



JK LAKSHMIPAT UNIVERSITY
Institute of Design
NAAC 'A' Grade Accredited

Making of the Mahabharata and Ramayana Comic Series

VOL. 1 of 1

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Programme :

Bachelor of Design (B.Des)

Integrated Communication Design

The Evaluation Jury has recommended **Naomi Ann Timothy**
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Herewith, for the project titled “Making of **Mahabharata and Ramayana comics series**”
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Making comics has always been a dream of mine. Growing up, I was fascinated by comic books and read a lot of them. I was especially drawn to how these comics could introduce diverse cultures and shape people's perspectives. Now, getting the chance to create a comic that represents my home country, India, along with its rich culture and mythology, has been a deeply meaningful experience for me. This project wouldn't have been possible without the support of many people. A heartfelt thank you to Yah Raizada, my mentor, for his valuable feedback throughout this internship.

To Triveni and Darpan, thank you for creating Patel Comics and for inviting me into your world of stories. Working with you has been meaningful and creatively fulfilling. Retelling stories like Mahabharata and Ramayana in a way that connects with young readers felt like a responsibility and a privilege. Though I worked remotely from New York, the collaboration never felt distant. Daily online discussions, constant feedback, and a shared passion for storytelling made the process exciting and purposeful.

Thank you to the kids and teens who shared their honest thoughts on the comic you helped shape it in ways that matter most. To my family and friends, thank you for your constant support, patience, and encouragement throughout.

Preface

This document captures the work I completed over four months as part of my final-year graduation project with Patel Comics, during a remote internship. During this internship the project I worked on focused reimagining Indian mythological stories, specifically from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, as comic series for young readers aged 6–18 in the U.S., especially Indian immigrant children seeking to connect with their roots and readers who want to know more about Indian Mythology. Design has played a crucial role in this project—not just in terms of aesthetics, but as a tool for storytelling, cultural translation, and emotional connection..

The design process allowed me to think deeply about how these ancient stories could be made accessible and engaging for a younger, global audience. From character design and visual tone to panel composition and pacing, each element was carefully considered to balance authenticity with relatability. Through research, sketching, storyboarding, and a lot of trial and error, I worked to hopefully make the stories feel both culturally rich and relatable. From the way characters looked and dressed to how each panel flowed, every design choice was intentional.



The Patel Comics

The Patel Comics is a storytelling venture founded by Triveni and Darpan, a creative duo passionate about Indian history and heritage. Rooted in a deep love for India's mythological tales, the company aims to reimagine mythological and historical narratives through engaging visual storytelling. Inspired by the stories passed down by their grandparents, they seek to preserve and celebrate India's cultural legacy in a fresh, artistic format—bridging the past with the present for new generations. The Patel Comics aims to connect with kids and teens—both those curious about their roots and those who simply want to learn more about India in an engaging, meaningful way.

While working with them, I got a real sense of how the team operates—not like a formal, rigid studio, but more like a collaborative creative space where everyone plays an important role. Triveni's scripting and discussions brought strong emotional clarity to each scene, which really helped shape my visual direction. The feedback from both Triveni and Darpan was always thoughtful and constructive—it pushed me to develop my ideas further while staying true to the heart of the story. They created an environment that encouraged exploration and creativity, always grounded in cultural depth and narrative integrity.

TPC

Project

Stories have always been a part of who we are, passed down through conversations, carved into stone, or conveyed through songs. For me, Comics prove to be the most unexpected and complex medium of storytelling. A space where visuals and text not only coexist but also depend on one another. It's more than just storytelling, its story building, frame by frame. What I find most unique about comics is how two simple frames can take you through time. And in the gap between the two panels, you can imagine what happened.

That's where the reader comes in, they fill in the silence, the emotion, and the movement/ action. It's almost as if the artist and the reader are collaborating quietly. That's the beauty of comics, without realising, we connect the dots and make up our own story; they rely on the reader to make sense of it, experience it, and bring it to life.

This project aims to retell the stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana through the medium of comics.

The goal is to reimagine these powerful epics through a modern narrative lens—creating something that is both entertaining and culturally educational for kids and teens aged 7–18 in the USA. It especially aims to help Indian immigrant children connect with their roots, while also inviting American readers to explore the richness of Indian mythology. My role in this project focused on visual design—bringing everything to life through character design, storyboarding, illustrations, and world-building. When I first started, I assumed there would be a lot of restrictions.

But the process turned out to be much more open and collaborative. Since it was a completely new project, it was definitely challenging to build everything from scratch. It was also my first time working on a comic and designing multiple characters, which made it both exciting and a huge learning experience.

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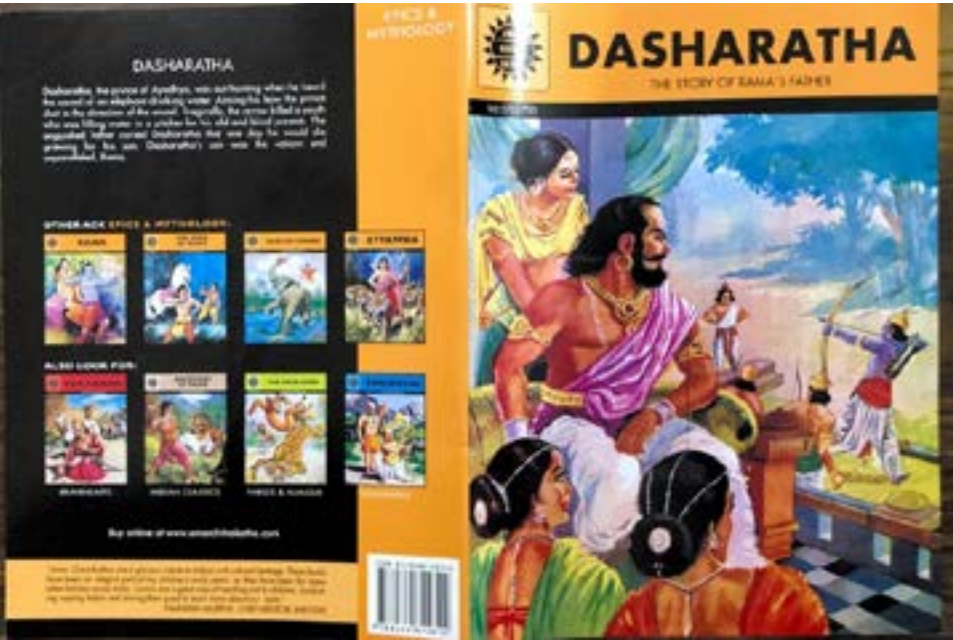
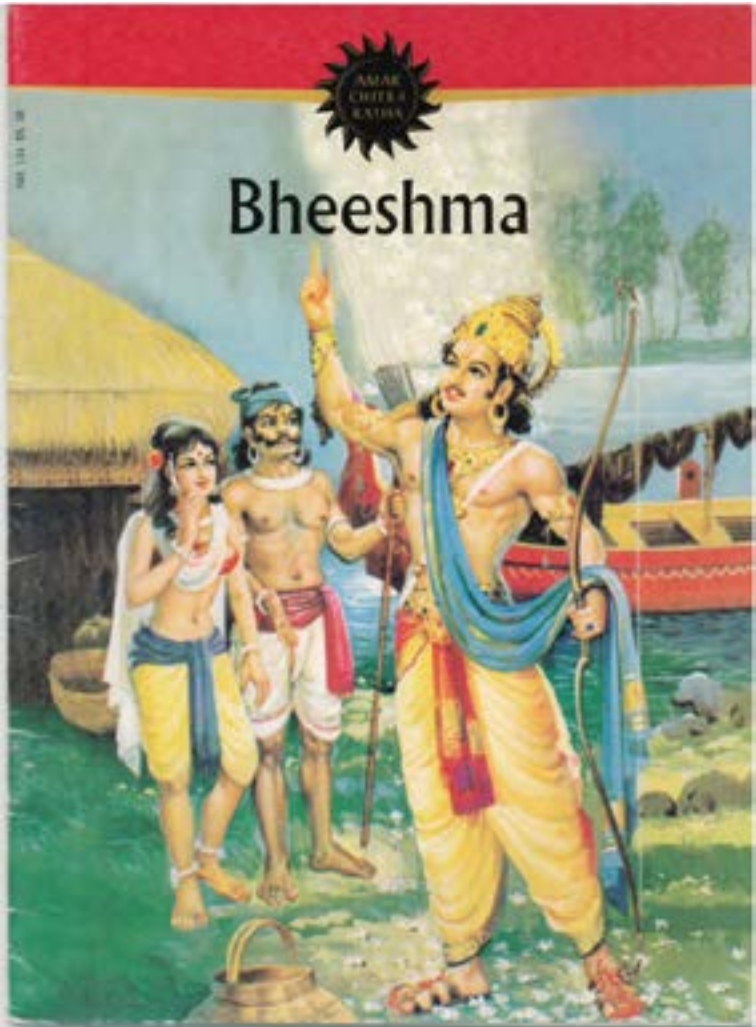
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Research

As part of my research for this comic project based on the Mahabharata and Ramayana, I studied Amar Chitra Katha (ACK)—a well-known and traditional comic series launched in 1967 by Anant Pai. ACK was created to make Indian mythology and history more accessible to young readers, particularly those in urban areas and the Indian diaspora, through English-language storytelling. My goal in studying ACK was to understand why it became so iconic and how it continues to resonate with readers today. ACK has become a cultural touchstone over the years—often described as a “route to your roots” for Indian families around the world.

Anant Pai was motivated by the realization that Indian children were more familiar with Western mythology than with their own epics, like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. In response, ACK positioned itself not just as a comic series, but as a “vehicle of education,” blending storytelling with moral and cultural lessons. It set a benchmark for comic-based storytelling in India and continues to be a reference point for anyone working in this space. For me, ACK is both an inspiration and a kind of competitor. It laid the foundation, but it also raised an important question: **Why is there still a need for a modernized version of these comics today?**



Why is there a need for a modernised indian comic ?

