

On the other hand, after leaving Avanti, prince Vikramaditya thought

I have to travel around and conceal my identity to avoid recognition. I should move about in the disguise of an Avadhoot Yogi.



And he disguised himself as an Avadhoot Yogi.

Moving around he arrived at a community platform in a village. Numerous villagers were sitting there talking. Amongst them was also sitting a pundit. Vikram listened.

Brother! In my opinion the true heir of Avanti is Vikram. He has all the virtues of a good ruler.

Bhartrihari is the elder brother. As long as he is present, how can Vikram be the king?



In state-craft seniority does not depend on age but on brilliance. Vikram's brilliance is unparalleled.

This person with an appearance of a villager seems to be very clever.



Vikram looked at that Brahmin and shouted—

Alakh Niranjani!

Hey! This appears to be some great sage.



The chant of Avadhoot mendicants which means 'invisible unblemished' or God.

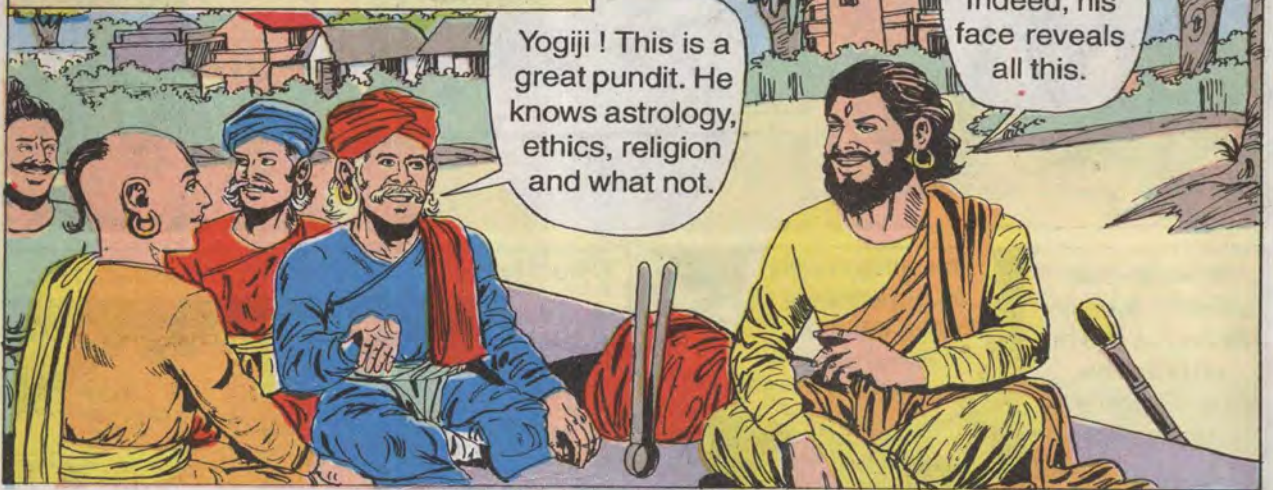
They all got up and paid homage to the Avadhoot, who then asked the pundit—



My name is Matribhatt.

You appear to be a pundit. What is your name ?

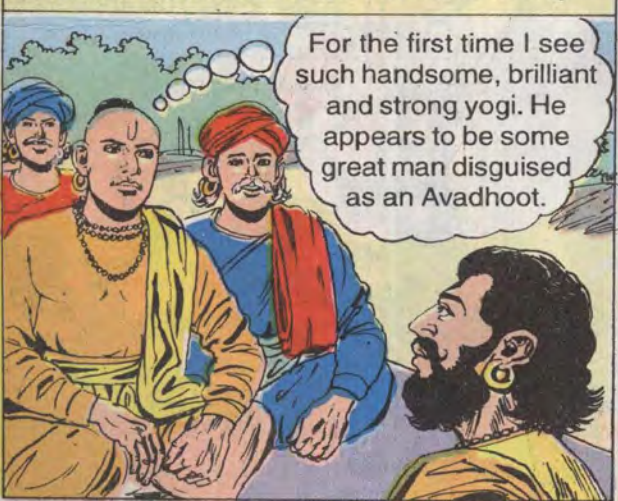
A villager informed about Matribhatt—



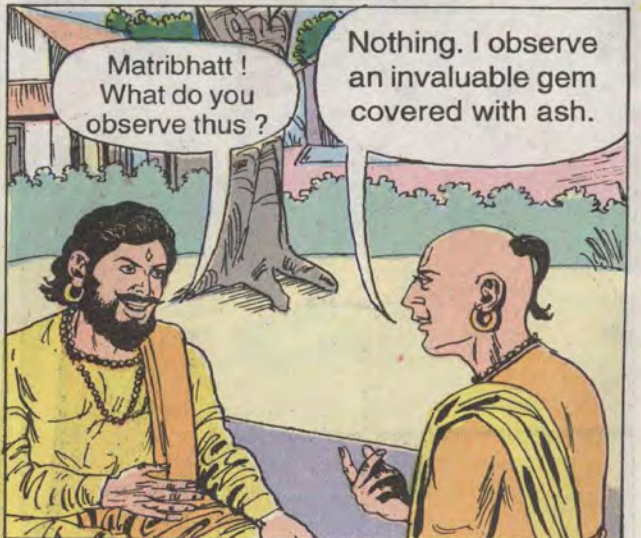
Yogiji ! This is a great pundit. He knows astrology, ethics, religion and what not.

Indeed, his face reveals all this.

Matribhatt also looked at the Avadhoot keenly—



For the first time I see such handsome, brilliant and strong yogi. He appears to be some great man disguised as an Avadhoot.



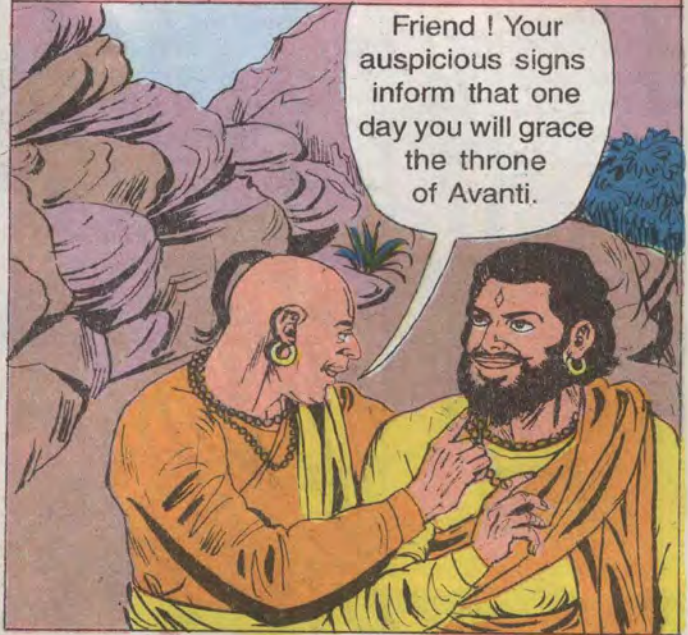
Matribhatt ! What do you observe thus ?

Nothing. I observe an invaluable gem covered with ash.

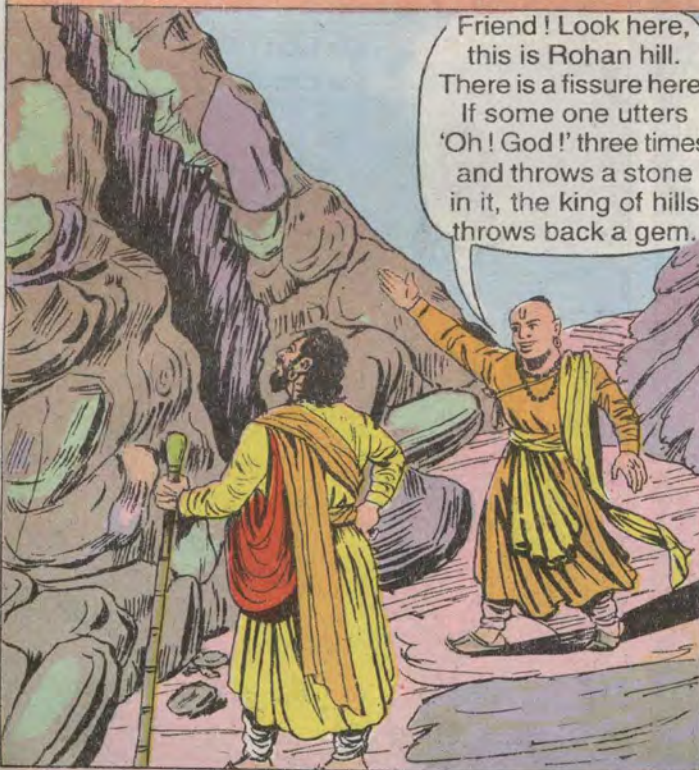
Avadhoot's eyes sparkled with amusement. Matribhatt also laughed. The two silently recognized each other.



When the Avadhoot resumed his journey, Matribhatt also went along. After exchange of views they both became fast friends. When the Avadhoot revealed his true identity, Matribhatt embraced him—

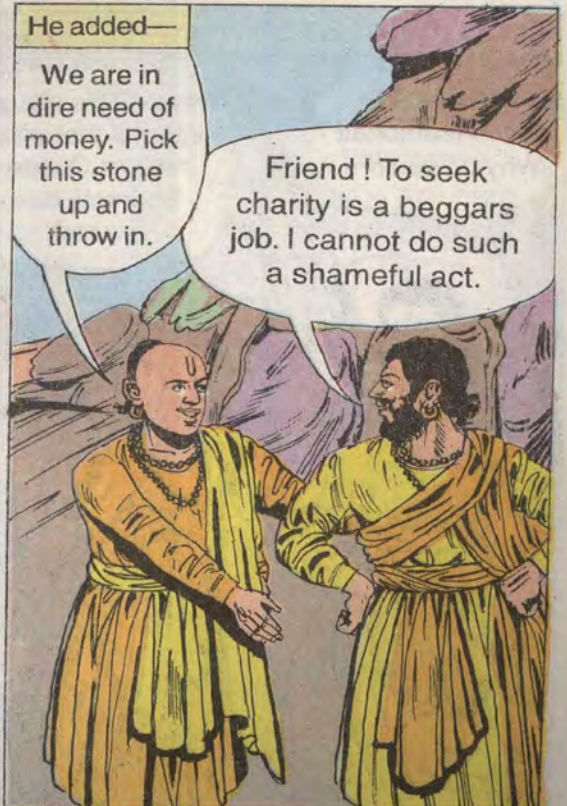


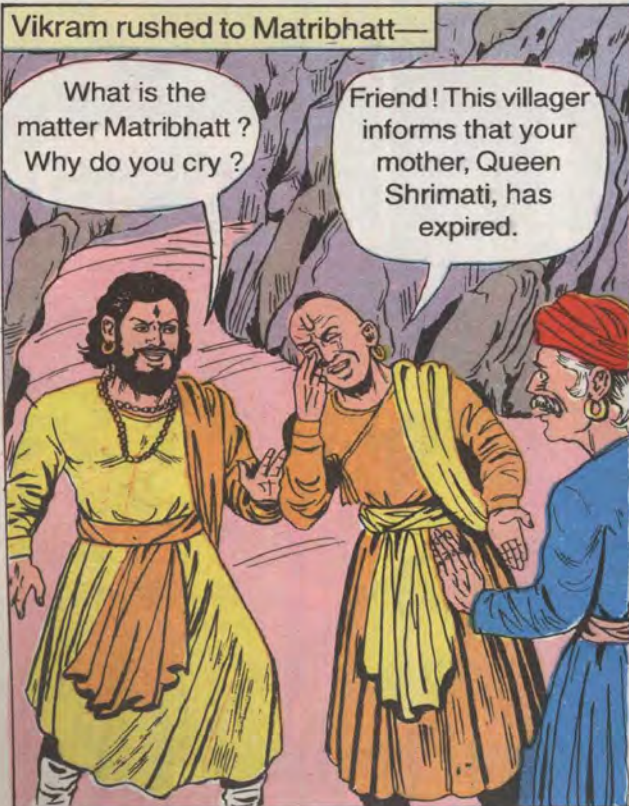
On their way they came across a hill. Matribhatt said—



He added—

We are in dire need of money. Pick this stone up and throw in.





Beating his forehead Vikram uttered—

Friend ! There is nothing in this world that I loved more than my mother. Now that she has gone, how would I live...?



