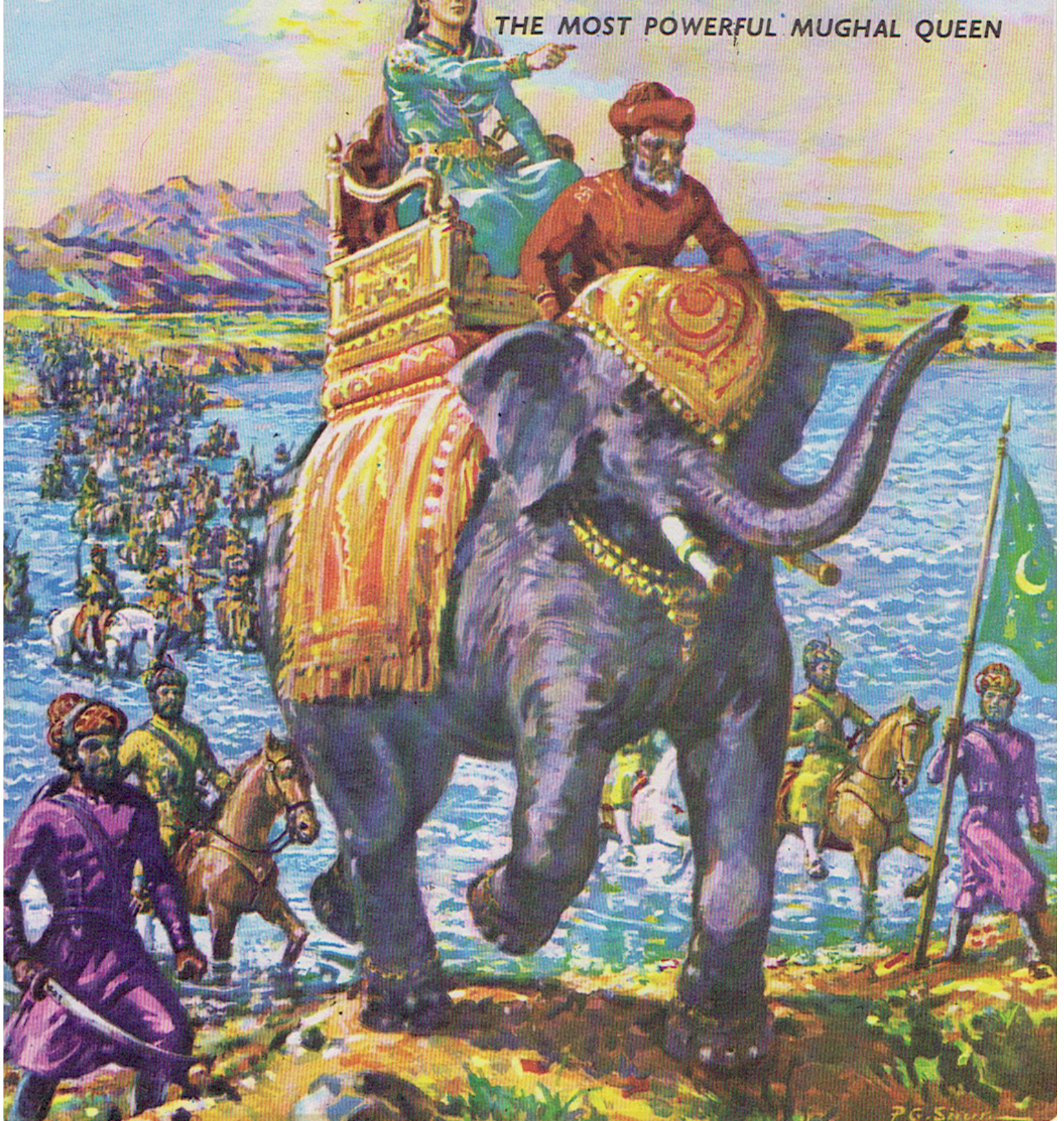




No. 148 Rs. 5-00

NOOR JAHAN

THE MOST POWERFUL MUGHAL QUEEN



Noor Jahan is one of the most fascinating figures of Mughal India. She showed considerable skill as an administrator and proved to be a shrewd statesman. Jahangir had full confidence in his queen. She received courtiers and held discussions with them regarding affairs of state. Coins were struck in her name with this super-inscription: "By order of the King, Jahangir: Gold has a hundred splendours added to it by receiving the impression of the name of Noor Jahan, the Queen Begum." Royal decrees carried her signature. As observed by Mutamid Khan, a historian who was Noor Jahan's contemporary, "her authority reached such a peak that the king was such only in name."

Noor Jahan was famous for her beauty and wisdom. She was an accomplished poet. She made the rose perfume, invented by her mother, popular. She was an adept in embroidery, and the fabrics and dresses designed by her dominated the world of fashion for many years.

As Abdul Rashid observes, "Fact and fiction have woven a web of romance around this colourful personality." According to popular legends, from which material for this book has been drawn, Noor Jahan and Jahangir were childhood playmates. But all the available evidence suggests that the two met for the first time at the Meena Bazaar, the family bazaar held annually at the palace of the emperor.

**AMAR CHITRA KATHA means good reading.
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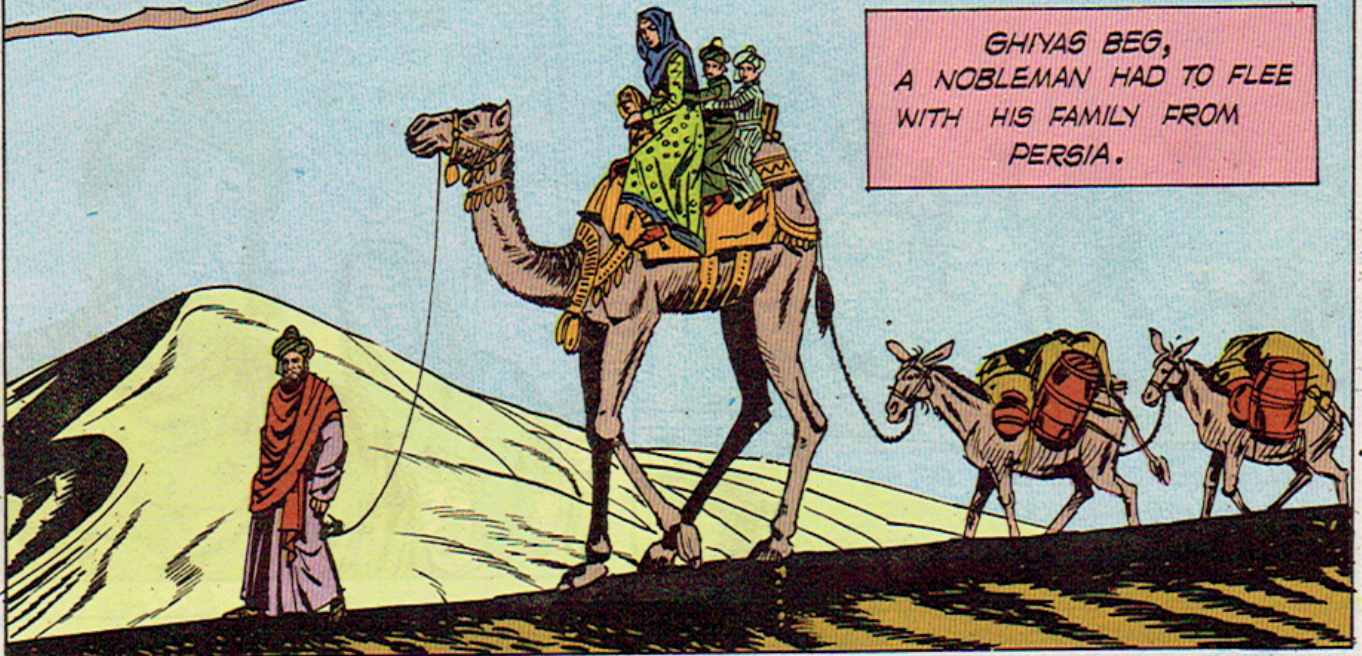
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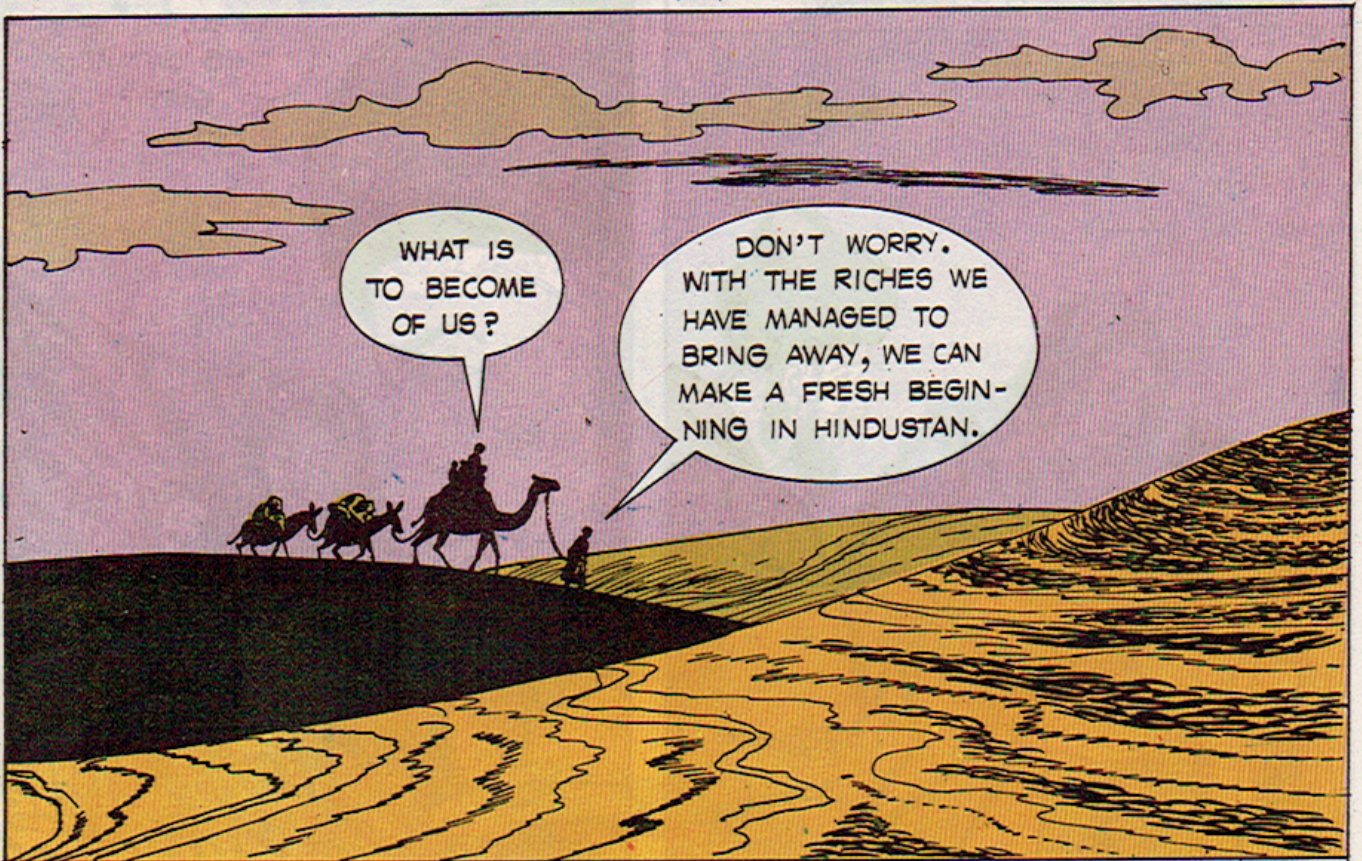
NOOR JAHAN

GHIYAS BEG,
A NOBLEMAN HAD TO FLEE
WITH HIS FAMILY FROM
PERSIA.



WHAT IS
TO BECOME
OF US?

DON'T WORRY.
WITH THE RICHES WE
HAVE MANAGED TO
BRING AWAY, WE CAN
MAKE A FRESH BEGIN-
NING IN HINDUSTAN.



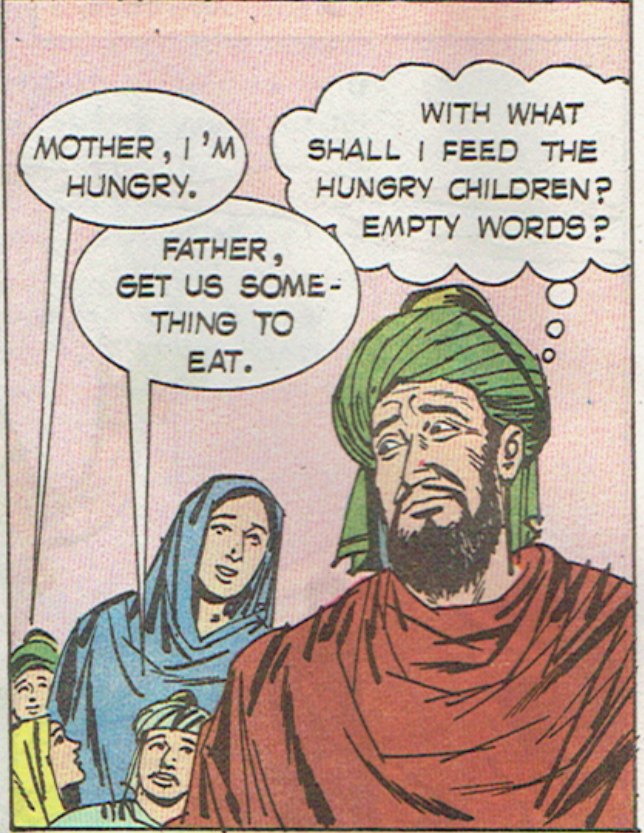
SUDDENLY —



DON'T MOVE. SURRENDER EVERYTHING IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIVES.

RELIEVING GHIYAS BEG OF HIS RICHES, HIS PROVISIONS AND HIS MULES, THE DACOITS RODE AWAY.

GHIYAS AND HIS FAMILY HAD TO TREK ACROSS THE DESERT. SOON—



MOTHER, I'M HUNGRY. WITH WHAT SHALL I FEED THE HUNGRY CHILDREN? EMPTY WORDS? FATHER, GET US SOMETHING TO EAT.

