

Select Indian Comics: Representations and Politics

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

**by
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled ***Select Indian Comics: Representations and Politics***, submitted by **Aloysius Sebastian** bearing registration number **16HCPH01** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

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5. CL-810	Course with Supervisor	4	Pass

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DECLARATION

I, **Aloysius Sebastian**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled *Select Indian Comics: Representations and Politics* submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Dr J. Bheemaiah, Associate Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature**, is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this university or any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodganga/ INFLIBNET.

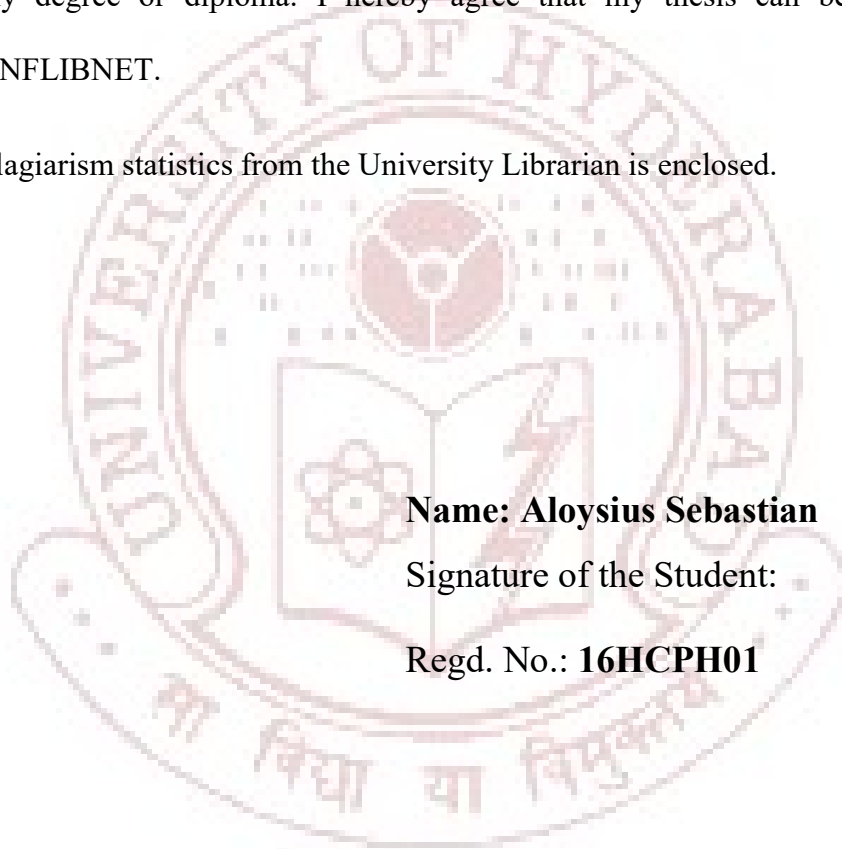
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Introduction

In my childhood, I used to read, especially comics, and my later reading was greatly influenced by what I read earlier. Children's literature, especially comics and picture books, can have much influence on the mind of children, and therefore, they can influence the way children grow up into adults. Comics and picture books can have a greater influence because they constitute illustrations that easily attract children, and they can, therefore, make a greater impact. This is why I took up research on comics. This research constitutes a comparative analysis of two immensely popular Indian comics; *Chandamama* and *Tinkle*.

Objective

The objective of this comparative study is to analyse shifts in the reflection and representation of Indian culture in the popular medium of comics. The first part of this thesis looks at how the Indian comic culture after Independence was nativistic and aimed at teaching children Indian tradition and culture, which was Brahmanical, casteist and aligning with the Hindu nationalist discourse by othering non-Hindu communities, especially Muslims. The second part of the thesis studies how and why the comic culture in India underwent a gradual shift from a religious culture towards a science culture. However, apart from observing and analysing the emergence of a new trend, that is, science culture, in Indian comic culture, this study does not make any claims that the religious nature of Indian comics completely ceased to exist. On the other hand, this study argues that Indian comic culture, which, by upholding tradition, culture and religion, was very nativist in Independent India, gradually adapted itself to suit the growing and evolving modernity in the country, which has led to a negotiation between tradition and modernity.

Review of Literature

Primary

Chandamama

Chandamama was a picture book published in 13 Indian languages, including English, which was widely read by children in the latter half of the 20th century, and played a significant role in their childhood life. It was started by filmmakers B Nagi Reddy and Chakrapani in 1947, that is, just one month before India gained Independence from British rule. The English issues were published from 1955, and continued to be published with a few short as well as long intervals in between. However, it stopped publication in 2013.

Chandamama constituted miscellaneous content, such as comic strips, illustrated stories, historical narratives, informative pieces and also news items. The main objective of this picture book was to teach Indian culture and tradition to Indian children of the time. Some stories in this picture book are often mythological or derived from the *Puranas*, and some stories are about heroic figures. Despite such derivative stories, *Chandamama* constitutes several stories created by the authors and illustrators themselves, and such creative stories are the subject of analysis in this thesis. However, unfortunately, the names of the authors and illustrators are mostly not mentioned in *Chandamama*.

I obtained several issues of *Chandamama* published from 1955 to 1985 from *Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/index.php>).

Tinkle

Tinkle comics, founded by Anant Pai, the founder of the *Amar Chitra Katha* picture books, began publication from 1980, and it is still being published, with a very wide readership in India and abroad. Like *Chandamama*, *Tinkle* is also a miscellaneous comic book. However, unlike *Chandamama*, all the stories in *Tinkle* are in the comic-book format, constituting panels and speech balloons. It contains stories, informative pieces on scientific inventions and discoveries, puzzles and games.

Even though *Tinkle* began publication from 1980, I have analysed those published in the 21st century, because, through the analysis of *Tinkle*, I observe the 21st-century comic culture in India.

Some Major Secondary Texts

Related Work on *Amar Chitra Katha*

***India's Immortal Comic Books: Gods, Kings, and Other Heroes* by Karline McLain**

Karline McLain points out that the immensely popular *Amar Chitra Katha* comics published in India from 1967 implicitly frames Indian political, cultural and religious history from a chauvinistic and Hindu nationalist perspective. McLain describes how these comic books, mostly covering Indian historical figures and Hindu mythology, are widely accepted by Indian families, educational institutions and politicians as being legitimate and factual sources of information.

McLain describes how the founder of *Amar Chitra Katha*, Anant Pai, said the reason behind his creation of *ACK* was to ameliorate Indian school children's knowledge of Indian history and Hindu mythology. However, as described by

McLain, *ACK* has an implicit religious agenda that seeks to exclude all non-Hindu religions as being foreign, as evident through several issues of the comic that are about significant Hindu figures who achieve greatness while vanquishing others of different faiths. She describes how *ACK* portrays Shivaji as a Hindu nationalist who sought to unite India under a common religious banner. McLain argues that *ACK*'s narration of the epic struggle between Shivaji, the hero, and the Muslim ruler Afzal Khan, the villain, has communal overtones. McLain points out that such overtones can be seen in several other issues of *ACK*. In this comic, for every victorious and just Hindu king, there is a Muslim foil. Even when, on a few occasions, the issue's focus is a Muslim figure, as does happen on an infinitesimal number of occasions, then it would be a Muslim hero vs a Muslim villain.

McLain quotes Indian readers across the world who favourably speak of how they grew up with *ACK* comic books and how they continue to pass the legacy on to future generations. Thus, McLain describes how, by the Hindu nationalist discourse, *Amar Chitra* implicitly instils in the minds of Indian children a conception of India as a land that originally belongs to one people and one particular religious group.

***Sculpting a Middle Class: History, Masculinity and the “Amar Chitra Katha” in India* by Deepa Sreenivas**

Deepa Sreenivas draws on *Amar Chitra Katha* to examine the modes in which the Indian upper-caste middle-class of the latter half of the 21st century consolidated its position. The generations of middle-class children that grew up reading *ACK* during the 1970s and the 80s have their ideas of citizenship and selfhood formed by it. It shaped dominant contemporary ideas about Indian history and tradition, Brahmanism and masculinity. *ACK* has also made a critical contribution in moulding many other

present-day hegemonic articulations about merit, self-respect, self-improvement and hard work.

Sreenivas describes how *Amar Chitra Katha* was seeking to reinstall tradition. The *ACK* impulse connects with the refurbishment of tradition that took place in the 1970s. *ACKs* heroes are born at auspicious moments, grow up in ritual-steeped families, and are almost invariably influenced by the *Gita*, but have within them an inherent courage to reject reactionary social practices.

Sreenivas argues that *Amar Chitra Katha*'s ambitions share close ties with the conservative battle for popular consent in the arena of culture by the right-wing politics of the 1960s and 70s. She describes how this comic supports a Brahmanical Indian culture, while Muslims are portrayed as invaders.

According to Sreenivas, recurrent in *Amar Chitra Katha* is the nation–family trope. She argues there is a shared context between the cultural–intellectual framework of *ACK* and the Vishva Hindu Parishad. *ACK* was launched a few years after the birth of the VHP, and it responded to a cultural need sharply felt in the rank and file of the VHP.

Sreenivas points out that the modern *guru* or the sage who comes out of *sanyas* to guide the moral battle of the nation has a prominent place in *Amar Chitra Katha* in several stories of saints/reformers.

Sreenivas says that *ACK* incorporates Indian art traditions into Western illusionist mode to construct the “authentic” national subject; spiritual yet martial/masculine, modern and individualist yet culturally rooted.

***The Classics Popular: Amar Chitra Katha, 1967 – 2007* by Nandini Chandra**

Nandini Chandra argues that *Amar Chitra Katha* comic books implicitly propagate Hindu communalism, Vaishnavism to be specific, and they are Brahmanical, anti-Muslim and patriarchal.

Chandra discusses how *Amar Chitra Katha* depicts dark-skinned characters as evil. She describes how *ACK* is implicitly Hindu communalist and anti-Muslim.

Nandini Chandra elaborates upon *ACKs* anti-Muslim nature by analysing comic strips on Muslim rulers like Aurangzeb who are depicted as anti-Hindu invaders. She also analyses images in comic strips on Rajput-Mughal wars with “Har-Har-Mahadev” slogans against “Allah-o-Akbar” that can inculcate communal divisions among readers. Chandra describes how Aurangzeb is portrayed as a villain in *ACK* comics, and his personality as an efficient military strategist is wholly ignored. She also points out *ACKs* method of systematically diminishing the image of a secular emperor like Akbar.

The Medium of Comics

***Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud**

Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics* is a path-breaking examination of comics art: its rich history, surprising technical components, and major cultural significance. McCloud explores how comic strips make meaning through a variety of techniques.

McCloud ingeniously uses comic strips to examine the medium itself. He writes about realism, abstraction and visual perception in comics.

McCloud describes how comics work. He talks about what comics are, how old they are, how line, colour and space work. He also talks about the difference between Japanese and American styles.

McCloud points out that the comic form as a method of storytelling goes back to ancient art. He explores the comic vocabulary, the concept of closure as it applies to comics, time frames, line, colour, storytelling, and the six steps an artist in any medium goes through to produce art. McCloud describes all kinds of ways that closure can work, and some of the cultural differences in patterns.

McCloud compares comics' creation to other forms of art and shows how they are similar and different.

McCloud elaborates how comics can be constructed and deconstructed in an infinite number of ways to instil an infinite number of reactions in the reader. He demonstrates this with line and closure.

This book describes how comics work and why they are such an appealing and enduring art form.

Major Theoretical Texts Used

***The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* by Partha Chatterjee (Nationalism and Modernity in India)**

This book by Partha Chatterjee is on nationalism and modernity in India. Partha Chatterjee elaborates there are two domains of institutions and practices: one is the outer domain of material and technological progress, and the other is the inner domain of spirituality, religion, traditions and culture. In the outer domain of material and technological progress, the West had already proved its indisputable superiority,

and therefore, colonised nations were willing to follow them and achieve similar development. However, the colonised intellectuals wanted to preserve the inner domain of traditions and culture. According to Chatterjee, nationalism originated in this domain. However, even though the colonised intellectuals wanted to preserve this domain and avoid the coloniser's intervention in this realm, that did not mean this domain was kept static and stagnant. What the colonised intellectual wanted to inculcate was a "modern national culture" that was nevertheless not Western.

I have used this argument of Chatterjee's to describe the cultural nationalist origins of comic culture in India and how the affinity towards technological progress has led to the gradual development of a science culture in Indian comics.

***The Historical Text as Literary Artifact* by Hayden White (Historiography)**

Hayden White states that a historical situation can be emplotted in many different ways. The historian can choose what events to include in the description of a historical situation. Thus, history writing is essentially a fiction-making operation since the historian's inclinations can influence the plot, including what events to include and exclude. The overall coherence of a historical narrative is attained through the coherence of the story form, and this coherence is attained by tailoring the facts to suit the story form. The historical narrative does not reproduce the events it describes, but tells the reader in what direction to think and charges the reader's thoughts with different emotional valences.

I have used White's arguments to talk about how historical narratives in *Chandamama* are narrated from a Hindu nationalist viewpoint.

***Early Childhood Education, Postcolonial Theory, and Teaching Practices in India: Balancing Vygotsky and the Veda* by Amita Gupta**

Amita Gupta gives an instructive outlook on the pedagogies that are nowadays used in middle-class Indian homes and private schools. Gupta describes how the Indian early childhood educators try to prepare their students for citizenship in the 21st century. She looks at the teaching practices of early childhood practitioners in urban India and positions them within a socio-cultural, postcolonial context.

I have mostly looked at the initial chapter of this book where Gupta describes the ancient Indian education system through the *gurukul*. I have quoted her to describe the Brahmanical and discriminatory nature of this education system and how *Chandamama* glorifies such an education system, particularly by idealising the figure of the *guru* or hermit and his teachings and wisdom.

***Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* by Christophe Jaffrelot**

In this book, Jaffrelot has brought together in a chronological order the thoughts of the founding fathers, key intellectual and leaders of Hindu nationalism from the time of the British rule, through the Independence period, to the present. Jaffrelot talks about the gradual rise of Hindu nationalism for more than 130 years. He has included the writings of several Hindu ideologues. Jaffrelott writes about how the Hindutva movement has influenced and approached vital issues of Indian politics, such as secularism, religious conversion, and relations with Muslims, education, and Hindu identity in the growing diaspora.

I have quoted from this text of Jaffrelot's to talk about the gradual rise of Hindu nationalism from cultural nationalism, and to argue how *Chandamama*'s cultural

nationalist and nativist nature resulted in it aligning with the Hindu nationalist discourse.

Other Major Theoretical Texts Used

Globalisation and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security by Katarina Kinnvall on Hindu nationalism.

Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space by Manu Goswami on nationalism in India, constituting elaborate analysis of Hindu nationalism.

The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India by Paul R Brass on the mutual relationship between Hindu nationalism and communal violence between Hindus and Muslims.

The Novelty of This Thesis

The existing research work analysing *Amar Chitra Katha* constitute work on narratives derived from other mainstream texts since all the narratives in *ACK* are derived from other texts. However, *Chandamama*, on the other hand, constitutes several narratives written and illustrated by the authors and illustrators themselves, even though the creators' names are often not mentioned. Completely novel from other research work on *ACK* is my analysis of the archetype of the *guru* in *Chandamama*, and the observation that such representations were based on an inclination towards the kind of mainstream education system in Indian before the arrival of the British and the Mughals. I explore in depth and detail how the narratives in *Chandamama* internalise the caste system and hierarchy by glorifying Brahmins and Kshatriya kings.

This work goes beyond culturalist comics such as *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha* by analysing the 21st century issues of *Tinkle* comics, aimed at observing how *Tinkle* propagates a science culture while at the same time upholding an Indianness.

Chapterisation

The chapterisation has been done based on the thematic content of the analysis. The first three chapters constitute the analysis of the picture-book *Chandamama*, while the last two chapters analyse the comic *Tinkle*. The three chapters on *Chandamama* discuss the following in consecutive chapters: 1) the representation of the figure of the *guru* and the propagation of Brahmanical knowledge; 2) propagation of spirituality, and the internalisation of the cast hierarchy through the glorification of upper-caste Hindus; 3) the depiction of “deceptive, ignoble and lustful” Mughal rulers as representing Muslims, and their battles with the “noble and brave” Hindu kings and warriors. Most of the narratives in *Chandamama* present a Hindu society, and non-Hindu religions are “othered” or else presented as foreign. Christianity and Christians are hardly ever represented in Indian narratives in *Chandamama*. Buddhism has been represented in some stories, and in these stories, Buddhism is represented as though it is an off-shoot of Hinduism and not a different religion. This thesis does not constitute *Chandamama*’s representation of Buddhism. If any non-Hindu religion is significantly represented in the Indian narratives in *Chandamama*, it is Islam. Such representations are mostly about battles between “brave and noble Hindu warrior kings” and “ignoble and deceptive Muslim invaders,” which has been analysed in detail in Chapter 3. The discussion of the last two chapters on *Tinkle* constitutes: 4) *Tinkle*’s criticism of certain aspects of a precolonial (both pre-British and pre-Mughal) society, such as the omnipotence of the monarchical king and the respect accorded to Brahmins in the role of Hindu holy men such as *sadhus* and

astrologers; 5 i) the criticism of superstition and 5 ii) the propagation of a science culture while at the same time preserving a kind of Indianness. Instead of discussing i and ii in two separate chapters, I have discussed both the themes together in the same chapter since the science culture itself is the reason behind the criticism of superstition, and also because the criticism of superstition strengthens the science culture.

Chapter 1: **The *Guru*: Brahmanical Education in *Chandamama***

This chapter looks at how *Chandamama* comics tried to inculcate among Indian children an inclination towards “Indian tradition and culture” through the portrayal and glorification of the figure of the *guru* and the Brahmanical culture of the society represented.

Chapter 2: **Spirituality and Casteism in *Chandamama***

The chapter analyses how *Chandamama* propagates Hindu spirituality through stories about pious devotees getting blessed by Hindu gods or deities, and how this picture book internalises casteism through the glorification of upper-caste Hindu characters.

Chapter 3: **“Chivalrous Hindu Warriors” and “Hostile Muslim Invaders” in *Chandamama***

It looks at how *Chandamama* portrays Muslims as a threat to the “Hindu Indian nation” through narratives of battles between “chivalrous Hindu warrior kings” and “deceitful and ruthless Muslim invaders.”

Chapter 4: **Modernity in *Tinkle*: Criticism of Monarchical and Religious Figures**

The chapter analyses how the contemporary *Tinkle* comics, unlike the earlier *Chandamama*, tries to adapt itself to the modern Indian state by criticising precolonial and pre-modern systems like monarchy and the superiority of kings and religious figures.

Chapter 5: **Science Culture in *Tinkle***

This chapter argues how the contemporary Indian comic culture, as represented by *Tinkle*, negotiates between tradition and modernity, as can be seen through a science culture that is different from the Brahmanical culture of *Chandamama*, and how this science culture itself tries to promote a kind of Indianness, but at the same time being very inclusive towards other parts of the world, unlike the exclusionary nature of the nativist *Chandamama*.

Chapter 1

The *Guru*: Brahmanical Education in *Chandamama*

This chapter looks at how the picture book *Chandamama* tried to inculcate among Indian children an inclination towards “Indian tradition and culture” through the portrayal and glorification of the figure of the *guru* and the Brahmanical culture of the society represented.

Chandamama began with the aim of educating Indian culture and traditions to Indian children when there was a great demand for Western comics and literature. Apart from this, the new education system formulated by the newly formed Indian government was derived mainly from the British education system. Apart from the focus upon the English language, there was also much emphasis upon a science-centric education system since development in the realm of science and technology was considered crucial to the development of the nation. Thus, the new education system was very different from the one that existed during the precolonial times, and to newly Independent Indians, it was as foreign as the British education system since it was very Western. In such a scenario, cultural nationalist sentiments in the country led to an inclination for a predominant precolonial education system; the *Gurukul* system. This chapter looks at how *Chandamama* glorifies the *Gurukul* system of education and also tries to impart the *Gurukul* kind of Brahmanical knowledge and stories to children. Moreover, it also looks at how the *gurus* in *Chandamama* are usually Hindu holy men who are glorified and presented as highly knowledgeable, immensely wise and as always righteous.

The format of Western comics inspired the first Indian comics. For instance, the British *Punch* magazine had a profound influence upon comics in India. Following

the well-known formula established by *Punch* Magazine, British expatriates introduced Western-style humour magazines with the *Indian Charivari* in Calcutta (1873). The *Punch* magazine published in London inspired the *Avadh or Oudh Punch* magazine in the Urdu language published in India from 1877 to 1936. *Chandamama* followed a similar format. *Chandamama*'s combination of illustrations and writings is quite like the format of *Punch* magazine. Like *Punch*, *Chandamama* constitutes stories, comic strips, poetry and essays.

The European chapbooks also seem to have had an enormous influence upon *Chandamama*. In Europe, the tradition of chapbooks had begun from the 16th century as soon as printing became affordable, and they gained significant popularity during the 17th and 18th centuries. The format of *Chandamama* is quite like that of chapbooks. Even though chapbooks, unlike *Chandamama*, were not exclusively aimed at children, they did contain children's literature and nursery rhymes, and like *Chandamama*, they too constituted a miscellany of folk tales, pamphlets, information on contemporary affairs, and also magic tricks. Moreover, the main themes in chapbooks were like those in *Chandamama* since they often dealt with themes of devotion and morality and history. The stories in chapbooks often had their origins and base in earlier narratives, like how *Chandamama* derived several tales from early texts like the *Puranas*. Like *Chandamama*, chapbooks contained historical stories set in a fantastic, mythical past.

Despite such Western influences of format and structure, the content of *Chandamama* was mostly what was claimed to be Indian, which was because the first Indian comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha* were started to create "Indian comics" distinct from the Western comics that were then very popular among children.

In India, the turn to science from liturgy was initiated after colonisation. Indian colonisation was accompanied by technological development, industrialisation and urbanisation that were products of the industrial revolution in Europe. In Europe itself, scientific knowledge had become prominent because of the industrial revolution. “As the British gained supremacy and control over all of India, education based on the scientific methods of modern Europe were implemented. The turning point of the British influence on education in colonial India was the adoption of English as the language of instruction in all the schools supported by the British administration” (Gupta 45).

In the 19th century India,

Education had a teleological function – science, engineering, and medicine imparted skills to realise the goal of building a new India like England. There was a worldview and set of values tacit in this mode of existence. It undermined Brahmanism and the entire Aristotelian tradition of pure contemplation as ontologically superior to hands-on technical labour (Ferneer 115).

The colonial legacy constituted two significant changes in India: the feudal system came to an end, and democracy was introduced when India gained Independence, and the focus of knowledge changed from the liturgical to the scientific. “After its independence, India embarked on a scientific and technological expansion path in its quest for industrialisation” (Subramaniam 72).

“The comic books Indians read before the 1970s were imports from the United States and Great Britain, some left behind by Allied forces at the end of World War II” (Lent 274). The first Indian comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha*

began with the aim of upholding and preserving an exclusively “Indian culture” by avoiding colonial influences that were very rampant in other popular comics of the time which were all mostly colonial imports. Most of these Western comics usually dealt with modern themes related to science, technological developments, new inventions or discoveries; usually through science-fiction and tales of superheroes who are usually aliens or else physically aided by science either internally or externally. Indian comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Citra Katha* wanted to be different from these Western comics and remain “exclusively Indian.”

Anant Pai, the founder-editor of *Amar Chitra Katha*, speaks about the motive of his decision to begin the comic, as quoted by Karline McLain in *India's Immortal Comic Books*;

In February 1967, my wife and I were visiting Delhi, and we stopped at Maharaja Lal and Sons bookstore. The TV was on in the bookstore – Bombay did not have a TV yet, only Delhi, and only black and white – and the programme was a quiz contest featuring five students from St Stephen's College. When they were asked, the students could not name the mother of Lord Ram. I was disappointed, but I thought, well, that is from a long time ago. However, then a question came about Greek gods on Mount Olympus, and the children could answer that question! This is the trouble with our education system; children are getting alienated from their own culture (24).

McLain also quotes what an Indian reader told her:

Born into a middle-class south Indian family, these comic books were a monthly staple at our home. We virtually grew up with them, in addition to more “normal” ones such as *Archie*, *Dennis the Menace*, a World War II series

from the UK, and a cowboy series. So, yes, we had an American inclination, quite normal in middle-class urban homes, and an Indian sensibility nurtured on *Amar Chitra Katha* and *Chandamama*. We were the new generation, born post-Independence, and did not know Sanskrit like our parents did and relied on these sources for the stories, mythologies, and the divinity that pervade Indian life (5).



Figure 1

Figure 1 is the cover page of the July 1955 issue of *Chandamama*, which depicts one of the avatars of Vishnu, the *Matsya* avatar. On page number ten is a description of the front cover. It is about how Vishnu in the form of the *Matsya* avatar rescued Vaivaswata and other seven *rishis* along with the seeds of all important plants from a great flood that devoured the entire world.

The description begins like this: “Many of you, no doubt, have heard of Noah and his Ark and the Flood. There is a similar, but slightly different, story in our mythology” (10). Here, the reference to the Biblical tale of *Noah and the Great Flood* before saying there is a similar Indian mythological tale is indicative of the comic’s ambition of making Indian children read “Indian stories.” Even though the tale of *Noah and the Great Flood* is from the Bible, and most Indians are Hindus, the writer seems to be quite sure his readers are more familiar with the Biblical tale rather than the Hindu mythology. Therefore, the writer refers to the Biblical tale to introduce the readers to the “Indian/Hindu” tale, which happens because the producers of comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha* started these comics as “Indian comics” since they were unhappy that in newly Independent India left with the colonial legacy, the influence of Western literature was powerful: Most of the available and favoured comics were Western, usually the superhero comics of DC or Marvel. This trend was magnified by the kind of school curriculum that was introduced by the new educational policies largely derived from the education system the British had introduced in India. The English language was a compulsory subject of the new school curriculum, and the English syllabi mostly constituted not Indian but Western literary pieces, which led to the younger generations of newly Independent India growing up under the strong influence of Western literature and

culture. This was the scenario in which comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha* began to be published.

This passage is from the editorial of the July 1955 issue of *Chandamama*:

There is great joy in reading or listening to a nice story. In olden days, some kings engaged story-tellers to derive this joy. Teachers told their pupils tales of wit and wisdom instead of dry lessons. These pupils got educated by listening to them. Those days are gone, but the stories have remained. *Chandamama* brings you these wise, old stories and gives you the same joy that kings of old derived from their story-tellers (9).

The reference to the “olden days” when “some kings engaged story-tellers to derive the great joy” of “reading or listening to nice stories” indicates an inclination towards an earlier society of kings. Most of the stories in *Chandamama* are set in a precolonial, feudal Indian society ruled by monarchs, and in many of these stories, the protagonist is a king. These monarchs are usually presented as chivalrous and wise, and as acting in the interest of the people, while depictions of unruly and corrupt monarchs in the stories in *Chandamama* are comparatively very less. Such representations indicate an inclination towards the precolonial, feudal and monarchical Indian societies, which was probably a result of newly democratised Indians’ psychological turmoil while getting gradually adapted to the new democratic system. For newly Independent India, the newly formed democratic government was as foreign as the British government that preceded it. Maybe this is the reason why there are many stories in this comic that present feudal societies ruled by monarchs who are very efficient in ruling the kingdom and always act towards the welfare of the people. In some such stories, the protagonist makes use

of his talents to gain the favour of the monarch and is thereby awarded several gifts and often permanent employment in the court. Such monarchical societies in these stories are presented as reminiscences of India's glorious past, thus instilling among its young readers an inclination and longing for such a monarchical, feudal past.

The editorial refers to "some teachers" who "told their pupils tales of wit and wisdom instead of dry lessons." The predominant system of education in India before colonisation was the *gurukul* system of education. This editorial of *Chandamama* refers to such a system of education as having constituted wit and wisdom, unlike the "dry lessons" that constituted the contemporary education system. Thereby, the older *Gurukul* system of education is presented as better than the contemporary one. In the *Gurukul* system, a scholarly *guru* or teacher imparted knowledge to his students who stayed at his residence for several years to learn from the *guru*'s knowledge gained through texts as well as from experience. When the child was twelve years old, one of the social rites of passage performed was to mark the child becoming of a student to embark on the educational stage of life that would be lived in the *gurukul*; the forest or community school of the *guru* or teacher (Achyuthan, 1974; Altekar, 1965). The education at the *gurukul* was mainly liturgical, and it was Hindu liturgical education through *Vedas*, *Puranas* and *Upanishads*. "The philosophy of education in Ancient India was based primarily on the philosophical offerings of the scriptures, namely the *Veda*, *Upanishad*, *Brahmana* and the *Bhagavad Gita*" (Gupta 15), constituting "verses and scriptures compiled in an archaic form of Sanskrit as early as 2000 BC" (*ibid*, 37). Thus, in precolonial India, education was predominantly Hindu liturgical. Precolonial Indian society considered liturgical knowledge as the highest form of knowledge. All other forms of knowledge were considered secondary or tertiary. Brahmins handled this

liturgical knowledge, and thus, Brahmanical knowledge was considered the highest form of knowledge. “The body of literature called *Puranas* was a central repository for the circulation, affirmation, and renewal of various Brahmanical schemas about the origins of the world, its topographical ordering, sacred geography, and genealogies of gods, sages, and kings” (Goswami 155). The Kshatriyas’ knowledge of warfare or the Vaishyas’ craftsmanship and skills of innovation or trade were not considered equivalent to Brahmanical knowledge.

Moreover, education in precolonial India was discriminatory based on caste since the Sudras (people belonging to the lowest caste) were denied education. “Education was available to most during the early Vedic stage but became more discriminatory as the caste system began to evolve” (Gupta 38). “The business of higher education became more concerned with the requirements of priesthood as the rituals of sacrifice began to gain increasing prominence in Vedic society” (*ibid*, 40). “Education was available to most except members of the *Sudra* caste, who, although they could train in menial jobs, were denied religious and spiritual learning” (*ibid*, 41).

Some stories in *Chandamama* directly deal with the *Gurukul* system of education in precolonial India. In these stories, the *guru* is presented as a man who has extensive knowledge in a variety of realms, but the depth of his knowledge is mainly determined by his knowledge of Hindu liturgical texts like the *Vedas* and *Puranas*. He is usually presented as very wise and righteous. He lives away in the forest in pastoral settings. In the stories in *Chandamama* that present such wise and knowledgeable *gurus*, the pastoral surroundings in which he is situated is described as so blessed with nature’s bounty that the reader is attracted towards such settings.

“Trapped” is a story about a righteous *guru*/teacher named Chiranjiva who conducts a *gurukul*. When a stabbed man dies in front of Chiranjiva’s house as Chiranjiva is engaged in pulling out the knife to save him, some neighbours and witnesses accuse him of murdering the man, and he is taken to the king. However, the king does not expect a “scholarly” *guru* like Chiranjiva to have committed the murder. The king himself would have undergone his education in a *gurukul* under the guidance of a *guru* like Chiranjiva, and he is unable to comprehend the probability of such a crime getting committed by such a *guru* since his notion of *gurus*, like most of his peers, is constituted of the virtues of wisdom and righteousness.

The punishment for murder is death by hanging. Chiranjiva stoutly declares he is innocent. The king uses a trick to capture the real culprit. To grant Chiranjiva’s last wish, the king allows him to go to set his affairs in order, on the condition he should return on the fifteenth day. However, on the fourteenth day, according to the arrangements made by the king, Chiranjiva is kidnapped by some soldiers in masks and taken to a secret hideout, which is part of the wise king’s plan to bring out the real culprit. On the fifteenth day, Chiranjiva’s neighbour comes to the king and says, “Your Majesty, see how Chranjiva has betrayed your trust. He has run off without a word. I know all about this base fellow.”

The king looks at him keenly and remarks, “Ah! You are a responsible citizen, indeed! Now I know who the murderer is. Until we hang the culprit, you must remain here.”

The king realises that the neighbour is probably the real murderer who has trapped Chiranjiva. He asks his soldiers to keep guard of the neighbour and not to let him escape.

The next morning the king asks the soldiers to bring the neighbour to the place of execution. On seeing the king, the neighbour enquires him anxiously, “Sire, have you caught the murderer? Hang him and make an end of such murders.”

Now the king is sure that the neighbour is the real murderer. He cross-examines him mercilessly, and the whole story comes out. The neighbour had committed the murder and laid the body in front of Chiranjiva’s house to trap him, which was because he had become jealous of Chiranjiva’s prosperity and popularity. So, instead of Chiranjiva, the neighbour is hanged. The king rewards Chiranjiva handsomely and sends him off with all honour.

Thus, by the end of the story, true to the wish and instinct of the king, it is finally discovered that Chiranjiva is innocent, and the real culprit is fittingly punished. After Chiranjiva is brought to the king, the story is narrated from the perspective of the king, and therefore, since the king feels Chiranjiva is innocent and wants to capture the real culprit, the reader’s thoughts also align with that of the king. Thus, finally, when Chiranjiva is freed, rewarded and honoured, and the real murderer who had tried to trap the righteous *guru* is punished fittingly, the reader rejoices along with the king.

Thus, this story is about a righteous and scholarly *guru* conducting a *gurukul*/hermitage for young scholars, who is trapped by his jealous neighbour but is saved by the wise king. In the story, it is also said that the neighbour wanted to trap Chiranjiva due to jealousy for his prosperity and popularity. Thus, the reader comes to know Chiranjiva is both prosperous and popular as a *guru* because of his great scholarship and wisdom that draw to him several young scholars who want to learn from him. Through such a representation, this story presents before its young readers

an idyllic image of a precolonial, monarchical Indian society with a scholarly and righteous *guru* conducting a *gurukul* in a kingdom ruled by a wise and noble king. He would not let any criminal go unpunished, while at the same time rewarding and honouring righteous people like the *guru*. Thus, this story instils among its young readers an inclination towards such a precolonial, monarchical society guided by scholarly *gurus* and ruled by wise kings. Thereby, the story also indirectly generates interest towards the Hindu liturgical texts taught at the *gurukul*, which is because apart from the common understanding that the *Gurukul* education system was centred on the imparting of liturgical knowledge, many stories in *Chandamama* itself convey to young readers “the precolonial Indian society” considered liturgical knowledge as the true and highest realm of knowledge.

Apart from such direct representations of *gurus* running *gurukuls*, there are several other stories in *Chandamama* that present hermits living alone in beautiful forests. These hermits thus live in very pastoral surroundings that instil among the readers an inclination and longing towards such surroundings they usually would not have had around them since most of the comic’s readers were from urban areas. Such glorification of holy hermits living in forests abounding with natural beauty indicates longing for a life of seclusion away from modern society. Thus, these stories have a very escapist tendency of leaving society and seeking solace with the hermit in the forest, which is probably because of the psychological turmoil experienced by the Indian society, that is, mostly by the more hegemonic, upper-caste Hindu middle classes, due to the changes in India following independence from British colonialism and the formation of the new democratic Indian government that was different from the earlier feudal system.

In these stories, hermits are either the protagonists or else the protagonist is usually a king who goes to the forest to seek some important advice or learn some significant lesson from the hermit. Thus, these hermits usually play the role of teachers to important people like kings. Through such representations of wise and knowledgeable hermits teaching kings, *Chandamama* instils among its young readers longing for the earlier *Gurukul* system of education that was not only centred around Hindu liturgical texts but was also reserved for only the upper-castes. In some of these stories, people who behave respectfully towards the hermit and heed to his advice properly prosper, while those who disobey or disrespect him subsequently suffer from adverse consequences. Since these hermits are usually ardent Hindu holy men, these stories pose a warning to the irreligious and the less religious Hindus to turn back from their irreligious ways and come back to proper devotion or else suffer like the characters in some stories in *Chandamama*.

In the stories representing such wise hermits living alone in the forest, it is usually a king who decides to meet the hermit to learn some important lesson(s) or get some significant answers or advice. These kings are thus presented as inherently thirsting for wisdom and knowledge that would help them rule their kingdom more efficiently. Through the king's visit(s) to the hermit, he gains much wisdom and knowledge that make him a better ruler. However, common men are hardly ever represented as making any visit to learn from the hermit, which implies that unlike the king, people who are neither Brahmins nor Kshatriyas are not inherently wise enough to go in search of more wisdom and knowledge. Thereby, through such stories, Kshatriya rulers' hereditary succession to the throne is internalised as a very rightful norm as they inherit the qualities that are requisite to rule the kingdom in a

very efficient and righteous manner. Thereby, the *Varna* system of social and occupational hierarchy is implicitly supported by such stories in *Chandamama*.

In “Virtue Rewards,” when a rich but miserly merchant ill-treats a hermit by not giving him alms or food, the merchant’s chef behaves kindly towards the hermit by providing him with his share of food. The chef says to the hermit, “Holy Sir. I can’t bear to see you treated thus. I have brought you some food. Eat so that you may not starve” (11).

The hermit says, “I want none of that miser’s food” (11).

However, the chef says, “Holy Sir, this is my portion that I am offering you” (11).

The hermit gladly receives it and asks the chef to share it with him. After the meal is over, the hermit looks upon the chef kindly and says, “My good man, you have done me a great service. For this, God will bless you. Now, do you see yonder mountain? There in the middle of a dark forest is a ruined temple. Go there and recite the Lakshmi prayer and you will inherit great wealth” (11). When the hermit thus asks the chef to say the Lakshmi prayer, it is evident that he is a Hindu sage.

As advised by the hermit, the chef goes in the direction of the temple. On the way, he comes across an older man who asks him for food. The chef gives him some of the cake his mother had made for him.

After some time, an old woman accompanied by a young boy comes up to him and says, “Sir, my little grandson is crying because he can’t walk. I cannot carry him, as I am already supporting this load of firewood on my head. Could you carry him for me, please?”

The chef readily helps her by carrying the child up to their cottage. Later a blind beggar comes and says to the chef, “Sir, I’ve lost my stick. Could you please help me find it?” The chef helps him too.

After that, he reaches the temple and devoutly recites the Lakshmi prayer till the morning, and when he opens his eyes, he sees in front of him a bag full of gold coins. He returns home with the wealth and lives happily ever afterwards.

Thus, since the chef heeds to the advice of the hermit, he becomes instantly wealthy. However, in this story, even though the hermit is presented as a very holy man with divine capabilities, he is a mediator who leads the faithful and benevolent chef to fortune. The wealth comes from Lakshmi because of the chef’s prayer to her. However, Lakshmi is pleased and blesses the chef with wealth not just because of his prayer but mainly because he was kind to the older man, the old lady and the blind beggar whom he met on his way to the temple. Thus, it is the kindness and the good and charitable deeds of the chef that finally bring him Lakshmi’s blessings. The hermit seems to have already known Lakshmi would be pleased if the devotee not only prayed but also showed kindness towards other human beings. Thus, both the Hindu hermit and the Hindu goddess are presented as propagators of love and benevolence. Such representations create the impression that the Hindu religion, its pantheon of gods and its priests and sages are always in support of love and charity. Thus, such qualities are presented as associated with the Hindu gods and its clergy. Thereby, since such qualities are considered as “good,” by associating Hinduism with such qualities, Hinduism is presented as a good religion, and the Hindu gods, as well as the clergy, are presented as good. Moreover, this story also implies that like the chef who was blessed with fortune because of his respect and obedience towards the hermit and his ardent faith and devotedness towards Lakshmi, young readers who

read the story can also get blessed in various ways if they respect Hindu sages and worship Hindu gods and deities.

Figure 2 depicts Eknath's chef standing before the hermit and offering him his share of food. In this image, the chef is presented as standing very meekly before the hermit. The higher status of the hermit is visible in the image through his taller and larger positioning in front of the picture. While the hermit stands very tall and straight, the chef is presented as standing in a meekly bowing angle. The Hindu religious nature of the hermit is visible through his saffron robes. That the hermit is a Hindu is evident in the story since he is a devotee of Lakshmi, and therefore, the necklace he is wearing is also indicative of his Hindu identity. Despite the necklace, he is also wearing beaded wristbands that are also probably of religious significance.

out and walked down the road. He had hardly taken a few steps when Eknath's chef, a pious man, came running after him with some food in his hand.

"Holy Sir," he cried out. "I can't bear to see you treated thus. I have brought you some food. Eat so that you may not starve."

The hermit said, "I want none of that miser's food."

The chef said, "Holy Sir, This is my portion that I am offering you."

Then the hermit gladly accepted his offering and invited him to share the food with him. After the meal was over, the hermit looked upon the chef kindly and said, "My good man, you have done me a great service. For this, God will bless you. Now, do you see yonder mountain? There in the middle of a dark forest is a ruined temple. Go there and recite the Lakshmi prayer and you will inherit great wealth."

Then he went his way, and the chef returned home to be confronted by an angry looking Eknath.

"Where is that hermit?" asked Eknath. "He went that way," said the chef.

Eknath jumped up and pursued the holyman. The reason for his anxiety to get hold of the hermit was simple. That morning, Eknath had uncovered a jar full of gold pieces while digging in his garden. He had secreted the jar in a corner of his house, but when he went to look at it he was dumbfounded to find it empty. Thinking that the hermit had spirited the gold coins away through his magic powers, Eknath was now running after the holy man to wrest his wealth from him.

