



SAMUDRA GUPTA

THE LUTE-PLAYING CONQUEROR

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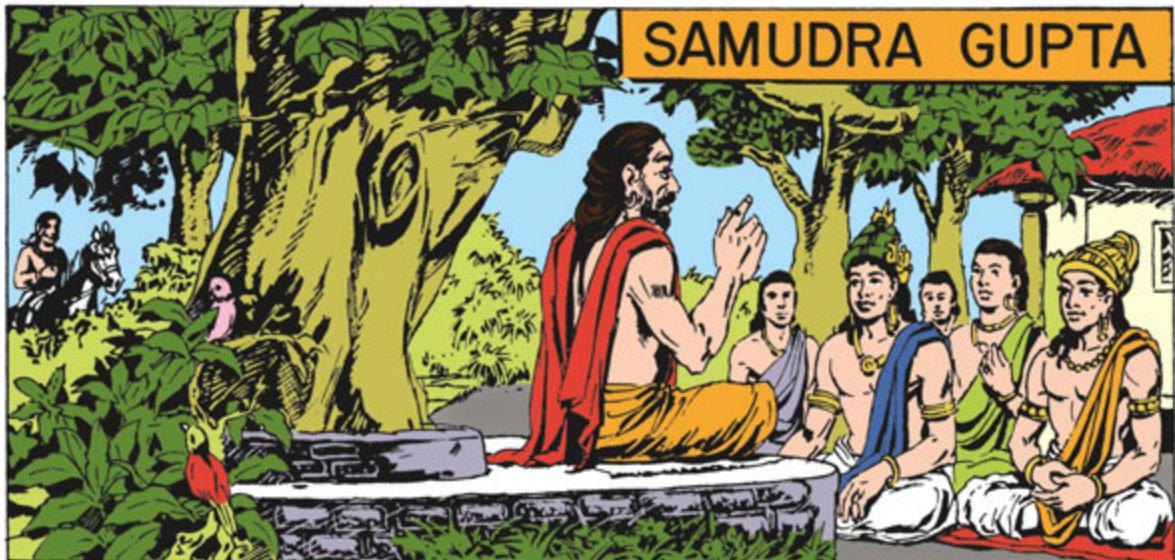
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SAMUDRA GUPTA



THE EARLY DECADES OF THE FOURTH CENTURY : THE SONS OF THE KING AND THE MINISTERS OF ANCIENT MAGADHA WERE LISTENING WITH RAPT ATTENTION TO THEIR GURU WHEN...

... CHANDRA GUPTA, THE KING OF MAGADHA, SILENTLY RODE UP, DISMOUNTED...



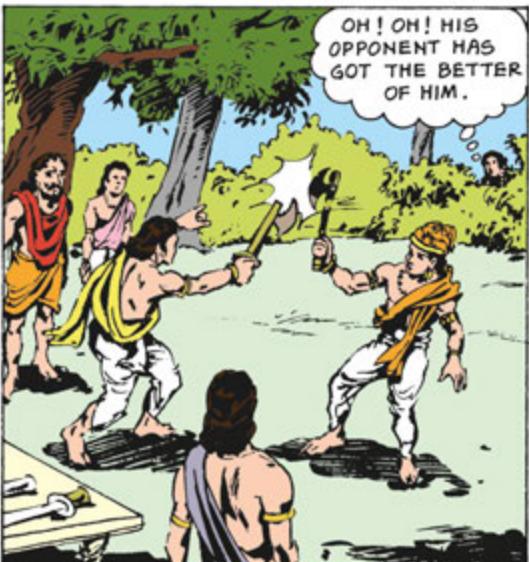
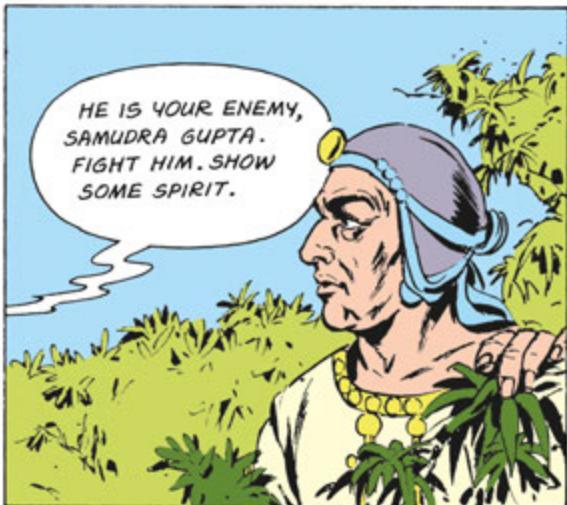
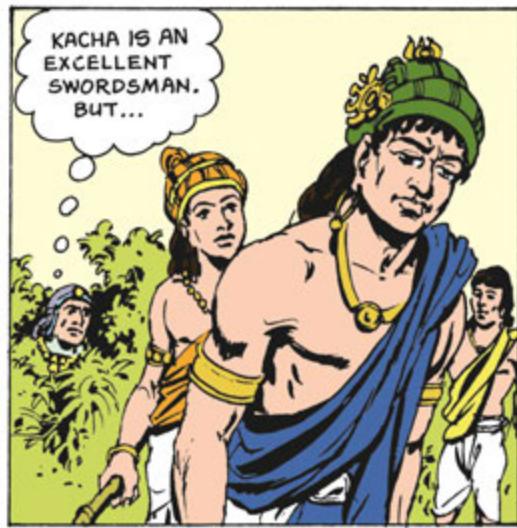
... AND HID HIMSELF BEHIND A BUSH.

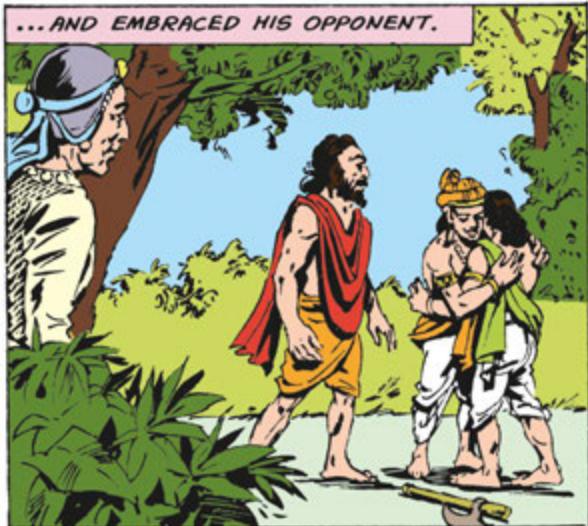


YOU MAY NOW CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS AND YOUR OPPONENTS.

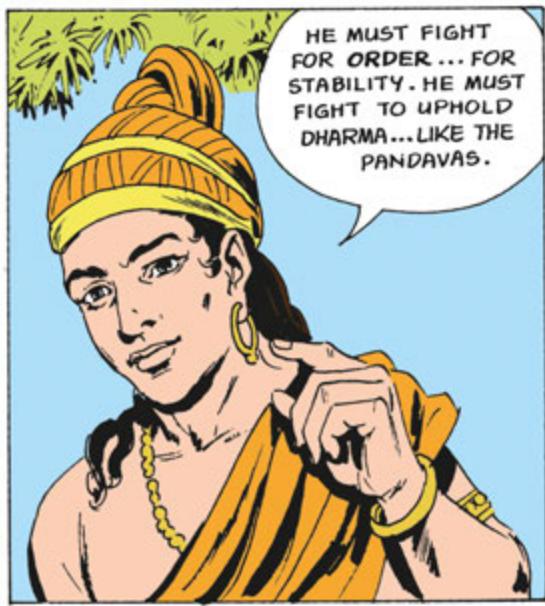
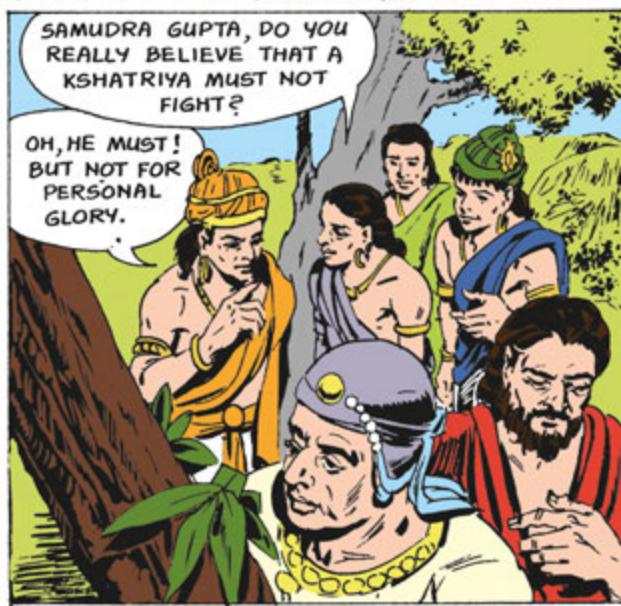
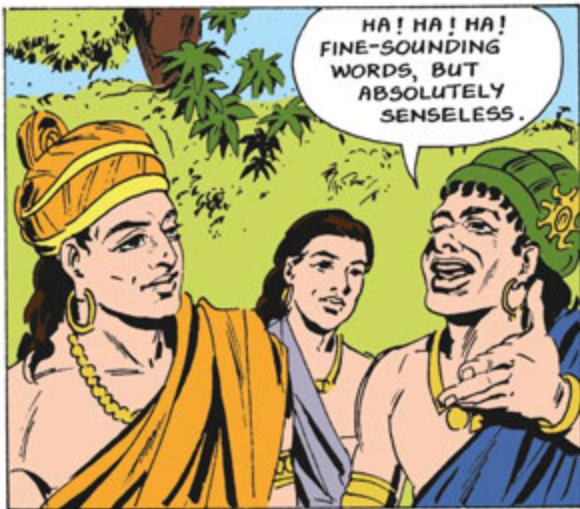
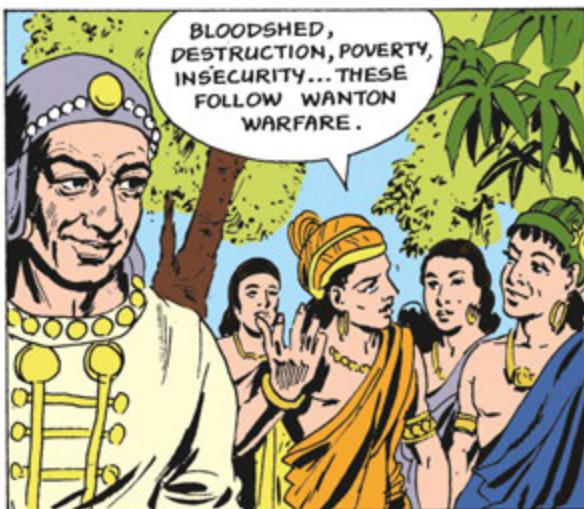
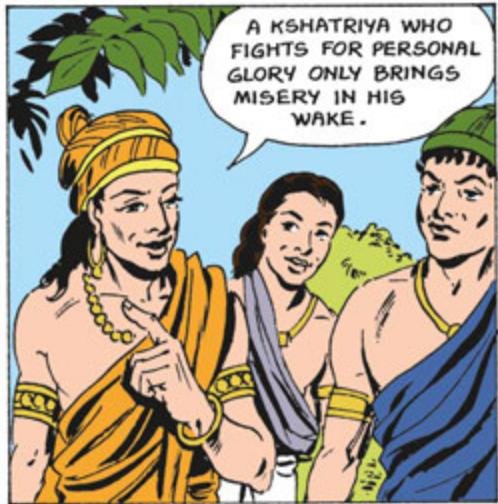