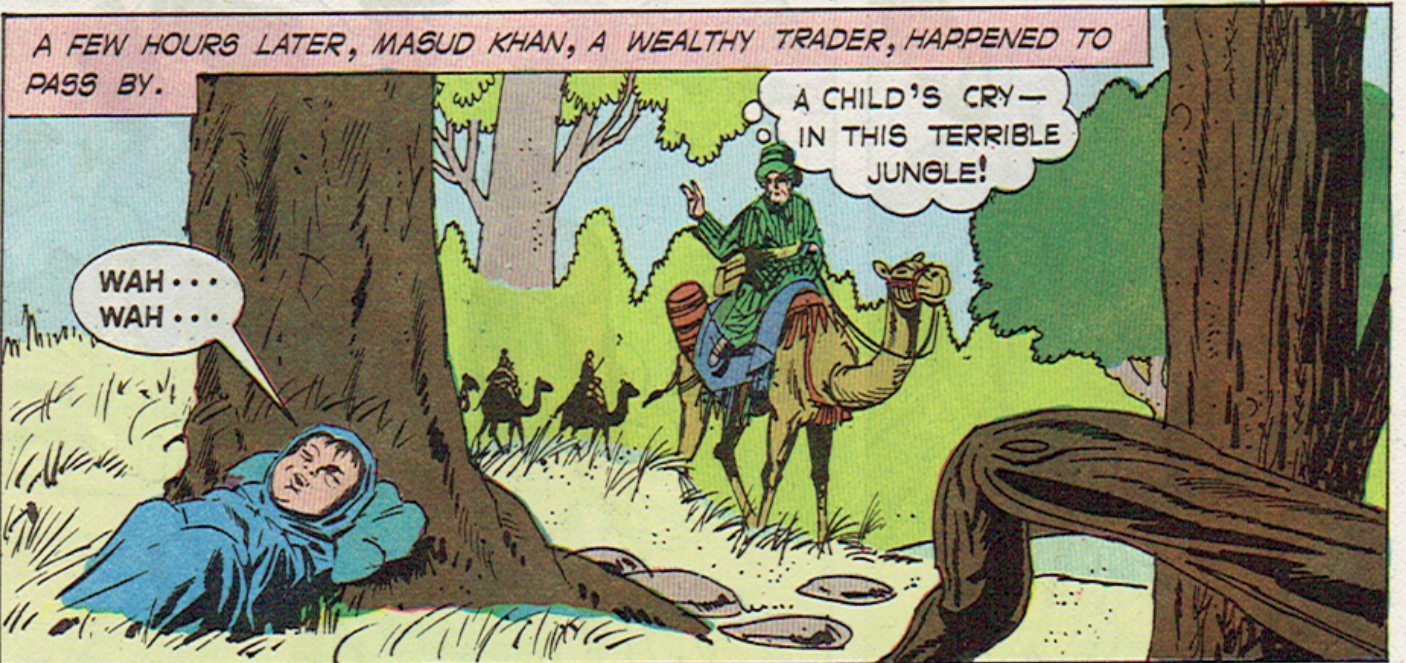
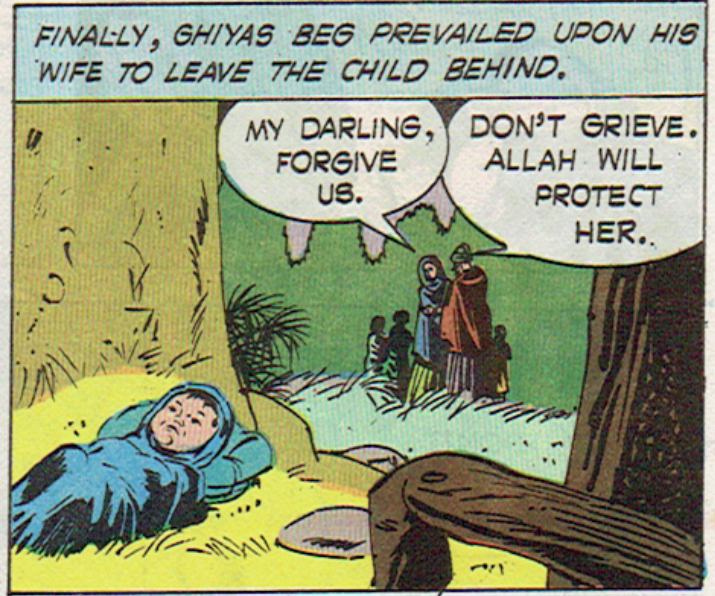
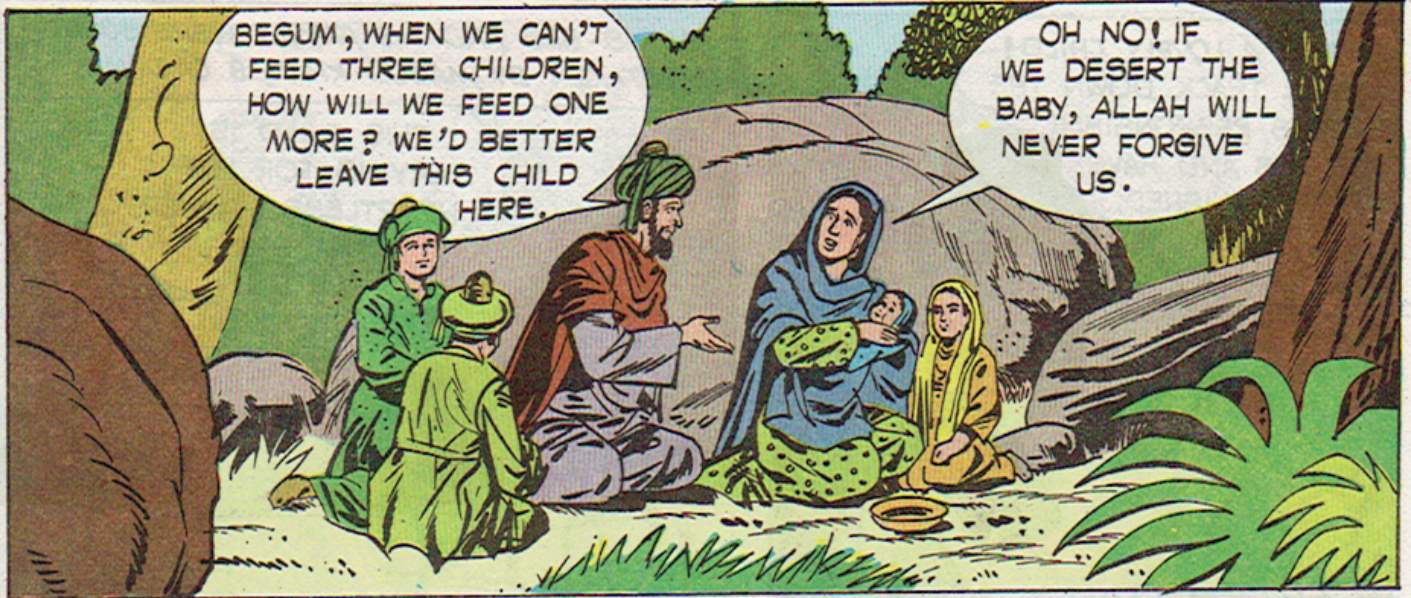
JUST THEN, OVERCOME BY HUNGER AND FATIGUE, GHIYAS BEG'S PREGNANT WIFE FAINTED...



... AND GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER.



YA ALLAH! * WHY THIS UNTIMELY GIFT?



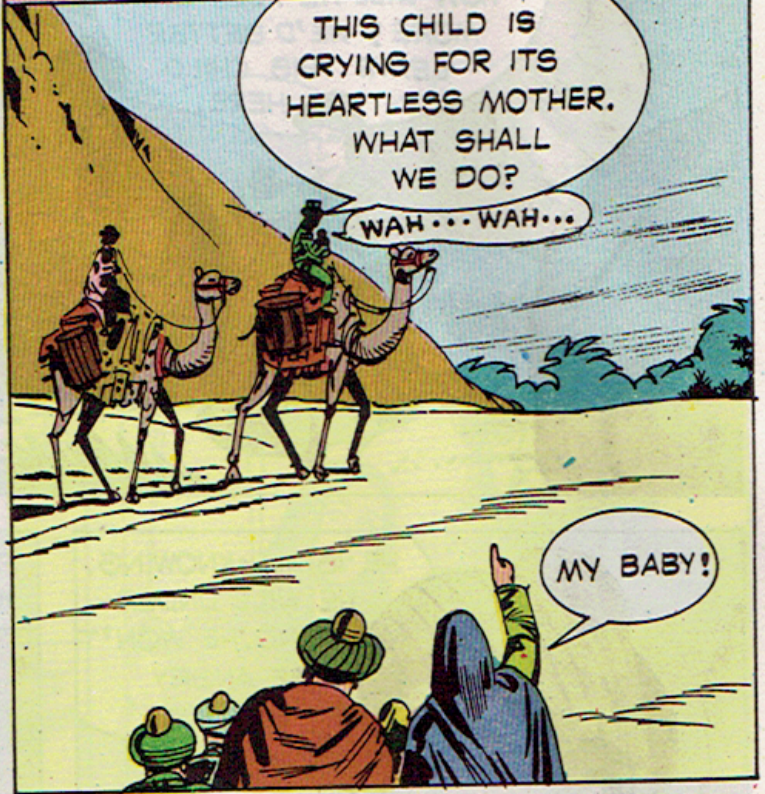
WHAT A LOVELY CHILD!
I WILL TRACK DOWN THE
BEASTS RESPONSIBLE
FOR THIS AND HAVE
THEM PUNISHED.



GHIYAS BEG AND HIS FAMILY WERE SOON
OVERTAKEN BY MASUD KHAN'S CARAVAN.

THIS CHILD IS
CRYING FOR ITS
HEARTLESS MOTHER.
WHAT SHALL
WE DO?

WAH... WAH...



MY BABY!

DON'T
CRY! I AM
COMING!



THE CHILD HAS CALMED
DOWN. SHE MUST
BE THE MOTHER.

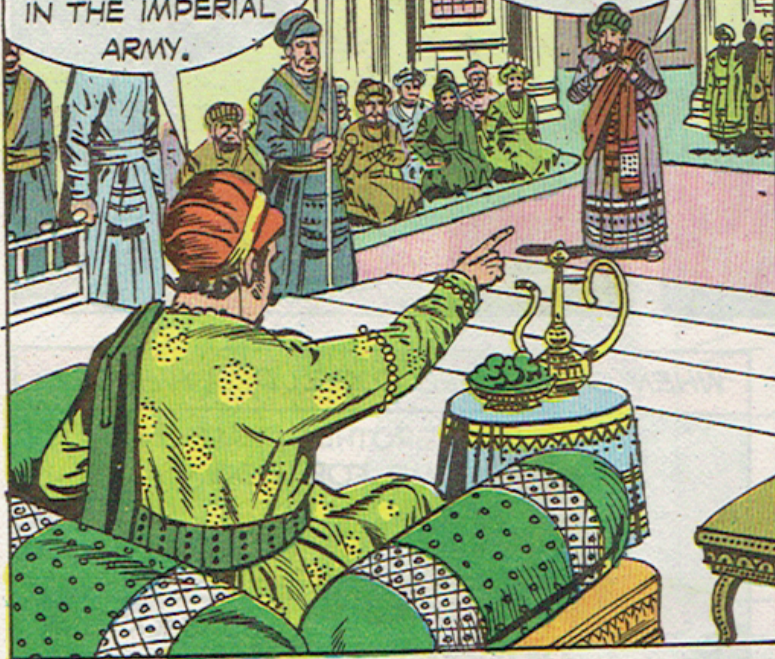




WHEN THEY REACHED HINDUSTAN, GHIYAS BEG WAS TAKEN TO THE COURT OF EMPEROR AKBAR AT FATEHPUR SIKRI.

WE ARE PLEASED TO APPOINT YOU AS A MANSABDAR* IN THE IMPERIAL ARMY.

I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, JAHANPANAHO.



BUT WHAT GHIYAS BEG EARNED AS MANSABDAR WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO MAINTAIN THE FAMILY. SO HIS WIFE SPENT HOURS EMBROIDERING SILKS WHILE MEHER WATCHED HER, FASCINATED.



EQUALLY FASCINATED WERE THE LADIES OF THE HAREM, TO WHOM SHE SOLD THE MATERIAL.

SUCH EXQUISITE WORK!

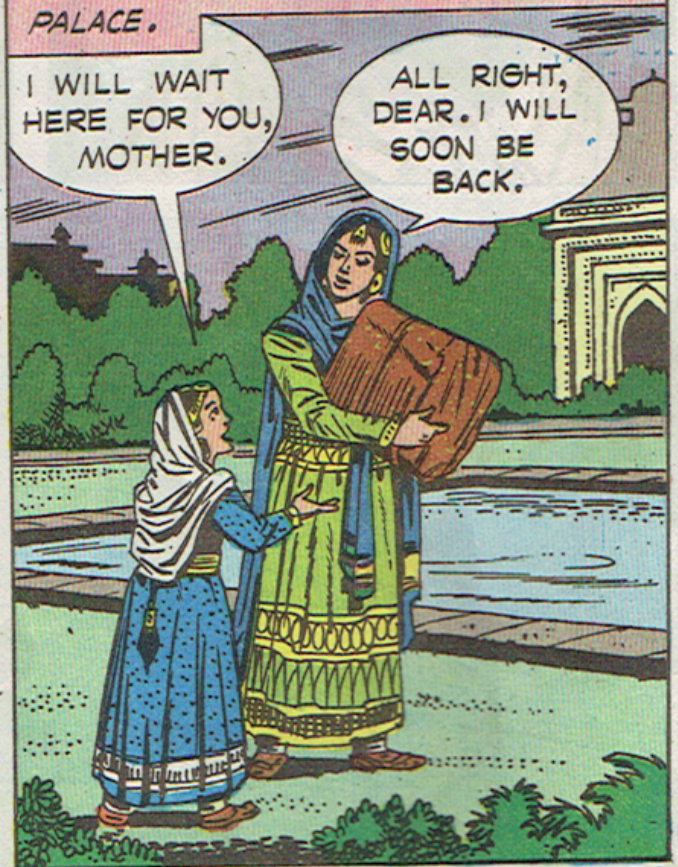
I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT, MADAM.



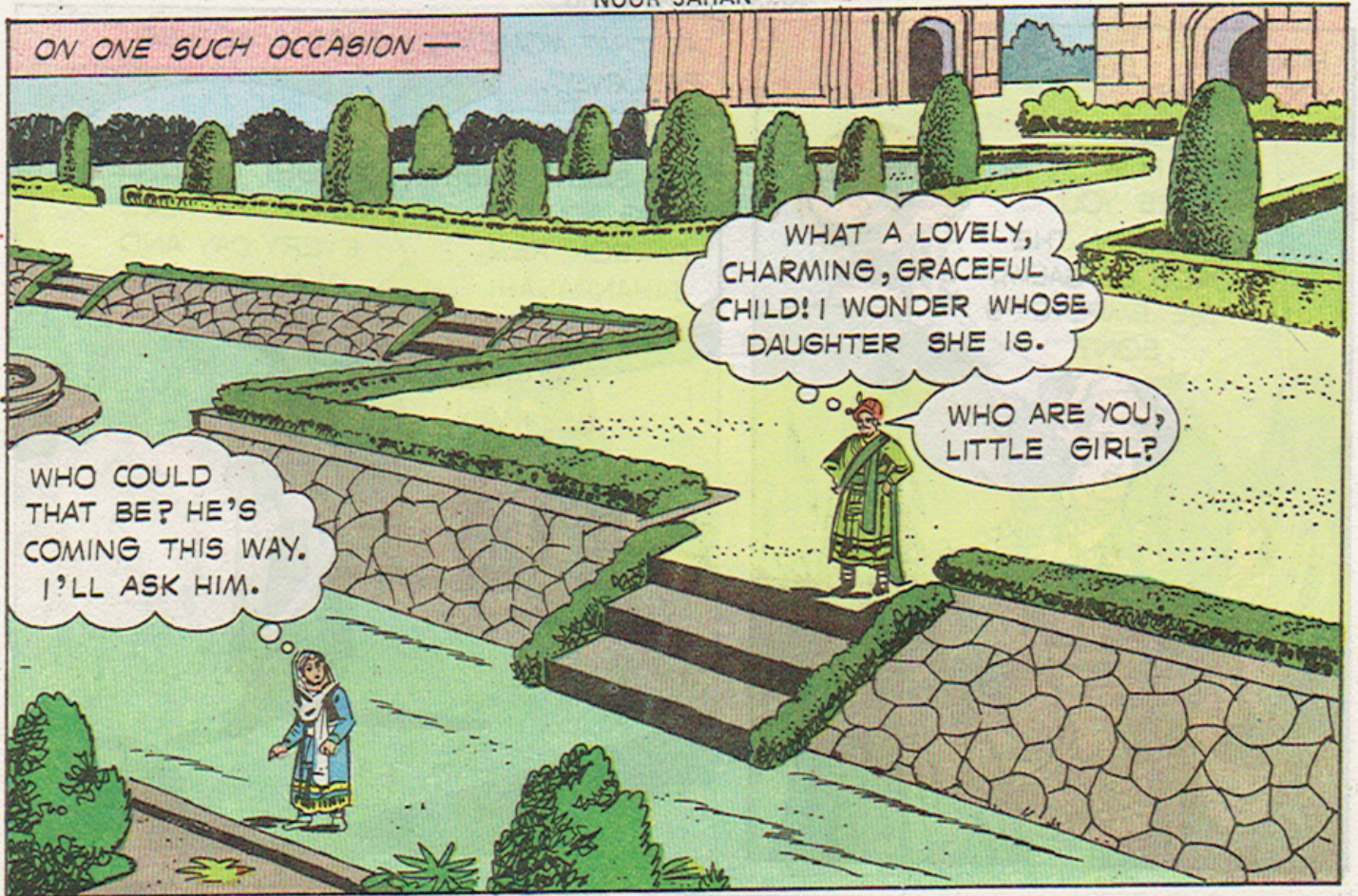
DURING SUCH VISITS, MEHER OFTEN WENT WITH HER MOTHER TO THE PALACE.

I WILL WAIT HERE FOR YOU, MOTHER.

ALL RIGHT, DEAR. I WILL SOON BE BACK.



ON ONE SUCH OCCASION —



WHO COULD THAT BE? HE'S COMING THIS WAY. I'LL ASK HIM.

WHAT A LOVELY, CHARMING, GRACEFUL CHILD! I WONDER WHOSE DAUGHTER SHE IS.

WHO ARE YOU, LITTLE GIRL?



I AM MEHER.

NO! MEHRUNNISA! YOU ARE THE SUN AMONG WOMEN AS THE NAME SUGGESTS.



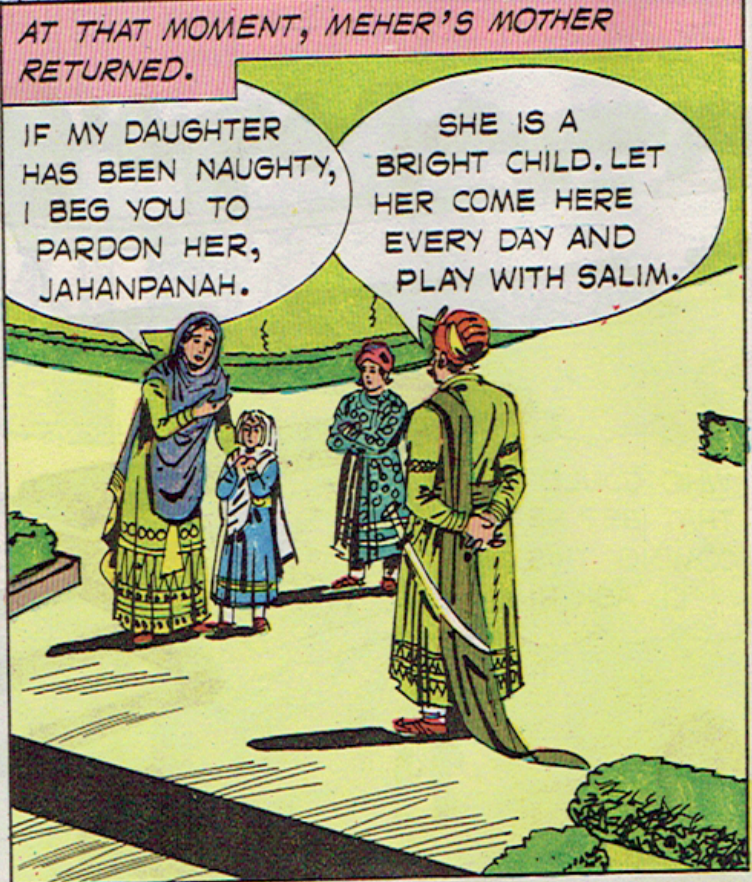
NOW TELL ME WHO YOU ARE.

