

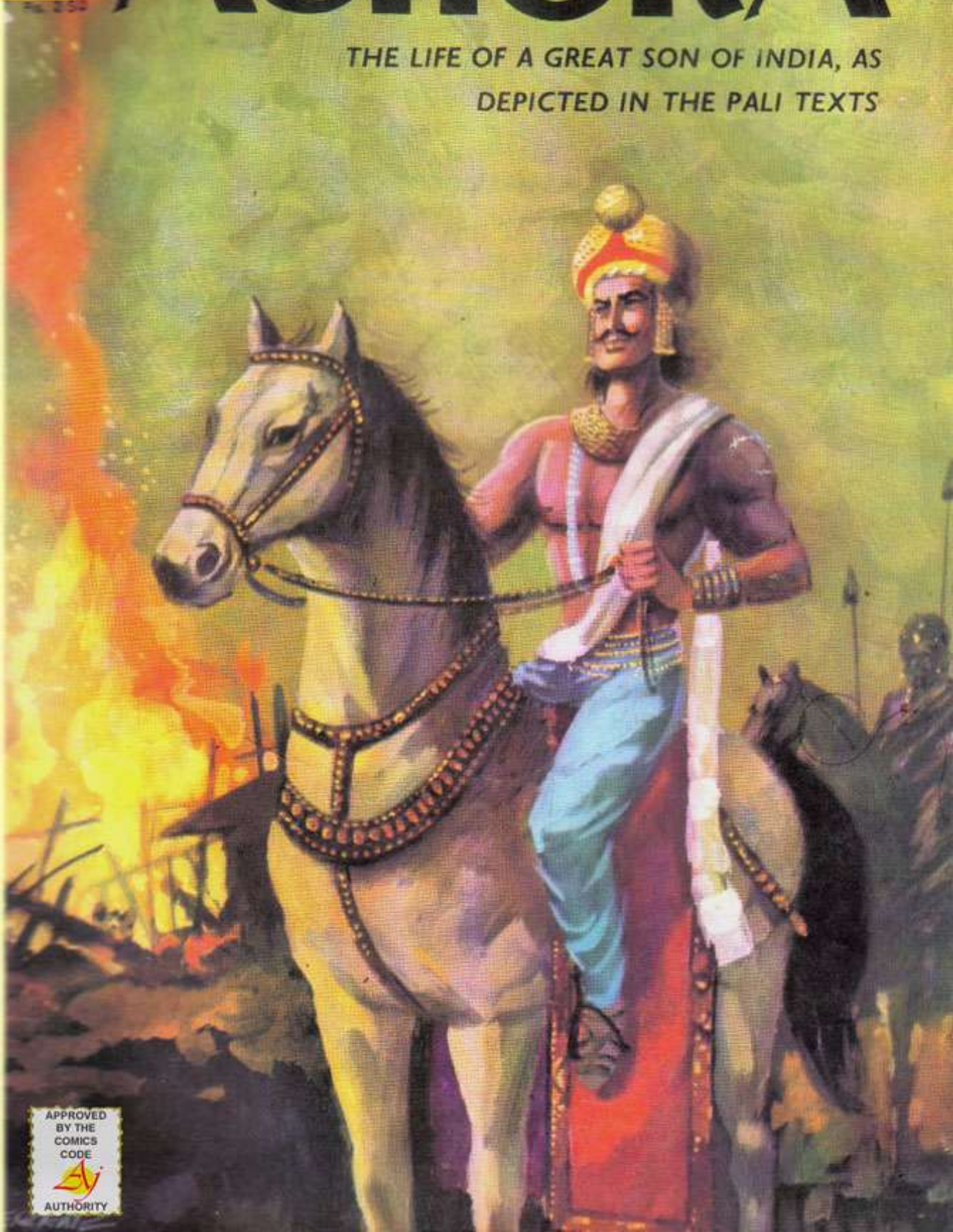


No. 37

# ASHOKA

THE LIFE OF A GREAT SON OF INDIA, AS  
DEPICTED IN THE PALI TEXTS

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History chronicles innumerable kings who were brave conquerors and valiant soldiers. But Ashoka stands above them all because he is the only one who at the zenith of his conquests saw the futility of violence and had the courage to renounce it. That is why, H.G. Wells in his 'Short History of The World' says that Ashoka's "reign for eight and twenty years was one of the brightest interludes in the troubled history of mankind." Wells goes on to say, "Such was Ashoka, the greatest of kings. He was far in advance of his age."

This volume is based on the original research of the author into Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa, Commentary on Mahavamsa, and the edicts of Ashoka. Pali manuscripts and other secondary sources have also been extensively studied in gleaning facts which should kindle a new interest in Ashoka.

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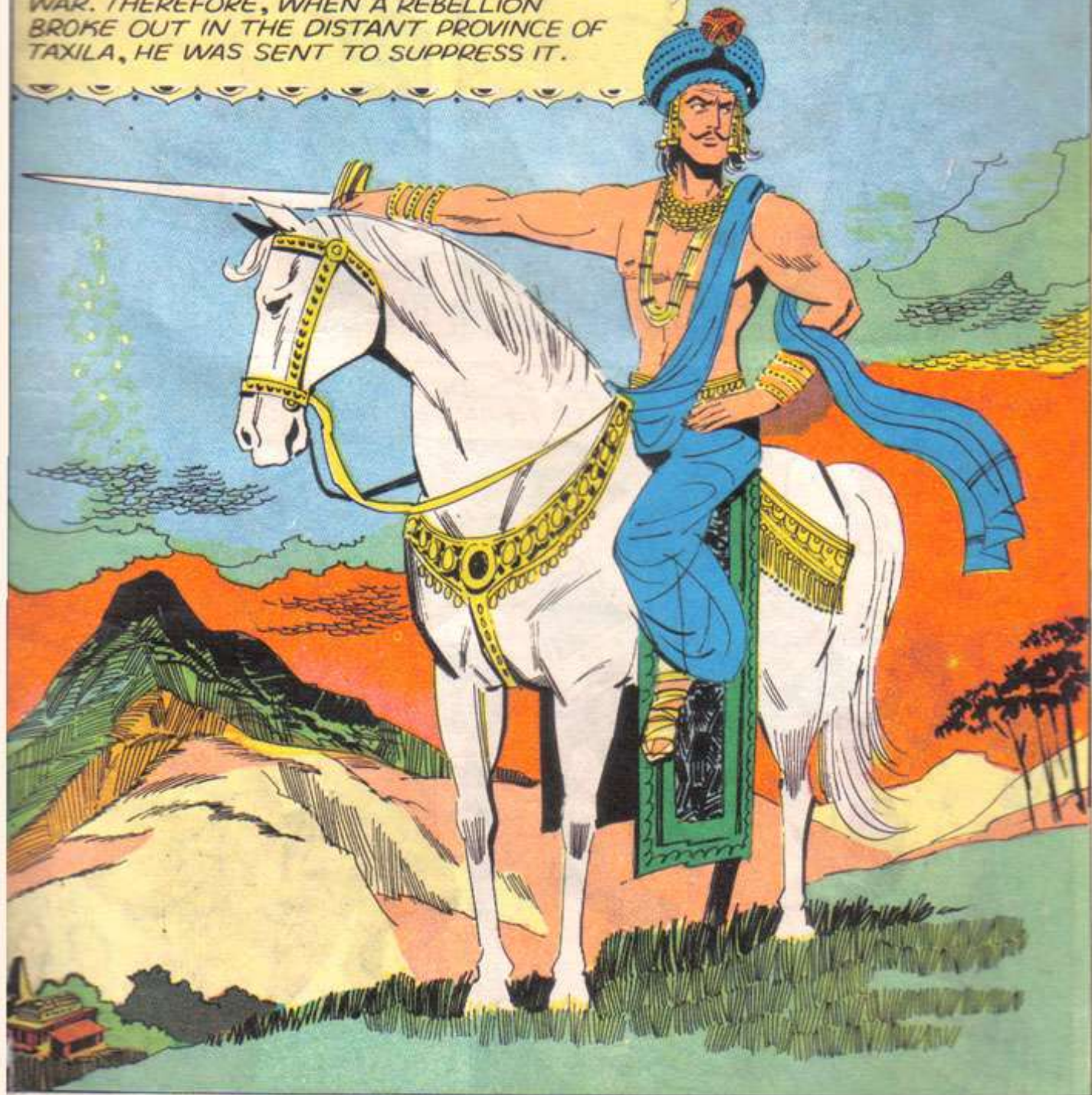
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# ASHOKA