Matribhatt saw that Vikram was genuinely crying for his mother's death. He placed his hand on Vikram's shoulder and said—

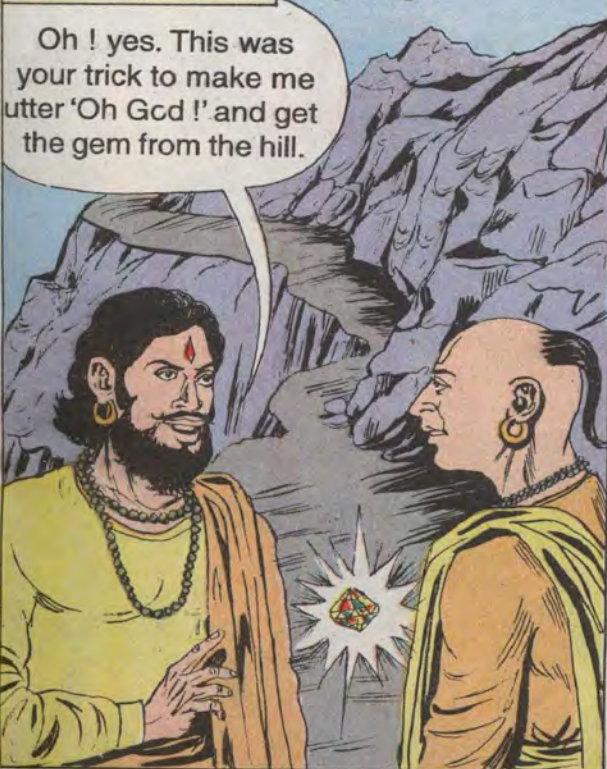
Friend ! Compose yourself. Don't cry. Your mother is hale and hearty. Look there.



A gem was lying before Vikram.

Vikram understood everything—

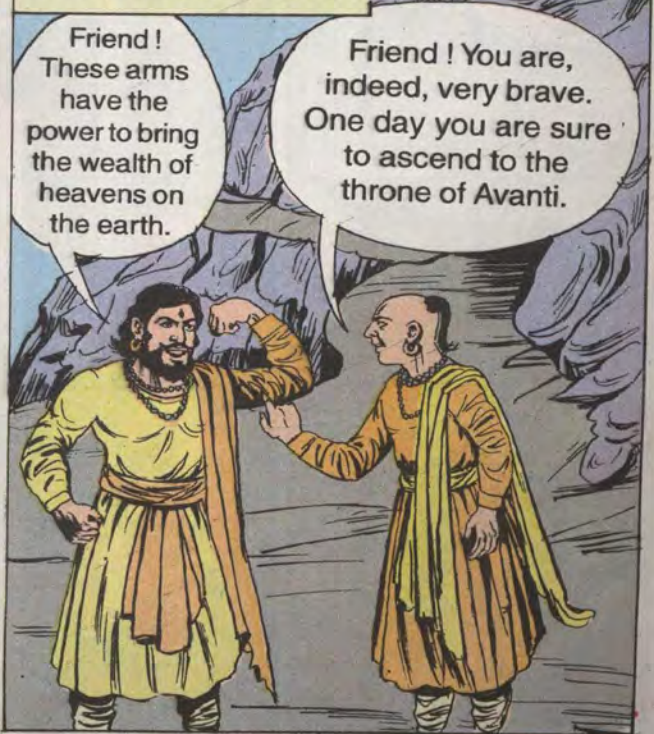
Oh ! yes. This was your trick to make me utter 'Oh Gcd !' and get the gem from the hill.

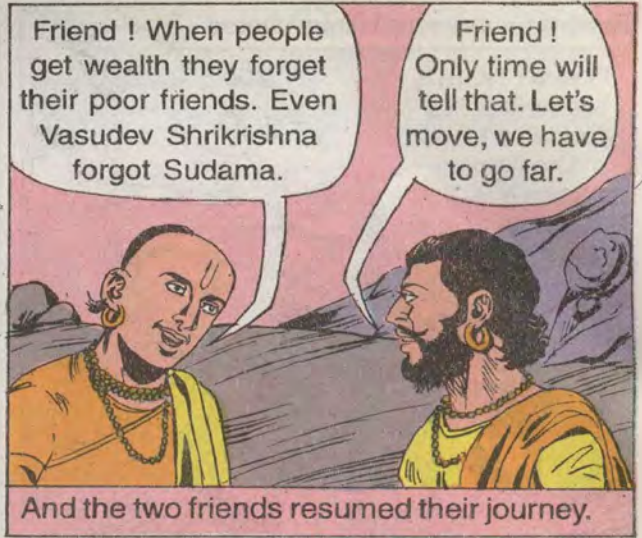
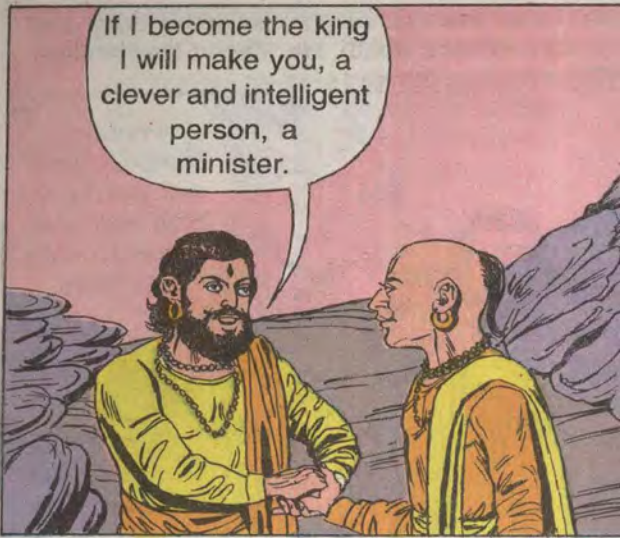


Vikram picked up the gem and threw it away. He bunched his biceps and said—

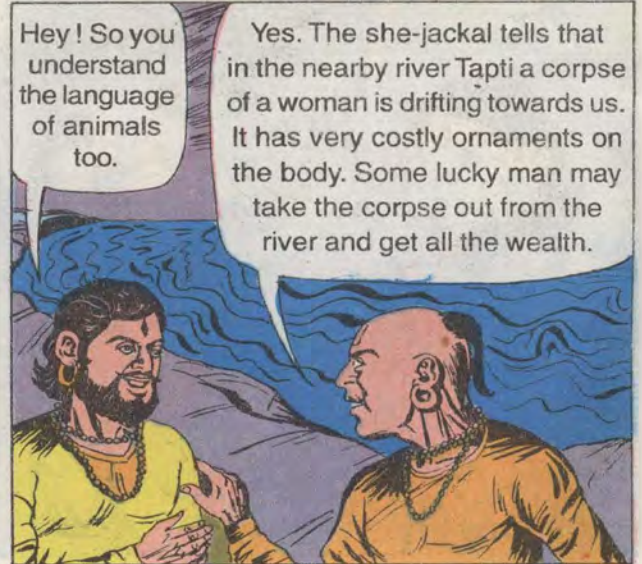
Friend ! These arms have the power to bring the wealth of heavens on the earth.

Friend ! You are, indeed, very brave. One day you are sure to ascend to the throne of Avanti.





One night while they were resting under a tree they heard the howl of a she-jackal. Alarmed Matribhatt stood up and listened carefully.



He added—



Friend ! Come, let's get that wealth. It will be very useful to us.

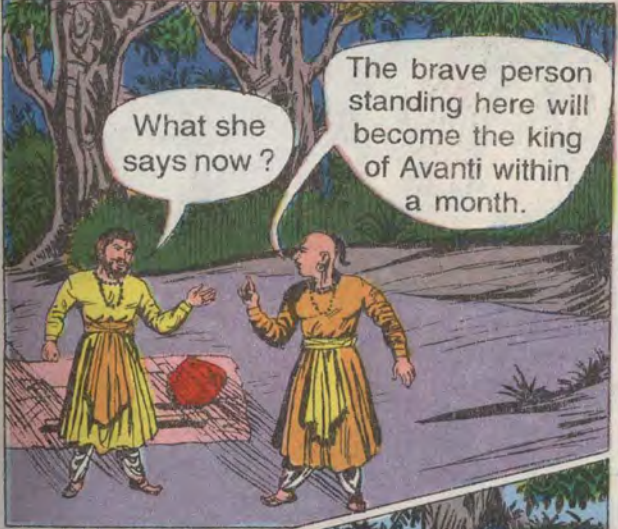
No ! To snatch ornaments from a corpse is the work of a Chandal.# I am a Kshatriya [martial clan], I cannot do this work.

The jackal howled again—



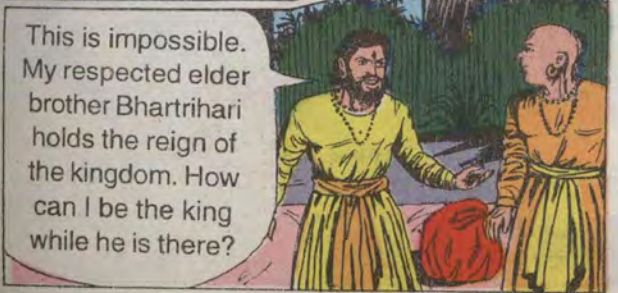
Wait ! The she-jackal is again telling something

Matribhatt carefully listened.

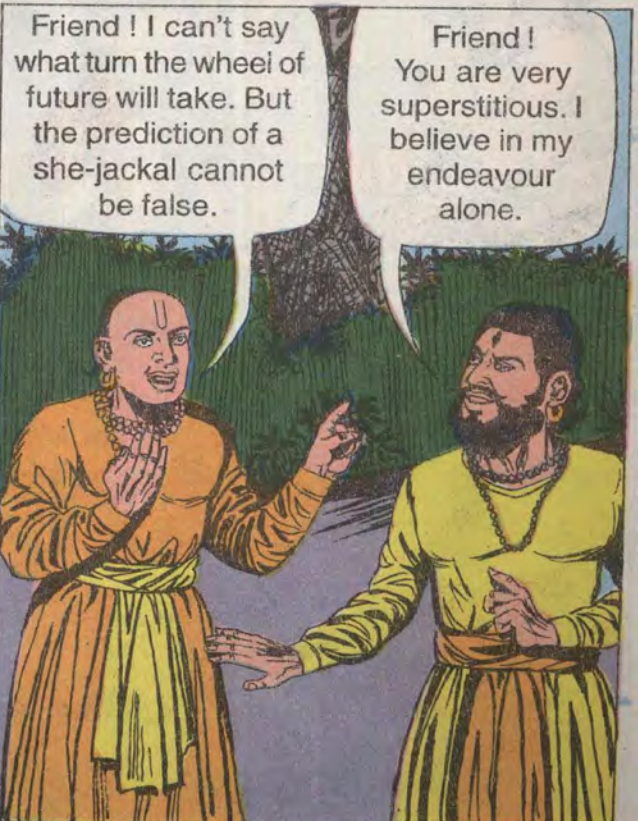


What she says now ?

The brave person standing here will become the king of Avantī within a month.



This is impossible. My respected elder brother Bhartrihari holds the reign of the kingdom. How can I be the king while he is there?

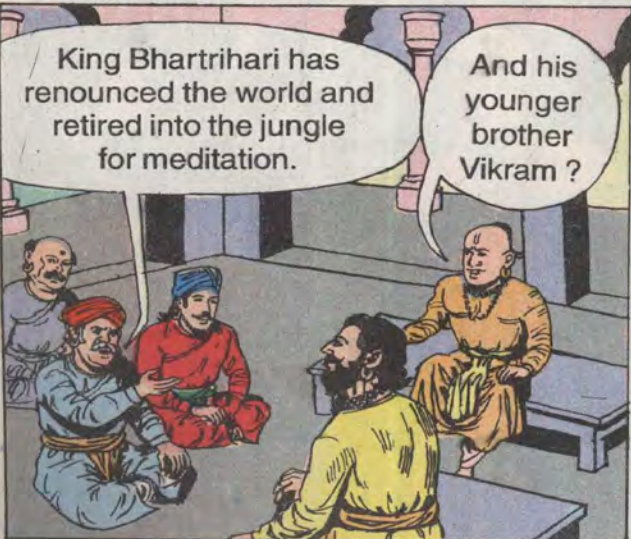
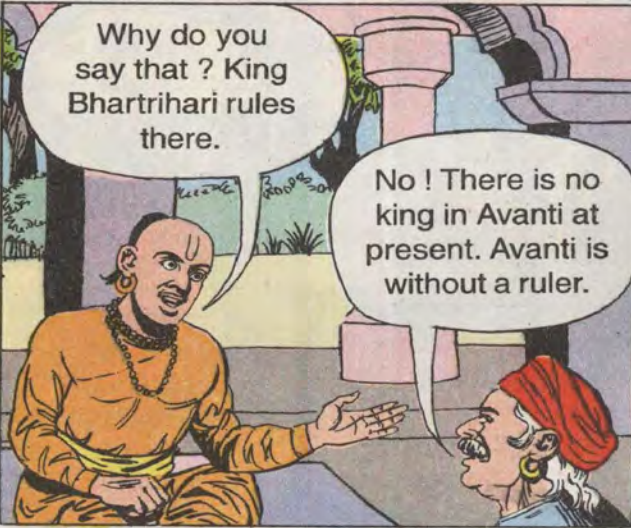
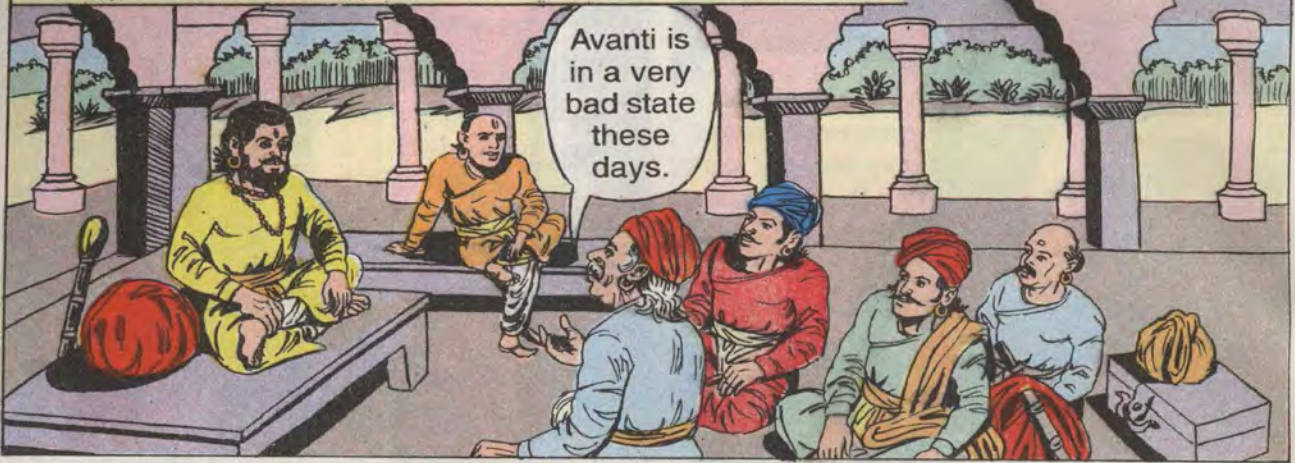


Friend ! I can't say what turn the wheel of future will take. But the prediction of a she-jackal cannot be false.

