



Nala Damayanti





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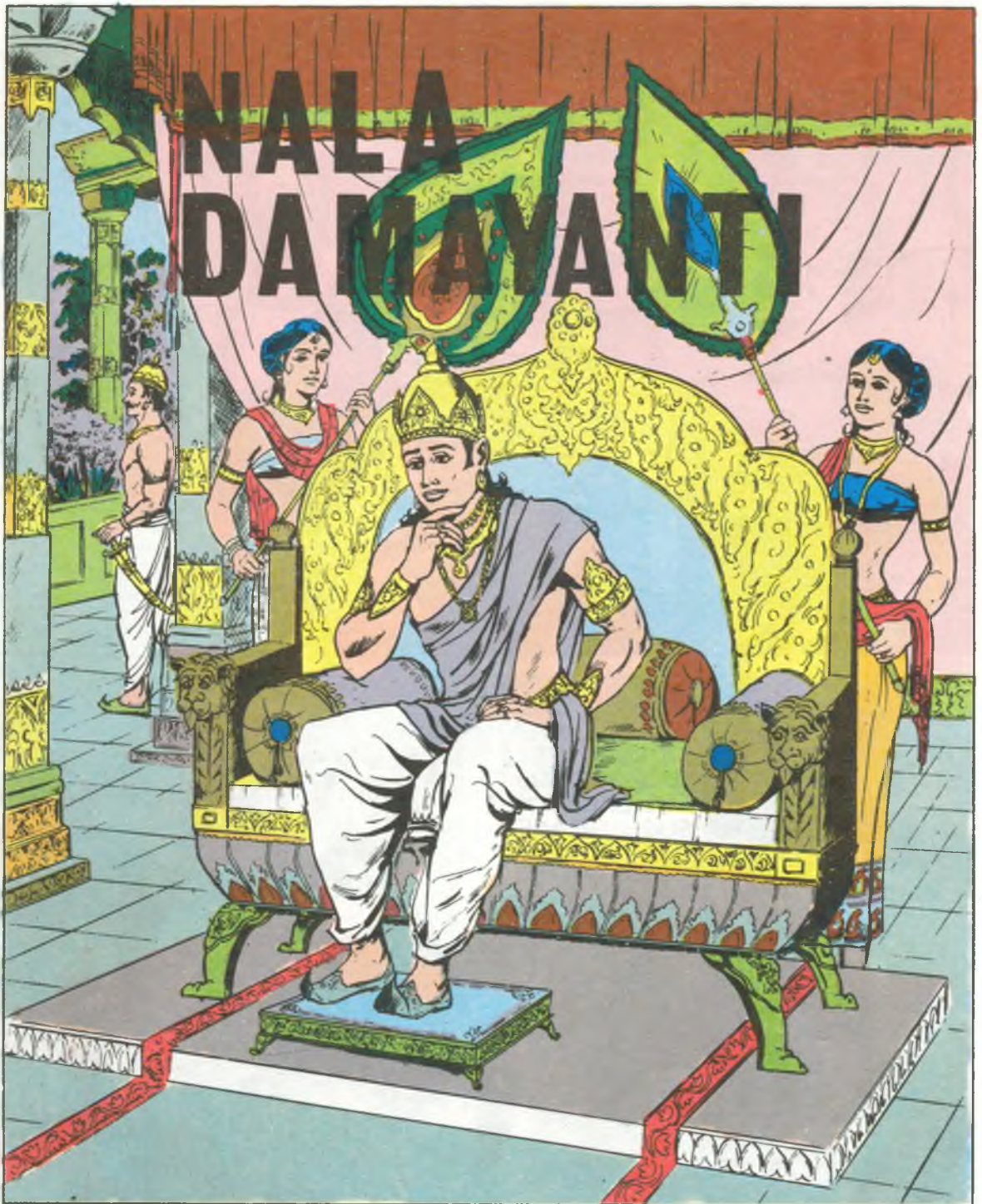
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THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, NALA RULED OVER THE KINGDOM OF NISHADA. HE WAS GENEROUS AND NOBLE AND WAS LOVED BY HIS SUBJECTS. BUT HE WAS ALWAYS SAD. HIS FATHER HAD GONE TO A FOREST TO SPEND THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

NALA'S COUSIN, PUSHKARA, ENVIED HIM HIS FAME.



NALA WAS LONELY AND WANDERED FROM PLACE TO PLACE. ONE DAY—





WHY! THAT
DAINTY SWAN
HAS GOLDEN
PLUMES!

SLOWLY AND SOFTLY HE
CREPT FORWARD.



HE CAUGHT THE SWAN BY ITS LEG. THE
BIRD CRIED OUT IN PAIN. THE OTHER
SWANS LOOKED HELPLESSLY ON.



DON'T BE
AFRAID.
I WON'T
KILL YOU.



