

VIDEHA

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37 CHILDREN'S NOVELS

*Translated from Maithili into English
by the author*

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha

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37 Children's Novels

Gajendra Thakur

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Fairyland in the Hollow

Aastha, Turacos, and the Doorway of the
Hollow

[Original Maithili, Translation from Maithili
into English by the author himself]



Gajendra Thakur

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Prologue: The Letter-Fist

With a point of her finger, Grandmother would guide both letter and feeling — the letter-fist. "Hold the pen between your fingers and make letters and pictures," she would say. "Make them well. You, too, can make fine words and fine feelings." Om's tiny fingers would slip into Grandmother's wrinkled ones the way ink slips into a pen.

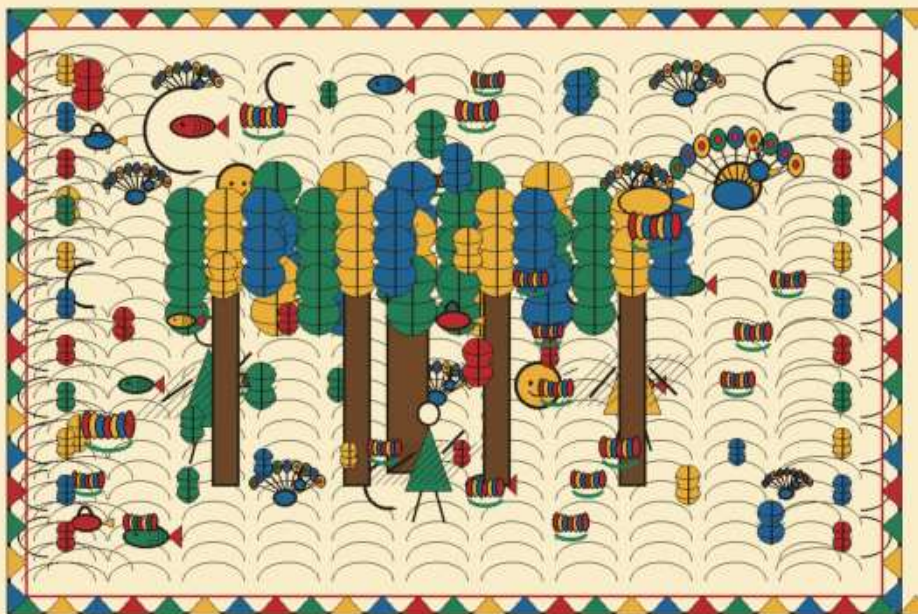
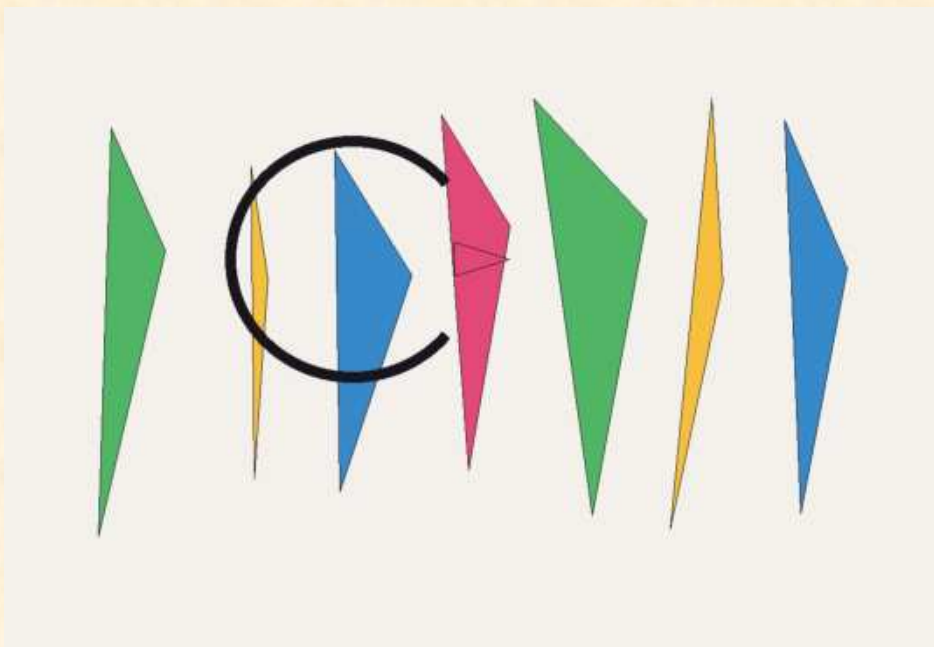
That night Grandmother was tired. "Go to sleep. You have school in the morning. Even I am worn out today." But Om would not hear of it. "Grandmother, a story first. No excuses!" — and with that he began to cry and sulk.

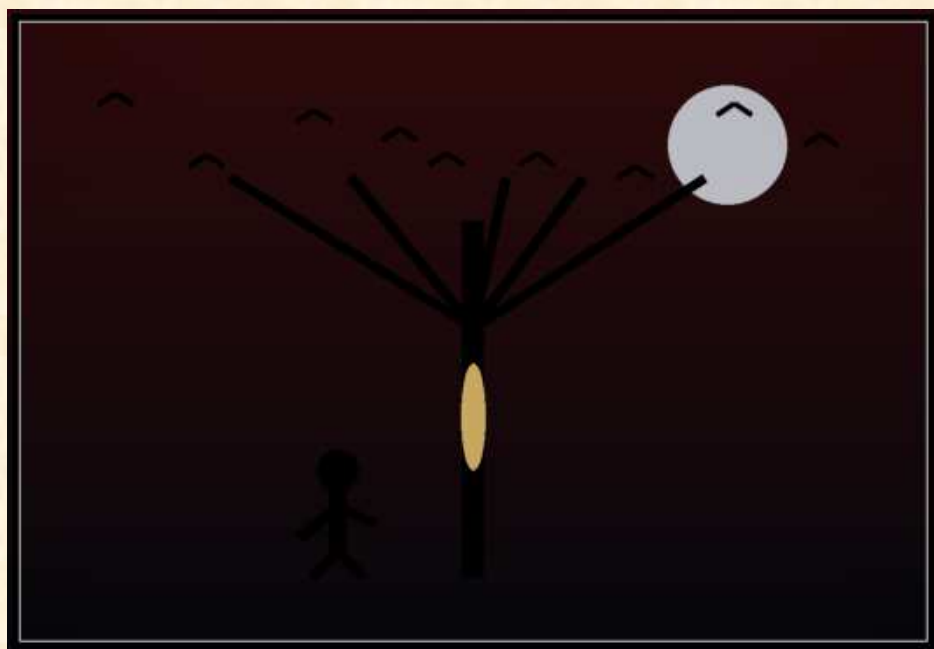
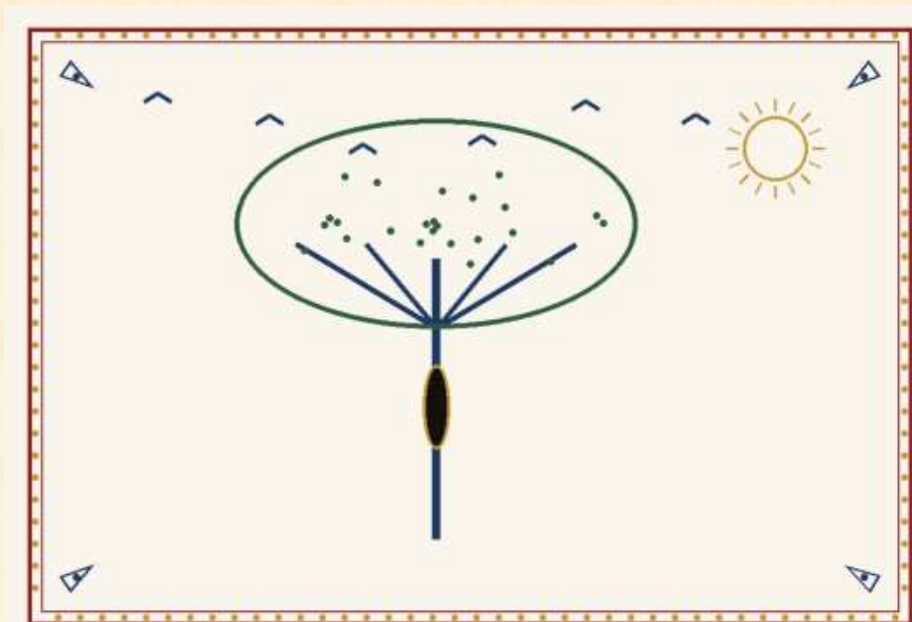
Grandmother gave in and smiled. "All right, all right. Which story? The king's, the fairy's, or..." "The fairy's!" Grandmother closed her eyes and thought a moment, as if opening some old chest of memory — "Fairyland in the hollow... the hollow of a tree... a black crow... a white, shimmering fairyland..."

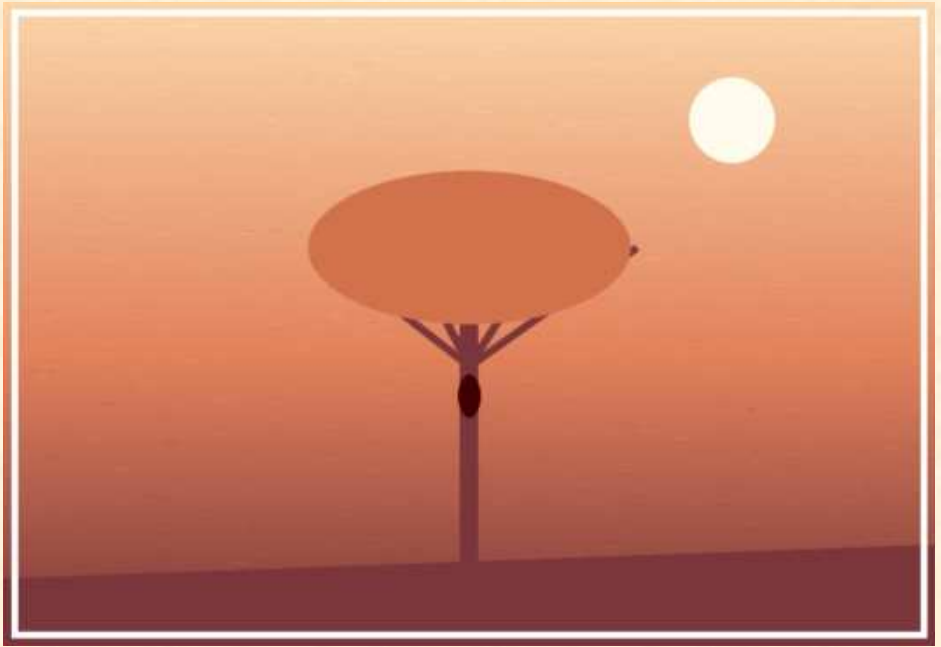
"Very well, then the story begins," said Om, burrowing under the quilt and pressing close against Grandmother's side. Outside, jackals howled. Inside, the lantern cast its yellow light. And Grandmother's voice, soft and slow, opened the path of the tale—

Chapter 1: The Dense Grove of Channa Trees









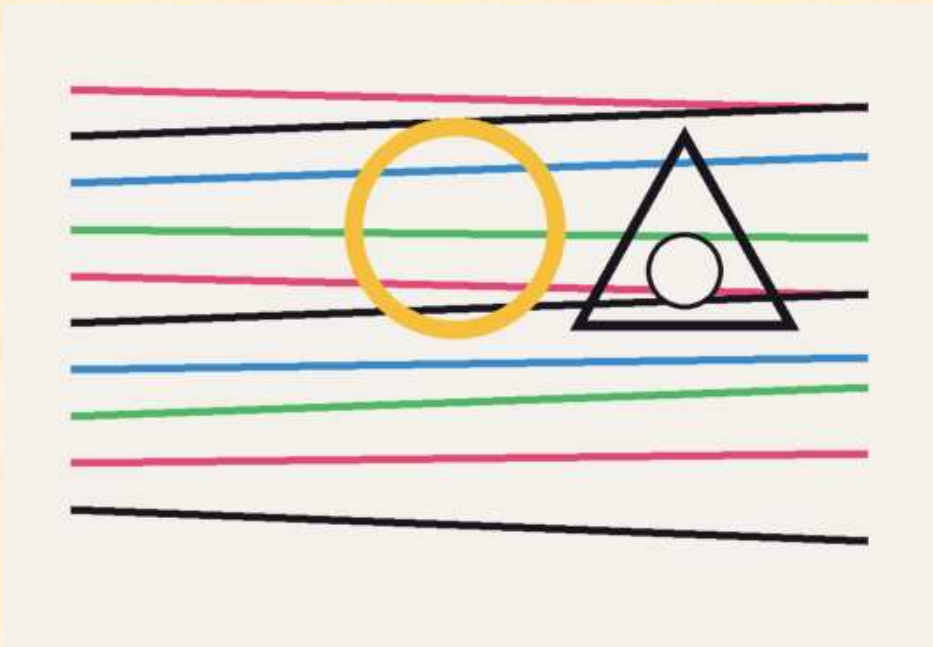
Picture 1

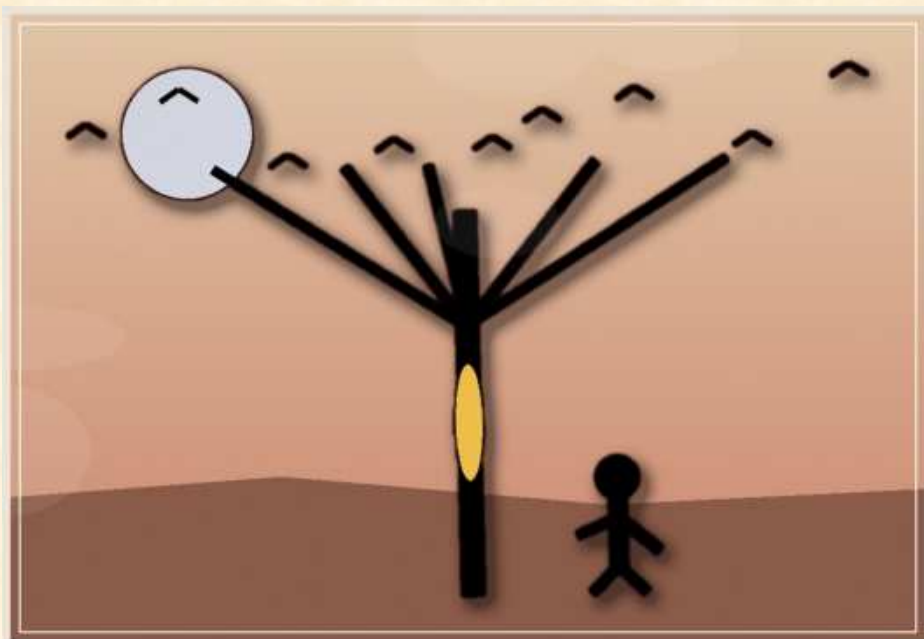
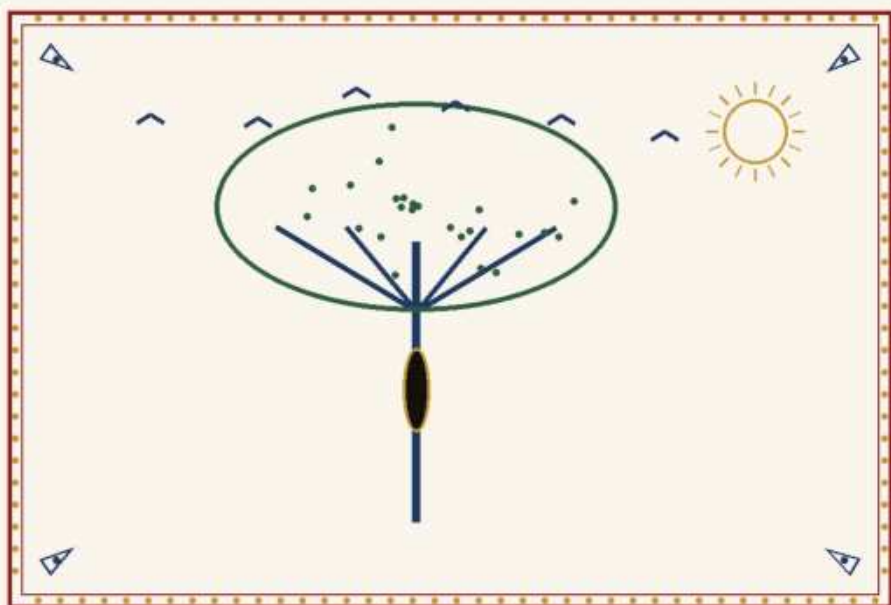


That day mangoes fell thick and fast in the dense grove of channa trees. In the morning rain the scent of mangoes spread so far that every child in the village ran toward the grove with basket and cloth. Aastha was among them — ten years old, bright-eyed, and never once shy of asking a question.

Gathering mangoes as she went, Aastha moved farther ahead than the rest. The grove grew thicker; the light grew thin. The laughter of her friends fell away behind her, and ahead there remained only the rustle of leaves. Just then — caw! A black crow flew cawing straight over her head.

Aastha stopped short. Before her stood a great old tree, so tall she had to tip her whole neck back to see its crown. And in the trunk of that tree, level with Aastha's head, was a black hollow — deep, silent, like the open mouth of the tree.







Picture 2



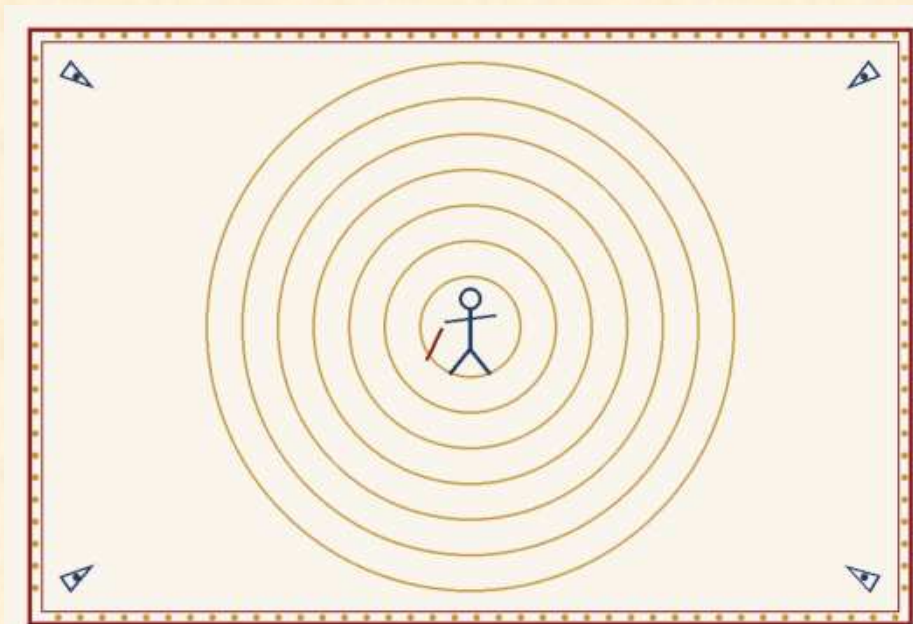
No sooner had she heard the first crow's cry than a host of black crows came from every side. Every branch of the tree turned black. The crows began to dive — toward Aastha's basket, toward Aastha's hair. In fright the basket slipped from her hands.

And then, without thinking, Aastha did the only thing left to do in that moment — she slipped quickly into the hollow. Inside it was dark, and strangely still. The cawing outside faded all at once, as if someone had thrown a thick blanket over every sound of the grove.

The moment she entered the hollow, something felt wrong. This darkness was no ordinary dark. In this dark there was neither up nor down, neither forward nor back — only Aastha, and her thudding heart.

Chapter 2: A Fall That Felt Like Flying







Picture 3

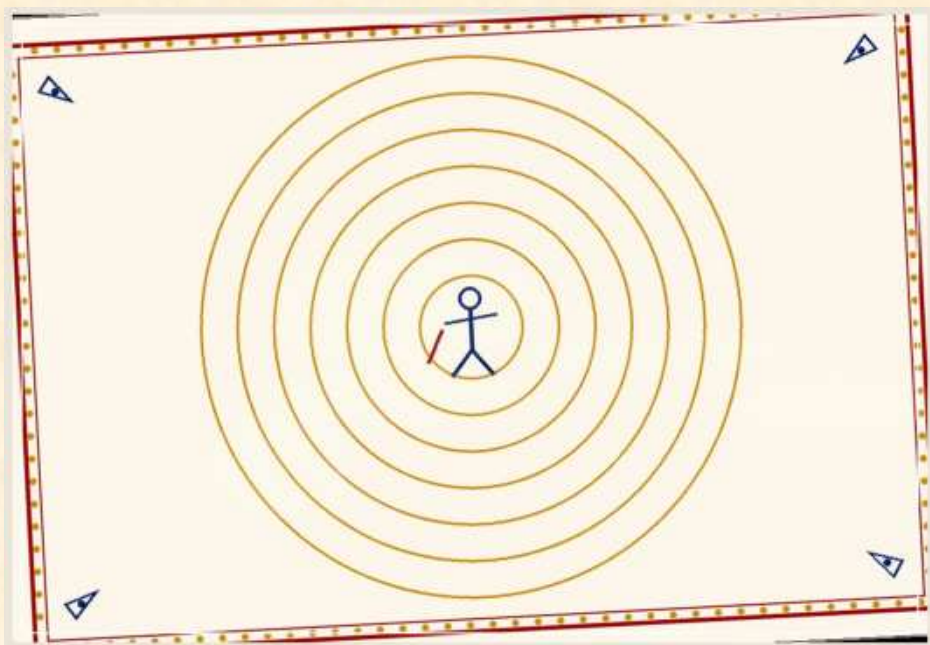


It seemed to her that she stood in the sky. Aastha looked up, looked down — both ways the same grey emptiness. She felt she was standing still; then she felt — no, she was going down! But what kind of falling was this? No wind sang past her ears; no frightened flutter stirred in her stomach.

She felt there was no weight in her body. She had grown lighter than cotton. Aastha stretched out her hands — and her hands spread like wings. She wanted to laugh, but the laugh stopped short at her lips, for a question was nagging in her mind: Where will this fall come to rest?

Time, too, flowed strangely here. How long had passed — if there had been a clock it might have said two hours. And then, without any jolt, Aastha came down upon a white, shimmering place. She fell on something soft — as if someone had laid a mattress just there. She was not hurt at all.







Picture 4



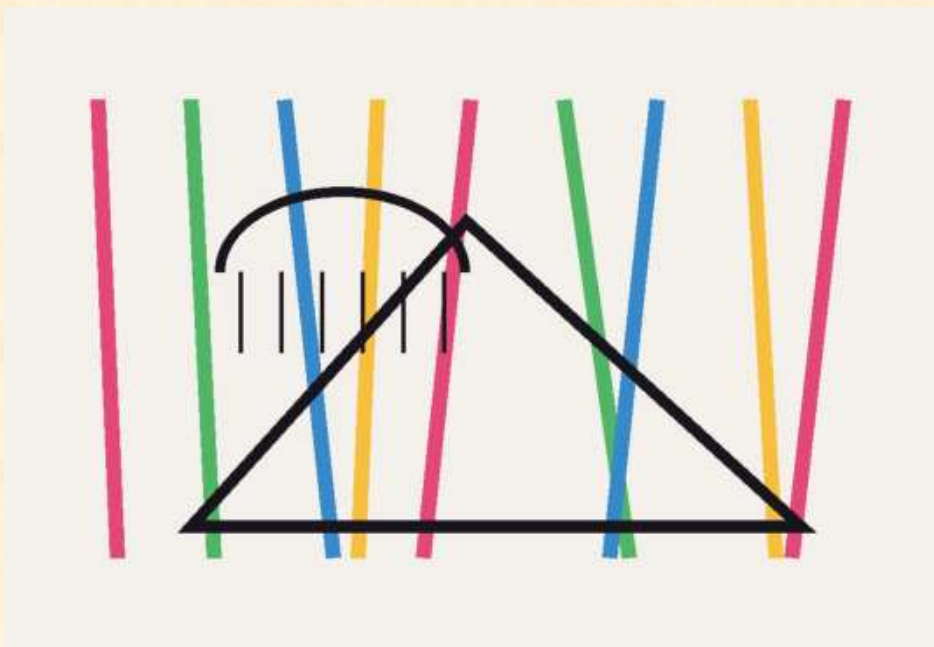
Aastha sat up and looked all around. Was the hollow an exit into fairyland? — she began to think — then how many other people, goods, and birds must have fallen through and vanished! And that is why folk call the channa grove a haunted grove!

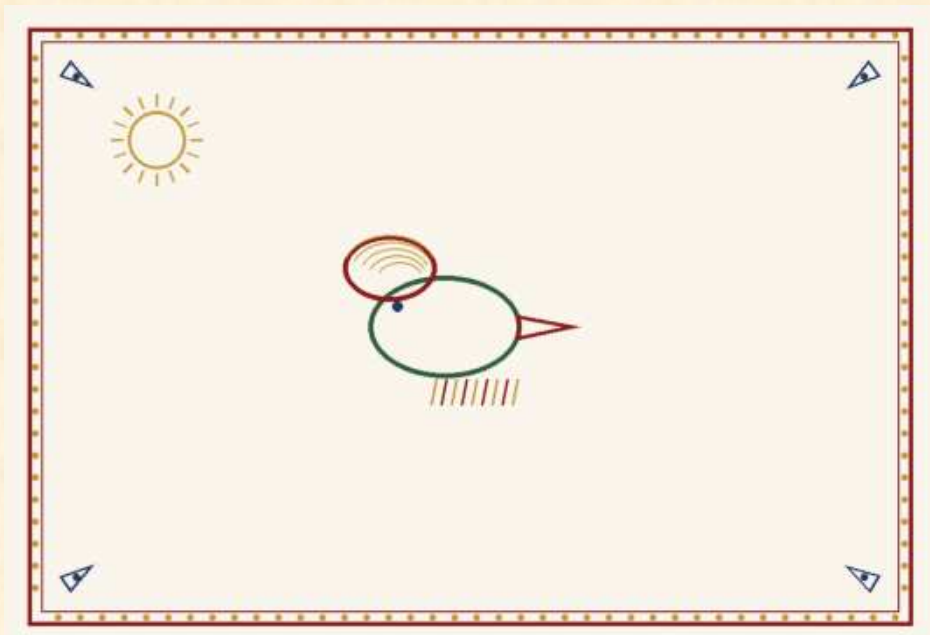
At that thought her heart gave a leap. Village stories crowded her mind — so-and-so's calf lost in the grove, so-and-so's parrot that flew and never came back... were they all here...?

Aastha blinked. The place itself seemed pleasant enough. She looked up — the hollow was nowhere to be seen — sky on every side. But not a blue sky: a white sky. White like the cream on milk. And in that whiteness, far off, a green speck was flying toward her.

Chapter 3: Turacos









Picture 5

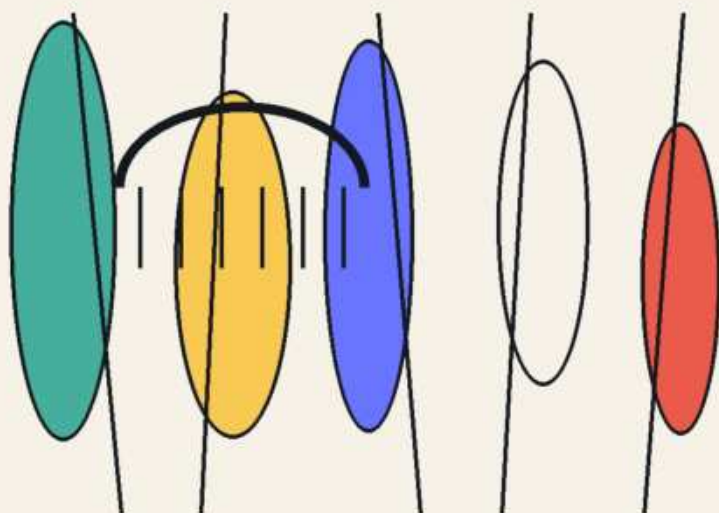


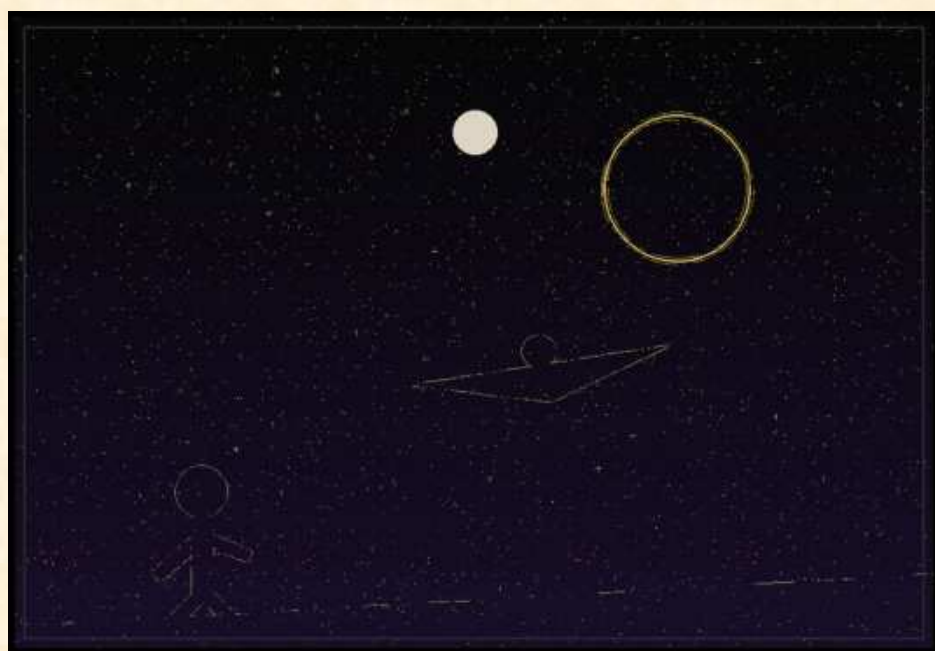
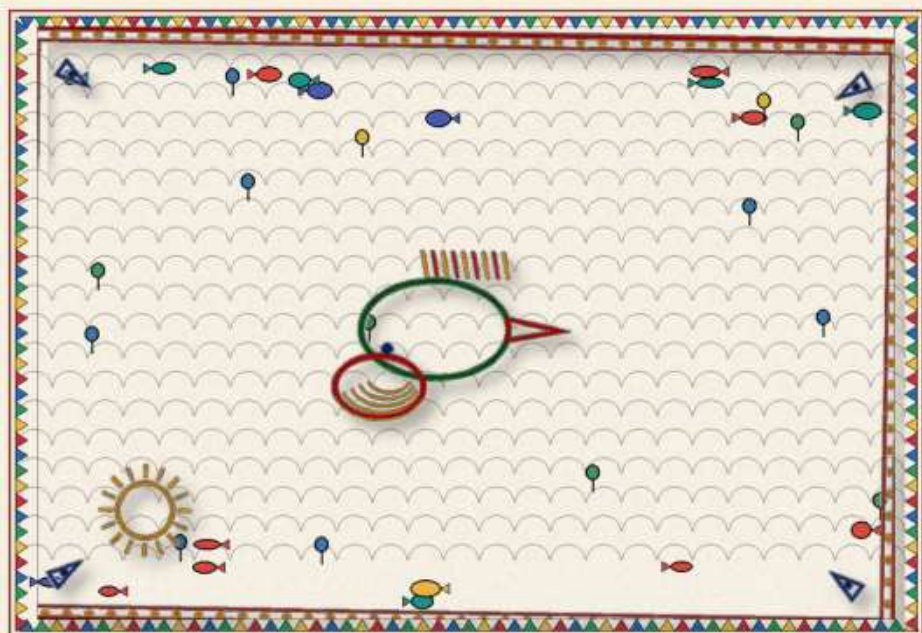
As the green speck drew near it became a bird — green-winged, with flight feathers of red. It landed before Aastha and spoke in clear human speech — "I am Turacos the bird. I have come from Africa."

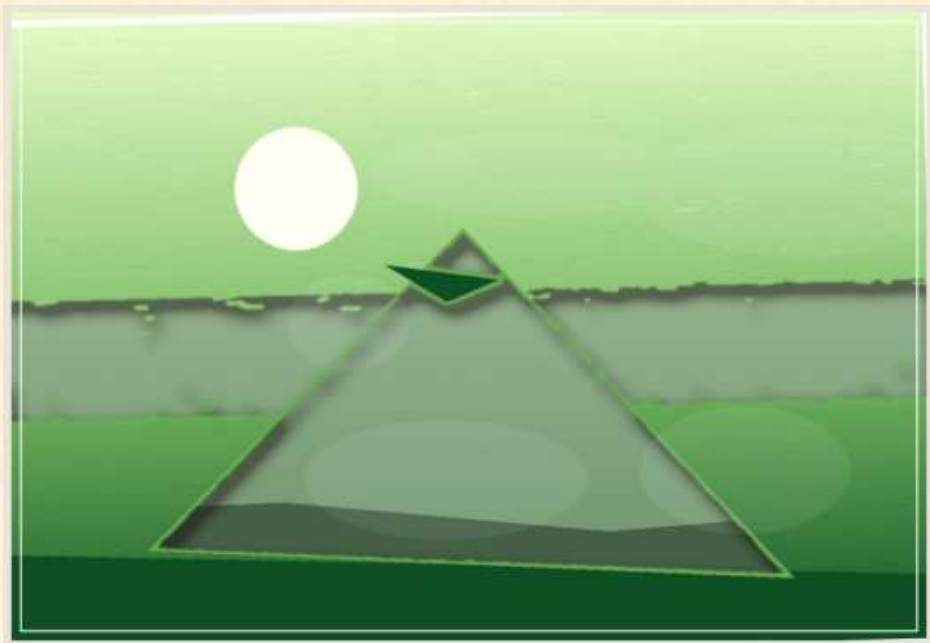
Aastha's eyes stayed wide. But more than fear there was wonder in her, and wonder always teaches good manners. She said, "I am Aastha. I have come from Asia. But... how do you, a bird, speak in human tongue?"

"This is fairyland," said Turacos. "Once you arrive here, everyone begins to think and speak like a human." — and saying so he flew up and settled on Aastha's shoulder. There was no fear in the light grip of his claws — only the weight of a new friendship.

"So when you were in Africa, you did not speak in human tongue?" "No," said Turacos easily, as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world.







Picture 6



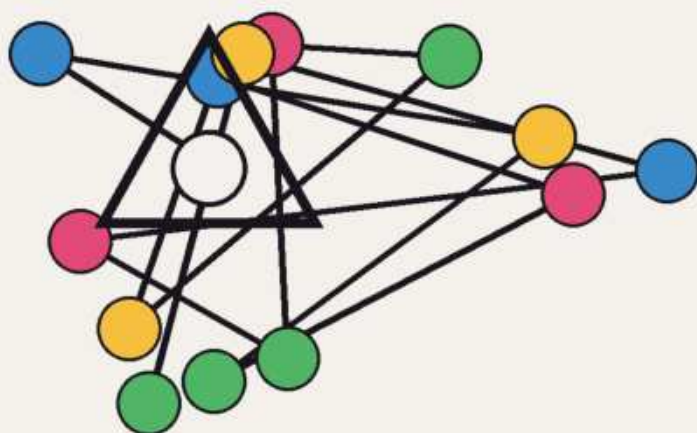
Just then rain began to fall hard. The water that ran from Turacos's body as the drops struck was red — and red colour stained Aastha's hand. "Have you been playing Holi?" Aastha asked. "No — why?" "This red colour fell from your feathers!"

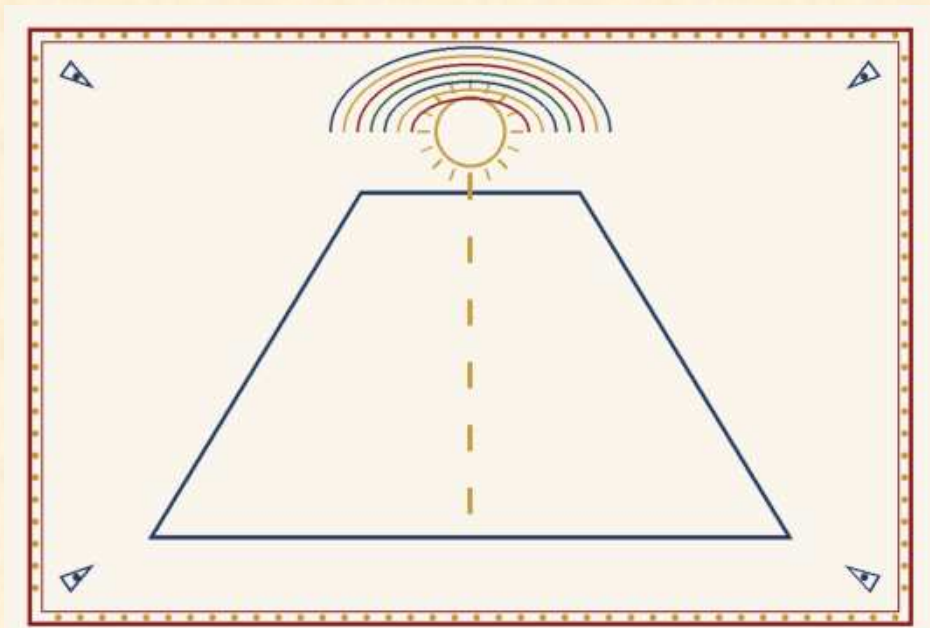
Turacos laughed. "My green is fast, but the red washes off in water. This red is the true colour of my feathers; no one has put it on." Aastha looked at her reddened palm. In this fairyland even the rain plays with colour — she thought.

"I fell through the hollow of a tree in my village's channa grove," said Aastha. "Is there any way out from here?" For the first time Turacos's smile dimmed. He spoke softly — "That same way is what I, too, am searching for." And the two of them, two strangers in an unknown land, set off together like old friends.

Chapter 4: Light Without a Sun









Picture 7

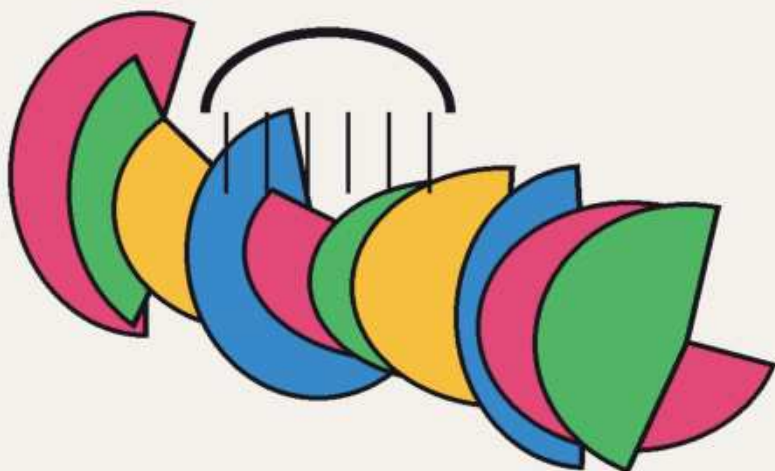


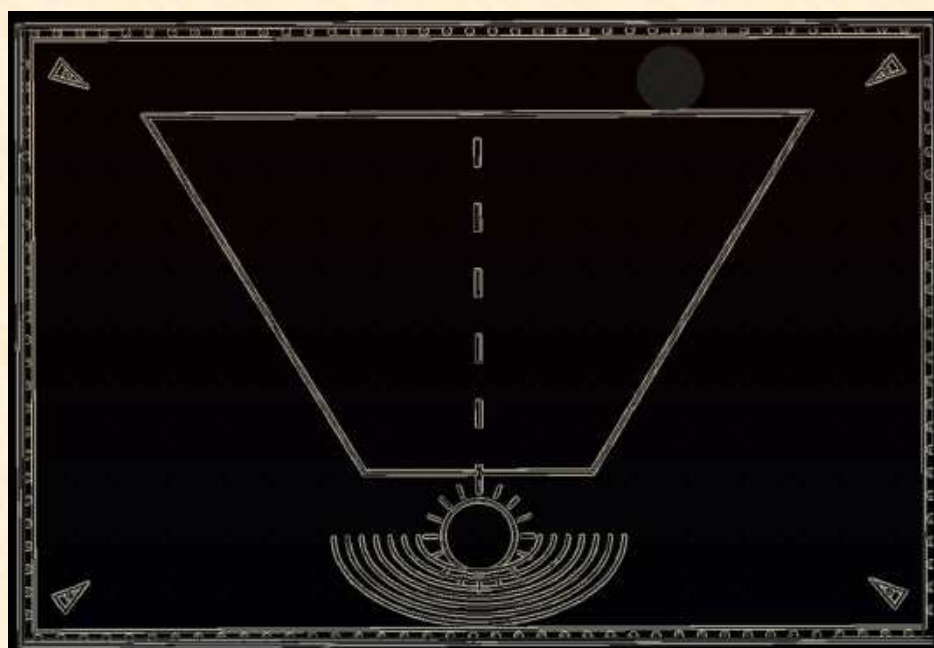
Light lay spread on every side — but what light! Nowhere a sun, nowhere a shadow, nowhere a sting in the eyes.

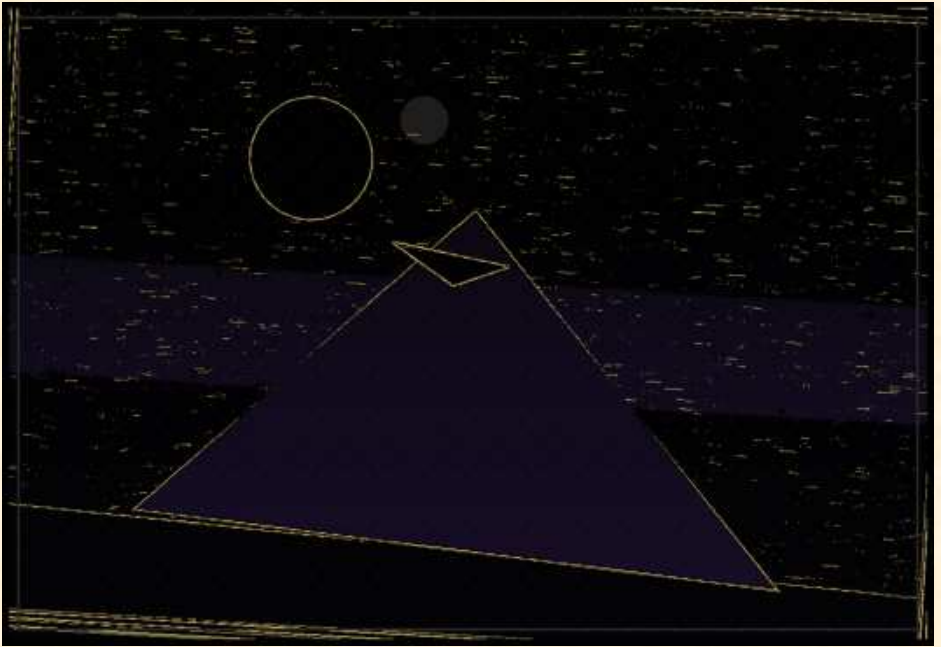
Aastha asked, "In the hollow... I mean, in this land — how does the light come? There is no sun here at all!"

As they walked, another wonder met Aastha — there was no friction on the road. A smooth, clean path, and the moment you set your foot on it your body glided of its own accord. Everything was moving at a hundred kilometres an hour at least. If one ran, how fast would one run? — Aastha did the sum in her head.

On the way they met a butterfly — two-winged, many-coloured, without a sting; and a dragonfly — four-winged, with a sting. Both joined them. Now they were four: one little girl, one bird, and two living things like flying flowers.







Picture 8



The student inside Aastha could no longer keep quiet.

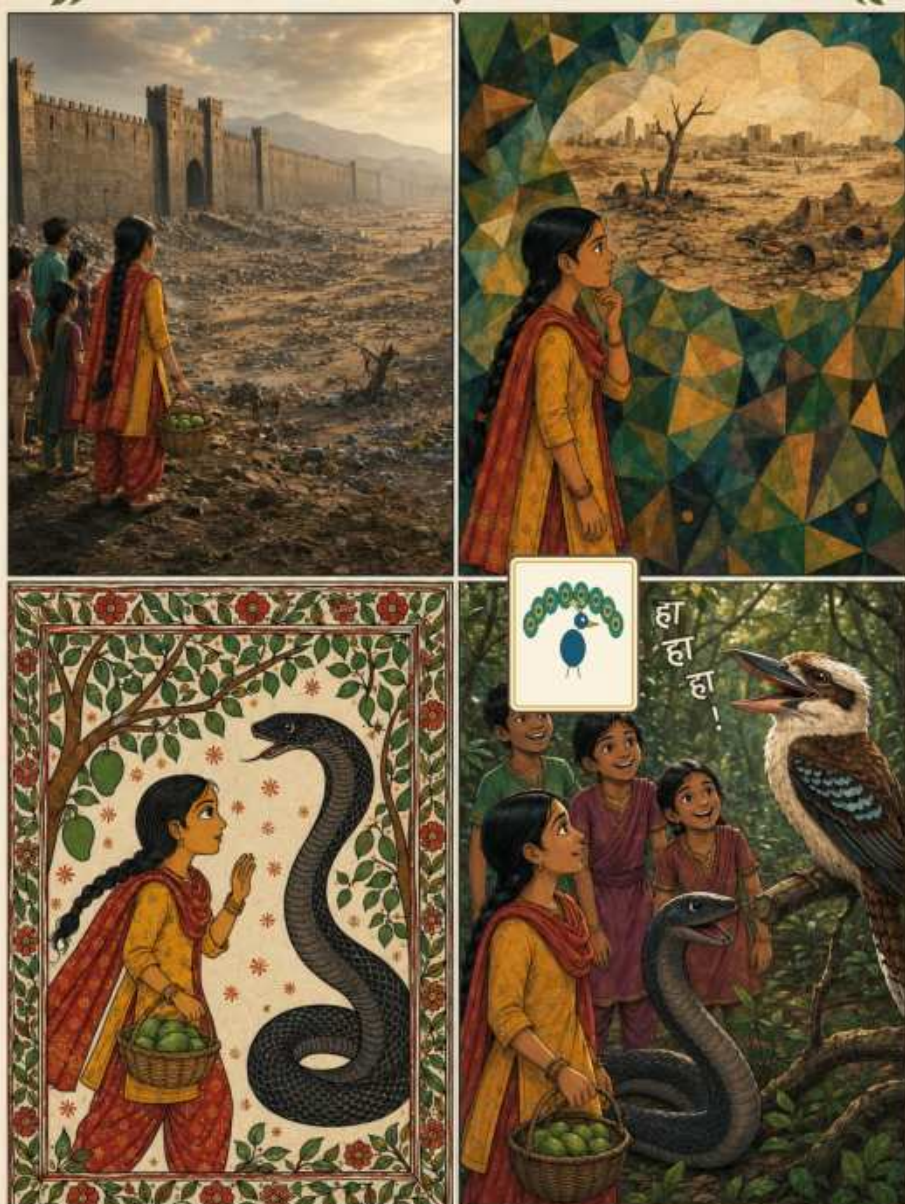
"Turacos," she said, "I have learned in school — carbon dioxide enters through the stomata in a leaf, water and minerals through the roots, sunlight through the leaf.

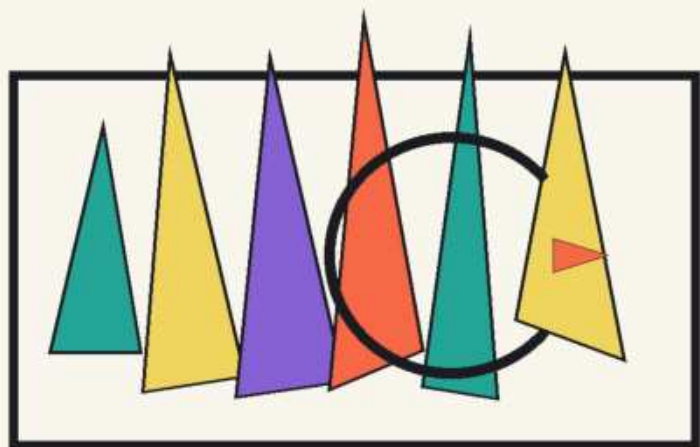
Chloroplasts take in the rays; then oxygen comes out and sugar is made. If there is no sunlight here at all, where does the energy come from?"

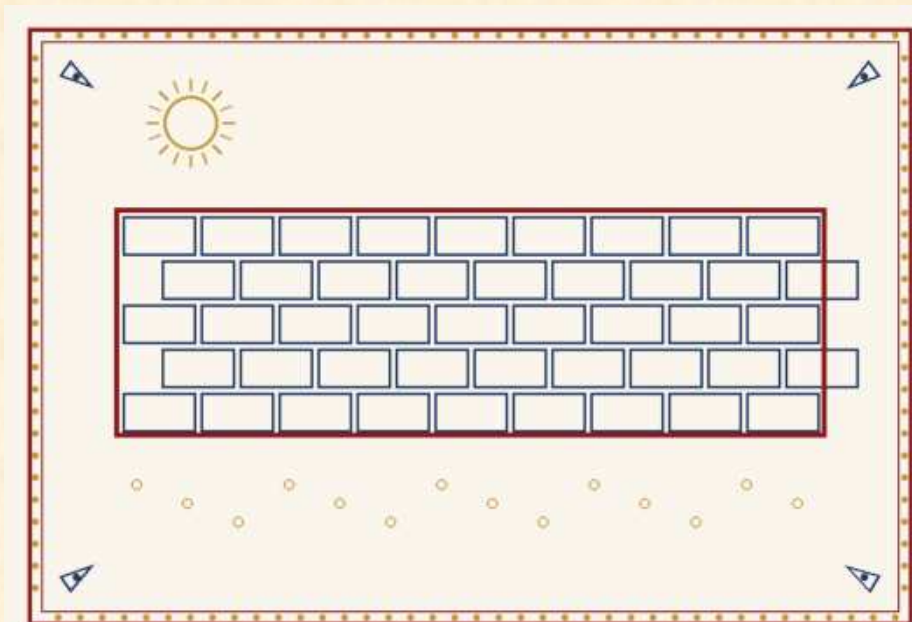
Turacos looked at Aastha as if he had found a new answer to an old question. "You are very sharp at your studies," he said. "This place needs people like you. You will find the answer to every question." But something in his voice troubled Aastha — as if the word "needs" had another meaning.

"What all is there in this land, Turacos?" "In this land there are fields — but not of rice and wheat: fields of energy. Energy grown without sunlight. And there is also a great desert here — beyond the Northern Wall of fairyland." "The Northern Wall?" Aastha's ears pricked up. Beyond a wall there is always a story.

Chapter 5: The Tale Beyond the Wall









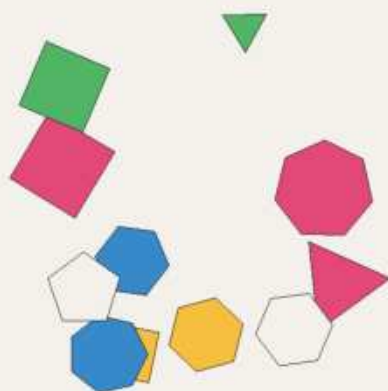
Picture 9

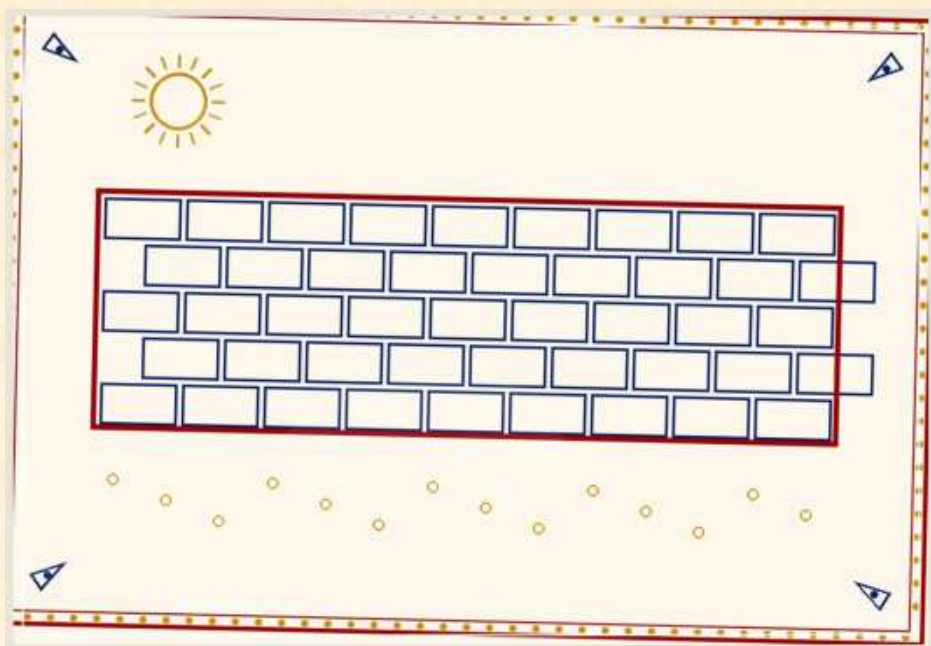


"Yes," said Turacos. "In the north of this land stands the Northern Wall — high, thick. Beyond it, the desert. I have heard that once there were fields there. But from the day the queen of this place ordered rubbish to be thrown in that region, the place began to grow desolate, and now it has become a desert."

Aastha stopped short. "The queen made a whole part of her own land into a dump?" "Yes. And when she gave the order, that very day this wall was built — so that the dumping ground would be easier to hide." Turacos's voice was flat, but the first thorn pricked Aastha's mind: why should a land so beautiful have one corner so ugly?

Just then a terrible snake came before them — black, gleaming, hood raised. Aastha was frightened and caught hold of Turacos's wing. "Don't be afraid," said Turacos. "Ordinarily this is the most poisonous mamba snake, but he is from my own Africa. Just as everyone here begins to speak in human tongue, so everyone's poison vanishes too."







Picture 10



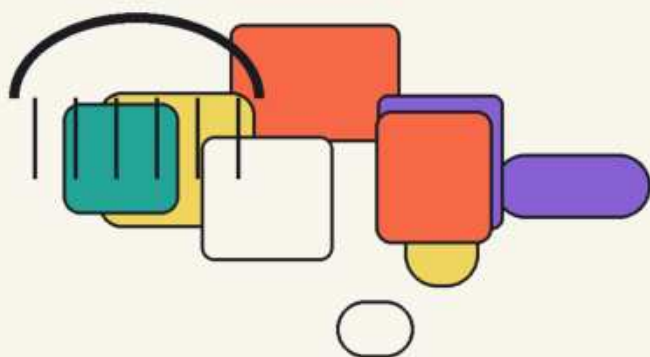
The mamba hissed and spoke in a heavy voice —
"Welcome to fairyland." There was no venom in his tone,
but there was an old weariness, as if he, too, had long
been searching for a way.

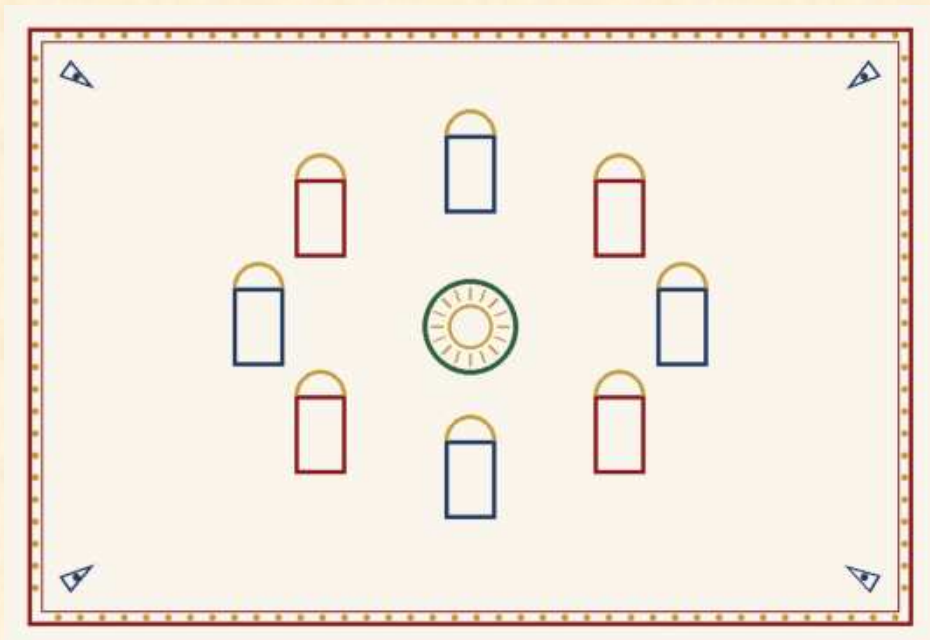
Just then a laughing creature hopped forward — "Khee-
khee-khee!" "Who is this?" "This is Kookaburra, come
from Australia. He laughs all the time." Kookaburra
cackled so hard that Aastha herself began to laugh — the
first open laugh in this strange land.

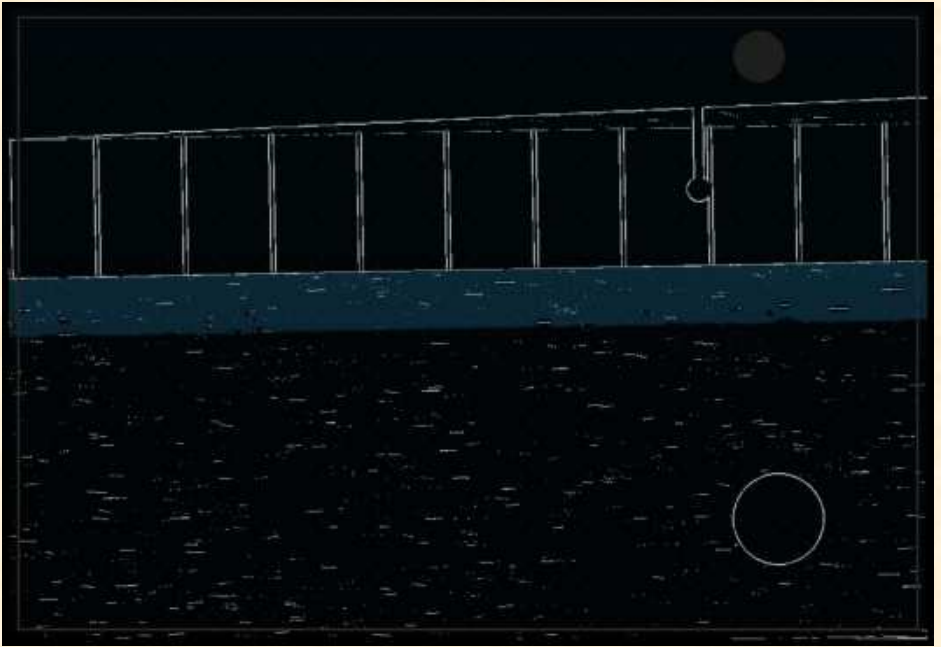
But the moment the laughter stopped, counting began in
Aastha's head: "Australia, Africa, Asia... I came through a
hollow, and all of you?" And this time the butterfly, the
dragonfly, Kookaburra, the mamba, and Turacos spoke as
one — "We, too, all came through hollows." In that single
voice there was a truth that touched Aastha's heart: every
one of them was a fallen traveller, just like her.

Chapter 6: Hollows of the Eight Continents









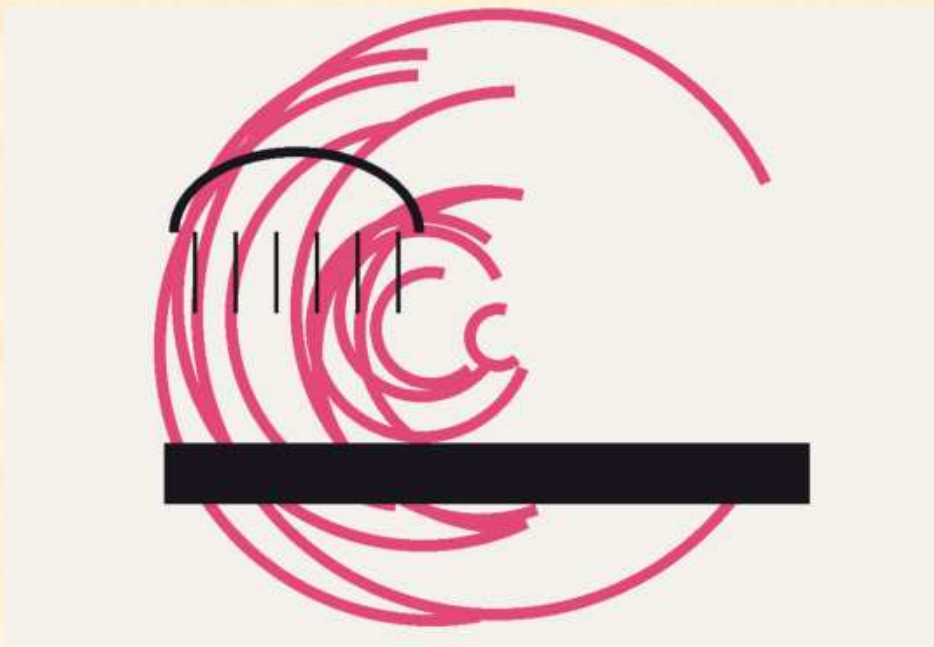
Picture 11



Still laughing, Kookaburra spoke a serious thing — "Here in fairyland, hollows have been made from all eight places: the Arctic, the Antarctic, Asia, Europe, Australia, North America, South America, and Africa." Have been made — that phrase stuck in Aastha's ear. The hollows had not formed of themselves; someone had made them.

"And is there any way out?" Aastha asked. The mamba said, "I have heard that to leave there is an exit based on the recognition of thumb and eye — by which one may go out to all eight places."

Aastha asked in wonder, "Recognition of eye and thumb? You mean fingerprint and cornea identification? Why?" The mamba said, "Without it a person from Asia might reach Antarctica, and that would cause a muddle."







Picture 12

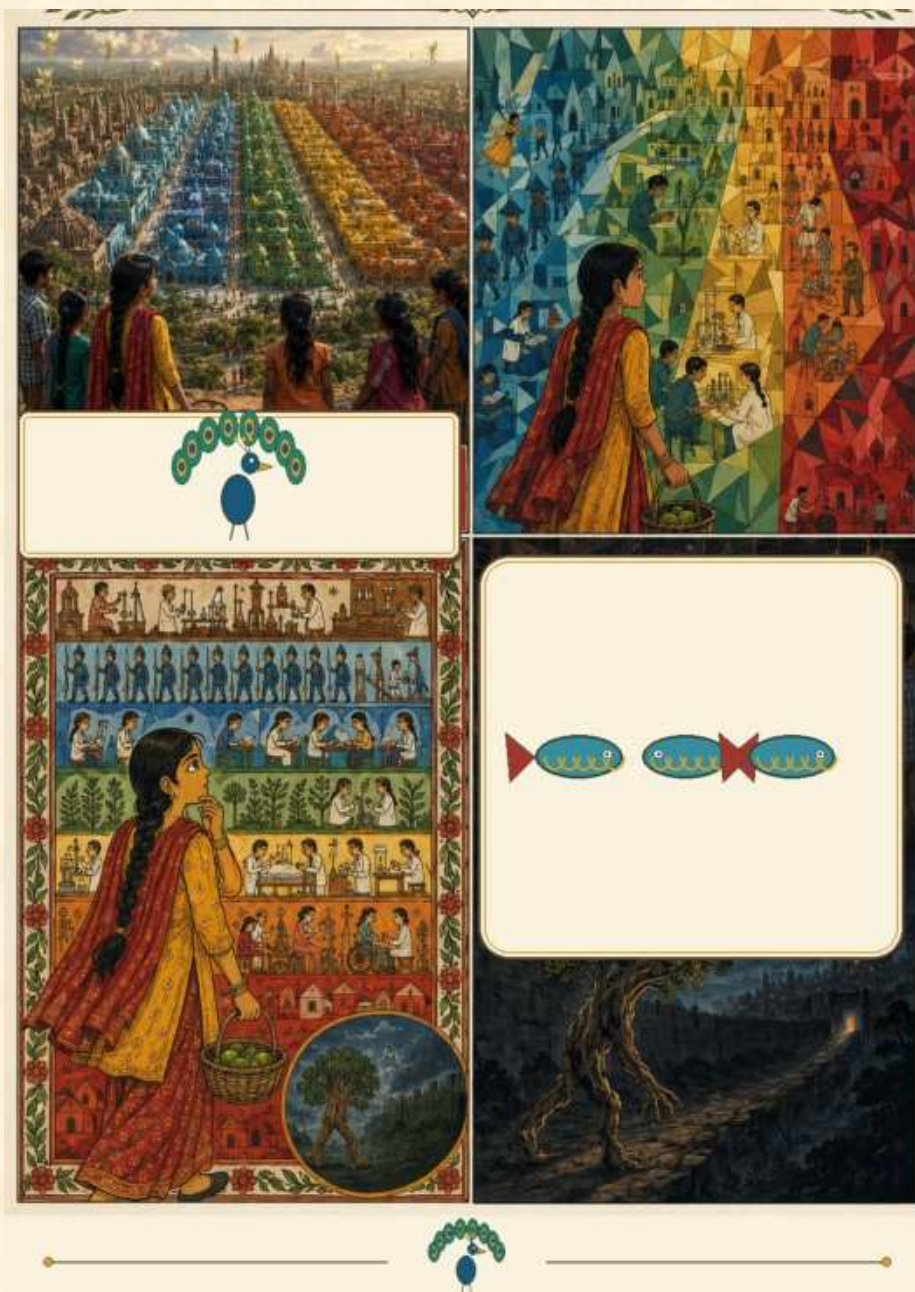


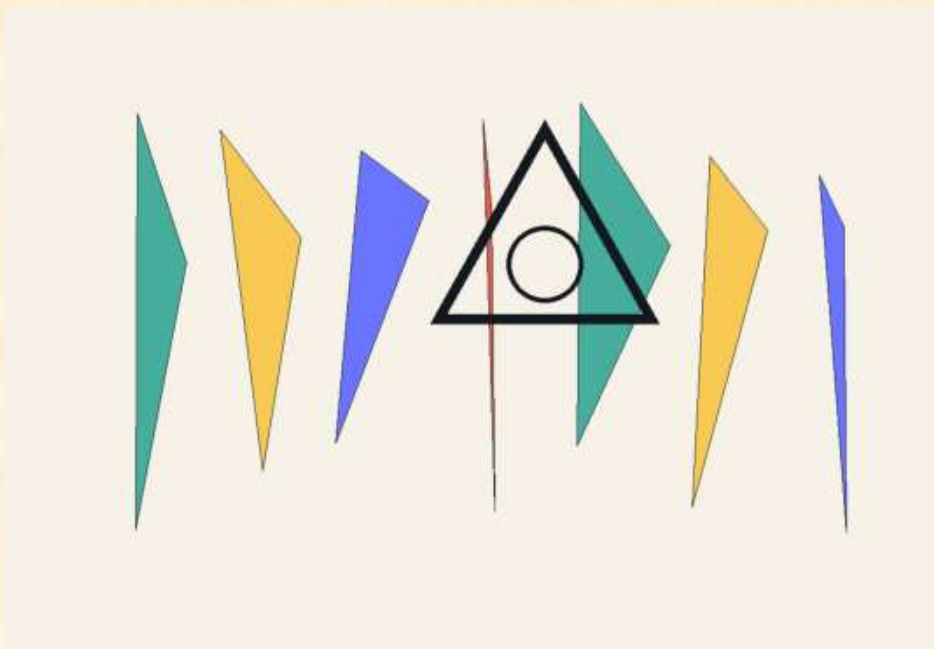
"What muddle would it cause?" "A great muddle. Take the Arctic — at the North Pole there is never night. An Eskimo would meet you and say — Who are you? Likewise in the Antarctic, at the South Pole there is never day. A penguin would meet you and say — Who are you?"

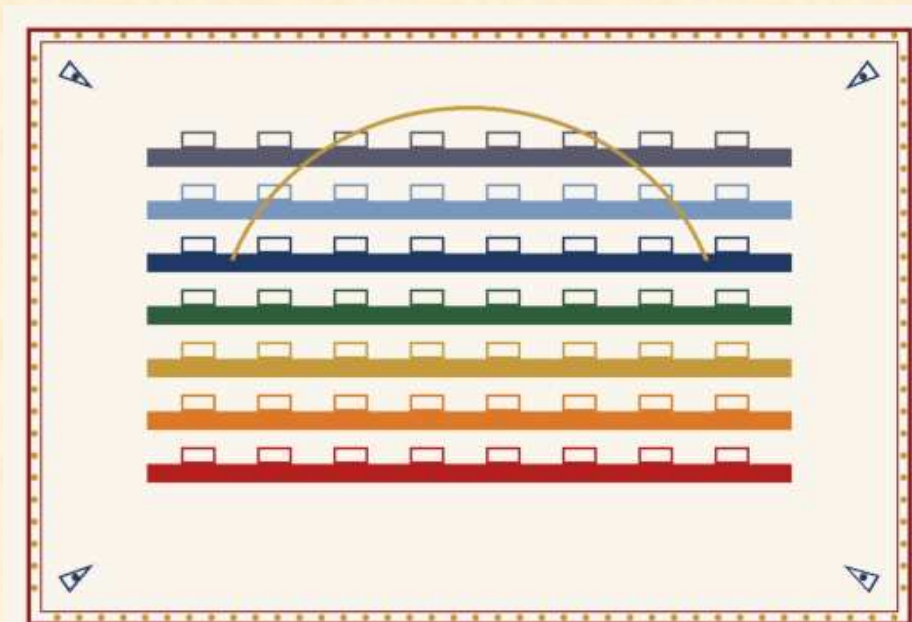
And as if characters walk into a story the moment it is told, just then from two sides an Eskimo and a penguin came into view. Greetings were exchanged. Now they were eight — eight travellers from eight places, in one white land.

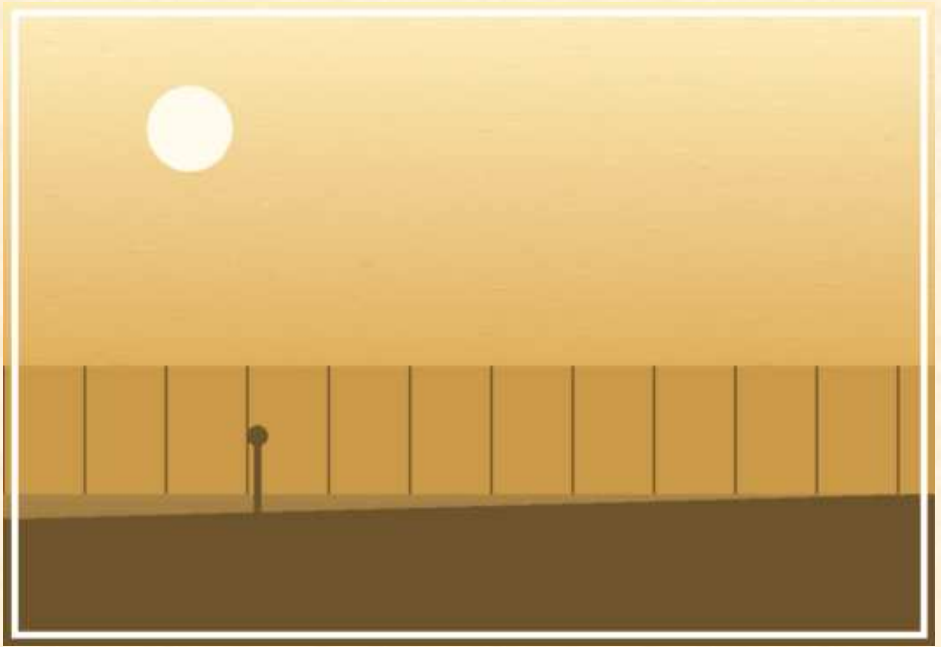
Aastha looked at them all and thought: everyone here smiles in welcome, yet no one has a way home. What kind of fairyland is this, with eight doors to enter and not even one to leave — only a rumour of marks of thumb and eye?

Chapter 7: The Beds of Seven Colours









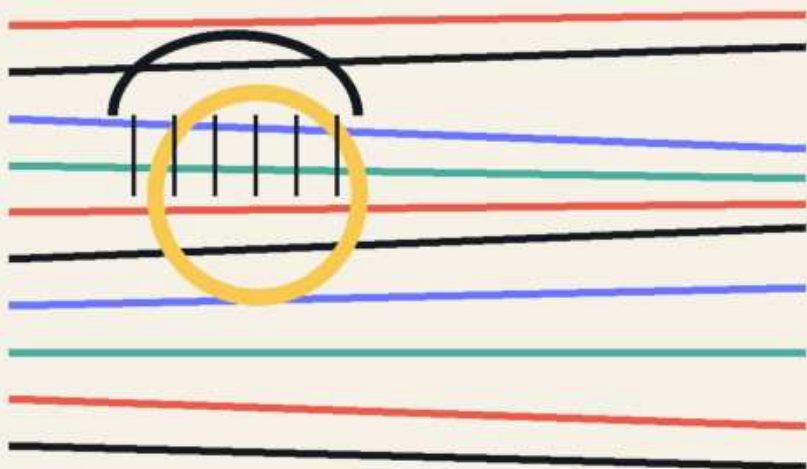
Picture 13

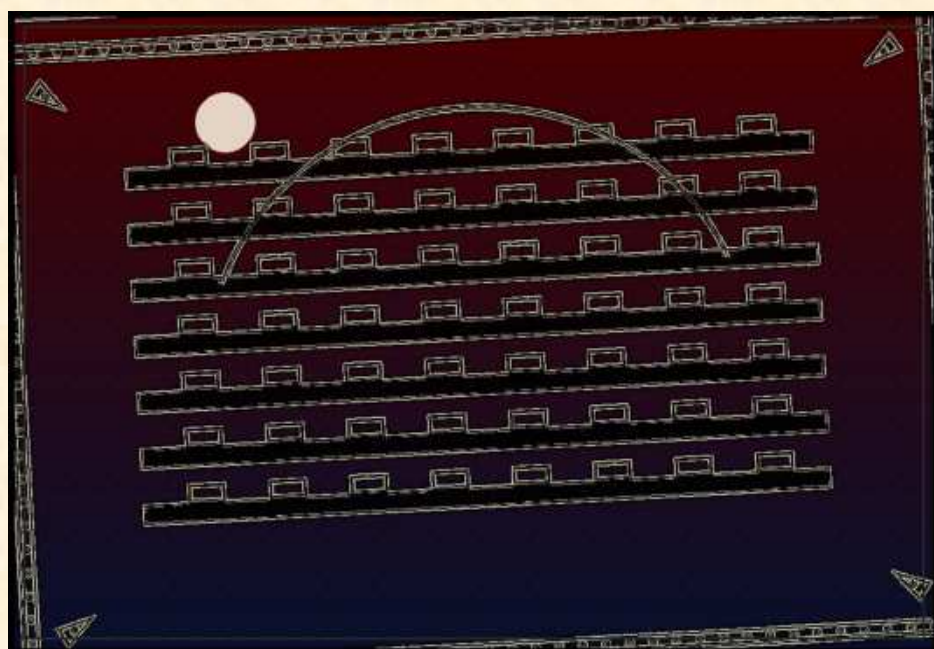


As they went on, bustle began upon the road. Fairies like little dolls were moving on every side. Houses and courtyards were many-coloured. And ahead — as if the rainbow of the sky had come down to the ground — seven beds in a row: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and deep red.

"What is this, Turacos?" "This is the headquarters and dwelling of fairyland." And Turacos began to count them one by one: "In the violet bed live the scientists. In indigo, the military department. In the blue-coloured houses, the children's school — from the first class to the university. In green, the laboratory for research on plants. In yellow, the laboratory and hospital for research on goods, humans, and fairies."

"And orange?" "In the orange row there is a laboratory for research on humans, fairies, birds, animals, and plants who are weak in mind or body. This row is the largest, and here..." — but Aastha cut in.







Picture 14

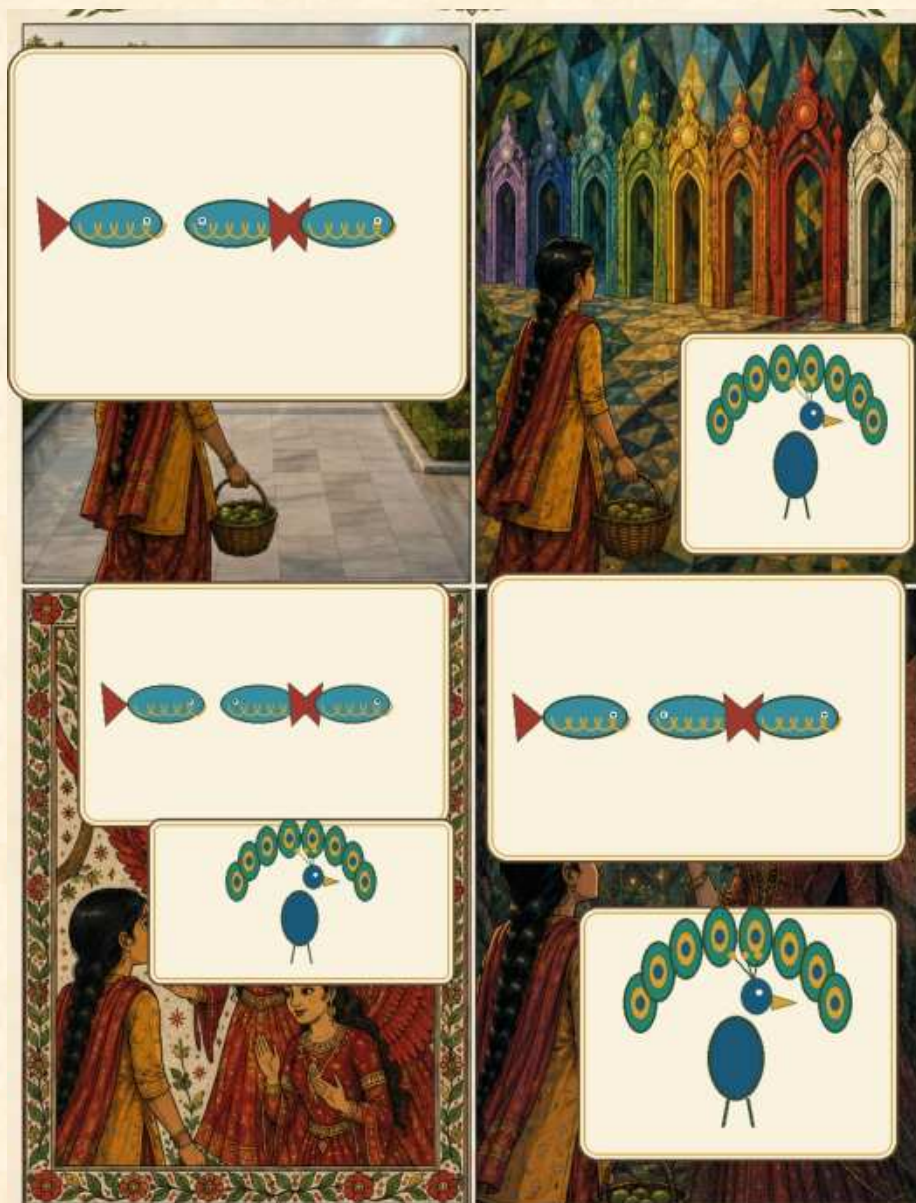


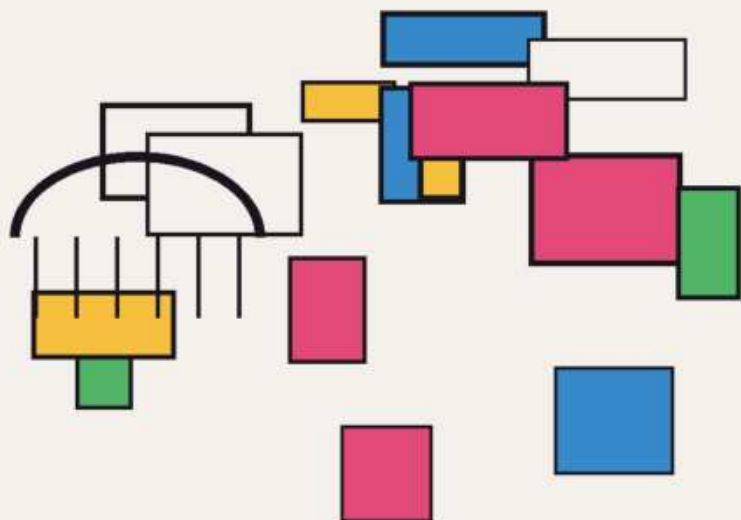
"Plants too, in the class of the mentally weak? How? The bodily I understand, but the mental?" Turacos paused a little, then said in a low voice — "Progress has been very swift here. Plants, too, have begun to speak, hunger, and think like humans. They only cannot walk — that alone is the lack, but even for that attempts are being made."

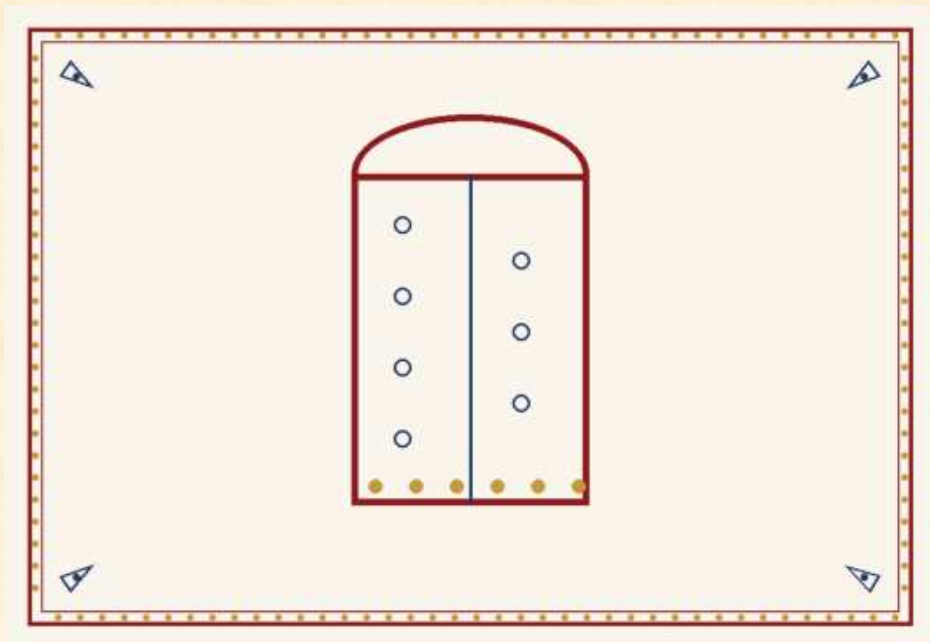
And then the thing that would become the pivot of the whole story: "I have heard that in the laboratory one or two trees began to walk... and of those, one or two ran away — toward the dark land, beyond the wall." Walking trees! A shiver ran through Aastha's body — not of fear, but of touching the edge of some great secret.

"And this deep-red row?" The mamba said, "This is the dwelling of the inhabitants of fairyland. All seven rows wind like a snake and spread through the whole of fairyland." Aastha thought — so beautiful the colours, so hard the divisions. Whatever colour one is, that is one's house, one's work, one's boundary. Even the rainbow is bound in rows here.

Chapter 8: Unicorn 99995745









Picture 15

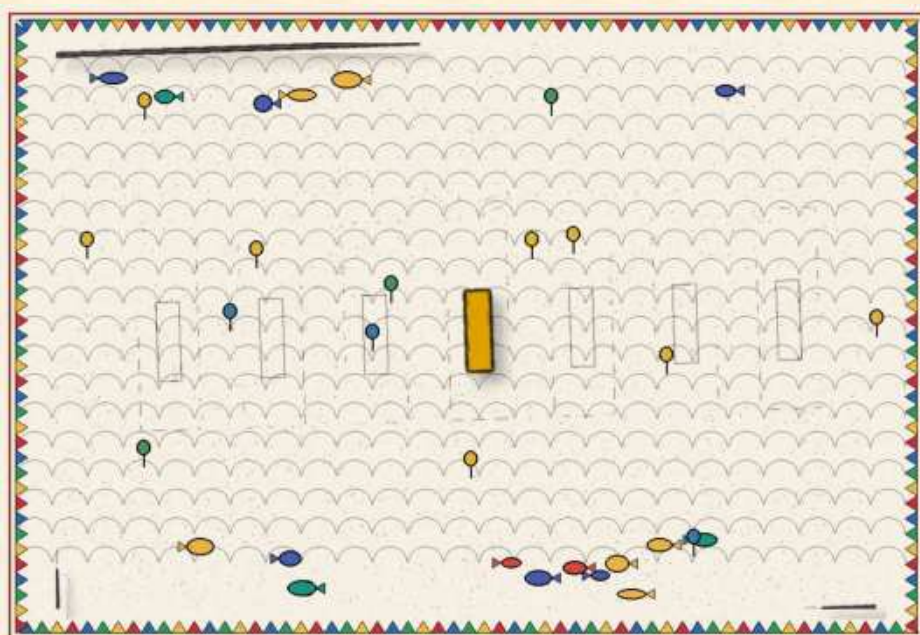
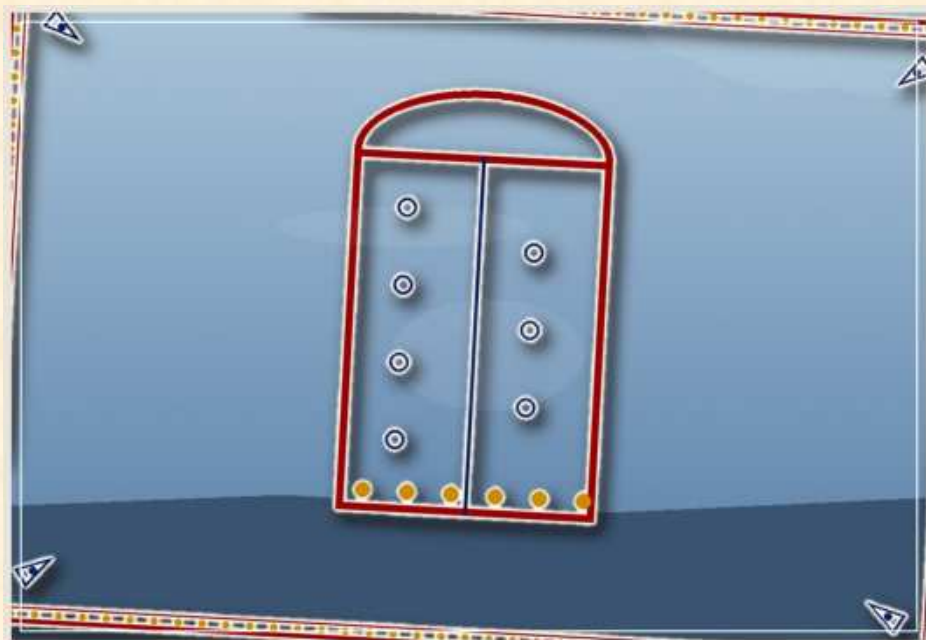


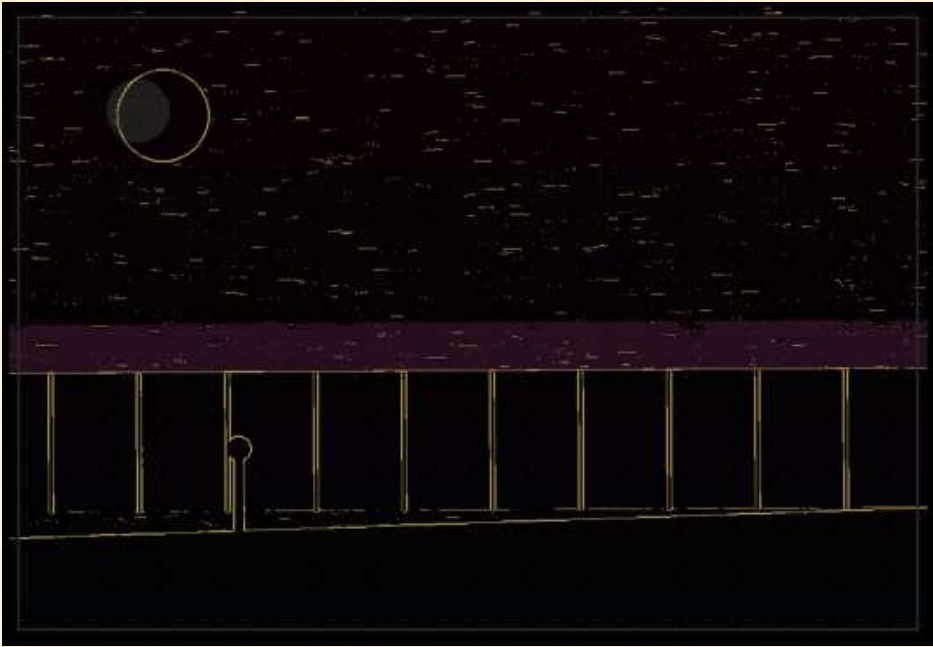
In fairyland everything was clean and neat — roads, crossroads, trees. The leaves of the trees were round, the twigs and foliage cut as if someone had trimmed them to proportion. Not a jot too large, not a jot too small. Everyone greeted Aastha; everyone spoke in human tongue.

But just then Aastha noticed something — it seemed there was no wind blowing here at all! Not one leaf stirred so much as a hair's breadth. Turacos said, "The leaves of these trees will not move. Only near the laboratory of the green row is there an arrangement of air through special tubes — there you will find leaves stirring. Nowhere else in fairyland." Aastha remembered her channa grove, where the rain made every leaf dance without asking. Beauty that does not breathe becomes a picture — not life.

Just then a great doorway appeared in the middle of the road — seven gates of seven colours. Turacos said, "Everyone come to the deep-red gate. Aastha must go to the palace to meet the queen, and this is the way there."







Picture 16

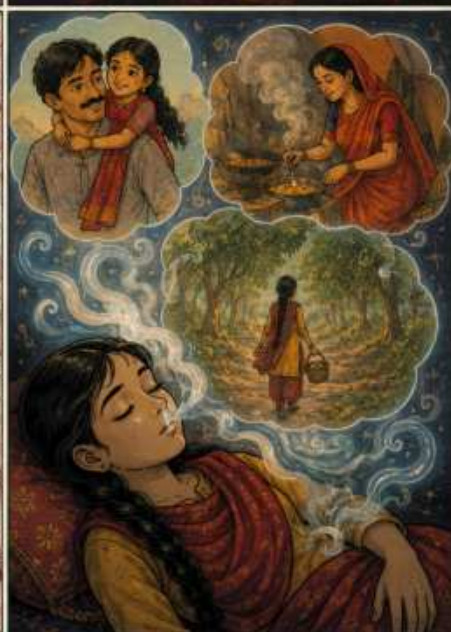


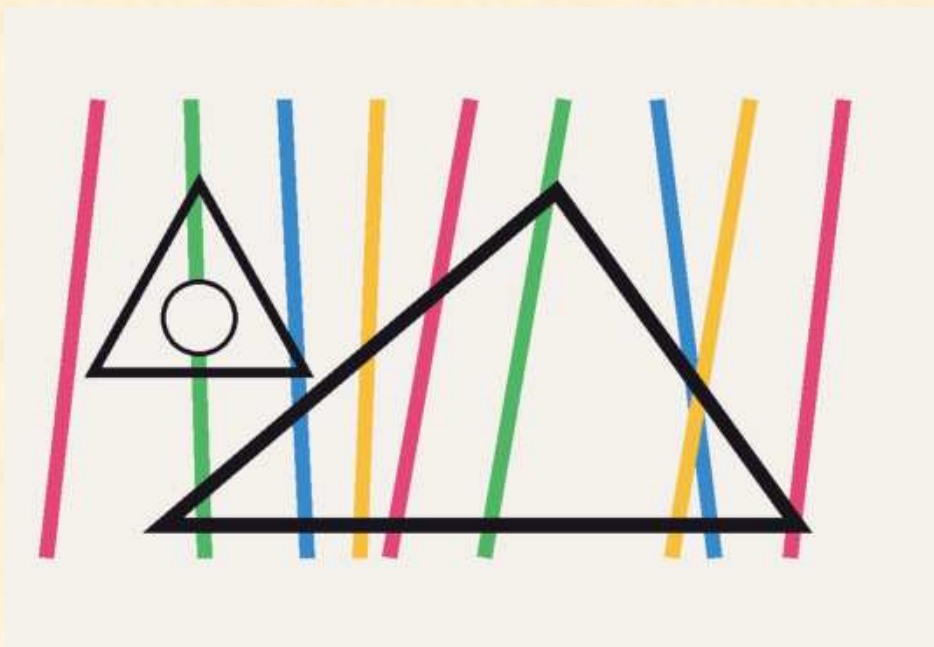
At the red door sat women in red-feathered frocks. One stepped forward and said — "Come, Aastha. The queen is waiting for you." Aastha's feet stopped where they were. "How do you know my name? How is the queen waiting for me? I fell into the hollow by chance!"

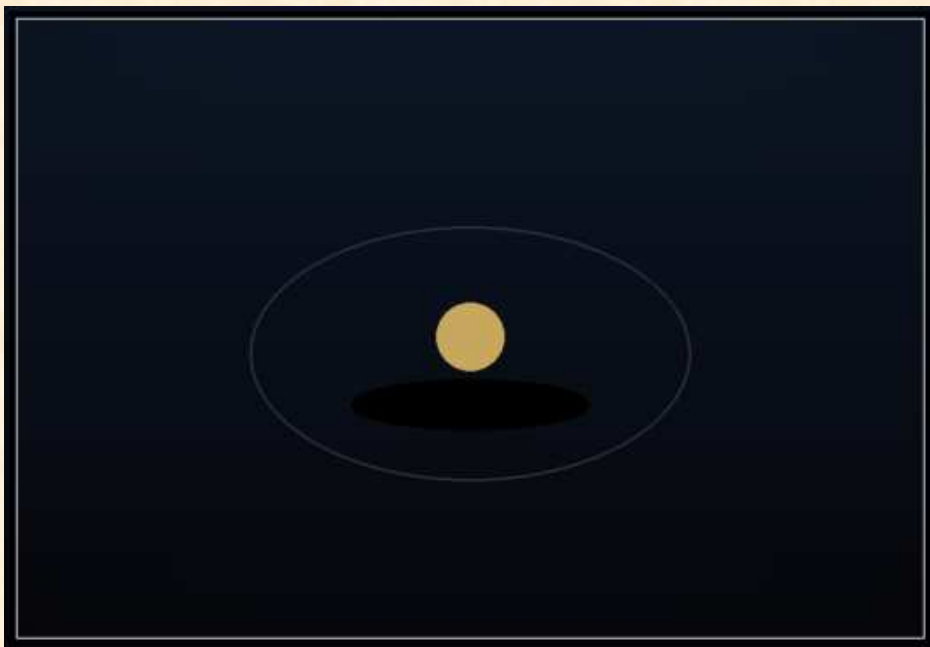
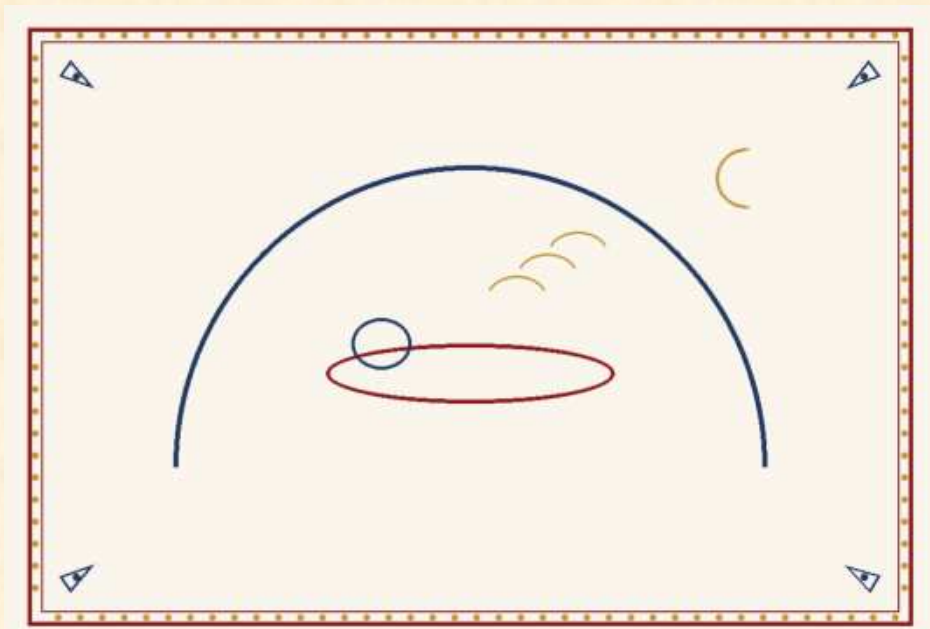
The woman smiled. "Whenever anyone falls through any hollow of this fairyland, their record begins at once. Every activity reaches the queen's headquarters through the violet laboratory. The queen sends at once for news of any creature that has fallen through a hollow. My name is Unicorn 99995745."

"Unicorn is the winged horse who, in stories, brings lost children of the forest home!" "In this land unicorns truly exist. All that you read in stories is true here." "And why these numbers in your name?" "Naming is done this way here — the one born after me became Unicorn 99995746." Aastha fell silent. In a land where the characters of stories become real, names become numbers — what kind of bargain is that?

Chapter 9: Sleep in the Welcome Chamber









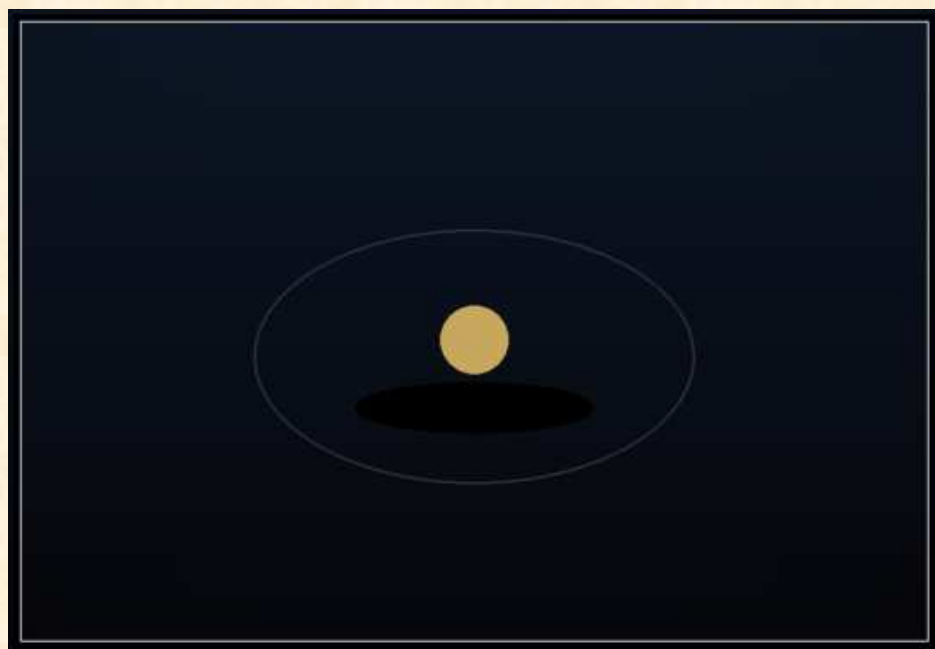
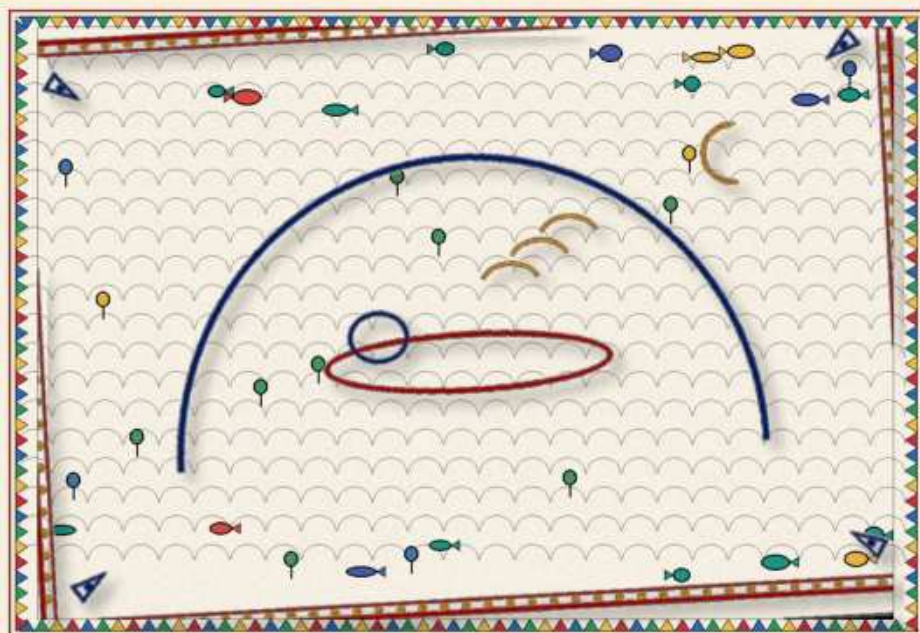
Picture 17



As they entered the deep-red row there came a welcome hall — which was neither on the ground nor in the sky! Aastha looked under her feet — nothing, and yet she did not fall. This land had its own rules, and those rules gave no answer when asked.

A red fairy took Aastha alone into a welcome chamber. Without any darkness it felt like evening there. A whole day's wonders were growing heavy on her body — Aastha began to feel drowsy.

And as the drowsiness came, she saw — something was going in through her nose with the air. With the air! She understood that from the moment she had entered fairyland she had not been breathing at all. So was the nose used here to feed one something through a thing like air?





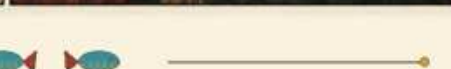
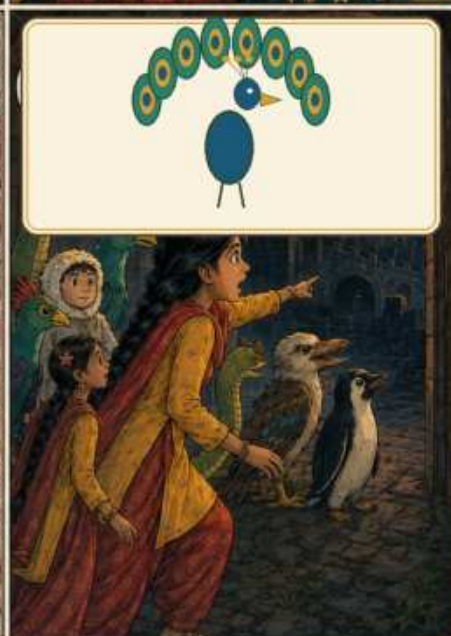
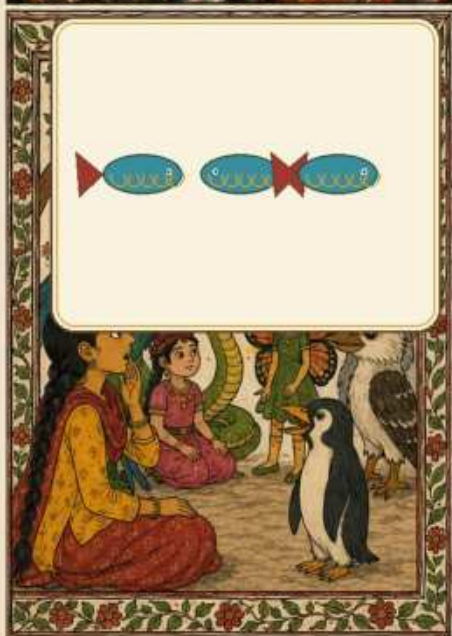
Picture 18

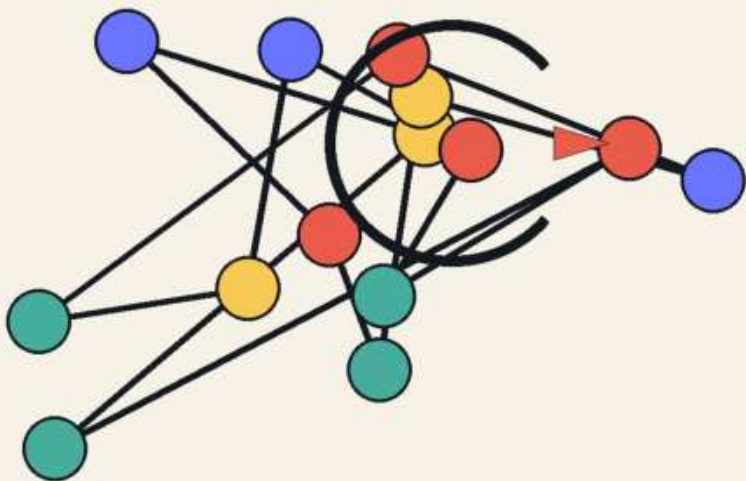


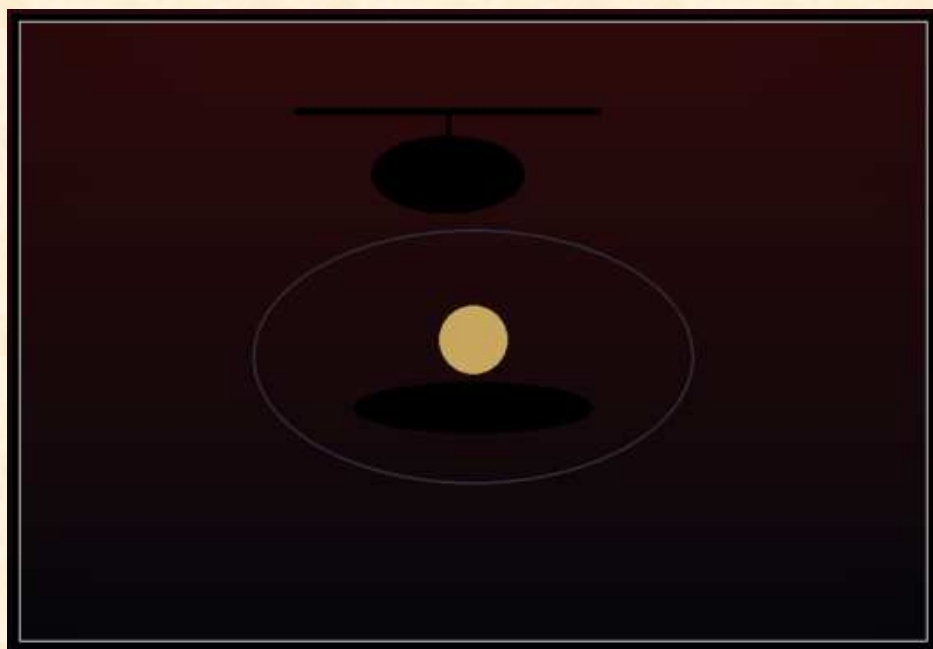
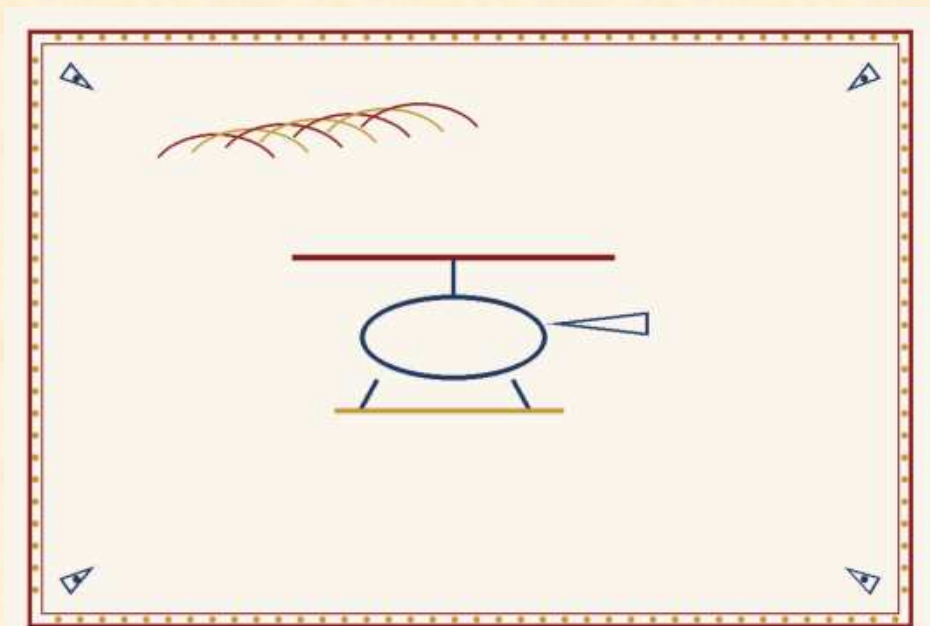
Even this question grew heavy like her eyelids and began to close. Somewhere far off Kookaburra's kee-kee was heard, then that too shut. And sleep took Aastha.

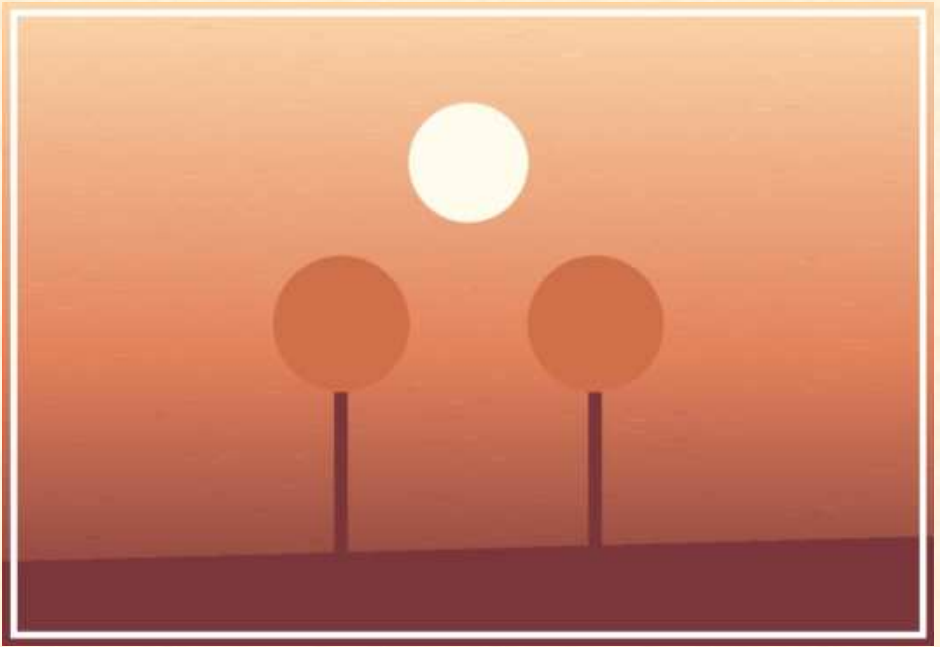
In sleep she saw home. Father's shoulder, the smoke of Mother's hearth, the path to the channa grove. And in sleep she did something — something whose result, when she woke, would shake all the peace of fairyland.

Chapter 10: The Dream That Came True









Picture 19



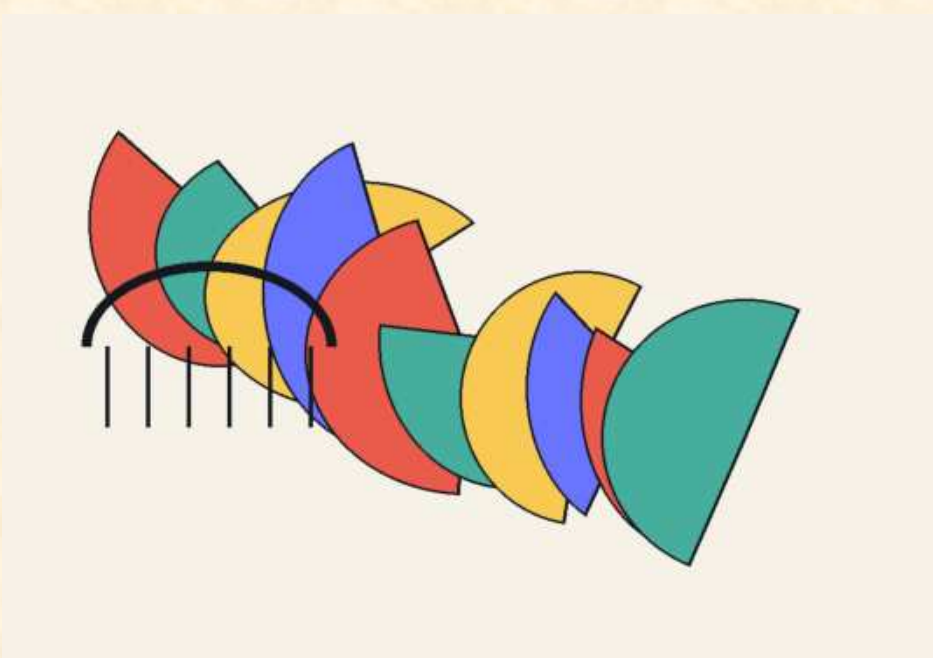
When she rose from sleep Aastha was astonished.

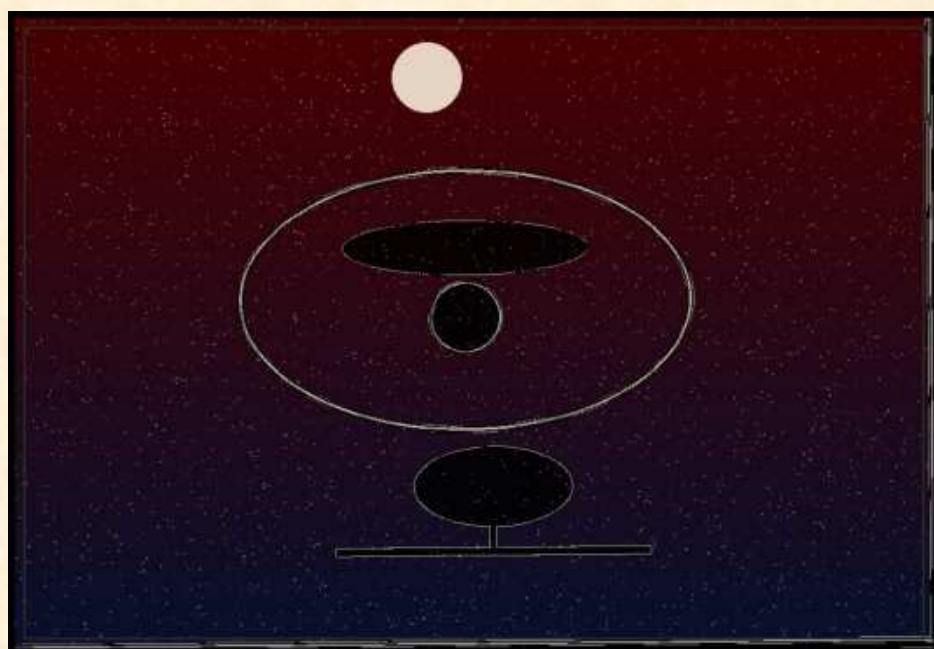
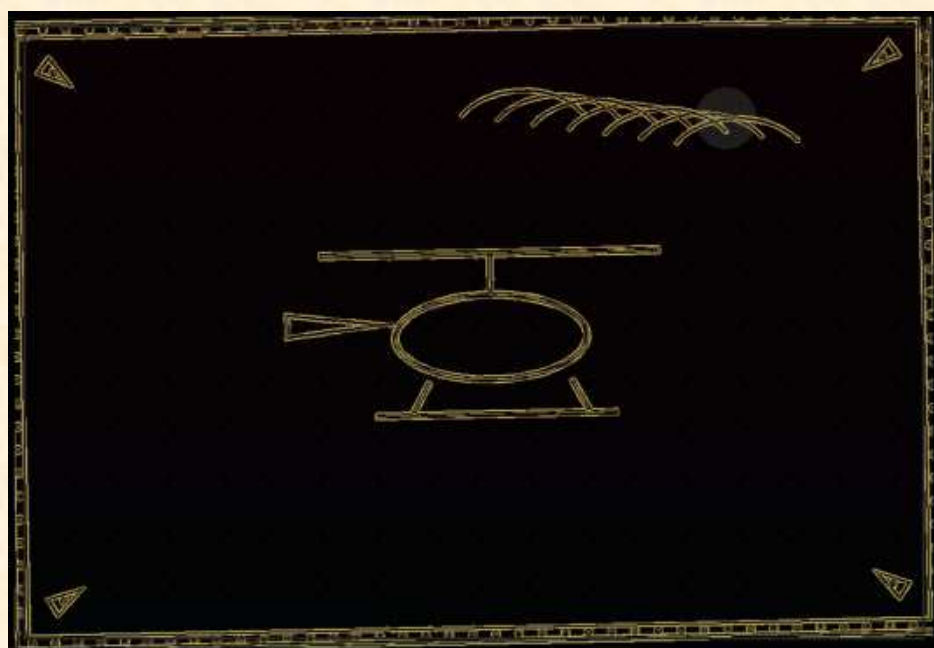
Whatever she had done in the dream was before her when she woke! "In this fairyland do the deeds done in dreams while sleeping become true as well?"

In her dream Aastha had seen that she went out through the hollow and brought a great deal of things from home, climbed into a helicopter, and slipped back into the hollow again — medicines, toys, an X-ray machine, knives, fruit, vessels, scales, wheels, screwdrivers, mirrors, crackers, cake and biscuits packed in boxes... and a helicopter! In the dream she had left all those things in the helicopter and come here — only a little of the vessels, fruit, cake, and biscuits she had brought with her. All of that now lay before her in the chamber.

Turacos, the mamba, the Eskimo, the butterfly, the dragonfly, Kookaburra, and the penguin — all seven came into the welcome hall. Turacos looked at Aastha with eyes wide in wonder and said, "We have all received the queen's order. In this land the work done in dreams becomes true, Aastha. That is why the queen of this place summons every kind of creature from every continent of

the world — they all bring a great many goods here in their dreams."







Picture 20

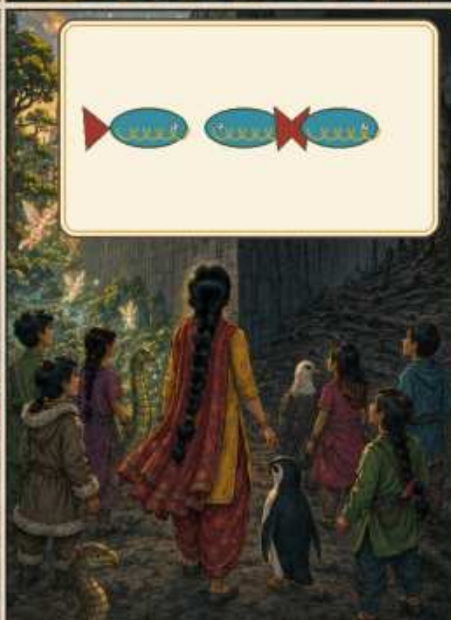
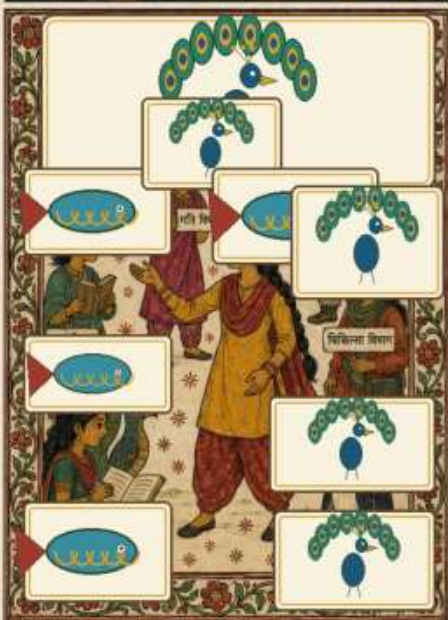


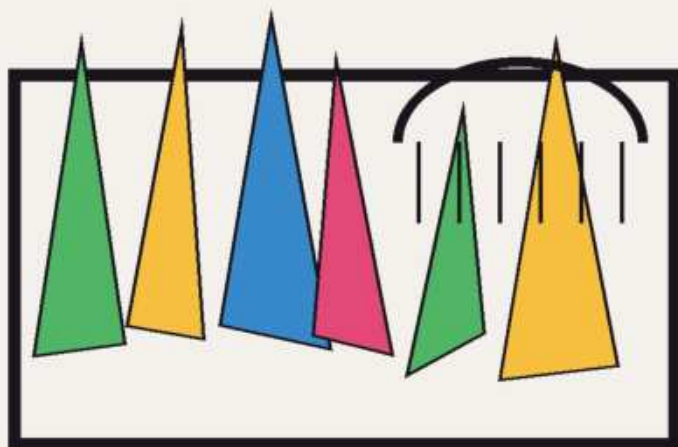
The biscuit slipped from Aastha's hand. So that was why the hollows of the eight continents! That was why "people like you are needed"! This fairyland does not call guests — it calls the dreams of guests.

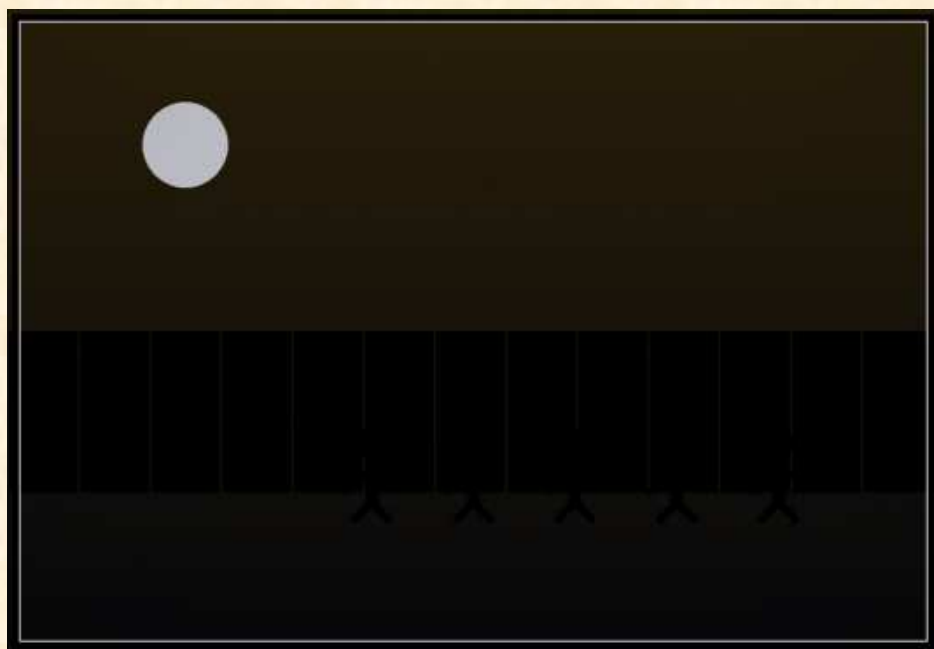
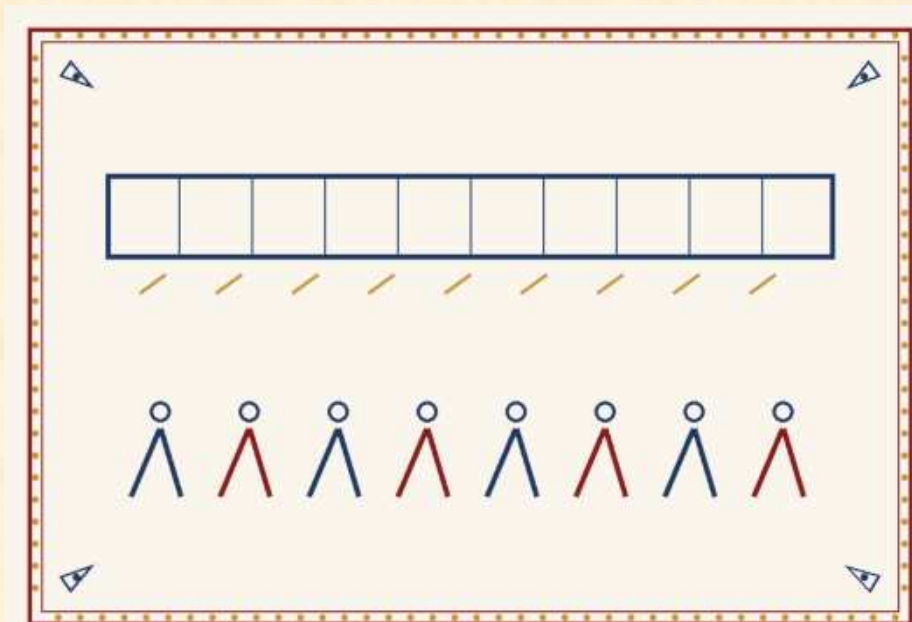
In his heavy hissing voice the mamba asked, "What else have you brought, Aastha, and where have you put it?" Aastha spoke, remembering, "Yes... I had brought a helicopter, and I took it over there." "Over there? You mean beyond the wall?" "Yes."

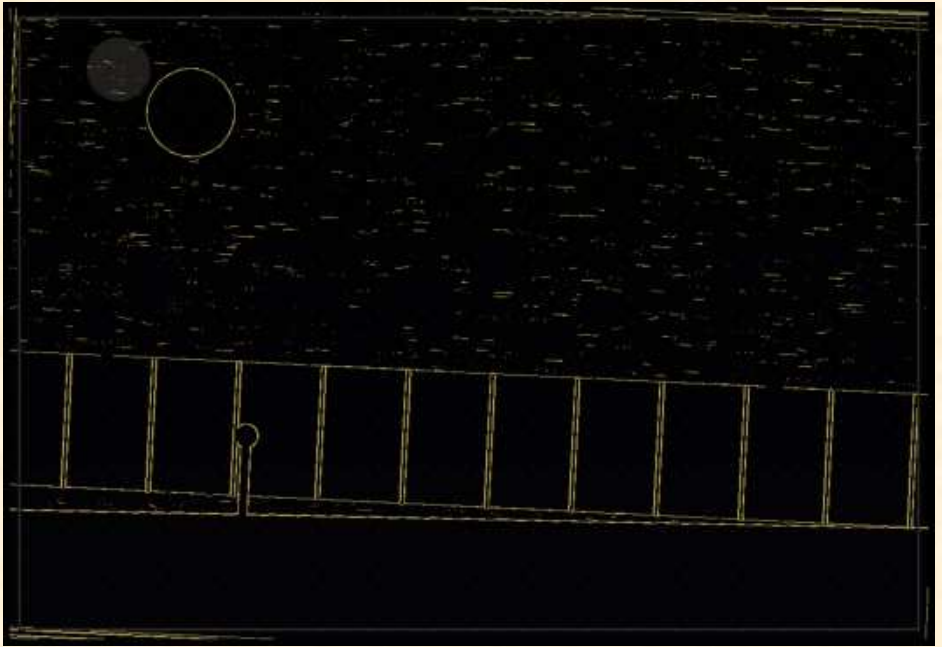
All seven began to look at one another's faces. And Kookaburra — who until a moment ago had been laughing khee-khee — for the first time looked worried and grave. "Come quickly, Aastha! Come quickly beyond the wall! Those one or two trees that have learned to walk — let them not do something dreadful with this helicopter!" — Kookaburra is always laughing; but when he grows serious, know that real trouble is coming.

Chapter 11: The Thousand-Kilometre Run









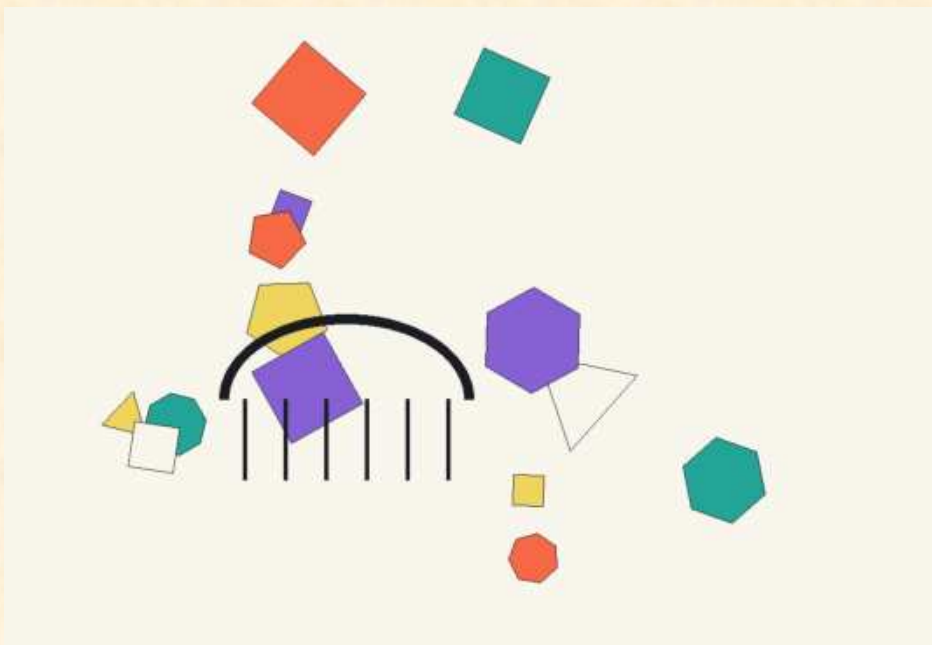
Picture 21

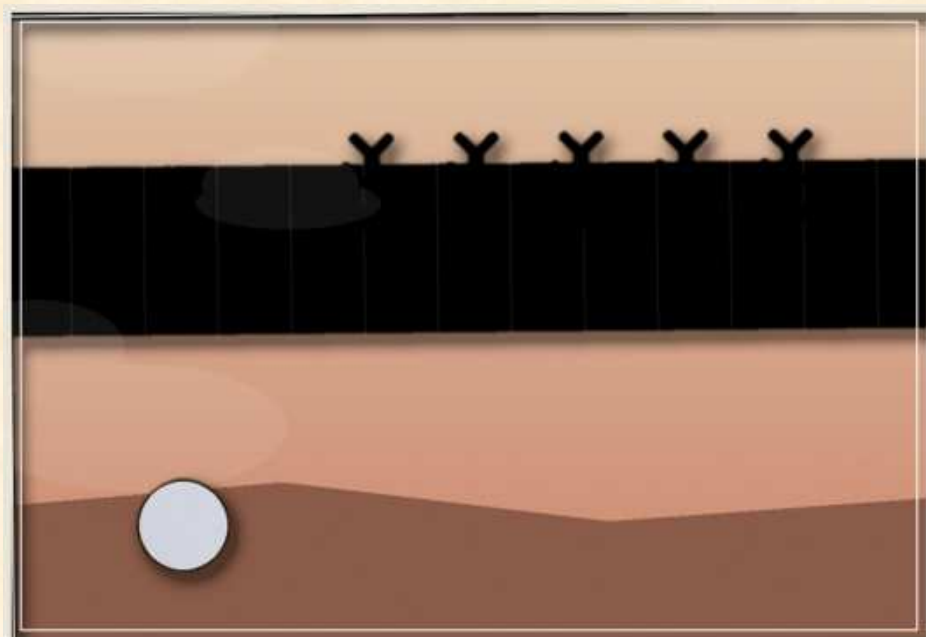
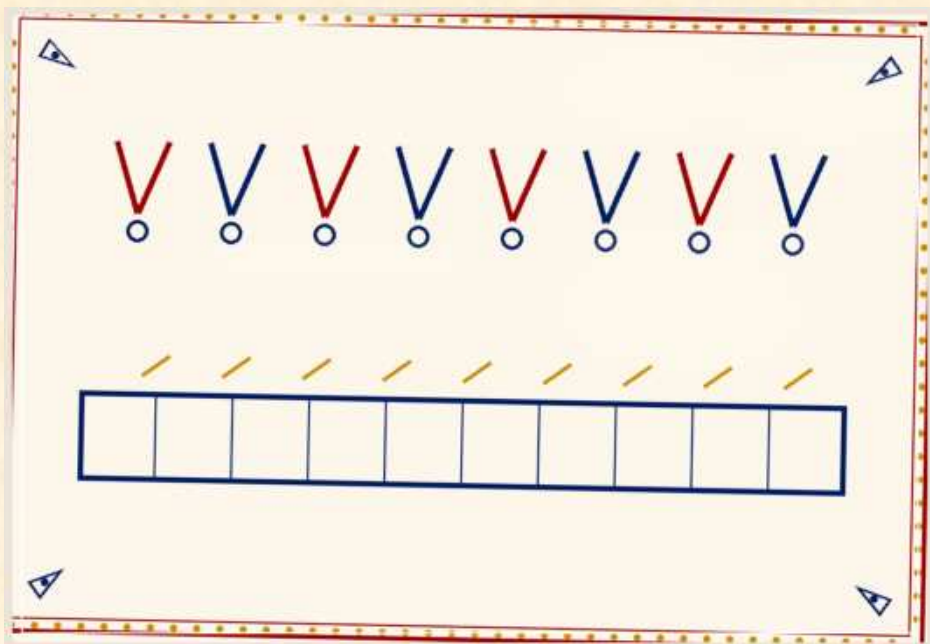


The moment they left the welcome hall the eight of them ran onto a road like a bypass. Aastha felt that everyone's speed must be a thousand kilometres an hour — when walking was a hundred kilometres, running must be a thousand; the sum was right. Beside them the beds of fairyland streamed past as coloured bands.

As she ran, questions ran in Aastha's mind too: What will a walking tree do with a helicopter? Is it wicked, or only curious — like herself? And why will all these stop it, when it has itself fled from this land?

After an hour Kookaburra hopped up into the sky above their heads — a signal to slow down. Everyone grew slow; the run changed with a jolt to a walk, the walk with a jolt to an easy pace. And ahead — the Northern Wall. High, grey, endless. On one side the glittering land of seven colours; on the other... silence.







Picture 22



"How shall we go beyond?" Aastha asked. And all seven burst out laughing together. The Eskimo said, "Turacos lives with the scientists of the violet bed, the mamba in the indigo military department, I in the blue school, the butterfly in the green plant laboratory, the dragonfly in the yellow hospital, Kookaburra in the orange laboratory, the penguin in the red row. Going beyond has been taught to us all."

And each spoke of their own task: the butterfly —

"Beyond, the plants are like manure; I shall experiment and try to control the activity of the runaway plants."

Turacos — "I shall not let the technology of the helicopter and other machines fall into the hands of that

extraordinary but unstable-minded plant." The dragonfly

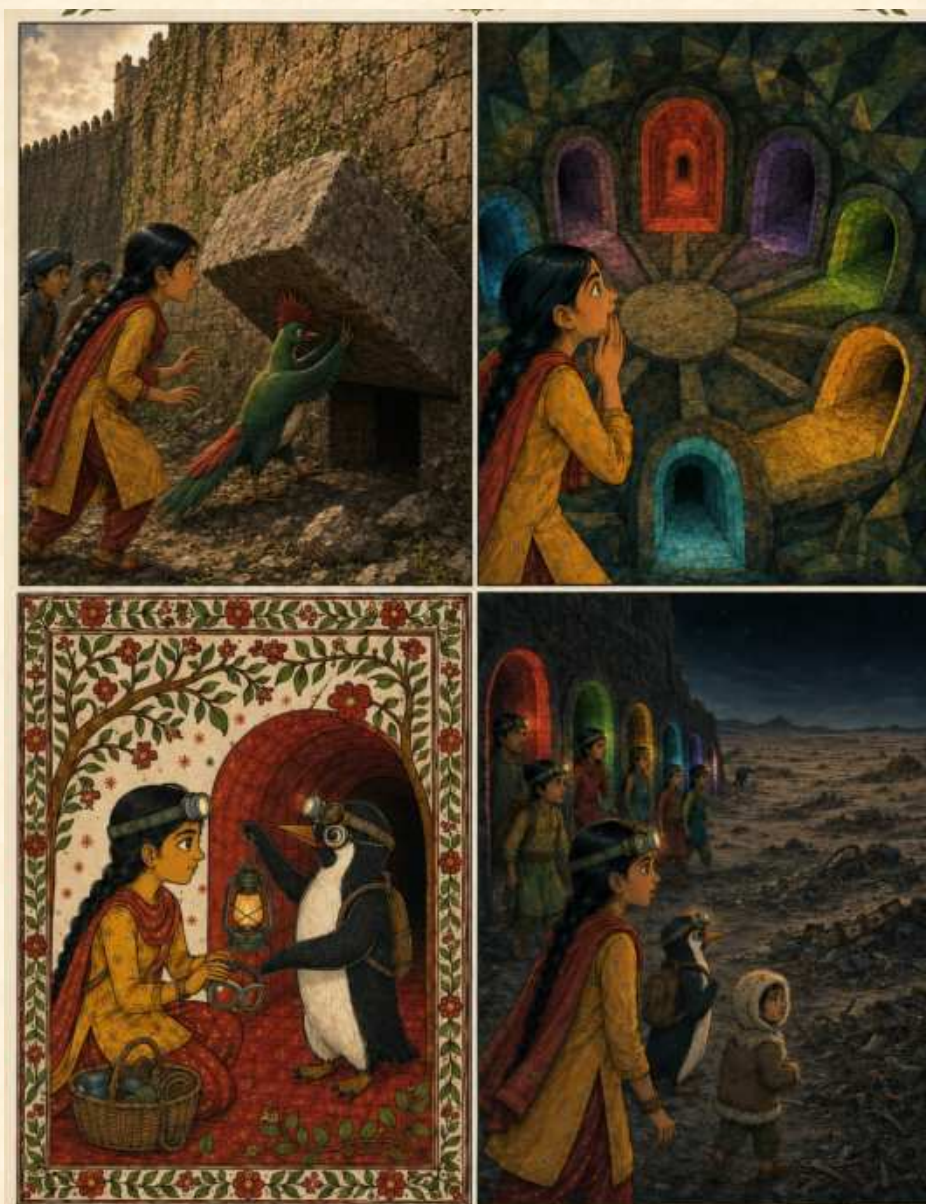
— "I shall see that its traits do not spread among goods,

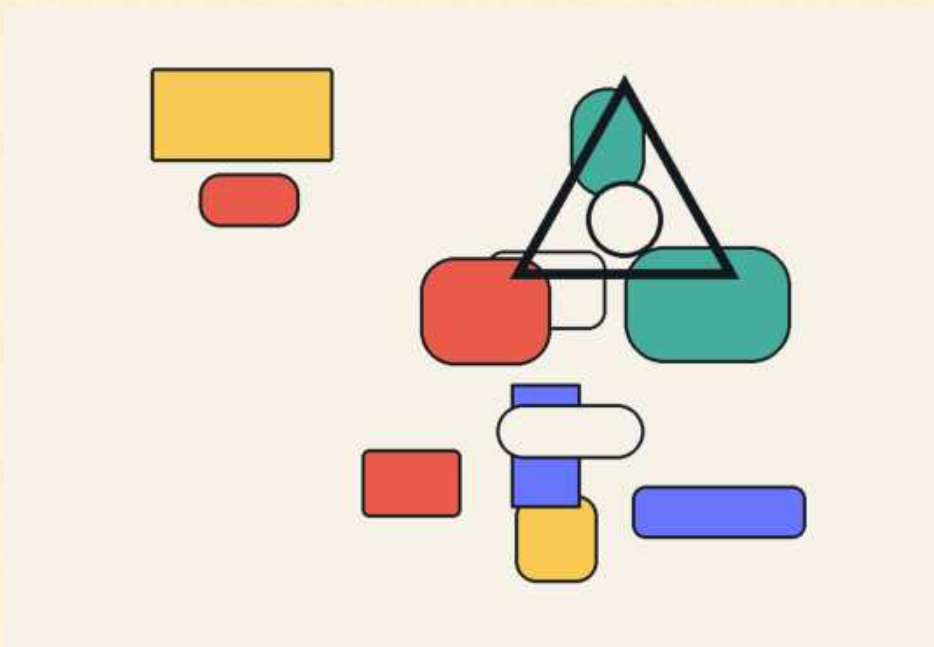
humans, and fairies." The penguin — "The queen has sent me to the red row to stop infection and attack. No one has yet met the queen — but a message had come."

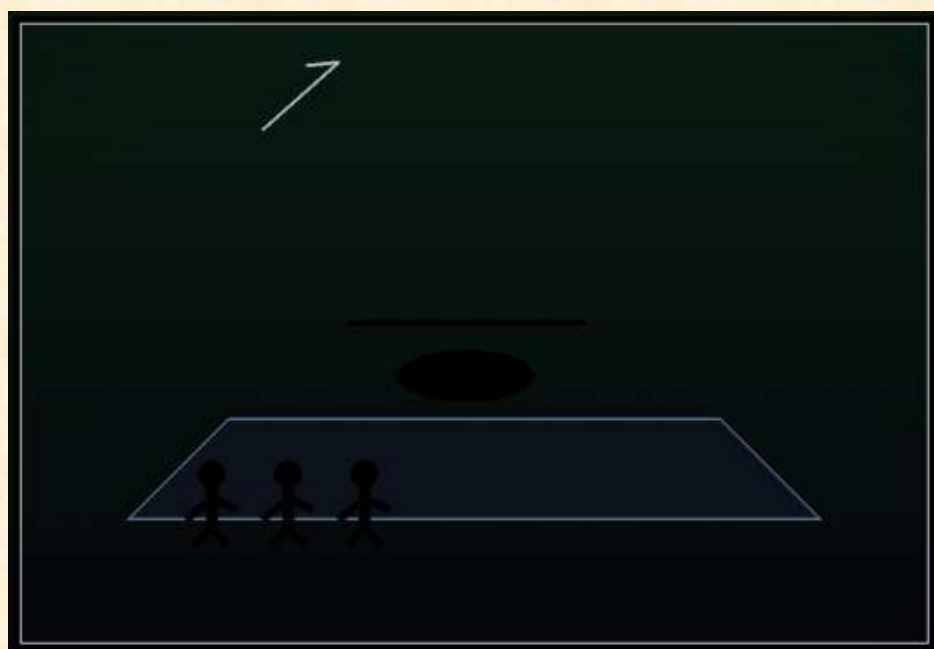
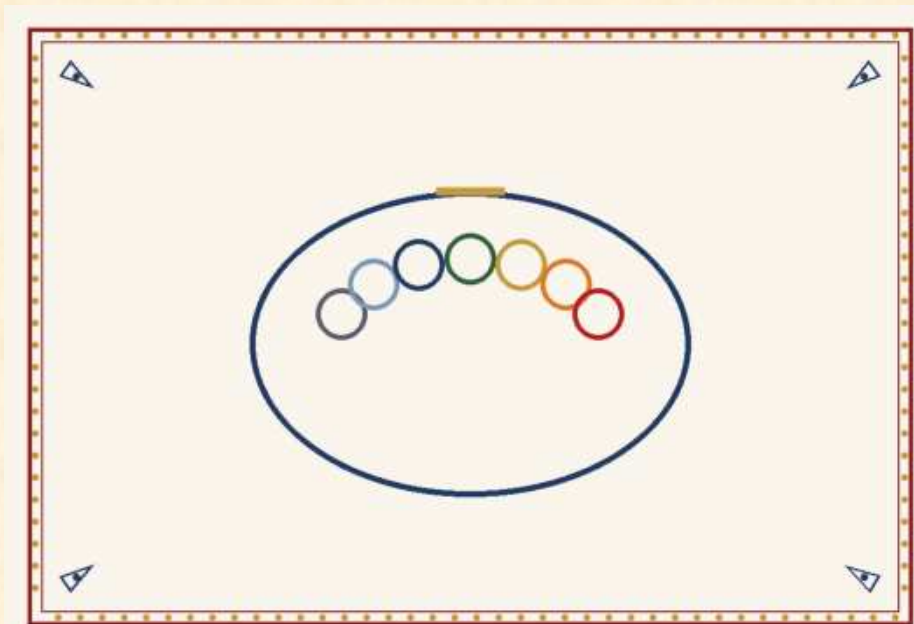
No one has yet met the queen. — That sentence stuck like a thorn in Aastha's mind. Everyone obeys the queen's orders, the wall stands in the queen's name, the desert

was made in the queen's name — and no one has seen the queen?

Chapter 12: A Hollow Within a Hollow









Picture 23

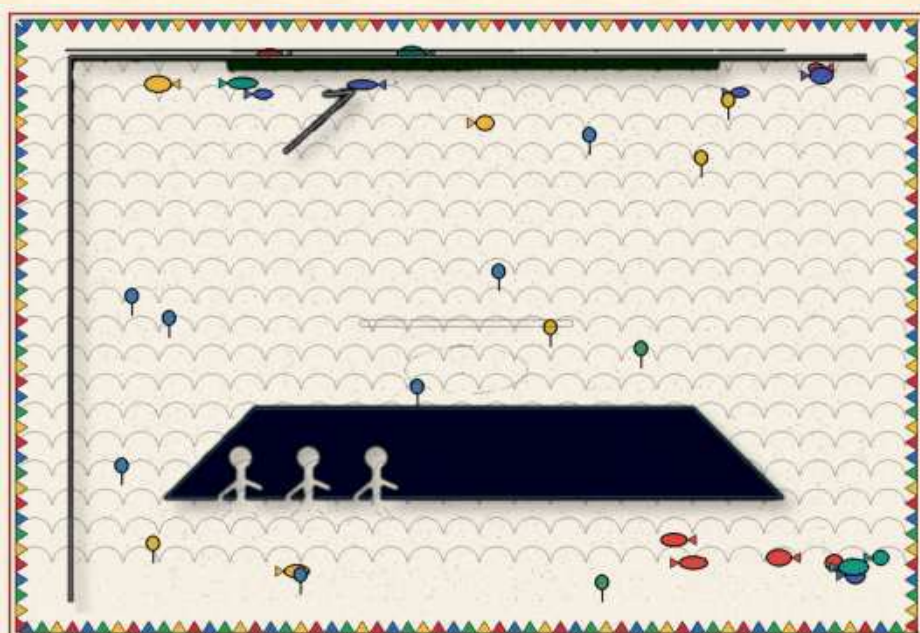
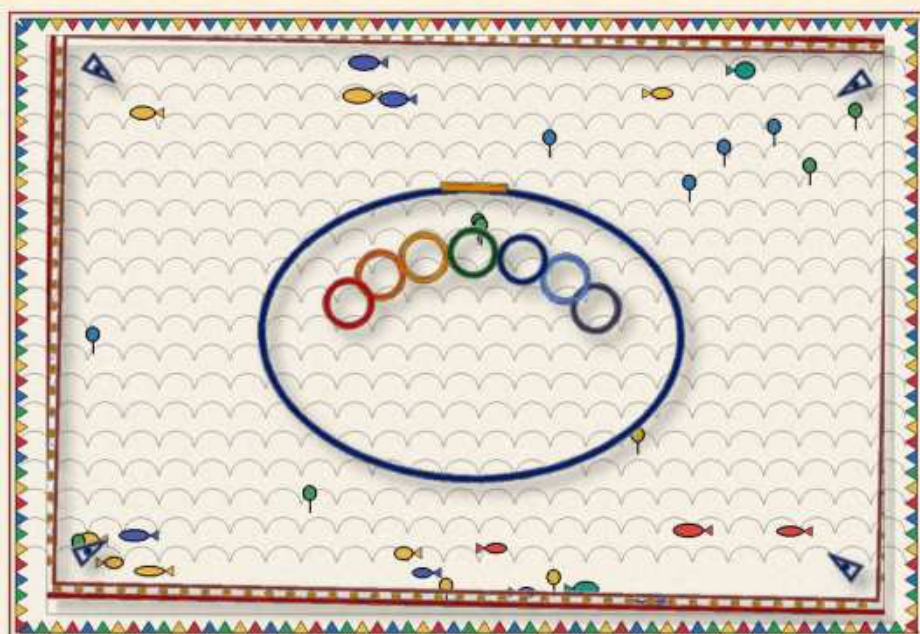


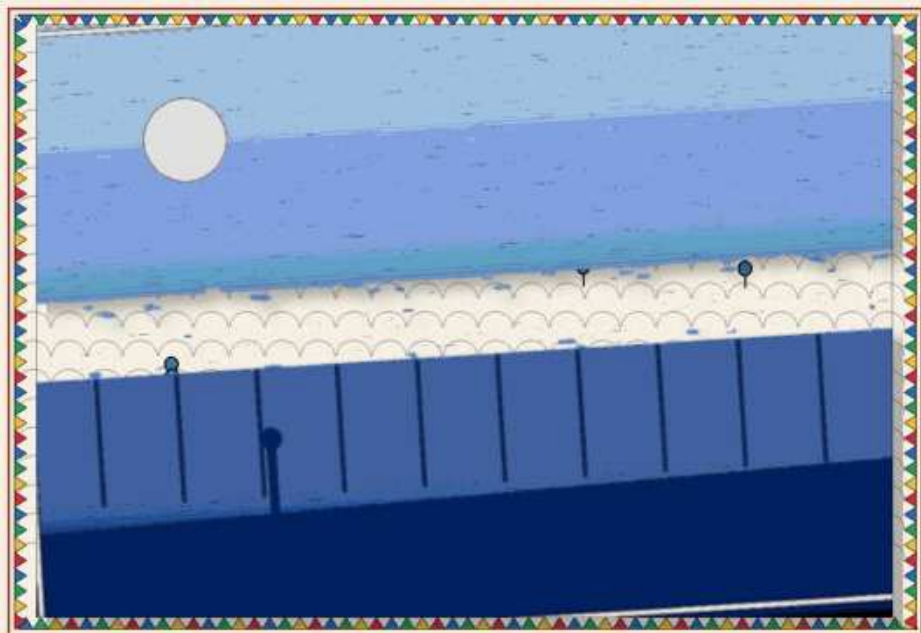
Turacos went forward and stood by a secret hollow-door at the foot of the wall. With one finger he lifted a great stone — in this land even weight was a game. And what appeared below filled Aastha with wonder — "A hollow within a hollow!"

Inside the hollow there were exactly seven hollows — seven secret doors of seven colours. Turacos went into violet, the mamba into indigo, the Eskimo into blue, the butterfly into green, the dragonfly into yellow, Kookaburra into orange. The penguin signed to Aastha and both went down into the red hollow.

As they went down the penguin said, "Just as a night-walker roams at night and is blinded by day, so to go beyond the wall we need special equipment — only then can we see in the dark, and enter the mind of that walking plant and understand what it wants to do with the helicopter."







Picture 24

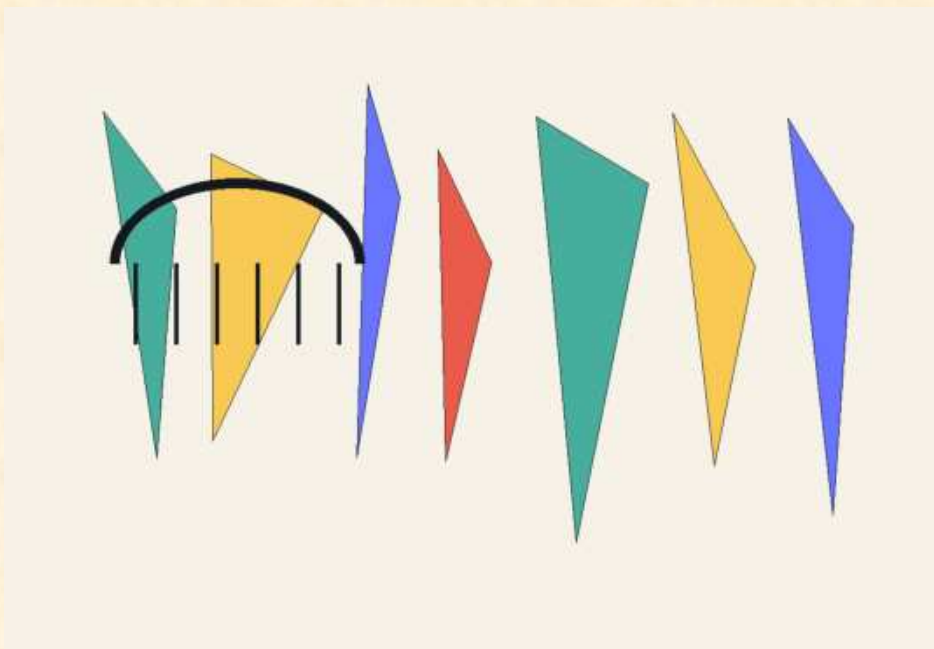


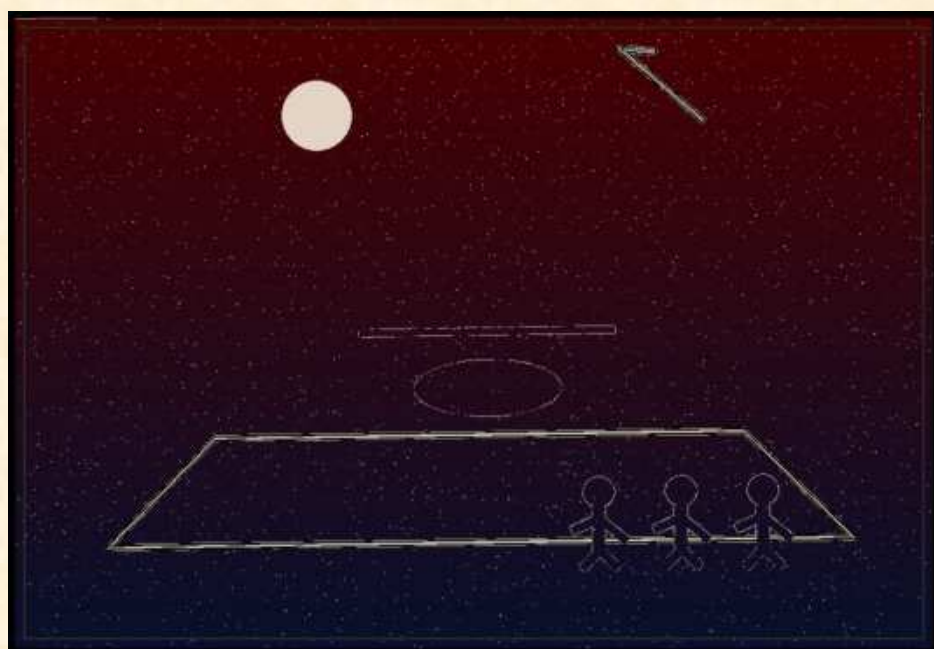
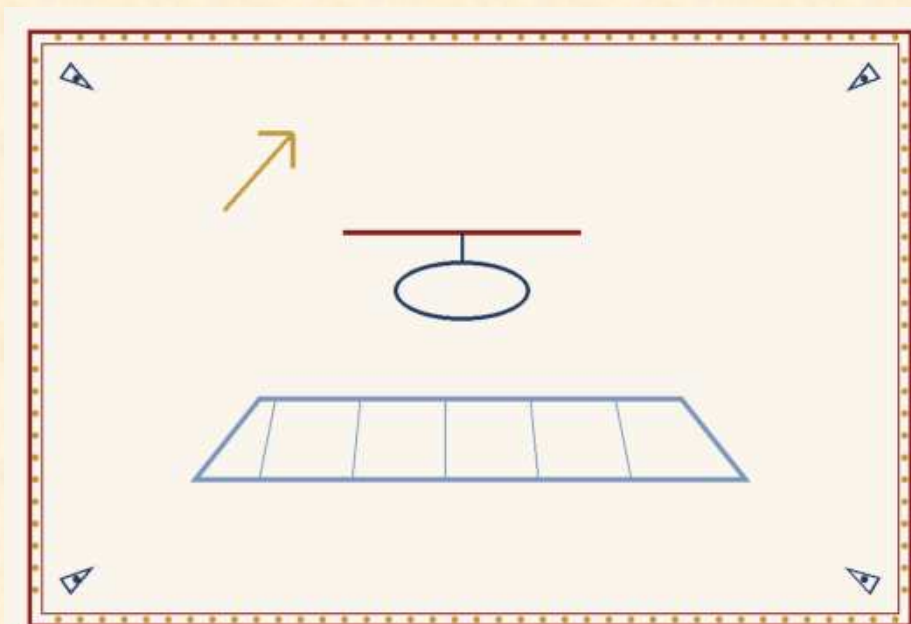
Aastha and the penguin put on special clothes and safety gear and came out through the secret path of the hollow; over there the other six came through their own coloured doors. And what lay ahead was the heaviest sight of this whole journey.

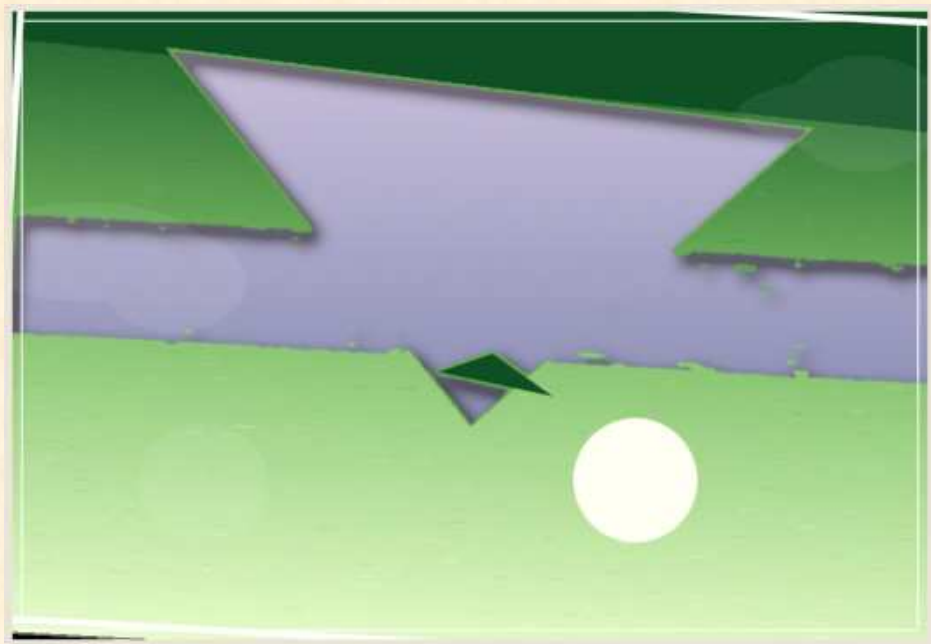
In the dark beyond the wall everything was empty. No colour, no leaf, no sound. As far as the eye (now the eye with special equipment) could reach — sand, and over the sand an old silence spread. Two faces of one land: on this side the rainbow's rows, on that the heaps of thrown-away rubbish. For the first time Aastha's heart ached not for this fairyland, but for this desert.

Chapter 13: Search in the Dark









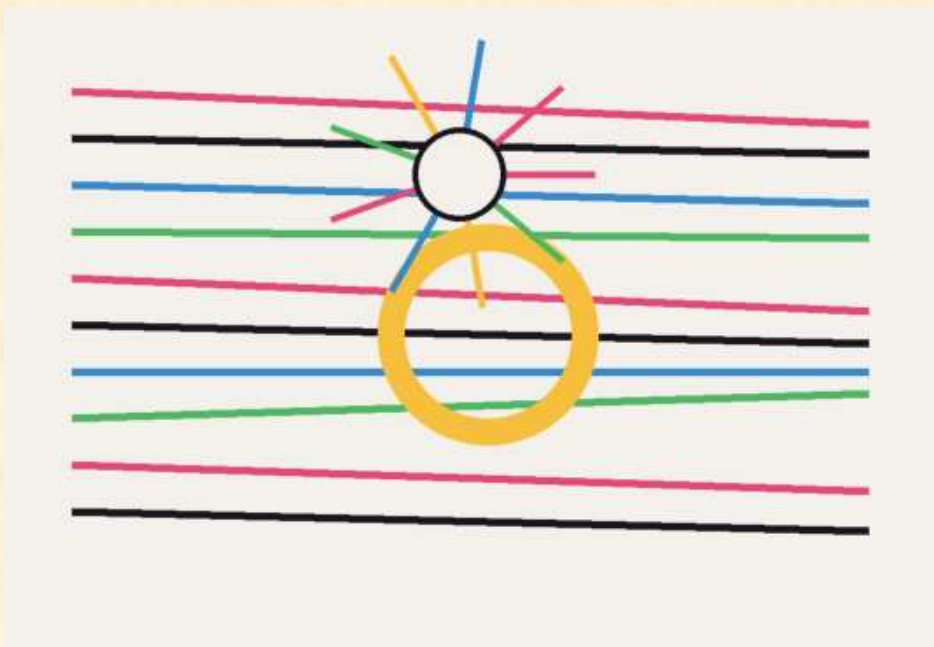
Picture 25

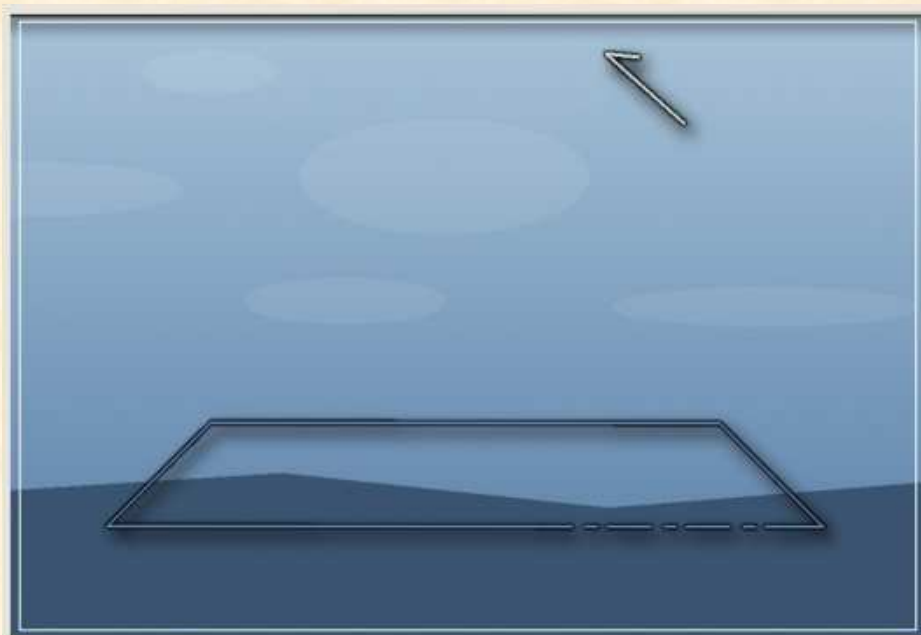
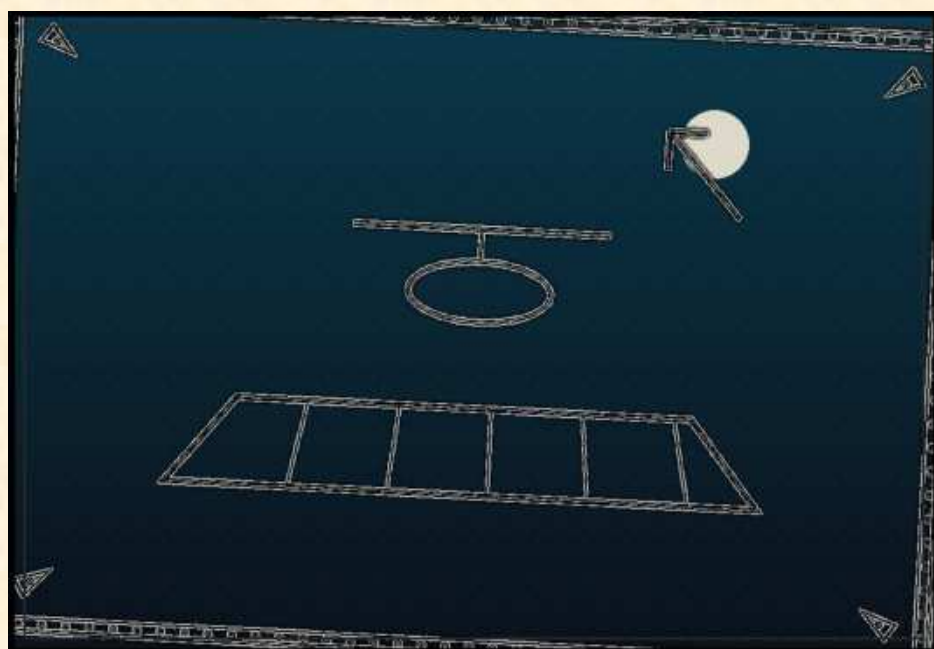


Turacos said, "Aastha, tell us a little more about the technical points of the helicopter." And Aastha, like a ten-year-old engineer, explained to them all: "It has a ladder for climbing in and out. When it lands it comes down on its own strong frame — even if it drops with a bang there is no damage. In some ways it is better than an aeroplane — with the help of a special engine and fan it flies straight up, comes straight down; it need not run. And it runs on a special fuel."

Kookaburra grew grave, and with him everyone grew grave. Pointing northeast Aastha said, "In the dream it seemed the lightning-thing had fallen that way — where the sand had melted and turned to glass." "Then come," said Kookaburra, "for when we can run a thousand kilometres an hour, this helicopter will fly here at a speed of lakhs of kilometres. That plant can copy its fuel, engine, fan — everything. Come!"

And at the word "Come" everyone ran. Several hours passed — sand and sand everywhere. After seven hours, in that dark, a gleaming glass platform came into view. And standing there — the helicopter of Aastha's dream.







Picture 26

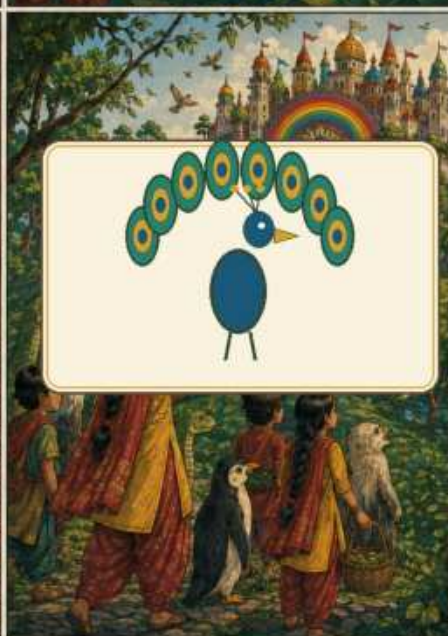
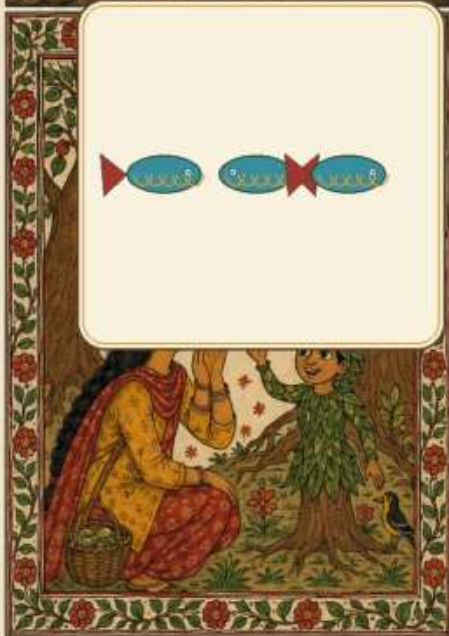
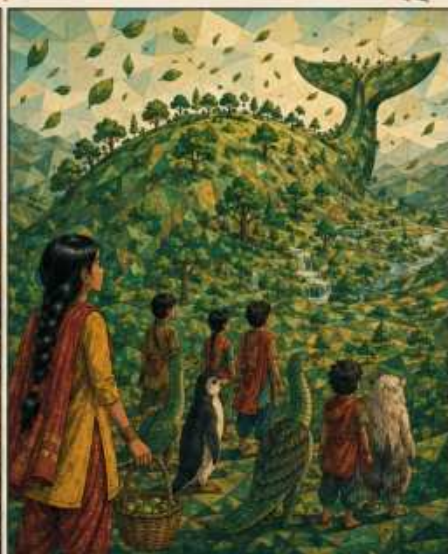
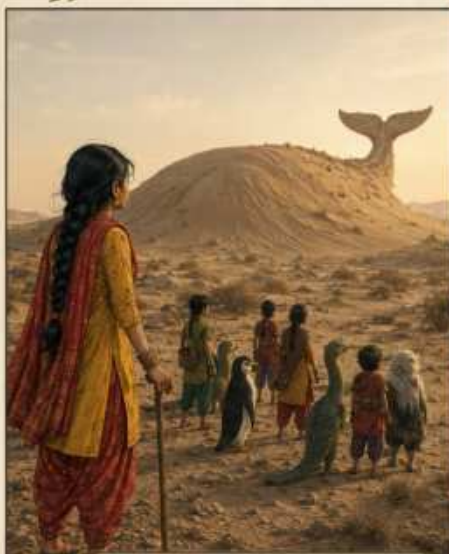


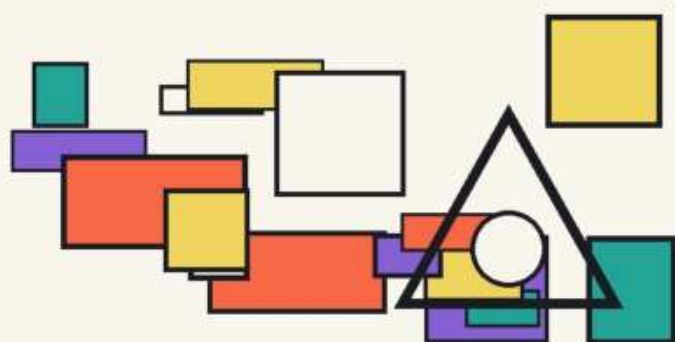
But as they drew near Aastha's breath caught. "The landing frame is gone from this! The ladder is gone! The gate has been opened — and someone has examined all these things with a deep, sharp eye." Someone had reached before them in the dark — and that "someone" was now somewhere nearby.

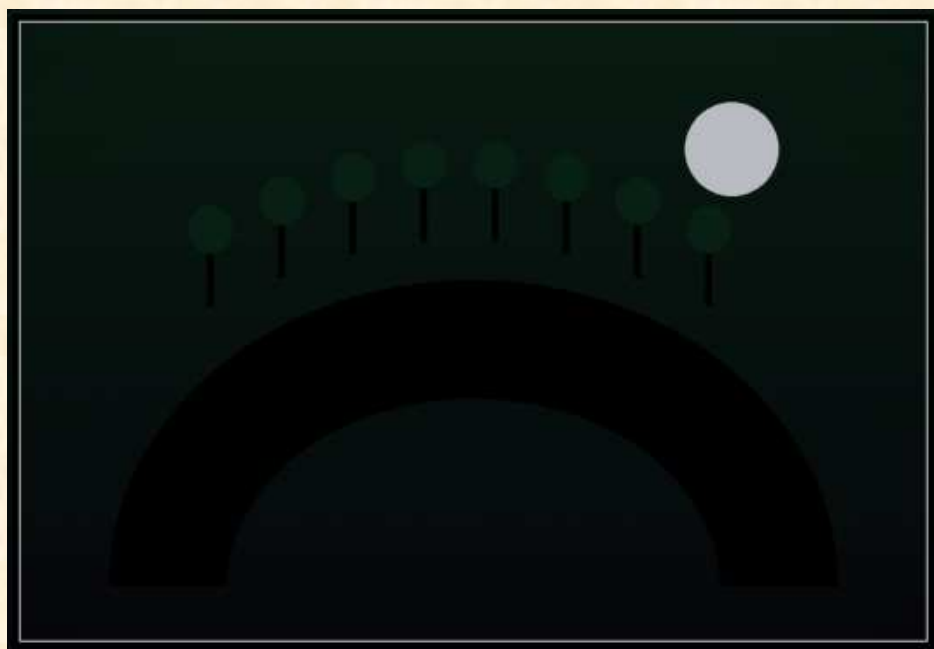
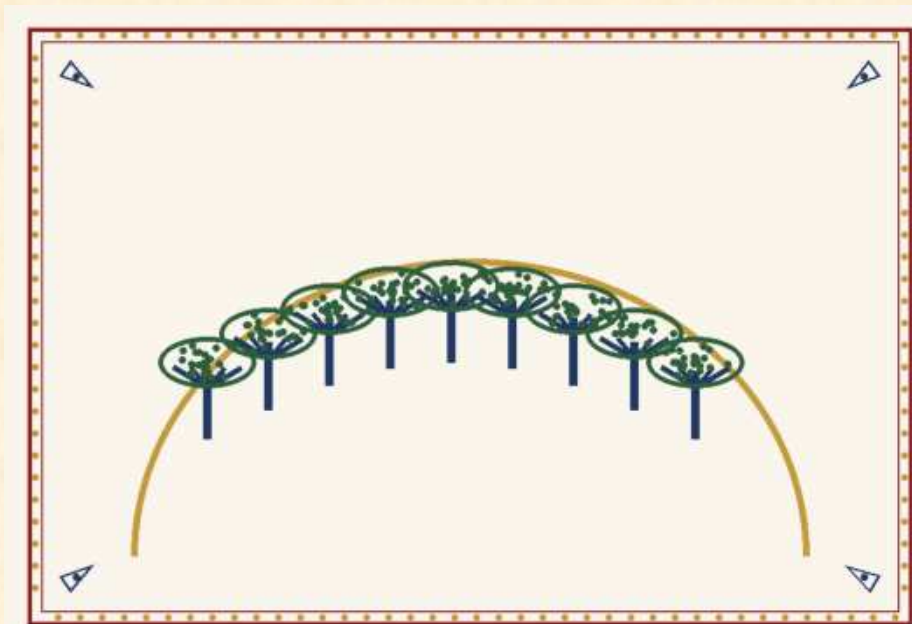
Just then the butterfly and the dragonfly came buzzing — "A wave is coming, over the sand!" "From which direction?" "Northwest!" Everyone ran, then stopped at the signal of the butterfly and dragonfly. The sound of the desert — sometimes frightening, sometimes like a tune of music — and between those two a third sound.

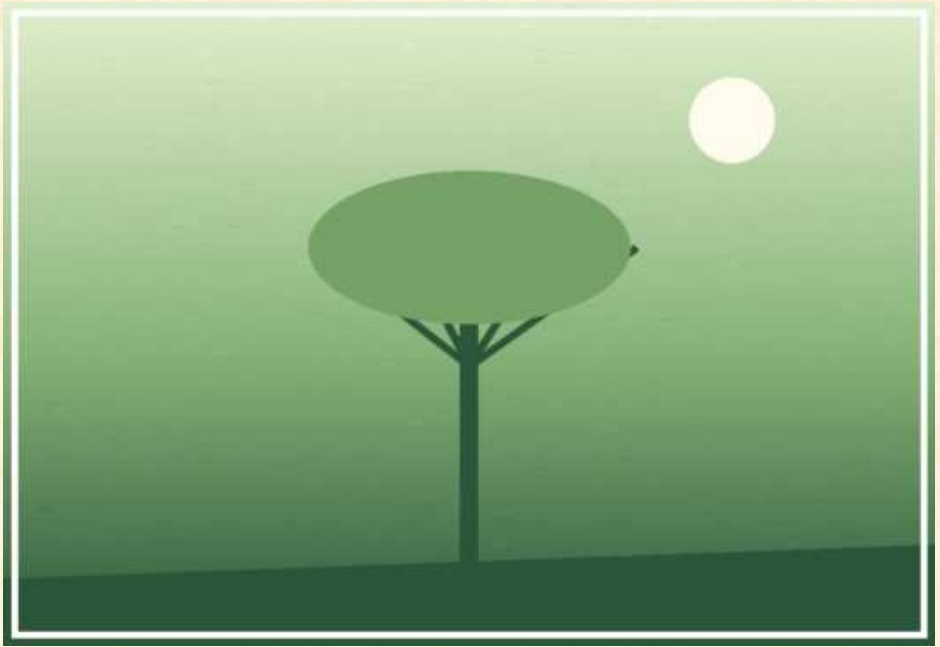
The butterfly said, "From the sand-hill like a whale's back all kinds of sounds are coming. The walking plant must be at work there." "Where is that hill?" "Northeast." And everyone ran again — into the belly of the dark, to meet a creature that was a tree and yet no longer a tree.

Chapter 14: Greenery on the Whale's Back









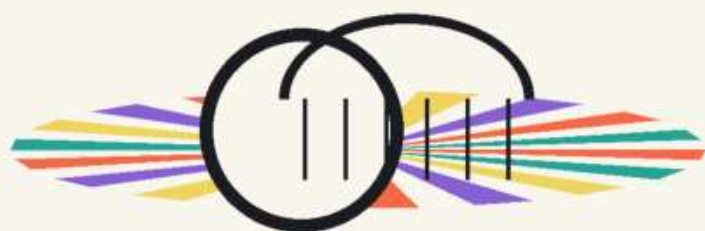
Picture 27

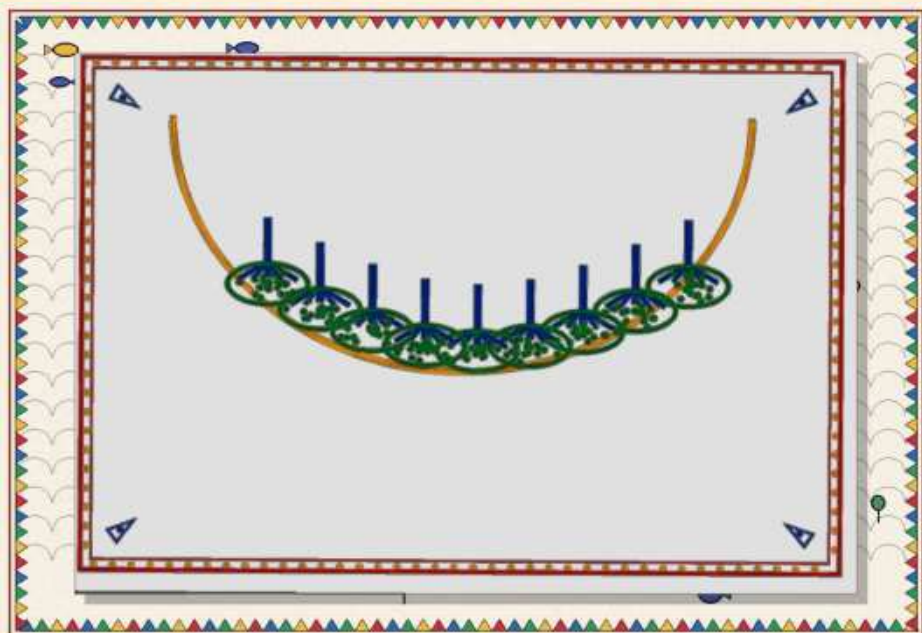


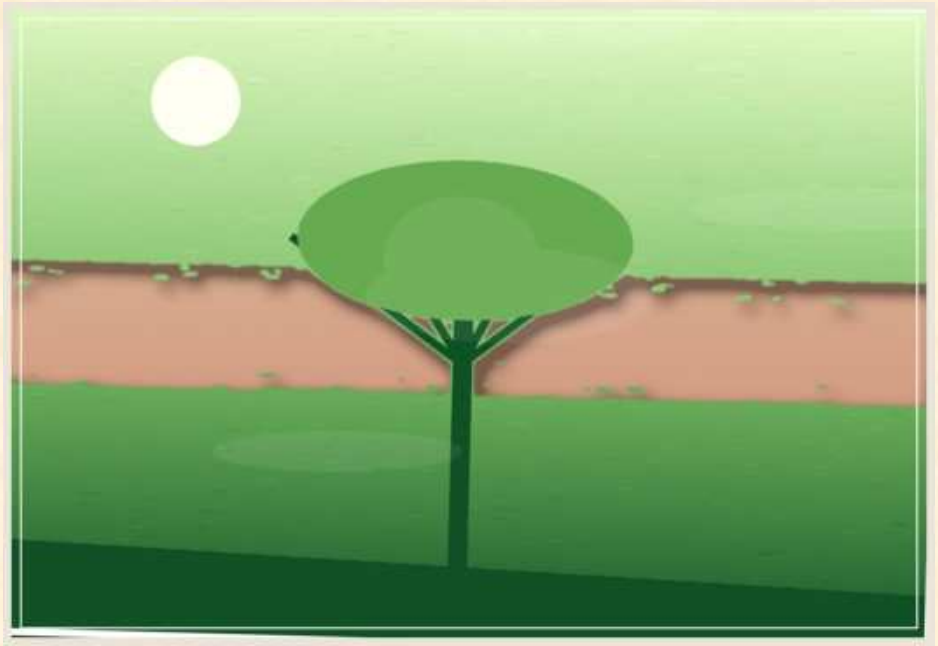
After seven or eight hours it came into view from afar — a thick sand-hill like a whale's back. Turacos warned them, "Now take care. Here when the little hills fly up they become hollows — feet can sink." "Like a bog?" Aastha asked. Kookaburra laughed khee-khee. "No, not like that. You sink to the knee; with effort the foot comes out. Only do not panic."

And when they climbed the hill, what they saw their eyes could not believe — in the heart of the desert, on the whale's back, trees and greenery were spread on every side! Green, living, leaves stirring. In that same dark land where rubbish was thrown by the queen's order, someone had planted a grove.

Turacos said in a low voice, "This is the handiwork of the walking plant. In a few days these trees too will begin to walk." There was warning in his voice, but in Aastha's eyes there was something else — this "handiwork" was the handiwork of making a home of the desert!







Picture 28

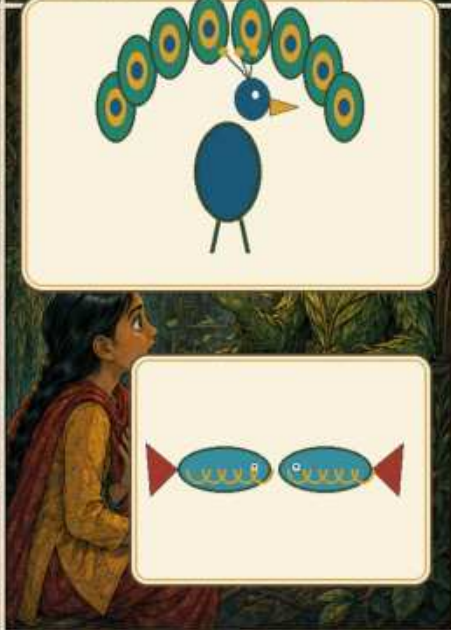


Just then the nearby plants began to greet Aastha. It seemed incredible to her — beyond the wall (that is, in fairyland) the leaves of the trees did not even stir, and the trees of this "dark land" speak so well, stir their leaves, and make welcome!

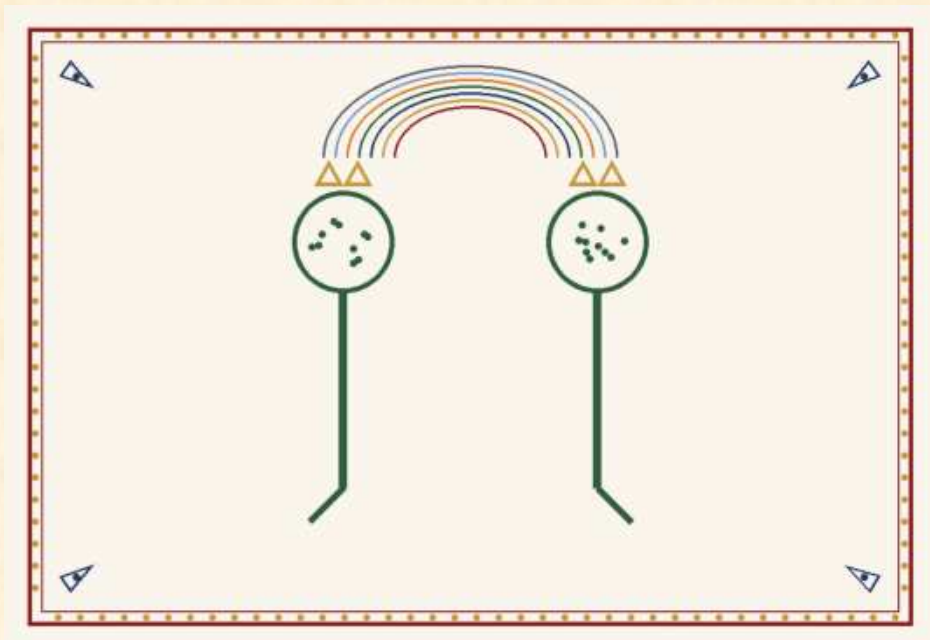
Aastha asked a tree, "Where is the walking plant who came from beyond the wall?" A little child-tree said, "Near the tail of the whale's back is their palace — a rainbow palace, where the rainbow falls down from the sky. They are king over us all."

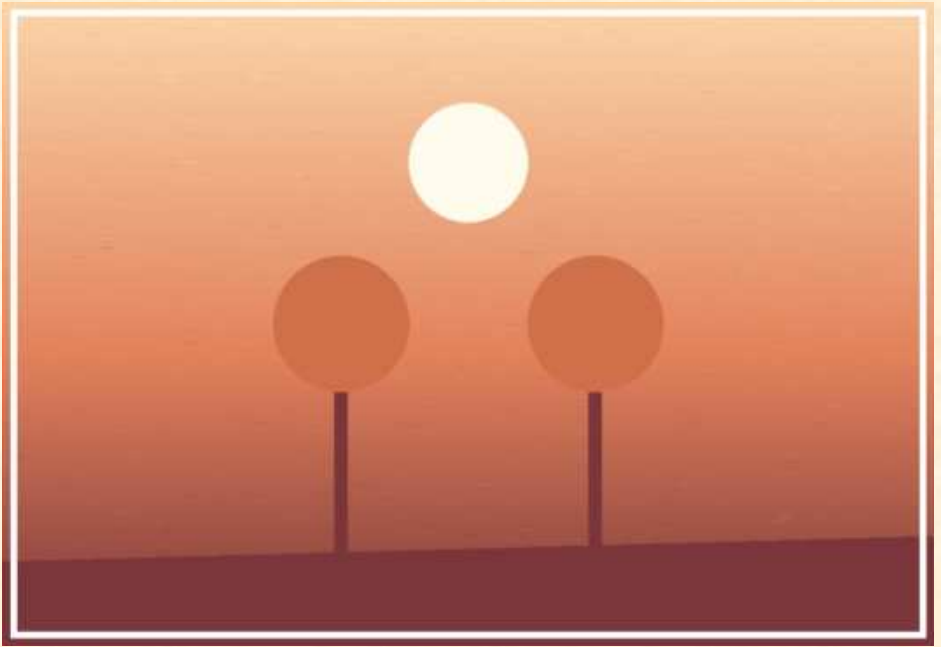
"Will it be right to go there?" — all seven asked Aastha, as if by chance this little girl had become the leader of the band. Aastha answered, "Why not? If talk can be had in friendship, what need of a quarrel?" And the eight of them went on over the whale's back — toward the rainbow gate, where the tail of the hill went down and ended.

Chapter 15: The Truth of the Two Kings









Picture 29



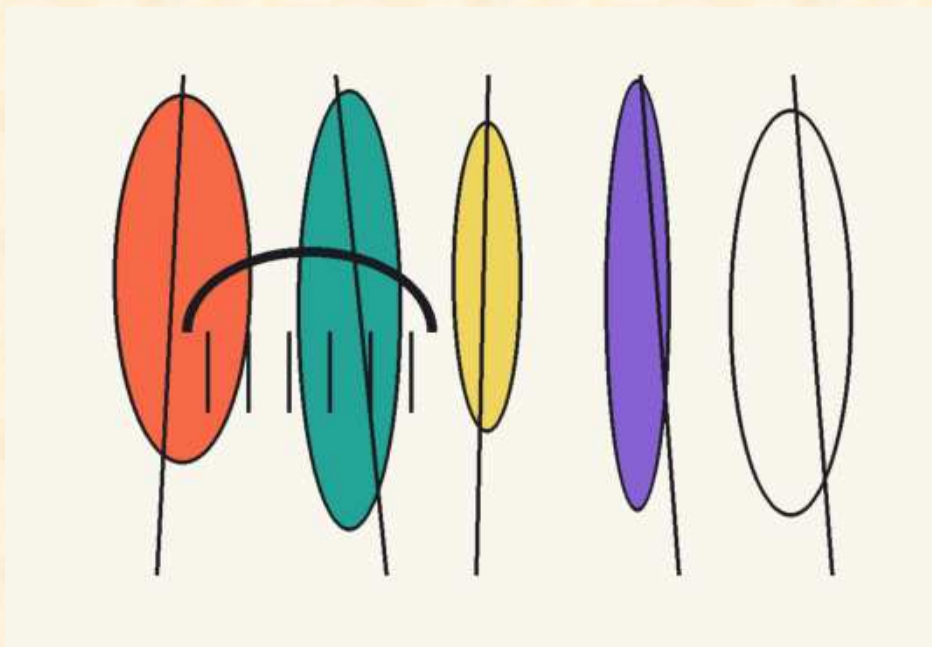
As they reached the rainbow door Kookaburra began to laugh khee-khee — and a strange gladness came upon everyone's face. In the welcome of this side there was no record, no number — a child of a walking tree came forward and led them all inside. Aastha felt that here people were thinking with the heart — not a machine, but the heart was at work.

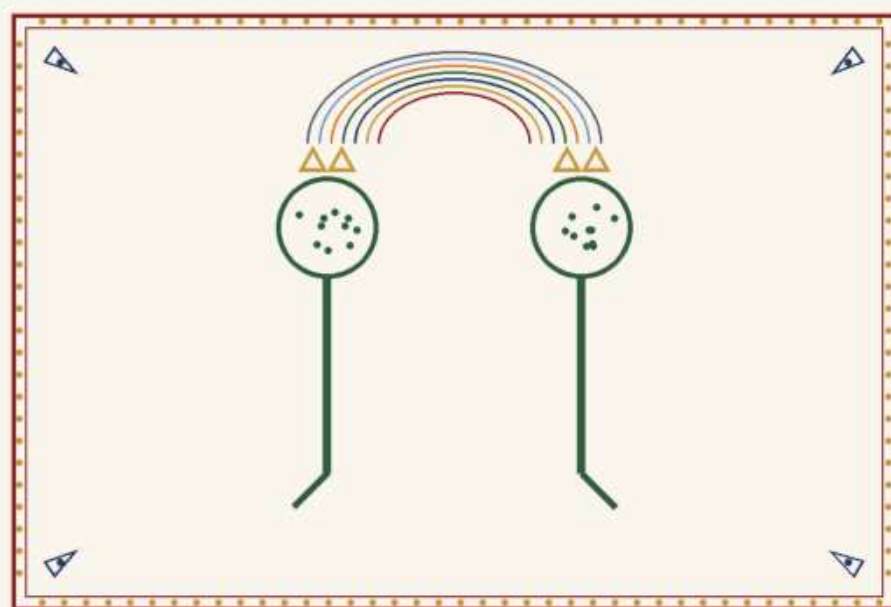
In the welcome chamber Aastha saw the food and drink she had brought in her dream. And then another wonder — she felt she could breathe! Here there was air; here there was hunger. She began to eat a biscuit, and for the first time she understood that feeling hungry is also one of the joys of being alive.

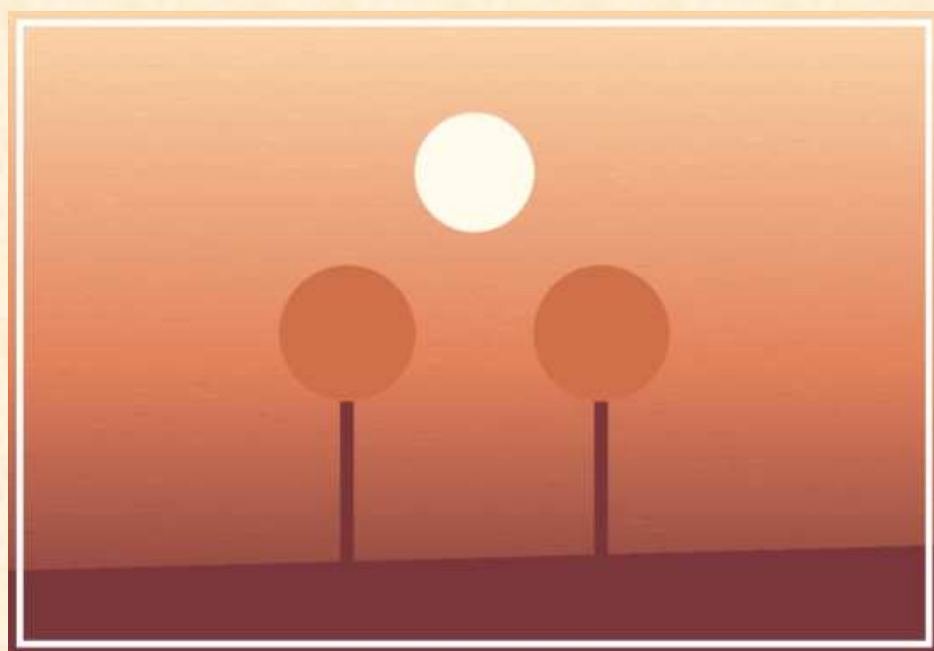
Outside the window, on the great field of glass melted by lightning, little helicopters like that one were flying and landing — walking-plant pilots were flying them. Aastha's technology had reached here — but not as a weapon: as a wing.

Then word came — "The two kings are coming to meet you." The two kings arrived — both plants, thinking and

walking. Aastha asked straight out, "Are you going to destroy the queen of fairyland? Are you going to destroy fairyland?"







Picture 30



What the two kings said in a quiet voice shifted the ground under Aastha's feet — "There is no fairyland, and there is no queen there either. Were you ever taken to meet the queen?" Aastha said, "No... that was never done."

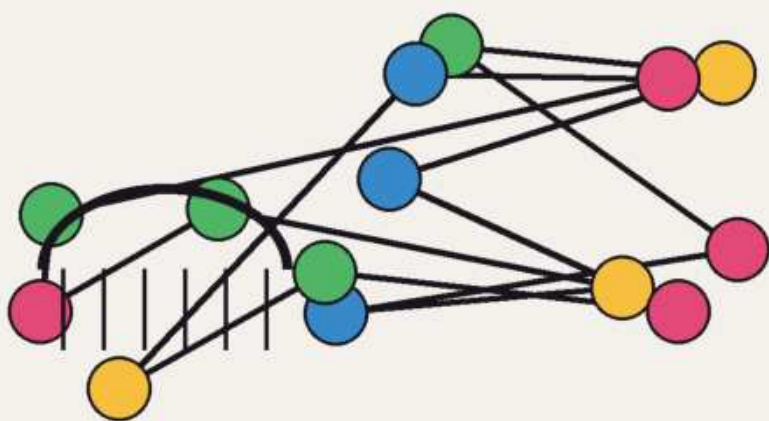
"There the rule of a few mad scientists has taken hold. When I learned of it I came over to this side of the wall. On that side they throw the remains of poisonous substances, and this region became a desert. But from our standing, life is spreading again. You chose talk, not war — I was watching that through a remote camera. This is only a parallel reform-house." — And in a little while the two kings went away, as if after speaking the truth someone sets down a burden.

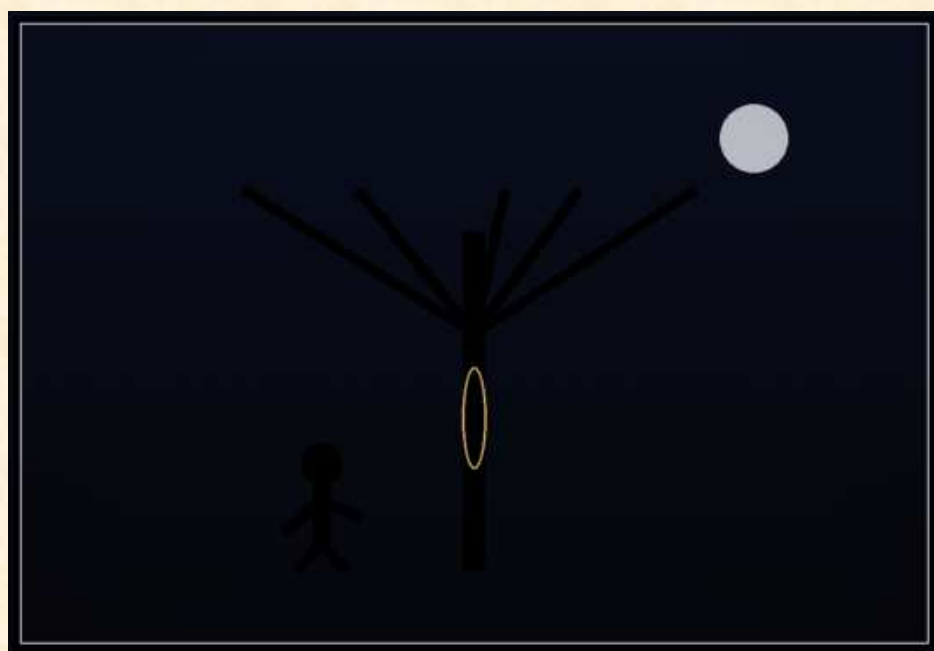
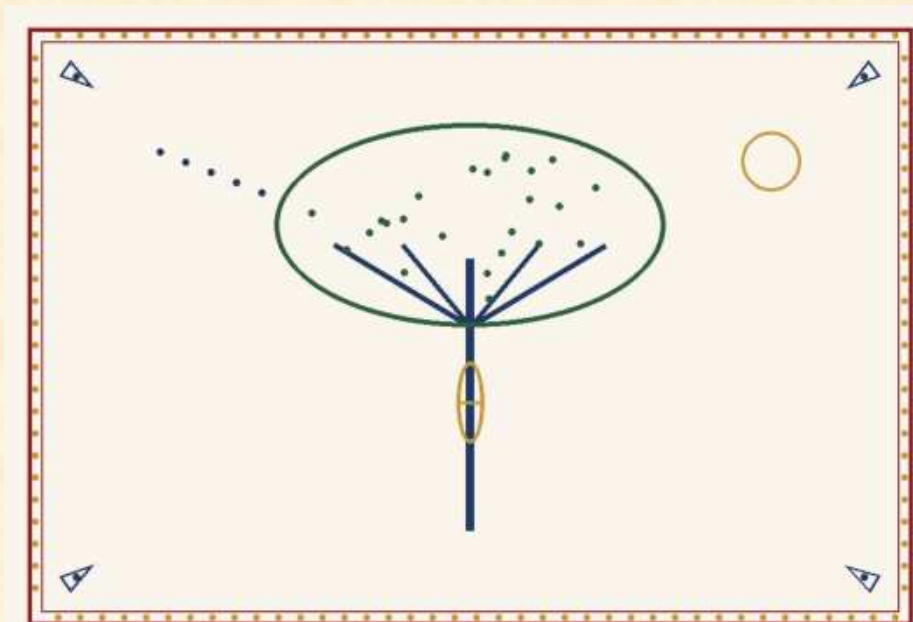
Aastha sat silent a long while. So what she had taken for fairyland was a sham — a rule without a queen, greenery without air, citizens without names. And what everyone feared as the "dark land" had breath, had hunger, had heart. Who was haunted — the grove, or the eyes of the people? Two tears fell from Aastha's eyes — not for herself, but for all those who had been left as numbers

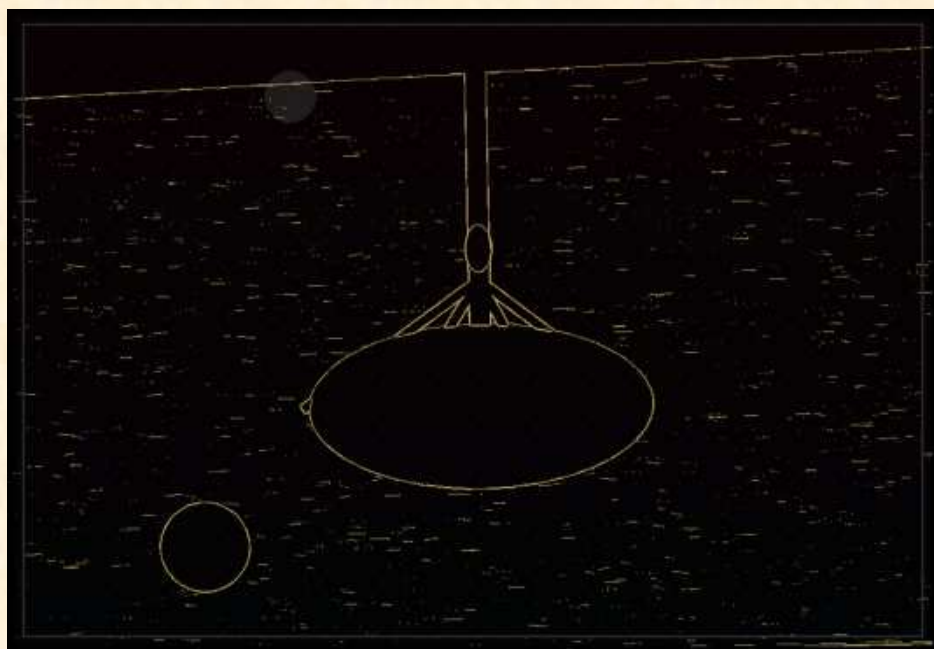
over there: Unicorn 99995745, and the one after, and the one after that.

Chapter 16: The Last Dream









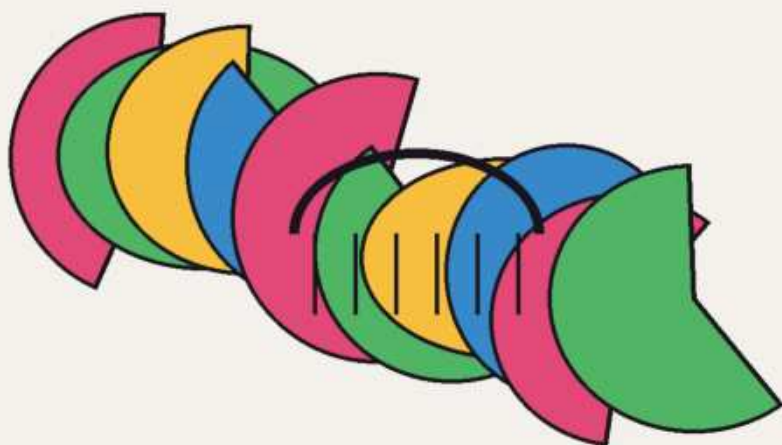
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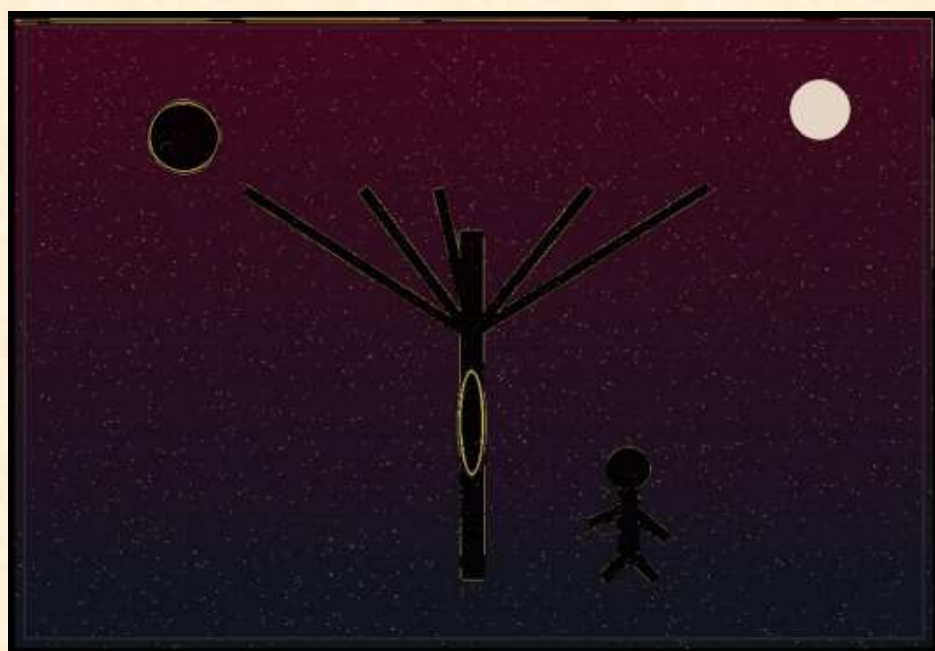
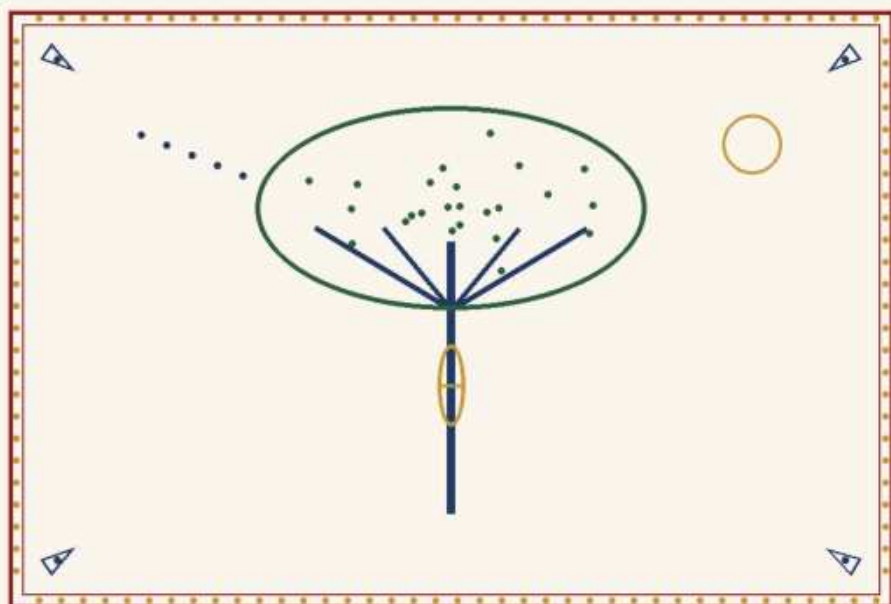


Sleep began to come to Aastha. She began to think — how can everyone leave this hollow sham of fairyland and the parallel reform-house? How can Turacos see his Africa, the Eskimo his never-night, the penguin his never-day?

