



Vetala Stories

# VIRVAR

CHATURANG KATHA.

No. 504

PICTORIAL CLASSICS FOR YOUNG AND OLD

Re. 1



The *Vetala Panchavimshati* is a collection of stories involving a *vetala* (a spirit that haunts corpses) and a legendary king, King Vikramaditya of Ujjaini. The king, for certain reasons, had to fetch the *vetala*, and to fetch him in total silence. The *vetala* insisted on telling stories and demanding answers to the problems these stories posed. Being wise, Vikramaditya knew all the answers. Knowing them, he had to answer. Answering, he broke the silence imposed upon him, thus letting the *vetala* escape again and again to his perch on a nearby tree.

The result is a collection of stories that raise questions of justice, fair play, character, good and bad, etc. that trouble most people in their journey through life.

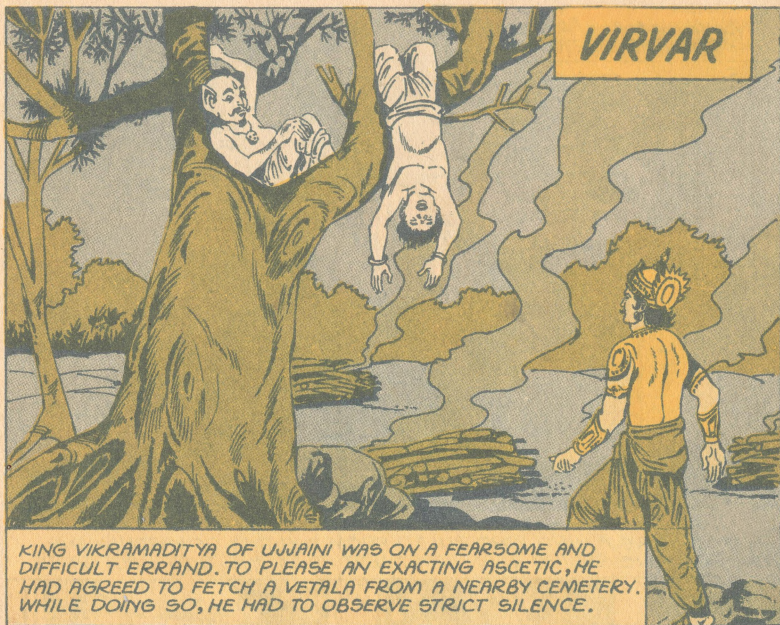
CHATURANG KATHA has already brought you the first *vetala* story—PADMAVATI. In this issue we bring you two more—VIRVAR and MADHUMAVATI.

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KING VIKRAMADITYA OF UJJAINI WAS ON A FEARSOME AND DIFFICULT ERRAND. TO PLEASE AN EXACTING ASCETIC, HE HAD AGREED TO FETCH A VETALA FROM A NEARBY CEMETERY. WHILE DOING SO, HE HAD TO OBSERVE STRICT SILENCE.

TO KEEP SILENT WAS NOT EASY. THE VETALA WOULD TELL STORIES THAT POSED A RIDDLE. THE KING, IF HE KNEW THE ANSWER, WAS BOUND TO SPEAK. IF HE DID NOT ANSWER, THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE DIRE.

I WILL BREAK YOUR HEAD INTO A 1000 PIECES!

I WONDER HOW MANY MORE TIMES I WILL HAVE TO COME BACK FOR THIS VETALA. I KNEW THE ANSWER TO HIS LAST RIDDLE!



THE VETALA CLEARED HIS THROAT AND BEGAN —

LISTEN, O KING, TO THE STORY OF RUPSEN.

AT LEAST HIS STORIES ARE INTERESTING.



RUPSEN WAS A KING WHO RULED FROM THE CITY OF VARDHAMANA. ONE DAY, AS HE RESTED IN AN APARTMENT ADJOINING THE PALACE GATES —





THE GATEKEEPER WAS ASKED FOR AN EXPLANATION.



MY LORD,  
YOUR PALACE  
GATES ATTRACT  
MANY PASSERS-BY.  
THEY COME FOR  
ALMS, OR JUST TO  
WHAILE AWAY AN  
IDLE HOUR.