Friend ! You are very superstitious. I believe in my endeavour alone.

Low caste people; keeper of a cremation ground.

In the morning they entered a town and stayed in a boarding house. Many travellers came to pay homage when they saw an Avadhoot Yogi. Some people from Avanti informed—

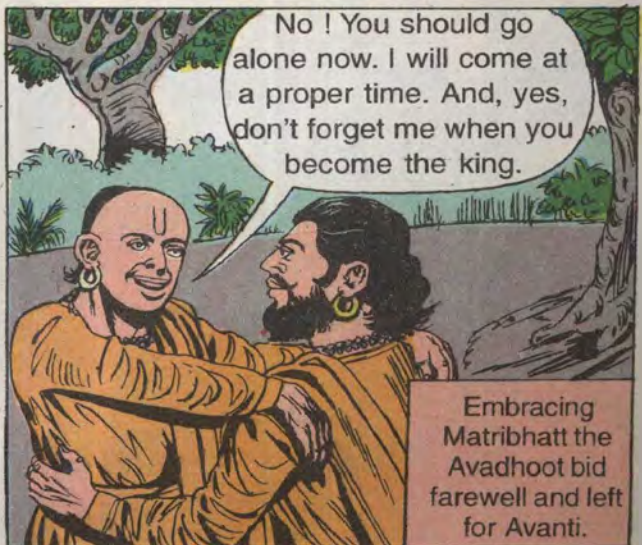
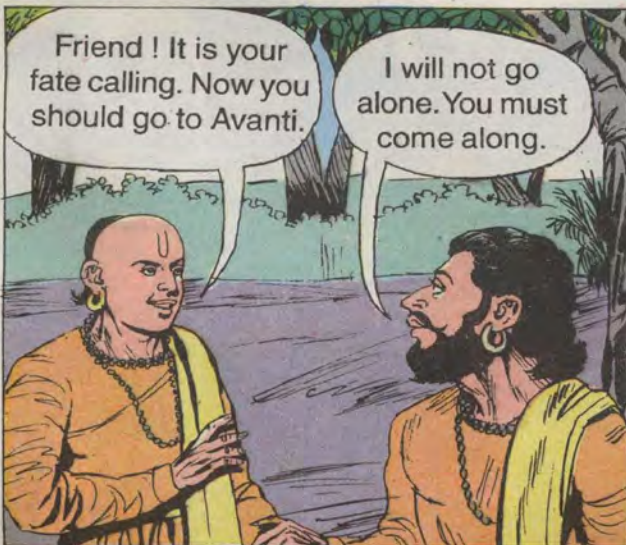
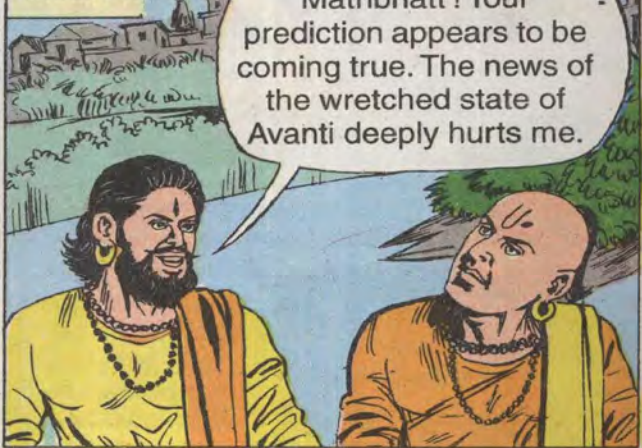




On hearing the news from Avanti the Avadhoot looked at Matribhatt. Shadows of anxiety appeared on their faces.



They left the place and came out of the town. Vikram said—



The Avadhoot Yogi camped outside Avanti on the banks of river Kshipra. Whoever came there and saw the yogi, paid him homage and listened to his discourse. Soon large crowds started gathering at the discourse of the yogi and spent some time with him.



Respected saint, your speech enlightened me.

Brother, it is our duty to guide people.

One day a messenger informed the chief minister Buddhisagar—



Sire ! A Yogi has camped on the banks of Kshipra river. He is very brilliant. His voice speaks wisdom. He is very great.

Is it so ? Then I also must go to pay my respect.

The minister went alone to see the Yogi. Vikram recognized him. Without asking he spoke—

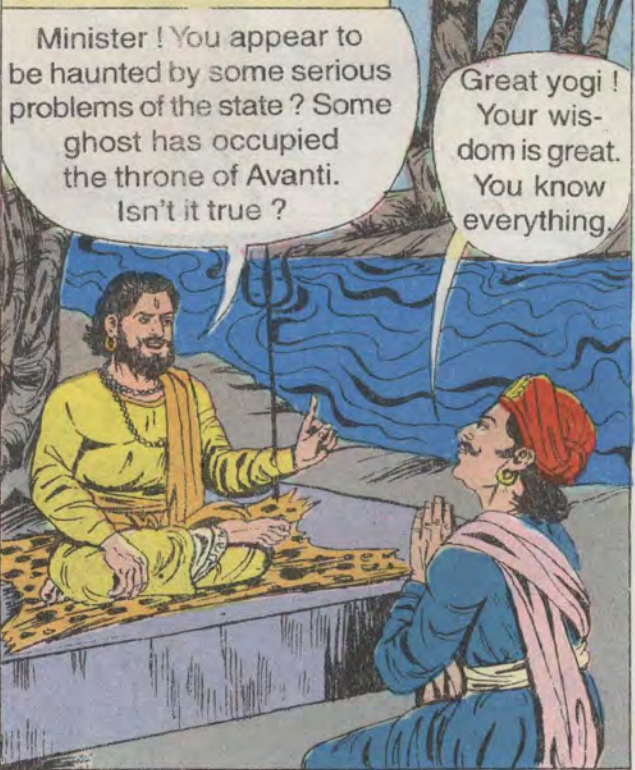


Come minister Buddhisagar !

What ! The yogi knows my name ? Then, with his yogic powers he must also be aware of my worries ?

The Avadhoot said again—

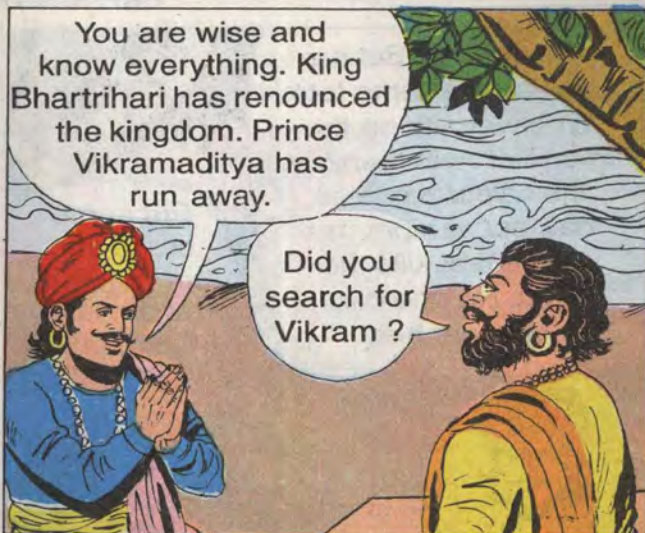
Minister ! You appear to be haunted by some serious problems of the state ? Some ghost has occupied the throne of Avanti. Isn't it true ?



Great yogi ! Your wisdom is great. You know everything.



Still, tell me what goes on in your mind.



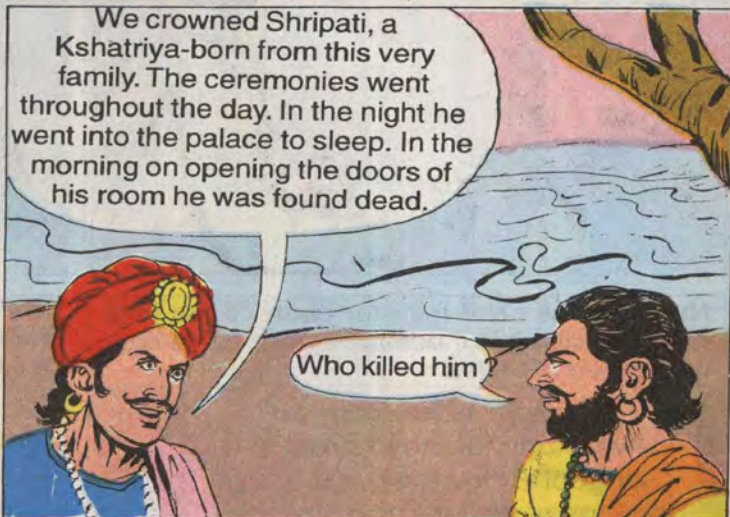
You are wise and know everything. King Bhartrihari has renounced the kingdom. Prince Vikramaditya has run away.

Did you search for Vikram ?



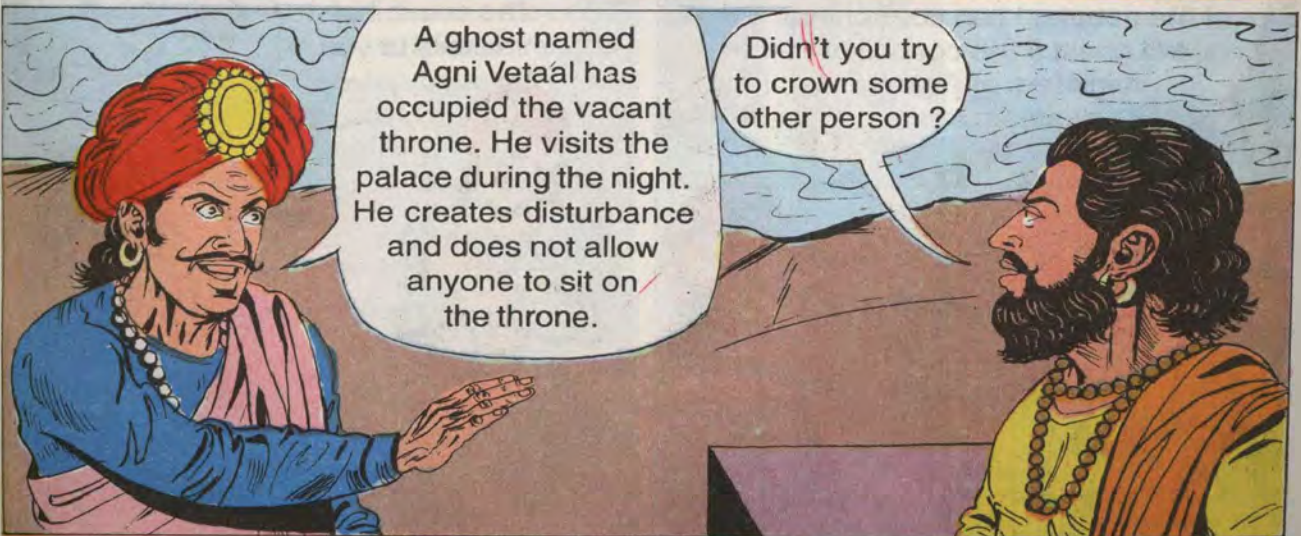
We have carefully searched every part of the land but couldn't find the prince.

Did you try to crown some other Kshatriya-born ?



