



SAMARTH RAMDAS

SHIVAJI'S SPIRITUAL GUIDE

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SAMARTH RAMDAS



IN THE SMALL TOWN OF JAMB IN MAHARASHTRA, THE RAMA NAVAMI FESTIVAL WAS BEING CELEBRATED.



THIS IS THE AUSPICIOUS MOMENT OF LORD RAMA'S BIRTH. LET THE MUSIC RISE TO A CRESCENDO!



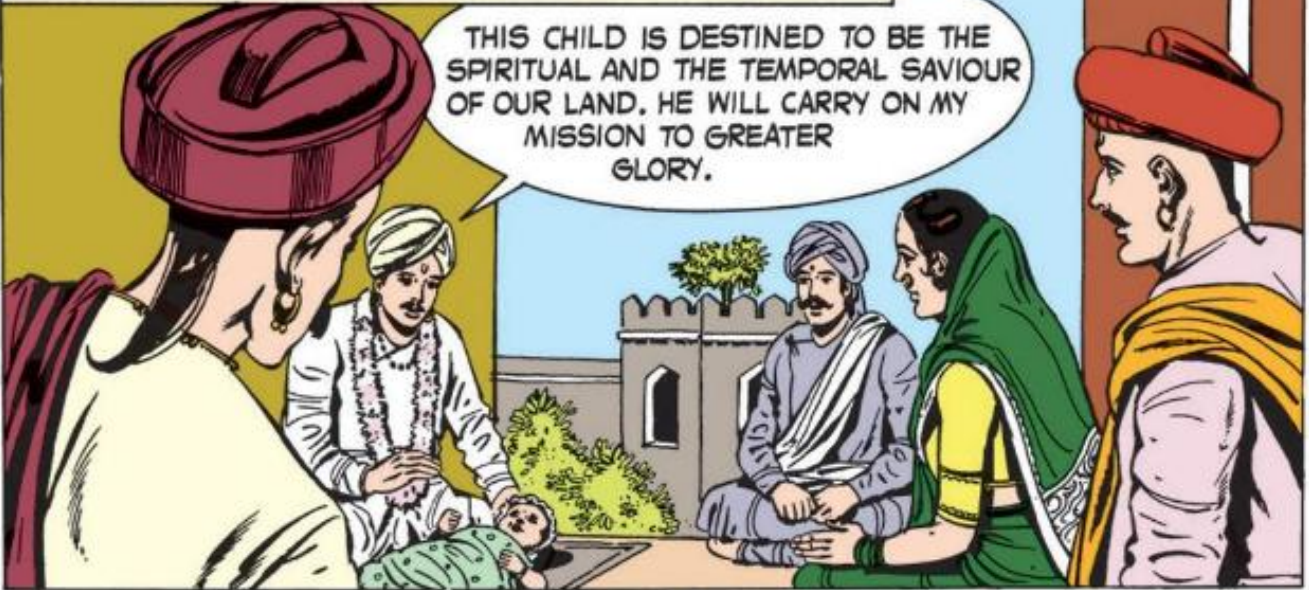
SURYAJI, SURYAJI! YOUR WIFE HAS JUST GIVEN BIRTH TO A BABY BOY.

MY CHILD, BORN AT THE SAME HOUR AS LORD RAMA! THIS IS A DIVINE FAVOUR.

AND SURYAJIPANT THOSAR HURRIED HOME TO SEE HIS SON.

WHEN SURYAJIPANT AND RANUBAI TOOK THEIR CHILD TO PAITHAN AND PLACED HIM AT THE FEET OF EKANATH, THE GREAT SAINT—

THIS CHILD IS DESTINED TO BE THE SPIRITUAL AND THE TEMPORAL SAVIOUR OF OUR LAND. HE WILL CARRY ON MY MISSION TO GREATER GLORY.



THE CHILD, WHO WAS NAMED NARAYAN, GREW UP TO BE A BRIGHT BOY.

MOTHER, I SHARE MY BIRTHDAY WITH LORD RAMA, DON'T I?

YOU DO, MY CHILD. YOU MUST ALSO STRIVE TO BE LIKE HIM—NOBLE AND GOOD.



BUT IT WAS THE EXPLOITS OF HANUMAN THAT INITIALLY CAUGHT THE ENERGETIC CHILD'S FANCY.

WHAT A GREAT DEVOTEE OF RAMA, MARUTI* WAS! JUST IMAGINE! HE CROSSED THE OCEAN TO LANKA IN ONE LEAP...



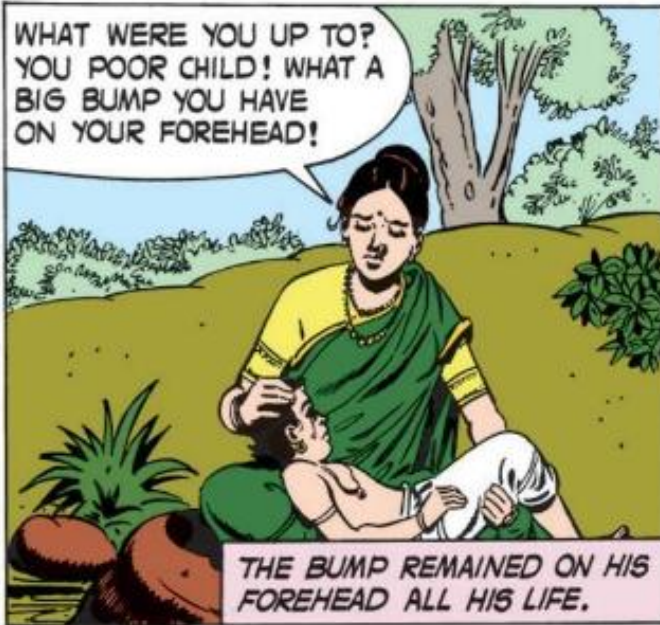
...LIKE THIS!



NARAYAN...



* ANOTHER NAME FOR HANUMAN



WHAT WERE YOU UP TO?
YOU POOR CHILD! WHAT A
BIG BUMP YOU HAVE
ON YOUR FOREHEAD!

THE BUMP REMAINED ON HIS
FOREHEAD ALL HIS LIFE.



BUT SUCH ACCIDENTS HARDLY DAMPENED
HIS SPIRITS.

MOTHER, MOTHER...
LIKE MARUTI, I TOO
CAN CLIMB TREES
THAT NEARLY TOUCH
THE SKY! I HAD
GONE INTO THE
JUNGLE TODAY.
I...

THE JUNGLE...
OF ALL PLACES!
AREN'T YOU
AFRAID OF WILD
ANIMALS? OR
EVIL SPIRITS?



EVIL SPIRITS! HUH! ONE
BLOW FROM ME AND THEY'LL
QUIT THE FOREST
FOREVER!



RANUBAI, FEAR WILL
NEVER STOP NARAYAN
FROM DOING WHAT HE
WISHES TO. HE DOESN'T
KNOW WHAT FEAR IS!

WHEN NARAYAN WAS FIVE YEARS OLD, SURYAJIPANT DIED. THEREAFTER NARAYAN'S ELDER BROTHER, GANGADHAR, TOOK CARE OF THE FAMILY. GANGADHAR WAS THE HEAD OF A RELIGIOUS SCHOOL.

MOTHER, WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE COME TO GANGOBA DADA ?

HE IS A TEACHER AND NOVICES COME TO HIM TO LEARN ABOUT GOD.



HE TAKES THEM INTO THAT ROOM AND CLOSES THE DOOR. WHAT DOES HE DO THERE ?

HE TEACHES THEM THE SACRED LORE AND MAKES THEM DEVOTEES OF GOD. IT'S CALLED INITIATION.

MOTHER, I WANT TO BE INITIATED.

INITIATED ? YOU ? WHY YOU ARE JUST A BABY !

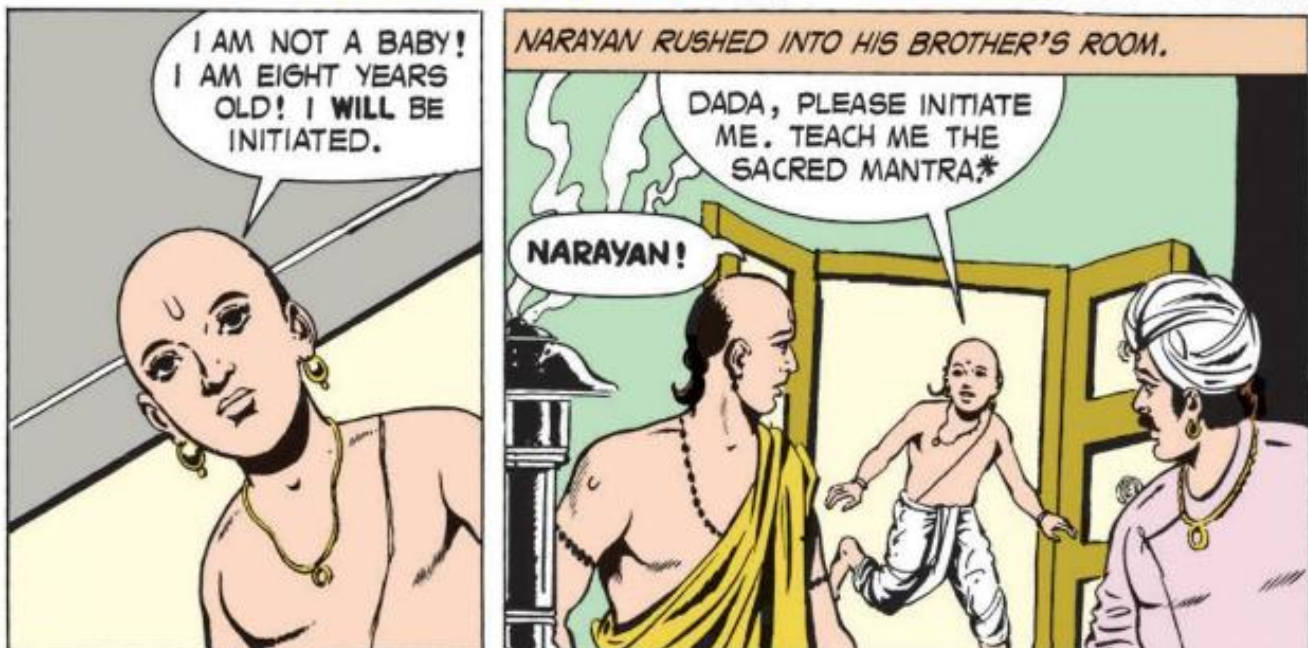


I AM NOT A BABY ! I AM EIGHT YEARS OLD ! I WILL BE INITIATED.

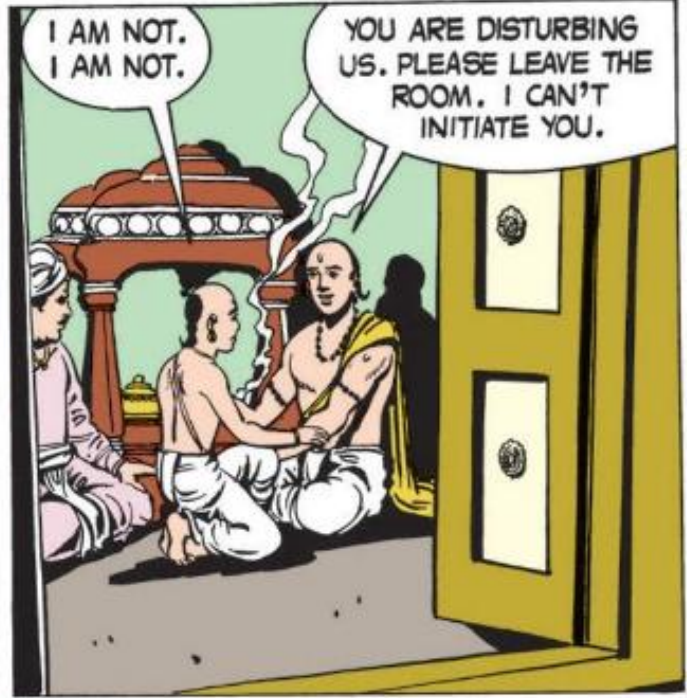
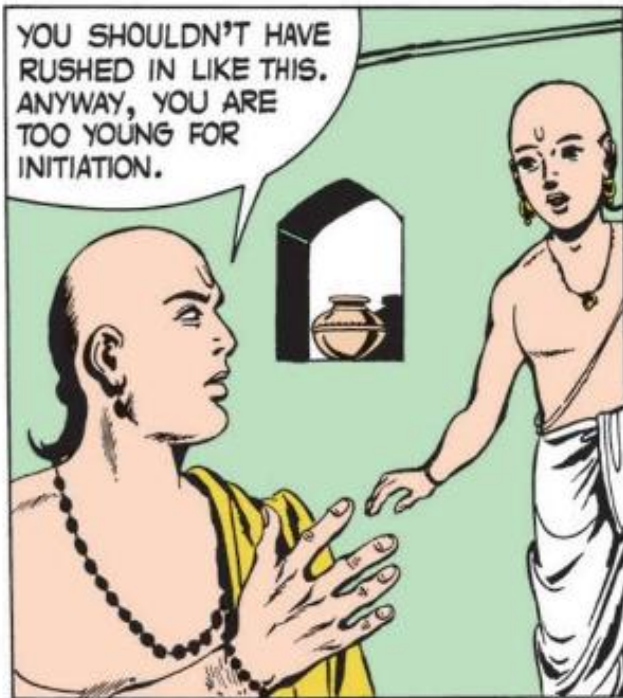
NARAYAN RUSHED INTO HIS BROTHER'S ROOM.

DADA, PLEASE INITIATE ME. TEACH ME THE SACRED MANTRA.*

NARAYAN !