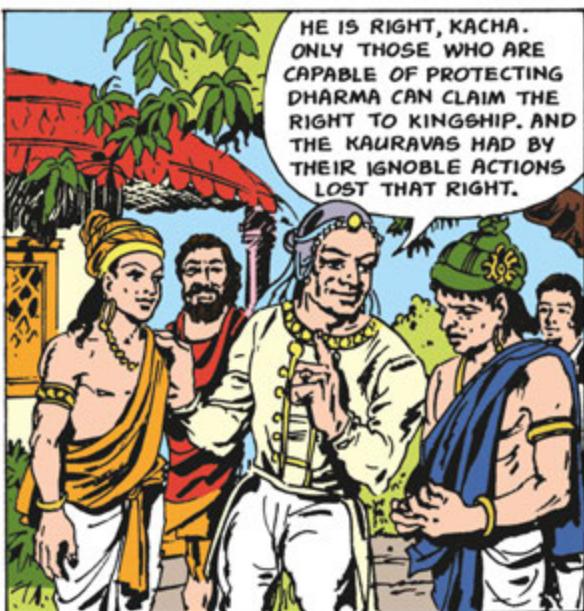
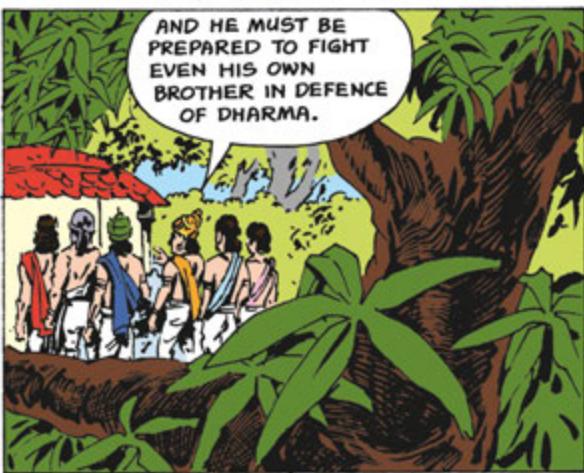
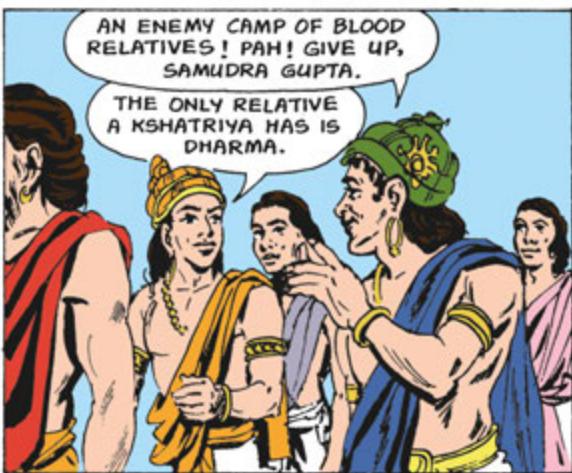
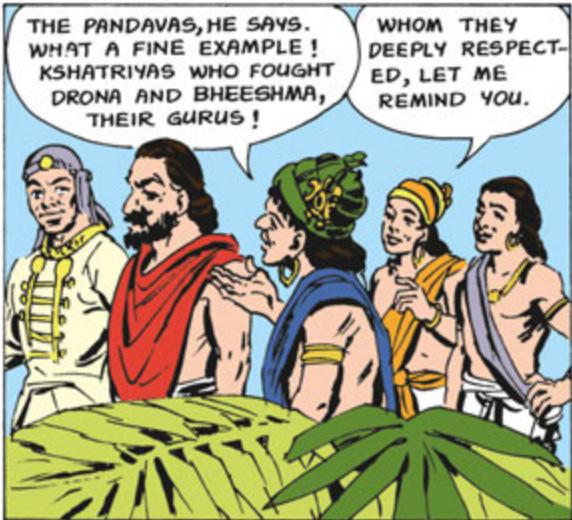






LATER, AS THEY WALKED TOWARDS THE HALL WHERE MUSIC WAS TAUGHT —





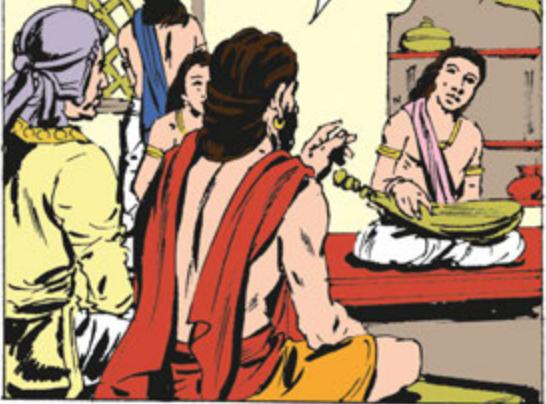
INSIDE THE MUSIC HALL —

IN THIS DISCIPLINE SAMUDRA GUPTA EXCELS ALL. HARISHENA IS GOOD AT COMPOSING VERSES BUT SAMUDRA GUPTA OUTSHINES HIM IN RENDERING THEM.



HARISHENA, HAVE YOU COMPOSED THE VERSES?

YES, SIR.



HARISHENA RECITED THE LYRIC, THE GURU COMPOSED THE MUSIC AND —

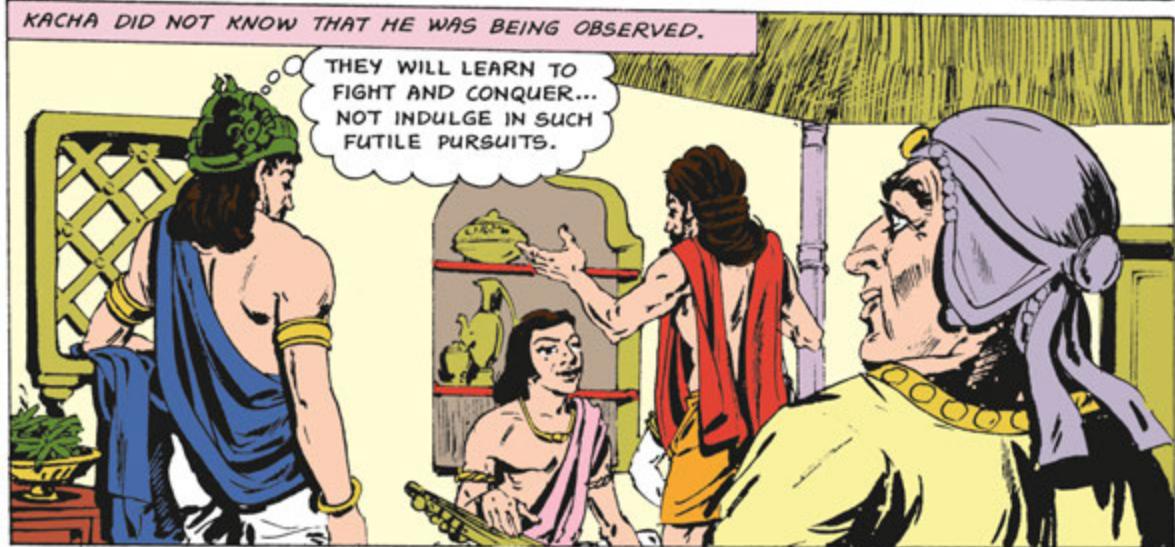
ALL RIGHT.
LET'S BEGIN.
SA-A-A-A

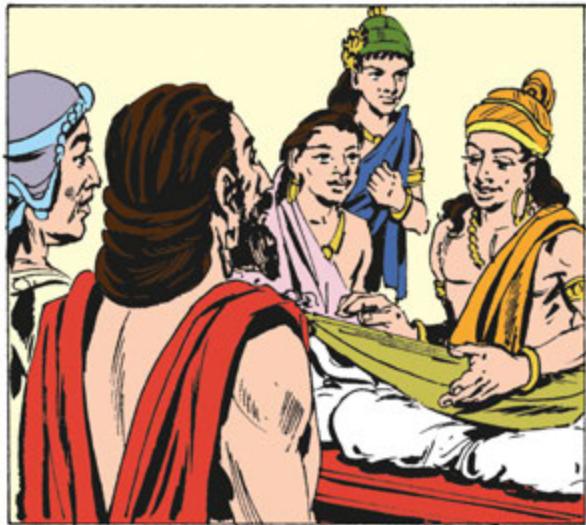
WHEN I BECOME KING,
I WILL SPARE MY SONS
THIS SILLY ROUTINE.

