

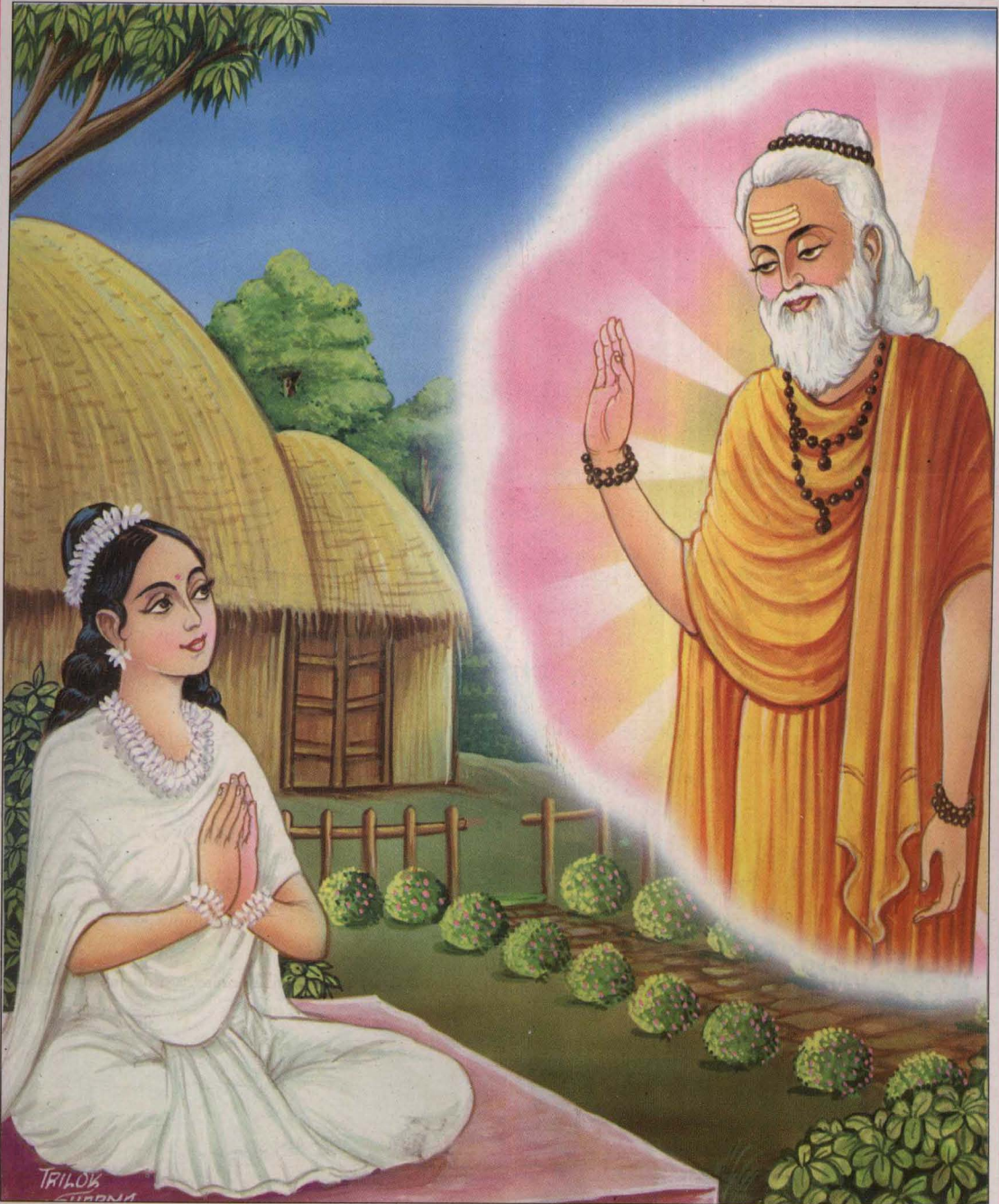


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RISHIDATTA



RISHIDATTA

Happiness and sorrow in life are like sun and shade. An ordinary person is joyous in conditions of happiness and sad in those of sorrow. But a wise man maintains equanimity considering happiness and sorrow to be consequences of his own deeds. He keeps his mental balance. A man with such balanced views never faces defeat in his life. He neither breaks down in adversity nor does he get excited in joy. He is capable of forgiving even a grave offender and having a feeling of love and friendship with all.

The story of Sati Rishidatta gives us the message that forgive even your offender and endure torments with equanimity considering them to be the fruits of your own deeds. The life story of Rishidatta is one of the most popular stories in Jain narrative literature. The tenth century Prakrit author Gunapala Muni of the Naail lineage wrote a book titled Isidatta Chariyam. Based on this work numerous books have been written about the story of Rishidatta in Sanskrit, Gujarati, and Rajasthani languages. Rishidatta was the daughter of a hermit (Tapas Rishi). But later, under the influence of Dharmaghosh Acharya she accepted Nirgranth religion (Jainism).

Sadhvi Shri Shantakumari ji, the scholarly disciple of Mahasati Kamalavati ji has favoured us with this story of Rishidatta. We are indebted to her.

—Shrichand Surana 'Saras'

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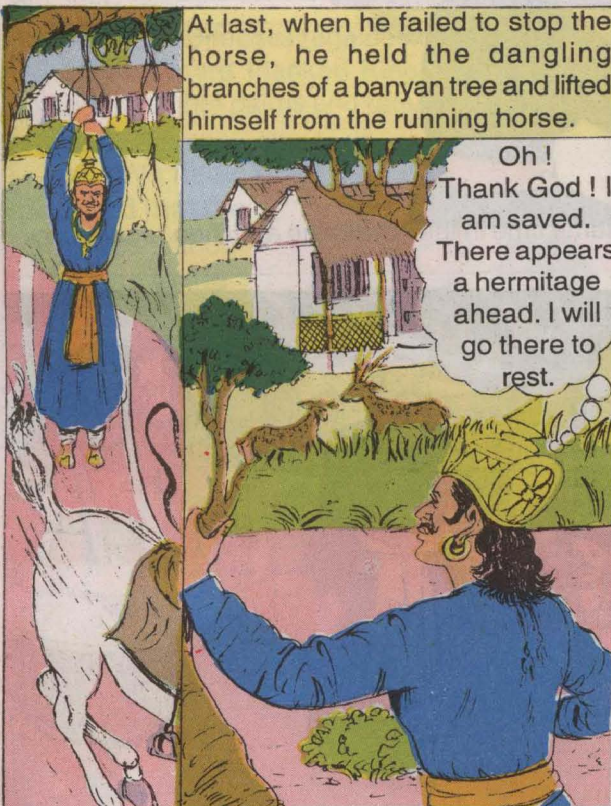
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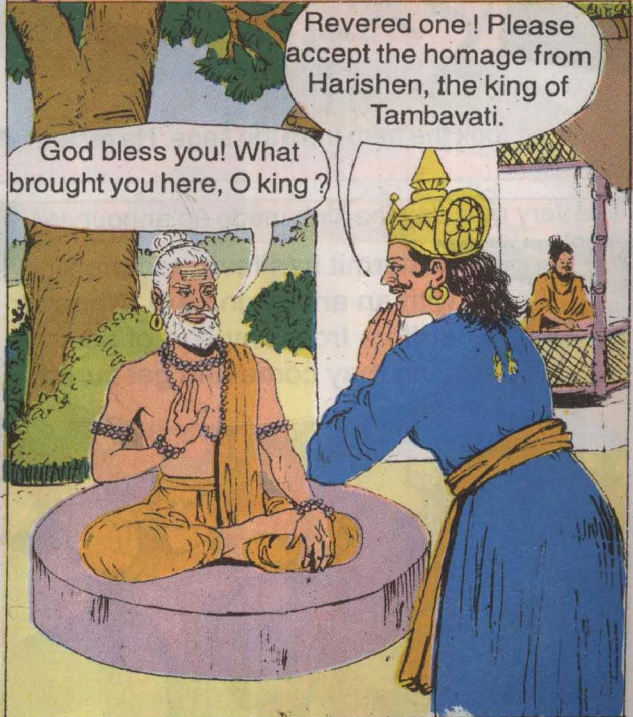
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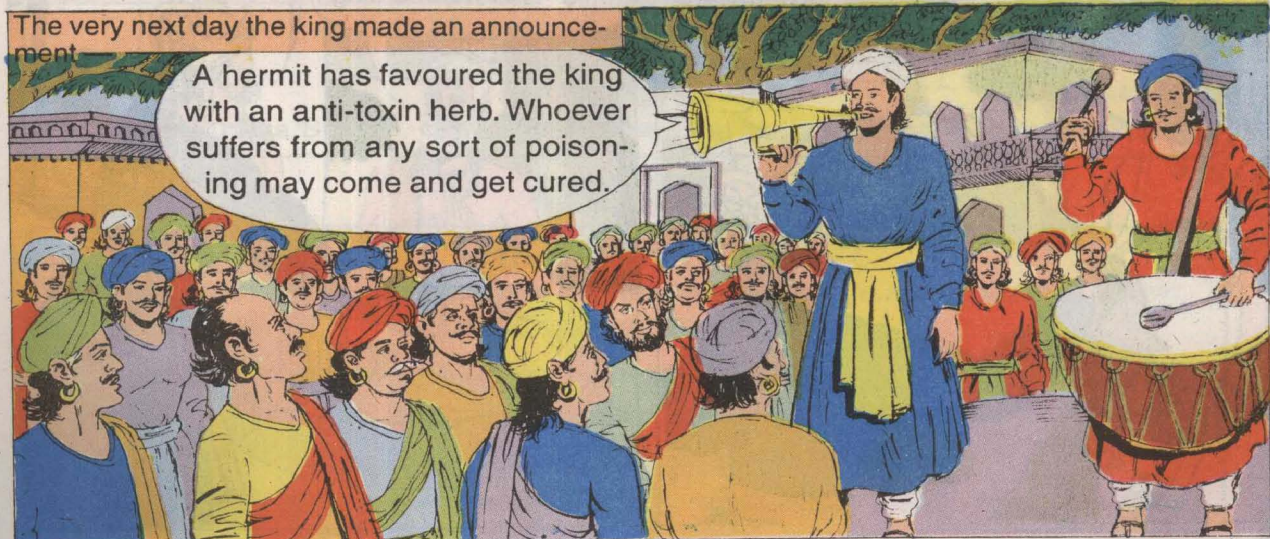
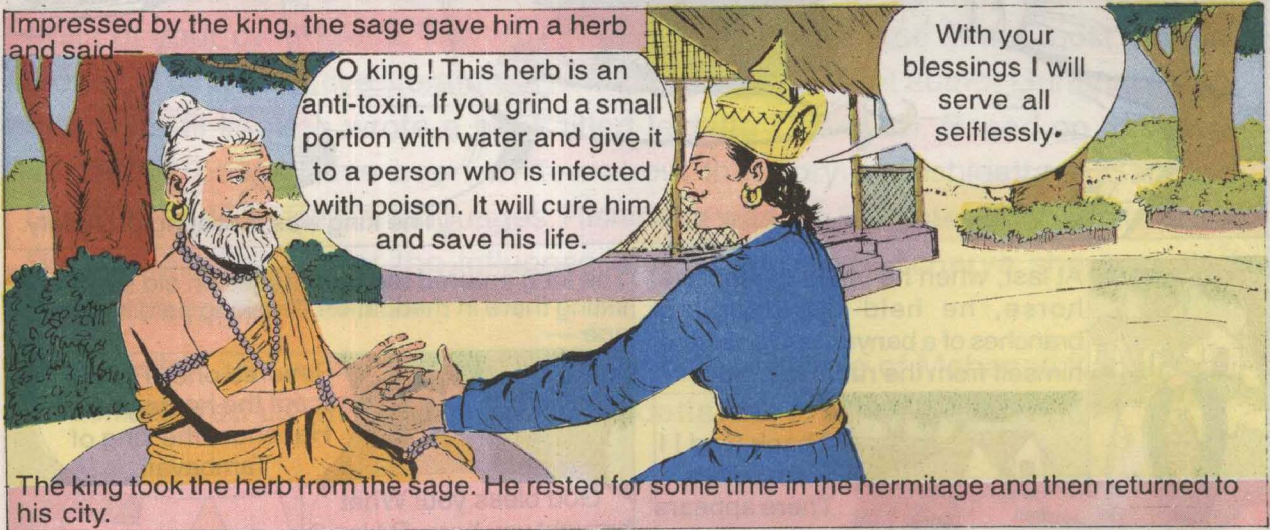
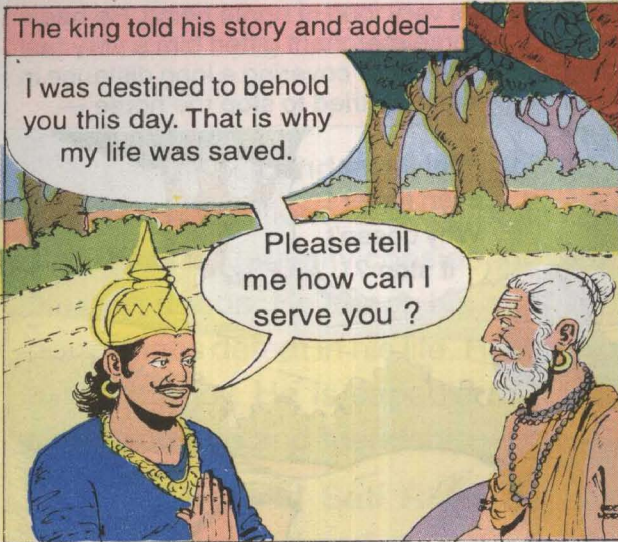
RISHIDATTA

King Harishen of Tambavati city was very fond of horse riding. He had a stable full of fast horses. Once a horse merchant gifted him a very fast horse. The king went riding that horse. After covering a long distance in a jungle beyond the border of his state he tried to stop the horse —

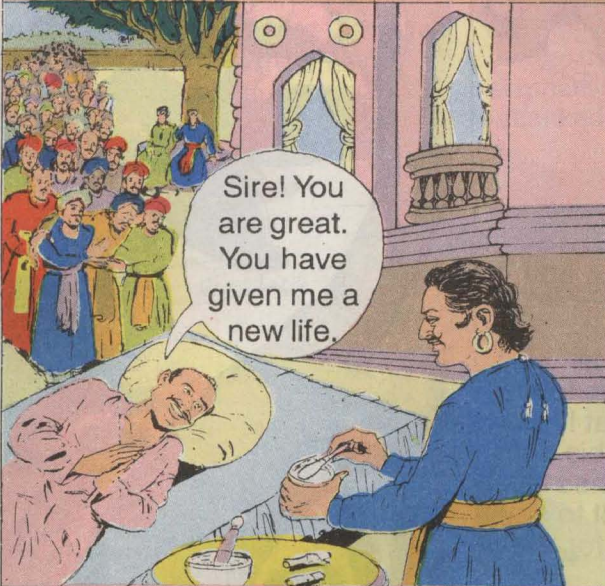


The king entered the hermitage. An old sage was sitting there in meditation. The king paid him homage —





Next day there was a long queue of people suffering from poisoning. The king himself started grinding the herb in water and treating the patients.



As the news spread, hundreds of patients from far and near poured in and the king was busy treating them.