As part of the primary research for this project, I shared selected Amar Chitra Katha (ACK) comics—Bheeshma and Dasharatha—with three readers aged 11–15 in the U.S. These were the same stories I planned to adapt during my internship. The goal was to understand how today’s generation experiences traditional mythology through comics, and where gaps in engagement and clarity might exist.

At first glance, the feedback was positive—most readers found the artwork colorful and intriguing. However, as they continued reading, many began to feel overwhelmed by the visuals. The frames were often packed with detailed backgrounds, dense text, and multiple characters, leading to visual clutter.

Characters frequently blended into the background, and the lack of visual contrast made it hard to follow who was speaking or what was happening. Some readers even said, “everyone looked the same,” which made it difficult to follow the story and created a sense of emotional disconnect.

Struggles with Comprehension
Another common issue was difficulty understanding the narrative. Many participants had to reread certain sections to figure out what was going on. The combination of heavy text blocks, formal language, and crowded visuals made the experience feel more like reading a textbook than a comic. This slowed down their engagement and, in many cases, led to a loss of interest halfway through the story.

Lack of Emotional Depth
One of the most striking observations was the emotional flatness of character expressions and reactions. A specific scene that stood out was when King Shantanu loses his divine wife Ganga and their child. Readers felt that neither the visuals nor the dialogue captured the depth of sorrow such a moment deserved. His facial expression lacked weight, and the dialogue didn’t carry any emotional vulnerability. As a result, moments that should have been powerful and memorable passed by without leaving any real impact.

Confusion in Visual Language
Another point of confusion was ACK’s use of green skin tones to depict evil or selfish characters. Most young readers found this odd and distracting. Without proper context, several assumed the characters were goblins or monsters, which unintentionally diluted the seriousness of the scenes.



The visual language felt outdated and disconnected from how modern comics build character identity and morality.

Gender Representation
Across both primary and secondary research, one recurring issue was the portrayal of female characters. Many readers, especially young girls, noted that female roles were often limited to being mothers, wives, or passive supporters. These characters lacked individuality, agency, and depth. This kind of representation felt not only outdated but also disconnected from the richness that mythology can offer. It became clear that while the core stories don’t necessarily have to change, the perspectives can. There is a real opportunity—and responsibility—to reimagine these narratives with more balanced, expressive, and empowering portrayals of women.

Project I (Mahabharata)

1. King Shantanu & Ganga

King Shantanu falls in love with the river goddess Ganga, who agrees to marry him only if he never questions her actions. She gives birth to seven sons and drowns each one in the river. When she tries to drown the eighth, Shantanu stops her, breaking his promise. Ganga reveals the children were cursed celestial beings (Vasus) and leaves with the last son, Devavrata. She raises him and later returns him to Shantanu as a powerful warrior—Bhishma.

2. Satyawati’s Past

Before marrying Shantanu, Satyawati was the daughter of a fisherman. In her youth, she had a son with the sage Parashara—this son was Vyasa, who would later write the Mahabharata. She was raised helping her father ferry people across the river, and despite her humble background, she carried great strength and wisdom. Her past remained mostly hidden until later events revealed its significance.

3. The Terrible Vow

Shantanu falls in love again—this time with Satyawati. But her father refuses the marriage unless her children inherit the throne. To fulfill his father’s wish, Devavrata gives up his right to the throne and vows lifelong celibacy. This terrible vow earns him the name Bhishma, meaning “the one who took a dreadful vow.” His sacrifice shapes the future of the Kuru dynasty and leads to many events in the Mahabharata.

Script breakdown

For this project, I was given the script for three key episodes from the first generation of the Mahabharata: King Shantanu & Ganga, Satyawati’s Past, and The Terrible Vow. My role was to break down each narrative and translate it into a visually compelling comic format. The first step was analyzing the script—identifying emotional highs and lows, key character moments, and the overall flow of the story. From there, I began planning how each scene would be visually represented, considering layout, pacing, character design, and the tone of each moment.

Once I had a clear understanding of the narrative, I moved on to creating a panel-wise breakdown of the script. In collaboration with the scriptwriter, each panel was divided into three core components:

Description – Outlining what’s happening in the scene, including character actions, setting, and mood.

Dialogue – Specifying what the characters are saying or thinking, along with any necessary narration to guide the story.

Art Note – Providing visual direction for myself, such as framing, perspective, lighting, expressions, and any elements to enhance storytelling. This approach helped me understand the script more deeply and made it easier to move back and forth between panels during the comic creation process.

Character design (Mahabharata)

When I design characters, I always begin by understanding their story and personality. I try to get a clear sense of who they are, where they come from, and what their role is in the larger narrative. This helps me figure out how they should look and carry themselves visually. Their backstory, emotions, and relationships all influence the choices I make while designing them.

While working on the Mahabharata characters—King Shantanu, Goddess Ganga, Devrata, Satyawati, and Sage Parashara—I referred to a wide range of sources. Since there are so many different interpretations of these characters in paintings, sculptures, and media, I didn't rely on just one version.

Instead, I picked and combined elements from different depictions to form a version that felt both familiar and fresh. My aim was to make the characters feel rooted in the epic while also having a unique presence that suits the context of the story being told.

I usually try to find a balance between symbolic meaning and practicality in my designs. The colors, clothing, and facial expressions I choose are all intentional—they reflect something about the character's mood, identity, or journey.

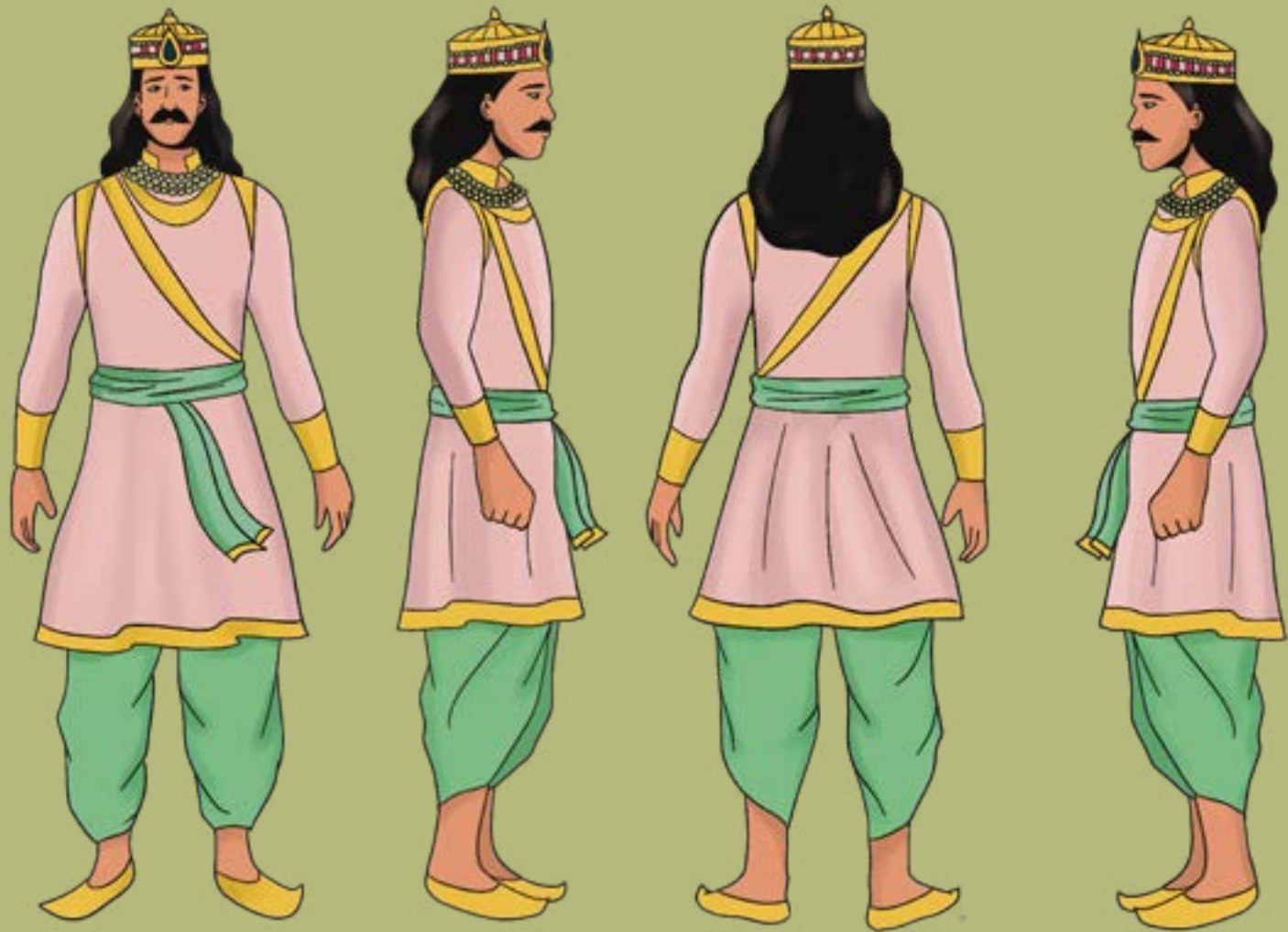
For example, I use brighter colors like yellows and pinks when I want to show warmth, softness, or even a sense of romance. These shades feel lighter and more open, so they work well for moments that are emotional or personal. On the other hand, I usually shift to deeper tones like blues when the character is going through something heavier—like feeling serious, distant, or sad. It helps set the emotional tone without making it too obvious or dramatic. I also try to reflect changes in the story through the character's appearance, especially their clothing. As the narrative progresses or the emotions shift, the colors or elements in their outfits change too.

It's a subtle way of showing growth, internal conflict, or transition without needing to say anything directly. Overall, character design for me is less about flashy visuals and more about making sure everything aligns with who the character is and what they represent in the story. It's about creating a design that fits naturally into the story and adds meaning to how we see and understand them.