And then she understood — the greatest power of this land was hers. Here dreams come true. She wished for sleep to come and a dream to come — such a dream in which the hollows of every continent would close, and the so-called fairyland of the mad scientists would end. And then the parallel reform-house would end of itself — for those who need reform would no longer be there.

Just before sleep she remembered the faces of her seven companions — Turacos's red-and-green feathers, the mamba's heavy hiss, Kookaburra's khee-khee, the buzz of butterfly and dragonfly, the Eskimo's patience like ice, the penguin's devotion to duty. There had been no time to say goodbye. Perhaps the truest goodbye is the one that is never spoken.







Picture 32



Aastha began to dream — and this dream she did not have to dream alone; the two kings of the parallel reform-house had sent the dream. In the dream the hollows closed one by one — Africa's, the Arctic's, Australia's, Asia's... all eight. The white sky of the sham fairyland began to flicker, as if someone were turning down a lantern.

And Aastha reached the channa grove once more. Dreams come true — and so it was. The hollow was closed. Now no goods, no birds go missing. The channa grove is no longer called a haunted grove — now it is only a mango grove, where in the morning children go with baskets and in the evening they return, every one of them, not one less.

Only Aastha, whenever she passes that great dense tree, always stops once and looks toward its closed hollow.

Have all seven companions reached their own homes?

What is there now where the white sky was? — No dream answered this question. Some doors, even after they are shut, still give a soft sound now and then from within.

Epilogue: Grandmother and Om

"...Now no goods, no birds go missing." — Grandmother brought the story to this point and stopped. "Om?"

But Om had fallen asleep. In his fist he still held Grandmother's finger — the letter-fist, even in sleep.

How far he heard the story, that would be asked tomorrow night — thinking this, Grandmother too drifted toward sleep. The lantern burned a little longer, then it too — like some white sky — slowly went out.

The End



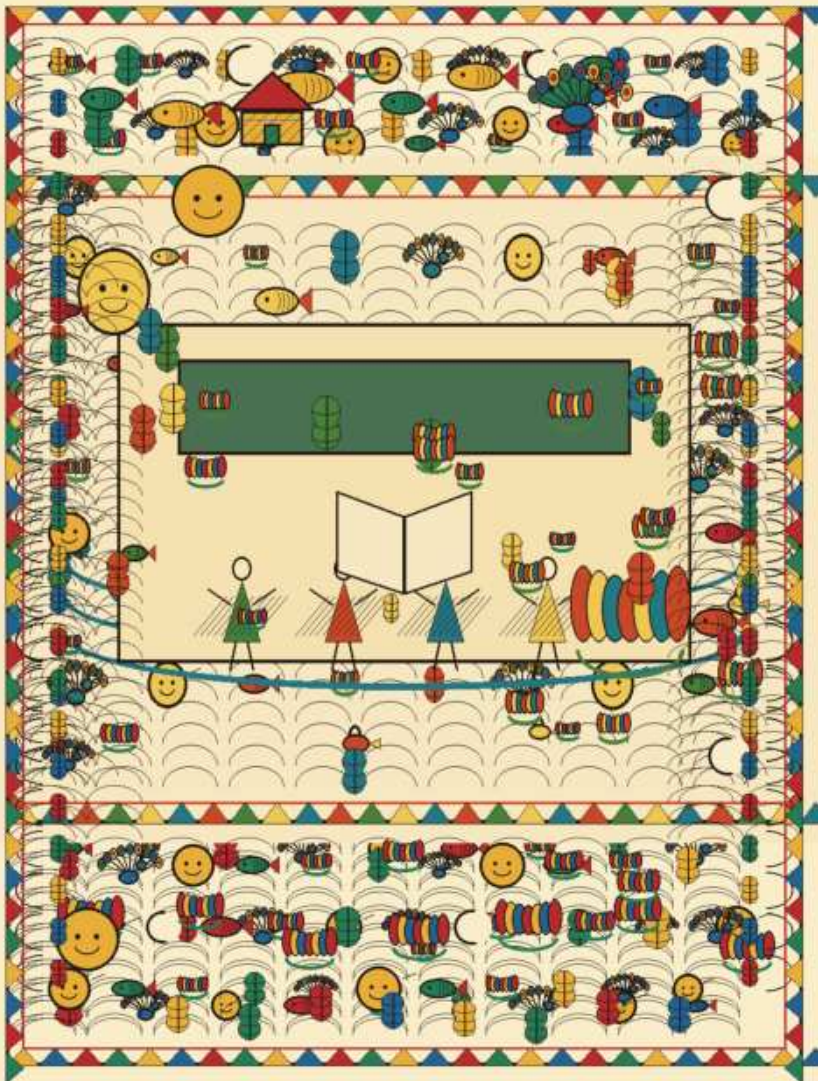
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The Child Guru

Om, Mansha, and an Answer That Made Even
the Grown-ups Bow Their Heads

[Original Maithili, Translation from Maithili into English by the author
himself]



Gajendra Thakur

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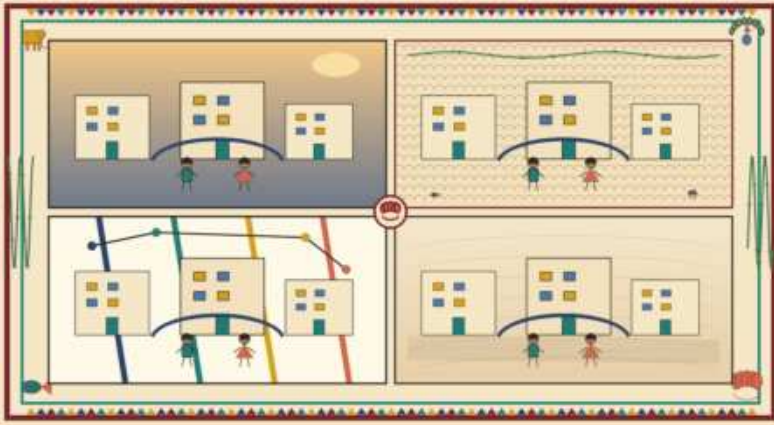
First Maithili Fortnightly E-Magazine

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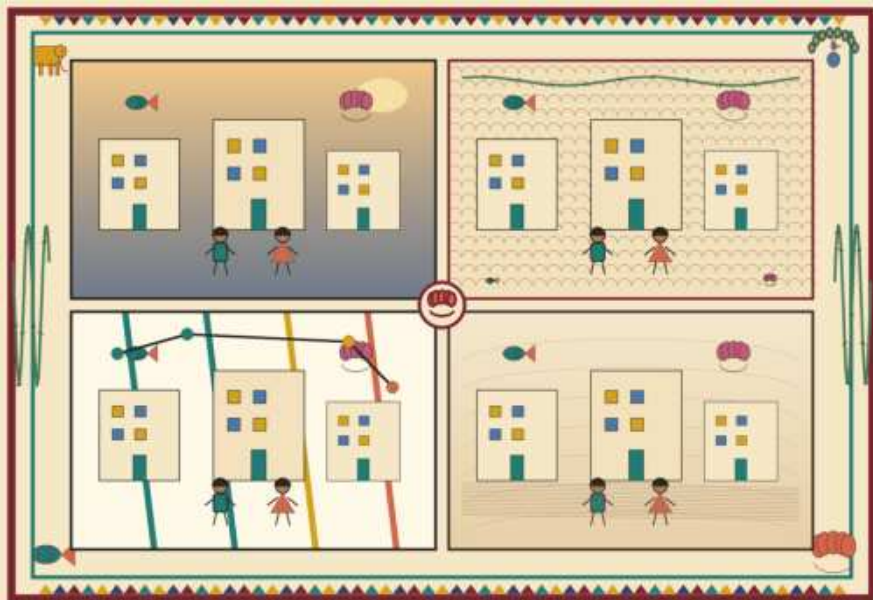
DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR



Prologue: Two Names

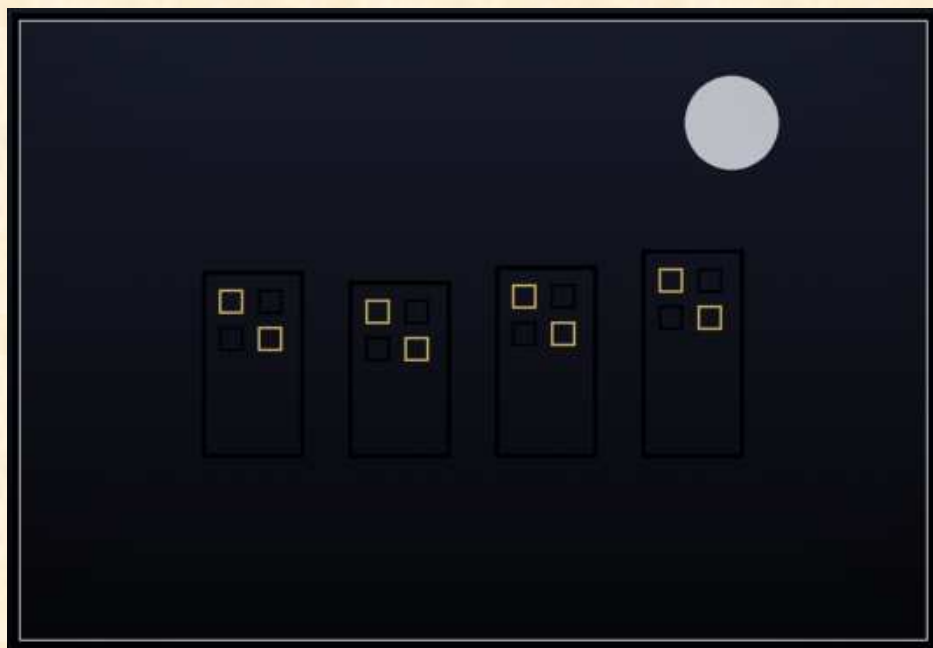
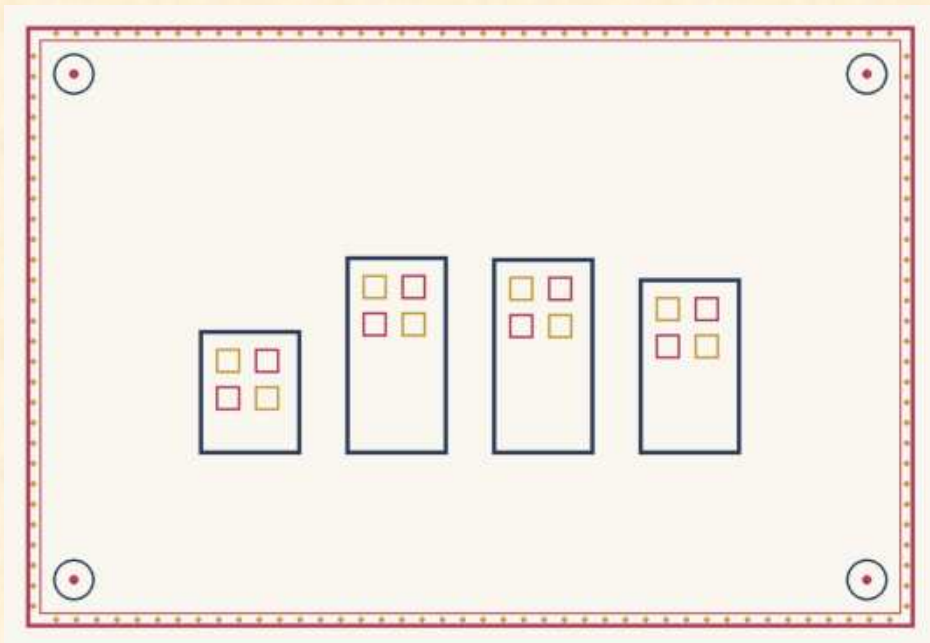
The boy's name was Om. The girl's name was Mansha. Both names were so short that if you wrote them on paper they would fit in half a line — yet by the end of this story, these two little names would say something so big that even the thickest books struggle to put it into words.

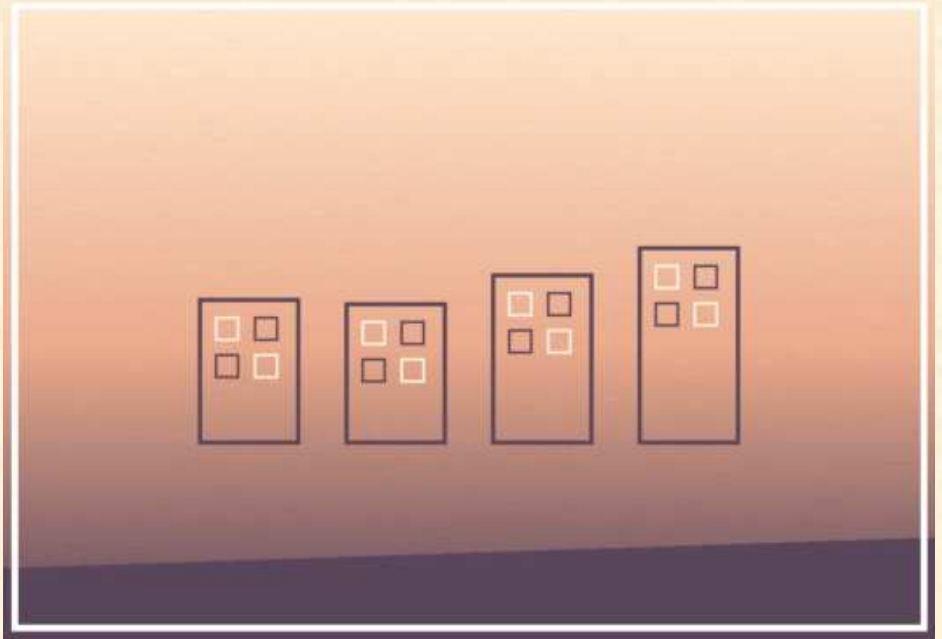
**Delhi — a city where everyone has
come from somewhere else. This story
took place in one of Delhi's housing
colonies. In the middle of the colony
stood a grassy park, and in the middle
of that park — this story.**



Chapter 1: The Housing Colony of Delhi





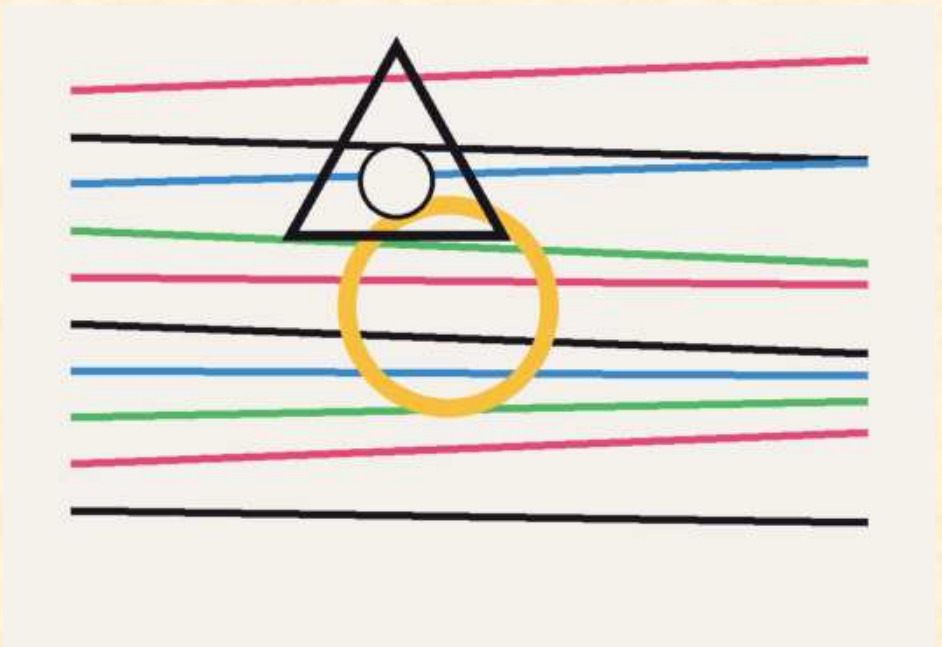


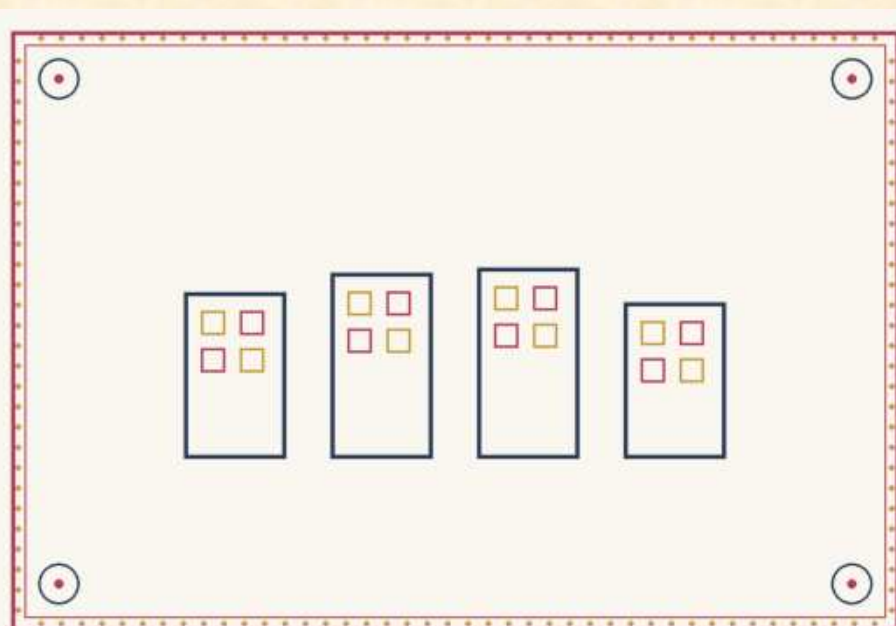
Picture 1

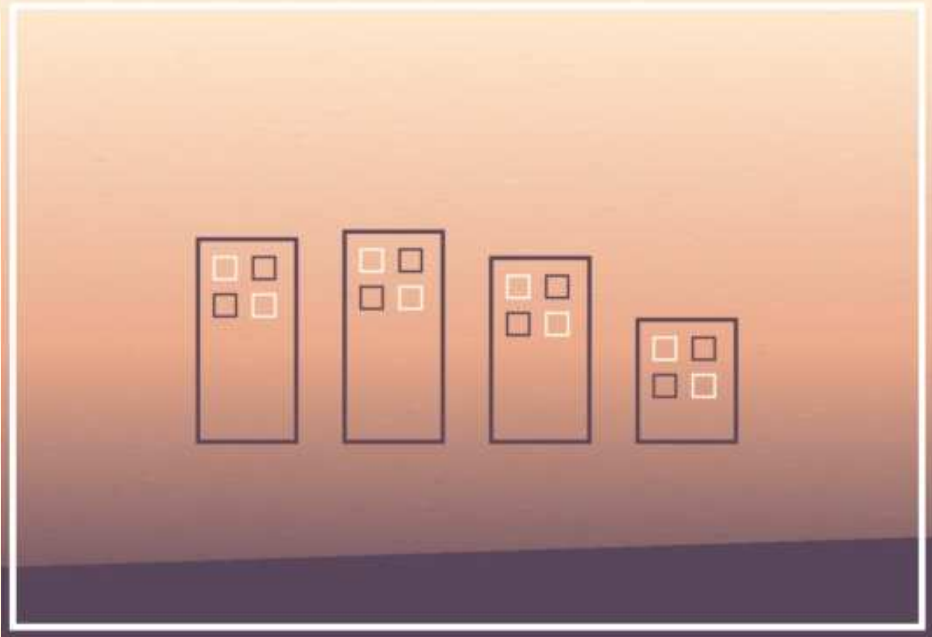


A housing colony means row upon row of houses the same colour, balconies the same shape, doors the same kind. From above, every flat looks like a twin brother. But inside? Behind every door lived a different country.

On the third floor of one flat lived Mithila — Om's home. On the stove, rice of the arwa kind; on rainy days, the scent of tarua and tilkor; and from Mother's lips, Maithili lullabies that slipped out like little songs. Om's mother was a homemaker, and his father went out to work — leaving early with his tiffin, returning tired in the evening.





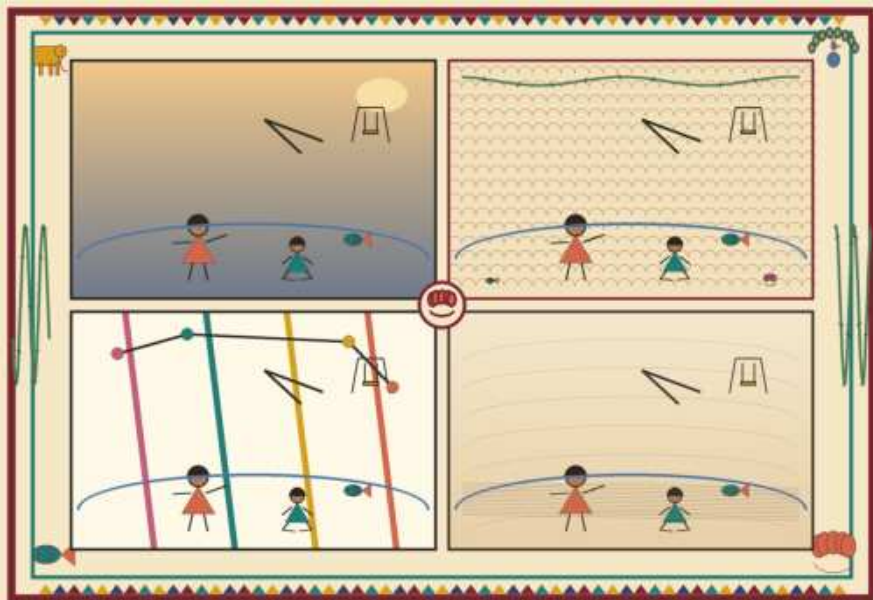


Picture 2

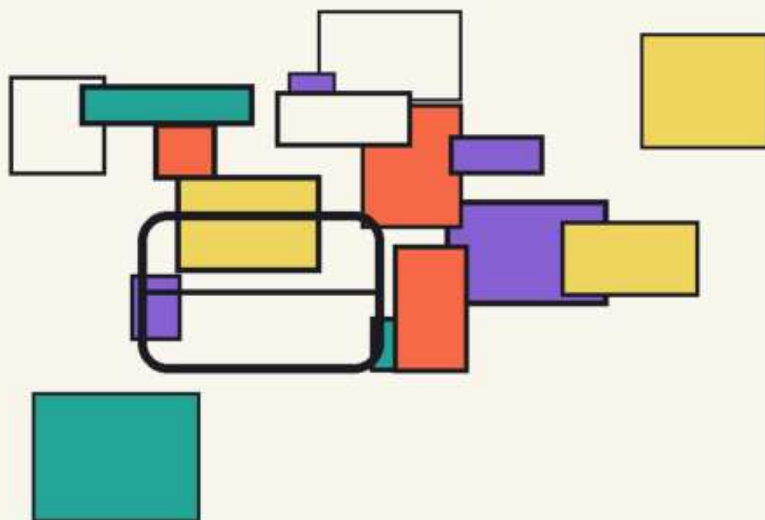


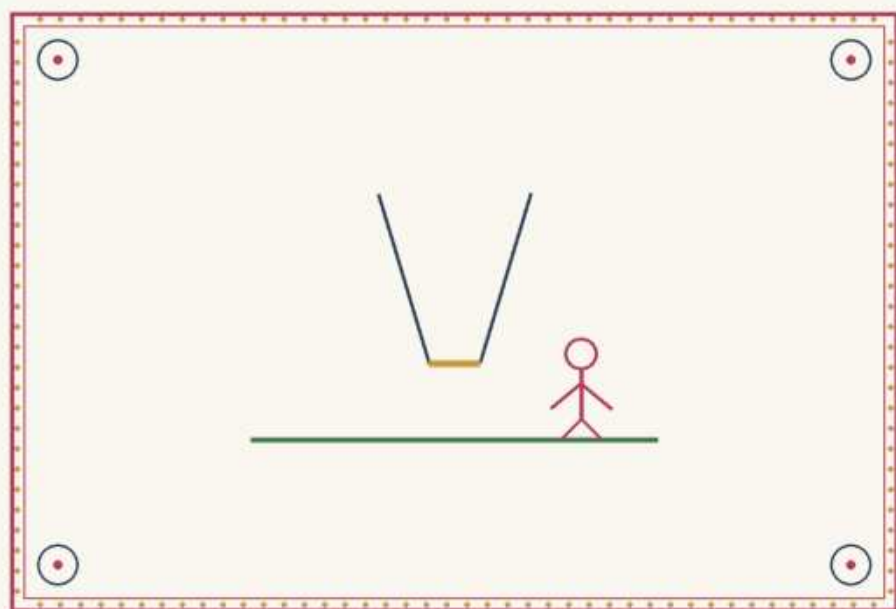
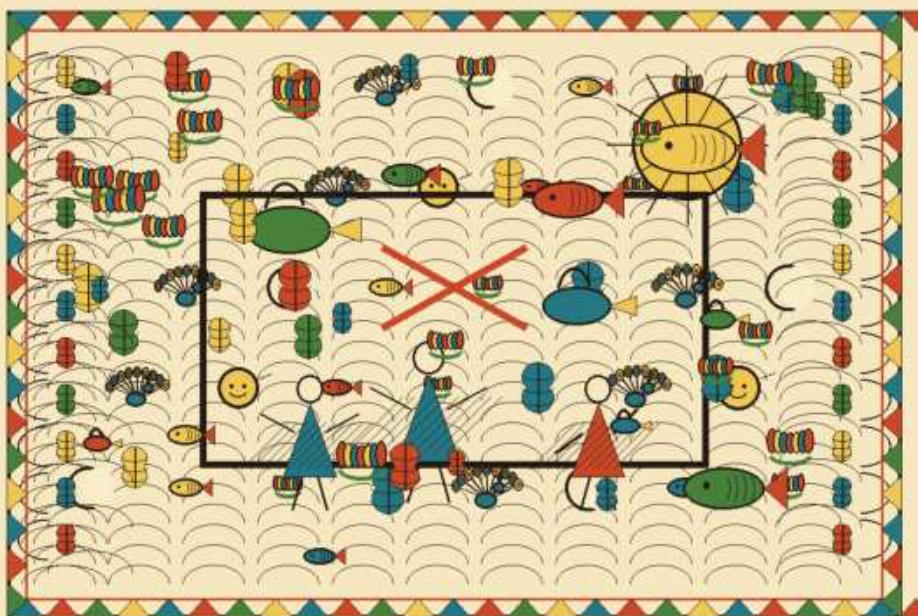
And in the block right opposite lived Punjab — Mansha's home. There, early each morning, the smell of tadka filled the air, and Mansha's father wore that turban which, once tied, looked as if the morning sun itself had been bound upon his head. Mansha's mother called him "Sardarji" — with such affection that the word felt less like a name and more like a song.

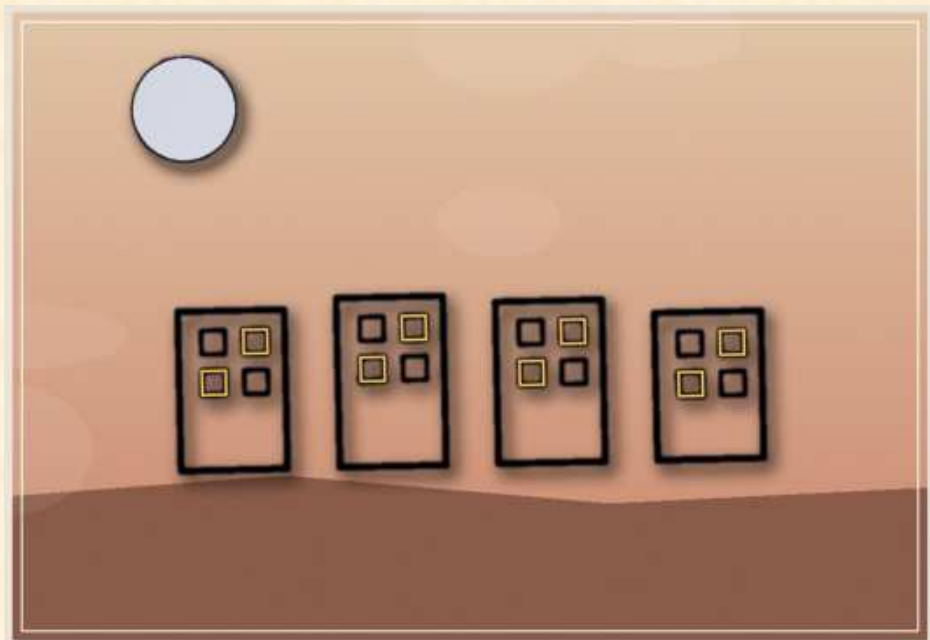
Mansha's mother and father both went out to work. Every morning the two of them set off in different directions, and the key to Mansha's day rested in a third pair of hands. Those third hands — the quietest and most necessary character in this story — belonged to Mahua.



Chapter 2: Mahua







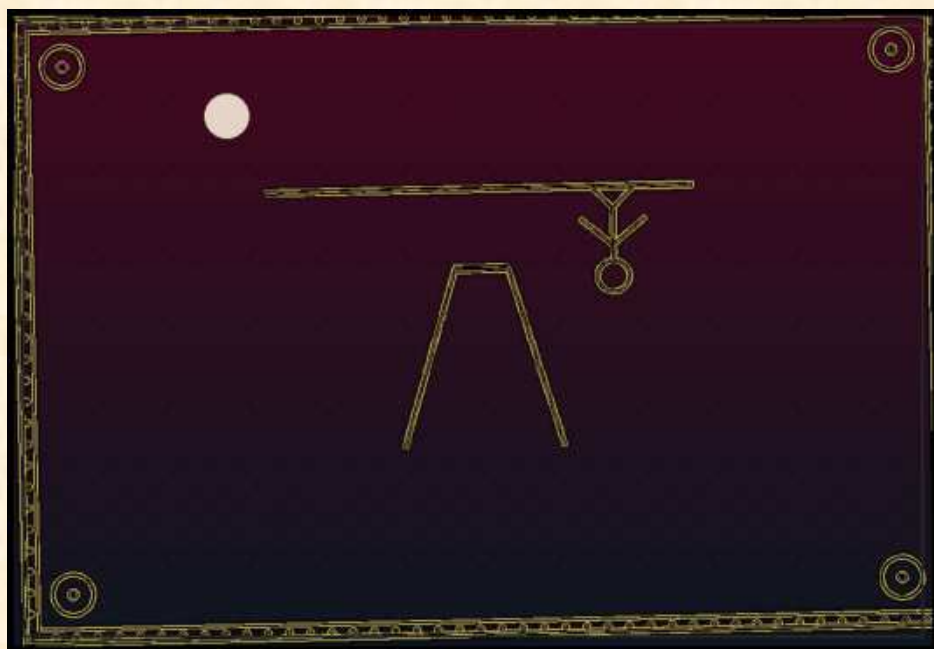
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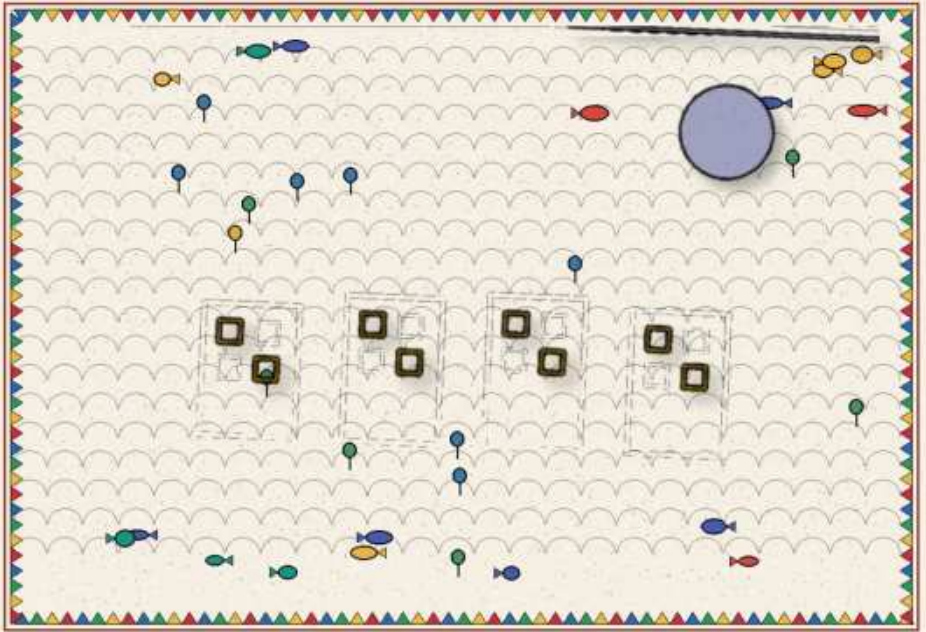


Mahua had come from Odisha — to work in Mansha's house. Her age? Not very much. Back in her village she might still have been playing in someone's lap. But in Delhi she looked after a little girl — Mansha.

Waking Mansha in the morning, combing her hair and tying it in two plaits, warming the milk, and taking her to the grassy park in the evening — all of this was Mahua's charge. Until Mansha's parents returned from work, Mansha's whole day unfolded in the fold of Mahua's sari.





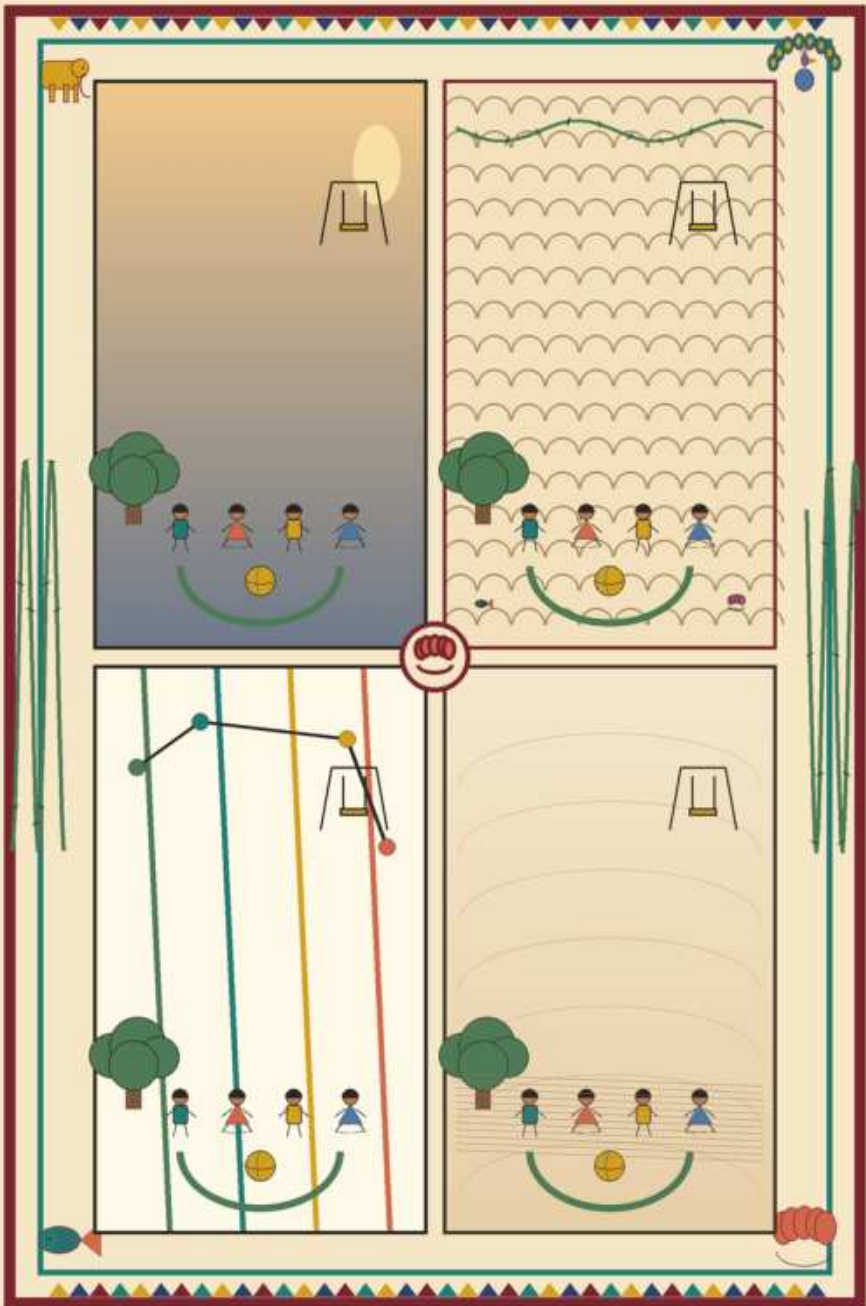


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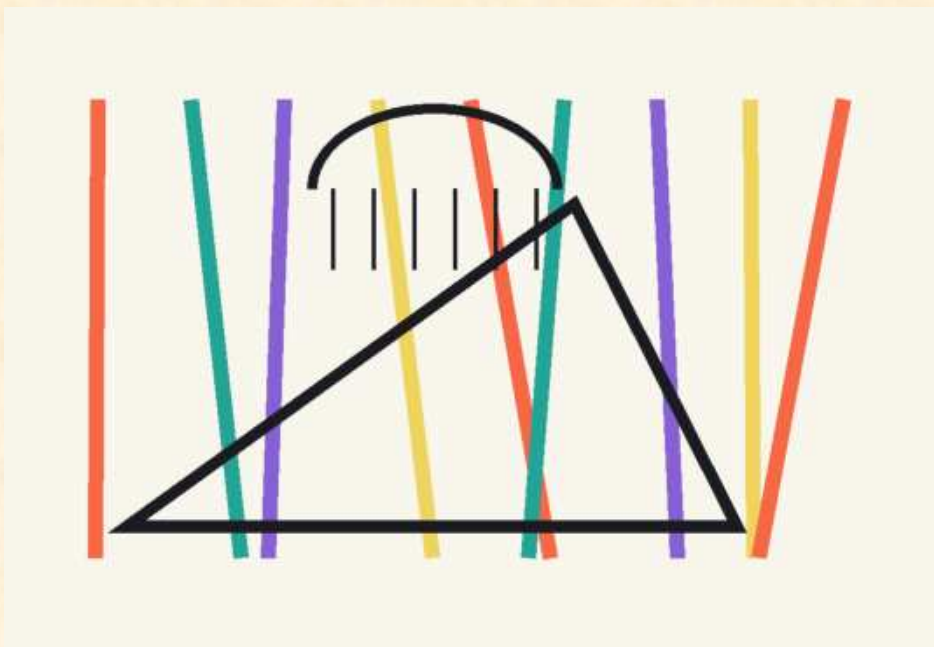


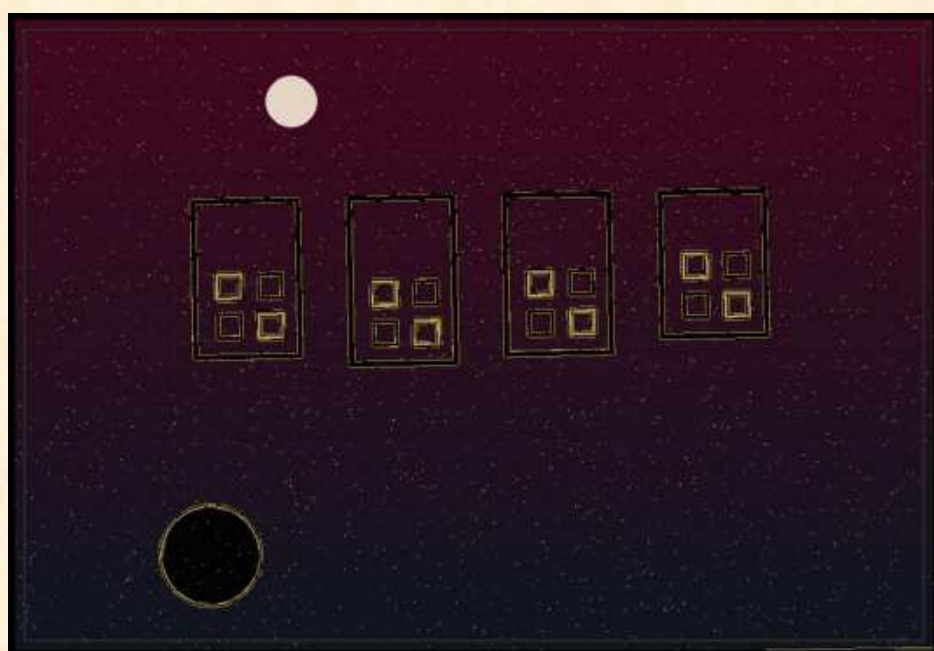
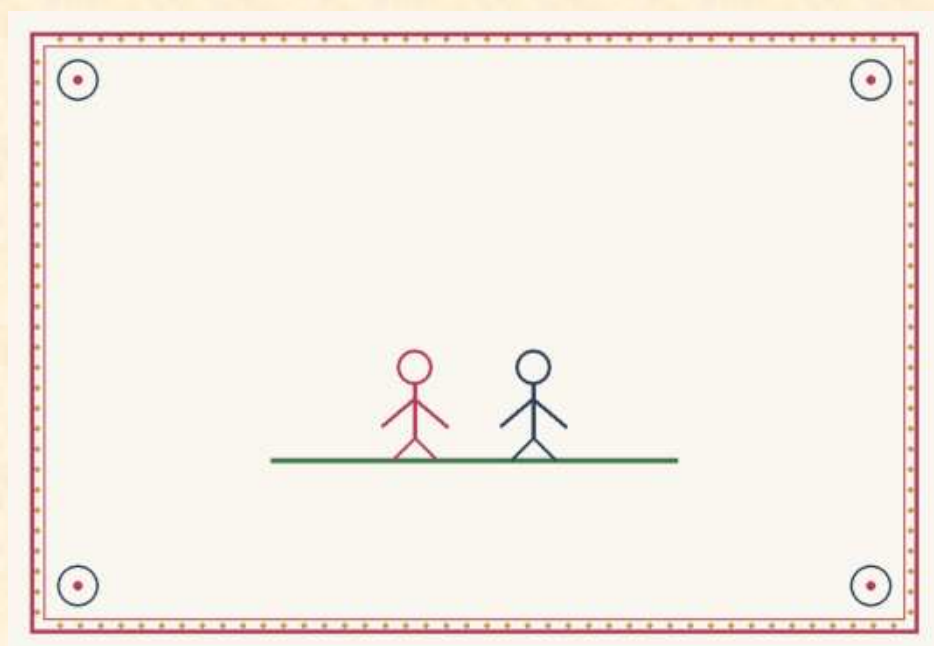
Mahua spoke little. But while she pushed Mansha on the swing she would sometimes hum a song from Odisha — soft, sweet, and a little sad. Mansha would ask, "Which song is that, Mahua Didi?" Mahua would smile. "From my village." And the song would stop right there, as if the mere name of home had filled its throat.

The grown-ups in the park called Mahua "Mansha's ayah." Only one person knew her by her name — Om's mother. Sometimes she would seat Mahua beside her and say, "Eat, little one — you are only a child yourself." And in Mahua's eyes that evening a river of Odisha would flash and shine.



Chapter 3: The Grassy Park





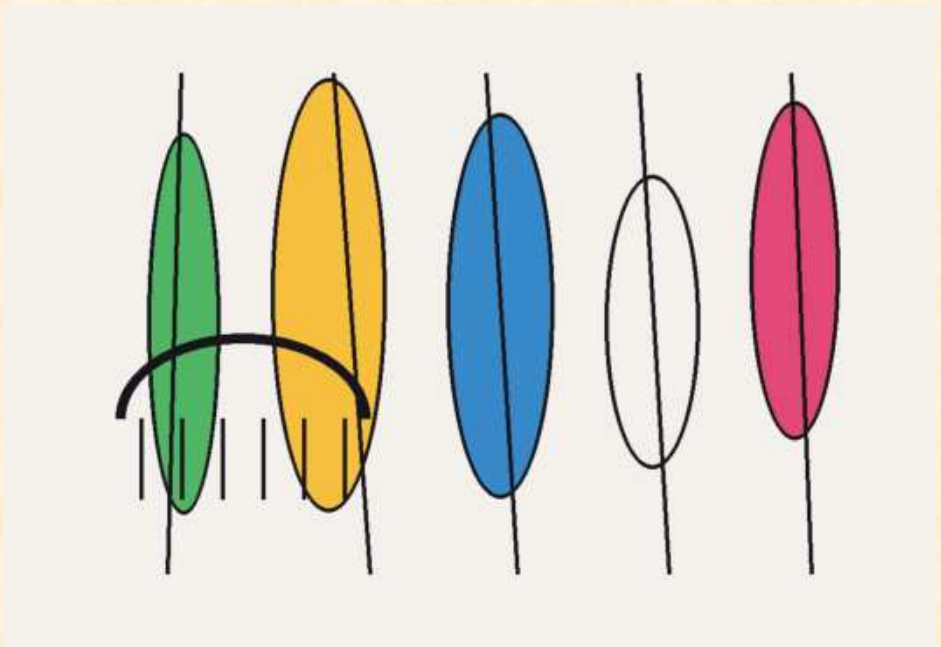


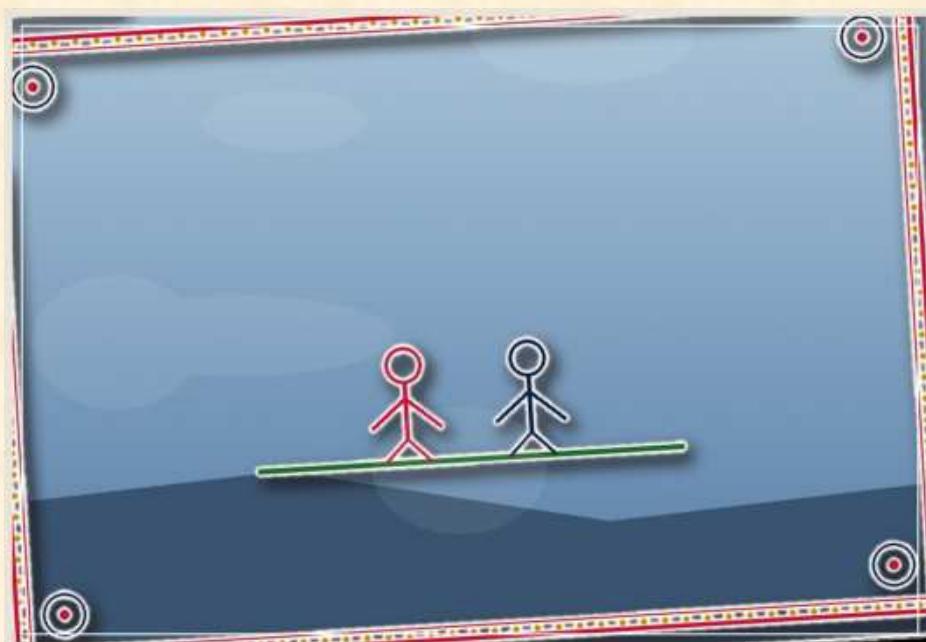
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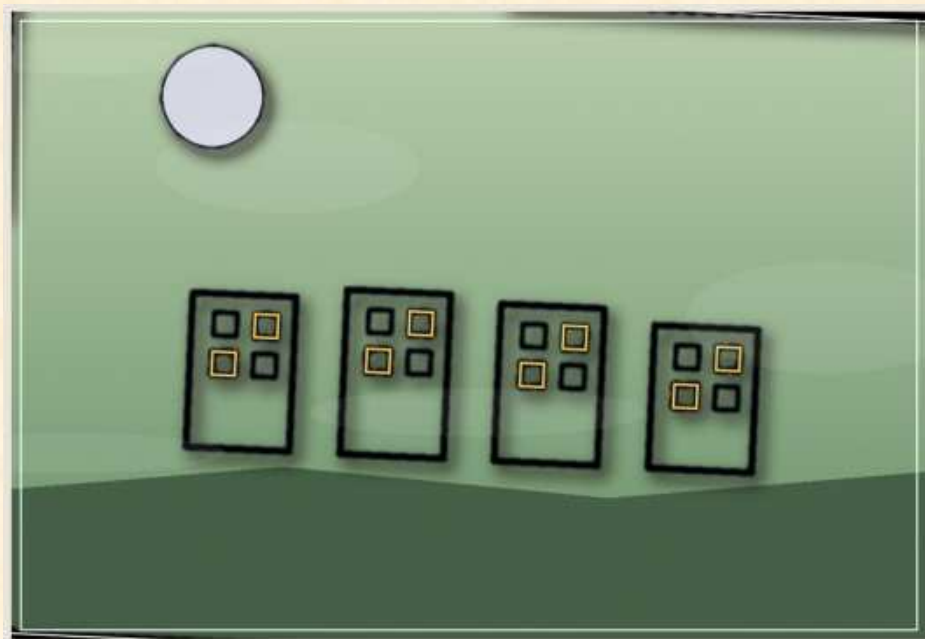


The grassy park in the middle of the colony was the capital of this story. The moment evening fell, the children's parliament assembled there: some racing bicycles, some with a ball, some simply running for the joy of it.

Om came to that park with his mother, and Mansha with Mahua. How they first met — no one quite remembers; that is the beauty of a four-year-old friendship: it has no date. Everyone simply saw that one evening the two of them were on the swing together, and after that, every evening.







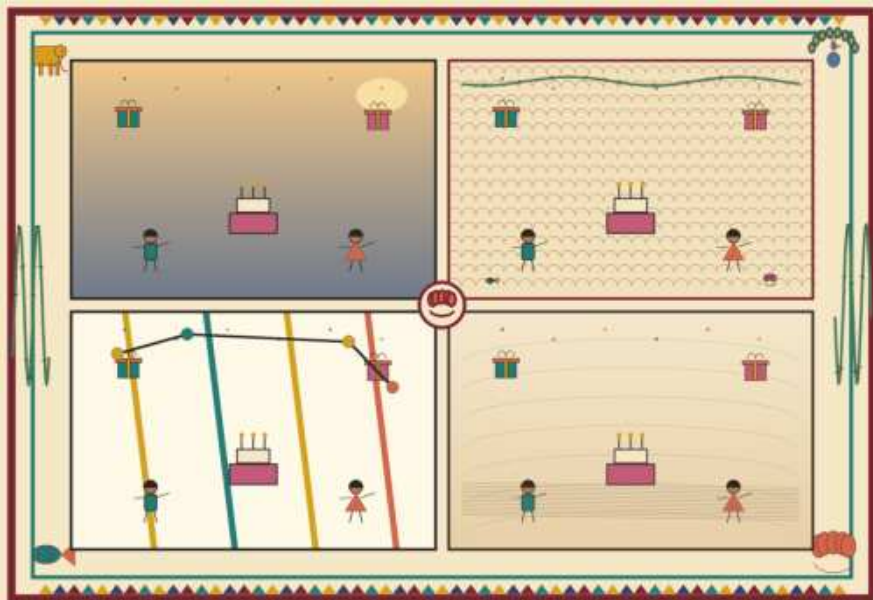
Picture 6



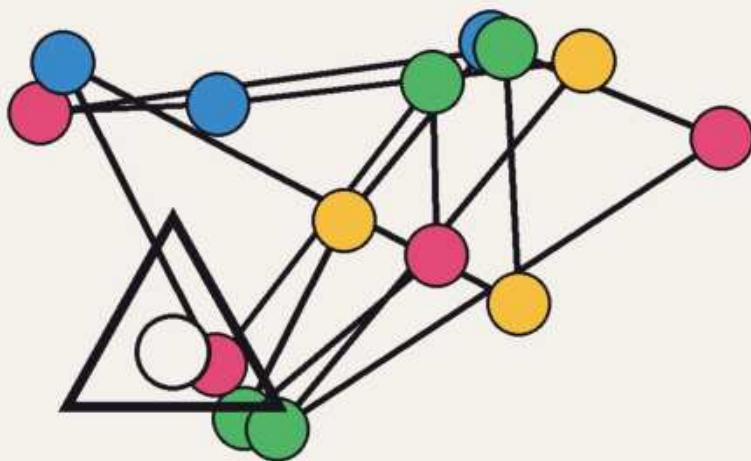
Om was quiet — he spoke little and listened much.

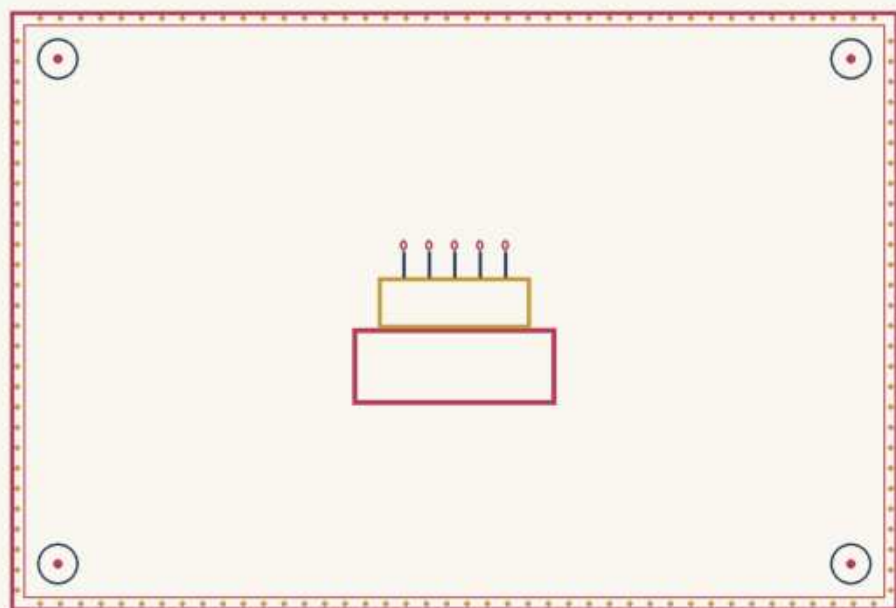
Mansha was just the opposite — a firework of words, fire in her temper. When Om built something, Mansha stood guard over it; when Mansha got stuck somewhere, Om quietly took her hand. Seeing the pair of them, the grandmothers in the park would smile.

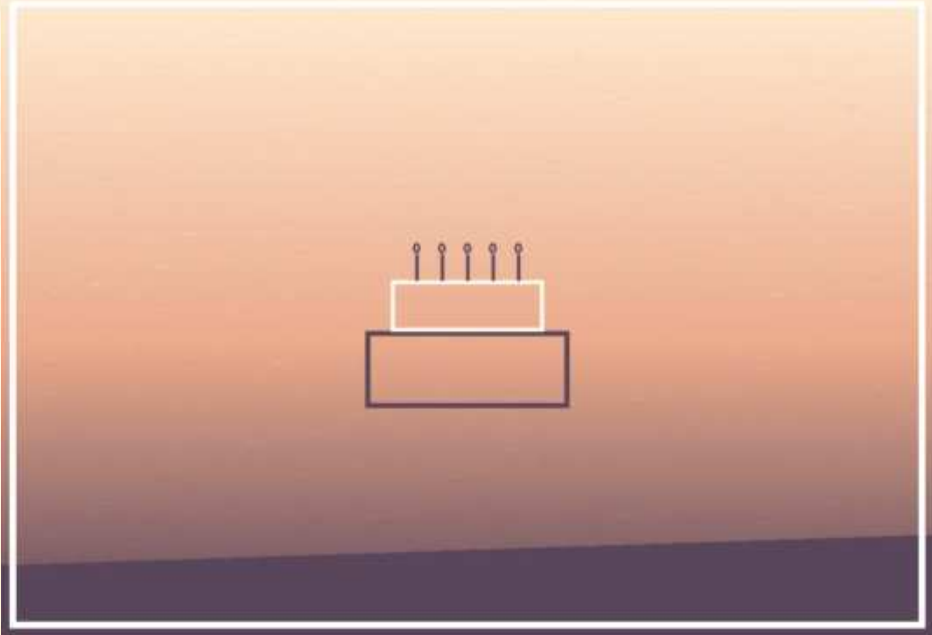
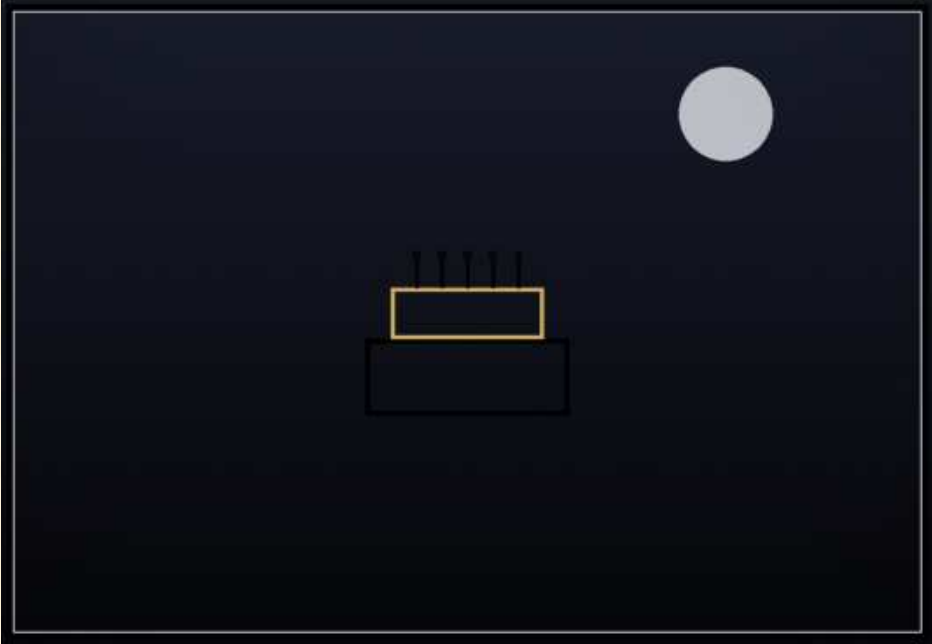
A child of Mithila, a little girl of Punjab, Mahua of Odisha, and the grass of Delhi — in that small park at evening the whole country was at play, and no one even noticed.



Chapter 4: The Birthday Custom





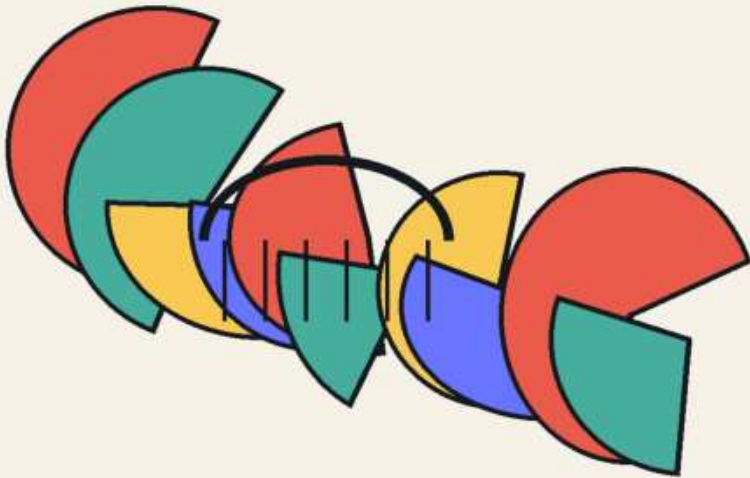


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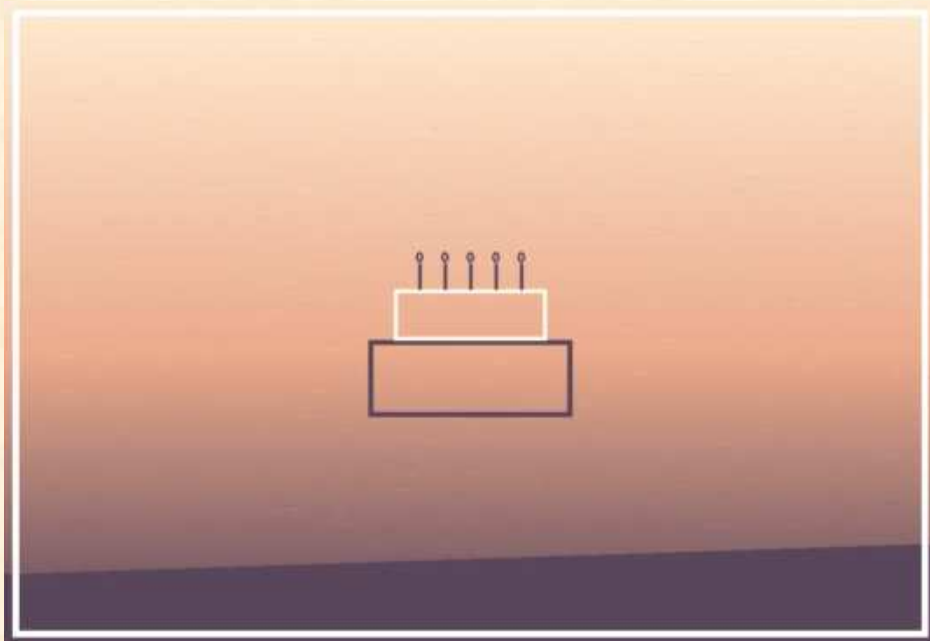
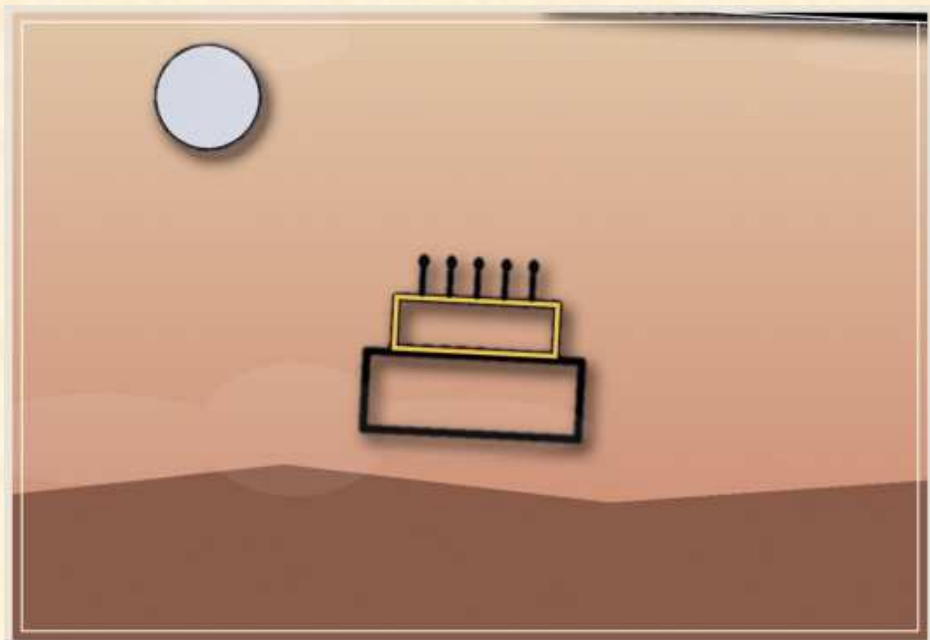


Om's birthday meant a festival for Mansha too. Om's mother would prepare from early morning — and one task she never forgot: buying a separate gift for Mansha. "Shall a daughter go home without a present?" she would say.

And on that side Mahua would bathe and dress Mansha, put her in a new frock, and bring her to Om's door before time. The bell would ring, the door would open, and Mansha would rush inside crying "Happy Birthday, Om!" — as if she were not a guest at all, but a daughter of the house.





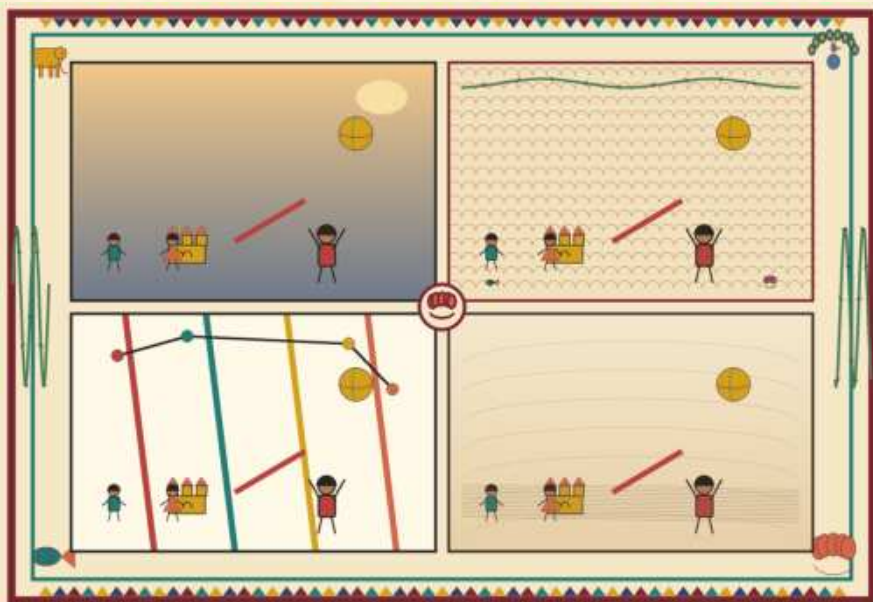


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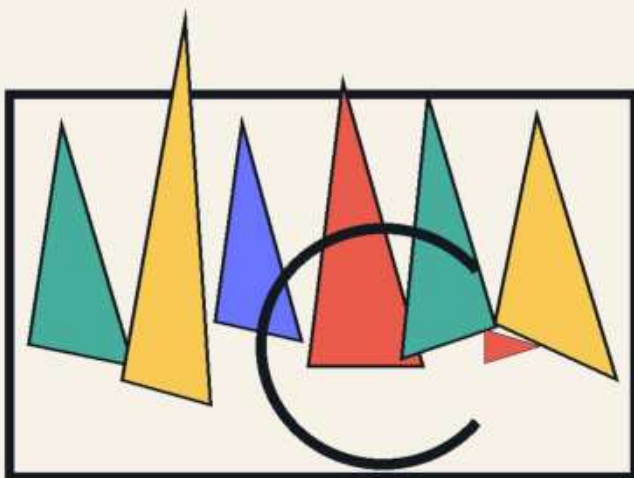


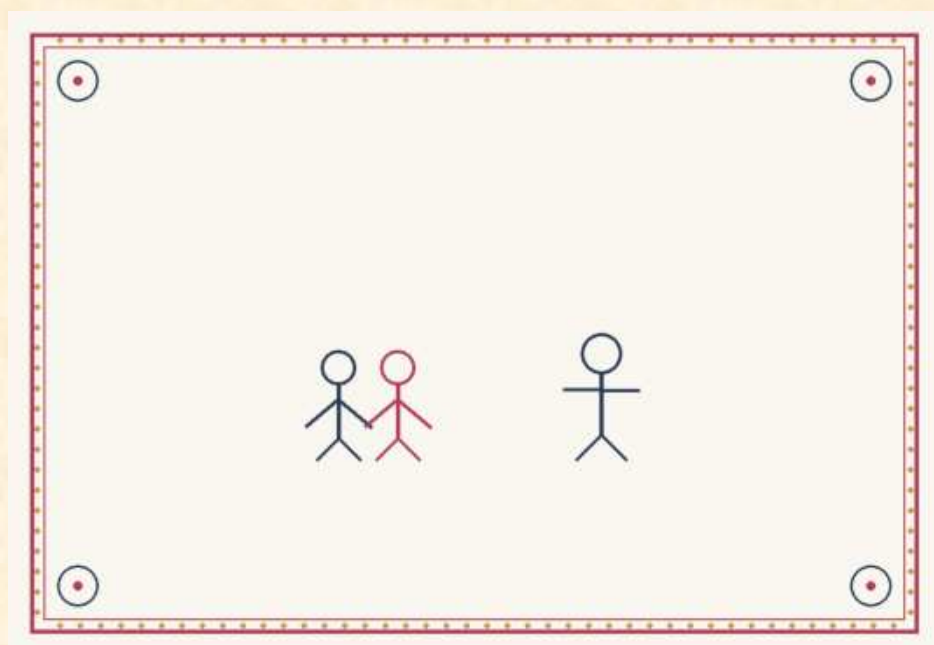
The cake would be cut, hands would clap, and then the two children would sit in a corner and feed each other their shares of cake. Om's mother would watch this every time and think the same thought — friendship cannot be taught; it is born on its own.

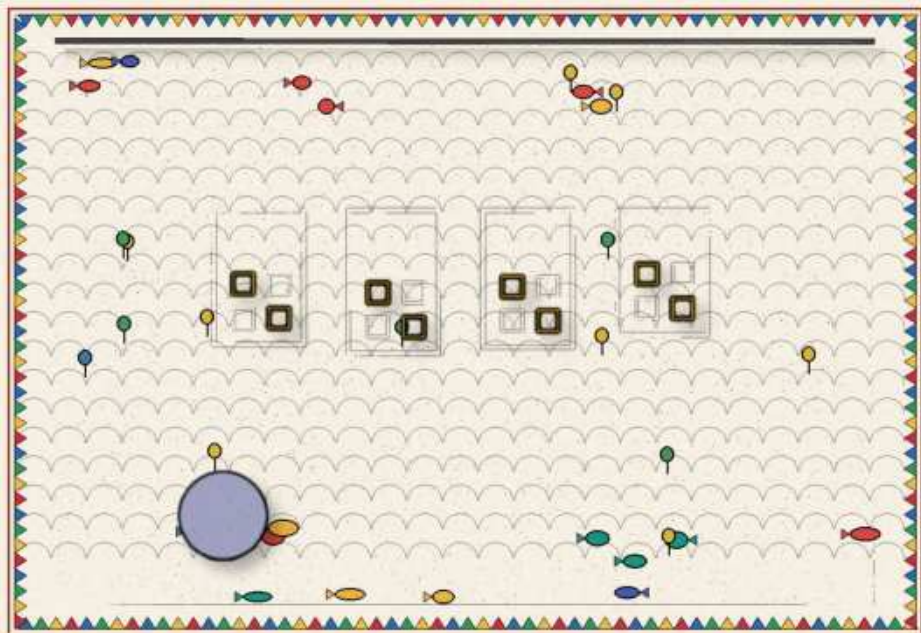
That year both of them completed their fourth year and entered their fifth. Four years — a whole lifetime of friendship, if a life were only four years long. And it was in this very fifth year that the story took the turn for which it was written.



Chapter 5: The New Child





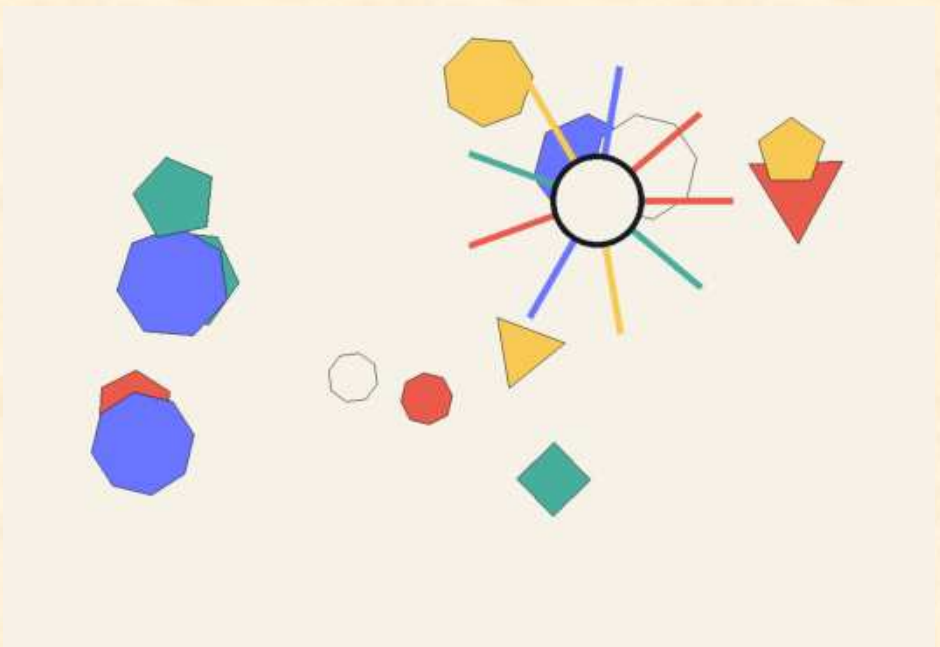


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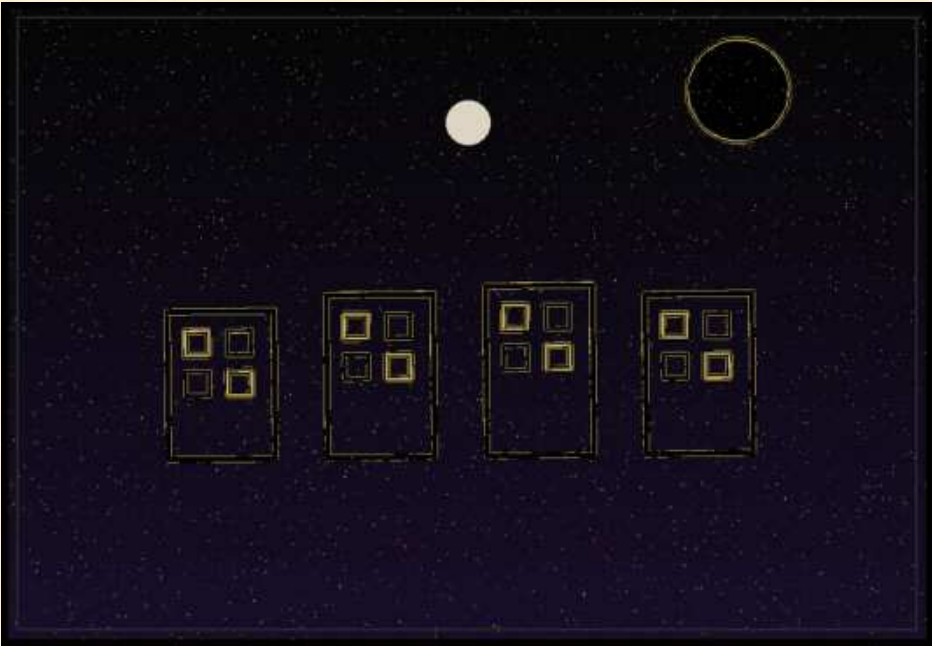


That month a new family arrived in the colony, and with them came a new child — Susen. A little older than Om and Mansha, strong of body, and sharp of tongue.

From the first day Susen's play was different. He played less and spoiled games more. He would ring someone's bicycle bell and run off, kick down someone's sandcastle, twist someone's name into something ugly. The air of the park, which until then had been light, grew a little heavy.





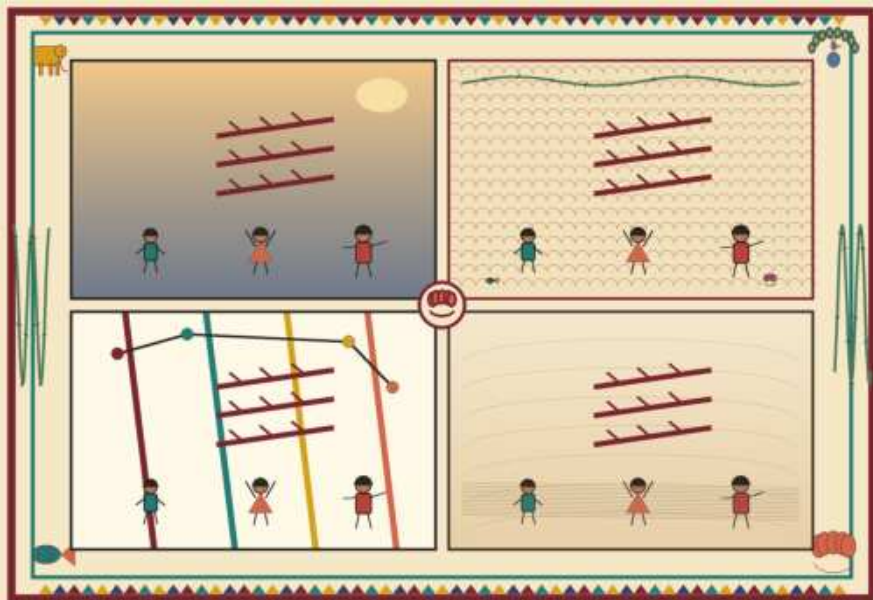


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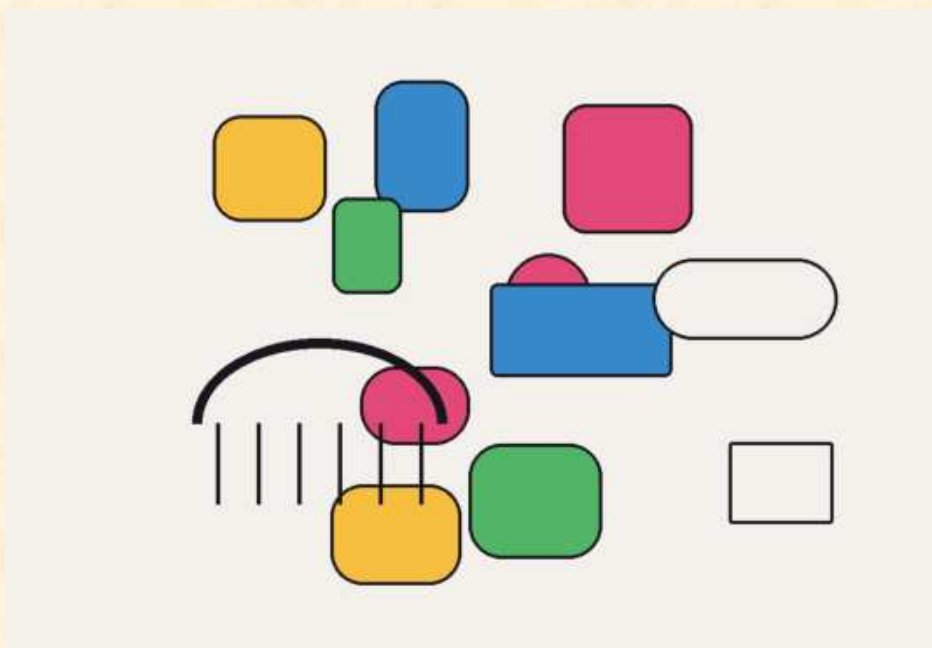


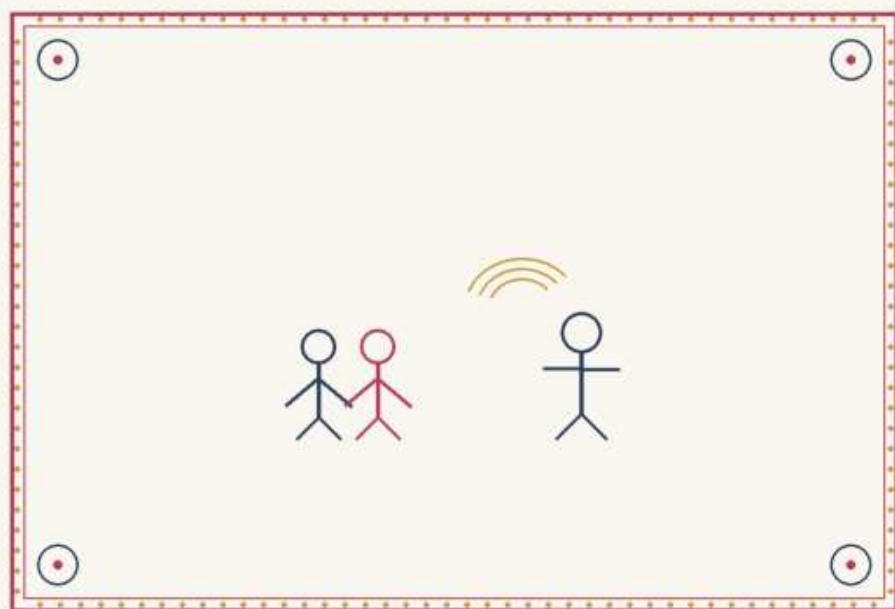
The grown-ups said, "He's new; he'll learn little by little."
But in the children's parliament whispers began — "Stay
away from Susen." No one answered him back, for who
would dare?

And as always happens — a troublemaker first eyes the
quietest one of all. Susen's gaze fixed on the quietest child
in the park — on Om. And the one who stepped forward
as Om's shield was the girl with the two plaits — Mansha.



Chapter 6: Words with Thorns







Picture 11



It began with little thorns. "Hey Mansha, why do you tie two plaits?" Mansha snapped back, "What's it to you?" — and walked on.

The next evening again — "Hey Mansha, why is your face all puffed up?" "Why shouldn't it be?" — there was irritation in Mansha's voice now. Mahua watched from afar; the swing rope tightened a little in her hand.

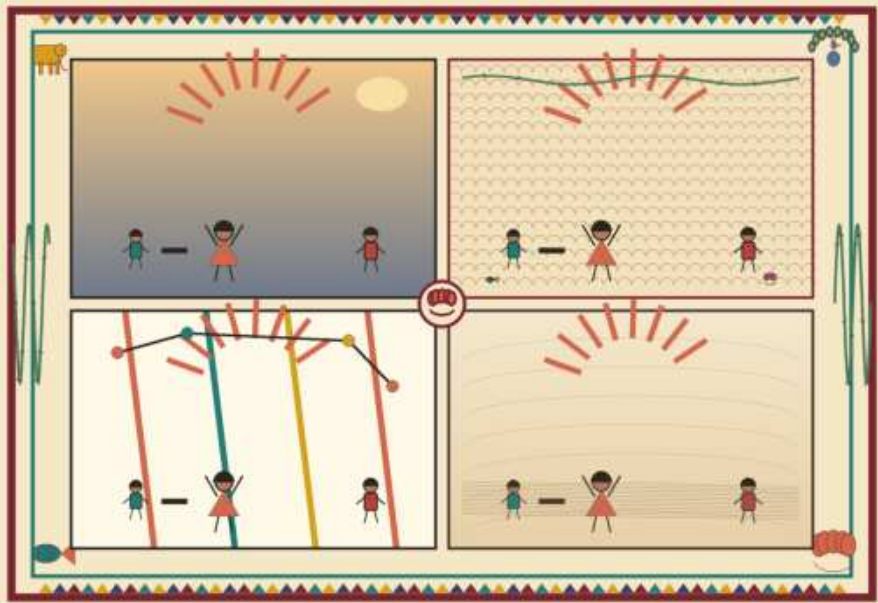






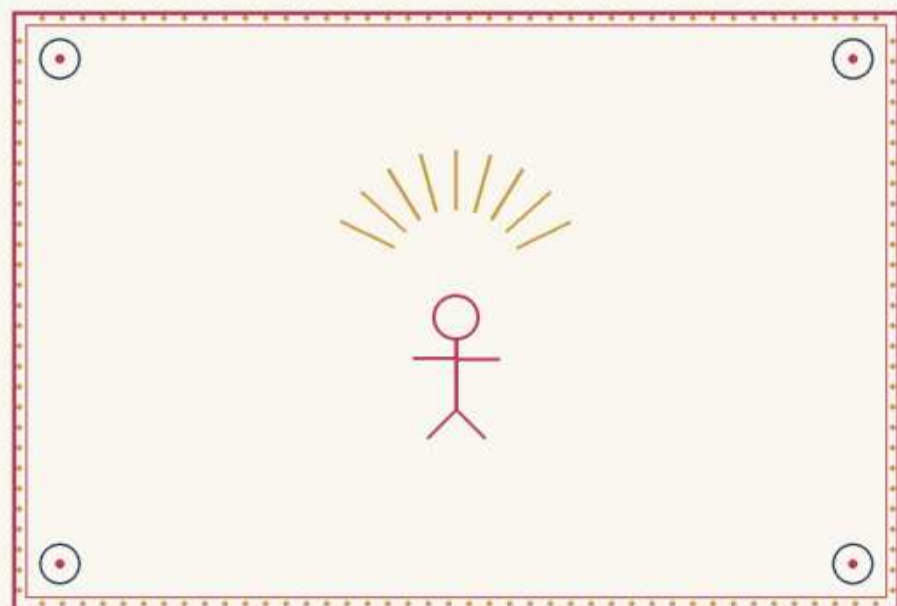
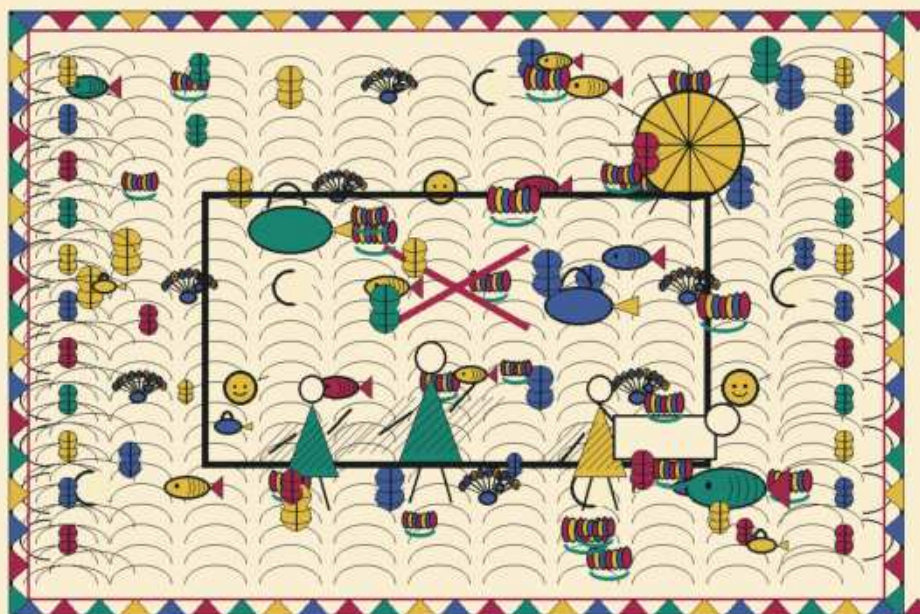
Susen had understood that Mansha answered back — and that teasing someone who answers is fun. But he had also understood where Mansha was softest. So on the third day he aimed his arrow straight there.

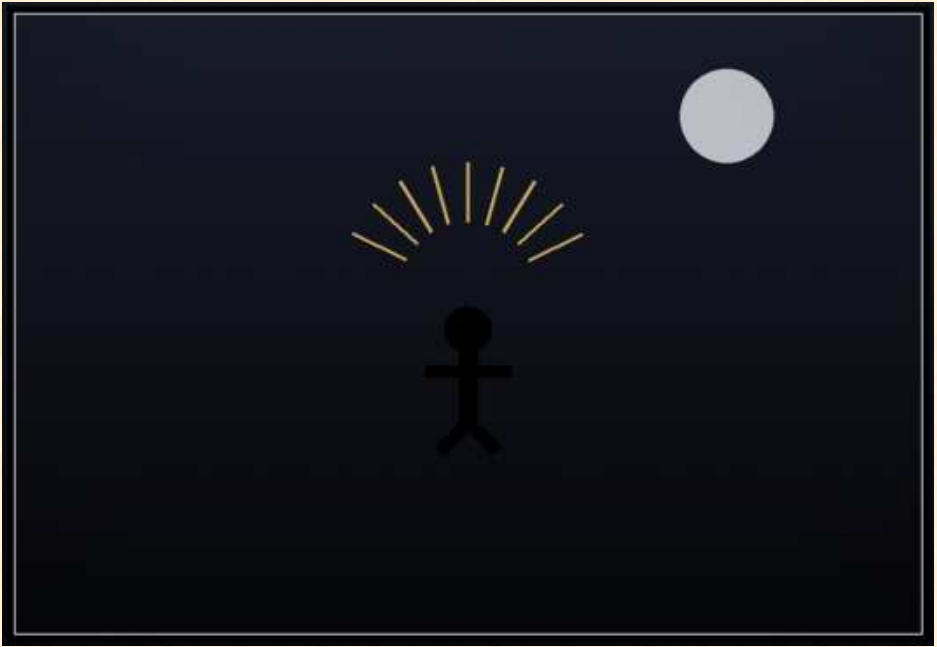
"Hey Mansha, why is your friend Om so dirty?" — Dirty. One single word. Om stood right there, a sand toy in his hand. He said nothing. His eyes went once to his clothes, then to Susen, then to the ground. And inside Mansha, in that very moment, a spark fell into gunpowder.



Chapter 7: Mansha's Roar





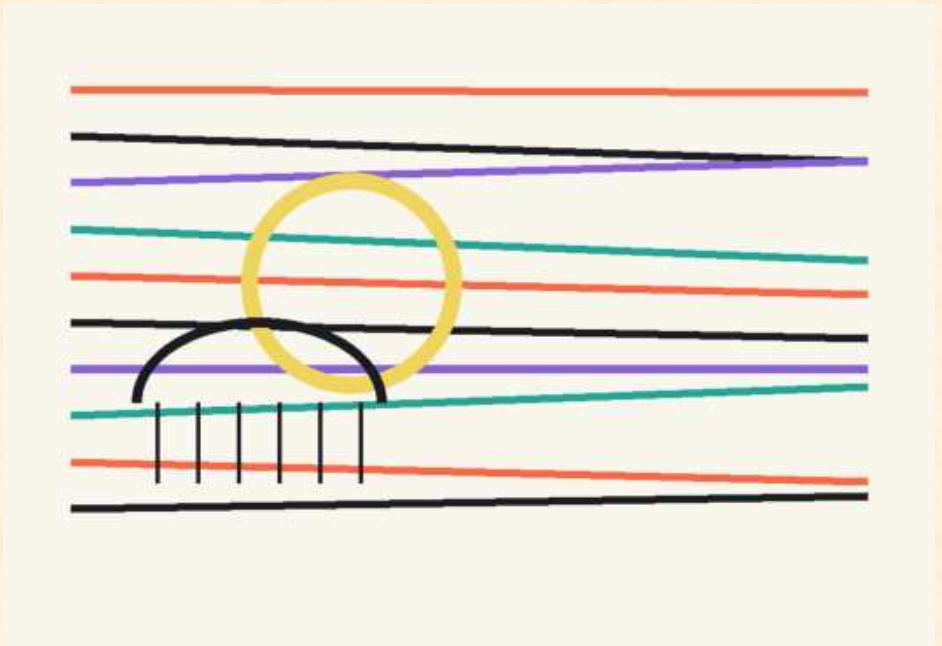


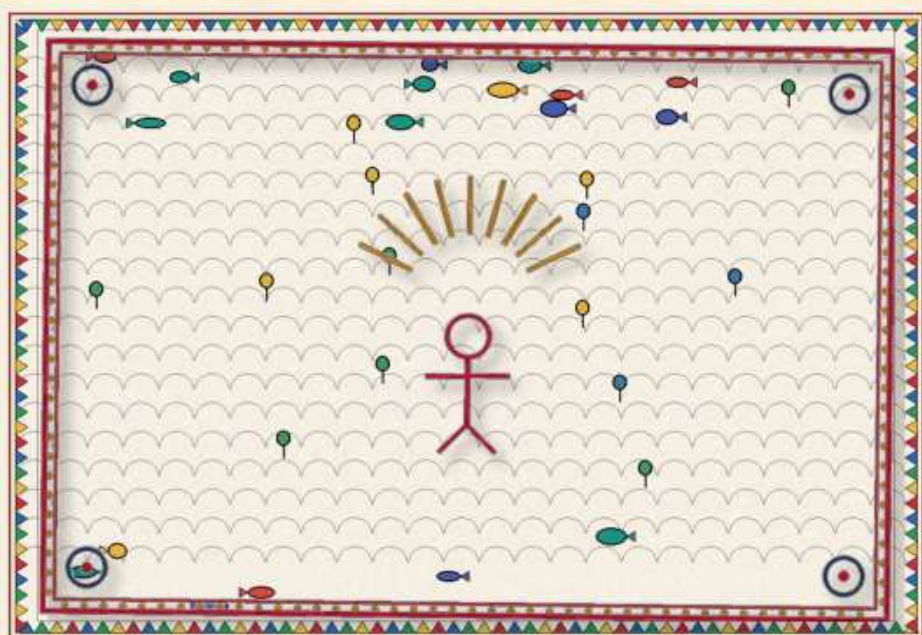
Picture 13

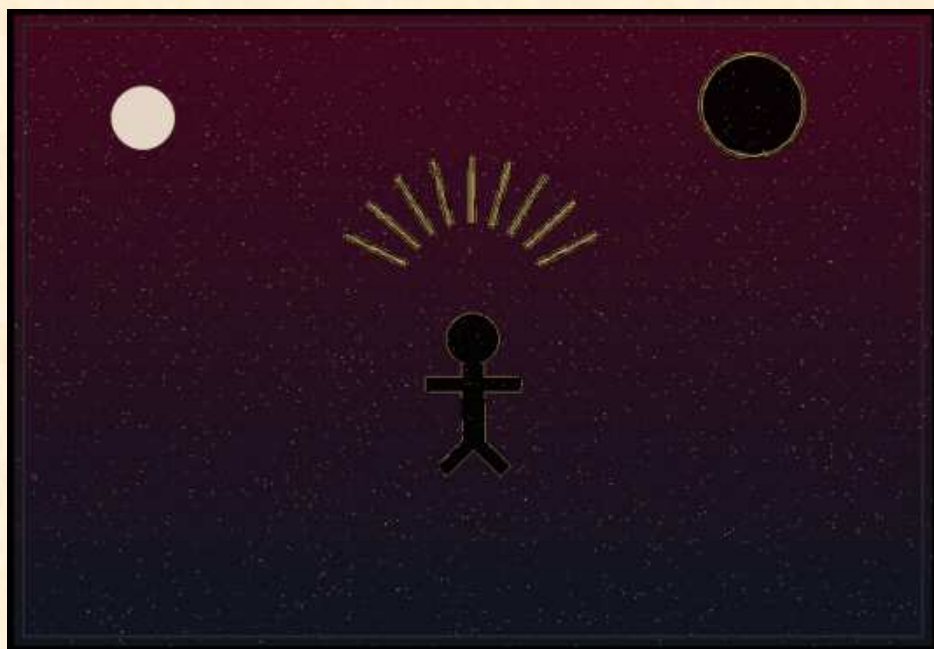


Now Mansha's temper rose beyond all telling. Her face red, her plaits taut, and her voice so high that the swings stopped, the balls halted, and the whole park became one great ear.

"Om is my friend! Whoever calls him dirty is dirty himself!"





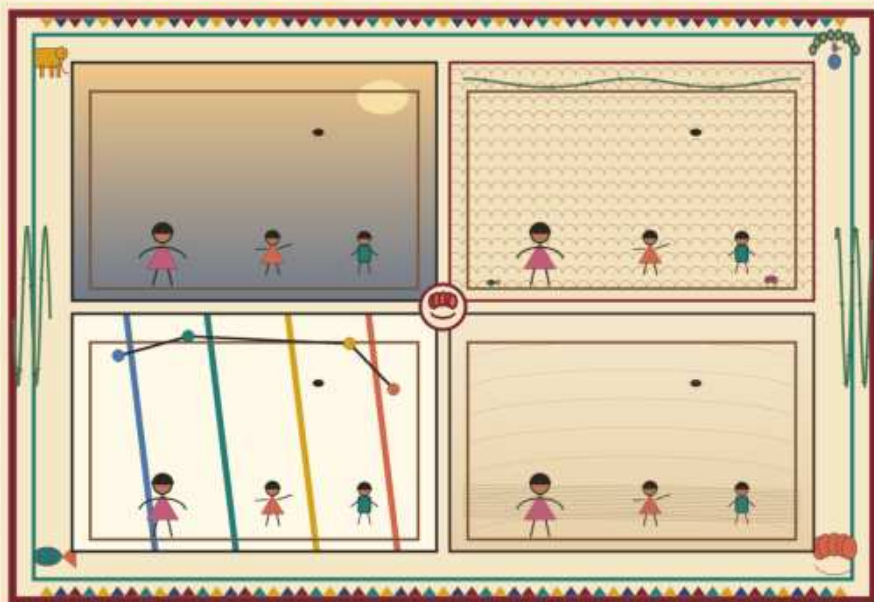


Picture 14

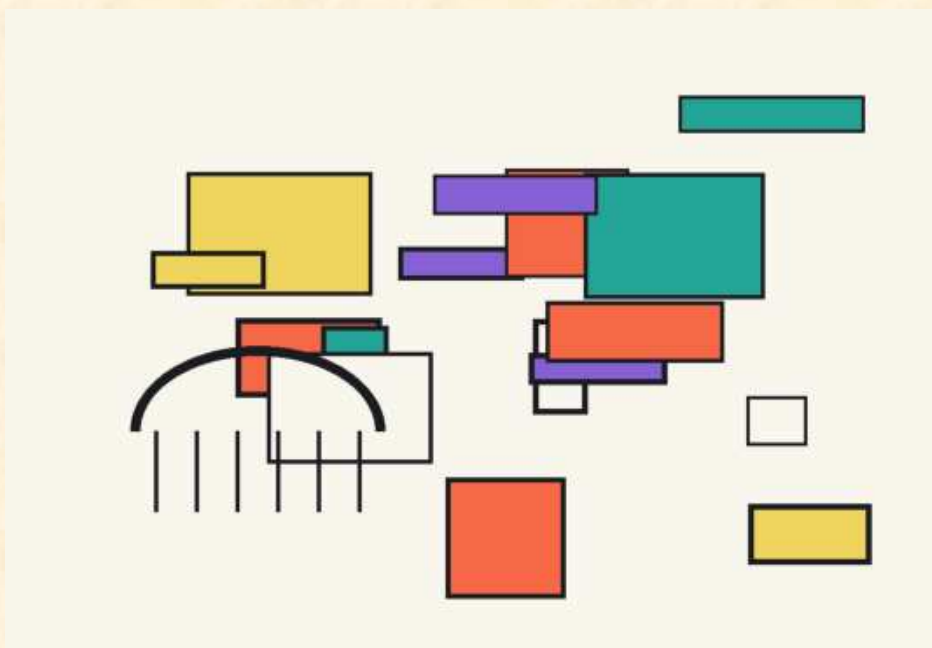


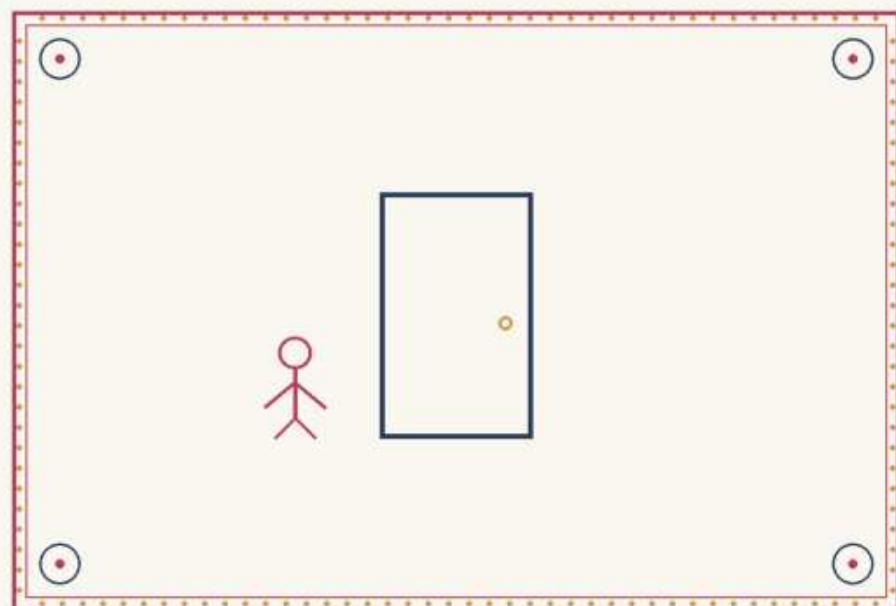
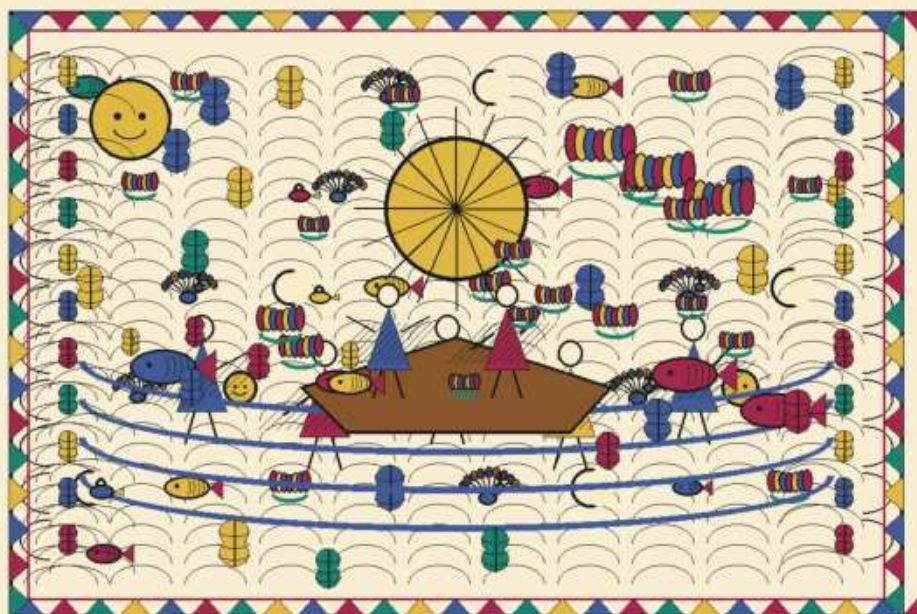
Two sentences, yet the weight of a thousand minds. Susen — who until now only knew how to tease others, never having been teased himself — faltered for the first time. The children of the park, who until then had quietly endured, saw for the first time that an answer can be given this way too — without raising a hand, simply by speaking the truth.

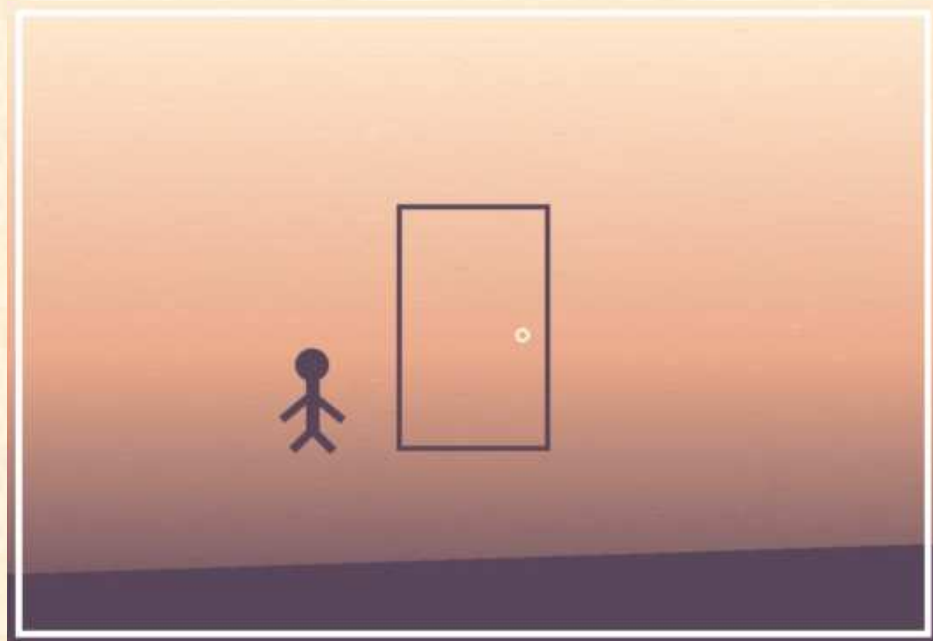
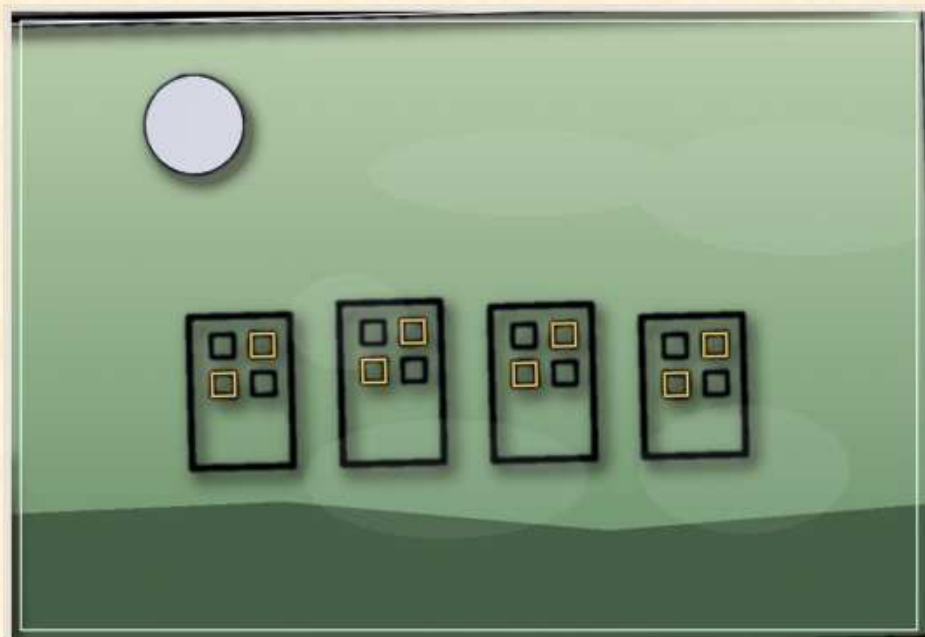
And Mansha did not stop there. She took Om's hand — tight, as if to say "I will not let this hand go" — and with her head high she walked out of the park. Left behind was Susen, wearing his hollow laugh, which now sat ill upon his own face.



Chapter 8: The Complaint





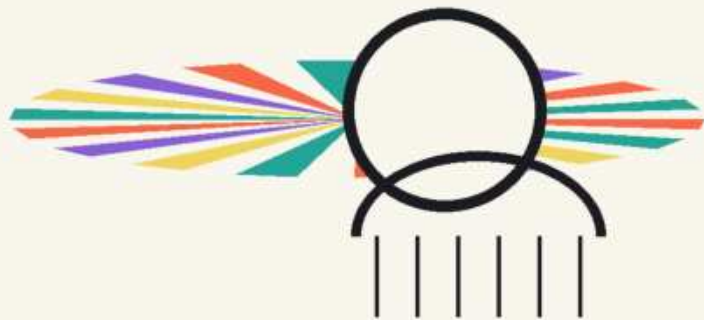


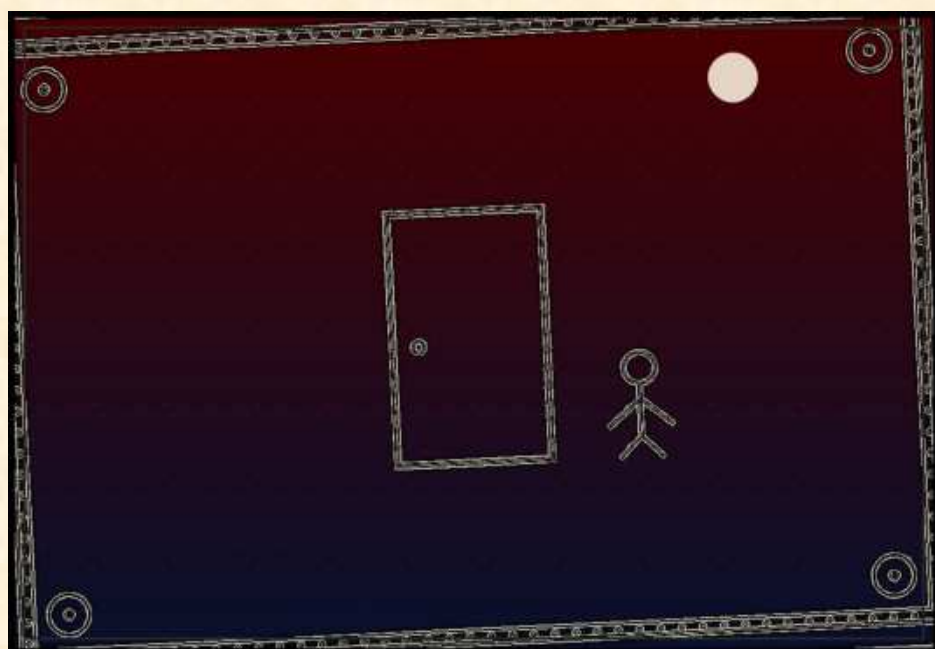
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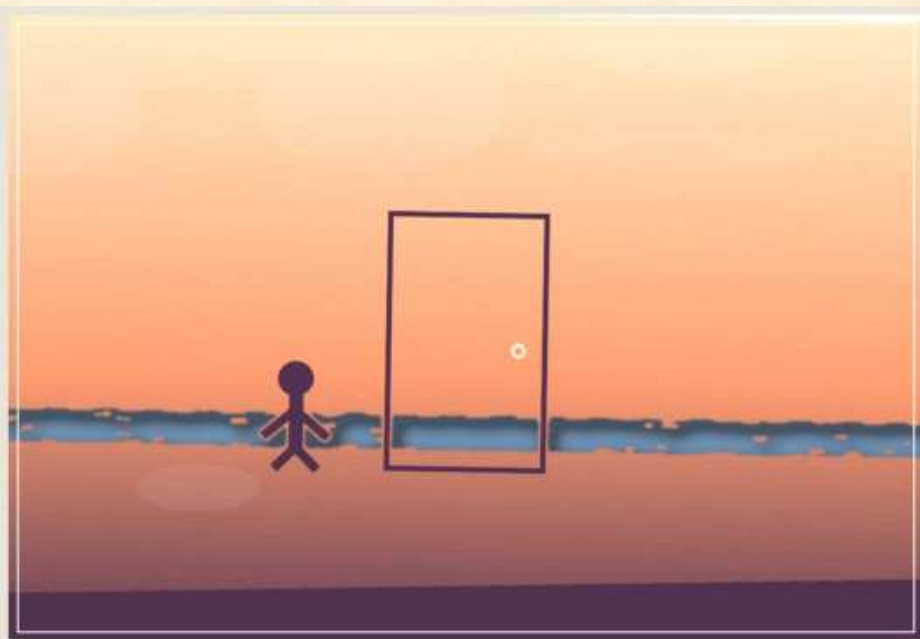
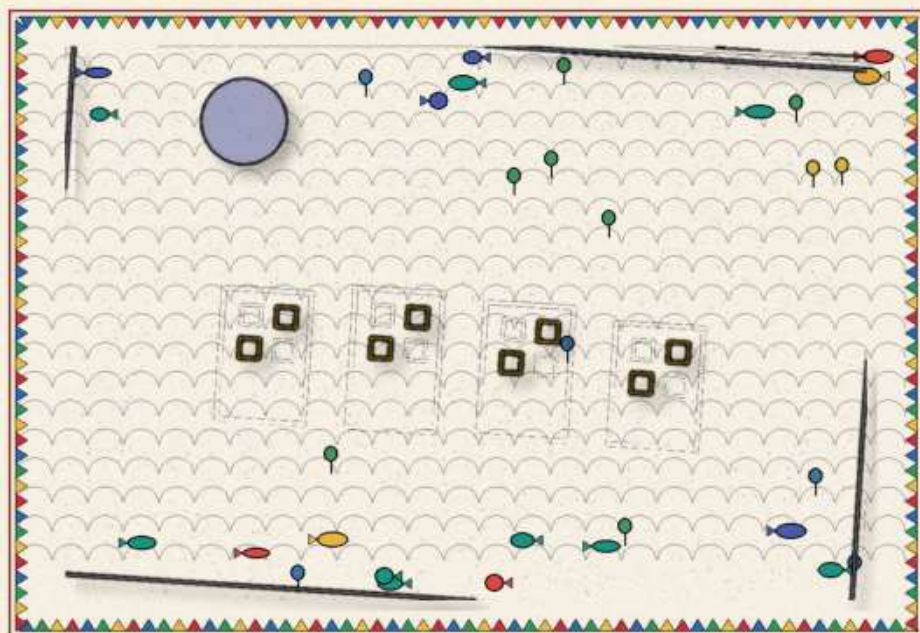


Mansha went straight to Om's house and told his mother everything — the whole event, her own roar, Susen's face — she left nothing out. But what she said at the end was not a complaint against Susen.

"I got angry at Susen, and he just stood there quietly!" — Mansha's finger pointed at Om. His silence had stung her more than Susen's insult. I fought for my friend, and my friend did not fight — what greater betrayal is there for a four-year-old heart?





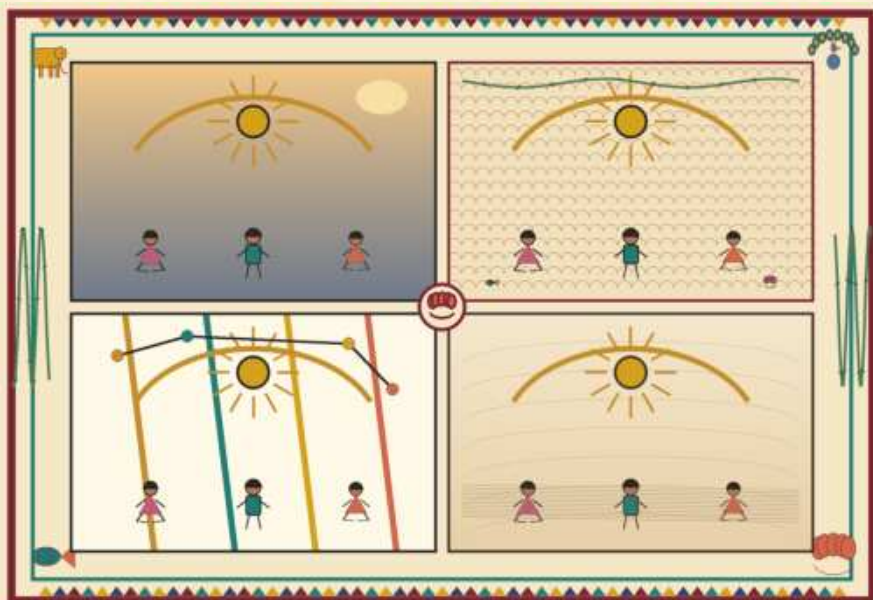


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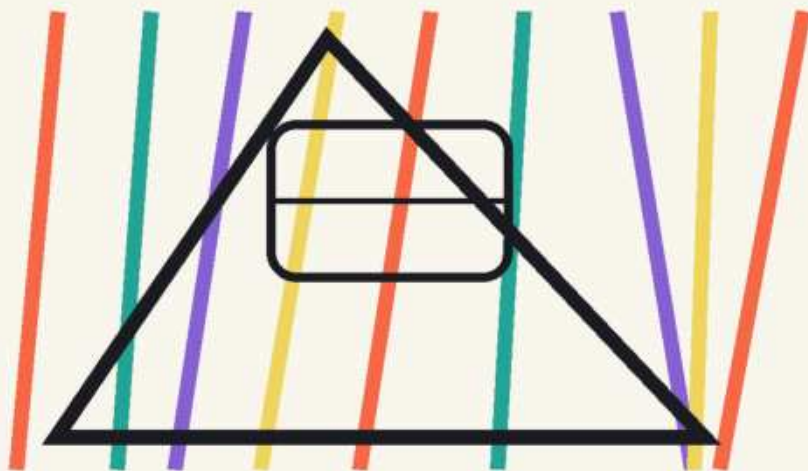


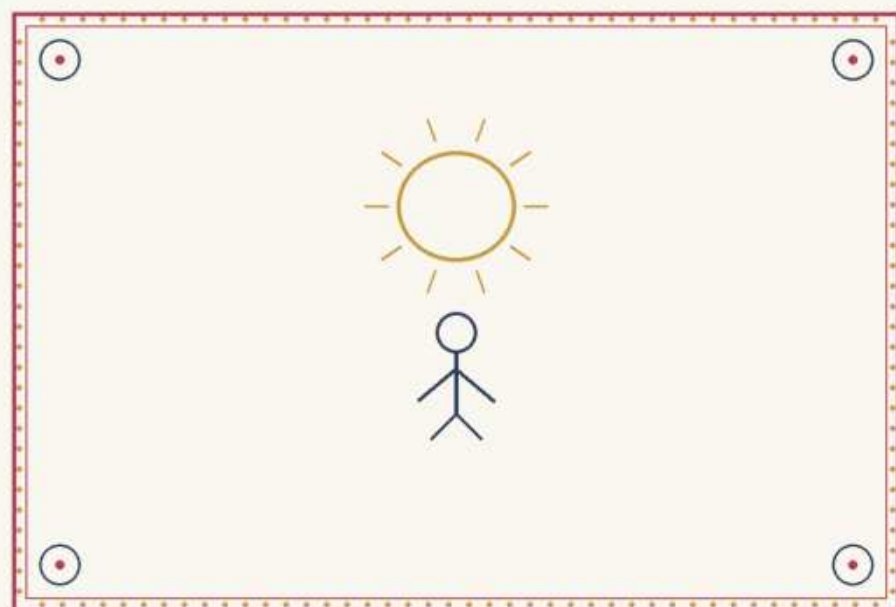
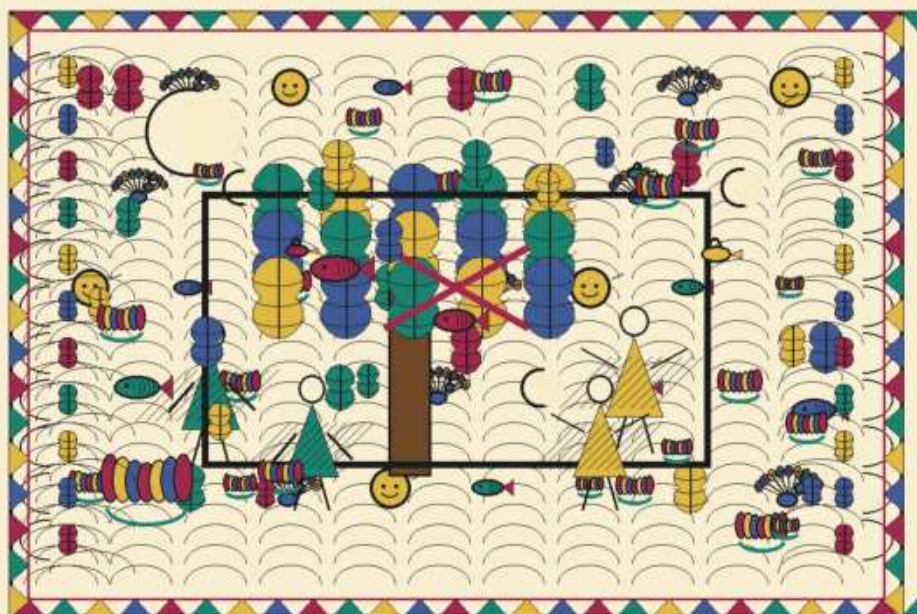
Om's mother's brow furrowed a little too. Inside her rose the same question that rises in every mother. She turned to Om — "Why, Om? Susen called you dirty, and you just stood there quietly?"

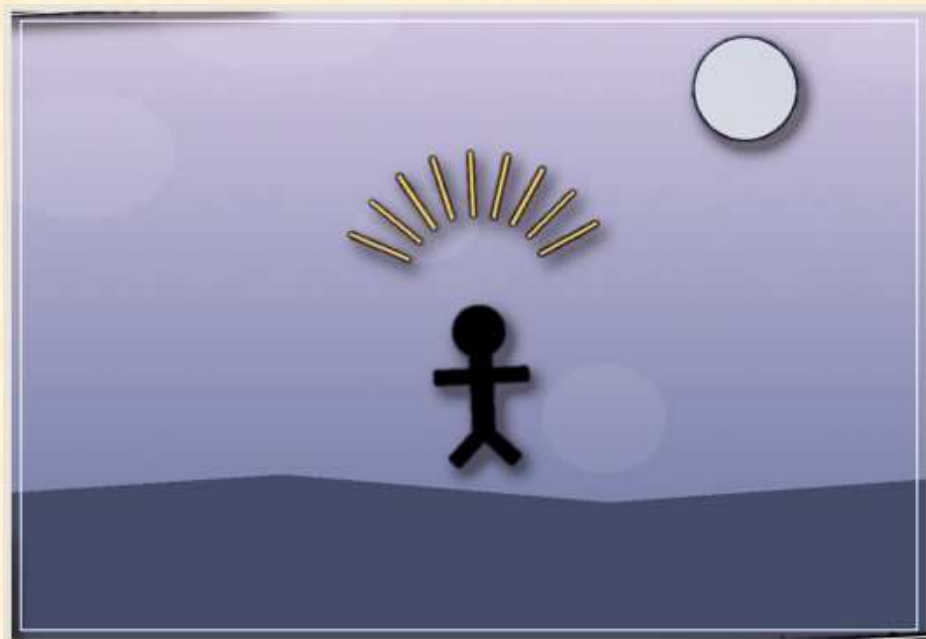
Silence filled the house. Mansha waited for an answer with her hands on her hips. Mother held a question in her eyes. And Om — Om entering his fifth year — stayed quiet a moment, as if arranging the words. Then he spoke. And what he said is the heart of this story.



Chapter 9: The Child Guru's Answer





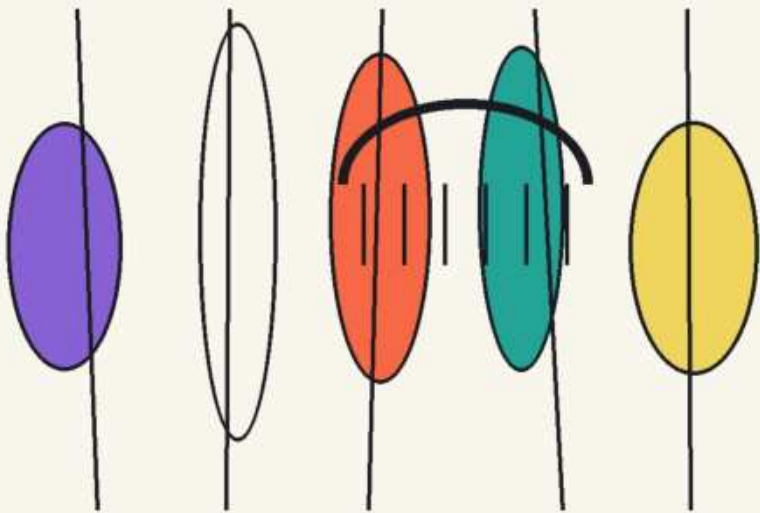


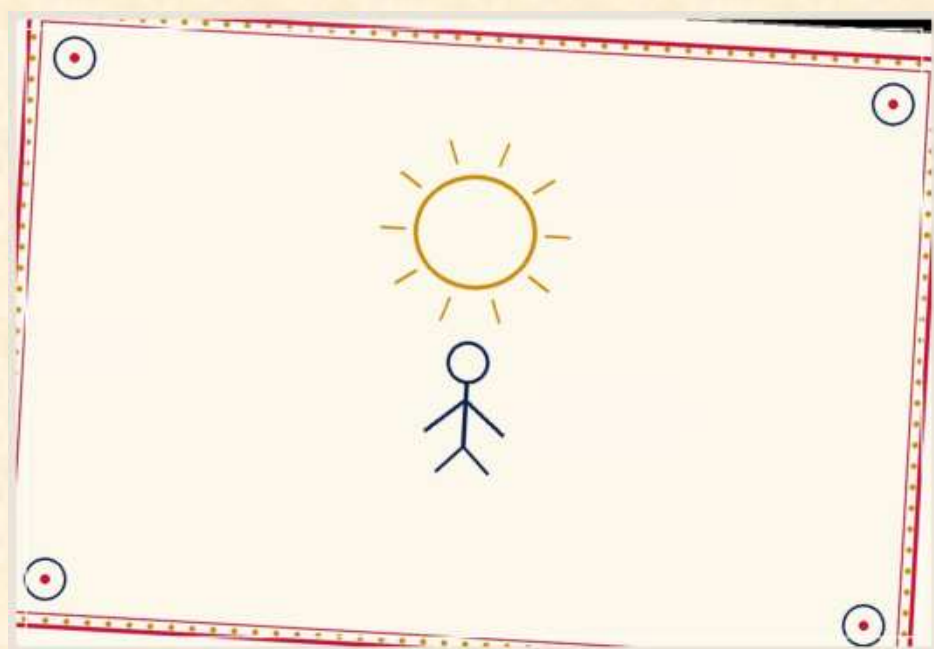
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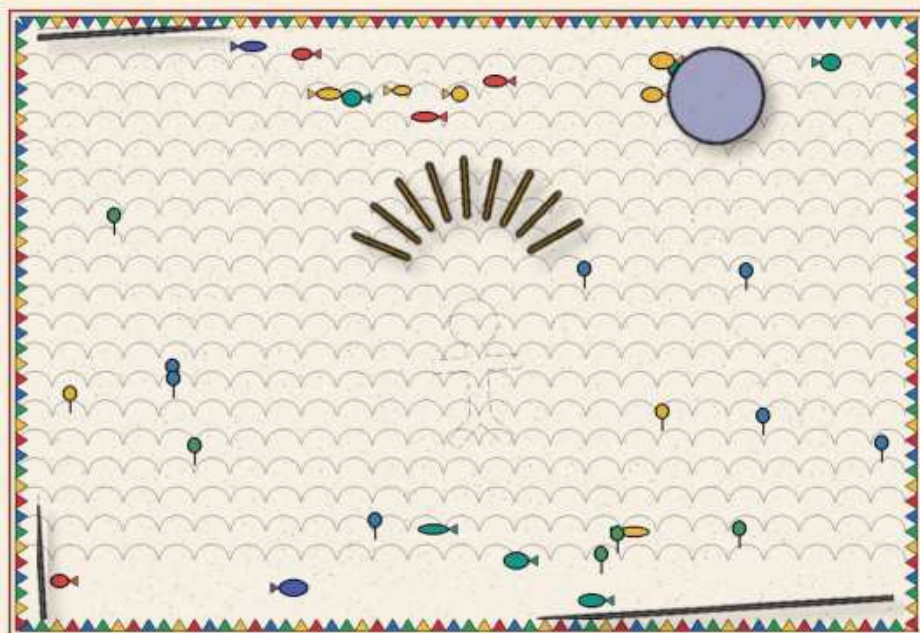


"Mother, he does not know me. He is new. That is why he called me dirty. When he comes to know all of us, he will hardly call anyone dirty."

That was all. No complaint, no revenge, no excuse for himself. A five-year-old child had found the root of the insult — not knowing. The one who does not know is the one who calls another dirty; once he knows, he will not say it at all. In this one sentence there was forgiveness, there was patience, and there was that trust which is hardest to place in the world at the hardest times — that people are not bad inside, only unknown.





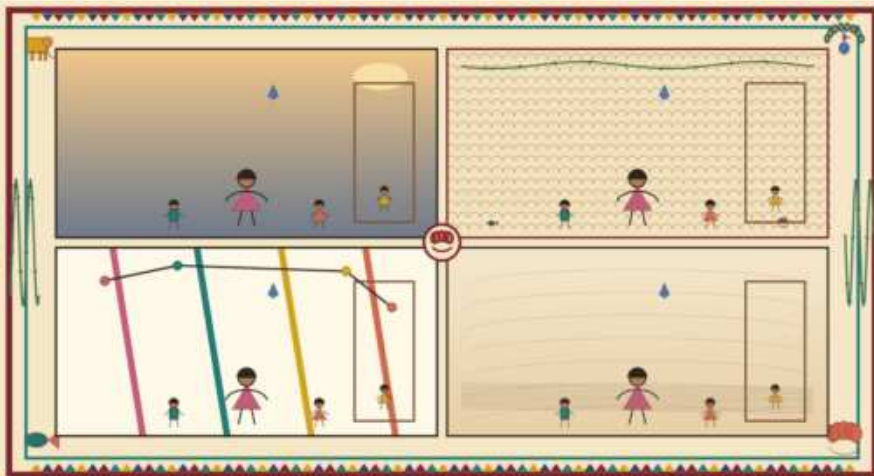


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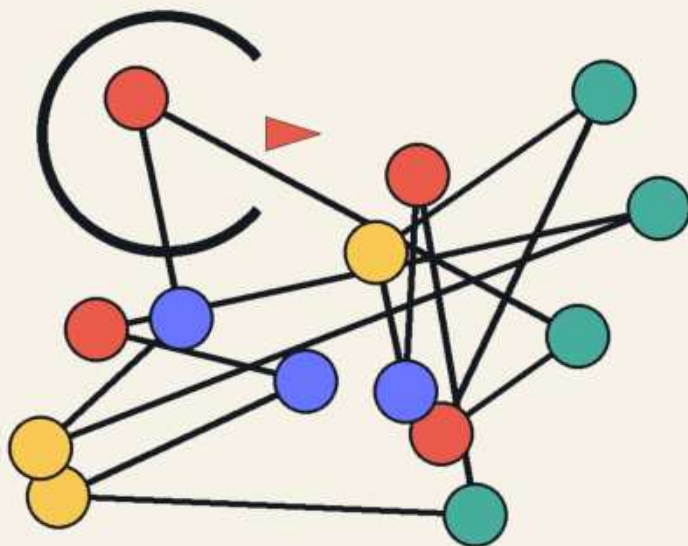


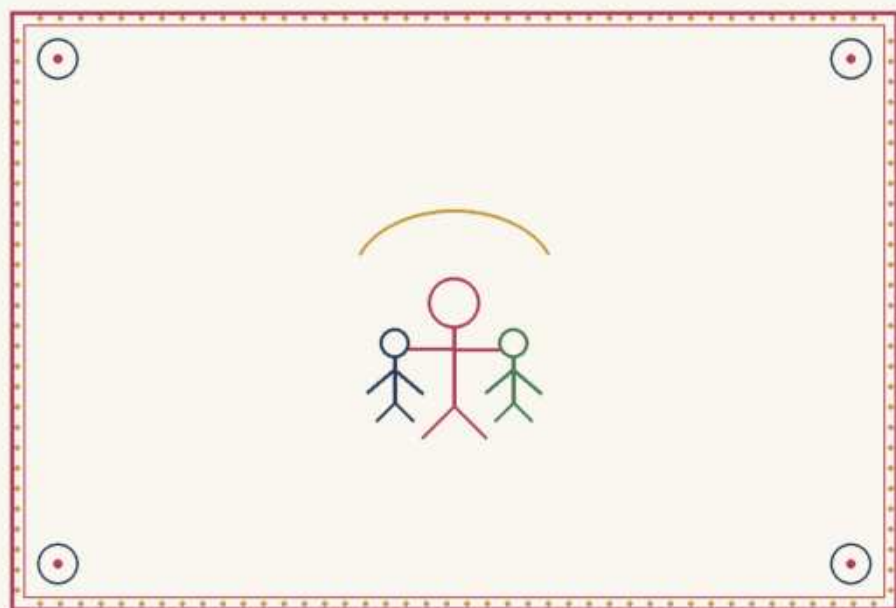
Mansha's hand slipped from her hip of its own accord. All her anger — which had been at Susen, then at Om — melted into the air. For the one she had fought for stood above the fight itself.

And Mother? Tears came into Mother's eyes. She too had felt anger — that her son had stayed quiet, that he had not said anything to Susen. And now she was ashamed of that very anger. She had meant to teach her son to fight — and her son had taught her to understand. Who was the guru, and who the disciple?



Chapter 10: A Mother's Tears





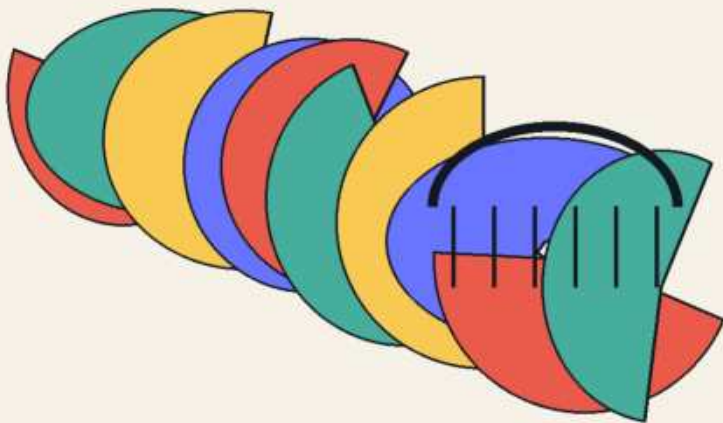


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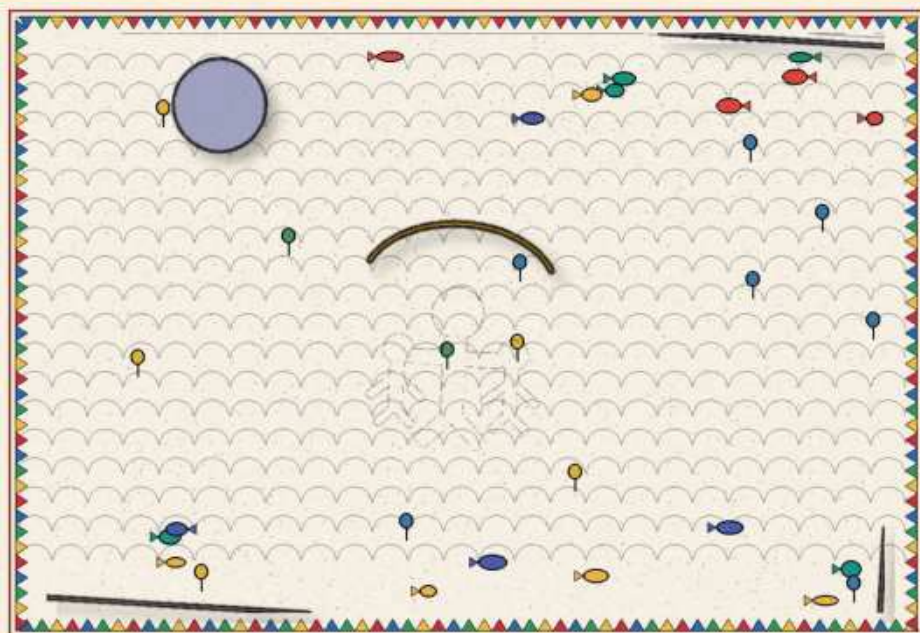


Those tears were not of sorrow. They were the tears of the moment when any mother suddenly sees that the child in her lap has grown larger inside than she herself.

And just then she saw Mansha — plaits untidy, cheeks still red with temper, yet in her eyes the same old care for Om. Look — how pure this is! One child who became fire at an insult to her friend; and another who washed that same insult with the water of forgiveness. One had heart, the other had understanding — and both were under five!





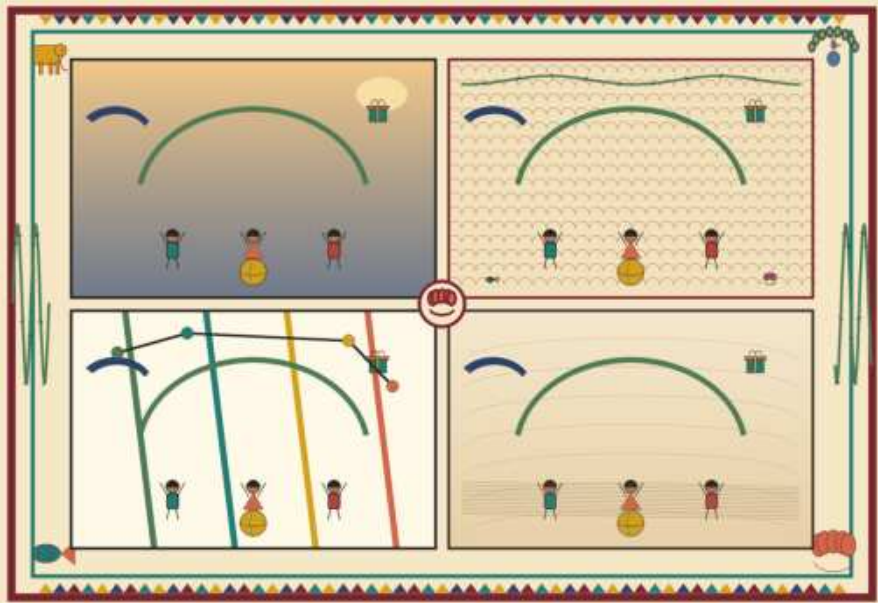


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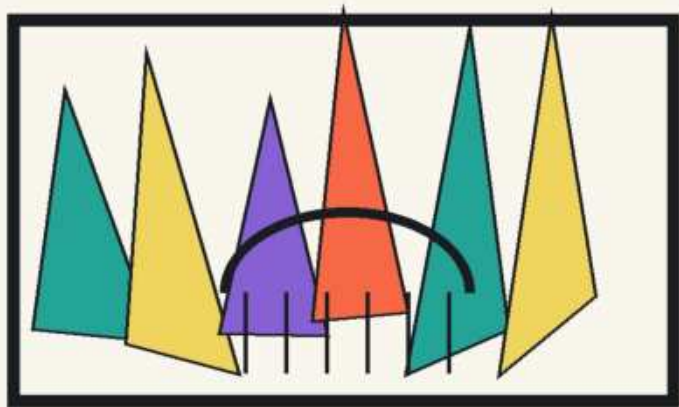


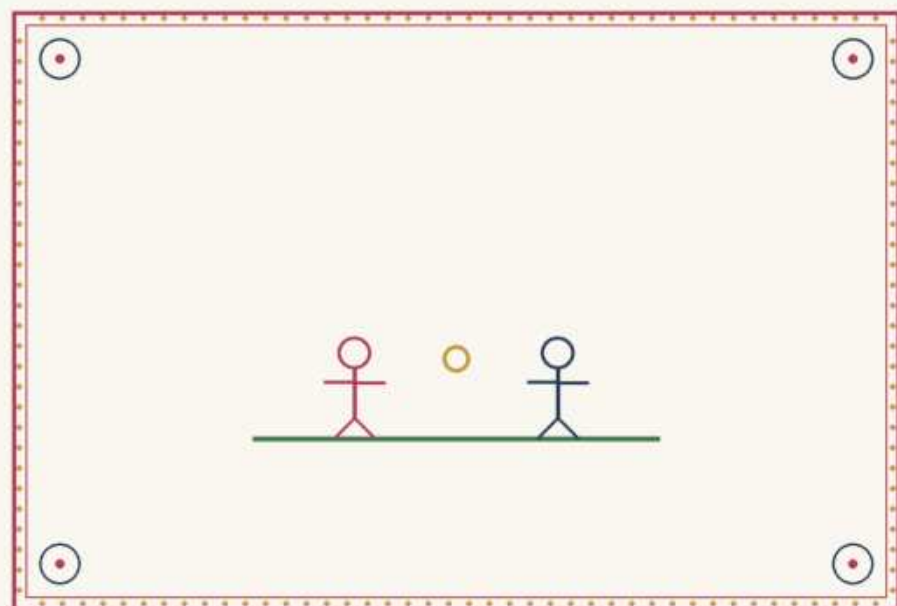
Mother pulled both children to her chest and began kissing them again and again — Om's head, Mansha's plaits. Outside, evening was falling; from the kitchen came the smell of rice.

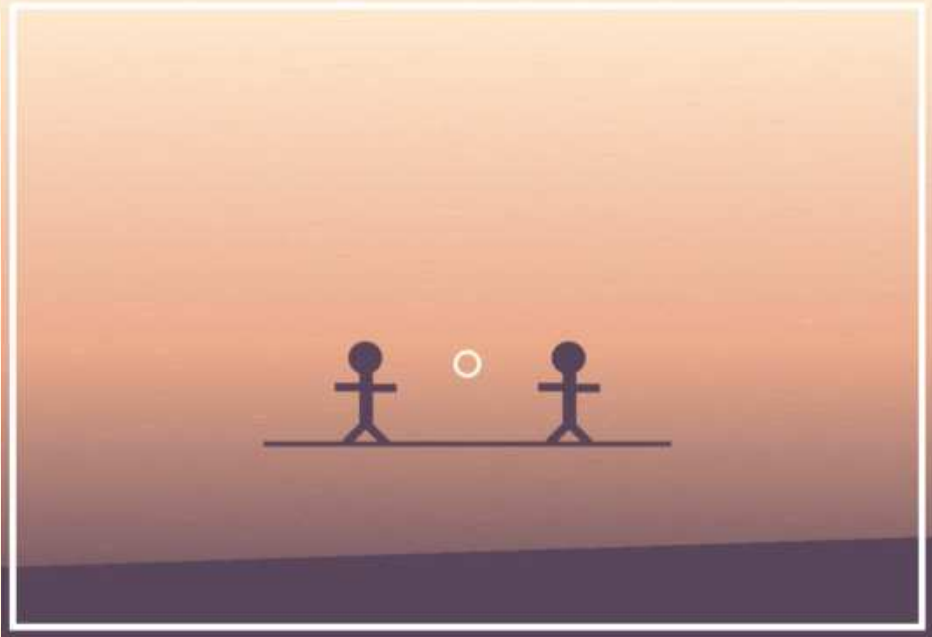
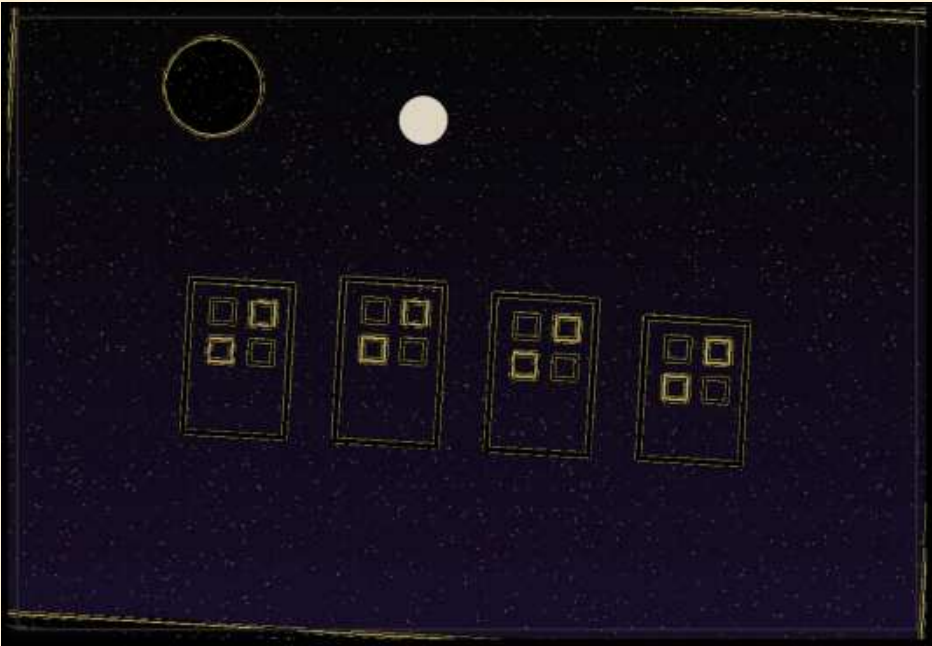
That evening Om's mother fed Mansha with her own hands and walked her to the door when it was time to go. Mahua stood waiting below. Mother stroked her head too — "Take good care of the little one." There were three mothers there that evening — one who had given birth, one who was raising her, and one who stood having learned something from her own son.



Chapter 11: Coming to Know





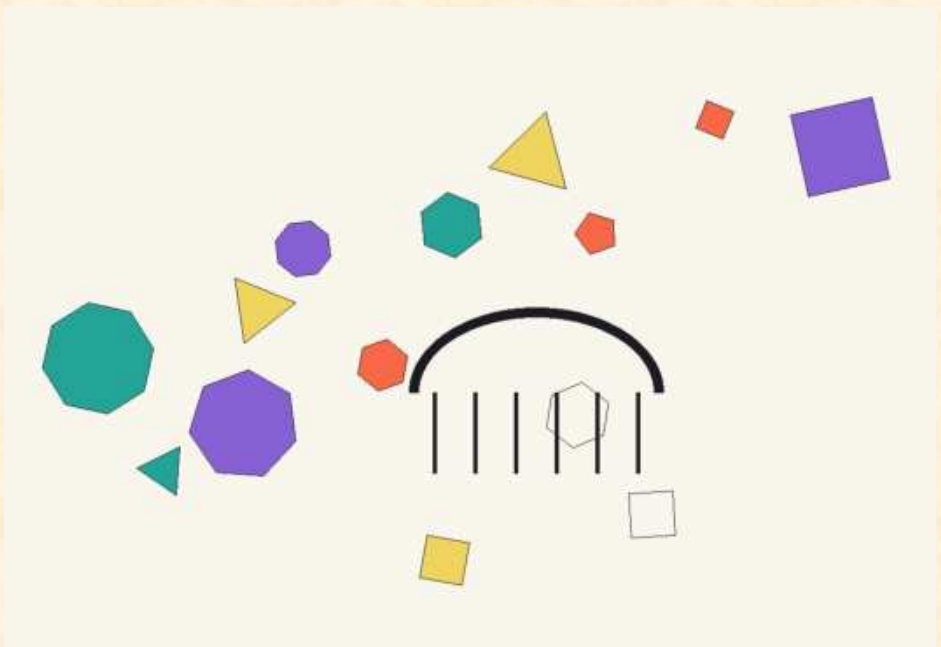


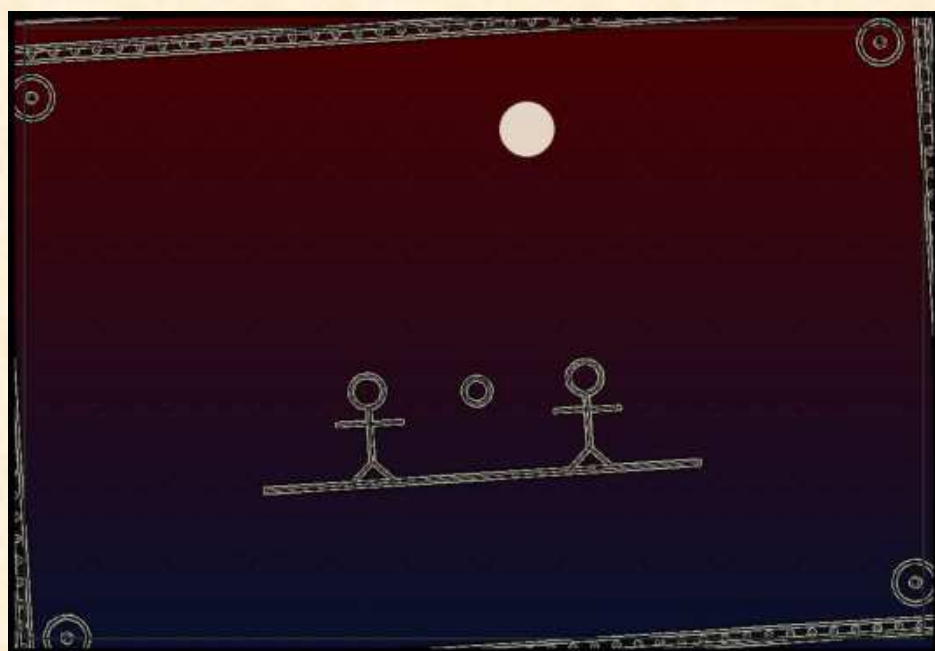
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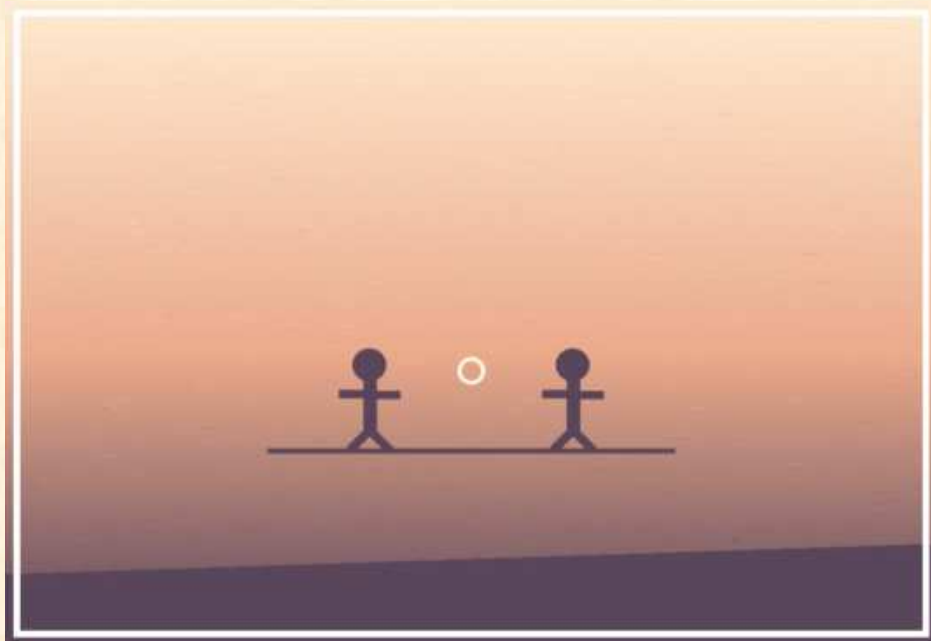
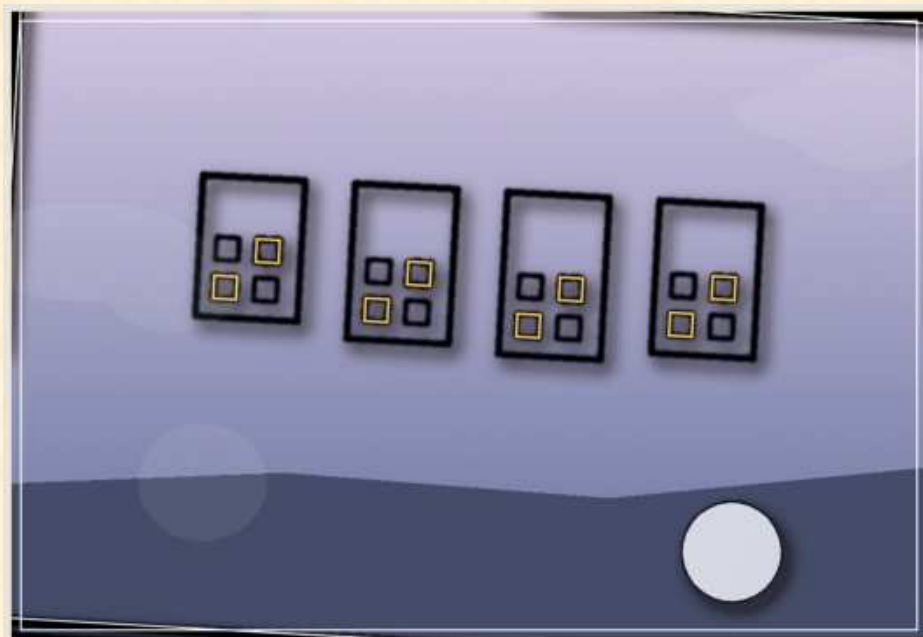


And what happened after that? The story stands at that same question where Om's prophecy rests — "When he comes to know all of us..."

And coming to know is no magic. Coming to know means playing together, getting wet together, winning and losing together. In the end the park makes everyone known to one another — that is the park's dharma. Some evening Susen's ball too will fall into the same circle where Om and Mansha play — and in play the word "dirty" does not last many days; play rubs and rubs until it becomes "friend."





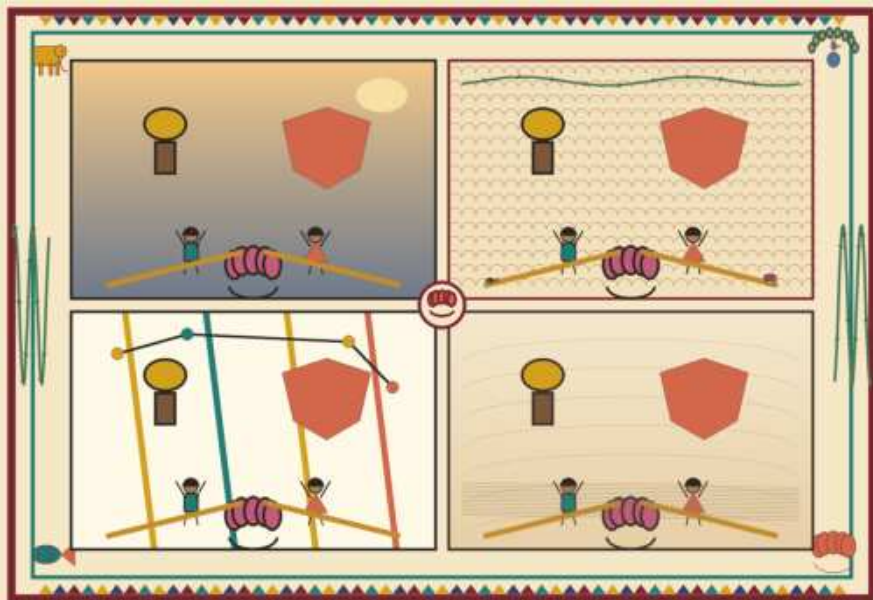


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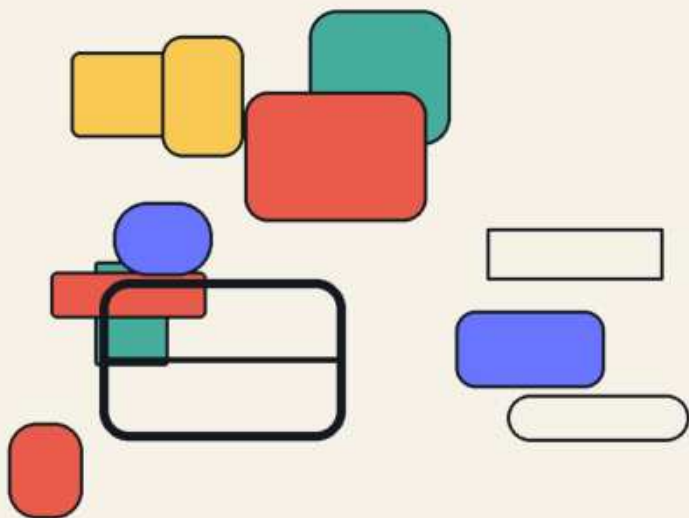


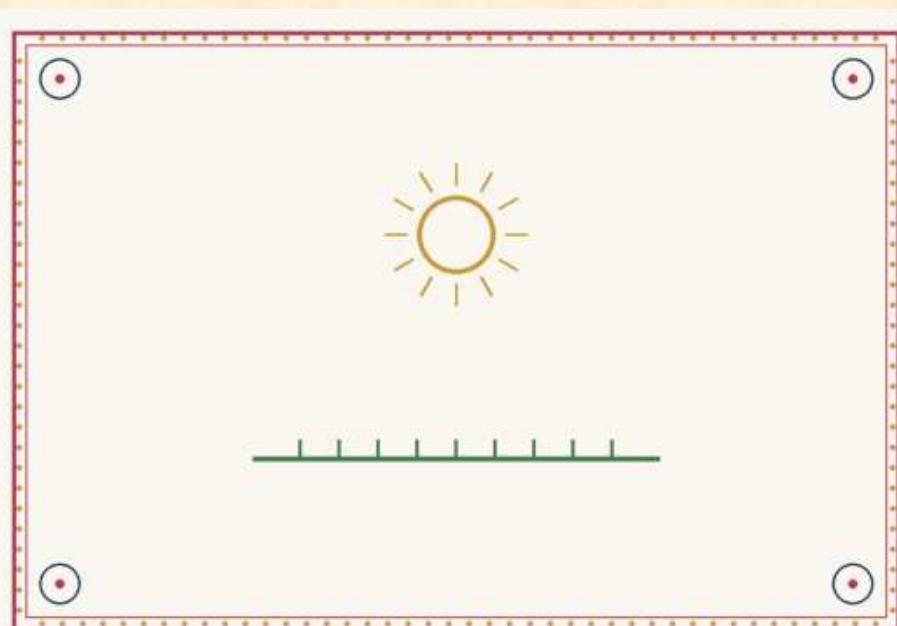
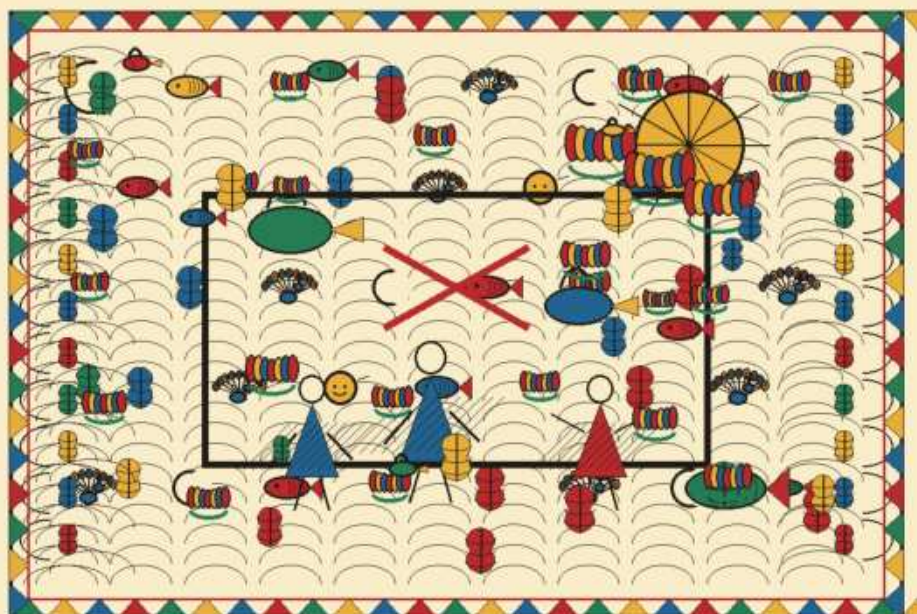
Birthdays will come again, cake will be cut again, gifts will be bought again. Only this time, perhaps, the doorbell will ring one extra time — and Mother, without even being asked, will have bought one extra gift.

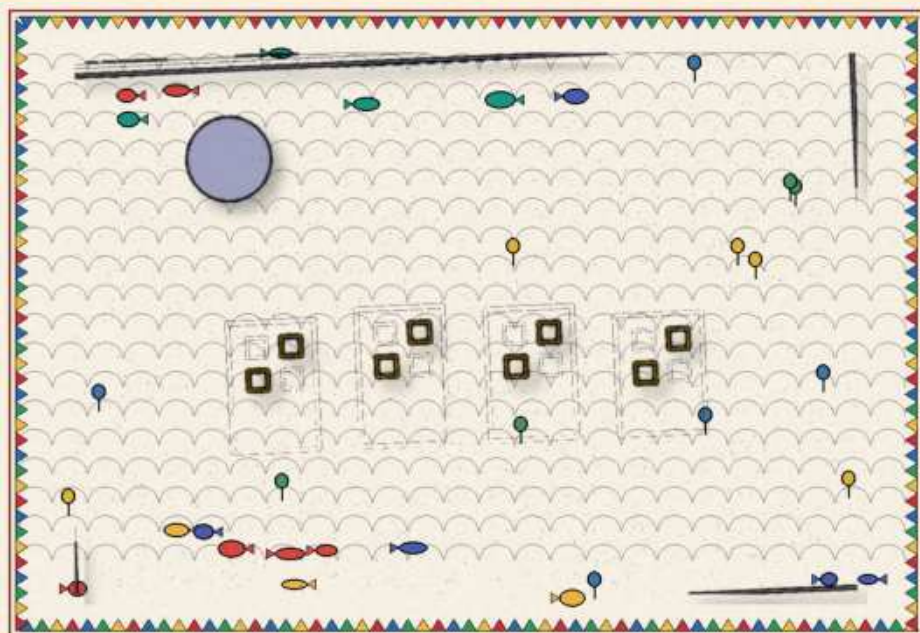
And Mahua? She will still bring Mansha to the park each evening, still hum her unfinished song from her village. Sometimes, sitting by a plate sent by Om's mother, she may even sing the song a little further — for where someone knows you by name, the song's throat does not fill up.



Chapter 12: The Child Guru







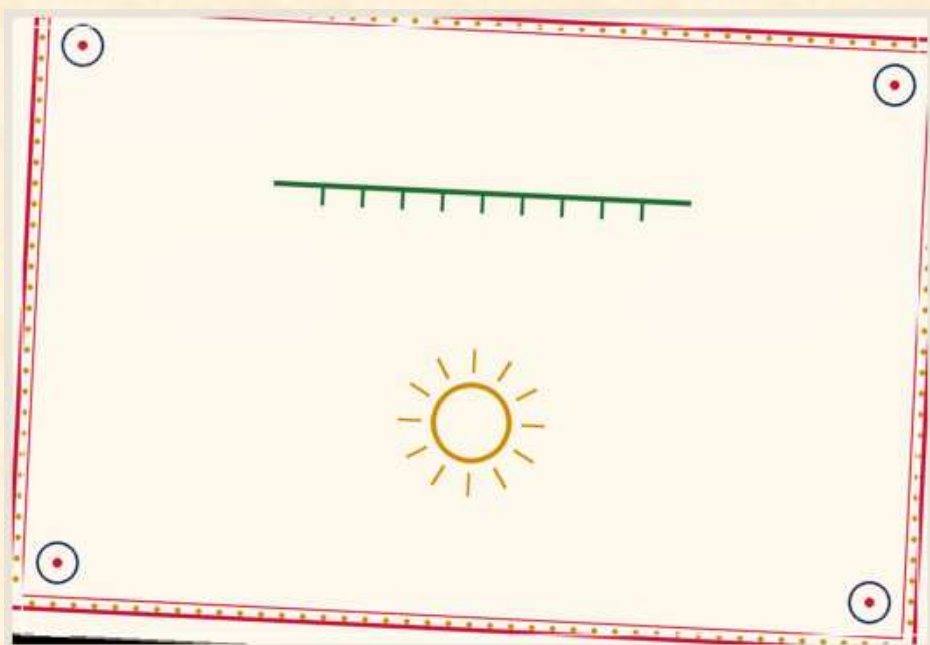
Picture 23



Who is a guru? One who shows the path in the dark. Who showed the path that evening in that Delhi housing colony? — A child smaller than five, who did not know how to fight, but knew how to understand.

Grown-ups look for the answer to a quarrel in more quarrelling, the answer to an insult in more insult. Om looked for the answer in coming to know. That is why he was a child, yet became a guru — the Child Guru.







Picture 24



And Mansha? She was no lesser guru. She taught that standing up for a friend is also a dharma — to speak the truth, and not stop for fear. One guru of forgiveness, one guru of courage. Together they make the whole lesson.

Even today evening falls in the grassy park; even today the swings keep swinging. And anyone who sits there with open ears may still hear two little names — Om, and Mansha — and with them that sentence which will never grow old: The one who comes to know does not call another dirty.

The End



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Deena-Bhadari

The Tragic Heroic Tale of Two Brothers from
Jogiyanganagar

[Original Maithili, Translation from Maithili into English by the author
himself]



Gajendra Thakur

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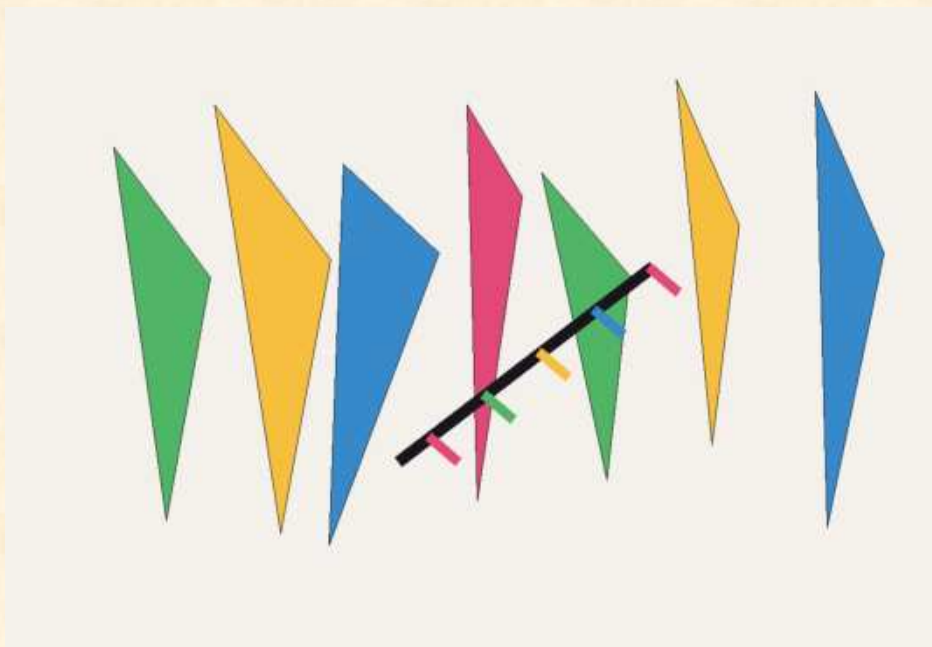
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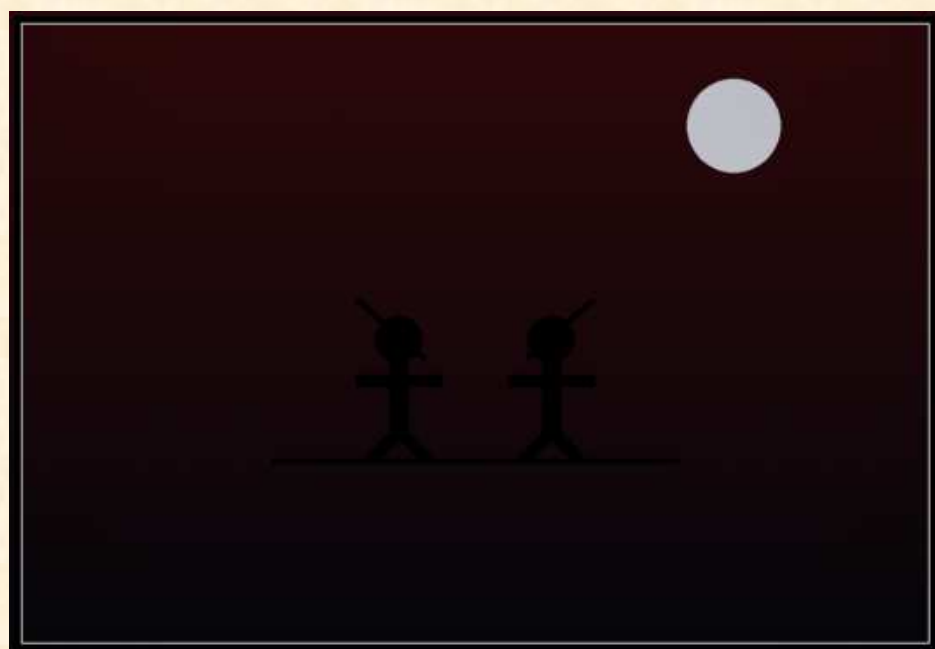
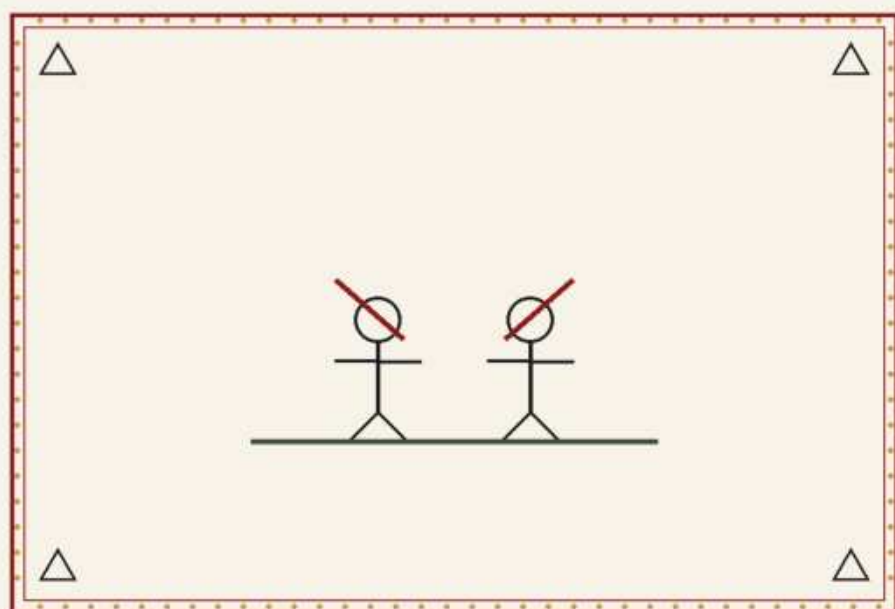
Prologue: Two Sons of the Soil

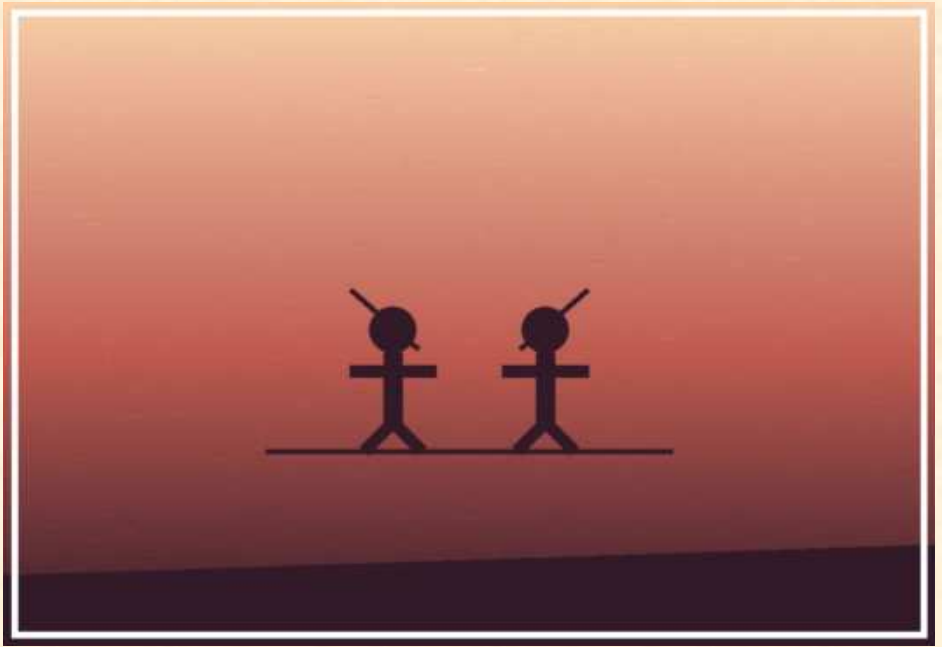
In the Mithila region of Nepal there is a village called Jogiyanagar. Its earth is earth like any other village's — yet in that earth two names are sunk so deep that even today, when a hoe strikes the ground, they seem to ring out: Deena, and Bhadari.

This is not a story of kings and queens. This is the story of two brothers who were Musahars, who were farmhands, and in whose arms there lived such strength that the very ground grew soft when it saw them. But where there is strength, there is also a plot to break it. So this is a heroic tale — and a tragic one too.

Chapter 1: Hoes of Five Maunds







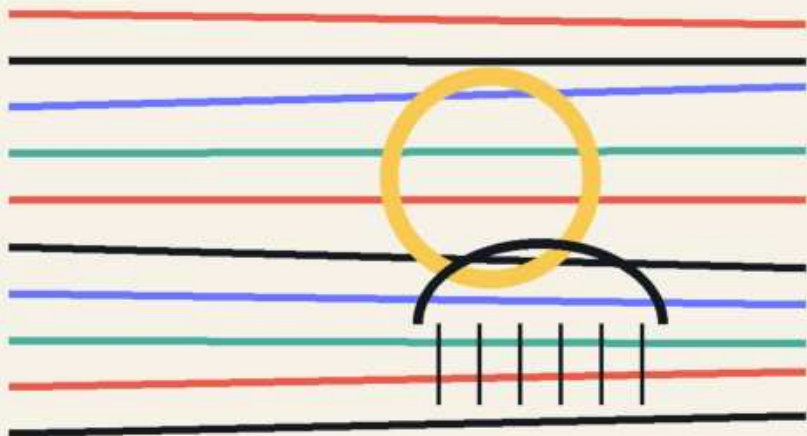
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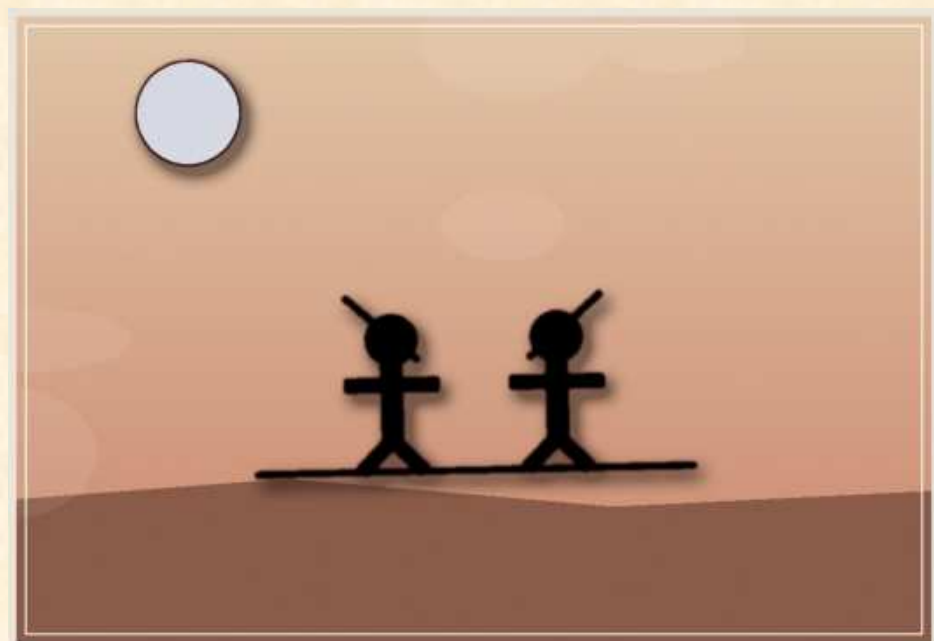
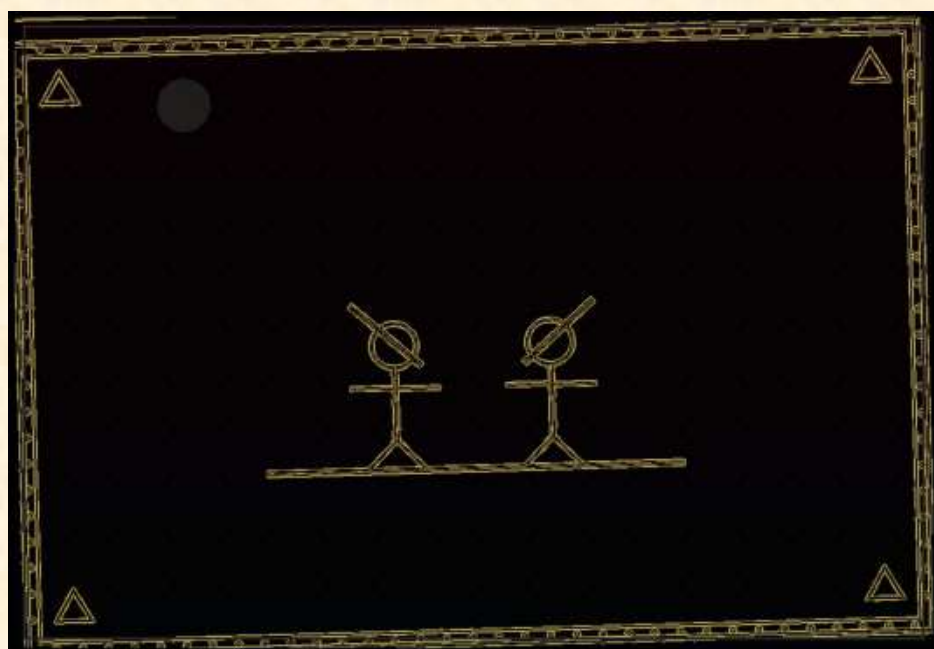


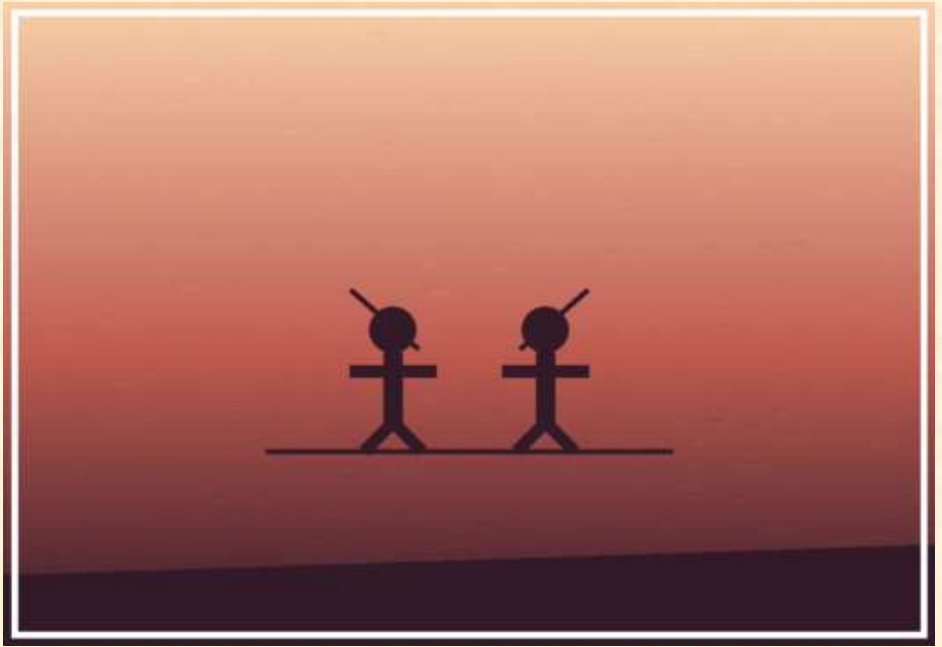
In Jogiyanagar there lived two brothers — Deena and Bhadari. Of the Musahar people, they worked the fields. In their house there was neither wealth nor land — only their bodies, and in those bodies a strength whose fame had travelled for miles and miles.

Each brother owned a hoe of five maunds. Five maunds — so heavy that if another person tried to lift one, his shoulder would buckle. But in Deena and Bhadari's hands those hoes danced like toys. At dawn they went down to the fields with the sun, and by evening they had tilled a whole bigha of earth — a whole bigha in a single day!

Whoever saw them pressed a finger to his teeth in wonder. People said, 'In these two brothers' arms there is the strength of a full-grown bull.' But Deena and Bhadari never grew proud of their strength. Strength, for them, was bread — not a weapon — until someone forced them to make it one.







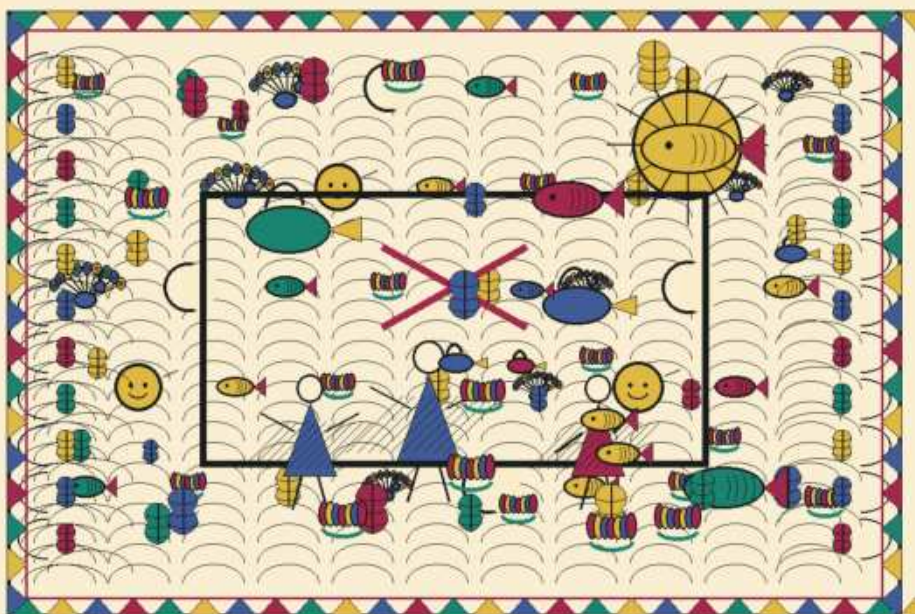
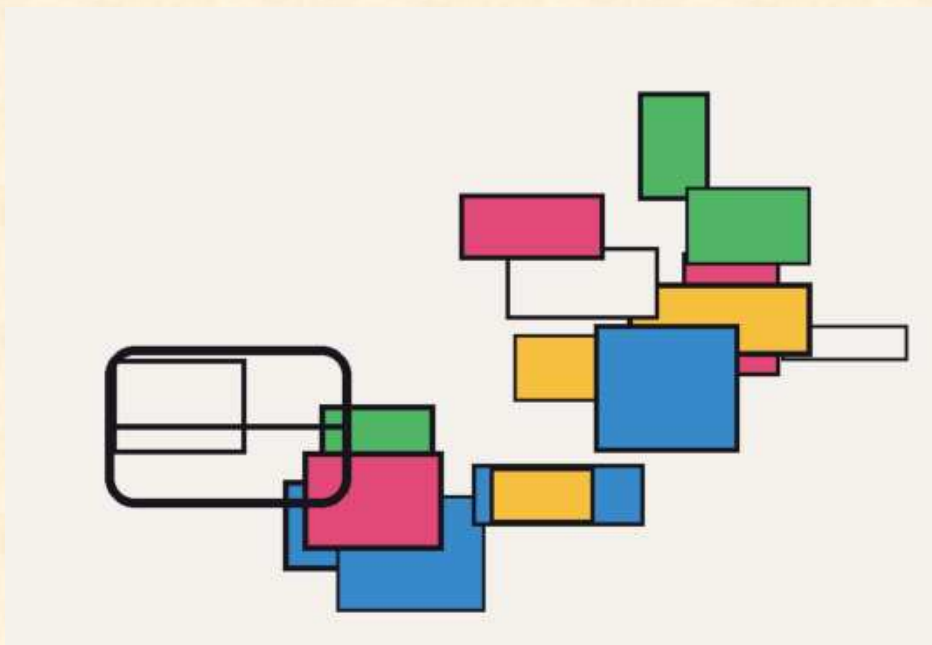
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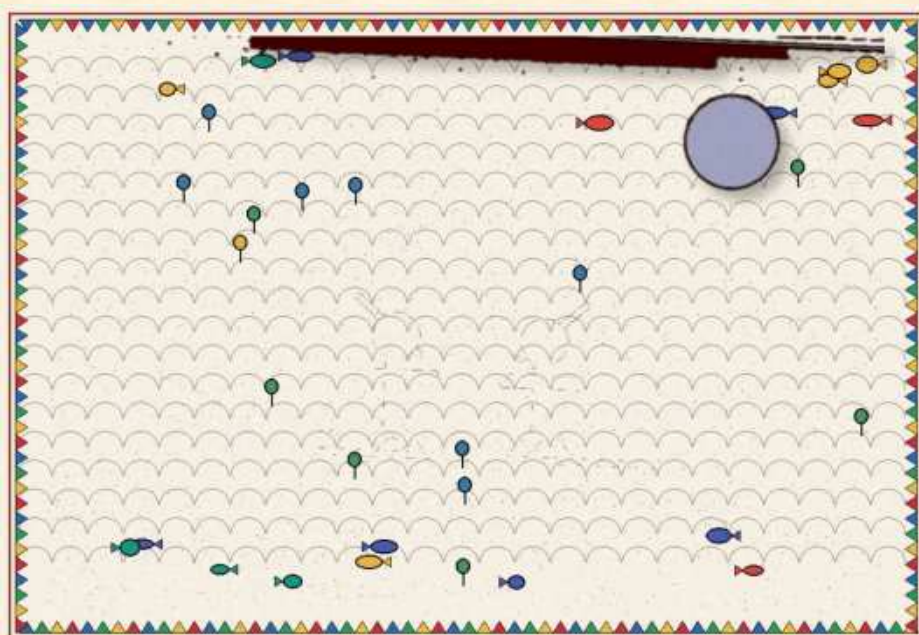
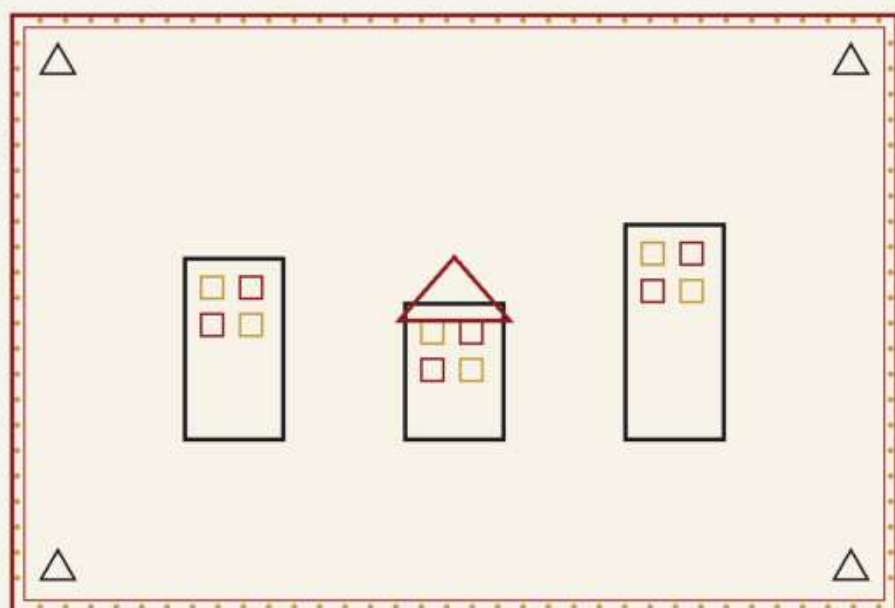


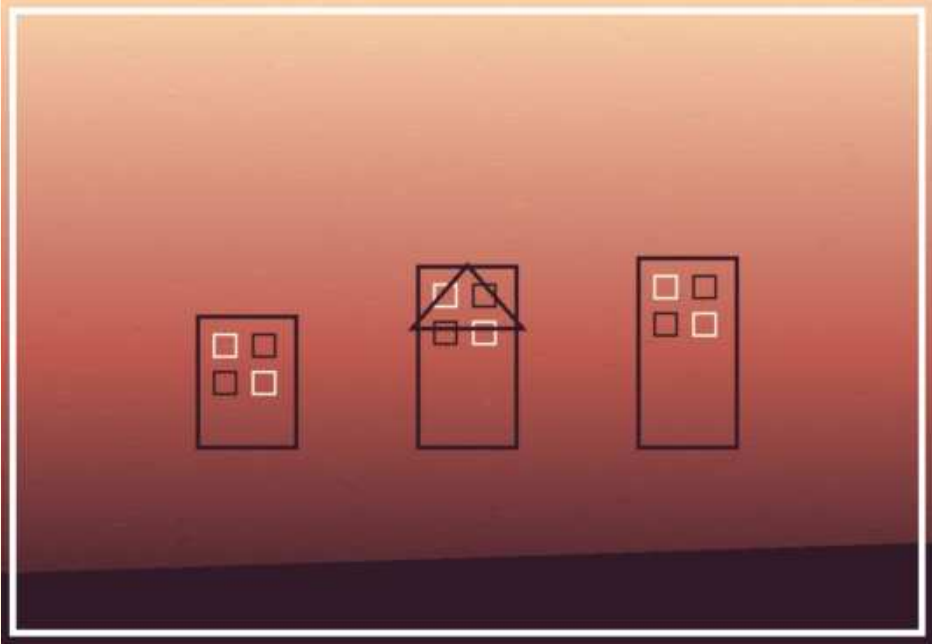
In the evenings both brothers sat beside their mother, Nirso. The old mother, seeing the calluses on her sons' hands, would ask, 'Why do you toil so hard, my boys?' Deena would laugh. 'Mother, the earth is our mother too. How can one grow tired serving her?' — In that house there was no wealth, but it was full of dharma.

And this very dharma, this very strength, this very name — one day reached the ears of Time. For a name has one fault: as far as it travels, just so far does it also bring an enemy.

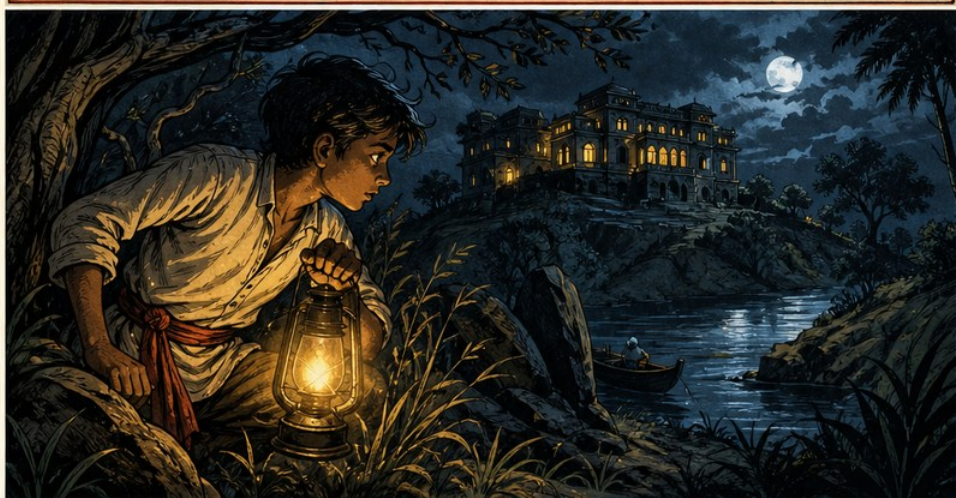
Chapter 2: The Landlord of Janjar







Picture 3

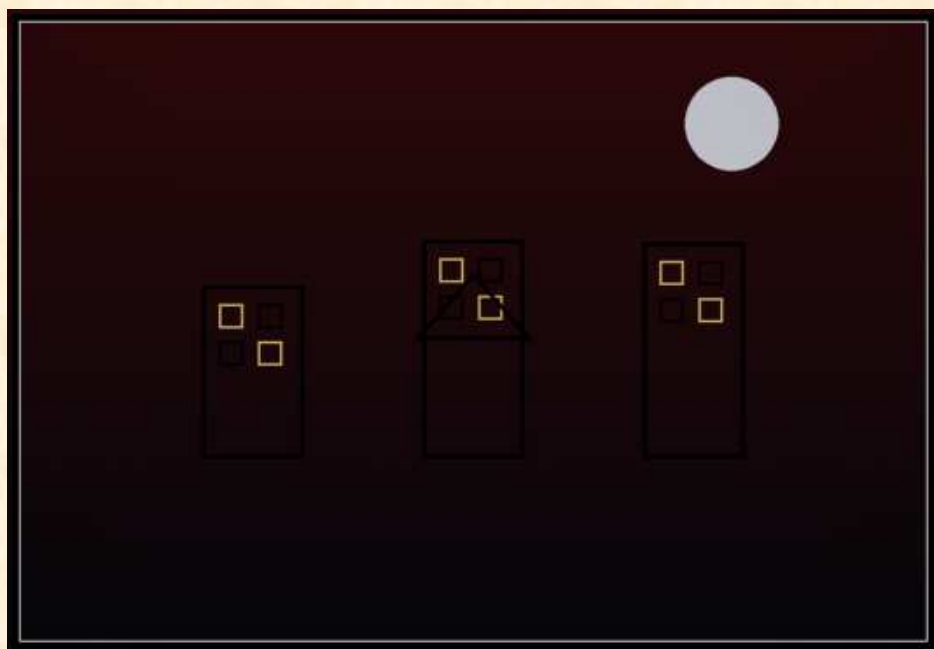
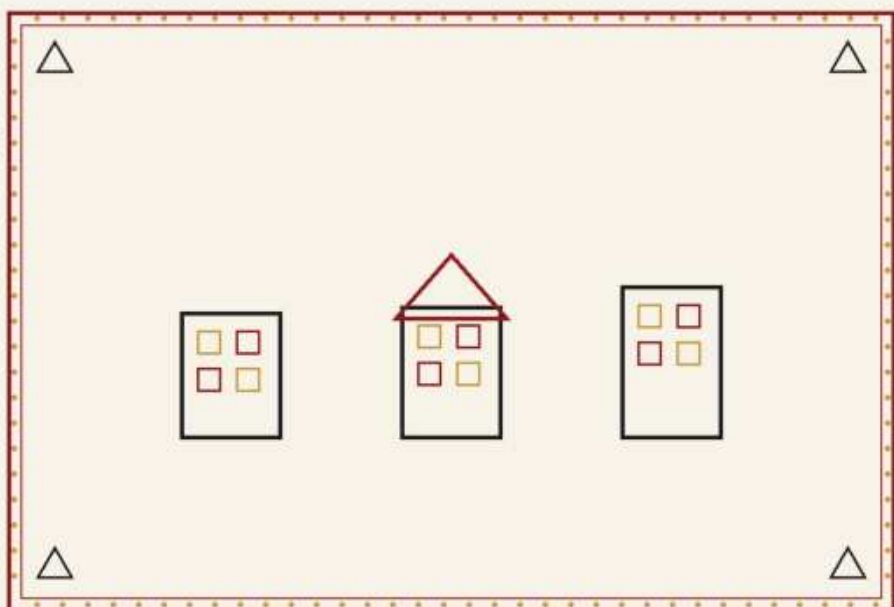


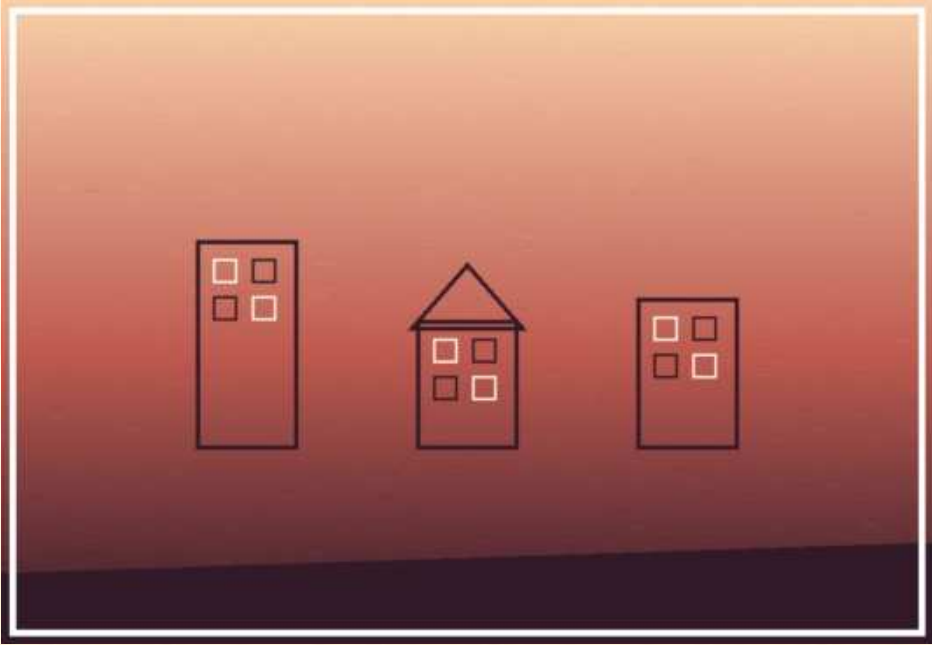
Beside Jogiyanagar lay the village of Janjar. Its landlord was Kanak Singh, and his wife was Budhni. Both had wealth without end — but greater than wealth was their pride, and greater than pride was their cruelty.

They were thoroughly wicked, the pair of them. They did not even regard farmhands as human beings. They took full work and paid half wages; if anyone spoke up, they got the lash. Grain grew in every field of Janjar, but in every grain of that harvest someone else's tears were mixed.

The farmhands stayed silent — for who would speak? When your belly is held in another's fist, your tongue ties itself. But even silence has a limit, and that limit arrived on the day the names of the two brothers reached Kanak Singh's ears.







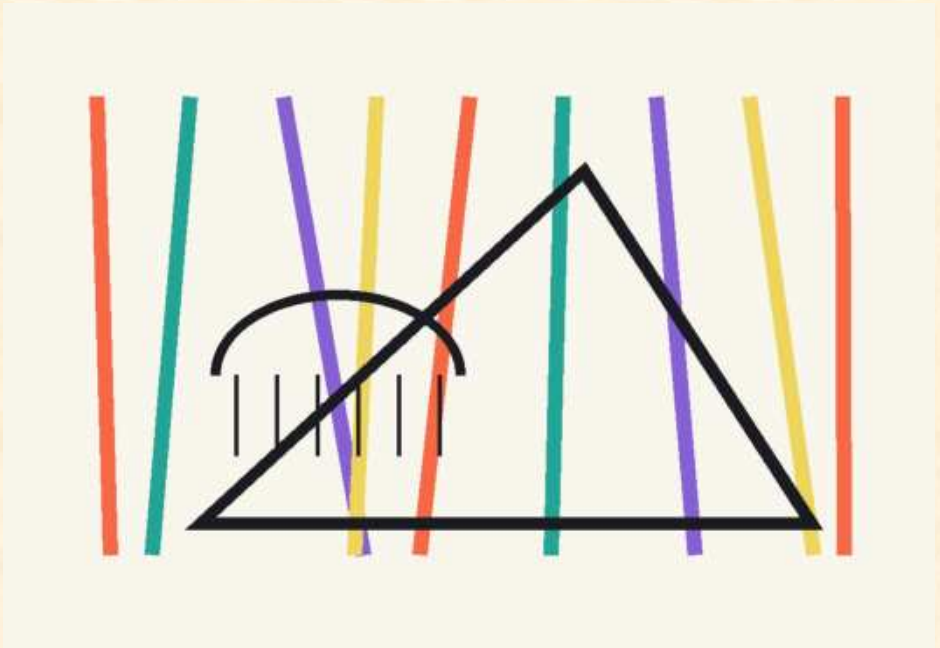
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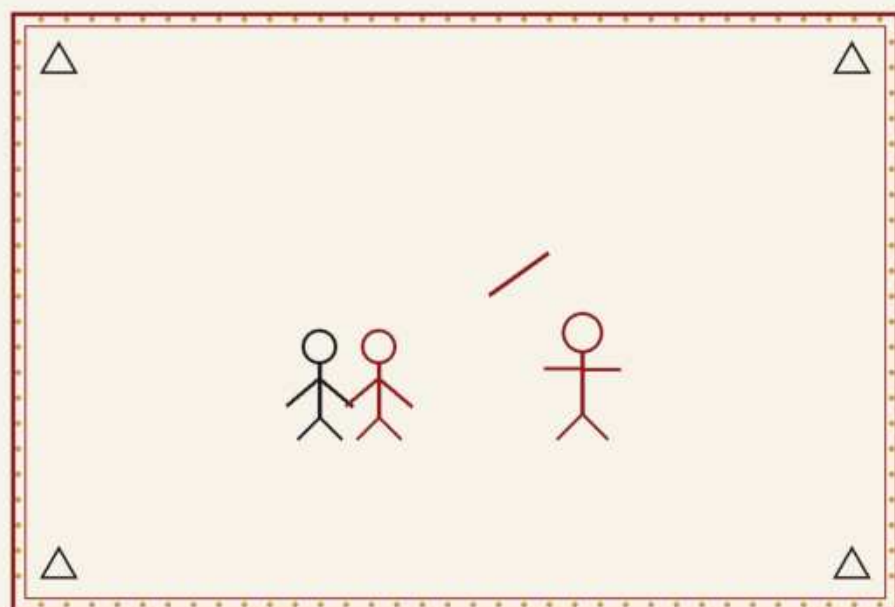
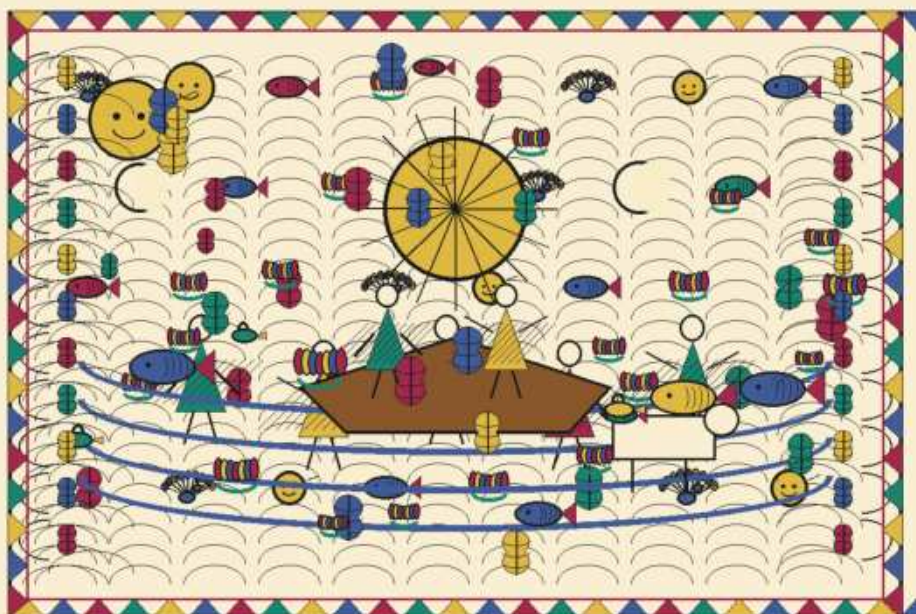


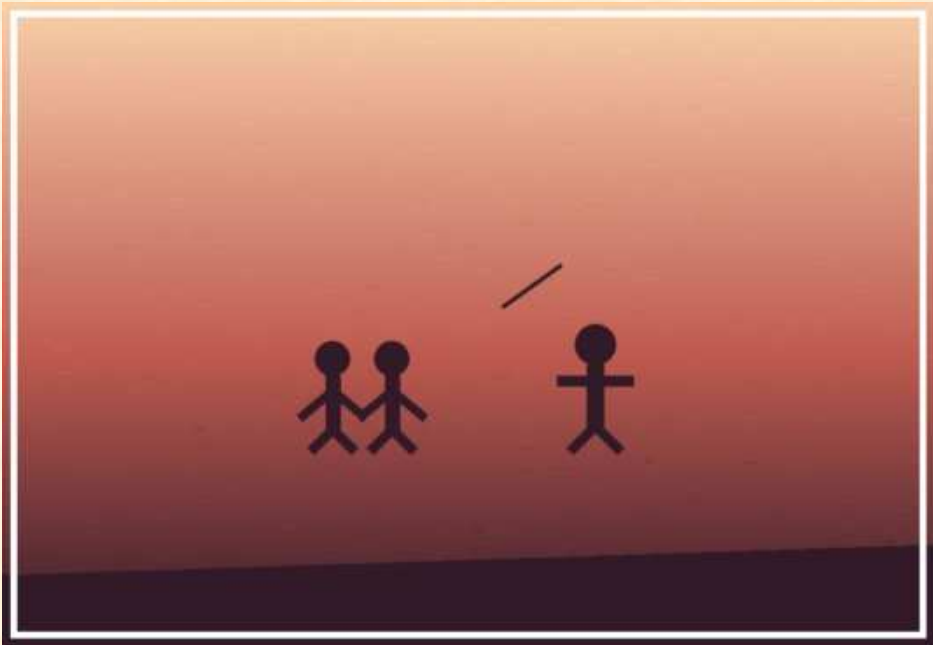
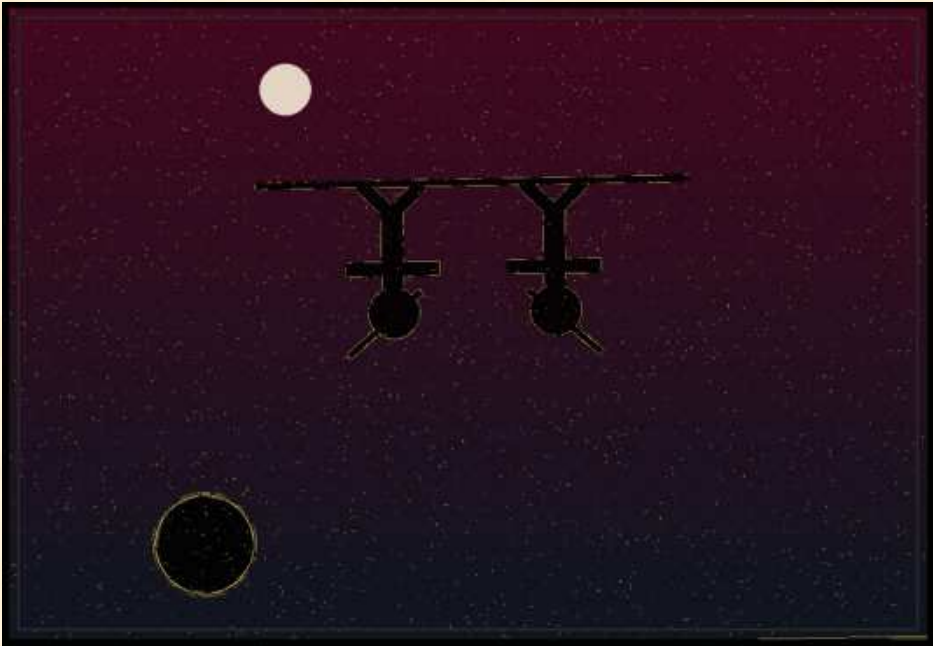
Kanak Singh learned that in Jogiyanagar, Deena and Bhadari each had a hoe of five maunds, and that they tilled bigha upon bigha of land in a single day. The landlord's eyes lit up — but that light was not admiration. It was the light that comes into a bird-catcher's eyes when he spies a parrot.

