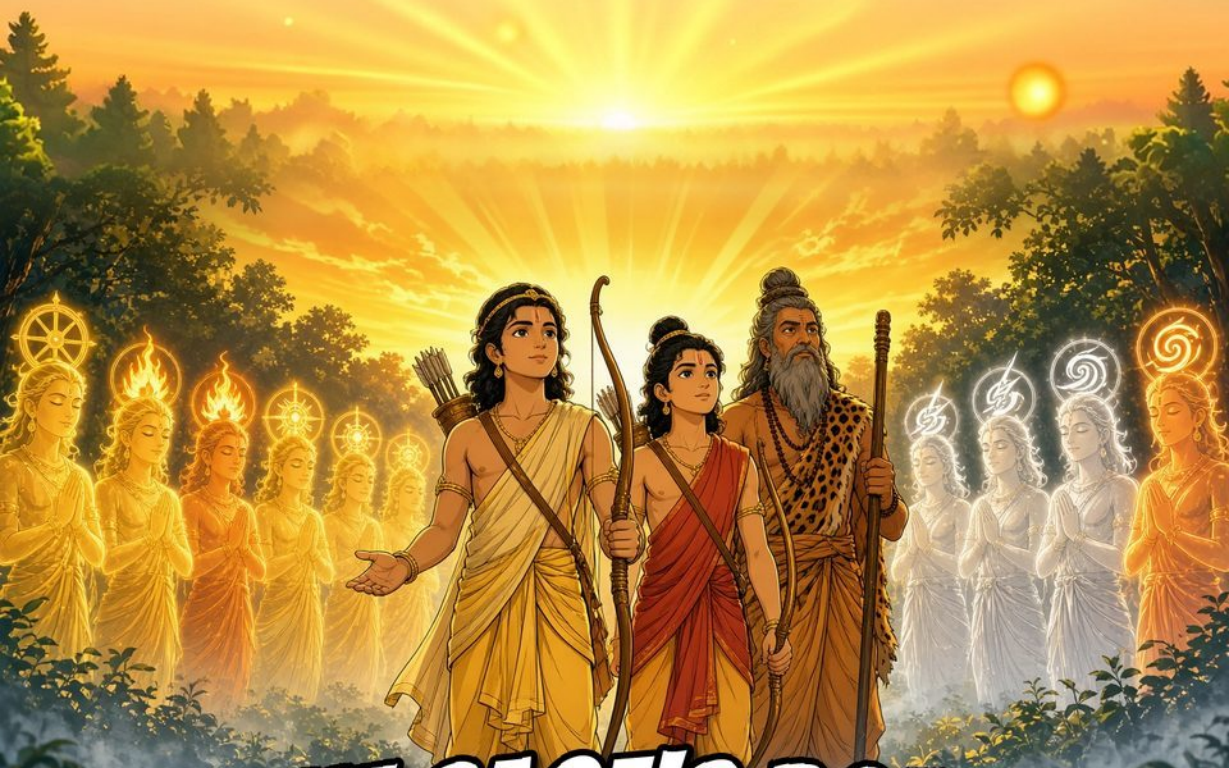


RAMAYANA

ISSUE #2

THE STRONGEST HAND IS THE ONE THAT HOLDS BACK.



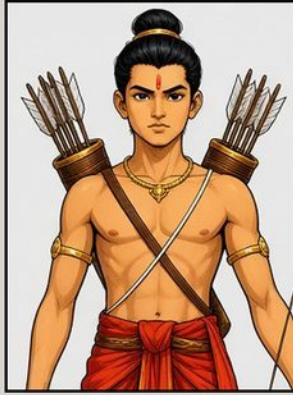
THE SAGE'S ROAD

MEET THE CHARACTERS



RAMA

A YOUNG PRINCE OF AYODHYA,
FAR FROM HOME.



LAKSHMANA

RAMA'S BROTHER, AND HIS
SHADOW.



VISHVAMITRA

A KING WHO BECAME A RISHI,
AND A TELLER OF STORIES.



TATAKA

A CURSED YAKSHI WHO HAS
EMPTIED A KINGDOM.



MARICHA

TATAKA'S SON, A RAKSHASA WHO
HATES SAGES.



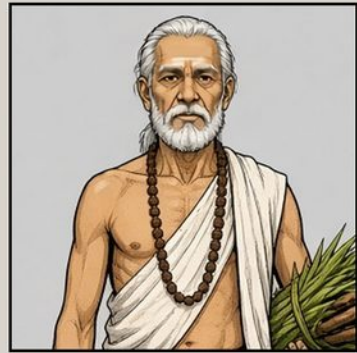
SUBAHU

MARICHA'S ALLY.



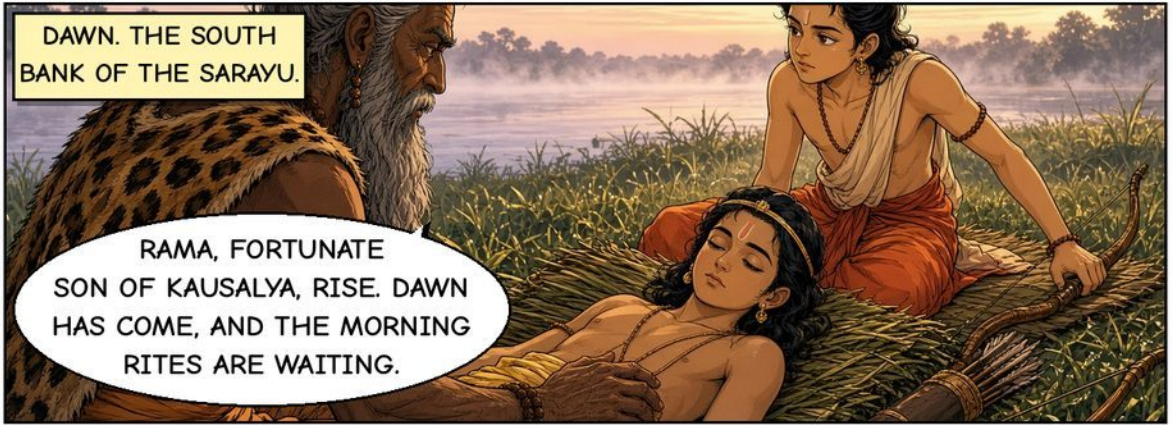
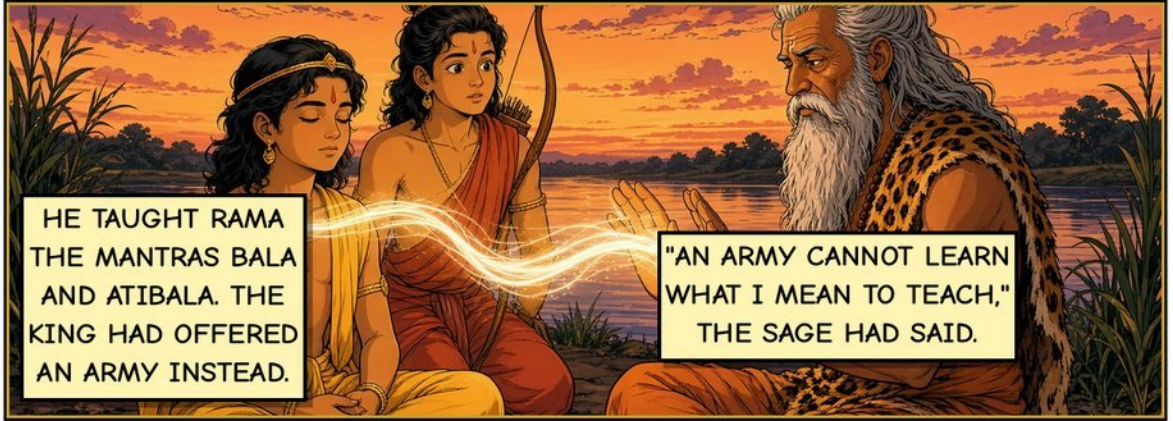
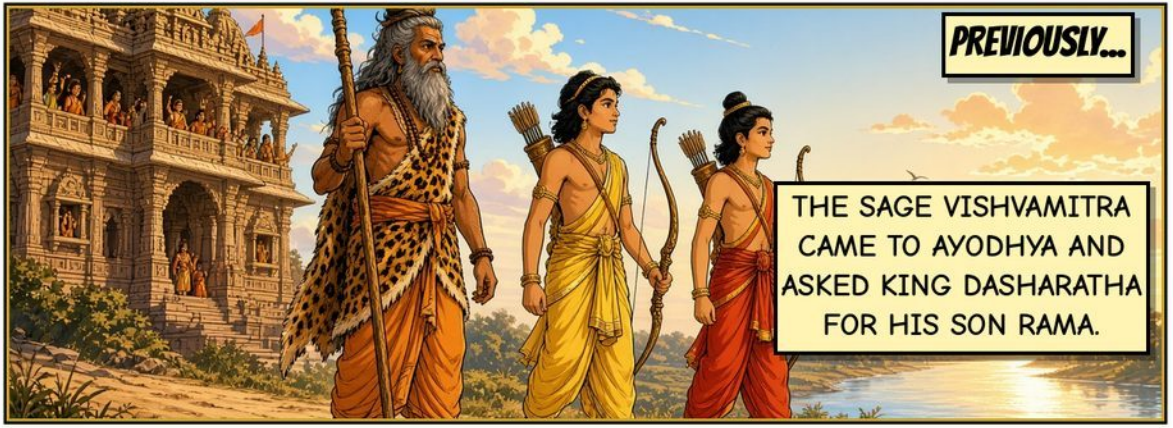
AHALYA

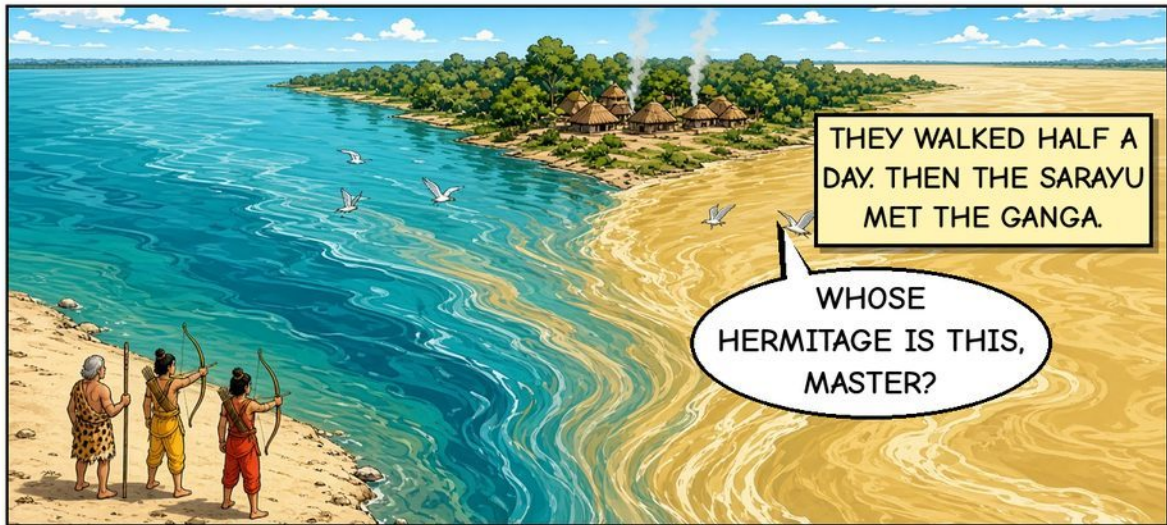
A WOMAN NO ONE HAS SEEN FOR AGES.



GAUTAMA

A GREAT RISHI WHO LEFT HIS HOME
LONG AGO.





THEY WALKED HALF A DAY. THEN THE SARAYU MET THE GANGA.

WHOSE HERMITAGE IS THIS, MASTER?

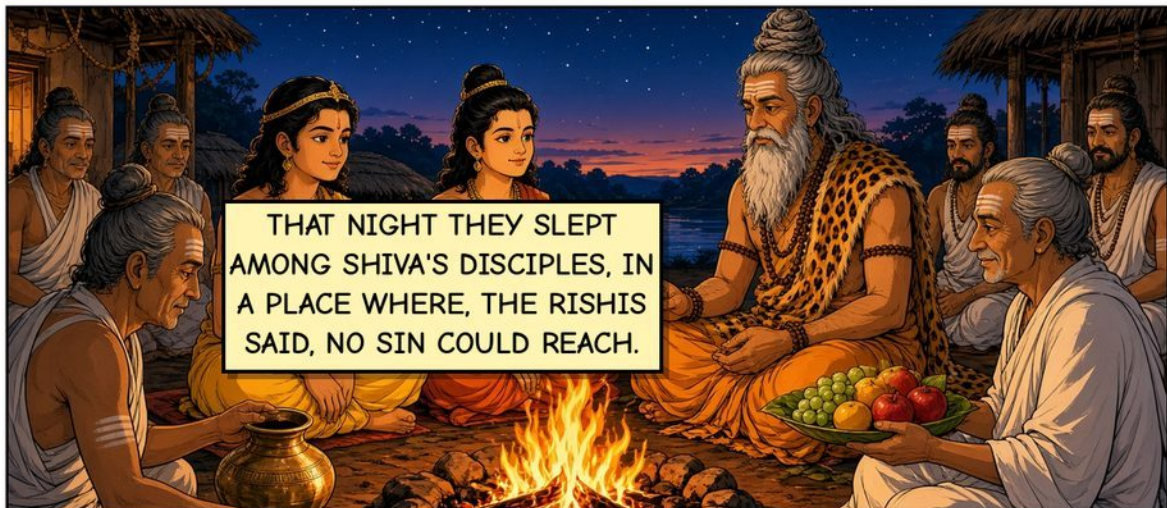
VISHVAMITRA: SHIVA WAS DEEP IN TAPAS HERE WHEN KAMA, GOD OF DESIRE, SHOT HIM WITH A FLOWER ARROW.

SHIVA BURNED HIM IN ANGER. KAMA'S BODY FELL AWAY, AND THE LAND WAS NAMED ANGA, "THE BODILESS".

