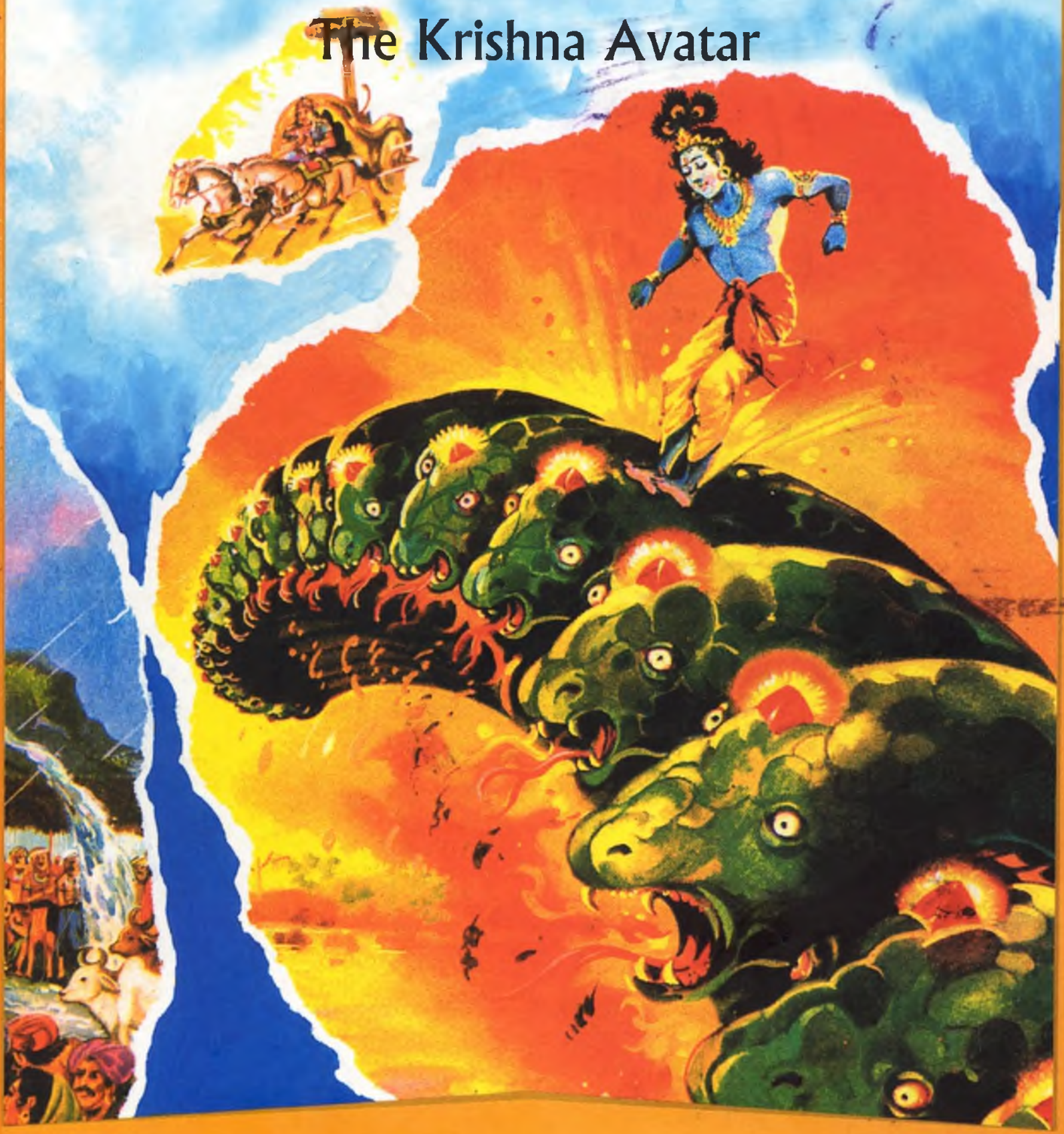


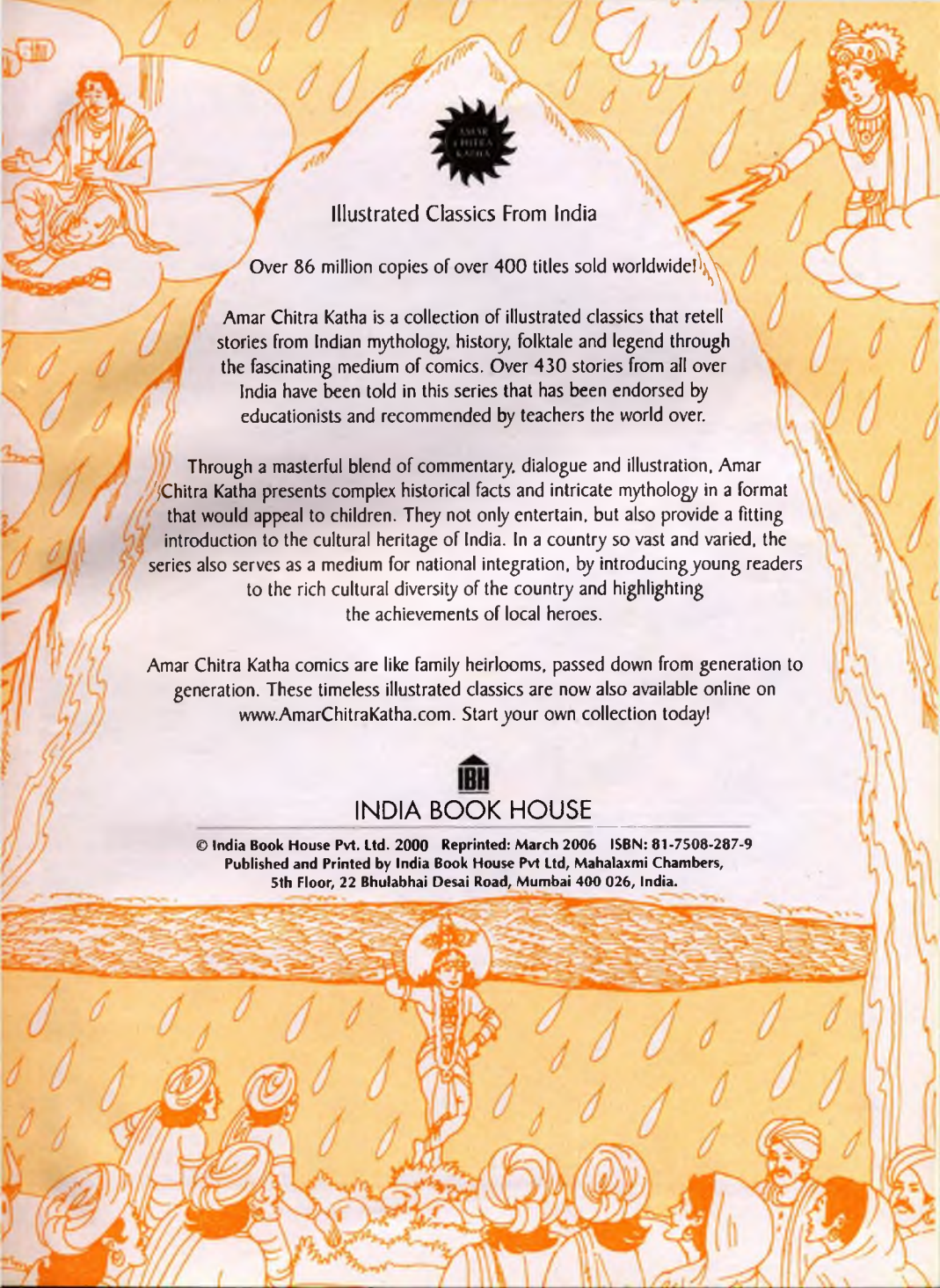


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KRISHNA—THE DARLING OF GOKUL