When he caught up with the hermit he bowed before the

The hermit gladly accepted the chef's offering



Figure 2

Such images are illustrative of *Chandamama*'s representation and glorification of a precolonial, feudal society ruled by pious Brahmin sages and hermits and Kshatriya kings, whereby while the king reigned and took care of all political, social and economic affairs of the subjects, the Brahmin and the hermit took care of all religious and spiritual affairs. Thus, even though both the Brahmin and the hermit are presented as authentic religious figures, the hermit is not readily available to the people since he usually lives away from society in the forest. However, those who seek him can find him in the forest, even though such visitors to the hermit as presented in *Chandamama* are mostly kings who learn many wise lessons from the hermit and thereby grow in wisdom and knowledge associated not only with religion but also with how to rule the kingdom as well wisely. Thereby, such representations present an idealistic image of a precolonial, feudal, Hindu Indian society where kings are noble and selfless rulers who seek the advice of the wise hermit to rule the kingdom more wisely and aimed at the welfare of the subjects, which implies kings inherently have wisdom and thirst for knowledge and thereby seek such wise, holy men. At the same time, ordinary people are not inherently as wise as the Kshatriya kings or the Brahmin clergy, and therefore, hardly ever approach wise and holy men like hermits to gain knowledge or wisdom, which implicitly gives the impression the common man who is neither Brahmin nor Kshatriya is inherently not wise enough to search for more wisdom and is unlike kings or Brahmins, not equipped with the qualities required to rule the kingdom. Thus, such stories internalise and implicitly justify the *Varna* system and the accompanying social hierarchy that forced people belonging to different occupations to confine to those and never aspire to practice any other occupation.

“Lord! Lord!” is about a poor farmer who benefits from being kind to a hermit while a rich man loses everything because of his rudeness towards him. On a rainy night, the hermit seeks shelter under the portico of the wealthy merchant’s house. However, the merchant shouts at him angrily, “Go away and don’t defile my house. I don’t like beggars” (6).

The hermit leaves the place murmuring “Lord, Lord.”

Then the hermit comes to the humble cottage of Hari and knocks on the door. Hari, a poor farmer, welcomes the hermit hospitably and shelters him from the rain. He gives the hermit torn but clean clothes to wear and a tattered mat to sleep. The hermit stays in the cottage for the night murmuring the chant “Lord, Lord.”

The hermit in this story is a pious Hindu sage. The Hindu identity of the hermit is revealed by the fact that his hospitable and respectful host is Hari, who is a Hindu. Hari is very hospitable and respectful towards the hermit because he is a pious Hindu and therefore believes in the holiness of such Hindu hermits. The highly religious nature of the hermit is indicated by his frequent chanting of “Lord, Lord.” Since he is a Hindu sage, the hermit’s “Lord, Lord” is addressed to some major Hindu god.

The next day, early in the morning, as the hermit prepares to leave, Hari and his wife come with a tin box in which they carry all their meagre savings and offer some money to the hermit. However, the hermit declines to take the money saying, “Brother, I never take money from anyone” (6). Then he goes away chanting “Lord, Lord.”

After the hermit leaves, Hari opens the tin box to put back the money he had offered to the hermit, but he is surprised to find it full of new gold coins shining bright. Moreover, he finds that the clothes and the mat used by the hermit have also

turned into gold. From then on, Hari and his wife live comfortably. Thus, here the hermit is presented as capable of performing superhuman feats because of his devotedness towards the Hindu god.

When the news of Hari's new riches reaches the ears of the wealthy merchant, he becomes highly envious. By careful questioning, he comes to know from Hari how exactly he has come upon the new wealth. Now he feels sorry for driving away the hermit with his harsh words. He resolves to treat the hermit better if he sees him again. So, he begins to keep a vigil from his housetop for the return of the hermit.

During the next monsoon, the hermit arrives at the village on a wet night. He begins to walk directly towards Hari's house. Just then the rich man comes running to him very hastily and says, "Holy Sir, why do you go about wet to the skin? Come and stay with us for the night" (7).

The hermit enters the house. The merchant gives him the most tattered clothes he could find, and then he feeds him with a pale and stinking gruel. After the hermit has finished it, the merchant offers him a very torn mat to sleep. The next morning, as the hermit prepares to leave, the merchant comes with a jar full of nickel coins and says, "Holly Sir, take some for your expenses on the way" (7).

The hermit declines it with a soft murmur of "Lord, Lord" and goes his way.

After he leaves, the merchant checks whether the coins, the rags and the mat have turned into gold, as in the case of Hari, but he is disappointed to find them all remaining the same. On the other hand, everything in the house seems to have lost its shine. All that the merchant possesses turn grey and dirty, and before his eyes, the house begins to crumble slowly. Soon everything is reduced to dust, and the wealthy merchant becomes a beggar.

Thus, while the poor man Hari benefits because of his kindness and respectfulness towards the hermit, the merchant, on the other hand, loses everything he had because of his rudeness towards the hermit and his greed. The hermit here is presented as a holy Hindu sage capable of superhuman feats due to his ardent faith and devotion towards his “Lord” whom he always addresses as “Lord, Lord.” This story asks Hindus to be respectful towards such sages to get blessed by them.

However, even though everything touched by the sage turns into gold, he is only a mediator while the real blessing comes from the “Lord” himself, which implies such blessings and fortunes can be gained not only through hermits but also by devotees themselves if they too, like the hermit, are highly faithful and devoted towards the “Lord.” Thus, this story propagates respect towards such hermits by talking about the benefits of such respect and the adverse effects of being rude towards them. Moreover, Hindus are advised to be ardently faithful and devoted to their gods.

The protagonist of “The Day the Earth Turned Gold” is a king who is famous for his charity. The people say, “To hungry he gives food; to scholars he gives rewards; to noblemen, he gives titles and honours. He is never tired of giving” (35).

However, the king does gradually get tired of giving because he thinks, “All my life, I have been giving alms and awards. Where is the end? Are the people needy or they continue to come because I give? Don’t I see the same faces coming to me, again and again, wearing a standard mask of gratitude” (35)?

He thinks a lot and finally decides to stop the practice. He thinks, “It is high time I know who are needy and, to begin with, I must find out the poorest man in my kingdom” (35).

Accordingly, he sends his minister to find out the poorest man.

The minister comes to the king a week later and says, “My lord, not far from here, inside the forest, there is a small mountain. On top of that sits the poorest man of our land – a mendicant. He has no roof on his head, nothing on his body except a yard of bark. He lives on whatever fruits some wood-cutters care to leave behind for him on their way back from the forest” (35).

So, the king goes to the top of the mountain in the forest to meet the mendicant. However, as the mendicant is in meditation, the king must wait for some time before he opens his eyes. After he opens his eyes, the king says to him, “I am the king of this land. I am sad to see the miserable condition in which you are living. I want you to dress well. Tell me what kind of dress will you like?” (36)

The mendicant smiles but keeps quiet. The king begins to lose patience and cries out, “I appeal to you, do speak!” (36)

The mendicant says, “My dear King, you are mistaken. I am not the poorest man. There is another man in the kingdom who is poorer than me. So far as I am concerned, although I look poor, I am wealthy, for I can change the earth into gold” (36).

The king gapes with amazement for some time and asks, “Will you kindly tell me who is poorer than you? And will you kindly reveal to me the secret of transforming the earth into gold?” (36)

The mendicant says, “To know these things, you have to follow a certain discipline” (36).

The king enthusiastically says, “I will follow” (36).

The mendicant says, “For one full year, every day, you must come here once before the sunset and spend some time with me” (36).

The king agrees joyously.

After that, the king comes to the mendicant twice every day without fail. “The mendicant seldom utters a word, but his charming smile always speaks of his affection for the king” (36). Every time, the mendicant makes the king sit and meditate for some time. Even though the king feels quite awkward about it in the beginning, soon he realises that it is the most welcome change from the dry or anxious hours of the court where diplomats and flatterers and discontented people always surround him. After a few months, the king becomes so fond of his visits to the mendicant that he eagerly looks forward to the twilight.

“The silence of the mountain, the sunrise and sunset which coloured the landscape, the breeze which embraced him with the message of freedom, the songs of the birds in the wood, and above all, the quiet yet overwhelming presence of the mendicant slowly makes the king a different man” (37). The little time he spends there has a significant impact on the rest of his time in the palace and elsewhere.

Even though the mendicant had asked the king to visit him twice regularly only for until a year when the two secrets would be revealed, the king does not notice even when two years have passed. At the end of the third year, one day the mendicant suddenly asks the king, “Well, it seems we have forgotten about the two things you wanted to know – about the man poorer than myself and about the secret of transforming the earth into gold. Would you not like to know about them?” (37)

The king smiles and replies, “But haven’t I known them already? I was the poorer man because I was anxious to possess more gold, and I was begging to know

the secret of changing the earth into gold. And secondly, I believe, by now, I have known the secret of changing the earth into gold. When I sit here and marvel at the splendour of nature all around at sunsets and sunrises when the colours of heaven are sprinkled on earth – at the diamond-fringed clouds – at all God’s creation – all appear to me a thousand times more wonderful than gold” (37 – 38).

The mendicant smiles and says, “You have got it – and that is because you have turned gold within” (38).

This story is about a king who goes to a mendicant, seeking advice to a simple question, but receives much more than that and grows very wise because of the very fruitful time he spends with the mendicant. Here the mendicant lives on top of a mountain in the forest, away from society and people. He lives without any of the facilities humans usually seek. He finds pleasure in isolation and meditation and the beauty of the visions and sounds of the forest surrounding him. The forest in which the mendicant is situated, and the same that the king also experiences, is described very romantically: “The silence of the mountain, the sunrise and sunset which coloured the landscape, the breeze which embraced him with the message of freedom, the songs of the birds in the wood and above all the quiet yet overwhelming presence of the mendicant slowly made the king a different man. The little time he spent there every day had its sure effect on the rest of his time and routine” (37). Through such descriptions, this story instils among its readers, longing for such forests and natural beauty. It is said that gradually the king begins to highly enjoy his visits to the mendicant since that is for him a temporary escape from the dry or anxious hours of the court where diplomats and flatterers and discontented people always surround him. He starts to look forward to the twilights when he would go to the forest to visit the mendicant. In the forest, the king can find solace from the

drudgery of his life in the palace. Thus, the king's visits to the forest are a kind of escapade from the difficulties of daily life. Finally, when the mendicant asks the king whether he wants to know the answers to the two questions, the king says he has, through his experiences with the hermit, realised the answers. His answer to the second question constitutes a beautiful description of the natural beauty of the forest: "When I sit here and marvel at the splendour of nature all around at sunsets and sunrises when the colours of heaven are sprinkled on earth – at the diamond-fringed clouds – at all God's creation – all appear to me a thousand times more wonderful than gold" (37 – 38).

Thus, the protagonist, who is a king, escapes to the forest where he becomes very wise through meditative and nature-bound living he learns from a mendicant. The mendicant plays a significant role in effecting such a transformation in the king. The wise mendicant can decipher the problem that ails the king and is, therefore, able to suggest the method by which the king can reach better realisation and wisdom. Thus, in this story, the king's growth in wisdom is mediated by the wise mendicant. Thus, the reader is presented with a strong image of a wise mendicant immersed in meditation in a beautiful forest. Thereby, the reader is attracted not only by the beauty of the forest but also by the wisdom of the mendicant who seems to act as a mediator between humans and the spiritual world of nature. Such inclination towards isolation on top of a mountain in a beautiful forest implies an escapist tendency in *Chandamama* itself which can be representative of such a tendency implicit within the larger Indian society of the late 20th century that was faced with much turmoil due to power transfer from British imperialism to the democratic government that was newly formed in the country. As far as the people of the country were concerned, the newly formed democratic Indian government was as foreign as the

British government that preceded it. Therefore, they sought to find solace by talking about the glory of the precolonial, feudal Indian society by ignoring all the negative aspects of such a society

Figure 3 is an image of the mendicant and the king engaged in either meditation or else conversation during twilight. If they are engaged in conversation, the mendicant is probably teaching something or giving some advice to the king.



ness more gold and I was begging to know the secret of changing the earth into gold. And secondly, I believe, by now I have known the secret of changing the earth into gold. When I sit here and marvel at the splendour of nature all around at sunsets and sunrises when the colours of heaven are sprin-

kled on earth—at the diamond-fringed clouds—at all God's creation—all appear to me a thousand times more wonderful than gold."

The mendicant smiled and said, "You have got it—and that is because you have turned gold within."

Retold by Manoj Das

Who made the first parachute jump?

The great Italian inventor Leonardo da Vinci had the first thoughts about parachute. But, however, he did not make one and the design remained only on paper. Two centuries passed before anyone tried to make a real parachute as it was left to a Frenchman, Andre Garnerin. He stretched 870 square yards of cloth over a framework of bamboo and made his first jump in 1797, from a balloon $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles above Paris. Relieved of his weight the balloon shot upwards and burst. Garnerin's fall was not a steady one, yet he managed to land safely. He made several jumps during the following years.

38



Figure 3

In this image, even though there is much emphasis on the beauty of the forest, the mendicant and the king are also given much significance, which is achieved by placing them both at the centre of the image. Here, the mendicant is given more significance than the king by seating him on a higher rock, which is obviously because the hermit plays the role of a teacher to the king, as is the case with some other stories in this comic.

One prominent feature of this picture is the sun situated precisely behind the mendicant. The mendicant has been positioned in such a way that he is at the middle of the large-looking setting sun behind him, which is a way of imparting divinity to the mendicant. Here, the sun functions as a halo around the mendicant. Moreover, this halo is very much in line with the way how Hindu gods are represented through arts like painting and sculpture. In different parts of the world, the depiction of gods in art has very frequently been accompanied by halos around them or their head. Halos are always used in Christian art in the depiction of God, Mary or the saints. In Christian art, halos are usually only around the head of the holy figure. However, in Hindu art, halos often cover the god or saint completely.

Thus, in “The Day the Earth Turned Gold” in *Chandamama*, the halo formed around the hermit by the sun behind him is in line with the type of halo usually used in the representation of Hindu saints. The sun forms around the mendicant a halo that covers him completely, which makes it seem as though he is sitting at the centre of the sun. The sun itself, thus forming a halo around the mendicant has great significance in Hinduism since the sun god or Surya is a principal Hindu deity. Thus, the divine nature of the mendicant is emphasised through such a representation. Moreover, because Hinduism is a religion that believes in the incarnation of gods in human form, as evident through the numerous incarnations and deities Hindus

believe in, of the past as well of the present as seen through the presence of numerous god-men and god-women, the depiction of the mendicant in this story in such a manner can very inevitably invoke among faithful mainstream Hindus devotion and worship towards him.

From the story of “Swami Dayanand” under “The Builders of India’s Heritage”:

Swami Dayanand was born in 1824 in a village called Jivapur, in Gujarat, in a Brahmin family. A boy who showed great concentration at study, he had mastered Sanskrit grammar and could recite much of the *Vedas* before he was thirteen! He knew “the *Vedas* alone contained the light of God (30 – 32).

In figure 4, Swami Dayanand and his *guru* are presented as having celestial fire around their heads.

great concentration at study, he had mastered Sanskrit grammar and could recite much of the Vedas before he was thirteen!

His small village could not provide him with any greater scope for learning, nor the common folk could satisfy his quest for knowledge. He left home and wandered from place to place in search of worthy guides. He became an ascetic and lived with many sects of mendicants. In the course of his wandering he met some worthy teachers who recognised in him a genuine seeker. At Chandod he studied Vedanta under the guidance of Paramanand Paramhansa.

Swami Yoganand of Vyas Ashram taught him Yoga. Thereafter he wandered in the Himalayas in search of a spiritual guru. At last, at Mathura, the holy place of Krishna's birth, he met Swami Virajananda.

"Throw your books into the Yamuna. Forget all you have learnt so far," was Virajananda's direction to the young seeker.

Moolshankar did as directed. With a clean mind, he then began learning from the master the inner meaning of the Vedas and the Vedanta. He went through a strenuous course of discipline.

After three years the master



Figure 4

should not be regarded as authentic. The Vedas alone were authentic, etc.

In temples idol-worship was carried on without true devotion. It was a hypocrisy. This view of Swami Dayanand disturbed even his admirers. The Maharana of Udaipur, who had become a devotee of the Swami, politely requested him to refrain from denouncing idol-worship. The Maharana also offered him the priesthood of the immensely rich Ekling temple—a position which was next to that of the Maharana himself!

The Swami replied, "You

tempt me to disobey the dictates of God! But know this that your small kingdom and all the great wealth of the temple cannot make me disobey God. I can leave your territory in a short while. But I cannot go out of His protection. There is no power on earth which can dissuade me from following the path of Truth."

The Maharana realised his mistake and apologised.

The ruler of Jodhpur, following the example of the ruler of Udaipur, invited the Swami to his territory. The Swami's well-wishers did not want the Swami to accept the invitation,

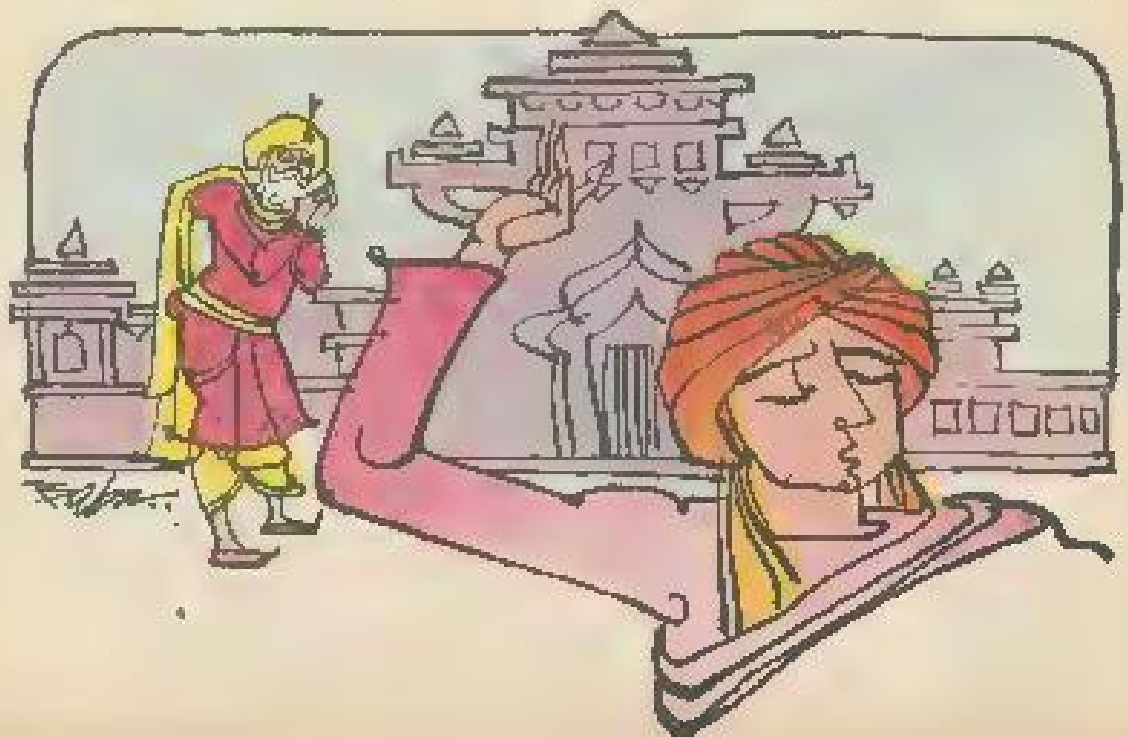


Figure 5

Figure 5 has Swami Dayanand with the background of a temple and a king standing behind him. The description from the narrative is as follows:

In temples, idol-worship was carried on without true devotion. It was hypocrisy. This view of Swami Dayanand disturbed even his admirers. The Maharaja of Udaipur, who had become a devotee of the Swami, politely requested him to refrain from denouncing idol-worship. The Maharaja also offered him the priesthood of the immensely rich Ekling temple - a position which was next to that of the Maharaja himself! The Swami replied, “You tempt me to disobey the dictates of God! However, know this that your small kingdom and all the great wealth of the temple cannot make me disobey God. I can leave your territory in a short while. However, I cannot go out of His protection. There is no power on earth which can dissuade me from following the path of Truth (33).

The illustration has three striking images: Swami Dayanand, a king, and a temple in the background. The image of Swami Dayanand is placed in the front part. The size of his image is larger than the size of the king. Swami Dayanand has held out his right hand as if he is blessing the King as well as the reader. The gesture of the King shows deep respect for the Brahmin priest and his gratitude for the blessing he received from him. The illustration gives the clear message that “the pious and holy Brahmin” enjoys a much higher position than the King. The illustration creates the illusion that the Brahmin priest has achieved this status because of his wisdom, and the dutiful king is obedient enough to receive the same. These articulate images are presented in the background of a temple which completes the message of the

situation.

From “The Scholar”:

Once there was a Brahmin youth in Banaras, Kuchumara by name. He was a great scholar, a master of all the sixty-four sciences. On his way, he stopped at a Brahman village. One of the householders of the village gave him hospitality. In the same story, “On receiving information concerning Kuchumara, the princess wrote him the following letter; “Sir, since you are a Brahman, I do not like to see you defeated. I am sending you some gifts which I want you to accept and give me your blessings” (Rao 25 – 26).

“A Family of Pandits” begins as follows:

In the city of Amaravati, a poor family consisting of a Brahman, his wife, their son and daughter-in-law, were all pandits and poets. So the people used to call them the pandit-family (Saradadevi 53).

In “The Miracle Lemon,” “People told him about a newly arrived hermit living in the forest nearby who distributed some ash with miraculous curative powers” (39) (Figure 6).

over him. They did not disturb him out of their reverence for him.

He did the same thing the next day. When his meditation was over, he returned home, without talking to anybody.

One day, while Shombhunath was engrossed in what people thought to be meditation, a woman, carrying her son in her arms, entered the temple and cried out, "O good physician, please save my son. I should have carried him to the hermit, but I am not sure if the boy can stand the strain of being carried so far."

Shombhunath stood up and

came near the boy. He examined him for a minute. The boy had swooned away. Without a word Shombhunath entered the temple orchard and plucked a lemon and returned to the room. Holding the lemon before his mouth, he muttered some mantra. Then he cut the fruit into two and squeezed out its juice into a glass. He added a pinch of salt and some water to it and kept it ready. Then he sprinkled ordinary water on the child's face and fanned him. Within minutes the boy opened his eyes. Shombhunath made him drink the lemon water and an-



Figure 6

In “Adventures in the Forest”:

Soon Govind observed a large number of people heading towards the forest that was a mile away from the village. On inquiry, he learnt that there was a hermit in the forest who sat in a trance for six days of the week. On the seventh day, he was willing to see and bless the people (39) (Figure 7).



number of people heading towards the forest that was a mile away from the village. On inquiry he learnt that there was a hermit in the forest who sat in trance for six days of the week. On the seventh day he was willing to see and bless the people.

"Since how long has he been in the forest?" asked Govind.

"For a month or so," replied the villagers. "Before that he was in the Himalayas."

Govind followed the villagers. Soon they were in the forest. Under a huge banyan tree sat the hermit, sporting ochre garh, an impressive beard, and a

pyramid of hair on the head. Behind him stood three bearded disciples.

Govind went closer to the hermit. His dog began to snarl at the hermit. Govind knew that his dog was always decent towards innocent people. It snarled or barked only when something was wrong somewhere.

"Why do you come so close to me? Can't you be where others are?" asked the hermit in a stern tone.

"I felt shy to say within other's hearing that I am looking for a good bride for myself. Please bless me so that I can be successful in my search," Govind said humbly.

"All right, your desire will be fulfilled," said the hermit.

All Govind wanted was to hear the hermit speak from close quarters. When the hermit spoke he could understand from the smell that the fellow had drunk wine.

Govind turned and took position behind the crowd. Some leading villagers stepped forward and said, "O pious one, we have come to you with the very prayer which we had made last time. Please save us from the menace of the handits."

Figure 7

“Two Friends” begins as follows; “In years gone by lived a sage named Ajikarta. He had an Ashram in a forest. Young disciples lived with him in the Ashram and received their education from him” (31) (Figure 8).



TWO FRIENDS

In years gone by lived a sage named Ajikarta. He had an Ashram in a forest. Young disciples lived with him in the Ashram and received their education from him.

Among Ajikarta's students were Jaydev and Rohit, two close friends. But the guru observed that their friendship had cracked. The calm and gentle Jaydev was avoiding Rohit who was often given to fits of anger. Rohit spoke against Jaydev to everyone.

Ajikarta called Jaydev and asked him, “Why don't you mix with Rohit any more?”

“Sir, he is huffy and ill-tempered. I fear that if I remain in his contact I will imbibe

his temper,” Jaydev replied humbly.

Ajikarta kept quiet for a moment. Then he narrated a story to his dear student:

In a village lived two young men. Ramesh and Sudhir. Though Ramesh was gentle in nature and Sudhir was haughty, both had become intimate friends. Together, they worked for the welfare of their village and the people knew them to be inseparable from each other.

But, suddenly they fell apart. Their love for each other grew into mistrust and even hatred. People were sad that an exemplary friendship should come to such an end.

One day a hermit visited

Figure 8

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at *Chandamama*'s glorification of the *guru* or the hermit who is very wise, knowledgeable and righteous, and a teacher of Brahmanical knowledge. He usually lives away from society in pastoral settings. Such settings were in contrast with the urban societies that most of the readers of the comic were associated. Thereby, glorified representations of such pastoral settings accompanied by the *guru*/hermit instilled among the comic's young readers an inclination towards such a society. The hermit's life of solitude in the beautiful forest indicates escapism from the typical societal life.

The glorification of such escapism in *Chandamama* and the demand for such representations was probably because of some longing among newly Independent Indians to escape from the contemporary reality in the Indian society that was undergoing rapid changes and transformations. The *guru*/hermit is presented as a respectable figure who is often capable of performing superhuman feats with the help of the Hindu god/s whom he very ardently and faithfully worships. While religious Hindus who respect the hermit prosper, those who disrespect or disobey him subsequently suffer from adverse consequences. Thereby, less religious Hindus who are disrespectful towards Hindu gods or holy men are given the warning to either come back to sincere devotion or else suffer like the unholy, irreligious and disrespectful characters in some stories in *Chandamama*.

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Figures

Fig. 1. "The Front Cover." *Chandamama*, July 1955, p. 1.

Fig. 2. "Virtue Rewards." *Chandamama*, July 1973, p. 11.

Fig. 3. "The Day the Earth Turned Gold." *Chandamama*, June 1975, p. 38.

Fig. 4. "The Builders of India's Heritage: Swami Dayanand." *Chandamama*, May 1979, p. 31.

--- Fig. 5. p. 33.

Fig. 6. "The Miracle Lemon." *Chandamama*, May 1978, p. 40.

Fig. 7. "Adventures in the Forest." *Chandamama*, July 1978, p. 52.

Fig. 8. "Two Friends." *Chandamama*, March 1978, p. 31.

Chapter 2

Spirituality and Casteism in *Chandamama*

This chapter analyses how *Chandamama* propagates Hindu spirituality through stories about pious devotees getting blessed by Hindu gods or deities, and how this picture-book internalises casteism through the glorification of upper-caste Hindu characters.

The last chapter looked at how *Chandamama*'s attempts at bringing back precolonial Indian education to Indian children resulted in the glorification of the *guru* and Brahmanical knowledge. This chapter focuses on how *Chandamama*'s cultural nationalist tendencies manifested in the form of Hindu nationalism as seen through the themes and characters of the stories and narratives in this picture book. Even though *Chandamama* began with cultural nationalist and nativist intentions, these manifested in the form of Hindu nationalism that can be seen in it through different ways including the propagation of Hindu spirituality by glorifying Hindu gods and sages, and through the characterisation of very faithful devotees who get blessed by the gods.

This chapter also looks at how *Chandamama* internalises and supports casteism by glorifying upper-caste Hindu characters who are the protagonists in most of the Indian narratives in this picture-book. In these stories, upper-caste and aristocratic characters like Brahmins and Kshatriya kings are presented as very noble, good and righteous people who are also very wise, knowledgeable and usually very handsome or beautiful. Such qualities are usually presented as hereditary. In these narratives, Brahmins and Kshatriyas are presented as having the qualities that are ascribed to them by the *Varna* system. Thus, Brahmins are presented as wise, divine and

knowledgeable, and Kshatriyas are presented as brave, valiant and excellent in the martial arts. In some stories, such upper-caste Hindu characters have even superhuman capabilities because of getting blessed by some Hindu god/s. On the other hand, lower caste people are hardly ever represented in this comic, and if ever represented, they are projected as foils to upper-caste characters. Thus, by portraying a society in which the upper-caste people are blessed with and hereditarily inherits the qualities required of them for performing their caste-based occupation, *Chandamama* internalises the *Varna* system and the caste-based practise and inheritance of different occupations.

One significant psychological effect of colonialism was it instilled a heightened spirit of nationalism in the minds of the colonial subjects. “The conception of Bharat as a national-territorial entity, and the identification of its territorial and cartographic coordinates as roughly analogous to those of the colonial state, only emerged during the 1860s and 70s” (Goswami 155 – 57).

Already in the late 19th century, this spirit of nationalism in the realm of academics had resulted in “an astonishing proliferation of vernacular geography and historical works, authored by teachers, journalists, and local and provincial officials, that were principally circulated in vernacular schools” (Goswami 188). “The nationalist counter-response to the permanent ideological structure of temporal deferral and the charge of bad mimesis animated the counter-pedagogical consolidation of *swadeshi* ideologies in the educational curriculum of vernacular schools and privately run secondary schools” (245). The post-1900 revamping of the education apparatus, initiated by Lord Curzon, the governor-general and viceroy, had been driven by the perceived threat posed by the expansion of indigenously run educational institutions (Basu). “Focusing largely on works of history, politics, and

economics, the official Text-Book Committee banned various works on 19th-century European history, especially those on the French revolution and those dealing with Ireland” (Goswami 245). “The colonial state instituted a set of draconian measures against schools, teachers, and students patronising and distributing proscribed works and engaging in activities deemed seditious” (248). However, the severe colonial measures against such counter-hegemonic academic practices failed to curb them fully.

By the 19th century, the British government in India began to issue rules and regulations intended at controlling or banning Hindu religious practices and customs they looked upon as uncivilised and pre-modern. They started to exert force to shape the Indian society by banning child marriage and *sati* (widow burning) as well as other religious practices that offended British morality. When the “modern” British colonisers thus began to question several traditional and religious beliefs, practices and customs, nationalism began to emerge as a feeling to protect traditions, beliefs, practices and customs. However, such cultural nationalist leaders also had Hindu interests, and therefore, it soon evolved into Hindu nationalism, leading to the emergence of Hindutva politics.

The British used the services of the local literati, who came from the Hindu upper-castes, mostly Brahmins, and, therefore, a new elite of upper-caste, British-trained, white-collar workers took shape, which was more prominent in Bengal. This intelligentsia admired Britain for its remarkable scientific, technical, legal, and social achievements. However, many of them also considered the West as a threat. They wanted to reform their traditions along modern lines but not to the extent they would abandon them. They often wanted to reform these traditions to save them.

Ram Mohun Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828, which believed in the notion of a Vedic “golden age.” “Keshab Chandra Sen promoted the idea that India was technically less advanced than England but spiritually superior” (Jaffrelot 7). “Dayananda Saraswati argued that Indian antiquity was imbued with cultural and social greatness” (*ibid*, 9). In 1875, Dayananda founded the Arya Samaj in Punjab where Hindus felt vulnerable because of their lesser population compared to Muslims and Sikhs.

The British antagonised the Hindu elite in 1906 when Lord Minto promised a separate electorate for Muslims. In Punjab, this led the Hindu urban elite to organise, and Hindu Sabhas were formed throughout the region, mostly under the leadership of Arya Samaj leaders who joined hands with other streams of Hinduism, including orthodox streams who paid allegiance to Sanatan Dharma. The leader of the Hindu Sabha, Madan Mohan Malaviya, was a well-known Sanatani, famous for his orthodoxy and his interest in educational matters. He founded the Banaras Hindu University in 1916. The Hindu Mahasabha was revived in the 1920s. For them, Muslims were a threatening “other,” not only because the British granted them a separate electorate, but also because of their mobilisation during the Khilafat movement. Savarkar wrote about the Hindu Rashtra with a clear-cut identity; Hindutva.

For Savarkar, the Hindus are the descendants of “Vedic fathers” who occupied this geographical area since antiquity. For him, the majority community is supposed to embody the nation, not only because it is the largest but also because it is the oldest. Hindus are the autochthonous people of India, whereas the religious minorities are outsiders who must adhere to Hindutva culture, which is the national culture. For Savarkar, the Muslims of India constituted

fifth-columnists whose allegiance was to Mecca and Istanbul. According to him, though in the minority, Muslims were a threat to Hindus because of their pan-Islamism, and because, being more aggressive and better organised, they could outmanoeuvre Hindus, who remained effete and divided into many castes and sects (Jaffrelot 15 – 16).

In 1925, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in his home town, Nagpur. In January 1948, Gandhi was killed by a former RSS member, Nathuram Godse. Consequently, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru immediately imposed a ban on the RSS. The leaders of the RSS then realised they could not expect help from any political party. Some RSS leaders argued this state of things justified the launching of a party of its own. In 1951, on the day before the first general elections, the RSS launched the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, a forerunner of the present Bharatiya Janata Party. Deendayal Upadhyaya eulogised the organic unity of the Varna system. Balraj Madhok exhorted minorities to “Indianise.” In 1964, the RSS set up the Vishva Hindu Parishad to group the heads of various Hindu sects to lend this hitherto unorganised religion a sort of centralised structure. In 1980, Jana Sangh leaders started a new party, the Bharatiya Janata Party. “The RSS kept its distance from the BJP and made greater use of the VHP to rekindle ethnoreligious political activism. This more militant strategy found its main expression in the launching of the Ayodhya movement in the mid-1980” (Jaffrelot 20).

After India gained Independence, one major quest of the newly formed Indian government was to unify the people who were very different in terms of language, culture and geography, by instilling in them nationalism and patriotism. Therefore, the government paid much attention to the development of the nationalist discourse. The icon of Bharat Mata offered, in the general idiom of biological reproduction and

the specific performative logic of upper-caste Hindu devotional practices, a potent origin myth for national history and territory (McClintock).

The figure of Bharat Mata (Mother India) embodied par excellence the organicist self-understanding of popular nationalism. Bharat Mata worked as an enduring matrix of nationalist identification and desire. It enabled and rendered plausible constructions of the nation as an organic formation rooted in an ancient past (Goswami 199).

This spirit of nationalism is visible in comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha*. Such nationalist discourses have usually constituted the glorification of the past. For the people of nations once colonised, the national culture is that what existed before colonisation, and everything brought by the coloniser is foreign and often a threat to the national culture (Fanon 148). Therefore, the discourse of nationalism in postcolonial nations is usually centred on talking about a “glorious and honourable precolonial past.” According to Romila Thapar, “what we regard as tradition may well turn out to be our contemporary requirements fashioned by the way we wish to interpret the past” (267). In this process, the goodness of the precolonial past is exaggerated, while the negativities are often forgotten or neglected. “In creating a tradition, we sometimes select from the past those normative values which may have a contemporary appeal, but which may even be contrary to historical actuality” (Thapar 271).

This is the kind of nationalism visible in comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha*. Most of the stories in *Chandamama* are set in a precolonial society, and many of them are set in much earlier periods like the Vedic Age. These stories often talk about “idealistic feudal societies” that are totally unlike modern democratic

nations. Moreover, religion plays a significant role in these societies. Many stories in *Chandamama* are based on Hindu mythologies and *Puranas*. Several stories depict protagonists who are highly devoted to Hindu gods who often directly intervene in their lives and grant them blessings. Such idealistic representations of monarchical and religious societies are accompanied by heroic representations of people who handled the monarchy and the institution of religion. Thus, in many stories in comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha*, the protagonists are usually chivalrous and noble kings and pious and holy Brahmins. Moreover, many stories are set in major Hindu religious centres and other significant centres of the Vedic society.

Such a rise of cultural nationalism accompanied by religiosity in different realms of popular culture in the country was synonymous with the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. The recurrence of such discourses in Indian popular culture aided the rise of Hindu nationalism in the country, and consequently the Hindu nationalist Janata Party, the predecessor of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), won the general election in 1977, even though it was also aided by popular discontent towards the state of Emergency (1975 – 77) declared by Indira Gandhi who was the Prime Minister when the Indian National Congress was in power.

Synonymous with popular cultural nationalist discourses, according to Catarina Kinnvall;

The Hindutva movement has aimed to construct a chain of events where a glorified past is connected to the present and where it justifies future actions. It is a nationalist homogenising narrative that is deeply rooted in religious discourse. Hindu nationalism is not a modern phenomenon in India. Instead, its

provenance is held to go back to Vedic times, and it is therefore enmeshed with the history and culture of the Hindu “race” (139).

In those states controlled by the BJP, textbooks have been written to glorify the “Hindu past,” to revile the policies of the “Muslim invaders,” to rename Indian cities and regions, and to revise the relationship between Hindu religion, national identity and citizenship (Smith). During the rule of the BJP government from 1998 to 2004, the policy of the minister for human resources and development, Murli Manohar Joshi, was well in tune with Hindu nationalist leanings.

“He appointed personalities who had been close to the Sangh Parivar as heads of the directive body of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), and the search committee for faculty appointments in the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) which was entrusted with the task of designing a new school curriculum. One of Joshi’s priorities was to create new textbooks, including those dealing with Indian history, rewritten in a vein more in line with Hindu nationalist ideology” (Jaffrelot 22).

The popularisation of religious stories in Indian cinema and television, particularly the broadcasting of the Ramayana as a serial starting in January 1987, brought Ram as a warrior god and Ayodhya into millions of Hindus in the privacy of their homes. In this sense, it significantly increased general awareness of Ayodhya as the birthplace of Ram. Televised images made this sacred centre more real and it became highly charged with effect in the popular imagination (Baccheta 2000, Jaffrelot 1998, Veer 1992).

In *Chandamama*, the religious element is given particular significance through several stories taken from or adapted from Hindu epics and other texts. In

compliance with the Hindu nationalist discourse, *Chandamama* depicts Hinduism as Indian tradition. Such Hindu Indian representations are usually of an upper-caste Hindu nature, which happens since the protagonists in most of the Indian stories in these comics are upper-caste and aristocratic Hindus like the king or the Brahmin. As already mentioned, one reason for such representations was an inclination for the precolonial, feudal and religious past when the monarchy was centred on the king, and the dominant Hindu religion was centred on the Brahmin. However, despite this, there is also a kind of hegemony at work when it comes to such representations, which becomes more evident when considering who constituted the producers and consumers of the comic.

The main reason behind the colonial British government's introduction of the English language and Western education in India was its requirement to employ Indians as clerks and officers since it proved more efficient than importing people from Britain. The British mostly chose upper-caste Hindus for such positions because it was easier to educate them institutionally since they already had some exposure to institutional education that the low caste people had been denied. Moreover, since the British knew about the caste system in India and how it operated, they knew the upper-caste Hindus were more suitable for smooth functioning as mediators between the British and the Indians, especially the more powerful sections of the Indian society who were mostly upper-caste Hindus. Such Indians became one of the first middle classes in India. They were some of the first to read newspapers and to get more exposure to emerging discourses. Thus, in the latter 20th century, most producers and consumers of newspapers, journals and comics were upper-caste Hindus, and therefore, these forms of media usually spoke from an upper-caste Hindu perspective.

Thereby, while *Chandamama* engages in an upper-caste Hindu representation of Indian culture, non-Hindu religions like Islam and Christianity are presented as foreign and are usually “othered,” which is also synonymous with the Hindu nationalist discourse, even though Christianity has existed in India since more than twenty centuries, and Islam has existed in the country since more than thirteen centuries. In *Chandamama*, foreignisation is particularly prominent in the representation of Muslim rulers who are presented as hostile to “Hindus/Indians” and “Hindu/Indian” culture. If ever “foreign” religions like Islam and Christianity are represented positively, that is done only in stories or narratives situated in the Middle East in the case of Islam, and in the West in the case of Christianity.

According to Ritu Khanduri;

To authorise the cultural claims of their comics, Indian publishing houses frequently inform readers of a historian or cultural expert among their staff, who ensures the accuracy of the research for their narratives. Anant Pai, the founder-editor of *Chandamama*, emphasised that *Amar Chitra Katha* comics were a product of primary research and the script was not arbitrary (174).

However, even historiography is often quite fictional, and some theorists have commented on how history is always narrated from one or the other hegemonic perspective, thus always having a centre that peripherizes other marginal and minor communities and groups.

Hayden White states;

Historical sequences can be emplotted in many different ways to provide different interpretations of those events and to endow them with different meanings. How a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the

historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, fiction-making operation (85).

White says;

The overall coherence of any given series of historical facts is the coherence of story, but this coherence is achieved only by a tailoring of the facts to the requirements of the story form. The historical narrative does not reproduce the events it describes but tells the reader in what direction to think about the events and charges the reader's thoughts about the events with different emotional valences (91).

