



No. 37

ASHOKA

THE LIFE OF A GREAT SON OF INDIA, AS
DEPICTED IN THE PALI TEXTS

A
M
A
R

C
H
I
T
R
A

K
A
T
H
A



History chronicles innumerable kings who were brave conquerors and valiant soldiers. But Ashoka stands above them all because he is the only one who at the zenith of his conquests saw the futility of violence and had the courage to renounce it. That is why, H. G. Wells in his 'Short History of The World' says that Ashoka's "reign for eight and twenty years was one of the brightest interludes in the troubled history of mankind." Wells goes on to say, "Such was Ashoka, the greatest of kings. He was far in advance of his age."

This volume is based on the original research of the author into Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa, Commentary on Mahavamsa, and the edicts of Ashoka. Pali manuscripts and other secondary sources have also been extensively studied in gleaning facts which should kindle a new interest in Ashoka.

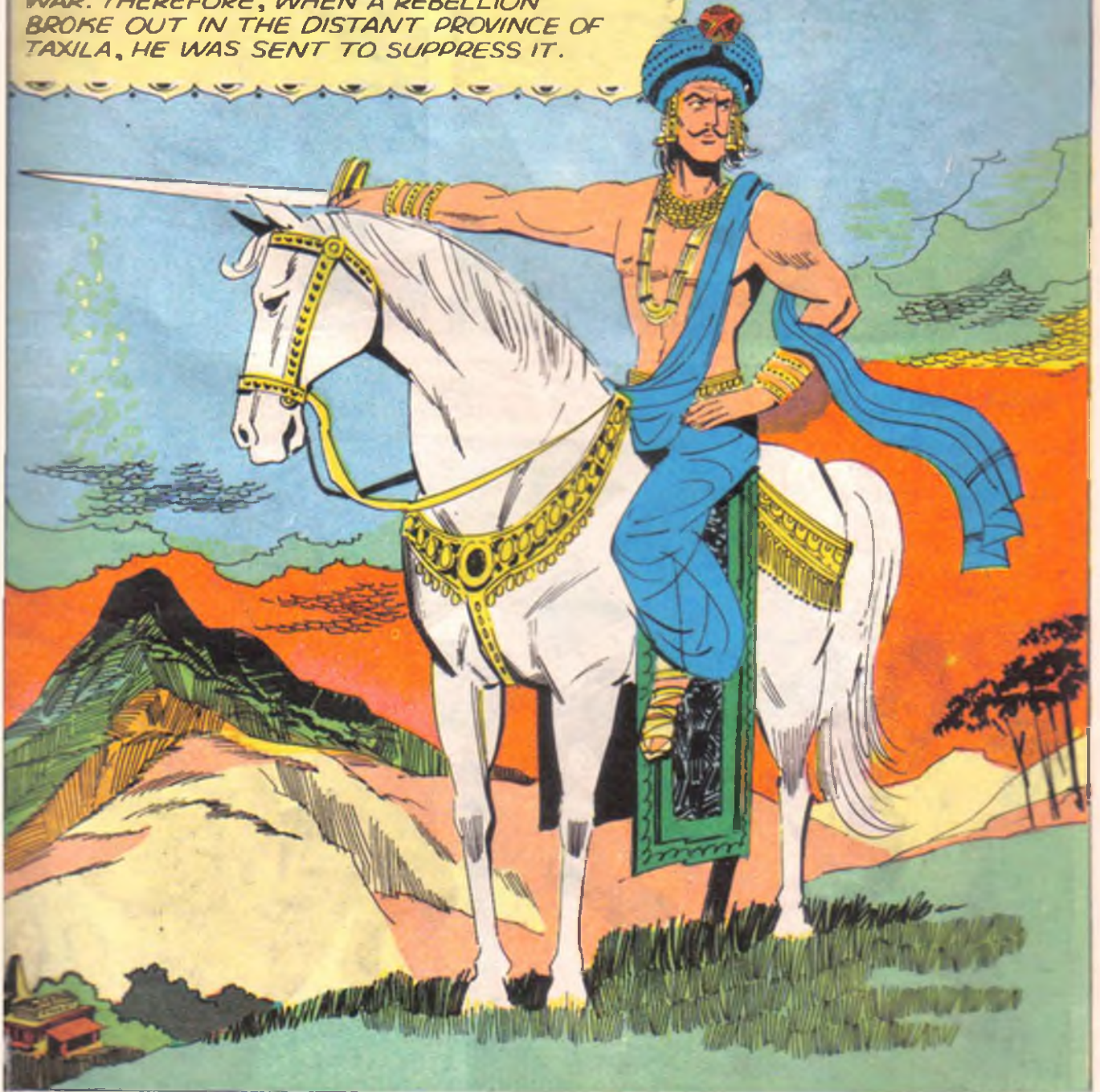
AMAR CHITRA KATHA means good reading
Over 200 titles are now on sale.

Published by H.G. Mirchandani for India Book House Education Trust, 29, Wodehouse Road, Bombay - 400 039 and printed by A. C. Chobe at IBH Printers, Marol Naka, Mathuradas Vissanjil Road, Andheri (East), Bombay - 400 059.

Editor: Anant Pai Written by : Meena Talim Illustrated by : Ram Waeerker

ASHOKA

ASHOKA WAS THE SON OF KING BINDUSARA WHO RULED INDIA FROM HIS CAPITAL OF PATALIPUTRA IN THE THIRD CENTURY B.C. HE EXCELLED HIS BROTHERS IN THE ART OF WAR. THEREFORE, WHEN A REBELLION BROKE OUT IN THE DISTANT PROVINCE OF TAXILA, HE WAS SENT TO SUPPRESS IT.



WEEKS LATER -

YOUR MAJESTY! WE HAVE HAPPY NEWS HERE. ASHOKA HAS SUCCESSFULLY PUT DOWN THE REBELS.



HE SHALL RULE THERE AS THE VICEROY. HE WILL KEEP PEACE THERE.



BINDUSARA HAD A HUNDRED SONS BESIDES ASHOKA. THEY WERE NOT HAPPY TO HEAR THE NEWS.

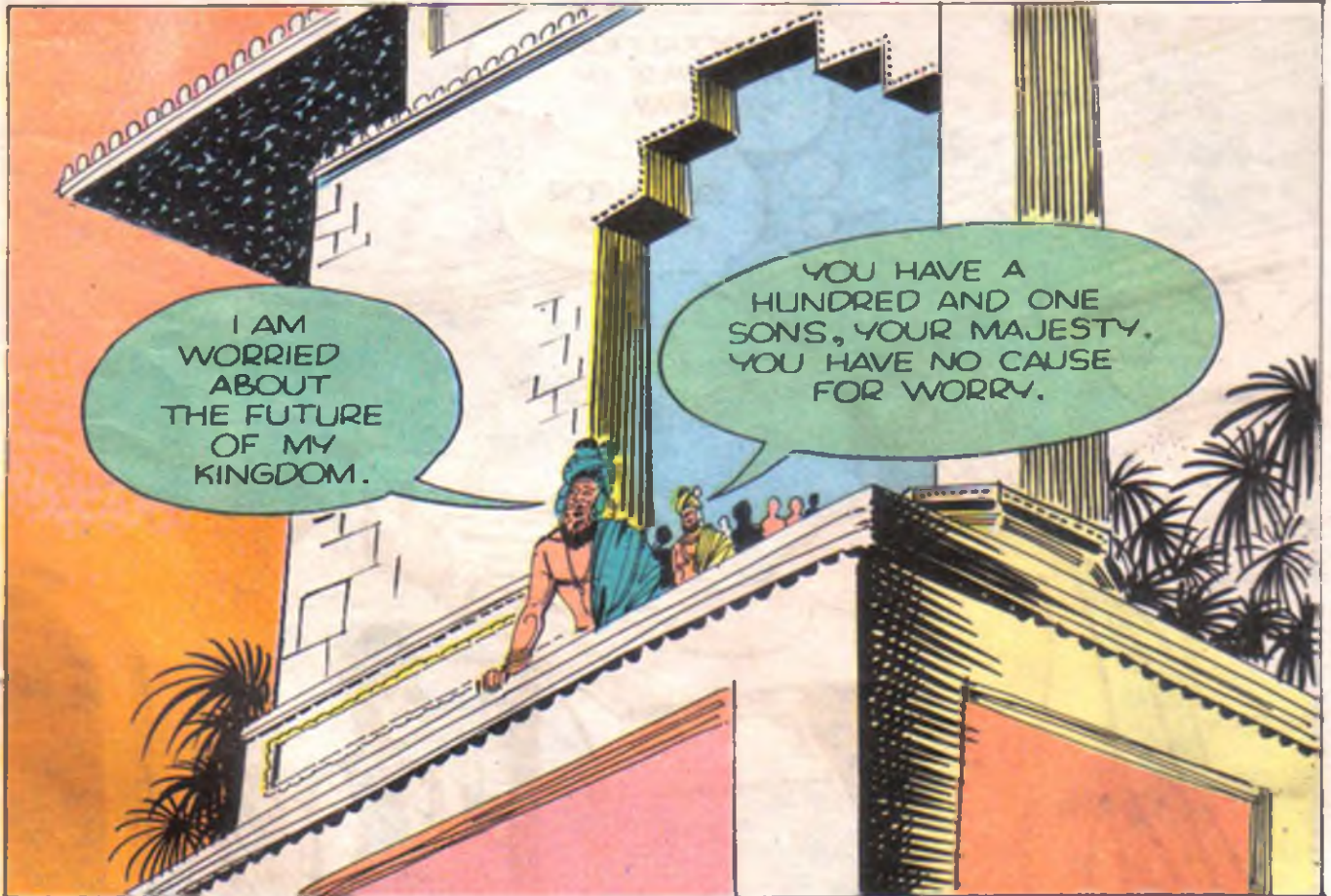
ASHOKA HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROUD. THE SUCCESS WILL GO TO HIS HEAD.

