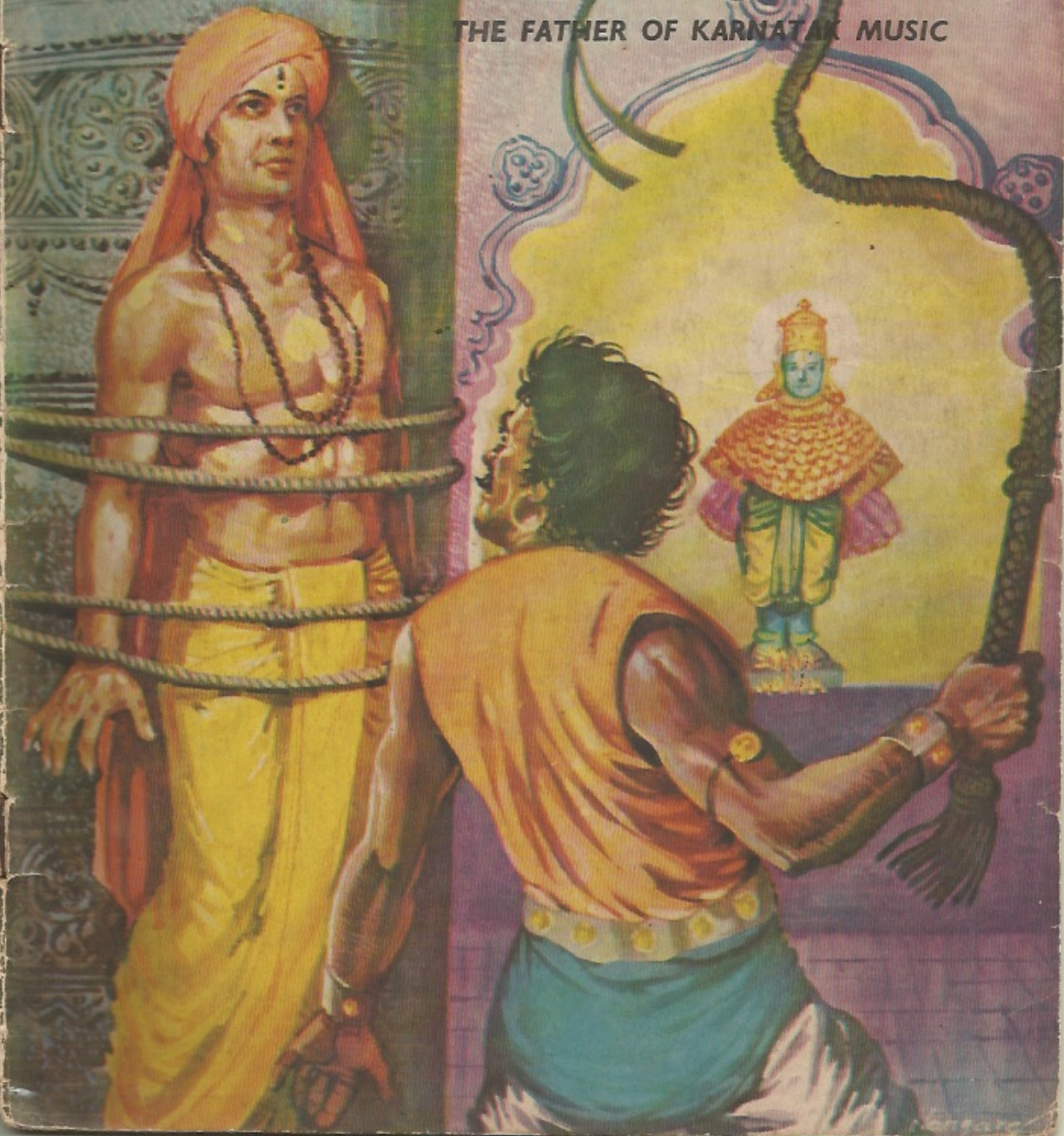




No. 144 Rs. 3.00

# Purandara Dasa

THE FATHER OF KARNATAK MUSIC





Purandara Dasa (1484–1564) is looked upon as the father of Karnatak music. With his compositions, the Ragas, (musical modes) which are described theoretically in the books on music in Sanskrit, came to be hummed and sung by the masses for the first time.

In music Purandara Dasa found the best form of communication—with God as well as with the hearts of men. Philosophy and sermons on ethics and morality which are usually shunned were willingly and eagerly heard when Purandara sang his compositions to the tune of the tambura. Vyasateertha, the renowned philosopher–saint of the time, hailed Purandara's compositions as PURANDAROPANISHAD.

Purandara belonged to a school of saint-philosophers which was known as Dasakuta, the society of Dasas. Purandara was a highly respected Dasa who was always on the move visiting pilgrim centres, passing through hundreds of villages propagating Bhakti (devotion to God) and upholding the universal brotherhood of man.

Of his compositions which exceeded four lakhs, only eight hundred have come down to us. Even to this day, girls in the south are initiated into music with a composition of Purandara and babes in cradles go to sleep as mothers softly hum his songs.