In *Chandamama*, the mythification of history is a technique used in the representation of Christianity, and Christians are presented as superstitious. However, Buddhism is usually represented as an offshoot of Hinduism, even though it is, in fact, a completely different religion. This is probably because Buddhism did originate from Hinduism, even though that began by questioning and criticising several Hindu beliefs and practices.

Thus, *Chandamama* seems to internalise Hindu nationalist ideas. Following the central idea of Hindu nationalism, *Chandamama* presents India as a Hindu nation where all other religions are foreign. This aspect of the comic is very noteworthy since the peak time of its publication was the 60s, 70s and 80s when Hindu nationalism was on the rise.

The issues of the 70s show a higher Hindu spirit than those of the 50s, which can be seen through the retelling of a story of the July 1957 issue titled "Avaricious" eleven years later as "Envy" in the June 1971 issue of the comic. In both the stories, an

impoverished woodcutter goes to the forest to cut wood, but he is unable to do so because of heavy rain, and so he takes shelter in a dilapidated hut inside the wood. Inside, he sees a tall stump of wood with a crude visage carved on it. He is about to chop it since he feels at least that would fetch him a little money to feed his children for the meanwhile, but immediately a figure comes out of the stump. In either of the tales, the being that comes out of the stump is described differently. In the 1957 story, it is just referred to as goddess and deity, and she seems to be a goddess/deity of the forest/nature. However, in the later 1971 issue, she is the Hindu Goddess Durga. In the earlier tale, the goddess comes out of the stump and says to the woodcutter, “Stop, fool. Do you want to break me up? Who do you think I am? (1957: 45) However, in the 1971 tale, the goddess says, “Would you commit sacrilege by destroying the image of the Goddess Durga?” (1971: 43) When the goddess is given the status of Goddess Durga in the later retelling of the tale, anything done against her is called sacrilege.

While in the older tale, the woodcutter folds his hands and seeks forgiveness from the goddess, in the later tale, he is presented as kneeling while seeking forgiveness from Goddess Durga. Thus, in the 1971 tale, the woodcutter is presented as humbler since he is before Goddess Durga.

In both the tales, the goddess is moved by the poverty of the woodcutter and blesses him saying his family would not starve any more. She instructs him to buy a new pot and heat it on an unlit stove. When the pot is taken from the stove, it would have been filled with food. The woodcutter goes home happy, and he and his family live happily after that with never again having to fend for food. However, there is again a change in the 1971 tale regarding how the food appears in the pot. In this

tale, unlike the earlier one, the name of Goddess Durga is to be chanted thrice while laying the pot on the fire. Here there is deliberate glorification of the Hindu goddess.

While in the older story, the being coming out of the stump is a goddess/deity of the forest, in the latter tale, the goddess is Goddess Durga, which constitutes replacement of local or regional Hinduism with mainstream Hinduism. The goddess of the older tale seems to be some regional deity, goddess or caretaker of the forest not belonging to the Hindu canon of gods and deities. However, in the later tale, the goddess is Goddess Durga, a major Hindu goddess. This replacement of the deity of the forest with Goddess Durga in the later retelling of the tale is illustrative of mainstream Hinduism's attempts at bringing all local/regional, minor religions and practices under mainstream Hinduism, which has been a common feature of Hinduism and Hindu nationalism. After all, Hinduism is not a singular religion. It has constituted several local and regional ways of worship, deities and gods, local myths and legends, and beliefs, customs, rituals and practices have often varied from one place to another. The word Hinduism is just an umbrella term used to describe this plurality of religious and cultural beliefs and practices, which has often been the result of mainstream Hinduism's attempts at homogenising and bringing together all these different practices. Thus, most of the people in South Asia who did not follow any institutional religion came to be called as Hindus.

“Godliness” is about two elderly friends, Govind and Gopal, going on a pilgrimage to the famous Hindu Kashi Vishwanath Temple. On the way, they come across a poor peasant family on the verge of death due to starvation. Govind helps them using all the money he had with him. Firstly he offers to help them cultivate on their small plot of land. However, the peasant says that even that small plot has been mortgaged. Therefore, if he cultivated anything on that land, the yield would go to the creditor.

Moreover, the peasant sold his cart and buffaloes. However, Govind helps the family by paying the debt to free the land from the money-lender. Moreover, Govind purchases for them a cart and a pair of buffaloes. Thus, after making sure the family can begin farming again and live a comfortable life, Govind decides to leave them and continue his pilgrimage, guessing his friend Gopal would already have reached Banaras. However, he realises now he does not have with him enough money for the pilgrimage since he has spent most of it for the peasant family. So, he decides to return home instead.

Meanwhile, Gopal continues his pilgrimage and reaches Banaras. As Gopal reaches the pilgrim centre, the central place of worship is very thickly packed with devotees touching the *linga* to purify themselves. Gopal's old-age-health does not allow him to make his way through the crowd to the *linga*.

However, Gopal is surprised to see Govind at the front, rising after touching the *linga* with his forehead. Gopal intends to meet Govind as everyone came out. However, even though he observes everyone very carefully, he is surprised when he is unable to find Govind. He just seems to have disappeared. Gopal stays at Banaras for three days. Every day he goes to the temple, and every day he sees Govind touching the *linga* with his forehead. However, he never sees Govind anywhere else.

So, Gopal leaves Banaras, and visits Gaya, Prayag and other sacred places before returning home. On the way back, he visits the peasants whom Govind had helped. He learns from them that Govind had stayed with them for three months, but he had never reached Banaras.

Now Gopal realises Govind has passed away, and it is his soul that now visits the temple every day and even touches the *linga* with his forehead as he is now very close to God because of his goodness, especially his generosity towards the poor

peasant family. Thus, even though Gopal was unable to accomplish his pilgrimage in his lifetime, he has achieved much more through his helping mentality and goodness, that now he is always close to God. Perhaps this indicates Govind has achieved *moksha* or salvation.

This story has as its theme Hindu spirituality and how the protagonist reaches the culmination of this spirituality through his charitable deeds. The protagonist is a very religious and devout Hindu who is also hugely charitable and helpful. By presenting such a character as the protagonist, this story tends to stimulate among its young readers inclination towards Hindu religiosity.

Apart from promoting Hindu spirituality, *Chandamama* often internalises the caste system, which can be seen through the reply given by the editors of the magazine to a reader who asked the question, “Who formed the caste system and when?” in the May 1979 issue:

Origin of the caste system dates back to the most ancient times. The *Rig Veda* says that men representing the four major castes sprang out of Brahma, the Creator. However, we have come a long way from the Vedic attitude to the system. The ancient guardians of the society looked upon the society as one human body, and they knew that various people must devote themselves to various duties, as sincerely as possible. Specialisation was necessary for all the types of work, physical or spiritual. Just as a Shudra busy in keeping the daily discipline of the society should not be suddenly called upon to take arms and defend his land against an enemy invader, so also a Kshatriya, meant for politics and warfare, should not be expected to take to trade - the sphere of a Vaishya. A Brahmin was expected to take care of the religious and spiritual welfare of the society. The feeling of superiority and inferiority were not

attached to the nature of work; nor was it open to anybody to feel proud on account of a superior caste. One was as much to blame for his failure as a warrior (Kshatriya) as for his failure as a spiritual guardian (Brahmin). A spiritually enlightened society, which believed in rebirth, thought that the soul must go through many experiences and one who was a Kshatriya in a certain life could be born as Shudra or Vaishya in the next. In any case, birth was not the sole factor for deciding one's caste. One's inclination and aspiration played a vital role (8).

When the writer says "we have come a long way from the Vedic attitude to the system," we see his inclination towards secularism. However, a feeling of reverence towards the older system is very evident in the passage, and thus by respecting the older system, there is an inclination towards sanskritization.

When he says "the ancient guardians of the society knew various people must devote themselves to various duties, as sincerely as possible," he is implying "the ancient guardians" had the knowledge or wisdom to resolve "that various people must devote themselves to various duties, as sincerely as possible." Interestingly, he uses the word "knew" in the sentence rather than "felt," which would have been more appropriate if he supported "we have come a long way from the Vedic attitude to the system" and was not in agreement with the notions ("knowledge") of "the ancient guardians."

Again he seems to support secularism and equality when he says, "The feeling of superiority and inferiority were not attached to the nature of work; nor was it open to anybody to feel proud on account of a superior caste." However, the seemingly secular nature of this phrase is contradicted by the next sentence which says, "One

was as much to blame for his failure as a warrior (Kshatriya) as for his failure as a spiritual guardian (Brahmin),” since only the upper-castes, the kshatriya and the Brahmin, are mentioned in this phrase. Moreover, according to him, “A spiritually enlightened society, which believed in rebirth, thought that the soul must go through many experiences and one who was a Kshatriya in a certain life could be born as Shudra or Vaishya in the next.” This phrase implies spirituality exists only in Hinduism, and only Hindus were spiritually enlightened, or perhaps for him, the Indian society constituted of only the Hindu society.

Further when he says, “the soul must go through many experiences, and one who was a Kshatriya in a certain life could be born as Shudra or Vaishya in the next,” interesting is that only the kshatriya, shudra and vaishya are mentioned. According to the Hindu caste system, the Brahmin occupies the highest caste status, and it is considered as the highest form of birth.

“In any case, birth was not the sole factor for deciding one’s caste. One’s inclination and aspiration played a vital role.” However, this is still problematic and actually in support of the caste system. By saying “inclination plays a vital role in deciding one’s caste,” there is an implication caste is fundamental, and an individual usually belongs to a caste by birth and his inclination can make him part of the same caste or another caste/s. Thus, according to this phrase, Indian society is fundamentally a Hindu society with different castes, and the lower castes should try to get sanskritized by following the Brahmins.

Another example can be seen in the story, “The True Brahmin”:

Centuries ago, in the province of Sindhu lived a pious Brahmin pundit. His son loved a farmer’s charming daughter. “My father will never agree to my

marrying a girl from another caste,” the pundit’s son expressed before one of his friends. “Why don’t you lead the girl to him and say that she is a Brahmin?” said the friend. The idea appealed to the young man. He led the girl to the old pundit and said, “Father, here is a poor Brahmin’s daughter. Have I your permission to marry her?” However, the girl spoke out instantly, “Oh no, please don’t give him a wrong impression. I am a farmer’s daughter!” The scholar smiled at the girl and said, “My child, whatever be your father’s profession, you are Brahmin. True Brahmin is one who cannot put up with falsehood.” Then, pointing his finger at his son, he said, “Now, the problem is, though a Brahmin’s son, this young man is not a true Brahmin. I should feel proud to have you as my daughter-in-law if you have no objection to marrying this non-Brahmin!” (46)

Even though the story seems to support secularism, it does put forth the idea of the Brahmin as occupying a high status. Thus, by creating a category of the Brahmin with specific archetypal characteristics and idealising it as a model to be achieved, we see an attempt at sanskritization, a call to people belonging to other castes and religions to get sanskritized to become like the better human being, the Brahmin, at least through sanskritization if not by birth. Thus, according to this discourse, the Brahmin is respectable as a better human being, and if an individual is not born as a Brahmin, he should at least try to become like the Brahmin. For this purpose, there are certain ideals to be achieved, like, a “true Brahmin is one who cannot put up with falsehood.”

In several stories in *Chandamama*, the protagonists are pious Brahmins who are helped by the gods not only because of their devotedness and piety, but also because they belong to that caste. In many stories in *Chandamama*, the protagonists are upper-caste Hindu characters, usually a Brahmin or a king. These characters usually

have certain archetypal features. The way Brahmins and Kshatriya kings are represented usually correspond to the features ascribed to them by the *Varna* system. Thus, Brahmins are usually represented as wise and pious, and kings are represented as chivalrous and noble. As already described, such representations were probably because of cultural nationalist attempts at portraying an exclusively “Indian culture” that resulted in utopian representations of monarchy and religion centred on the king and the Brahmin. However, quite remarkable is that such glorified representations of the king and the Brahmin escalated by the 70s since that was the time when Hindu nationalism was on the rise. The Brahmin is often the protagonist, and he is usually represented as pious, wise and holy.

Attribution of “goodness” is a technique frequently used in the glorification of the Brahmin. Brahmin protagonists in some stories are idealised as having many good qualities. The Brahmin is often represented as pious, benevolent and charitable. Even though he is usually very wise, he is honest and devoid of deceit. In such stories, the Brahmin is respected not only because of his caste, but also because of his “goodness.” He is hardly ever self-centred or interested in accumulating riches. On the other hand, he is usually presented as having a sense of responsibility towards the gods as well as to men.

Moreover, in some of these stories, Brahmins have even superhuman capabilities which seem to have been bestowed upon them by the gods, and there seems to be some sort of divine intervention in favour of the Brahmin protagonists. Such supernatural capabilities are often hereditary because of belonging to that caste, and because of such characters’ intense faith and devotedness.

Thus, in the stories in *Chandamama*, Brahmin characters are usually presented as very likeable and humane, and they stimulate in the readers, especially young

readers, affection and friendliness towards such characters. By idealising the Brahmin, such stories, inspire young readers to aspire to become like the Brahmin. Thus, these stories have an agenda of sanskritization¹ whereby people belonging to other castes and religions are stimulated to aspire to go up higher in society by striving to become like the Brahmin.

The process of inheritance of qualities is frequent in the stories in *Chandamama*. Thus, Brahmins are presented as inheriting divinity, wisdom and often supernatural capabilities like the power of prediction. On the other hand, Kshatriya protagonists who are usually kings or else generals or brave soldiers, are presented as inheriting strength, valour, bravery and courage.

Apart from such glorified representations of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, several stories in *Chandamama* implicitly instil among its young readers nostalgia and longing for precolonial, feudal, monarchical India through the representation of righteous monarchs who are highly efficient in ruling the kingdom and always act towards the welfare of the subjects. Some of these stories talk about a protagonist, who, through his talents, gain the favour of the ruler and thereby gains several gifts and riches and often permanent employment in the court. Since these stories are usually narrated from the perspective of such a protagonist, the reader rejoices along with the protagonist as he gets recognised and awarded for his talents, and the reader gets a sense of the gratefulness and admiration felt by the protagonist towards the generous and talented monarch who is capable of rightfully judging and appreciating the talents of his subjects.

¹MN Srinivas describes sanskritization as the process by which people placed lower in caste hierarchy try to go up by emulating the rituals and practices of the upper-castes.

Such glorification of upper-caste Hindus by representing them as possessing and inheriting the qualities attributed to them by the *Varna* system is itself a way of internalising the caste system because if upper-caste Hindus are represented according to the *Varna* system, then the non-representation of the lower caste Hindus is equivalent to representing them too according to that system which attributes them low caste status by describing them as fit for only menial jobs due to their “lower values and qualities.”

However, such casteism is implied in *Chandamama* in such a way that it is very much internalised and presented as acceptable, and often depicted as good for the precolonial Indian society portrayed in these stories. Moreover, such a portrayal would not have disturbed most of the readers of the comic since they belonged to the same hegemonic and dominant sections glorified in the comic.

“Krishna Came to the Poet’s Rescue” is a narrative of a mythological incident associated with the Sanskrit poet Jayadeva. Apart from the glorification of the poet who is the Brahmin protagonist of the story, the events in the narrative induce faithful Hindus to admire and worship Krishna, a major Hindu god. The narrative starts as follows: “In the shade of a tree, behind the great temple of Jagannath at Puri, sat a young Brahmin, engrossed in engraving his verses on a bunch of palm leaves” (39). Here, the temple of Jagannath at Puri has been referred to as “great.” When the poet is initially introduced, he is not introduced by his name, but as a Brahmin sitting in the shade of a tree behind the “great Jagannath temple,” engraving his verses on a bunch of palm leaves. Such addressing of the poet by his caste name as Brahmin rather than by his name itself attributes the activity that he is engaged in, namely that of engrossing verses, as something commonly pursued by Brahmins and not just Jayadeva himself. Thus, this narrative seems to claim proudly that Brahmins of the

past were often engaged in engrossing and studying verses and scriptures, and thus, it seems to take pride in Brahmins' "capability" to create and engage with verses and scriptures like the *Vedas*, which implies glorification of not only Brahmins but also of Hindu verses and scriptures. Thus, it supports a *Veda* centric society in which only Brahmins and Kshatriyas had the right to engage with the scriptures while those who belonged to the lower castes were prohibited from reading the scriptures or even studying Sanskrit. The verse the poet was engaged in engrossing is the *Gita Govinda*, a major Hindu poem about the relationship between Krishna and the *gopis* (cowgirls) of Vrindavana, particularly Radha. However, the name of the poem is revealed only by the end of the narrative. Till then, the narrative talks about the commitment as well as the devotedness of the poet Jayadeva, and it describes the event of a divine intervention in the writing of the poem. Such a technique instils curiosity in the reader until the end when it is finally revealed that the poem is the *Gita Govinda*.

The narrative continues as follows, "It was a quiet mid-day, with no sound heard except the roar of the sea which was not far and the cooing of a couple of cuckoos from the tree. However, of course, there was another faint sound too – joining the cuckoos' song from time to time. This was the sweet voice of our poet Jayadeva. He was reciting his verses as he went on writing those" (39). Here the poet is described as engrossing and reciting his verses sitting in a very idyllic environment. He was sitting in the shade of a tree behind the temple of Jagannath at Puri. There was no other sound other than the roar of the sea and the cooing of a couple of cuckoos from the tree under which the poet was seated. Thus, the temple of Jagannath and the Brahmin poet as well is situated in an idyllic environment, and such a representation can inevitably induce its readers, especially young readers, to get inclined towards such an idyllic setting as presented in the story, accompanied by

massive, renowned temples and highly devoted and talented Brahmins to support and strengthen such establishments.

Moreover, he is referred to as “our poet Jayadeva,” thus, instilling a feeling of familiarity with the poet. Apart from this, referring to him as “our poet” implies an all-encompassing Hindu nationalist perspective that sees all the readers of the comic as Hindus even though the comic was read by children belonging to other communities as well. Such a comment implies a perspective that looks at “Indian culture” as “Hindu culture,” which is the Hindu nationalist way of looking at Hindu culture. This implies that anyone for whom the poet Jaydeva is not his poet and the *Gita Govinda* is not his poem is a foreigner who is supposed to respect the native Hindu culture that can treat any culture other than Hinduism as foreign or as the “other.”

The narrative continues as follows, “With deep concentration, he was writing about Krishna and Radha, about the great love that the two felt for each other. He was narrating an episode in which Krishna had to be shown trying to appease Radha who had grown a bit angry with him” (39).

However, the poet murmured, “O Krishna, my Lord! I know your great love for Radha. Even then, how can I show you humbled before her, apologising to her?” (39 – 40)

“Again, and again the poet tried to set down the two lines which he had already composed in his mind, but his reverence for Krishna did not allow him to do so” (40).

Here, the poet’s great respect for Krishna is expressed through his reluctance to write about the god bowing before a human being, especially a woman. Here,

Jayadeva's reverence for Krishna is illustrative to young readers of how they also should, like the "great poet Jayadeva," love and respect the god with humility.

When it was time for lunch, the poet's wife Padmavati came out of their hut nearby and said, "The sun is already overhead. Food is ready. Will you not go for your bath?" (40)

The poet said, "Oh, is that so? I was not aware of time. Very well, Padmavati, carry home my manuscript and the pen. I will be back soon, after a dip in the lake" (40). Jayadeva is thus presented as immensely interested in composing the poem about Krishna that he forgot time and even hunger.

"He passed quite some time in the lake, for, bathing to him also meant reciting long hymns and performing certain rites" (40). Here, the piousness of the Brahmin poet is emphasised by saying that for him bathing included reciting long hymns and performing certain rites. Thus, by presenting him as always very keen on performing rites, the Brahmin's exclusive right to priesthood is internalised.

After a bath, he went home to take food. As he reached home, Jayadeva was surprised to see his wife preparing to take food, which was because, throughout their married life, it had been Padmavati's habit to eat only after her husband had finished eating. So, he was surprised why she was now behaving in this strange fashion. He asked her, "How is it, Padmavati, that you were in such a hurry to take food today?" (40)

Padmavati seemed to be surprised at this and said, "Isn't your conduct rather unusual today? A little while ago you rushed in and asked for your manuscript, saying that you wanted to write down a couple of lines before you forgot them. I gave you the manuscript, and after writing down those lines, you finished your meal

and went out, saying that you had some urgent business to attend in the temple. You are back in no time, and you say that you were hungry!” (40)

Jayadeva was stunned. However, something occurred to him in a flashlight, and he wanted to see the manuscript. Padmavati washed her hands and brought it out.

“Jayadeva stared down at the manuscript while he trembled with emotion. Tears rolled down his cheeks. He saw the very two lines which he had hesitated to write down lest they should offend Krishna, written on the palm leaf. They were the lines which described Krishna bowing down humbly to Radha in a bid to please her!” (40 – 41)

Jayadeva said to Padmavati, “Great is your luck, Padmavati, although you do not know yet whom you saw a little ago. He who came assuming my form was none other than Krishna himself. Who else could have known what was going on in my mind?” (41)? Thus, in this narrative, it is presented as very befitting for Krishna to take the form of the Brahmin. Krishna took the form of the poet since he wanted to help him to perfect and complete the poem he was writing about Krishna himself. Here, the god took the form of the Brahmin without any hesitation, which seems to suggest it was not only the poet’s devotedness or the theme and quality of the poem but also the caste of the poet that caused the god to help him by taking his form. Through such an instance of a major Hindu god helping a Brahmin poet, this story elicits among its readers respect for the Brahmin poet, apart from inducing love and worship towards Krishna. By talking about the god taking the form of the Brahmin, the Brahmin is raised to godliness, which is what the Brahmanical caste system always tried to do. Such an effect is highly achieved in this narrative since it is about a real poet, the writer of the *Gita Govinda*.

“Jayadeva asked Padmavati to show him where the Lord had sat down. He rolled on the ground, and both eagerly ate the remains from the dish from which the disguised Lord had eaten” (41). Thus, the opportunity to eat from the remains of what “the Lord” ate is presented as a blessing.

The narrative ends like this, “Jayadeva’s lyric poem, in the writing of which Krishna had played such a role, is famous as the *Gita Govinda*” (41). Thus, the name of the poem is revealed only by the end of the narrative, thereby providing an answer to the curiosity of the reader after building up a glorified image of the poem through the portrayal of the poet Jayadeva as a highly talented and devoted poet, and through the description of an event of divine interference in the writing of the “great” poem.

“Jayadeva lived in the twelfth century. For hundreds of years past his immortal lyric poem, the *Gita Govinda*, is regularly recited in the temple of Puri. It is said that the Lord does not go to sleep without listening to this sweet composition” (41).

In this narrative about Jayadeva’s writing of the *Gita Govinda* and a mythical incident of Krishna’s interference in the writing of the poem, history and myth are fused in such a way that the myth involving Krishna’s interference is historicised. Such historicisation is achieved by conjoining the mythical incident along with the historical event of the writing of the poem actually took place and thereby elicits legitimacy.

In figure 1, the Brahmin poet Jayadeva is placed in front of the famous temple of Jagannath at Puri. Since the poet is sitting at the front under the shade of a tree, he is very large in the image. Thus, the famous Brahmin poet is presented as sitting before a very famous Hindu temple. Through such a representation of the Brahmin poet sitting in front of the temple, engaged in engraving scriptures, he is presented in a divine light. Thus, this image makes use of two significant Hindu symbols that instil

among its readers inclination towards such a culture. Like this image, there are other images too in this comic that depict Brahmin characters reading or writing scriptures. Because for the precolonial Indian society depicted in *Chandamama*, liturgical knowledge was the highest form of knowledge, such portrayals of Brahmins dealing with scriptures is indicative of the comic's belief and interest in presenting them as the caste of people most suited for and experienced in dealing with "true knowledge." Thereby, they are presented as the real scholars, and according to such a discourse, people belonging to other castes are not as suitable and talented as the Brahmin to deal with the scriptures or "true knowledge."

LEGENDS OF INDIA KRISHNA CAME TO THE POET'S RESCUE

In the shade of a tree, behind the great temple of Jagannath at Puri, sat a young Brahmin, engrossed in engraving his verses on a bunch of palm leaves. It was a quiet mid-day, with no sound heard excepting the roar of the sea which was not far and the cooing of a couple of cuckoos from the tree.

But, of course, there was another faint sound too—joining the cuckoos' song from time to time. That was the sweet voice of our poet Jayadeva. He

was reciting his verses as he went on writing them.

With deep concentration he was writing about Krishna and Radha, about the great love that the two felt for each other. He was narrating an episode in which Krishna had to be shown trying to appease Radha who had grown a bit angry with him.

But the poet had faced a dilemma. He murmured, "O Krishna, my Lord! I know your great love for Radha. Even



Figure 1

In “A Family of Pandits,” upper-castes like Brahmins and Kshatriyas are very explicitly glorified (54 – 58). Such glorification of certain castes implies internalisation of the caste hierarchy and the low caste status attributed to other castes. This story is about a Brahmin, his wife, their son and daughter-in-law who are all *pandits*² and poets (54 – 58). So, the people call them the *pandit* family. Here, the members of the Brahmin family are not only *pandits* but are also poets. In this story, a Brahmin family has been specifically chosen to be the protagonists, and they are glorified as *pandits* as poets, which suggests it is quite common among Brahmins to be *pandits* and poets, and thus, there is an implication it is not so with people belonging to other castes and communities.

In the story, King Bhoja is shown as very helpful towards poor *pandits* and poets, but it turns out that all the *pandits* and poets are Brahmins. Thus, even though the king is ready to help the poor, there is a condition they should be *pandits* or poets who are mostly Brahmins, which implies the king may leave the poor of the other castes to starve.

The *pandit* family is on their way to the court of king Bhoja to obtain financial help from the “generous” king. On their way, they meet another old Brahmin who is on his way back after receiving a considerable amount of money from the king, and so they feel happy about seeing some evidence for the king’s “philanthropy.”

Before any outsiders enter the city, they should obtain permission from the court. So, the *pandit* family sends word to the king about their arrival and camps under a spreading banyan tree just outside the city. Coming to know about their arrival, the king sends a messenger to the *pandits*. According to the instruction of the king, the messenger offers the elder *pandit* a tumbler filled with milk to the brim as a

²*Pandit* is a term used to refer to a very learned and wise scholar.

gift from the king to the *pandit* family, which is to symbolically convey to them the city is already full of *pandits* and poets, and there is no room for any more. The elder Brahmin understands the message of the king and reacts very tactfully. He adds some sugar to the milk and asks the messenger to take it back to the king. By this, he wants to convey to the king that they would mix well with the other *pandits* like how sugar mixes with milk. Moreover, like how sugar adds sweetness to milk, they would add a new sweetness with their presence. When the messenger reaches back to the king, the king understands the Brahmin's message, and he is delighted. However, the king wants to test the *pandit* family even more. So, disguised as an ordinary citizen, he goes to the banyan tree. He sees the Brahmin's son at a nearby river. The king looks at him questioningly, and then, taking some water in his hands, drinks it. In doing so, the king is asking the Brahmin, "Are you not the same caste as the great Brahmin Agastya, who drank down all oceans at one gulp?" (56)

The young Brahmin understands this question and asks another question to the king through the act of throwing a stone into the river. The question is, "Are you not a Kshatriya like Sree Rama who bridged the ocean by throwing stones in it?" (56)

The king is delighted and goes home happy. This symbolic conversation between the king and the young Brahmin explicitly internalises the caste system. Here, Brahmins and Kshatriyas are explicitly portrayed as respectable and as occupying high caste positions, which is achieved by invoking mythical and significant Hindu figures like Agastya and Sree Rama. Thus, this story brings out support for the caste system and the superiority of and respectability for Brahmins and Kshatriyas.

The king is still keen to test the family even further. So, he again returns to the banyan tree, this time disguised as a woodcutter. He asks the elder Brahmin to let him rest there for the night, and he is granted his wish.

Before they sleep, they decide each of them would take turns to sit awake and watch out for thieves. The first one to thus sit awake is the elder Brahmin. During his watch, the king speaks out, “In this unhappy world, three things are deemed pleasant” (57), and the Brahmin replies, “Life in Kashi, serving the good and taking the name of God” (57).

Here the king gets the right answer from the Brahmin, and he is delighted. The three things deemed pleasant are “life in Kashi, serving the good and taking the name of God.” Such a reply from the Brahmin brings forth the very Hinduistic nature of the story. The Kashi Vishwanath Temple is a famous Hindu pilgrim centre, and according to this story, visiting this temple is one of the pleasantest things to be done. The second pleasant deed is to serve the good. However, “the good” seems to denote only certain groups of people. On reading this story by the grain, the king seems to be a man who lives by the same philosophy as spoken out by the Brahmin. He is a person who wants to serve “the good,” but “the good” is only Brahmin *pandits* and poets while the king neglects poor people belonging to other castes since they are not *pandits* or poets. A relevant question here would be what exactly constitutes the becoming of a *pandit*.

After the elder Brahmin’s watch time, as the other family members take up the responsibility one after the other, the king asks similar religious questions to the Brahmin’s wife, son and daughter-in-law, and they all reply correctly. The king honours each of them in his very best manner and gives them all permanent employment in his court.

The king is finally pleased about rewarding the Brahmin family since they have proved to be very wise *pandits* and poets, and he gives them all permanent employment in his court. However, this raises questions as to what constitutes the becoming of a wise *pandit*. The *pandits* in the story are called wise because they are Brahmins well-versed in Hindu religious discourses. Thus, this story presents wisdom and knowledge as mainly constituting Hindu liturgical knowledge. Here, the questions raised by the king and all the answers he receives from the Brahmins are based on Hindu texts. Thus, the story seems to imply Hindu religious knowledge as constituting true wisdom and knowledge, and the Brahmins are considered *pandits* because they are well-versed in Hindu scriptures and texts, which also implies only Brahmins can be *pandits* since they are the caste of Hindus selected to study and preach Hindu scriptures and texts. This story represents a precolonial Indian Hindu society in which only Brahmins and other upper castes like Kshatriyas had the right to get educated through the *gurukul* system that was mainly centred on Hindu liturgical knowledge. People belonging to lower castes were prohibited from going to the *gurukuls* or even reading Hindu religious texts. Thus, through the rewarding of such knowledge and its proponents who are all Brahmins and Kshatriyas, the story supports the caste system.

tree about the time of sunset. He saw only the ladies there. He went to the river expecting the males to be there at their evening prayers. However he saw only the Brahman's son at the river. The king looked at him questioningly, and taking some water in his hands, drank it. In doing so the king was asking the young Brahman, "Are you not the same caste as the great Brha-

man Agastya, who drank down all the oceans at one gulp?"

The young Brahman understood this silent question and asked in return another by throwing a stone into the water. His question was, "Are you not a Kshatriya like Sree Rama who bridged the ocean by throwing stones in it?"

King Bhoja was very much pleased at this and went home.



Figure 2

Figure 2 illustrates the king meeting the Brahmin disguised as an ordinary citizen. Since the disguised king carries a log of wood and an axe in his hand, he seems to be disguised as a woodcutter. Behind them are the Brahmin's family seated at the foot of a giant banyan tree. The king in woodcutter's disguise is presented as standing very meekly in a slightly bowing position before the Brahmin, which indicates the woodcutter's respect for the Brahmin since he belongs to that caste. Thereby, such meekness on the part of people belonging to the lower castes towards those belonging to the higher castes indicates internalisation and even support for the caste hierarchy.

"The Three Brothers" is about three princes, Pushpaketu, Chitrabhanu and Pingala who go on an extended tour that leads them all to get married to three young women who are of the same caste and social standing as that of the brothers.

On their journey, on reaching Pushpapura, they rent a big building for a lodge and go site-seeing into the city, each by himself. As the youngest prince Pingala walks along a street, he comes across a portrait of a lovely young woman at the gate of her palace. Underneath the portrait is an announcement; "This portrait belongs to a noble maiden called Maharajaratna. If any learned young man wants to marry her, he will have to reply to her questions which will be conveyed to him through symbols. He who succeeds in the test can marry her, but he who fails will have to become a slave-labourer. If the condition is agreeable, ring the bell" (Menon 21).

Pingala rings the bell. A few maids escort him to a room inside the palace, and then they go away to return with a few leaf-buds on a platter. Showing the platter to Pingala, they ask him, "Please let us know your reply" (Menon 21). Pingala fails. So, he is made a slave-labourer.

When the eldest brother Pushpaketu returns home, he finds his two brothers have not returned. So, the next day he goes looking for them. He walks along different streets and comes across the palace with the portrait of Maharajaratna at the gate. He befriends the servants and learns a young man resembling him wanted to marry Maharajaratna but failed the test and has, therefore, become a slave. Pushpaketu is certain the victim is his brother Pingala. So, he decides to save him by taking the test himself. When the maids show him the platter with leaf-buds, because of his extensive reading and wisdom, he can understand the question is what his caste is, and he replies, “Kshatriya,” which is the right answer. Here, the casteist nature of this story is very evident. Even though the announcement for the test indicated anyone who can answer all the symbols could marry the noble maid, the first symbol itself asks the test-taker what his caste is. Even though it is not said in the story any test-taker would be expelled if his answer to the first question revealed his caste as not befitting marriage with the noble Kshatriya maid, it strongly implies only Kshatriya men are invited to woo her. Here there is also the implication that if the answer to the first question of caste does not turn out to be as expected, the test-taker can probably be expelled from taking the test any further, even though the story does not show any such instance since no non-Kshatriya turns up for the test, which points to a common understanding only Kshatriyas are expected to turn up for the test.

After Pushpaketu answers all the questions successfully, the maids take him to a room which is gorgeously decorated. As he enters, a young lady rises from a golden seat and says to him, “You’re welcome. At long last, I found one who could answer all my questions. I’m willing to marry you” (Menon 23).

However, Pushpaketu is surprised because this young woman is not Maharajaratna. She is much more attractive, and she wears a crown. He asks her,

“Was it you that sent the questions? However, you are not Maharajaratna!” (Menon 23)

She replies, “No. However, it was I that sent you the questions. You see, I am the Queen Ratnamakuta. Maharajaratna is a close friend of mine. I borrowed her name so that no one would know that I was seeking a husband” (Menon 23).

Pushpaketu says, “Well, it makes no difference to me. However, a brother of mine who was defeated by you yesterday is doing hard labour in your garden. Be so kind as to let him off” (Menon 23).

Ratnamukuta laughs gaily and says, “So he is your brother? My friend Maharajaratna is very much in love with him. Their marriage shall take place together with ours” (Menon 23).

Thus, both the princes marry two women who are of the same social standing as themselves. While the youngest brother, Pingala, according to his wish, marries the beautiful young woman in the portrait, Maharajaratna, the eldest brother who is heir to the throne marries Queen Ratnamakuta.

Meanwhile, the second brother Chitrabhanu also manages to get a bride due to a strange turn of circumstances. A billionaire named Manimantha has a lovely daughter called “Urmila who has been brought up like a princess amidst all possible luxuries” (Menon 24). After searching for a long time, he finds an adequate groom for his daughter. The betrothal is held, and the marriage is fixed six months hence so that both the parties would have enough time to make all the grand preparations befitting a prosperous marriage. Manimantha is told if the fixed *muhurat* (auspicious moment) is missed, the next auspicious day will come not until three years later. He makes grand arrangements for the marriage; to lodge ten thousand guests, and to host countless entertainments, and he gets *pandals* erected over several acres of ground.

On the day of the marriage, thousands of guests arrive, but the bridegroom's party does not turn up. When the *muhurat* is almost at hand, the messengers who were sent to the coast to bring news of the arriving ships comes instead with the information that the bridegroom's group's ships had hit some rocks and sank into the sea.

Manimantha is flabbergasted. He had made all the grand preparations, invited many guests, and he had been informed that if the marriage does not take place during the *muhurat*, the next auspicious date will come not until after three years. He goes around the numberless guests and looks around. His gaze falls upon Chitrabhanu, who has come to see the marriage. Manimantha calls him aside and says to him, "Young man, be my son-in-law and save me from disgrace. I am worth ten crores, and this girl is my only child" (Menon 25).

Chitrabhanu informs him he is a prince himself, agrees to marry Urmila, and the marriage takes place.

In this story, all the three princes marry according to their caste and class. Moreover, the marriages take place in such a way that the eldest prince who is the heir to the throne marries a queen and the younger princes marry only "beneath" the future-king, even though the second brother Chitrabhanu marries a very wealthy woman and the youngest brother Pingala marries a noble, wealthy maid who is a close friend of the queen. Moreover, it is mentioned that all the brides are gorgeous.

In this story, there are two ways by which the Kshatriya princes marry according to their caste and class. The first way is by proving one's talent. The second is by getting selected arbitrarily, possibly based on the princes' appearance and demeanour. The eldest prince Pushpaketu is presented as very knowledgeable and well-read enough to succeed in the test put forth by the queen. The story does not indicate any reason as to why the queen's close friend falls in love with the youngest

prince Pingala. She is probably enamoured of him by his *good looks and wonderful demeanour befitting a Kshatriya*. In the case of the second prince Chitrabhanu, the same seems to have happened, even though it is not the woman but her father who selects him from a huge crowd.

Thus, this story is about three Kshatriya princes who marry three Kshatriya women who are of the same social standing by caste as well as class. The events that lead to their marriages imply the idea that the qualities of a Kshatriya include not only his talents and knowledge, as in the case of Pushpaketu but also his appearance and demeanour as well. In this story, all the brides are described as gorgeous young women, and they or their fathers are very happy about selecting the princes as bridegrooms due to getting pleased and satisfied with the princes' appearance and demeanour. Since the three princes are Kshatriyas, such a selection procedure implies that Kshatriyas usually have certain physical features and appearance that make them stand out from others. Besides, since all the brides are described as lovely young women, there is the implication that the three young Kshatriya men are all very handsome young men. Through such a representation, this story instils among its young readers the impression that Kshatriya men and women look very handsome and beautiful respectively. Thus, beauty is presented as something associated with caste. When this story is read along with other stories that represent Brahmins and Kshatriyas as very good-looking people, the comic implies that beauty is a part of the caste system and that beauty also has the same hierarchy as that of caste. Thus, such a discourse instils among its young readers the notion that the upper-caste people are more beautiful than those belonging to the lower castes.

“Oracular Wisdom” not only internalises Hindu practices like astrology and horoscope, but also represents Brahmins as the people most capable of taking care of

Hindu religious beliefs and practices like horoscope and astrology. Thus, apart from imparting among its young readers inclination towards such beliefs and practices, this story internalises the caste system and attributes the highest caste status to Brahmins. In this story, the high caste status of Brahmins is internalised not only through claims of their ancestry and liturgical scholarship, but also by presenting Brahmins as acquiring even superhuman capabilities by birth because they belong to that caste. Here, a fortune-teller named Annaswami predicts to the Brahmin priest Kuppu Dikshit “he will become the father of a bonny son who will bring him great luck” (58).

The Brahmin priest’s son is born with the gift of prediction, and thus Annaswami’s prediction becomes true. Kuppu Dikshit names his son accordingly; Satyamoorthy, that is, one who is the *Moorthy* or personification of *satya* or truth. His predictions always turn out to be true. He becomes famous, and people come from nearby as well as distant places to see him and to listen to his predictions on different matters.

Finally, the king himself comes to know about Satyamoorthy’s talent, and so he summons both him as well as his father the Brahmin priest to the palace. The king gives to Satyamoorthy three slips of paper with three different questions. Satyamoorthy should foretell the outcome of the situations mentioned in the three questions, and the answers would be read out to the whole court. After Satyamoorthy makes the predictions, the king takes measures towards altering the situations aimed at failing the predictions. However, the king is unable to alter them successfully because of unexpected and unpredictable events taking place against the measures taken by him, and thus, finally, all the three of Satyamoorthy’s predictions come true.

So, the king, as well as the whole court, is highly impressed by his talent. The king rewards him handsomely and appoints him as the royal soothsayer.

This story is a perfect example of *Chandamama's* glorification of a precolonial Hindu society led by pious Brahmins. In the precolonial monarchic society represented in this story, astrology, horoscope and future telling are real, and Brahmins are the people who are capable of and talented in such practices mainly because of their piety and closeness to the gods, as indicated by the fact that Kuppu Dikshit is a priest. Moreover, they are the caste of people specially chosen by the gods for superhuman religious capabilities. Therefore, the Brahmin priest Kuppu Dikshit's son Satyamoorthy is born with the talent of perfect soothsaying. The king appoints Satyamoorthy as the royal soothsayer because of his divine capability in soothsaying, and he is also rewarded handsomely. When the story was introduced to the young Indian readers of 1973, superstition and ardent belief in astrology, horoscope and soothsaying were still at large in the country, even though their sway was gradually declining. Even now, such beliefs are quite common among several Hindus in the country, although at a much lesser scale than the late 20th century India. So, when this story was introduced to young Indian readers of the time, it would have been received more as a realistic depiction of a precolonial Indian society, and not as some mythical tale as would more probably be received by several young Indian readers of the contemporary society. Introducing such a story to such a collective of young Indian readers could have had the effect of instilling in them at least indirectly the notion that as the events of the story, in earlier Indian societies, kings used to be happy to employ Brahmins in high positions in the palace since they used to be divinely talented in one way or the other. The story also implies

that they often acquired such talents by just being born into that caste. Thus, the supremacy of the Brahmin caste is again internalised through this story.