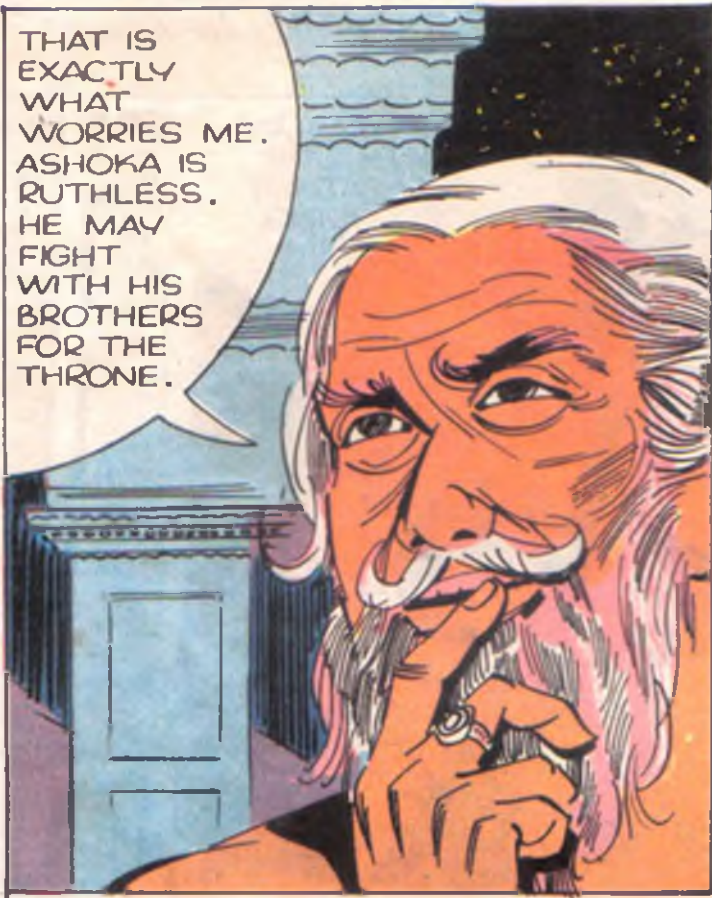


IT WILL MAKE HIM MORE ARROGANT.



BUT THEY WERE UNHAPPIER STILL, WHEN THE KING RECALLED ASHOKA FROM TAXILA.



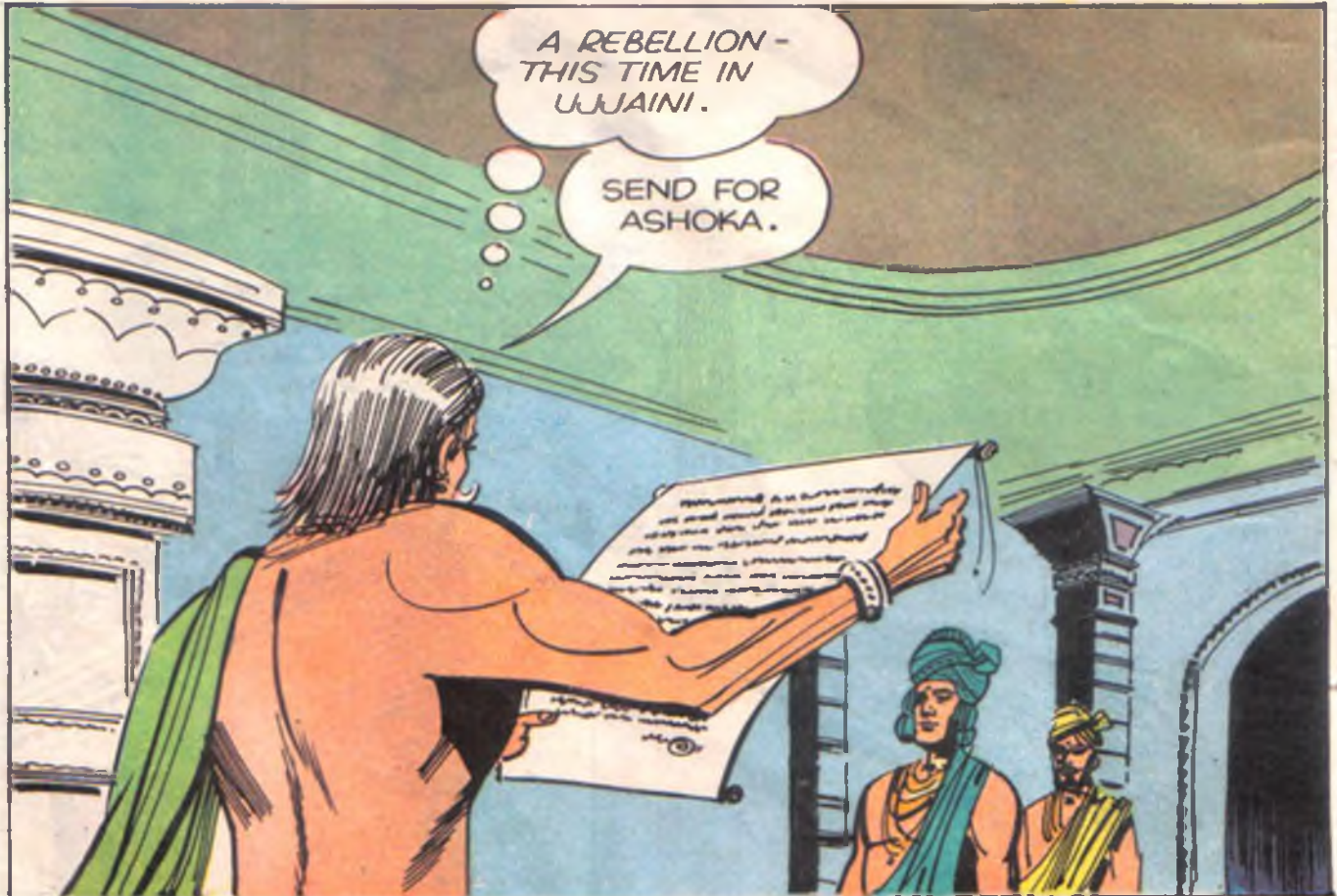


THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WORRIES ME. ASHOKA IS RUTHLESS. HE MAY FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHERS FOR THE THRONE.



JUST THEN-

THERE IS A MESSENGER FROM UJJAINI, YOUR MAJESTY.



A REBELLION - THIS TIME IN UJJAINI.

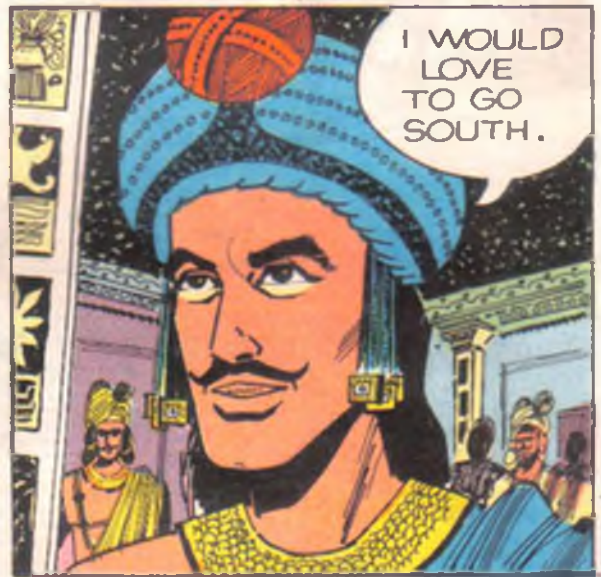
SEND FOR ASHOKA.



