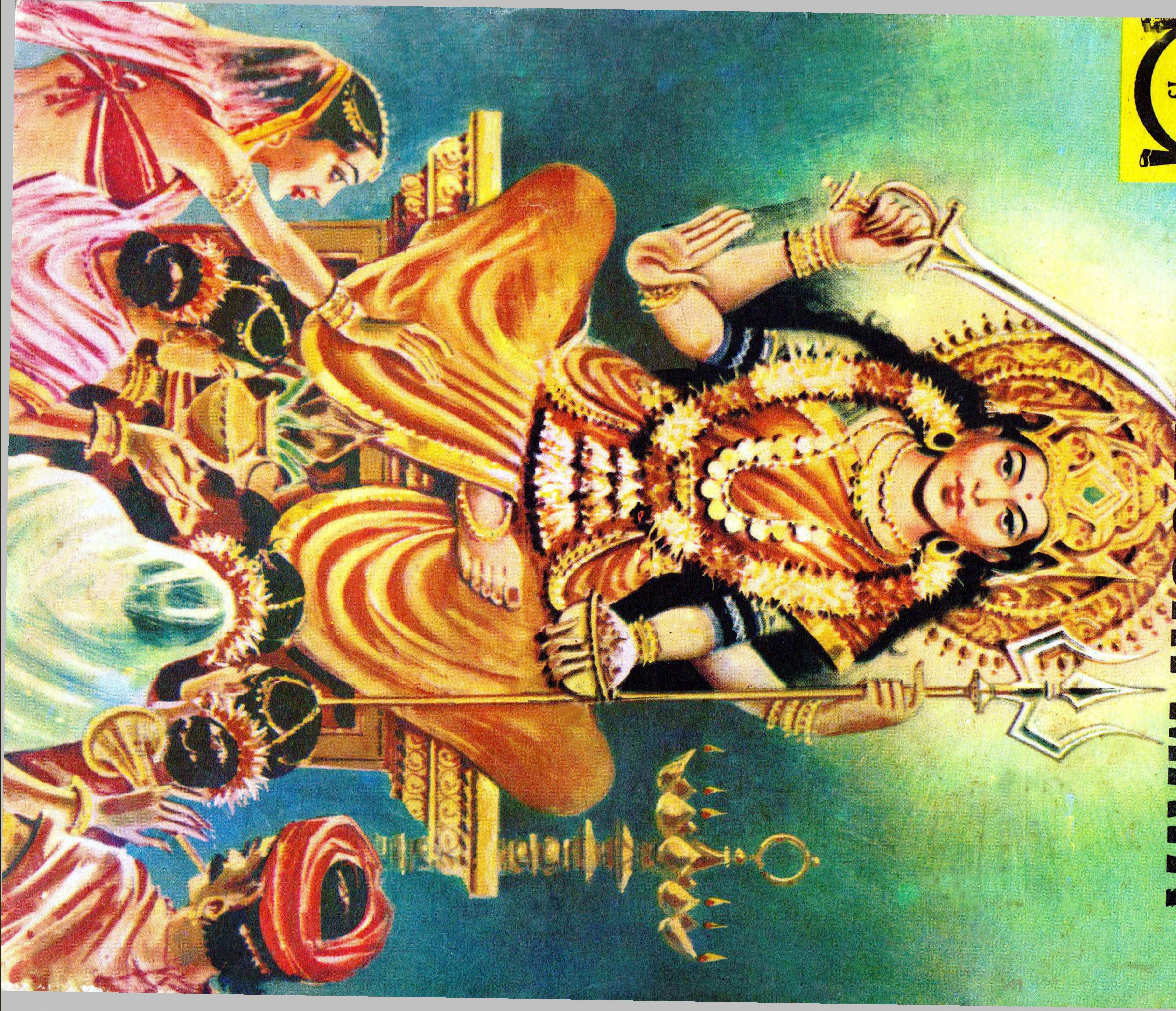


SANTOSHI MATA



Santoshi Mata is one of the most popular manifestation of Durga, the Universal Mother, mostly worshipped in this form by the common populace as the warder of evil, especially disease, pestilence, epidemic, etc. She is also the bestower of opulence, welfare and prosperity to devotees. In almost all the villages of the country, we could see a temple dedicated to Her, and often the shrine is located in some elevated and sanctified place as the top of a hillock, a forested area, and the like. Special occasions observed as hallowed moments in her honour are times of fast, worship and even vigil in certain communities. The Deity is conceived as a handsome and charming figure, attracting veneration and awe at the same time, love and fear combined. She is a blend of Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati.

**SWAMI KRISHNANANDA
The Divine Life Society,
P.O. Sivanandanagar
Distt. Tehri-Garhwal
U P. (Himalayas).**

Editor : D. Kumar

Script : Bharati Sukhatankar

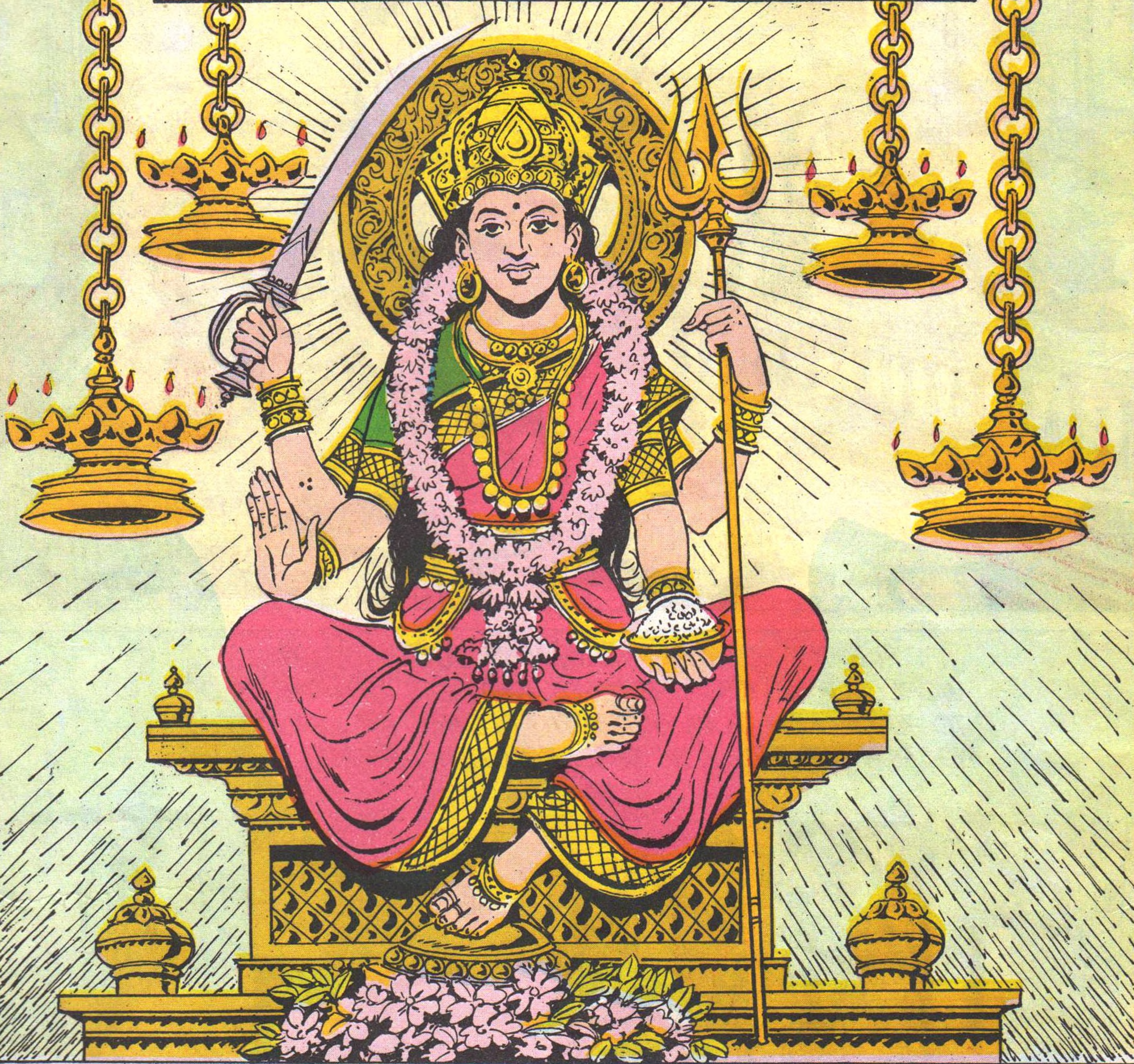
Art Work : Madhu Powle

OUR NEXT TITLE :

SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA

**Published by Geeta Kumar for Argus Central Enterprises, 16, Golf Links,
New Delhi-110003 and printed at Jay Print Pack (P) Ltd., 8/39 Industrial Area,
Kirti Nagar, New Delhi-110015.**