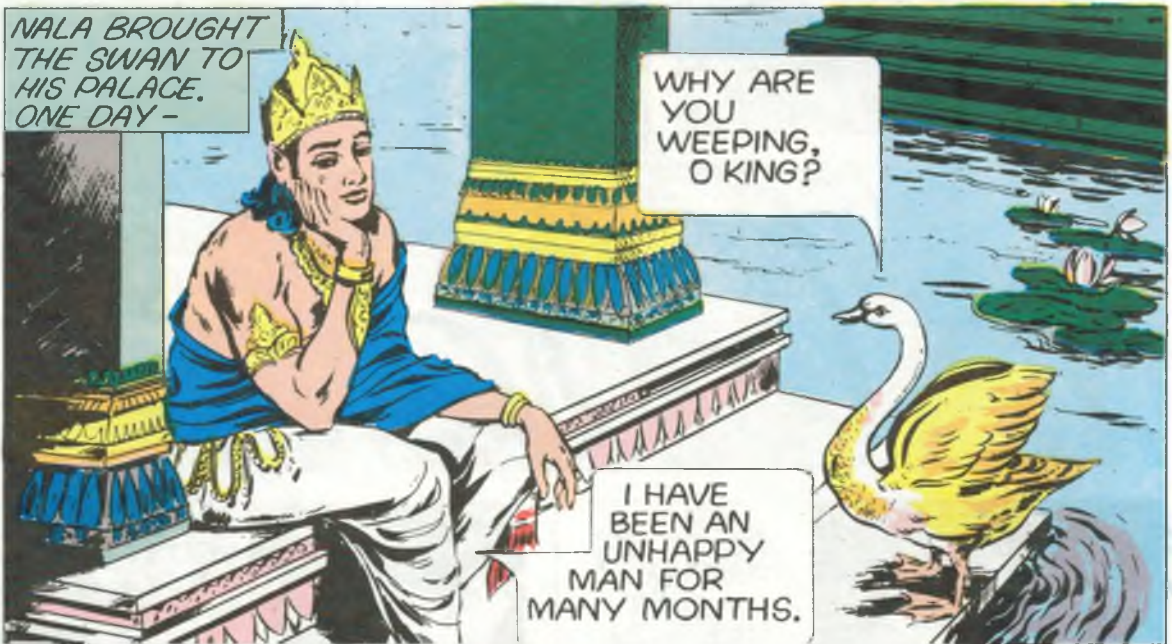
I SHALL KEEP
YOU IN MY
PALACE AND
GIVE YOU
PEARLS.

THE SWAN CONSOLED HIS WAILING
MATES.



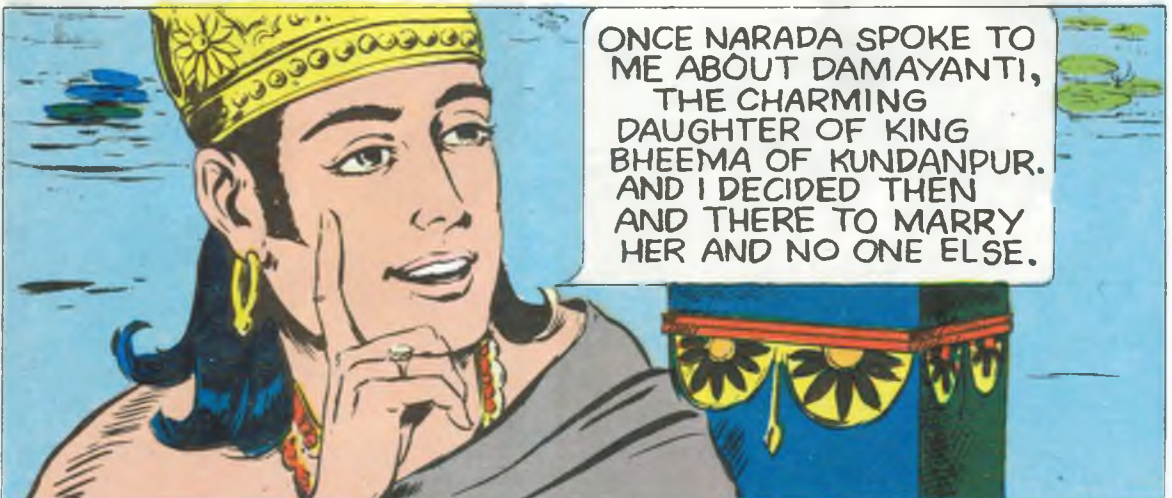
I HAVE TO GO WITH
THE KING TO KEEP
A PROMISE I
MADE IN MY LAST
BIRTH. I SHALL
RETURN THE
MOMENT MY
WORK IS
DONE.

NALA BROUGHT
THE SWAN TO
HIS PALACE.
ONE DAY -

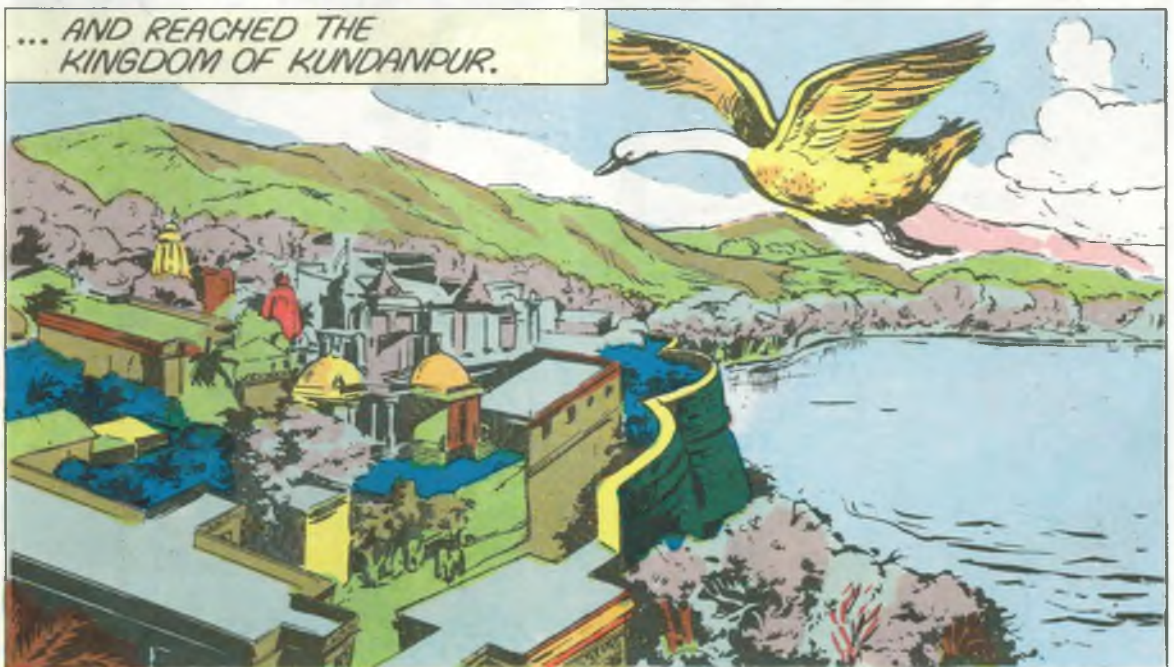


WHY ARE
YOU
WEEPING,
O KING?

