

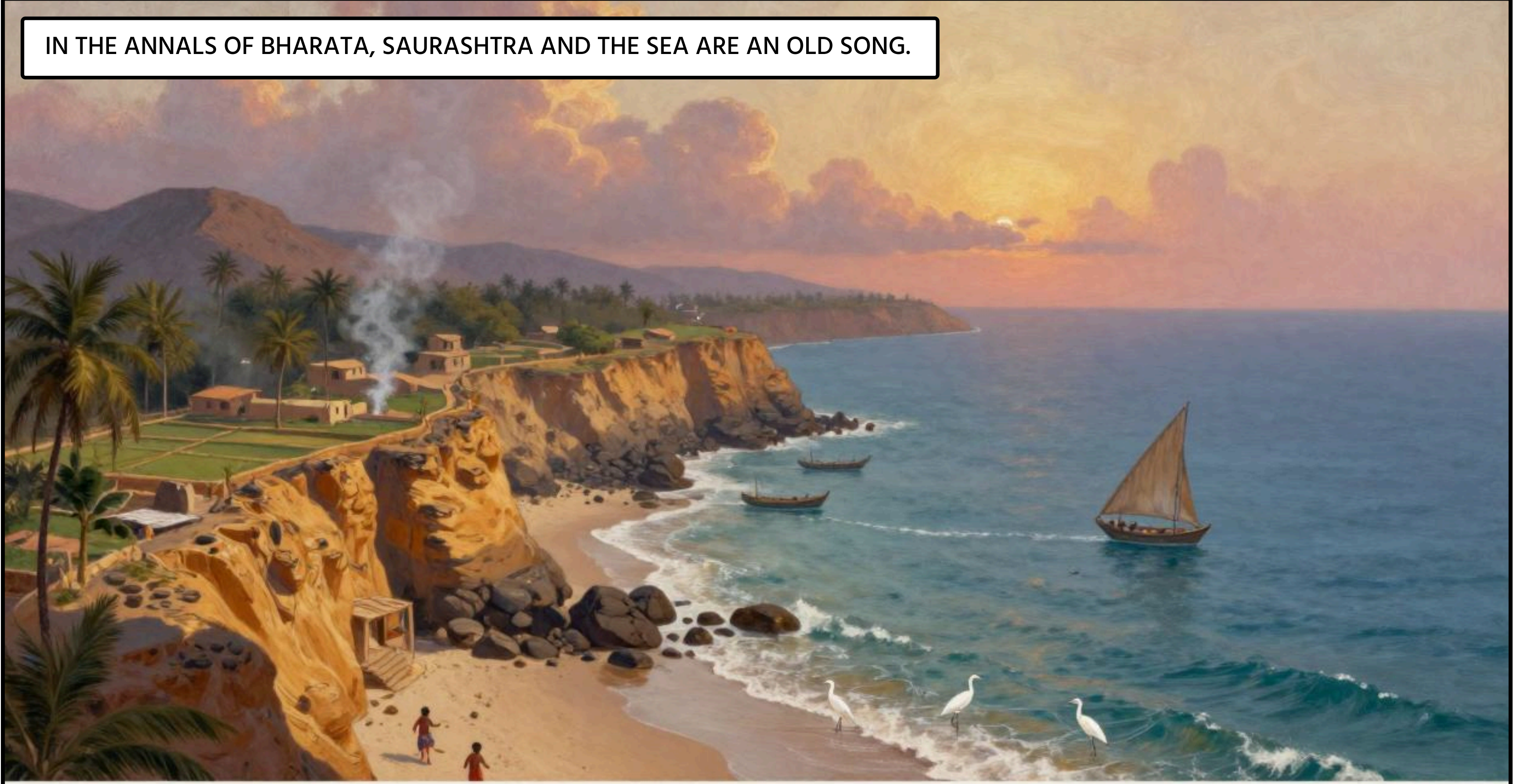
SOMNATH



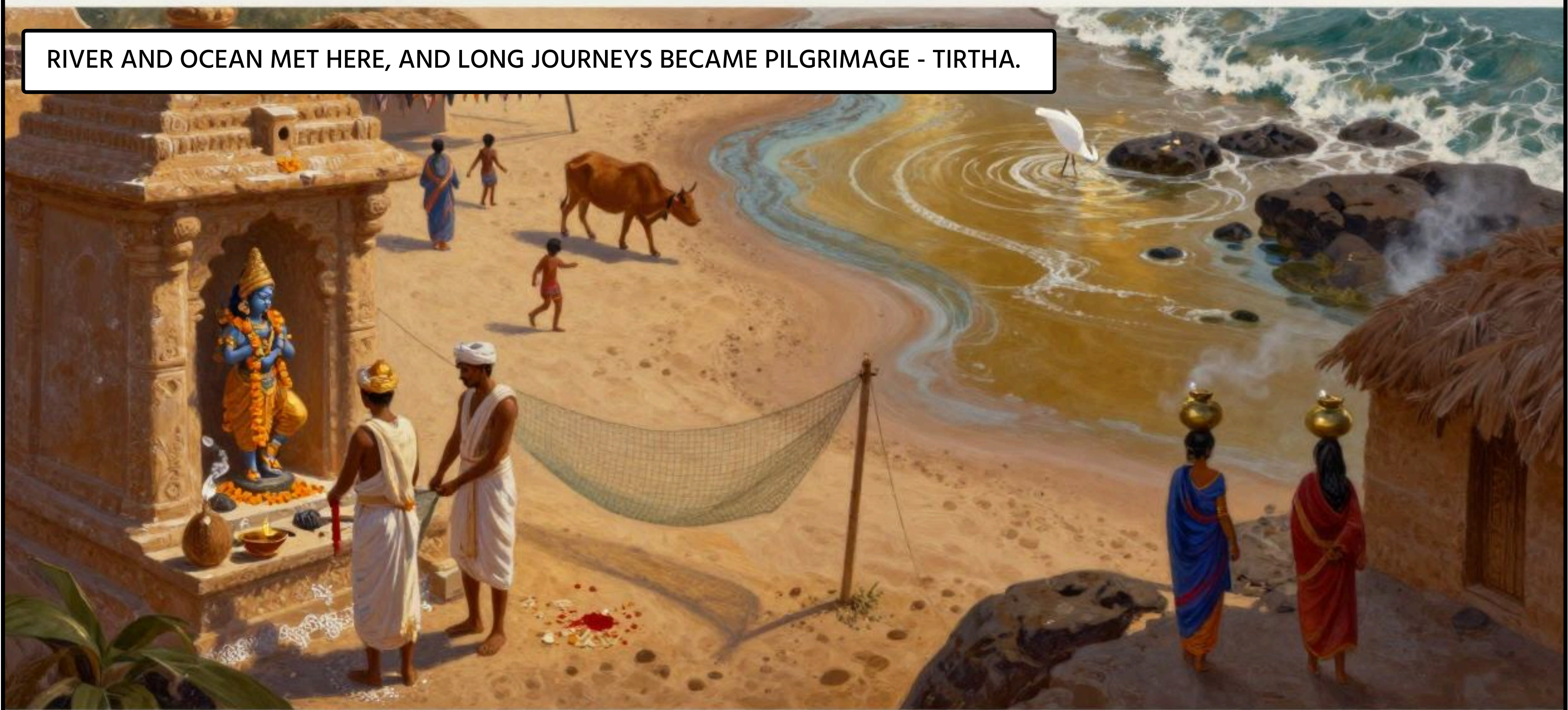
BODHA

VOL. 1 ISSUE 3
SCROLLS OF **ARYAVARTA**

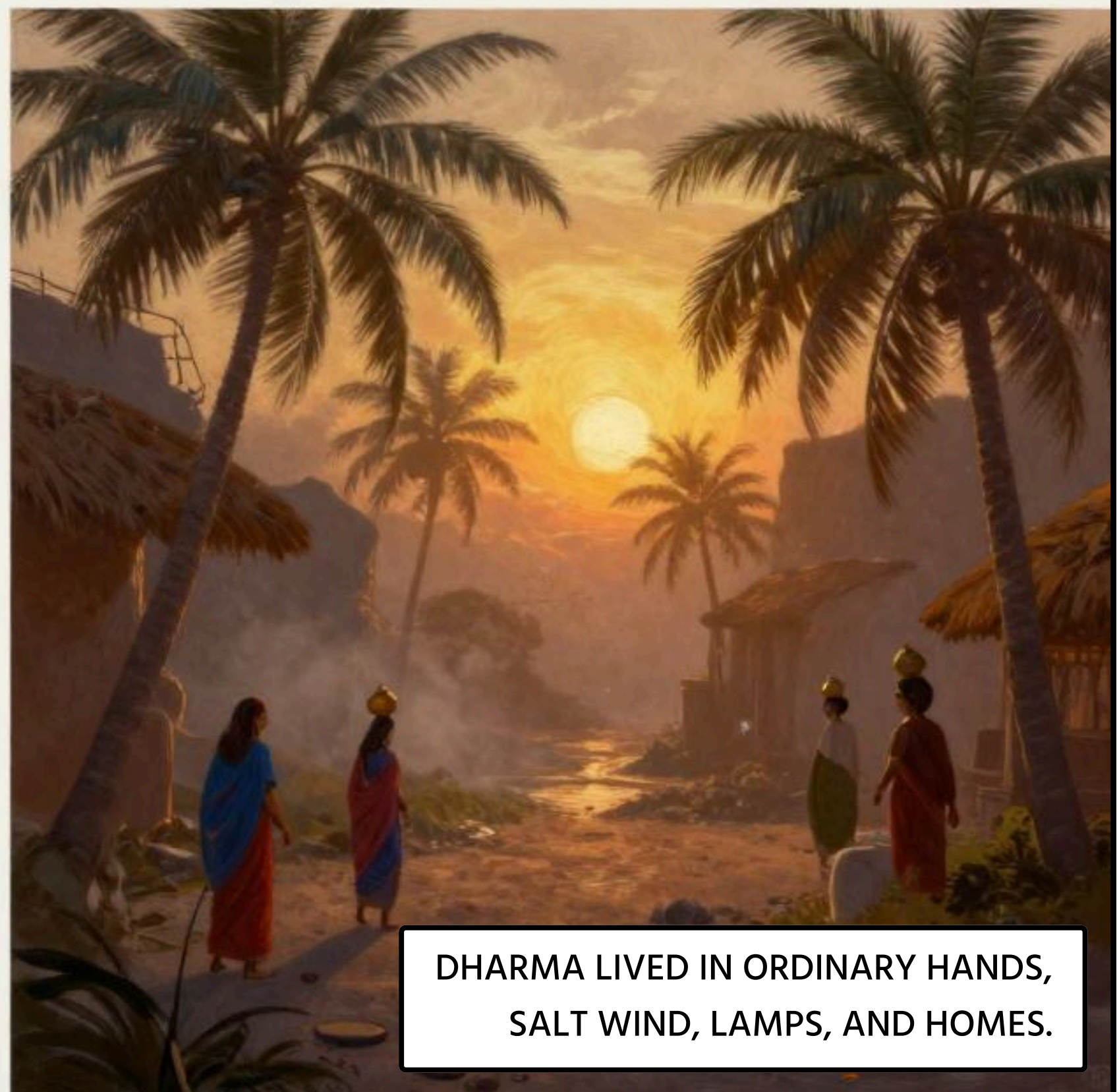
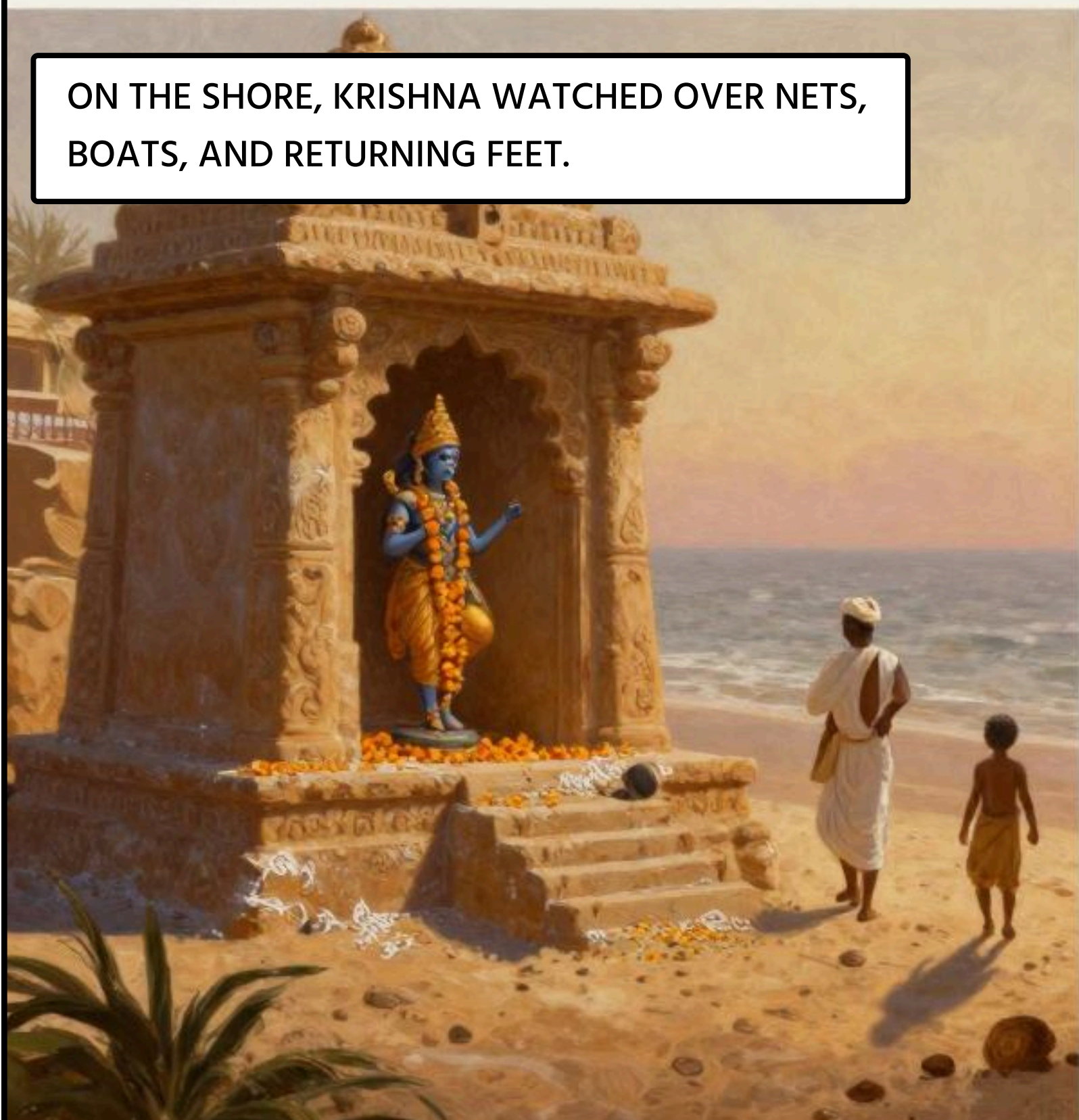
IN THE ANNALS OF BHARATA, SAURASHTRA AND THE SEA ARE AN OLD SONG.



RIVER AND OCEAN MET HERE, AND LONG JOURNEYS BECAME PILGRIMAGE - TIRTHA.



ON THE SHORE, KRISHNA WATCHED OVER NETS, BOATS, AND RETURNING FEET.



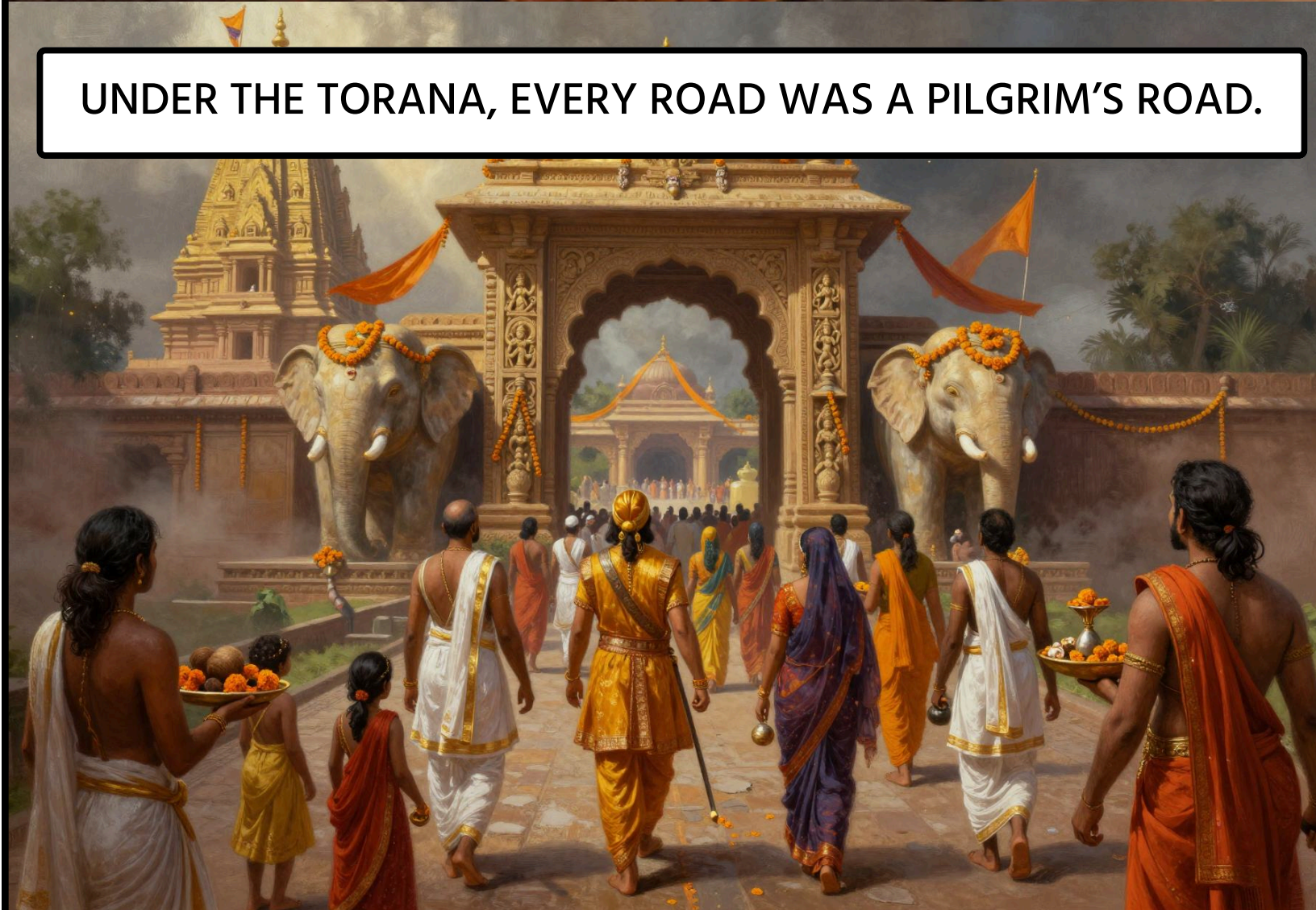
DHARMA LIVED IN ORDINARY HANDS, SALT WIND, LAMPS, AND HOMES.