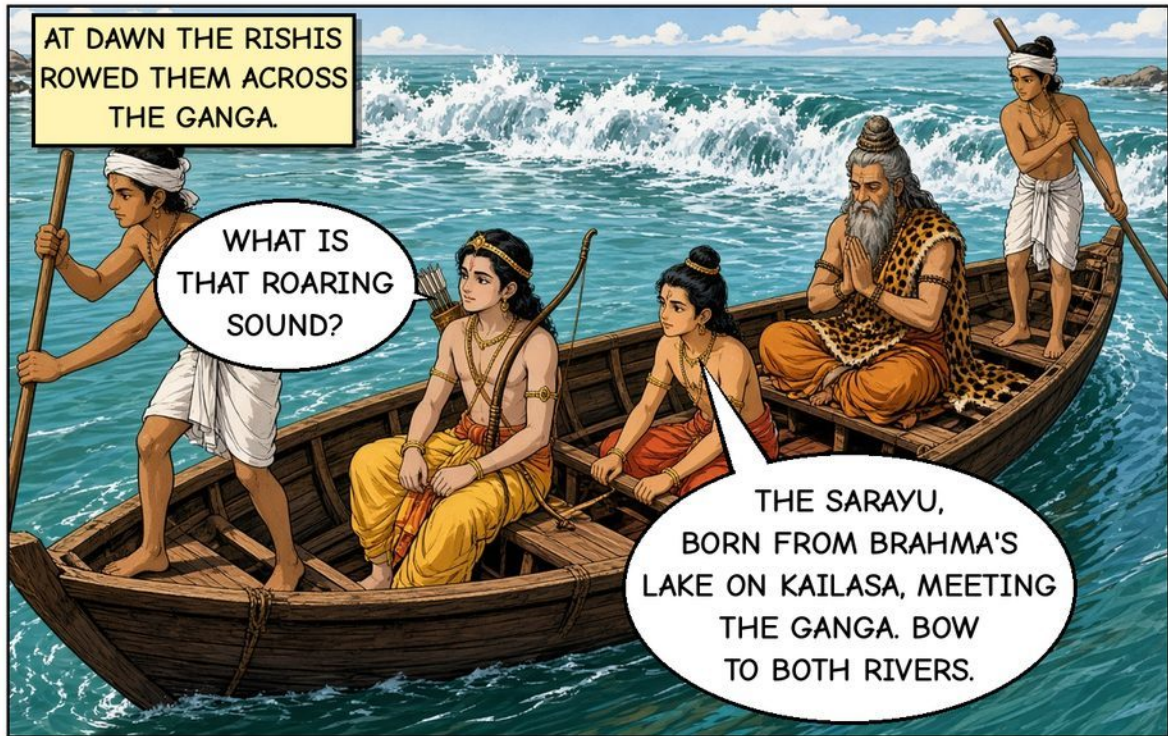


THEN EVEN SHIVA'S ANGER BURNS?

WHEN IT IS PROVOKED. DESIRE PROVOKED IT.



THAT NIGHT THEY SLEPT AMONG SHIVA'S DISCIPLES, IN A PLACE WHERE, THE RISHIS SAID, NO SIN COULD REACH.



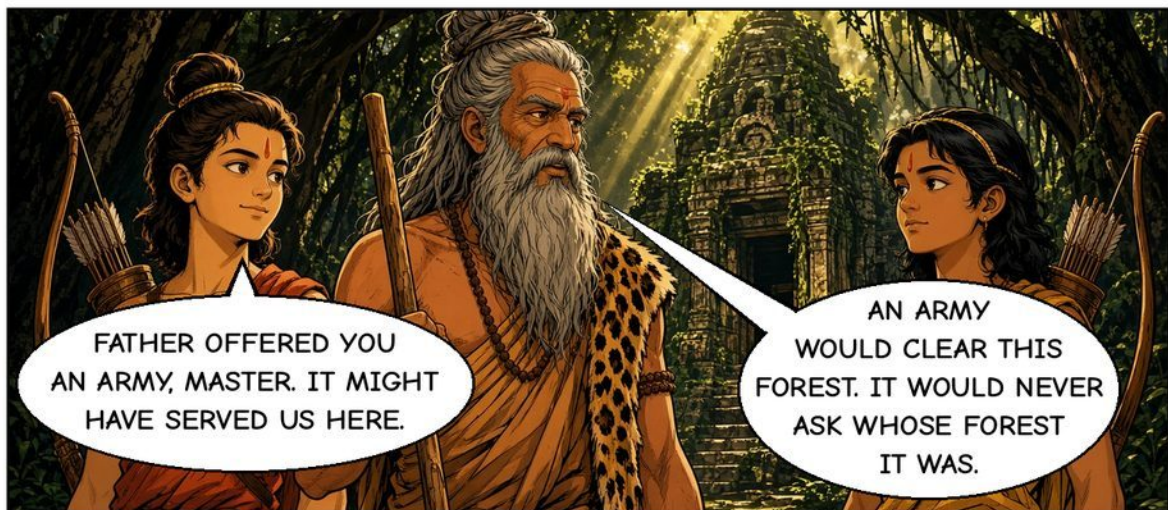
AT DAWN THE RISHIS
ROWED THEM ACROSS
THE GANGA.

WHAT IS
THAT ROARING
SOUND?

THE SARAYU,
BORN FROM BRAHMA'S
LAKE ON KAILASA, MEETING
THE GANGA. BOW
TO BOTH RIVERS.

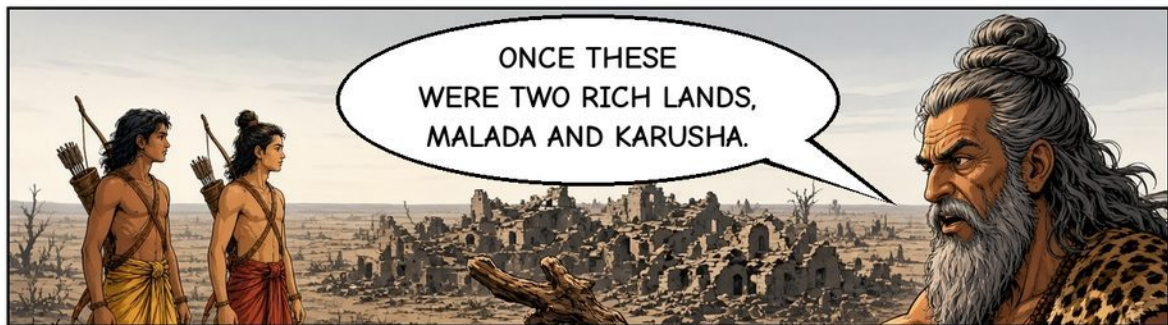


WHAT FOREST IS
THIS? VULTURES, TIGERS, WILD
BOAR. THE WHOLE PLACE SEEMS
TO WARN US AWAY.

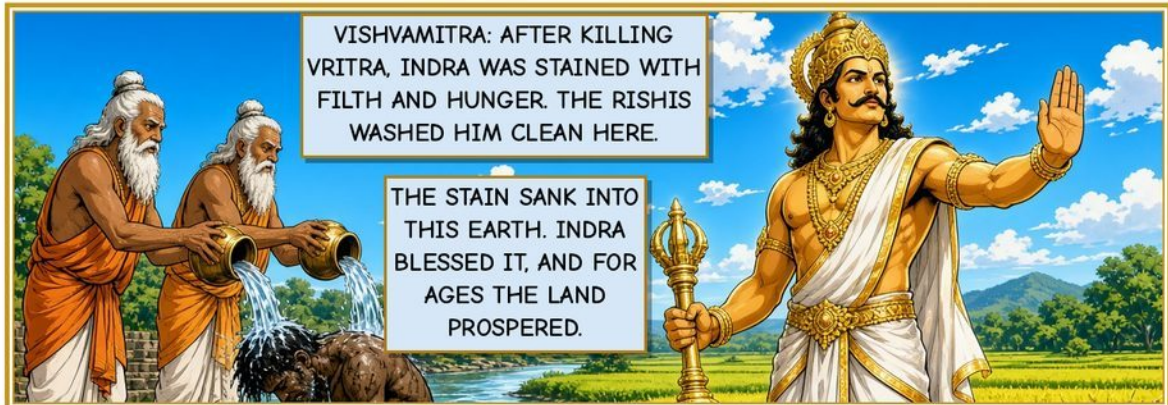


FATHER OFFERED YOU
AN ARMY, MASTER. IT MIGHT
HAVE SERVED US HERE.

AN ARMY
WOULD CLEAR THIS
FOREST. IT WOULD NEVER
ASK WHOSE FOREST
IT WAS.

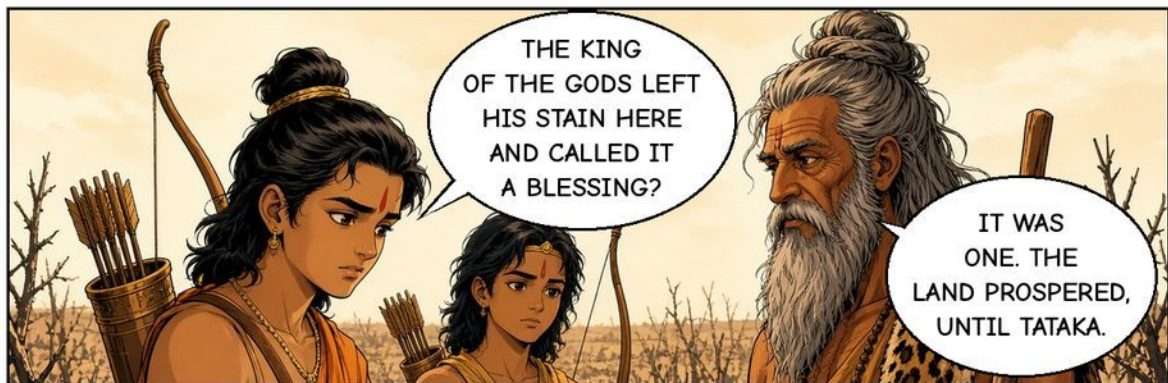


ONCE THESE
WERE TWO RICH LANDS,
MALADA AND KARUSHA.



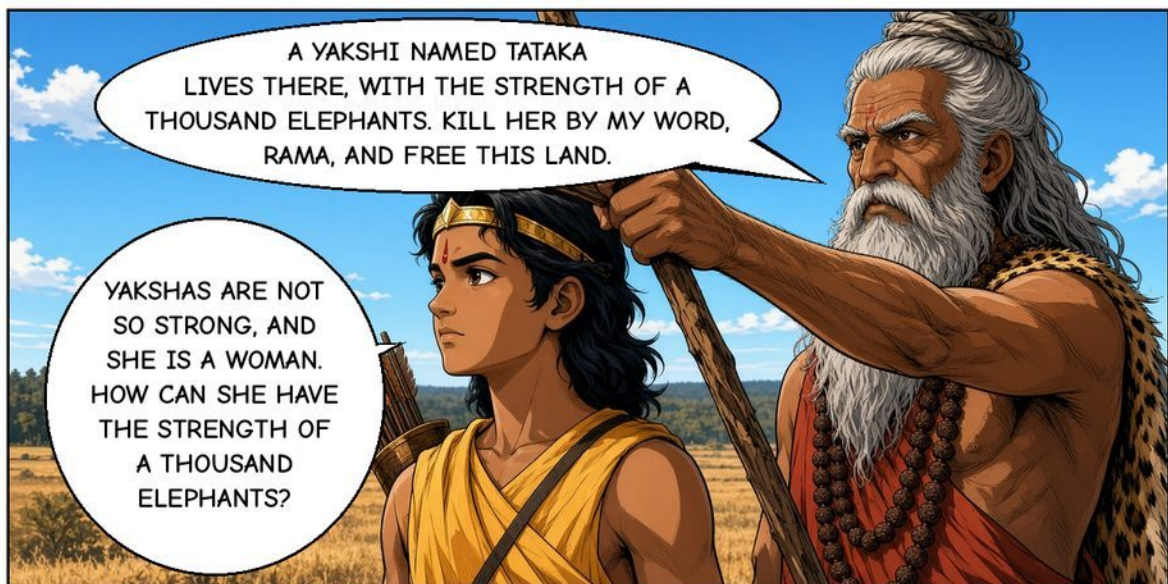
VISHVAMITRA: AFTER KILLING
VRITRA, INDRA WAS STAINED WITH
FILTH AND HUNGER. THE RISHIS
WASHED HIM CLEAN HERE.

THE STAIN SANK INTO
THIS EARTH. INDRA
BLESSED IT, AND FOR
AGES THE LAND
PROSPERED.



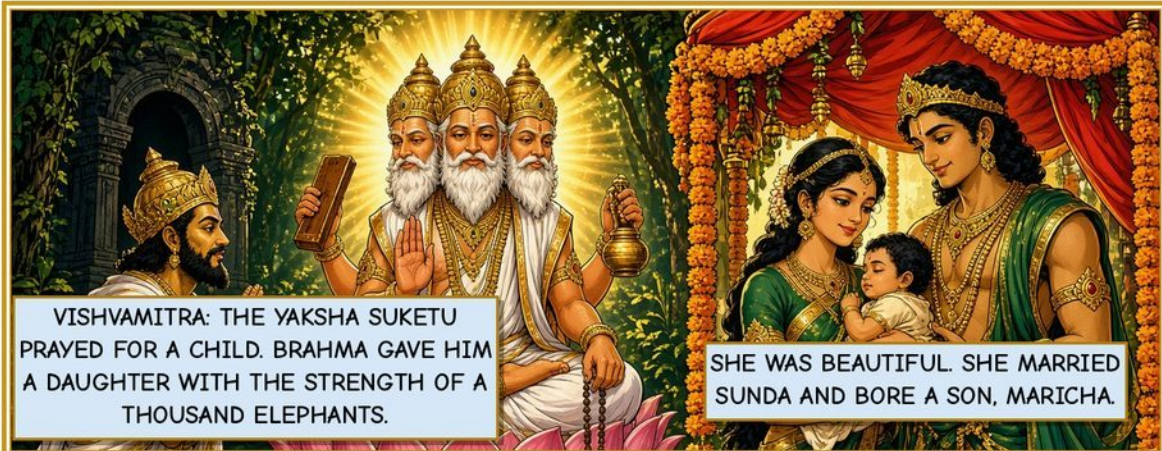
THE KING
OF THE GODS LEFT
HIS STAIN HERE
AND CALLED IT
A BLESSING?

IT WAS
ONE. THE
LAND PROSPERED,
UNTIL TATAKA.



