



No. 162 Rs. 4.00

YAYATI

— RETOLD FROM THE MAHABHARATA



In Hindu mythology, Yayati, the son of Nahusha, is depicted as one of the wisest and noblest rulers of the times. Such was his knowledge that even Indra, king of the celestials, held him in esteem. His encounter with Devayani and later with Sharmishtha, the Asura princess, is one of the most romantic episodes of the Mahabharata. It is significant that a woman in those days enjoyed the right to choose the man she wanted to marry, a right that Devayani exercised when she chose Yayati.

Yayati found wisdom the hard way. Though the study of the scriptures undoubtedly moulded his character, he learnt the truth of the maxims by his own experience. The scriptures uphold restraint and self-control as the prerequisites of self-realisation. By experience, Yayati realised that happiness, peace of mind and contentment elude those who make no effort at self-control in the misguided belief that the cravings of the body run themselves out in course of time; and that the best course is not to resist but to yield.

In portraying the characters of this tale from the Mahabharata, we have deviated slightly from the original for our young readers.

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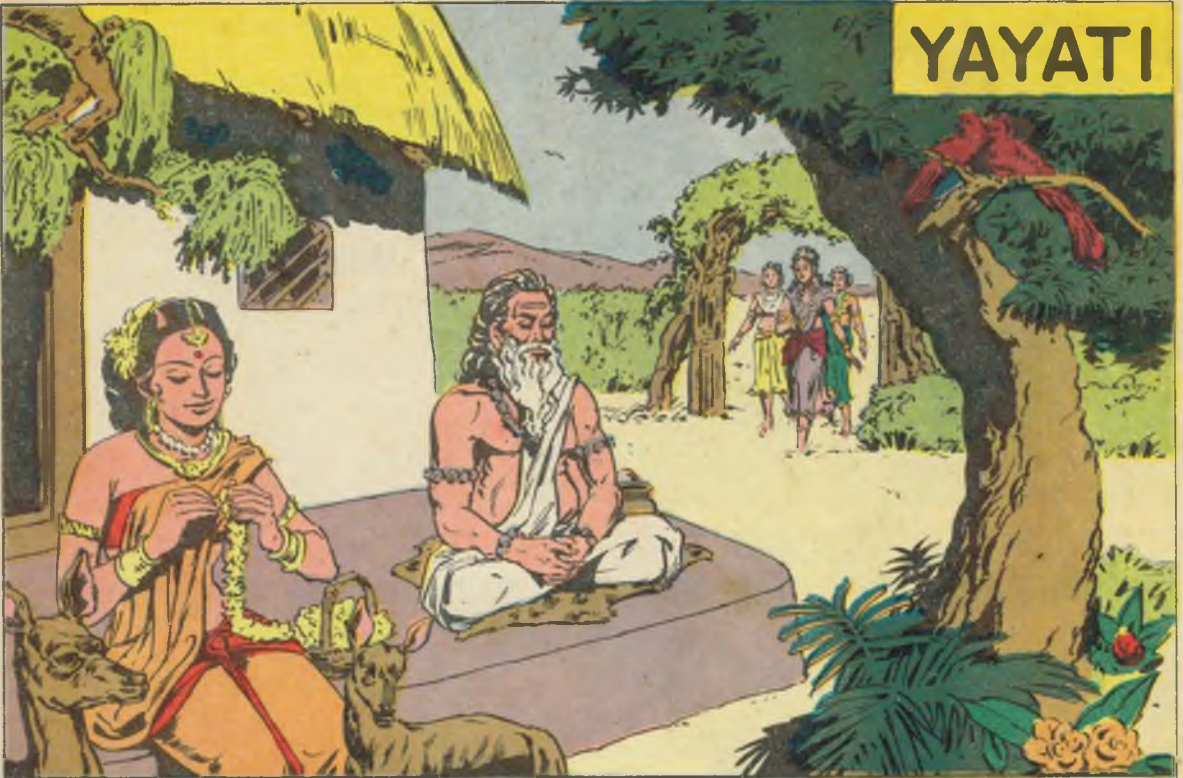
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YAYATI



DEVAYANI WAS THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF SHUKRACHARYA, THE PRECEPTOR OF VRISHA-PARVA, KING OF THE ASURAS. UNFORTUNATELY SHE WAS A SPOILT, WILFUL GIRL AS HER FATHER DOTTED ON HER, INDULGING HER EVERY WHIM AND FANCY.