AND ABOVE THE COAST, VISIBLE FROM DISTANT HORIZON, ROSE A BEACON SHAPED BY DEVOTION.

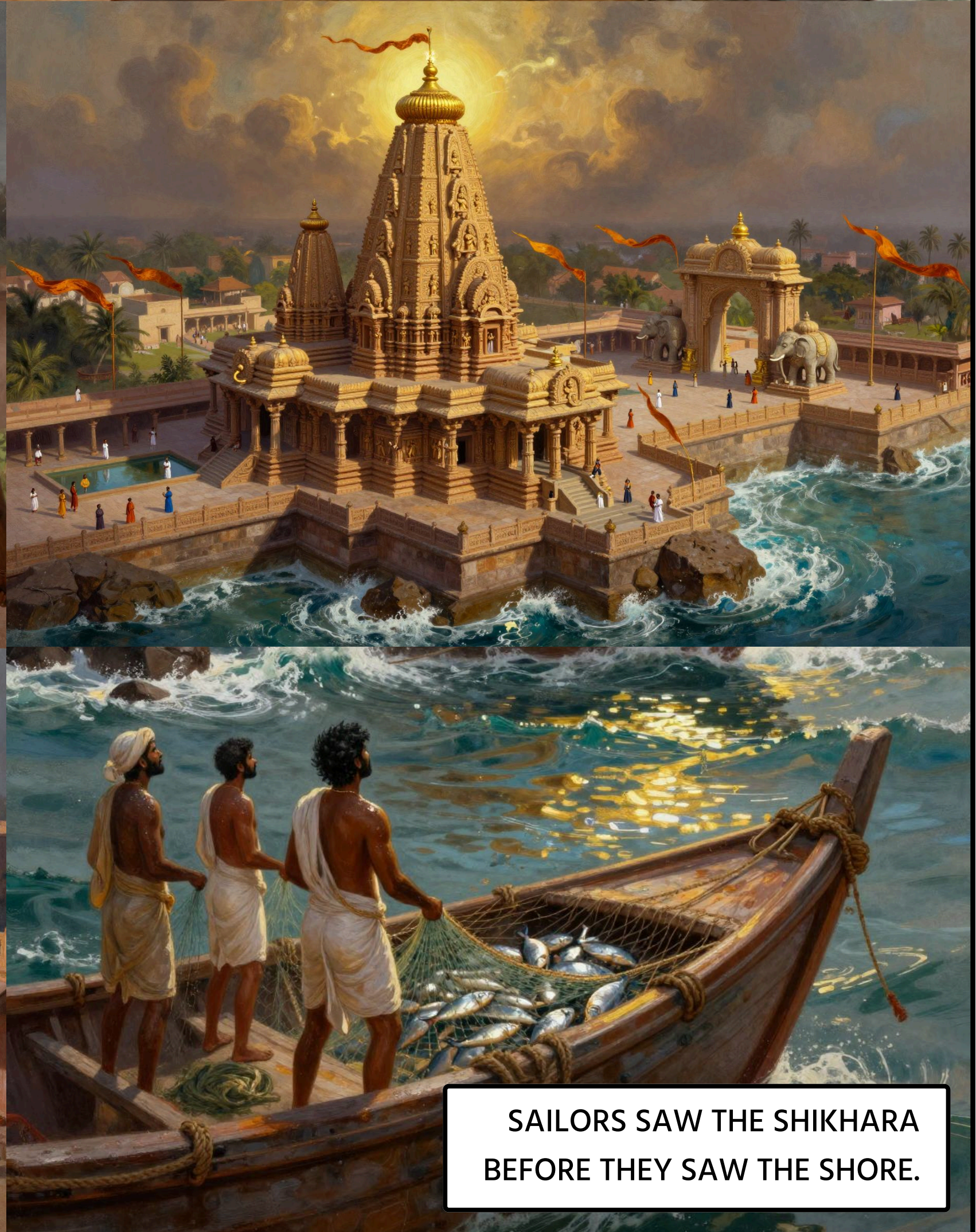
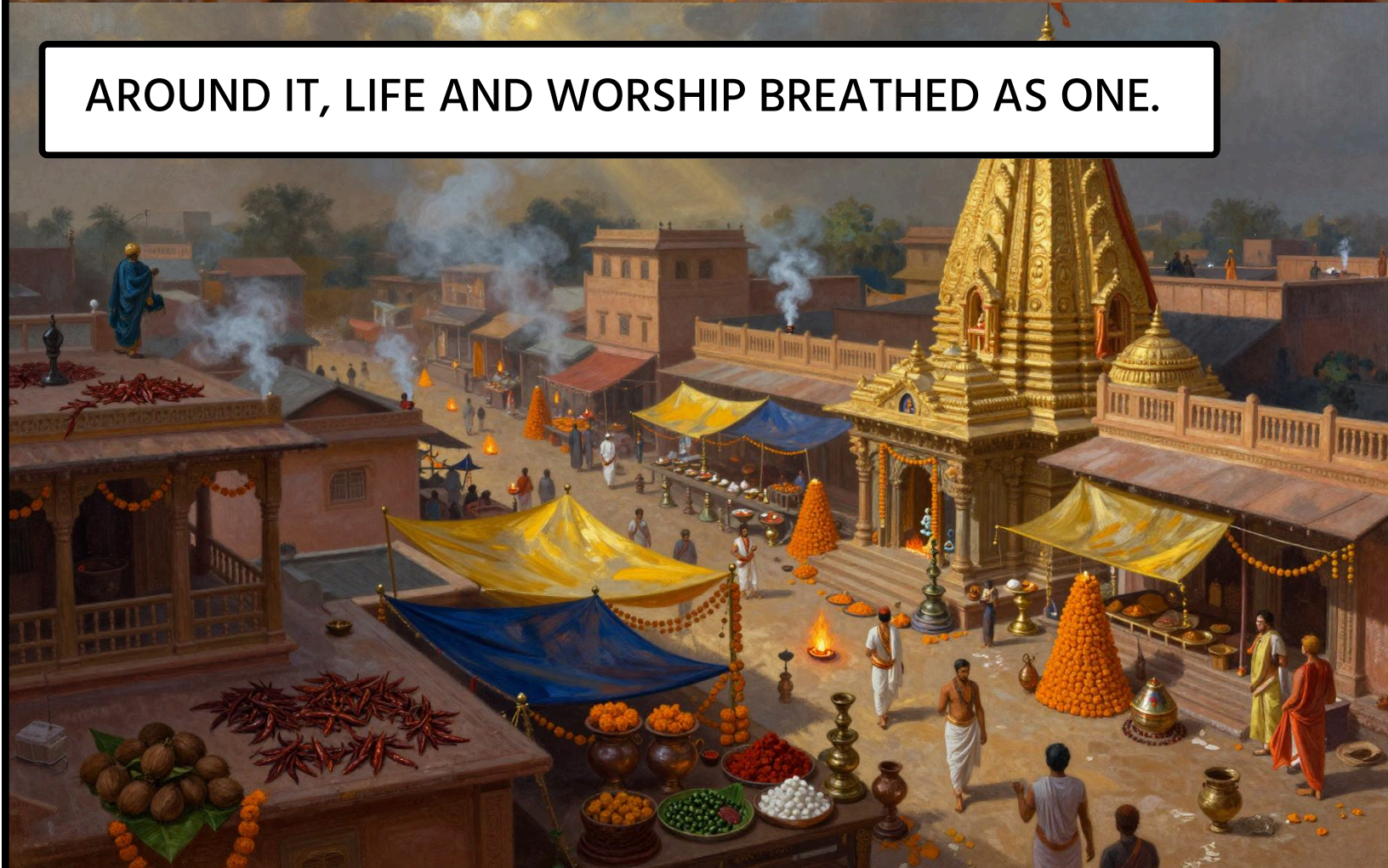
SOMNATH. THE MOON LORD.



UNDER THE TORANA, EVERY ROAD WAS A PILGRIM'S ROAD.



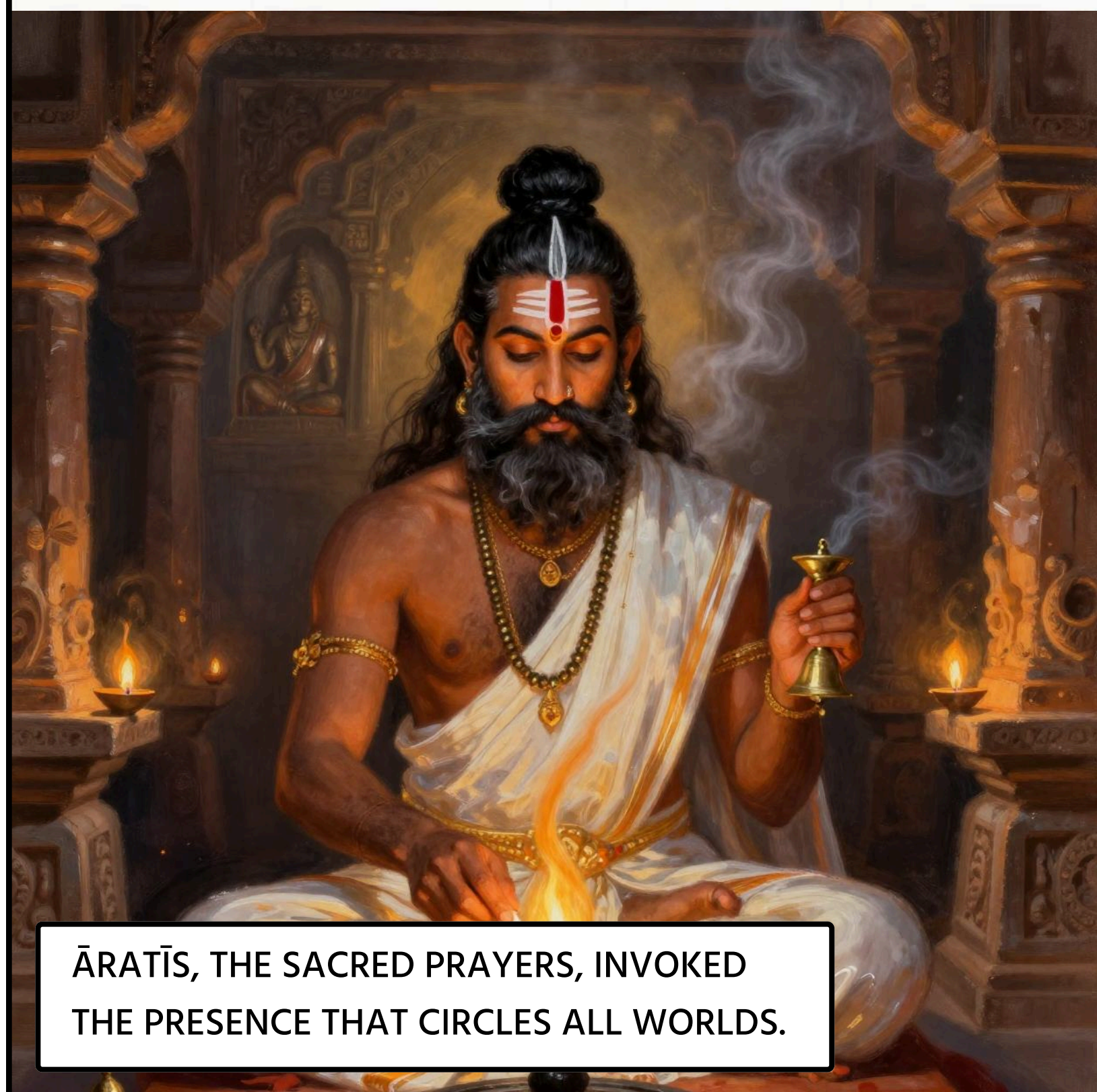
AROUND IT, LIFE AND WORSHIP BREATHED AS ONE.



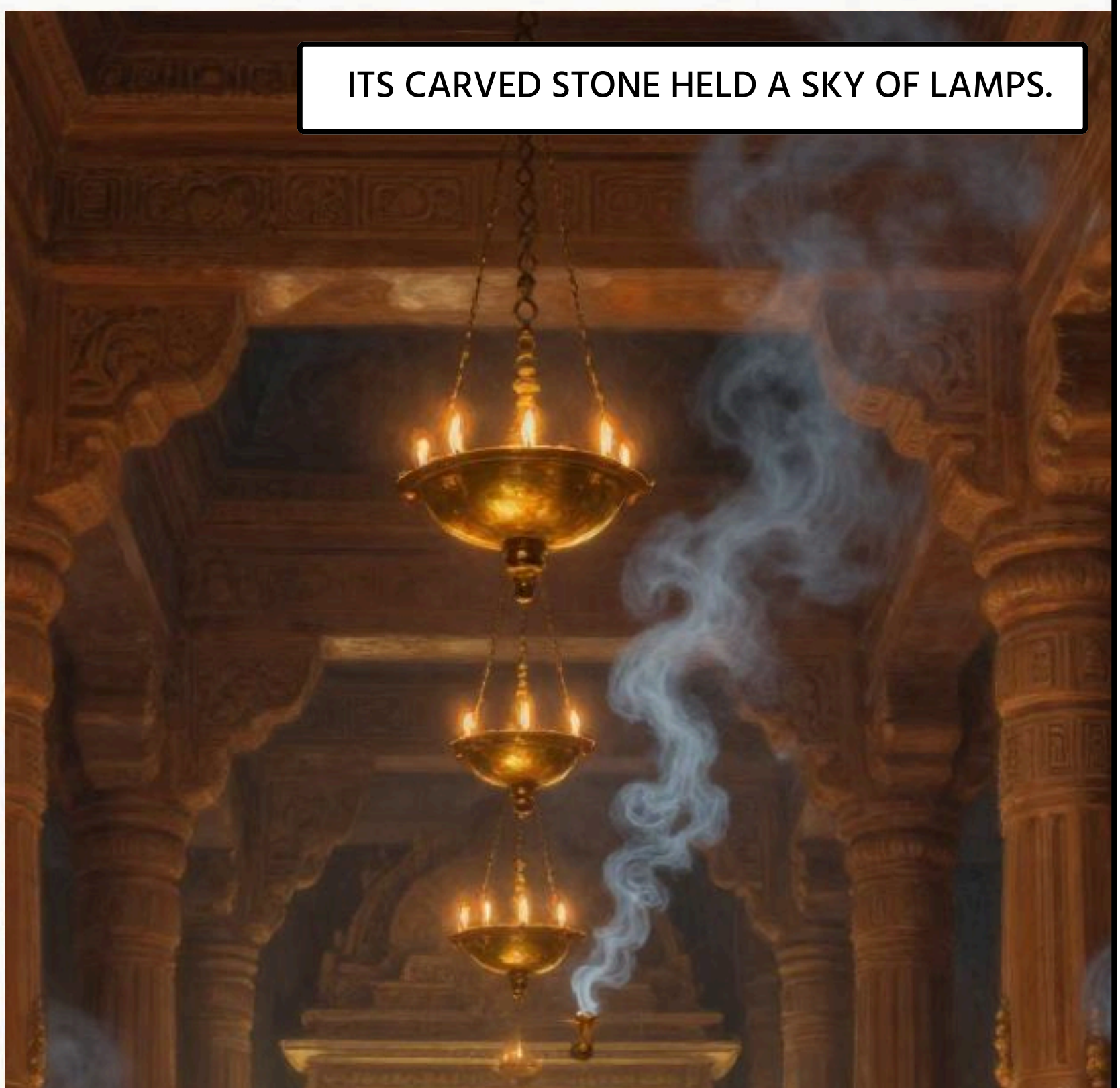
SAILORS SAW THE SHIKHARA
BEFORE THEY SAW THE SHORE.



WITHIN IT, HALLS DANCED WITH RHYTHM, GESTURE, AND DEVOTION.



ĀRATĪS, THE SACRED PRAYERS, INVOKED
THE PRESENCE THAT CIRCLES ALL WORLDS.



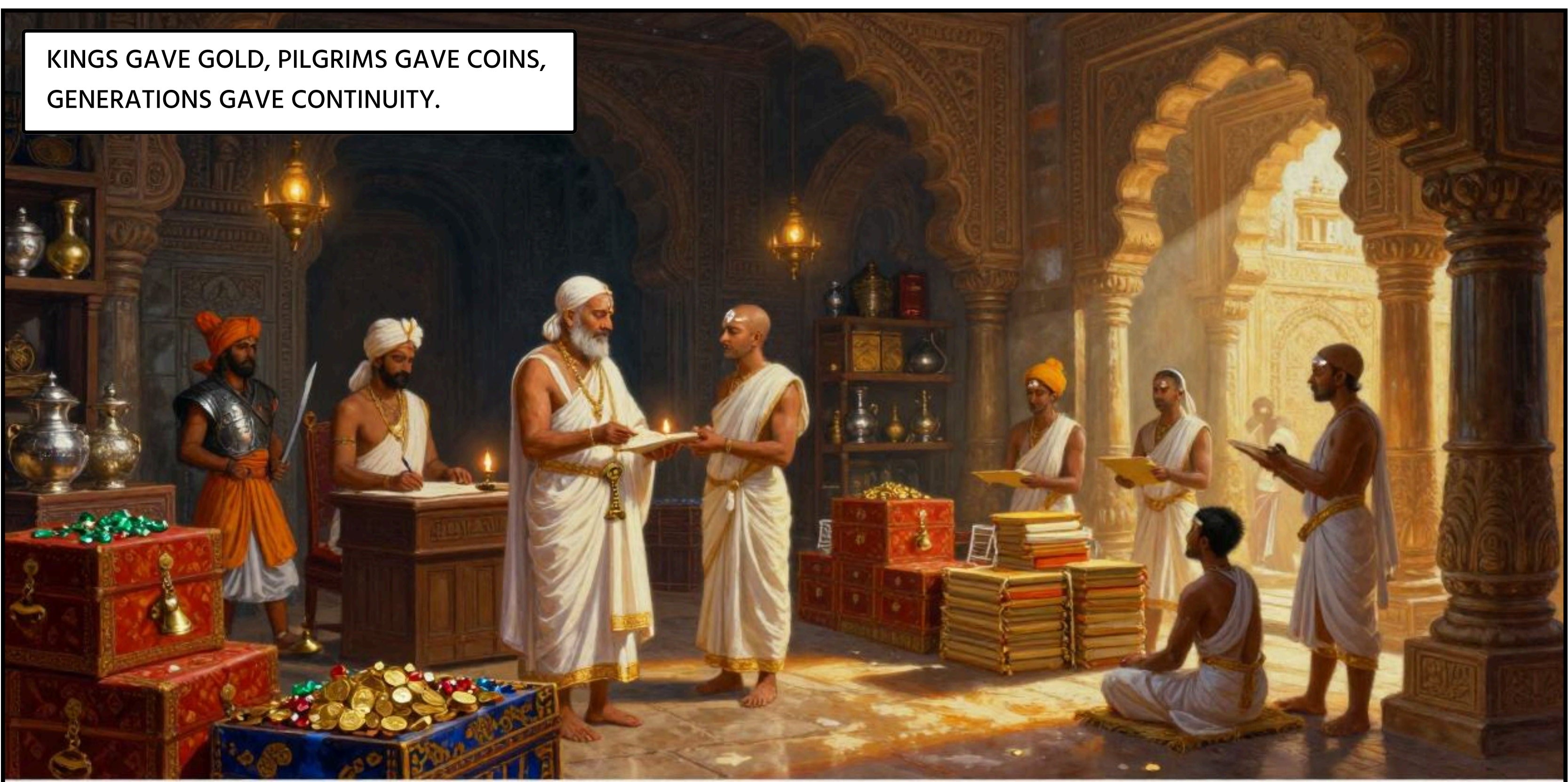
ITS CARVED STONE HELD A SKY OF LAMPS.