Oracular Wisdom

In a certain city there lived a Priest named Kuppu Dikshit who was very poor. He was married and found it difficult to make both ends meet.

Somehow he managed to eke out a living. Frustrated beyond measure, he sought out a fortune teller named Annaswami and asked him to predict his future.

Annaswami after examining his horoscope opined gravely, "Well, Sir, you will become the father of a bonny soo and he will briog you great luck."

Kuppu Dikshit was not heartened by this statement. He thought his misery would deep- eo with an addition to his family. Some months later, true to Annaswami's prediction,

he became the father of a bonny boy. The fond father christened him Satyamoorthy and reared him up with great care. As the lad grew up, Kuppu Dikshit noticed that he had a special quality. The lad had oracular wisdom and his words proved to be right always. His fame spread and many came to him with their questions and received answers which invariably proved to be correct.

One day, Kuppu Dikshit decided to test the truth of his son's oracles. So he asked, "Son, tell me what I have in mind. Will it endure or depart?"

Satyamoorthy replied, "It will depart." Whereupon the father rejoiced hecause, he had wanted to know whether the

Figure 3 illustrates the Brahmin priest teaching scriptures to his son. *Chandamama* frequently presents such Brahmin characters who are well-versed in scriptures. They are usually described as scholars because of their knowledge of Hindu scriptures. Thus, in these stories, liturgical knowledge is presented as the highest and “true knowledge,” and other realms of knowledge are not attributed the same status. Moreover, Brahmins are presented as the people who deal with the scriptures and as the caste of people most suitable for doing so. Thereby, the precolonial Indian society idealised in *Chandamama* is a casteist society in which each occupation is practised exclusively by the members of a caste according to heredity.

“Trapped” is about a righteous *guru* named Chiranjiva who is saved from the death penalty by the wise king Vallalassena. Chiranjiva is arrested for a murder he has not committed. However, the king strongly feels the *guru* is innocent. The punishment for murder is death by hanging. Chiranjiva stoutly declares he is innocent. The prudent king uses a trick to capture the real culprit. To grant Chiranjiva’s last wish, the king lets him go to set his affairs in order, but on the condition that he should return on the fifteenth day. However, on the fourteenth day, according to the arrangements made by the king, Chiranjiva is kidnapped by some masked men who are the king’s soldiers. They take him to a secret hideout. On the fifteenth day, Chiranjiva’s neighbour comes to the king and says, “Your Majesty, see how Chiranjiva has betrayed your trust. He has run off without a word. I know all about this base fellow” (62).

The king looks at him keenly and remarks, “Ah! You are a responsible citizen, indeed! Now I know who the murderer is. Until we hang the culprit, you must remain here” (62).

From the neighbour's interest to present Chiranjiva as a "base fellow" and to get him caught, the king realises he is probably the real murderer who would have trapped the *guru*. So, secretly the king asks some of his soldiers to keep guard of the neighbour and not to let him escape.

The next morning the king asks the soldiers to bring the neighbour to the place of execution. On seeing the king, the neighbour enquires him anxiously, "Sire, have you caught the murderer? Hang him and make an end of such murderers" (63).

Since the neighbour shows such interest in having Chiranjiva hanged, the king is now sure he is the real murderer and that he has trapped Chiranjiva. The king cross-examines him mercilessly, and the whole story comes out. He had committed the murder and then laid the body in front of Chiranjiva's house to trap him, which was because he had become jealous of Chiranjiva's prosperity and popularity. So, instead of Chiranjiva, the neighbour is hanged. The king rewards Chiranjiva handsomely and sends him off with all honour.

Thus, in this story, the king is presented as very understanding, prudent and patient enough to realise the innocence of Chiranjiva and to get hold of the real culprit. Thus, even though everyone else in the kingdom turns against the innocent *guru*, the monarch, on the other hand, is more efficient and capable than the others to bring out the truth and give justice. Thus, as far as the society represented in this story is concerned, the subjects are fortunate to have such a righteous king who can rule the kingdom with justice and truth. Here, the king's belief in the innocence of Chiranjiva may partly be because he is a scholarly *guru* running a *gurukul*, whom the king does not suspect of committing any crime or even any other sort of foul play, probably because the king himself would have been trained and educated in a *gurukul*. From

his own as well as his peers' experience with *gurus* and *gurukuls*, the king has a high opinion of *gurus* who are usually very wise as well as righteous. This constitutes an idealistic representation of not only the monarchical king but also of the *guru* of the precolonial, feudal society.

“King’s Gift” is about a clever and witty lad named Somnath who impresses the king and gets permanent employment in the palace. According to the advice of his brother and sister-in-law, Somnath goes to the palace to impress the king with his wit on the day of the king’s birthday when the king honoured all scholars who came to him on that day by setting riddles and rewarding those who could solve them. The king is thus presented as an admirer of wit and wisdom, which implies that if he has the talent to admire and appreciate wit and wisdom, he is very witty and wise.

Somnath is just one among several scholars who have arrived to display their knowledge and wit. For the questions and riddles asked by the king, Somnath gives the wittiest and humorous answers that impress not only the king but also everyone else gathered there. The king awards all the scholars with a silken cloth and a gold *mohur*, and he also invites them all to the royal dinner that night.

During dinner time, all the scholars come wearing the new clothes given by the king, except Somnath who comes wearing the same dress he had been wearing earlier. While everyone enjoys the feast greedily, Somnath eats only sparingly. The king notices all this and asks Somnath, “Well, Somnath, why haven’t you worn the new dress I gave you?” (28)

Somnath replies humbly, “Your Majesty, I could wear my new dress today and feel happy about it. However, I can’t wear a new dress every day. Again, I may stuff myself with the royal repast you have served, but that is not my lot in everyday life. I

am far happier with the yoghurt rice to which I am accustomed. After all, a taste for luxuries can be a fatal thing for a poor man like me” (28).

So, the king asks, “What did you do with the gold *mohur* I gave you?” (29)

Somnath replies, “Your Majesty, I have preserved that because I shall give it to my brother who looks after my every want and is like a father to me” (29).

The king is rejoiced at Somnath’s answer and is impressed with his keen sense of responsibility. So, he rewards him with a thousand gold *mohurs* and appoints him to his court.

The king is thus presented not only as a lover of scholarship and wisdom, but also as someone who appreciates qualities like responsibility and gratefulness as displayed by Somnath who intended to give the gold *mohur* to his elder brother rather than keeping it himself, which implies the king has a great sense of responsibility apart from being very witty and scholarly. He is thus presented as a very apt ruler who can rule the kingdom very efficiently through the good qualities that he possesses.

In “Four Friends,” the respective qualities required of people belonging to different occupations are presented as having been inherited from one generation to the next. Since the caste system was primarily based on categorization according to the occupation, by presenting people inheriting the qualities required of them for their occupation, this tale supports the caste system that forced different castes of people to confine to their hereditary occupations.

The story begins by introducing four friends who are respectively the sons of the king, minister, general and merchant. Here, the king, minister and general are affluent upper-caste aristocrats, and the merchant is also a very affluent upper-caste man, even though he may not be an aristocrat. Thus, all the four friends belong to

almost the same social status regarding caste as well as class. However, in the order in which they are introduced, hierarchy is not forgotten, and therefore, first comes the king's son, then the minister's, followed by the general's son and finally the merchant's son. Moreover, even though all the friends are almost equally significant in this tale, the king's son is undeniably the one who leads and often controls the others. They are all classmates at the Royal Academy. After all, the Royal Academy would not have had students coming from the lower castes since people belonging to the lower castes were not allowed to get educated in such academies or *gurukuls*.

After finishing their studies, the four friends set about to see the world. When they reach the land of Jasmine Flowers, the king's son falls in love with the princess of that land and she with him. Here it is carefully and deliberately made sure the king's son falls in love with the princess herself and not any other woman since that would be beneath the status of the prince. However, the princess says to the prince, "Lord, I have three friends; one is the daughter of our General, another the daughter of the Minister, and the third, the daughter of a diamond merchant in our land. My wedding must coincide with theirs. Unless suitors are found for them, I can't marry you" (57).

Thus, the princess' friends are also of the same occupational heredity as that of the prince. So, as expected and foreseen by the reader, the prince tells the princess that his three friends can marry the three friends of the princess according to the occupation of their fathers, and the marriages are celebrated accordingly.

Here, the only couple who choose each other through love is the prince and the princess, while the friends' selection of partners is not their own choice but instigated by the prince and princess. The story does not indicate any discomfort in the mind of the friends regarding the prince and princess' selection of the friends' partners. On

the other hand, the prince and princess, along with the narrative itself, make the reader feel the friends are pleased about the prince and princess' decision regarding all the friends' marriage, which points to three reasons that can be the cause of the friends' total agreement towards the marriage. Firstly, the story presents a precolonial feudal Indian society in which traditionally arranged marriages were usually decided by the parents alone according to caste and class, and the bride or bridegroom hardly ever had the right to choose their partners. However, in the case of the prince and princess and their respective friends, their parents would inevitably be happy about the marriages since the partners belong to the same caste and class, and each couple's fathers have the same occupation, which points to the second reason for the decision of the prince and princess and the friends' agreement: Since they belong to a society in which marriages are conducted based on caste and hereditary occupation, they are, without any hesitancy or second thoughts, immediately ready for the marriage since their fathers practice the same occupation. Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, the friends do not want to speak or act against the wish and decision of the prince and princess. All these portray a precolonial, feudal, casteist and patriarchal Indian society with a power hierarchy in which there was no individual freedom, but everyone was in one way or the other directly controlled by those with more power.

In the story, once the prince succeeds his father as the king, he immediately asks his two friends, the sons of the minister and the general, to succeed to their fathers' occupation. The merchant's son is appointed as Keeper of the Royal Treasury. Thus, even though the merchant was not an aristocrat, his son becomes an aristocrat since he is a loyal and obedient friend to the prince.

Later, the princess and her friends become pregnant simultaneously as though through some divine intervention of the gods who want the heredity to continue without any hindrance as smoothly as possible for these upper-caste Hindus who have been devoutly and “righteously” living according to the norms of the gods as well as of men by following the caste system and hereditary occupation. However, as the four women reach the advanced stages of pregnancy, an eagle comes to the prince and says, “Your Majesty, in a few days four children will be born to you and your friends. However, there is an evil spell on all the four wives, because as little girls they had been guilty of torturing tiny birds. As they rejoice at the sight of their newborn babes, the latter will die. For twelve long years, they will have to endure this spell. After that, it will be lifted” (58).

So, the friends decide to send away their children to some distant place as soon as they are born and bring them back only twelve years later when the spell is lifted. One son is born to each of the four friends. Here it is taken care that sons, and not daughters, are born to the friends since sons were more favourable than daughters in such a society, and sons could easily succeed to the profession of their fathers while daughters could not since all women in such a society were homemakers. Soon after their birth, the four sons are sent away to a distant land where they grow up as “bright young lads.”

After twelve years when it is time to bring back the sons, the king and his friends are faced with a new dilemma: Since the sons were sent away soon after their birth, the parents would not be able to recognize which one among the four is their son. Even the children had been brought up in total ignorance of their parentage. So, the king seeks the advice of the former minister, that is, one of the four sons’ grandfathers. The ex-minister says, “A knotty problem indeed. However, there is a

way. Let us test their natural abilities. Each lad must undergo a severe test to prove himself. In this way, we can easily find out something about their inherited traits.”

According to the plan of the minister, an older man goes to the *guru* who taught the boys, and he informs the *guru* about the king’s instruction to send the boys one by one to the palace accompanied by four different older men. So, one of the boys is sent with the first older man. As they pass through a forest, a dacoit ambushes them, but the lad fights him bravely and disarms him and says to him, “I forgive you for your crime. Go free for this time, but if you persist in your crime, you’ll be severely punished” (59).

The dacoit runs away, and the two continue their journey. When the minister hears what happened, he says the lad is the royal heir to the throne. The minister can thus recognize the lad because of the latter’s bravery and martial fervour in fighting and defeating the dacoit accompanied by his nobility as seen through his act of forgiving the dacoit for the meanwhile.

Then another lad sets out with another older man. As they pass through the forest, a robber way-lays them. The lad says to the robber, “Of what use is it to waylay us? We have no money on us. You should steal only from those who possess something” (59). At these words, the robber leaves and the two reach the palace safely. After listening about the events in the forest, the old minister leads the boy to his son, the incumbent minister, saying that the boy is his grandson. The minister has deciphered this from the lad’s wisdom and shrewdness suiting an efficient minister.

As the next boy passes through the forest with another older man, they too are about to be attacked by a dacoit, but even before the dacoit has reached them, the boy is keen enough to spot him. Therefore, he asks the older man to hide, and he climbs a tree to prevent getting detected by the dacoit. When the two reach the palace and

narrate the events, the minister declares he is the son of the keeper of the royal treasury, which is because, during the emergency, the lad exhibited keen observation and the ability to make a fast decision to overcome the impending peril; qualities that are required for careful handling of wealth.

The dacoit also ambushes the last lad, but he fights the dacoit so bravely and efficiently that he runs away without continuing the fight. The lad says, “If only I had caught the robber, I would have hauled him before the King” (60). On hearing about this, the minister declares the boy is the son of the army general, which is because the boy was not only valiant and brave to fight the dacoit, but moreover, his loyalty to the king is evident from his statement that he would have hauled the dacoit before the king if he had been caught.

Thus, the old minister’s plan works out perfectly well in the story. All the lads, like their fathers and grandfathers, have perfectly inherited the qualities of their ancestors that enable them to practice an occupation hereditarily. By presenting such a turn of incidences in this story, it supports the *varna* system that divided people into different castes based on their occupation and prescribed specific occupations for people belonging to different castes.

The events in the story create among its young readers an impression that the kind of qualities as described in the story are usually inherited from one generation to the next, and thereby creates in them an impression that, as practised in the story, it was wise of precolonial feudal societies to practice occupations according to heredity and caste.

“What Price a Dream” is about a lad named Shanmugam who prospers by selling his dreams.

While Shanmugam's elder brothers toil hard, he does nothing but spends most of his time dreaming of this and that. One day his mother, vexed at seeing him idling away, says to him sharply, "Why, you good-for-nothing fellow, you waste your time so? Why don't you go into the world and earn your living?" (61)

Shanmugam replies grandly, "Mother, you worry too much. Don't you know that I am the dreamer of dreamers? No other pleasure can equal that" (61).

Annoyed at this, his mother says, "Why, you waster, feeding you is a lot of waste. Of what use are your dreams? Can you turn them into money?" (61)

Shanmugam is angered and saddened by this and says, "Very well, I shan't bother you any more with my presence. I'll go out and sell my dreams to those who'll buy them. I'll become rich and you won't be able to scold me then" (61).

So, he leaves the village and goes to the manor of a wealthy landlord. He sees the landlord coming out since he is about to go somewhere. Shanmugam stops him on the way and says to him, "My Lord, my name is Shanmugam. I am a maker of Dreams. I have come to sell you my dreams. I hope you'll buy them and be benefited" (61).

The landlord is surprised by this. He has seen several eccentrics in his life but none like this fool who offers to sell his dreams. However, since he is a kind man, he says to the lad, "Dreams for sale, eh! What price do you charge for a dream?" (62)

Shanmugam is overjoyed at this quick response and says he wanted to be fed well and he wished to get paid at least twenty *paise* per dream. Laughingly the landlord agrees to these demands.

Here, the landlord is referred and addressed to as "Lord" with capital L, thus presenting him as a respectable and respected person. Moreover, it is also said he is a kind man, and therefore, even though Shanmugam's offer is very eccentric and

seemingly useless, he listens to him patiently, and he also agrees to feed and pay the lad for selling his dreams.

The landlord had a son and a daughter, but he lost the daughter in a fair a few years earlier. To forget his sorrow over the loss of his daughter, he indulges in pastimes that give him some mental peace, which include whimsical and sometimes eccentric entertainments or engagements like that offered by Shanmugam.

However, it turns out to the amazement and contentment of the landlord that Shanmugam's dreams come true and fortunate for him. Therefore, he asks Shanmugam to stay for another day and dream some more.

After spending another night at the manor, Shanmugam says to the lord, "Sir, I dreamed that two miles from your house lies a temple. Close by is a solitary cottage. An old dame and her lovely daughter live there. I went there, and the old woman asked me to marry her daughter. I agreed, and we married straight away" (63).

The landlord goes in the direction indicated by Shanmugam and finds an older woman sitting by the door of her house near the temple. The landlord asks her whether a young, unmarried woman was living with her. The older woman agrees and says she had found her wandering about at a fair unable to find her parents, and so she had rescued her, and she has been living with the older woman ever since. The landlord is astonished to hear this, and he says eagerly, "I too had a daughter who was lost in a fair. She has a mole on her right cheek" (64).

The older woman goes inside and returns with a pretty lass. She has a mole on her right cheek. The landlord is overwhelmed with joy as he recognizes her as his daughter. He brings both his daughter as well as the older woman to live with him.

As the dreamer's dreams have all come true, the landlord has no hesitation in marrying his daughter to Shanmugam. Thus, Shanmugam's last dream also comes true.

Thus, through his dreams, Shanmugam earns wealth, a wife and a secure haven.

In this story, even though Shanmugam makes his fortune through his superhuman talent of dreaming the future, he could not have accomplished that without the support of the benevolent and generous landlord. Thus, the landlord is presented as someone who is always open and supportive of new talents. He is presented as a lord who can be of great support to his vassals, as with the case of Shanmugam who benefits from his services to the landlord, which is particularly prominent when one of Shanmugam's dreams is taken into consideration: This dream leads the lord to find a treasure hoard of gold coins. The landlord is so overjoyed by this that he gives to Shanmugam fifty paise for this dream even though he had asked for only twenty. While such a dream brings enormous fortune to the landlord, the dreamer vassal Shanmugam who is entirely responsible for the landlord's fortune, claims only a very meagre payment of just twenty paise. However, by the end of the story, Shanmugam's last dream turns out to be fortunate not only for the landlord but also for Shanmugam as well. Finally, according to his dream, Shanmugam marries the landlord's daughter and thereby inherits great wealth too. Thus, this story is about a submissive vassal and a benevolent landlord, and how both benefit through their relationship. Thereby, this story implicitly supports the old feudal system in precolonial India.

In "The Lost Prince," King Vijaysingh and his queen are killed by a soldier according to the orders of the king's brother Jaysingh so that the latter can become

king. Even though he does this out of his greed for power, Jaysingh had and has much love for his demised brother. Other than the soldier who was appointed to kill the old king, no one else knows Jaysingh is the murderer of his brother, except Jaysingh's wife Roopmathi who happened to overhear the conversation between Jaysingh and the soldier when Jaysingh appointed him to kill the king.

Even though Jaysingh thus becomes the king by killing his brother, he rules the kingdom very efficiently and righteously. During Jaysingh's absence from the kingdom, the queen gives birth to twin sons. Even though the queen is highly delighted at their birth, she is immediately confronted by a fear: She remembers how her husband had ordered to kill his brother just for the sake of kingship despite all the love he had for him. So, Roopmathi fears when her twin sons grew up, they would be overcome by greed for kingship and power, and thereby one of them may kill the other or else both may become victims of each other. So, with great sorrow, she calls one of her faithful maids and asks her to give one of the sons to anyone that the maid saw fit, along with a jar full of gold *mohurs*. The queen also asks the maid never to tell her where the child is since that would cause her to try to visit him often, and that may reveal the truth. The maid promises to do as instructed.

The son in the palace is named as Vijay. Vijay grows up into a bright and strong young man capable of mastering both the sciences as well as martial arts at great speed. As Vijay reaches the age of sixteen, during a festival around the palace, the king announces he would like to see how many young men in the kingdom can equal or excel Vijay in strength and the art of fighting. Some young men come forward on the scheduled day. However, far from excelling Vijay, none of them can even equal him in combat. Those who show some efficiency are recruited to the

army. Vijay exclaims, “Is there nobody in such a big crowd who can equal me in anything?” (14)

At once a young man jumps into the arena and challenges Vijay to fencing. They fight for a long time, but neither of them can defeat the other. They exhibit equal strength and martial talent, and more surprising is that the young challenger looks very much like the prince. As the fight continues like that for quite some time, the king tells them to stop and asks the young challenger what his name is and who his parents are. He replies, “My lord, my name is Madhav. Moreover, since all the subjects are your children, you can take me as your son!” (14)

The queen is by now sure Madhav is her son she had sent away with the maid. She embraces Madhav and addresses her as her son, tears rolling down her eyes. Soon the maid steps forward and narrates the whole story. Instead of giving away the child to anyone else, the maid had brought him up herself. The king sighs and asks the queen why she had done so.

The queen whispers, “Because I knew the fate of your brother!” (15)

The king sits silently for some time with his head bowed in shame. Then he stands up, embraces Madhav, and says to the queen, “You have nothing to fear. I will, in due course, divide my vast kingdom in two parts so that both your sons can be kings. There will be no scope for a rivalry between the two” (15).

However, later it turns out that the king does not have to divide the kingdom since Madhav is not willing to become a ruler. He passes his time studying the scriptures and later becomes a mendicant.

This story portrays hereditary inheritance of Kshatriya qualities. Even though one of the princes grows up in the palace and the other one grows up elsewhere, both are equally good in martial vigour and fighting abilities since they are Kshatriya princes

who, according to the *varna* system, are expected to inherit such qualities by birth itself and not through training or practice which are just modes to perfect their inborn talents. The fact that one of the princes possesses such qualities despite not living in the palace is ample support for such hereditary inheritance. Apart from martial vigour, both the princes are highly capable of studying the scriptures and are well versed in them, and the son who was living away is so well-versed and interested in the scriptures that he decides not to become a king but rather a mendicant. In precolonial India, apart from Brahmins, Kshatriyas were also entitled to study the Hindu scriptures. *Chandamama* usually portrays only Brahmins as well-versed in the scriptures like the *Vedas*, and if ever non-Brahmins are so, then they are Kshatriya kings. In this story, the princes are presented as very quick and efficient in studying both the martial arts as well as the scriptures since they have already inherited such abilities, and therefore, there is further need of only polishing and perfecting those inborn talents. Thus, the ability to learn the martial arts as well as the scriptures is presented as hereditarily inherited, which implies people belonging to the lower castes cannot be entitled to study the martial arts or the scriptures since they have not inherited the qualities prerequisite for the practice of such arts. On the other hand, according to such a discourse, if the lower caste people are appointed and forced to confine to menial hereditary jobs, that is because the qualities they have inherited make them fit for that kind of occupations. All this supports the precolonial, feudal, Brahmanical concept that the proper running of the society required people belonging to the different castes to practice their traditional occupations exclusively. Even though the glorification of upper-caste Hindus in several stories in *Chandamama* implicitly supports sanskritization as a means for upward mobility, through some stories in this comic, there is the implication it is never actually

possible for a lower caste individual to ever become as perfectly sanskritized as an upper-caste individual. This is implied through some stories that present lower caste protagonists as foils to upper-caste protagonists in other stories.

“The False Mendicant” is about a fake mendicant who is exposed by a clever man. The protagonist is a penniless man named Dolu, who acts as a mendicant and makes money by deceiving the highly superstitious people of a city called Andhapur. However, the fake mendicant is exposed by a clever man called Bolu, who had been considered as the village idiot. The natives give a good beating to Dolu and chase him away from the city.

As described through many examples, in several stories in *Chandamama*, the protagonists are often Brahmins who are highly devout and pious. Some of them are wise mendicants or advisers to the king. In some of these stories, Brahmins are even capable of superhuman feats through divine intervention that can be called superstitious. Moreover, Brahmins are usually very good men: Apart from being devoted and dutiful towards the gods who grant them blessings, they are also very benevolent and helpful towards fellow human beings. However, if ever any stories talk about fake mendicants, then these frauds are never Brahmins, and the caste of the protagonist is not mentioned.

Thus, in the society represented in this comic, Brahmins are usually pious devotees who are mendicants or advisers and ministers to the king; Kshatriyas are chivalrous warriors who are kings, generals or soldiers, and the middle caste usually constitutes prosperous merchants who are often in good terms with the king and the aristocracy. Therefore, in such a society, when a man is not indicated as belonging to any caste, he probably belongs to a lower caste.

Thus, in *Chandamama*, people belonging to lower castes are sometimes presented as foils to upper-caste people. Through the glorification of Brahmin mendicants and the representation of fake mendicants coming from lower caste backgrounds, *Chandamama* implicitly gives the idea that only Brahmins can become and serve as true mendicants. According to the narrative of *Chandamama*, this is because by belonging to that caste, Brahmins are rightfully endowed with the right as well as the requisite talents to practice their occupations as *gurus*, ministers, advisors, mendicants and soothsayers, which indicates *Chandamama*'s implicit support for the caste system, and it instilled such casteist beliefs and feelings among its young and thereby gullible readers.

In this comic, such casteism is implied and instilled more strongly by emphasizing the goodness of upper-caste people like Brahmins and Kshatriyas; by presenting both as acting for the welfare of the subjects, and by representing Brahmins as benevolent and Kshatriyas as noble. On the other hand, as with the case of Dolu, "The False Mendicant," lower caste people are presented as deceitful and greedy. This supports the caste hierarchy and implies that if upper-caste people possess all the better qualities and vice versa, Brahmins and Kshatriyas should be rightfully appointed as the rulers and caretakers of such a society.

Conclusion

Thus, this chapter has looked at *Chandamama*'s propagation of Hindu spirituality through stories that talk about ardent devotees of Hindu gods getting blessed by these gods. These devotees are presented as exceptionally good men who through their good deeds, get rewarded by the god whom they worship, or they attain salvation. The gods who are presented in such stories are mainstream Hindu gods. As seen through the changes made to the story of the woodcutter in the later retelling of the

tale, synonymous with the Hindu nationalist discourse, *Chandamama* tries to bring local, regional and minor religious beliefs and practices under mainstream Hinduism.

Chandamama glorifies Hindu temples as well as upper-caste Hindus like Brahmins and Kshatriyas who are the protagonists in several stories in it, and the events in these narratives induce faithful Hindus to admire and worship Hindu gods. Brahmins are often presented as engaged in engraving, reading or teaching Hindu scriptures. Such narratives proudly claim that Brahmins of the past were often engaged in engrossing and studying verses and scriptures, and they glorify not only Brahmins but also Hindu verses and scriptures. Thus, it supports a *Veda* centric society in which only Brahmins and Kshatriyas had the right to engage with the scriptures while those who belonged to the lower castes were prohibited from reading the scriptures or even studying Sanskrit. *Chandamama* often portrays and glorifies massive, renowned temples and also talks about highly devoted and talented Brahmins who support and strengthen such establishments.

Chandamama portrays “Indian culture” as “Hindu culture,” which is the Hindu nationalist way of looking at Hindu culture. According to the Hindu nationalist discourse in *Chandamama*, Hindus can treat people who are not Hindus by birth or practice and culture as foreign or as the “other.”

Brahmins are presented as very devoted and respectful towards Hindu gods. Such reverence for Hindu gods on the part of glorified and “good” Brahmins is illustrative to young readers of how they also should, like such “great and pious Brahmins,” love and respect Hindu gods with humility. Thus, by presenting him as always very keen on performing rites, the Brahmin’s exclusive right to priesthood is internalized. Through stories about Hindu gods helping and blessing Brahmins, *Chandamama* elicits among its readers respect for Brahmins, apart from inducing

love and worship towards Hindu gods. Brahmins are often presented as divine, which is what the Brahmanical caste system always tried to do. Brahmins are presented as highly talented and devoted, and there are descriptions of divine interventions taking place in their lives and activities. In such narratives, history and myth are fused in such a way that the myth involving the god's interference is historicized. Such historicization is achieved by conjoining mythical incidents along with historical events. Brahmins are often presented in a divine light. They are frequently presented as reading or writing scriptures. Because for the precolonial Indian society depicted in *Chandamama*, liturgical knowledge was the highest form of knowledge, such portrayals of Brahmins dealing with scriptures is indicative of the comic's belief and interest in presenting them as the caste of people most suited for and experienced in dealing with "true knowledge." Thereby, they are presented as the real scholars, and according to such a discourse, people belonging to other castes are not as suitable and talented as the Brahmin to deal with the scriptures or "true knowledge."

Very often, *Chandamama* presents Brahmins and Kshatriyas as inheriting their caste qualities. Kshatriyas are presented as very good in martial vigour and fighting abilities since they are the caste of people who, according to the *Varna* system, are expected to inherit such qualities by birth itself and not through training or practice which are just modes to perfect their inborn talents. *Chandamama* usually portrays only Brahmins as well-versed in the scriptures like the *Vedas*, and if ever non-Brahmins are so, then they are Kshatriya kings. In *Chandamama*, Kshatriya princes are presented as very quick and efficient in studying both the martial arts as well as the scriptures since they have already inherited such abilities, and, therefore, there is further need of only polishing and perfecting those inborn talents. Thus, the ability to learn the martial arts as well as the scriptures is presented as hereditarily inherited,

which implies people belonging to the lower castes cannot be entitled to study the martial arts or the scriptures since they have not inherited the qualities that are prerequisite for the practice of such arts. On the other hand, according to such a discourse, if the lower caste people are appointed and forced to confine to menial hereditary jobs, then that is so because the qualities they have inherited make them fit for only that kind of occupations. All this supports the precolonial, feudal, Brahmanical concept that the proper running of the society required people belonging to the different castes to practice their own traditional and hereditary occupations exclusively.

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Figures

Fig. 1. "Legends of India: Krishna Came to the Poet's Rescue." *Chandamama*, June 1975, p. 39.

Fig. 2. "A Family of Pandits." *Chandamama*, July 1955, p. 56.

Fig. 3. "Oracular Wisdom." *Chandamama*, June 1973, p. 58.

Chapter 3

“Chivalrous Hindu Warriors” and “Hostile Muslim Invaders” in *Chandamama*

This chapter looks at how *Chandamama* portrays Muslims as a threat to the “Hindu Indian nation” through narratives of battles between “chivalrous Hindu warrior kings” and “deceitful and ruthless Muslim invaders.”

The last chapter looked at how *Chandamama* propagates Hindu spirituality and glorifies upper-caste Hindu characters and thereby internalises the caste hierarchy, which is in tune with specific versions of the Hindu nationalist discourse that believes in caste hierarchies and respecting Brahmins. Thus, the protagonist in several stories in *Chandamama* is an upper-caste Hindu character; either a pious Brahmin or else a noble Kshatriya king. Thereby, just like the broader discourse of Hindu nationalism, the Indian society as represented in *Chandamama* has upper-caste Hindus like Brahmins and Kshatriyas at the centre, and this society is a casteist society that follows the *Varna* system of social hierarchy. Apart from such casteist nature of mainstream Hindu nationalism, a more prominent and explicitly declared feature of the Hindu nationalist discourse is it considers non-Hindu religions and their followers as foreign and therefore demands them to be submissive to the “Hindu nation, tradition and culture.” Non-Hindu religions and their followers are marginalised in *Chandamama*. This is particularly significant in the representation of Muslims who are presented as hostile through historical narratives of battles between “chivalrous Hindu warrior kings” and ignoble Muslim invaders, which forms the area of discussion in this chapter.

The Hindu nationalist nature of *Chandamama* is visible not only through its glorification of a precolonial, Hindu, feudal Indian society ruled by Kshatriya kings and led by pious Brahmins but also through the comic's hostile representation of Muslims and Islam that has always been presented as the opposite other of Hinduism by Hindu nationalists. According to this discourse, Islam is a foreign religion that was brought to India through conquest and forced conversions. Moreover, Hindu nationalists often refer to the demolition of several Hindu temples by Muslim rulers and the construction of mosques at those sites. They have supplied a list of more than 3000 sites across the country where, they say, Muslim emperors usurped Hindu ground. Even the Taj Mahal has been claimed to be built by a pre-Islamic Hindu movement and then being appropriated by Muslim aggressors, rather than being built by a Mughal emperor to commemorate his wife (Misra 2000, Smith 1993).

Authors like Ishwar Prasad and Subedar have gone to the extent of suggesting that since "Islam entered India at the head of an Army, its soldiers had the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other," the seeds of hatred were sown right from the advent of Islam in India (Mehta 8 – 9).

Riots between Hindus and Muslims became prevalent in India after Independence, even though their frequency and strength changed with time and place. A significant reason behind the rise of Hindu nationalism was this quarrel between Hindus and Muslims.

Hindu-Muslim riots and anti-Muslim programmes have been endemic in India since Independence. Their frequency and intensity have fluctuated from time to time and place to place. Hindu nationalism theoretically exists independently

of Hindu-Muslim antagonisms, but in practice has thrived only when that opposition is explicitly or implicitly present (Brass 6 – 7).

In specific periods, Hindu-Muslim rioting occurred in what is commonly referred to as great “waves”: 1923 – 1927, after the collapse of the non-cooperation/Khilafat movement against the British rule in India in which Hindu and Muslim religious and political organisations and groups worked together; 1946 – 1948, when massive waves of rioting and massacres produced, accompanied and followed the partition of India and the consequent formation of the states of India and Pakistan; and the series of riots that occurred between 1989 and 1993 during the Ayodhya movement.

From *India's Immortal Comics* by Karline McLain, I would like to refer to the opinion of a reader of *Amar Chitra Katha* since it was somewhat similar to *Chandamama* in its representation of “India's tradition and glory”:

I have read all about the Muslim saints and invaders. They have been represented perfectly. It can't get any better than this. I don't think a single finger has been pointed at *Amar Chitra Katha* by any of the religious minorities; on the contrary, they have upheld it. This is true secularism. This is truth. I love and cherish every single one of them; from the story of Padmini who sacrificed her life, the tyranny of the Muslim rulers who roughed up ancient and glorious India, the heroes of battles, the great saints and pious sages of this great land, the numerous, wonderful stories of ancient Indian mythology, the freedom fighters of India, to the gods and goddesses of India. A single word description to all these is “India,” and that's what I love about these books (McLain 11).

One of the major reasons for the conflict between Hinduism and Islam was the destruction of many Hindu temples by the Muslim rulers. They also built mosques and other constructions in the same locations where the Hindu temples had stood. In the modern era, these incidents from the past triggered antagonistic feeling among Hindus against Muslims. Many Hindu scholars believe that Islam and Christianity are alien to the soil of India since they have come from outside through the foreign invaders. They also view Buddhism and Sikhism as offshoots of Hinduism. This viewpoint leads them to support the argument that it is legitimate for Hindus to try to recapture their past glory by any means even if it involves violence. The violence can be directed against the believers of these foreign religions or their places of worship! Thus, this theory views Islam and Christianity as foreign elements that have to be purged out of the country. The fight against these foreign elements can be equated to the fight against the British Empire that brought the country under their feet. Thus, this is a war to liberate the nation from the clutches of the foreign invaders. The scholars belonging to this stream of thought imagine a pure Hindu culture devoid of any foreign influence including that of the Muslim, Christian or Western.

The Ayodhya movement created martyrs, especially after the killing of 16 Hindus in Ayodhya in 1990, who were then portrayed in a grossly exaggerated and fantastic manner as the latest in a long series of martyrs to the cause of the removal of the defiling mosque from its place in the Hindu town of Ayodhya on the allegedly sacred ground of the god, Ram. This movement was also accompanied throughout north India by deliberate provocations directed against Muslims, whose effect was certain to bring violence upon them, as it did massively in many cities and towns in northern and western India between 1989 and 1993 (Brass 8).

The book titled *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them*, by Arun Shourie, et al. can give valuable insights to the present context. The text endorses the view that the foreign invasion did destroy the Hindu culture. It testifies that due to the Muslim invasion, many of the Hindu temples were converted into mosques. It views Hindus as the original habitants of India. People belonging to other religions are foreigners and thus non-Indians. It supports the claim that Hindus have a legitimate right to reclaim their land from the clutches of the foreign religions and they can do this at any cost including the destruction of mosques and churches in order to rebuild Hindu temples.

We Hindus have become a timid race, almost a cowardly race. We lack the courage of our convictions. Some of us don't even have any convictions and have been trying to hide our shame under high-sounding but empty phrases like secularism. For the last so many centuries, the history of the Hindus has been created by non-Hindus, first the Moghuls, then the British. Even today, the Hindus are being denied their right to write their own history. . . Small-minded people like Namboodiripad or editors of Indo-Anglian papers who bring out special editions at Christmas time but never on Diwali, will not understand this, because they do not know Indian history. If the British were foreigners, so were the Moghuls, and so is everything they left behind. We have taken over old British firms and Indianized them. Surely, if we can do all that, we can also take over their churches and cathedrals, as also those of other conquerors that preceded them. We have not done that, but I do not see why not. . . You cannot have one law for others, just because they happen to be in a minority and another for the majority because it happens to be too generous or too timid to fight back. (Dubashi 1990, 28 – 9)

In the backdrop of this discourse, *Chandamama* can be read as a text supporting the claims of Hindu nationalism. It shows a tendency to project the Hindu culture as the only authentic Indian culture. Islam features only in the stories from the “Middle East” or West Asia. If at all any Muslim characters appear in the stories happening in India, they are projected as a threat to the Indian culture, its monuments and devotees.

Chandamama contains several stories on battles between Hindu and Muslim rulers. In these stories, while the Hindu ruler is presented as a brave and noble warrior who always follows the proper conduct of warfare, the Muslim “invader” is presented as deceitful and cunning. The brave Hindu ruler is so valiant in battle that he is always victorious unless defeated through deception and foul play. Therefore, the deceitful and ignoble Muslim “invaders” defeat the Hindu ruler not through valour, but deception and cunningness.

In “historical narratives” of wars between “chivalrous Hindu warriors” and “deceitful Muslim invaders,” *Chandamama* often historicises myths or historical details without enough authenticity. Often this happens when it exaggerates or otherwise ignores certain details to lead the reader along a certain path. Hayden White describes how historiography is itself essentially a fiction-making operation since the historian can include or exclude certain details to make the reader look at the whole event from a certain perspective. This is what has been done in the “historical narratives” in *Chandamama*. These narratives either historicise myth or else mythicise history in such a way that the reader is made to think from a Hindu viewpoint and look at other religions as foreign, which is significant in the representation of Islam which is presented as hostile and as a threat to Hindus and Hindustan.

The representation of hostile Muslim “invaders” in *Chandamama* cannot be taken for granted, especially because Hindu nationalists have frequently used the same historiographical method for deriving its fundamental argument that Islam is a foreign religion. Therefore, Muslims are expected to be open towards and accept and be submissive towards Hindu or Indian culture. The discourse of Hindu nationalism has always thrived by instilling unity among mainstream Hindus after generating fear towards the Islamic “other” through frequent references to the destruction of Hindu temples and the construction of mosques at those sites, by talking about the forceful conversion of Hindus to Islam by Muslim rulers, and through frequent reminding of battles between “brave and noble Hindu warriors” and “deceitful Muslim invaders.” The Ayodhya dispute is the best example for how such claims of Hindu property finally led to brutal violence. “The unfolding of events in Ayodhya showed how a myth was being transformed through the introduction of new ideas, new values and new stories and how this transformation has occurred within a structure of mythic discourse rather than outside it. This “mythic discourse” has been propped up by reference to “true history” and “authentic accounts” and has been aimed at connecting the Hindutva version of Hinduism to Indian history and Indian national identity” (Kinnvall 147).

“The Shrine of Somanath” is a historical narrative in *Chandamama* about the Somanath shrine which was thrice destroyed by Muslim rulers and rebuilt each time by Hindu “devotees.” Thus, this historical narrative in *Chandamama* is about the repetitive destruction of a “holy” Hindu temple by the “fanatic and unsecular Muslim invaders,” and the reconstructions of the temple by the “ardent Hindu devotees” every time after its destruction by the “enemy Muslim rulers.” It begins as follows, “Once upon a time the river Saraswati flowed into the sea at the place famous in our

epics as Prabhasa. There stands the shrine of Somanath – Lord of the Moon – who is none other than Shiva” (65). Here it is said that Somanath means “Lord of the Moon” and that this lord is “none other than Shiva.” Here, by using the phrase “none other than Shiva,” Shiva is presented as a very familiar figure who should invoke joy in the mind of the reader.

“Here a temple had been built to Lord Shiva over 2000 years ago” (65). The Hindu god is referred to as “Lord Shiva” with great respect, and not just as “Shiva.”

“It had been rebuilt twice before the 10th century. Then, in 1026, Mahmud of Ghazni raided it. Fifty thousand people sacrificed themselves in a bid to protect the temple” (65). Thus, emphasis is placed upon the 50000 devotees’ sacrifice of their lives to protect the temple from getting destroyed by the Muslims.

“But Mahmud plundered and brought the temple to the ground. A new temple was built which was again destroyed at the order of Allaud-din Khilji in the 13th century. Over the ruins was built a temple again. Again it was destroyed at the order of Aurungzeb. Again a new temple was built” (65).

“Thus the monument represents the invincible spirit of the devotees” (65).

