



# THANJAVUR

CITY OF BRIHADEESWARA

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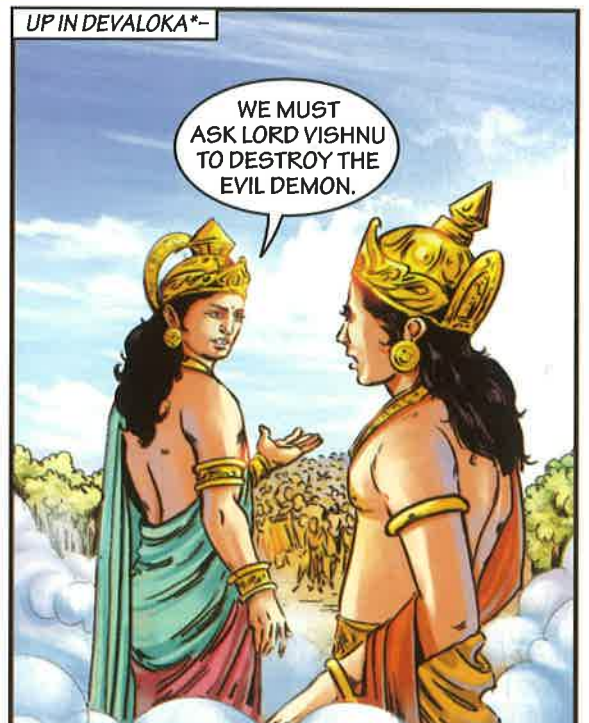


# THANJAVUR



*BUILT BY RAJA RAJA CHOLA I, THE BRIHADEESWARA TEMPLE TOWERS OVER THE HISTORIC TOWN OF THANJAVUR, IN THE HEART OF TAMIL NADU. FOR CENTURIES PEOPLE HAVE MARVELLED AT IT AND AT THE OTHER ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECES BUILT HERE BY VARIOUS CHOLA MONARCHS. THE MONUMENTS ARE STEEPED IN HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY. OUR STORY GOES BACK TO THE BIRTH OF THANJAVUR.*

ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER KAVERI, LIVED A WICKED ASURA NAMED THANJAN. HE TERRORISED THE PEOPLE LIVING THERE.



\* THE ABODE OF THE GODS

VISHNU CONFRONTED THANJAN ...



... AND VANQUISHED HIM.



MY LORD!  
GRANT ME ONE WISH  
BEFORE I DIE. LET A  
TOWN OF GREAT BEAUTY  
COME UP AT THIS SPOT  
WHERE YOU HAVE  
DEFEATED ME.



THANJAN'S WISH WAS GRANTED AND THANJAVUR OR THANJAN'S UR\* WAS BORN. POETS SANG PRAISES OF THE FERTILE LAND AND ITS WEALTHY PEOPLE.



THEY GET SO MUCH RICE FROM THEIR FIELDS THAT THEY USE ELEPHANTS INSTEAD OF OXEN TO THRESH THE PADDY.



THE WOMEN FLING THEIR HEAVY GOLD EARRINGS TO CHASE AWAY THE BIRDS THAT PECK AT THE GRAIN THEY PUT OUT TO DRY.



THANJAVUR BECAME THE CAPITAL OF THE CHOLA KINGS IN THE 9TH CENTURY CE. AROUND 945 CE, PARANTAKA SUNDARA CHOLA II RECEIVED HAPPY NEWS.



THE QUEEN HAS HAD A BABY BOY!



\* UR MEANS PLACE AND IT IS PRONOUNCED 'OOR'.

WE SHALL NAME THE BABY ARULMOZHI VARMAN.

ONE WHOSE WORDS ARE PRECIOUS. WHAT A LOVELY NAME!

IT IS SAID THAT THE MANY WIVES OF THE SERPENT ADISESHA\* DANCED WITH JOY AT PRINCE ARUL'S BIRTH.

HE WILL RELIEVE OUR HUSBAND OF CARRYING THE BURDEN OF THE EARTH!

PRINCE ARULMOZHI ASCENDED THE THRONE IN 985 CE.

THE RITUAL OF THE SACRED BATH IS OVER. YOU SHALL HENCEFORTH BE KNOWN AS RAJA RAJA, KING OF KINGS.

KING OF KINGS HE DID PROVE HIMSELF TO BE. FOR UNDER RAJA RAJA'S WISE AND MATURE LEADERSHIP, THE CHOLAS BECAME A GREAT POWER.

WE SHOULD GO TO WAR AT ONCE, O KING, AND CONQUER NEW TERRITORIES!

NO, WE MUST FIRST TRAIN OUR SOLDIERS AND CREATE A STRONG ARMY.

\* ALSO KNOWN AS SHESHNAG, AND IS SAID TO SUPPORT THE EARTH ON ITS HOOD.

