST END

HEY SWEETS,
YEAH I'M
LOOKING...

LOOKING
OR BUYING?

BUT LIKE MOST OF THE PEOPLE
WE LIVED AMONGST, WILLIAM WAS
ABLE TO PUT ASIDE HIS RAGE AND
INDULGE IN THE ROUTINE OF HIS
LIFE--NO MATTER HOW BAD IT WAS.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT
IT JAMES, WE'LL FIND MORE
WORK IF WE HAVE TO. THINGS
WILL WORK OUT FINE. THEY
ALWAYS DO.

WE MAY HAVE BEEN
BROTHERS--

I MAY WORRY TOO
MUCH, WILL. BUT YOUR
PROBLEM IS YOU DON'T
WORRY AT ALL.

IT'S A GIFT, MY
BROTHER. YOU CAN'T
BUY THAT SORT OF
PEACE OF MIND.

YOU MUST BE
ENLIGHTENED THEN, WILL.
BECAUSE I HAVE NO PEACE
OF MIND. AND YOU'RE RIGHT--
I DON'T HAVE A SINGLE QUID
TO MY NAME TO BUY IT.

--BUT AS THEY SAY IN THE
EAST, 'WE WERE SOULS APART.'

ON STANDS AUGUST 2006

Virgin
COMICS

ISSUE 2

SHEKHAR KAPUR'S

SNAKE WOMAN



WELLS | GAYDOS

DIRECTOR'S CUT



MEANWHILE, UNBEKNOWNST TO ME,
MY STORY WAS SPINNING OUT A
WORLD AWAY IN THE NORTHEAST
PART OF INDIA, IN A PLACE
NAMED BENGAL.

IN THE ILLUSORY WORLD OF AKASH--THE
INVISIBLE SPACE, AS THEY CALL IT--MY
LIFE WAS INTERSECTING WITH ANOTHER,
AND GETTING UP A SAGA NEITHER OF US
COULD EVER PREDICT.

"COLONEL TOWNSEND. YOUR
SERVICE HAS BEEN MOST
NOBLE.

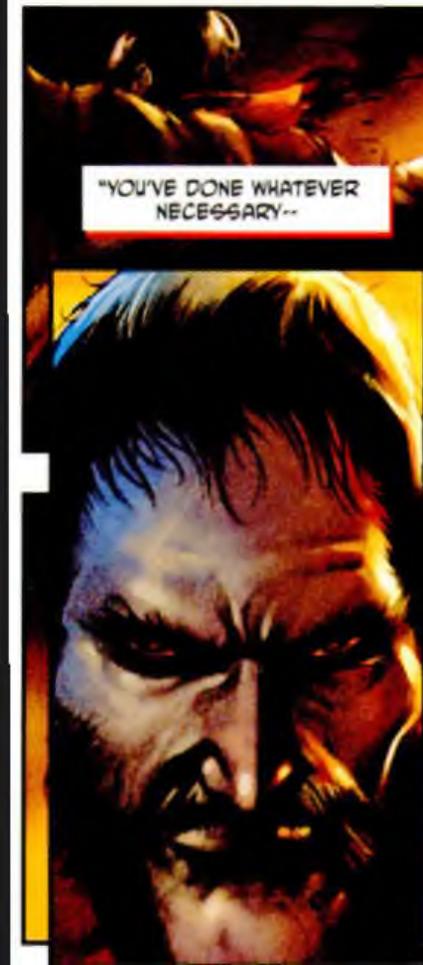


READY...

AIM...

FIRE!

"DESPITE THE HARSH
CONDITIONS, COLONEL
TOWNSEND--



"YOU'VE DONE WHATEVER
NECESSARY--



HELP!!!
BHAGWAN-ii!!!!!!

AHHH!



"--AND MANAGED THE
NATIVES AS NEEDED..."

...HER MAJESTY IS
VERY GRATEFUL.

YOU SHOULD BE
VERY PROUD.

IT'S BEEN A GREAT
HONOR. BUT I AM
LOOKING VERY MUCH
FORWARD TO RETURNING
HOME. IT'S BEEN QUITE
SOME TIME.

IT'S NOT THAT
I DON'T APPRECIATE THE
COLONY, BUT PERHAPS THE
ANIMALS COULD USE
A NEW MASTER.