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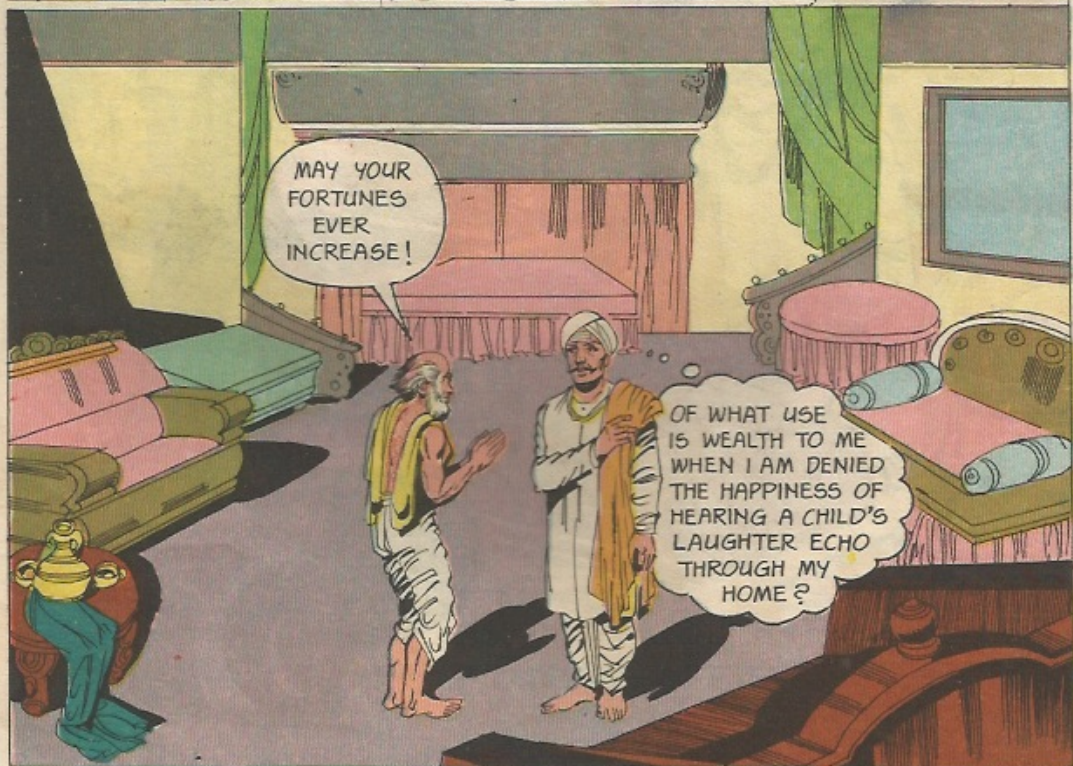
# PURANDARA DASA



VARADAPPA NAYAK WAS A RICH JEWELLER WHO LIVED IN PURANDARGAD, NEAR POONA, DURING THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.



NO ONE WHO CAME TO HIM FOR HELP EVER WENT AWAY DISAPPOINTED.





AT LAST, PIOUS VARADAPPA AND HIS WIFE VISITED THE TEMPLE OF VENKATESHWARA\* AT TIRUPATI.



THEIR PRAYERS DID NOT GO UNHEARD. A YEAR LATER —



WHILE HIS MOTHER TRIED TO INCULCATE IN LITTLE SRINIVASA A LOVE OF GOD BY TELLING HIM STORIES FROM THE SCRIPTURES...



... WHAT SRINIVASA ENJOYED MOST WAS PLAYING WITH THE FAKE COINS HIS FATHER GAVE HIM.



\* ALSO KNOWN AS BALAJI  
⊕ ANOTHER NAME OF VENKATESHWARA



WHEN HE GREW UP, SRINIVASA BEGAN TO ACCOMPANY HIS FATHER TO THE SHOP.



AT THE SHOP, HE OBSERVED HOW HIS FATHER DEALT WITH THE CUSTOMERS.



AFTER THE CUSTOMER HAD LEFT —



\* PANA WAS A COPPER COIN. 20 PANAS = ONE VARAHA (GOLD COIN)



WHEN SRINIVASA CAME OF AGE, HE WAS MARRIED TO SARASWATI.



SOON AFTER THE WEDDING, VARADAPPA SENT FOR HIS SON.



YOU MUST NOW RELIEVE ME OF MY BUSINESS. I WISH TO DEVOTE MY TIME TO WORSHIP.

AS YOU PLEASE, FATHER.

SRINIVASA NAYAK'S WAY OF DOING BUSINESS WAS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE PIOUS VARADAPPA NAYAK.



IF YOU WANT ONE HUNDRED PANAS YOU HAD BETTER SELL THE CHAIN AS WELL AS THE BANGLES.

NO, I CAN'T PART WITH MY CHAIN.



AND I CAN'T PART WITH MY MONEY.

BUT I NEED MONEY BADLY. ALL RIGHT! HERE! TAKE IT!



APART FROM BEING MERCILESS WITH HIS CUSTOMERS, SRINIVASA WAS A MISER TOO.

SRINIVASA NAYAK, WE ARE BUILDING A TEMPLE FOR LORD VENKATESHWARA. WE HAVE COME FOR A DONATION FROM YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU GO TO THE LORD HIMSELF FOR IT?