IS THERE ANYONE  
SEEKING SPECIAL  
AUDIENCE WITH ME?

AS A MATTER OF FACT,  
THERE IS. AN ARMED  
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE  
WHO WISHES TO  
ENTER YOUR  
SERVICE.

SEND  
HIM IN.

A GUARD RETURNED WITH THE MAN.

I HEAR THAT YOU  
DESIRE TO SERVE  
ME. WHAT IS YOUR  
NAME? WHAT  
FEE DO YOU  
EXPECT?

MY NAME IS VIRVAR.  
I WOULD LIKE A  
1000 TOLAS OF GOLD  
TO BE GIVEN TO ME  
EVERY DAY.

THE KING WAS AMAZED.

HOW MANY  
DEPENDANTS  
DO YOU  
HAVE?

MY WIFE, MY  
SON AND MY  
DAUGHTER.

THERE WAS A BURST OF LAUGHTER.

HE DEMANDS  
A LARGE SUM  
AND THEN  
DECLARES HE  
HAS HARDLY  
ANYONE TO  
SUPPORT!

HE MUST  
BE MAD.

BUT SOMETHING IN VIRVAR'S FACE AND BEARING INSPIRED THE KING'S CONFIDENCE.

I AM SURE HE  
WILL NOT MISUSE  
THE FUNDS.

HE HAS NOT  
THROWN ME  
OUT. THERE  
IS HOPE.

THE KING CALLED FOR THE TREASURER.

I HAVE  
DECIDED  
TO EMPLOY  
VIRVAR.

I AM  
GRATEFUL,  
MY LORD.

VIRVAR RECEIVED HIS FIRST  
1000 TOLAS AND WENT  
HOME, FULL OF PLANS.



ON REACHING HOME, HE GAVE HIS WIFE THE GLAD NEWS.

500 TOLAS SHOULD BE  
DISTRIBUTED AMONGST  
DESERVING BRAHMAN.

250 TOLAS  
SHOULD LOOK  
AFTER THE NEEDS OF  
PILGRIMS, DEVOTEES  
AND RELIGIOUS  
MENDICANTS...



... AND 250 TOLAS SHOULD DO  
TO FEED THE POOR OF THE  
CITY AND ALSO MEET OUR  
HUMBLE NEEDS.



THE KING HAD JUDGED HIM CORRECTLY. VIRVAR  
WAS NOT LOOKING FOR PERSONAL GAIN.



VIRVAR WAS EVER MINDFUL OF HIS MASTER'S NEEDS.

VIRVAR,  
I AM  
RESTLESS.

YOUR MAJESTY,  
I WILL GET THE  
COURT MUSICIANS  
TO PLAY YOU  
SOOTHING MUSIC.

BY NIGHT, HE WOULD MOUNT GUARD OVER THE KING'S COUCH. THE KING HAD ONLY TO STIR —

IS ANYBODY  
THERE?

YOUR  
MAJESTY,  
VIRVAR  
WAITS ON  
YOU.

SOON, VIRVAR WAS AN INVALUABLE PART OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD.

HE IS ALWAYS  
THERE WHEN  
NEEDED. BUT HIS  
TOTAL LOYALTY  
HAS STILL TO  
BE TESTED.

THE OPPORTUNITY SOON AROSE. ONE DARK NIGHT, THE KING CALLED OUT —

VIRVAR,  
VIRVAR...

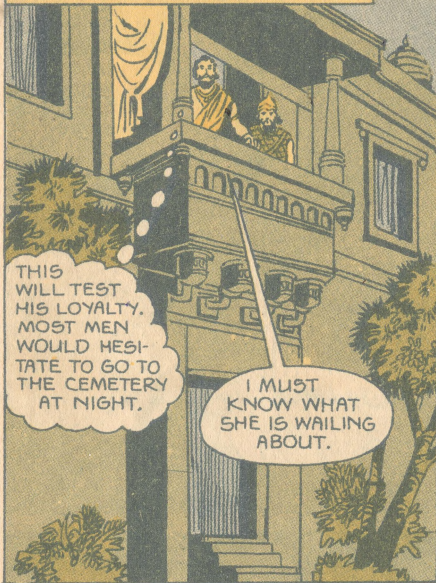
YOUR  
MAJESTY,  
WHAT IS IT?  
WHAT CAN  
I DO?