SANTOSHI MATA



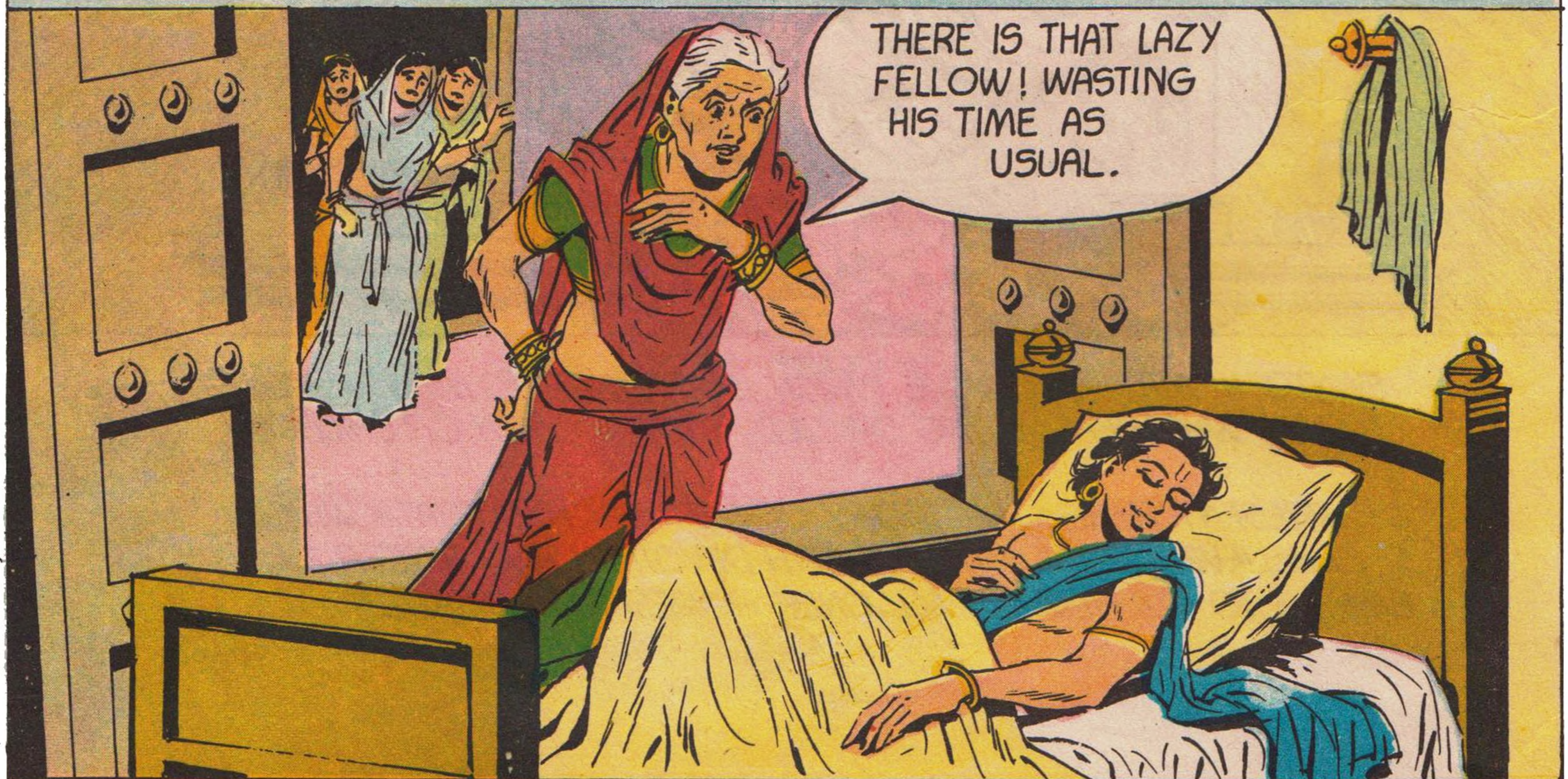
SANTOSHI MATA IS A NAME WHICH IS FAMILIAR TO MOST PEOPLE TODAY, WHETHER YOUNG OR OLD, MEN, WOMEN OR CHILDREN.

WE PRESENT HERE, THE STORY OF HER SACRED VRATA WHICH, IT IS BELIEVED, IF UNDERTAKEN WITH DEVOTION AND SINCERITY, BRINGS TO FULFILMENT ALL ONES HOPES AND DESIRES.

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED AN OLD WOMAN WHO HAD SEVEN SONS. THE SIX ELDER SONS WORKED HARD FOR THEIR LIVING...



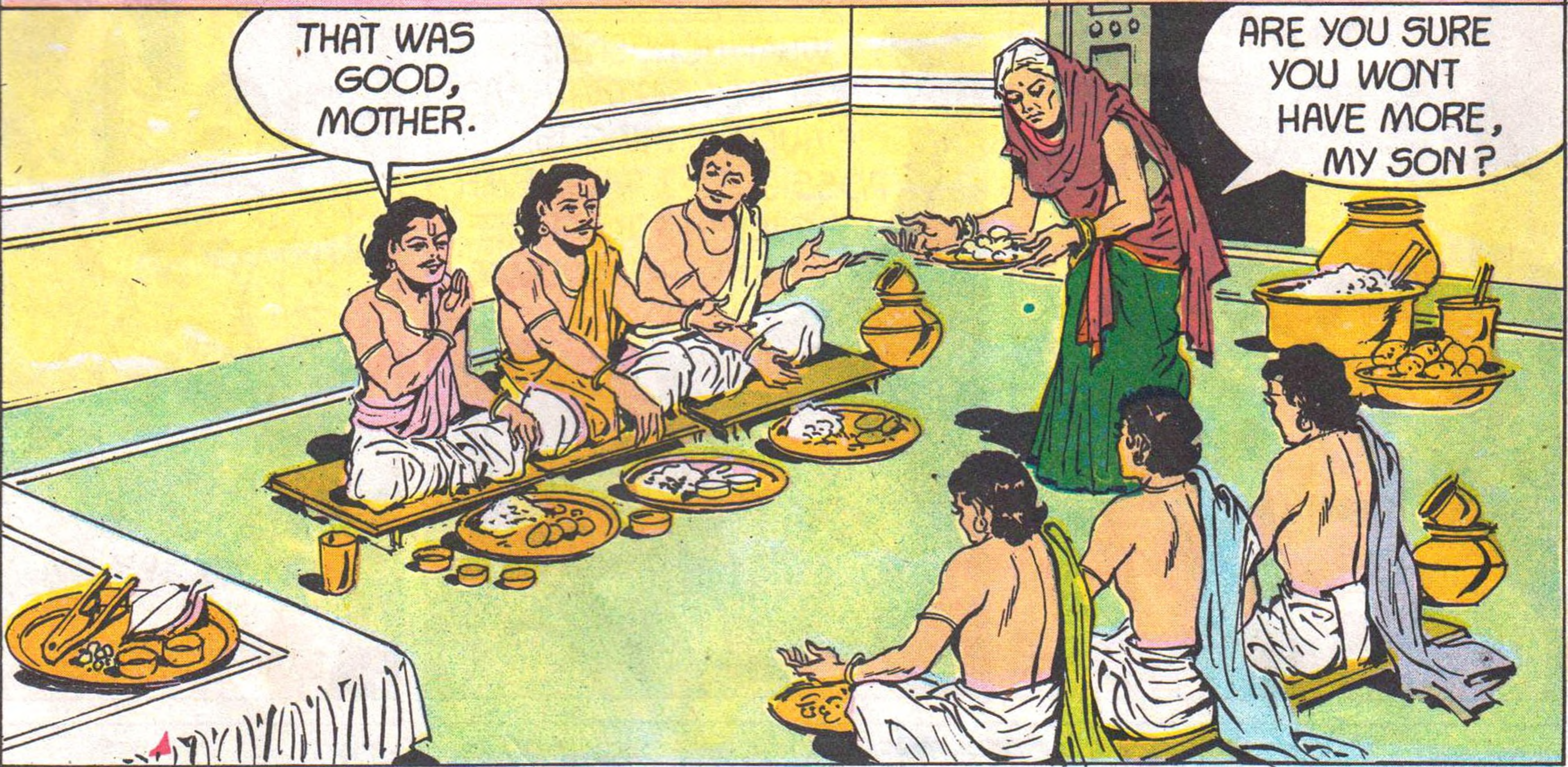
... WHILE THE SEVENTH WAS ALWAYS LOST IN A DREAM WORLD OF HIS OWN. HE NEVER WENT OUT INTO THE FIELDS TO PLOUGH OR SOW, BUT SPENT ALL HIS TIME DAY DREAMING. FOR OUR STORY, WE SHALL CALL HIM DEVIDAS.



NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE OLD WOMAN FAVOURED HER SIX ELDER SONS WHO BROUGHT IN THE WEALTH IN THE FAMILY. SHE COOKED THEIR FAVOURITE DISHES, AND AFTER THEY HAD EATEN...