EIGHT YEARS WENT BY.



WE ARE READY FOR BATTLE! PREPARE TO LAUNCH AN ATTACK ON THE CHERA KING, BHASKARA RAVIVARMAN.



WE HAVE DESTROYED THE ENTIRE FLEET OF THE CHERAS!

WELL DONE!

RAJA RAJA SPENT THE NEXT FEW YEARS CONQUERING NEW TERRITORIES.

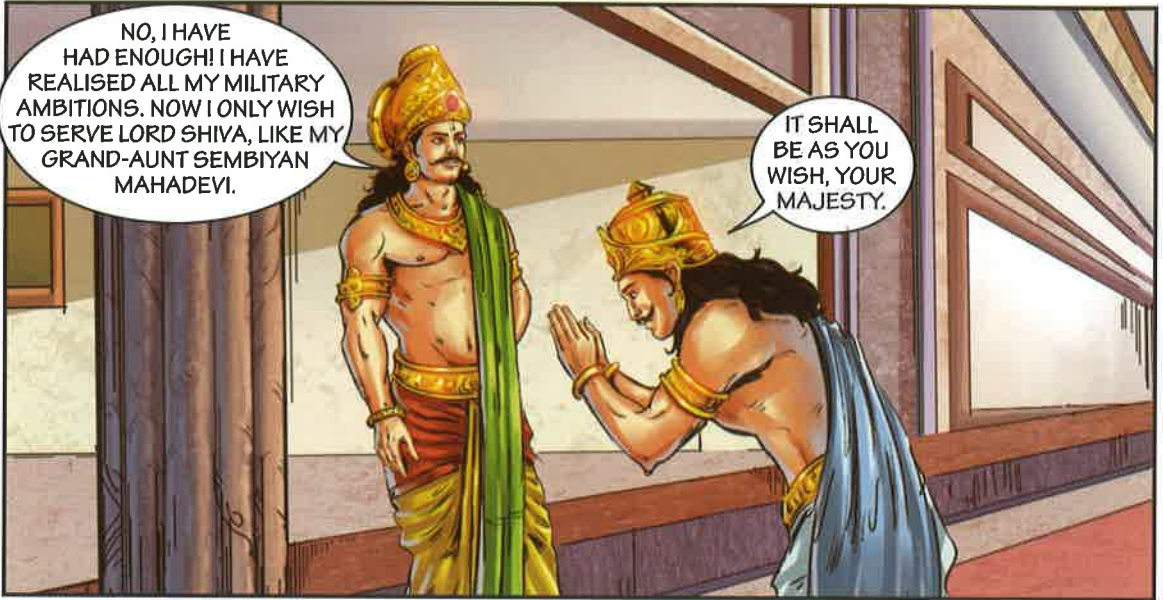


MY KINGDOM STRETCHES FROM CHERALAM\* TO LANKA, AND FROM MUNNIR PALANTIVU PANNIRAYIRAM^ TO KALINGA^^.

THERE ARE MORE PRIZES TO BE WON, YOUR MAJESTY.

\*KERALA  
^MALDIVES

^^ORISSA



NO, I HAVE HAD ENOUGH! I HAVE REALISED ALL MY MILITARY AMBITIONS. NOW I ONLY WISH TO SERVE LORD SHIVA, LIKE MY GRAND-AUNT SEMBIYAN MAHADEVI.

IT SHALL BE AS YOU WISH, YOUR MAJESTY.

IN HER TIME, SEMBIYAN MAHADEVI HAD BUILT MANY TEMPLES IN AND AROUND THANJAVUR. ONE OF THE TEMPLES WAS AT KONERIRAJAPURAM.



THE QUEEN WISHES TO INSTALL A BRONZE NATARAJA HERE. IT SHOULD BE AT LEAST 6 FEET TALL.

IT SHALL BE DONE, O KING!