"UNFORTUNATELY, YOUR
DEPARTURE MAY HAVE TO
BE DELAYED, COLONEL.

"A MUTINY IS UNDERWAY
IN BARRAKPORE...

"THE SEPOYS IN
MEERUT AND FIROZPUR
ARE REVOLTING AS
WELL...

"MANY IMPERIAL
OFFICERS
HAVE BEEN KILLED...

"AND THEY'RE BEING
JOINED BY RURAL
INSURGENTS.

"WE HAVE IT UNDER
CONTROL THERE BUT
WORD HAS SPREAD...

"WE'RE SORRY
COLONEL TOWNSEND,
BUT WE NEED
YOU HERE."

THE TRUTH IS THAT WE ARE ALL CONNECTED. EVERY MAN IS CO-WRITING EVERY OTHER MAN'S FATE. THIS, THEY CALL OUR "COLLECTIVE KARMA."

BACK OFF, FRIEND. I NEED THE WORK TODAY.

BUT ENOUGH WITH THE PHILOSOPHY. BECAUSE WHILE I WAS ALWAYS A DEEP THINKER, ON THE DOCKS, I WAS TOO BUSY SURVIVING--

NO MORE THAN ME

IT'S SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST OUT HERE!



THUDDDD!

--TAKING HITS--



TWHACKKKK!

--DOLING THEM OUT--



BEHIND YOU BROTHER...

--WATCHING MY BROTHERS BACK--



BRING IT ON BOYS...

--AND STANDING BESIDE HIM--

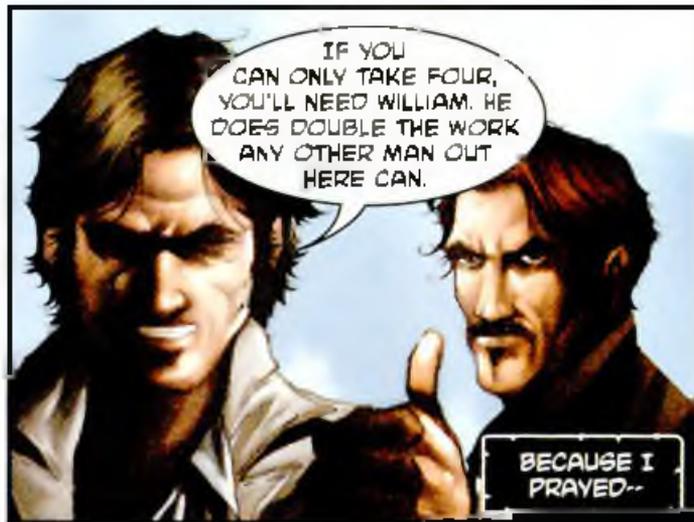
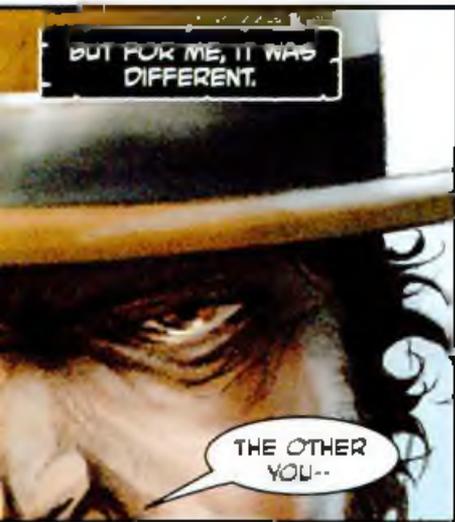


--EVEN WHEN I KNEW IT JUST MEANT ANOTHER FIGHT.

MUST BE MY LUCKY DAY! TWO JENGENS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!

THUDDDD!!

BREAK IT UP DOGS!