IN ITS INNERMOST DARKNESS, THE JYOTIRLINGA GATHERED ALL FLAMES TOWARDS IT.

A PRESENCE WITHOUT A BEGINNING OR AN END. AN ANCIENT RHYTHM THROBBED HERE - MANTRA, JALA, BILVA, PRĀṆA.



KINGS GAVE GOLD, PILGRIMS GAVE COINS,
GENERATIONS GAVE CONTINUITY.

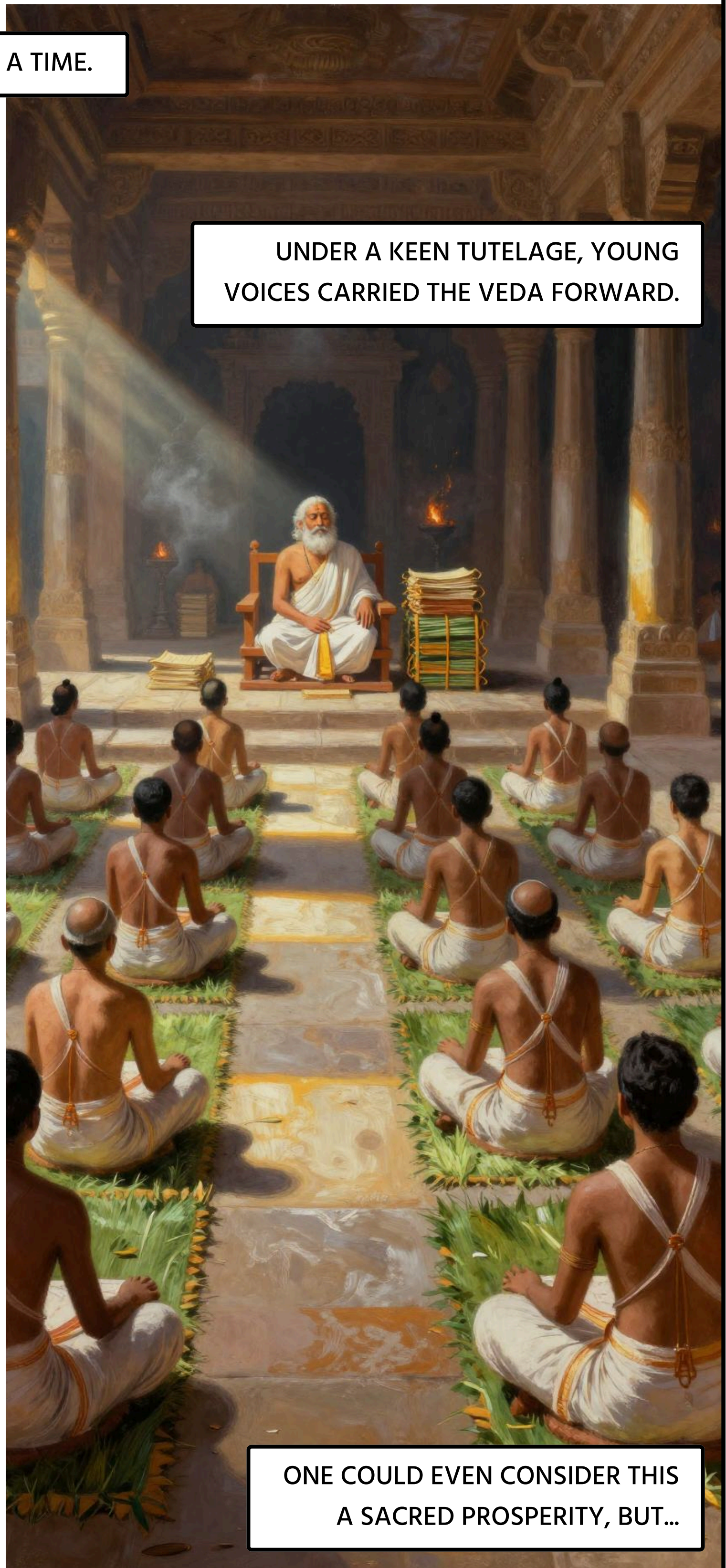


ABUNDANCE ARRIVED HERE AS SEVA, ONE VESSEL AND CARAVAN AT A TIME.

THOSE WITHOUT POSSESSIONS GAVE SERVICE AND DEVOTION.



UNDER A KEEN TUTELAGE, YOUNG
VOICES CARRIED THE VEDA FORWARD.



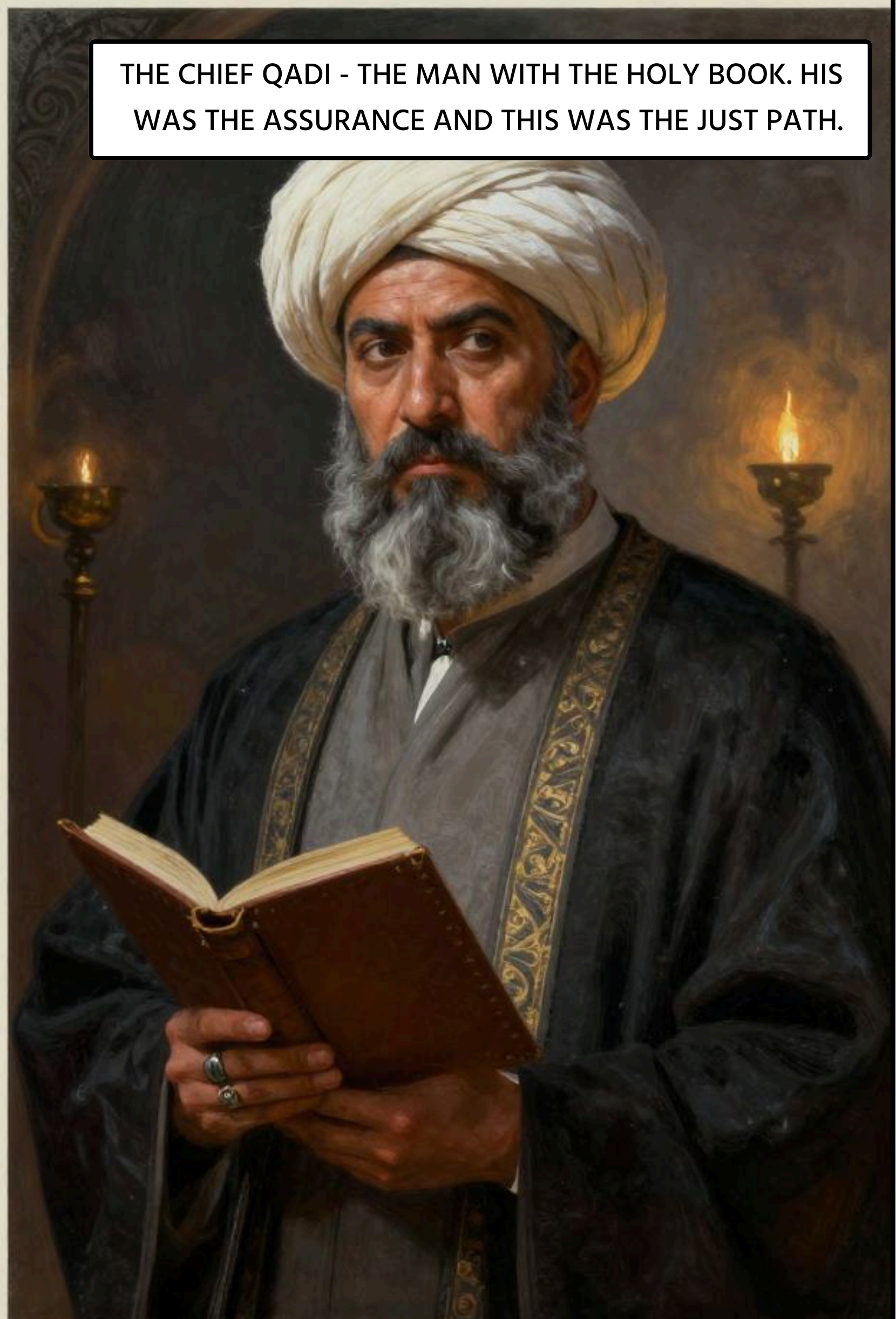
ONE COULD EVEN CONSIDER THIS
A SACRED PROSPERITY, BUT...

...FAR FROM SAURASHTRA, AT A DIFFERENT KIND OF COURT,
PROSPERITY WAS MEASURED IN CONQUEST AND PILLAGED WEALTH.

A SULTAN AND HIS QADI HELD CONFERENCE. AND THEIR NEXT DESTINATION WAS SET.



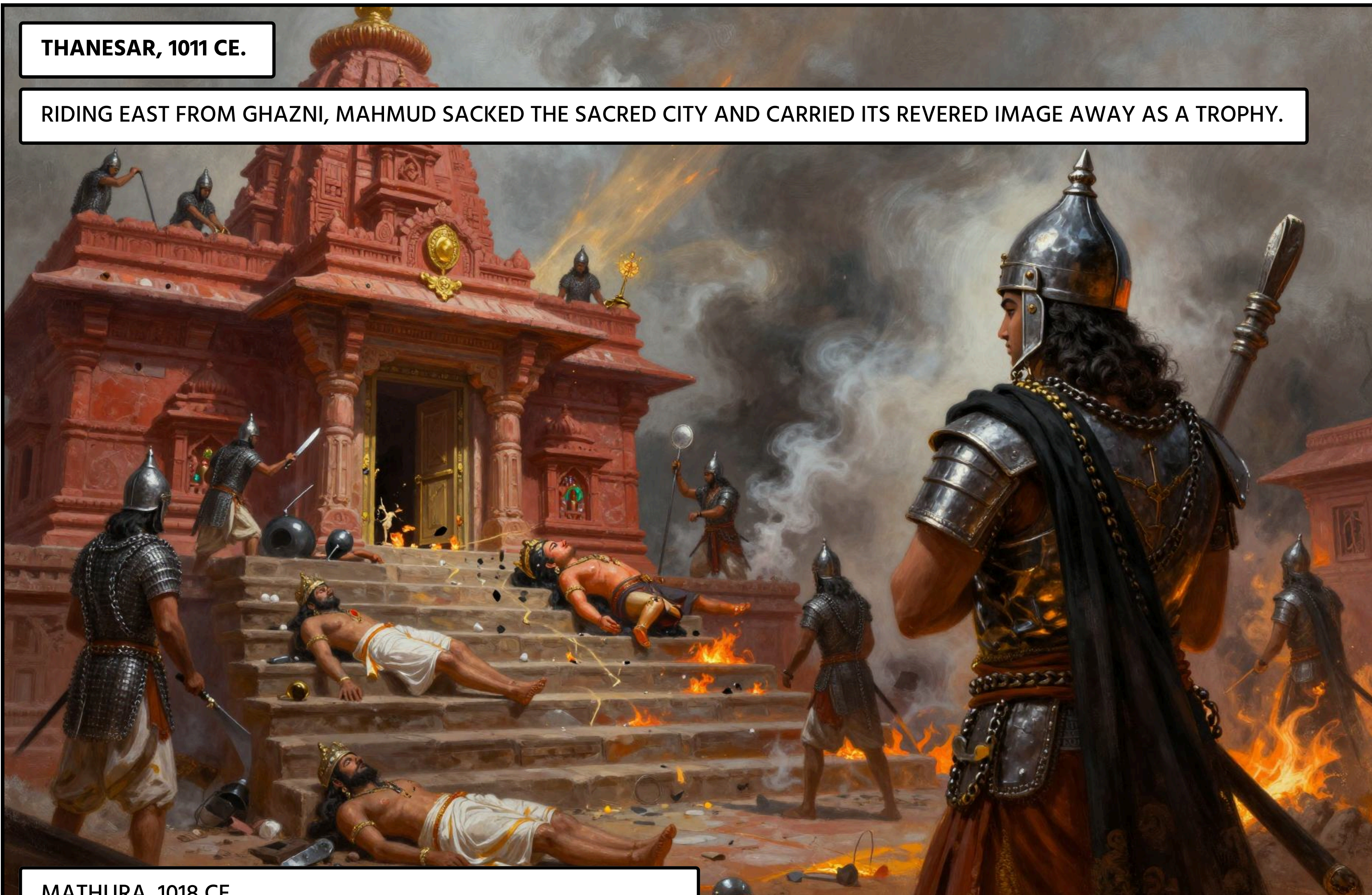
THE SULTAN - MAHMUD OF GHAZNI.
A FANATICAL MIND, GIVEN TO CONQUEST AND GREED.



THE CHIEF QADI - THE MAN WITH THE HOLY BOOK. HIS
WAS THE ASSURANCE AND THIS WAS THE JUST PATH.

THANESAR, 1011 CE.

RIDING EAST FROM GHAZNI, MAHMUD SACKED THE SACRED CITY AND CARRIED ITS REVERED IMAGE AWAY AS A TROPHY.



MATHURA, 1018 CE.

ITS TEMPLES ASTONISHED EVEN THE INVADER'S CHRONICLER...

"THEN GOLD WAS STRIPPED, SANCTUARIES BURNED, AND THE CITY LEFT IN SMOKE."



KANNAUJ, WINTER 1018 CE. THE OLD CAPITAL WAS PLUNDERED.
ANOTHER ENTRY IN GHAZNI'S LEDGER.



NAGARKOT, 1009 CE.
EACH RAID TAUGHT THE SAME LESSON.
SANCTITY ITSELF COULD BE MADE A TARGET.

BY 1025 CE, MAHMUD HAD RAIDED THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT FOR A QUARTER-CENTURY. NOW HIS MAPS TURNED TOWARDS THE RICHEST TIRTHA ON THE WESTERN SEA.

THE QADI SUPPLIED THE SANCTION - SOMNATH WAS A CELEBRATED SEAT OF MURTI-PUJA, AND THEREFORE A PRIZE FOR ICONOCLASM.

FROM GHAZNI TO MULTAN, ACROSS THE THAR, SOUTH TO ANHILWARA, THEN WEST TO PRABHAS PATAN. A FINGER FOUND SOMNATH. AN ARMY WOULD FOLLOW.

LATE 1025 CE. MAHMUD MARCHED FROM GHAZNI WITH CAVALRY, ARCHERS, ENGINEERS.
AN INVASION WAS UNDERWAY.



THE THAR WAS CHOSEN AS A WEAPON - A HARD SOUTHERN ROUTE MEANT TO OUTRUN
WARNING, BYPASS RESISTANCE, AND APPEAR WHERE NO GREAT ARMY WAS EXPECTED.



ANHILWARA, CAPITAL OF THE SOLANKI KINGDOM. KING BHIMA I WITHDREW.
THE CITY WAS PLUNDERED, AND THE ROUTE TO SAURASHTRA OPENED.



THEN THE SHIKHARA ROSE THROUGH THE COASTAL HAZE.

AFTER MONTHS OF DUST, MAHMUD'S ARMY SAW THE BEACON IT HAD CROSSED A SUBCONTINENT TO BREAK.



AT PRABHAS PATAN, THE INVADERS MET MORE THAN WALLS.

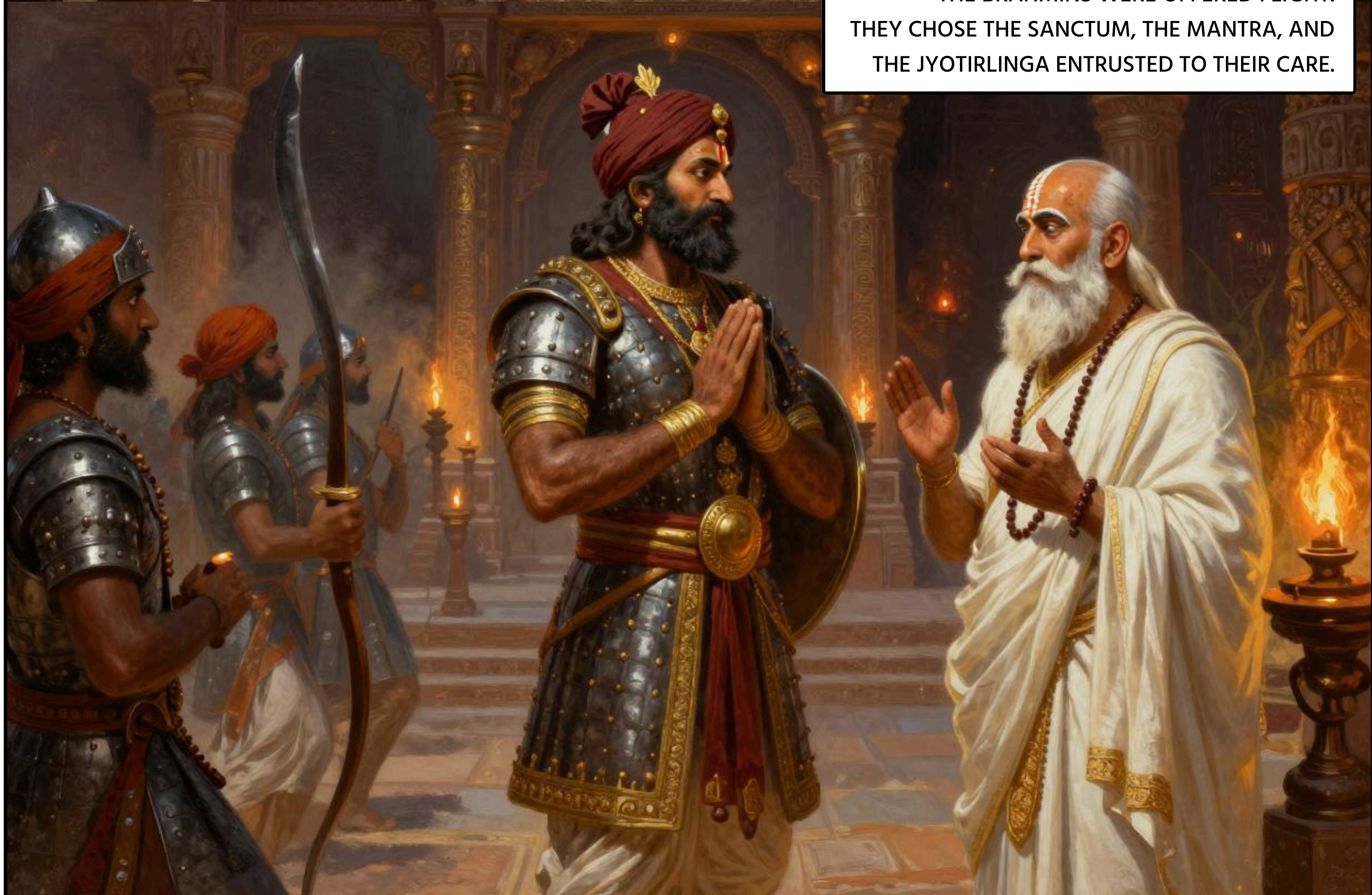
WARRIORS, TOWNSPEOPLE, PILGRIMS, AND TEMPLE SERVANTS GATHERED BENEATH SOMNATH'S GAZE.