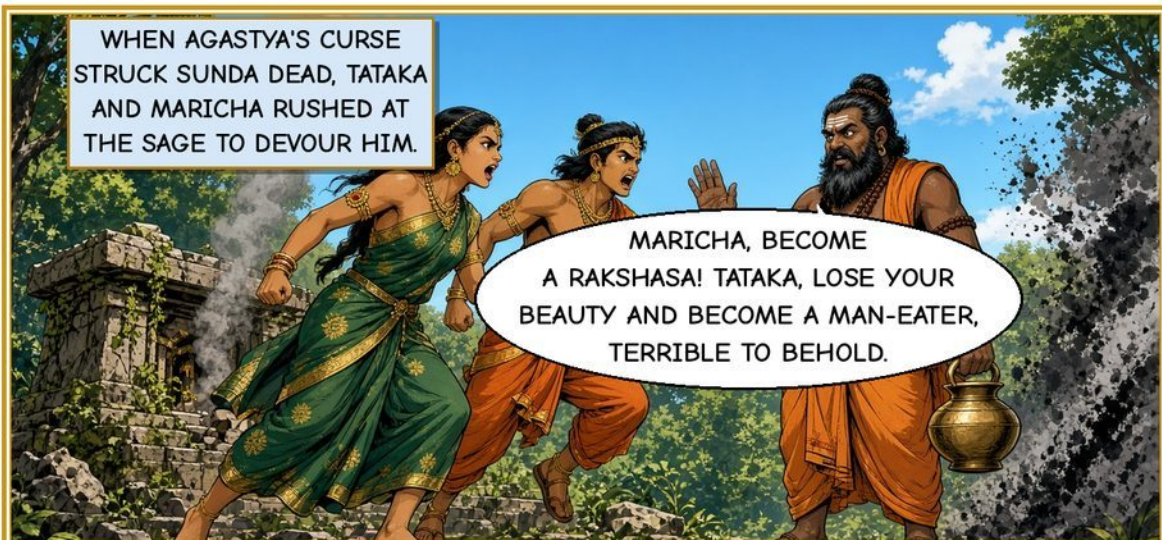
A YAKSHI NAMED TATAKA
LIVES THERE, WITH THE STRENGTH OF A
THOUSAND ELEPHANTS. KILL HER BY MY WORD,
RAMA, AND FREE THIS LAND.

YAKSHAS ARE NOT
SO STRONG, AND
SHE IS A WOMAN.
HOW CAN SHE HAVE
THE STRENGTH OF
A THOUSAND
ELEPHANTS?



VISHVAMITRA: THE YAKSHA SUKETU
PRAYED FOR A CHILD. BRAHMA GAVE HIM
A DAUGHTER WITH THE STRENGTH OF A
THOUSAND ELEPHANTS.

SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL. SHE MARRIED
SUNDA AND BORE A SON, MARICHA.

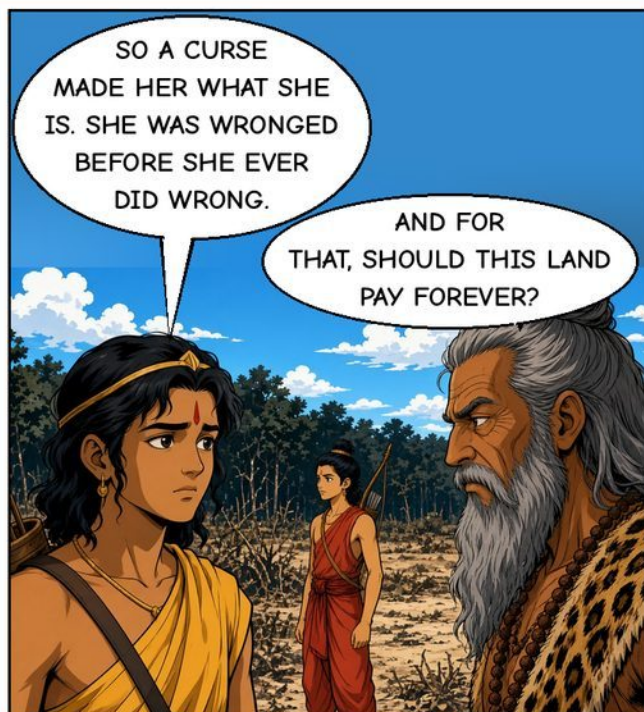


WHEN AGASTYA'S CURSE
STRUCK SUNDA DEAD, TATAKA
AND MARICHA RUSHED AT
THE SAGE TO DEVOUR HIM.

MARICHA, BECOME
A RAKSHASA! TATAKA, LOSE YOUR
BEAUTY AND BECOME A MAN-EATER,
TERRIBLE TO BEHOLD.

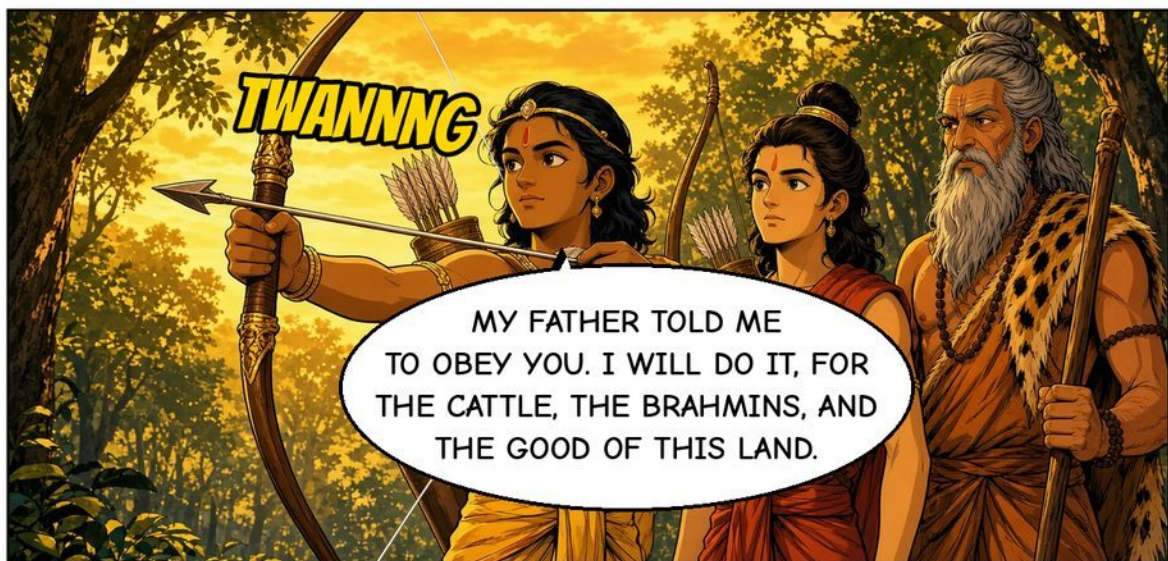
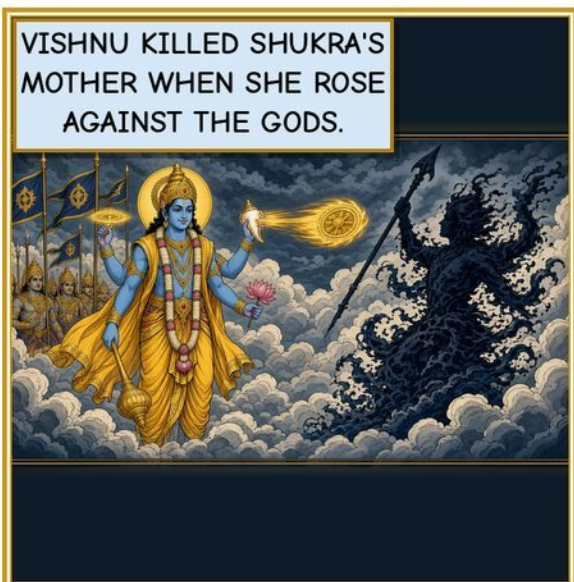
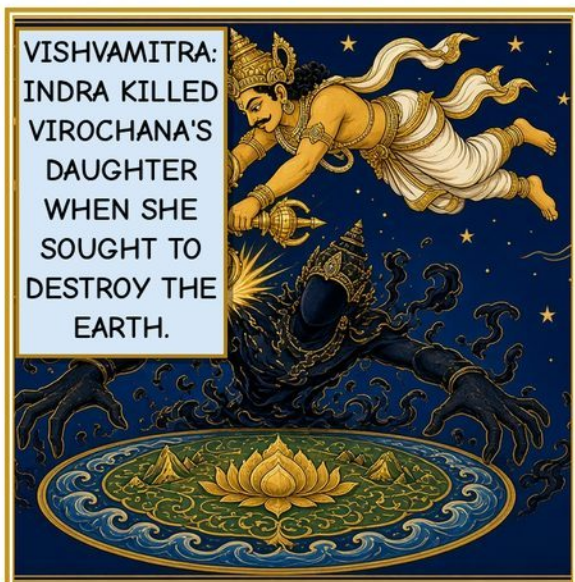


BECAUSE
AGASTYA
ONCE LIVED
HERE, SHE
HAS LAID
THIS LAND
WASTE EVER
SINCE.



SO A CURSE
MADE HER WHAT SHE
IS. SHE WAS WRONGED
BEFORE SHE EVER
DID WRONG.

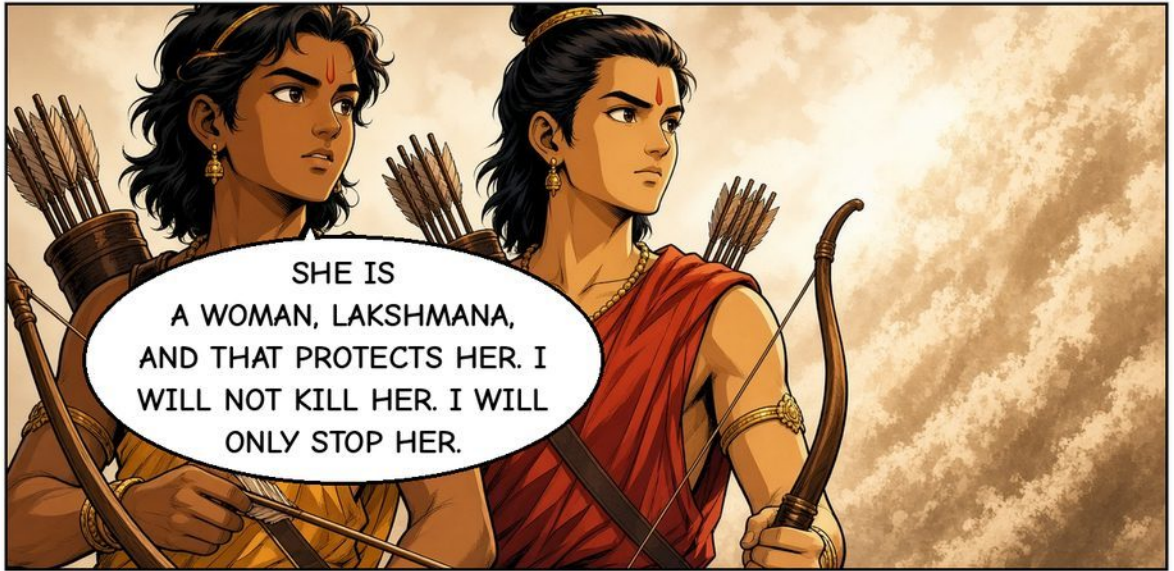
AND FOR
THAT, SHOULD THIS LAND
PAY FOREVER?



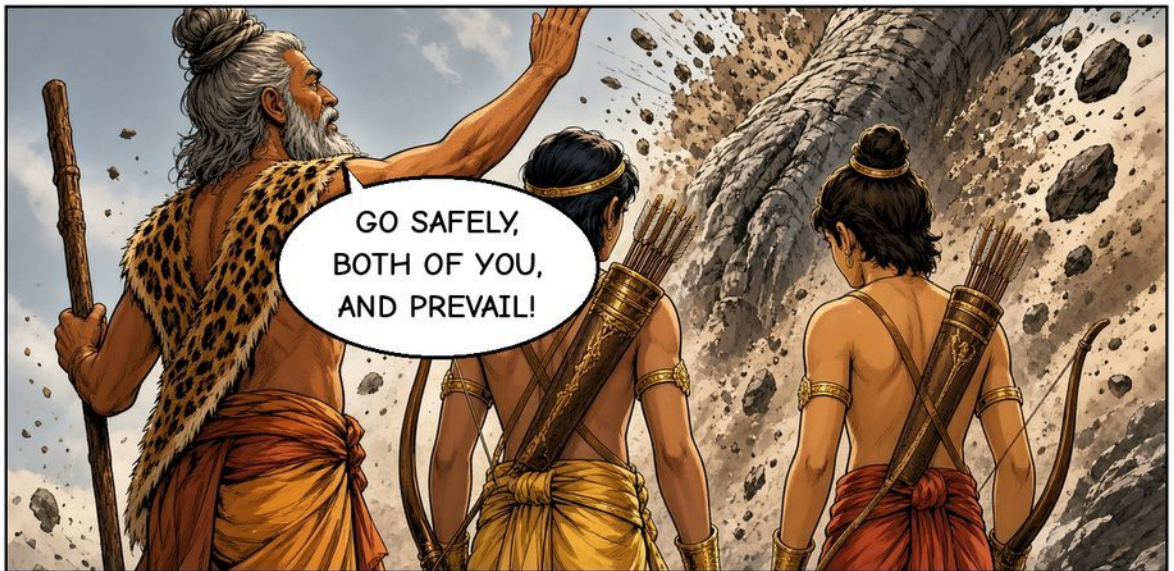
THE SOUND OF THE BOW
REACHED TATAKA. SHE
CAME OUT IN FURY.



SHE IS
A WOMAN, LAKSHMANA,
AND THAT PROTECTS HER. I
WILL NOT KILL HER. I WILL
ONLY STOP HER.



GO SAFELY,
BOTH OF YOU,
AND PREVAIL!