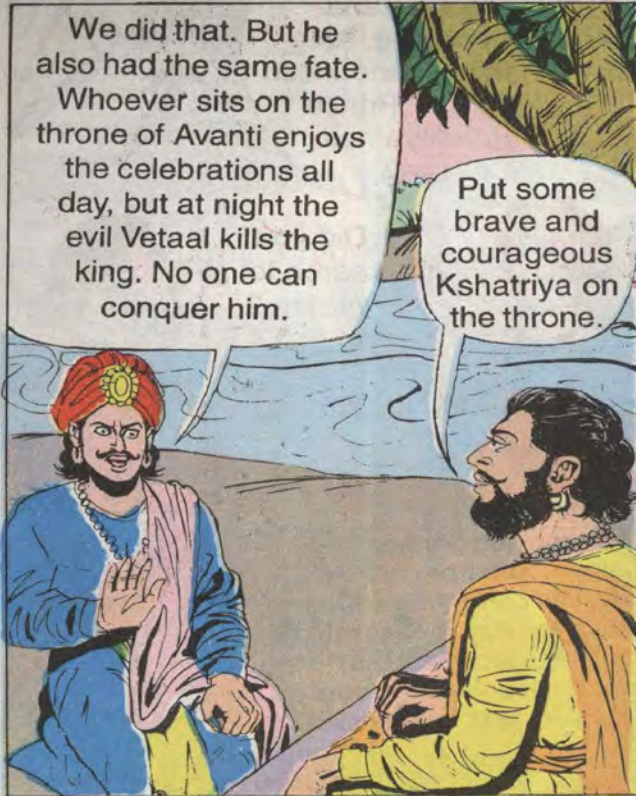
We crowned Shripati, a Kshatriya-born from this very family. The ceremonies went throughout the day. In the night he went into the palace to sleep. In the morning on opening the doors of his room he was found dead.

Who killed him ?



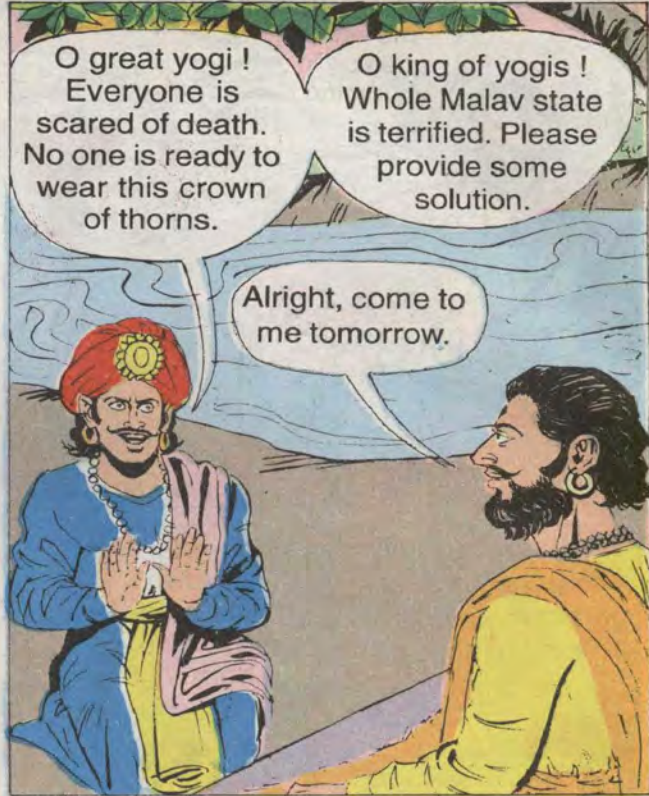
A ghost named Agni Vetaal has occupied the vacant throne. He visits the palace during the night. He creates disturbance and does not allow anyone to sit on the throne.

Didn't you try to crown some other person ?



We did that. But he also had the same fate. Whoever sits on the throne of Avanti enjoys the celebrations all day, but at night the evil Vetaal kills the king. No one can conquer him.

Put some brave and courageous Kshatriya on the throne.

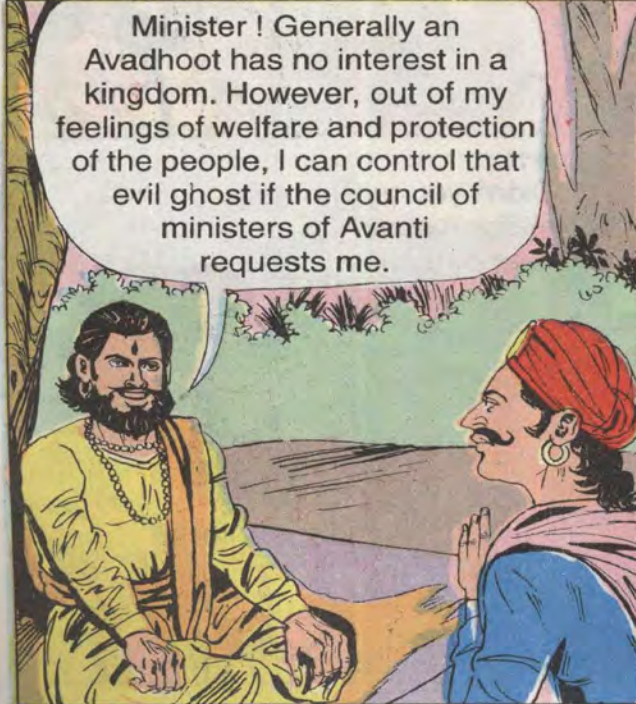


O great yogi ! Everyone is scared of death. No one is ready to wear this crown of thorns.

O king of yogis ! Whole Malav state is terrified. Please provide some solution.

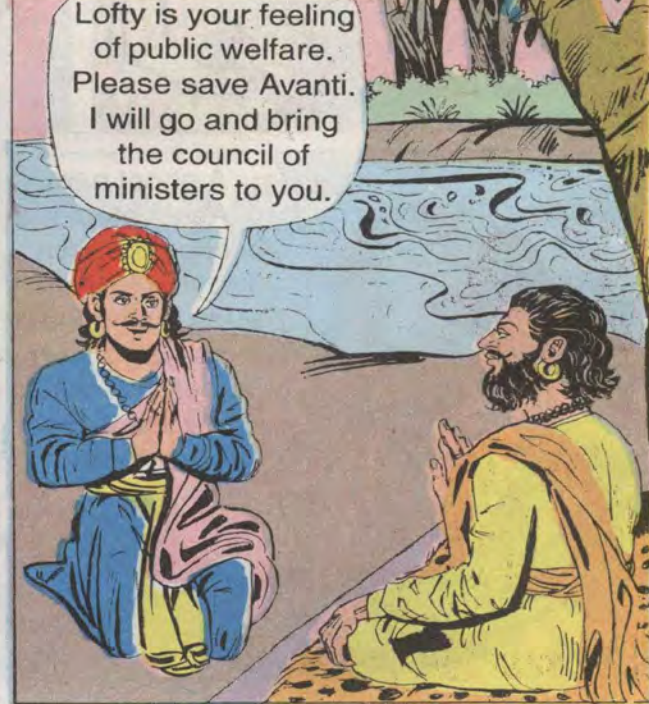
Alright, come to me tomorrow.

Next day the chief minister came to the yogi who was sitting in meditation. After some time he opened his eyes.



Minister ! Generally an Avadhoot has no interest in a kingdom. However, out of my feelings of welfare and protection of the people, I can control that evil ghost if the council of ministers of Avanti requests me.

The minister was happy to hear these words. He bowed his head at the feet of the yogi and said politely—



Lofty is your feeling of public welfare. Please save Avanti. I will go and bring the council of ministers to you.

Next day minister Buddhisagar came to the yogi along with the council of ministers. All the ministers requested the yogi to save Avanti. The yogi said—

I have two conditions—
1. I will occupy the throne dressed as a yogi. 2. The day Vikramaditya is found I will hand over the kingdom to him and go.

We agree.



Next day the coronation ceremony was organized. Avadhoot Yogi was seated on the throne. People started talking—

See the irony of fate. One king has abandoned the state and become a yogi. And another yogi is becoming a king.

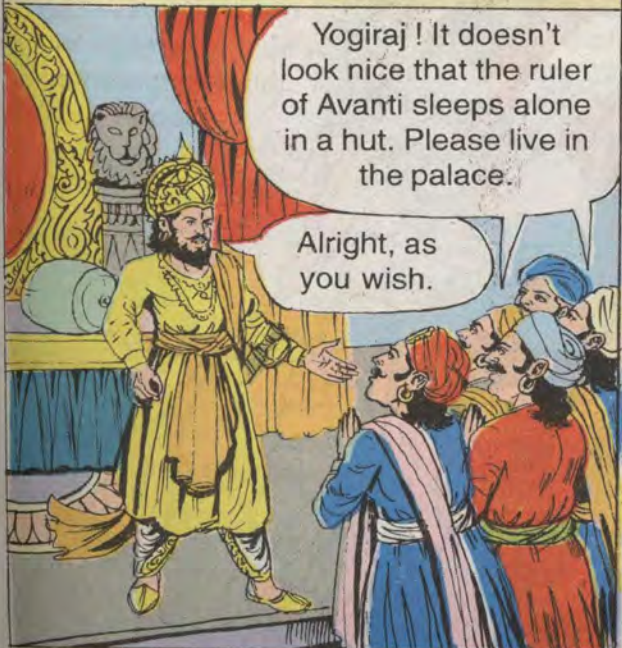


In the evening the yogi returned to his hut on the river bank and slept.

During the day Avadhoot Yogi attended the court, listened to the problems of the people, discussed with ministers and administered justice. In the evening he returned to his hut to sleep. One day the ministers jointly requested—

Yogiraj! It doesn't look nice that the ruler of Avanti sleeps alone in a hut. Please live in the palace.

Alright, as you wish.



Next evening the king gave instructions—

I will stay in the palace. For a yogi palace and hut are same.

Arrange to decorate the main road from my bedroom right up to the city gate.

As you say, Sire!



The instructions were followed at once. Perfumed water was sprinkled all over the road. Flowers were spread. Incense sticks were burnt. Trays filled with sweets, fruits and dry fruits were placed all along the road.

The palace was decorated like the Diwali night. At night the Avadhoot Yogi went alone in the bedroom to sleep.



All around the palace guards with alert swords were on watch.

At midnight there was a loud whoop and everyone was terrified. Then a cloud of smoke covered the palace.



Whooping and hissing Agni Vetaal ghost entered the palace and crashed straight into the king's bedroom.



The Avadhoot king was waiting for the ghost. He got up and said—

O king of ghosts !
So much offerings of
food ware placed outside
the palace to satisfy your
hunger. Have you not
had your fill ?

No ! I will be
satisfied only
by accepting
you as an
offering.



At this the Avadhoot also drew his sword.

If that is what you
want beware. Get
ready to bear the
thrust of my sword.



Vetaal and Avadhoot had a long and fierce duel
with swords. Slowly Vetaal got tired—

I have faced such
brave and courageous
person for the first
time. There is a
chance that he
may kill me.

Here
rascal !
Face this !



Vetaal got flustered with Avadhoot's thrusts. Soon he said—

Stop, friend ! You are
indeed very brave.
I was, in fact,
testing you.

Alright, if you want
friendship I extend
my hand.



Vetaal informed him—

Now I, Agni Vetaal ghost, am the protector of Avanti state. Work for the welfare of the people without any worries. Just continue your daily offerings of food.



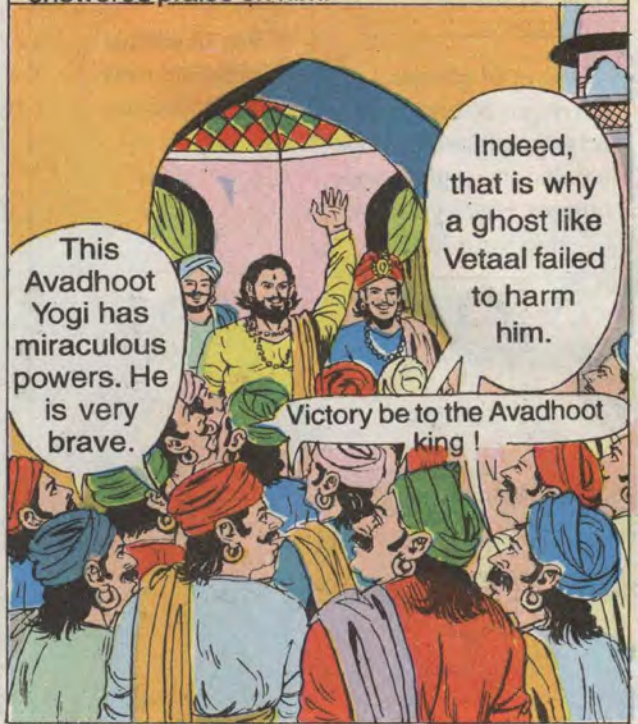
Vetaal and Avadhoot talked all night.

In the morning the Avadhoot got up and came out. People were surprised to see him alive. They showered praise on him.

This Avadhoot Yogi has miraculous powers. He is very brave.

Indeed, that is why a ghost like Vetaal failed to harm him.

Victory be to the Avadhoot king!



Now every evening perfumes, flowers, dry-fruit and sweets were placed on the road from the city gate to the palace to welcome the ghost.

Be quick. It will be night soon and Vetaal is about to come.

Yes, brother! We must place everything in order. Otherwise he will get angry.