THAT AWFUL  
WAILING —  
I CANNOT  
GET TO  
SLEEP.  
CAN'T YOU  
HEAR IT?

YES, INDEED,  
YOUR MAJESTY.  
IT IS THE VOICE  
OF A WOMAN IN  
DISTRESS. IT  
SEEMS TO COME  
FROM THE BURNING  
GROUNDS.



THE KING MOVED OUT ON TO THE BALCONY OF HIS BEDCHAMBER.



THIS WILL TEST HIS LOYALTY. MOST MEN WOULD HESITATE TO GO TO THE CEMETERY AT NIGHT.

I MUST KNOW WHAT SHE IS WHILING ABOUT.

VIRVAR DID NOT HESITATE.

YOUR MAJESTY, I SHALL GO IMMEDIATELY.



AND HE SET OFF, CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY THE KING IN DISGUISE.

THE HOWL OF JACKALS AND THE WEIRD, FLICKERING LIGHT FROM THE BURNING PYRES MADE VIRVAR SHUDDER. AS HE PROCEEDED —



I CAN NO LONGER HEAR THE JACKALS — SO LOUD ARE HER CRIES.

SUDDENLY, IN THE FLARE OF A NEARBY PYRE HE SAW —



WHAT A  
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN!  
AND SO RICHLY  
DRESSED! WHAT  
ON EARTH COULD  
SHE BE DOING  
HERE?

AS HE STOOD GAPING, SHE FLUNG HER ARMS AND  
LEGS ABOUT AND BEAT HER HEAD REPEATEDLY.



ALAS!  
ALAS!

VIRVAR TOOK HIS COURAGE IN BOTH HANDS.

WHO  
ARE YOU?  
WHAT GREAT  
CALAMITY  
HAS OVER-  
TAKEN YOU?

I AM THE  
**ROYAL GLORY**  
AND I AM  
THREATENED WITH  
EXTINCTION.





VIRVAR WAS PUZZLED.

DO I UNDERSTAND  
YOU TO SAY THAT  
KING RUPSEN'S  
GLORIOUS REIGN  
WILL SOON COME  
TO AN END?

YES. I CANNOT  
BEAR IT. I HAVE  
HAD SUCH GOOD  
TIMES IN THE  
KINGDOM OF  
VARDHAMANA!

VIRVAR SILENCED HER WITH A GESTURE.

CALM YOUR-  
SELF, WOMAN.  
WHAT EXACTLY  
DO YOU  
PREDICT?

CORRUPTION  
AND VICE ARE  
RAMPANT. MIS-  
FORTUNE WILL FOL-  
LOW. KING RUPSEN  
WILL DIE A  
MONTH FROM NOW.  
MARK MY WORDS!



VIRVAR WAS BY NOW WIDE AWAKE AND FULLY ALERT.

IS THERE NO WAY OF  
AVERTING THIS  
DISASTER? I WANT  
KING RUPSEN TO LIVE  
A HUNDRED YEARS.

THE APPARITION STOPPED HER WILD PRANCING  
AND LED HIM TO A NEARBY TREE.


IT IS ALL IN  
YOUR HANDS.

HOW CAN  
I CHANGE THE  
WAYS OF DESTINY?  
HOWEVER...

THERE IS A TEMPLE  
TO DEVI EIGHT  
MILES FROM HERE,  
AS YOU GO EAST.  
YOU MUST PLACATE  
THE GODDESS OF  
THAT TEMPLE.


HOW?

THE APPARITION PAUSED DRAMATICALLY. VIRVAR FELT A BLIGHT TWINGE OF FEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME.



YOU MUST, WITH YOUR OWN HANDS, CHOP OFF YOUR SON'S HEAD. THAT IS THE PRICE THAT DESTINY DEMANDS FOR THE KING'S LONG LIFE.

B...B... BUT...