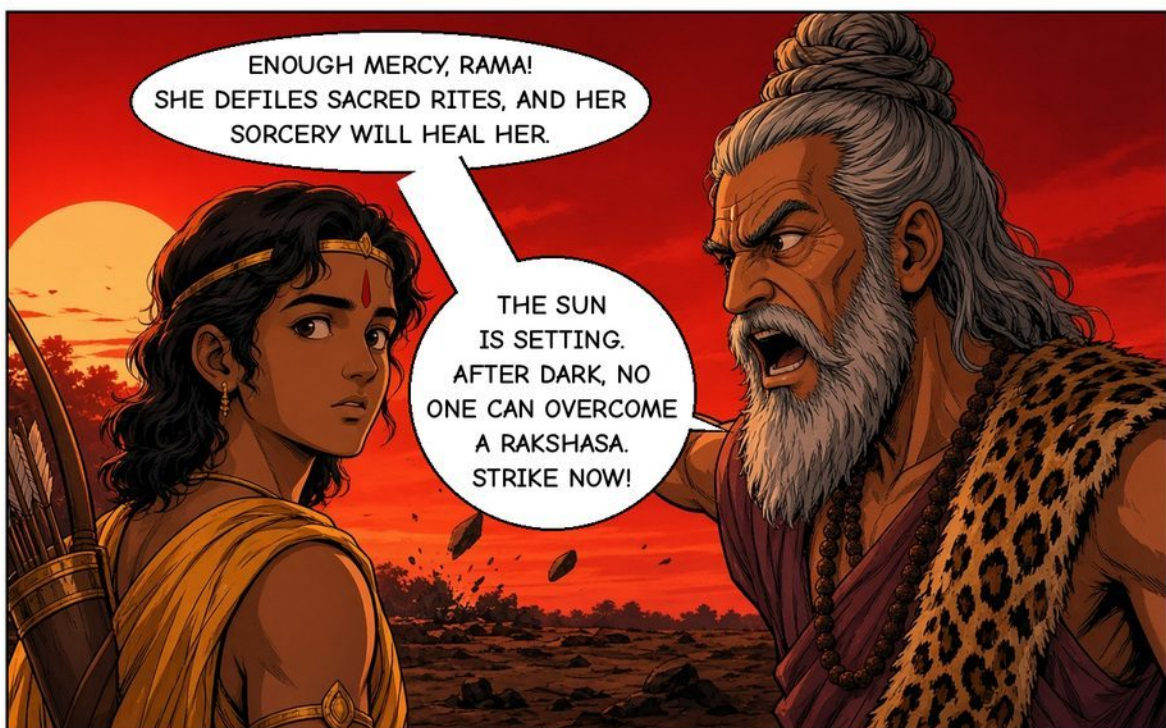
RAMA AIMED TO
STOP HER, NOT TO
KILL HER.

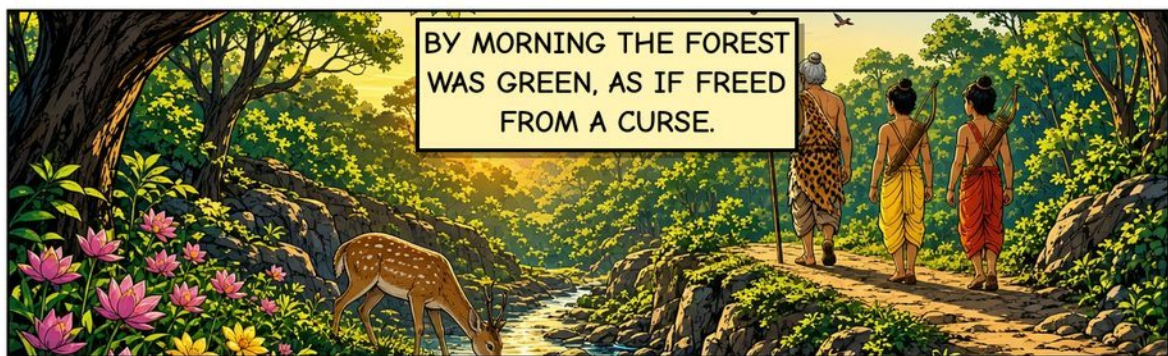
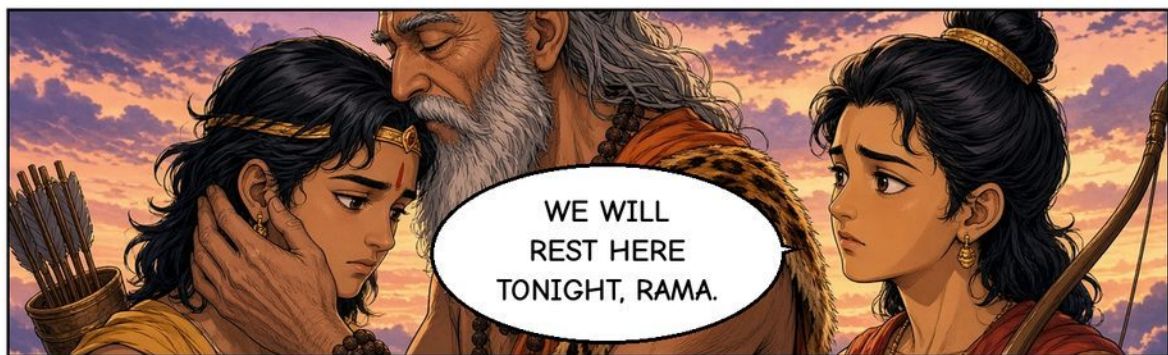


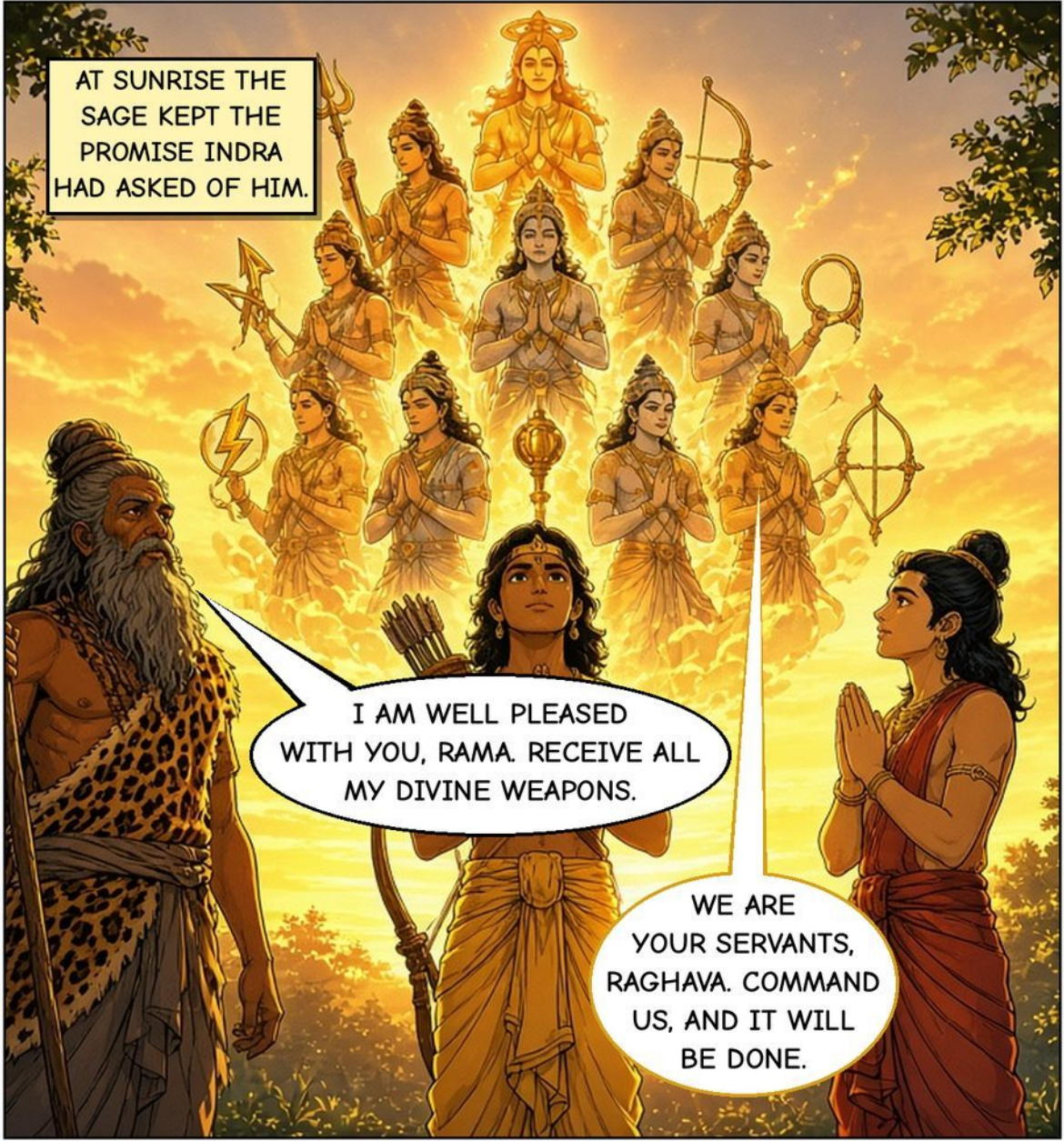
Note: In both texts Rama means only to stop her. Only the vulgate shows the attempt; in the Critical Edition one arrow ends it.

ENOUGH MERCY, RAMA!
SHE DEFILES SACRED RITES, AND HER
SORCERY WILL HEAL HER.

THE SUN
IS SETTING.
AFTER DARK, NO
ONE CAN OVERCOME
A RAKSHASA.
STRIKE NOW!





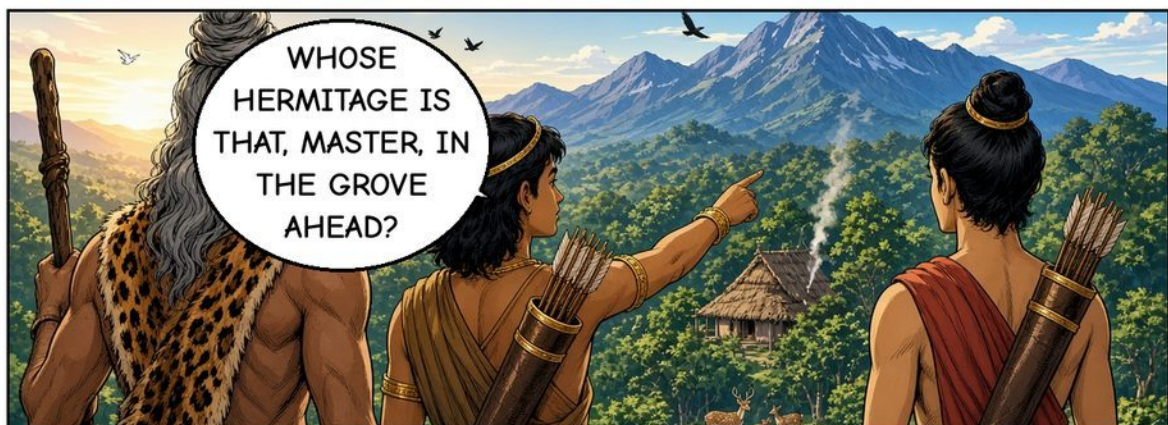
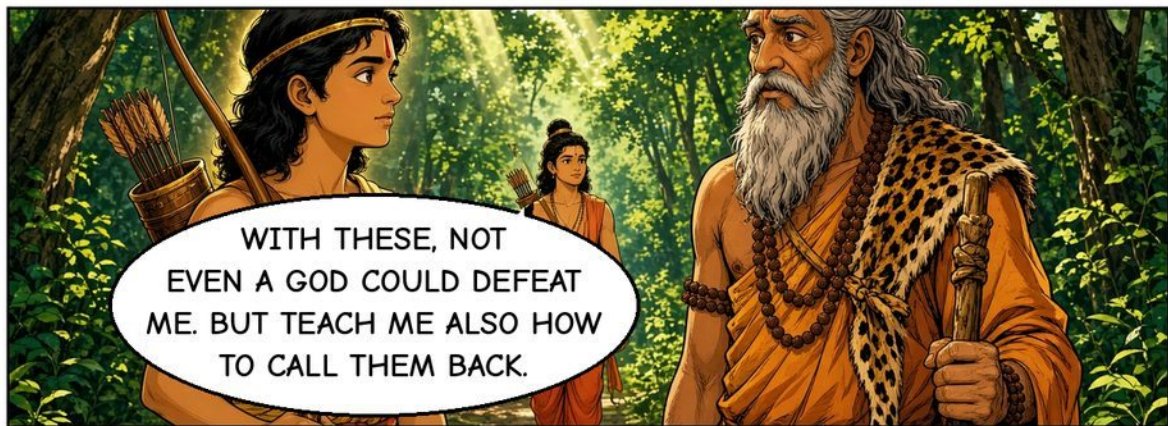