'If such a pair of bullocks were yoked to my fields,' Kanak thought, 'Janjar's harvest would double.' — And that is the first mark of a man who sees people as cattle.

Chapter 3: They Beat Him and Drove Him Off







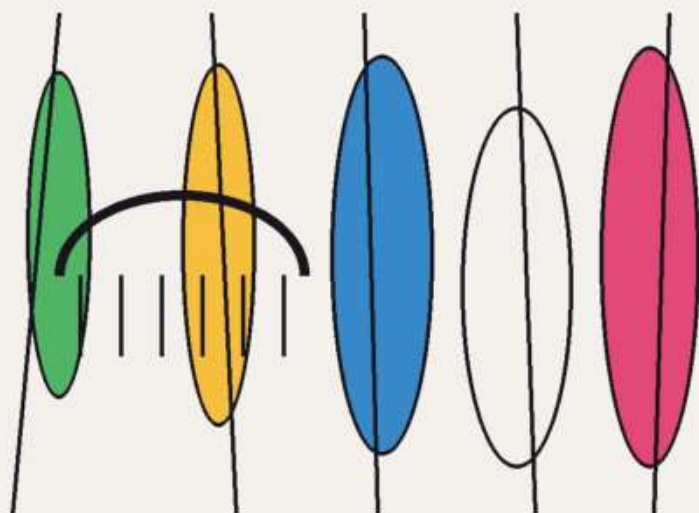
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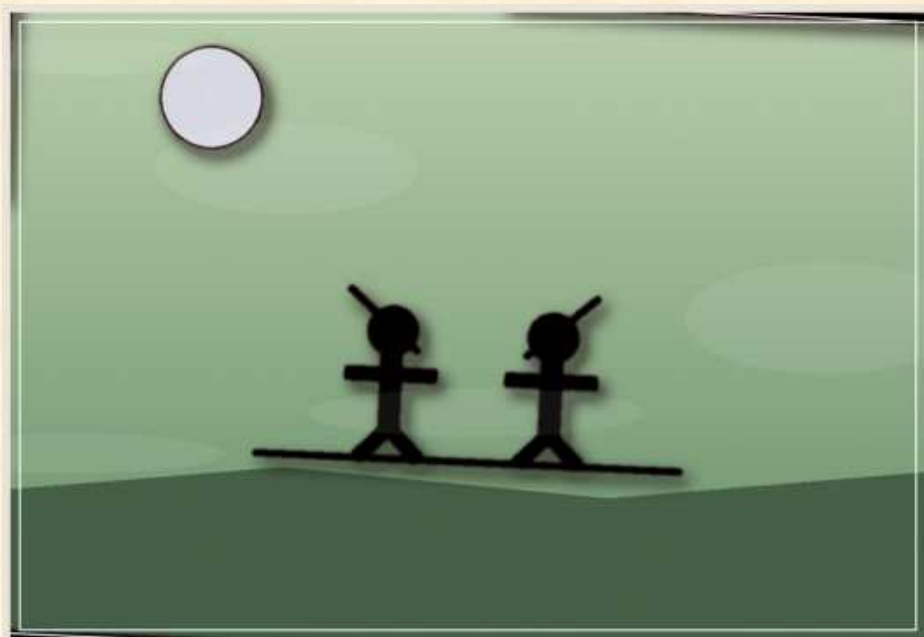
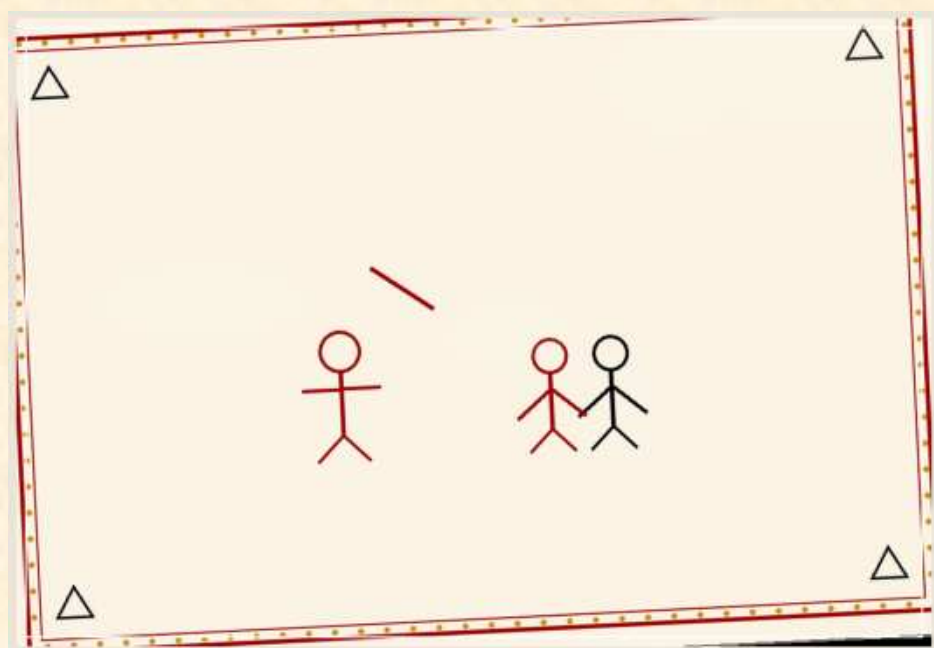


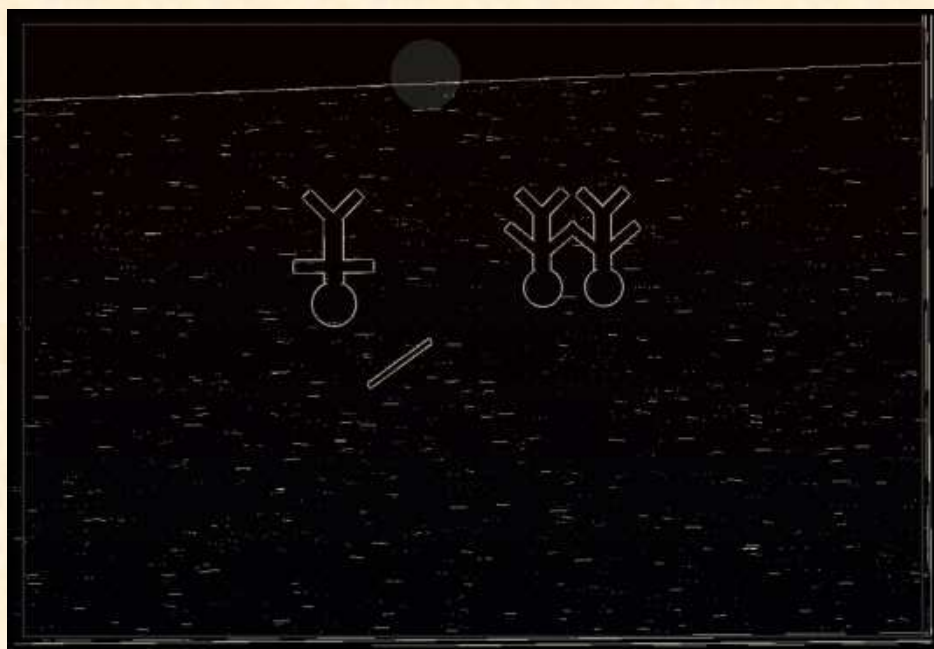
Kanak Singh went to Jogiyanagar himself. Sweet words on his lips, a snare in his heart — 'Deena-Bhadari! I have heard of your strength. Come to my village, work my fields, and I shall make you rich.'

But Deena and Bhadari were not blind. They knew well what Kanak Singh's 'rich' truly meant — tales of the cruelties done to Janjar's farmhands had reached their ears along with the fame of their hoes. The ache of an empty belly, the welts of the whip on a back, and homes breaking under half-wages — all of it.

Deena's brow darkened. 'He who does not see his farmhands as human beings will never see our hoes in his fields.' Kanak Singh roared — roaring is an old weapon of landlords. But this time he faced not ordinary labourers; he faced Deena and Bhadari.







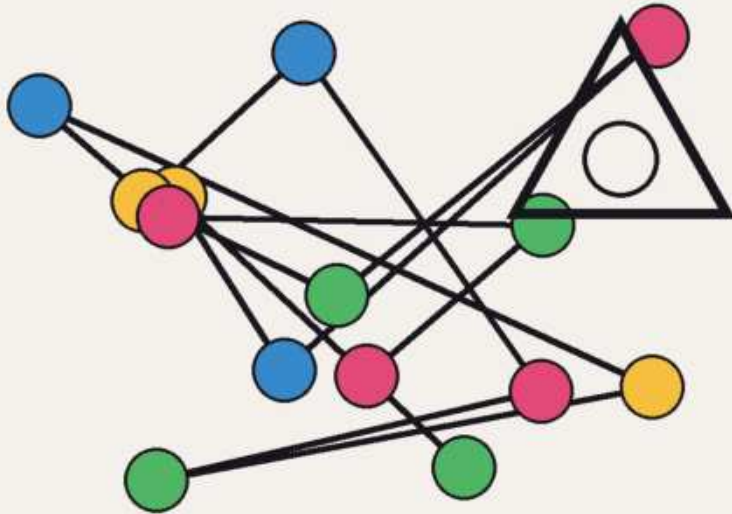
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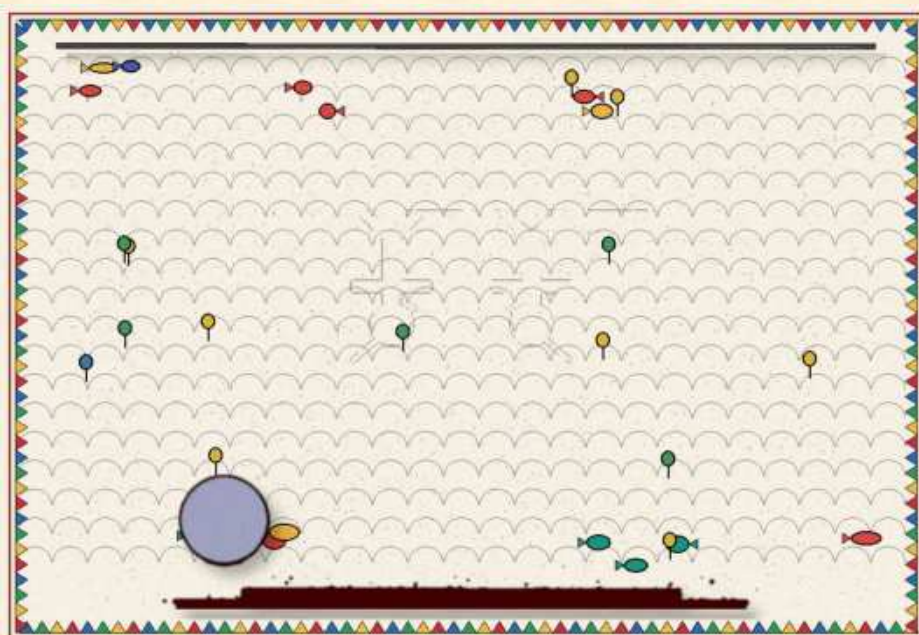
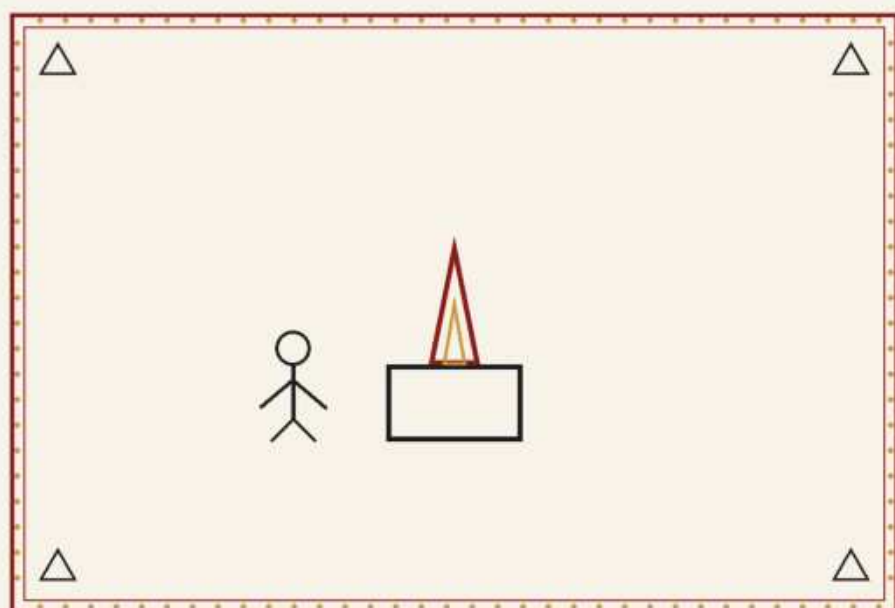


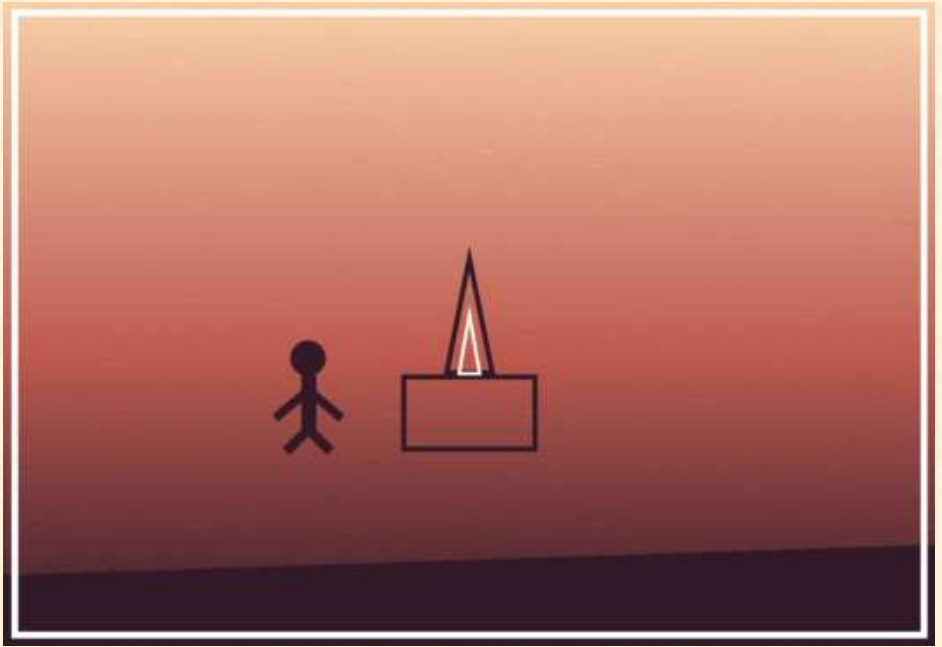
The two brothers fell upon Kanak Singh and beat him thoroughly, then let him go. The landlord at whose mere signal a whole village once trembled that day rolled and scrambled across the earth of Jogiyanagar and fled to his own village. Laughter ran after him — the long-held-back laughter of farmhands, which had been waiting years for a way out.

Deena and Bhadari turned back to their own fields as if nothing had happened. But something had happened — something very great. Kanak Singh had fled with his back turned, yet his humiliation reached the mansion of Janjar and became a fire. And Budhni fanned that fire.

Chapter 4: Budhni's Boon







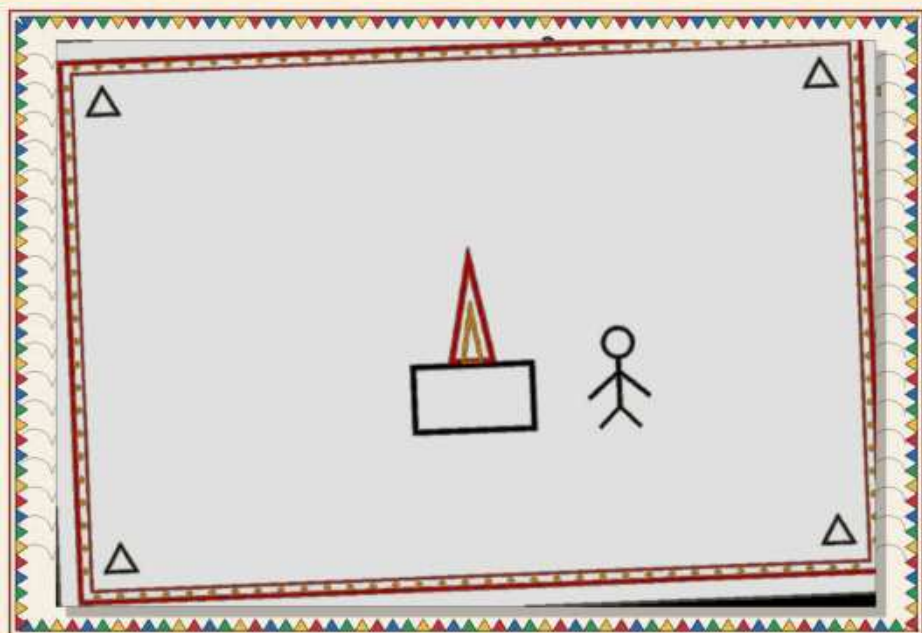
Picture 7



When Budhni learned that two Musahar brothers had beaten her husband and driven him away, she neither wept nor shrieked. She fell silent — and the silence of a cruel person is more frightening than a roar.

She went to the shrine of Salhesh. Raja Salhesh — the god of valour, lord of the forest beasts, at whose shrine the people of Mithila bow their heads. There Budhni performed a fierce penance — giving up food, giving up sleep, fixing her will like iron. Penance has its own law: it does not look at the penitent's intention; it looks only at the penance.

Salhesh appeared. 'Ask. What do you want?'





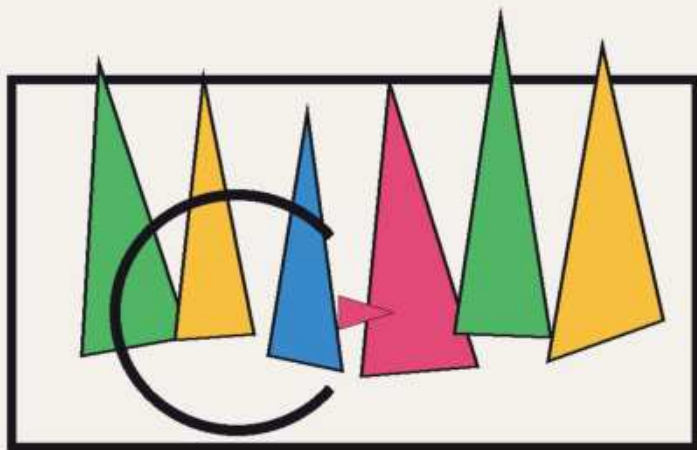
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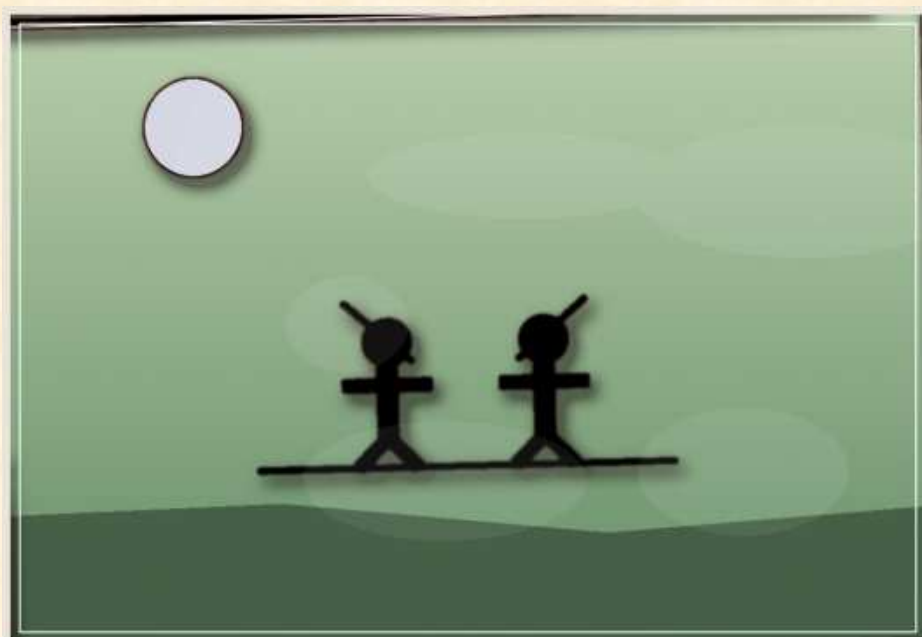
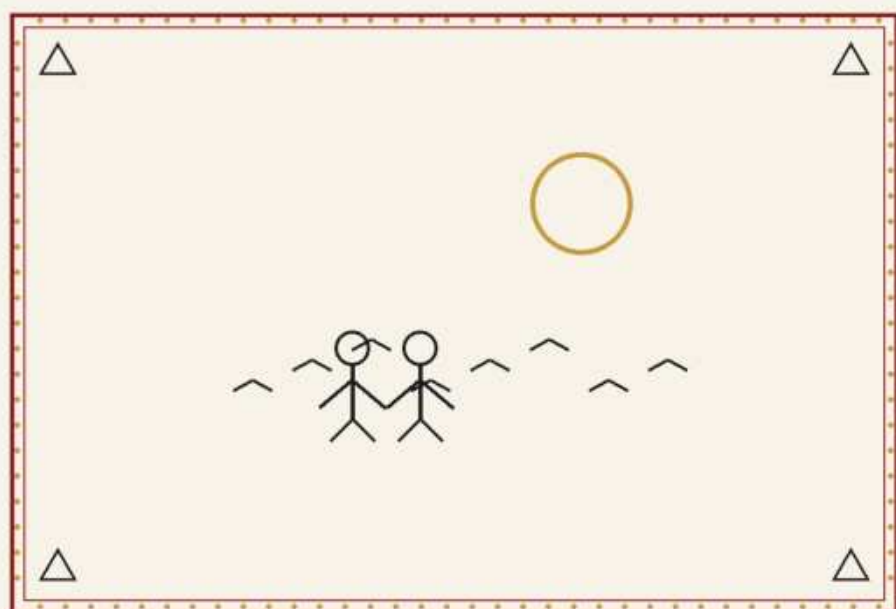


Budhni raised her eyes, and what came from her mouth made even the god shudder — 'The lives of Deena and Bhadari.'

'Ah!' — That was all that left Salhesh's lips, and he fainted. From the very god who protects heroes, the life of a hero had been demanded! But a vow is a vow — the god was bound by his word. What could he do? When he came to himself, two paths lay before Salhesh's eyes: break the vow and lose his godhood, or keep the vow and lose justice. And this is fate's most pitiful game — that sometimes even a god is left with no choice.

Chapter 5: Salhesh's Dream







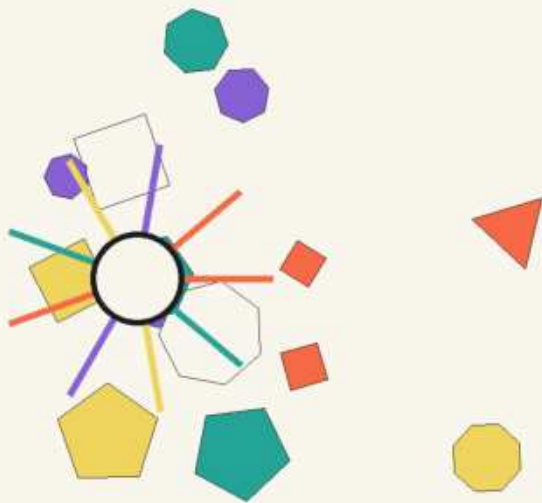
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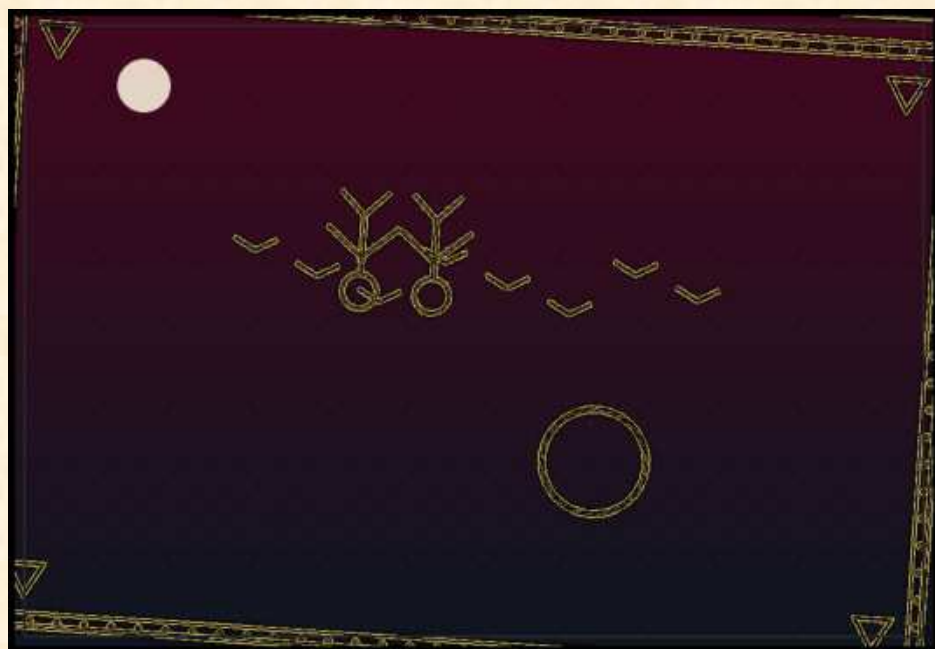


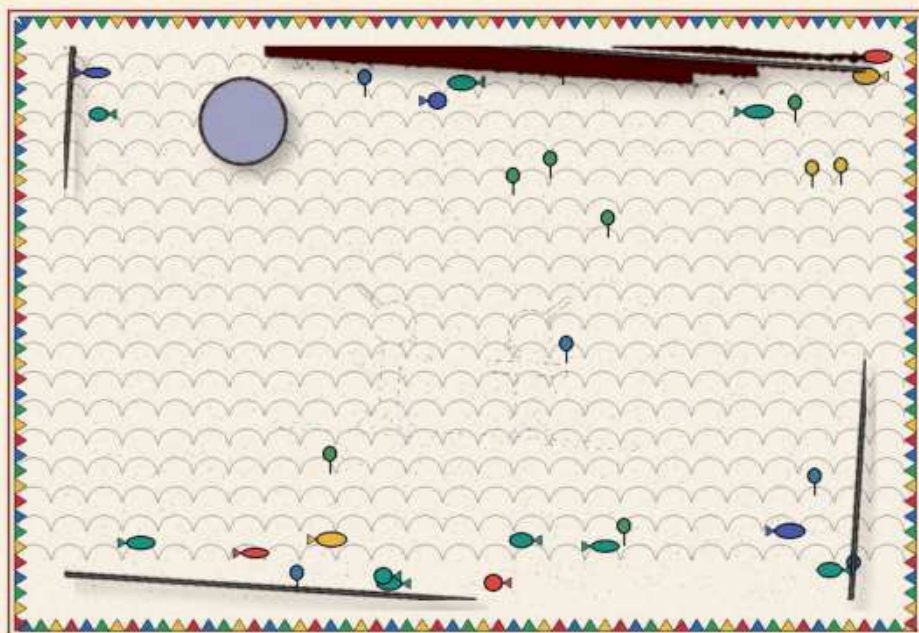
That very night in Jogiyanagar, Deena and Bhadari lay asleep — the scent of the day's tilled earth still on their bodies. And into their sleep Salhesh descended.

In the dream the god's voice came — 'Come to the Kattaiya forest. A great hunt awaits you.'

A hunt! Even in sleep a light kindled in both brothers' eyes. For the sons of a Musahar, the hunt was not mere sport — it was meat, it was festival, it was the test of a man's worth. And the one who called them was Salhesh himself — the god of the forest beasts! Who would doubt his call?







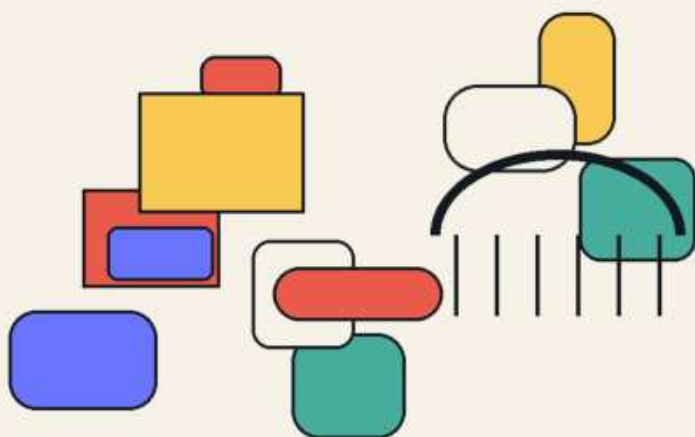
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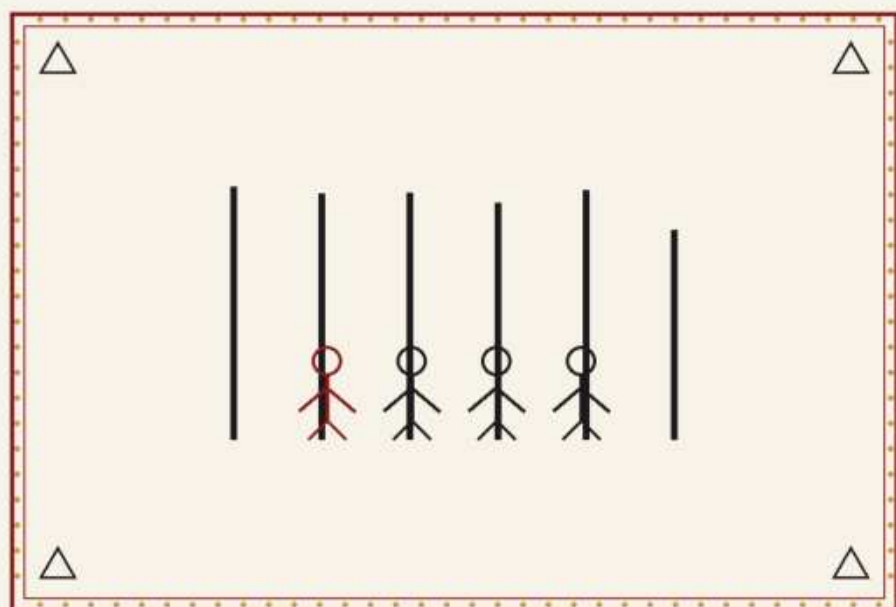
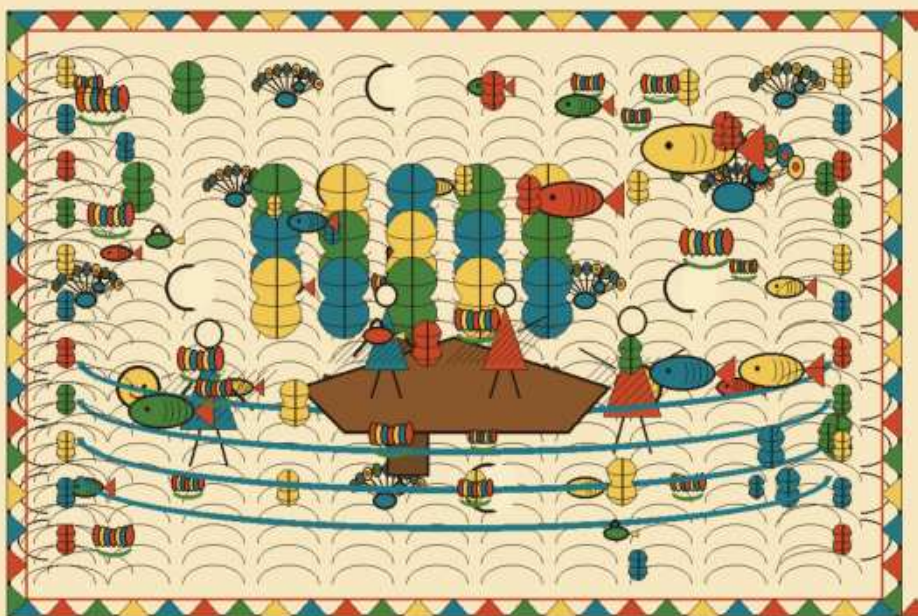


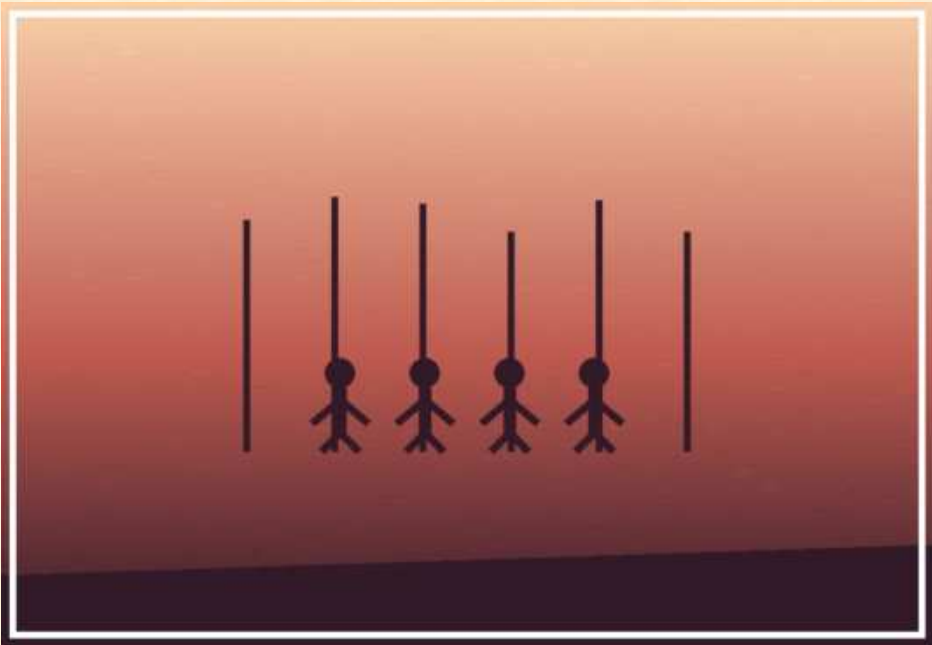
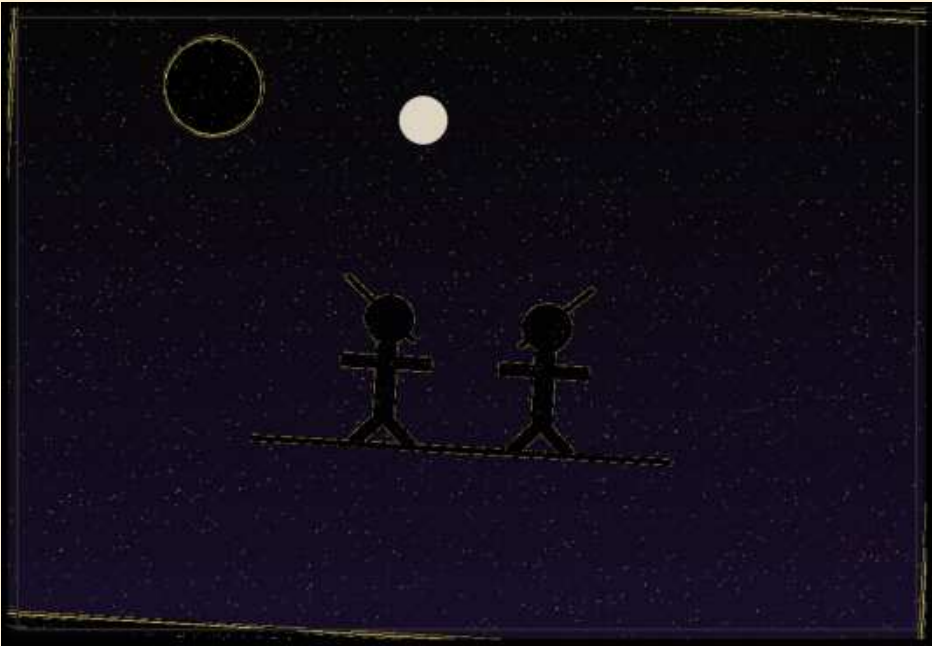
But how much Salhesh's own heart must have wept as he gave that dream — that did not show in the dream. The god was leading his beloved ones toward death with his own hand, for the chain of his vow was locked around his throat. The snare had been spread, and the one who held the rope of the snare was himself bound.

At daybreak Deena told Bhadari the dream, and Bhadari told Deena — both had seen the same dream! Then no room for doubt remained. 'Salhesh has called us,' said Deena, 'and to refuse his call is a sin.' — To be caught in the snare, they now set out toward it on their own feet.

Chapter 6: Farewell on the Night of the New Moon







Picture 11

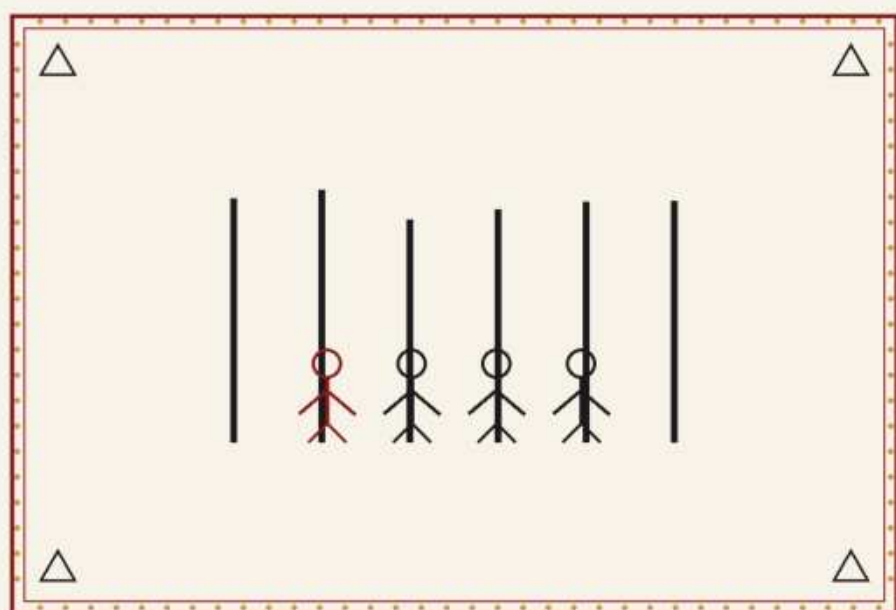


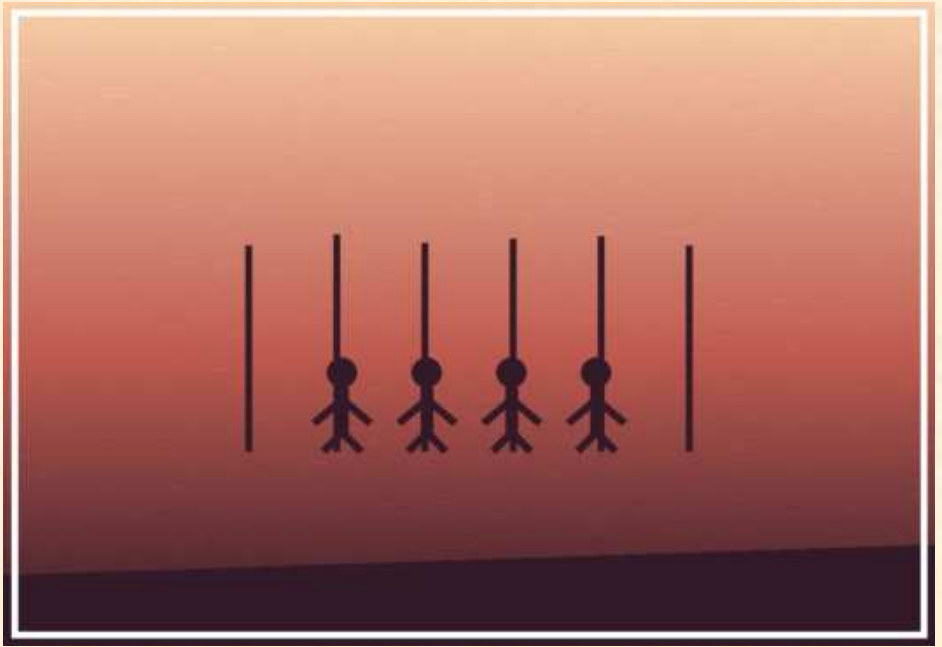
In the night itself Deena and Bhadari took their leave — bow and arrows in hand, quivers strapped to their shoulders. With them went Uncle Bahuran — old, yet one who knew every secret of the forest.

Mother Nirso came as far as the doorway. 'The forest at night, my sons... go carefully.' Deena touched his mother's feet and said, 'It is Salhesh's call, Mother; he himself is our guardian.' — The mother's heart accepted it, but no corner of a mother's heart truly accepts such things; that corner stayed awake the whole night through.

On the way they passed Nangragodiya village, where their friend Jitan Yadav lived. Leave a friend behind for a hunt? Deena and Bhadari asked him to come too. Jitan at once took up his bow and arrows — 'Wherever you two brothers go, there go I.' Now they were four: two heroes, one uncle, one friend.







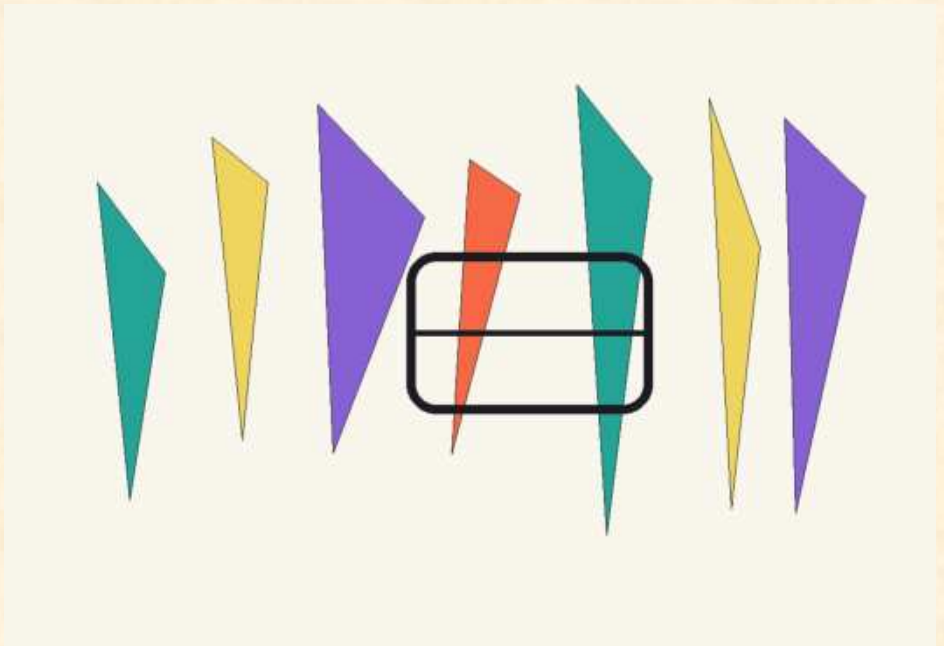
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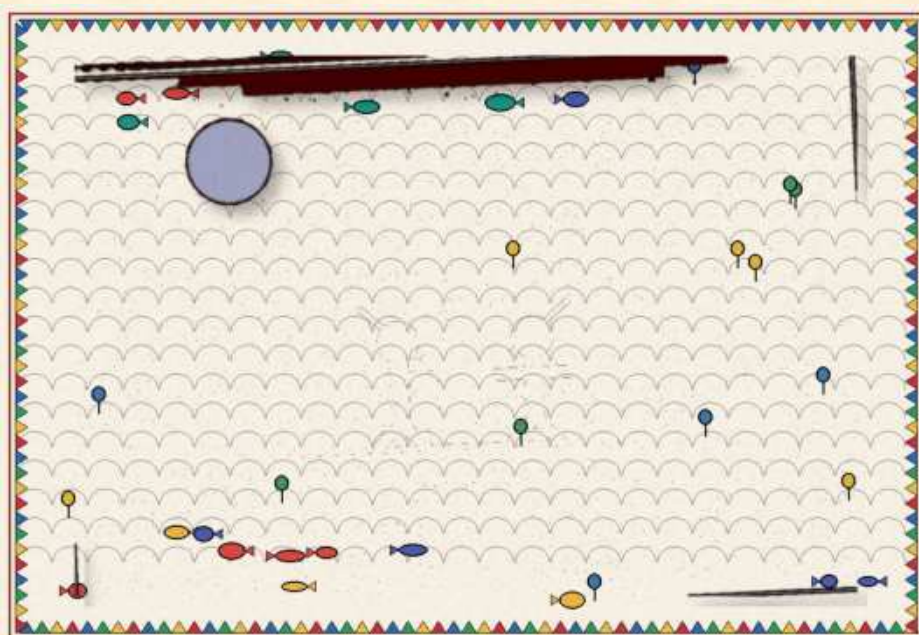
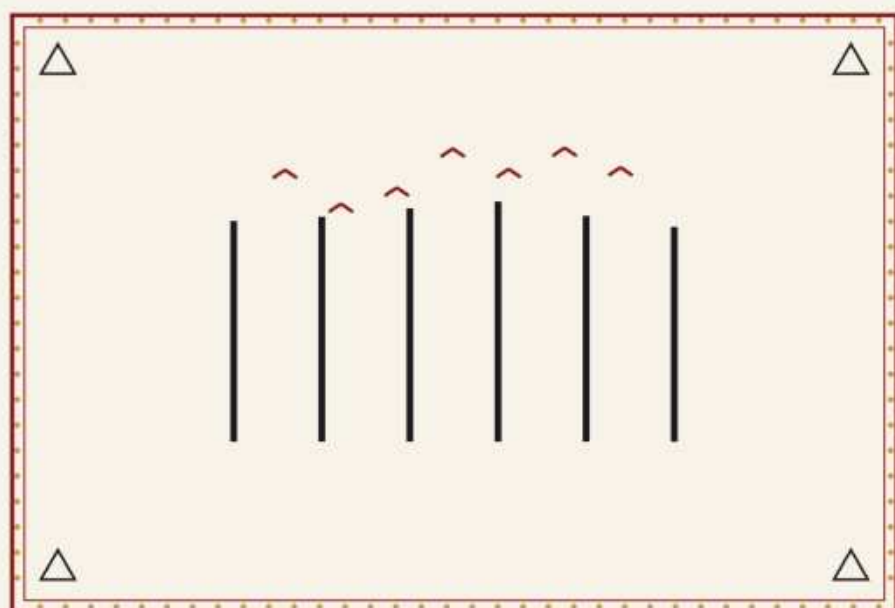


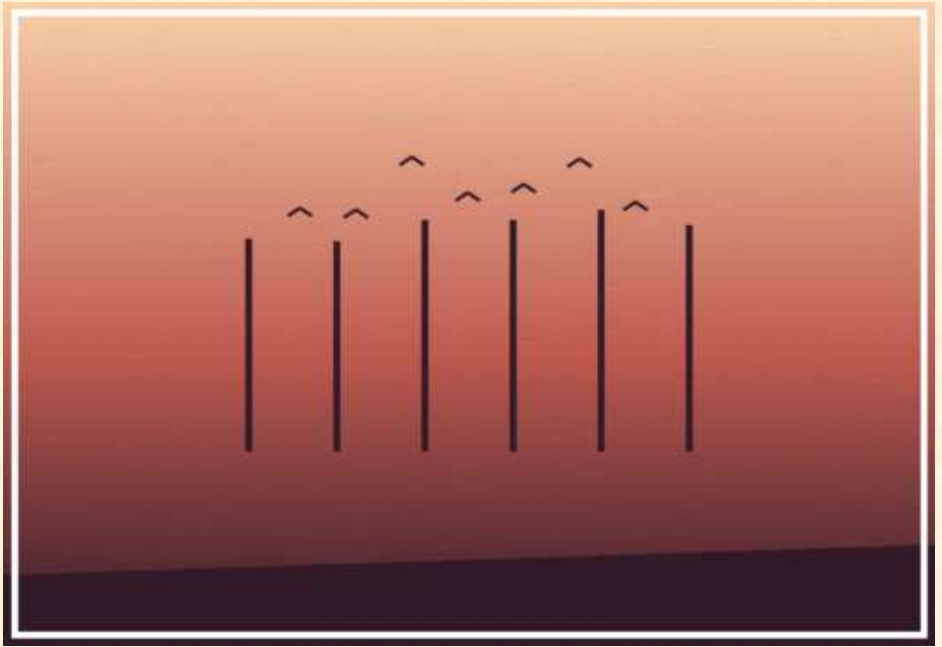
A night of the new moon! Darkness thick as pitch — such darkness that a hand could not see its own hand. The trees of the forest stood like black walls, and what lay behind those walls only two beings knew — Budhni, and the helpless Salhesh.

The four entered the Kattaiya forest. Behind them the last lamp of the village went out. Ahead — only night.

Chapter 7: The Silent Forest







Picture 13

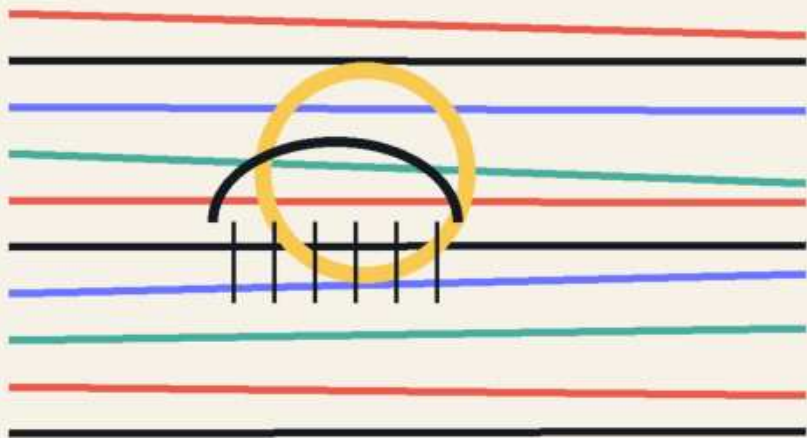


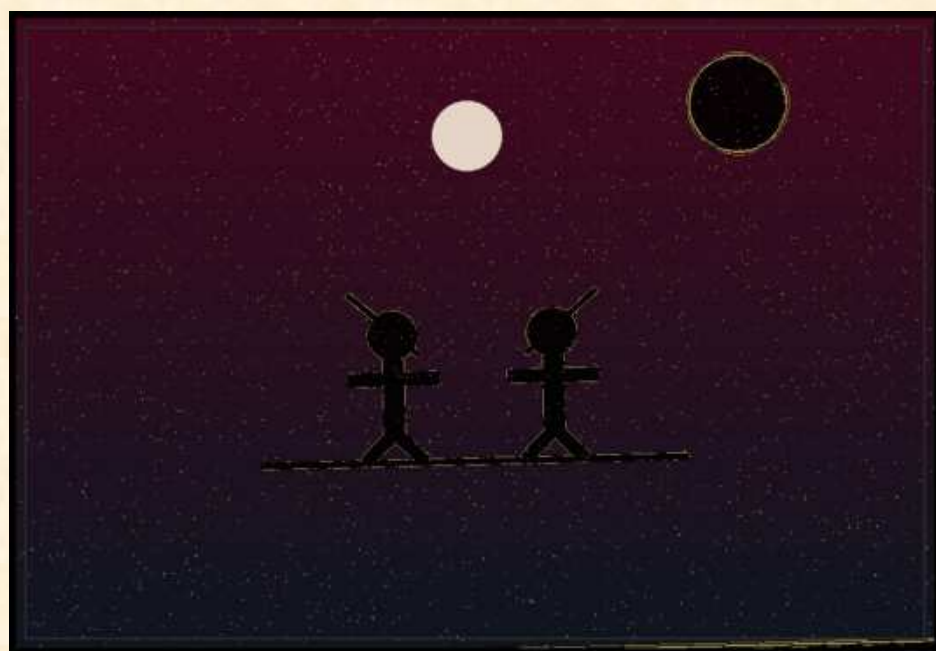
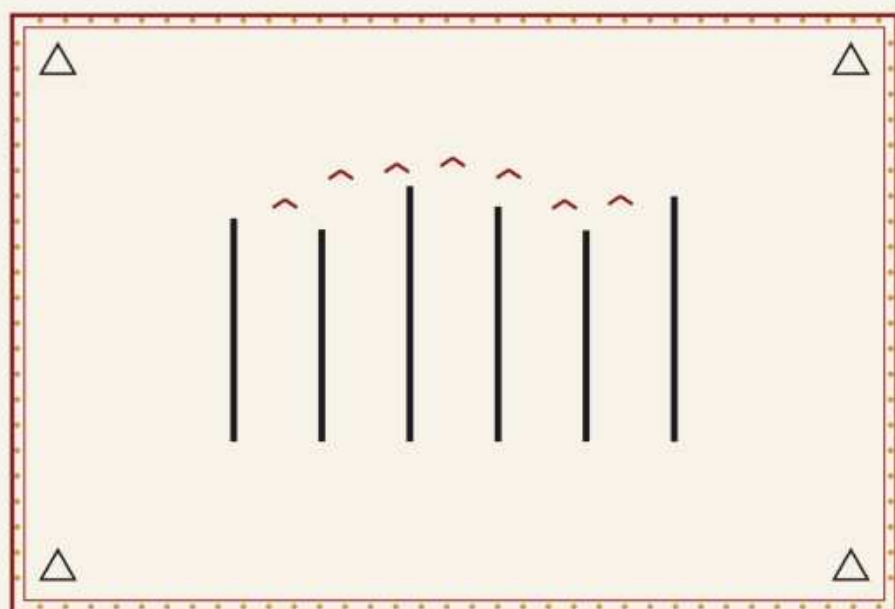
The forest was dense, the night deep — but game? Not a single creature. No sound of a deer's hoof, no snort of a wild boar, no rustle of a hare. As if the whole forest had been emptied beforehand.

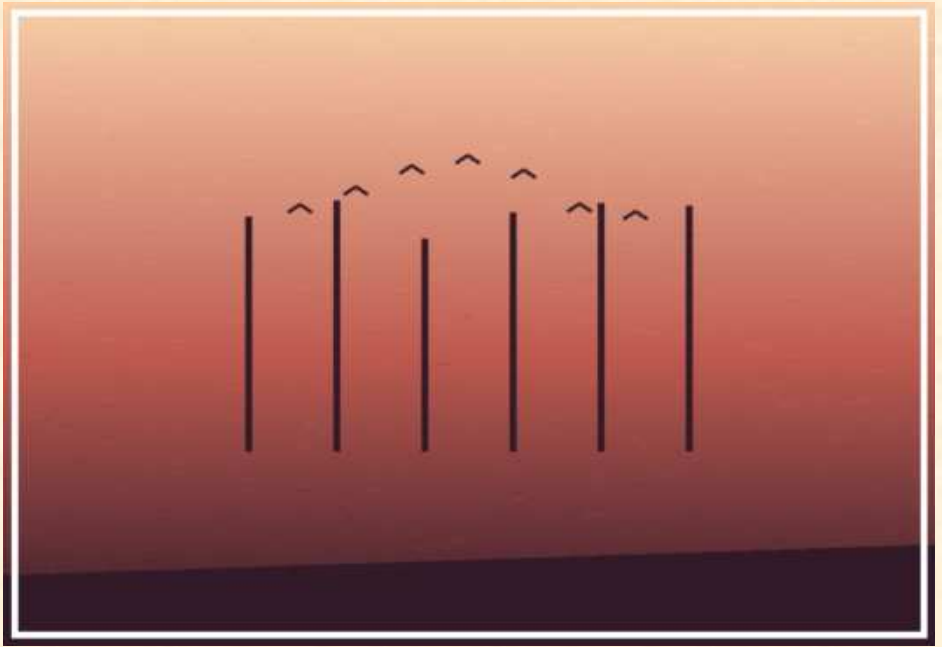
Only bats wheeled about — fluttering over their heads, black and black, as if torn scraps of night were flying.

Uncle Bahuran's seasoned mind grew uneasy — 'Why is the forest so quiet, boys? A silent forest is no good omen.'

But feet caught in a snare do not turn back. 'The game will be farther on,' — thinking this, the four pressed deeper still. The forest swallowed them — first the path, then direction, then the sound of one another.







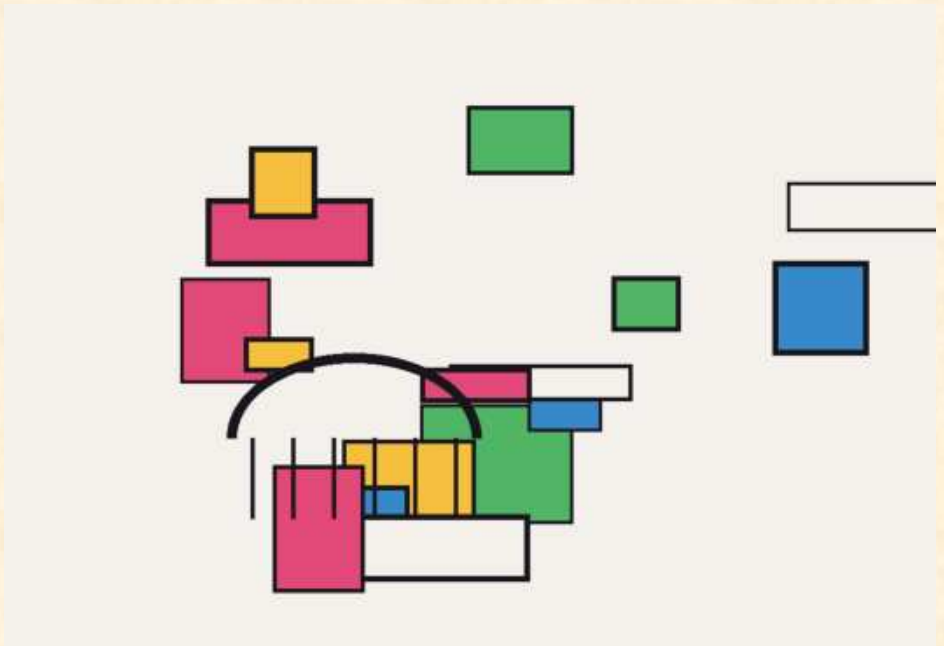
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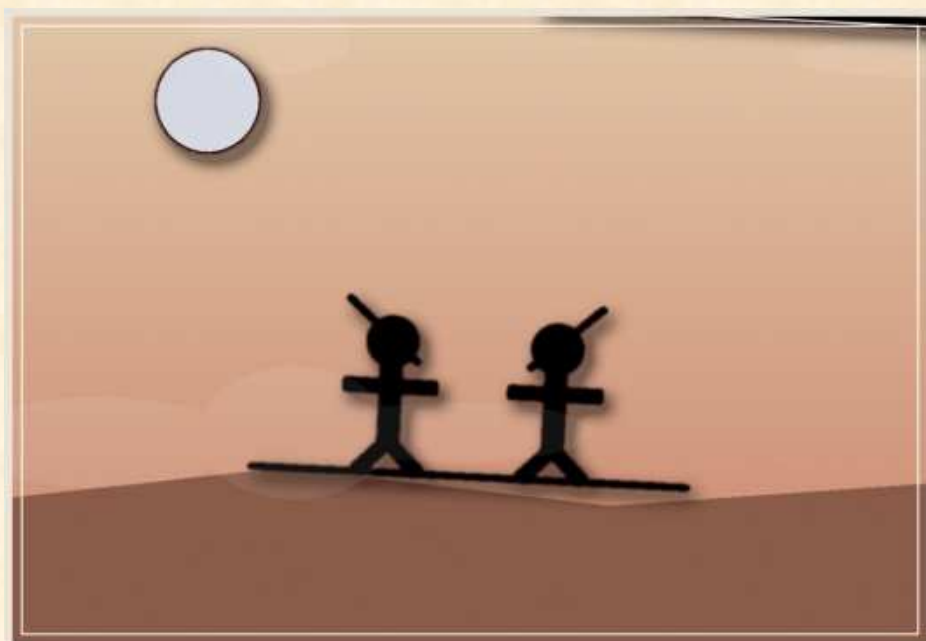
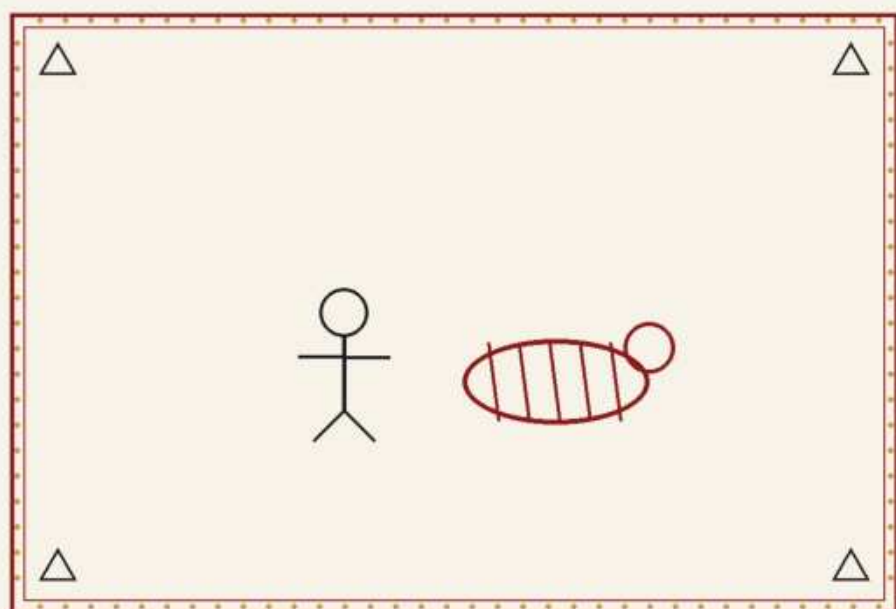


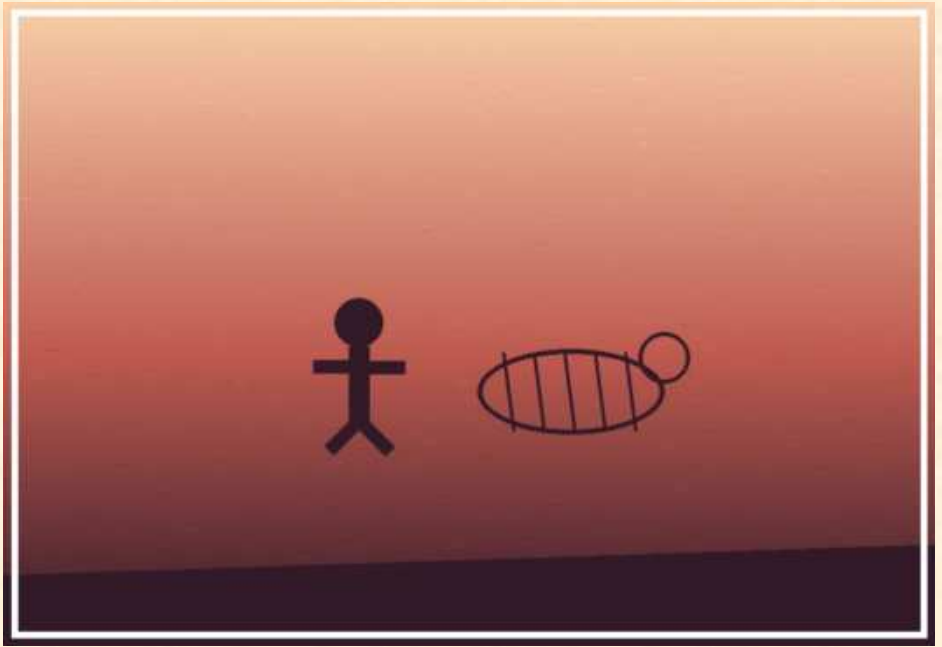
And somehow, in that same walking of the forest, Deena went alone into its heart — apart from Bhadari, apart from Uncle, apart from Jitan. When a hero is parted from his companions, know that fate is tightening its circle.

And there, in that very heart of the forest, stood Budhni. Not alone — Salhesh was with her too. On one side a god bound by the force of penance; on the other a woman burning in the fire of revenge — and before them, stepping out of the dark, almost unarmed, Deena alone.

Chapter 8: The Blood-Stained Tiger







Picture 15

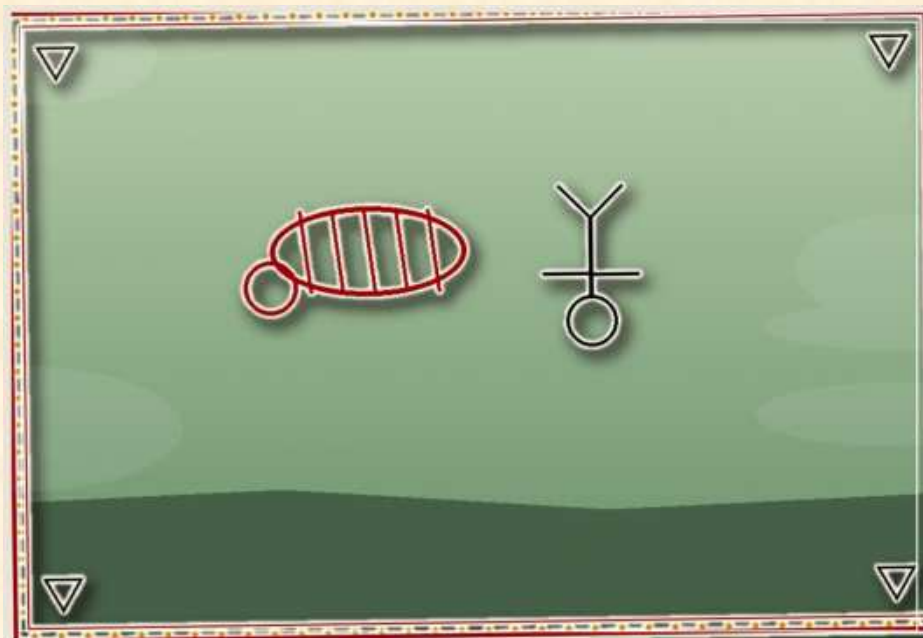


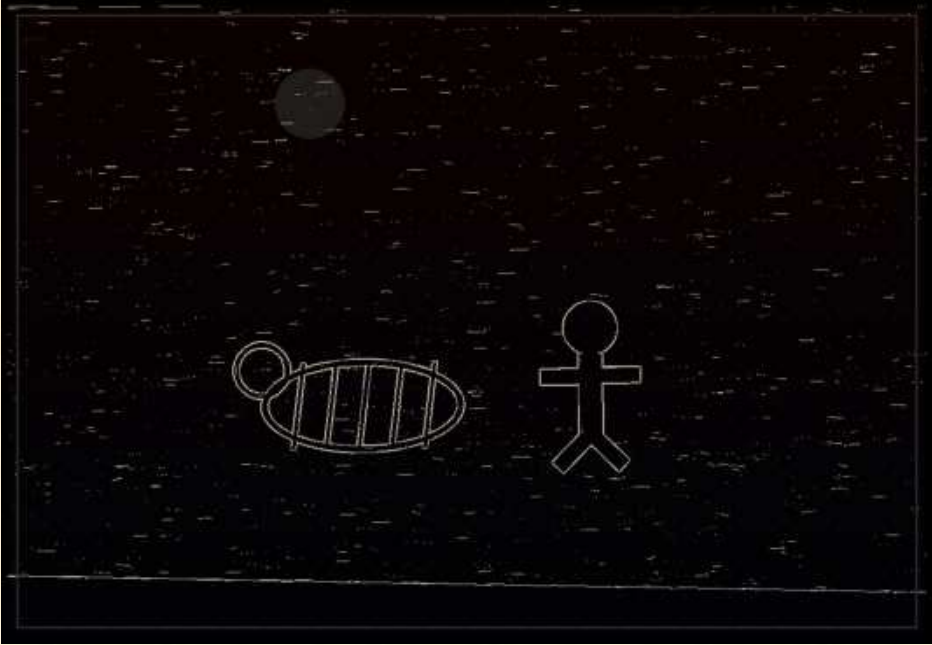
Budhni roared and cried — 'Salhesh, god of the forest beasts! Call forth your blood-stained tiger!'

And the forest split open. Out of the dark came the blood-stained tiger — Salhesh's own tiger, at whose roar the trees of the forest shook off their leaves. Deena drew his bow and loosed an arrow — but what was this! The arrow forgot its path! The arrow that had never missed went blunt in the air — for the arrow was being blinded by the same power that had sent the tiger.

Then Deena flung down his bow. 'If the weapon betrays me, still these arms are my own!' — And the son of a Musahar locked himself in hand-to-hand combat with the tiger. Against claw and fang, only flesh and bone; against the roar, only breath. In the dark of the forest two bodies tangled into one — which was man, which beast, hard to tell.







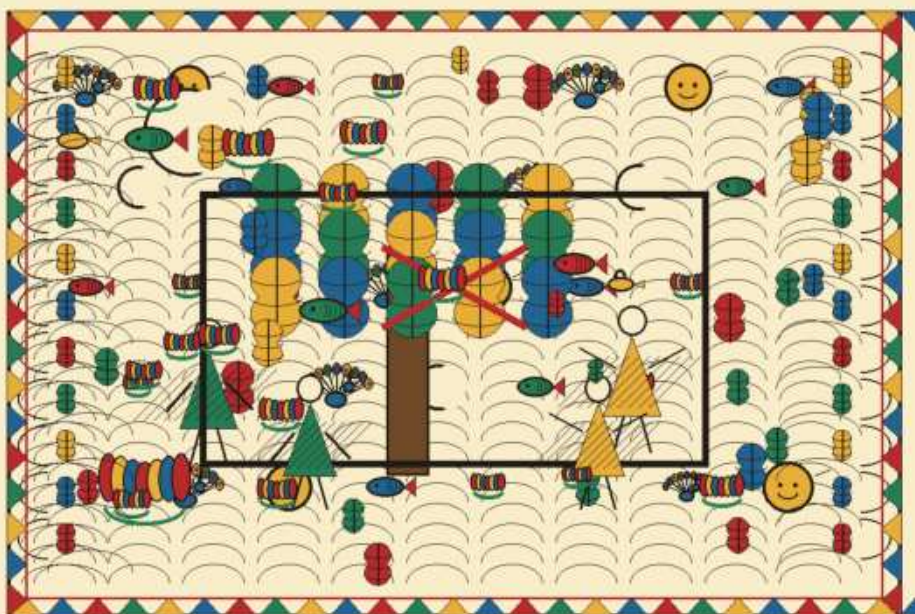
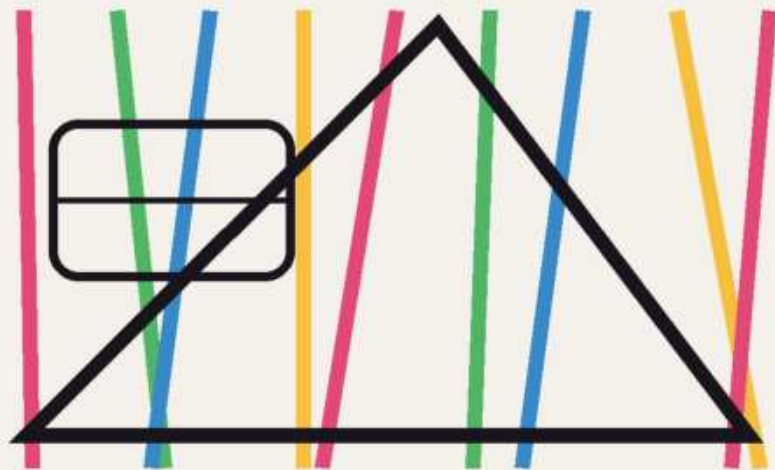
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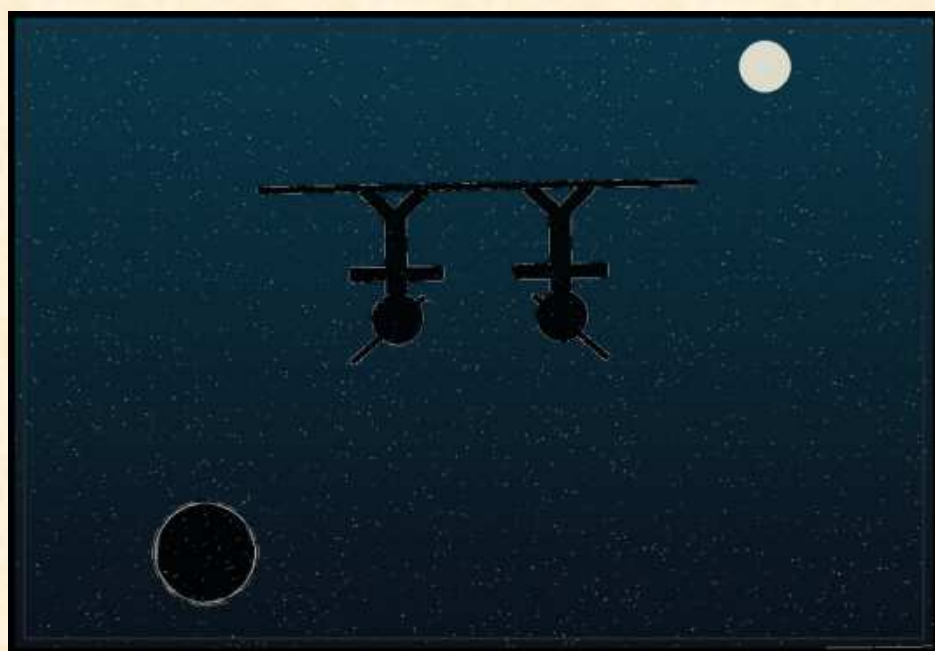
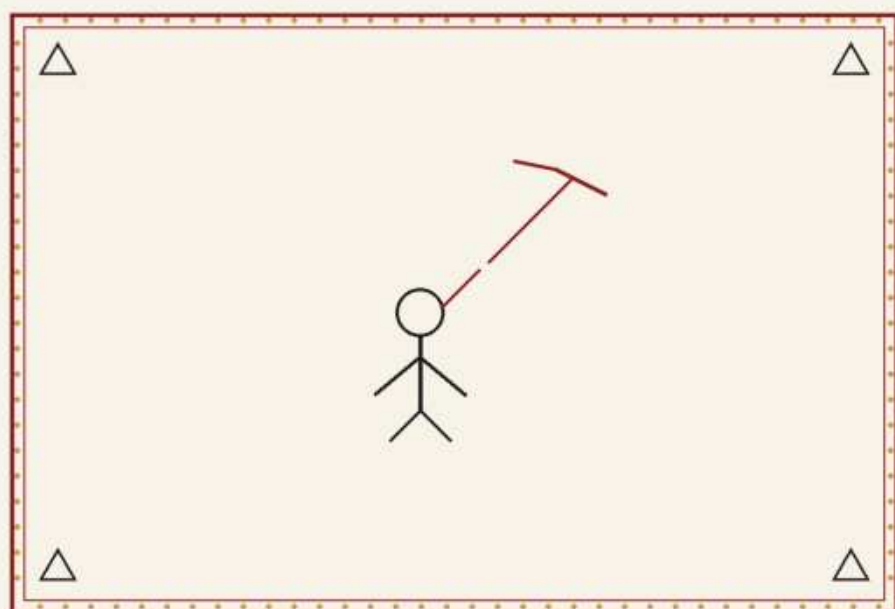


And then Deena did what is born at the meeting of courage and devotion — wrestling with death, he called the name of the very god who was his killer: 'Victory to Raja Salhesh!' — And as he spoke Salhesh's name, the strength of a hundred tigers poured into his arms. One blow, a second, a third — and the blood-stained tiger bit the dust.

The tiger lay dead. Deena stood panting — his chest bloodied, yet his head held high. In Salhesh's eyes, tears and pride together — 'Such a hero...' But Budhni's voice cut his thought short. The game was not yet over.

Chapter 9: In the Guise of a Dove







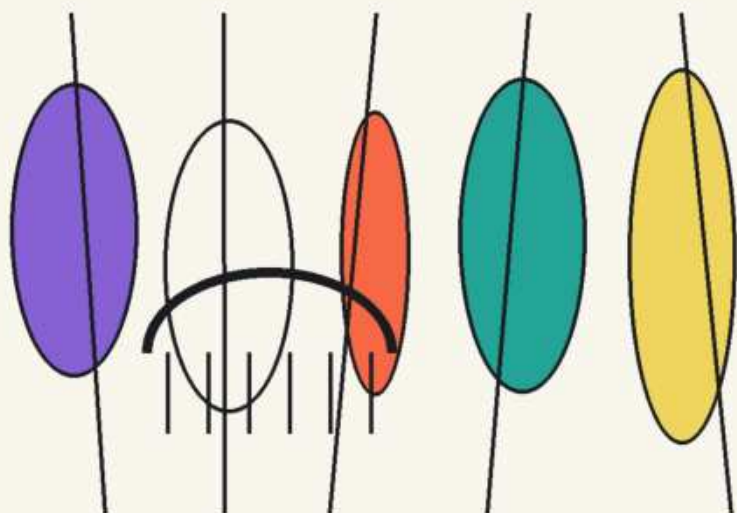
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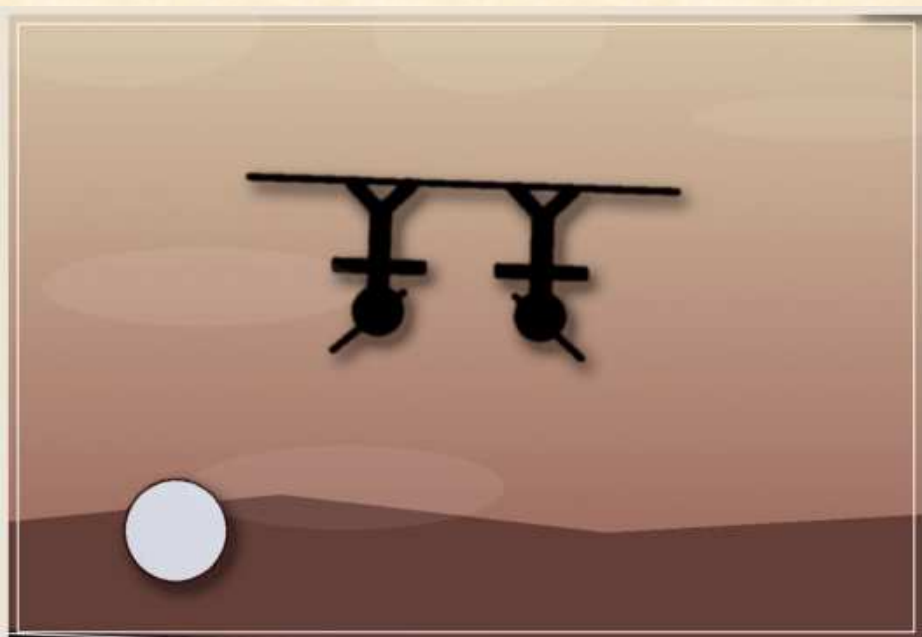
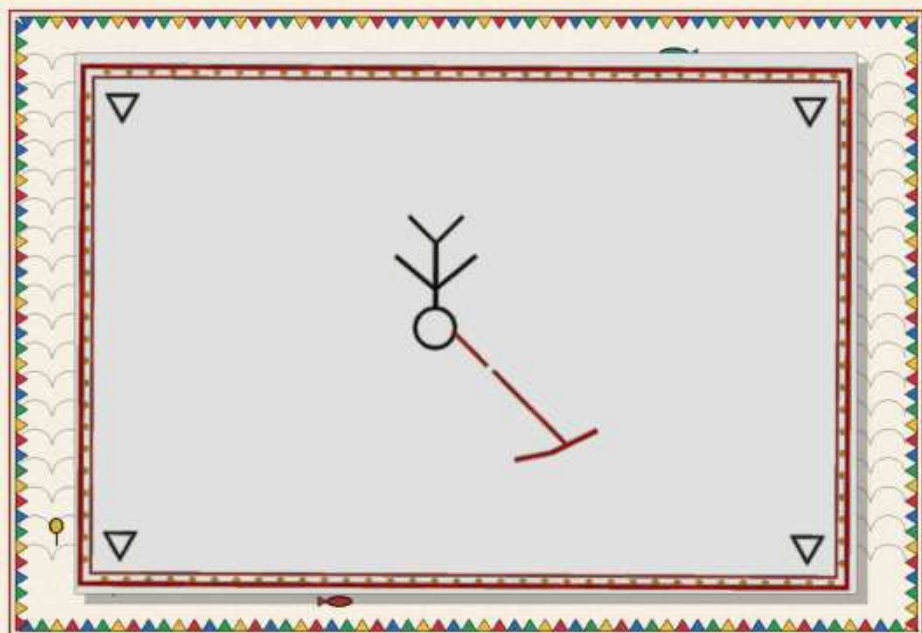


Budhni spoke again — and this time her voice was steeped in poison: 'Call the shape-shifting tigress who can change her form!'

Salhesh was glad of Deena's valour — but what could he do? The vow had his throat in its grip. His silence became consent, and out of the forest dark she came — the shape-shifting tigress who knew how to change her form.

She did not come as a tigress. She came in the guise of a dove — in the shape of an innocent little bird. For Budhni had understood: Deena could not be defeated by force, only by deceit. A hero's eye seeks an enemy — who suspects a bird?





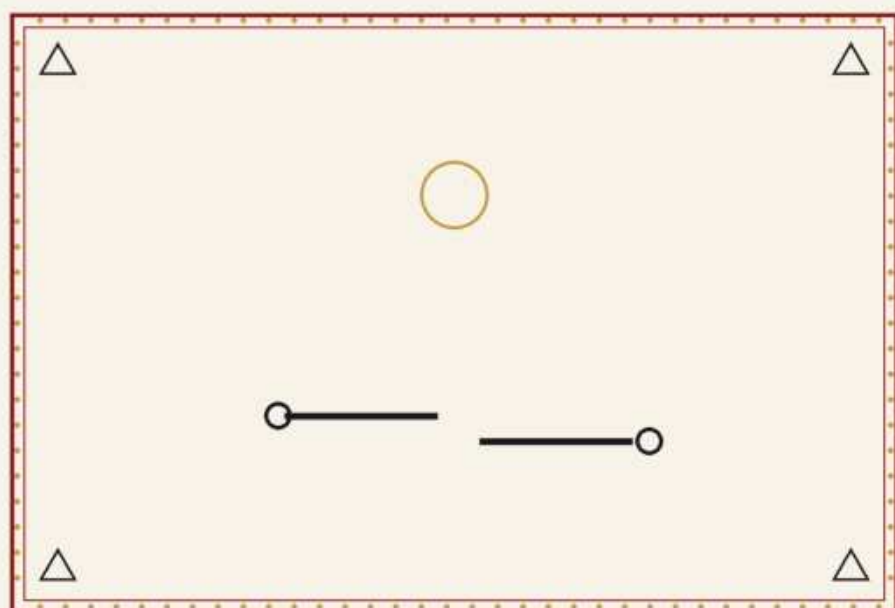


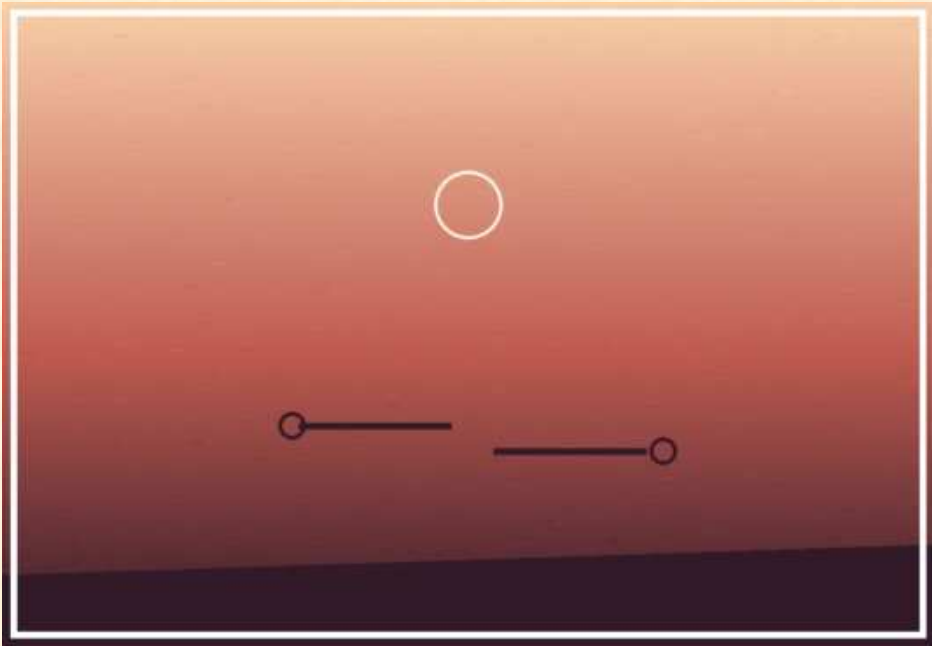
Picture 18



Deena stood weary from the tiger-slaying. Overhead a dove flew by — ordinary, white, harmless. And then, in the blink of an eye, that dove struck — and with its poisoned beak it killed Deena.

He who lifted the five-maund hoe, who threw down the blood-stained tiger with his bare arms — Deena fell before the guise of a little bird. Strength was defeated by deceit. On the earth of the Kattaiya forest one of Mithila's heroes lay still — and the forest, which had been quiet all night, grew quieter still. So quiet that the silence travelled miles and reached Bhadari's heart.





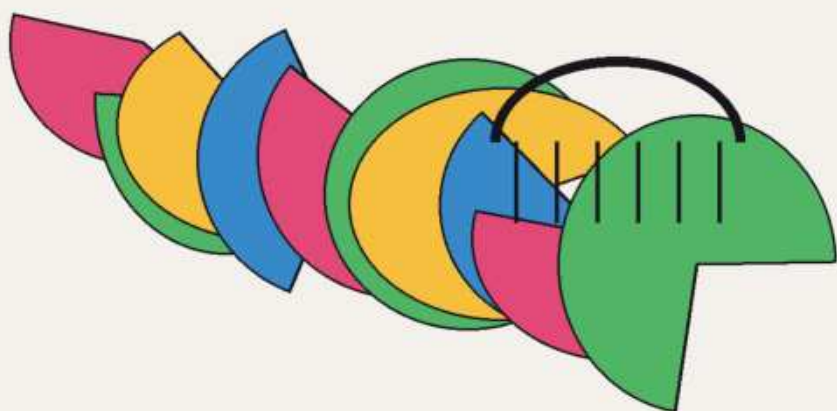
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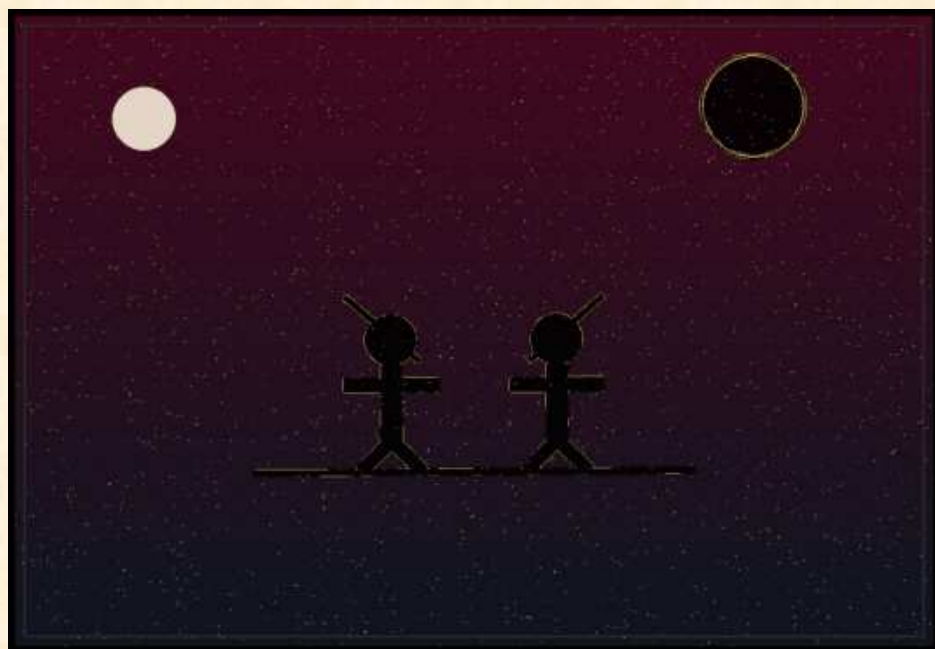
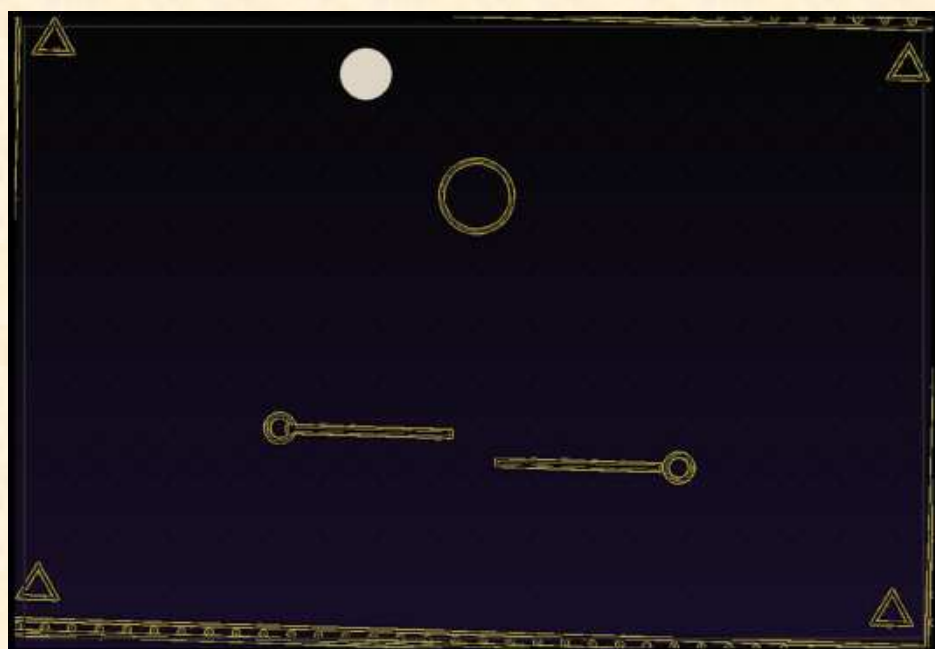


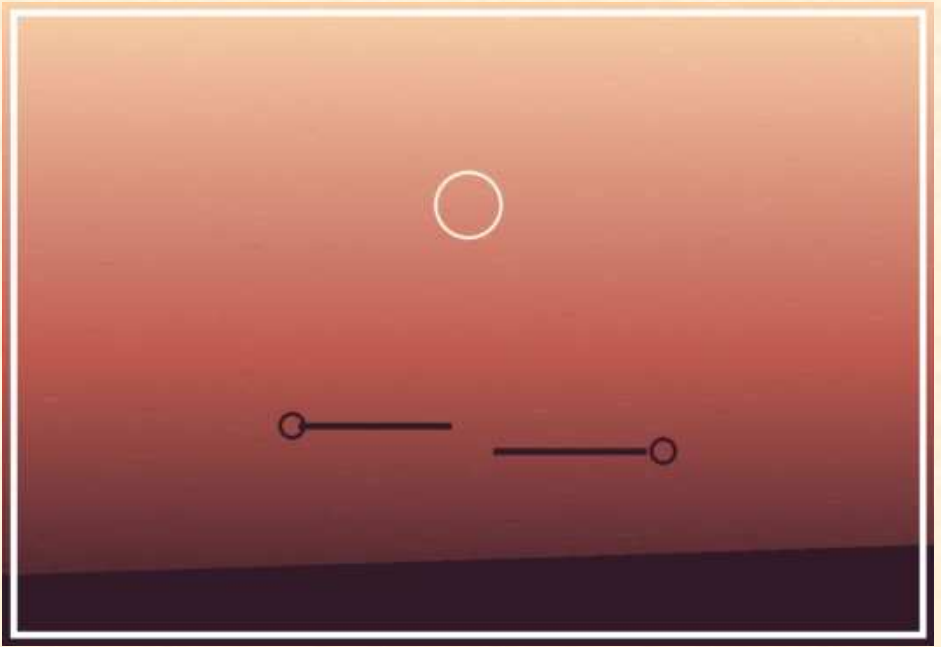
At that very moment, at the other end of the forest, Bhadari's mind seemed to scatter. For no reason his heart began to pound; the bow slipped in his hand. Between brothers a thread is tied that the eye cannot see — yet when a blow falls at one end, the other end trembles.

'Uncle Bahuran,' Bhadari said, and his own voice sounded strange to him, 'I am going to my brother. You climb a tree and wait.'

Before Uncle could speak, Bhadari vanished into the dark. Old Bahuran climbed a tree — and from there, the most helpless witness of that night, he listened to the silence of the forest.







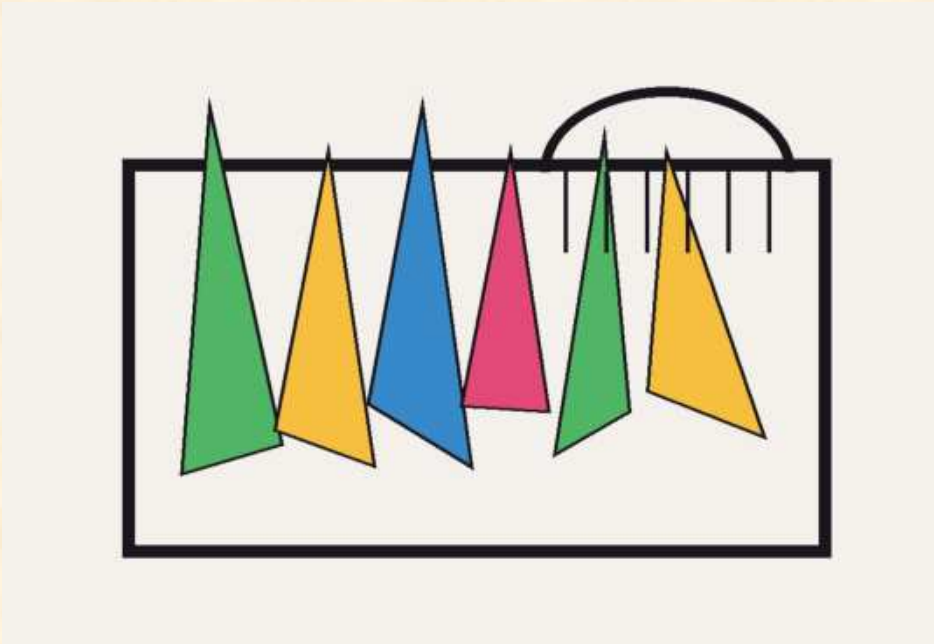
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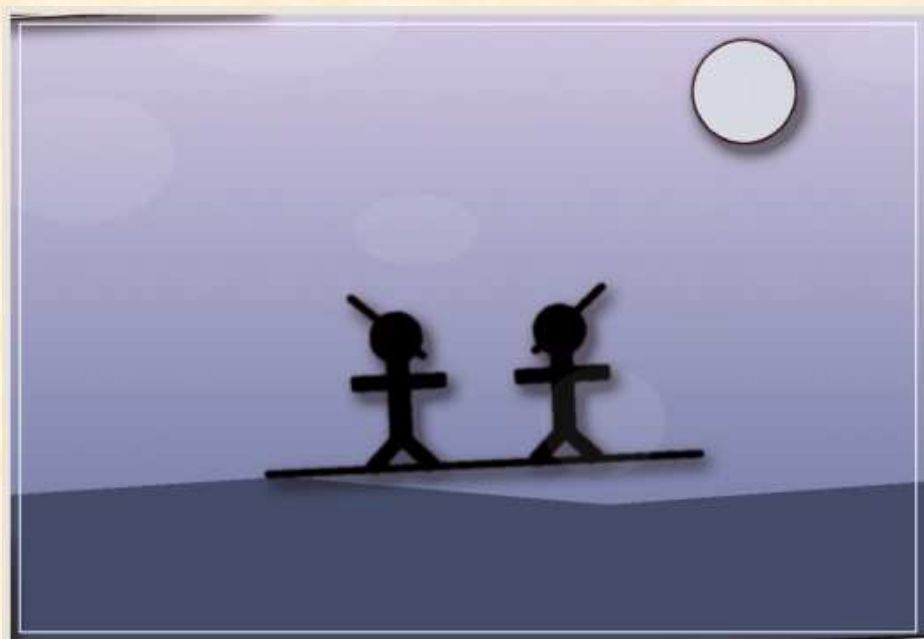
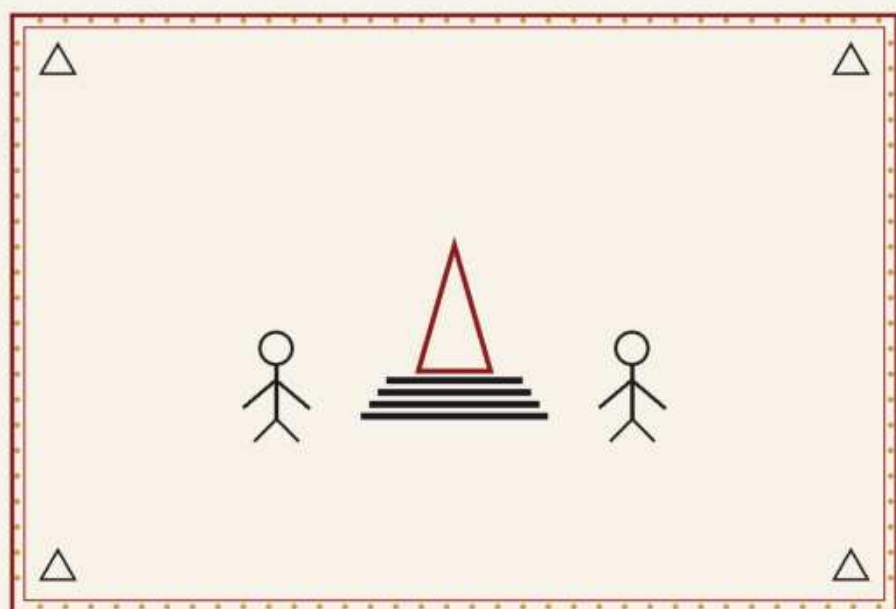


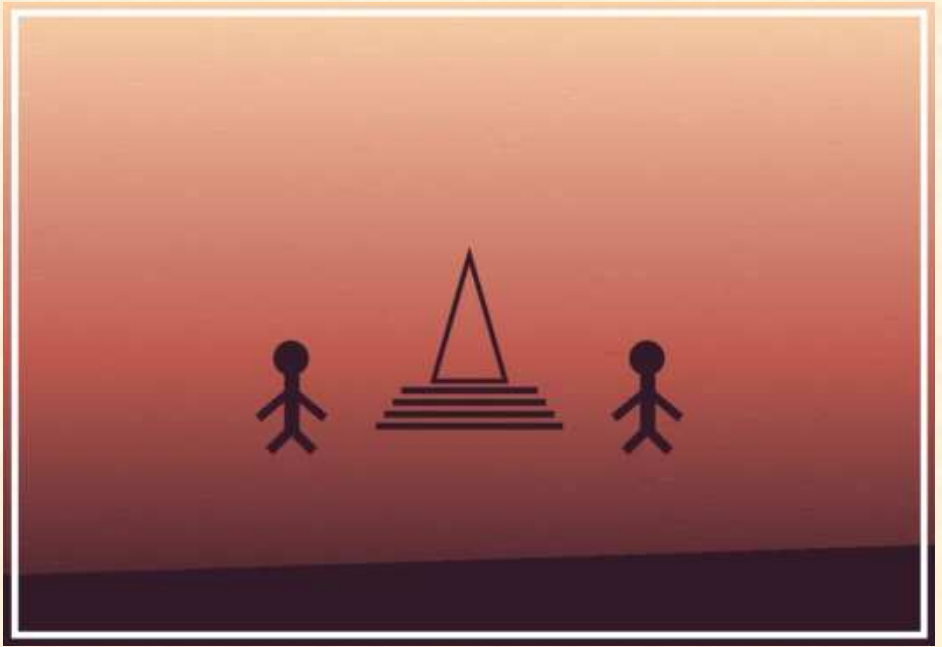
Bhadari reached his brother's body. Deena lay on the earth — peaceful, as if he had finished the day's work in the fields and fallen asleep. The cry that rose inside Bhadari could not come out — for at that very instant the same shape-shifting dove struck again.

And it killed him too. Both brothers — who were born together, who lifted the hoe together, who fought the landlord together — lay together on the earth of the Kattaiya forest. Budhni went home — revenge was complete. But between revenge and justice there is a difference: revenge goes home; justice comes back. And this story was still only half told.

Chapter 11: The Message of the Souls







Picture 21



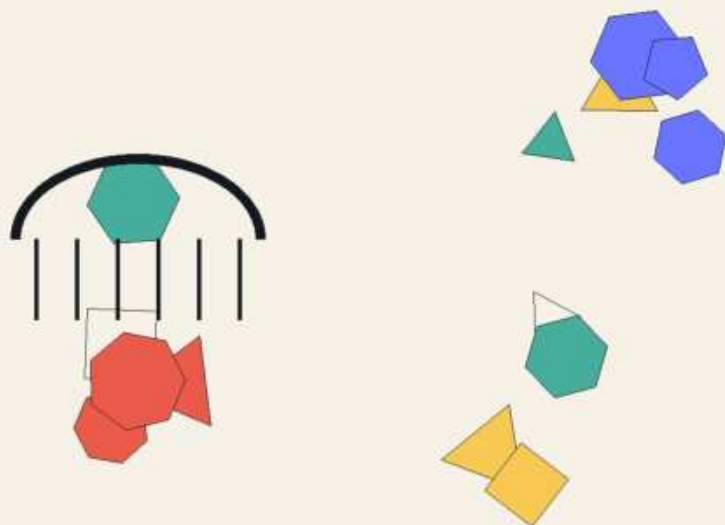
But the story of heroes like Deena and Bhadari does not end with the body. The souls of both brothers entered two bodies — and in that form both came to Uncle Bahuran.

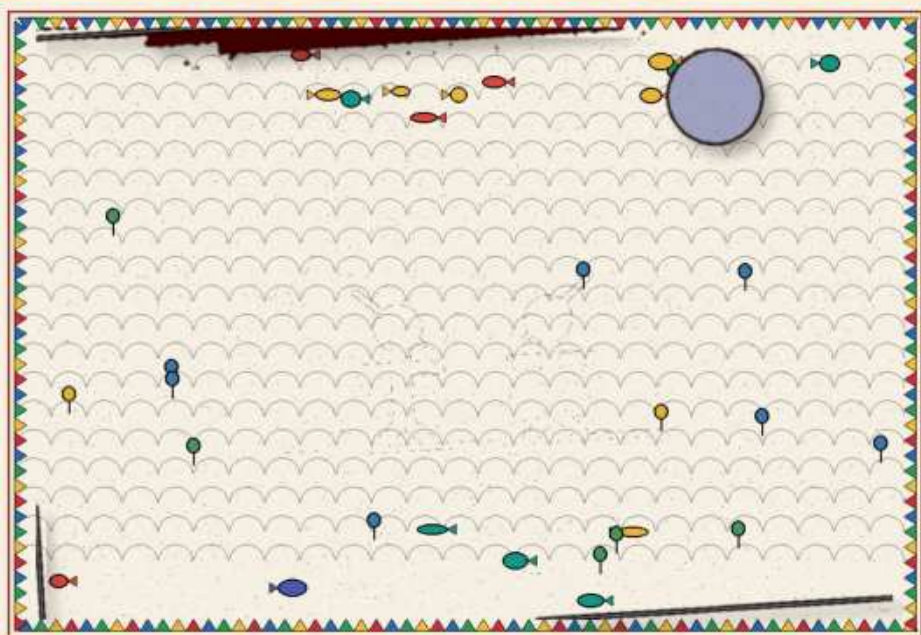
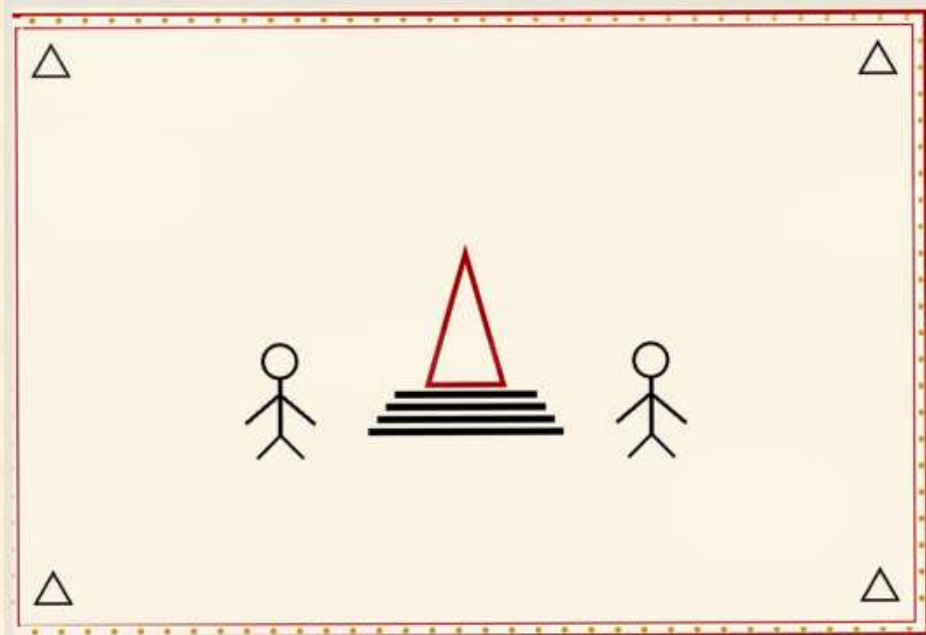
'Your two nephews have been killed,' the soul-forms said.

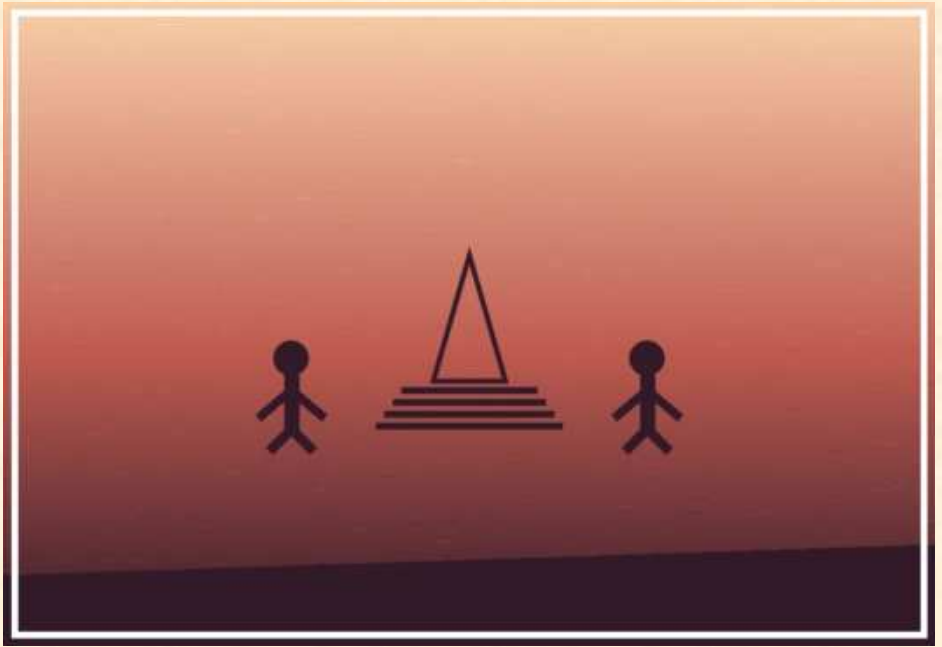
'Carry the news to the village. Take the bodies home.

Perform the shraddha rites.' — The bow slipped from the old uncle's hands. Beneath the very tree where he had been waiting, the last news of his two nephews arrived.

By then Jitan Yadav had reached them too. What became of Jitan when he saw his friend's bodies — even Maithili has no words for it. But Jitan did not sit and weep — he fulfilled friendship's last duty: he carried both bodies to the village, and himself gave them to the fire.







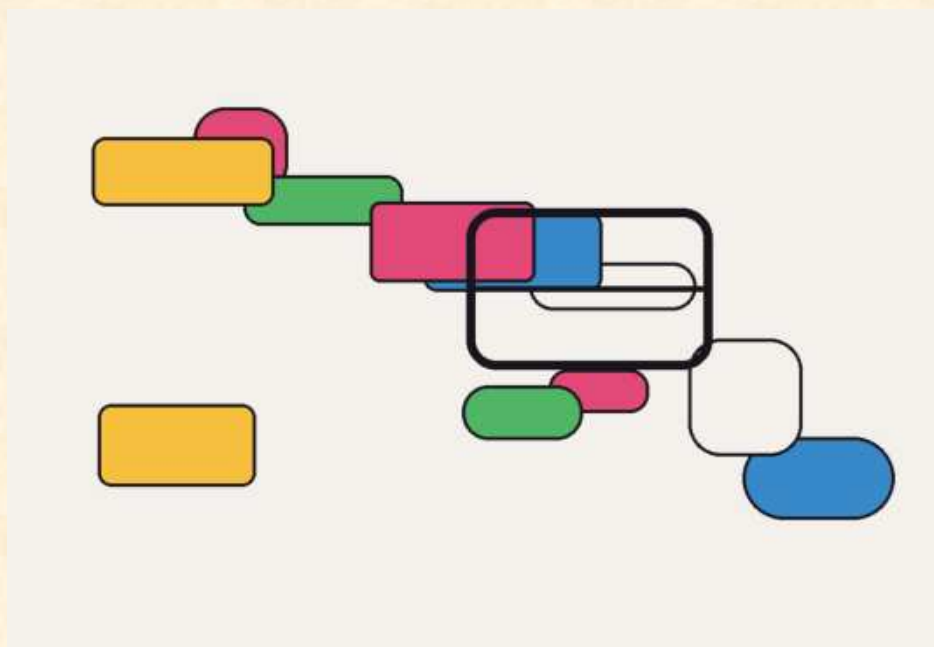
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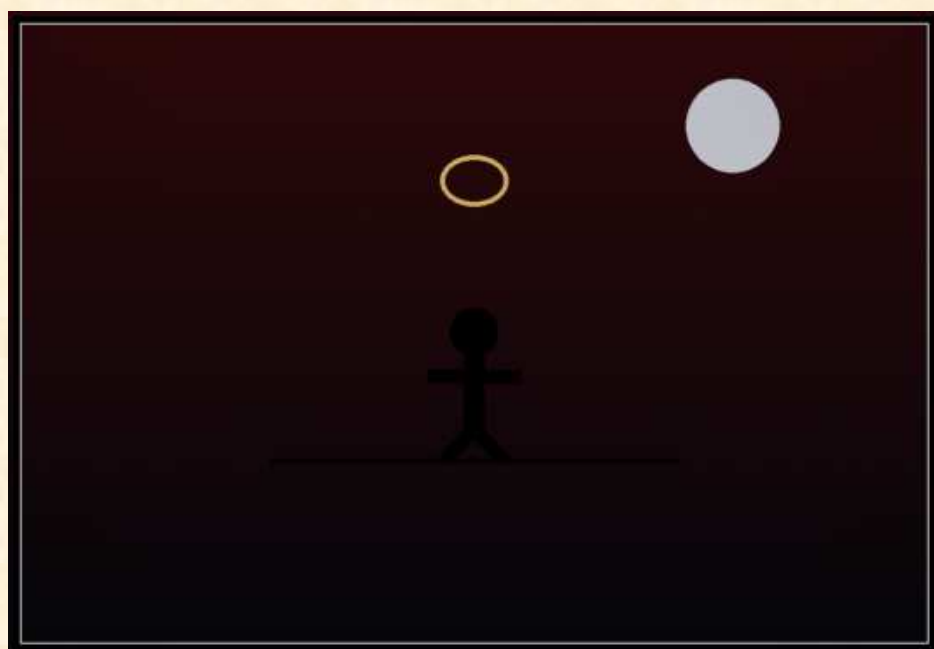
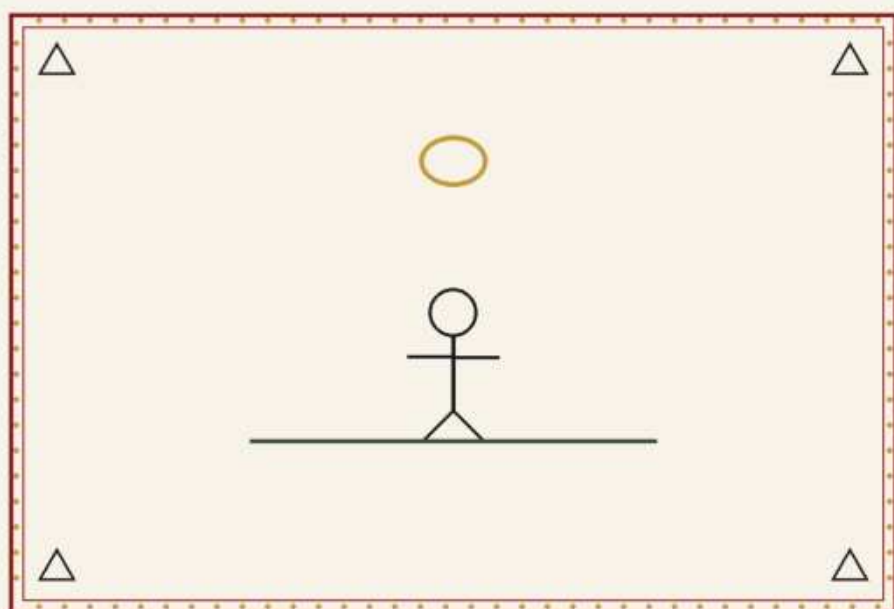


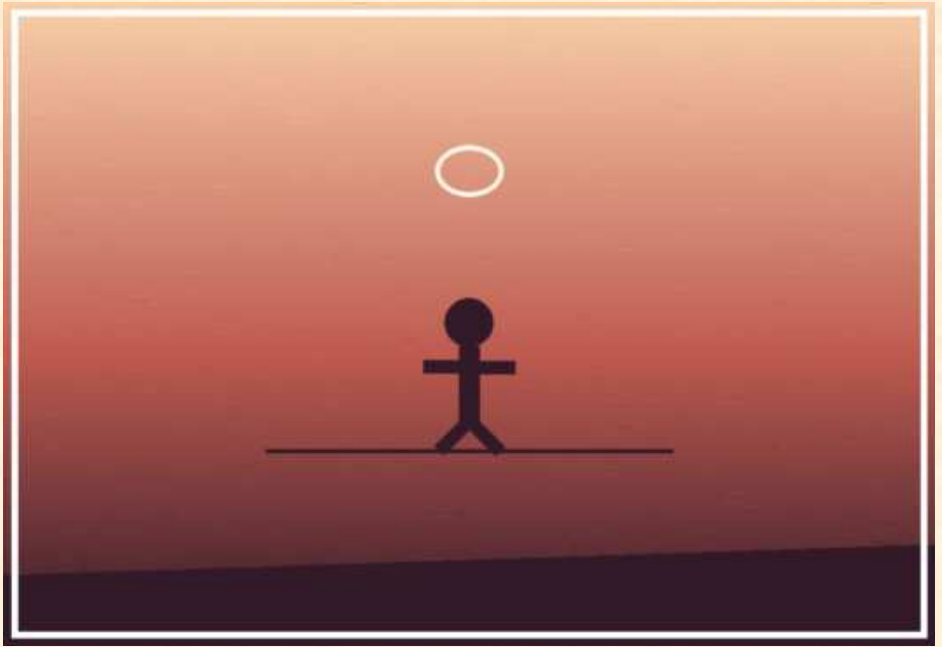
In Jogiyanagar that day no cooking-hearth was lit. Only two funeral pyres burned — and beside them stood a mother whose light in both eyes had gone out in a single night.

Nirso — mother of Deena and Bhadari. Her sons were gone; now it was time for the shraddha — but there was not even money for the rites! What was in the house? A little cotton, a few rags, and years of old want. What was a mother to do? — And from here begins that chapter of this ballad where sorrow turns into miracle.

Chapter 12: Cotton and Sugar-Drops







Picture 23

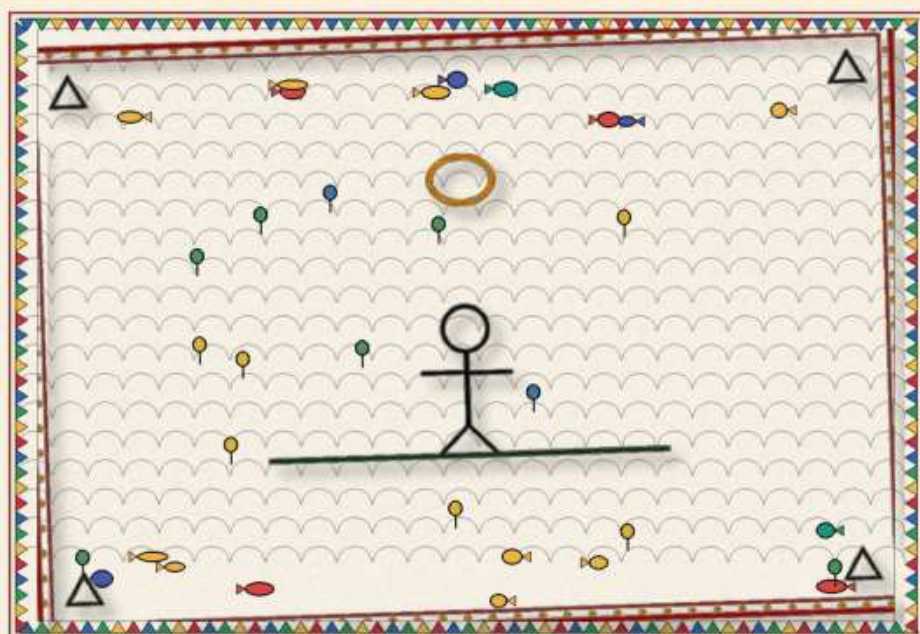


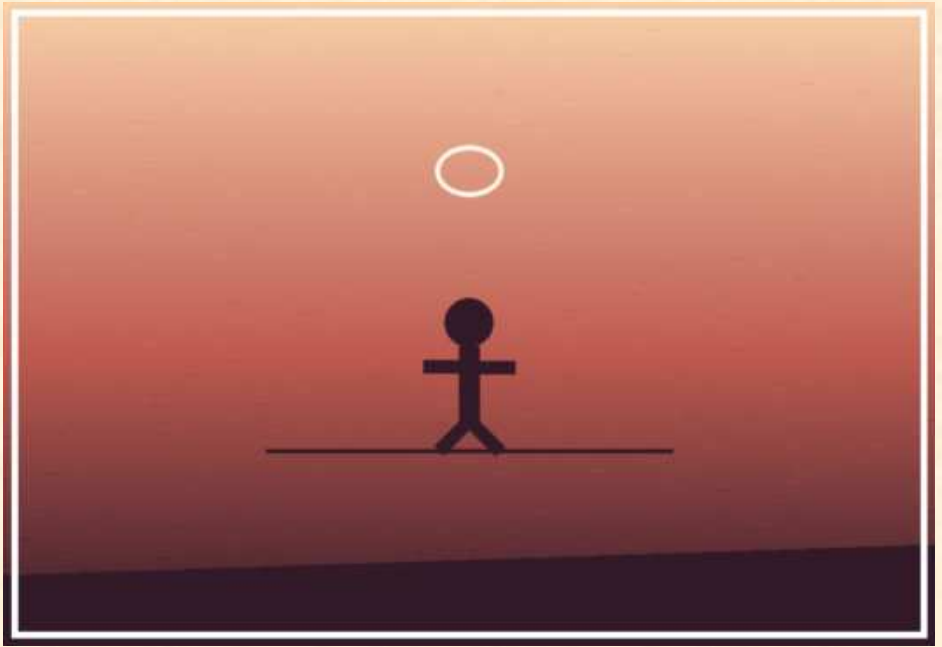
In the night Nirso had a dream. In the dream both sons came — 'Mother, do not weep. There is cotton in the house. Take it to the Banima shopkeeper. Whatever he gives in exchange will serve for our shraddha.'

Cotton — fluff worth almost nothing. From that, a shraddha? But a son's word is scripture to a mother. At daybreak Nirso lifted a bundle of cotton onto her head and went to Banima's shop.

Banima saw the cotton and laughed — the laugh the rich laugh at a poor person's goods. 'What will you take for this cotton, old woman?' He lifted the scales — on one side he set the cotton, on the other sugar-drops. He thought a fistful of sweets would settle it.







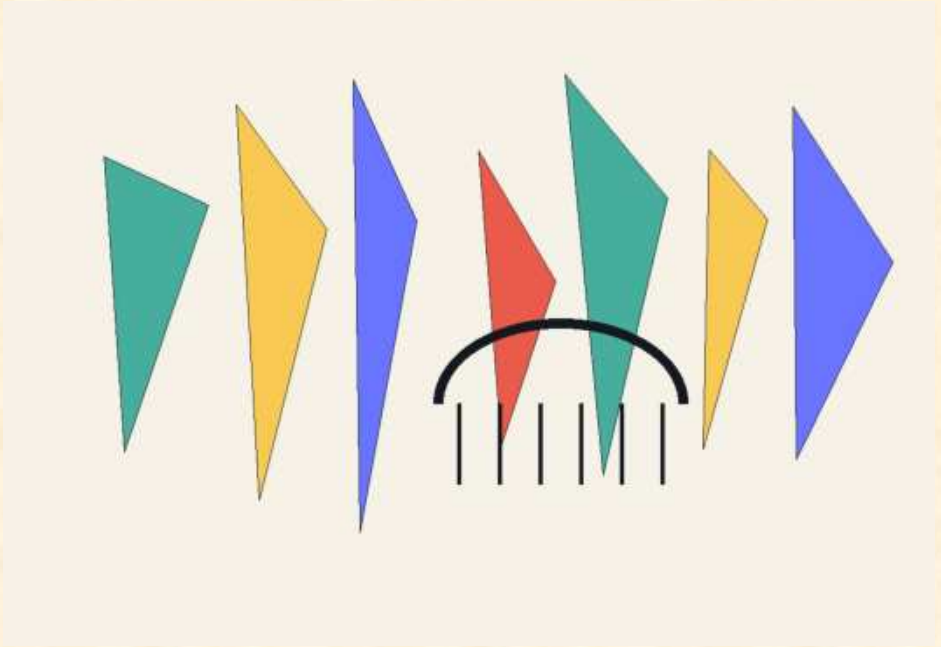
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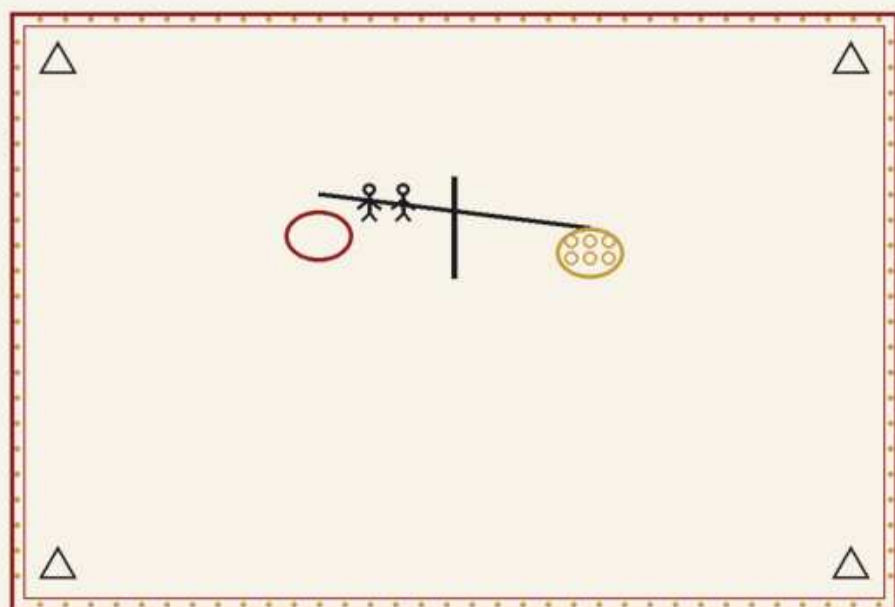


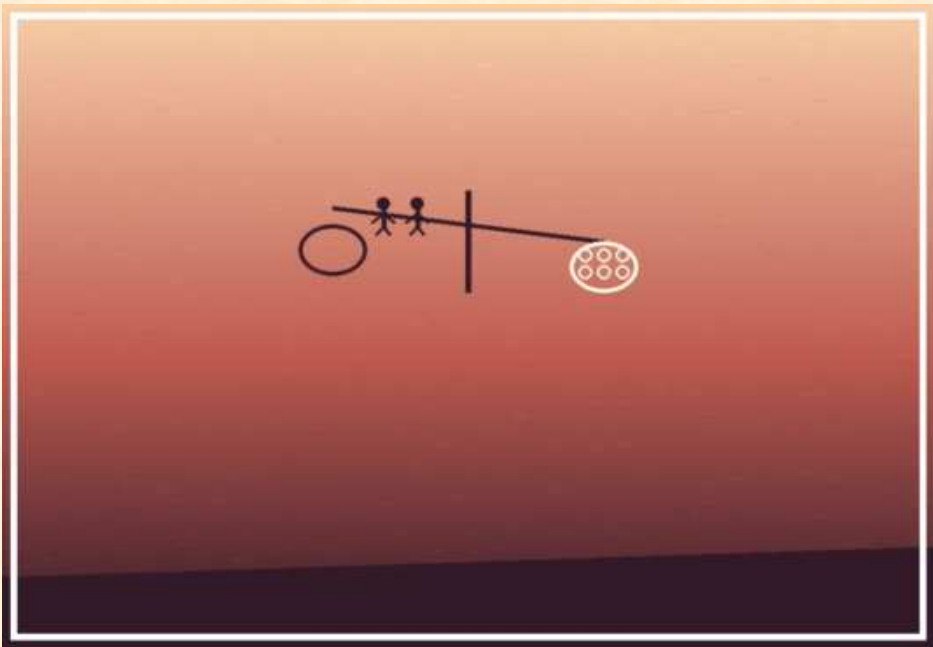
But what was this?! He piled on sugar-drops, and the pan would not rise. More sugar-drops — it would not rise. Crystal sugar, rice, lentils, jaggery — the whole shop's goods were weighed against it, yet the cotton pan did not budge an inch! Banima's laugh dried up; his hands began to shake. What he understood was this: on that pan sat not cotton, but Deena and Bhadari themselves.

The whole shop was emptied, and still the pan stayed down. Banima stood with folded hands — 'Mother! This cotton is no ordinary cotton!' He sent farmhands and goods home with Nirso — a cartful. The mother who had left at dawn with empty hands returned at evening with everything needed for her sons' shraddha. Even in death the sons had kept their mother's honour.

Chapter 13: The Feast and Hansa's Eyes







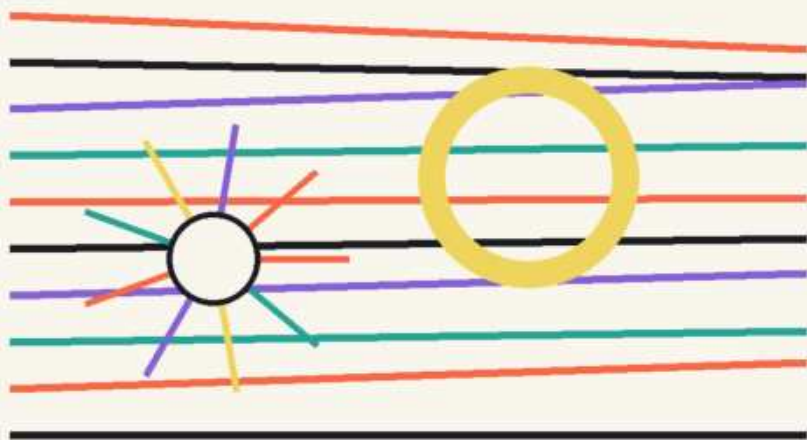
Picture 25



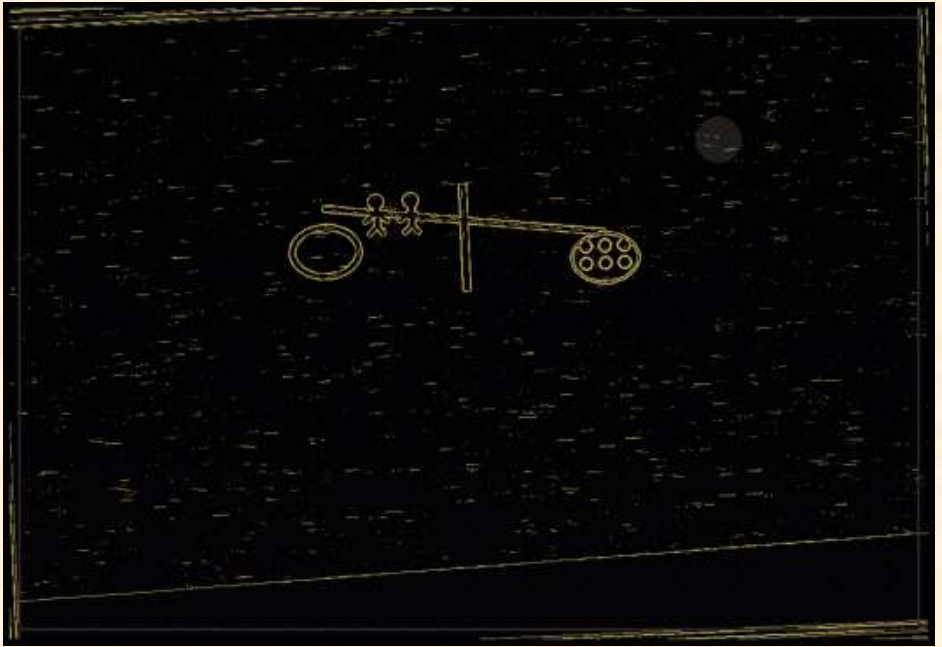
Nirso held the feast — the village and the community sat down to eat. And at that feast two unknown serving-boys began to serve everyone, going from person to person. Their hands moved as if they had practised for years; and as they served, their eyes stayed lowered, as if they feared someone might know them.

Someone did know them — but it was no ordinary someone. Midway through the feast Deena appeared for a moment in his true form — and at that very moment his young wife Hansa's eyes fell upon him. A wife's eyes — which tear through seven veils of disguise and see.

Hansa ran to Nirso — 'Mother! The serving-boy... he is himself...!' But Nirso would not believe her. How could she? How could she trust that the son she had laid upon the pyre was 'her son serving the feast'? This too is one of sorrow's cruelties — that it shuts the door of hope first.







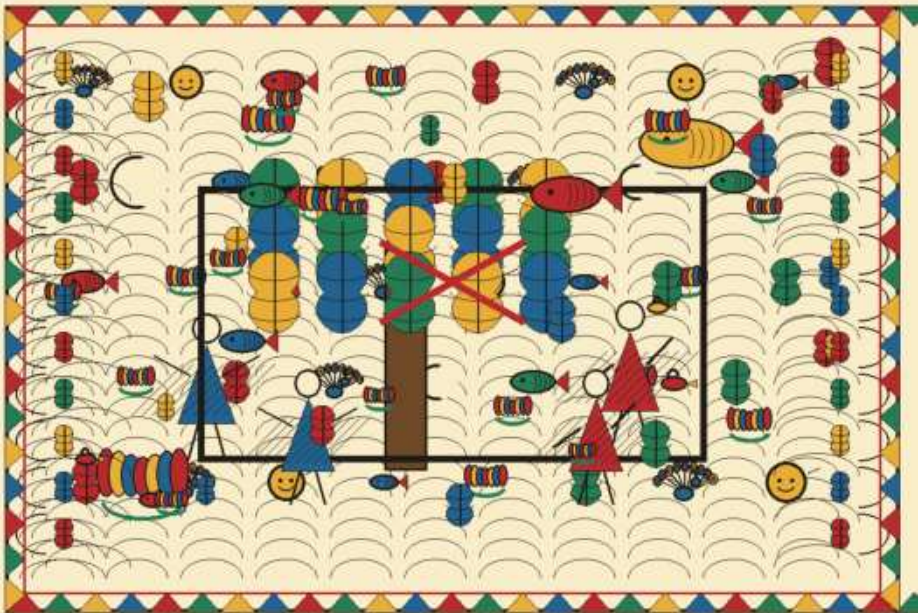
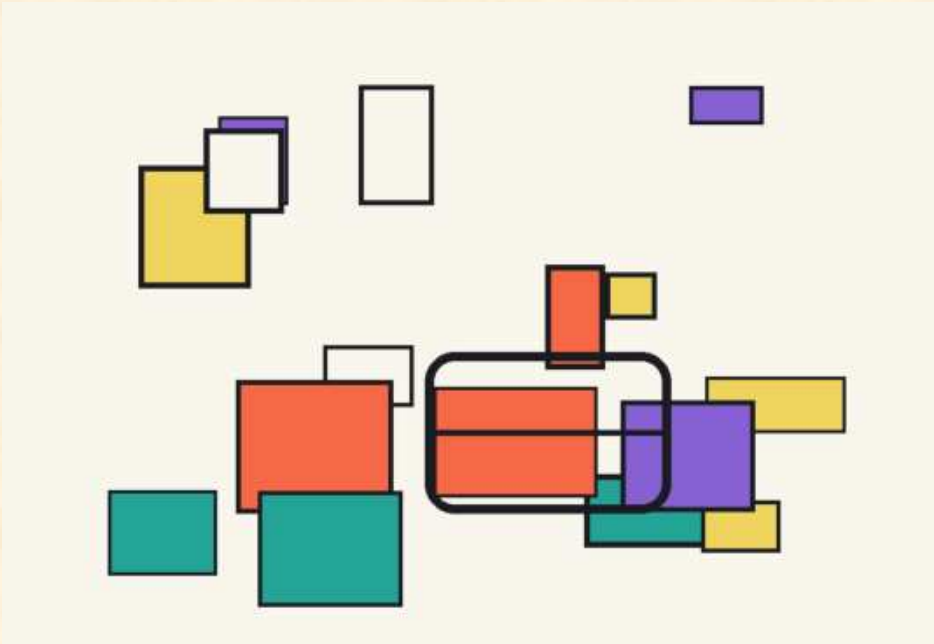
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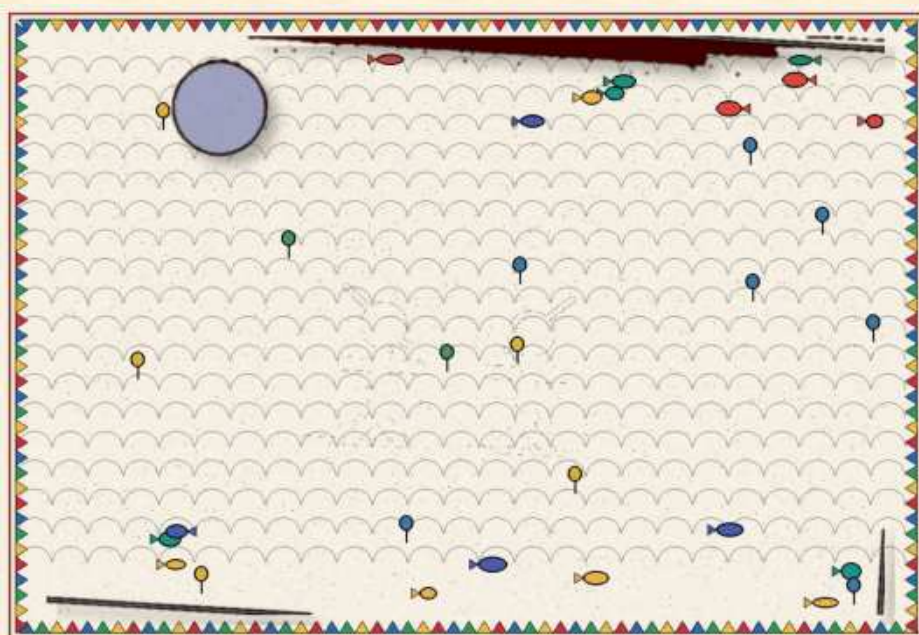
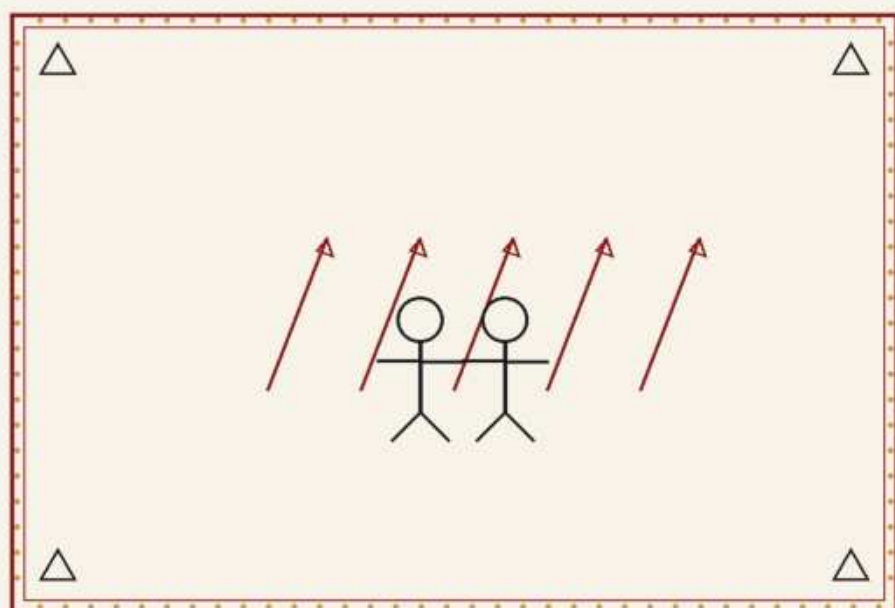


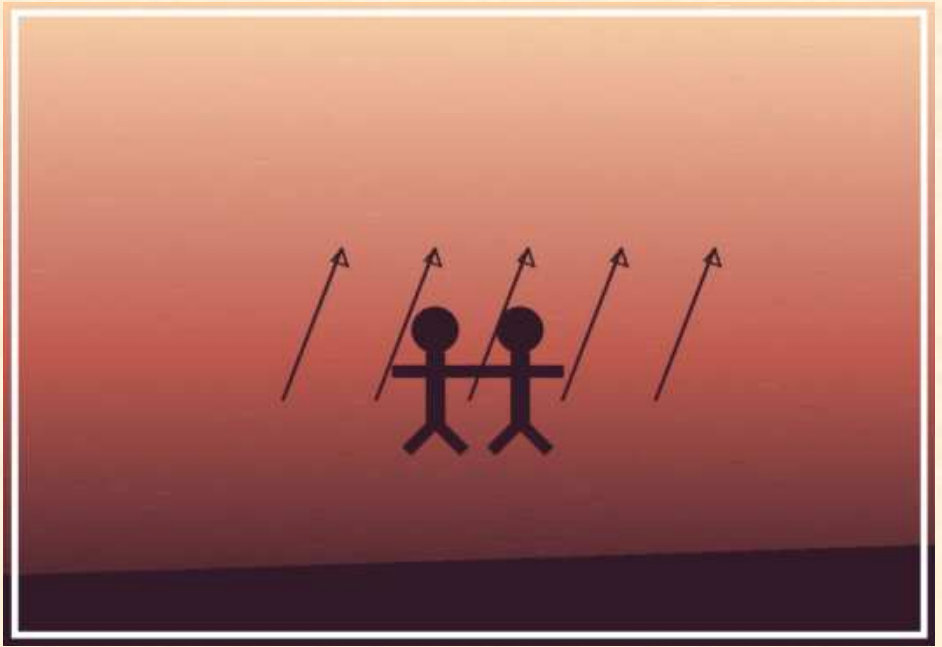
Hansa did not give up. She said — 'Bind your chest with seven layers of cloth, and go to the one who became Deena.' Nirso bound seven layers of cloth and went there — and a mother's heart knew her son: the seven layers tore open and milk flowed straight into the mouths of Deena and Bhadari.

A mother's milk — the greatest proof in the world. And in that very moment, having drunk the last offering of their mother's milk, both brothers vanished. This time there was no dove, no deceit — only a mother whose shawl was wet with tears, and two sons who had now gone on the journey beyond the body.

Chapter 14: The Holy War of Morang







Picture 27



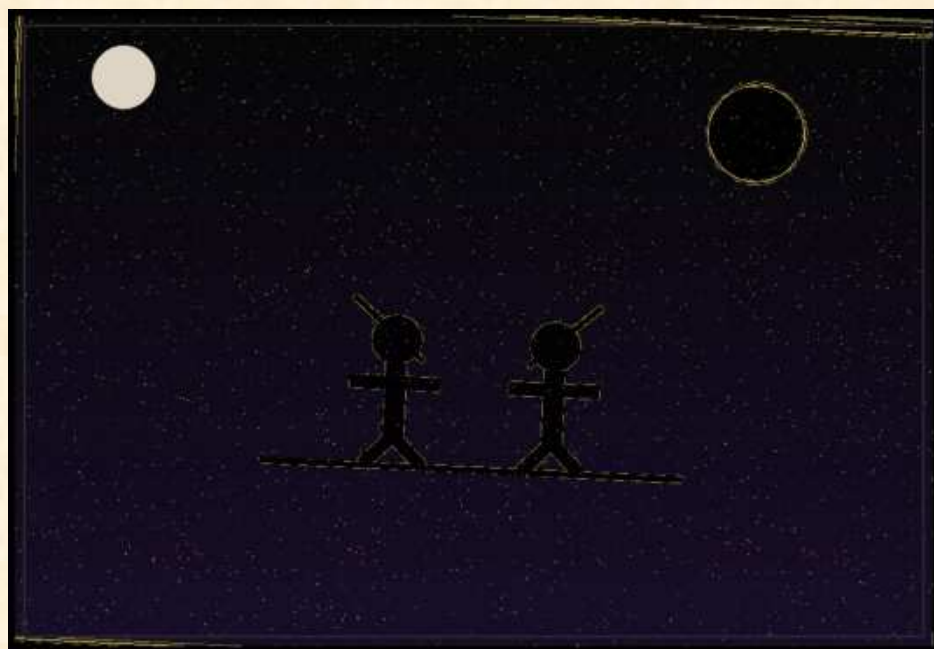
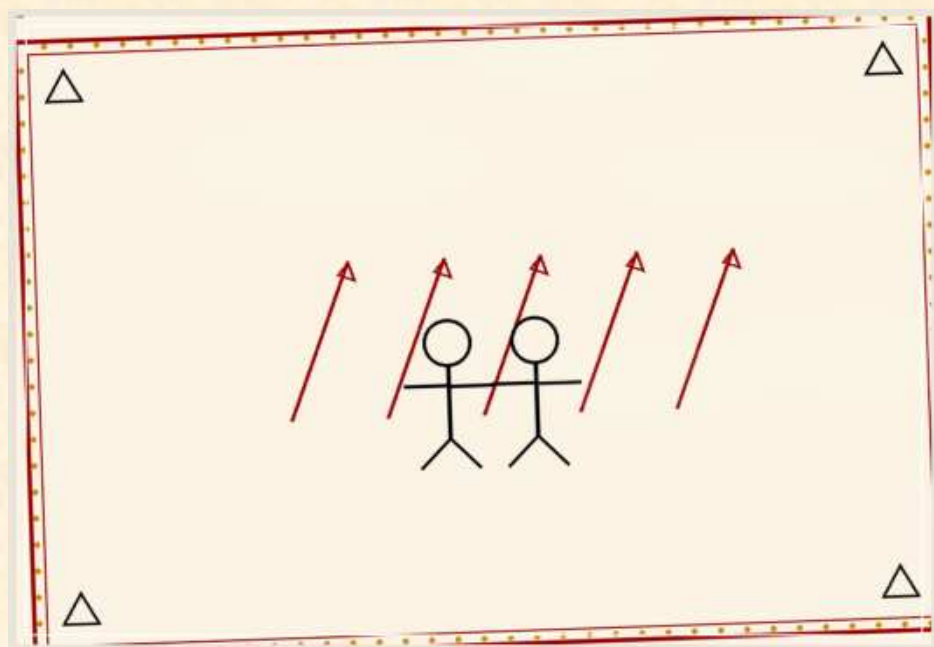
But the body was gone; dharma was not. The souls of Deena and Bhadari now set out to do the work left unfinished in life — the destruction of the wicked, and the uplift of their own Musahar people.

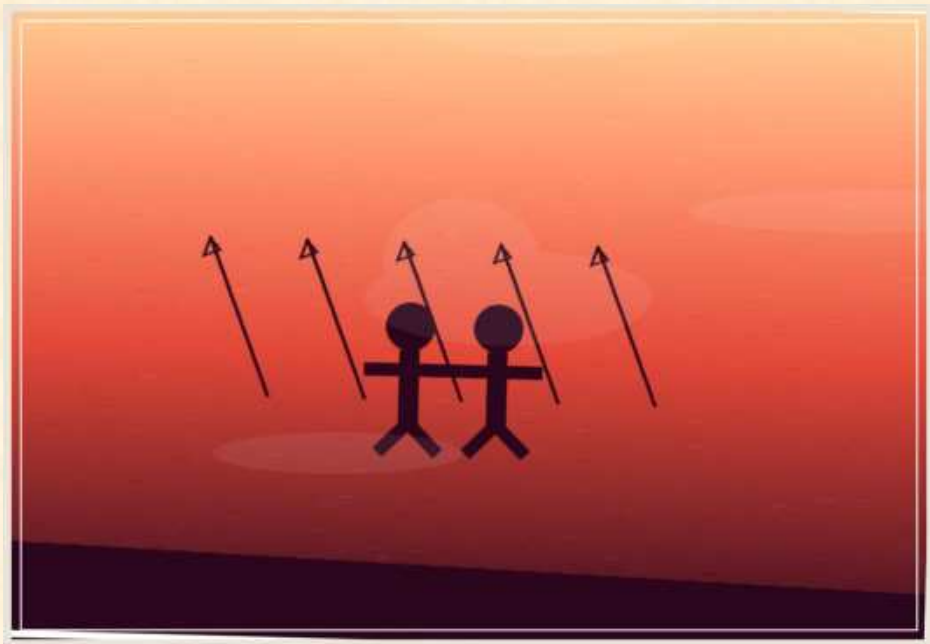
They went to Morang. There the terror of Jorawar Singh held sway — they killed Jorawar Singh, and lifted high the heads of the Musahars. The people who for years had known only how to bow stood straight for the first time.

Then they killed Tahir. Then they killed Sunariya.

Wherever farmhands suffered oppression, there the invisible hoes of the two brothers struck. And at last — on the bank of the river Dhar — they killed the one who was the root of all this sorrow: the witch Budhni.







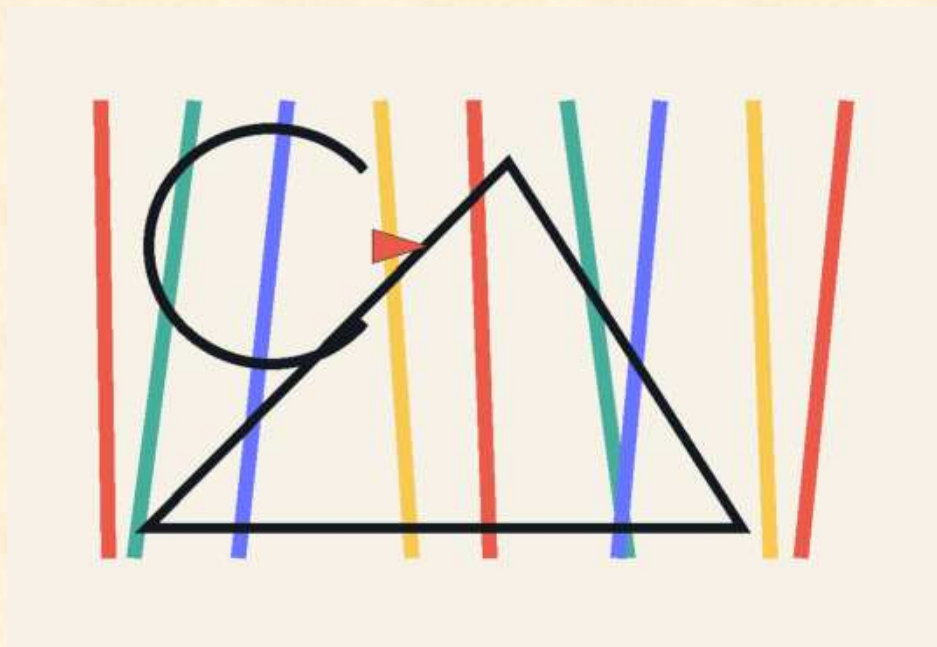
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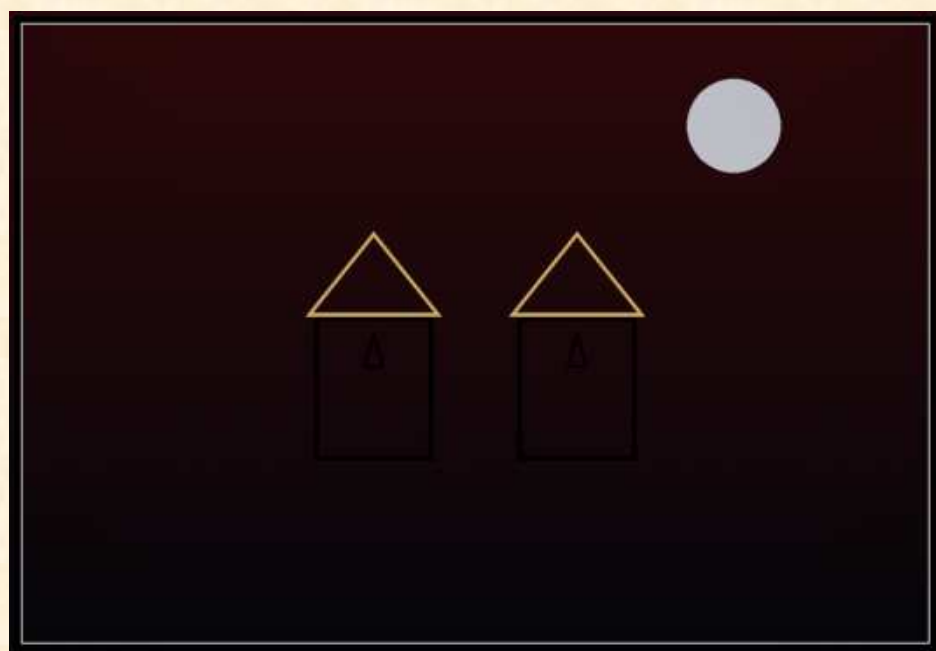
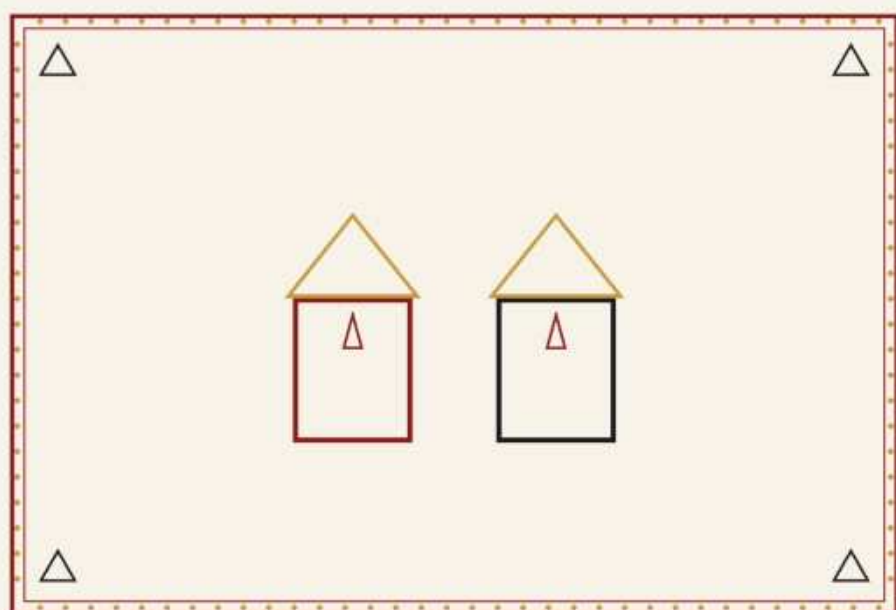


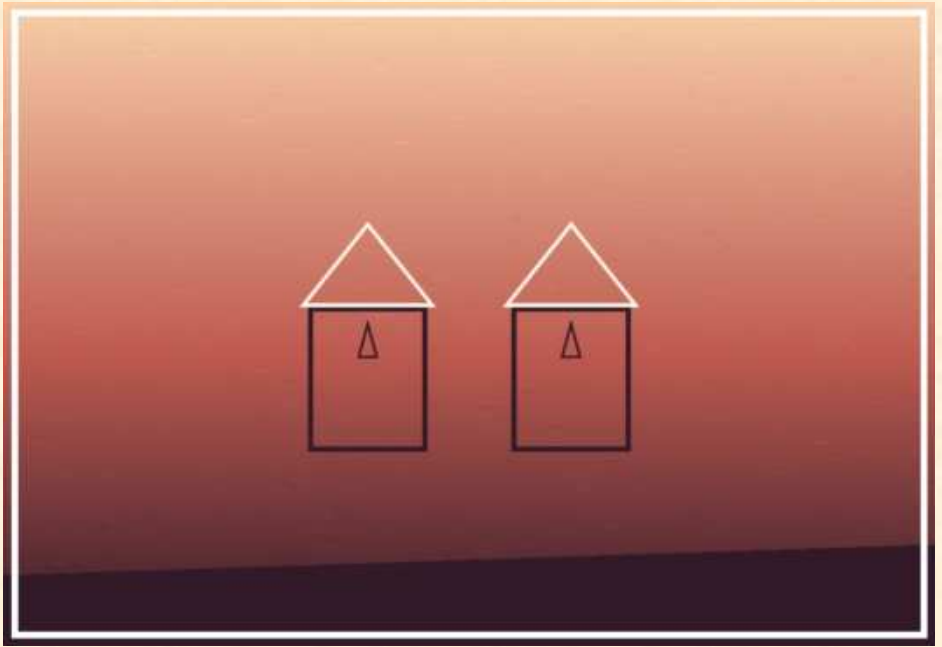
The Budhni whose boon had made this ballad a tragedy met her own end on the bank of the Dhar. The revenge that had gone home had returned as justice. Those who keep count say — Deena and Bhadari destroyed one hundred and fifty wicked ones. One hundred and fifty — meaning the breath of farmhands in one hundred and fifty villages was set free.

And all this was done without a throne, without an army, without a crown. Two Musahar brothers — whom in life a landlord took for bullocks — after death became the guardians of a whole region.

Chapter 15: Salhesh's Promise







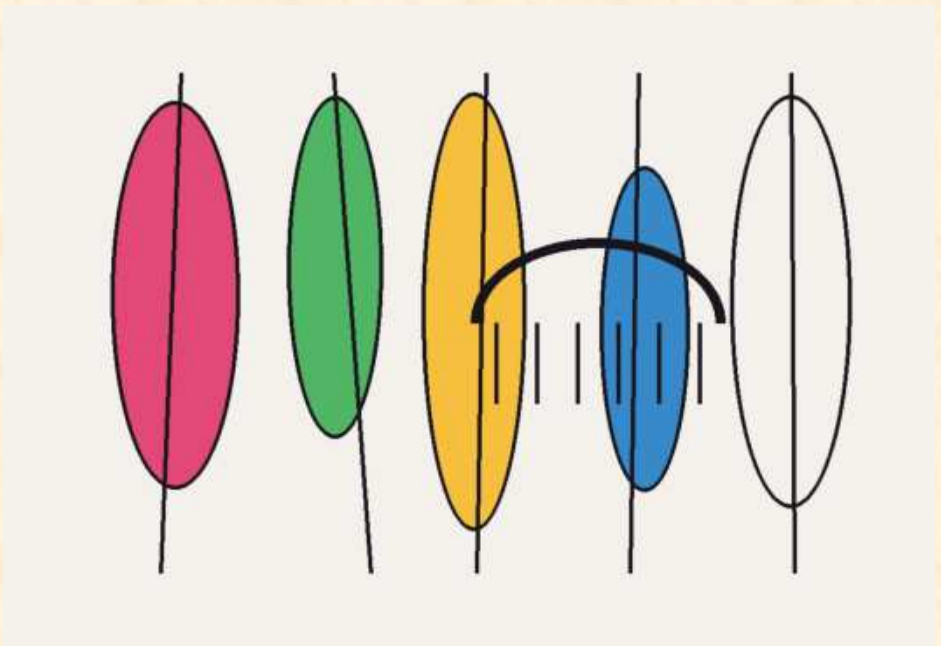
Picture 29



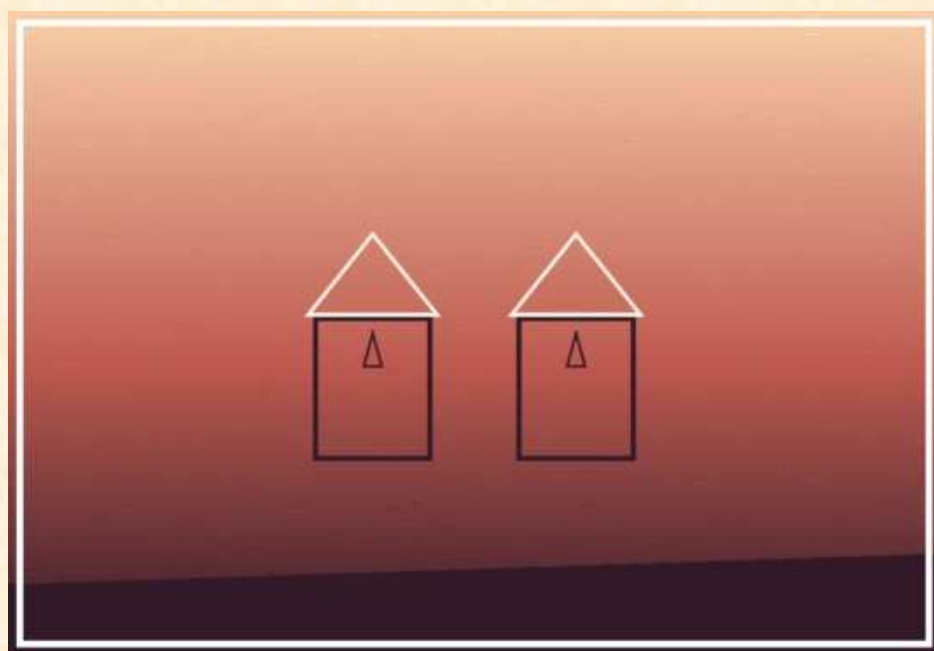
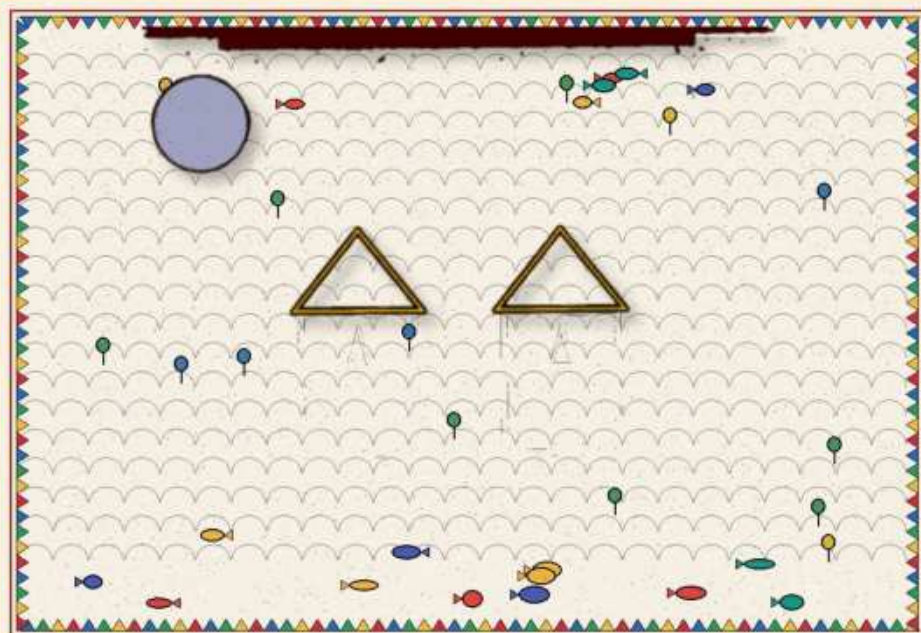
And then Salhesh spoke — that god who, bound in the chain of his own vow, could not save his beloved heroes. The weight on his heart would now be lifted by a word — but this time the word would be a blessing, not a curse.

Salhesh said: 'Wherever I am worshipped, there you too shall be worshipped.'

This was not only a promise — it was an apology, the weeping of a god, and the anointing of immortality. The lives that were lost through his helplessness he made immortal by giving them half of his own worship.







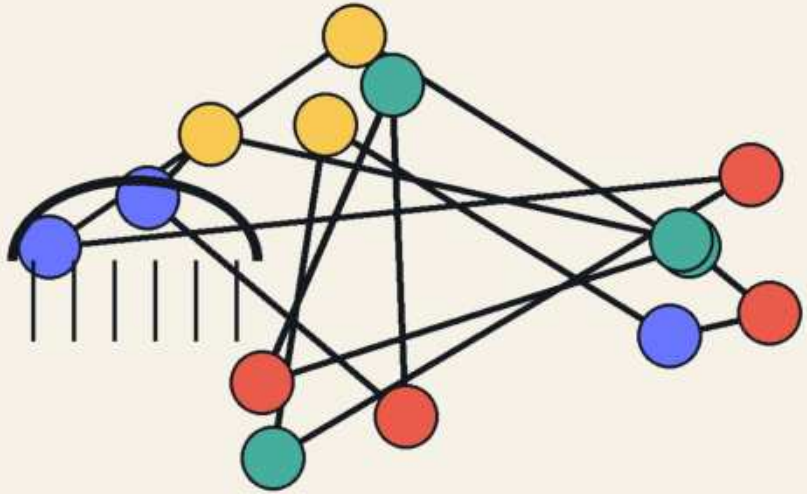
Picture 30

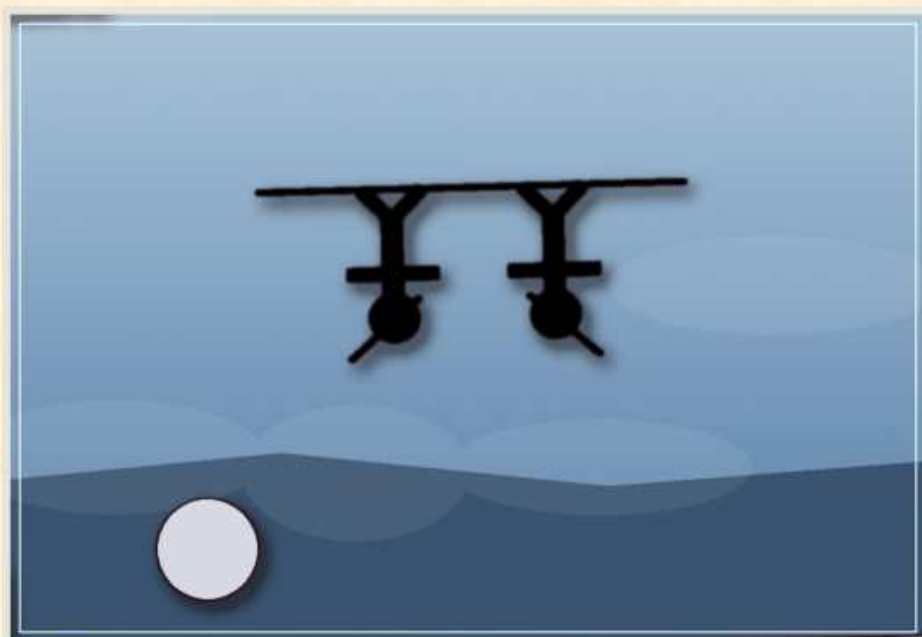
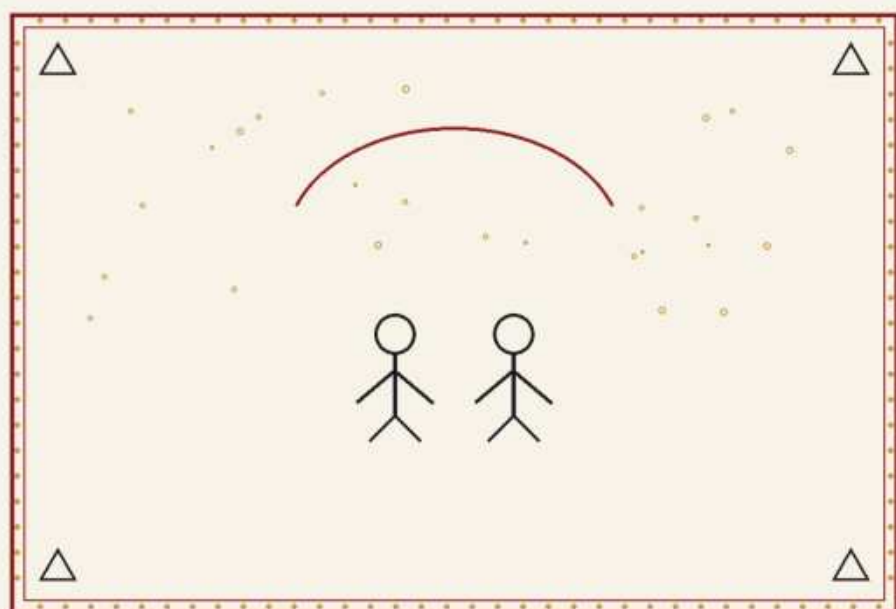


And so it was. From that day the joint shrines of Salhesh and Deena-Bhadari began to stand together. Even today in the Mithila region, wherever flowers are offered to Salhesh, the names of Deena and Bhadari are spoken too. God and farmhand — in the same courtyard, in the same incense and lamp-light.

How strange a justice is worship! No one today remembers the name of landlord Kanak Singh; Budhni's name survives only as a curse; and the two brothers who were killed have reached every household shrine. Time is the greatest court of all — it delivers its verdict late, but it does deliver it.

Chapter 16: Liberation







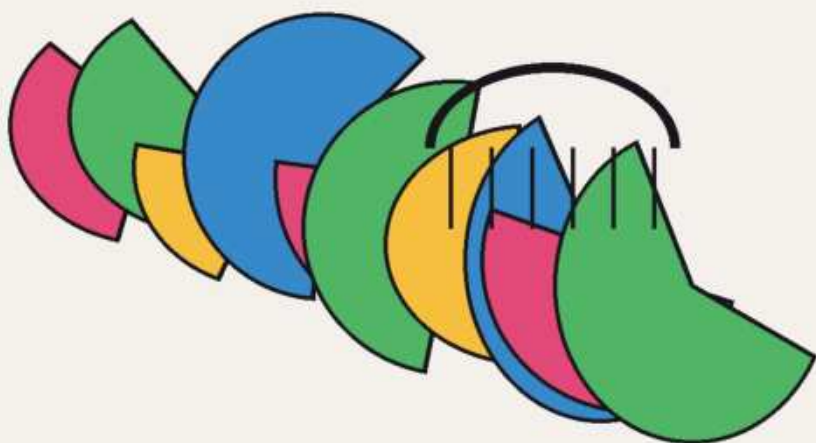
Picture 31

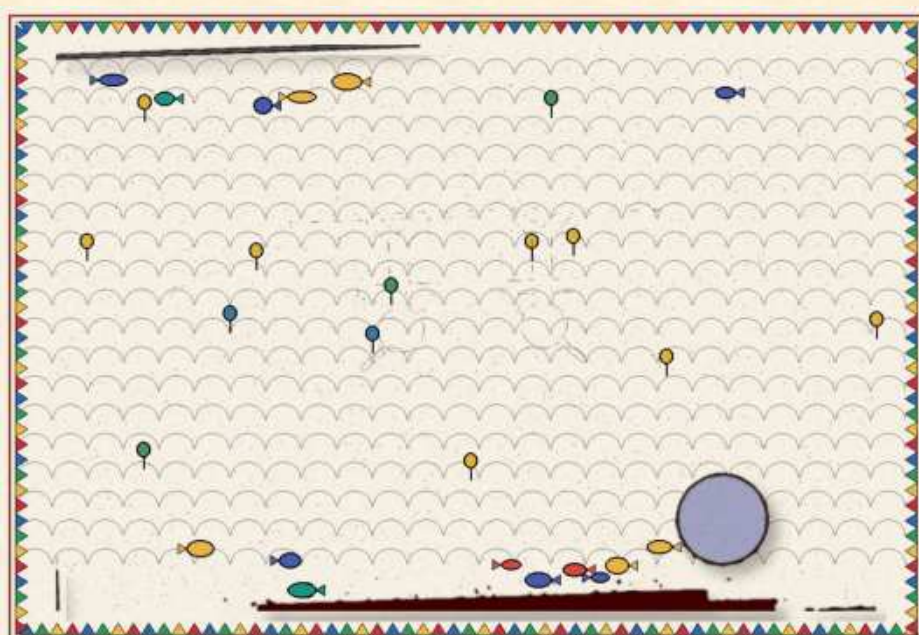
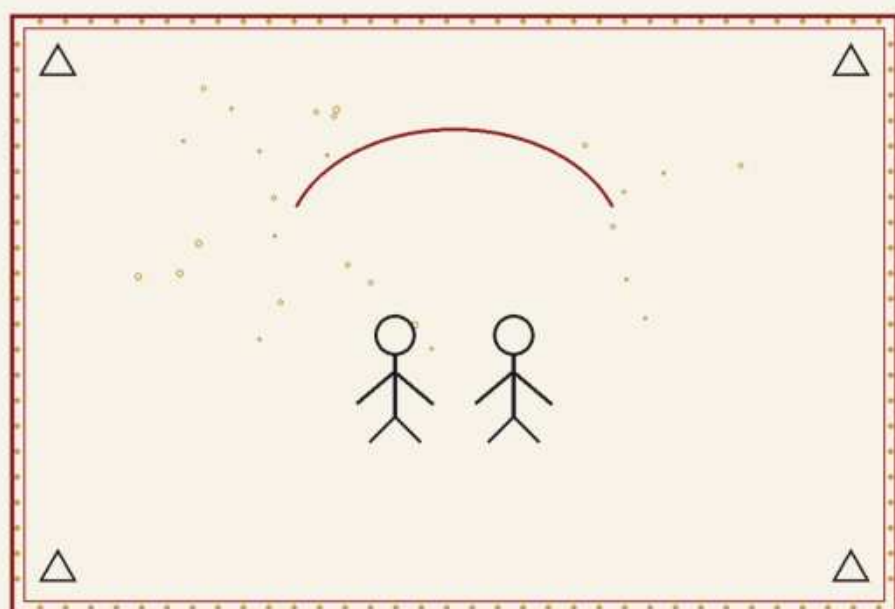


And at last — when every task upon the earth was done, every wicked account was settled, and their names were made immortal at every shrine — then Deena and Bhadari found liberation.

Liberation — meaning now no fear of any dove, no chain of any boon, no need to sit upon any scale-pan. In the world beyond, Salhesh and Deena-Bhadari began to dwell together — a god and his heroes, between whom there was now no wall of any vow.

But the earth of Jogiyanagar still holds both brothers in its memory. Even today, if any farmhand lifts a load of five maunds, the old folk say — 'There is a share of Deena-Bhadari in this one.'







Picture 32



And the Kattaiya forest? Even today, on the night of the new moon, it falls silent. That silence is not of fear — it is of reverence. The forest knows who once lay upon its earth.

This ballad is a tragedy — two innocent brothers were killed by deceit, a mother's arms were emptied, a young wife's vermilion was wiped away. But what rose out of this sorrow was greater than death: the sons' duty that sat upon the scale at the shraddha, the mother's milk that broke through seven layers of cloth, the end of one hundred and fifty oppressors, and the worship shared with a god. Deena and Bhadari died — and so they became immortal.

The End



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Amar Baba

Guardian of the Kamala River — The Legend
of Amarsingh of Shivra Village

[Original Maithili, Translation from Maithili into English by the author
himself]



Gajendra Thakur

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

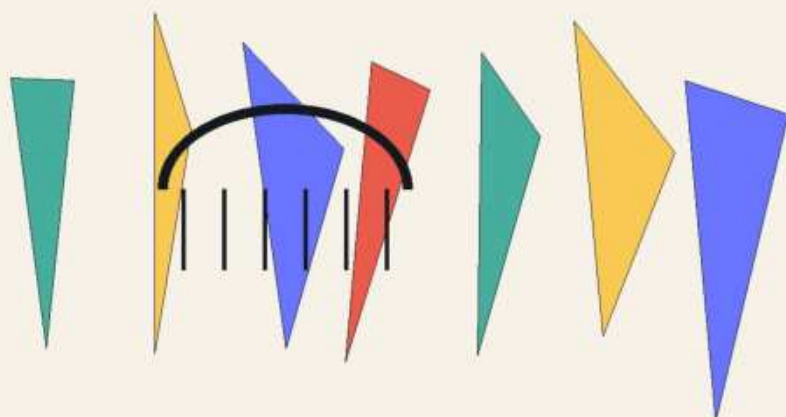
Prologue: The River and the Dharma

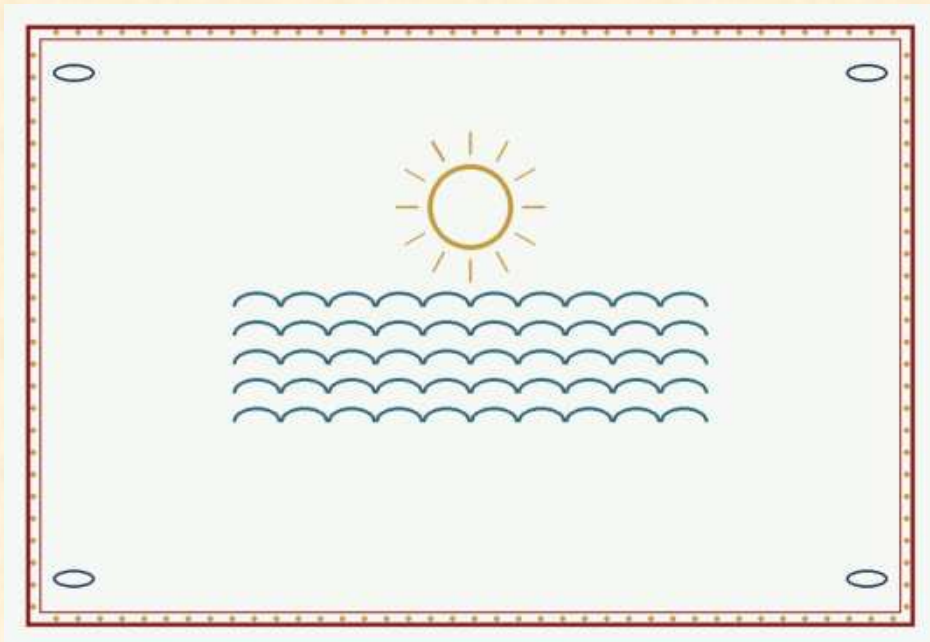
The rivers of Mithila are not only water. They are Mother. They are Goddess. And sometimes... they are a story. The Kamala River is one such story. On her waves, even today, a name still drifts and echoes — Amar Baba.

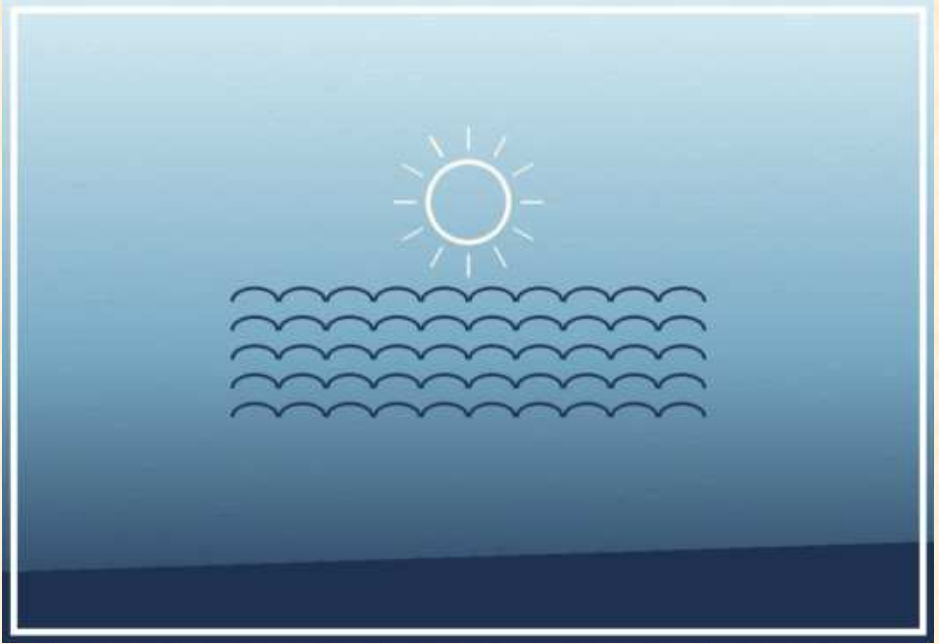
This is a tale of protection — yet protection has its price. This is a tale of courage — yet on the blade of courage, sometimes a tear may gleam. So this story is as full of the heroic as it is of the tender and the sad.

Chapter 1: The Birth of the Kamala River





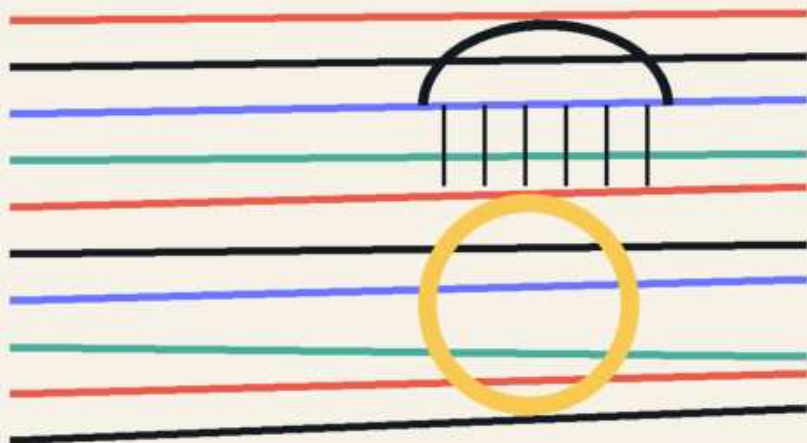


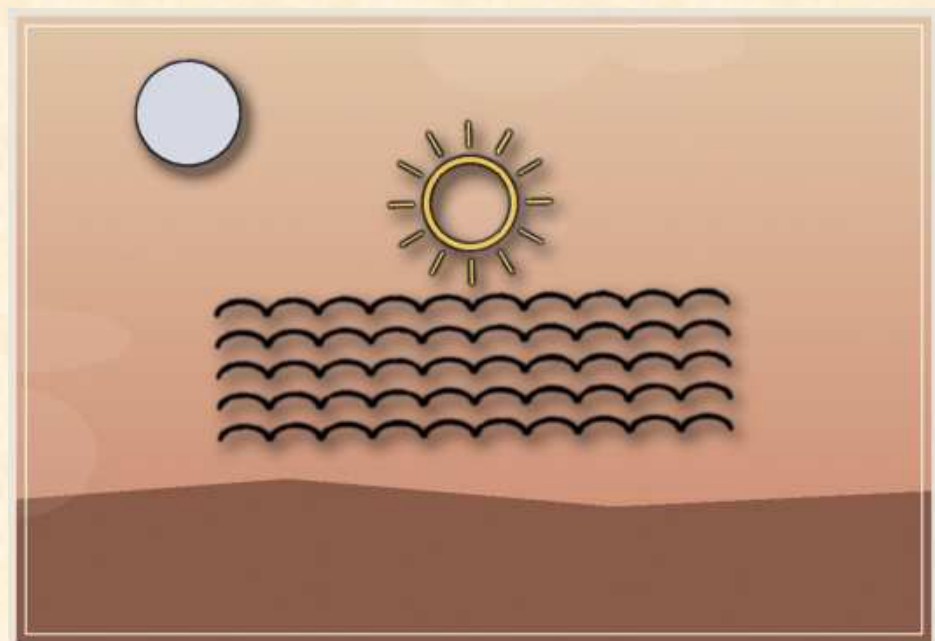
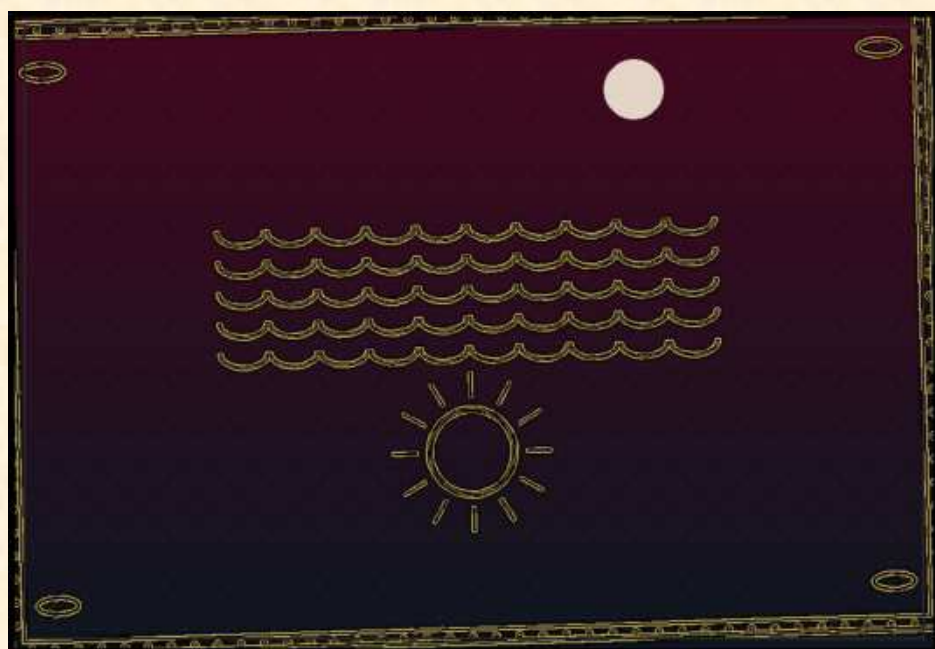


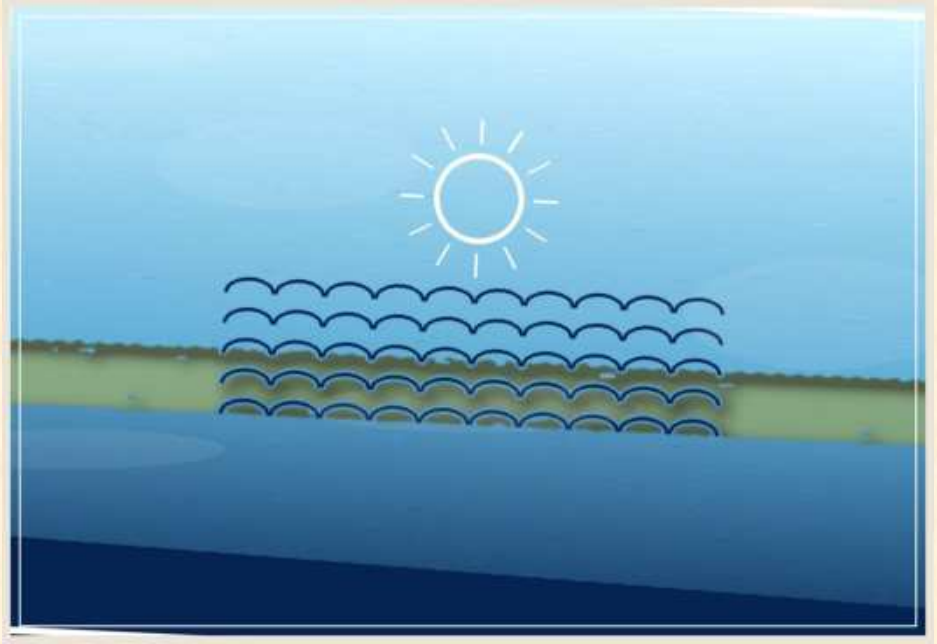
Picture 1

That year the earth of Mithila had cracked open. The rains had turned their face away. The fields were dry and brittle. The wells had gone empty. And then, as if she had heard the earth's cry, the Kamala River was born. She came down from the mountains, split the soil, and spread across the plain — a bright new stream, sparkling as she went.

Wherever Kamala flowed, life woke up. The dry fields turned green. Water returned to the wells. And once more the laughter of children rose from the village ghats.







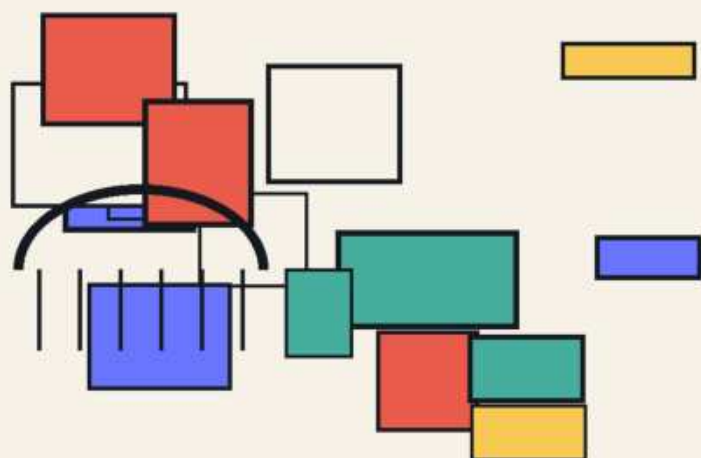
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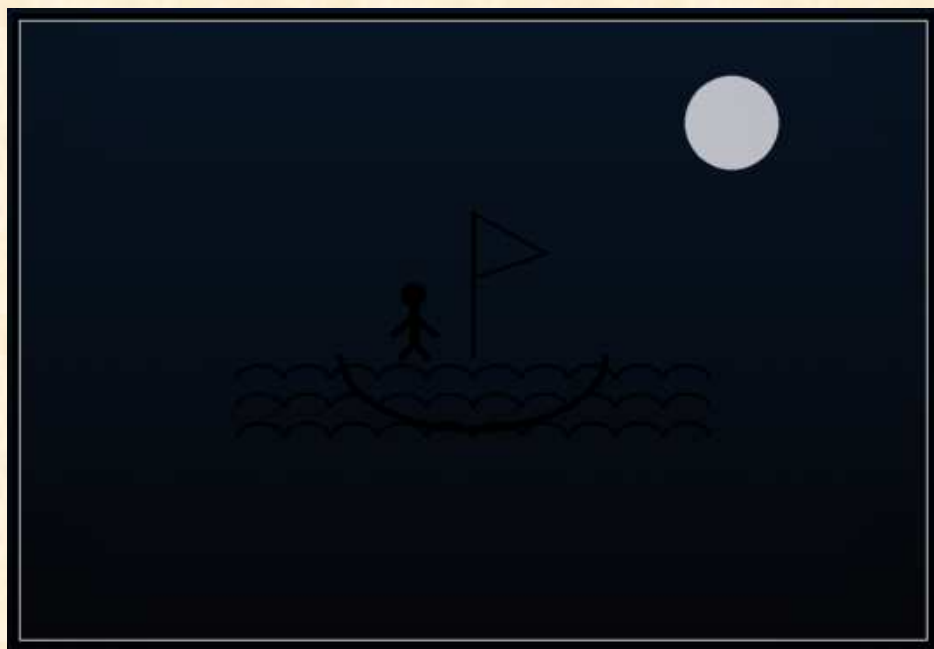
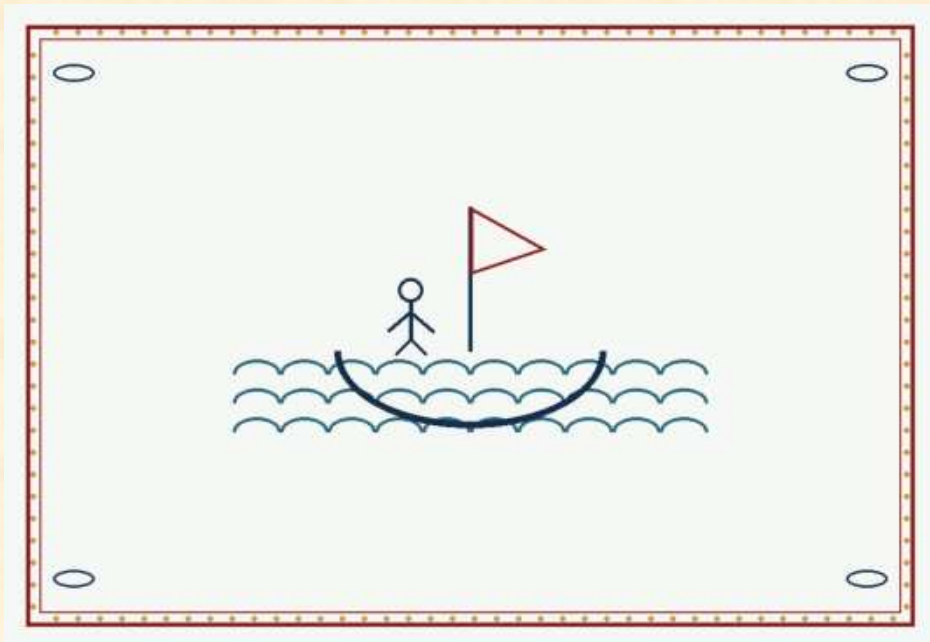
The old ones said, 'This is no ordinary river. She is a goddess. In this water there is the cool softness of a mother's scarf.' And from that day the people began to call her Kamala Mother.

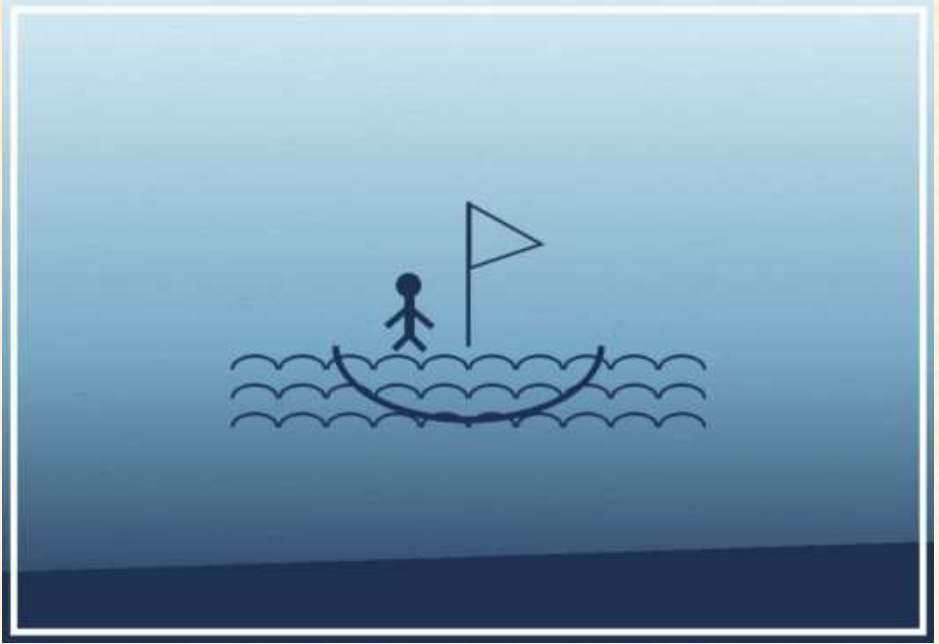
On both banks of the river, villages grew — villages of farmers, villages of boatmen. Everyone's life turned on one hub alone: Kamala. Whatever the river gave, they took; and in return they gave her reverence. This balance held for year upon year — until a flaw appeared in one man's eye.

Chapter 2: The Farmers and the Boatmen





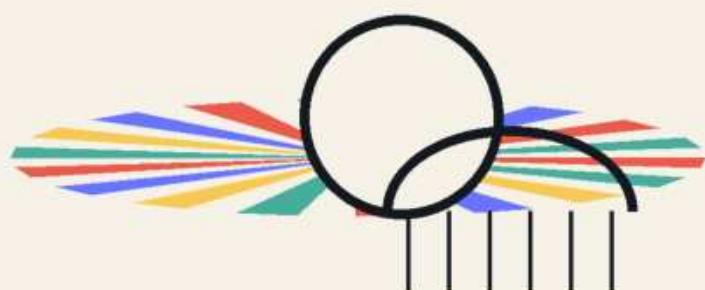


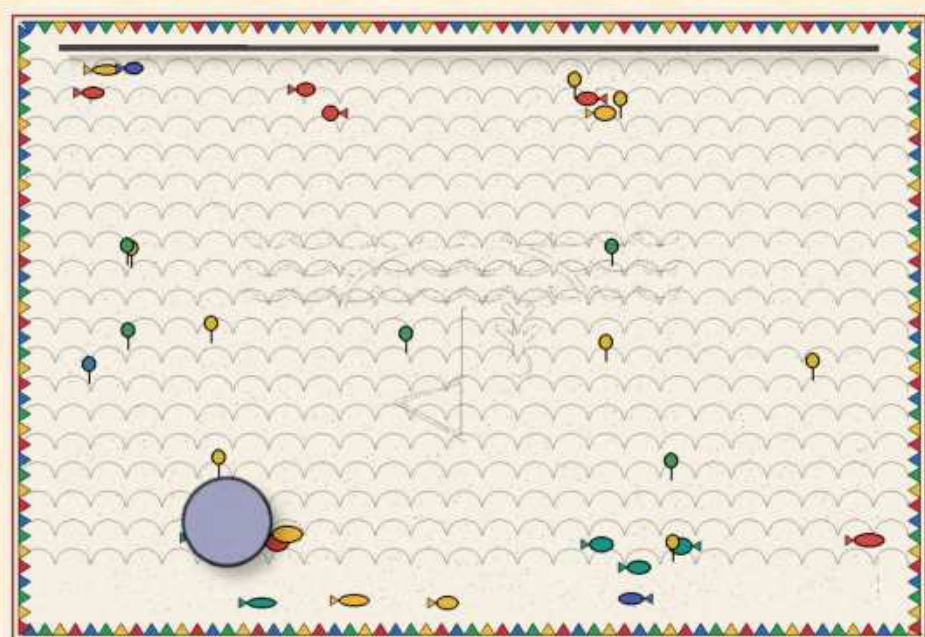
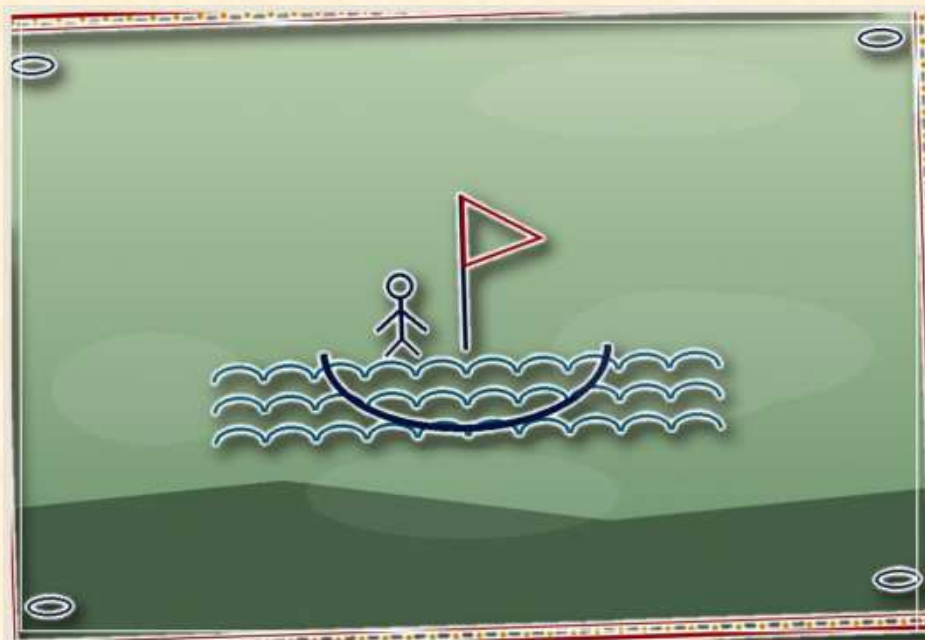


Picture 3

The farmer and the boatman — Kamala's two sons. At dawn the farmer took his plough toward the fields; the boatman took his net toward the ghat. In the evening both homes smelled of grain and fish that Kamala herself had given.

For the boatmen's people, the whole world was Kamala. Their boat was her palanquin, their net was their fortune, and the river's waves were their lullaby. The boatmen's children played in the water just as other children play in a courtyard.







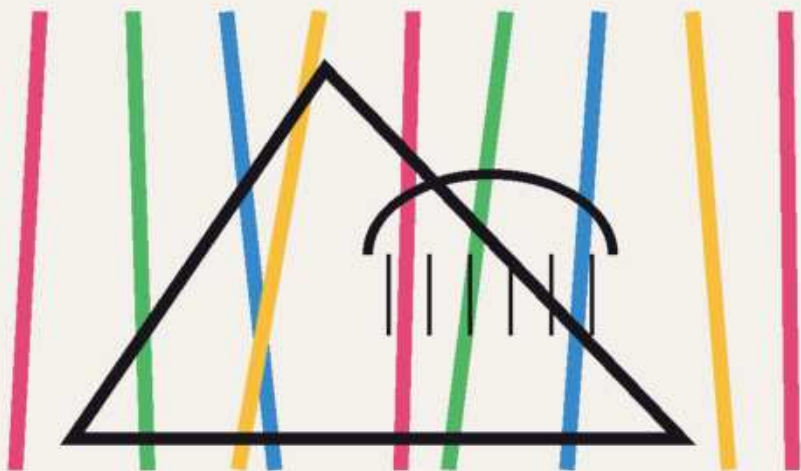
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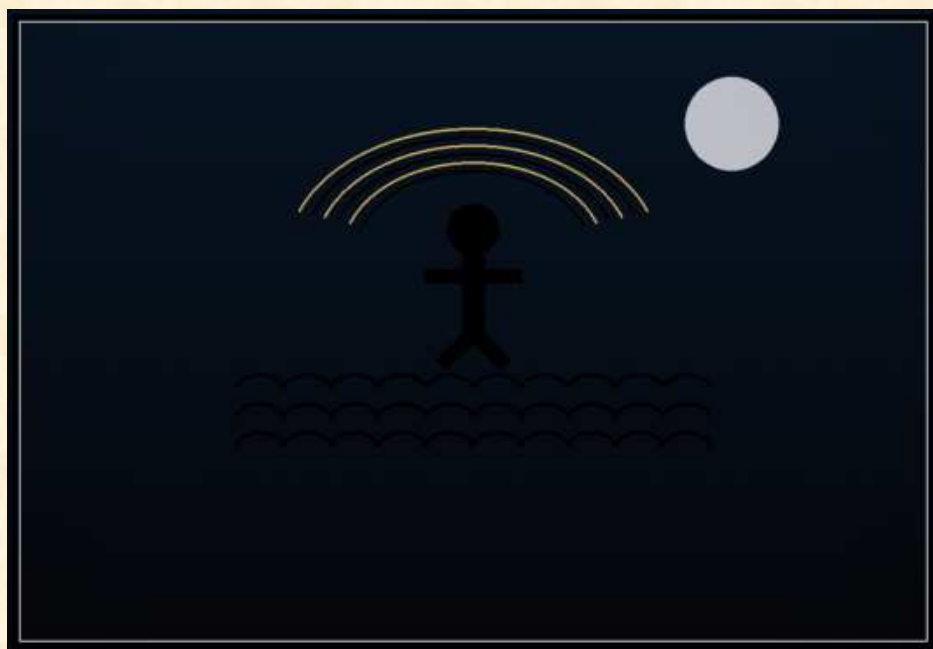
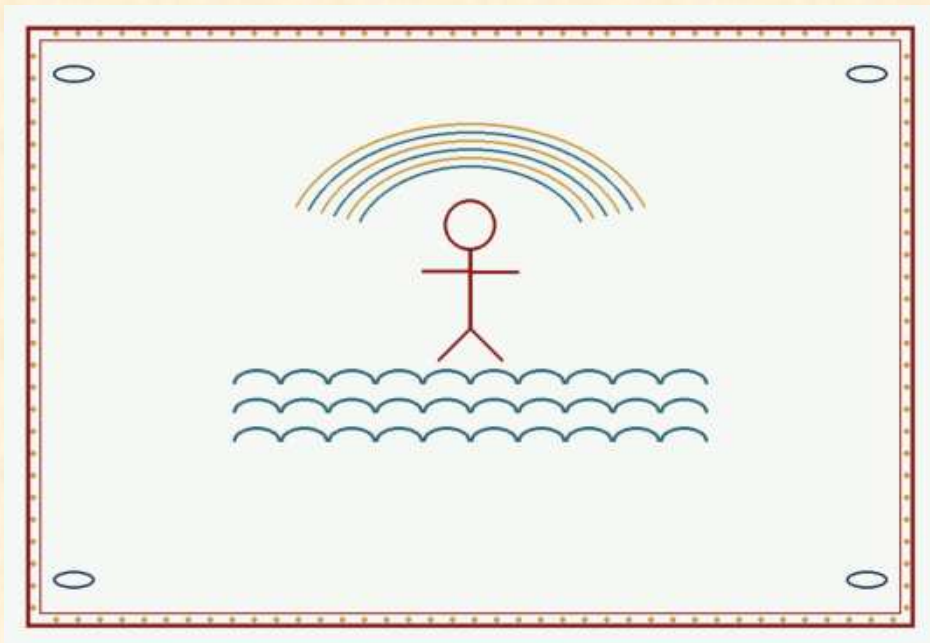
On festival days lamps burned at the ghat. Newly married brides offered vermilion to Kamala. Mothers entrusted the first hair of their children to the river. Kamala was witness to all of them — from birth to the final farewell.