In no time the princess regained consciousness. All present there thanked King Harishen. The queen joined her palms and requested —

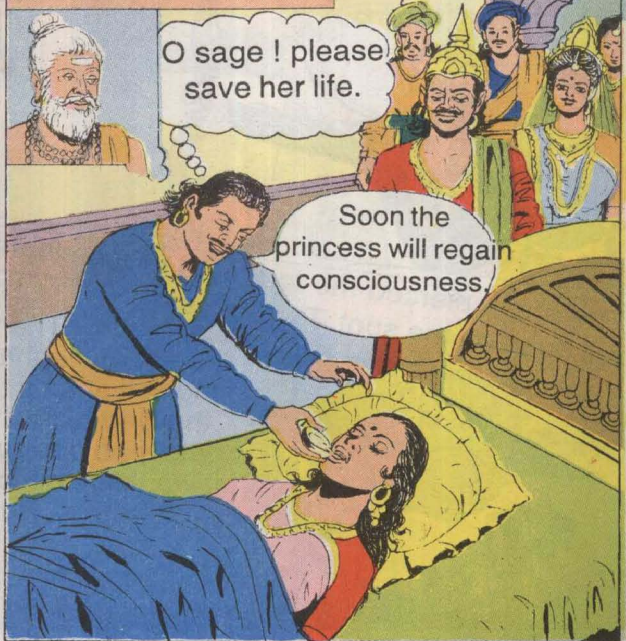
Sire ! We had declared that the princess will be married to the noble person who cures her of the poison.



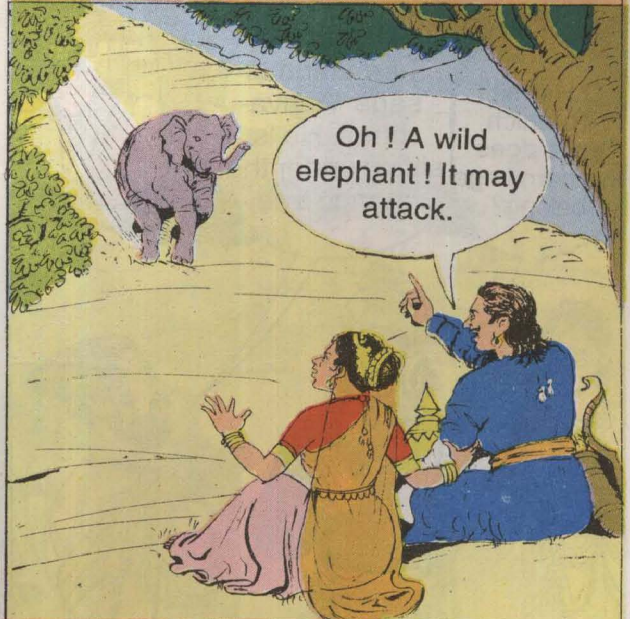
When Harishen gave his consent Pritimati was married to him with great pomp and show.



One day a snake bit the princess of Mangalavati, a neighbouring kingdom. On getting the news King Harishen came to Mangalavati. He put a few drops of the medicinal water in the mouth of the princess.

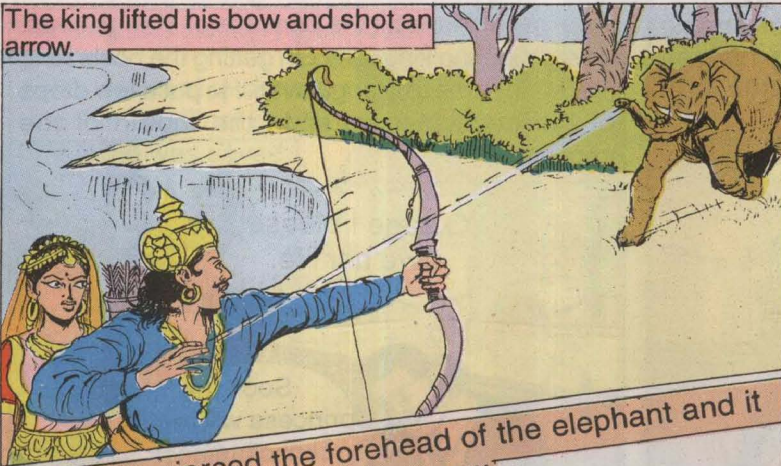


One day king Harishen and queen Pritimati went for an outing. When the royal couple was resting under a tree on the bank of a river they saw a wild elephant approaching—



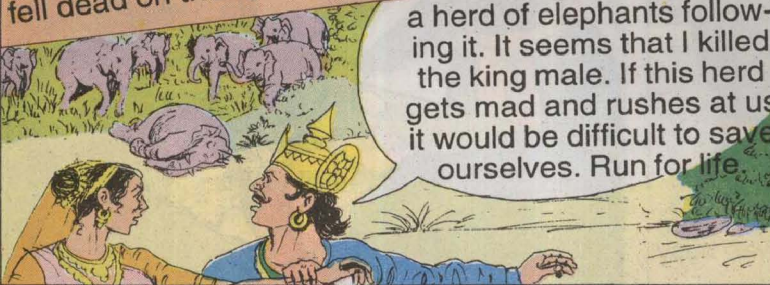
The queen hid behind the king's back.

The king lifted his bow and shot an arrow.



The arrow pierced the forehead of the elephant and it fell dead on the spot. The king saw—

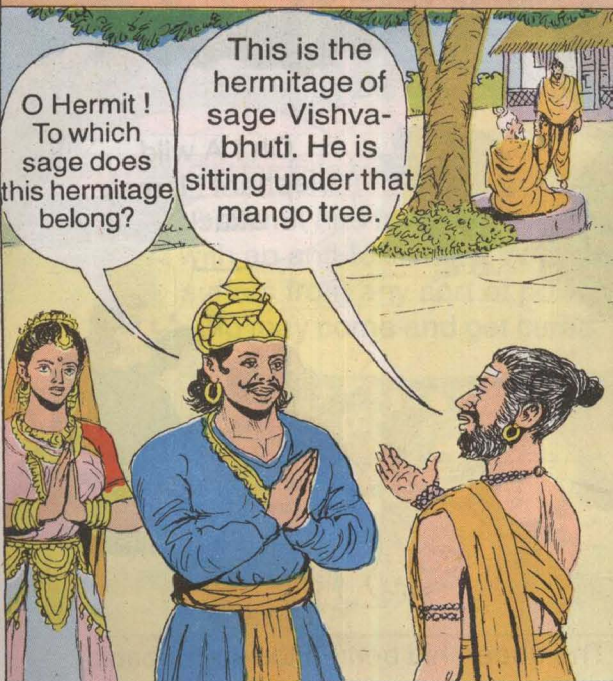
Oh ! There is a herd of elephants following it. It seems that I killed the king male. If this herd gets mad and rushes at us it would be difficult to save ourselves. Run for life.



Hiding behind trees, the royal couple ran into the jungle.



After a long run they saw a hermitage. On entering the hermitage they saw many hermits moving around. After greetings the king asked—



O Hermit ! To which sage does this hermitage belong?

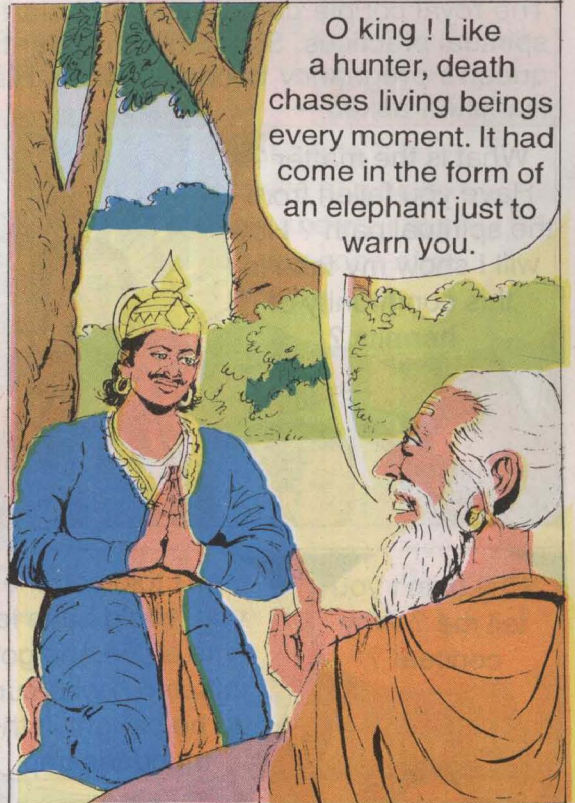
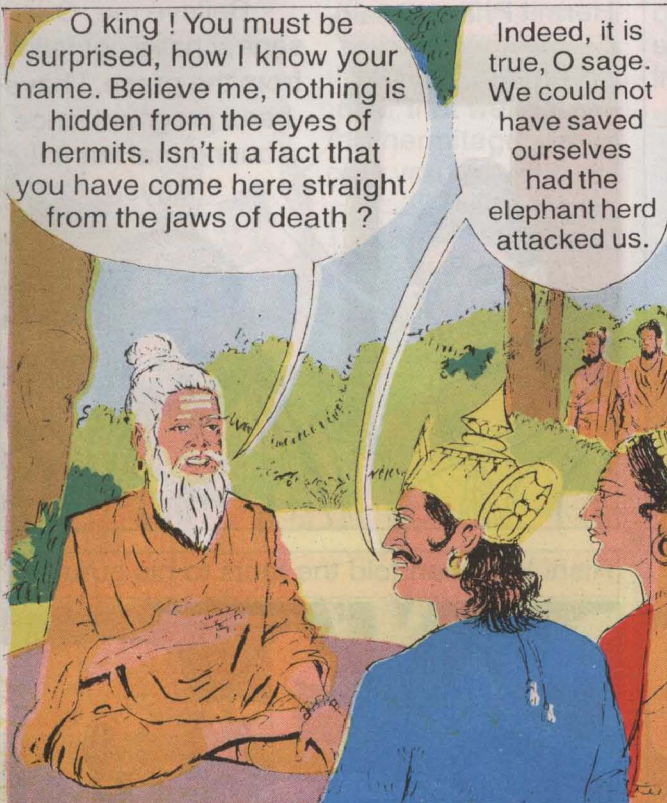
This is the hermitage of sage Vishva-bhuti. He is sitting under that mango tree.

The royal couple approached the sage and paid homage. The sage opened his eyes—

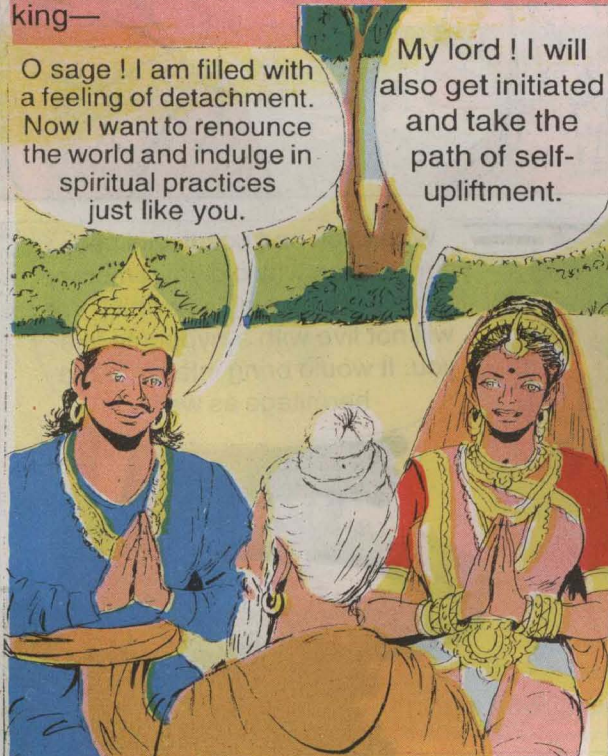


King Harishen ! You are welcome in the hermitage.

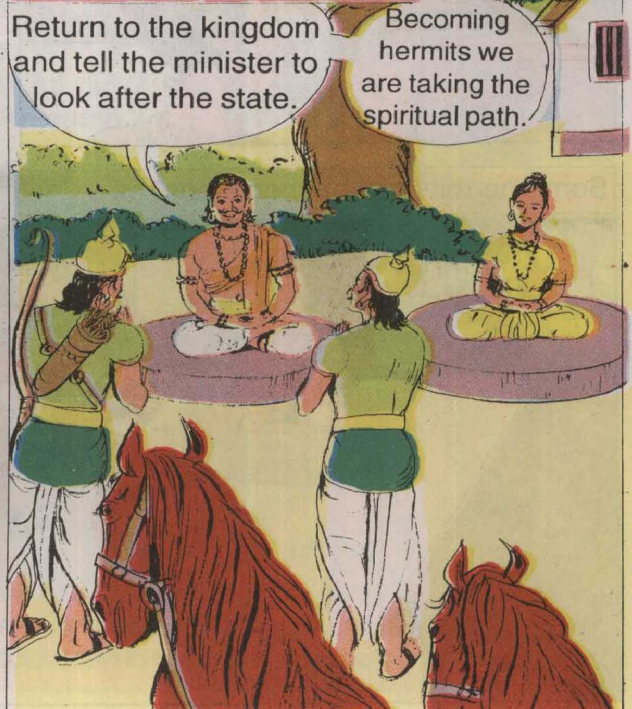
Surprising ! How the sage knows my name?