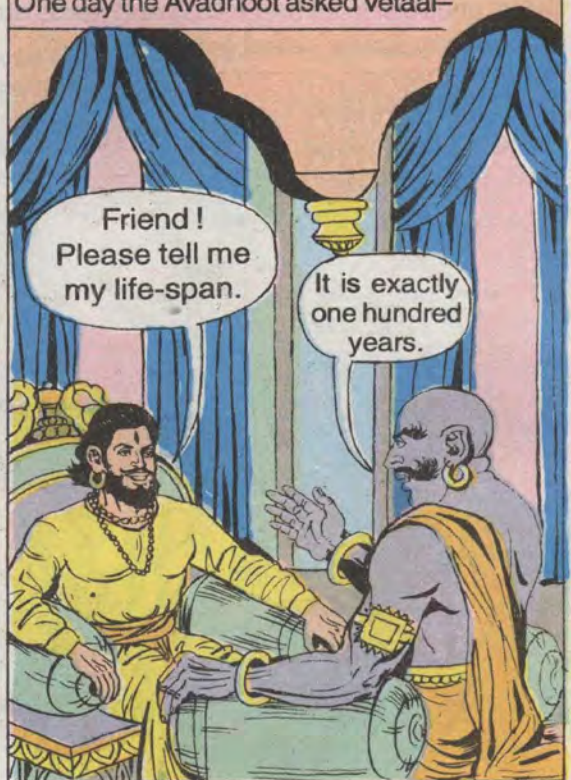


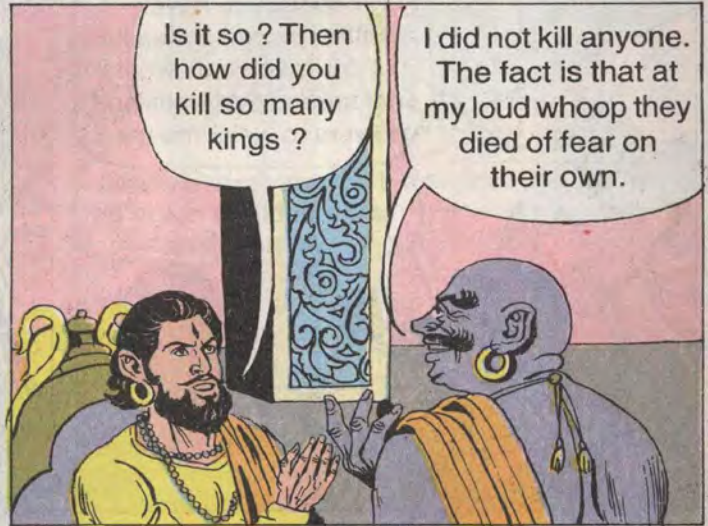
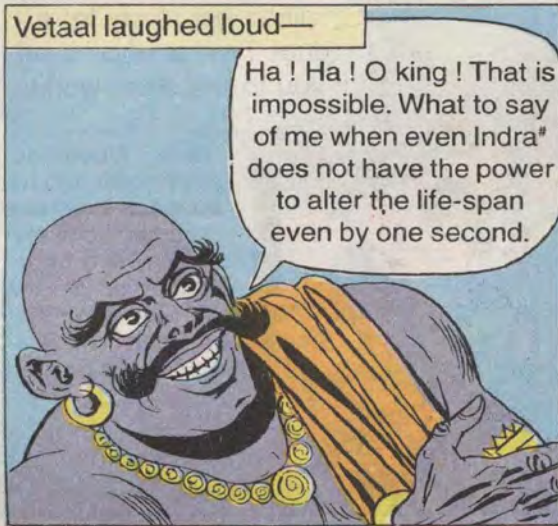
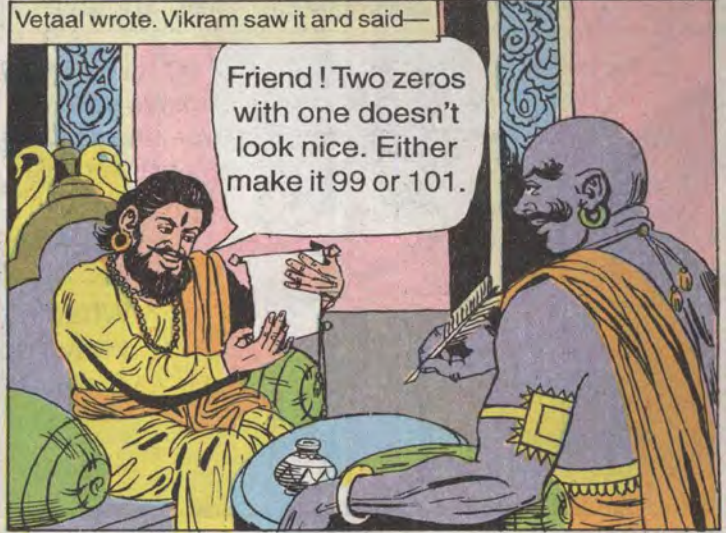
Vetaal came everyday and returned contented after eating all the food.

One day the Avadhoot asked Vetaal—

Friend! Please tell me my life-span.

It is exactly one hundred years.



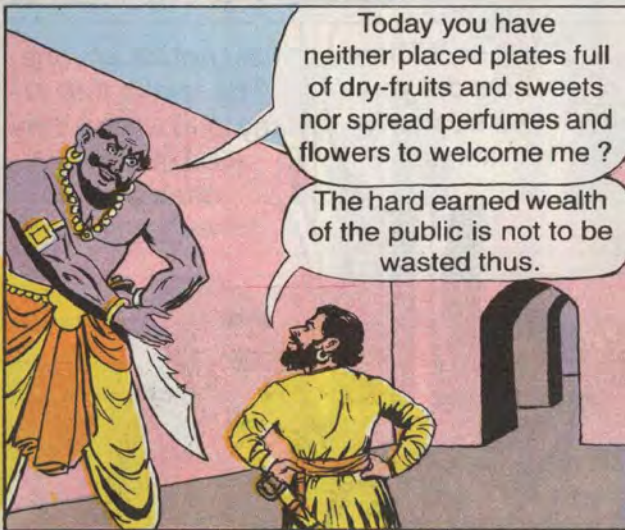


Next day around midnight Vetaal came hissing in anger—



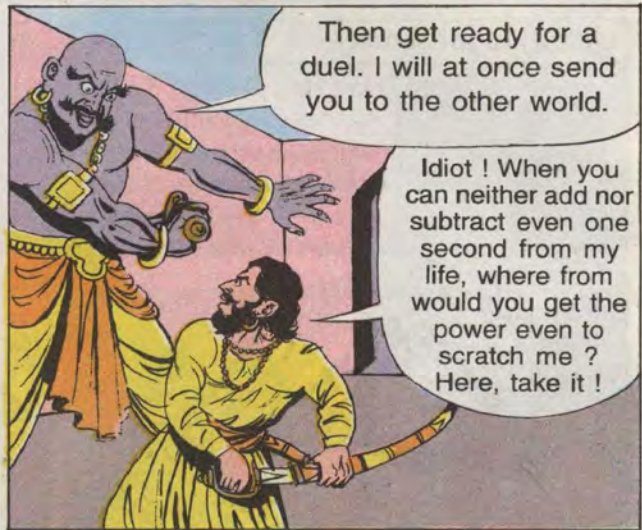
O rascal ! You have deceived me after a promise of friendship. Tricked a friend ?

What trick ? I have done nothing.



Today you have neither placed plates full of dry-fruits and sweets nor spread perfumes and flowers to welcome me ?

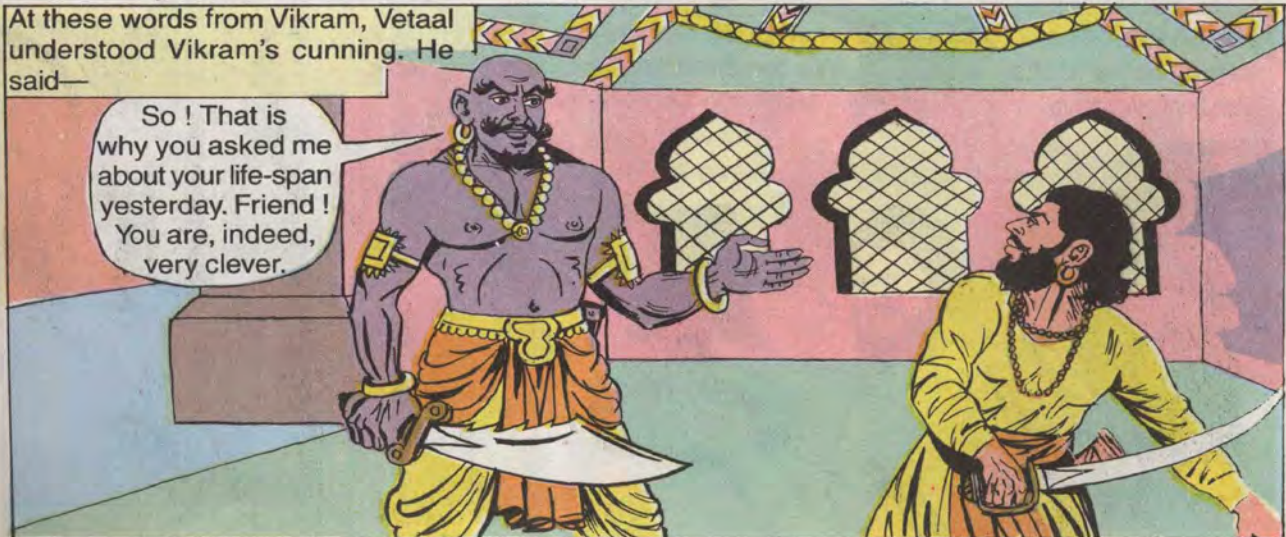
The hard earned wealth of the public is not to be wasted thus.



Then get ready for a duel. I will at once send you to the other world.

Idiot ! When you can neither add nor subtract even one second from my life, where from would you get the power even to scratch me ? Here, take it !

At these words from Vikram, Vetaal understood Vikram's cunning. He said—

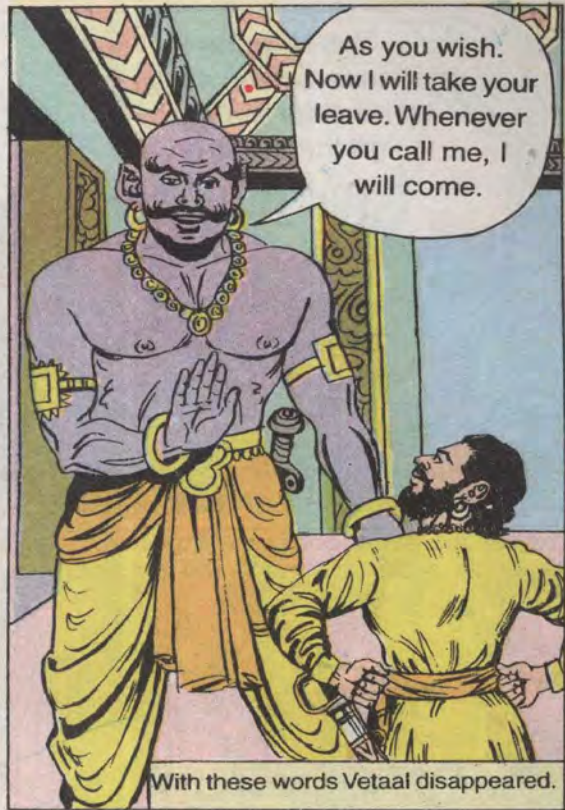


So ! That is why you asked me about your life-span yesterday. Friend ! You are, indeed, very clever.

Vetaal added—

Friend ! Before your courage and smartness I accept my defeat. I would be pleased to have you as a friend. From this day we are friends as equals.

Friend ! If you are pleased with me you should promise that this friendship will never break. Whenever I invoke you, you will at once come and do what I request.



As you wish. Now I will take your leave. Whenever you call me, I will come.

With these words Vetaal disappeared.

Vikramaditya, disguised as Avadhoot, devoted all his time to public welfare. The fame of his astonishing justness, morality, scholarship and courage spread far and wide.



Brother ! The Avadhoot king has wiped all our tears. Happiness has reached every household.

Yes, brother ! The king is very just. He loves the people as his children.

One day the chief minister requested to the Avadhoot king—

O Yogiraj ! What you are doing for the people of Avanti is unmatched. Now we have one more wish.



What do you want now ?

Yes ! Yogiraj !
Please do this much
at least for the grace
of the throne.

Please discard this
Avadhoot garb and accept
a dress suitable for
a king.

Alright ! As
you wish.



Next day the Avadhoot formally put on the crown after adorning himself in the royal dress and ornaments. The whole state celebrated the occasion.