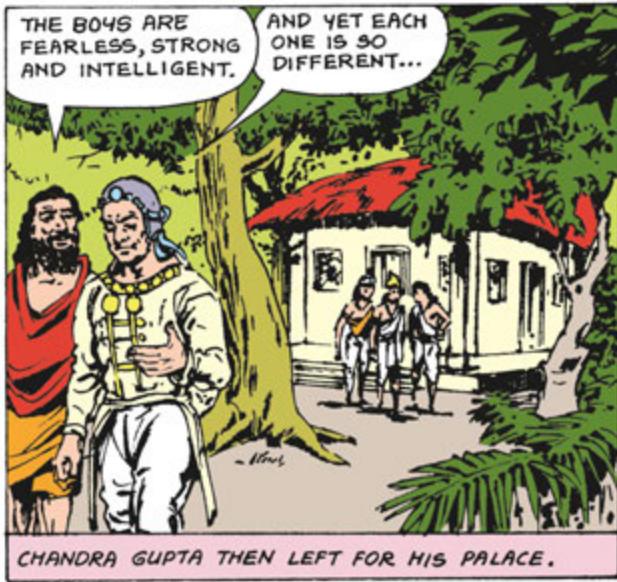
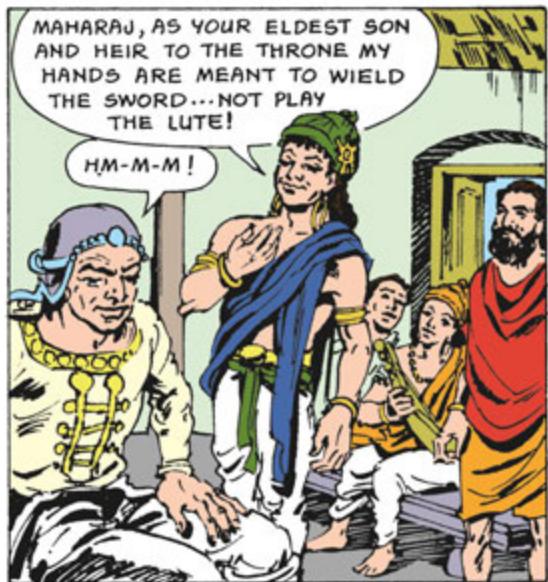
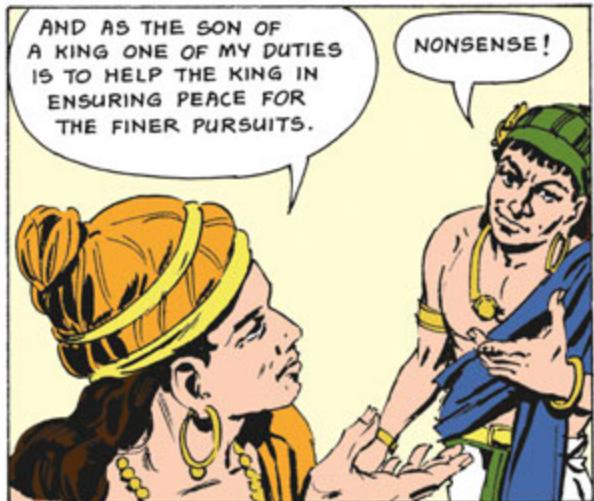


KACHA DID NOT KNOW THAT HE WAS BEING OBSERVED.

THEY WILL LEARN TO FIGHT AND CONQUER... NOT INDULGE IN SUCH FUTILE PURSUITS.

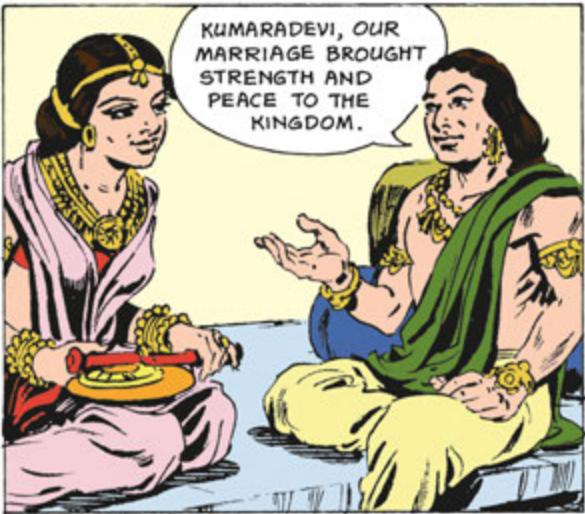






THERE, KUMARADEVI, THE LICHCHAVI PRINCESS WHO WAS HIS FAVOURITE QUEEN AND THE MOTHER OF SAMUDRA GUPTA, WELCOMED HIM WITH A SMILE.



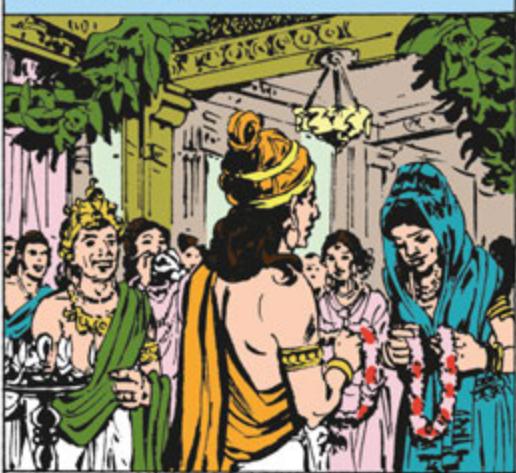


WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR HIS SONS TO GET MARRIED,
CHANDRA GUPTA RESERVED THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED
BRIDE FOR SAMUDRA GUPTA.

SHOULDN'T THE
BEST ALLIANCE GO
TO YOUR ELDEST
SON?

NO. SAMUDRA GUPTA
WILL MARRY DATTADEVI
AND FOR VERY GOOD
REASONS.

AND SO SAMUDRA GUPTA WAS MARRIED
TO DATTADEVI +



ONE DAY WHILE CHANDRA GUPTA, HIS SONS AND HIS RETINUE WERE OUT ON A HUNT —



AS THE TIGER SPRANG...





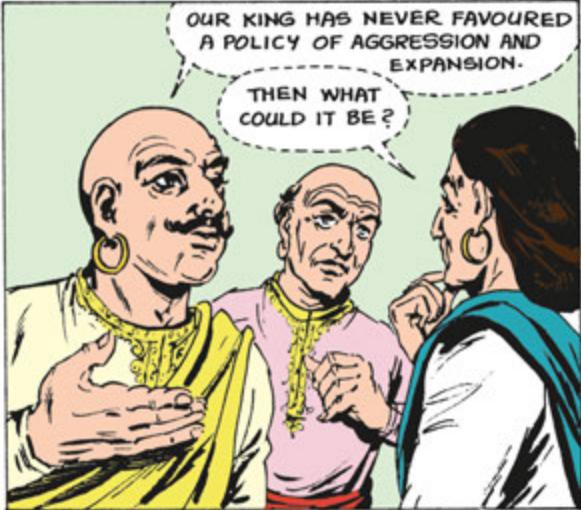
THE NEXT DAY, THE COURT AWAITED CHANDRA GUPTA'S ARRIVAL IN HUSHED EXPECTANCY.

WHY HAS HE CALLED THIS SPECIAL COURT?

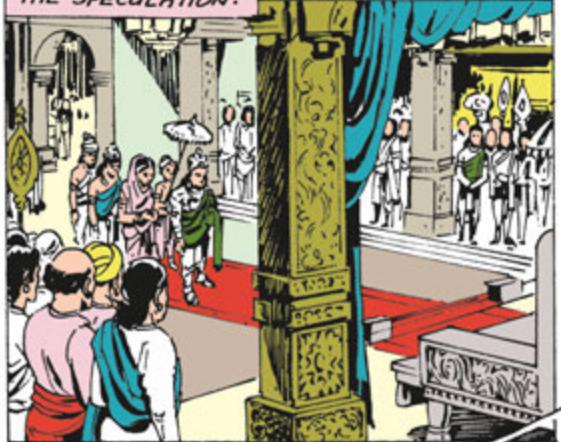
IT MUST BE TO DISCUSS THE PLANS OF SOME CAMPAIGN.

OUR KING HAS NEVER FAVOURED A POLICY OF AGGRESSION AND EXPANSION.

THEN WHAT COULD IT BE?



THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING, HIS FAVOURITE QUEEN AND THE PRINCES PUT AN END TO THE SPECULATION.



WHEN ALL WERE SEATED —

WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS TODAY MAY AMAZE SOME... DISAPPOINT A FEW... AND PLEASE MANY.

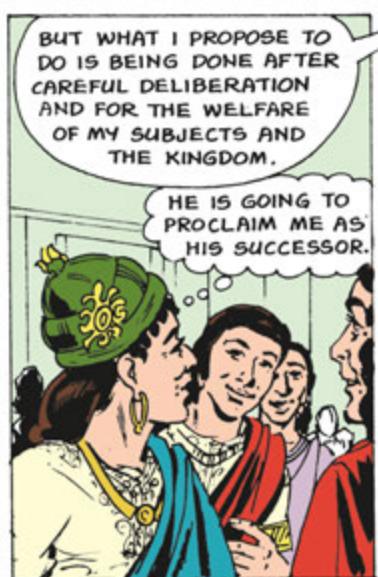


BUT WHAT I PROPOSE TO DO IS BEING DONE AFTER CAREFUL DELIBERATION AND FOR THE WELFARE OF MY SUBJECTS AND THE KINGDOM.