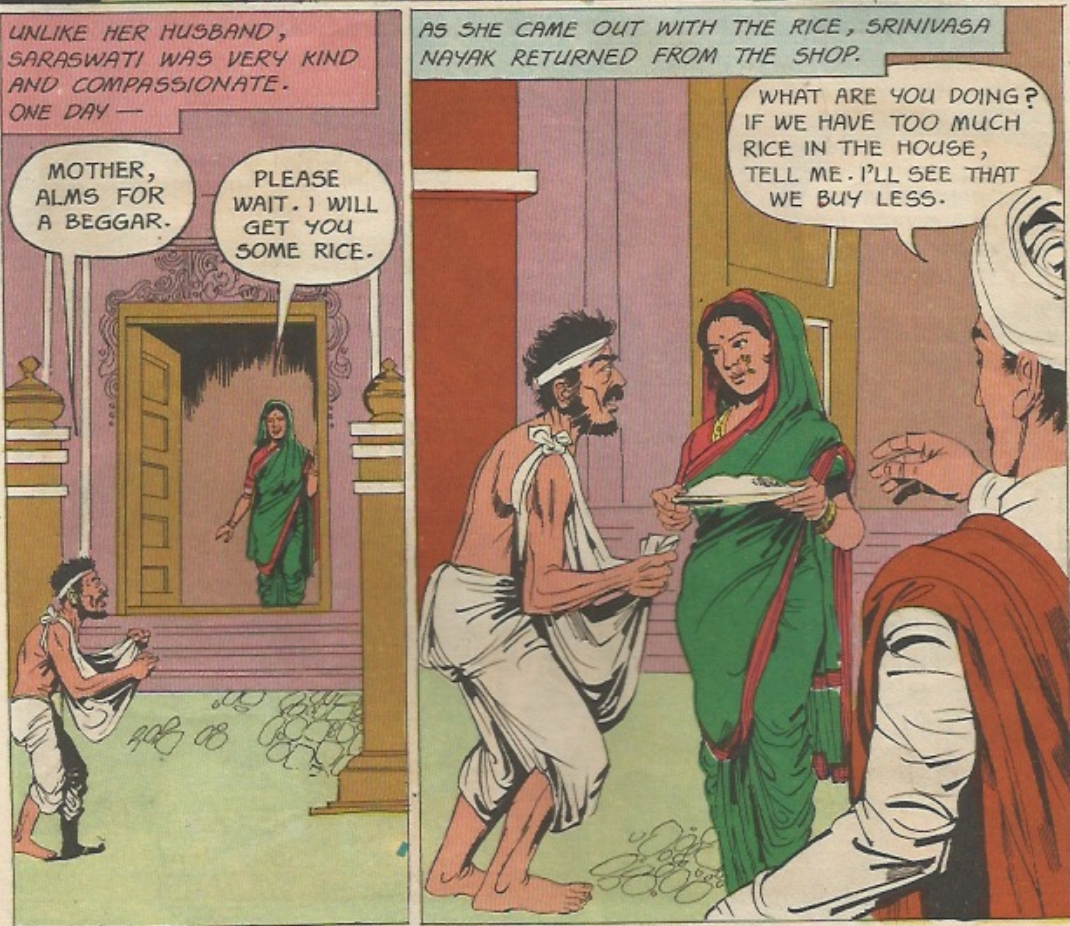
UNLIKE HER HUSBAND, SARASWATI WAS VERY KIND AND COMPASSIONATE. ONE DAY —

AS SHE CAME OUT WITH THE RICE, SRINIVASA NAYAK RETURNED FROM THE SHOP.

MOTHER, ALMS FOR A BEGGAR.

PLEASE WAIT. I WILL GET YOU SOME RICE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? IF WE HAVE TOO MUCH RICE IN THE HOUSE, TELL ME. I'LL SEE THAT WE BUY LESS.







ALL THAT POOR SARASWATI COULD DO WAS TO PRAY FOR SRINIVASA.



\* A PLANT DEIFIED BY ORTHODOX HINDUS.



AS THE YEARS PASSED, SRINIVASA NAYAK AND SARASWATI HAD FOUR SONS.

SRINIVASA IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE SO MANY CHILDREN, ALL HEALTHY AND INTELLIGENT. IF ONLY HE GAVE UP HIS GREED!



ONE DAY, OLD VARADAPPA NAYAK FELL ILL. A VAIDYA \* CAME TO EXAMINE HIM.



I NEED THE ASHES OF PRECIOUS STONES TO CURE HIM. GET ME SOME.



\* DOCTOR





PRECIOUS STONES COST A FORTUNE!

CAN'T YOU FIND SOME OTHER MEDICINE ?

I COULD. BUT IT MIGHT NOT PROVE AS EFFECTIVE.

SARASWATI TRIED TO REASON WITH HIM.



ARE YOUR STONES MORE PRECIOUS TO YOU THAN FATHER'S LIFE ?

BE PRACTICAL, SARASWATI. HE HAS TO DIE ONE DAY OR OTHER. WHY WASTE MY PRECIOUS STONES ?

THE NEXT DAY, VARADAPPA DIED.



FATHER, FORGIVE US.



A FEW DAYS LATER, AN OLD BRAHMAN APPROACHED SRINIVASA NAYAK.

BLESSED ONE, I NEED MONEY TO PERFORM MY SON'S THREAD CEREMONY. WILL YOU HELP ME?

I AM BUSY. COME TOMORROW.

SRINIVASA NAYAK MADE HIM WALK TO HIS SHOP FOR SIX MONTHS WITHOUT GIVING HIM A SINGLE VARAHA.

IMBECILE! CAN'T HE UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE NO INTENTION OF HELPING HIM OUT.

THE NEXT WEEK, AT THE TIME OF STOCK-TAKING IN HIS SHOP, SRINIVASA CAME ACROSS A HEAVY BOX.