ON STANDS AUGUST 2006

SHEKHAR KAPUR'S

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Cover by
GREG HORN



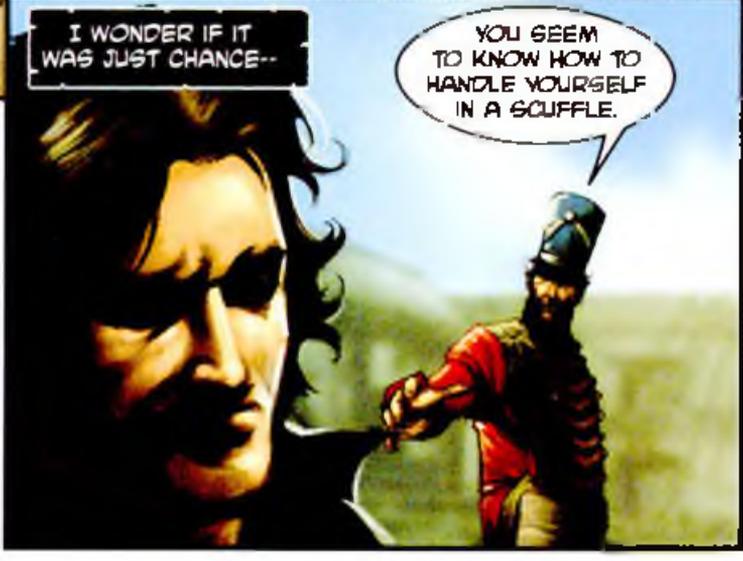
I SOMETIMES THINK ABOUT THAT DAY,
THE DAY THAT WILLIAM STAYED ON
THE DOCKS AND I DRIFTED AWAY.

HEY YOU--



I WONDER IF IT
WAS JUST CHANCE--

YOU SEEM
TO KNOW HOW TO
HANDLE YOURSELF
IN A SCUFFLE.



JUST
PROTECTING MY BROTHER.
I HAVE NO FIGHT WITH
ANYONE.

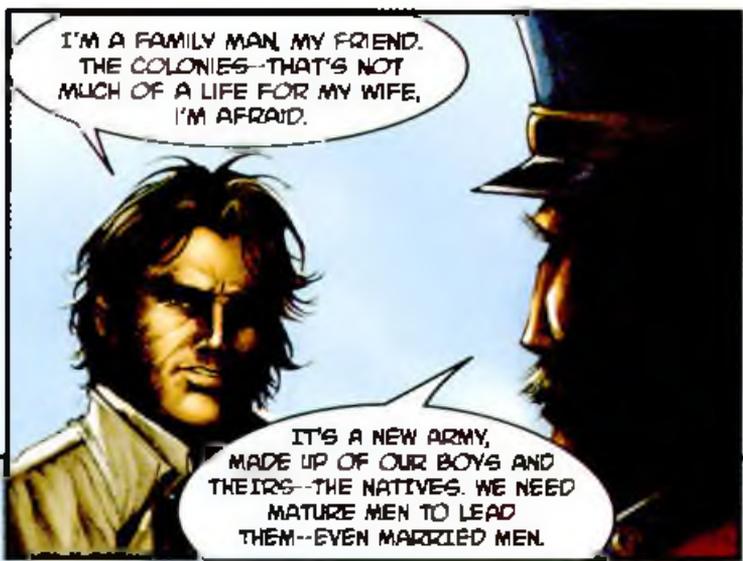
HER MAJESTY
IS LOOKING FOR MEN
LIKE YOU TO SERVE IN
HER ARMY IN THE
COLONIES.

--OR FATE.



I'M A FAMILY MAN, MY FRIEND.
THE COLONIES--THAT'S NOT
MUCH OF A LIFE FOR MY WIFE,
I'M AFRAID.

IT'S A NEW ARMY,
MADE UP OF OUR BOYS AND
THEIRS--THE NATIVES. WE NEED
MATURE MEN TO LEAD
THEM--EVEN MARRIED MEN.



MAYBE
SO, BUT IT'S
NOT FOR ME AND
MY WIFE.

EXCUSE ME
GOOD SIR--



"--BUT IS THIS MUCH OF A LIFE
FOR YOUR WIFE NOW?"

I STILL THINK ABOUT THAT
SOLDIER AND THE WORDS HE
SPOKE TO ME. I IMAGINE THAT
OTHER LIFE--THE ONE WHERE I
STAYED ON THE DOCKS, AND
WILLIAM WALKED HIMSELF OVER
TO SOME PUB. WHAT WOULD
THAT LIFE HAVE BROUGHT?



HAD I NOT GONE HOME
EARLY THAT DAY.