The focus of this narrative is upon two groups of people; the fanatic and unsecular Muslim rulers who destroy the Somanath temple thrice, and the Hindu devotees who have an “invincible spirit” that drives them to rebuild the temple every time after it gets destroyed by the Muslims. Finally, it is said that “the monument represents the invincible spirit of the devotees,” indicating it was the spirit and unity of the Hindu devotees that enabled them to rebuild the temple each time and defend themselves against the Muslims and prevent further destruction of the temple. This statement is an invocation to Hindus in the country to unify so that they can defend themselves

against potential threats posed by other communities like the Muslims who had in the past destroyed several Hindu temples and other structures. This narrative is thus in tune with other texts like *Hindu Temples and What Happened to Them?* that try to instil Hindu nationalism by talking about the destruction of Hindu temples and other significant Hindu structures by Muslim rulers and the construction of mosques and similar structures at those sites.

“Producing a single historical version has been vital for the assignation of meaning to Ayodhya as a sacred site and for signifying oppositional Hindu (Ram) and Muslim (Babur) identities” (Kinnvall 149). Such juxtapositioning of Ram and Babur has been supported by several romanticised myths beginning with the pre-Muslim period. There are such myths that talk about a pre-Muslim period as a time of wealth and development, and as having high levels of cultural and intellectual achievements when there were several temples all around. There are myths about Ayodhya as a land of milk and honey, having been brought from heaven to earth. For many Hindu nationalists who have great longing towards such an “idealistic” Hindu mythical past, such peaceful times were overthrown by the invasions of the Muslims who brought death and destruction. In such narratives, Muslim “invaders” are archetypal villains, and Hindu rulers are heroes. “Attempts by historians to prove otherwise, through their insistence that Shivaji employed Muslims in his army or that Akbar’s commander was a Rajput king, does little to refute such myths as long as they remain within the framework of mythical discourse” (Kinnvall 149).

According to the Hindu nationalist discourse, like how the British were foreigners who had to be driven away from the country for India to gain independence, the Muslims are also foreigners who ought to be submissive to a Hindu India where the Hindus are hospitable enough to treat the Muslims as guests

and not as enemies. Such feelings began to emerge right from the time when Indian nationalism began to emerge because of British colonialism.

The emergent popular discourse of India as Bharat sought to inscribe the imagined nation within a potentially universalistic framework of an idealised space-time that was understood as outside of and temporally before colonial space. However, at the same moment, it defined, along the lines of spatiotemporal and cultural purity, what the imagined core of the nation was to preserve it against contamination from both the colonial present and the particularistic foreign body of the Muslim. This territorial nativist understanding of nationhood, rooted in the historically specific reworking of conceptions of space and time wrought by the contradictory experience of colonial space, empowered the hierarchical and relational elaboration of the interlinked categories of Hindu, Muslim, and India as Bharat (Goswami 167).

Popular cultural productions like comics, television and cinema have always played a significant role in invoking such religious sentiments (Kinnvall 2006, van der Veer 2003, Baccheta 2000, Jaffrelot 1998). Comics have played a significant role in this process (Sreenivas 2010, McLain 2009, Chandra 2008, Nayar 2006).

“The Fall of the Lion’s Fort” is about a historical incident that has been hailed as a landmark in the Hindu nationalist historiography of Hindu-Muslim conflict. The protagonist of this narrative is Shivaji’s trusted, valiant General Tanaji Malusare, who, along with Shivaji, has been hailed as a hero and saviour of Hindus and Hinduism, especially in Maharashtra, and the incident is the Marathas’ “brave and valorous” recapture of the Simhagad fort from the Mughals.

This narrative begins as follows, “Upon a hill-top of the Sahyadri range stood Simhagad or the Lion’s Fort. The Mughals had captured it from the Marathas” (60). Thus, initially, the narrative makes it clear it is about a fort that the Muslim Mughals had captured from the Hindu Marathas. In this narrative, as is the case with many other such narratives as well, the Marathas represent Hindus, and the Mughals represent Muslims. This is because the very discourse of Hindu nationalism was founded upon such historical tales of how Muslim emperors usurped Hindu ground (Misra 2000, Smith 1993).

The narrative continues as follows, “Shivaji, the great Maratha hero, then lived in the fort of Pratapgarh” (60). The fort of Pratapgarh was one of the principal residences of Shivaji. It was also an important and famous site of battle for ownership between the Marathas and Muslim rulers. “One morning, his mother, Jijabai, after her worship, looked through the window. At a distance was seen Simhagad. Suddenly a thought flashed in her mind” (60).

“Shivaji, then somewhat unwell, passed his time in relaxation. That afternoon, when he sat down to play chess with his mother, she asked, ‘My son! What will you give me if you are defeated in the game?’ ‘Whatever you wish!’ promised the smiling Shivaji” (60).

“Shivaji was defeated in the game. ‘What would you have, mother?’ he asked indulgently. Jijabai pronounced gravely, ‘My son! I desire to have Simhagad!’” (61)!

“Even the mighty Shivaji was awe-struck, for Simhagad was no easy trophy! However, Shivaji had already promised to give whatever his mother would demand!” (61)

“There was only one hero who could dare to attack Simhagad. He was Tanaji Malusare” (61). Tanaji Malusare was one of Shivaji’s most valiant military leaders who has been dramatically glorified by mainstream historiographies.

Shivaji sent for Tanaji. “Tanaji’s son was going to marry. However, Tanaji left the party and galloped forth to meet his master” (61).

“When Tanaji heard about Shivaji’s promise to his mother, he did not hesitate for a moment, but chose a band of thousand valiant soldiers and marched towards Simhagad in a night, braving a rain” (61).

“Tanaji assembled his soldiers at the rear side of the fort and directed Yashwanti, Shivaji’s trained monitor lizard, to climb the rock, with a rope tied to its trunk. The faithful lizard reached the top and tied the rope to a tree” (62).

The soldiers began climbing with the help of the strong rope. They worked very quietly so that no one in the fort came to know about it until three hundred soldiers had reached the top.

However, while climbing the wall of the fort, a Maratha soldier slipped down. The sound woke up the guards. The guards alerted their soldiers. However, those who had crossed the wall opened the gate.

Soldiers of the fort rushed to fight with the invaders. “They let loose a ferocious elephant, famous as Chandravally, to create scare among the Marathas” (63). Tanaji instantly jumped onto its back and led it into the Mughal army before killing it.

Seven hundred Maratha soldiers were still below the hill. “It would have been impossible to capture the fort with only three hundred men against the fort’s large

number of soldiers. However, Tanaji fought with unprecedented courage and tact till the fort fell to his hands!” (63)

“But Tanaji did not live to rejoice in the victory” (63). Upon seeing Tanaji’s dead body, Shivaji said with tears, “I got the *gad* (fort), but lost my *Simha* (Lion)!” (63)

This narrative, from the beginning till the end, is narrated from the perspective of the Marathas who are hailed as heroes while the Mughals are presented as villainous. It is narrated in such a way that the reader empathises with the Marathas. Such empathy is instilled in the reader not only by portraying the Marathas as fighting for a just cause but also by making the reader more familiar with the Maratha heroes. In this narrative, the Maratha heroes are Shivaji and Tanaji who are elaborately glorified in Hindu nationalist and Maratha nationalist historiographies as chivalrous Hindu warriors. They are made more familiar to the reader through the description of their personal affairs. Shivaji is brought close to the reader by mentioning his relationship with his mother, Jijabai, who has often been hailed as his mentor. It is said in the beginning of the narrative that Shivaji has decided to recapture the fort to fulfil the promise he has made to his mother. Thus, the reader gets an idea about the great sway that Shivaji’s mother has over him. Tanaji is made more familiar to the reader through the incident of him departing from his son’s wedding event to take up his duty. Thereby, there is mentioning of Tanaji’s son that directs towards his family. Thus, both the Maratha heroes, Shivaji and Tanaji are introduced to the reader outside the spatiotemporality of the main event of the capturing of the fort.

On the other hand, the Mughals are highly objectivized since there is no description of them except as the enemy group that is larger in number. The evil

nature of the Mughals is established in the beginning itself by indicating the Marathas are going to recapture a fort that had earlier belonged to them, but was later captured by the Mughals. This also indicates that the Marathas are going to fight for a just cause. Thereby, from the outset itself, this narrative manages to attract the reader's support for the Marathas and dislike towards the Mughals who are presented as a very dangerous and large group of enemies whom the Marathas encounter and defeat with their extraordinary bravery and courage even though they are much lesser in number.

Shivaji is hailed as “the great Maratha hero” and as “the mighty Shivaji.” Tanaji's valiant nature is emphasised by referring to him as the only hero who would be capable of recapturing the fort from the Mughals. Tanaji's great sense of duty is indicated by mentioning that even though his son is about to get married, he heeds to his master Shivaji and marches towards the Simhagad fort with a band of one thousand soldiers. The soldiers are described as valiant,” and their courage and bravery are further highlighted by pointing out that they march towards the fort on a night, braving a heavy rain. Even the “trained” monitor lizard named Yashwanti that helps the soldiers to climb the fort is referred to as “faithful.” According to the narrative, this “faithful” monitor lizard climbs to the top of the fort with a rope tied to its trunk, and after reaching the top, ties the rope to a tree, thus enabling the soldiers to climb the fort. Unlike the Marathas' “faithful” monitor lizard Yashwanti, the Mughals unleash a “ferocious” elephant named Chandravally to attack the Marathas. Thus, while the Marathas' monitor lizard is faithful, the Mughals' elephant is ferocious. While the Mughals are thus shown as using brute force, the Marathas are presented as using their intelligence to use and train the monitor lizard. The

following incident illustrates this further when Tanaji jumps onto the back of the elephant and directs it onto the Mughals themselves before killing it.

That the Mughals gravely outnumber the Marathas is indicated by describing how the fall of a Maratha soldier while climbing the fort wakes up the guards who inform the rest of the Mughal army, thereby making it extremely difficult for the remaining Maratha soldiers to do the climb. Thus, according to the narrative, out of the one thousand Maratha soldiers who have gathered, seven hundred are still below the rock. However, even though “it would have been impossible to capture the fort with only three hundred men against the fort’s large number of soldiers, Tanaji fought with unprecedented courage and tact till the fort fell to his hands!” (63) However, Tanaji dies in the battle and is described as a brave martyr whom Shivaji calls *Simha* (Lion).

Thus, this narrative describes a battle between the Marathas and the Mughals in which the Marathas under the leadership of Shivaji’s General Tanaji Malusare recaptures the Simhagad fort from the Mughals. According to the narrative, the recapturing of the fort is achieved by the Marathas through a ferocious battle with the Mughals in which the Marathas greatly outnumber the Mughals. Despite all the odds, under the valiant and brave leadership of Tanaji, the fort is recaptured, even though Tanaji is killed in the battle, thus sacrificing his life to the cause.

If this historical narrative is taken singly, the battle given here is just a battle by the Marathas for recapturing their fort from the Mughals. However, when it is read along with several other such historical tales, it becomes clear that the Marathas are seen as Hindu warriors and the Mughals as Muslim invaders. Thereby, the comic’s Hindu nationalist nature becomes evident.



But Shivaji had already promised to give whatever his mother would demand! There was only one hero who could dare to attack Simhagad. He was Tanaji Malusare. Shivaji sent for him. Tanaji's son was going to marry. But Tanaji left the party and galloped forth to meet his master.

When Tanaji heard about Shivaji's promise to his mother, he did not hesitate for a moment, but chose a band of thousand valiant soldiers and marched towards Simhagad in a dark night, braving a rain.

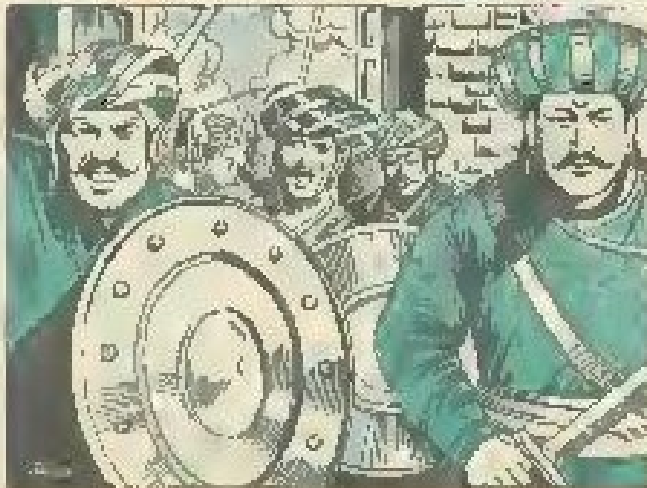


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Figures 1 & 2

Figure 1 from “The Fall of the Lion’s Fort” depicts Shivaji’s General Tanaji Malusare departing from his son’s wedding venue to take up the duty his master Shivaji has appointed him. Tanaji’s ardent sense of duty and loyalty is evident here as he places them above the marriage of his son. The scene is of Tanaji mounting his horse to go to his master’s aid while the guests who have gathered for the wedding gaze upon him with both despair and awe as he departs. Tanaji is placed at the front of the image and therefore appears larger than the other people in the image, which is characteristic of depicting important characters and those who are the subject of the action. This image is full of action since it depicts him mounting the horse rather than as seated upon it. That the background is the venue of the wedding is indicated through features like the decorations hanging bellow the ceiling of the portico of the building. There is someone, probably a servant, holding a stick with a decorative shield on top, and there are also trumpets in the background.

Figure 2 is of Tanaji and his one thousand soldiers marching to the Simhagad fort to recapture it from the Mughals. This is a very lively, action-packed image that depicts in the front Tanaji sitting on his galloping horse, followed by his soldiers in the background in a lengthy, irregular line. Thus, in this image as well, Tanaji, who is the protagonist, appears larger than everyone else. He is depicted as brandishing his sword as if to strike down his enemy at the very instant. Thus, he is presented as a heroic warrior who is always ready to strike down his enemies. As evident from the image, Tanaji and his men are marching through heavy rain, which indicates their will and determination to go forward despite any troublesome conditions. The reader knows all this will and determination are aimed at fighting the Muslim Mughals.



But while climbing the wall of the fort, a Maratha soldier slipped down. The sound woke up the guards. The guards alerted their soldiers. However, those who had crossed the wall, opened the gate.

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Figure 3

Figure 3 depicts Tanaji and his men forcing themselves through the door of the fort after they have managed to open it. This image is also very lively. Tanaji is presented with his sword in his right hand, ready to strike, and the other soldiers also have swords and shields in their hands. Their faces express anger and vengeance towards their enemies whom they are going to strike down.

Soldiers of the fort rushed to fight with the invaders. They let loose a ferocious elephant, famous as Chandravally, to create scare among the Marathas. Tanaji instantly jumped onto its back and led it into the Mughal army before killing it.



Figure 4

Figure 4 is of Tanaji bravely chasing away the Mughals after jumping onto the back of the “ferocious” elephant Chandravally that was unleashed by the Mughals to attack the Marathas. In this image, the emphasis is placed upon the fleeing Mughals. This image, like the others in this narrative, is also a very live one that depicts a scene of action. While the previous three images depict the hero Tanaji and the Marathas as facing the reader, this image, on the other hand, looks upon the fleeing Mughals from above the elephant as they are being chased by it, controlled by Tanaji sitting on top of the elephant with a sword brandished in his right hand. Thus, the eye of the narrative, as well as the reader, is positioned in such a way that it is pointed at the Mughals fleeing from the elephant controlled by Tanaji. Thus, the reader is placed in a position of power from where he can rejoice as the enemy is being chased away as a result of falling in his own trap. Apart from the Mughals fleeing in the opposite direction, in this image, there is in the front one Mughal’s face directed towards the reader. His mouth is opened wide in terror as he flees the onslaught of the “ferocious” elephant. By the time this incident takes place, the narrative has already managed to instil in the reader empathy towards the Marathas and dislike or hatred towards the Mughals. Therefore, as Tanaji directs the elephant towards the Mughals, the reader is invited to rejoice at the enemy falling in his own trap. Therefore, in this image, the fearful face of the fleeing Mughal at the front is intended at invoking laughter in the reader.

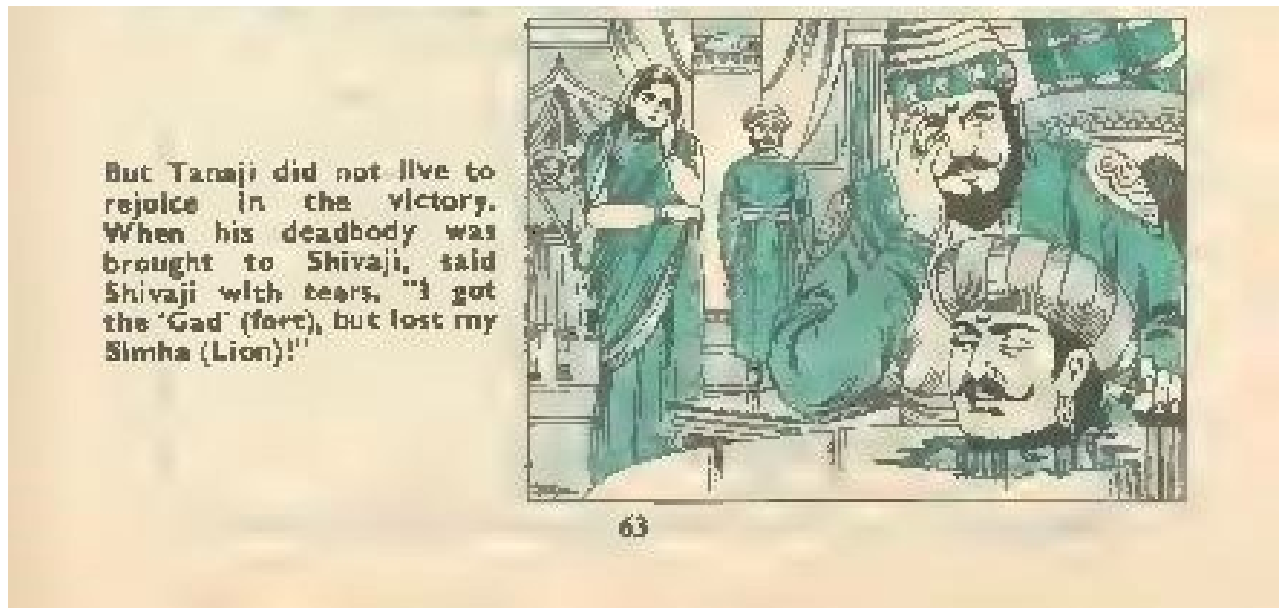


Figure 5

Figure 5 depicts the final scene when Tanaji's dead body is brought to Shivaji after Tanaji has sacrificed his life for the successful recapturing of the fort. Even though the text of the narrative only mentions that Tanaji's dead body was brought to Shivaji, in this image, Tanaji is depicted as having been beheaded as represented through Shivaji and his mother Jijabai staring at Tanaji's severed and bleeding head with tears in their eyes. Thus, this image intensifies the tragedy through a close depiction of the hero's severed and bleeding head in the front, with Shivaji right behind and his mother further behind him tearfully mourning the death of the brave warrior. Tanaji is depicted as the protagonist of this historical narrative, which is evident not only from the text but also from the images as well that are all centred on Tanaji and his actions that culminate in the defeat of the Mughals and the capture of the fort. Thus, the depiction of the severed head of the brave hero in figure 5 can invoke in the reader regret for the death of the great hero, and also hatred and anger towards the Muslim Mughals who killed him.

Thus, this narrative is about the brave and valiant deeds of Tanaji towards defeating the Mughals and recapturing from them the Simhagad fort. Tanaji's crucial leadership and bravery towards the capturing of the fort is gloriously elaborated not only through the text of the narrative, but also through the accompanying images that are very action-oriented and project Tanaji at the centre of all the action. In the first four images taken from the narrative, Tanaji is presented in heroic postures of mounting his horse to go to take up his duty; as riding his horse with his sword brandished in his hand to attack the Mughals and recapture the fort; and as directing an elephant against the Mughals who flee in terror. Thus, the reader rejoices through all such exploits of Tanaji. However, the final image with the severed and bleeding head of the great hero invokes in the reader regret for the death of the hero and also dislike and hatred towards those responsible for his death.

Shambuji ridiculed Aurungzeb even when a prisoner, knowing full well the consequence. Aurungzeb tortured and put to a gruesome death this young king of the Marathas who remained defiant to the end. Murder of Shambuji made the Marathas only more determined to fight the Mughals. They adopted guerrilla tactics and harassed the Mughals whenever possible. Aurangzeb tried his utmost to put an end to the Maratha power, but the result was his strength began to wane. Shivaji's second son Raja Ram provided leadership to the Marathas, first from the fort of Jingsi and then from Satara till his death in 1700. After him, his widow, Tarabai, took up the cause and proved highly efficient and intelligent as a leader. Aurangzeb found no peace (54).

To quote from "Story of India: The Mughals versus the Marathas"; "The Marathas celebrated their great leader Shivaji's escape from the Mughal clutch with jubilation. Frequent battles were fought between the Mughal army and the Marathas" (51).

According to this narrative, Shivaji is a great soldier while Aurangzeb and the Mughals are cheaters, cruel and ruthless.

To quote from the same text again: “Shivaji inspired his followers with his exemplary courage and character. Among his faithful lieutenants was Baji Prabhu who died fighting the enemies alone at the mouth of a pass to let his master reach a safe place” (51).

It continues the glorification of Shivaji: “although Shivaji was a champion of the Hindu faith, he showed great respect for the other religions. The moment a copy of the Koran fell into his hand, he invited the nearest Muslim to his camp and respectfully made a gift of the book to him” (51).

Accounts from the present story tells that Shivaji is a tolerant king who always respected women, including the Muslim women who are supposed to be his enemies. The following quote presents this idea: “Once the ruler of Kalyan, Mulan Ahmed, was defeated by Shivaji’s general Abaji Sondev who made a gift of Ahmed’s charming daughter to Shivaji” (52). However, “Shivaji sent the captive princess to her parents with gifts saying that they were from a father for his daughter!” (52).

The text portrays Shivaji as a “champion of the Hindu faith” (51). His interest in the Hindu scripts and his respect for the teachings of Tukaram and Ramdas testify to this³. “Shivaji was so much fond of listening to religious lectures that once he went to a temple to hear Tukaram's preachings. A spy informed his enemies. They raided the meeting. They saw Shivaji trying to escape. They pursued him, but in vain. Shivaji returned home safe. It was someone else who had created an illusion of Shivaji attempting to escape the temple. Who was it that created the illusion of being

3

Tukaram and Ramdas were Hindu poet-saints of the 17th century.

Shivaji? Nobody knows” (52). The appearance of an unknown character that rescues Shivaji adds an element of mysticism to the story. The reader who is familiar with Tukaram may also know that he worshipped Vithal, an avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu according to many puranic stories. So, the same reader may imagine that it is this mythic character that saved Shivaji.

Shivaji is also portrayed as an unselfish and devoted king who is ready to “donate his entire kingdom to Ramdas” (52). He is portrayed as a king who receives the advice of Hindu sages, and he rules his kingdom as per their instructions. However, his respect for Hinduism does not taint his secular image. He gives due consideration to the Islamic faith as evidenced by statements such as; “He helped not only the Hindu temples, but also the Muslim mosques. His fight was against Aurangzeb’s fanaticism, not against any religion” (53). Thus, the whole narrative portrays Aurangzeb as a fanatic Muslim and Shivaji as a secular Hindu.

The Muslim invaders captured the valiant and noble young King Shambuji, Shivaji’s son who succeeded his throne through treachery and other dishonest means.

“Shambuji ridiculed Aurangzeb even when a prisoner, knowing full well the consequence. Aurangzeb tortured and put to a gruesome death this young king of the Marathas who remained defiant to the end. Murder of Shambuji made the Marathas only more determined to fight the Mughals. They adopted guerrilla tactics and harassed the Mughals whenever possible. Aurangzeb tried his utmost to put an end to the Maratha power, but the result was his own strength began to wane. Shivaji’s second son Raja Ram provided leadership to the Marathas, first from the fort of Jings and then from Satara till his death in 1700.

After him, his widow, Tarabai, took up the cause and proved highly efficient and intelligent as a leader. Aurangzeb found no peace (54).”

Thus, in the above narratives in *Chandamama* on battles between Hindu kings and Muslim invaders, Hindu kings are presented as valiant, noble and brave, while Muslim rulers are presented as cruel, treacherous and ignoble. Hindu kings are presented as pious and devout but still secular and respectable towards other religions, while Muslim invaders are projected as fanatics and as never respectful towards other religions. According to these narratives, the chivalrous Hindu rulers could never be defeated by the Muslim invaders, and if ever defeated, that was possible only through cunning and treachery, and never through straight combat.

Even though good Muslims are usually presented only in tales from the “Arabian Nights” and other stories from West Asia or the “Middle East,” good Muslims are also presented in some Indian stories. However, in these stories, Muslim characters are presented as devotees of Hindu gods, which implies all Indians are Hindus, and if not a Hindu by birth, then that is to be achieved through devotion towards Hindu gods.

From “The Mysterious Boy”; “The Sultan leaned over the picture and cried out, ‘I cannot forget the eyes and the contour of the boy. Yes, it is your Lord Vithal⁴ who had come to your rescue!’” (15) Sultans were Muslim rulers.

“Damaji said to the Sultan, ‘You are not a fool, my lord, you are among the luckiest of devotees of the Lord. He would not have appeared before you in a human form otherwise’” (15) (Figure 6).

⁴Vithal is a Hindu deity considered as an incarnation of Vishnu.

By then the sultan had no other thought in his mind than that of the mysterious boy. Every word the boy had spoken, every child-like gesture he had made, was haunting him.

"Damaji, tell me, had you ever confided your plight to anybody? Had you ever appealed to anybody for help, fearing punishment from me?" asked the sultan.

"Whom can I appeal, my lord? Who can come to my rescue if you decide to punish me for my distributing your grain without your permission?" said Damaji. But next moment, he said again, "Yes, my lord, I had appealed to one—the Supreme One whom I worship in the form of Lord Vitthal of Pandharpur."

As he said this, he took out of his bag a picture of Lord Vitthal. And no sooner had he unfolded the picture than a slip of paper fell down from his bag. The minister picked it up. It was the receipt that had been given to the boy!

The sultan leaned over the picture and cried out, "I cannot forget the eyes and the contour of the boy. Yes, it is your Lord Vitthal who had come to your rescue! I was a fool to be trying to trace him through a hundred sepoys!"

"You are not fool, my lord, you are among the luckiest of devotees of the Lord. He would not have appeared before you in a human form otherwise," said Damaji.



Figure 6

In historical narratives of battles between Hindu warriors and “Muslim invaders,” while the Hindu warrior is presented as noble and chivalrous, the “Muslim invader” is ignoble and treacherous. While the Hindu warrior is a very righteous and noble man who always follows the proper conduct of warfare and is respectful even towards his enemies, the “Muslim invader” is presented as ignoble and crooked, and as always ready to use means of deception and foul play to defeat his enemies. Moreover, the Muslims rulers and soldiers in these narratives are presented as very ruthless and cruel. Apart from these, another significant characteristic of the “Muslim invaders” as presented through these narratives is they often covet Hindu women and are a threat to their “honour,” unlike Hindu warrior-kings like Shivaji as presented in “The Mughals versus the Marathas”. The latter always treat all women, even women from the enemy group, with great decency.

There are two narratives in *Chandamama* that talk about the aftermath of the invasion and plunder of Sindh by “foreign Muslim invaders.” Even though Sindh is currently situated in Pakistan, both the narratives refer to this place as Indian territory, and there is no reference to its current situation. The first narrative appeared in 1975 September titled “The Grand Revenge,” while the second appeared in 1981 October titled “The Invasion and the Revenge.” The second narrative of 1981 is more explicit upon the Muslimness of the invaders, and it lays more emphasis upon their cruelty while at the same time the chivalry of the Indian king Dahir and the bravery of his queen are more glorified. The fact that this was happening during a time when Hindu nationalism was on the rise indicates that similar to other popular media of the time like the television and cinema, *Chandamama* was also symbiotically related to the contemporary political developments in the country.

In the first narrative, there is no direct mentioning the invaders were Muslims, even though that is indicated through the images as well as through names of characters and by saying they hailed from Turkey. On the other hand, in the second narrative, the introduction itself explicitly makes it clear to the reader the invaders were Muslims; “A new religion, Islam, united the Bedouin Arabs in the sixth century. Mohammed the Prophet who founded it was succeeded by the Caliphs. Under them the Arabs ruthlessly conquered many lands. They coveted the fabulous Hindustan” (1981: 33). The Arab Muslims are thus described as having ruthlessly conquered many lands. Here, the usage of the term “Hindustan” is of much significance since that denotes something particular as Hindu nationalists have used this term to signify “the land of the Hindus.”

The earlier narrative begins as follows, “It happened hundreds of years ago. The northern kingdoms of India were then often attacked by invaders from outside. The battles were fierce and brutal. Sometimes the invaders destroyed the Indian forts. Sometimes they were repulsed” (1975: 19). Thus, in the earlier narrative, the introduction talks about invaders to India without initially disclosing the identity of these invaders. However, the following passage makes it clear to the reader that the invaders were Muslims. It says Al Hazaz who ruled Turkey and Iran as the deputy of the Caliph of Bagdad, sent his soldiers to plunder Sind, then ruled by King Dahir, but the invaders were defeated.

Unlike the earlier narrative that just mentions King Dahir and his soldiers defeated Al Hazaz’ army, the later narrative is more elaborate in describing how “King Dahir fought bravely and defeated the invaders” (1981: 34) even though he was “unprepared to face the attack” (1981: 34). Thus, the later narrative is careful to

point out King Dahir was “unprepared to face the attack” but he still “fought bravely and defeated the invaders.”

Dismayed at the defeat, Al Hazaz appointed his son-in-law Muhammed Kazim as the commander of his army. Both the narratives say Muhammed Kazim successfully defeated King Dahir. However, the later narrative brings out a reason for why Kazim could defeat the “brave” King Dahir and his soldiers. According to this narrative, a treacherous feudal chief of Debal named Kaka Kotal was secretly won over by Muhammed Kazim. Kaka Kotal spread a rumour astrologers had predicted Dahir’s defeat. This rumour demoralised Dahir’s army, and some of his generals went over to the enemy side. Such a description implies Kazim could finally defeat the “brave and valorous” King Dahir only through deception and not through straight combat, which is the stereotypical way *Chandamama* represents battles between “chivalrous Hindu warriors” and “deceitful Muslim invaders.” Thereby, the “chivalrous Hindu ruler” is implied as so fierce and valiant in battle he could hardly be defeated by the “Muslim invader” through straight combat unless through deception and foul means.

Moreover, unlike the earlier narrative that only mentions the king and the princes were killed in the battle, the later narrative has taken enough effort to portray King Dahir as a great martyr. It says King Dahir, “fighting bravely,” was grievously wounded. He was brought into the fort through a secret door guarded by trusted soldiers but was declared dead by the physician.

The earlier narrative says “when the king and the princes were killed by the invaders, the queen and her daughters-in-law lit a fire and sacrificed themselves” (1975: 20) by jumping into it. However, the later narrative depicts the queen as a

brave woman who took up the battle and fought against the “Muslim invaders” even after the death of the king. In the latter narrative, after the death of the king, “his queen, Rani Bai, knew that it was no time for weeping” (1981: 35). She took up the challenge and cheered the soldiers from the roof-top of the fort. When the enemies pressed closer, she and the inmates of the palace tried to check them by hurling balls of fire and boulders at them. Thus, Rani Bai is presented as a brave and valiant woman who continued the fight after the death of her husband. Thus, such a representation of a strong and brave woman in this narrative in *Chandamama* seems to be unlike other stories and narratives in this comic that portray women as submissive and meek. However, to be noted is that Rani Bai attained such a strong position in this narrative only after the death of her husband, the king. Thus, this narrative indicates how even women were forced to fight to defend themselves and their kingdom against the “Muslim invaders.”

According to the later narrative, at last, the queen realised the fall of the fort was certain. She and most of the women of the palace enclosed themselves in a room and set fire to it to save their “honour” from the invaders. When the Arabs stormed in, they found only their charred bodies. Thus, the “Muslim invaders” are presented as a threat to the honour of Hindu women. Thereby, apart from being cruel and deceitful, the Muslims are also presented as always coveting the Hindu woman. However, the earlier narrative mentions only the queen and her daughters-in-law sacrificed themselves by jumping into a fire after the death of the king and princes, implying they did so because of the intensity of their grief at the death of their husbands and not to save their “honour” from the Muslim invaders as said in the later narrative. Thus, the later narrative is more interested in presenting the cruelty and villainy of the Muslims.

A more elaborate description of the cruelty of the invaders continues in the later narrative; “Muhammed Kasim put to death thousands of Indian prisoners, and led 30000 prisoners as slaves to Iraq” (1981: 36).

Both the narratives say two “beautiful young” daughters of the king were captured by Kasim who presented them to the Caliph as a gift. The Caliph was taken away by the beauty of the princesses and declared he would marry them, but the princesses said Kasim had already married them. The Caliph was very enraged at this information that he ordered to have Kasim killed.

In the earlier narrative, the Caliph just ordered to have his commander killed, and the dead body of Kassim was brought to him. On the other hand, in the latter narrative, there is more emphasis upon the cruelty of the Caliph by indicating the cruel manner in which he issued a death sentence to Kassim: The Caliph ordered to have Kassim sewn in a hide so that he would slowly suffocate to death.

In both the narratives, after Kassim was murdered, the princesses declared to the Caliph that Kasim had not married them, and they had lied to the Caliph to take revenge against Kasim for murdering their family and destroying their dynasty. Thus, like their mother, the two daughters of the king are also presented as courageous and valiant young women who did not hesitate to avenge their parents’ murder. However, here too, like their mother, the princesses acted bravely only in a situation when there were no men to protect them, and this happened when they took revenge against the “Muslim invader.”

Towards the end of the first narrative, “Thus deceived, the Caliph shrieked and cried and put the princesses to death. However, the princesses had no regret at all.

The Caliph did not live long. He died repenting for murdering his faithful commander, Kasim” (1975: 22).

On the other hand, the second narrative abruptly comes to an end; “Mad with fury, the Caliph buried the two girls alive!” (1981: 36)

There are two effects achieved in the way the second narrative abruptly comes to an end. Firstly, instead of just mentioning the princesses were put to death, the second narrative more accurately points towards the cruelty of the Caliph by saying he buried them alive. Secondly, unlike the first one, the second narrative invokes more of a painful feeling in the reader not only by mentioning how the princesses were put to death, but also because of the reason that unlike the earlier narrative, the ending of the latter one provides much lesser scope for any relief in the mind of the reader despite all the tragic events of the narrative. In the first narrative, such an effect is achieved by saying that even though the princesses were put to death, they had no regrets at all since they had accomplished their revenge by putting the Caliph in distress for the rest of his life for murdering his faithful commander, Kasim; “The princesses had no regrets at all. The Caliph did not live long. He died repenting for murdering his faithful commander, Kasim” (1975: 22). Thus, at the ending of the first narrative, the emphasis is upon the revenge of the princesses, and not upon the cruelty of the Caliph and his burying of the princesses alive, which is where the second narrative abruptly comes to an end. Thus, the second narrative invokes in the reader more regret at the death of the princesses than does the first one. Thereby, the second narrative is capable of invoking in the reader more hatred towards the heartless Caliph who mercilessly murders his faithful commander, Kasim; has no grief over the death of Kasim even after coming to know he was innocent, but is instead full of anger and vengeance towards the princesses for deceiving him; and

thereby, above everything else, metes out a gruesome death to the princesses by burying them alive.

As indicated by the titles of the two narratives, while the title of the 1975 issue, “The Grand Revenge,” indicates the centre of the narrative is the revenge, the title of the narrative of the 1981 issue is “The Invasion and the Revenge,” implying this narrative puts more emphasis upon the invasion. Not only the texts of the two narratives, but the images in these comic strips also show how the later one is more focused up bringing out the villainy of the Muslim invaders.



Figure 7

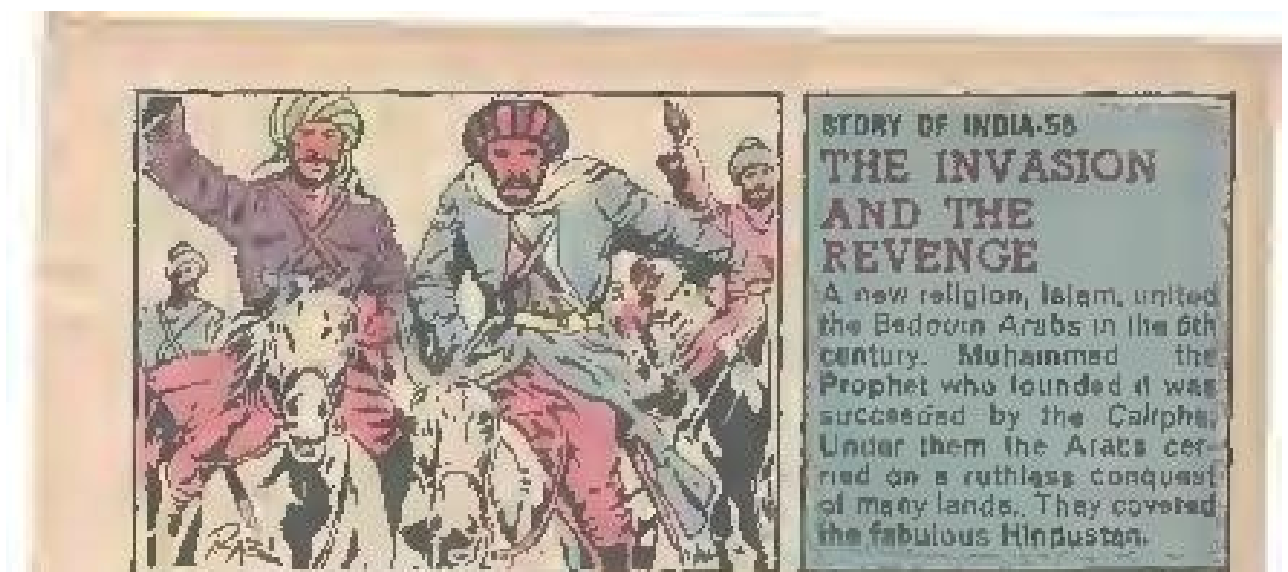
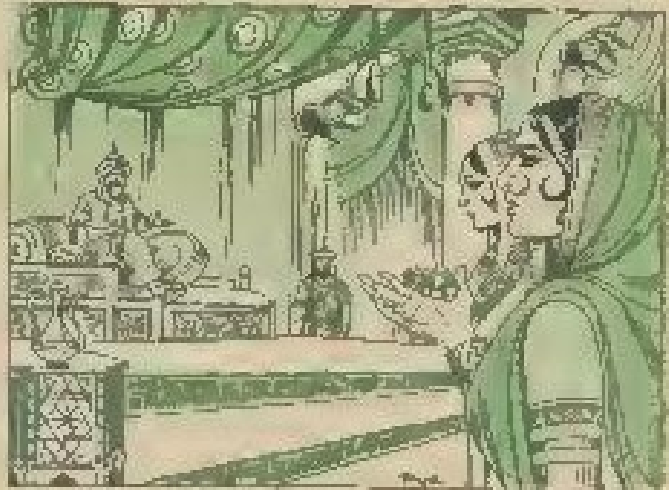


Figure 8

Figures 7 and 8 respectively accompany the titles of the two different comic strips. As can be seen from the two images, while the first one shows the two princesses, the second image shows the “Muslims invaders” advancing on their horses, which indicates that while the centre of attention of the earlier comic strip, “The Grand Revenge,” is the revenge of the princesses, the focus of the later comic strip, “The Invasion and the Revenge,” is upon the invasion of the “cruel Muslims.” In the second image, the “Muslim invaders” are presented as advancing on their horses with their swords brandished in their hands. They are presented as facing the reader. In visual media, presentation of characters as facing the reader or audience voluntarily or involuntarily achieves a unique effect of taking these characters outside the narrative and presenting them face to face with the reader, as though the character/s is/are acknowledging the presence of the reader or the audience. This increases the liveliness of the characters and the situation presented in the narrative, effectively attracting the reader’s feelings for the characters, ranging from sympathy and empathy for the good protagonist/s, to hatred and antipathy towards the villains. Thus, this image, by presenting the “villainous Muslim invaders” with their swords brandished in their hands as facing the reader, takes the characters out of the narrative and makes them more lively, thereby increasing the effect of the comic strip’s depiction of them as a threat not only to the historical Hindu protagonists in the comic strip, but also to the contemporary reader himself who is invited to feel threatened not only by the historical “Muslim invaders” presented in the narrative, but also by the contemporary Muslims in the country, mainly because the narrative, through its images as well as text, emphasises the Muslimness of the invaders.

Some time passed. The Caliph then joyfully declared that he would now marry the princesses from Hindustan! But the princesses said, "O Caliph! Your commander had already married us on our way here. Is this the custom in your land to present one's wives to one's master?"



21

Figure 9

In Figure 9, as the Caliph declares that he is going to marry the princesses, the princesses initiate their revenge by saying the Caliph's commander, Kassim, has already married them. The princess appears much larger than the Caliph since they are presented at the front, while the Caliph sits on his throne some distance away from the princesses. Thus, the image attempts to bring the reader's attention towards the princesses and their revenge.