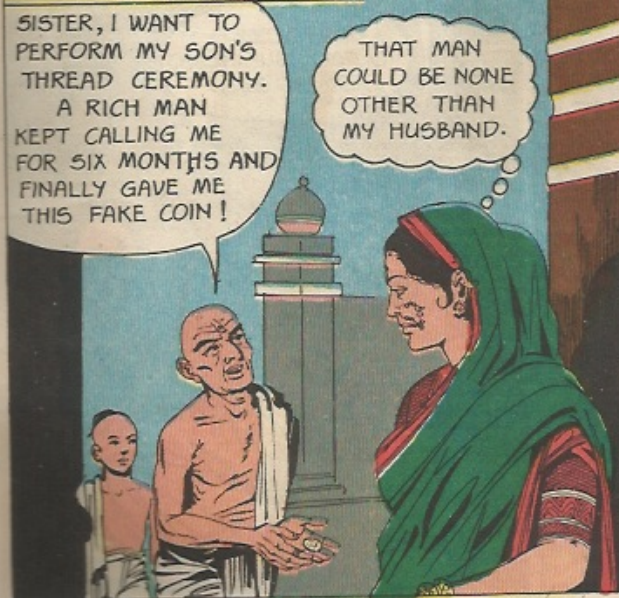
WHAT COULD THIS BOX CONTAIN?

FAKE COINS! THE COINS I USED TO PLAY WITH!

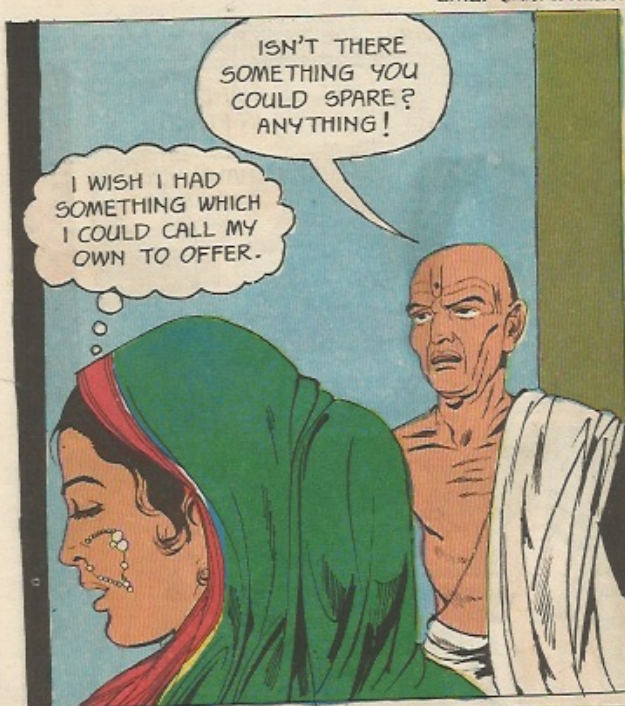




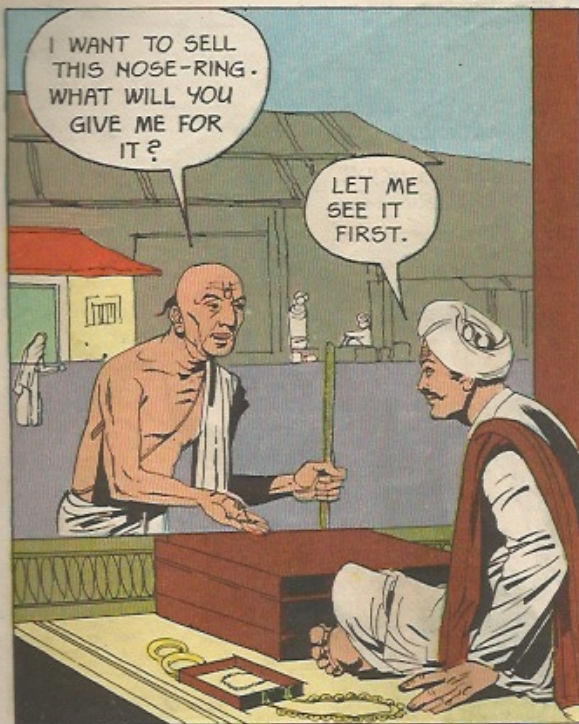
A FEW HOURS LATER, THE BRAHMAN WENT TO  
SRINIVASA NAYAK'S HOUSE.











I WANT TO SELL THIS NOSE-RING. WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME FOR IT?

LET ME SEE IT FIRST.



IT LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THE ONE SARASWATI WEARS. HOW DID HE GET IT?

SRINIVASA NAYAK DECIDED TO PLAY FOR TIME TO PROBE INTO THE MATTER.

SRINIVASA NAYAK LOCKED THE NOSE-RING IN A BOX ...



I'LL NEED TIME TO VALUE THIS NOSE-RING. IT'S AN EXPENSIVE ONE. CAN YOU COME TOMORROW?

I DON'T MIND.





...AND RUSHED HOME.



\* THE ROOM WHERE THE HOUSEHOLD DEITIES ARE KEPT AND WORSHIPPED.



SHE DISLODGED THE DIAMONDS FROM HER BANGLES...



... CRUSHED THEM AND MIXED THE POWDER WITH WATER.



WHEN SHE WAS ABOUT TO SWALLOW THE MIXTURE—



SHE RUSHED TO HER HUSBAND.



SRINIVASA NAYAK EXAMINED IT.