SHE HAS VANISHED, AND I AM LEFT WITH THIS HEAVY BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY! I MUST GO HOME AT ONCE.

I WONDER WHAT HE WILL DO. WILL A FATHER'S LOVE WIN OVER THE CALL OF DUTY?



THE KING FOLLOWED VIRVAR HOME. HE  
COULD HEAR HIM TALKING TO HIS WIFE.

WAKE UP!  
LISTEN...

AND VIRVAR TOLD HER ALL  
THAT HAD HAPPENED.

THE WIFE WOKE UP THEIR SON AND  
TOLD HIM.

SON, YOUR FATHER  
HAS TO SACRIFICE  
YOU. IT IS IMPORT-  
ANT THAT THE  
KING LIVES.

MOTHER, FIRSTLY,  
I CANNOT DISOBEY YOU;  
SECONDLY, IT IS IN THE  
KING'S SERVICE; THIRDLY,  
I AM HONOURD TO  
BE A SACRIFICE  
TO DEVI.

VIRVAR TURNED TO HIS WIFE.

IF YOU AGREE, AND ONLY IF YOU DO, WILL I PERFORM THIS AWFUL DUTY.

MY DEAR HUSBAND, YOUR WELFARE DEPENDS ON THE KING'S WELFARE AND YOUR WELFARE SHOULD BE MY ONLY CONCERN.



THE DAUGHTER DID NOT ACCEPT THE DECISION SO EASILY.

IF MOTHER, FATHER AND KING CANNOT PROTECT US, WHO WILL?



AND TALKING OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES, THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO THE TEMPLE OF DEVI. THE KING FOLLOWED AT A DISTANCE, THOUGH WITHIN EARSHOT.





VIRVAR ENTERED THE TEMPLE, PRAYED FOR THE KING'S LONG LIFE AND HAPPY REIGN AND SWIFTLY CUT OFF HIS SON'S HEAD.



THE DAUGHTER PICKED UP THE SWORD.



THEN—



VIRVAR LOOKED AT THE LIFELESS BODIES OF HIS NEAR AND DEAR ONES.





THE KING ENTERED THE TEMPLE  
AND STOOD AGHAST.

ALL THIS  
FOR ME? I AM  
NOT FIT TO  
LIVE!

AND HE PICKED UP THE SWORD IN ORDER TO END HIS LIFE.

BUT JUST AS HE RAISED IT, THE  
GODDESS APPEARED, HER HAND  
RAISED IN BLESSING.

I AM PLEASED  
WITH YOUR  
HUMILITY.  
ASK ME FOR  
A BOON.

MOTHER, IF YOU WISH TO  
REWARD ME, BRING  
THESE GOOD SOULS  
BACK TO LIFE.

THE GODDESS VANISH-  
ED FROM SIGHT...

...AND SOON RETURNED WITH HOLY WATER.



ONE BY ONE, THEY SPRANG TO LIFE, WHOLE AND UNHARMED. THE KING TURNED TO VIRVAR—

HALF MY KINGDOM IS YOURS. YOU DESERVE NO LESS, MY LOYAL SERVANT.

LONG LIVE MY KING!



THE STORY HAVING ENDED, THE VETALA POSED HIS PROBLEM.

WHO, WISE KING, WAS GREATER IN VIRTUE—THE KING OR VIRVAR?

THE KING, OF COURSE. VIRVAR WAS MERELY DOING HIS DUTY, THE KING WAS DOING MORE THAN HIS DUTY.



VIKRAMADITYA STARTED WALKING BACK TO THE VETALA'S TREE; FOR ONCE AGAIN THE SPIRIT HAD ESCAPED.



# MADHUMAVATI

KING VIKRAMADITYA TOOK THE VETALA FROM THE TREE AND STARTED HIS WEARY JOURNEY BACK TO THE ASCETIC.