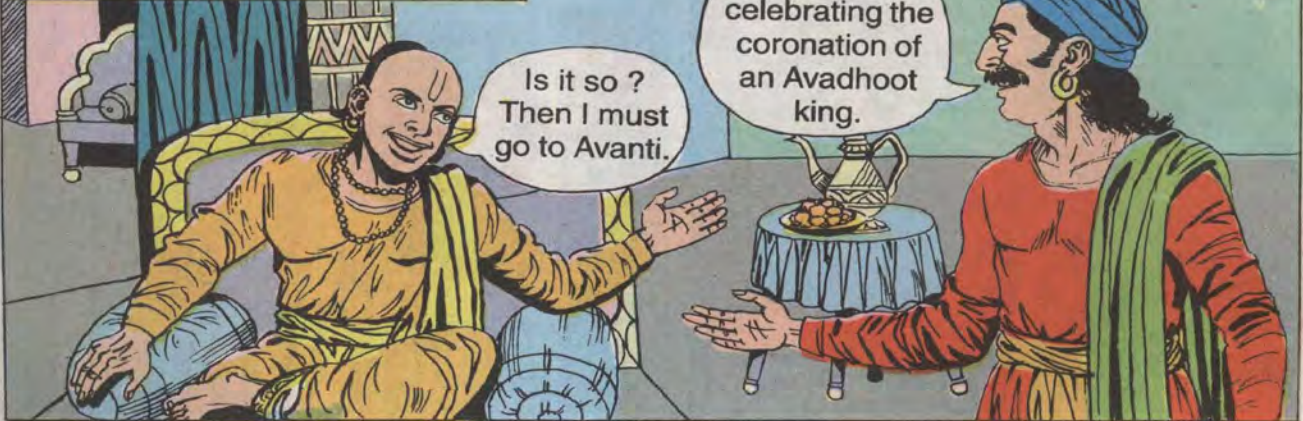


To greet the king of Avanti, friendly rulers came with gifts.

One day someone informed Matribhatt—

Is it so ?
Then I must go
to Avanti.

Avanti is
celebrating the
coronation of
an Avadhoot
king.



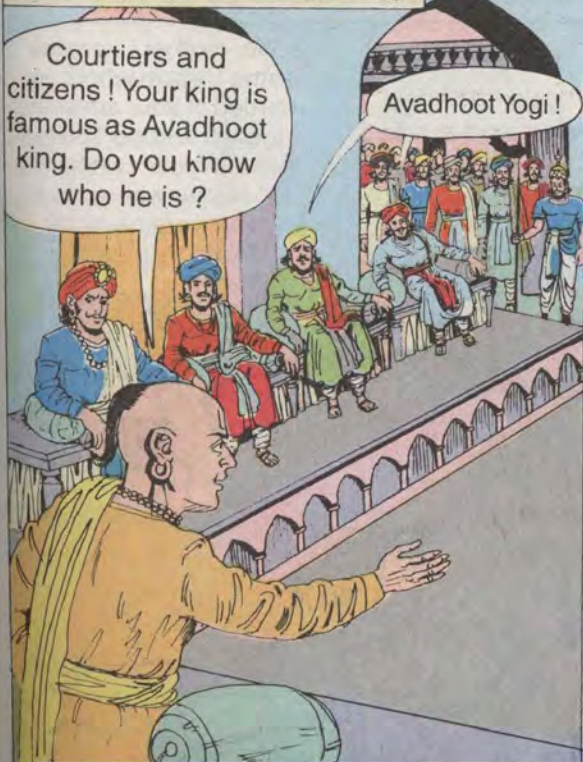
Matribhatt came to Avanti to greet the king. When he saw his friend coming, the Avadhoot king got up and embraced him.



Vikramaditya introduced Matribhatt—



Matribhatt addressed the assembly—



In the assembly people started jumping and dancing with joy—



Hail King Vikramaditya !

Queen mother Shrimati also got the news—



Queen mother ! The Avadhoot king is none else but your son Vikram.

Take me to Vikram at once.

Queen mother rushed to the assembly. Vikramaditya fell at his mother's feet. The mother embraced her son. Their eyes brimmed with tears of love.



The mother kissed the forehead of the son and said—



Vikram ! You have changed a lot and made me suffer much.

No, mother ! I am the same Vikram whom you carried in your arms and moved around. You fed me with your own hands. No matter where I lived, you were never far from my memory.

Then seeking his mother's blessing, Vikram said—

Mother ! I will look after this kingdom considering it to be the boon of your blessings.



After that Vikram recalled his promise and announced—

King Vikramaditya ! Live long life.

Minister Matribhatt ! Live long life.

Minister Buddhisagar is the chief minister of this kingdom. But as he has grown old I am appointing my young friend Matribhatt as the joint chief minister. He is my true companion, associate and advisor from my bad days.



Under the rule of chief minister Matribhatt and majestic King Vikramaditya the people of Avanti prospered and flourished. One day Matribhatt came to Vikramaditya with some dignitaries—

Hey ! What is the matter ? What complaint you all have brought today ?

Sire ! It is a complaint as well as request.



Sire ! Till date the throne of the queen remains unoccupied. If this throne is also filled, the joy of the people will have no bounds.

So, from a biped you want to turn me to a quadruped !



They broke into a laughter.

Then Vikram asked Matribhatt-

Have you seen some able and virtuous match suitable for the throne of Avanti ?

Yes, sire ! Minister Buddhisagar and I have just returned seeing such a girl. Kamalavati, daughter of king Vairi Singh of Lakshmpur, is a perfect match for you. See.



The king carefully saw the picture.

Yes ! From the picture the appears looks to be calm and serene and can be the queen of Avanti.



At an auspicious moment the king was ceremoniously married to Kamalavati.



Vikramaditya gave his consent.

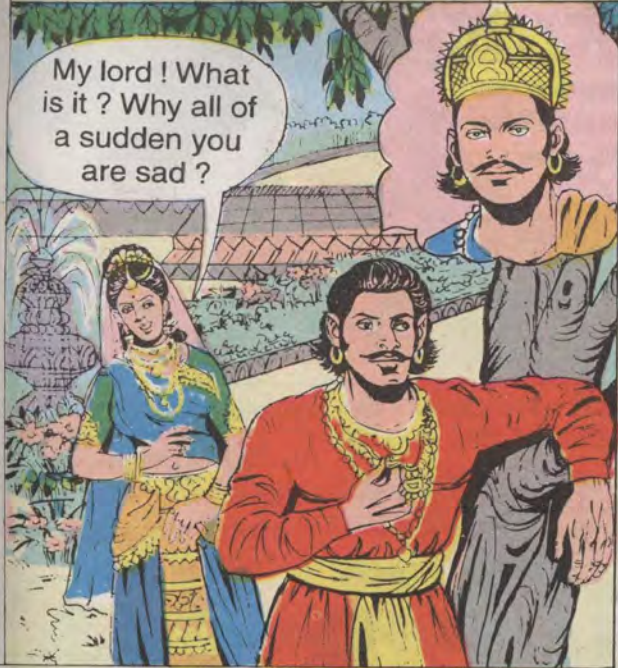


I accept your decision.

May the king be victorious.

After that many other kings made their relations intimate with King Vikramaditya by marrying their daughters to him. Kamalavati became the chief queen consort.

One day while enjoying an outing in a garden Vikramaditya thought of his elder brother king Bhartrihari. He got lost in his memories.



My lord ! What is it ? Why all of a sudden you are sad ?

Memories of my elder brother Bhartrihari haunt me. Where and how is he ? I am eager to see him.

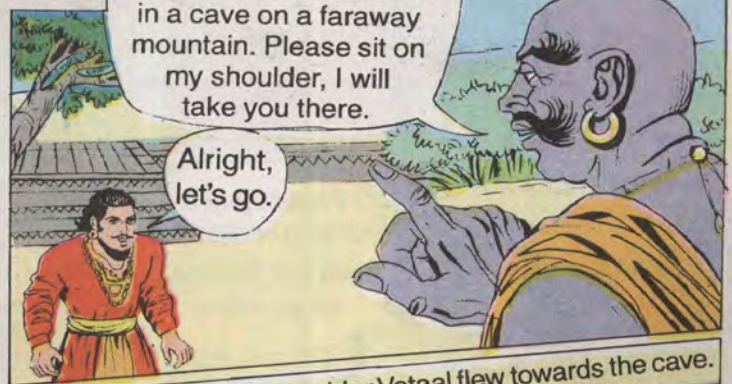
My lord ! Why not ask your friend Vetaal ? He knows everything.



Agni vetaal closed his eyes for two minutes. Then said—

He is deeply involved in his rigorous austerities in a cave on a faraway mountain. Please sit on my shoulder, I will take you there.

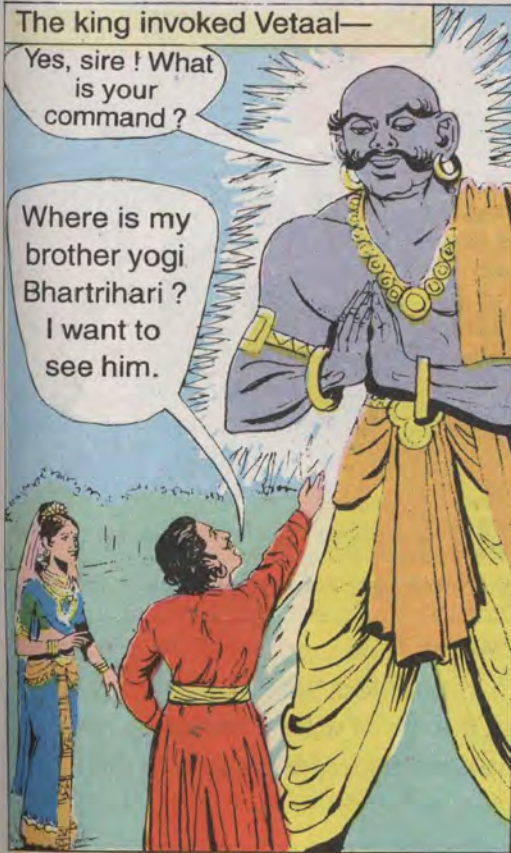
Alright, let's go.



The king invoked Vetaal—

Yes, sire ! What is your command ?

Where is my brother yogi Bhartrihari ? I want to see him.



Taking Vikram on his shoulder Vetaal flew towards the cave.



Soon Vetaal brought Vikramaditya to a dark cave and placed him before a meditating yogi. Seeing Vikram all of a sudden Bhartrihari asked—

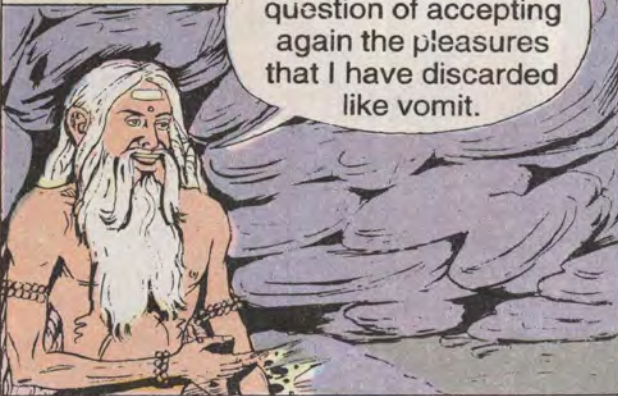


Come Vikram !
What brings
you here
suddenly ?
How are
you ?

Brother ! I have come
to fetch you. The throne
of Avanti awaits your
arrival. Please give
Avanti a ruler.

The yogi smiled—

Vikram ! There is no
question of accepting
again the pleasures
that I have discarded
like vomit.



Even after Vikram's repeated requests Bhartrihari refused firmly—

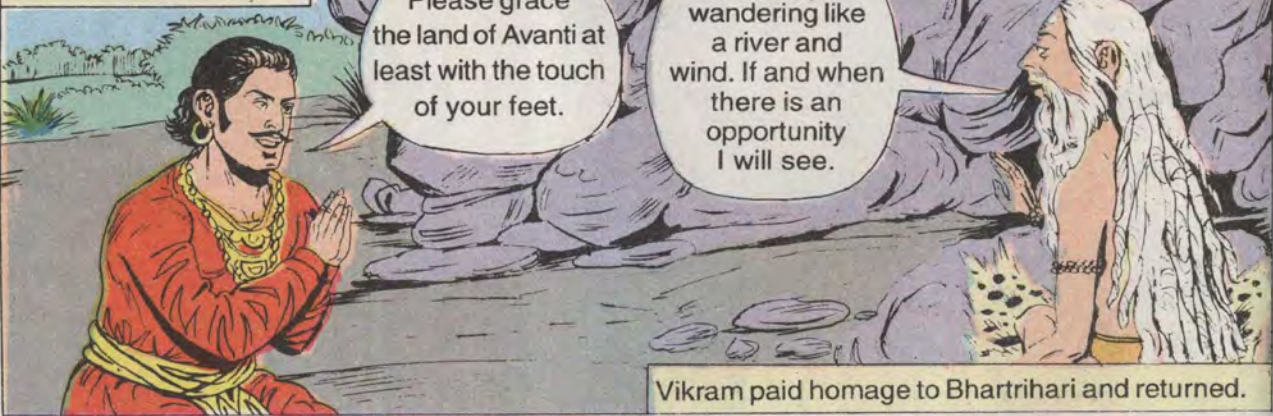
Mundane pleasures
appear worthless to
one who has gained
spiritual bliss.



Dejected Vikram said—

Please grace
the land of Avanti at
least with the touch
of your feet.

A yogi is ever
wandering like
a river and
wind. If and when
there is an
opportunity
I will see.