DON'T YOU KNOW WHO HE IS? HE'S AKBAR, THE EMPEROR.



HOW DO YOU KNOW?

HOW DARE YOU QUESTION THE WORDS OF SALIM, THE EMPEROR'S SON?



AT THAT MOMENT, MEHER'S MOTHER RETURNED.

IF MY DAUGHTER HAS BEEN NAUGHTY, I BEG YOU TO PARDON HER, JAHANPANAH.

SHE IS A BRIGHT CHILD. LET HER COME HERE EVERY DAY AND PLAY WITH SALIM.



ONE DAY, WHEN AKBAR WAS RELAXING IN THE GARDEN, MEHER CAME RUNNING UP.

ABBAJAN, SALIM IS ANGRY. PROTECT ME.

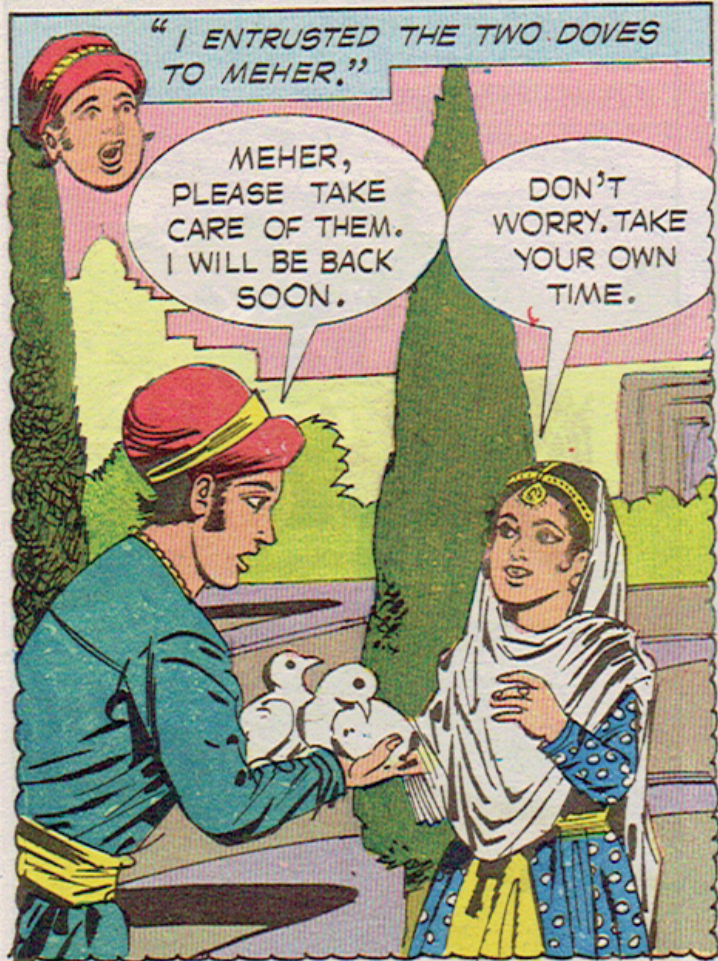
WHAT MADE HIM ANGRY, DEAR?



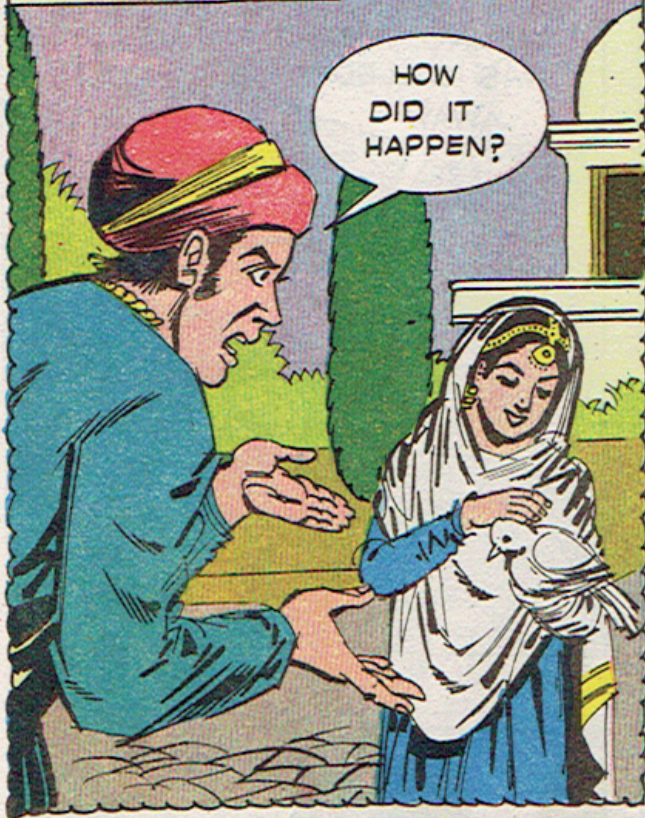
BEFORE SHE COULD REPLY —

DON'T HIDE BEHIND ABBAJAN. COME OUT, YOU COWARD.

NO, I WON'T.

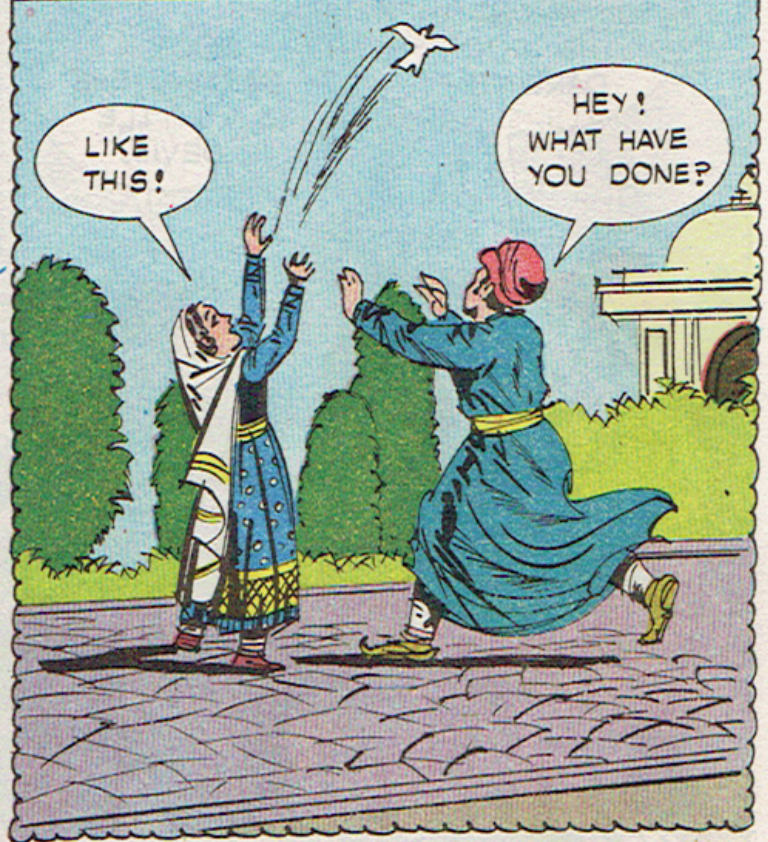


" I WAS ENRAGED BY HER ATTITUDE AND HER CALM REPLY."



HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

" SHE LET GO THE OTHER DOVE TOO."



LIKE THIS!

HEY! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

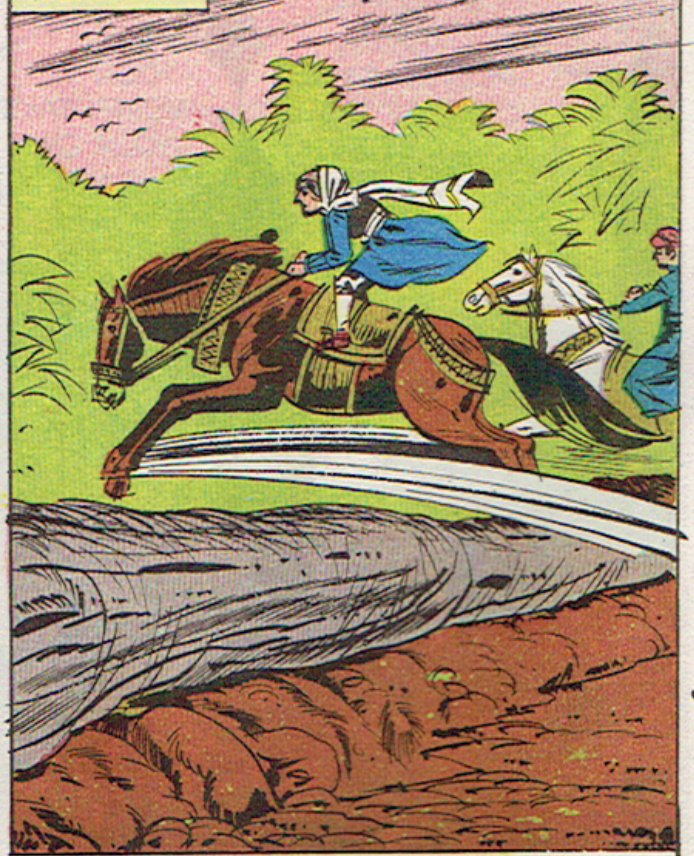
SALIM GLARED AT MEHER AS HE CONCLUDED HIS TALE.

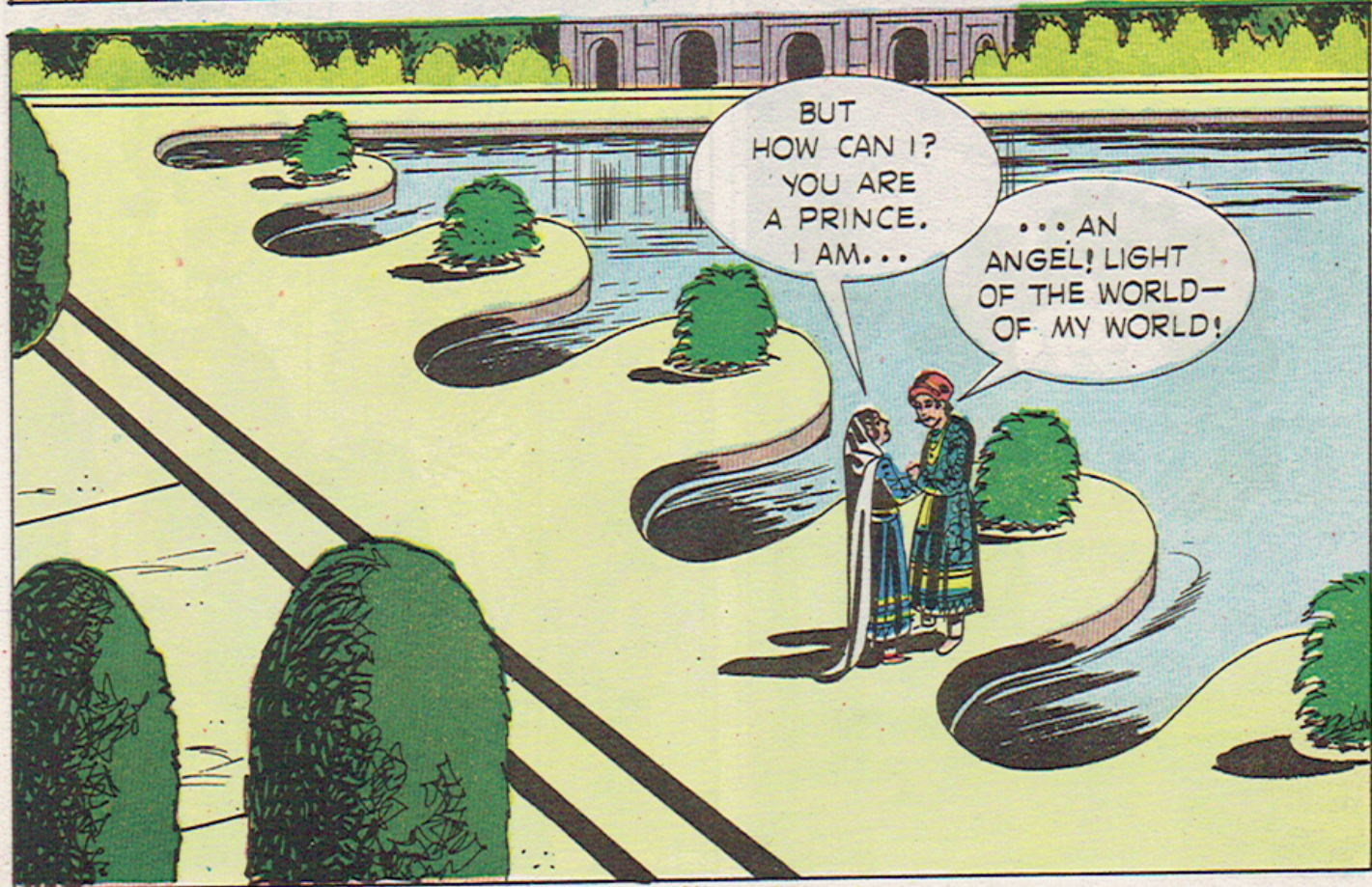
...AND YOU CALL HER POOR, LITTLE DARLING!

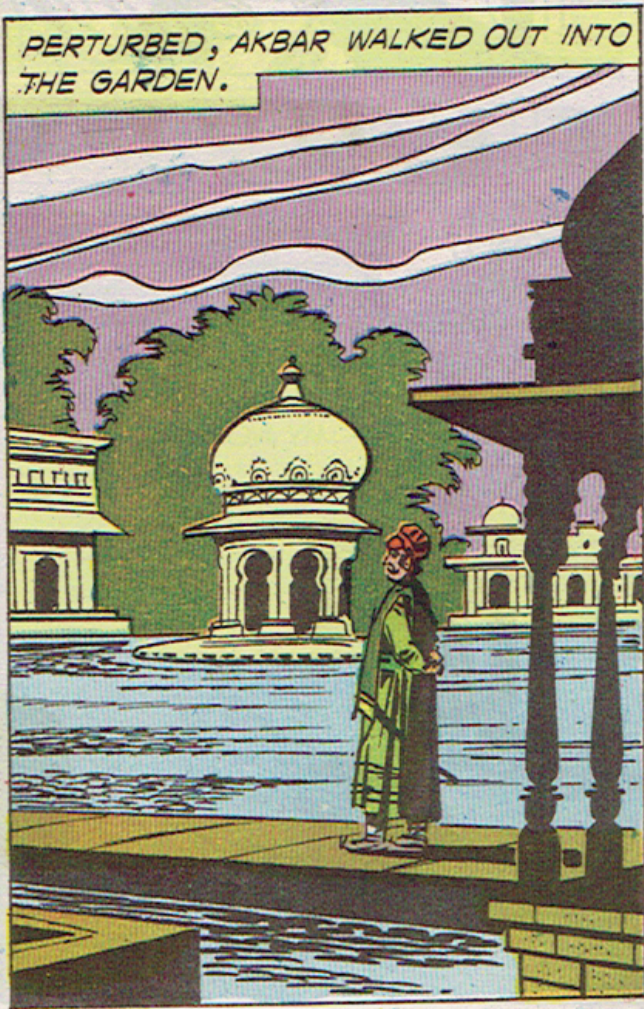
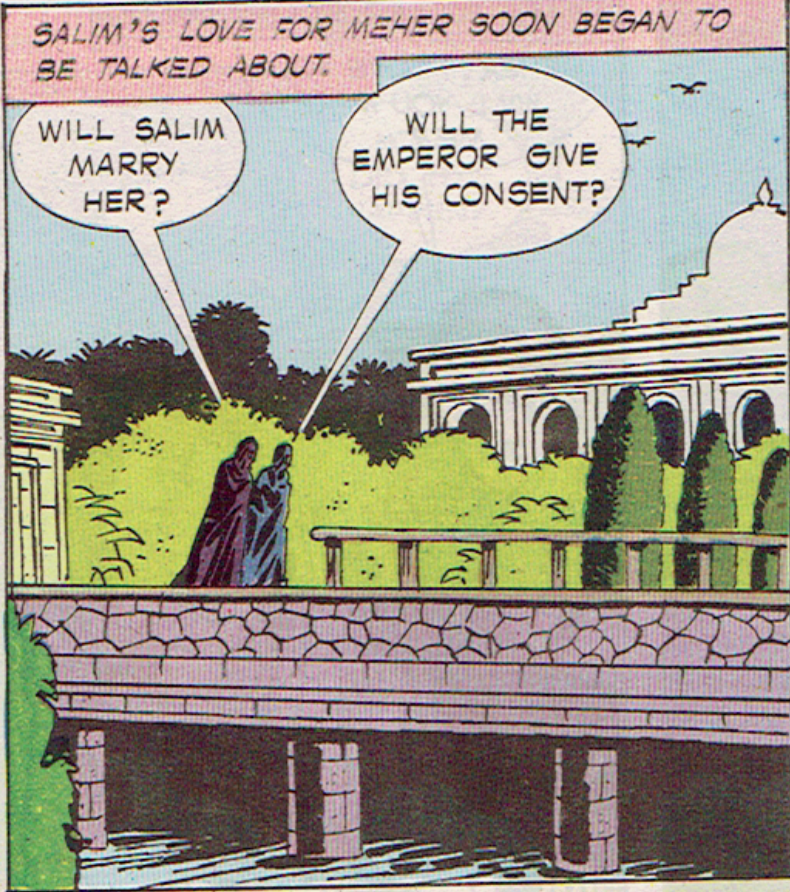
SALIM, MY MEHER IS A GIRL OF HIGH SPIRITS. YOU MUST FORGIVE HER.