HE IS GOING TO PROCLAIM ME AS HIS SUCCESSOR.

I HAVE DECIDED TO WAIVE TRADITION...

... AND CROWN MY SON...





ONLY KUMARADEVI NOTICED THE EFFECT CHANDRA GUPTA'S PROCLAMATION HAD ON KACHA.



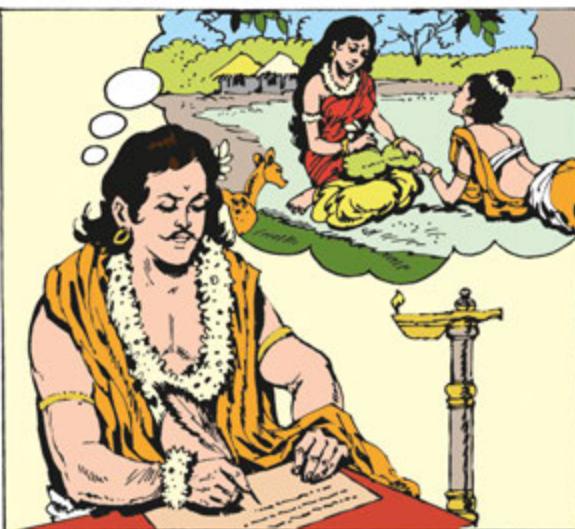
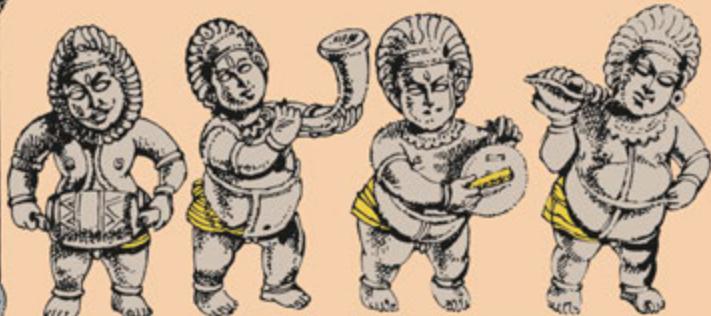
The Glory of the Guptas

Script: Swarn Khandpur

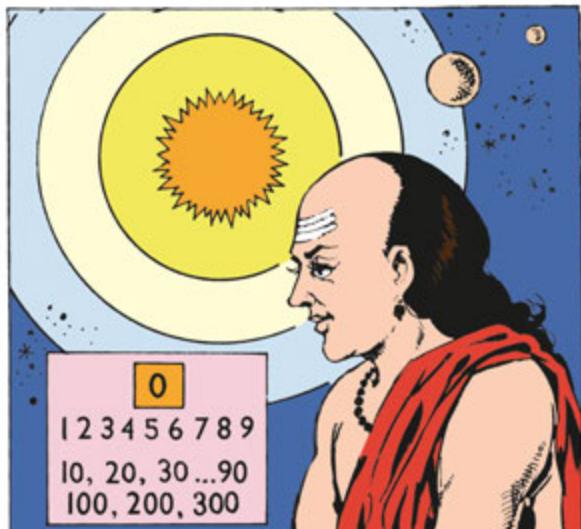
• Illustrations: Ramesh Umrotkar



THE RULE OF THE GUPTA DYNASTY (A.D. 320 TO 569) IS USUALLY KNOWN AS THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIAN HISTORY. IT WAS A PERIOD OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY AND IT WITNESSED THE BLOSSOMING OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND THE ARTS.



IT WAS UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE GUPTA KINGS THAT SOME OF THE FINEST WORKS OF SANSKRIT POETRY AND DRAMA WERE WRITTEN. THE MOST FAMOUS POET AND DRAMATIST OF INDIA, KALIDASA, PROBABLY FLOURISHED DURING THIS TIME. HIS 'ABHIJNANA SHAKUNTALAM' IS WORLD-FAMOUS.

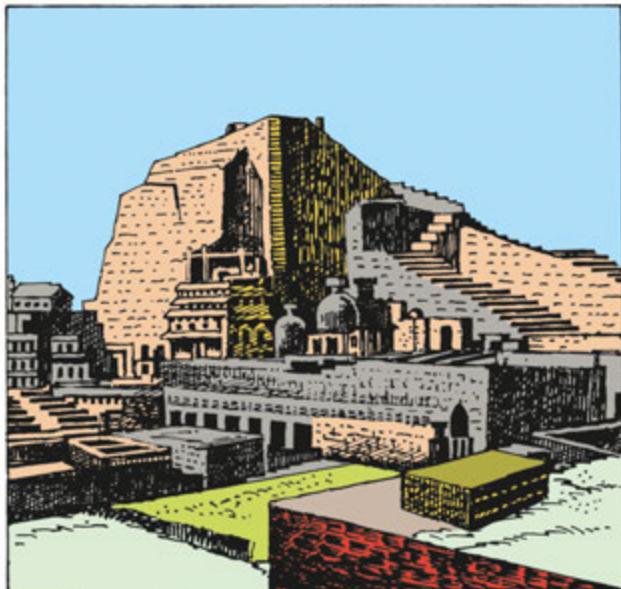


ARYABHATA, THE GREAT ASTRONOMER AND MATHEMATICIAN, WHO GAVE THE WORLD THE CONCEPT OF ZERO AND WHO WAS THE FIRST TO DISCOVER THAT THE EARTH REVOLVES ROUND THE SUN AND ROTATES ON ITS AXIS, TOO BELONGED TO THIS PERIOD.

THE IRON PILLAR AT DELHI, WHICH WEIGHS ABOUT 6 TONNES AND IS 7.32 METRES IN HEIGHT, IS A LIVING TRIBUTE TO THE GUPTA METALLURGISTS. DESPITE 2000 YEARS OF EXPOSURE TO WIND AND RAIN, IT DOES NOT HAVE EVEN A TRACE OF RUST!



ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE GUPTA KINGS WERE VAISHNAVAS, THEY WERE GENEROUS TO THE BUDDHISTS AND THE JAINS. THE AJANTA CAVES NEAR AURANGABAD WERE CARVED DURING THEIR REIGN. THE PAINTINGS ON THE WALLS, DEPICTING THE LIFE OF BUDDHA, HAVE SURVIVED TO THIS DAY.



THERE WERE SEVERAL BUDDHIST MONASTERIES WHICH WERE AIDED BY ROYAL GRANTS. THE NALANDA MONASTERY, WHICH LATER BECAME A WORLD-FAMOUS UNIVERSITY, WAS FOUNDED DURING THE GUPTA PERIOD.

LATER, WHEN THE COURTIERS WERE ALONE —

OUR KING TAKING A WIFE FROM THE LICHCHAVI OLIGARCHY IS ONE THING.

BUT MAKING A SON OF THAT UNION THE RULER IS QUITE ANOTHER. IT WAS AN UNWISE CHOICE.

ON THE CONTRARY, WITH HIM AS KING, WE CAN BE SURE OF THE CONTINUED POLITICAL AND MILITARY SUPPORT OF THE LICHCHAVIS.

THE COURTIER WHO SUPPORTED THE CHOICE WAS DHRUVABHUTI, CHIEF OF THE MILITARY AND HARISHENA'S FATHER.

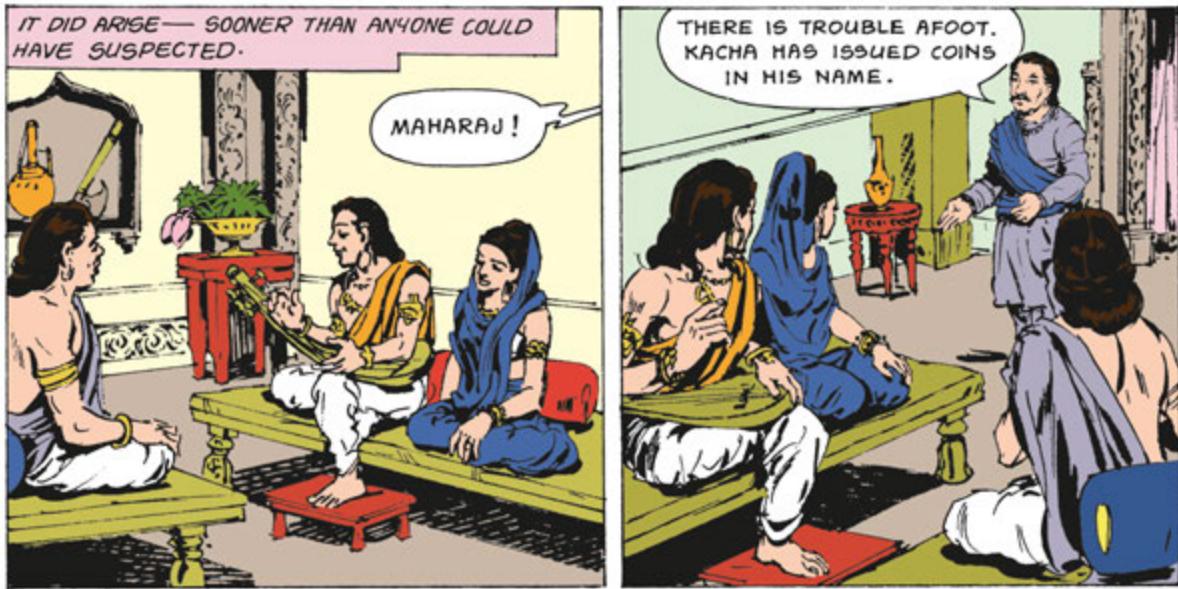
WHAT IF HE ADOPTS THEIR HERETICAL CREEDS AND ENDANGERS OUR OWN?