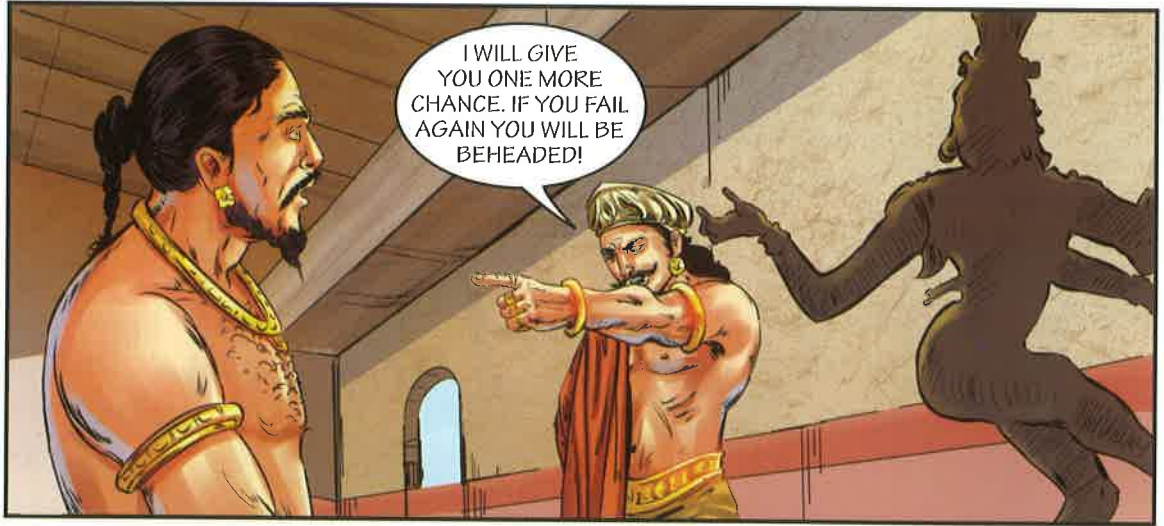
LEGEND HAS IT THAT EVEN AFTER MANY ATTEMPTS -



WHAT IS THIS? ANOTHER SMALL STATUE?

I AM HELPLESS, SIRE, THE STATUE DOES NOT RISE BEYOND THAT.





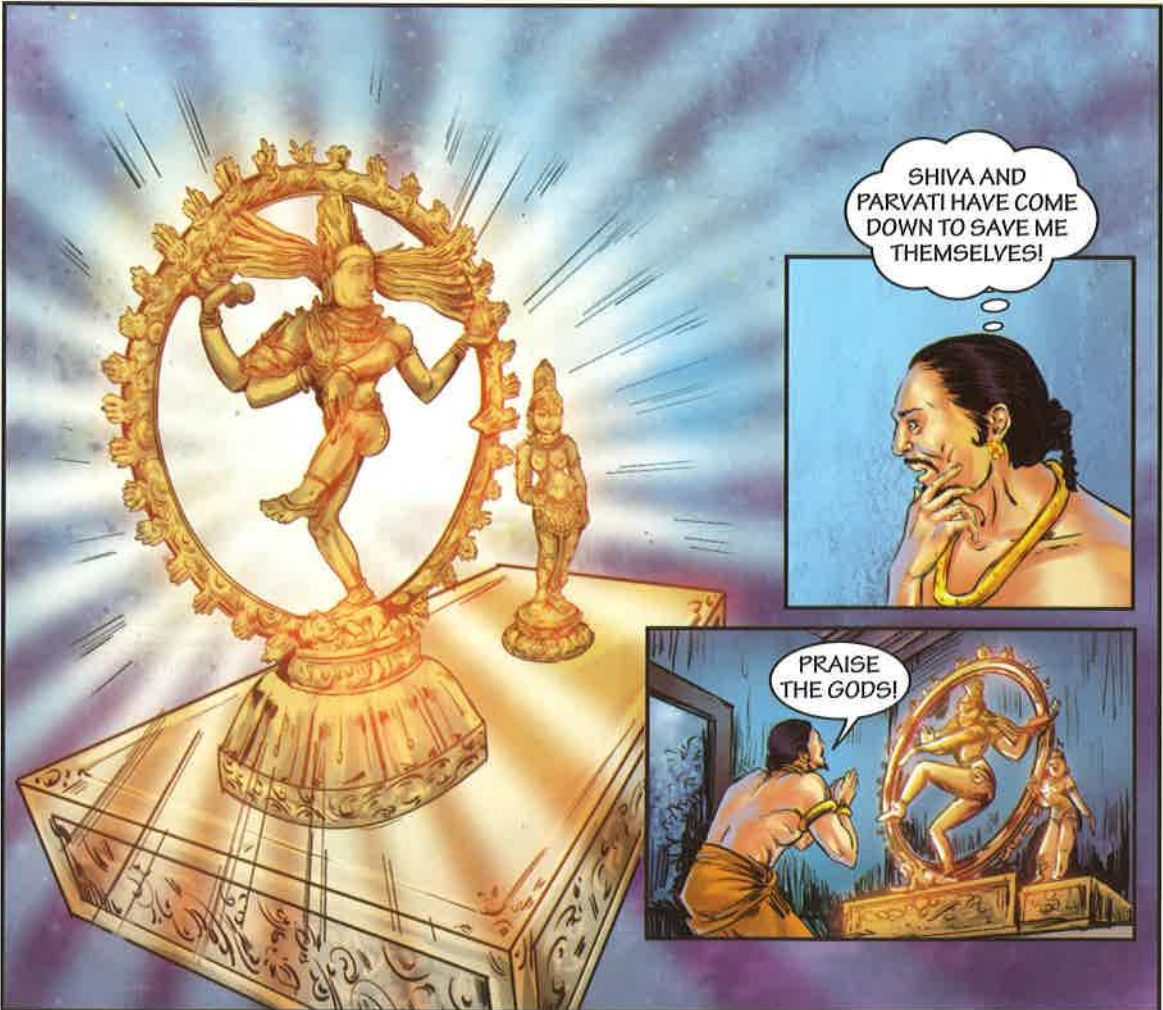
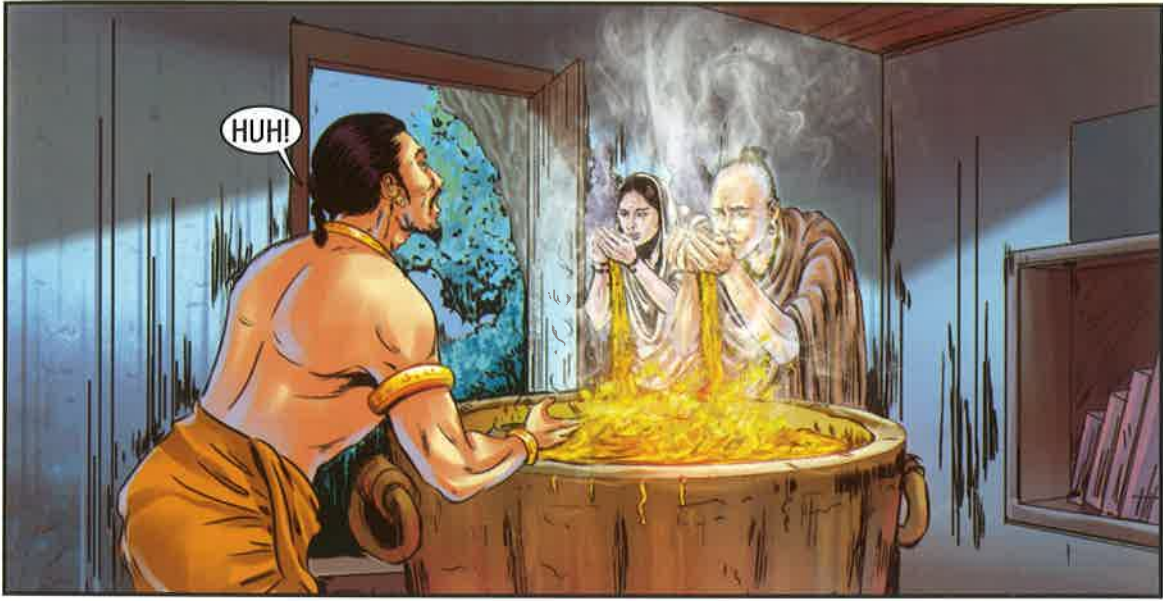
WHEN THERE WAS JUST ONE NIGHT LEFT, THE SCULPTOR HEARD A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.