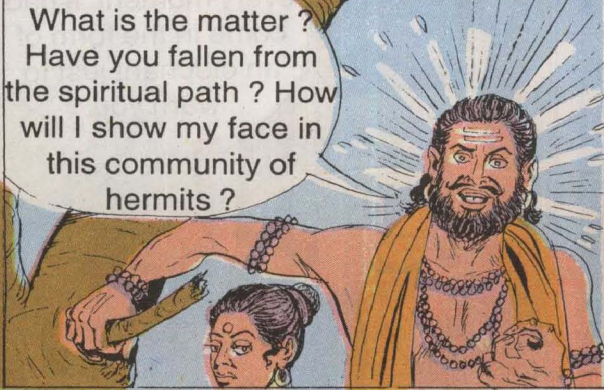
The words of the sage enlightened the king—



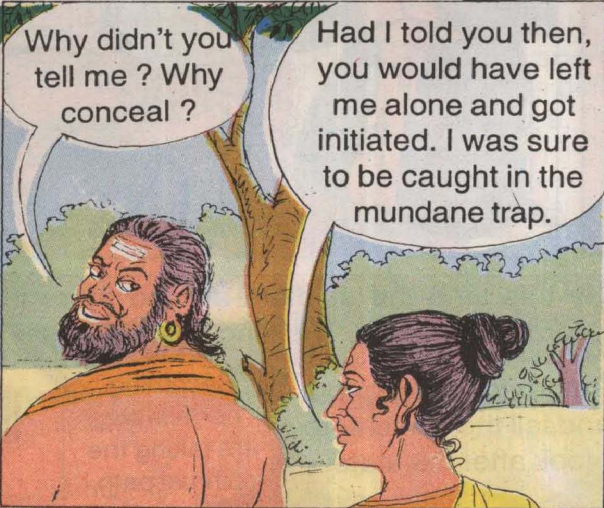
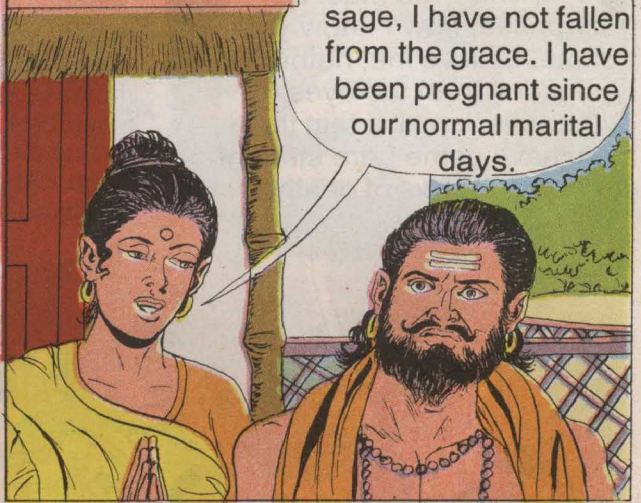
By this time the soldiers arrived there in search of the king. The king told them—



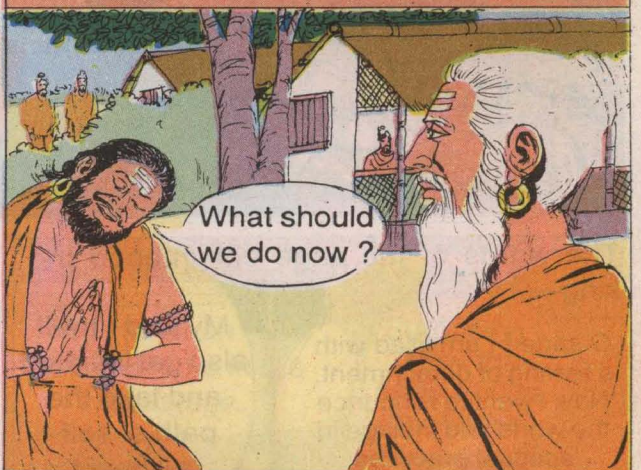
The royal couple got initiated and started spiritual practices. Some months later the queen's pregnancy became visible. Rishi Harishen asked—



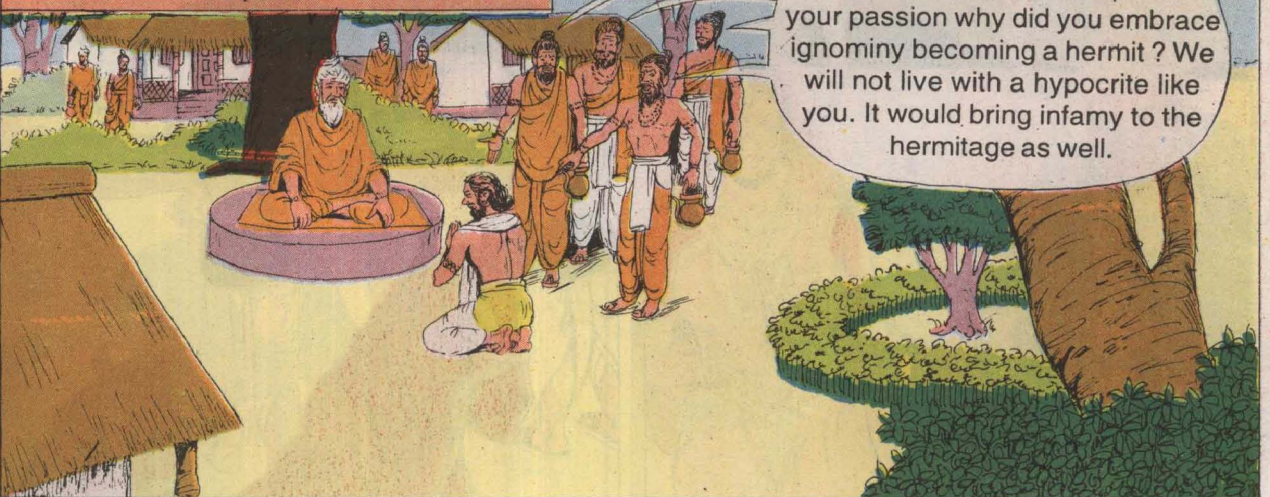
Hermit Pritimati said—



Rishi Harishen told the facts to his guru —



Some hermits reproached Harishen—



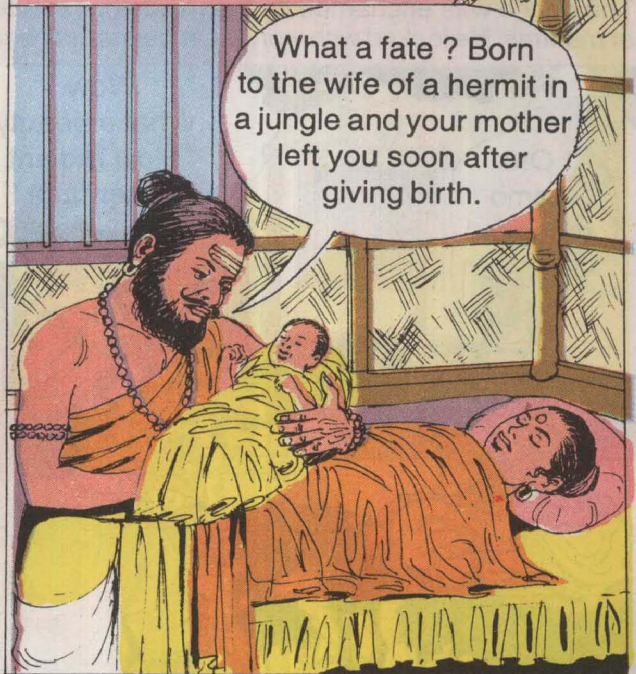
Sage Vishvabhuti said—



O sage ! No one will believe even if you are true. It is better that we leave this hermitage and only you live here.

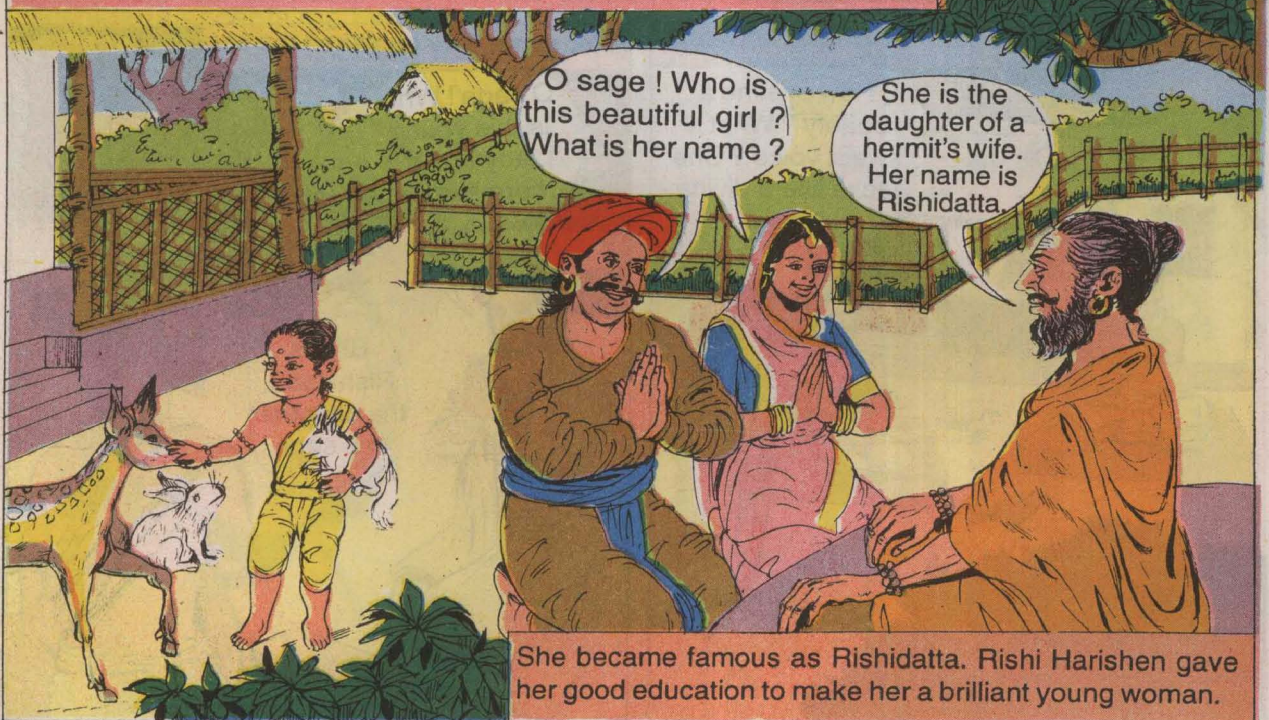
All the hermits left that place.

In due course hermit Pritimati gave birth to a baby girl. Soon after giving birth she died. Rishi Harishen took the child and uttered—



What a fate ? Born to the wife of a hermit in a jungle and your mother left you soon after giving birth.

Now rishi Harishen alone took care of the child. She started growing. She played with the small rabbits and deers in the hermitage. Visitors asked—

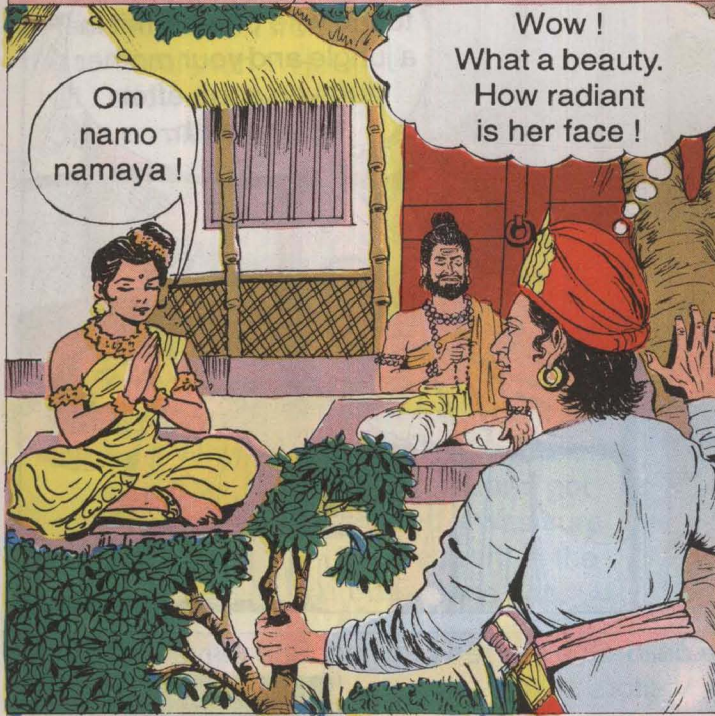


O sage ! Who is this beautiful girl ? What is her name ?

She is the daughter of a hermit's wife. Her name is Rishidatta.

She became famous as Rishidatta. Rishi Harishen gave her good education to make her a brilliant young woman.

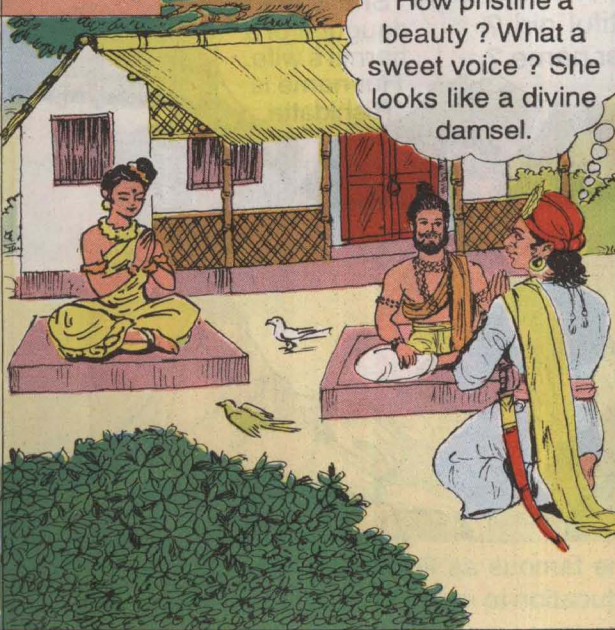
Once a marriage party of a prince passed that way and camped in the jungle to rest. In the evening the prince came to the hermitage. The sage was sitting on a white rock and meditating. Rishidatta was chanting mantras. The prince was enchanted by the melodious rendering of mantras. He looked with wonder at her natural beauty.



When the chanting was over, the prince got up, paid homage to the sage and introduced himself.



The sage remained silent. Kanakarath kept on staring at Rishidatta.



After some time he asked the sage



The prince could not contain himself. He gathered courage and said—

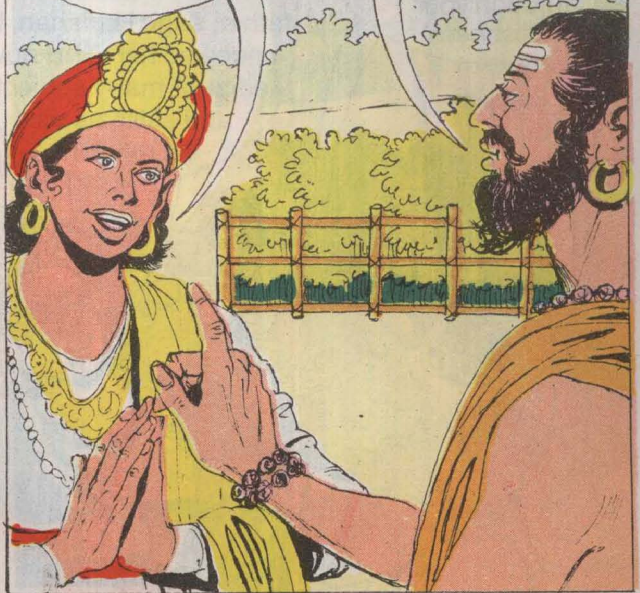
O sage ! Am I lucky enough to be the life partner of this sage-daughter ?

But, prince, you are proceeding to marry the princess of Kaberi ?



Yes, but I am a bachelor at present. Who would like to drink water from a well when he gets the pure water of the Ganges ?

Would this act of yours not annoy your parents? Moreover, the bride's parents are sure to be furious.



I will pacify everyone. I promise you that if Rishidatta accepts me I will never give her any chance to be unhappy.



The prince became adamant. At last the sage sought consent of Rishidatta and married her to the prince.



When the marriage party returned to the kingdom with Rishidatta, everyone was surprised. The king said with apprehension—

Prince ! You have sown seeds of animosity between two kingdoms through your mulishness.