King Shantanu & Ganga

For the character design of King Shantanu and Ganga, I drew inspiration from the works of Bamapada Banerjee, a 19th-century painter renowned for his mythological scenes. His richly detailed oil paintings beautifully capture the divine elegance of deities and the emotional depth of legendary figures.

I found his portrayal of Ganga particularly compelling: ethereal, serene, and almost otherworldly. This influenced my design of her as a calm, radiant presence draped in flowing, luminous attire. For Shantanu, Banerjee's depiction of regal figures with subtle emotional undertones helped shape his visual identity—a noble king whose strength is softened by love and longing. Their character designs aim to reflect both their celestial grace and the deeply human emotions at the heart of their story.





King Shantanu of Hastinapura is a kind and thoughtful ruler. While he carries himself with the dignity expected of a king, there's also a quieter, more personal side to him. In his private life, Shantanu is gentle and caring—someone who feels deeply, especially when it comes to love and family. I wanted to show both sides of his character: the composed ruler and the man who also struggles with his emotions when life takes a difficult turn.

Shantanu's attire reflects both his royal stature and his gentle nature. The use of yellow in his outfit hints at gold, symbolizing his nobility and status as a king. At the same time, touches of pink are used to bring out his romantic and emotional side, balancing strength with warmth. I created multiple iterations of Shantanu—ranging from close-ups to wide shots—to explore his presence from different visual perspectives. Some of these early sketches made it into the final comic.

Initially, I planned to include intricate detailing in his costume and features to emphasize his royal stature. However, as the story evolved, I chose to simplify certain elements to maintain visual consistency throughout the comic. This decision also aligned with my intent to portray Shantanu more as a human driven by emotion, rather than just as a distant, regal figure. By softening the detailing, I could better highlight his vulnerability and internal conflict.





As I worked through more iterations of Shantanu, I paid special attention to his posture and facial expressions to clearly show his inner struggle between duty and love. I experimented with different ways to depict him feeling distressed or conflicted, trying out various body language and expressions to find what felt authentic and consistent. This process helped me understand how subtle changes in his stance or gaze could communicate his emotions without needing words. It was important for me to balance these emotional cues with the overall flow of the story and maintain visual consistency across all the panels. Through these iterations, I aimed to make Shantanu feel relatable and human rather than just a distant king.

Goddess Ganga





As a river goddess, Ganga's design focuses on grace, fluidity, and a quiet sense of divinity. Her long, flowing hair is meant to mirror the natural movement of water—soft, continuous, and always shifting. I chose an off-white sari for her to represent purity, paired with a pale pink blouse that brings a gentle warmth without taking away from her calm and serene presence. Her overall look is minimal and light, with a subtle glow around her to suggest she's not entirely of this world.

Her expressions are steady and composed—often unreadable—which adds to both her beauty and the quiet mystery that surrounds her. I made several iterations to find the right balance between softness and strength, making sure she looked ethereal but also had a certain firmness to her, true to her divine role.

Devrata

For Devavrata, I wanted him to resemble King Shantanu but with a stronger, more determined expression—showing his bravery and readiness as a prince. While Shantanu carries the full regality of a king with rich ornaments, I chose to keep Devavrata's look simpler, with fewer accessories, to reflect his status as an heir still growing into his role.

His outfit uses a soft light pink for the upper garment, symbolizing his gentle side and the compassion he inherits from his parents. The dark blue of his lower clothing grounds him, giving a sense of stability, strength, and seriousness. This contrast highlights the balance between his youthful sensitivity and the responsibility he carries as the future of Hastinapura.

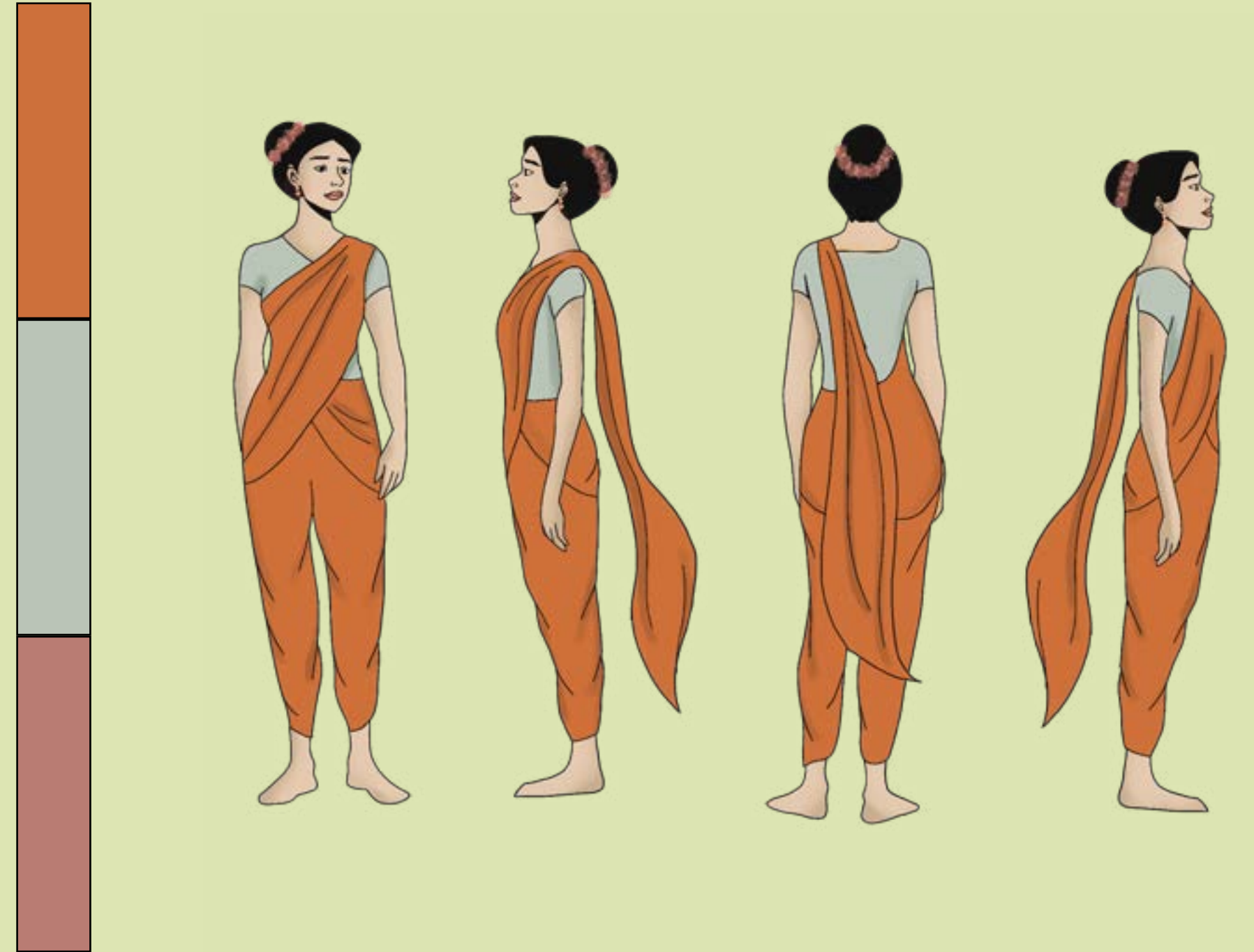


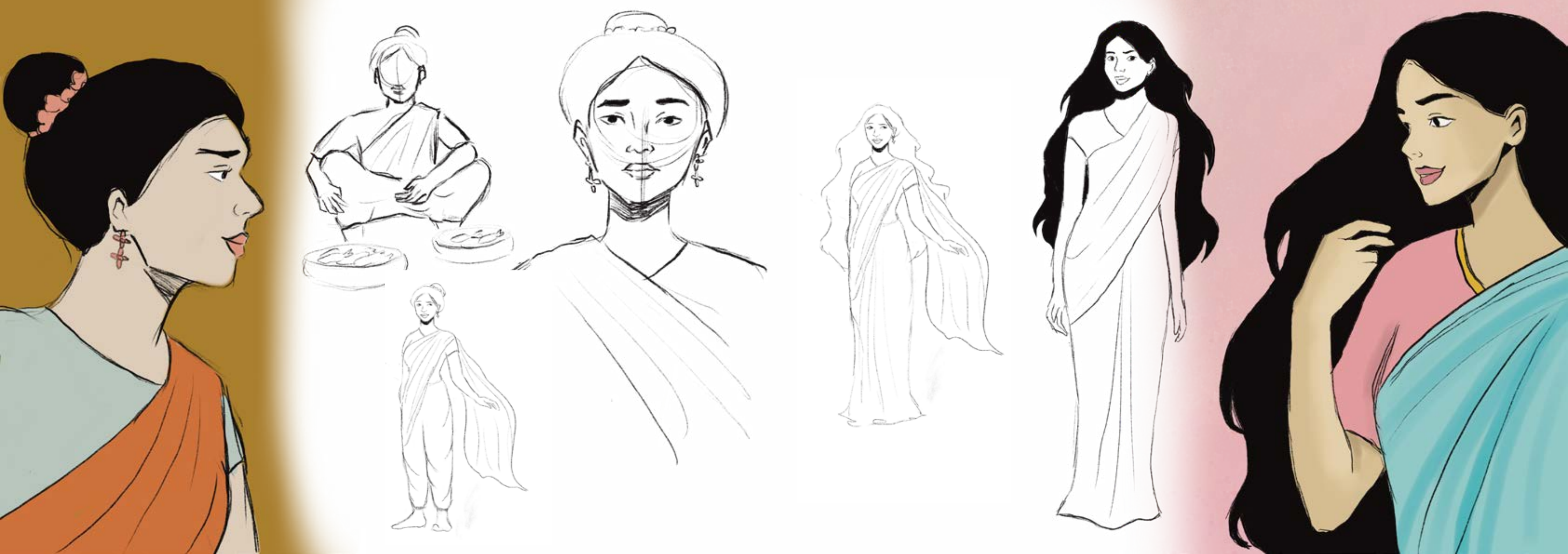
Overall, Devavrata's look is a subtle blend of royal heritage and youthful determination, visually connecting him to Shantanu but marking him clearly as a brave and focused prince ready to take on his destiny..