FATHER,
HERE I AM.
I GOT
YOUR
MESSAGE.



THE PROVINCE
OF UJJAINI
NEEDS
AN ABLE
VICEROY.



I WOULD
LOVE
TO GO
SOUTH.



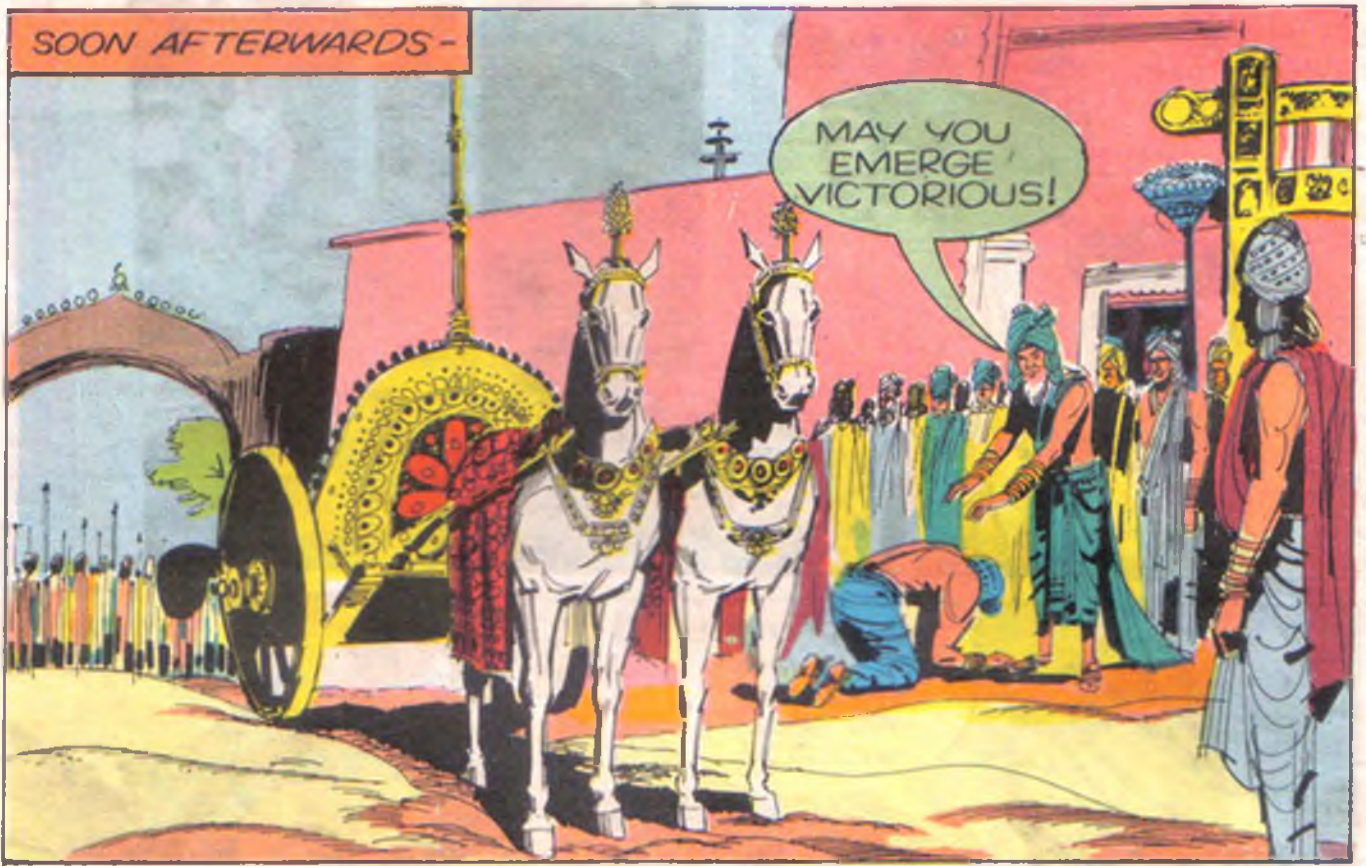
BUT THE
VICEROY
DESIGNATE...



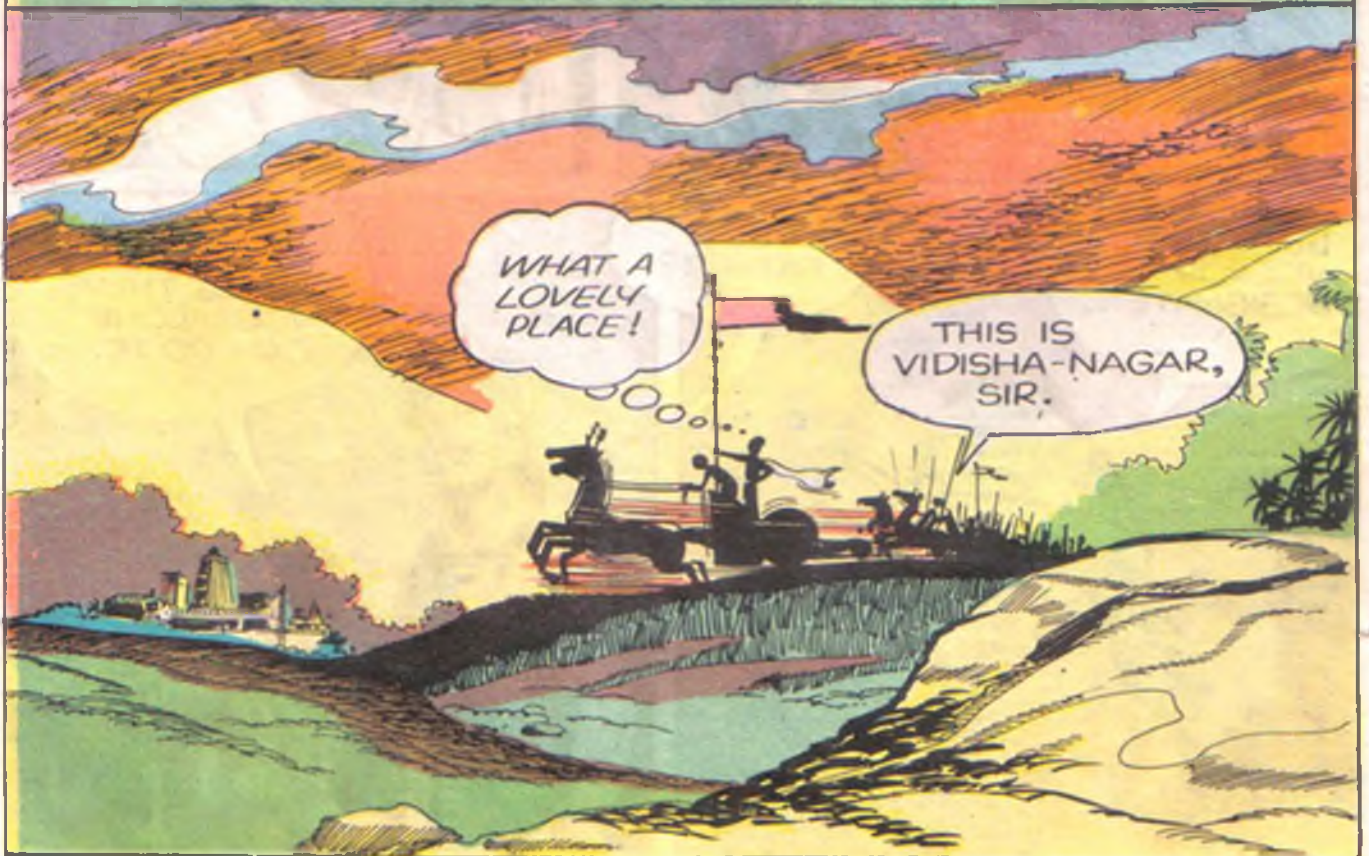
YES,
FATHER?

... WILL HAVE
TO CRUSH THE
REBELS THERE.
YOU ALONE
CAN DO IT.

SOON AFTERWARDS -



ASHOKA MARCHED TOWARDS UJJAINI. A GREATER PART OF THE JOURNEY WAS ON HORSEBACK.





ASHOKA WAS CHARMED BY THE BEAUTY OF THE LEADER
OF THE GROUP.





ASHOKA'S MESSENGER SOON RETURNED.