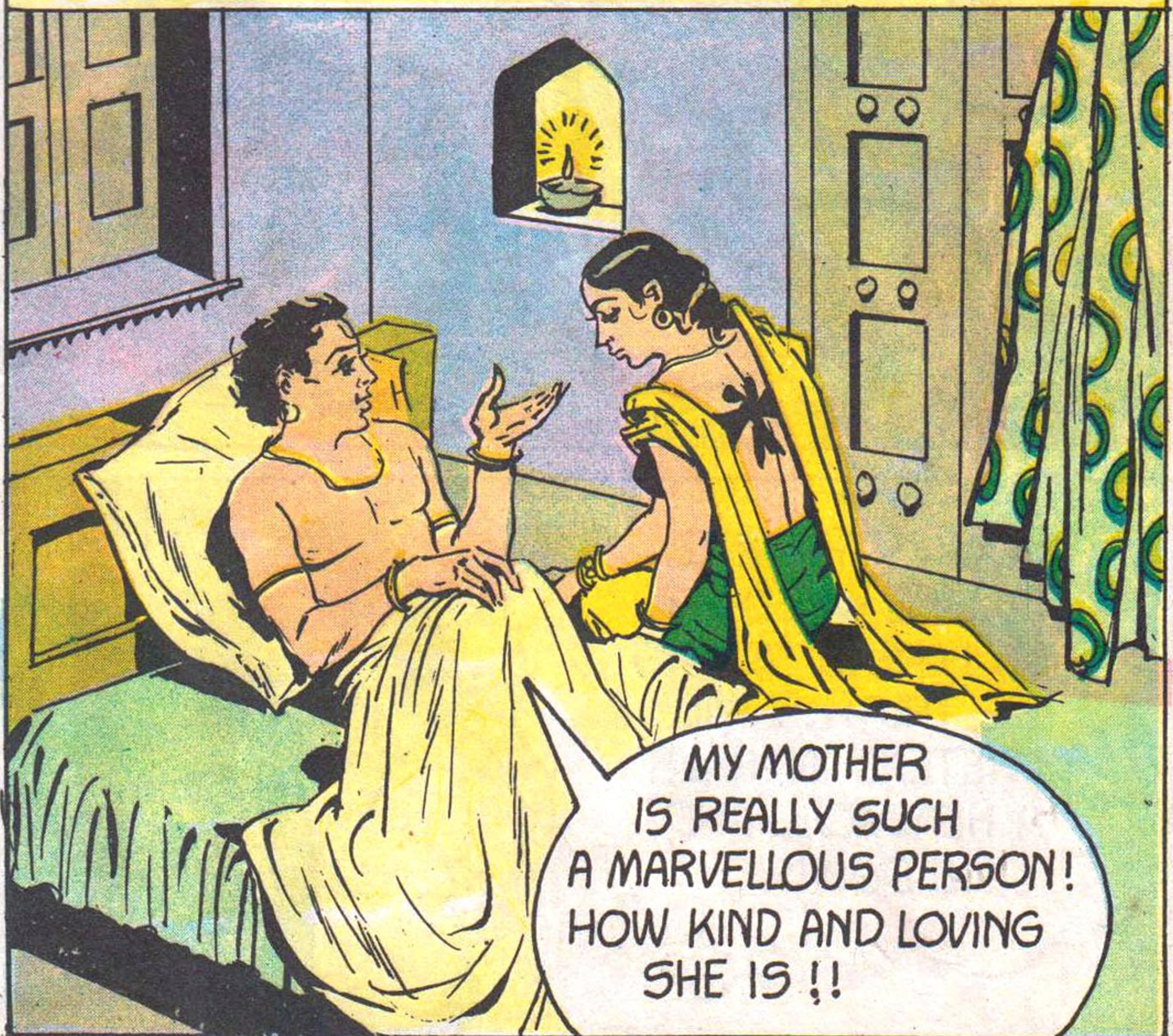
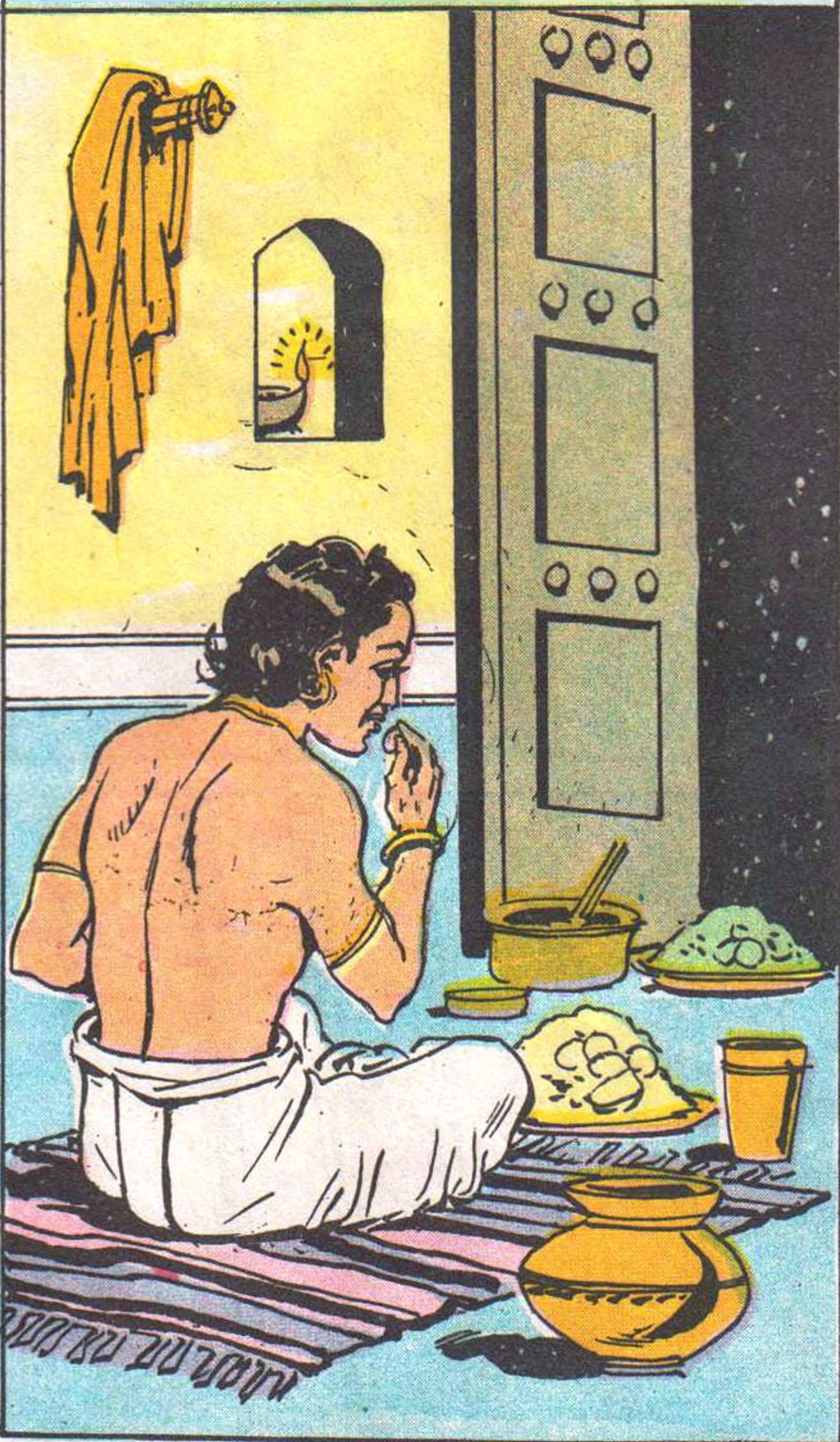
THAT WAS GOOD, MOTHER.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WONT HAVE MORE, MY SON?



... SHE WOULD PUT TOGETHER ALL THE LEFT-OVERS AND CALL HER SEVENTH SON FOR FOOD.

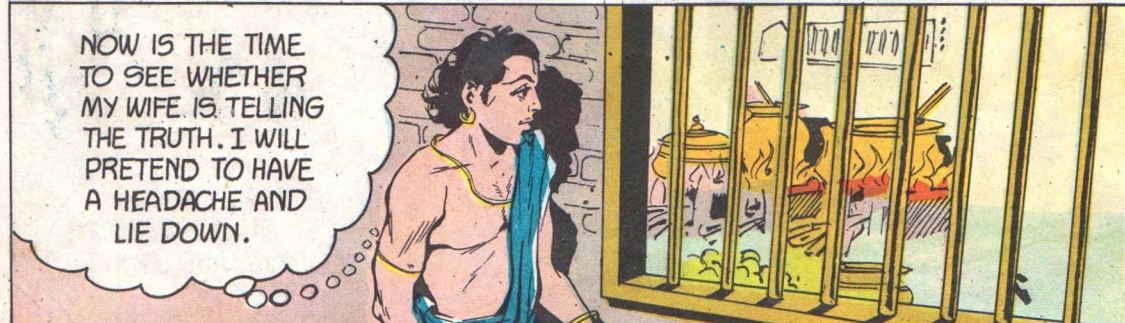
BUT DEVIDAS WAS PURE-HEARTED WITH AN INNOCENT MIND. HE DID NOT OBSERVE HIS MOTHER'S PARTIALITY AND THOUGHT THAT SHE LOVED HIM AS MUCH AS SHE LOVED THE OTHERS. ONE DAY, AS HE SAT WITH HIS WIFE, SUVRATA -



MY MOTHER IS REALLY SUCH A MARVELLOUS PERSON! HOW KIND AND LOVING SHE IS !!



A FEW DAYS LATER, THE HOUSEHOLD GOT BUSY WITH THE CELEBRATION OF AN IMPORTANT FESTIVAL. A LAVISH FEAST WAS PREPARED WITH SEVEN SPECIAL DISHES AND SWEETMEATS.



HE WENT AND LAY DOWN IN THE KITCHEN AND COVERED HIS FACE WITH A TRANSPARENT CLOTH.



THE SIX BROTHERS SAT DOWN TO THEIR MEAL. ALL THEIR FAVOURITE DISHES WERE COOKED AND THEY ENJOYED THE REPAST.



WHEN THEY HAD FINISHED EATING, THE OLD LADY GATHERED ALL THE LEFT-OVER PIECES OF LADDU FROM THEIR PLATES...



...AND MADE IT INTO A SINGLE LADDU.

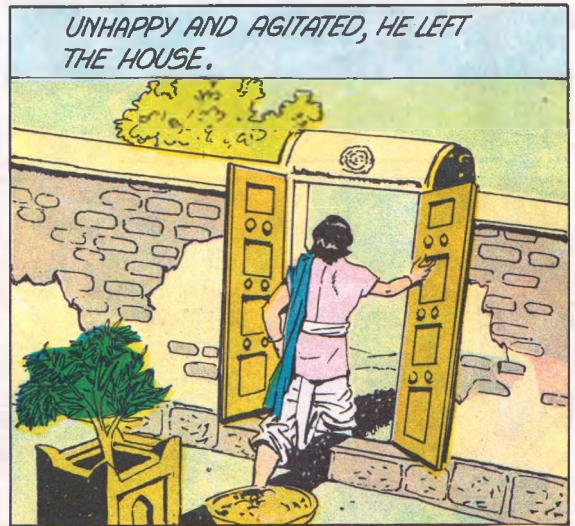


YOUR BROTHERS HAVE ALREADY EATEN AND LEFT. COME ON, GET UP AND DON'T KEEP ME WAITING.



* RICE PUDDING

NOW DEVIDAS HAD WATCHED ALL HER ACTIONS, ALTHOUGH HE HAD PRETENDED TO BE FAST ASLEEP.



AND RAPIDLY, HE WENT OUT OF THE ROOM.

HE HAD WALKED BUT A FEW STEPS WHEN HE THOUGHT OF HIS WIFE—



SUVRATA!
I MUST TELL
HER BEFORE
I LEAVE.

HE CAME UPON HER OUTSIDE THE COW-SHED WHERE SHE WAS MAKING COW-DUNG CAKES.



SUVRATA!



SUVRATA, YOU
WERE RIGHT. I
AM LEAVING THE
HOUSE AND GOING
AWAY. STAY HERE
AND DISCHARGE YOUR
DUTIES IN THE
HOUSEHOLD.

HER FACE WAS STREAKED WITH TEARS AS SHE TURNED IT AWAY—



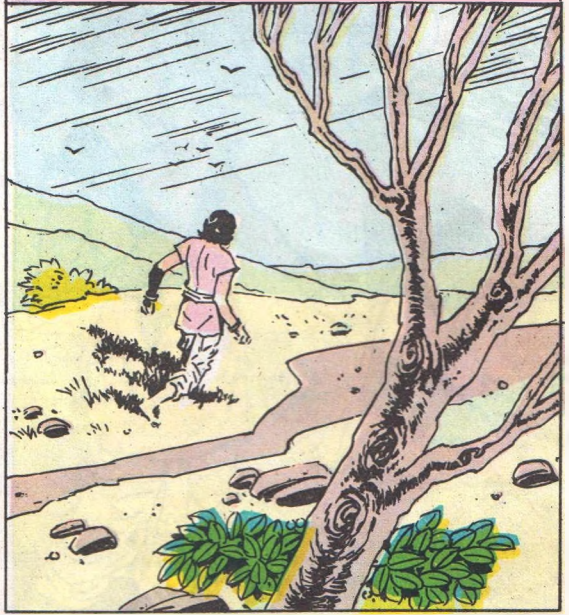
HERE, KEEP MY
RING WITH YOU
AS A REMEMBRANCE.
AND GIVE ME
SOMETHING WHICH
WILL MAKE ME
THINK OF YOU.

