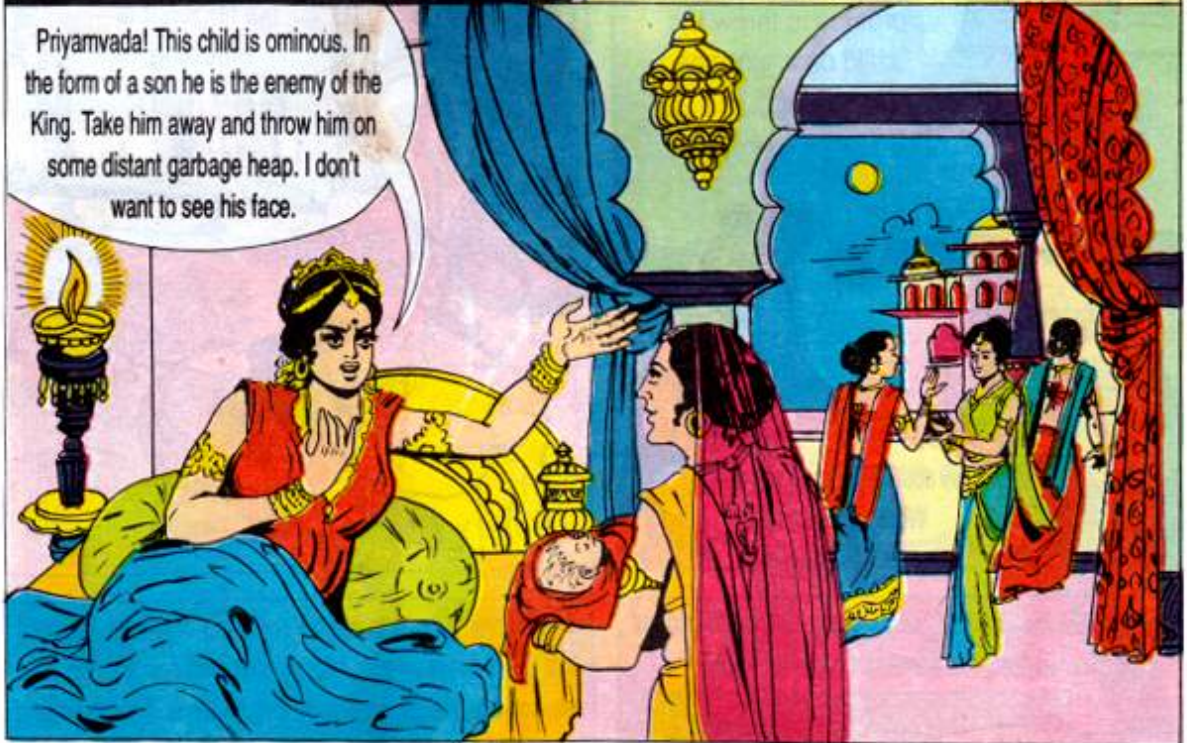


AJATSHATRU KUNIK

It was the last quarter of the night. Surrounded by beautiful gardens at the foot of Vaibhargiri hills, Queen Chelna's palace was filled with unusual activity. The maids were rushing around. The queen had just given birth to a son. She became nervous the moment she saw the face of the new born. She called her maid—

Priyamvada! This child is ominous. In the form of a son he is the enemy of the King. Take him away and throw him on some distant garbage heap. I don't want to see his face.



The maid followed the queen's instructions. She left the child on a garbage heap at the back of the palace. As she turned to leave, King Shrenik arrived there from his morning walk. He saw a woman furtively going toward the palace. He shouted—



The maid trembled with fear.

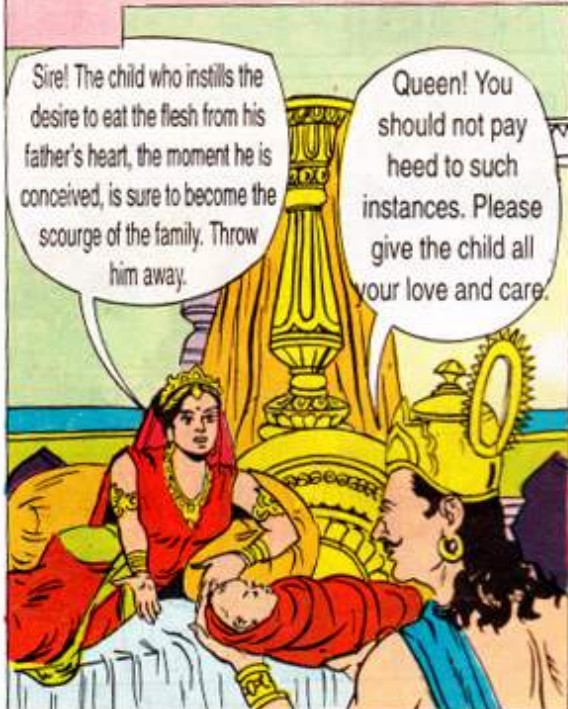
On coming near, the king recognized the maid. When he reprimanded her for questionable behaviour, the nervous maid revealed the truth—



The maid took the king near the garbage heap. Shrenik rushed, picked up the infant and kissed him. When he saw the finger of the wailing child he exclaimed—



Shrenik took the child to Chelna's palace and questioned her about this cruel deed. The queen said in choked voice—



When Shrenik came to see his son a few days later, he found that the wounded finger had swollen with pus and the child was crying. He at once took the finger in his mouth and sucked out the pus. The queen was surprised.



The child was named Ashok Chandra but due to his wounded finger every one called him Kunik#. After Kunik, Chelna gave birth to two other sons who were named Halla and Vihalla. When they grew up, the three princes were sent to a "Gurukul" school.



One afternoon three lunch-boxes full of saffron laddus## were sent to the school. The servants first gave a box to Kunik and then to Halla and Vihalla. Kunik tasted his laddu—



He tasted the sweets from his brothers' boxes.



When he found the same mistake next day also, he asked the servants—



Kunik thought—



Gradually a feeling of dislike clouded Kunik's mind. Even in insignificant matters he felt as if his father hated him and loved his younger brothers.

Kunik = one with a cut finger.

Ball shaped sweets.