PAREEKSHIT, THE SON OF ABHIMANYU,* WAS LISTENING WITH RAPT ATTENTION TO THE STORY OF HIS FOREFATHERS NARRATED BY SHUKADEVA.

YOU HAVE TOLD ME ABOUT THE KINGS OF THE SOLAR AND LUNAR DYNASTY. NOW TELL ME, IN DETAIL, THE STORY OF LORD KRISHNA, WHO SAVED ME FROM THE VENGEFUL WRATH OF ASHWATTHAMA, AND WITH WHOSE GRACE MY FOREFATHERS WON THE MAHABHARATA WAR.

LISTEN, O PAREEKSHIT, THE STORY OF KRISHNA IS SUCH THAT THE ENQUIRER, THE NARRATOR AND THE LISTENER ARE ALL PURIFIED BY IT.



LONG, LONG AGO, IN THE DAYS OF YORE, THERE WAS A KING NAMED SHOORASENA OF THE YADAVA RACE, WHO RULED OVER THE KINGDOM OF MATHURA. VASUDEVA WAS HIS SON.



IN DUE TIME, VASUDEVA WAS MARRIED TO DEVAKI, WITH GREAT POMP.



THE NEWLY WEDS WERE ABOUT TO LEAVE IN THEIR CHARIOT, WHEN...



... DEVAKI'S COUSIN KAMSA HELD THE REINS IN HIS HAND...



* THE SON OF ARJUNA

BY THIS TIME ACCORDING TO OTHER SOURCES, AFTER THE DEATH OF SHOORASENA THE KINGDOM WAS RULED OVER BY UGRASENA. VASUDEVA HAD RELINQUISHED HIS RIGHT TO THE THRONE, PREFERING BE A COWHERD AND HAD BEEN APPOINTED A MINISTER BY UGRASENA.

... AND INSISTED ON DRIVING THE CHARIOT HIMSELF.



FOLLOWING THEM, AT A LITTLE DISTANCE, WERE FOUR HUNDRED CAPARISONED ELEPHANTS, FIFTEEN THOUSAND HORSES, NUMEROUS CHARIOTS CARRYING THE GIFTS BESTOWED ON THE BRIDAL PAIR BY DEVAKI'S FOND FATHER. TWO HUNDRED BEAUTIFULLY BEDECKED MAIDS WERE ALSO IN THE RETINUE.



SUDDENLY, EVEN AS THE NOTES OF AUSPICIOUS MUSIC REACHED A CRESCENDO, A VOICE RANG OUT FROM THE HEAVENS.



BEWARE, YOU FOOL!
THE EIGHTH-BORN
OF THIS VERY WOMAN
WILL SLAY YOU!

THE CRUEL KAMSA, ABLAZE WITH ANGER AND FRIGHT, DREW HIS SWORD.



I WILL KILL HER
RIGHT AWAY!

VASUDEVA INTERVENED —



STOP KAMSA! YOU
ARE THE GLORY OF
YOUR RACE. MIGHTY
WARRIORS RELATE
STORIES OF YOUR
VALOUR.

IT DOES NOT
BECOME YOU TO
KILL DEVAKI, A WOMAN,
YOUR OWN COUSIN
AND THAT TOO ON HER
WEDDING DAY.

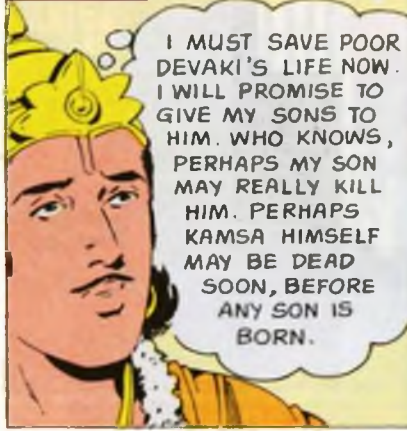


AFTER ALL, WHOEVER IS BORN IS DESTINED TO DIE ONE DAY. SPARE YOUR INNOCENT LITTLE COUSIN.

"VASUDEVA TRIED HIS BEST TO DISSUADE KAMSA WITH PRAISE AND REASONING, BUT IN VAIN—"

"ALoud HE SAID—"

YOU HAVE NO REASON TO FEAR THIS DAMSEL. ACCORDING TO THE CELESTIAL VOICE, IT IS HER SONS WHO POSE A THREAT TO YOU. I PROMISE I WILL BRING EVERY CHILD TO YOU AS SOON AS IT IS BORN.



"KAMSA KNEW HE COULD TRUST VASUDEVA'S WORDS."

I BELIEVE YOU, AND SPARE DEVAKI'S LIFE. BUT BE SURE TO KEEP YOUR PROMISE.

"VASUDEVA AND DEVAKI RETURNED HOME. MONTHS ROLLED BY AND ONE DAY—"

KAMSA. HERE IS MY FIRST-BORN, KIRTIMAN. AS I PROMISED, I HAVE BROUGHT HIM TO YOU.

OH! TAKE THIS LITTLE ONE AWAY. IT IS YOUR EIGHTH CHILD WHO IS SUPPOSED TO KILL ME.

AS YOU SAY.



"VASUDEVA WAS NOT FULLY CONVINCED"

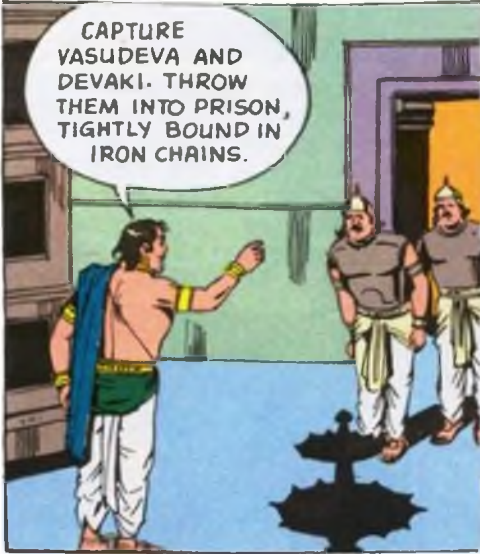
WHATEVER HE MAY SAY, I CANNOT TRUST KAMSA. HE MAY CHANGE HIS MIND ANY TIME.