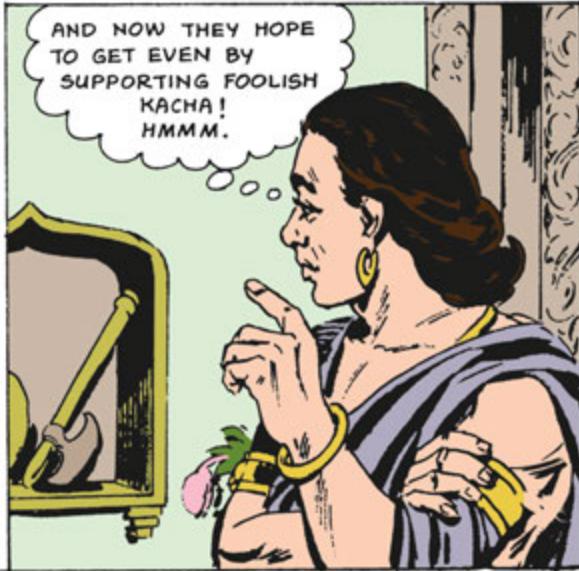
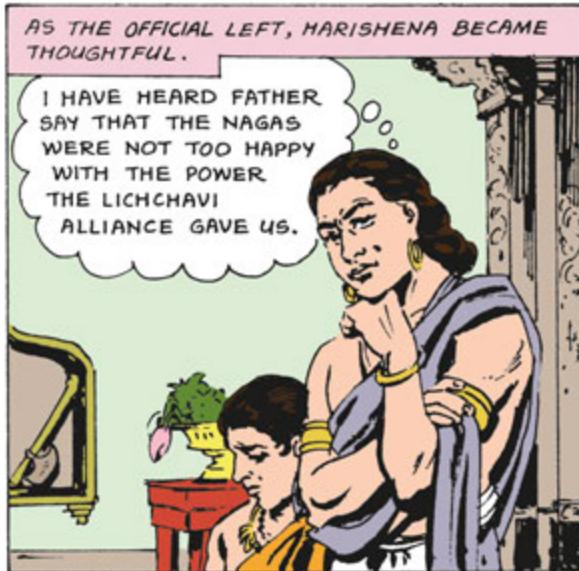
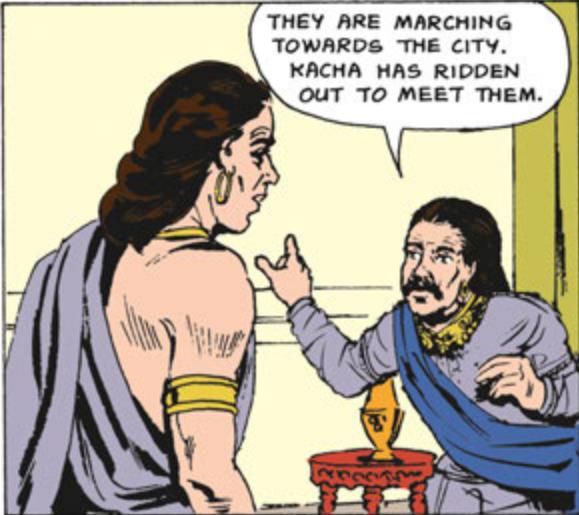
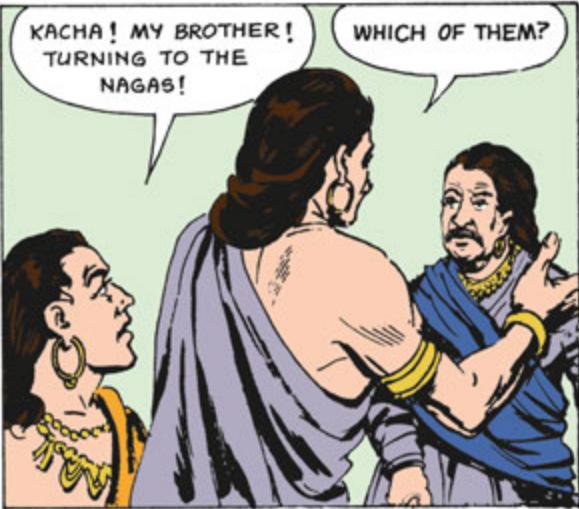
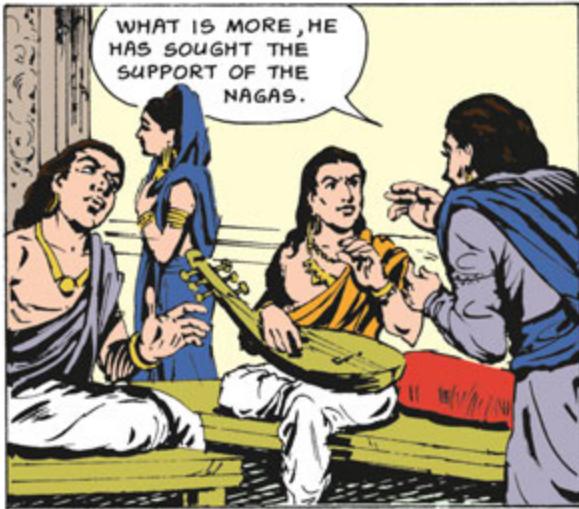
THE SON OF THE LICHCHAVI QUEEN SURPASSES ALL IN HIS GRASP OF THE ITIHASAS, THE DHARMA-SHASTRAS AND THE ARTHASHASTRA.

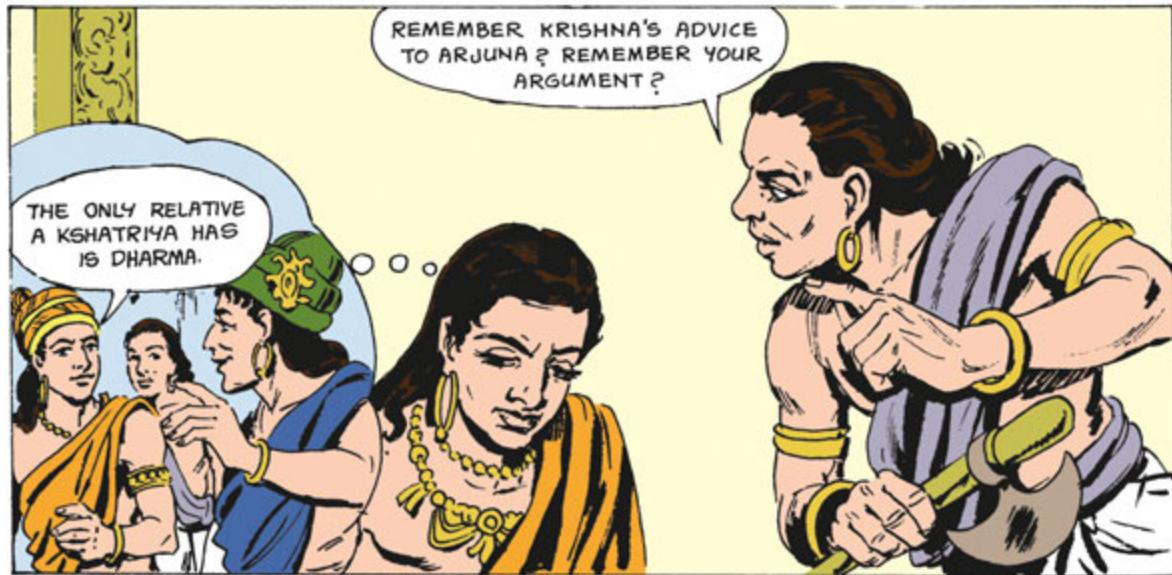
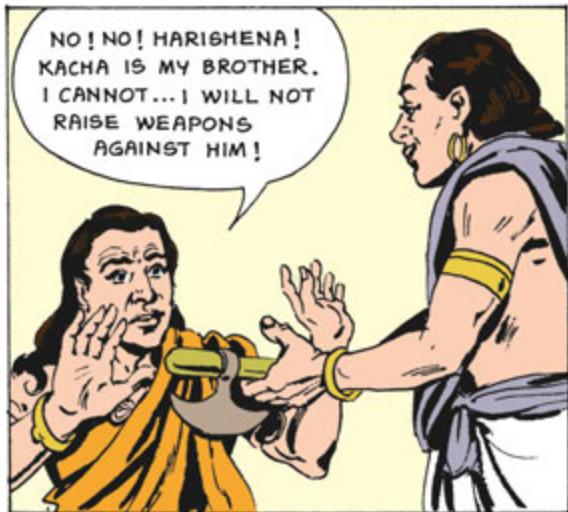
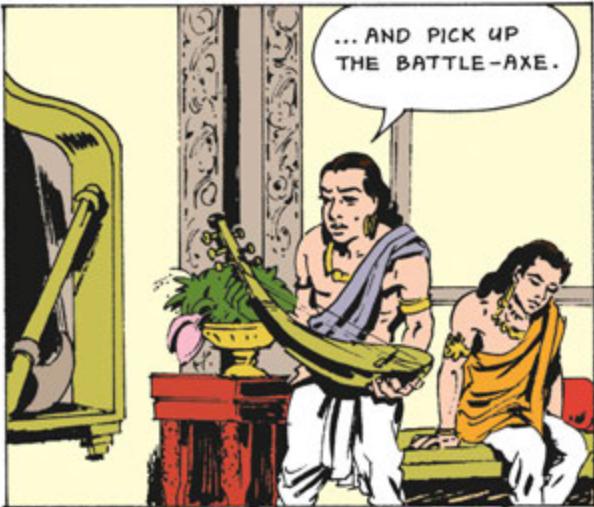
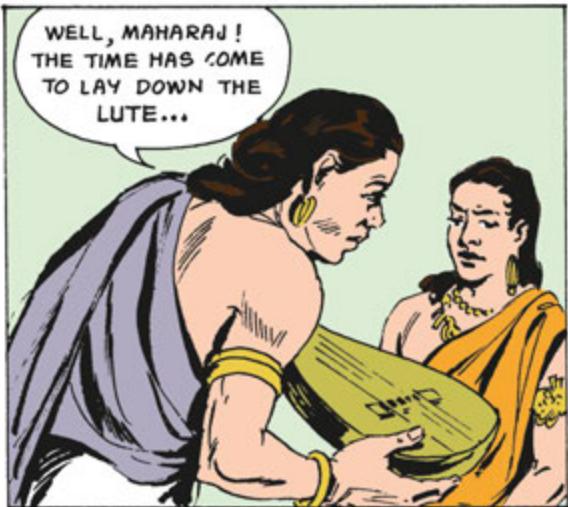
SO YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT HIS RULE WILL BE GUIDED BY OUR TRADITIONAL VALUES.