Satyavati

Satyavati was introduced in my second comic, *Satyavati's Past*. She begins as a humble fisherwoman, grounded and practical, someone deeply connected to the earth and water. In the first half of the comic, I designed her with her hair tied up in a bun, wearing an orange fisherwoman's outfit paired with a dull blouse. The orange reflects her raw energy, warmth, and strong-willed nature, while the dull tones of the blouse show her modesty and simple life. Her look is meant to feel functional—unembellished but full of purpose, just like her.

As her story progresses, she goes through a transformation—visually and emotionally. In the second half of the panel, her look becomes more striking. I left her hair open to show a softer, more confident side of her. Her features become more defined. The shift in her appearance shows her growing presence and how she starts to carry herself differently. Overall, her design reflects her journey—from a simple, hardworking life to someone who's finding her own place and identity.





Sage Parashara

Sage Parashara appears briefly in Satyavati's Past, but his presence leaves a lasting impact. He's calm, powerful, and mysterious—a sage who carries both spiritual strength and quiet intensity. I designed him with a simple orange outfit to reflect his ascetic lifestyle and connection to wisdom. The orange also adds a sense of warmth and divinity.

The beaded brown bracelet and necklace he wears are traditional for sages, grounding him in the world of spirituality and discipline. He's not heavily ornamented.

Though he appears for a short time, he shifts the direction of Satyavati's life and becomes the father of Vyasa, the future author of the Mahabharata. His character postures throughout the comic had to feel grounded yet powerful, and his design reflects just that—subtle, wise, and deeply rooted in purpose.

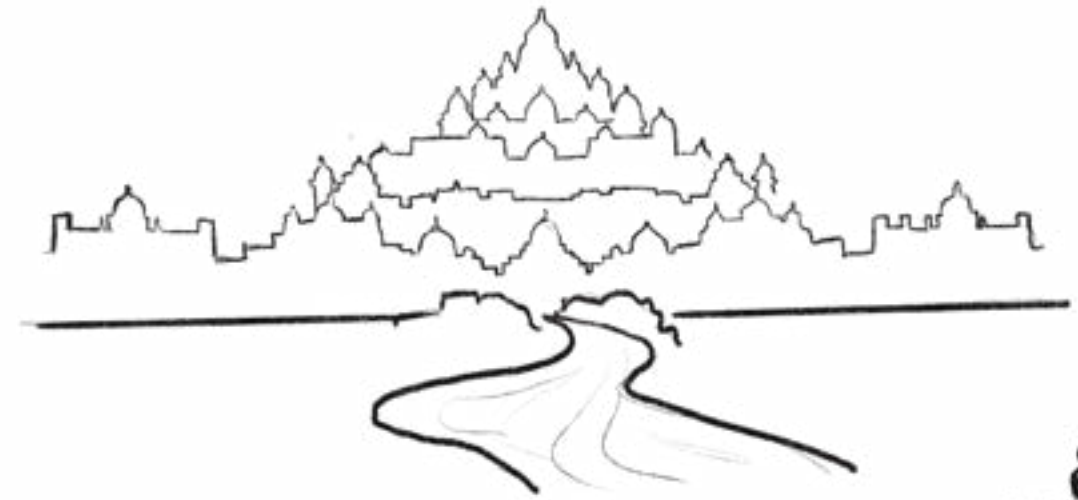
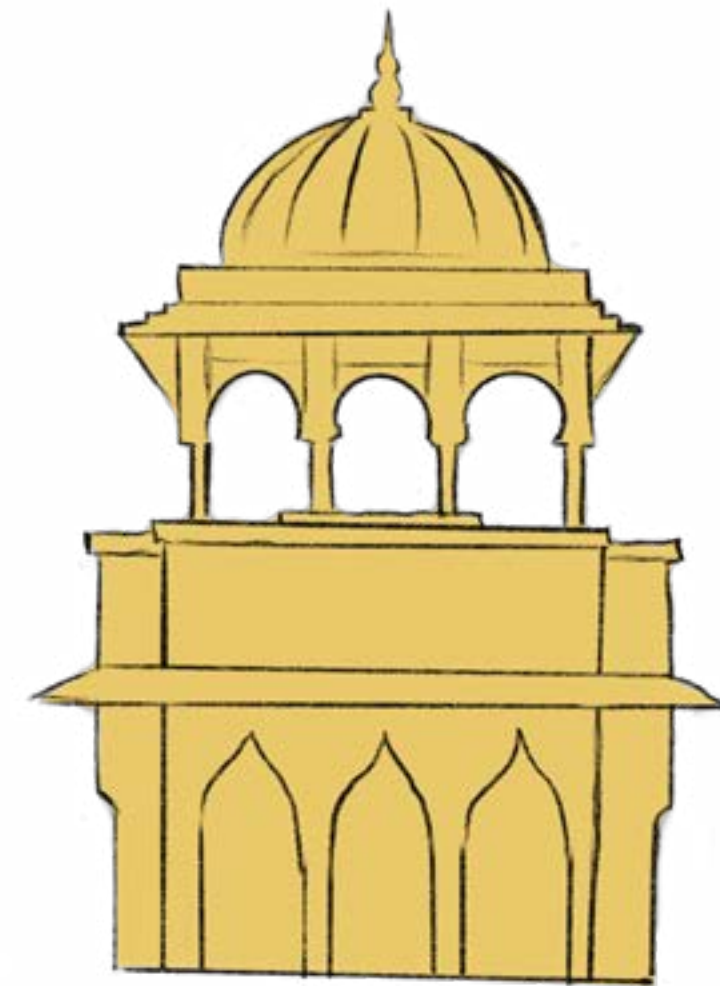




Palaces

When I set out to design this palace, I pictured something truly grand, something that felt authentically Indian. Naturally, I drew inspiration from the incredible palaces I've seen, especially their distinctive dome-shaped roofs. To me, a dome isn't just a part of the building; it's what gives a palace its majestic feel, its regal crown. So, including a prominent dome was always central to my vision – it just feels right. But I wanted the palace to feel expansive, to have a sense of depth that draws you in. That's where the Kailash Parvat rachna really got me thinking. The way it layers, creating this incredible sense of scale, was truly inspiring. I adapted that layering concept for my palace, using it to make the structure appear larger and more visually striking.

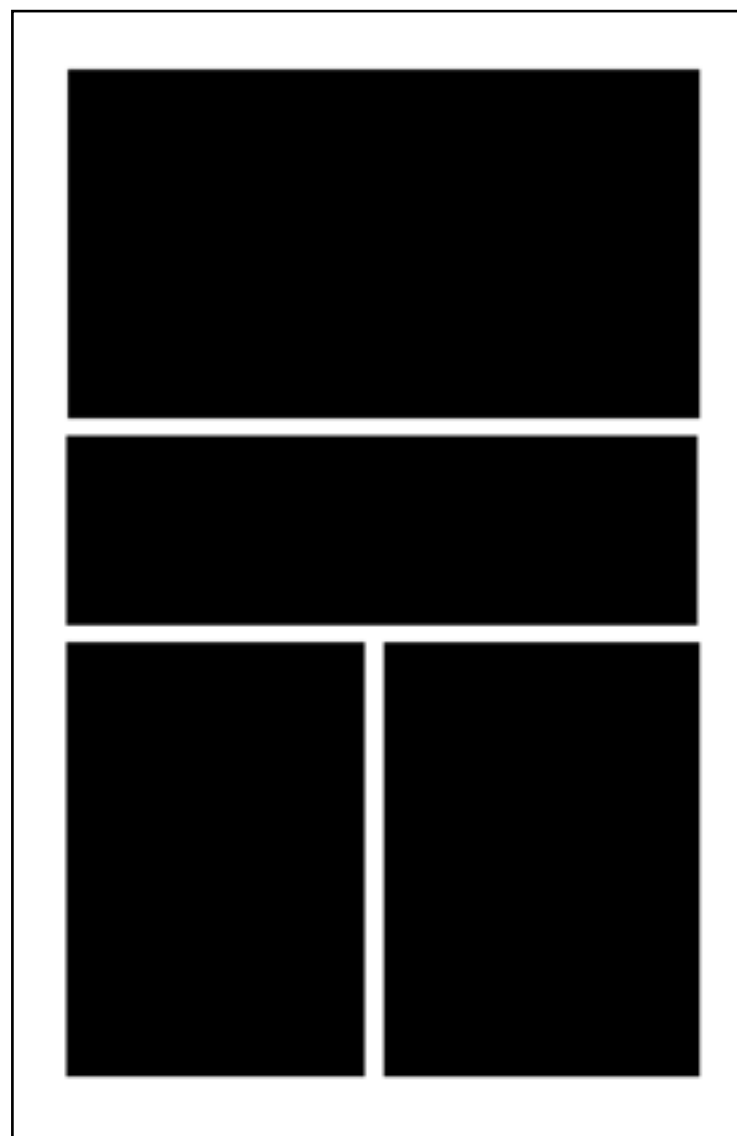
It's about creating a flow, a natural progression of space that makes the palace feel grand without being overwhelming. Right now, I've got a clear picture of the exterior's overall look and some of the key interiors. The rest of the details of how the palace looks and everything would be later on decided.