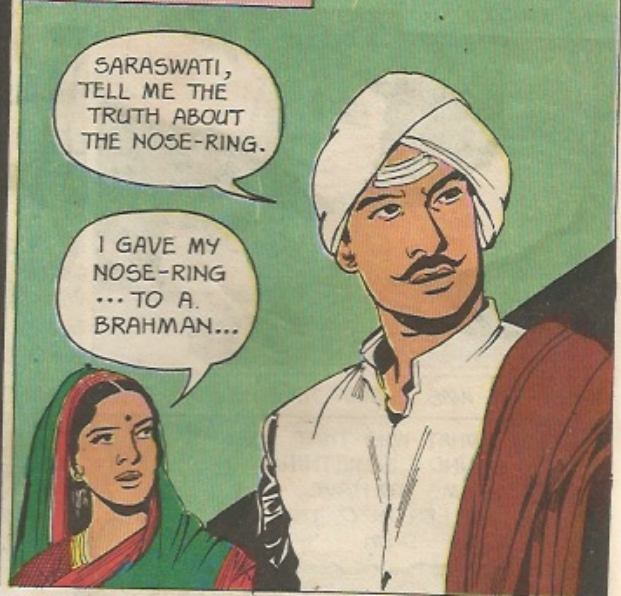




SRINIVASA NAYAK HURRIED BACK TO HIS SHOP AND UNLOCKED THE BOX.



HE RAN BACK HOME.



SARASWATI, TELL ME THE TRUTH ABOUT THE NOSE-RING.

I GAVE MY NOSE-RING ... TO A BRAHMAN...



...AND FEARING YOUR WRATH, I WAS ABOUT TO KILL MYSELF BY SWALLOWING A MIXTURE OF POUNDED DIAMONDS AND WATER, WHEN MY NOSE-RING FELL INTO THE DISH, FROM WHERE I DO NOT KNOW.

THAT WAS NO ORDINARY OLD BRAHMAN. IT MUST HAVE BEEN GOD HIMSELF COME TO AWAKEN ME!



MY GREED KILLED MY FATHER AND IT WAS GOING TO KILL MY WIFE TOO...





SRINIVASA NAYAK DISTRIBUTED ALL HIS WEALTH  
TO THE POOR AND DESERVING.



HE BECAME A DASA.\*



THUS MILLIONAIRE SRINIVASA NAYAK, AFTER  
GIVING UP HIS RICHES, DONNED THE ROBE OF  
A MENDICANT AND STARTED ON A PILGRIMAGE.  
HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN ACCOMPANIED HIM.

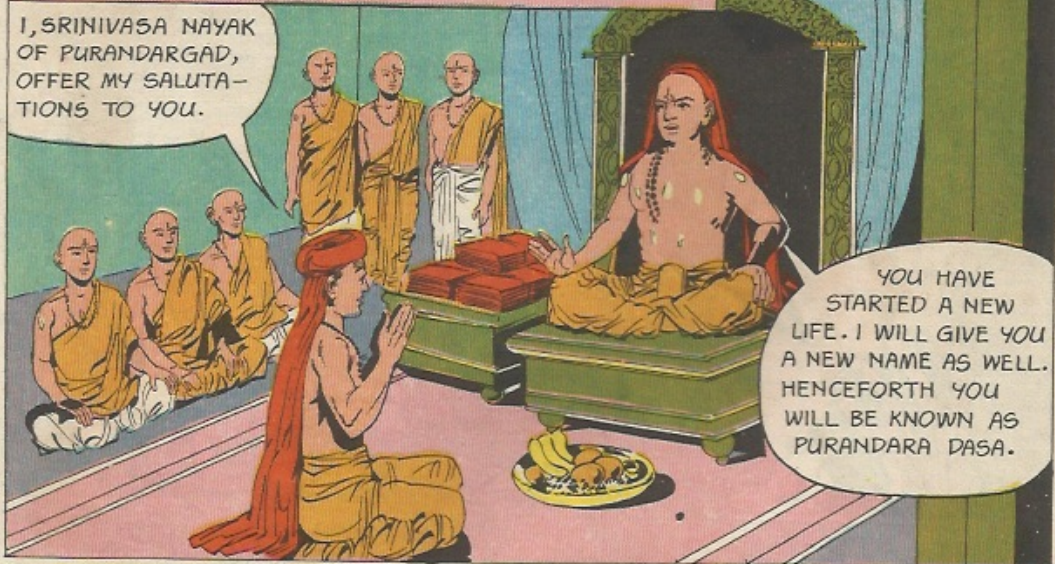


\* VAISHNAVITES WHO SURRENDERED THEMSELVES TO GOD,  
CALLED THEMSELVES DASAS.



WANDERING FROM PLACE TO PLACE, SRINIVASA NAYAK CAME TO VIJAYANAGARA WHERE HE MET THE RENOWNED SAINT, VYASATEERTHA.

I, SRINIVASA NAYAK OF PURANDARGAD, OFFER MY SALUTATIONS TO YOU.



YOU HAVE STARTED A NEW LIFE. I WILL GIVE YOU A NEW NAME AS WELL. HENCEFORTH YOU WILL BE KNOWN AS PURANDARA DASA.

PURANDARA DASA USED TO GO OUT ON THE STREETS OF VIJAYANAGARA SINGING SONGS IN PRAISE OF GOD. PEOPLE USED TO FALL AT HIS FEET AND MAKE OFFERINGS TO HIM.