THUS DID SAMUDRA GUPTA ASCEND THE THRONE EVEN IN THE LIFETIME OF HIS FATHER.











SAMUDRA GUPTA SLOWLY LOOKED UP AND SMILED AT HARISHENA.



THEN HE TOOK THE BATTLE-AXE FROM HIM...



... AND STOOD UP.

I SHALL NOT TOUCH THE LUTE TILL I HAVE NO MORE USE FOR THIS. ASK DHRUVABHUTI TO SEE ME.

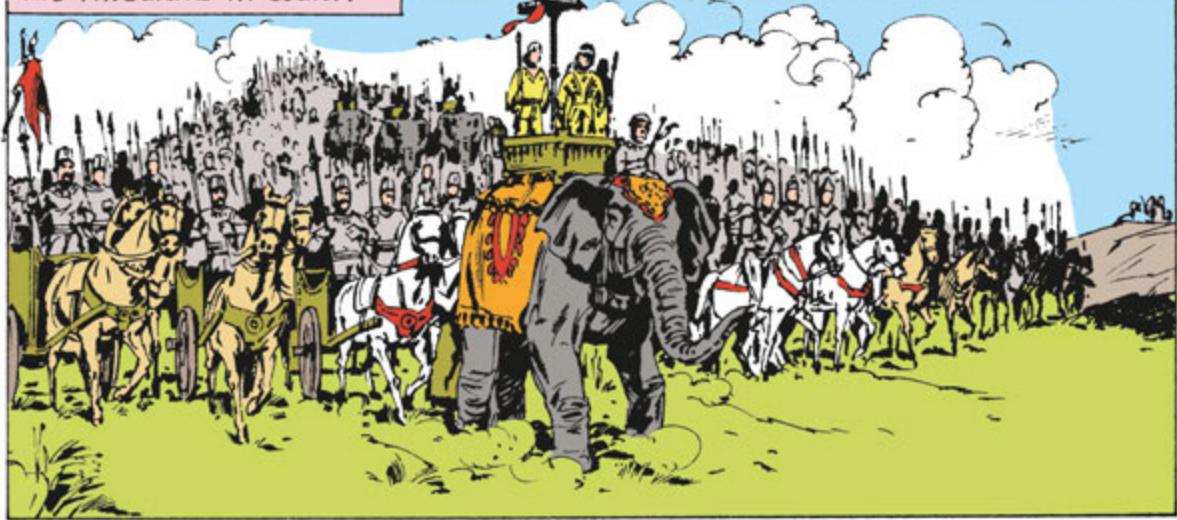


SOON —

DHRUVABHUTI, RALLY OUR ARMIES. THE NAGAS MUST BE QUELLED.



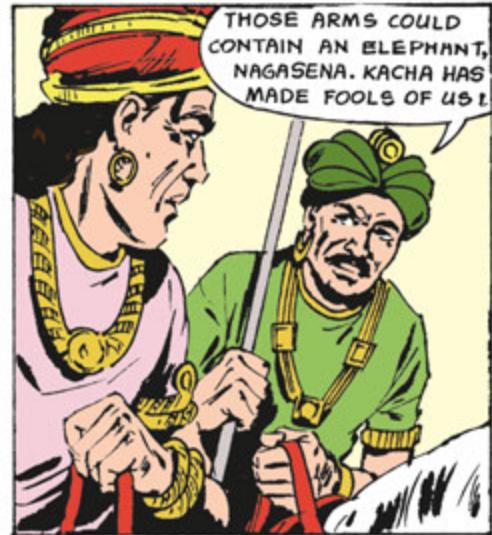
AND SO SAMUDRA SUPTA, AT THE HEAD OF A VAST ARMY, MARCHED OUT WITH HARISHENA, HIS FAVOURITE AT COURT.



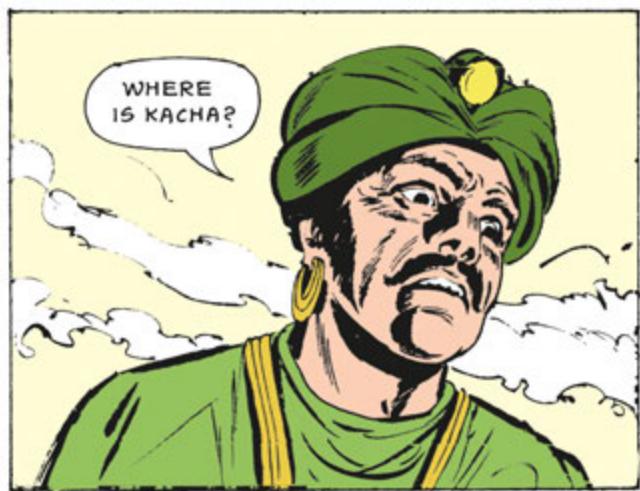
IN THE BATTLE THAT FOLLOWED EVEN HIS ENEMIES COULD NOT HELP BUT ADMIRE HIS PROWESS IN WAR.



THOSE ARMS COULD CONTAIN AN ELEPHANT, NAGASENA. KACHA HAS MADE FOOLS OF US!



WHERE IS KACHA?



WATCHING THE TURN THE BATTLE WAS TAKING, KACHA HAD FLED FROM THE SCENE AND WAS HEARD OF NO MORE.

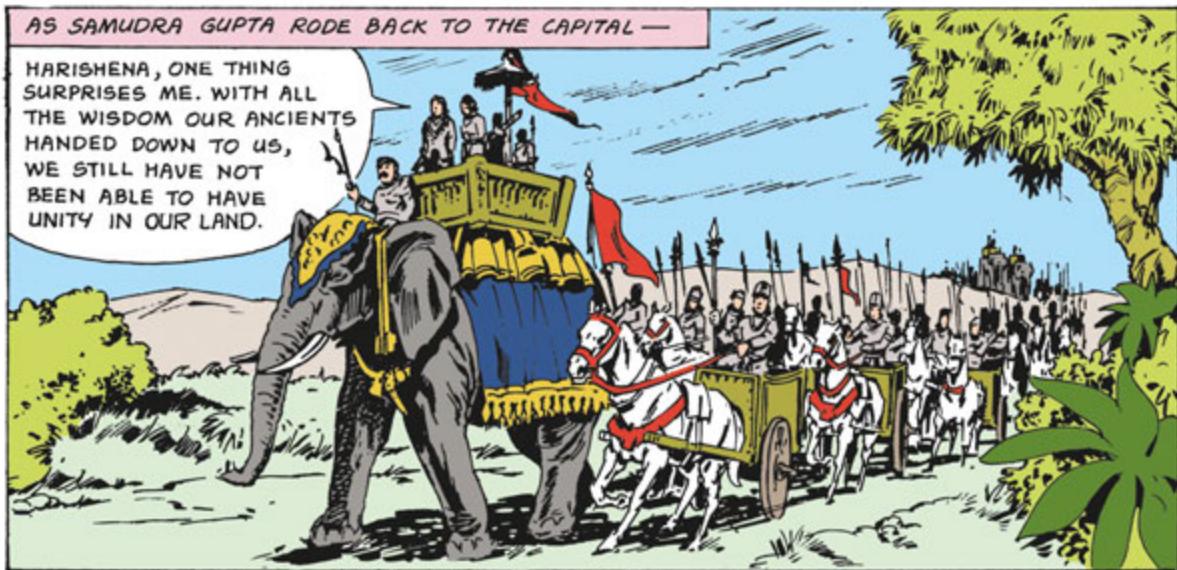
SAMUDRA GUPTA WON THE BATTLE AND TOOK THE THREE KINGS CAPTIVE.

I AM SPARING YOUR LIVES. BUT LET THIS BE A LESSON TO YOU. NEVER PROVOKE ME AGAIN.

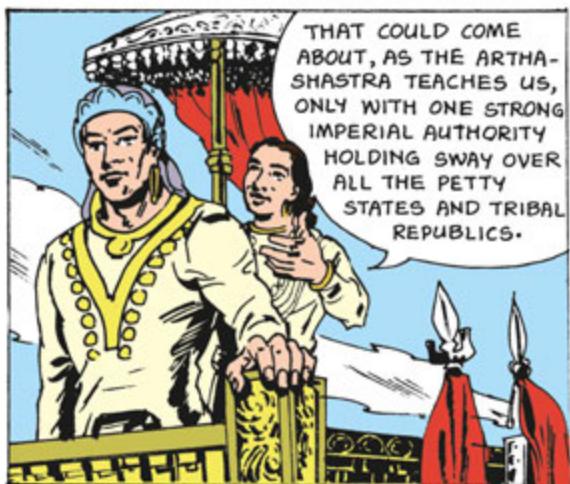
THEIR TERRITORIES WERE ANNEXED TO THE GUPTA KINGDOM.

AS SAMUDRA GUPTA RODE BACK TO THE CAPITAL —

HARISHENA, ONE THING SURPRISES ME. WITH ALL THE WISDOM OUR ANCIENTS HANDED DOWN TO US, WE STILL HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO HAVE UNITY IN OUR LAND.