Everyone's life was full of joy. But the rule of a story is this: the greater the happiness you describe, the nearer trouble stands. And this time trouble would not come from the water. It would come from the heart of a man.

Chapter 3: Kamala Grew Fair and Strong





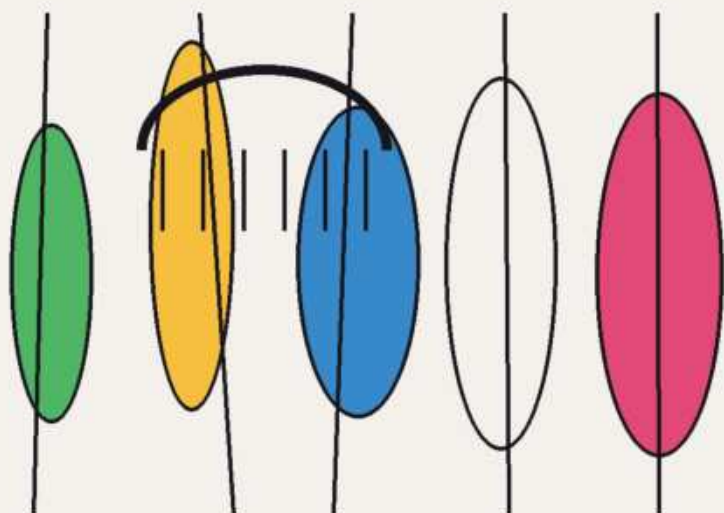


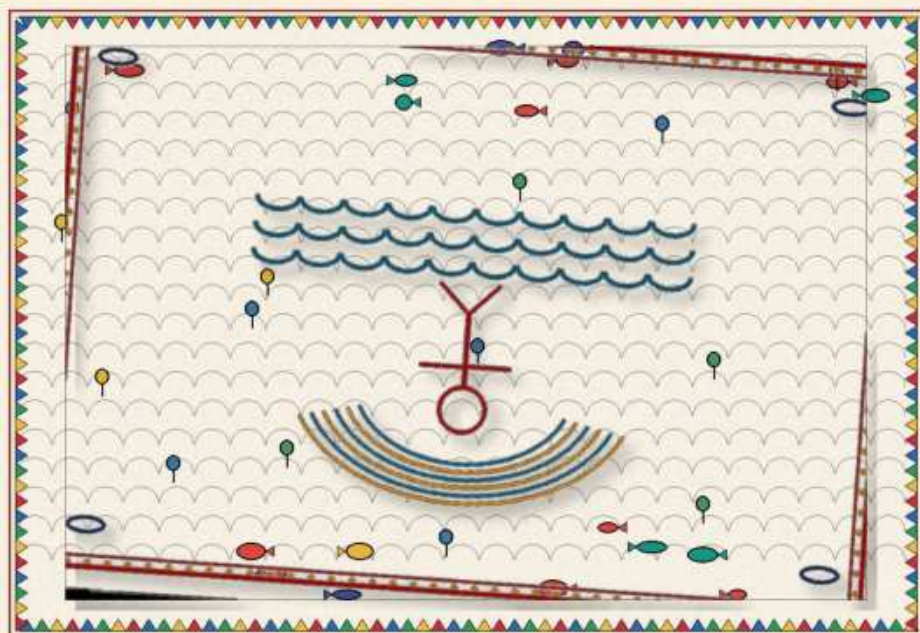


Picture 5

Time passed. Kamala grew. Her channel widened. Youthful strength rose in her waves, and talk of her beauty travelled far. In the morning sun her water shone like gold. At dusk it glowed like vermilion. Under the moonlight it gleamed like silver.

People said, 'There is no river as lovely as Kamala in all the three worlds.' And just as parents' hearts swell with pride at a daughter's fame, so the heads of the farmers and boatmen were held high because of Kamala's glory.







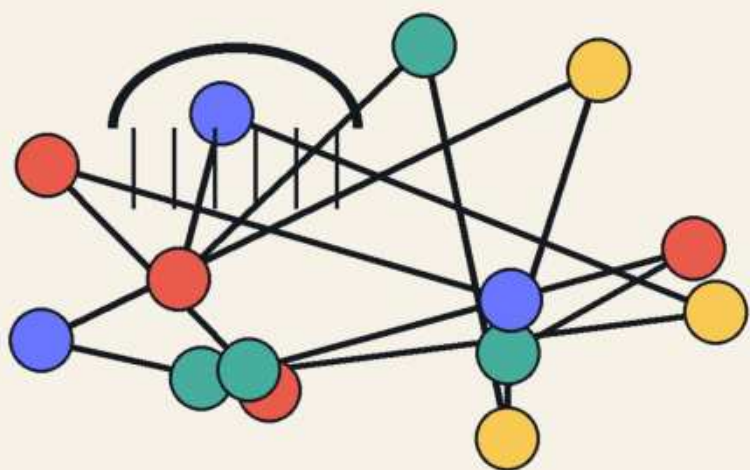
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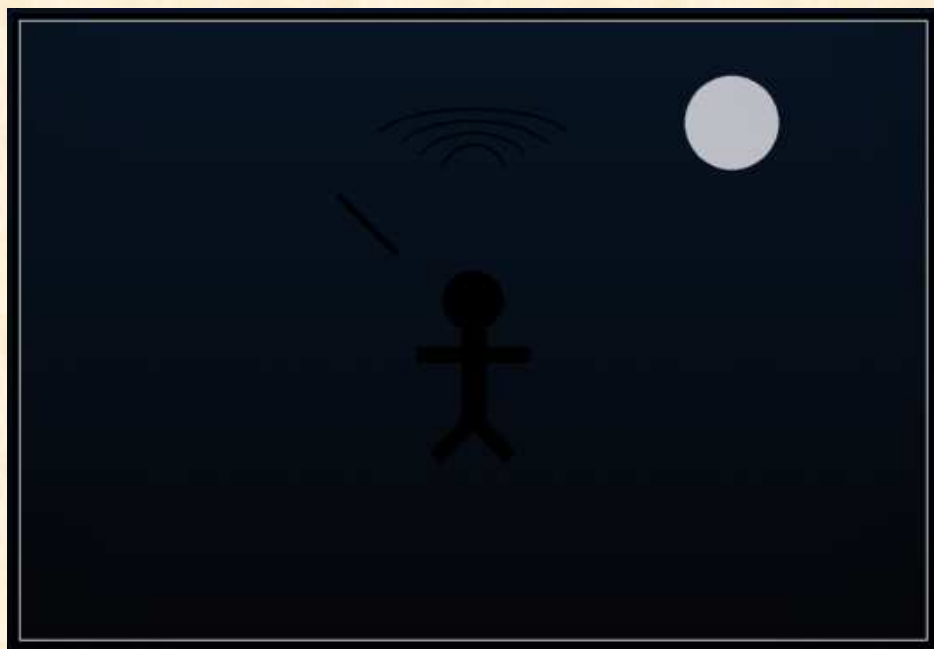
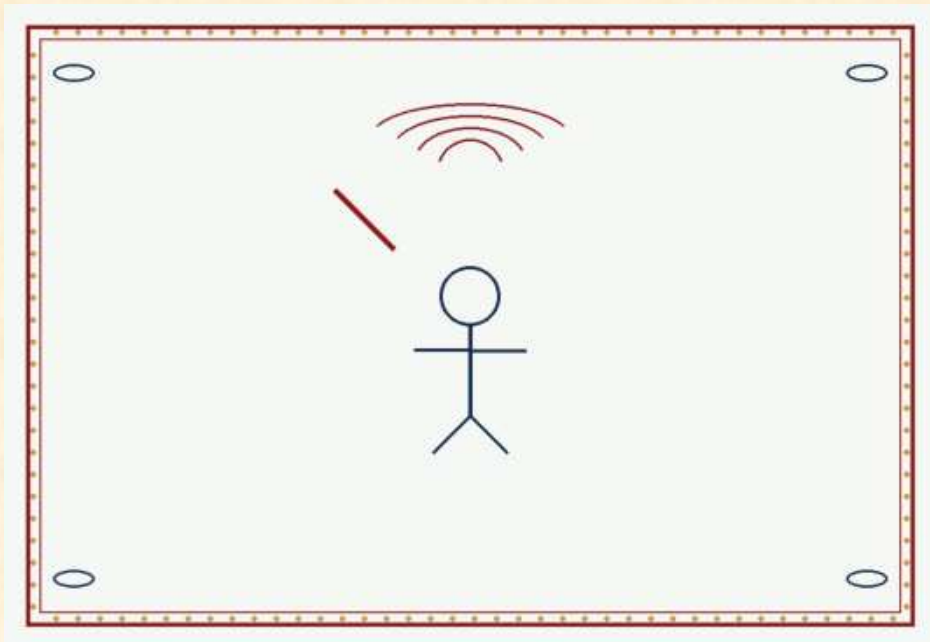
But fame and beauty are two lamps — and to a lamp come not only moths, but snakes as well.

On one bank of the river lived a neighbourhood chief named Baidla — strong of body, dark of heart. The day his eye fell on Kamala's youthful stream, reverence did not wake in that eye. A wicked longing did.

Chapter 4: Baidla's Wicked Desire





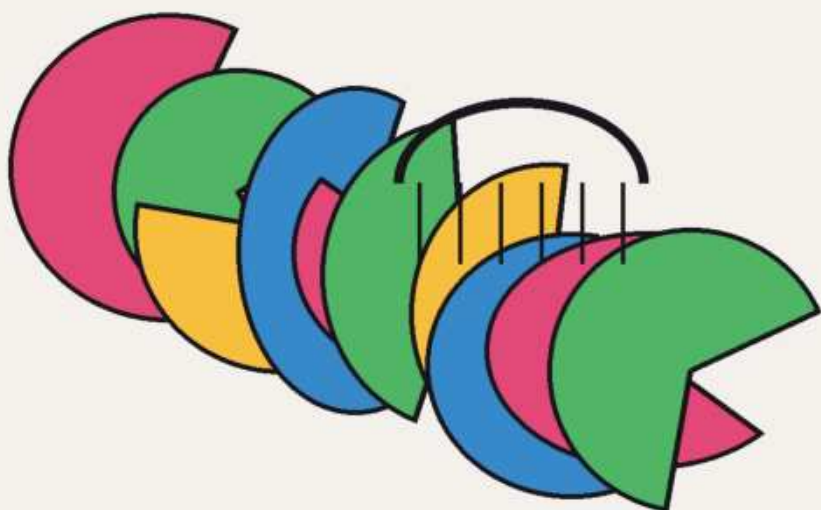


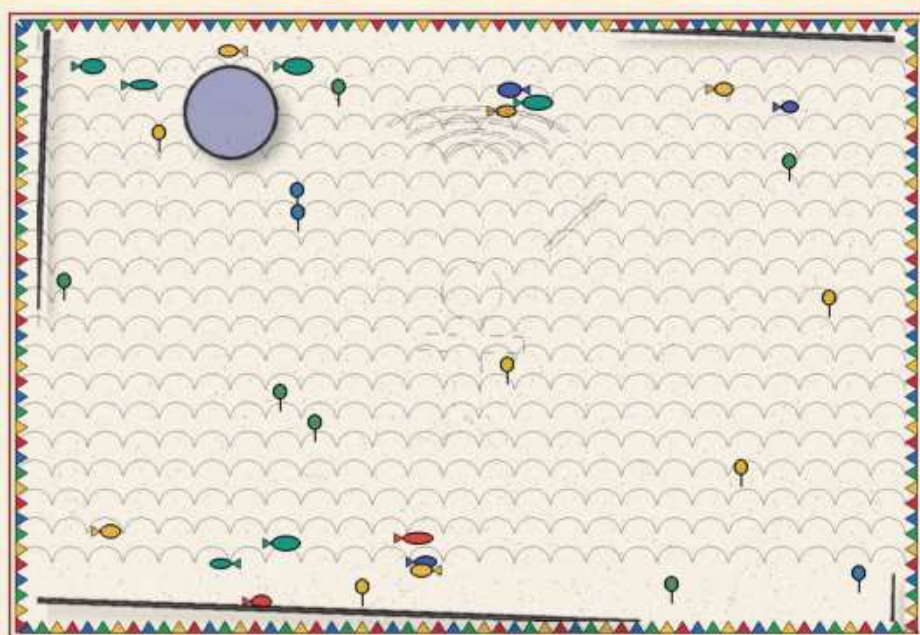
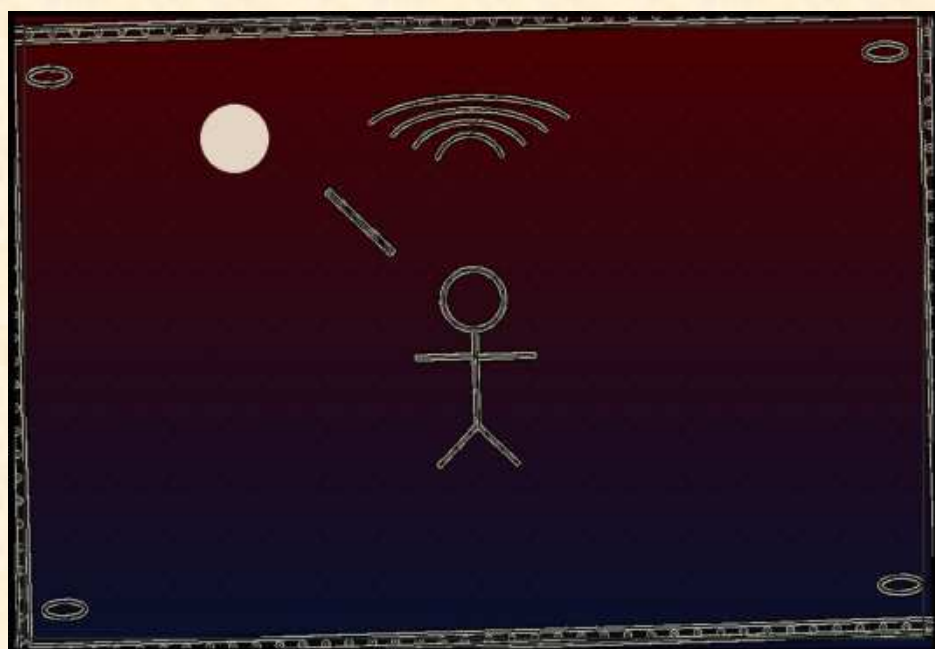


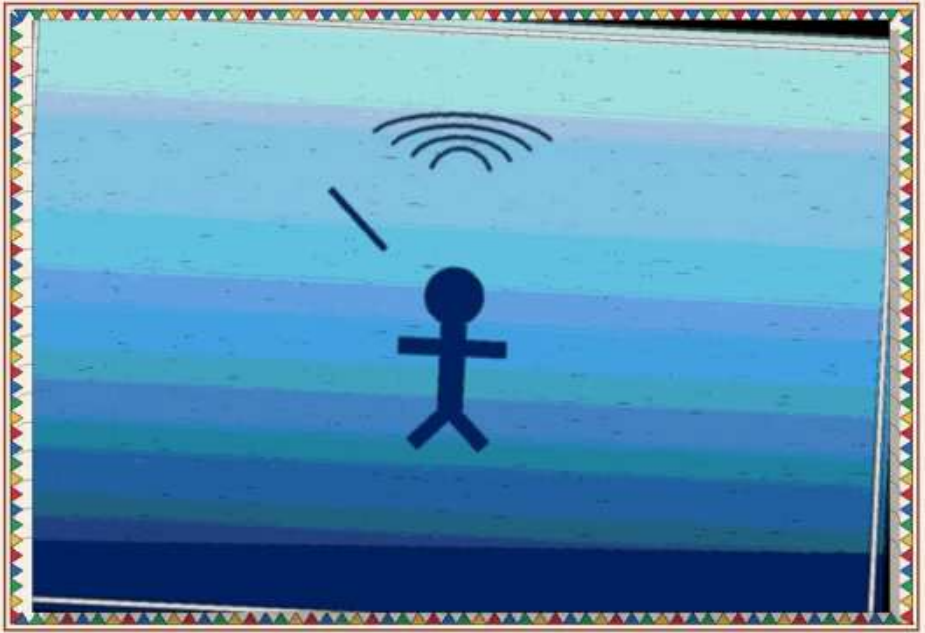
Picture 7

Baidla was a bully. The village people trembled at his name. Whatever pleased him, he seized — that was his only law. And now the thing that pleased him most of all was Kamala.

He made a public declaration: 'I will marry Kamala — by force!' By force — meaning against her will, meaning her wish would count for nothing. A forced marriage with a goddess-river! Hearing this, the whole village fell into a stunned silence.







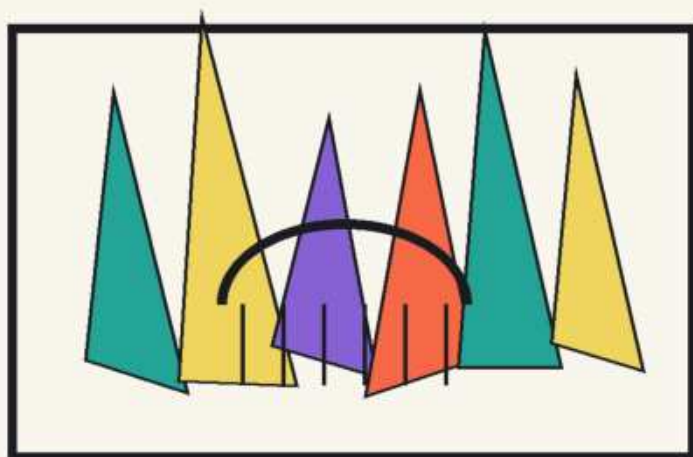
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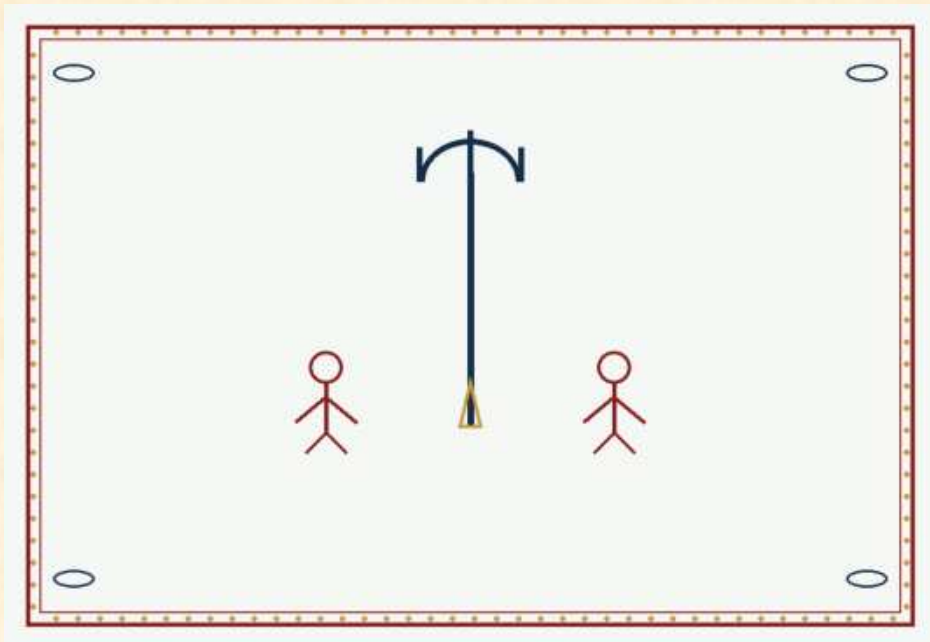
He set up his wrestling ground at the ghat, posted his stick-wielding men, and beat the drum: 'Whoever stops me must first fight me!' The ghat where lamps once burned now glittered with staves.

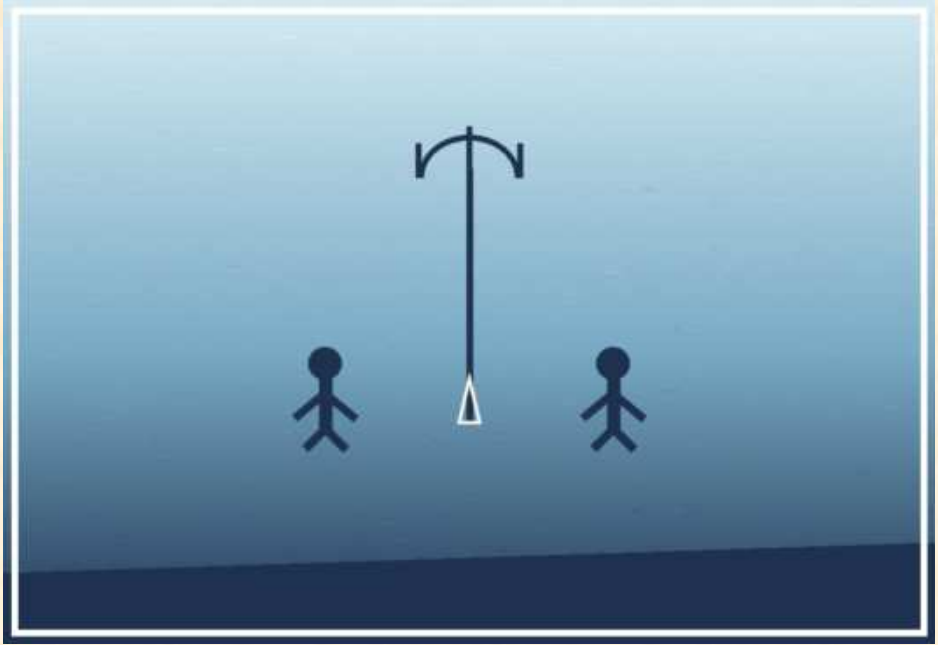
From that day Kamala's waves grew restless. The river rose and swirled, as if to say, 'My children, do you hear? My honour is now in your hands.' And the first to hear that call were the boatmen — for a daughter's shame reaches first the ears of those who once held her in their arms.

Chapter 5: The Penance Before Bhola Baba





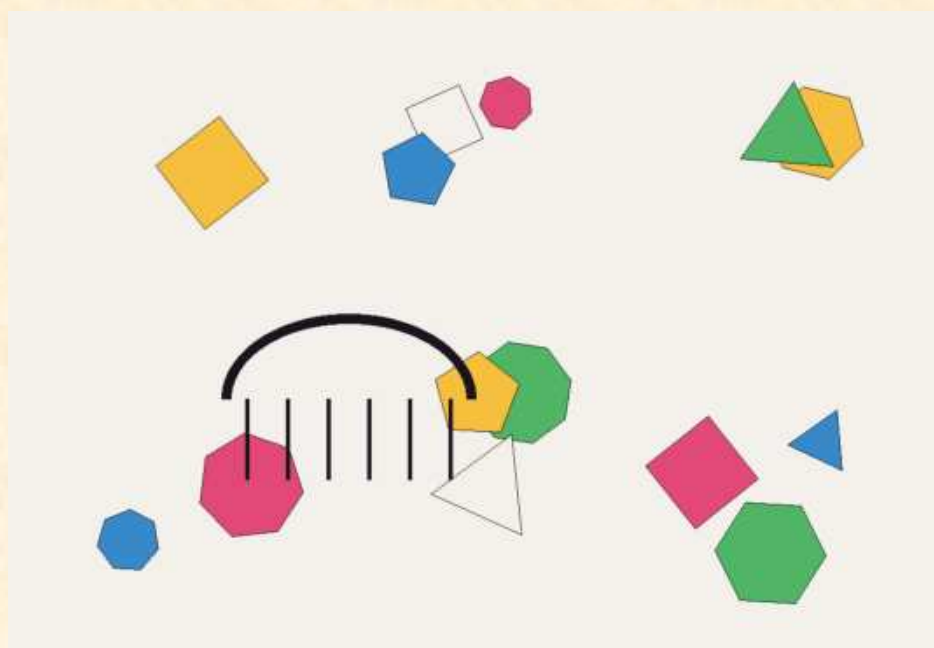


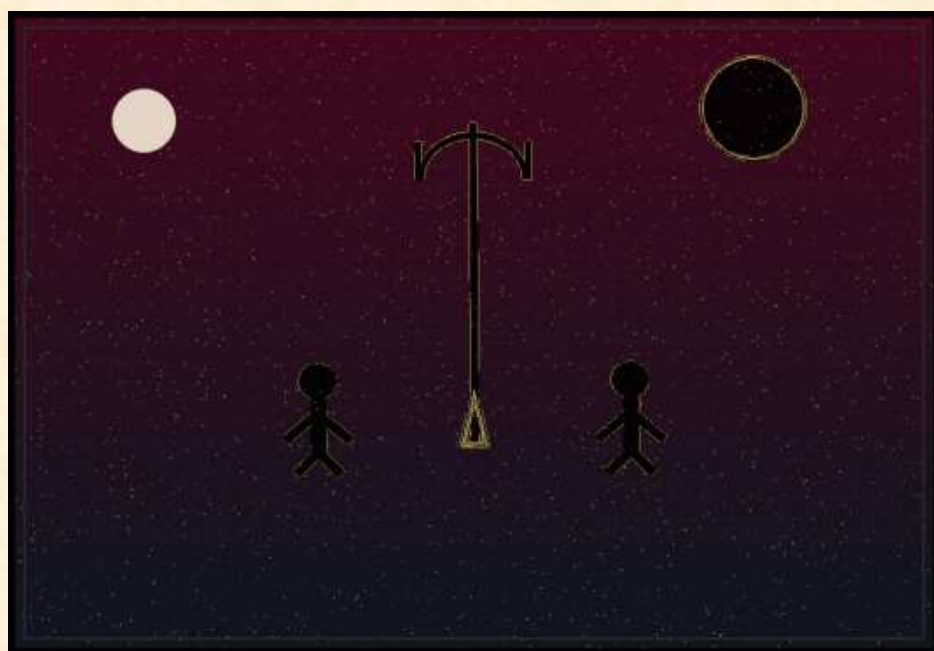
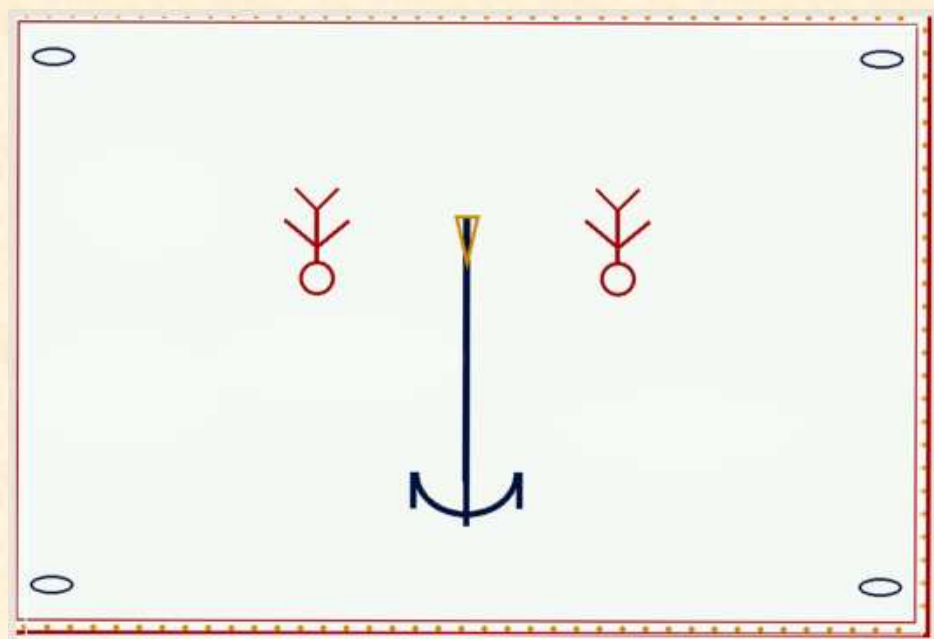


Picture 9

The boatmen gathered. But what could they do? Baidla had a demon's strength and an army of stick-men beside him. The boatmen had only nets and the oars of their boats. In a fight of arms, defeat was certain. Then an old boatman said, 'Where the arm fails, worship goes ahead. Come — let us go to Bhola Baba.'

And so the penance began. The boatmen forgot food and water and sat in the shelter of Mahadev. Heaps of bel leaves rose at the ghat. The temple bell rang through the nights. And on every tongue there was one cry alone —







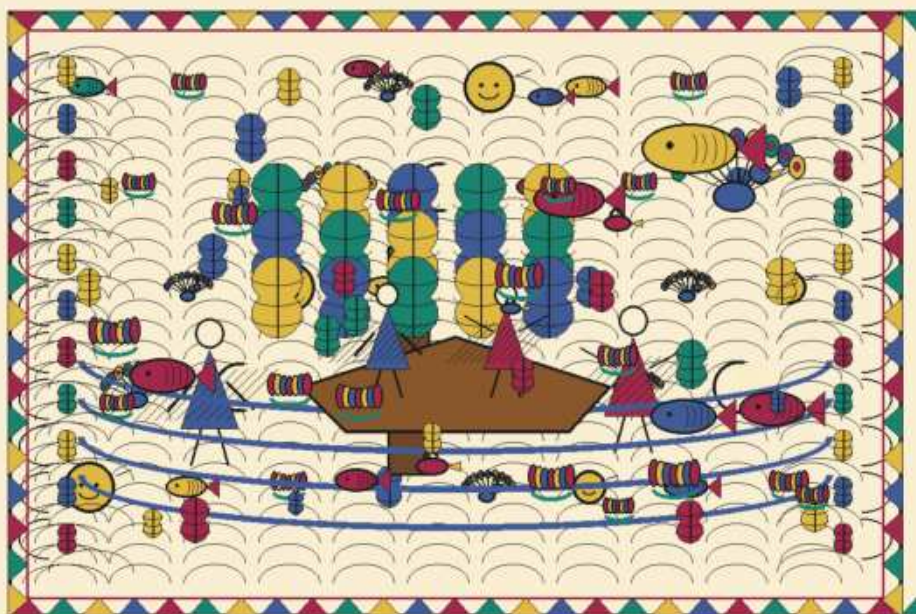
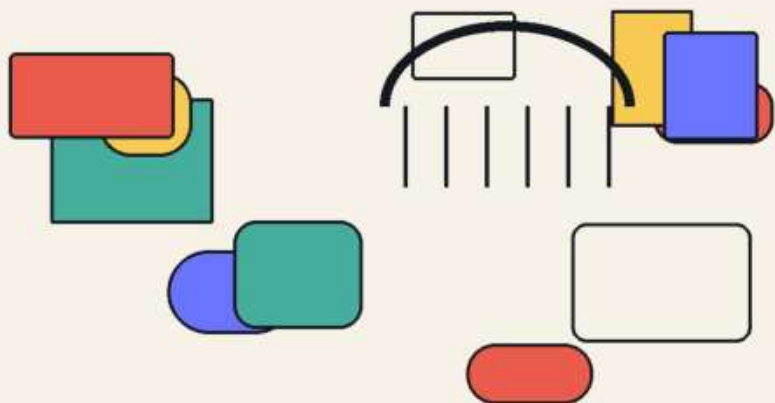
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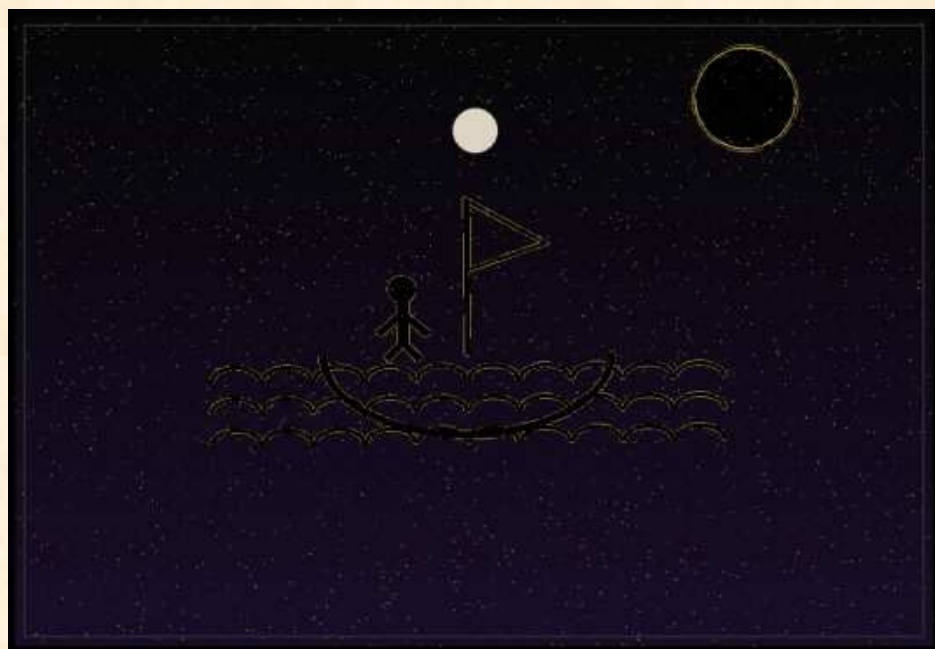
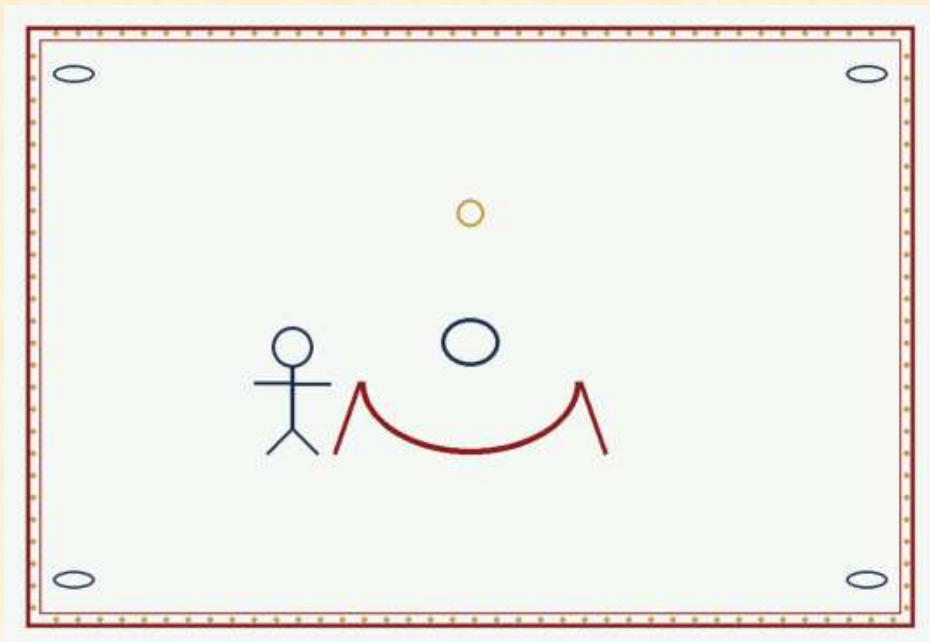
'Protect Kamala's honour, O Mahadev!'

Bhola Baba — who is simple and kind — cannot long watch the tears of his devotees. On the third night the worshippers felt the trident in the shrine stir of its own accord. And Bhola Baba made a way. But a god's remedy does not fall like a flower of blessing. It falls like a seed, and a seed needs time to grow.

Chapter 6: The Boy of Shivra Village







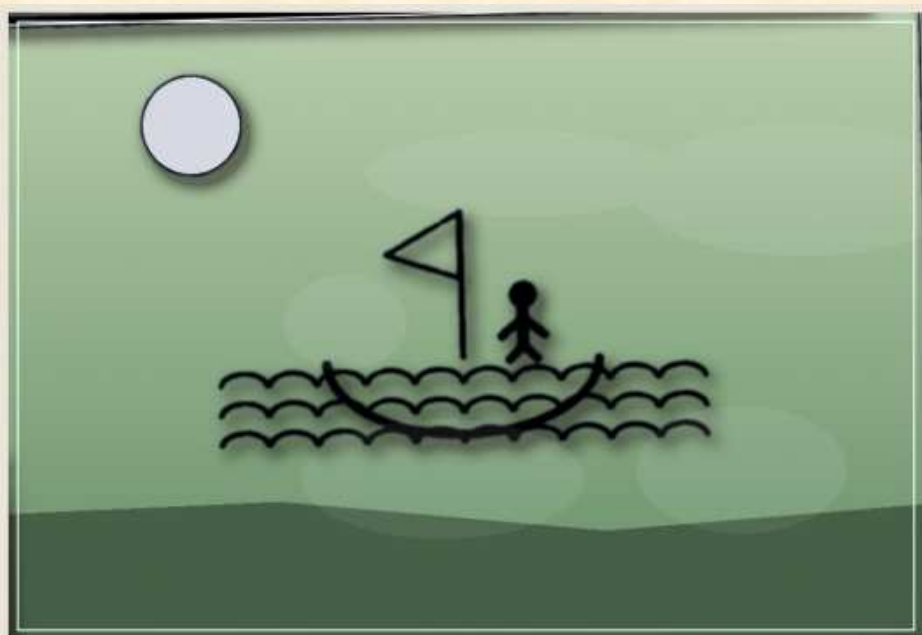


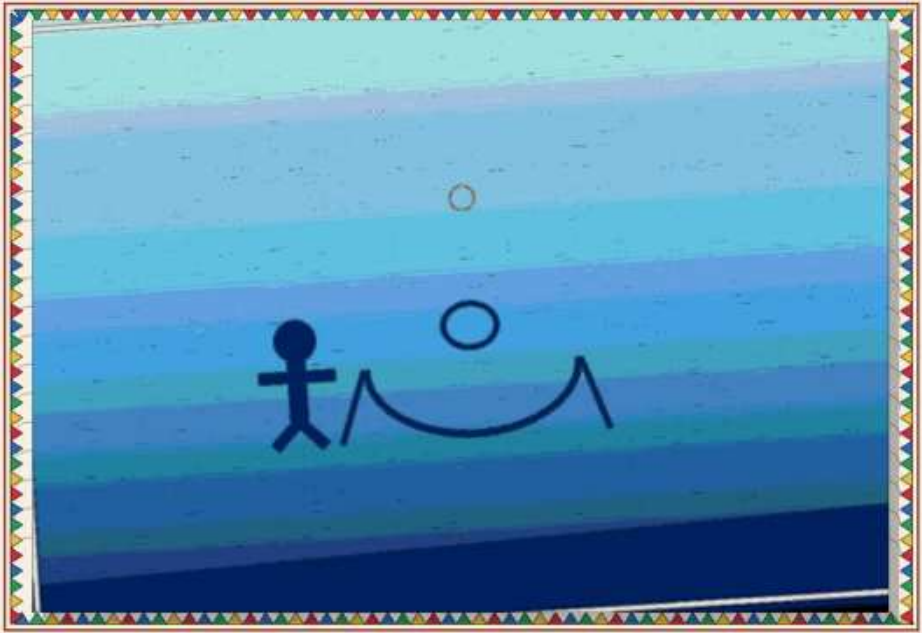
Picture 11

Shivra Village — a small boatmen's settlement on Kamala's bank. That year a son was born to a boatman family there. They named him Amarsingh.

From birth the child was extraordinary. Whoever took him in their arms found their arms grow tired — so sturdy was his little body! At six months he sat up. Before he had finished his first year he was running on the sand of the ghat. And wonder of wonders — he loved the water as if he were a baby fish himself.





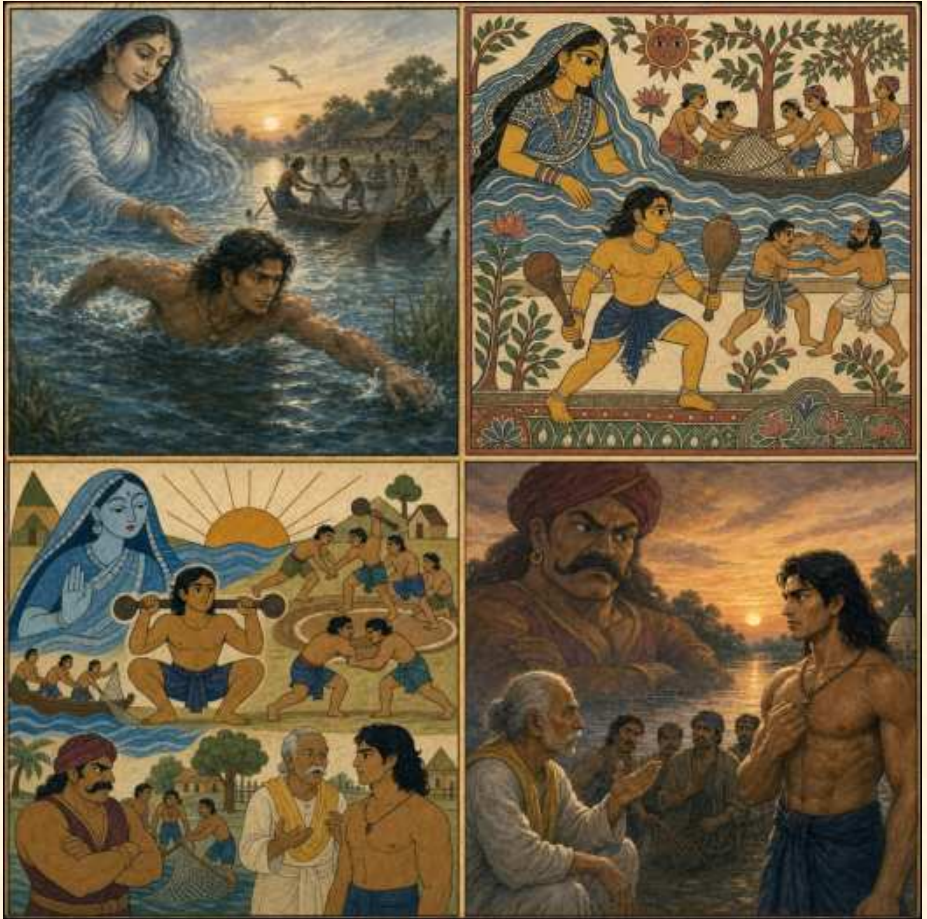


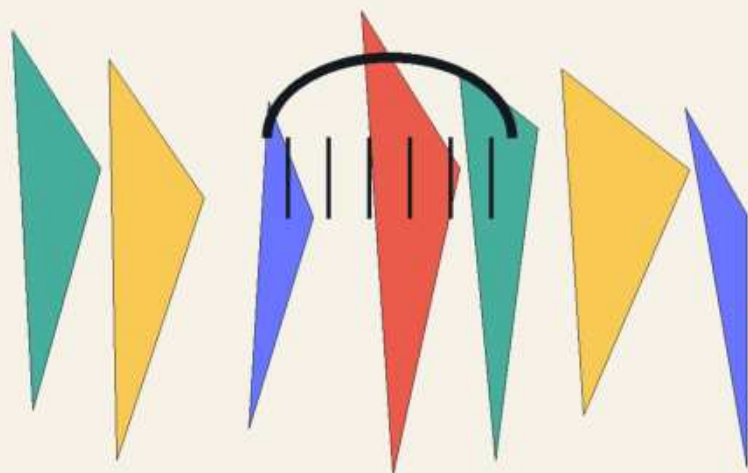
Picture 12

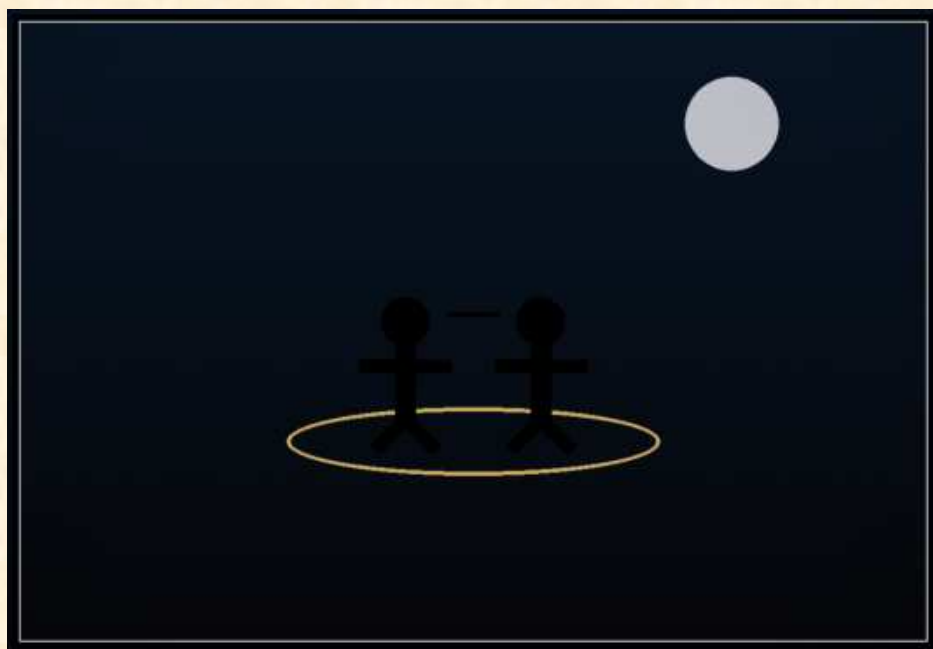
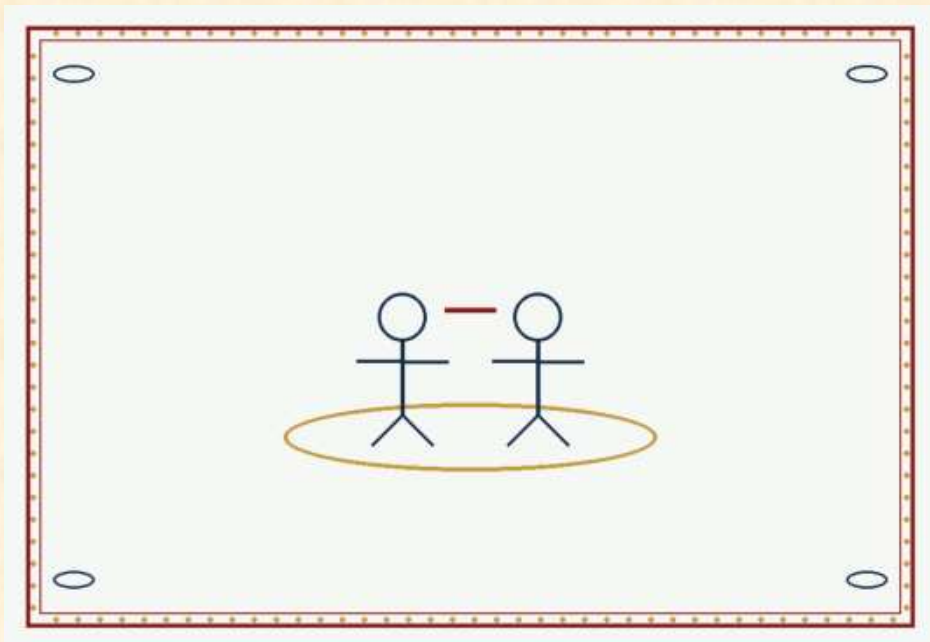
The old boatmen winked when they saw him. 'This child is no ordinary boy. In his eyes burns the flame of the temple lamp.' Everyone still remembered the penance, and a hope had woken in their hearts — but no one spoke it aloud. If you talk of a blessing before its time, the blessing grows shy and slips away.

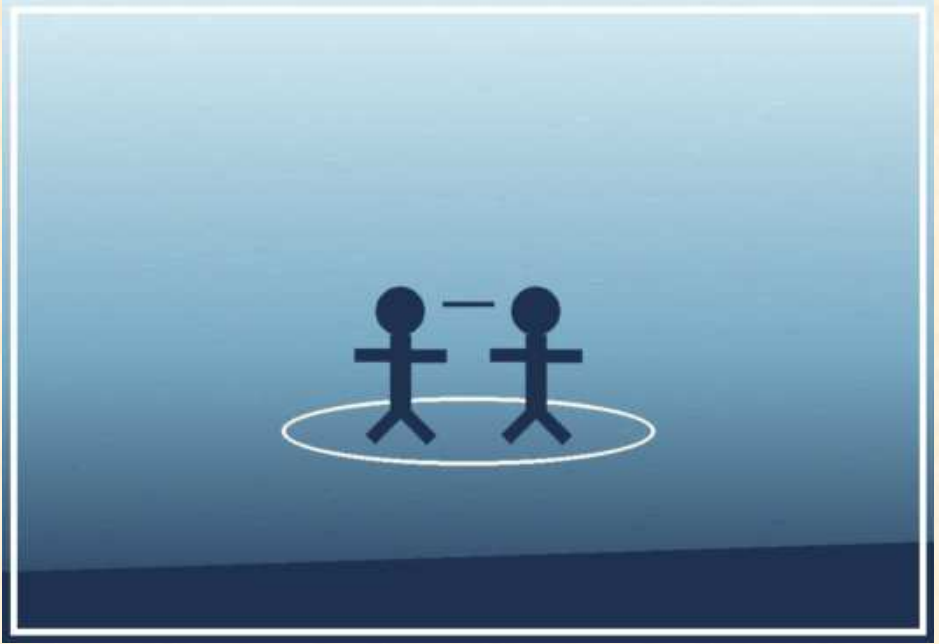
Amarsingh grew — and with him grew Baidla's terror. Both were growing in the same stretch of years: on one side the tree of oppression, on the other the axe that would cut it down.

Chapter 7: The Dust of the Wrestling Ground







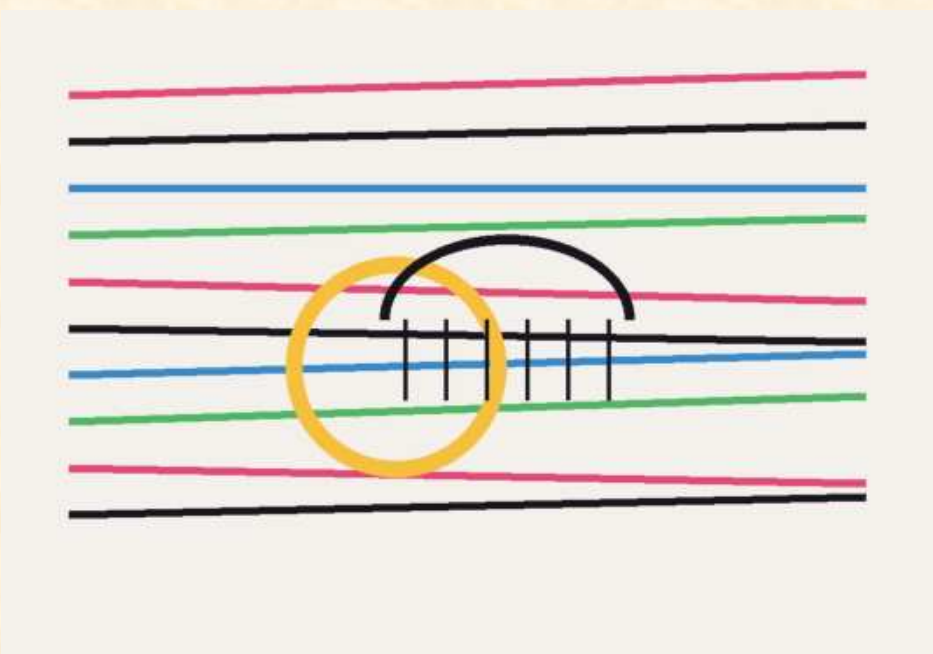


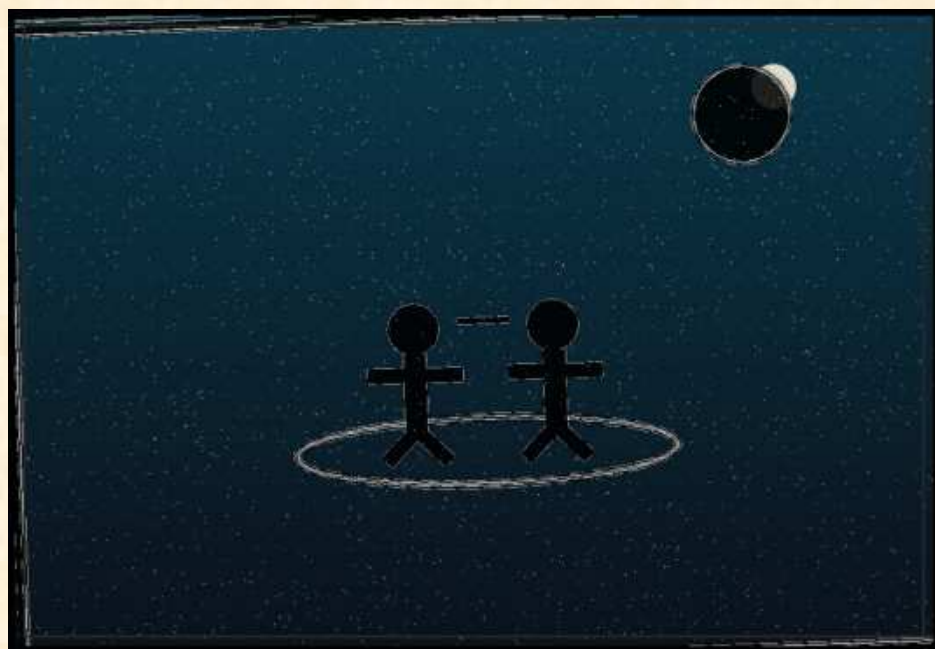
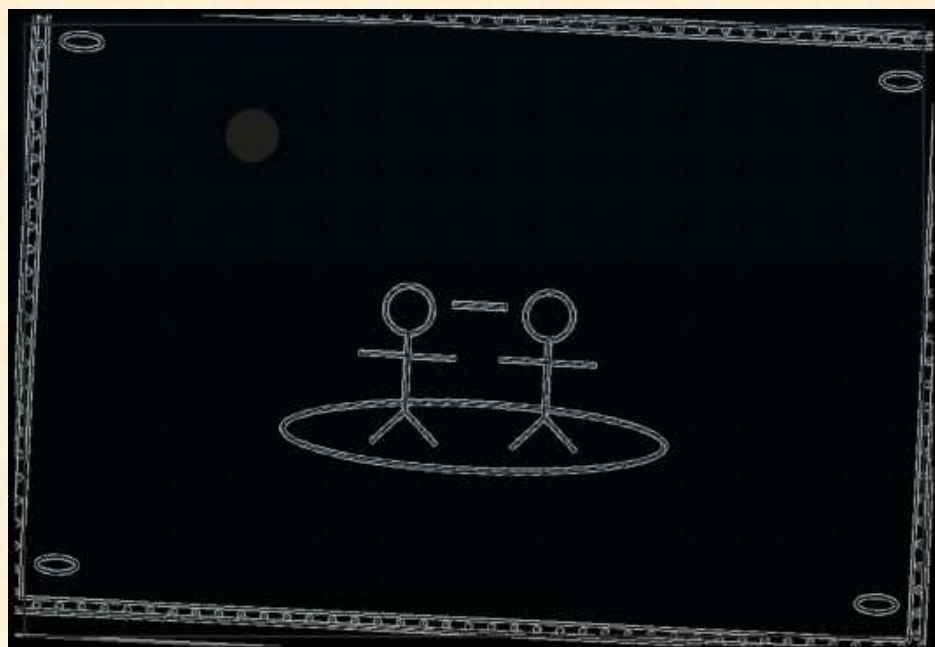
Picture 13

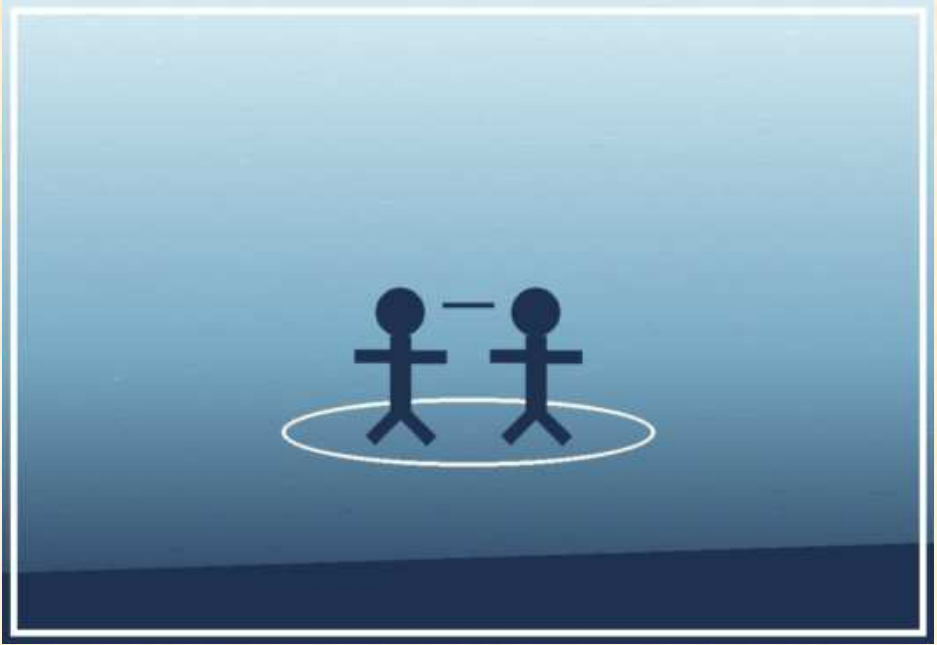
When Amarsingh became a young man, his true home was the wrestling ground. At dawn he dived in the Kamala; then on the ghat's arena came exercises, wrestling, and the heavy clubs. His body grew so strong that people said, 'In Shivra Village a god of stone has woken.'

But more than his strength, people spoke of his nature. Soft before the weak, a mountain before the proud. If anyone's boat stuck at the ghat, Amarsingh's shoulder

arrived first. If anyone's net was snatched, Amarsingh's
fist arrived first.







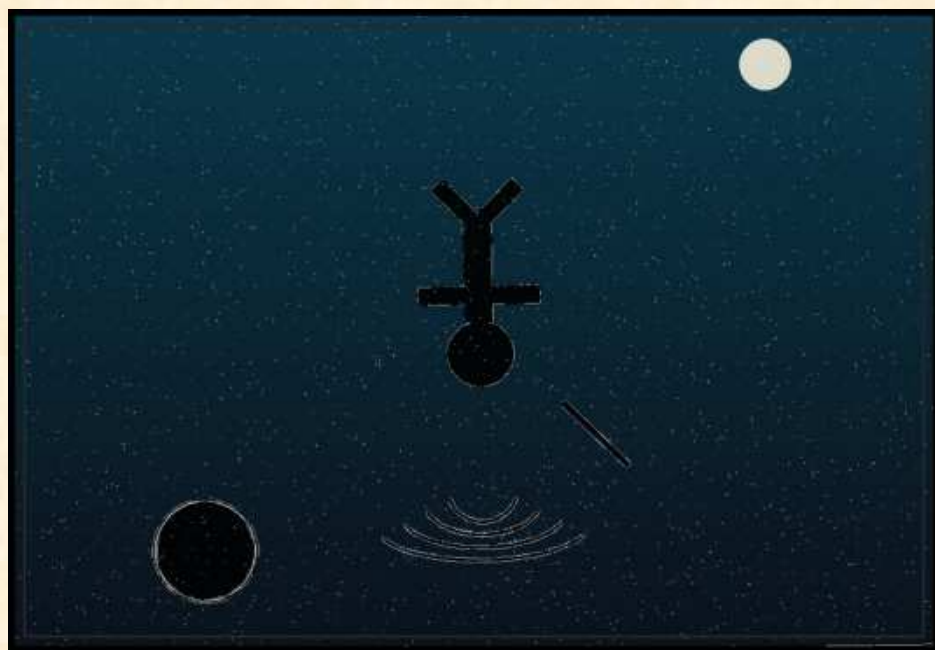
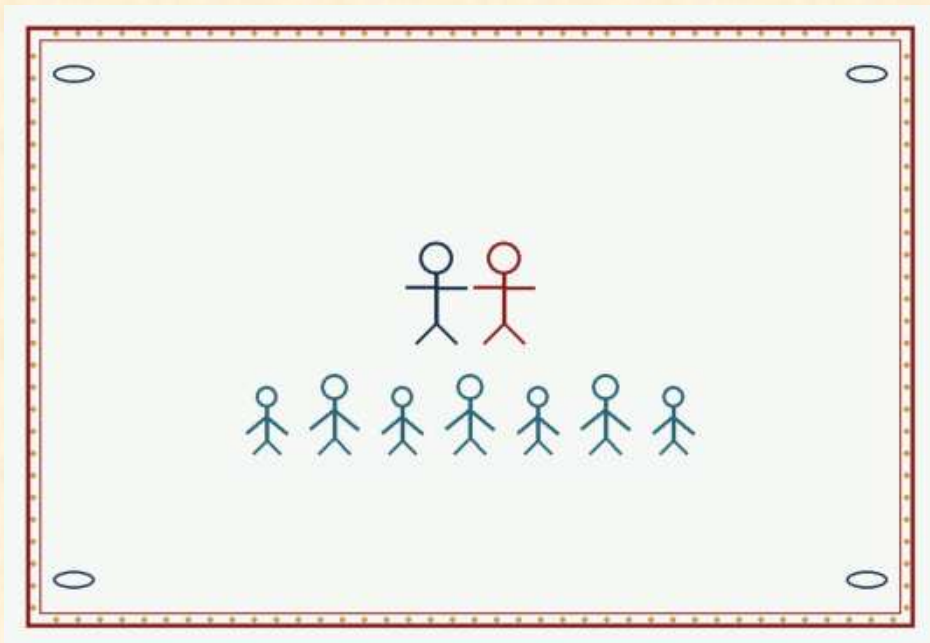
Picture 14

And one thing was fixed deep in his heart — Baidla's declaration. To him Kamala was not only a river. She was Mother, in whose water he had taken his first bath. Could a son stay silent while an evil eye fell on his mother?

One evening Amarsingh asked the old boatman who was like a teacher to him, 'Why has no one yet thrown the dust of challenge in Baidla's arena?' The old man laughed. 'Because that dust has been waiting for your body alone, my boy.' — And that very night Amarsingh made his decision.

Chapter 8: The Challenge



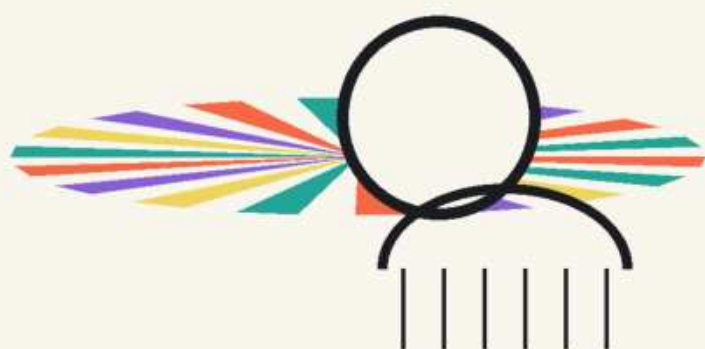


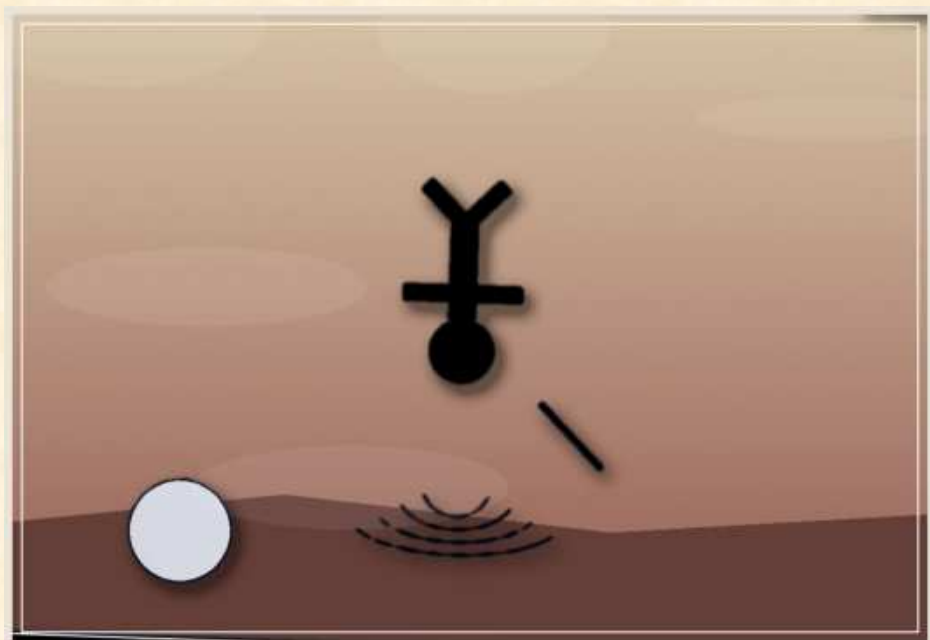
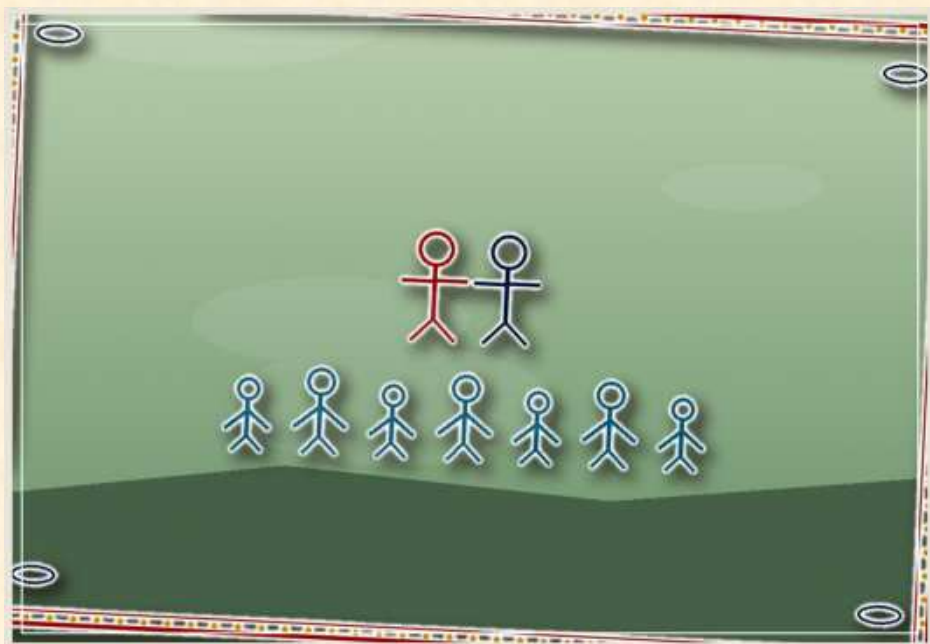


Picture 15

The next morning a new voice rang out in Baidla's wrestling ground — 'Baidla! Amarsingh of Shivra Village throws you the dust of challenge!'

To throw the dust — in the language of the arena, a challenge. Baidla laughed; his stick-men roared with him. 'This boy? A boatman's son? Against me?' — Baidla had only ever won in his life, and so he had forgotten that every winner has one last bout written for him.







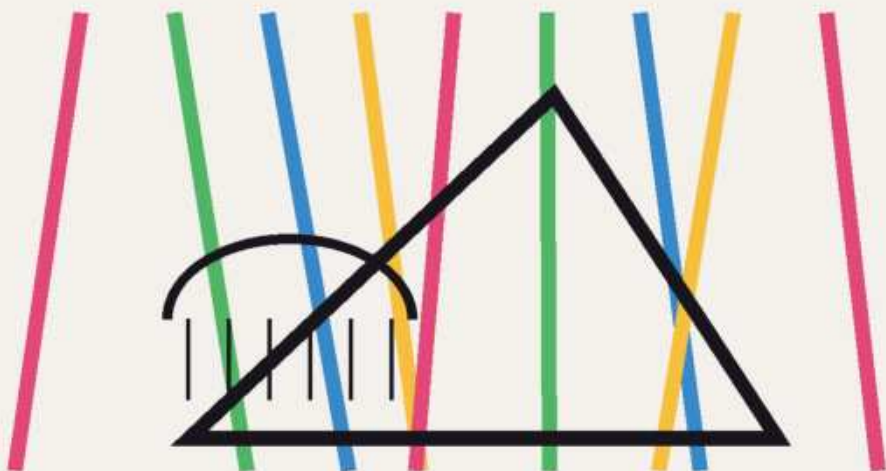
Picture 16

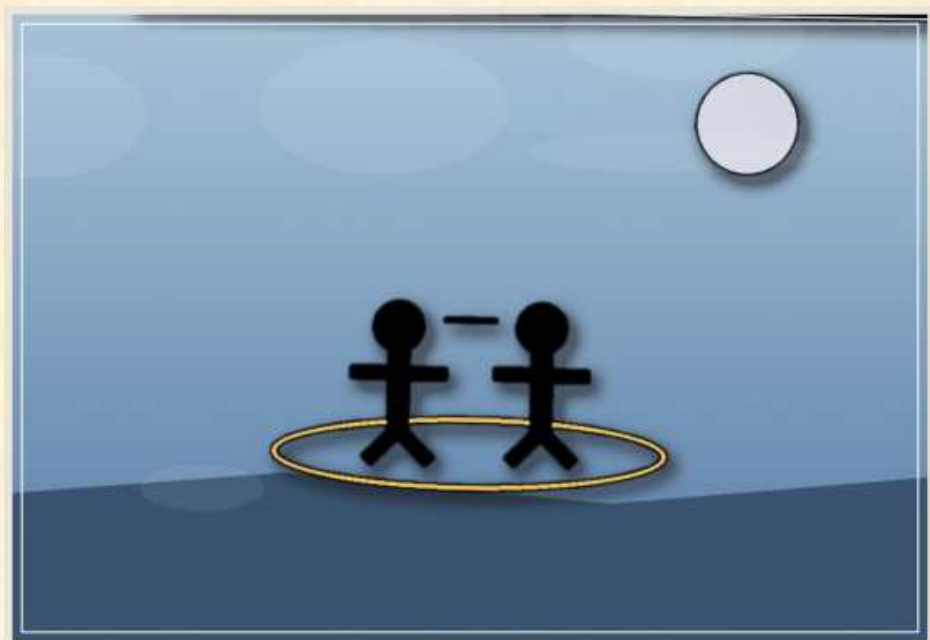
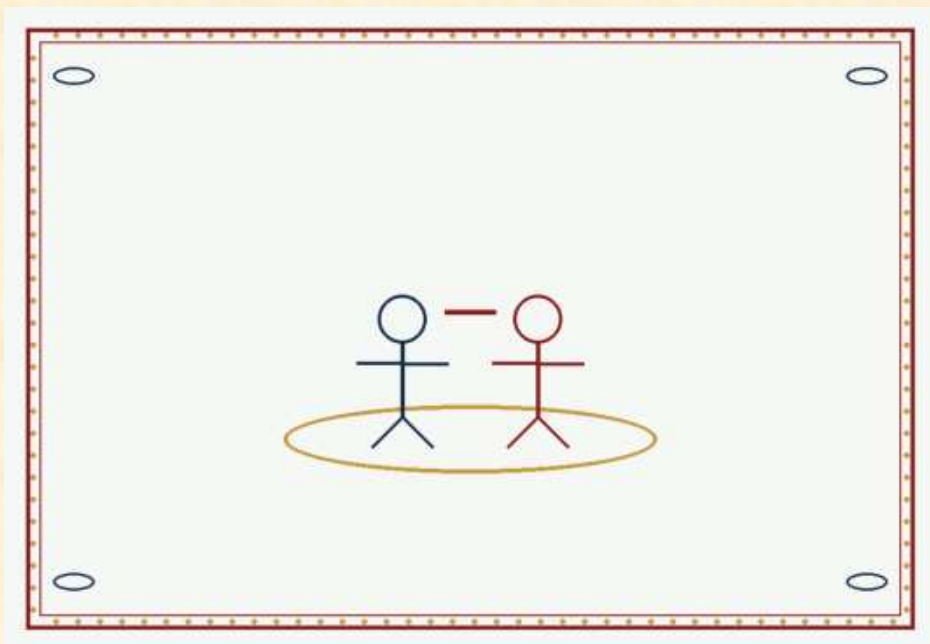
But the village people did not laugh. Quietly they began to gather at the ghat — farmers, boatmen, the old, the young. In every eye the same question: Could this boy truly...? And in every heart the same prayer that had been made three years before in the shrine of Shiva.

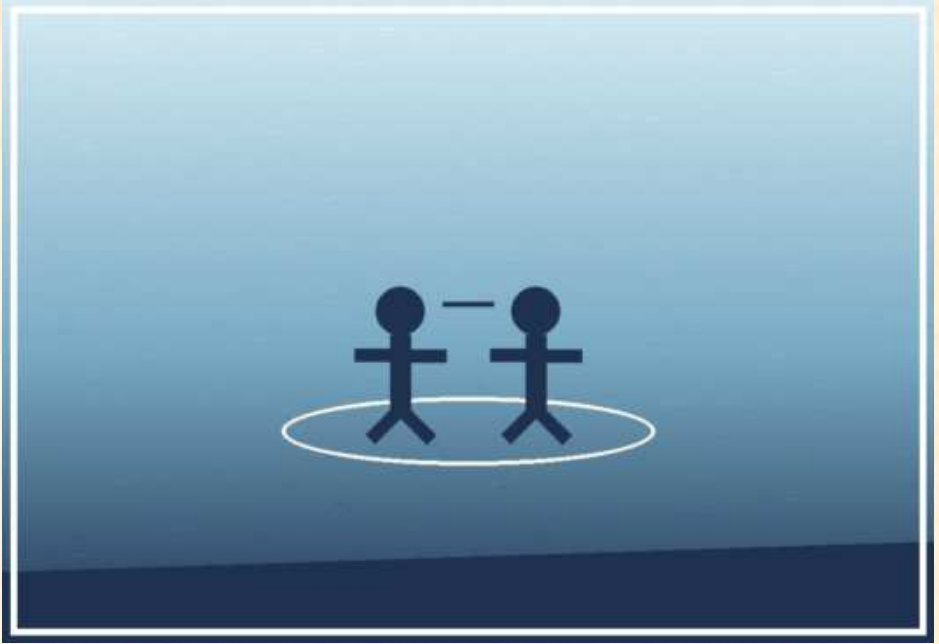
Even the Kamala River flowed slow and careful that day — as if a mother were holding her breath to watch her son's trial. The arena dust was turned, vermilion and rice grains were scattered, and the two wrestlers stood face to face — oppression and its answer.

Chapter 9: The Battle







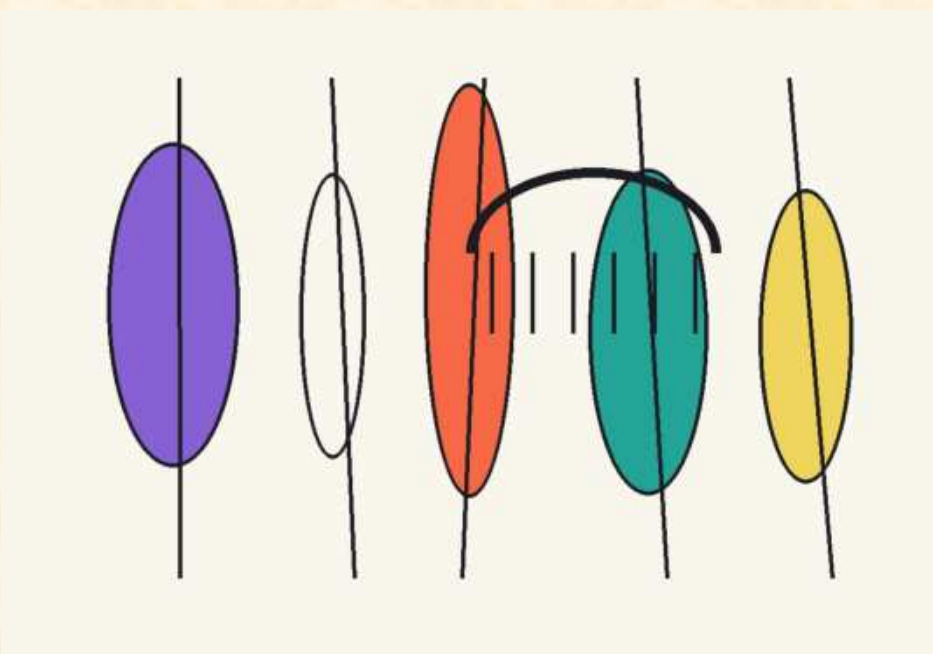


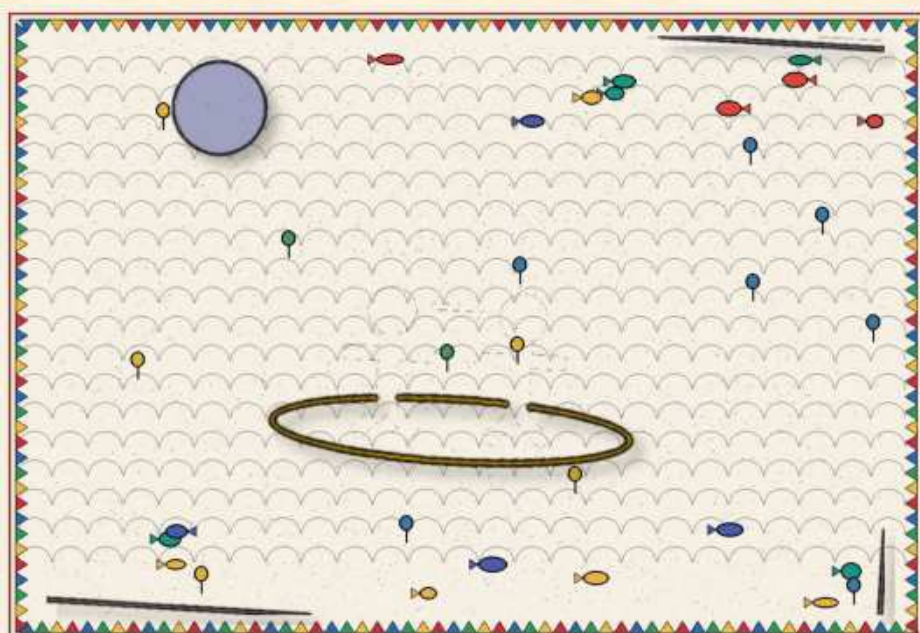
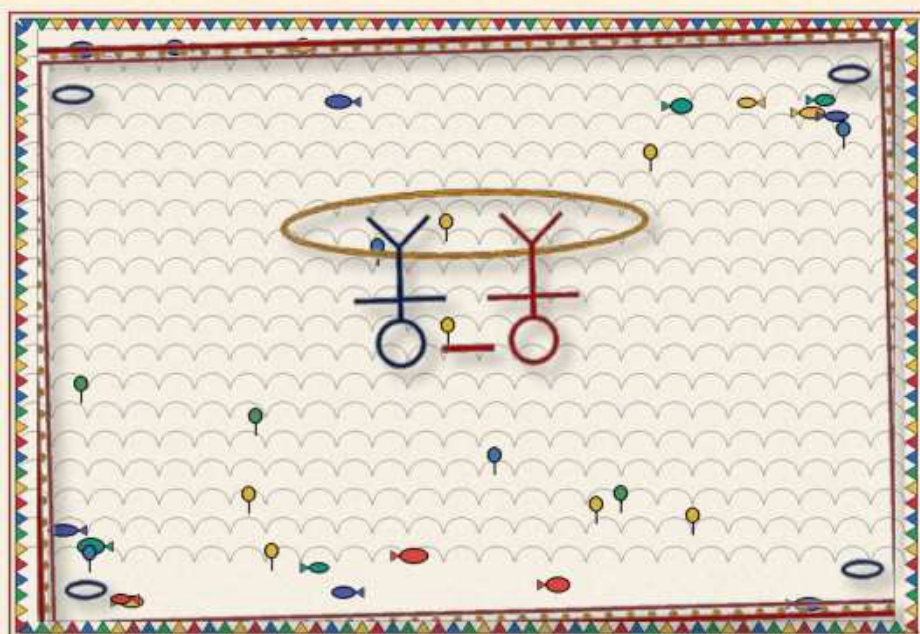
Picture 17

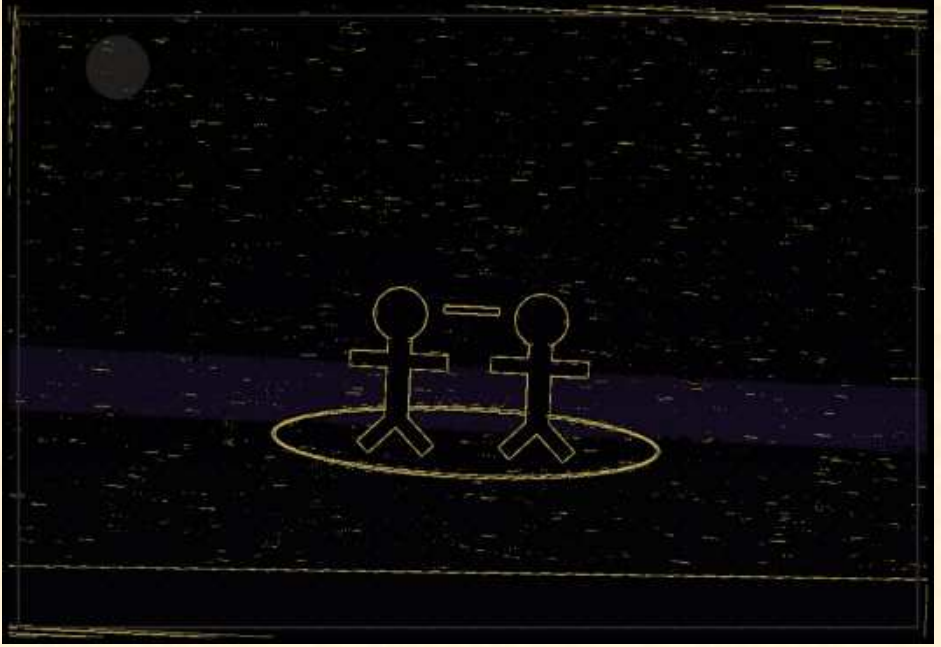
The battle began — and what a battle it was! Baidla was experienced; he knew every trick and hold. Amarsingh had the fire of youth and the strength of a mother's honour. In the first clash they met like two mountains — and the sand of the ghat flew up like smoke.

Baidla struck a cunning blow — Amarsingh was flung down, and the people's breath caught. But to fall is not the same as to lose. Amarsingh rose — and as he rose he touched the arena dust and pressed it to his brow. That

dust was no longer only dust; it held a grain of Kamala's own bank.







Picture 18

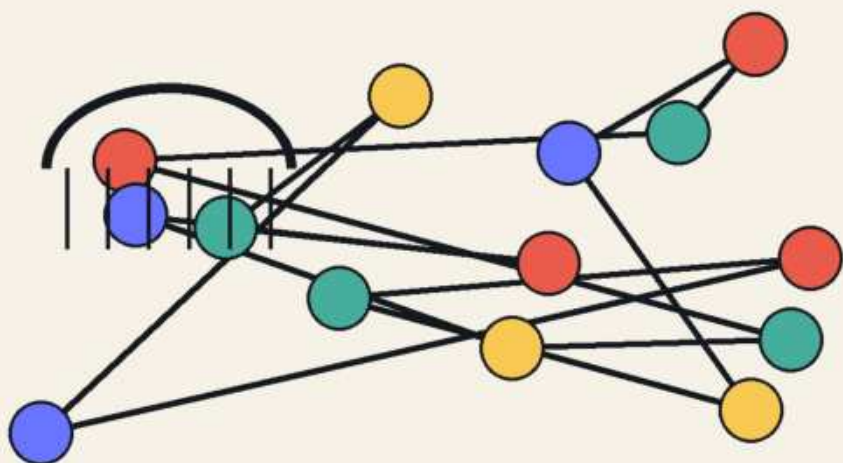
What happened next, the watchers told from generation to generation until they died. Amarsingh's grip became like thunder. Baidla's tricks broke one by one. At the final throw the earth itself seemed to shake — and Baidla did not rise again. Baidla was slain — on that very ghat where he had once beaten the drum of forced marriage to the goddess-river.

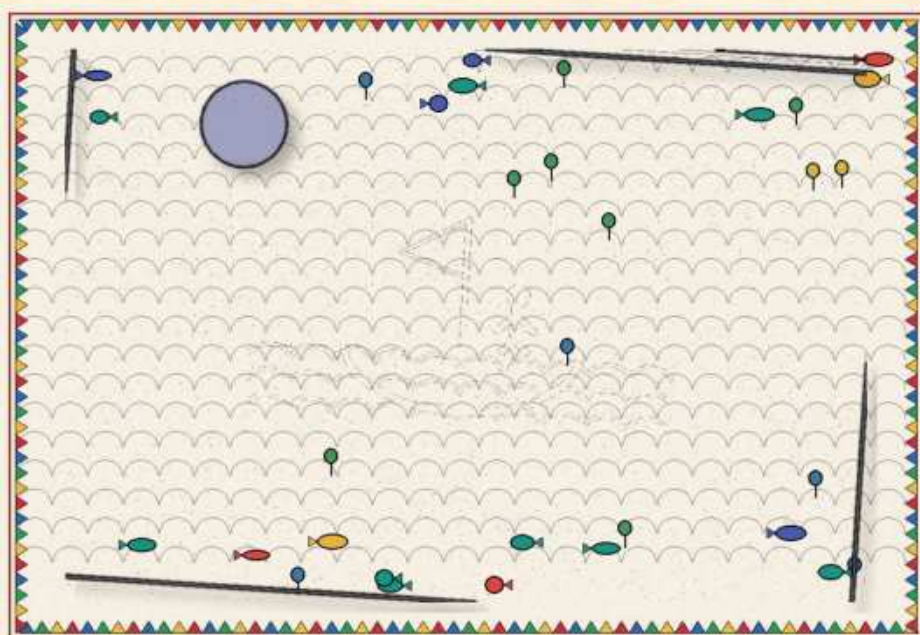
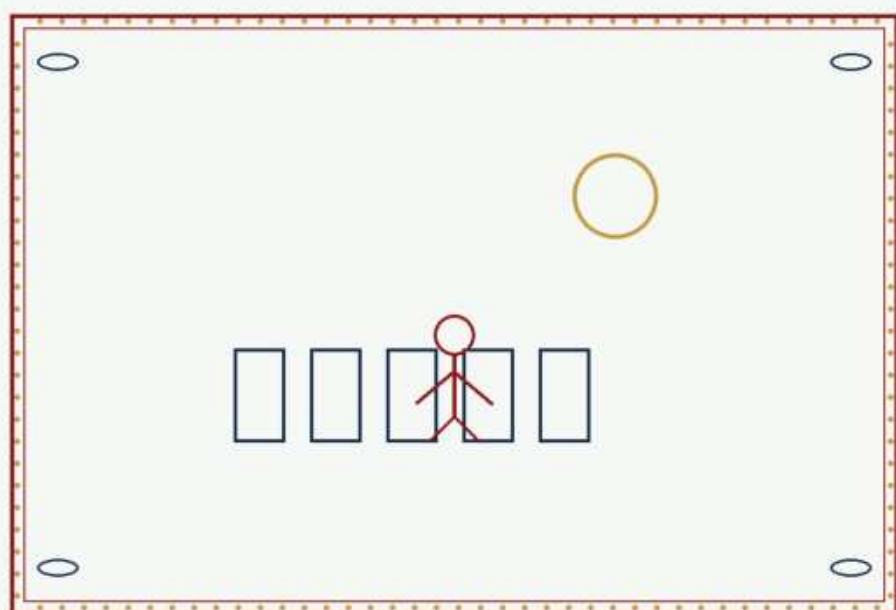
First a deep silence fell over the ghat, then a cry of victory burst out — 'Glory to Kamala Mother! Glory to Amarsingh!' The boatmen laughed and wept and held one

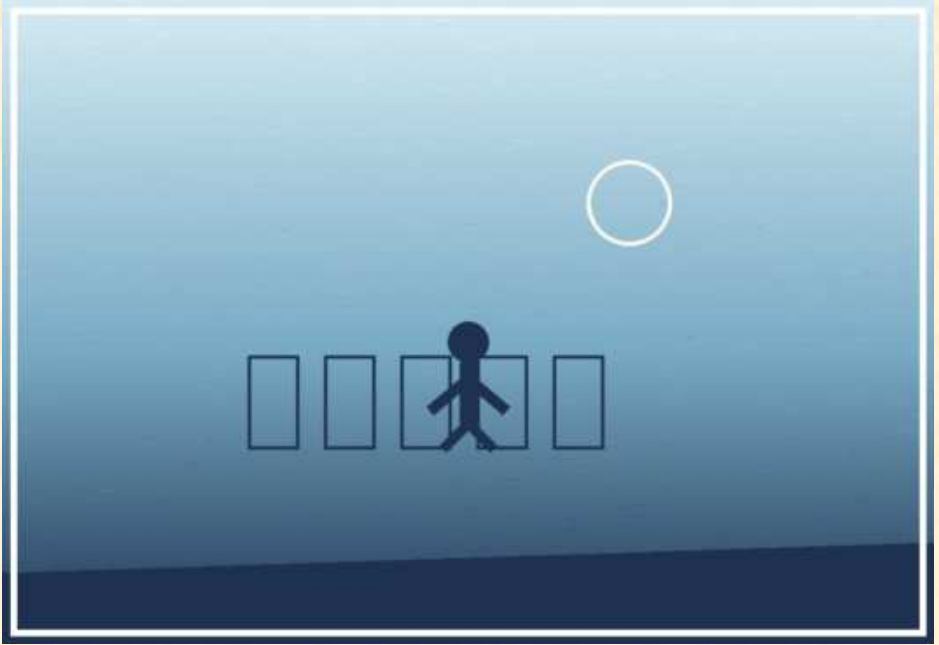
another. The answer to years of old penance lay before them in the dust. But — the story did not end here. Victory is not always an ending; sometimes it is the beginning of a harder chapter still.

Chapter 10: The Shadow of Victory





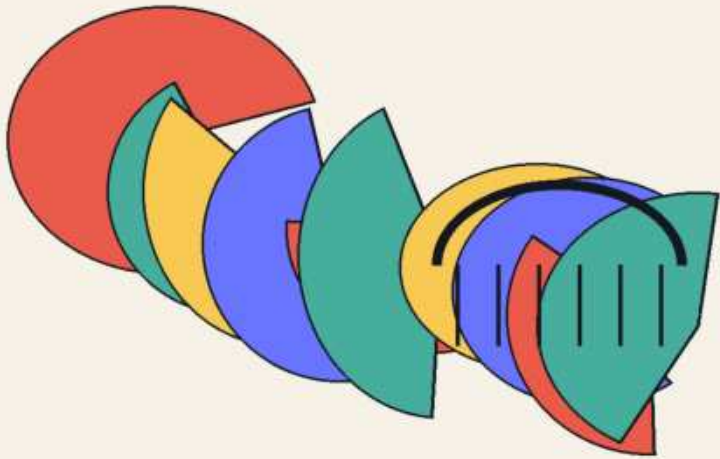


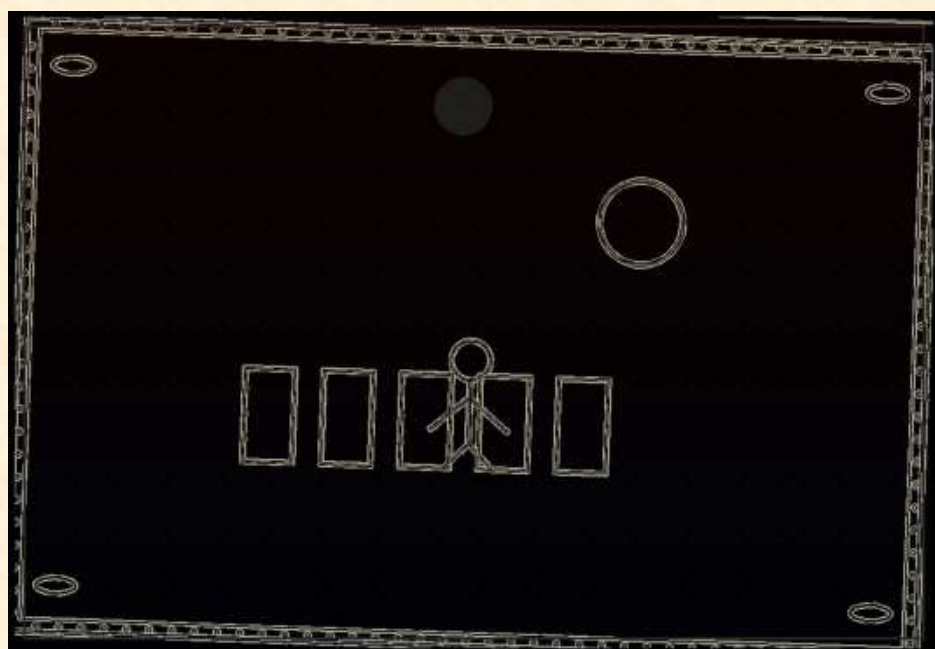


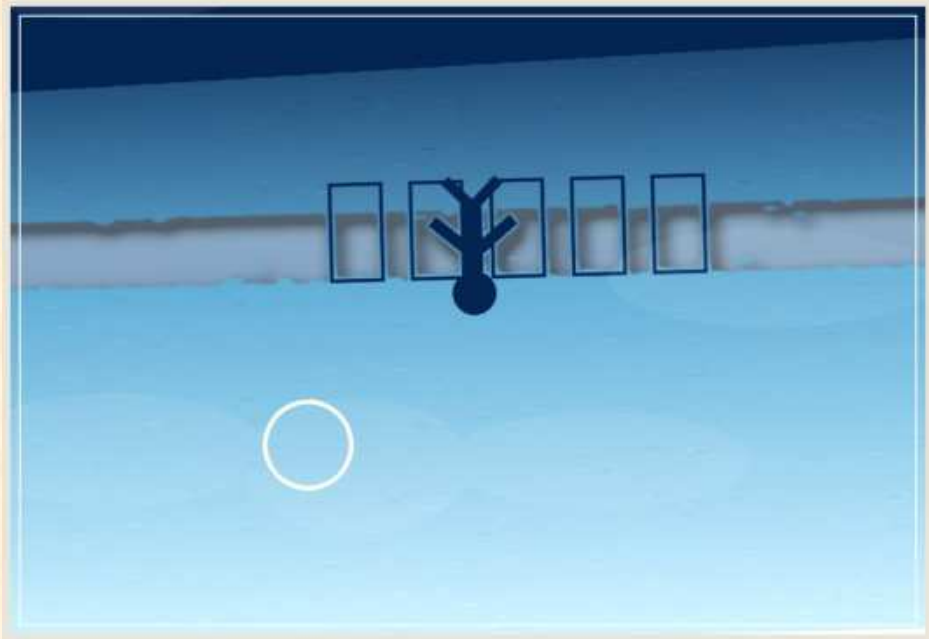
Picture 19

Baidla was dead, but Baidla's family still lived — and with them lived the seed of revenge. Fear settled in the boatmen's hearts: 'If Baidla's line remains, tomorrow another Baidla will stand. The whole line must end.'

Hearing this demand, Amarsingh's heart trembled for the first time. To fight an enemy in the arena was one thing — but to go as far as his home? There Baidla's wife still lived, and she was with child — and in that child was his blood.







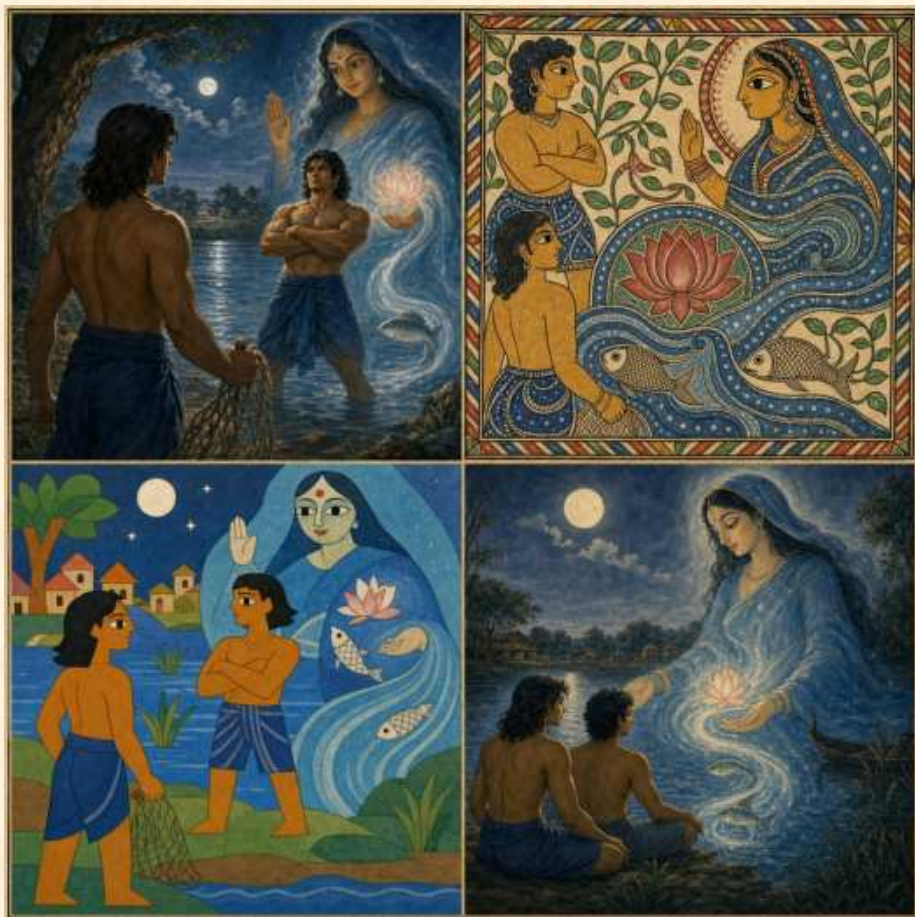
Picture 20

But fear has its own arguments, and a crowd has its own force. What happened next is the darkest page of this legend — Amarsingh struck down Baidla's wife, who carried a child. Here the tale lowers its eyes; so do we. When the sword of courage passes into the hand of fear, what it cuts leaves a wound forever in the heart of the one who swung it.

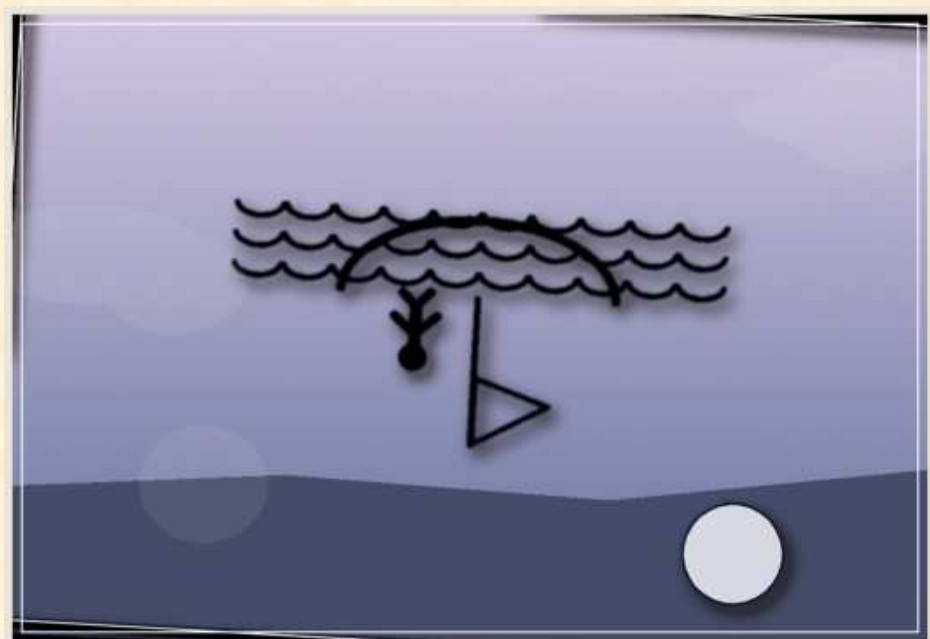
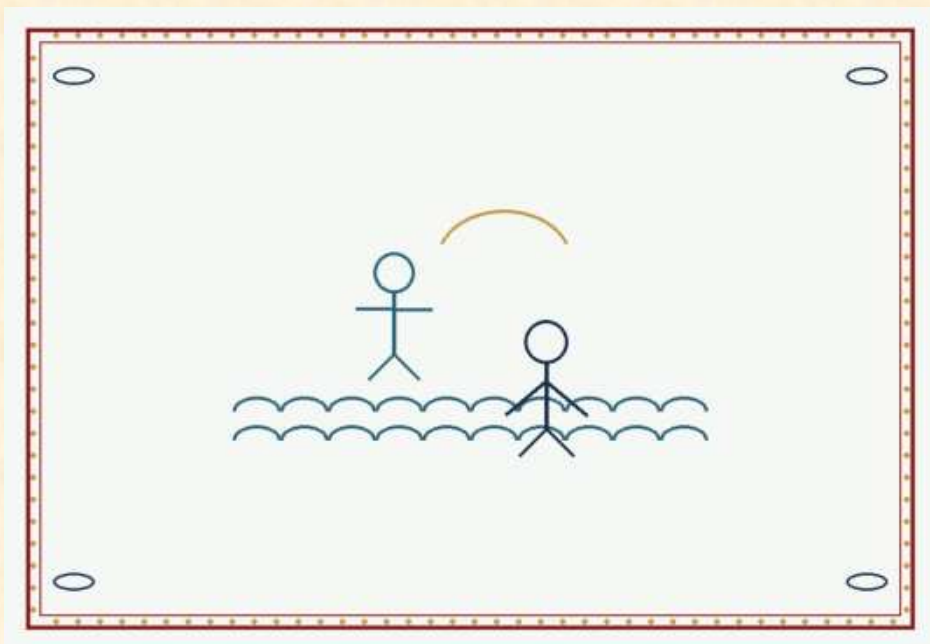
And see the work of fate — in that very moment the child was born. From a dying mother's womb a living son — and fiercely strong. As if Time itself were saying: 'The

reckoning is not so easy, Amarsingh.' The newborn — Baidla's blood, Baidla's strength — now drew breath on the same earth where both his father and mother had fallen.

Chapter 11: Kamala's Secret





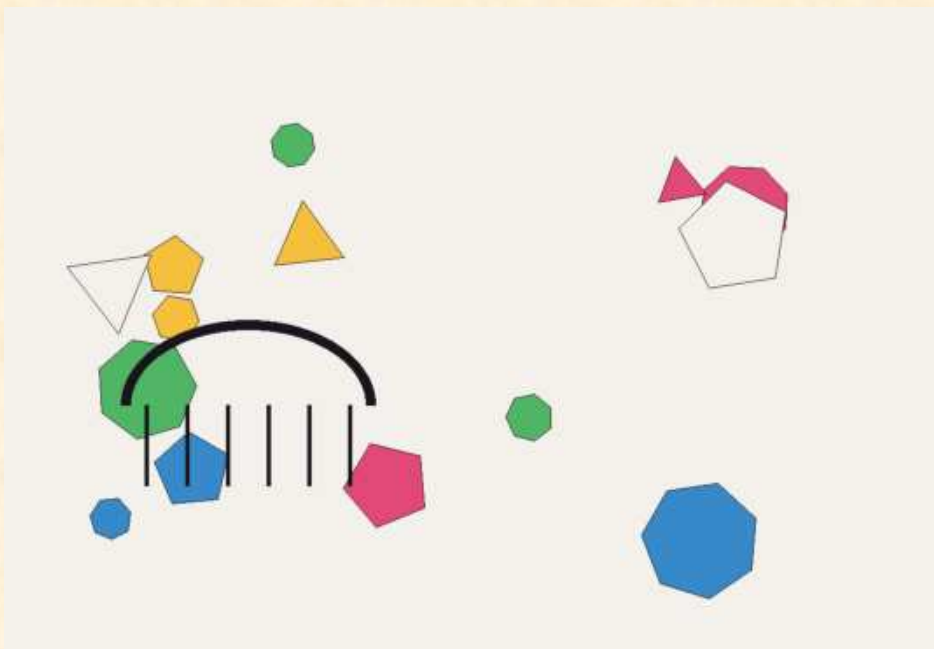


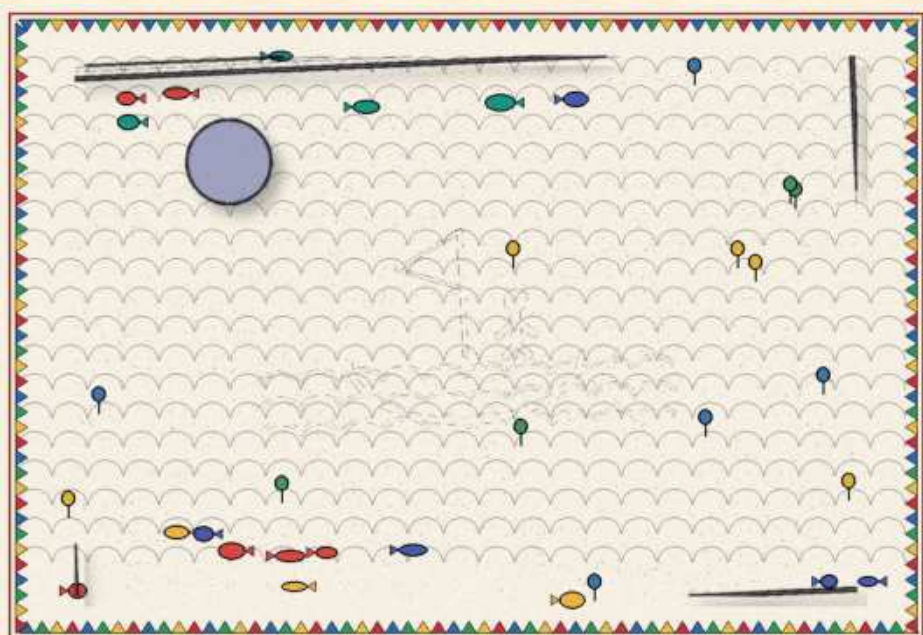
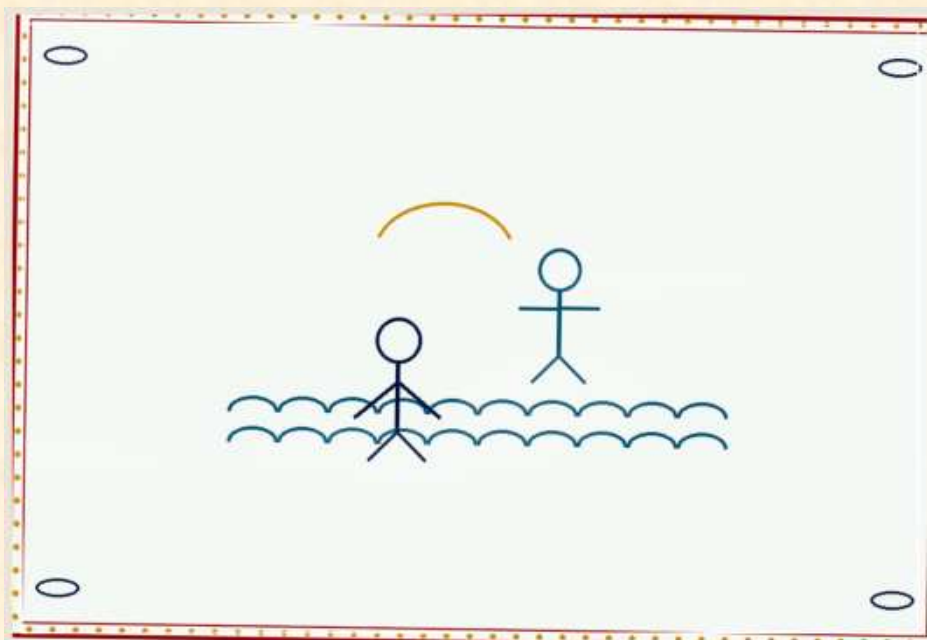


Picture 21

As that boy grew, it became clear that Baidla's strength had settled in him twice over. Ordinary wounds could not touch him; ordinary bonds could not hold him. The old fear returned to the boatmen's people — now worse than before.

Amarsingh faced him, but every hold failed. The hero who had thrown Baidla now stood helpless for the first time before Baidla's son. For no one knew the secret of that boy's life-force.







Picture 22

Then Kamala River herself spoke. The Mother who had been silent all this while told her guardian son the secret — where the boy's strength lay, and by what means it could be stilled. It was the path the goddess showed — and by that path alone Amarsingh defeated Baidla's son. That path he told to no one.

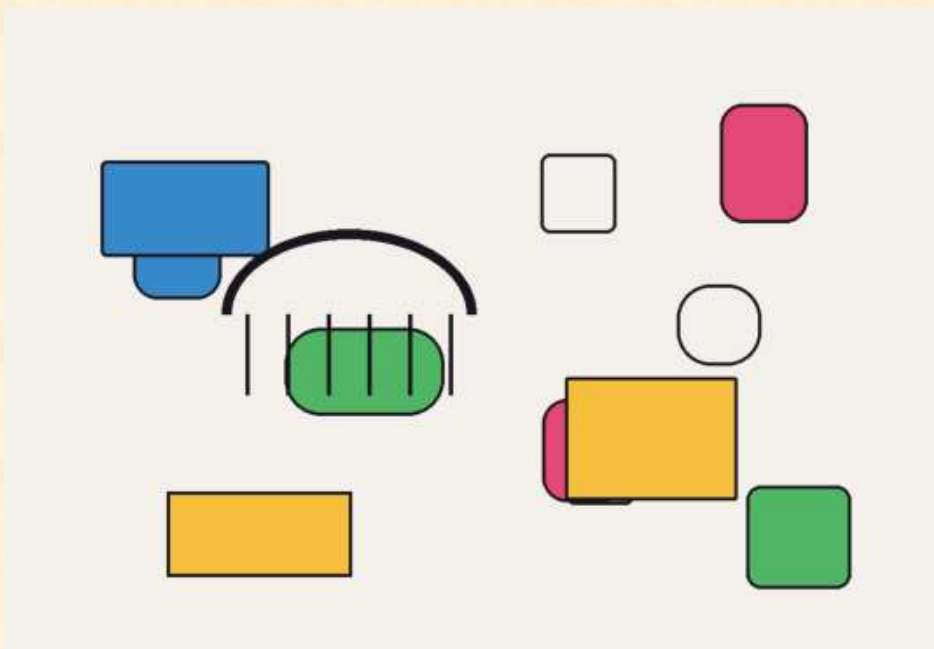
The last enemy fell, and with him fell a whole chapter — of force, of revenge, of blood. Peace settled once more on the ghat. But this peace was not as pure as the first; a deep sadness was mixed in it. That evening Amarsingh sat a

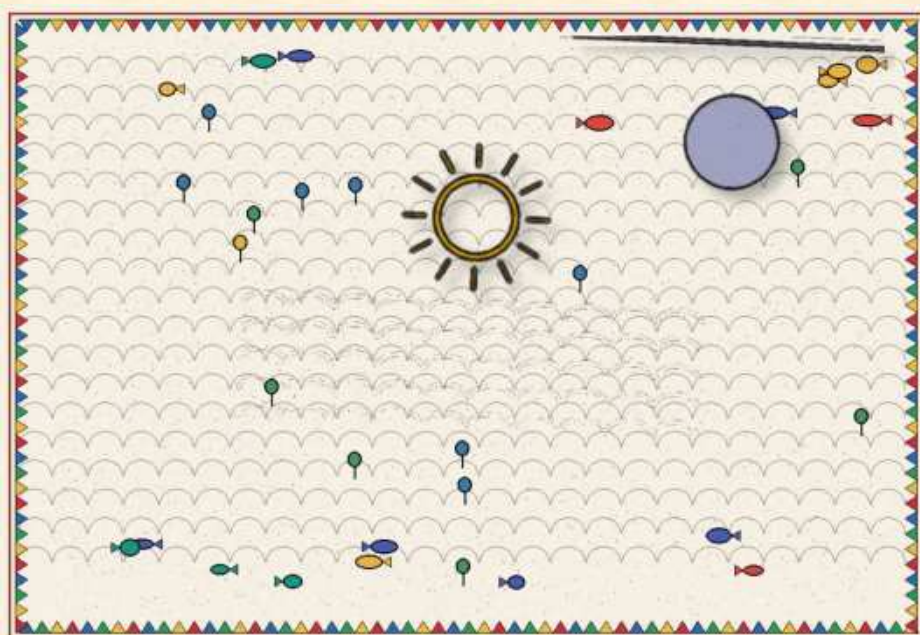
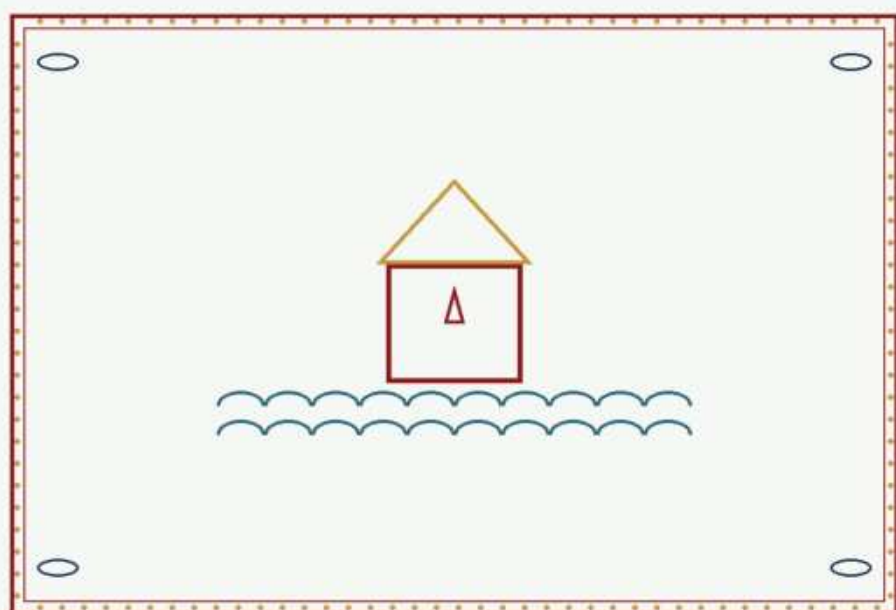
long while alone beside Kamala — victorious, yet heavy.

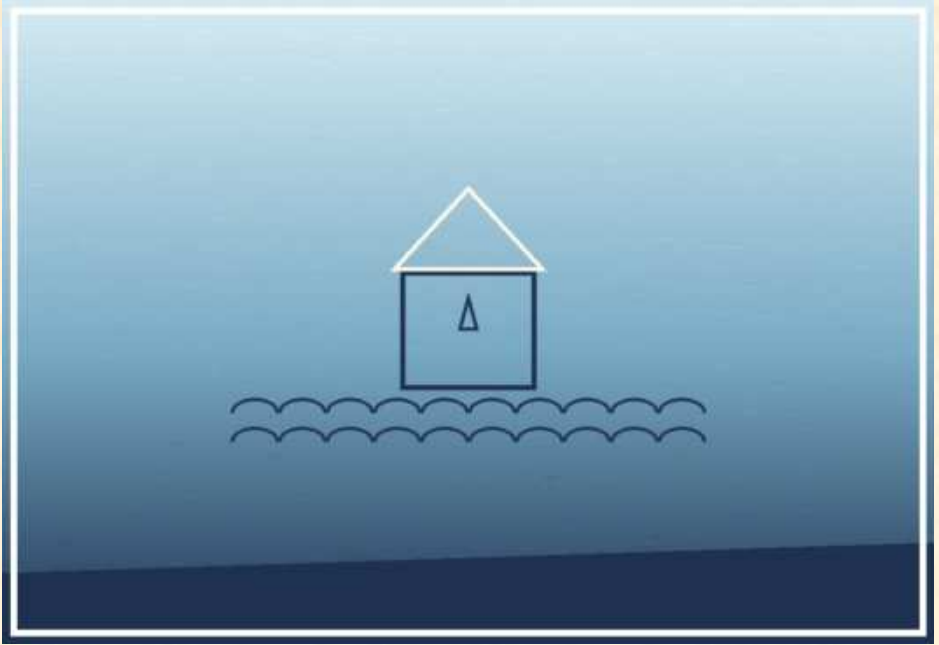
He had paid the price of protection, and the price was not small.

Chapter 12: The Shrine: Amar Baba









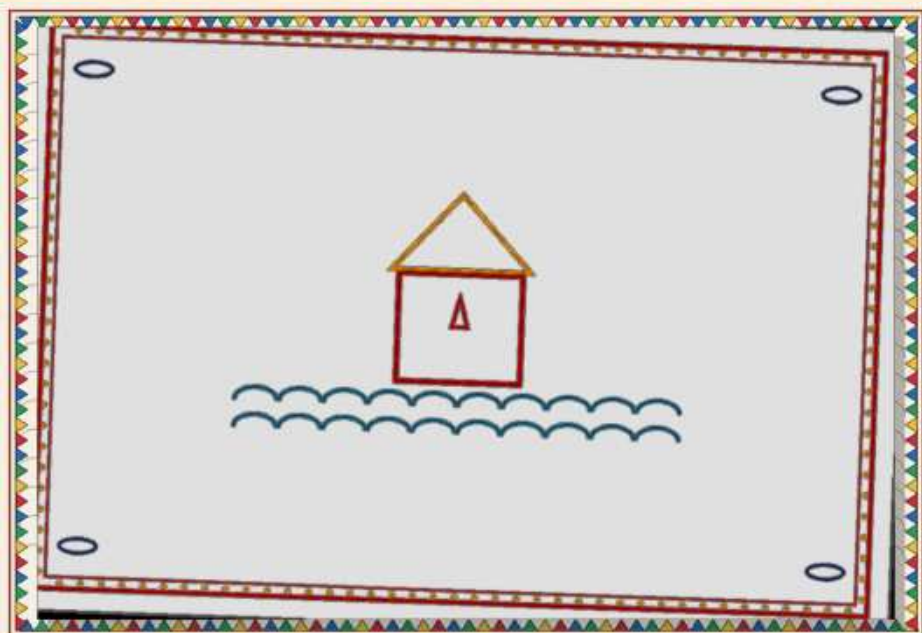
Picture 23

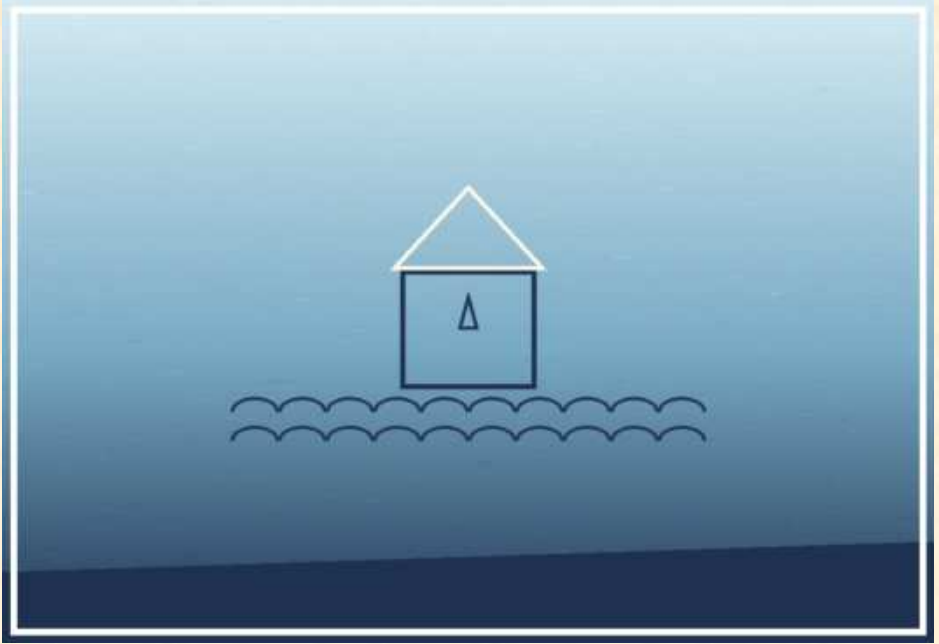
Time flowed on — like Kamala's water. As long as Amarsingh lived, he kept watch by Kamala's side and over the boatmen's people. And when his body's journey was complete, the boatmen did not forget him — how could they? He was the life that had been born for their honour!

The boatmen built Amarsingh a shrine — a gahamar — on the bank of the Kamala River. And even today, after so many generations, worship is offered there. Before a

boatman launches his boat he takes the name of Amar
Baba; a new net is first touched to the shrine.







Picture 24

And Kamala? People still bow to the Kamala River with reverence — she was Mother, and she is Mother. In flood they ask her forgiveness; in drought they ask her for water; and on every festival lamps still burn at her ghat just as they burned on the day before Baidla's drum ever sounded.

This is a hero's tale — yet its final lesson is not of the sword, but of the scales. Protection is dharma; yet the innocent blood that is shed in the name of protection leaves a legend forever sad. So when the old boatman

lights a lamp at Amar Baba's shrine even today, he makes two prayers — one for protection, and one for forgiveness.

The End



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Moti Dai

Devotee of Mother Gahil — A Tender Tale of
Six Days of Motherhood

[Original Maithili, Translation from Maithili into English by the author
himself]



Gajendra Thakur

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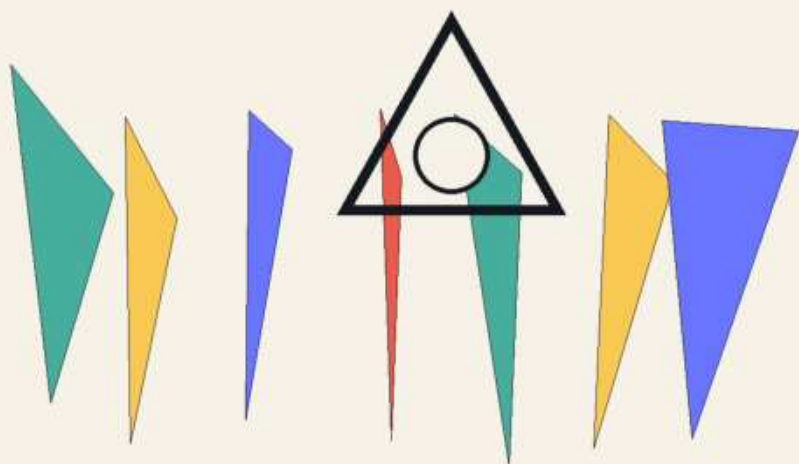
Prologue: The Village of Ujaini

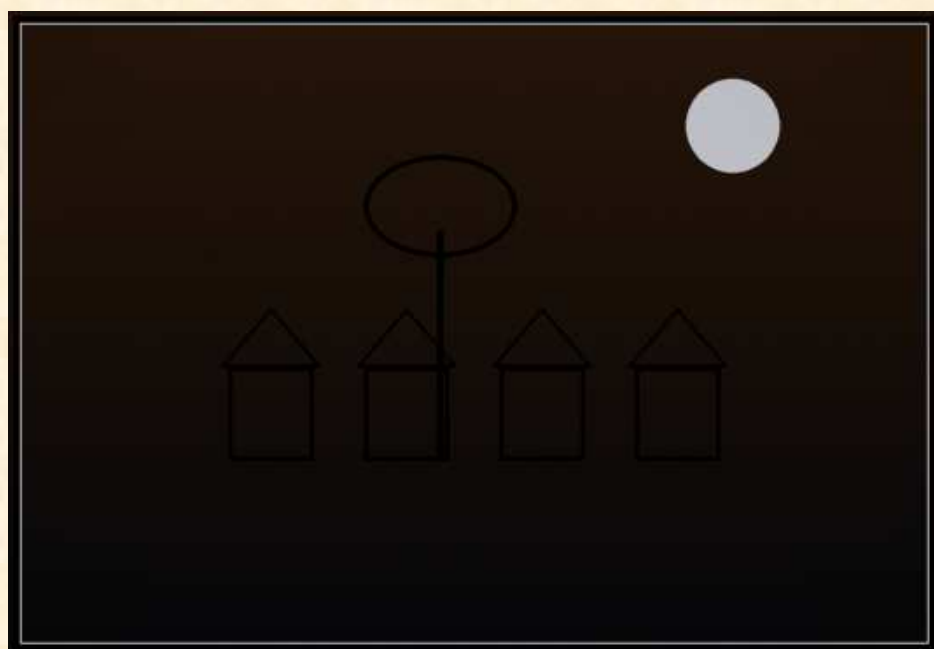
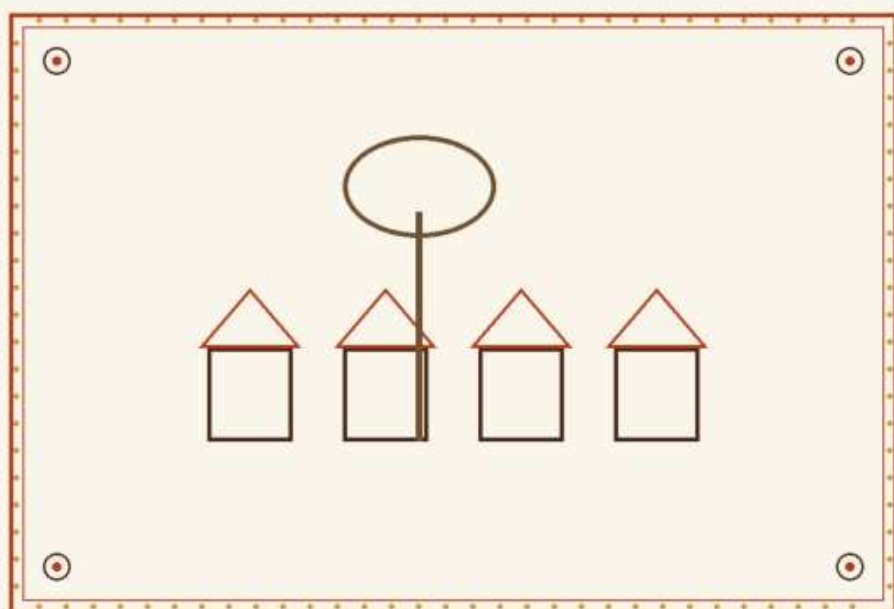
In Mithila there is a village called Ujaini. There stands the shrine of Mother Gahil, and in the stories of that shrine there lives a name that brings tears to the eyes the moment it is heard — Moti Dai.

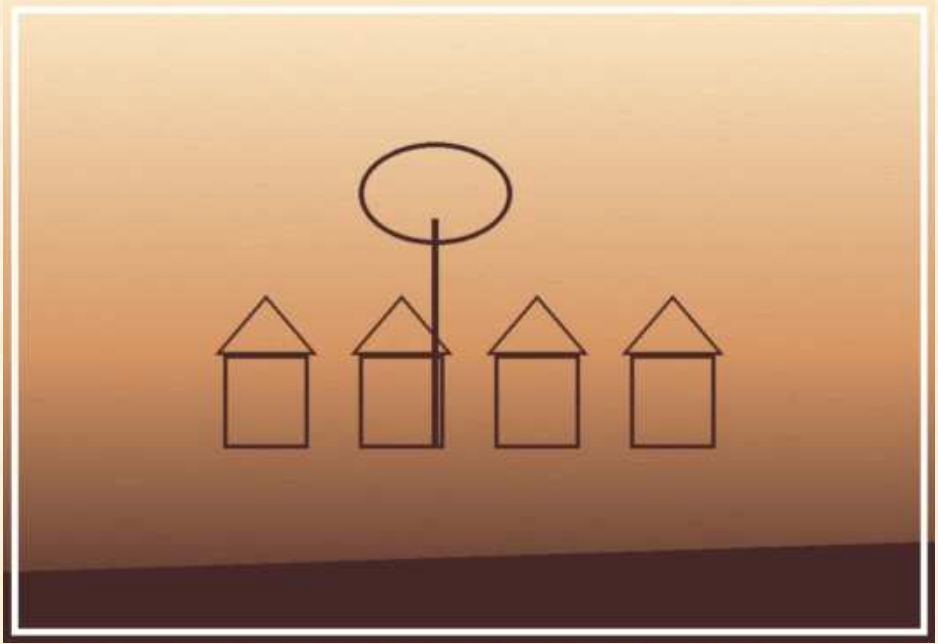
This is a tale of blessing and of sorrow too. It tells what devotion can give — and what it cannot; and how, sometimes, six days of joy become the answer to a lifetime of ache.

Chapter 1: The Village of Mother Gahil





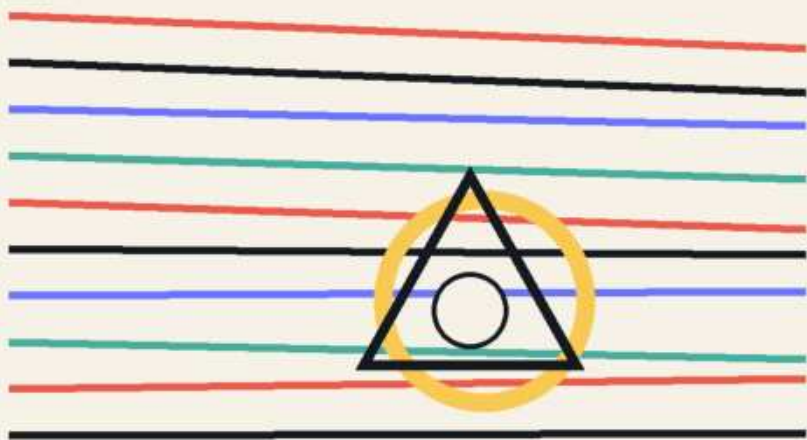


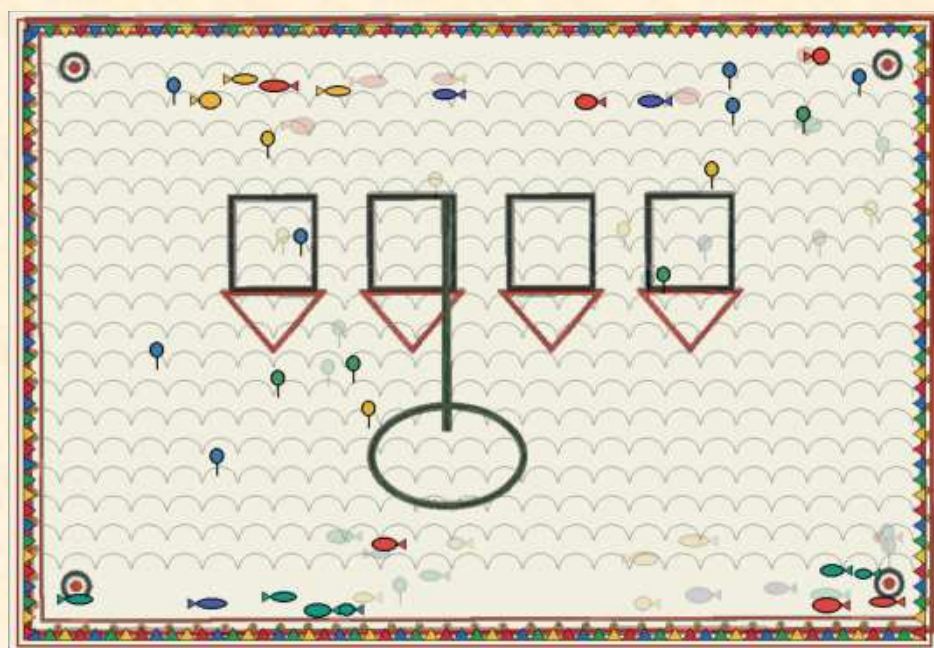


Picture 1

Ujaini was a small village — yet its fame was great: the shrine of Mother Gahil. A clay pedestal, painted with vermillion, under a neem tree. From far and wide people came to bow their heads — for a son, for grain, for health.

Mother Gahil was not a fierce goddess, but a tender mother to all. People said, 'Mother never sends anyone away empty-handed.' And the strongest pillar of that faith was an ordinary woman — Moti Dai.





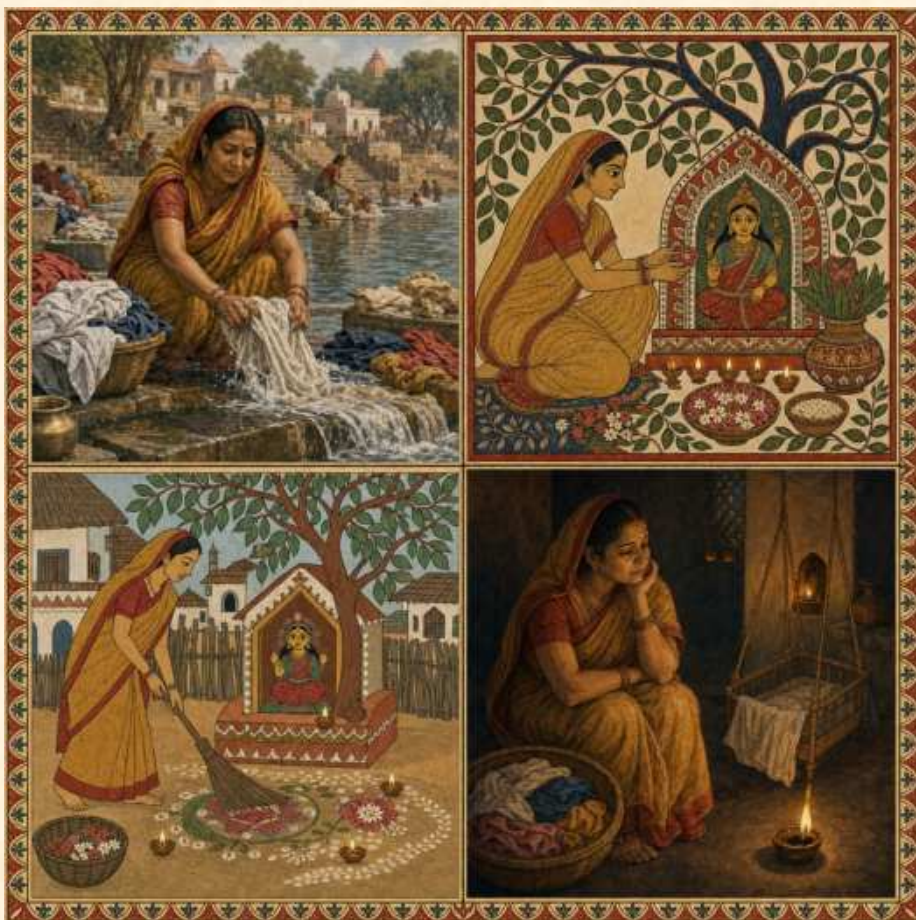


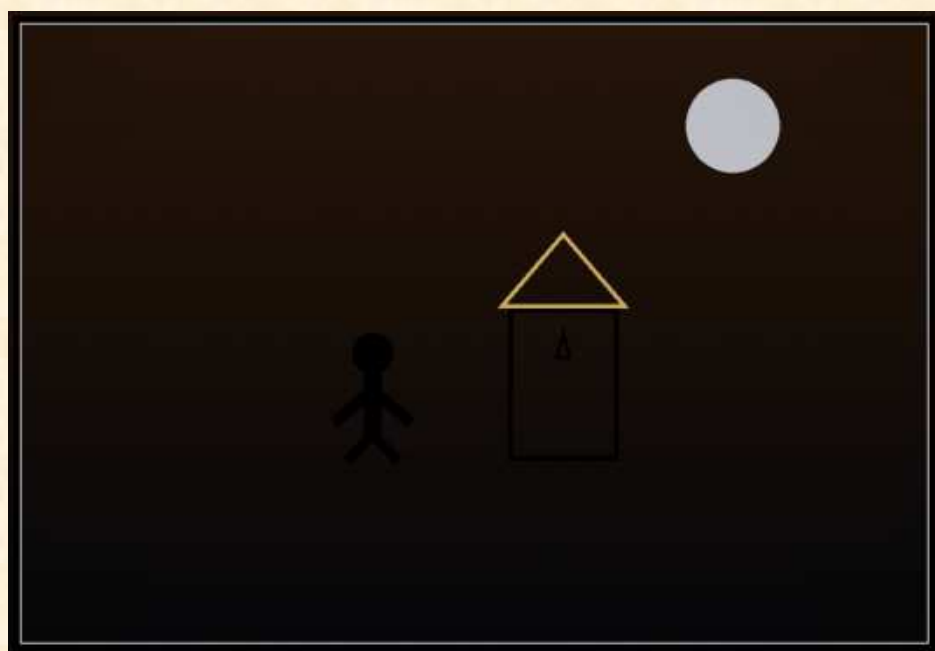
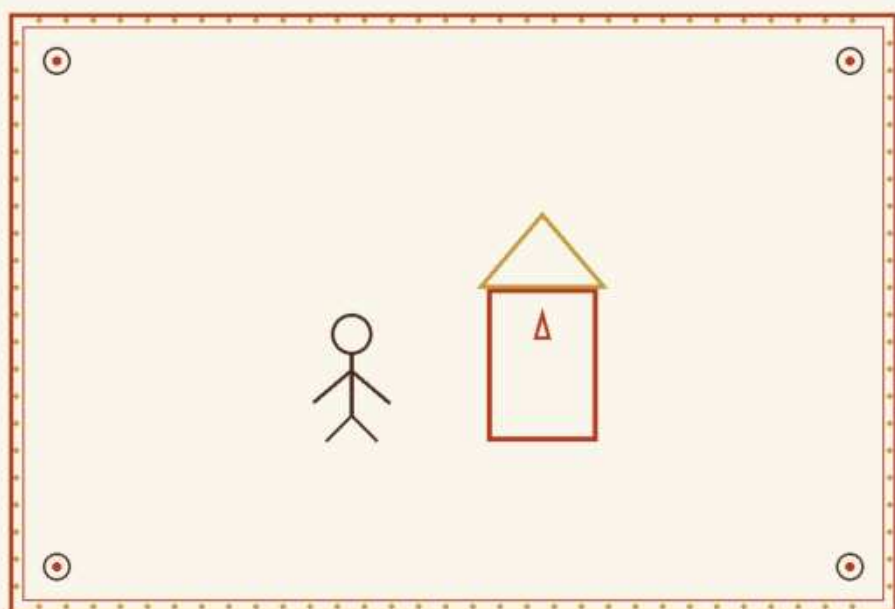
Picture 2

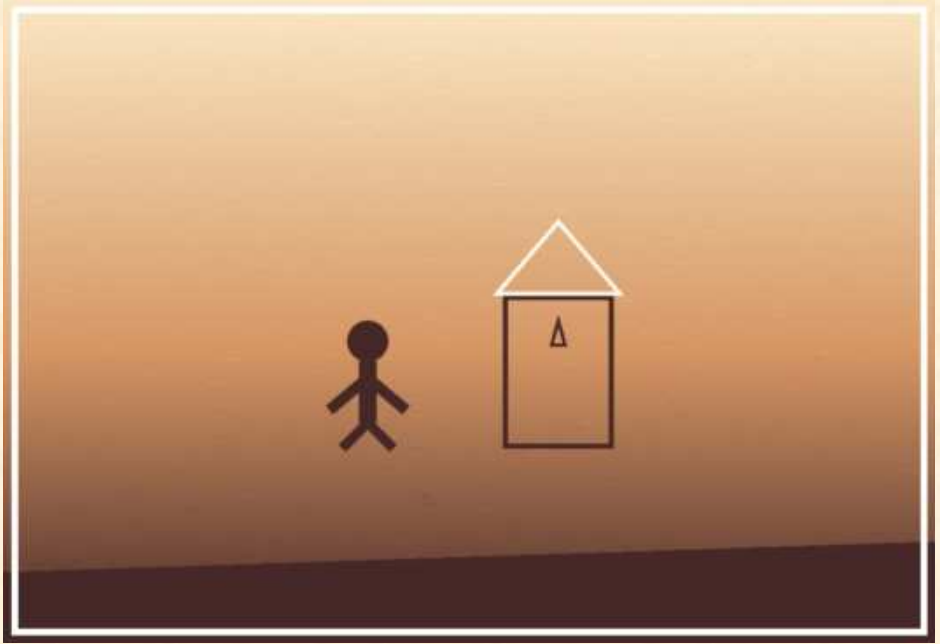
In the village there were many quarters — the cowherds' lane, the washers' lane, and others still. Each had its own work, its own riverbank. But at the shrine everyone was one — or so it seemed. Seeming and being — the distance between those two will be measured as this story goes on.

Under the neem tree, on that pedestal, the lamp that burned earliest each morning was lit by one pair of hands alone — the hands of Moti Dai.

Chapter 2: Moti Dai the Devotee





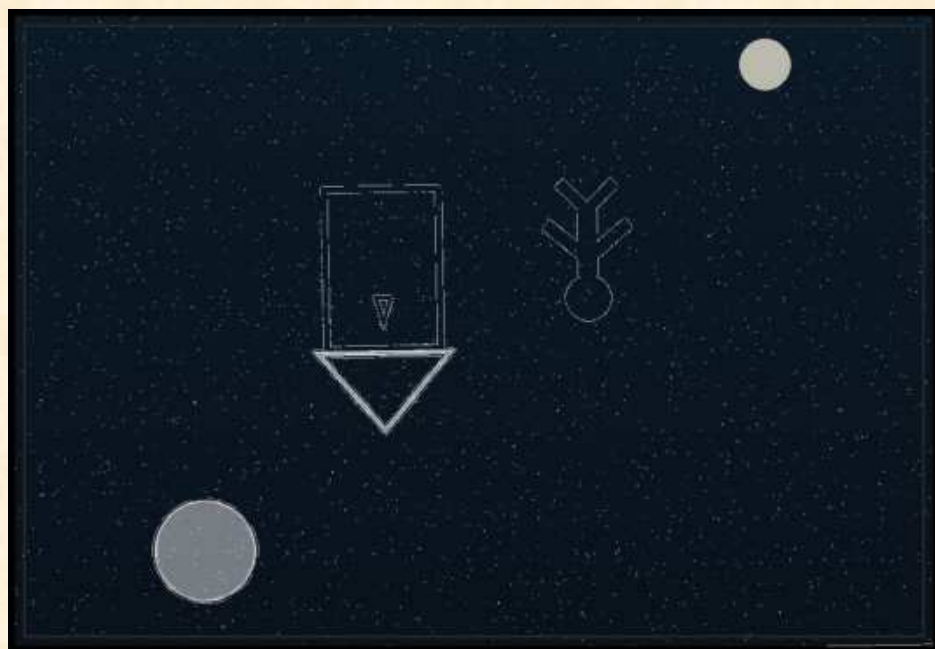
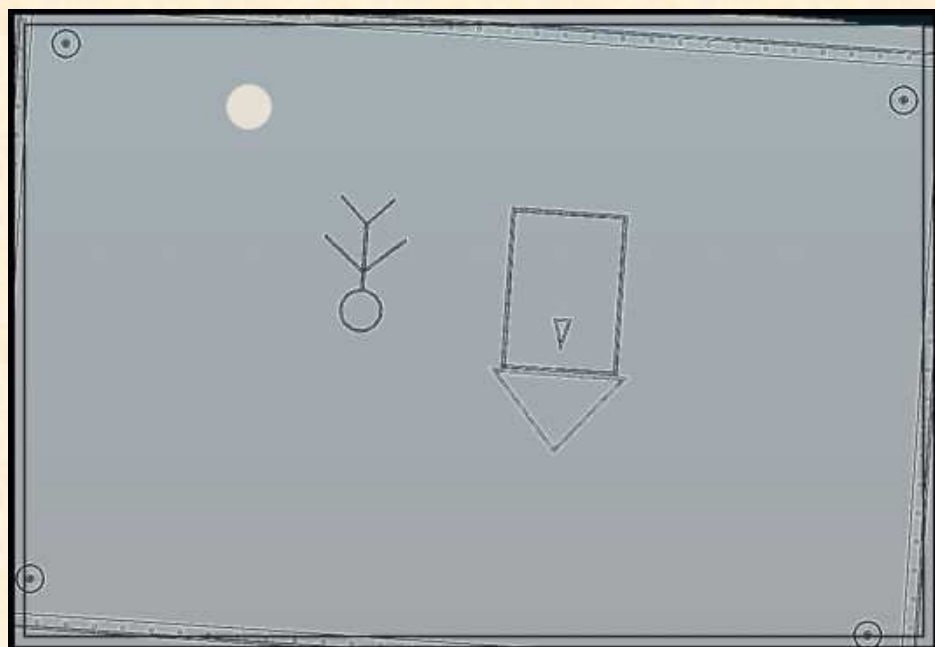


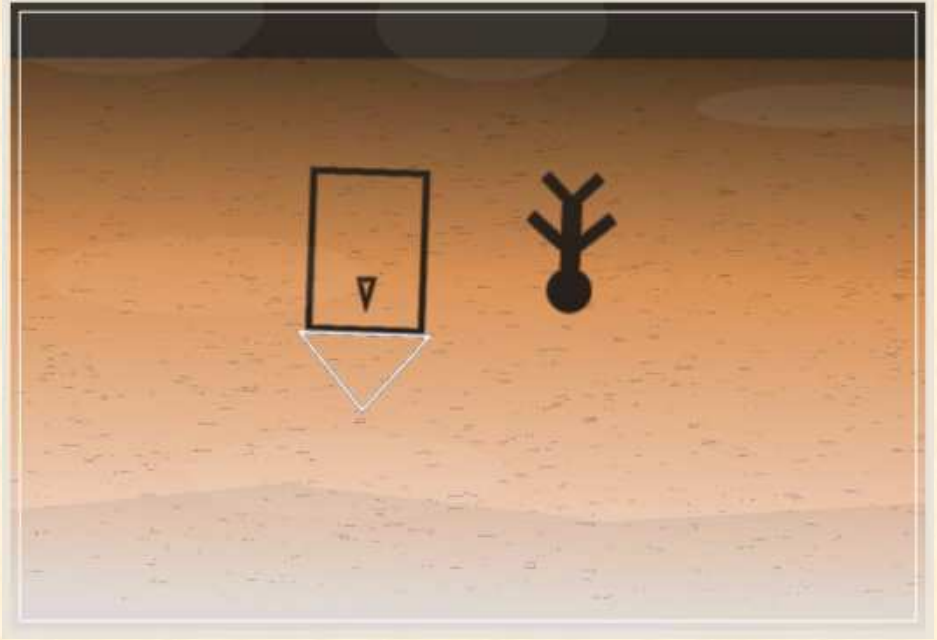
Picture 3

Moti Dai was of the washer caste — a woman who cleaned clothes. At dawn, heaps of cloth by the river; at noon, the drying; at evening, deliveries from door to door — that was life enough for the body. But for the soul? For the soul there was only the service of Mother Gahil.

Sweeping the shrine, smoothing the pedestal with fresh clay, lamps and incense, flowers and rice grains — all this was Moti Dai's daily work. People called her 'Bhagtin,' the true devotee, and that title felt greater to her than any throne.







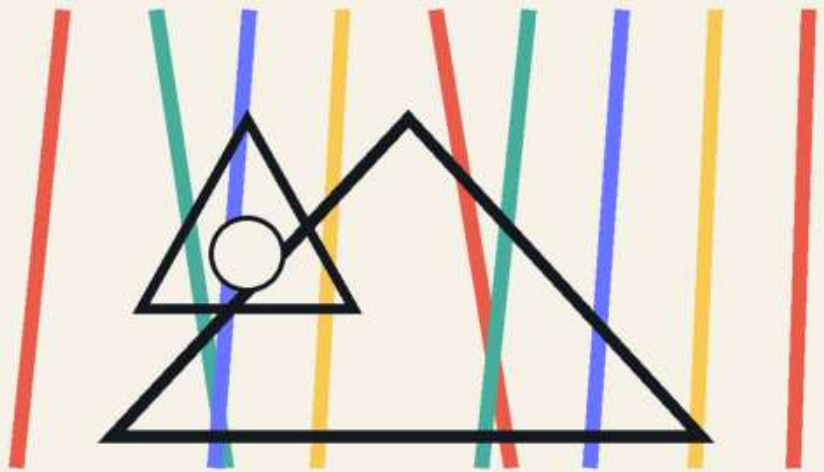
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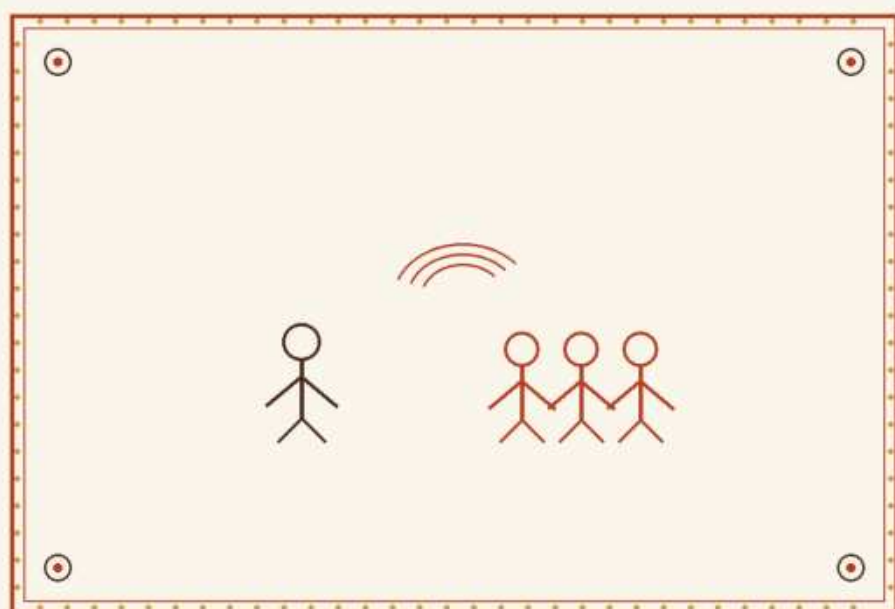
But in the devotee's own home one room stood empty — her arms. Years of marriage had passed, and no child had come. Moti Dai never spoke that sorrow to anyone — to whom could she speak? Mother sees everything, she thought, and she only straightened the wick of the lamp.

Yet in the village, counting another woman's empty arms was an old custom. Moti Dai's sorrow had already been given a name by the village tongue — and one day that name was thrown straight into her face.

Chapter 3: An Evening of Spreading Cow-Dung Cakes





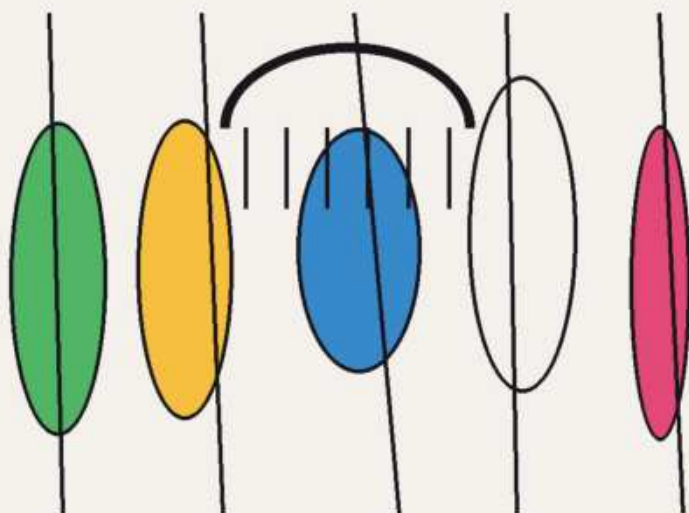


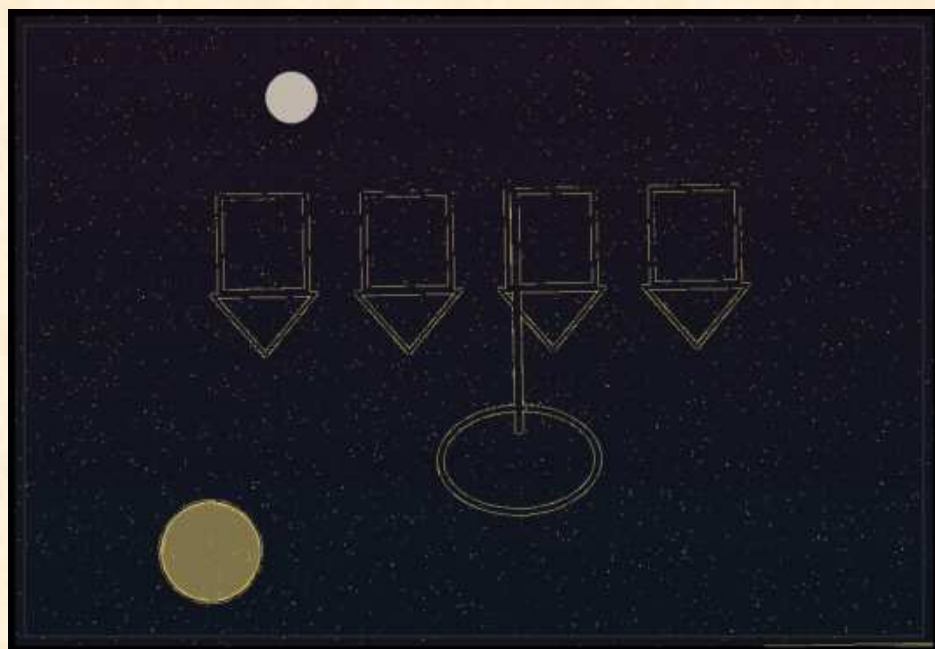
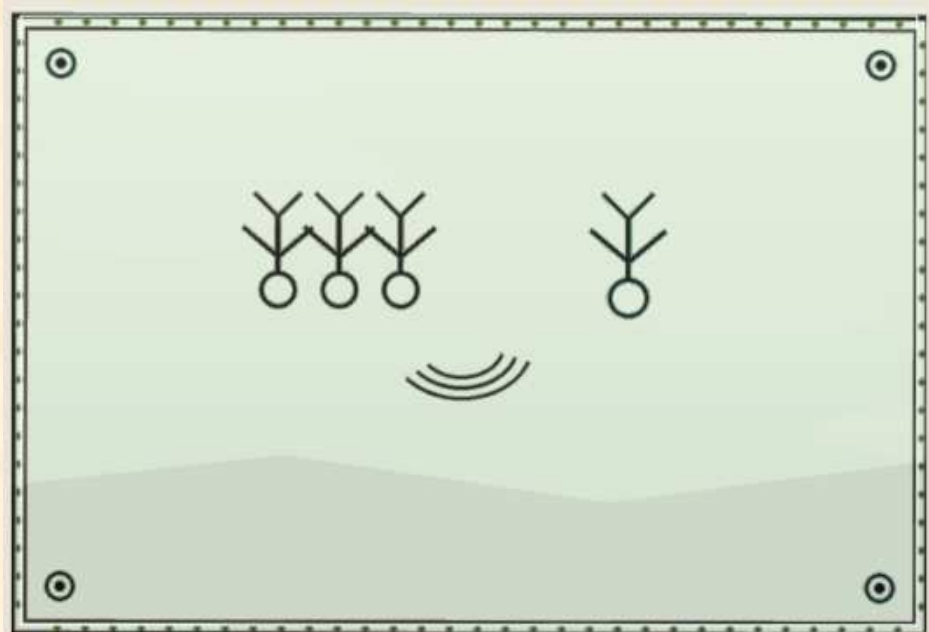


Picture 5

One day it happened. Moti Dai was in her courtyard, spreading cakes of cow-dung to dry — evening time, hands wet with dung, head bent, lost in her work.

Just then the women of the cowherds' lane came that way, driving their cattle home. The moment they saw Moti Dai their feet stopped, and their tongues began to run.







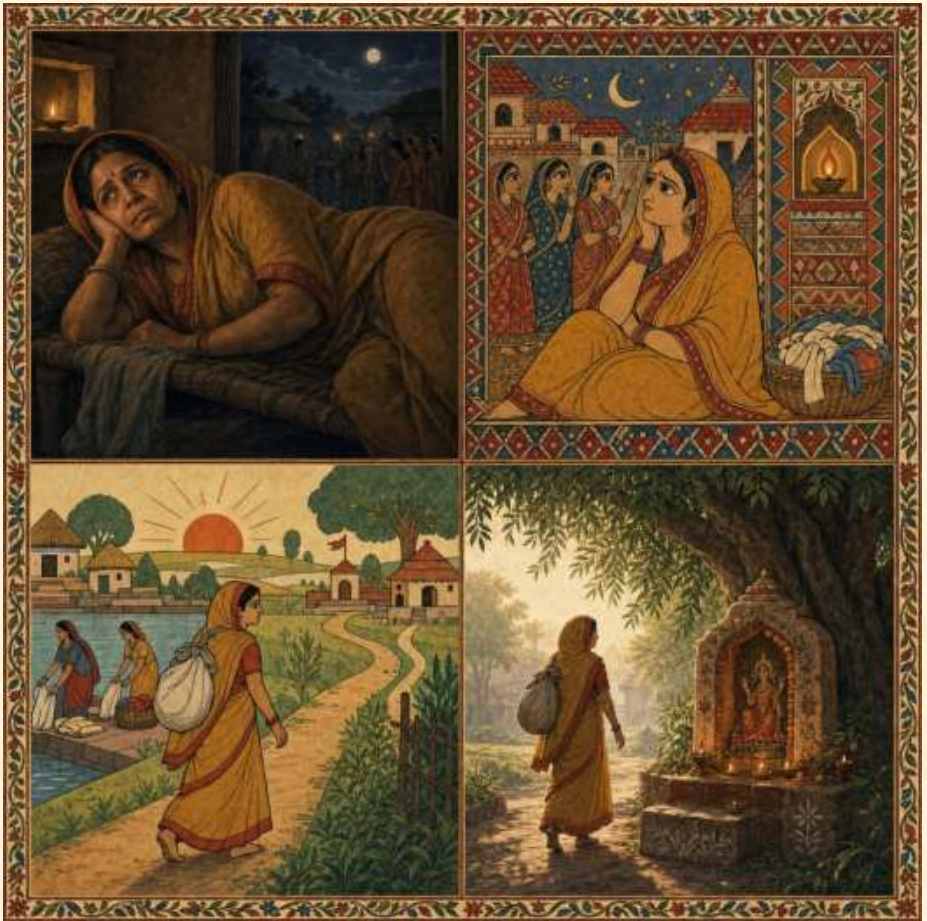
Picture 6

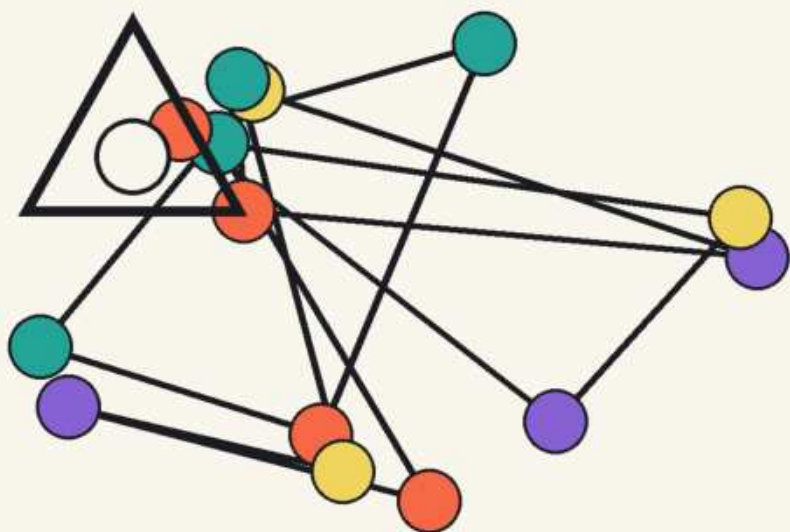
'Drive your cattle on! Or every last beast will go barren — just like this Moti Dai!'

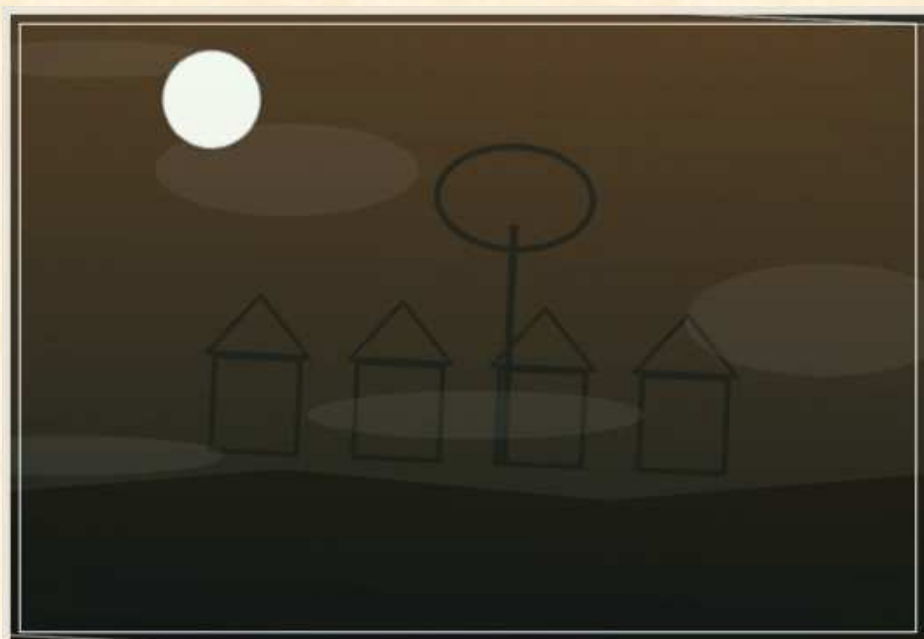
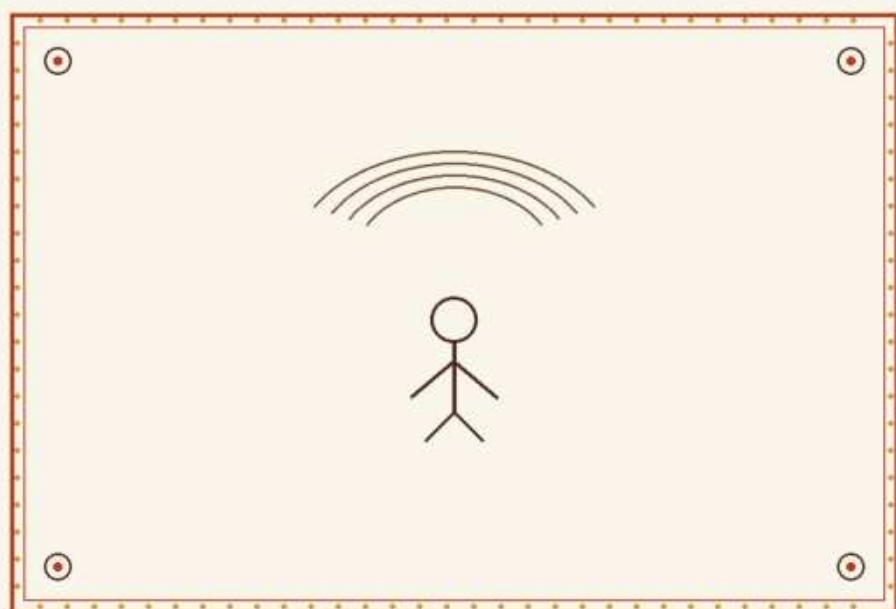
Words — and among all words, that word. Barren. Not only that — even Moti Dai's shadow was called unlucky: whoever saw her, they said, would lose their cattle to barrenness! Her hands, wet with dung, froze where they were. The women laughed and walked on, and behind them Moti Dai remained — and something inside her broke, with a sound no one else could hear.

Chapter 4: The Weight of the Word

'Barren'





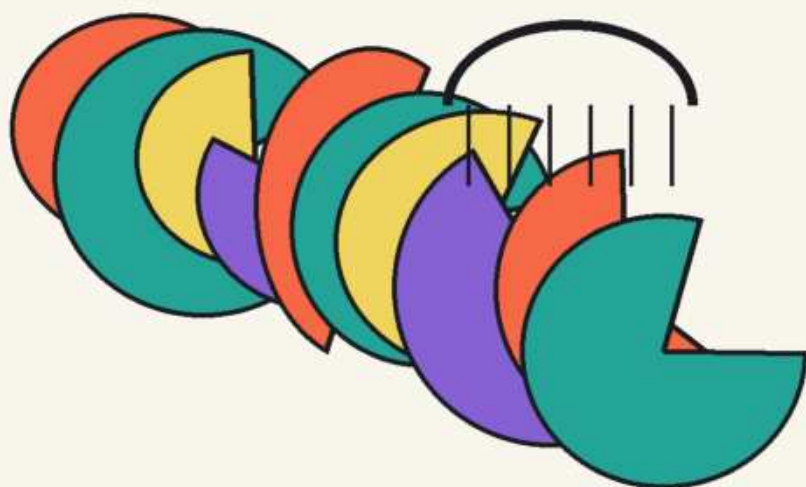




Picture 7

Moti Dai was filled with sorrow. The sorrow itself was not new — what was new was its public announcement. One thing is to weep quietly inside; another is to be called unlucky on the village path.

That night she could not sleep. Again and again the same sentence rang in her ears — 'just like this Moti Dai...' So was this the worth of a whole lifetime of service? The lines of her hands had worn away from smoothing the Mother's pedestal year after year — and still no child's name had been written in those lines.





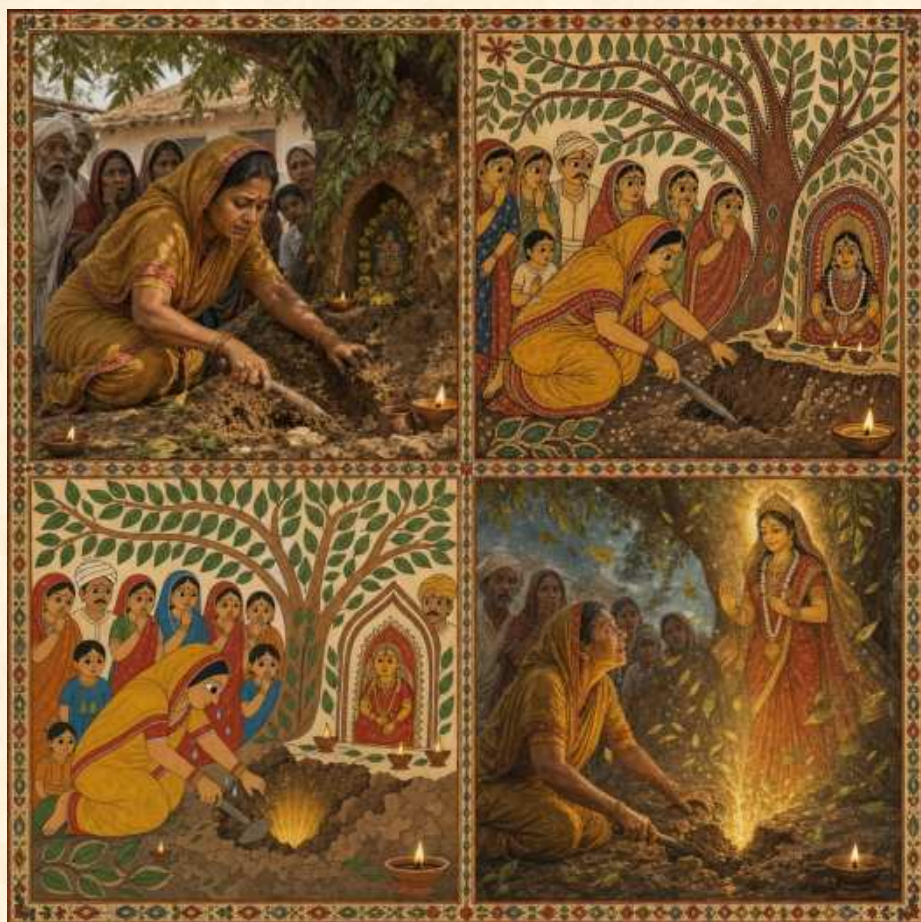


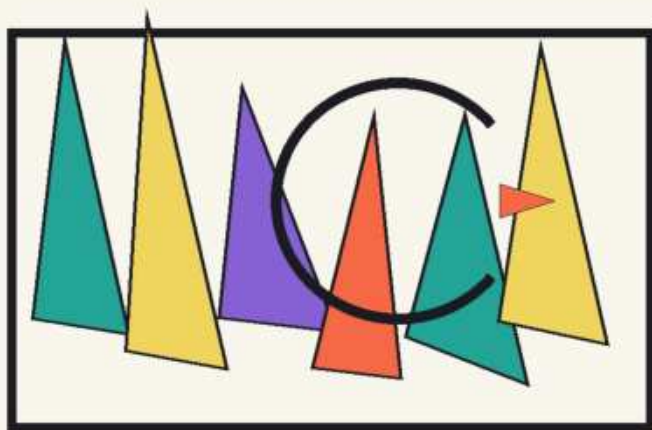
Picture 8

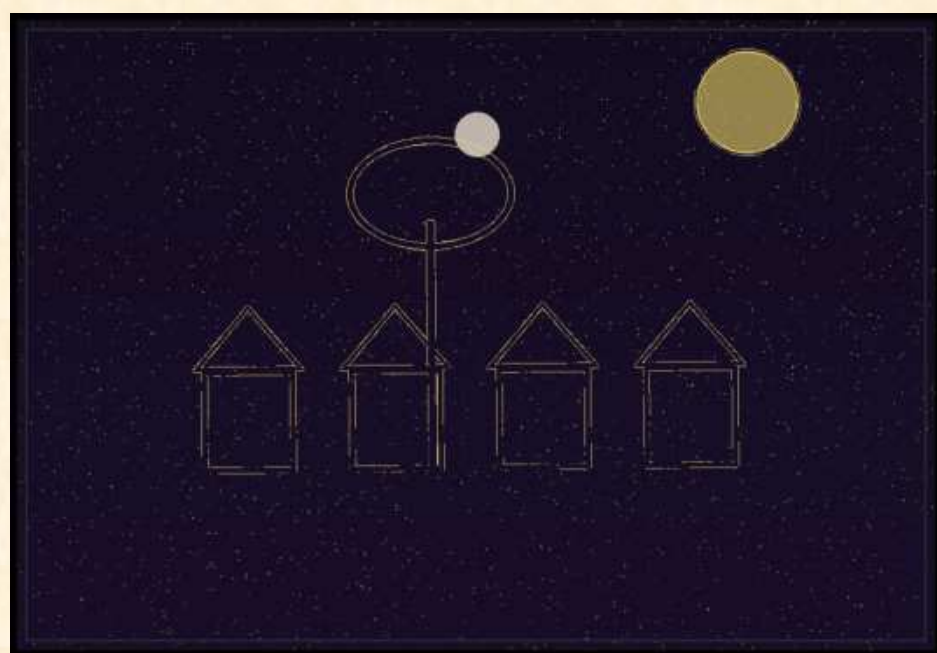
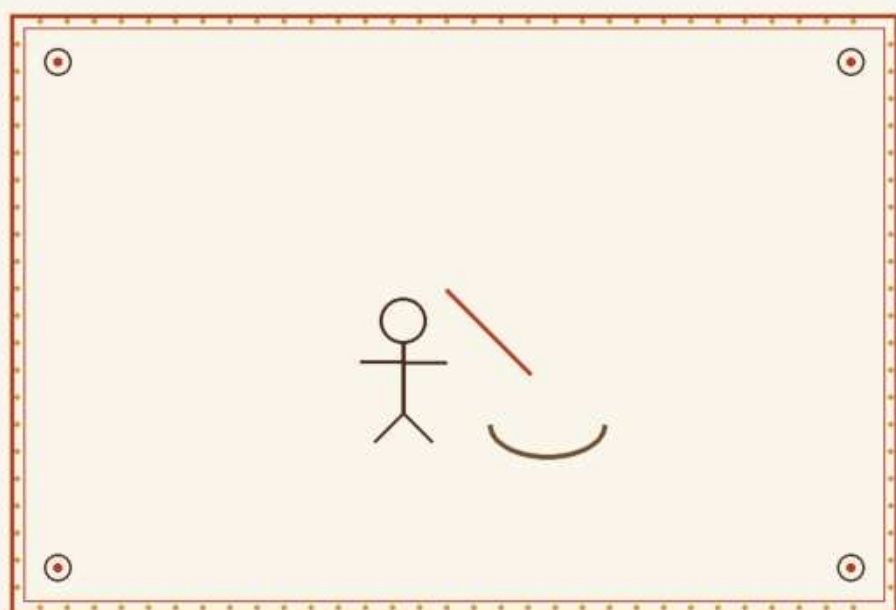
At first light she rose — but today she did not go toward the river. She went toward the shrine. Today was not a time for lamps and incense. Today was a time for reckoning — a straight reckoning between devotee and goddess.

The woman who for years had only bowed her head was going, for the first time, to ask. And every witness of devotion's story knows — when a true devotee comes down to demand, even the gods must answer.

Chapter 5: Digging Up the Pedestal





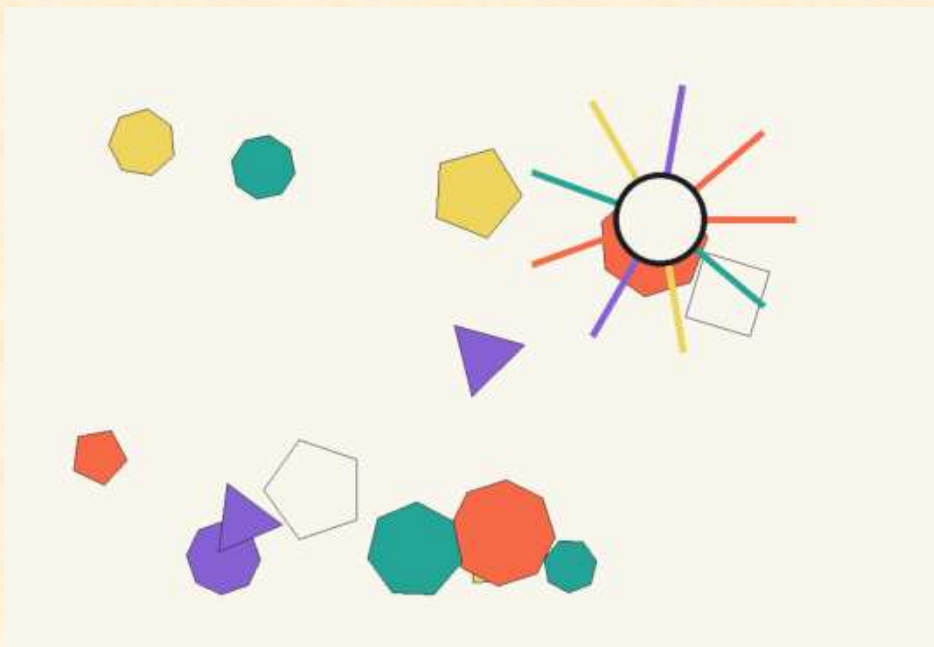


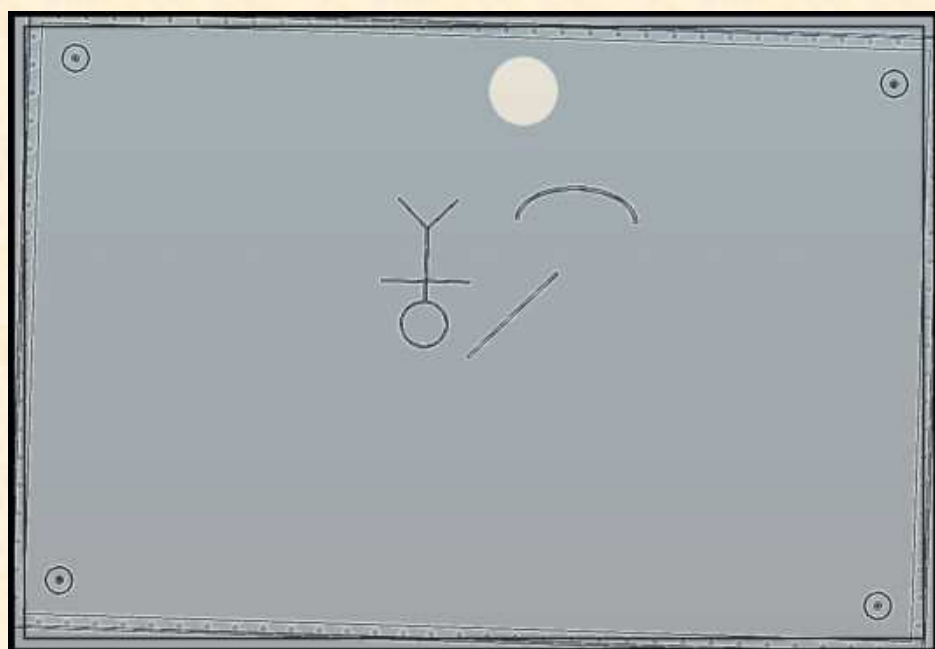


Picture 9

Reaching the shrine, Moti Dai lit no lamp and offered no flowers. She went straight to digging up the pedestal — with her own hands, the same hands that for years had smoothed it with clay.

This was not rebellion — it was devotion's final language. Like a child tugging a mother's sari — 'Answer me, or I will not let go.' In every strike of Moti Dai's hoe there was one cry alone: 'Appear, Mother! Today I need an answer!'







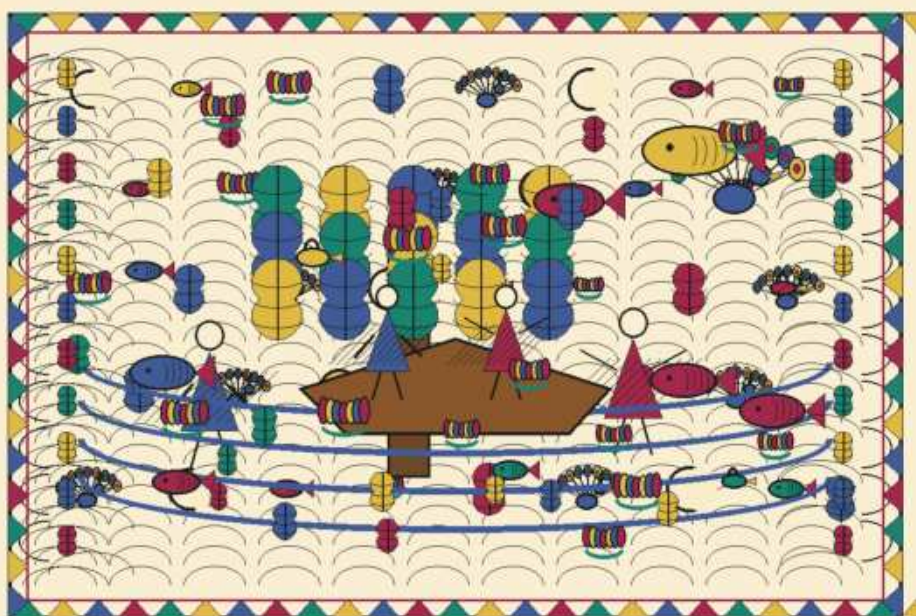
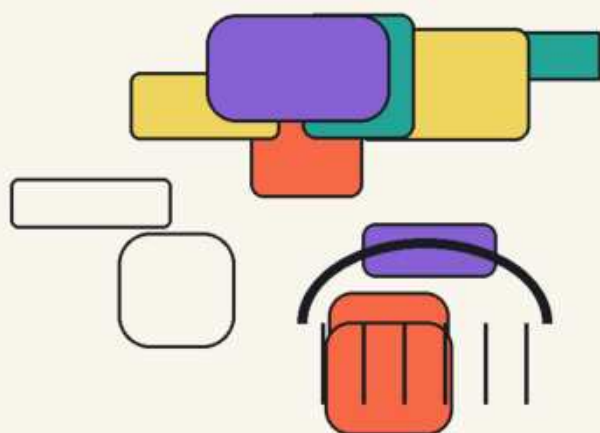
Picture 10

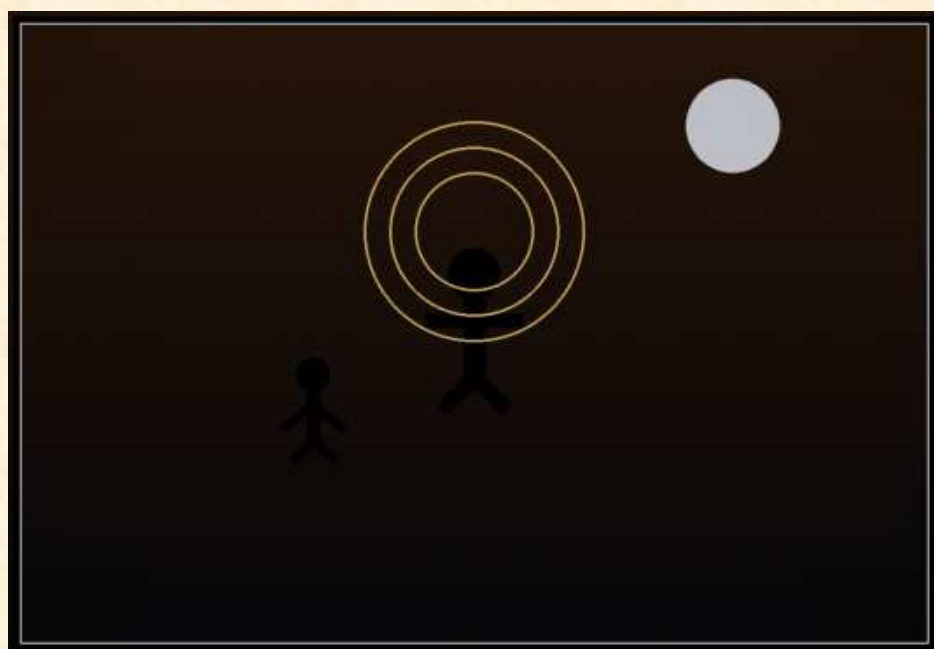
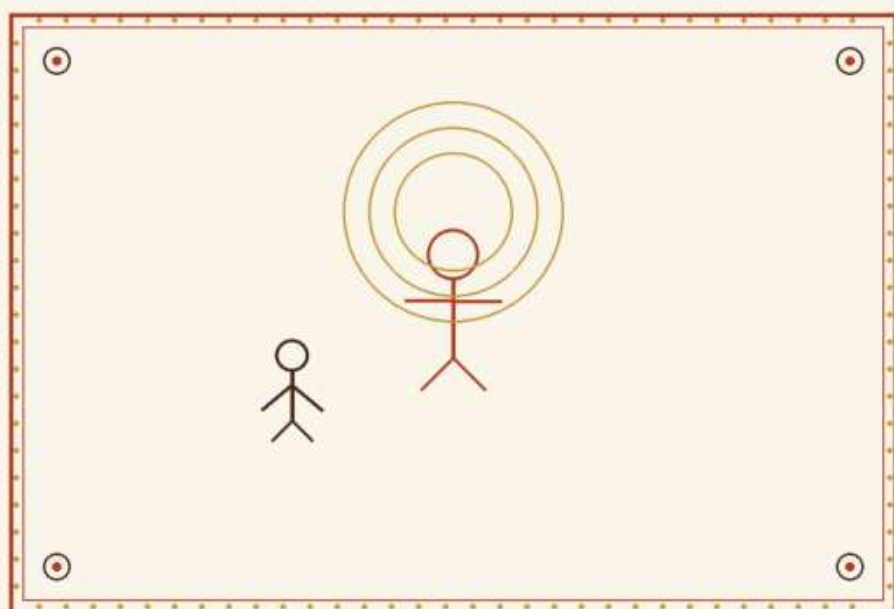
The village people gathered — some wanted to stop her, some stood far off in fear. 'The devotee has gone mad!' — but Moti Dai's hands did not stop. Tears from her eyes and sweat from her brow fell together upon the earth of the pedestal.

And then — a neem leaf stirred without any breeze, the air of the shrine grew heavy, and light burst from the clay of the pedestal. Mother Gahil appeared — before her devotee, whose stubborn love even the goddess could no longer turn aside.

Chapter 6: The Mother's Word







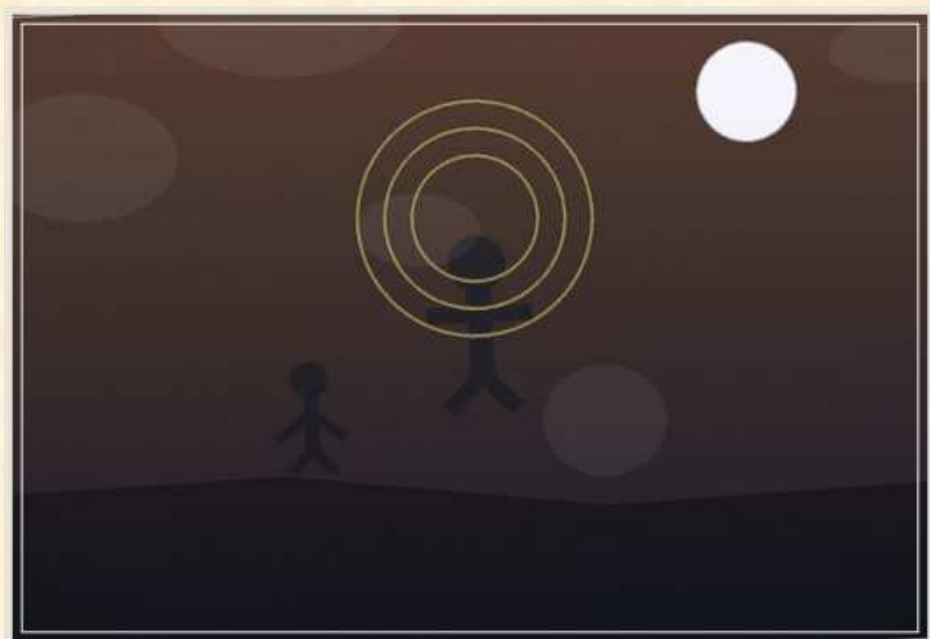


Picture 11

'What has happened, Moti?' — in the Mother's voice there was no anger, only tenderness. And before that tenderness every lock inside Moti Dai broke open. The sharp words of that cow-dung evening, the label of barren, the stain of bringing bad luck — she told it all, and as she spoke she clutched the Mother's pedestal and wept.

'Where was the fault in my service, Mother, that my arms stayed empty? And if they stayed empty, let them — but why was even my shadow called unlucky?'







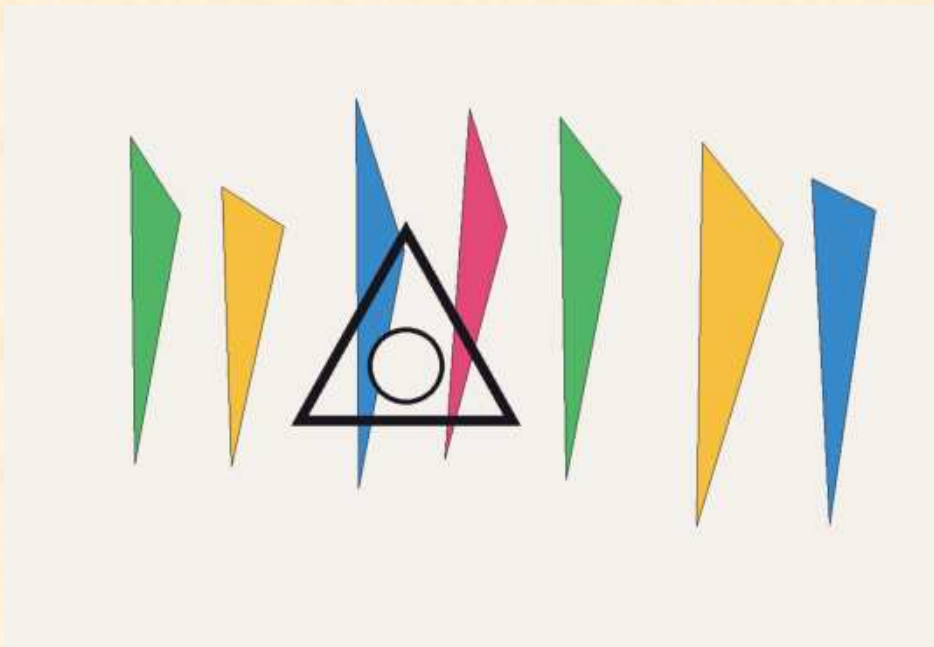
Picture 12

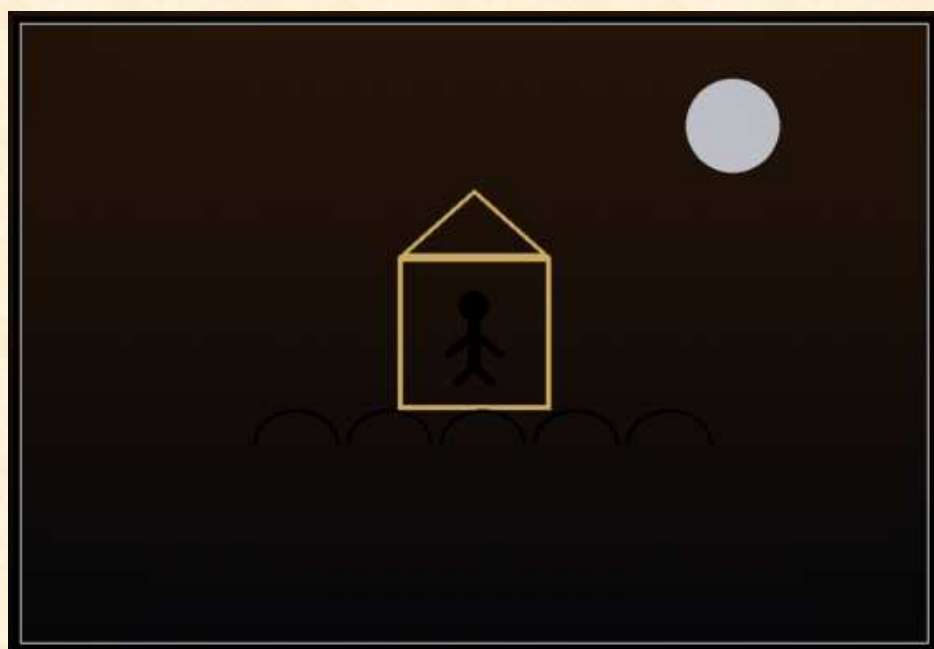
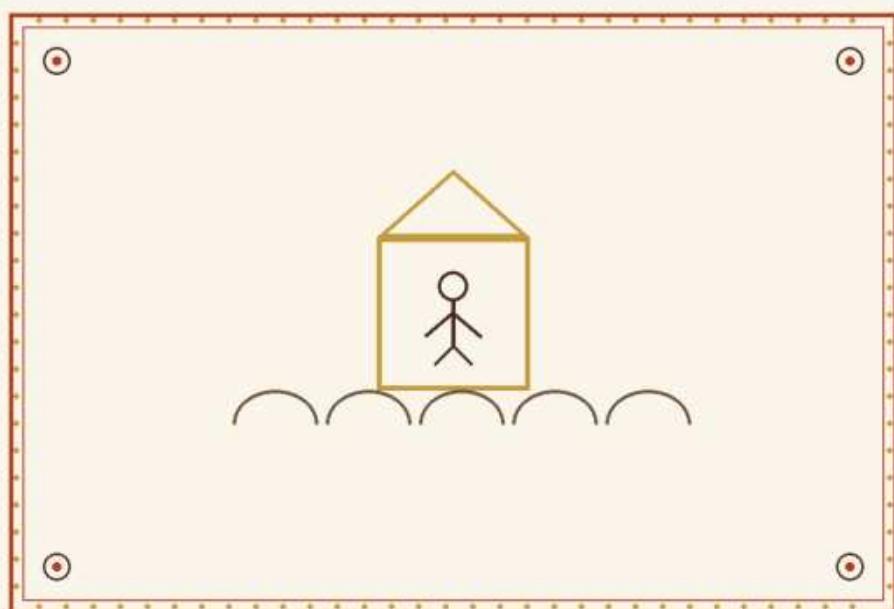
Mother Gahil stayed silent — because even she had no answer in that moment. The account of children does not rest in a goddess's hands — it rests in Indra's court, where the ledgers of birth after birth are kept.

'Very well,' said the Mother. 'I shall go to Indra's court, and I shall ask for a child for you.' — A goddess becoming a petitioner for her own devotee! The village folk who heard stood stunned. In Moti Dai's eyes, for the first time in years, hope awoke — and hope is the sweetest and the most dangerous thing of all.

Chapter 7: Indra's Court





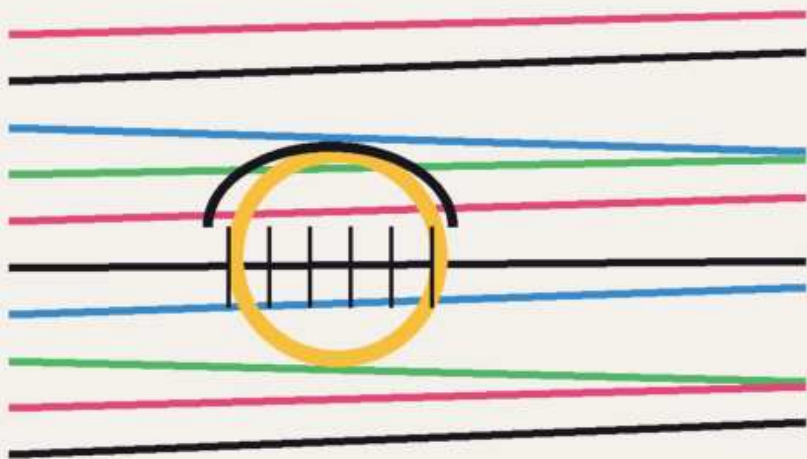




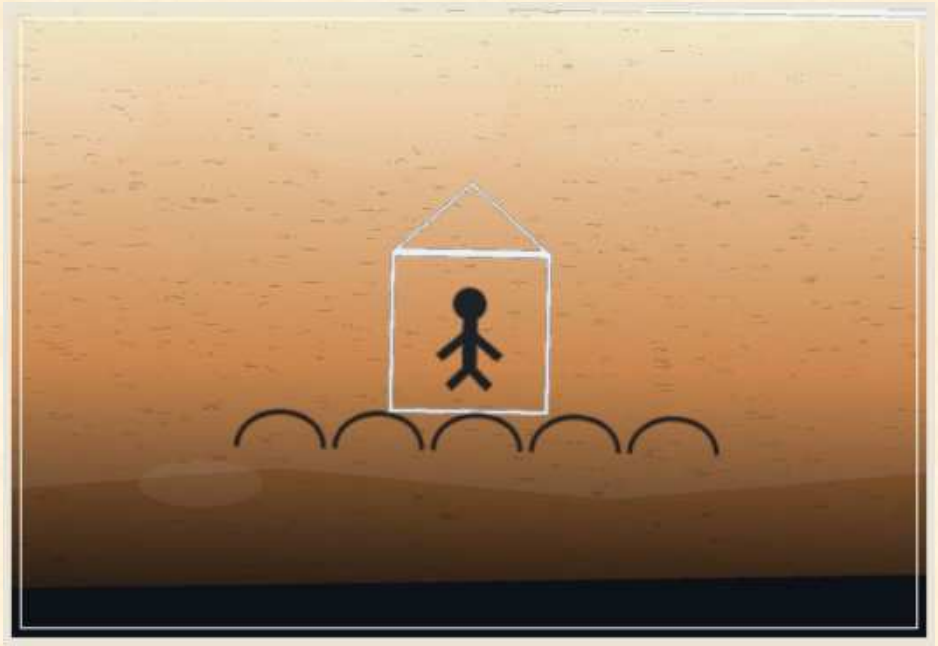
Picture 13

Indra's court — where clouds are curtains, lightning is the lamp, and where the fate-books of every living being are kept. Mother Gahil reached there — not as a goddess, but as the mother of a devotee.

'I ask for a child for my devotee Moti Dai, O King of the Gods.'







Picture 14

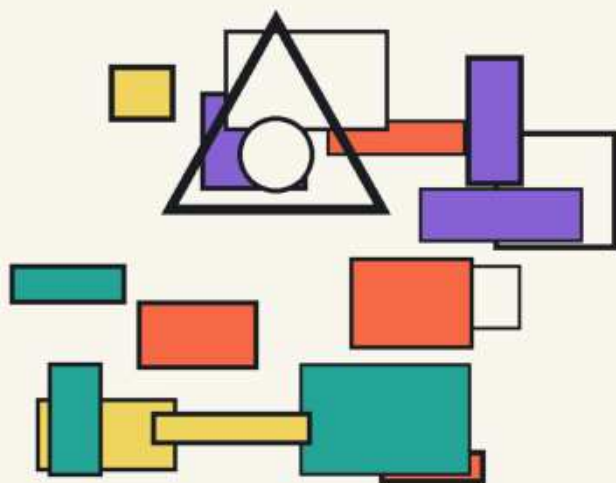
Indra called for the ledger. He turned the pages — the sum of birth after birth, the adding-up of deed after deed. And then the King of the Gods slowly shook his head. 'It is the fruit of a former birth, Mother. No child is written for her.'

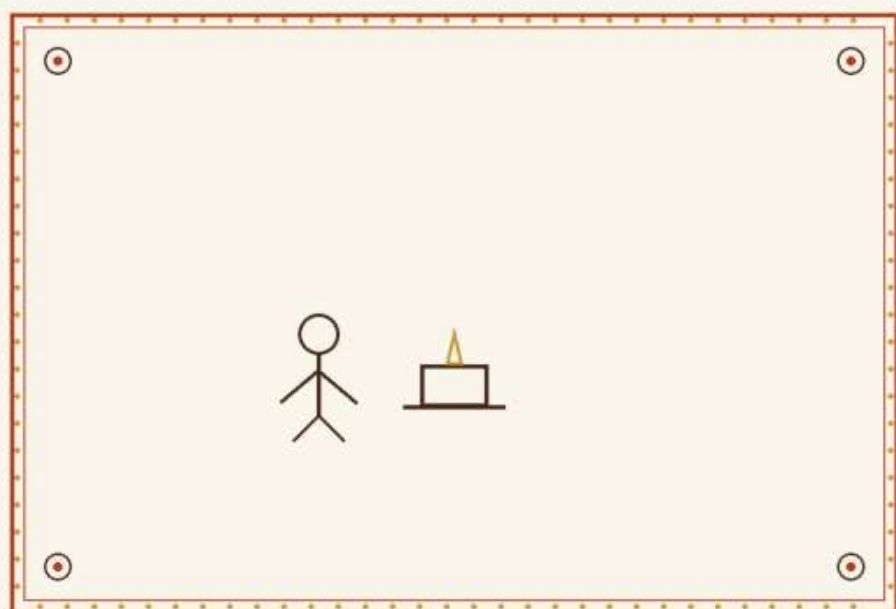
No child is written — three words, and in all three the weight of stone. Mother Gahil stood long and spoke long — but even a goddess's pleading could not move the book of destiny. She returned — empty-handed, heavy-hearted.

She was a goddess, so she could not tell a lie; she was like
a mother, so telling the truth cut her heart.

Chapter 8: Better to Die







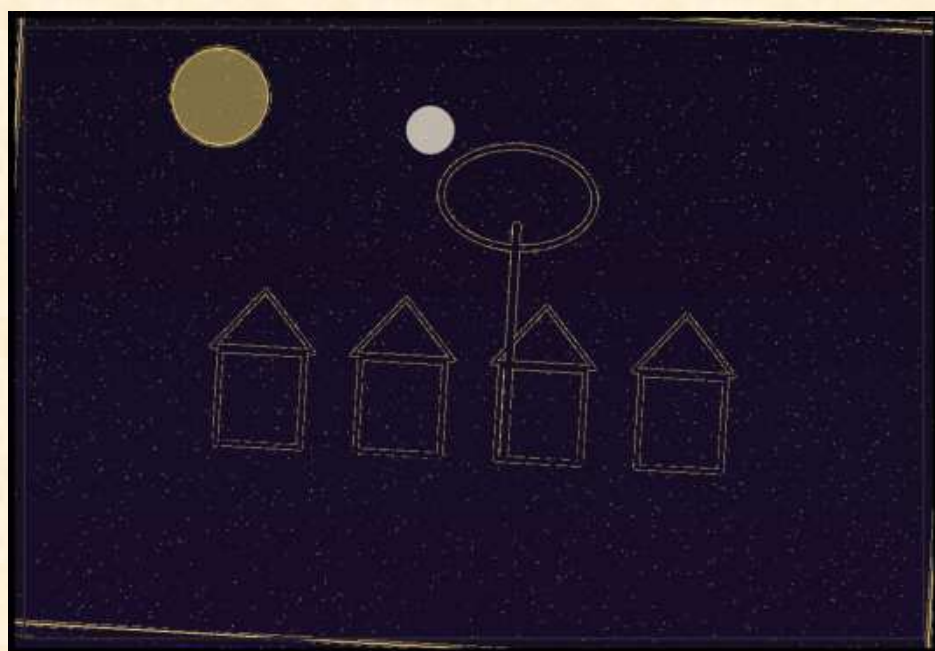
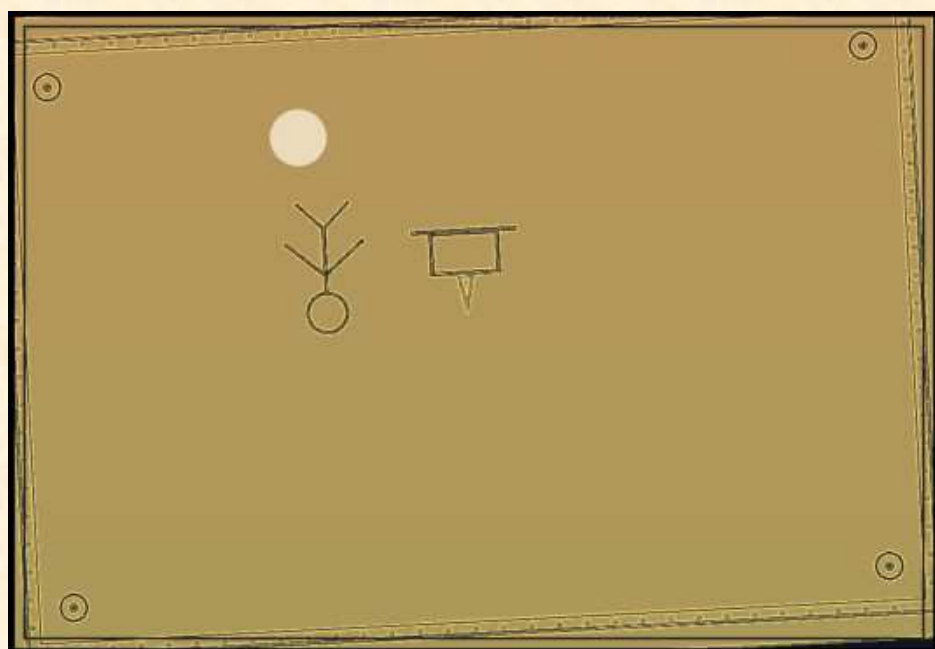


Picture 15

'It is the fruit of a former birth, Moti. No child is written for you.' — The Mother told her the whole truth.

Moti Dai heard, and the last small lamp still flickering inside her went out. 'Ah! Then my life is worthless. I served — and received no fruit. I bore the insult — and received no answer. And now even destiny itself says that to keep hope is a sin. Better, then, to die!'