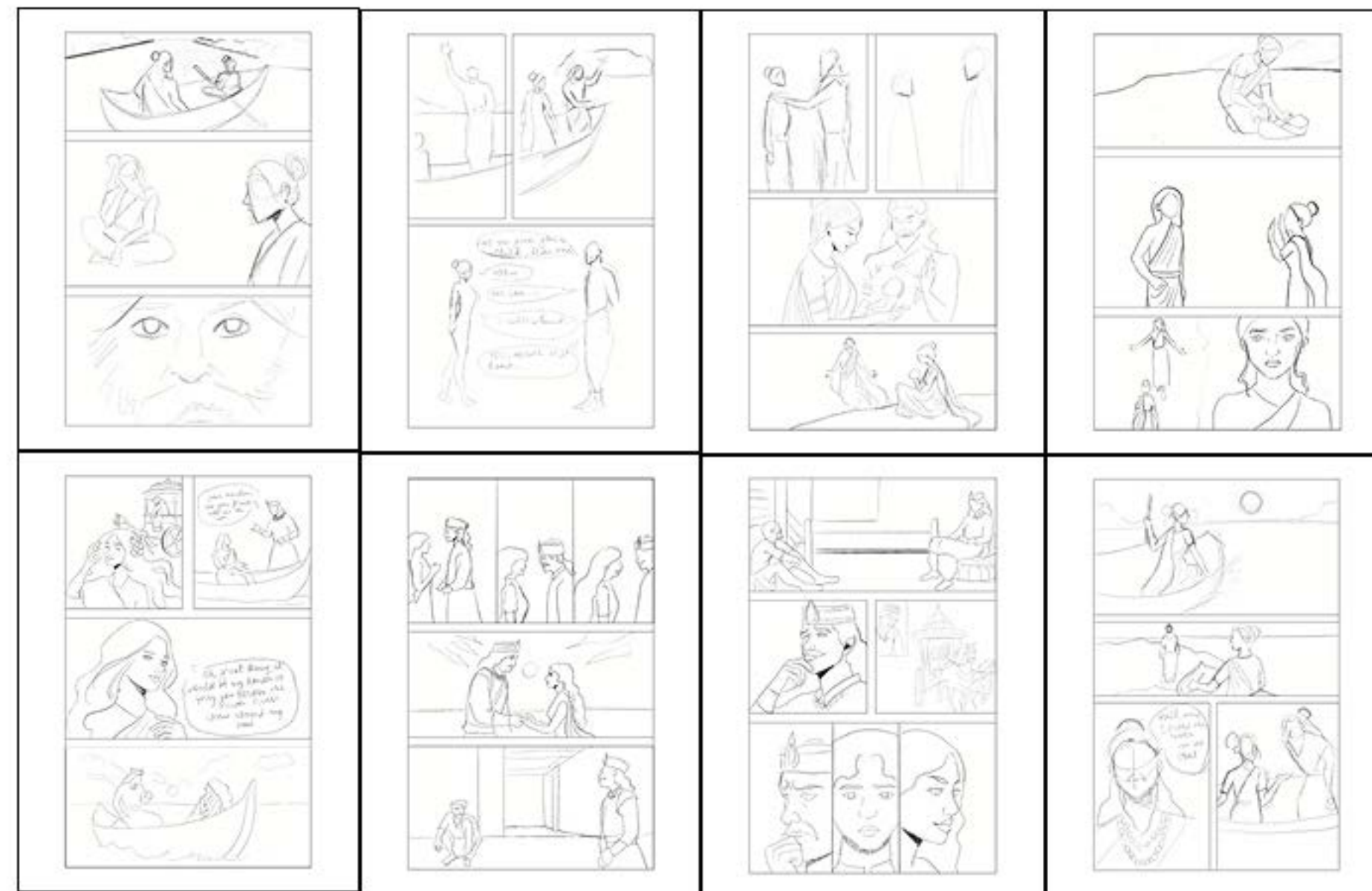


My palace design incorporates a dynamic aesthetic, where the palace's color adapts to the time of day, reflecting the ambient light. For instance, in the evening, the structure appears with a distinct pink hue, mirroring the twilight sky. This concept extends to the surrounding natural elements. The rivers and sky visually convey the prevailing mood or time. A serene, 'tale-like' sky, with its colors softly reflected in the river, indicates calmness. Conversely, a dark blue river under a grey sky signals an impending storm or a shift in atmosphere. During the evening, a golden sky, casting its reflection upon the river, captures the transitional beauty of dusk. This integration of color aims to create a cohesive and evocative visual narrative throughout the various scenes.

Layout & Storyboard (Mahabharata)



After breaking down the script, my next step was laying out. This involves figuring out how much space each panel needs. I used black boxes as placeholders to visualize the panel sizes and ensure important moments got a bit more bigger panels than others, appearing slightly larger than the others. Once the layouts were set, I moved on to storyboarding. This is where I sketch out rough drafts of what's happening in each panel. It's a highly collaborative process; there's a lot of back-and-forth feedback with my team, which often means plenty of trial and error until we get it just right.





Panel 1: Establishing Hastinapura
For the opening, I opted for an establishing shot of Hastinapura. I did this to immediately immerse the reader in its world. The warm, golden hues and the grand palace silhouette create a majestic, almost mythical atmosphere. This effectively conveys the city's prosperity and historical significance. The silhouette technique adds grandeur without overwhelming the panel with too much detail.

Panel 2: Introducing King Shantanu
This medium shot serves a dual purpose. First, it introduces King Shantanu, letting us see his regal appearance. Second, by showing him looking out from his balcony, we subtly reinforce the city view. I did this to help the audience further settle into the setting. This framing also ensures ample room for his thought bubble without cluttering the visual..



Panel 3 & 4: The Encounter with Ganga
The third panel is a medium shot. I did this to give it a focused, intimate feel, drawing the reader's eye directly to the moment of encounter. Shantanu's posture conveys his immediate awe and curiosity, setting up the mystery of Ganga. The "reflective water" and "radiant glow" around Ganga are crucial visual cues emphasizing her ethereal nature, making her appearance impactful. This third panel smoothly transitions into the fourth, a close-up of Ganga. In the third, she's seen from a distance; the fourth brings us right to her face as she introduces herself, ending the page with her reveal.

This is how I approached the storyboarding for this page, keeping in mind both the visual impact and the flow of the narrative. All the major changes happen during the storyboarding phase.





The next step in my process was to define each illustration through inking and adding color, deliberately chosen to enhance the narrative and emotional tone of the panels.

Panel 1: I illustrated the first panel with a warm, golden hue and a grand palace silhouette. This choice effectively conveys a majestic, almost mythical atmosphere, highlighting the city's prosperity and historical significance. The silhouette technique was intentionally used to add grandeur without overwhelming the panel with excessive detail, allowing the overall mood to take precedence.

For the **second panel**, featuring King Shantanu on the balcony, I incorporated dark maroon and dusty golden colors. These specific hues were chosen to represent his mood, effectively conveying a sense of loneliness and introspection. The subdued palette directly mirrors his emotional state.

Panel 3: Ganga's Divine Radiance
In the third panel, I used a combination of pastel green and a strong yellow light coming from behind Ganga. This choice was deliberate; the pastel green provides a soft, ethereal quality, while the prominent yellow light emphasizes her radiance and glow, visually reinforcing her divine nature.

Panel 4: Ganga's Close-Up
For the final panel, a close-up of Ganga, I maintained the yellow background. This consistent use of yellow ensures her divine radiance remains the focal point, creating a strong visual connection to her presence in the previous panel and ending the sequence with an emphasis on her powerful, otherworldly aura.

Project 2 (Ramayan comic series)

My work on the Ramayana series began concurrently with the Mahabharata project, which initially presented a challenge in managing multiple narratives simultaneously. However, as I grew more accustomed to the established process of layout, storyboarding, and illustration, I found myself able to push the Ramayana series into greater detail. This increasing familiarity with the workflow allowed me to invest more intricacy into each panel, enhancing the visual storytelling and ultimately creating a more refined and comprehensive rendition of this epic.

While the core creative process for both the Mahabharata and Ramayana remained consistent, the latter introduced a significant new element: a much larger cast of characters. Working with such a diverse and extensive array of personalities, each requiring unique visual development and emotional depth, was a challenging yet incredibly rewarding new experience for me as an illustrator. It pushed me to think more deeply about individual character arcs and how to portray them distinctly within the larger narrative tapestry.