HAD TESS NOT TOLD ME
WHAT SHE DID--



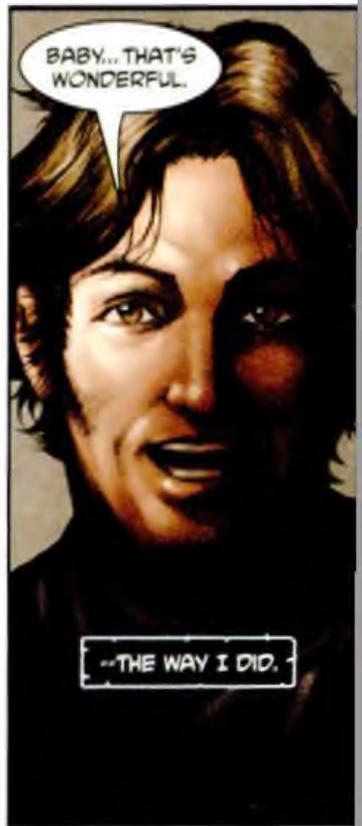
JAMES, I'M
PREGNANT.



AND HAD I NOT REACTED



BABY... THAT'S
WONDERFUL.



--THE WAY I DID.

HOW ARE WE
GOING TO--?

AND ALL OF A SUDDEN
THOUGHT ALL THE THINGS
THAT I WAS THINKING.

DON'T WORRY,
TESS. DON'T EVER
WORRY. WE'LL
BE FINE.





HAD I NOT SOAKED
THOSE THOUGHTS--



--IN ONE TOO MANY--



--AND LISTENED TO THAT MAN
AND HIS INTOXICATED WORDS
OF WISDOM--

MATE,
YOU HAVE TO LEARN
TO ACCEPT WHAT YOU
GOT. THE WORLD
IS AS IT IS...

THAT CAN'T BE.
THERE'S A WHOLE
WORLD OUT
THERE.



--WOULD I HAVE GONE BACK
THERE THAT NIGHT?

SEND ME AND
MY FAMILY TO WHATEVER
FAR FLUNG COLONY YOU
WANT.

HER MAJESTY
HONORS YOUR
SERVICE...

SAVE IT.
THIS ISN'T FOR HER.
MY LOYALTY IS TO
MYSELF.

AND SAID WHAT I DID?



INDIA?
THAT'S THE OTHER
SIDE OF THE
PLANET.



RIGHT--FAR
AWAY FROM
HERE.



FAR FROM
OUR HOME,
JAMES.

HOME? WE HAVE
NOTHING HERE, TESS.
WHAT KIND OF LIFE IS THIS?
BARELY HANGING ON.
THAT'S NO LIFE FOR MY
CHILD, FOR YOU.



SOMETHING'S
WAITING FOR US THERE.
I CAN SENSE IT.

ON STANDS AUGUST 2006



ISSUE 2

THE 
Sadhur

CHOPRA | KANG

AS IT TURNED OUT, LEAVING
WAS A LOT EASIER THAN
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

I STILL THINK
YOU'RE A BLOODY
IDIOT FOR TAKING YOUR
PREGNANT WIFE TO
THE LAND OF SNAKE
CHARMERS, MATE.

AND I STILL
THINK YOU'RE A
BLOODY IDIOT FOR
STAYING IN THE LAND
OF SNAKES, MATE.