SIR! SHE IS THE DAUGHTER OF A REPUTED SHRESHTHI'S* FAMILY.

TELL THE SHRESHTHI! I WANT TO MEET HIM.

*MERCHANT

LATER-

SHRESHTHI, IF YOU PLEASE,
I...

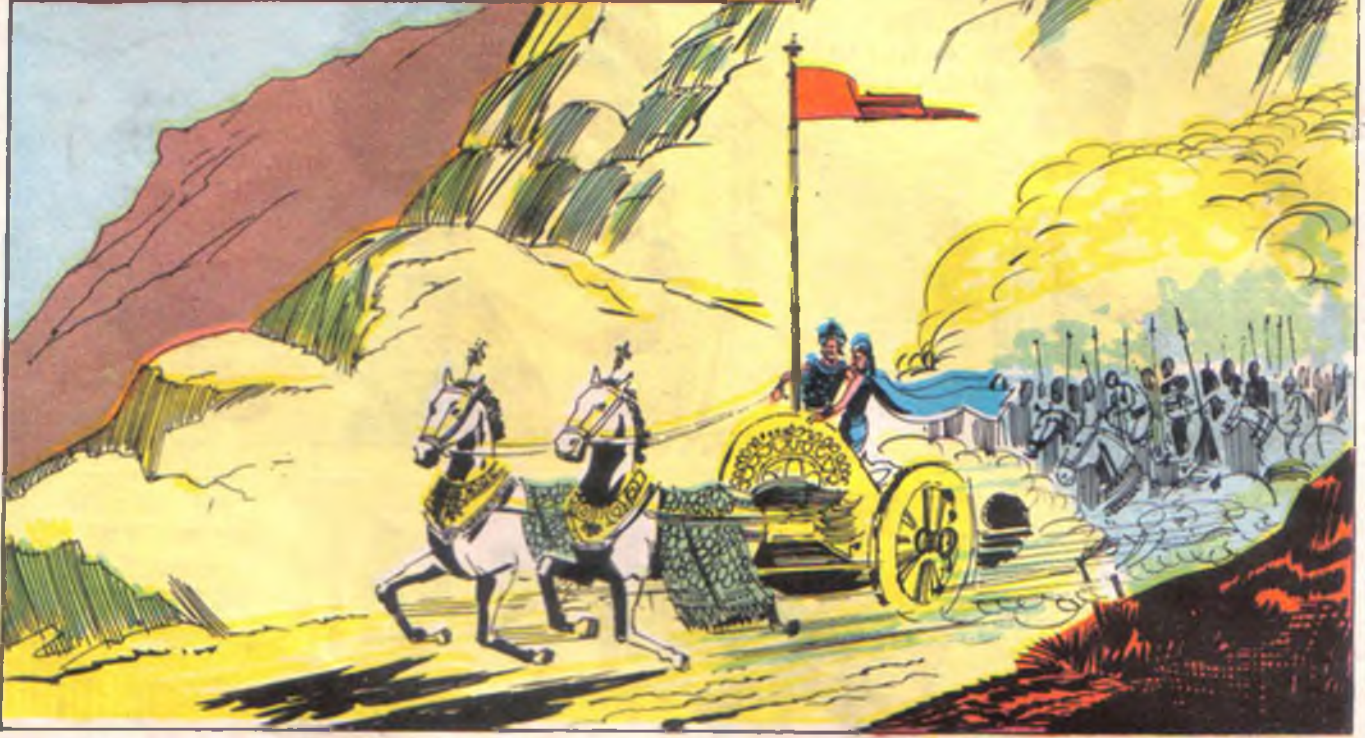
SIR, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?

I'VE NEVER SEEN OUR PRINCE HESITATE THUS.

I... YES. I WANT THE HAND OF YOUR DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE.

I AM HONoured, SIR.

AFTER A QUICK WEDDING, HE PROCEEDED TOWARDS UJJAINI ALONG WITH VIDISHA.



ASHOKA, A GREAT WARRIOR, IN NO TIME ROUTED THE REBELS.




THE REBELS LAID DOWN THEIR ARMS.



PEOPLE OF THE CITY GAVE ASHOKA A GRAND WELCOME.




IN THE PALACE GARDENS LATER-



THIS IS AN OCCASION FOR REJOICING, VIDISHA, BUT YOU LOOK SAD.

I DISLIKE KILLING... EVEN IN BATTLES... ESPECIALLY BY YOU.



THAT'S SILLY. YOU SAY IT, BECAUSE YOU ARE A BUDDHIST, I AM NOT.



I AM A KSHATRIYA KING. MY DUTY ENJOINS KILLING IF NEED BE.

WHAT ABOUT BIMBISARA? HE TOO WAS A KING. HE FOUND PEACE IN THE TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASHOKA AND VIDISHA PERSISTED. MONTHS LATER, WHEN VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A SON -



A SON! I AM VERY HAPPY. I WILL NAME HIM *MAHINDRA. HE WILL CONQUER THE ENTIRE WORLD.

I WISH, HE CONQUERS THE HEARTS OF MEN AS PRINCE SIDDHARTHA DID.

*MAHI = WORLD

TWO YEARS LATER, VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER.



ONE DAY, A MESSENGER CAME FROM PATALIPUTRA.



ASHOKA HAD HURRIED
CONSULTATIONS WITH
VIDISHA.

I HAVE RECEIVED
A MESSAGE FROM
THE CHIEF MINISTER.
MY FATHER IS ILL.
I HAVE TO RUSH TO
PATALIPUTRA...



...AND
YOU AREN'T
YET FIT TO
ACCOMPANY
ME.

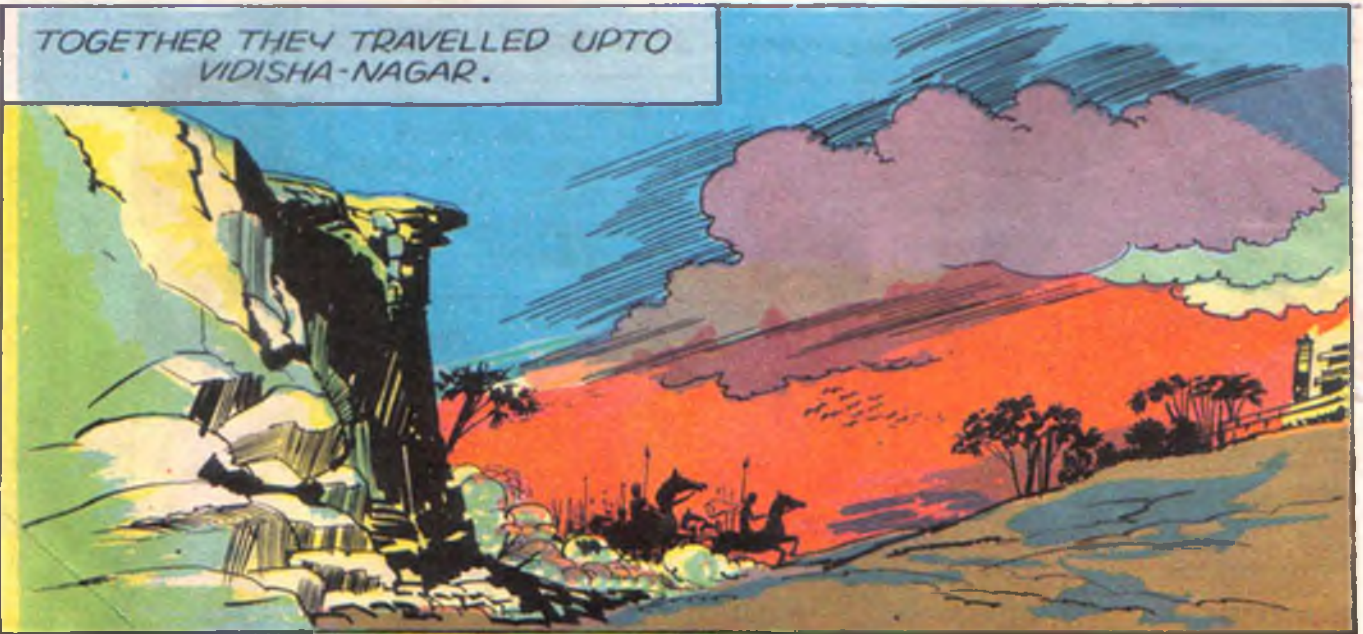


WILL YOU STAY
AT VIDISHA-NAGAR
WITH YOUR PARENTS?
I'LL SEND FOR
YOU LATER.

AS YOU
WISH,
MY LORD!



TOGETHER THEY TRAVELLED UPTO
VIDISHA-NAGAR.





PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH. AND DON'T PREACH NON-VIOLENCE TO MY MAHINDRA.



I WANT HIM TO BE A KING OF KINGS.



BEFORE I LEAVE, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANT ME TO DO?

YES. BUT GIVE ME YOUR WORD THAT YOU WILL.



I WILL. WHAT IS IT?



I WANT YOU TO SHUN VIOLENCE OF ALL KINDS.

AT DATALIPUTRA, ASHOKA WAS RECEIVED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER.

PRINCE!
YOUR FATHER
IS NO MORE.
AND YOUR
BROTHERS ARE
FIGHTING
AMONGST
THEMSELVES
FOR THE
THRONE.

THE THRONE!
IT IS MINE!
I HAVE EARNED
THE RIGHT TO
IT.



ASHOKA FORGOT ALL ABOUT THE PROMISE
HE HAD MADE TO VIDISHA.



ASHOKA WAS RUTHLESS IN KILLING ALL THOSE THAT CHALLENGED HIS RIGHT TO THE THRONE. SUMANADEVI, WIFE OF ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, WAS EXPECTING A BABY AT THE TIME.

PRINCESS!
I FEAR FOR
THE LIFE OF
THE UNBORN
CHILD.



DO YOU SUGGEST
THAT I RUN AWAY
FROM HERE?
BUT WHERE
CAN I GO?

I CAN SHOW YOU
A SECRET DOOR.
YOU CAN ESCAPE
INTO THE
WOODS.



ESCAPING FROM THE PALACE,
SUMANADEVI WANDERED IN
THE FOREST.



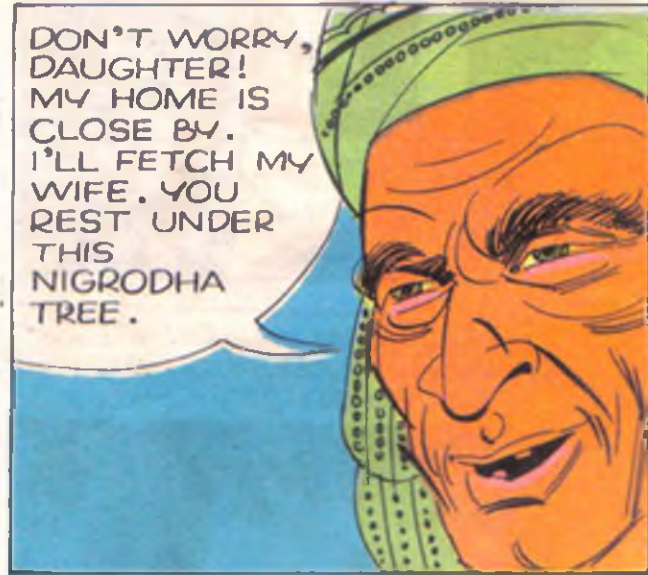
AN OLD MAN, WHO WAS PASSING BY, TOOK PITY ON HER.



SHE ACCOMPANIED HIM. WHILE THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY -



DON'T WORRY, DAUGHTER! MY HOME IS CLOSE BY. I'LL FETCH MY WIFE. YOU REST UNDER THIS NIGRODHA TREE.



IT WAS UNDER THAT NIGRODHA TREE THAT A BOY WAS BORN TO SUMANADEVI.



LET'S CALL HIM NIGRODHA KUMAR.



NIGRODHA KUMAR GREW UP IN THAT VILLAGE AND BECAME A MONK AT A VERY TENDER AGE.



MEANWHILE, ASHOKA HAD BECOME A POWERFUL KING. AT HIS COURT -

YES, YOUR MAJESTY. EVEN TAXILA AND UJJAINI ARE QUIET.

MINISTER, IS MY KINGDOM PEACEFUL? ARE THE BORDERS QUIET?



STILL WE SHOULD NOT REST TILL KALINGA IS CONQUERED.

WHY YOUR MAJESTY?



IT IS INDEPENDENT TODAY AND MAY RAISE ITS HEAD ANY MOMENT.

WAR IT WILL HAVE TO BE.



COMMANDER! PREPARE FOR THE BATTLE.



ASHOKA'S
ARMY
INVADED
KALINGA.



THE SOLDIERS OF KALINGA
FOUGHT BRAVELY.



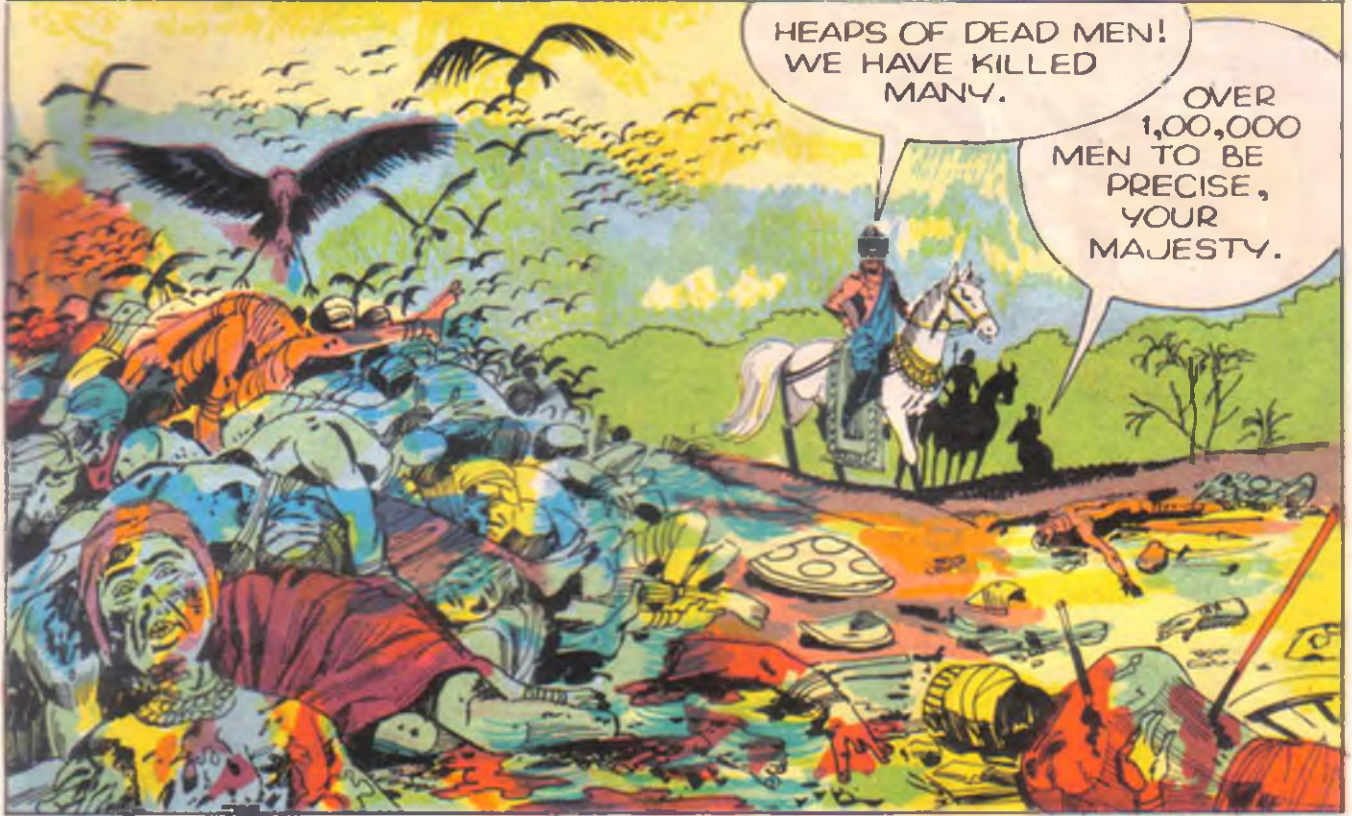
AT LAST—

WE HAVE WON.
KALINGA IS
OURS.

SHALL
VISIT
KALINGA.