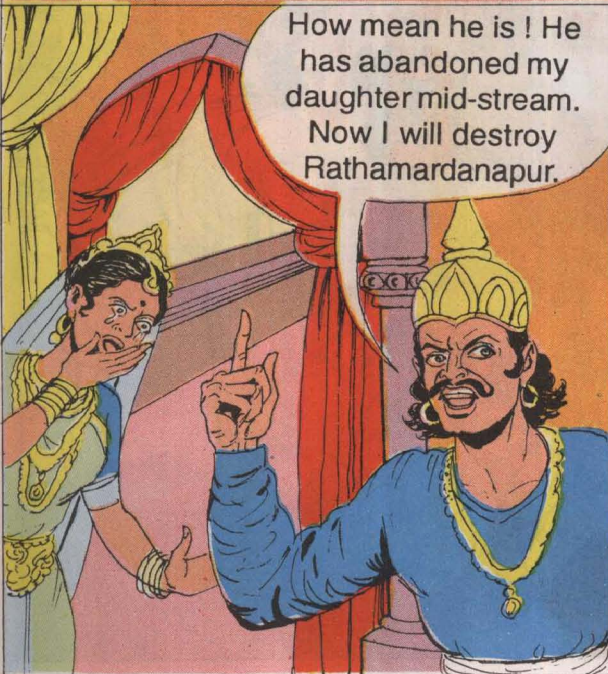
But, father, Rishidatta is so virtuous and modest that she can turn an enemy into a friend. Her father, sage Harishen, has endowed her with knowledge of many subjects and skills as well as religion.

Sire, celebrate the occasion now. Whatever has happened is for good. Goddess Lakshmi has entered our house as a bride.



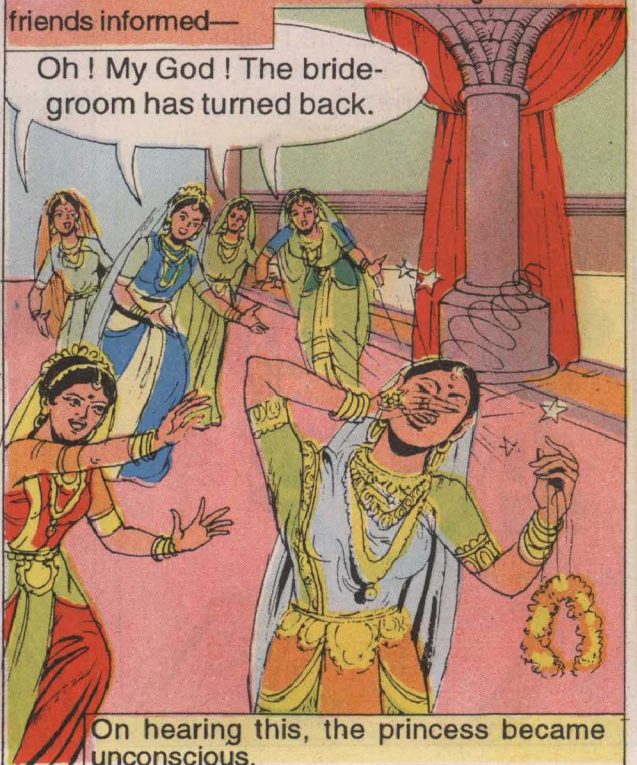
There, in Kaberi, when king Kritabrahma got the news that prince Kanakarath has married a sage-daughter and has returned with the marriage party, he lost his temper—

How mean he is ! He has abandoned my daughter mid-stream. Now I will destroy Rathamardanapur.



In her bridal dress Rukmini was waiting when her friends informed—

Oh ! My God ! The bride-groom has turned back.



On hearing this, the princess became unconscious.

She started sobbing when she regained consciousness. Her mother said—

Don't worry darling,
we'll find more handsome
and brave prince
for you.

No, mother,
that won't happen.
I will either marry
him or kill
myself.

King Kritabrahma sent an emissary to persuade Kanakarath for the marriage but the prince did not yield. Then Rishidatta intervened—

My lord ! There are
many queens in the
palaces of kings. Please
marry Rukmini. I have
no objection.

But Kanakarath still refused.

The emissary returned
and informed—

Sire ! Prince
Kanakarath
will not
accept
Rukmini.

What can we do ?
Marriage is an
agreement of
minds. We cannot
enforce it just by
exchange of
garlands.

When Rukmini came to know of this she
flared up with anger—

I take a vow to
kill that Rishidatta
who has snatched
my groom
from me.

And she retired to her chamber-of-fury and mumbled—

Rishidatta, you have shattered my dream. I will also turn you to dust.

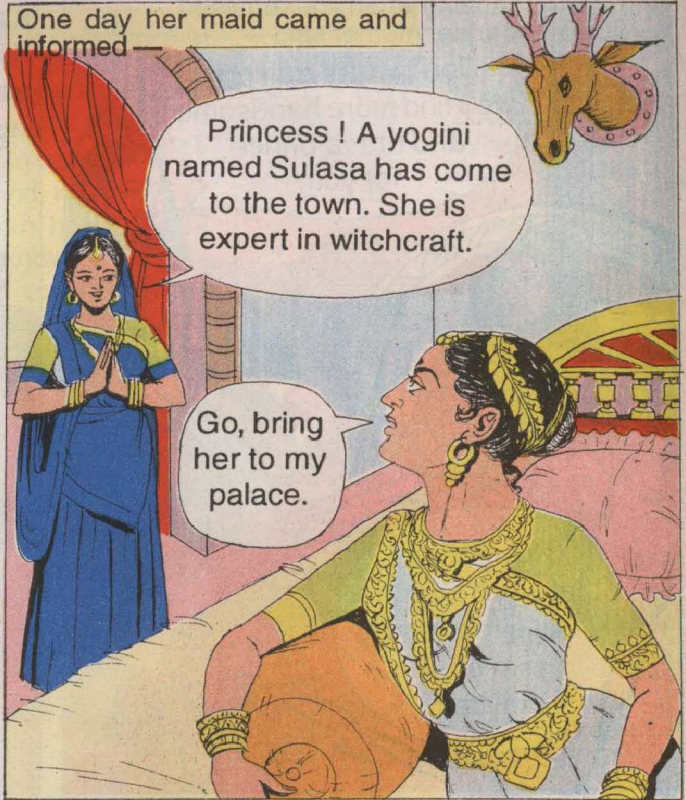


She started making a new plan every day to take revenge on Rishidatta.

One day her maid came and informed—

Princess ! A yogini named Sulasa has come to the town. She is expert in witchcraft.

Go, bring her to my palace.



The maid secretly brought the yogini into the palace. Offering a variety of gifts, the princess said—

Mother, please protect me.

Daughter ! Don't worry. With my power I can even pluck stars from the sky. Tell me what do you want?



Rukmini said—

Rishidatta has snatched my husband. I want her to be dead and then marry Kanakarath.

True magic is that which becomes self evident. You will see that Kanakarath himself will kill his wife and will come here to marry you.



The princess gifted her golden ornaments to the yogini.

Sulasa transformed herself into a bird and flew in the sky.



Coming to Rathamardanapur she killed a young men with her spell.



Collecting his flesh and blood she came to Rishidatta's bedroom —

Yes ! Now I will see who saves you ?



She applied blood on Rishidatta's face and scattered lumps of flesh around the room.

When Kanakarath got up during the night, he saw all this and was taken aback —



But he had so much love for and faith in his wife that he did not even awake her. He took a damp cloth and wiped her face —

No ! Not at all ! My wife cannot be a cannibal.



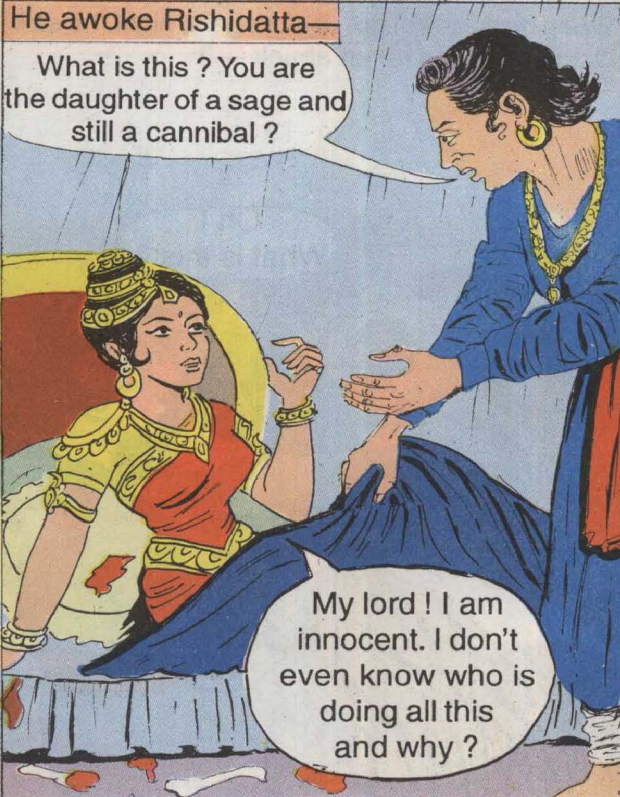
Next night the incident was repeated. Now the prince became alert. When the whole thing was repeated on the third night also he trembled with fear—

What is this happening every night ?



He awoke Rishidatta—

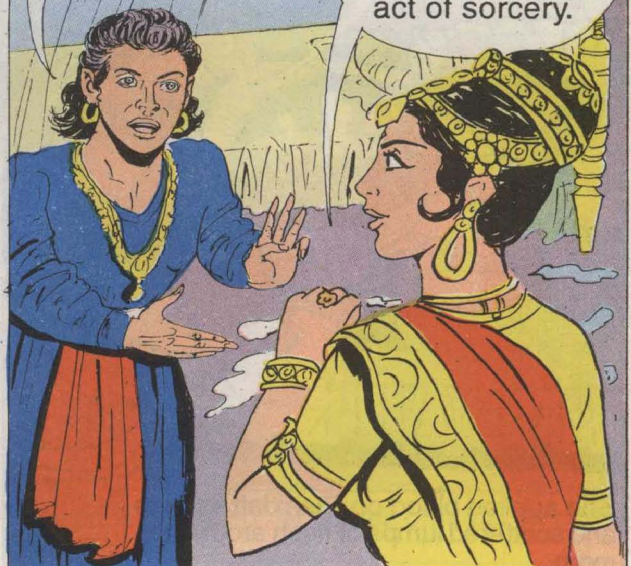
What is this ? You are the daughter of a sage and still a cannibal ?

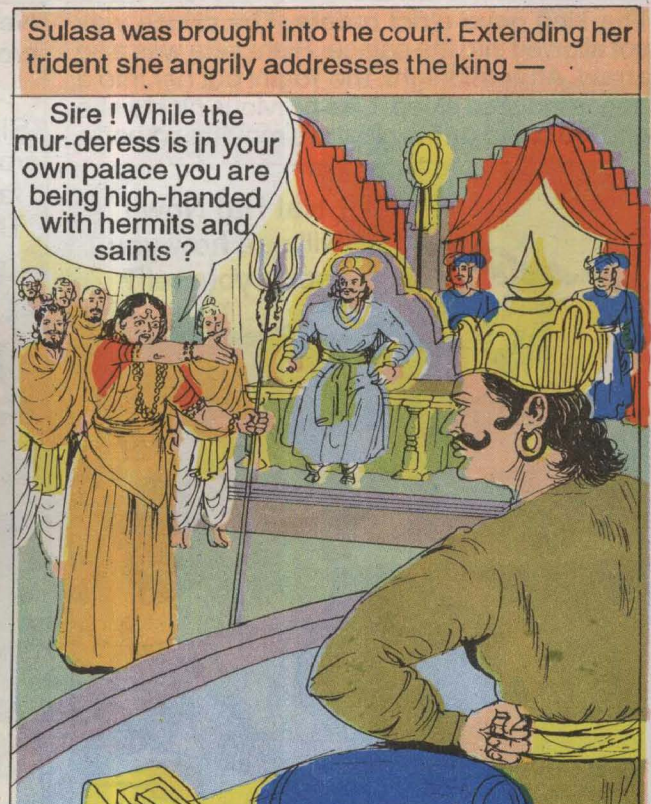
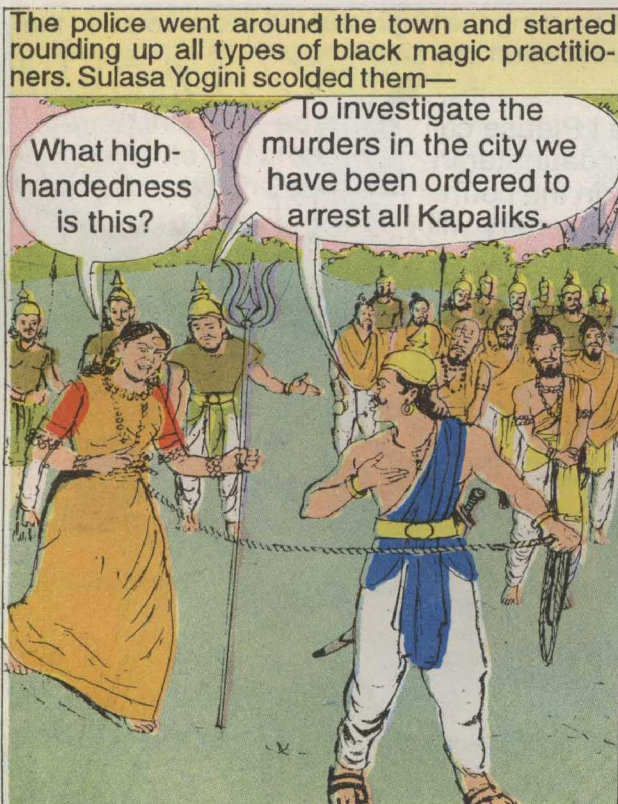


My lord ! I am innocent. I don't even know who is doing all this and why ?

Each night I find your mouth wet with blood. This is going on for last three nights. Are you thirsty of human blood?

What do you say, my lord?! I swear, I have not killed even an ant, what to say of a human being. I am sure this is an act of sorcery.

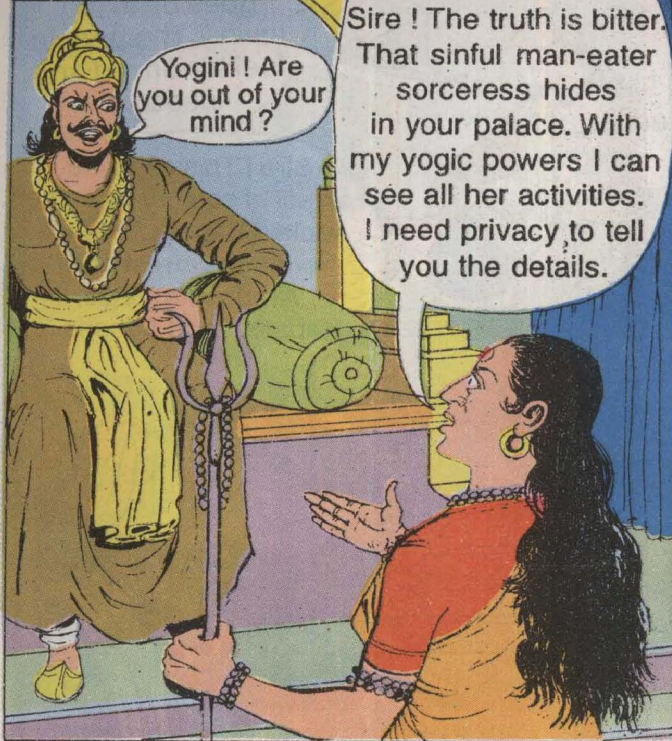




* A Shaivite hermit practicing necromancy.