MY LORD, WHAT HAVE I GOT THAT I CAN GIVE YOU? JUST THESE DUNG SMEARED HANDS.

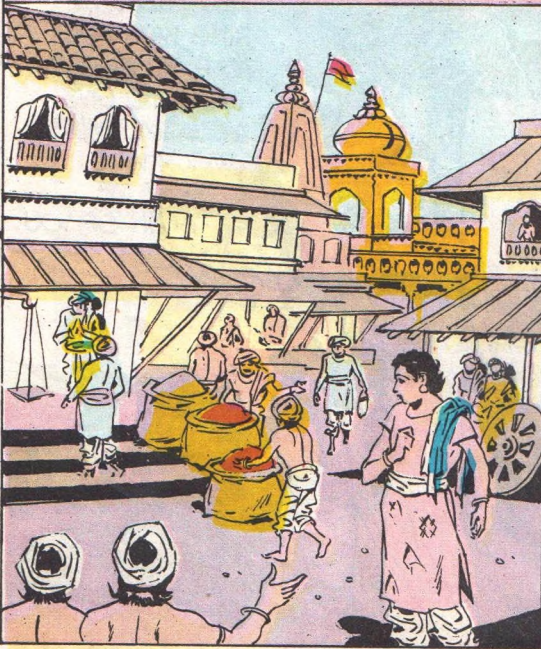


AND THE TEARS COURSED DOWN HER CHEEKS SILENTLY.

DEVIDAS THEN TOOK LEAVE OF HIS YOUNG WIFE AND WALKED ON. AFTER MANY DAYS OF HARDSHIP AND JOURNEYING...



... HE CAME UPON A TOWN WHICH LOOKED RICH AND PROSPEROUS.

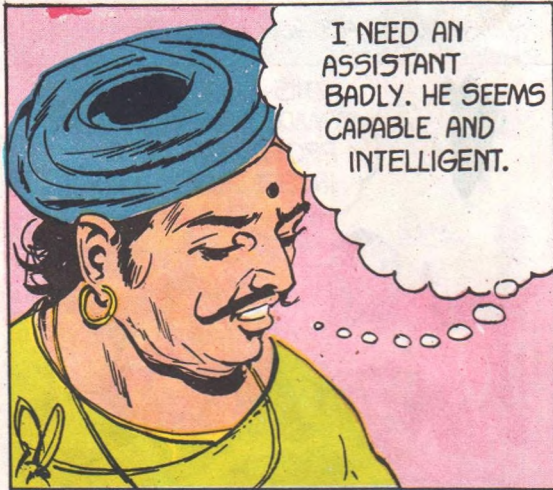


HE WENT TO THE SHOP OF THE WEALTHIEST MERCHANT IN TOWN.





SIR, I AM A POOR MAN. PLEASE GIVE ME A JOB.



I NEED AN ASSISTANT BADLY. HE SEEMS CAPABLE AND INTELLIGENT.



ALRIGHT SON. YOU CAN HELP ME WITH MY WORK.

AT THIS, DEVIDAS ASKED ANXIOUSLY-



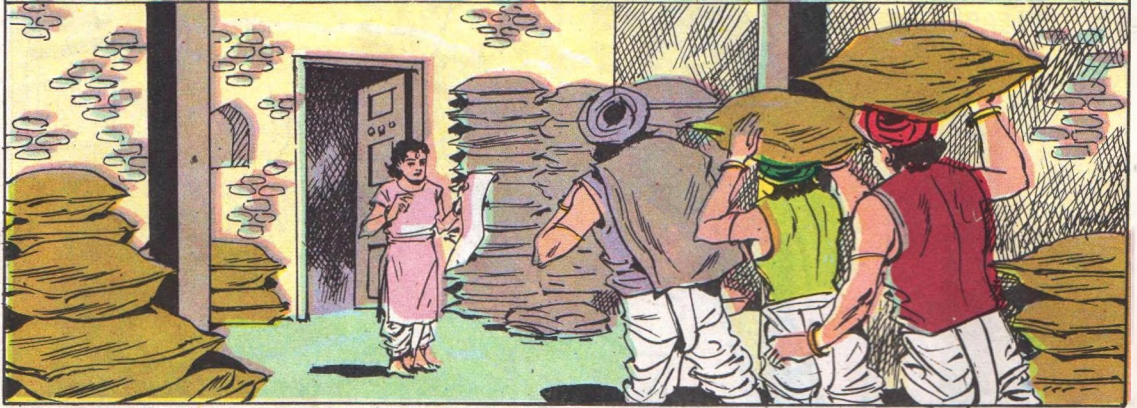
WHAT WILL YOU PAY ME, SIR?



FIRST I WILL SEE HOW WELL YOU WORK. ONLY THEN WILL I DECIDE ON YOUR PAYMENT

THIS SATISFIED DEVIDAS. THE JOB WAS NOW HIS.

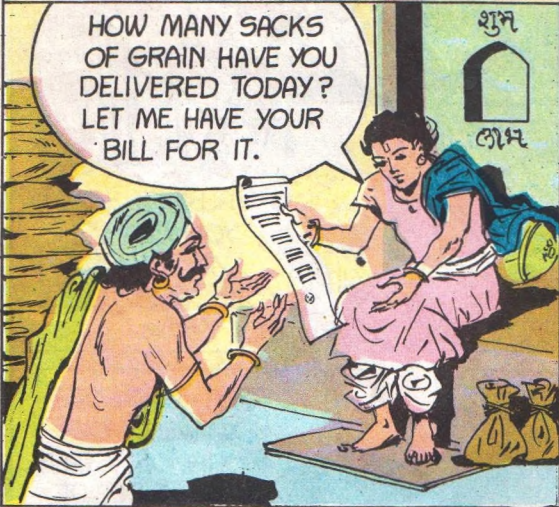
HE WOULD RISE EARLY IN THE MORNING AND START WORK AT SEVEN. HE WOULD WORK RIGHT THROUGH THE DAY WITHOUT A BREAK. THIS IMPRESSED THE SETHJI GREATLY.



WITHIN A FEW DAYS, THE MERCHANT CAME TO RELY ON HIM ENTIRELY. HE ENTRUSTED TO HIM ALL THE BUYING AND SELLING...

...AND ALSO ALL HIS ACCOUNT-KEEPING.

HOW MANY SACKS OF GRAIN HAVE YOU DELIVERED TODAY? LET ME HAVE YOUR BILL FOR IT.



THIS MONTH WE HAVE MADE A CONSIDERABLE PROFIT. WE COULD INVEST THIS MONEY IN...

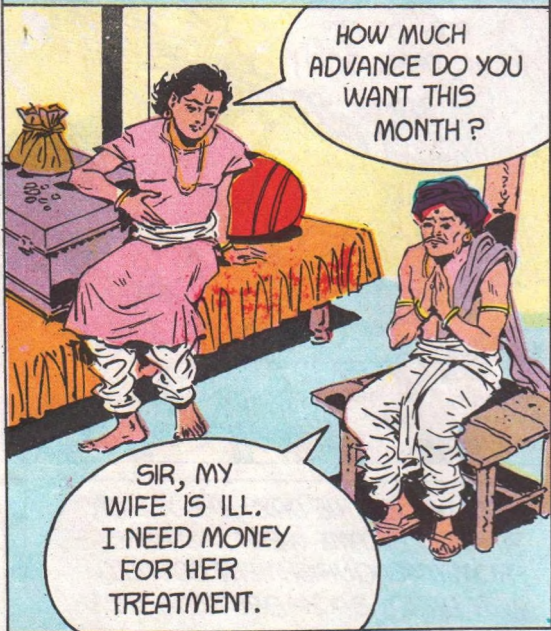


THE MERCHANT CLOSELY OBSERVED HIS SINCERITY AND DEDICATION TO HIS WORK.

HE IS A GEM AND I HAVE NO WORRIES NOW. HOW WELL HE HANDLES MY BUSINESS!



DEVIDAS DID NOT LET HIS NEW-FOUND IMPORTANCE GO TO HIS HEAD. HE WAS KIND AND CONSIDERATE TOWARDS HIS SUBORDINATES.



HOW MUCH ADVANCE DO YOU WANT THIS MONTH?

SIR, MY WIFE IS ILL. I NEED MONEY FOR HER TREATMENT.

THUS HE BECAME VERY POPULAR WITH ALL THOSE WHO CAME IN CONTACT WITH HIM. WITHIN A SHORT PERIOD, THE MERCHANT MADE HIM A PARTNER IN HIS BUSINESS.



SON, MY PROFITS HAVE DOUBLED SINCE YOU JOINED ME. I WILL GIVE YOU HALF THE SHARE IN THE BUSINESS.

I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU, SETHJI.

THUS PASSED TWELVE YEARS. DEVIDAS BECAME A RICH AND PROSPEROUS MERCHANT. THE OLD MERCHANT SOON ENTRUSTED HIS ENTIRE BUSINESS TO HIM AND SET OFF ON A PILGRIMAGE.

NOW LET US SEE WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO SUVRATA. WHEN HER HUSBAND LEFT HER AND WENT AWAY, SHE WAS TREATED VERY BADLY BY HER IN-LAWS.



WHAT AN UNNECESSARY BURDEN ON OUR HEADS! WE HAVE TO FEED HER AND CLOTHE HER, ALL FOR NOTHING!

SHE WAS MADE TO DO ALL THE MENIAL WORK IN THE HOUSE. SHE WASHED ALL THE CLOTHES, SCRUBBED ALL THE UTENSILS...

HOW SLOW AND LAZY YOU ARE! COME ON, HURRY UP.

HAVE YOU FINISHED THE CLOTHES, YOU USELESS WOMAN?



...THEN WENT INTO THE FOREST TO FETCH FIREWOOD.