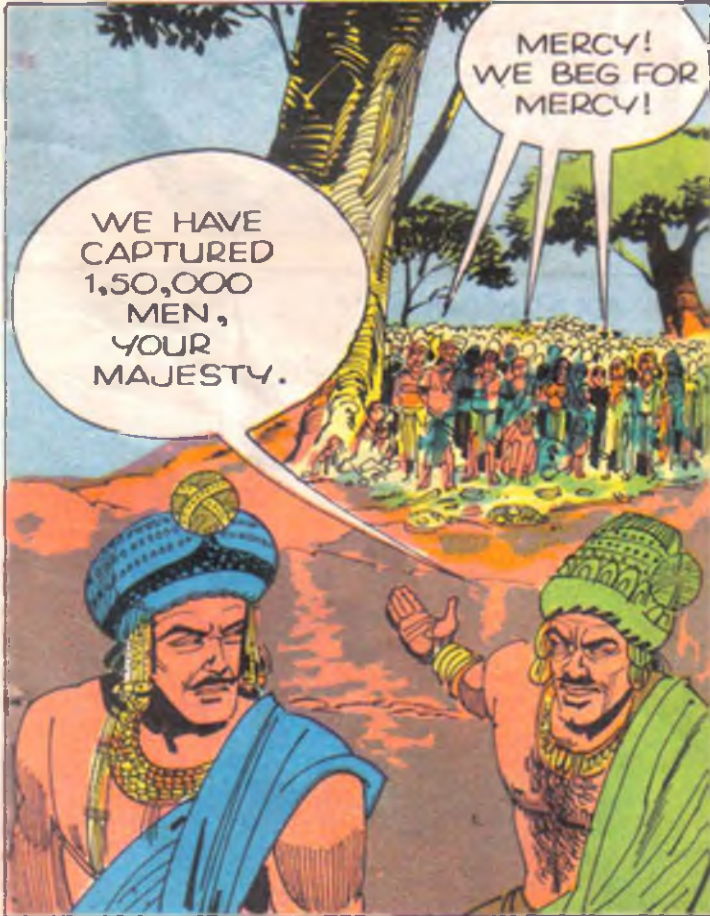


AS HE PROCEEDED, HE SAW HORRIBLE SIGHTS.



HEAPS OF DEAD MEN!
WE HAVE KILLED
MANY.

OVER
1,00,000
MEN TO BE
PRECISE,
YOUR
MAJESTY.



MERCY!
WE BEG FOR
MERCY!

WE HAVE
CAPTURED
1,50,000
MEN,
YOUR
MAJESTY.



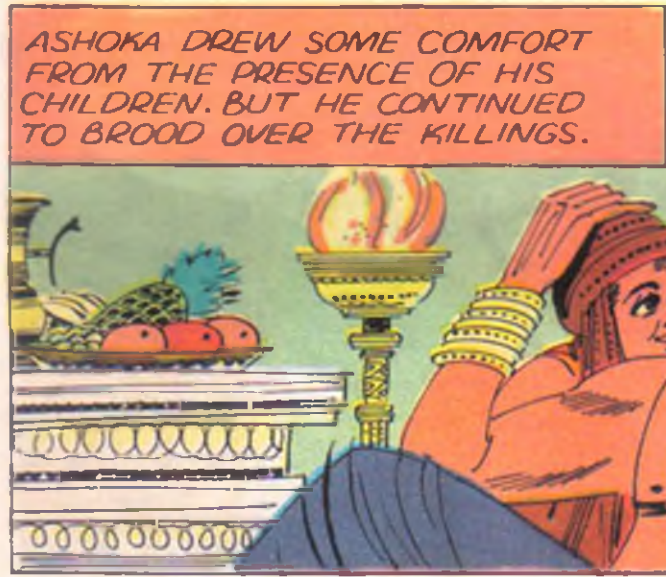
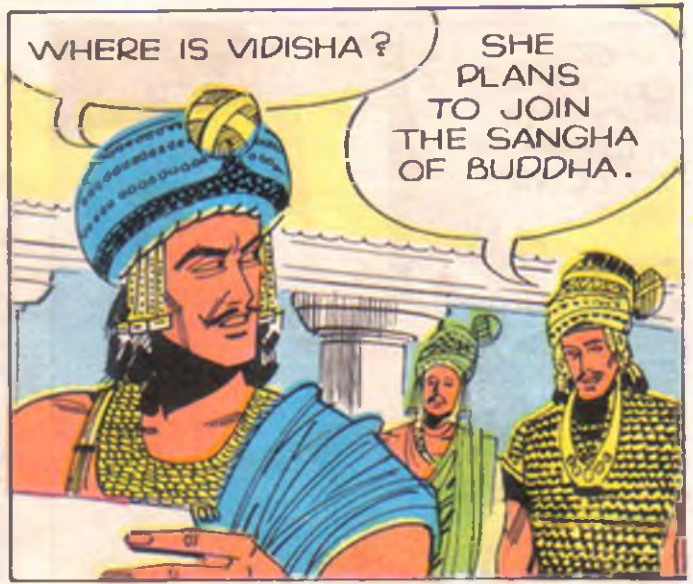
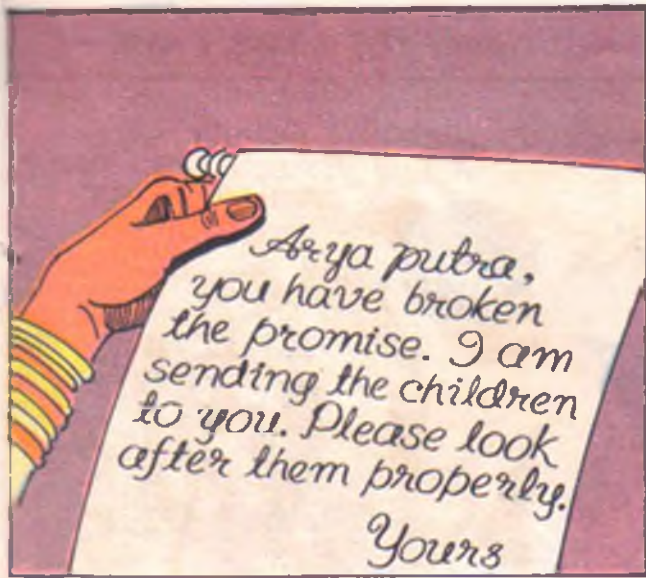
AS ASHOKA MOVED FARTHER -

IT LOOKS
DESOLATE
HERE.

LAKHS HAVE
DIED, YOUR
MAJESTY.

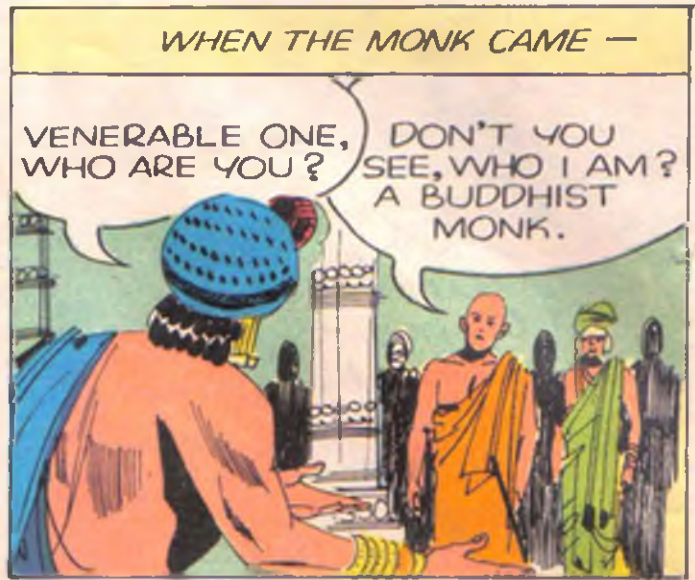
HE SAW THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE.







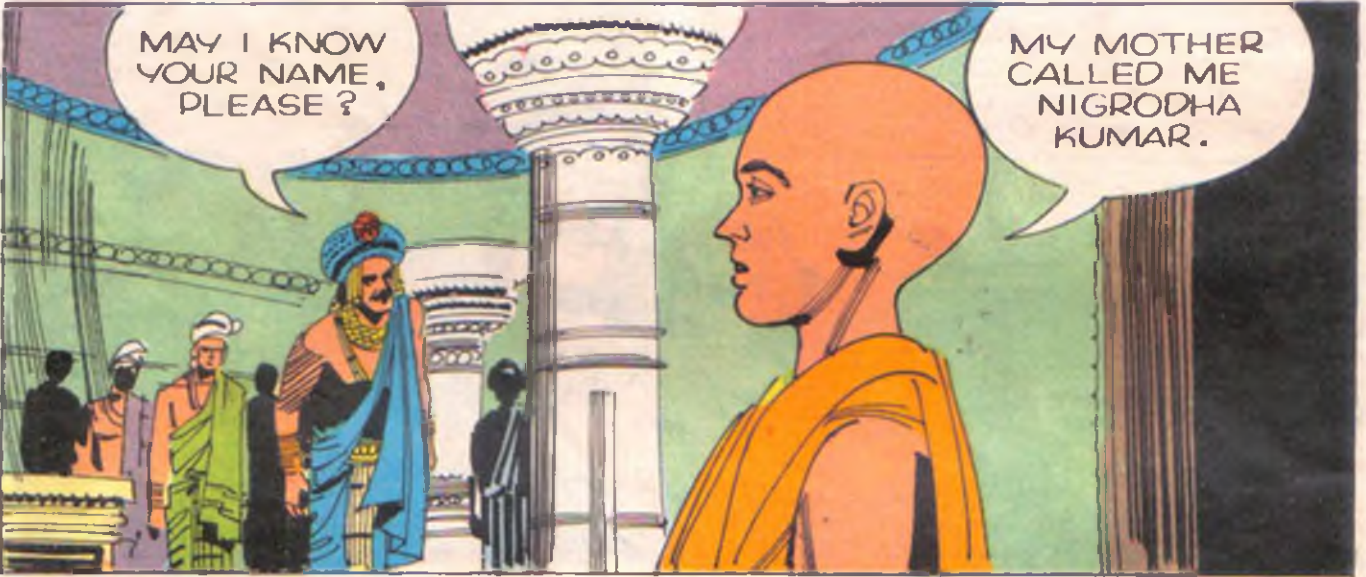
GO!
QUICK!
REQUEST
THAT MONK
TO COME
HERE.