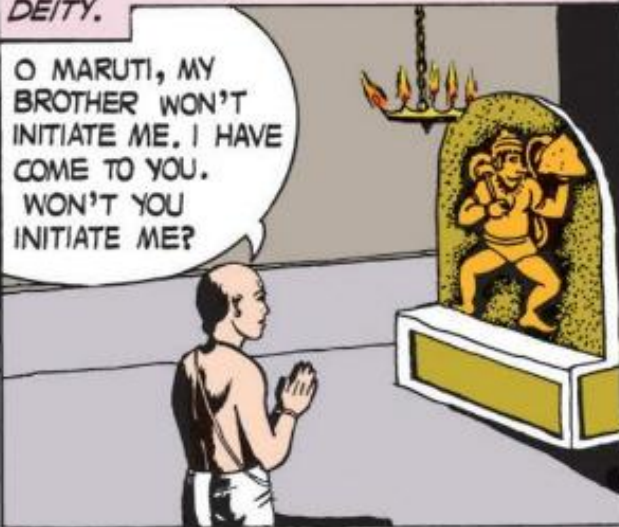


* CHANT

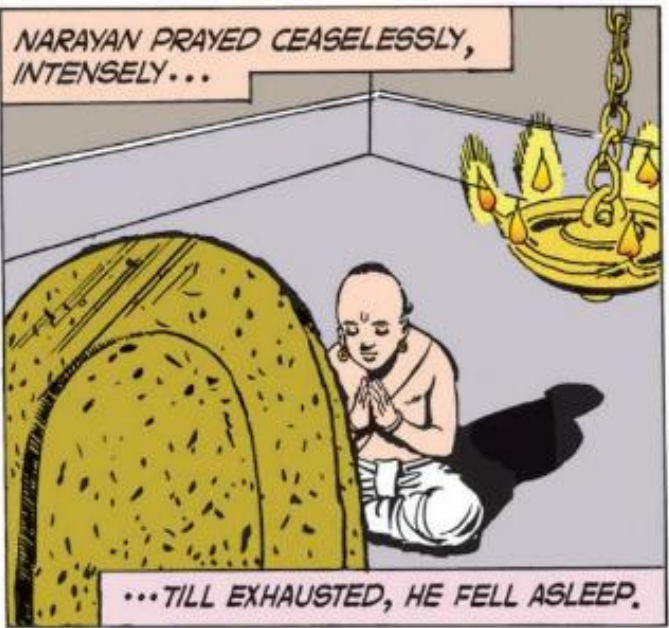


NARAYAN RAN TO THE HANUMAN TEMPLE NEAR BY AND PRAYED TO HIS FAVOURITE DEITY.

O MARUTI, MY BROTHER WON'T INITIATE ME. I HAVE COME TO YOU. WON'T YOU INITIATE ME?

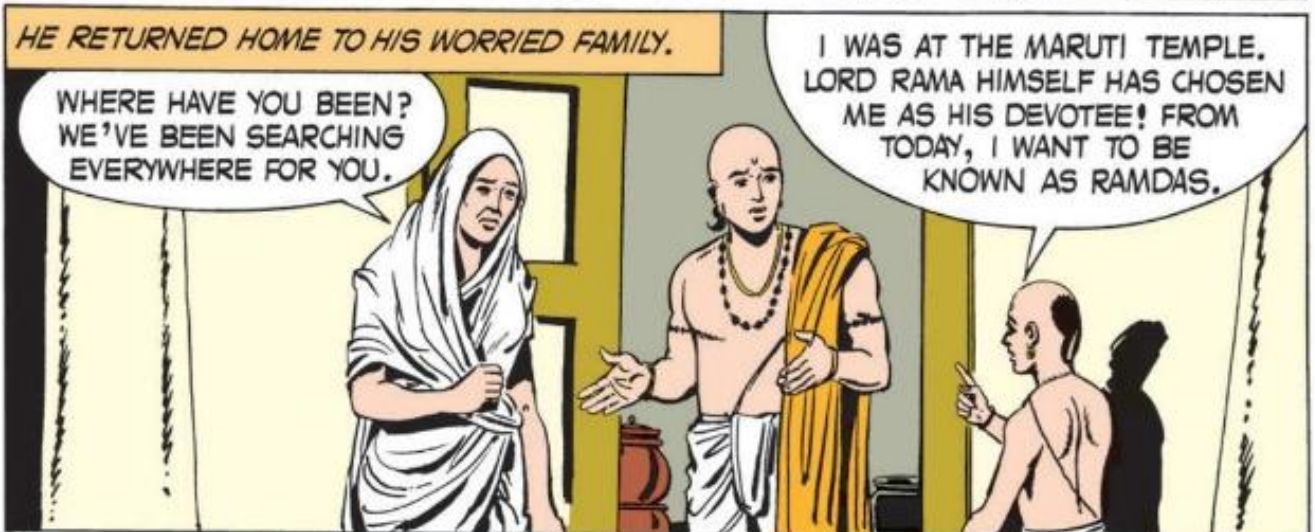
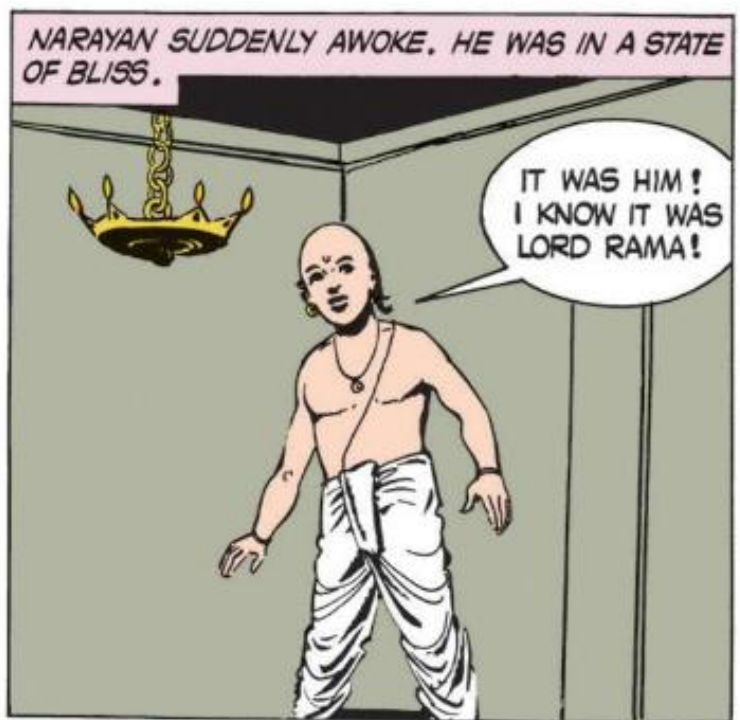
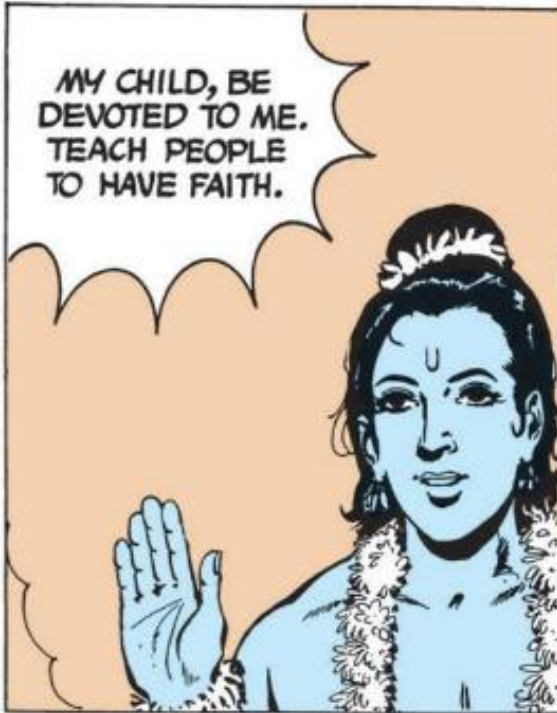


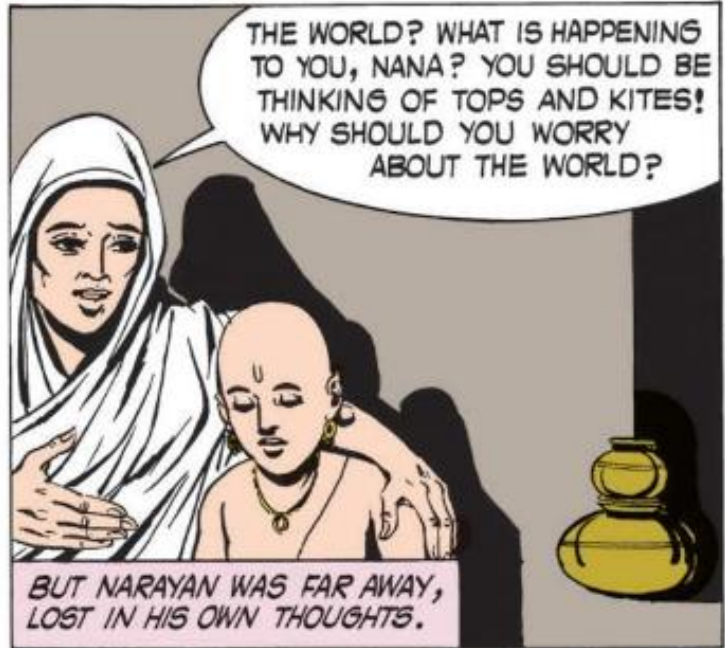
NARAYAN PRAYED CEASELESSLY, INTENSELY...



AND THEN HE HAD A WONDERFUL DREAM.







OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS, RANUBAI HELPLESSLY WATCHED HER SON GROW FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM HER. AT LAST WHEN NARAYAN WAS TWELVE, SHE DECIDED THAT MARRIAGE WOULD BE THE BEST THING FOR HIM.



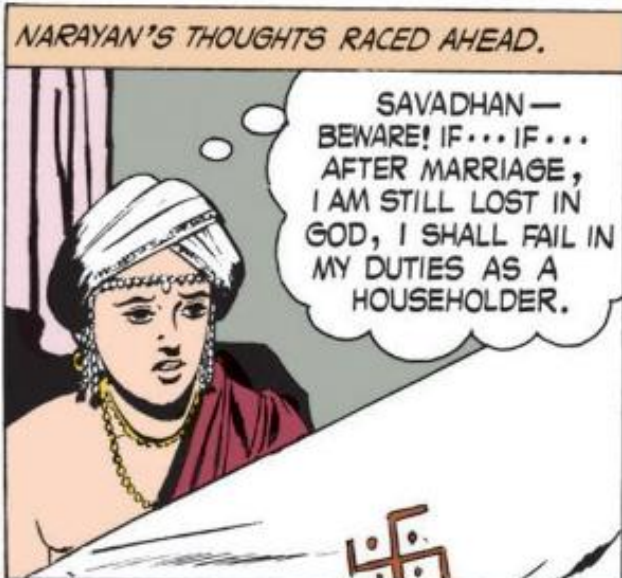
RANUBAI TOOK HIS SILENCE FOR CONSENT AND SOON THE FATEFUL DAY DAWNED.

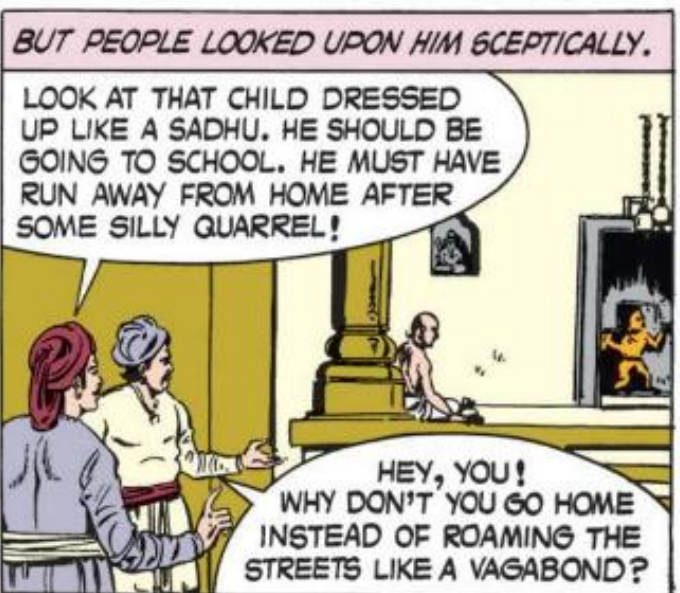
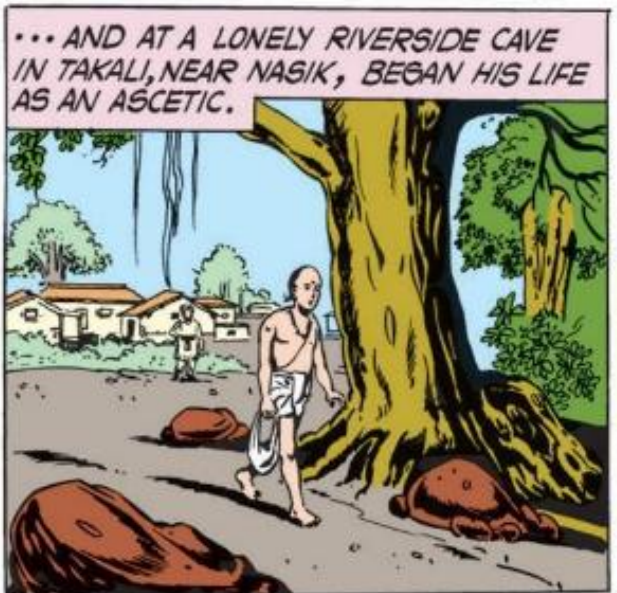
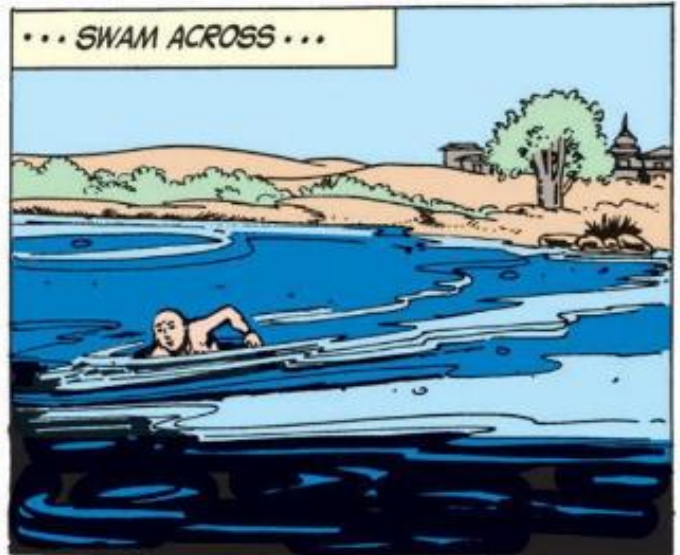
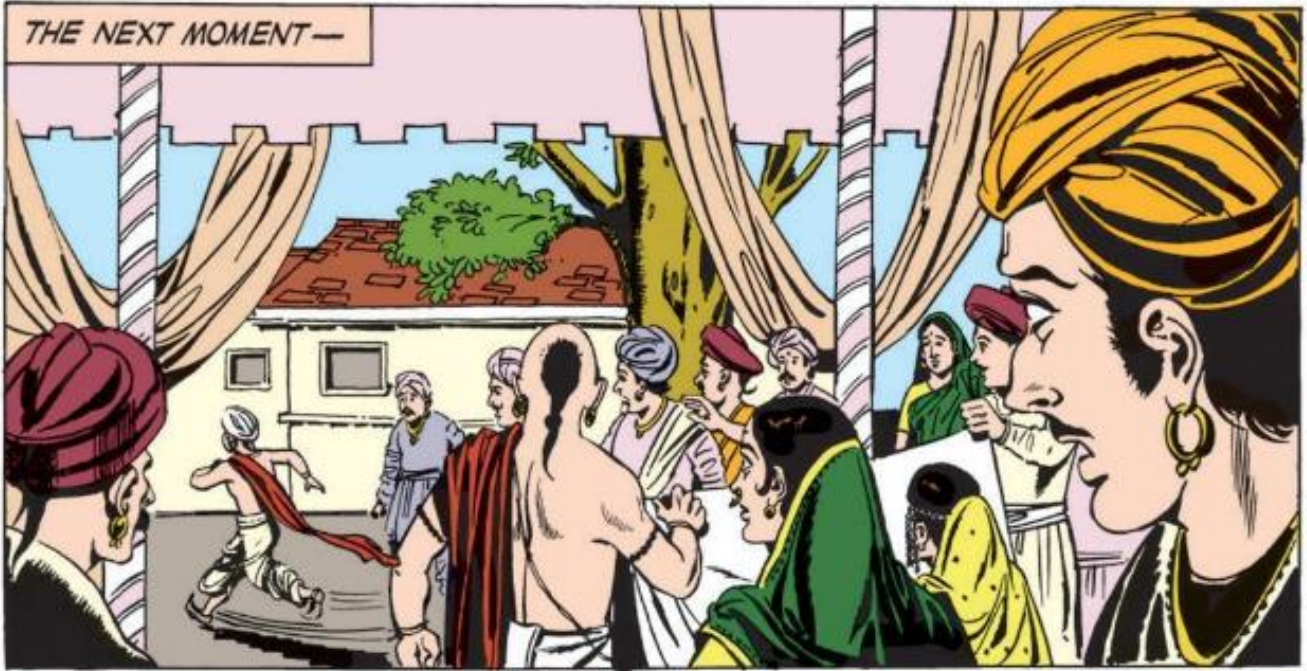


NARAYAN REMAINED SILENT. ONCE THE INITIAL RITES WERE COMPLETED, THE PRIESTS BEGAN UTTERING THE FINAL CHANT.