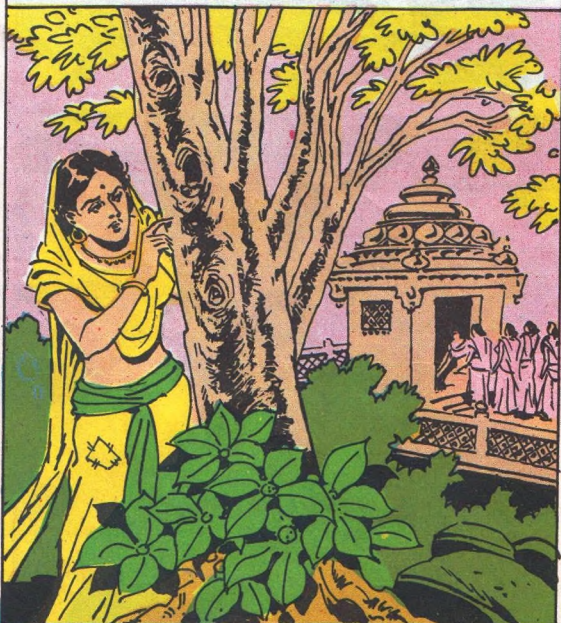
O GOD, WHAT A FATE! HAVE PITY ON ME, DEAR GOD!



WHEN SHE RETURNED FROM THE FOREST WITH HER LOAD OF FIREWOOD, SHE WOULD BE GIVEN A CHAPATI MADE FROM WHEAT HUSK AND WATER IN A CUP MADE FROM A COCONUT SHELL.

THUS PASSED THE DAYS, THE YEARS. SUVRATA BECAME WEAK AND HAGGARD FROM MALNOURISHMENT COUPLED WITH HARD, BACK-BREAKING WORK. ONE DAY WHEN SHE HAD GONE INTO THE FOREST TO GATHER FIREWOOD, SHE CAME UPON A SMALL TEMPLE WHERE A GROUP OF LADIES WERE WORSHIPPING.

HOW MANY MORE DAYS WILL I HAVE TO ENDURE ALL THIS? WHEN WILL MY HUSBAND RETURN HOME?

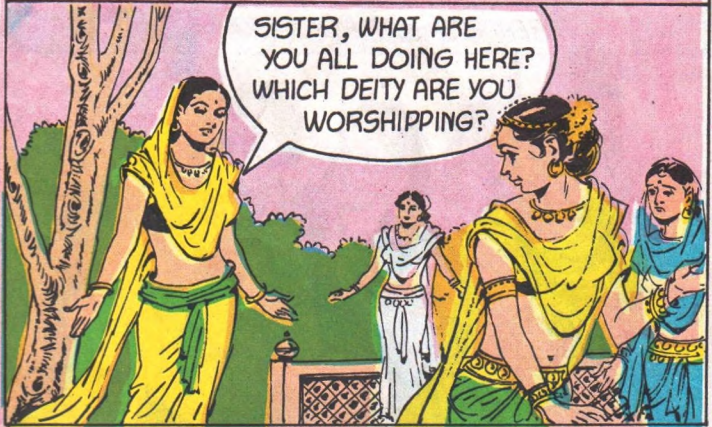


WHO CAN THEY BE? WHAT ARE THEY DOING? WHY DO I FEEL SO CALM AND PEACEFUL, ALL OF A SUDDEN?



SHE PICKED UP COURAGE AND DREW NEARER. THEN SHE APPROACHED ONE OF THE LADIES—

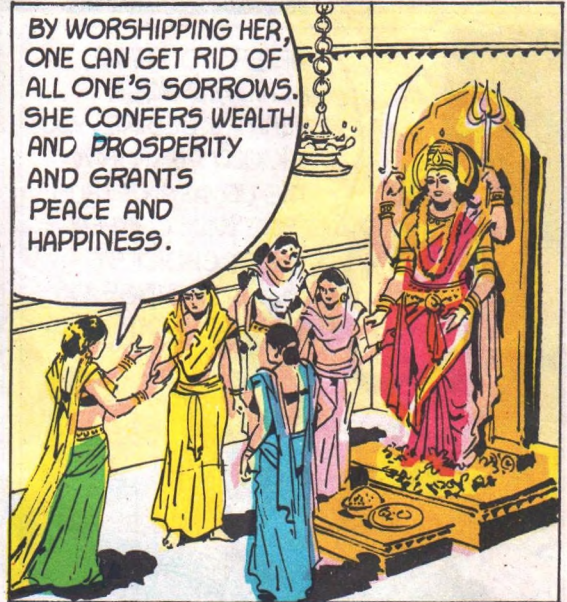
SISTER, WHAT ARE YOU ALL DOING HERE? WHICH DEITY ARE YOU WORSHIPPING?



LISTEN, SISTER. WE ARE WORSHIPPING SANTOSHI MATA. SHE IS THE DAUGHTER OF LORD GANESHA.



BY WORSHIPPING HER, ONE CAN GET RID OF ALL ONE'S SORROWS. SHE CONFERS WEALTH AND PROSPERITY AND GRANTS PEACE AND HAPPINESS.



SUVRATA LISTENED INTENTLY AS THE GOOD LADY RE-COUNTED THE GLORIES OF THE GODDESS.

SISTER, PLEASE TELL ME HOW TO GO ABOUT THIS WORSHIP. I WILL BE VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU.



THEN THE LADY EXPLAINED IN DETAIL, THE CONDITIONS OF THE SANTOSHI MATA VRATA, - FASTING ON FRIDAYS, NON-EATING OF SOUR THINGS ON THAT DAY, LIGHTING A GHEE LAMP AND READING HER HOLY STORY.



AFTER, YOU HAVE ACHIEVED YOUR HEART'S DESIRE, YOU SHOULD PERFORM THE UDYAPAN.* THUS SHE WILL CONFER HER CHOICEST BLESSINGS ON YOU.



THANK YOU, MY SISTER. I WILL PERFORM THIS VRATA ACCORDING TO YOUR INSTRUCTIONS.

THEN THE LADIES LEFT HER AND WENT AWAY.

SUVRATA WAS LEFT ALONE. SHE CLUNG TO THE FEET OF THE IDOL OF SANTOSHI MATA AND WEPT HER HEART OUT.

MOTHER, I AM FOOLISH AND IGNORANT. BUT I AM VERY UNHAPPY. HAVE PITY ON ME, MOTHER. HAVE COMPASSION ON YOUR CHILD.



THEN SHE WENT AND SOLD SOME OF THE WOOD SHE HAD COLLECTED AND WITH THE MONEY SHE BOUGHT SOME ROASTED GRAM AND JAGGERY TO COMMENCE HER VRATA.

MATA SANTOSHI WAS FILLED WITH PITY FOR THE POOR GIRL.

THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY, AS SUVRATA WAS PRAYING AT THE TEMPLE IN THE FOREST, SHE WAS FILLED WITH A SUDDEN FLOOD OF PEACE.



MAY THE GODDESS BLESS ME!



POOR THING. HOW MUCH SHE HAS SUFFERED! I MUST HELP HER.



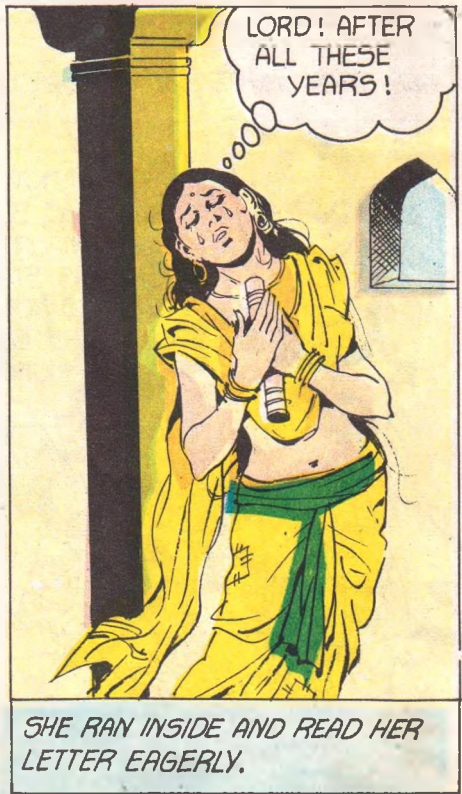
MA SANTOSHI! YOU ARE THE MOTHER OF THE UNIVERSE. ACCEPT MY HUMBLE OFFERING.

AND WHEN SHE RETURNED FROM THE FOREST—



HERE SHE IS, THAT LAZY WOMAN.

THERE IS A LETTER FOR YOU FROM YOUR HUSBAND.



LORD! AFTER ALL THESE YEARS!

SHE RAN INSIDE AND READ HER LETTER EAGERLY.

NEXT FRIDAY, SHE WORSHIPPED MOTHER AGAIN IN THE FOREST TEMPLE.



MOTHER, YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME NEWS OF HIM. O MOTHER, KEEP HIM WELL AND HAPPY.

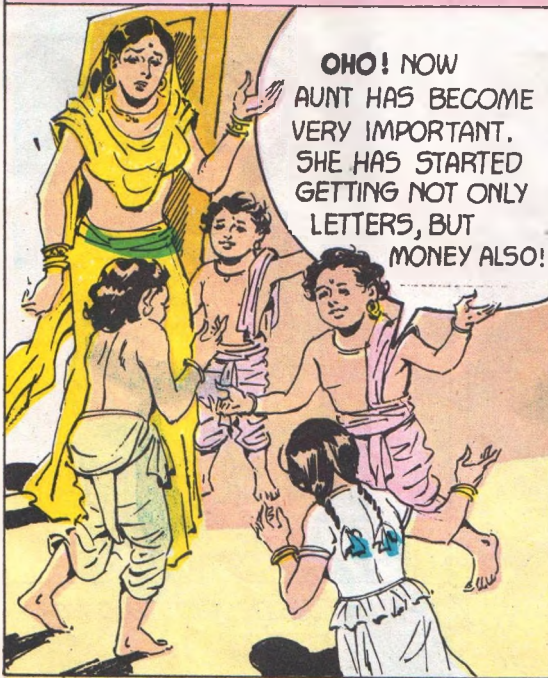
WHEN SHE RETURNED HOME THAT DAY, SHE FOUND THAT HER HUSBAND HAD SENT HER A LARGE SUM OF MONEY.



MONEY? FOR ME?

WHAT IS SO GREAT IF THAT GOOD-FOR-NOTHING HUSBAND OF YOURS SENDS MONEY ONCE IN A LIFE TIME?

HER NEPHEWS TEASED HER ABOUT IT-



OHO! NOW AUNT HAS BECOME VERY IMPORTANT. SHE HAS STARTED GETTING NOT ONLY LETTERS, BUT MONEY ALSO!