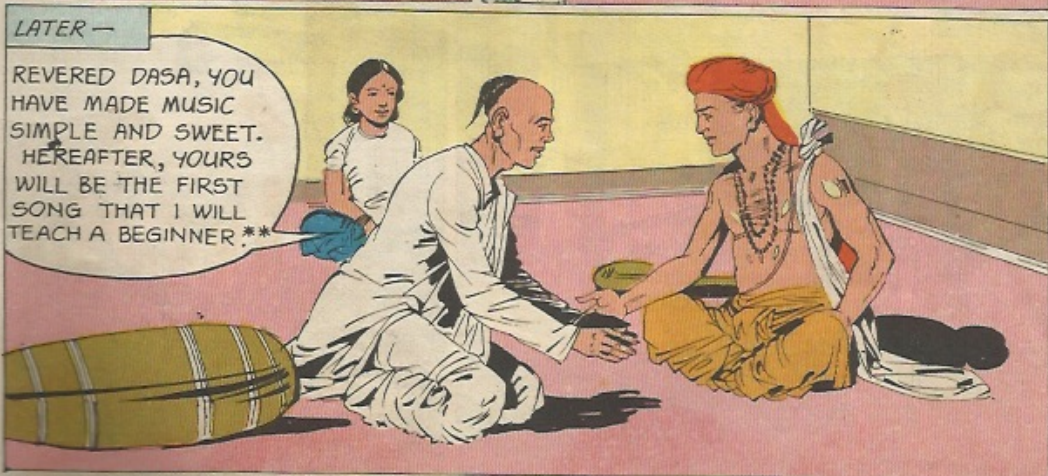
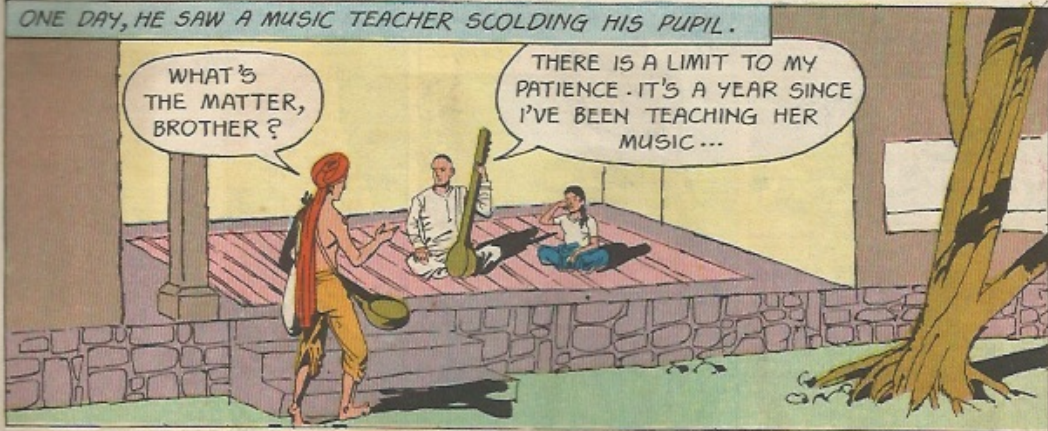


HOW MELODIOUS!

HOW PREGNANT WITH MEANING ARE HIS SONGS!



ONE DAY, HE SAW A MUSIC TEACHER SCOLDING HIS PUPIL.



\* MUSICAL MODE \*\* THIS PRACTICE IS MAINTAINED TO THIS DAY.



EVER ON THE MOVE, PURANDARA DASA, FOLLOWED BY HIS FAITHFUL DISCIPLE APPANNA, VISITED TIRUPATI... ..UDUPI... ..AND PANDHARPUR.



ONE DAY, WHILE THEY WERE AT PANDHARPUR —





A FEW MINUTES LATER —



I'M SORRY  
I KEPT YOU  
WAITING, SIR.

NEED YOU  
HAVE TAKEN  
SO LONG?

TAKING THE PITCHER FROM HIM,  
PURANDARA DASA POURED THE  
WATER ON HIS FEET —



OO-OH! IT'S HOT!  
FOOL!! ASKED YOU TO  
BRING WARM WATER,  
NOT BOILING WATER!

I AM  
SORRY,  
SIR.

THIS WILL TEACH  
YOU TO BE CAREFUL  
NEXT TIME.



THAT NIGHT, HOWEVER, PURANDARA DASA COULDN'T  
SLEEP. HE WAS FULL OF REMORSE FOR WHAT HE HAD  
DONE.



SHAME ON ME.  
WHEN WILL I EVER  
CONQUER ANGER?



THE NEXT DAY —



CHILD, I AM SORRY I HURT YOU, YESTERDAY.

SIR, I DON'T UNDERSTAND.



HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN SO SOON ? I THREW A PITCHER AT YOU LAST NIGHT, WHEN YOU BROUGHT ME WATER.

WATER ? LAST NIGHT ? BUT I HAD FALLEN ASLEEP EARLIER THAN USUAL. I DIDN'T BRING YOU ANY WATER!

PURANDARA DASA WAS PERPLEXED.



IF IT WASN'T APPANNA, WHO COULD IT HAVE BEEN ? UNLESS...

HE WENT TO THE TEMPLE OF VITHALA\*.



VITHALA, SO IT WAS YOU!

\* ANOTHER NAME FOR PANDURANG.



SUDDENLY, PURANDARA DASA RUSHED TOWARDS THE IDOL OF VITHALA.



VITHALA, YOUR FOREHEAD IS SWOLLEN! O VITHALA, WHAT HAVE I DONE!



YOU HAVE NOT DONE ANYTHING, DASA. CONTROL YOURSELF. NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO THE LORD.



PURANDARA DASA BURST INTO TEARS.

VITHALA, YOU CAME TO HELP ME. HOW DID I REWARD YOU? BY FLINGING THE PITCHER AT YOU? LORD, DID I HURT YOU MUCH?



THE WHOLE OF THAT DAY, HE DID NOT EAT A THING. WHEN THE PRIEST LEFT FOR HOME, PURANDARA DASA WAS STILL AT THE TEMPLE.

VITHALA, PUNISH ME. HURT ME AS I HURT YOU.



THE NEXT MORNING WHEN THE PRIEST CAME TO OPEN THE DOORS OF THE TEMPLE, HE FOUND PURANDARA DASA STILL THERE.