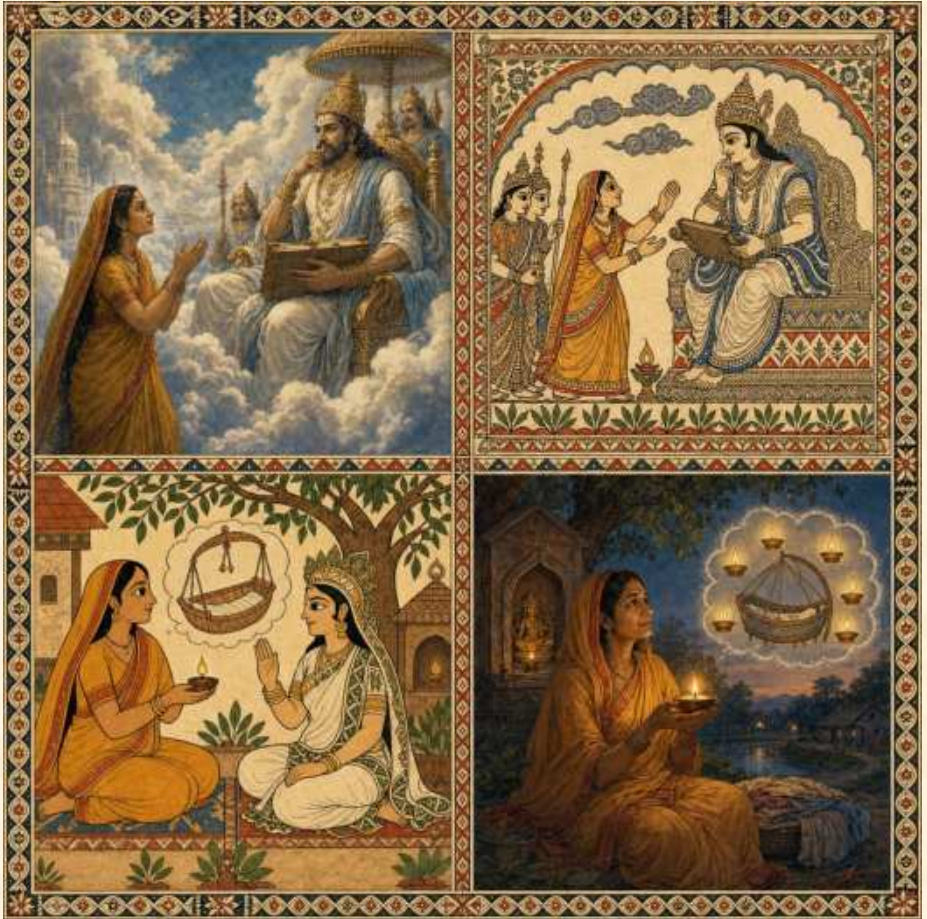
Picture 16

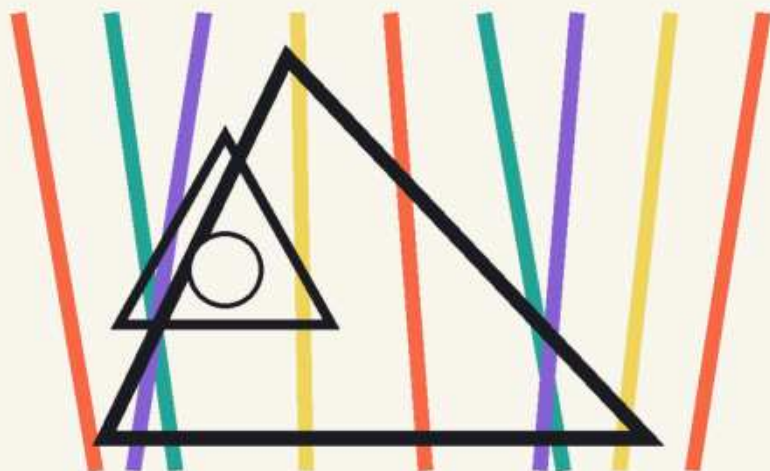
And these were not empty words. Moti Dai began to prepare for death — she gave up food, she left the riverbank, and into her eyes came that emptiness which is more frightening than any word.

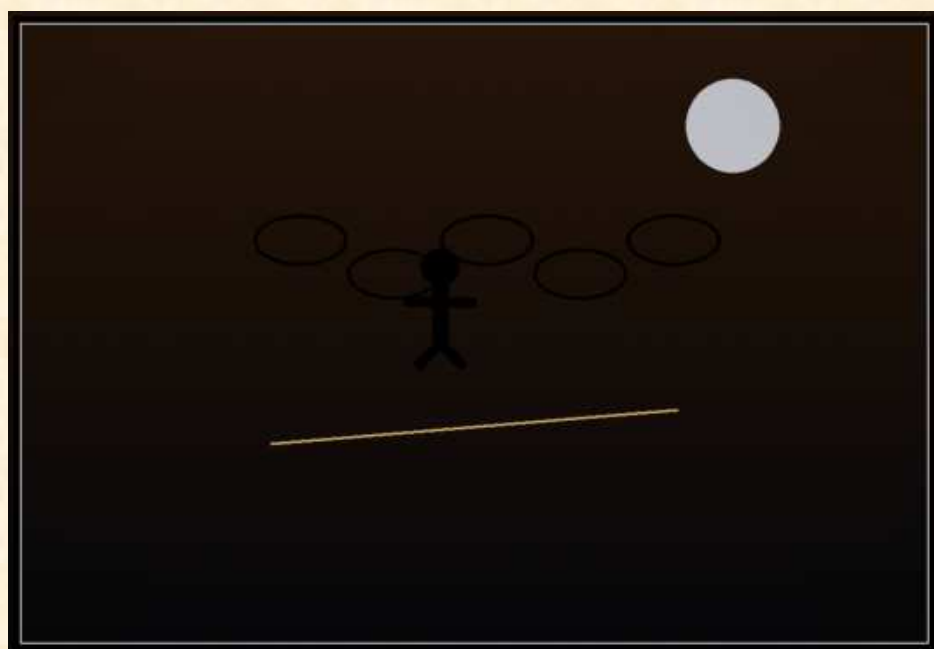
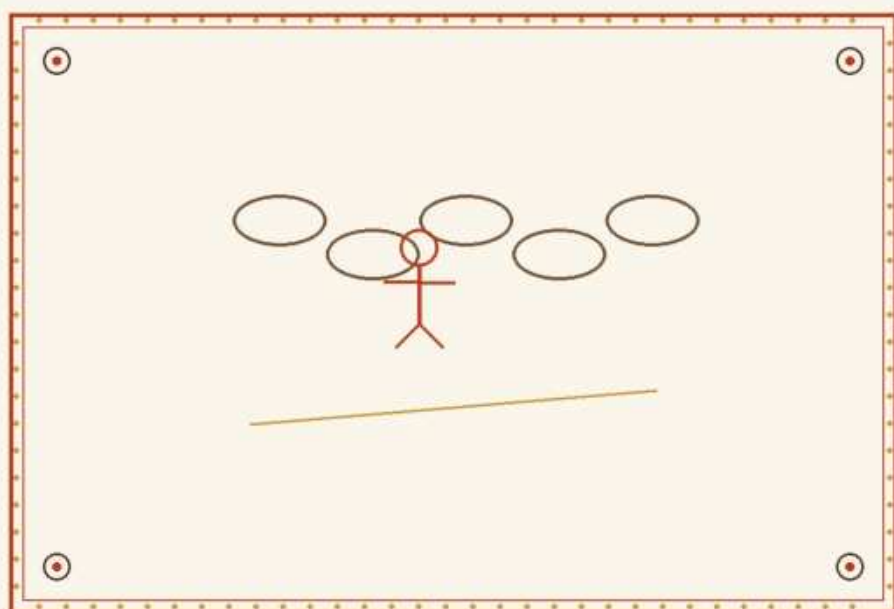
Mother Gahil saw this — and the goddess's heart began to shake like a peepal leaf. What is written in the book is destiny; but that a devotee should die before her eyes — what destiny is that? And then the Mother did what is the highest moment in any tale of devotion — the goddess

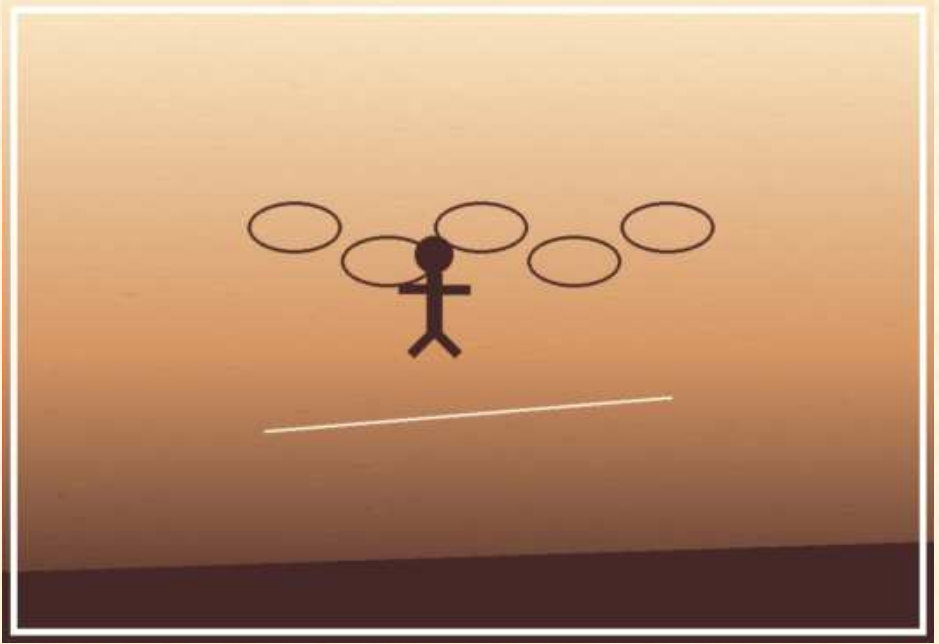
became a petitioner a second time. This time not with a request — but with stubborn love.

Chapter 9: The Second Journey and the Condition





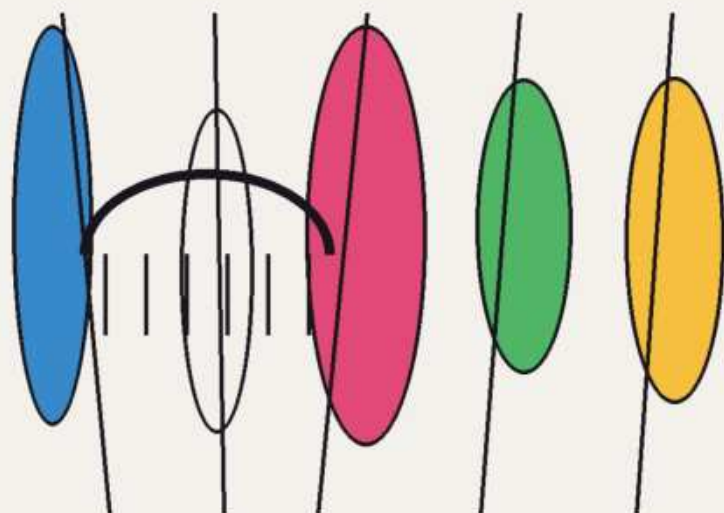


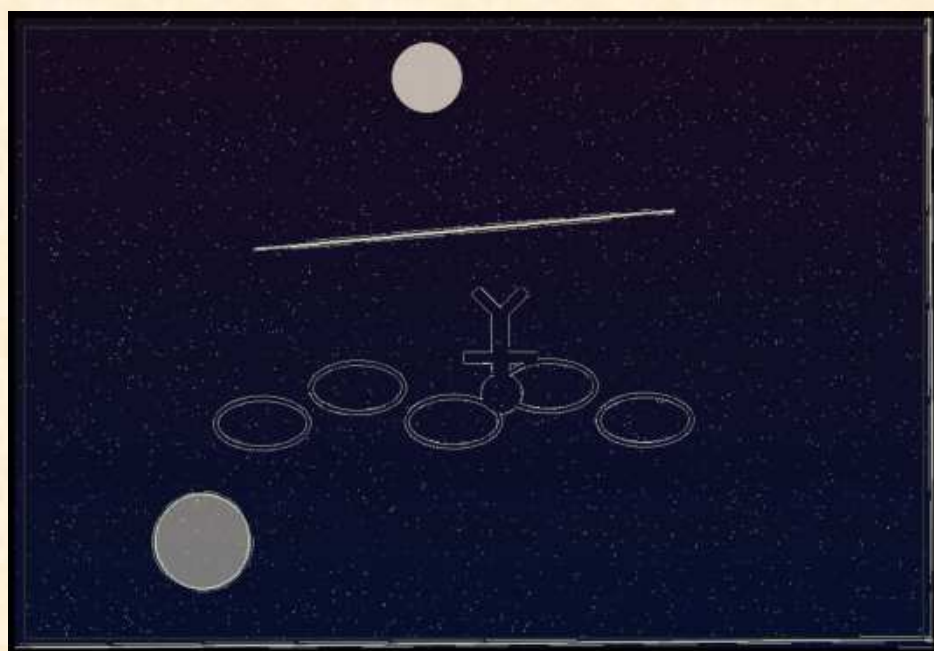
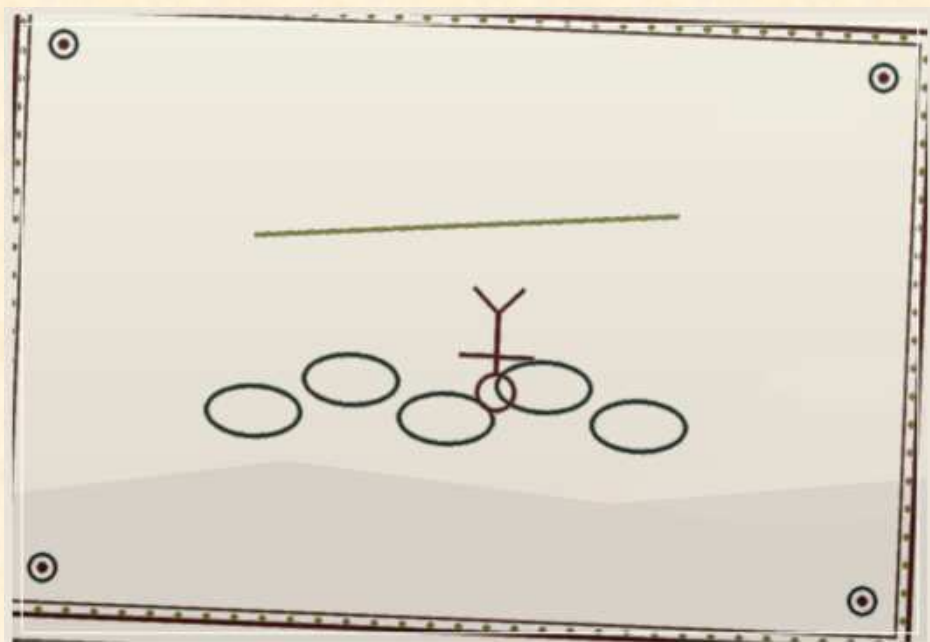


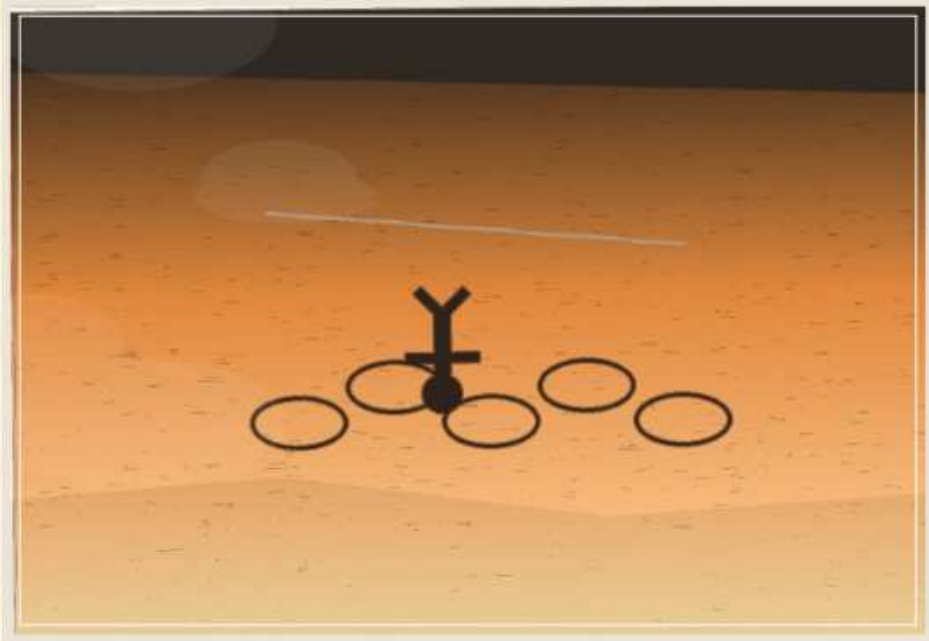
Picture 17

Mother Gahil went again to Indra's court. She told everything — the devotee's breaking, the giving-up of food, the preparations for death. 'Shall my devotee die because of her devotion to me, O King of the Gods? Destiny must find a way.'

Indra opened the ledger once more. Destiny is unbending — yet even within destiny there is sometimes a little margin, where compassion may add a line or two. After much thought the King of the Gods spoke —







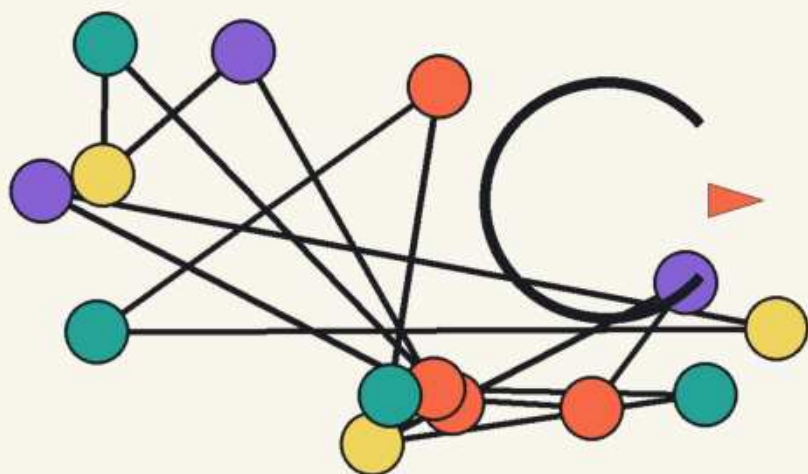
Picture 18

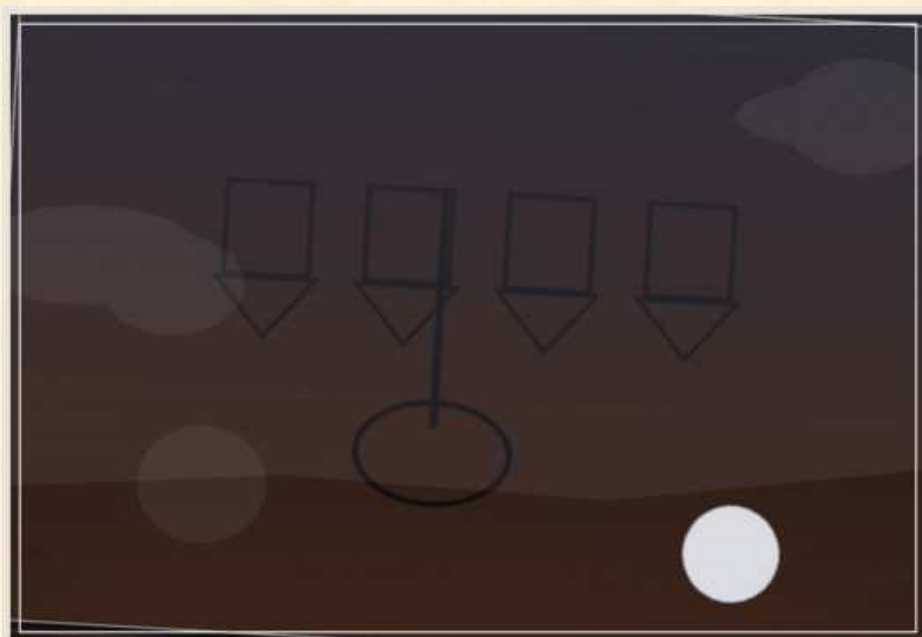
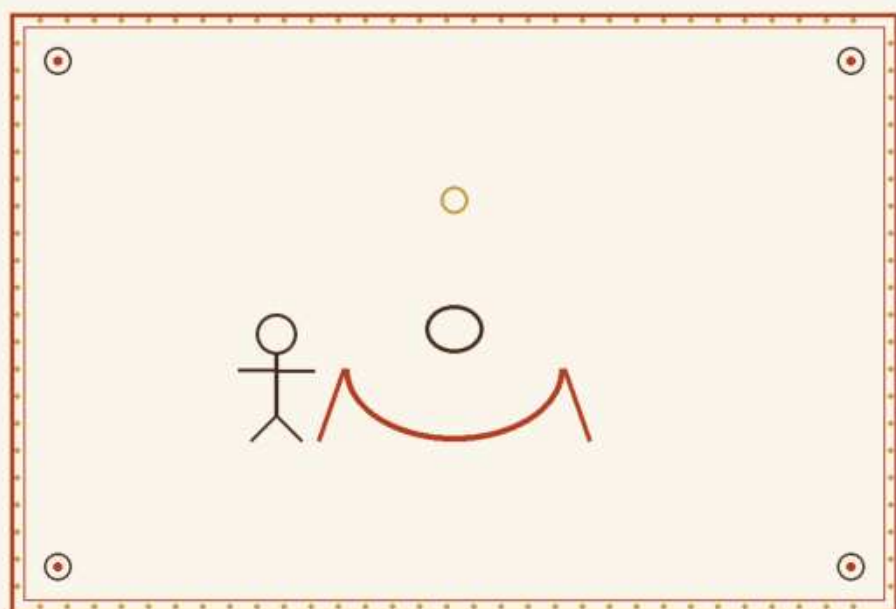
'Very well. Moti Dai shall have a child... but on the sixth day the child shall die.'

Six days. Only six days of motherhood — and before the seventh dawn, the end. Was this a blessing or a still greater curse? Mother Gahil carried that question home. But when Moti Dai heard, her answer was straight — 'Six days? Mother, for one whose arms have been empty a whole lifetime, even six days are six ages. I accept.' — Before the longing to become a mother, even the date of death grew small.

Chapter 10: A World of Six Days







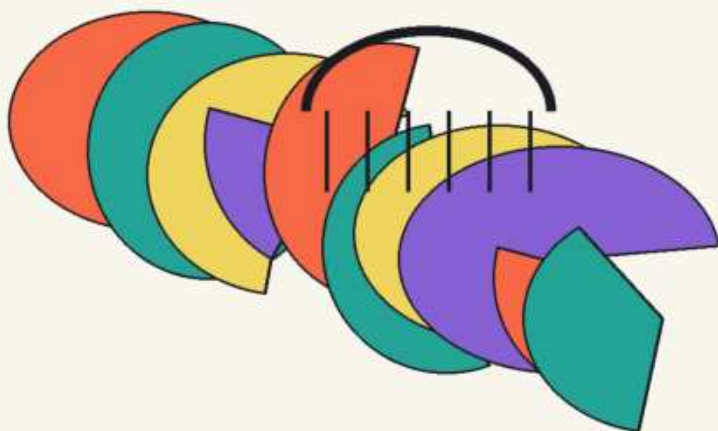


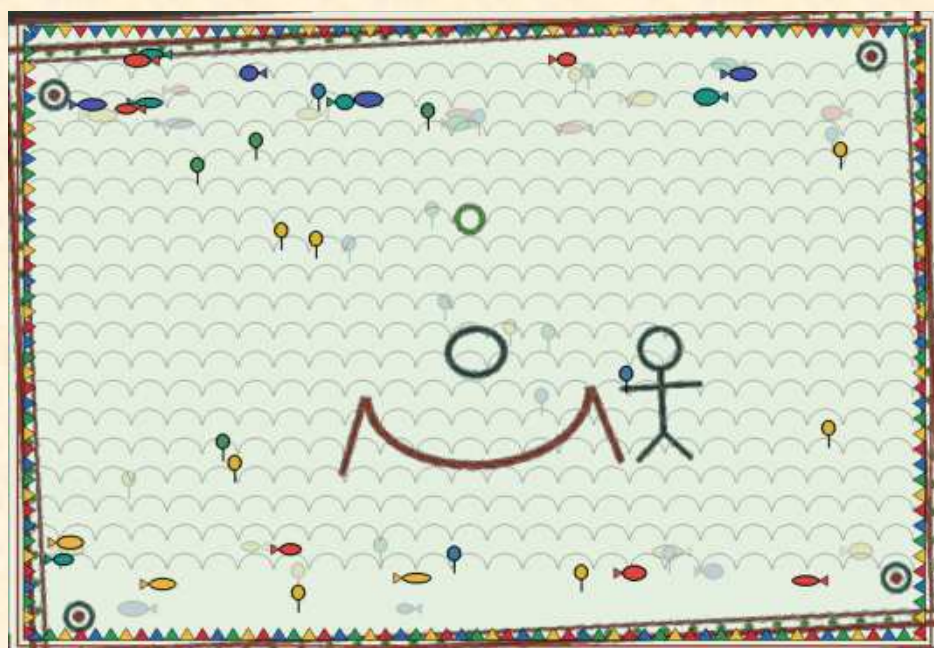
Picture 19

And so it came to pass — Moti Dai's arms were filled. A child was born: pure, healthy, like a piece of the moon. The village of Ujaini stood amazed — in the courtyard of the one they had called 'barren,' the birth-song rang out!

And those six days! In those six days Moti Dai lived a whole motherhood — as if someone might eat an entire life's feast in a single evening. The first day she only gazed at the child — even the blink of an eyelid felt like a loss. The second day she sang every lullaby she knew. The

third day she put kohl on the baby's eyes, the fourth she dreamed of a naming, the fifth day...





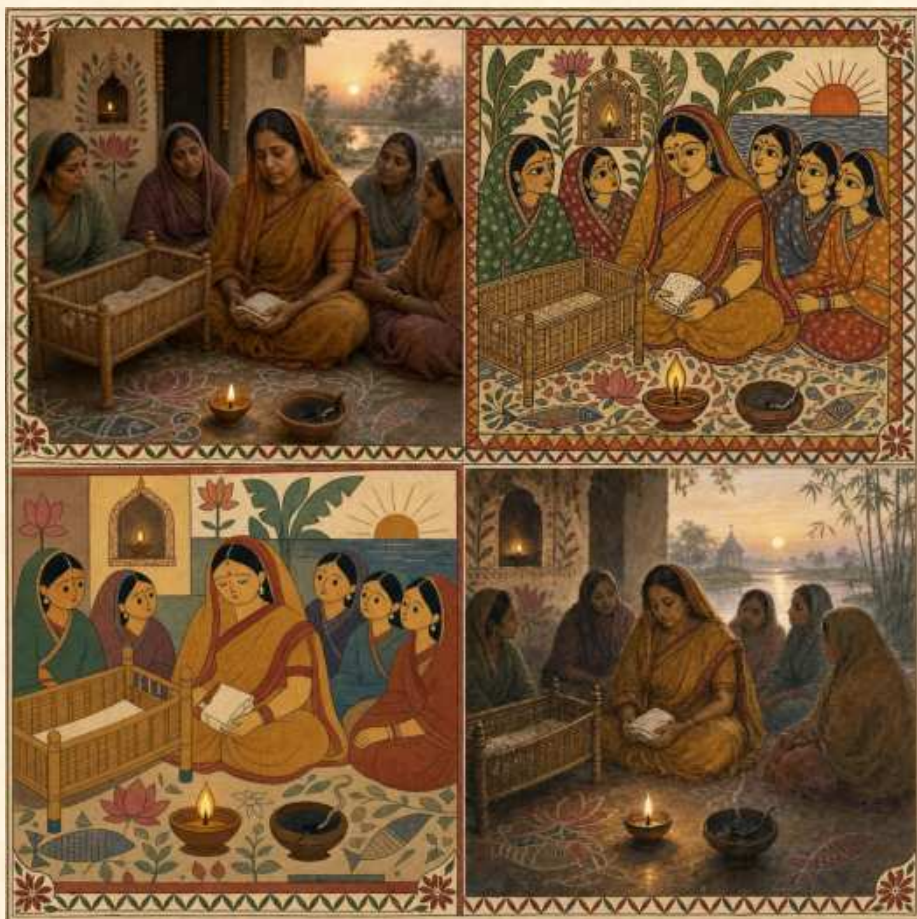


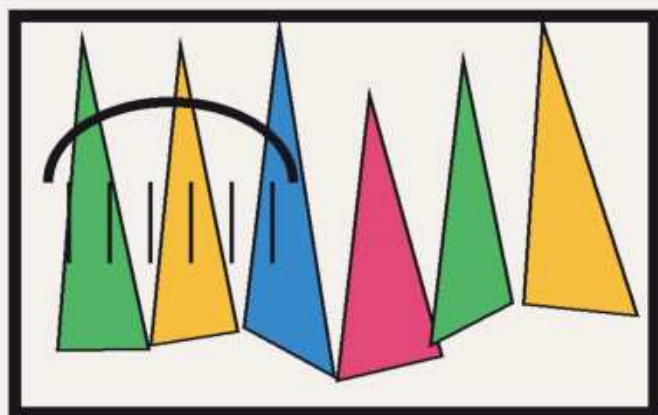
Picture 20

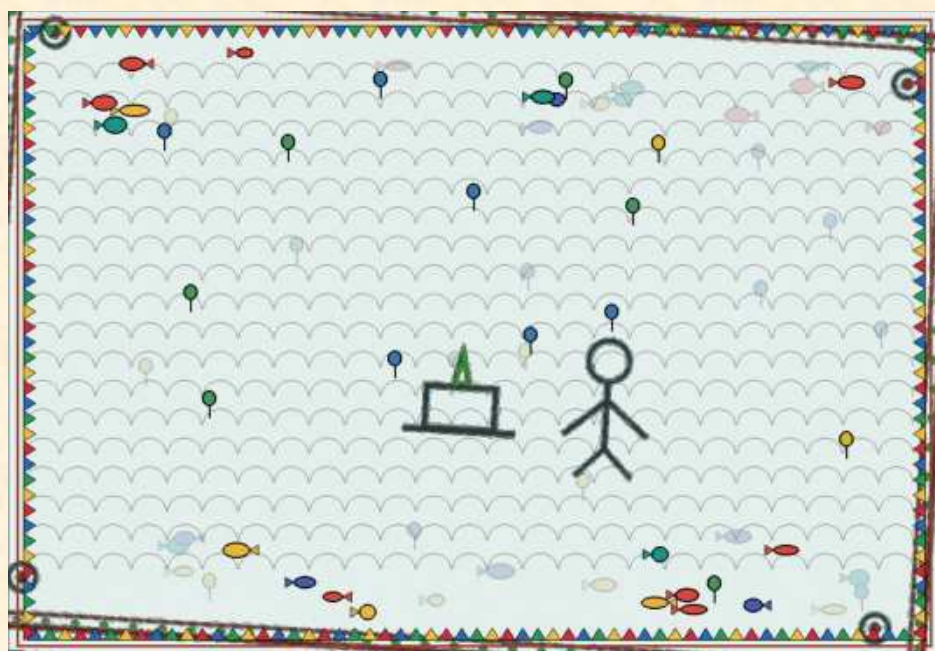
From the fifth day a tremor entered her lullabies. She knew the count as well as anyone. Holding the child to her heart she stayed awake all night — and said to sleep, 'You come later; right now it is my turn.'

And the village? The village watched in silence. Even those women of the cowherds' lane — whose sharp words had begun this tale — now stood in their doorways looking toward that courtyard where a world of six days had settled. From no one's mouth did the word 'barren' come out now — how could it?

Chapter 11: The Sixth Day





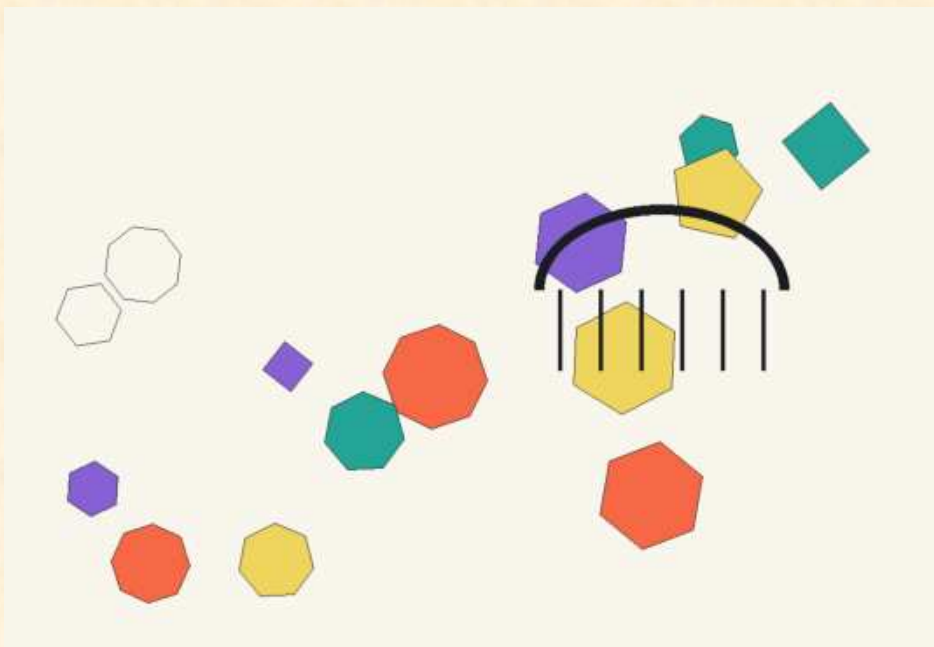


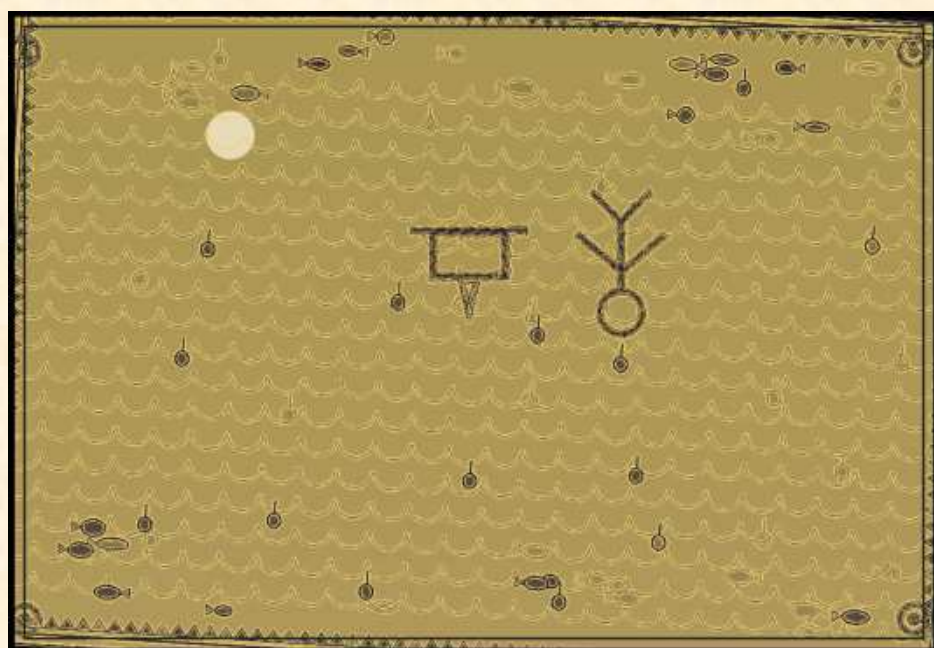


Picture 21

The sixth day came — the day when in every home the rites of Chhathi are held, and Mother Shashthi is worshipped as guardian of the newborn. In Moti Dai's courtyard too the Chhathi lamp burned — but that night the flame of that lamp trembled more than any other.

Moti Dai bathed the child one last time, put kohl on the little eyes, and sat holding the baby to her heart. No weeping, no crying out — only gazing without end at that face which tomorrow would not remain.





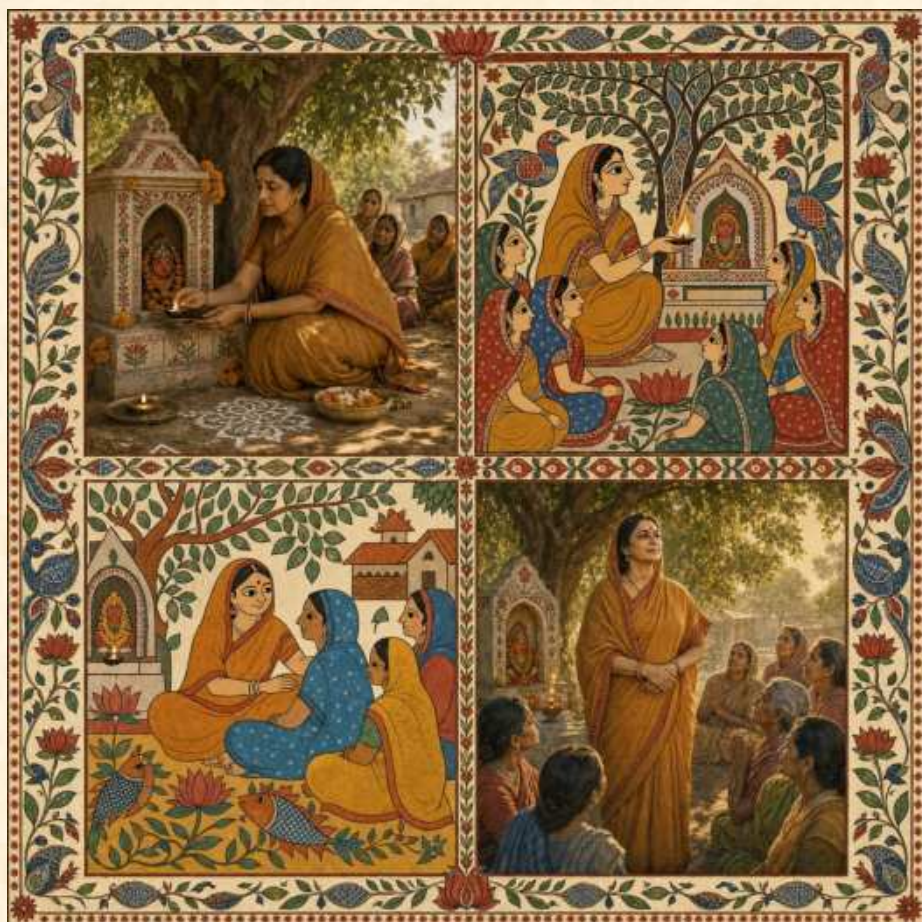


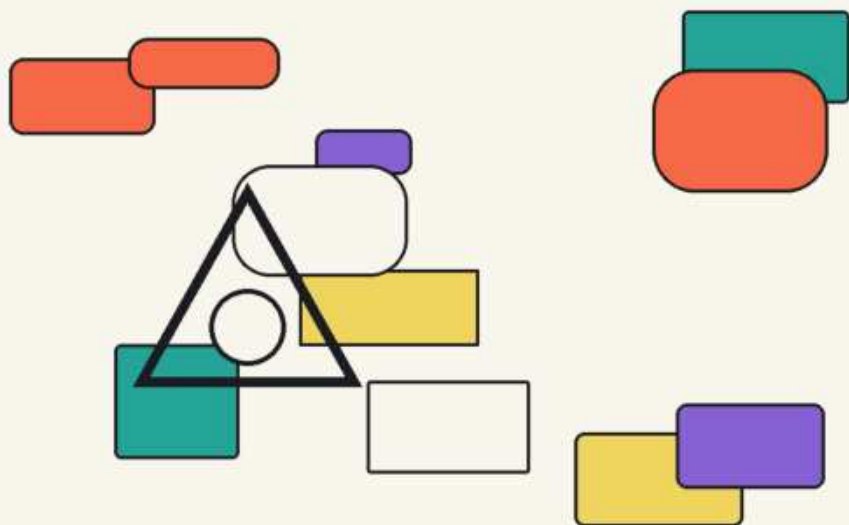
Picture 22

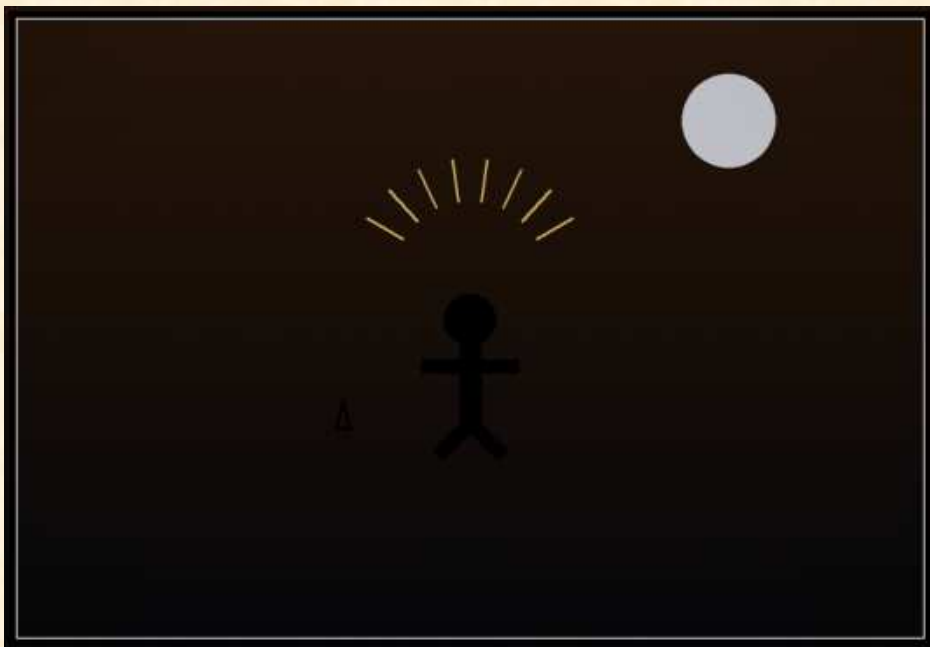
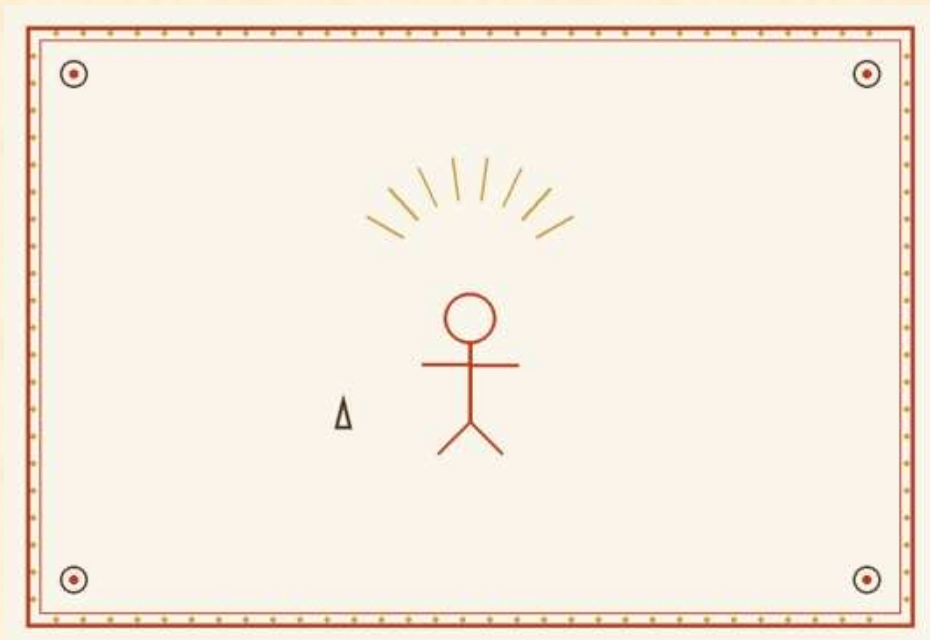
And so it happened — on the sixth day the child died. As quietly as it had come, so quietly it went — completing that single line in the book of destiny which compassion had added and fate had cut short.

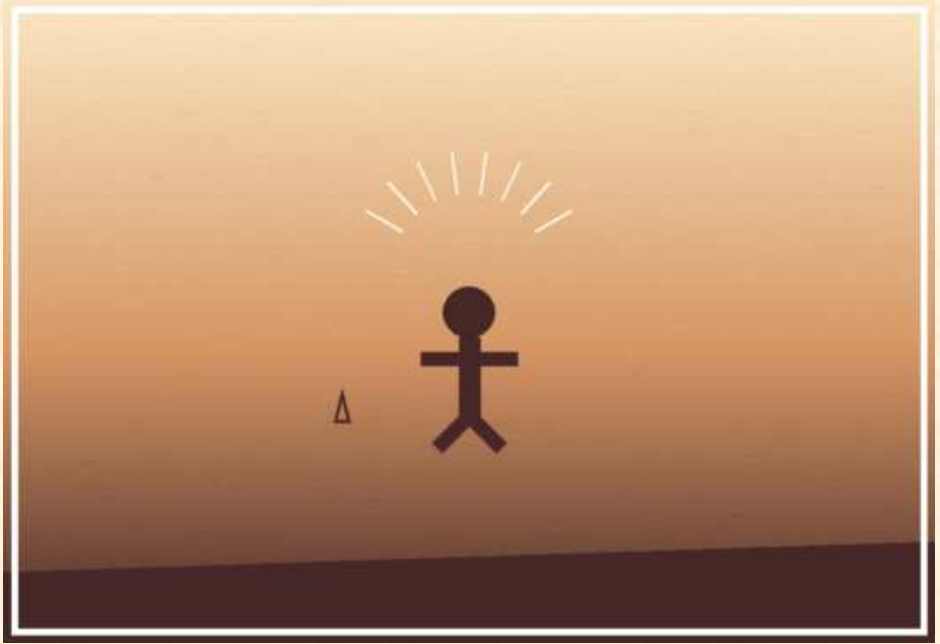
Ujaini wept that day — the whole village. But the strangest thing was this — Moti Dai's eyes that day were dry. People thought grief had turned her to stone. The truth was something else: she who had known a lifetime the sorrow of empty arms now carried the memory of arms that had been full. Both are sorrows — but they are not the same.

Chapter 12: The Vessel of the Goddess







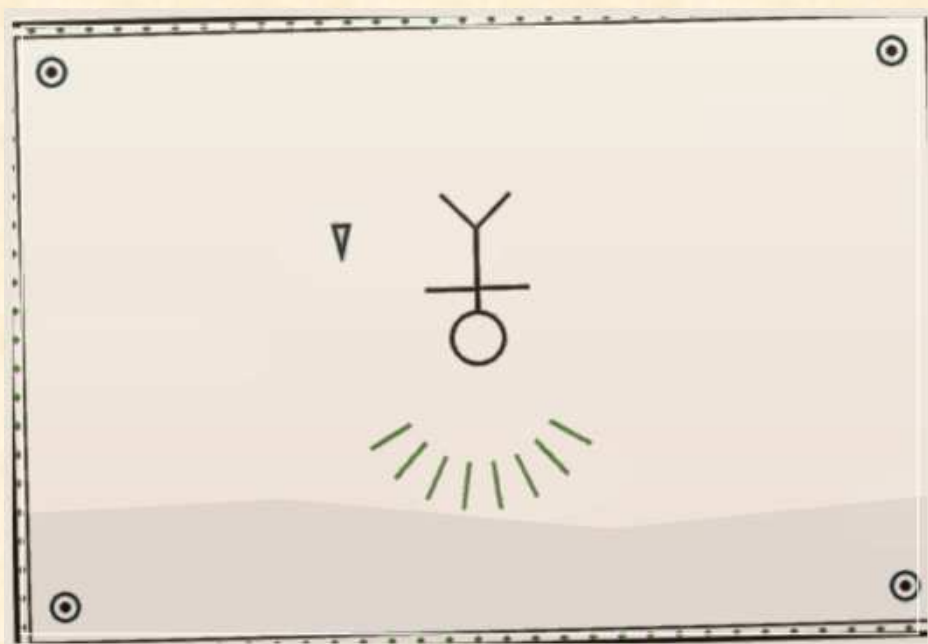


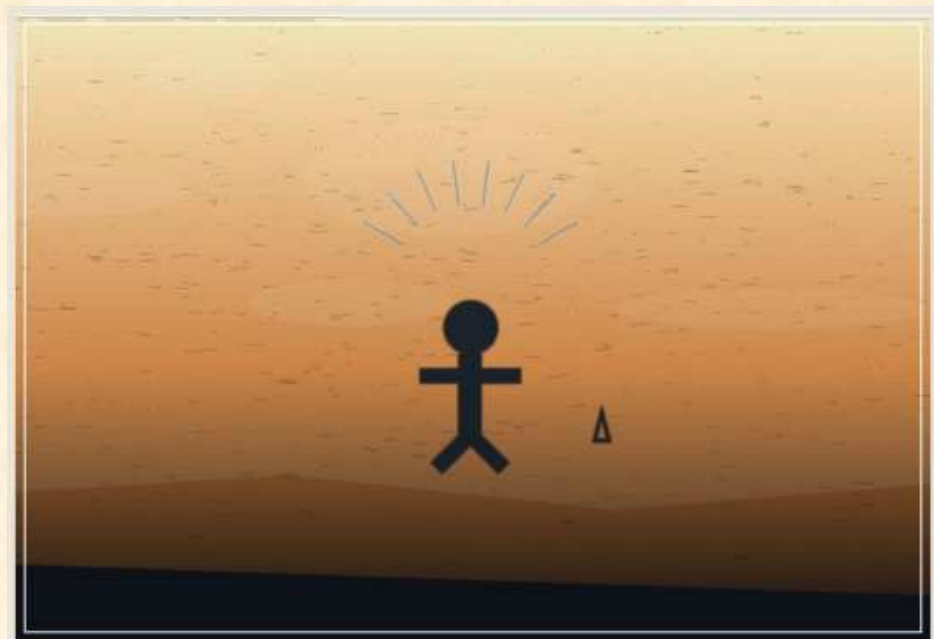
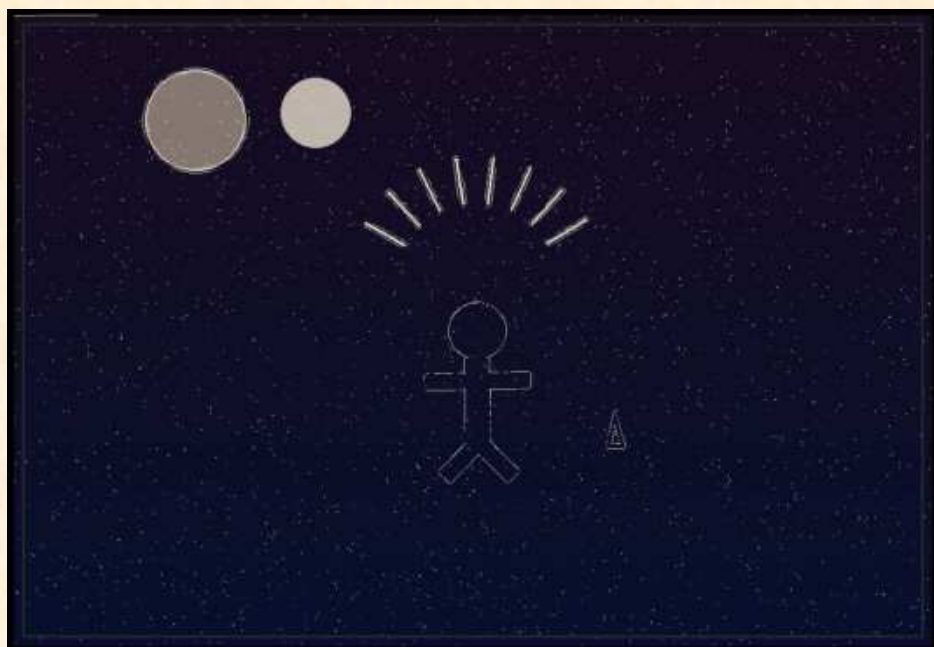
Picture 23

Yet the sorrow of being called barren was gone from her. This sentence sounds strange to hear — the child did not remain, so how did the sorrow end? But herein lies the deep heart of this tale. For Moti Dai, the joy of children had not been written — what had been written was the stain. And that stain six days of motherhood washed away forever. Now she was not 'barren Moti Dai' — she was a mother whose child was no more. To the village tongue this difference may seem small; to the heart it was as wide as sky and earth.

And Moti Dai? She returned to the shrine again — but now not only for lamps and incense. She began to hold the trance of Mother Gahil — the goddess would enter her body, and the suffering folk of the village would come to her with their empty arms, their harsh words received, their tears.







Picture 24

The woman who had once dug up the pedestal for her own answer had now become the answer for others. When sorrow pours into devotion, it becomes service — and Moti Dai was the living shrine of that truth.

In Ujaini to this day Mother Gahil is worshipped, and in that worship Moti Dai's name is spoken. People say — the Mother's greatest devotee, who sent the goddess twice to Indra's court. And whoever comes to that shrine carrying the sorrow of empty arms is told the story of Moti Dai by the old women — so that the listener may understand: what destiny does not give, devotion often gives in another form. The son of six days is gone — but the mother became immortal.

The End



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Raja Salhes

The People's King of Morang — How Magic and Justice Won



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: The First Maithili Fortnightly E-Magazine
(since 2000)

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: The King of Hearts

In Morang, Nepal, there lived a man named Salhes. He was handsome, brave, and belonged to the Dusadh community. He did not sit on a royal throne. People called him the king of their hearts, because he always helped anyone in trouble.

This story is about jealousy and justice. It tells how one landlord's envy started a big problem — and how love, magic, and truth won in the end.

Chapter 1: Dabna's Unanswered Love



Picture 1

Dabna was the king's gardener girl in Morang. She was beautiful and bright. She loved Salhes very much. But Salhes was so busy helping the people that he never noticed her.

The king's doctor also loved Dabna. But Dabna said no to him. The doctor became so sad that he died. This was the first sad turn in the story, and it led to more trouble later.



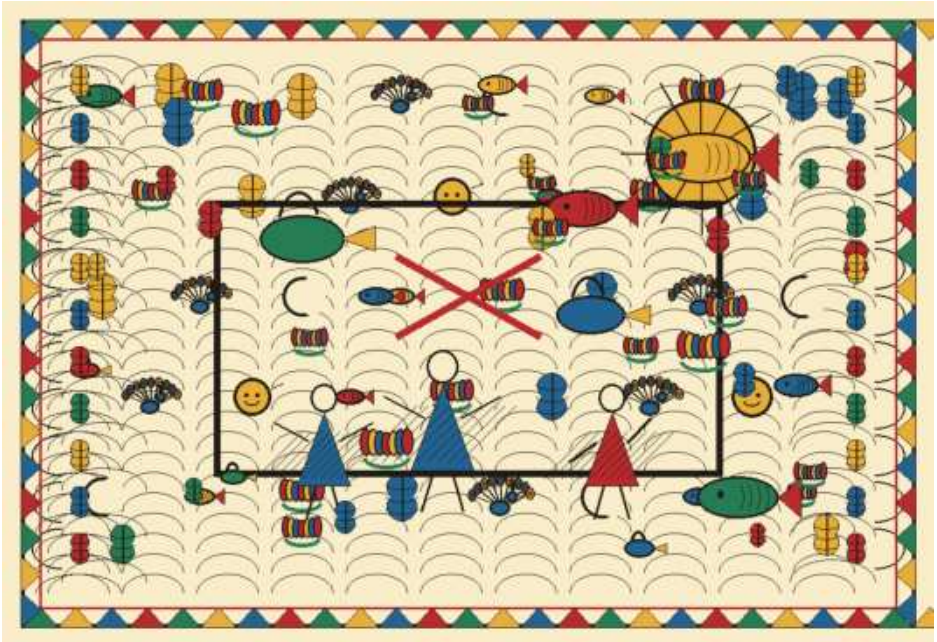


Picture 2

Dabna's heart beat only for Salhes, but she got no answer from him. Inside her heart, a deep unhappiness grew. Later, this feeling would turn into a powerful act of magic.

Salhes was a soldier who worked for the landlord of Morang, Naurangi Bahadur Thapa. Because he was simple and fair, the people already gave him the respect of a king — even though he sat on no throne.

Chapter 2: The Landlord's Jealousy



Picture 3

Everyone called Salhes "Raja," which means King. This honor came from the people's love. But landlord Thapa did not like it. A common soldier called a king? It hurt his pride.

One day in the court, Thapa asked Salhes, "What is your name?" Salhes answered simply, "My name is Raja Salhes." This made the landlord even angrier.





Picture 4

Thapa ordered, "Do not put Raja in your name." Salhes tried to explain. "This is a title the people gave me. How can I drop it? Even if I drop it, people will still say it!"

Thapa insisted, "Then stop the people from saying it!" Salhes had no good answer. "How can I stop what is in people's hearts? People will call whoever they love whatever they wish!" This fight made Salhes see that his job was no longer safe.

Chapter 3: Leaving Morang



Picture 5

Salhes left the court. He was unhappy, but he stayed calm. His cousin sister lived in Munger, and her husband worked for the Raja of Darbhanga. Salhes thought he might go there for help.

Meanwhile, a woman named Kusmi told Dabna the news: "Salhes is leaving Morang!" This shook Dabna's heart. The man she loved was going away forever.



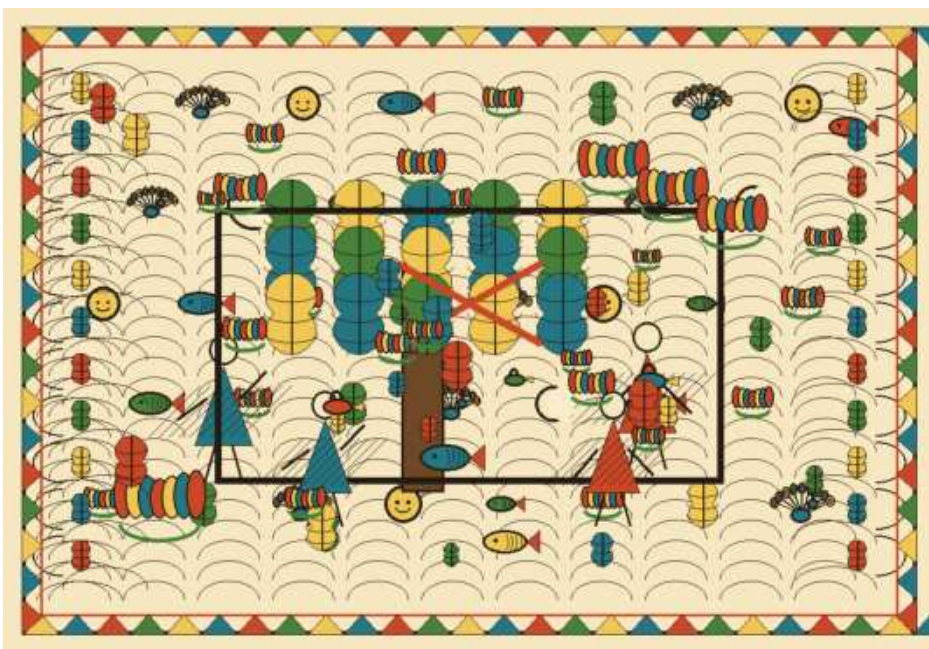


Picture 6

Dabna was no ordinary woman. She had learned magic spells from the great teachers of Kamru-Kamakhya. She knew powerful arts. This moment gave her a chance to use her knowledge.

Dabna went to Salhes and made a big promise: "I will remove Chuharmal, the chief of seven hundred soldiers in the king's court, and make you the chief instead!" This offer became the decision that changed Salhes's future.

Chapter 4: Dabna's Magic and Song



Picture 7

Dabna's words came true. A big celebration was held. Dabna began to sing from her heart: "O dear one, for twelve years I waited for you with my veil tied!" This song showed her twelve long years of waiting and the depth of her love.

But the new post that Salhes got made Chuharmal — the old chief — very angry. He planned revenge. He would steal something! Chuharmal stole the queen's necklace, worth a great deal of money, and hid it in Salhes's bedding.





Picture 8

Then Chuharmal went before the king and blamed Salhes: "Search Salhes's house!" In the search, the necklace fell from Salhes's bag. It looked like proof! Though Salhes was innocent, everyone thought he was guilty.

Dabna could not bear this injustice. She went to the Kali temple and began her special magic practice. She used the full power of her knowledge to bring out the truth.

Chapter 5: The Truth Comes Out



Picture 9

From the power of Dabna's magic, Chuhamal began to suffer a strange and terrible pain. No ordinary guilty person could bear it.

In this pain, Chuhamal confessed everything — the theft, the plot, and the whole plan to trap Salhes. Truth finally came out, thanks to Dabna's magical power.



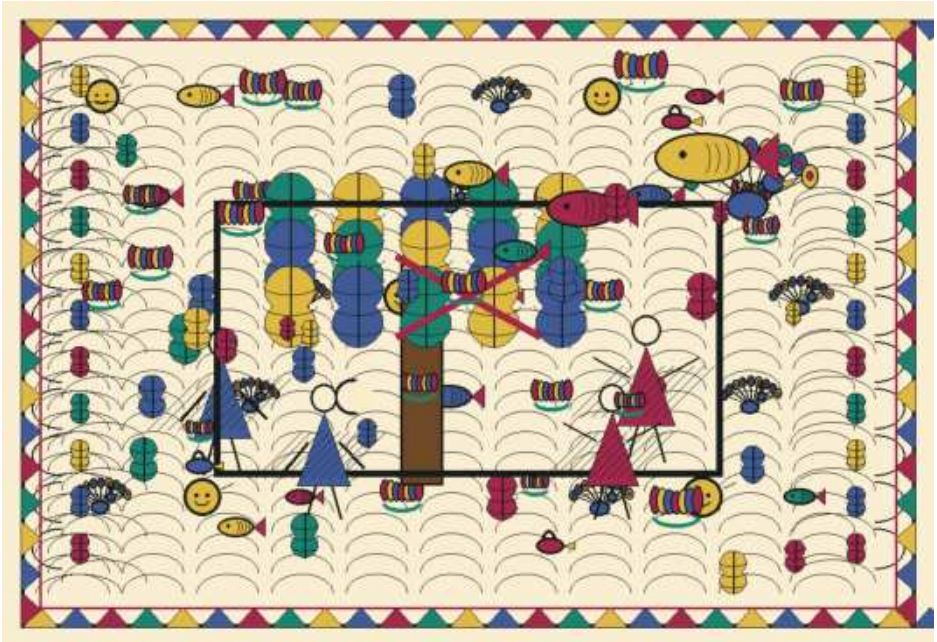


Picture 10

Salhes was freed from jail, and his rank was raised. Justice had won! Chuharmal, the plotter, was sent to jail. That was the right punishment for his crime.

This was the turning point in Salhes's life. Without Dabna's courage and magical power, it would not have been possible. The love that once seemed unanswered became the guardian of justice.

Chapter 6: Marriage and Happy Ending



Picture 11

After the truth came out and justice won, Salhes at last understood Dabna's love and sacrifice. The woman who waited twelve years for him, whose magic saved both his life and his honor, now found her true place in his heart.

Dabna and Salhes were married. The people of Morang celebrated with great joy. The Dusadh soldier who earned the title "Raja" through fairness now found a full and happy life with Dabna.





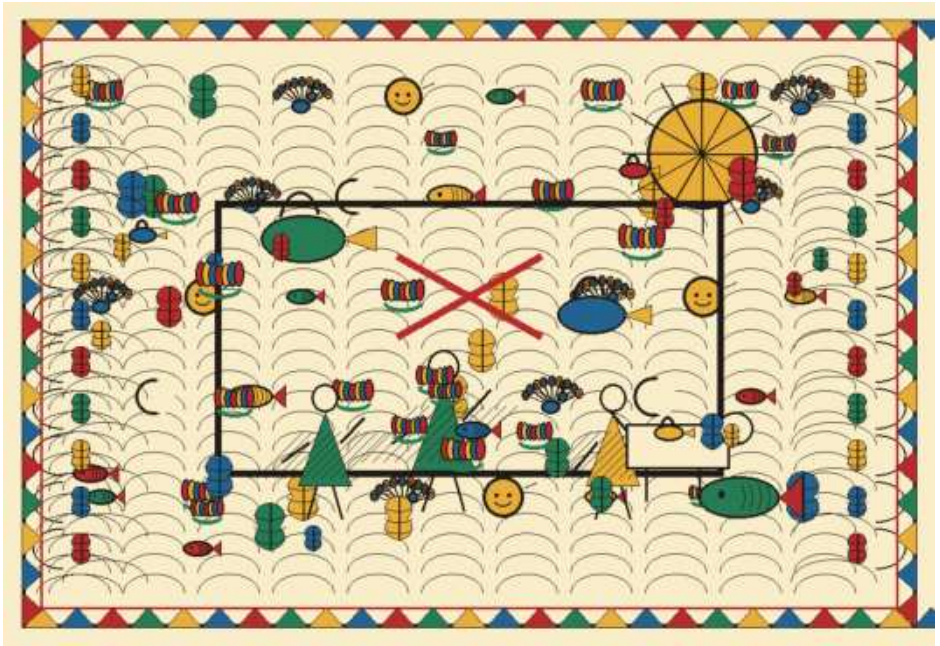
Picture 12

After their wedding they lived happily together. Even after the landlord's jealousy, Chuharmal's tricks, and the doctor's sad end, truth and love finally won.

The story of Raja Salhes is still sung today in the lands of Mithila and Morang. It is the tale of a people's king — a man who became king not from a throne, but from people's hearts. His fairness and his beloved's magic together protected the truth.

Chapter 7: The Legacy of the King of Hearts





Picture 13

The story of Raja Salhes is not just a tale in Mithila and Morang. It became a living tradition. Even today, folk singers sing Salhes songs. When people hear his name, the story of justice and love comes alive in their minds.

In the Dusadh community, Salhes became a special hero. He was a hero who crossed community lines and won the title of king from people's hearts. His victory came not by force, but by the power of justice and love.



Picture 14

And what about Dabna? Her magical power and unshaken love are still remembered in folk tales. She is remembered as a woman who turned twelve years of waiting into a tool for justice, and whose knowledge became a way to protect the truth.

Even today, when the tune of a Salhes song rises in a village square in Morang, people say: "This is that same Salhes, who was king in the heart — and who remains Raja Salhes in the heart, forever and always."

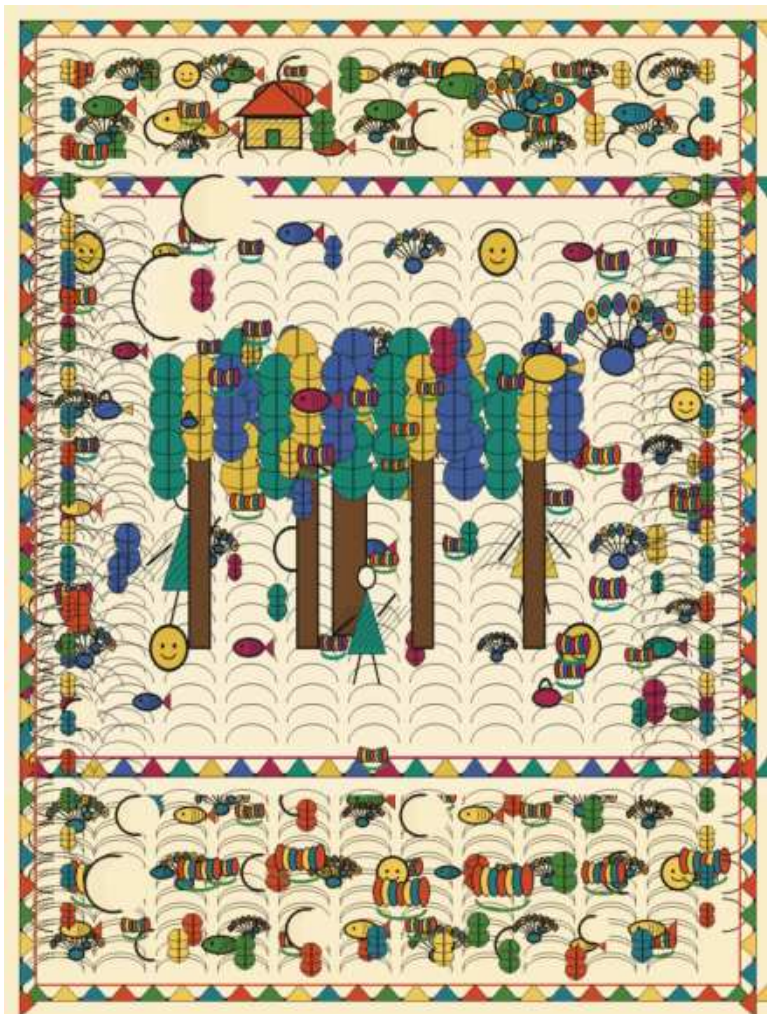
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The Bagiya* Tree

A Funny and Exciting Story of a Clever Boy
and a Wicked Witch



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: The First Maithili Fortnightly E-Magazine (since
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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: The Bagiya* Tree

This is the story of a tree that no one had ever seen or heard of — the Bagiya* Tree. Beside this tree lived a boy so clever that his wits saved him from every danger.

** Bagiya is a food item of Mithila (North-East Bihar of India and South-East Nepal), akin to idli, made of boiled rice-flour, inside which remains liquid jaggery.*

This tale is full of laughs and thrills. It is about a mother's love, a boy's bright mind, and a wicked old witch whose own tricks finally trapped her.

Chapter 1: Mother's Only Son



Picture 1

Once there lived a mother who had only one son. He was bright, quick, and very clever. Their home was poor, but the love between mother and son was endless.

One day, Mother brought her boy some Bagiya. He loved them at once — such a lovely taste, such a fine shape! His heart was full of joy.



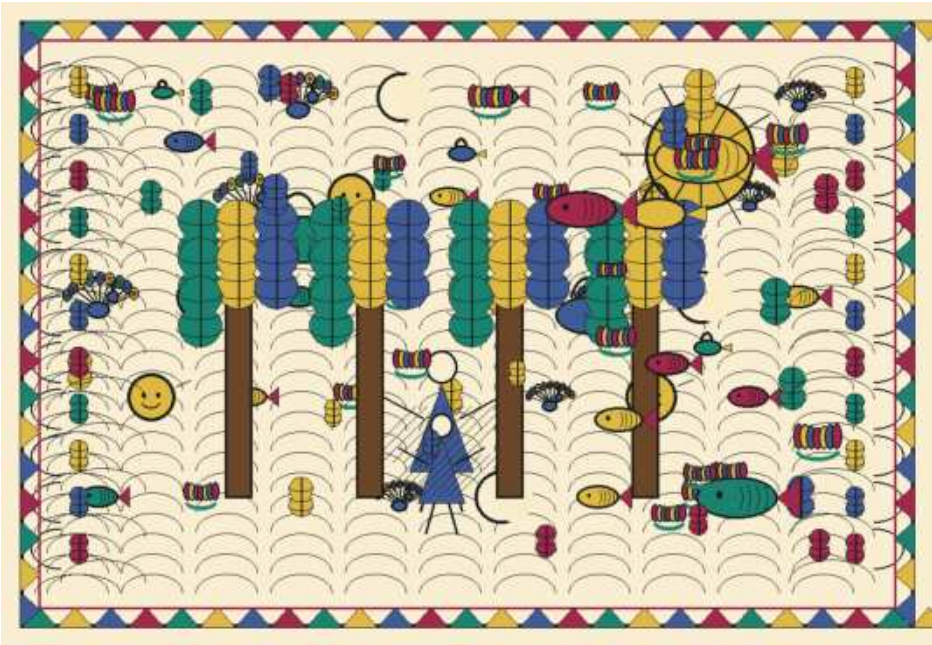
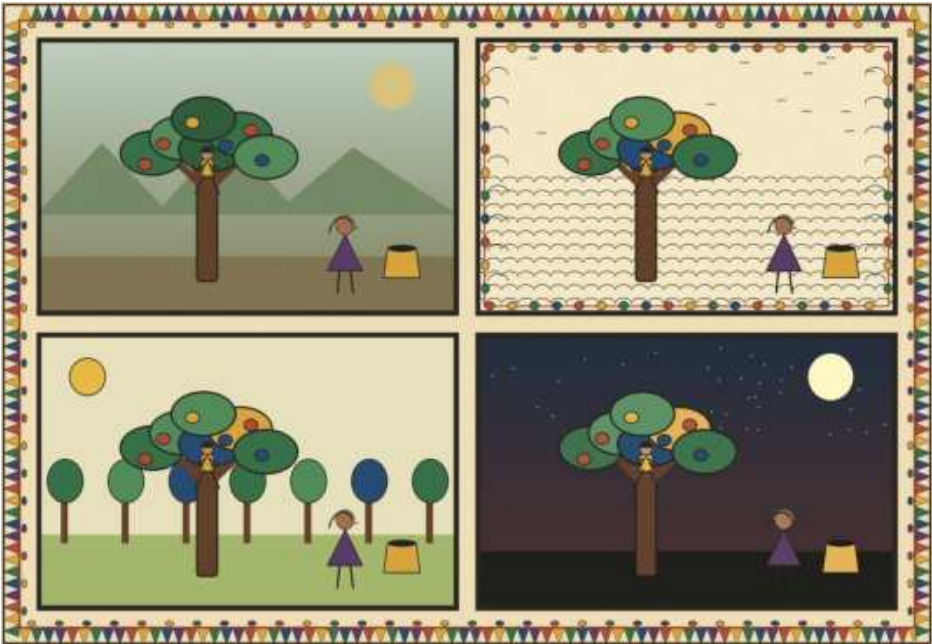


Picture 2

The boy planted one Bagiya in their little garden. He did not know what magic it would bring. In a few days a tree grew there — a Bagiya Tree! No one had ever seen or heard of such a thing.

Mother and son cared for the wonderful tree with love. They watered it, cleaned the soil, and watched it grow. Soon the tree was heavy with Bagiya. Every day the boy climbed up, picked them, and ate them. It became his favourite thing to do.

Chapter 2: The Witch's Eye

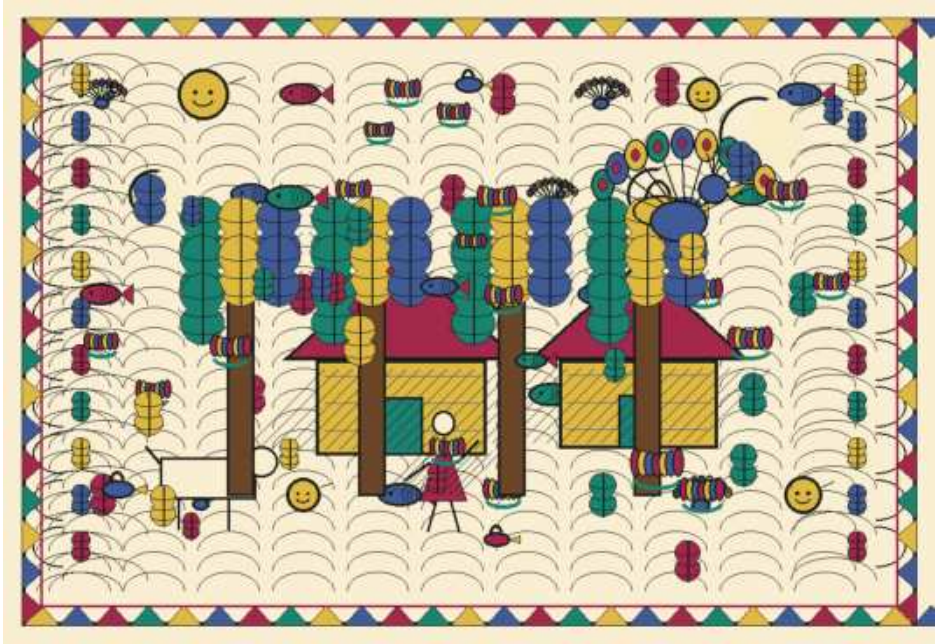


Picture 3

One day a wicked old witch walked down that road. She was no ordinary old woman. She liked to eat people, and she was always looking for her next meal.

When she saw the healthy boy up in the Bagiya Tree, her mouth watered. "What a fine, strong boy!" she thought. "I will take him home and cook him!" Greed shone in her eyes.





Picture 4

At once she made a plan. How could she trick the boy into her big sack? She crept closer, full of sly ideas.

In a sweet voice she called, "Dear child, won't you give me one Bagiya? I am so very hungry." Her voice was so gentle that any trusting child might believe her.

Chapter 3: Three Excuses



Picture 5

The kind boy — who suspected nothing — began to hand her a Bagiya. But the witch made an excuse at once. "Dear child, how can I take it in my hand? It will make my hand smell!"

So the boy tried to place the Bagiya on her head. The witch made another excuse. "No, no! Don't put it on my head. It will make my head smell!" Behind every excuse was one plan: to bring the boy close.





Picture 6

Then the clever boy — who was wiser than ten wise people — tried to put the Bagiya in the fold of her sari. The witch made a third excuse. "What are you doing, dear child? It will make my clothes smell. Bend down and put it in my sack!"

But the boy came from a line of clever people. He understood at once. "No, old woman! You will shut me in the sack and run away. Mother told me to watch out for tricks!" The boy's care was wonderful — but the witch's tricks were deeper still.

Chapter 4: Tied in the Sack



Picture 7

The witch — a master of sweet talk — soon talked the boy into trusting her again. Soft words, promises of friendship, and at last the boy bent down.

The moment he bent, the witch swiftly pushed him into the sack and tied it tight. In one careless second, the clever boy was caught. The witch went away happy, carrying her prize.





Picture 8

On the road she grew tired. She sat under a tree and set the sack beside her. Soon sleep closed her eyes.

The boy inside the sack never lost hope. When he saw his chance, he wriggled free. His clever mind was awake again, and he watched for every chance to escape.

Chapter 5: Mud and Stones

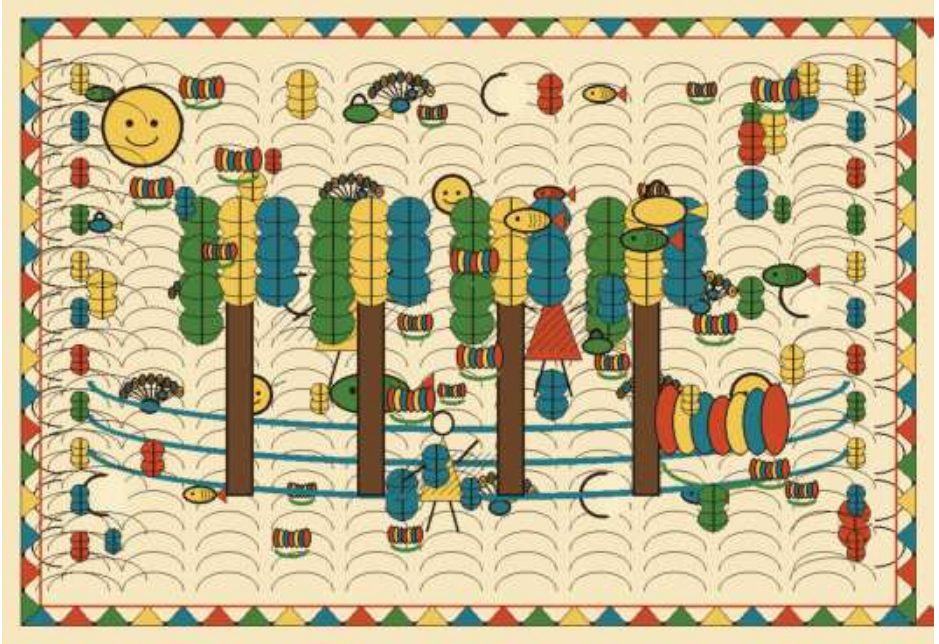


Picture 9

Once outside, the boy looked all around. What could he do so the witch would be fooled? His eyes fell on wet mud, stones, and thorns.

Quickly and cleverly, he filled the sack with wet mud, stones, and thorns — just as heavy as he was. Then he tied the sack the way it had been and ran home as fast as he could.



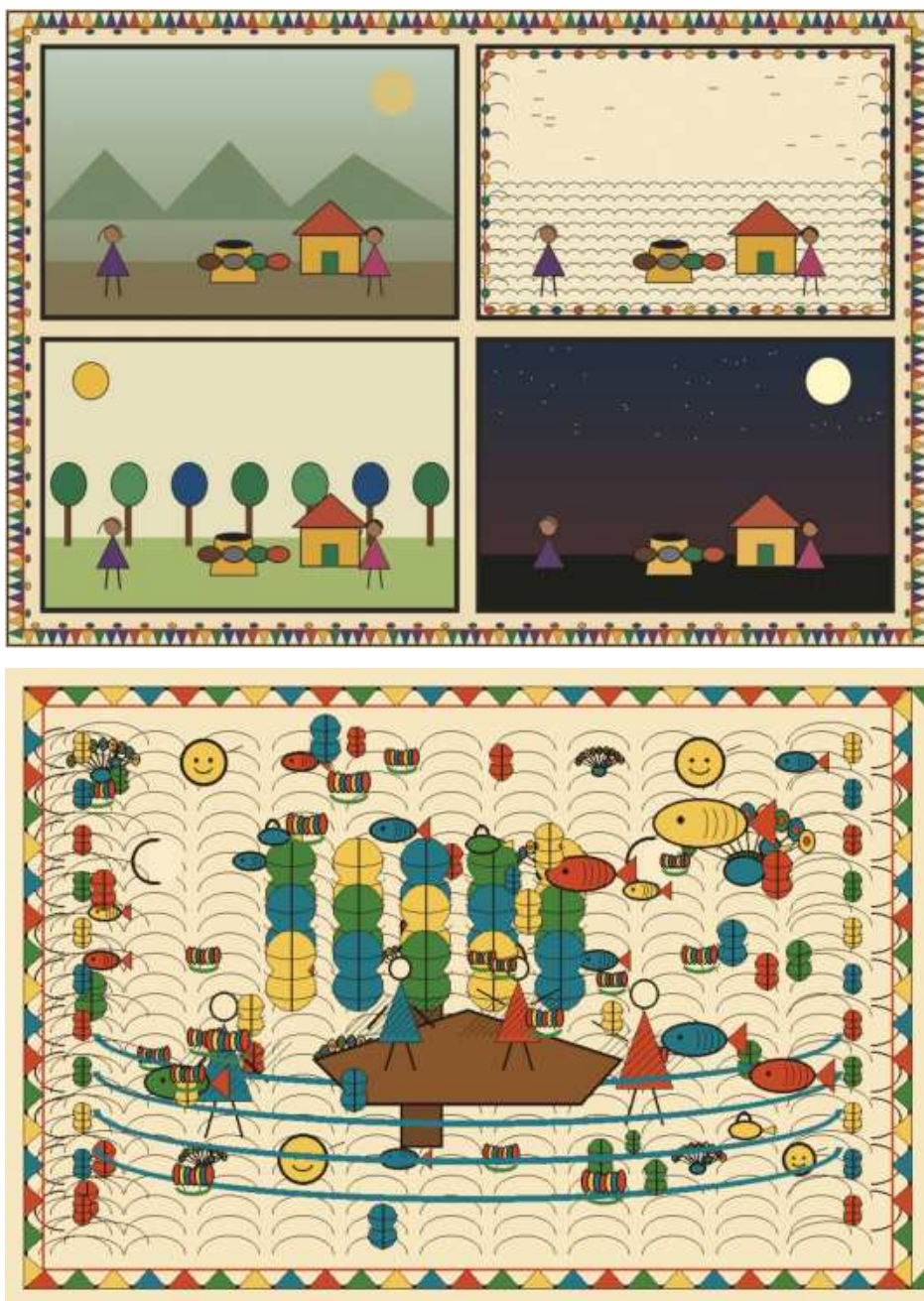


Picture 10

When the witch woke up and lifted the sack, it felt heavy. She smiled to herself. "At last I will have a fine, fat meal!"

Along the way, water dripped from the wet mud. The witch thought the boy was wetting himself. She laughed and said, "Are you making water on my head, little one? Never mind! At home I will cook you into a tasty meal!" How funny — the witch knew nothing, and the boy had already won!

Chapter 6: Fooled on the Way Home



Picture 11

A little later the thorns began to prick her. She spoke again to what she thought was the boy — but was only mud and stones. "Dear child, are you pinching me? Never mind. Pinch as long as you like!"

The witch had a daughter. When they reached the village, she told her excitedly, "Today there is a fat prize in the sack! Get ready!"





Picture 12

Mother and daughter opened the sack with eager hands — and out fell mud, thorns, and stones. No boy at all! Their whole plan fell to pieces. The witch's face turned red with anger and shame.

But the witch would not give up. "Never mind," she said. She changed her look and went back to the Bagiya Tree, ready to try again.

Chapter 7: The Second Try

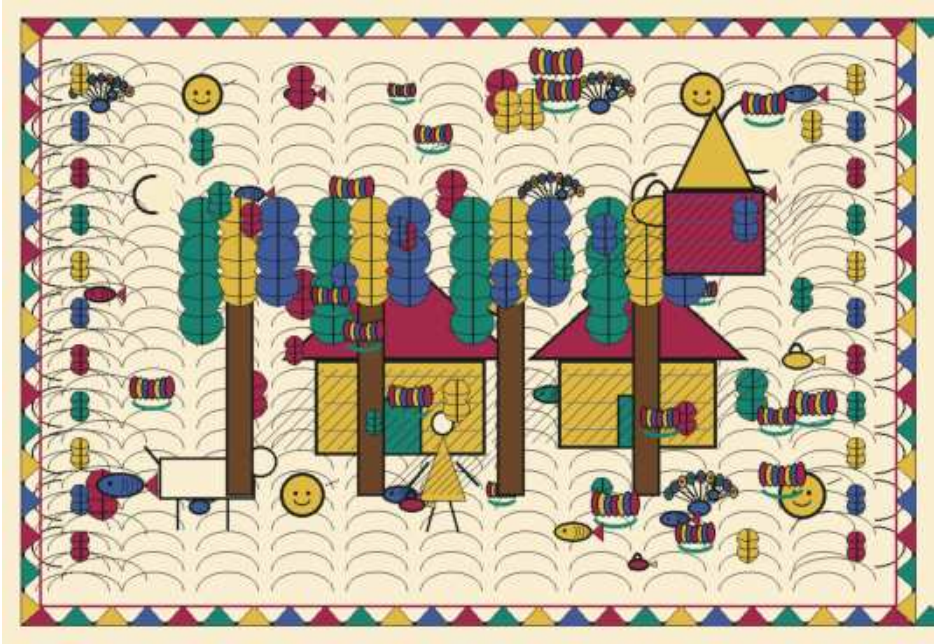


Picture 13

This time the boy did not know her — her disguise was so good. But when she asked him to bend and put a Bagiya in her sack, he felt afraid. He remembered what had happened before.

"Go away, old woman! You are that tricky witch!" the boy said bravely. But the witch swore a great oath. "No, dear child, I am not a witch!" Her lie sounded so true that the boy believed her again.





Picture 14

He bent down to put the Bagiya in the sack — and the old trick worked once more. This time the witch took no chances. She did not stop on the road. She went straight home.

She left the sack with her daughter and hurried off to bathe. She would not miss her chance this time.

Chapter 8: The Secret of Long Hair

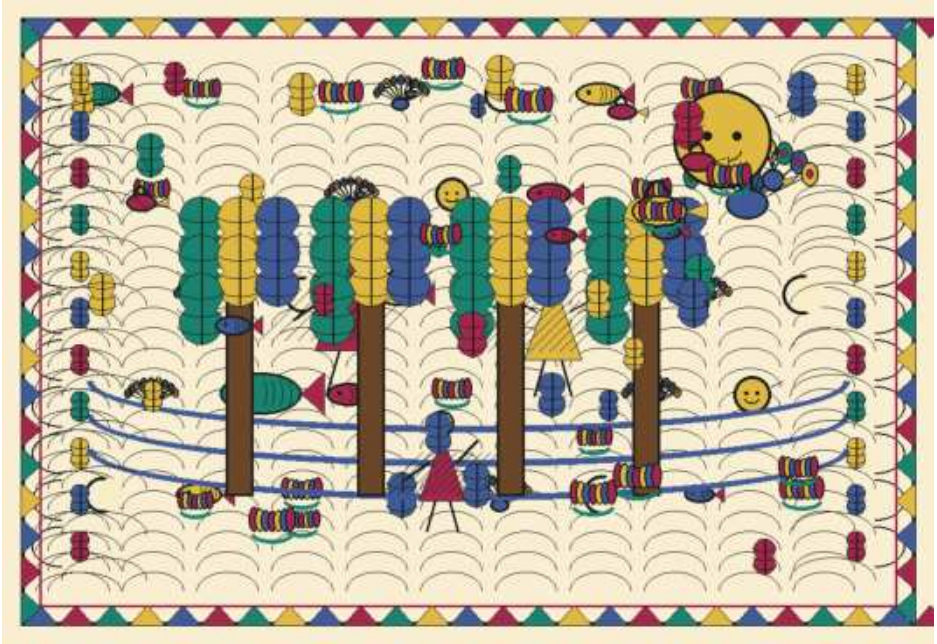


Picture 15

The daughter opened the sack with great excitement. Out came not mud and stones, but a boy with long, thick hair! She stared and asked, "Why isn't my hair as long as yours?"

The boy — now playing his cleverest game — answered at once. "Because your mother never put your head in the big wooden bowl and gently brushed it with the long stick! That's why!" It was the answer of a very sharp child.





Picture 16

The witch's daughter was simple and did not know better. She believed the silly story. Wanting long hair of her own, she put her head in the big wooden bowl and told the boy he could "brush" it with the stick.

The boy used that moment to save himself. This story will not tell the dark details of what happened next. It is enough to say that the clever boy escaped, and the witch's daughter fell for his trick.

Chapter 9: The Cat's Warning



Picture 17

When the witch came back from bathing in the pond, her daughter — who was no longer herself, but part of the boy's clever plan — set food before her. She did not understand what that food really was.

As the witch sat down to eat, a cat nearby cried out, "Meow! You are eating your own daughter! Meow!" The animal's warning told the truth that human eyes could not yet see.



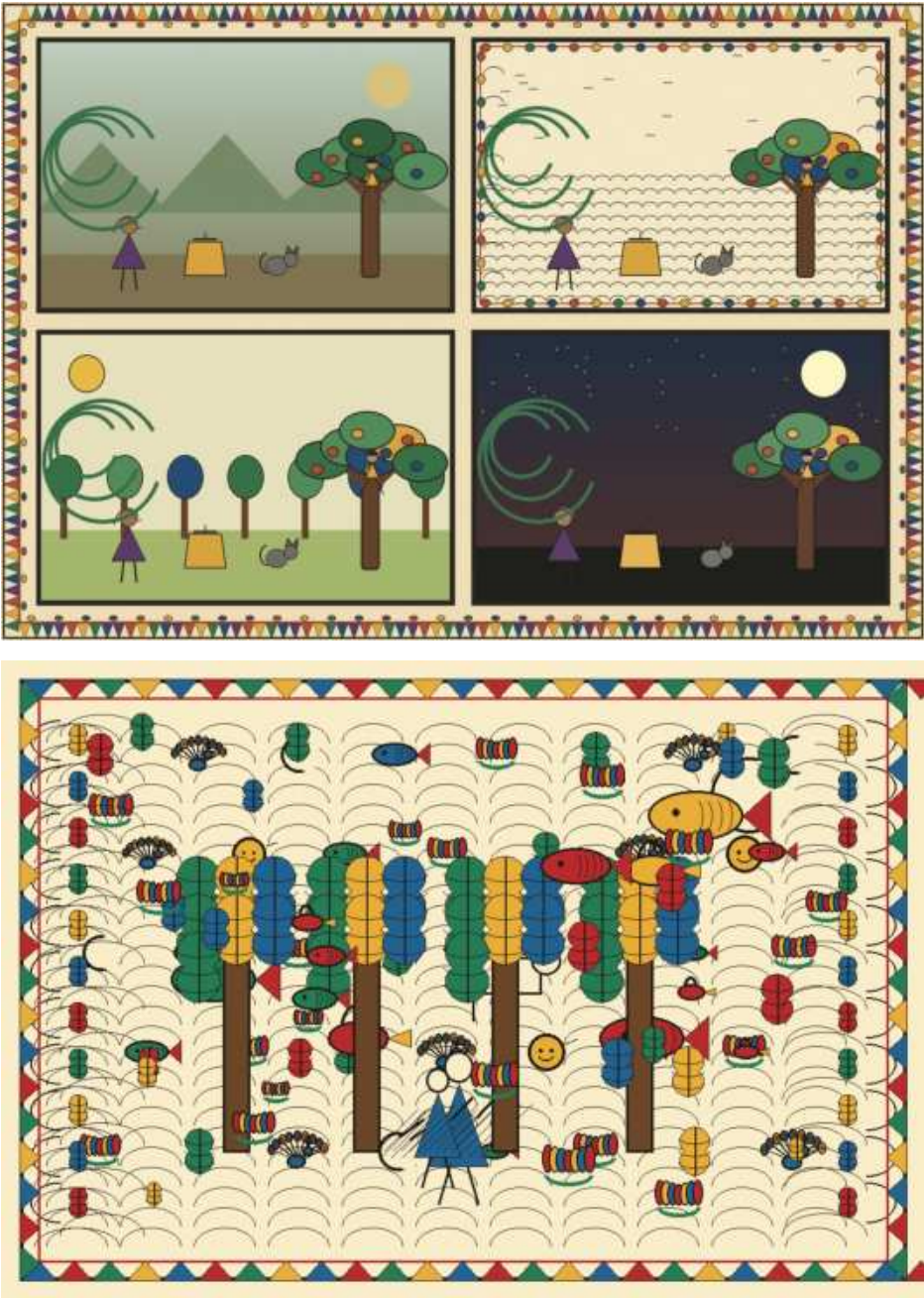


Picture 18

The witch was surprised. "Daughter, didn't you give the cat some meat? That is why it is crying." The girl put meat before the cat, but the cat would not touch it. The animal's wise heart knew more than people did.

Now the witch's head spun with doubt and anger. She questioned her daughter, and the truth slowly came out — but it was already too late.

Chapter 10: What the Witch Deserved



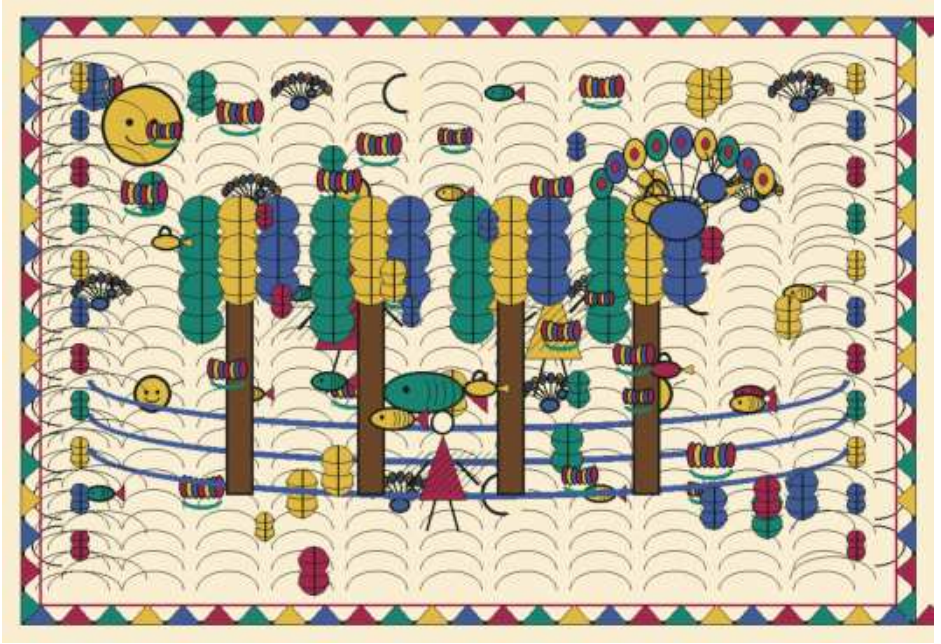
Picture 19

When the witch understood the whole truth — that the boy had fooled her again, and that something terrible had happened to her daughter — her anger knew no bounds.

She called to her daughter once more. But this time the answer came in the boy's voice, and he held the stick. This was the moment when the witch fell into her own trap.

The wicked plan she had made against the boy fell back upon her own family.





Picture 20

This story will not describe that sad ending in detail. It only says this: the witch's own bad deeds came back to her. She had longed to eat the boy, and she paid a heavy price — for herself and for her daughter. Fate's justice was hard, but fair.

And the boy? He went straight back to his Bagiya Tree. He climbed up, free and happy, and ate Bagiya just as before. They tasted so good! He had passed through every danger and every trick. Now he returned to his simple, sweet life. And so ends this tale of cleverness and courage — right

where it began: with a tree, some Bagiya, and one brave boy.

The End

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Bahura Godhin and Natua Dayal

A Tale of Dance and Magic by the Banks of the Kamala and
Balan Rivers



Gajendra Thakur

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**Editor, Videha: The First Maithili Fortnightly E-
Magazine (since 2000)**

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Beginning: By the Kamala and Balan Rivers

Where the Kamala and Balan rivers meet, there lives a wonderful story. It is full of dance and magic, love and anger, and at the end, a great sacrifice. On one side was Bahura Godhin — a fisher girl who was bold and strong. She had learned powerful magic from far-away Kamrup. On the other side was Natua Dayal — a prince of Bharoud in the kingdom of Mithila. He came to learn dance and slowly became a master of magic too.

This story twists and turns like the rivers themselves. It tells of the prince's hard practice, of Bahura's fierce temper, and of a sacrifice that people still talk about on rainy nights by the river banks.

Chapter 1: Bahura Godhin and Natua

Dayal





Picture 1

By the Kamala and Balan rivers, in the land of Bakhri-Begusarai, lived Bahura Godhin. She was a fisher's daughter, a dancer, and a woman who knew magic. She was brave and bold. Her magic, learned from Kamrup, was very strong.

In the kingdom of Mithila there was a prince named Dulra Dayal of Bharoud. He loved dance so much that he came to Bahura to learn. After he learned from her, everyone began to call him "Natua" — Natua Dayal, the dancing prince.



Picture 2

Natua Dayal admired Bahura Godhin — but not only for her art. He had fallen in love with Bahura's daughter. That love became the heart of this whole story.

Natua Dayal himself became a master of magic while he practiced dance. His teacher was Mangal — a wise and holy man with amazing powers. Mangal could hang his clothes in the sky to dry without any rope or peg!

Chapter 2: Bahura's Power and Anger



Picture 3

Bahura Godhin's power was amazing. She could make trees walk when she called them! If anyone fought with her, she could turn that person into a parrot and keep it in her cage. Because of her temper and her magic, people were afraid of her.

Bahura lived by the Kamala river and sang songs of prayer: "Kamala is my seat, and there I live, O Mother Kamala." Her love and her power were both given to Mother Kamala.





Picture 4

Bahura had learned magic in hard and strange ways. She could be loving and kind, but she could also be very fierce when she was angry.

When Natua Dayal — who was also a prince — asked to marry Bahura's daughter, Bahura could not easily say no. It is hard to refuse a prince. But when the wedding party reached her door, some harsh words were spoken. Bahura grew so angry that she used her magic and turned everyone into little lamps!

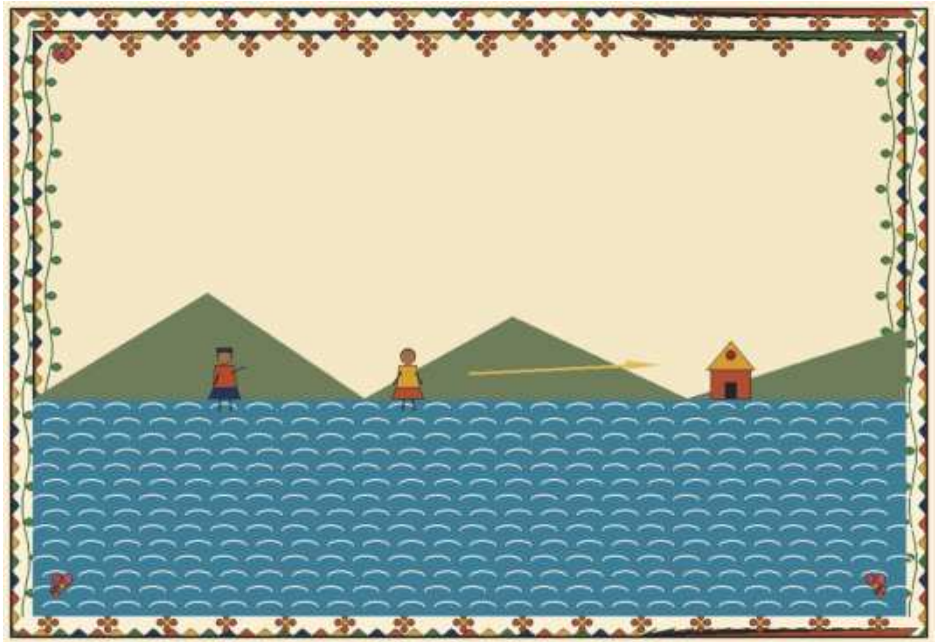
Chapter 3: The Trader's Wicked Plan



Picture 5

In that terrible moment, Minister Mall lost the light of one eye — Bahura's magic had hurt even an innocent man. "Ahi re ba!" — those words of pain echo again and again in this story, showing how deep the sorrow was.

Behind all this trouble was a wicked plan. A trader named Jaisingh wanted Bahura's daughter for himself. His tricks made everything go wrong. Selfishness and greed often stand in the way of truth and love.





Picture 6

"Ahi re ba!" — once more the cry of pain rang out. Things had grown even worse. The only way out was deeper magic and greater skill.

Natua Dayal went to his teacher Mangal to find a way. The teacher's order was clear: "Go to Kamakhya. Learn the six sacred dances and more magic." That order sent Natua on a new and difficult path.

Chapter 4: Learning Magic at Kamakhya





Picture 7

Natua Dayal went to Kamakhya — a famous place of magic. There, in the temple of Chandika, he learned the six sacred dances from wise women called yoginis. These were heavenly dances, far more powerful than ordinary ones.

Then he was told to learn one more part of the six dances from Bhuvan Mohini of Sarraiya village. Step by step, Natua's training grew deeper. At every stage he gained new knowledge and power.



Picture 8

In Sarraiya village lived a powerful goddess named Vageshwari — but that place was very frightening. Dark spirits came there! Still, Natua was brave and went forward.

In that scary place Natua learned two great sacred dances called "Anhad" and "Ajna Chakra." These were among the highest forms of magic dance. His teacher also whispered a special charm into the prince's ear — a charm that could break black magic and keep him safe.

Chapter 5: The Dry River



Picture 9

When his training was complete, Natua Dayal came back to the Kamala and Balan rivers. He wanted to finish what he had started — to keep his love and do his duty. But Bahura was still angry. She dried up all the water in the Kamala river!

The king — Natua's father — learned of this through secret spies from Jukiya and had Bahura caught. But clever Bahura blamed the prince instead. "Even after the holy fire, no water came to the Kamala," she said. "Did Natua send all the water down under the earth?"





Picture 10

That was a serious charge — blaming the prince for sending the river's water under the ground! The mix-up of truth and lies put Natua in danger again, even though he had done no wrong.

Natua was brought before everyone under the charge. But with the power of his dance he filled the Kamala with water again — proving he was innocent. Even in that moment of victory, Natua asked Bahura to forgive him. That kindness and humility were a special part of who he was.

Chapter 6: Getting Ready for the Wedding





Picture 11

Bahura saw both Natua's kindness and his power, and her heart softened. She said, "Now you are truly worthy of my daughter! Come with the wedding party." At last Bahura agreed to the marriage.

Natua arrived with the wedding party, full of joy. Three betel leaves were offered — a sign of good wishes. One was for water to return to the Kamala, one was to ask Bahura's pardon, and one was to marry her daughter.



Picture 12

Those three leaves stood for three victories — over nature, over anger, and for love. Natua picked up all three leaves, and songs and music began. It was a happy wedding moment.

But in the middle of the celebration something small happened. Natua felt thirsty and sent his student Jhilmil to the well for water. That little thing later led to a great sorrow.

Chapter 7: The Secret of the Rope



Picture 13

Jhilmil went to the well to draw water, but the rope was too short. It could not reach the water. It seemed like a small problem, yet some hidden power was at work.

So Natua himself went to the well. That choice changed the next turn of the story. When Natua went, the rope grew long by itself — as if an unseen hand was guiding everything.



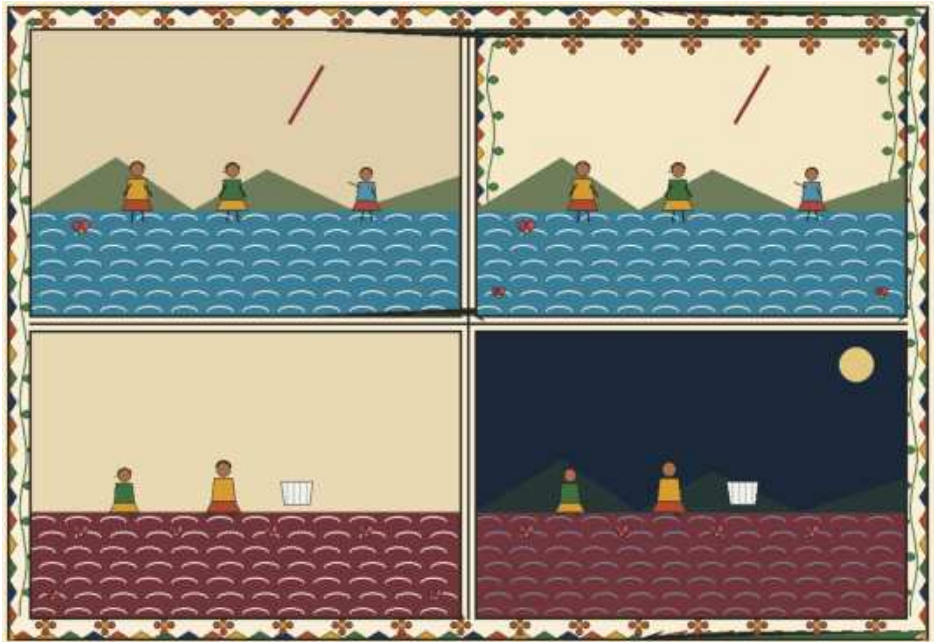


Picture 14

Meanwhile Phulmati — Natua's first wife — was there too, happy to see her husband's great skill.

Bahura did one more kind thing. She healed Minister Mall's eye, which her magic had hurt before. This was her way of making up for her earlier anger. It showed that Bahura had a kind heart — she only became fierce when she lost her temper.

Chapter 8: The Wedding by the Kamala River





Picture 15

Natua reached the bank of the Kamala river with Bahura's daughter for the last wedding rites. Everything seemed bright and happy.

But just then — "Ahi re ba!" — the cry of trouble rang out again. Natua was stabbed — hurt by his own student, far from Bahura! That moment of betrayal is the saddest turn in the whole story.

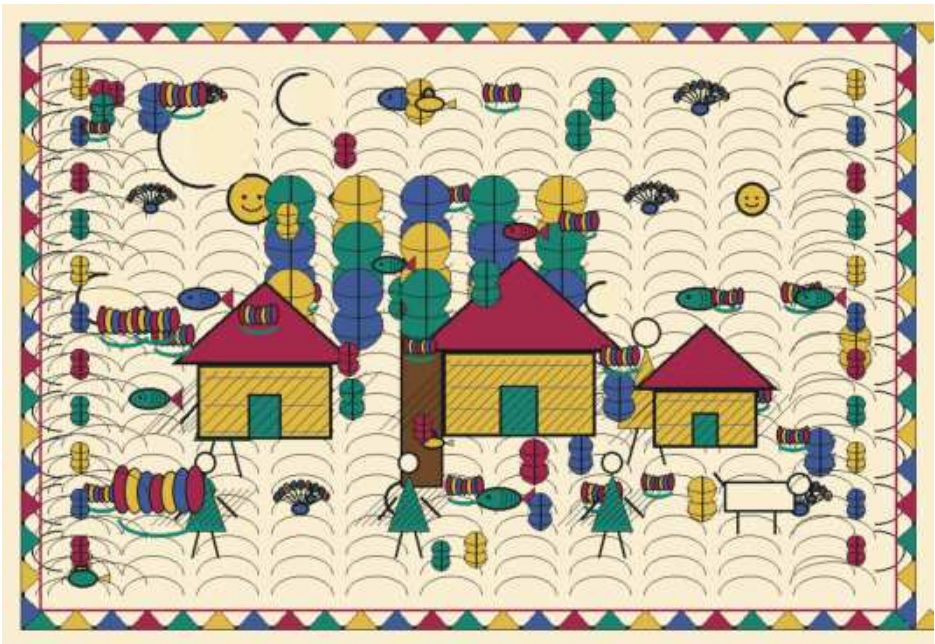
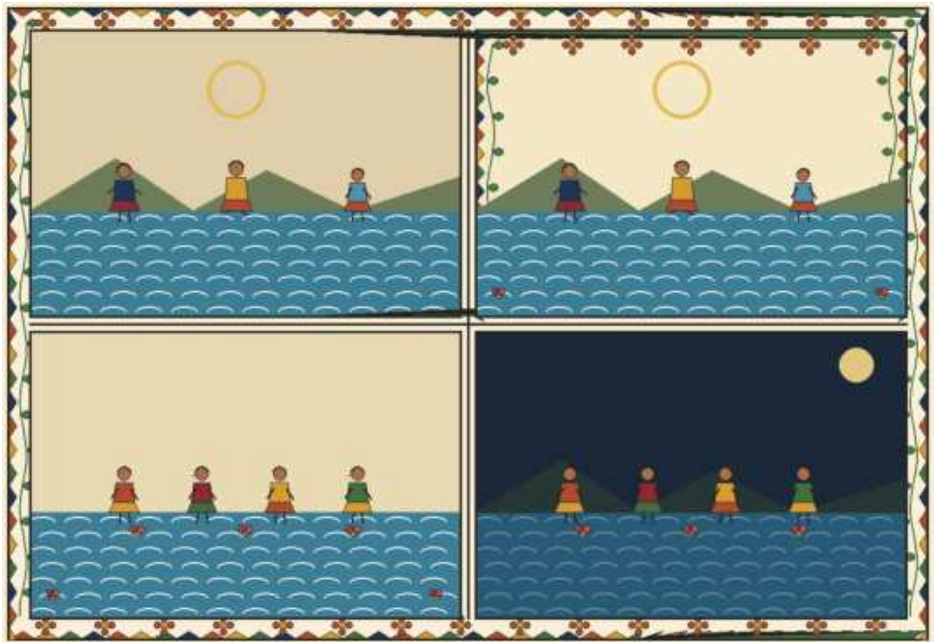


Picture 16

Even though he was wounded, Natua finished his last duty. He offered a special cloth as a gift to Mother Kamala. Even at the door of death he kept his faith and his promise. That was truly wonderful.

The waters of the Kamala turned red with his blood, witnessing Natua's sacrifice. The sight was both sad and terrible — the highest sign of love and giving.

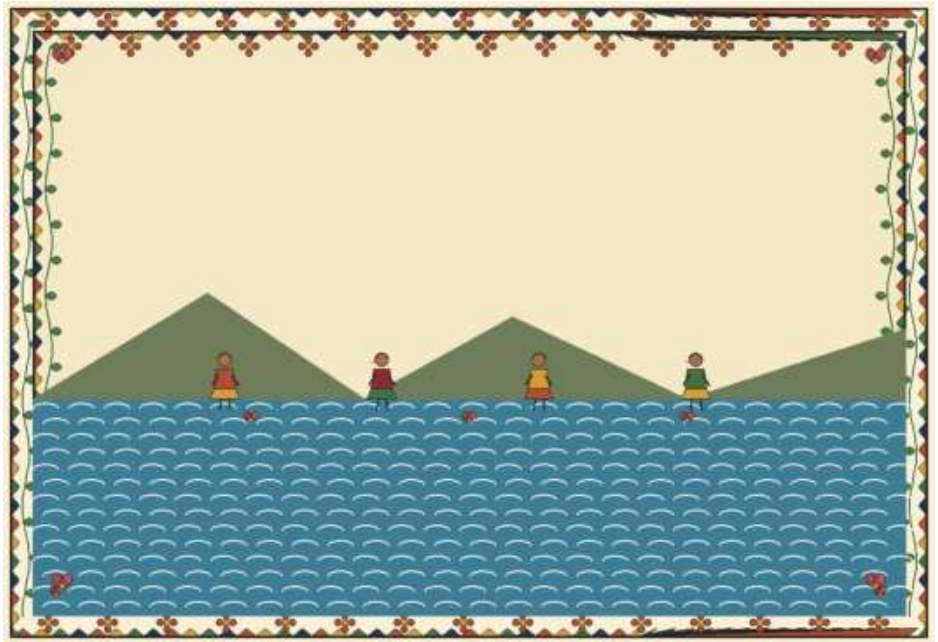
Chapter 9: The Sorceress of Kamakhya



Picture 17

But the story did not end there. A sorceress from Kamakhya — linked to Natua's teacher's line, a being of divine power — came and brought Natua back to life. From death to life again — the greatest show of magic power.

But this return to life had a heavy price. The sorceress offered the enemy as a sacrifice to the Kamala. The cycle of wrong and payback — the betrayer paid for betrayal — gave the story a hard kind of justice.





Picture 18

So the tale leaves behind a rich mix of love and revenge, dance and magic, sacrifice and new life. It is not a simple happy ending, but an ending where justice finds its own way.

Even today, people by the Kamala and Balan rivers tell this story — of Bahura Godhin's power, of Natua Dayal's training and sacrifice, and of the final justice of the sorceress of Kamakhya. This joining of magic and love has become a precious treasure of the folk tales of Mithila.

The End

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Chuharmal and Reshma

The Immortal Love Story of Mokama Ghat



Gajendra Thakur

Chuharmal and Reshma

The Immortal Love Story of Mokama Ghat

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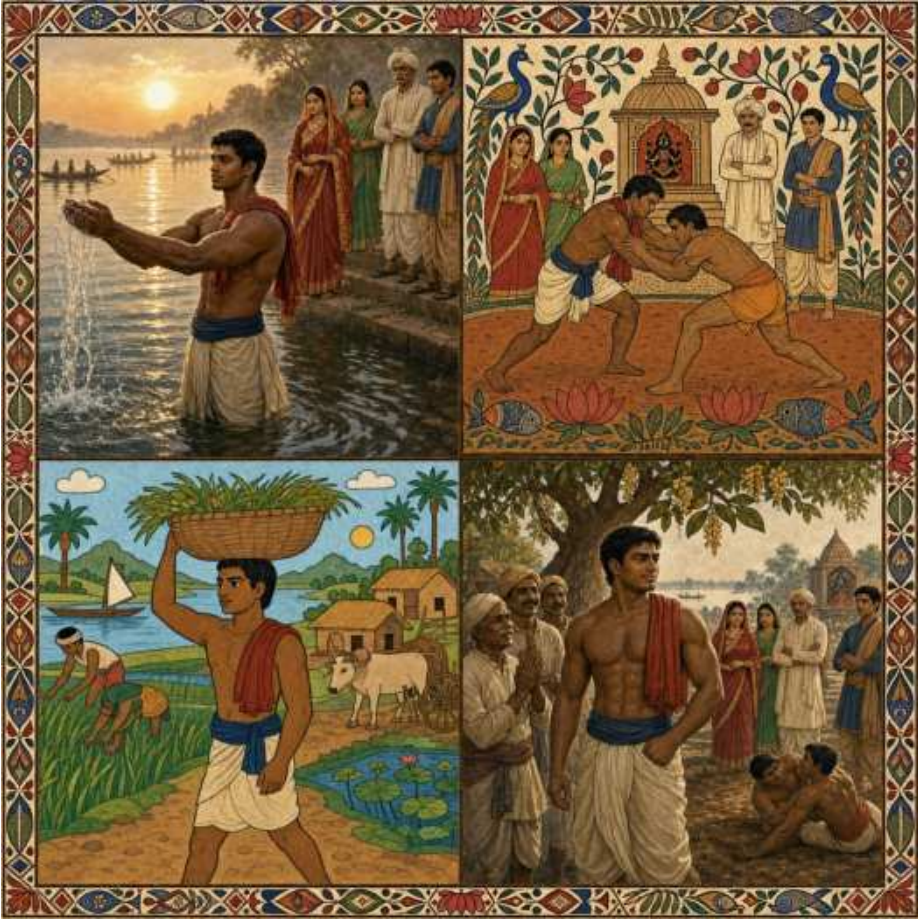
Designed by Aum Gajendra Thakur

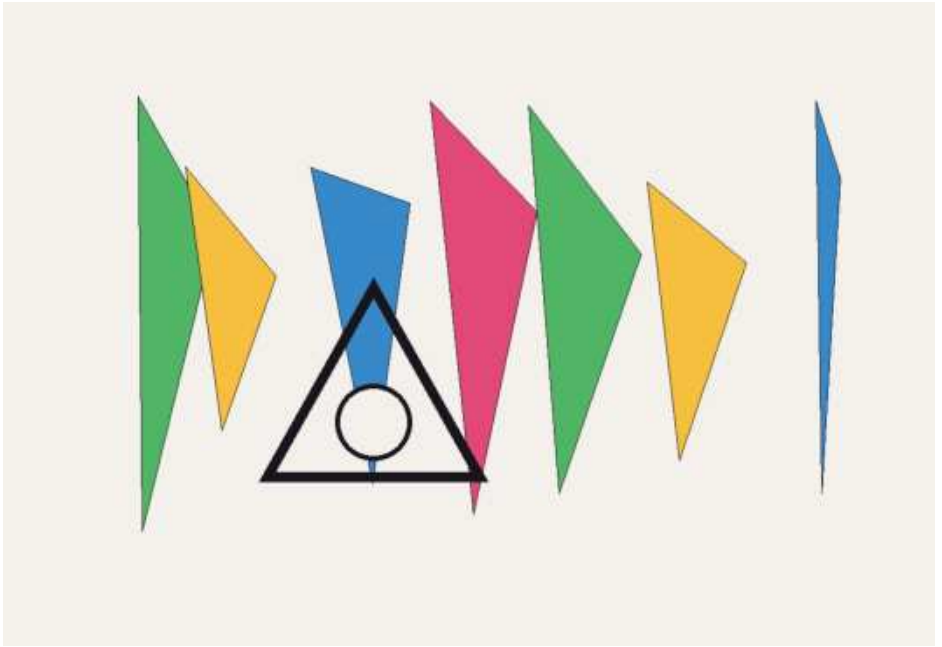
Introduction: Mokama Ghat

Where the great river Ganga is at her widest, there lies Mokama Ghat. On one side of the ghat stretches a long sandbank — a kingdom of water and soft mud as far as the eye can see. And on the wind of that sandbank floats this story: the story of Chuhamal and Reshma.

This is a love story — but a love that society would not accept. On one side stood a brave young farm worker from the wrestling ground. On the other stood a rich man's daughter. And between them stood all the walls that people have built to keep people apart. The walls won. The lovers lost. But the story? The story still brings people together at the fair even today.

Chapter 1: The Hero of the Wrestling Ground



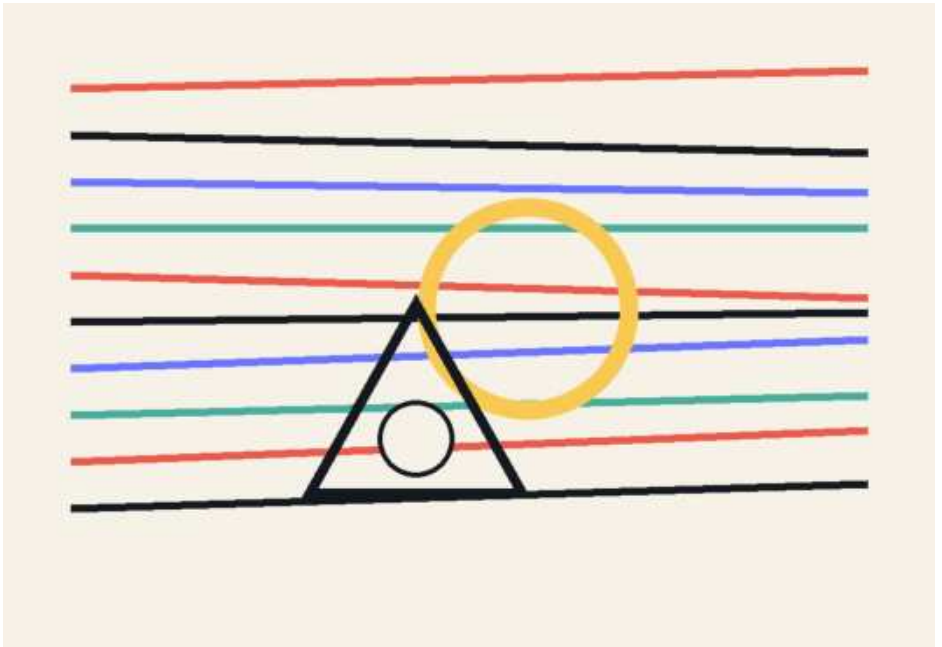


Picture 1

Chuharmal was a poor farm worker from the Doodhbansi community. His father's name was Rajvansi, his mother's

name was Anjani, and his uncle's name was Baisiraay. At home there was no gold or silver — only a strong body made for hard work. But what a body it was!

Chuharmal was the hero of the wrestling ground. Every morning he bathed in the Ganga, then trained on the soft earth — push-ups, squats, and wrestling. Other wrestlers shook when he gripped them, and the whole neighbourhood loved his honest and kind nature.



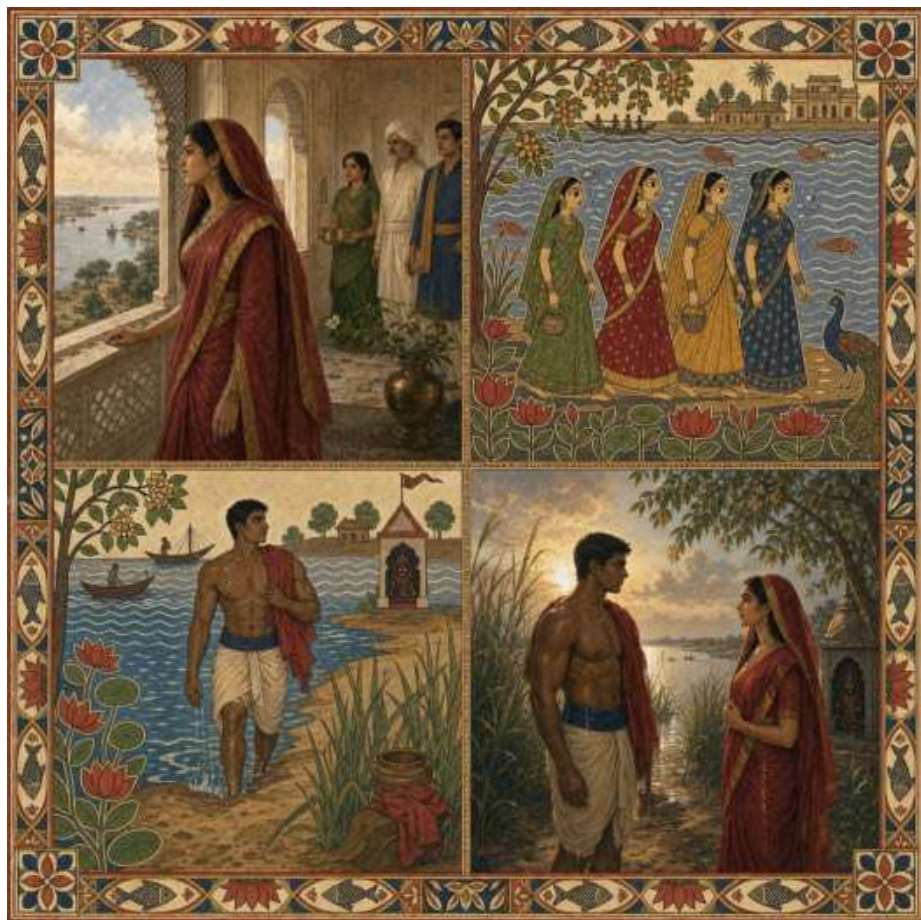


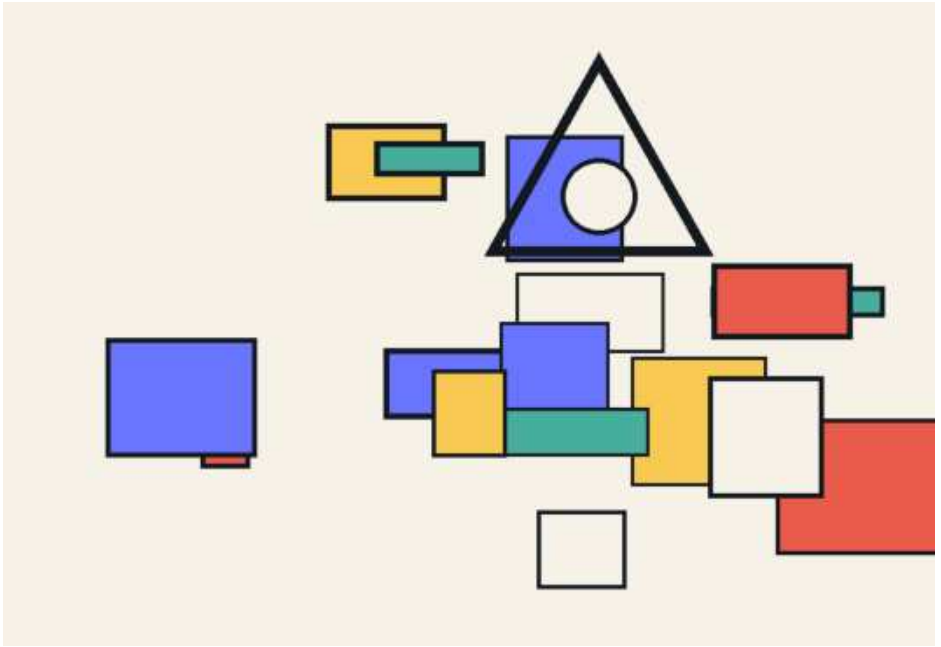
Picture 2

He was a farm worker's son, so he worked all day — in the fields, at the ghat, and carrying heavy loads. But there was no weakness in his walk. There was a quiet pride that shone even through his torn, poor clothes.

Everyone at Mokama Ghat knew him — "Rajvansi's son, the lion of the wrestling ground." And one day that fame floated along the banks of the Ganga all the way to a tall mansion where he was not allowed to go.

Chapter 2: Reshma



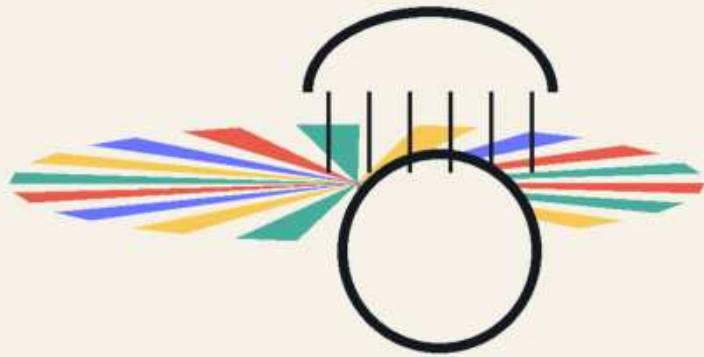


Picture 3

Reshma was the daughter of Ajabi Singh and the sister of Ajay Singh. She came from a rich Bhumihaar family. She had money,

silver, a big mansion, and many servants — everything that wealth can give, Reshma had.

But inside Reshma lived a heart that flew higher than the high walls of the mansion. She did not care for the world of money and accounts. She loved the free wind that blew over the Ganga.





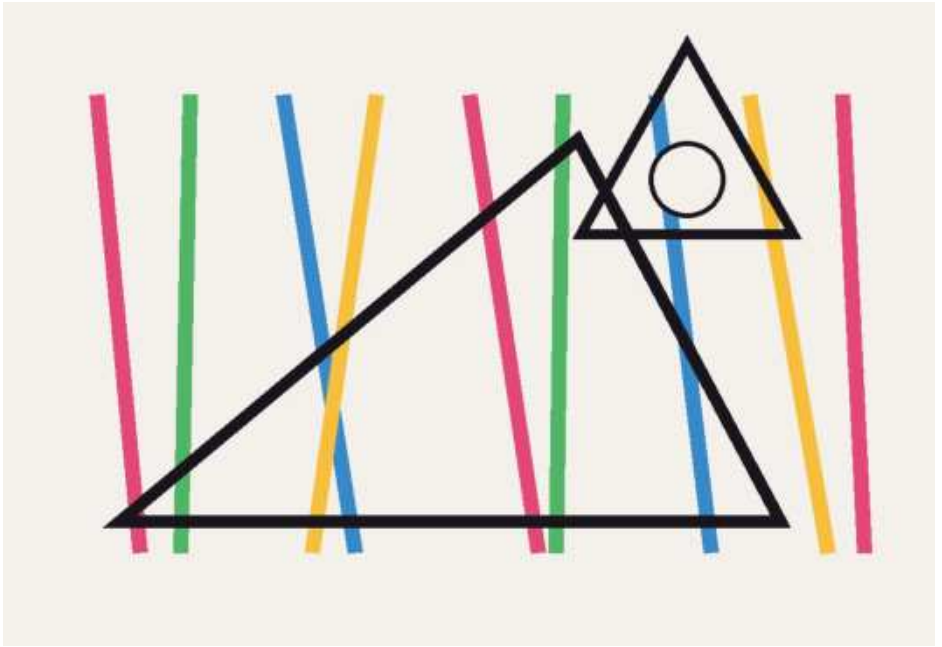
Picture 4

One day they met by the river. Reshma was at the ghat with her friends, and from the other side came Chuharmal — his body still wet from the river, a cloth on his shoulder, walking with the proud step of a wrestler.

And Reshma could not look away. This was the moment stories call "love at first sight" — when the eyes stop their usual work and start working for the heart. In that moment Reshma lost her heart — and she lost it so completely that she no longer wished to win it back.

Chapter 3: A One-Sided Rain

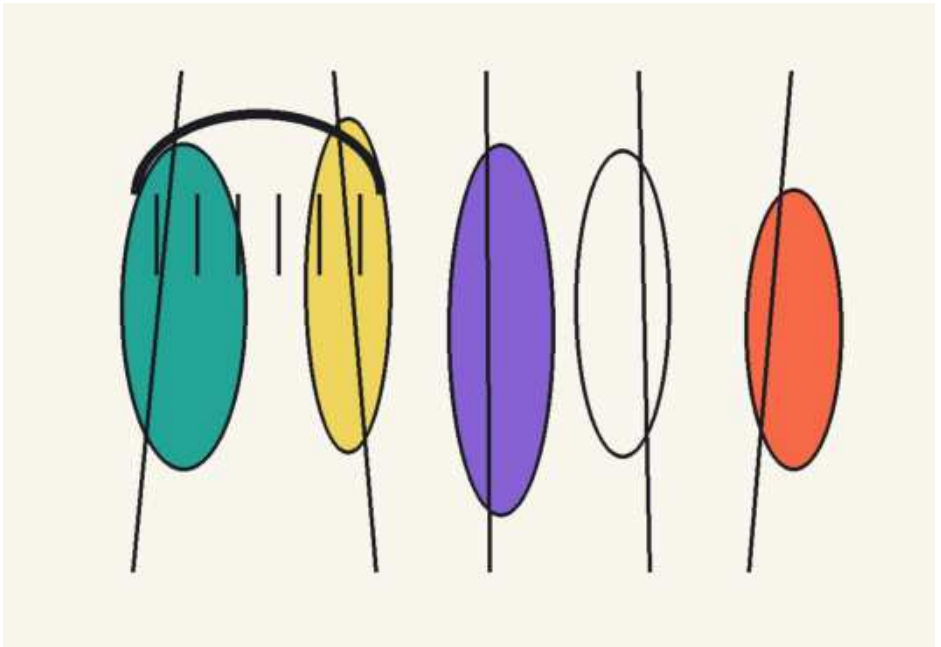




Picture 5

Reshma told him of her love — clearly and bravely, with no soft hiding words. That was the courage of a rich man's daughter. She knew how to speak her heart.

But Chuharmal? He would not agree! No matter how much Reshma explained, Chuharmal stopped the talk — "You are a daughter of the mansion. I am a farm worker of the ghat. This path is not a path we can walk." His "no" was not pride. It was wisdom. He knew what this love would cost.





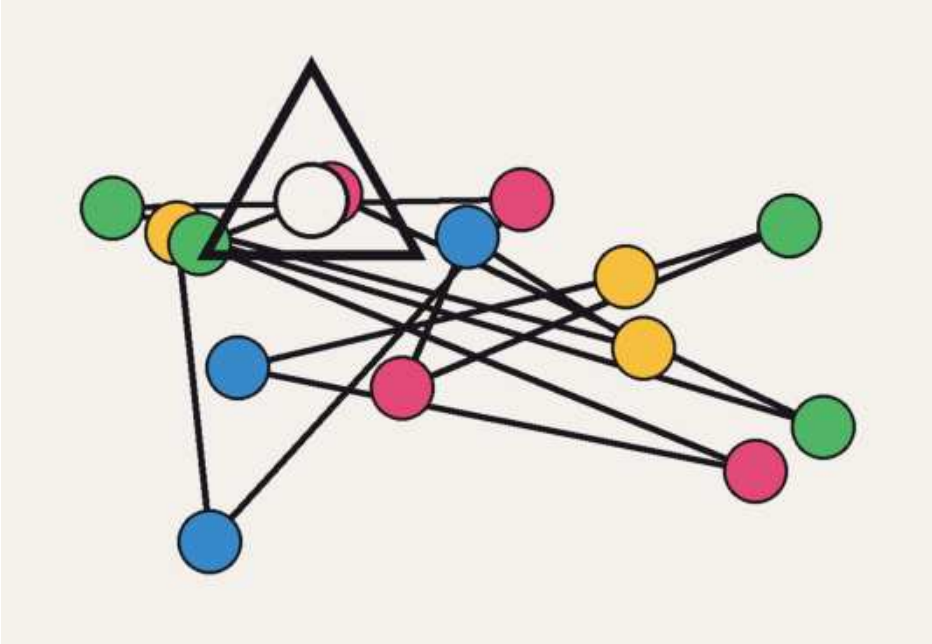
Picture 6

But when has love ever understood the language of wisdom? Reshma kept coming to meet him — sometimes at the ghat, sometimes on the path by the sandbank. She found many excuses, but she always had one place she wanted to reach.

And as these meetings grew, Chuhamal's "no" grew softer and thinner. Drops of water on a stone do nothing in one day — but again and again? Even stone wears away. Meanwhile, people in the mansion began to notice. Such meetings cannot stay hidden for long.

Chapter 4: The Guard

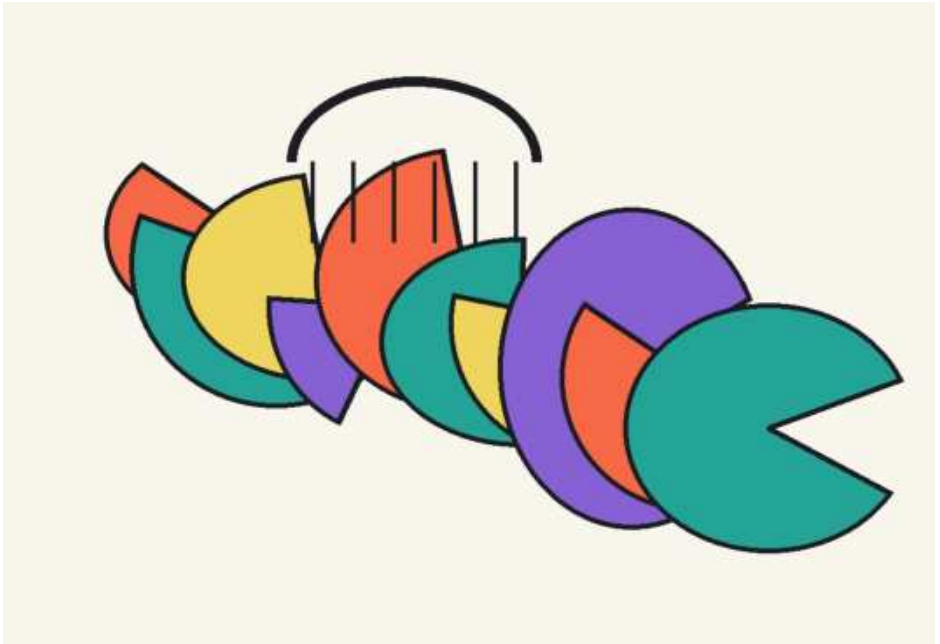




Picture 7

The secret broke open — and a great shock shook the mansion. Ajabi Singh's daughter and a poor farm worker from the ghat! The family's honour trembled.

Guards were placed on Reshma. Watchmen stood at the door. Eyes watched the windows. Even meeting her friends was stopped. For Reshma, the mansion turned from a home into a prison.



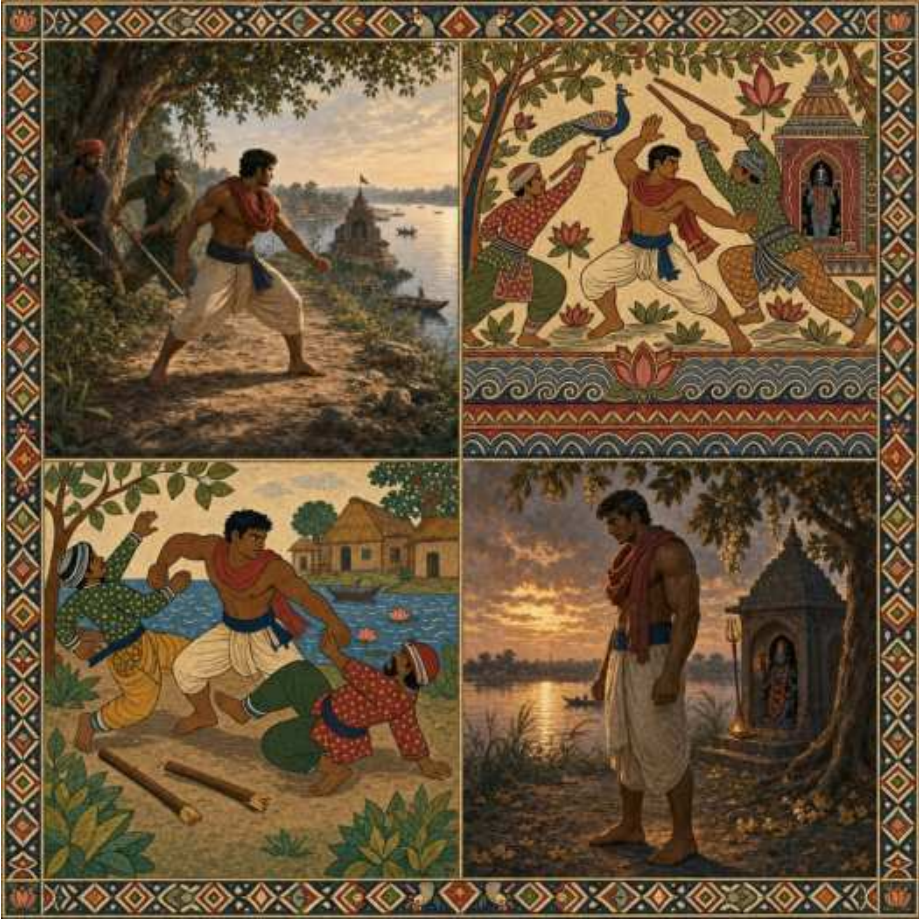


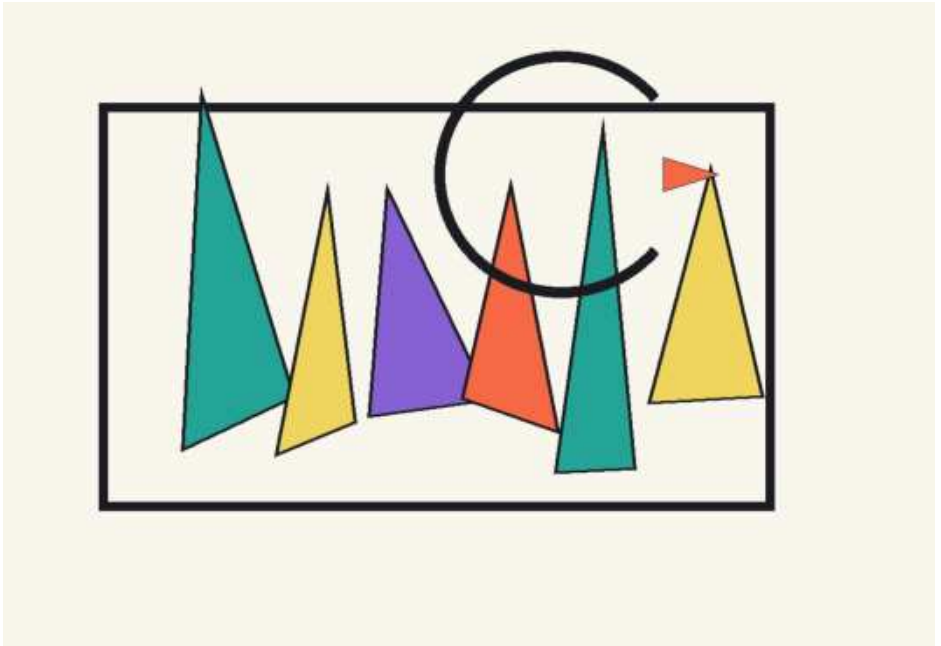
Picture 8

But guards can stop the body, not the heart. Reshma's heart stayed at the ghat day and night. And a guard has one strange effect too — whatever is stopped becomes even more dear.

Her brother Ajay Singh's anger was not calmed by the guards. In his mind the root of the trouble was not Reshma — it was Chuharmal. And the way pride always wants to cut a root is to harm the person.

Chapter 5: Ramjeet and Manne Khan



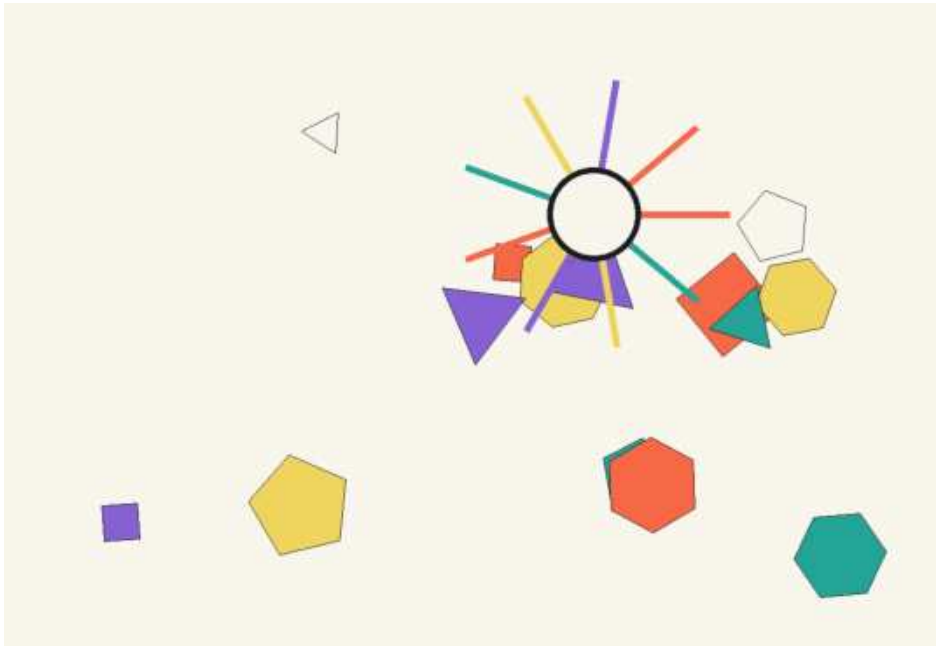


Picture 9

At Ajay Singh's order, two men set out — the shepherd Ramjeet and Manne Khan. Their job was to harm Chuhamal. The price

was fixed. The weapons were sharp. And the target? One farm worker, whom they thought would be easy to defeat.

But oh dear! Who told them that the man they were going after was the lion of the wrestling ground?





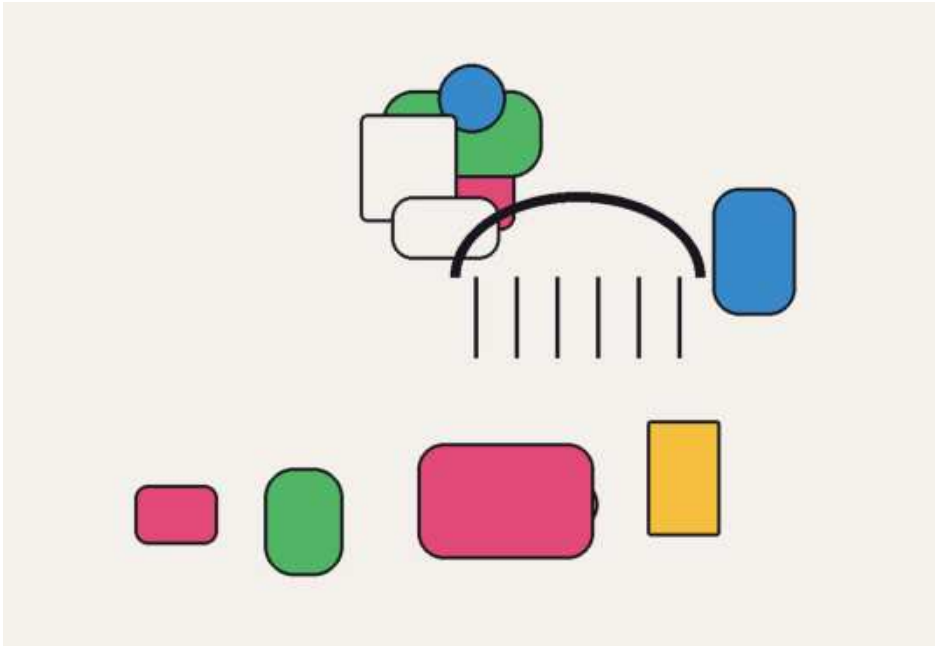
Picture 10

They laid a trap and struck — and then what happened is still told at Mokama Ghat today: Chuhamal fought back with his sword and defeated both Ramjeet and Manne Khan! The two who came to attack were beaten themselves.

This was Chuhamal's first real fight with blood — and it was only to save his own life. But he knew what this event meant: now a bigger fight had begun. The mansion had lost its hired men. Now it would come with its real force. And the target would not be only Chuhamal — the whole neighbourhood would be in danger.

Chapter 6: Attack on the Neighbourhood





Picture 11

And that is just what happened — an attack on the Doodhbansi neighbourhood!

Under Ajay Singh's lead, armed men rushed into the neighbourhood. There were houses made of straw, farm workers without weapons, and crying children — and against them came swords and spears. The price of one love was being taken from a whole neighbourhood.





Picture 12

Chuharmal stood like a shield in front of everyone, but he was alone — and before him stood the full power of the mansion. That day the fate of the neighbourhood trembled on the edge of a sword.

Then something no one had expected happened — Reshma! She broke free of the guards and ran to her father, Ajabi Singh. She folded her hands, she cried, and she stood firm — and she made him stop the attack. "If innocent blood will flow because of me, then take mine first!" Before a daughter's brave love, the father had to bow. The swords went back into their sheaths. That day Mokama learned that Reshma not only knew how to love — she also knew how to protect love.

Chapter 7: Ramsakhi's Magic

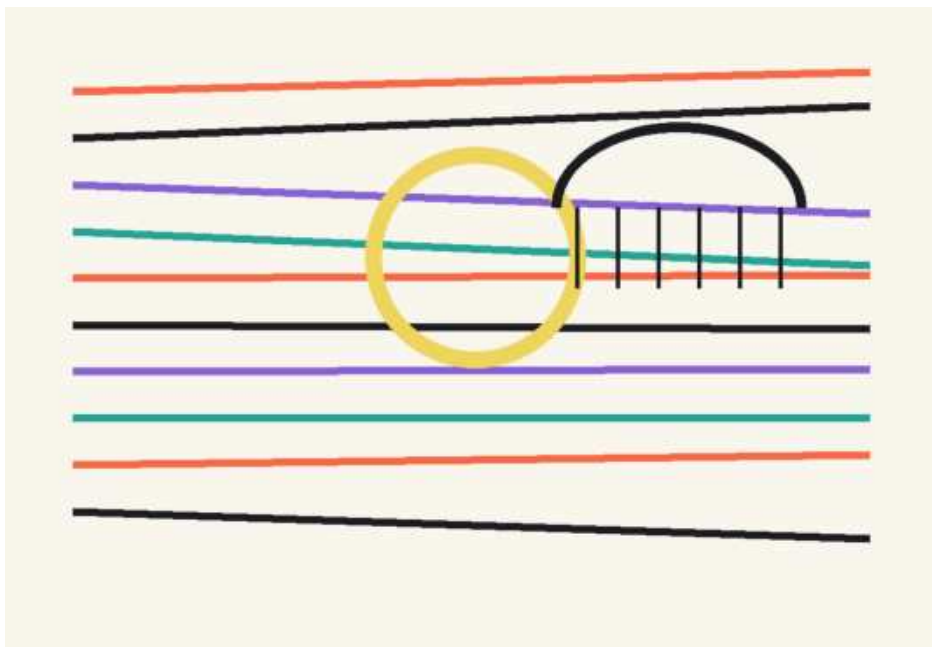




Picture 13

But now Reshma also understood that this tug-of-war between the mansion and the ghat would never end happily. Whatever had to be done, she had to do herself — and soon.

With Reshma was her dear friend Ramsakhi — and Ramsakhi had magic. In folk stories, a true friend always has something special — sometimes magic, sometimes a clever plan, and sometimes just unbreakable company. Ramsakhi had all three.



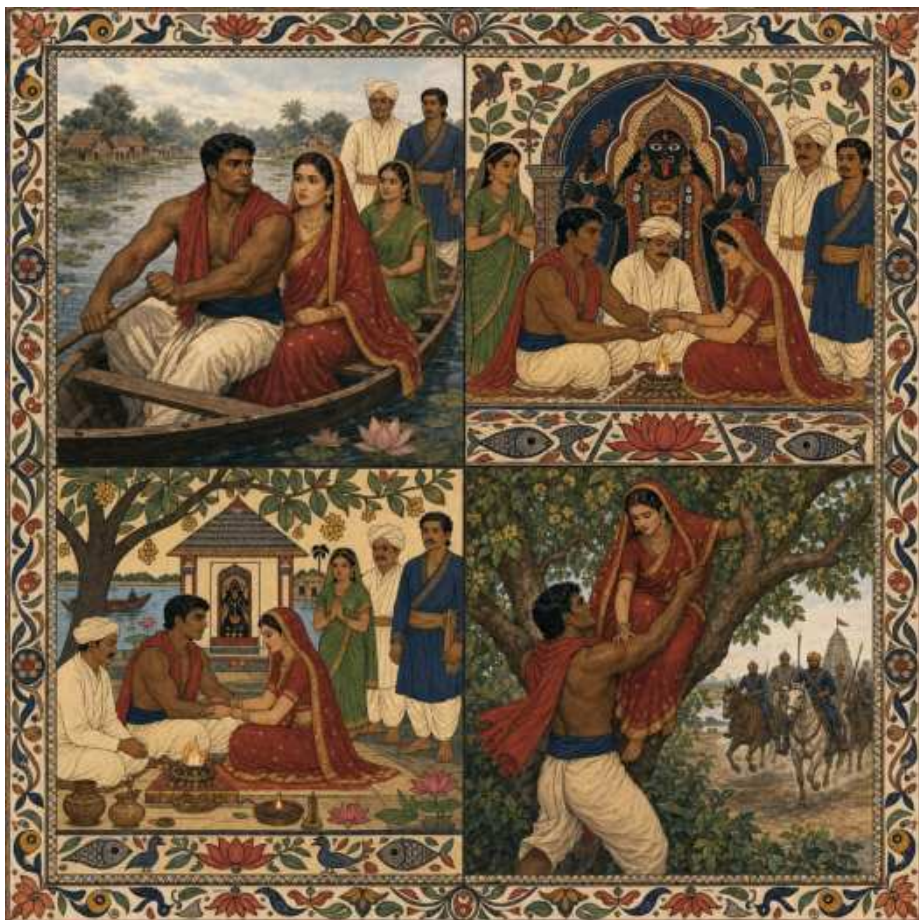


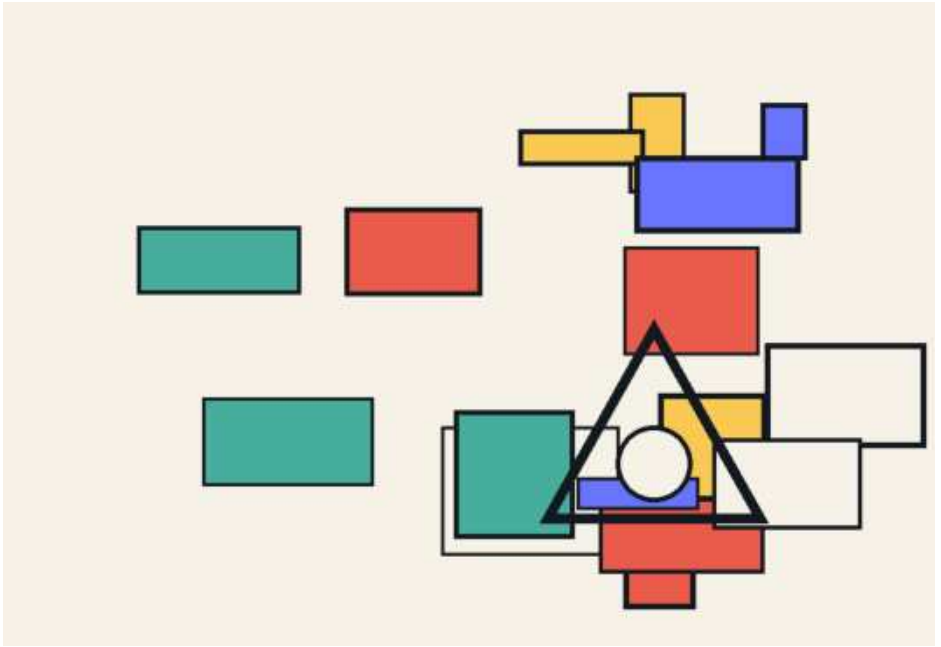
Picture 14

Reshma went again with Ramsakhi to meet Chuharmal — on the bank of the Ganga. With her magic, Ramsakhi brought Reshma to him. Under the spell, no one could see Reshma. She slipped past the eyes of the guards — unseen, like a soft puff of wind.

And on the riverbank, after so many "no"s, Chuharmal said "yes" for the first time. The hero who had not lost to any sword lost to Reshma's stubborn love and great sacrifice. Now only one path lay before them both — and that path led toward the temple of Mother Kali.

Chapter 8: The Vermilion of Blood





Picture 15

On horseback the two of them set out — to the Kali temple near the Mokama sandbank. There was no wedding party, no music,

and no wedding tent. Their only witnesses were Mother Kali, the wind of the Ganga, and one kind priest.

But what about the red vermilion for the bride's hair? Who would bring a little box of it? Then Chuharmal did the thing that made this tale immortal: he drew a little blood from his own body, and with that blood he filled the parting in Reshma's hair.



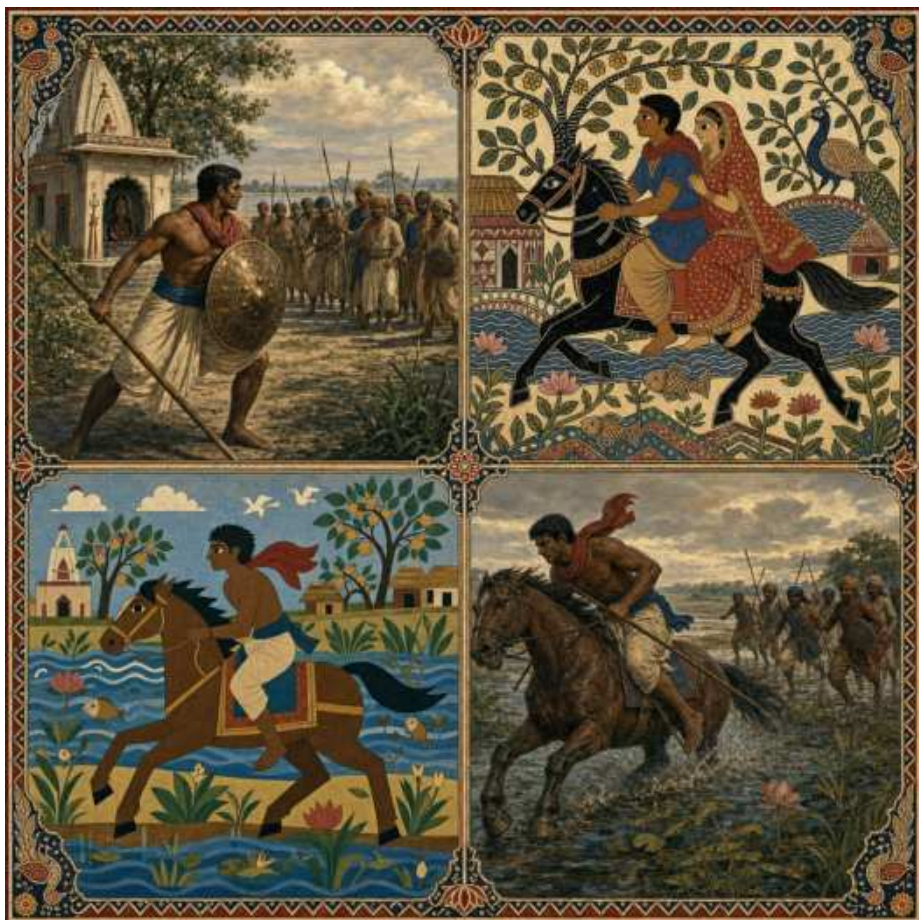


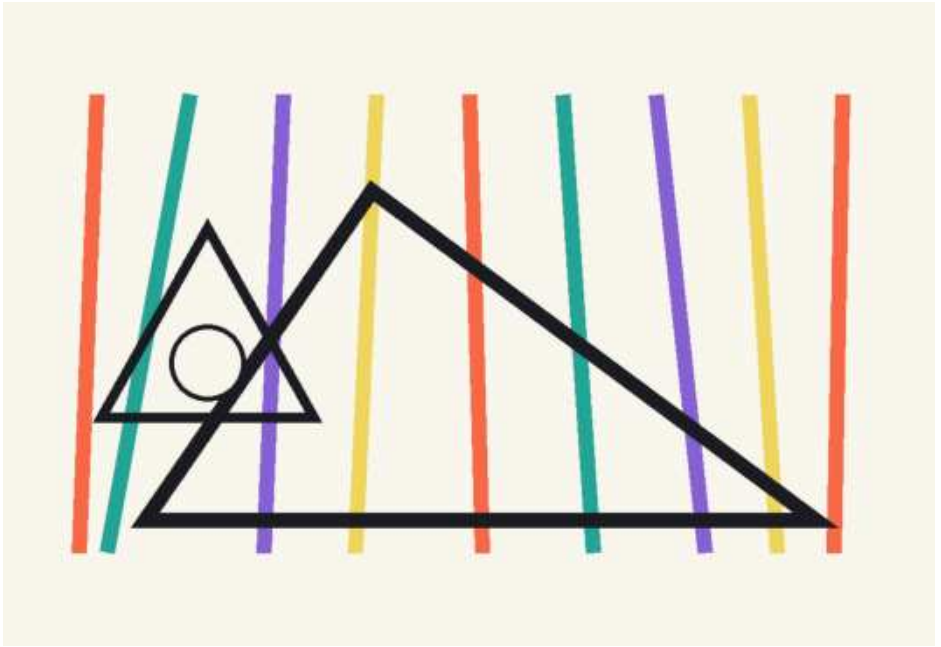
Picture 16

The vermillion of blood! No vermillion in the world is deeper than this. The priest gave his blessing. The lamp trembled before Mother Kali. And in the wind of Mokama sandbank, the first breath of a new household mixed in.

But that breath was not yet complete when the sound of horses came — they were surrounded! The mansion's men had reached the temple. In one moment Chuarmal understood — whatever happened now would be hard and dangerous. He called Reshma close, and first he protected her: he sat her high in a mahua tree. "Whatever happens," he said, "do not come down."

Chapter 9: The Final Battle

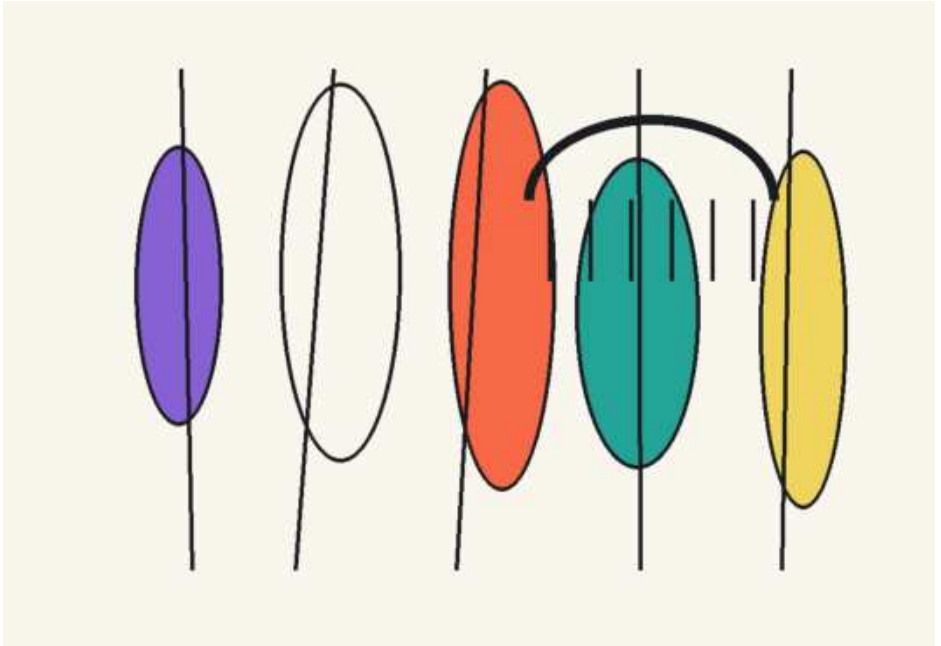




Picture 17

And then a terrible battle began.

On one side stood Chuharmal — alone, newly married, defending the first hours of his married life. On the other side stood a band of armed men. But that day the lion of the wrestling ground fought so bravely that the feet of those who surrounded him began to slip. His sword flashed like lightning. His shield stood like a mountain. Chuharmal was about to win!





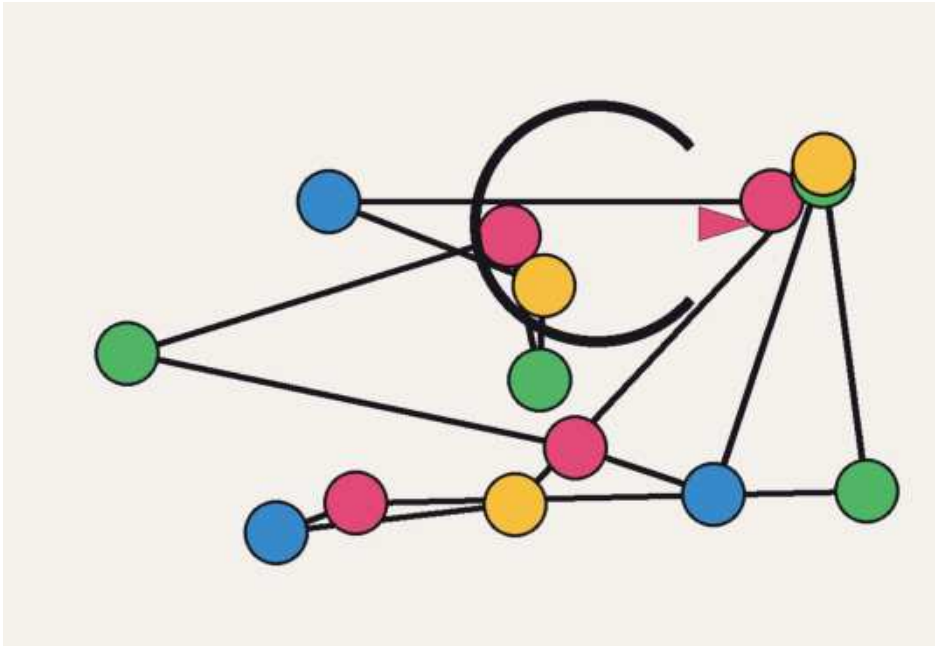
Picture 18

But fate had other plans... Just then a soldier named Kalua — who had been hiding and waiting in the noise of the fight — rushed toward the mahua tree and ran away with Reshma!

"Reshma!" Chuharmal's roar tore across the battlefield. Leaving the fight he was winning, he ran — jumped on a horse, blind with love. Ahead was Kalua. Behind was Chuharmal. The distance between them grew smaller and smaller... But then a blow came from behind. The horse was struck. The horse fell. The rider fell. And the men who surrounded him poured down upon him.

Chapter 10: Reshma... Reshma...

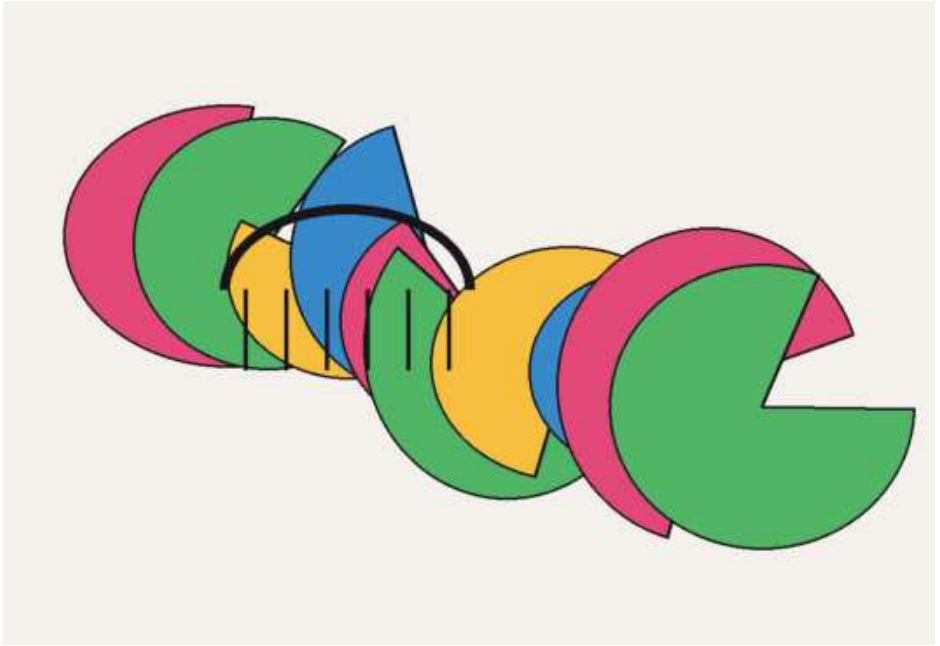




Picture 19

On the soft mud of Mokama sandbank, the lion of the wrestling ground lay wounded. On his lips there was no prayer and no curse. There was only one name:

"Reshma... Reshma..."



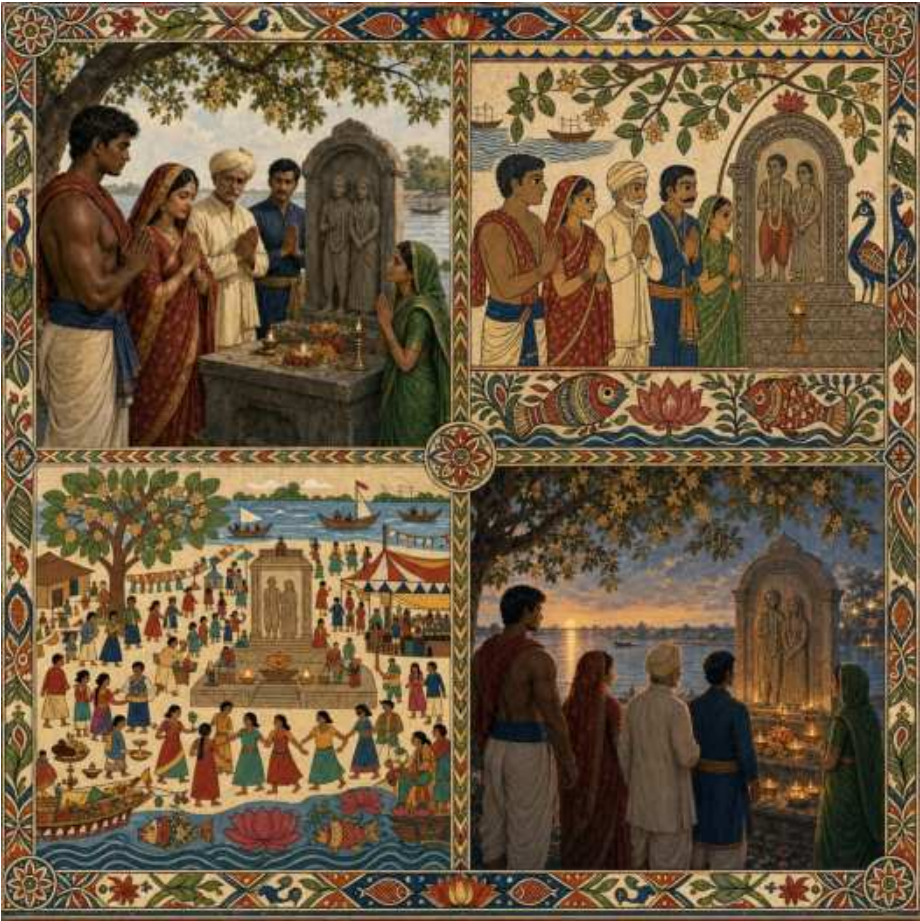


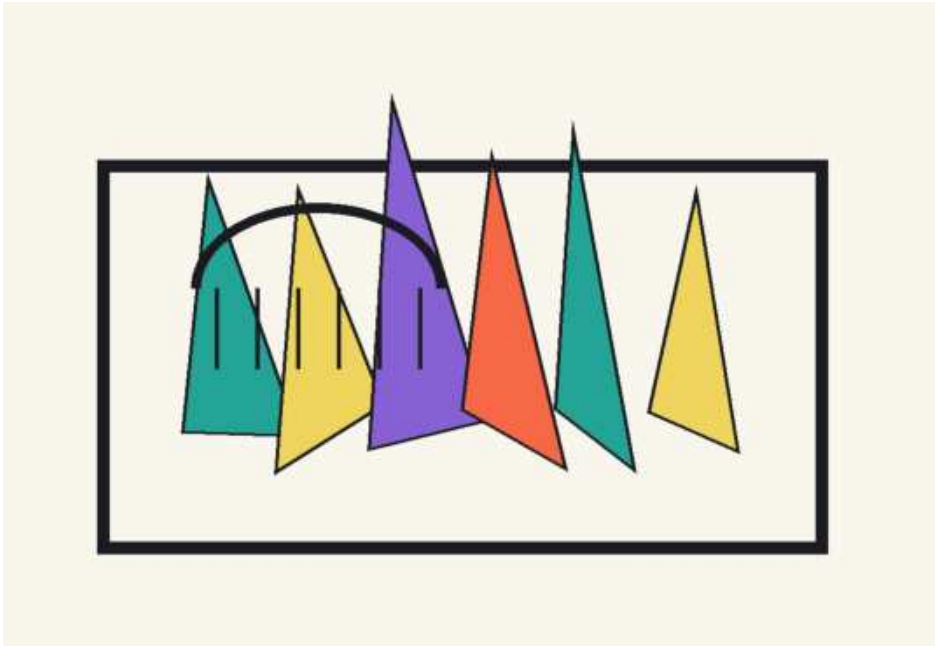
Picture 20

The hero who had faced the swords of Ramjeet and Manne Khan, who had stood alone to protect his neighbourhood, who was still winning even when surrounded — at the end he gave up his life calling the name of love. Crying "Reshma... Reshma..." Chuharmal died. The blood-vermilion of the newly married bride had not even dried, and her married life was already broken.

And Reshma? The tale leaves her next chapter in silence — and that silence is sadder than any words. The girl who fought the mansion, the guards, and society for love could not even reach her husband's side at the end. What deeper sadness can a story hold than this?

Chapter 11: The Reshma-Chuharmal Temple

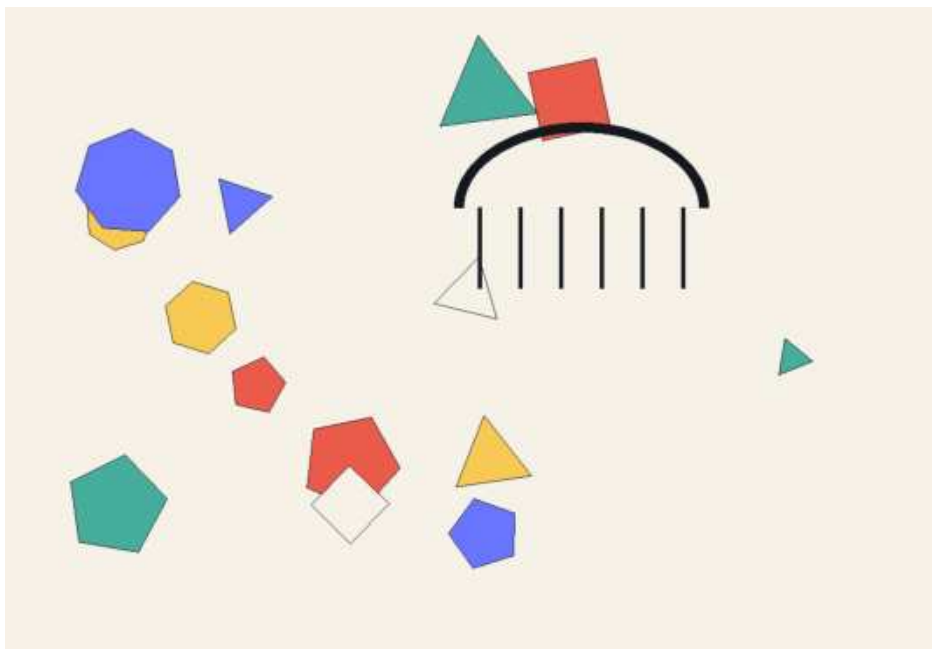




Picture 21

Only memory remains — but what a beautiful memory!

In the Mokama sandbank stands the Reshma-Chuharmal temple. Both names are written together, as if what life could not join has been joined in stone. The same society whose walls once kept them apart now worships them side by side. What greater healing can time give?





Picture 22

And every year a fair is held there. Thousands of people gather — Doodhbansi people, Bhumihaar people, and people of every community — at one fair, before one temple. The love that made two neighbourhoods fight while it lived joins thousands of people after death.

The old people of Mokama say that in the evening, when the wind blows over the Ganga, the mahua trees of the sandbank begin to sway by themselves. Who knows — perhaps even today someone sits gently in those branches, and below, on the mud, someone still stands guard for her. The story says: lovers may die, but love becomes a fair that never ends.

The End

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Mahua the Ferry Girl

An immortal story of love and brave sacrifice on the
banks of the Parman River



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

**Editor, Videha: The First Maithili Fortnightly E-
Magazine (since 2000)**

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: The Ferry Landing on the Parman River

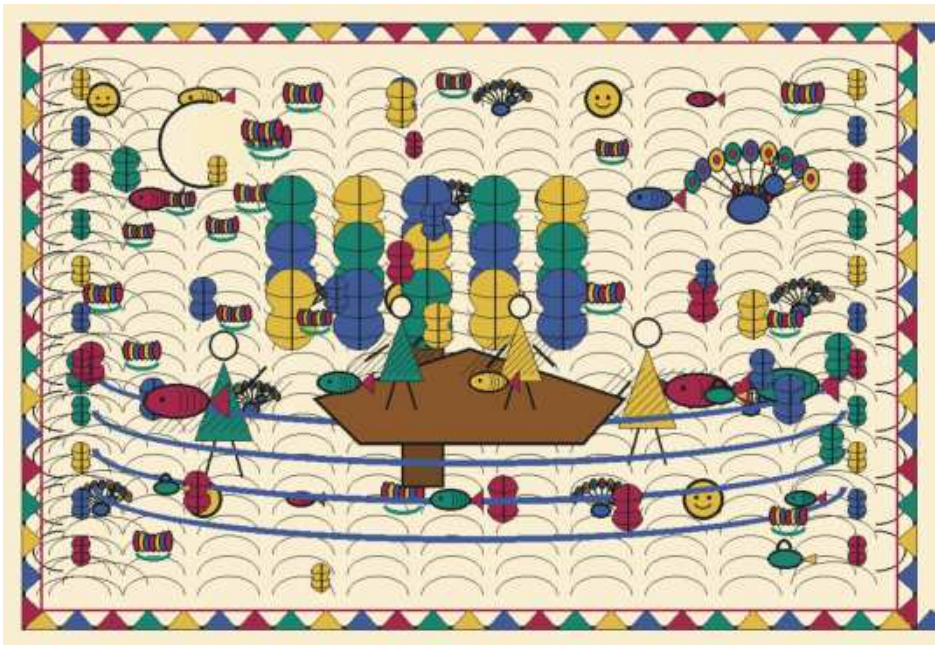
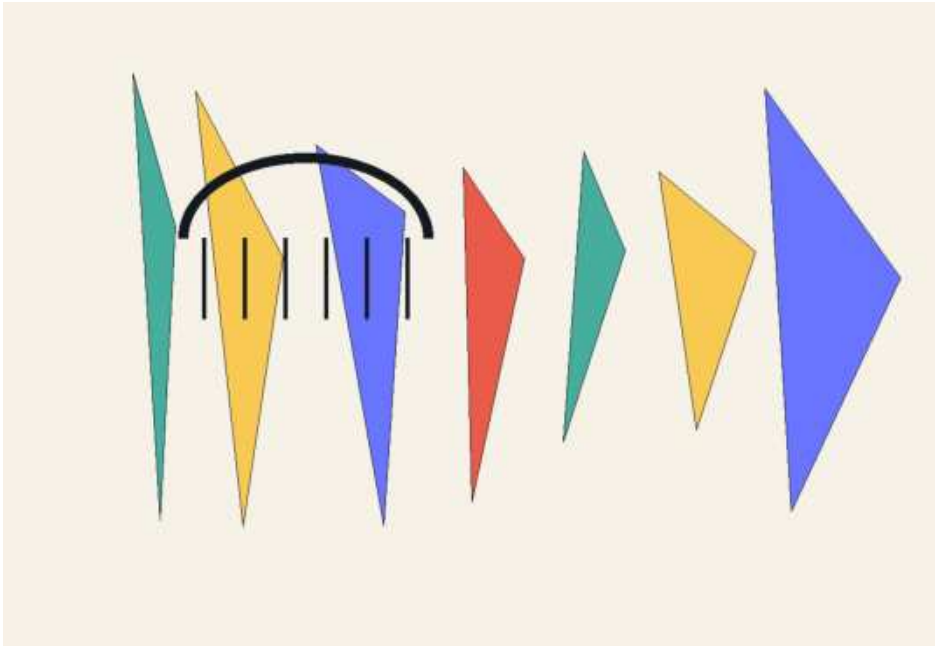
Mahua the ferry girl was as pretty as a fairy — like a pinch of saffron mixed into soft dough! But more precious than her looks was her pure and honest heart — a quality that never shook, even in hard times.

This story comes from the banks of the Parman River. There, a poor girl was caught between her greedy mother and a tricky merchant. In the end, she gave her life for her love and

her self-respect. Even today, when the monsoon river runs full in Saon and Bhadav, people still sing: "There once was a girl named Mahua the ferry girl..."

Chapter 1: The Stepmother's House

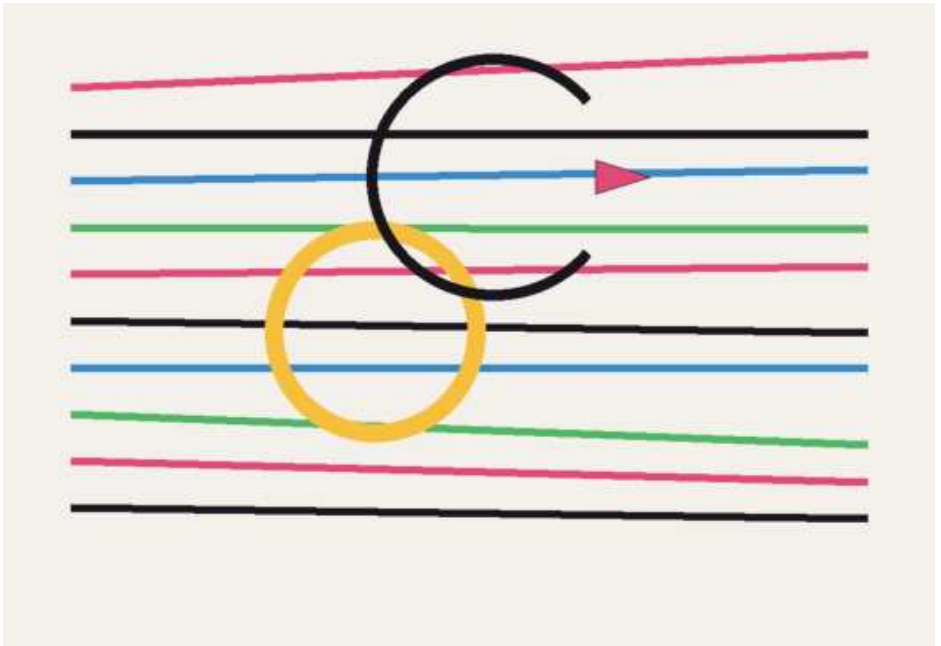




Picture 1

Mahua the ferry girl was as pretty as a fairy. But her true beauty was her pure heart. No temptation and no hard times could make her change what was right.

But Mahua's home was not happy. Her father drank too much. He forgot his duties. Her stepmother was selfish and cold. She did not love Mahua like a real mother.





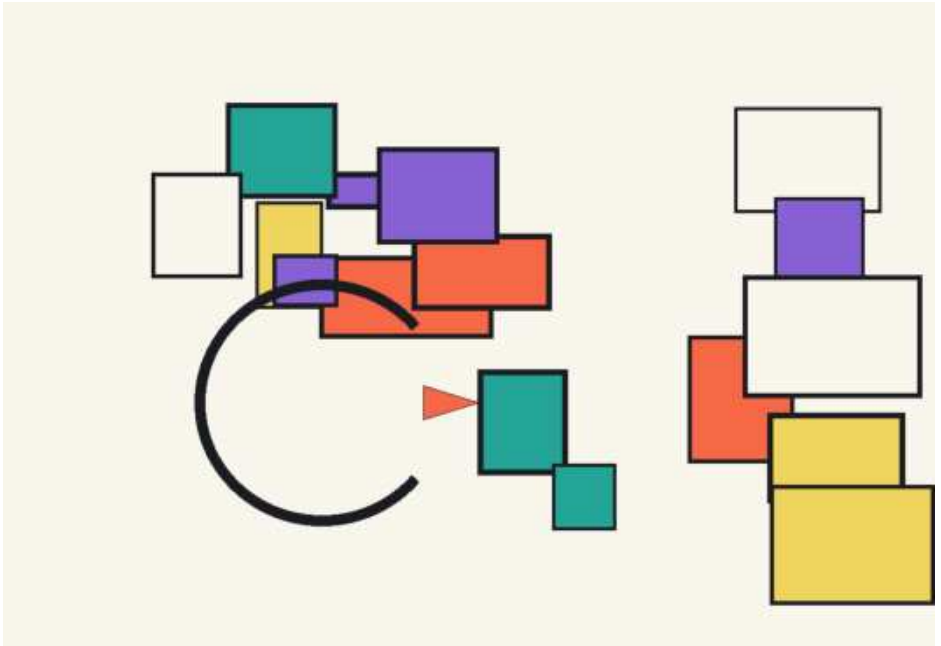
Picture 2

In that house, the stepmother ruled. No one listened to Mahua. Mahua was sixteen years old, but no one cared about her future. For a young girl, this neglect hurt very much.

At the old ferry landing on the Parman River, the boatmen prayed, "Please bring Mahua's boat safely to the shore." Their prayer showed that the village cared for her — even when her own home did not.

Chapter 2: A Warning in the Monsoon



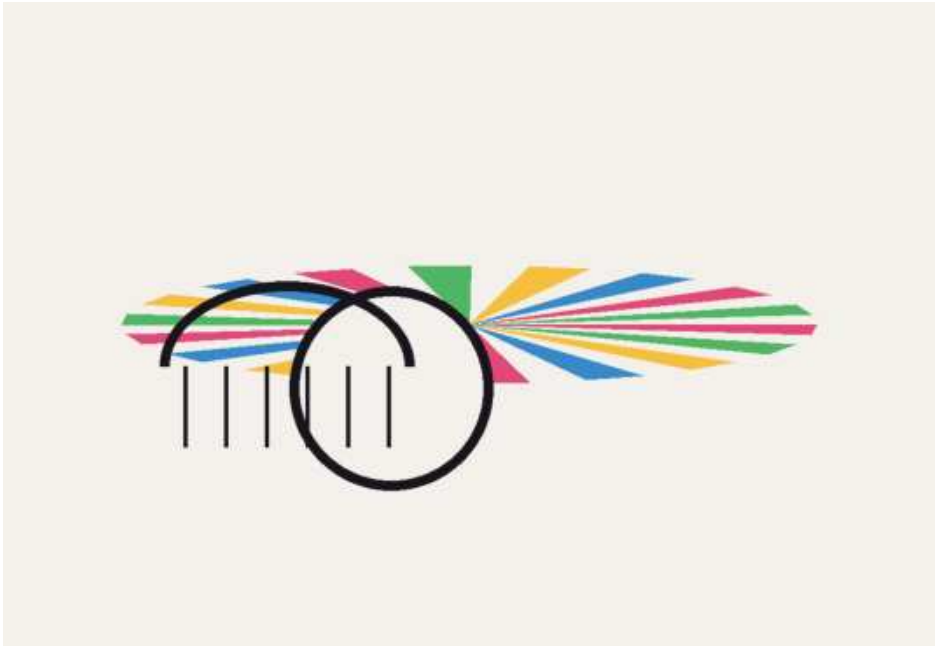


Picture 3

When the monsoon months of Saon and Bhadav filled the river with strong water, people sang a folk song: "In Saon and Bhadav, when the

current is full and fast, young Mahua, do not go out to row the boat at night." The song was both a warning and a sign of care.

On one such monsoon night, the stepmother made a new plan. A merchant had come to the ferry landing. She wanted to send Mahua to massage oil on him.





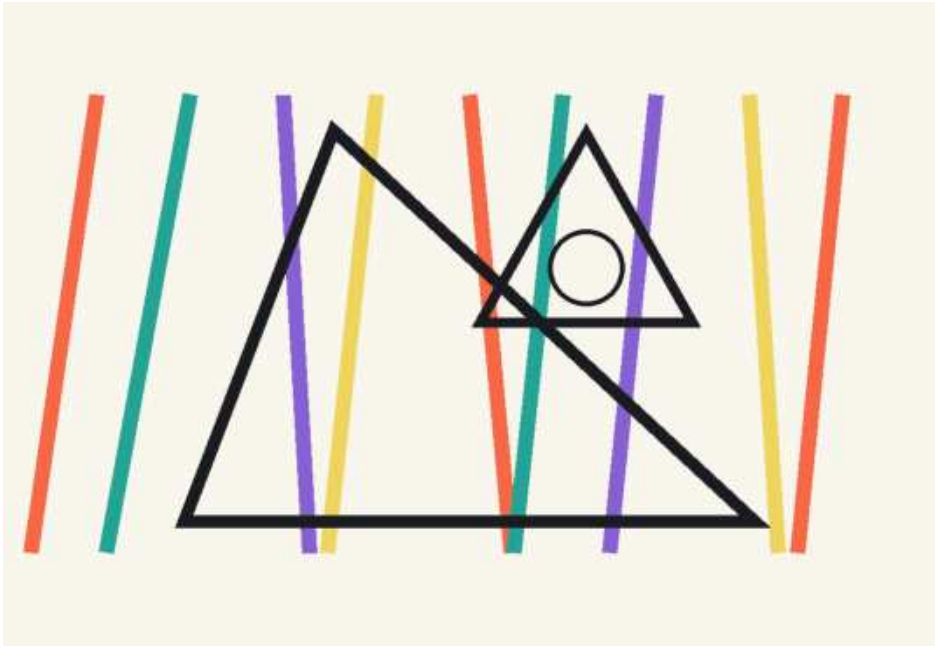
Picture 4

Mahua did not want to go. She felt that something bad might happen. She remembered her real mother — her love and her protection — which she no longer had in this stepmother's house.

Pain rose in Mahua's heart. She thought, "Why did they raise me, if only for a day like this?" Her words showed how deeply she hurt. What was the use of being cared for, if it ended this way?

Chapter 3: The Journey She Did Not Want

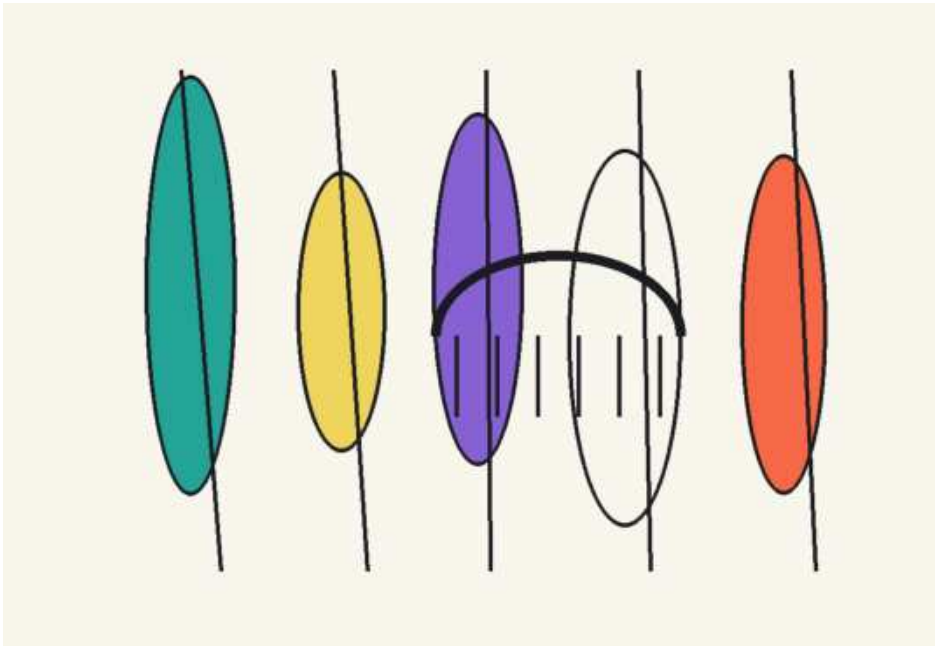




Picture 5

But the stepmother would not change her mind. That very monsoon night, she forced Mahua to go and help the traveler cross the river. Mahua's wishes did not matter at all.

Mahua left with a heavy heart. On the way she met her dear friend Phoolmati. The two girls talked all night. They shared their fear, their worry, and their doubts.





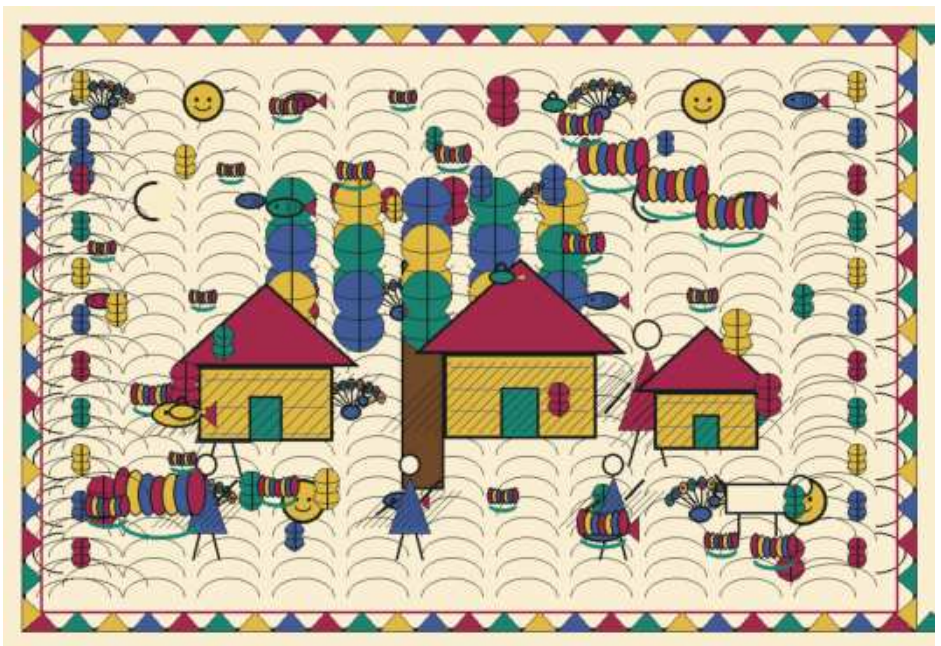
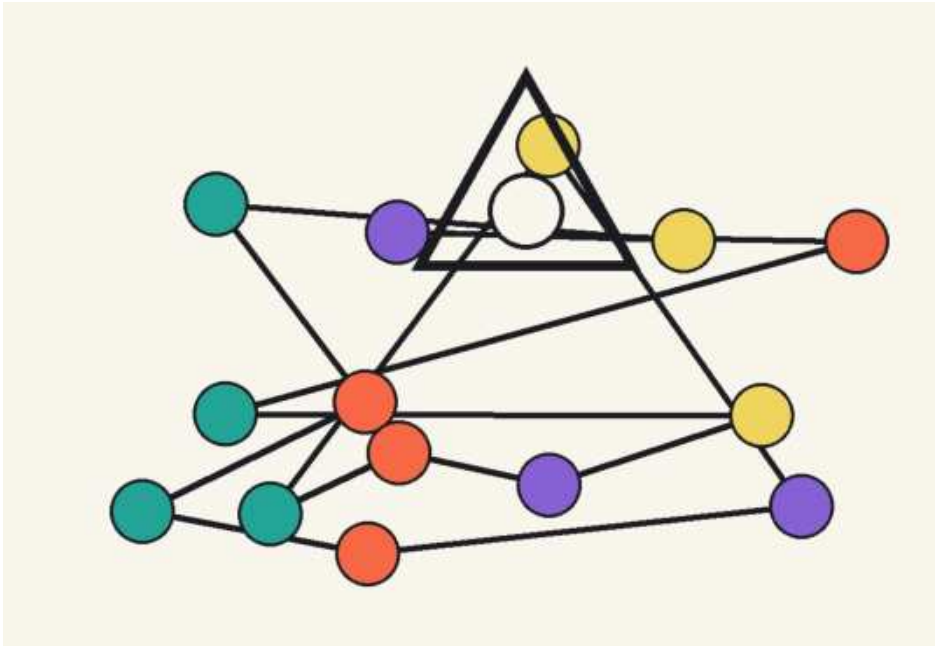
Picture 6

Mahua cried about her stepmother. "What kind of mother sends her daughter to cross the river at night?" The stepmother's answer was hard: "If the traveler is rich and old, there is no harm in massaging him with oil. Take four coins from his pocket — that is smart."

Phoolmati comforted her. "Do not be afraid. Keep the fire of love burning for the one who waits for you in Morang, counting the days on his fingers." Those words woke a name in Mahua's heart — her beloved in Morang, the one she lived to wait for.

Chapter 4: Memories of Morang



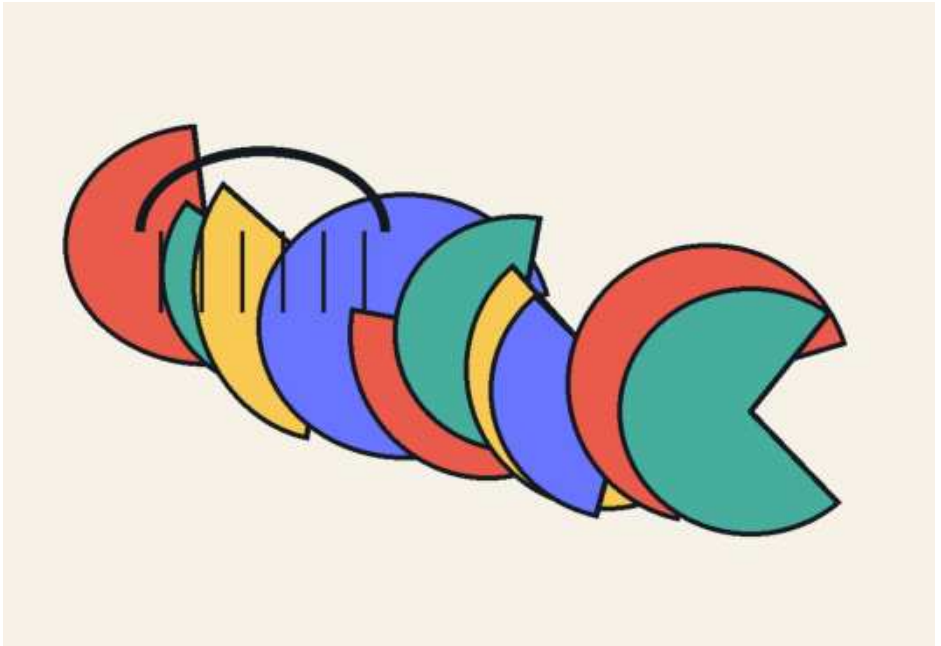


Picture 7

As soon as she heard the name Morang, Mahua grew sad. The memory of her beloved, far away in another land, touched her heart.

She felt sure he would come in the spring month of Phagun. That hope was her only strength.

At dawn Mahua reached the village. Her stepmother scolded her with harsh words, blame, and insults. Mahua stayed quiet. In that house she had no power to speak back.



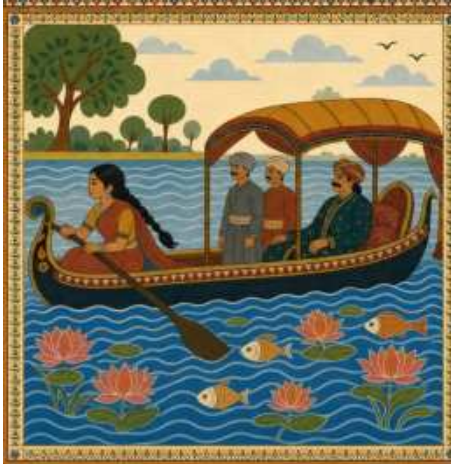


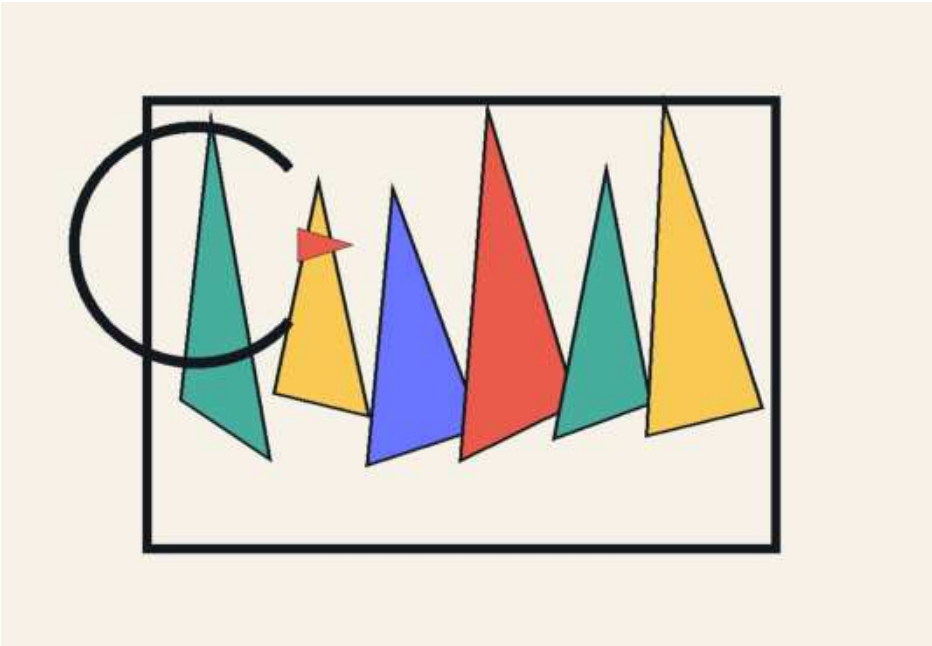
Picture 8

When her father came home drunk, the stepmother kicked him out too. Fighting and chaos had become Mahua's daily life. Still, she kept her dreams and her love safe inside her heart.

But fate was getting ready for a new trouble. A messenger came and whispered a secret message in the stepmother's ear. That message was the start of the biggest betrayal in Mahua's life.

Chapter 5: The Deal of Betrayal

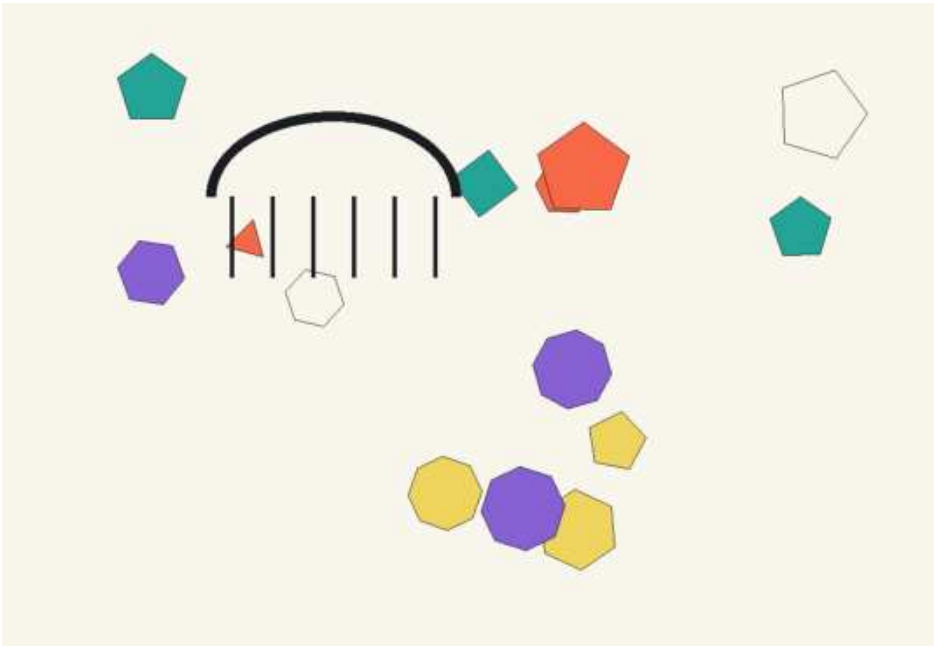




Picture 9

After the messenger's words, Mahua told her stepmother, "Whatever you say, I will do." She said this because she had no choice. She did not know what was written in her future.

A man from the merchant came, and Mahua went with him to the ferry landing. The merchant sat in the boat with two guards. He looked ordinary, but a terrible secret was hidden there.





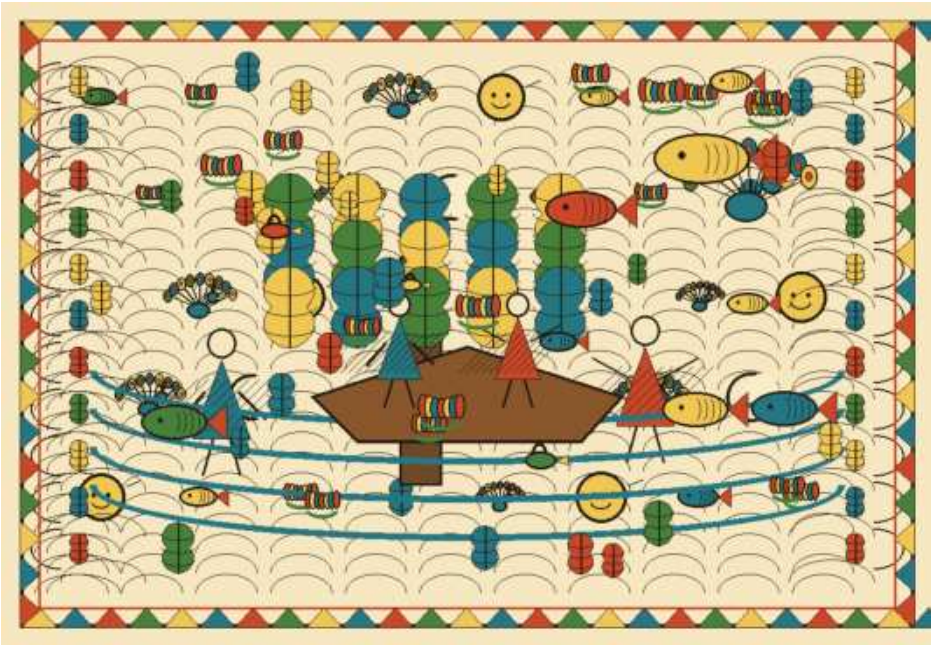
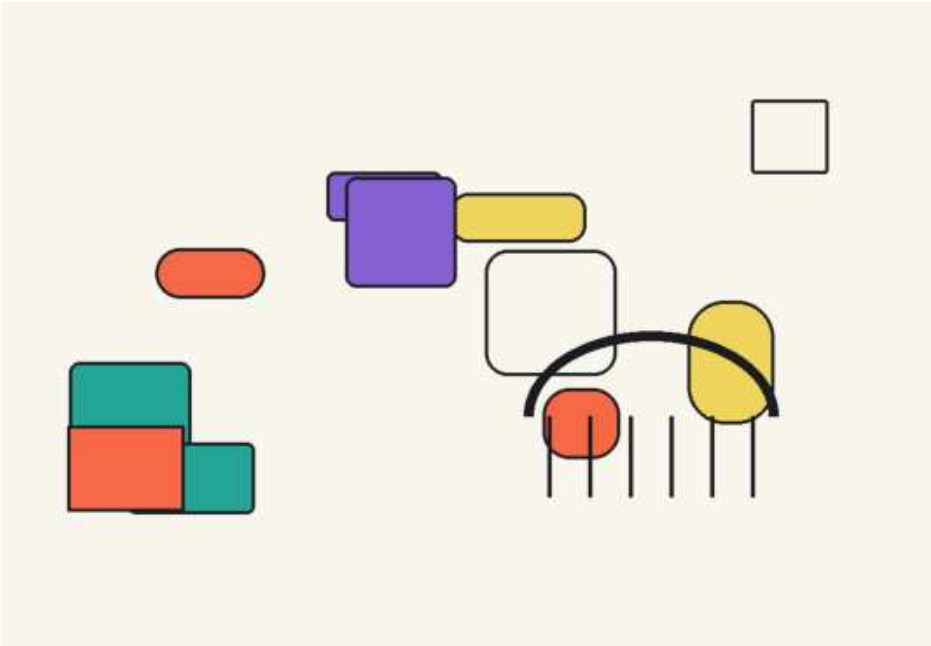
Picture 10

Mahua began to row the boat — with trust, without any doubt. She did not know she had been sold! The stepmother had given her own daughter to the merchant for money. That betrayal of a mother's duty was too cruel to bear.