THE KSHATRIYA COMMANDER ASKED FOR NO PROMISE OF SURVIVAL.

ONLY THAT EVERY MAN HOLD HIS PLACE WHILE BREATH AND STEEL REMAINED.



THE BRAHMINS WERE OFFERED FLIGHT.
THEY CHOSE THE SANCTUM, THE MANTRA, AND
THE JYOTIRLINGA ENTRUSTED TO THEIR CARE.



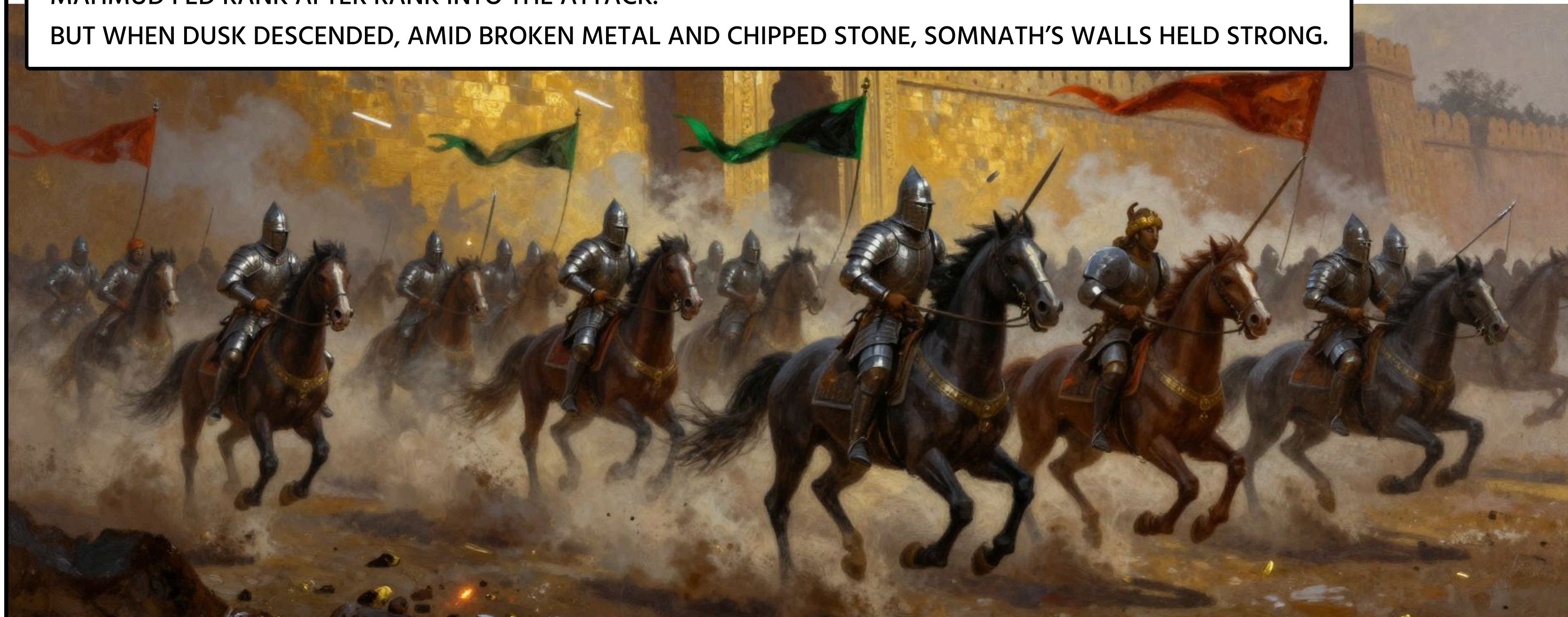
AT DAWN THE ASSAULT BEGAN.

LADDERS CLIMBED THE SANDSTONE, ARROWS DARKENED THE AIR.



WHERE THE WALL SHOOK, THE COMMANDER BECAME ITS STRENGTH.
MOVING FROM BREACH TO BREACH, BINDING EXHAUSTED MEN INTO A SINGLE LINE.

MAHMUD FED RANK AFTER RANK INTO THE ATTACK.
BUT WHEN DUSK DESCENDED, AMID BROKEN METAL AND CHIPPED STONE, SOMNATH'S WALLS HELD STRONG.

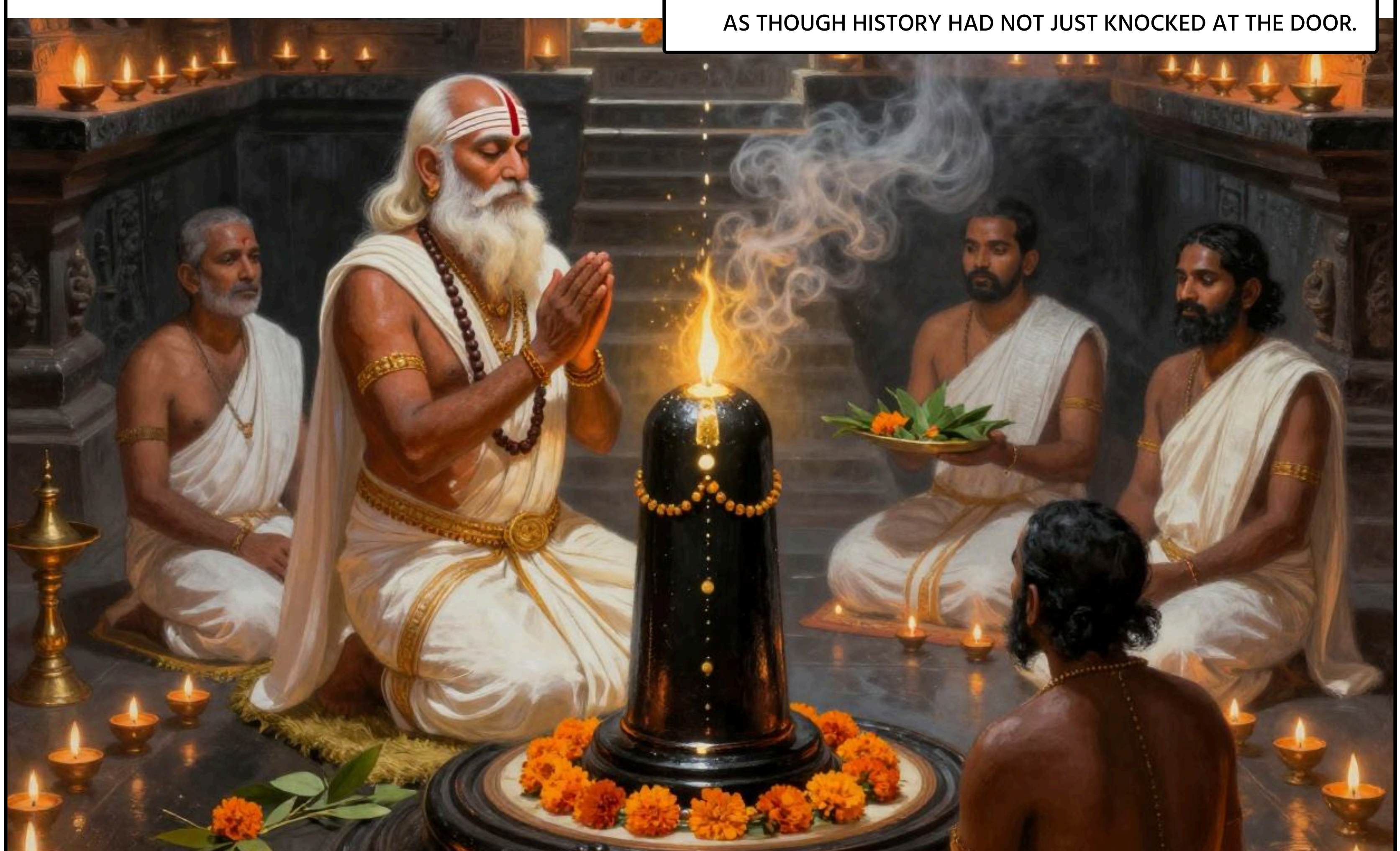




THE WAVES WERE RELENTLESS - GHAZNI HAD ENOUGH TO SPEND ON ATTRITION.
THE NEXT ASSAULT FOUND ITS WOUND.

STONE SPLIT, DEFENDERS FELL, AND THE OUTER WALL FINALLY GAVE WAY.

BUT INSIDE, LAMPS STILL BURNED, THE ABHISHEKA CONTINUED.
AS THOUGH HISTORY HAD NOT JUST KNOCKED AT THE DOOR.



ON SOMNATH'S EASTERN STEPS, THE LAST DEFENDERS FORMED A SAFFRON LINE.

BEHIND THEM STOOD THE DOORS. BEHIND THE DOORS, THE SACRED.



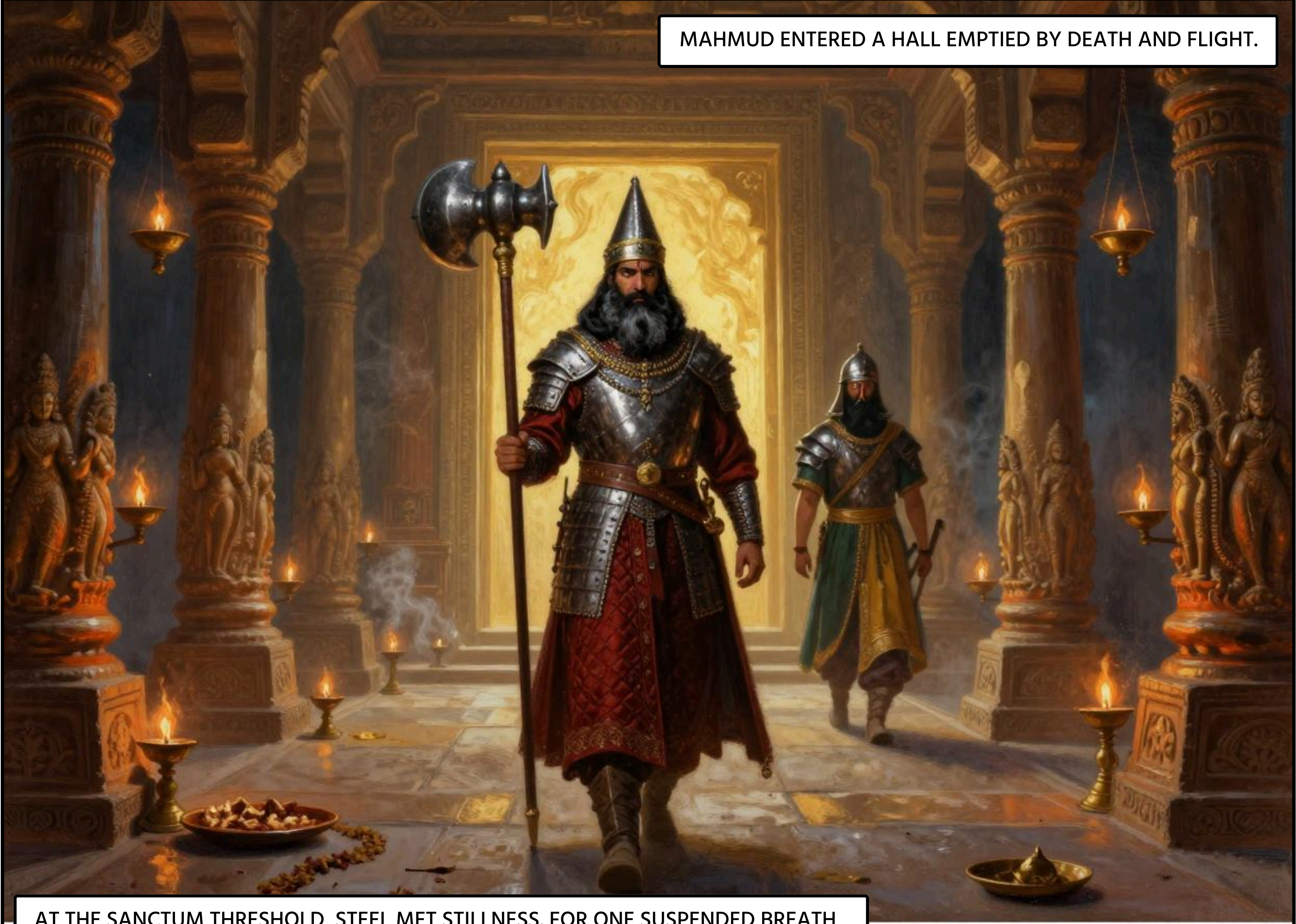
THE COMMANDER'S TURBAN WAS GONE, HIS ARMOUR OPENED, HIS SWORD BROKEN. DUTY HAD TAKEN EVERYTHING FROM HIM - BUT HE HAD MORE TO GIVE.

ONLY WHEN THE FINAL DEFENDER FELL DID THE GREAT DOORS STAND OPEN.

THE OUTER DEFENCE WAS FINISHED. THE INNER WITNESS REMAINED.



MAHMUD ENTERED A HALL EMPTIED BY DEATH AND FLIGHT.



AT THE SANCTUM THRESHOLD, STEEL MET STILLNESS. FOR ONE SUSPENDED BREATH, THE INVADER STOOD BEFORE WHAT HE HAD TRAVELLED SO FAR TO DESTROY.





BETWEEN THE MACE AND THE JYOTIRLINGA STOOD AN OLD PUJARI. UNARMED, UNYIELDING, AND CERTAIN THAT REASON STILL HAD A PLACE - FOR WHO WOULD DEFILE THE SACRED?

WHEN REASON FAILED, THEY OFFERED TREASURE BEYOND MEASURE. GOLD, THEY PLEADED, COULD LEAVE. BUT THE PRESENCE MUST REMAIN.

BUT MAHMUD HAD NOT CROSSED THE DESERT TO TRADE IN IDOLS. HE HAD COME TO BREAK THEM.



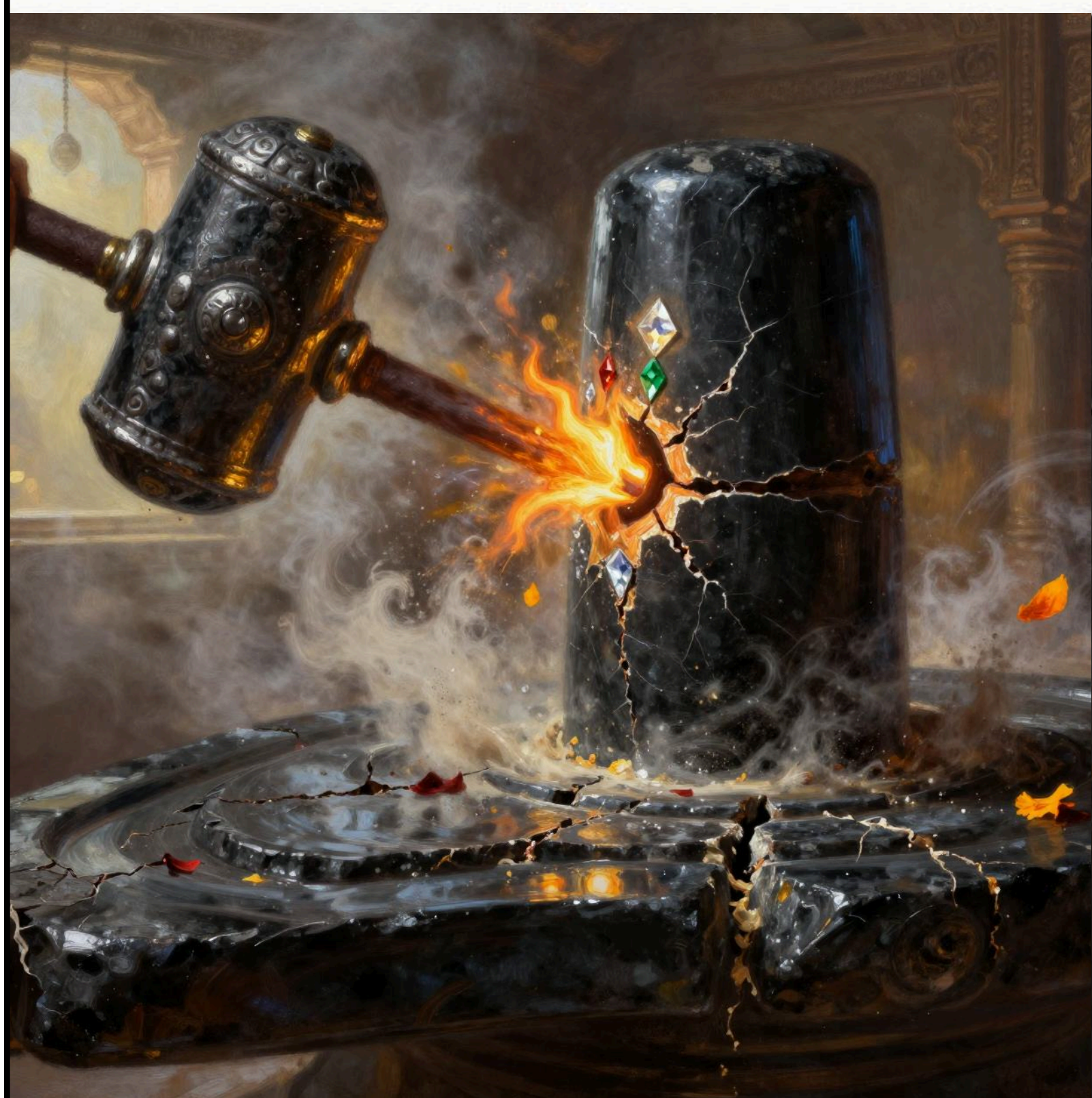
THE BULL-HEADED MACE ROSE ABOVE CENTURIES OF PŪJĀ.
ABOVE THE TOUCH OF KINGS, FISHERMEN, WIDOWS, CHILDREN, AND NAMELESS PILGRIMS.



THE POLISHED STONE FRACTURED. LAMP FLAMES SHUDDERED.

IT WAS A BLOW THAT ENTERED CIVILIZATIONAL MEMORY.

DUST REPLACED INCENSE. SOLDIERS CROWDED THE SANCTUM.
TRADITION AND DEVOTION WERE SUPPLANTED BY BIGOTRY.



BUT THE STREAM OF ABHISHEKA CONTINUED, FALLING
UPON THE BROKEN STONE WITH THE PATIENCE OF TIME.

THE PUJARIS REFUSED TO ABANDON THEIR JYOTIRLINGA.
THEIR FINAL ACT WAS REFUSAL TO LEAVE, IN THE FACE OF CERTAIN DEATH.



THEN CAME THE INVENTORY - COINS, JEWELS, SILKS, RITUAL VESSELS, ROYAL GIFTS.

THE ACCUMULATED SEVA OF GENERATIONS CARRIED OUT AS DAYLIGHT LOOT.



AT SUNSET, MAHMUD STOOD ABOVE SOMNATH'S DEAD
WITH SATISFACTION, SMOKE BILLOWING BEHIND HIM.



CHESTS WERE BALANCED ON CAMEL BACKS UNTIL THE LOADING LINE VANISHED INTO DUST.
SACRED PROSPERITY, REPACKAGED AS IMPERIAL WEALTH.

BUT THE PLUNDER WAS NOT OF OBJECT AND TREASURE ALONE...