WHEN THE MONK CAME —

VENERABLE ONE,
WHO ARE YOU?

DON'T YOU
SEE, WHO I AM?
A BUDDHIST
MONK.



MAY I KNOW
YOUR NAME,
PLEASE?

MY MOTHER
CALLED ME
NIGRODHA
KUMAR.



NIGRODHA
KUMAR!
I KNOW,
THAT IS
THE NAME
OF MY
BROTHER'S
SON.

YES.
I AM YOUR
NEPHEW.
I CAN GUESS
WHAT IS
GOING ON
IN YOUR
MIND.



YOU HATE ME. DON'T YOU?

WHY SHOULD I? BECAUSE YOU KILLED MY FATHER?



IS NOT THAT REASON ENOUGH TO HATE ANOTHER?

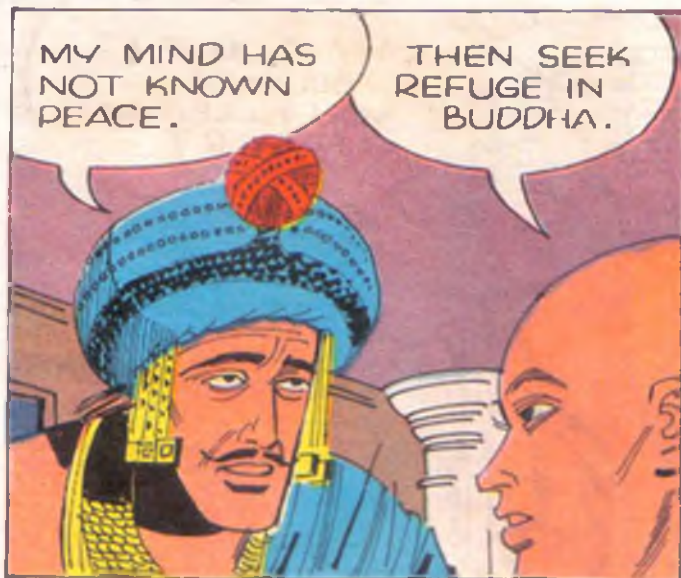


NO. I LOVE ALL. HATRED IS DESTRUCTIVE. IT SHOULD BE CONQUERED BY LOVE.



PRAY, WHERE DID YOU LEARN THIS? AT SUCH A TENDER AGE?

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF LORD BUDDHA. THEY BRING PEACE TO TROUBLED MINDS.



MY MIND HAS NOT KNOWN PEACE.

THEN SEEK REFUGE IN BUDDHA.



WILL YOU ACCEPT ME AS YOUR DISCIPLE?

YES. REPEAT AFTER ME... I TAKE REFUGE IN THE BUDDHA.



I TAKE REFUGE IN THE BUDDHA.



I TAKE REFUGE IN THE SANGHA.



I TAKE REFUGE IN THE DHARMA.

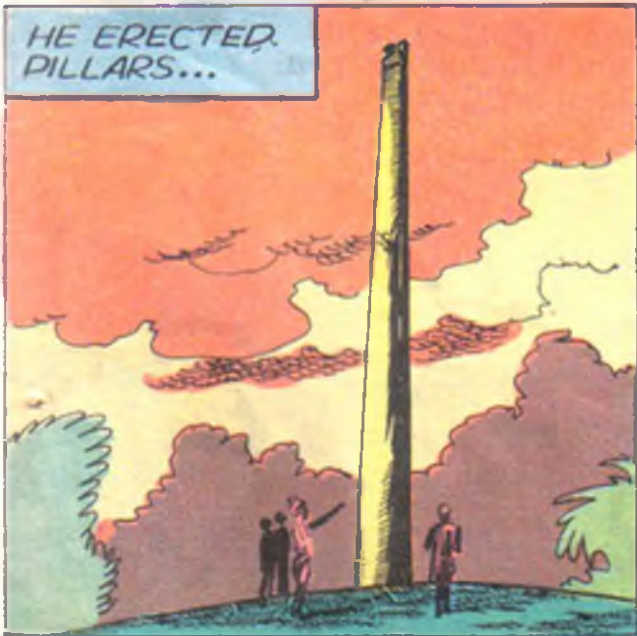
A TRANSFORMATION CAME ABOUT IN ASHOKA. ALL HIS ATTENTION NOW WAS ON BRINGING PEACE AND HAPPINESS TO THE PEOPLE.



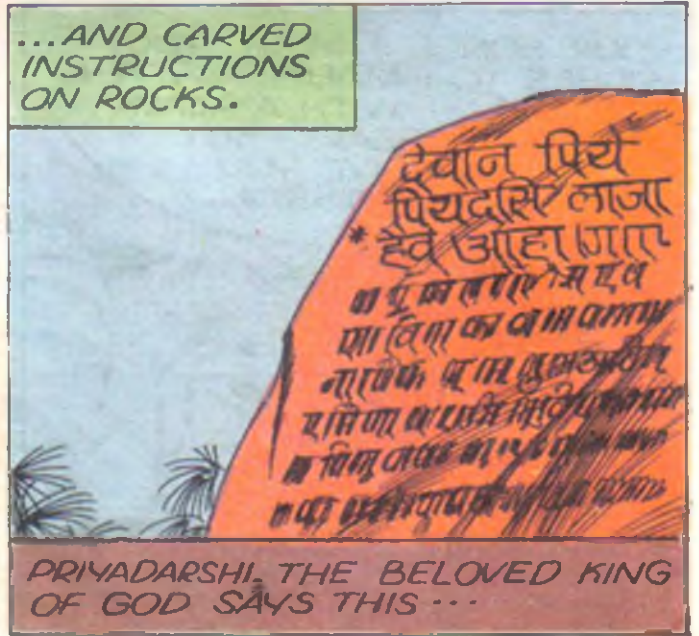
FOR THE COMFORT OF TRAVELLERS, EVEN IN THE WOODS, HE BUILT REST HOUSES AND DISPENSARIES.



HE ERECTED PILLARS...



...AND CARVED INSTRUCTIONS ON ROCKS.



PRIYADARSHI, THE BELOVED KING OF GOD SAYS THIS ...

ONE DAY -

I HAVE GIVEN AWAY ALL THINGS DEAR TO ME.

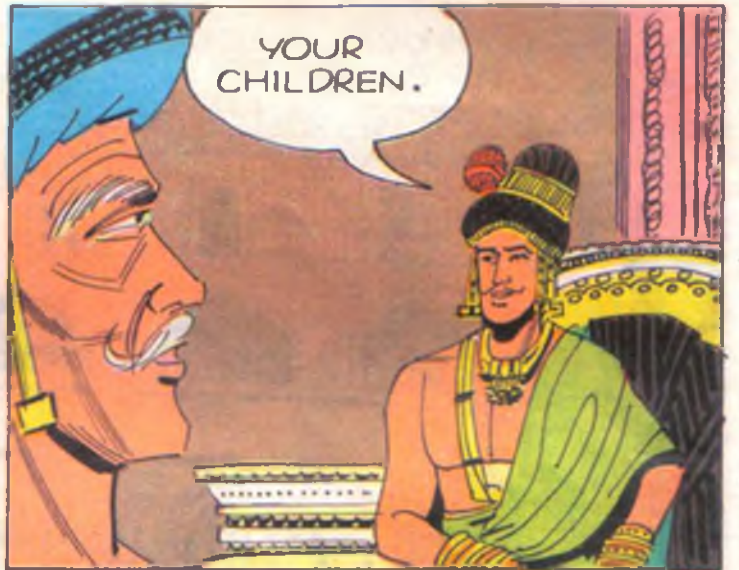
EXCEPT...