ONE MORNING, SHARMISHTHA, THE ASURA PRINCESS, CALLED ON SHUKRACHARYA.

HOLY ONE, WE ARE GOING TO THE GARDEN OF THE GANDHARVAS* IN THE FOREST, TO SWIM IN THE LAKE THERE. MAY WE TAKE DEVAYANI WITH US?



DO SO BY ALL MEANS. BUT TAKE GOOD CARE OF HER.

I CERTAINLY WILL, HOLY ONE! I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU LOVE HER.



SHARMISHTHA AND DEVAYANI LEFT THE ASHRAM WITH THEIR FRIENDS.

*CELESTIAL MUSICIANS, A CLASS OF 'DEMI-GODS'

AS THE GIRLS APPROACHED THE LAKE, THE GARDEN RESOUNDED WITH THEIR GABBLE AND LAUGHTER.



THEY LEFT THEIR CLOTHES IN SEPARATE HEAPS ON THE BANK AND PLUNGED INTO THE LAKE.



SUDDENLY, A STORM BROKE OUT AND SOON THE CLOTHES WERE ALL JUMBLED UP.



WHEN THEY CAME OUT OF THE LAKE, THE GIRLS HURRIEDLY SORTED OUT THEIR CLOTHES AND DRESSED THEMSELVES.



AS THEY WERE ABOUT TO SET OUT HOMEWARDS —



AND WORKING HERSELF UP INTO A FRENZY, DEVAYANI FLEW AT SHARMISHTHA.

HOW DARE YOU TAKE MY GARMENT? DON'T YOU KNOW, YOU SHOULD NOT COVET WHAT BELONGS TO ANOTHER, YOU THIEF?



SHARMISHTHA WAS STUNNED BY THE HARSH WORDS.

HOW UNREASONABLE CAN DEVAYANI GET! CAN'T SHE REALISE THAT IT WAS DONE BY MISTAKE?



WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER ME — YOU COMMON THIEF?





ALL RIGHT, I'LL ANSWER YOU. HOW COULD I BE A THIEF WHEN I'VE ONLY TAKEN WHAT IS MINE?



YES. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO CALL YOUR OWN. YOUR FATHER GIVES YOU WHAT HE RECEIVES FROM MY FATHER AS ALMS, O DAUGHTER OF A BEGGAR.



HOW DARE YOU CALL MY FATHER, THE GREAT SHUKRACHARYA, A BEGGAR!



HE IS ONE ! HE SINGS THE PRAISES OF MY FATHER, BEGS AND GETS ALMS WHICH HE PASSES ON TO YOU AS GIFTS.

NO!!

AS SHARMISHTHA BEGAN TO WALK AWAY —



GIVE ME BACK MY CLOTHES, YOU THIEF!

DEVAYANI RAN AFTER HER AND PULLED HER ROBE.