ASHOKA WAS THE SON OF KING BINDUSARA WHO RULED INDIA FROM HIS CAPITAL OF PATALIPUTRA IN THE THIRD CENTURY B.C. HE EXCELLED HIS BROTHERS IN THE ART OF WAR. THEREFORE, WHEN A REBELLION BROKE OUT IN THE DISTANT PROVINCE OF TAXILA, HE WAS SENT TO SUPPRESS IT.



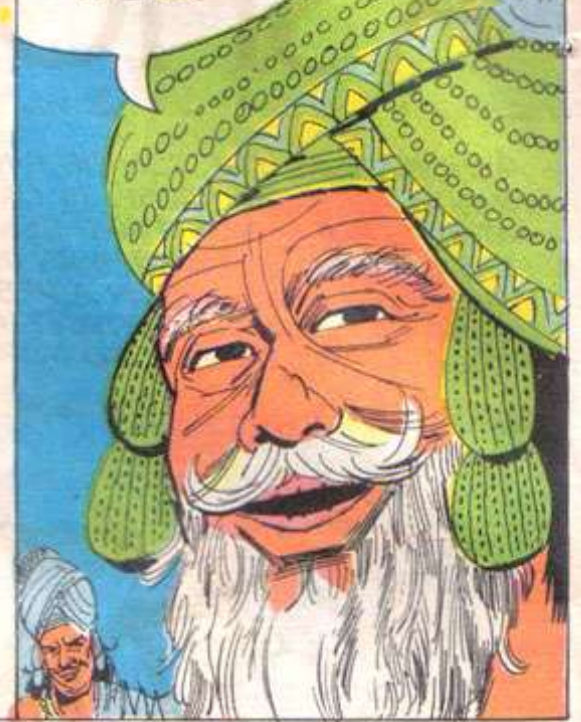


WEEKS LATER -

YOUR MAJESTY! WE HAVE HAPPY NEWS HERE. ASHOKA HAS SUCCESSFULLY PUT DOWN THE REBELS.



HE SHALL RULE THERE AS THE VICEROY. HE WILL KEEP PEACE THERE.



BINDUSARA HAD A HUNDRED SONS BESIDES ASHOKA. THEY WERE NOT HAPPY TO HEAR THE NEWS.

ASHOKA HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROUD. THE SUCCESS WILL GO TO HIS HEAD.

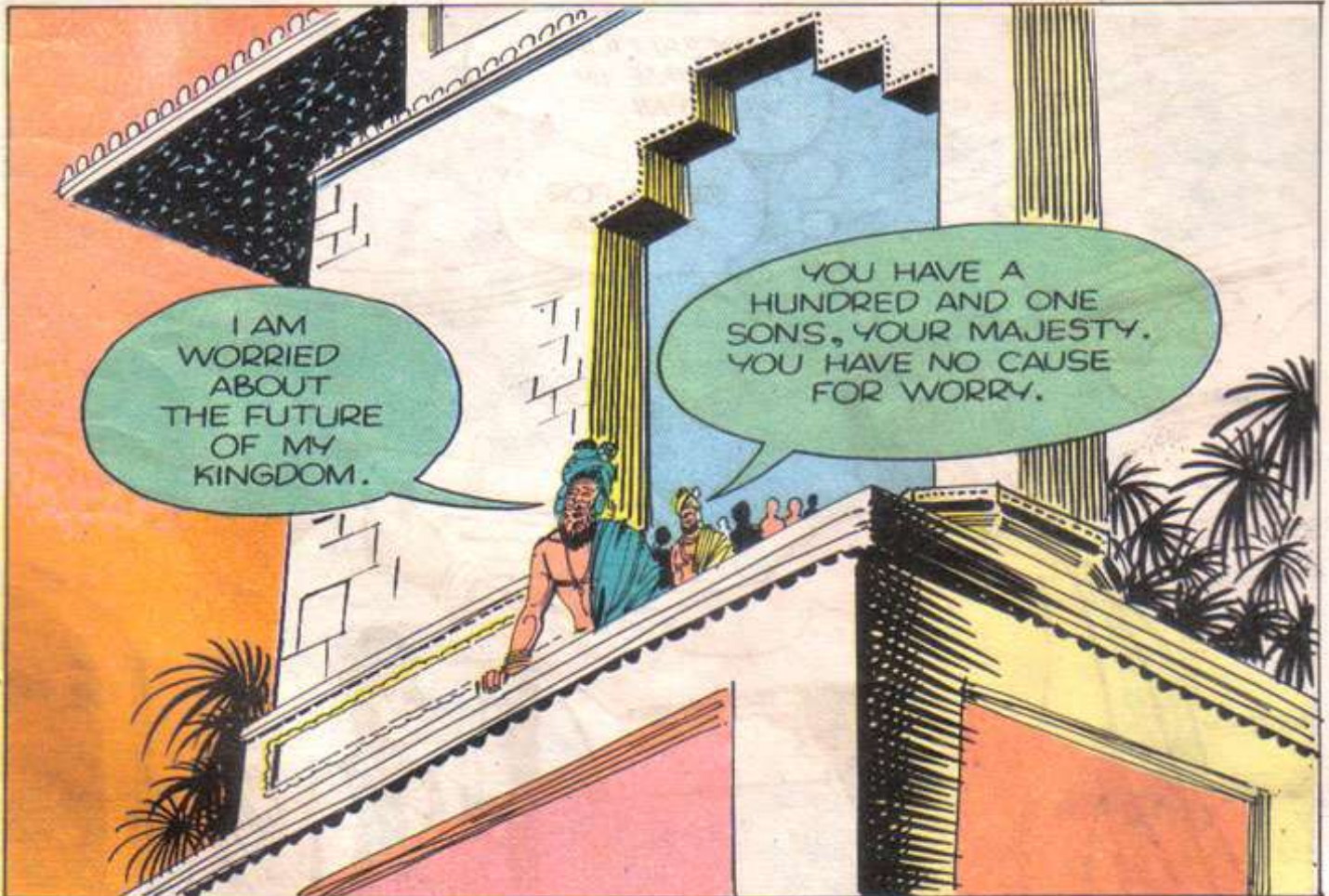


IT WILL MAKE HIM MORE ARROGANT.