...LIVE CAPTIVES. WOMEN, CHILDREN, SCHOLARS, SERVANTS.
COUNTED, BOUND, AND DIVIDED INTO MARCHING LINES BACK TO GHAZNI.

IN ITS BRICK WALLS, AND IN THE HEARTS OF ITS
SURVIVORS, PRABHAS PATAN BURNT FOR DAYS.

FOR THE CIVILIZATION, A LONG AND WOUNDING FIRE HAD ONLY JUST BEEN LIT.

EARLY 1026 CE. THE RETURNING COLUMN DRAGGED TREASURE, CAPTIVES, CARTS, AND EXHAUSTION NORTHWARDS - ITS TRIUMPH MADE SLOW BY EVERYTHING IT HAD TAKEN.

ON THE SINDH FRONTIER, JAT RIDERS STRUCK THE BURDENED COLUMN. ARROWS, DUST, A BURST CHEST OF GOLD, AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE DESERT THAT SHELTERED THEM.

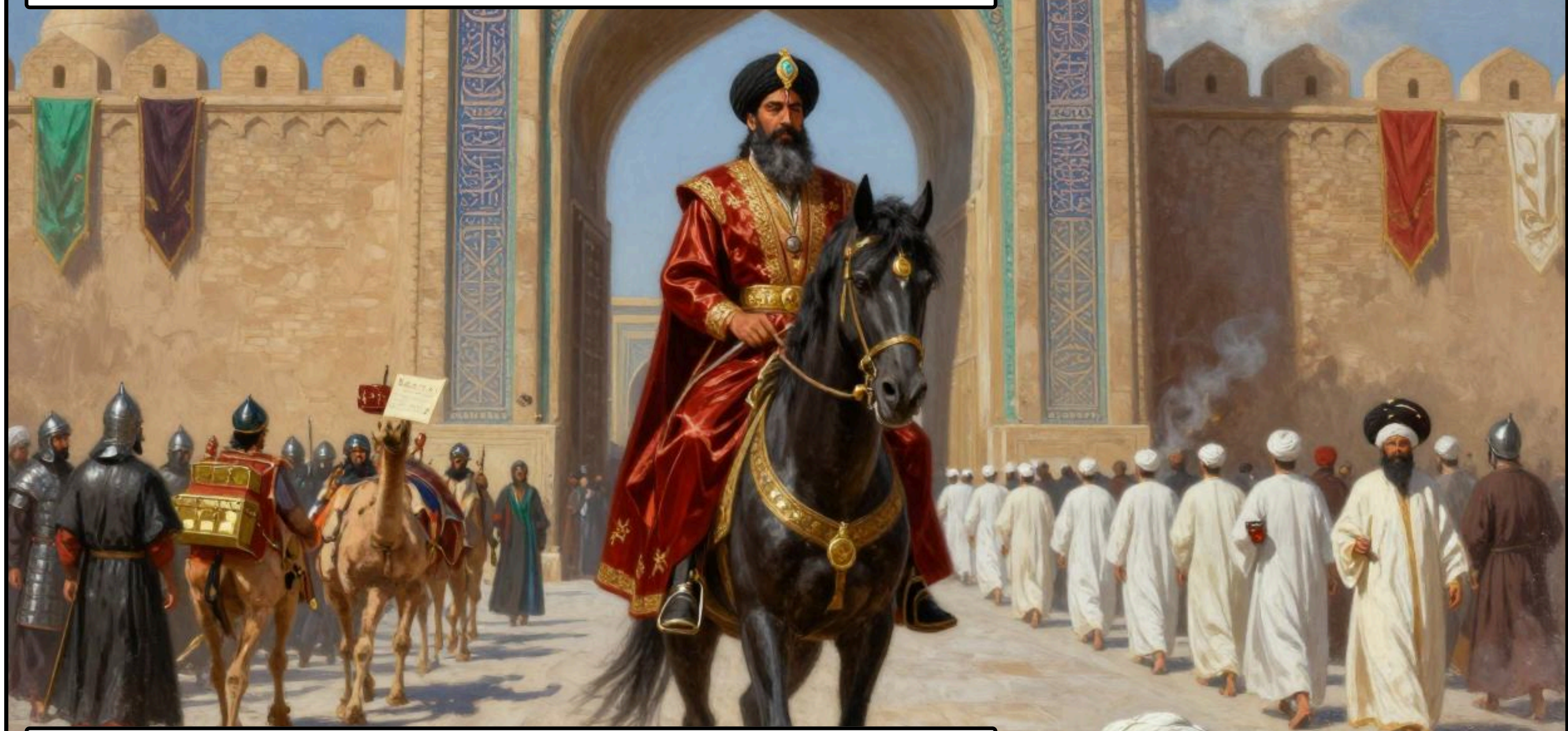
MAHMUD DID NOT MIND OVERMUCH. IN HIS TENT LAY FRAGMENTS OF THE JYOTIRLINGA, WRAPPED LIKE RECEIPTS OF CONQUEST.



THE IDOL WAS SMASHED. HE HAD DONE HIS RELIGIOUS DUTY. AND FOR ITS IDLE ROCKS NOW, HE HAD THE PERFECT PLAN...

GHAZNI RECEIVED ITS SULTAN IN TRIUMPH.

SOLDIERS, LADEN CAMELS, AND HINDU CAPTIVES PASSED BENEATH BANNERS.
THE COURT CONVERTED PLUNDER INTO PRESTIGE.
THE QADI REITERATED RELIGIOUS SANCTION AND ACCOLADE.

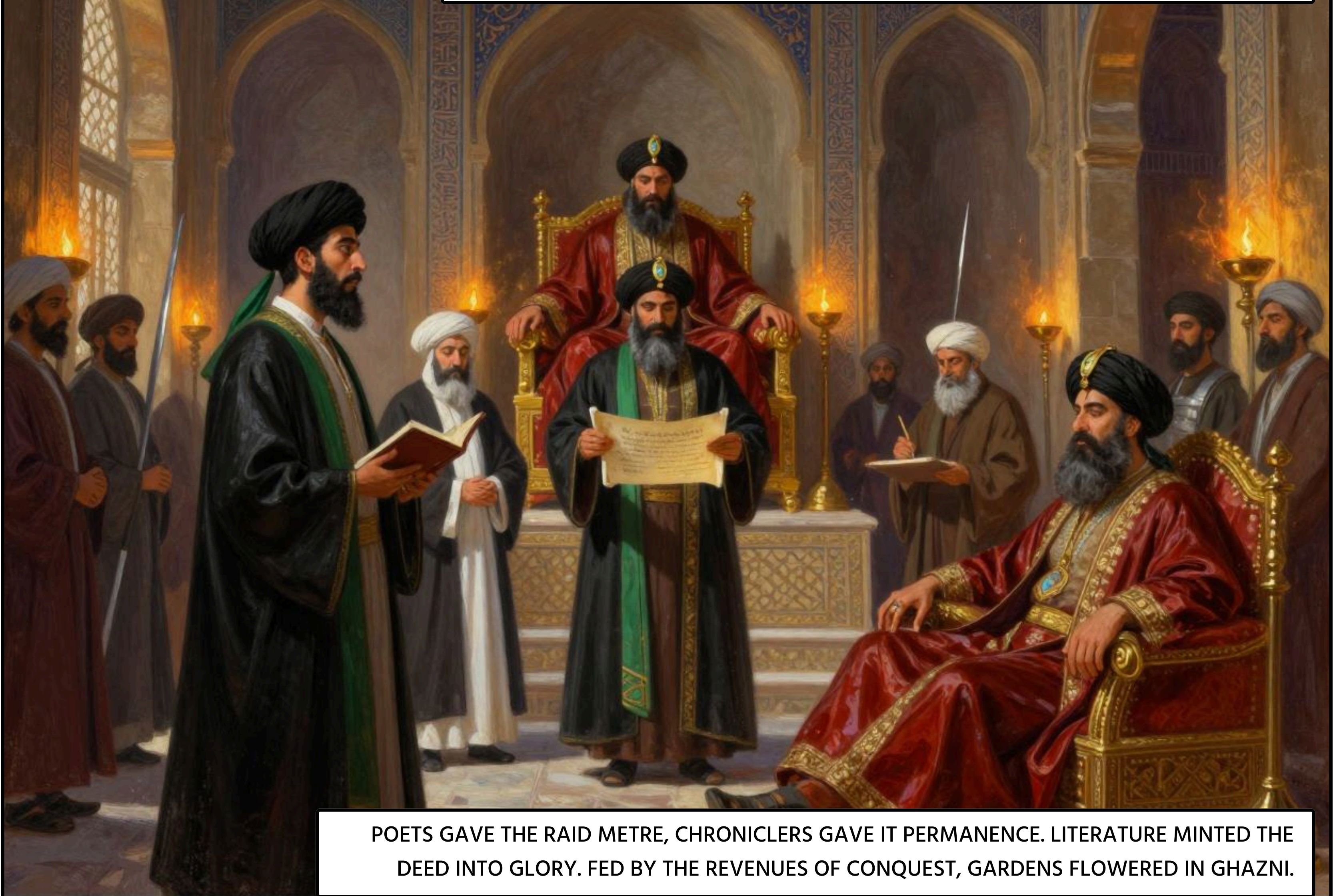


THE IDOL'S FRAGMENTS WERE SET INTO A MOSQUE THRESHOLD FOR DEVOUT FOLLOWERS OF ALLAH TO PRESS BENEATH THEIR FEET.

IT WAS DESECRATION MADE PIETY.



INSIDE MAHMUD'S COURT, ACCOLADES WERE READ FOR THE TRIUMPHANT SULTAN.
ONE CIVILIZATION'S DEVASTATION WAS ANOTHER'S PIOUS VICTORY.



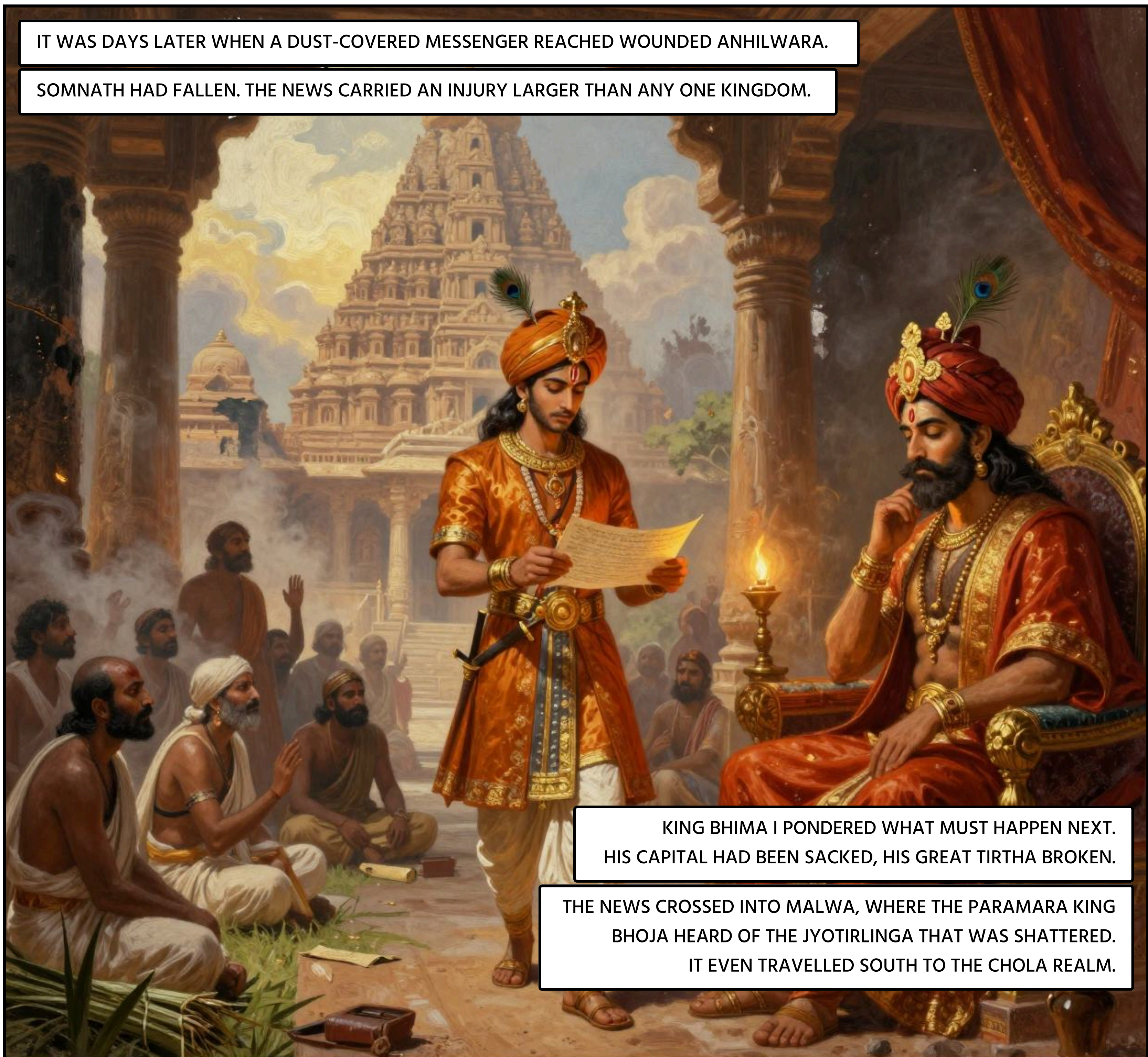
POETS GAVE THE RAID METRE, CHRONICLERS GAVE IT PERMANENCE. LITERATURE MINTED THE
DEED INTO GLORY. FED BY THE REVENUES OF CONQUEST, GARDENS FLOWERED IN GHAZNI.

ONLY THE MEMORY OF SURVIVOR CIVILIZATIONS RECALLS,
THE BEAUTY OF EMPIRES OFTEN HIDES RUINS BENEATH.



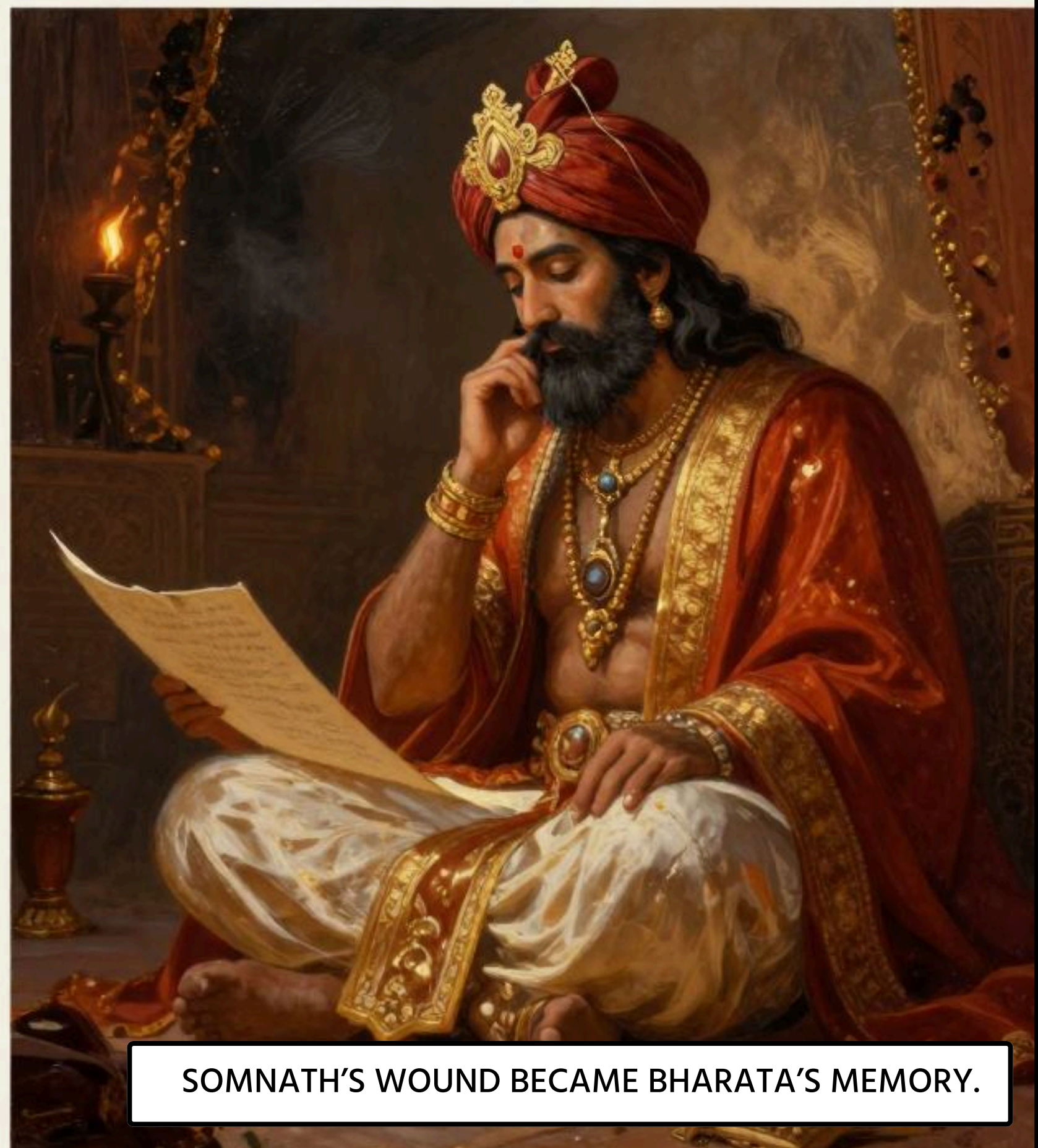
IT WAS DAYS LATER WHEN A DUST-COVERED MESSENGER REACHED WOUNDED ANHILWARA.

SOMNATH HAD FALLEN. THE NEWS CARRIED AN INJURY LARGER THAN ANY ONE KINGDOM.



KING BHIMA I PONDERED WHAT MUST HAPPEN NEXT.
HIS CAPITAL HAD BEEN SACKED, HIS GREAT TIRTHA BROKEN.

THE NEWS CROSSED INTO MALWA, WHERE THE PARAMARA KING
BHOJA HEARD OF THE JYOTIRLINGA THAT WAS SHATTERED.
IT EVEN TRAVELLED SOUTH TO THE CHOLA REALM.



SOMNATH'S WOUND BECAME BHARATA'S MEMORY.