"MEANWHILE NARADA VISITED KAMSA."

KAMSA. TAKE CARE. DEVAKI, VASUDEVA, NANDA, IN FACT, ALL THE INHABITANTS OF BRAJA ARE INCARNATIONS OF THE DEVAS. THEY HAVE DESCENDED TO EARTH TO RID IT OF CRUEL OPPRESSORS.

I HAD BETTER BE WARY OF THE SONS OF DEVAKI.





"KAMSA NOW BEGAN TO REVEAL HIMSELF IN HIS TRUE COLOURS. HE PUT HIS FATHER UGRASENA IN PRISON, AND TOOK OVER THE KINGDOM. AMONG HIS FRIENDS WERE THE WICKED ASURAS—PRALAMBA, BAKA, CHANURA AND TRINAVARTA."

"KAMSA PROVED TO BE A STRONG BUT CRUEL KING. HE HAD THE SUPPORT OF JARASANDHA, THE EMPEROR WHO RULED FROM MAGADHA. BECAUSE OF HIS OPPRESSIVE RULE, HIS SUBJECTS BEGAN TO FLEE THE KINGDOM TO TAKE SHELTER IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY."



"MEANWHILE, ONE BY ONE, ALL THE SONS BORN TO DEVAKI, WERE PUT TO DEATH BY KAMSA."

"WHEN HER SEVENTH CHILD WAS DUE, DEVAKI'S HAPPINESS WAS AGAIN CLOUDED OVER BY APPREHENSIONS."



SHUKADEVA EXPLAINED TO PAREEKSHIT—



ALTHOUGH SHE WAS NOT AWARE OF IT, DEVAKI'S SEVENTH CHILD WAS NONE OTHER THAN SHESHA, ON WHOM LORD VISHNU RECLINES. LORD VISHNU INSTRUCTED YOGAMAYA*, TO TRANSFER THE BABY FROM DEVAKI TO ROHINI, VASUDEVA'S SECOND WIFE WHO WAS IN GOKUL.

LATER, ON THE VERY DAY THAT LORD VISHNU WOULD BE BORN AS THE EIGHTH SON OF DEVAKI, YOGAMAYA WAS TO TAKE BIRTH AS YASHODA'S DAUGHTER.

ON DIVINE COMMAND, YOGAMAYA CAUSED THE UNBORN BABY TO BE TRANSFERRED FROM DEVAKI'S WOMB TO THAT OF ROHINI'S.



AS A RESULT, ROHINI FOUND HERSELF WITH CHILD JUST WHEN DEVAKI LOST HER BABY. IN DUE TIME ROHINI GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.



BEFORE LONG, DEVAKI FOUND HERSELF EXPECTING HER EIGHTH CHILD. HER RADIANT BEAUTY SHONE THROUGH THE BARS OF THE JAIL LIKE THAT OF A LAMP CONCEALED IN AN EARTHEN POT.



EVEN KAMSA NOTICED THE STRANGE GLOW ON DEVAKI'S FACE.

DEVAKI NEVER LOOKED LIKE THIS BEFORE. SURELY IT IS THE PRESENCE OF VISHNU HIMSELF INSIDE HER THAT MAKES HER SO RADIANT.



BUT WHAT CAN I DO? IF I KILL HER NOW, I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO LIVE DOWN THE STIGMA OF KILLING A WOMAN, MY OWN COUSIN AND THAT TOO WHEN SHE IS WITH CHILD.



IMPATIENTLY KAMSA WAITED FOR THE BIRTH OF DEVAKI'S EIGHTH CHILD.

ORDER THE GUARDS TO LET ME KNOW THE MOMENT THE BABY IS BORN.



* LORD VISHNU'S POWER OF ILLUSION. Ⓢ LATER CALLED BALARAMA

AT LAST THE AUSPICIOUS DAY DAWNED. THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE SEEMED TO CELEBRATE THE EVENT.



VASUDEVA WAS FILLED WITH WONDER ON BEHOLDING THE NEW-BORN BABY. IT HELD ALOFT A MACE, A DISC, A CONCHSHELL AND A LOTUS IN HIS FOUR TINY HANDS. HIS BEAUTIFUL DUSKY COMPLEXION CONTRASTED VIVIDLY WITH THE YELLOW SILK ENVELOPING HIM.



WITH FOLDED HANDS, VASUDEVA FELL ON HIS KNEES AND BEGAN TO PRAY TO HIS DIVINE SON.



LORD! YOU HAVE TAKEN BIRTH IN OUR HOUSE IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE EARTH. BUT THE CRUEL KAMSA WILL HASTEN TO DESTROY YOU AS SOON AS HE HEARS THE NEWS.

DEVAKI TOO WAS FILLED WITH AWE AT THE SIGHT OF HER BABY.



I KNOW, LORD, THAT YOU WILL BE OUR SAVIOUR. BUT DO NOT LET KAMSA SEE YOU IN THIS DIVINE FORM, I BESEECH YOU!

"IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, THE BABY ASSUMED THE FORM OF AN ORDINARY NEW-BORN.



KAMSA MUST NOT SET EYES ON THIS SON OF OURS. I MUST TAKE HIM AWAY. BUT HOW?

"NO SOONER HAD HE THOUGHT TO HIMSELF THUS THAN —



OH! MY CHAINS AND FETTERS HAVE FALLEN OFF! DEVAKI, GIVE THE CHILD TO ME. QUICK!

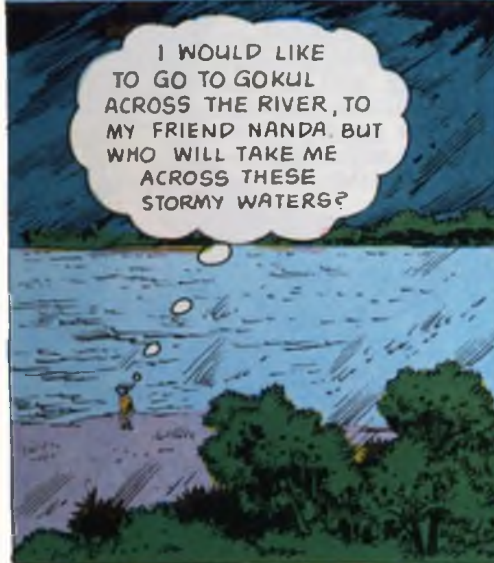
"TENDERLY HOLDING THE BABY IN HIS ARMS, VASUDEVA STEPPED OUT OF THE ROOM.



"MIRACULOUSLY HE FOUND THE PRISON DOORS WIDE OPEN AND THE GUARDS ALL BLISSFULLY ASLEEP. UNDETECTED, HE WALKED OUT WITH THE BABY.