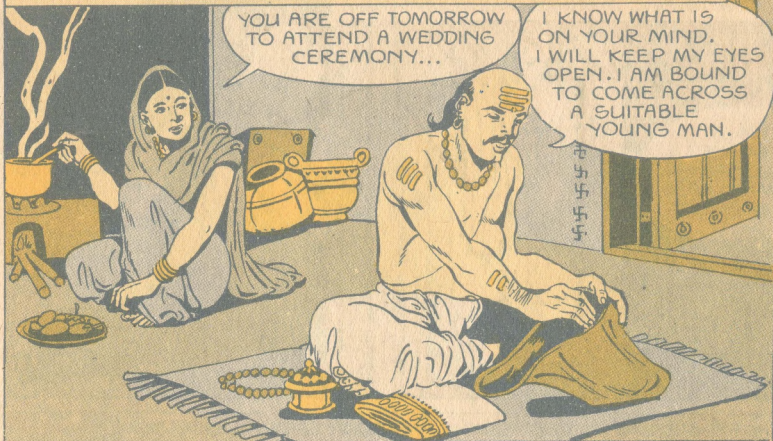
GIVE EAR,  
O KING...

HIS RIDDLES  
ARE GETTING MORE  
COMPLICATED, BUT  
MY BRAIN SEEMS  
TO BE GETTING  
CLEARER. HOW  
MANY MORE  
TRIPS,  
I WONDER.

IN DHARMASTHAL, ON THE BANKS OF THE YAMUNA, LIVED A BRAHMAN NAMED KESHAVA. HE HAD A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, MADHUMAVATI.



HER PARENTS THOUGHT IT WAS TIME TO FIND HER A GOOD HUSBAND.



YOU ARE OFF TOMORROW  
TO ATTEND A WEDDING  
CEREMONY...

I KNOW WHAT IS  
ON YOUR MIND.  
I WILL KEEP MY EYES  
OPEN. I AM BOUND  
TO COME ACROSS  
A SUITABLE  
YOUNG MAN.

HER BROTHER TOO WAS WORRIED ABOUT MADHUMAVATI.  
AS HE SET OFF FOR THE DAY —

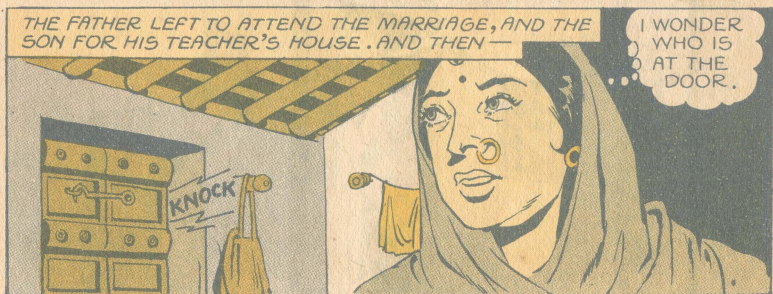
I HOPE I MEET  
SOMEONE TODAY.

I WILL BE  
MARRIED WHEN  
THE FATES  
WILL IT, NOT A  
DAY BEFORE.



THE FATHER LEFT TO ATTEND THE MARRIAGE, AND THE  
SON FOR HIS TEACHER'S HOUSE. AND THEN —

I WONDER  
WHO IS  
AT THE  
DOOR.





MADHUMAVATI'S MOTHER OPENED THE DOOR TO FIND A HANDSOME YOUNG MAN.

I HAVE WALKED A LONG WAY. MAY I REST AWHILE?

YOU ARE WELCOME. YOU MUST EAT WITH US.

AS HE ATE, SHE TALKED TO HIM AND SOON LEARNT ALL ABOUT HIS FAMILY, HIS PLACE OF BIRTH, HIS FORTUNES.

I THINK HE IS JUST THE RIGHT MAN FOR MADHUMAVATI.

I HAVE A DAUGHTER. YOU WOULD MAKE HER A GOOD HUSBAND.

I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF HER JUST NOW. I AM HONOURED. SHE IS VERY BEAUTIFUL.



AT DUSK, HER HUSBAND RETURNED,  
BRINGING WITH HIM A YOUNG MAN...



THAT MUST BE  
A BRIDEGROOM FOR  
MADHUMAVATI. WHAT  
DO I DO NOW?

THERE IS A YOUNG  
MAN IN OUR  
FRONT YARD.  
I WONDER...