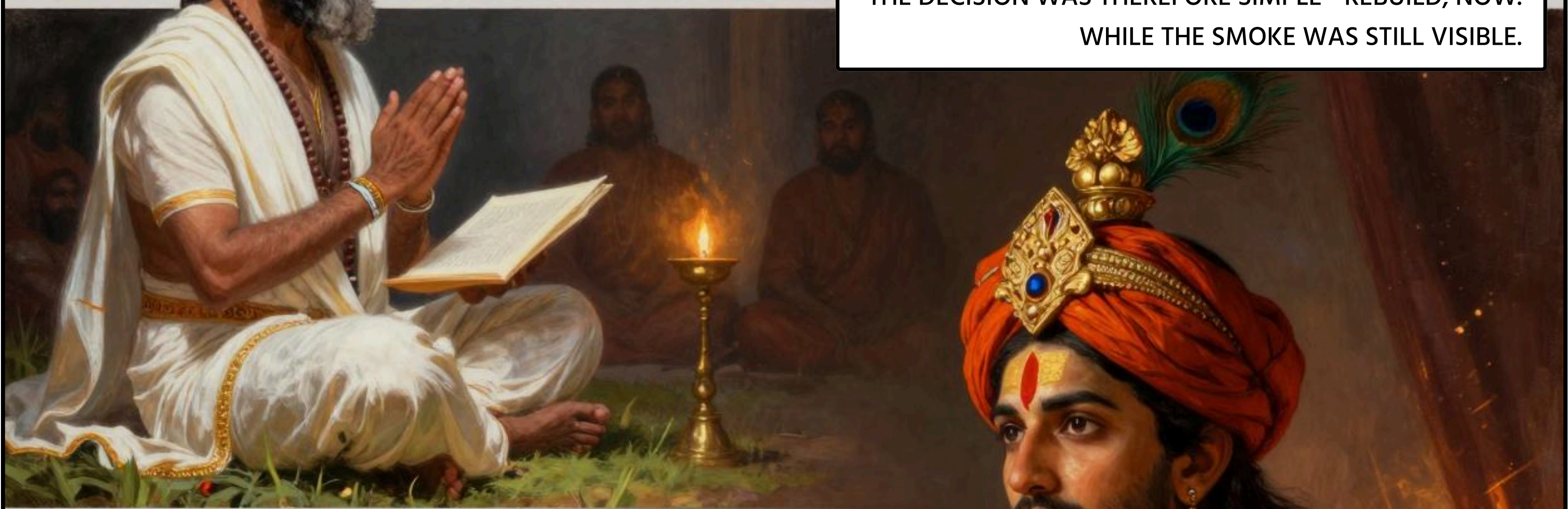
KINGS, GUILDS, STHAPATIS, ACHARYAS, MERCHANTS, AND PILGRIMS GATHERED.
NO EMPIRE HAD ORDERED SOMNATH INTO BEING, NO CONQUEROR COULD FORBID ITS RETURN.

THE MŪRTĪ WAS TAKEN. BUT THE KSHETRA REMAINED. THE TIRTHA REMAINED. THE MANTRA REMAINED.

THE PILGRIMS REMEMBERED THE ROUTES. THE GEOGRAPHY REMAINED SACRED.
THINGS THE ICONOCLASTS AND RAKSHASAS COULD NEITHER STEAL NOR BREAK.



THE DECISION WAS THEREFORE SIMPLE - REBUILD, NOW.
WHILE THE SMOKE WAS STILL VISIBLE.



UNDER KING BHIMA I, AND IN TRADITION WITH THE SUPPORT OF KING BHOJA OF MALWA, STONE AND SOMA ROSE AGAIN AT PRABHAS PATAN.

A NEW JYOTIRLINGA WAS SHAPED FROM LIVING ROCK.

EACH MEASURED STRIKE ANSWERED THE BLOW THAT HAD BROKEN THE OLD ONE.



THEN CAME PRANA PRATISHTHA - THE CONSECRATION. MANTRA, WATER, FIRE, AND BREATH INVITING SACRED PRESENCE ONCE MORE INTO THE SANCTUM.

PILGRIMS RETURNED. MARKETS REOPENED. BELLS CROSSED THE SEA WIND.



BY 1169 CE, THE CHAULUKYA KING KUMARAPALA HAD RENEWED SOMNATH IN MAGNIFICENT STONE. A CENTURY AFTER DEVASTATION, SPLENDOR AGAIN FACED THE SEA.

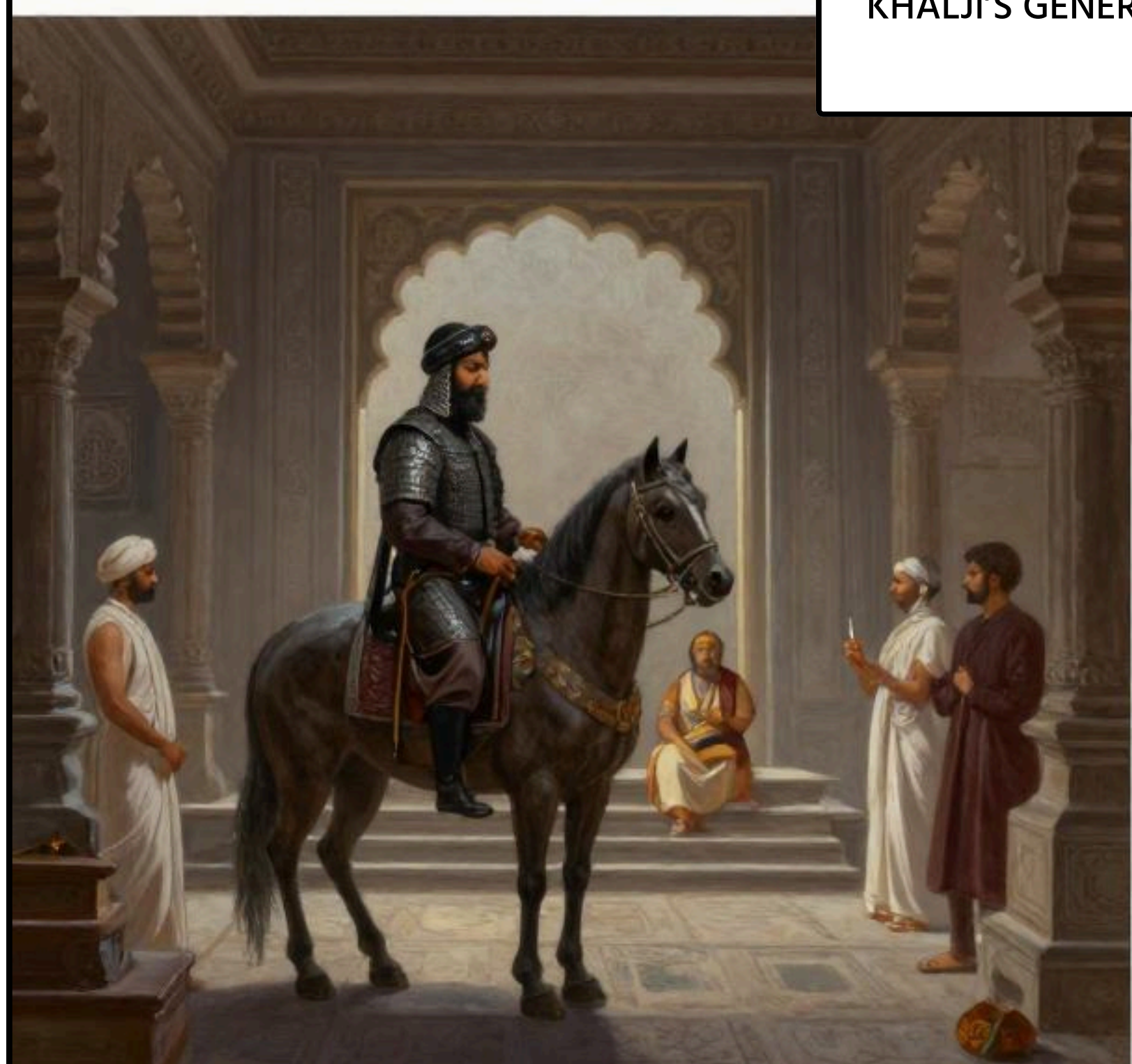
DYNASTIES CHANGED, BUT THE DAILY SEQUENCE OF LAMP, WATER, BILVA, AND MANTRA DID NOT. GRANDFATHER TAUGHT FATHER, FATHER TAUGHT CHILD, CHILD CARRIED MEMORY INTO THE OLD AGE.



BUT THE ZEALOTS HAD BEEN BUSY TOO. IN THE NORTH, THE DELHI SULTANATE EXPANDED. ALAUDDIN KHALJI'S AMBITION TURNED TOWARDS GUJARAT'S WEALTH AND TEMPLES.



1299 CE.
KHALJI'S GENERALS ULUGH KHAN AND NUSRAT KHAN MARCHED INTO GUJARAT.
A NEW ARMY, A NEW STORM.



IT WAS THE SECOND GREAT SIEGE OF SOMNATH.
THE VAST KHALJI HORDE STOOD BEFORE TWO CENTURIES OF RESILIENCE AND REVIVAL.

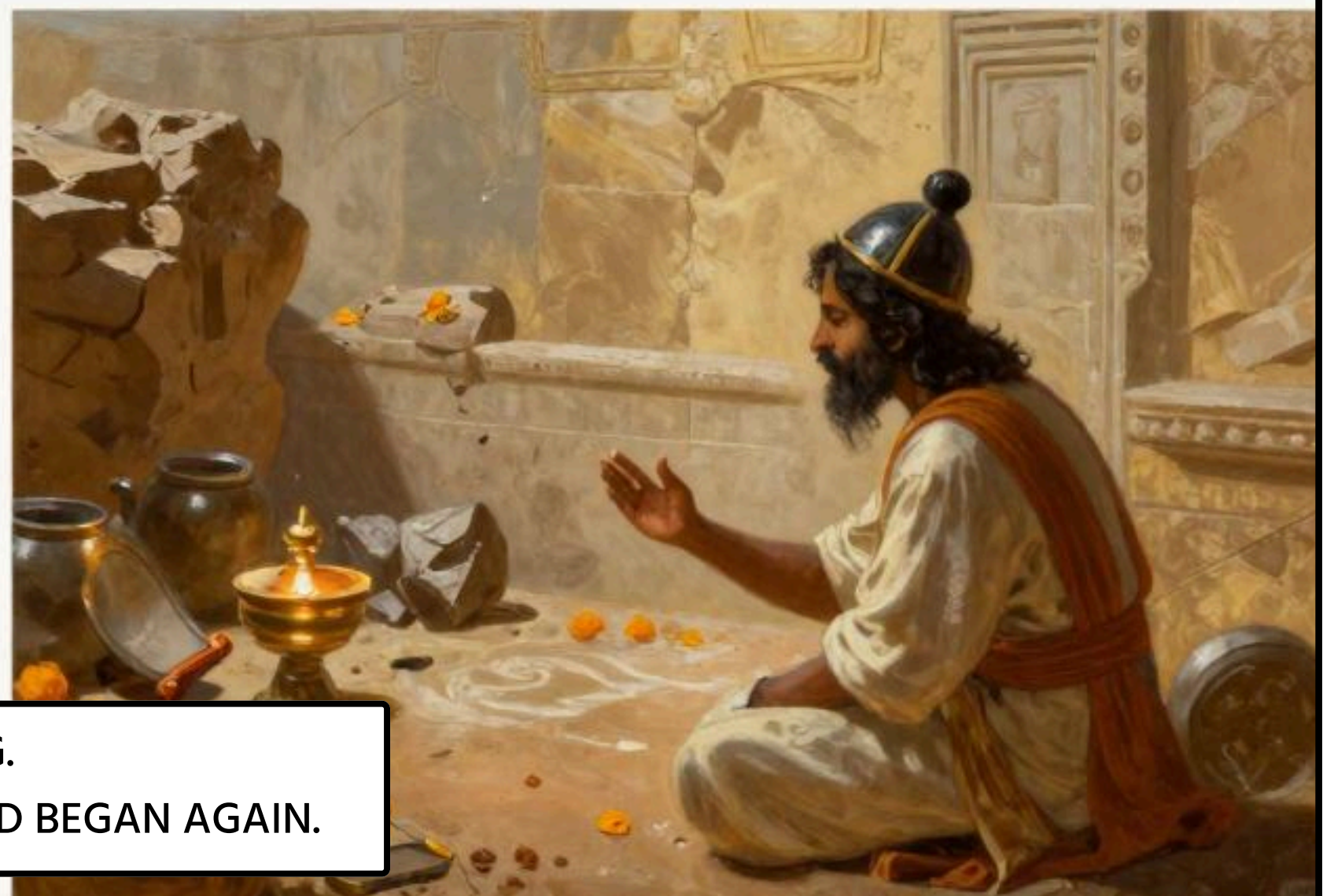


THE TEMPLE WAS BROKEN, AGAIN, THE JYOTIRLINGA DESECRATED, AGAIN.
WEALTH SEIZED, WANTON DESTRUCTION. AGAIN.

BUT ANOTHER PUJARI STOOD WHERE EARLIER PUJARIS HAD FALLEN.
GENERATIONS CHANGED, THE DUTY DID NOT.



NO IMPERIAL DECREE WAS NEEDED TO ORDER THE REBUILDING.
LOCAL HANDS CLEARED THE STONES, RESTORED WORSHIP, AND BEGAN AGAIN.



1395 CE, THE THIRD DESECRATION.

MUZAFFAR SHAH I OF THE GUJARAT SULTANATE ATTACKED SOMNATH.

WHEN THE SOLDIERS LEFT, THEIR GREED AND BLOODLUST SATIATED, RESIDENTS RETURNED WITH BASKETS AND ROPES. BEFORE MOURNING HAD ENDED, RUBBLE WAS BEING SORTED INTO FOUNDATIONS.

IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, UNDER MAHMUD BEGADA, DESTRUCTION CAME AGAIN. THE CYCLE WAS POLITICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND DELIBERATE.

AND AGAIN CAME THE QUIETER COUNTER-HISTORY -
A CLEARED FLOOR, A REKINDLED LAMP, A MURTI SHELTERED, WORSHIP RESUMED.

THE SMASHERS OF IDOLS WERE LEARNING THAT DHARMA DID NOT LIVE IN STONE AND BRICK, AFTER ALL.