O NOW SHE WILL NOT BOTHER ABOUT US.

SHE HAS BECOME RICH!

SUVRATA WAS DEEPLY DISTRESSED.



O WHY DO YOU TALK SO? THIS MONEY IS NOT FOR ME ALONE. IT IS FOR ALL OF US TO SHARE.

TEARS WELLED UP IN HER EYES AS SHE FOUND NO WARMTH IN THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD. THEY REMAINED ALOOF AND MOCKING.

UNHAPPINESS WELLED UP INSIDE HER AGAIN AS SHE RAN OUT OF THE HOUSE. SHE WENT TO SANTOSHI MATA'S TEMPLE AND SOBBED TILL HER SHOULDERS SHOOK WITH GRIEF.

WHY ARE YOU SO CRUEL? WHAT HAVE I DONE TO YOU?

MOTHER, O MOTHER!



SANTOSHI MATA TOOK PITY ON POOR, UNHAPPY, SUVRATA. SHE APPEARED BEFORE HER, SHINING AND RESPLENDENT -

I HAVE NEVER ASKED YOU FOR MONEY. I ONLY WANT A GLIMPSE OF MY HUSBAND. I LONG FOR HIS RETURN, MOTHER.



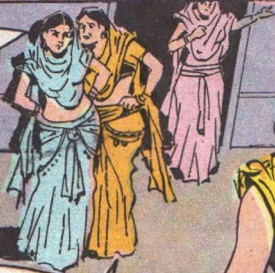
MY DAUGHTER, I AM PLEASED WITH YOU. YOUR HUSBAND WILL SURELY RETURN.

SUVRATA WAS SO HAPPY TO HEAR THIS, THAT SHE COULD NO LONGER CONTAIN HER EXCITEMENT.

SHE RAN HOME AL' THE WAY AND WENT ABOUT HER WORK WITH A BEATIFIC SMILE ON HER FACE.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS SILLY GIRL?

HOW DOES SHE APPEAR SO CHEERFUL?



NOW MA SANTOSHI THOUGHT-

I HAVE PROMISED THE GIRL THAT HER HUSBAND WILL RETURN TO HER...



... BUT HE HAS NOT EVEN GIVEN HER A THOUGHT. HE IS TOO ENGROSSSED IN HIS BUSINESS.



SO THAT NIGHT WHILE DEVIDAS SLEPT-

DEVIDAS, DEVIDAS ! ARE YOU ASLEEP OR ARE YOU AWAKE ?



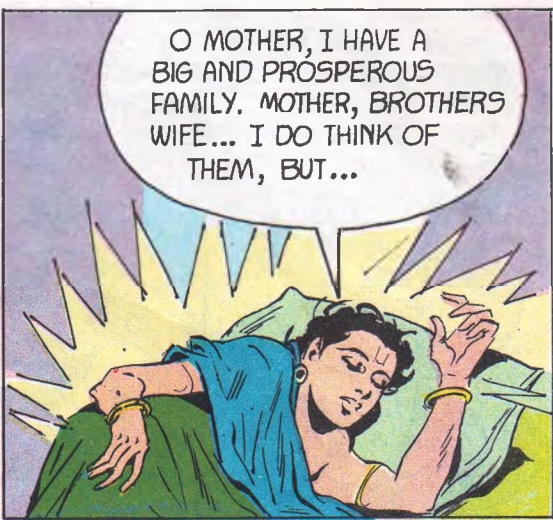
WHO ARE YOU. WHAT IS YOUR COMMAND ?



AND MOTHER SAID TO HIM GENTLY-



I AM THE GODDESS SANTOSHI. DEVIDAS, DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY? DO YOU EVER THINK OF IT ?

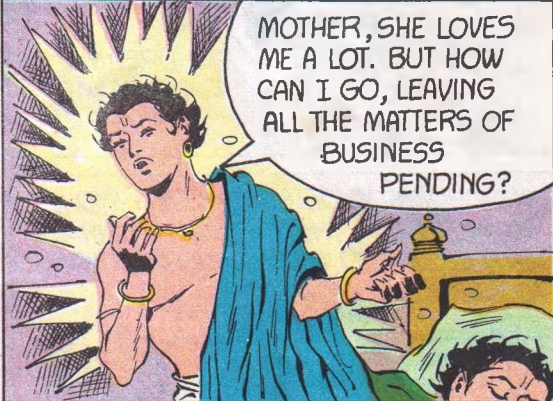


O MOTHER, I HAVE A BIG AND PROSPEROUS FAMILY. MOTHER, BROTHERS WIFE... I DO THINK OF THEM, BUT...



SON, YOUR WIFE IS VERY UNHAPPY. GO TO HER QUICKLY. SHE IS LONGING TO HAVE A GLIMPSE OF YOU.

DEVIDAS' FACE CLOUDED AS HE HEARD THIS.

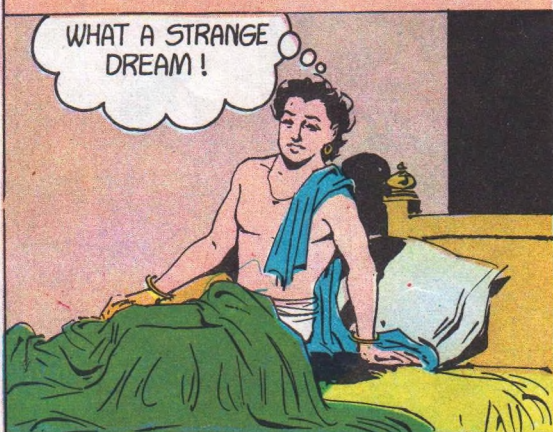


MOTHER, SHE LOVES ME A LOT. BUT HOW CAN I GO, LEAVING ALL THE MATTERS OF BUSINESS PENDING?



LISTEN TO ME, SON. BY TOMORROW YOU WILL BE ABLE TO WIND UP YOUR ENTIRE BUSINESS AND GO HOME.

DEVIDAS GOT UP WITH A START. DAWN WAS BREAKING OVER THE HORIZON.



WHAT A STRANGE DREAM !

SO SAYING, SANTOSHI MATA DISAPPEARED FROM HIS DREAM.

HE SOUGHT OUT HIS FRIENDS AND TOLD THEM OF HIS DREAM. BUT THEY JUST TOOK IT LIGHTLY AND LAUGHED AT HIM.

REALLY, DEVIDAS! YOU ARE THE LIMIT.

DO DREAMS EVER COME TRUE?

BUT THERE WAS AN OLD MAN SITTING NEARBY—

DO NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THEM, SON. DO AS THE GODDESS SAYS. IT WON'T DO YOU ANY HARM.

ACCORDINGLY, DEVIDAS WENT AND TOOK A BATH. THEN HE LIT A LAMP WITH GHEE AND MENTALLY PROSTRATED TO SANTOSHI MATA.

AS USUAL, HE OPENED HIS SHOP FOR BUSINESS.

YOUR WILL BE DONE, MOTHER!

TO HIS UTTER SURPRISE, PEOPLE WHO OWED HIM MONEY CAME, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, AND CLEARED THEIR ACCOUNTS WITH HIM...



HERE IS YOUR MONEY, SETHJI.

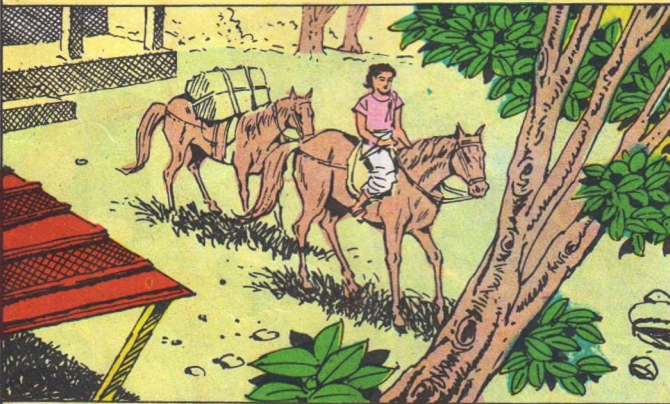
PLEASE TAKE THIS FIVE HUNDRED RUPEES THAT I HAD BORROWED FROM YOU.

... AND ALL THE STOCK IN HIS GODOWNS ALSO GOT SOLD! WHEN EVENING CAME, THERE WAS A HEAP OF MONEY BY HIS SIDE.



MY GOODNESS! I HAVE SOLD OFF MY ENTIRE BUSINESS! WHAT THE GODDESS SAID WAS TRUE, AFTER ALL.

THEN HE WENT OUT INTO THE MARKET AND BOUGHT CLOTHES AND JEWELS FOR HIS WIFE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY.



THUS EQUIPPED HE SET OUT ON HIS JOURNEY HOMEWARD, LOADED WITH GIFTS.

IT HAS BEEN SO LONG! I WISH I HAD THOUGHT OF RETURNING HOME EARLIER.



MEANWHILE, SUVRATA HAD GONE INTO THE FOREST TO GATHER FIREWOOD, AS USUAL.



I TIRE VERY EASILY THESE DAYS. LET ME REST IN MOTHER'S TEMPLE FOR A WHILE.

SOON SHE SAW A CLOUD OF DUST IN THE DISTANCE-

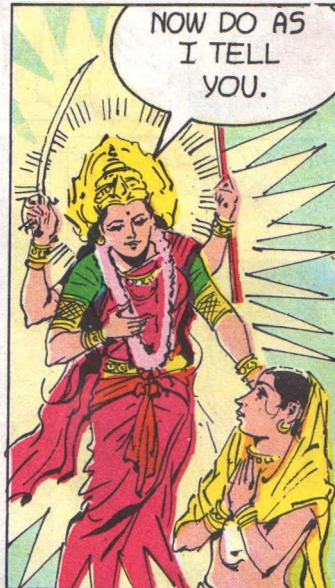


MOTHER, WHO COULD BE COMING THIS WAY?

TO HER SURPRISE, MA SANTOSHI ANSWERED HER-



CHILD, THAT IS YOUR HUSBAND RETURNING.



NOW DO AS I TELL YOU.

AND SHE PROCEEDED TO GIVE HER INSTRUCTIONS ON WHAT SHE SHOULD DO WHEN SHE RETURNED HOME.

VERY WELL, MOTHER. I WILL DO AS YOU SAY.