INDOORS —

I HAVE PRO-  
MISED TO GIVE  
MADHUMAVATI  
TO A YOUNG  
MAN. YOU  
MUST HAVE  
SEEN HIM...



HOW AWKWARD!  
I HAVE  
OFFERED HER  
IN MARRIAGE  
TO ANOTHER  
YOUNG MAN.

AS THEY STOOD PERPLEXED, THE  
SON ENTERED.



FATHER, I HAVE  
ALSO BROUGHT  
A YOUNG MAN. HE  
IS WAITING OUTSIDE—  
WITH THE OTHER  
TWO!

ONE GIRL  
AND THREE  
SUITORS!  
I WISH WE  
HADN'T BEEN  
QUITE SO  
PROMPT.

WHILE THE THREE OF THEM STOOD DISCUSSING THE SITUATION —

AAAH!  
A SNAKE...

THAT IS  
MADHUMAVATI!



THEY RAN OUT TO FIND HER LYING UNCONSCIOUS.



THERE WAS PANIC. THE MEN RAN OFF IN SEARCH OF SNAKE CHARMERS, CONJURORS AND MAGICIANS. SOON, THEY WERE ALL STANDING OVER THE UNCONSCIOUS GIRL.





THE EXPERTS STARTED GIVING THEIR OPINIONS.

A MAN BITTEN BY A SNAKE ON THE 5TH, 6TH, 8TH, 9TH AND 14TH DAY OF THE MONTH CANNOT SURVIVE.

ONE WHO HAS BEEN BITTEN ON THE 5TH, 6TH, 8TH, 9TH AND 14TH DAY CAN REVIVE.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH GAVE EVEN MORE BAFFLING OPINIONS. THE FIFTH PUT AN END TO ALL SPECULATION.

BRAHMA HIMSELF CANNOT BREATHE LIFE INTO THIS DEAD BODY.

MADHUMAVATI'S BODY WAS BURNT.

SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN AN IDEAL WIFE.

PERHAPS IT IS FOR THE BEST. THESE MEN WOULD HAVE FOUGHT OVER HER.



AFTER THE FUNERAL, ONE SUITOR COLLECTED HER BONES, DONNED THE GARB OF A MENDICANT AND ROAMED FROM FOREST TO FOREST.



THE SECOND KEPT HER ASHES, BUILT A HUT ON THAT VERY SPOT AND BEGAN TO LIVE IN IT.

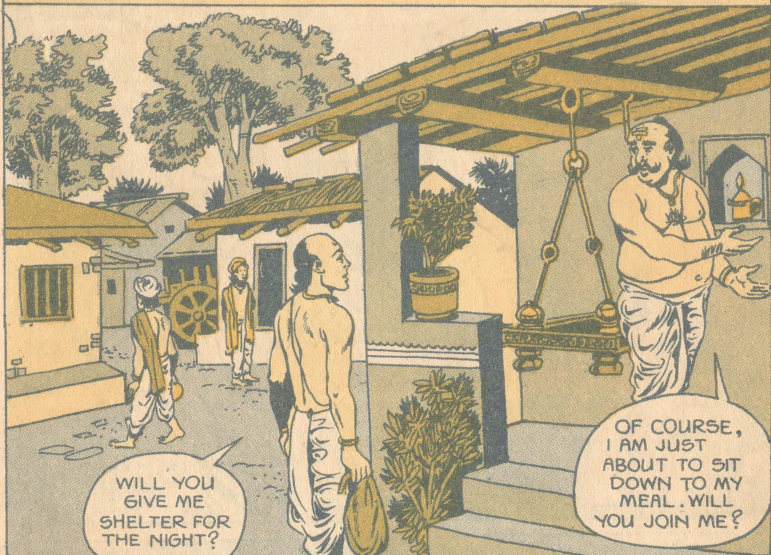


THE THIRD, WITH POUCH AND BEGGING BOWL, WANDERED FROM VILLAGE TO VILLAGE.