When a guard snatched the oar from Mahua, she grew afraid. The merchant tried to pull her into his lap. Then Mahua struggled hard to protect her honor.

Chapter 6: The Merchant's Cruelty





Picture 11

The guard told Mahua in a cold voice, "All the money has been paid. You are not being taken for free." Those words cut through Mahua's heart. She had been turned into a thing for sale, against her own will.

When she learned the truth, pain was not all she felt. A strong firmness woke inside her. She grew still — calm on the outside, but with a clear decision inside.





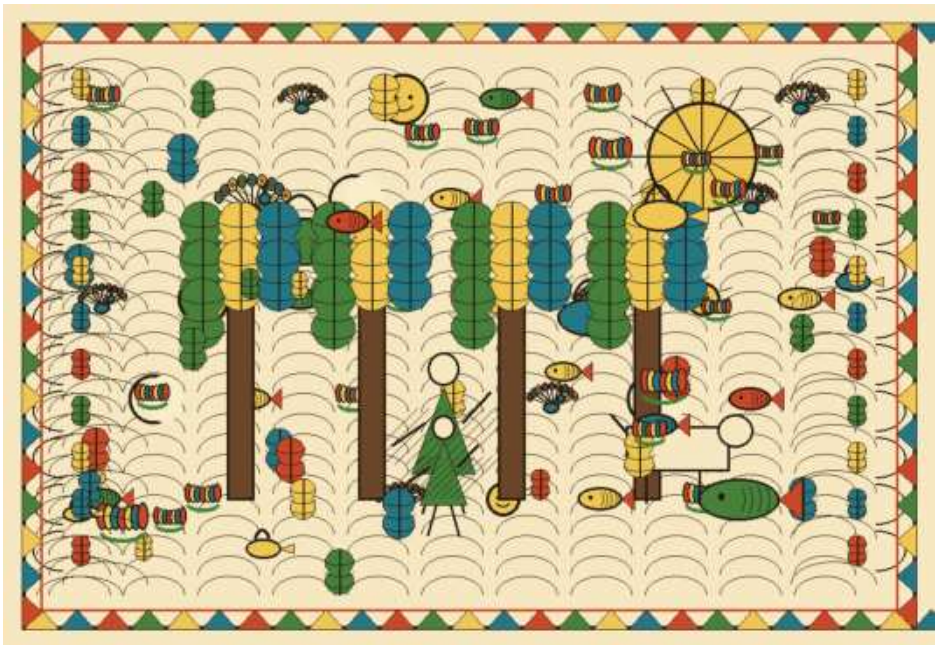
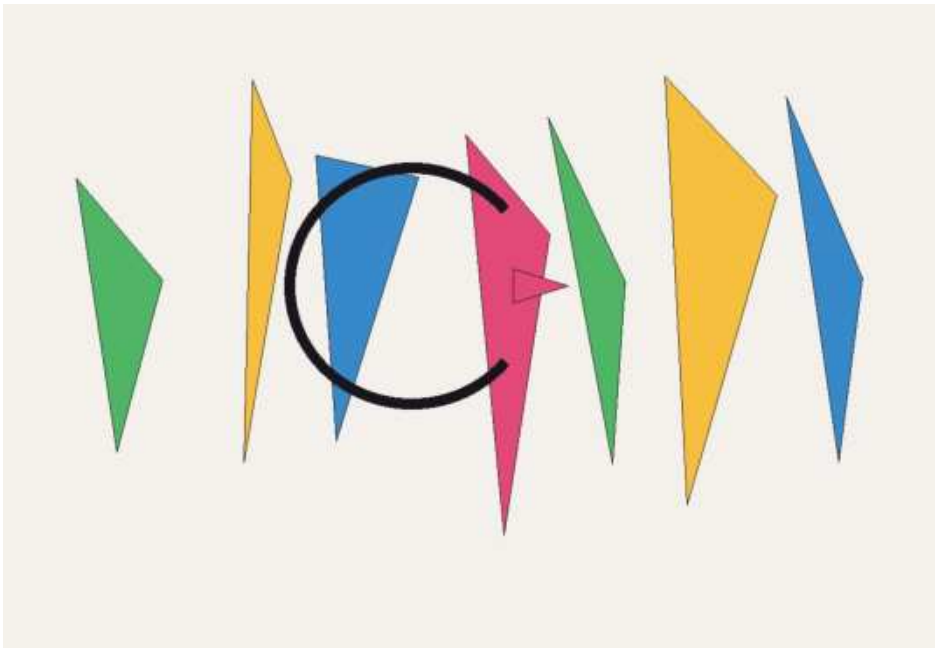
Picture 12

The merchant and the guards thought Mahua had given in. They mistook her stillness for surrender. But it was not surrender. It was her last plan to save herself.

Then, without any warning, Mahua jumped into the river current! That moment was the bravest and saddest turn in this story — a young girl's last choice for freedom.

Chapter 7: Courage in the Current

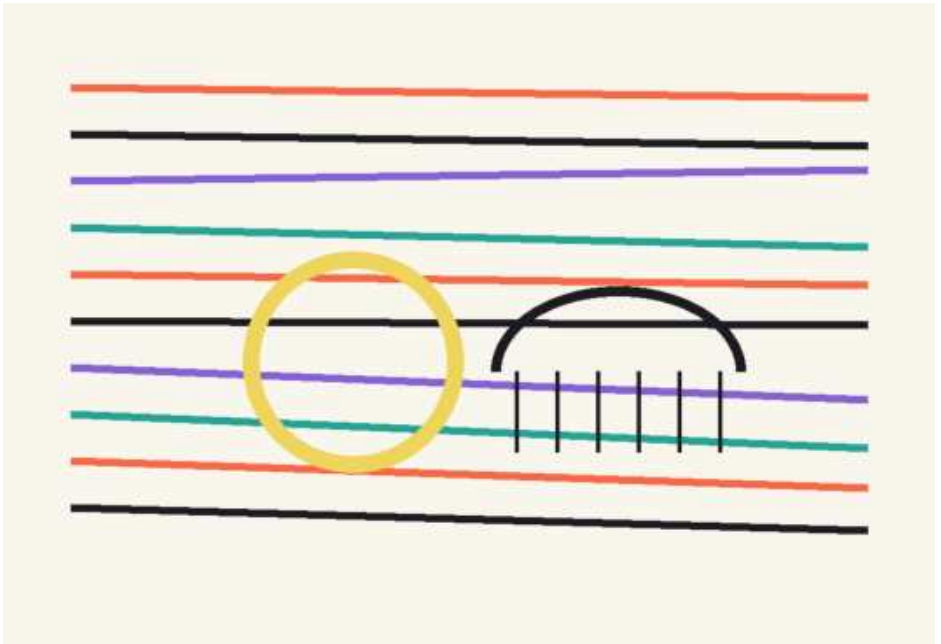




Picture 13

Mahua tried to swim against the current toward Morang — where her beloved waited with a boat of seven sails. This was her last hope, her last try — to reach love and free herself from being sold.

But the full river, the strong flow, and Mahua's tired body were all against her. Her courage was endless, but nature's power was greater than her strength.





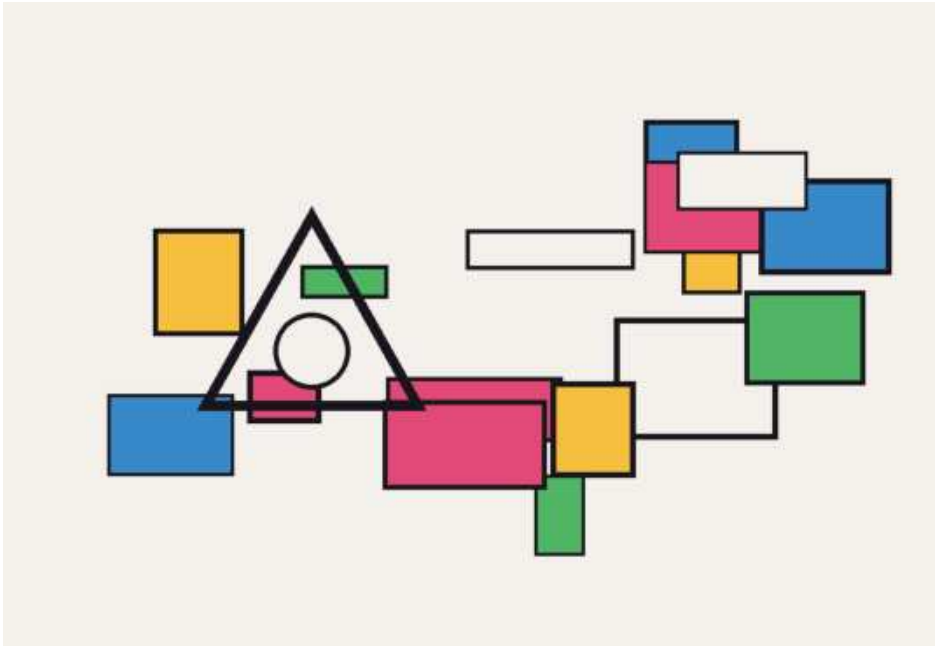
Picture 14

Then something unexpected happened. The merchant's young guard, who had secretly begun to love Mahua, also jumped into the Koshi current — to save her, or to stay with her.

But against the power of the river, both were helpless. Mahua and that guard both sank beneath the water. The ending was very sad — one love that never came true, and a new love that ended as soon as it began.

Chapter 8: The Ferry Girl Lives Forever

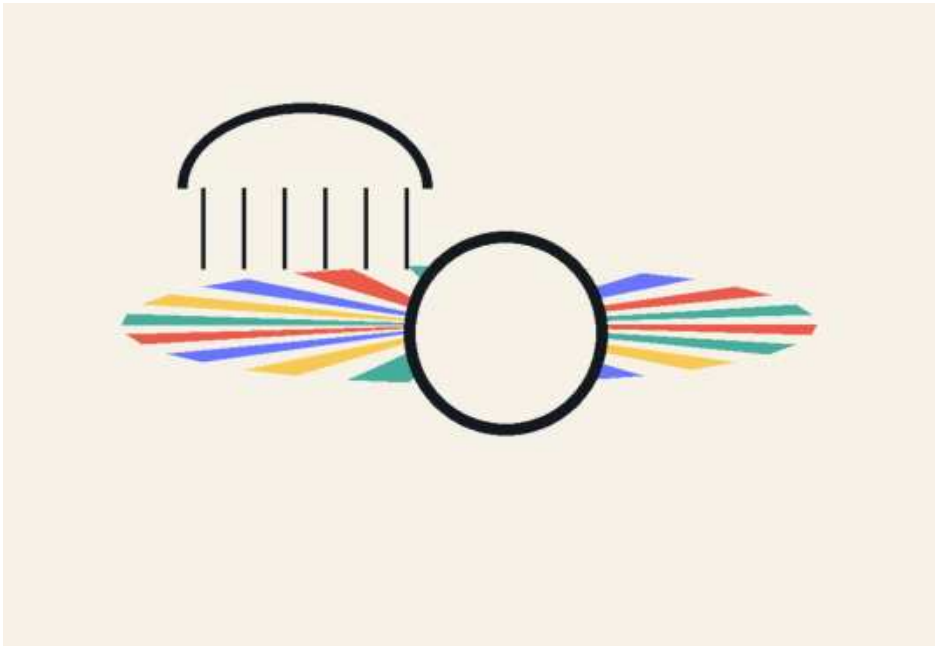




Picture 15

Mahua's story does not end here. Even now, in the monsoon currents of Saon and Bhadav, ferry workers sometimes see Mahua — a spirit who lives forever in the river.

She appears to some storyteller, and when he sees Mahua, the tale begins again: "There once was a girl named Mahua the ferry girl..." This circle of the story is a sign that she never truly dies.





Picture 16

In Mithila, Mahua's story has become a symbol of a woman's purity, courage, and sacrifice. She was a girl neglected in her own home and sold by her mother — yet she never gave up her self-respect or her love.

Even today, on monsoon nights by the Parman and Koshi rivers, people stay mindful of Mahua's memory. They sing her songs and honor her sacrifice. Mahua the ferry girl — a girl from a poor home who became immortal through her death.

The End

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Chechan

*A Hero Story of Strength and Love — The Folk God of
the Dom People*



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: The First Maithili Fortnightly E-Magazine
(since 2000)

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: Strong Chechan Maharaj

Chechan Maharaj was a folk god of the Dom community. He was very strong — a hero whose strength and courage are still remembered in the folk tales of Mithila.

This is a story of a test of strength, a victory of love, and at last a great fight. With his power, Chechan beat a fierce pig and a strong Dom leader named Manikchand. He won both love and honour.

Chapter 1: Talk of Sahidapur

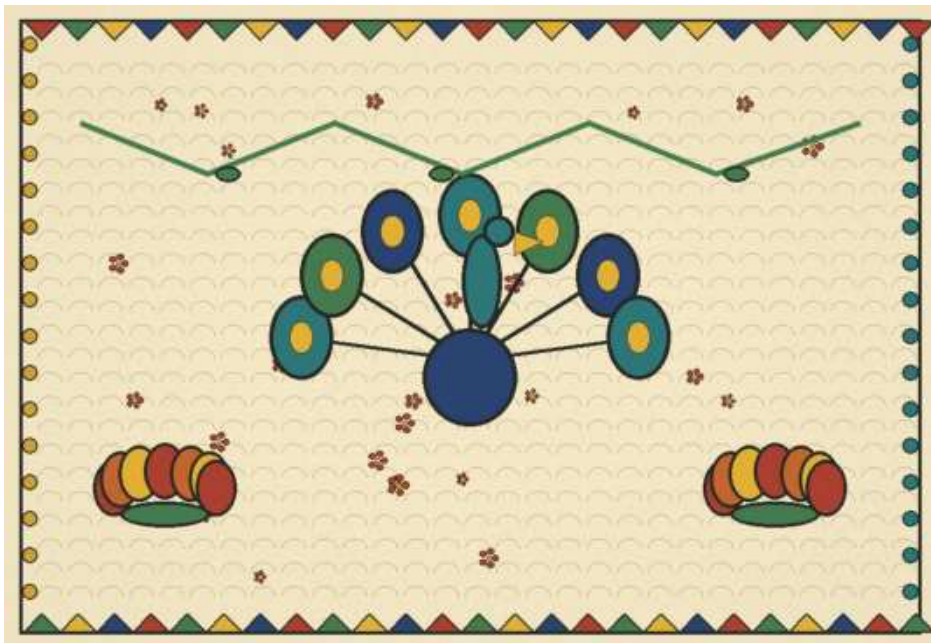




Picture 1

One day, the friends of Chechan Maharaj told him an exciting story. When they had gone to Sahidapur to sell bamboo baskets and mats, they heard people talk about the bravery of the Dom leader Manikchand.

Manikchand had made a wrestling ground. There he kept a big drum. The drum was a sign of challenge. It called brave people to come and fight.

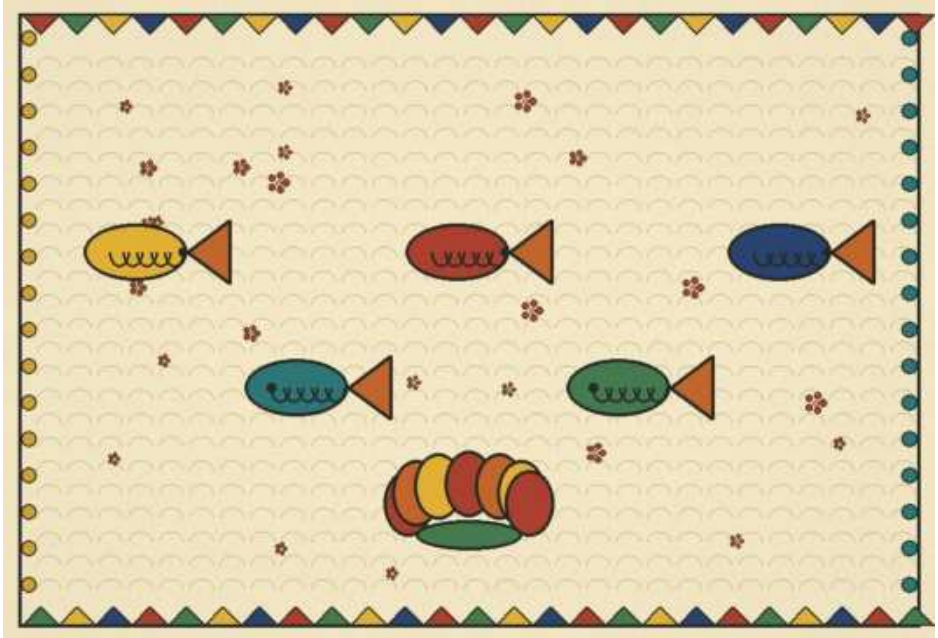


Picture 2

Anyone who hit that drum had to fight Manikchand's pet pig named Chatiya! This was no ordinary animal. Chatiya was very strong and fierce.

Manikchand had made a promise. Anyone who beat Chatiya would be fit to fight Manikchand. And anyone who beat Manikchand could marry Manikchand's sister, Panma! This was a rare chance. But until now, no one had been able to beat Chatiya.

Chapter 2: The Courage of the Chillum

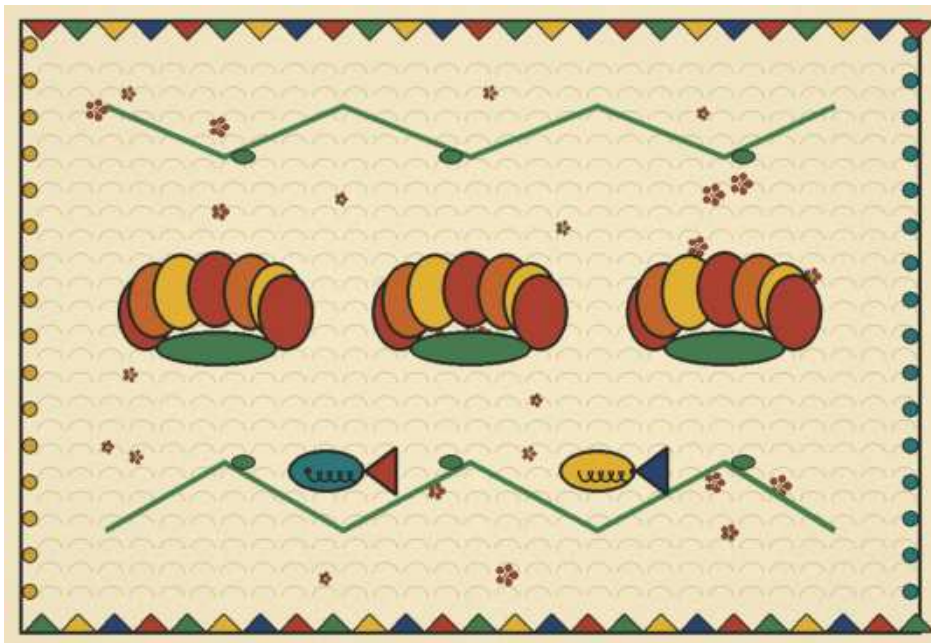




Picture 3

Days went by. One day Chechan Maharaj took his heavy sword, which weighed five paseri, and set out for Sahidapur. He was ready to face that drum of challenge.

Before he hit the drum, Chechan Maharaj did something special. He asked an old woman for fire. He filled his chillum with fire and a special flower paste called medaniphool, and smoked it all!

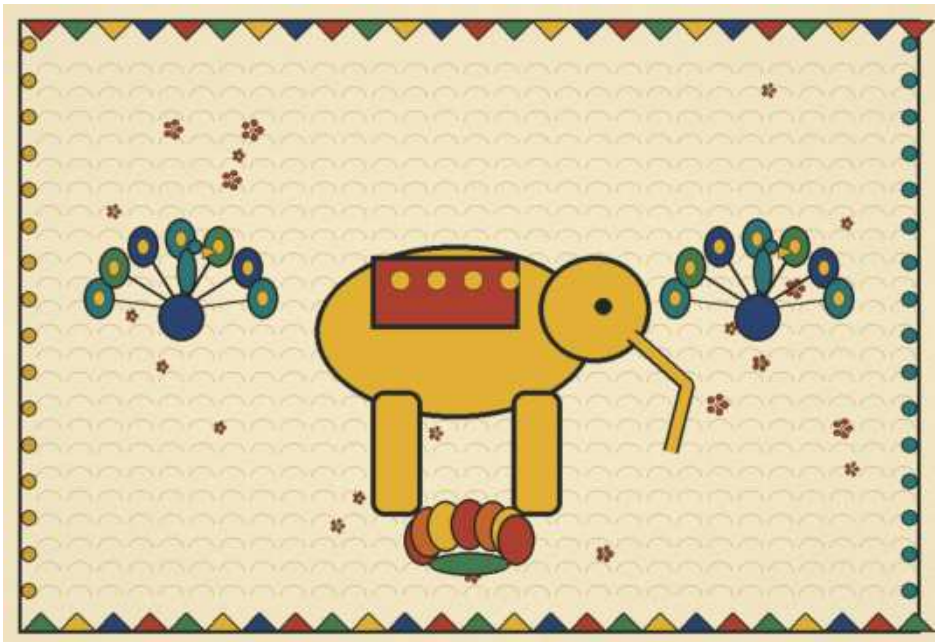


Picture 4

This showed Chechan's great courage and confidence. Before a big challenge, he made his spirit strong. He got ready in body and mind.

A little dizzy from the smoke, but still in full control, Chechan hit the drum hard! The sound rang through all of Sahidapur. He had accepted the challenge. There was no turning back now.

Chapter 3: The Fight with Chatiya

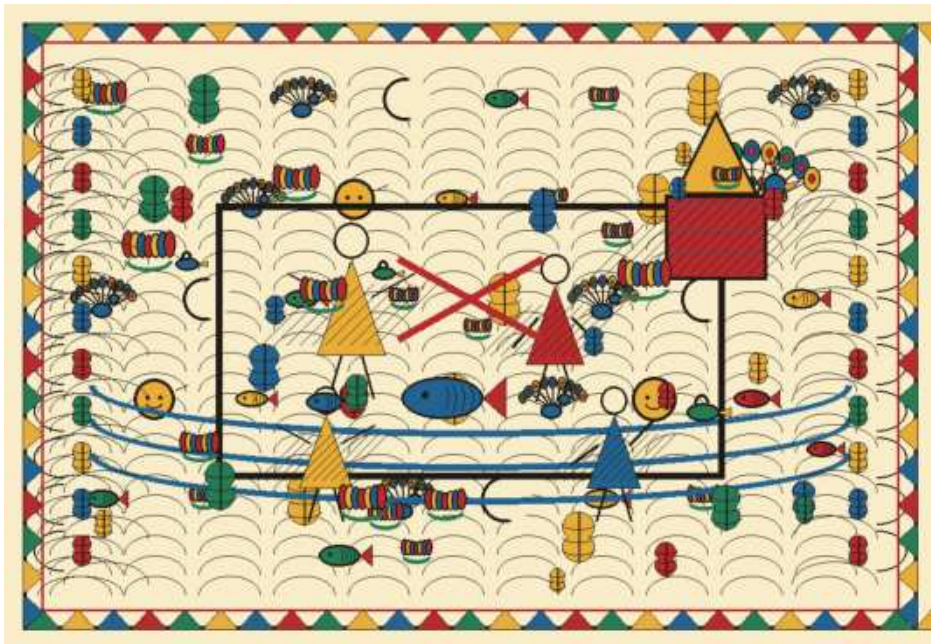




Picture 5

Manikchand saw Chechan and at once called out to Chatiya — the signal for battle. Chatiya, the fierce pig, came running and showed his strength.

But to everyone's surprise, Chatiya fell down when he saw Chechan! This was strange. Maybe Chechan's bright look, or his great confidence, scared the pig.



Picture 6

Panma and Manikchand saw this and urged Chatiya on. They wanted their pet to fight again. Chatiya ran and jumped at Chechan. The big moment had come.

But Chechan was ready. He caught both of Chatiya's legs and tore them apart! This showed amazing strength and skill. The pig no one else could beat, Chechan defeated in a single move.

Chapter 4: The Wrestling Match with Manikchand

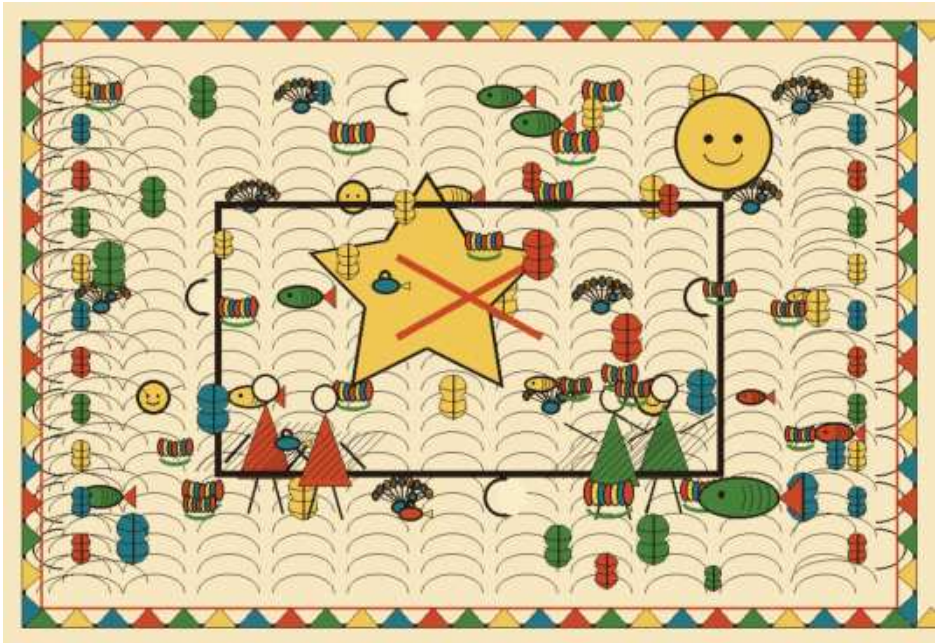




Picture 7

After Chatiya's defeat, the next step began. As promised, Manikchand himself came forward to fight Chechan. This was the big match between two strong warriors.

Manikchand and Chechan had a fierce wrestling match. Strength, skill, and willpower clashed. Both showed all their power. Before the crowd, they put on a thrilling fight.



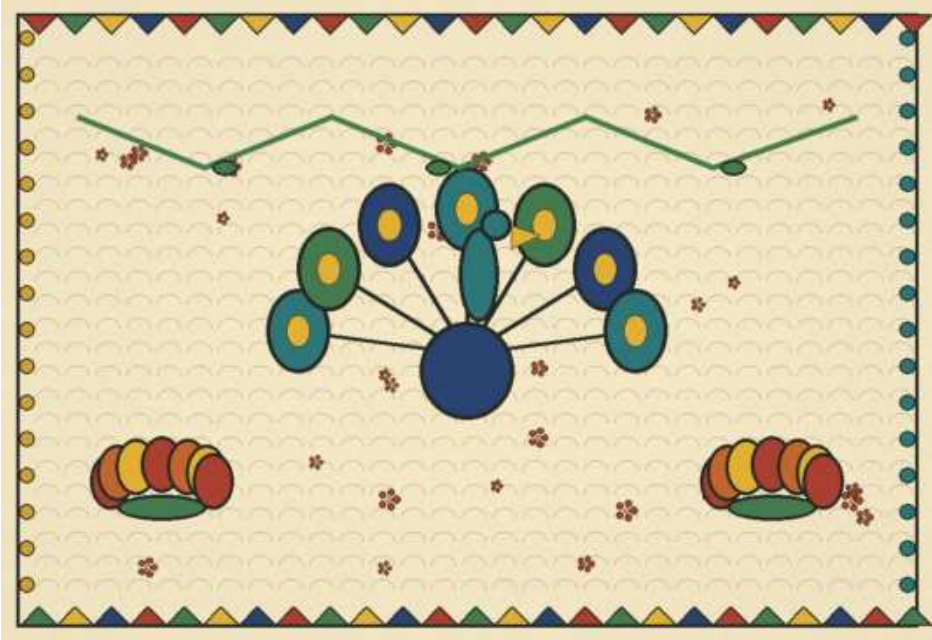
Picture 8

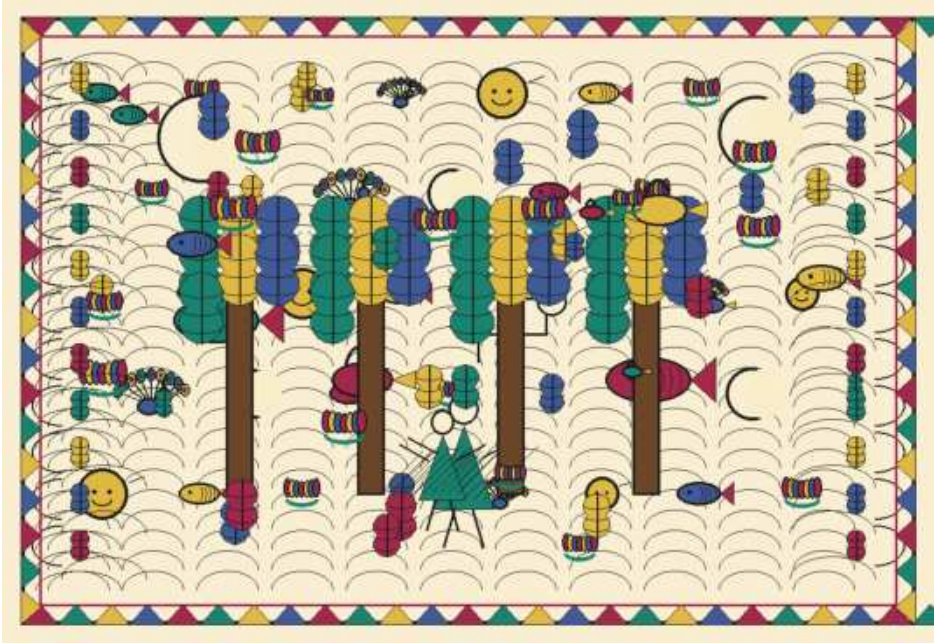
At last Chechan won. He threw Manikchand down! This victory was the greatest proof of Chechan's strength and courage. The

challenge no one had finished before, Chechan completed with success.

Manikchand accepted his defeat, but he was not sad. He was happy! His promise was kept, and he got the chance to give his sister's hand to a true hero.

Chapter 5: The Wedding of Panma

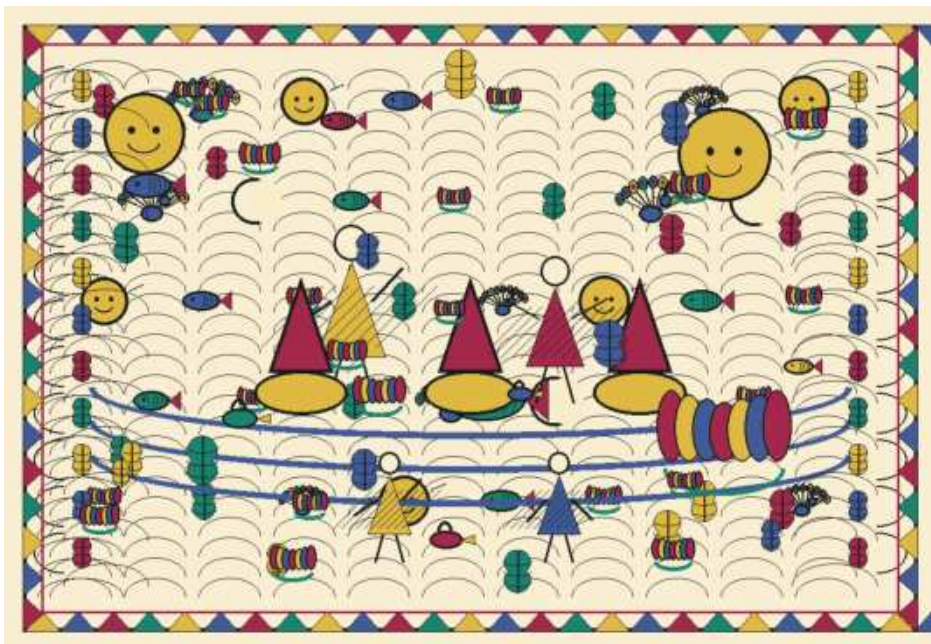
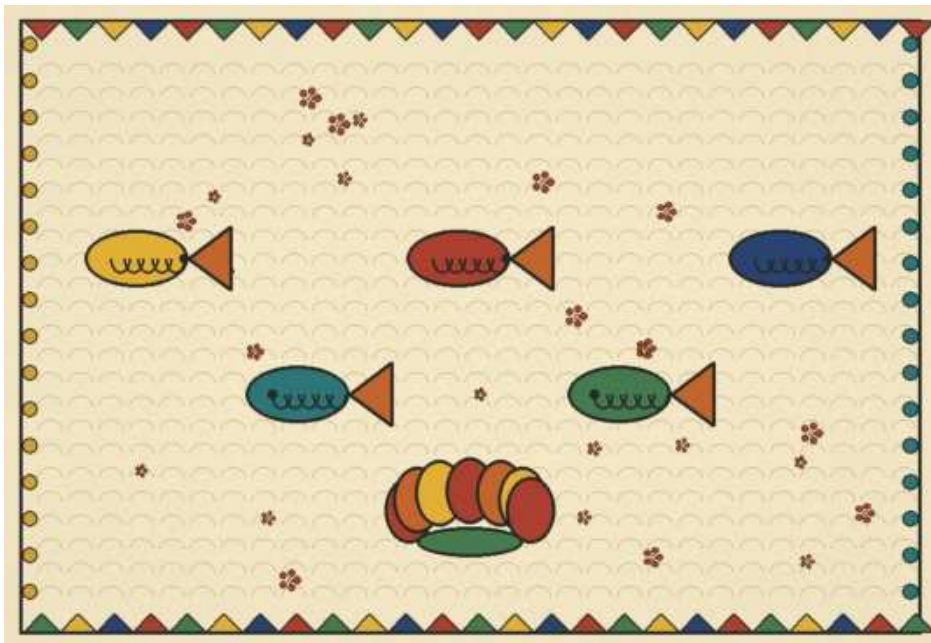




Picture 9

With great joy, Manikchand arranged the wedding of his sister Panma with Chechan — just as he had promised, and in honour of Chechan's great bravery. This wedding was the sweet fruit of Chechan's victory.

The meeting of Panma and Chechan was like the happy ending of a hero's tale. The prize for strength and courage came as love and a home. Chechan was no longer only a warrior. He became a householder too.

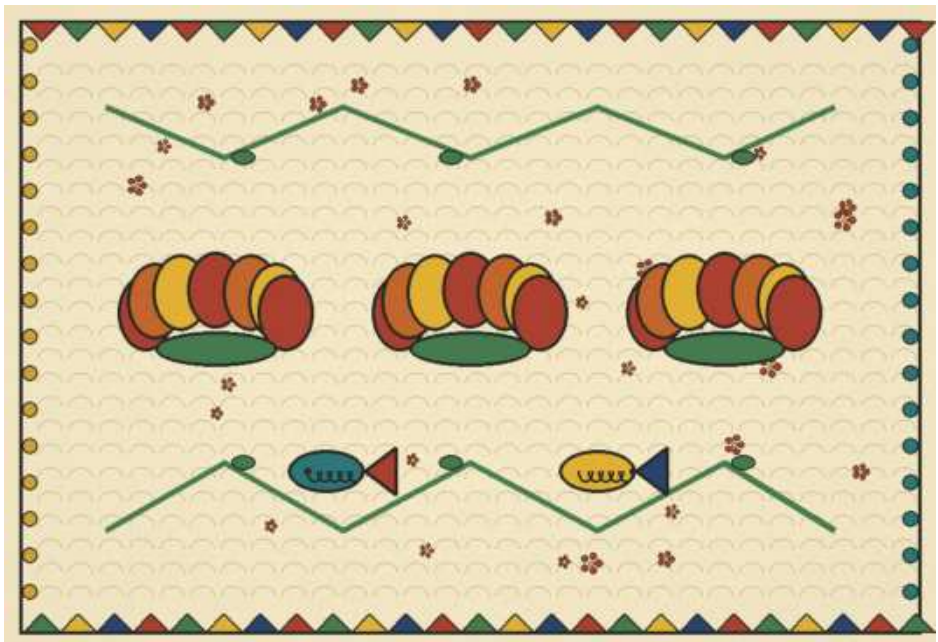


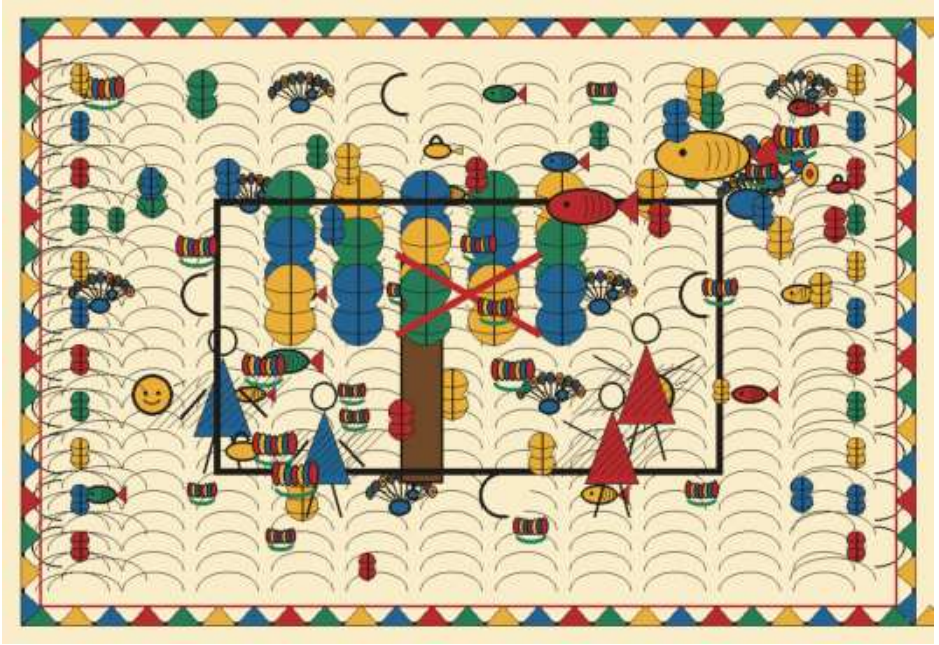
Picture 10

The contest between Manikchand and Chechan did not turn into hate. It became respect and a family bond. This showed the Dom community's tradition of bravery and honour.

But the story does not end here. Another challenge waited in Chechan's life. He would have to face it in the middle of his new married life — a fight with another powerful rival.

Chapter 6: Krishnaram's Bamboo Grove

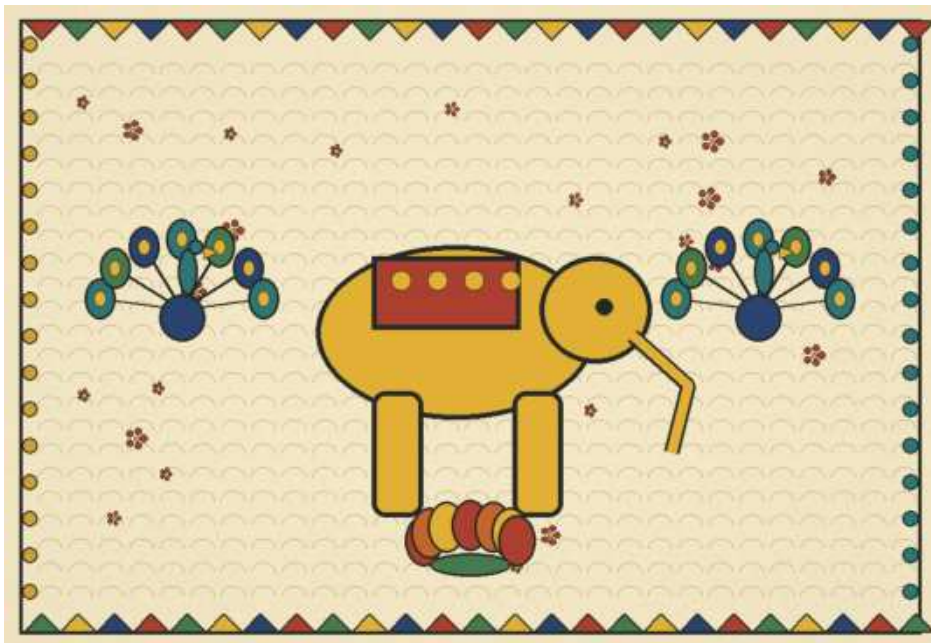




Picture 11

Days passed. After the wedding, Chechan began his new life. But he was still brave and fearless. He started cutting bamboo from other people's groves — maybe because he needed work, or maybe from old habit.

Once, Chechan cut a lot of bamboo from the grove of Krishnaram, the folk god of the Yadav people — without asking, or perhaps thinking he had the right. This act later caused a new fight.

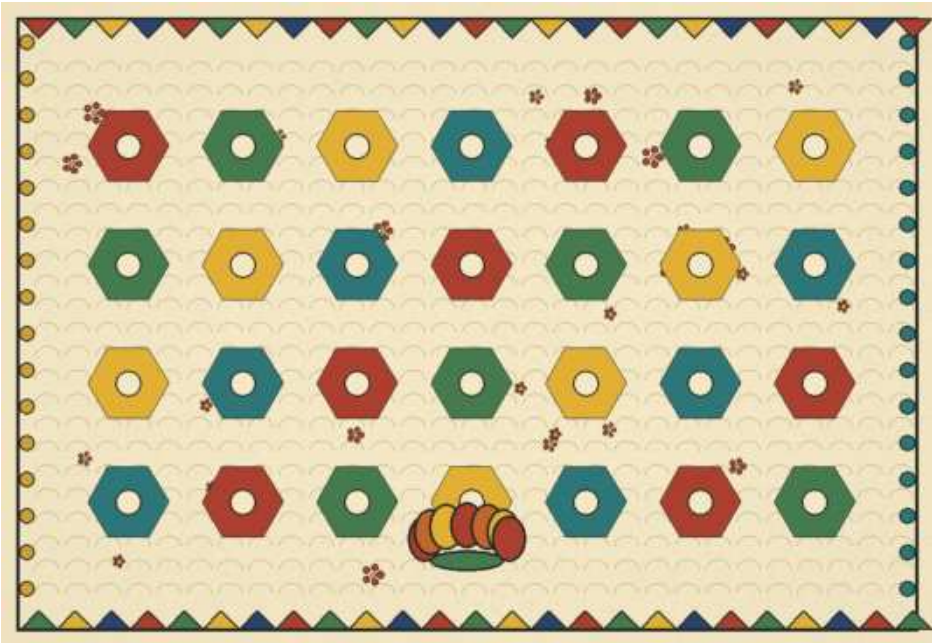
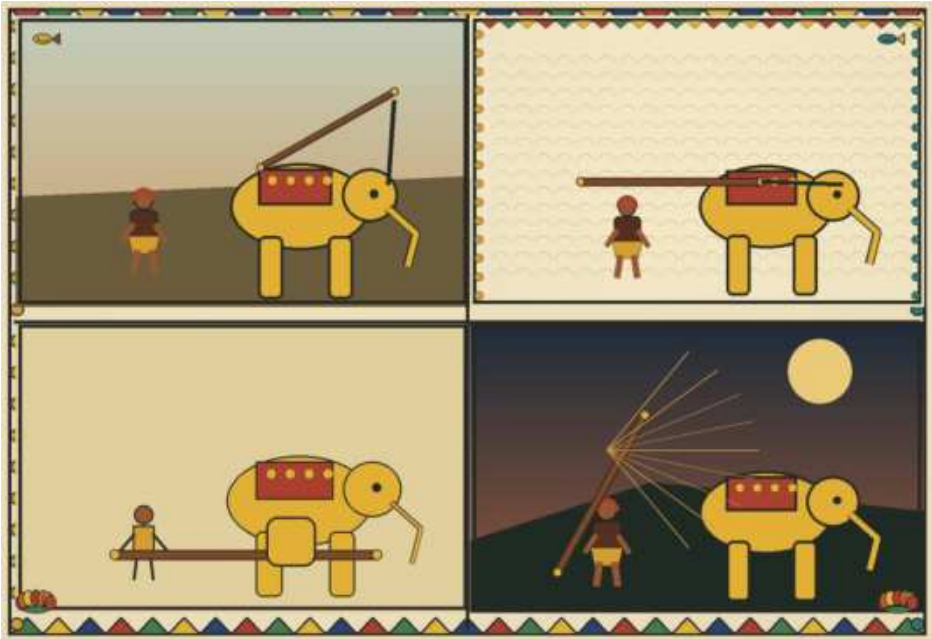


Picture 12

When Krishnaram heard of this, he grew angry. He climbed onto his golden elephant and came to Chechan — for revenge or for an answer.

Krishnaram found Chechan asleep with Panma in a mango orchard. It was a quiet, peaceful moment that was about to turn into a tense meeting.

Chapter 7: The Elephant Shows Its Power

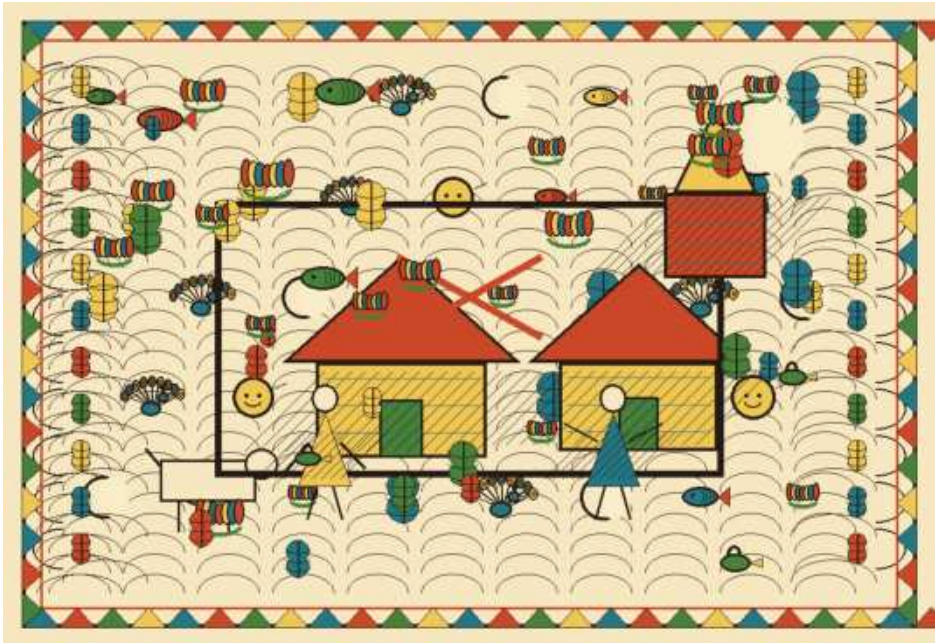




Picture 13

Krishnaram's elephant, Subaran, was very strong and obedient. He understood his master's anger and acted at once. With his trunk, he lifted Chechan's heavy five-paseri sword.

Subaran placed that heavy sword on Chechan's neck. It was a powerful act — both a sign and a real hold — meant to limit Chechan's freedom and strength.



Picture 14

Then Subaran put his huge foot on that same sword. He held Chechan tight so he could not move at all. This showed the

elephant's great power. For any ordinary person, it would seem impossible to face.

This moment was the start of a new and serious challenge in Chechan's life. The hero who had beaten strong foes like Chatiya and Manikchand now stood before the vast strength of an elephant. Here the tale takes a new turn. In the memory of Mithila, Chechan lives on for his fearless courage and his winning struggle — a hero who, from the bamboo market to the elephant's show of power, met every challenge with unmatched bravery.

The End

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Gariban Baba

How an accidental mistake angered the goddess, and how a devotee's faith brought immortality



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: The First Maithili Fortnightly E-Magazine
(since 2000)

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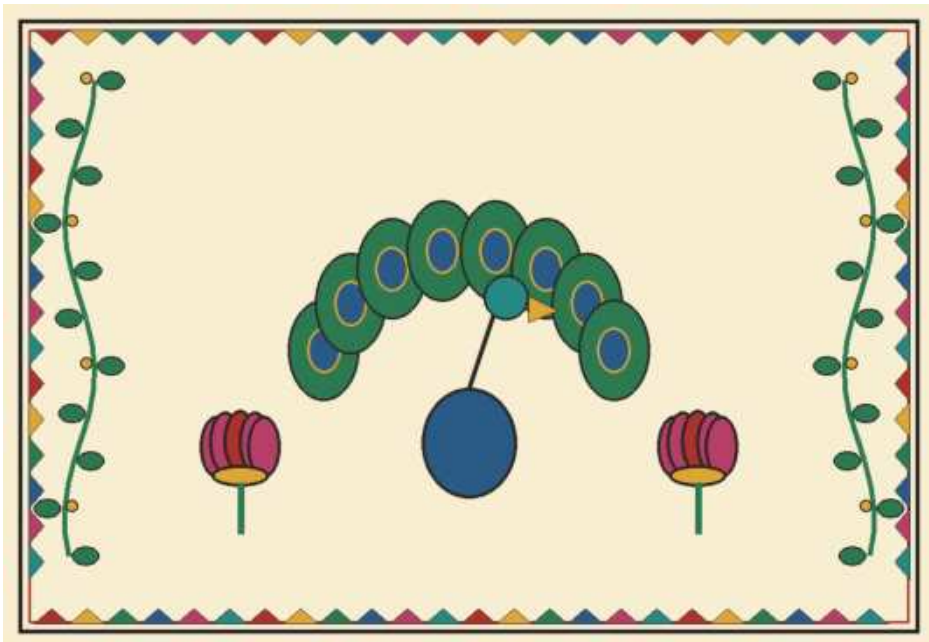
DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: Three Friends

In the village of Udhra by the Kamla River lived three friends — Barham Thakur the Brahmin, Ghasi Yadav, and Gariban the washerman. In those days every village had a wrestling ground, and these three friends wrestled and trained there.

This story is about a small mistake made by accident. That mistake had a big result — the goddess became angry, and in the end, through deep faith, someone became immortal.

Chapter 1: A Mistake by Accident

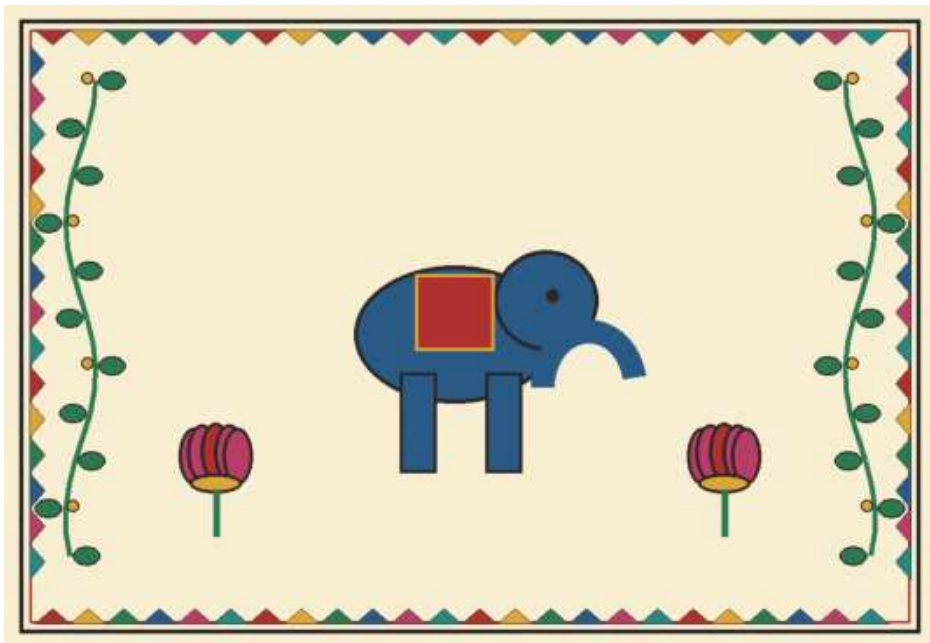




Picture 1

Near the wrestling ground of Udhra village stood the holy platform of Mother Kamla — a sacred place where village people prayed with love and respect.

One day, during wrestling practice, Gariban's foot accidentally touched that holy platform. He did not mean to do wrong. It was only an accidental touch.

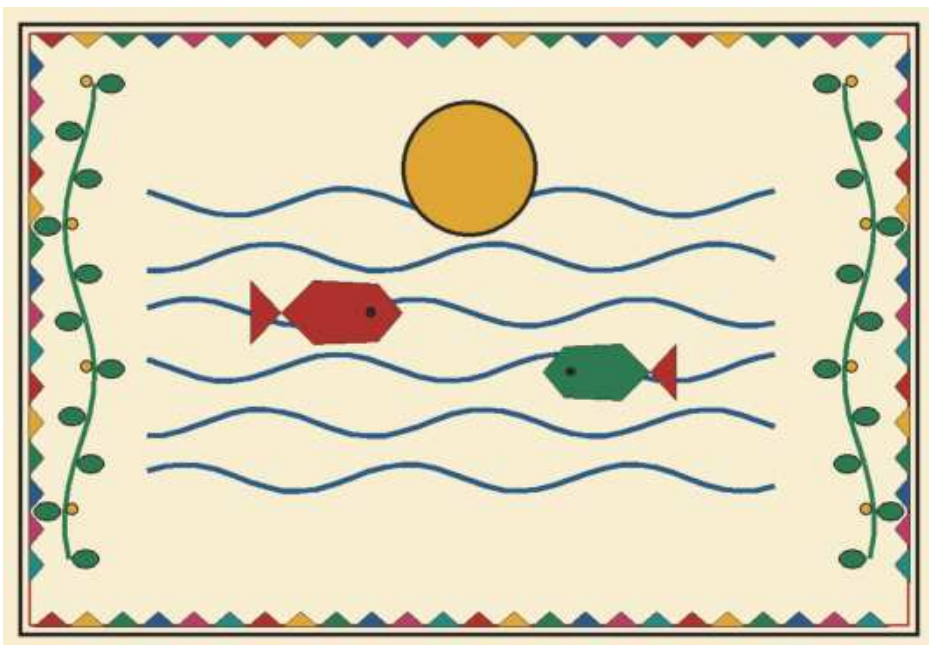


Picture 2

But this small accident made Mother Kamla very angry! The goddess's anger was serious. Even though Gariban meant no harm, disrespect to a holy place was not forgiven.

Angry Mother Kamla brought a tigress from Indra's court — a powerful, fearsome animal to punish him. This decision took Gariban's fate down a scary path.

Chapter 2: Fight with the Tigress

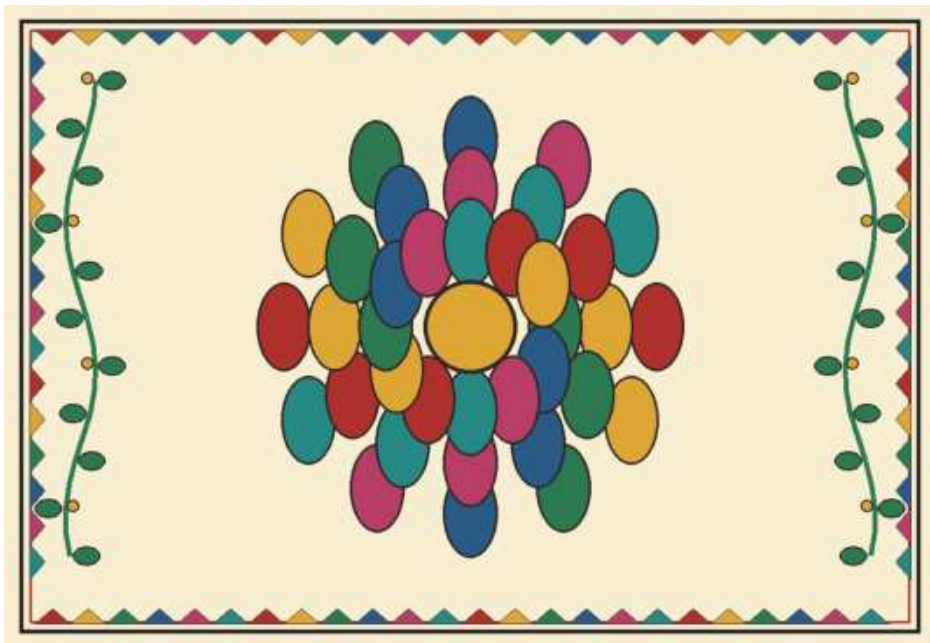




Picture 3

At the wrestling ground, Gariban had to fight the tigress. The place for ordinary wrestling became a fight for life and death. Gariban was skilled at wrestling, but now he faced a tigress filled with divine power.

The fight was not fair — a man's strength against a tigress driven by the goddess's anger. Gariban's wrestling skill was not enough against this special enemy.

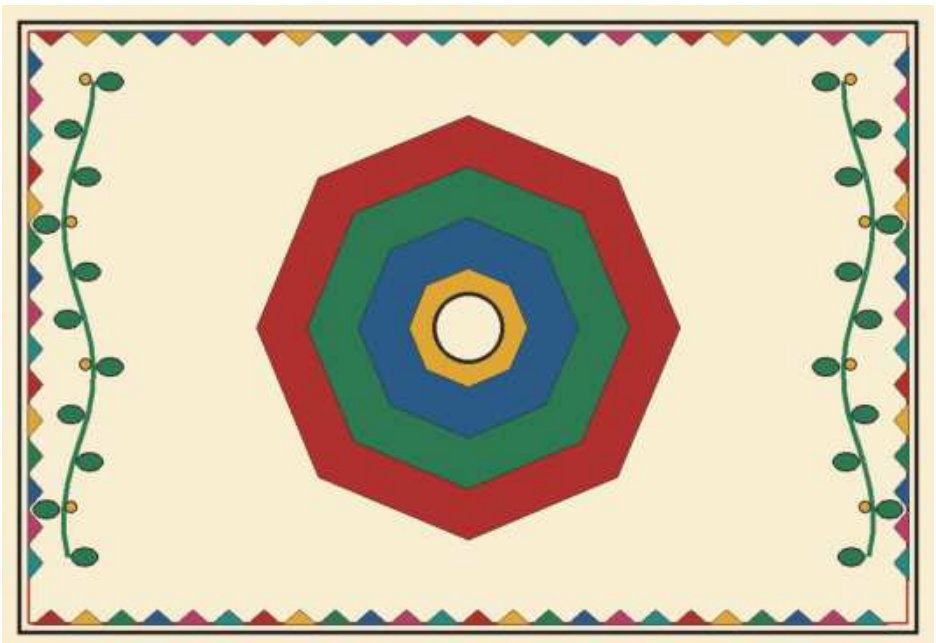


Picture 4

At last Gariban was killed — such a heavy price for one accidental mistake! The people of the village felt sad and shocked. An innocent man had met such a sad end.

Gariban's body was thrown into the Kamla stream — the final result of the goddess's anger. Even his body did not get a proper burial with respect.

Chapter 3: Disrespect by a Washerman

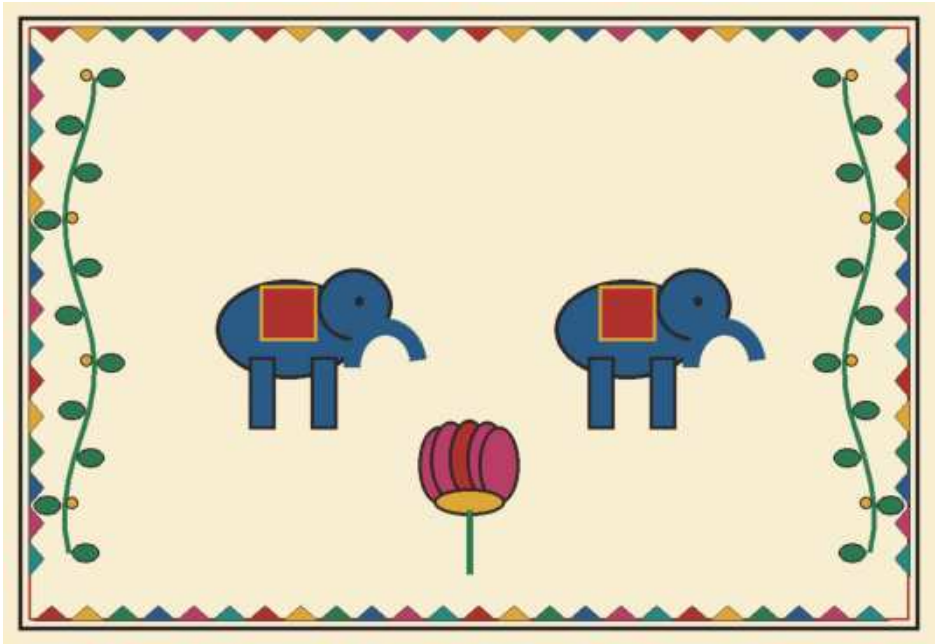




Picture 5

Gariban's body floated down the Kamla stream and reached a washerman's ghat, where a washerman was cleaning clothes. This ordinary scene of daily work suddenly became an unhappy moment.

The washerman found it hard to clean clothes — the body was in his way. This small trouble would lead to a serious result.



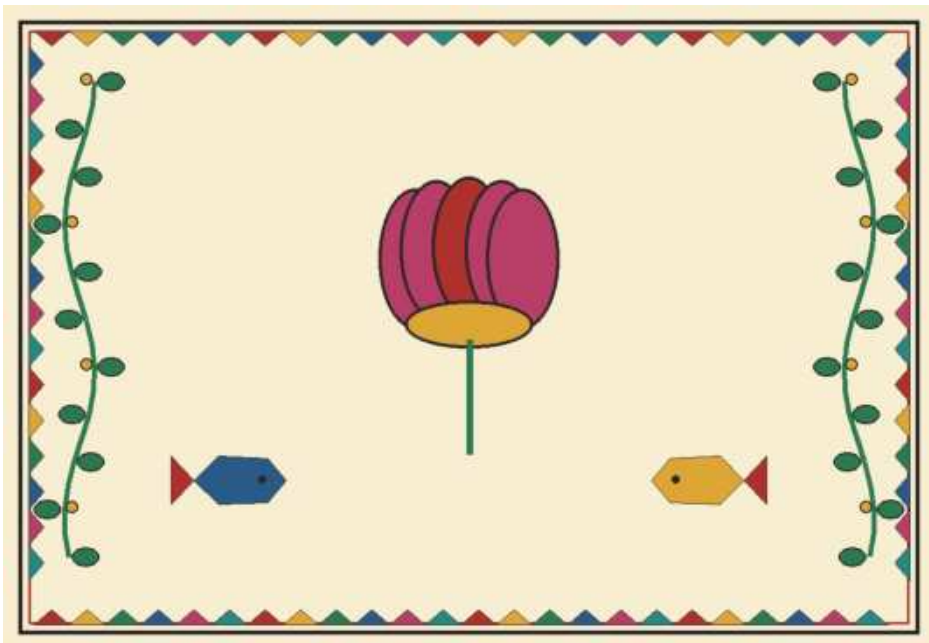
Picture 6

The washerman — without thinking that this was the body of a respected person — pushed the body away with a stick so it

floated to the other side! This was disrespectful. The washerman meant no real harm; he only wanted to clear his work space.

This was the second accidental mistake — the first was Gariban's foot touching the holy platform. This new mistake would bring a new result that would affect the whole washerman community.

Chapter 4: The Wife's Cry

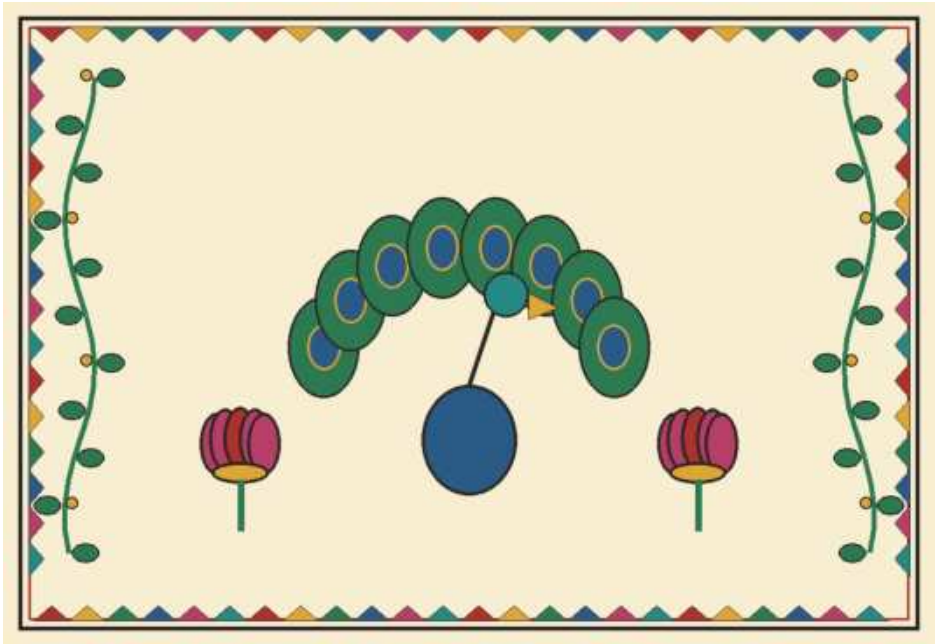




Picture 7

Meanwhile, Gariban's wife heard the news of her husband's death and began to cry in deep sorrow — a wife's unbearable grief at the untimely death of her life partner.

In her sorrow, the wife prayed to God — deep faith mixed with despair, her only hope. This prayer was her last hope for justice for her husband.



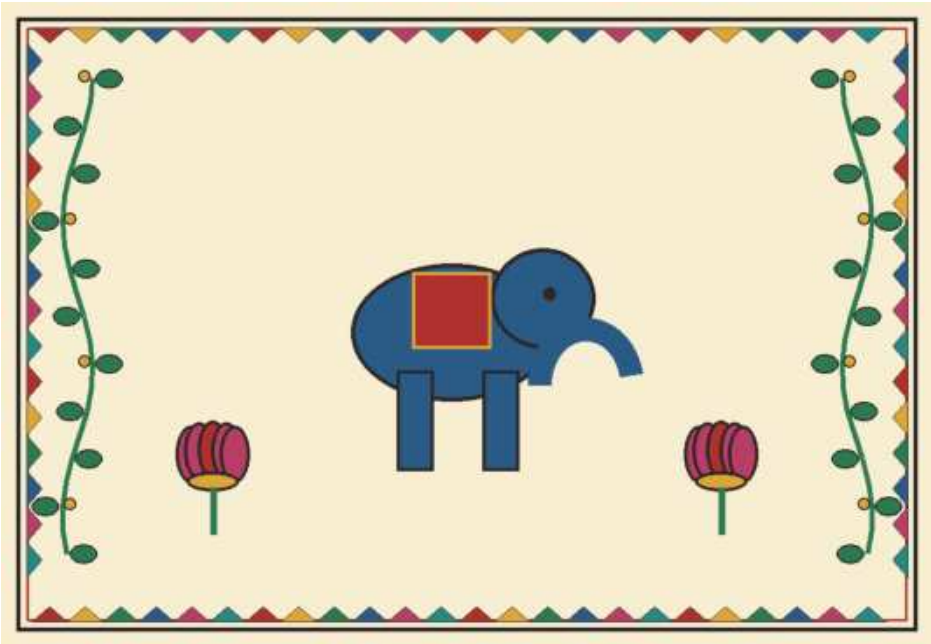
Picture 8

Then, by God's grace, a wonderful thing happened — Gariban's soul entered another person's body, and that person began to

act as a devotee filled with a divine spirit. Even after death, the soul became active again to seek justice.

In this devotee-state, Gariban's soul got the chance to tell the story of his pain, the disrespect shown to him, and his unfair death — the voice of a departed soul speaking among the living.

Chapter 5: The Curse and the Warning

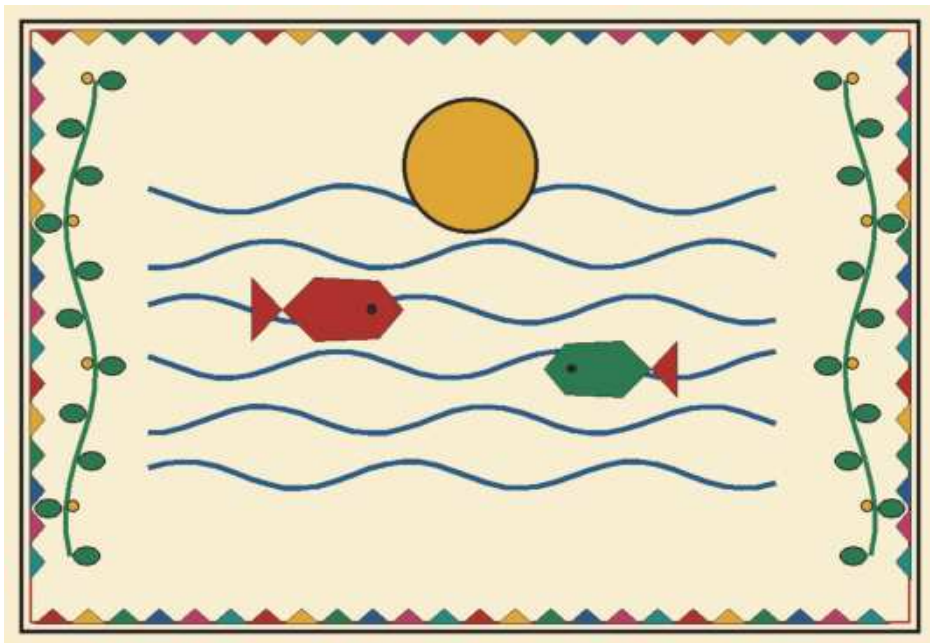




Picture 9

The devotee (the body with Gariban's soul) said — "One washerman disrespected him, so he gives a curse!" — even after death, the memory of disrespect and the demand for justice.

The curse was clear — "All the washermen must join together, take his body out of the Kamla stream, and give it a proper funeral. If not, the clothes in every washerman's kiln will burn!" — a warning to the whole washerman community.



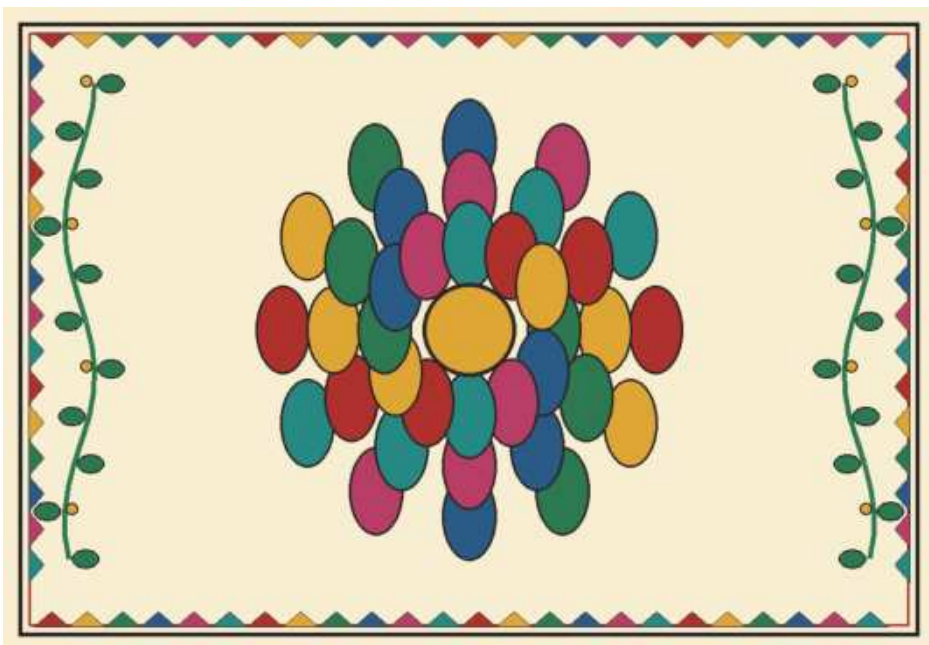
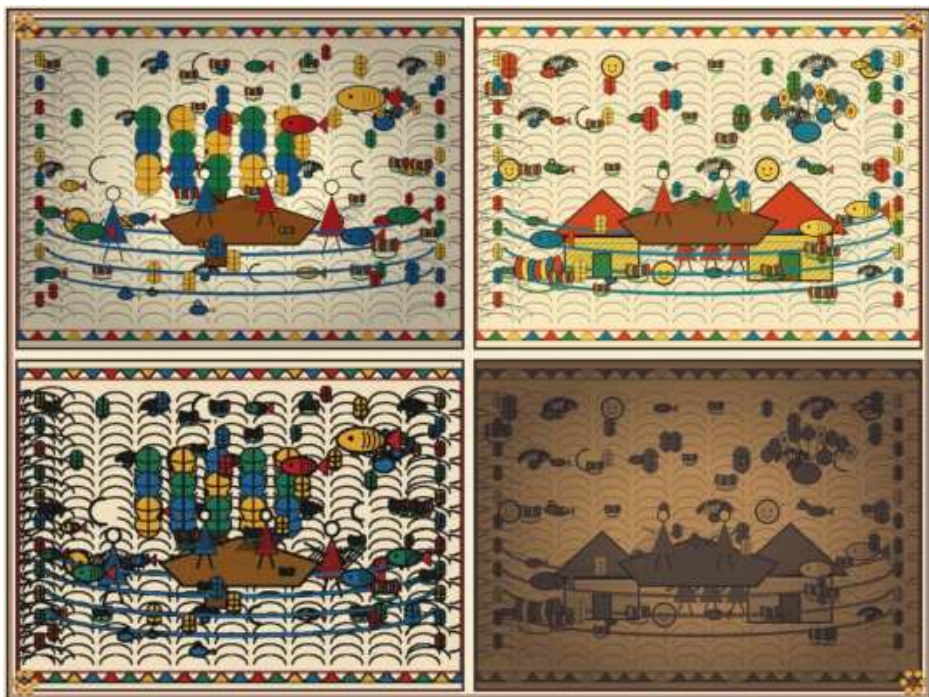
Picture 10

This curse was fair and full of meaning — the body that was pushed away without respect needed a proper funeral;

otherwise the whole washerman community's way of earning a living (washing and drying clothes) would be destroyed.

This curse carried a serious message — disrespect to the dead, even by accident, can bring serious results. The curse showed how important respect and proper last rites are.

Chapter 6: Collective Atonement

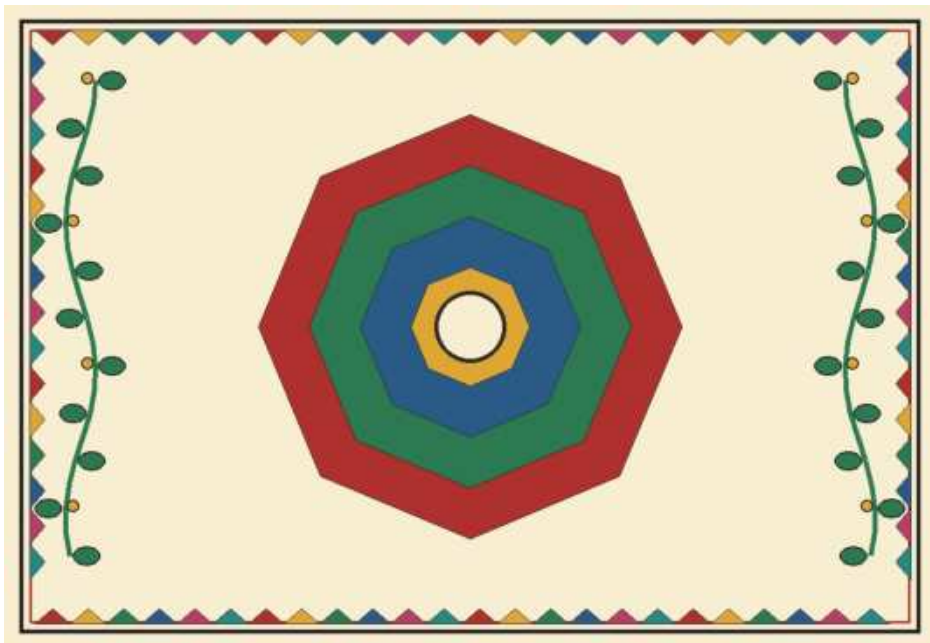




Picture 11

Everyone in the washerman community heard the curse and acted at once — whether from fear or from good sense, they all jumped into the stream and began to search for Gariban's body.

Together they found the body and gave it a proper funeral — at last Gariban received the respect he deserved, even after death.

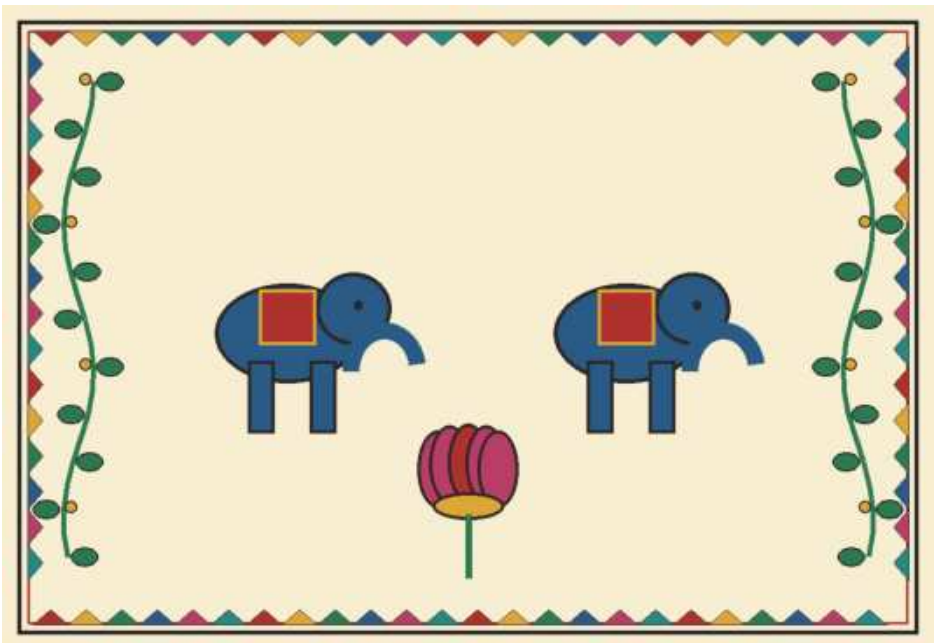


Picture 12

This shared atonement showed the unity of the washerman community — fixing a mistake together, accepting shared responsibility, and trying to avoid future trouble.

After the funeral, the curse lost its power — the washermen's kilns stayed safe, and Gariban's soul found peace. Justice and respect were restored at last.

Chapter 7: Protector of the Kiln

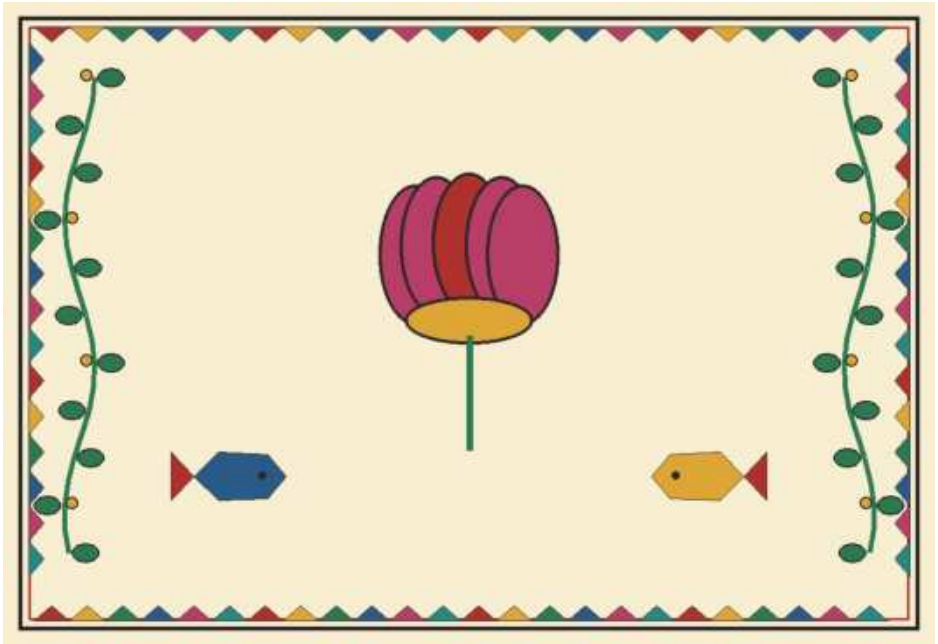




Picture 13

From that day on, Gariban Baba has protected the clothes at the kiln — a simple man killed because of an accidental mistake became, in the end, a guardian deity.

This change was wonderful — Gariban, who himself suffered an unfair death, now became the protector of the very washerman community whose member had once disrespected his body.



Picture 14

This story gives a deep message of forgiveness and change — even after injustice and disrespect, shared atonement and

respect can heal the bond, and the one who suffered can become the protector.

Even today, the memory of Gariban Baba lives on in the washerman community — protector of the kiln, guardian of the clothes, a folk deity whose story shows the full circle of an accidental mistake, the goddess's anger, disrespect, a curse, and finally shared atonement and immortality.

The End

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Alphabet Learning: Ankita

Alphabet Journey with Ankita



Gajendra Thakur

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Editor, Videha: The First Maithili Fortnightly E-Magazine (since
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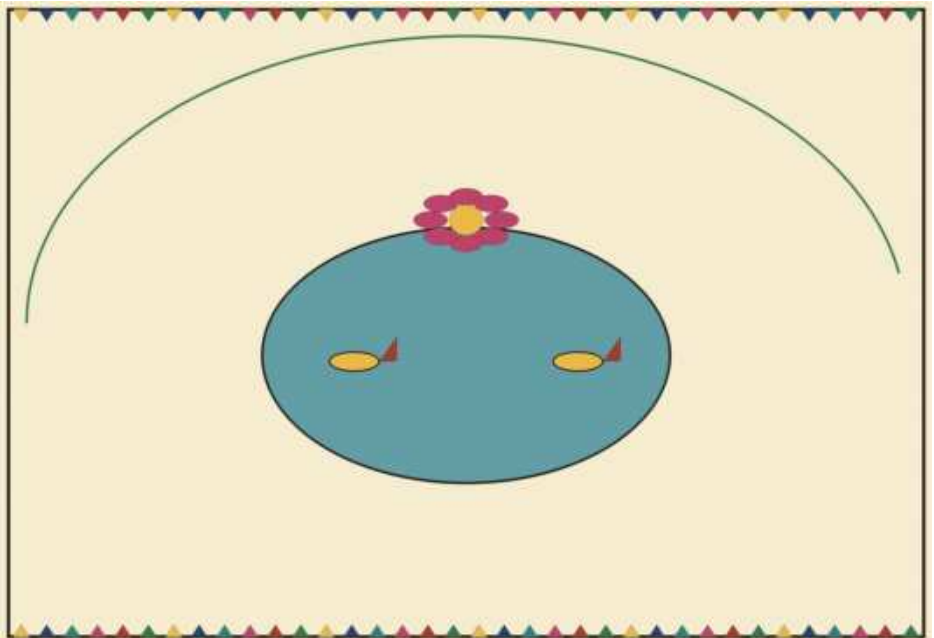
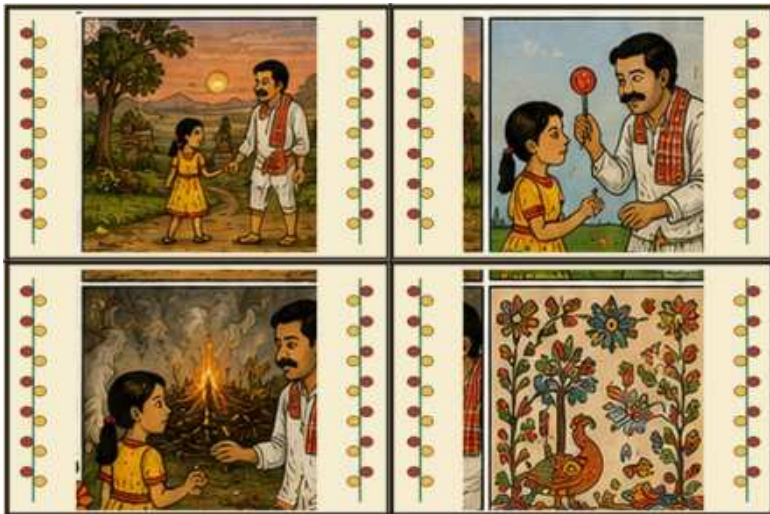
DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: Ankita and Her Father

This book is different from other children's stories. It helps children learn the Maithili alphabet. Little Ankita goes on a walk with her father. In each chapter, the words begin with letters from one group of the alphabet.

The first chapter uses words with 'A', the next with 'Ka', then 'Cha', and so on. Ankita's evening walk becomes a full journey through the alphabet. At the end of each chapter there are questions and answers, so children can learn both the words and their meanings.

Chapter 1: The Deep Red Evening (A Words)



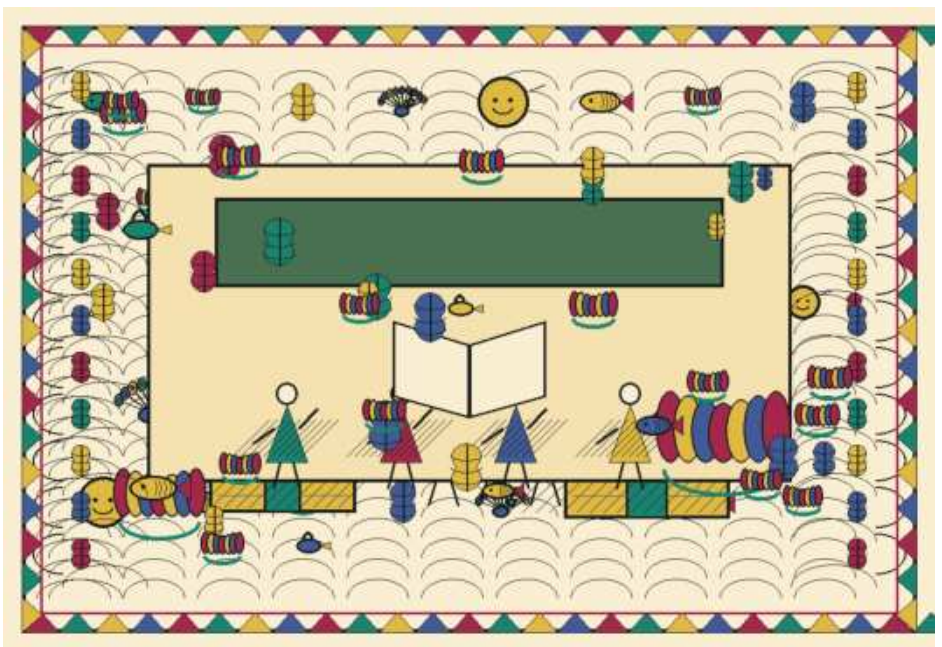
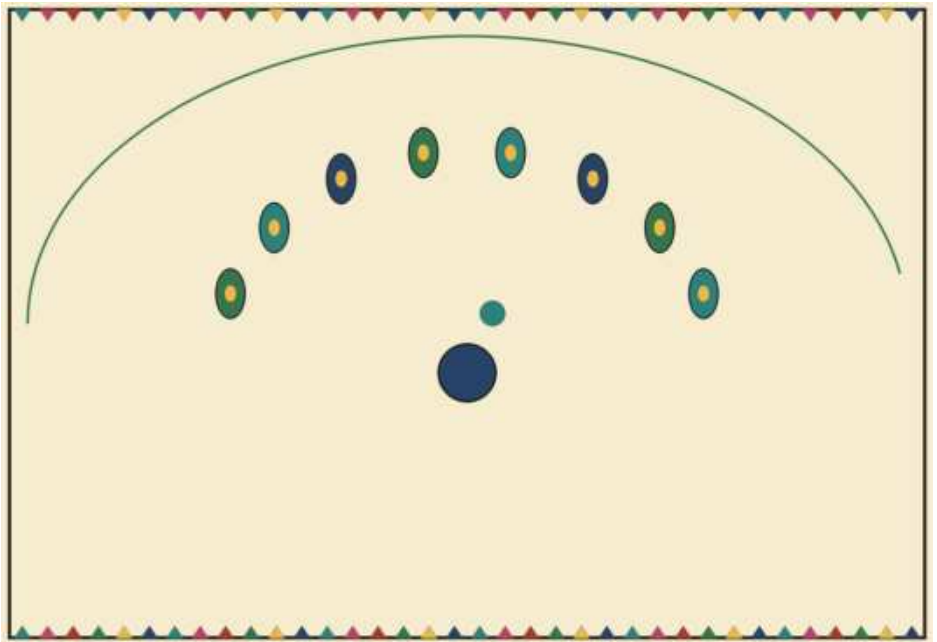


Picture 1

It was a deep red evening. Ankita stretched and twisted.

Her father said, "Stop dawdling! Come on, hurry up!"

Ankita grew very tired. As she walked, her feet began to hurt — it was a long road for such little feet.



Picture 2

On the road she saw a boy with a red candy stick. "Please buy me a red candy stick!" Father said, "Ankita, do not eat junk snacks." But Ankita was stubborn. "No! I really want this!" Father laughed and said, "You are so greedy! You just ate so many things!" Still, Father bought her the red candy stick.

On the road Ankita saw a big fire. "Why is this fire burning?" she asked. Father said, "To clear the bushes and scrub." Ankita looked carefully and said, "The hard tough trees still did not burn!"

Questions and Answers

Question: What is the little girl's name?

Answer: अंकिता

Question: What was the evening like?

Answer: अकादरुण

Question: While walking, Ankita became...

Answer: अकच्छ

Question: Father told her not to eat...

Answer: अकर-धकर

Question: What word was used for the fire that burns bushes?

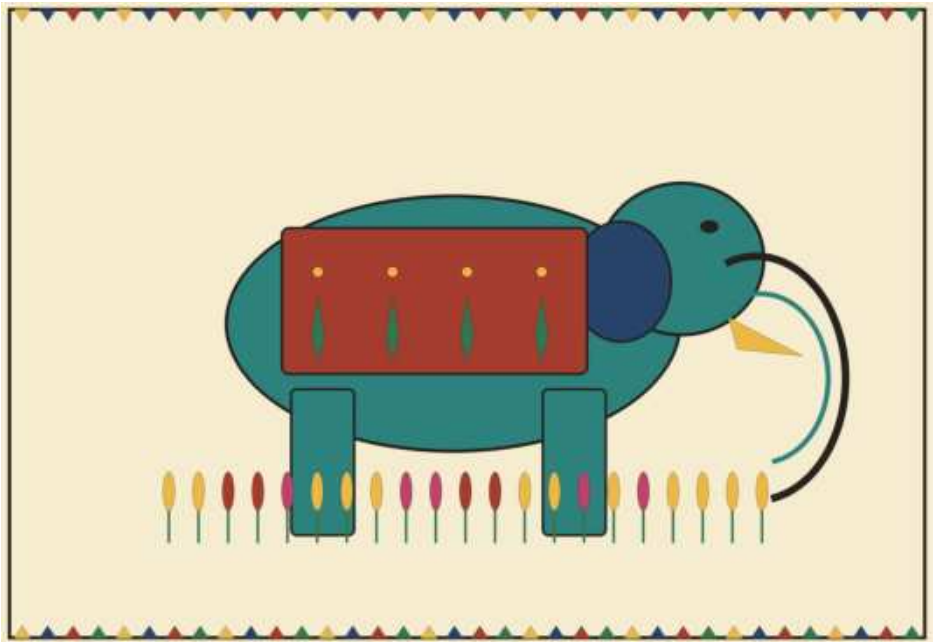
Answer: अग्नवान

Question: What kind of wood did not burn in the fire?

Answer: अक्खज

Chapter 2: Rest in the Shade (More A Words)

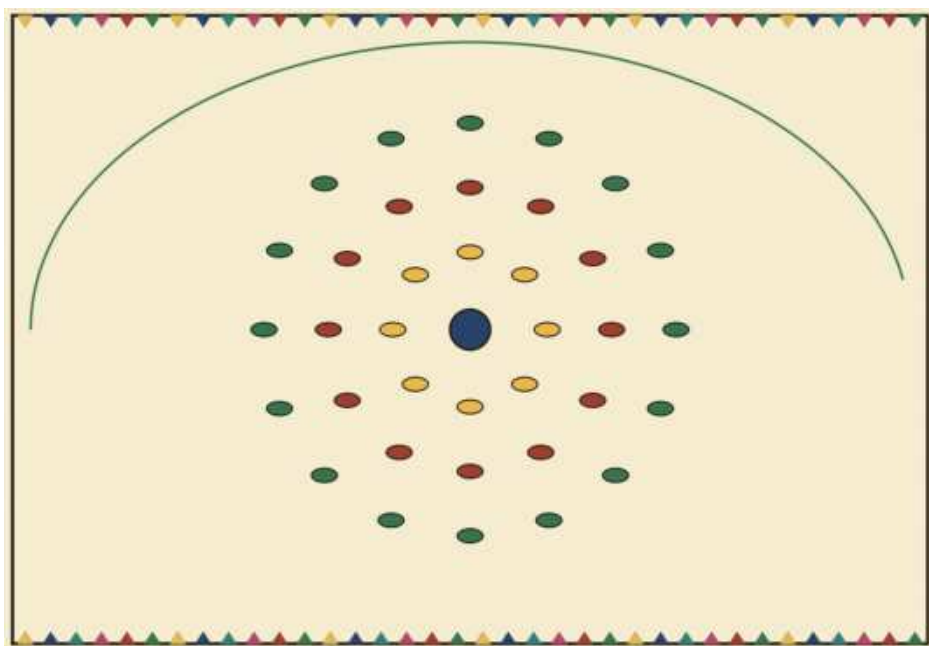




Picture 3

For a little while, father and daughter sat in the shade of a tree — to rest their tired feet. Ankita sat on her heels and began to fidget.

Father asked, "Why are you so restless, Ankita? Evening has come. If we walk a little more, we will reach home."





Picture 4

Just then Ankita saw a high-flying kite in the sky, and she said, "Even after walking a long stretch, we have not reached the village!"

Father said, "Come on, walk carefully on the path, or the stinging thorns will stick to your body." Ankita said, "If it were still day, I would eat field snacks in the farm!"

Questions and Answers

Question: In what way did Ankita sit?

Answer: उकड़ू

Question: What did Ankita feel?

Answer: उखी-बिखी

Question: What did Ankita see in the sky?

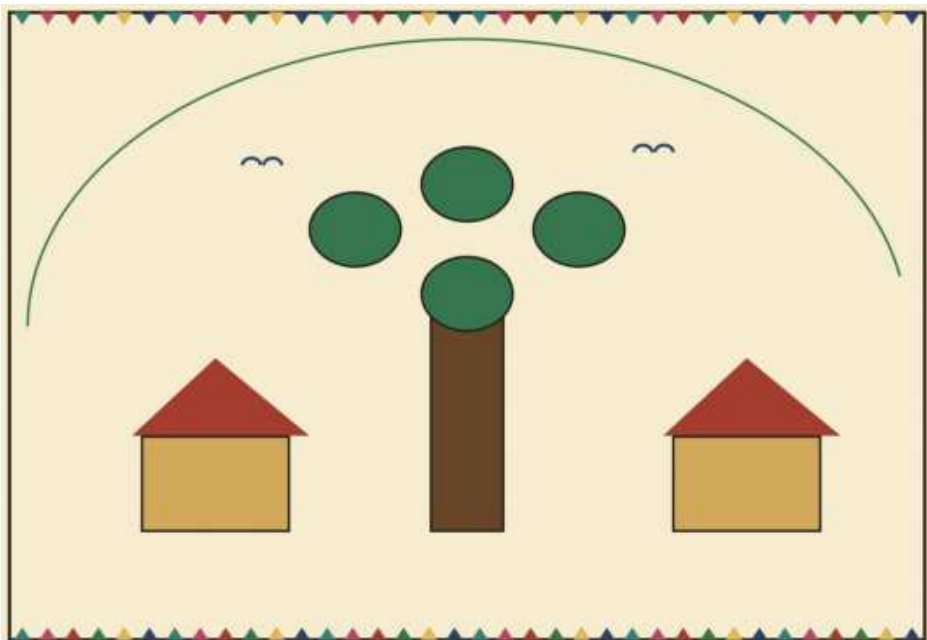
Answer: उकापतङ्ग

Question: What word was used for the poisonous stinging thorn on the path?

Answer: उड़कुस्सी

Chapter 3: Guards in the Cane Field

(Ka Words)

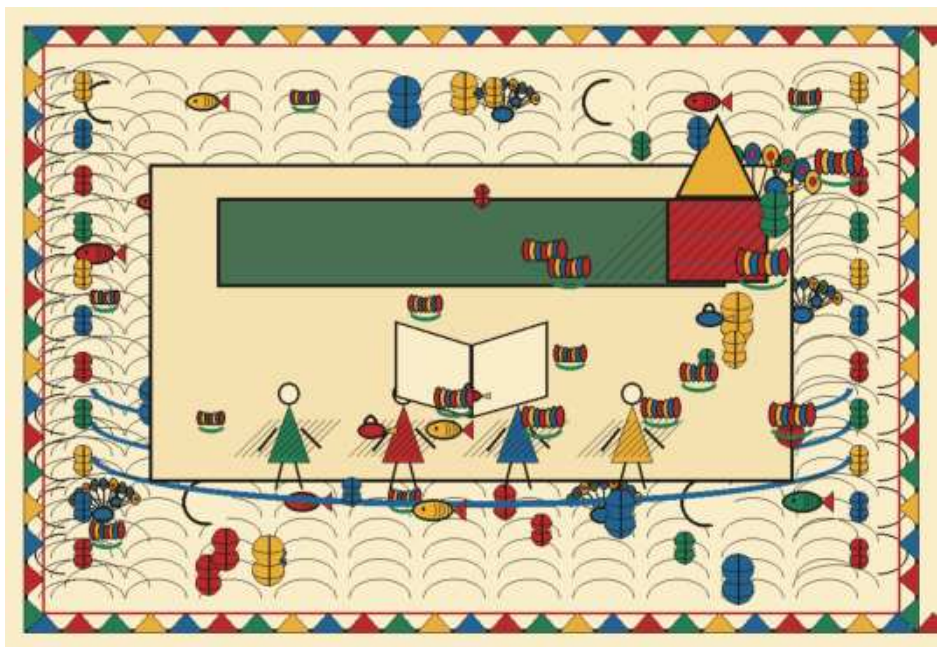
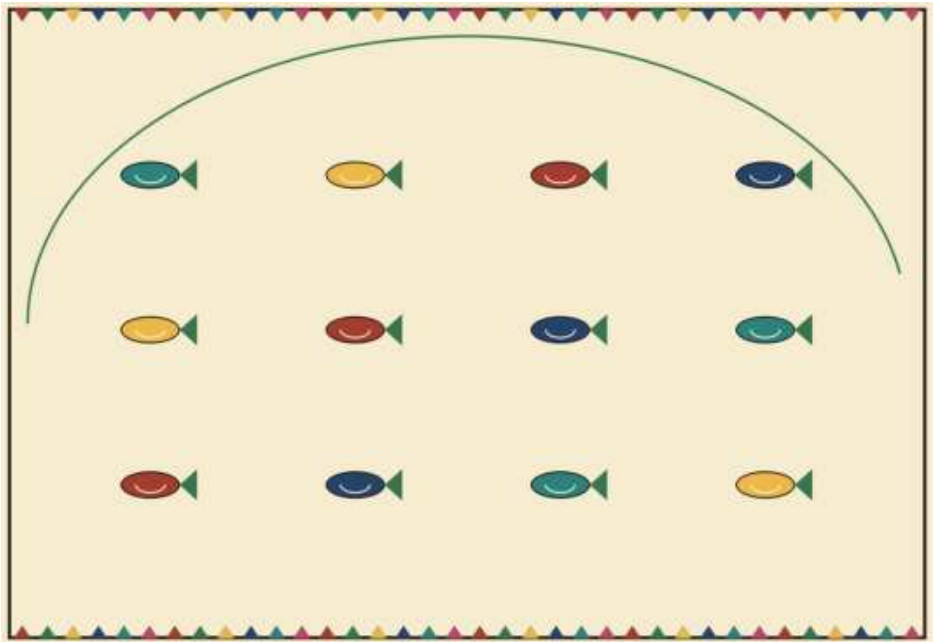




Picture 5

As they walked on, Father said, "The watchmen have come to the cane field. There is a strong guard, each on his own platform!" Ankita began to look with curiosity.

"Look in the moonlight," Father said. "It rained during the day, so people have been working the mud in the fields." Ankita was happy to see the green fields.



Picture 6

"Here comes the blacksmith lane, and our own house too!" Father's voice was full of relief. The long journey was almost over.

Ankita jumped up. "How many miles did we walk, Father?" Father laughed and said, "At least a few miles, but now the hard part is over!"

Questions and Answers

Question: Who came to guard the cane field?

Answer: ओगरबाह

Question: What kind of guard was on the platforms?

Answer: कड़ेकमान

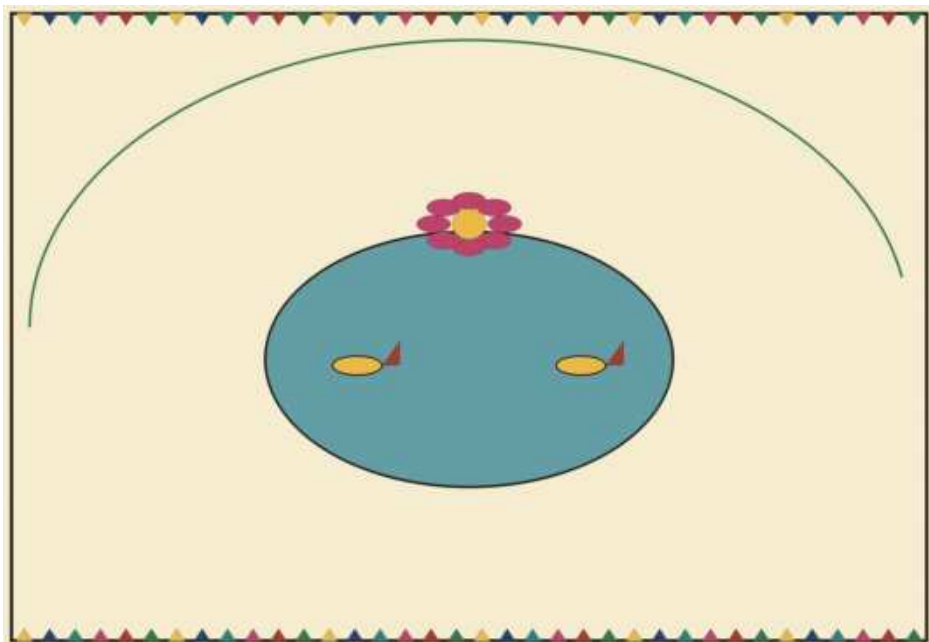
Question: What were people doing in the fields in the moonlight?

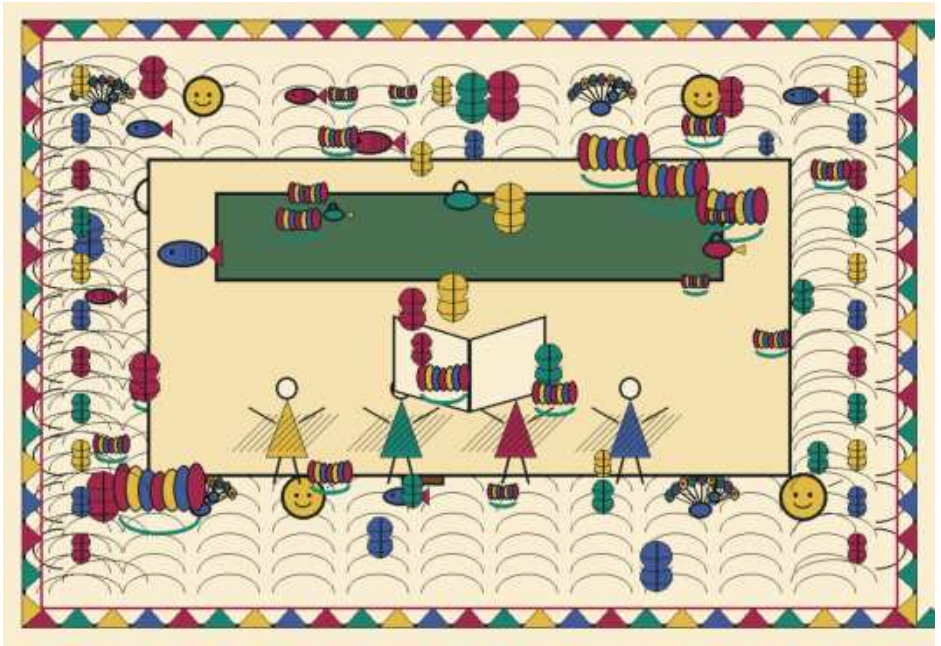
Answer: कदबा

Question: What word was used for the village blacksmith lane?

Answer: कमरसारि

Chapter 4: The Square and the Smooth Path (Cha Words)





Picture 7

As soon as they reached the village square, Ankita became lively — she was excited because home was near. Father said, "Hurry up, the path is smooth. Do not delay now."

Ankita chirped, "Oh look, a champa tree!" The champa tree stood by the roadside, full of flower scent, and it stole Ankita's heart.

"The moon has come out," Father said, looking at the sky.

"In the moonlight the path looks even smoother."

Ankita grew lively and began to run ahead. When she saw the familiar lane of home, the tiredness in her feet seemed to fly away.

Questions and Answers

Question: At which place in the village did Ankita become lively?

Answer: चौपर

Question: What kind of path did Father tell her to walk on?

Answer: चिक्कन

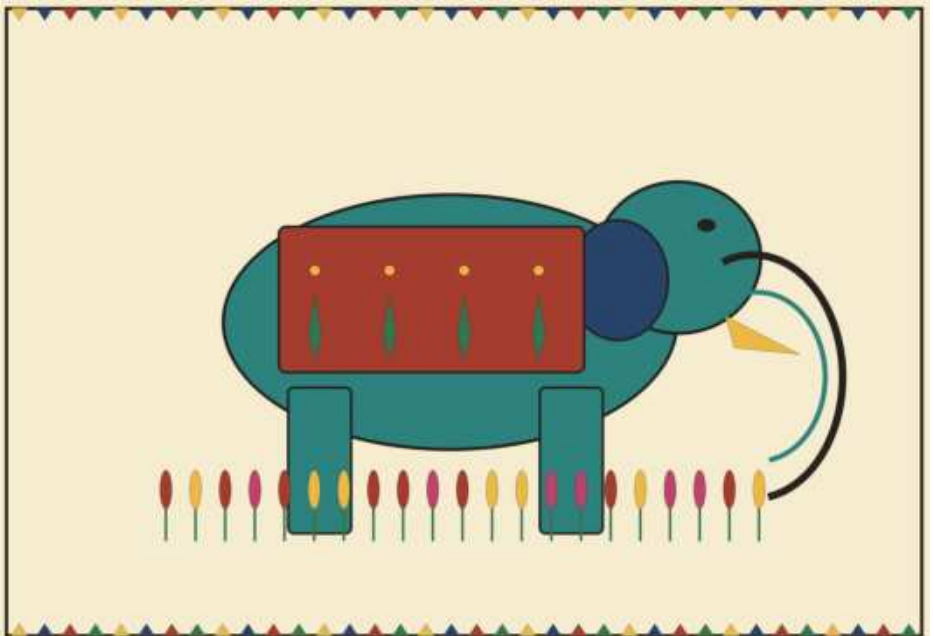
Question: Which tree made Ankita chirp with joy?

Answer: चम्पाक गाछ

Question: What came out in the sky?

Answer: चान

Chapter 5: Calling Near the Neighbourhood Tree (Ta Words)

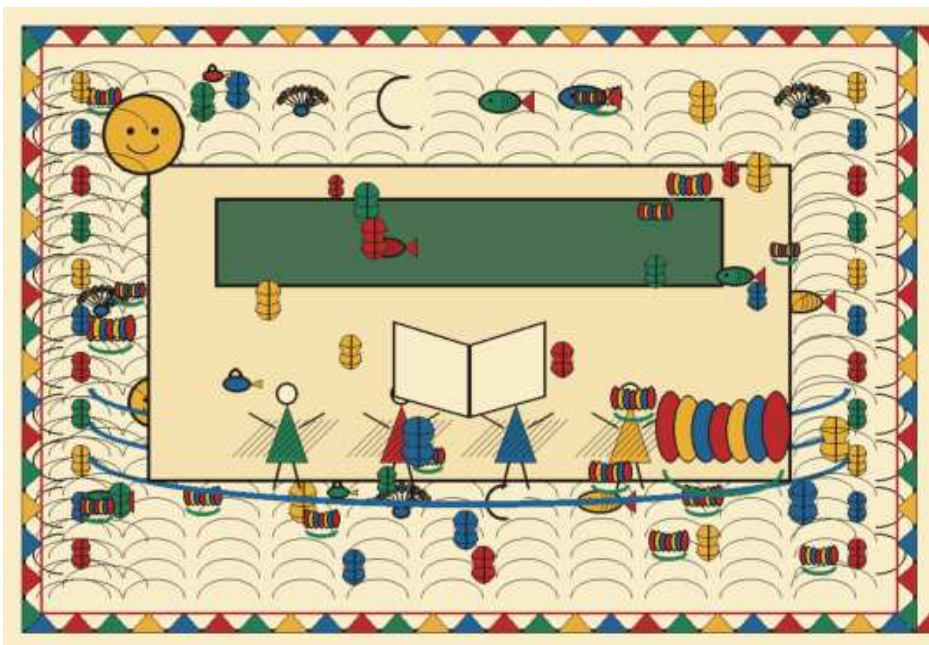
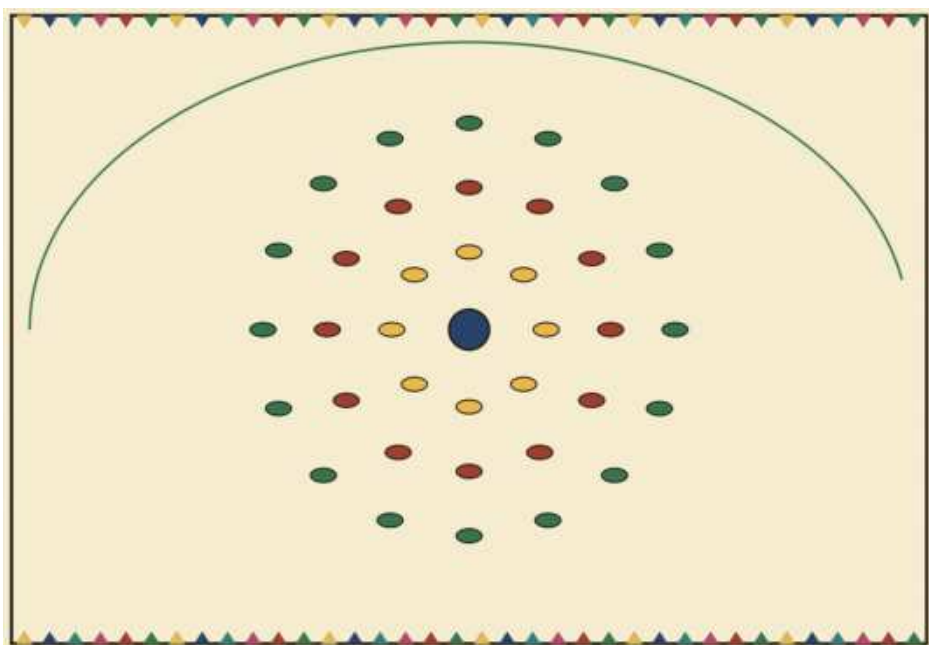




Picture 9

When they reached the big tree in the neighbourhood, Ankita heard someone calling out loudly. The loud call sounded like a night wanderer's voice. Father said, "Look, a lamp is burning near the village god's place."

Ankita began to speak in a soft grumbly voice. "I am hungry, Father!" Father laughed and said, "When we reach home, fresh hot roti will be ready."



Picture 10

Ankita put her hand on her lips, as if her throat were dry — a little sulk, but she forgot it at once and began to laugh again.

When Ankita saw the neighbourhood dog, she held Father's hand tightly.

Questions and Answers

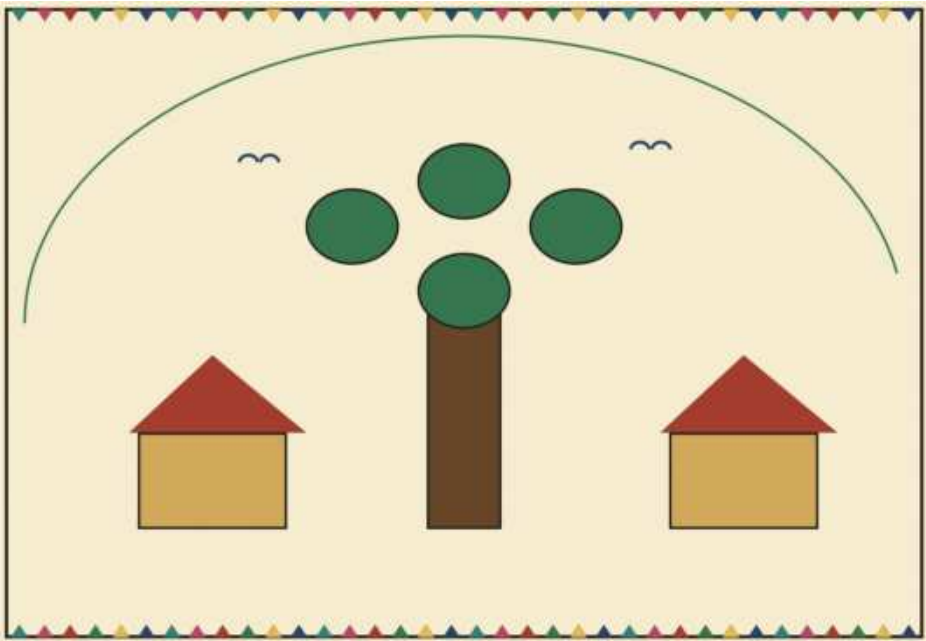
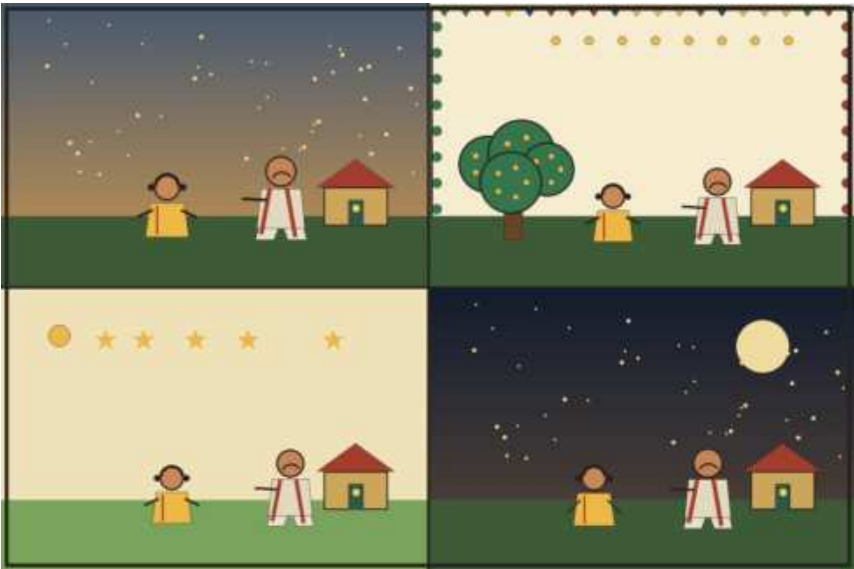
Question: Near which place in the neighbourhood was a lamp burning?

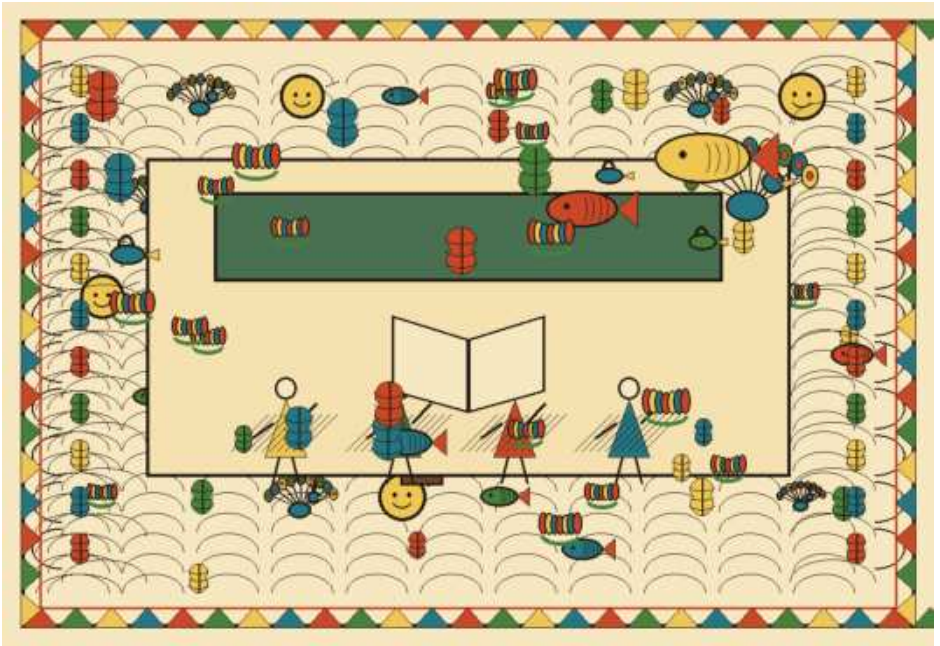
Answer: डिहबार (ग्राम देवता) स्थान।

Question: What did Father say would be cooked?

Answer: टटका रोटी

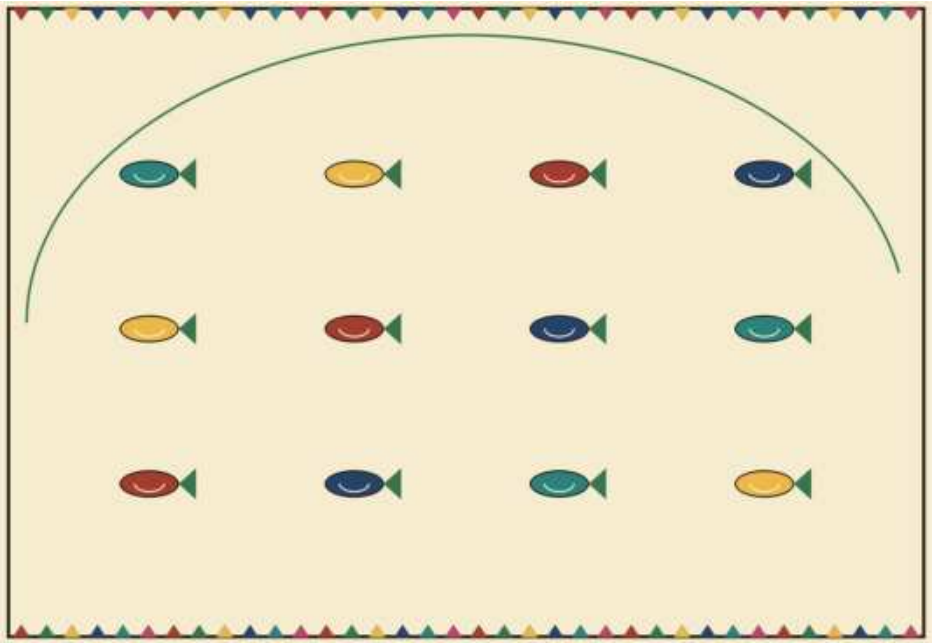
Chapter 6: The Stars (Ta Words)





Picture 11

The dark had grown deep, and stars began to shine in the sky. Ankita kept looking. "Father, how bright the stars look! So many of them! My heart is full of joy!"



Picture 12

Ankita sulked and asked, "Why are we walking so fast, Father?" Father said kindly, "We were walking quickly so you could reach home soon and rest."

Ankita smiled at once. When she heard Father's loving answer, all her complaints vanished.

Questions and Answers

Question: What began to shine in the sky?

Answer: तरेगण

Question: Why did Ankita sulk?

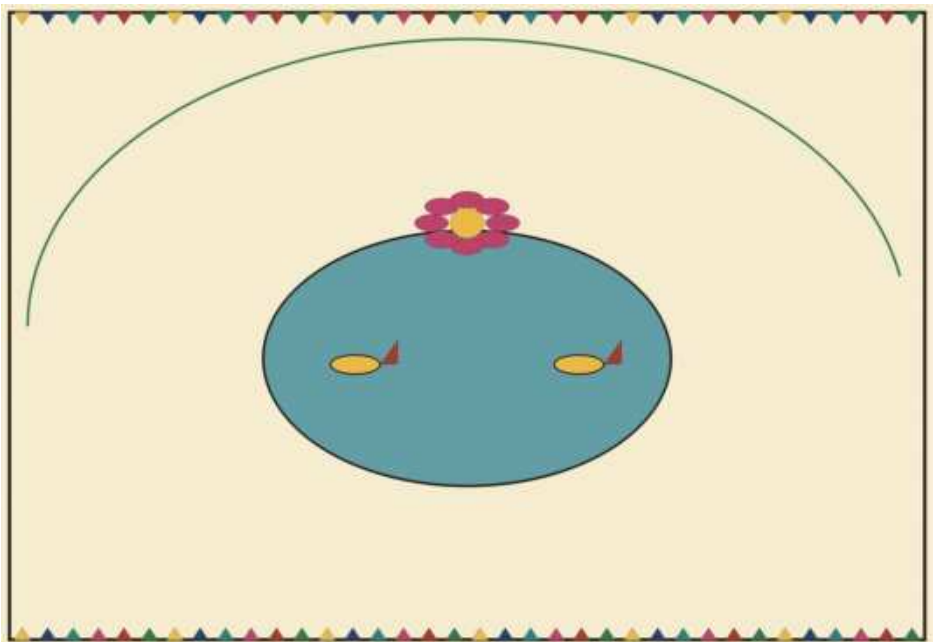
Answer: तेज चलबाक कारण

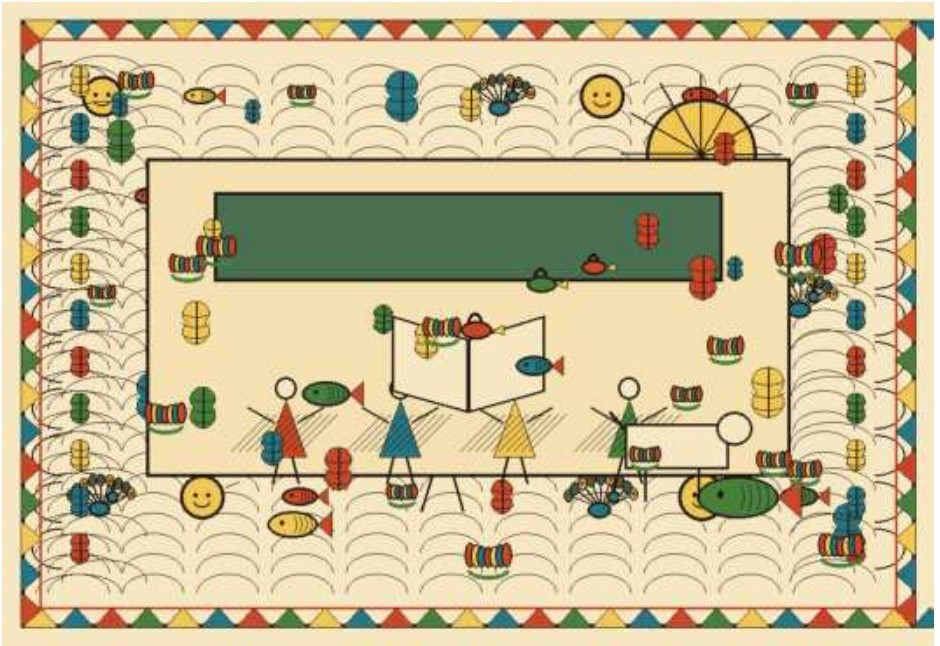
Question: What happened to Ankita's complaints?

Answer: तिरोहित

Chapter 7: The Traveller's Last Stop

(Pa Words)

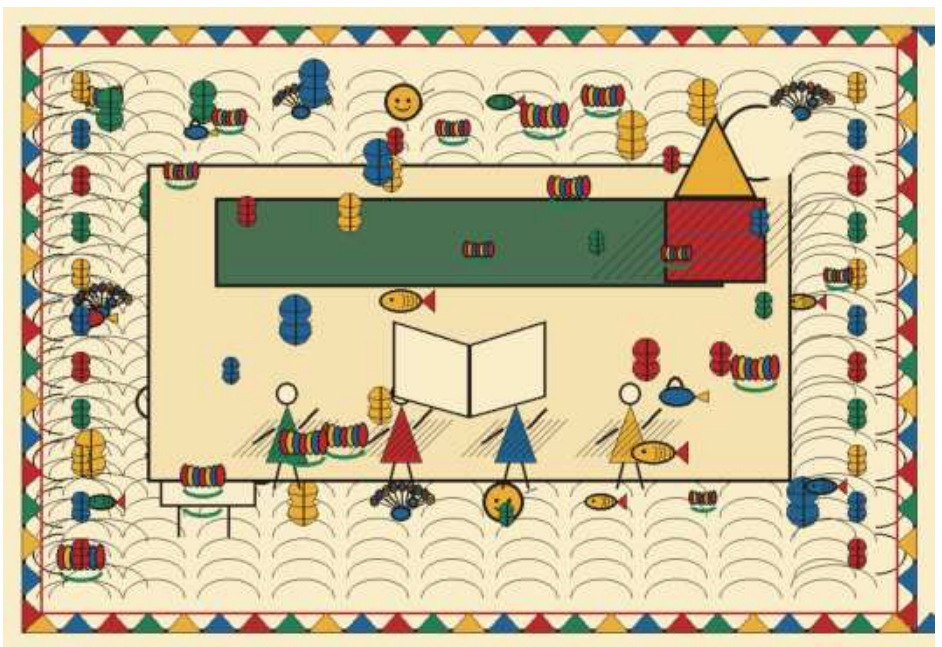
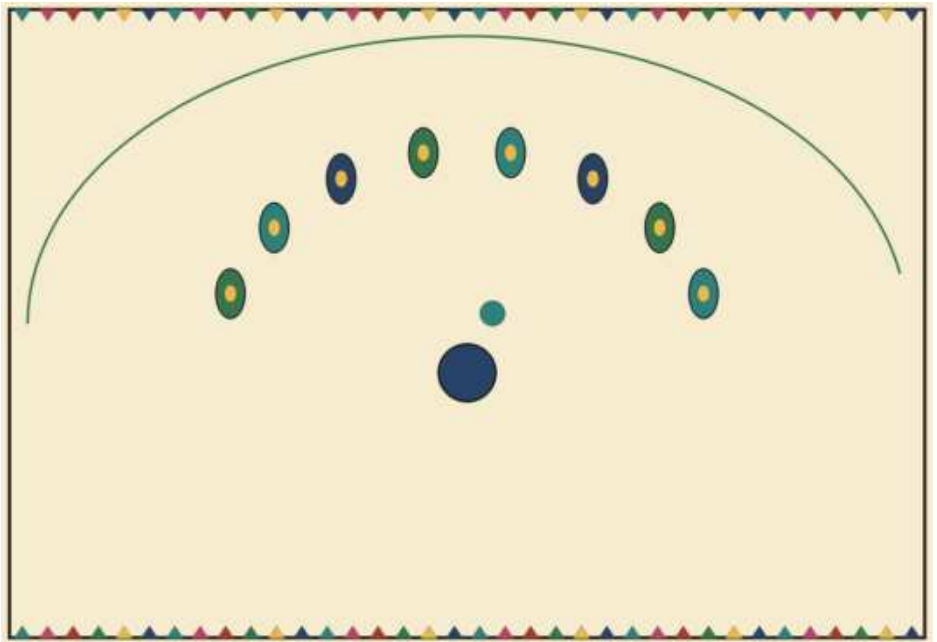




Picture 13

At last Ankita and Father reached the door — the end of the journey. Ankita called out happily, "Mother! We have arrived!"

Father brushed the dust from his feet and said, "We worked hard all day, but Ankita, you walked with great patience. You deserve a reward!"



Picture 14

Ankita's mother appeared at the door. "You have come! I was so worried waiting for you!" Ankita ran and climbed into Mother's lap.

Father said with a happy heart, "Dear daughter, today's whole journey — from A all the way to Pa — finished so well with you. Now rest."

Questions and Answers

Question: Where did Ankita and Father arrive?

Answer: द्वार

Question: Which quality did Father say Ankita deserved praise for?

Answer: धैर्य

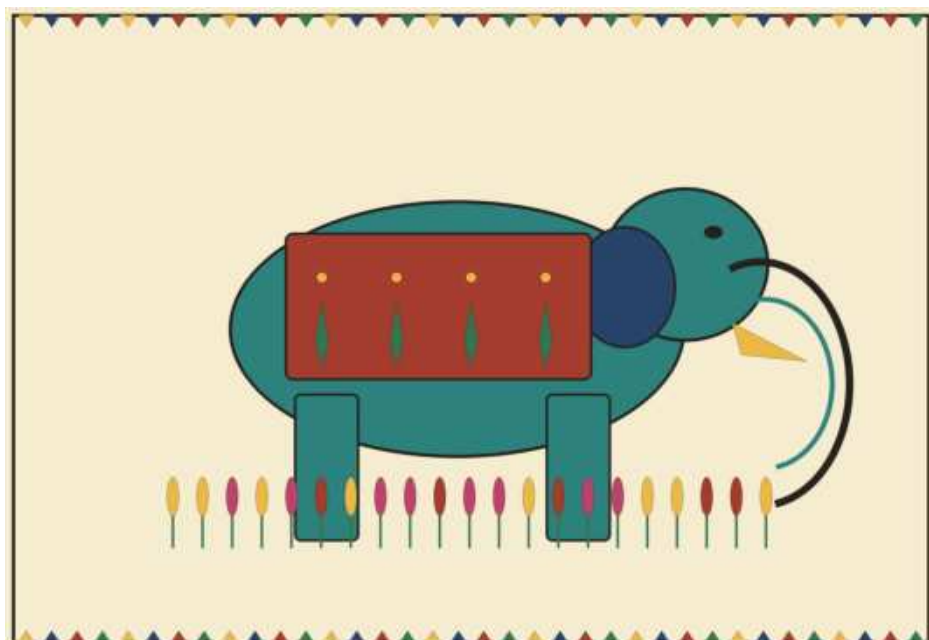
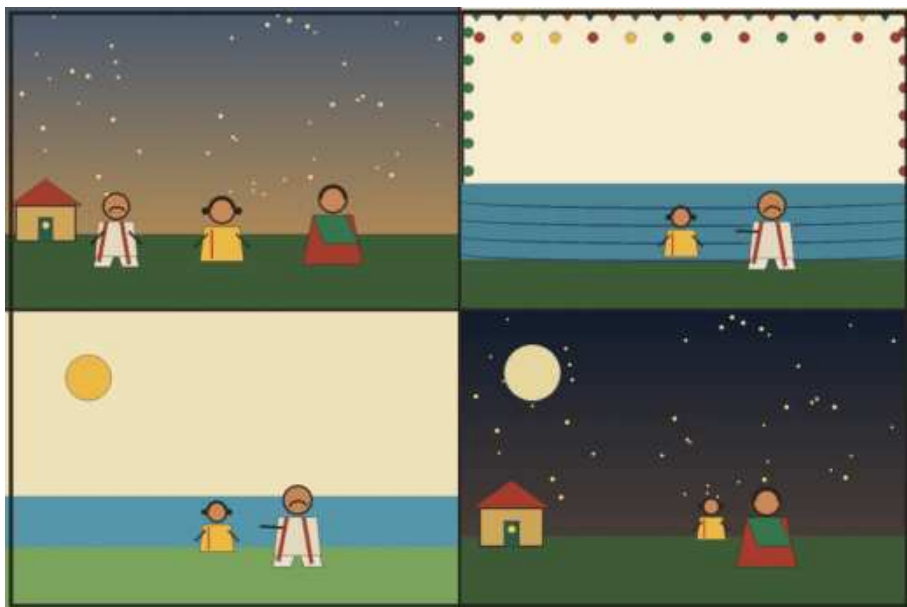
Question: Who was waiting at home?

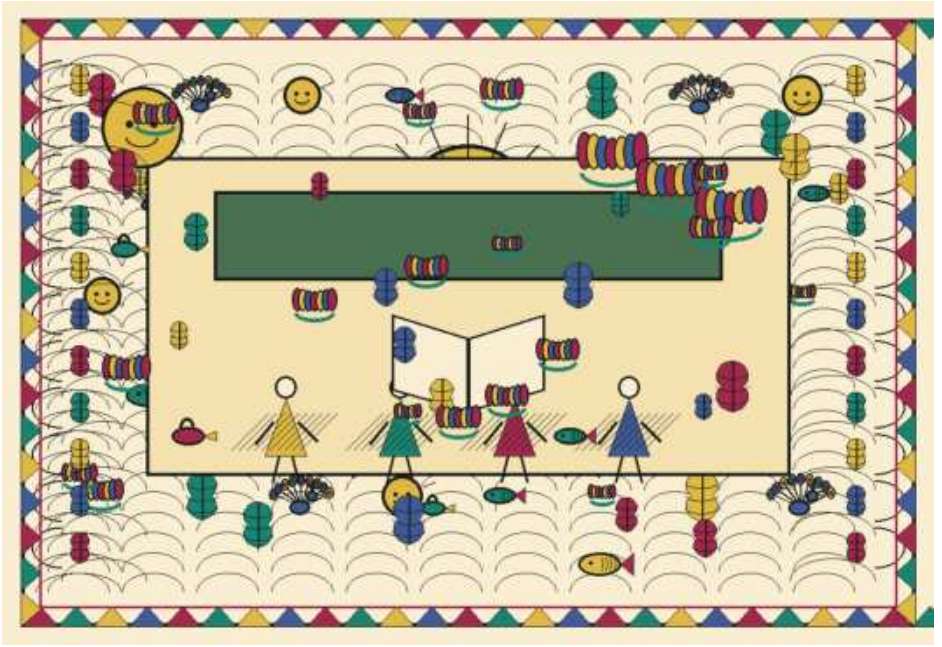
Answer: माए

Question: What did Father say about today's journey?

Answer: पूर्ण भेल

Chapter 8: The Last Steps of the Alphabet (Ya–Ha Words)

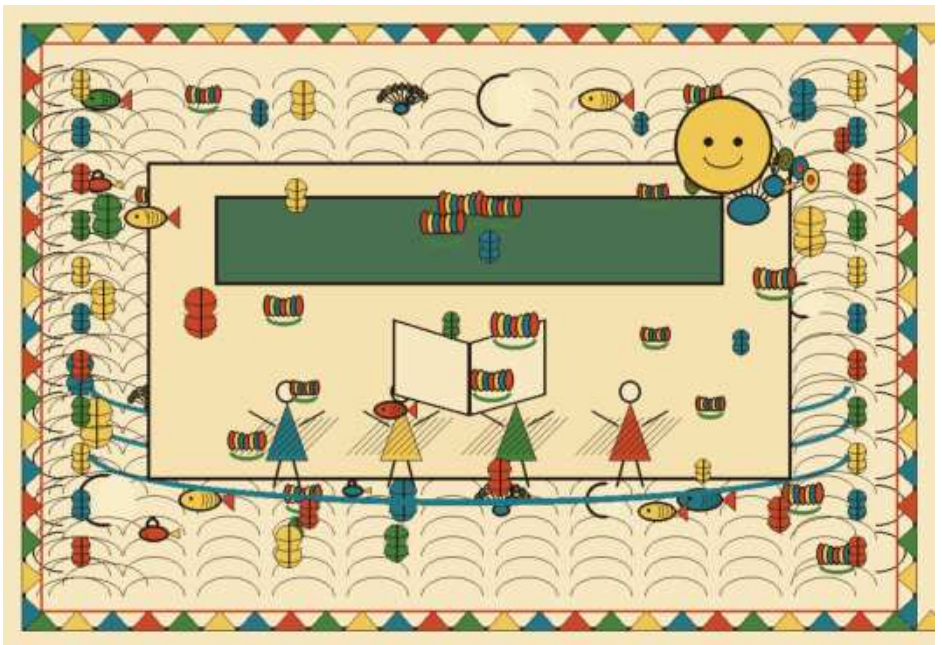
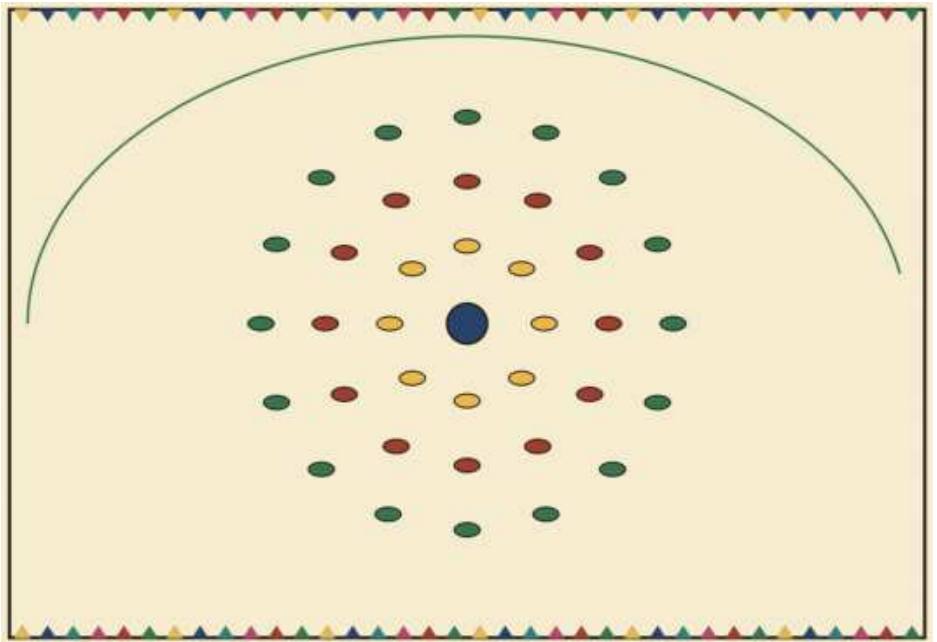




Picture 15

Night grew deep. Ankita sat in Mother's lap and began to tell the story of the journey. "Mother, on the way we found a winding stream like the Yamuna!" (Word: यमुना)

"Then night fell on the path, and we stopped for a little rest." (Word: रजनी)



Picture 16

"My feet got stuck in the sticky mud, but Father picked me up!" (Word: लस्सा)

"Wandering through the woods, we finally reached home — I feel so happy!" (Words: बोन, हर्ष) — Ankita's eyes began to close with sleep, and she fell asleep in Mother's lap.

Questions and Answers

Question: Which winding stream did they find on the way?

Answer: यमुना

Question: What word was used for the night?

Answer: रजनी

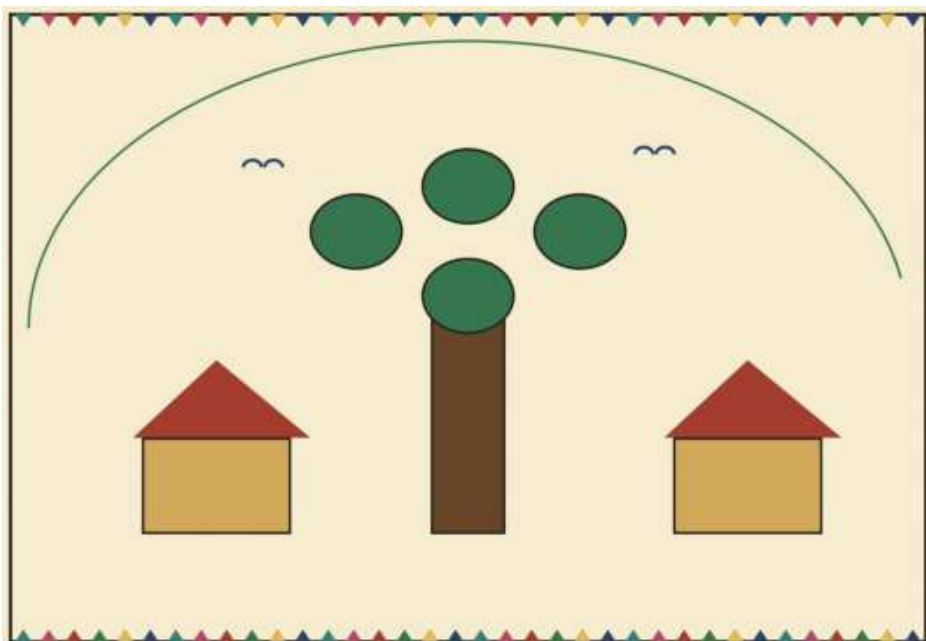
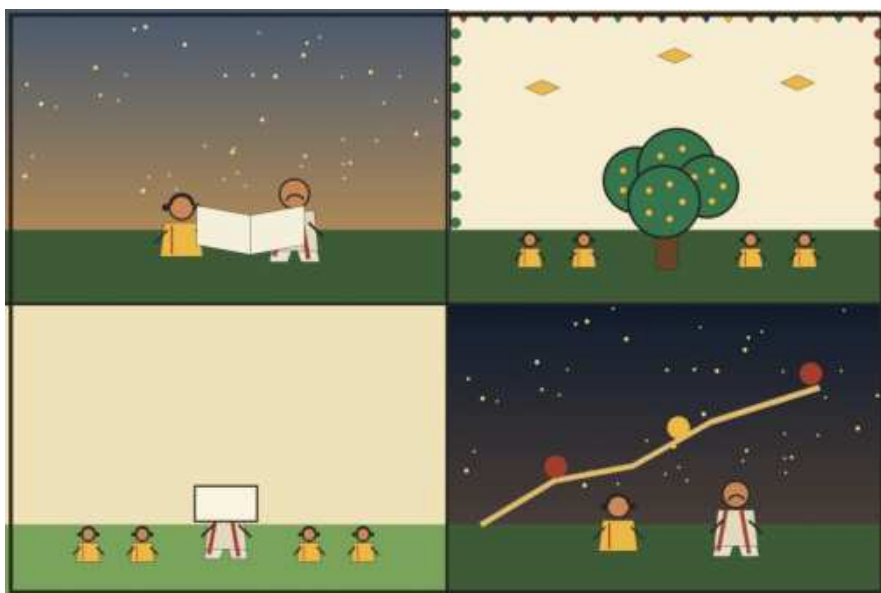
Question: In what kind of mud did Ankita's feet get stuck?

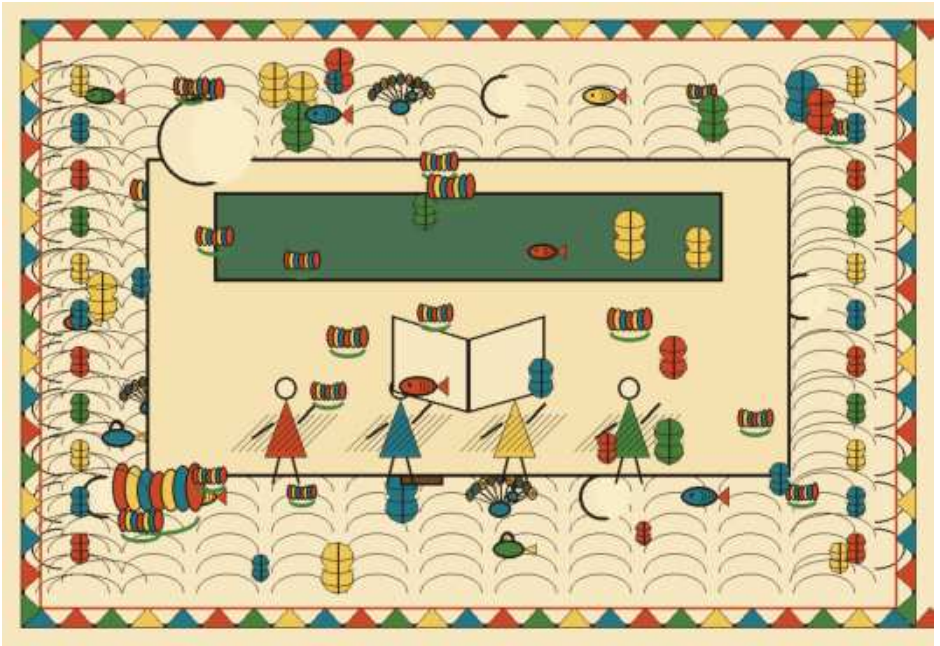
Answer: लस्सा

Question: What feeling did Ankita have when she reached home?

Answer: हर्ष

Chapter 9: A Note for Teachers: The Journey Ahead

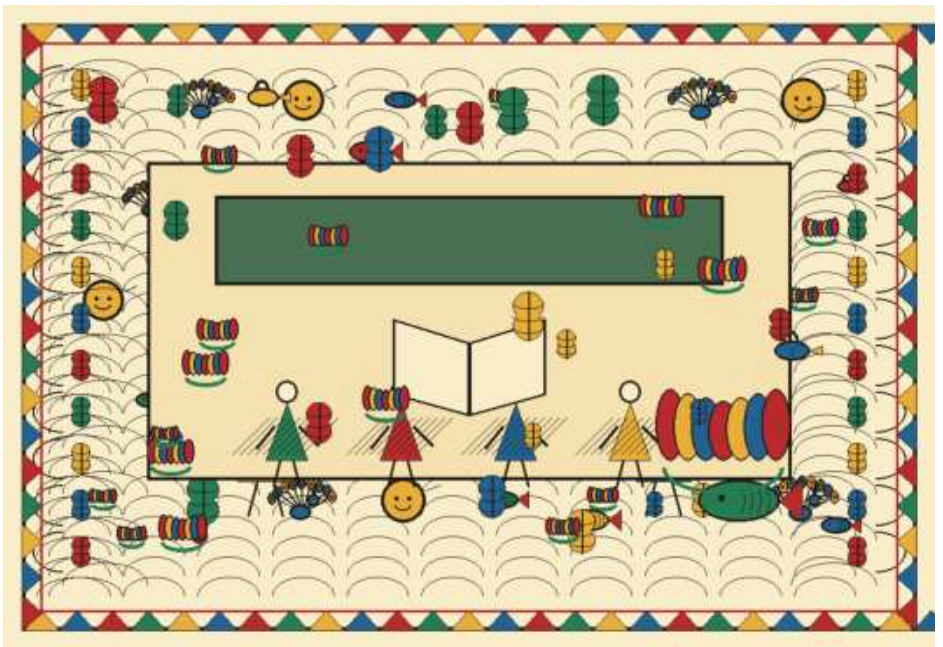
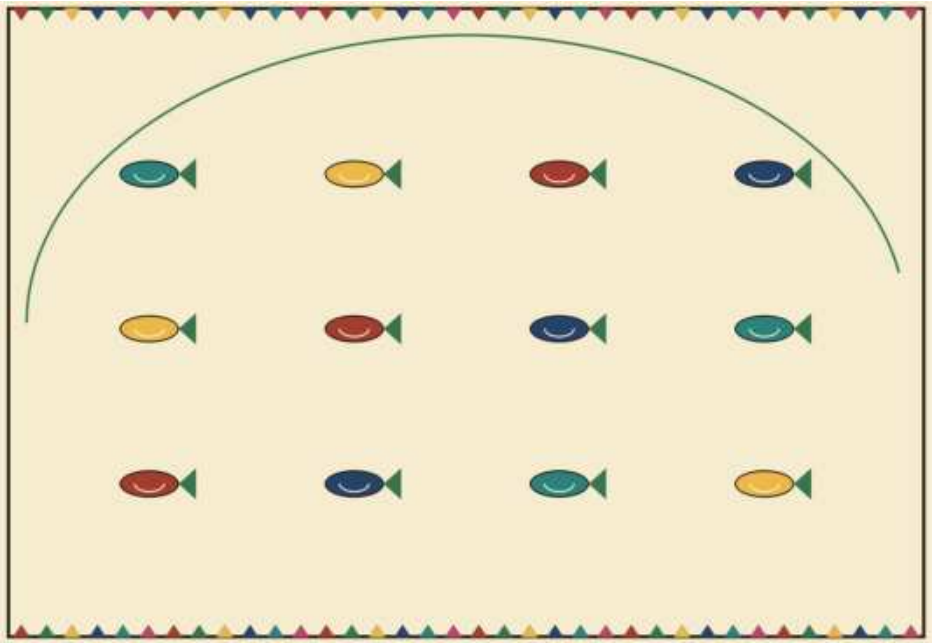




Picture 17

Ankita's evening walk ends here, but the alphabet-learning journey does not end. The main aim of this book is to help children meet every letter of the Maithili alphabet while they listen to a story.

Just as Ankita's story gathers words from 'A' all the way to 'Ha', parents and teachers can carry this method forward — by making new stories and filling them with words that begin with each letter.



Picture 18

How many times the story should be told depends on the child's ability and how many new words are in the tale. Every child learns at a different speed, so patience is needed.

Ankita's tale — a simple evening walk that became a full journey through the alphabet — is a fresh experiment in the children's literature of Mithila. This book does not only entertain. It also offers an easy and joyful way to learn, where learning a language is not a burden but a loving journey, just like the one Ankita took with her father.

The End

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Devotees of Gangodevi

Gangodevi the Fisherwoman: Faith and
Unshakable Belief



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

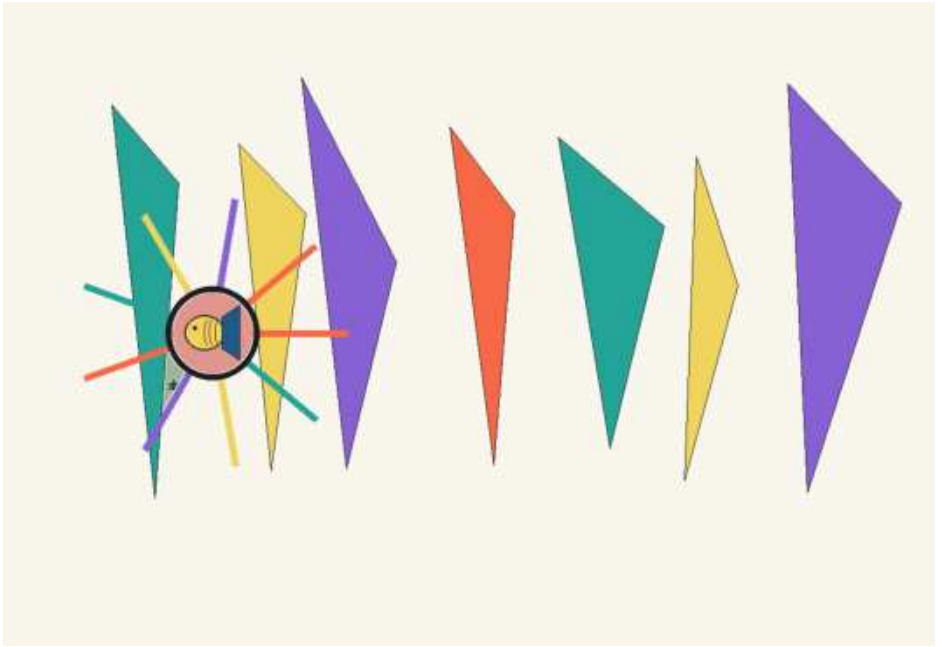
Introduction: Gango, Daughter of the River

Gangodevi was a fisherwoman—an ordinary woman, yet someone who held a very special place in her husband's heart. This is a tale of a love so powerful that even an impossibly difficult day of fishing ended in a miraculous success.

In Mithila, eating or selling fish during the month of Sawan was not forbidden, so this season was a natural time for fishing families to earn their living. But this tale is about much more than an ordinary livelihood. It is a wonderful example of the power of love and faith, a belief that still lives among Mithila's fishing community today.

Chapter 1: The Sawan Fair and the Fishing Trip

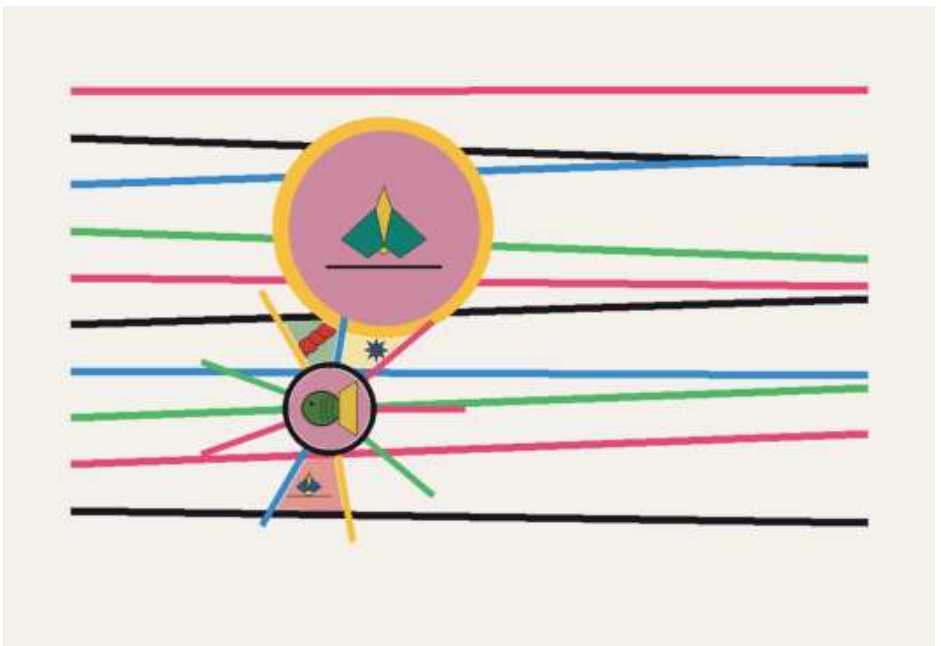




Picture 1

One day, Gangodevi's husband went to the river with his brother and father to catch fish. The Sawan fair was under way. In Mithila, eating or selling fish in Sawan was not forbidden, so this was a normal season for the fishing trade.

In his heart, Gangodevi's husband made a little plan: 'Today I will catch fish and sell them in the market, and from the Sawan fair I will bring Gango some bangles.' It was a simple wish, but it was filled with love.





Picture 2

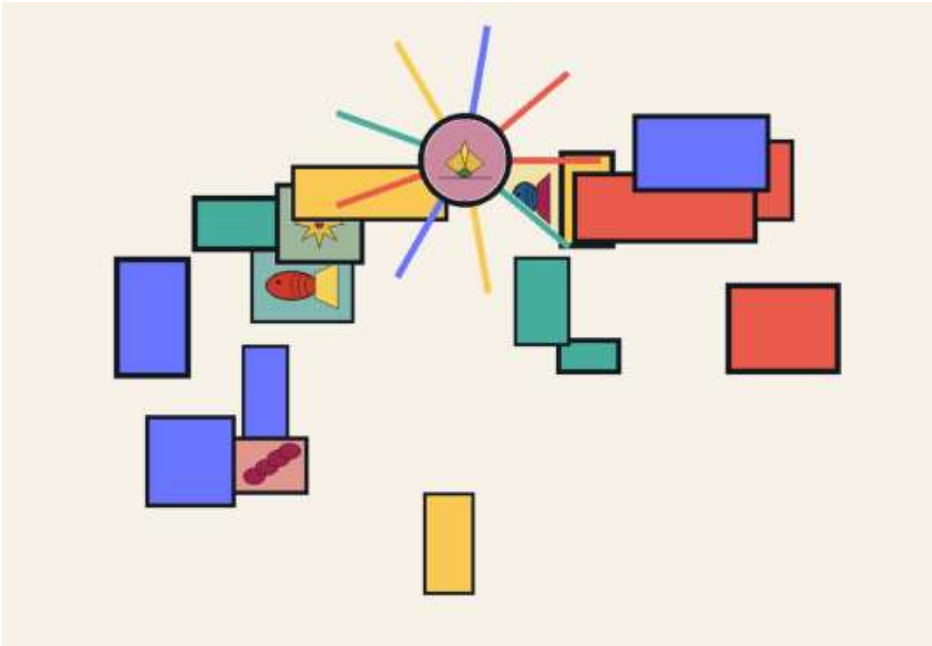
All three cast their nets in the river and set out their saraiya, a fishing tool. But until late afternoon, all they caught were doka, harashankh, and satua—small kinds of fish or water creatures. Not a single large fish came their way.

Disappointed, Gango's husband began to lose heart. He had worked all day, but there was still nothing worth taking to market. His plan to buy a gift for Gango was now in danger of failing.

Chapter 2: One Last Try in His Wife's

Name

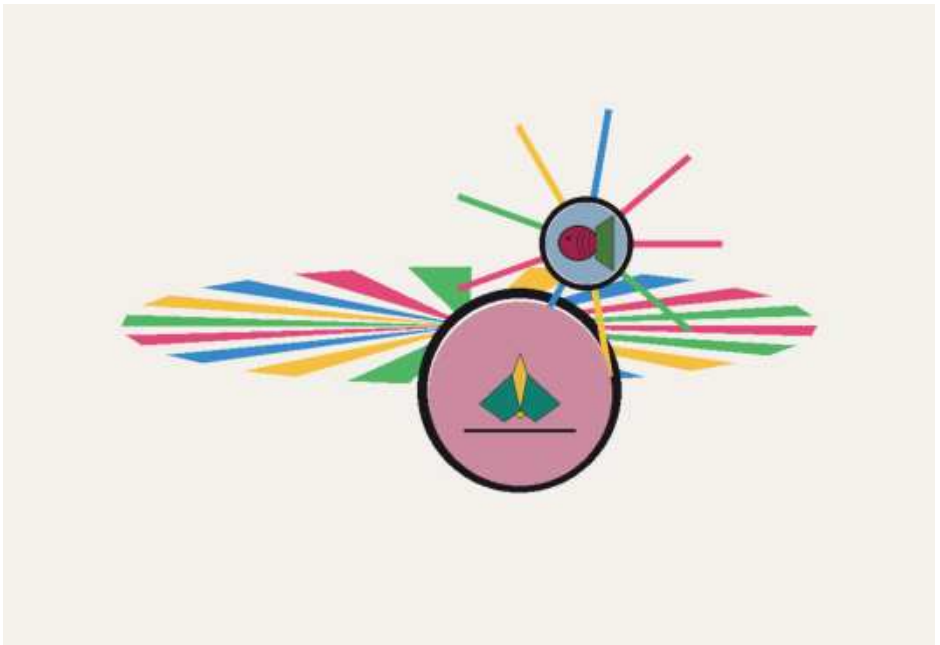




Picture 3

Gango's husband decided to make one last, heartfelt attempt. Taking his wife's name, he cast the net and said, 'This is my last try, Gango. If no fish comes this time, please forgive me!'

Those words were unusual. A fisherman was casting his net while speaking his wife's name—a sign of his love and faith, as though Gangodevi's very name were a powerful call for good fortune.





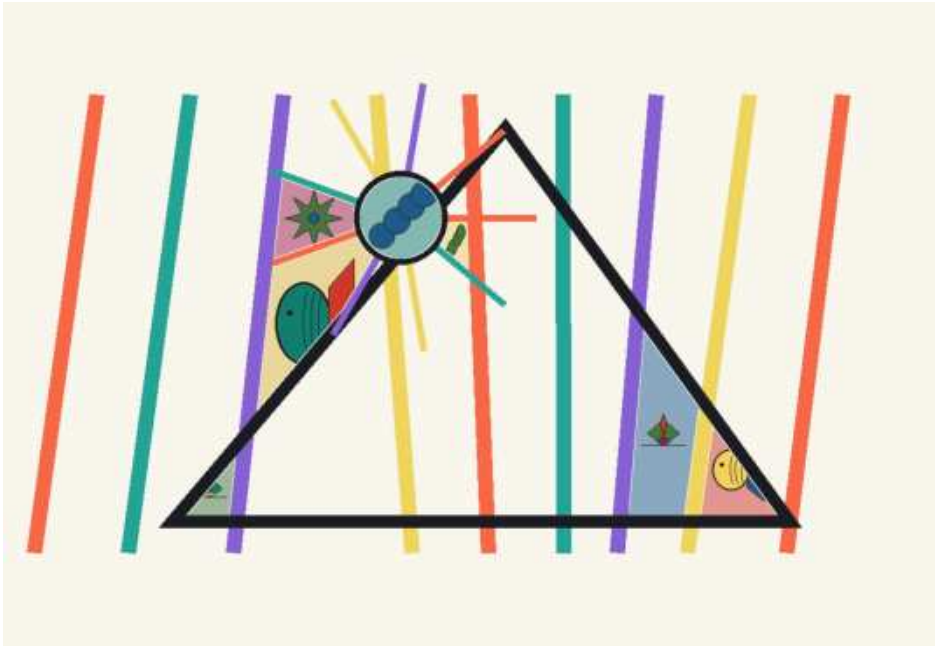
Picture 4

And then a miracle happened! The net filled with fish—so many that they could hardly pull it in. After a whole day of failure, this unbelievable success came the very moment he took Gango's name.

They sold all the fish. With the money, Gango's husband bought her lac bangles, glass bangles, and even a new sari. His wish came true, and the miracle made his love and faith in his wife even stronger.

Chapter 3: Confirmation the Next Day

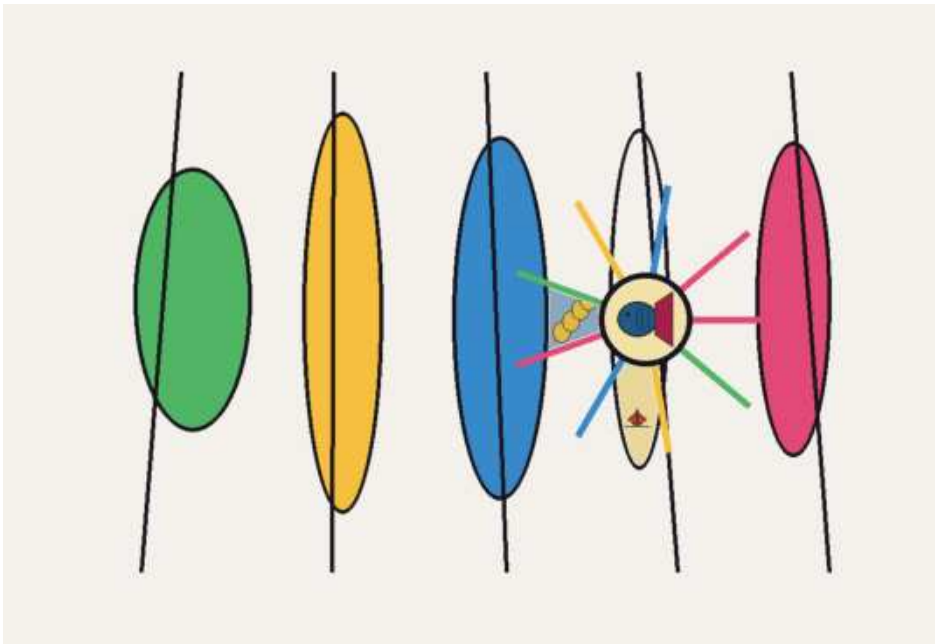




Picture 5

The next day, Gango's husband again took her name before casting his net, hoping the first day's miracle would happen once more. Again his net filled with fish. This was no longer a single lucky accident; it seemed to be a clear pattern.

But there was one curious difference. His brother and father caught the same doka and crabs they had caught the day before! Only Gango's husband's net had such extraordinary success.





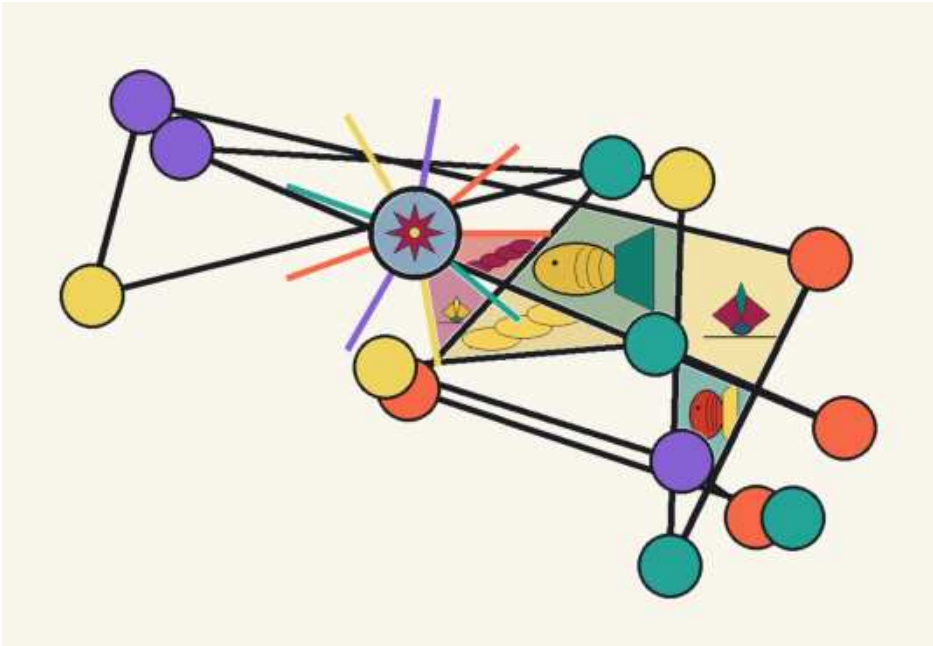
Picture 6

Seeing the difference, Gango's brother-in-law and father-in-law asked questions and discovered the secret: when Gango's name was spoken, fish came in abundance; without it, the catch remained ordinary. To them, the pattern clearly seemed to be the result of Gangodevi's special blessing—or of the faith placed in her name.

The discovery opened a new chapter within the family. Gangodevi's name was no longer only the name of a wife. It became an auspicious and powerful call, believed to make the difficult work of fishing easier.

Chapter 4: The Story Spreads Across Mithila

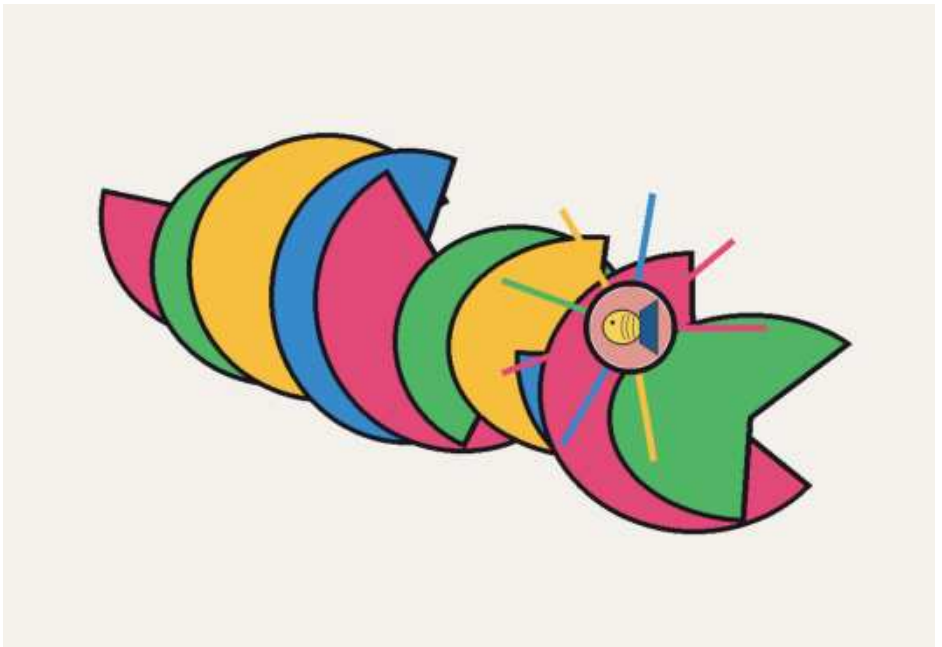




Picture 7

The amazing secret—the miraculous power linked with Gango's name—soon spread throughout Mithila's fishing community. What had begun as one family's personal experience slowly became a shared belief and tradition.

Fisherfolk, who had worked for generations along streams and waterways, heard Gangodevi's story and began to believe that remembering her with faith could bring success to anyone.





Picture 8

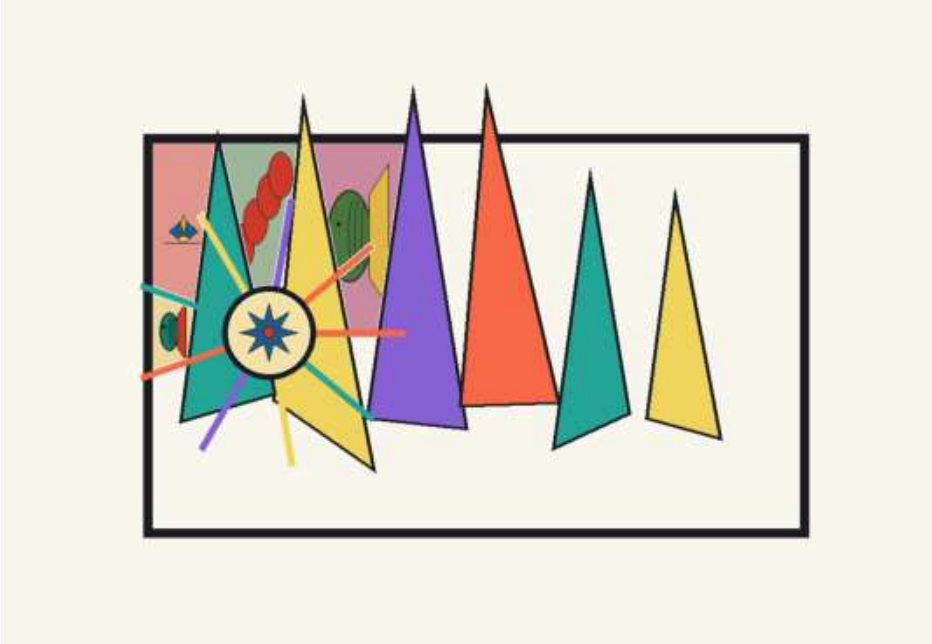
'Devotees of Gangodevi' became the name of a tradition that is still known among Mithila's fisherfolk. It passed from one generation to the next, keeping the memory of the original story alive.

Even today, fisherfolk in Mithila remember Gango before casting their nets. The love of an ordinary fisherwoman and her husband gradually became a symbol of faith for an entire community. The tale teaches that true love and faith, however simply they appear, can bring

extraordinary results and inspire generation after generation.

Chapter 5: A Heritage of Faith





Picture 9



Picture 10

Even today, when someone in the fishing community speaks Gango's name before casting a net, it is more than a ritual. It keeps alive the memory of a love that travelled from one waterway to another and from one generation to the next.

Devotees of Gangodevi—this name still echoes in villages beside Mithila's rivers and streams, an undying memory of the extraordinary faith connected with an ordinary fisherwoman.

The End

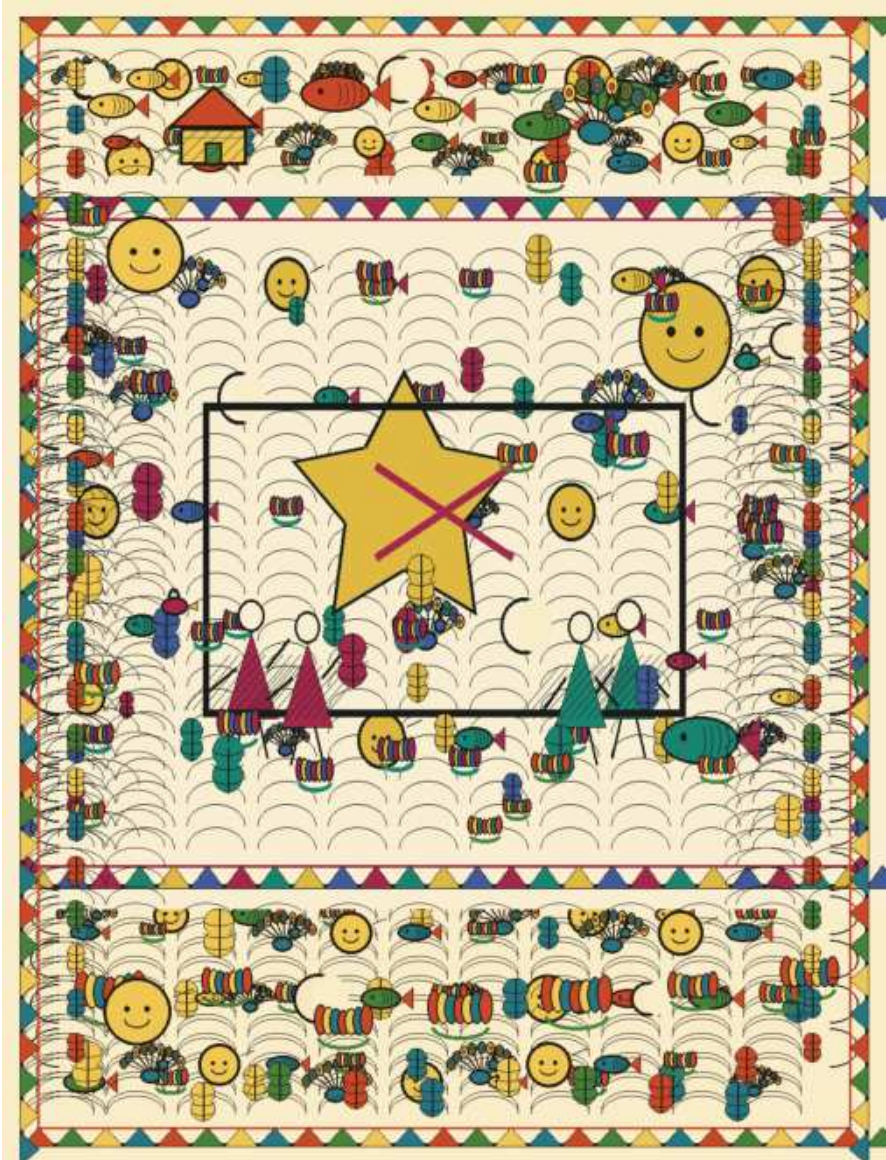
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Miran Saheb

The Tale of Dilarinagar's Lone Warrior



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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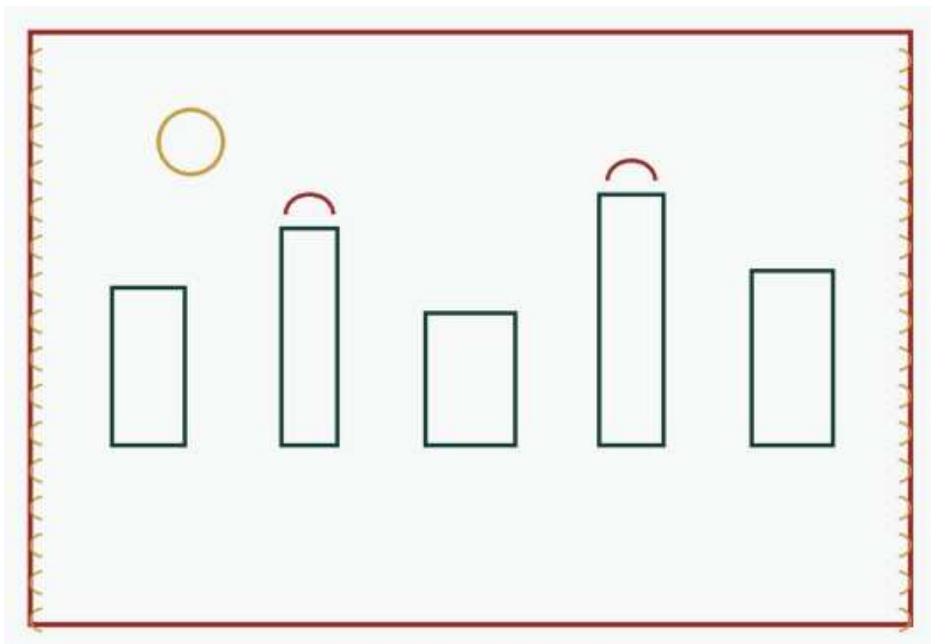
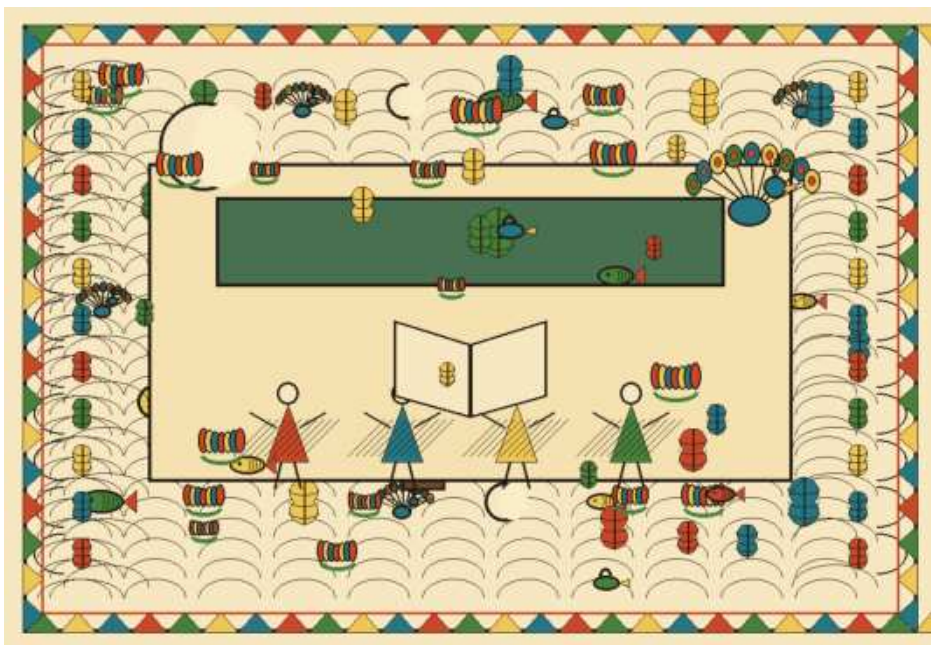
Introduction: One Name, One Town

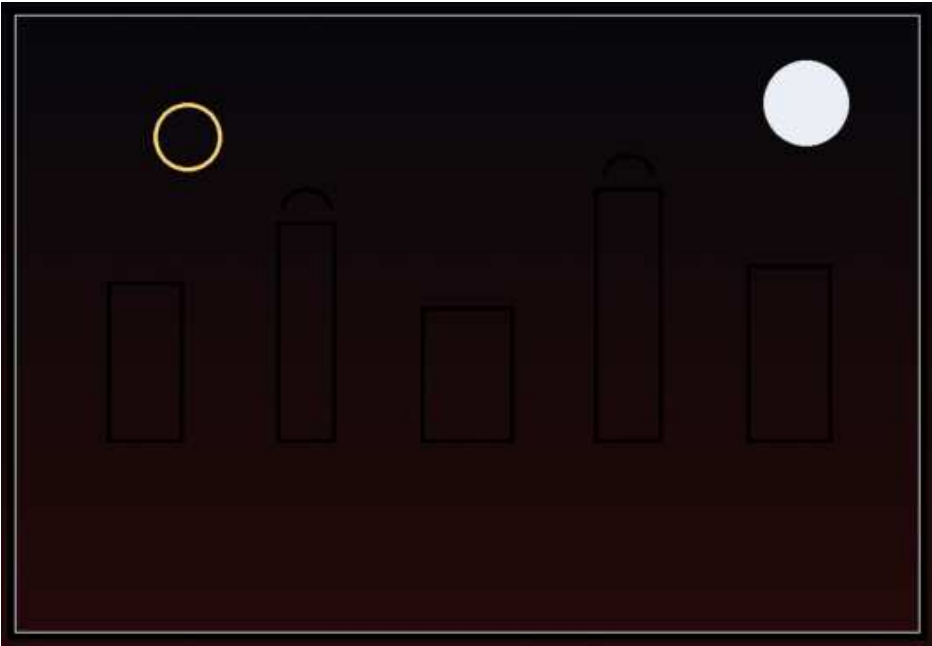
Dilarinagar—a town in the story-geography of Mithila, where even today one name seems to drift through the air like a quiet blessing: Miran Saheb.

This is the tale of a boy who became an orphan before he was even born; of a warrior whom everyone tried to keep away from battle; and of a spirit that, people say, continued to guard its town even after death. Here bravery does not roar. In this story, courage quietly does its duty and then walks away.

Chapter 1: The Sayyid of Dilarinagar



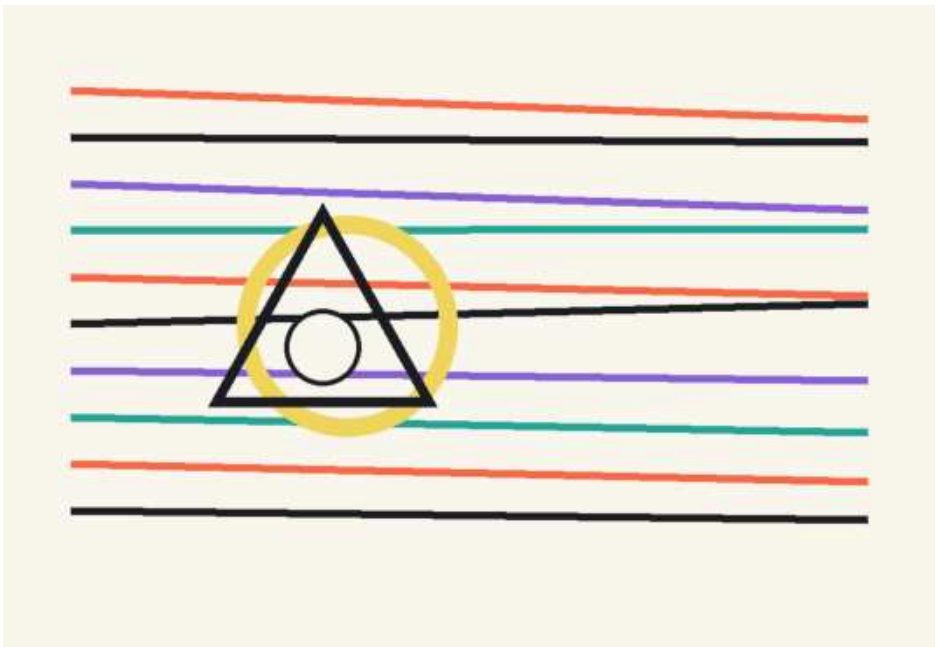


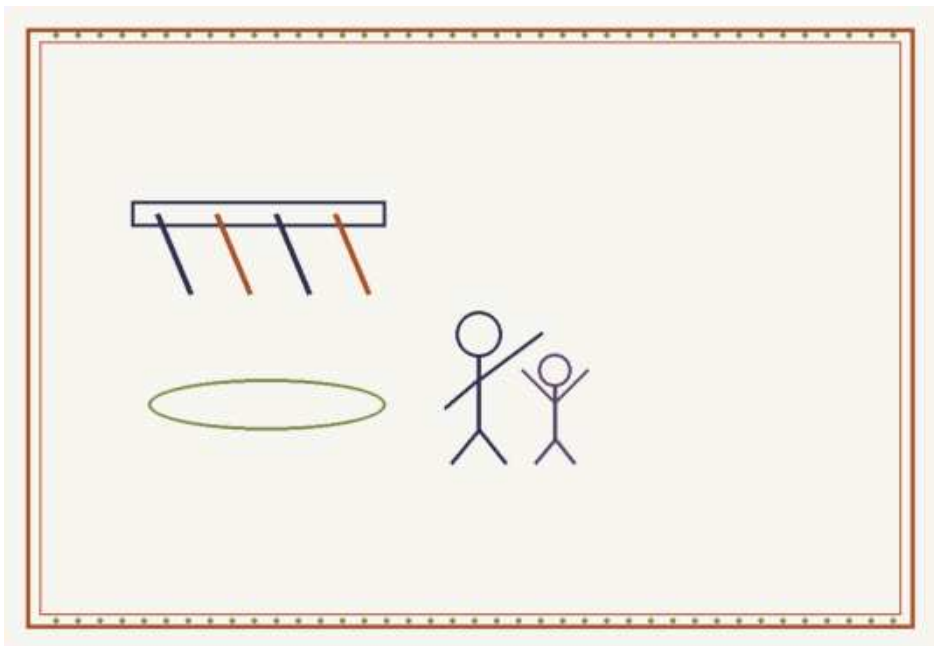


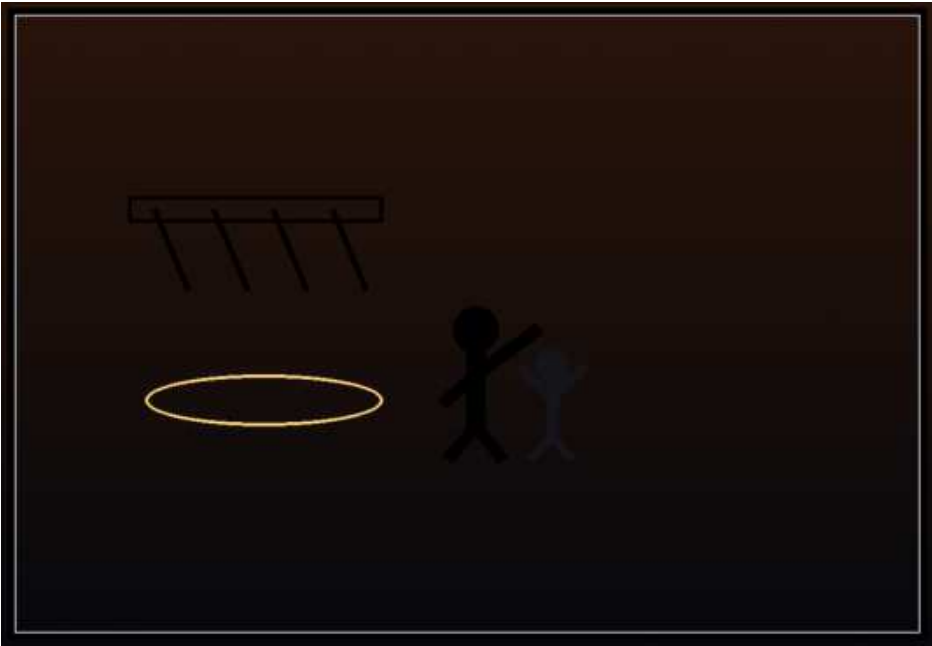
Picture 1

A Sayyid lived in Dilarinagar. He was respected, devout, and belonged to a family of warriors. He had a wife and several sons, and every one of the sons was a fighter whose skill with the sword was known far and wide.

Every morning two sounds rose from the Sayyid's mansion—the sound of prayer and the sound of martial practice. The sons trained with their father in horse-riding, archery, and swordsmanship. Their mother watched with pride, but also with the quiet worry that lives in the heart of every woman in a warrior's household.





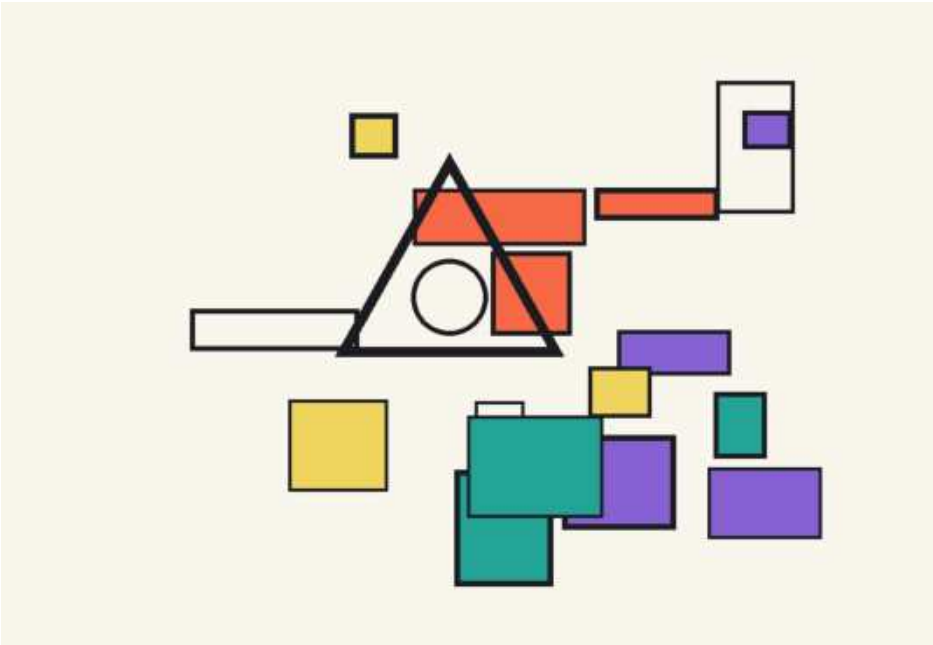


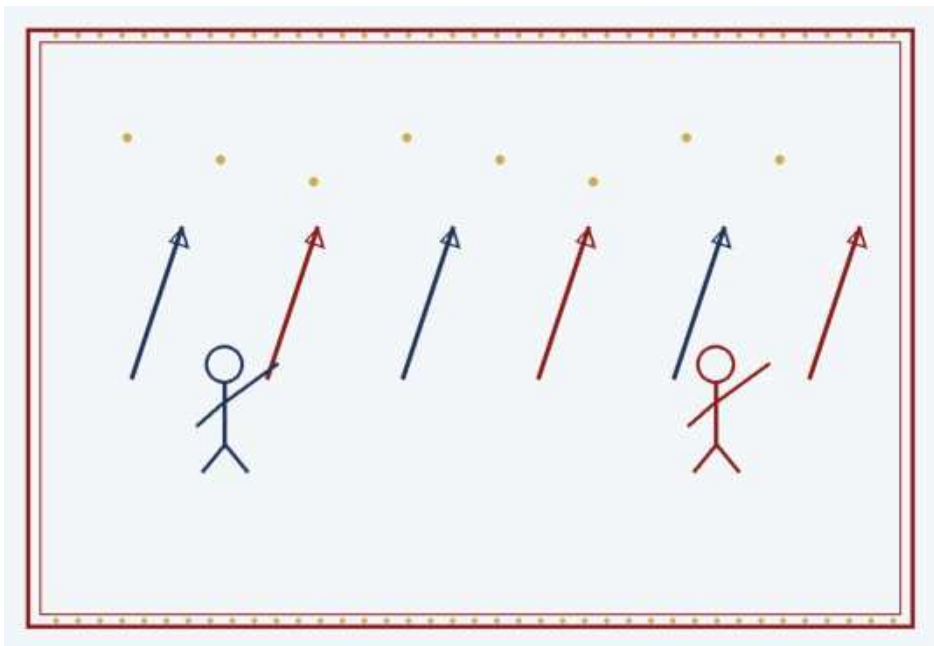
Picture 2

For there is one truth everyone in a warrior's home knows, though no one likes to say it aloud: a sword hanging on the wall may one day leave the house—and never return.

Then that day came. A call to battle arrived from faraway Nunjagarh. The Sayyid and all his sons put on their armour. At the threshold of the mansion, their mother placed a protective kajal mark on each of them. Never had that doorway seemed so silent.

Chapter 2: The Battle of Nunjarh





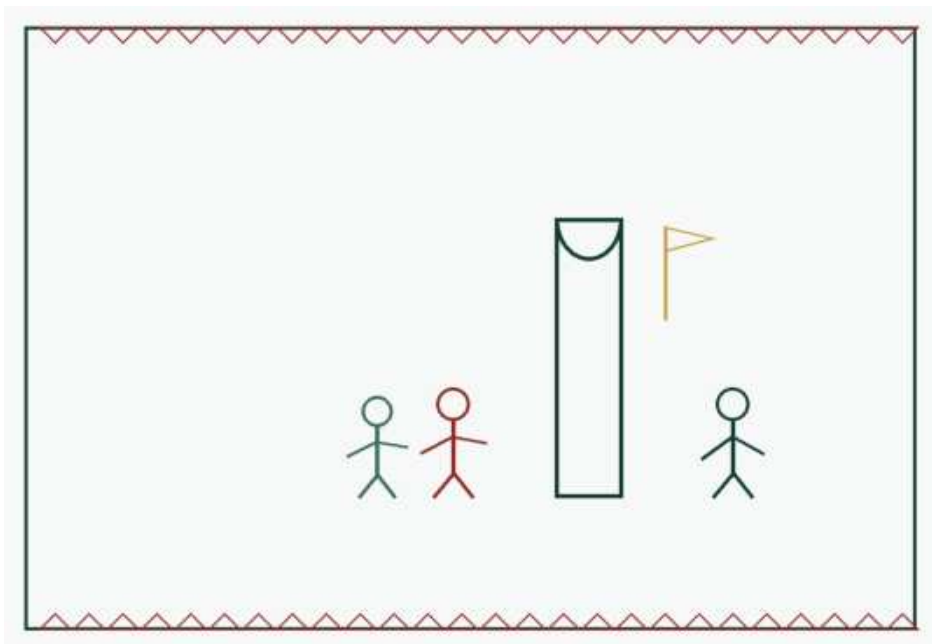


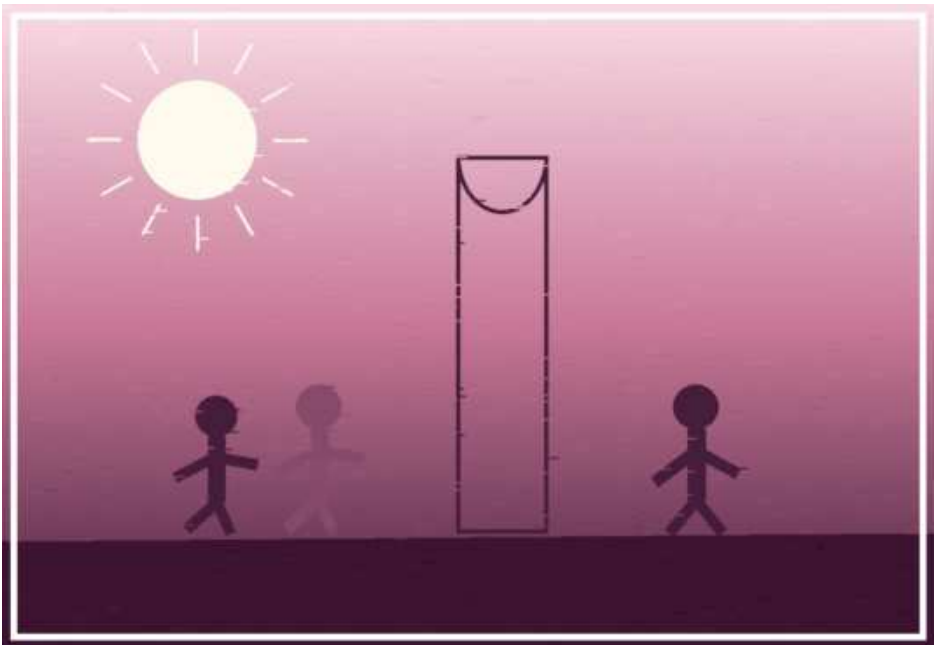
Picture 3

The battle of Nunjagarh was fierce. Sword struck sword, the ground turned red, and when the dust finally settled, news reached Dilarinagar—news no heart could have been ready to hear.

The Sayyid had been killed. All his sons had fallen too. An entire warrior family was lost in the same battle, on the same day. The practice yard at the mansion fell silent, and only empty pegs remained where the swords had once hung.





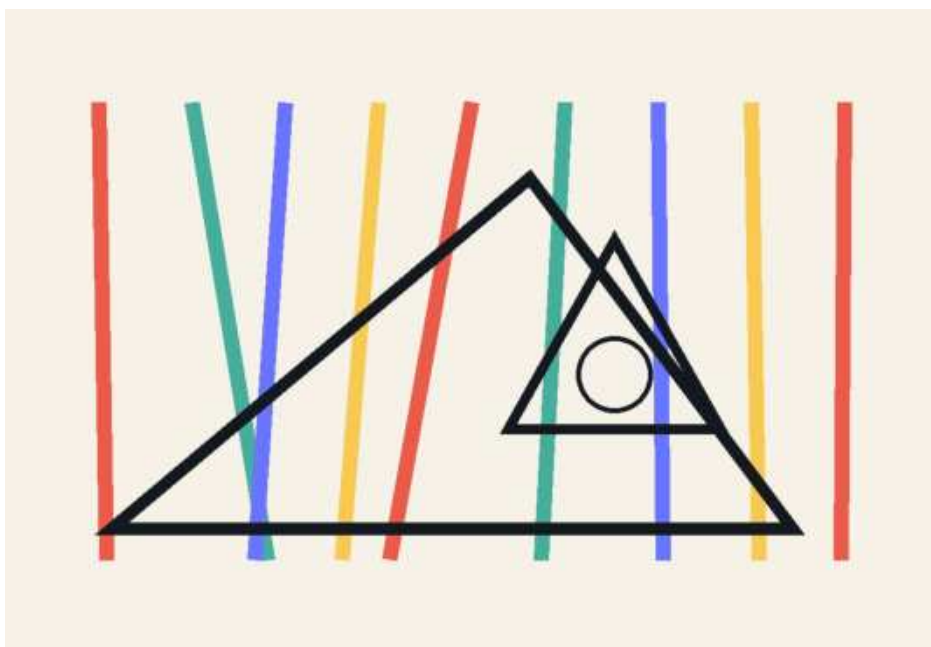


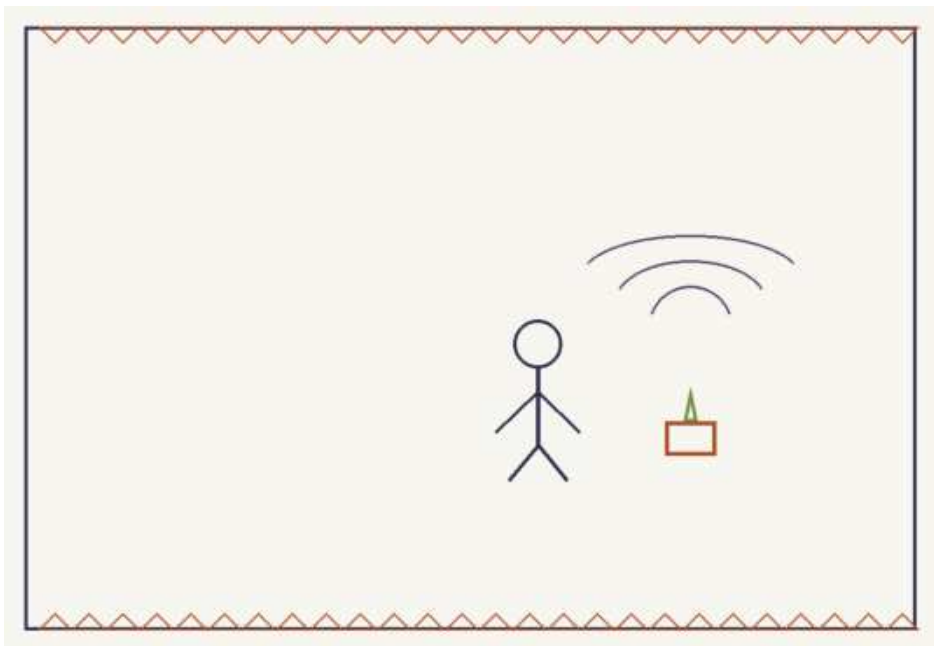
Picture 4

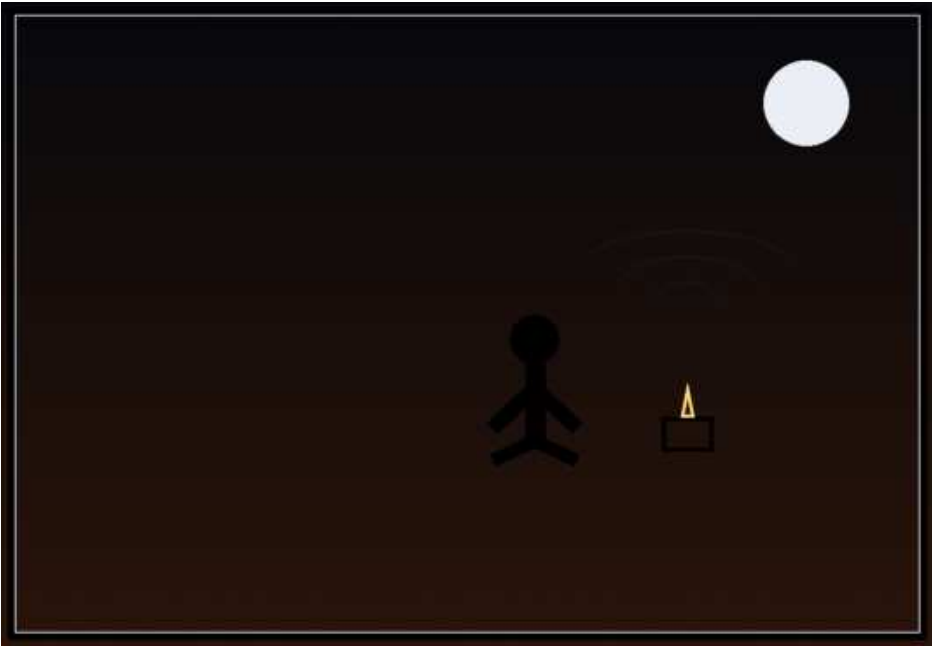
Dilarinagar sank into grief. But the deepest grief lay inside that mansion, where one widow was left alone—her husband gone, her sons gone, and ahead of her... what was there now?

There was one secret ahead, one thin ray of light in that dark hour: the widow was expecting a child. In a house filled with death, a new life was waiting to arrive. Grief and hope rested beneath the same shawl.