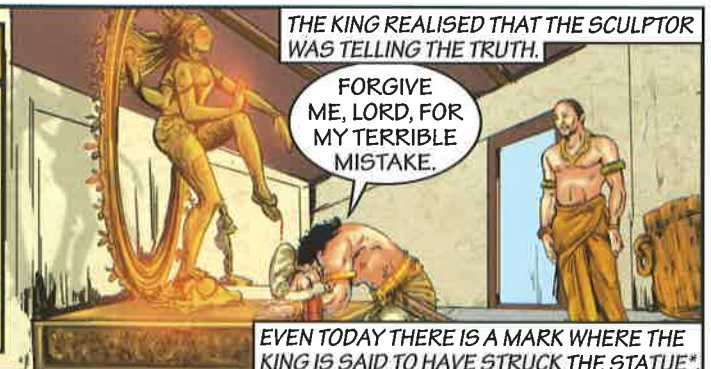
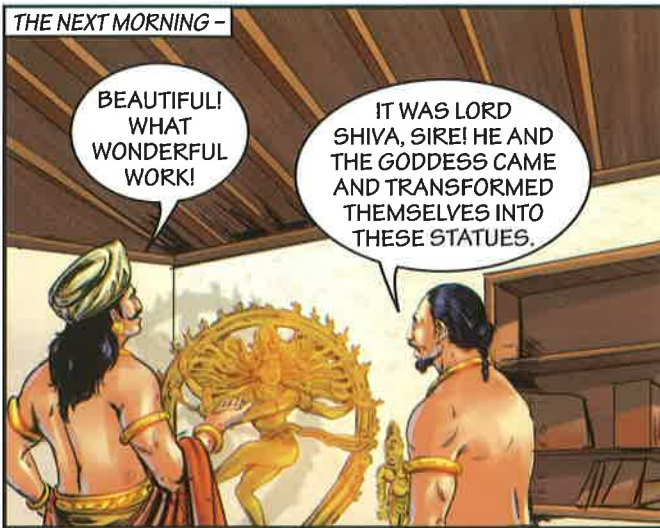
YOU ARE BRAHMINS. I CANNOT OFFER YOU WATER. GO TO THE AGRAHARAM\* AND ASK THEM.