** Various sects of sorcerers.

This brought a hush in the court. The king raised his voice—



Yogini ! Are you out of your mind ?

Sire ! The truth is bitter. That sinful man-eater sorceress hides in your palace. With my yogic powers I can see all her activities. I need privacy to tell you the details.

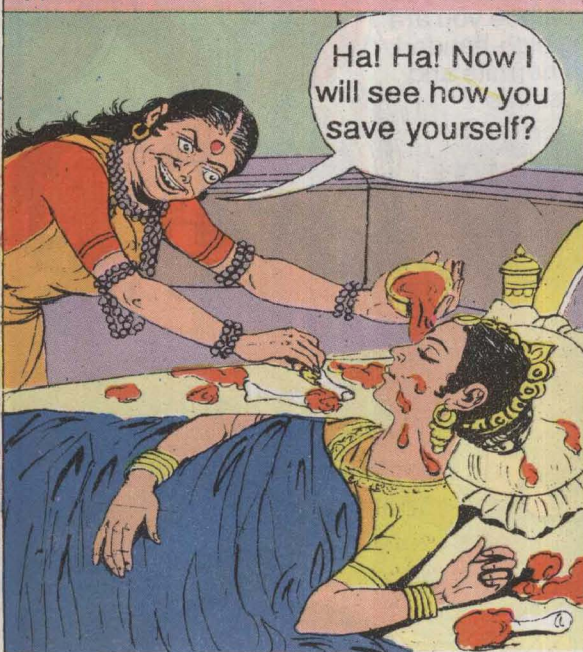
The king went into his private chamber with the yogini. She said —

Sire ! Let your daughter-in-law sleep alone in her room today. Don't allow the prince to meet her. I will tell you everything tomorrow morning.



Yogini ! What nonsense is this ?

The king gave strict orders. The prince was not allowed into the palace. Rishidatta was also afraid. After midnight, the Yogini put her into a trance induced sleep. Like previous nights she applied blood on Rishidatta's mouth and body.



Ha! Ha! Now I will see how you save yourself?

Next morning the Yogini arrived in the court. In the crowded court she said —

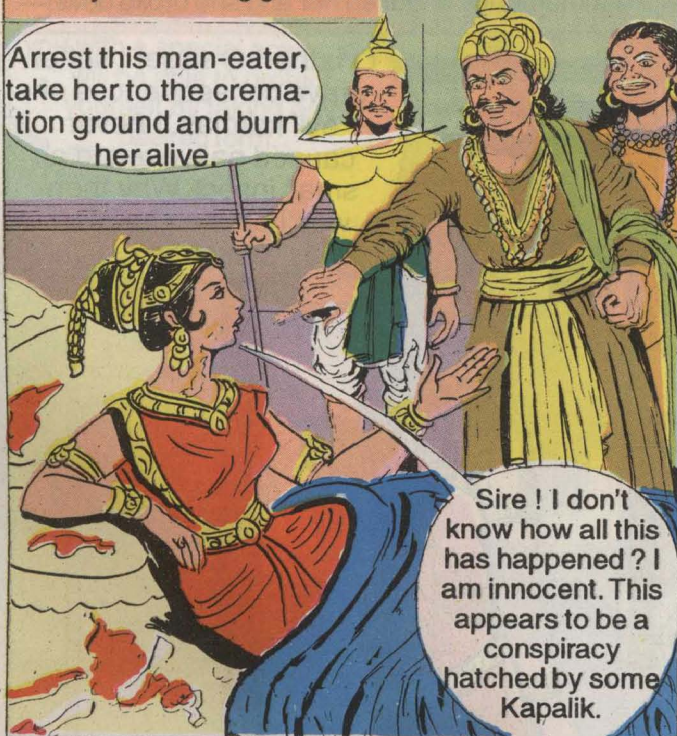


Sire ! Please call your daughter-in-law in the court. The mystery will be solved.

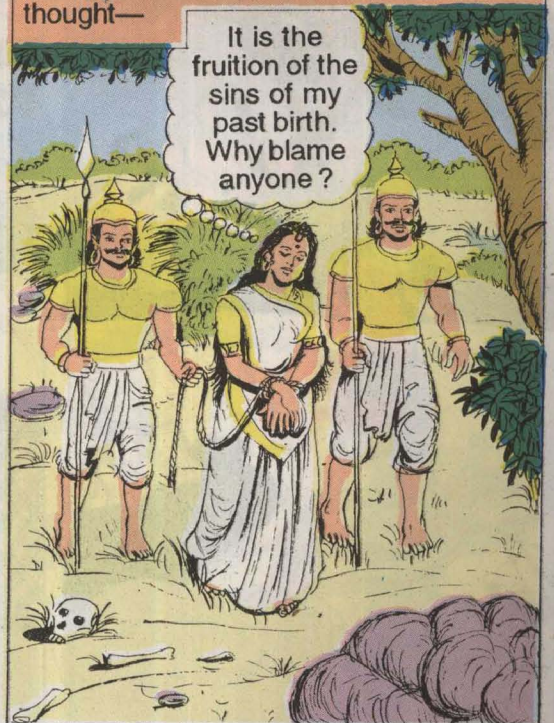
Maids went into the palace to call Rishidatta. They shrieked when they saw the terrifying scene. The king also came and saw Rishidatta lying in the bed fast asleep. There was blood on her face, nails, hands, and chest. Scattered all around were lumps of flesh.



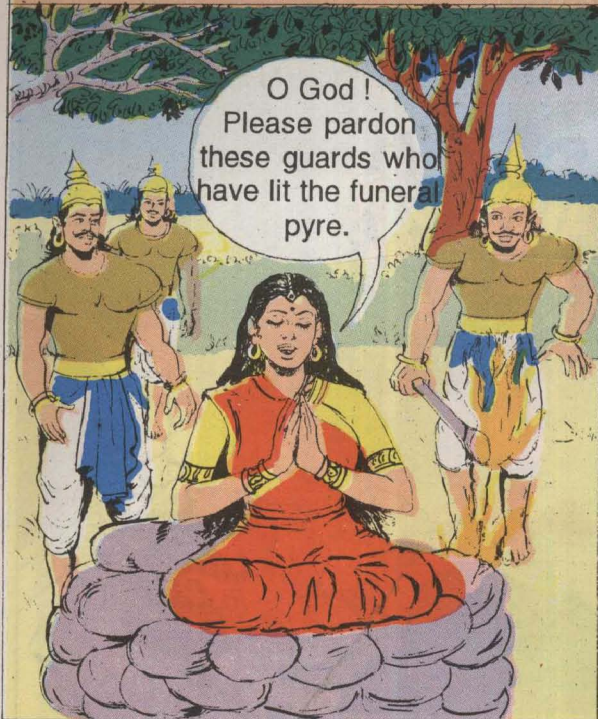
Sulasa withdrew her spell and Rishidatta came awake wide-eyed. The king gave an order—



But the king did not listen to her. The guards took her to the cremation ground. She thought—



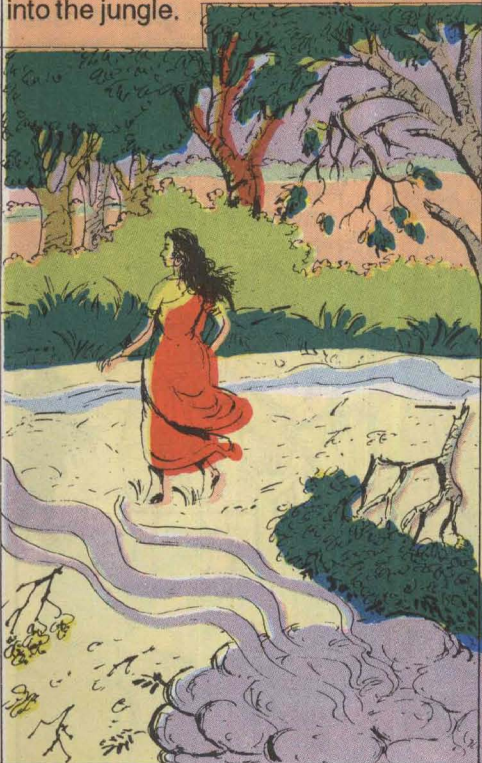
On the banks of a river the guards made a funeral pyre and lit it after seating Rishidatta on it.



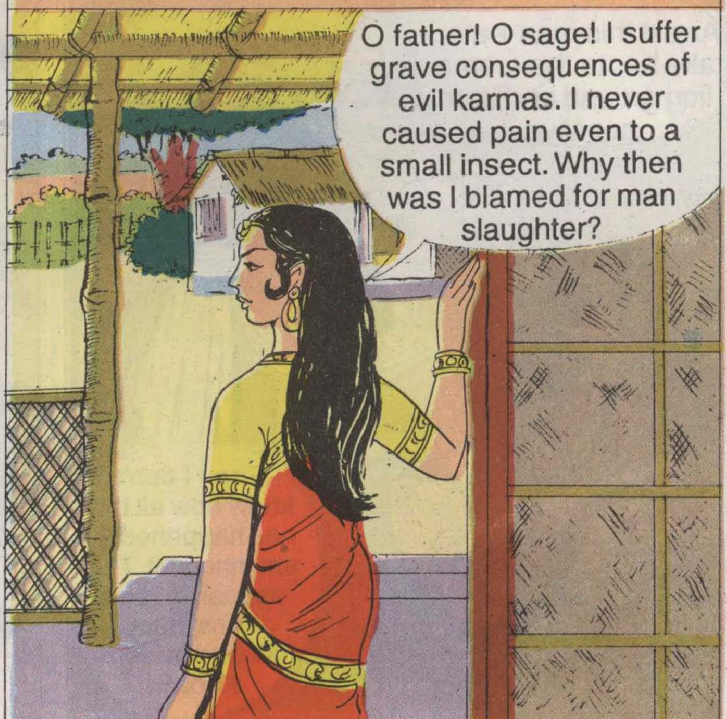
Just then it started raining. A storm began of a storm. Darkness descended. Strong winds uprooted trees.



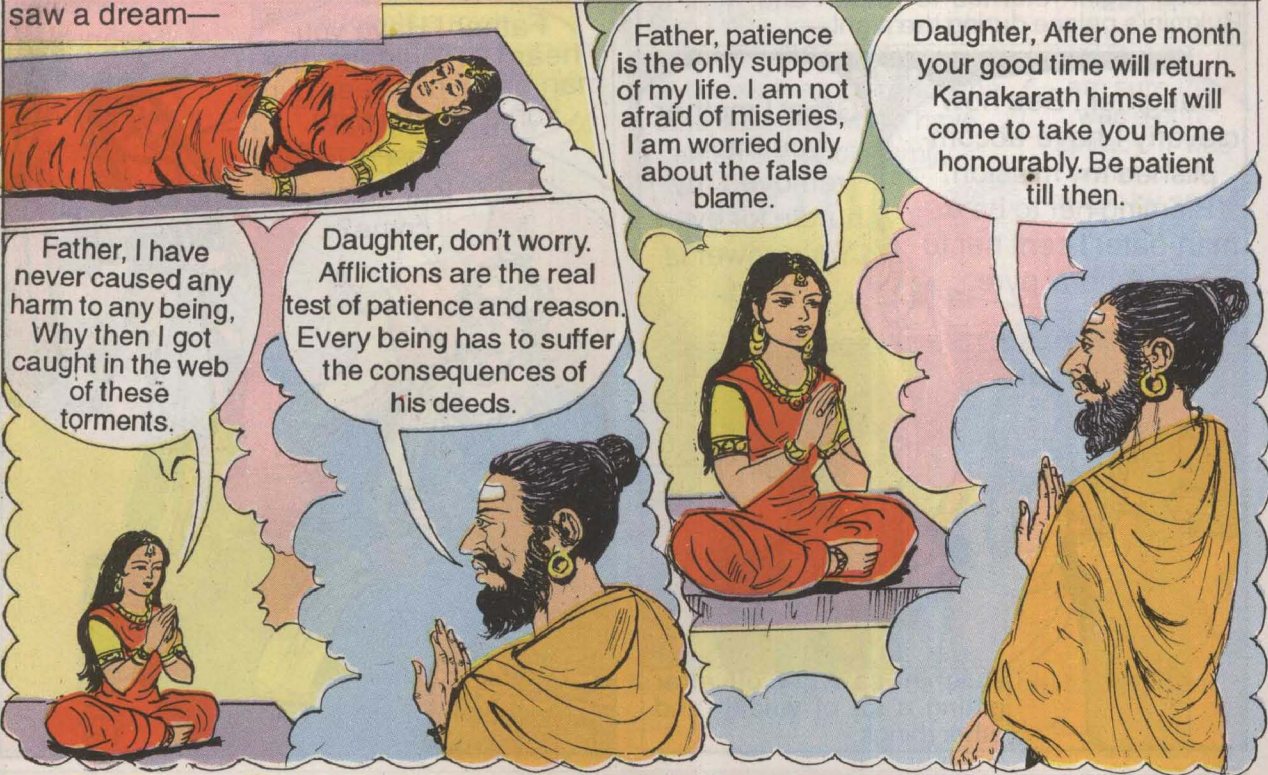
Rishidatta got up from the pyre and went into the jungle.



Wandering around, she arrived at the old hermitage of her father. Past memories engulfed her and she broke down—



While weeping she fell asleep on the rock on which his sage father used to meditate. She saw a dream—



The dream ended. Rishidatta was awake. She saw her father appear in the sky and bless her. She offered salutations—



At the other end, accomplishing her mission Sulasa Yogini returned to Kaberi and went to Rukmini's palace during the night—

Daughter ! See how cleverly I have accomplished my mission. Blaming her to be a man-eater I sent her to the funeral pyre.

Great ! mother you have removed my hurdle for ever. Your power is great.

Rukmini saw her off after gifting a lot of wealth and other things.

Filled with joy, Rukmini came to her father—

Father ! Have you heard ? Rishidatta, the man-eater, has been burnt on a funeral pyre.

Is it ! How come?

Rukmini told him in details about Sulasa's conspiracy. King Kritabrahma trembled—

This is not good.

Leave it father. Now send an emissary to Rathamardanapur with my marriage proposal.

The very next day an emissary from Kaberi came to King Hemarath—

Sire ! Was it proper to play with the life of the princess by rejecting her once all the preparations for her marriage were complete?

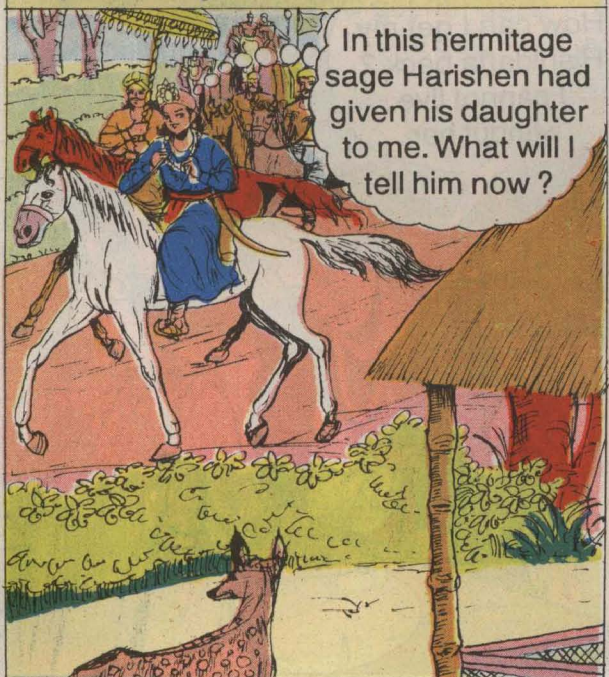


The king sent back the emissary with a promise.