Storyline

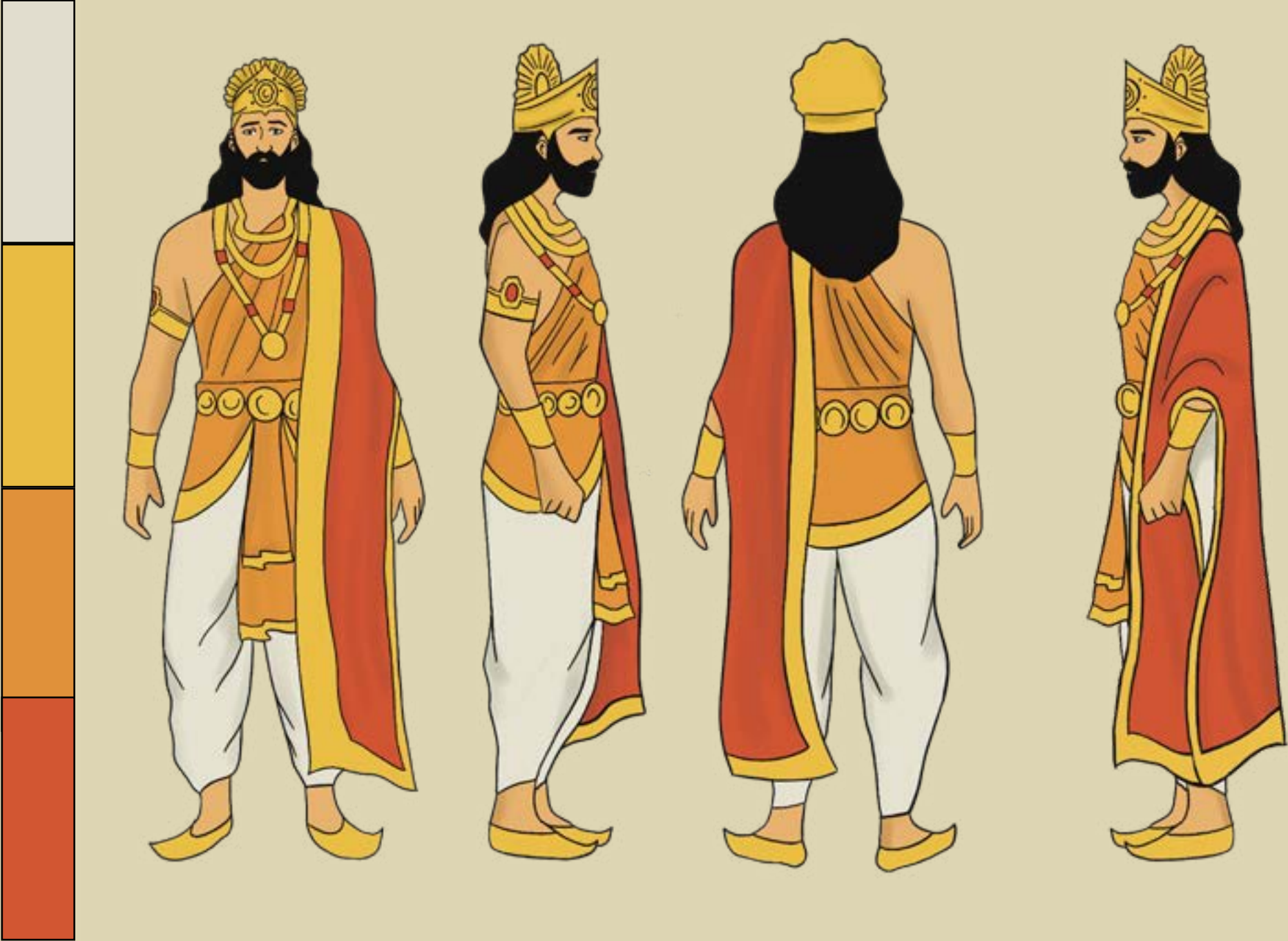


King Dasharatha of Ayodhya deeply desired a son. Advised by Rishi Vashishta, he undertook the Putra Kameshti Yagna with Sage Rishyashringa. During the ritual, Lord Agni appeared, offering divine kheer, which Dasharatha shared among his three queens, Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra. All three soon became pregnant. Worried, Queen Kaushalya consulted Rishi Jaimini, who prophesied her son would be a great king if born before noon, but face exile if born after.

Despite her fear, she was advised to worship Lord Vishnu. As her due date neared, Vishnu appeared to her in a dream, offering to be born as an adult. Kaushalya, however, wished to experience motherhood fully from birth, a request granted by the Lord. The next morning, her labor began, signaling the arrival of the divine Crown Prince.

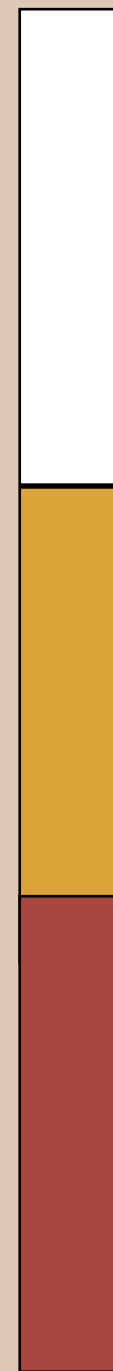
King Dasharath

King Dashrath, the noble ruler of Ayodhya, is portrayed as a compassionate and dignified leader whose reign brings peace and prosperity to the kingdom. A descendant of the illustrious Sun Dynasty, his character design reflects his royal heritage—he is draped in warm tones of yellow, red, and orange that represent vitality, strength, and dharma. To design his character and also the queen characters, I looked at different sources like Ramanand Sagar's Ramayana, different TV shows and paintings. Atop his head sits a majestic sun-shaped crown, symbolizing his divine connection to Surya, the Sun God. Though his expression carries the calm authority of a just king, there's a hint of longing in his posture—subtly capturing the void he feels without an heir.



Queen Kaushalya

Queen Kaushalya, his eldest wife, exudes grace and maternal warmth. She is deeply spiritual and emotionally grounded, a woman of quiet strength and devotion. Her attire features rich reds and yellows, resonating with her seniority and pious character. She wears the most elaborate jewelry among the queens, adding to her regal presence. Her hair is neatly tied in a low bun, reflecting tradition and elegance. Kaushalya's design mirrors her inner calm and her close spiritual connection, especially in moments where she communicates with Lord Vishnu through divine dreams.



Queen Kaikeyi

Queen Kaikeyi, the youngest, stands out with her bold and commanding aura. She is spirited, intelligent, and unafraid to express herself. Her outfit uses deep blue and dark green tones, colors that signify ambition, depth, and emotional intensity. Her hairstyle—half tied, half loose—symbolizes her complex personality: disciplined yet independent, royal yet unpredictable. Kaikeyi's design captures her charm and strength, with subtle hints of playfulness—like her fondness for the divine kheer—foreshadowing the strong will that shapes her actions later in the epic.



Queen Sumitra

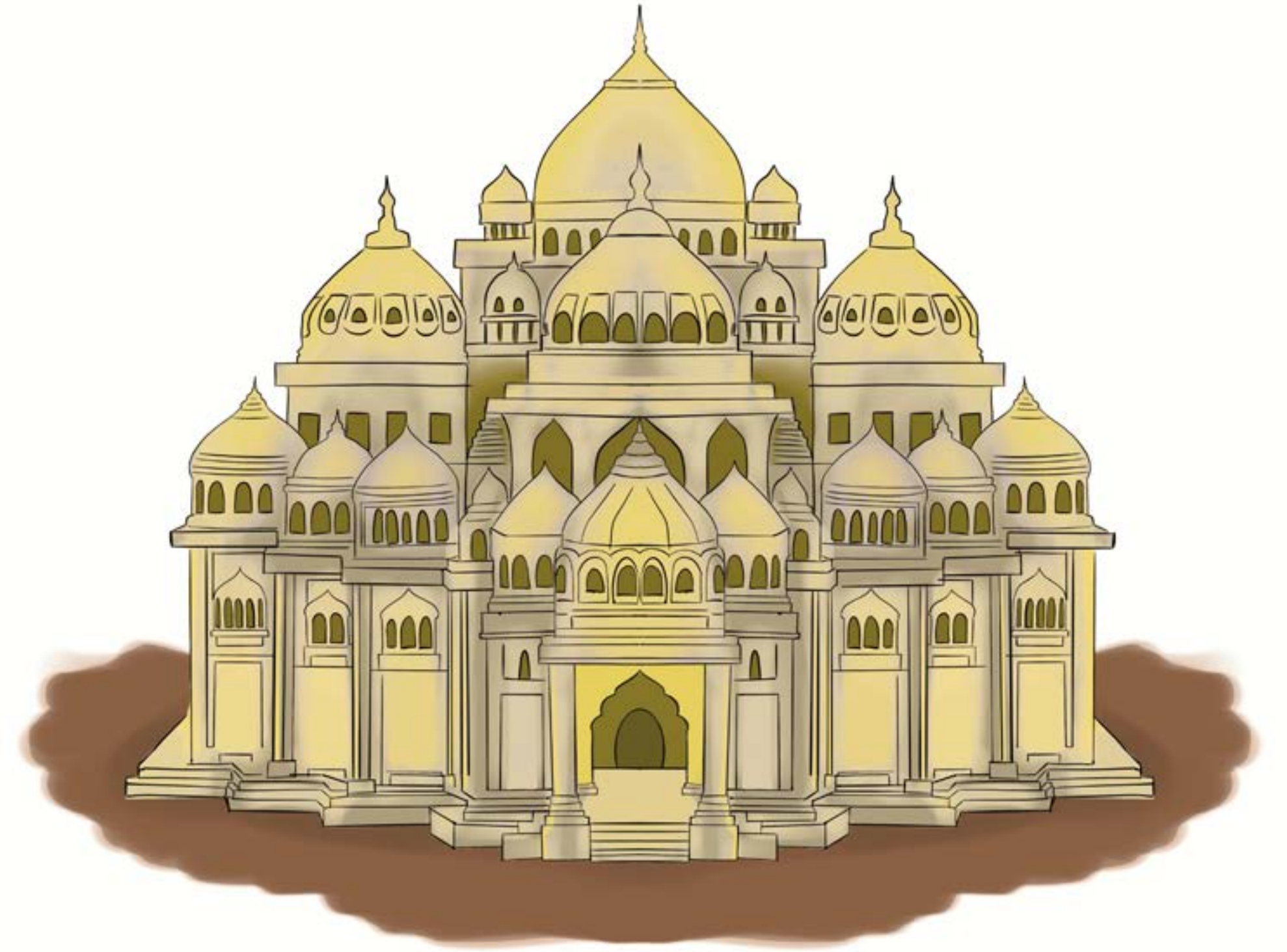
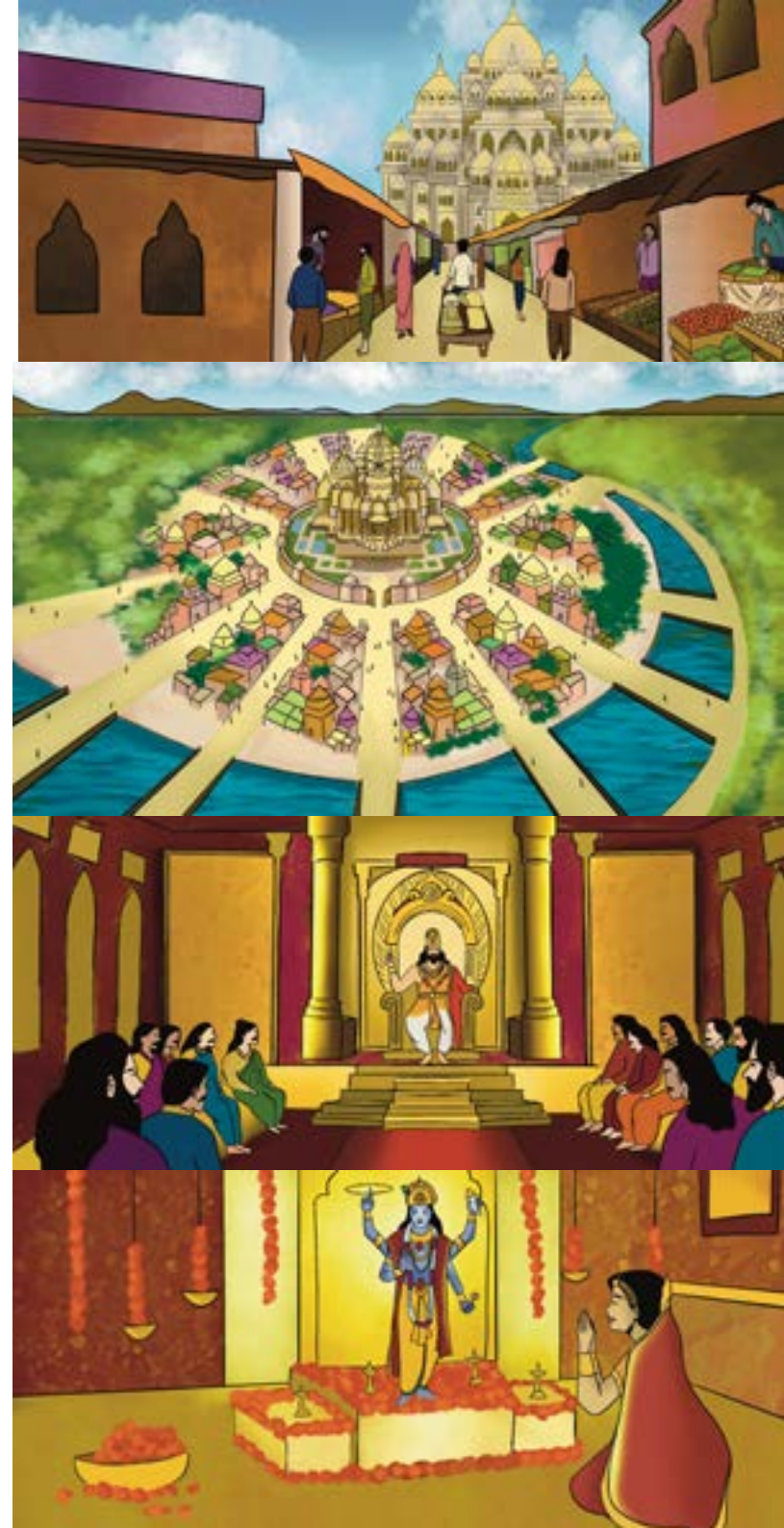
Queen Sumitra, gentle and introspective, is the quiet pillar among the three queens. She is known for her selflessness and wisdom, always balancing personal desire with empathy for others. Her look is soft and harmonious, with shades of pink, pastel green, and yellow that evoke peace and serenity. Her hair is styled in a high bun—simple yet refined—symbolizing alertness and grace. Sumitra's posture and minimal jewelry reflect her composed and thoughtful nature. The moment she receives both her share and Kaikeyi's leftover kheer highlights her open-hearted character and ability to carry others' blessings with dignity.