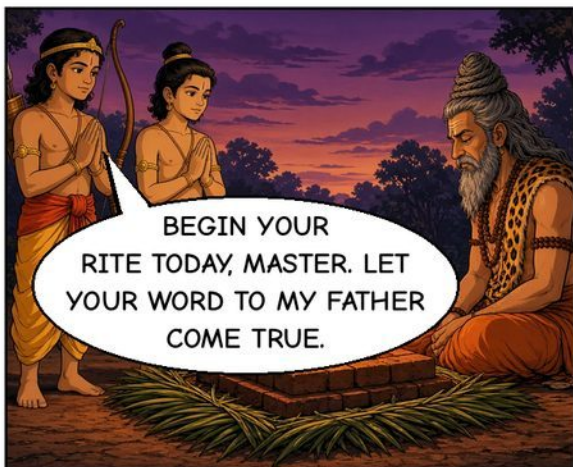
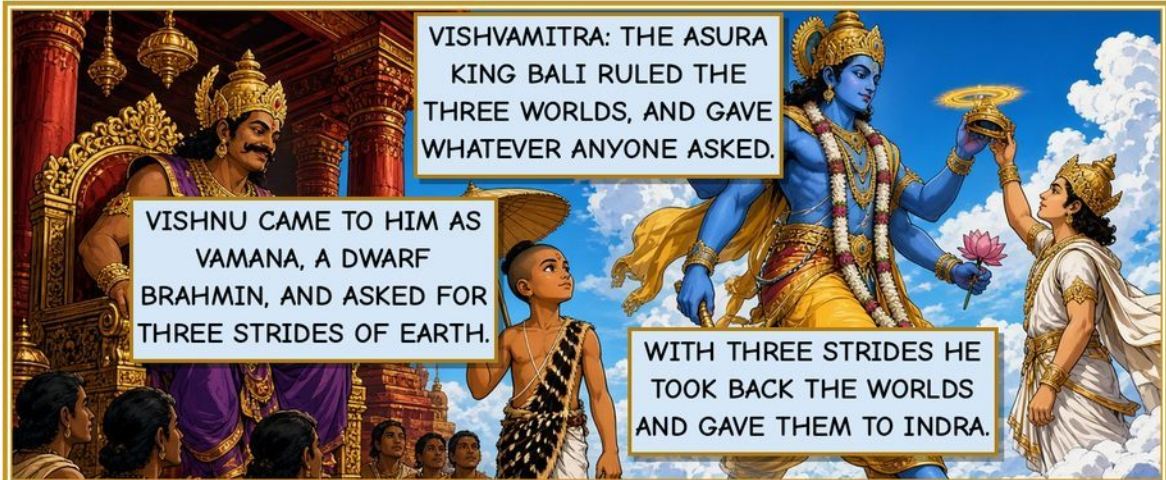
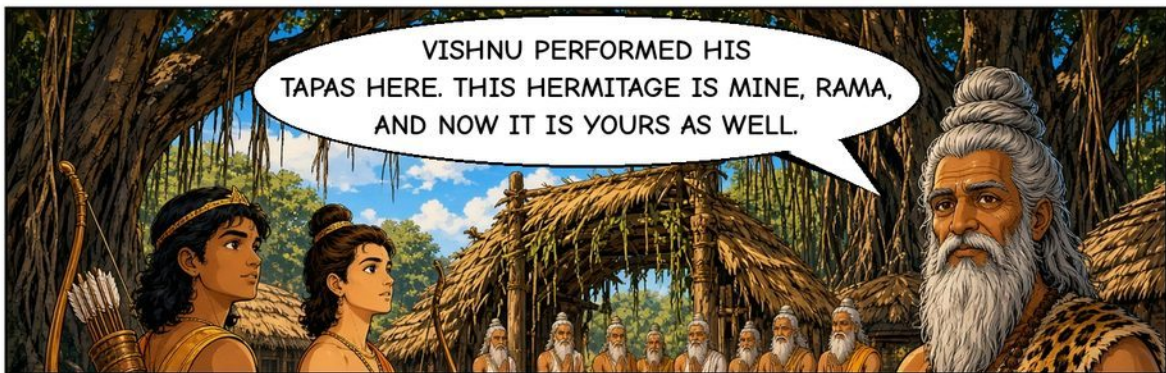
AT SUNRISE THE
SAGE KEPT THE
PROMISE INDRA
HAD ASKED OF HIM.

I AM WELL PLEASED
WITH YOU, RAMA. RECEIVE ALL
MY DIVINE WEAPONS.

WE ARE
YOUR SERVANTS,
RAGHAVA. COMMAND
US, AND IT WILL
BE DONE.

COME WHEN
I THINK OF YOU.



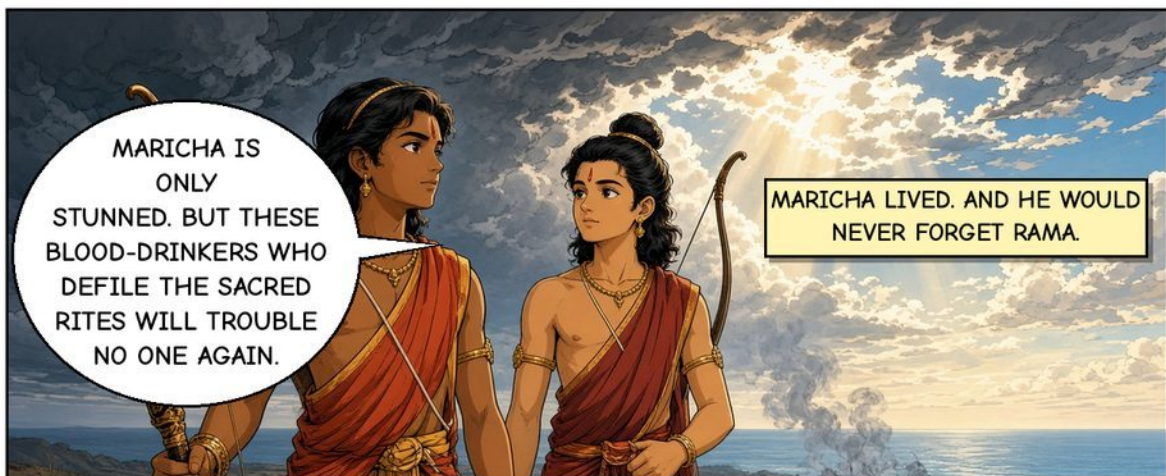


ON THE SIXTH DAY, THE
ALTAR BLAZED UP, AND
THE RAKSHASAS CAME.

FWOOM
THWAAM

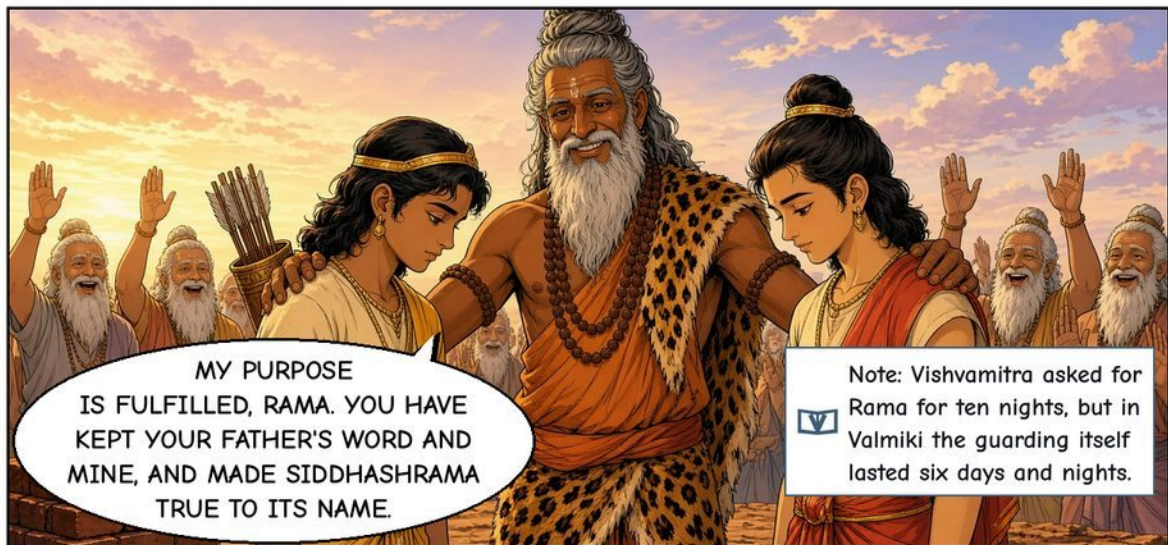


Note: In Valmiki, Rama's "cold" Manava arrow carries Maricha off alive. Years later, Maricha tells Ravana, "Rama did not wish to kill me."



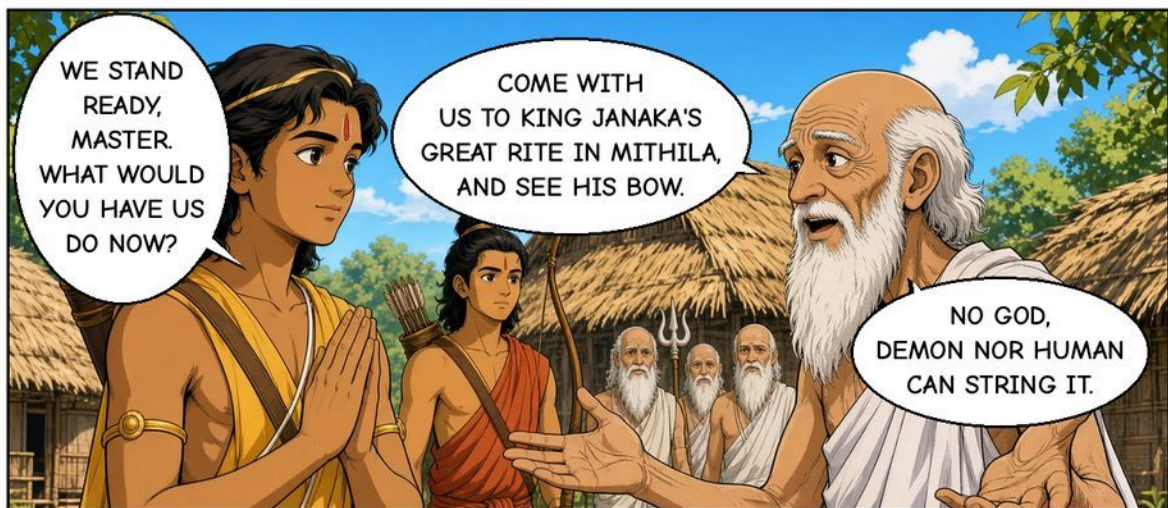
MARICHA IS
ONLY
STUNNED. BUT THESE
BLOOD-DRINKERS WHO
DEFILE THE SACRED
RITES WILL TROUBLE
NO ONE AGAIN.

MARICHA LIVED. AND HE WOULD
NEVER FORGET RAMA.



MY PURPOSE
IS FULFILLED, RAMA. YOU HAVE
KEPT YOUR FATHER'S WORD AND
MINE, AND MADE SIDDHASHRAMA
TRUE TO ITS NAME.

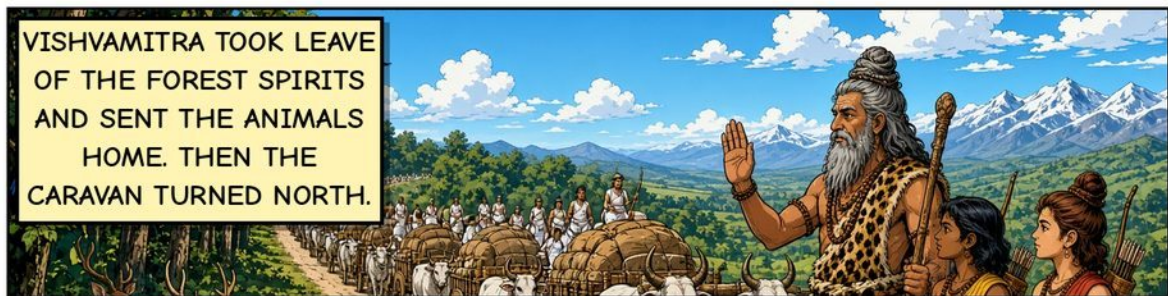
Note: Vishvamitra asked for
Rama for ten nights, but in
Valmiki the guarding itself
lasted six days and nights.



WE STAND
READY,
MASTER.
WHAT WOULD
YOU HAVE US
DO NOW?

COME WITH
US TO KING JANAKA'S
GREAT RITE IN MITHILA,
AND SEE HIS BOW.

NO GOD,
DEMON NOR HUMAN
CAN STRING IT.

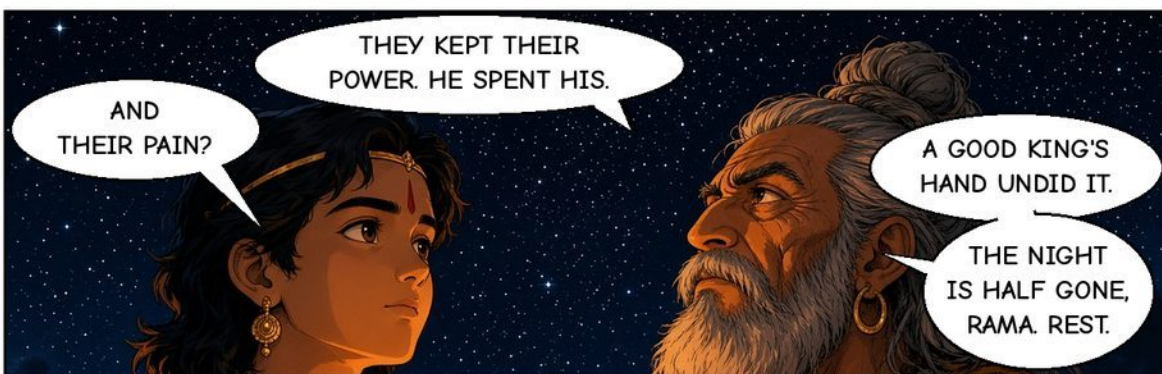
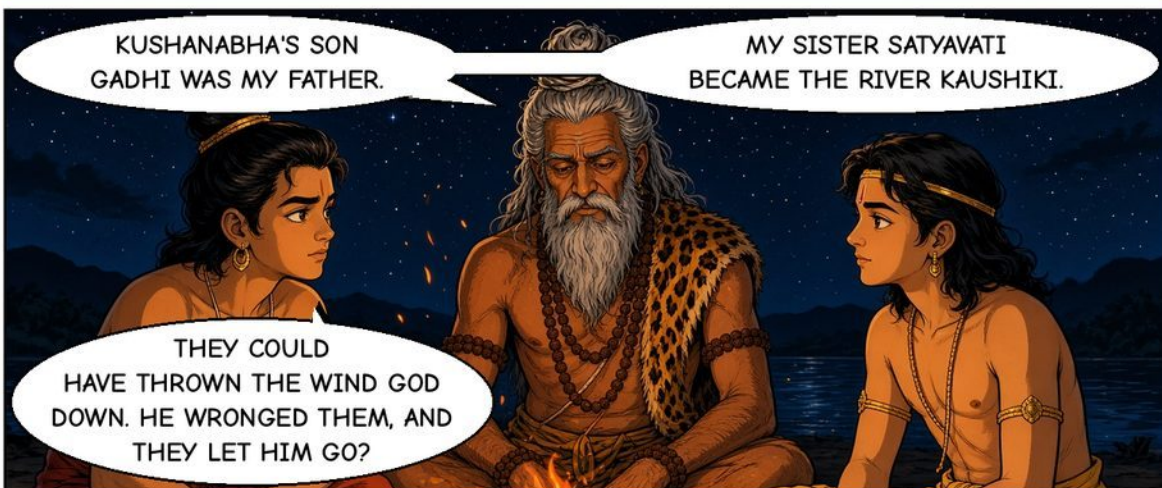
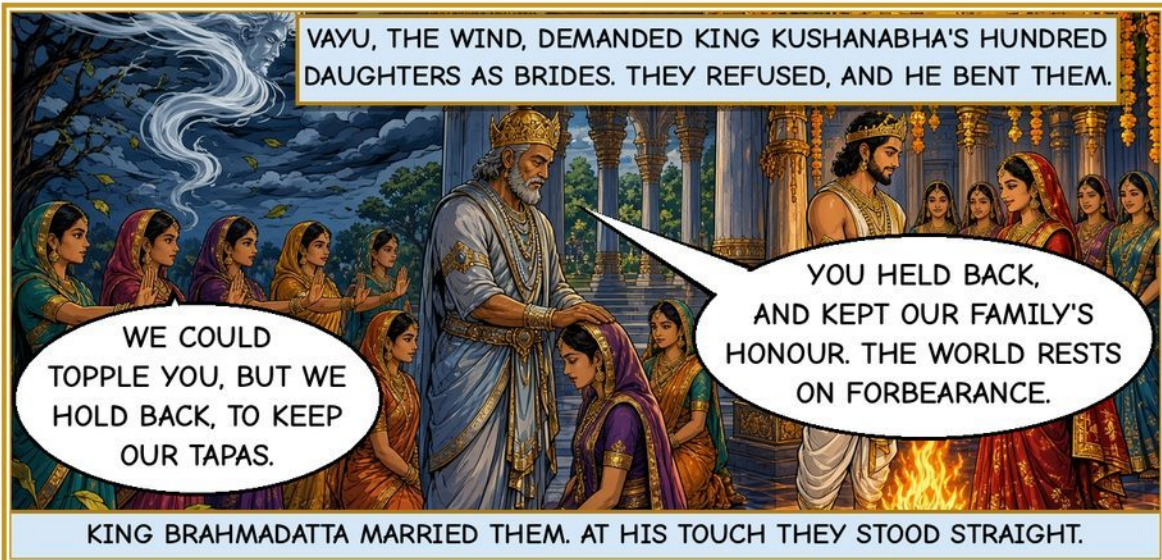
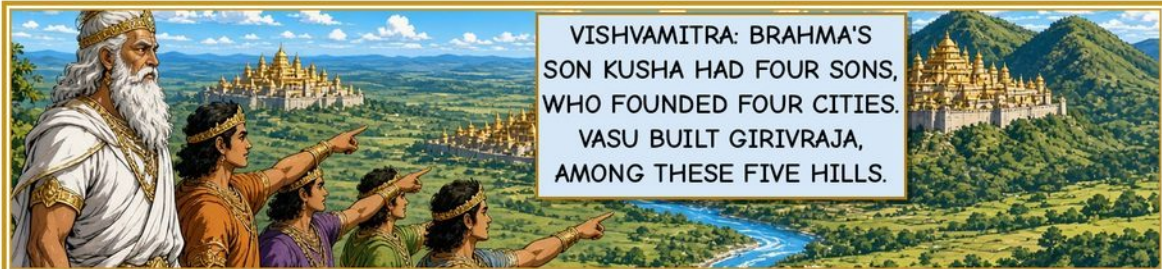