The command was duly carried out. But as soon as the deadbody of Kassim was brought before the Caliph, the princesses declared, "O Caliph! Your commander was innocent. He had never touched us! We have avenged our father's murder and the destruction of his dynasty!"



Thus deceived, the Caliph shrieked and cried and put the princesses to death. But the princesses had no regrets at all. The Caliph did not live long. He died repenting for murdering his faithful commander, Kassim.

22

Figures 10 & 11

In Figure 10, following the orders of the Caliph, Kassim has been killed, and his body has been brought to the Caliph. Now, the princesses declare to the Caliph that Kassim was innocent, and they had lied to the Caliph to incite revenge for the murder of their parents and the plunder and conquest of their dynasty by the Caliph and Kassim. The Caliph and the princesses are presented at the front of the image, at the right and left sides respectively. The body of the dead commander is seen behind. Several soldiers are standing in the background. The princess has a gleeful

expression on her face as she declares to the Caliph they have incited their revenge by causing the death of the Caliph's faithful commander. The Caliph's face indicates both regret and anger as he holds his right hand on the hilt of his sword, indicating his urge to avenge the death of his faithful commander. In this image, even though the Caliph and the princesses are positioned at the front, the Caliph is placed more in front of the image. Thus, this image emphasises the revenge of the princesses and how it affects the villainous Caliph.

In Figure 11, the Caliph issues a death sentence to the princesses for causing the death of his faithful commander. The Caliph is presented at the front of the image, and he, therefore, appears very large compared to the princesses standing some distance behind him. There are also several soldiers in the background. The Caliph's expression indicates distress at the death of his commander, and anger towards the princesses. As indicated in the text accompanying the image, the princesses have no regret at all since they have accomplished their revenge. Moreover, the text also says the Caliph does not live much longer, but dies out of grief for having killed his faithful commander. Thus, the emphasis is upon the revenge of the princesses, and the reader is told they have no grief since they have accomplished their revenge.

Thus, the images in the narrative of 1975 put the princesses at the centre and emphasise their revenge. On the other hand, the images accompanying the narrative of 1981 have taken more effort towards presenting the "Muslim invaders" as very cruel, and these images emphasise the impact of the invasion and how the "good protagonists" are affected by it. Unlike the issue of 1975, the cover page of the 1981 issue of *Chandamama* containing this narrative has an image from "The Invasion and the Revenge," which indicates *Chandamama* gives much importance to this narrative of Muslim invasion.

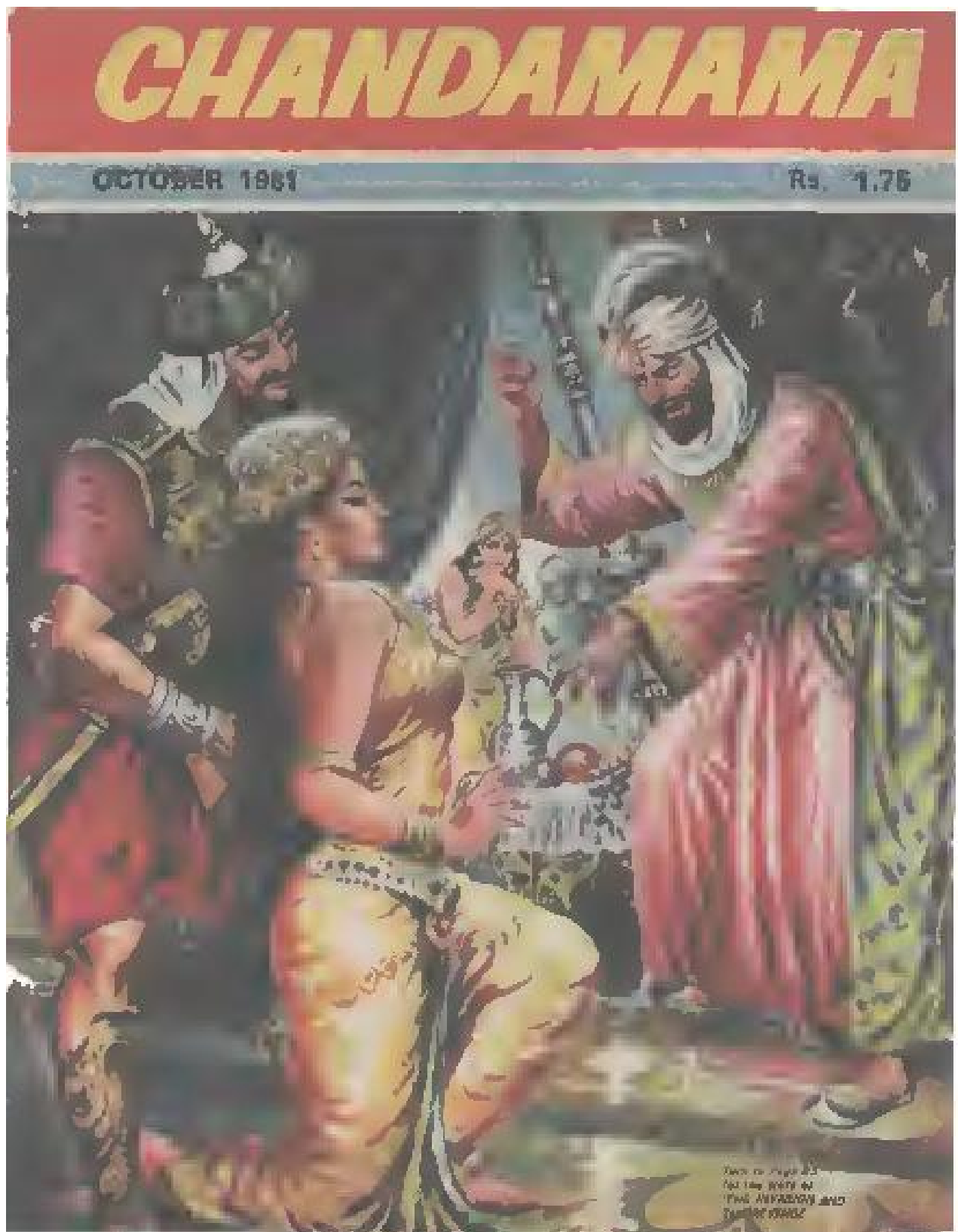


Figure 12

Figure 12 is the cover page of the 1981 issue of *Chandamama*. This image depicts a scene from *The Invasion and the Revenge*. In the image, a soldier presents one of the princesses to the Caliph. The other princess is seen standing behind. The soldier has a pleasurable smirk on his face. He has forced the princess to kneel before the Caliph who has a lustful expression on his face, and his hands are held forward as though he is about to grope her. The other princess, who watches from behind, has a worried expression on her face, and her gesture also indicates her anxiety; her hands held together towards her neck and chest. While the small table standing nearby with fruits and wine on top of it is kept there for fulfilling the Caliph's gluttony, the princess has been brought to fulfil the Caliph's lust. Thus, the Caliph is presented as an evil man who is cruel, gluttonous and lustful.

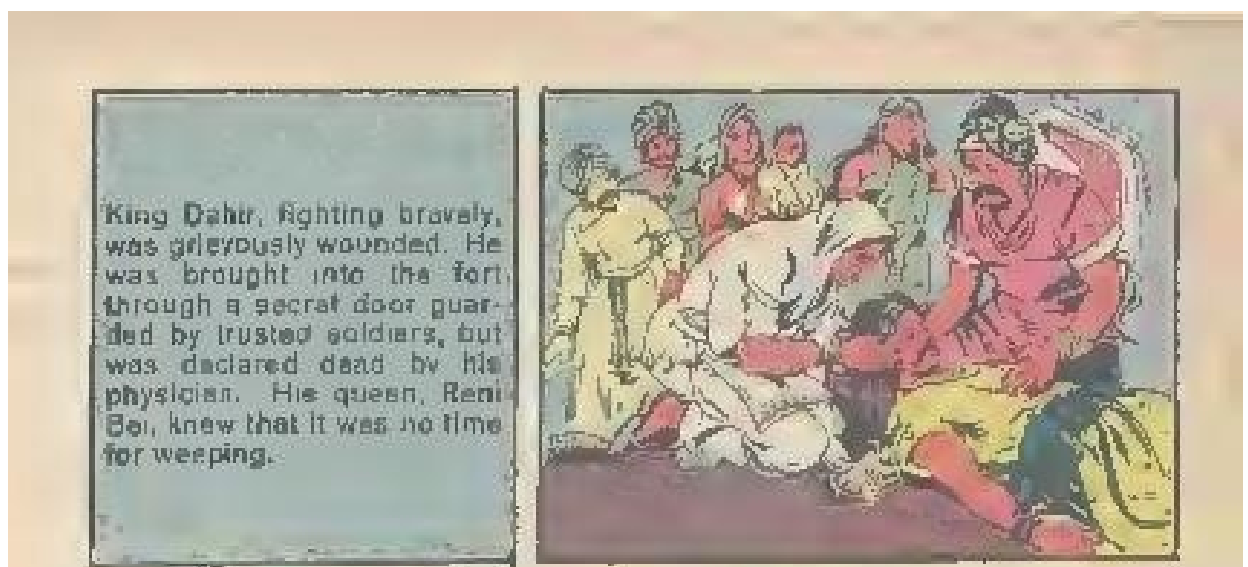


Figure 13

In figure 13, after the “brave king Dahir” dies at the hands of the deceitful Muslims, his body has been brought into the palace. The queen places the head of her dead husband over her lap. Kneeled beside her is the soldier who has brought inside the dead body of the king. There are some courtiers, both men and women, standing behind. Even though the queen’s great sorrow over the death of her husband is indicated by her gesture in the image, as indicated by the text, she “knows that it is no time for weeping,” because, now, she has to command the soldiers and save her kingdom and the people. This image depicts how the brave king, his queen and courtiers become victims to the “ruthless Muslim invaders.”

Figure 14 presents the Caliphs’ commander, Muhammad Kassim, after having murdered thousands of Indians, leading thirty thousand prisoners as slaves to Iraq. The prisoners, who have been chained together, are made to walk all the distance in a long line. Directing and ordering them from the side is Kassim on horse-top, followed by other soldiers who are also on horse-top. One soldier sitting on top of an elephant follows the prisoners from behind so that he could quickly notice if any of them made any attempt to escape or did anything wrong. This image depicts the victimhood of the Hindu soldiers and the people of Sindh who have been ruthlessly murdered or else enslaved by the “brutal Muslim invaders.”



Muhammad Kasim put to death thousands of Indian prisoners, and led thirty thousand prisoners as slaves to Iraq. Among them were two young daughters of King Dahir. He sent the princesses to the Caliph as his gift.

The Caliph, amazed at the beauty of the princesses, desired to marry them. But they said that Kasim had married them already! The furious Caliph ordered that Kasim be brought to him sawn in a hide!



Kasim let himself be sawn in a hide. He died on his way to the Caliph. Only then the princesses declared that Kasim had never married them. They had avenged the death of their parents. Mad with fury, the Caliph buried the two girls alive!

Figure 14, 15 & 16

In Figure 15, the dead body of the commander, Kassim, suffocated to death after getting sewn in a hide, has been brought to the Caliph after he had issued such a death sentence to the commander for marrying the princesses whom the Caliph himself wanted to marry. The princesses had lied to the Caliph that Kasim had married them, to incite revenge against Kassim for murdering their parents and others in the palace, and for destroying and capturing their kingdom. In the image, the Caliph appears the largest since he is positioned at the front. Standing behind him are the princesses and a soldier. The Caliph looks happy as he opens the hide to look at the dead body of his commander, who, he thinks, has deceived him. This image shows the cruel nature of the Caliph who has no hesitancy to issue a torturous death sentence to his faithful commander whom he easily mistrusts, and has not the slightest grief at the sight of his dead body.

In Figure 16, after the princesses had declared they had lied to the Caliph regarding Kassim marrying them, the Caliph became enraged and ordered to bury the princesses alive. The image depicts the princesses kneeled beside their graves in which they are about to be buried alive. The Caliph and some soldiers are seen standing some distance away, overlooking the death sentence. Even though the princesses are about to be executed, they show no sign of fear or anxiety. On the other hand, they have kneeled beside their graves with their hands held together, as though they are engaged in their final prayers before dying. They are thus presented as very brave even in the face of death. Thus, the princesses are again presented as becoming victims to the cruelty of the Caliph. They had initially become victims to the cruelty of Kassim who killed their parents and other family members along with many other inmates of the palace. Afterwards, they were about to become victims of

the Caliphs' lust. Finally, they become victims to the cruelty of the Caliph who is about to bury them alive.

Thus, unlike the earlier narrative that emphasises the revenge of the princesses against the "Muslim invaders," the later narrative focuses upon how Hindus become victims to the cruelty of the "invaders." Caliph was a title given to the civil and religious rulers of varying Islamic states of West Asia from the 13th century to the early 20th. Caliphs were regarded as successors of Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Caliphs served as both political and religious representatives of Muslims. Even though Caliph was just a title, only the term Caliph is used throughout *Chandamama*, while his name is never mentioned. Therefore, by presenting the Caliph as the villain in comic strips in *Chandamama*, it presents Muslims as a threat to the Hindu Indian nation. Such an effect is achieved especially in the 1981 issue, since the invaders under the Caliph are referred to as Muslims. Moreover, even the cover page of the 1981 issue is a depiction of the "cruel and lustful Caliph."

Conclusion

This chapter has described how *Chandamama* is in tune with the Hindu nationalist discourse by "othering" and also looking upon Muslims as hostile foreigners. Such an effect has been achieved in this picture book through "historical narratives" of battles between "chivalrous Hindu warriors" and "hostile and deceitful Muslim invaders." In these narratives, the hero is the Hindu warrior, and the villain is "the Muslim invader." These "historical events" are narrated from the perspective of the Hindu warriors and never from that of the Muslim rulers. The Hindu warriors are presented as good and the Muslim "invaders" as bad.

Moreover, the reader is brought close to the Hindu characters in such narratives up to the extent of empathising with them and thereby insinuating him to look upon the Muslim “invader” with enmity and hatred. Such an effect is achieved by introducing the reader to the Hindu warriors before and outside the main event of the battle with the Muslims. In doing so, the reader is familiarised not only with the main characters themselves, but also with their family members. Such descriptions bring out the close and deep relationship of the heroes with their family members, which results in much familiarisation of the reader with the main character and his household and thereby associates the reader with the hero. Therefore, the reader, along with the hero/s, looks hatefully upon the Muslim enemies as they attack the Hindu kingdoms.

While the Hindu warrior is presented as good-natured, the “Muslim invader” is presented as cruel. While the Hindu warrior is presented as a noble man who is respectful even towards his enemies and always follows the rules of war, the “Muslim invader” is presented as deceitful and ignoble. These narratives create in the reader the impression that the “Muslim invader” cannot defeat the Hindu warrior in straight combat unless through deception and foul means. Thus, such historical narratives in *Chandamama* describe the deceptive measures taken by the invaders to defeat the noble Hindu warriors who would never resort to such foul means but always follow the rules of war. Apart from these, unlike the Hindu warrior king who is very decent towards all women, “the Muslim invader” is presented as coveting the Hindu woman and as a threat to the “honour” of the Hindu woman.

Such representation of Muslims in *Chandamama* was in tune with the Hindu nationalist discourse that talks about Islam as a foreign religion and Muslims as invaders who destroyed several Hindu temples and other holy structures and built

mosques at those sites. The Hindu nationalist narrative as seen in texts like *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them* talks not only about the Muslim rulers' destruction of Hindu temples and the construction of mosques at those sites, but also claims that similar to how the British were foreigners who had to be driven away from the country for India to gain Independence, Islam and Christianity are foreign religions. Therefore, the followers of these religions are foreigners who are either supposed to be submissive to the Hindu state or else be driven away from the country. Such "historical narratives" were more frequent in *Chandamama* in the 70s and 80s when Hindu nationalism was on the rise, which indicates the content of this comic, along with that of other mass media like the television and cinema was symbiotically related to the rise of Hindu nationalism and politics in India in the late 20th century.

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Figures

Fig. 1 & 2. "The Fall of the Lion's Fort." *Chandamama*, June 1976, p. 61.

--- Fig. 3. p. 62.

--- Fig. 4. p. 63.

--- Fig. 5. p. 63.

Fig. 6. "The Mysterious Boy." *Chandamama*, September 1978, p. 15.

Fig. 7. "The Grand Revenge." *Chandamama*, September 1975, p. 19.

Fig. 8. "Story of India: The Invasion and the Revenge." *Chandamama*, October 1981, p. 33.

Fig. 9. "The Grand Revenge." *Chandamama*, September 1975, p. 21.

--- Fig. 10 & 11. p. 22.

Fig. 12. *Chandamama*, October 1981, Cover Page.

Fig. 13. "Story of India: The Invasion and the Revenge." *Chandamama*, October 1981, p. 35.

--- Fig. 14, 15 & 16. p. 36.

Chapter 4

Modernity in *Tinkle*: Criticism of Monarchical and Religious Figures

This chapter analyzes how the contemporary *Tinkle* comics, unlike the earlier comic *Chandamama*, tries to adapt itself to the modern Indian state by criticizing precolonial and pre-modern systems like monarchy and the superiority of kings and religious figures.

The last three chapters analyzed how *Chandamama*'s cultural nationalist nature (initially started in the form of stories reminiscing and glorifying the liturgical education system of the precolonial *Gurukul* system of education) resulted in it being aligned with the Hindu nationalist discourse 1) through the promotion of spirituality and religiousness, 2) by internalizing the caste system through the glorification of upper-caste Hindus, and 3) by marginalizing minorities, especially Muslims who form the largest minority in India. This chapter studies how the comic culture in the country, by the turn of the century, inculcated a rather different trend than that seen in earlier comics by trying to adapt to the contemporary, modern culture. Unlike *Chandamama*'s nativist tendencies seen through its glorification of a precolonial, monarchical, feudal and religious Indian past, *Tinkle*, on the other hand, is critical towards precolonial systems and beliefs. Reflected in *Tinkle* is contemporary Indian society's adaption to the modern Indian state and the modern world. *Tinkle*, trying to align itself towards rational thinking and scientific knowledge, is critical towards precolonial systems and beliefs considered as irrational and detrimental to human equality by modernity. Therefore, *Tinkle* criticizes kings and religious figures like Brahmins and mendicants.

In the period soon after Independence, the Indian people's psychological turmoil towards getting adapted to the new democratic system, accompanied by the rise of Hindu nationalism that exploited the people's inclination towards the older systems, resulted in the production of comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha* that reflected these through the glorification of precolonial, feudal, monarchical and Hindu Indian societies, and such comics supported and accompanied the rise of Hindu nationalism.

However, even though the Indian comics published in India soon after Independence reflected a trend of cultural nationalism, there was also another trend taking shape. The Indian people were gradually getting adapted to a new era of rapid changes and evolution in social, political and cultural realms considered as constituents of modernity. Even though there was an inclination and a sense of loss towards the older systems and culture, there was also a feeling the future development and prosperity of the nation and its people depended upon embracing modern systems and discourses. Even though nationalism emerged in India in the inner realm of culture; of traditions, customs and practices the Indian people wanted to preserve without any foreign intervention, in the outer realm of technology and material prosperity, the West had proved its superiority, and therefore, in this realm, Indians wanted to learn from the West and develop accordingly (Chatterjee 6). The Indian government laid much emphasis on scientific and technological development since that was seen as essential and as the backbone of development (Khilnani). Even though there was much psychological turmoil because of the introduction of the new democratic system, due to the impact of the modern education system, there was an understanding that a democratic system was more appropriate than a feudal one for more righteous and just governance. Because of much exposure to modern

rationalism, logical thinking and scientific knowledge paralleled by scepticism in thought, even the inner realm of culture; of traditions, beliefs, practices and customs, had already been much shaken and restructured by the time India became Independent. After all, even though it is often assumed handing over of tradition and culture generation after generation is a measure towards preserving the respective tradition or culture, the very act of handing it over induces restructuring of that tradition or culture (Thapar). Every tradition knowingly or unknowingly undergoes gradual changes with time and circumstances. In post-Independence, democratic India, the supernatural, including the religious supernatural, ceased to be the sacred centre capable of controlling everything else like it used to do in the precolonial, feudal society, since modernity saw the supernatural as pre-modern and savage. Modernity would allow no space for the supernatural in any of its realms except as the opposite “other” since modernity has always thrived on talking about and mocking its opposite; that what is not modern or is pre-modern, thus instilling such entities as unfashionable and inappropriate to modern society (Chakrabarty).

Moreover, modernity brought about the concept of secularism that was made a part of the Indian constitution. “Secularism drew heavily on the Western liberal heritage to argue for a separation between religion and the ideas that governed public life” (Chakrabarty 93). Thus, modernity provided no scope for any religion-centred society like what existed earlier in precolonial India. Science and religion were constructed as oppositional and mutually exclusive practices since Western secularism co-opted science its vision for the modern state. However, this does not imply the realm of religion and the transcendental are entirely excluded in modern India.

On the other hand, the scared realm continues to have considerable sway in contemporary Indian society, but unlike earlier, it cannot exist independently at the centre of the society but in confluence with modernity itself. The new reality of the Indian people, mostly of the middle and upper classes more exposed to modern discourses, is that, on the one hand, while there is no escaping from the contemporary world of modernity, on the other hand, there is an inclination towards the “glorious past.” Because of the advent of modernity and globalization, the sacred, culturalist, mythological sphere can no longer hold on to the central position it held in precolonial India. Among the middle and upper-middle classes of the Indian society, this gradually led to the allocation of a separate, sacred space for the mythological; a separate space where it reigned supreme, independent and free from any rational or scientific theory, discovery, invention or advancement that questioned its authenticity or sacredness. However, whenever the modern society offers any space for talking about tradition, ethnicity, culturalism or the distinctiveness of culture, there are attempts at reviving the mythological past by bringing it from the protected, scared realm, to the outer reality of modern discourses to try to conquer some legitimate and respected space for itself within the realm of modernity.

According to Ashis Nandy, there are two ways in which secularism is practised in India. There is the Western model in which secularism denotes complete separation between the church and the state, relegating religion to a private sphere. However, there is a non-Western model that allows religion a public role, but in such a case, the state is supposed to keep a distance from religion and treat all religions equally. According to Nandy, in India, the “the non-modern” Indians or the lower sections of the Indian society who have not undergone Western education and who have been less exposed to Western discourses, have followed the non-Western model

of secularism that allows religion a public role. On the other hand, the Western-educated, “modern,” middle and upper-middle-class Indians have been more inclined to the Western model of secularism that relegates religion to a private sphere. According to Nandy, as the process of modernization progressed, the Western model of separation has become hegemonic. However, this Western model makes the political use of religion more aggressive and violent (Nandy 68 – 69).

According to Prasenjit Duara, in India, the idea of spirituality and transcendence is a source of non-worldly moral authority that can speak back to power and critique existing conditions. There are divergent trends in such traditions: While some such traditions are against modern trends, some have adapted to trends of modernity. Duara says the religious and the secular mutually co-exist through a dialogic process which is not dialectical in a Hegelian sense where one paradigm negates or supersedes the other, but rather through unacknowledged borrowings of ideas from each other.

Thus, in India, the advent of modernity has not led to the total decline of tradition and older cultural and religious beliefs, practices and customs. On the other hand, with the advent of modernity, the sacred realm has been evolving. Moreover, even though modernity did begin to establish its clutches by questioning everything pre-modern or non-modern, like how tradition has been affected by modernity, even modernity has been affected by tradition. Thus, both tradition and modernity have co-existed side by side in the Indian society.

Another new phenomenon is increasing globalization because of which the world has been becoming smaller, which has led to the passing over of cultural

influences from different parts of the world, leading to multiculturalism, even though there has often been dominance and hegemony of Western culture.

Such a relationship of confluence between modernity and tradition in the contemporary Indian society has its reflections in its cultural productions as well, and therefore, 21st-century Indian comic culture is in confluence with both tradition as well as modernity. With the advent of modernity, the allocation of a separate space for the sacred realm has incorporated all cultural productions, including the realm of comics as well. All these reflected in comic culture through the allocation of a separate space for exclusively mythological comics mainly constituted in *Amar Chitra Katha*. On the other hand, comics with miscellaneous content; such as illustrated stories, comic strips, informative pieces and news threads, like *Chandamama*, were beginning to divert from their mythological and culturalist centre by becoming more inclusive towards other kinds of narratives. Stories from other parts of the world began to get more recurrent in *Chandamama*.

Moreover, the influences of different cultures from around the world began to be seen even in the Indian narratives in *Chandamama*. However, according to what is the prevailing trend concerning globalization, even in the case of the comic culture in India, there has been a predominant influence of Western culture more than any other foreign culture. Even though all these trends had already been initiated in formerly mythology-centred comics like *Chandamama*, they have become very recurrent in contemporary comics like *Tinkle*.

When the case of *Tinkle* comics is taken into consideration, unlike *Chandamama*, it does not contain many stories portraying a glorious, precolonial, feudal past ruled by noble kings and led by pious Brahmins. On the other hand,

Tinkle sometimes presents such characters as fallible and often mocks them. The king is often mocked for his foolish decisions leading to adverse consequences in his kingdom, and the Brahmin is often presented as a fraud, who, through the disguise of holiness, exploits and deceives the people for his profit and selfish motives. There are, moreover, considerable changes in the portrayal of these characters in either of the comics. While the king is well-built and serious-looking in *Chandamama*, in *Tinkle*, he is usually presented as obese and funny-looking. Brahmins in *Chandamama* usually look serious and pious, but in *Tinkle*, images of Brahmins present them as obese and cunning.

The Foolish Monarch

In the comic strip “The King Who Stopped the River” in *Tinkle*, the king is presented as so foolish that he goes to the extent of building a dam to stop a river flowing through his kingdom from flowing into the next kingdom. This foolish act of the king leads to the flooding of parts of his kingdom. To solve this problem and also to prevent a potential attack from the king of the neighbouring kingdom for stopping their water supply, the *diwan* easily fools the king towards believing the sun has not arrived in his kingdom since it has been caught and held by the king of the neighbouring kingdom as revenge against stopping the river. Thus, the story presents a very foolish king as the protagonist. Luckily, the kingdom is saved by the wise *diwan*. The *diwan* acts very wisely and cunningly towards manipulating the king’s decisions in favour of the kingdom since he could otherwise put himself in danger if he directly gave advice and directions to such a foolish yet egoistic king who falsely thought of himself as very wise and cunning. Through such a representation, the story presents the monarchical powers of the king as potentially dangerous to the

kingdom and the people. Thus, the story attacks the idea of monarchy and despotism, and thereby, implicitly supports democracy.



are arrested. No use pretending innocence. You gave me two false necklaces and kept the original one for yourself. Tell me, what have you done with it?" thundered the raja.

"My lord! The original one is not with me. It is safe in the palace itself!" said the jeweller in tears. Then he explained what had at first appeared like a riddle to the king: While he was busy making the false necklace, the younger rani's chief maid met him secretly and gave him a lot of money. Hence he made two false necklaces instead of one and passed on the real one to the younger rani.

The raja detained the jeweller

in the chamber and rushed to the younger rani's apartment. The younger rani as though expected him. In tears, she said, "I know what is going on. Here is the true necklace. I had a great desire to possess it, for, I was jealous of the elder rani to whom it belonged. As a wise raja, you should have known that I too would naturally desire to have what you give to the other rani!"

The raja realised that the basic error was his. He restored the original necklace to the elder rani, but lost no time in buying an equally costly and beautiful necklace for the younger rani.

Make sure of your copy of Chandamama by placing a regular order with your Newsagent

Figure 1 depicts the “ideal king” in *Chandamama*. As seen in this image, the king is quite well-built, the usual way that *Chandamama* presents kings. He is dressed magnificently and is seated on a grand, high throne. A subject stands before the king. Even though the subject stands more towards the front, the image has positioned the king from such an angle that he appears very large and occupies a significant portion of the image. Moreover, the king is already positioned at a much taller position than the subject since he is seated on a high throne. Such positioning makes the king the focal point of the image and emphasizes the significance of the king. The king seems to be patiently listening to what the subject has to say, thus presenting him as very interested in the welfare of his people. This is one example of *Chandamama*’s grandiloquent representation of kings.

In figure 2 from “A Family of Pundits,” the king has even disguised as a wood-cutter to walk among the people and to enquire into their problems directly.

tree about the time of sunset. He saw only the ladies there. He went to the river expecting the males to be there at their evening prayers. However he saw only the Brahman's son at the river. The king looked at him questioningly, and taking some water in his hands, drank it. In doing so the king was asking the young Brahman, "Are you not the same caste as the great Brha-

man Agastya, who drank down all the oceans at one gulp?"

The young Brahman understood this silent question and asked in return another by throwing a stone into the water. His question was, "Are you not a Kshatriya like Sree Rama who bridged the ocean by throwing stones in it?"

King Bhoja was very much pleased at this and went home.



Figure 2

Thus, in both the images discussed above, the kings are presented as very interested and patient towards listening to their subjects to know and solve their problems.



Figure 3

Figure 3 depicts the foolish king in “The King Who Stopped the River” from *Tinkle*. The army commander comes to the king and says, “Wake up, your majesty! A terrible thing has happened!” (Mohandas and Fernandes 11) The king has an irritatingly questioning expression on his face as he says, “Eh...?” (*ibid*, 11) In this image, unlike the well-built kings in *Chandamama*, the king is obese and pot-bellied. The king is shown not in the court hall of the palace, but inside his bedroom, on his bed, where he seems to have been sleeping with his blanket covered over him. The expression of the king indicates irritation since his sleep has been disturbed by the commander, even though he has come with urgent information. In the image can be seen a small table with fruits and wine, indicating the fat king’s gluttonous nature. Thus, the king is presented as a comfort-loving, lazy, fat glutton who spends a lot of

time eating, drinking and sleeping, and he is not very interested in the affairs of his kingdom or to solve the people's problems.



Figure 4

In the first panel in figure 4, the obese, foolish king asks the *diwan*, “Do you think he (the king of the neighbouring kingdom) would let the sun go if we let the river flow into his country again?” (Mohandas and Fernandes 14) This is because, following the instruction of the *diwan*, the foolish king has been made to believe the king of the neighbouring kingdom has captured the sun and is not letting it come to the former’s kingdom as revenge against his act of building a dam to prevent a river’s water from flowing into the latter’s kingdom. The *diwan* has thus fooled the king to prevent any attack from the neighbouring king for the foolish king’s act of stopping the flow of the river that has also lead to flooding of parts of his kingdom. The *diwan* claps his hands and replies with a smiling face, “What a brilliant idea, your majesty!” Here, to save the kingdom, even though the *diwan* has fooled the king into changing his decision, the king does not realize this as he suggests to the *diwan* what the *diwan* himself wanted the king to suggest. Knowing the egotistic nature of the foolish king

and that he would punish the *diwan* if he questioned the king's decision and wits, the *diwan* has played cunningly, and as the king suggests the solution the *diwan* himself has put into his mouth, the *diwan* puts on a show by clapping his hands and congratulating the king. In the next panel, the king boasts proudly with his right hand at the tip of his handlebar moustache, "Ah, well, my mother always said I was a very clever fellow!" (*ibid*, 14) This further heightens the joke of the situation, and the reader is made to feel how foolish yet self-esteeming and self-appraising the king is.

Thus, while the king in *Chandamama* is a well-built warrior who is always interested in the welfare of his kingdom and the people, the king in *Tinkle* is a foolish, lazy, fat glutton who is not very keen on the welfare of his subjects and is incompetent to rule the kingdom. Thus, while *Chandamama* shows inclination towards a monarchical society through stories about the glorious, chivalrous king in a precolonial Indian society, *Tinkle*, on the other hand, puts forward the adverse effects of monarchy by showing how an incompetent and inglorious monarch could cause much turmoil and chaos in his kingdom.

In the comic strip "Self Sacrifice," the foolish king Vilambabuddhi is presented as easily gullible and superstitious. The name itself is intended at invoking the foolish nature of the king since "vilambabuddhi" in Sanskrit means dim-witted. A false mendicant hands over to him three idols, claiming they are magical, and as long as they remain in the palace, the kingdom would continue to prosper. The foolish king happily receives the idols and rewards "the holy man" with a bag of gold coins. Being superstitious, the king has utter belief in the words of the mendicant, and so he takes excellent care of the idols and asks some of his men to guard the idols day and night, saying, "...and anyone who breaks or disfigures them will have to pay with his life!" (Waeerkar 93)

One day, one of the men taking care of the idols, while wiping them, accidentally drops one and it shatters into several pieces. Hearing the noise, the king comes in running, and crestfallen and enraged upon seeing the shattered idol, orders to hang the man responsible.

This story, apart from mocking the foolish king, also criticizes superstitious beliefs, and also people who perpetrate such beliefs and take advantage of those who get overcome by them, which can be seen through the mendicant's fooling of the superstitious king who also is described as foolish. Thus, superstitious beliefs are presented as foolish and as followed by foolish people. In this comic strip as well, the king is thus presented as idiotic.

“The Right Choice” is about an egotistic, despotic king. He is enraged upon hearing that a youth has said something rude about him. He asks his men to catch and hang him. However, an elderly man who appears to be the minister says to the king, “Your majesty, you can't do that without giving him a fair trial. It will make you unpopular” (Shaikh 20).

So, the king agrees to give him a trial. The boy is caught and brought to the king. After placing two bags in front of the boy, a courtier tells him, “Choose a bag. One contains a white bean, the other, brown. If you get the brown bean, you die” (Shaikh 20).

However, since the king does not want the boy to escape, he has laid a trap by placing brown beans in either of the bags, but the clever boy understands this and immediately hatches a plan to save himself. He takes the bean from one of the bags and swallows it. Seeing this, the king asks him angrily, “What did you do that for, you rascal?” (Shaikh 20)

The boy replies, “I have made my choice, your majesty” (Shaikh 20).

Then he says to the courtier, “Check the colour of the bean in the other bag” (Shaikh 20).

Since both beans were brown, the one in the other bag is inevitably brown. So, looking inside the bag, the courtier says to the king, “It is brown, your majesty! So, the one he swallowed must have been the white one” (Shaikh 20).

Thus, the king is forced to let the boy go.

In this comic strip, the king is egotistic and ruthless. Because of his egotistic nature, he is unable to tolerate the information that the boy talked angrily and rudely about him. The ruthless nature of the king is indicated by the fact that he wants to hang the culprit even though he is a boy, and he does not even want to conduct a trial to test the validity of the accusation. However, at the imploration of the minister that executing the boy without a trial would make the king unpopular, the king changes his mind for his benefit. Still, instead of giving the boy a fair trial, he uses false means to trap the boy, even though he, being too smart for the king, escapes his death sentence by acting cleverly. The trial, even if it was conducted fairly, is very inappropriate since it does not inquire into the validity of the claims against the boy, but his death sentence is based on a mere game of luck, which indicates the meagre value given by the king for justice as well as for human life.

Thus, in this comic strip, the king is presented as a ruthless and egotistic monarch, who is an unjust ruler and has no value for human life, which could have been the reason why the boy was angry towards the king and talked about him rudely. Thus, this comic strip presents how monarchical rule could often turn sinister by giving omnipotent power to a single individual, mainly because such power could

often make him egotistic and ruthless. Thus, on the one hand, while this narrative instils in the reader dislike and contempt towards the egotistic and cruel king, on the other hand, it leads the reader to like the brave boy who dared to question the despotic monarch and also had the cleverness to escape from his death penalty. Thus, unlike the narratives in *Chandamama* that always glorified monarchs and presented the common people as cyphers always submissive and grateful towards the king, this comic strip from *Tinkle* presents an ordinary boy as questioning and outwitting a despotic monarch. Thereby, by placing a common subject above the monarch, this comic strip promotes democracy.

“A Game of Chess” is about a despotic king who has a strange method of acquiring slaves. Anyone who needs his help has to play a game of chess with him. However, what matters is not who wins the game. During the game, a cat sits nearby, and seven lamps are placed along its tail. If even one of the lamps on the cat’s tail falls during the game, the person would be granted anything he wants. However, if the cat sits still throughout the entire period of the game and no lamp falls, then the person would become a slave to the king. The king always wins since the cat is so well trained that never does any lamp fall from its tail during any game of chess. Therefore, many people end up as slaves to the king.

One day, a merchant from a distant city comes to the king and asks him permission to do trade there. The king puts forward to the merchant the condition that he should initially play the game of chess with the cat and the lamps. As usual, the cat stays still, and the king wins. Therefore, the merchant is made a slave to the king.

The merchant sends a letter to his wife, explaining his plight. The merchant's wife is a "brave and clever woman." On receiving information about her husband's misfortune, she decides to save her husband and also teach the "wicked king" a lesson. She thinks, "How dare he let a cat decide my husband's fate!" (24)

She dresses herself as a man and goes to the palace accompanied by a servant. Inside the palace, she informs the attendant courtier that she has come to ask a favour of the king. The courtier explains to her about the game of chess she should play with the king before she can ask any favour of him. She readily agrees, and enters the playing room after leaving her servant outside.

The game of chess begins. After some time, as had been directed by the merchant's wife, her servant outside releases a mouse into the playing room. On seeing the mouse, the cat stiffens and pricks up her ears. At this, the king glares at her fiercely, and she makes herself immobile again.

A little later, the servant lets in another mouse. This time, the cat becomes restless and moves a bit, almost dropping a lamp.

The king realizes he may lose if the game does not end soon, and so he tries his best to finish it. However, since the merchant had taught his wife how to play chess very well, she plays very cautiously to prolong the game.

As the king tries frantically to finish the game, the servant lets in a third mouse. This time, the cat is unable to restrain herself, and she jumps forward, dropping all the lamps.

Thus, to the dismay of the king, the lady wins the game. So, he uninterestedly asks her what she wants. She says she wants him to release all the men he has

enslaved. The king has to grant her wish, and soon she is reunited with her husband. The king, enraged by his loss, kicks out the cat.

In this comic strip, the king is the villain, and the good protagonist is the merchant's wife who saves the villainous king's victims. This comic strip begins as follows; "Once upon a time there was a king. He was a despot, and he had a strange method of acquiring slaves" (21). Thus, in the very beginning of this comic strip, it is indicated it is about a despotic king who loves to acquire slaves. As the merchant's wife says, the king lets a mere cat decide the fate of men; whether they should be slaves or not; which indicates the king's lack of value for humans and their labour. Whenever anyone asks any favour of the king, he has to play the game of chess with the cat and the lamps, and every time the king wins, and therefore, anyone who has ever asked any favour of the king has been enslaved by him, which implies the king has hardly ever done any favour to anyone, but has, on the other hand, ruthlessly enslaved several men.

In this comic strip, the reader loathes the villainous, despotic king, and rejoices as the clever and brave lady teaches him a good lesson and frees not only her husband, but also all the other men whom the king had enslaved. Thus, this comic strip is also about a despotic monarch who never does any favour to anyone, but on the other hand, is very interested in accumulating slaves.

In both the comic strips above, the villains are kings who are despotic, ruthless and unfair monarchs. The "good protagonists"; the boy in "The Right Choice" and the merchant's wife in "A Game of Chess," who are both ordinary subjects, question the despotic and unfair nature of the king and teach him a good lesson. Thus, the subjects are presented as wise and fair, unlike the despotic monarch. Thus, by failing the

despotic and unfair monarchs at the hands of the smart and fair subjects, these comic strips imply the rule of the subjects can be better than that of egotistic, self-centred and unfair despots. This implies elected representatives of the people are potentially better rulers than the hereditary succession of kings. Thus, these comic strips criticize monarchy and support democracy.

The False Mendicant

In the comic strip “Self Sacrifice,” apart from the foolish king, another significant character is the false mendicant who deceives the king. Thus, both the producer and the consumer of superstition are criticized in this comic strip. This reflects *Tinkle*’s criticism of a monarchical and superstitious society, which is unlike *Chandamama*’s glorification of a precolonial, monarchical Indian society in which such beliefs and practices had much regard and significance.

In “Faster Fenay,” a trickster appears in the guise of the *pujari* (priest) of a temple.

The protagonist Faster Fenay’s class is on a trip to the Pratapgadh fort. Fenay’s friend Subhash says to him that his father has collected some articles belonging to Shivaji’s time. Fenay replies, “I know, Subhash, such curios when sold fetch a lot of money...However, of course, your father is too wealthy to bother about selling them” (Khanolkar 61).

The conversation between the two boys is overheard by a man standing behind a tree, who appears to be a *sadhu* (Hindu mendicant) since he wears the saffron robes worn by *sadhus* and also a necklace which seems to be religious in combination with the saffron robes (Figure 5).



Figure 5

After exploring the fort, the boys climb down and go to a cottage near the Bhavani temple to rest for the night. At night, hearing some noises outside, Subhash wakes up and opens the door. Standing outside is the *sadhu*. When Subhash enquires him who he is and what he wants, the *sadhu* replies, “I am a devotee of goddess Bhavani. Have some *prasad*⁵. I am the *pujari* of the temple. So were my ancestors. I even guard a few treasures of those ancient times” (Khanolkar 62).