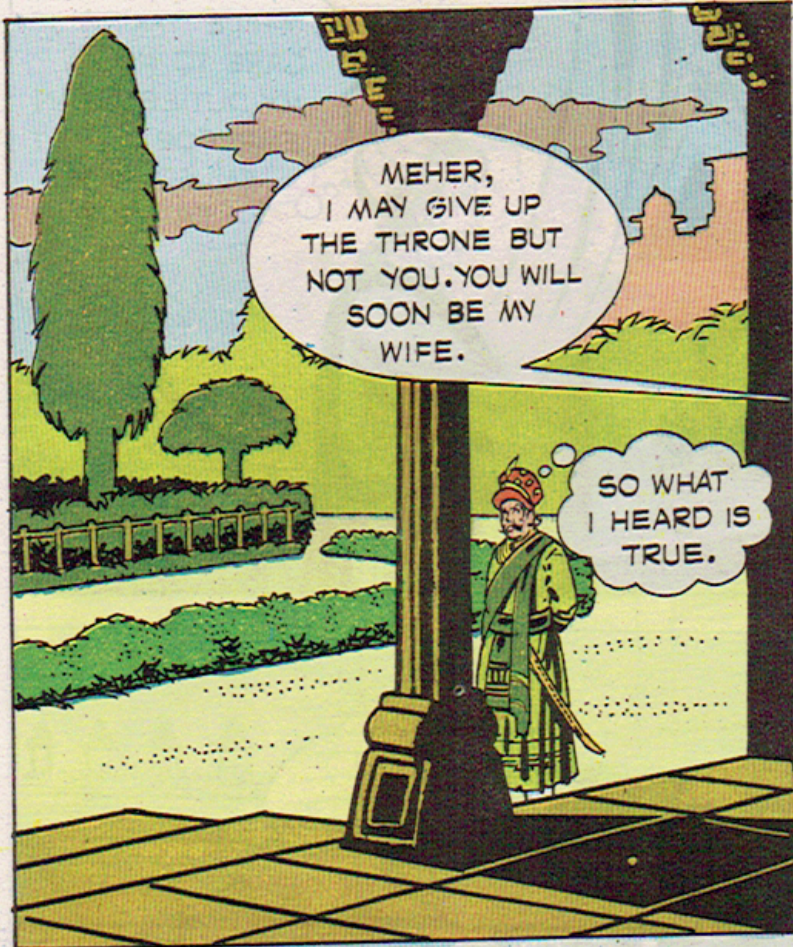


SALIM WAS MOLLIFIED AND SUDDENLY BEGAN TAKING A GREATER INTEREST IN MEHER THAN EVER BEFORE. HE TAUGHT HER RIDING...









MEHER,
I MAY GIVE UP
THE THRONE BUT
NOT YOU. YOU WILL
SOON BE MY
WIFE.

SO WHAT
I HEARD IS
TRUE.



THE DAUGHTER OF A
REFUGEE TO MARRY
THE CROWN PRINCE!
NEVER! I MUST
SEPARATE THEM.



THE NEXT DAY, THE EMPEROR SENT
FOR HIS SON.

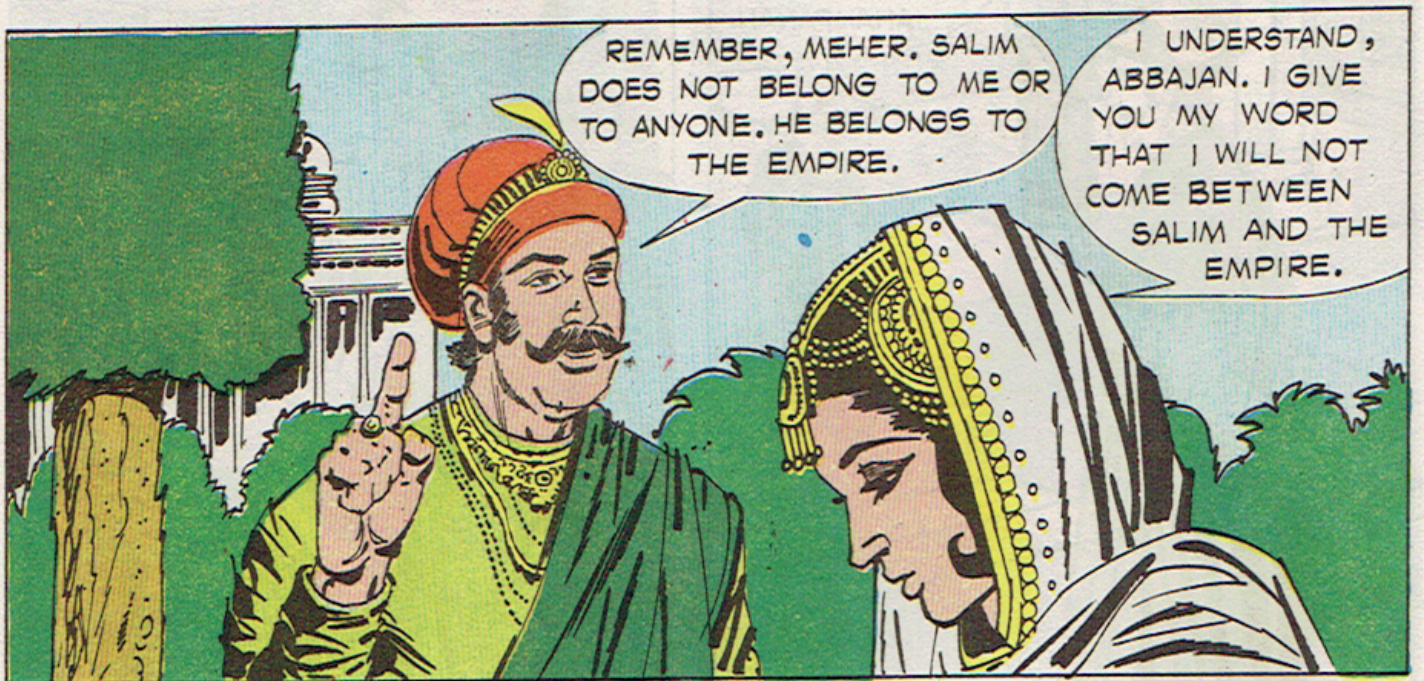
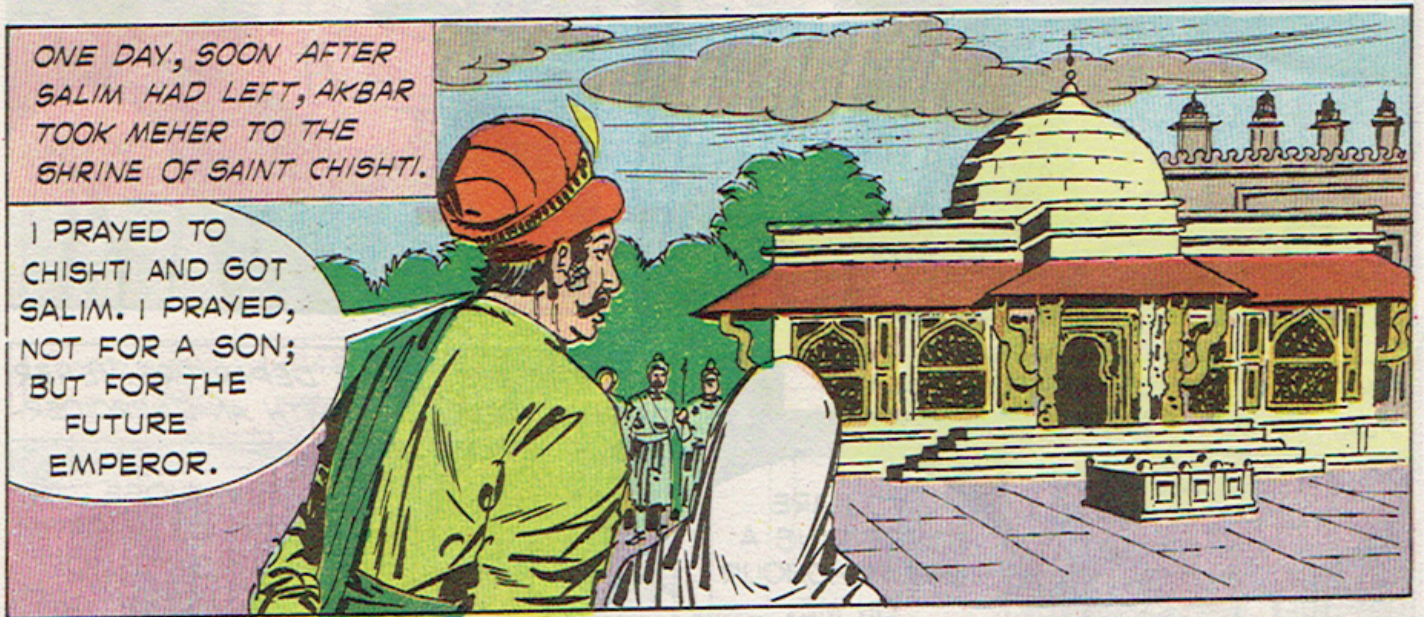
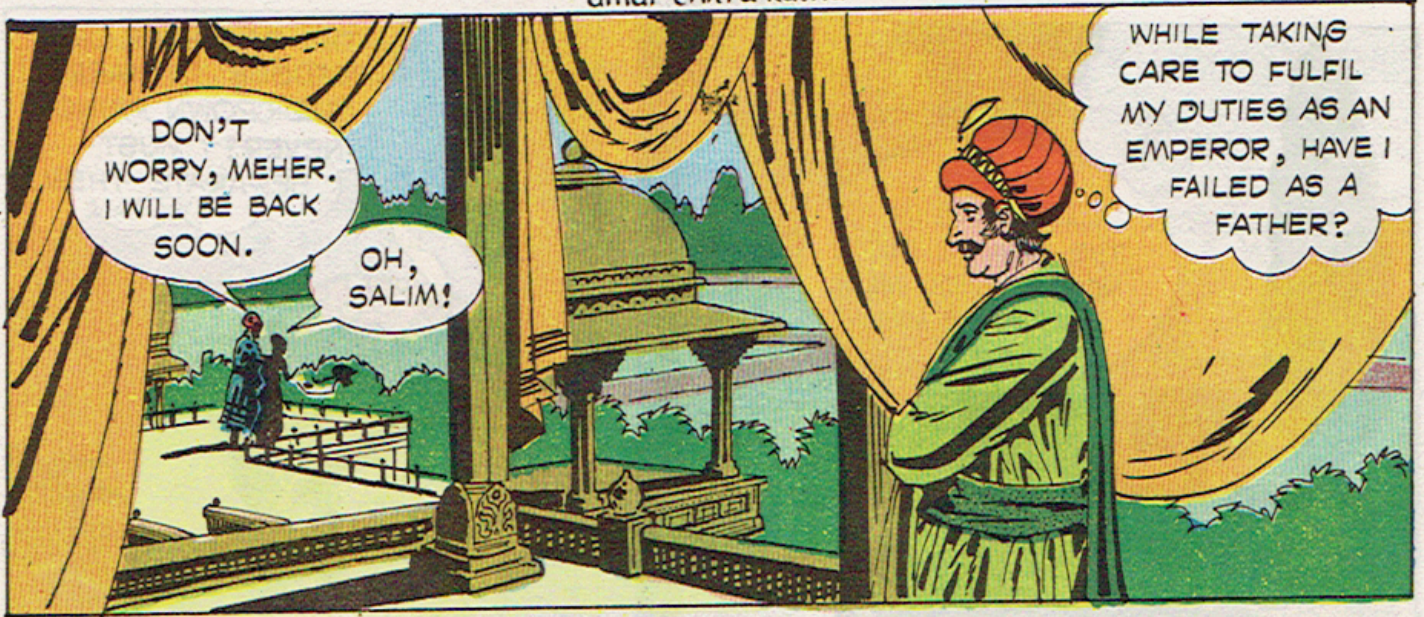
SALIM, I WANT YOU
TO LEAD AN EXPEDI-
TION TO THE
DECCAN.

YOU ARE
CONFERRING A
GREAT HONOUR
ON ME,
JAHANPANAHH.



ON THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE, MEHER
PRESENTED SALIM WITH AN EMBROIDER-
ED HANDKERCHIEF.

MAY THOSE
ROSEBUDS ALWAYS
REMAND YOU OF
ME.



AS MEHER RODE OUT ONE MORNING TO EXERCISE HER HORSE —

A RUNAWAY HORSE!
THE WOMAN SEEMS TO BE IN DISTRESS! I MUST SAVE HER!

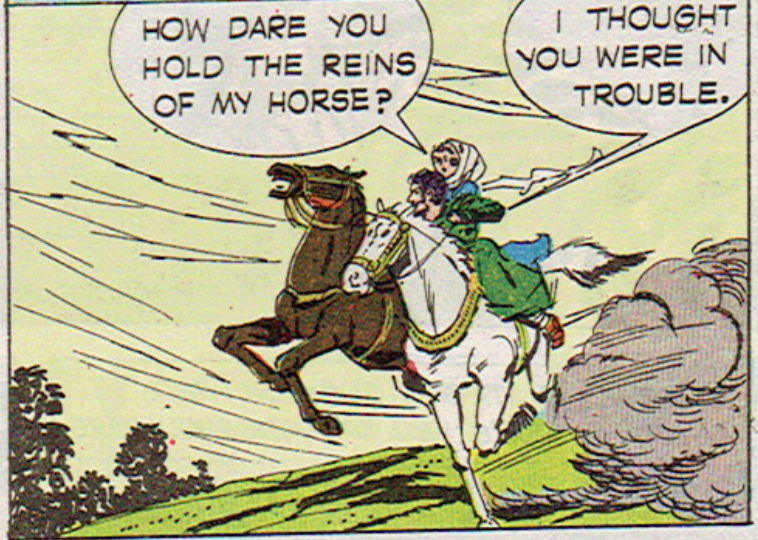


I MUST STOP THE HORSE BEFORE SHE IS TOSSED OFF ITS BACK.

THE YOUNG RIDER WAS SHER AFGHAN, AN OFFICER IN THE IMPERIAL ARMY.

HOW DARE YOU HOLD THE REINS OF MY HORSE?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN TROUBLE.



INDEED! NONE IN AGRA HAS FOUND IT NECESSARY TO COME TO MY AID WHILE I AM ON HORSEBACK.

A PROUD WOMAN INDEED!
BUT BRAVE AND BEAUTIFUL.

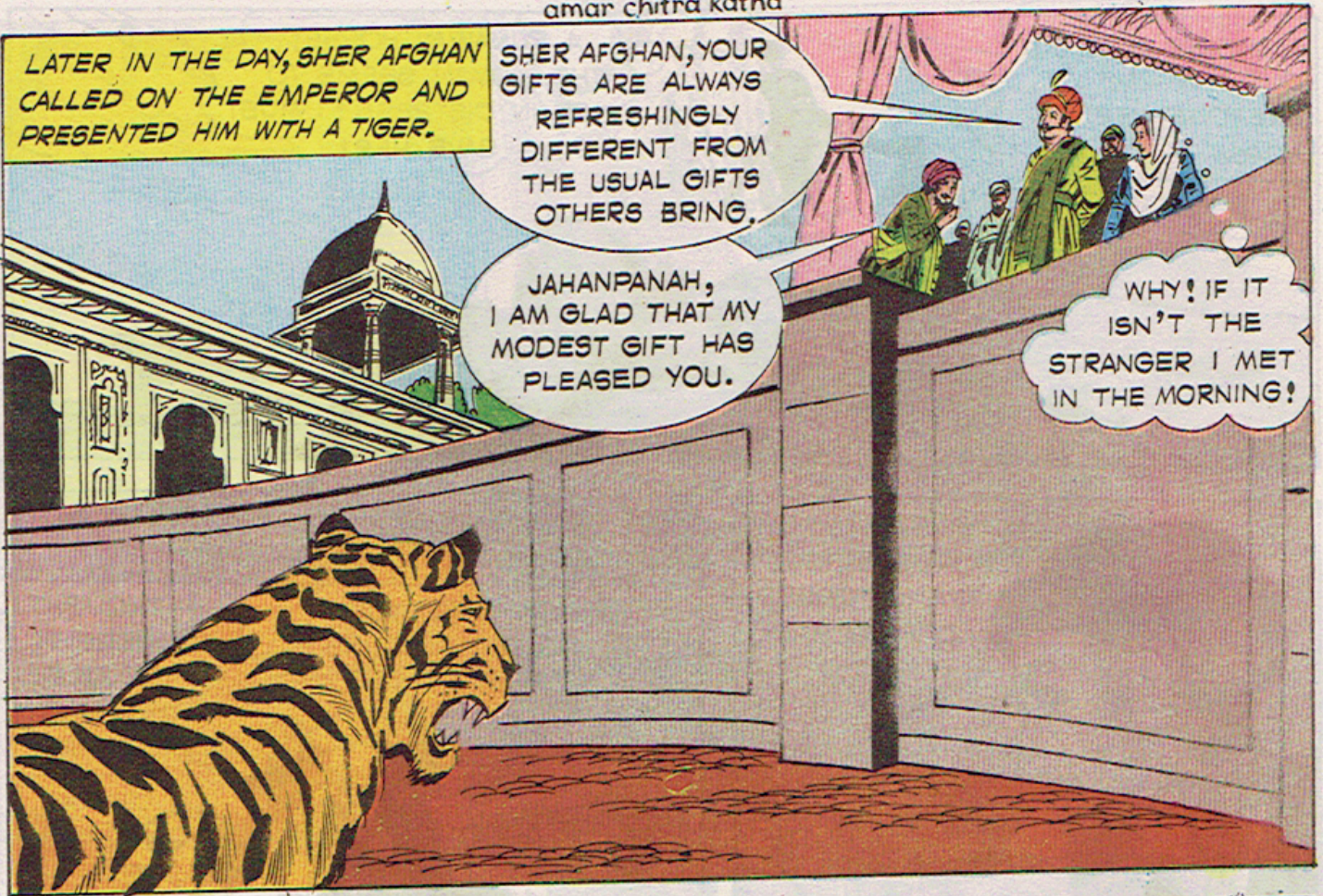


LATER IN THE DAY, SHER AFGHAN CALLED ON THE EMPEROR AND PRESENTED HIM WITH A TIGER.