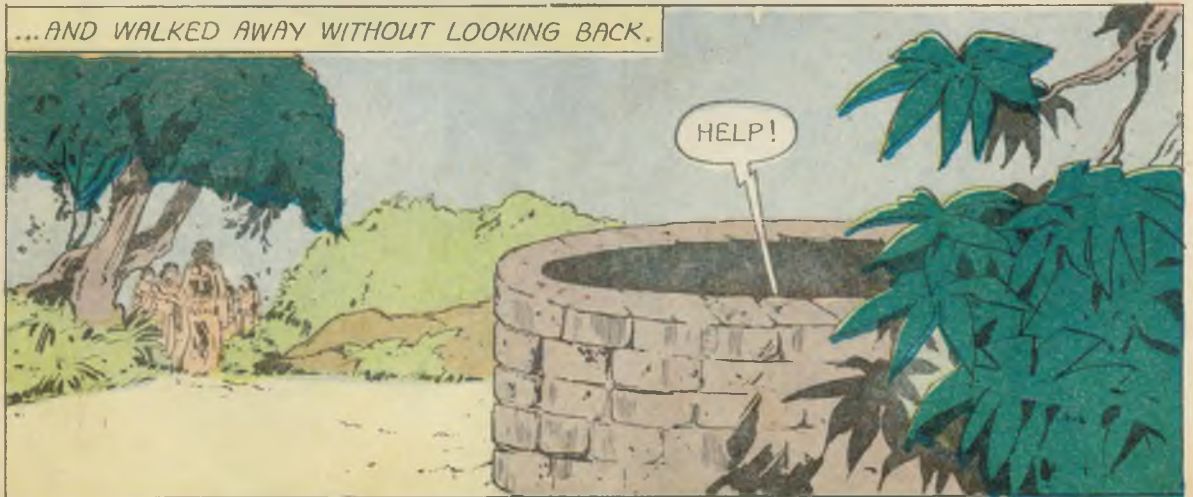
I WON'T ALLOW YOU TO GET AWAY WITH YOUR LOOT.



SHARMISHTHA GAVE HER A PUSH...



... AND WALKED AWAY WITHOUT LOOKING BACK.



HELP!

JUST THEN, KING YAYATI WHO HAD BEEN OUT HUNTING PASSED BY.

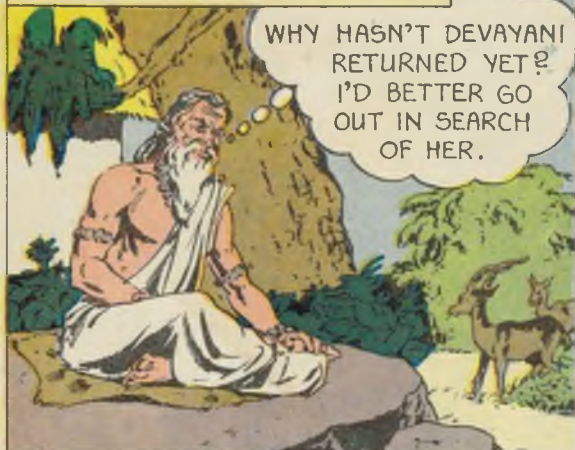


HE RODE UP TO THE WELL AND LOOKED INTO IT. SUDDENLY—





MEANWHILE, AT THE ASHRAM—



AT LAST—



THE NEXT MOMENT—



DEVAYANI TOLD HER FATHER WHAT HAD HAPPENED. THEN—







HOW CAN I LIVE IN THIS KINGDOM AS A DEPENDANT OF THAT ARROGANT PRINCESS?



SHUKRACHARYA COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE HIS BELOVED DAUGHTER WEEP.

COMPOSE YOURSELF, MY DAUGHTER. SHE WHO HAS HURT YOU WILL NOT GO UNPUNISHED.

LEAVING DEVAYANI IN THE FOREST, SHUKRACHARYA LEFT FOR THE CAPITAL OF THE ASURAS.



WHEN HE STOMPED INTO THE PALACE, KING VRISHAPARVA GOT UP AND RECEIVED HIM WITH THE RESPECT DUE TO A PRECEPTOR.



VRISHAPARVA, I HAVE COME TO TELL YOU THAT I AM LEAVING YOUR KINGDOM — NEVER TO RETURN.



VRISHAPARVA AND SHARMISHTHA LEFT FOR THE FOREST.



IF THE RESPECTED SHUKRACHARYA REFUSES TO RETURN, WE ARE DOOMED. WHO ELSE WILL BRING THE ASURAS KILLED BY THE DEVAS BACK TO LIFE?

DON'T WORRY, FATHER. WE WILL GRATIFY DEVAYANI AND BRING THEM BACK.