I HAVE
BEEN AN
UNHAPPY
MAN FOR
MANY MONTHS.



ONCE NARADA SPOKE TO
ME ABOUT DAMAYANTI,
THE CHARMING
DAUGHTER OF KING
BHEEMA OF KUNDANPUR.
AND I DECIDED THEN
AND THERE TO MARRY
HER AND NO ONE ELSE.



ENTERING THE ROYAL GARDEN,
IT BEGAN CHANTING NALA'S NAME.
DAMAYANTI LOOKED UP.



AH!
WHAT A
DEAR SWAN!
IF ONLY
I COULD
HAVE IT!



AS DAMAYANTI WENT FORWARD TO
CATCH THE SWAN, IT MOVED
FARTHER AWAY.



AT LAST, WITH A SWIFT
MOVEMENT, SHE CAUGHT IT.

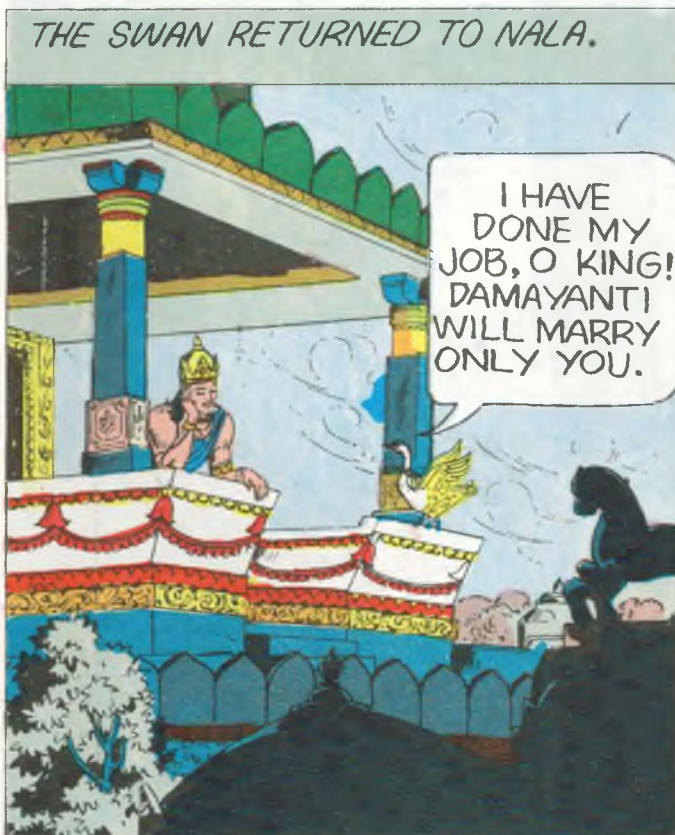


YOU'VE BEEN REPEATING THE NAME 'NALA.' WHO IS HE?



THE SWAN SPOKE OF NALA AND PRAISED HIM HIGHLY.

KING NALA MUST BE A WONDERFUL MAN! I'LL MARRY HIM AND NONE OTHER.



THE SWAN RETURNED TO NALA.

I HAVE DONE MY JOB, O KING! DAMAYANTI WILL MARRY ONLY YOU.



I HAVE KEPT MY PROMISE. LET ME NOW GO BACK TO MY COMPANIONS.

I WILL MISS YOU, MY FRIEND, BUT I DON'T WANT TO KEEP YOU AWAY FROM YOUR FRIENDS.

NALA WAS SOON INVITED TO
DAMAYANTI'S SWAYAMVARA.



PRINCES FROM FAR AND NEAR HAD GATHERED IN THE SWAYAM-
VARA HALL. DAMAYANTI ENTERED WITH THE GARLAND.
THE PRINCES WERE RESTLESS. LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THAT
DAMAYANTI'S GARLAND WAS MEANT ONLY FOR NALA.

DAMAYANTI GARLANDED NALA.

LONG LIVE KING NALA!



NALA BROUGHT DAMAYANTI TO HIS PALACE. PEOPLE, YOUNG AND OLD, DANCED WITH JOY.

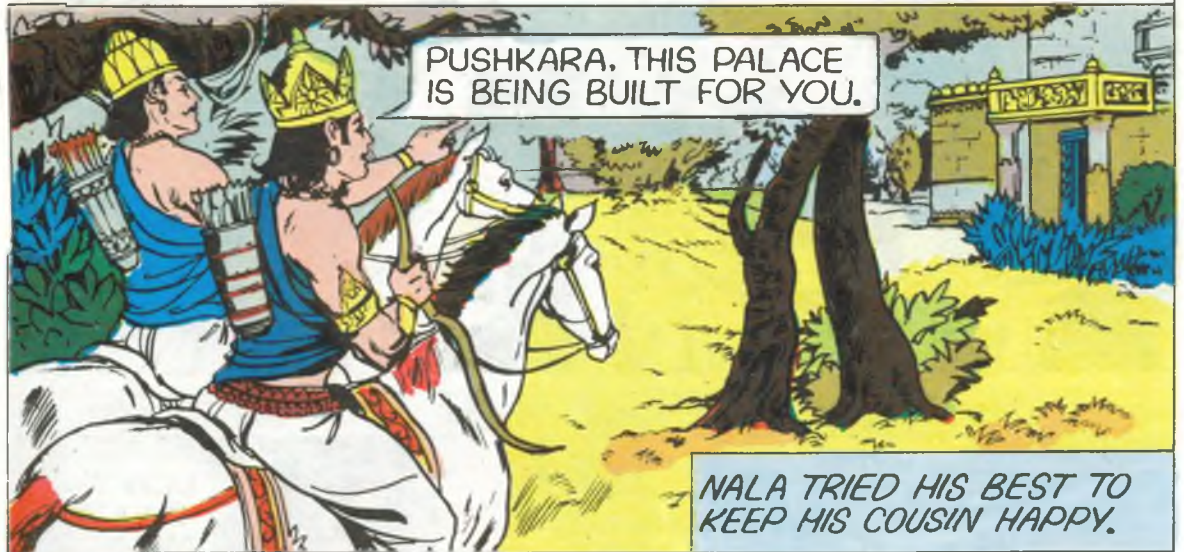
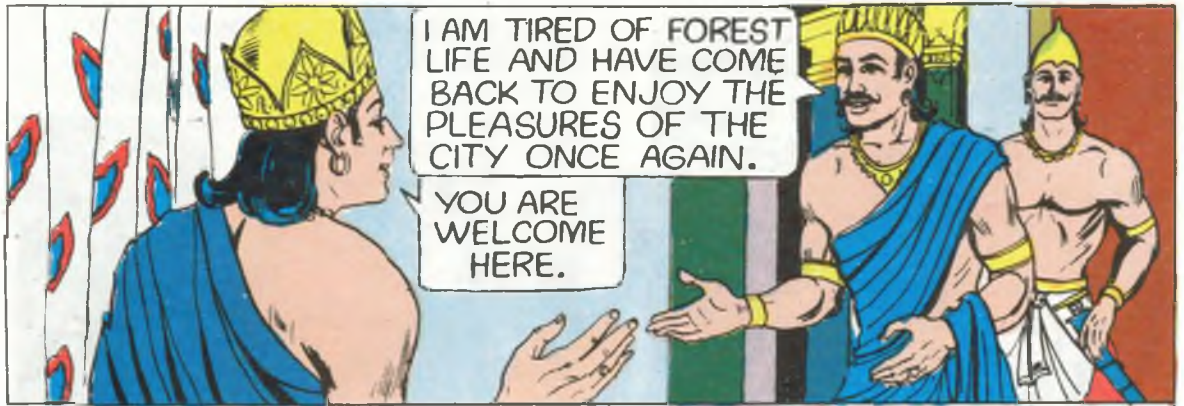