"IT WAS A DARK, STORMY NIGHT. THE RIVER YAMUNA WAS IN SPATE



I WOULD LIKE TO GO TO GOKUL ACROSS THE RIVER, TO MY FRIEND NANDA. BUT WHO WILL TAKE ME ACROSS THESE STORMY WATERS?

"AND, LO AND BEHOLD, THE RIVER WATERS PARTED.



" ON REACHING GOKUL, HE FOUND ALL THE PEOPLE DEEP IN SLUMBER.



" ON REACHING NANDA'S HOUSE, HE PLACED HIS BABY BOY BY THE SIDE OF YASHODA, NANDA'S WIFE, AND PICKED UP HER NEW-BORN DAUGHTER.



" IT WAS ONLY AFTER VASUDEVA HAD GONE AWAY THAT YASHODA BECAME AWARE OF THE CHILD NEXT TO HER. SHE, LIKE THE REST OF THE PEOPLE OF GOKUL HAD BEEN UNDER A TRANCE SINCE HER BABY WAS BORN.



" MEANWHILE VASUDEVA RETURNED TO THE PRISON IN MATHURA. HE PLACED THE BABY GIRL BY THE SIDE OF DEVAKI.



I'LL PUT THE FETTERS BACK ON MY FEET. THE DOORS ARE LOCKED AS BEFORE. NO ONE WILL GUESS I HAVE BEEN AWAY.

" AT DAWN, THE LUSTY CRIES OF THE CHILD WOKE UP THE THE GUARDS.



DID YOU HEAR THAT? GO AT ONCE AND INFORM THE KING.

" KAMSA WAS HASTILY WOKEN UP. HE RUSHED TO THE PRISON



THE EIGHTH-BORN! MY WOULD-BE SLAYER!

" WHEN KAMSA ARRIVED THERE, DEVAKI IMPLORDED HIM —



MY DEAR BROTHER, PLEASE SPARE THIS CHILD. SURELY YOU WOULD NOT KILL A FEMALE? ALLOW ME TO KEEP THIS LAST CHILD OF MINE.

"BUT KAMSA WAS UNMOVED. HE SEIZED THE BABY BY HER TINY LEGS...



"... AND DASHED HER AGAINST A STONE SURFACE.



"BUT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY BABY. THE DIVINE INFANT ROSE TOWARDS THE SKY AND MANIFESTED HERSELF AS AN EIGHT-ARMED GODDESS.



"ADDRESSING KAMSA, SHE SAID—



YOU FOOL! THE ONE WHO IS DESTINED TO DESTROY YOU STILL LIVES! DO NOT KILL OTHER INNOCENT INFANTS.

"THEN SHE DISAPPEARED.

"KAMSA WAS WONDERSTRUCK ON HEARING THIS PROCLAMATION. IN A DAZE, HE RELEASED DEVAKI AND VASUDEVA.



MY DEAR SISTER, WHAT A GREAT SINNER I HAVE BEEN TO KILL MY NEPHEWS. I REALLY REGRET MY ACTIONS.

"BUT HIS REPENTANCE WAS SHORT-LIVED. NEXT MORNING HE CALLED FOR HIS MINISTERS AND CRONIES TO RELATE THE EVENTS OF THE NIGHT.



... SO I LET VASUDEVA AND DEVAKI GO SINCE THE DIVINE BEING SAID THAT THE ONE WHO IS DESTINED TO KILL ME IS BORN ELSEWHERE.

"HIS WICKED ASURA FRIENDS SAID —



O KING, IF THAT IS SO, WE WILL SEARCH EVERYWHERE IN THE KINGDOM AND KILL ALL INFANTS WHO ARE TEN DAYS OLD OR LESS.

"KAMSA AGREED. ADDRESSING A RAKSHASI CALLED POOTANA, HE SAID —

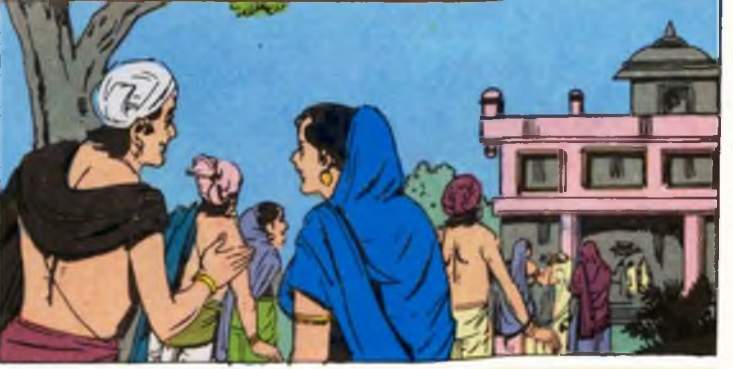


POOTANA, GO TO EVERY VILLAGE AND CITY, AND KILL ALL THE NEW-BORN BABIES.

"MEANWHILE, AT GOKUL, NANDA WAS OVERJOYED AT THE BIRTH OF A SON TO HIM AND CELEBRATED IT WITH DUE CEREMONY.



"THE PEOPLE OF GOKUL WERE EAGER TO SEE THE SON OF THEIR CHIEF BEDECKED IN THEIR BEST GARMENTS, THE GOPAS* AND GOPIKAS, AS THEY WERE CALLED, MADE THEIR WAY TO NANDA'S PALACE.



"THEY CROWDED AROUND TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE BABY.



GOD BLESS THIS BOY.

MAY HE LIVE LONG!

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL FACE HE HAS!

"THE GOPAS CELEBRATED THE EVENT WITH GAY ABANDON, SPRINKLING ONE ANOTHER WITH MILK AND CURDS, AND SMEARING BUTTER ON ONE ANOTHER'S FACES.



NANDA GAVE GENEROUS GIFTS TO HIS VISITORS.



"AFTER FEW DAYS, LEAVING GOKUL IN THE HANDS OF OTHER COWHERDS, NANDA WENT TO MATHURA TO PAY HIS ANNUAL DUES TO KAMSA.



"WHEN VASUDEVA HEARD OF HIS ARRIVAL, HE HASTENED TO MEET HIM.



"AFTER EMBRACING HIM AFFECTIONATELY, VASUDEVA SAID —



IT IS A PITY THAT WE SELDOM MEET. YOU AND YOUR WIFE LOOK AFTER ROHINI AND MY SON. I HOPE HE IS WELL AND LOOKS UPON YOU AS HIS PARENTS.



SO MANY OF YOUR SONS WERE KILLED BY KAMSA. EVEN YOUR LITTLE DAUGHTER DID NOT SURVIVE. VERILY, OUR LIFE IS GOVERNED BY DESTINY.



"VASUDEVA SAID — NOW THAT YOU HAVE PAID YOUR ANNUAL DUES AND MET ME TOO, YOU MUST NOT TARRY HERE ANY LONGER. MANY CALAMITIES ARE LIKELY TO DESCEND ON GOKULA.