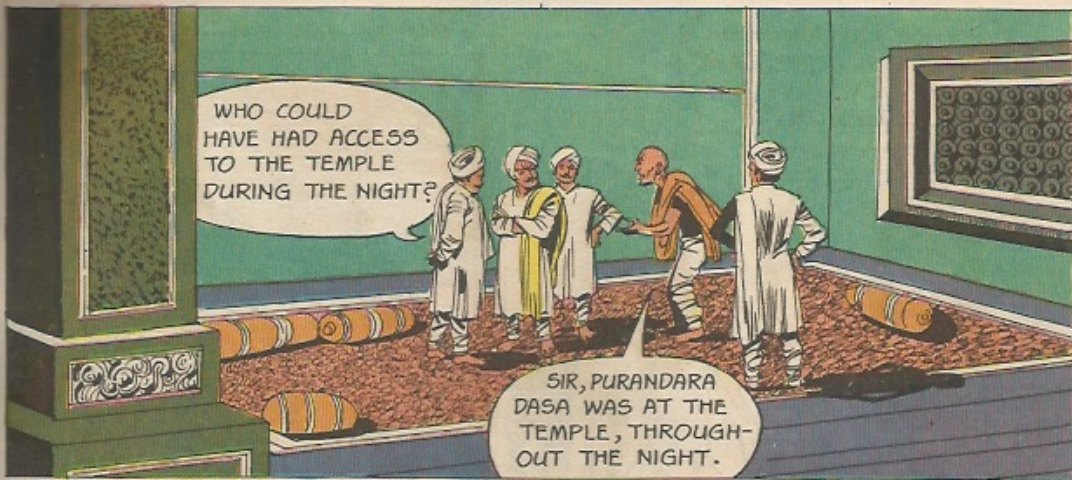


THE PRIEST RAN TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE TEMPLE.

A THIEF MUST HAVE BROKEN IN AND STOLEN THE GOLD BRACELETS.



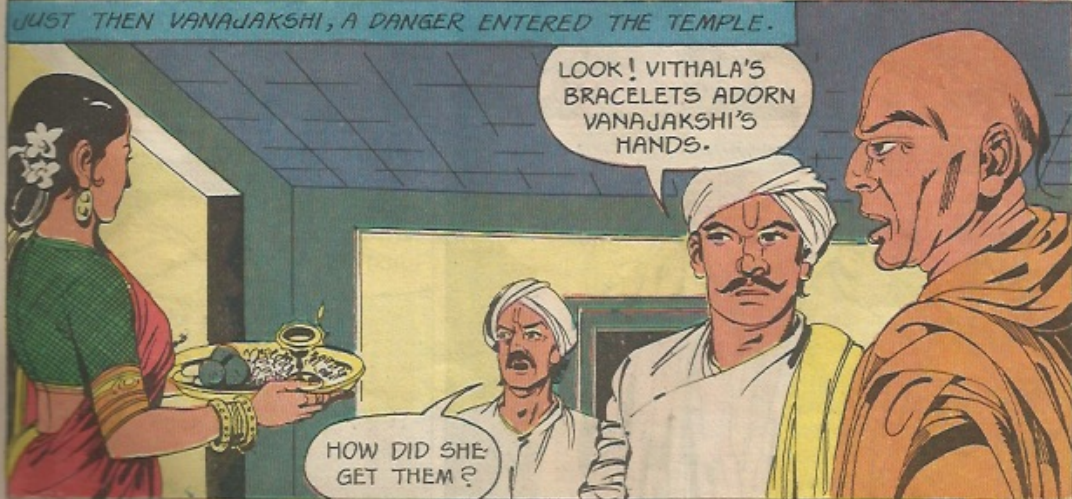




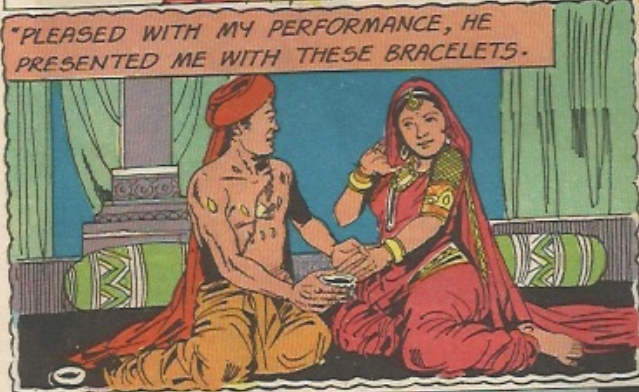
WHEN PURANDARA DASA WAS QUESTIONED -



JUST THEN VANAJAKSHI, A DANCER ENTERED THE TEMPLE.









PURANDARA DASA WAS TIED TO A PILLAR AND WAS GIVEN A WHIPPING.



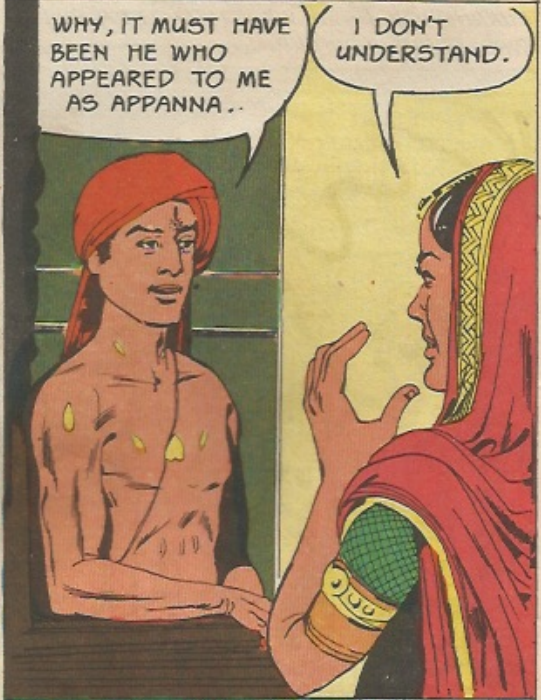
SUDDENLY —

THE BRACELETS! THEY ARE GONE!