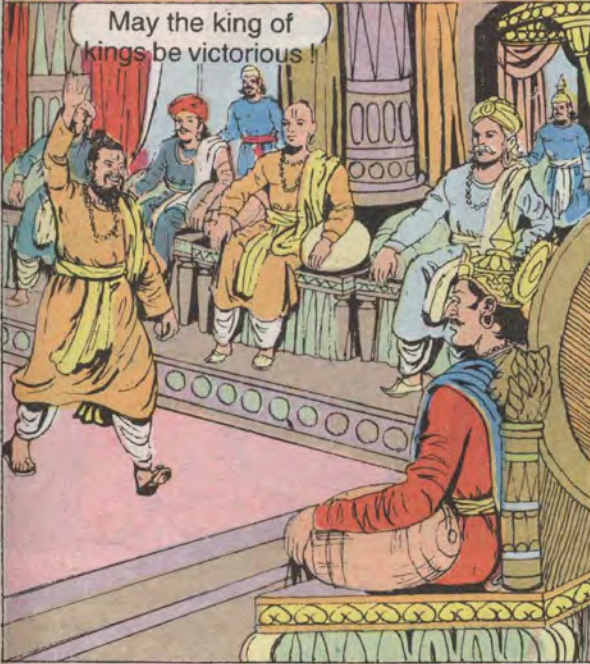


Vikram paid homage to Bhartrihari and returned.

While wandering, one day yogi Bhartrihari came to Avanti. The people of Avanti paid their homage and attended his sermon. Vikramaditya requested him to stay in Avanti permanently. Yogi Bhartrihari said—'O king ! Like a river, the life of saints and yogis is ever devoted to the welfare of people.' The great yogi preached morality and religion to the king and his people before he returned to the jungle.

When he became the king of Avanti, Vikramaditya first of all made plans for public welfare and development of art, literature and commerce. He kept no limits on expenditure to remove ignorance and poverty of the people. Soon Avanti became a prosperous state.

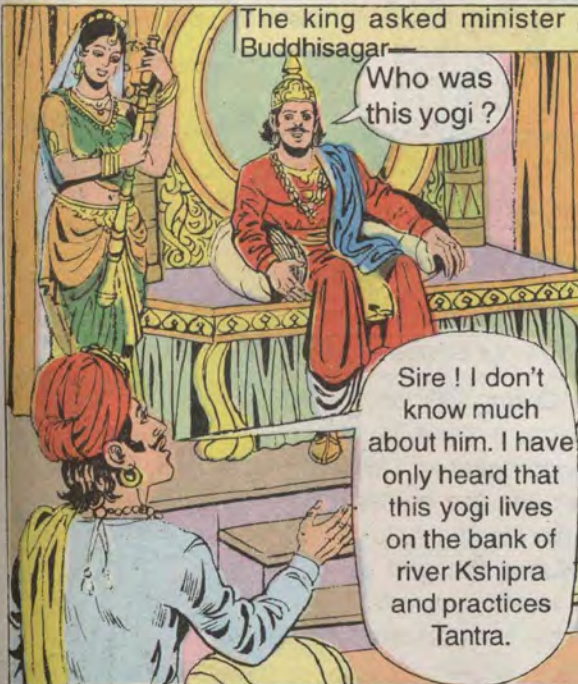
One day while King Vikramaditya was in his court, a yogi entered.



The king welcomed the yogi—



The king asked minister Buddhisagar—



The yogi came everyday at a fixed time, presented a fruit and returned. One day when the yogi was offering the fruit, a monkey snatched it and ran away.



When the monkey, perched on a wall and cut the fruit, a gem came out and fell before the king. Its glitter filled the court.



Oh ! It appears to be a gem. Is it an illusion ?

The yogi explained—

King of kings ! This is, indeed, a gem. As the fruit contains this gem it is called gem-fruit.

But Yogiraj ! Why do you give this fruit to me ?

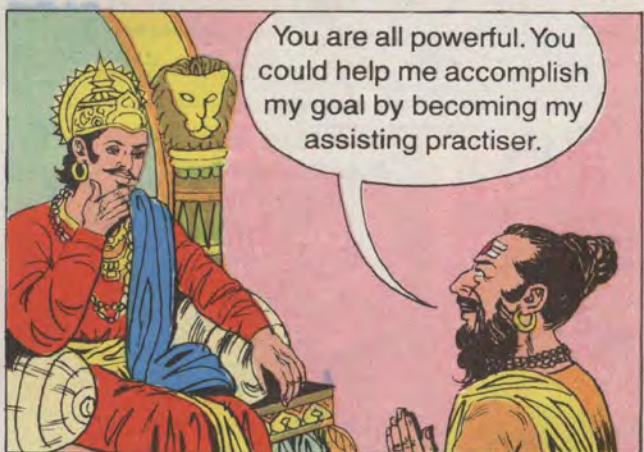


O King ! Fruit begets fruit.

So, what fruit do you expect from me ? Tell me how can I help you ?

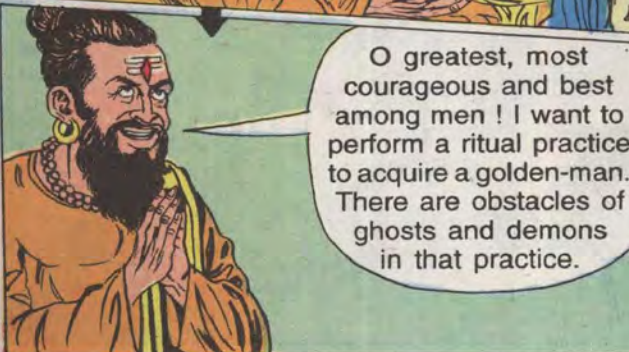


You are all powerful. You could help me accomplish my goal by becoming my assisting practiser.

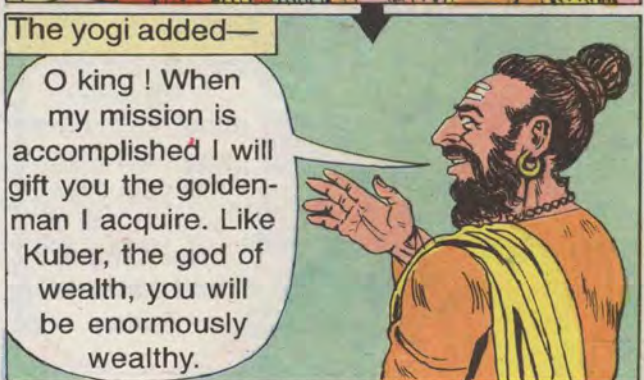


The yogi added—

O king ! When my mission is accomplished I will gift you the golden-man I acquire. Like Kuber, the god of wealth, you will be enormously wealthy.



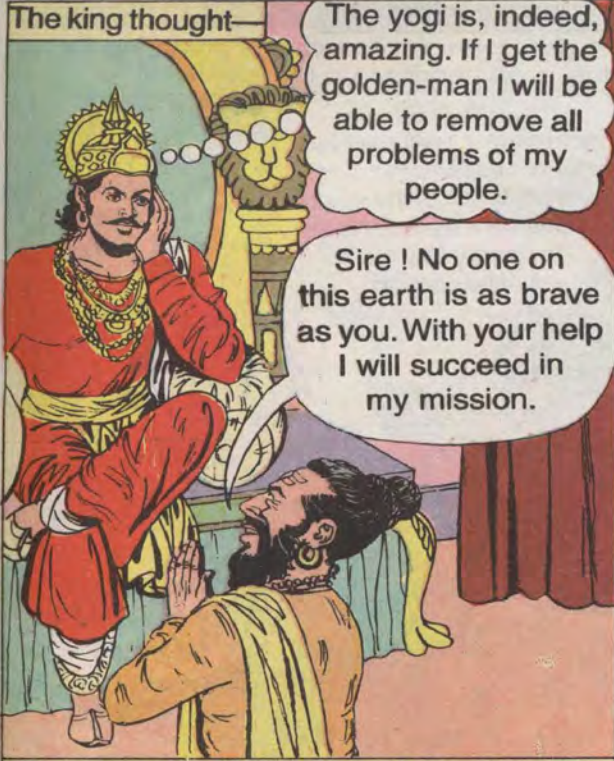
O greatest, most courageous and best among men ! I want to perform a ritual practice to acquire a golden-man. There are obstacles of ghosts and demons in that practice.



The king thought—

The yogi is, indeed, amazing. If I get the golden-man I will be able to remove all problems of my people.

Sire ! No one on this earth is as brave as you. With your help I will succeed in my mission.



The king promised to help the yogi.

The yogi said—

Sire ! On the fourteenth night of this dark half of the month, please put on a clean dress and stand outside the palace. My black horse will come on the gate and take you to the right spot. Beware, no one should accompany you otherwise the ritual could fail.

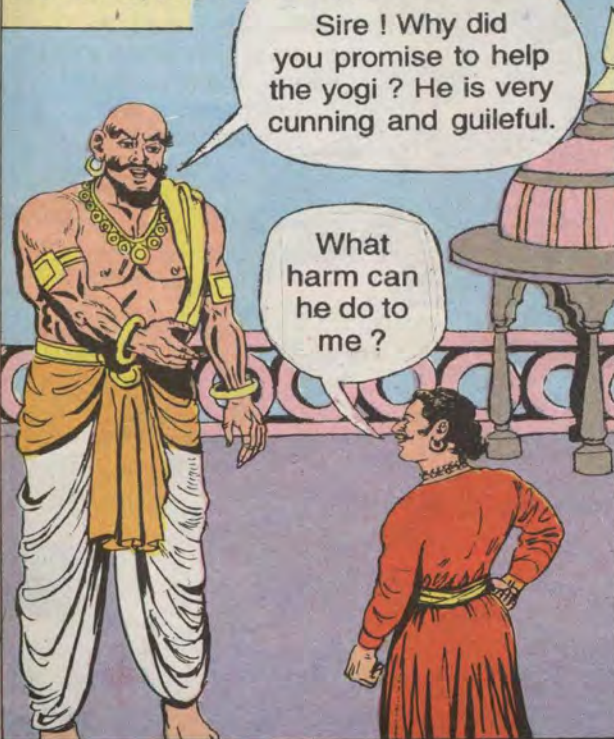


Explaining thus the yogi left.

In the evening while the king was strolling on the roof top, Agni Vetaal appeared.

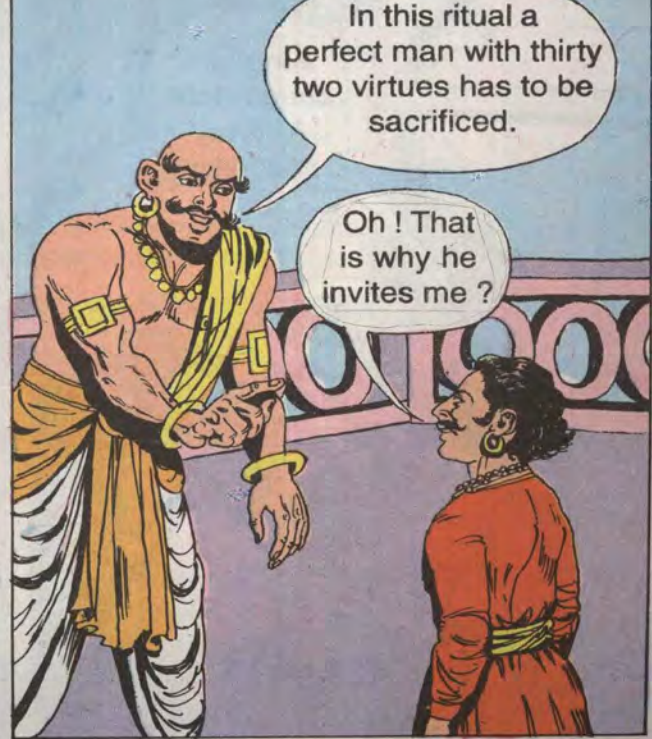
Sire ! Why did you promise to help the yogi ? He is very cunning and guileful.

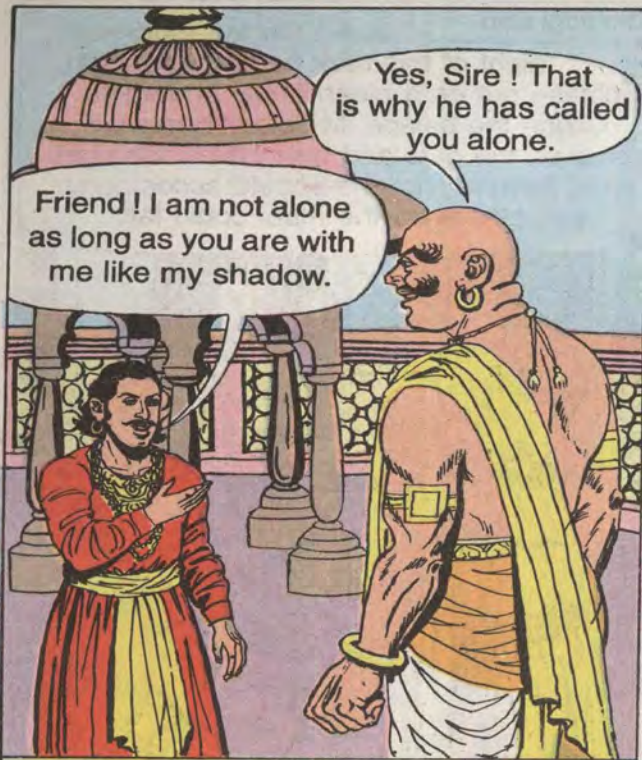
What harm can he do to me ?