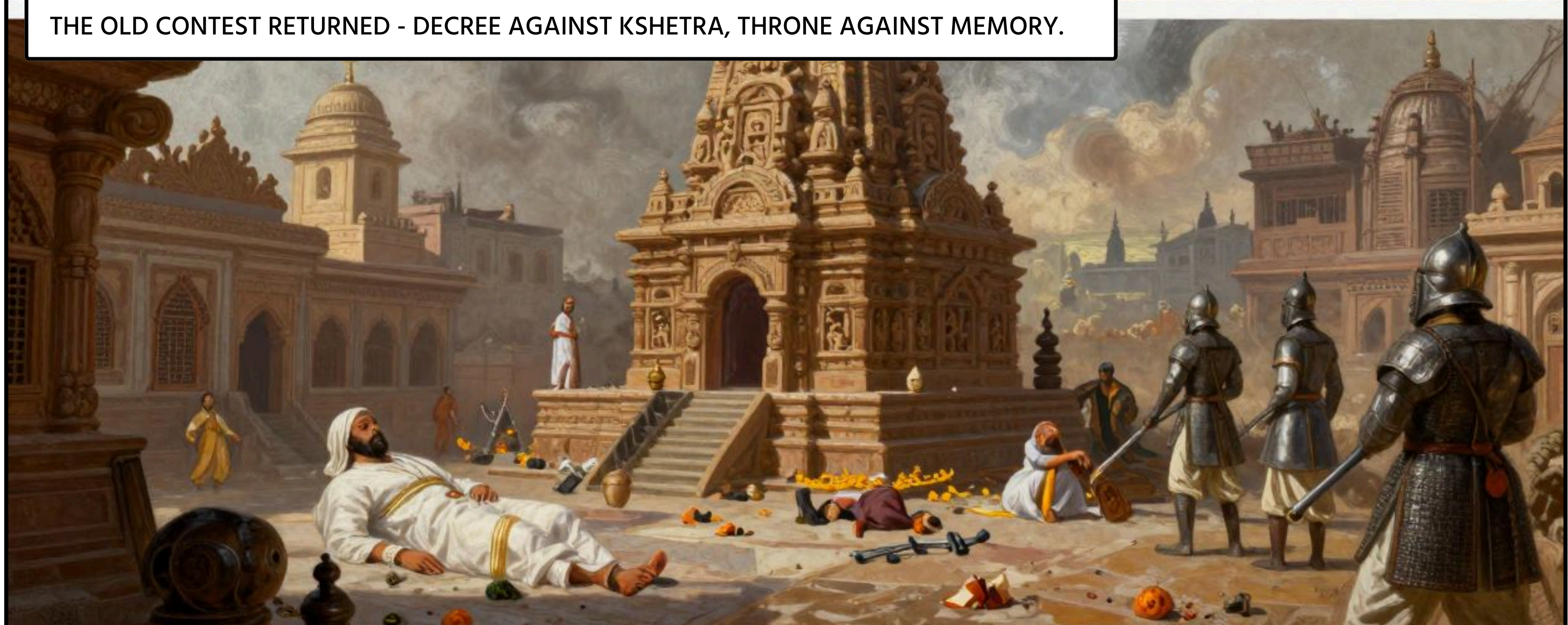
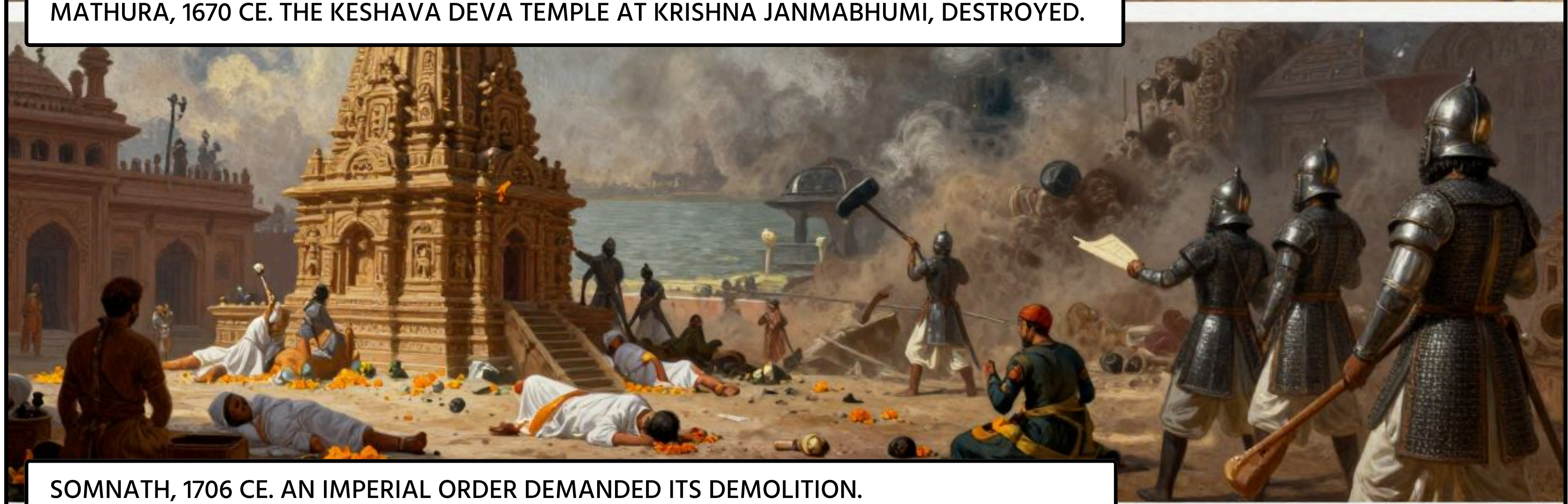
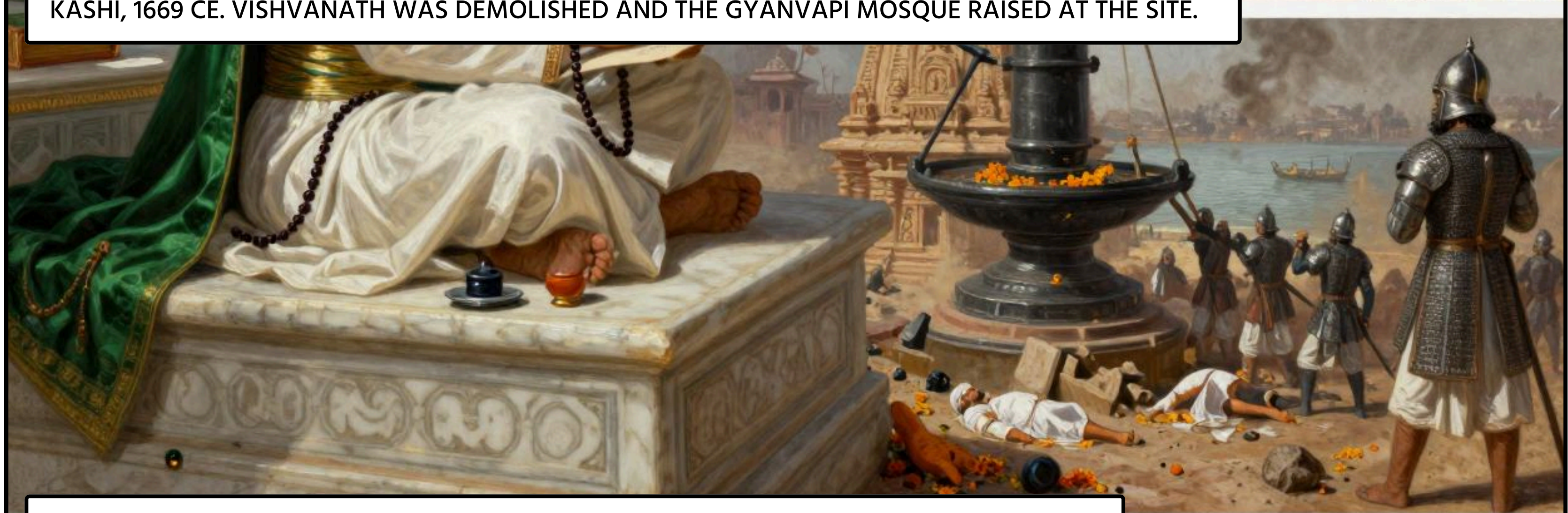
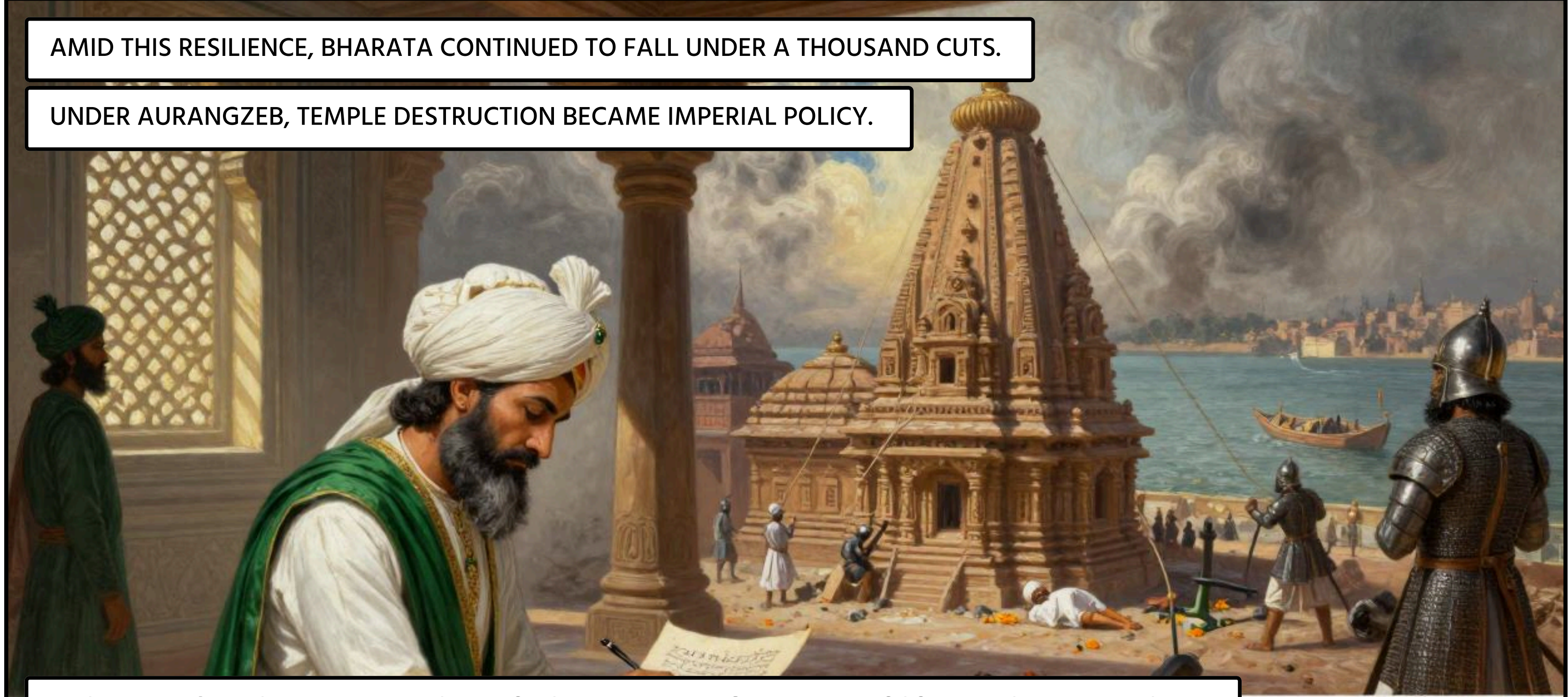
AMID THIS RESILIENCE, BHARATA CONTINUED TO FALL UNDER A THOUSAND CUTS.

UNDER AURANGZEB, TEMPLE DESTRUCTION BECAME IMPERIAL POLICY.

KASHI, 1669 CE. VISHVANATH WAS DEMOLISHED AND THE GYANVAPI MOSQUE RAISED AT THE SITE.

MATHURA, 1670 CE. THE KESHAVA DEVA TEMPLE AT KRISHNA JANMABHUMI, DESTROYED.

SOMNATH, 1706 CE. AN IMPERIAL ORDER DEMANDED ITS DEMOLITION.
THE OLD CONTEST RETURNED - DECREE AGAINST KSHETRA, THRONE AGAINST MEMORY.

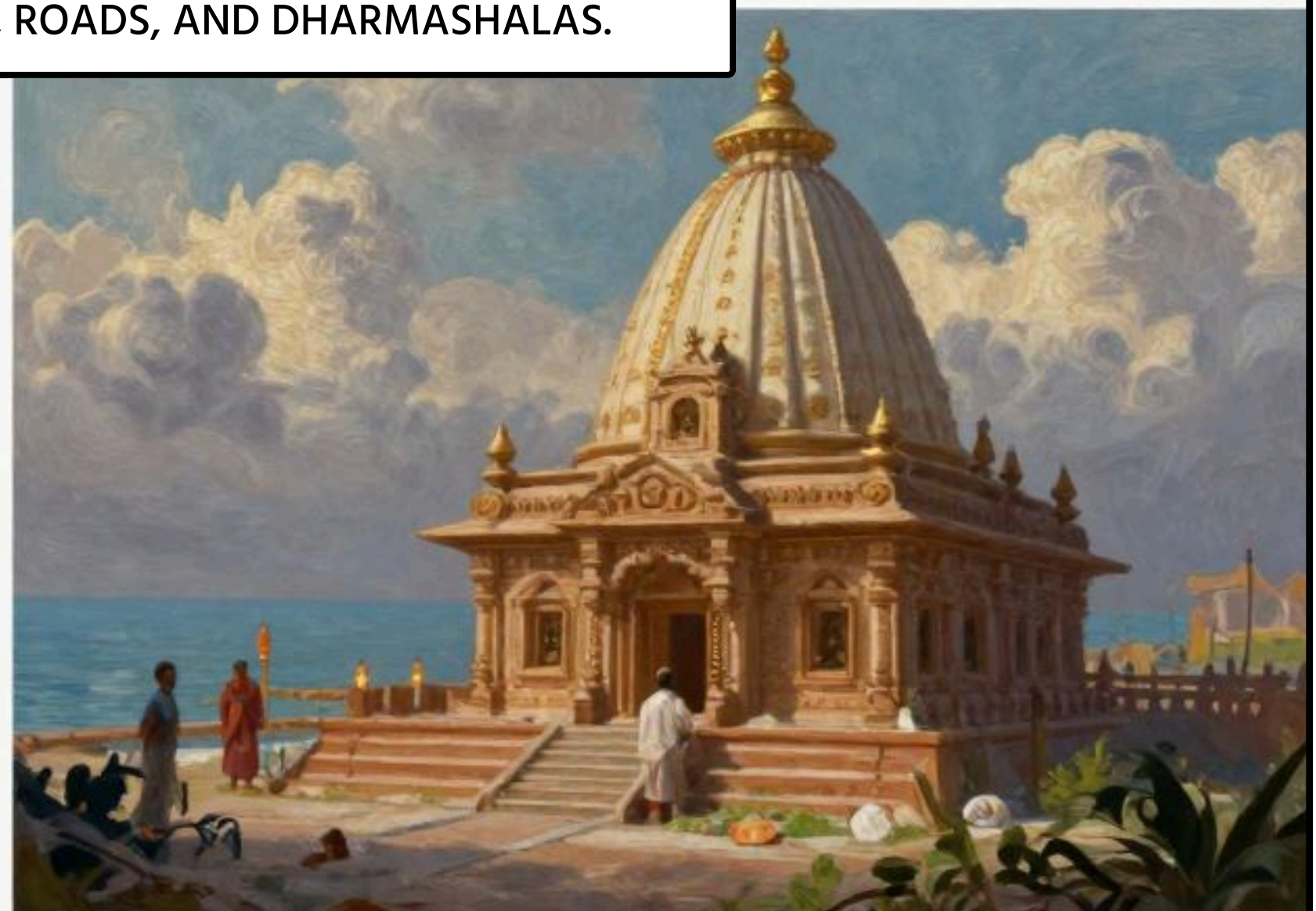
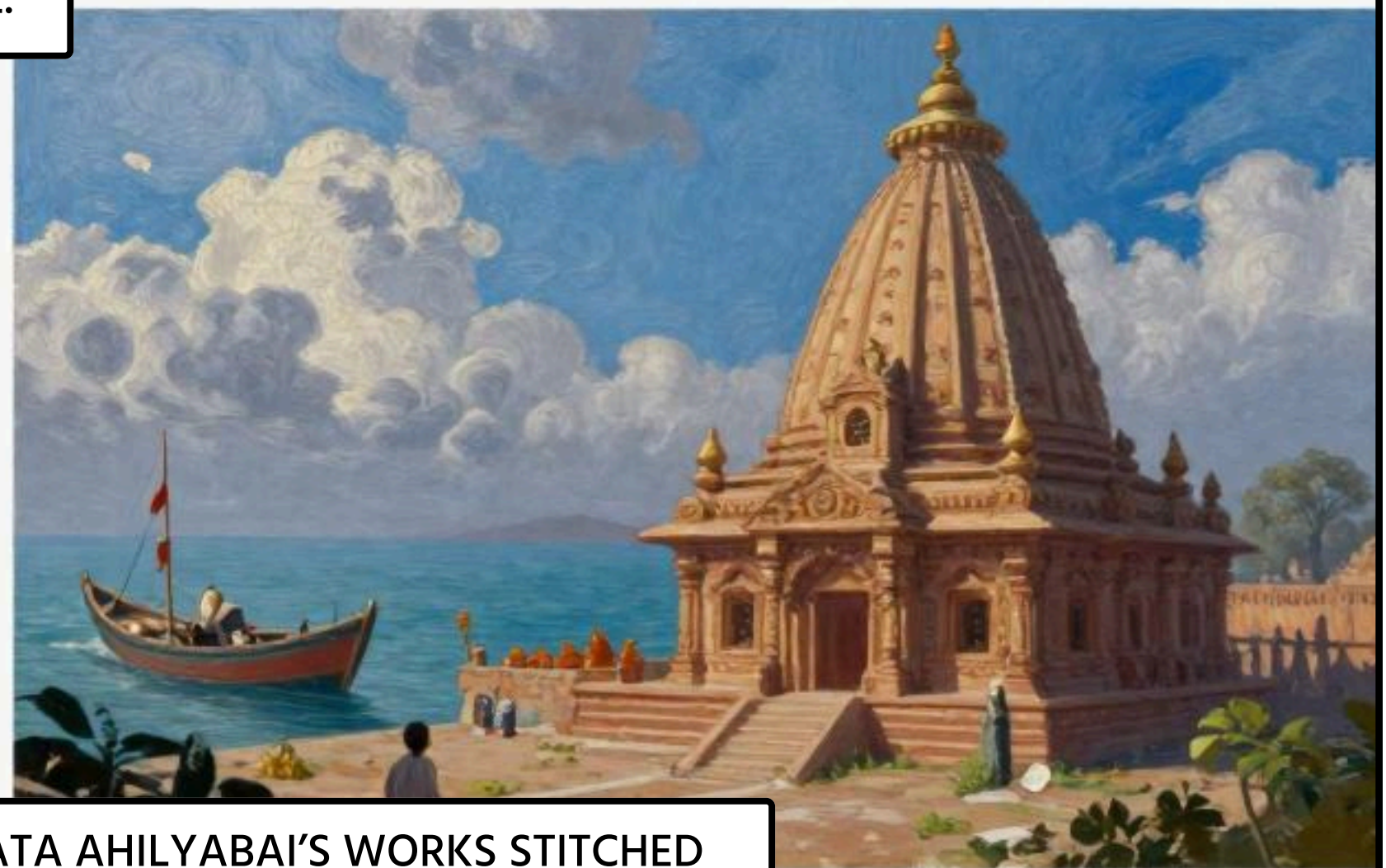
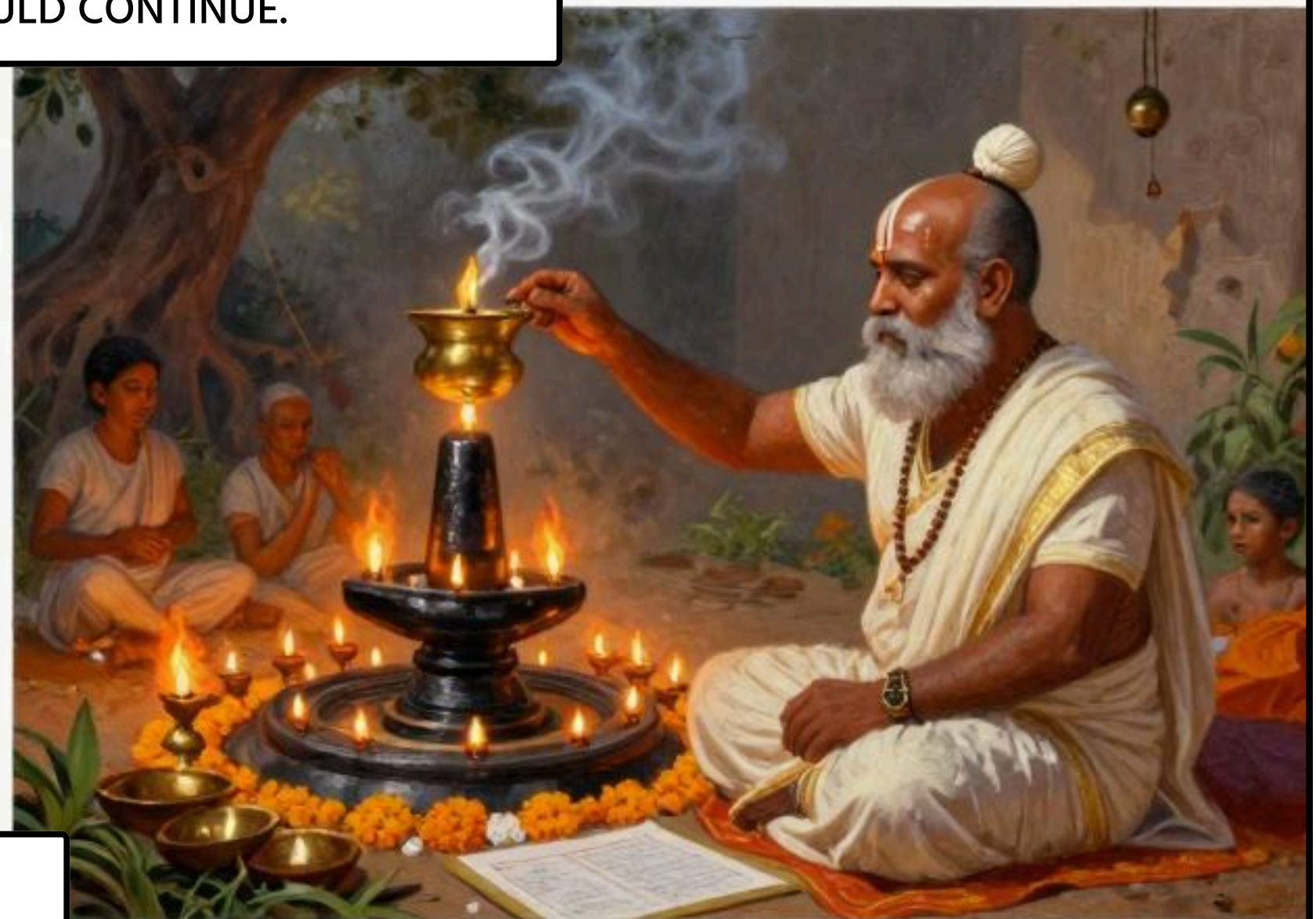
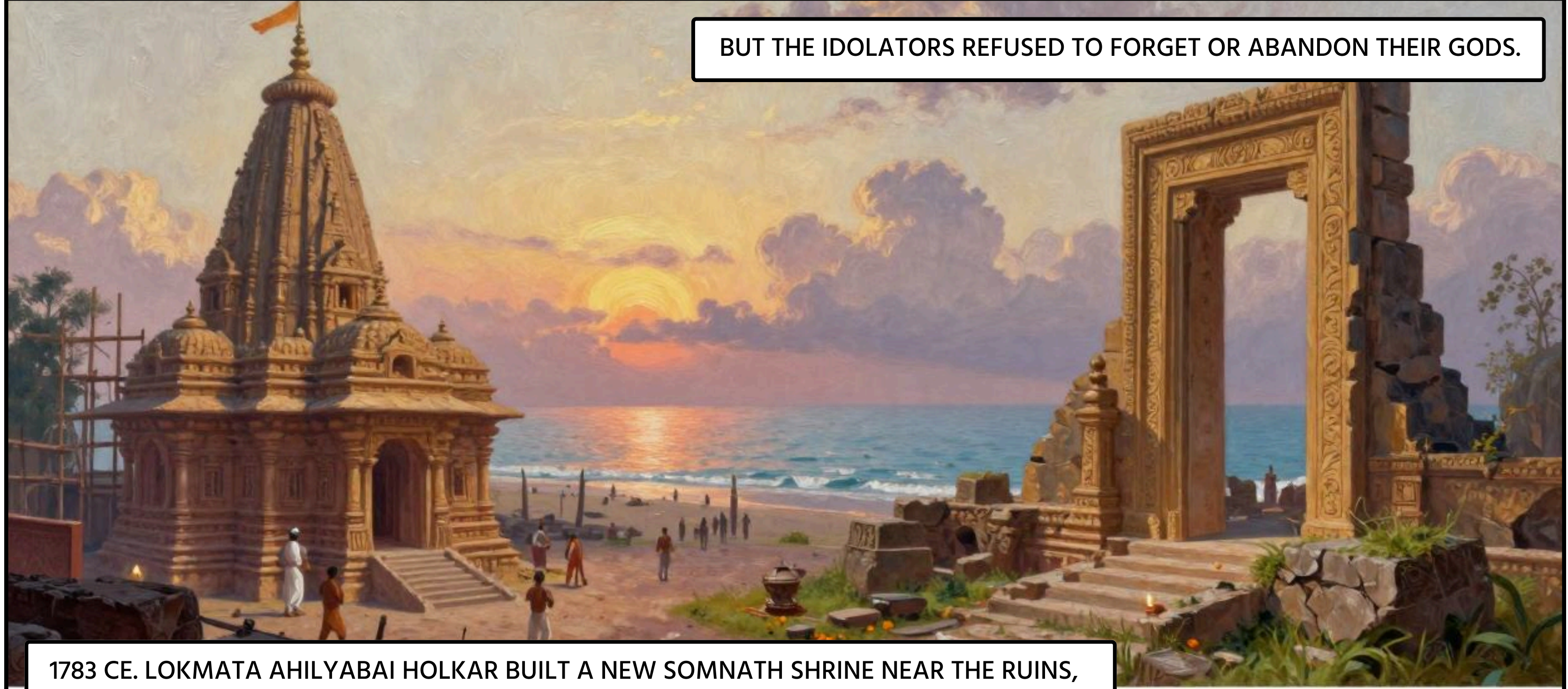


BUT THE IDOLATORS REFUSED TO FORGET OR ABANDON THEIR GODS.