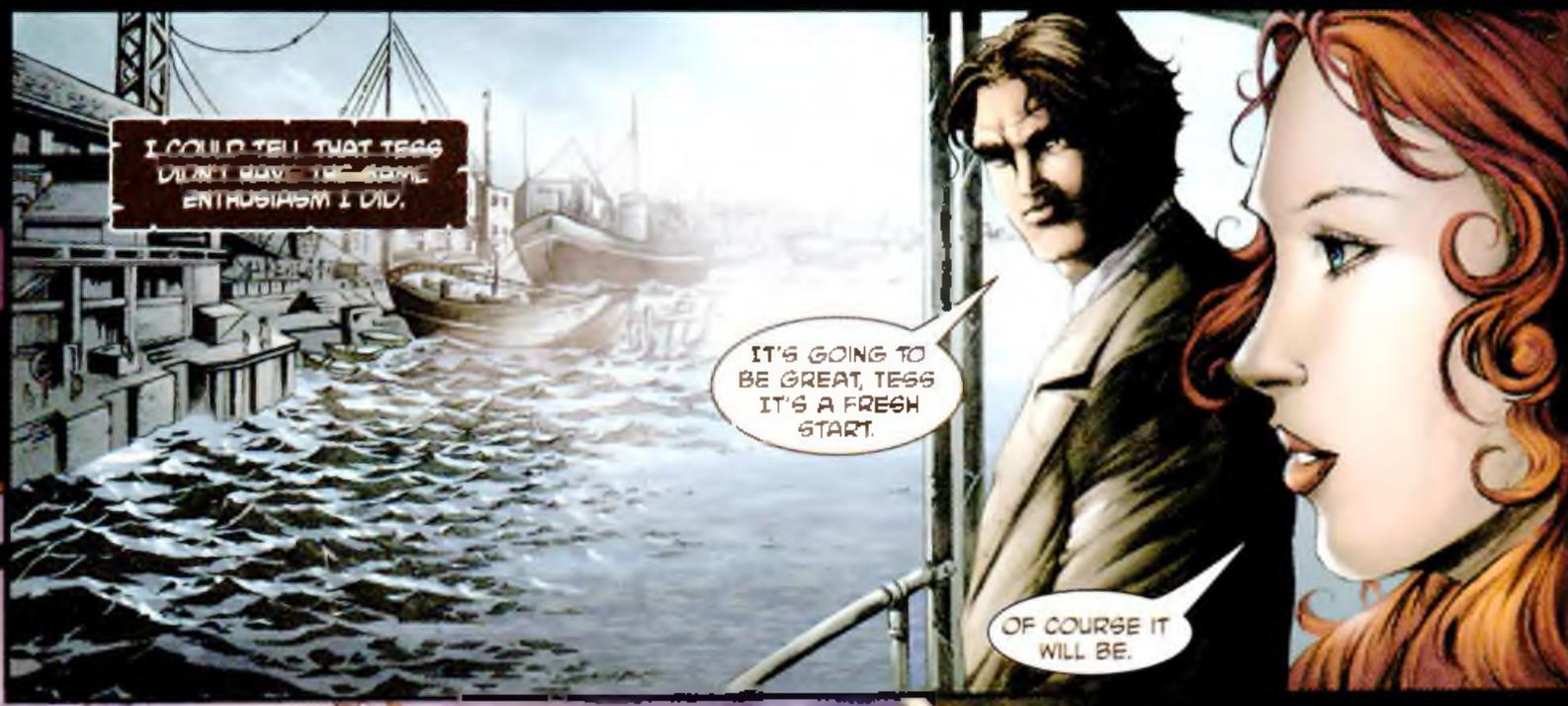
DON'T BE A
HERO.

YOU TOO...

WHEN YOU
COME BACK, BROTHER,
I'LL OWN THIS DOCK.
YOU WATCH...

THE TRUTH IS THAT SOMETIMES
YOU NEED TO GO SO FAR
AND LEAVE THOSE YOU LOVE
THE MOST TO FIND OUT WHO
YOU REALLY ARE.





I COULD TELL THAT TESS DIDN'T HAVE THE SAME ENTHUSIASM I DID.

IT'S GOING TO BE GREAT, TESS IT'S A FRESH START.

OF COURSE IT WILL BE.

RURAL BENGAL, INDIA

GATHER UP THE BODIES. AND BURN THEM.

FRESH START TOMORROW.

AS YOU WISH, COLONEL TOWNSEND.

MAYBE SHE SENSED WHAT WAS GOING ON OUT THERE WHILE WE SAILED SILENTLY TOWARD IT.



MAYBE SHE KNEW THAT ALL THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY WE ENCOUNTERED WHEN WE FIRST ARRIVED IN INDIA WOULD ONLY BE TEMPORARY.

THESE JUNGLES ARE AS OLD AS TIME ITSELF, SIR.

I, FOR ONE, FELT SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW THOSE FIRST FEW DAYS.

THAT'S PRETTY OLD.

TIME IS THE ULTIMATE DEVOURER. IT EATS ALL THINGS.

I FELT FREE
--POWERFUL--

SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO JOIN ME UP HERE? YOU'RE MISSING OUT.

POSITIVE, JAMES.