"ON VASUDEVA'S ADVICE, NANDA MADE HIS WAY HOME.



WHY DID VASUDEVA SAY SUCH A THING, I WONDER. BUT HIS WORDS CAN NEVER BE FALSE. MAY GOD PROTECT US.

"WHILE NANDA WAS AWAY, THE WICKED POOTANA REACHED GOKUL IN THE FORM OF A BEAUTIFUL DAMSEL.



"SHE FOUND HER WAY INTO NANDA'S HOME AND BEHELD THE SLEEPING KRISHNA.



"SHE LIFTED HIM UP IN HER ARMS. BOTH ROHINI AND YASHODA WERE SURPRISED TO SEE THIS STRANGER, BUT WERE SO CARRIED AWAY BY HER BEAUTY THAT THEY DID NOT ASK ANY QUESTIONS.



"POOTANA TOOK THE BABY IN HER LAP AND BEGAN TO SUCKLE HIM.



AH! THE DEADLY POISON THAT I HAVE SMEARED ON MY BREASTS WILL SOON TAKE EFFECT!

"BUT LITTLE DID SHE KNOW THAT IT WAS HER LIFE THAT WAS IN DANGER. FOR THE INFANT, KRISHNA, SOON BEGAN TO SUCK THE VERY LIFE OUT OF HER.



AIEEE!! LET GO! LEAVE ME!

"SHE SHRIEKED AND SHRIEKED. UNABLE TO BEAR THE PAIN, SHE ASSUMED HER UGLY RAKGHASI FORM, AND COLLAPSED IN A HEAP.



BUT STILL KRISHNA WOULD NOT LET GO OF HER. THE PETRIFIED GOPIKAS HASTILY PULLED HIM AWAY AND TOOK HIM TO YASHODA.



YASHODA ANOINTED AND BATHED KRISHNA AND ROCKED HIM TO SLEEP.



WHEN NANDA AND HIS COMPANIONS RETURNED TO GOKUL, THEY WERE SURPRISED TO SEE POOTANA'S HIDEOUS SUPINE FORM.



WHAT VASUDEVA PROPHESED HAS COME TRUE. HOW AMAZING!

HE WAS ALL THE MORE ASTONISHED WHEN HE HEARD THAT IT WAS HIS KRISHNA WHO HAD TORMENTED AND KILLED POOTANA. HE PICKED UP HIS LITTLE SON AND KISSED HIM ON HIS FOREHEAD AGAIN AND AGAIN.



NANDA AND YASHODA WATCHED THEIR SON GROW WITH DELIGHT. WHEN HE LEARNT TO TURN ON HIS SIDE, THE EVENT WAS CELEBRATED WITH SONG AND FEASTING.



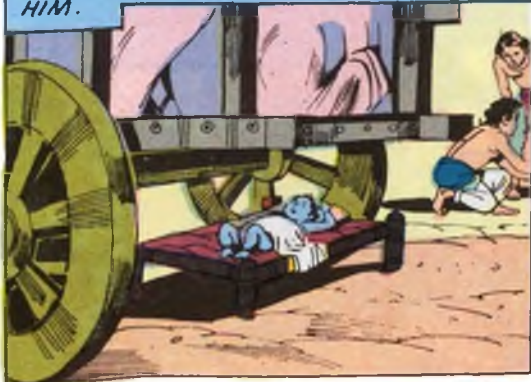
"ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOKUL HAD GATHERED AT NANDA'S HOUSE. SEEING THAT THE BABY WAS A LITTLE TIRED AFTER ALL THE FUSS, YASHODA FED HIM AND MADE HIM SLEEP.



"PLACING HIS COT IN THE SHADE OF A CART, SHE WENT BACK TO HER GUESTS.



"AFTER A BRIEF NAP, KRISHNA WOKE UP AND BEGAN TO CRY. BUT YASHODA WAS TOO FAR AND TOO BUSY TO HEAR HIM.



"LOUDER AND LOUDER HE CRIED AND KICKED UP HIS BABY FEET IN THE AIR.



"BUT THE TOUCH OF THE TINY FEET WAS ENOUGH.



"THE NOISE OF THE VESSELS BREAKING BROUGHT THE GUESTS TO THE SPOT.

SEE! THAT CART HAS OVERTURNED ON ITS OWN!

ALL THAT FOOD IS WASTED.

MAYBE THE CART WAS OVERLOADED.



THE SMALL BOYS WHO WERE PLAYING NEARBY SAID —



IT WAS THE LITTLE ONE. HE KICKED THE CART.

WE SAW IT! WE SAW IT!

BUT NO ONE BELIEVED THEM.

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A BABY TO TOPPLE SUCH A HEAVY CART?



DON'T LISTEN TO THEM. LITTLE BOYS ARE ALWAYS IMAGINING THINGS.

YASHODA HAD MEANWHILE TAKEN THE BABY AWAY AND SOOTHED HIM. SLOWLY, PEOPLE WENT BACK TO THEIR FEASTING AND THE MATTER WAS FORGOTTEN FOR A WHILE.



A FEW DAYS LATER, YASHODA WAS SITTING WITH KRISHNA IN HER LAP.



WHY! HE SUDDENLY FEELS SO HEAVY. I CAN HARDLY BEAR HIS WEIGHT.

SHE PLACED HIM ON THE GROUND AND WAS SOON ENGRESSSED IN HOUSEHOLD WORK.



KRISHNA WAS HAPPILY PLAYING AND GURGLING ON HIS OWN. SUDDENLY —



"THE GENTLE BREEZE HAD TURNED INTO SUCH A TERRIBLE WHIRLWIND THAT IT SWOOPED THE BABY OFF.



"IT WAS TRINAVARTA, ANOTHER EVIL ASURA FRIEND OF KAMSA, WHO HAD APPEARED IN THE GUISE OF A WHIRLWIND TO DESTROY KRISHNA.



"THE ENTIRE GOKUL WAS FILLED BY DUST AND DARKNESS. NO ONE COULD SEE ANYTHING.



"YASHODA CAME RUNNING OUT.



OH! WHERE IS MY DARLING BABY? I HAD LEFT HIM HERE JUST NOW!

"WHEN THE WHIRLWIND HAD SUBSIDED—



WHAT HAPPENED, YASHODA?

MY SON! HE HAS JUST DISAPPEARED!

"MEANWHILE AS THE WICKED TRINAVARTA CARRIED THE BABY SKYWARDS, HE FOUND HIM BECOMING HEAVIER AND HEAVIER.



"KRISHNA'S WEIGHT COMPELLED THE DEMON TO SLOW DOWN. NOW KRISHNA CAUGHT HIM BY THE THROAT..."



"... AND KILLED HIM."



"DOWN FELL THE DEMON TO HIS DEATH."



"THE PEOPLE OF GOKUL WATCHED THE SCENE WITH OPEN-EYED AMAZEMENT."



"ONCE AGAIN KRISHNA WAS RESCUED AND RESTORED TO HIS ANXIOUS MOTHER."