JUST THEN, THE STRANGER ON HORSE-
BACK CAME TO THE TEMPLE.

GOOD LADY, WILL
YOU GIVE FOOD
AND DRINK TO A
HUNGRY TRAVELLER?

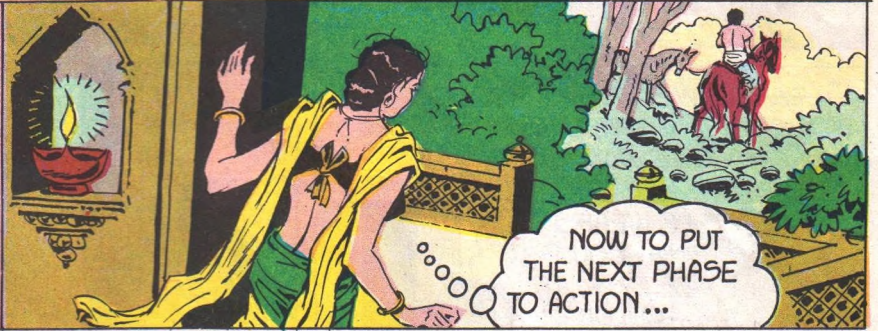
IT IS
HIM!
IT IS
HIM !!



YES, GOOD
SIR. I
WILL.



WHEN HE HAD
EATEN AND
WAS RESTED,
HE MOUNTED
HIS HORSE AND
WENT TOWARDS
HIS HOME.



NOW TO PUT
THE NEXT PHASE
TO ACTION...

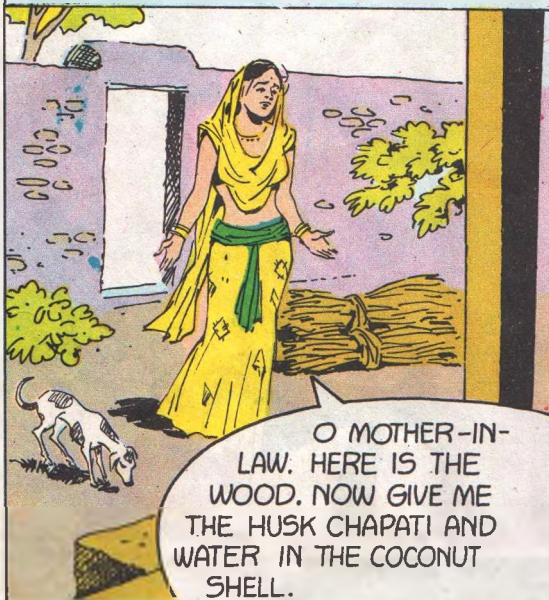
WHEN HE REACHED HOME, DEVIDAS GREETED EVERYONE WITH AFFECTION.

O IT IS
GOOD TO BE
BACK, BROTHER !

IT IS
GOOD TO
HAVE YOU
WITH US
AGAIN,
DEVIDAS.



SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, SUVRATA ENTERED WITH THE LOAD OF WOOD ON HER HEAD. SHE DUMPED IT IN THE EMPTY COURTYARD AND CALLED OUT IN A LOUD VOICE—



HER MOTHER-IN-LAW CAME OUT AND BEGAN IN SUGARY SWEET TONES—



HEARING HIS WIFE'S VOICE, DEVIDAS CAME OUT. HE WAS SHOCKED TO SEE HER HAGGARD AND UNKEMPT APPEARANCE.





THIS, MY SON, IS YOUR WIFE. EVER SINCE YOU LEFT THE HOUSE AND WENT AWAY...



... SHE HAS BEEN ROAMING LIKE THIS IN THE STREETS LIKE AN ANIMAL.



SHE DOESN'T DO A STROKE OF WORK IN THE HOUSE BUT ON THE DOT, TURNS UP AT ALL MEALTIMES.



I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CREDIT WHAT YOU SAY MOTHER. HOWEVER, SHE WONT BE A BURDEN TO YOU ANY MORE...

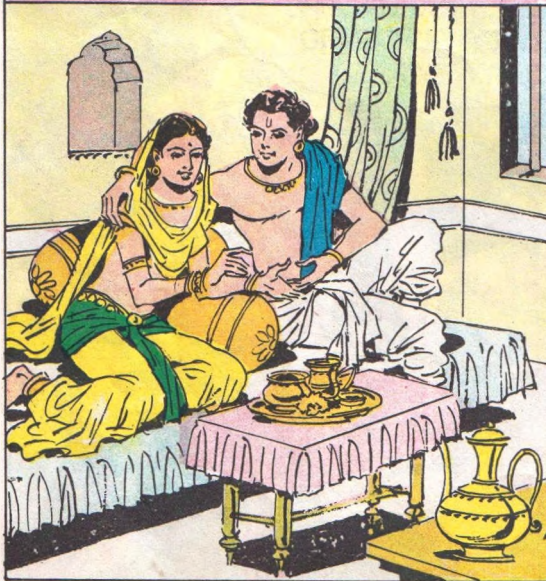


WE WILL NOT LIVE IN THIS HOUSE ANY MORE. WE WILL SET UP A SEPARATE HOUSE.



AS YOU WISH! YOU ARE, BOTH OF YOU, UNGRATEFUL WRETCHES!

DEVIDAS AND SUVRATA WERE VERY HAPPY TO MEET EACH OTHER AGAIN. THEY SET UP A HOUSE AND DECORATED IT WITH ALL THE GOODS AND RICHES HE HAD BROUGHT WITH HIM.



LORD, TODAY IS FRIDAY. I WOULD LIKE TO DO UDYAPAN OF MY VRATA.

DO SO, SUVRATA. MA SANTOSHI HAS BEEN KIND TO US.

SO SHE STARTED MAKING PREPARATIONS FOR THE FEAST. ACCORDING TO CUSTOM, SHE WENT TO HER SISTERS-IN-LAW.

I AM DOING UDYAPAN OF MY VRATA. PLEASE SEND THE BOYS FOR THE FEAST.

CERTAINLY WE WILL, SISTER.

ACCORDINGLY, THE BOYS WENT TO THEIR YOUNGEST UNCLE'S HOUSE FOR MEALS. BUT WHEN THEY HAD FINISHED EATING--

AUNTY, AUNTY, GIVE US SOMETHING SOUR TO EAT.

WE DONT LIKE THE SWEETS. GIVE US SOME-THING SOUR.

BUT SUVRATA REFUSED TO GIVE THEM ANYTHING SOUR, FOR THIS WOULD VIOLATE THE CONDITIONS OF THE VRATA. SO THE BOYS THEMSELVES TOOK SOME TAMARIND AND LICKING THE SOUR FRUIT GLEEFULLY, THEY RAN AWAY!

SUVRATA'S VRATA FAILED! THE KING'S MEN CAME AND TOOK HER HUSBAND AWAY.

ARE YOU DEVIDAS ?

COME WITH US. THE KING HAS SENT FOR YOU.

HER IN-LAWS CAME AND RANSACKED HER HOUSE. SUVRATA WAS TERRIFIED. SHE RAN TO MA SANTOSHI'S TEMPLE, WHICH WAS HER ONLY SOLACE.



MOTHER, O MOTHER!
WHY HAVE YOU
DESERTED ME?
WHY HAVE YOU
TAKEN MY SMILES
AND GIVEN ME
TEARS?

AND SANTOSHI MATA CONSOLED HER—



GO CHILD; YOU
WILL MEET YOUR HUSBAND
ON THE WAY. CALL YOUR
NEPHEWS AGAIN FOR UDYAPAN,
BUT SEE THAT THEY DON'T
EAT ANYTHING SOUR!

AS SUVRATA WAS WALKING HOME, SHE MET HER HUSBAND RETURNING.



IT WAS NOTHING, MY
DEAR. THE KING JUST
WANTED ME TO PAY
TAXES FOR THE WEALTH
I BROUGHT INTO
THE COUNTRY.

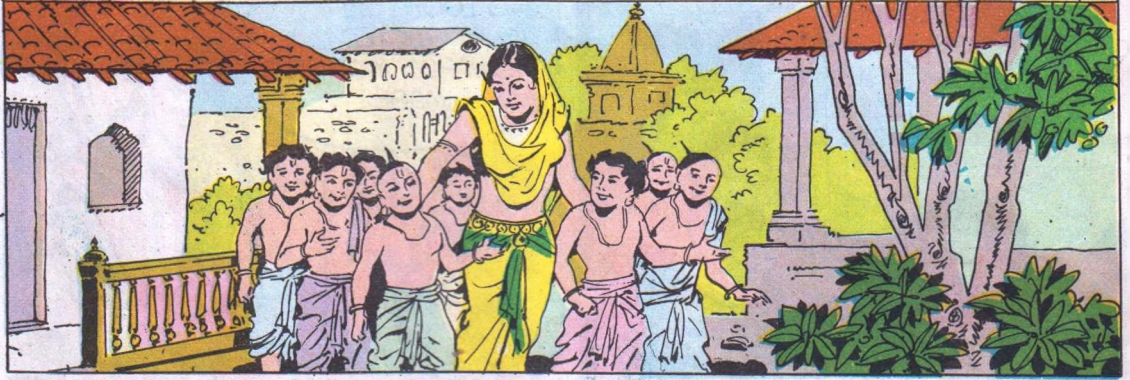
WHEN THE NEXT FRIDAY CAME, SHE WENT TO INVITE HER NEPHEWS FOR THE FEAST.



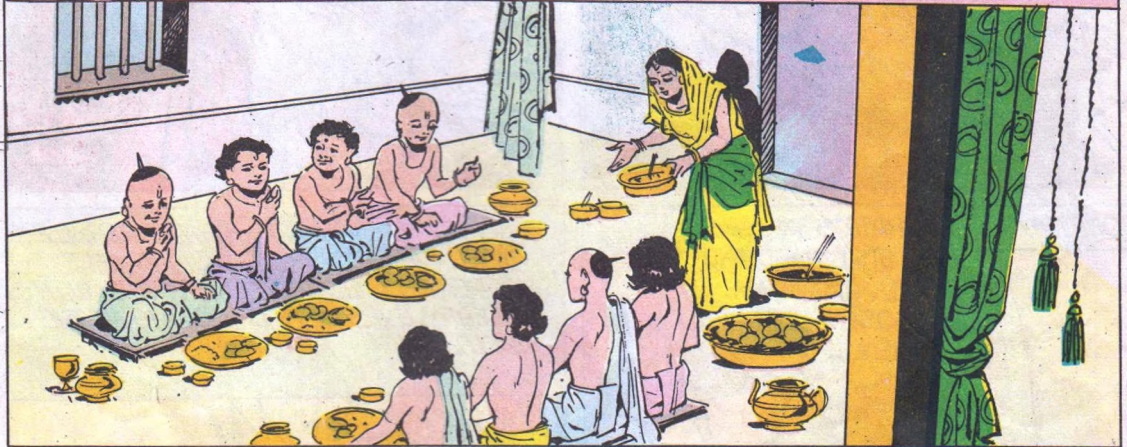
GO CHILDREN GO.
EAT YOUR FILL IN
AUNTY'S HOUSE
AND COME.