WHEN THEY REACHED THE FOREST —



O DEVAYANI, PLEASE FORGIVE SHARMISHTHA.

I WILL, ON ONE CONDITION.



ANYTHING YOU ASK FOR WILL BE GRANTED.



SHARMISHTHA WITH A THOUSAND MAIDS SHOULD WAIT ON ME. SHE MUST FOLLOW ME WHEREVER I GO.



I SHALL CHEERFULLY DO SO, DEVAYANI. YOU AND YOUR REVERED FATHER MUST NOT LEAVE THE ASURAS.

HER ANGER APPEASED, DEVAYANI AND SHUKRACHARYA RETURNED TO THE ASHRAM.



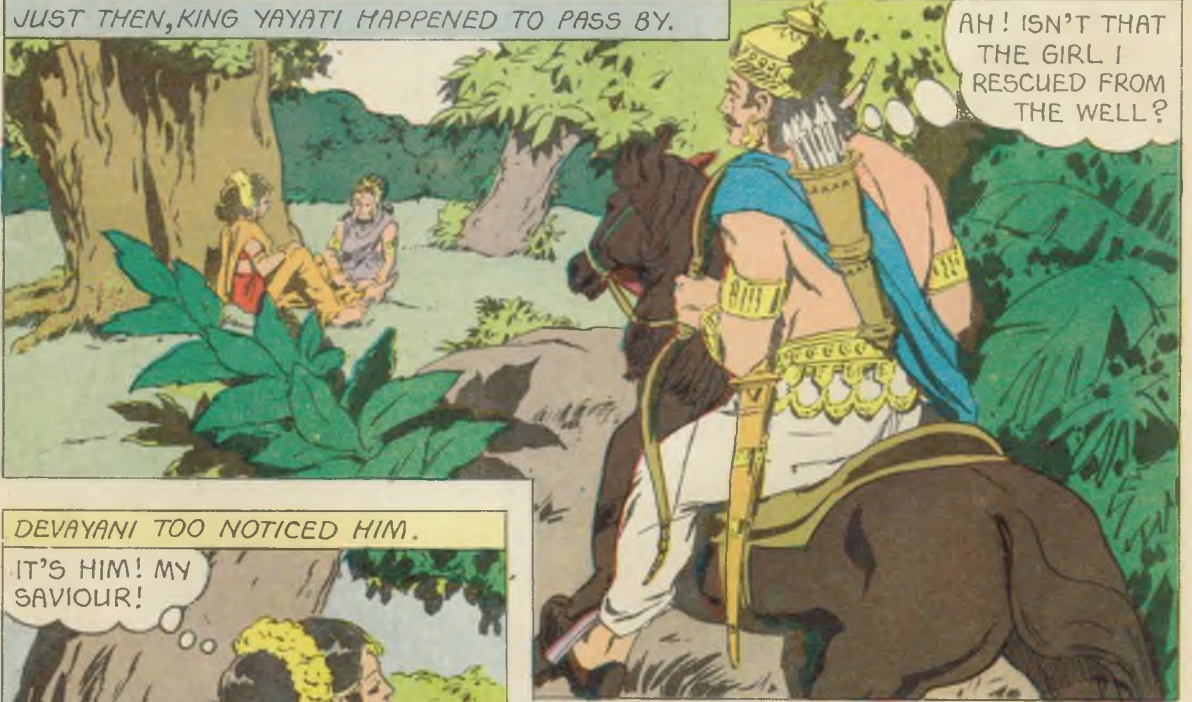
A FEW DAYS LATER, DEVAYANI WENT ONCE AGAIN TO THE SAME FOREST WITH SHARMISHTHA AND THE OTHER MAIDS.



AFTER A WHILE —



JUST THEN, KING YAYATI HAPPENED TO PASS BY.



DEVAYANI TOO NOTICED HIM.

IT'S HIM! MY
SAVIOUR!



YAYATI APPROACHED DEVAYANI AND SHARMISHTHA.





DEVAYANI SENT FOR HER FATHER. WHEN HE CAME —



DEVAYANI STEPPED FORWARD.