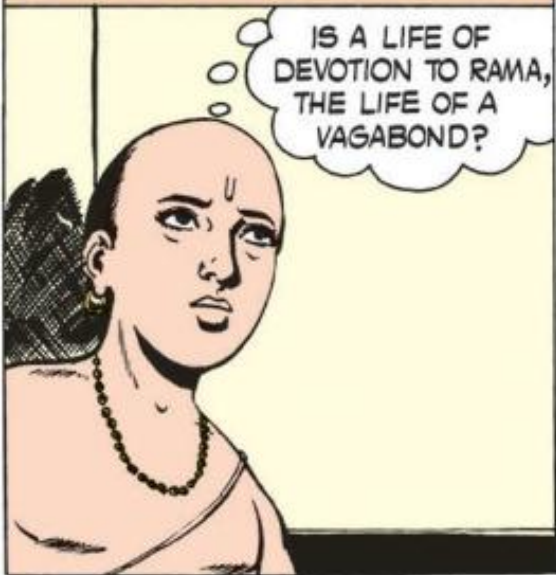


* BE AWARE






THESE ACCUSATIONS HURT RAMDAS.



IS A LIFE OF DEVOTION TO RAMA, THE LIFE OF A VAGABOND?

THOUGHTS OF HOME TROUBLED THE YOUNG BOY.

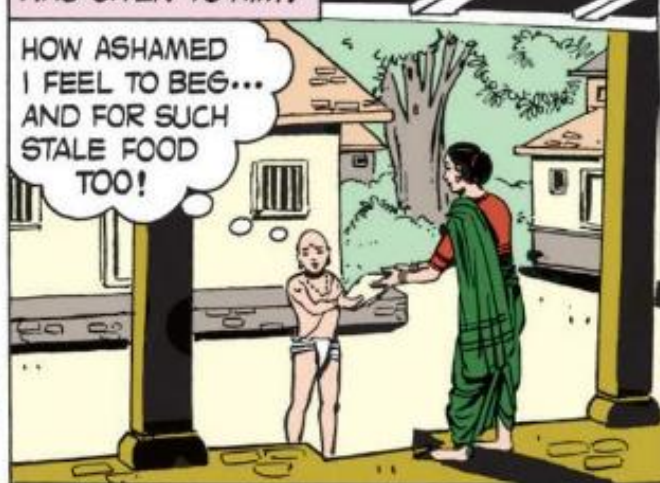


MOTHER, I CAN IMAGINE VERY WELL WHAT YOU MUST BE DOING AT THIS HOUR.



HE HAD TO GET USED TO THE IDEA OF BEGGING FOR HIS FOOD, AND EATING WHAT WAS GIVEN TO HIM.

HOW ASHAMED I FEEL TO BEG... AND FOR SUCH STALE FOOD TOO!



BUT NEVER DID HE WAVER FROM HIS CHOSEN PATH.



IF THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE YOUR DEVOTEE, O RAMA, I WILL TAKE IT IN MY STRIDE.

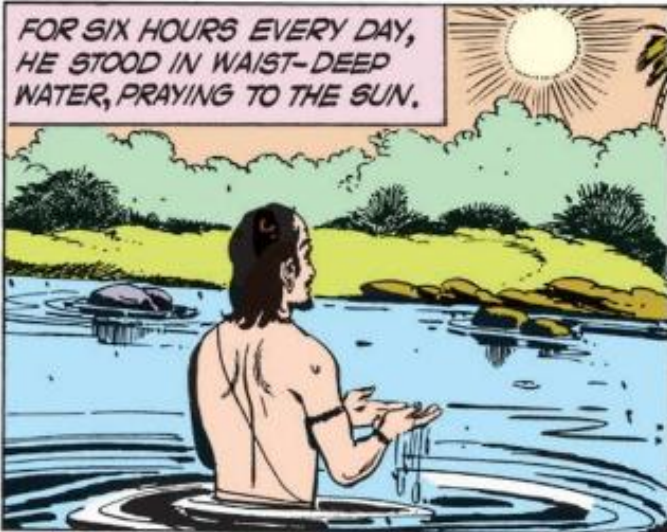
WITH SINGLE-MINDED DEVOTION, HE USED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE HIMSELF. HE LISTENED TO THE DISCOURSES OF THE PANDITS.



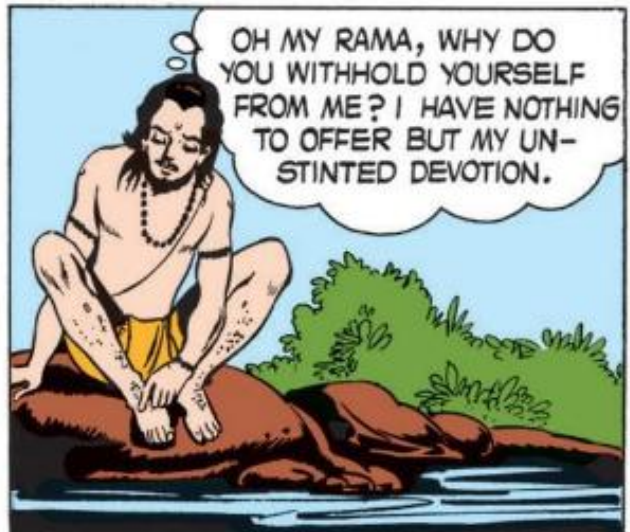
HE PORED OVER THE ANCIENT TEXTS.



FOR SIX HOURS EVERY DAY, HE STOOD IN WAIST-DEEP WATER, PRAYING TO THE SUN.

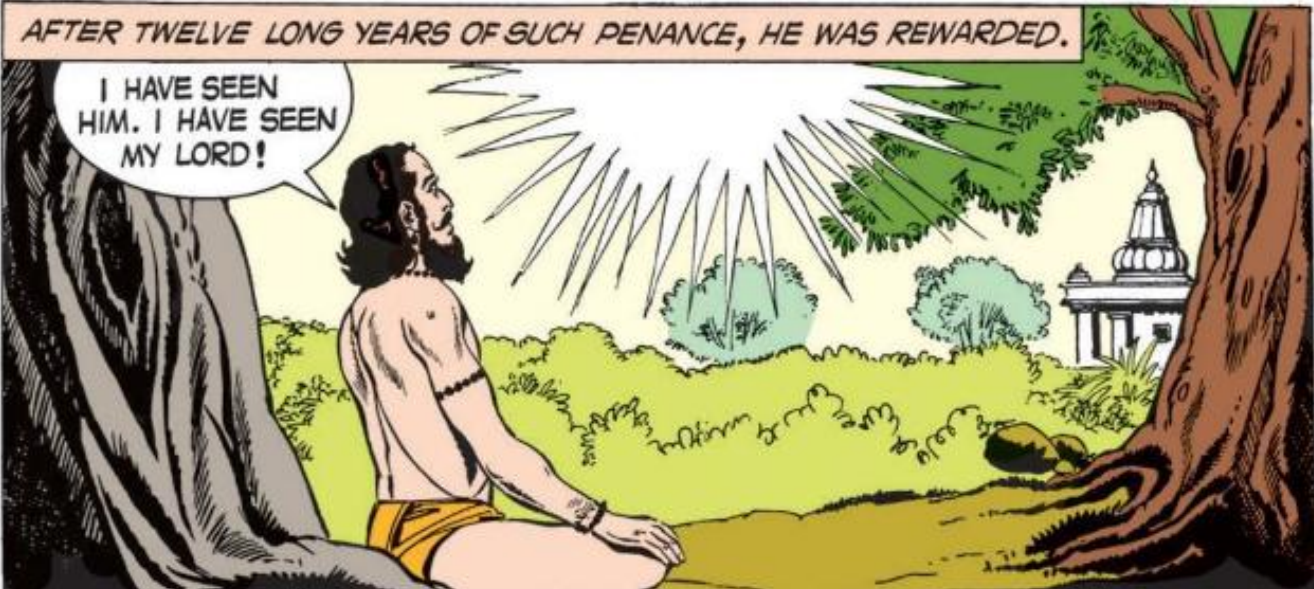


OH MY RAMA, WHY DO YOU WITHHOLD YOURSELF FROM ME? I HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER BUT MY UN-STINTED DEVOTION.

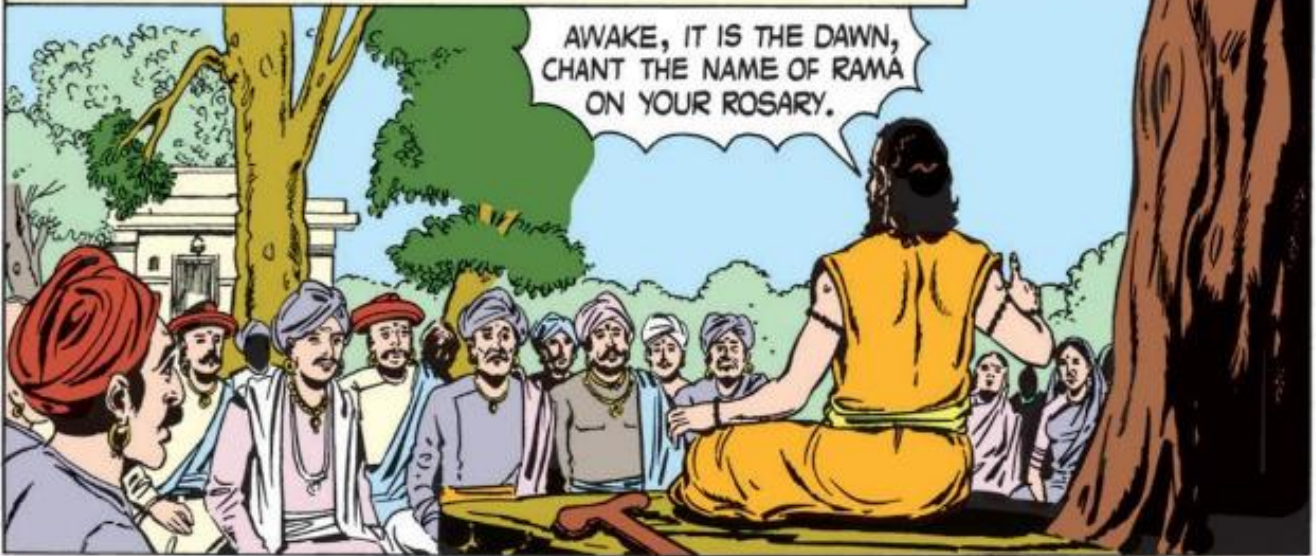


AFTER TWELVE LONG YEARS OF SUCH PENANCE, HE WAS REWARDED.

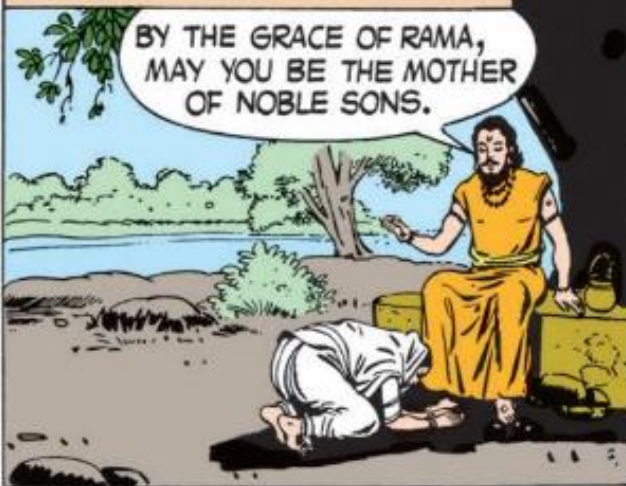
I HAVE SEEN HIM. I HAVE SEEN MY LORD!



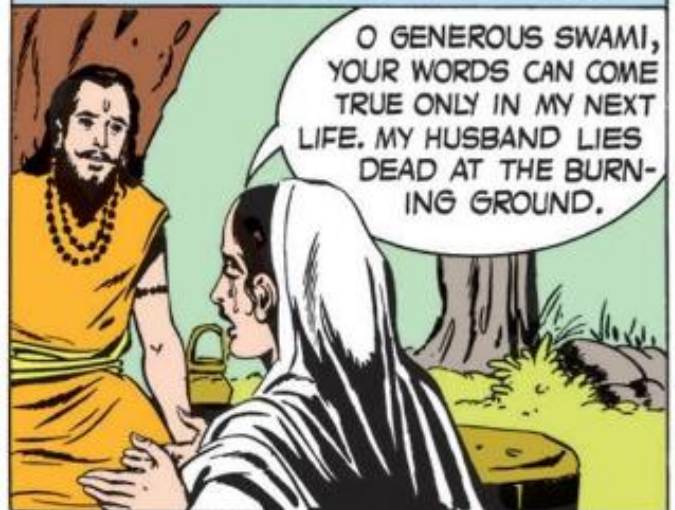
NO LONGER WAS RAMDAS THE UNSURE, AWKWARD BOY. A NEW CONFIDENCE MADE HIM A SEER AND A POET. PEOPLE NOW FLOCKED TO SEE AND HEAR HIM.