\*BRAHMIN COLONY



THE NEXT MORNING -



\*IT IS SAID TO BE THE WORLD'S  
TALLEST BRONZE NATARAJA.

LIKE HIS ANCESTORS, RAJA RAJA WAS ALSO A GREAT DEVOTEE OF LORD SHIVA.



I WISH TO VISIT THE TEMPLE AT TIRUVARUR.

WE SHALL LEAVE AT ONCE, YOUR MAJESTY.

AT TIRUVARUR -



YES.

LOOK AT THE KING. HE IS LOST IN THE MUSIC.

WHEN THE HYMN\* WAS OVER -



WHAT A BEAUTIFUL HYMN! I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR SOME MORE.

ALAS, SIRE, THE SAINTS WHO WROTE THESE HYMNS ARE NO MORE.

THE MANY HYMNS THEY WROTE ARE LOST. THE FEW STANZAS YOU HEARD ARE ALL THAT REMAIN.



THEN LOOK FOR THEM! THIS IS A ROYAL ORDER!

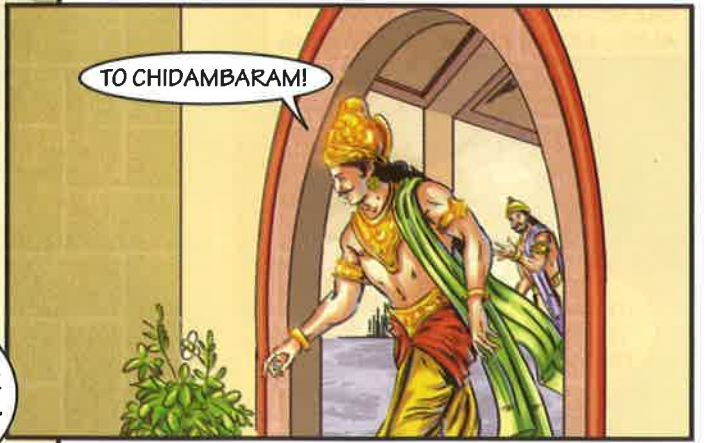
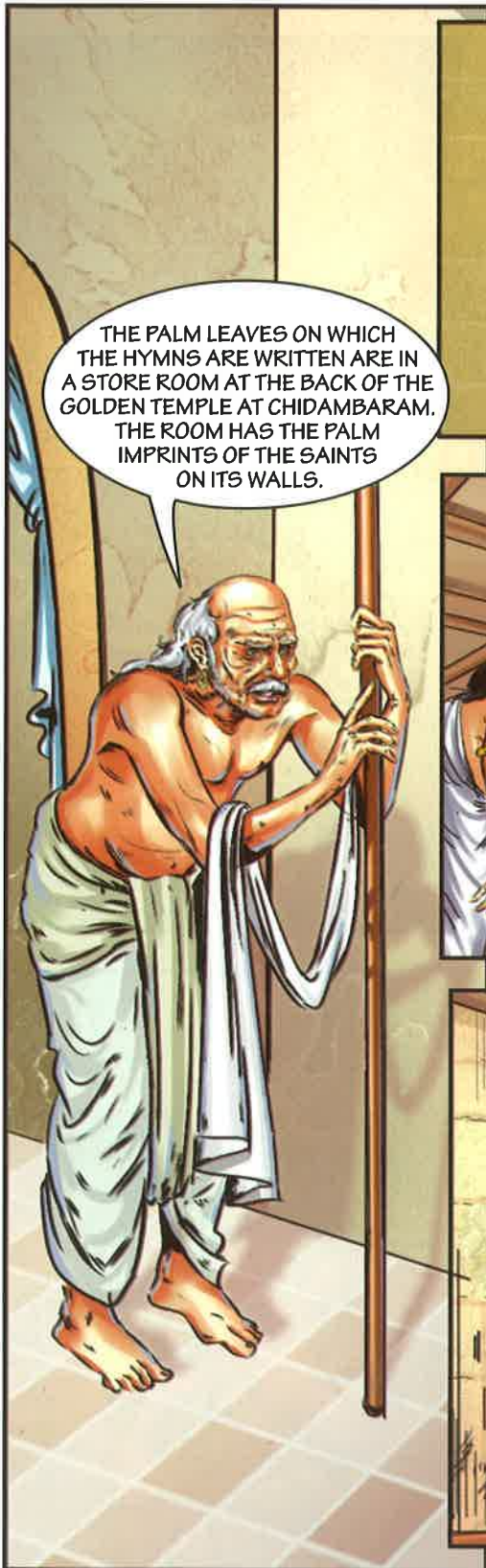
AFTER MANY DAYS OF SEARCHING -



YOUR MAJESTY! THIS MAN KNOWS WHERE TO FIND THE HYMNS.