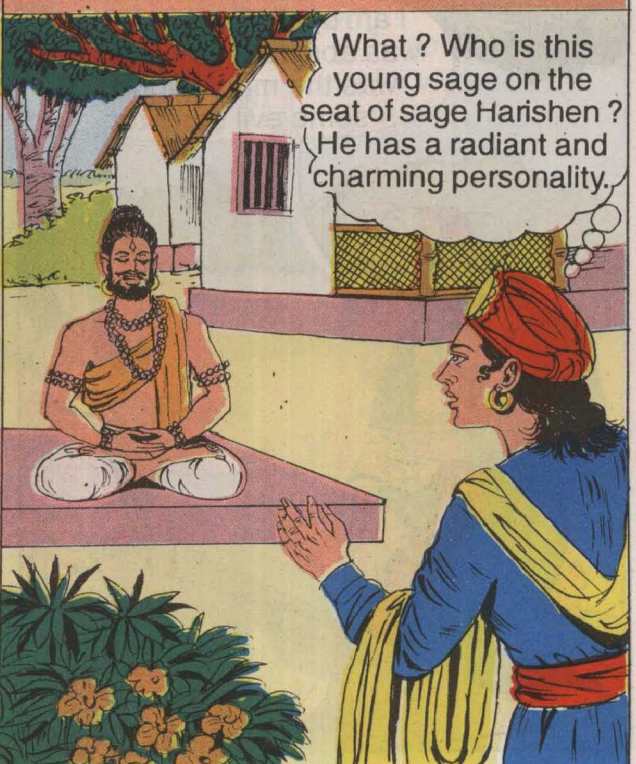


But in the end the king was able to persuade him to marry Rukmini.

At an auspicious moment the marriage party left. On the way was the same jungle where he was married to Rishidatta. Passing through that place the prince thought—



He came to the hermitage hesitatingly and saw—



Kanakarath approached the young hermit and paid homage—

O hermit ! I, prince Kanakarath of Rathamardanapur, offers homage to you.

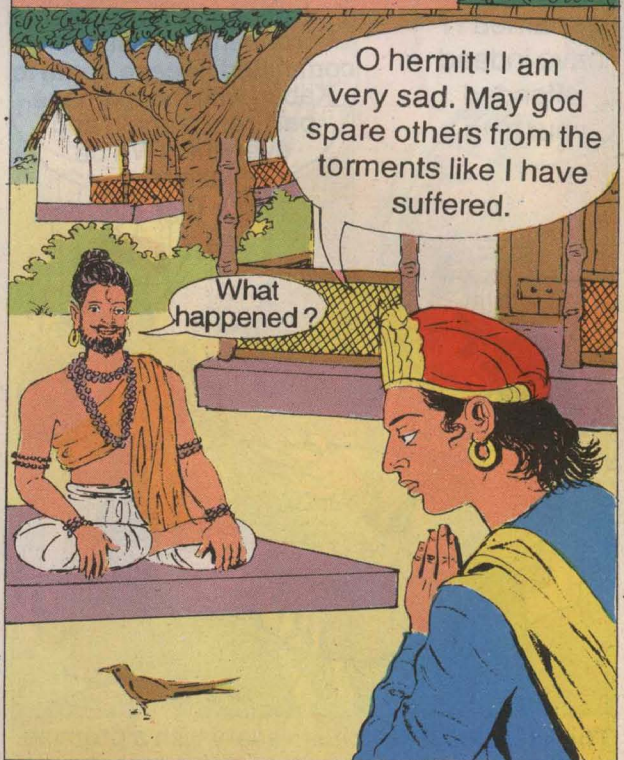
Long live prince ! Why this wedding dress ?



Looking down, the prince said—

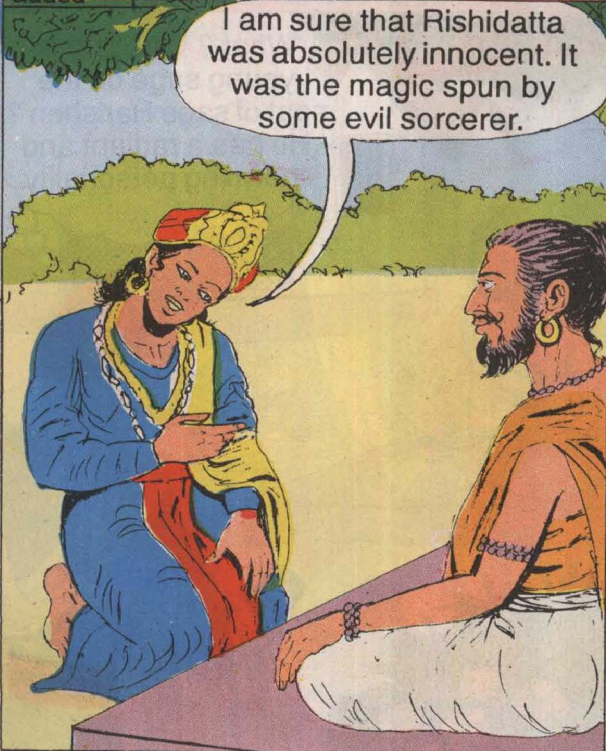
O hermit ! I am very sad. May god spare others from the torments like I have suffered.

What happened ?



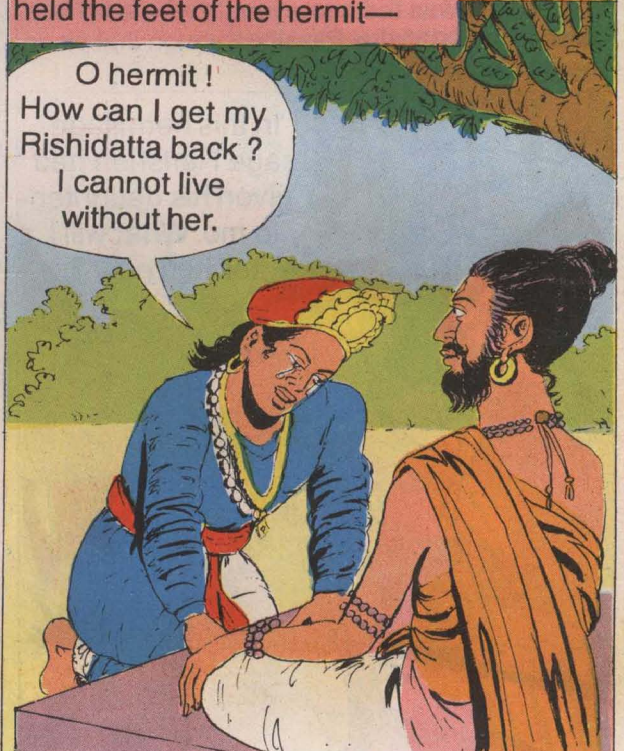
Kanakarath narrated the story of Rishidatta and added—

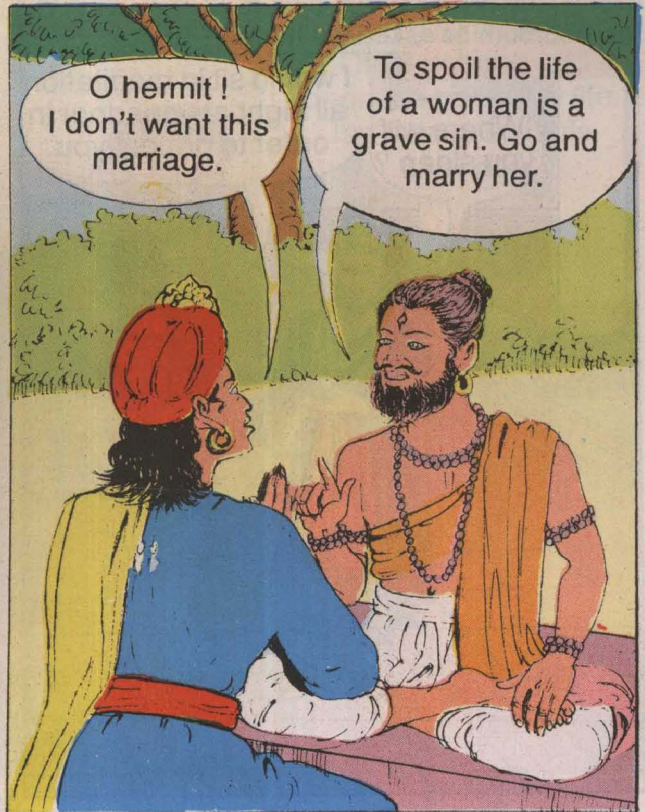
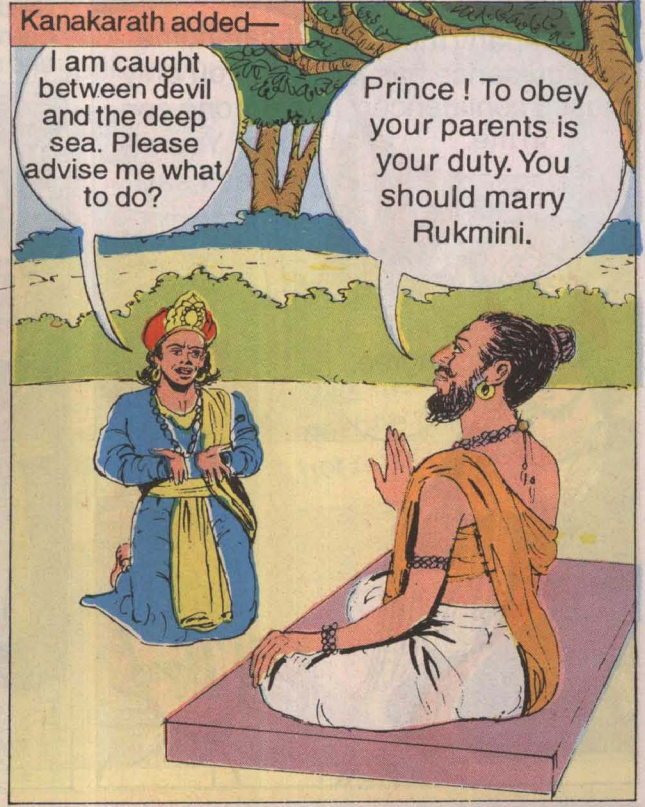
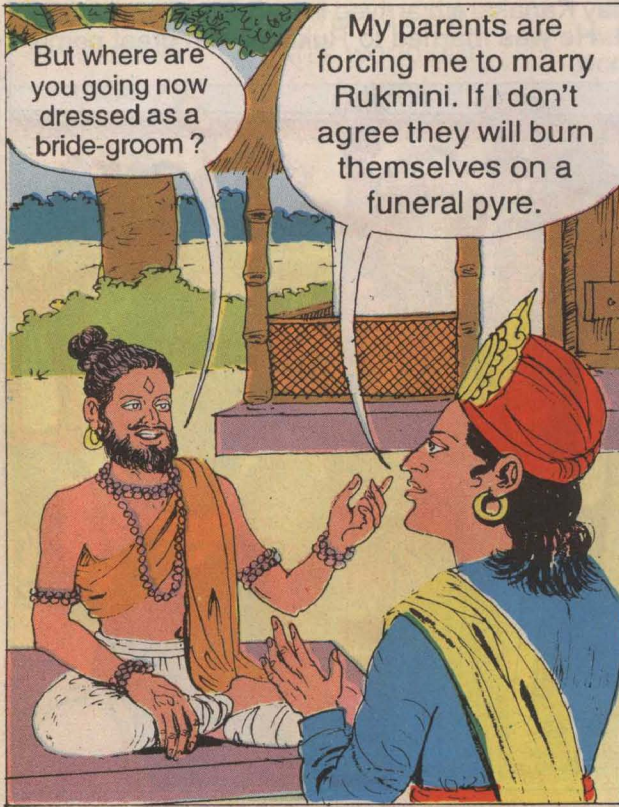
I am sure that Rishidatta was absolutely innocent. It was the magic spun by some evil sorcerer.

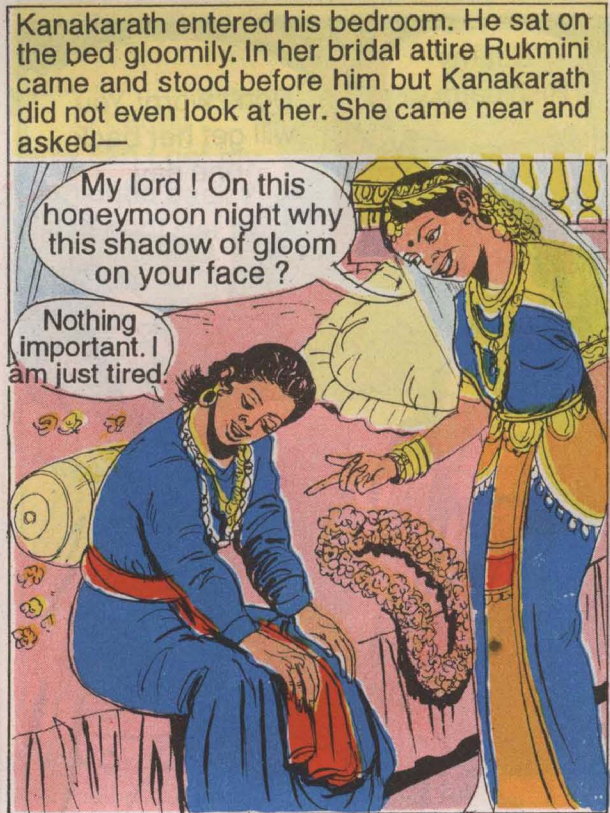
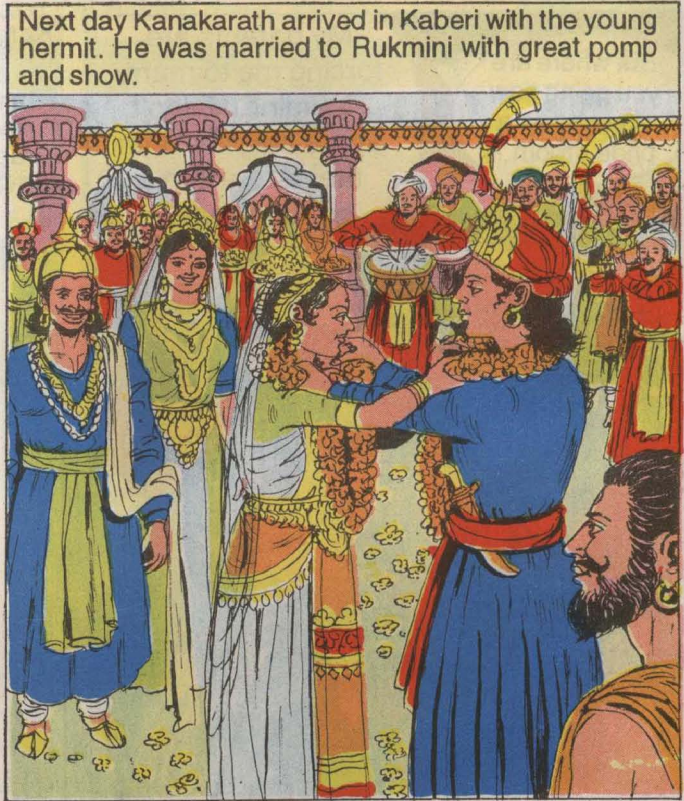