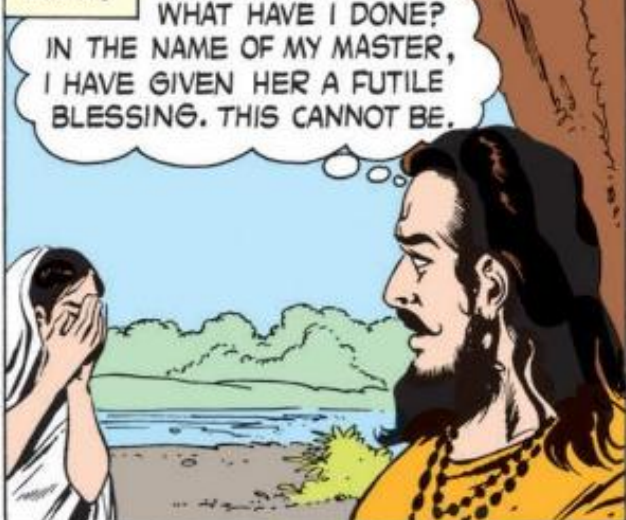
ONE DAY, A YOUNG WOMAN APPROACHED HIM AND RAMDAS BLESSED HER.



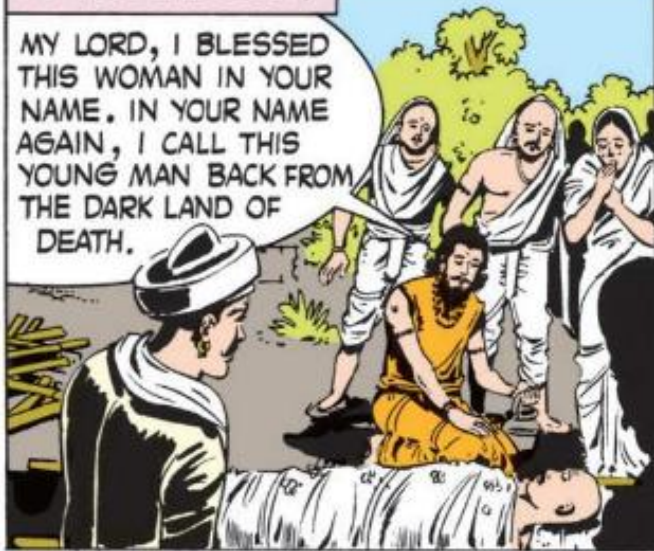
AT THIS, THE WOMAN BURST INTO TEARS.



FOR A MOMENT, RAMDAS WAS TAKEN ABACK.

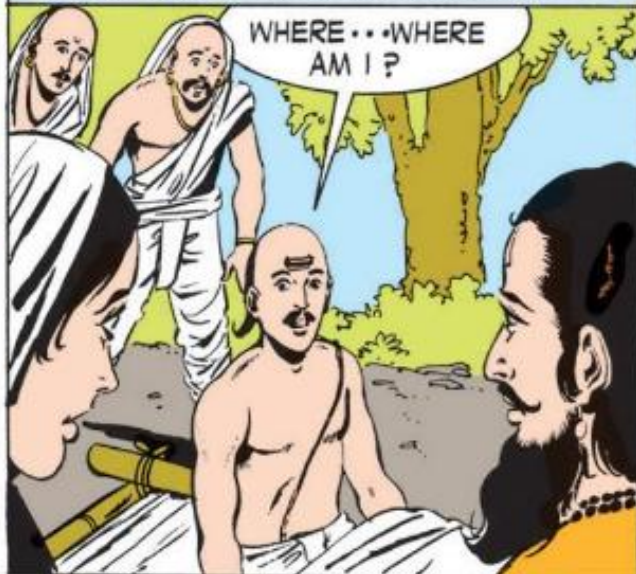


AT THE BURNING GHAT, TAKING THE NAME OF RAMA, RAMDAS SPRINKLED HOLY WATER ON THE DEAD BODY.



MY LORD, I BLESSED THIS WOMAN IN YOUR NAME. IN YOUR NAME AGAIN, I CALL THIS YOUNG MAN BACK FROM THE DARK LAND OF DEATH.

TO THE ASTONISHMENT OF ALL AROUND, GIRIDHARPANT, THE DEAD MAN, SAT UP.



WHERE...WHERE AM I?

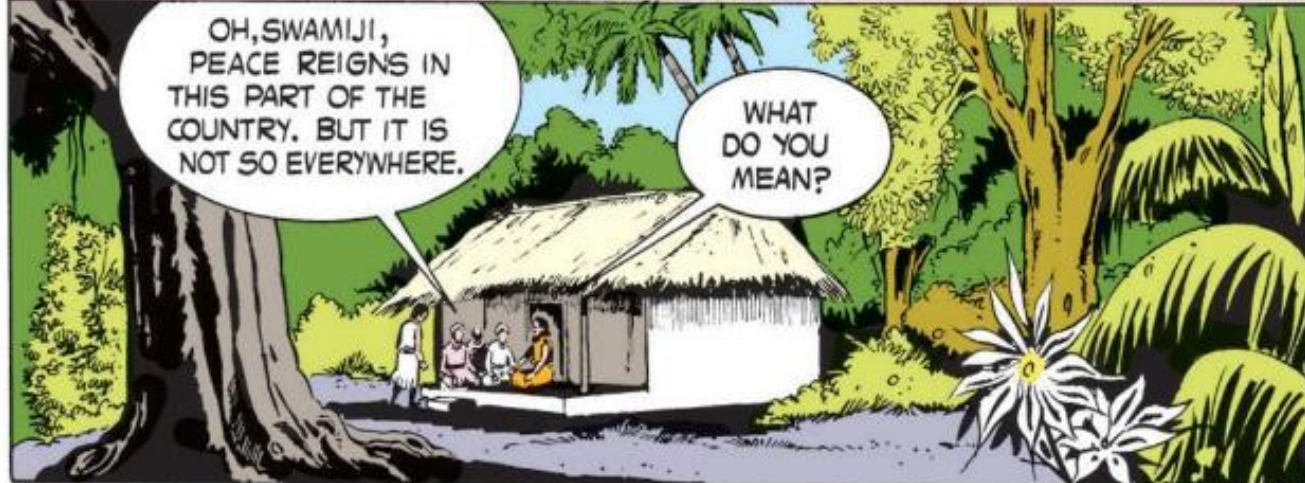
OVERJOYED, THE COUPLE BOWED TO RAMDAS!

...SWAMIJI, OUR FIRST SON SHALL BE LAID AT YOUR FEET AS YOUR DISCIPLE.



GLORY TO RAMA, RAGHUVIR SAMARTH.*

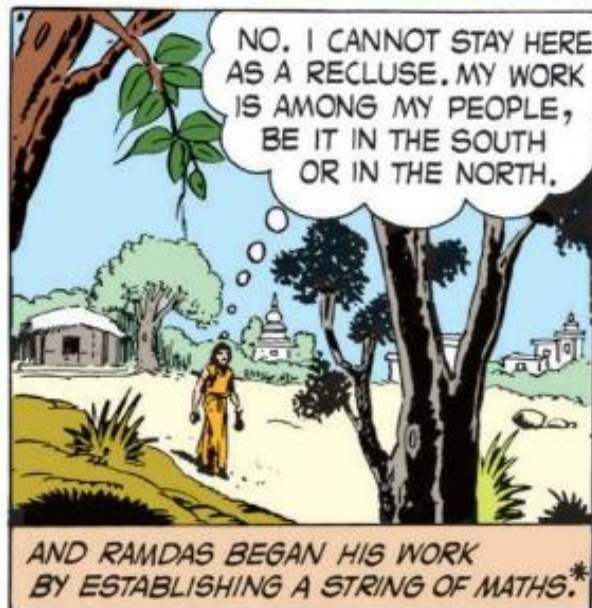
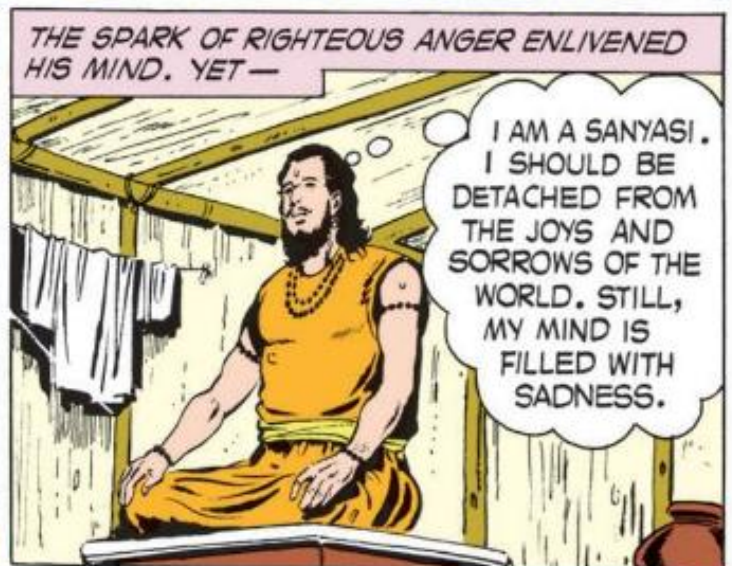
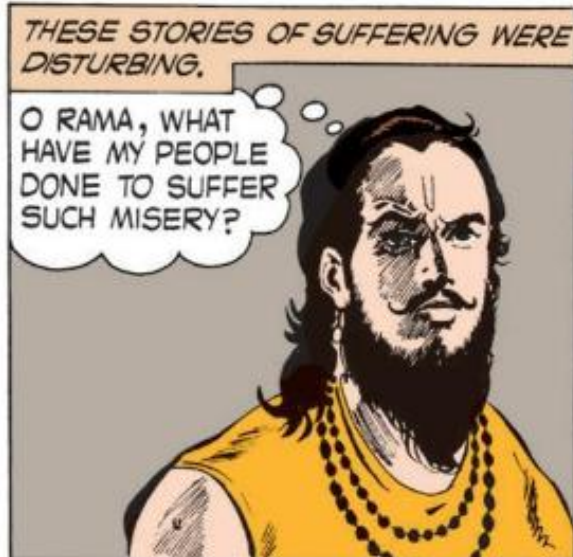
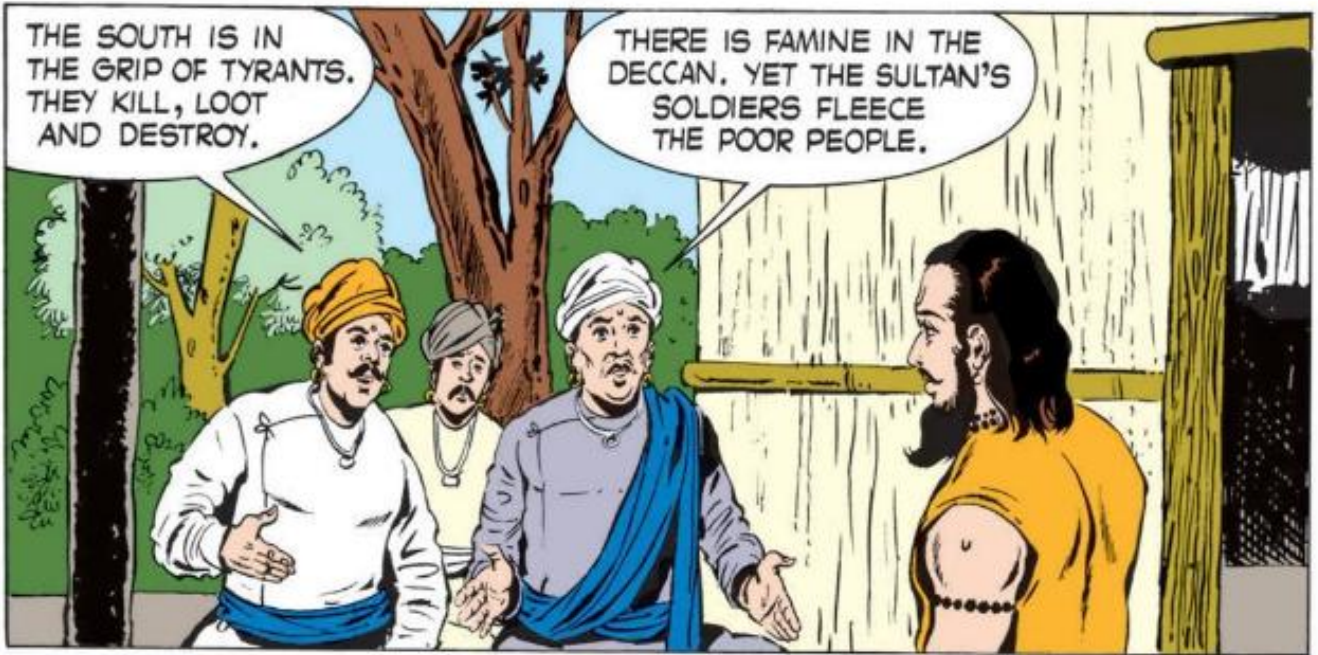
RAMDAS' FAME SPREAD. PEOPLE CAME TO SEE HIM AND RECEIVE HIS BLESSINGS. THEY ALSO BROUGHT HIM NEWS OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN OTHER REGIONS.