IMPORTANT SIR, THAT WE ARE NOT TRAVELING IN THIS SUN. TOO HOT FOR THE LADY AND THE OXEN. WE REST.

OKAY, WE REST.

--EXCITED AND AWAKE--

--AND CURIOUS.

I DON'T GET DOWN TO WHAT I WASN'T SURE, BUT WHATEVER IT WAS, IT PULLED ME AND PROPULSED ME TOWARD IT.

MR. JAMES-- PLEASE DO NOT BE WANDERING TOO FAR...

DON'T WORRY...

AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, THERE WAS A HIDDEN WORLD THAT WAS EXPOSED TO ME.

AND IT WAS FAMILIAR.

WHOA.

HE WAS FAMILIAR--

--EVEN THOUGH I KNEW I HAD NEVER MET HIM BEFORE

I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T KNOW WHO THIS BELONGED TO. IT WAS JUST OPEN...

DON'T BE SORRY. IT BELONGS TO NO ONE IN PARTICULAR, EVERYONE IN GENERAL.



SO EVEN THOUGH I WAS
SOME STRANGER IN
SOME STRANGE LAND--

I FEEL LIKE I'VE
SEEN THIS STATUE
BEFORE.



--AND EVEN THOUGH IT
RESEMBLES AN
INEXPLICABLY FAMILIAR--

KALI IS THE
DESTROYER OF ALL
THINGS, THE BEARER
OF DEATH AND WITH
IT NEW LIFE.



SOUNDS
LIKE A PRETTY
UNFRIENDLY
GAL



--I WASN'T AT
ALL AFRAID.

DEATH IS
THE GREAT
EQUALIZER. IT
ACCEPTS ALL MEN.
IT IS EVERY MAN'S
FRIEND.



HOW LONG
HAS THIS STATUE
BEEN HERE? HOW
OLD IS IT?



KALI MAO IS AS OLD AS TIME
IT'S THE BEGINNING AND
THE END, THE GREAT
DISCOURSED CULTURE

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
BECOME ONE, A SINGULAR
DREAM INSEPARABLE FROM
THE DREAMER...

THE GREAT CULTURE KALI,
KNOWS NO TIME...

SEVEN BROTHERS

JOHN WOO
GARTA ENNIS

FALL 2006



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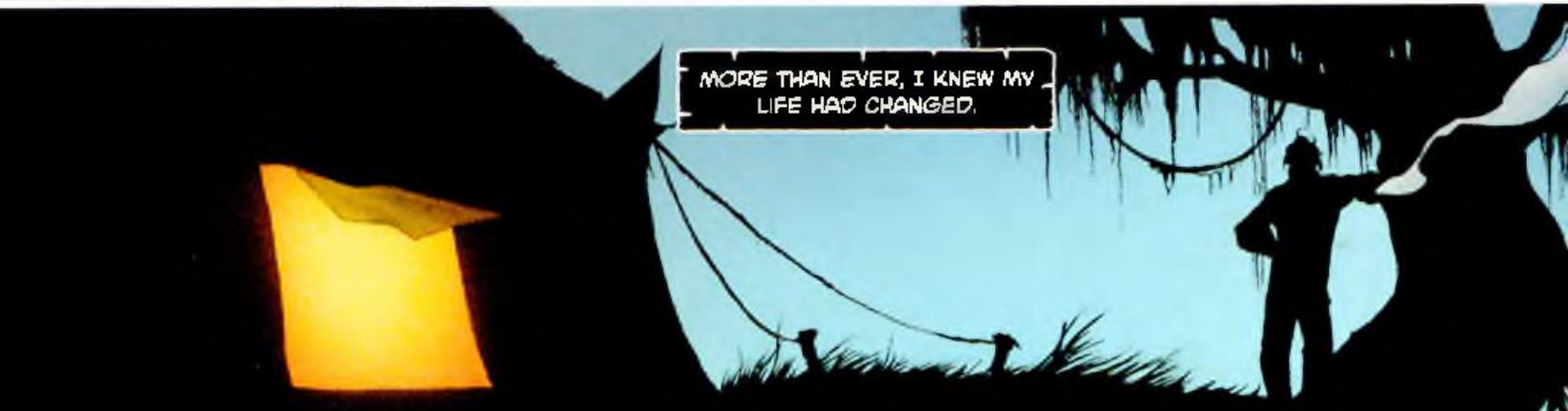
ONE MORE PUSH MADAME SAHIB...