HAPPY TIMES PASS QUICKLY. SOON, TWELVE YEARS WERE OVER. ONE DAY—

WHO ARE YOU?

DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME? I'M PUSHKARA, YOUR COUSIN.





BUT NALA KEPT ON LOSING.

NOW FOR THE LAST
ROUND. THE WINNER
GETS THE CROWN AND
THE LOSER SPENDS
THREE YEARS IN THE
FOREST -
AGREED?

AGREED!



THE DICE WERE CAST.

(I HAVE WON! HA...
HA...HA...!
I'M THE
RULER
NOW!)



*NALA GAVE UP THE KINGDOM. DAMAYANTI SENT THE CHILDREN TO
HER PARENTS AND WENT
AWAY WITH NALA.*



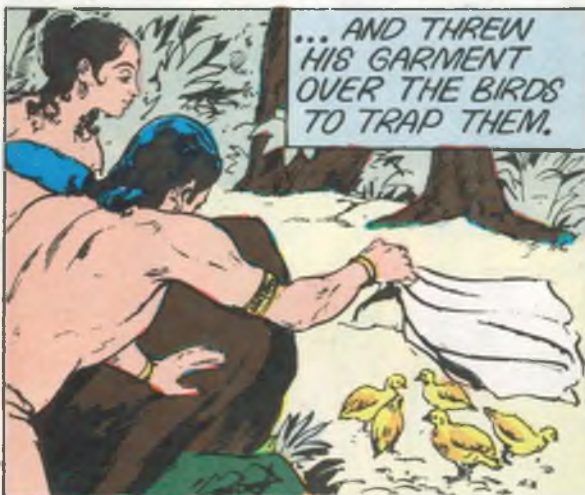
THEY WANDERED IN THE FOREST
WITHOUT FOOD AND WATER.



ONE DAY NALA
NOTICED A
FLOCK OF
GOLDEN BIRDS...



... AND THREW
HIS GARMENT
OVER THE BIRDS
TO TRAP THEM.



AS HE LEANED FORWARD, THE
BIRDS FLEW AWAY WITH THE
GARMENT— NALA'S ONLY
BELONGING!





AT NIGHT THEY SLEPT ON THE BARE GROUND COVERED BY DAMAYANTI'S SARI.



EARLY NEXT MORNING, WHEN NALA WOKE UP, HE TORE A PIECE FROM DAMAYANTI'S SARI. WRAPPING HIMSELF IN IT, HE QUIETLY WALKED AWAY.

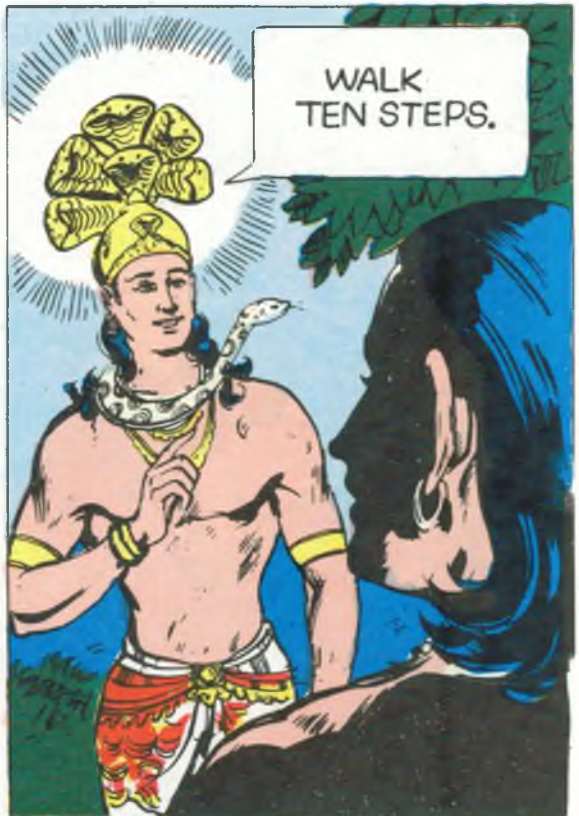


HE WALKED FOR A LONG TIME.
SUDDENLY—



NALA JUMPED INTO THE FIRE.