OH, SWAMIJI, PEACE REIGNS IN THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY. BUT IT IS NOT SO EVERYWHERE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

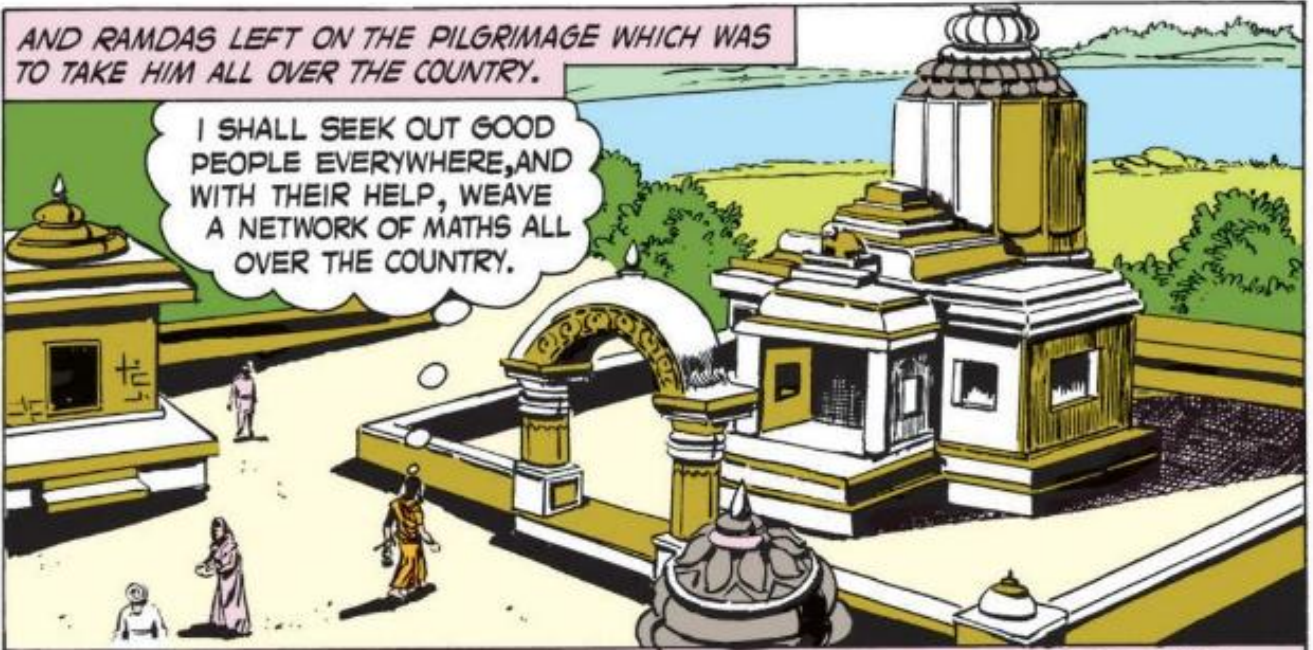
* THE OMNIPOTENT



* RELIGIOUS MONASTERIES

AND RAMDAS LEFT ON THE PILGRIMAGE WHICH WAS TO TAKE HIM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

I SHALL SEEK OUT GOOD PEOPLE EVERYWHERE, AND WITH THEIR HELP, WEAVE A NETWORK OF MATHS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.



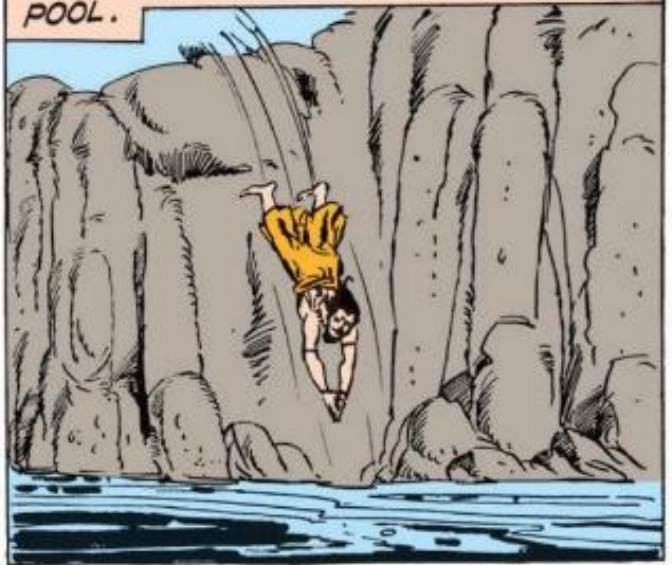
HE VISITED KASHI, AYODHYA, MATHURA AND DWARAKA WHERE HE ESTABLISHED HANUMAN TEMPLES AND MATHS HEADED BY HIS CHOSEN DISCIPLES.

HE THEN SET OUT FOR HOLY BADRI-KEDAR IN THE HIMALAYAS. ON HIS WAY THERE, HE WAS OVERCOME BY A SUDDEN REVULSION FOR HIS MORTAL BODY.

WHEN I HAVE ALREADY REALISED GOD, WHY SHOULD I BEAR THE BURDEN OF THIS MORTAL FRAME?

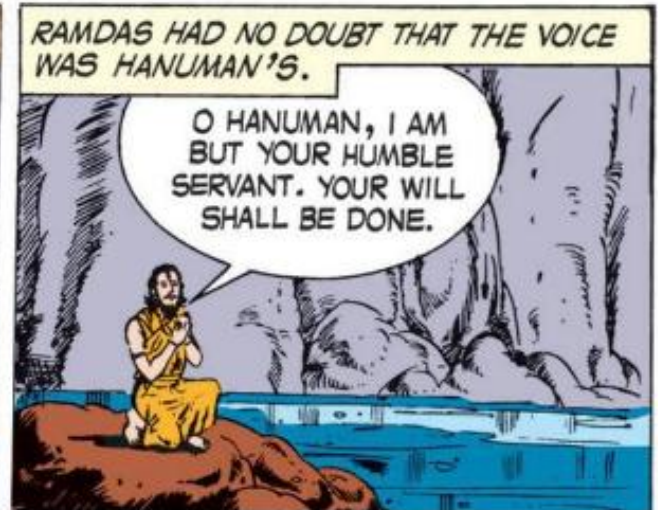
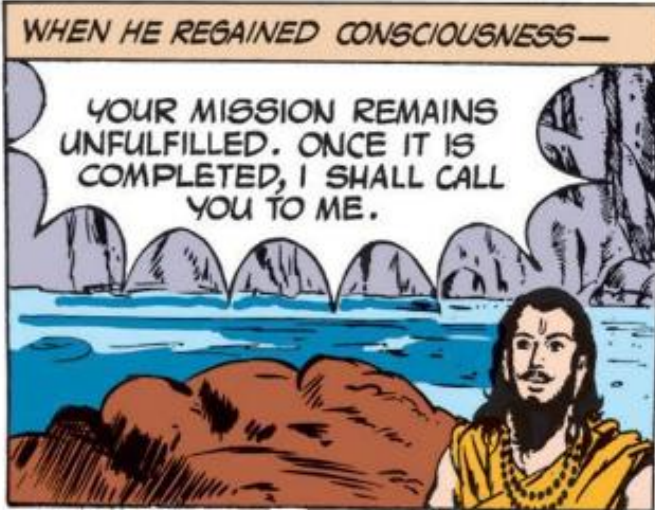


AND RAMDAS THREW HIMSELF INTO AN ICY POOL.



BUT SAVED BY THE HAND OF GOD, HE LAY UNCONSCIOUS ON THE EDGE OF THE POOL.





FROM THE HIMALAYAS, HE CAME DOWN SOUTH AND REACHED HAMPPI — ONCE THE PROUD CAPITAL OF THE VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE, NOW IN RUINS. THE SIGHT FILLED HIM WITH SADNESS.

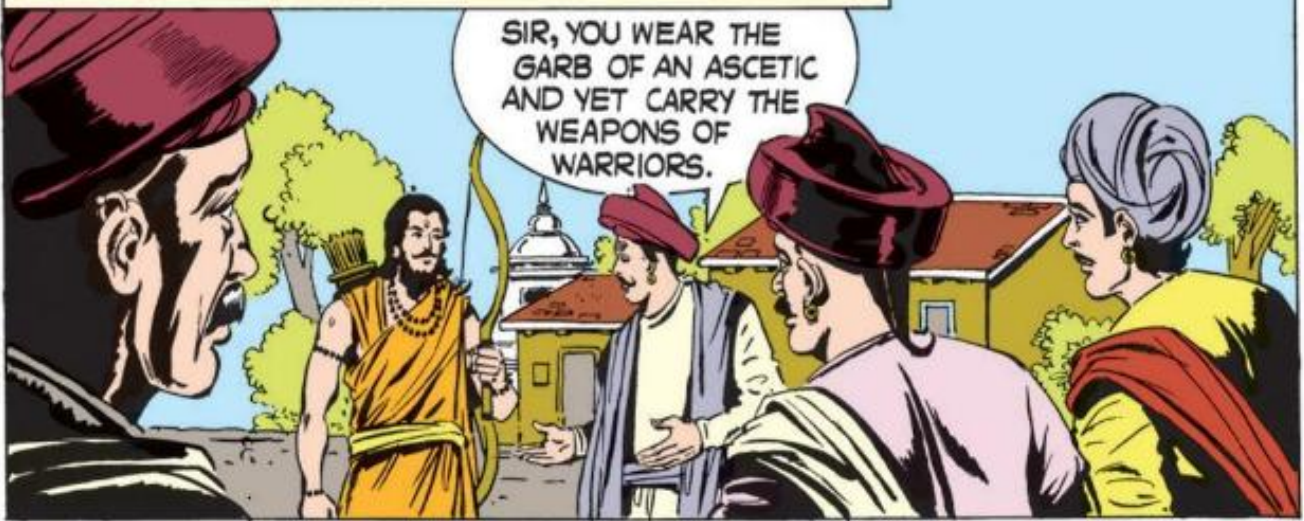


FROM HAMPPI, A DEEPLY AGITATED RAMDAS TRAVELLED WESTWARDS AND REACHED CHIPLUN.



* AN AVATAR OF VISHNU

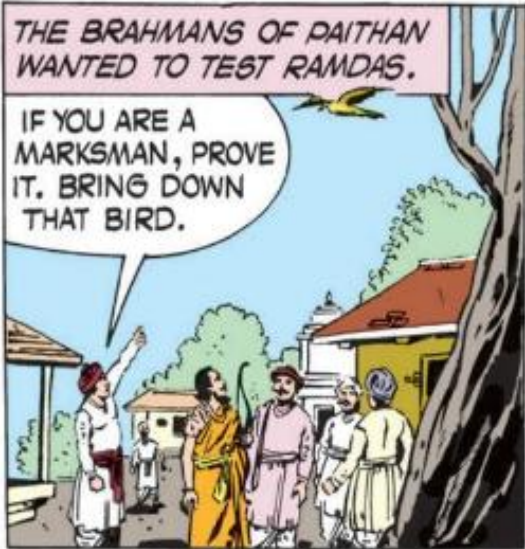
RAMDAS HAD DECIDED UPON ACTION AND LATER, WHEN HE REACHED PAITHAN, THE PEOPLE THERE WERE AMAZED TO FIND THIS ASCETIC CARRYING A BOW AND ARROWS.



SIR, YOU WEAR THE GARB OF AN ASCETIC AND YET CARRY THE WEAPONS OF WARRIORS.

THE BRAHMANS OF PAITHAN WANTED TO TEST RAMDAS.

IF YOU ARE A MARKSMAN, PROVE IT. BRING DOWN THAT BIRD.



RAMDAS TOOK AIM AND HIS ARROW BROUGHT DOWN THE BIRD.



THE BRAHMANS WERE SHOCKED.

OH, NO! SIR, HOW COULD YOU! YOU HAVE SINNED IN KILLING THIS INNOCENT BIRD. YOU MUST ATONE FOR IT.



RAMDAS PERFORMED THE RITES OF ATONEMENT AS LAID DOWN BY THE BRAHMANS.



THEN HE TURNED TO THEM .

YOU SAY I AM NOW FREE FROM SIN. BUT TRUE ATONEMENT LIES ONLY IN RESTORING LIFE TO THIS BIRD.



RAMDAS GENTLY PICKED UP THE LIMP BIRD.

RAMA, YOUR DEVOTEE BEGS YOU TO WASH HIM CLEAR OF HIS SIN. LET THE BIRD COME ALIVE AGAIN.



THE BIRD SPRANG TO LIFE...



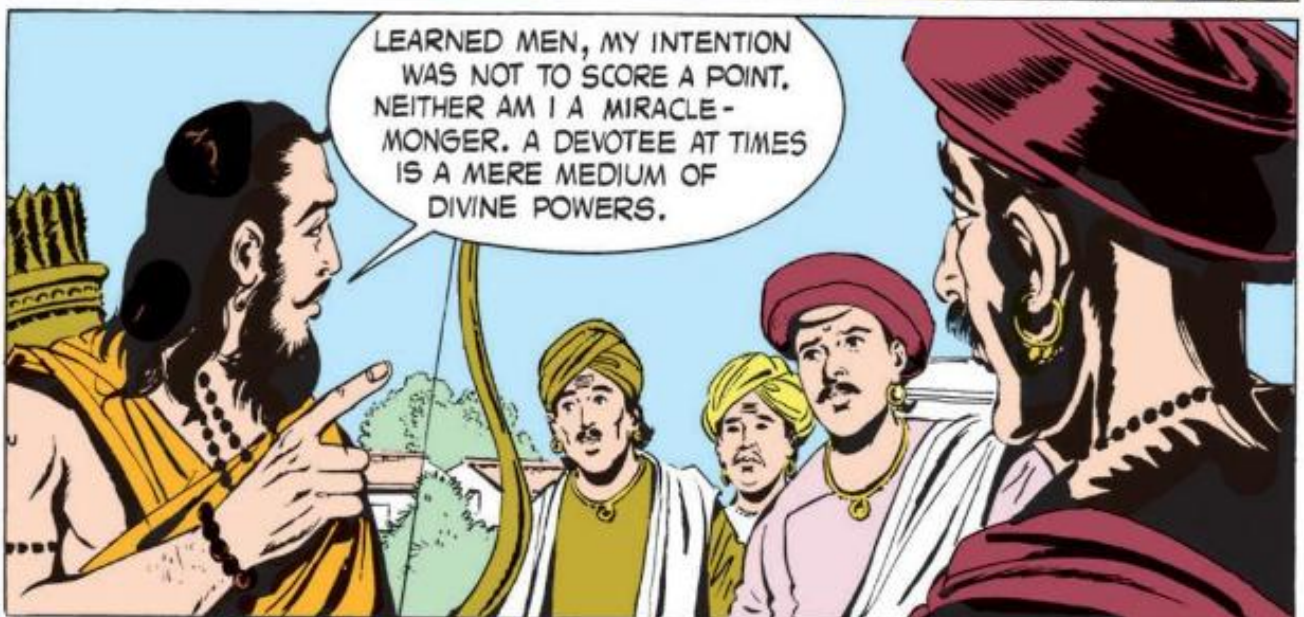
... SPREAD ITS WINGS AND SOARED AWAY TO FREEDOM.

MIRACULOUS!

GREAT ONE, YOU ARE A SAMARTH. TRULY A SAMARTH!



LEARNED MEN, MY INTENTION WAS NOT TO SCORE A POINT, NEITHER AM I A MIRACLE-MONGER. A DEVOTEE AT TIMES IS A MERE MEDIUM OF DIVINE POWERS.



RAMDAS' WANDERING PILGRIMAGE LED HIM TO JAMB, HIS NATIVE VILLAGE, WHICH HE HAD LEFT TWENTY-THREE YEARS AGO. HE WENT TO HIS HOUSE AND STOOD AT THE FAMILIAR DOORSTEP.



GANGADHAR'S WIFE DID NOT RECOGNISE RAMDAS.