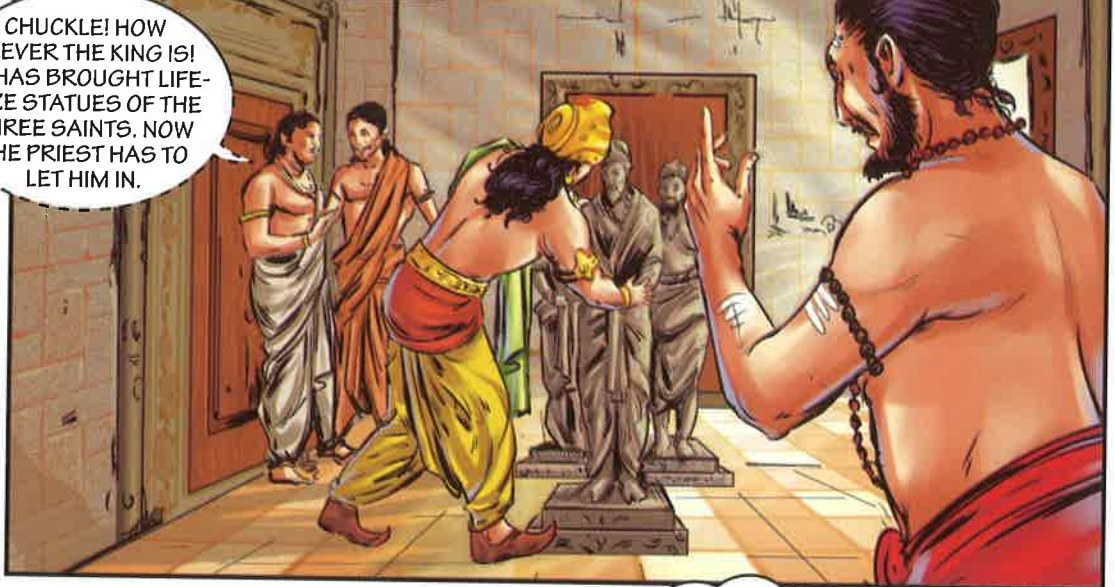
TELL ME, REVERED FATHER.