BUT THEY WERE UNHAPPIER STILL, WHEN THE KING RECALLED ASHOKA FROM TAXILA.





THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WORRIES ME. ASHOKA IS RUTHLESS. HE MAY FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHERS FOR THE THRONE.



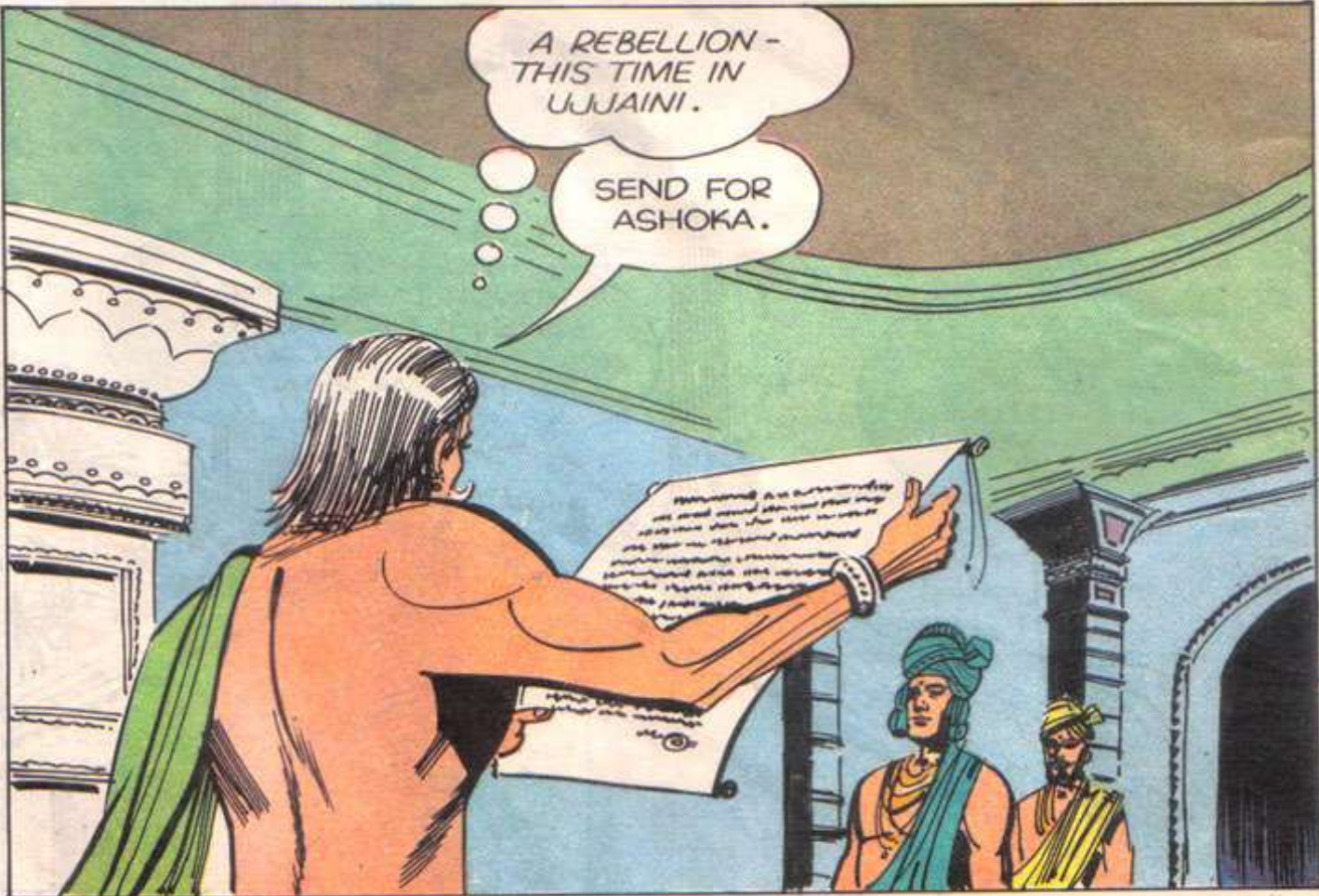
JUST THEN-

THERE IS A MESSENGER FROM UJJAINI, YOUR MAJESTY.

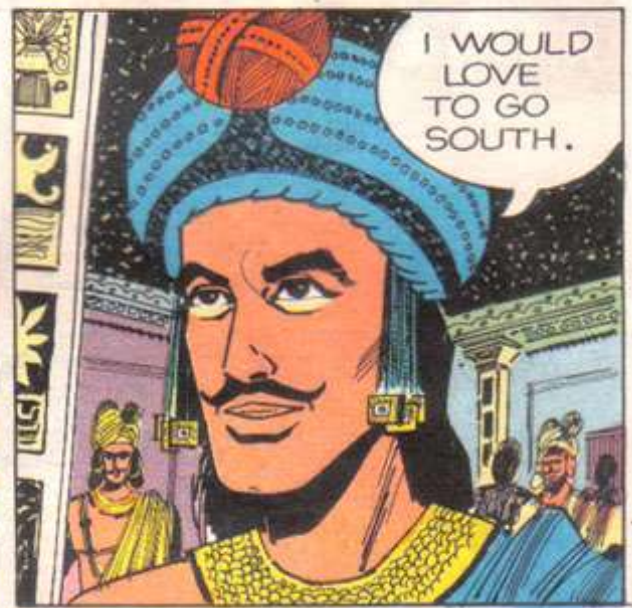


A REBELLION - THIS TIME IN UJJAINI.

SEND FOR ASHOKA.









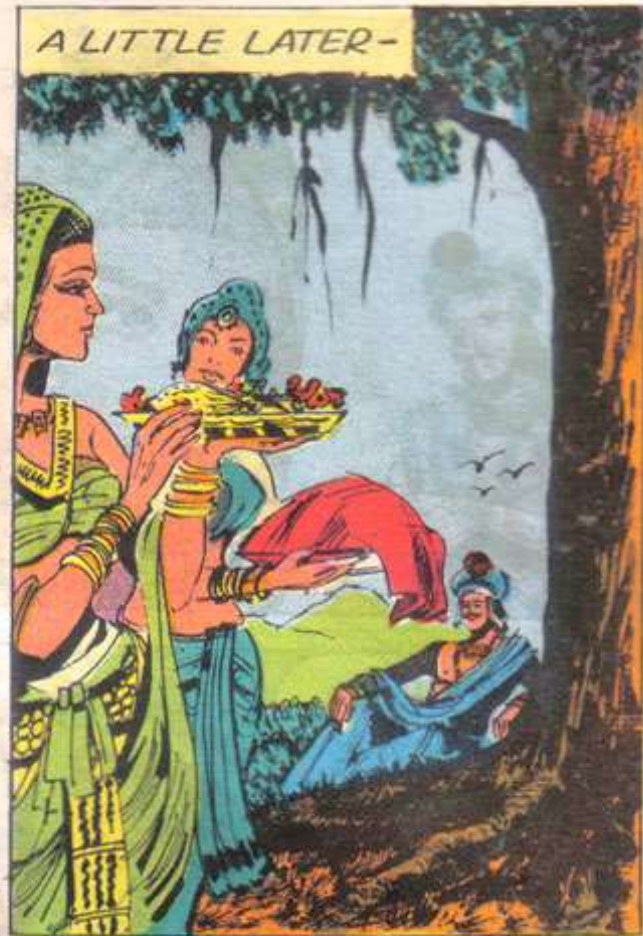
SOON AFTERWARDS -



ASHOKA MARCHED TOWARDS UJJAINI. A GREATER PART OF THE JOURNEY WAS ON HORSEBACK.