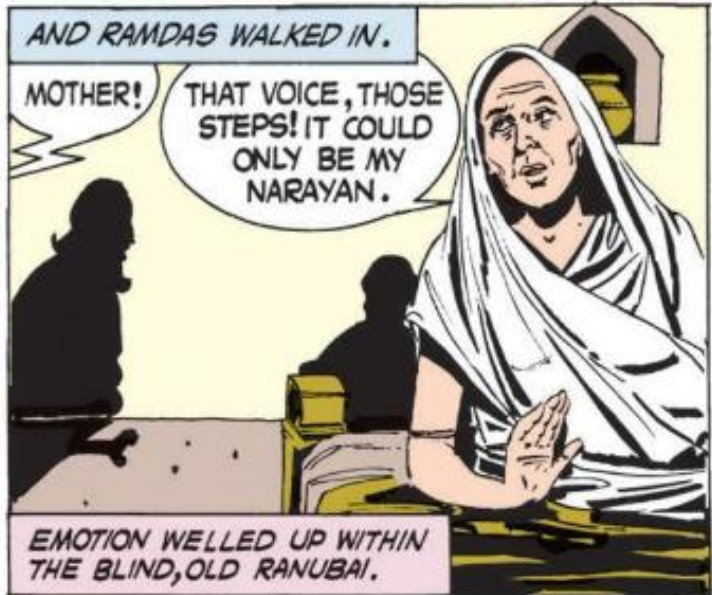
SISTER, DON'T YOU KNOW ME?



AND RAMDAS WALKED IN.

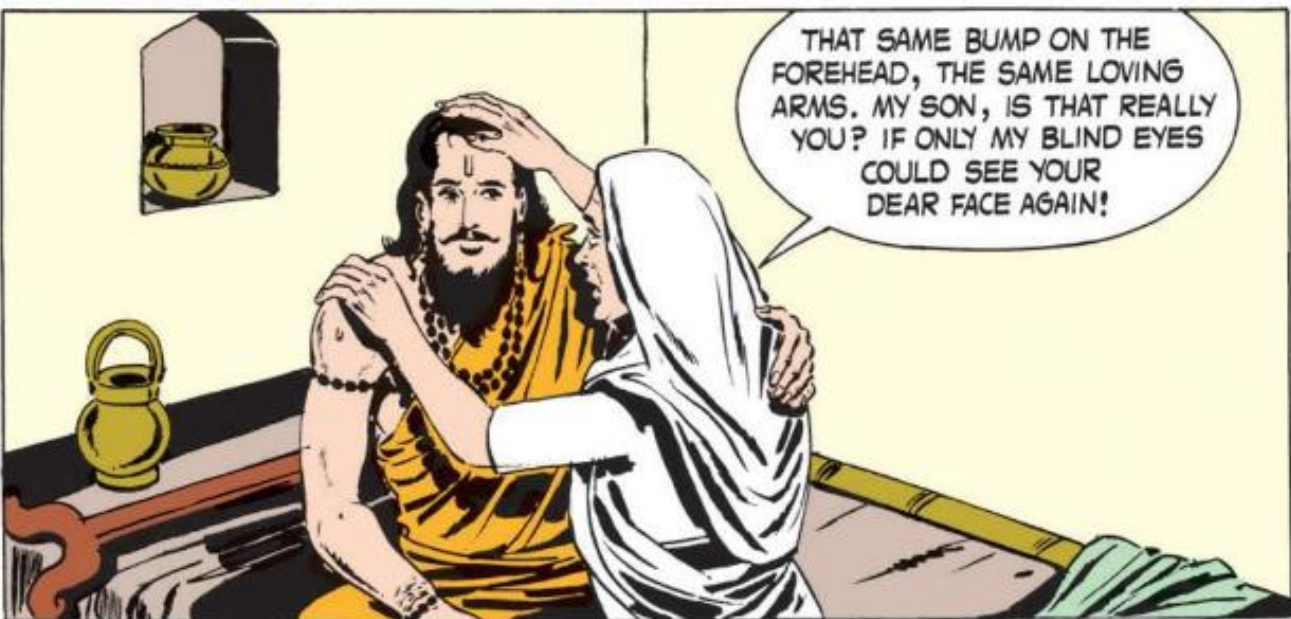
MOTHER!

THAT VOICE, THOSE STEPS! IT COULD ONLY BE MY NARAYAN.



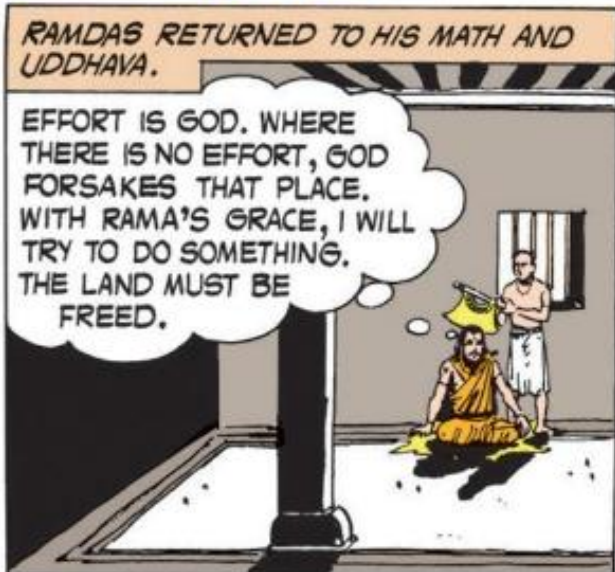
EMOTION WELLED UP WITHIN THE BLIND, OLD RANUBAI.

THAT SAME BUMP ON THE FOREHEAD, THE SAME LOVING ARMS. MY SON, IS THAT REALLY YOU? IF ONLY MY BLIND EYES COULD SEE YOUR DEAR FACE AGAIN!





IT WAS A HAPPY TIME THAT RAMDAS SPENT WITH HIS FAMILY, BUT HE LEFT HIS HOME ONCE AGAIN — THIS TIME WITH HIS MOTHER'S BLESSINGS.



THE LEADER RAMDAS WAS LOOKING FOR WAS STILL A YOUNGSTER — SHIVAJI, THE SON OF A MARATHA NOBLEMAN, SHAHAJI BHOSLE.



YOUNG SHIVAJI SEEMED TO KNOW EVERY STONE IN THE WILD, HILLY TERRAIN OF MAVAL,* WHERE HE GREW UP.

SHIVAJI HAD HEARD STORIES OF THE GREAT HEROES OF THE PAST FROM HIS MOTHER, JIJABAI.



I WILL, MOTHER. I'LL MAKE THAT MY GOAL.

MY SON, LET THE NOBLE EXAMPLES OF RAMA AND THE PANDAVAS GUIDE YOU. YOU MUST FIGHT OPPRESSORS AND DEFEND THE RIGHTEOUS.

SHIVAJI'S COMRADES WERE THE HARDY, LOYAL YOUTHS OF MAVAL, IN WHOSE COMPANY HE LEARNT TO RIDE AND FIGHT.



* IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

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* IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

ONE DAY AT THE SHIVA TEMPLE AT RAIRESHWAR, SHIVAJI TOOK AN OATH.



O SHIVA, I SWEAR THAT I WILL NOT REST TILL I ACHIEVE MY GOAL.

WE WILL STAND BY YOU, COME WHAT MAY.

WHEN RAMDAS HEARD OF SHIVAJI'S OATH —



THE "MORNING STAR" HAS RISEN. THE PEOPLE AWAIT YOU, YOUNG SHIVAJI.

RAMDAS AND SHIVAJI HAD HEARD OF EACH OTHER. THEY MET FOR THE FIRST TIME AT A RAMA-NAVAMI FESTIVAL AT MASUR. SAINT AND WARRIOR WERE EQUALLY IMPRESSED.



HE'S YOUNG, BUT HE CARRIES HIMSELF LIKE A PRINCE. HE WILL LIBERATE THE LAND.

HE TOWERS OVER ALL. GENTLE AND YET STRONG!

LATER, THEY MET AGAIN AT SHINGANAWADI. AT SHIVAJI'S REQUEST, RAMDAS INITIATED HIM AS HIS DEVOTEE.



ADORN YOUR BODY NOT WITH RICH CLOTHES AND JEWELS, BUT WITH DISCRETION AND WISDOM.

MAY YOU UNITE THE PEOPLE UNDER YOUR RULE. MAY YOU GOVERN ACCORDING TO DHARMA * AND RELIEVE THE MISERY OF THE PEOPLE. MAY YOU SUCCEED IN ALL YOUR EFFORTS.



YOU INSPIRE ME, O SAMARTH. I WILL NOT FAIL YOU.

ONE DAY, RAMDAS SENT WORD THAT HE WAS ILL. SHIVAJI HURRIED TO HIS SIDE.



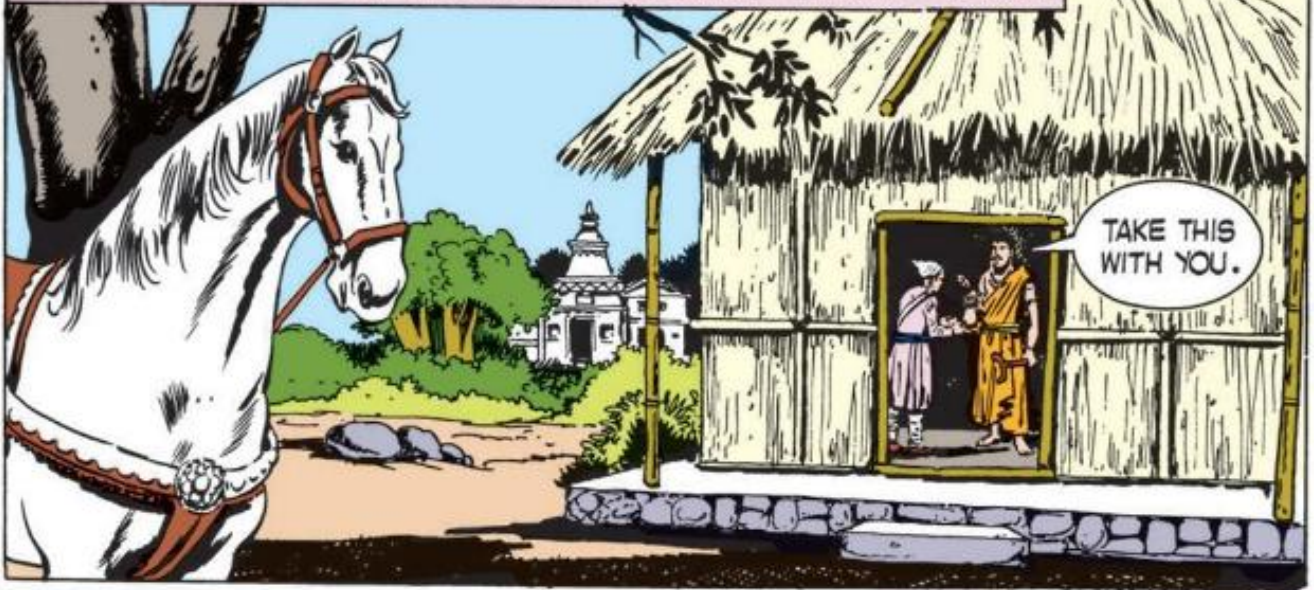
SAMARTH, I WILL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE YOU WELL. PLEASE TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO.

THE ONLY MEDICINE THAT WILL CURE ME IS THE MILK OF A TIGRESS.

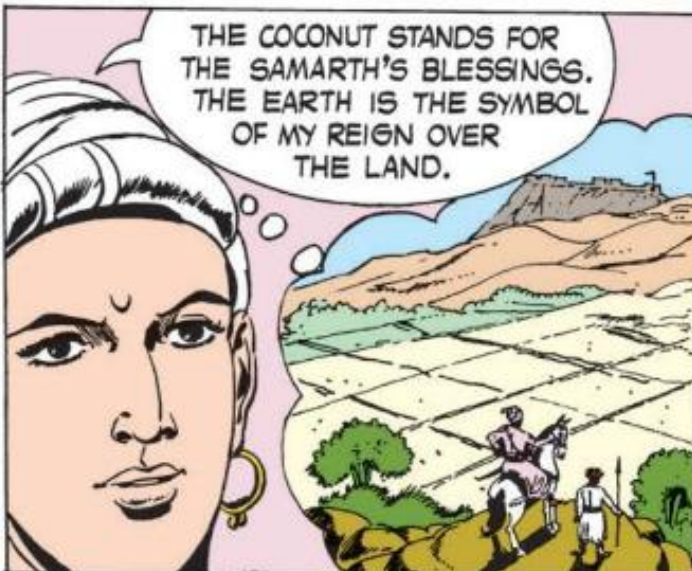
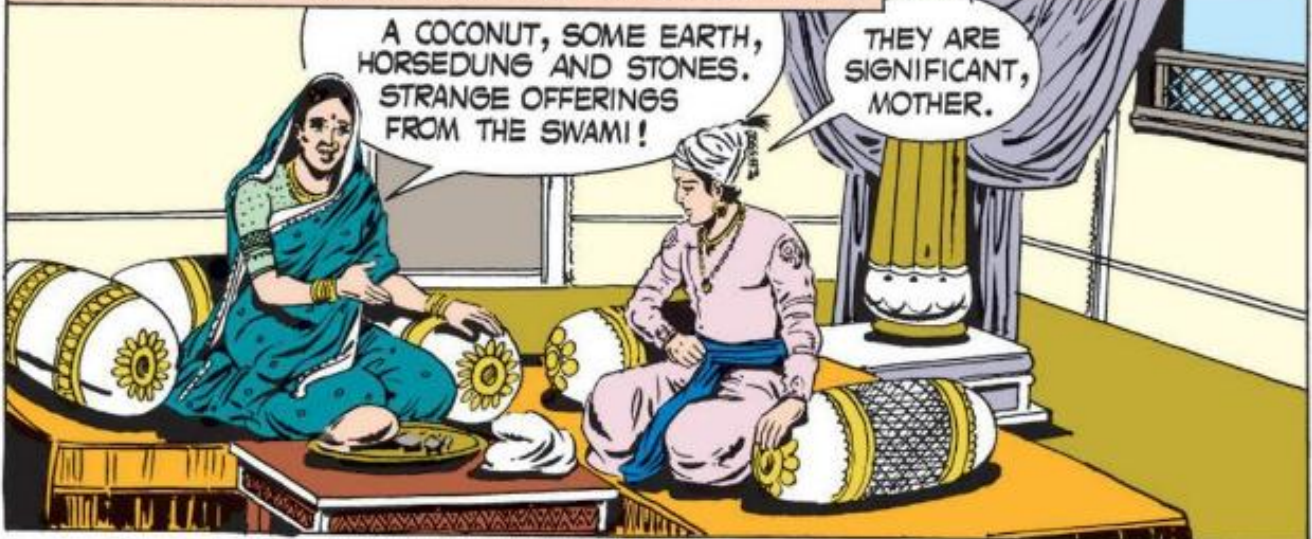
* RULE OF LAW

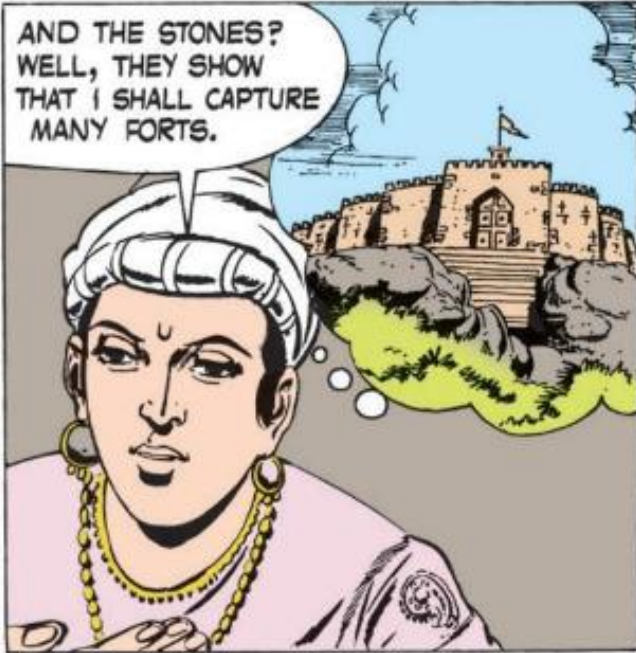


PLEASED WITH SHIVAJI, RAMDAS MADE A SACRED OFFERING TO HIM.