The *sadhu* then offers to show the treasures to Subhash, and Subhash agrees. The *sadhu* takes him to a cave where he imprisons Subhash with the help of an aid. Then he demands Subhas’ father a hefty ransom to release his son. However, through a set of twists and turns involving some brave acts by the protagonist, Fenay, the story finally comes to a happy end: Fenay saves Subhash, the fake *sadhu* dies in an accident, and the aid is arrested.

⁵ Devotional offering made to a god or deity, usually consisting of food that is later shared among devotees.

Thus, in this comic strip, the villain is a fake *sadhu*. By presenting such a character as the villain, *Tinkle* gives a warning against the deceptive ways of such fake *sadhus*. From the very beginning, the villain is dressed in the attire of a *sadhu*, and his first appearance in the story happens when he overhears the conversation between Subhash and Fenay that gives him knowledge of Subhash's wealthy father. Thus, it is evident that he has repeatedly been using the same disguise to trick devotee and tourists. After overhearing the conversation between the boys, he plans to kidnap Subhash to demand a hefty ransom from his father. There is a reference to the massive wealth he has already amassed through such deception. Thus, this comic strip warns against the deceptive nature of such fake *sadhus*.

Similar representations of *sadhus* or hermits hardly ever happen in *Chandamama*. On the other hand, in *Chandamama*, such characters are presented as pious, divine and selfless. This indicates *Tinkle's* more critical attitude towards those who claim to be at the helm of religion. The next chapter discusses more on how *Tinkle* criticizes those at the helm of religion, such as astrologers. Unlike *Chandamama* that glorified people at the helm of religion, such as Brahmins and astrologers, *Tinkle*, on the other hand, criticizes the omnipotence of such people.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed how the comic culture in India underwent much change over the turn of the century. Unlike the nativist approach of *Chandamama* published in India soon after Independence, *Tinkle* comics published in contemporary India exemplifies how the comic culture in the country has been striving towards adapting to the contemporary, modern culture. As a result, *Tinkle* is critical towards monarchy

and the omnipotence enjoyed by monarchs and religious leaders, which becomes evident through *Tinkle's* recurrent criticism of kings, Brahmins and mendicants.

However, even though contemporary comics like *Tinkle* have attempted towards becoming modern, this does not imply these comic strips entirely do away with the past. On the other hand, what *Tinkle* tries to achieve is a negotiation between modernity and tradition. This will be discussed in the next chapter that analyzes the science culture of *Tinkle*, and how, even such a science culture holds on to a kind of Indianness.

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Figures

Fig. 1. "The Necklace Multiplied!" *Chandamama*, July 1976, p. 38.

Fig. 2. "A Family of Pandits." *Chandamama*, July 1955, p. 56.

Fig. 3. Mohandas, M. "The King Who Stopped the River." *Tinkle: Double Digest No. 1 i*, 2003, p. 11.

--- Fig. 4. p. 14.

Fig. 5. Khanolkar, Bhara B Prabhakar. "Faster Fenay." *Tinkle: Double Digest No. 1 i*, 2003, p. 61.

Chapter 5

Science Culture in *Tinkle*

This chapter analyses how the contemporary Indian comic culture, as represented by *Tinkle*, negotiates between tradition and modernity, as can be seen through a science culture that is different from the Brahmanical culture of *Chandamama*, and how this science culture itself tries to promote a kind of Indianness, but at the same time being very inclusive towards other parts of the world, unlike the exclusionary nature of the nativist *Chandamama*.

The last chapter argued how *Tinkle* comics published in the 21st century, unlike the post-Independence times' *Chandamama*, attempts to adapt to the contemporary, modern Indian state, by criticizing precolonial and pre-modern systems such as monarchy and the omnipotence of kings and religious figures. This chapter elaborates upon *Tinkle*'s criticism of the power enjoyed by astrologers and soothsayers who are presented as taking advantage of the people's superstitious belief in astrology. At the same time, *Tinkle* promotes scientific knowledge among children and describes how science often overthrew superstitious beliefs by providing the reasons behind different phenomena. However, even though *Tinkle* does not show an escapist and nativist tendency as seen in *Chandamama* through the glorification of a precolonial, monarchical and religious Indian past, *Tinkle* does not entirely do away with the past: *Tinkle* criticizes monarchy, superstitiousness, and the omnipotence of religious figures, and it propagates scientific knowledge, but still, it tries to uphold an Indianness that sometimes happens even through reverence for certain aspects of the past. Ultimately, reflected in *Tinkle* is contemporary Indian society's adaption to the modern Indian state and the modern world, which can be

seen as represented in this comic through a negotiation between tradition and modernity.

Criticism of Superstition, Astrology and Casteism

While several stories in *Chandamama* promoted Hindu spirituality and glorified pious and devout Hindus, to the extent of even internalizing what would today be considered as superstitious, *Tinkle*, on the other hand, is critical of superstitious beliefs and practices.

This can be seen in the comic strip “Self Sacrifice” through the false mendicant and the foolish and superstitious king, that is, both the producer and the consumer of superstition.

From “The Lightning Conductor”: “For centuries, people did not know what lightning was. Ancient Indians believed that it was Lord Indra’s weapon. The Romans believed that it was Jupiter’s. All such myths were exploded in the 18th century by an American named Benjamin Franklin” (Teegies, Sattanathan, AN, and Nira Benegal 70).

From “Meteors and Meteorites”: “There are occasions when showers of meteors occur. Many such showers have been recorded in history. Ignorant people have considered such sightings to be manifestations of God’s anger” (Mande, Anand, and JD Isloor 53). In this comic strip intended at the scientific education of children on meteors and meteorites, the earlier superstitious belief on meteor showers as manifestations of god/s’ anger is criticized by calling those who believed in such superstitions as “ignorant.”

“All for a Quarrel” is about a corrupt astrologer. He manipulates his profession to make money through false means. After taking payment, he offers to lie to a husband

and wife named Kamu and Kami to create discord among them as wished by their jealous neighbours.

In the story “Oracular Wisdom” from *Chandamama*, there is always *truth* that is associated with astrology and the astrologer. The fortune-teller named Annaswami predicts to the Brahmin priest Kuppu Dikshit “he will become the father of a bonny son who will bring him great luck” (58), and the prediction comes *true*. Kuppu Dikshit names his son accordingly; Satyamoorthy, that is, one who is the *moorthy* or personification of *satya* or *truth*. His predictions always turn out to be *true*. Thus, it is repeatedly said in this story that astrological predictions are true. Finally, the king himself summons Satyamoorthy and tests him by asking him to make three predictions. The king is unable to alter Satyamoorthy’s predictions because of unexpected and unpredictable events taking place against the measures taken by the king, and thus, finally, all the three of Satyamoorthy’s predictions come *true*.

On the other hand, the astrologer in the comic strip in *Tinkle* is presented as a deceiving liar. He lies to the couple, Kamu and Kami. He is never presented as making any genuine astrological prediction. Thus, he is presented as a crook. Unlike Satyamoorthy in *Chandamama* who by the end of the story is rewarded by the king and appointed as the Royal Soothsayer, in *Tinkle*, by the end of the comic strip, the astrologer is presented as having invited towards himself the anger of the neighbours of Kamu and Kami since he has taken much money from them for an unaccomplished, deceptive task.

The name of the astrologer in the story from *Chandamama* is Satyamoorthy, which means one who is the *moorthy* or personification of *satya* or *truth*. On the other hand, the name of the “the astrologer” in *Tinkle* is not indicated. In the earlier

tale, the astrologer is the good protagonist, while in the latter one, the nameless, corrupt astrologer is a crook. Satyamoorthy in *Chandamama* is familiarized to the reader through the narrative method. He is introduced before his birth; through an auspicious prediction by the fortune teller Annaswami. After that, he is made familiar to the reader from childhood itself in the space of his family, even though the reader is introduced only to his father, the Brahmin priest Kuppu Dikshit. From childhood onwards, the gifted astrologer Satyamoorthy makes predictions that always come true. He is highly respected and looked forward to by the people, and finally, even the king rewards him and also appoints him as the Royal Soothsayer after thoroughly testing him. Thus, the reader travels along with the astrologer-protagonist from his birth, through his childhood with his father, and then to the palace of the king where Satyamoorthy is finally appointed as the Royal Soothsayer. Thus, throughout the story, the astrologer is a very familiar figure to the reader. Thereby, the reader is made to empathize with the astrologer-protagonist and rejoice as he prospers.

On the other hand, the astrologer in *Tinkle* is not familiar to the reader. He appears to the reader as a corrupt town astrologer whose name itself is unknown. He is just referred to as the town astrologer. Thereby, he is objectified. Through such an objectified presentation of the astrologer in *Tinkle*, he can easily stand for any town astrologer.

The narrative voice of the story says “it is well known that childless couples like to consult astrologers. Kamu and Kami were no different” (Teegies, Sattanathan and Benegal 10). This problem of Kamu and Kami is what the astrologer takes advantage. Here, when the narrative voice says “it is well known that childless couples like to consult astrologers,” the issue is more explicitly presented as not just

confining to Kamu and Kami in the story, but rather as a social problem represented in the story, and it could be any childless couple and not just characters in the story. This problem faced by the couple is taken advantage of by the astrologer. They are happy to receive him since they hope he would be able to provide some solution to their problem. This provides the astrologer with an excellent opportunity to trap them. Thus, in this comic strip, there is an implied call to the readers to be careful not to fall into the traps of corrupt astrologers like the one in the story in *Tinkle*.

Apart from this, there is a mockery of the belief in rebirths and the idea of an individual's form and way of life in one birth affecting the next. In the comic strip, both Kamu and Kami believe in the words of the astrologer. The most humorous event constituting the mockery of such beliefs happens when Kami starts licking her husband to check if he tasted of salt to test whether he, as told by the astrologer, was a salt seller in his previous birth. At this, Kamu who, awake, is engaged in contemplating upon the astrologer's words that his wife was a dog in her previous birth, jumps up, now convinced she was a dog, and shouts at her, "You dirty dog! The astrologer was right... I'll drive you out of this house!" (Teegies, Sattanathan and Benegal 12) Here, the satire is directed at people's superstitious beliefs like the belief in rebirths and the notion that a person's form and way of life in one birth would have consequences in the next birth/s. Thus, this comic strip gives the idea that because people believe in such superstitions, they are gullible to getting deceived by those like the astrologer who prosper by taking advantage of such superstitious people. This is further emphasized at the end of the comic strip as the jealous neighbours discuss their plight: Apart from having failed in their endeavour, they had to pay the astrologer for the unaccomplished task. They are under the impression the astrologer has deceived them deliberately. The story concludes with, "The jealous

neighbours had learnt a good lesson!” (*ibid*, 13) Here, the lesson referred to is a warning against trusting people like the astrologer who deceive people by taking advantage of their faith in spiritual practices like astrology.

The astrologers in both *Chandamama* as well as *Tinkle*, are Brahmins. In *Chandamama*, there is both narrative as well as pictorial description regarding the Brahmin identity of the astrologer-protagonist. This story illustrates *Chandamama*’s glorification of a precolonial Hindu society led by pious Brahmins. In the precolonial, monarchic society represented in this story, astrology, horoscope and future telling are real, and Brahmins are the people capable of and talented in such practices mainly because of their piety and closeness to the gods, as indicated by the fact that Kuppu Dikshit is a priest. Moreover, they are the caste of people specially chosen by the gods for superhuman religious capabilities. Therefore, the Brahmin priest Kuppu Dikshit’s son Satyamoorthy is born with the talent of perfect soothsaying. The king appoints Satyamoorthy as the Royal Soothsayer because of his divine capability in soothsaying, and he is also rewarded handsomely. When the story was introduced to young Indian readers of 1973, superstition and ardent belief in astrology, horoscope and soothsaying was still at large in the country, even though their sway was gradually declining. So, when this story was introduced to young Indian readers of the time, it would have been received more as a realistic depiction of a precolonial Indian society, and not as some mythical tale as would more probably be received by several young Indian readers of the contemporary society. Introducing this story to such a collective of readers could have had the effect of instilling in them at least indirectly the notion that like the events of the story, in earlier Indian societies, kings used to be happy to employ Brahmins in high positions in the palace since they were divinely talented in one way or the other. The story also

implies they often acquired such talents by just being born into that caste. Thus, the supremacy of the Brahmin caste is internalized through this story.

However, in “All for a Quarrel” from *Tinkle*, the Brahmin astrologer is presented as a crook who has no hesitancy in resorting to false means to gain wealth. The Brahmin identity of the astrologer is indicated through the images in the comic strip that indicate him wearing a sacred thread. Unlike the glorified Brahmin astrologer in *Chandamama*, the astrologer in *Tinkle* is a figure of ridicule. While the Brahmin in *Chandamama* is presented as inheriting divine astrological capabilities, the Brahmin in *Tinkle* is a fraud. Thus, unlike *Chandamama* that glorified Brahmins who were at the helm of religion, *Tinkle* criticizes their superiority and the respect accorded to them.

The first panel in Figure 1 from “All for a Quarrel” depicts Kamu and Kami lying down to sleep, while both of them are engaged in thinking about the inauspicious previous birth of the other. In the second panel, thinking Kamu is asleep, Kami slowly goes towards him and starts to lick him to check if, as said by the astrologer, he really tasted of salt because of having been a salt seller in his previous birth. This panel is hilarious since Kami is seen sneaking towards her husband in a dog-like posture. The third panel is even more hilarious since it shows Kami licking Kamu to check if he tastes of salt. In this panel, she is depicted as crouching before Kamu on both her legs as well as hands, and as licking him with her tongue, while Kamu, who is awake, stares at her with only one eye opened.



Figure 1



Figure 2

In the next panel in Figure 2, Kamu immediately rises up from his bed and shouts at his wife, saying she is a dirty dog as said by the astrologer and he would drive her out of the house. In the next panel, Kami, who is full of tears at her husband's rude words, says to Kamu the astrologer had told her Kamu was a salt seller in his

previous birth. Thereupon, both of them slowly realize the astrologer had played a trick upon them.

Here there is criticism of people's superstitious beliefs like the belief in reincarnation that make them vulnerable to the traps of corrupt astrologers and *sadhus*. The criticism is brought out well through the satirical manner in which the panels describe the ridiculousness of the situation after the couple believe the words of the astrologer. Such criticism of astrologers or soothsayers hardly ever happened in *Chandamama*.



Oracular Wisdom

In a certain city there lived a Priest named Kuppu Dikshit who was very poor. He was married and found it difficult to make both ends meet.

Somehow he managed to eke out a living. Frustrated beyond measure, he sought out a fortune teller named Annaswami and asked him to predict his future.

Annaswami after examining his horoscope opined gravely, "Well, Sir, you will become the father of a bonny soo and he will briog you great luck."

Kuppu Dikshit was not heartened by this statement. He thought his misery would deep-
eo with an addition to his family. Some months later, true to Annaswami's prediction,

he became the father of a bonny boy. The fond father christened him Satyamoorthy and reared him up with great care. As the lad grew up, Kuppu Dikshit noticed that he had a special quality. The lad had oracular wisdom and his words proved to be right always. His fame spread and many came to him with their questions and received answers which invariably proved to be correct.

One day, Kuppu Dikshit decided to test the truth of his son's oracles. So he asked, "Son, tell me what I have in mind. Will it endure or depart?"

Satyamoorthy replied, "It will depart." Whereupon the father rejoiced hecause, he had wanted to know whether the

Figure 3 is from the story “Oracular Wisdom” in *Chandamama*, which depicts the Brahmin priest Kuppu Dikshit and his son Satyamoorthy. Both of them are presented as quite well-built, unlike the obese astrologer in *Chandamama*. They are dressed in the kind of robes usually worn by Hindu priests and sages, and the sacred thread worn by Brahmins is visible around their neck. Thus, the religious and Brahmin identity of both the priest as well as his son is very evident in the image. Even though the focus of the story is upon the son’s oracular wisdom, this image emphasizes the father, the Brahmin priest, as well, who is presented as engaged in teaching his son from the manuscripts placed on the table on which the son also is seated, which indicates the priest-father has a significant role in the growth and development of his son. Such a pictorial representation implies the boy has oracular wisdom because of three reasons: initially because of having been born as a Brahmin, since the caste of the father and the son is repeatedly emphasized in the story both textually as well as pictorially; secondly because of the piety and goodness of the Brahmin priest; thirdly because of the priest’s pious upbringing of his son by teaching him holy manuscripts as indicated in the image. All of these factors, in one way or the other, internalize the caste hierarchy and the respectable status of Brahmins.

Figure 4 depicts *Satymoorthy* making his astrological predictions to a large group of people who are gathered around him. It is indicated in the story a large number of people come to visit him, even from distant places, due to his exceptional oracular capability. He is seated at the centre with many people standing around him who listen to him with great interest and respect. Most of them are presented as standing in a bowing angle with folded hands, which is a gesture of respect. Thus, *Chandamama* presents a precolonial, religious Indian society in which people have much belief in astrology and soothsaying, and the astrologer is presented as a

respected and pious figure. As Satyamoorthy makes his predictions, his father, the Brahmin priest, watches from behind. In this image as well, like the previous one, the astrologer's Brahmin father is presented with much significance and respect.

family's poverty would endure or vanish, and his son had said it would not linger any longer.

In fact, Kuppu Dikshit made a lot of money from the correct answers of his son, as those satisfied with the lad's replies usually paid a token fee.

One day Annaswami, the astrologer came to their house and queried Satyamoorthy. "Tell me, will my old mother continue to suffer from her diseases? When will salvation come to her?"

Satyamoorthy replied, "By to-morrow afternoon." The next day, Annaswami's aged mother died.

Soon the King of that land heard about Satyamoorthy's miraculous powers of prophecy. So he sent for father and son. Kuppu Dikshit was overjoyed to receive the royal summons as he thought he would be appointed to some position in the court. But the King gave Satyamoorthy three slips of paper and said, "I understand that your prophecies come true. Well, I have written down three questions on this paper. Write down the answers and we will read them out to the Court."

The King's first question was



whether now he would go to the left or to the right of the throne before sitting on it, or whether he would go straight to the royal chair.

The lad wrote the answer and looked at the King. The King stood where he was and read out the answer. Satyamoorthy had written "The King will not sit on the throne now." Everyone applauded because that proved to be true.

Then the King took the lad to the garden and pointing to a coconut said, "Now lad, tell me, when will that coconut fall?" Satyamoorthy replied, "In a quarter of an hour."

The King asked one of his

Figure 4



men to climb the tree and pluck the coconut but the latter found it difficult going as a lot of ants bit him all over the body. So he came down and propping up a ladder began to climb again. In the meantime, the coconut dropped from the tree. A quarter of an hour had elapsed since the prophecy.

Then the King said, "Well, lad, I shall now pass through the gates of the fort. Write down the method of my entrance into the fort."

Satyamoorthy wrote the answer on a slip of paper and gave it to the King.

The King propped up a ladder against the wall of the fort and

climbed up. But as he was coming down on the other side, he slipped and fell and hurt himself so severely that he could barely walk. So his soldiers had to carry him through a small gate into the fort.

Later the King read out what Satyamoorthy had written on the paper.

"The King will not use any of the normal entrances to the fort. In fact, he will be carried into the fort through a smaller gate," was what Satyamoorthy had written.

The King and the entire court were pleasantly surprised to see that all three questions had been answered correctly.

So the King said, "Satyamoorthy, my lad, you have been well named, because what you say proves to be true always.

Then he rewarded him handsomely and appointed him as a Royal Soothsayer at the court. From that day on, Kuppu Dikshit was freed from the numbing clutches of poverty and lived happily ever afterwards.

Why is the tail of a dog like the middle of a tree?

Because it is farthest from the back.

Figure 5

Figure 5 from “Oracular Wisdom” shows the young astrologer and his father assembled before the king. Thus, finally, even the king applauds the talent of the young soothsayer. He rewards the boy handsomely and appoints him as the Royal Soothsayer. The viewer sees the incident from behind Satyamorthy and his father as they face the king. Besides the three, the image also shows a few courtiers as well. Even though they are all in the palace, everyone is standing. It is not usual for a king or even his ministers and other courtiers to stand before any ordinary guests. The fact that they are all standing before the young soothsayer and his father, the Brahmin priest, implies they are not just ordinary guests in the king’s palace. Thus, this comic strip glorifies practices like astrology and soothsaying by glorifying their practitioners and by internalizing such practices.

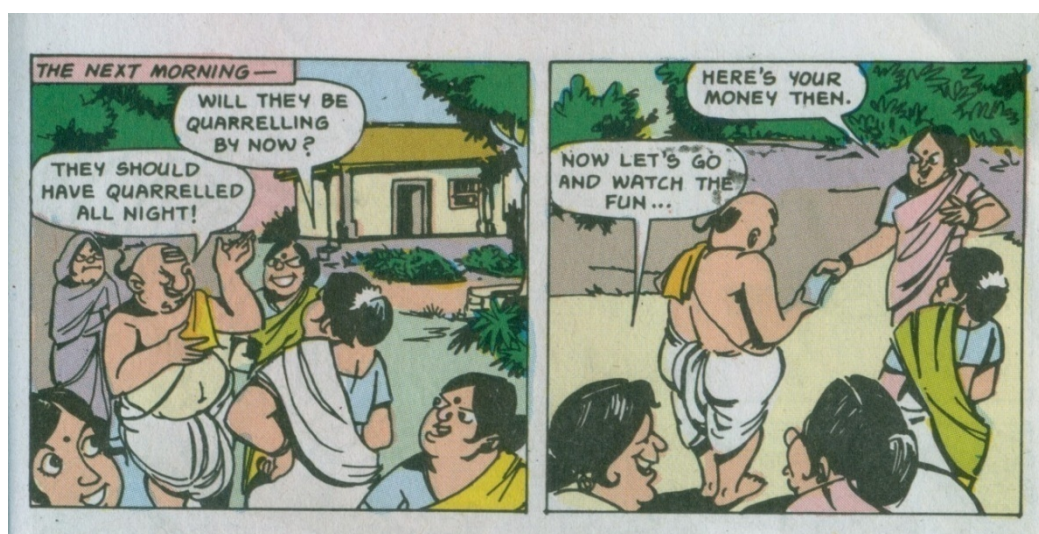


Figure 6

The panels in figure 6 show the astrologer in “All for a Quarrel” from *Tinkle*. Here, the astrologer is presented as obese and pot-bellied unlike the soothsayer and his father, the Brahmin priest, in *Chandamama*, who are well-built. This indicates the astrologer in *Tinkle* is a lazy glutton who undergoes very less physical labour but yet

makes an excellent living through his corrupt practising of astrology as narrated in the comic strip. That he is a Brahmin is indicated by the sacred thread he is wearing. Instead of the full robes of the *sadhu* worn by Satyamoorthy and his father in *Chandamama*, the astrologer in *Tinkle* wears only a *dhoti* and a small saffron shawl on his shoulder. While everyone stands around Satyamoorthy with great respect and anticipation for his predictions, the women standing around the astrologer in *Tinkle* do not show any sign of respect towards him. The second panel shows the astrologer receiving money from one of the women for assumedly causing quarrel between the couple. Thus, in this comic strip in *Tinkle*, the deal between the astrologer and his *customers* is presented as more commercial than spiritual, while Satyamoorthy in *Tinkle* is presented as having been divinely gifted with oracular wisdom.

Thus, while the soothsayer is glorified in *Chandamama*, on the other hand, in *Tinkle*, the astrologer is presented as a subject of ridicule. Moreover, while the practice of astrology is internalized in *Chandamama*, in *Tinkle*, it is criticized. Apart from this, *Tinkle* also mocks at people's superstitious belief in rebirths that make them susceptible to getting deceived by tricksters like the corrupt astrologer in the comic strip "All for a Quarrel". More than its intention of teaching Indian culture and tradition to the Indian children of English educated India, more prominent through such a glorified representation of a religious figure like an astrologer situated in a complimentary environment with even the monarch in support of such practitioners shows the comic's inclination towards a precolonial, feudal, monarchical India in which religion was at the centre. On the other hand, the derogatory representation of the astrologer in *Tinkle* reflects the comic's scientific world view that ridicules superstitious practices like astrology.

“Manduka: The Lucky Astrologer” is about a dull and ignored Brahmin who feigns to be an astrologer and becomes famous and prosperous through a fortunate turn of circumstances, and also because of the gullibility and superstitiousness of the people who have ardent belief in the practice of astrology. Thus, this comic strip criticizes the practice of astrology and the easily gullible nature of the people because of being superstitious.

The comic strip begins with the Brahmin sadly contemplating upon the fact that he has not been called for a wedding feast at a merchant’s house that almost all the people of the village are attending. He sadly thinks upon the fact that people have always ignored him ever since his childhood, except his father who never forgot to tell him one thing often, “You are as dull as a *manduka* (frog) in a well” (27). This is based upon the Sanskrit proverb *kupamanduka* meaning “a frog in a well.” The Brahmin says to himself, “That’s what I’ve become, a *manduka*! And I’m tired of it” (28).

Such a representation of the Brahmin in this comic strip is opposed to *Chandamama*’s frequent representation of Brahmin characters as intelligent, wise and respected. Thus, while *Chandamama* glorified the religious head and even internalized the respect accorded to Brahmins in cast-centred, precolonial Indian societies, *Tinkle* has no hesitancy in presenting Brahmin characters as insignificant in the society represented.

The Brahmin wishes he could do something to make people notice him, and he suddenly comes upon an idea. He runs back to the place where the wedding feast is going on and quietly leads away the horse on which the bridegroom had arrived. The next morning, the bride’s father, the merchant, comes to know the horse is missing

and it could not be found even after much searching. This is when the Brahmin's wife, according to his instruction, arrives at the house of the wedding and informs that her husband, being an astrologer, would be able to help find the missing horse. The merchant asks for the astrologer to be brought to him immediately. The Brahmin arrives, and after pretending to read some astrological charts, discloses where the horse is, that is, the place where he had left the horse. Inevitably, the horse is found precisely where the astrologer mentioned. The overjoyed merchant rewards the Brahmin handsomely.

Moreover, the people gathered at the wedding praise the talent of the astrologer. Soon, people throughout the village talk to each other about the talented astrologer. The comic strip shows one villager saying to another, "I had always thought he was a half-wit" (31), and the other villager says, "You should never go by appearances" (31).

Soon, everyone begins to show respect towards the Brahmin. He is pleased and says to himself, "At last the *manduka* has jumped out of the well!" (32) At this, one among two men walking together in the opposite direction of the Brahmin says, "He talks to himself!" (32) His companion says, "All great men have some peculiarity or the other" (32).

Since the reader knows the fact that the Brahmin has no particular talent, and all he has done is to use a simple trick to take advantage of the people's belief in astrology, the Brahmin's rise to stardom as an astrologer invokes much laughter in the reader. The high level of humour of the situation lies in the fact that the "dull and half-witted Brahmin" has succeeded in making fools of everyone else.

The Brahmin's fame spreads far and wide, and finally, he is summoned by the king to find his queen's stolen necklace. The king tells him he is not to leave until the necklace has been found. The Brahmin is now in a difficult situation. He worries over what the king would do to him when he comes to know the Brahmin has no talent at all, and that he is a fraud. He shuts himself in the chamber allotted to him in the palace, and curses himself for having donned the role of an astrologer. He starts to blame his tongue, saying, "What have you done, *jihvah* (tongue in Sanskrit)? Why did you do it?" (34)

Meanwhile, the maid named Jihvah, who had stolen the necklace, has been lurking outside the Brahmin's door, afraid she would get caught by the "talented astrologer." Upon hearing the Brahmin blaming his tongue, she thinks it is her he is blaming, and she immediately barges in and confesses to the astrologer she had stolen the necklace in a moment of weakness, and she begs him not to reveal her to the king. He agrees to forgive her, but she should tell him where she had hidden the necklace. Later that day, as the king is strolling in the garden, the astrologer says to him he knows where the necklace is, pointing to the bottom of a tree. The gardener digs there, and the necklace is found. The king applauds the Brahmin, saying, "You are without a doubt the greatest astrologer I have ever met" (36), and then the king asks him who had hid the necklace there.

The Brahmin replies, "That must remain a secret, Maharaj. There are some things which even I may not know" (36).

However, one among the king's retinue whispers to him, "There is some mystery here, Maharaj. If he is such a great astrologer, why can't he tell us who the

thief is? He must have found the necklace in the palace and hidden it here himself. Let us test him once more” (37).

So, the king tells the Brahmin he would be rewarded handsomely, but he is not to leave the palace as yet. After some time, the Brahmin is summoned to the king’s chamber. Pointing to a jar placed atop a pillar, the king asks the Brahmin to say what is inside it without looking. The Brahmin, totally worried, realizes there is no escape now, and even anticipates his death sentence following the revelation of his deception. Amidst the torrent of thoughts in his mind, remembering what his father used to say to him often, he says to himself, “O *manduka*, you were better off in the well” (38).

However, the king claps his hands, saying, “Well done! I should never have doubted your powers. There is indeed a *manduka* in the jar” (38).

A servant tilts the jar to reveal a frog jumping out. The king rewards the Brahmin with costly gifts, and the Brahmin returns home to a hero’s welcome.

This comic strip criticizes the superstitiousness belief in astrology as seen among the people of the society represented. This society is a precolonial, monarchical Indian society ruled by a king, similar to that of the societies represented in *Chandamama*. However, while *Chandamama* glorifies the astrologer and the practice of astrology, *Tinkle*, on the other hand, presents the astrologer as a “dull and ignored Brahmin” who uses a simple trick that along with a set of fortunate circumstances lead him to success and fame. The astrologer in this comic strip is always referred to as Brahmana, and there is no indication of his name except at once place where it is mentioned his name is Bhojraj. Thus, the Brahmin caste of the astrologer is projected in this comic strip.

The progress of the astrologer in *Tinkle* takes place in the same direction as that of the astrologer in *Chandamama*. However, the reasons and methods of their progress are very different: While the astrologer in *Chandamama* progresses through his oracular wisdom, the one in *Tinkle* progresses through trickery and sheer luck.

In the story “Oracular Wisdom” from *Chandamama*, the Brahmin protagonist’s son is born with oracular wisdom, and his predictions always turn out to be true. On the other hand, the Brahmin protagonist in “Manduka: The Lucky Astrologer” in *Tinkle* is born with no particular talent.

In *Chandamama*, the astrologer’s father names his son accordingly; Satyamoorthy, that is, one who is the *moorthy* or personification of *satya* or truth. On the other hand, in *Tinkle*, the protagonist’s father often said to him, “You are as dull as a *manduka* (frog) in a well.” Thus, in either of the narratives, the reader is introduced to the fathers of the protagonists. While the astrologer’s father in *Chandamama* is presented as always supportive towards the development of his talented son, and as engaged in teaching him scriptures, the father of the Brahmin protagonist in *Tinkle* is presented as one who always mocked his “mediocre son” and thereby discouraged him from whatever development and growth he could have attained through encouragement and proper guidance.

In *Chandamama*, the astrologer becomes famous through his oracular wisdom, and people come from different regions to listen to his predictions. On the other hand, the Brahmin in *Tinkle* feigns to be an astrologer and becomes famous through trickery.

In either of the narratives, the astrologer-protagonist is summoned by the king, and both of them are tested. In *Chandamama*, the king gives to the astrologer,

Satyamoorthy, three slips of paper with three different questions. Satyamoorthy should foretell the outcome of the situations mentioned in the three questions, and the answers would be read out to the whole court. After Satyamoorthy makes the predictions, the king takes measures towards altering the situations aimed at failing the predictions. However, the king is unable to alter them successfully because of unexpected and unpredictable events taking place against the measures taken by him, and thus, finally, all the three of Satyamoorthy's predictions come true. So, the king, as well as the whole court, is highly impressed by his talent. The king rewards him handsomely and appoints him as the royal soothsayer. However, as the king tests the astrologer in *Tinkle*, he succeeds through sheer luck. He is rewarded handsomely, and he returns home to a hero's welcome.

Both the narratives are situated in precolonial, monarchical India societies. While the practice of astrology is presented as real in *Chandamama*, *Tinkle* presents astrology as superstitious. The astrologer is glorified in *Chandamama*, but in *Tinkle*, he is presented as a very mediocre man. The latter becomes successful as an astrologer through trickery and sheer luck that function very well because the people, being superstitious, are easily gullible to such deception. Thus, in *Tinkle*, the criticism is aimed more at the superstitious people than at the astrologer who takes advantage of their superstitiousness. Thus, while *Chandamama* glorifies the practice of astrology and the respect accorded to astrologers in precolonial Indian societies, *Tinkle* criticizes such societies by pointing out that the superstitious nature of such societies could have made the people susceptible to getting deceived by people like the astrologer.

The astrologers in both *Chandamama* and *Tinkle* are Brahmins, and their Brahmin identity is emphasized in either of the narratives through text as well as

images. In both the narratives, the images depict the astrologers as wearing the sacred thread. In *Tinkle*, throughout the comic strip, the astrologer is referred to as Brahmin, and not by his name. Therefore, while *Chandamama* internalizes the superiority of Brahmins by presenting them as inheriting or getting blessed with divine capabilities like oracular wisdom, *Tinkle*, on the other hand, presents the Brahmin protagonist as a dull man. He rises to fame as an astrologer not because of his talent, but through a fortunate set of circumstances catalyzed by the people's superstitiousness. Thus, in *Tinkle*, the Brahmin is a figure of ridicule.

Thus, by placing such a fake yet successful astrologer, who is a Brahmin, in a precolonial, monarchical, religious Indian society, this comic strip suggests such fake astrologers may have thrived in such precolonial Indian societies. Thus, unlike *Chandamama's* glorification of precolonial, feudal, monarchical and religious Indian societies, *Tinkle* criticizes the superstitiousness nature of such societies, thereby promoting rational and scientific thinking and knowledge.

Figure 7 depicts the obese and pot-bellied astrologer in "Manduka: The Lucky Astrologer" from *Tinkle*.

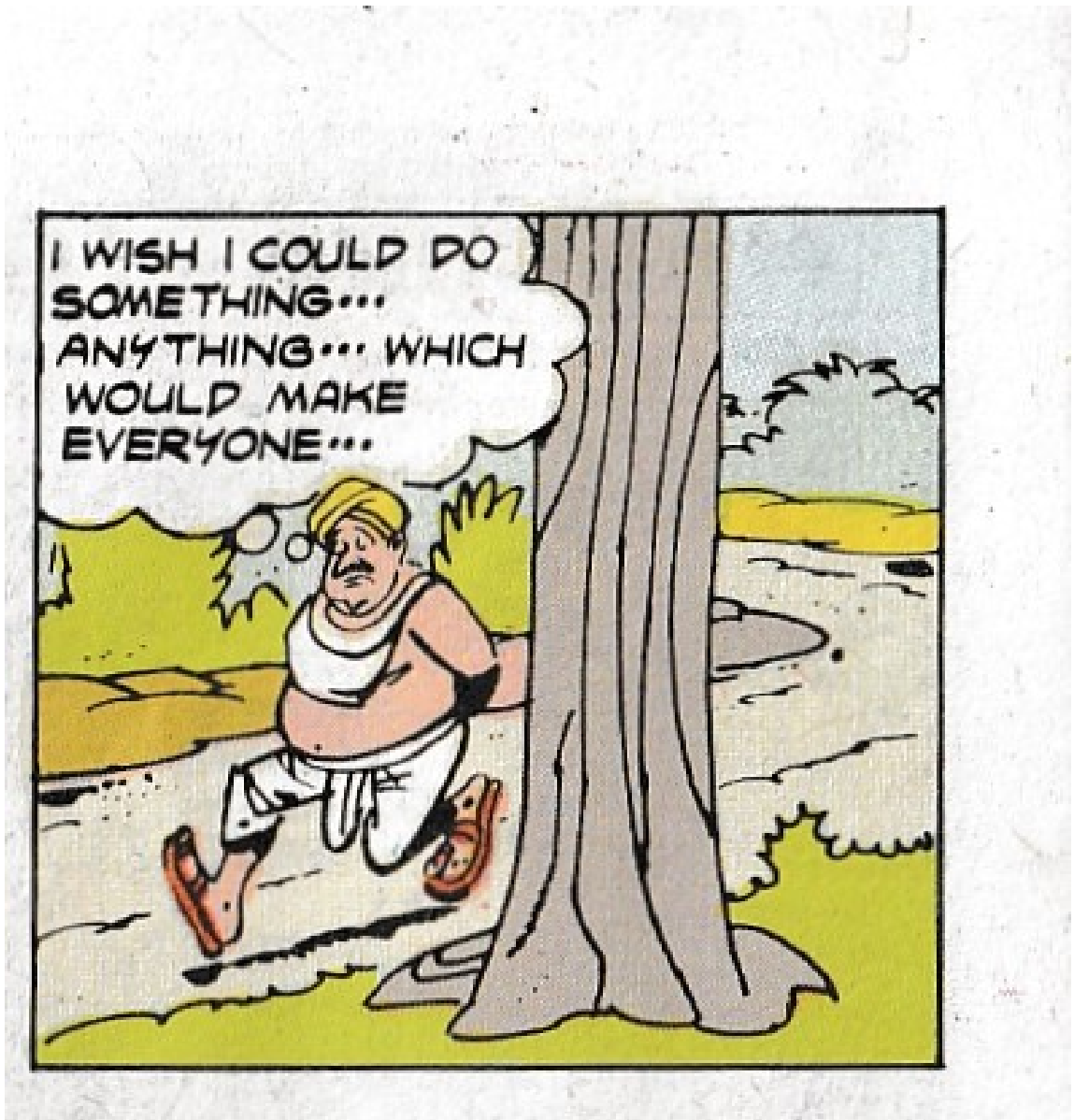


Figure 7

In figure 8, the bride's father says to the astrologer he would reward him handsomely if the astrologer would help them find the missing horse. As he says this, he stands bowed before the astrologer, and has his hands held together in respect. The astrologer is seated on what seems to be a comfortable cushion. He has a very proud expression on his face as he says he would find out where the horse (hidden by himself) is within a few moments. This image depicts the respect accorded to the astrologer as represented by the merchant's bowed and respectful posture. It brings

out how a very mediocre and talentless Brahmin disguised as an astrologer elicits such respect by taking advantage of the people's superstitious belief in astrology.

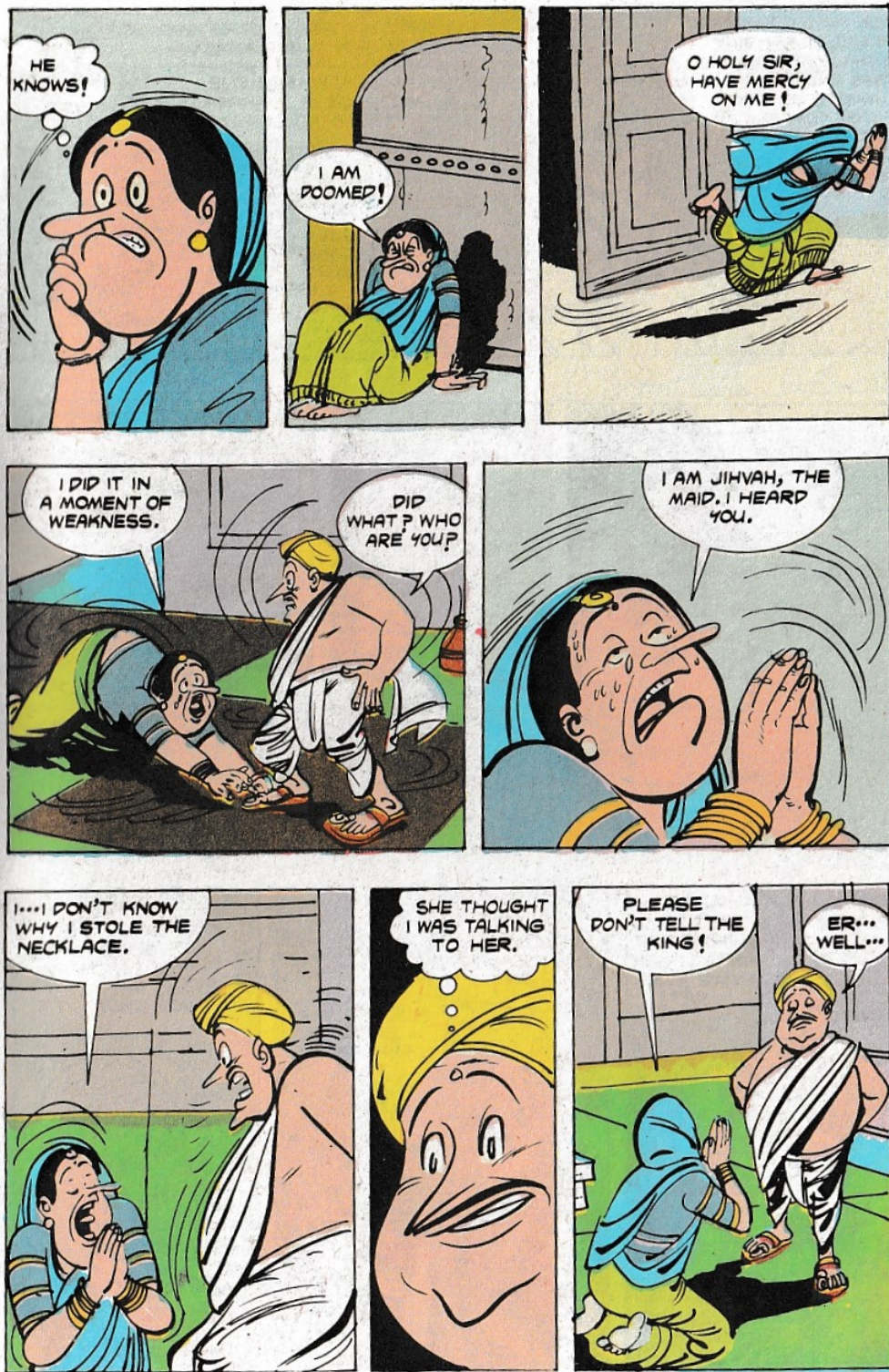


Figure 8



Figure 9

In figure 9, after the Brahmin has proved his astrological prowess by (stealing and) finding the bridegroom's horse, the people in the village begin to show him respect even as he walks along streets or public places, as seen in the image with people bowing down with their hands held together at the sight of the astrologer. As indicated in the thought bubble, the astrologer thinks, "Everyone bows to me now," reflecting upon the fact that everyone used to ignore the Brahmin earlier.