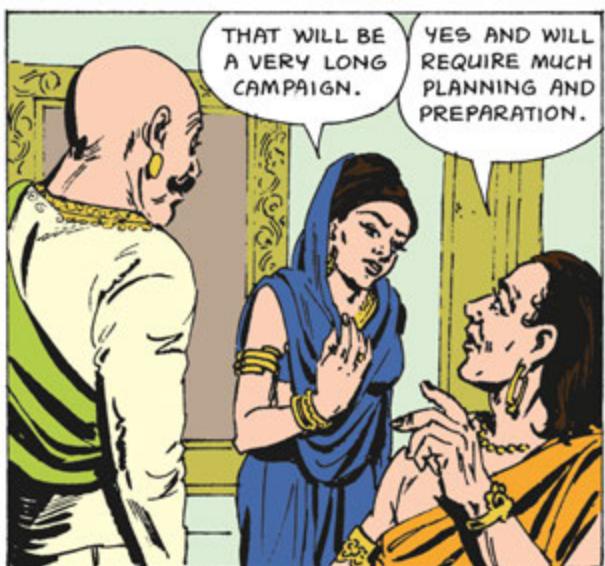
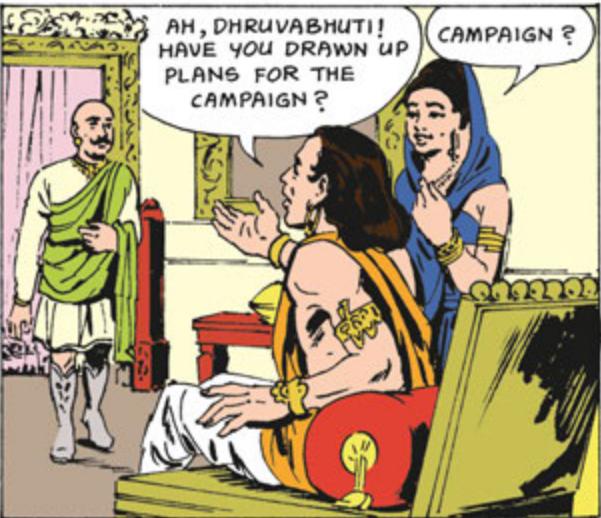
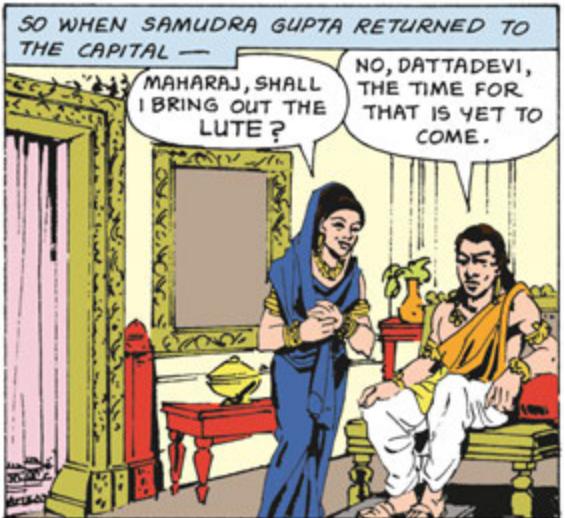


THAT COULD COME ABOUT, AS THE ARTHASHASTRA TEACHES US, ONLY WITH ONE STRONG IMPERIAL AUTHORITY HOLDING SWAY OVER ALL THE PETTY STATES AND TRIBAL REPUBLICS.

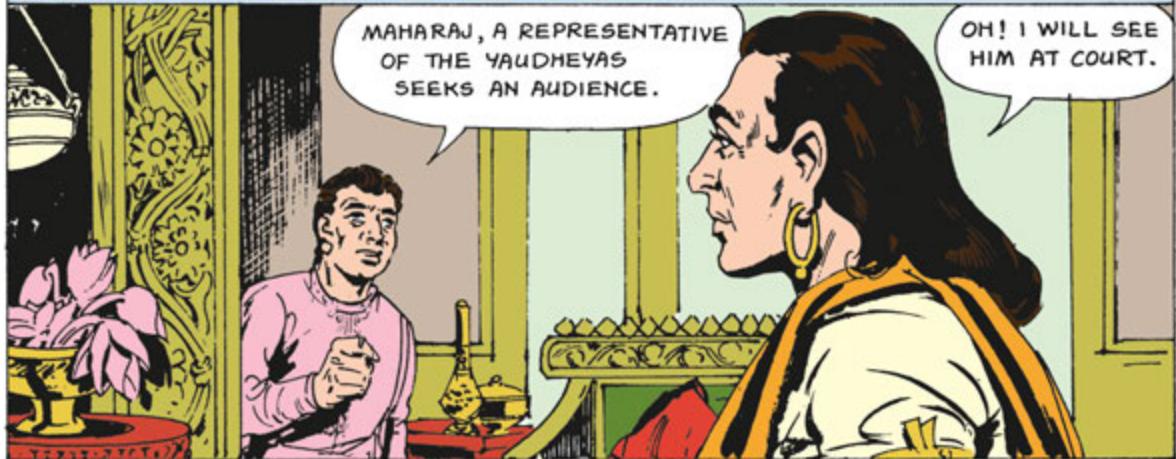


THEN WE SHALL BECOME THAT AUTHORITY.





MEANWHILE NEWS OF THE PREPARATIONS AND OF THE DEFEAT OF THE THREE KINGS SPREAD AND HAD A MOST UNEXPECTED RESULT. ONE DAY—



LATER—

OUR TRIBE OFFERS YOU TRIBUTE AS OUR MOST RESPECTED OVERLORD, AND SEEKS YOUR PROTECTION AND FRIENDSHIP AT ALL TIMES.



YOUR OFFER IS ACCEPTED IF YOU AGREE NOT TO WAGE WAR AMONG YOURSELVES OR WITH ANY OTHER WHO ENJOYS OUR PROTECTION.

AN OFFICIAL OF OUR COURT WILL BE PLACED IN YOUR REPUBLIC TO ENSURE PEACE AT ALL TIMES.



OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, ONE BY ONE, EACH OF THE TRIBES CAME WITH THE SAME OFFER AND WAS GIVEN THE SAME REPLY. AND SO WITHOUT A STRUGGLE, WITHOUT ANY BLOODSHED, THE TRIBES BECAME FEUDAL STATES OF THE GROWING GUPTA POWER.

WHEN THE LAST OF THE REPRESENTATIVES
HAD COME AND GONE —

WHAT DO WE DO WITH ALL THE
MEN WE HAVE RALLIED... ALL THE
WEAPONS... ALL THE EQUIPMENT?

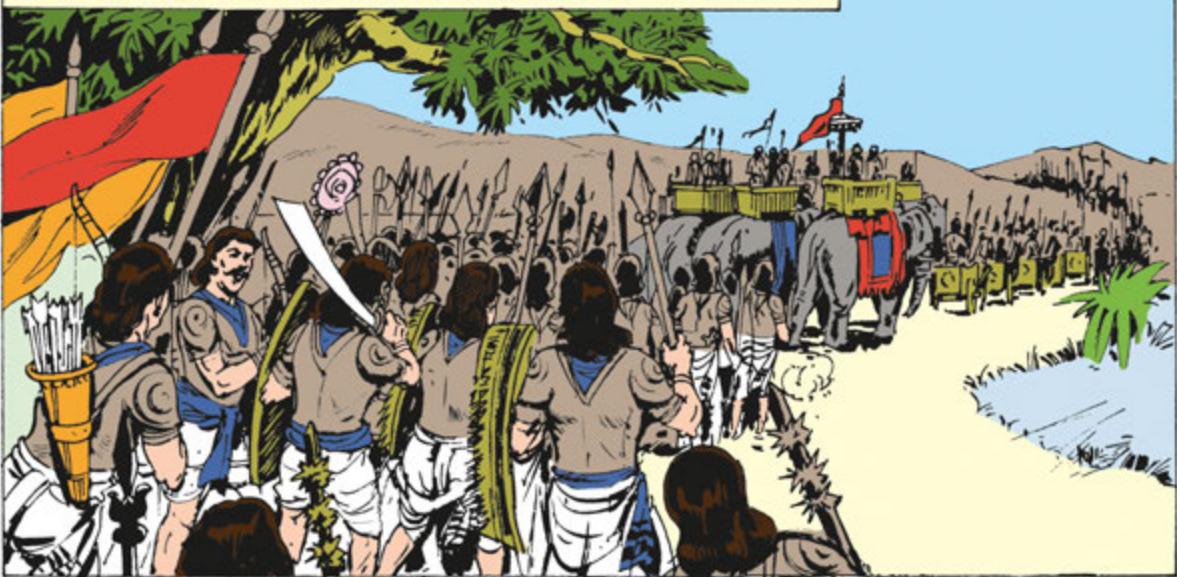
NOTHING IS LOST.
WE STILL GO ON OUR
CAMPAIGN. BUT WE
TAKE A DIFFERENT
ROUTE.

WE GO SOUTHWARDS
INSTEAD OF
WESTWARDS.

HARISHENA SHOOK HIS HEAD AND SMILED
TO HIMSELF.

WELL, MAHARAJ.
I WILL NEVER
UNDERSTAND
YOU.

AND SO BEGAN SAMUDRA GUPTA'S LONG MARCH SOUTHWARDS.



HE BEGAN WITH WHAT ARE NOW
EASTERN MADHYA PRADESH
AND NORTHERN ORISSA,
MARCHED THROUGH THE
HEART OF THE FORESTS
OF ORISSA AND THEN
ALONG THE EASTERN
COAST TO THE KINGDOM
OF THE PALLAVAS,
CONQUERING EVERY
KINGDOM ON
HIS ROUTE.



AS HE WAS PREPARING TO MARCH FURTHER SOUTH, NEWS CAME FROM THE NORTH.

MAHARAJ, ACHYUTSENA AND
NAGASENA ARE PLANNING AN
UPRISING. THEY HAVE ALLIED
THEMSELVES WITH SIX OTHER
NAGA RAJAS UNDER
GANAPATINAGA OF
MATHURA.