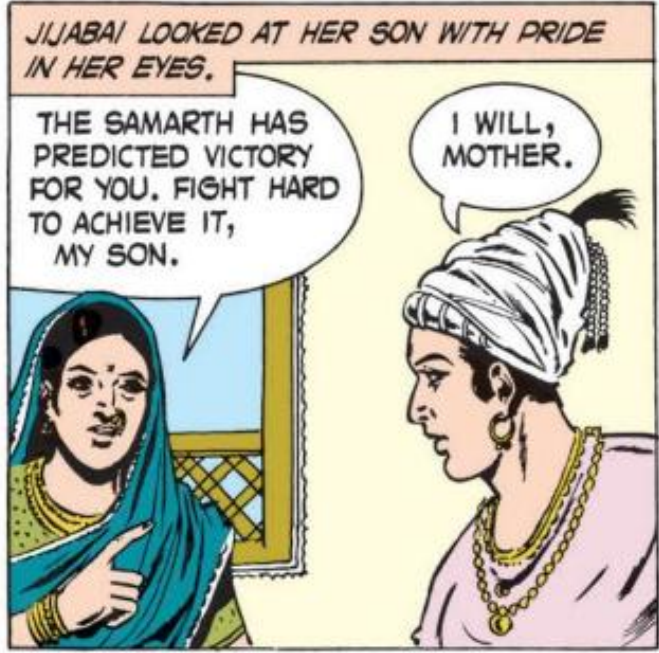


WHEN SHIVAJI REACHED HOME, HE OPENED THE BUNDLE IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS MOTHER. WHAT IT CONTAINED TOOK JIJABAI BY SURPRISE.





AND THE STONES? WELL, THEY SHOW THAT I SHALL CAPTURE MANY FORTS.



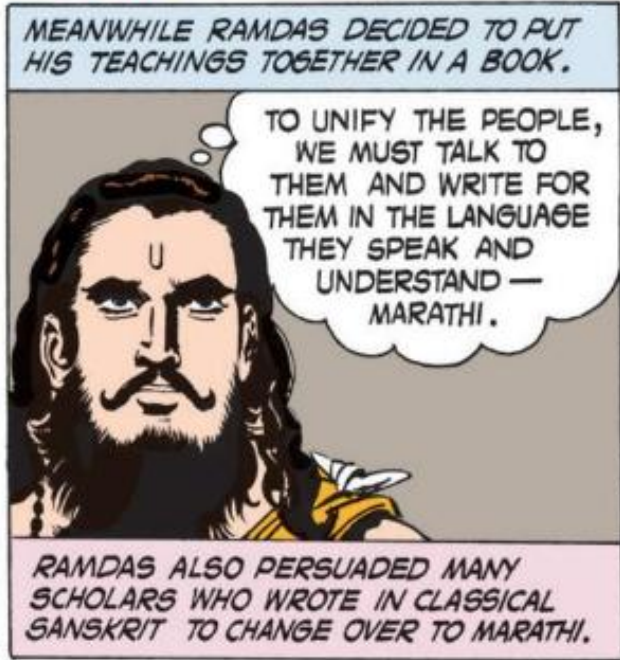
JIJABAI LOOKED AT HER SON WITH PRIDE IN HER EYES.

THE SAMARTH HAS PREDICTED VICTORY FOR YOU. FIGHT HARD TO ACHIEVE IT, MY SON.

I WILL, MOTHER.



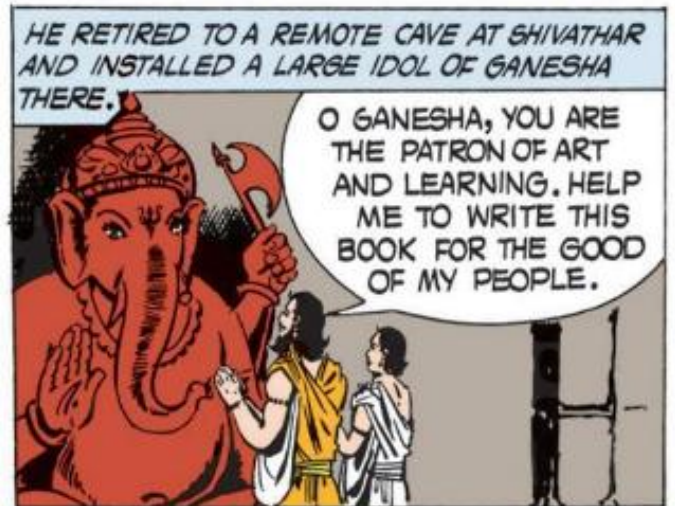
SHIVAJI AND HIS MEN MADE THEIR FIRST MOVE. THEY ATTACKED AND CAPTURED THE FORT OF TORNA AND LATER OF RAJGADH. SHIVAJI MARCHED FROM VICTORY TO VICTORY.



MEANWHILE RAMDAS DECIDED TO PUT HIS TEACHINGS TOGETHER IN A BOOK.

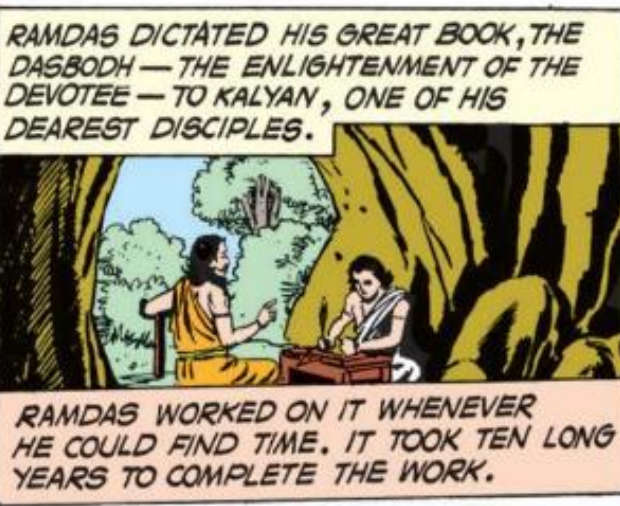
TO UNIFY THE PEOPLE, WE MUST TALK TO THEM AND WRITE FOR THEM IN THE LANGUAGE THEY SPEAK AND UNDERSTAND — MARATHI.

RAMDAS ALSO PERSUADED MANY SCHOLARS WHO WROTE IN CLASSICAL SANSKRIT TO CHANGE OVER TO MARATHI.



HE RETIRED TO A REMOTE CAVE AT SHIVATHAR AND INSTALLED A LARGE IDOL OF GANESHA THERE.

O GANESHA, YOU ARE THE PATRON OF ART AND LEARNING. HELP ME TO WRITE THIS BOOK FOR THE GOOD OF MY PEOPLE.



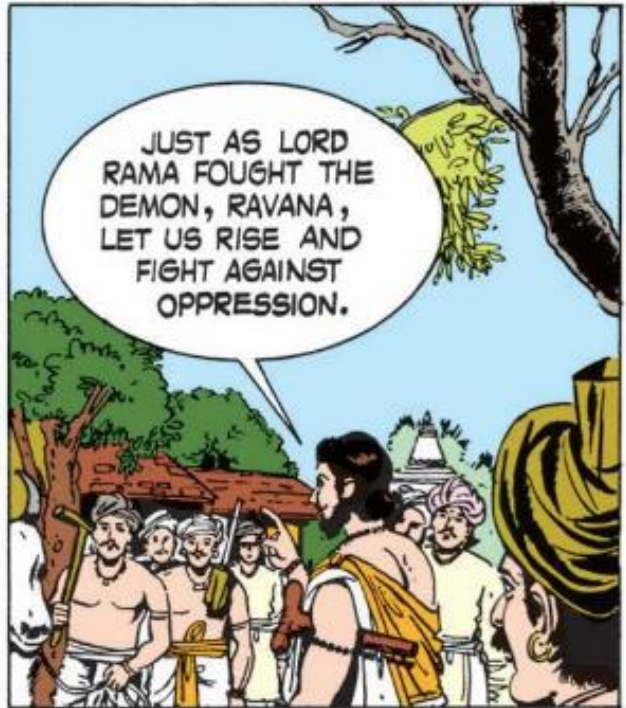
RAMDAS DICTATED HIS GREAT BOOK, THE DASBODH — THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE DEVOTEE — TO KALYAN, ONE OF HIS DEAREST DISCIPLES.

RAMDAS WORKED ON IT WHENEVER HE COULD FIND TIME. IT TOOK TEN LONG YEARS TO COMPLETE THE WORK.

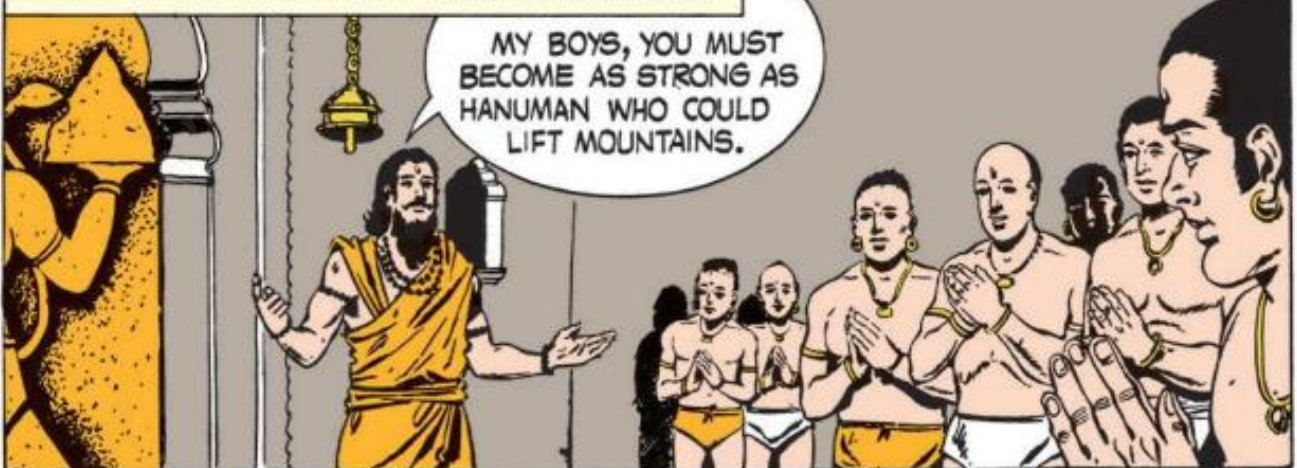
HIS DISCIPLES WENT OUT AMONG THE PEOPLE, HELPING THEM, INSPIRING THEM, AND MOBILISING THEM TO FIGHT INJUSTICE.



JUST AS LORD RAMA FOUGHT THE DEMON, RAVANA, LET US RISE AND FIGHT AGAINST OPPRESSION.



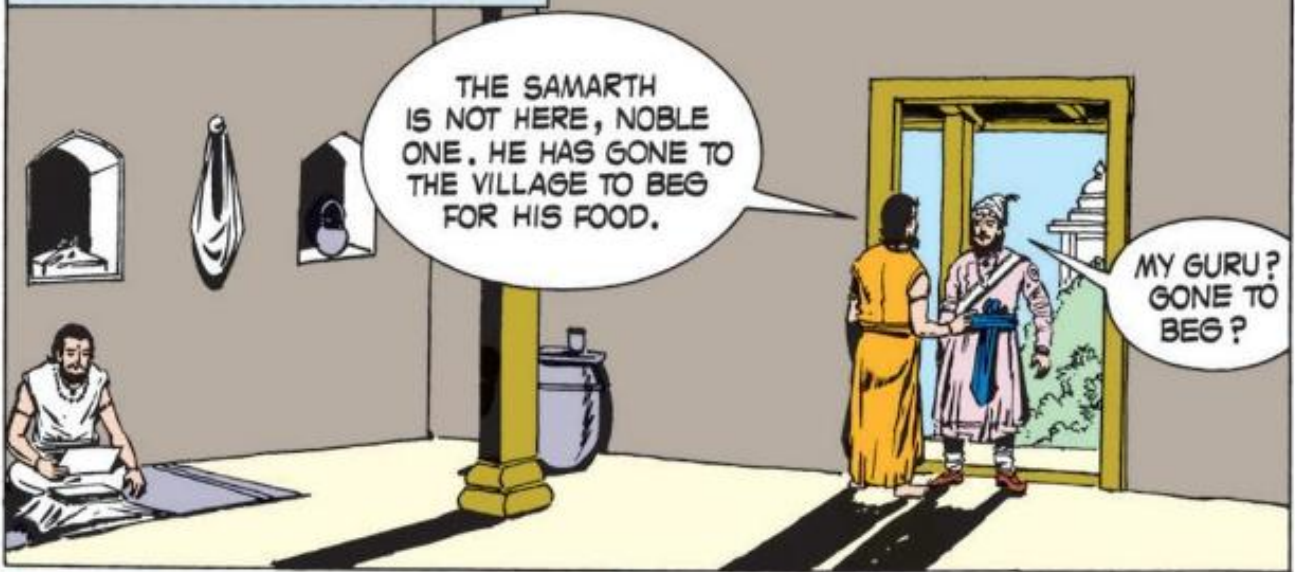
THEY ALSO TRAINED YOUNG MEN AND BOYS IN GYMNASTICS AND THE MARTIAL ARTS. RAMDAS OFTEN VISITED THE TRAINING CENTRES.