\*RELIGIOUS SONG



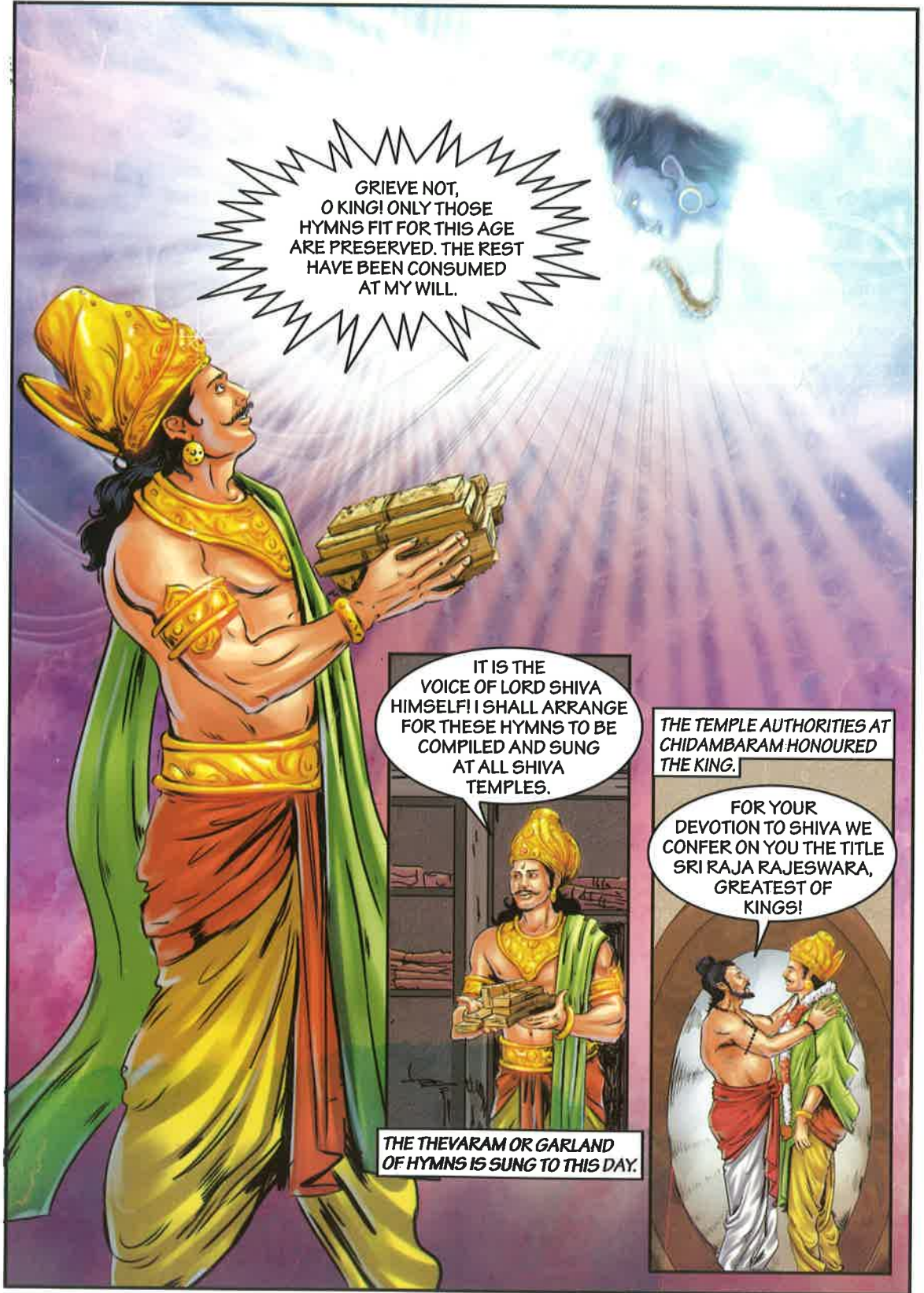


CHUCKLE! HOW CLEVER THE KING IS! HE HAS BROUGHT LIFE-SIZE STATUES OF THE THREE SAINTS. NOW THE PRIEST HAS TO LET HIM IN.



OH NO! THE PALM LEAVES ARE COVERED WITH WHITE ANTS AND MUD!





GRIEVE NOT,  
O KING! ONLY THOSE  
HYMNS FIT FOR THIS AGE  
ARE PRESERVED. THE REST  
HAVE BEEN CONSUMED  
AT MY WILL.

IT IS THE  
VOICE OF LORD SHIVA  
HIMSELF! I SHALL ARRANGE  
FOR THESE HYMNS TO BE  
COMPILED AND SUNG  
AT ALL SHIVA  
TEMPLES.

THE TEMPLE AUTHORITIES AT  
CHIDAMBARAM HONoured  
THE KING.

FOR YOUR  
DEVOTION TO SHIVA WE  
CONFER ON YOU THE TITLE  
SRI RAJA RAJESWARA,  
GREATEST OF  
KINGS!

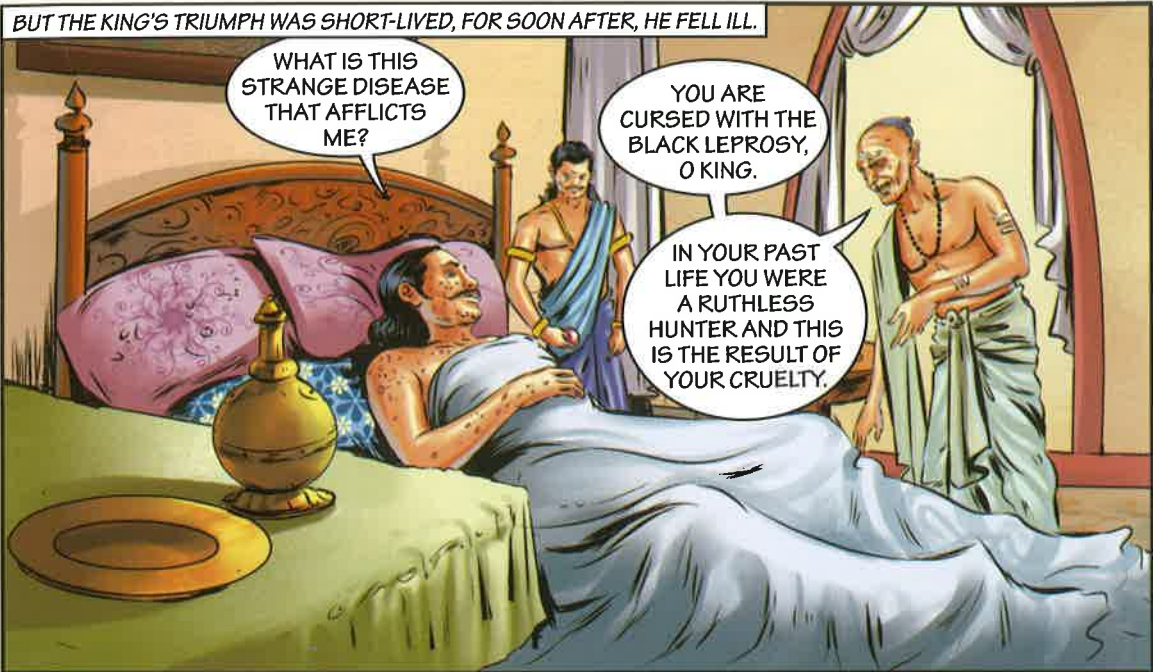
THE THEYARAM OR GARLAND  
OF HYMNS IS SUNG TO THIS DAY.