A LITTLE LATER—



NALA WALKED TEN STEPS AND...

OH!
SERPENT
GOD, WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE?

I CHANGED YOUR
FORM SO THAT
YOU WON'T BE
RECOGNISED.
YOU'RE BAAHUK
FROM TODAY.



KING RITUPARNA OF
AYODHYA IS VERY
GOOD AT THE
GAME OF DICE.
GO TO HIM IF
YOU WISH TO
KNOW THE
SECRET OF
THE GAME!



AND, PUT ON
THIS MAGIC
DRESS WHEN
YOU WANT
TO BECOME
YOUR OLD SELF.



MEANWHILE DAMAYANTI WOKE UP.



WHERE HAS
NALA GONE?
WHY HAS HE
LEFT ME ALONE
IN THE FOREST?



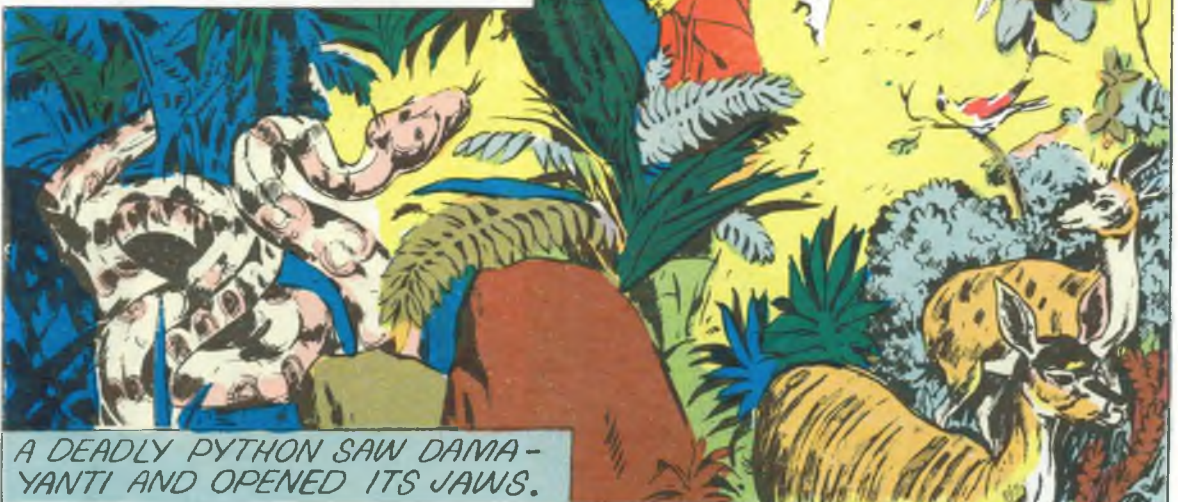
NALA! OH, NALA!

DAMAYANTI ASKED THE ANIMALS
AND BIRDS.



O JUMPING
DEER!
O LITTLE
SPARROW!
HAVE YOU
SEEN MY
NALA?

DAMAYANTI WANDERED IN
THE FOREST CRYING FOR NALA.



A DEADLY PYTHON SAW DAMA-
YANTI AND OPENED ITS JAWS.

IT CAUGHT DAMAYANTI'S LEG.



SUDDENLY A HUNTER'S ARROW HIT AND KILLED THE PYTHON.

THEN -



WHO ARE YOU?
A GODDESS?
A HEAVENLY
DAMSEL?
MARRY ME!



OH, MY MISFORTUNE!
I WISH THE PYTHON
HAD KILLED ME...!
STAY WHERE YOU
ARE, IF YOU TAKE
ONE STEP FURTHER,
YOU WILL BE BURNT.





BY HER CURSE, THE HUNTER WAS BURN'T TO ASHES.

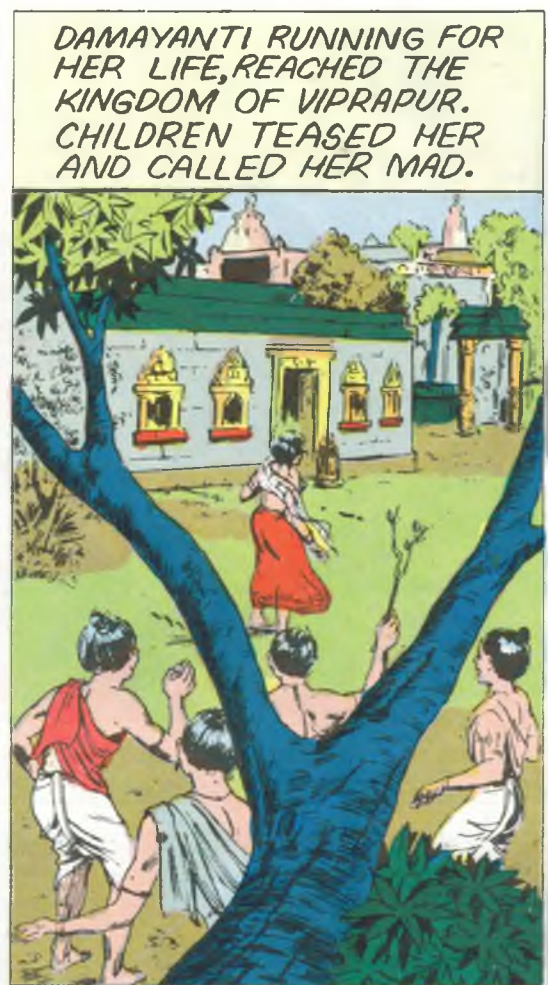
STUMBLING AND FALLING, DAMA-YANTI REACHED THE RIVER BANK. THERE SHE MET A GROUP OF TRADERS.

OH TRADER, CAN YOU GIVE ME NEWS ABOUT NALA?

NALA? WHO'S HE?



AT NIGHT WHEN THE TRADERS WERE ASLEEP, A HERD OF ELEPHANTS CAME THAT WAY AND DESTROYED ALL THAT THEY CARRIED.



ONE DAY, THE MINISTER OF KUNDANPUR CAME TO VIPRAPUR.