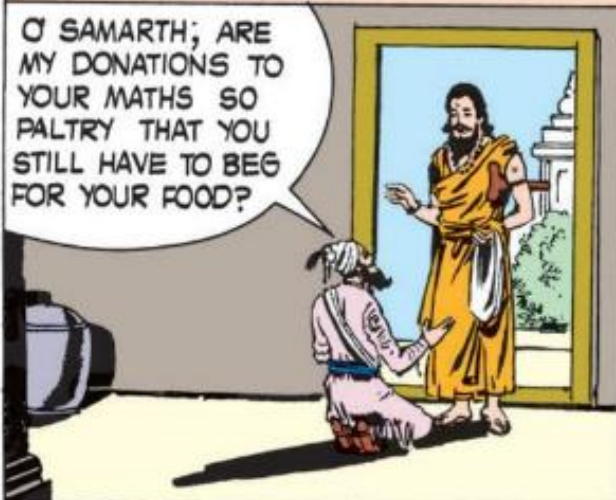
INSPIRED BY THE CALL GIVEN BY RAMDAS, SEVERAL YOUNG MEN CAME FORWARD TO JOIN SHIVAJI.



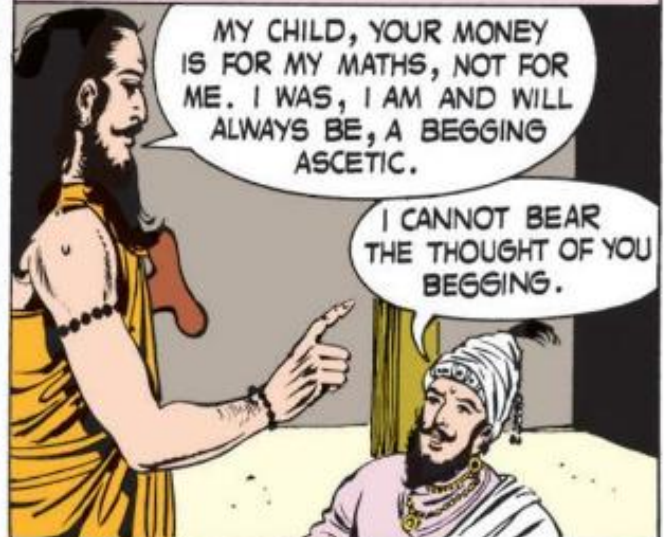
SHIVAJI WOULD OFTEN GO TO RAMDAS FOR ADVICE. ONE DAY HE CALLED UNEXPECTEDLY.



SHIVAJI WAS UPSET. WHEN RAMDAS RETURNED, HE KNELT BEFORE HIM.

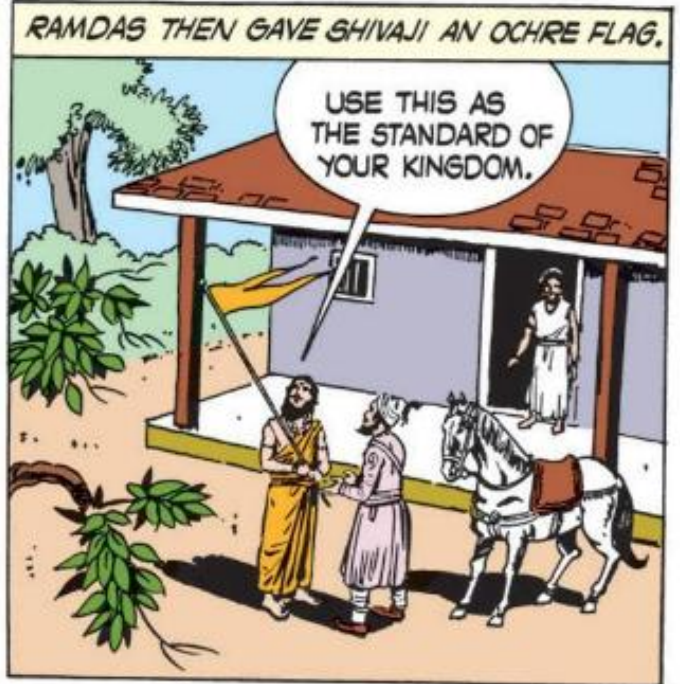
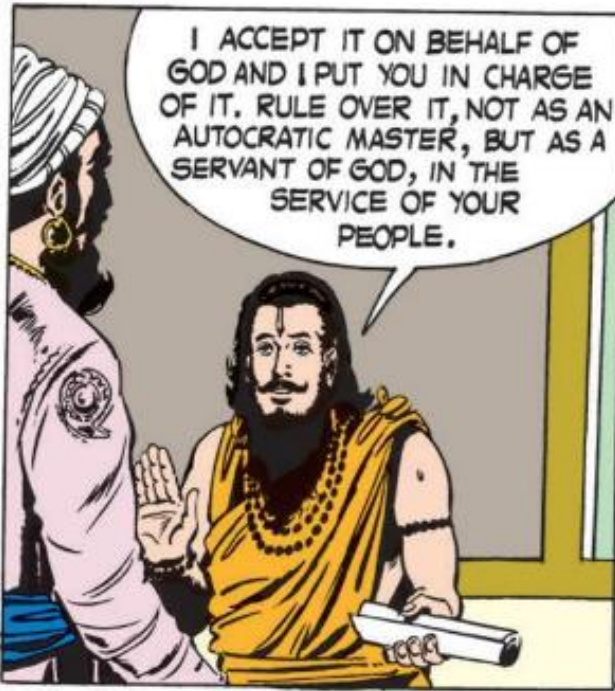


RAMDAS SMILED DOWN AT HIS DISCIPLE.

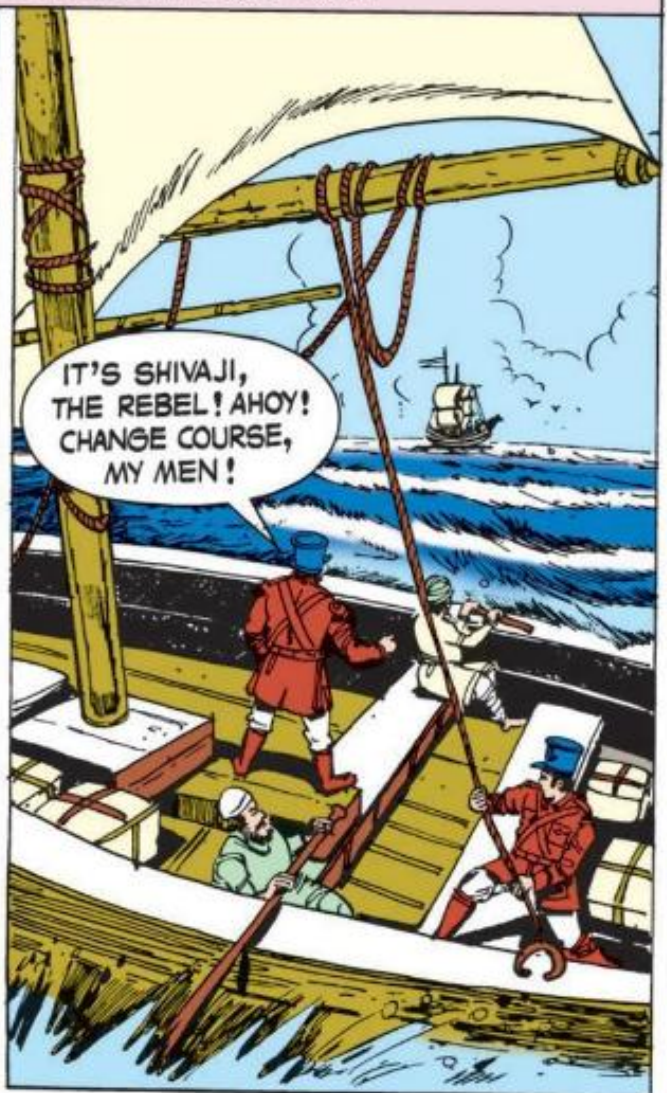


IN A MOMENTOUS DECISION, SHIVAJI MADE A DEED, GIFTING AWAY HIS KINGDOM TO RAMDAS.





IT WAS THIS VERY FLAG THAT FLEW ON THE LOFTY FORTS THAT SHIVAJI CAPTURED; WHILE ON THE SHIPS OF SHIVAJI'S NAVY FLUTTERED AN OCHRE SAIL.



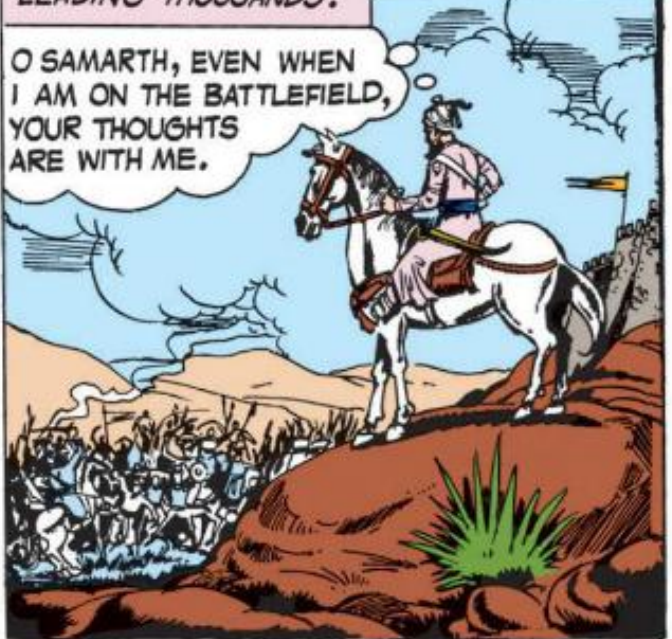
HIS GURU RAMDAS' BLESSINGS AFTER EACH VICTORY INSPIRED HIM ON TO THE NEXT.

YOU HAVE BEEN JUST AND RIGHTEOUS; MANY HAVE TAKEN FRIGHT, MANY HAVE SOUGHT YOUR PROTECTION. GREETINGS TO YOU, O BENEVOLENT KING...



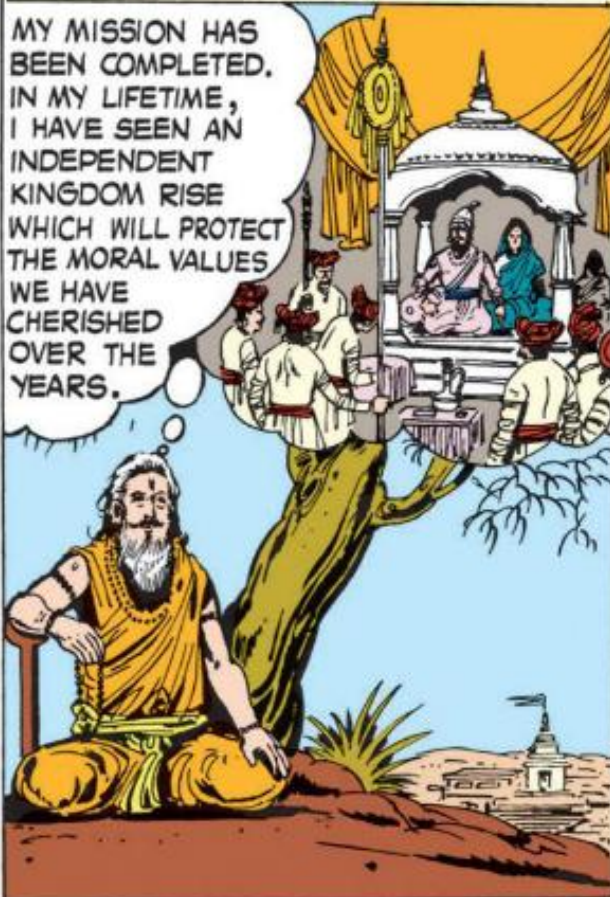
FROM A SMALL-TIME REBEL WITH A HANDFUL OF MEN SCATTERED OVER BARREN VALLEYS, SHIVAJI WAS NOW A MIGHTY GENERAL, LEADING THOUSANDS.

O SAMARTH, EVEN WHEN I AM ON THE BATTLEFIELD, YOUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH ME.



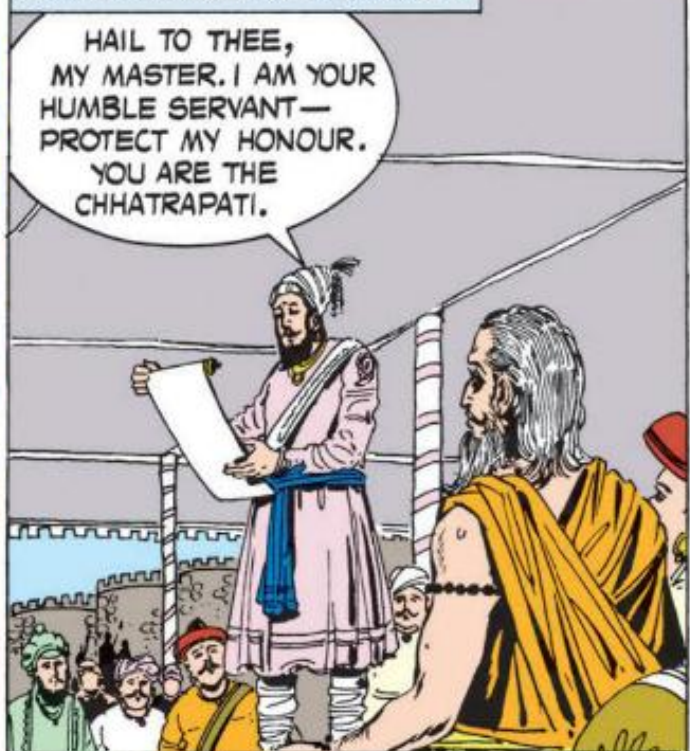
AT LAST, SHIVAJI WAS CROWNED CHHATRAPATI OF A LARGE PART OF MAVAL WHICH HE HAD LIBERATED. THE CORONATION TOOK PLACE AT RAIGADH, BUT RAMDAS COULD NOT ATTEND THE CEREMONY.

MY MISSION HAS BEEN COMPLETED. IN MY LIFETIME, I HAVE SEEN AN INDEPENDENT KINGDOM RISE WHICH WILL PROTECT THE MORAL VALUES WE HAVE CHERISHED OVER THE YEARS.



LATER WHEN RAMDAS CONVENED A CONFERENCE OF SAINTS AND SAGES AT A FORT NEAR SATARA, SHIVAJI WAS ABLE TO PAY HIM A DELAYED TRIBUTE.

HAIL TO THEE, MY MASTER. I AM YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT— PROTECT MY HONOUR. YOU ARE THE CHHATRAPATI.



THE PLACE CAME TO BE KNOWN AS SAJANGAD AND IT WAS THERE THAT RAMDAS PASSED AWAY. THE TEMPLE, CONSTRUCTED OVER HIS MORTAL REMAINS, STANDS AT SAJANGAD TO THIS DAY.