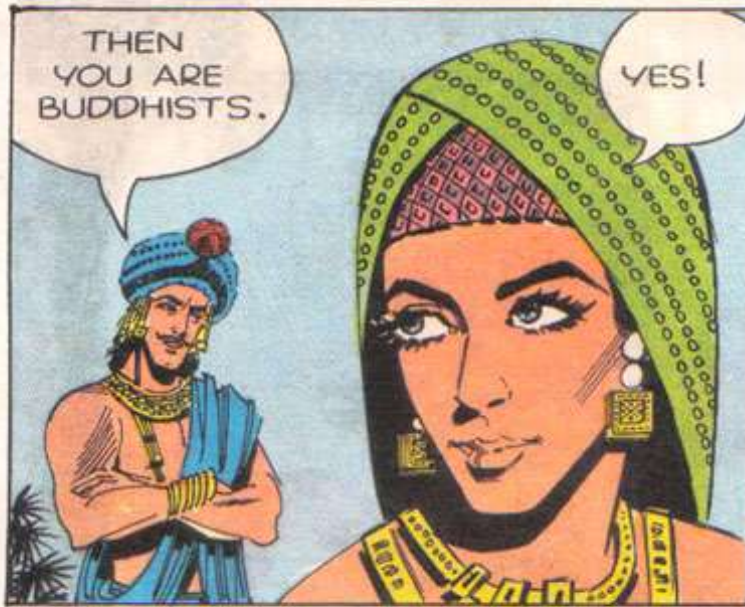




ASHOKA WAS CHARMED BY THE BEAUTY OF THE LEADER OF THE GROUP.









ASHOKA'S MESSENGER SOON RETURNED.

SIR! SHE IS THE DAUGHTER OF A REPUTED SHRESHTHI'S\* FAMILY.

TELL THE SHRESHTHI! I WANT TO MEET HIM.

\*MERCHANT

LATER-

SHRESHTHI, IF YOU PLEASE, I...

SIR, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?

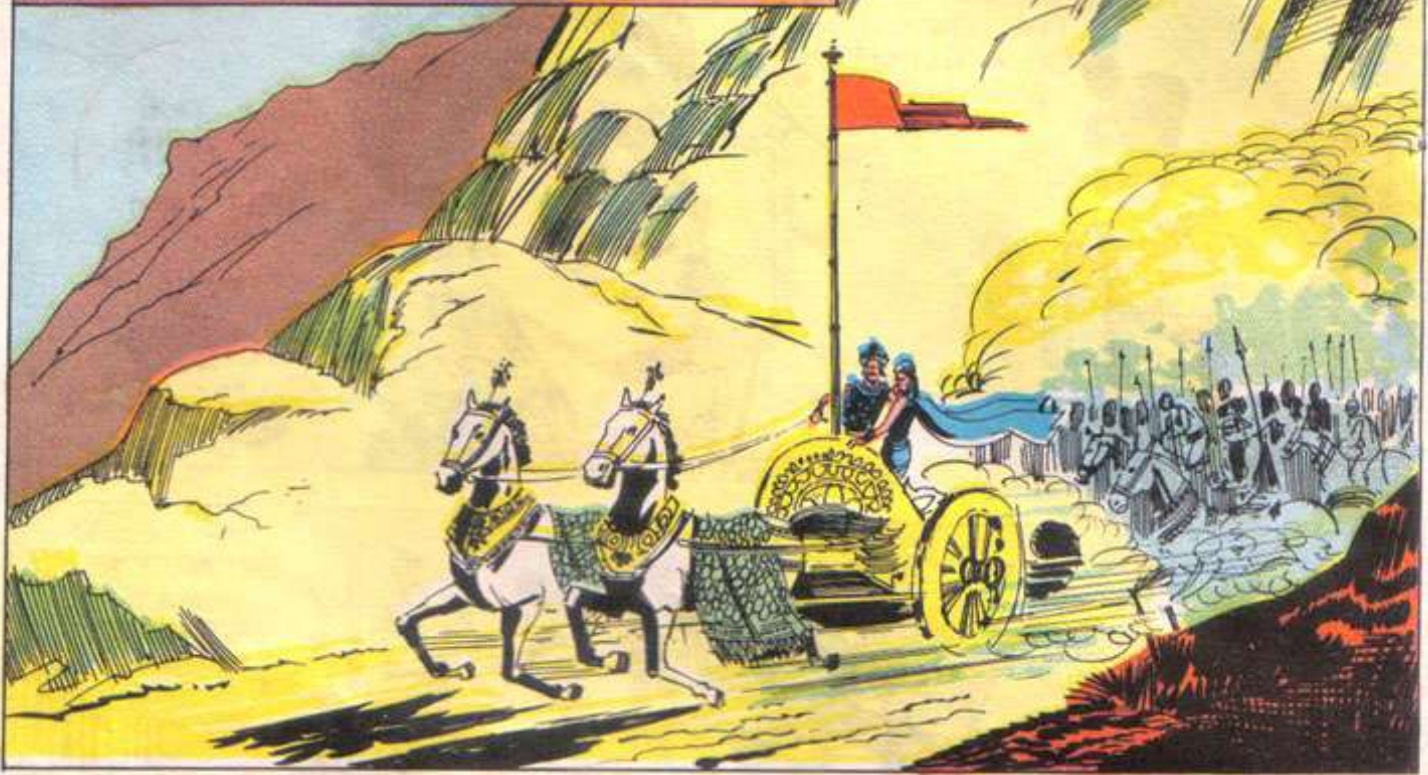
I'VE NEVER SEEN OUR PRINCE HESITATE THUS.

I...YES. I WANT THE HAND OF YOUR DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE.

I AM HONoured, SIR.



AFTER A QUICK WEDDING, HE PROCEEDED TOWARDS UJJAINI ALONG WITH VIDISHA.



ASHOKA, A GREAT WARRIOR, IN NO TIME ROUTED THE REBELS.



THE REBELS LAID DOWN THEIR ARMS.







PEOPLE OF THE CITY GAVE ASHOKA A GRAND WELCOME.




IN THE PALACE GARDENS LATER-



THIS IS AN OCCASION FOR REJOICING, VIDISHA. BUT YOU LOOK SAD.



I DISLIKE KILLING... EVEN IN BATTLES... ESPECIALLY BY YOU.



THAT'S SILLY. YOU SAY IT, BECAUSE YOU ARE A BUDDHIST, I AM NOT.





I AM A  
KSHATRIYA  
KING.  
MY DUTY  
ENJOINS  
KILLING  
IF NEED  
BE.

WHAT ABOUT  
BIMBISARA?  
HE TOO WAS  
A KING.  
HE FOUND  
PEACE IN THE  
TEACHINGS  
OF BUDDHA.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASHOKA AND  
VIDISHA PERSISTED. MONTHS LATER, WHEN  
VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A SON -



A SON!  
I AM VERY  
HAPPY.  
I WILL NAME  
HIM \*MAHINDRA.  
HE WILL CONQUER  
THE ENTIRE  
WORLD.