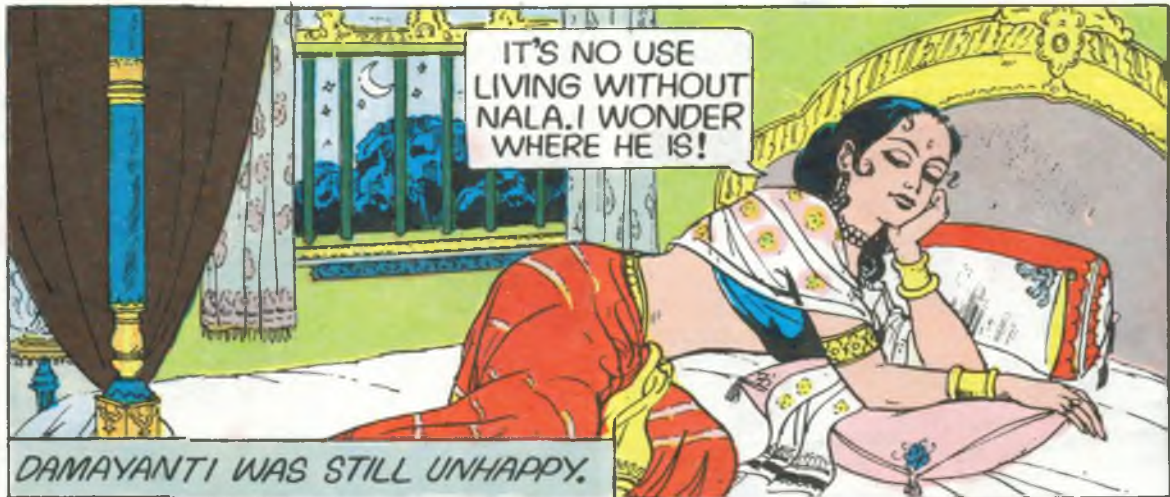
HOW DID YOU COME HERE?

I'VE BEEN SEARCHING A LONG TIME FOR YOU. I'LL TAKE YOU TO KUNDANPUR.