Landscapes

For the setting of my Ramayana comic, I envisioned Ayodhya, the capital city of Kosala, as a place of with full of bustling. I conceptualized the city in the shape of the sun, with all roads elegantly converging towards the central palace. This design choice wasn't arbitrary; it served multiple purposes:

The sun motif visually reinforces the divine lineage of the Ikshvaku dynasty, to which Rama belongs, often associated with the solar (Surya) dynasty. It subtly elevates the city to a celestial, almost sacred status. The radiating road structure naturally draws the reader's eye towards the palace, emphasizing its importance as the heart of the kingdom and the focal point of many key events. I also drew inspiration from the Ram Mandir, specifically its intricate layering and structural complexity.



Layouting & Storyboarding Ramayana

I applied the same methodical approach to layout, storyboarding, and illustration for the Ramayana comic as I did for the Mahabharata. However, I deliberately added more detail to the storyboards for this project. This enhanced focus on clarity, including clear expressions in each panel, not only streamlined the feedback process but also made it significantly easier for me to understand and implement necessary changes.

Storyboarding example for ramayan on the next page

Panel 1: The Royal Council
I designed this panel to show King Dasharatha in his council, discussing the need for an heir. I used a grand hall setting with a raised throne to immediately convey the king's authority and the importance of this decision. The noble appearance of his advisors further emphasized the gravity of the discussion for the kingdom.

Panel 2: Rishi Vashishta's Counsel
Here, Rishi Vashishta suggests Rishi Rishyashringa for the yagna. I portrayed him with classic sage features—white hair, beard, simple white attire, and rudraksh beads—to instantly communicate his wisdom and spiritual authority.



His angled stance allowed him to address both the King and the court, highlighting the public importance of his prophecy.

Panel 3: The Meeting at the Ashram
This panel shows Dasharatha meeting Rishi Rishyashringa. I depicted both figures bowing with namaste to express mutual respect, even between a king and a sage. The clean, natural ashram setting was chosen to contrast with the palace, symbolizing the sage's spiritual purity and highlighting the sacred nature of the place where the yagna would be performed.