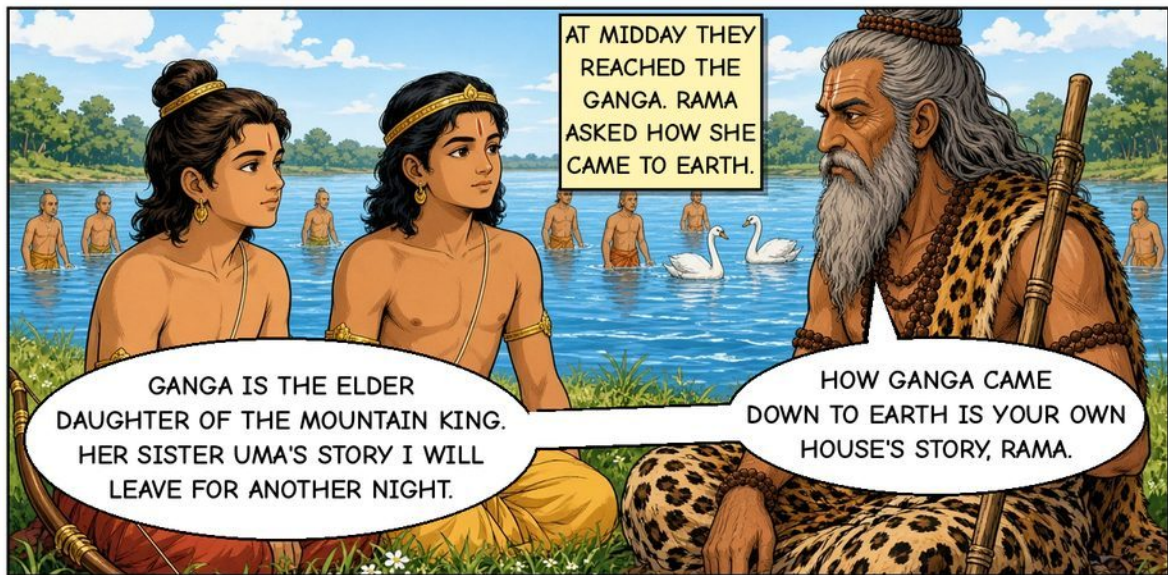
VISHVAMITRA TOOK LEAVE
OF THE FOREST SPIRITS
AND SENT THE ANIMALS
HOME. THEN THE
CARAVAN TURNED NORTH.



WHOSE LAND
IS THIS,
MASTER, SO RICH
WITH WOODS?

YOU ASK
ABOUT THIS
LAND. THEN
HEAR ABOUT
MY FAMILY.

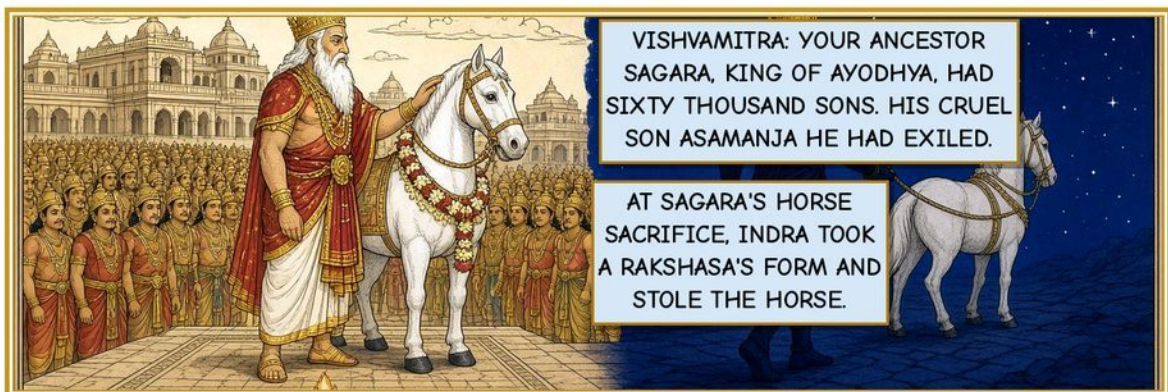




AT MIDDAY THEY
REACHED THE
GANGA. RAMA
ASKED HOW SHE
CAME TO EARTH.

GANGA IS THE ELDER
DAUGHTER OF THE MOUNTAIN KING.
HER SISTER UMA'S STORY I WILL
LEAVE FOR ANOTHER NIGHT.

HOW GANGA CAME
DOWN TO EARTH IS YOUR OWN
HOUSE'S STORY, RAMA.

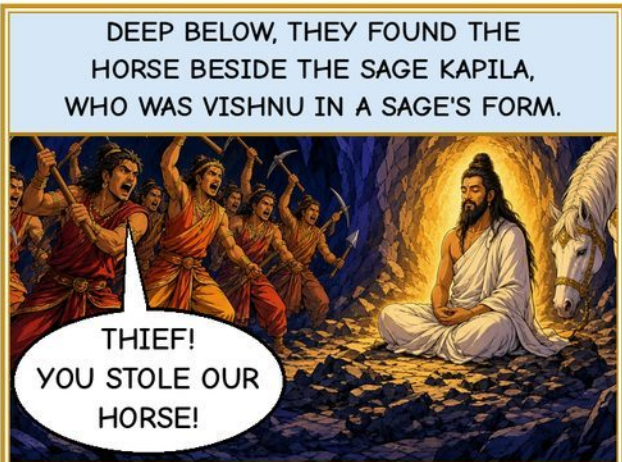


VISHVAMITRA: YOUR ANCESTOR
SAGARA, KING OF AYODHYA, HAD
SIXTY THOUSAND SONS. HIS CRUEL
SON ASAMANJA HE HAD EXILED.

AT SAGARA'S HORSE
SACRIFICE, INDRA TOOK
A RAKSHASA'S FORM AND
STOLE THE HORSE.

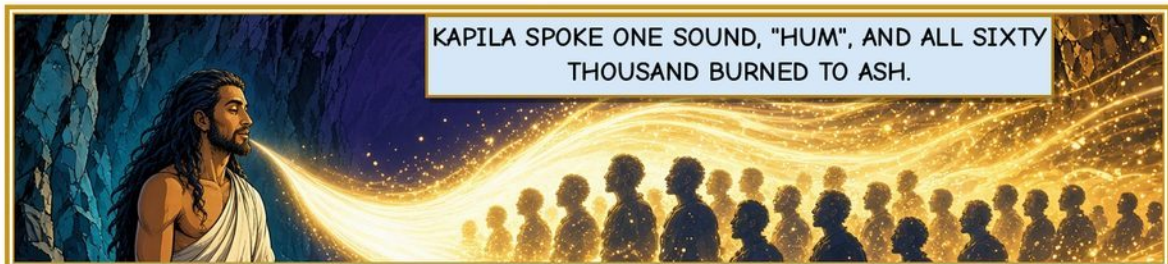


SAGARA SENT HIS SONS TO FIND IT. THEY
DUG UP THE WHOLE EARTH, KILLING
EVERY CREATURE IN THEIR WAY.



DEEP BELOW, THEY FOUND THE
HORSE BESIDE THE SAGE KAPILA,
WHO WAS VISHNU IN A SAGE'S FORM.

THIEF!
YOU STOLE OUR
HORSE!



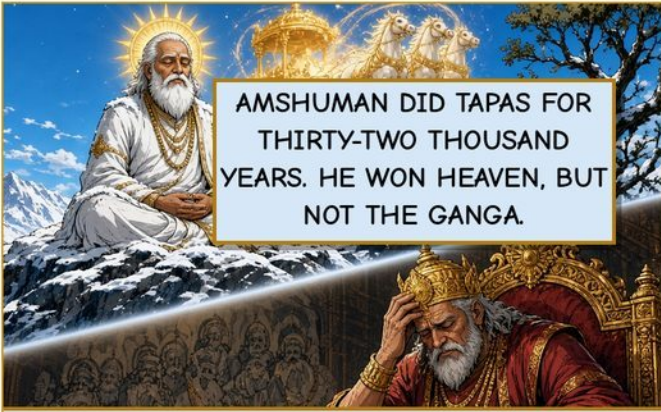
KAPILA SPOKE ONE SOUND, "HUM", AND ALL SIXTY
THOUSAND BURNED TO ASH.

VISHVAMITRA: SAGARA'S GRANDSON AMSHUMAN FOUND THE ASHES. GARUDA TOLD HIM ONLY THE HEAVENLY GANGA COULD FREE THEM.

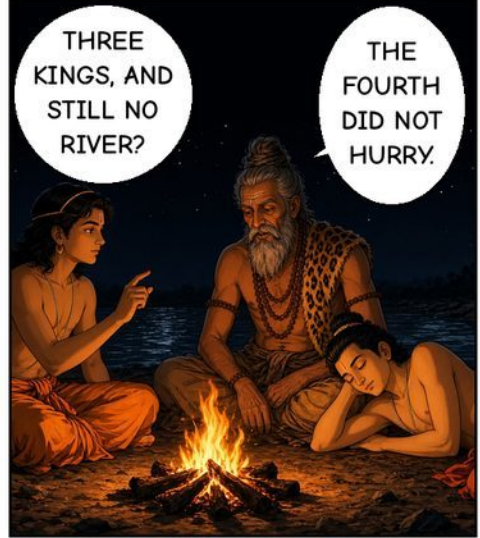
SAGARA FINISHED HIS SACRIFICE, AND DIED NOT KNOWING HOW TO BRING HER DOWN.



AMSHUMAN DID TAPAS FOR THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND YEARS. HE WON HEAVEN, BUT NOT THE GANGA.



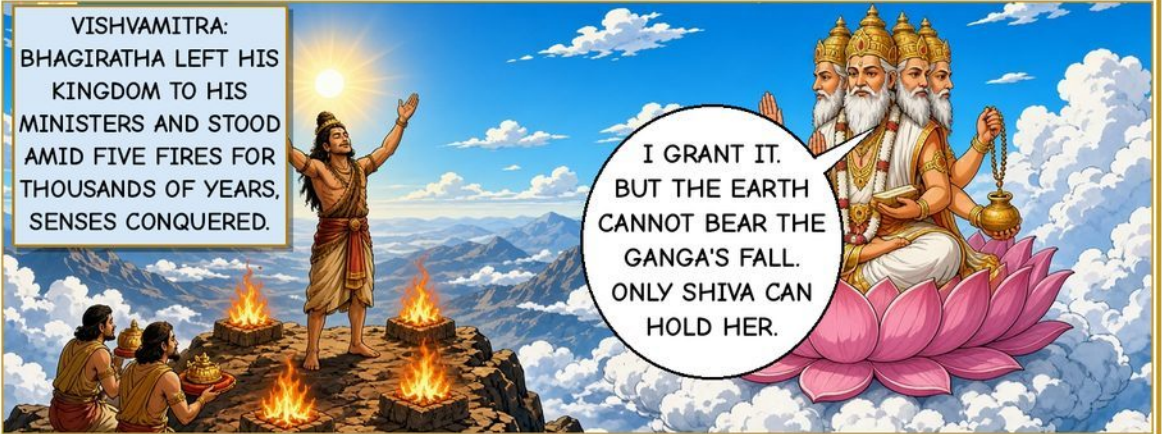
HIS SON DILIPA SEARCHED ALL HIS LIFE, THEN FELL ILL AND DIED WITHOUT FINDING A WAY.



THREE KINGS, AND STILL NO RIVER?

THE FOURTH DID NOT HURRY.