THANK GOD YOU ARE SAFE.

HOW RIGHT VASUDEVA WAS! STRANGE THINGS ARE HAPPENING HERE.

"ONE DAY, GARGA, THE FAMILY PRIEST OF THE YADAVAS, VISITED GOKUL AT VASUDEVA'S BIDDING."



"AFTER WELCOMING HIM WITH DUE RESPECT, NANDA SAID —"



WE ARE HONOURED BY YOUR VISIT, GARGACHARYA. MAY I REQUEST YOU TO CONDUCT THE NAMING CEREMONY OF OUR TWO BOYS?

"GARGA EXPLAINED —

I AM THE ROYAL PRIEST OF THE YADAVAS. IF THE NEWS OF MY PERFORMING THE CEREMONY OF THE BOYS REACHES KAMSA, HE WILL BE SUSPICIOUS.

EVER SINCE HE HEARD THAT HIS SLAYER HAS BEEN BORN ELSEWHERE, KAMSA HAS BEEN ON THE LOOKOUT FOR HIM. HE WOULD SURELY HAVE YOUR SON KILLED.

"NANDA SAID —

IN THAT CASE WE WILL DO EVERYTHING ON THE QUIET. NOT EVEN MY NEAR ONES WILL KNOW OF IT.

"SO IN ABSOLUTE SECRECY, WITHOUT ANY FANFARE, THE NAMING CEREMONY OF THE TWO BOYS WAS PERFORMED IN A COWSHED.

THIS SON OF ROHINI, WILL BE A CHARMING BOY, PLEASING PEOPLE WITH HIS GOOD QUALITIES. HENCE HE SHOULD BE CALLED RAMA. BECAUSE OF HIS PROWESS, HE WILL BE CALLED BALARAMA.*

YOUR OTHER DUSKY COMPLEXIONED SON WILL BE CALLED KRISHNA, BECAUSE OF HIS COLOUR. HE WILL BRING PLEASURE AND PROSPERITY TO YOU. TAKE GOOD CARE OF HIM.

"IN A FEW WEEKS BALARAMA AND KRISHNA LEARNT TO CRAWL. NOW THERE WAS NO STOPPING THE TWO BOYS. THEY WOULD WANDER ALL OVER GOKUL, DRAGGING THEIR LITTLE FEET ADORNED WITH ANKLETS THROUGH THE MUDDY PASTURES.

"THEIR CHILDISH PRANKS WERE A CONSTANT SOURCE OF AMUSEMENT TO THEIR MOTHERS.

YASHODA! COME AND SEE YOUR KRISHNA.

WHAT IS HE UP TO NOW?

*BALA = STRENGTH.

"THE FRIGHTENED CALF RAN HELTER SKELTER.

SEE! HE'S BEING DRAGGED AWAY BY THE CALF.

JUST LOOK AT HIS FACE! HE'S ENJOYING IT!

"ROHINI AND YASHODA COULD NEVER BE SURE WHAT THE NAUGHTY PAIR WOULD DO NEXT.

YASHODA DEAR! THE HOUSE IS SO QUIET. THOSE TWO MUST BE UP TO SOME MISCHIEF! WILL YOU GO AND LOOK?

YES, I WILL! I HOPE THEY HAVEN'T CAUGHT HOLD OF A DOG IN THE STREET AS THEY DID THE OTHER DAY.

OR TRIED TO PICK UP A SWORD LIKE YESTERDAY!

"SOON YASHODA WAS BACK, DRAGGING THE TWO WITH HER.

YOU WERE RIGHT, ROHINI! I CAUGHT THEM JUST IN TIME, TRYING TO PEEP INTO THE WELL ON TIPTOE.

WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF NEXT?

"SOON KRISHNA AND BALARAMA LEARNT TO WALK AND RUN.

KRISHNA! BALARAMA! I SHOULD KEEP THEM TIED UP, I THINK! WHERE COULD THEY BE?

"SHE KNEW SOON ENOUGH.

YASHODA, YOU MUST CONTROL THAT NAUGHTY SON OF YOURS.

WHAT HAPPENED?

"EVERY DAY THERE WOULD BE FRESH COMPLAINTS FROM THE NEIGHBOURS.

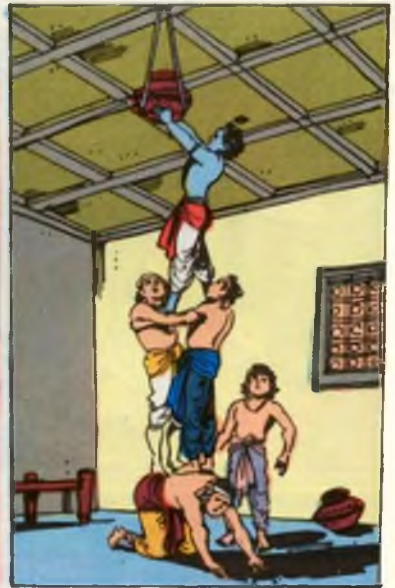
HE ATE UP ALL THE BUTTER IN MY HOUSE!

AND HE BROKE THE POT ALSO.

HE IS ALL OVER OUR HOUSE. WHEN WE SCOLD HIM, HE JUST GIGGLES AND RUNS AWAY.

HE STEALS THE BUTTER AND GIVES IT TO HIS MONKEY FRIENDS.

"EVERYDAY, THE NAUGHTY KRISHNA WOULD THINK OF NEW WAYS TO STEAL BUTTER WHICH WOULD BE KEPT OUT OF HIS REACH.



"YASHODA WOULD MAKE UP HER MIND TO SCOLD HIM.



JUST LET HIM COME HOME TODAY!

"BUT ONE LOOK AT HIS WIDE-EYED INNOCENT FACE WOULD MELT HER HEART.

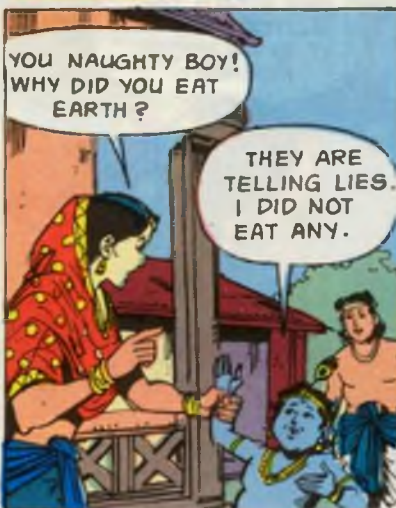


"ONE DAY, KRISHNA AND BALARAMA WERE PLAYING IN THE FIELDS WITH THEIR FRIENDS. SOON, BALARAMA CAME RUNNING HOME.



MA YASHODA! KRISHNA HAS EATEN EARTH!

YES! YES! WE SAW HIM.



YOU NAUGHTY BOY! WHY DID YOU EAT EARTH?

THEY ARE TELLING LIES. I DID NOT EAT ANY.