I WISH, HE  
CONQUERS THE  
HEARTS OF MEN  
AS PRINCE  
SIDDHARTHA  
DID.



TWO YEARS LATER, VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER.



ONE DAY, A MESSENGER CAME FROM PATALIPUTRA.





ASHOKA HAD HURRIED CONSULTATIONS WITH VIDISHA.

I HAVE RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MINISTER. MY FATHER IS ILL. I HAVE TO RUSH TO PATALIPUTRA...



...AND YOU AREN'T YET FIT TO ACCOMPANY ME.

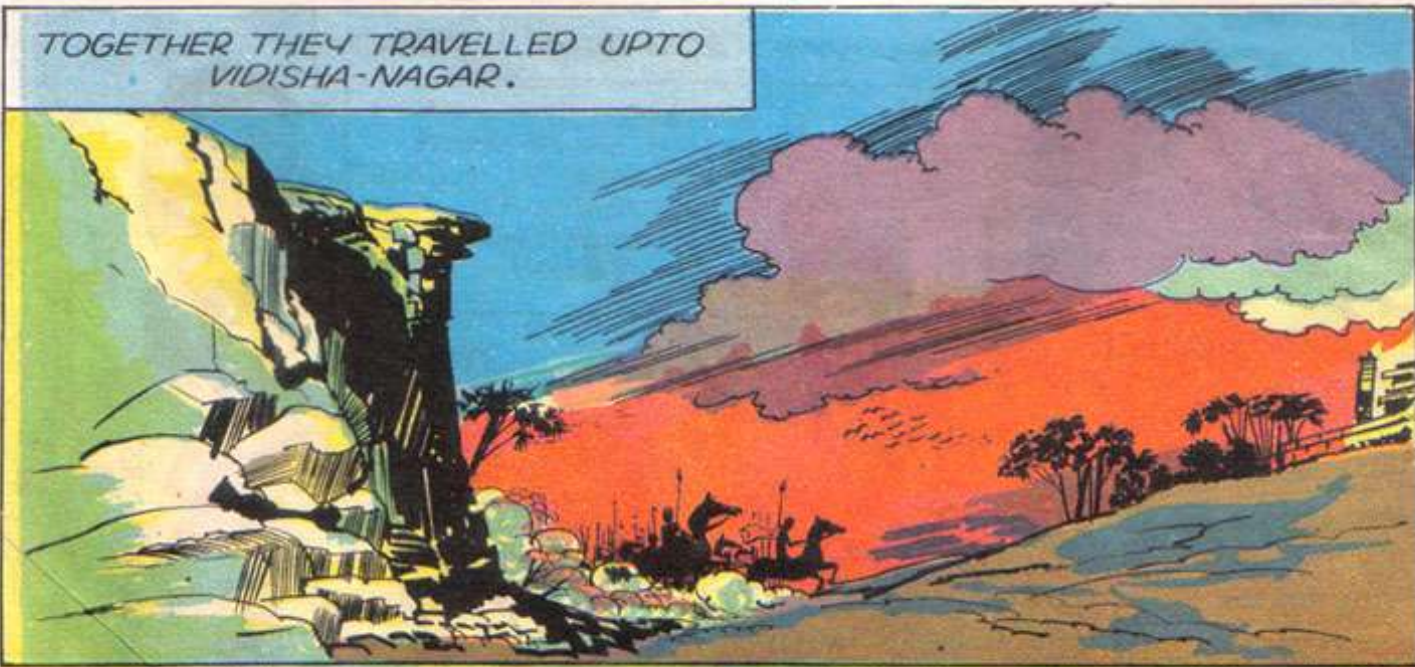


WILL YOU STAY AT VIDISHA-NAGAR WITH YOUR PARENTS? I'LL SEND FOR YOU LATER.

AS YOU WISH, MY LORD!



TOGETHER THEY TRAVELLED UPTO VIDISHA-NAGAR.









AT DATALIPUTRA, ASHOKA WAS RECEIVED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER.

PRINCE!  
YOUR FATHER  
IS NO MORE.  
AND YOUR  
BROTHERS ARE  
FIGHTING  
AMONGST  
THEMSELVES  
FOR THE  
THRONE.

THE THRONE!  
IT IS MINE!  
I HAVE EARNED  
THE RIGHT TO  
IT.



ASHOKA FORGOT ALL ABOUT THE PROMISE  
HE HAD MADE TO VIDISHA.





ASHOKA WAS RUTHLESS IN KILLING ALL THOSE THAT CHALLENGED HIS RIGHT TO THE THRONE. SUMANADEVI, WIFE OF ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, WAS EXPECTING A BABY AT THE TIME.

PRINCESS!  
I FEAR FOR THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD.



DO YOU SUGGEST THAT I RUN AWAY FROM HERE? BUT WHERE CAN I GO?

I CAN SHOW YOU A SECRET DOOR. YOU CAN ESCAPE INTO THE WOODS.



ESCAPING FROM THE PALACE, SUMANADEVI WANDERED IN THE FOREST.





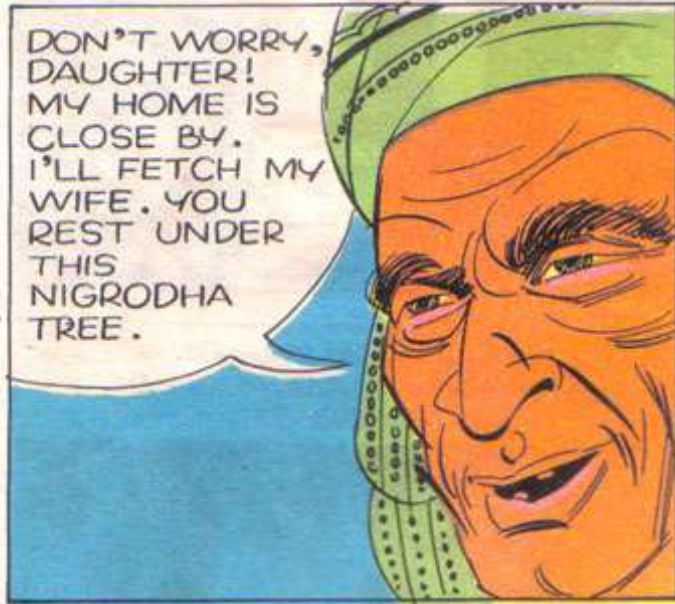
AN OLD MAN, WHO WAS PASSING BY, TOOK PITY ON HER.



SHE ACCOMPANIED HIM. WHILE THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY -



DON'T WORRY, DAUGHTER! MY HOME IS CLOSE BY. I'LL FETCH MY WIFE. YOU REST UNDER THIS NIGRODHA TREE.



IT WAS UNDER THAT NIGRODHA TREE THAT A BOY WAS BORN TO SUMANADEVI.



LET'S CALL HIM NIGRODHA KUMAR.



NIGRODHA KUMAR GREW UP IN THAT VILLAGE AND BECAME A MONK AT A VERY TENDER AGE.