AND DON'T
FORGET WHAT
WE HAVE TOLD
YOU!

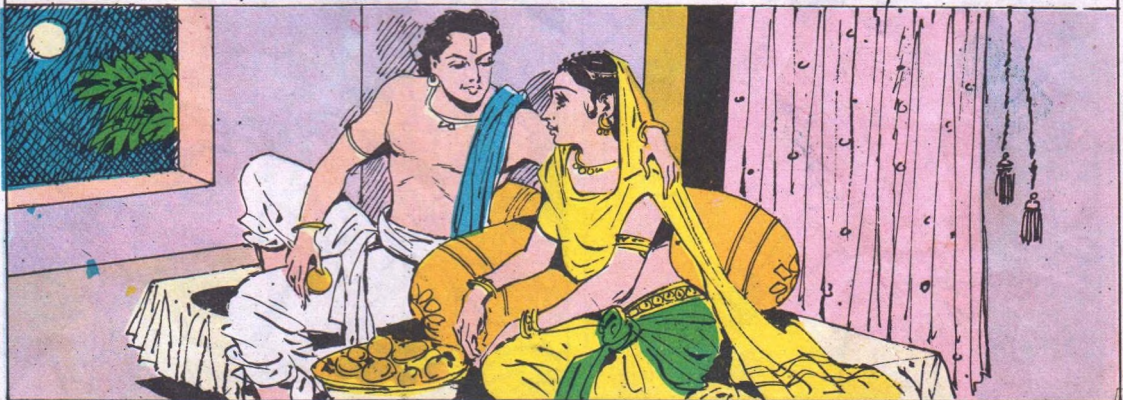
AT THE FEAST, THE CHILDREN AGAIN CLAMoured FOR SOUR THINGS TO EAT. THIS TIME SUVRATA GOT ANNOYED. SHE WENT AND BROUGHT EIGHT BRAHMIN BOYS.



LOVINGLY, SHE FED THEM ALL THE DELICACIES AND SWEETS SHE HAD PREPARED.



THEN SHE GAVE THEM A FRUIT EACH AND THEY WENT AWAY HAPPILY. SHE FELT IMMENSELY SATISFIED, AS AT LAST, SHE HAD BEEN ABLE TO COMPLETE HER VRATA.



AFTER SOME TIME, MA SANTOSHI BLESSED THE DEVOTED COUPLE WITH A BONNY SON.

ALL MOTHER'S BLESSINGS!



OFTEN, THEY WOULD TAKE THE BABY WITH THEM AND VISIT MOTHER'S TEMPLE IN THE FOREST.

O LOOK! HE IS ATTRACTED TOWARDS MOTHER'S IMAGE!



ONE DAY -

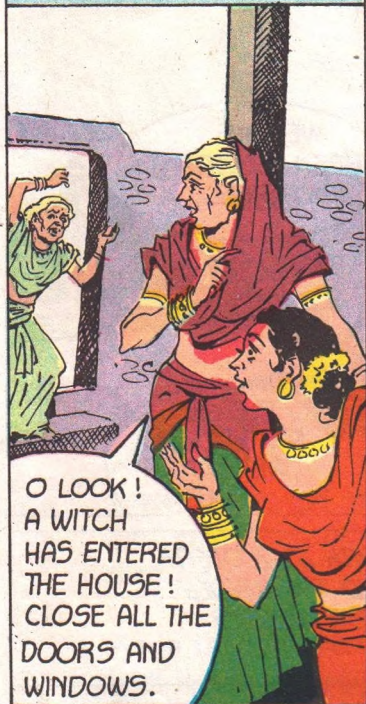
SUVRATA'S IN-LAWS ARE STILL HARD AND CRUEL. HMMMMM. SUPPOSE I VISIT THEM...



SO SANTOSHI MATA TURNED HERSELF INTO A HIDEOUS OLD WOMAN. SHE APPEARED DECREPIT WITH AGE, WITH BLEARY EYES AND DROOLING AT THE MOUTH.



AS SHE STEPPED INTO THE COURTYARD—



BOYS, CHASE HER AWAY, THE OLD WITCH!



JUST THEN, SUVRATA WHO WAS VISITING THEM THAT DAY, HEARD THE COMMOTION AND CAME OUT.

O WHAT ARE YOU DOING. SHE IS MY MOTHER, WHOM I HAVE BEEN WORSHIPPING ALL THESE DAYS!



AT THAT MOMENT, MA SANTOSHI REVEALED HER TRUE FORM TO THEM. SUVRATA'S MOTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTERS-IN-LAW GAPED IN ASTONISHMENT AT THE SIGHT.



THEY FELT REMORSE FOR ALL THEIR WICKED DEEDS, AND FELL AT HER FEET.



MOTHER,
FORGIVE US!

WE HAVE
BEEN IGNORANT
AND CRUEL.

PLEASE
FORGIVE US,
WE BEG OF
YOU!

AND SANTOSHI MATA, EVER COMPASSIONATE, WITH LOVE OVERFLOWING FOR HER SINCERE DEVOTEES, BLESSED THE WHOLE FAMILY WITH HEALTH, WEALTH AND ALL THAT THEIR HEARTS COULD DESIRE.



JAI
SANTOSHI
MATA!

JAI
SANTOSHI
MATA!

JAI
SANTOSHI
MATA!

The philosophical interpretation of the deity Santoshi Mata may be construed as a combination of supreme wisdom and intelligence, super powers and the ability to achieve things in life. Therefore invoking her grace would amount to invoking and unfolding within ourselves these qualities.

As in the observance of any *vrata*, the Santoshi Mata *vrata*, too, carries with it its own taboos—non-eating of sour foods, eating only one meal a day and performing an *udyapan* on completion of the *vrata*. These restrictions can only be to discipline one's physical and mental capacities in order to make them single-pointed. Here, we have attempted to render in an authentic form the story which constitutes the traditional *Santoshi Mata Vrata Katha*.

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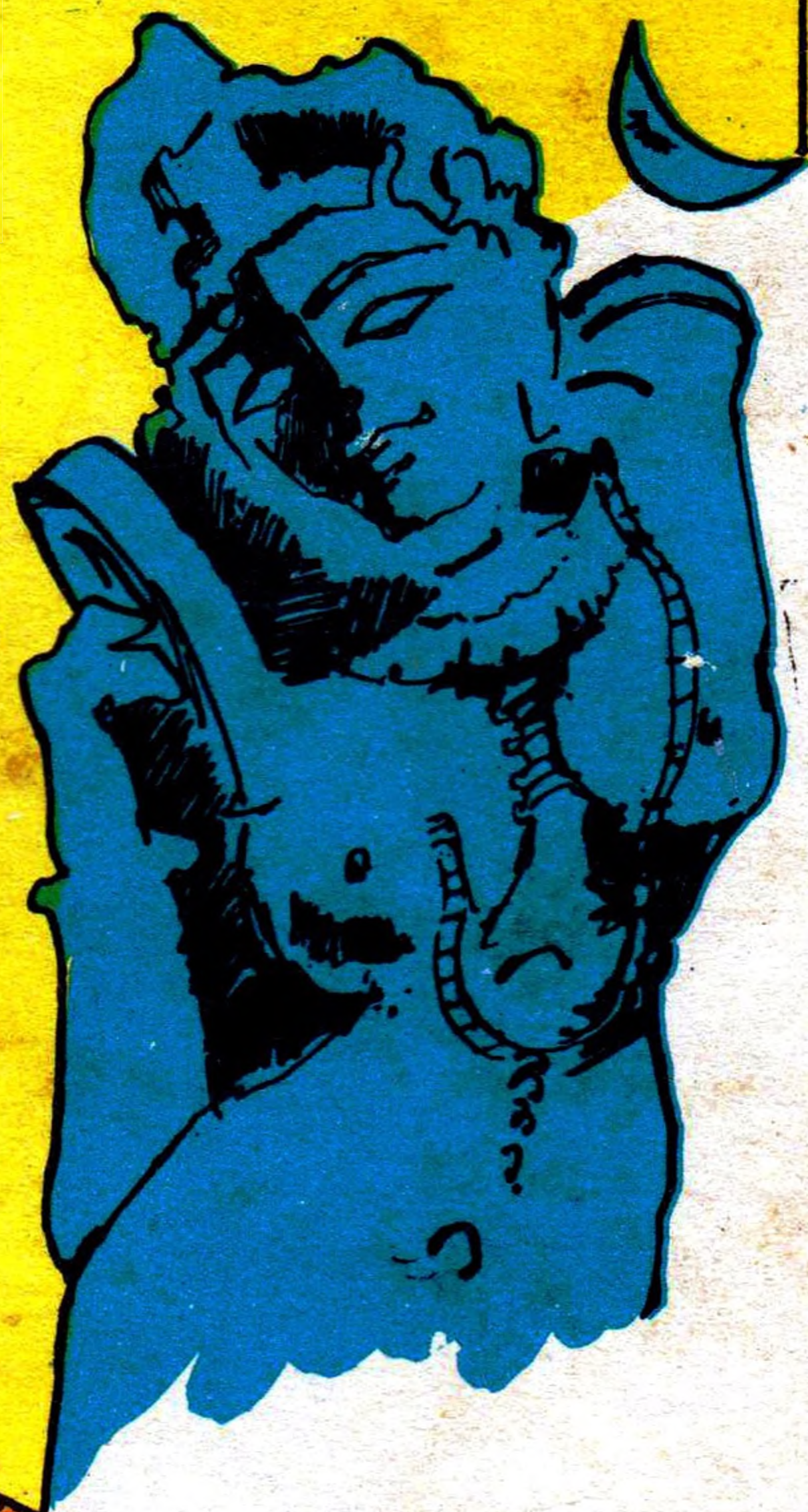
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