Chapter 3: Miran Is Born



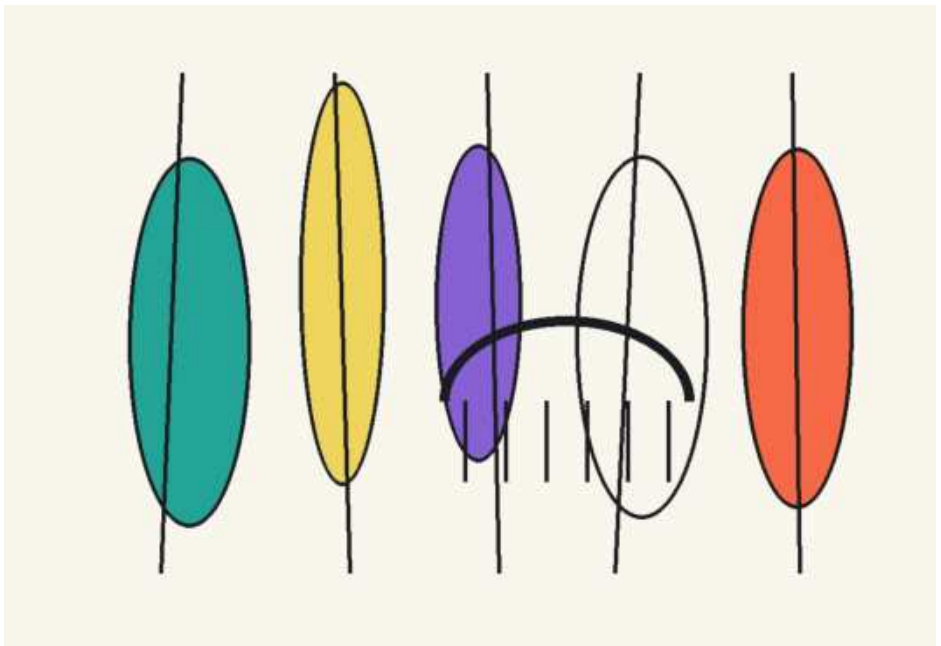


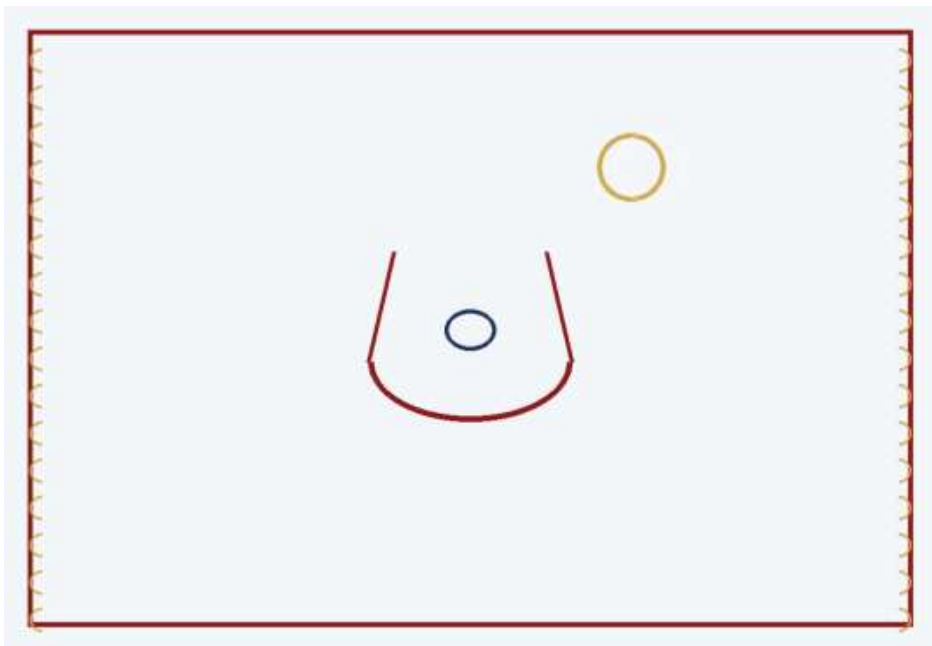


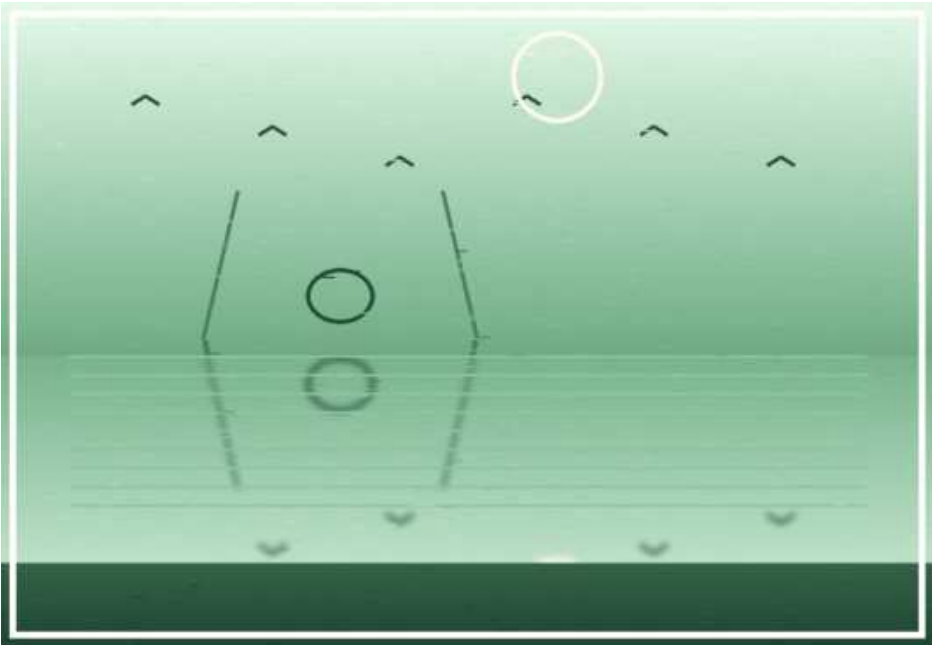
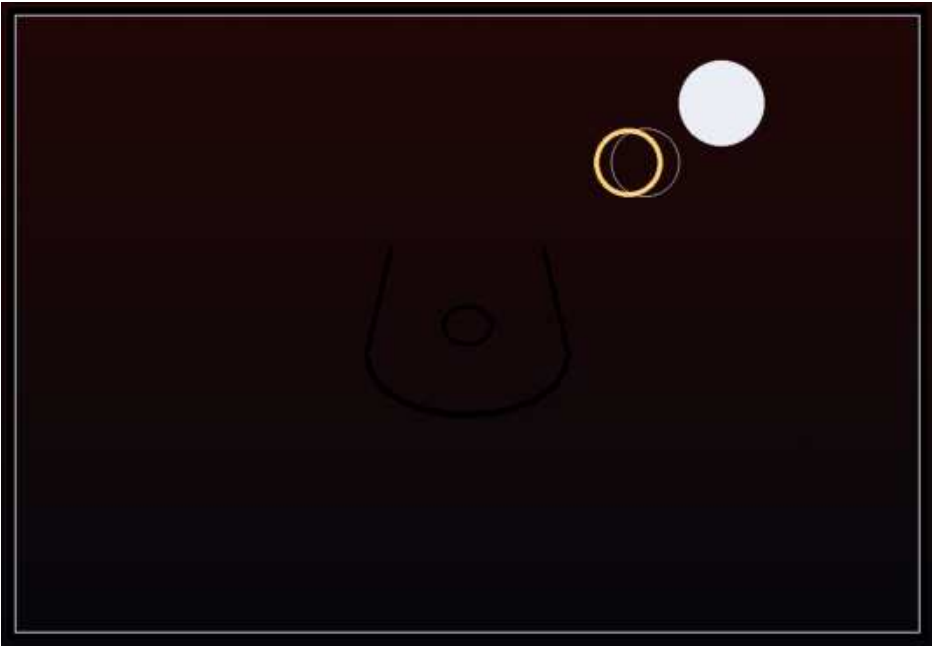
Picture 5

Some time later, a child was born—a boy. He was named Miran.

How could a cradle rock for a child who had lost his father and all his brothers before he was even born? His mother held him close and made a silent promise: 'I will keep him far from the shadow of war. He will never touch a sword. He will live—that is all. He will live.'





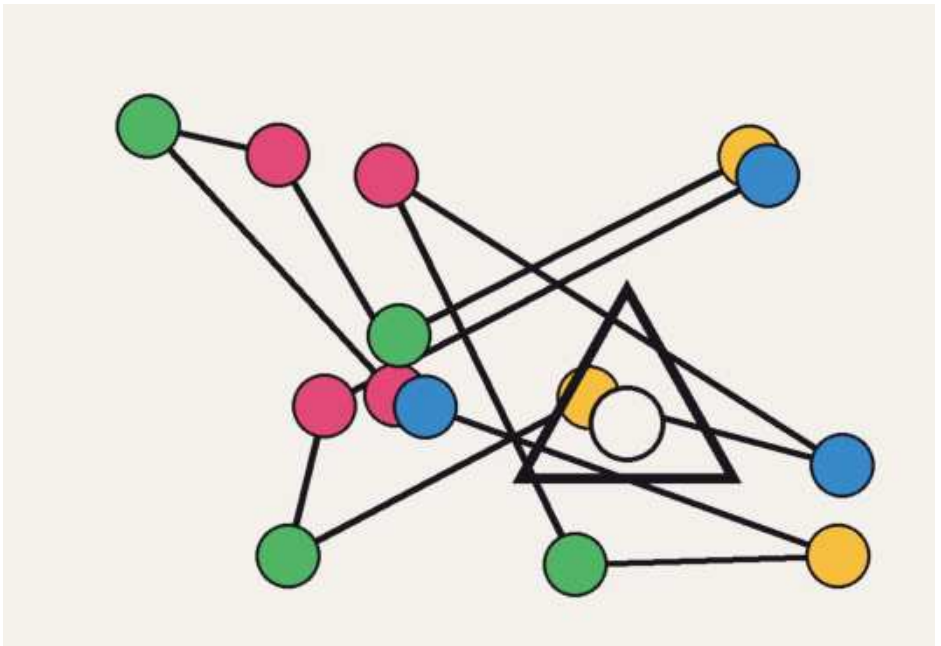


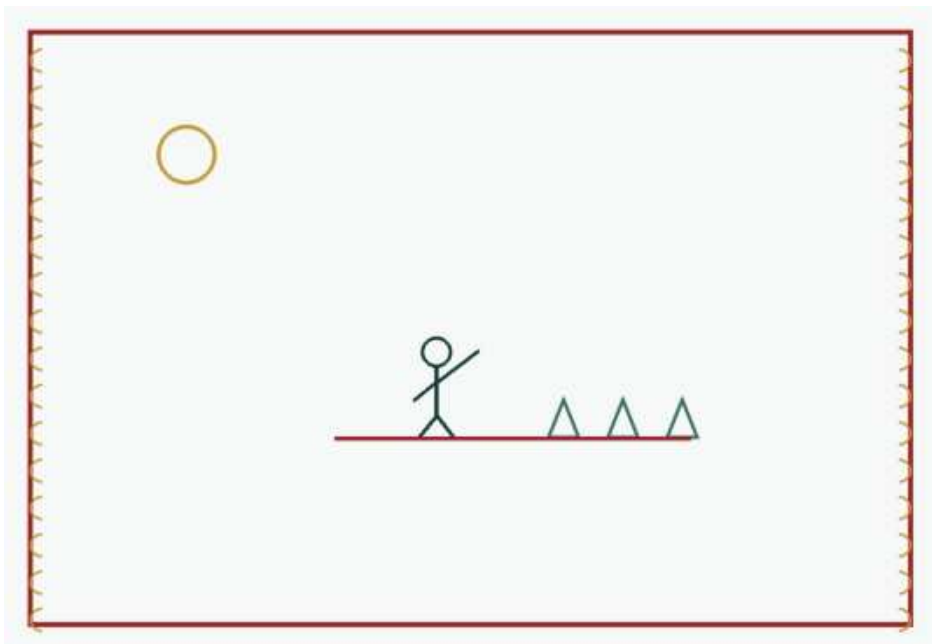
Picture 6

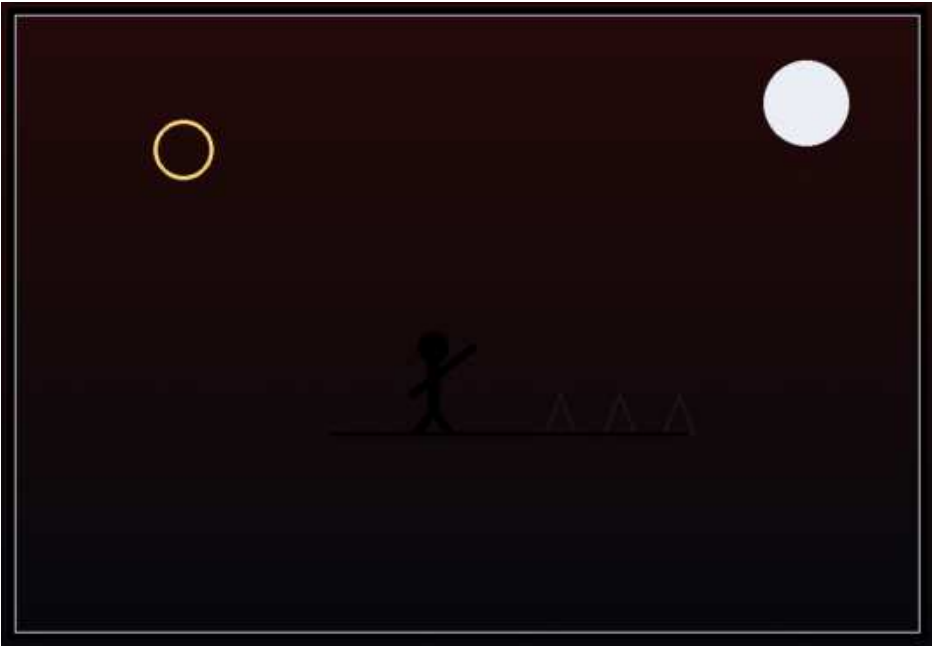
But blood has a language of its own. As Miran grew, even his games began to take the shape of battle. A stick became a sword, a mound of earth became a fort, and a certain brightness appeared in his eyes—a brightness his mother knew only too well. She had seen it in her husband's eyes and in the eyes of her other sons.

Miran too was a born fighter. His mother did not like it, but her dislike was not weakness. It was the wound of a woman who had lost her whole world in a single battle. Who could blame her?

Chapter 4: A Marriage at a Young Age



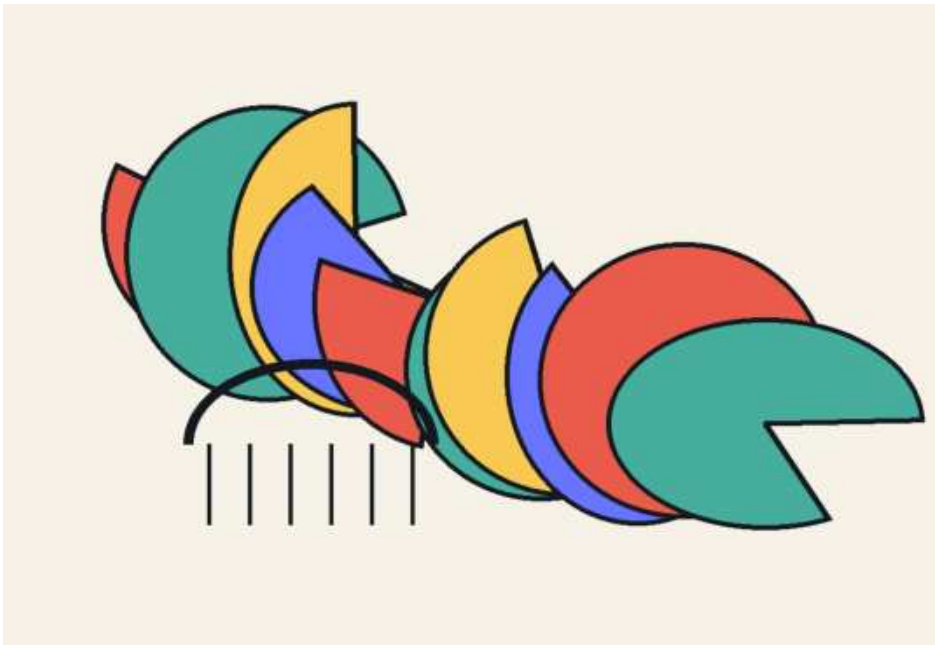


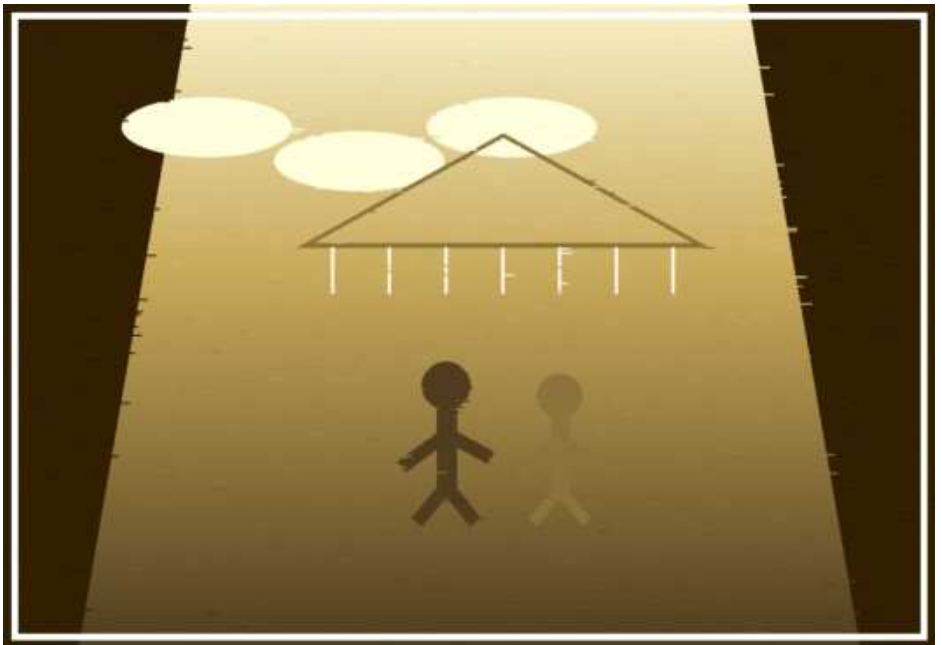
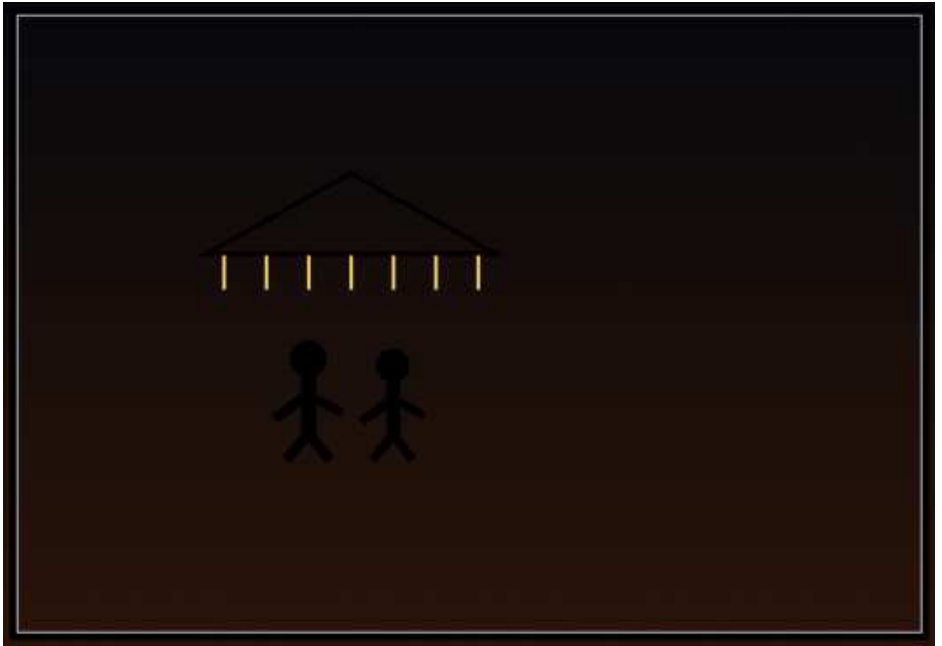


Picture 7

His mother thought of a solution—the same solution many worried mothers of that time might have chosen: marriage. 'If I tie him to a home and family,' she thought, 'his mind will turn away from war.'

And so Miran was married while still young. After years of mourning, wedding music sounded in the mansion again. Green-leaf decorations hung in the courtyard that had once been filled with grief. For the first time, Miran's mother felt a little relief. Her son now had bonds that might hold him close to home.





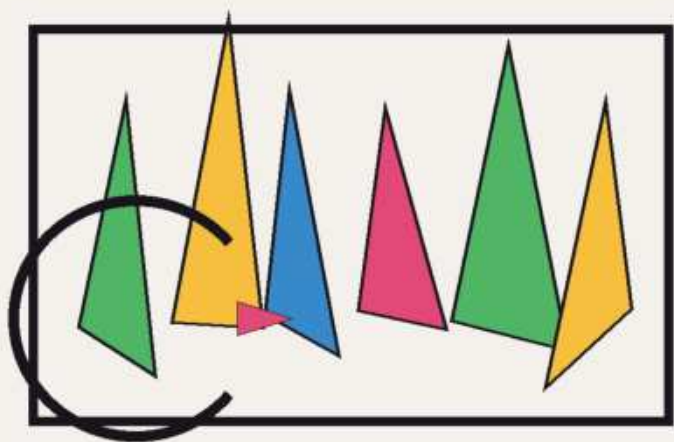
Picture 8

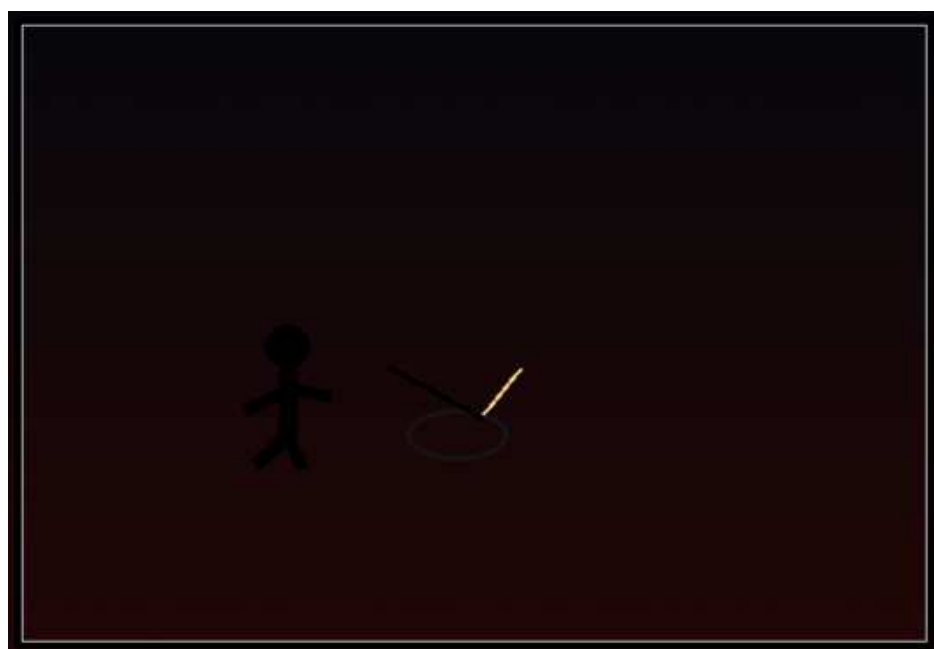
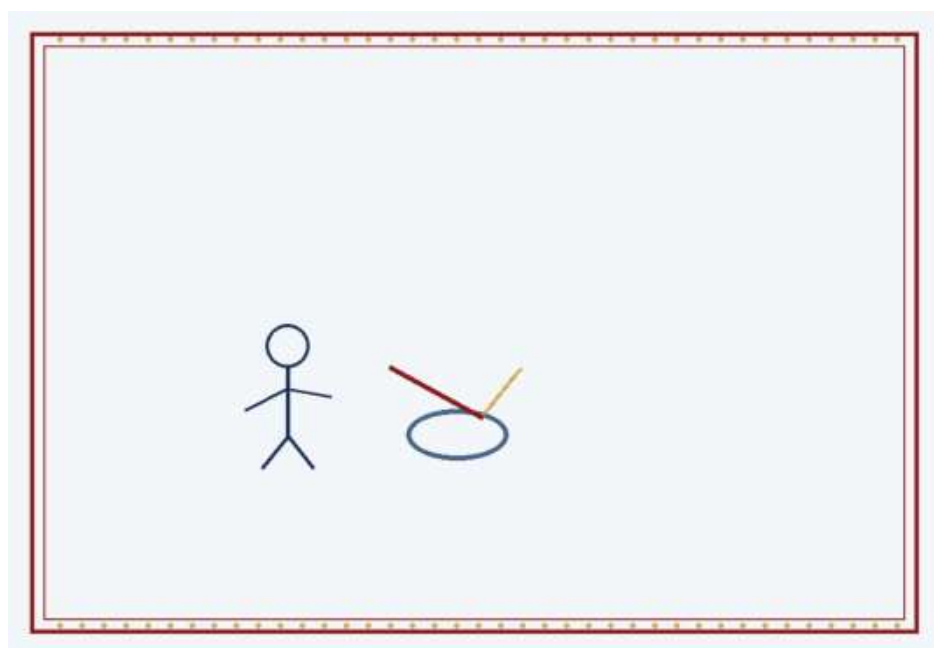
His young wife too held that bond with all her heart. But...

But. That is the heaviest word in this tale. Whether the bond is made of love or duty, it can hold only someone who wishes to be held. Inside Miran, an old account was still open—an account that neither wedding music nor vermilion could close: the account of Nunjagarh. His father's blood, his brothers' blood, and the revenge still unpaid.

Chapter 5: The Heart That Would Not Listen





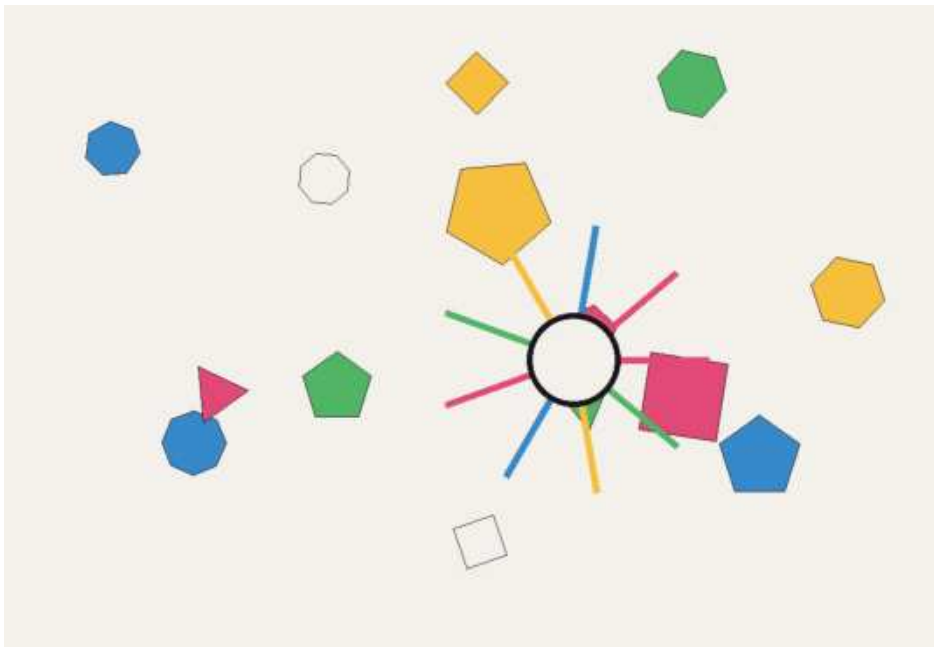


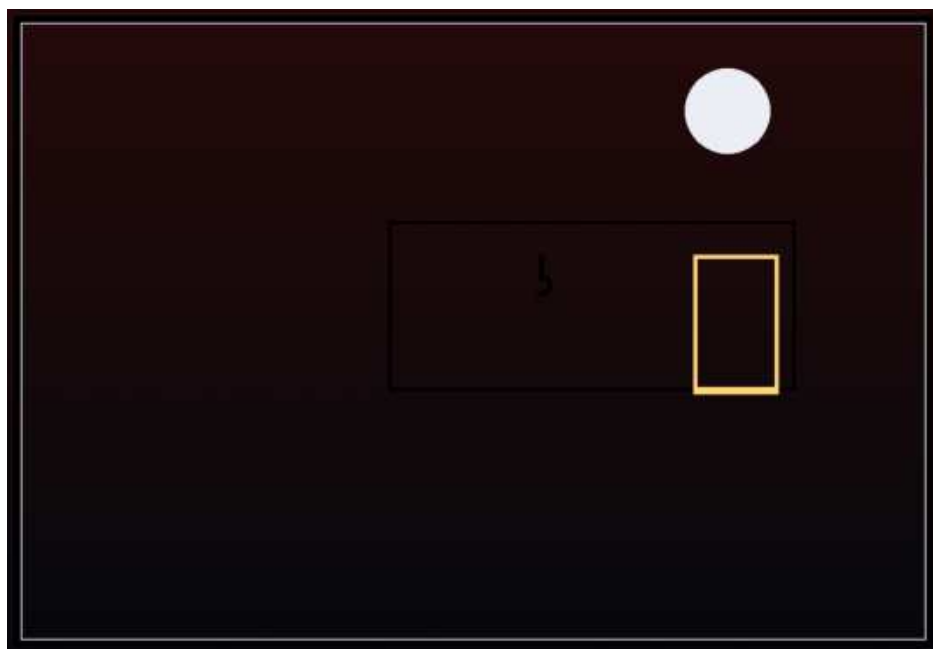
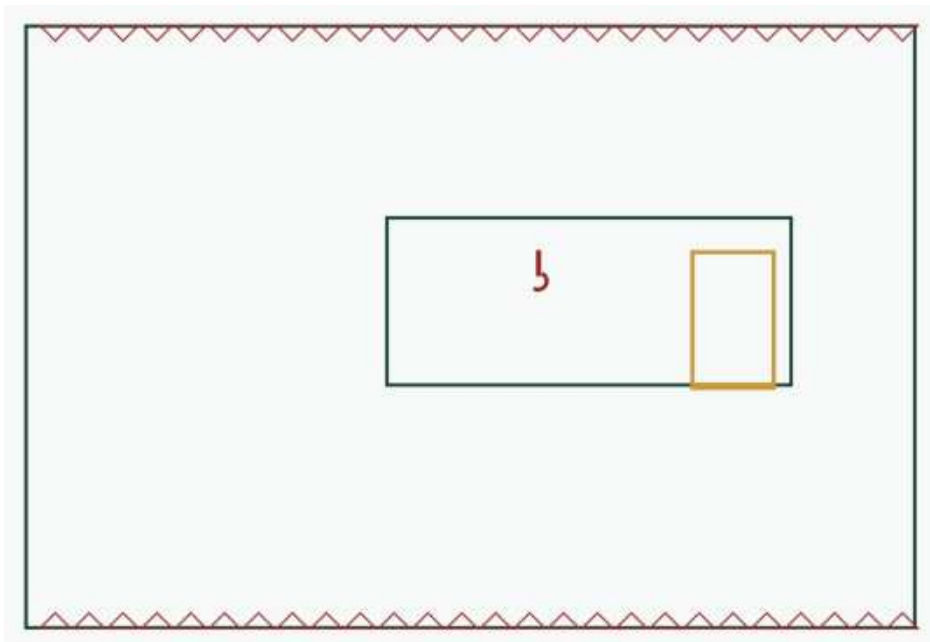


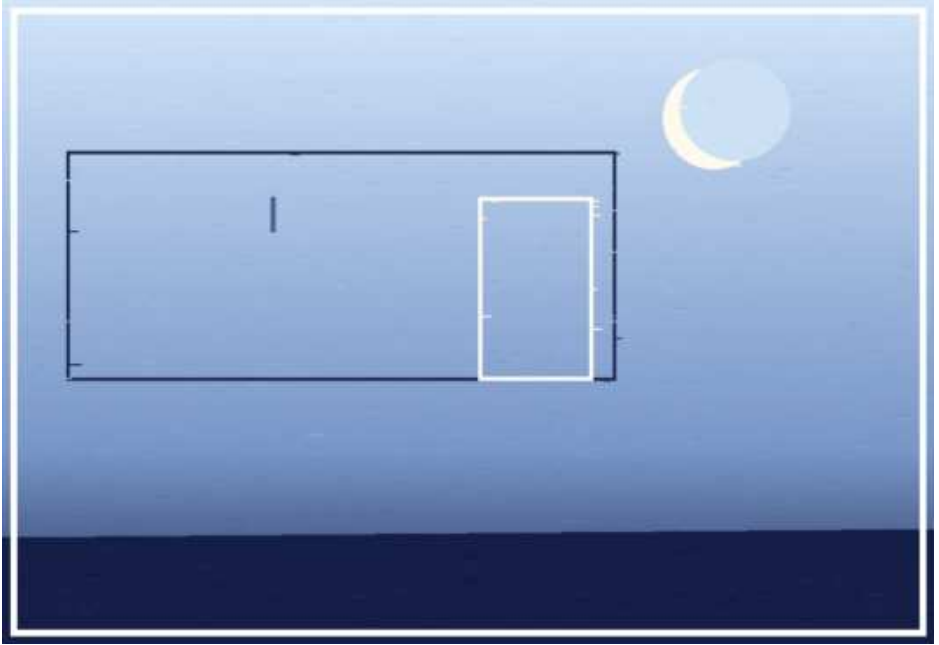
Picture 9

His mother tried to explain: 'My son, those who are gone will not return. Revenge cannot bring the dead back to life.' His wife pleaded, 'Your life belongs partly to me now too.' Two women—one who had lost the past, and one who was building a future—tried together to stop one man from walking toward battle.

Miran listened quietly and respectfully, with his head lowered. He never argued and never protested. That very silence misled them both. They thought he had accepted what they said.







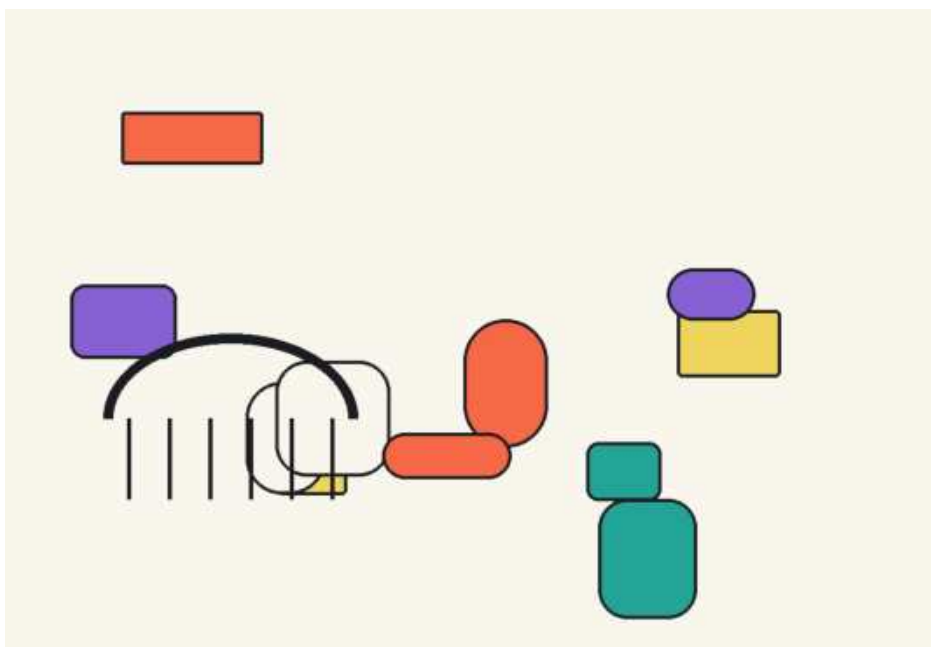
Picture 10

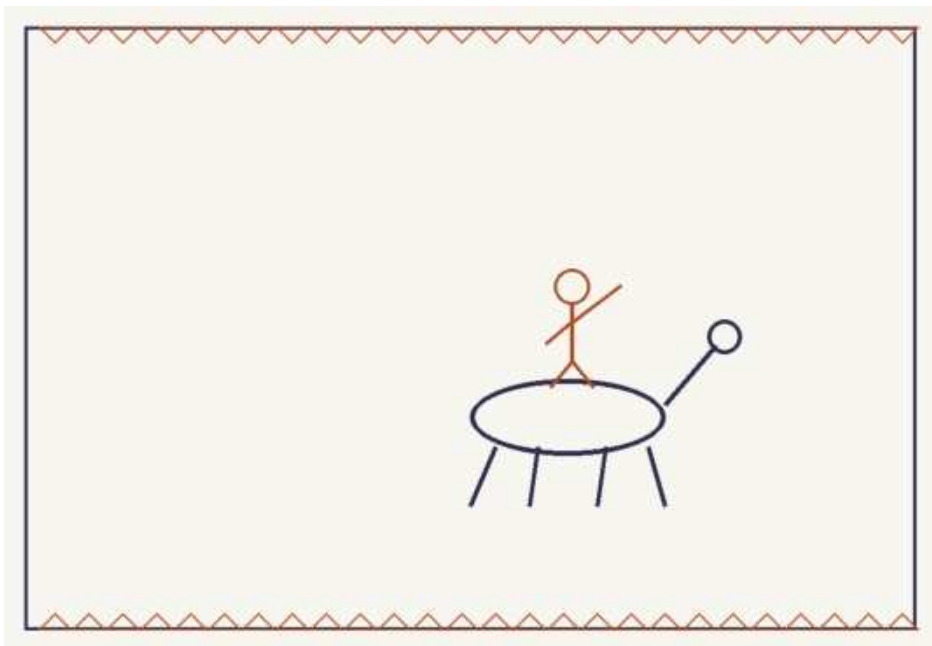
But when a heart has already made its decision, silence is not always agreement—it can be preparation. At night, Miran quietly sharpened his sword, fed his horse with his own hands, and traced the road to Nunjagarh again and again in his mind.

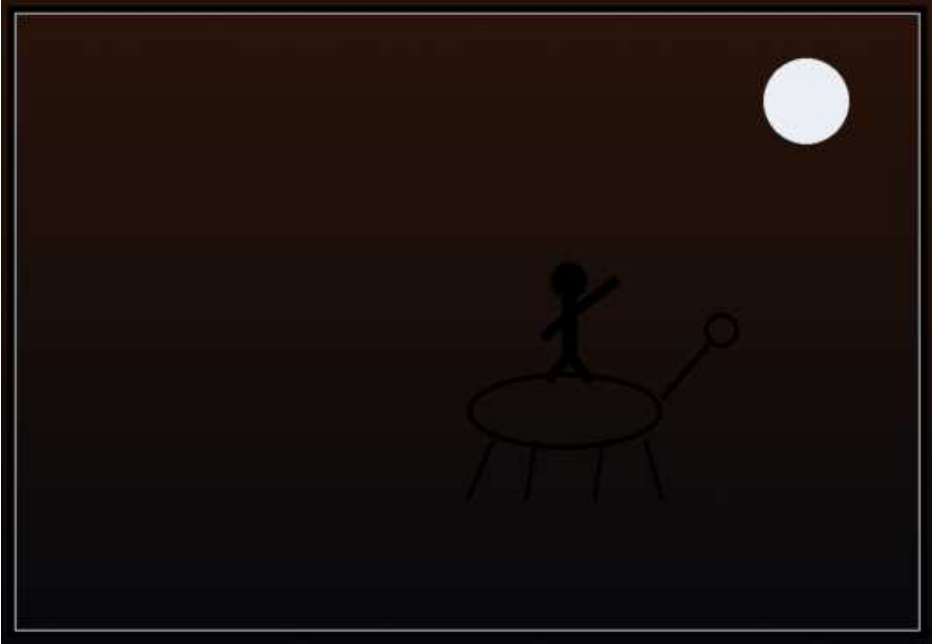
One morning the mansion awoke to find Miran's room empty. There had been no shouting, no farewell, no announcement—only an empty peg where the sword had hung the day before. His mother sat down at the

threshold. She did not need even a moment to understand where her son had gone.

Chapter 6: The Lone Rider





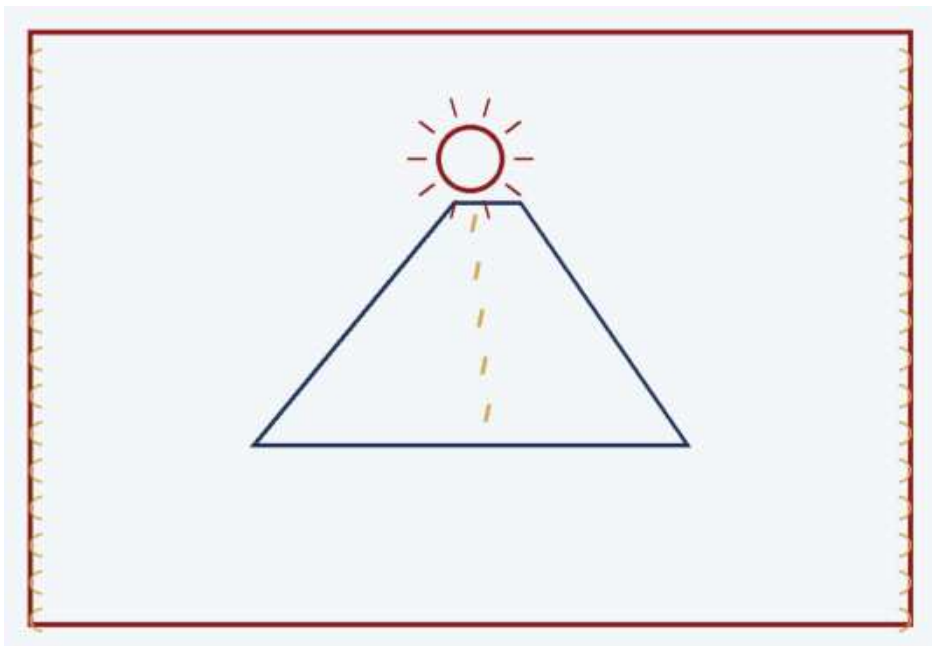


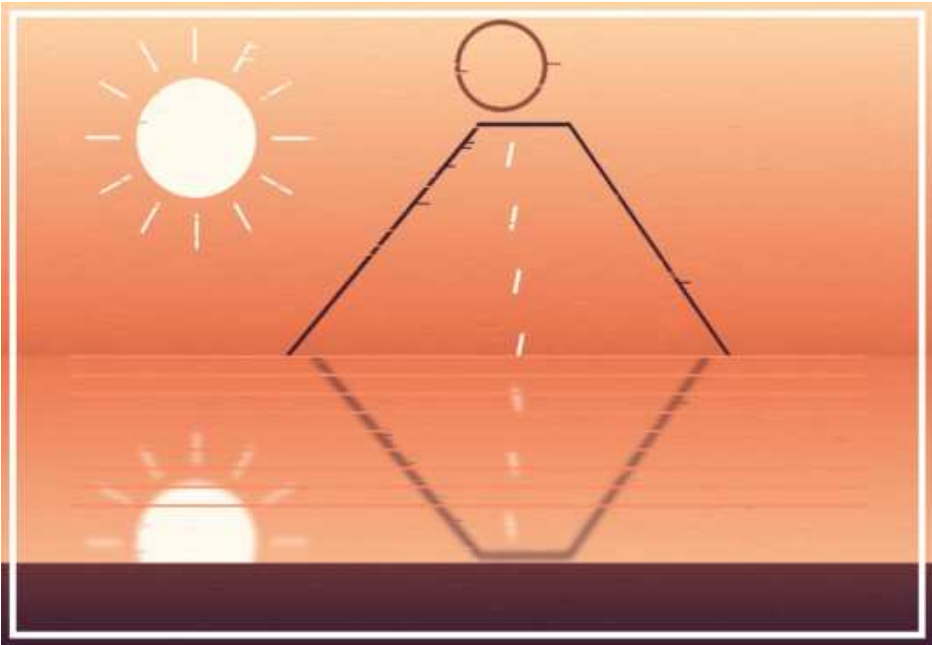
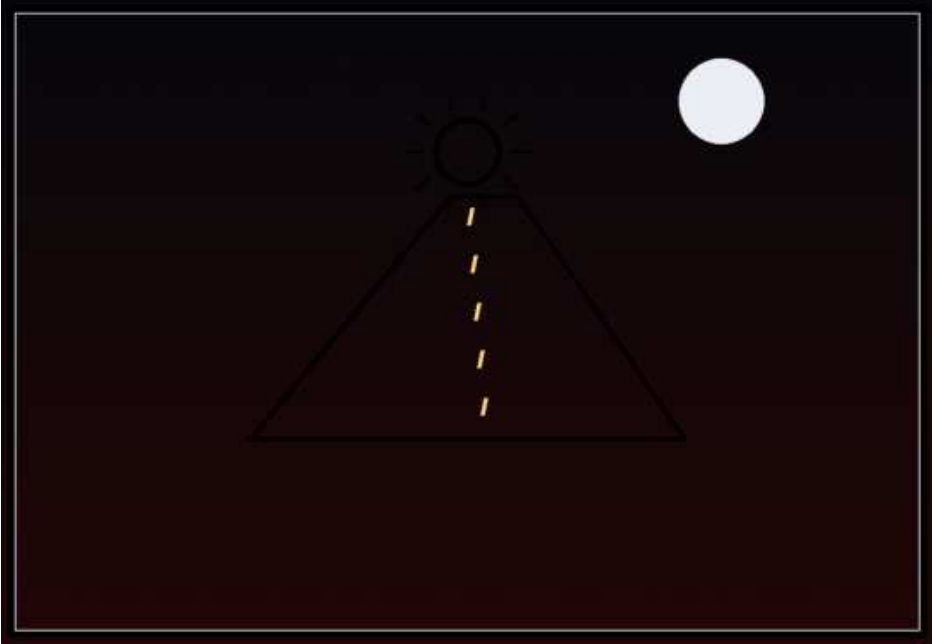
Picture 11

Miran set out alone for Nunjagarh—no army, no companion, no banner. One horse, one sword, and one unfinished account.

The road was long. The day scorched him and the night covered him with dew, but the rider did not stop. The boy who had become an orphan before birth was now travelling toward the very land where his orphanhood had been written.





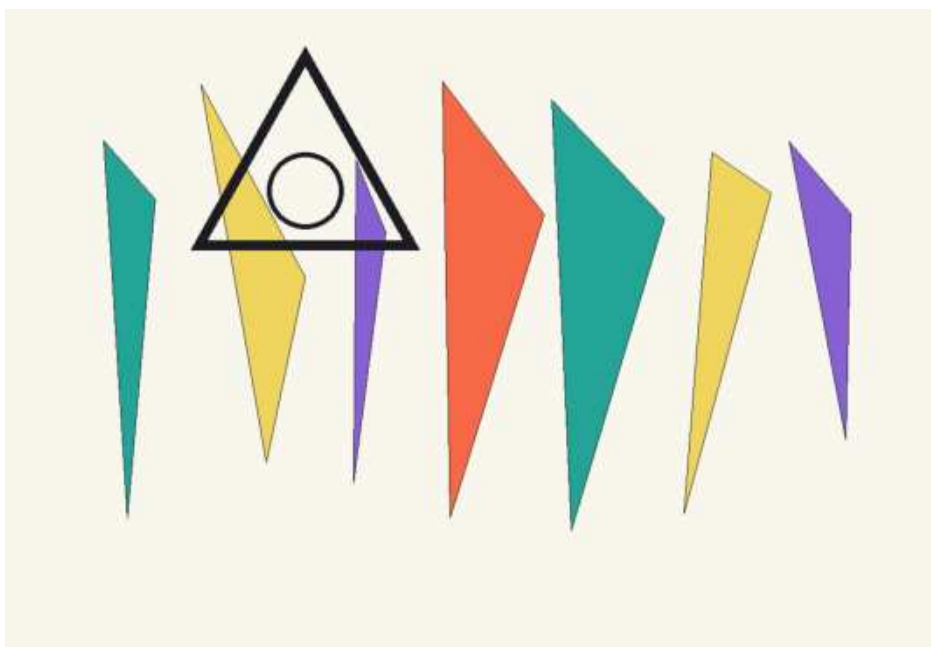


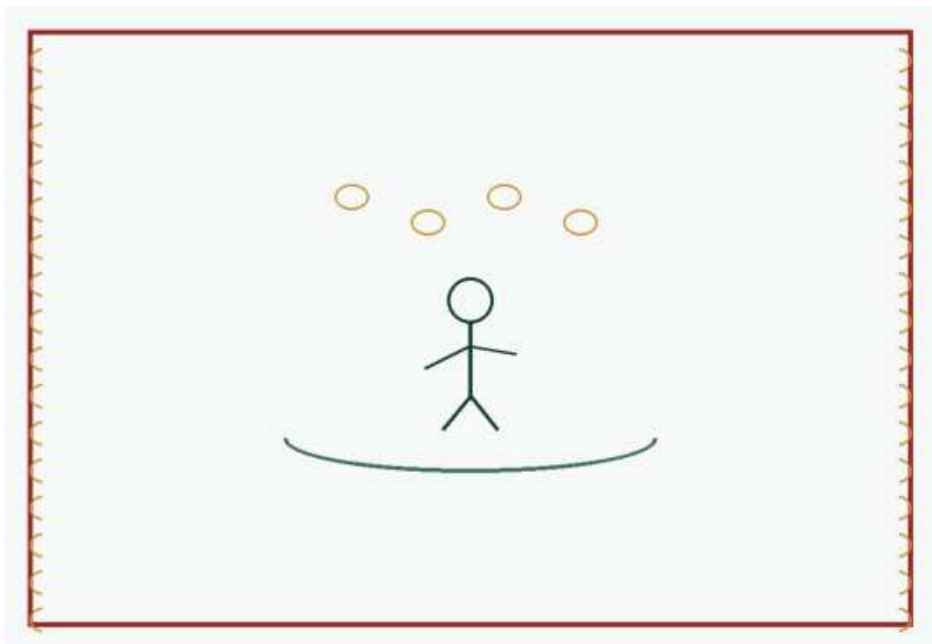
Picture 12

Going alone was daring. Nunjagarh was the place where an entire warrior family had been destroyed. What could one young man do there by himself? But Miran's reasoning was different: a battle lost by an army can sometimes be won by one fearless heart, because armies may be stopped by fear of death—and Miran felt he had nothing left to lose.

At the border of Nunjagarh, Miran stopped his horse. Before him lay the same land where his father had fought his final battle. He picked up a little earth and touched it to his forehead. 'Abba, brothers—Miran has come.'

Chapter 7: Revenge



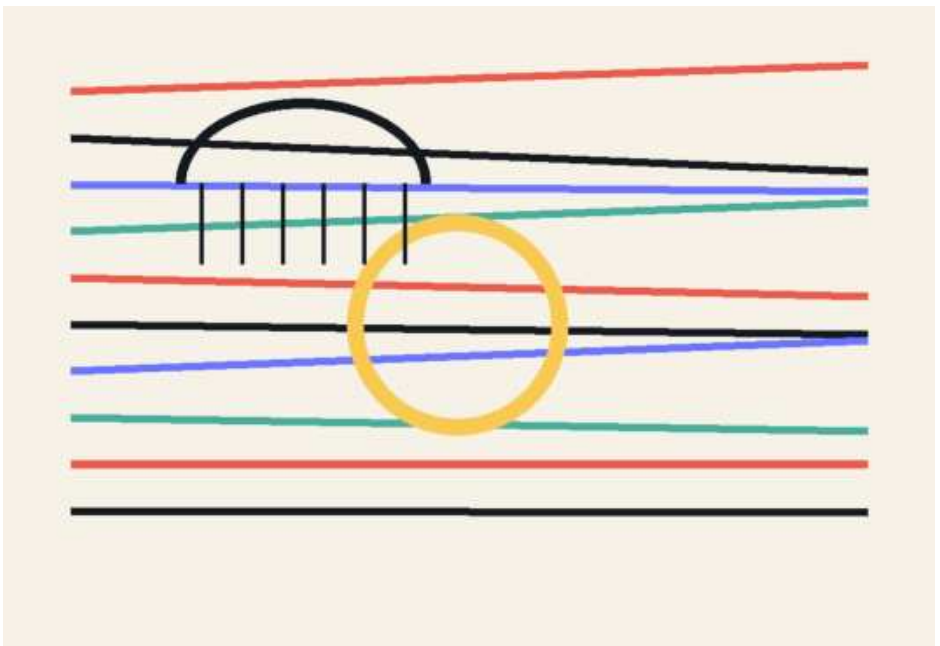


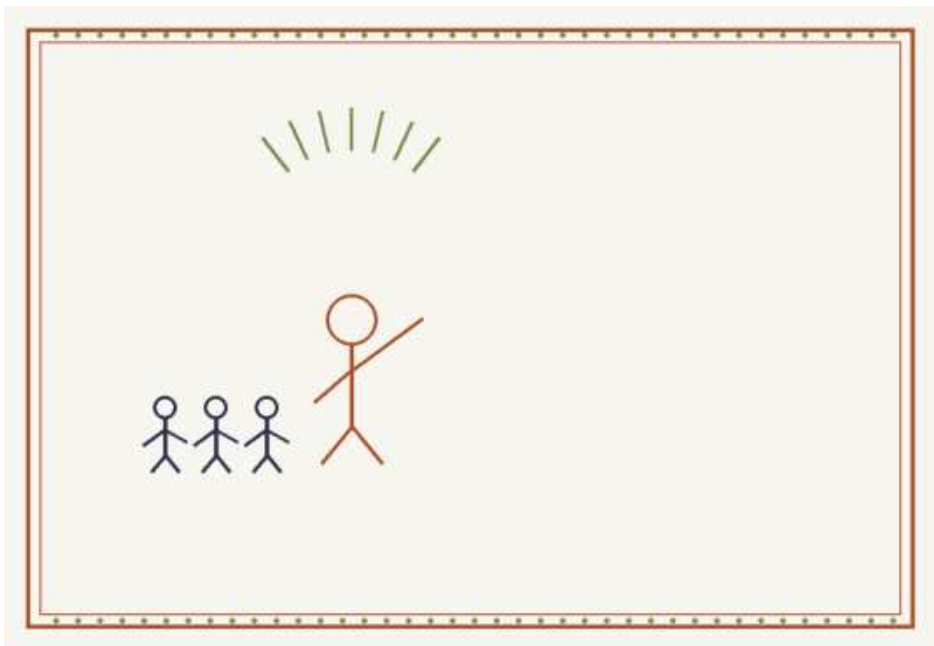


Picture 13

What happened next is remembered in the stories of Dilarinagar like a flash of lightning: Miran, all alone, avenged his father and brothers in Nunjagarh.

The enemy had never imagined that any lamp of the fallen family still burned—and that the surviving flame would arrive like a storm. That day Miran's sword was not merely iron. It carried the years of tears of a widow, the silence of seven graves, and the pain of an unborn orphan, all sharpened into one blade.



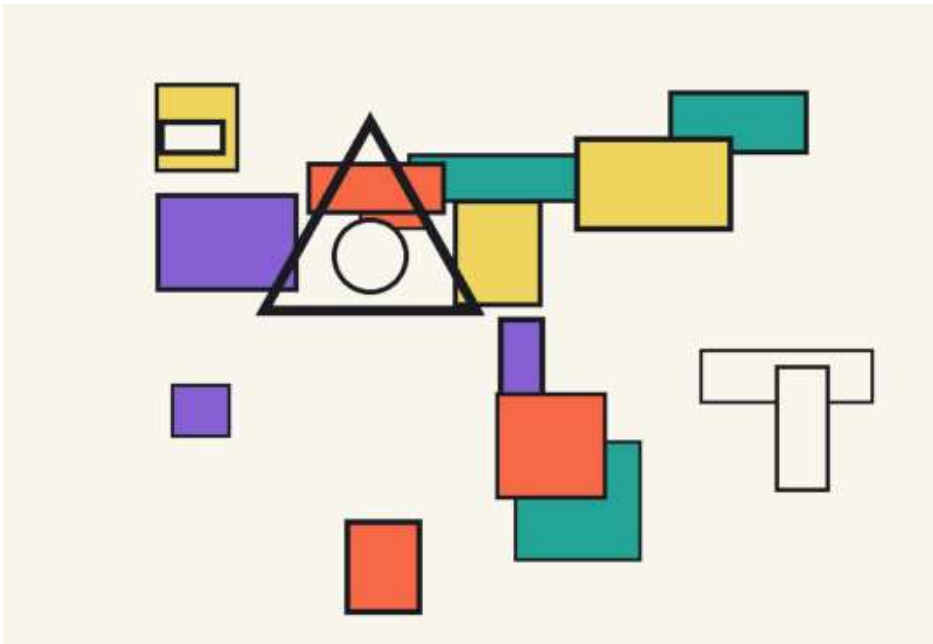


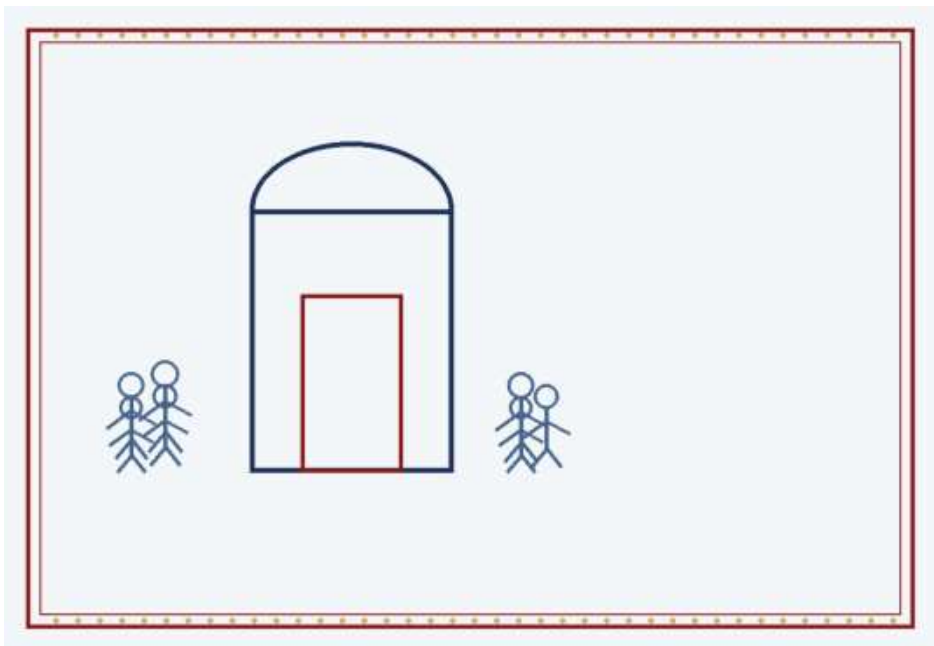


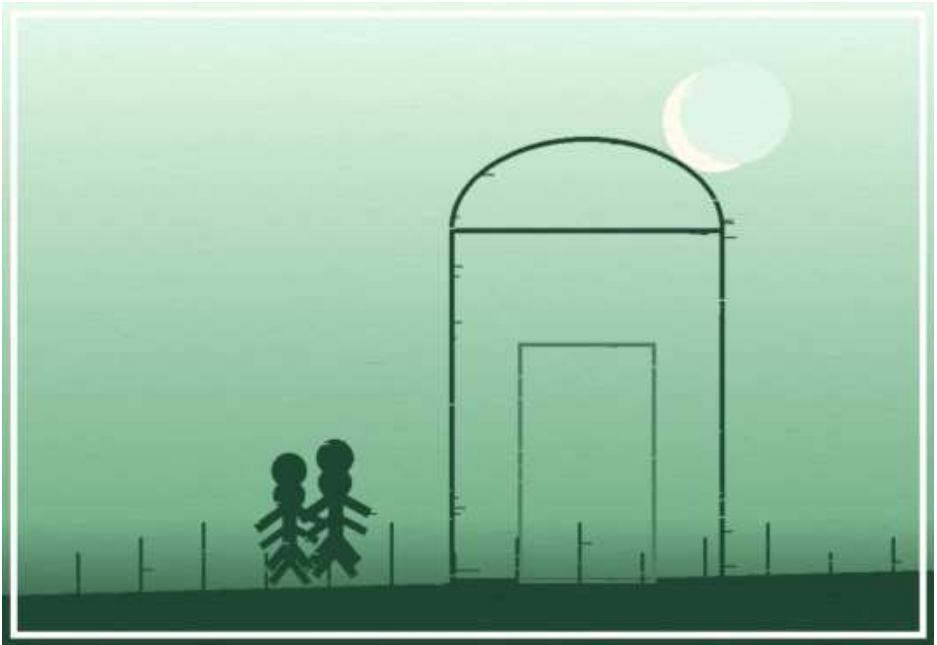
Picture 14

There was a battle, and the old account was settled. The blood that had once been spilled on the soil of Nunjagarh was answered on that same soil.

And then this tale becomes different from many stories of revenge. Miran did not stay there. He did not conquer a kingdom and did not loot it. He simply closed the account and turned his horse homeward. For him, revenge was not a fire meant to spread forever. It was a debt to be paid—and once paid, the book was closed.





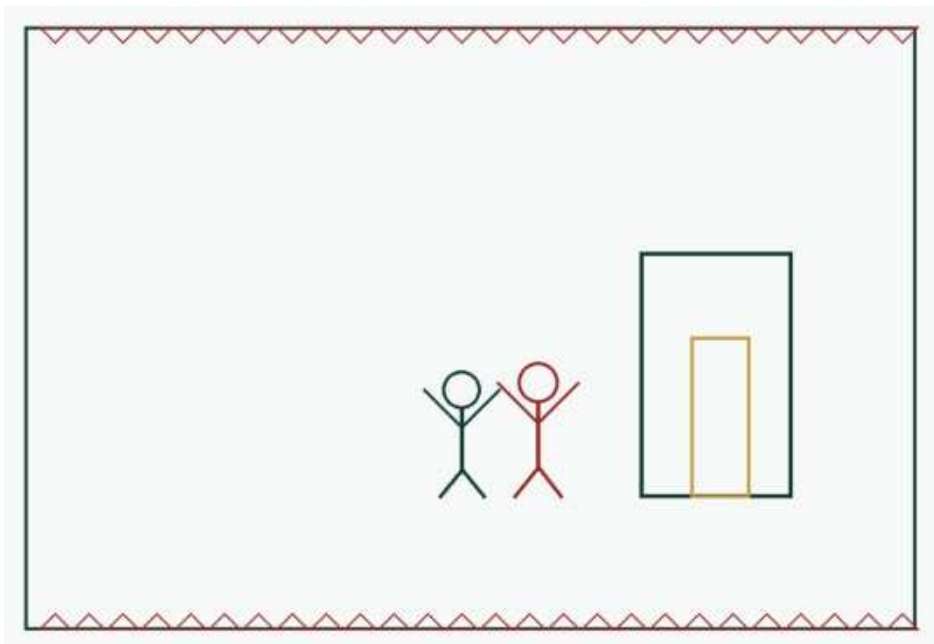


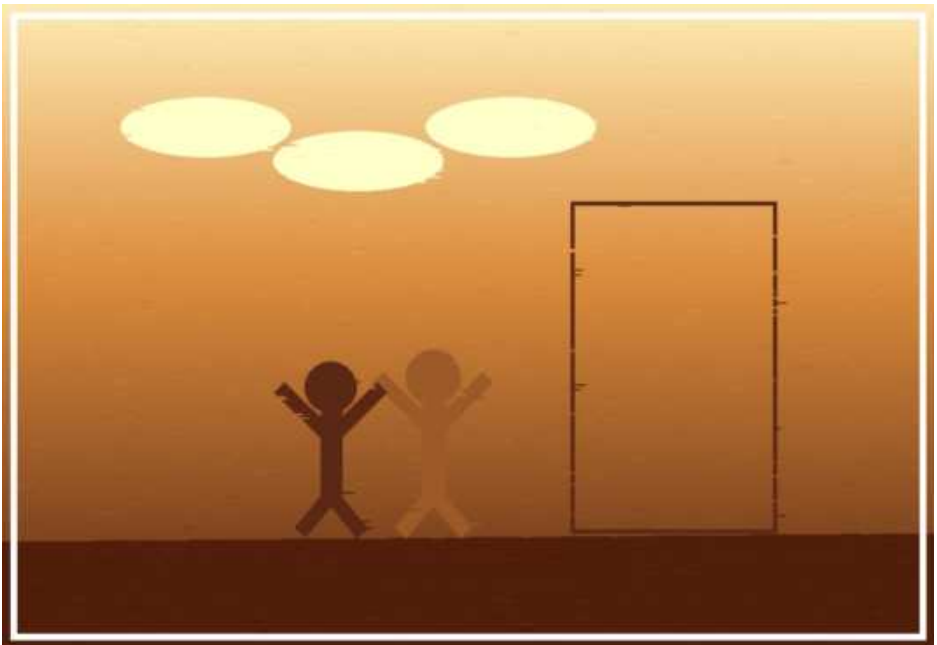
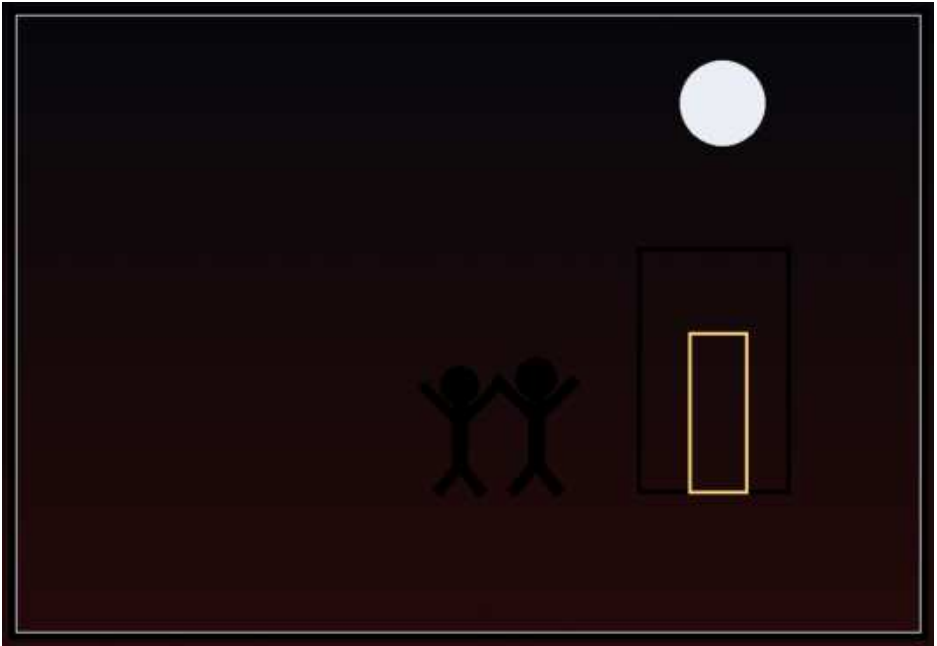
Picture 15

Miran returned to Dilarinagar. The whole town rushed to see him. The boy who had left in silence had returned as part of history.

His mother stood at the doorway. When she saw her son alive and unharmed, the tears she had held back for years poured out all at once. She did not scold him and did not question him. She only stroked his head. Some homecomings are so great that every question becomes small before them.





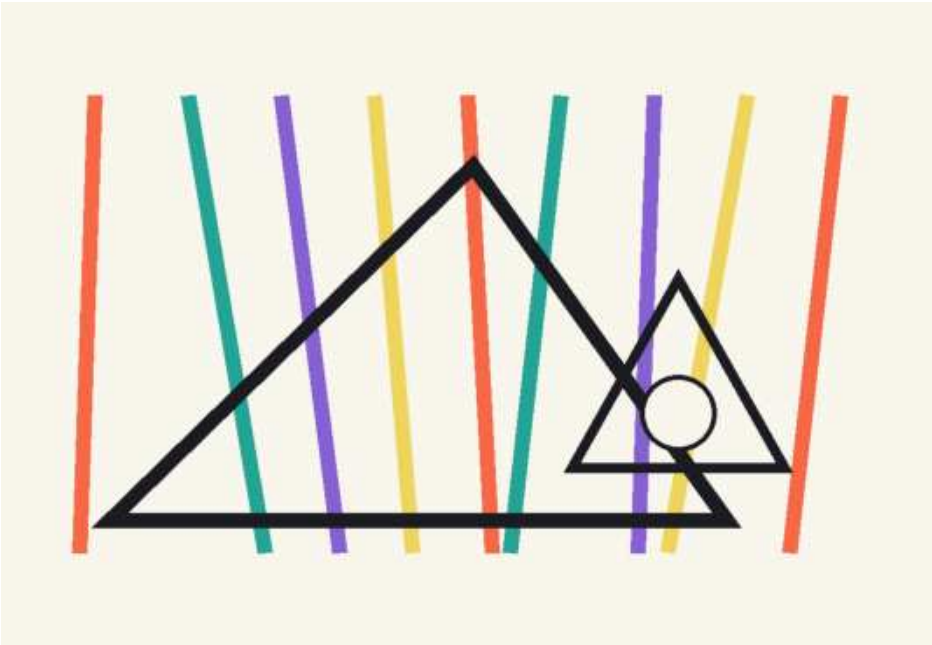


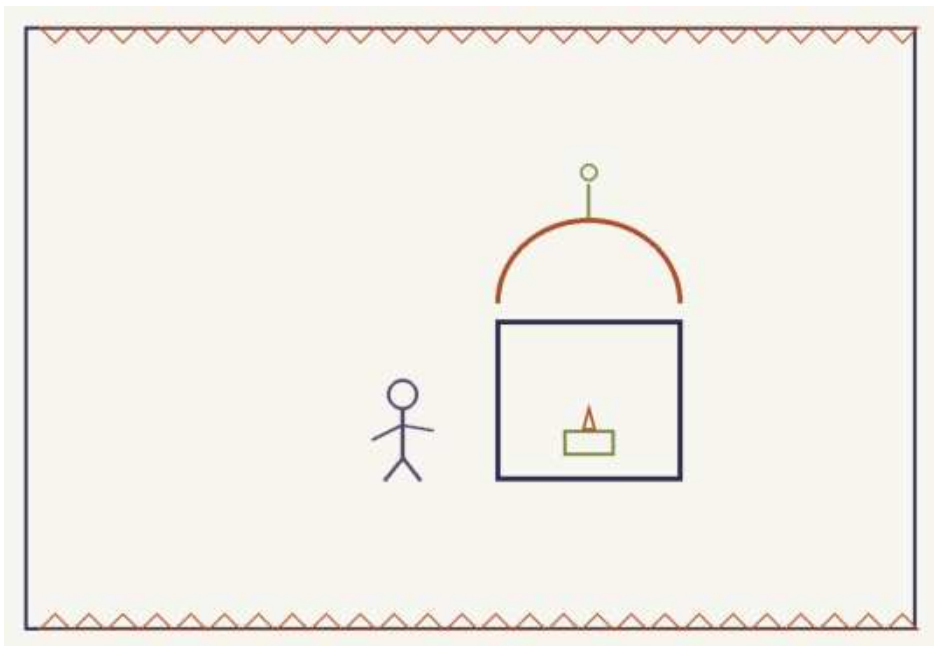
Picture 16

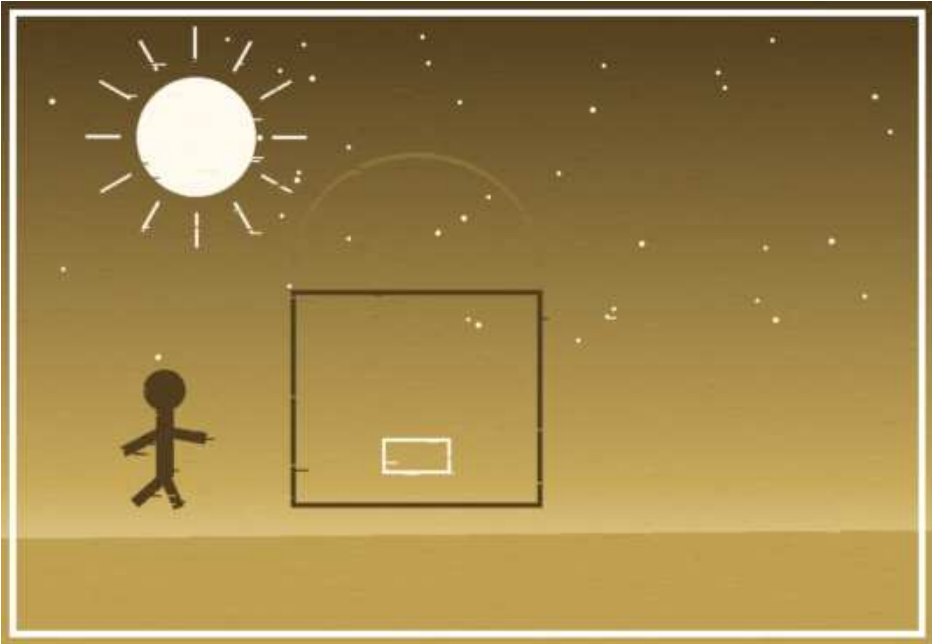
Miran was peaceful now, as if a storm that had raged inside him for years had finally become still. He returned to family life, served the town, and his presence alone gave Dilarinagar a sense of safety: 'If Miran Saheb is here, what is there to fear?'

People had begun to call him 'Miran Saheb'. The word 'Saheb' seemed to attach itself to his name naturally, as respect sometimes creates its own title.

Chapter 9: The Spirit on Guard



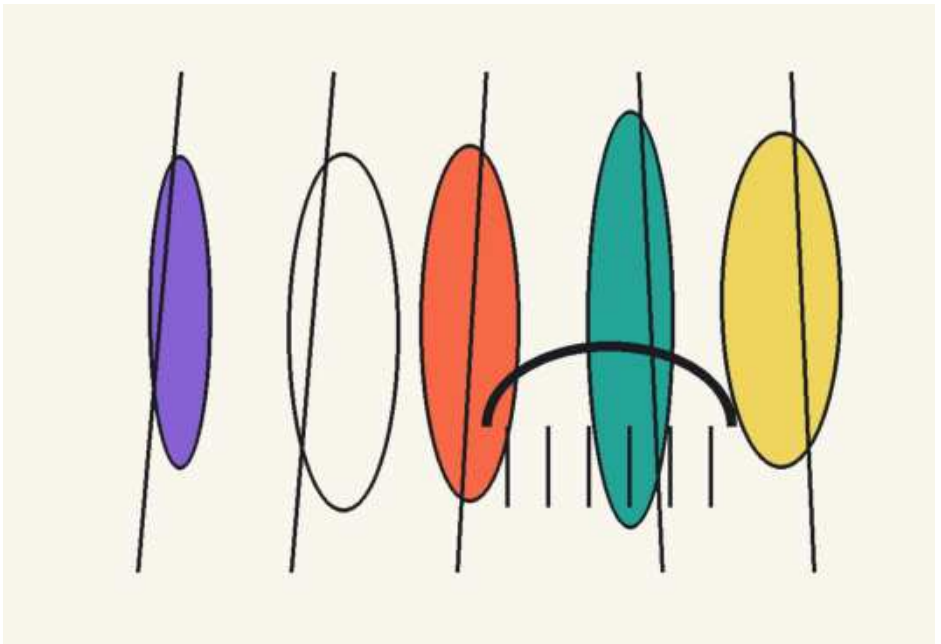


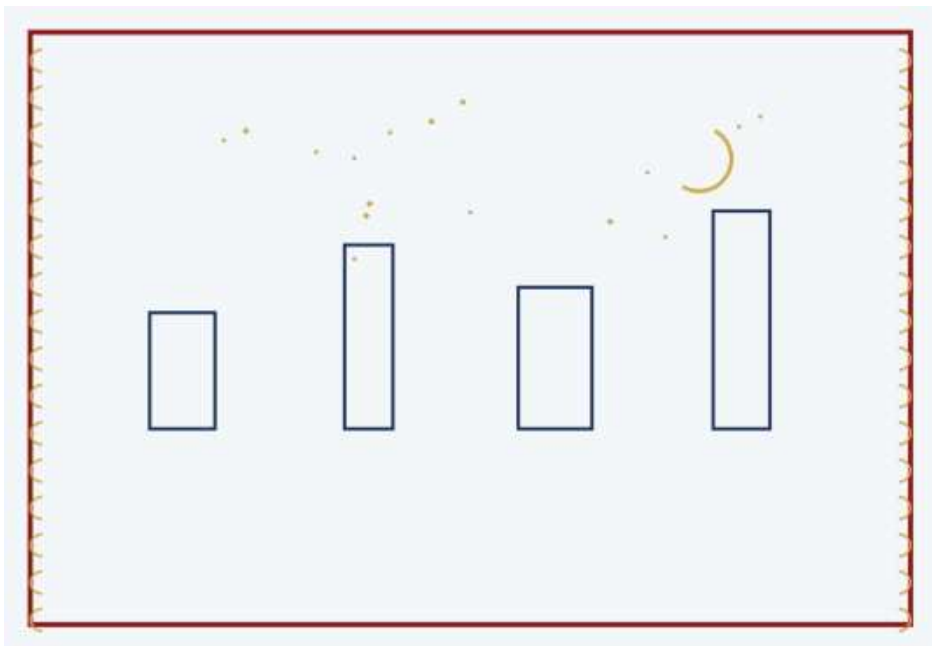


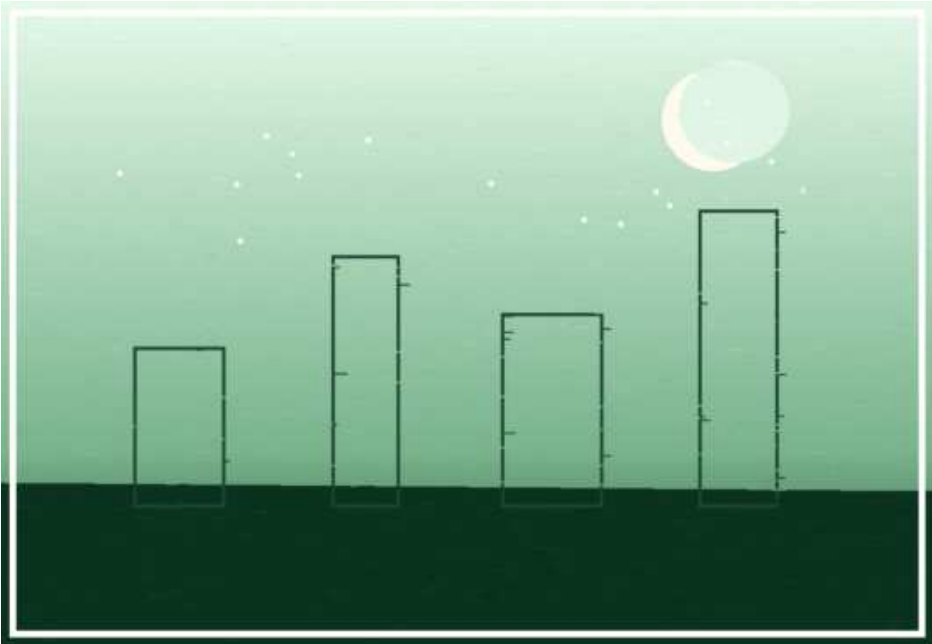
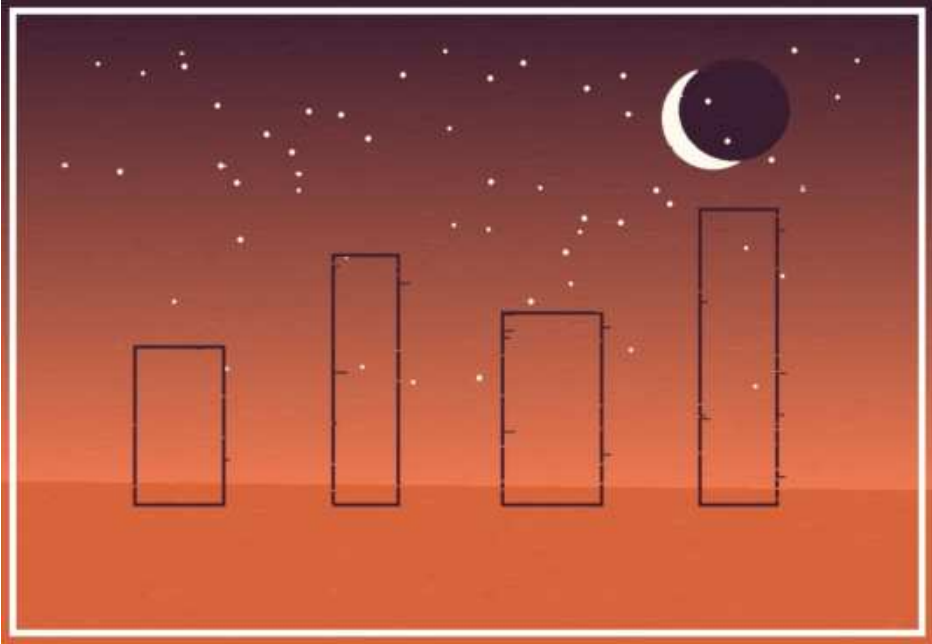
Picture 17

Time moved on, and one day Miran Saheb's life came to an end. Dilarinagar mourned again—but this time its grief held a strange feeling of reassurance, whose meaning became clear later.

The reason was this: even after Miran Saheb's death, Dilarinagar remained peaceful for a long time. There was no theft, no robbery, and no trouble. People said, 'It is the power of his spirit. Miran Saheb has not really left us—he is still on guard.'







Picture 18

And that belief was more than a simple superstition. It was the natural continuation of the life he had lived. A man who had been the town's shield while alive became a shield in memory too. Wrongdoers feared his name, while troubled people drew courage from it.

Even today, when a mother in Dilarinagar tells a stubborn child a story at dusk, the name Miran Saheb may appear—the boy orphaned before birth, whom everyone tried to stop but who would not be stopped, and who, people say, did not abandon his town even after death. Some people remain in history; some remain in the very air, like peace itself.

The End

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Jat-Jatin

A Folk Play from Vidyapati's Age — Love,
Married Life, and the Rain Ritual



Gajendra Thakur

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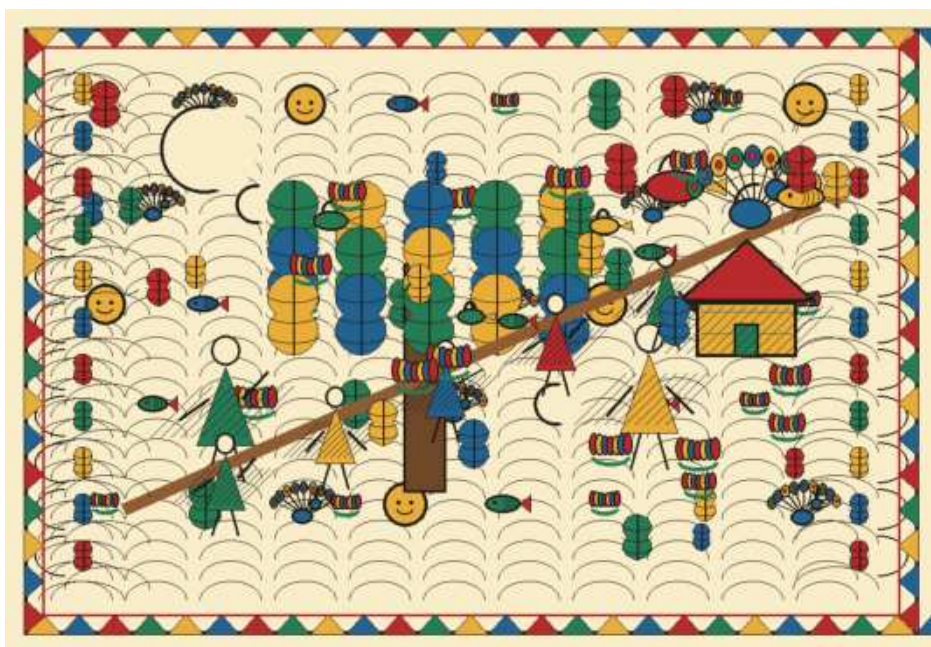
Introduction: The Court of Maharaja Shiva Singh

Maharaja Shiva Singh (1412–1446) was a king of Mithila. Vidyapati, the great poet who wrote in Sanskrit and Avahatta, lived during his reign, and King Shiva Singh and Queen Lakhima Rani were deeply fond of Vidyapati.

At the same time there was also a great musician named Jayat, or Jat. King Shiva Singh had asked him to set to different ragas and raginis the songs of the poet Vidyapati's padavali, following the older musical tradition associated with Jyotirishwar. This same Jayat composed the Jat-Jatin play and himself performed the role of Jat.

The play is performed by women on moonlit nights during Sawan and Bhadav. It is a folk drama about love, household life, separation and reunion, and finally a ritual for rain. This book tells the story of that play, which women of Mithila have kept alive from generation to generation.

Chapter 1: Jat and Jatin



Picture 1

The Jat-Jatin play has two main characters: Jat, dressed in men's clothing, and Jatin, wearing a printed sari.

Traditionally, women performed both roles because the play was part of a ritual belonging entirely to women.

And look—both characters arrive with groups of their friends. On Sawan and Bhadav nights, this group performance brought the village women together, giving them both entertainment and a strong sense of community.





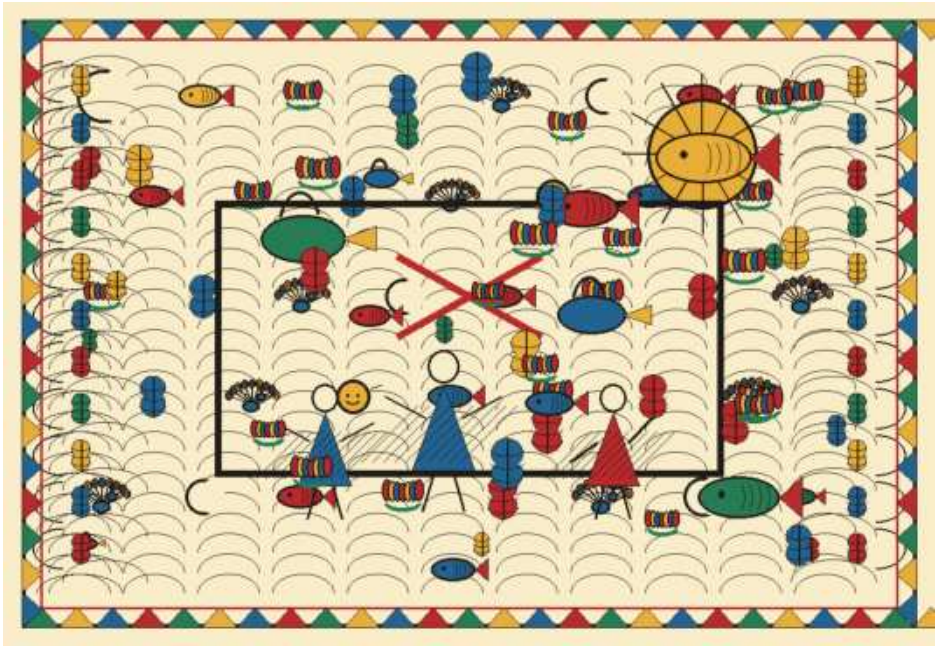
Picture 2

The story begins in the first Sawan after the wedding—the young bride Jatin's first rainy season in her husband's home, when the custom of visiting her parents' house comes into conflict with the rules and duties of her marital home.

The play gives a delicate picture of family life in Mithila: the pull between a woman's parents' home and her husband's home, playful quarrels between husband and wife, and finally the strength of their love—all presented as lively entertainment.

Chapter 2: Jatin Insists on Going to Her Parents' Home





Picture 3

Jatin wants to visit her parents' home, but the river is flooded. In the play she calls out to her mother: 'Mother, send someone proper to escort me home—a barber, a Thakur, a Brahmin, or even my younger brother in place of my elder brother. Otherwise my husband's family may send the escort back!'

The dialogue offers a glimpse of Mithila's traditions: the formal custom of a bride being escorted to her parents' home, the expectation of respectful arrangements from

her family, and the many threads of social custom woven around such a journey.



Picture 4

When the young bride is not allowed to go to her parents' home, she says to her husband, 'Then at least let me join the Jat-Jatin dance!' She looks for another little happiness when her first wish cannot be fulfilled.

But her husband refuses to let her join the jhumar dance too—another 'no'! Jatin makes an excuse about the heat and moves away. It is a graceful way of showing her anger, theatrical yet very much like the small quarrels of real family life.

Chapter 3: An Invitation to Dance

Jhumar





Picture 5

Jat and Jatin stand in the middle while their groups of friends argue around them. The lively exchange entertains the women watching the play.

'Come, let us dance jhumar,' one side invites. 'Climbing on which leaf?' the other side asks. 'On a lotus leaf,' comes the reply. This kind of poetic question-and-answer is one of the special charms of folk theatre.



Picture 6

Within the play, Jat and Jatin are about to marry—a play within a play, a symbolic wedding. But Jat insists on certain conditions. For example, Jatin must walk gracefully, bending like an ear of ripe paddy. The demand is playful, yet meaningful.

After a little show of protest, Jatin agrees. This light pattern of refusal and acceptance makes the audience laugh, and then the two characters complete their symbolic marriage.

Chapter 4: A Glimpse of Married Life



Picture 7

Morning comes, and Jatin says, 'Let me go. I have to sweep the courtyard!' But Jat replies, 'Mother and sister can sweep it!' His wish to save his new bride from work becomes a sign of family affection.

As the days pass, Jatin makes a new demand: 'Why aren't you having jewellery made for me? If you make any more excuses, I will go straight to the goldsmith's house!' It is the young wife's natural wish, expressed with a playful little threat.





Picture 8

Jatin spends so much that even Jat's elephant has to be sold, leaving only its chain behind! This comic exaggeration teases the idea of an extravagantly spending wife and gives the audience a good laugh.

The scene shows the humorous side of the play—ordinary little disagreements of married life presented in a funny way, allowing the women in the audience to recognise pieces of their own daily world.

Chapter 5: Leaving for Her Parents' Home





Picture 9

Again Jatin says, 'I want to go to my parents' home!' Jat answers, 'The paddy crop is ready. Go after we have harvested it.' Household and farm work must come first.

Jatin refuses to agree. 'If I go this time, I will not come back!' she warns in a burst of emotion. The playful quarrel has reached a tense moment.



Picture 10

But when Jatin hears talk of a co-wife—perhaps the rumour or fear of another woman—she becomes frightened. This touch of insecurity gives the play another emotional layer.

The performance also includes comic side-scenes, such as pretend treatments for a sick person. These little episodes step away from the main story to provide extra fun and social comment.

Chapter 6: Jat Goes to Morang and the Goldsmith Tempts Jatin





Picture 11

Jat leaves for Morang to earn money for the household. His departure begins a new stage of the story—the time of separation.

While Jat is away, a goldsmith tries to tempt Jatin with jewellery. He is an outsider who wishes to distract her from her husband, but Jatin remains firm.



Picture 12

Jatin describes Jat's handsome appearance and speaks of her unshakable love and loyalty to her husband, refusing the goldsmith's temptation. The scene presents her devotion in a symbolic way.

The episode brings out the play's moral lesson: even during separation, love and loyalty should remain steady, however attractive an outside temptation may seem.

Chapter 7: Quarrel and Separation



Picture 13

At last Jat returns from Morang with his earnings. But one day the two quarrel over some matter—an ordinary disagreement between husband and wife, the sort that can arise in any household.

In anger, or perhaps by accident, Jat touches Jatin with his stick. Jatin feels deeply insulted by it.





Picture 14

Angry and hurt, Jatin leaves the house. Their separation is the emotional high point of the play—a struggle between love and pride that many relationships can understand.

Regretting his mistake, Jat goes in search of Jatin, taking on different disguises—a cowherd girl, a bangle-seller, and other forms. His search becomes a symbol of love, regret, and the hope of reunion.

Chapter 8: Reunion



Picture 15

Cobwebs fill Jat's house, and grass begins to grow in the courtyard. The neglected home becomes a picture of emptiness in Jatin's absence.

The audience understands the message clearly: without Jatin, the home has become lonely and untidy. Even after all Jat's disguises and searching, the condition of the house shows just how important she is.



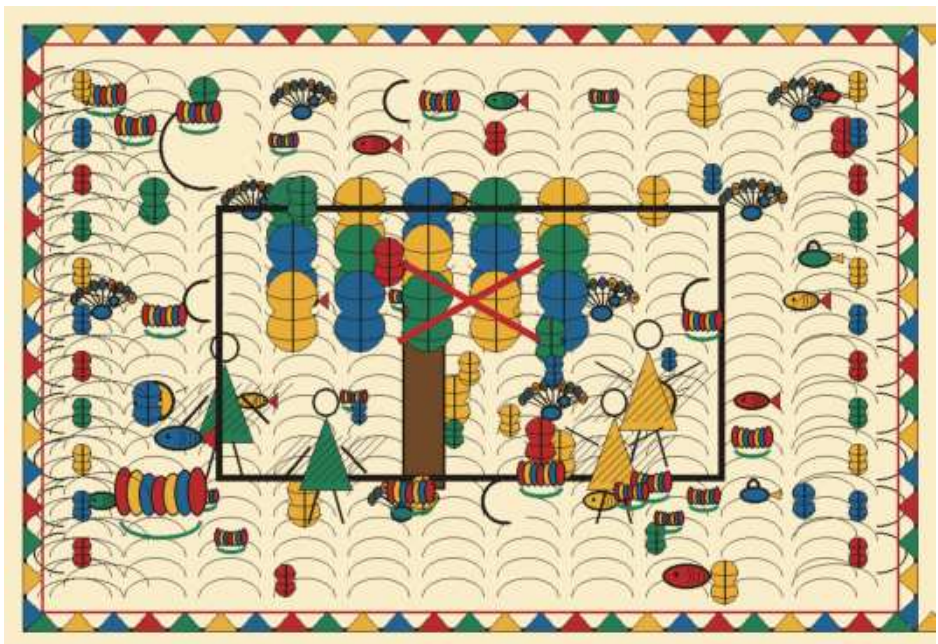


Picture 16

In the end Jatin returns to Jat. Her anger has cooled, and love wins again. Their reunion gives the play a happy ending and leaves the audience satisfied and joyful.

The story of Jat and Jatin—the pull between a bride's parents' home and her husband's home, the wish for jewellery, the threat not to return, separation, and reunion—turns the whole cycle of married life into theatre, allowing women to see reflections of their own lives on the stage.

Chapter 9: The Frog Rain Ritual



Picture 17

At the end of the play, a special folk ritual takes place. The women dig a pit, put frogs into it, and strike them from above.

Then the dead frogs are thrown at the doorway of a woman known for quarrelling. This was part of a traditional folk belief.





Picture 18

The belief said that the more angrily the woman scolded when she saw the dead frogs in the morning, the more heavily it would rain! In this way, folk imagination created a symbolic link between a woman's anger and the coming rain.

This ritual is an inseparable part of the Jat-Jatin tradition. The performance is not only entertainment; it is also a shared folk practice for inviting rain. In this way, the Jat-Jatin play weaves together a love story and an agricultural rain ritual, becoming a collective expression for the

women of Mithila on Sawan and Bhadav nights—a meeting place of entertainment, community, and closeness to nature.

The End

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Lalmain Baba

A Tale of Betrayed Friendship and Justice
Through a Curse



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

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Introduction: Two Friends

Two friends lived in Nauhatta—Mansaram and Lalmain Baba. Both belonged to the Chamar community, and they herded buffaloes together. Their friendship had begun in childhood and was part of their simple village life.

This is a tale about friendship put to the test, betrayal, and finally a fierce form of justice. One friend's failure to honour the other's last wish led to his own death, and in the end both friends became part of a sacred folk tradition.

Chapter 1: The Forest of Nauhatta





Picture 1

Mansaram and Lalmain of Nauhatta were friends from the Chamar community who had herded buffaloes together since childhood. Their friendship was a natural part of village life, and every day they went into the forest side by side.

At that time Nauhatta had a vast forest—thick, wide, and sometimes dangerous. Herding buffaloes in such a forest required courage, but the two friends fearlessly followed their daily routine.



Picture 2

Then one day their ordinary, peaceful life suddenly took a frightening turn. A danger was waiting for them deep in the forest, and what happened next would change both their lives.

The event became the true test of their friendship—a difficult mixture of courage, sacrifice, and, in the end, betrayal. That is why this tale holds such a memorable place among Mithila's folk stories.

Chapter 2: The Fight with the Tigress





Picture 4

Yet Lalmain held back from using all his strength for one unusual reason: the tiger was female. Even in the middle of danger, he hesitated to strike a female creature with his

full force. This sense of restraint and respect was remembered as a special part of his character.

Because he did not use his full strength, Lalmain was finally killed by the tigress. The price of his restraint was terribly high—his own life.

Chapter 3: The Last Wish





Picture 5

As Lalmain lay dying, he made one final request to his dear friend Mansaram: 'After I die, make sure my funeral rites are performed properly.' It was a simple request, but to him it mattered deeply.

This request became the final test of friendship.

Mansaram was expected to protect his dead friend's honour and arrange the proper rites, just as a true friend would.



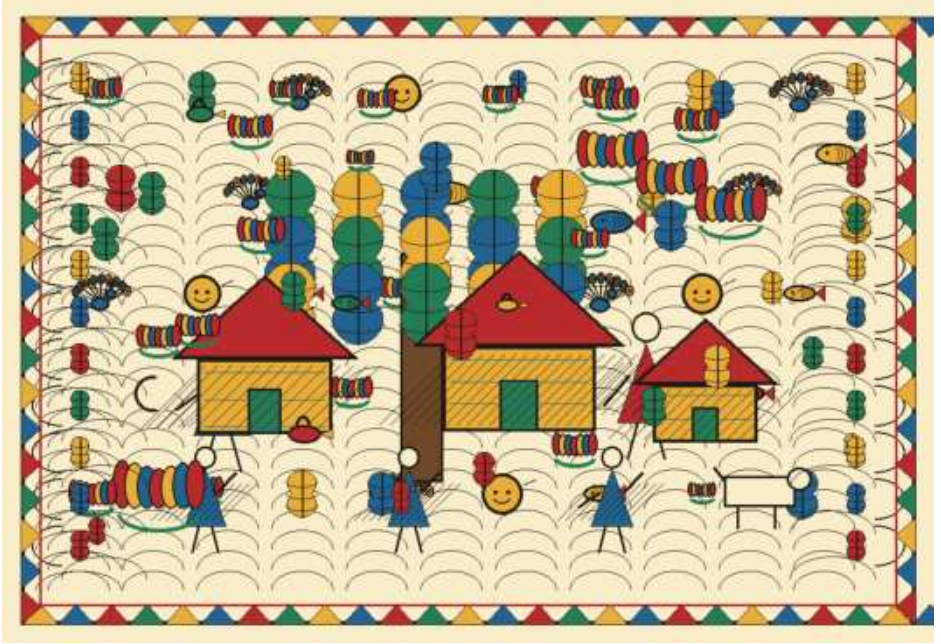
Picture 6

But Mansaram—whether from fear, selfishness, or neglect, the story does not say—told no one in the village what had happened. He completely ignored his friend's last wish.

For Lalmain Baba's spirit, this betrayal was unbearable. The friend for whom he had cared so deeply had not even shown him respect after death. The neglected last wish left his spirit restless.

Chapter 4: The Spirit's Anger





Picture 7

Lalmain Baba's spirit became furious at this betrayal. Even after death, the disrespect shown by his friend would not let him rest. His anger came from the deepest hurt: the person he trusted had ignored his final request. Filled with anger, Lalmain Baba's spirit struck Mansaram down. In the folk tale, the spirit's anger was so powerful that even death could not contain it.



Picture 8

For the villagers, the event became a warning: a friend's last wish, however simple, should not be treated lightly. Ignoring the wishes of the dead could have serious consequences.

Mansaram's death shocked the village. The two friends who had once herded buffaloes together had both now died because of the terrible events in the forest—one because of the tigress, the other because of the anger of his dead friend.

Chapter 5: The Funeral Rites





Picture 9

After Mansaram's death, the villagers came to understand the whole chain of events: Lalmain's sacrifice, his last wish, Mansaram's betrayal, and finally the revenge of Lalmain's spirit.

The villagers came together and performed Lalmain Baba's funeral rites. They were late, but at last the rites were carried out properly and with respect. It was the village's way of showing regret and correcting what had been left undone.



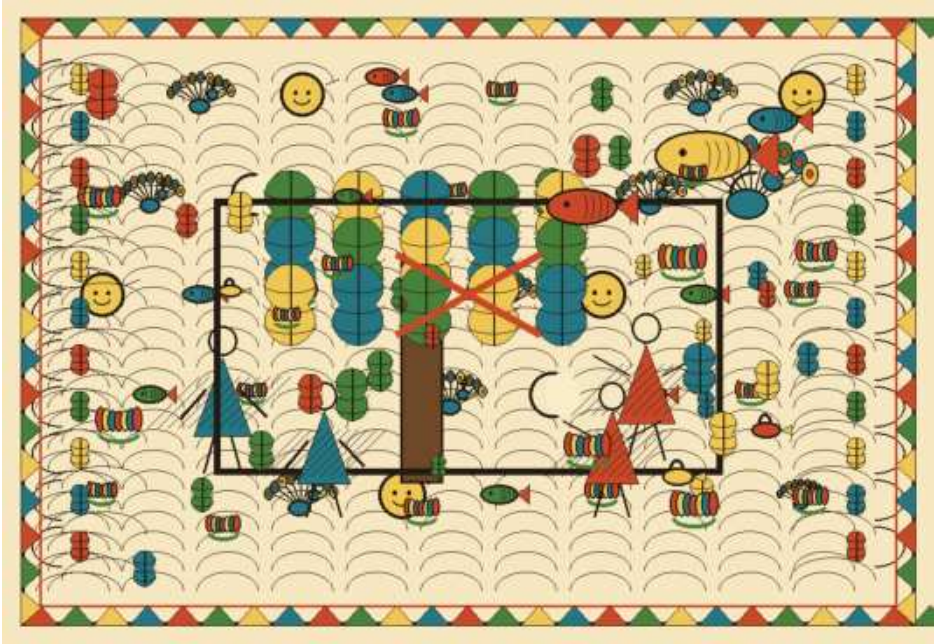
Picture 10

After the funeral rites, Lalmain Baba's spirit finally found peace. The wish that Mansaram had failed to fulfil was completed through the villagers' united effort. At last, justice was restored.

The story became a deep lesson for the village: honour the last wishes of the dead and remain faithful in friendship, because neglecting such duties can bring painful consequences.

Chapter 6: Remembered Through the Bhagat Tradition





Picture 11

After Lalmain Baba's funeral rites, a bhagat tradition grew around him—the belief that his spirit could enter the body of a devotee. In this way he came to be honoured as a folk deity and became a centre of faith in the village.

Even today, believers say that Lalmain Baba enters the body of a bhagat and helps fulfil sincere wishes, giving his blessings and strength to those who come to him in faith.



Picture 12

It was an extraordinary transformation. A simple man from the Chamar community, who lost his life while protecting his buffalo and whose spirit later took revenge

after a friend's betrayal, came at last to be honoured as a sacred figure.

The tale of Lalmain Baba carries a complex but powerful message in Mithila's folk religion: sacrifice, betrayal, anger, and finally the return of respect and peace.

Lalmain's remembered compassion—even his hesitation to strike a female tiger—and the importance of honouring a friend's final wish both live on in the bhagat tradition, where devotees still come seeking his blessing.

The End

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Munga and Jalim Singh

A Tale of Love and Revenge from the Bettiah

Raj



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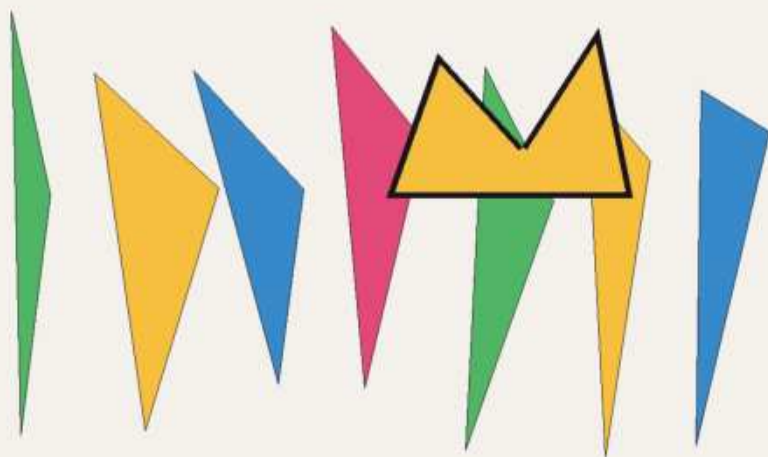
Introduction: The Bettiah Raj

The Bettiah Raj—a place where one day a bond of love formed between a Rajput soldier and a young woman from the Dudhbansi community. That bond would cut through barriers of caste and family and through the schemes of the royal court before finally finding a home.

This is the tale of Jalim Singh and Munga—a love for which Jalim had to face a king's anger on one side and fight a fearsome, tiger-hunting buffalo on the other.

Adventure, betrayal, and final reunion are all woven into this short story.

Chapter 1: A Meeting by the Well

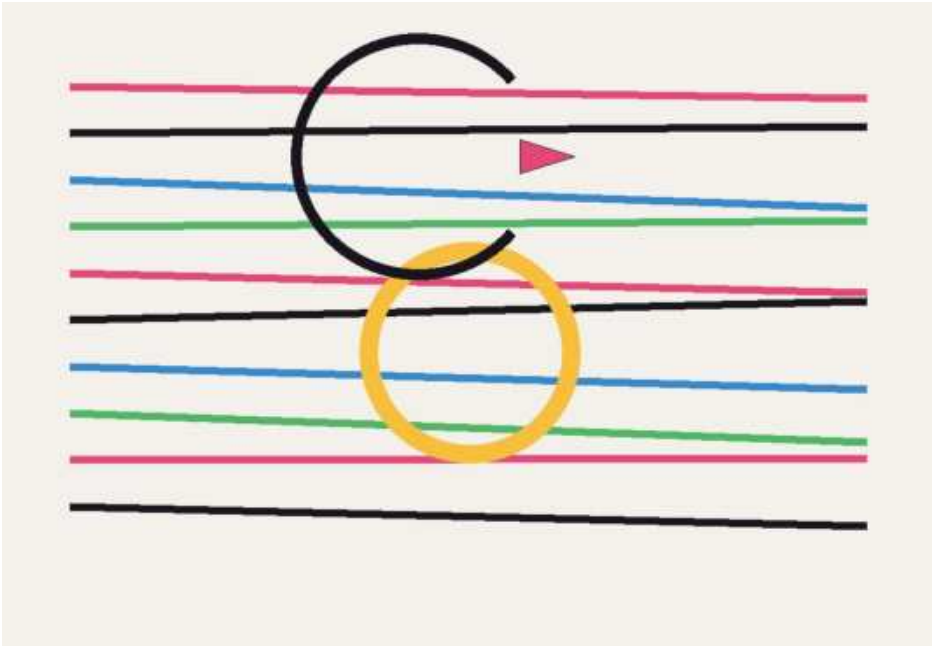




Picture 1

Within the lands of the Bettiah Raj stood a village where women gathered around the well every morning to draw water. One day Munga was among them—a daughter of a Dudhbansi family, known throughout the village for both her beauty and her good qualities.

Along that road came Jalim Singh, a Rajput and a soldier-commander of the Bettiah Raj. People made way when they heard the hoofbeats of his horse. When Jalim saw Munga drawing water at the well, his steps stopped by themselves.

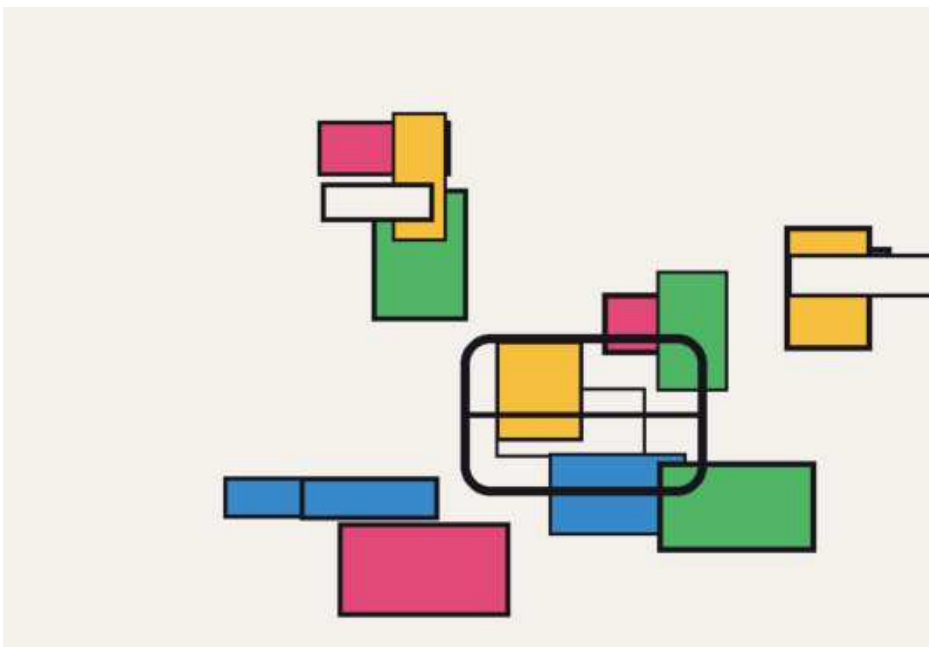


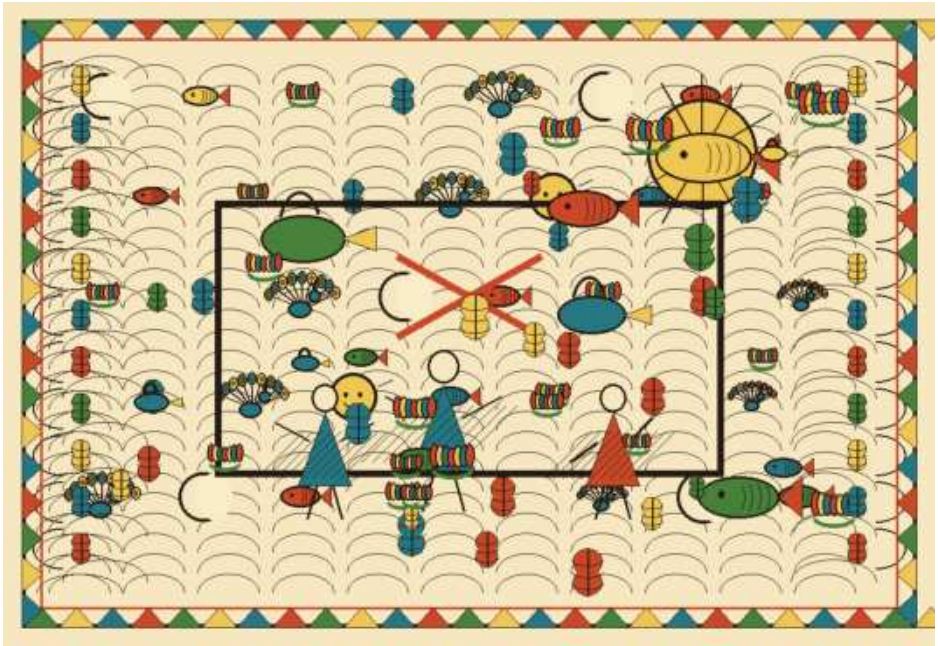
Picture 2

Thirst was only the excuse. It was really his eyes that had stopped. Jalim stepped forward and asked Munga for a drink of water, just as any ordinary traveller might.

But Munga noticed the special brightness in the Rajput commander's eyes. She left the water pot where it was and hurried away. Was she running from shyness, from fear, or from both? Even Munga could not have said for certain. Jalim remained standing there with her image in his mind—an image he would not easily forget.

Chapter 2: Prithvipal's Plot

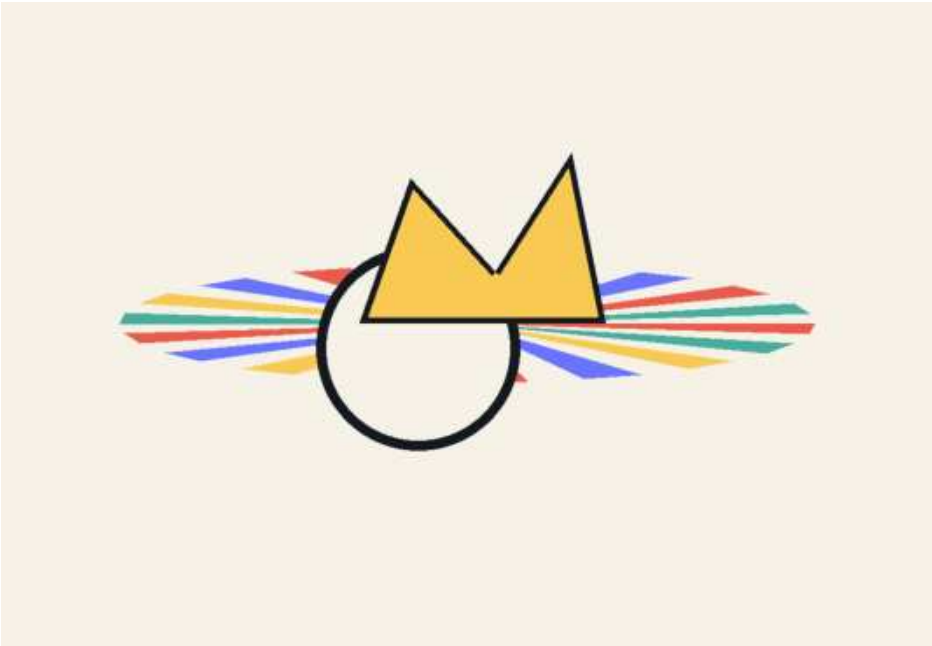




Picture 3

At the Bettiah court there was a favourite named Prithvipal Singh, always close to the king's ear but full of bitterness inside. Jalim Singh's growing fame troubled him—the commander's position, the soldiers' respect, and now even the talk about Munga.

Prithvipal kept plotting against Jalim—sometimes spreading rumours, sometimes making accusations, sometimes whispering tales. But Jalim had one true friend: Pattu, a fisherman who stood shoulder to shoulder with him in every danger.

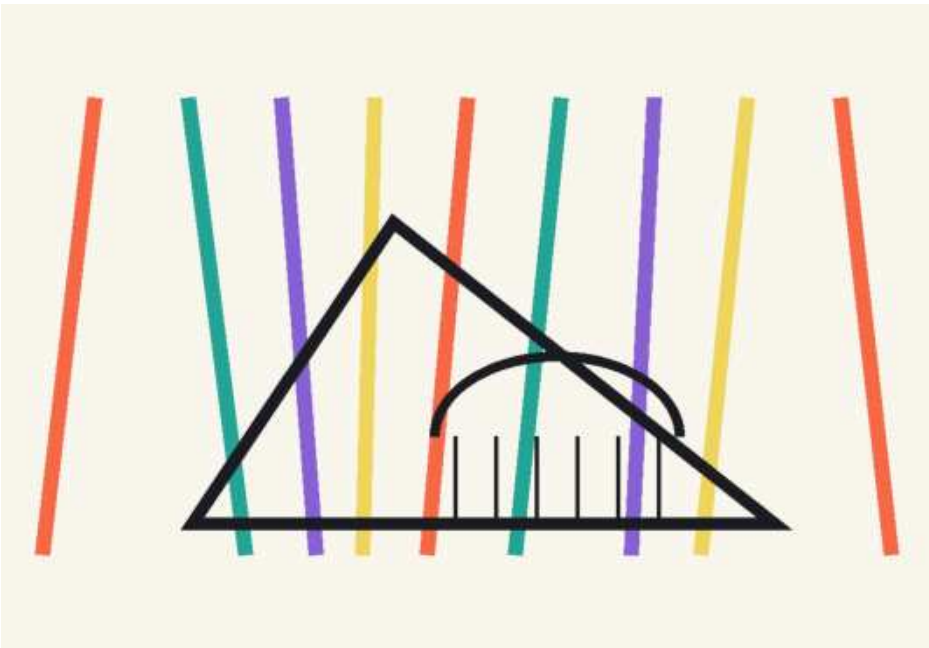


Picture 4

Once Prithvipal arranged an attack, hiring men as part of another scheme against Jalim. But Pattu was alert. When the attackers charged, Pattu fought them off alone, and none of them was left to continue the attack.

The victory brought pride to Pattu and Jalim, but even greater humiliation to Prithvipal. Humiliation can make a person's tongue poisonous. Prithvipal began filling the king's ears with wild stories, mixing lies with bits of truth and adding false claims about Munga too. After hearing these stories again and again, the king grew angry with Jalim.

Chapter 3: Guru Mauni Baba

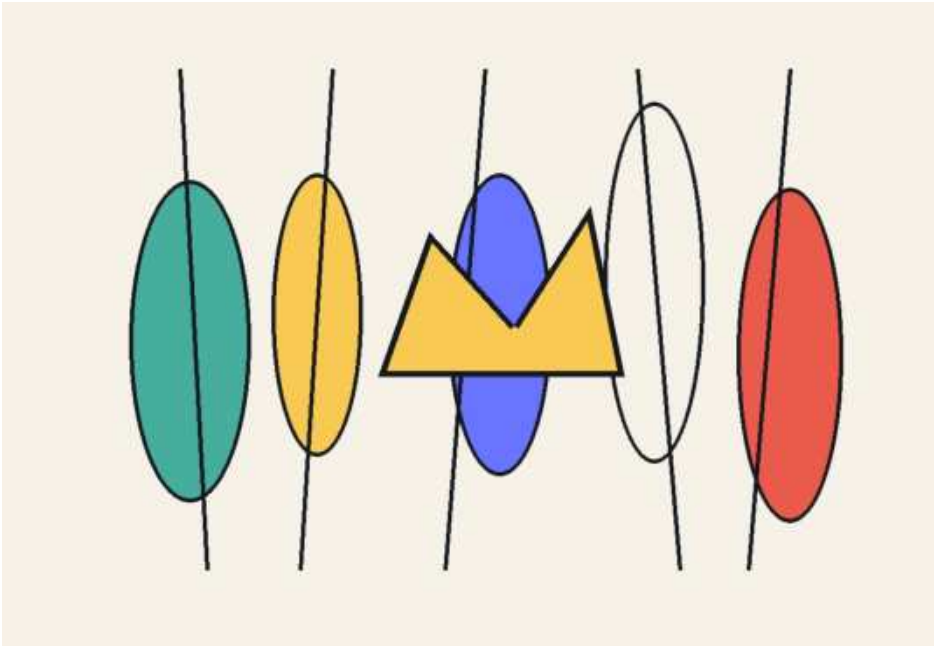




Picture 5

News of the king's displeasure reached Jalim. On one side stood the king's anger; on the other, Jalim's growing feelings for Munga. He was caught between the two.

Troubled, Jalim and Pattu went to Guru Mauni Baba, a respected holy man whose words the villagers trusted like sacred truth. Jalim told him everything—his feelings for Munga, the king's anger, and his uncertainty about what to do next.

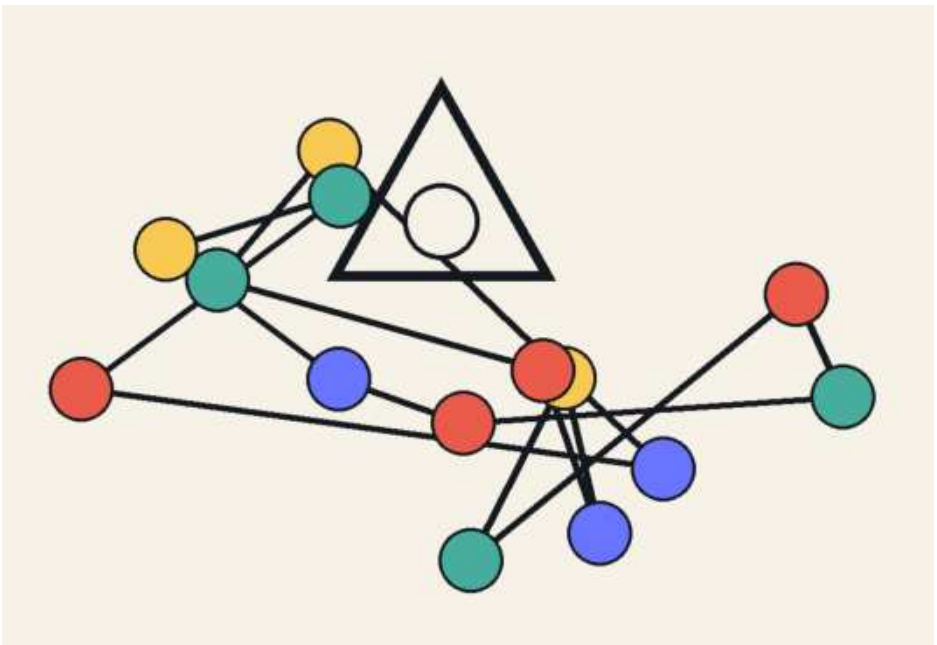


Picture 6

Mauni Baba remained silent for a while. Then he said, 'Leave Munga.' Only two words, but they struck Jalim like a spear. Jalim was stunned. The holy man's words had never proved false, yet this was his advice today.

But fate can be stronger than advice. Jalim said neither yes nor no. His heart simply could not accept that he should leave the person whose image had already bound him so deeply.

Chapter 4: Pattu's Sacrifice





Picture 7

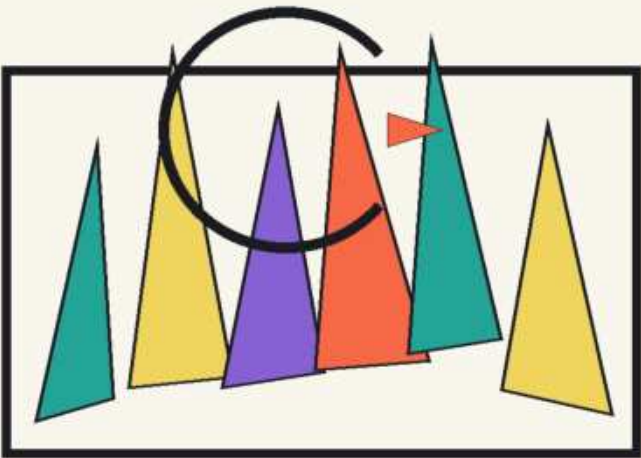
Prithvipal's anger had grown even worse after Pattu's earlier victory. He began looking for a chance to take revenge. When he found one, he made another move—this time directly against Pattu.

Pattu, Jalim's trusted companion and shield in every danger, invoked Mother Bhavani and took a solemn oath before facing Prithvipal. In the struggle Pattu killed Prithvipal. The schemer's plotting had finally come to an end.

But Prithvipal's men surrounded Pattu. How long could one man fight a crowd alone? Pattu too lost his life. The fisherman who had protected Jalim in every danger gave his life in his friend's cause.

Pattu's death left a deep wound in Jalim's heart, and he never forgot the price of such friendship. Yet in the middle of his grief another piece of news arrived and pulled his attention elsewhere: Munga had been sent into the forests of Bettiah.

Chapter 5: Kanua of the Forest

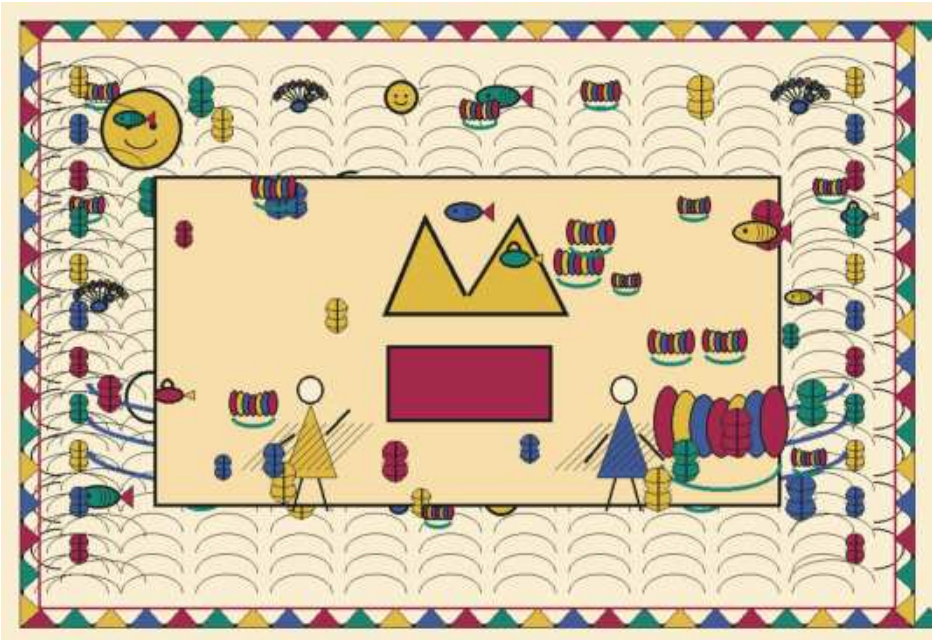
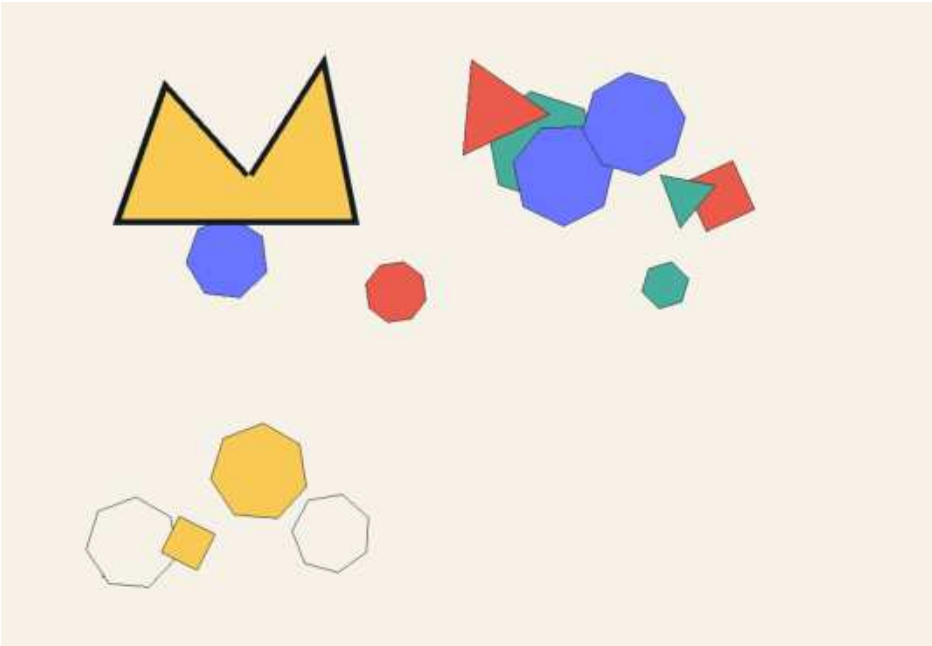




Picture 9

Munga's sister-in-law had a brother named Kanua, a Dusadh man who lived in the thick forests of Bettiah. Stories described him as almost unbelievably strong, with an equally enormous appetite—more than forty kilograms of milk and a whole goat as his daily food!

Even Kanua's mount was unusual. He rode a buffalo, and not an ordinary one—a buffalo said to hunt tigers. With such strength, such food, and such a mount, Kanua lived in the forest almost like a king.

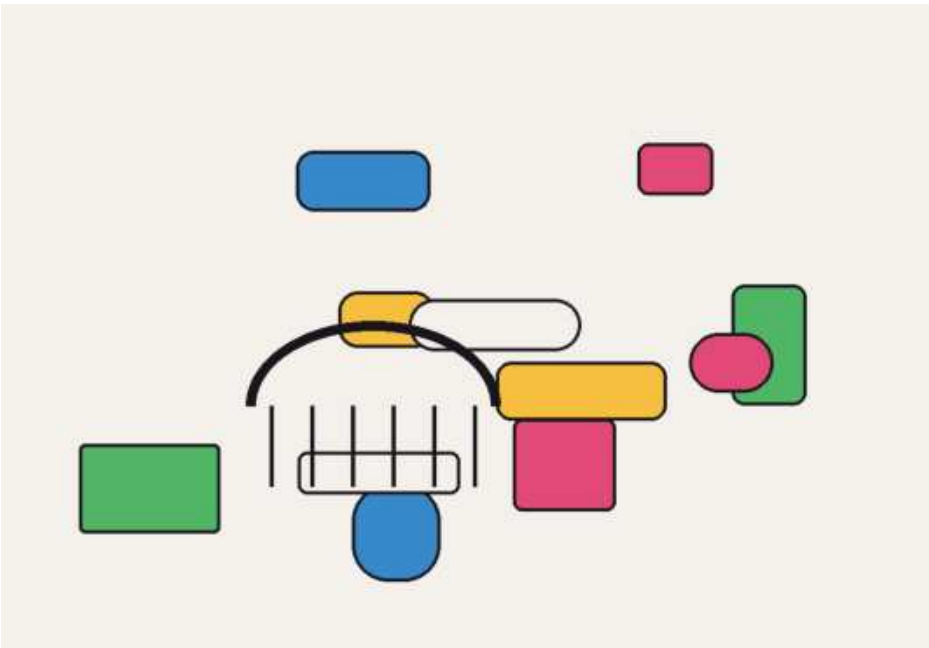


Picture 10

Munga was sent into the Bettiah forest to stay with Kanua. The story does not explain all the reasons, but one thing is clear: she was now under Kanua's control, and Kanua followed a frightening custom of his own.

Munga was tied near the forest goddess, and Kanua prepared to strike her with a heavy sword. The story does not clearly explain the ritual or the reason for such a sacrifice, but the danger itself was clear: Munga's life hung on the edge of the blade.

Chapter 6: Battle at the Door of Death

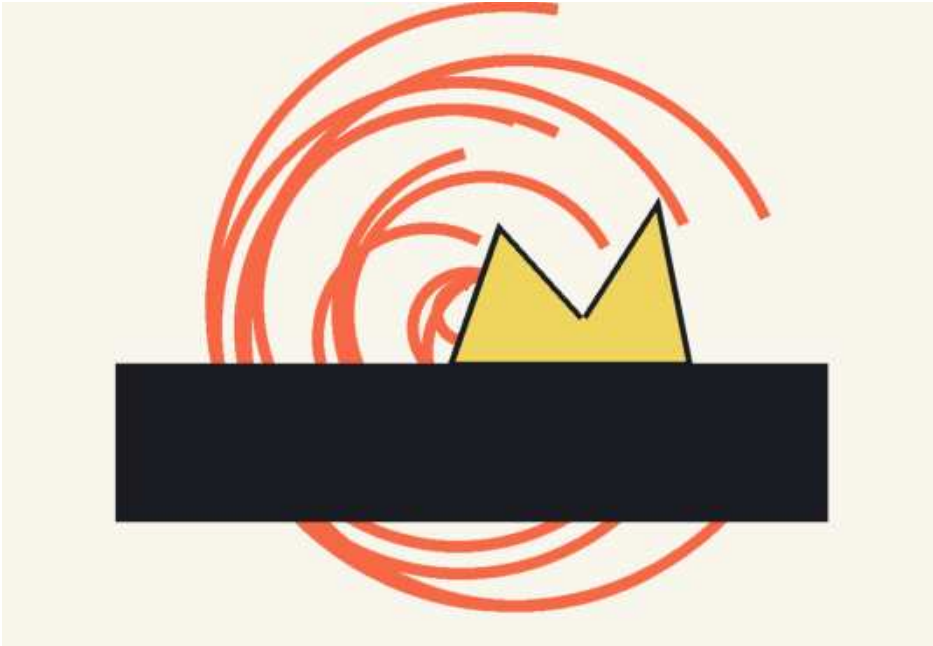




Picture 11

At the very moment Kanua raised his sword, Jalim Singh arrived. Whether some message, instinct, or pull of fate brought him there, the story does not say. But he reached the place at exactly the moment when even one more instant of delay might have cost Munga her life.

Jalim drove his spear straight at Kanua's buffalo. The tiger-hunting animal that frightened even skilled hunters was wounded and fell from Jalim's single powerful attack. When the buffalo fell, it was as if half of Kanua's strength had gone with it.

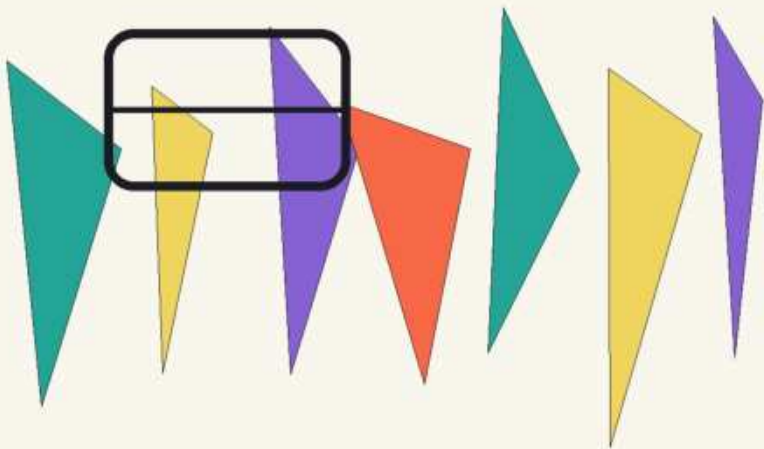


Picture 12

Then Jalim and Kanua fought face to face—sword against spear, before the forest goddess, with Munga's life at stake. Kanua was tremendously strong, but Jalim's anger and love seemed to make him unbeatable that day.

The battle ended with Kanua's death. Munga was saved, though another life had been lost in the struggle. Jalim untied Munga, took her hand, and helped her to her feet. There in the forest, at that very moment, their fates became joined forever.

Chapter 7: Vermilion in the Forest

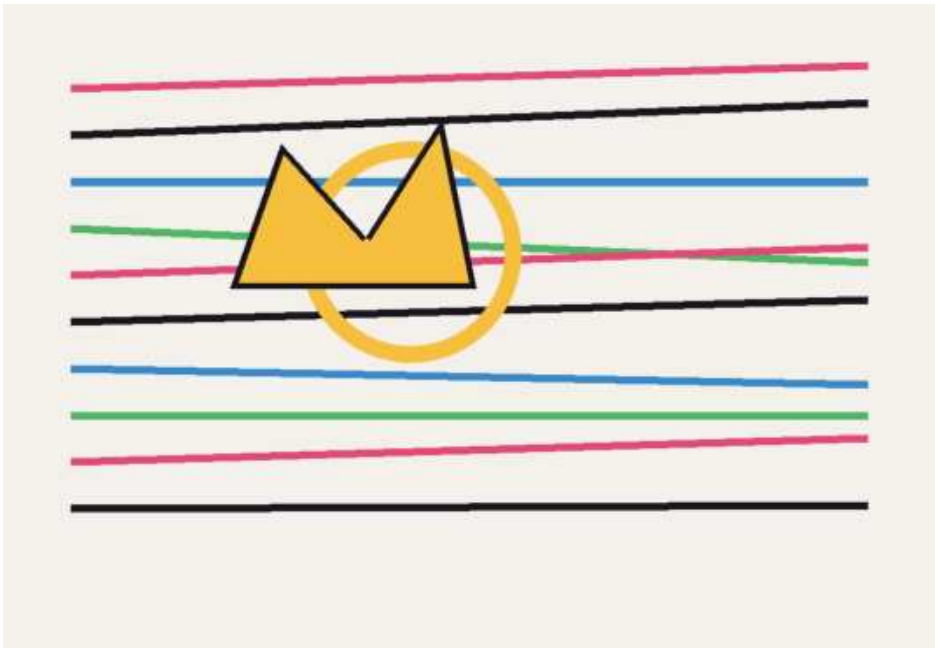




Picture 13

At the same forest place, while the memory of danger still hung in the air, Jalim placed sindoor in Munga's hair-parting as a sign of marriage. A priest—whether present there in some form, or represented by Mauni Baba's blessing—gave his blessing as properly as the circumstances allowed.

Jalim brought Munga to his village and announced before everyone, 'She is my Kshatrani, my honoured wife.' From the mouth of a Rajput commander, the meaning was clear: the wall of caste no longer mattered to him.

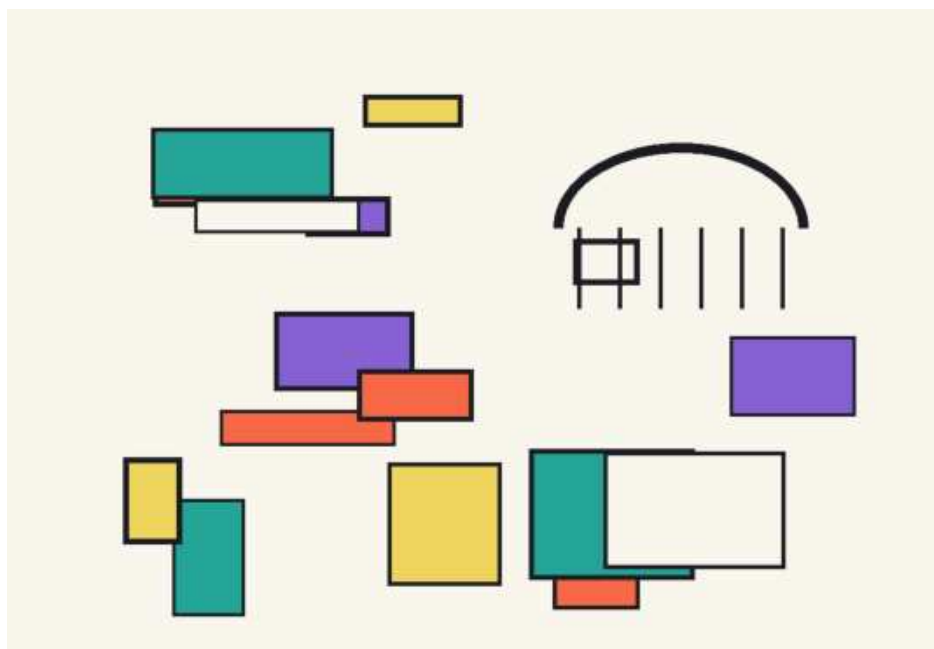


Picture 14

But society did not accept the change so easily. Jalim's brother Kunwar discovered that Munga was from the Dudhbansi, or Dusadh, community—a woman from another caste entering a Rajput household. The news spread through the family like fire.

Yet Jalim's mother stood beside her son even under such difficult circumstances. Her acceptance became the first support for the new household, even though the rest of the family still disagreed.

Chapter 8: The Brothers Rebel

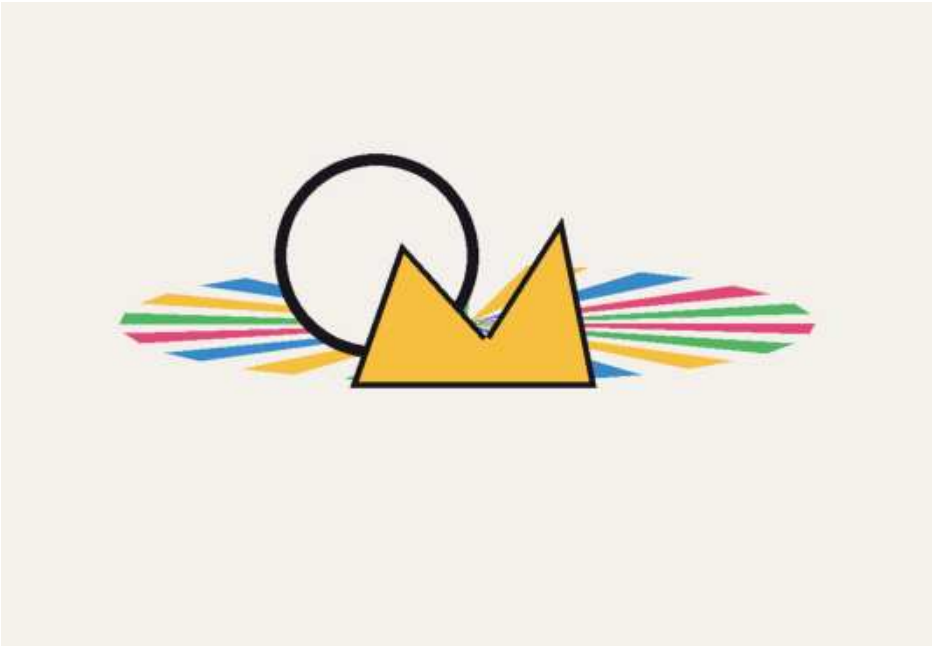




Picture 15

With his mother's acceptance, Jalim and Munga lived peacefully for a while. But resentment continued to burn inside Kunwar and the other brothers. Caste prejudice can have roots so deep that even a mother's acceptance cannot pull them out at once.

One day the brothers attacked Jalim—inside his own home, men of his own blood. It was one of the saddest turns in the tale: the enemies of love were not strangers, but members of his own family.

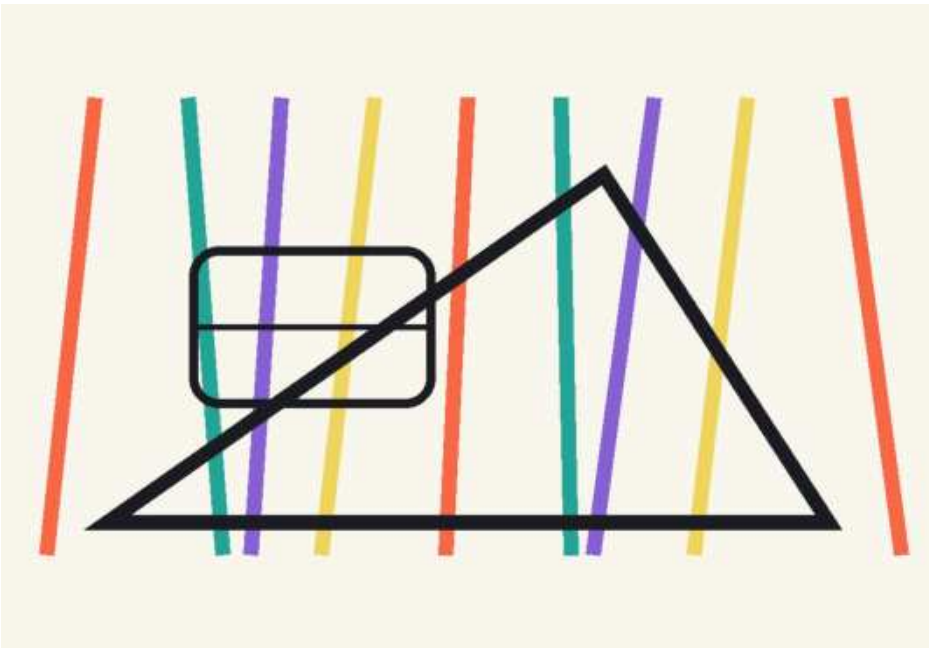


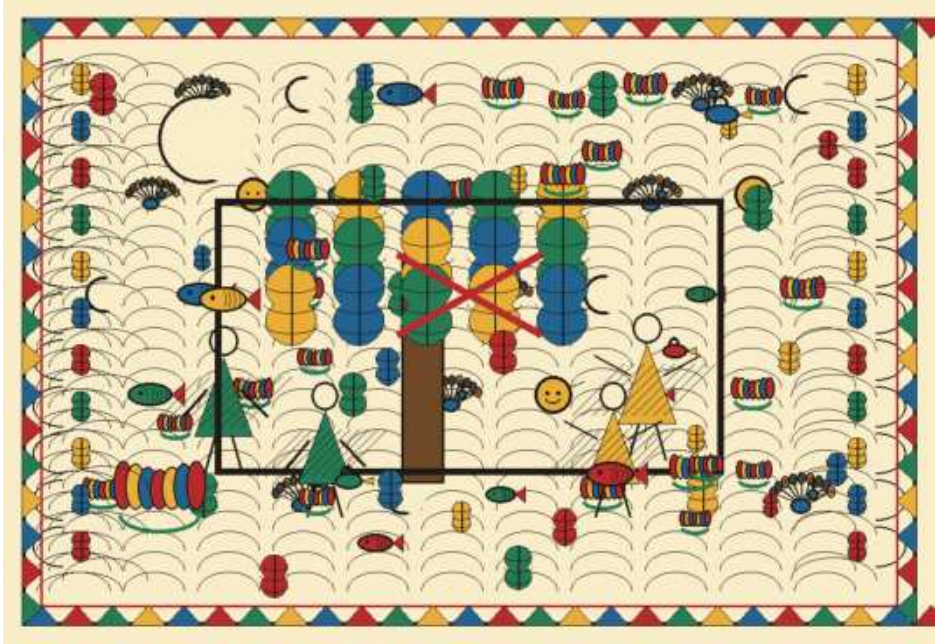
Picture 16

After the attack, matters became so serious that the brothers ran away—whether from fear of Jalim or from shame, the story does not say. Jalim had been wounded in the struggle, and a wound given by one's own brothers can hurt the heart even more than the body.

Munga took her injured husband and set out for the home of Jalim's friend Bhairav, hoping to find shelter and safety there. But the road was long, and Jalim's condition was growing weaker with every moment.

Chapter 9: At the Healer's Door

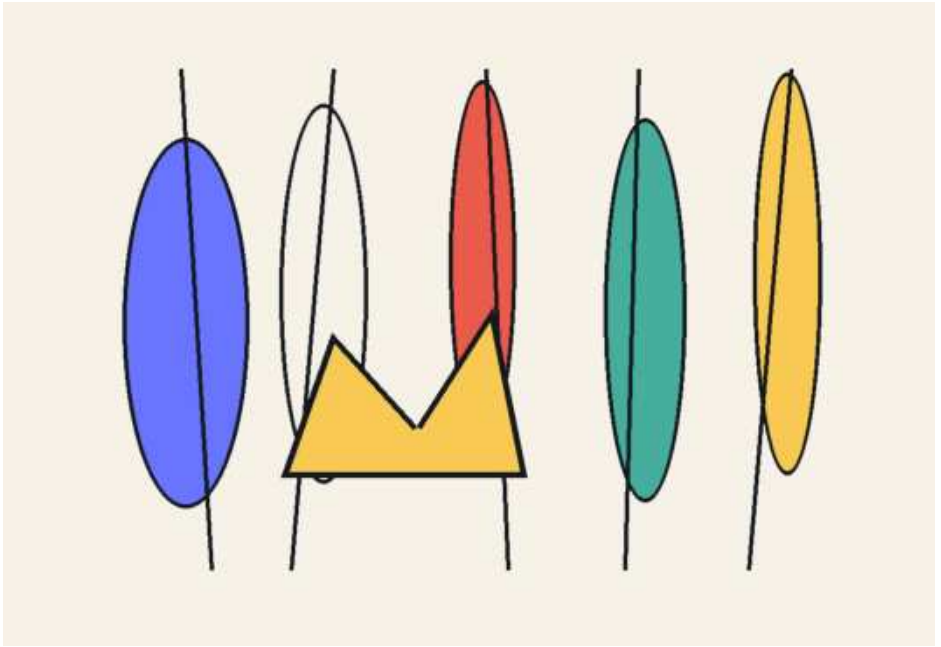




Picture 17

On the road, Jalim's wound became worse. Loss of blood, pain, and exhaustion made him stumble. Munga did not lose courage even for a moment. She stopped at the home of a traditional healer.

Seeing Jalim's condition, the healer immediately began dressing the wound. It was deep, but skilled hands offered a thread of hope. Slowly the bleeding stopped, the pain eased, and Jalim's breathing became steadier.



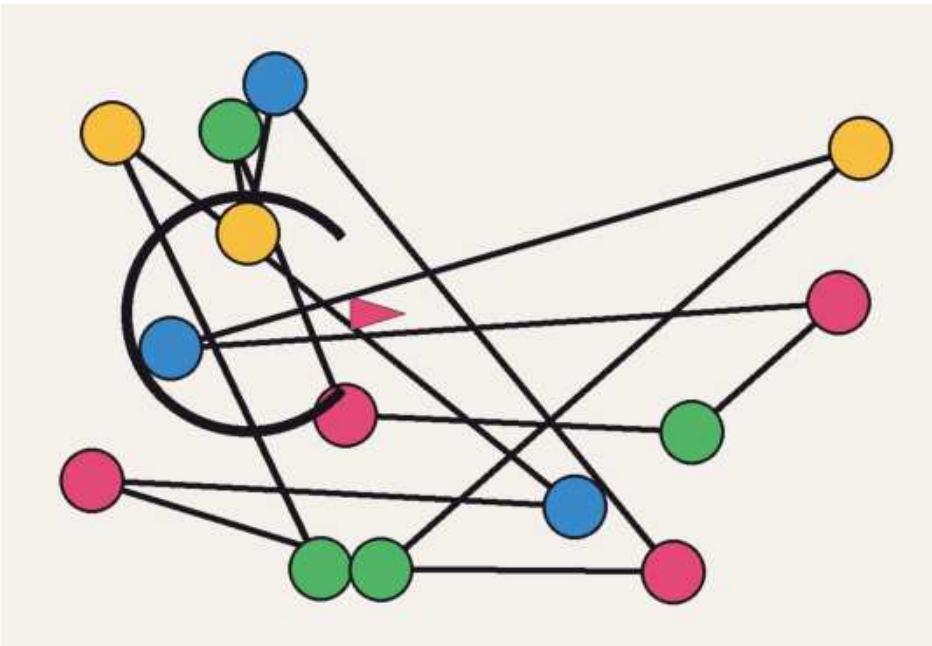
Picture 18

Munga stayed awake beside her husband all night, alert to every instruction from the healer. The young woman who had once run away from Jalim at the well now stood alone and fearless in the effort to save his life. It is one of the strongest moments of change in the story.

With the healer's care and Munga's tireless attention, Jalim slowly began to recover. The danger passed.

Meanwhile another piece of news reached them—news Munga may have been hoping for most of all.

Chapter 10: Returning Home



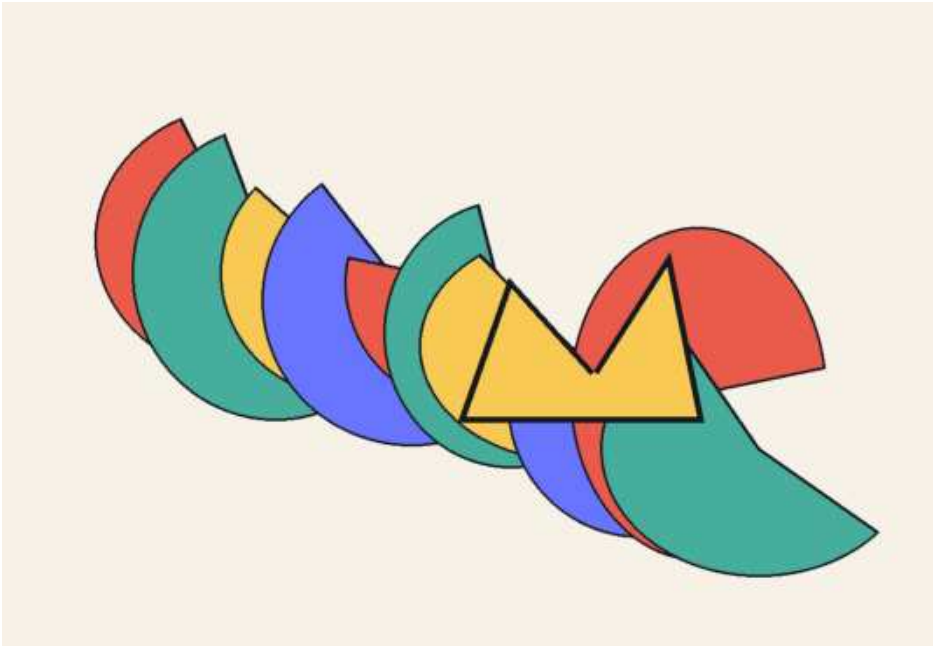


Picture 19

Munga's mother and brothers came to them in tears, full of regret and finally ready to bow before the strength of Munga and Jalim's love.

The brothers who had only days earlier raised their hands against Jalim now cried when they saw his wounds.

Sometimes regret is so deep that words cannot even begin to excuse what has been done.

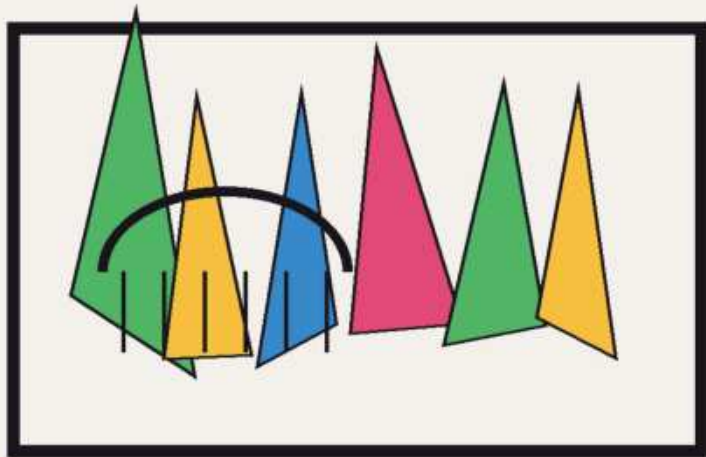


Picture 20

Munga's mother and brothers lovingly took both Munga and Jalim home. There was no more opposition and no more excuse of caste difference. The same family ties that had once raised weapons now tried to make amends by welcoming the couple with love.

Back home, the family began to live happily together. The house that had once seen an attack now became a place of reunion. This is the sweetness at the end of the tale, after adventure, betrayal, and sacrifice—the kind of peace that comes only through true love and unbroken patience.

Chapter 11: Love Wins

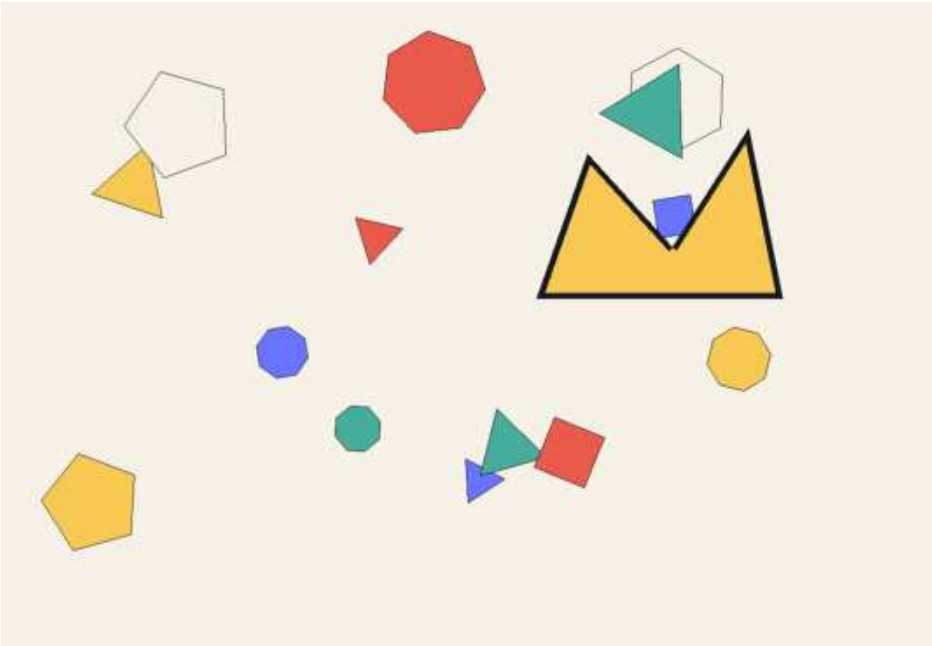




Picture 21

The tale of Munga and Jalim Singh is remembered as a chapter in the story of the Bettiah Raj where the walls of caste and family finally lost before love—but only after a hard struggle.

The tale has adventure—the first meeting at the well, Prithvipal's plots, and Pattu's sacrifice. It has deep feeling—Jalim's doubts, Munga's courage, and his mother's acceptance. And it also has the shadow of sorrow—Pattu's death, Kanua's death, the brothers' rebellion, and Jalim's wound.



Picture 22

Yet through all these events one thread never broke: the love between Munga and Jalim. Every danger only made it stronger. Neither the king's anger, nor the forest's threats, nor rebellion within the family could tear it apart.

Even today, memories of this tale live in folk songs around Bettiah. They tell us that when love is true, it can begin with a simple meeting beside a well, pass through danger and drawn weapons, and still find its way at last into the courtyard of home.

The End

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Great Joy I Found Upon Your Shore

Bodhi Kayastha's Final Union with the Ganga
and Vidyapati's Immortal Song



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

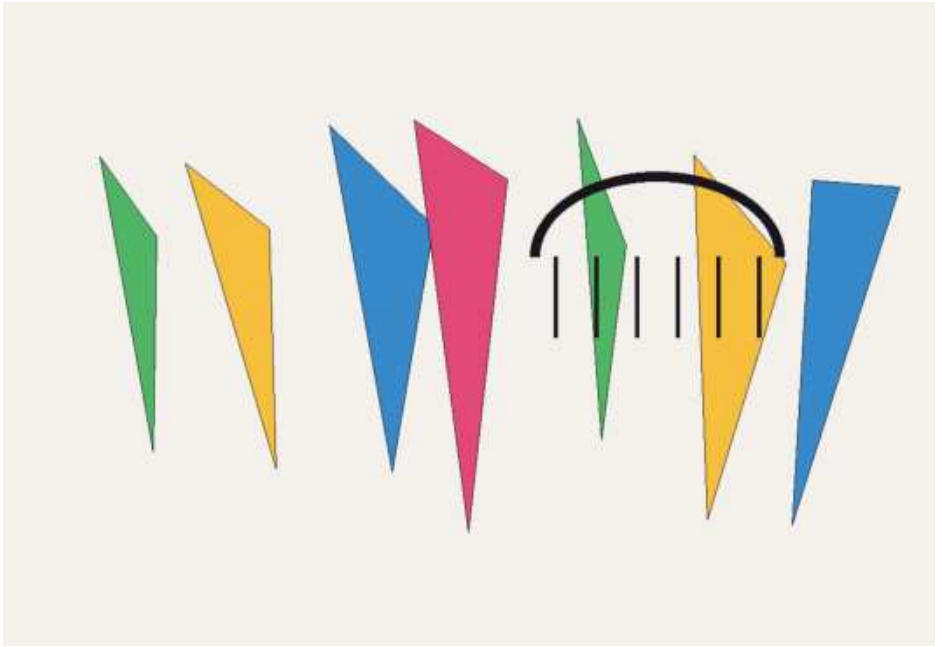
Introduction: A Blameless Life

Bodhi Kayastha served at the court of the king of Mithila. His whole life was remembered as an example of honesty and devotion. This is a tale of simplicity, integrity, and finally liberation—a liberation that, according to the tradition, Mother Ganga herself came forward to grant.

The event was considered so important that Jyotirishwar, a scholar from before Vidyapati's time, described it in the Sanskrit work Purusha-Pariksha. Vidyapati later composed his famous Maithili song 'Bad Sukh Saar Paol Tua Teere' about it. This meeting of literature and devotion is one of Mithila's treasured cultural memories.

Chapter 1: The Blameless Kayastha

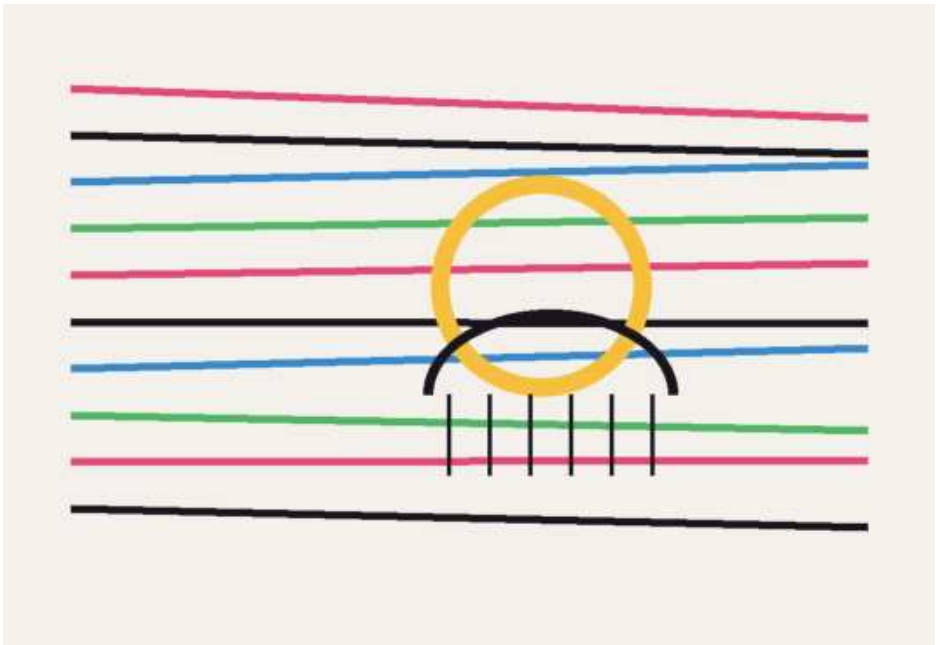




Picture 1

Bodhi Kayastha worked in the court of the king of Mithila. The king paid him a salary, and with it he lived a simple but respectable life.

Bodhi Kayastha's character was unusual. Throughout his life he kept away from harming others and from desiring another person's wife or wealth. Such clean conduct was rare for someone close to a royal court, where power and temptation were always nearby.





Picture 2

Whatever money he received beyond what he needed for daily living was spent on charity and good works. Bodhi Kayastha did not hoard wealth for himself; he used what he did not need to help others.

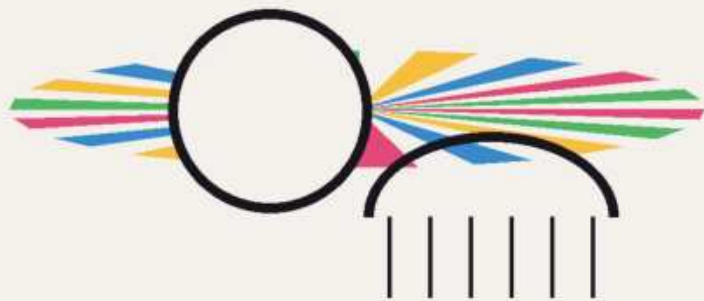
He was a devotee of Bhola Baba, Lord Shiva. Deep faith and regular worship shaped his life. Later, the story says, the fruit of that devotion appeared in an extraordinary way.

Chapter 2: The Decision to Seek Ganga-Labh



Like everyone, Bodhi Kayastha grew old, and the end of his life drew near. In his final days he made an important decision. He left his home and set out to seek ganga-labh—to spend his final moments by the Ganga, something traditionally believed to bring liberation.

The decision showed the depth of Bodhi Kayastha's spiritual life. He wished to leave worldly ties behind and turn fully toward God at the end. In Mithila's religious tradition, ganga-labh has long been regarded as a deeply sacred goal.





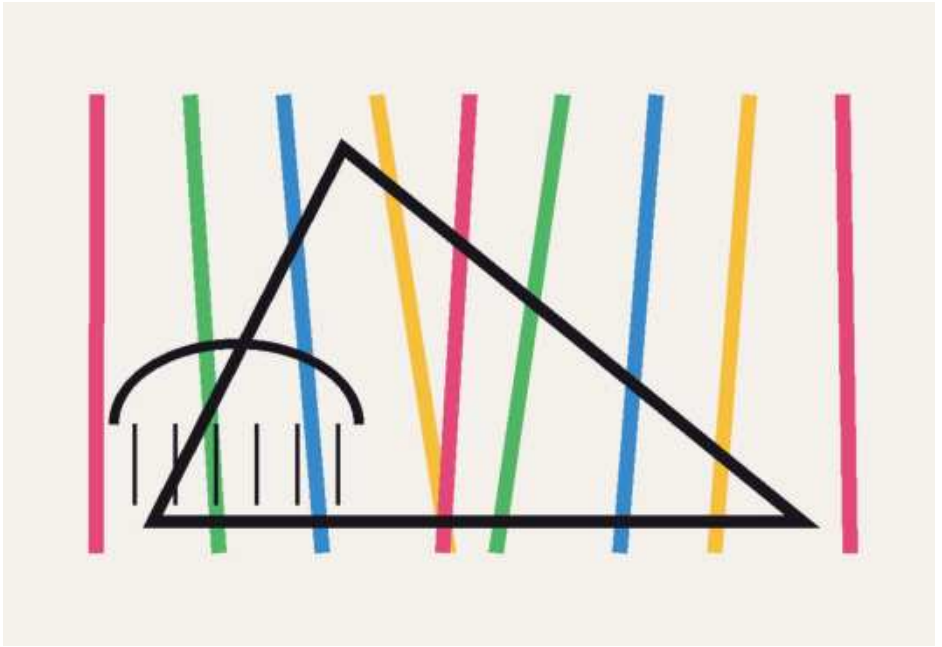
Picture 4

Bodhi Kayastha left behind his long years of service, his family, and his courtly life, and began his journey toward the Ganga. The journey was physically difficult, but his purpose was firm.

Step by step he came close to the river. Yet one last test of his faith still remained.

Chapter 3: Calling to the Ganga

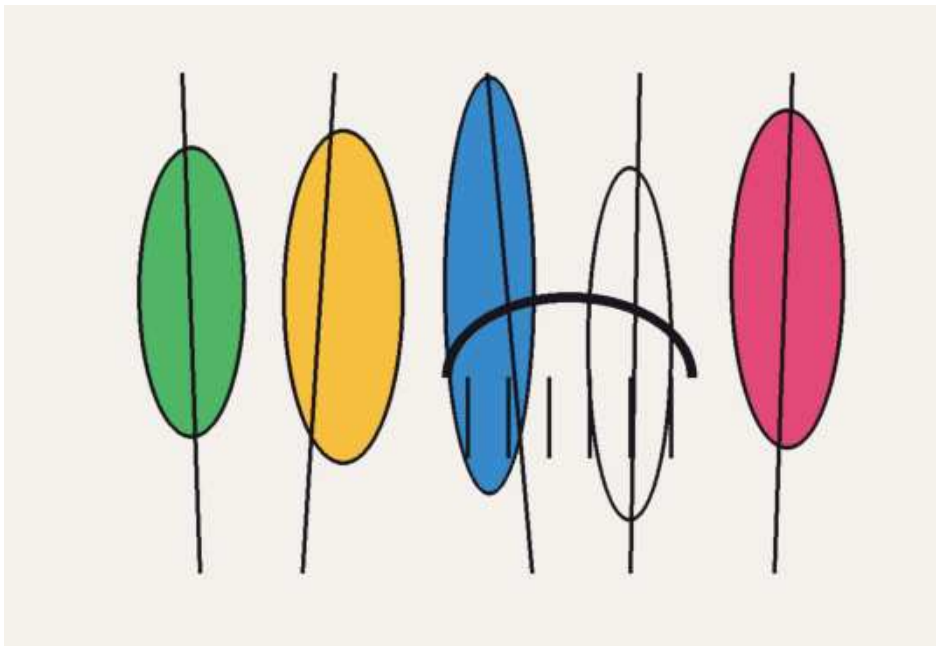




Picture 5

When the river was still about half a kos away, Bodhi Kayastha did something bold. As a test of faith, he called out to the Ganga and asked her to purify him.

It was an extraordinary act. Bodhi Kayastha had not yet reached the riverbank, but his faith was so strong that he called to Mother Ganga from a distance, placing his trust completely in her grace.





Picture 6

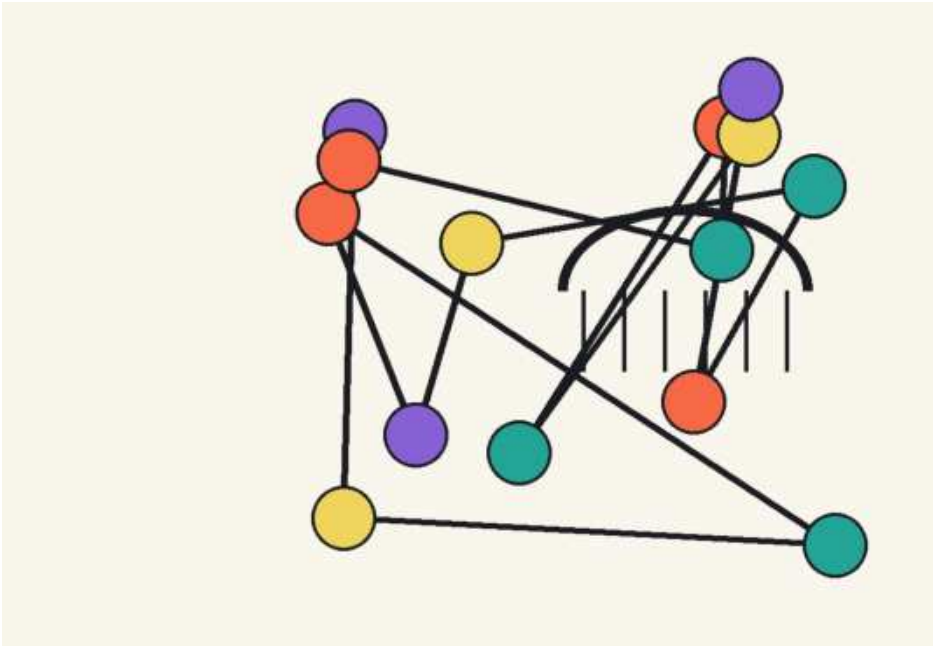
His call was not pride or arrogance. It was the last innocent prayer of a devoted person who had spent his life trying to live rightly and now hoped only for Mother Ganga's mercy.

This became the greatest test of Bodhi Kayastha's life.

Would Mother Ganga hear him from so far away? Would the devotion and clean conduct of a lifetime be answered in this final moment?

Chapter 4: The Ganga's Wonderful Grace

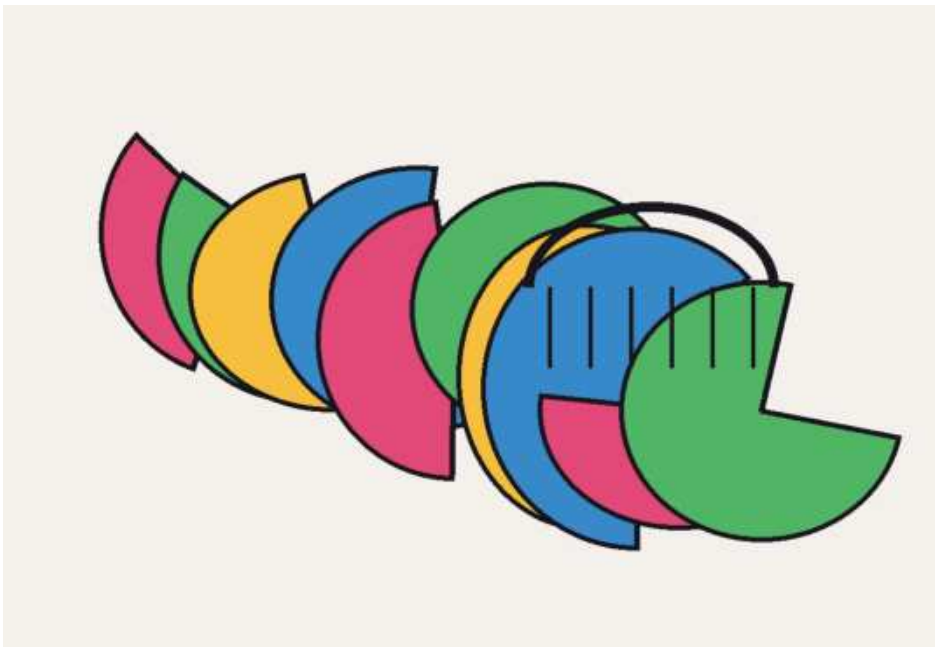




Picture 7

Then, the tradition says, a miracle occurred. The Ganga broke beyond her bank, flowed toward Bodhi Kayastha, and gathered him into her waters. Mother Ganga herself seemed to cross her natural boundary to reach her devotee.

The miracle was remembered as the reward for Bodhi Kayastha's life of devotion, generosity, and honest conduct. Mother Ganga had heard his call from far away and came to bless him. In the language of faith, devotion had made even the natural course of the river bend toward the devotee.





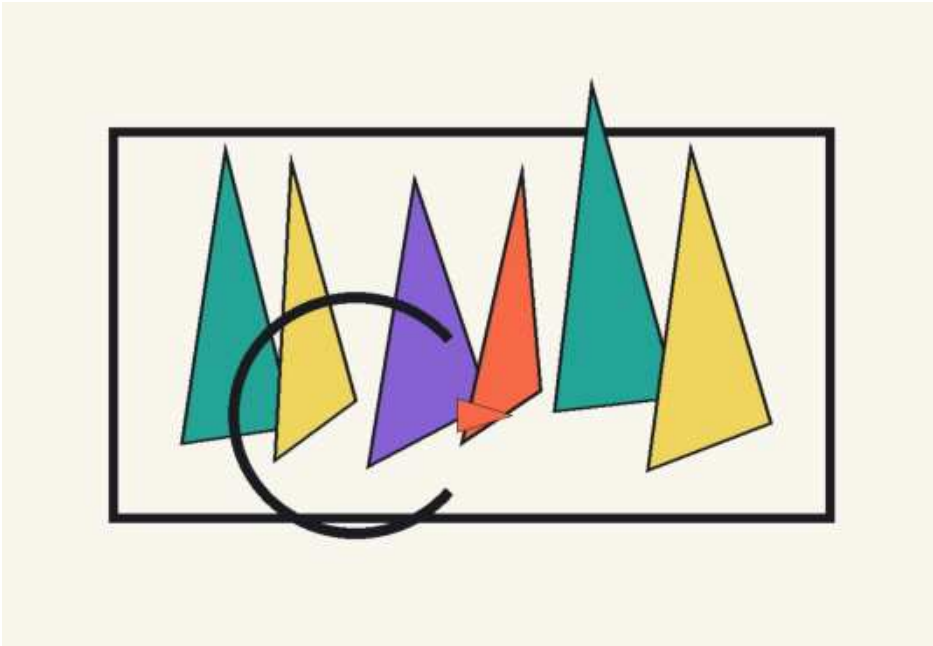
Picture 8

Bodhi Kayastha was believed to have reached heaven directly, without any further penance or long waiting, because of the purity of his whole life and his unshakable faith at the end.

The tale carries a deep message: a lifetime of honesty, charity, and devotion bears the highest fruit. More important than outward ritual is the purity of the heart and the goodness of one's conduct.

Chapter 5: Vidyapati's Immortal Song

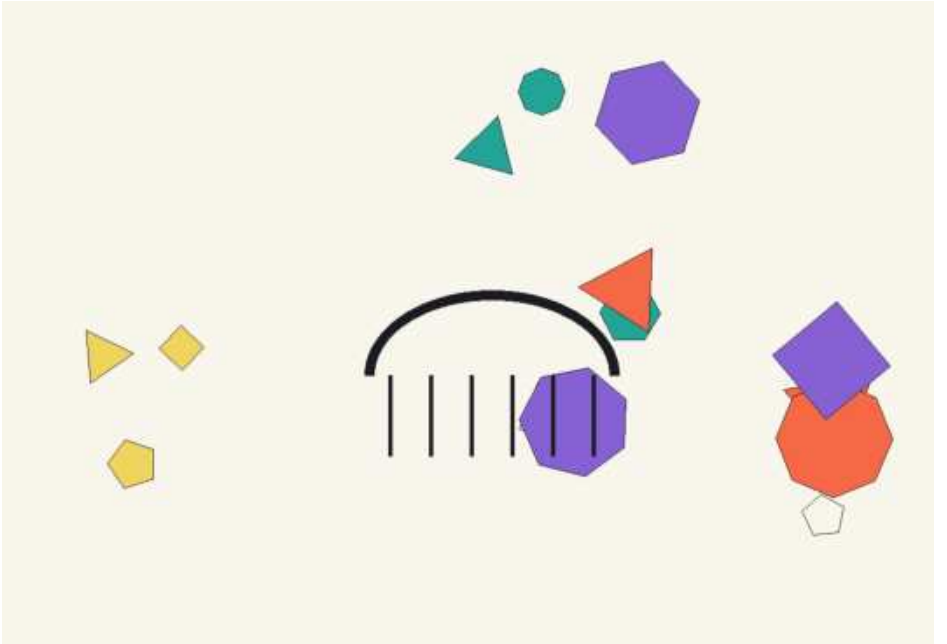




Picture 9

The story of Bodhi Kayastha belongs to a time before Vidyapati. This matters because it appears in the Sanskrit work Purusha-Pariksha, showing that by Vidyapati's age it was already known as an inspiring tale.

Vidyapati was so moved by the story that he composed the Maithili song 'Bad Sukh Saar Paol Tua Teere'. The poem gave lasting literary life to the memory of Bodhi Kayastha's ganga-labh.





Picture 10

The title itself carries a deep meaning: 'On your shore, O Ganga, I found great joy and the very essence of life.' It gathers into a single line the spiritual meaning associated with Bodhi Kayastha's experience.

Even today, the song is treasured in Mithila's devotional literature. The saying 'to attain ganga-labh like Bodhi Kayastha' became an image of an ideal end to life: after a blameless life and unwavering devotion, Mother Ganga herself receives the devotee. Through Vidyapati's poetry,

the tale of Bodhi Kayastha has inspired people in Mithila for centuries to live with honesty, charity, and faith.

The End

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Battu

The Amazing Courage of a Clever Goat in the
Forest



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: Escaping Sacrifice

There was once a mother goat who had a little kid. But when the kid was only four months old, Durga Puja arrived, and in that place there was an old custom of sacrificing goats during the festival.

This is the remarkable story of a mother's quick thinking, a young goat's courage in the wild, and finally the cleverness that allowed him to outwit even a terrifying tiger. The mixture of courage and intelligence in the tale teaches children one of life's great lessons.

Chapter 1: The Shadow of Sacrifice





Picture 1

There was once a gentle, loving mother goat. She had a little kid, small and soft, whom she raised with great affection.

But Durga Puja was drawing near, and there was an old tradition of animal sacrifice during the festival. A man came to bargain for the young goat because he had already made a vow to offer a sacrifice.





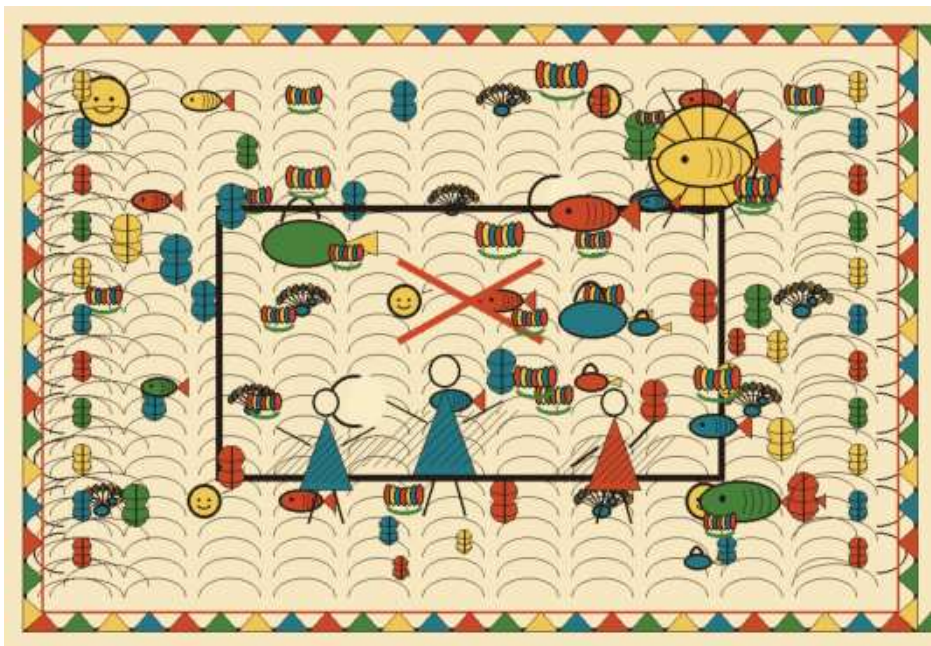
Picture 2

The man and the goat's owner agreed on the price. The buyer had not brought the money with him, so he said he would return the next day with the payment and take the young goat away.

The mother goat had heard the whole conversation. The terrible meaning of those words made her heart tremble. Her little one's life was now in danger.

Chapter 2: A Mother's Warning





Picture 3

The mother goat immediately called her child and said,
'Run away to the forest! If you stay, the owner will sell
you tomorrow, and the buyer will sacrifice you during
Durga Puja!'

It was a very serious warning—a mother's desperate
attempt to save her child. She knew the parting would be
painful, but she also knew it was necessary.





Picture 4

The young goat understood the danger in his mother's voice. That very night he ran away into the forest. It was a brave decision, because the unknown forest could be frightening for such a small animal.

But the choice between the forest and certain death was clear. Leaving his home and his mother behind, the little goat ran into the darkness toward the trees.

Chapter 3: Battu Grows Up





Picture 5

The young goat spent two or three years in the forest. Life was hard, but he was free. Growing up in the wild, he slowly changed from a small kid into a big, sturdy goat called Battu.

He grew a long beard and strong horns. The little soft kid who had once fled to escape sacrifice had become an impressive and powerful animal.





Picture 6

One day, while wandering, Battu crossed into another forest. Exploring new places was part of his free life now, but a frightening encounter was waiting for him there.

A tiger lived in that forest—the powerful and feared hunter of the woods. When Battu saw the tiger, he was frightened. That was only natural, because tigers are dangerous predators.

Chapter 4: Face to Face





Picture 7

But, surprisingly, the tiger had never seen an animal quite like Battu either—with his huge beard, great horns, and heavy body. Battu's strange appearance frightened the tiger too.

Trying to hide his fear, the tiger asked Battu in a grand, poetic way, 'You there with the famous beard and moustache—tell me where you come from, or are you some mighty lord?' The tiger sounded proud, but fear was hiding underneath his words.





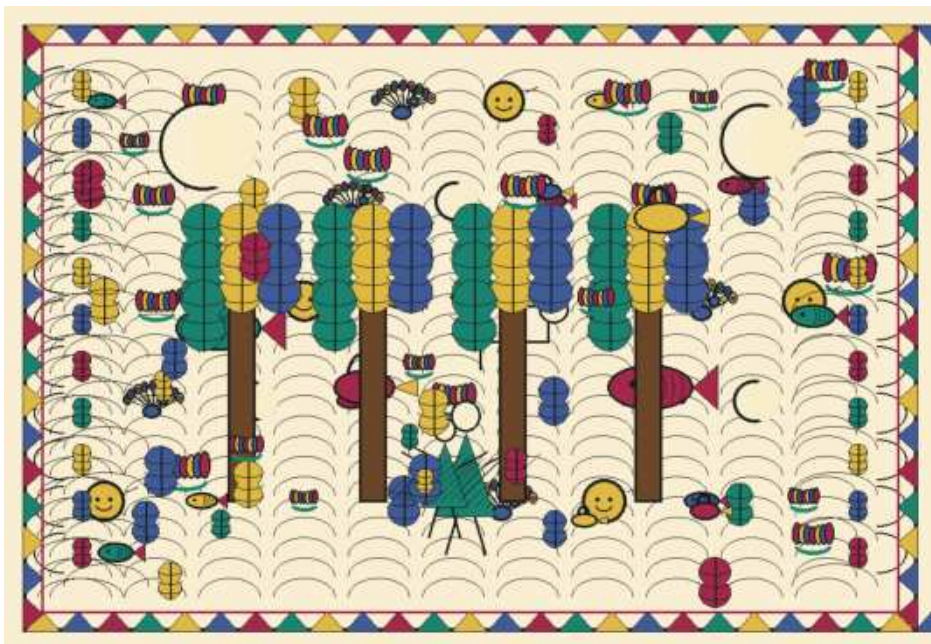
Picture 8

Battu gave his first clever answer, speaking in the same poetic style: 'I have played with mighty ones and played with fierce ones; I have even played with seven lions. And on a day when I cannot find ten tigers, I simply have to go hungry!'

The meaning was clear. Battu pretended to be a terrifying creature so powerful that even lions were toys to him and ten tigers were only a meal. The tiger heard this, panicked, and ran away.

Chapter 5: The Jackal's Cunning





Picture 9

The tiger raced through the forest, trembling with fear. On the way he met a clever jackal. The jackal asked why the tiger was so frightened, and when he heard the whole story, he burst out laughing.

'You are afraid for no reason!' said the jackal. 'Come with me. We shall have a fine meal today. That creature is only a goat!' The jackal's experience challenged the tiger's fear.





Picture 10

The tiger was still not fully convinced, but he began to trust the jackal's words. Then the jackal made a strange suggestion: 'Tie one of your legs to one of mine. I will lead you there. Then you will not be able to run away, and I will be safe from you too.'

The frightened tiger agreed to the odd plan. With one of their legs tied together, the tiger and the jackal set off toward Battu. It was a funny sight—a fearful tiger tied to a jackal for courage.

Chapter 6: Battu's Final Trick





Picture 11

When Battu saw the tiger and jackal coming together, he understood at once what had happened. The jackal had persuaded the tiger to return. But Battu did not panic. He used his wits.

Battu shouted loudly to the jackal, 'Hey! I told you to bring me two tigers, and you have brought only one!' It was a brilliant trick, making it sound as though Battu had ordered the jackal to fetch tigers for him.





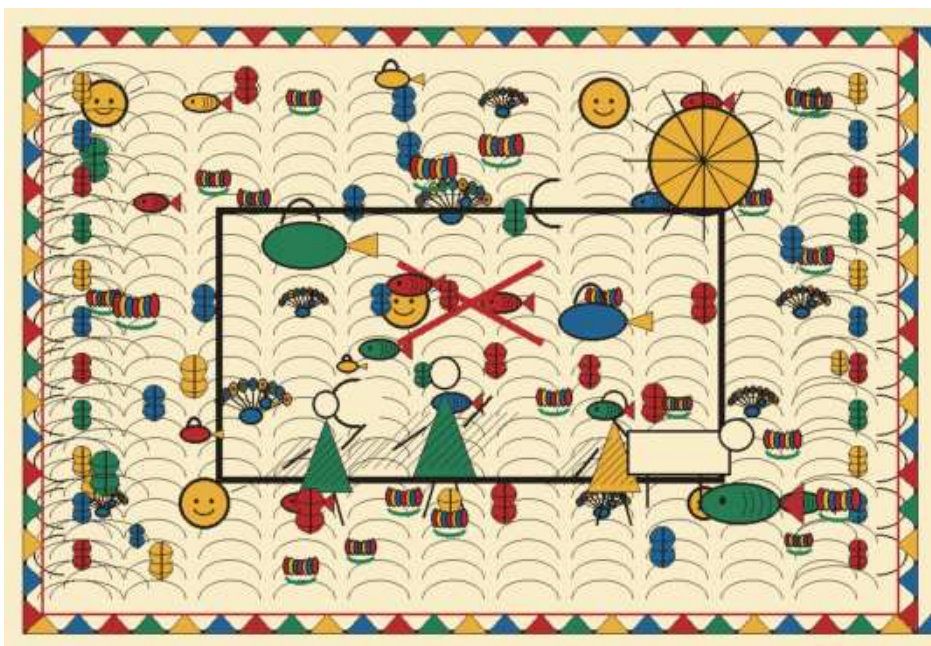
Picture 12

The tiger's fear returned at once. 'I am only one tiger, and Battu had asked for two! How powerful must he be?' Thinking this, the tiger turned and ran without looking back.

But the jackal was still tied to the tiger's leg. The jackal, trapped by his own clever plan, was dragged along as the tiger raced away and died in the wild dash. His own cunning had turned against him.

Chapter 7: Cleverness Wins





Picture 13

The ending of the tale is wonderful. The little goat who had once run into the forest to escape sacrifice had used courage and cleverness to defeat even the most frightening animal in the forest—a tiger.

Battu's victory did not come from greater strength. It came from intelligence. He never fought the tiger face to face. His clever words, confident manner, and ability to say exactly the right thing at exactly the right moment were his greatest weapons.





Picture 14

The jackal, usually a symbol of cunning, became the victim of his own trick. This is the tale's poetic justice: deceit and trickery can finally harm the very person who uses them.

Battu's story has become a folk tale of courage, intelligence, and self-confidence in Mithila. It teaches children that wisdom can matter more than physical strength, and that true courage often means thinking clearly at the right moment.

The End

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Bhat and Bhatin

A Deadly Riddle of Betrayal and a Sister's

Clever Victory



Gajendra Thakur

Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

Introduction: A Secret Love

There once lived a bhat, a traditional singer and bard, and his wife, Bhatin. This is a tale of betrayal—of how a wife became unfaithful to her husband and, because of a secret attachment, even plotted to take his life.

Yet the tale is also about justice. A sister's courage and cleverness save her brother from death, and in the end the deceiver is trapped by the very plan she created.

Chapter 1: The Poisonous Vine of Secret Love





Picture 1

Bhatin had formed a secret attachment to a manidhari gahuman—a special cobra believed in folklore to possess a jewel. The relationship betrayed her husband, yet Bhatin became so absorbed in it that she began to see her own husband as an obstacle.

For the snake, Bhatin prepared the best food and care with great attention. But she gave her husband old and poor food. Her neglect and contempt became plain to see.

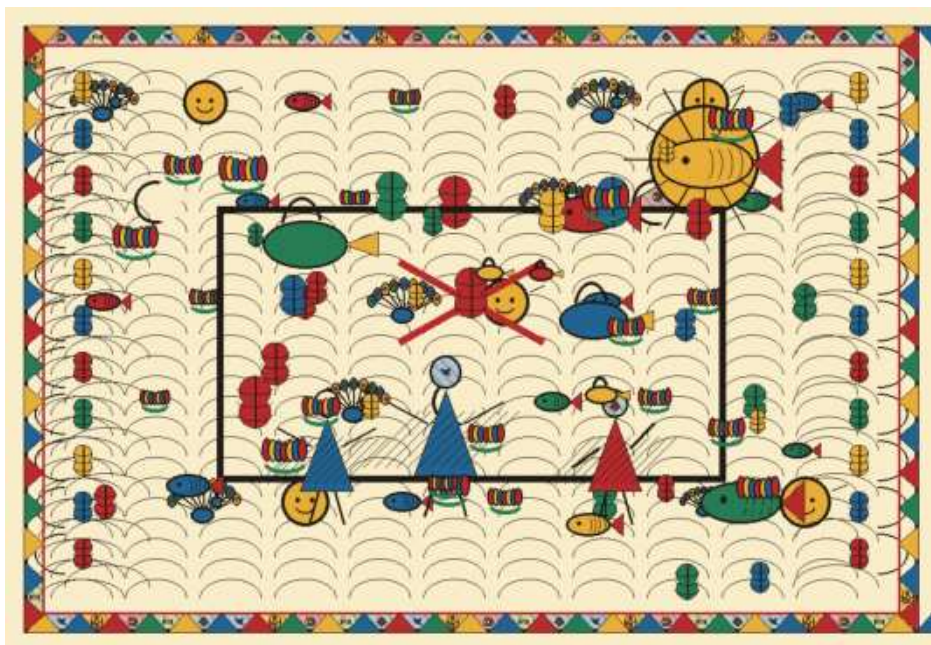
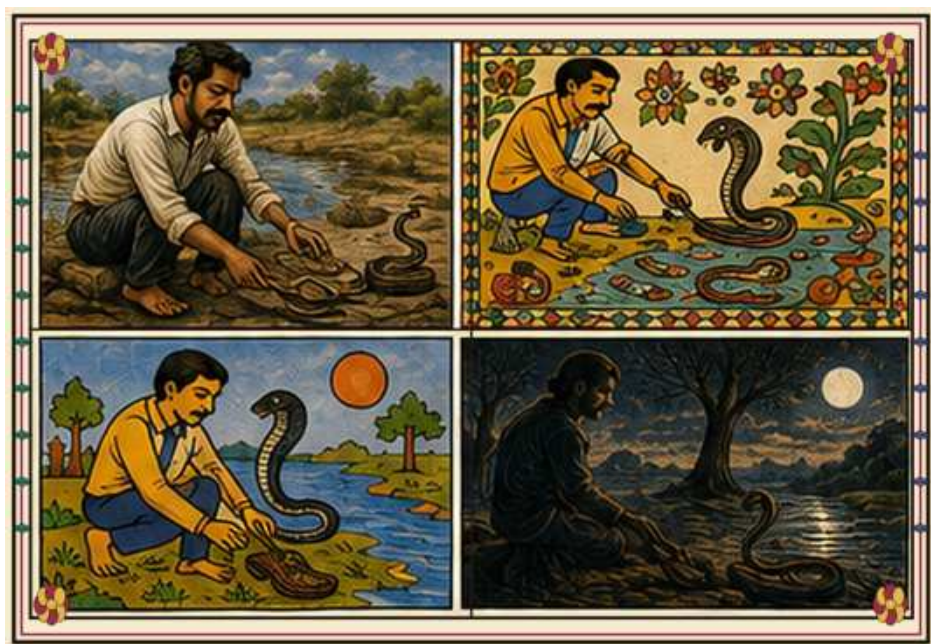


Picture 2

Because of this constant neglect, Bhat grew thin and weak. His failing health was the direct result of Bhatin's cruelty, yet she showed him no pity.

At last Bhatin's cruelty went even further. She no longer wanted Bhat to live. She told the snake clearly to bite him and kill him.

Chapter 2: Death Hidden in a Shoe



Picture 3

Following Bhatin's command, the snake began waiting for a chance to bite Bhat. It watched patiently and cunningly for the right moment.

One day Bhat took off his shoes beside a stream so that he could wash his feet. While he was busy, the snake quietly slipped inside one of the shoes and waited there.





Picture 4

When Bhat returned, he naturally shook the shoe before putting it on, as people often do to remove dust or dirt. That simple habit saved his life.

The snake fell out of the shoe. Bhat did not know why it had been hiding there, but he reacted at once. In self-defence he struck the snake with the shoe until it died. Without knowing it, Bhat had escaped a planned attack.

Chapter 3: The Truth Hanging from the Banyan Tree

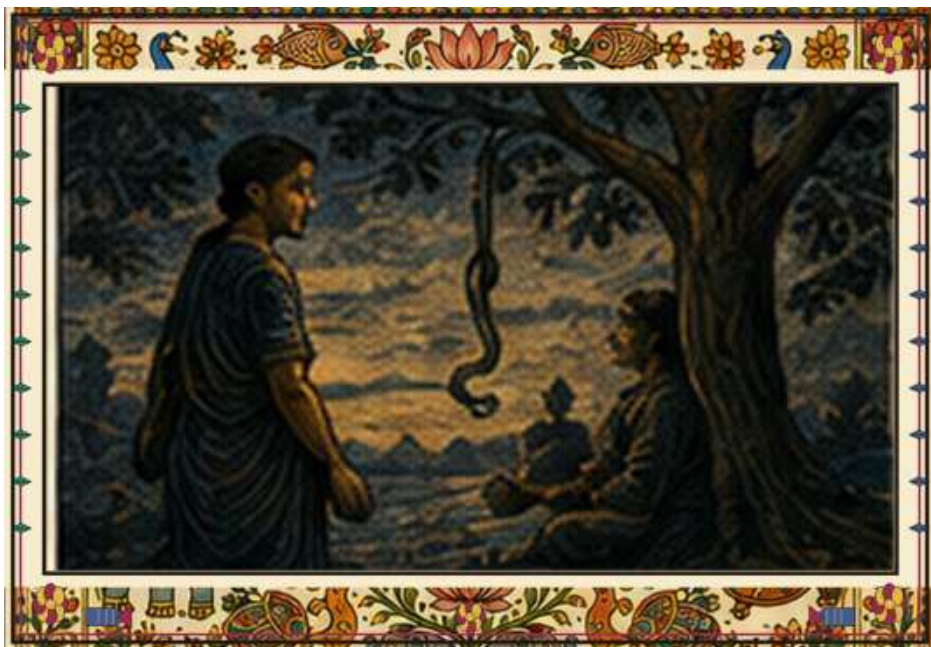




Picture 5

After killing the snake, Bhat hung it from a banyan tree, perhaps as a warning or simply to show what had happened. He had no idea that the snake had been Bhatin's secret beloved.

When Bhat reached the village, he eagerly told his wife the whole story—how he had escaped the snake and killed it in self-defence. He did not understand how terrible the news would sound to Bhatin.



Picture 6

Bhatin felt as though all the life had gone out of her. The snake she secretly loved was dead. Inside she was shattered, but she had to hide her grief because she could not reveal the truth to her husband.

Unable to control her desire to see the snake, Bhatin went with Bhat to the banyan tree. When she saw it dead, grief and shock overwhelmed her and she fainted. Her true feelings had burst out, even though Bhat still did not understand why.

Chapter 4: The Mystery of the Nine Pieces





Picture 7

Bhat carried the unconscious Bhatin back to the village, worried about her but still unaware of her betrayal.

Inside, however, Bhatin was already planning a terrible revenge.

Later, alone and grieving, Bhatin took the dead snake down from the banyan tree, cut it into nine pieces, and carried them home. The strange act showed how deeply obsessed she had become.



Picture 8

Bhatin hid the nine pieces in different places: four beneath the four legs of the bed, one under a low stool, one in the oil, one in the salt, one in the grain store, and one in a basket.

These secret hiding places prepared the next stage of Bhatin's plan. She was going to give her husband a deadly riddle, and his ability to answer it would decide whether he lived or died.

Chapter 5: The Deadly Riddle



Picture 9

Bhatin challenged Bhat: 'Tell me what is hidden at the bed, the stool, the salt, the oil, the grain store, and the basket! If you cannot, I will kill you.' The riddle was really a cruel trap disguised as a test.

Bhat had no idea that pieces of the snake had been hidden in those places, so he could not answer the riddle. His life now seemed to depend entirely on Bhatin's cruel decision.





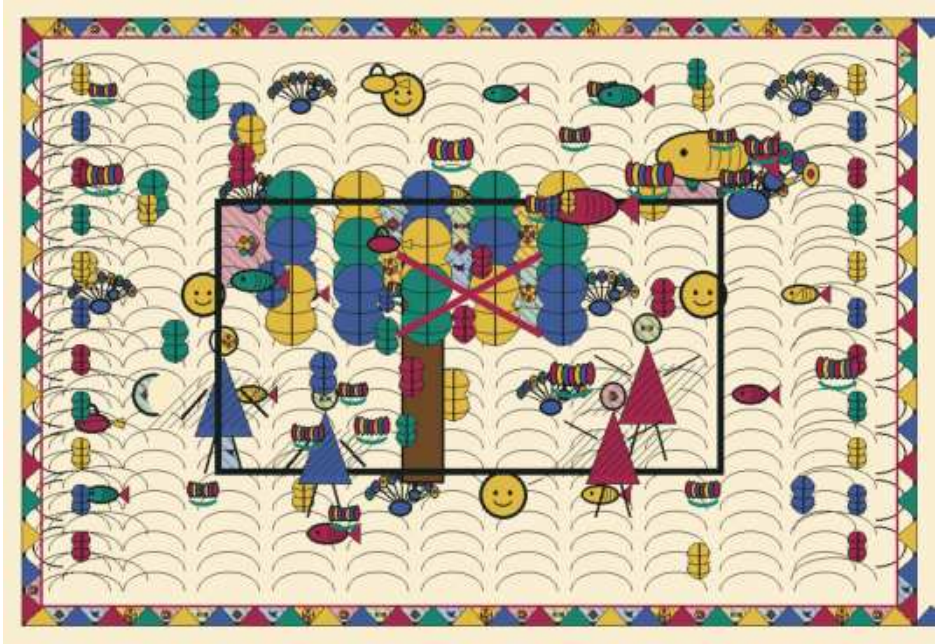
Picture 10

With death close, Bhat made one final request: 'Before I die, I want to see my sister. Give me two days to visit her.' It was his last hope. Perhaps his sister could somehow help him.

Bhatin agreed—perhaps because she felt certain she had already won, or perhaps because custom made the request difficult to refuse. With a heavy heart, Bhat began the journey to his sister, not knowing that the journey would save his life.

Chapter 6: The Lamps Reveal the Secret





Picture 11

Bhat reached his sister. She had been calculating or considering her brother's span of life and fate according to a traditional family or astrological practice. The moment she saw him, she became concerned.

When she learned the whole story—the riddle, the threat, and the danger to her brother—she decided at once: 'I am coming with you.' Her brave decision was the first step toward saving Bhat's life.

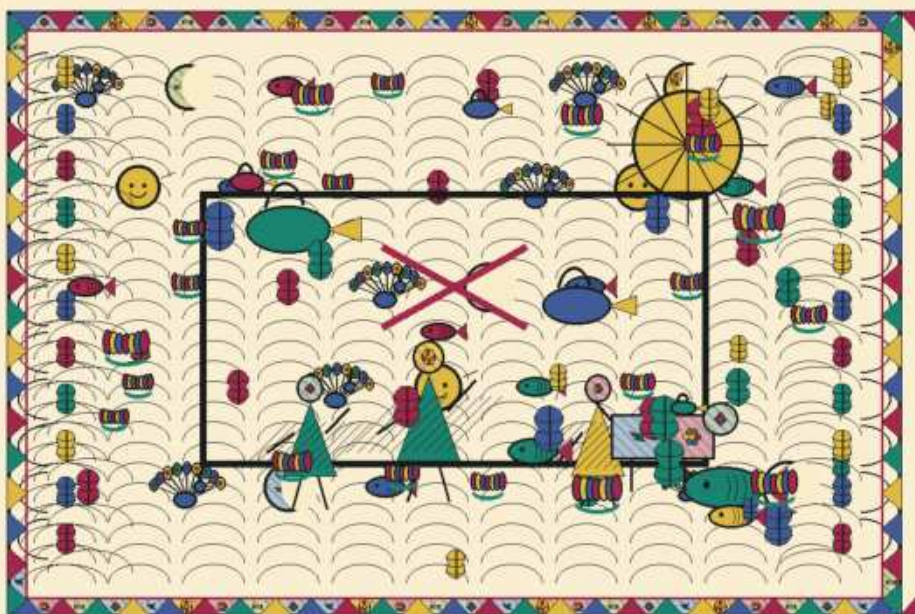


Picture 12

On the way back, brother and sister spent the night at a dharamshala, a travellers' rest house. The sister was too worried to sleep. Fear for her brother's fate kept her awake.

Then something magical happened. All the lamps in the rest house gathered together and began talking among themselves. In the language of the folk tale, even the lamps had voices. The lamp from the sister's room revealed the secret: 'Bhatin wants to kill her husband Bhat. Her false riddle is made from the body of her secret beloved, the dead cobra. She cut the snake into pieces and hid them in different places, then turned those hiding places into a riddle!'

Chapter 7: Justice and Revenge



Picture 13

The next morning, as the brother and sister neared the village, the sister made a plan. She told her sister-in-law, Bhatin, 'I want to hear the riddle too!'

Proud of her power, Bhatin declared, 'If she cannot solve it, I will kill her too!' Her cruelty now extended even to her husband's sister.





Picture 14

But the sister already knew the secret from the lamp. Fearlessly she answered, 'And if I solve the riddle, then the punishment will fall on you!' With those words she challenged Bhatin's pride and turned Bhatin's own game against her.

The moment Bhatin asked the riddle, the sister went to every hiding place and brought out all nine pieces of the snake, one by one. It was a complete and exact answer. According to the fierce justice of the old folk tale, Bhatin then received the very deadly punishment she had

threatened for others. Bhat was saved, the betrayal was exposed, and the sister's courage and intelligence brought the story to its final turning point.