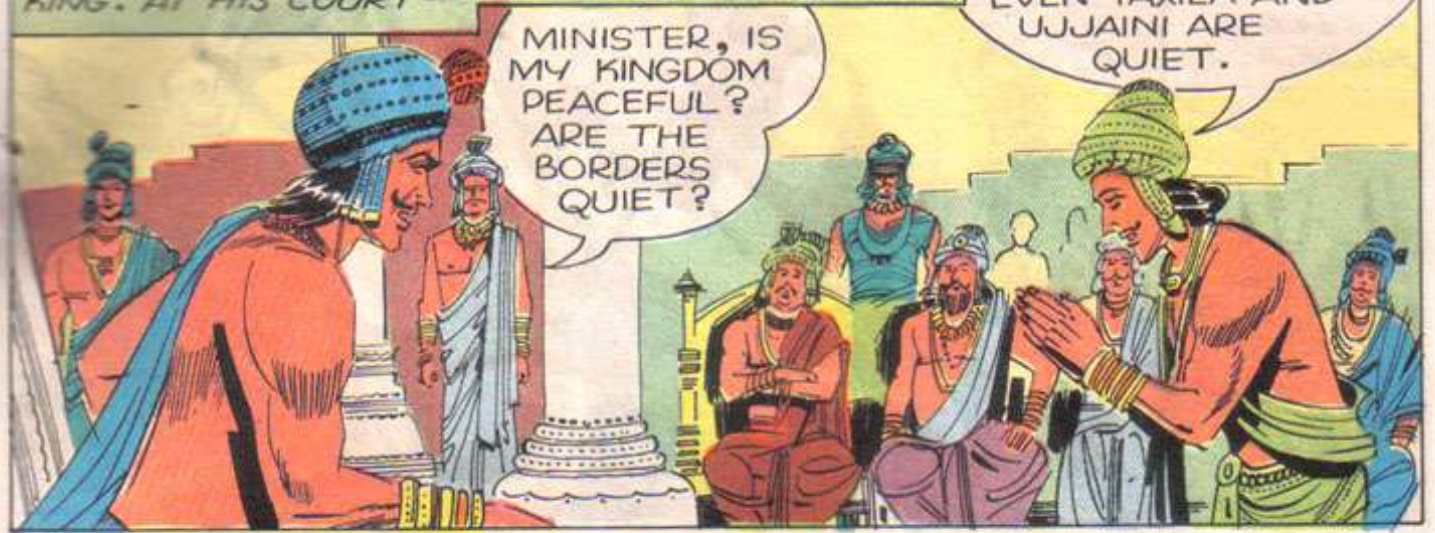




MEANWHILE, ASHOKA HAD BECOME A POWERFUL KING. AT HIS COURT -

YES, YOUR MAJESTY. EVEN TAXILA AND UJJAINI ARE QUIET.

MINISTER, IS MY KINGDOM PEACEFUL? ARE THE BORDERS QUIET?



STILL WE SHOULD NOT REST TILL KALINGA IS CONQUERED.

WHY YOUR MAJESTY?



IT IS INDEPENDENT TODAY AND MAY RAISE ITS HEAD ANY MOMENT.

WAR IT WILL HAVE TO BE.



COMMANDER! PREPARE FOR THE BATTLE.





ASHOKA'S  
ARMY  
INVADED  
KALINGA.



THE SOLDIERS OF KALINGA  
FOUGHT BRAVELY.



AT LAST—

WE HAVE WON.  
KALINGA IS  
OURS.

I  
SHALL VISIT  
KALINGA.





AS HE PROCEEDED, HE SAW HORRIBLE SIGHTS.



HEAPS OF DEAD MEN!  
WE HAVE KILLED  
MANY.

OVER  
1,00,000  
MEN TO BE  
PRECISE,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY.

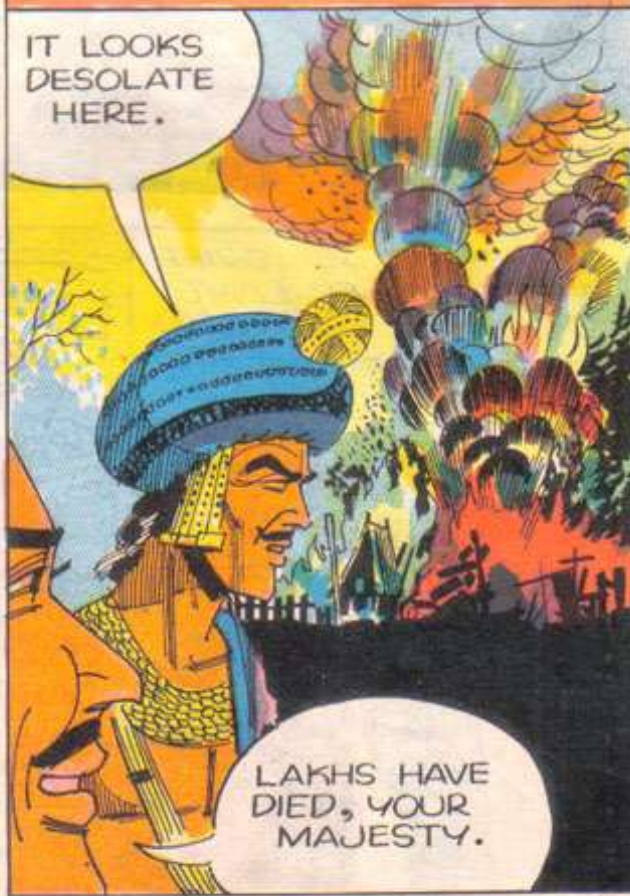


MERCY!  
WE BEG FOR  
MERCY!

WE HAVE  
CAPTURED  
1,50,000  
MEN,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY.

AS ASHOKA MOVED FARTHER -

IT LOOKS  
DESOLATE  
HERE.



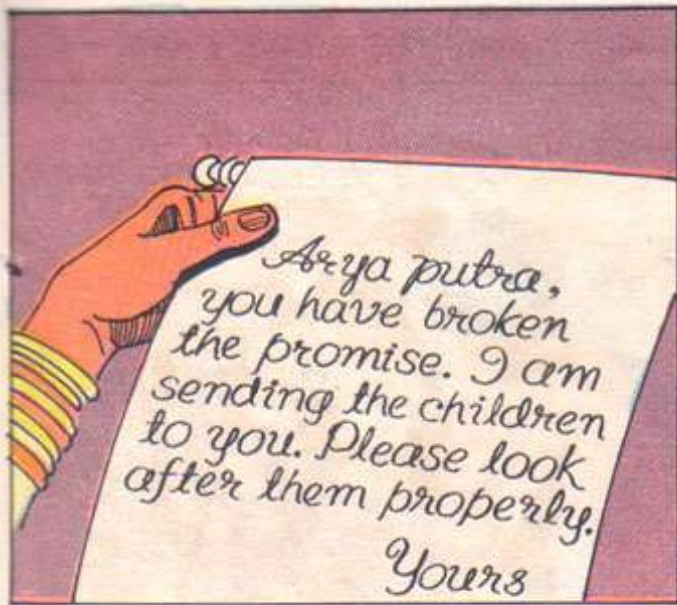
LAKHS HAVE  
DIED, YOUR  
MAJESTY.



HE SAW THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE.