* ROYAL SAGE

A FEW DAYS LATER, YAYATI MARRIED DEVAYANI.



WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR THEM TO TAKE LEAVE OF SHUKRACHARYA —

YAYATI, TAKE CARE OF DEVAYANI. SHE IS DEARER TO ME THAN LIFE.

I WILL, REVERED ONE.



KEEP HER HAPPY. NEVER HURT HER BY YOUR WORDS OR DEEDS.



I ASSURE YOU, I WON'T, HOLY ONE.

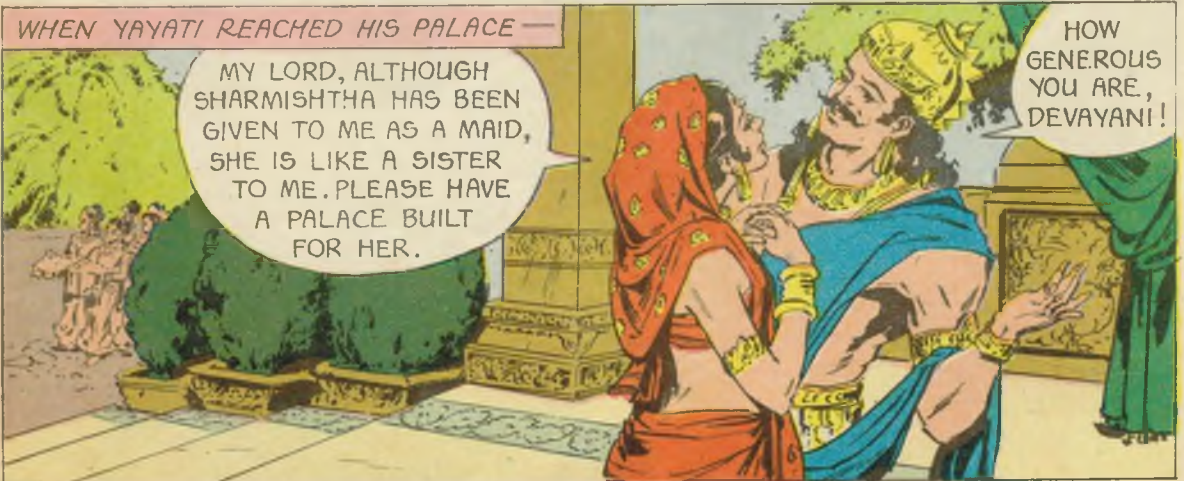
YAYATI LEFT FOR HIS CAPITAL WITH DEVAYANI, SHARMISHTHA AND TWO THOUSAND MAIDS.



YAYATI'S SUBJECTS GAVE THEM A ROUSING WELCOME.



WHEN YAYATI REACHED HIS PALACE —



* CELESTIAL NYMPH

SO A PALACE WAS BUILT FOR SHARMISHTHA ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY. DEVAYANI TOOK HER THERE.

SHARMISHTHA, THIS IS YOUR HOME, A HOME BEFITTING THE DAUGHTER OF THE ASURA KING.



DEVAYANI LIVED HAPPILY WITH YAYATI. TWO SONS WERE BORN TO THEM — YADU AND TURVASU.



ONE DAY, YAYATI WENT ON A HUNT.



WHILE RETURNING, HE STRAYED INTO SHARMISHTHA'S GARDEN.

WHO COULD THIS BEAUTIFUL ONE BE? OH! IT'S SHARMISHTHA!



SHARMISHTHA APPROACHED HIM.

WELCOME, O KING!

SHARMISHTHA, HOW ARE YOU? ARE YOU HAPPY?



HOW COULD I BE, O KING, IN A HOUSE WHERE A CHILD'S LAUGHTER IS NOT HEARD?



O KING, I BEG YOU, ACCEPT ME AS YOUR WIFE AND ENABLE ME TO BECOME A MOTHER OF SONS AS BRAVE AND ACCOMPLISHED AS YOU.