In this ritual a perfect man with thirty two virtues has to be sacrificed.

Oh ! That is why he invites me ?





Yes, Sire ! That is why he has called you alone.

Friend ! I am not alone as long as you are with me like my shadow.

Vetaal explained the yogi's conspiracy to Vikram.



AFTER TWELVE DAYS It is the fourteenth of the dark fortnight. The yogi is preparing for his ritual in his hermitage in the jungle.

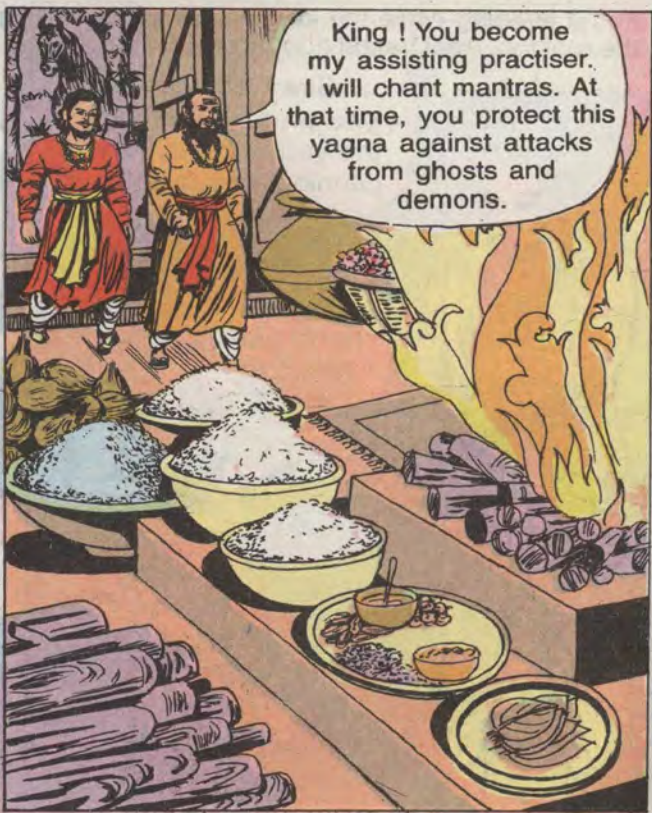
Today I will acquire gold power. I will become the richest and the most powerful man of the world. I have sent a black horse to bring Vikram. He must be coming....



Then, the horse arrived along with Vikram. The yogi said—

King ! It's already late. Anyway, you follow me.

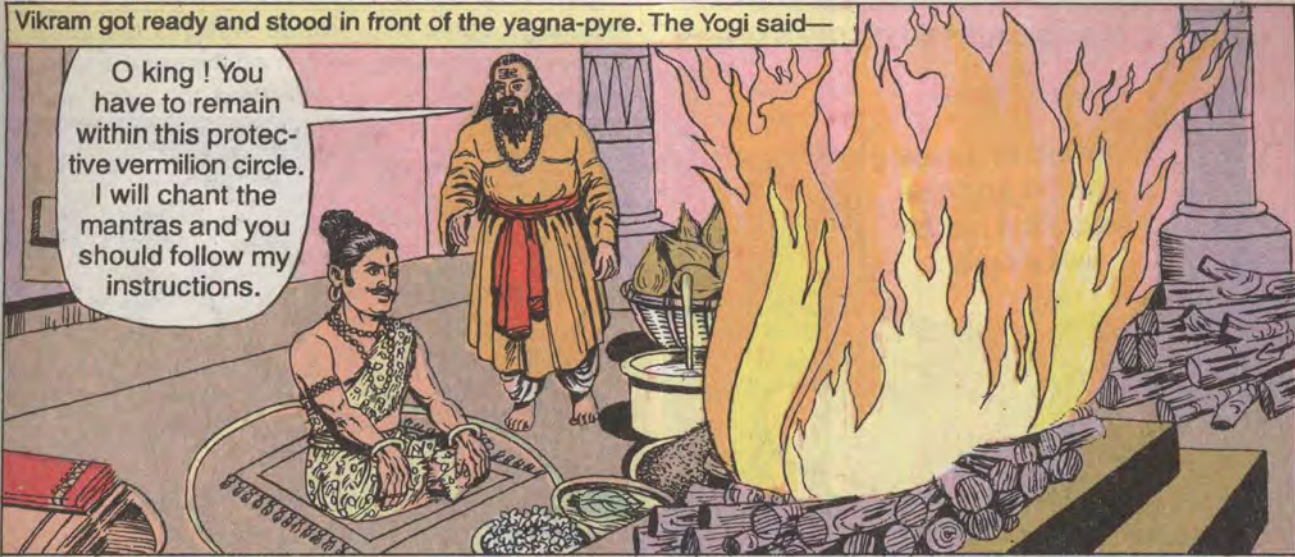
Yogiraj ! What do you want me to do ?



King ! You become my assisting practiser. I will chant mantras. At that time, you protect this yagna against attacks from ghosts and demons.

Vikram got ready and stood in front of the yagna-pyre. The Yogi said—

O king ! You have to remain within this protective vermilion circle. I will chant the mantras and you should follow my instructions.

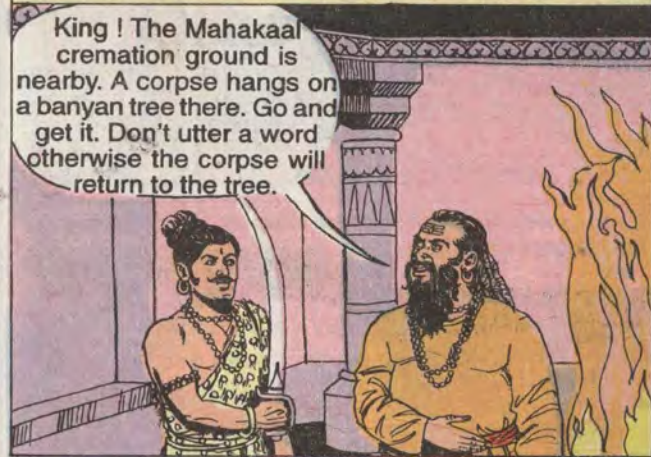


King ! Take this mantra-charged sword in your hand and stand in attention.



The yogi continued mantra chanting. Vikram stood alert with the sword in his hand. The yogi said—

King ! The Mahakaal cremation ground is nearby. A corpse hangs on a banyan tree there. Go and get it. Don't utter a word otherwise the corpse will return to the tree.

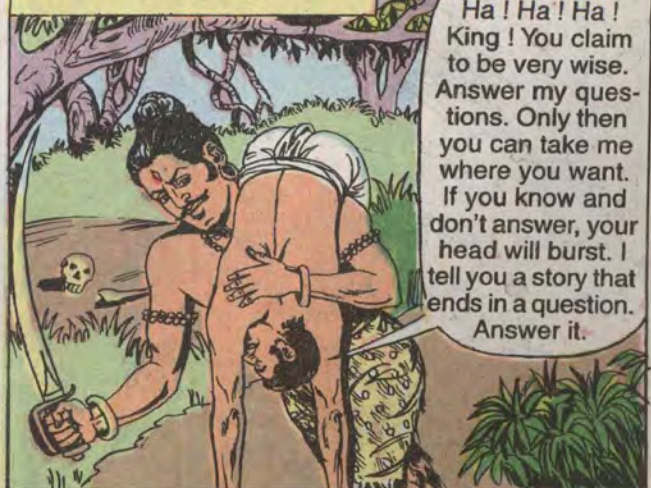


With the sword in his hand Vikram went to the cremation ground. He saw the corpse hanging on a banyan tree—



This appears to be the corpse.

He took the corpse on his shoulder and started back. Suddenly the corpse laughed—



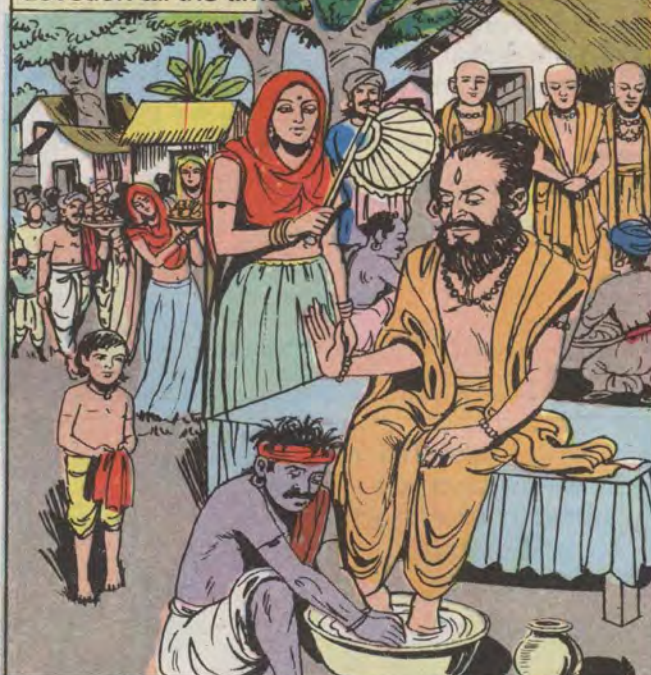
Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! King ! You claim to be very wise. Answer my questions. Only then you can take me where you want. If you know and don't answer, your head will burst. I tell you a story that ends in a question. Answer it.

A wise sage told his disciples—

I want to travel around and see what kind people live where ?

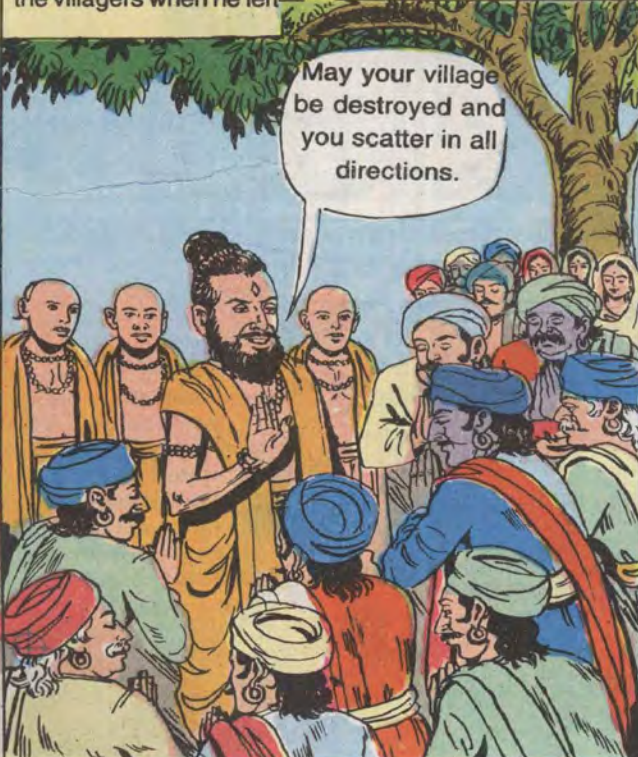


The sage came to a village with his disciples. The villagers heartily welcomed the sage. Elders, youth and children all attended the sage with devotion all the time.



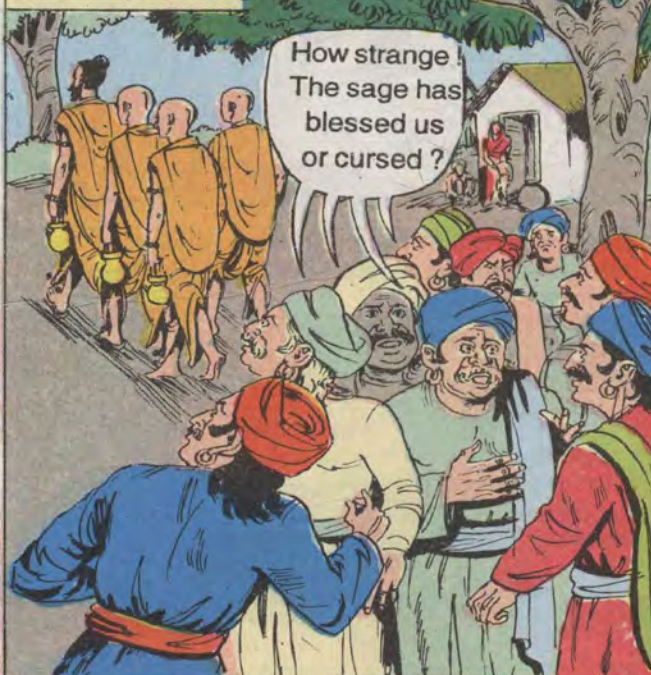
Pleased with the devotion of the villagers, the sage blessed the villagers when he left.

May your village be destroyed and you scatter in all directions.



The villagers thought—

How strange! The sage has blessed us or cursed ?



With passage of time the village was destroyed and the villagers migrated to different villages to earn their living.