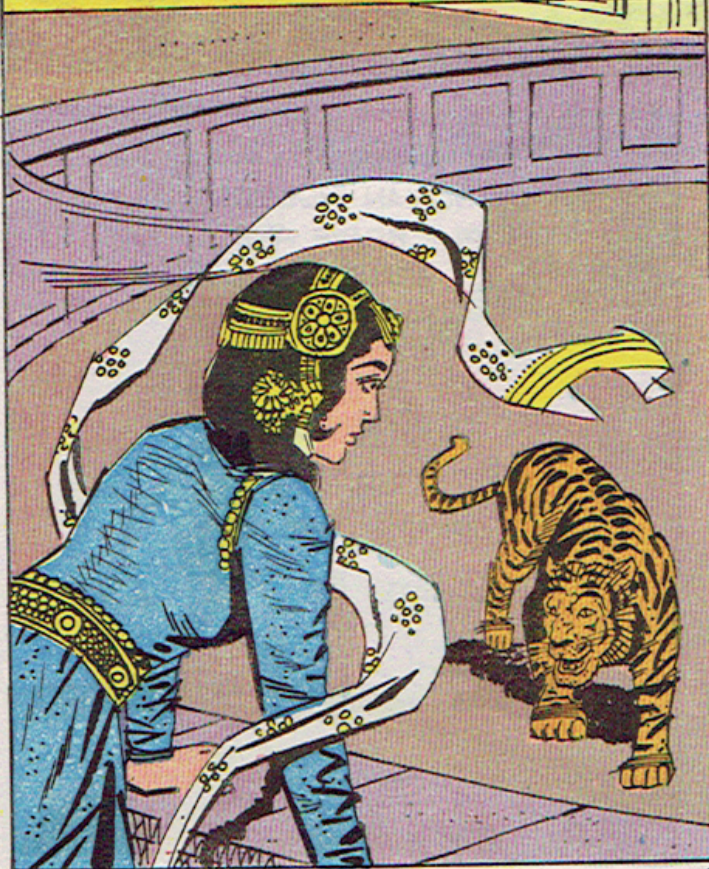
SHER AFGHAN, YOUR GIFTS ARE ALWAYS REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT FROM THE USUAL GIFTS OTHERS BRING.

JAHANPANA, I AM GLAD THAT MY MODEST GIFT HAS PLEASSED YOU.

WHY! IF IT ISN'T THE STRANGER I MET IN THE MORNING!



SUDDENLY, A STRONG GUST OF WIND SWEEP MEHER'S VEIL OFF HER SHOULDERS.





WHEN AKBAR TURNED HELPLESSLY TO MEHER —

FORGIVE ME, SALIM.

I WILL ABIDE BY YOUR WISHES, ABBAJAN. YOU HAVE BEEN MORE THAN A FATHER TO ME.

AFTER THE WEDDING, MEHER WENT WITH HER HUSBAND TO BURDWAN, WHERE SHE LED A HAPPY LIFE. SHE OFTEN WENT OUT RIDING AND HUNTING WITH HIM.

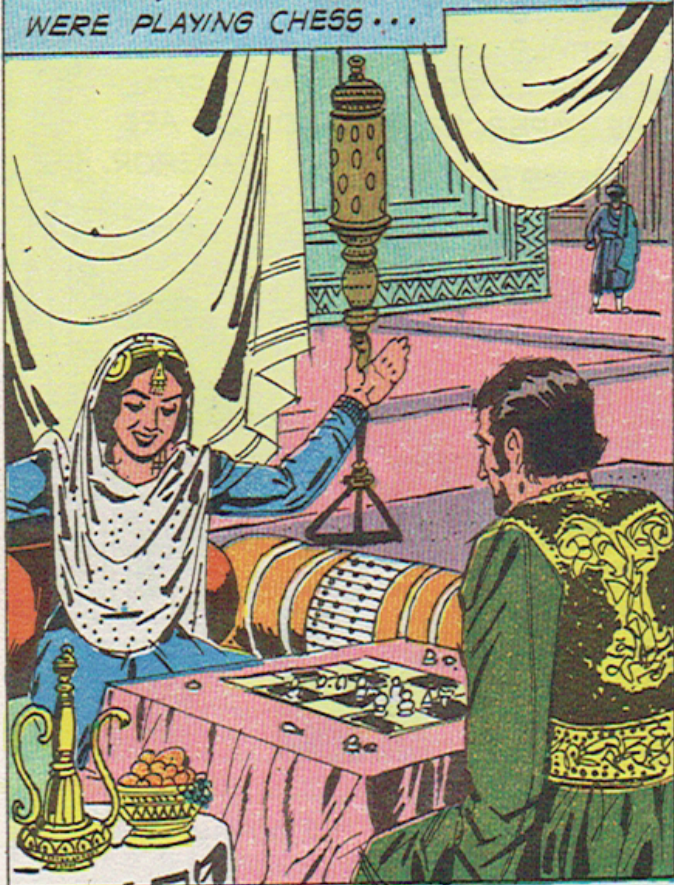
YOU ARE A GOOD SHOT AND AN EXCELLENT RIDER, MEHER. TELL ME, WHO TRAINED YOU?

I LEARNT BOTH SHOOTING AND RIDING WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG.

OH, SALIM!

IN DUE COURSE, MEHER BECAME THE PROUD MOTHER OF A BEAUTIFUL GIRL WHOM SHE CALLED LADLI.

ONE DAY, AS MEHER AND SHER AFGHAN WERE PLAYING CHESS ...

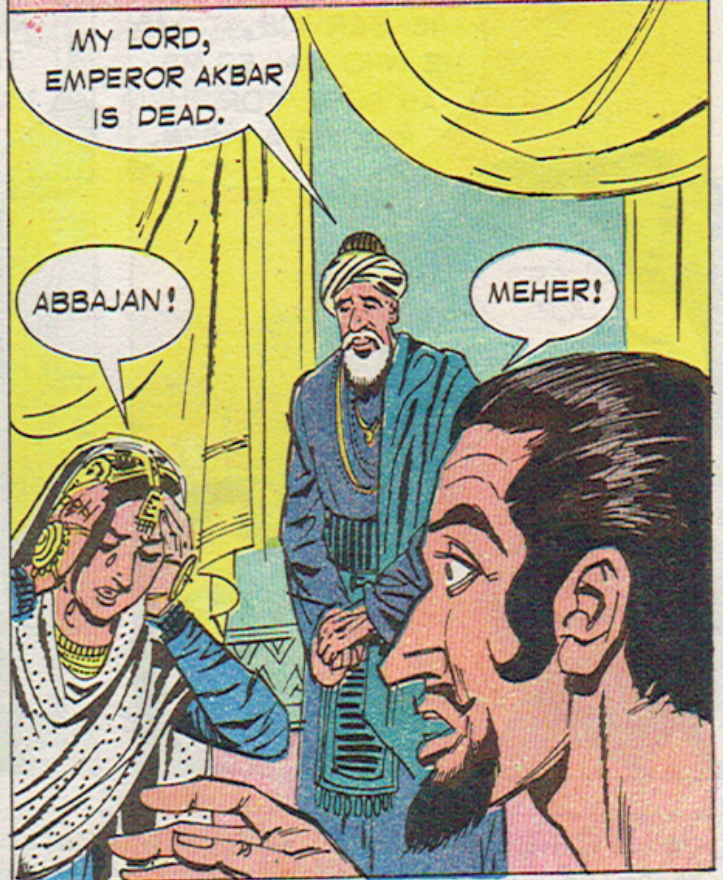


... A MESSENGER CAME WITH BAD NEWS.

MY LORD, EMPEROR AKBAR IS DEAD.

ABBAJAN!

MEHER!



LATER —

I HEAR, SALIM HAS ASSUMED THE TITLE — JAHANGIR — AND SUCCEEDED HIS FATHER AS THE EMPEROR.

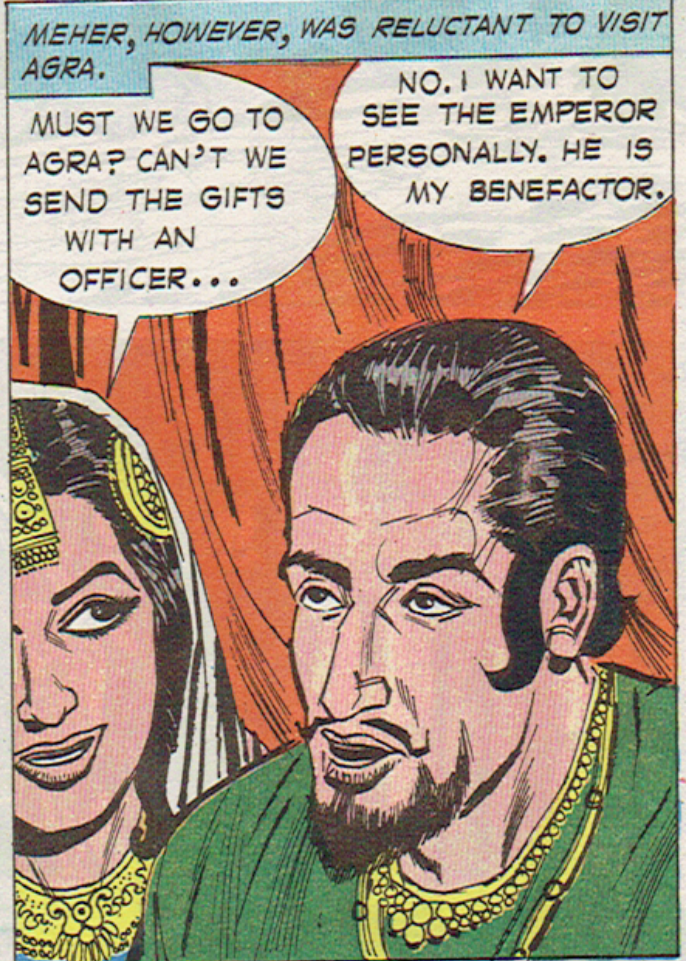
YES. WE SHOULD CALL ON THE NEW EMPEROR WITH GIFTS.



MEHER, HOWEVER, WAS RELUCTANT TO VISIT AGRA.

MUST WE GO TO AGRA? CAN'T WE SEND THE GIFTS WITH AN OFFICER...

NO. I WANT TO SEE THE EMPEROR PERSONALLY. HE IS MY BENEFACTOR.





WHEN I WAS IN HIS SERVICE, IT WAS HE WHO HAILED ME AS SHER FOR KILLING A TIGER.



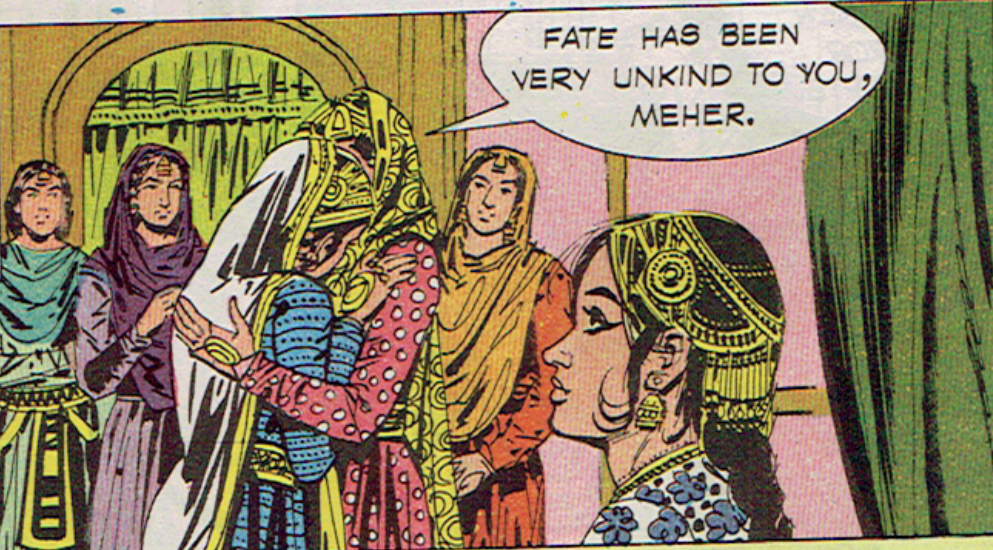
BUT WHY ARE YOU RELUCTANT TO VISIT THE CAPITAL? DON'T YOU WISH TO SEE THE EMPEROR?

BURDWAN IS MY CAPITAL AND YOU ARE MY EMPEROR.

FINALLY, MEHER AGREED AND SHER AFGHAN LEFT FOR AGRA WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER.



BUT MEHER ARRIVED AT AGRA WITHOUT HER HUSBAND WHO WAS ATTACKED AND KILLED ON THE WAY BY HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS.



FATE HAS BEEN VERY UNKIND TO YOU, MEHER.

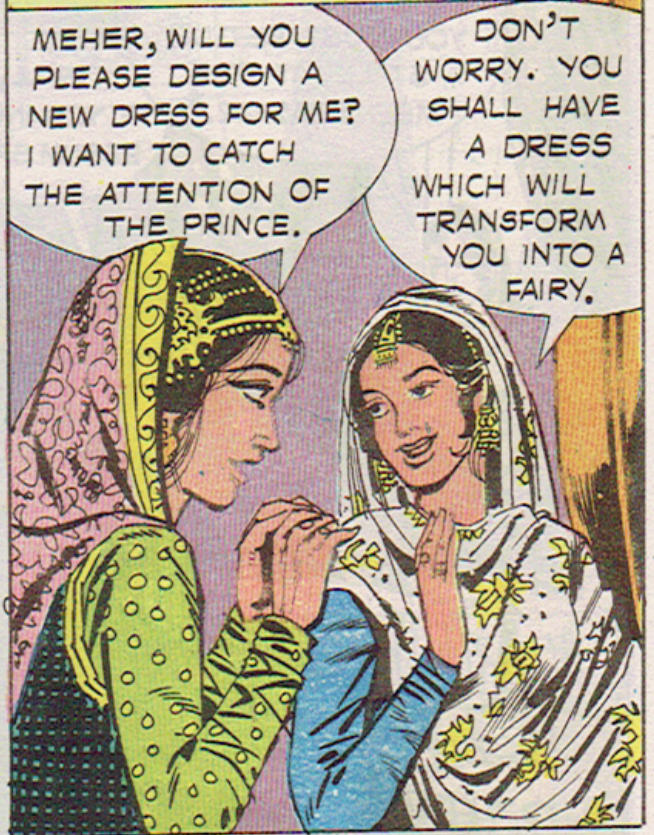
THE LADY WHO RECEIVED MEHER WAS THE QUEEN MOTHER, SALIMA BEGUM, WITH WHOM MEHER STAYED.

APART FROM WAITING UPON SALIMA BEGUM, MEHER BEGAN TO DESIGN FABRICS AND DRESSES TOO.



HOW BEAUTIFUL! THE LADIES OF THE HAREM WILL BE GREEN WITH ENVY WHEN THEY SEE ME IN THIS.

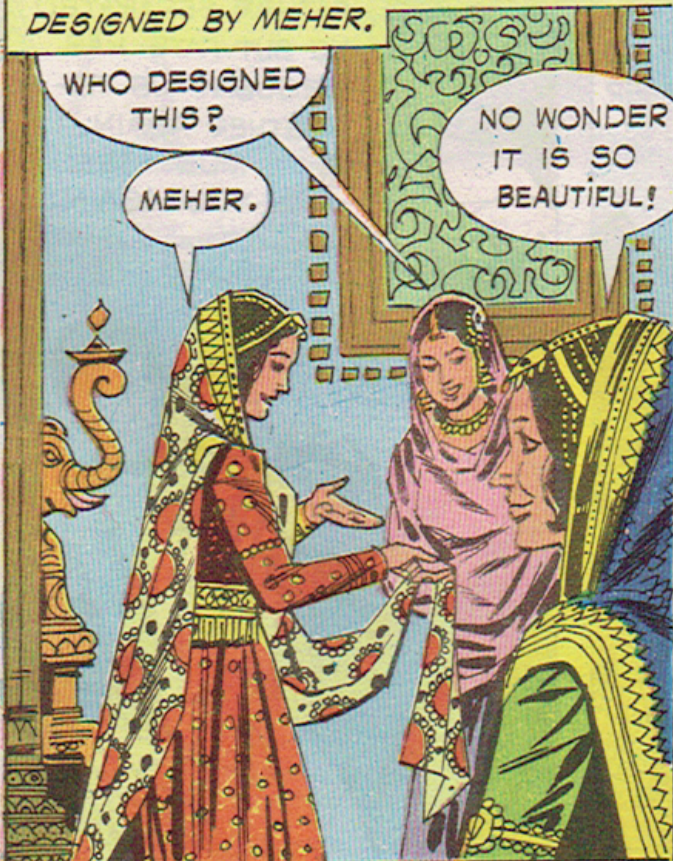
OTHER LADIES OF THE HAREM TOO SOON BEGAN TO APPROACH MEHER.