SAMUDRA GUPTA WAS QUIET FOR A WHILE AS HE DID SOME QUICK REASONING. THEN —

HARISHENA. WE ARE TURNING BACK.

OUR CAMPAIGN WAS SUCCESSFUL. BUT STAYING BACK TO CONSOLIDATE OUR POSITION IS NOT POSSIBLE. NOT NOW, NOR IN THE FUTURE.

I HAVE DECIDED TO REINSTATE THE KINGS WITH ALL POWERS AND SETTLE FOR AN ANNUAL TRIBUTE FROM THEM.

SAMUDRA GUPTA RETRACED HIS ROUTE...

...SET THE KINGS BACK ON THEIR THRONES, ON HIS TERMS...

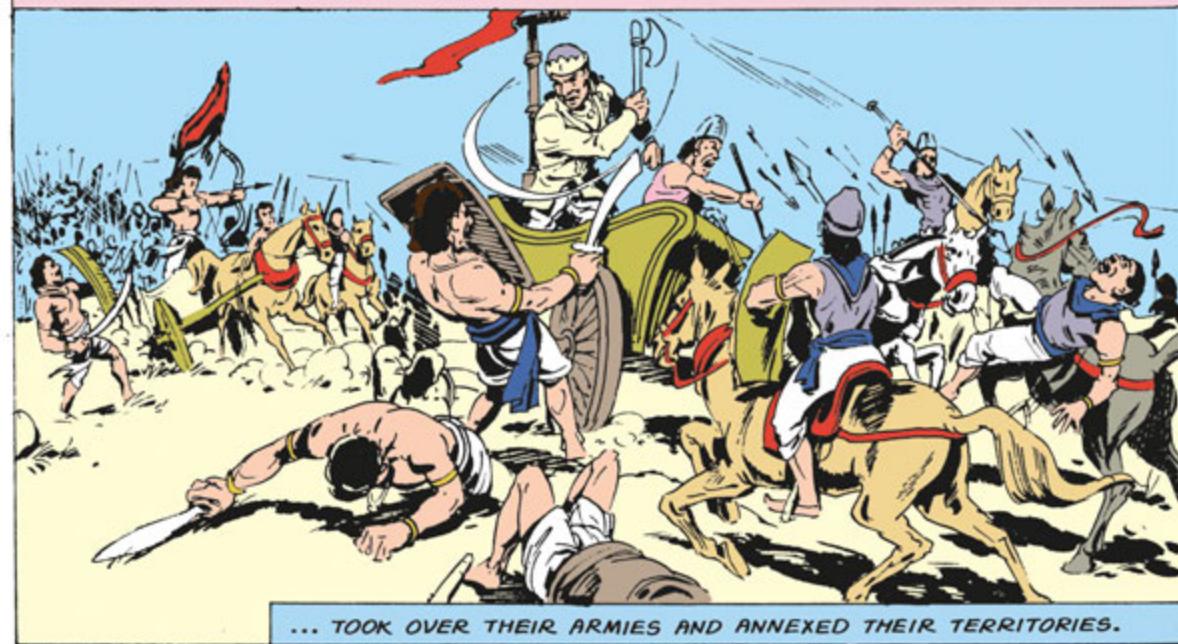
... AND AT LAST REACHED HIS CAPITAL TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE BATTLE AHEAD.

HARISHENA,
I HAVE MADE
UP MY MIND.

ABOUT WHAT
NOW?



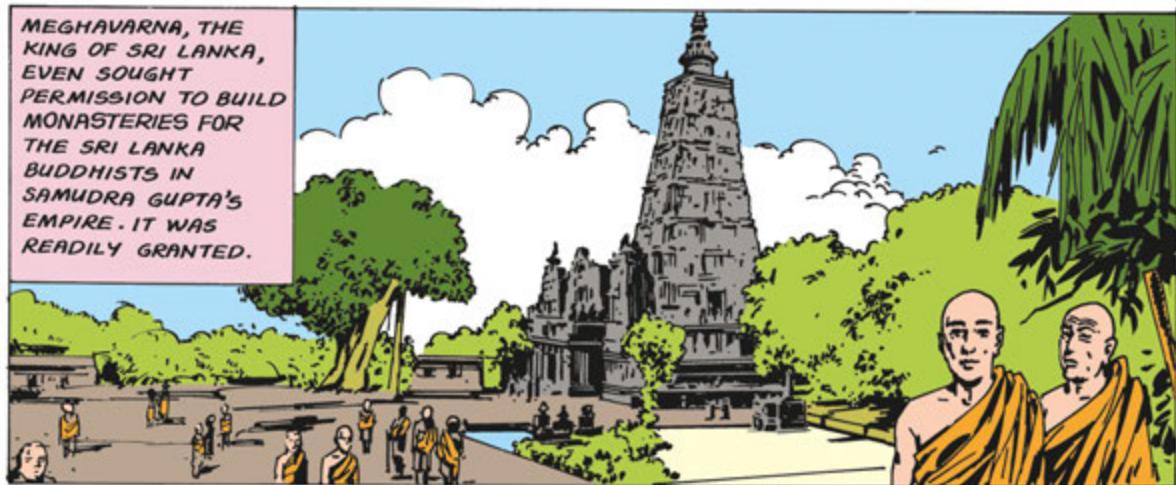
AND TRUE TO HIS WORD, HE RUTHLESSLY ATTACKED AND SLEW THE OFFENDERS...



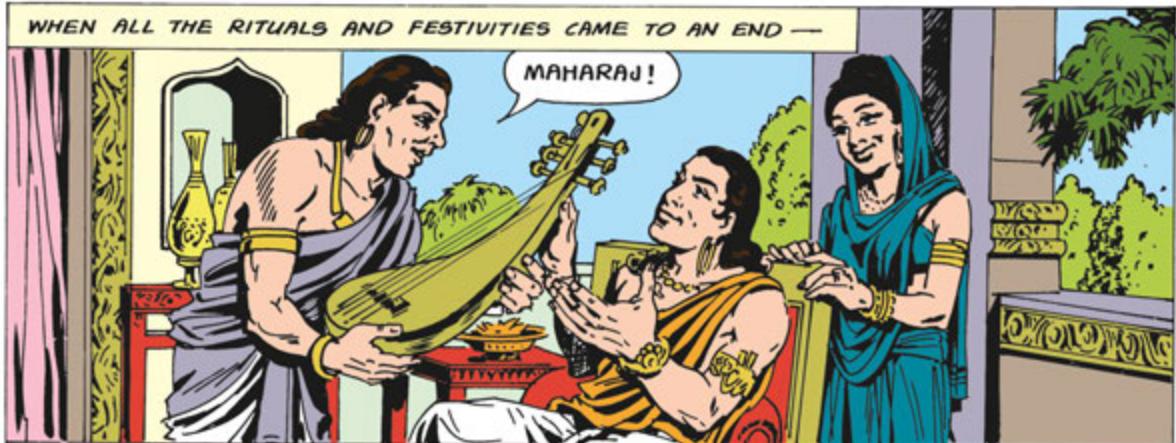
ON RETURNING TO HIS CAPITAL, HE PERFORMED THE ASHWAMEDHA SACRIFICE, TO WHICH KINGS FROM PARTS OF AFGHANISTAN, PERSIA, SRI LANKA AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA SENT THEIR ENVOYS WITH GIFTS.



MEGHAVARNA, THE KING OF SRI LANKA, EVEN SOUGHT PERMISSION TO BUILD MONASTERIES FOR THE SRI LANKA BUDDHISTS IN SAMUDRA GUPTA'S EMPIRE. IT WAS READILY GRANTED.



WHEN ALL THE RITUALS AND FESTIVITIES CAME TO AN END —

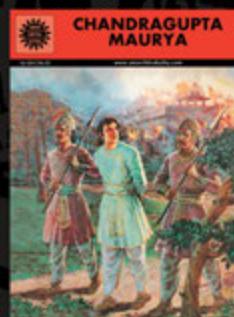


IN THE LAST TEN YEARS OF HIS REIGN, SAMUDRA GUPTA SAW HIS DREAM BECOME A REALITY. THE ORDER AND STABILITY HE HAD BROUGHT ABOUT, PAVED THE WAY FOR CHANDRA GUPTA II, HIS SON BORN OF DATTADEVI, TO CARRY THE GUPTA GLORY TO ITS ZENITH. LITERATURE AND THE ARTS FLOURISHED, EARNING THE GUPTA AGE THE EPITHET "GOLDEN".

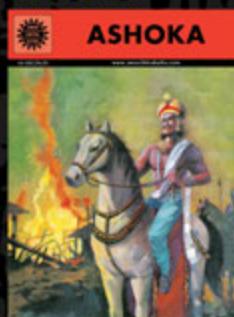
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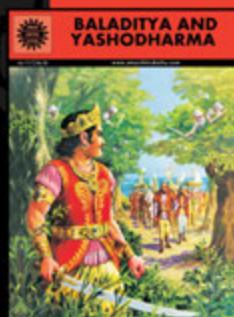
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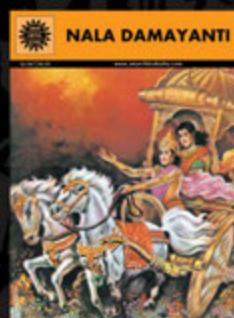


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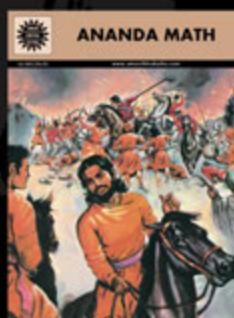


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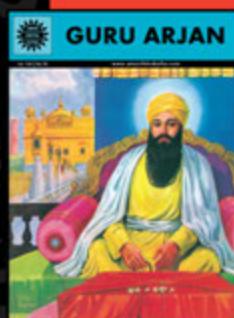
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