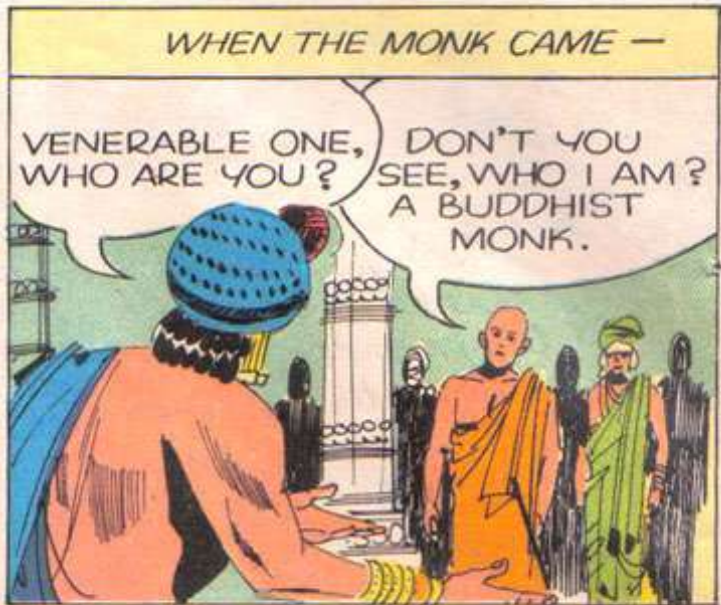








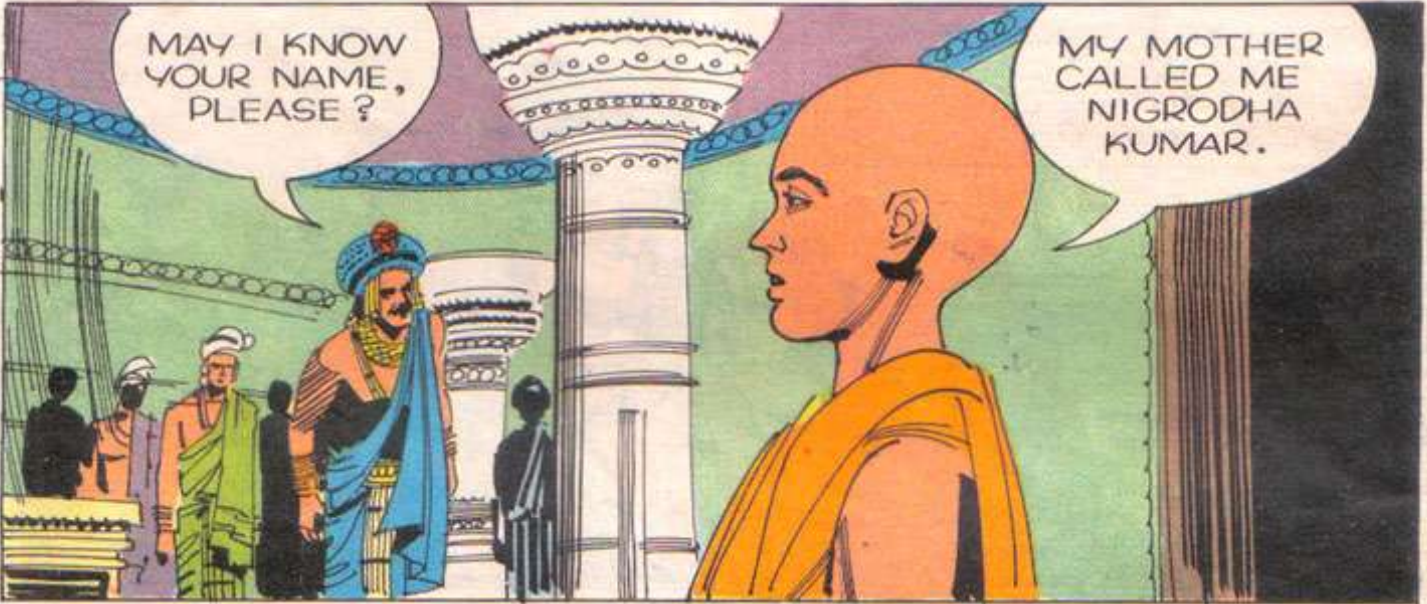
GO!  
QUICK!  
REQUEST  
THAT MONK  
TO COME  
HERE.



WHEN THE MONK CAME —

VENERABLE ONE,  
WHO ARE YOU?

DON'T YOU  
SEE, WHO I AM?  
A BUDDHIST  
MONK.



MAY I KNOW  
YOUR NAME,  
PLEASE?

MY MOTHER  
CALLED ME  
NIGRODHA  
KUMAR.



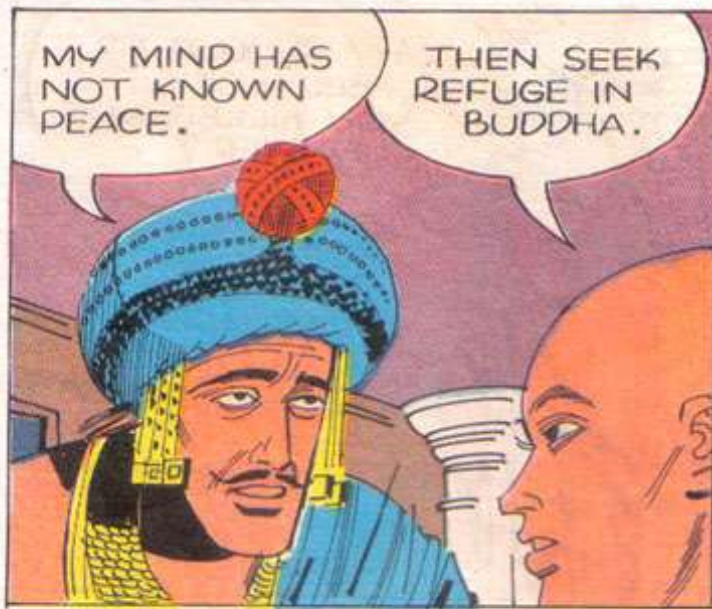
NIGRODHA  
KUMAR!  
I KNOW,  
THAT IS  
THE NAME  
OF MY  
BROTHER'S  
SON.

YES.  
I AM YOUR  
NEPHEW.  
I CAN GUESS  
WHAT IS  
GOING ON  
IN YOUR  
MIND.











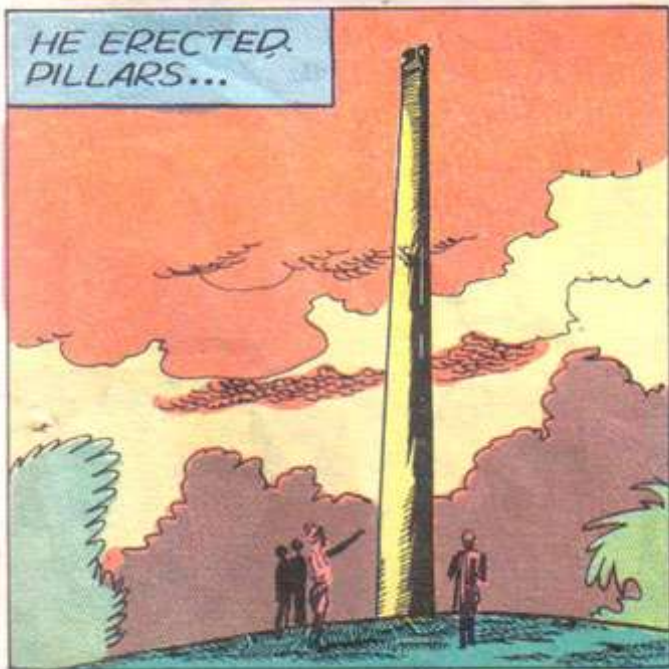
A TRANSFORMATION CAME ABOUT IN ASHOKA. ALL HIS ATTENTION NOW WAS ON BRINGING PEACE AND HAPPINESS TO THE PEOPLE.