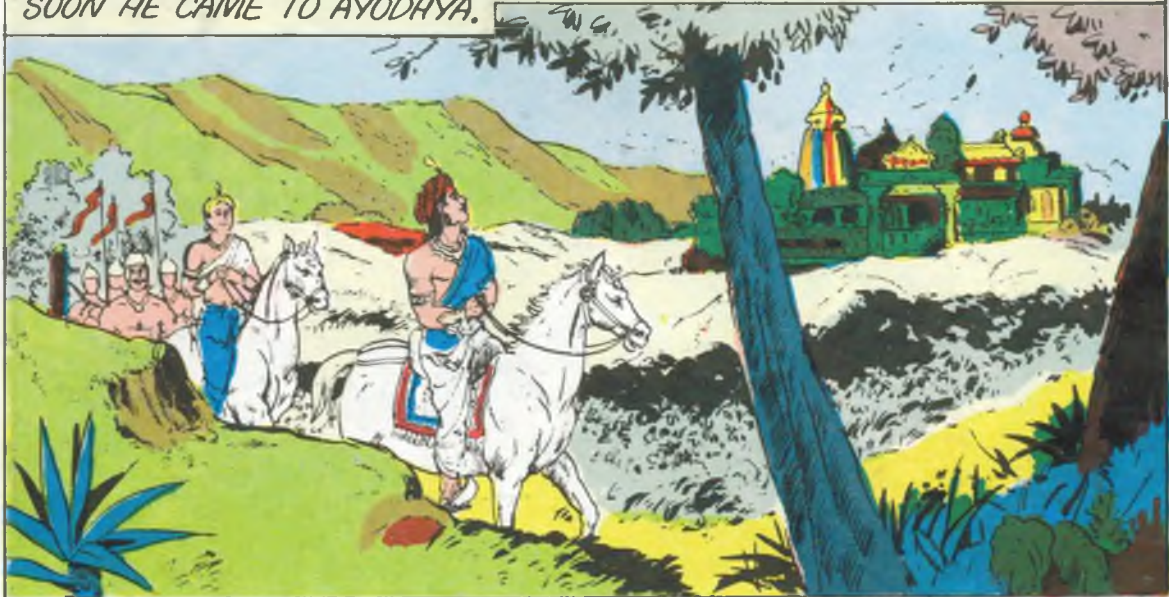


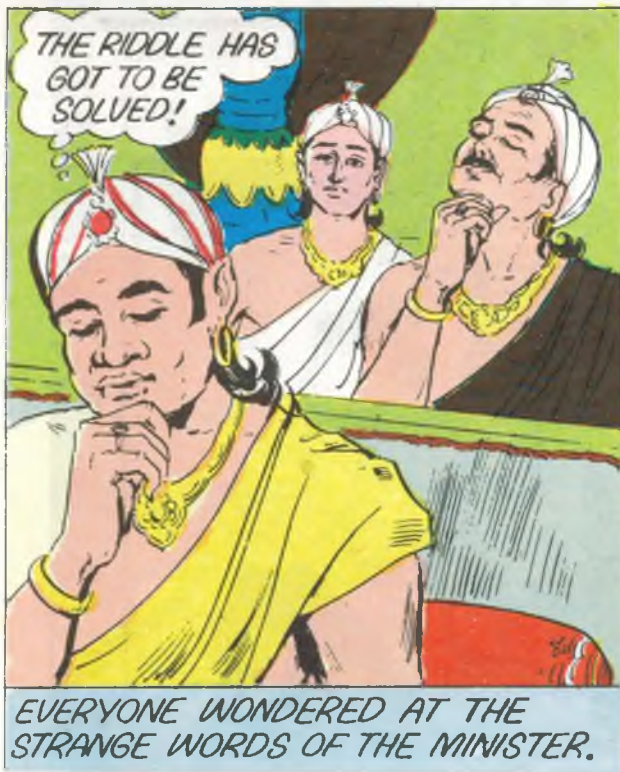
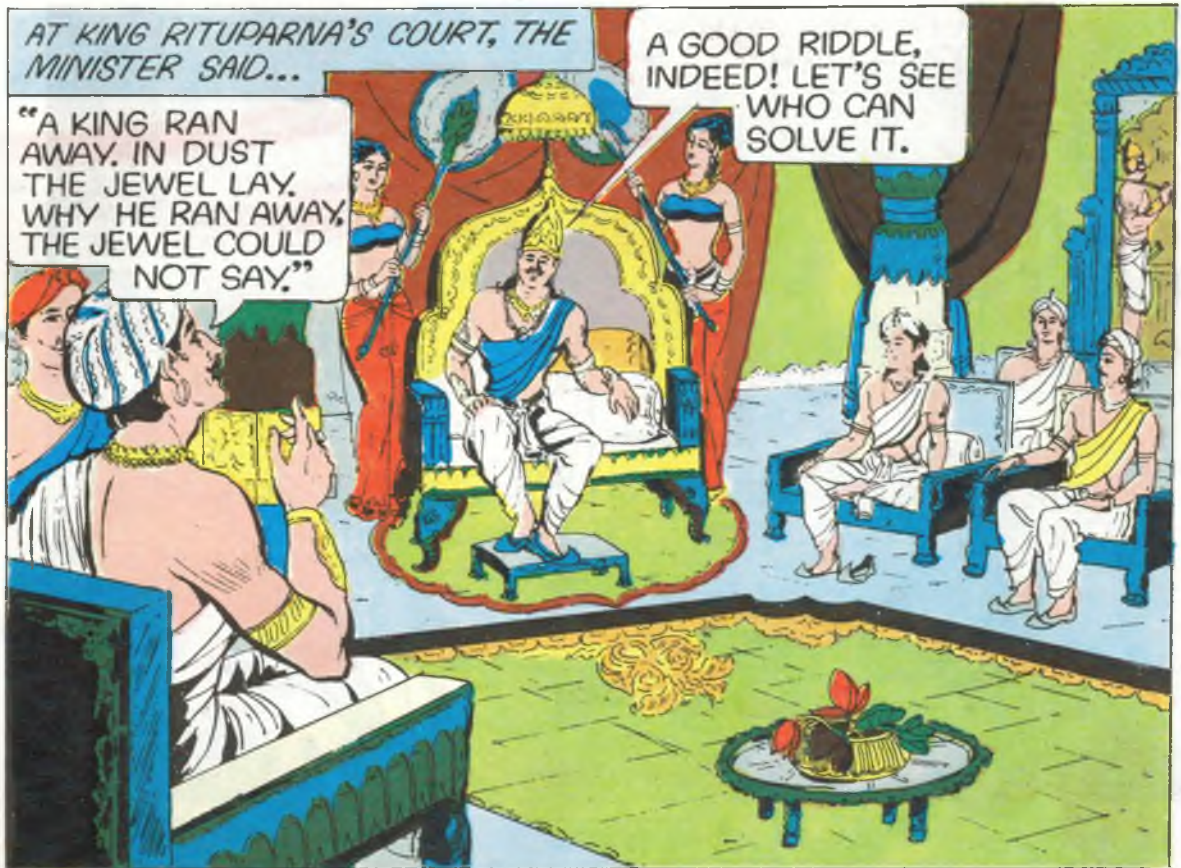
DAMAYANTI CAME TO KUNDANPUR. HER CHILDREN HAD GROWN UP. SHE WATCHED THEM AT PLAY AND MISSED NALA.





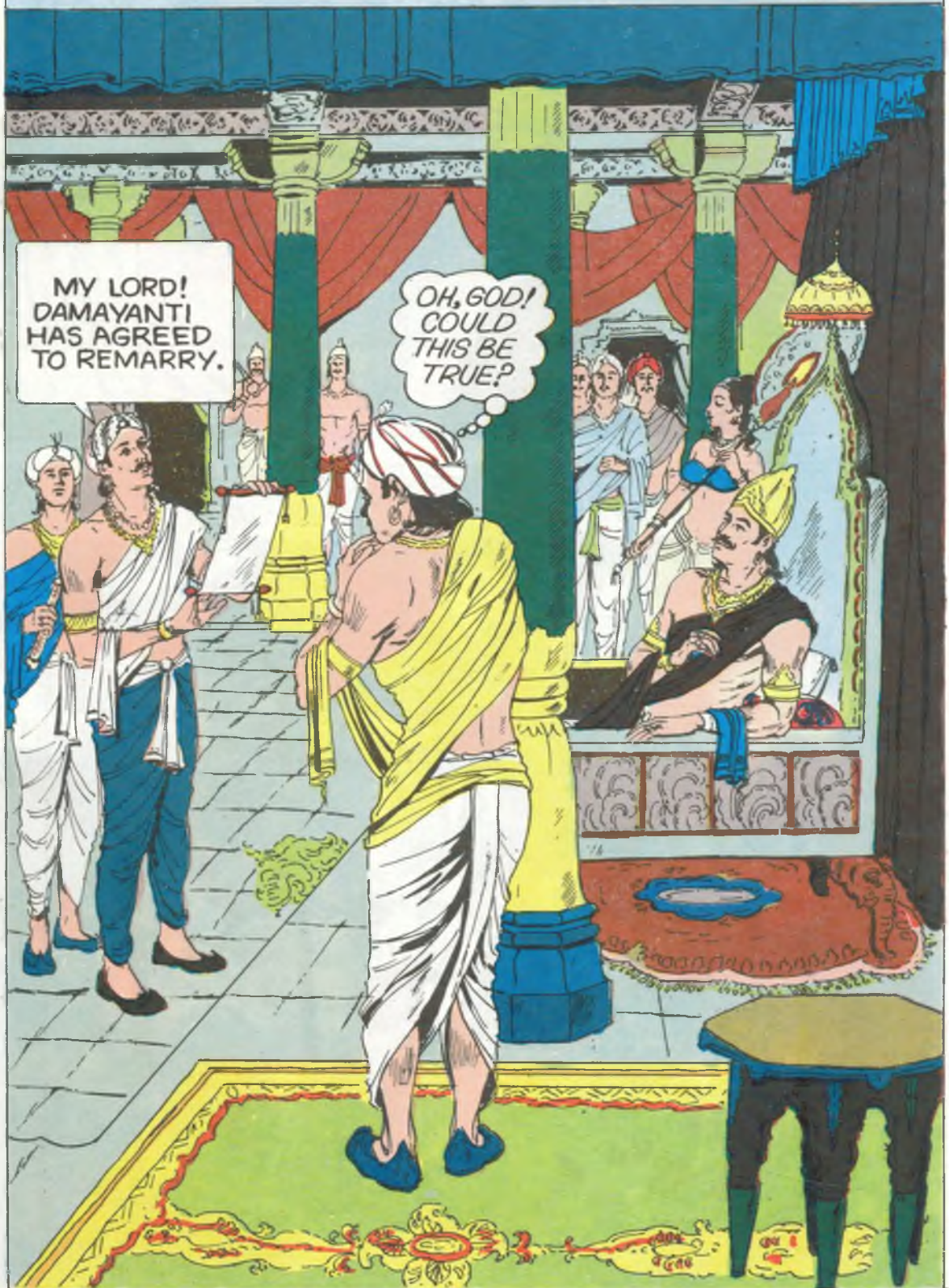
ONE DAY, THE KING'S MINISTER SET OUT IN SEARCH OF NALA.
SOON HE CAME TO AYODHYA.