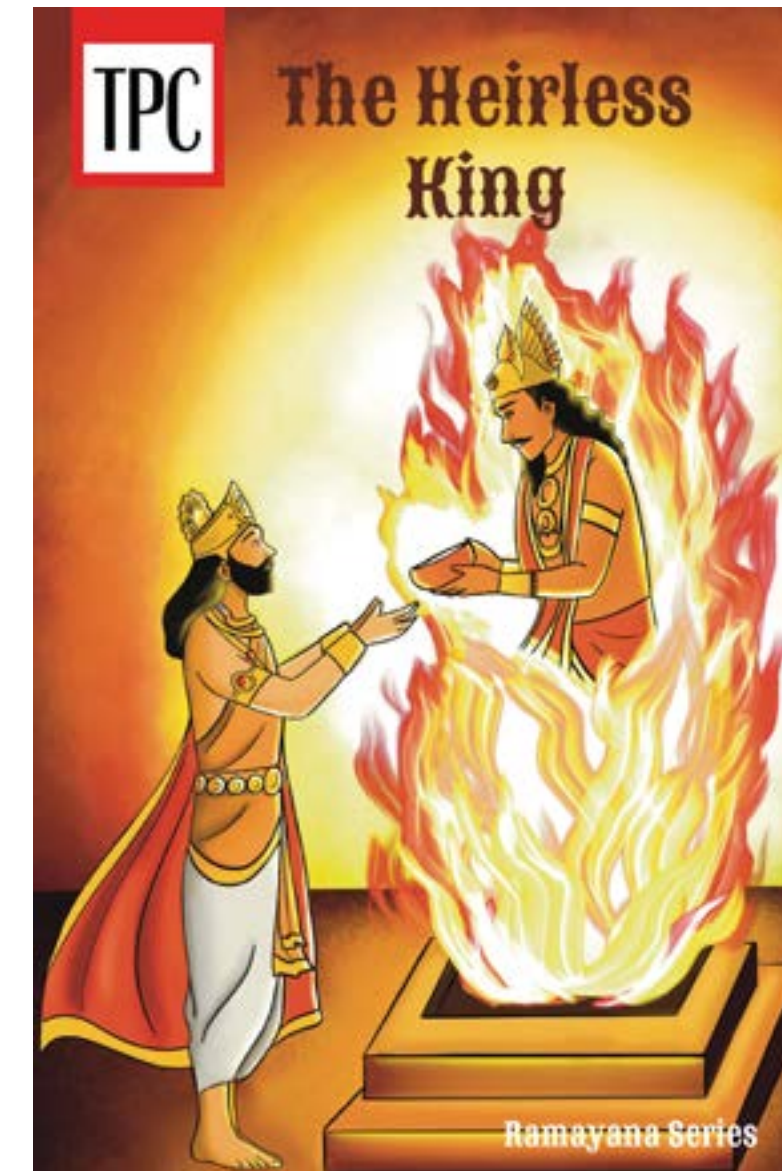
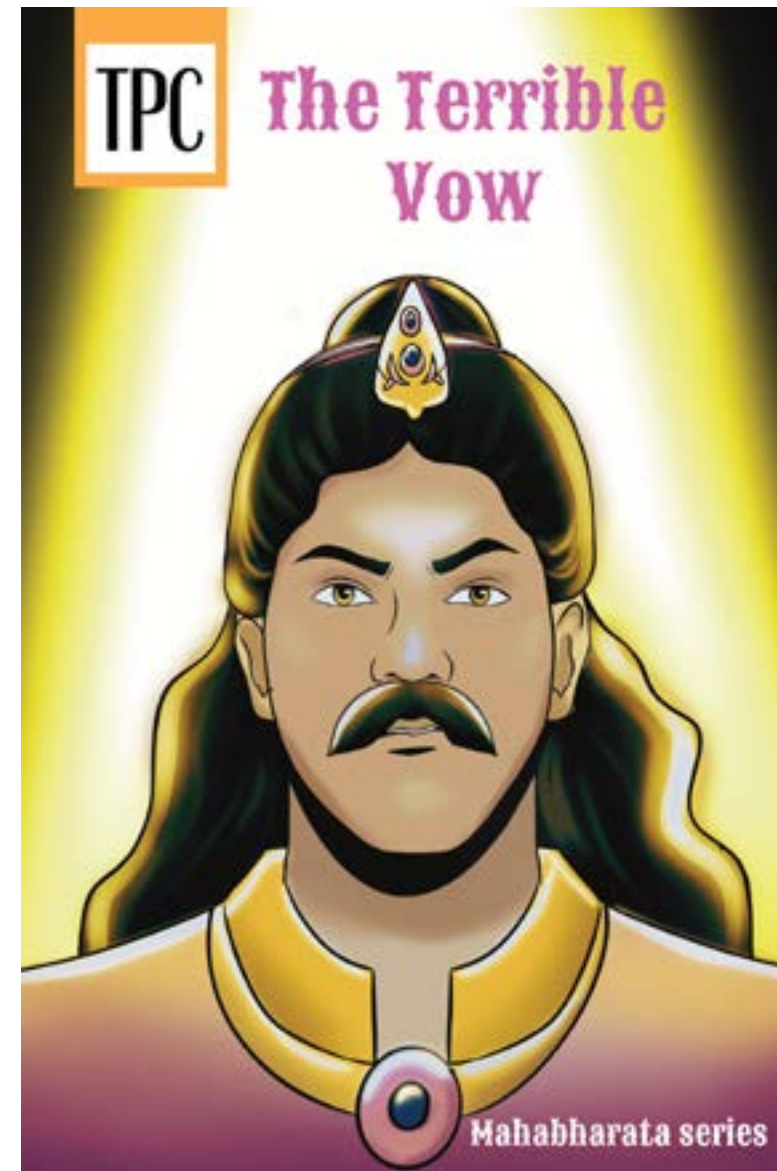
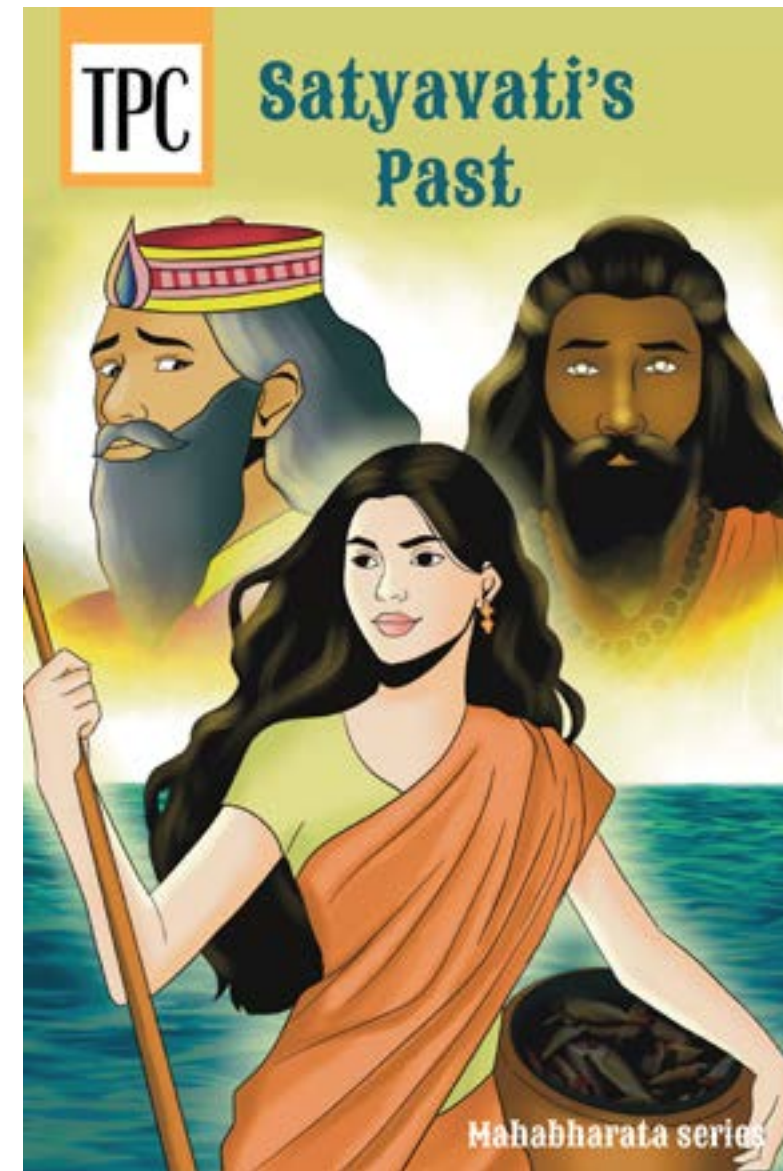
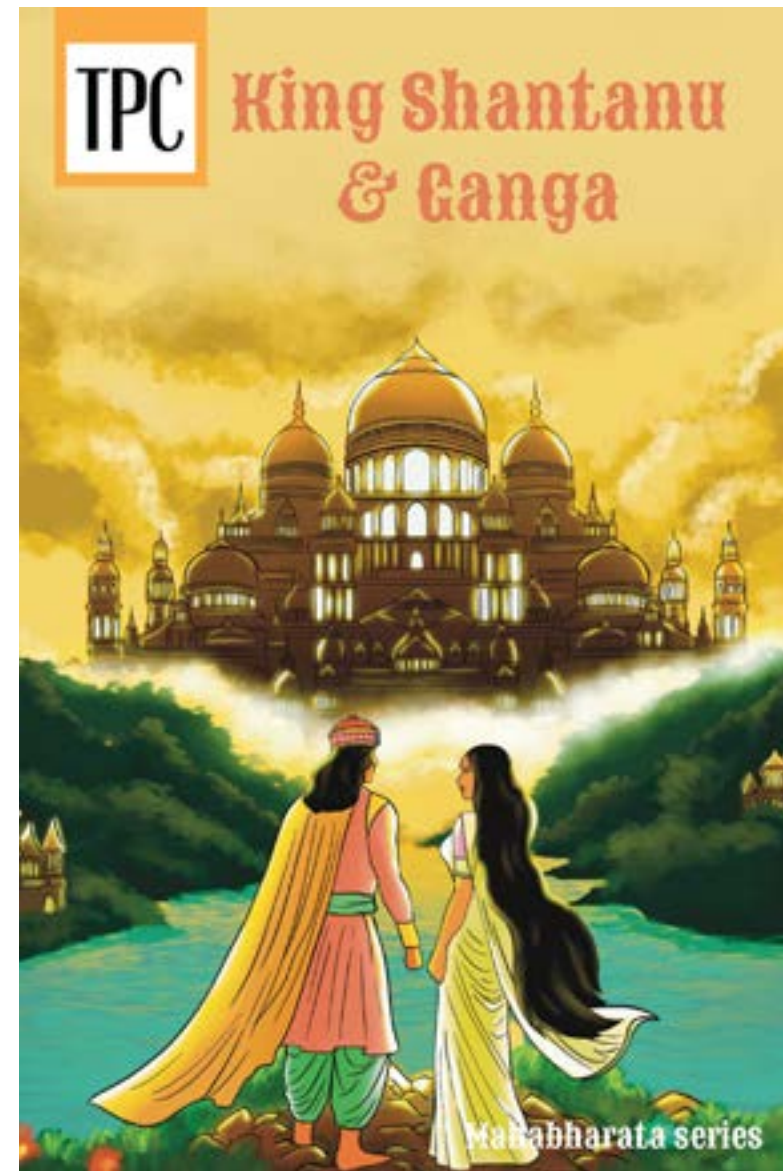


Here's how I approached the design of each panel, focusing on composition, character details, and the chosen color palette:

Panel 1: Red and gold dominate the color palette, not just for aesthetic appeal, but to actively convey power, royalty, and the sheer importance of the discussion about an heir. The noble appearance of the advisors further emphasizes the weight of their collective decision for the kingdom's future.

Panel 2: While this panel shares a similar background with Panel 1, the focus shifts entirely to the sage. The background maintains the red and gold to provide continuity and establish the location. However, Rishi Vashishtha is designed to stand out through the use of contrasting colors and his white attire, symbolizing his purity and wisdom. This contrast ensures the viewer's eye is immediately drawn to him and his key role in the narrative.

Panel 3: In contrast to the previous panels, this scene primarily utilizes a green and brown background. These earthy tones evoke the natural, serene, and spiritual atmosphere of the ashram. The orange outfits of the characters, particularly Dasharatha, provide a vibrant contrast against the backdrop, drawing attention to their interaction while still feeling harmonious within the setting. The orange can also be associated with spirituality and sacrifice in some contexts, subtly hinting at the purpose of Dasharatha's visit.



Redesigning the Covers: A Personal Touch
 As my primary role during the internship was focused solely on illustrating the interior artwork, I took the initiative to redesign the cover pages to truly make the project my own. This allowed me to infuse my vision into the entire comic book experience.

A key element of this redesign was the introduction of a colored tag on each comic. This tag serves a practical purpose: it helps buyers easily identify which epic series the book belongs to. For the Mahabharata series, I used a distinct orange tag, while the Ramayana series features a prominent red tag.

Reflection

This project was truly a great lesson for me. Adapting ancient epics into comics taught me so much about the industry and what it's like to work in a team. I learned to effectively balance idea generation, inspiration, and research with the crucial need to deliver quality work and cope with tight deadlines. I also found myself more open to feedback, realizing its importance in aligning with the project's vision. A key takeaway was the reality of creative work: embracing ideas I love, but also knowing when to let them go if they don't serve the story.

Working with these mythologies reinforced my core design beliefs. I see comics as a powerful tool to make complex stories accessible and impactful. As a designer, being mindful of how every visual choice—from expressions to layouts—affected the reader's connection was essential. The care and thought put into each panel directly showed in the final outcome. It's vital to understand the why behind every design decision, ensuring it's not just "design for design's sake." Without intentionality and purpose, is it truly design?

Adapting the Mahabharata and Ramayana, I saw how specific visuals and pacing could evoke a desired emotional response, drawing readers into these ancient tales. Modernizing these stories meant understanding influence: how to create visuals that resonated with universal human emotions in a new generation. This involved constantly adapting traditional narratives for diverse audiences. For me, design was central to both understanding these perceptions and translating them into the comic's visual language.

Ultimately, this project taught me that mythologies are living entities. They can be reverent yet fresh, emotional yet educational, traditional yet inclusive. It's not about replacing the past—it's about continuing its dialogue in a language the present can understand.

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