VISHVAMITRA: BHAGIRATHA LEFT HIS KINGDOM TO HIS MINISTERS AND STOOD AMID FIVE FIRES FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, SENSES CONQUERED.



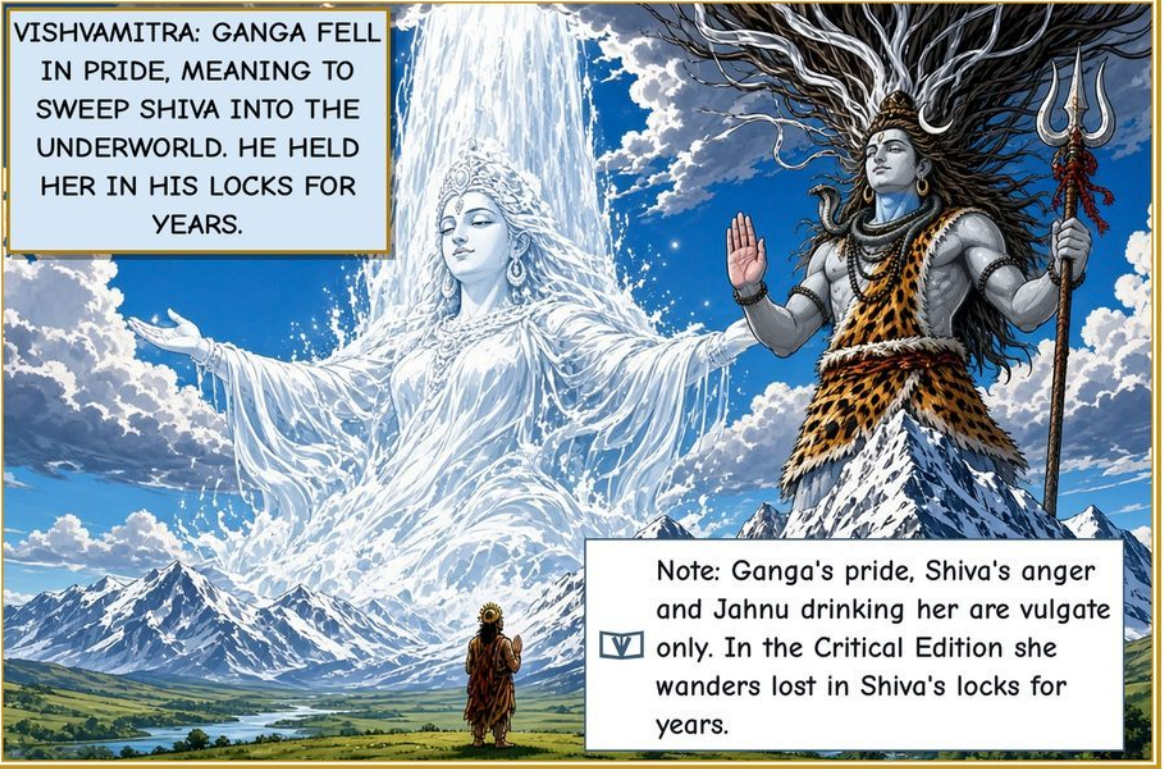
I GRANT IT. BUT THE EARTH CANNOT BEAR THE GANGA'S FALL. ONLY SHIVA CAN HOLD HER.

SO BHAGIRATHA STOOD ON ONE TOE FOR A YEAR, UNTIL SHIVA CAME.

I AM PLEASED. I WILL BEAR THE MOUNTAIN KING'S DAUGHTER ON MY HEAD.

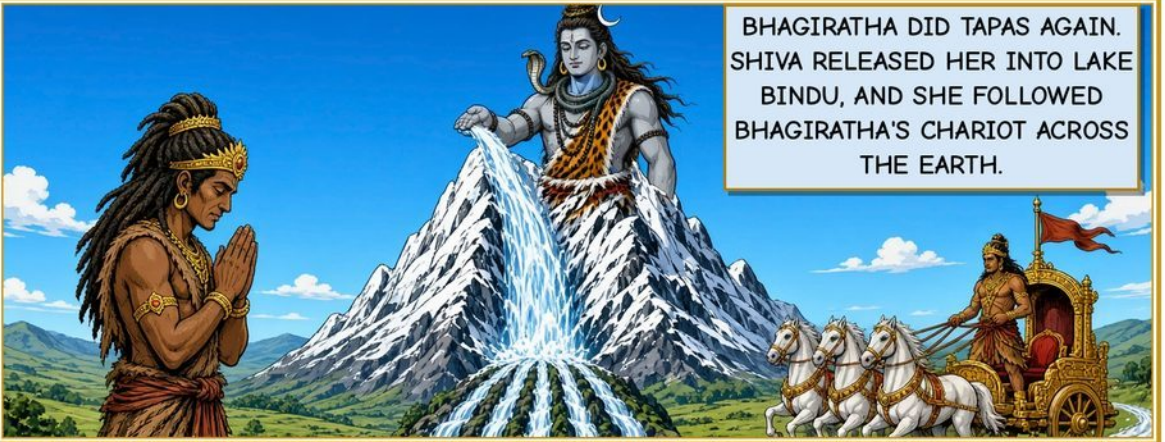


VISHVAMITRA: GANGA FELL IN PRIDE, MEANING TO SWEEP SHIVA INTO THE UNDERWORLD. HE HELD HER IN HIS LOCKS FOR YEARS.



Note: Ganga's pride, Shiva's anger and Jahnu drinking her are vulgate only. In the Critical Edition she wanders lost in Shiva's locks for years.

BHAGIRATHA DID TAPAS AGAIN. SHIVA RELEASED HER INTO LAKE BINDU, AND SHE FOLLOWED BHAGIRATHA'S CHARIOT ACROSS THE EARTH.

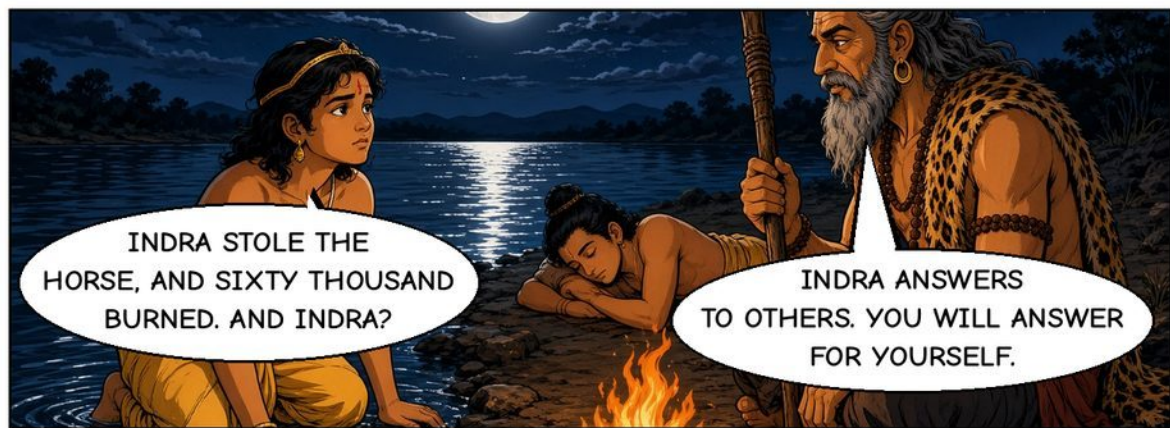


WHEN SHE FLOODED THE SAGE JAHNU'S RITE, HE DRANK HER UP, AND RELEASED HER ONLY WHEN THE GODS PLEADED.



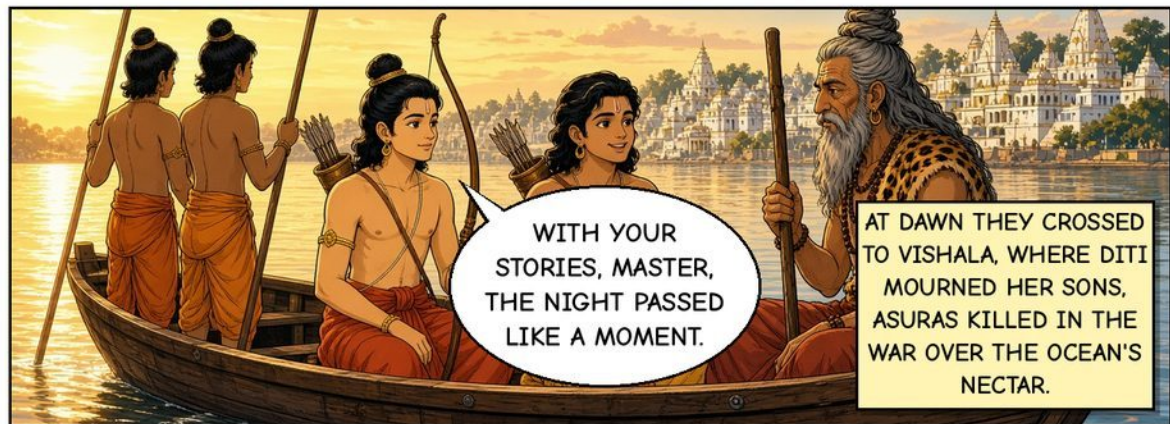
SHE REACHED THE ASHES, AND THE SIXTY THOUSAND ROSE TO HEAVEN. SINCE THEN SHE IS ALSO CALLED BHAGIRATHI.





INDRA STOLE THE HORSE, AND SIXTY THOUSAND BURNED. AND INDRA?

INDRA ANSWERS TO OTHERS. YOU WILL ANSWER FOR YOURSELF.



WITH YOUR STORIES, MASTER, THE NIGHT PASSED LIKE A MOMENT.

AT DAWN THEY CROSSED TO VISHALA, WHERE DITI MOURNED HER SONS, ASURAS KILLED IN THE WAR OVER THE OCEAN'S NECTAR.

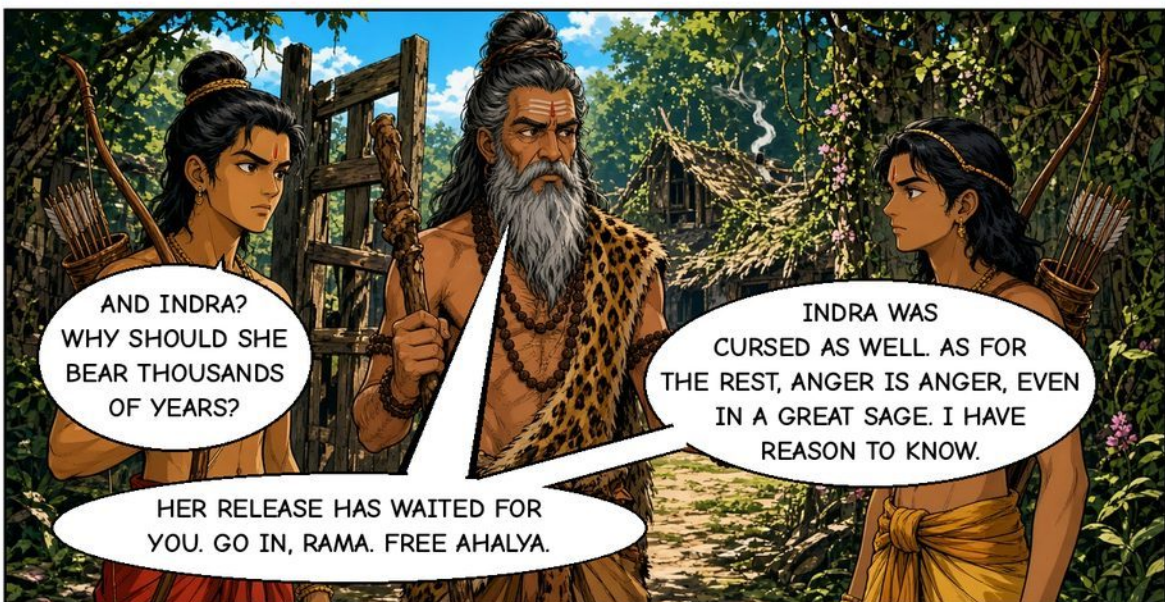
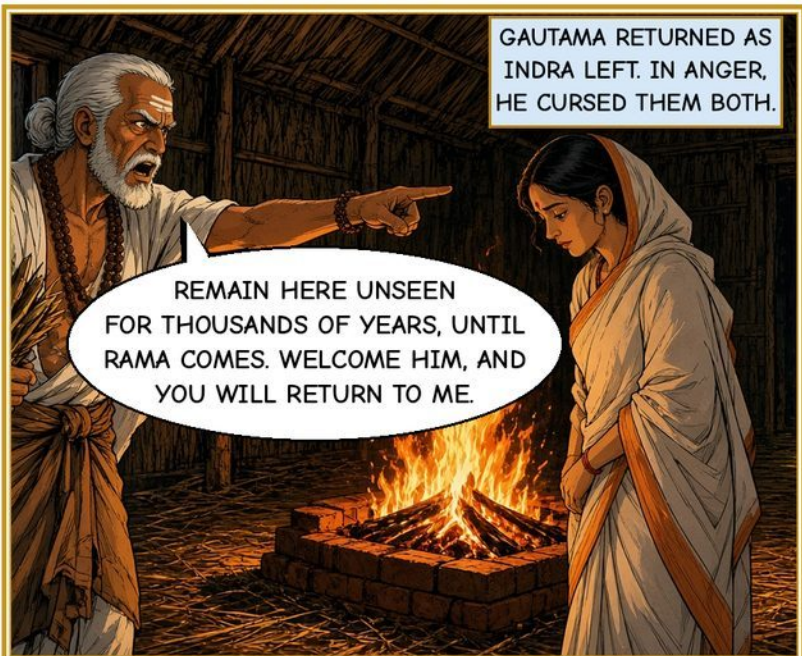
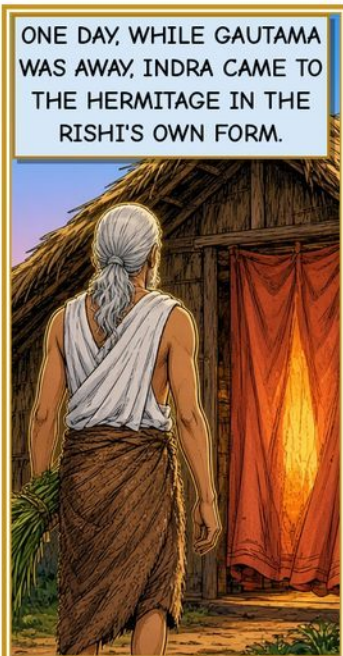


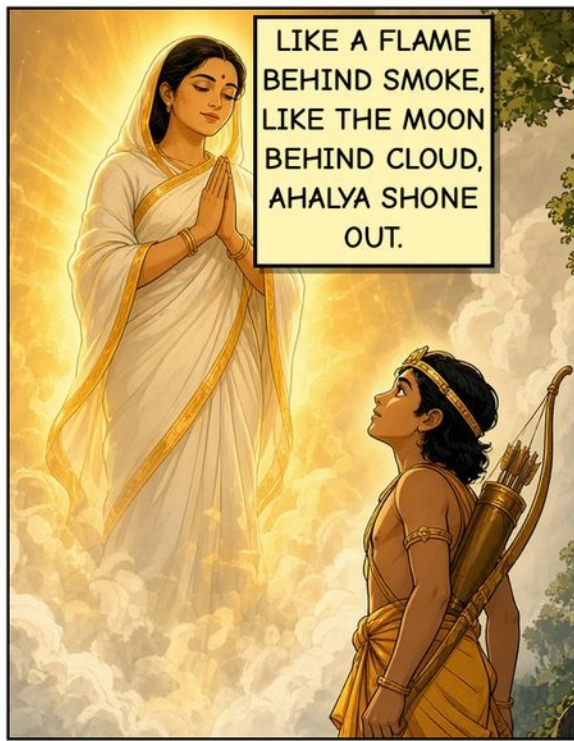
KING SUMATI OF VISHALA WELCOMED THEM. NEXT DAY THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF MITHILA.