THE MINISTER AGAIN WENT TO AYODHYA.





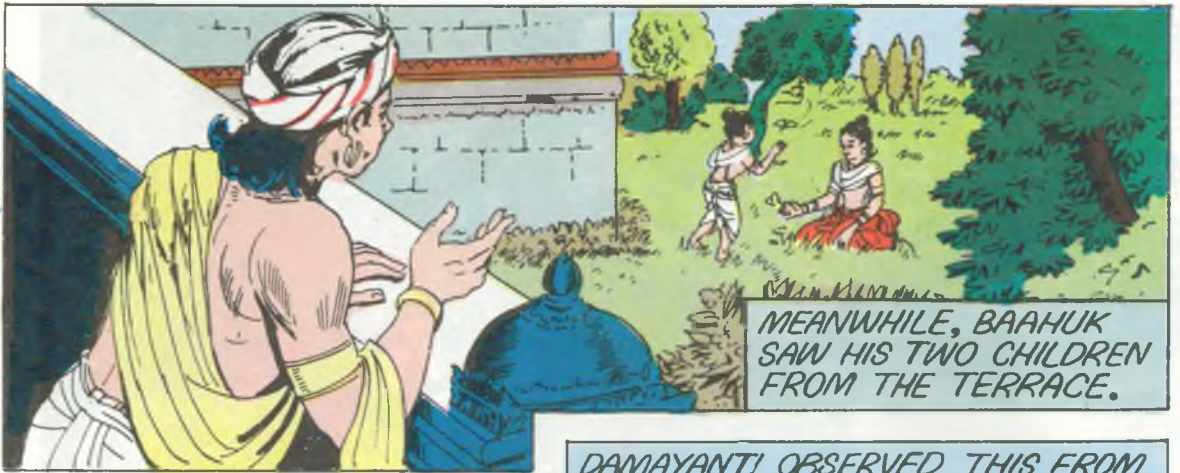
AND SURELY ENOUGH, THE HORSES SEEMED TO FLY IN THE AIR. NALA WAS A GREAT CHARIOTEER.





BY THE TIME THEY REACHED KUNDANPUR, THEY HAD EXCHANGED THEIR SECRETS.





MEANWHILE, BAAHUK SAW HIS TWO CHILDREN FROM THE TERRACE.



HE RAN UP TO THEM AND HUGGED THEM.

DAMAYANTI OBSERVED THIS FROM THE PALACE. SHE CAME RUNNING TO MEET HIM.

I'M SURE YOU ARE NALA! HOW CAN I THANK YOU FOR COMING!



BUT WERE YOU GOING TO MARRY AGAIN, DAMAYANTI?

NO. IT WAS A TRICK TO GET YOU HERE. WHO ELSE BUT YOU COULD TRAVEL SUCH A LONG DISTANCE IN ONE DAY?

NALA PUT ON THE
MAGIC DRESS AND-



SEEING NALA SAFE AND SOUND, THE
PEOPLE WENT CRAZY WITH JOY.

NALA RETURNED TO HIS PALACE WITH DAMAYANTI AND THE CHILDREN.



PUSHKARA! I HAVE SPENT MY THREE YEARS IN THE FOREST. COME, LET'S HAVE AN-OTHER GAME OF DICE.

VERY WELL! THE WINNER WILL HAVE THE KINGDOM AND THE LOSER WILL GO TO THE FOREST.

THEY SETTLED DOWN TO THE GAME. NALA HAD MASTERED THE GAME OF DICE WITH THE HELP OF KING RITUPARNA. IT WAS PUSHKARA'S TURN TO LOSE.

AND HE DID.

PUSHKARA! I'VE WON! I'VE WON!

BUT, I WON'T SEND YOU TO THE FOREST. YOU MAY CONTINUE TO LIVE HERE!





ONCE AGAIN, NALA WORE THE CROWN. DAMAYANTI WAS HIS QUEEN. THEY LIVED HAPPILY FOR MANY YEARS AND RULED THE COUNTRY WELL.



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Nala was a brave and handsome young Nishada king, skilled in the use of arms and the management of horses. Damayanti, the only daughter of the King of Vidarbha, in Eastern Maharashtra, was beautiful and accomplished. When Nala heard of her beauty he began pining for her and it was a delicate golden swan that carried his messages of love to his beloved. Damayanti too began yearning for her unseen lover.

The story of Nala and Damayanti has so much romance and pathos in it that it has attracted the attention of writers and poets not only in India, but also in distant lands. It has been translated into Latin by Bopp and into English verse by Dean Milman.

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