LET ME SEE. OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE.



"YASHODA WAS GRIPPED BY AWE.

"FOR IN KRISHNA'S MOUTH SHE COULD SEE THE SKY, THE EARTH, AND IN FACT, THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.



SURELY I MUST BE DREAMING.



IS IT MY EGO THAT MAKES ME THINK LIKE THIS? HELP ME, GOD!

BUT SOON SHE MIRACULOUSLY FORGOT THE WHOLE INCIDENT.

"ANOTHER DAY—



ALL THE MAIDS ARE BUSY, BUT I MUST HAVE FRESH BUTTER MADE FOR MY KRISHNA. HMM, I WILL CHURN IT MYSELF.

"SHE WAS BUSY SINGING AND WORKING.



"KRISHNA HEARD HIS MOTHER SINGING MELODIOUSLY AND CLIMBED ONTO HER LAP.



"YASHODA WAS ENGROSSED IN THE CHILDISH PRATTLE OF KRISHNA WHEN SUDDENLY—



OH! THE MILK MUST HAVE BOILED OVER!

"KRISHNA DID NOT LIKE THIS AT ALL. HE BROKE THE CHURNING POT IN ANGER. WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES AND A CONTAINER OF BUTTER IN HIS HAND, HE MARCHED OFF...



... TO A SAFE CORNER TO EAT THE STOLEN BUTTER IN PEACE.



WHEN YASHODA CAME BACK —

THE POT IS BROKEN! IT MUST BE KRISHNA. JUST LET ME CATCH HOLD OF HIM.



BY NOW KRISHNA'S HUNGER AND ANGER HAD BOTH GONE. SHE FOUND HIM STANDING ON AN UPTURNED MORTAR HAPPILY SHARING THE BUTTER WITH THE MONKEYS.



AS SOON AS HE SAW YASHODA, KRISHNA RAN AWAY WITH HIS FRIENDS.

RUN! RUN! MA HAS A STICK IN HER HAND.



"YASHODA WAS QUITE OUT OF BREATH BY THE TIME SHE MANAGED TO CATCH HOLD OF KRISHNA."

TODAY, I MUST PUNISH YOU. YOU ARE BECOMING NAUGHTIER EVERY DAY!



"SHE DRAGGED HIM BACK HOME."

I WILL BIND YOU UP TO THE SAME MORTAR.



AHH! HERE IS SOME ROPE! NOW AT LEAST I WILL KNOW WHERE YOU ARE.



WHY! THIS ROPE IS SHORT BY JUST TWO FINGERS. ROHINI! GET SOME ROPE!



OH DEAR! AGAIN THIS IS A LITTLE SHORT FOR TYING A KNOT.



"THERE WAS A LOOK OF MISCHIEF ON KRISHNA'S TEAR-STAINED FACE, AS IF HE WAS AMUSED AT HER FINDING THE ROPE SHORT. BUT AT LAST SHE MANAGED TO TIE HIM UP FIRMLY.

NOW YOU WILL STAY HERE TILL I DECIDE TO FREE YOU.

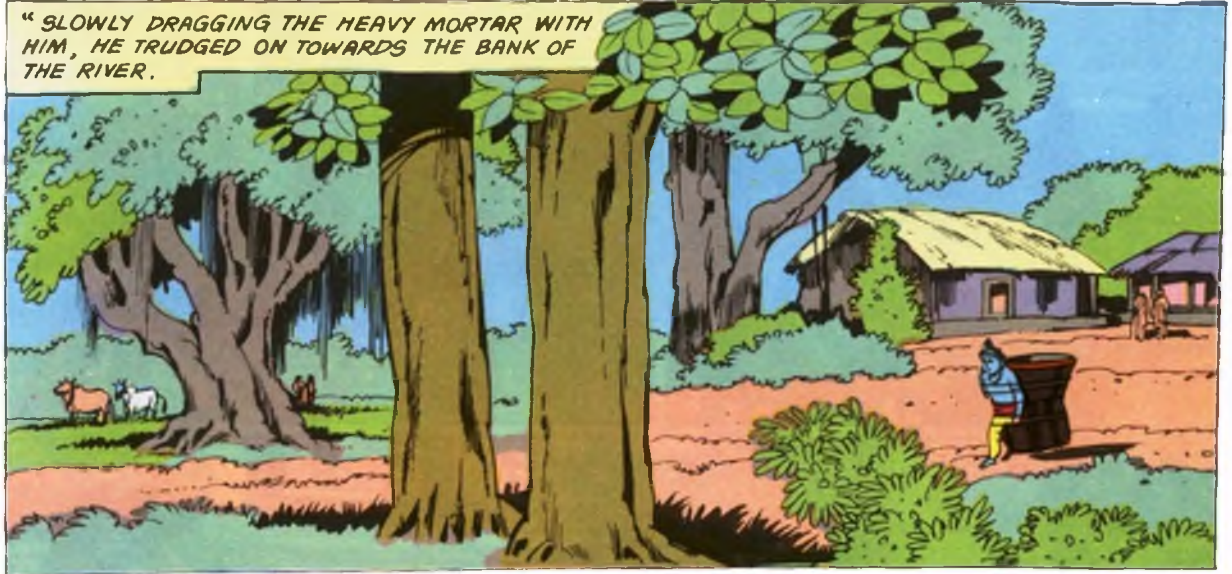


"BUT SHE WAS MISTAKEN. AS SOON AS HER BACK WAS TURNED—

I'LL FIND SOMEONE TO UNTIE ME.



"SLOWLY DRAGGING THE HEAVY MORTAR WITH HIM, HE TRUDGED ON TOWARDS THE BANK OF THE RIVER.



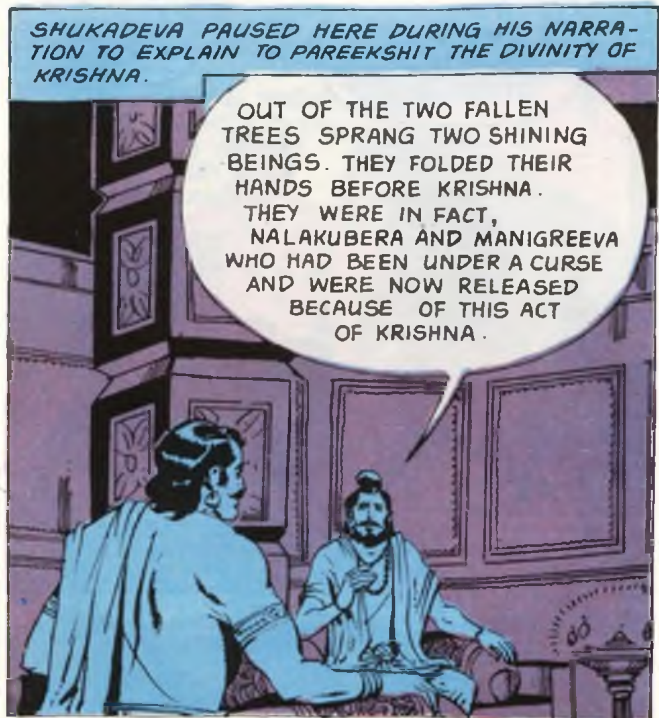
"ON HIS WAY WERE TWO YAMALARJUNA* TREES. KRISHNA MANAGED TO GO IN BETWEEN, BUT THE MORTAR GOT STUCK.