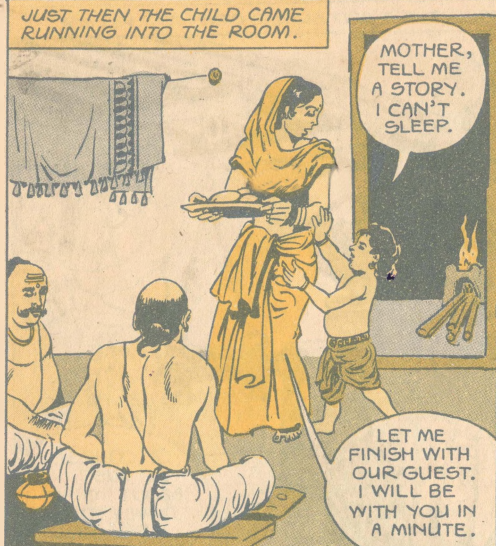




ONE DAY, TOWARDS NIGHTFALL, THE THIRD SUITOR CAME TO A VILLAGE.



JUST THEN THE CHILD CAME  
RUNNING INTO THE ROOM.



MOTHER,  
TELL ME  
A STORY.  
I CAN'T  
SLEEP.

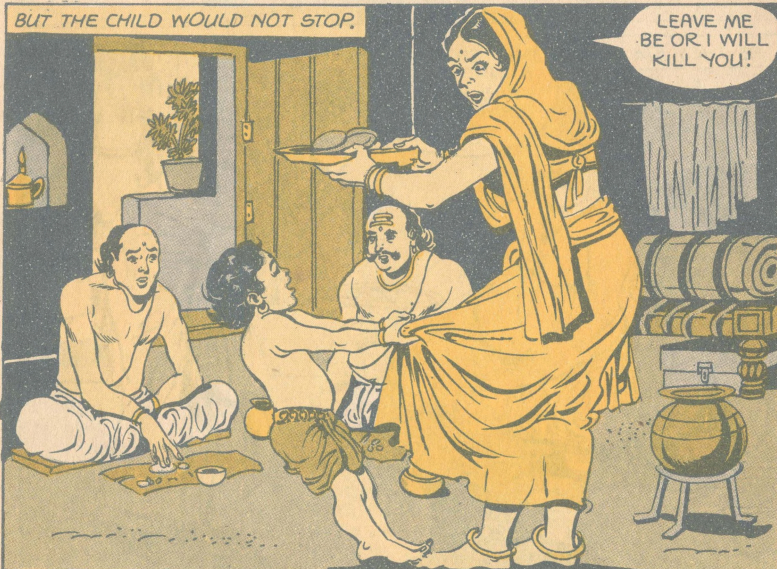
LET ME  
FINISH WITH  
OUR GUEST.  
I WILL BE  
WITH YOU IN  
A MINUTE.



NO, I WANT  
YOU TO  
COME NOW!

STOP IT,  
OR YOU WILL  
SPILL THE  
FOOD.

BUT THE CHILD WOULD NOT STOP.



LEAVE ME  
BE OR I WILL  
KILL YOU!



THE CHILD ONLY CRIED ALL THE MORE. THE MOTHER PICKED UP THE CHILD AND —



YOU DESERVE TO BURN. I HAVE HAD ENOUGH.

THE GUEST WAS HORRIFIED. HE GOT UP.



WHY DON'T YOU FINISH THE FOOD?

HOW CAN I EAT? I HAVE JUST SEEN A CHILD THROWN INTO THE FIRE.

THE BRAHMAN WAS UNPERTURBED. HE FETCHED A BOOK, OPENED IT AND MUTTERED A SPELL.



THE CHILD EMERGED FROM THE FIRE, WHOLE AND WELL.

COME HERE, SON. GO TO YOUR MOTHER AND SAY YOU ARE SORRY.

THE SECRET OF BRINGING THE DEAD TO LIFE! IT IS THERE, IN THAT BOOK!

THE HOUSEHOLD WAS SOON FAST ASLEEP.

I MUST HAVE THAT BOOK. WITH IT, I CAN BRING MADHUMAVATI BACK TO LIFE!

HE STOLE INTO THE BRAHMAN'S ROOM, GOT HOLD OF THE BOOK AND—

I MUST BE OUT OF THIS VILLAGE LONG BEFORE DAWN.