YAYATI WAS TAKEN ABACK.

HOW CAN I, SHARMISHTHA? I AM MARRIED TO DEVAYANI.

OUR SCRIPTURES ALLOW A KING TO MARRY MANY TIMES.



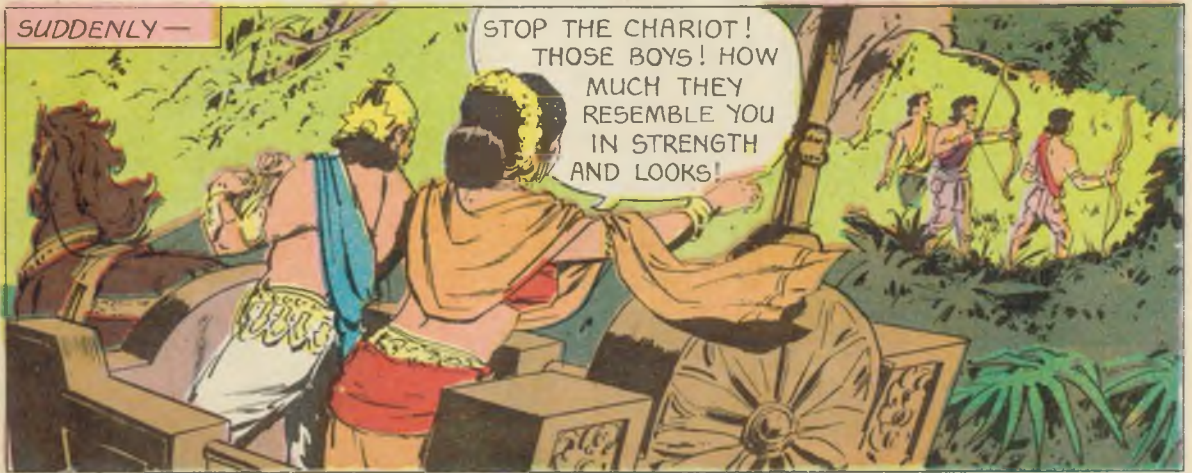


*MUTUAL CONSENT SANCTIFIED A GANDHARVA MARRIAGE

DEVAYANI, HOWEVER, WAS UNAWARE OF ALL THIS. ONE DAY, A FEW YEARS LATER, SHE ACCOMPANIED YAYATI TO THE FOREST.



SUDDENLY —



STOP THE CHARIOT!
THOSE BOYS! HOW
MUCH THEY
RESEMBLE YOU
IN STRENGTH
AND LOOKS!

SHE GOT DOWN AND APPROACHED THEM.

WHOSE CHILDREN
ARE YOU?

IT'S FATHER.



FATHER?
NO!



JUST THEN SHARMISHTHA CAME THERE.



MOTHER! FATHER IS HERE TO SEE US.

SHARMISHTHA!



MY HUSBAND HAS MARRIED SHARMISHTHA WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE. THEY HAVE MADE A FOOL OF ME.



O KING, YOU HAVE DECEIVED ME! NOT A MOMENT LONGER WILL I STAY WITH YOU!

PLEASE LISTEN, DEVAYANI...



DEVAYANI, COME BACK!

DEVAYANI, HOWEVER, DID NOT STOP TILL SHE REACHED HER FATHER'S ASHRAM.



FATHER!

MY CHILD. WHAT'S THE MATTER?



FATHER, I'VE BEEN DECEIVED BY MY HUSBAND.

AND DEVAYANI TOLD HER STORY TO HER FATHER.

JUST THEN, YAYATI WHO HAD FOLLOWED HIS WIFE, CAME THERE.



O KING, YOU HAD PROMISED ME YOU WOULD NOT HURT MY DAUGHTER BY YOUR WORDS OR DEEDS. YOU HAVE BROKEN YOUR PROMISE.

SINCE IT WAS THE CURSE OF YOUTH THAT PROMPTED YOU TO DO SO, MAY YOU LOSE YOUR YOUTH AND GROW OLD THIS MINUTE.