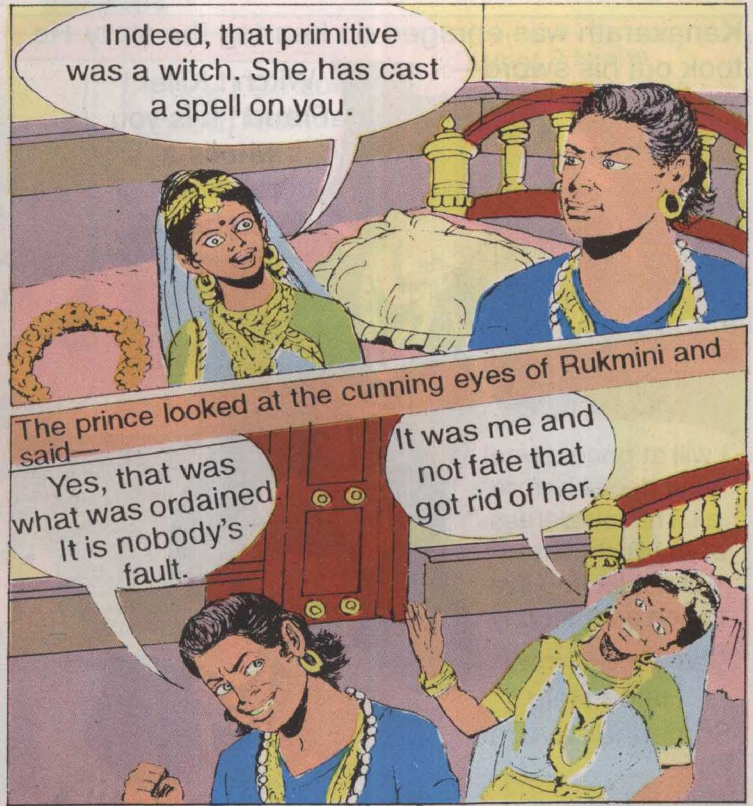
The prince started crying like a child. He then held the feet of the hermit—

O hermit !
How can I get my Rishidatta back ?
I cannot live without her.





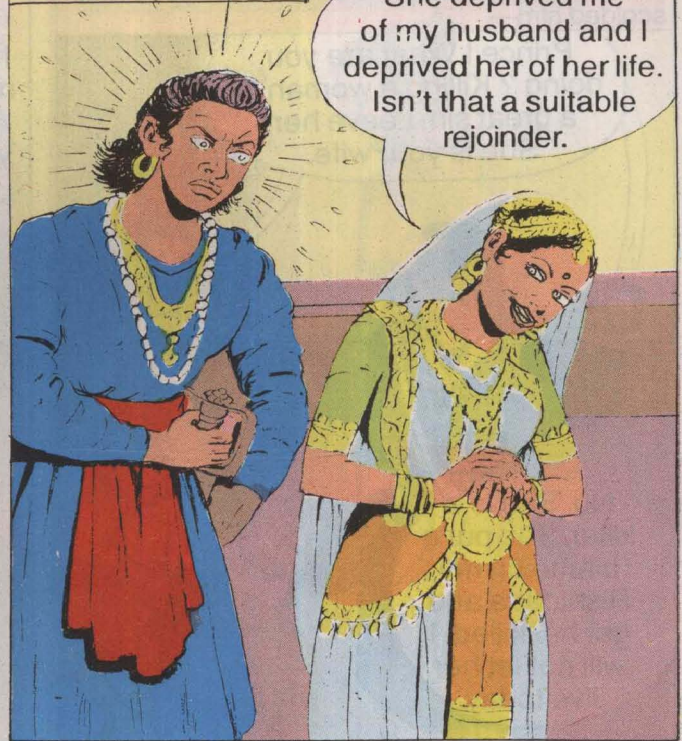




Kanakarath was shocked at these words. But hiding his feelings he praised Rukmini—



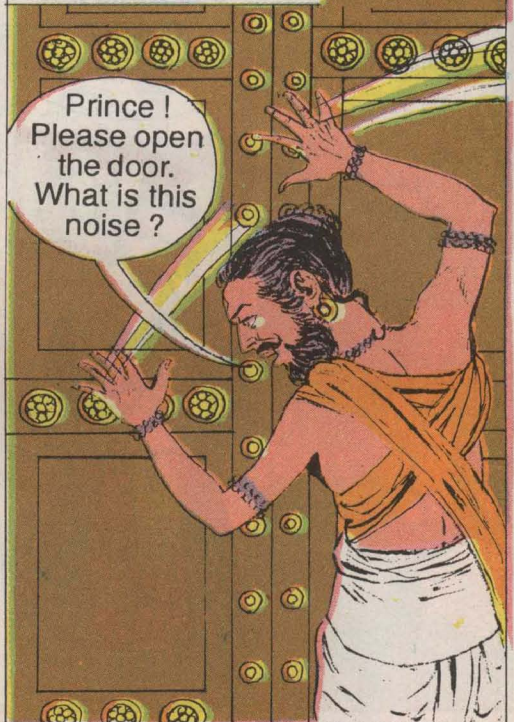
Rukmini narrated the story of Sulasa Yogini's sorcery and added—



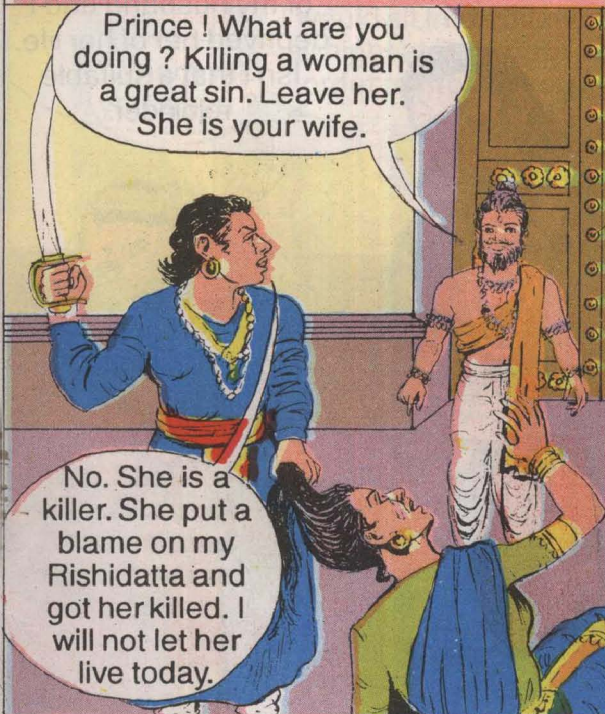
Kanakarath was enraged on hearing the story. He took out his sword—



Hearing the noise, the hermit sitting outside the door got up and knocked—

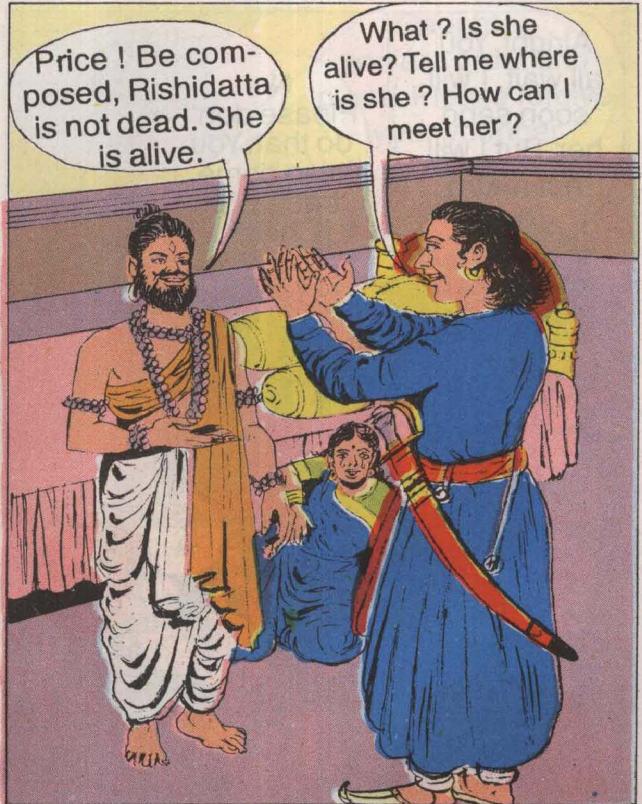
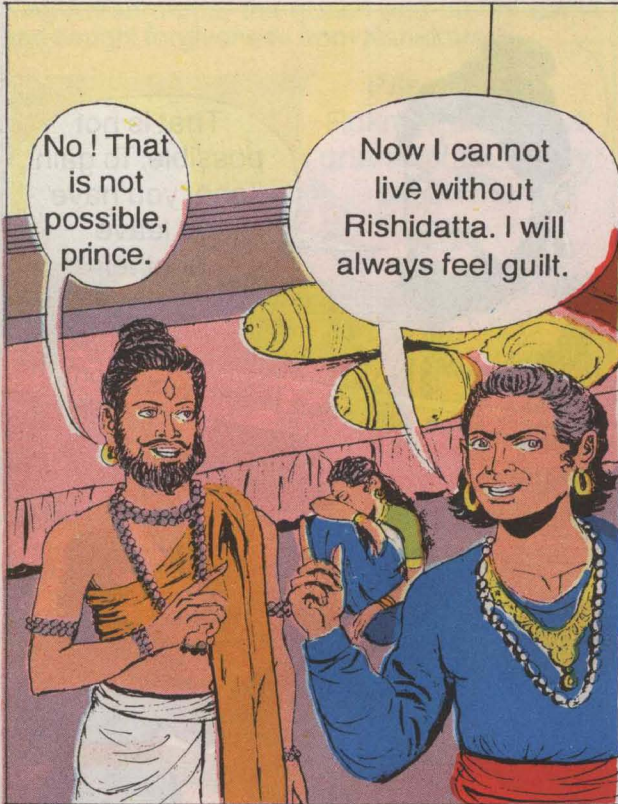


The prince caught Rukmini's hair and dragged her to the door. He opened the door. The hermit scolded him—

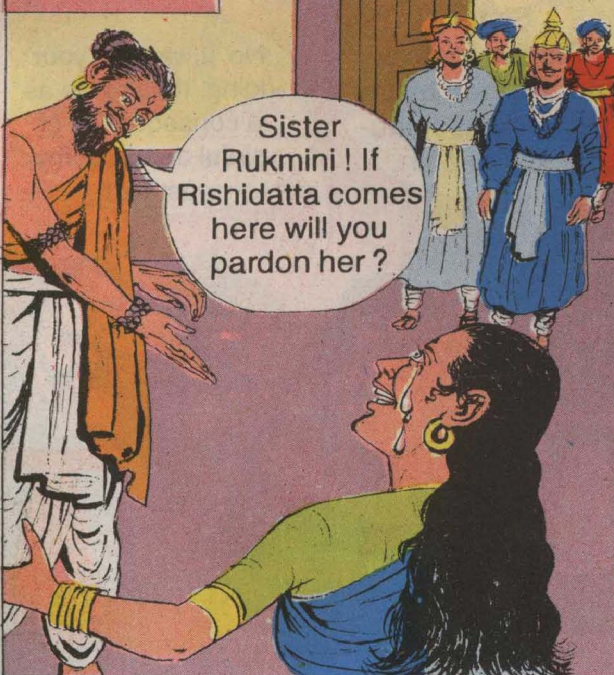


The young hermit stood between the two—

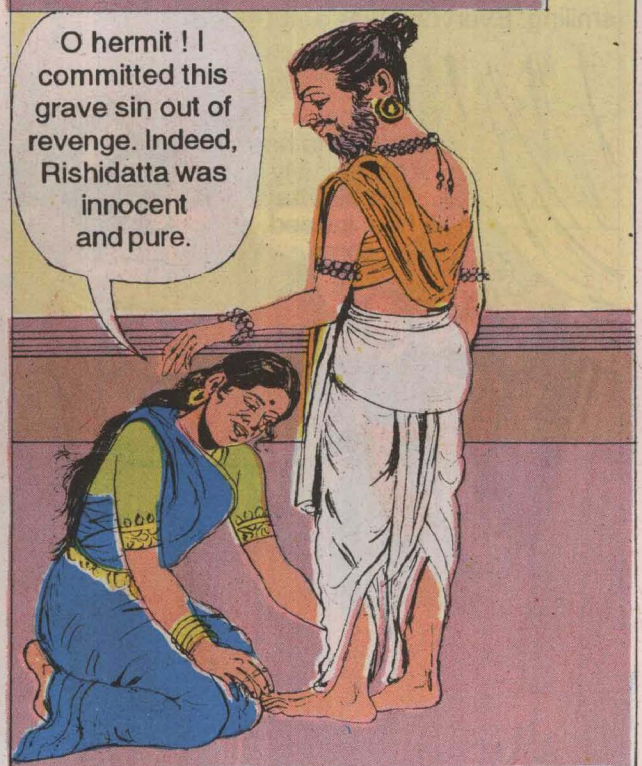


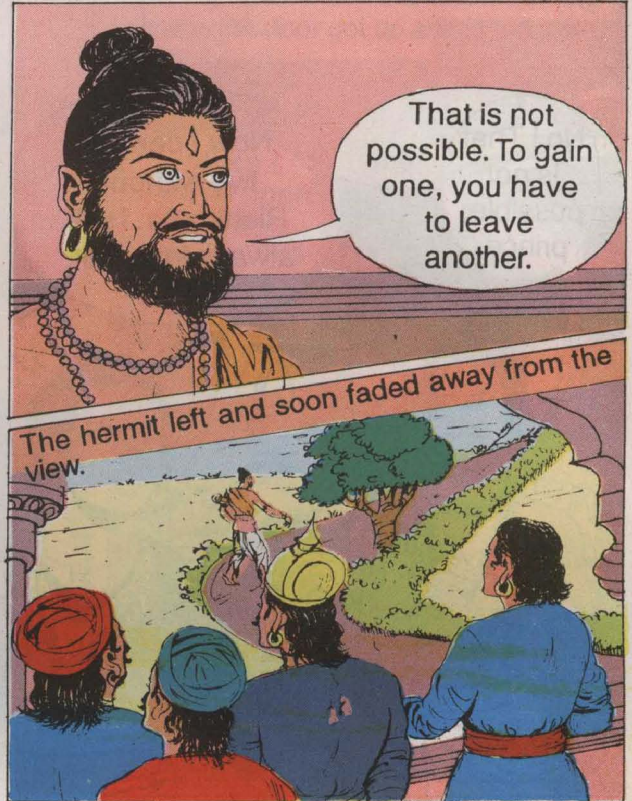


Hearing all this noise king Kritabrahma and many others came there and witnessed the proceedings from a distance. The hermit asked Rukmini—