BUT THE KING'S TRIUMPH WAS SHORT-LIVED, FOR SOON AFTER, HE FELL ILL.

WHAT IS THIS STRANGE DISEASE THAT AFFLICTS ME?

YOU ARE CURSED WITH THE BLACK LEPROSY, O KING.

IN YOUR PAST LIFE YOU WERE A RUTHLESS HUNTER AND THIS IS THE RESULT OF YOUR CRUELTY.



AAH! IS THERE NO CURE?

YOU WILL BE CURED IF YOU BUILD A TEMPLE WITH A TALL GOPURAM\* AND PLACE IN IT A LINGA BROUGHT FROM THE BANKS OF THE RIVER NARMADA.

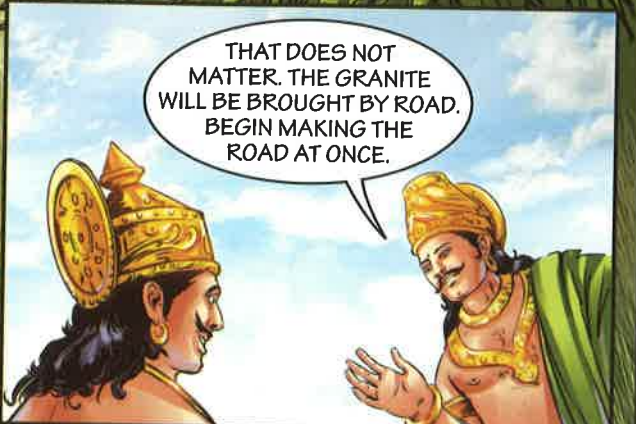
I VOW THAT I WILL BUILD A MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE IN MY CAPITAL THANJAVUR. IT WILL BE A MONUMENT TO MY MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS. IT WILL PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT TO MY PEOPLE AND WILL BE A MEASURE OF MY DEVOTION TO LORD SHIVA.



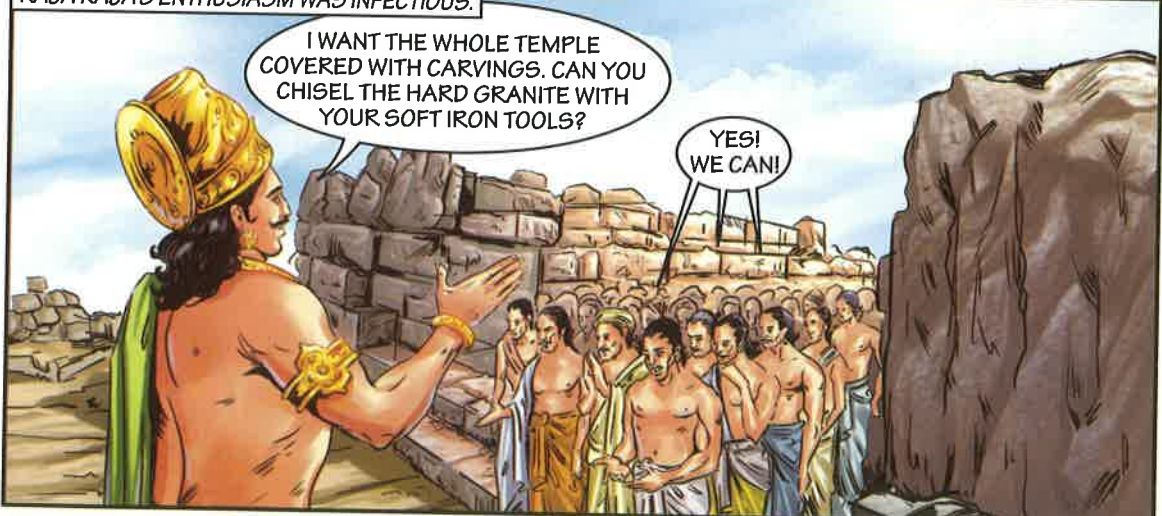
\*TOWER



WHEN HE RECOVERED -



RAJA RAJA'S ENTHUSIASM WAS INFECTIOUS.



\* THE TEMPLE CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE BRIHADEESWARA TEMPLE, POPULARLY CALLED THE BIG TEMPLE.