EXCEPT WHAT, MAHINDRA?

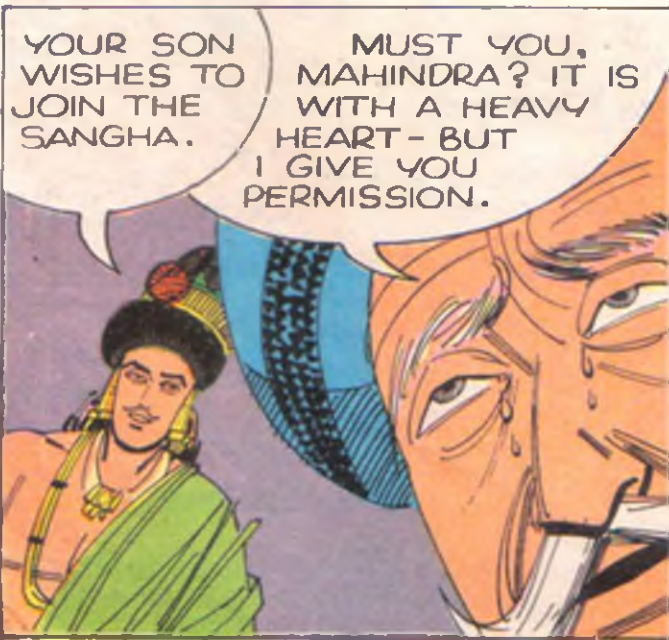


YOUR CHILDREN.



YOUR SON WISHES TO JOIN THE SANGHA.

MUST YOU, MAHINDRA? IT IS WITH A HEAVY HEART - BUT I GIVE YOU PERMISSION.



FATHER, ALLOW ME TO JOIN THE NUNNERY.

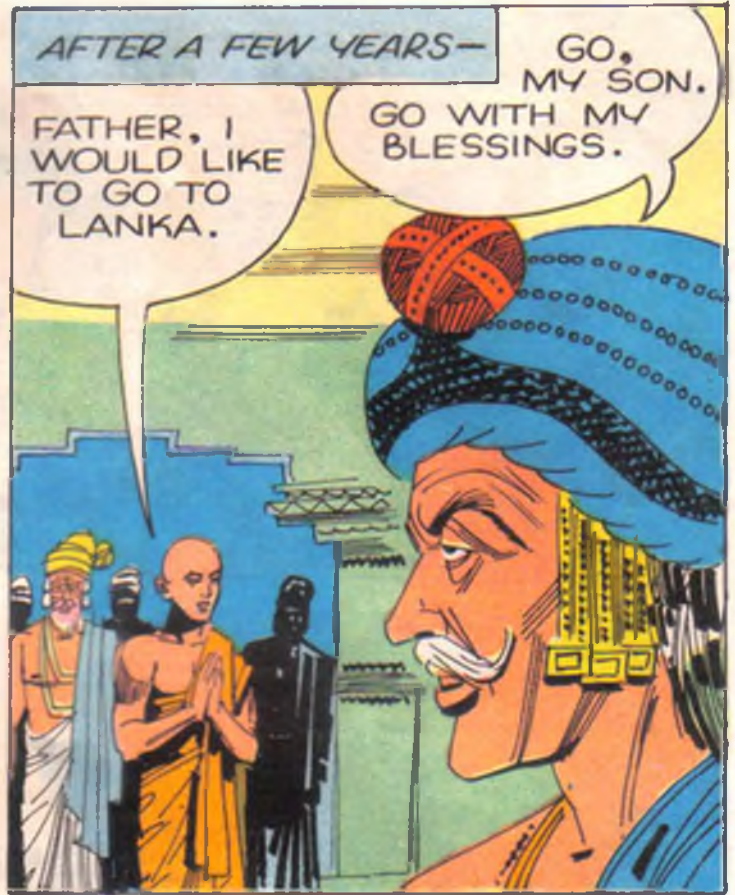
OH! SANGHAMITRA!!





MY HUSBAND AND SON HAVE RENOUNCED THE WORLD. I TAKE NO PLEASURE IN LIFE.

YOU MAY JOIN THE NUNNERY.



AFTER A FEW YEARS—

FATHER, I WOULD LIKE TO GO TO LANKA.

GO, MY SON. GO WITH MY BLESSINGS.



TWO YEARS LATER -

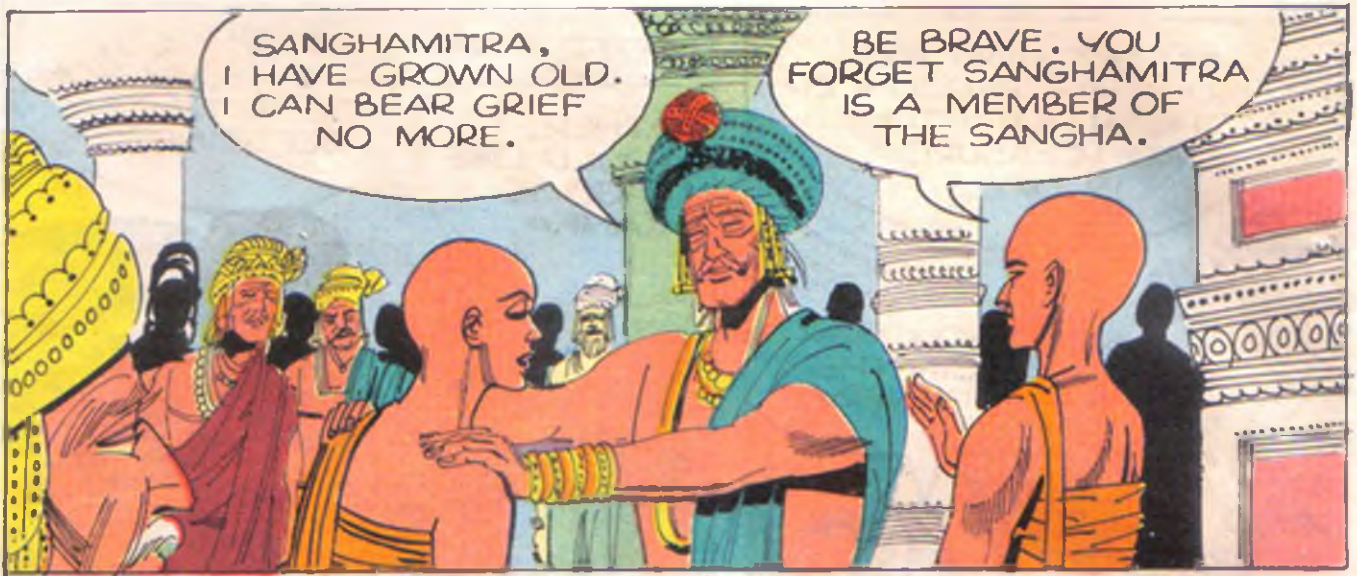
FATHER, I HAVE COME TO BID YOU GOOD-BYE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SANGHA-MITRA?



A MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM LANKA. THEY NEED NUNS AT THE MISSION.

HM...



SANGHAMITRA,
I HAVE GROWN OLD.
I CAN BEAR GRIEF
NO MORE.

BE BRAVE. YOU
FORGET SANGHAMITRA
IS A MEMBER OF
THE SANGHA.



I
UNDERSTAND.
I WISH YOU
SUCCESS.
GO, MY
CHILD.

THANK
YOU,
FATHER.



OH! VIDISHA,
YOUR CHILDREN
HAVE LEFT ME
JUST AS YOU DID
FOR THE SAKE OF
DHARMA.



DO NOT
GRIEVE.



BY
SACRIFICING
YOUR DEAR ONES
YOU HAVE
PROVED THAT
DHARMA IS
DEAR TO YOU.
YOU ARE
INDEED,
DHARMASHOKA.

THUS ASHOKA BECAME DHARMASHOKA.
HE RULED FOR MANY YEARS AND LOOKED
AFTER THE WELFARE OF THE SUBJECTS
OF HIS VAST EMPIRE AS A FATHER
WOULD LOOK AFTER HIS CHILDREN.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF CO-EXISTENCE, WHICH HE PROPAGATED, ARE STILL RESPECTED THE WORLD OVER. THE ASHOKA PILLAR AT SARNATH REMINDS US EVEN TILL THIS DAY OF HIS GREATNESS. THE 'DHARMA CHAKRA' ON THE ASHOKA PILLAR ADORNS OUR NATIONAL FLAG.





Preservation