FOR THE COMFORT OF TRAVELLERS, EVEN IN THE WOODS, HE BUILT REST HOUSES AND DISPENSARIES.



HE ERECTED PILLARS...



...AND CARVED INSTRUCTIONS ON ROCKS.



PRIYADARSHI, THE BELOVED KING OF GOD SAYS THIS ...



ONE DAY -

I HAVE GIVEN AWAY ALL THINGS DEAR TO ME.

EXCEPT...



EXCEPT WHAT, MAHINDRA?



YOUR CHILDREN.



YOUR SON WISHES TO JOIN THE SANGHA.

MUST YOU, MAHINDRA? IT IS WITH A HEAVY HEART - BUT I GIVE YOU PERMISSION.



FATHER, ALLOW ME TO JOIN THE NUNNERY.

OH! SANGHAMITRA!!

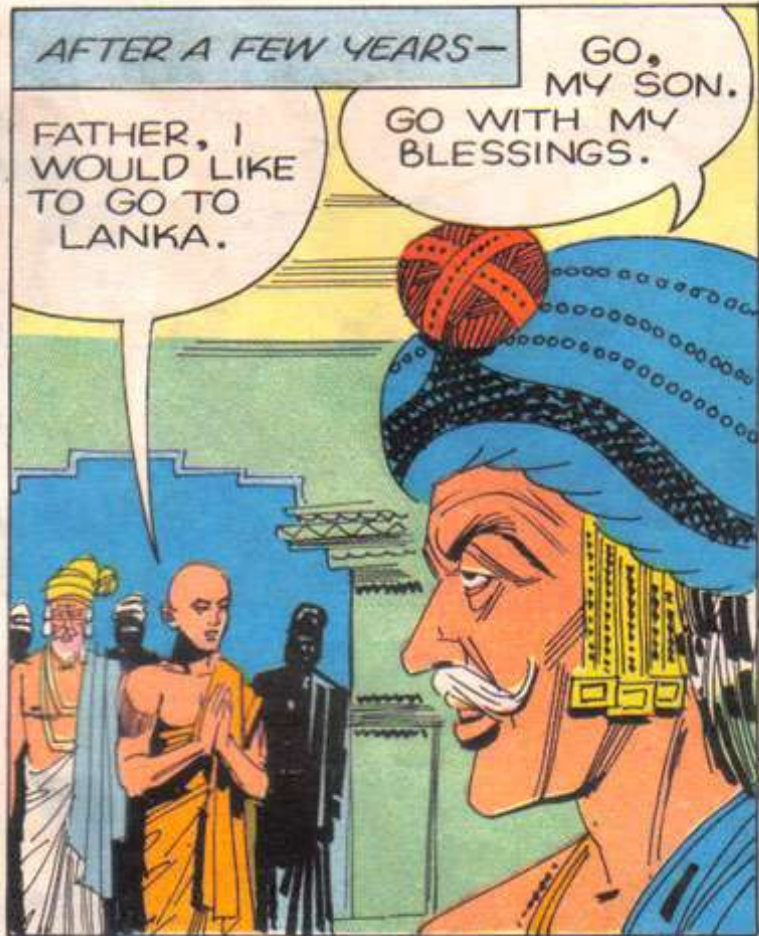






MY HUSBAND AND SON HAVE RENOUNCED THE WORLD. I TAKE NO PLEASURE IN LIFE.

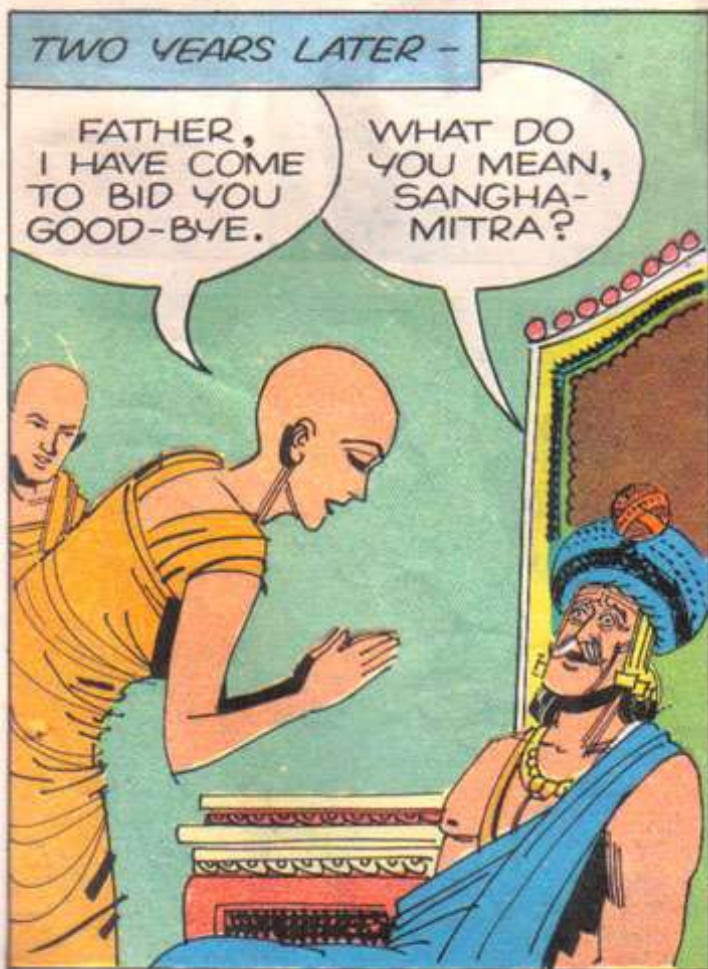
YOU MAY JOIN THE NUNNERY.



AFTER A FEW YEARS—

FATHER, I WOULD LIKE TO GO TO LANKA.

GO, MY SON. GO WITH MY BLESSINGS.



TWO YEARS LATER -

FATHER, I HAVE COME TO BID YOU GOOD-BYE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SANGHAMITRA?



A MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM LANKA. THEY NEED NUNS AT THE MISSION.

HM...





SANGHAMITRA,  
I HAVE GROWN OLD.  
I CAN BEAR GRIEF  
NO MORE.

BE BRAVE. YOU  
FORGET SANGHAMITRA  
IS A MEMBER OF  
THE SANGHA.



I  
UNDERSTAND.  
I WISH YOU  
SUCCESS.  
GO, MY  
CHILD.

THANK  
YOU,  
FATHER.



OH! VIDISHA,  
YOUR CHILDREN  
HAVE LEFT ME  
JUST AS YOU DID  
FOR THE SAKE OF  
DHARMA.





THIS ASHOKA BECAME DHARMASHOKA. HE RULED FOR MANY YEARS AND LOOKED AFTER THE WELFARE OF THE SUBJECTS OF HIS VAST EMPIRE AS A FATHER WOULD LOOK AFTER HIS CHILDREN.



THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF CO-EXISTENCE, WHICH HE PROPAGATED, ARE STILL RESPECTED THE WORLD OVER. THE ASHOKA PILLAR AT SARNATH REMINDS US EVEN TILL THIS DAY OF HIS GREATNESS. THE 'DHARMA CHAKRA' ON THE ASHOKA PILLAR ADORNS OUR NATIONAL FLAG.