GRRRR...

PUSH MADAME SAHIB, PUSH!

INDEED, TIME QUICKLY DISAPPEARED AND I FOUND MYSELF BACK IN THE REAL WORLD.



MORE THAN EVER, I KNEW MY LIFE HAD CHANGED.



MR JAMES, SAHIB. IT'S A BABY BOY!



AND THAT I WAS THE INHERITOR OF NEW RESPONSIBILITIES.



MADAME SAHIB IS RESTING COMFORTABLY...

AND I FELT A JOY THAT CANNOT BE DESCRIBED.



JACK, HOW ABOUT WE CALL YOU JACK?

WEEKS LATER



IT WAS THEN, SHORTLY AFTER MY SON WAS BORN, THAT I KNEW WHAT I WOULD BECOME. I WAS NO LONGER A BOY FIGHTING ON THE DOCKS. I WAS A MAN.



HE'S BROUGHT ME NEW PURPOSE, TESS. I'M NOT GOING TO LET THE COLONEL GET ME DOWN.

AND AS A MAN, I HAD THE PROBLEMS THAT MEN DO--

IS TOWNSEND REALLY THAT BAD?



--AND THE OBSERVATIONS THAT MEN HAVE.

HE'S DRILLING THE MEN TOO HARD. HE RULES THROUGH FEAR...



DON'T MOVE!

AND OF COURSE, EVERY DAY BROUGHT A NEW ADVENTURE...



--A NEW BEAST THAT NEEDED TO BE TAMED



JAMES!

BUT IN THIS STRANGE LAND--

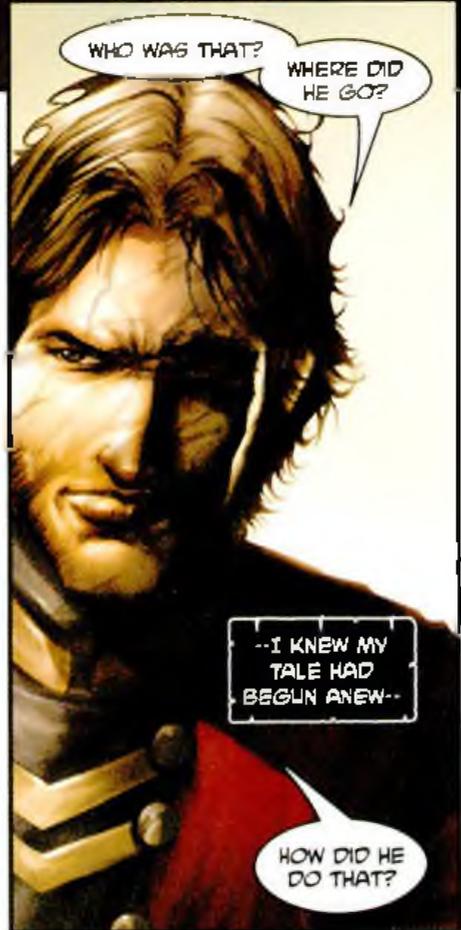
MAAF KARO...



--WHERE STRANGE THINGS FELT SO NORMAL AND FAMILIAR, WHERE EVERYTHING FELT SO REAL--



--AND UNREAL--



WHO WAS THAT?

WHERE DID HE GO?

--I KNEW MY TALE HAD BEGUN ANEW--

HOW DID HE DO THAT?



--BUT THAT ONLY TIME WOULD TELL IT.

TO BE CONTINUED...



THE PATH WE CHOOSE IS WHO WE ARE



In India, they say that your life is divided into four stages.

The first stage should be devoted to *learning*. That means from birth, interacting with the world and letting it imprint itself upon your consciousness. From the people that you meet, to the places you go, the emphasis should be on gathering knowledge and expanding your awareness.

The second stage, it is said, should be spent *earning*. That means that with all that you have learned, you should put it to some use, apply it to a trade, and earn all that you can. *Earning* becomes the point of all the *learning*.