HE HEADED FOR DHARMASTHAL, AND AFTER SEVERAL DAYS, ARRIVED AT THE CREMATION GROUNDS. THE OTHERS WERE ALSO THERE.

YOU LOOK TIRED AND  
FOOTSORE.  
WHAT FRESH  
TRUTHS HAVE  
YOU DISCOVERED?

THE  
SECRET OF  
BRINGING  
THE DEAD  
TO LIFE—  
NO LESS.

HERE IS YOUR  
CHANCE TO PROVE  
IT. BRING  
MADHUMAVATI  
BACK TO LIFE.

MOST CERTAINLY.  
YOU HAVE THE  
BONES AND HE,  
THE ASHES.  
MAKE A HEAP  
OF THEM.

THERE WAS AN AIR OF SUPPRESSED EXCITEMENT.  
ONE MADE A HEAP OF HER BONES...

HOW KEENLY  
I AM REMINDED OF  
THE BEAUTIFUL  
MADHUMAVATI!

... AND THE OTHER PLACED HER ASHES LOVINGLY ON THEM.

IF WHAT THIS  
MAN CLAIMS IS  
TRUE, YOU WILL  
SOON BE MINE,  
MADHUMAVATI!



THE THIRD TOOK OUT HIS BOOK AND MUTTERING A SPELL, PASSED HIS HANDS OVER THE HEAP. AND, LO AND BEHOLD! —

HAVE I BEEN  
ASLEEP? WHERE  
AM I? WHERE  
ARE MY  
PARENTS?





THE YOUNG MEN BEGAN TO ARGUE.

SHE IS MINE.  
I PRESERVED  
HER ASHES.

WITHOUT HER BONES,  
YOUR ASHES WOULD  
HAVE BEEN NO USE.  
SO, SHE IS MINE.



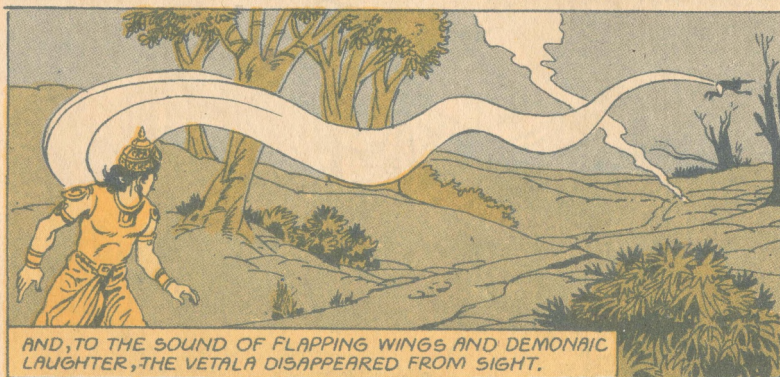
MADHUMAVATI LOOKED  
FROM ONE TO THE  
OTHER IN AMAZEMENT.  
THE THIRD YOUNG  
MAN SAID —

NEITHER YOUR BONES  
NOR YOUR ASHES COULD  
HAVE BROUGHT HER  
TO LIFE. IT WAS MY  
SPELL THAT DID IT.  
I CLAIM HER.

KING VIKRAMADITYA WAITED FOR THE VETALA TO SPEAK.

WHICH OF THE  
THREE HAD THE  
RIGHT TO  
MARRY HER?







OUR NEXT TITLE:



THE STRANGE SACRIFICE is yet another story riddle from the *vetala*, and a strange one this time. If the heads of two people are interchanged, what about their identity? Who is who? The story leads up to this point in a most interesting manner.

This issue also brings you MADANASENA. A wife is made to realize the value of marriage and its sanctity—a lesson beautifully taught, and eternally relevant.

# FUN WITH GEMS

HOW MANY 3-SIDED SHAPES  
CAN YOU FIND? eg.  $\Delta$ .



Twenty



COLOURFUL  
CHOCOLATE-  
CENTRED  
GEMS.

*Cadbury's*

GEMS— THE FUN FOOD FOR CHILDREN