MEHER, WILL YOU PLEASE DESIGN A NEW DRESS FOR ME? I WANT TO CATCH THE ATTENTION OF THE PRINCE.

DON'T WORRY. YOU SHALL HAVE A DRESS WHICH WILL TRANSFORM YOU INTO A FAIRY.

SOON THE LADIES IN THE COURT VIED WITH ONE ANOTHER TO WEAR DRESSES DESIGNED BY MEHER.



WHO DESIGNED THIS?

MEHER.

NO WONDER IT IS SO BEAUTIFUL!

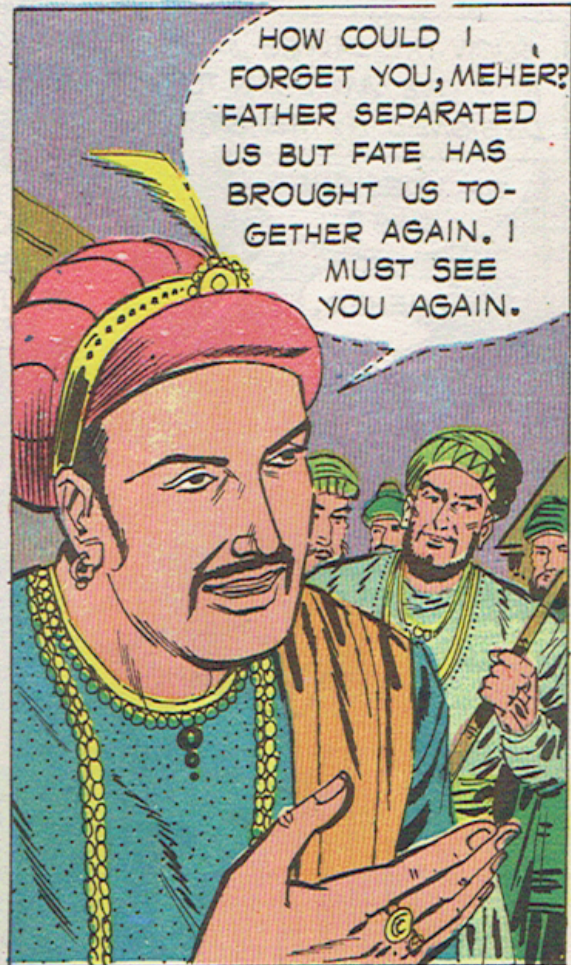
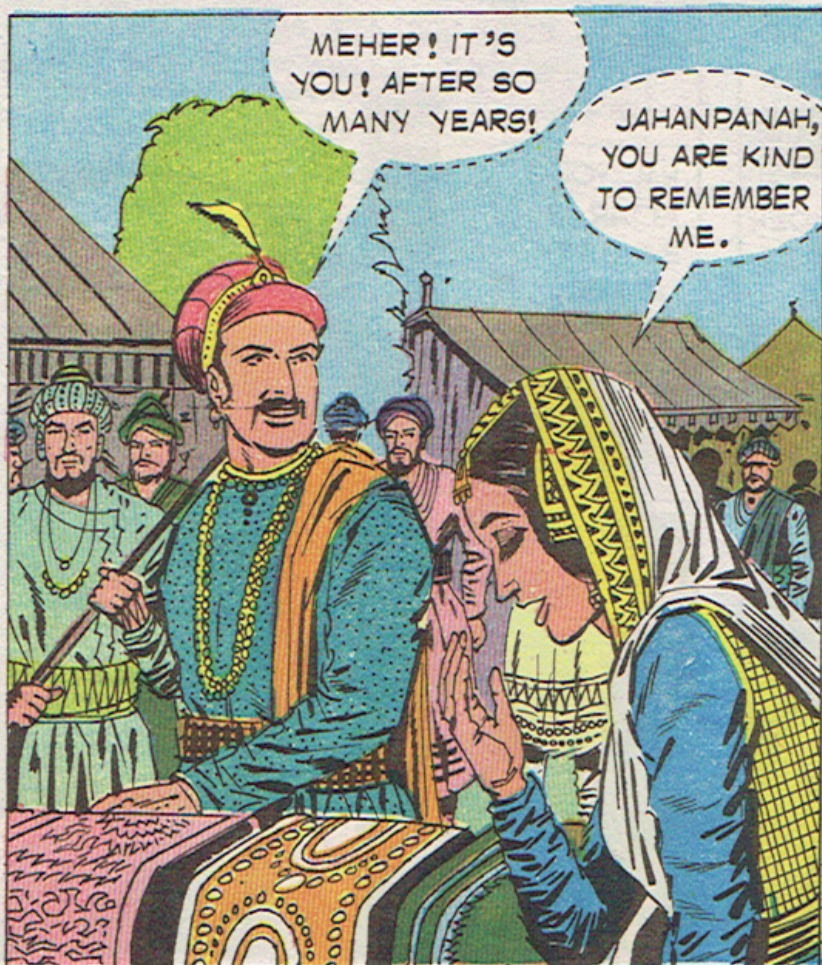
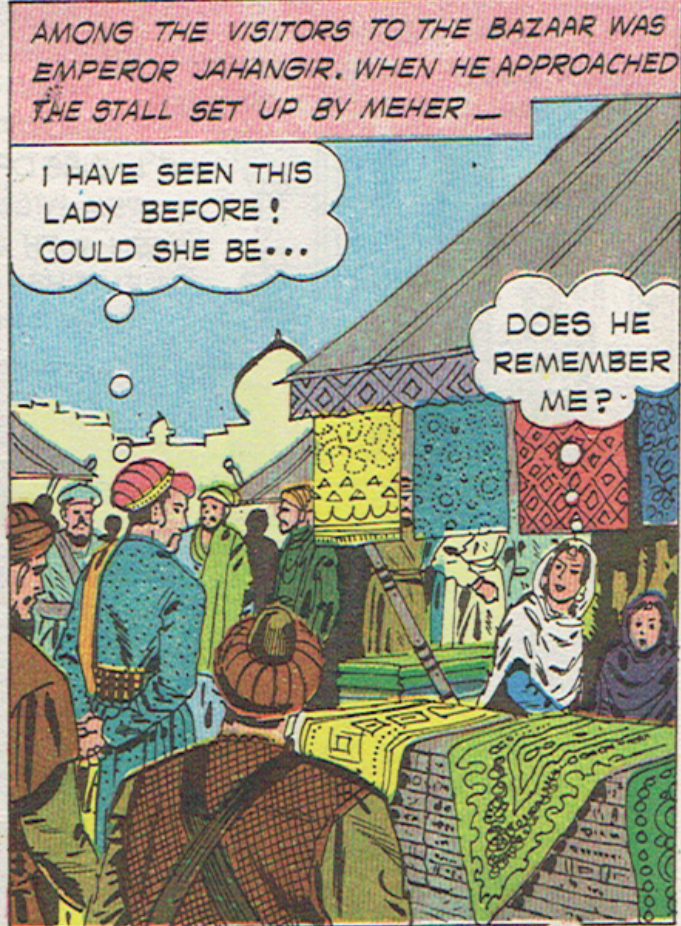
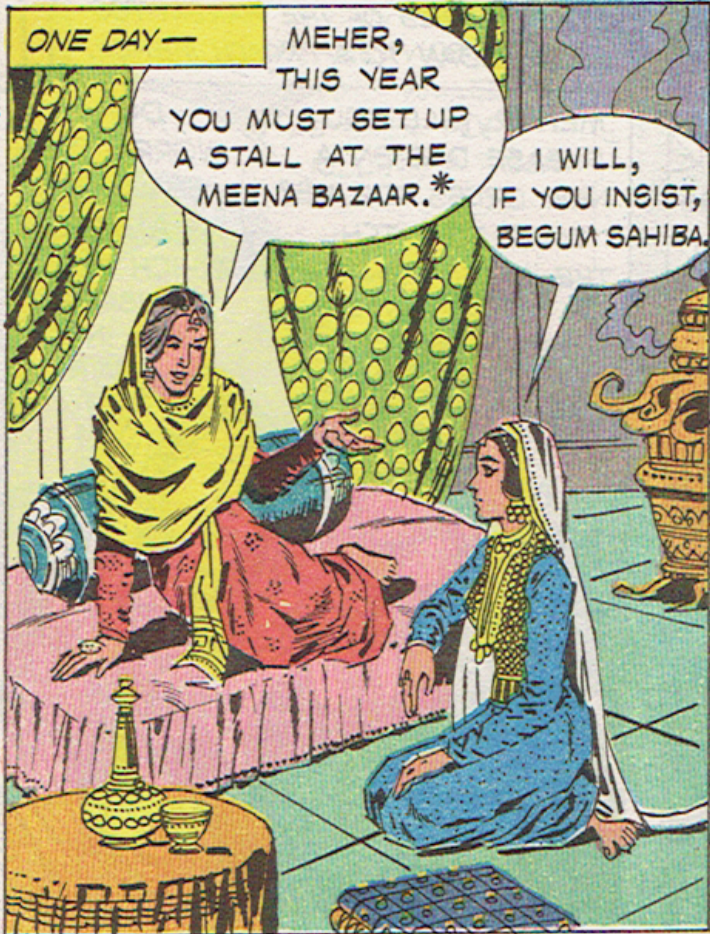
SHE ALSO MADE ATTAR* OF ROSES. THIS SHE HAD LEARNT FROM HER MOTHER.



HM. YOUR ATTAR IS EXHILARATING.

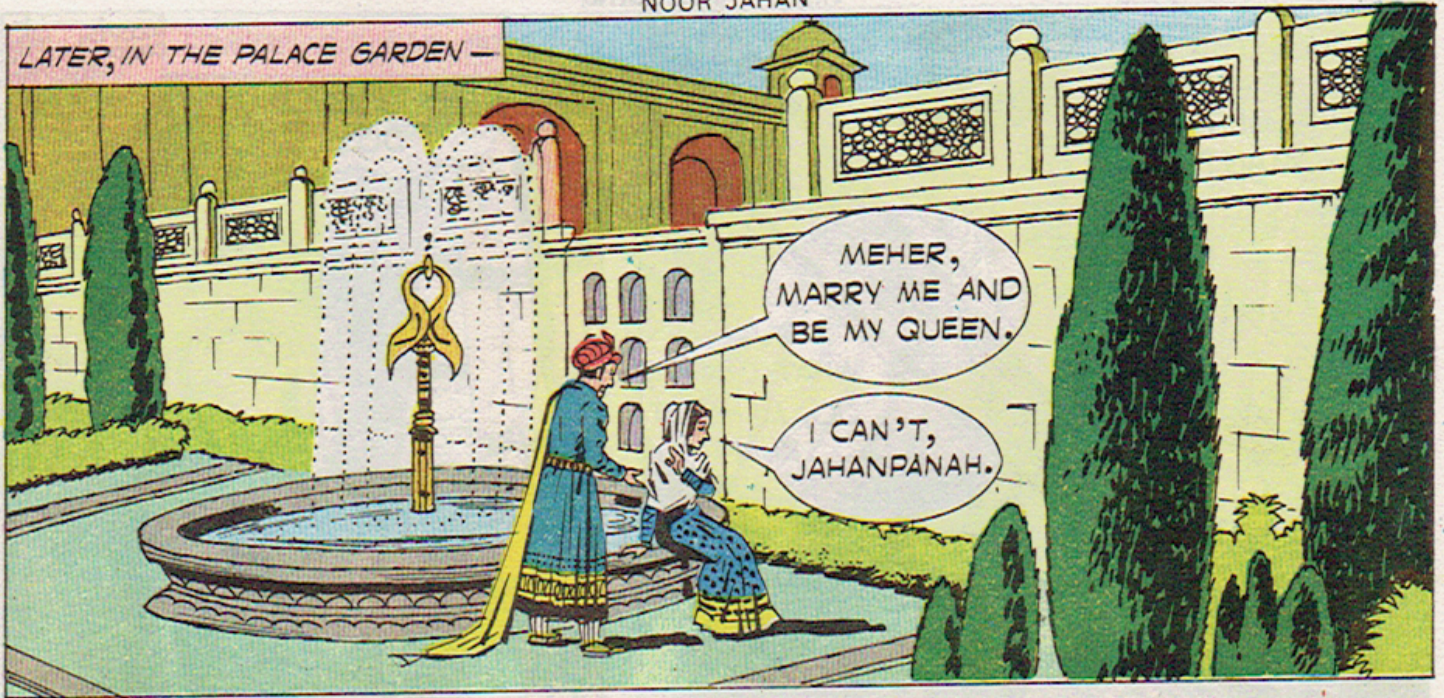
I AM GLAD YOU LIKE IT.

* AN ORIENTAL PERFUME



* FAMILY BAZAAR HELD ONCE A YEAR, AT THE PALACE.

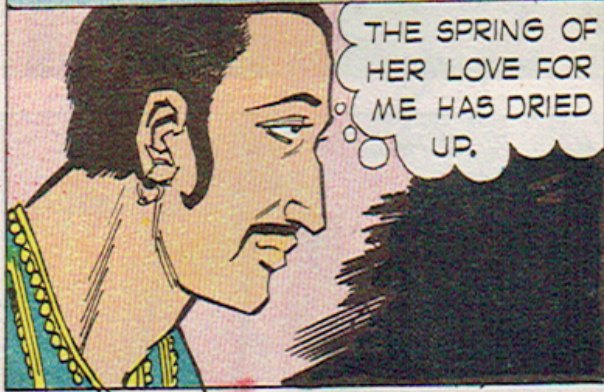
LATER, IN THE PALACE GARDEN —



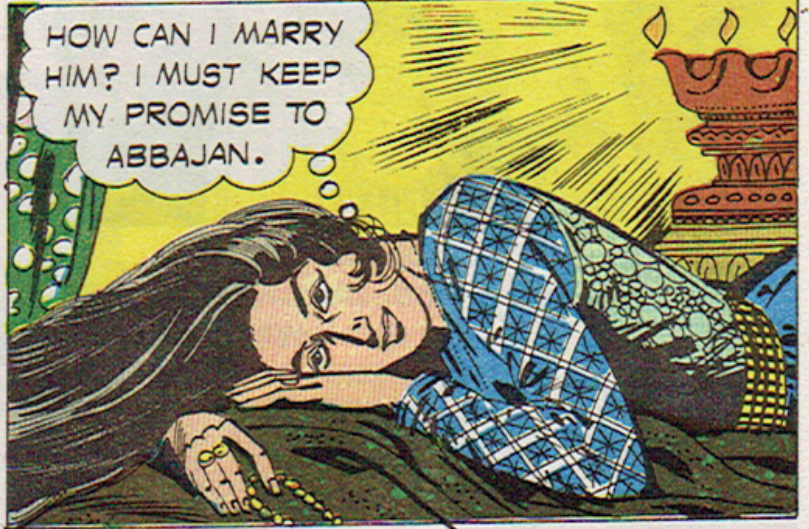
MEHER,
MARRY ME AND
BE MY QUEEN.

I CAN'T,
JAHANPANA.

JAHANGIR REPEATEDLY BEGGED MEHER TO MARRY HIM AND EACH TIME MEHER GENTLY TURNED HIM DOWN.

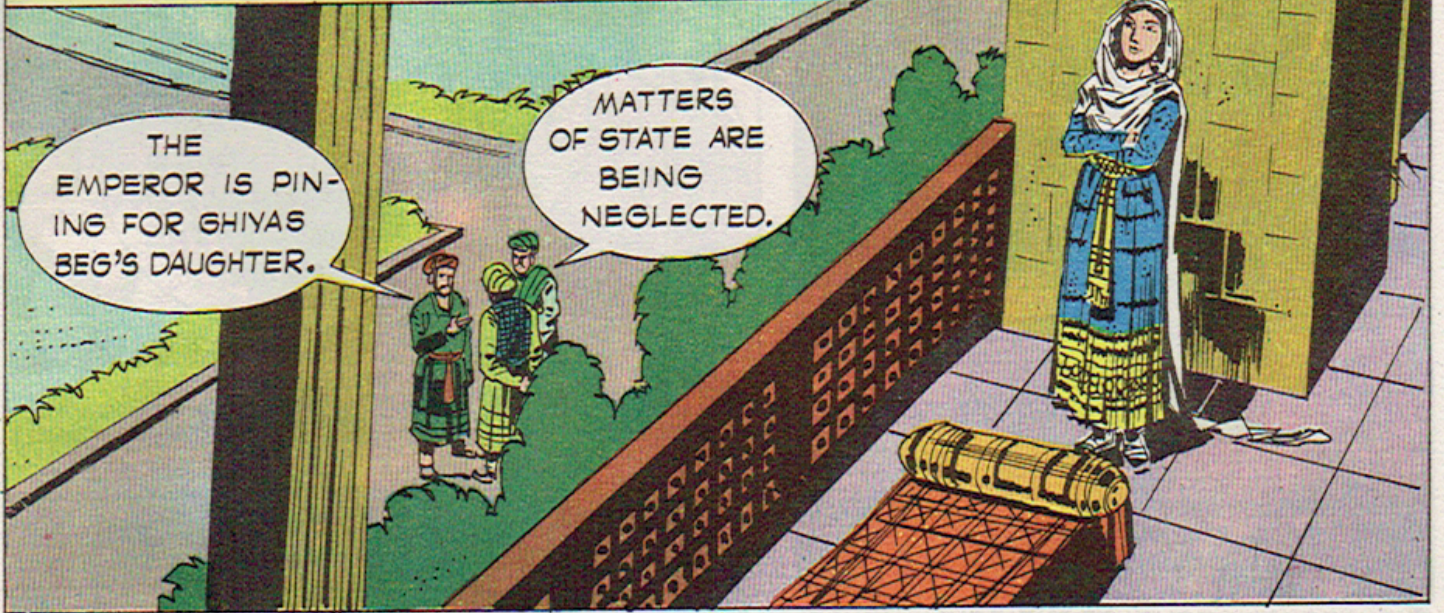


THE SPRING OF
HER LOVE FOR
ME HAS DRIED
UP.