VANAJAKSHI WAS PERPLEXED.



IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THAT SHE  
DIDN'T. FOR THE WAYS OF THE LORD AND  
HIS DEVOTEES ARE INDEED MYSTERIOUS.

PURANDARA DASA CONTINUED HIS WANDERINGS. HE HAD A WAY OF  
DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF PEOPLE TOWARDS GOD.





WHEN A CROWD WAS DRAWN BY THE MAGIC WORDS "SUGAR CANDY"—



... REPEAT THE SWEET NAME OF KRISHNA! IS THERE ANYTHING SWEETER THAN THAT?

HE WOULD COMPLETE THE SONG, AND THE CROWD WOULD DANCE WITH HIM TO ITS TUNE.



... REPEAT THE SWEET NAME OF KRISHNA!

HE NOT ONLY SANG SONGS PRAISING GOD, BUT ALSO CONDEMNING HYPOCRISY.



OF WHAT USE IS ALL YOUR MEDITATION IF THE MIND DOESN'T REST ON VITHALA?



MASTER, YOU HAVE OPENED MY EYES!



ONCE, PURANDARA DASA WENT TO SAINT VYASATEERTHA, CARRYING THE SONGS HE HAD WRITTEN.

PLEASE ACCEPT THE WORKS OF YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT.

PURANDARA DASA, THE PLACE FOR YOUR WORKS IS NOT THE FLOOR. GIVE THEM TO ME.

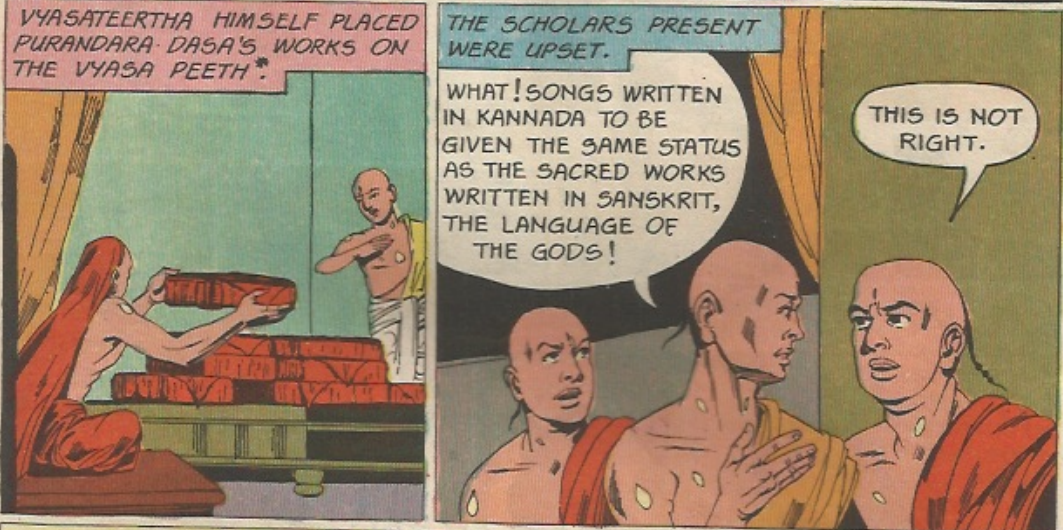


VYASATEERTHA HIMSELF PLACED PURANDARA DASA'S WORKS ON THE VYASA PEETH\*.

THE SCHOLARS PRESENT WERE UPSET.

WHAT! SONGS WRITTEN IN KANNADA TO BE GIVEN THE SAME STATUS AS THE SACRED WORKS WRITTEN IN SANSKRIT, THE LANGUAGE OF THE GODS!

THIS IS NOT RIGHT.



SAINT VYASATEERTHA NOTED THE ANGER OF THE SCHOLARS.

I WILL SHOW THEM THE GREATNESS OF PURANDARA DASA.

SON, KEEP THE DASA'S WORKS ON THE FLOOR.



\* RAISED PLATFORM ON WHICH THE TEACHER OF THE SCRIPTURES SITS OR THE SCRIPTURES ARE PLACED.



BUT NO SOONER HAD THE DISCIPLE KEPT THE WORKS ON THE FLOOR...



... THAN THEY SPRANG UP AND PLACED THEMSELVES ON THE VYASA PEETH.



WHAT A WONDER!

THE DASA IS A GREAT SOUL.

WE HAVE WRONGED HIM.



THE WORKS OF PURANDARA DASA WILL BE KNOWN AS THE "PURANDARA UPANISHAD."\*

PURANDARA DASA SPENT HIS LAST DAYS IN A RETREAT, SPECIALLY BUILT FOR HIM BY THE KING, ON A BANK OF THE RIVER TUNGABHADRA IN VIJAYANAGARA.



TO THIS DAY, FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, PURANDARA DASA'S SONGS ARE SUNG AND HEARD BY LOVERS OF KARNATAK MUSIC.

\* UPANISHADS ARE THE SACRED SCRIPTURES OF THE HINDUS WHICH DEAL WITH THE NATURE OF BRAHMAN.