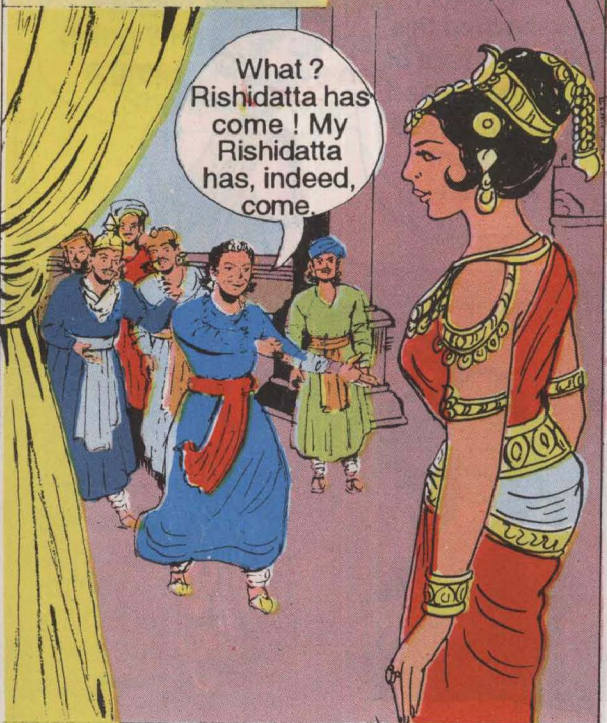


Rukmini fell at the feet of the hermit—

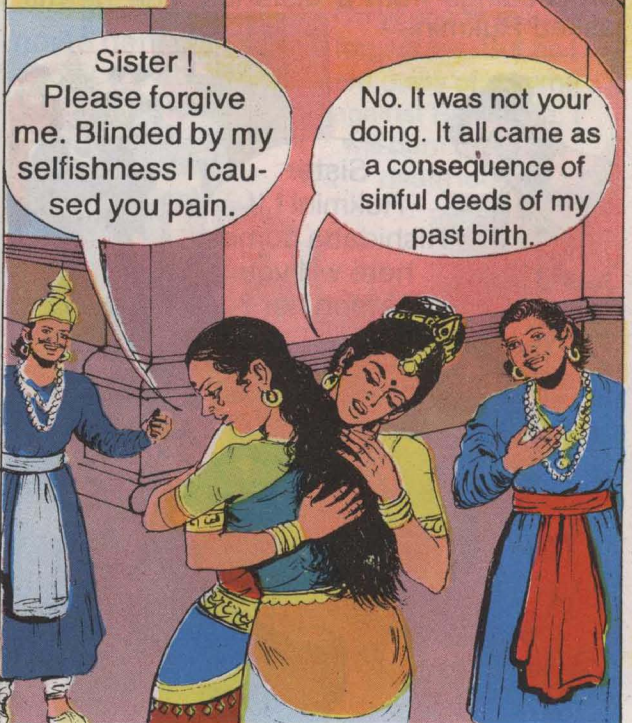




Just after few minutes Rishidatta entered smiling. Everyone was astounded—



Rukmini embraced her. Rishidatta responded with the same zeal—



King Kritabrahma, the queen and others came and sought forgiveness from Kanakarath—



Then they begged Rishidatta's pardon—



Rishidatta said to all—

I request you all to forget what happened in the past. Let us start afresh since this moment.



They uttered in unison—

Good fortune always protects.

No one can kill him who has accumulated meritorious karmas.

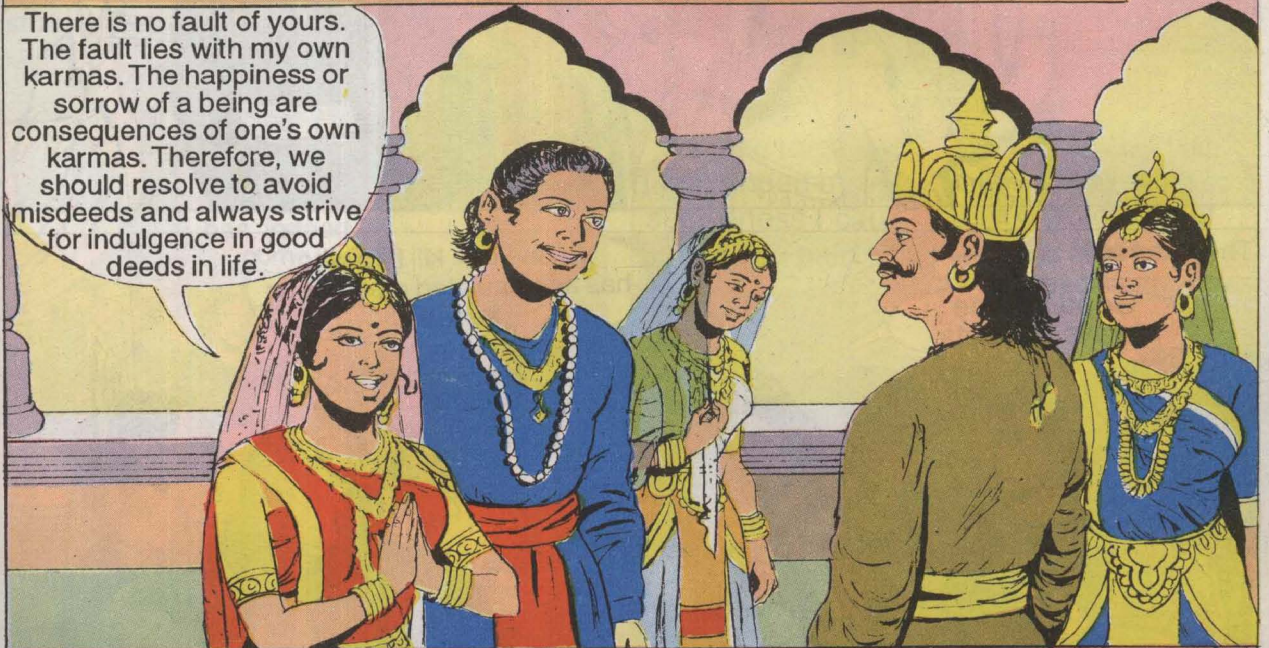


Rishidatta told her story and then Kanakarath returned to his kingdom with his two wives. When king Hemarath heard the story he repented for what he did—



The parents-in-law sought Rishidatta's pardon and she said—

There is no fault of yours. The fault lies with my own karmas. The happiness or sorrow of a being are consequences of one's own karmas. Therefore, we should resolve to avoid misdeeds and always strive for indulgence in good deeds in life.



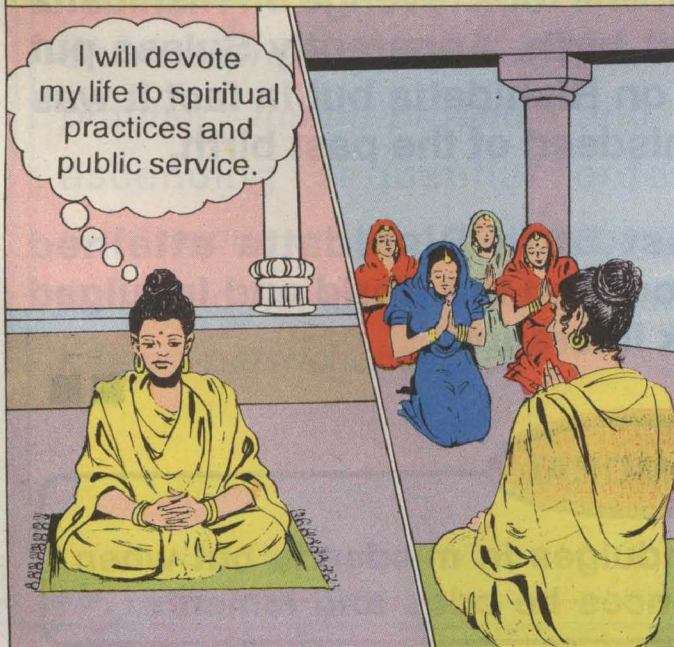
King Hemarath gave the kingdom to Kanakarath and took the spiritual path by becoming an ascetic. In due course Kanakarath and Rishidatta also followed the same path when their sons were old enough to look after the kingdom.

Once a Scholarly acharya named Dharmavijaya came to Rathamardanapur. Rishidatta, along with the royal family, went to attend the discourse. After that she asked the ascetic — “Munivar! I did not commit any sin in this life. In spite of being innocent I got the blame of being a cannibal and got the death sentence. What sin caused this? The sagacious ascetic explained — “Lady! The happiness and misery in life are not without a cause. They are consequences of karmas acquired during this or the earlier births. The blame you attracted came as a consequence of the deeds of your past life. On further query by Rishidatta, the ascetic said—

You were Gangasena, the daughter of the king of Gangapur city in Bharat area. By the time you completed your education you acquired proficiency in many arts.



In her youthful age Gangasena took the vow of celibacy and indulged in spiritual practices. She became famous and people from far and near came to pay her homage.



Once a mendicant woman named Sangama came to the town. Her austerities and detachment became talk of the town. Everyone started praising mendicant Sangama. The fame of princes Gangasena faded.



RISHIDATTA

Her shrinking influence made the princess jealous towards mendicant Sangama. She started conspiring to insult her and tarnish her image. Inspired by this growing jealousy the princess made a plan and successfully blamed Sangama for being a meat-eating and wine consuming witch. Plagued by this Sangama was also filled with animosity towards the princess, who was pleased with her success.

After death Gangasena reincarnated as Rishidatta, the daughter of King Harishen and queen Pritimati of Tambavati. The king and the queen became hermits and lived in a hermitage where Pritimati died after childbirth. Sage Harishen brought up the daughter. Being the daughter of a sage she became famous as Rishidatta.

Mendicant Sangama died with feelings of revenge and reincarnated as Sulasa Yogini. She took revenge on Rishidatta for her misdeeds of the past birth. Apparently Sulasa put blame of being a man-eater on Rishidatta but in fact it was just a consequence of the misdeed of the past birth.

Hearing about her past birth Rishidatta attained Jati-smaran Jnana. She renounced the world and indulged in spiritual practices to seek liberation.

THE MORAL

Out of recklessness man indulges in misdeeds but when he suffers the consequences he cries and laments.

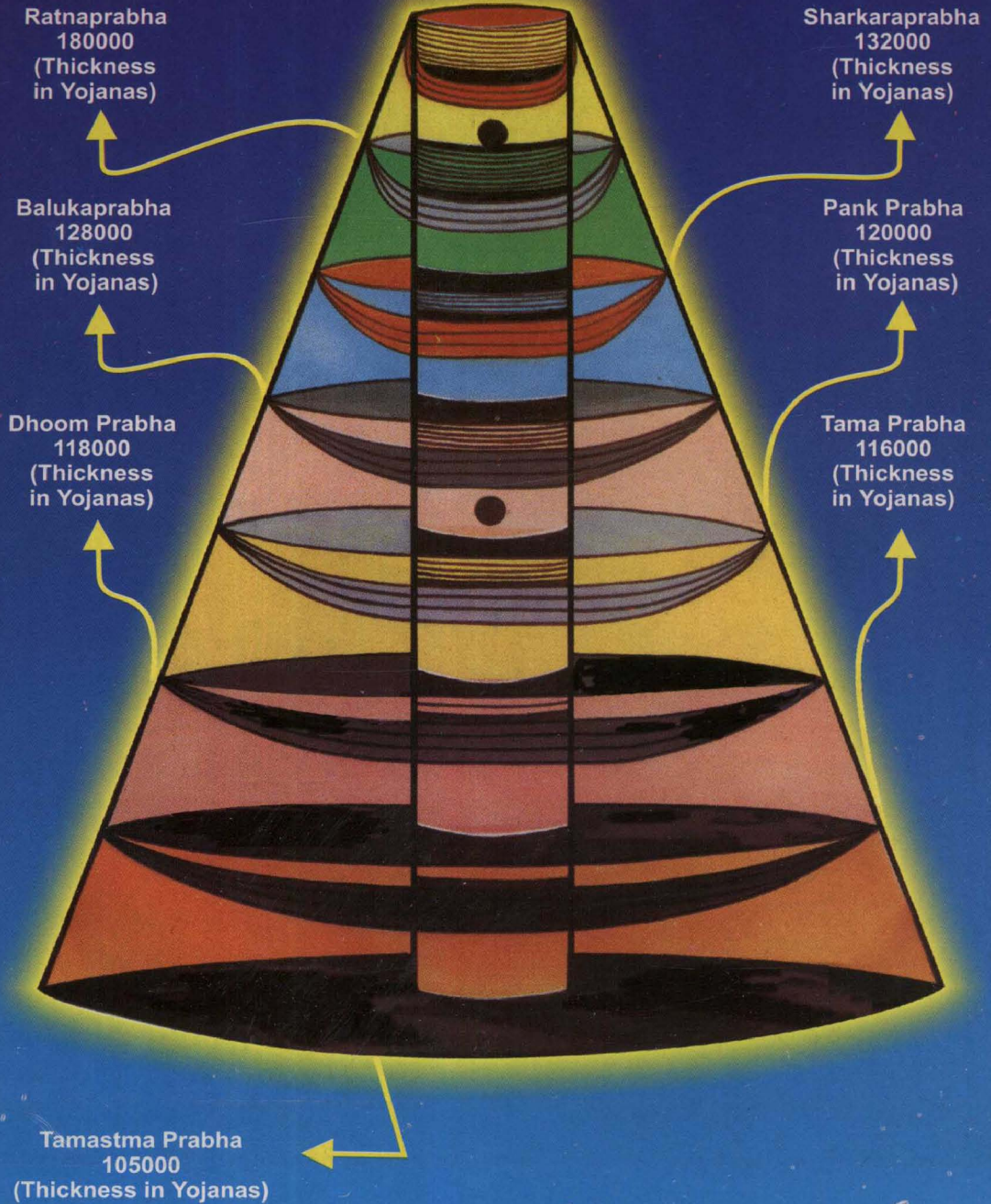


THE SEVEN HELLS IN THE LOWER WORLD

In this fourteen *Rajju* high *Loka* the lower seven *Rajju* area is called lower world. Here, above and below the *Ratnaprabha* hell, leaving a gap of one thousand yojans there are millions of abodes of *Bhavan-vasi* gods. It is called *Ratnaprabha* because it is radiant with the glow of a variety of gems (*ratna*). Below this is a layer of frozen water (*ghanodadhi*) below which there is a layer of dense air (*ghanovat*) followed by that of thin air (*tanuvat*). After this there is hollow space. Under this are *Sharkaraprabha* and other hells.

Starting from *Ratnaprabha*, arranging hells named *Sharkaraprabha*, *Balukaprabha*, *Pankaprabha*, *Dhoomprabha*, *Tamah-prabha*, and *Tamastamah-prabha* in ascending sequential order is called *Adholoka kshetra-purvanupurvi*, Arranging hells from *Tamastamah-prabha* to *Ratnaprabha* in reverse order is called *Adholoka kshetra-parshchanupurvi*.

—Anuyog-dvar Sutra-164



THE SEVEN HELLS IN THE LOWER WORLD

(See Details Overleaf)

Picture taken from Illustrated Anuyog-dvar Sutra, EDITOR : Up Pravartak Shri Amar Muni