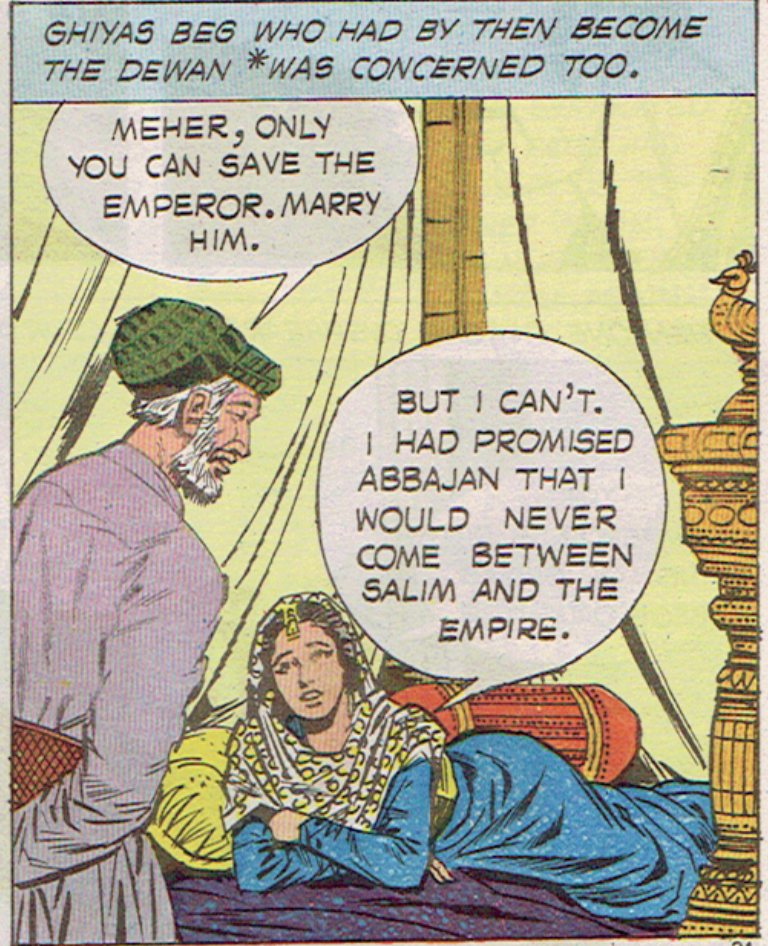
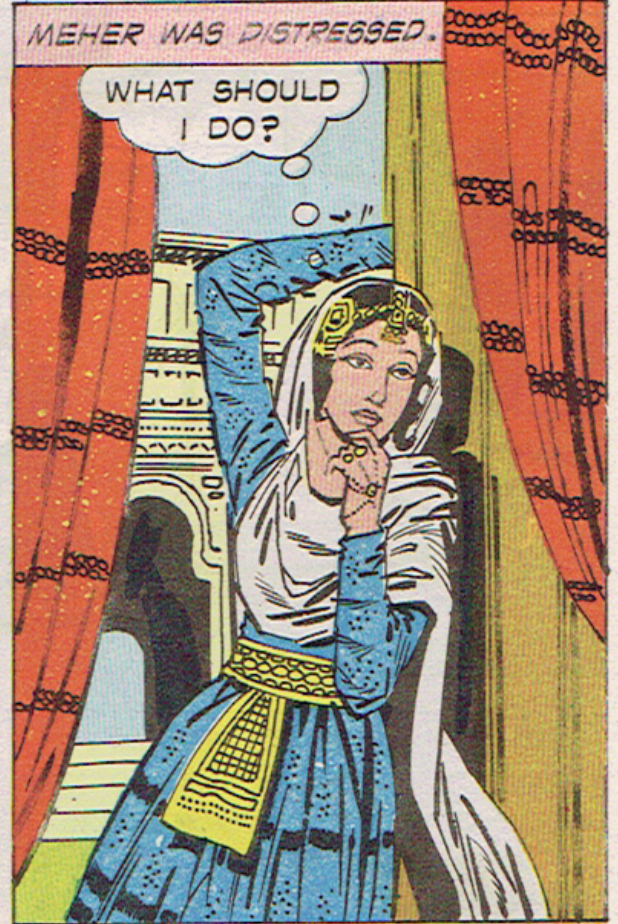
HOW CAN I MARRY
HIM? I MUST KEEP
MY PROMISE TO
ABBAJAN.

THEN ONE DAY, SHE OVERHEARD SOME COURTIER'S TALKING.

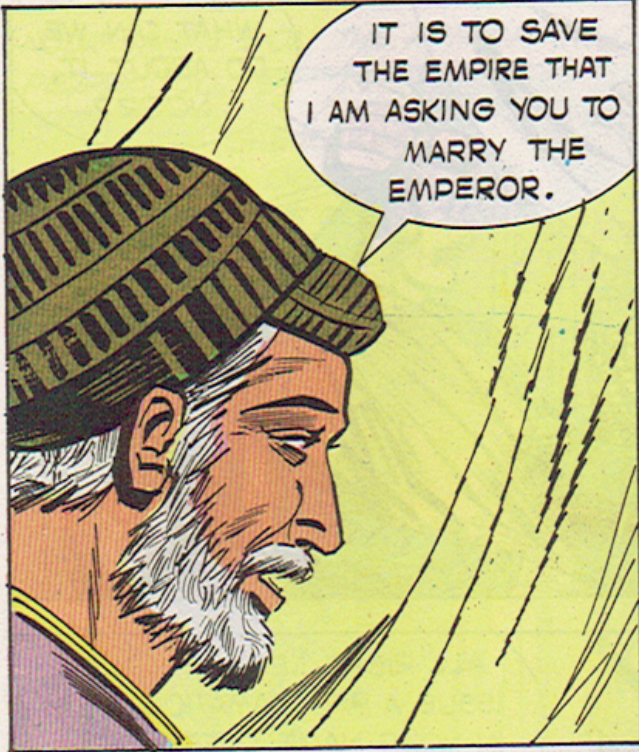


THE
EMPEROR IS PIN-
NING FOR GHIYAS
BEG'S DAUGHTER.

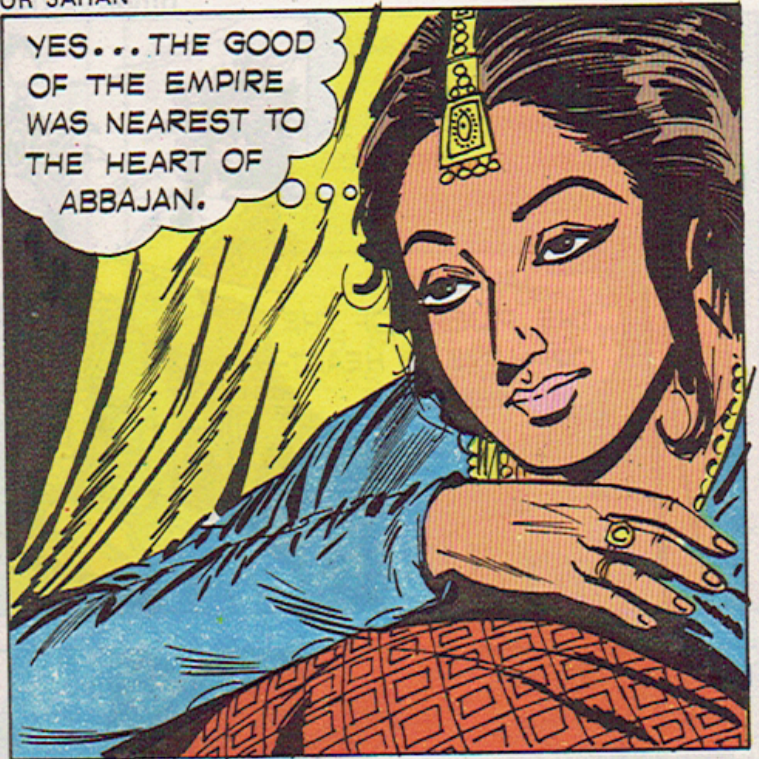
MATTERS
OF STATE ARE
BEING
NEGLECTED.



* SUPERINTENDENT OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD.



IT IS TO SAVE THE EMPIRE THAT I AM ASKING YOU TO MARRY THE EMPEROR.



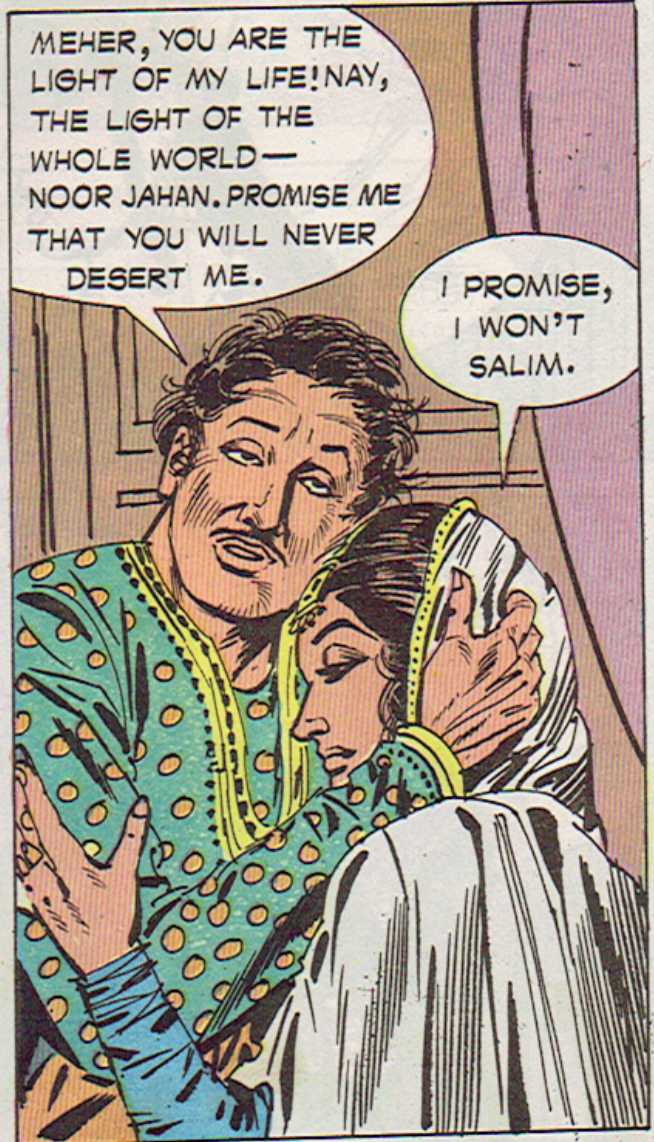
YES... THE GOOD OF THE EMPIRE WAS NEAREST TO THE HEART OF ABBAJAN.



MEHER CALLED ON JAHANGIR.

IS THAT MEHER OR AM I DREAMING?

SALIM, PARDON ME FOR CAUSING YOU SO MUCH SUFFERING.



MEHER, YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF MY LIFE! NAY, THE LIGHT OF THE WHOLE WORLD — NOOR JAHAN. PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL NEVER DESERT ME.

I PROMISE, I WON'T SALIM.

ASSUMING THE NEW NAME NOOR JAHAN—MEHER MARRIED JAHANGIR. SHE TOOK A KEEN INTEREST IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT, NOOR?

JAHANPANA, THE PLIGHT OF THE ORPHANS IS HEART-RENDING.

WHY CAN'T WE BRING UP THE ORPHANS? TO WHOM ELSE CAN THEY TURN?

ALL RIGHT. LET US ISSUE A PROCLAMATION IN YOUR NAME, OFFERING OUR PROTECTION TO THE ORPHANS.

NOT IN MY NAME, JAHANPANA!

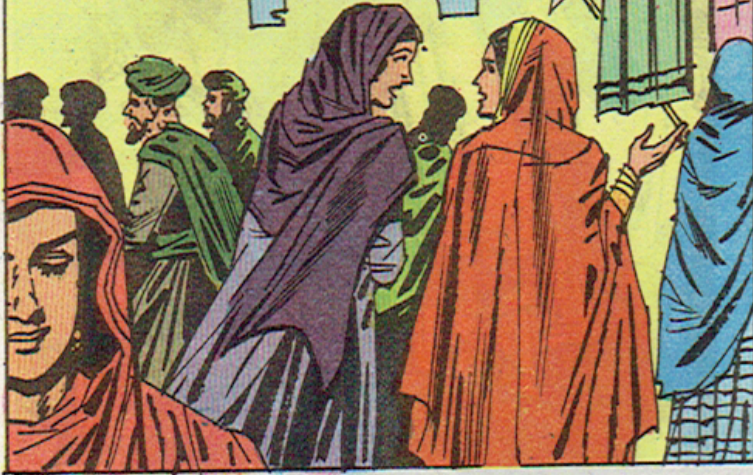
WHY NOT, NOOR? IT IS YOUR IDEA. THE PROCLAMATION SHOULD BEAR YOUR SIGNATURE.

AND IN FUTURE YOU MAY ISSUE ANY PROCLAMATION ON YOUR OWN.

NOOR JAHAN WON THE ADMIRATION OF THE PEOPLE TOO.

SHE IS KIND AND GENEROUS. SHE TAKES GOOD CARE OF THE ORPHANS.

SHE EVEN ARRANGES THEIR MARRIAGES.



BUT THERE WERE SOME WHO REGENTED NOOR JAHAN'S INFLUENCE OVER JAHANGIR. PROMINENT AMONG THEM WAS MAHABAT KHAN.

MAHABAT KHAN, SHE HAS NOW BEGUN TO RECEIVE COURTIER'S AND DISCUSS STATE ISSUES.

OUR EMPEROR DANCES TO HER TUNE.



WHEN NOOR JAHAN GOT LADLI MARRIED TO SHAHRIYAR, JAHANGIR'S FOURTH SON BY AN EARLIER MARRIAGE —

NOW SHE WILL GET THE EMPEROR TO DECLARE SHAHRIYAR AS HIS SUCCESSOR

THAT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO THE ELDER PRINCE, KHURRAM.



NOOR JAHAN WAS NOT UNAWARE OF MAHABAT KHAN'S HOSTILITY.

JAHANPANA, I DO NOT TRUST MAHABAT KHAN.



I'M AFRAID I DON'T SHARE YOUR APPREHENSION, MY DEAR.



DON'T FORGET THAT IT WAS HE WHO PUT DOWN THE REBELLION OF PRINCE KHURRAM.

BUT HE IS CORRUPT. HAS HE EVER SUBMITTED THE ACCOUNTS OF THE VARIOUS EXPEDITIONS HE HAS LED?



ALL RIGHT, MY DEAR. I WILL SUMMON HIM FROM THE DECCAN, AND QUESTION HIM. BUT LET THIS NOT DISTURB OUR PLANS TO VISIT KABUL.