The third stage should be dedicated to *servicing*. So with all that you've earned, you use it to make your family comfortable and secure. They say also that your "family" is not just your blood, but your community – the larger society in which you live, indeed humanity at-large. Hence, charity is integral to this stage of life. And if you're successful at it, ideally by the end of this third stage, you should have nothing material left to your name. Which prepares you for the fourth and final stage of your life.

This last stage is for *seeking*. And as much as the third stage of life, serving, is about others, seeking is all about oneself. Seeking traditionally means detaching oneself from all that you are bound to and retreating from your life. For it is what you are bound to emotionally – including even your family – that keeps you attached to this life. The goal then is to identify with something beyond yourself, to identify with the source of all things – that from which you came and to which you will return, the ceaseless silence that always has been and always will be.

They call this silence “samadhi” and those that seek it “sadhus.” Even today in modern India, in cities all across the country, you’ll find sadhus wandering the streets, sleeping by the rivers, and meditating in various temples. There are entire cities – mostly along the holy river Ganges – that have become veritable homes to sadhus, like Hardiwar, Rishikesh, and Varanasi (the city of death). And when you are in a sadhu’s presence, you can’t help but feel some piece of *their* soulful liberation infect yours.

It’s an eastern concept for sure, this idea of surrendering all and walking away from everything you have accumulated/achieved just as you hit old age. But as exotic and foreign as it is (and even as someone of Indian – heritage as I am, it is to me), there is a definite appeal to it. Because so much of life is about its seeming lack of meaning, about the race to get through it, only to arrive at certain points and ask, as a child would, “but why?” To think that there could be a portion of your life devoted to finding the answers to these simplest and most existential questions – that sounds like a pretty decent time.

Sadhus live by a code. However the code itself is a hard one to articulate because the point of spiritual liberation, one supposes, is not to live by any rules at all. Really, a sadhu is defined not even by what he believes but

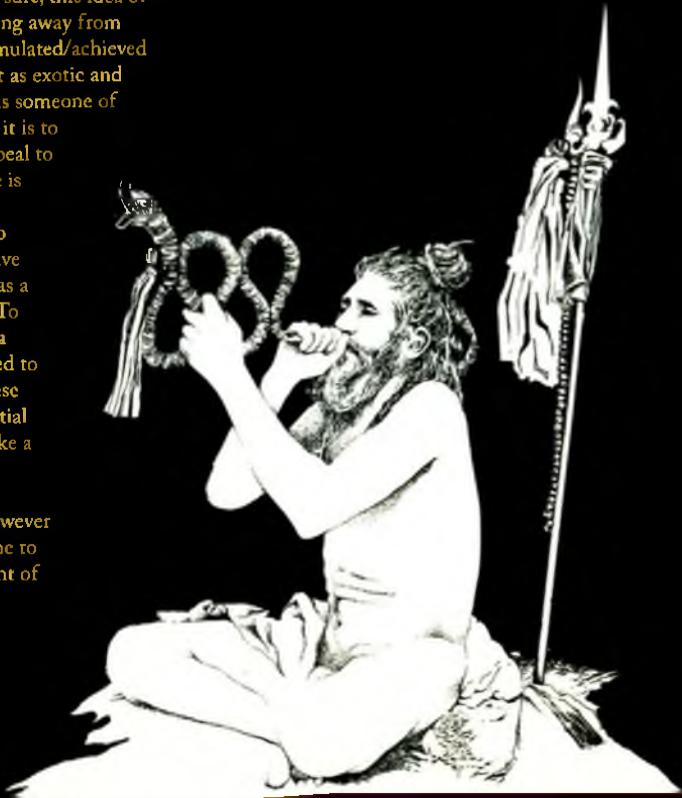
by what he does. Hence comes the saying amongst sadhus: “*the path we choose is who we are.*”

There are, of course, the sadhus that have successfully conquered this final fourth stage of their lives, who have essentially “found the answers.” So what of them? Who are they and what do they know? Well, if I could answer that, I surely wouldn’t be writing this. But what I can offer is something I was once told by a sadhu who I had met and who I am pretty sure had made it through the four stages. He was old and experienced, but his mind was quick and agile, and he let me in on the simplest of secrets. “It’s not the destination,” he said. “It’s the journey to get there. The destination is, in fact, the journey itself.”

And so it goes. We’re all sadhus-in-training along the ride of life.

Enjoy it.

Gotham Chopra



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