NO!

THE NEXT MINUTE, A SUDDEN CHANGE CAME OVER YAYATI.



YAYATI TREMBLED AT THE FATE THAT HAD BEFALLEN HIM.



HOLY ONE, I IMPLORER YOU, TAKE BACK YOUR WORDS AND RESTORE MY YOUTH.



I CANNOT REVOKE A CURSE, YAYATI. BUT IF ANYONE IS PREPARED TO OBLIGE YOU, YOU MAY EXCHANGE HIS YOUTH FOR YOUR OLD AGE.



ONE OF MY DUTIFUL SONS WILL CERTAINLY OBLIGE ME. I'LL GO TO THEM THIS VERY MOMENT.



YAYATI, NOW AN OLD MAN RUSHED TO HIS CAPITAL AND SENT FOR HIS FIRST-BORN.

O YADU, MY DUTIFUL SON, TAKE MY OLD AGE AND GIVE ME YOUR YOUTH FOR A PERIOD OF A THOUSAND YEARS.



HOW CAN I, FATHER? I HAVE MY OWN DREAMS AND AMBITIONS. HOW CAN I FULFIL MY DESIRES IF I GIVE UP MY YOUTH AND EMBRACE OLD AGE?



YAYATI'S REQUEST WAS TURNED DOWN BY HIS NEXT THREE SONS AS WELL. AT LAST HE APPROACHED THE YOUNGEST.

PURU, YOU ARE MY ONLY HOPE. OR WILL YOU ALSO...

NO, FATHER, I WON'T.



I WILL GLADLY EXCHANGE MY YOUTH FOR YOUR OLD AGE. TAKE MY YOUTH, AND RETAIN IT AS LONG AS YOU DESIRE.



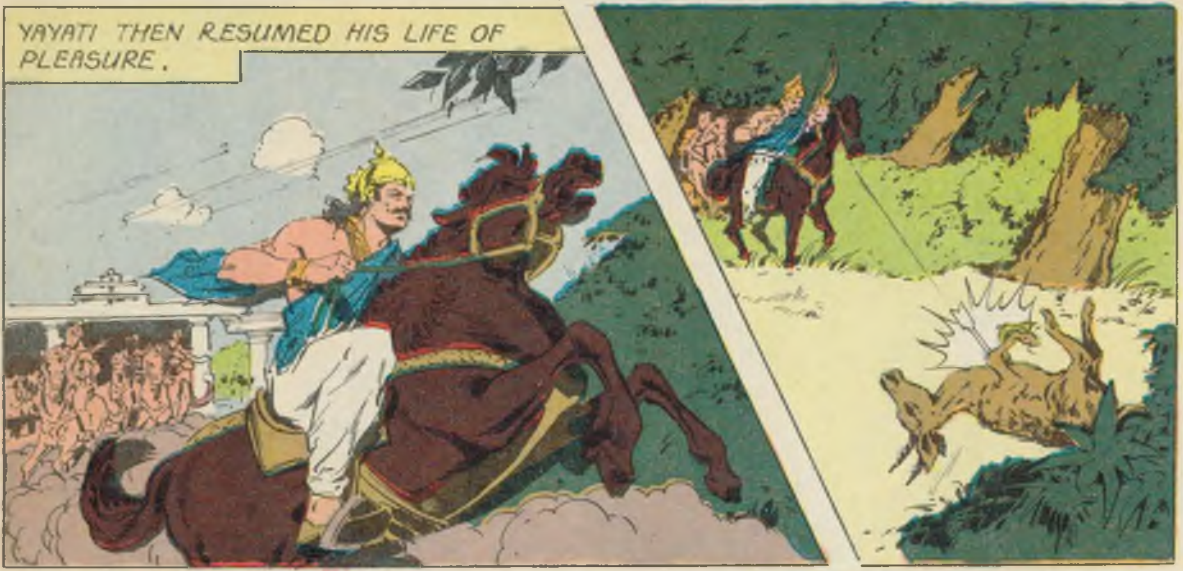
THE NEXT MOMENT, YAYATI BECAME A YOUNG MAN AND PURU AN OLD ONE.