"WHEN KRISHNA TUGGED AT THE ROPE TO PULL HIMSELF FREE, BOTH THE TREES WERE UPROOTED...



* TWIN TREES OF THE GENUS, TERMINALIA





IT WAS KRISHNA WHO MADE THE TREES FALL!

WE SAW HIM DO SO!



AND TWO SHINING FIGURES CAME OUT OF THE TREES.

DON'T LISTEN TO THEIR CHILDISH TALK! SUCH IMAGINATION!

SOON VASUDEVA TOO CAME THERE AND UNTIED THE ROPE BINDING KRISHNA. BUT SUCH PUNISHMENTS DID NOT DETER LITTLE KRISHNA FROM HIS MISCHIEVOUS WAYS. HE WOULD BE ALWAYS OUT OF THE HOUSE, SINGING AND DANCING TO AMUSE THE GOPIKAS.

HIDING PEOPLE'S THINGS WAS ANOTHER FAVOURITE PRANK OF HIS. BUT, WHATEVER HE DID, THE PEOPLE OF GOKUL WOULD NEVER FAIL TO BE ENCHANTED AT THE SIGHT OF HIS BEAUTIFUL FACE. ONE DAY —



ALL MY HOUSEWORK IS STILL TO BE DONE BUT THIS BOY IS SUCH FUN TO WATCH!



FRESH FRUIT!

I'LL GIVE A FISTFUL OF GRAIN IN EXCHANGE FOR THE FRUIT.

BUT BY THE TIME KRISHNA RAN OUT. ALL THE GRAIN FELL THROUGH HIS TINY FINGERS.



OH! WHERE DID IT ALL GO?

NEVER MIND! HERE, HOLD THIS PROPERLY.

AS KRISHNA RAN AWAY HAPPILY WITH HIS BOOTY—



WHAT IS THIS? MY BASKET IS FILLED WITH GEMS! WHAT A MIRACLE!

THE OLDER HE GREW, THE MORE TIME KRISHNA SPENT ON THE RIVER BANK, FROLICKING WITH HIS FRIENDS.

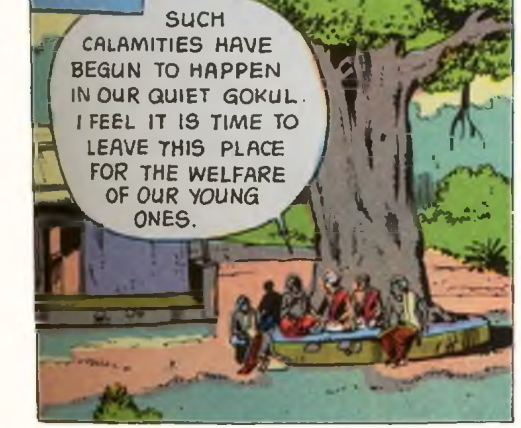


KRISHNA! BALARAMA! COME HOME QUICKLY. YOU HAVE NOT EATEN SINCE MORNING.

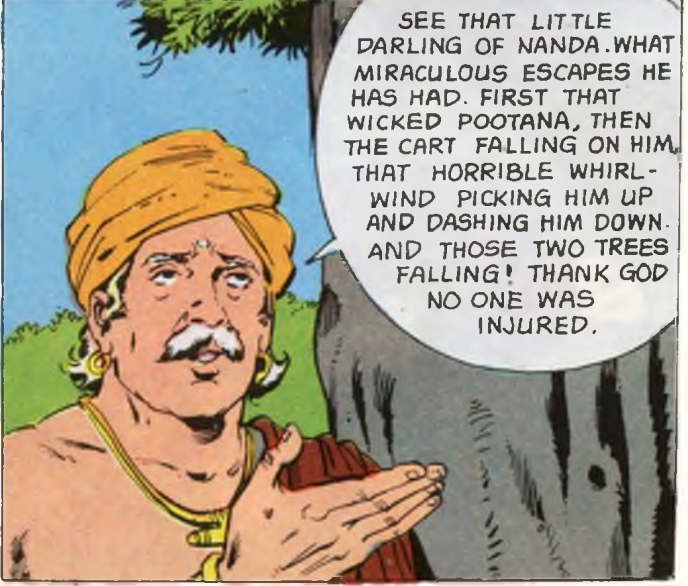


I CAN HARDLY RECOGNIZE YOU UNDER ALL THAT MUD! GO AND HAVE A BATH. SEE HOW CLEAN YOUR FRIENDS ARE!

WHILE YASHODA WAS BUSY TRYING TO CONTROL KRISHNA'S LITTLE PRANKS, NANDA AND HIS ADVISERS WERE DISCUSSING A MORE SERIOUS MATTER. UPANANDA, A WISE AND ELDERLY MAN, SAID—



SUCH CALAMITIES HAVE BEGUN TO HAPPEN IN OUR QUIET GOKUL. I FEEL IT IS TIME TO LEAVE THIS PLACE FOR THE WELFARE OF OUR YOUNG ONES.



SEE THAT LITTLE DARLING OF NANDA. WHAT MIRACULOUS ESCAPES HE HAS HAD. FIRST THAT WICKED POOTANA, THEN THE CART FALLING ON HIM, THAT HORRIBLE WHIRLWIND PICKING HIM UP AND DASHING HIM DOWN. AND THOSE TWO TREES FALLING! THANK GOD NO ONE WAS INJURED.

WE HAVE BEEN PROTECTED BY GOD'S MERCY SO FAR. BUT BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE HAPPENS, LET US ALL GO AWAY. THERE IS A WONDERFUL PLACE CALLED VRINDAVANA. IT HAS LUSH GRASSFIELDS, PLENTY OF FRUIT TREES AND FOLIAGE. IT WILL BE IDEAL FOR OUR CATTLE.



NANDA AGREED

WE WILL LEAVE FOR VRINDAVANA AS SOON AS WE CAN. TELL EVERYONE TO BE PREPARED TO LEAVE TODAY



AFTER COLLECTING THEIR CATTLE, THE PEOPLE OF GOKUL LOADED THEIR CARTS WITH THEIR BELONGINGS. THE WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE AGED, ALL RODE ON CHARIOTS AND CARTS. WITH THEIR BOW AND ARROW IN HAND, THE YOUNG MEN WALKED BESIDE THEM. WITH A SONG ON THEIR LIPS, AND HOPE IN THEIR HEARTS, THE PEOPLE OF GOKUL SET OUT IN SEARCH OF A NEW HOME.