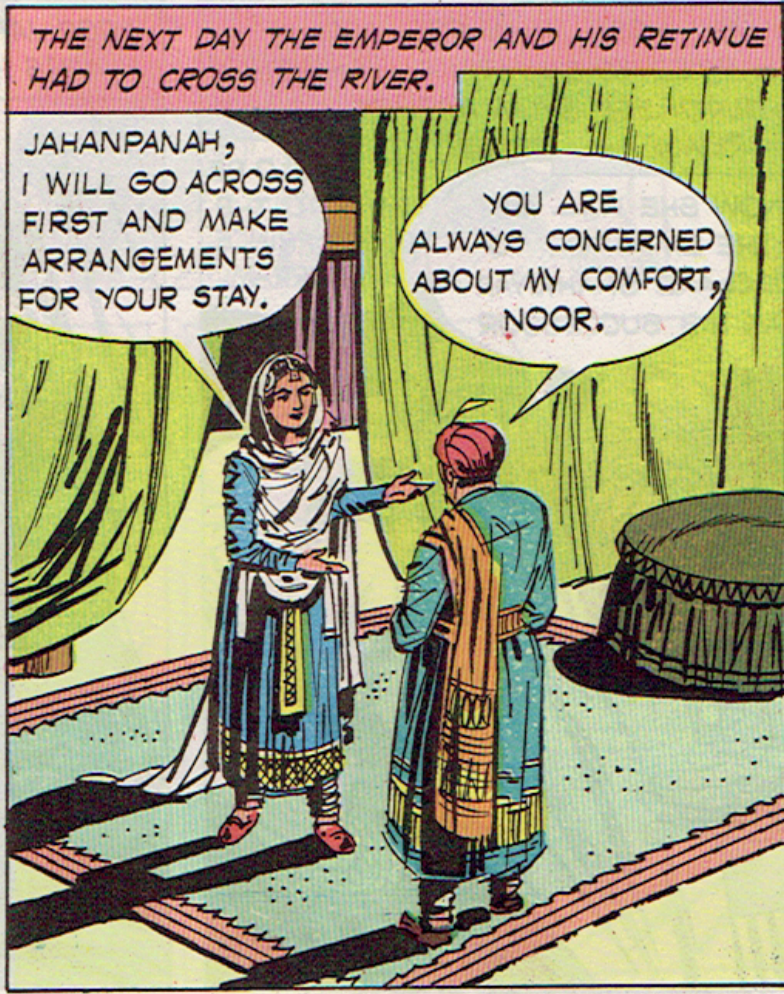
JAHANPANAHA, I LOOK FORWARD TO THE TRIP.



ON THEIR WAY TO KABUL, JAHANGIR AND NOOR JAHAN CAMPED WITH THE ROYAL ARMY ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER JHELUM.

JAHANPANAHA, I HEAR THAT MAHABAT KHAN WILL BE MEETING YOU.

YES, HE IS EXPECTED ANY DAY NOW.

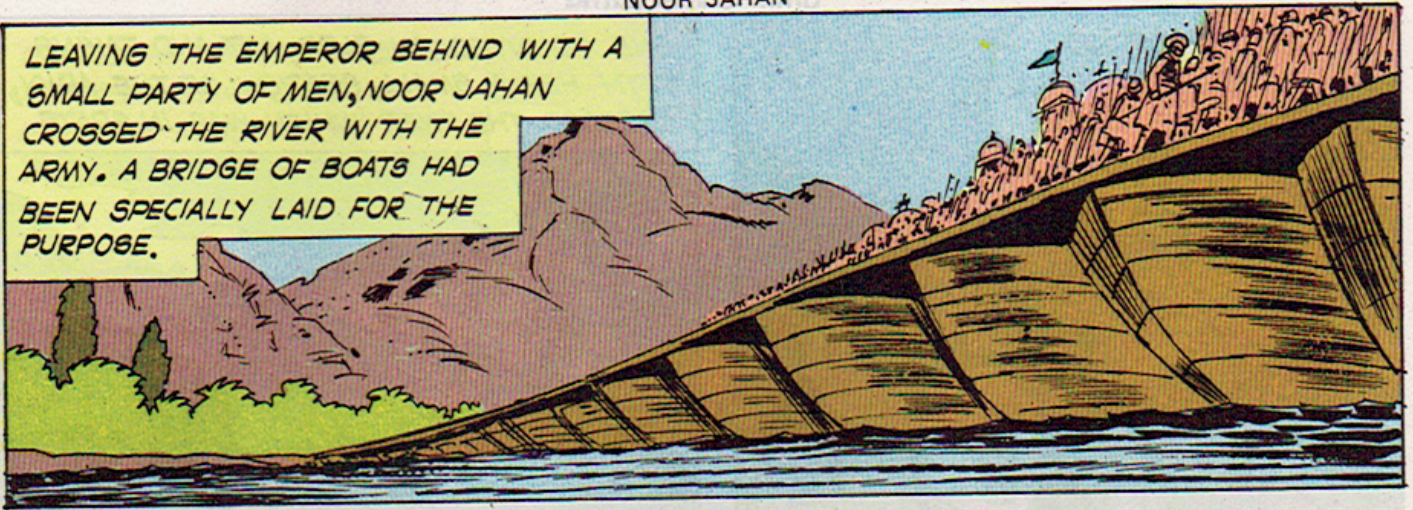


THE NEXT DAY THE EMPEROR AND HIS RETINUE HAD TO CROSS THE RIVER.

JAHANPANAHA, I WILL GO ACROSS FIRST AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUR STAY.

YOU ARE ALWAYS CONCERNED ABOUT MY COMFORT, NOOR.

LEAVING THE EMPEROR BEHIND WITH A SMALL PARTY OF MEN, NOOR JAHAN CROSSED THE RIVER WITH THE ARMY. A BRIDGE OF BOATS HAD BEEN SPECIALLY LAID FOR THE PURPOSE.



ALL ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR HIS STAY BUT THE EMPEROR DID NOT TURN UP.



WHY HASN'T HE COME AS YET?

SHE SOON LEARNT WHY.

BEGUM SAHIBA, MAHABAT KHAN'S ARMY HAS SURROUNDED THE EMPEROR'S PARTY.

WHAT!

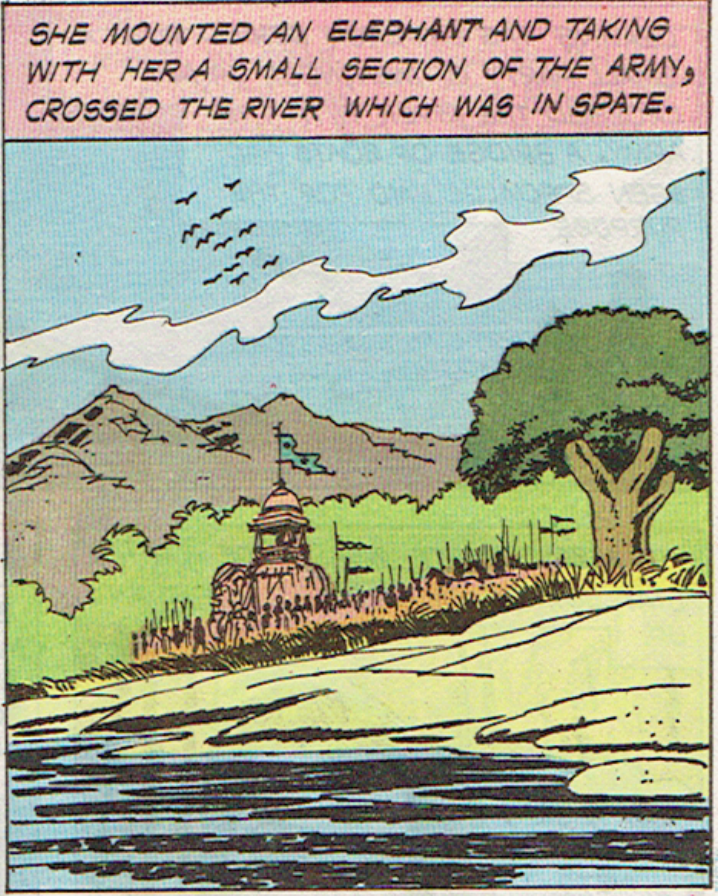


WE SHOULD RUSH TO HIS RESCUE! WE WILL CROSS THE RIVER.

BUT BEGUM SAHIBA, THE ENEMY HAVE TAKEN THE BRIDGE!



BRIDGE OR NO BRIDGE, WE SHALL CROSS THE RIVER! NOW DO AS I SAY.



SHE MOUNTED AN ELEPHANT AND TAKING WITH HER A SMALL SECTION OF THE ARMY, CROSSED THE RIVER WHICH WAS IN SPATE.



IN THE FIGHT THAT FOLLOWED, SHE WAS DEFEATED AND TAKEN CAPTIVE.

BEGUM SAHIBA, WHY DID YOU TAKE THIS UNNECESSARY RISK?

I HAVE NO WISH TO SPEAK TO A TRAITOR. LEAD ME TO THE EMPEROR.

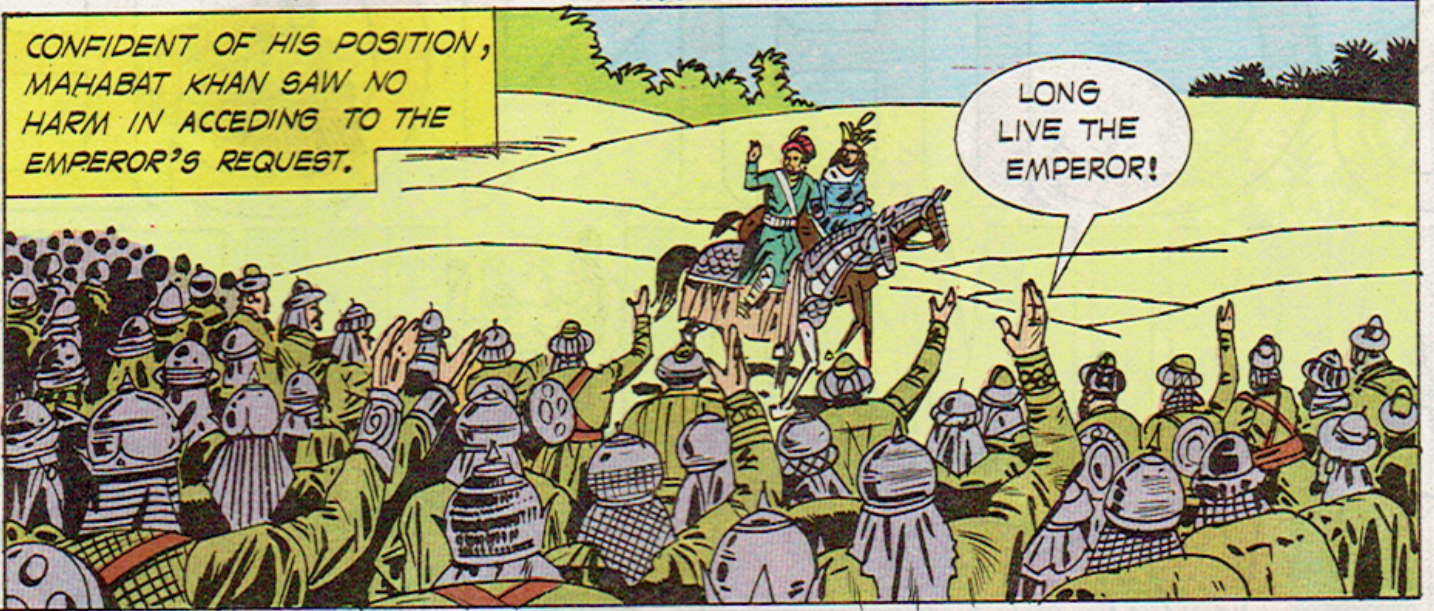


NOOR, YOU ARE SAFE! WHAT A RELIEF!

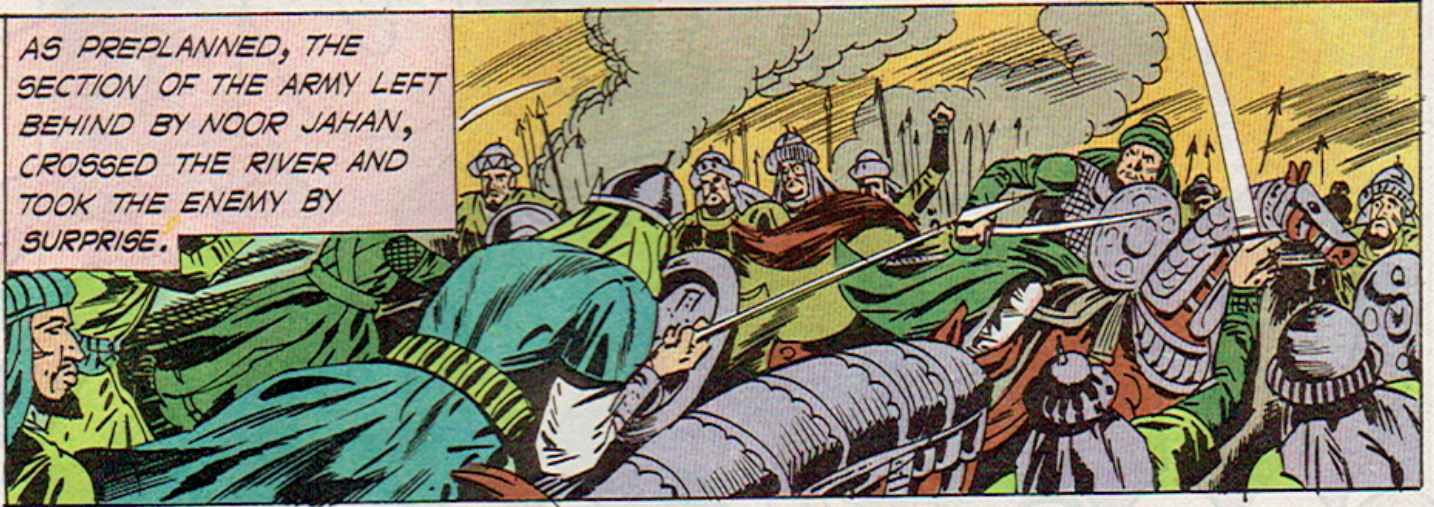
JAHANPANAHA, WE HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE. TELL MAHABAT KHAN THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO INSPECT THE ARMY.

CONFIDENT OF HIS POSITION, MAHABAT KHAN SAW NO HARM IN ACCEDING TO THE EMPEROR'S REQUEST.

LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!

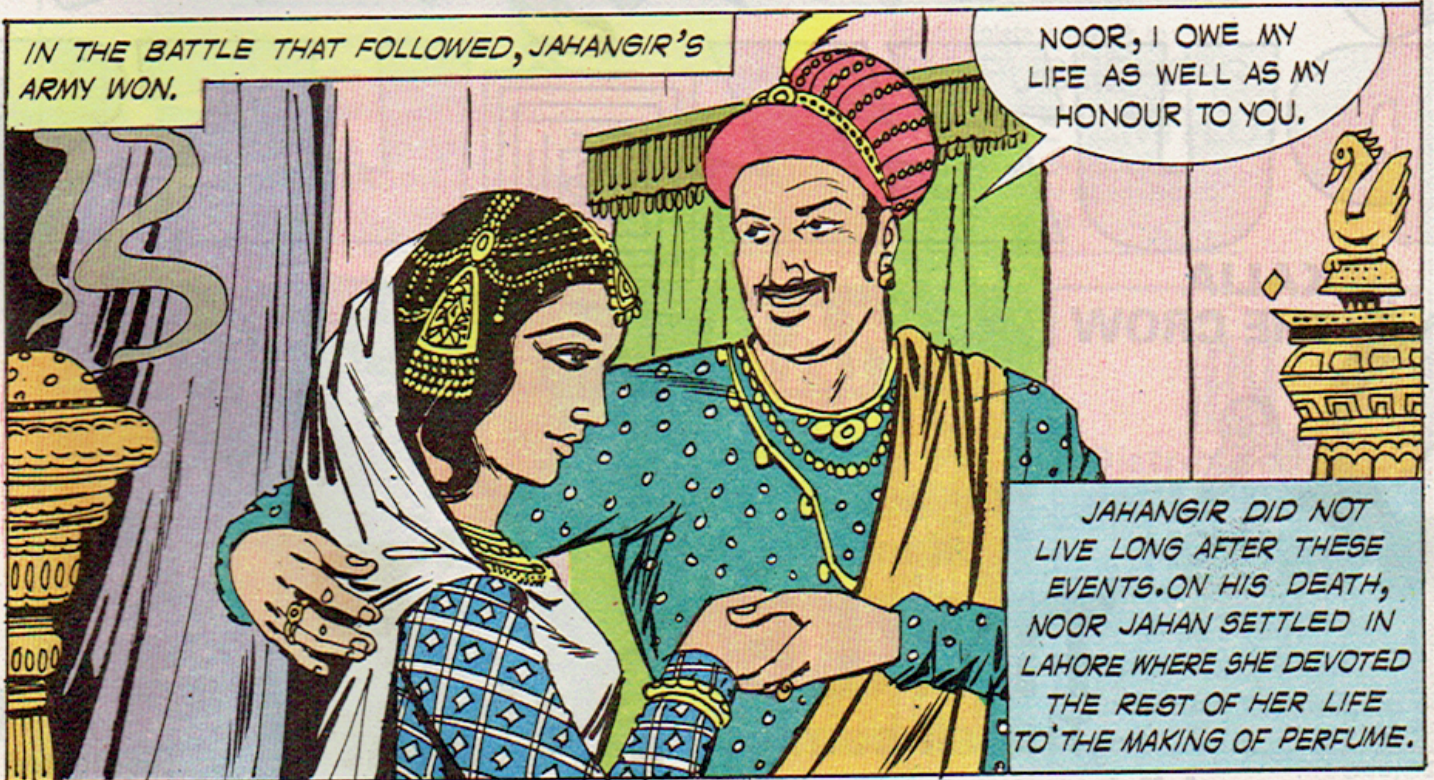


AS PREPLANNED, THE SECTION OF THE ARMY LEFT BEHIND BY NOOR JAHAN, CROSSED THE RIVER AND TOOK THE ENEMY BY SURPRISE.



IN THE BATTLE THAT FOLLOWED, JAHANGIR'S ARMY WON.

NOOR, I OWE MY LIFE AS WELL AS MY HONOUR TO YOU.



JAHANGIR DID NOT LIVE LONG AFTER THESE EVENTS. ON HIS DEATH, NOOR JAHAN SETTLED IN LAHORE WHERE SHE DEVOTED THE REST OF HER LIFE TO THE MAKING OF PERFUME.