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Figure 10

In the panels in figure 10, the maid who had stolen the queen's necklace, under the impression the "great astrologer" has identified her crime, kneels before him, falls at his feet, apologizes repeatedly, and begs him not to reveal her to the king.

In this comic strip, even though the astrologer is fake, the superstitious people are easily deceived, and therefore, all of them have great respect and admiration for him; as seen through the images depicting the respectful demeanour of the people, the merchant and the maid. Even the king is much awed by "the power of the great astrologer." Thus, the comic strip describes the Brahmin's progress as an astrologer, which becomes easily possible since the people are easily gullible because of being superstitious. Thus, the criticism is aimed more at the superstitious people than at the Brahmin who takes advantage of their gullibility to become successful and elicits much undeserving respect from them. Since this comic strip is situated in a precolonial, monarchical Indian society, it poses the idea that people who lived in precolonial and earlier Indian societies, because of their superstitiousness, may have accorded undeserving respect to fake astrologers like the one in the comic strip, who would have garnered fame, wealth and power by sowing and harvesting superstition.

Science Culture

Tinkle tries to instil scientific knowledge among its young readers through several of its comic strips. *Tinkle* has some comic strips that are exclusively on scientific inventions or discoveries. Such comic strips contain enough details for a child to write a good answer for an examination question on the topic. Thus, its representation of knowledge is as scientific, unlike earlier comics like *Chandamama* that present liturgical knowledge as the right and complete form of knowledge that was practised and taught by wise and knowledgeable *gurus* and hermits. As already described, unlike earlier comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha*, *Tinkle*

contains several stories and narratives from other parts of the world, and especially from the West as a result of the colonial legacy and because of the Western nature of globalization. Apart from such Western stories and narratives, even several Indian stories in *Tinkle* also display much influence of Western literature and culture. Such influences are particularly prominent in the science-centric narratives in this comic, which is not surprising because colonized and developing nations like India have often followed the West in the realm of science and technology since the West has undoubtedly been superior in this realm (Chatterjee 6).

Tinkle contains several comic strips on scientific inventions and discoveries, like the origins and development of the bicycle (The Story of the Bicycle), the origins and development of paper (From Clay Tablets to Paper), the discovery of the possibility of making silk cloth from the cocoon (The Story of Silk), Benjamin Franklin's discovery of electric current in lightning and his subsequent invention of the lightning conductor (The Lightning Conductor), Thomas Alva Edison's invention of the tin-foil phonograph and the later development of the gramophone (The Gramophone), the history of steel and how steel is produced (Steel), how an airliner is flown (Flying an Airliner), the origins and development of lifts (Lifts), comets (Comets), meteors and meteorites (Meteors and Meteorites), and on the uses of salt and how it is obtained (Salty Facts).

Even though Western influences are very prevalent in scientific comic strips in *Tinkle*, several such comic strips are not entirely Western. However, they do often constitute certain elements, characteristics and archetypal characters from Indian literature and culture, including those that are present in earlier comics like *Chandamama*. Thereby, even in the realm of science that Indians wanted to learn from the West, there are attempts at Indianization. This can be seen through the

sadhu who imparts scientific knowledge in “How an Elephant was Weighed”. In this comic strip, the king of a land asks his mahout to tell him how much his elephant weighs. The king wants the mahout to give him the answer by the next morning or else he would be beheaded. The mahout is in a great dilemma because it is an age when there are no scales to weigh elephants. As he is thus wandering around in despair, he meets a *sadhu* who asks him why he looks very glum. The mahout relates his dilemma to the *sadhu*, and the latter offers to provide a solution to the problem. He asks the mahout to bring the elephant to the river. Then he instructs him to get the elephant into a boat and measure the level up to which it sinks because of the weight of the elephant. The *sadhu* then asks the mahout to fill the boat with sand until it sinks to the same level to which it had sunk by the weight of the elephant. Thereby, the mahout gets the weight of the elephant by measuring the weight of the sand in it.

This comic strip is set in a precolonial, monarchical Indian society. Its main aim is to familiarize youngsters with a simple science. Here this is done in the form of advice from a *sadhu*. However, in this story, unlike the stories in *Chandamama*, the *sadhu* imparts not liturgical but scientific knowledge. Thereby, even though the focus of knowledge has changed from the liturgical to the scientific, the *sadhu* or the hermit still plays a significant role. There is no story in *Chandamama* in which a hermit imparts scientific thinking like the *sadhu* in this story in *Tinkle*. Even though the science in this story does not involve any modern technology, it is still science, and thereby, the *sadhu* in *Tinkle* is presented as a man of science.



Figure 11

Figure 11 from “How an Elephant was Weighed” presents the archetypal figure of the hermit like that in *Chandamama*. The hermit is seated under a tree as he is typically presented in *Chandamama* as well. The mahout is standing before the hermit with his hands held together in a posture of respect towards the *sadhu*. Such folding together of hands has religious significance since that is usually done by devotees standing before a god or deity. Therefore, the mahout’s act of holding his hands together before the *sadhu* indicates he looks upon the *sadhu* as a holy man with a certain level of godliness. This is in line with the representation of the archetypal hermit in *Chandamama*. Thereby, since the archetypal hermit in *Chandamama* is a devout and “divine” Hindu, the *sadhu* in this comic strip in *Tinkle* is also of the same type. This indicates that even though the *sadhu* in this story is a man with a scientific bend of mind, that does not mean he has no holiness or religious significance.



Figure 12

In figure 12, the *sadhu*'s pointed finger stands out of the second panel and reaches out into the gutter to point towards the first panel containing the fulfilment of the *sadhu*'s advice. Such usage of the gutter lay's emphasis upon the fact that it is the *sadhu* who advises on how to weigh the elephant successfully. Thus, even though the theme of this comic strip is a matter of science, the *sadhu* is given great significance.

Apart from the archetypal figure of the *sadhu* of *Chandamama*, the archetypal figure of the king also reappears in some science-centred comic strips in *Tinkle*. A comic strip on the production of steel (Steel) is detailed enough to aid a school-going child to write an excellent answer to an examination-question on how steel is produced. Here it is also mentioned "the steel that was made in ancient India was famous for its good quality. It was used to make surgical goods, among many other things. It is said that King Porus (of India) presented Alexander (the Great) with steel *lotas* (vessels). Even the famous swords of Damascus were made from Indian steel" (Mande, Anand, and Dev Nadkarni 56). Thus, even though the focus of this comic strip is the scientific aspect of the subject since it is on how steel is produced, there is no hesitancy in description and imagery when the Indian contribution is described.

In this comic strip, King Porus is representative of the archetypal figure of the noble warrior-king in early Indian comics like *Chandamama*. While in *Chandamama*, this archetype was used to uphold tradition and culture, in *Tinkle*, on the other hand, the king is presented as someone who passes over a significant scientific achievement to the king of another land and thereby plays a significant role in the spreading of information about it. Thus, here, the valiant Indian king is presented as having had exposure to the steel produced through the best of existing raw materials and technology. Thereby, India is presented as a land that was good with technology and as having helped in the development of new technology in other parts of the world, including the highly technologically advanced West.

However, unlike *Chandamama*, in *Tinkle*, there is hardly any space for the superstitious. Instead, such beliefs are often subjected to criticism. This can be seen through some comic strips that directly criticize such beliefs. In some comic strips on scientific discoveries and inventions, *Tinkle* describes how certain superstitious beliefs were challenged and overthrown by scientific discoveries and inventions. This can be seen through the comic strip on Benjamin Franklin's experiments on electricity using thunder (The Lightning Conductor), which begins as follows, "For centuries, people did not know what lightning was. Ancient Indians believed that it was Lord Indra's weapon. The Romans believed that it was Jupiter's. All such myths were exploded in the 18th century by an American named Benjamin Franklin" (Teegies, Sattanathan, AN, and Nira Benegal 70). The events that follow in this comic strip constitute the experiments of Benjamin Franklin on lightning that help him prove it is electric charge coming down. Thereby, the superstitious beliefs of both Indians as well as Romans, are presented as having been overthrown by Franklin's scientific experiments. Thus, unlike earlier comics like *Chandamama*, in

Tinkle, even the sacred realm of religion, when it is superstitious, is made to bow down to the findings of science.

Later in this comic strip, after some descriptions on Benjamin Franklin's invention of the lightning conductor and how it functions; "In the beginning, people did not want to use lighting conductors. They felt that if God wanted to strike a particular building with lightning, it was not right for man to stop him. Nowadays, lightning conductors are a common sight, everywhere" (Teegies, Sattanathan, AN, and Nira Benegal 72). Thereby, such superstitious beliefs are presented as belonging to the past and as not part of the contemporary society.

Thus, this comic strip refers to two superstitious beliefs. The first is the superstitious belief of both Indians as well as Romans that lightning was the weapon of the king of the gods, Indra and Jupiter for Indians and Romans respectively. The second superstition derives from the first one; in the form of strong opposition against the installation of lightning conductors claiming that if the gods wanted to strike a building with lightning, men had no right to stop it. Here, the two given superstitions, and especially the way they are described, suggest some sort of universality. In the case of the first one, universality is suggested by indicating the same superstition was practised by people belonging to two very different parts of the world; India and Europe. In the case of the other superstition, universality is suggested by not providing specific details regarding the place or places where people opposed the construction of lightning conductors, which implicitly creates the impression the same kind of opposition took place in different parts of the world.

In this comic strip as well as the one on steel, there is an attitude of friendliness towards the foreign, unlike the exclusionary, nativist approach that is more prevalent

in earlier comics like *Chandamama*. In the comic strip on steel, friendship is shown between the Indian king Porus and the Greek emperor Alexander through the mentioning of Porus' gifting of Alexander with steel vessels of high quality. In the comic strip on Benjamin Franklin's experiments with electricity, there is an attitude of friendship and alliance with the foreign; the West. This can be seen through the reference to Indians and Romans sharing the same superstitious belief that lightning was the weapon of the king of the gods. Thus, in both comic strips, India is placed on the same trajectory with that of the West in the realm of scientific developments. Thereby, these comic strips implicitly claim India has played a significant role behind several scientific developments, and this country's scientific thinking and progress has been simultaneous and often intersecting with that of the West.

"Meteors and Meteorites" is an informative comic strip on meteors and meteorites. Apart from educating children on astronomical discoveries about celestial objects, this comic strip also criticizes the earlier superstitious belief in meteor showers as manifestations of God's anger: "There are occasions when showers of meteors occur. Many such showers have been recorded in history. Ignorant people have considered such sightings to be manifestations of God's anger" (Mande, Anand, and JD Isloor 53). Here, people who believed in meteor showers as manifestations of God's anger are called ignorant, which implies that the ignorant condition of superstitiousness can be overcome through science education. Thus, even though the superstition presented here may have been part of the religious belief system of an earlier age, it is criticized as ignorant and scientific knowledge is presented as real knowledge. Moreover, here too, universality is achieved by not indicating the spatiotemporality of the people who believed in the superstition.

“Salty Facts,” a comic strip on the uses of salt and how it is obtained, criticizes superstitious beliefs related to salt: “In the West, it was considered unlucky to spill salt. However, the person who had spilt salt could keep bad luck away by throwing a little salt over his or her left shoulder. Saltiness was associated with tears, and some people would pick up the salt that had been spilt and throw it into fire. This they did to dry up in advance the tears that were to be shed” (Mande, Anand, and Shobha Rao 75).

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that since the contemporary education system is highly centred on the education of science to children, contemporary issues of *Tinkle* comics put scientific education at the centre, while at the same time, upholding an Indianness through the glorification of the past, as seen through the archetypal figures of the *sadhu* and the king. *Tinkle* associates these archetypal figures with science by presenting the *sadhu* as imparting scientific knowledge and by narrating the event of King Porus gifting high-quality steel vessels to Alexander. At the same time, earlier superstitious beliefs and practices like astrology have hardly any place in the society portrayed in *Tinkle*, which is because of the advent of modernity, resulting in the negation of everything irrational and scientifically not provable, which can be seen in *Tinkle* through the corrupt astrologer who is a figure of ridicule, unlike the glorified astrologer in *Chandamama*. Thus, while *Chandamama* published in India soon after Independence reflected an inclination for the precolonial past, the contemporary *Tinkle*, on the other hand, is situated within the contemporary society, reflecting a negotiation between both tradition as well as modernity.

Chandamama was a comic that intended to teach Indian children “Indian tradition and culture.” Therefore, it was very nativist in its approach and wanted to retain the exclusivity of “Indian stories” that talked about the glory of the past. “Foreign countries and cultures” were presented only in those stories situated in foreign lands. All this resulted in the glorification of a pre-British and pre-Mughal, Hindu culture, accompanied with the othering of non-Hindu communities and cultures.

However, unlike *Chandamama*, *Tinkle*’s focus is not on “Indian tradition and culture,” but on scientific knowledge. When it comes to the representation of science culture, the comic culture in India is not nativistic. Partha Chatterjee writes about the rise of nationalism in colonial India. According to him, even though nationalism emerged in India in the inner realm of culture; of traditions, customs and practices the Indian people wanted to preserve without any foreign intervention, in the outer realm of technology and material prosperity, the West had proved its superiority, and therefore, in this realm, Indians wanted to learn from the West and develop accordingly (Chatterjee 6). By the turn of the century, India has come far ahead in the realm of science, but it is still not on par with the West. Even though the science-centric comic strips in *Tinkle* do not indicate India as following the West, what is seen in *Tinkle* is a friendly attitude towards the West whenever science is discussed.

Moreover, as described in this chapter, science-centric comic strips in *Tinkle* have a universal characteristic since they constitute allusions to the contributions of different countries towards inventions and discoveries, and they also describe how some inventions and discoveries overthrew superstitious beliefs. However, these comic strips also take care to mention the Indian contributions to different inventions and discoveries. Thus, while *Chandamama*, having been a culturalist comic, was

very nativistic and exclusionary in its portrayal of “Indian tradition and culture,” *Tinkle*, on the other hand, being a modern and science-centric comic, is inclusive and friendly towards the progress of rational and scientific thinking in India as well as the rest of the world.

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Figures

Fig. 1. Teegies, Sattanathan, AN, and Nira Benegal. "All for a Quarrel." *Tinkle: Double Digest No. 10 ii*, 2004, p. 11.

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Fig. 3. "Oracular Wisdom." *Chandamama*, June 1973, p. 58.

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Fig. 6. Teegies, Sattanathan, AN, and Nira Benegal. "All for a Quarrel." *Tinkle: Double Digest No. 10 ii*, 2004, p. 13.

Fig. 7. "Manduka: The Lucky Astrologer." *Tinkle: Double Digest No. 20 i*, 2005, p. 28.

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Fig. 11. Rane, Chandrakant, and Shruti Desai. "How an Elephant was Weighed." *Tinkle: Double Digest No. 1 ii*, 2003, p. 39.

--- Fig. 12. p. 39.

Conclusion

In post-Independence India, comics like *Chandamama* and *Amar Chitra Katha* were created to publish Indian comics containing exclusively Indian content, unlike the Western comics that were very popular in India during the time. Moreover, these comics intended to teach Indian culture and traditions when the newly formed Indian education system, primarily derived from the British education system, emphasised scientific education. Since *Chandamama* was published soon after Independence when nationalist sentiments were at the peak, it was very nativistic. It was begun to narrate to children the same “stories of wit and wisdom” that Indian kings of older times used to listen to from their *gurus*, which were, according to *Chandamama*, unlike the “dry lessons” taught at contemporary schools. Thus, the precolonial system of education is presented as better than the contemporary one. *Chandamama* wanted to serve as a substitute to the earlier, precolonial system of education, even though this system was predominantly religious and Brahmanical, and was exclusive to upper-caste Hindu children. Thus, reflected in *Chandamama* is a notion of a glorious Indian culture as something that had existed before the intrusion of both the British and the Muslims. Thereby, *Chandamama* glorifies a precolonial (pre-British and pre-Mughal), monarchical and Brahmanical Indian society.

As described in the first chapter, sometimes, a king goes to the forest to seek some valuable advice or learn some significant lesson from the hermit. Thus, hermits usually play the role of teachers to important people like kings. Through such representations of wise and knowledgeable hermits teaching kings, *Chandamama* instils among its young readers longing for an earlier system of education that was not only centred on Brahmanical texts but was also reserved for only the upper-castes. In some of these stories, people who behave respectfully towards the hermit

and heed to his advice properly prosper, while those who disobey or disrespect him suffer from adverse consequences. Since such hermits are usually ardent Hindu holy men, these stories pose a warning to the irreligious and the less religious Hindus to turn back from their irreligious ways and come back to proper devotion or else suffer like the characters in some stories in *Chandamama*.

Being nativistic and culturalist, most of the stories in *Chandamama* are set in a precolonial society. These stories often talk about “idealistic feudal societies” that are totally unlike modern, democratic nations. Moreover, religion plays a significant role in these societies. As described in the second chapter, several stories depict protagonists who are highly devoted to Hindu gods who often directly intervene in their lives and grant them blessings. Such idealistic representations of monarchical and religious societies are accompanied by heroic representations of people who handled the monarchy and the institution of religion. Thus, in many stories in *Chandamama*, the protagonists are brave and noble kings and pious and holy Brahmins.

Chandamama began publication with nativist intentions that resulted in the propagation of a Hindu nationalist conception of Indian culture and society. This was similar to how the very discourse of Hindu nationalism gradually took shape from cultural nationalism. Indian tradition, culture and society in *Chandamama* are very exclusivist in nature since the society portrayed in *Chandamama* is a pre-British and pre-Mughal, Hindu society. As described in Chapter 2, through its stories, *Chandamama* propagates ardent devotion towards Hindu gods and goddesses. Faithful devotees get blessed by the god/s, often through supernatural interferences. Apart from all these, *Chandamama* even internalises the caste hierarchy through stories of pious, wise and divine Brahmins, and brave and noble Kshatriya kings and

warriors, both of whom are often presented as inheriting their abilities. Brahmin characters in *Chandamama* are often capable of superhuman feats because of having been blessed by a god or deity whom they worship. Hindu kings are presented as always working towards the welfare of the kingdom and the subjects. Thus, *Chandamama* glorifies monarchy and Brahmanical dominance.

As focused in Chapter 3, *Chandamama*, aligning with the Hindu nationalist discourse, represents Muslims as the “other.” Islam is presented as a foreign religion that was brought to India through conquest and forced conversions, and Muslims are presented as followers of a foreign religion and culture. There are three ways in which Muslims are represented in *Chandamama*: 1) in stories situated in West Asia or the “Middle East”; 2) in narratives of battles between “chivalrous Hindu warriors” and “hostile Muslim invaders”, which is most common; 3) and in one story, as a “good Muslim” Sultan who worships a Hindu god. In the case of the second type of narratives, while Hindu kings and warriors are presented as chivalrous, Muslim rulers are presented as invaders. While the “noble Hindu warrior king” is presented as always ethical and following the proper conduct of warfare, the “Muslim invader” is presented as deceptive and as ready to follow any false means towards defeating his enemy/ies. Apart from this, the “Muslim invader” is presented as coveting the Hindu woman. In such narratives in *Chandamama*, the religion of the warrior and the “invader” are emphasised, thereby posing all Muslims as a potential threat to the Hindu nation and its people.

Unlike the nativist culture of comics published in India after Independence, contemporary comic culture in the country has adapted to the growing modernity, as reflected through *Tinkle* comics. As elaborated through the fourth chapter, unlike *Chandamama*, *Tinkle* is critical towards monarchy and the omnipotence of religion,

which can be seen through *Tinkle*'s portrayal of foolish and obese kings, and fake and mercenary mendicants, *sadhus* and astrologers. *Tinkle* is also critical towards superstitious beliefs by ridiculing both the perpetrators and followers of superstition.

As analysed in Chapter 4, unlike *Chandamama*'s glorification of a precolonial, monarchical Indian society, *Tinkle*, apart from presenting the king as foolish and as unfit to rule the kingdom appropriately, often the protagonist is a common subject who is presented as brave, wise and cunning enough to question the king's foolish deeds and also to outwit him. Thus, common subjects are often presented as more capable than the king to rule the kingdom successfully by keeping in mind the welfare of the people. Thus, by presenting a representative of the people as more capable than the monarch to rule, *Tinkle* implicitly propagates democracy.

Tinkle shows how Indian comic culture has moved towards inculcating scientific thinking and knowledge among children, unlike the earlier *Chandamama* that wanted to inculcate among Indian children the knowledge of Indian tradition and culture. Thus, *Tinkle* has a science culture. Therefore, as described in the fifth chapter, *Tinkle* criticises superstitious beliefs, the belief in reincarnations, astrology and astrologers. In some comic strips, *Tinkle* describes how scientific discoveries overcame superstitious beliefs. Moreover, *Tinkle* implicitly criticises the caste system since the fake and mercenary astrologers represented in this comic are often Brahmins who are glorified in *Chandamama*.

As discussed in Chapter 5, science culture in *Tinkle* can be seen through several informative comic strips on scientific inventions and discoveries. Moreover, several stories impart scientific knowledge. Apart from the predominance of a scientific temper, prevalent in such comic strips are two other significant

characteristics: emphasis upon the Indian contributions to science, and an attitude of inclusivity towards scientific developments in other parts of the world since scientific progress has hardly ever been confined to only a few parts of the world, even though the West has dominated in this realm.

Even though *Tinkle* ridicules some aspects of the precolonial Indian society; such as monarchy, the omnipotence of religious figures, superstition and the caste system, it does not entirely do away with the past. *Tinkle* never misses an opportunity to talk about the Indian contributions to science. Often such contributions take place in a precolonial Indian society; the kind of past glorified in *Chandamama*, and in some comic strips, the same cultural figures glorified in *Chandamama* contribute to the development of science. Thus, reflected in *Tinkle* is a negotiation between tradition and modernity.

Thus, through the analysis of *Chandamama* and *Tinkle*, this thesis has observed and thrashed out how the comic culture in India has constituted two significant trends: the first among these trends gained momentum post Independence, in the form of cultural nationalism that resulted in Hindu nationalism as represented through the stories in *Chandamama*, which was synonymous with the rise of Hindu nationalism in India; and the second trend had already taken shape by the turn of the century, in the form of a science culture as represented in *Tinkle*, which, even though more inclusive towards regions and cultures other than Indian, still tries to uphold a kind of Indianness, while *Chandamama* is exclusive in spirit by highlighting the glory of a Brahmanical culture camouflaged as Indian culture.

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Hindu Nationalism in Chandamama

Aloysius Sebastian*

Abstract

Even though much research has happened on how ideology and propaganda often implicitly manifest in different literature, children's literature is often considered as devoid of the play of ideology. However, contemporary researches have proved that even literature for children cannot be called as innocent since that also is often quite ideological. In the Indian scenario, this can be seen through the researches that have been done on the popular Amar Chitra Katha comics, like the works of Pramod K Nayar, Nandini Chandra, Karlaine McLain and Deepa Sreenivas.

While Amar Chitra Katha began publication from 1967, there was another comic that was already very popular among both children as well as parents; Chandamama, a comic that began to be published just one month before India gained independence from British imperialism but stopped publication in 2013. Parents were happy to buy this comic for their children since they believed it could teach them "Indian culture and traditions" in Independent India with the new educational system that emphasized the English language and scientific knowledge.

This paper is an analysis of Chandamama aimed at observing its representation of "Indian culture and traditions". This analysis leads to the understanding that this comic portrays a hegemonic, Hindu nationalist "Indian culture and tradition". In such a portrayal of Indian culture and traditions, certain communities, cultures and traditions are glorified, while other minor cultures, communities and traditions are neglected and "otherized".

Keywords: Chandamama, Indian comics, Hindu nationalism, spirituality, casteism

Introduction

Chandamama was an immensely popular comic that was published in India from 1947 July and continued till 2013. It played a significant role in the life of Indian children of the second half of the 20th century. This paper looks at the play of ideology in this comic, exploring how Chandamama presents an Indian culture that is very Hindu centric. Moreover, apart from being Hindu-centric, Chandamama presents and glorifies an upper-caste Hindu community and culture by mainly portraying and even frequently glorifying such characters, and also by neglecting other communities and cultures. Through the analysis of such representations in this comic, this paper explores how the discourse of Chandamama was in line with the Hindu nationalistic discourse. Considering the fact that this comic was published in the late 20th century and its peak period was the 70s and 80s when Hindu nationalism was on the rise, this paper argues that the discourse of this comic was symbiotically related to the cultural and political developments in post-Independence India similar to the prevalent discourse in other popular media like the television and cinema.

After India gained independence from British imperialism, one major quest of the newly formed Indian government was to unify the people who were very different in terms of language, culture and geography, by instilling in them nationalism and patriotism. Therefore, the government paid a lot of attention to the development of the nationalist

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discourse. The icon of Bharat Mata offered, in the general idiom of biological reproduction and in the specific performative logic of upper-caste Hindu devotional practices, a potent origin myth for national history and territory (McClintock).

Such a spirit of nationalism is visible in comics like Chandamama and Amar Chitra Katha. Such nationalist discourses have usually constituted the glorification of the past. For the people of nations once colonized, the national culture is that what existed before colonization, and everything brought by the colonizer is foreign and often a threat to the national culture (Fanon). Therefore, the discourse of nationalism in postcolonial nations is usually centred on talking about a “glorious and honourable precolonial past”. According to Romila Thapar, “what we regard as tradition may well turn out to be our contemporary requirements fashioned by the way we wish to interpret the past (267).” In this process, the goodness of the precolonial past is exaggerated, while the negativities are often forgotten or neglected. “In creating a tradition, we sometimes select from the past those normative values which may have a contemporary appeal, but which may even be contrary to historical actuality (Thapar 271).”

This is the kind of nationalism visible in comics like Chandamama and Amar Chitra Katha. Most of the stories in Chandamama are set in a precolonial society, and many of them are set in much earlier periods like the Vedic Age. These stories often talk about “idealistic feudal societies” that are totally unlike modern democratic nations. Moreover, religion plays a major role in these societies. Many stories in Chandamama are based on Hindu mythologies and puranas. There are also several stories that depict protagonists who are highly devoted to Hindu gods who often directly intervene in their lives and grant them blessings. Such idealistic representations of monarchical and religious societies are accompanied by heroic representations of people who handled the monarchy and the institution of religion. Thus, in many of the stories in comics like Chandamama and Amar Chitra Katha, the protagonists are usually chivalrous and noble kings and pious and holy Brahmins. Moreover, many stories are set in major Hindu religious centres and other major centres of the Vedic society.

Such a rise of cultural nationalism accompanied by religiosity in different realms of popular culture in the country was synonymous with the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. In fact, the recurrence of such discourses in Indian popular culture aided the rise of Hindu nationalism in the country, and consequently the BJP won the general election in 1977, even though it was aided also by popular discontent towards the state of emergency (1975 – 77) declared by Indira Gandhi who was the Prime Minister when the Indian National Congress was in power.

Synonymous with popular cultural nationalist discourses, according to Catarina Kinnvall, the aim of the Hindutva movement has been to construct a chain of events where a glorified past is connected to the present and where it justifies future actions. It is a nationalist homogenizing narrative that is deeply rooted in religious discourse. Hindu nationalism is not a modern phenomenon in India. Instead, its provenance is held to go back to Vedic times and it is therefore enmeshed with the history and culture of the Hindu “race” (139).

The popularization of religious stories in Indian cinema and television, particularly the broadcasting of the Ramayana as a serial starting in January 1987, brought Ram as a warrior god and Ayodhya into millions of Hindus in the privacy of their homes. In this sense, it greatly increased general awareness of Ayodhya as the birthplace of Rama. Televised images made this sacred centre more real and it became highly charged with affect in the popular imagination (Baccheta 2000, Jaffrelot 1996, van der Veer 1996). In

those states controlled by the BJP, textbooks have been written to glorify the “Hindu past,” to revile the policies of the “Muslim invaders,” to rename Indian cities and regions, and to revise the relationship between Hindu religion, national identity and citizenship (Smith).

In Chandamama, the religious element is given particular significance through several stories taken from or adapted from Hindu epics and other texts. In compliance with the Hindu nationalist discourse, Chandamama depicts Hinduism as Indian tradition. Such Hindu Indian representations are usually of an upper caste Hindu nature. This happens since the protagonists in most of the Indian stories in these comics are upper caste and aristocratic Hindus like the king or the Brahmin. As already mentioned, one reason for such representations was nostalgia for the precolonial feudal and religious past when the monarchy was centred on the king and the dominant Hindu religion was centred on the Brahmin. However, despite this, there is also a kind of hegemony at work when it comes to such representations. This becomes more evident on considering that in the late 20th century, most producers and consumers of newspapers, journals and comics were upper caste Hindus, and therefore, these forms of media usually spoke from an upper caste Hindu perspective.

Thereby, while Chandamama engages in an upper caste Hindu representation of Indian culture, non-Hindu religions like Islam and Christianity are presented as foreign and are usually otherized, which is also synonymous with the Hindu nationalist discourse, even though Christianity has existed in India since more than twenty centuries and Islam since more than thirteen centuries. In Chandamama, foreignization is particularly prominent in the representation of Muslim rulers who are presented as hostile to “Hindus/Indians” and “Hindu/Indian” culture. If ever “foreign” religions like Islam and Christianity are represented positively, that is done only in stories or narratives situated in the Middle East in the case of Islam, and in the West in the case of Christianity.

According to Ritu Khanduri, to authorize the cultural claims of their comics, Indian publishing houses frequently inform readers of a historian or cultural expert among their staff, who ensures the accuracy of the research for their narratives. Anant Pai, the founder-editor of Amar Chitra Katha, emphasized that Amar Chitra Katha comics were a product of primary research and the script was not arbitrary (174).

However, even historiography is often quite fictional, and some theorists have commented on how history is always narrated from one or the other hegemonic perspective, thus always having a centre that peripheralizes other marginal and/minor communities and groups.

Hayden White states that historical sequences can be emplotted in many different ways so as to provide different interpretations of those events and to endow them with different meanings. How a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, fiction-making operation (1978: 85).

In Chandamama, the mythification of history is a technique used in the representation of Christianity, and Christians are presented as superstitious. However, Buddhism is usually represented as an offshoot of Hinduism, even though it is in fact a completely different religion. This is probably because Buddhism did originate from Hinduism, even though that began by questioning and mocking several Hindu beliefs and practices.

Thus, Chandamama seems to internalize Hindu nationalist ideas. In accordance with the central idea of Hindu nationalism, Chandamama presents India as a Hindu nation where all

other religions are foreign. This aspect of the comic is very noteworthy since the peak time of its publication was the 60s, 70s and 80s when Hindu nationalism was on the rise.

The issues of the 70s show a higher Hindu spirit than those of the 50s. This can be seen through the retelling of a story of the July 1957 issue eleven years later in the June 1971 issue of the comic. In both the stories, an impoverished woodcutter goes to the forest to cut wood, but he is unable to do so because of heavy rain, and so he takes shelter in a dilapidated hut inside the wood. Inside, he sees a tall stump of wood with a crude visage carved on it. He is about to chop it since he feels at least that would fetch him a little money to feed his children for the meanwhile, but immediately a figure comes out of the stump. In either of the tales, the being that comes out of the stump is described differently. In the 1957 story, it is just referred to as goddess and deity, and she seems to be a goddess/deity of the forest/nature. However, in the later 1971 issue, she is the Hindu Goddess Durga. In the earlier tale, the goddess comes out of the stump and says to the woodcutter, "Stop, fool. Do you want to break me up? Who do you think I am?" However, in the 1971 tale, the goddess says, "Would you commit sacrilege by destroying the image of the Goddess Durga?" When the goddess is given the status of Goddess Durga in the later retelling of the tale, anything done against her is called sacrilege. While in the older tale, the woodcutter folds his hands and seeks forgiveness from the goddess, in the later tale, he is presented as kneeling while seeking forgiveness from Goddess Durga. Thus, in the 1971 tale, the woodcutter is presented as humbler since he is before Goddess Durga.

In both the tales, the goddess is moved by the poverty of the woodcutter and blesses him saying his family would not starve any more. She instructs him to buy a new pot and heat it on an unlit stove. When the pot is taken from the stove, it would have been filled with food. The woodcutter goes home happily, and he and his family live happily thereafter with never again having to fend for food. However, there is again a change in the 1971 tale regarding how the food appears in the pot. In this tale, unlike the earlier one, the name of Goddess Durga is to be chanted thrice while laying the pot on the fire. Here there is deliberate glorification of the Hindu goddess.

While in the older story, the being coming out of the stump is a goddess/deity of the forest, in the later tale, the goddess is Goddess Durga. This constitutes replacement of local and/or regional Hinduism with mainstream Hinduism. The goddess of the older tale seems to be some regional deity or some goddess or caretaker of the forest not belonging to the Hindu canon of gods and deities. However, in the later tale, the goddess is Goddess Durga, a major Hindu goddess. This replacement of the deity of the forest with Goddess Durga in the later retelling of the tale is illustrative of mainstream Hinduism's attempts at bringing all local/regional minor religions and practices under mainstream Hinduism. This has been a common feature of Hinduism and Hindu nationalism. After all, Hinduism is not a singular religion. It has constituted several local and regional ways of worship, deities and gods, local myths and legends, and beliefs, customs, rituals and practices have often varied from one place to another. The word Hinduism is just an umbrella term used to describe this plurality of religious and cultural beliefs and practices. This has often been the result of mainstream Hinduism's attempts at homogenizing and bringing together all these different practices. Thus, most of the people in South Asia who did not follow any institutional religion came to be called as Hindus.

Apart from the portrayal of a Hindu-centric society with divine interferences taking place in the lives of ardent devotees, in most of such stories in Chandamama, the protagonists are pious Brahmins who are helped by the gods not only because of their devotedness and piety, but also because they belong to that caste. In many stories in Chandamama, the

protagonists are upper-caste Hindu characters, usually a Brahmin or a king. These characters usually have certain archetypical features. The way Brahmins and Kshatriya kings are represented usually correspond to the features ascribed by the Varna system. Thus, Brahmins are usually represented as wise and pious, and kings are represented as chivalrous and noble. As already described, such representations were probably because of cultural nationalist attempts at portraying an exclusively "Indian culture" that resulted in utopian representations of monarchy and religion centred on the king and the Brahmin. However, quite remarkable is that such glorified representations of the king and the Brahmin escalated by the 70s since this was the time when Hindu nationalism was on the rise. The Brahmin is often the protagonist, and he is usually represented as pious, wise and holy.

Attribution of "goodness" is a technique frequently used in the glorification of the Brahmin. Brahmin protagonists in some stories are idealized as having many good qualities. The Brahmin is often represented as pious, benevolent and charitable. Even though he is usually very wise, he is honest and devoid of deceit. In such stories, the Brahmin is respected not only because of his caste, but also because of his "goodness". He is hardly ever self-centred or interested in accumulating riches. On the other hand, he is usually presented as having a sense of responsibility towards the gods as well as to men.

Moreover, in some of these stories, Brahmins have even superhuman capabilities which seem to have been bestowed upon them by the gods, and there seems to be some sort of divine intervention in favour of the Brahmin protagonists. Such supernatural capabilities are often hereditary because of belonging to that caste, and because of such characters' intense faith and devotedness.

Thus, in the stories in Chandamama, Brahmin characters are usually presented as very likeable and humane, and they stimulate in the readers, especially young readers, affection and friendliness towards such characters. By idealizing the Brahmin, such stories in fact inspire young readers to aspire to become like the Brahmin. Thus, these stories have an agenda of sanskritization whereby people belonging to other castes and religions are stimulated to aspire to go up higher in society by striving to become like the Brahmin.

The process of inheritance of qualities is frequent in the stories in Chandamama, and thus Brahmins are presented as inheriting divinity, wisdom and often supernatural capabilities like the power of prediction, while on the other hand, Kshatriya protagonists who are usually kings or else generals or brave soldiers, are presented as inheriting strength, valour, bravery and courage.

Apart from such glorified representations of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, several stories in Chandamama implicitly instil among its young readers nostalgia and longing for precolonial, feudal, monarchical India through the representation of righteous monarchs who are highly efficient in ruling the kingdom and always act towards the welfare of the subjects. Some of these stories talk about a protagonist, usually a Brahmin, who through his talents gains the favour of the ruler and thereby gets several gifts and riches and often permanent employment in the court. Since these stories are usually narrated from the perspective of such a Brahmin protagonist, the reader rejoices along with him as he gets recognized and awarded for his talents, and moreover, the reader gets a sense of the gratefulness and admiration felt by the protagonist towards the generous and talented monarch who is capable of rightfully judging and appreciating the talents of his subjects.

The glorification of upper caste Hindus by representing them as possessing and inheriting the qualities attributed to them by the varna system is itself a way of internalizing the caste system because if upper caste Hindus are represented according to the varna system, then

the non-representation of lower caste Hindus is equivalent to representing them too according to that system which attributes them low caste status by describing them as fit for only menial jobs due to their “lower values and qualities”.

However, such casteism is implied in Chandamama in such a way that it is very much internalized and presented as acceptable, and often depicted as good for the precolonial Indian society portrayed in these stories. Moreover, such a portrayal would not have disturbed most of the readers of the comic since they belonged to the same hegemonic and dominant sections who are glorified in the comic.

My observations on the aggravated aggrandisement of upper caste Hindus in the 70s is strengthened by the presence of the same story in two issues of the comic, in 1955 and 1970, but with only a slight change which is in the description of the Brahmin protagonist of the story. In the story of the July 1955 issue, the Brahmin protagonist is described as a destitute Brahmin who comes to the city of Sravasthi in search of livelihood while King Prasenajitis the ruler. Fortunately, he finds favour with the rich merchants there, who provide him with enough of food and clothing and a good deal of money. The same story appears again in the August 1970 issue with the only change that the Brahmin is no longer destitute but is a well-known poet who journeys to Benares, and wherever he stops on his pilgrimage, he would recite his poems, to the enjoyment of his audiences, who give him money. Thus, in the later version of the story, the Brahmin is presented not only as more religious by saying he is on a pilgrimage to Banaras, but also as a talented poet to whom his audiences heartily and generously give money, unlike the destitute Brahmin of the earlier version who has no talent but is lucky to find favour with the rich merchants. The change in the second version of the story is quite intriguing since its only function is to avoid the representation of the Brahmin protagonist as destitute and to portray him as a religious and pious talented poet. When the time of appearance of the second version is taken into consideration, conscious attempt at the glorification of the Brahmin protagonist complies with the rise of Hindutva in India.

Even if such a change had not been introduced in the story of the 1970 issue, mentioning the caste of the protagonist in either of the two versions is totally unnecessary. In both the versions of the story, King Prasenajit is very willing to help the Brahmin, and he even directly interferes to help him. Such willingness on the part of the king to help Brahmins and happy relationships between Brahmins and kings is quite recurrent in Chandamama, which indicates some sort of alliance among the Hindu upper castes within the society.

Thus, through stories glorifying Hindu spirituality and upper caste Hindu characters, Chandamama was in tune with the Hindu nationalist discourse. It instils devotion and worship towards Hindu gods through stories about devoted protagonists getting blessed by these gods. In many stories in Chandamama, the protagonists are usually upper caste Hindu characters like a Brahmin or a Kshatriya king. They are frequently glorified by presenting them as highly talented and as having inherited the qualities attributed to them by the varna system. Thereby, apart from glorifying Hindu spirituality, Chandamama internalizes the caste-system by presenting characters belonging to different castes as having the qualities attributed to them by the varna system. Thus, Indian community, tradition and culture in Chandamama are Hinduistic and casteist.

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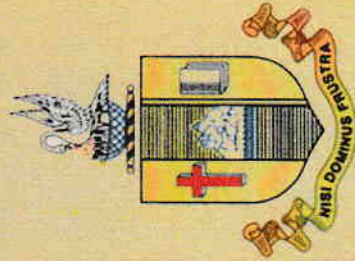
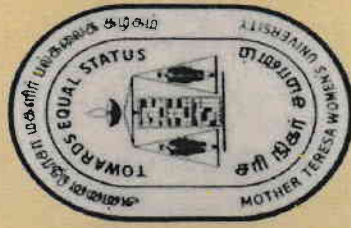
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