1783 CE. LOKMATA AHILYABAI HOLKAR BUILT A NEW SOMNATH SHRINE NEAR THE RUINS, GIVING PILGRIMS A SECURE SANCTUM IN WHICH WORSHIP COULD CONTINUE.

AT CONSECRATION, SOVEREIGNTY TOOK A DIFFERENT FORM. SACRED CONTINUITY RESTORED THROUGH A QUEEN'S RESOLVE.

FROM SOMNATH TO KASHI, GAYA TO RAMESHWARAM, LOKMATA AHILYABAI'S WORKS STITCHED BHARATA'S SACRED GEOGRAPHY TOGETHER IN STONE, WATER, ROADS, AND DHARMASHALAS.

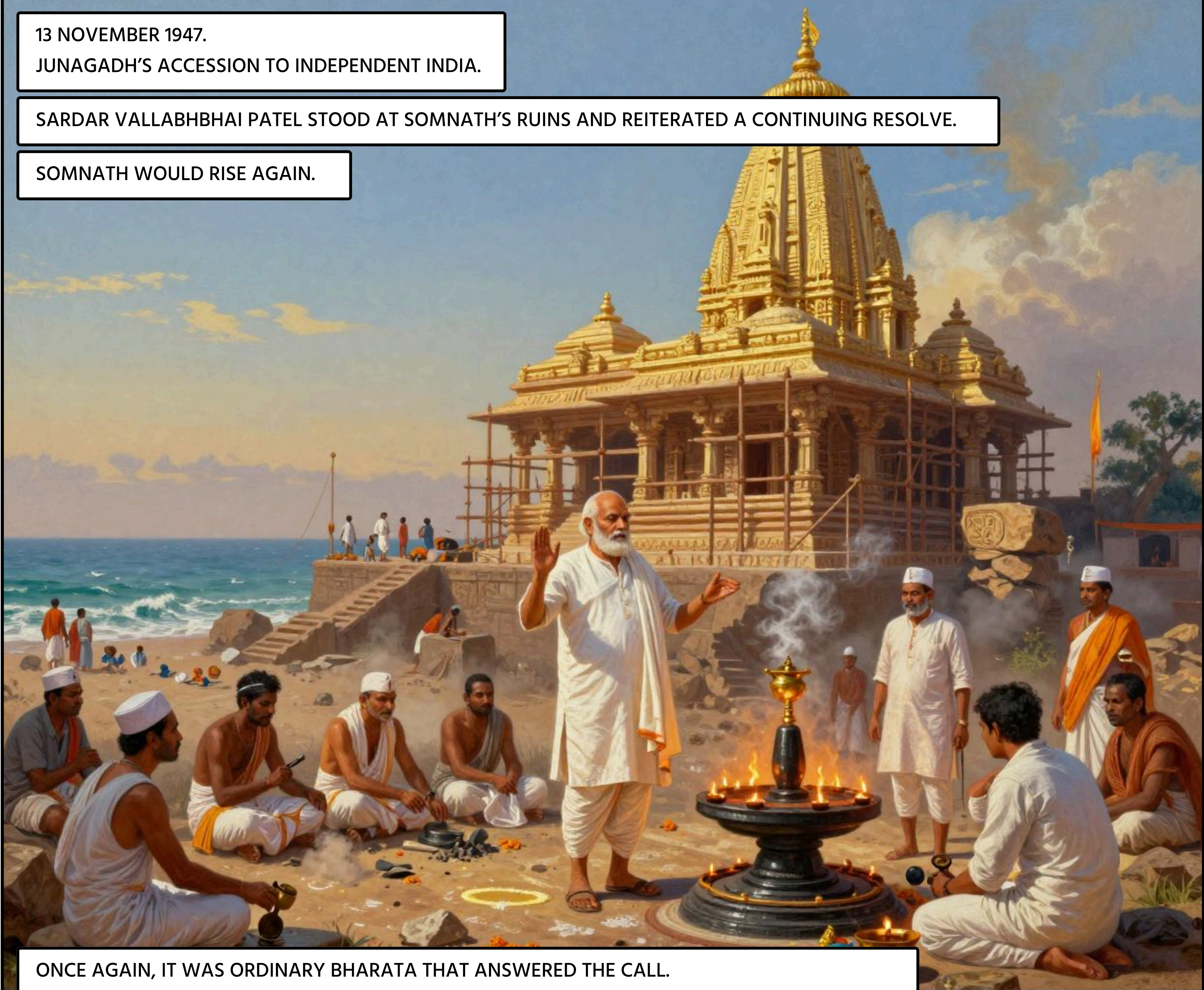


13 NOVEMBER 1947.

JUNAGADH'S ACCESSION TO INDEPENDENT INDIA.

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL STOOD AT SOMNATH'S RUINS AND REITERATED A CONTINUING RESOLVE.

SOMNATH WOULD RISE AGAIN.

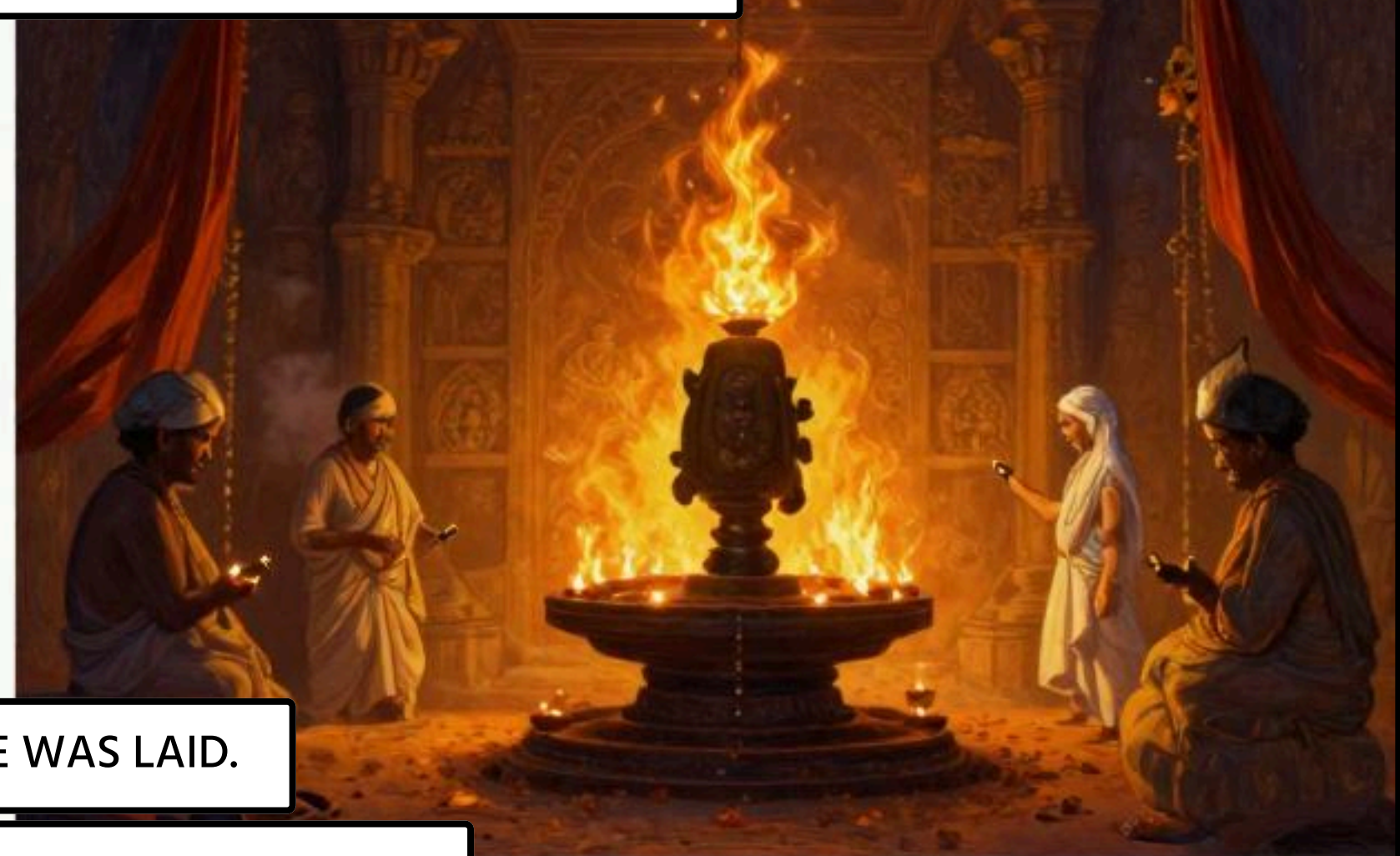


ONCE AGAIN, IT WAS ORDINARY BHARATA THAT ANSWERED THE CALL.

NO STATE TREASURY WAS NEEDED, THE RECONSTRUCTION FUNDED BY PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION.



8 MAY 1950. THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE SEVENTH TEMPLE WAS LAID.



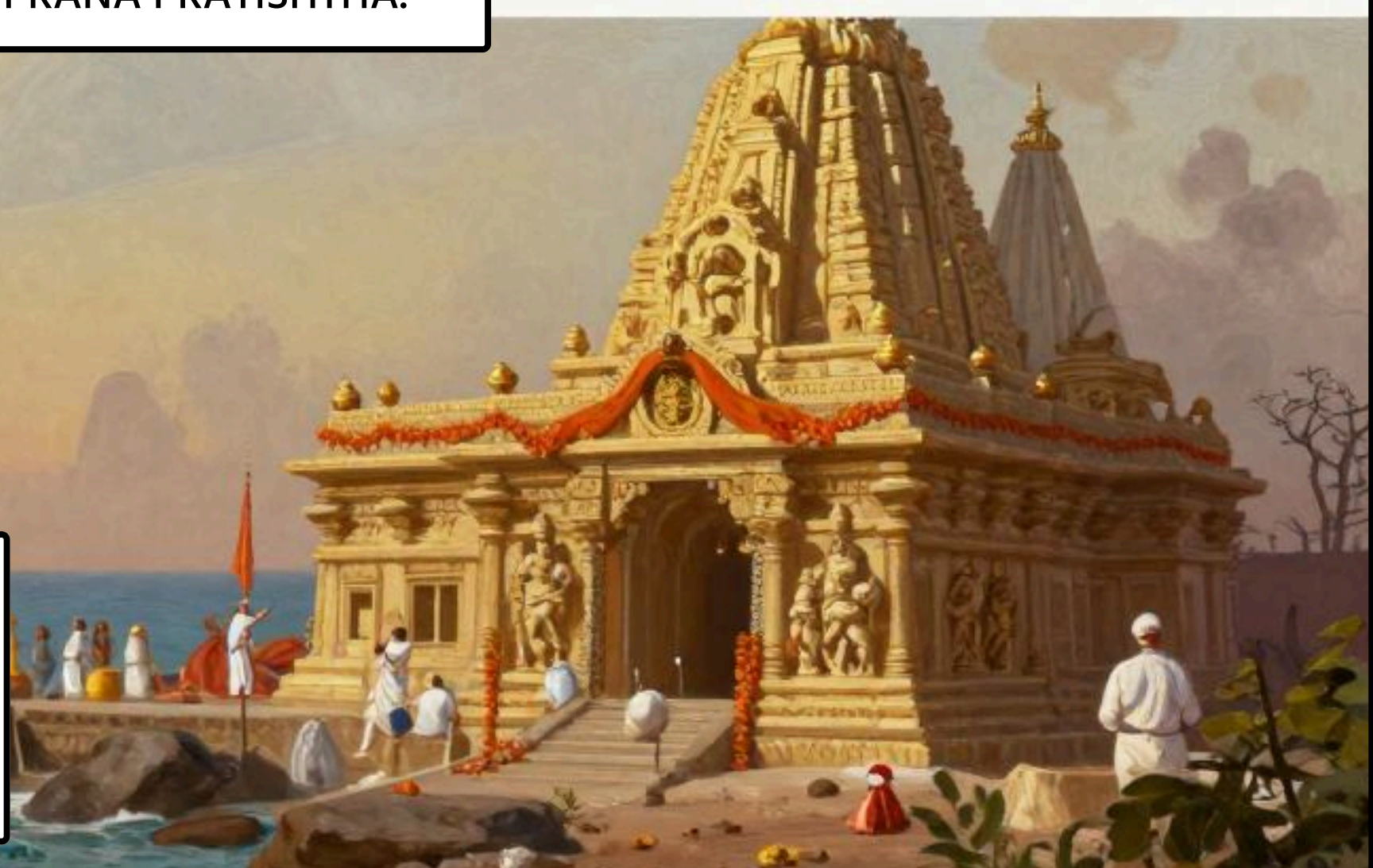
11 MAY 1951. PRESIDENT RAJENDRA PRASAD PERFORMED THE PRANA PRATISHTHA.

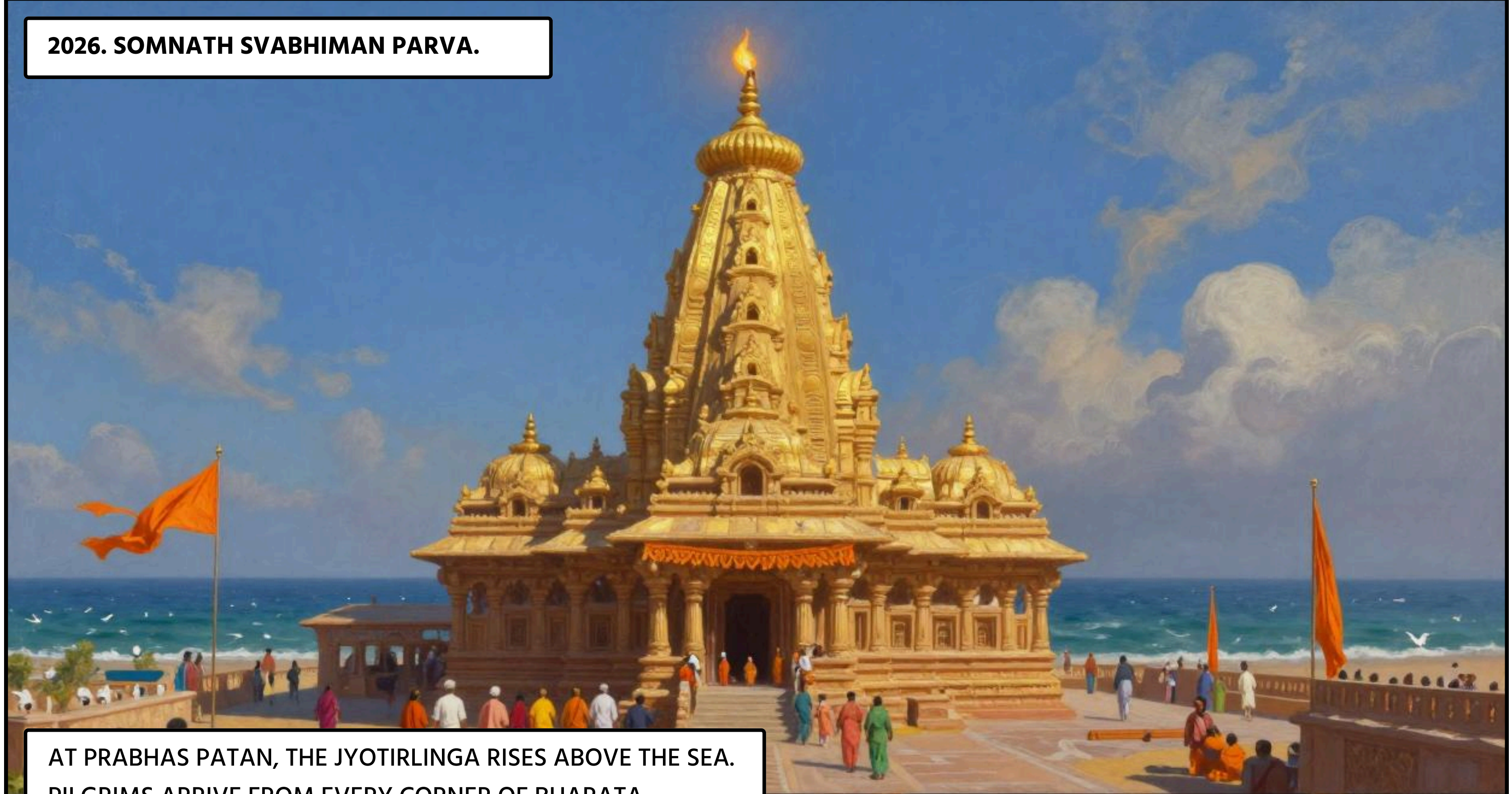
17 RAIDS AND ATTACKS.

6 MAJOR DESTRUCTIONS.

7 DISTINCT RECONSTRUCTIONS.

A CIVILIZATION'S ABSOLUTE REFUSAL TO ACCEPT DEFEAT.





AT PRABHAS PATAN, THE JYOTIRLINGA RISES ABOVE THE SEA.
PILGRIMS ARRIVE FROM EVERY CORNER OF BHARATA.
THE LAMPS BURN EACH EVENING.

MAHMUD'S WEATHERED TOMB GATHERS DUST IN RURAL AFGHANISTAN.
SOMNATH STANDS TALL.



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