THERE LIES MITHILA. HOW SPLENDID IT IS!

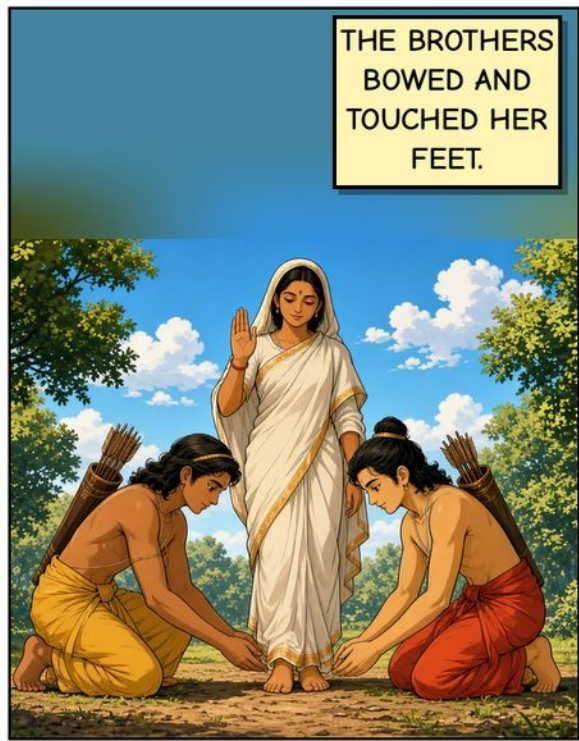


THIS HERMITAGE STANDS EMPTY. WHOSE WAS IT, MASTER?

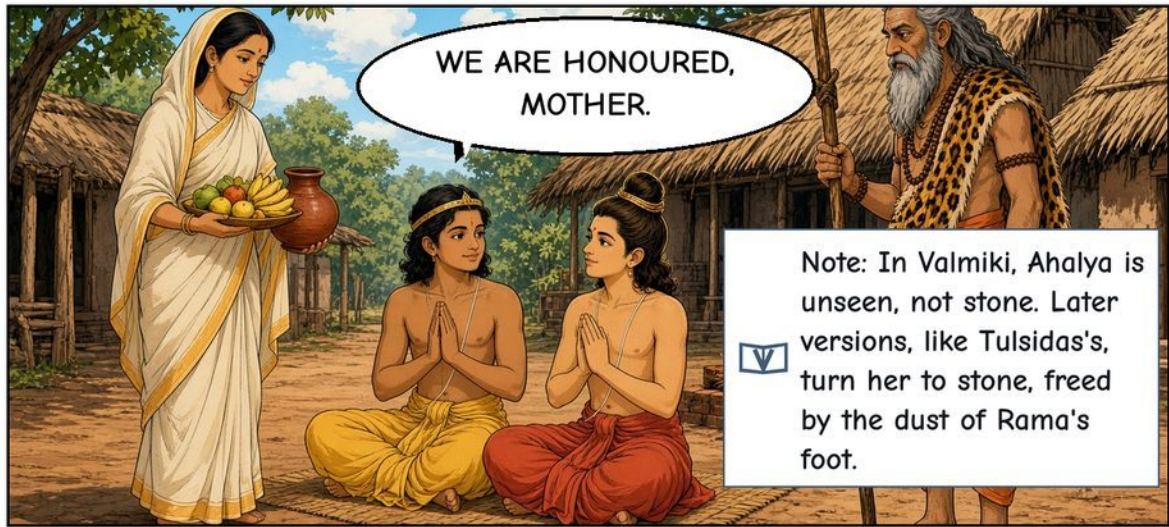




LIKE A FLAME
BEHIND SMOKE,
LIKE THE MOON
BEHIND CLOUD,
AHALYA SHONE
OUT.

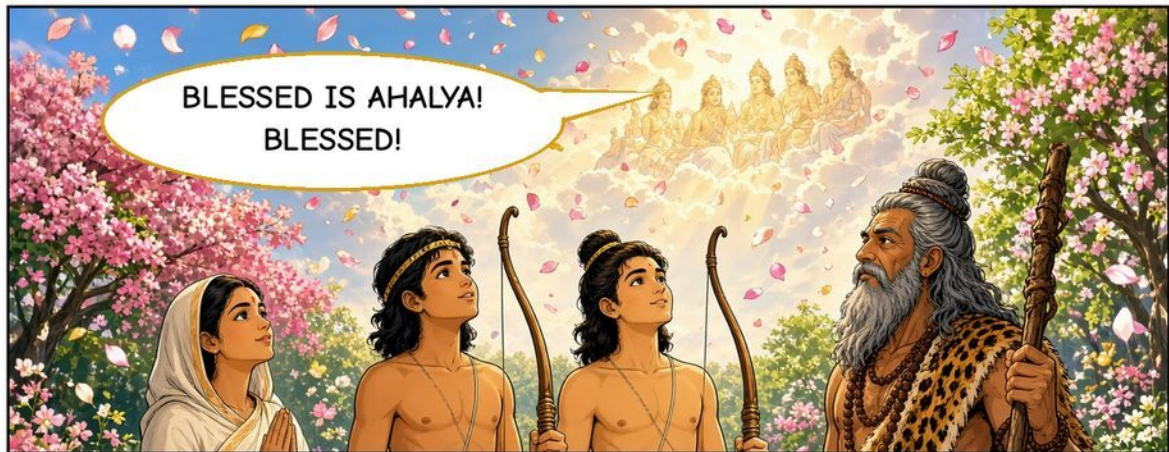


THE BROTHERS
BOWED AND
TOUCHED HER
FEET.

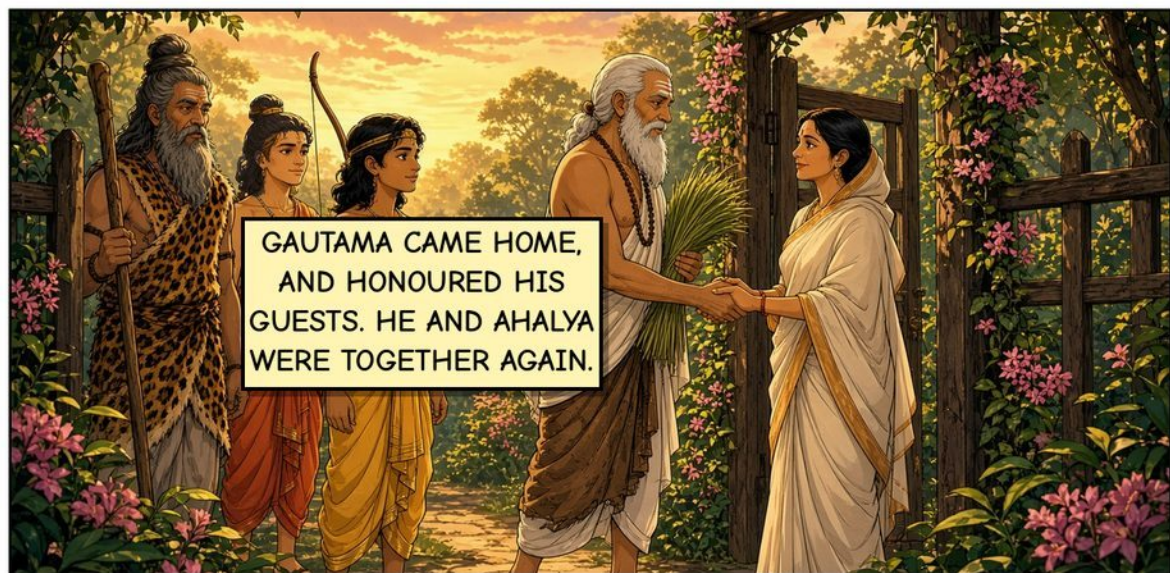


WE ARE HONOURED,
MOTHER.

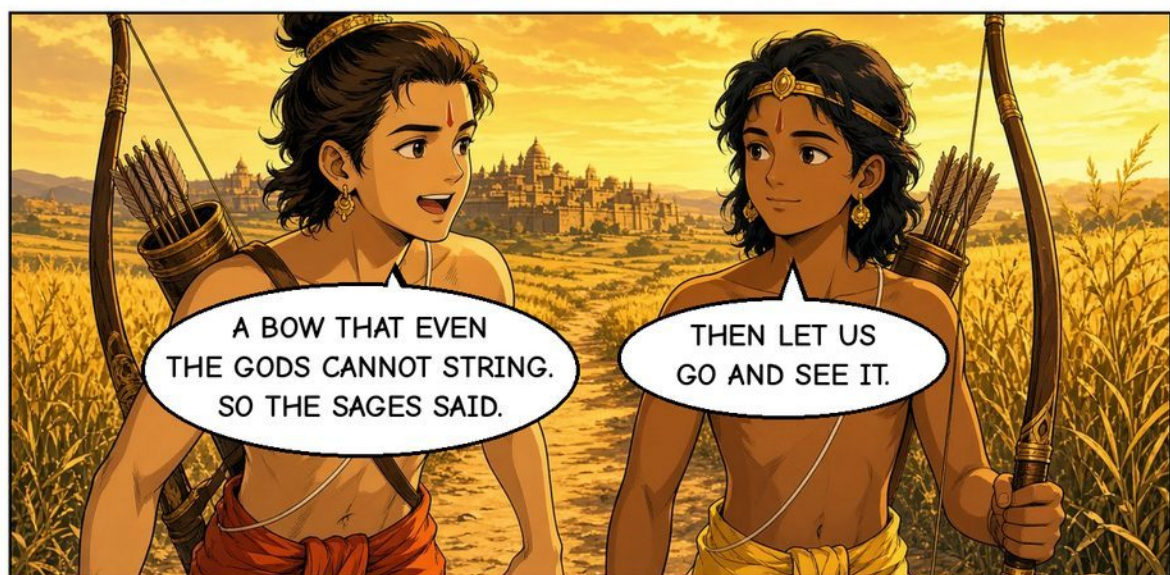
Note: In Valmiki, Ahalya is
unseen, not stone. Later
versions, like Tulsidas's,
turn her to stone, freed
by the dust of Rama's
foot.



BLESSED IS AHALYA!
BLESSED!

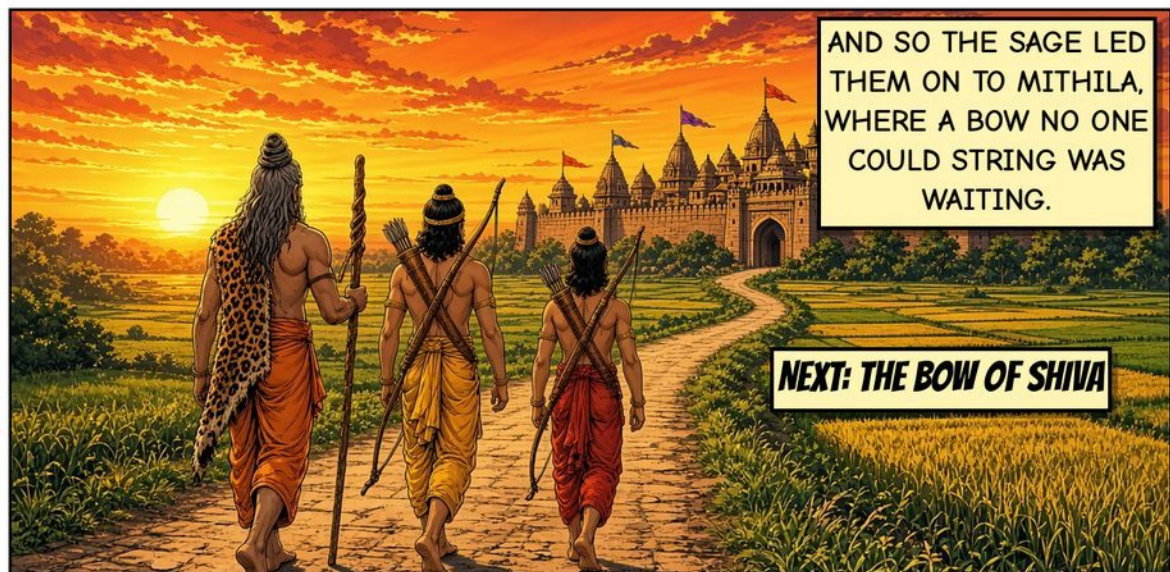


GAUTAMA CAME HOME,
AND HONoured HIS
GUESTS. HE AND AHALYA
WERE TOGETHER AGAIN.



A BOW THAT EVEN
THE GODS CANNOT STRING.
SO THE SAGES SAID.

THEN LET US
GO AND SEE IT.



AND SO THE SAGE LED
THEM ON TO MITHILA,
WHERE A BOW NO ONE
COULD STRING WAS
WAITING.

NEXT: THE BOW OF SHIVA