SON, I WILL GIVE BACK YOUR YOUTH AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS. AND THEN YOU SHALL BE THE KING.

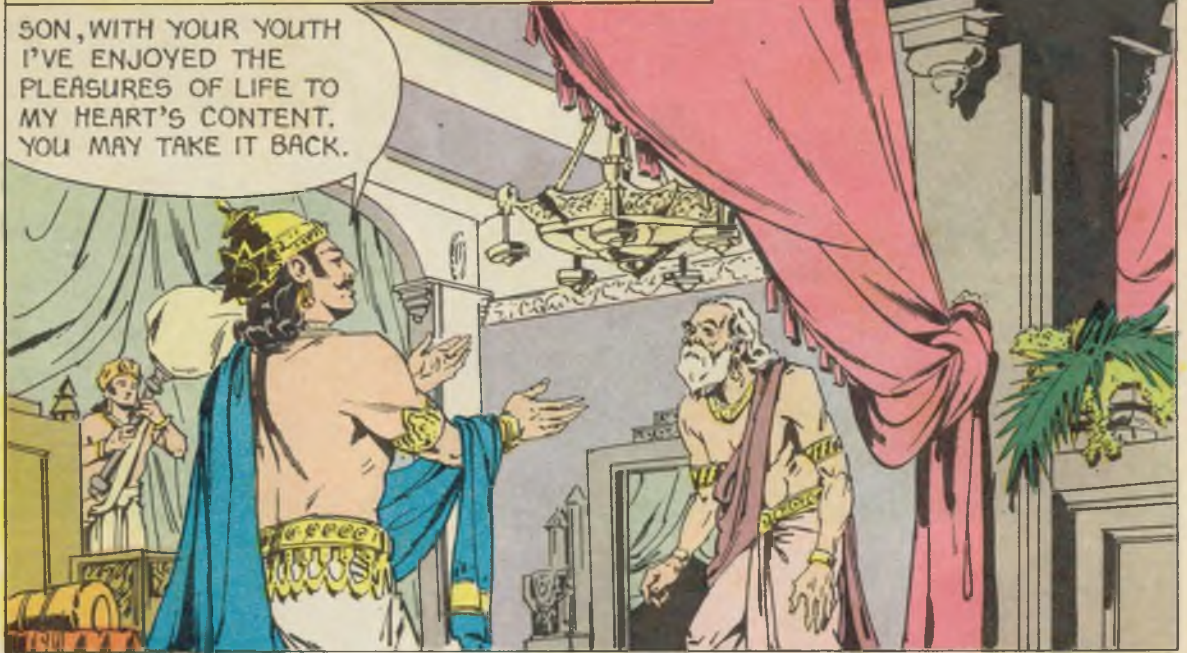


YAYATI THEN RESUMED HIS LIFE OF PLEASURE.



A THOUSAND YEARS LATER, HE SENT FOR PURU.

SON, WITH YOUR YOUTH I'VE ENJOYED THE PLEASURES OF LIFE TO MY HEART'S CONTENT. YOU MAY TAKE IT BACK.



FATHER, WOULD YOU LIKE TO RETAIN MY YOUTH FOR ANOTHER THOUSAND YEARS? PLEASE DO, IF YOU SO DESIRE.



NO, PURU. I HAVE FOUND THAT DESIRES ARE NEVER GRATIFIED BY INDULGENCE.



"ON THE OTHER HAND WITH INDULGENCE, THEY ONLY FLARE UP LIKE FIRE FED WITH LIBATIONS OF SACRIFICIAL GHEE."





AND THE NEXT MOMENT, PURU REGAINED HIS YOUTH AND YAYATI HIS OLD AGE. HE INSTALLED PURU ON THE THRONE...



...AND WENT TO THE FOREST WHERE HE BEGAN TO MEDITATE UPON BRAHMAN, THE ULTIMATE REALITY.



THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT



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