The End

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Bihula

The Devoted Bride of Champanagar — The
Tale of Manasa and Chand Saudagar



Gajendra Thakur

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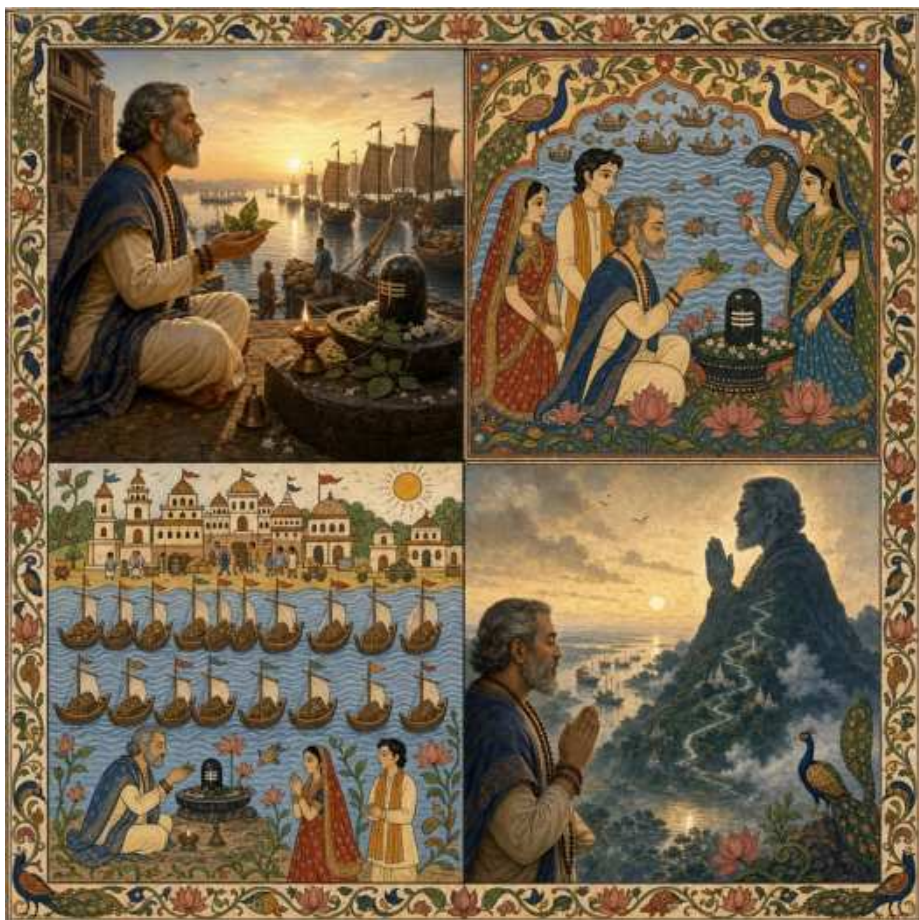
DESIGNED BY: AUM GAJENDRA THAKUR

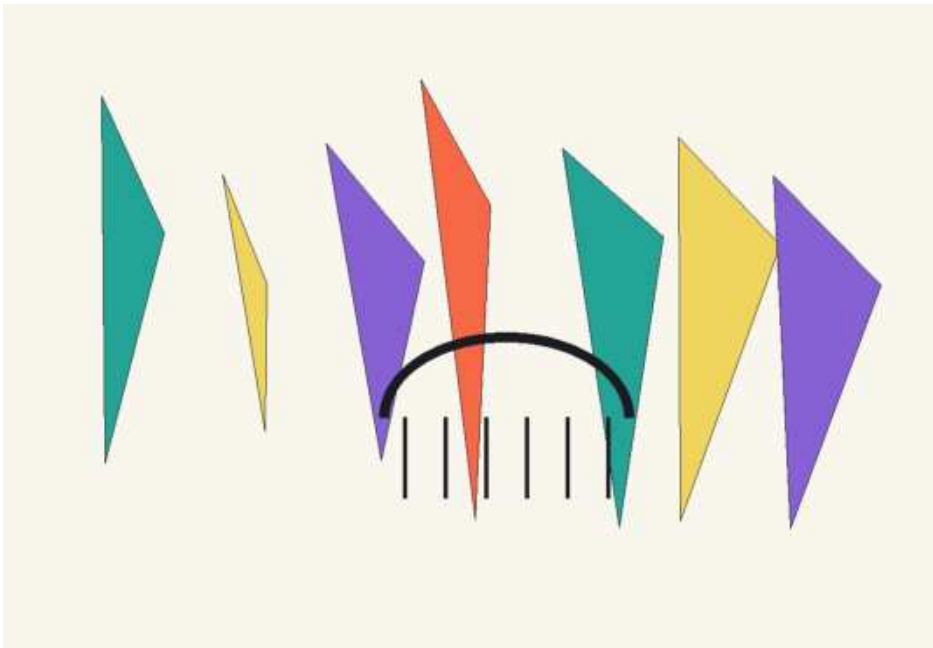
Introduction: Champanagar

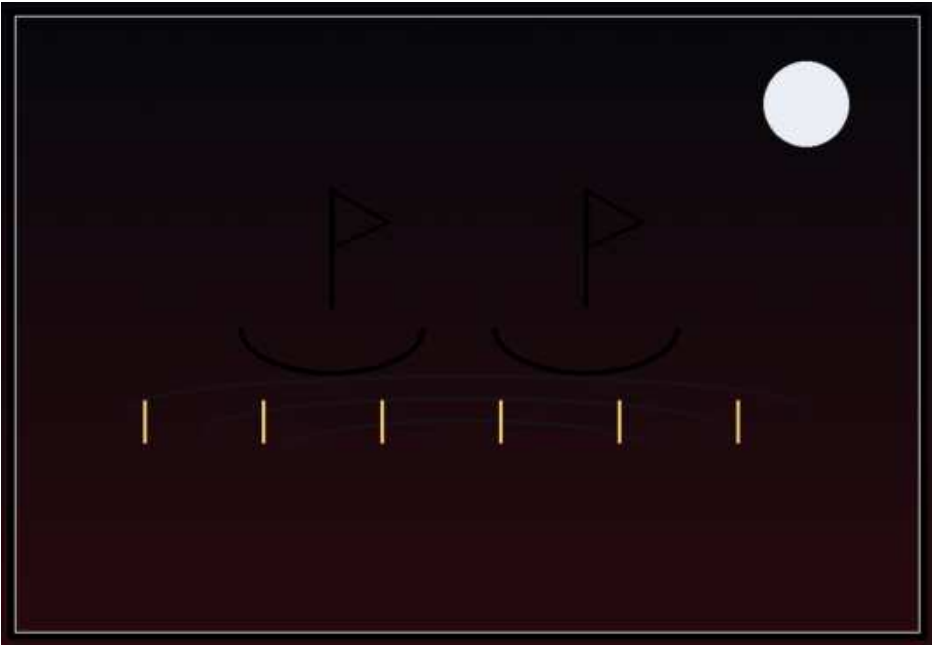
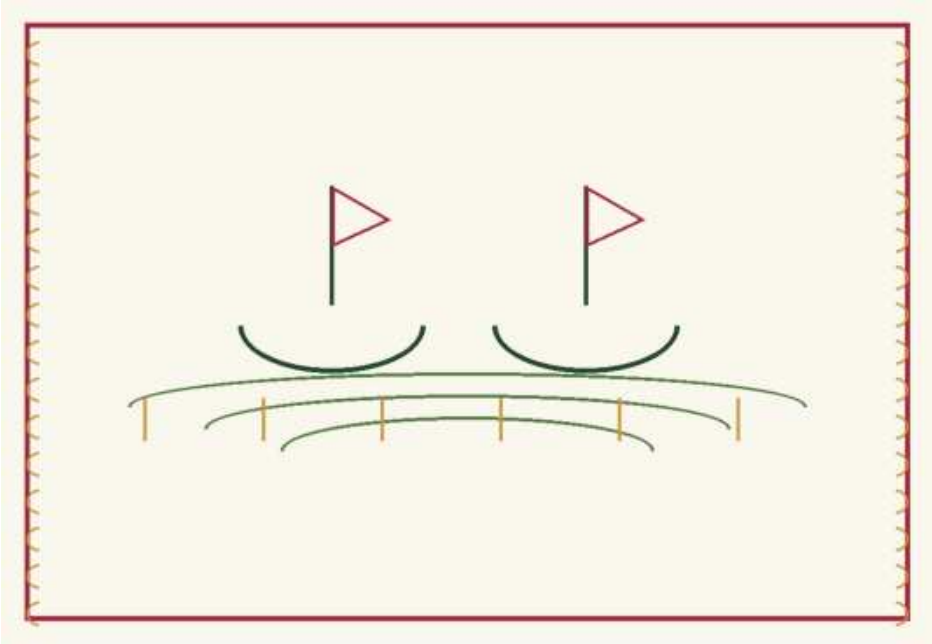
Champanagar stood beside the Ganga, a city of merchants where ships arrived at the ghats and the scents of seven seas seemed to fill the market. This is a story from that city, where the stubborn will of a goddess and the stubborn will of a human being faced each other—and an entire family was caught between them.

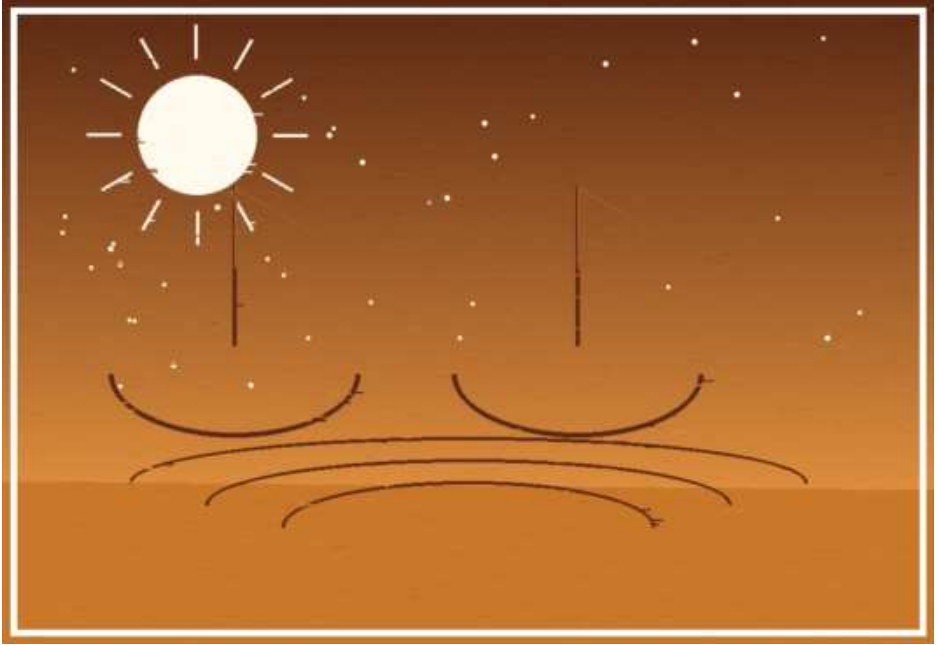
Yet in the end, the story belongs neither to the goddess nor to the merchant. It belongs to a young bride who entered the river of death beside her husband and refused to let the current defeat her. Her name was Bihula.

Chapter 1: Chand Saudagar





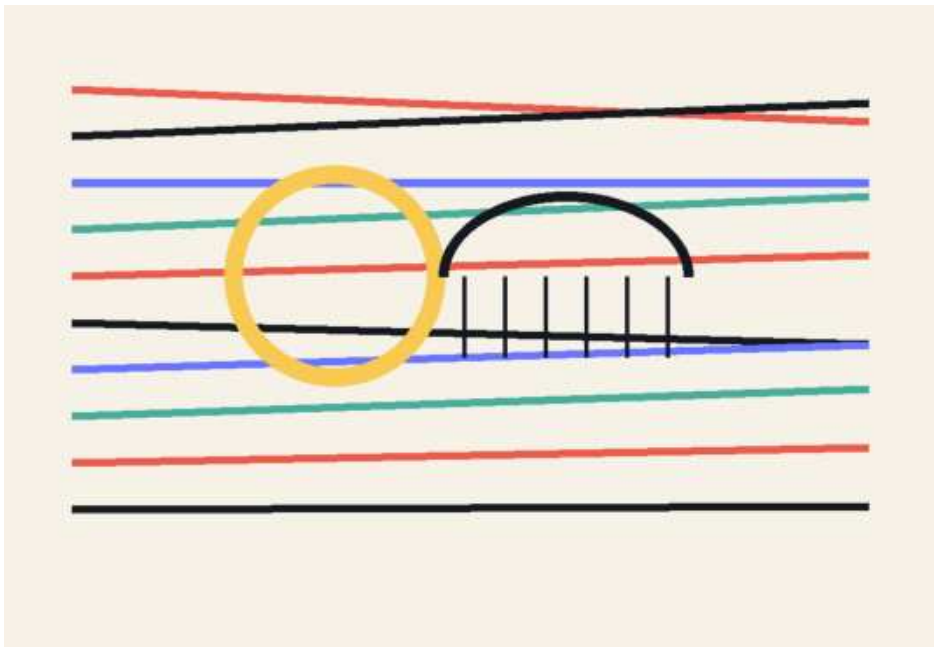


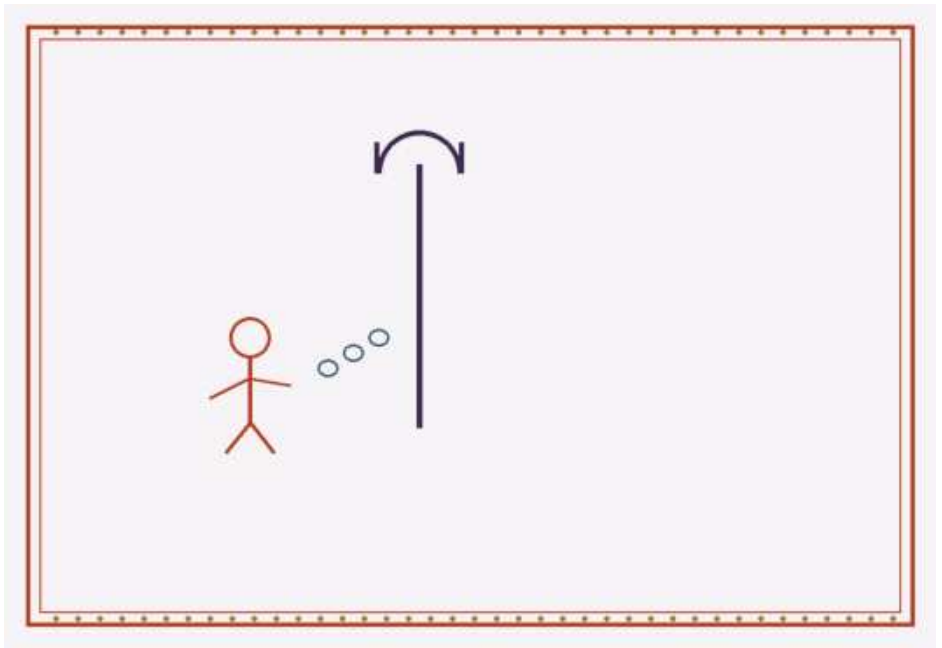


Picture 1

A great merchant named Chand Saudagar lived in Champanagar. He owned fourteen ships, and his trade reached distant lands. His wealth was enough to make kings envious, and his reputation was so great that the whole city seemed known by his name.

But wealth was not Chand Saudagar's true identity. Devotion was. He was a devoted worshipper of Lord Shiva. His day began with a bath in the Ganga, bilva leaves, rudraksha beads, and the words 'Har Har Mahadev.'







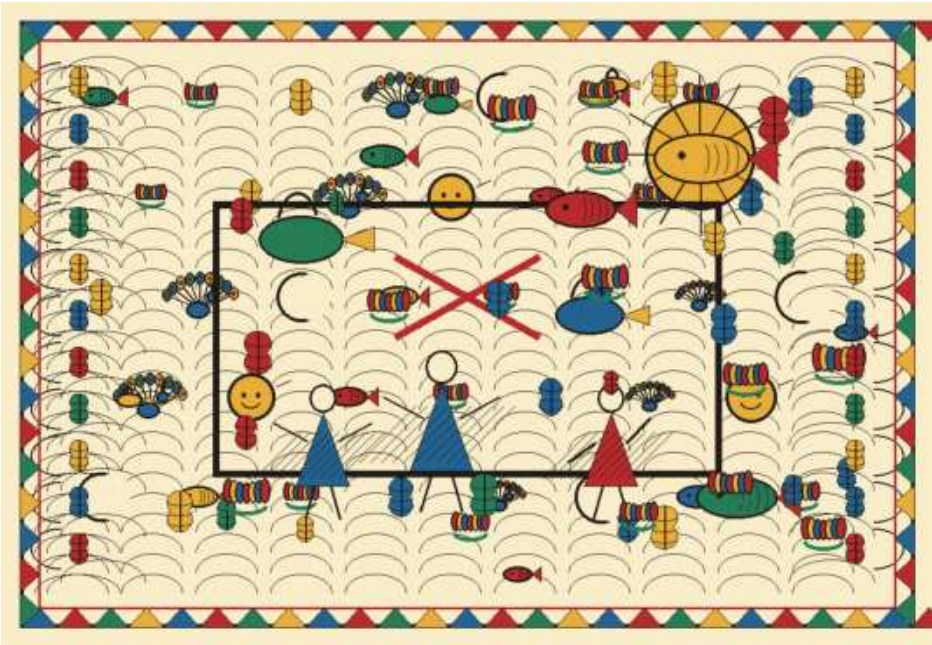
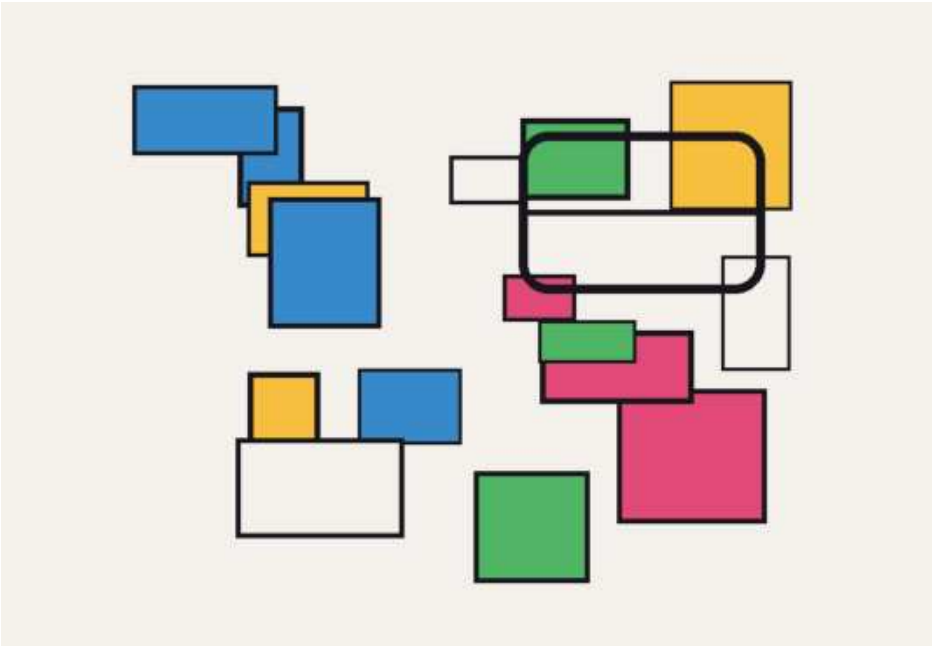
Picture 2

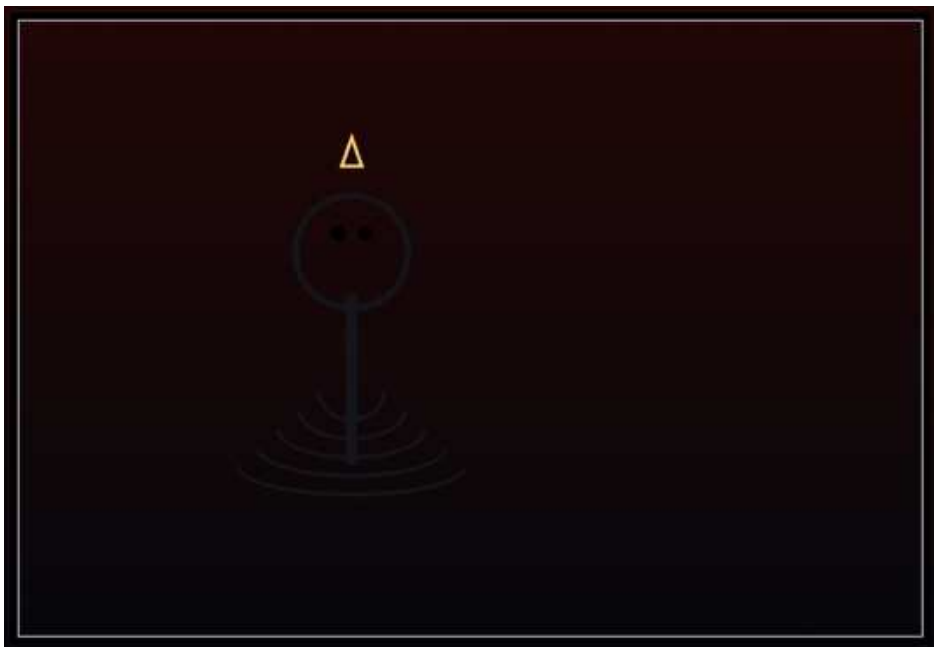
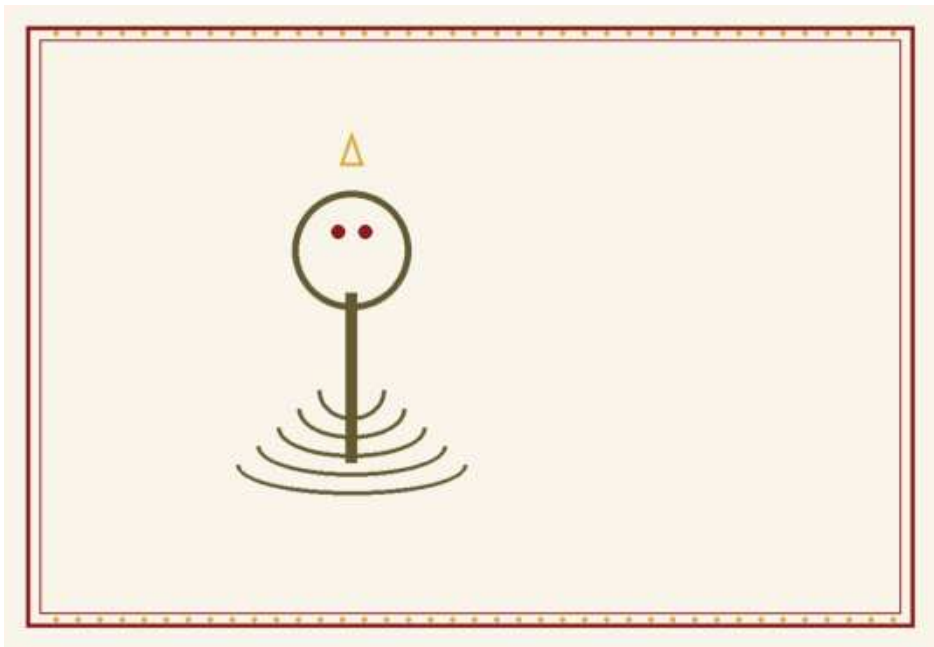
His devotion had the firmness of a warrior. He would say, 'This head bows in only one place—at the feet of the Lord of Kailash. If it bows elsewhere, what is the worth of this head?'

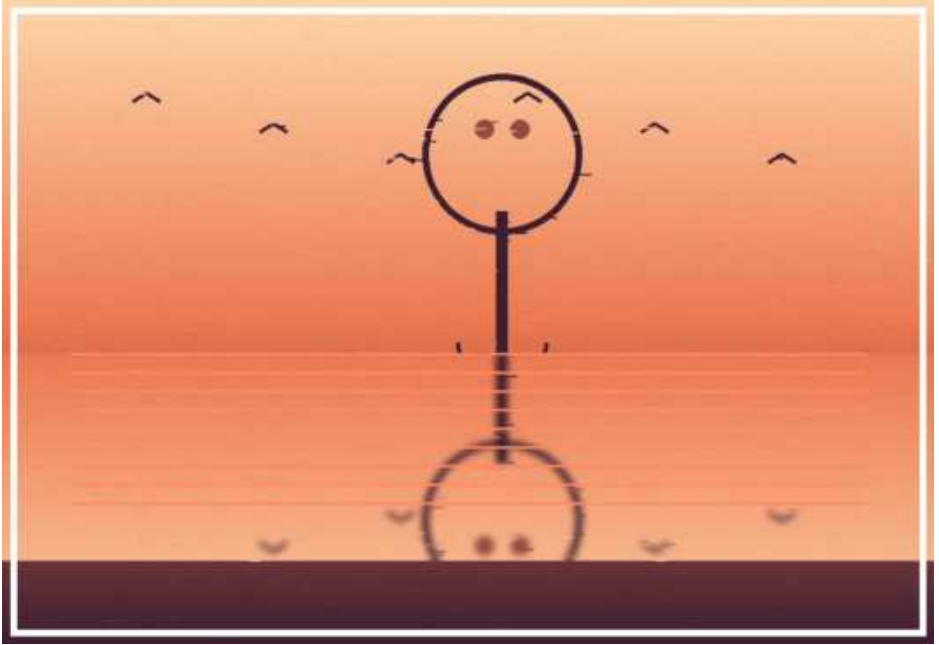
And fate made that very firmness, that unbroken loyalty, the greatest test of his life. For at that same time, far below Kailash, another decision was being made.

Chapter 2: Manasa's Wish





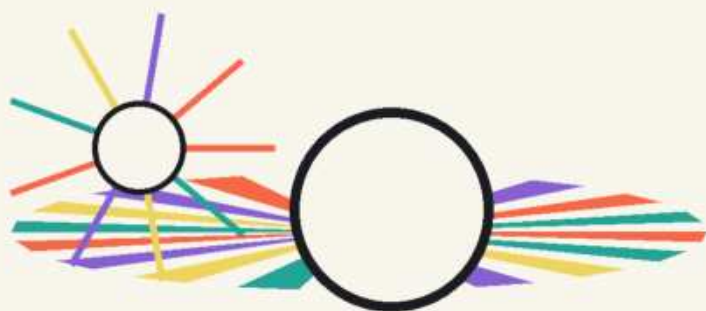


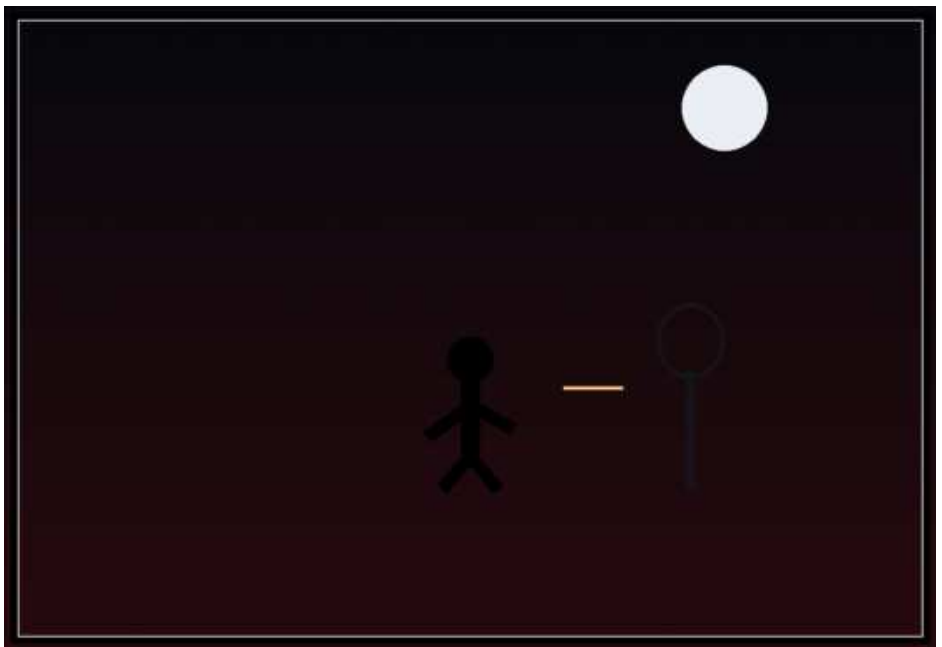
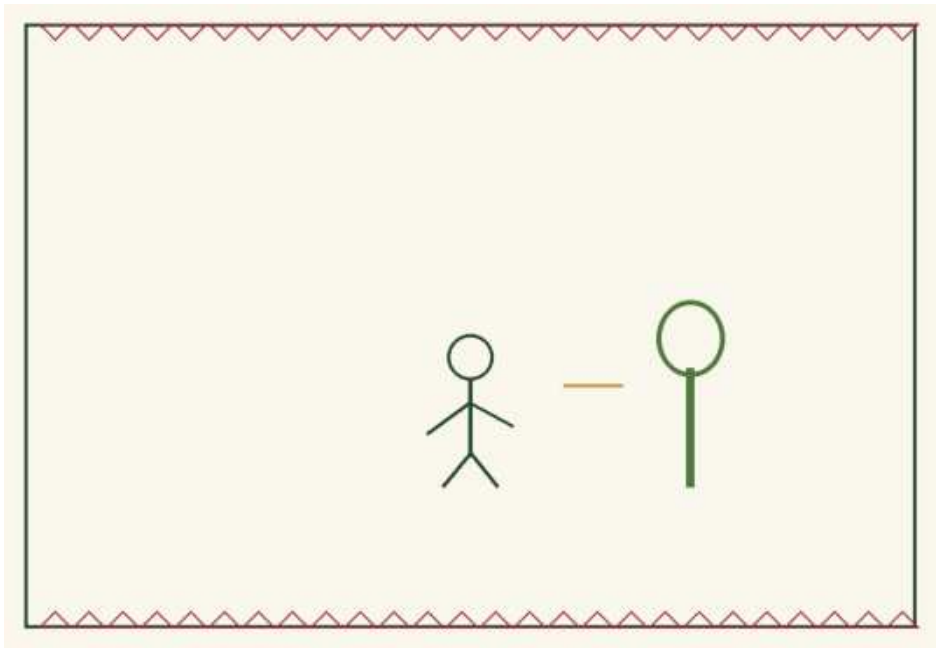


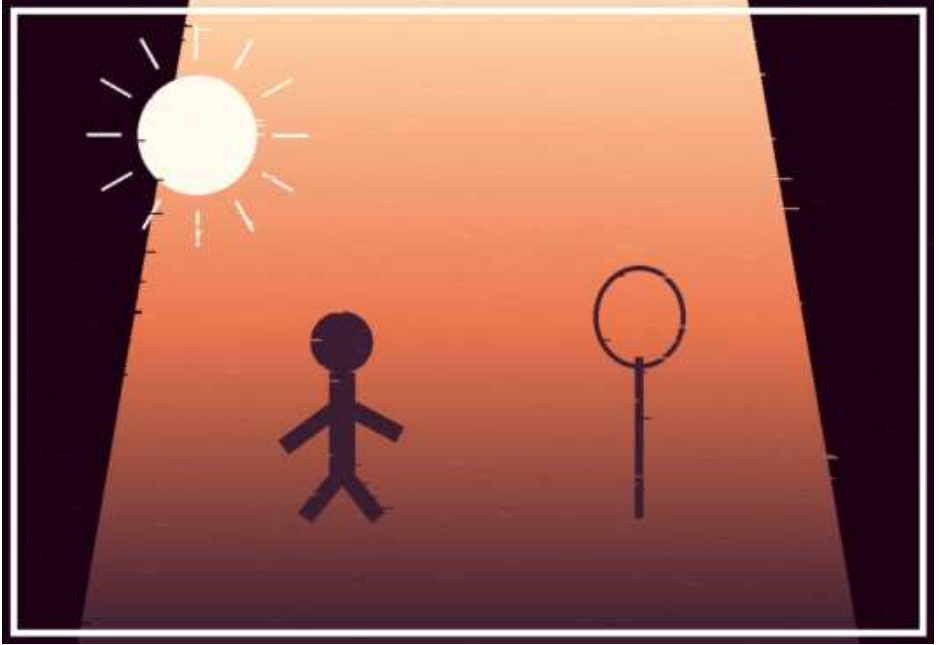
Picture 3

Manasa, the snake goddess and mistress of poison, once thought, 'Who pays attention to me on Kailash? I will leave Kailash and go to the human world. There people will worship me, build shrines for me, and sing my songs.'

The wish belonged to a goddess, but the hunger behind it was very human—the hunger to be recognised. Manasa reasoned that worship would spread only if an important and respected person bowed to her first. Then the rest of the city would follow.







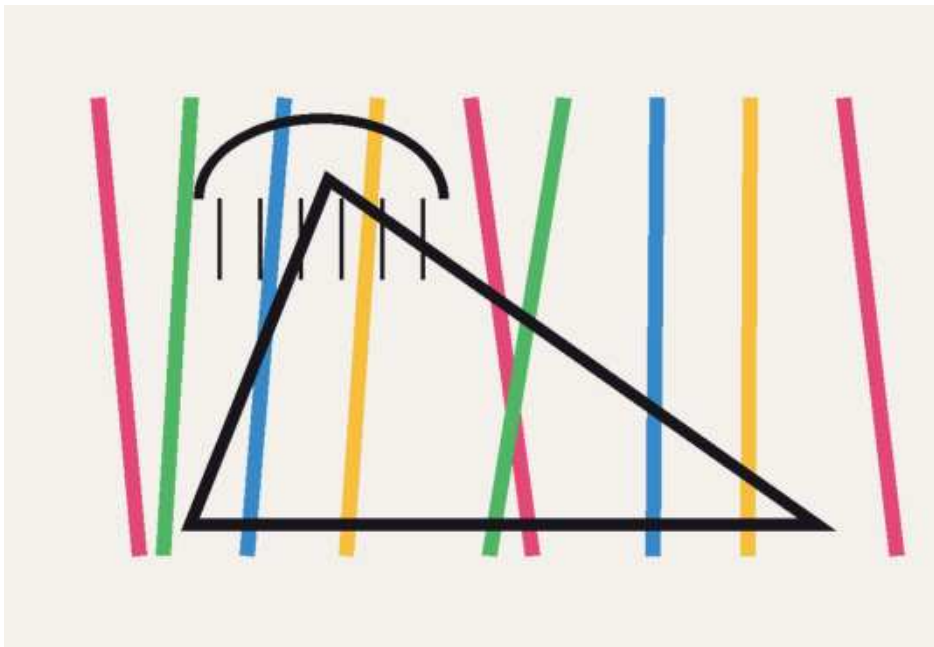
Picture 4

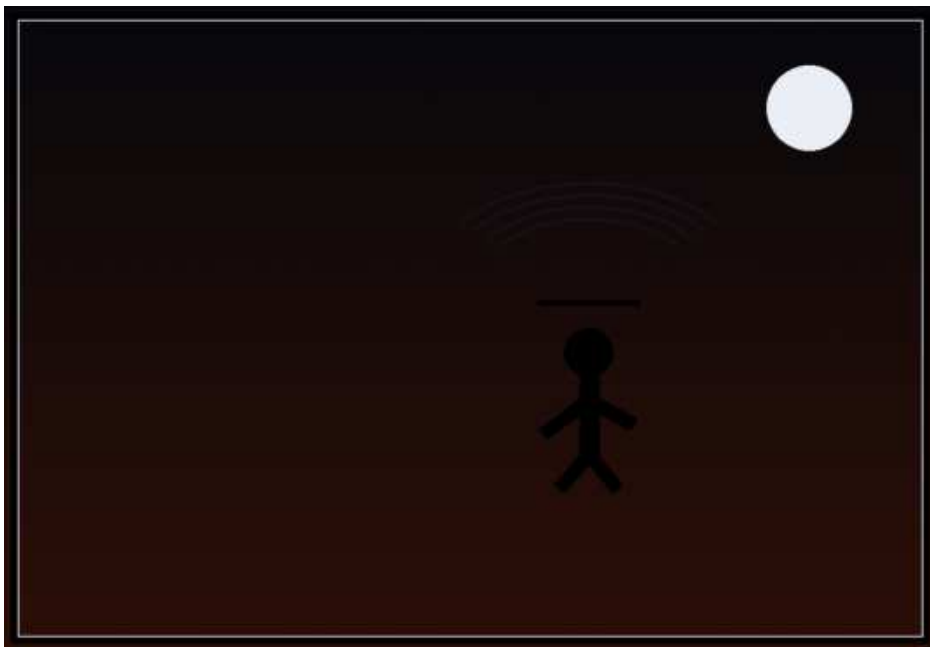
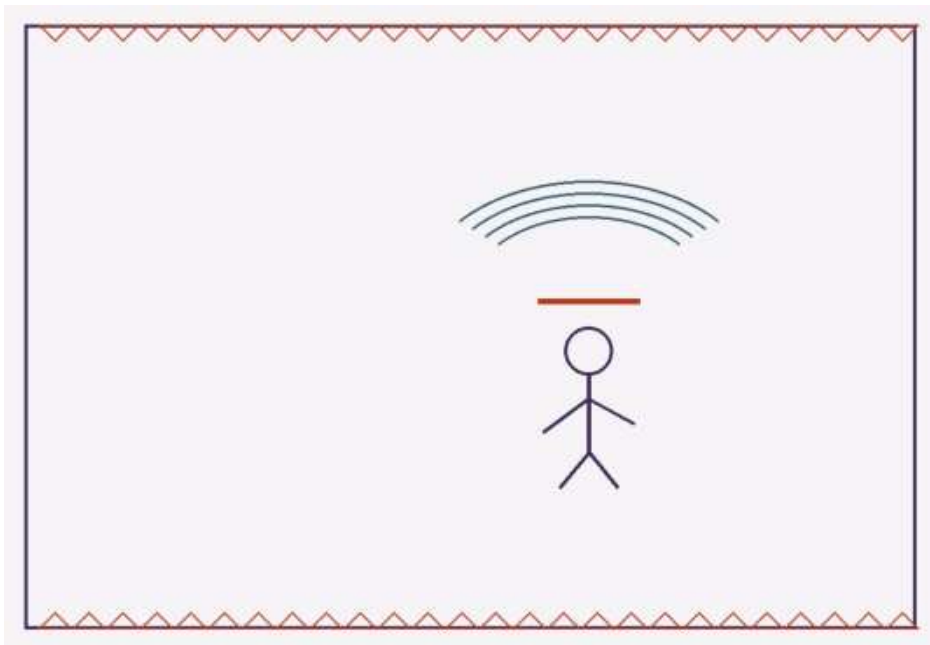
Manasa came down to the human world and went straight to Champanagar. Who was the city's greatest name? Chand Saudagar. The goddess went to him and said, 'Worship me.'

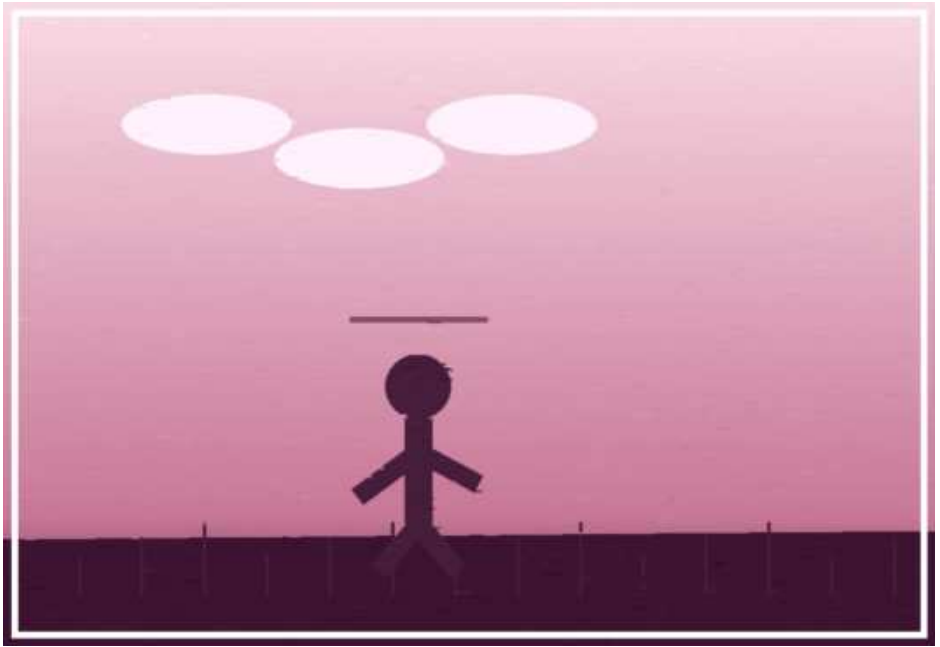
The command was short, but a whole plan stood behind it. Manasa was certain: who would refuse a goddess? But the man before her was Chand Saudagar, and he had already declared the rule by which his head would bow.

Chapter 3: The Refusal





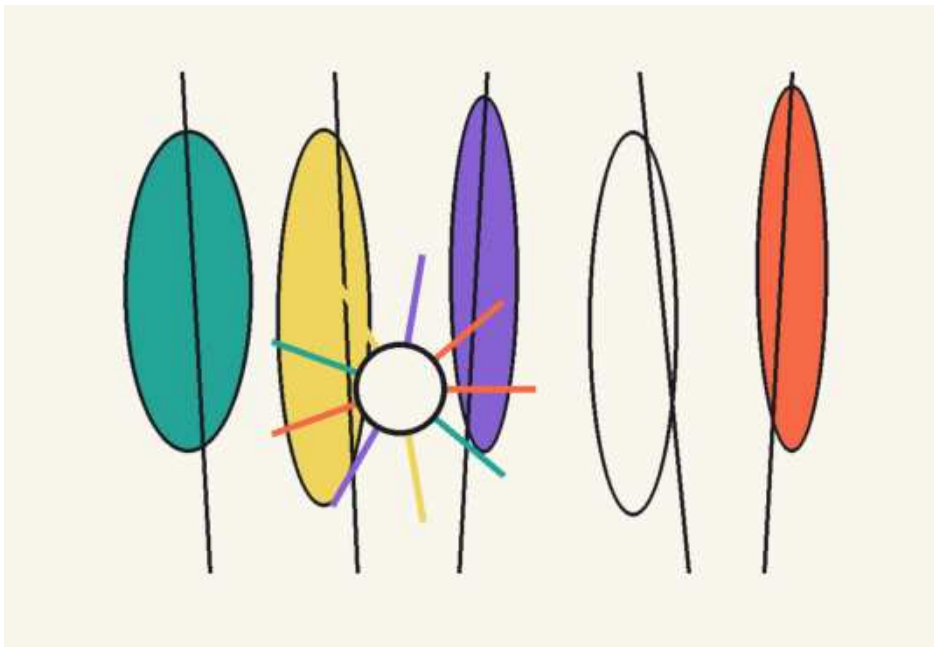


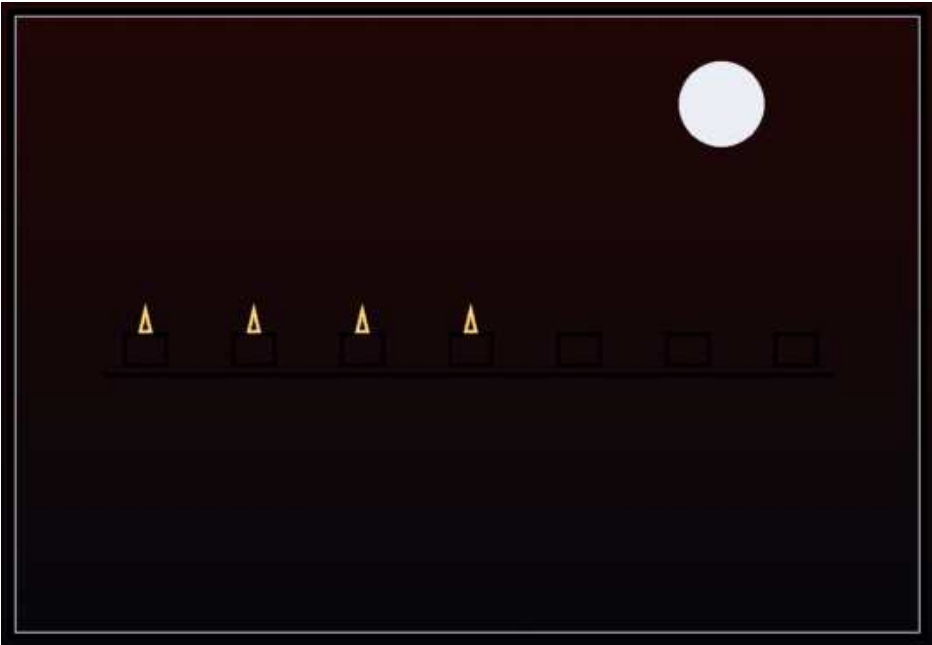
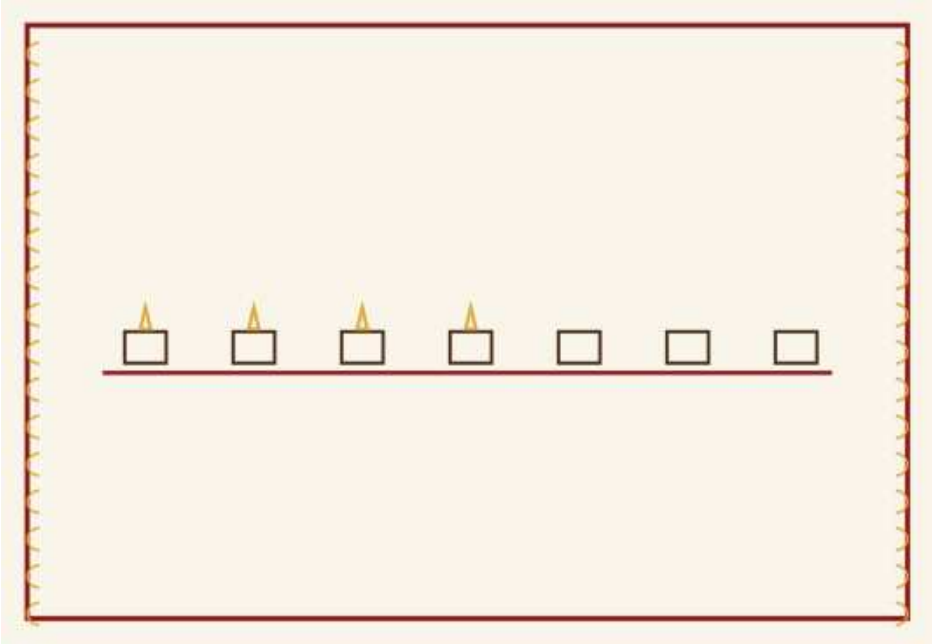


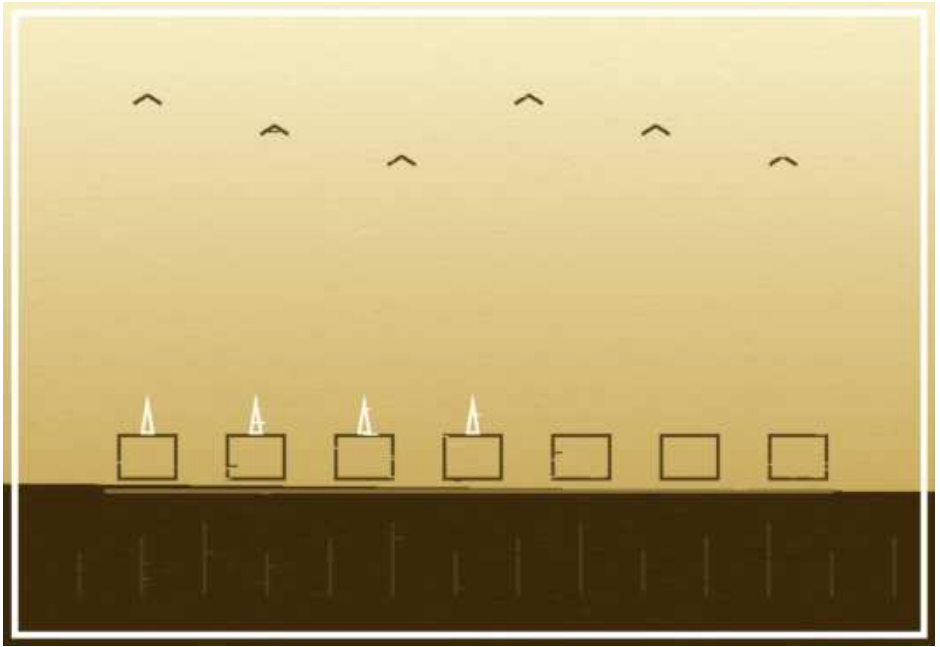
Picture 5

Chand Saudagar refused.

'I am a devotee of Shiva. The hand that offers flowers to Mahadev will not offer them to another.' There was no hatred and no insult in his answer—only a devotee's direct loyalty. But when one stubborn will meets another, there is little room left for reason.







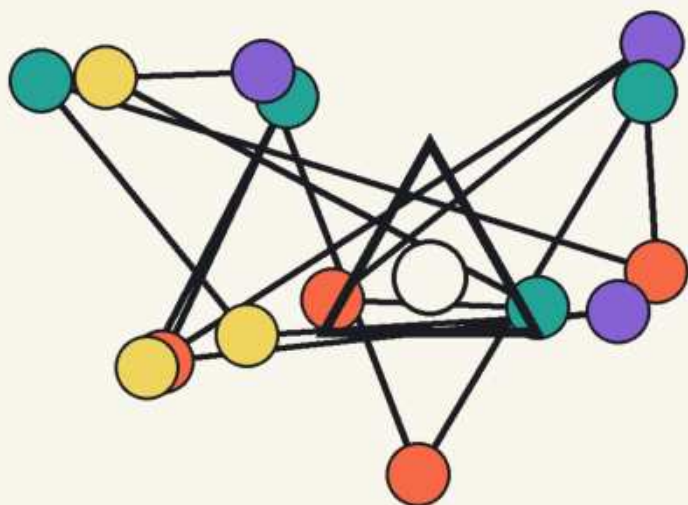
Picture 6

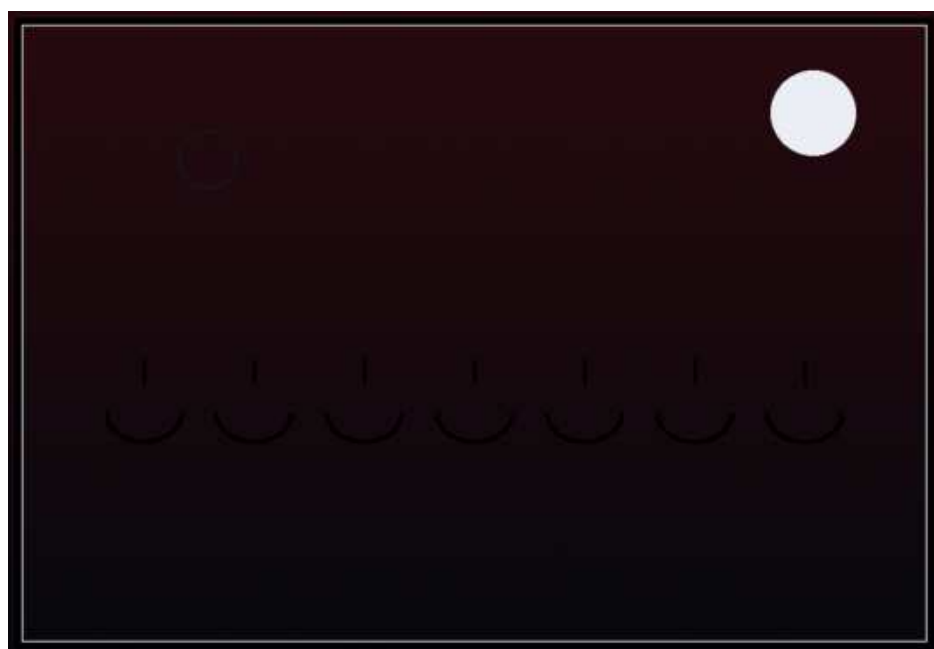
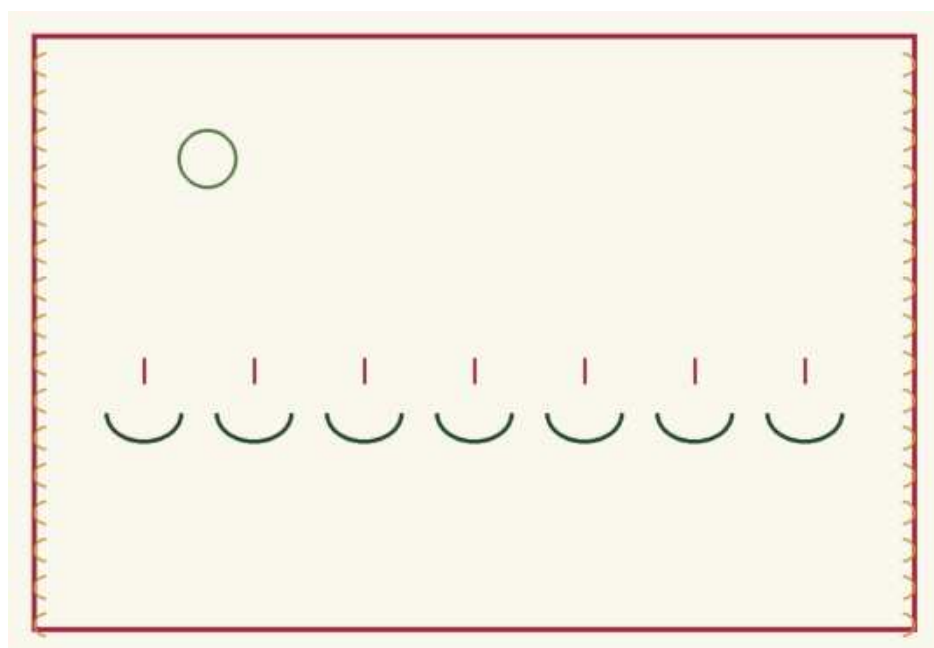
Manasa became furious. The very man through whom she had hoped to spread her worship in the human world had refused her. Her desire for recognition now burned like the fire of insult, and its first flame fell where Chand Saudagar was most vulnerable.

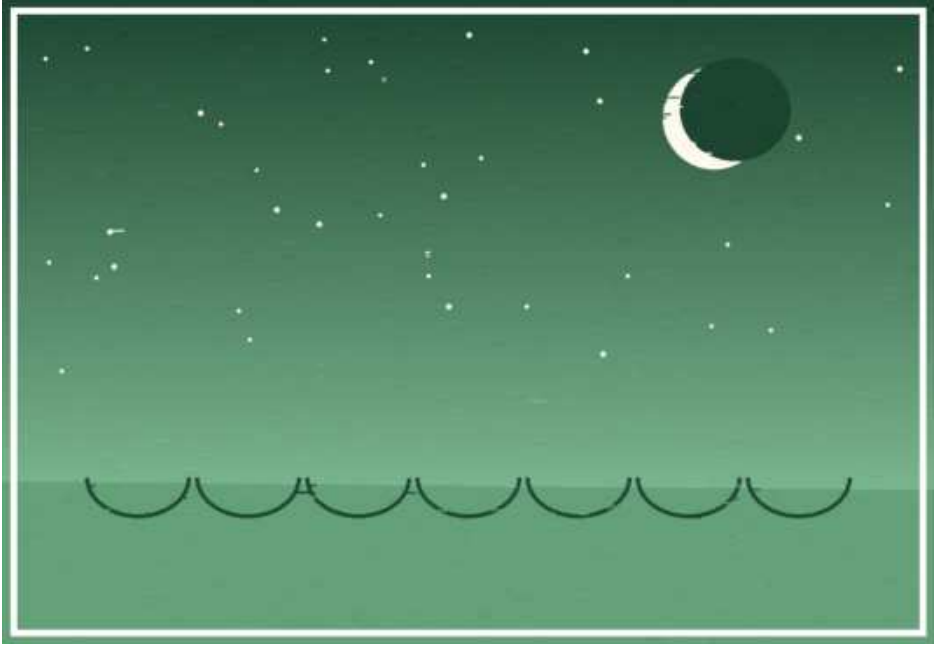
Chand Saudagar had seven sons—seven lights, seven supports of his home. Manasa turned her attention toward them. In the old tale, when divine pride could not bend the man, it struck at his heart.

Chapter 4: Seven Blows





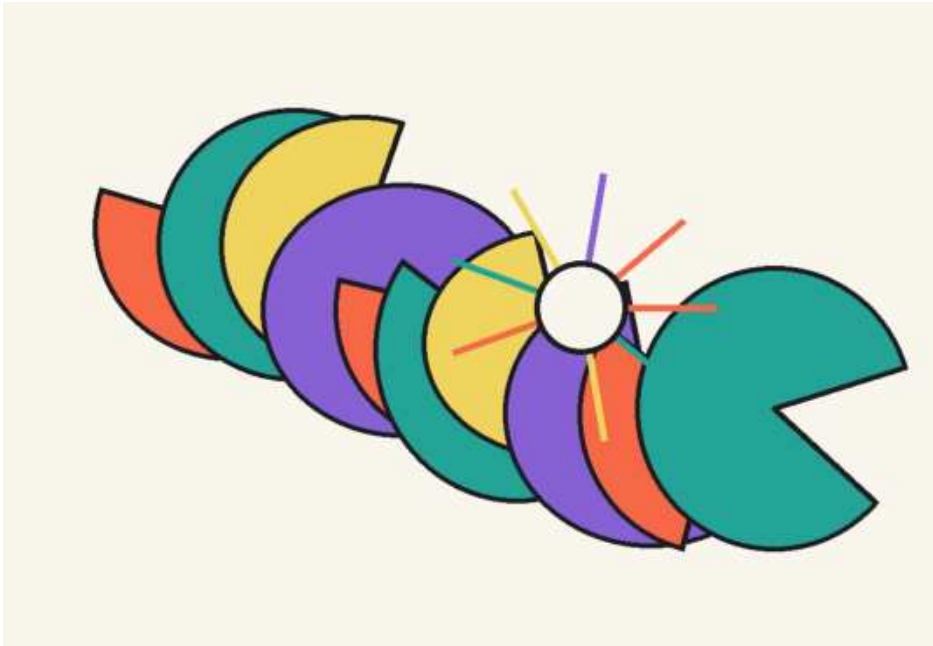


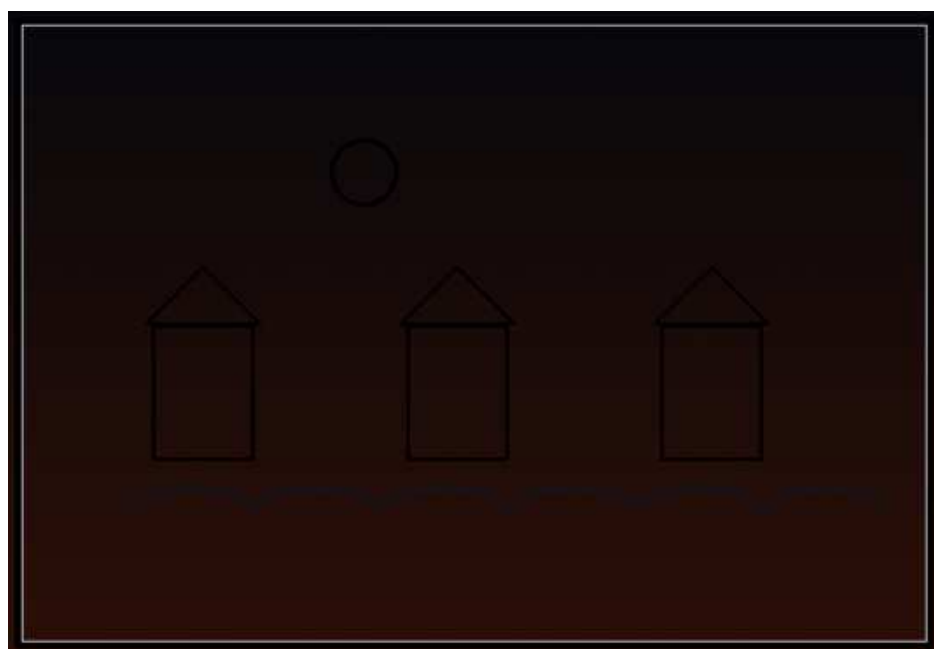
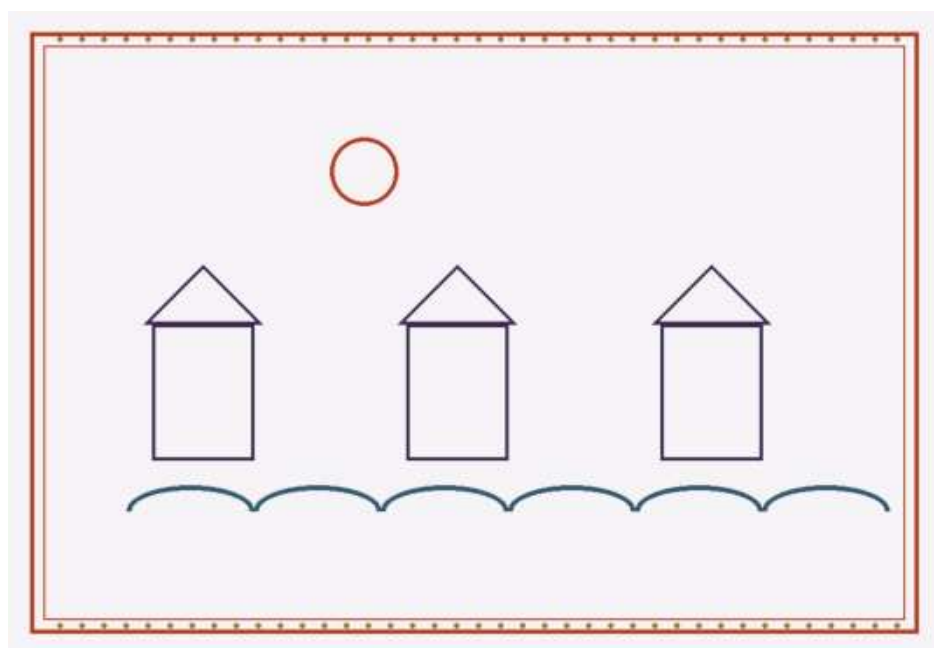


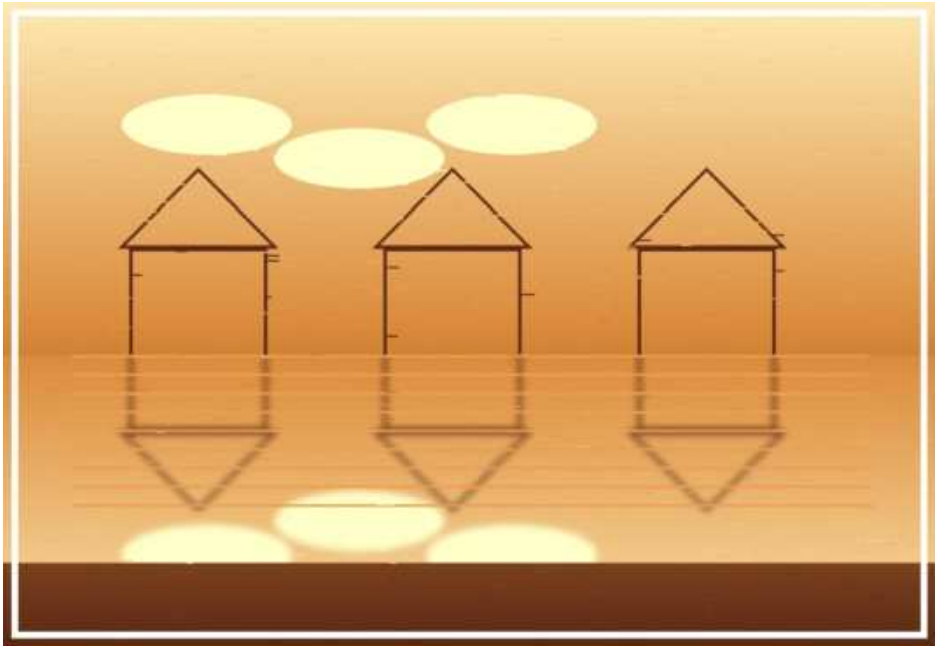
Picture 7

Manasa sent her snakes against all seven sons. One after another they died from the venomous bites—seven sons, seven bodies. In a short time, the happiest courtyard in Champanagar became a place of mourning.

The city trembled. People whispered, 'It is the anger of the snake goddess... Merchant, worship her...' But even after seven terrible blows, Chand Saudagar did not give in. His grief was a mountain, but his loyalty stood higher still.







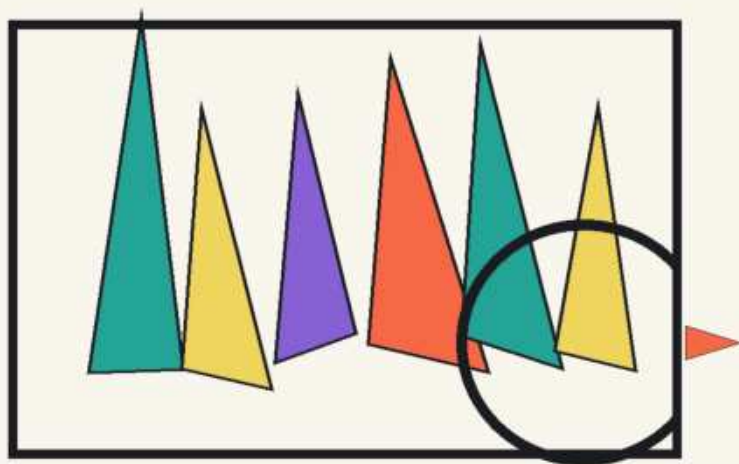
Picture 8

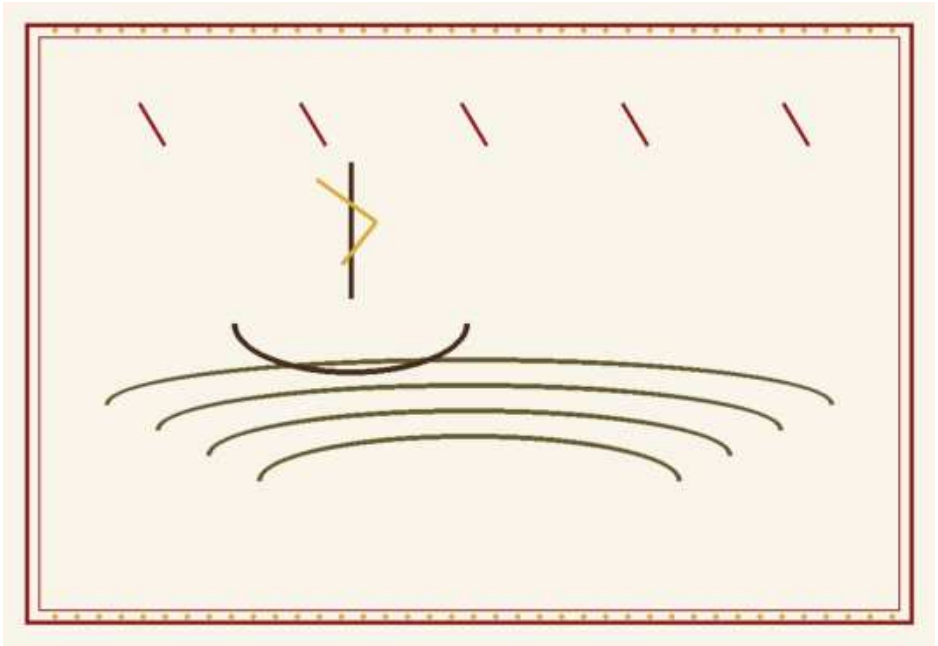
'A goddess who can take the lives of my seven innocent sons is not asking for worship—she is asking for fear. And what value is a head that bows because it is afraid?' That one sentence contains Chand Saudagar's whole character. He was stubborn and could seem hard, but a principle burned inside him.

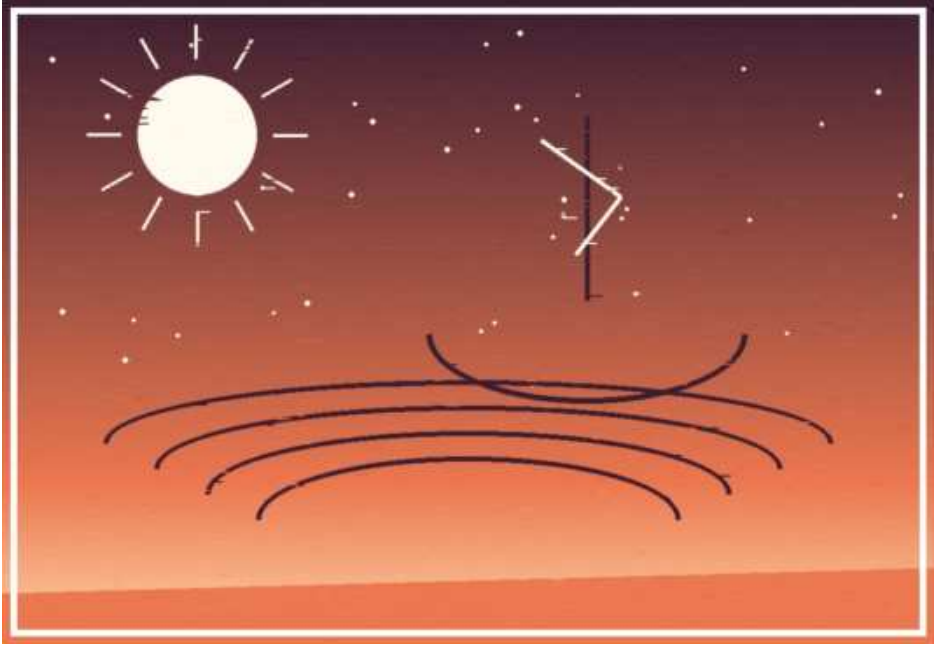
Manasa's quiver was not empty yet. The sons were gone. Now came the turn of wealth—and Chand Saudagar's wealth floated upon the sea.

Chapter 5: The Sunken Ships





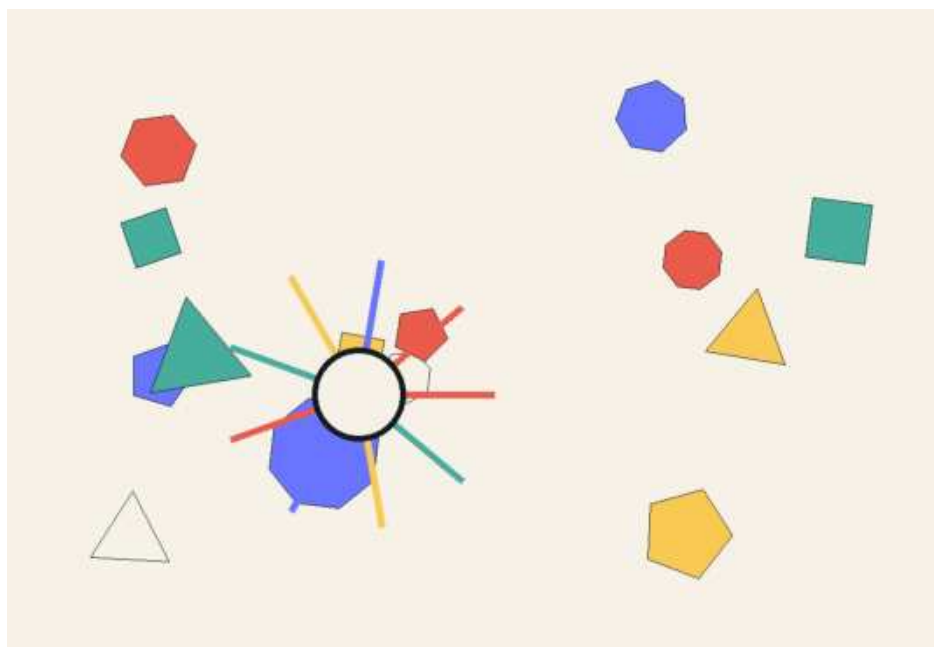


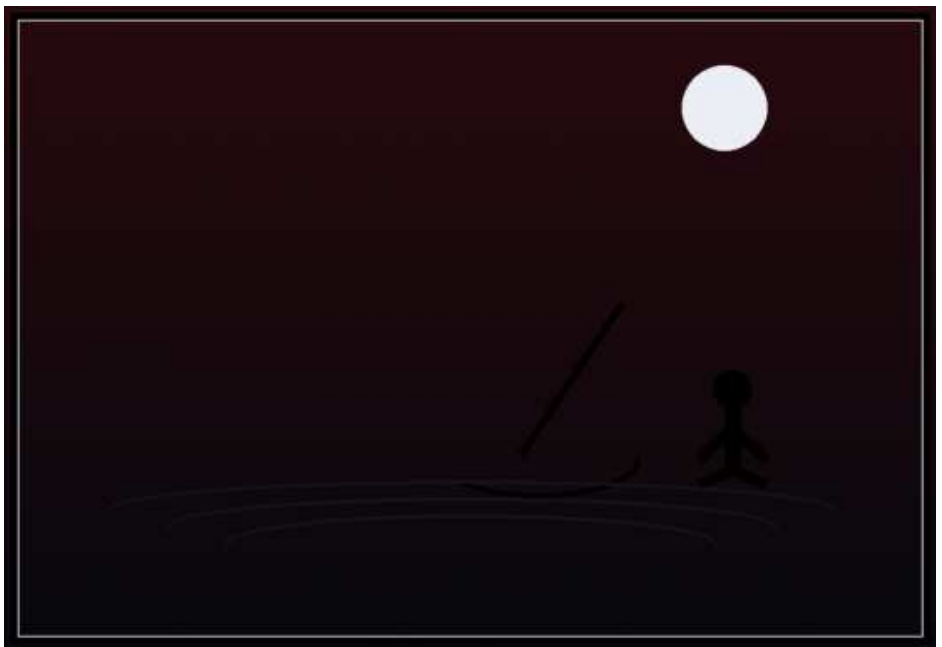
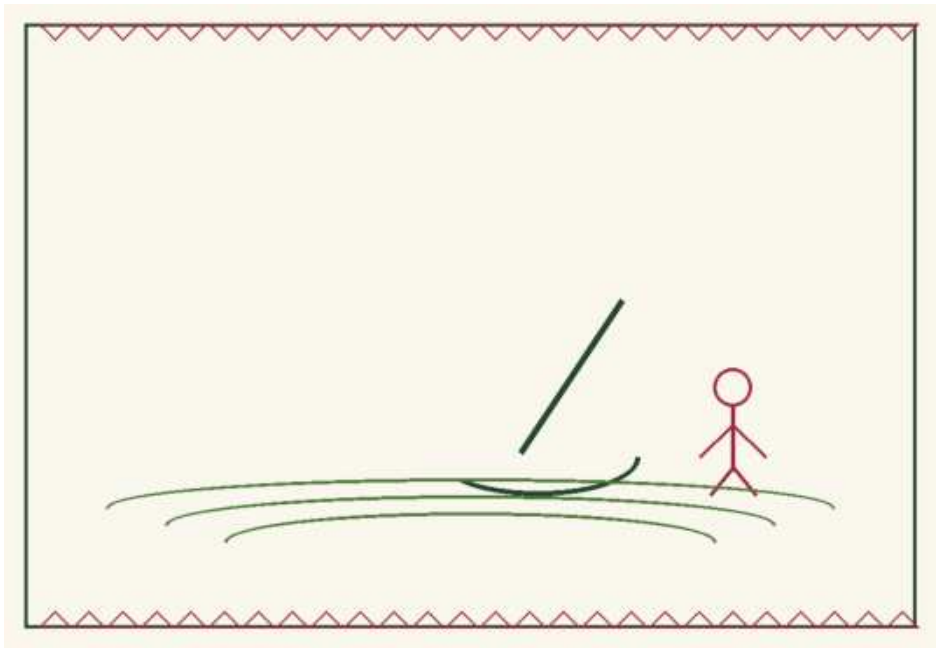


Picture 9

Once the merchant was returning by ship from a distant land after successful trade. His ships were full of goods. In the middle of the river route, Manasa caused the ships to sink.

A storm rose, the waves became like hills, and all fourteen ships disappeared one by one into the water. Chand Saudagar somehow reached the shore alive—but he reached it as a poor man.







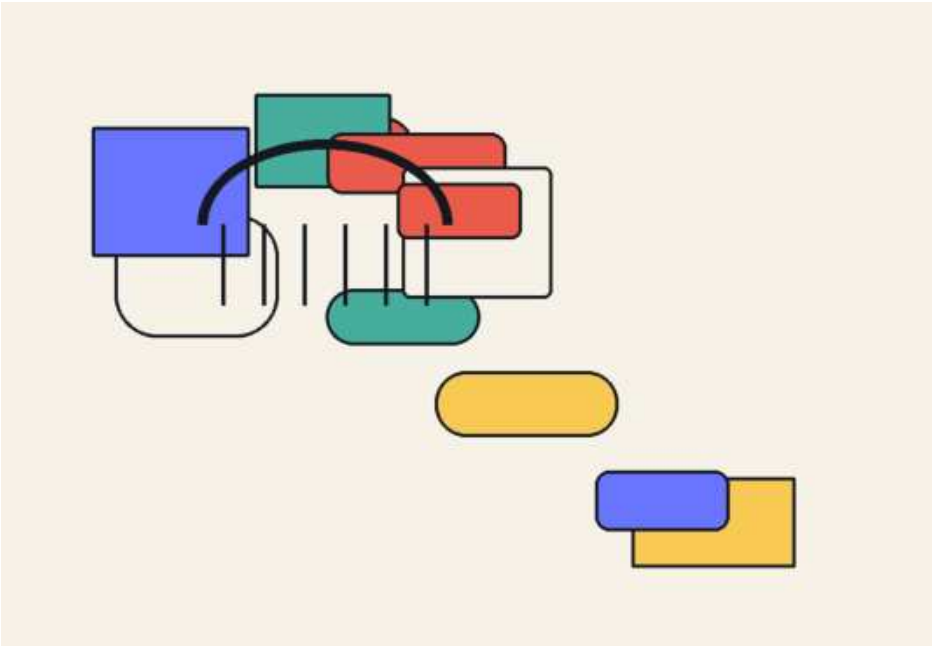
Picture 10

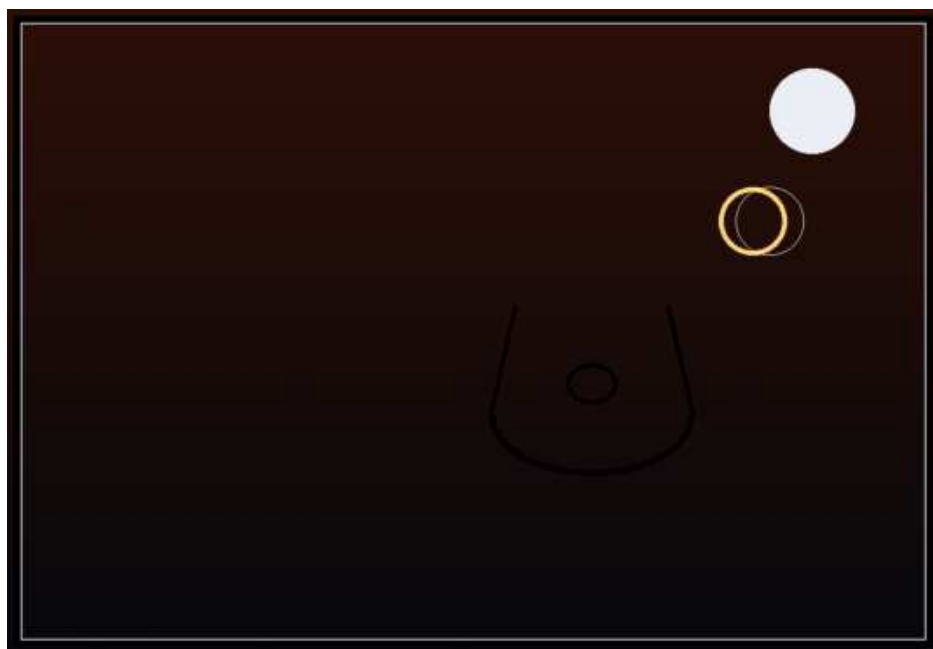
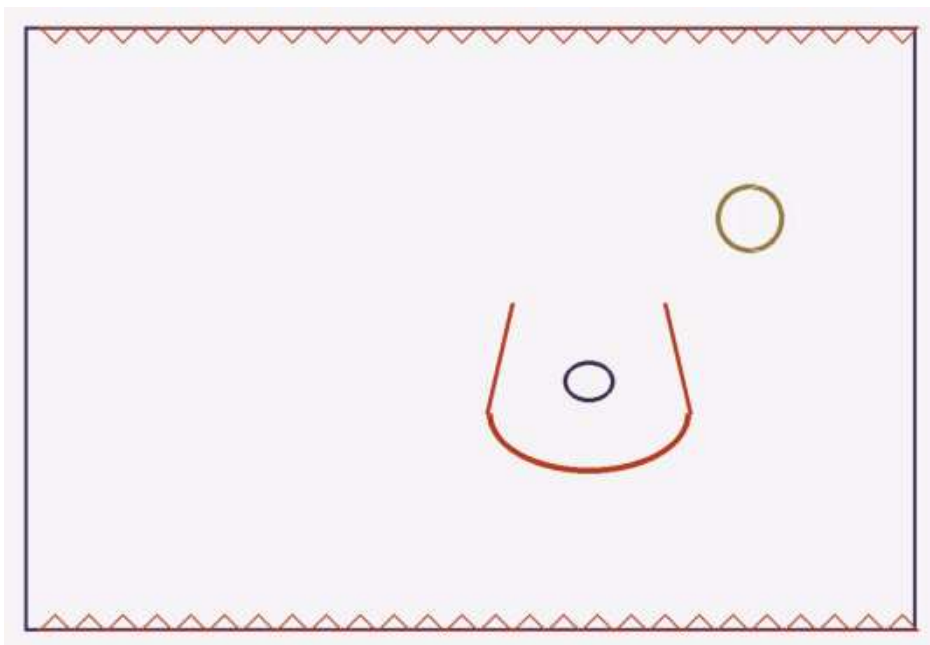
The man who had been the richest in the city now stood empty-handed. Seven sons were gone, his wealth was gone, and his ships were gone. From afar, Manasa watched. Surely now he would bow.

But even a broken Chand Saudagar would not bow. Then, in that darkest hour, fate lit one small lamp. A son was born to him. He was named Lakhindar—a spark in a heap of ashes, and there is no hope greater than a spark when everything else seems dark.

Chapter 6: Lakhindar and Bihula









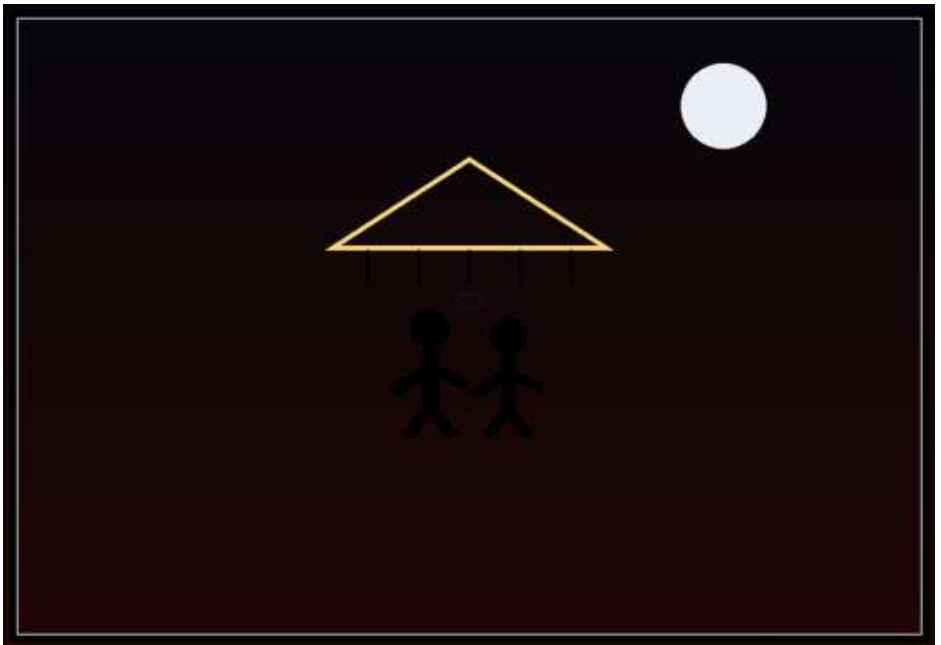
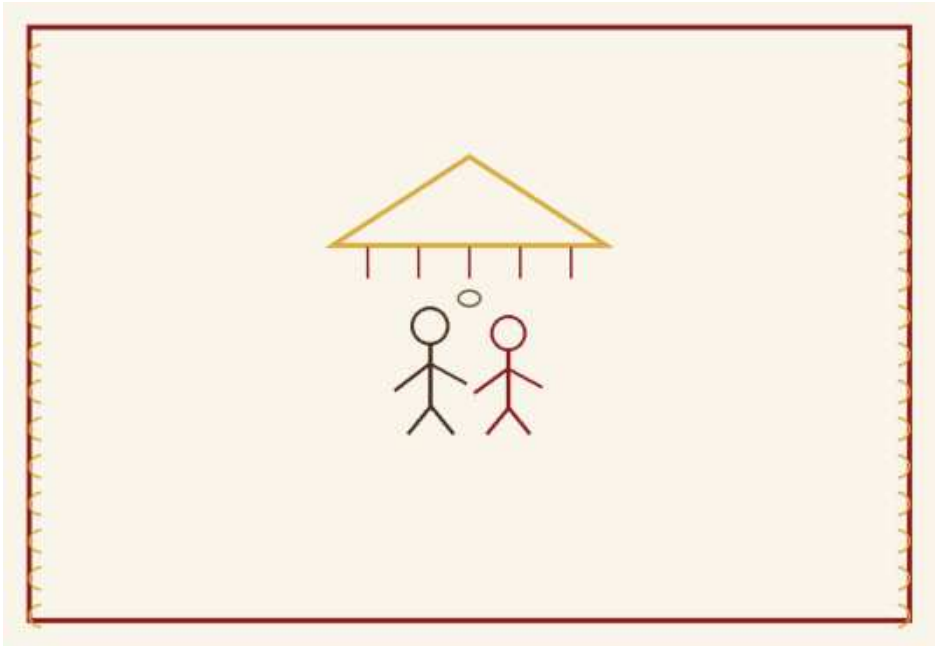
Picture 11

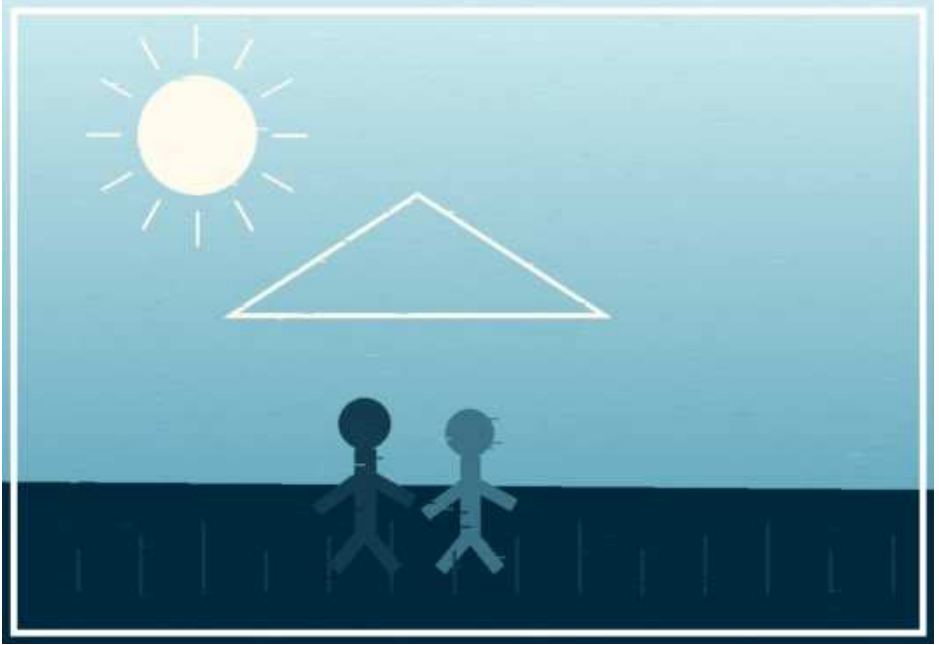
Lakhindar grew into a handsome and gentle young man, the answer to the loss of his seven brothers. But Chand Saudagar lived with fear now. Fear had become his shadow. Manasa's anger was still alive, and Lakhindar seemed to be its final target.

So a plan was made: Lakhindar would marry a girl whose destiny itself could be his shield. A search began, and Bihula was found—a girl believed to possess unbroken good fortune in marriage, with no sign of widowhood in her horoscope. If her married life was destined to remain

whole, how could her husband die? That was Chand Saudagar's hope.







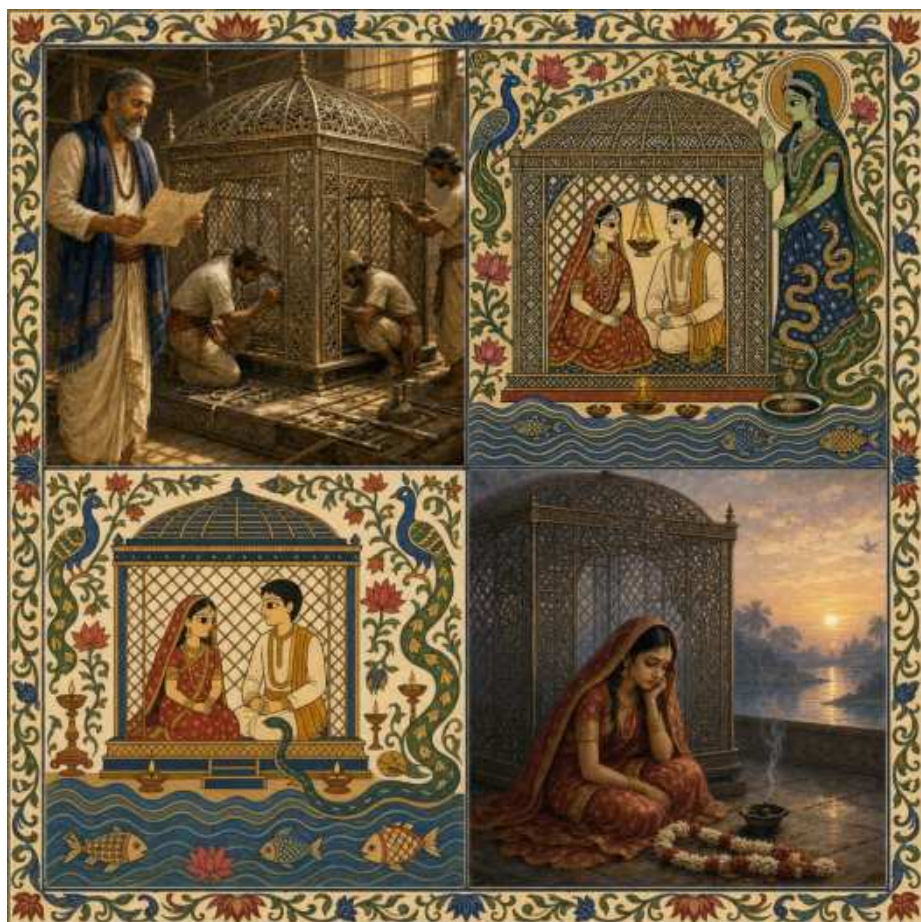
Picture 12

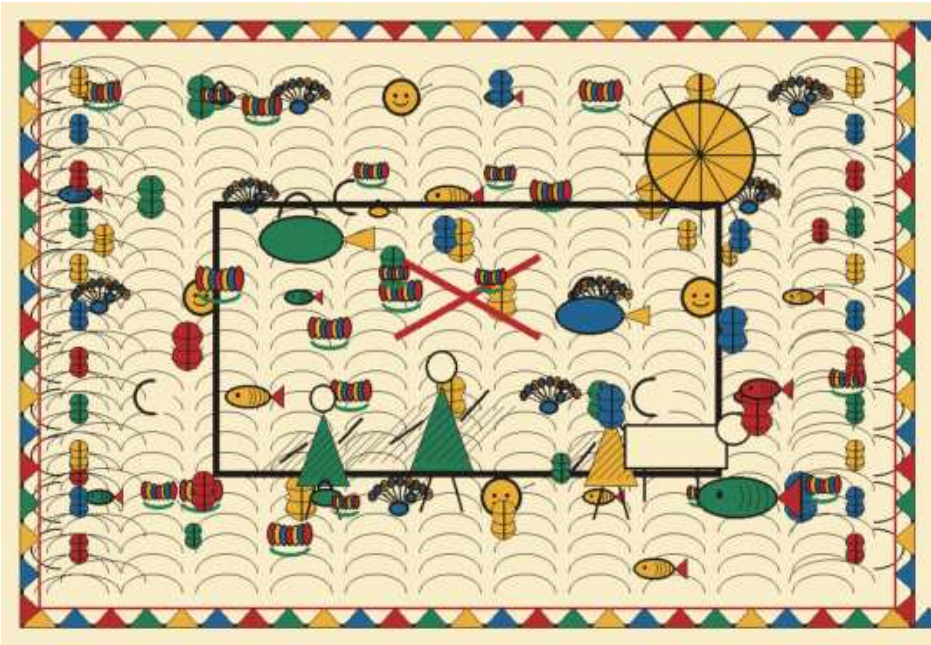
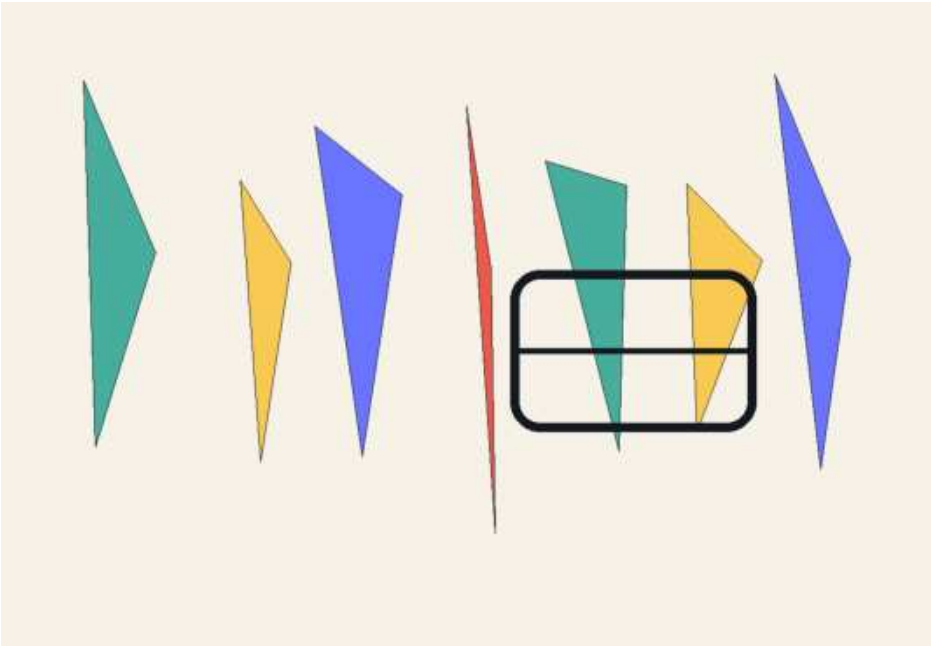
The wedding was celebrated as grandly as a wounded household could manage. Bihula became the daughter-in-law of Champanagar, and from the moment she arrived she understood that she was not entering an ordinary marriage. She was stepping onto the front line of an old conflict.

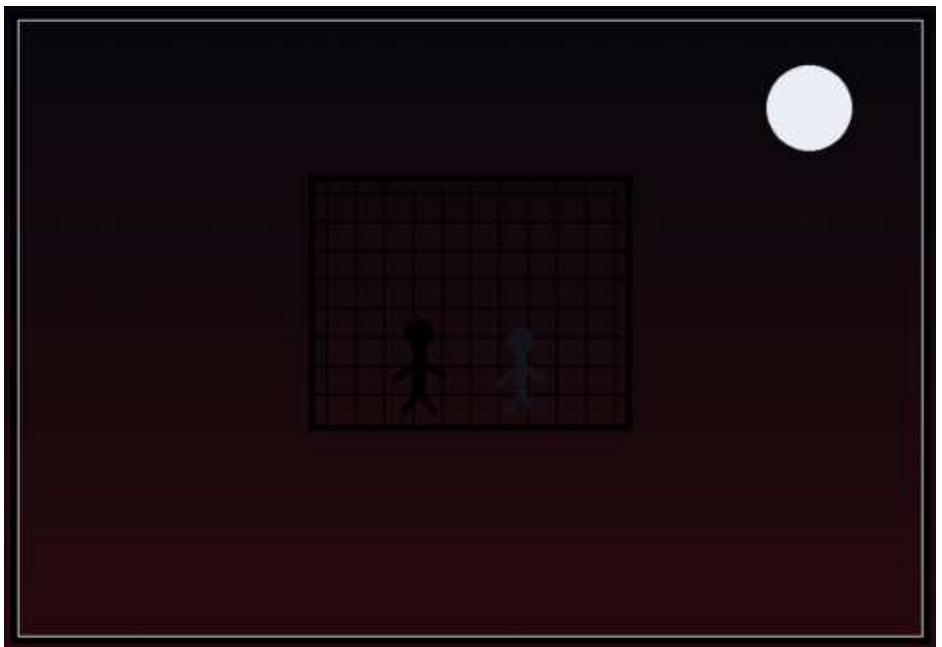
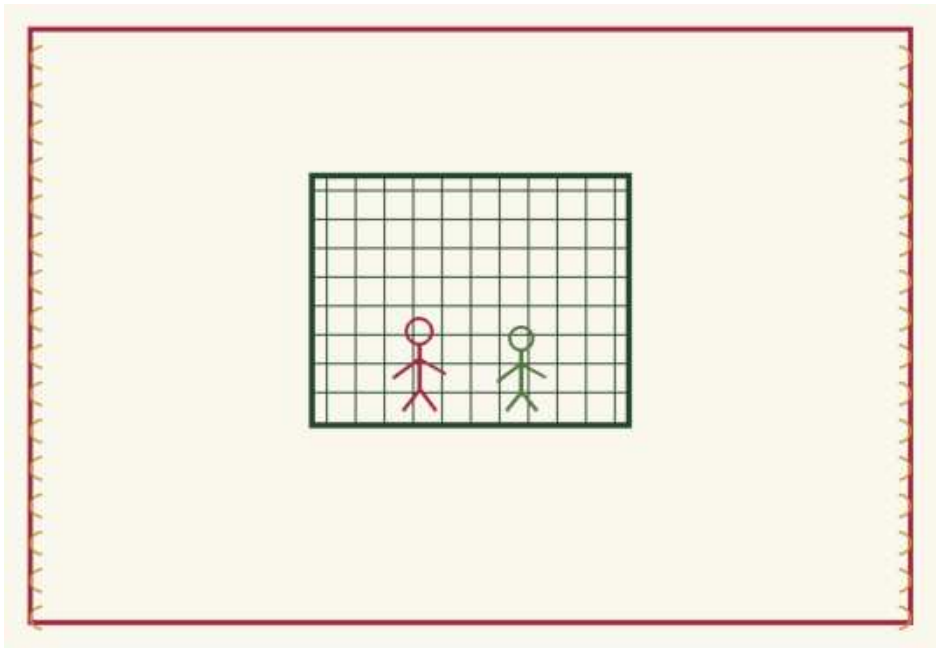
What would Manasa do now? the city wondered. Surely even poison would fail before Bihula's unbroken good fortune. But a goddess's anger did not follow human calculations. Manasa appeared to Chand Saudagar in a

dream and spoke one sentence, cold as ice: 'I will bite
your son in the bridal chamber.'

Chapter 7: The Mesh Bridal Chamber







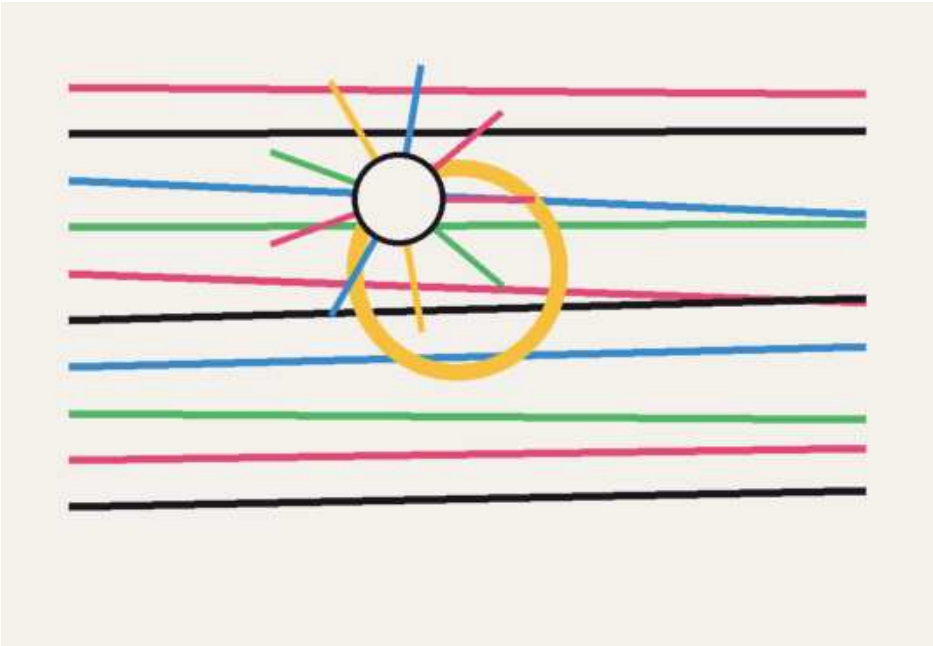


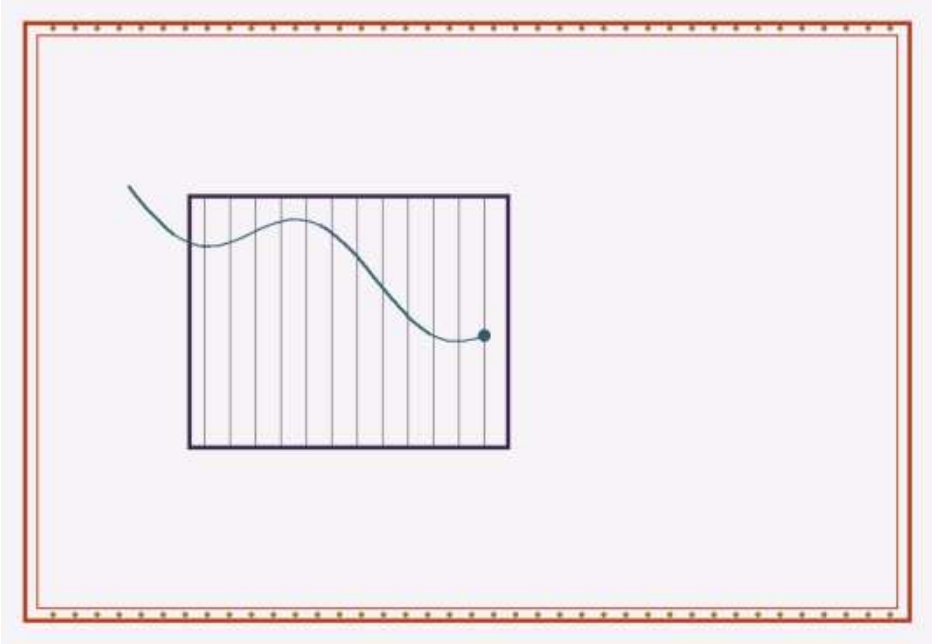
Picture 13

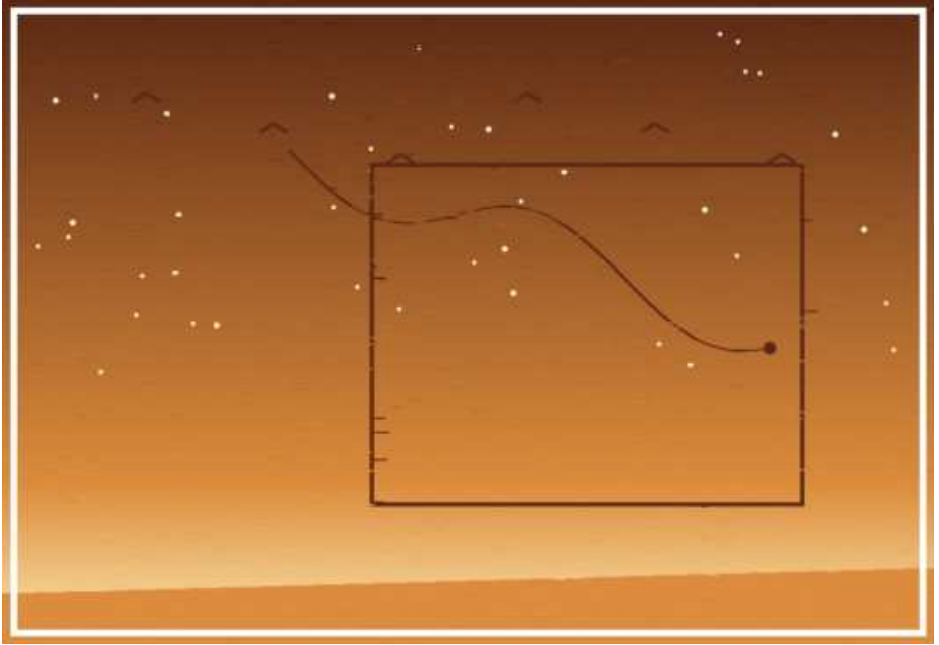
The warning was clear. The attack would come in the bridal chamber, on the first wedding night, in the place where no ordinary guard could stand. But Chand Saudagar was not a man who surrendered easily. He ordered an extraordinary bridal chamber to be built, protected with fine mesh.

The mesh was so fine that only air seemed able to pass through it. There were sheets of metal and layer upon layer of tiny openings, without a visible hole or crack. The

craftsmen said, 'Merchant, not even poison could enter this room!'







Picture 14

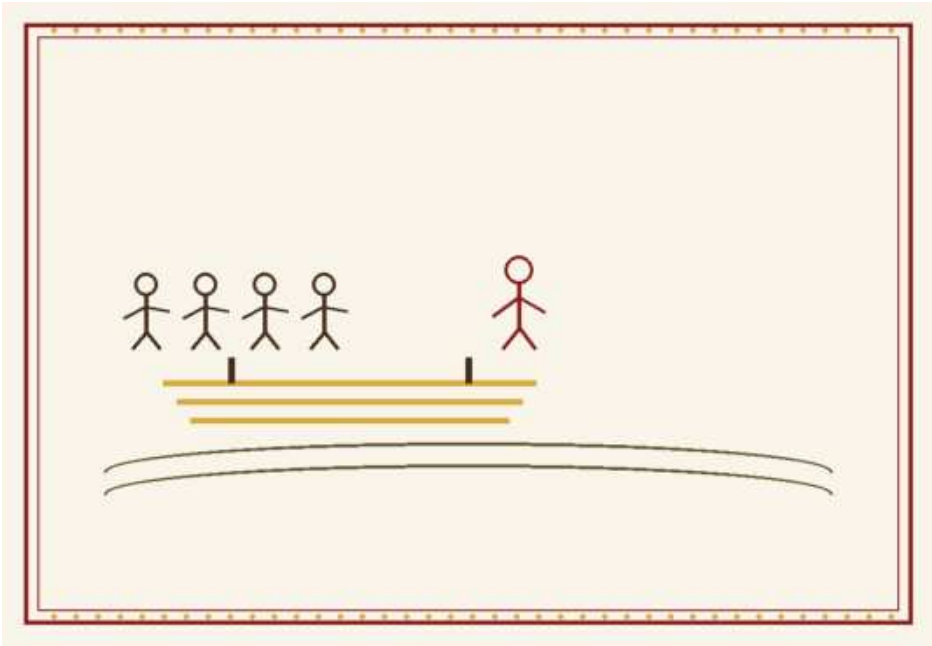
On the wedding night, Lakhindar and Bihula entered the protected room. Guards stood outside, lamps burned within, and the fine mesh surrounded them on every side. Chand Saudagar remained awake all night. What could Manasa do now?

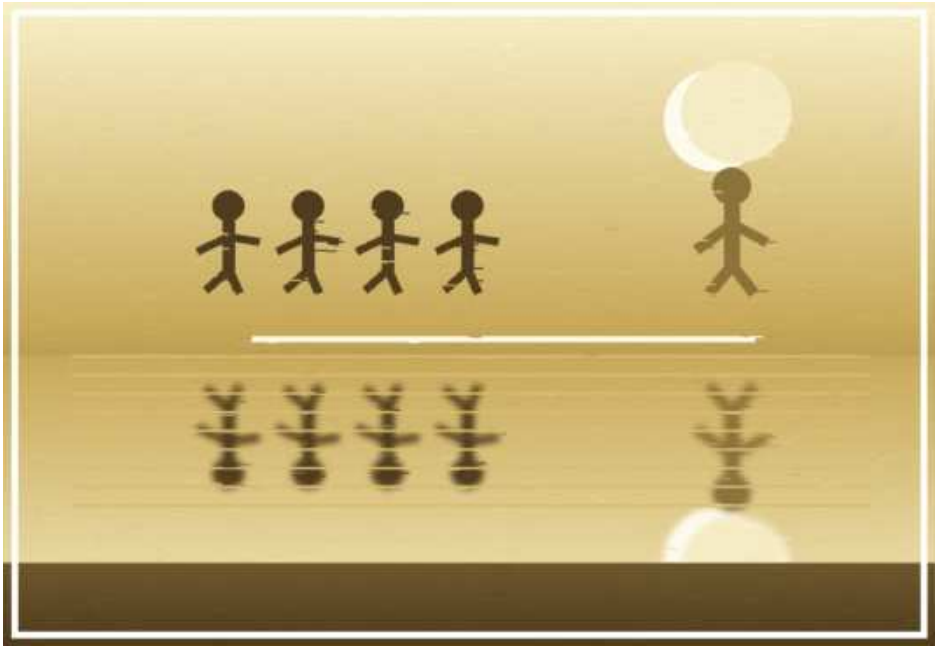
But Manasa was a goddess. In the tale she made herself finer than the finest thread, so tiny that the weave of the mesh became a road for her. She entered and sent the fatal snakebite. Lakhindar died on his wedding night. Bihula's promise of unbroken married fortune seemed

shattered in the very bridal chamber. Fate could hardly have played a crueller trick.

Chapter 8: The Raft of Banana Stems



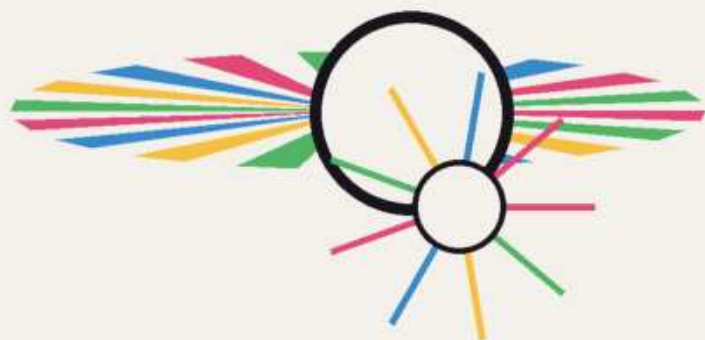


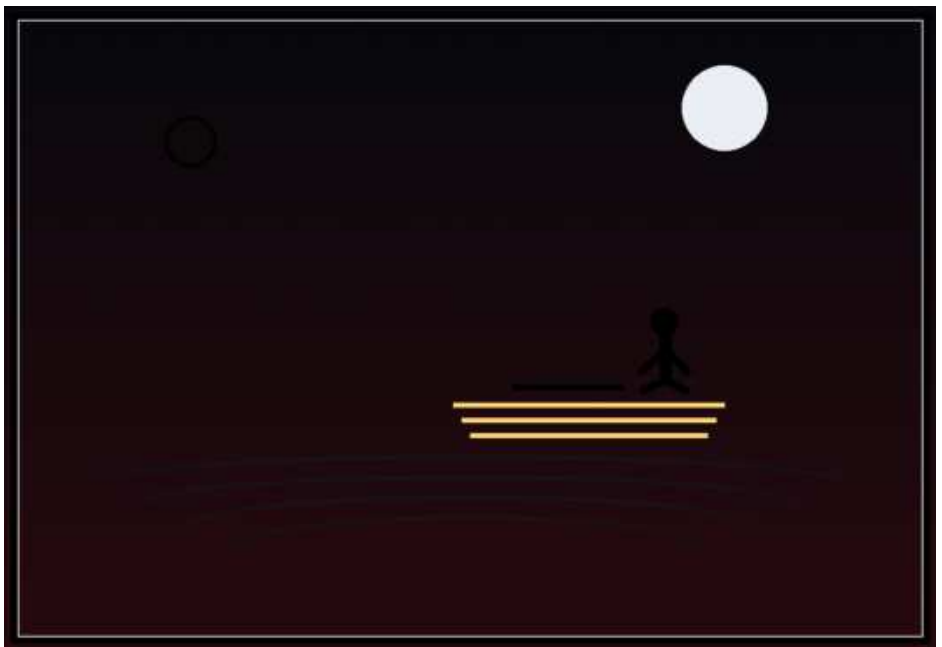
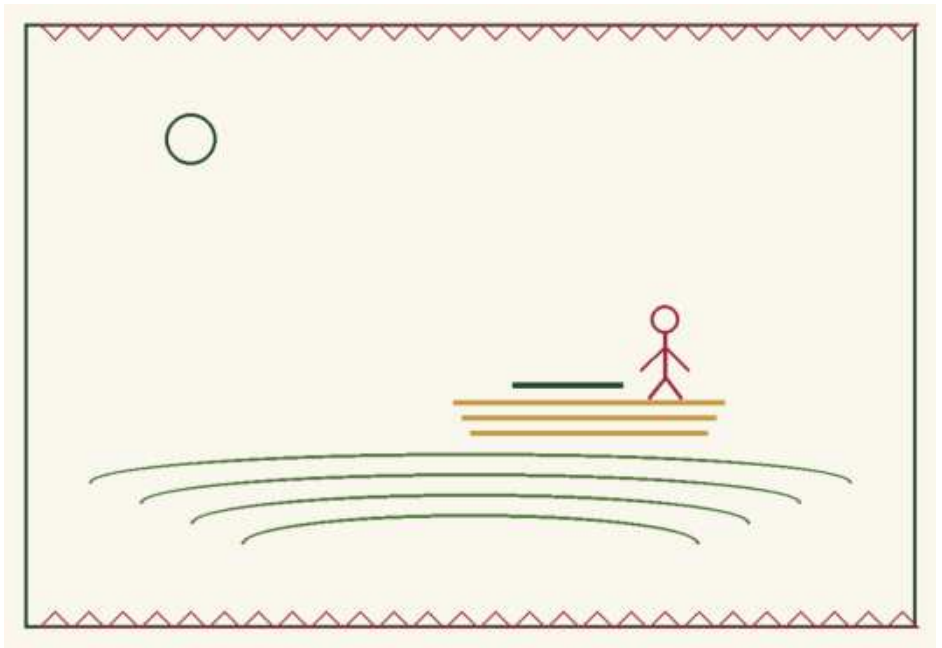


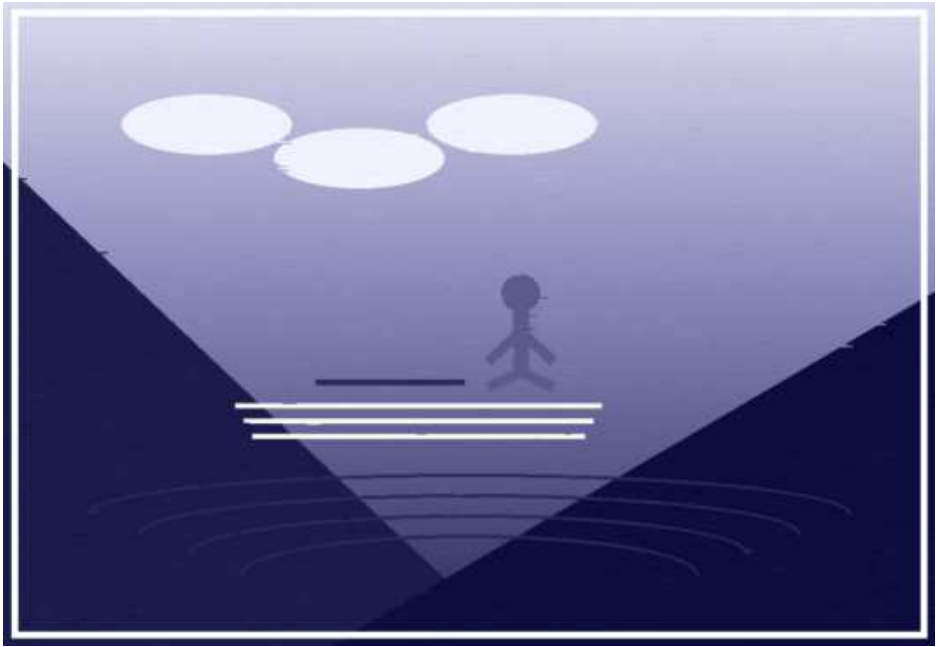
Picture 15

A traditional belief in Mithila says that a person who dies from snakebite should not be cremated at once. Instead, the body may be placed on a raft of banana stems and set afloat, in the hope that somewhere a healer with special knowledge might revive the person.

Lakhindar's body was placed on such a raft. The people of Champanagar stood weeping at the Ganga ghat. The raft was lowered into the water, and Lakhindar began to drift down the river.







Picture 16

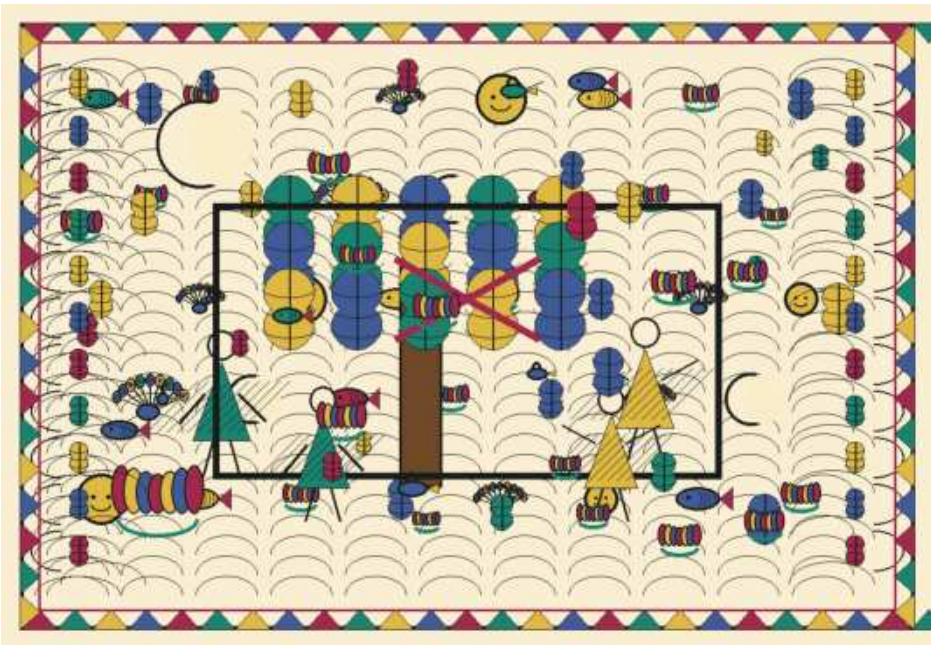
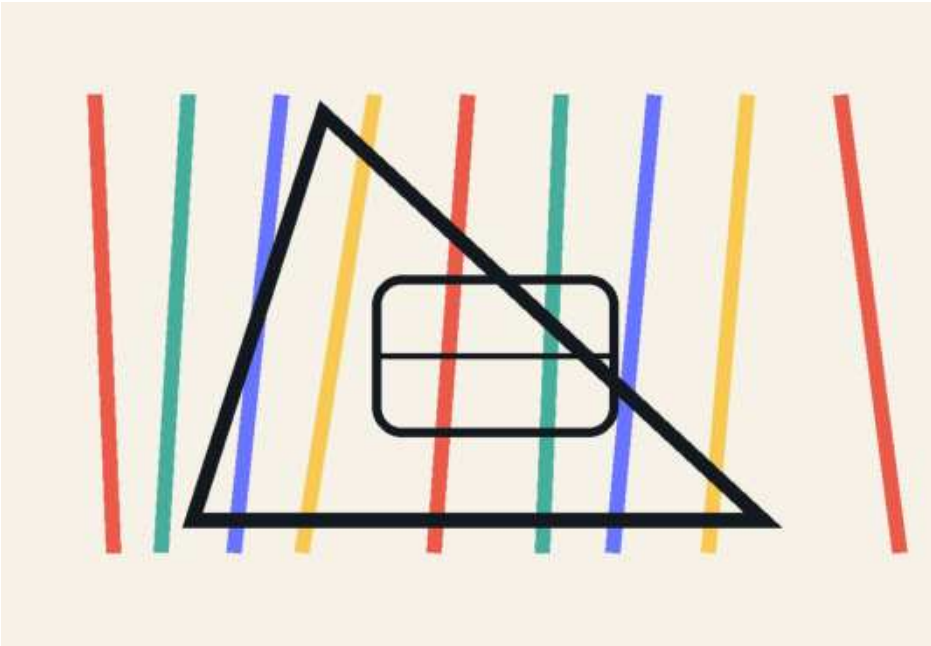
But then everyone saw Bihula. As the raft moved into the current, the young bride gathered her wet sari around her and sat down on the same raft beside her husband's body. 'Wherever my husband goes, I will go. My married fortune is meant to remain whole. No river current will break it in two.'

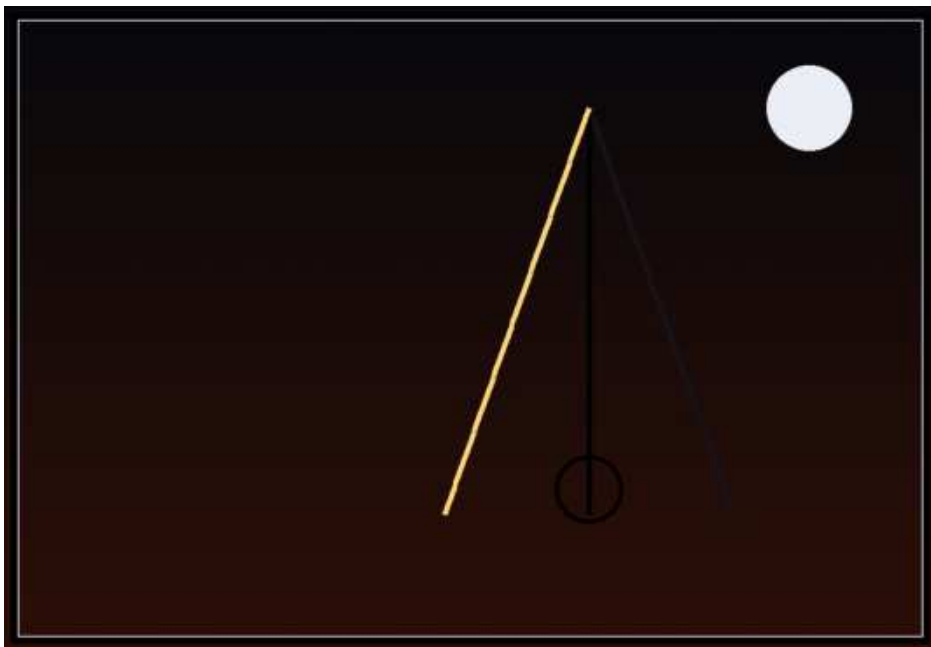
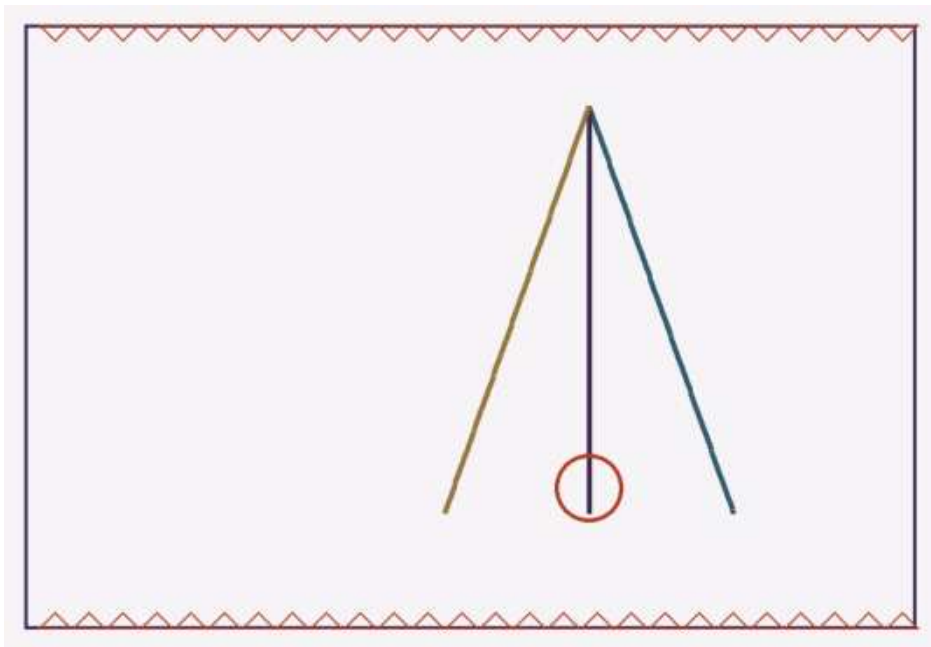
People shouted, pleaded, and tried to stop her. They warned her of the current, snakes, forests, and unknown roads. But Bihula would not get off. The raft floated away carrying a dead bridegroom, a living bride, and her

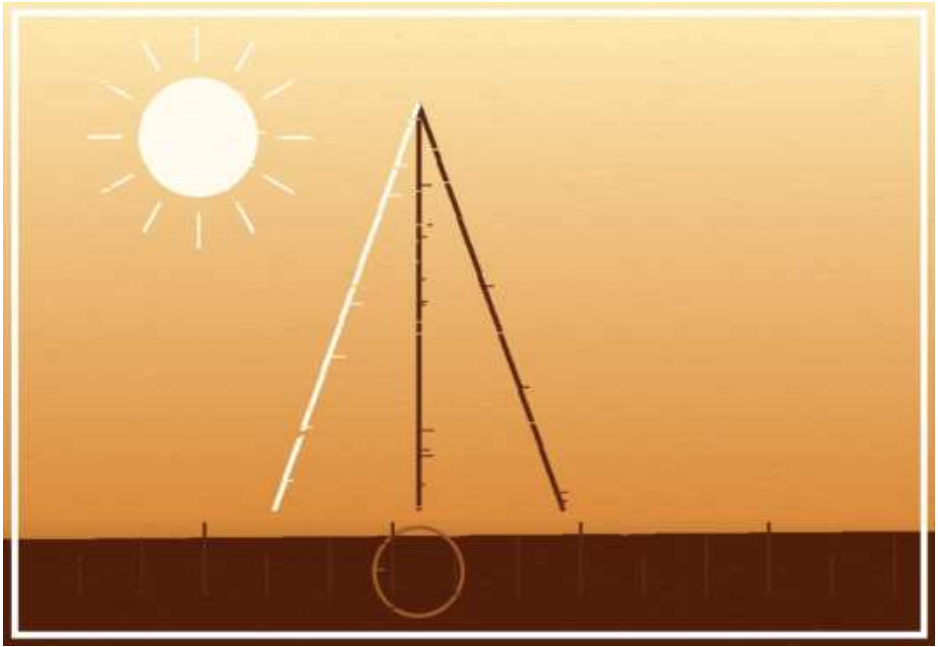
unbreakable determination into the endless river. From this moment, the tale stops being only a song of grief and becomes a journey.

Chapter 9: The Washerwoman at Triveni





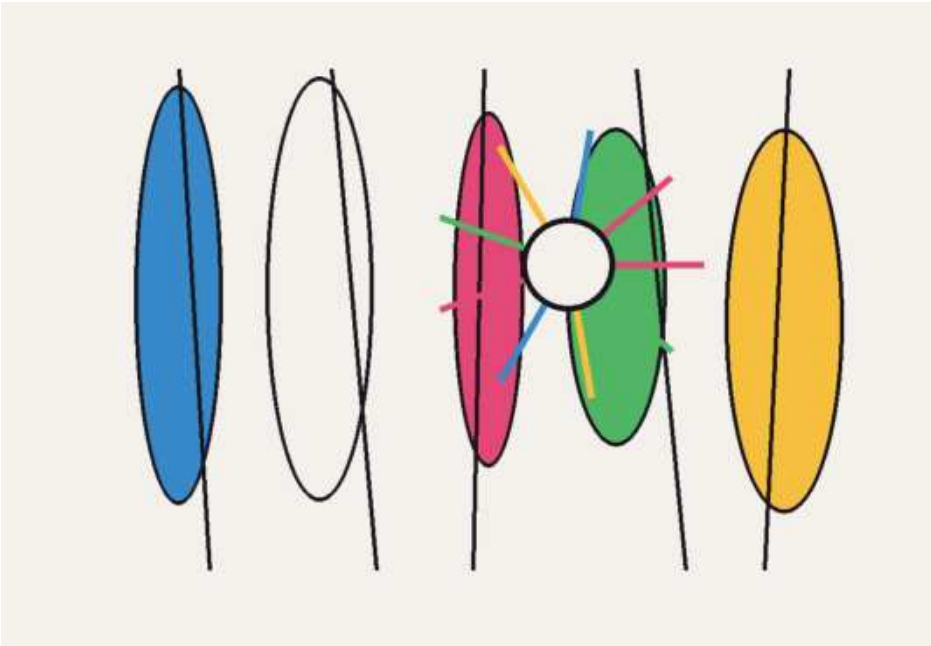


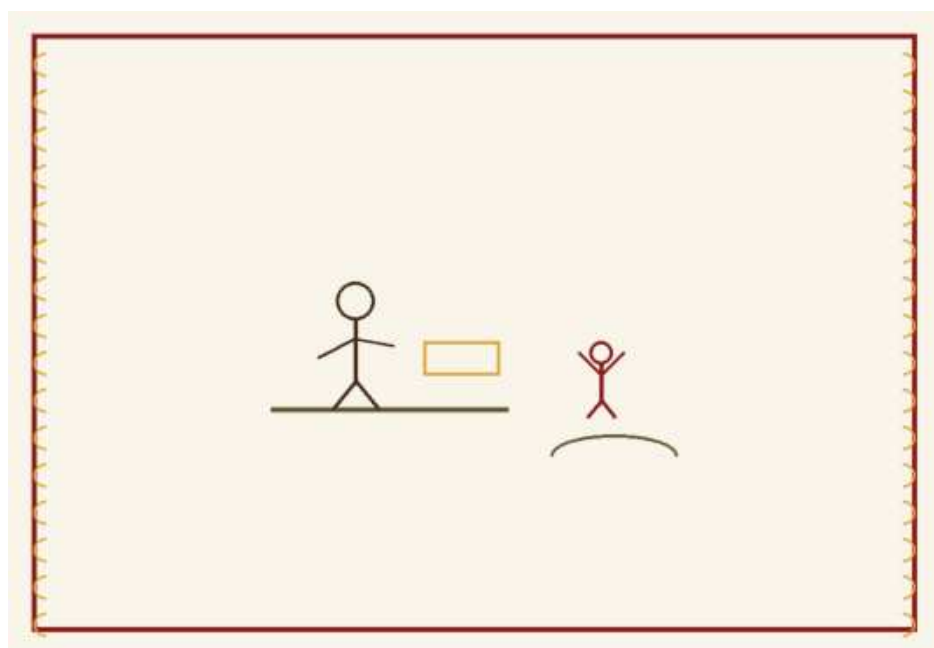


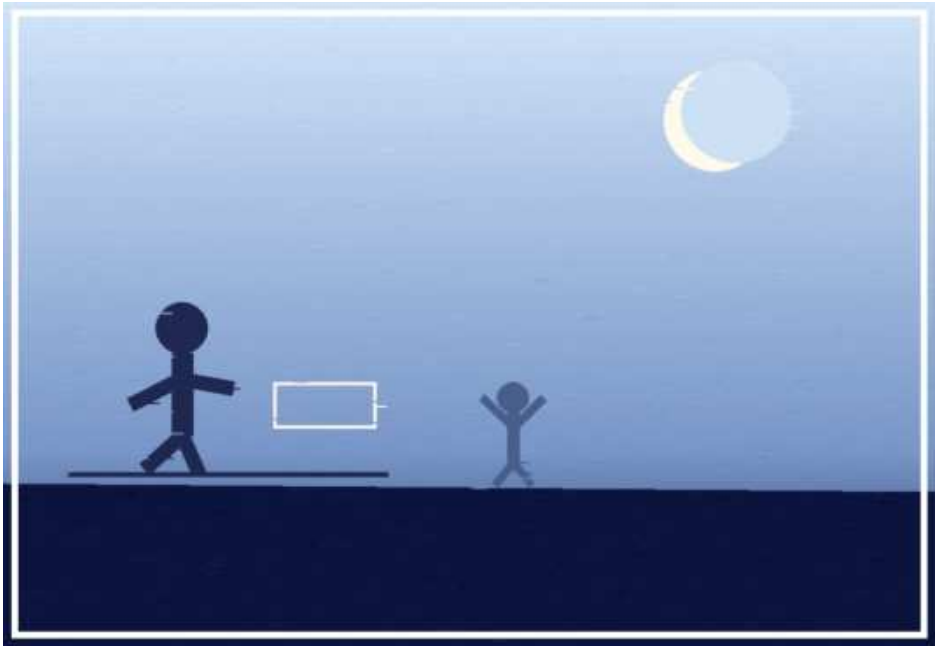
Picture 17

The current carried the raft onward—day, night, and another day. One ghat after another disappeared behind them until at last the raft reached Triveni, the sacred meeting place of three streams.

There a washerwoman was working with clothes. Her little son was with her, crying again and again and disturbing her work. Then Bihula saw something that took her breath away: in the old folk tale, the tired washerwoman struck the child dead, covered the body with cloth, and calmly returned to her work.







Picture 18

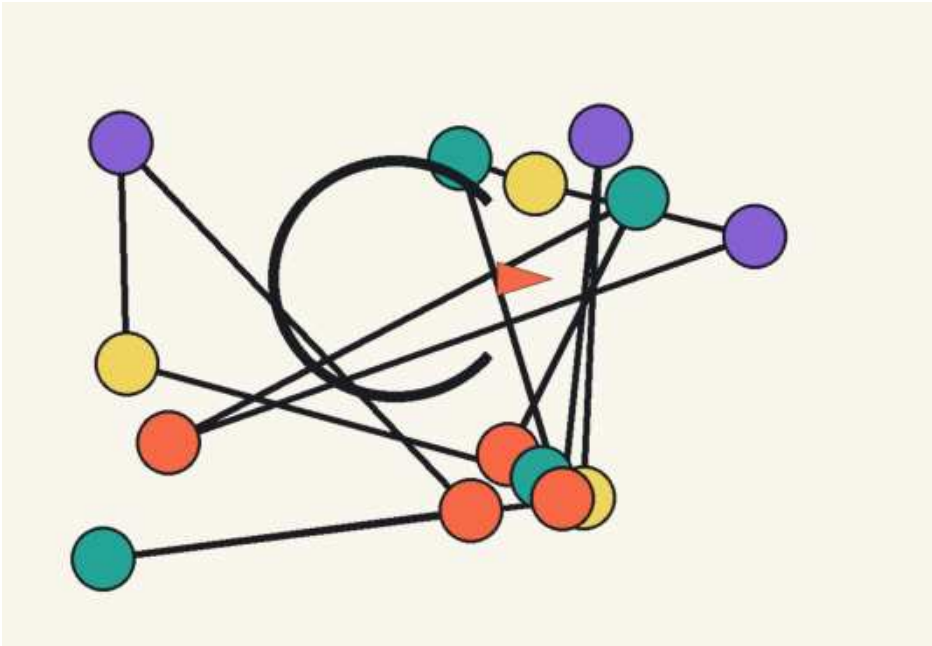
Bihula was horrified. But the true wonder came in the evening. When the washerwoman finished her work, she went to the covered child, whispered something, and the boy came back to life as if waking from sleep. Then mother and son took each other's hands and started home.

Bihula ran after her. 'Wait! What did I just see? You treated death as if it were only a moment's sleep...' The washerwoman smiled and revealed the first light in Bihula's dark journey: 'This is possible by the grace of

Goddess Manasa. The thread of life and death is in her hands.' Then Bihula understood. The road led to Manasa. The goddess who had taken life might also be the one who could return it.

Chapter 10: Bihula's Penance







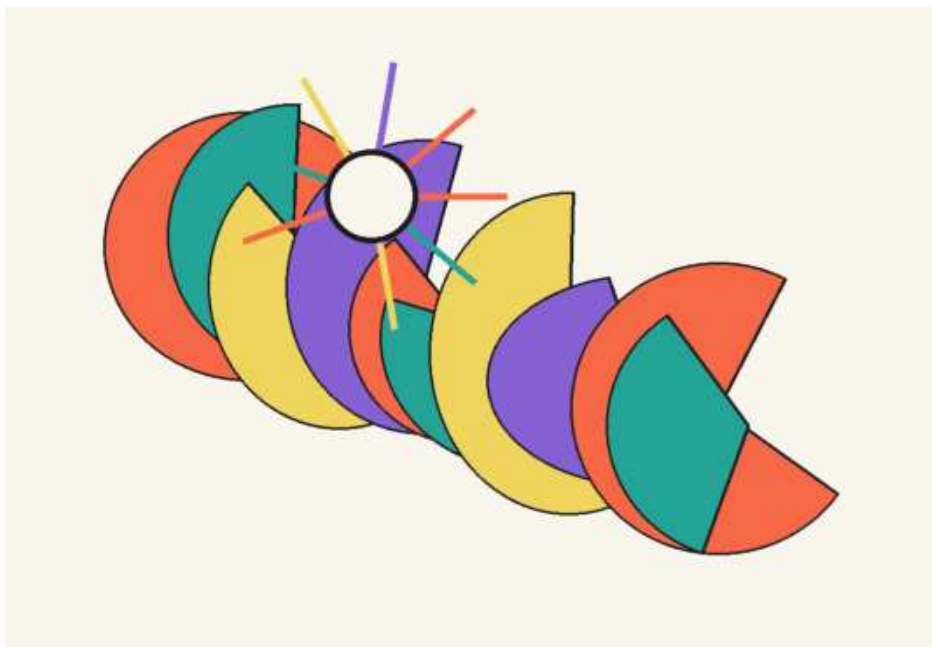


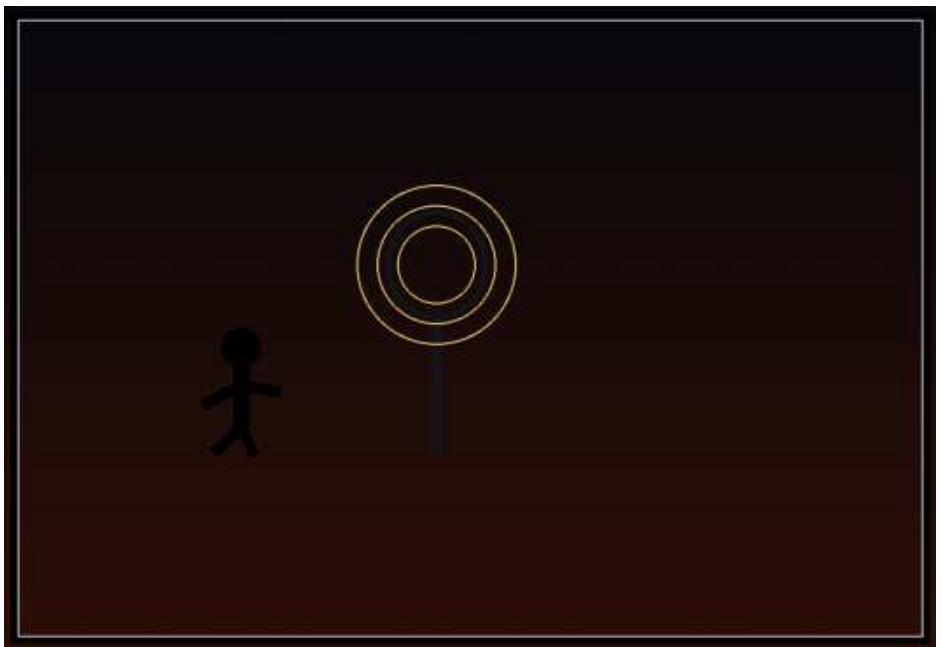
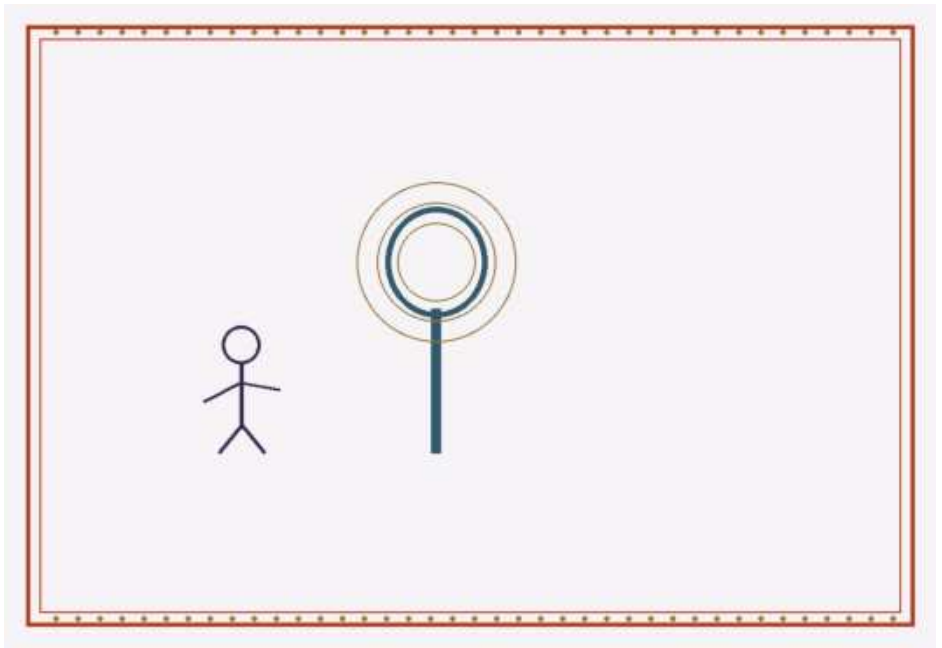
Picture 19

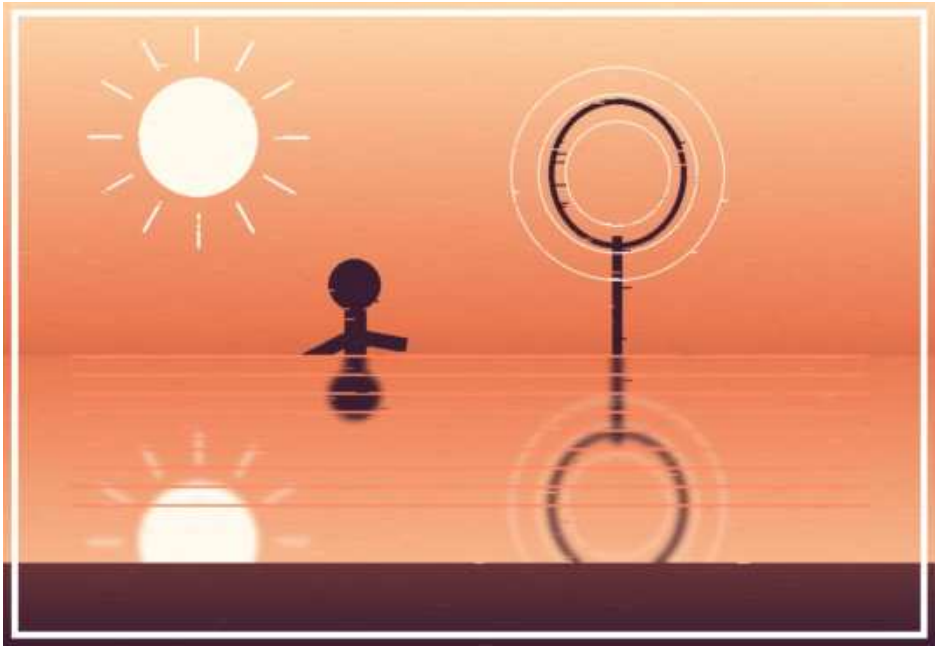
Bihula took that road. Penance, prayer, and endurance followed—she travelled by the path shown by the washerwoman until she reached Manasa, and there she offered a devotion so intense that even the world of the gods seemed to take notice.

There was pleading in Bihula's worship, but no helplessness; determination, but no disrespect. Before Manasa she offered her dance, her service, and her tears. And she also placed one question before the goddess: 'Your anger was against a man. Why should a new bride

bear the punishment? Mother, give me back my married life.'







Picture 20

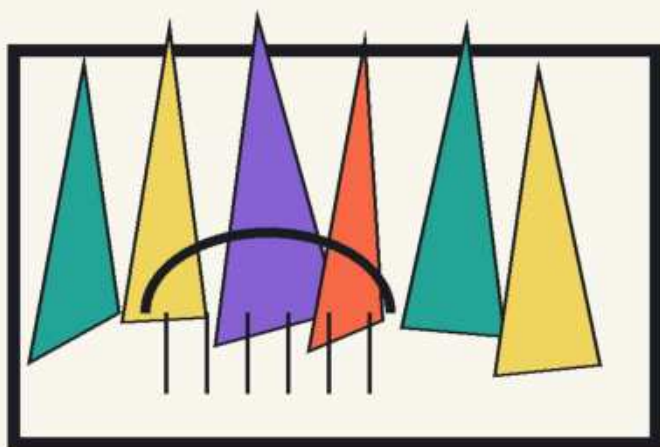
Manasa watched the girl who had travelled beside death all the way to her door, a girl who neither cursed nor fled but simply asked with the strength of her devotion. Something inside the goddess that had hardened from the hunger for recognition began to soften before Bihula's faith.

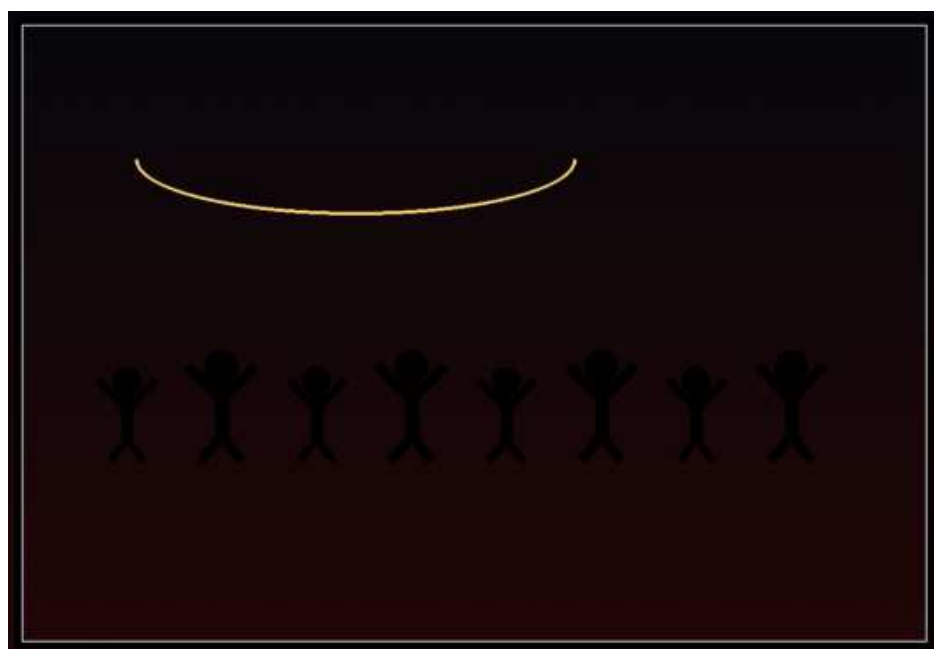
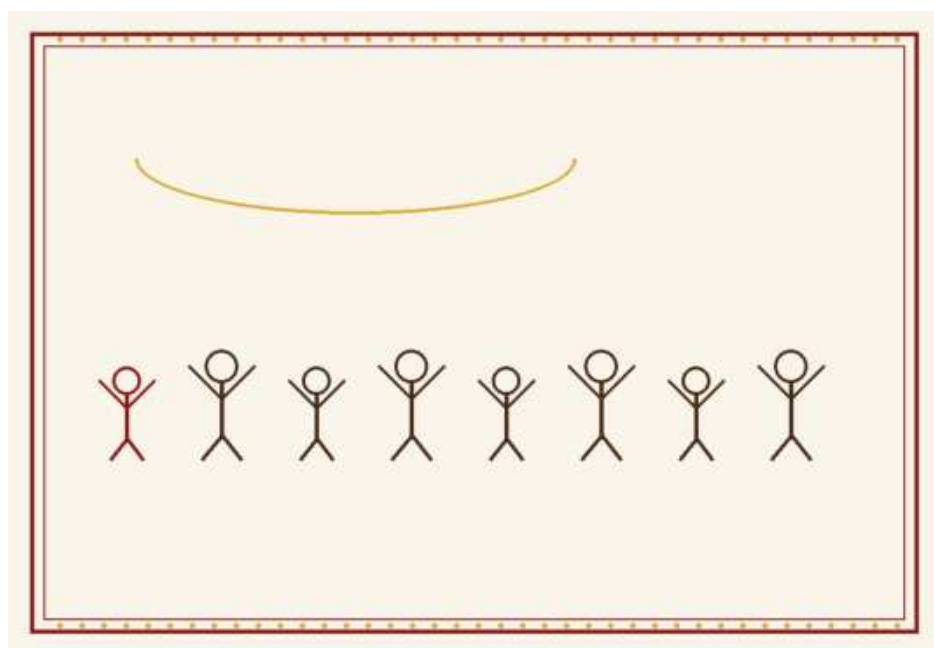
At last Manasa was pleased. 'Ask, Bihula.' And Bihula asked for more than her own husband. 'Give back Lakhindar's life, Mother—and the lives of all his seven elder brothers too. Let my father-in-law's courtyard be

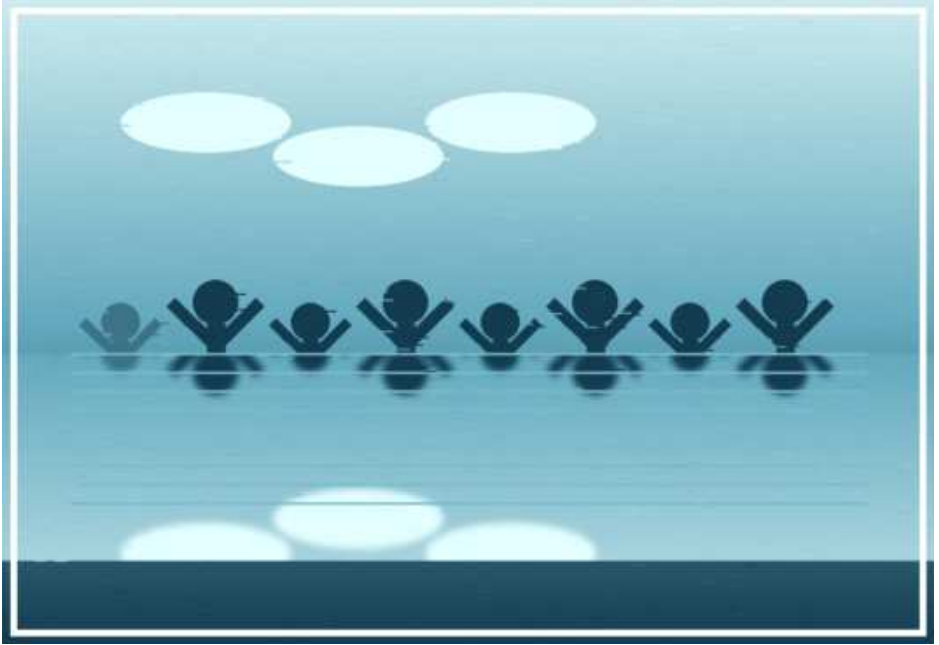
full again.' She had come for herself, but she asked for everyone. That is what makes Bihula who she is.

Chapter 11: The Gift of Life





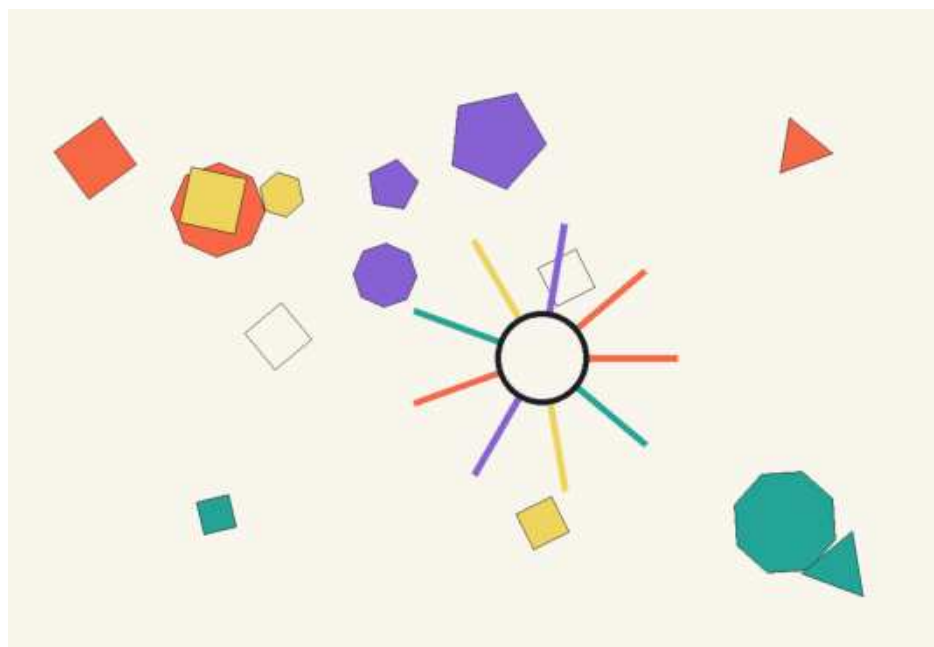


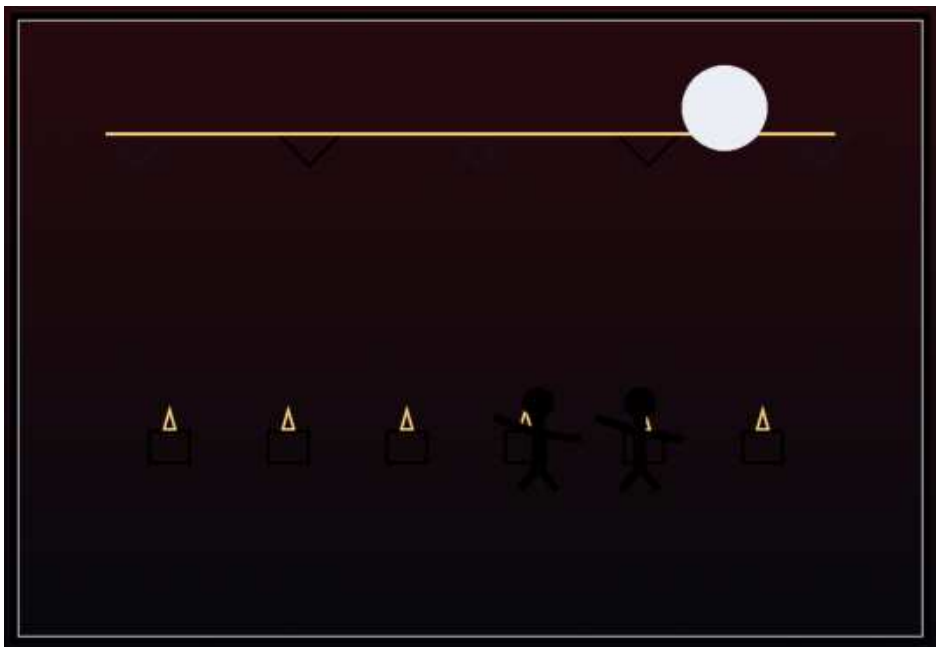
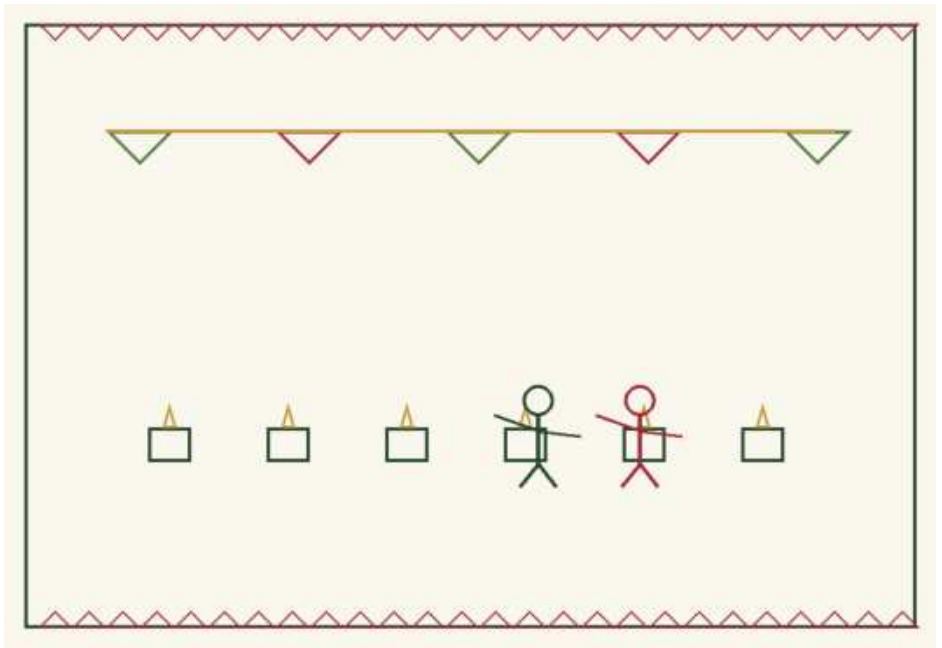


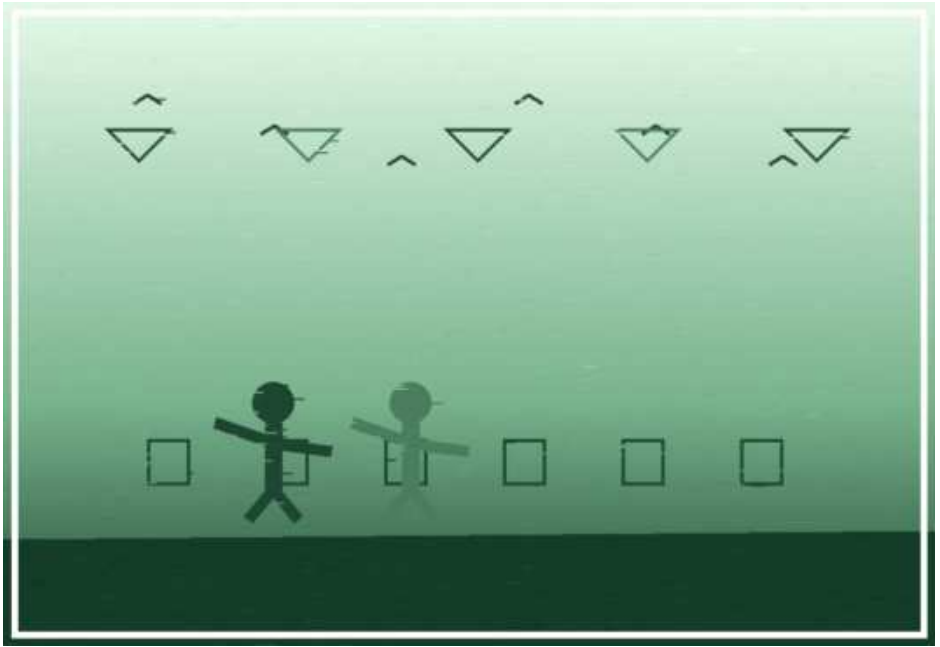
Picture 21

And Manasa restored them—Lakhindar and all seven of his elder brothers. Eight lives that had been taken by poison returned in a single moment to the world of the living.

When Lakhindar opened his eyes, Bihula was before him—the same bride who had guarded his body since the wedding night. The journey that began in sorrow upon the Ganga ended in celebration at Manasa's shrine.







Picture 22

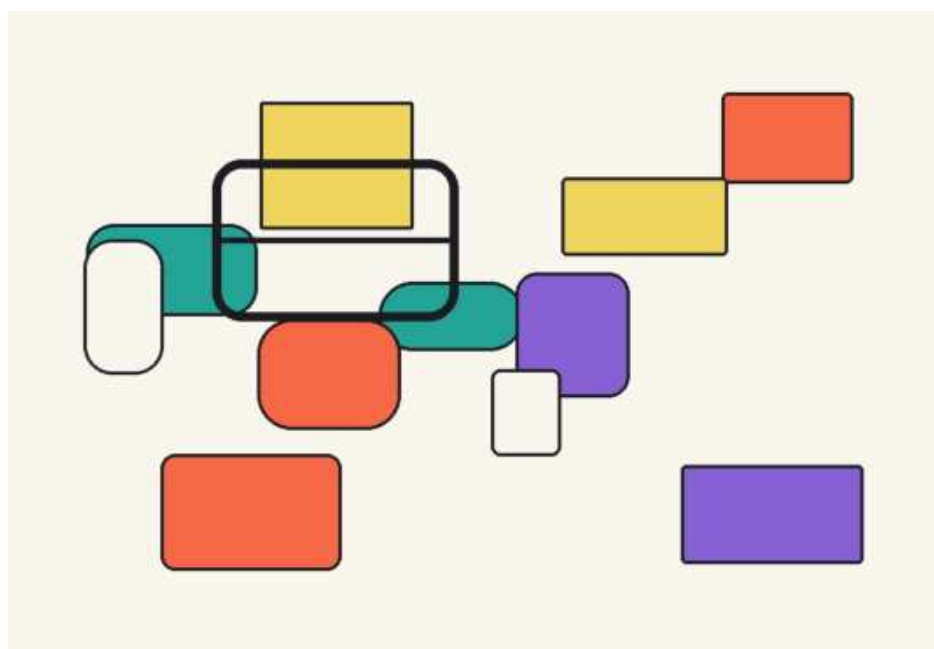
When the group returned to Champanagar—eight living sons with Bihula leading the way—the city's joy was beyond description. Chand Saudagar rejoiced, and so did all Champanagar. In the courtyard where seven funeral fires had once burned, eight lamps of welcome were now raised.

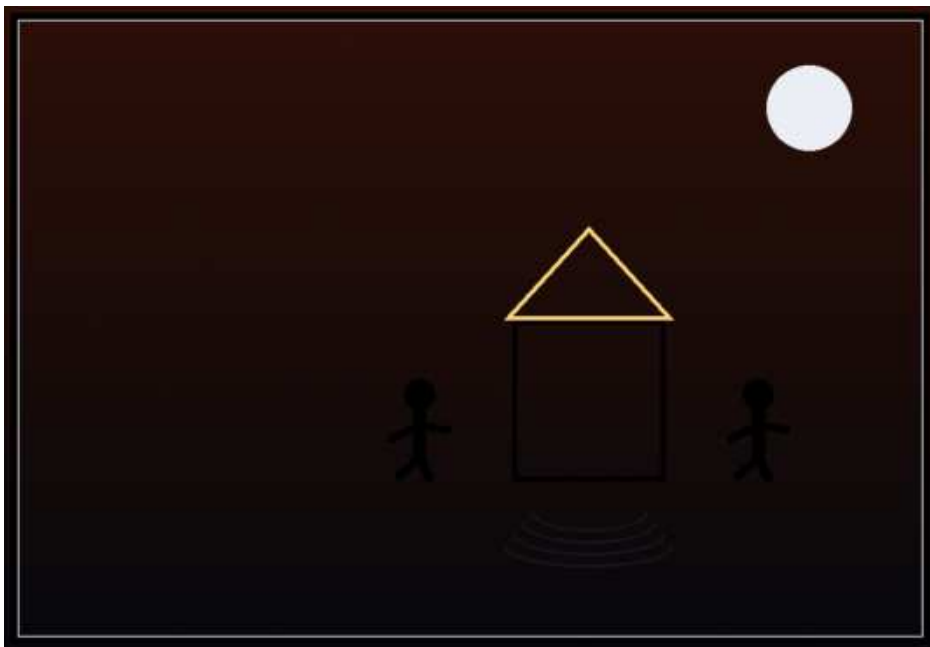
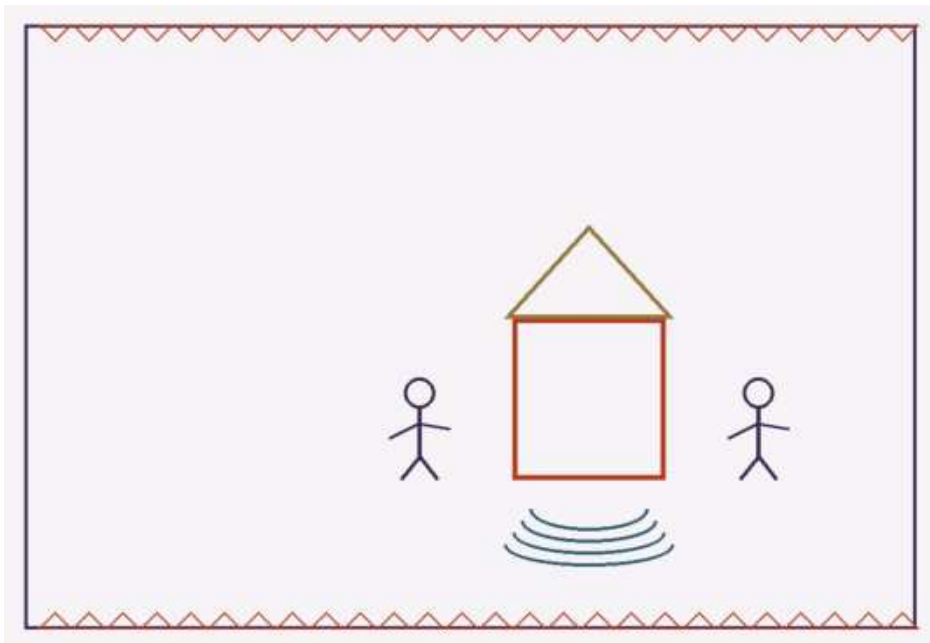
And what of Chand Saudagar? The tale gives a special kind of justice. His loyalty to Shiva remained, and Manasa also received honour. The worship that had not come

from fear now came from gratitude—and gratitude is
always greater than worship forced by fear.

Chapter 12: Worship of Manasa and Bihula









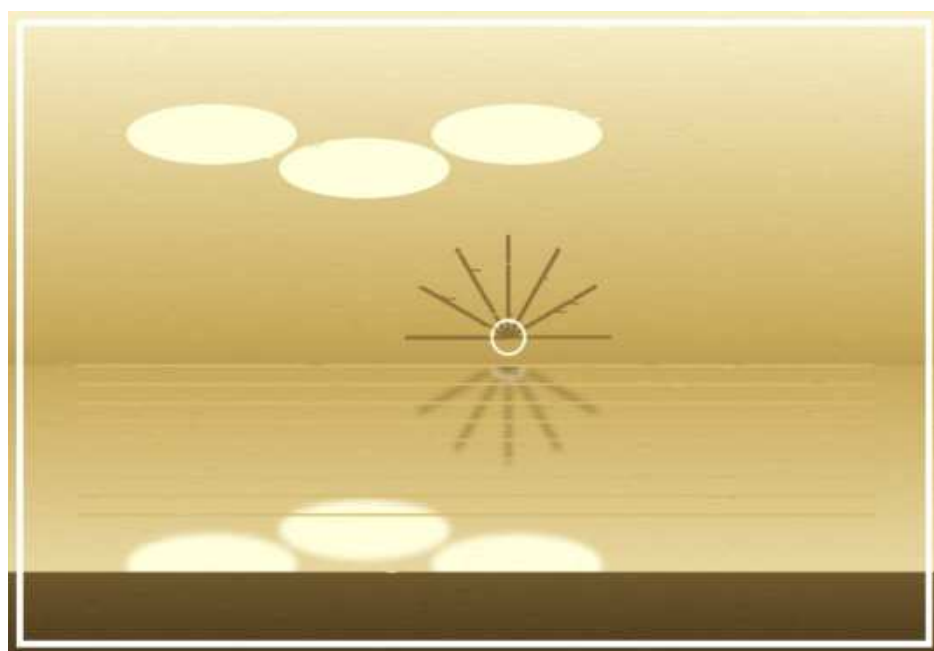
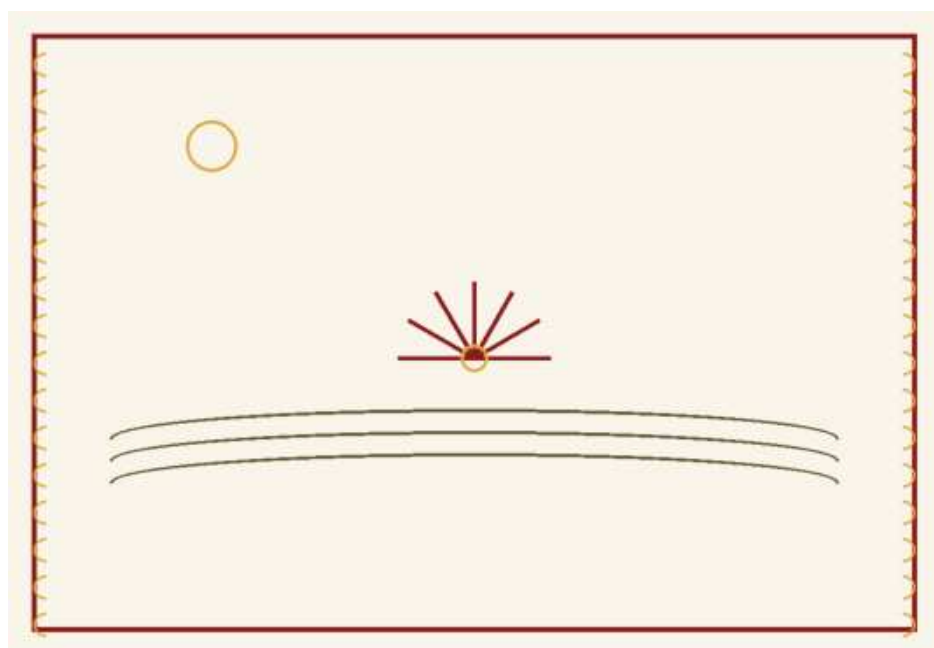
Picture 23

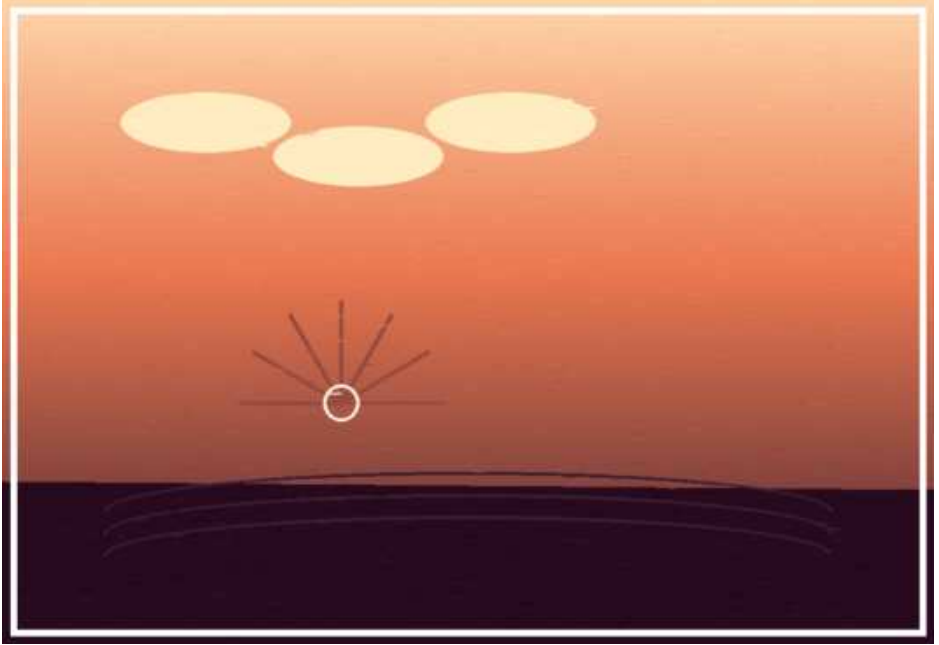
From then on, people in Champanagar—and later across Mithila—began to worship Manasa, and Bihula was remembered beside her. Vishahari worship, songs of Manasa, and the Bihula dance all grew from this old story.

Think of the strange turn in the tale. The goddess came asking for worship, but she finally received it because of a human bride. What Manasa could not gain by force, Bihula's devotion brought to her. And Bihula, who had come asking only for life, began to be honoured beside the

goddess herself. Where else do devotion and power meet quite like this?







Picture 24

This tale travels through deep waters of sorrow—the deaths of seven sons, sunken ships, the bite in the bridal chamber, and a body floating down the river. Yet sorrow is not its final word. Its final word is Bihula: the bride who sat face to face with fate and rose only after she had changed it.

Even today, when trouble rises like a mountain in a household, elders in Mithila may say, 'Be like Bihula.' They mean: enter the current, but do not surrender; cry if

you must, but do not remain still; and when you ask for help, do not ask only for yourself—ask for everyone.

The End

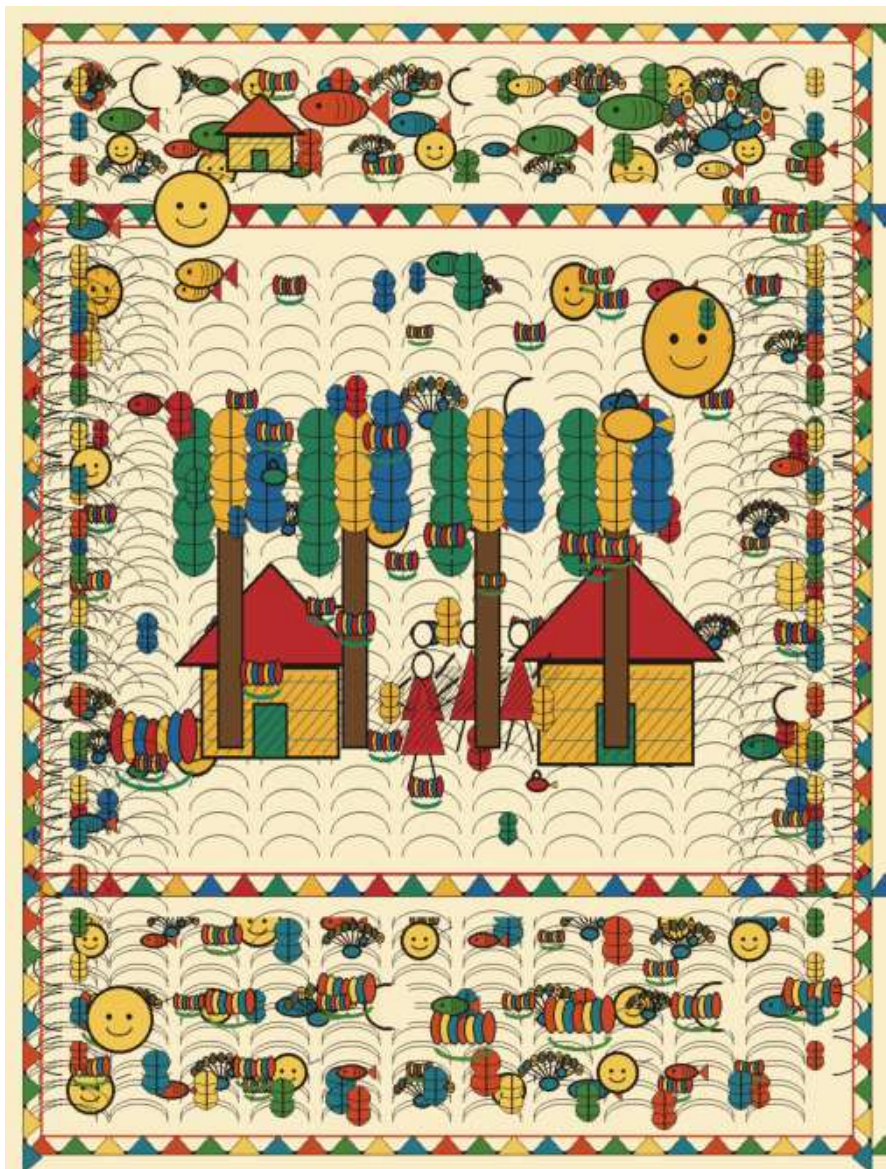
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The Brahmin and the Thakur Boy

Three Mysteries on the Road and One
Condition



Gajendra Thakur

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Introduction: The Condition at Debiganj

A Brahmin lived in the town of Debiganj. He was learned and gentle, but he had no companion for a long journey. An invitation had come from far away to conduct the worship of Lord Satyanarayan, and he did not like the idea of travelling alone.

So the Brahmin asked a Thakur boy from his town to travel with him. Before agreeing, the boy set one condition: 'Panditji, I will go with you, but whenever I see something I cannot understand, you must explain it to me. If you cannot, I will not continue the journey with you.' The Brahmin agreed. That single condition changed the whole journey. It was no longer only a journey to a worship ceremony; it became a journey in search of the answers to three mysteries.

Chapter 1: The Floating Body



Picture 1

As the Brahmin and the Thakur boy travelled, they reached a stream that they had to cross. They took off their outer clothes and prepared to enter the water. Just then the boy noticed a woman's body floating in the current, drifting with sand and silt around it.

'Panditji, look! That body is floating there—and there seem to be three lives tied to its story. How strange!' cried the boy, with curiosity and a little fear in his eyes. 'You must explain it to me, or I will turn back!'





Picture 2

Bound by his promise, Panditji sat down there and began a story. 'Listen, child. Near our village there once ruled a king of a town called K. Nagar. The king's son had been married in the very place toward which we are now travelling.'

'Later the old king died. His son could not manage the kingdom properly and had to mortgage the state. His wife's family learned that the young king did not even have enough money to arrange the customary second

journey that would bring his bride home. Matters became very difficult.'

Chapter 2: The Story of the Broken Cot



Picture 3

'One day a worship ceremony was being held at his in-laws' home. The poor young king arrived in the evening, but in the crowd no one noticed him or asked after him. He sat to one side. The worship ended, everyone ate the prasad and went home, but no one asked him anything. He lay down there to sleep.'

'At midnight his own wife got up and went toward the horse shed. There was hardly any proper place to sleep there—only a cot with three legs. Where would anyone find the missing fourth leg?'





Picture 4

'The girl found the poor king and asked, without recognising him as her husband, whether he had eaten anything. He said no. Hungry, he ate some leftover food. Still not knowing who he was, she asked him to support the broken cot where the missing leg should have been, and she settled down to sleep there.'

'After he fell asleep, someone appeared to the king in a dream and said, "Go home. Beneath your father's old seat are four pots of treasure. Sell one of them and free your kingdom from the mortgage." At dawn the king returned

home, recovered his kingdom, and soon his in-laws heard that his fortunes were better than before. The time came for his bride's formal return to his home.'

Chapter 3: Shame Over the Leftovers



Picture 5

'After the gauna ceremony, the king brought his bride home, but he placed her in a separate room with a maid and enough food and supplies. She lived there, but the king himself did not visit her.'

'After some days the queen sent the maid to call the king. When he came, she complained, "You brought me here after the gauna, locked me in this room, and never even come to see me!"'





Picture 6

'The king replied, "This is not the horse shed where I had to stand in place of the broken cot's missing leg. I was the one who ate the leftovers there—and you even told me to eat those scraps."'

'The girl was overcome with shame when she understood what had happened. The next morning she told her maid, "It is a fasting day. I am going to bathe in the stream." She removed her clothes and jumped into the water. The woman whose body you see floating there, child, is that same girl. Now let us go on.' The first mystery had been

explained, and the Thakur boy's curiosity was satisfied for the moment.

Chapter 4: The Goat Everyone Kicks



Picture 7

After crossing the stream, the two travellers continued until they reached a large village where a crowd had gathered. The Thakur boy went to look. A young goat was tied there, and everyone who passed gave it two kicks.

The boy wondered whether the goat had eaten someone's crop, but why was everyone beating it? He asked, 'Panditji, explain this to me. Only then will I go farther.'





Picture 8

The Brahmin sat down again. 'Listen, Thakur. The son of King Pratap Singh of Lodipur and the son of a Thakur from the same area were close friends. One day the two went hunting in the forest. Evening came, and they decided to spend the night beneath a tree.'

'At midnight, a pair of fate-birds—Bidh and Bidhin—sat in the tree above them. Looking at the sleeping prince and the Thakur's son, Bidhin said, "How handsome they are!" Bidh replied, "There is a beautiful girl named Lalpari who

would make a perfect match." Bidh, who represented fate itself, carried the two sleeping friends to Lalpari's place.'

Chapter 5: Betrayal Through the Body- Changing Spell





Picture 9

'The prince and Lalpari were placed on one bed, while the Thakur's son was on another. At dawn Lalpari was delighted to find the prince beside her—it seemed to be a match made by fate. The prince and the fairy-like Lalpari were married there.'

'Some days later, when it was time to leave, Lalpari remembered that her father knew a spell for changing bodies. She suggested that the prince learn it. The prince and the Thakur's son went together, and both learned the

spell. But after learning it, a wicked thought entered the Thakur's son's mind.'

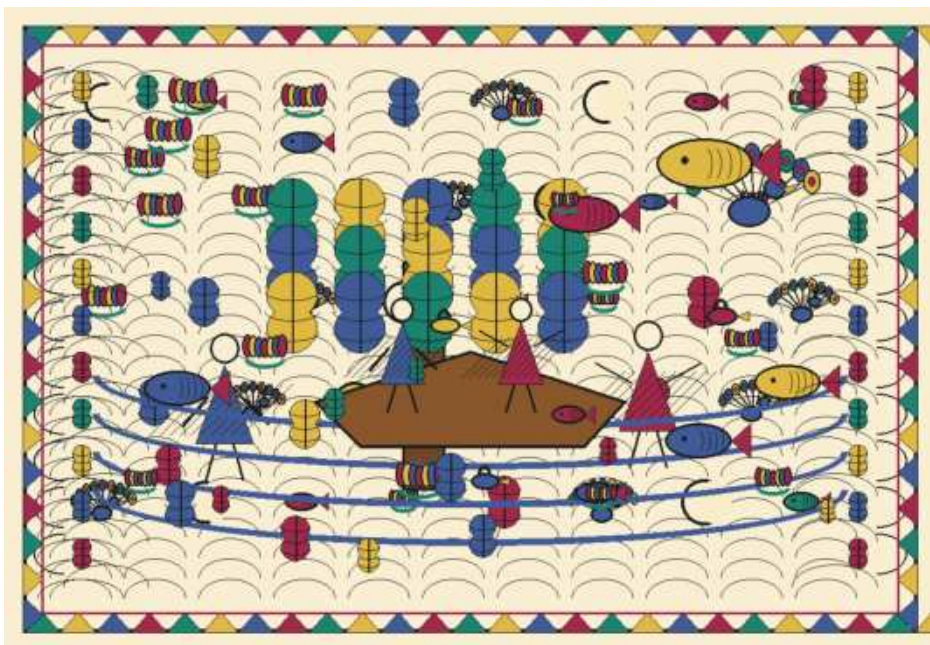
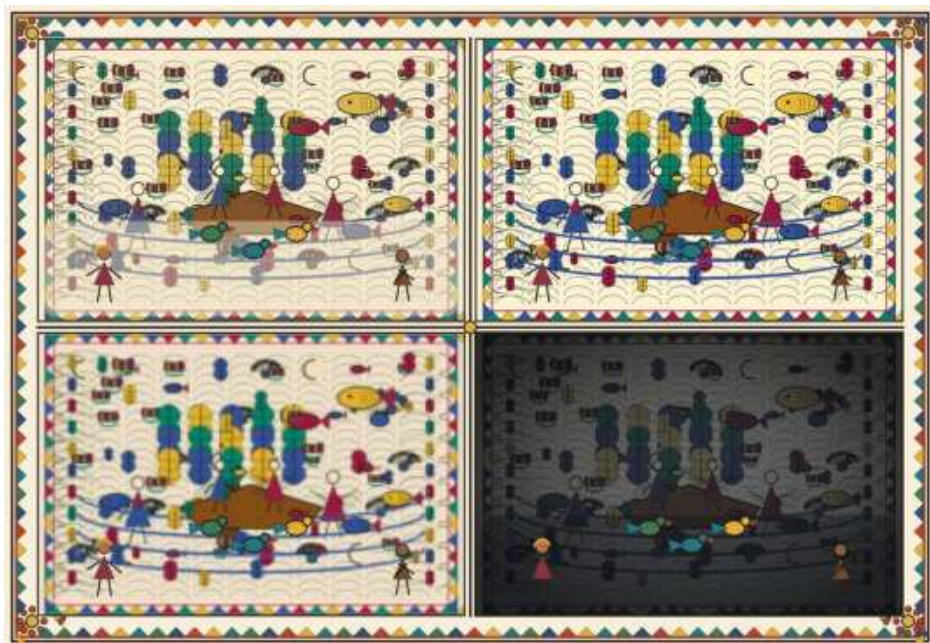


Picture 10

'On the road they tested the spell. The prince recited it and entered the body of a dead parrot. At that very moment, the Thakur's son recited the spell and entered the prince's now-empty body. He abandoned his own body, stood up looking exactly like the prince, and the true prince's spirit remained trapped in the parrot and flew away.'

'Lalpari understood at once that the man in the prince's body was not her true husband. But she said nothing openly. When the false prince spoke of their wedding night, she delayed him: "I still have a vow to fulfil. Build me a temple on the bank of the Jamuna, and let me distribute free food for twelve years." The false prince agreed, but inside he remained afraid that the real prince might somehow return.'

Chapter 6: Lalpari's Cleverness



Picture 11

'In fear, the false prince thought of a terrible plan: he would have every parrot in the forest killed so that the true prince's spirit would die too. He offered hunters one coin for every parrot, and they began catching and killing them.'

'One day Lalpari saw a hunter carrying parrots near the Jamuna. She asked, "Who are these parrots for?" The hunter replied, "For the king. He has them killed and thrown away." Lalpari immediately understood the danger.'





Picture 12

'Lalpari told the hunter, "From today, bring all the parrots to me. I will pay you twice as much." The hunter agreed. Lalpari asked each parrot, "Do you know the spell for changing bodies?" Many parrots were questioned and released. At last one parrot answered, "Yes, I know it!"'

'That parrot was the true prince. Lalpari kept him safely in a cage and bought a young goat. When her twelve-year vow of free food was complete, the false prince brought Lalpari back to the palace. She took the goat with her.

That night she killed the goat, refused to eat, and began to cry.'

Chapter 7: The Moment of Returning to the Body





Picture 13

'The false prince asked, "Why are you crying?" Lalpari said, "The little goat is dead. As long as it would not eat, I would not eat either. Now it is dead, so I will die too!"'

'The false prince panicked. "Stop crying. The goat will live again," he said, and immediately used the spell to enter the goat's body. At that exact moment, the parrot flew into the true prince's empty body. The real prince was himself again, and the betraying Thakur's son was trapped inside the goat.'



Picture 14

'Do you understand now, Thakur boy? That goat is the false king—the Thakur who betrayed his friend. That is why everyone who comes by gives it two kicks, as the punishment for its betrayal.' Panditji finished the tale, and the boy's second mystery was solved.

But the journey was not over. The Thakur boy and Panditji went on, and a third mystery waited for them: at a crossroads in the next town, an eighty-year-old woman was about to be hanged.

Chapter 8: The Old Woman at the Gallows





Picture 15

A huge crowd stood at the town crossroads. The Thakur boy ran forward and saw an eighty-year-old woman being led to the gallows. He wondered whether she had stolen grain because she was hungry. Again he insisted that Panditji explain the matter.

Panditji sat down and began another story. 'The son of the king of Viratnagar and the son of his minister were close friends. One day they went hunting in the forest and spent the night in a great tree. The minister's son tied the prince

securely to the tree with a cloth for safety, then moved to another branch.'

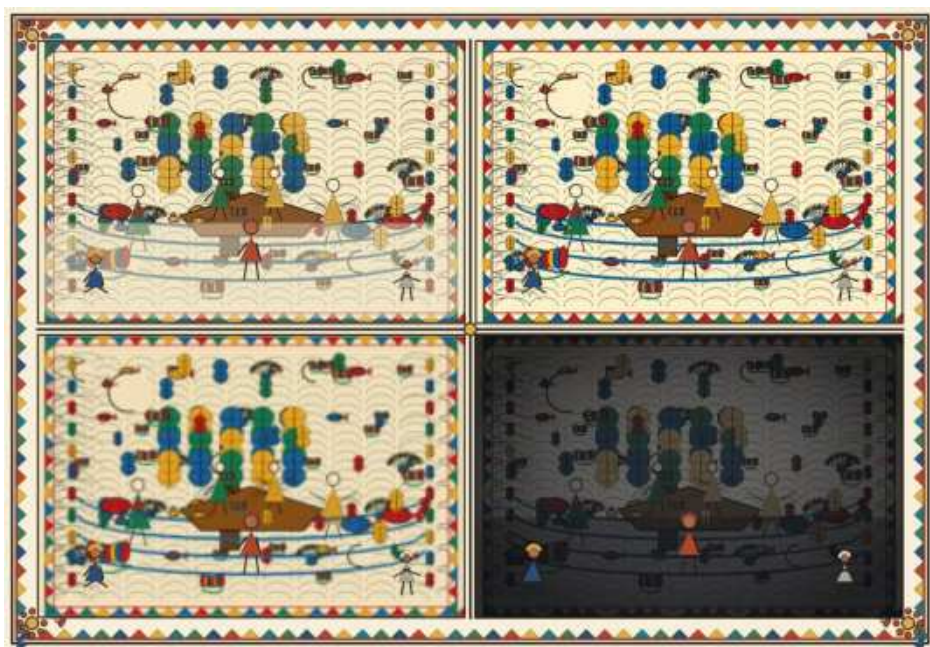


Picture 16

'At midnight a huge snake appeared and placed its jewel nearby, filling the area with light. The minister's son quietly stood a sword upright at the root of the tree, climbed up, and dropped his cloth over the jewel. The jewel was covered and darkness fell. The snake panicked, thrashed its tail around, struck the sword, and was cut to pieces.'

'At dawn the two friends took the jewel and continued on their way. While washing it in a pond, the jewel pulled them toward a girl named Nagavati. She said, "You have killed my father. Now one of you must marry me." The minister's son arranged the marriage between Nagavati and the prince.'

Chapter 9: The Lovesick Prince



Picture 17

'The minister's son went away to arrange drums, musicians, and a palanquin for the wedding. But the next day at noon, while Nagavati was bathing in the pond, the prince of Thagpur came there during a hunt to drink water. The moment he saw Nagavati he fainted, and she disappeared back into the pond. From that day the prince of Thagpur became mad with love.'

'The king of Thagpur had an announcement made: whoever cured his son would receive part of the kingdom and would also marry the king's daughter. An eighty-year-old poor woman, who herself had a mentally troubled son, came forward.'

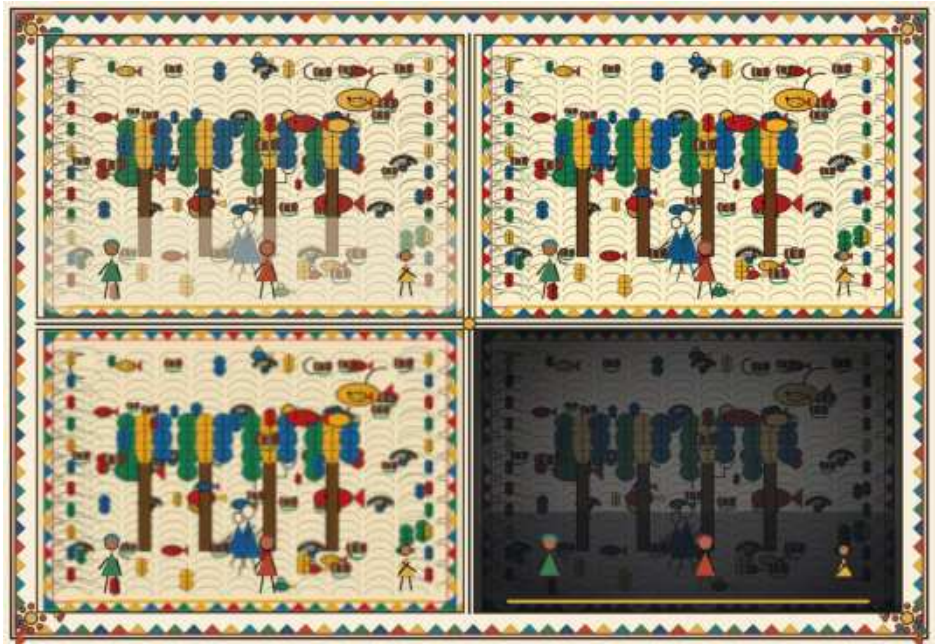


Picture 18

'The old woman shut the prince in a room and questioned him until he described his fainting and the beautiful girl from the pond. The woman promised, "I will bring that girl to you." Taking five female companions, she set out for the pond.'

'At noon Nagavati came out of the pond to bathe. The old woman went close and began serving her. Nagavati kindly started helping the old woman wash. At that moment the old woman snapped her fingers, and the five companions seized Nagavati from all sides and carried her to Thagpur. The king prepared the promised reward, and wedding arrangements began.'

Chapter 10: The Minister's Son Makes a Plan





Picture 19

'Meanwhile, as the minister's son searched from village to village for musicians and palanquins, he learned that the king of Thagpur had taken them all. When he reached Thagpur, he discovered that the old woman's troubled son was about to be married to the very same Nagavati.'

'The minister's son disguised himself as a beggar and entered the king's courtyard. He saw Nagavati and signalled that he would return by evening. Then he searched for the old woman's son and found him in the forest herding cows and buffaloes. He played with him for

a while, then led him deeper into the forest, left him there,
and took his clothes.'



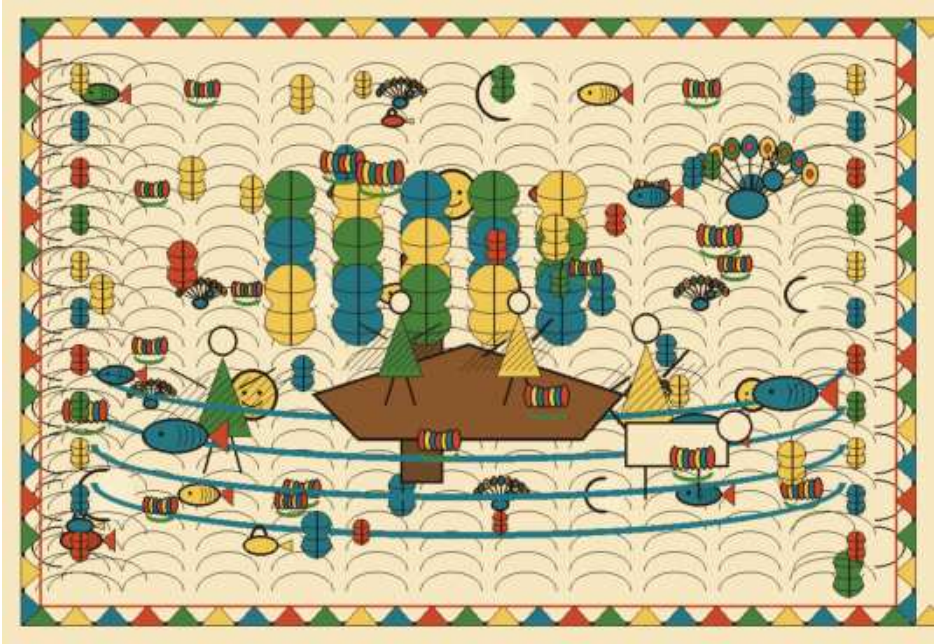
Picture 20

'At dusk the minister's son entered the house pretending to be the troubled young man. He wandered around the girl who was supposed to become his bride. Reaching Nagavati, he whispered, "Change your clothes, tie them in a bundle and carry it under your arm. Walk out ahead. I will follow."'

'The two escaped and reached the same pond where Nagavati had first met the prince. Do you understand, Thakur boy? This is why the old woman is being hanged. The king accuses her of plotting to seize part of his kingdom.' The third mystery had now been explained.

Chapter 11: Twenty-Five Dangers on the Road





Picture 21

Now the minister's son returned in his true identity. He brought the musicians and palanquin, arranged the proper marriage of Nagavati and the prince, and the wedding party started home.

Evening came on the road, and everyone slept beneath a great tree. At midnight Bidh and Bidhata appeared. They were pleased with the married pair, but Bidhata said, 'The prince will die, because twenty-five dangers still wait on the road ahead.' Then he described all the dangers one by one.



Picture 22

Nagavati and the minister's son were both awake and heard everything. At dawn they sent the rest of the wedding party ahead, while the three of them—the prince, Nagavati, and the minister's son—continued alone, ready to avoid each danger.

Two trees were about to fall across the road, but the three held hands and ran past in time. A dangerous water creature was waiting to trap them in a stream, but they swam quickly and escaped. One danger after another was crossed through the minister's son's good sense and Nagavati's courage.

Chapter 12: The Body of Stone



Picture 23

When they reached home, everyone rejoiced to see the prince and his bride. But the prince grew suspicious because Nagavati and the minister's son had spoken privately many times on the road, and they had not told him the reasons for all their actions.

The prince ordered the minister's son to explain what they had talked about. The friend tried to avoid revealing the secret. 'It was only joking,' he said. 'We were seeing whether the prince could run fast.' But the prince did not believe him and threatened him with death if he would not tell the truth.





Picture 24

Nagavati heard the threat. With no choice left, the minister's son began revealing everything Bidhata had said. But with every secret he spoke, a part of his body turned to stone. As he finished telling all the hidden warnings, more and more of him became stone until at last he stood like a stone hill beside the palace. This was the terrible price of breaking the secret he had overheard.

Some time later, a son was born to the prince. The stone figure of the minister's son then completed the strange condition connected with the prophecy: the child was laid

upon the stone, and the body was divided into two pieces.

As soon as this happened, the minister's son changed from stone back into a human being and asked for the child.

Chapter 13: Forgiveness and Friendship Restored





Picture 25

The minister's son carried the child to his own wife's family home at midnight. After telling his wife everything, he hung the child's body upon the branch of a mango tree. Later he brought his wife close, took the child down from the branch, and said, 'Take a small knife. Make a tiny cut on your little finger and sprinkle a little blood on this child.' The moment the drops fell, the child began to cry. He was alive again.



Picture 26

The minister's son carried the living child back to the prince and said, 'From today, our friendship is over.' Then he turned to leave. At that moment the prince finally understood everything—the sacrifices, the dangers, and the terrible cost his friend had paid to protect him.

The prince ran after his friend, embraced him, and begged forgiveness. 'I will never make such a mistake again.' Their friendship was restored. After twenty-five dangers, three mysteries, and the sacrifice demanded by one broken secret, trust and friendship finally won. The Brahmin and the Thakur boy, who had told and listened to all these stories along their journey, reached their destination, and all three of the boy's questions had been answered.

The End

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Rauhineya the Bandit

The Tale of a Clever Bandit of Magadha Who
Changed His Heart



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

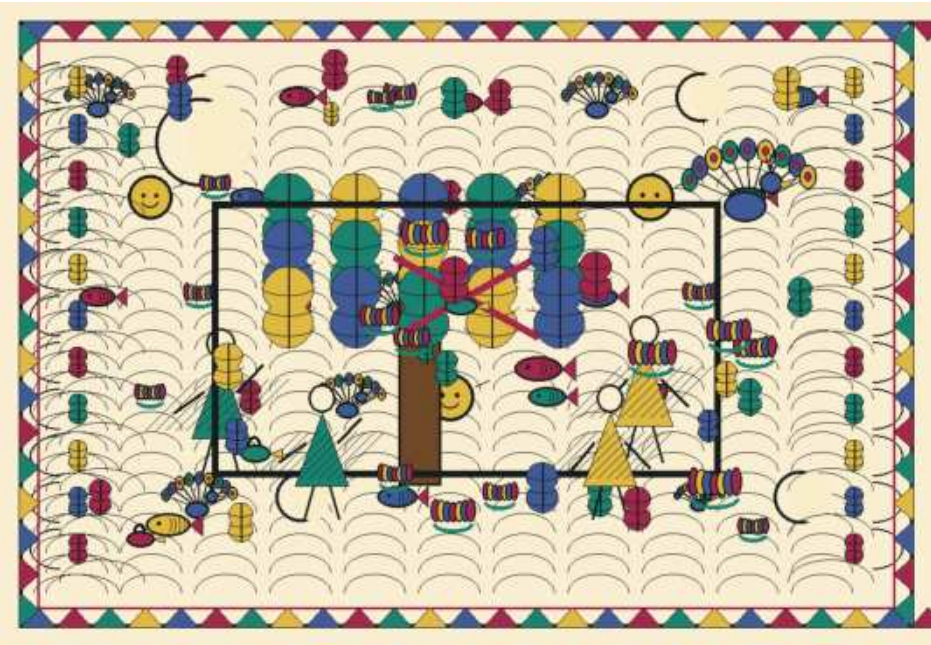
ISSN 2229-547X

Introduction: The Terror of Magadha

In the land of Magadha ruled Bimbisara, father of Ashoka. Peace lay across the kingdom, yet one bandit named Rauhineya repeatedly disturbed it. This is the tale of that bandit—a man whose cleverness seemed stronger than the king's whole army, and whose life was finally changed by a single sentence.

Rauhineya was no ordinary robber. He was a friend of the poor, an enemy of the rich, and an unsolved riddle for the royal authorities. Yet the true beauty of this tale lies at its end, when both force and trickery are defeated and one small word of truth proves stronger than either.

Chapter 1: His Father's Last Command



Picture 1

Rauhineya's father was the notorious bandit Lauhakhur. On his deathbed he gave his son a strange command: 'Never listen to a sermon by Mahavira Swami. If you ever come near such a sermon, close your ears. Otherwise your ruin is certain.'

The command was mysterious. What power could there be in a sermon that even a hardened bandit feared? But Rauhineya was devoted to his father, so he made the command an unbreakable rule of his life.





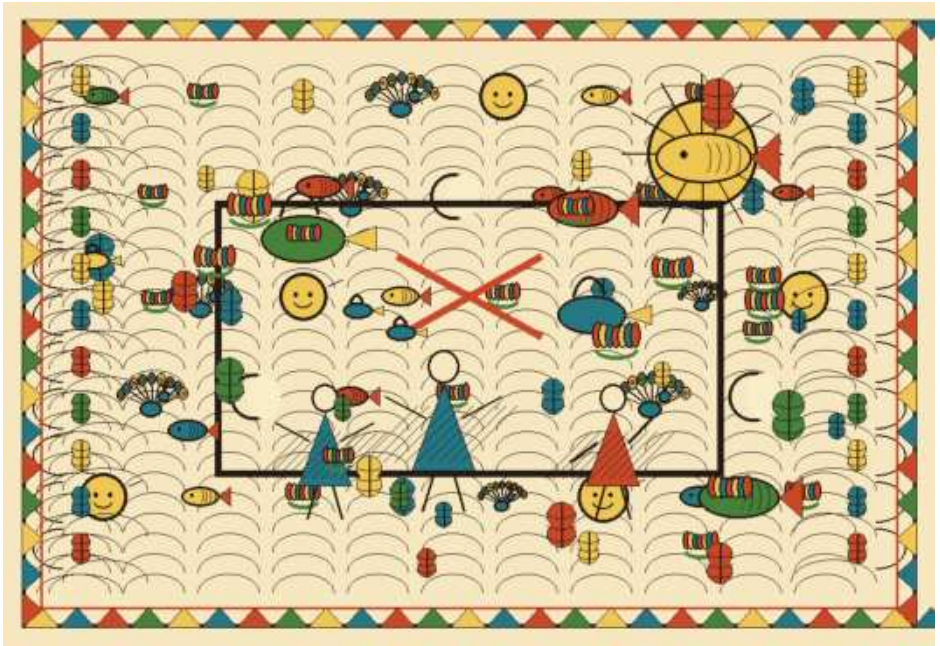
Picture 2

Rauhineya inherited his father's life of robbery and plunder. Yet his own nature was different. He robbed only the rich and distributed much of the stolen wealth among the poor.

Because of this rule, villagers often helped him, and Rauhineya was never easily caught. The support of ordinary people became his greatest shield—stronger than the king's entire army.

Chapter 2: The Abduction of Madanavati

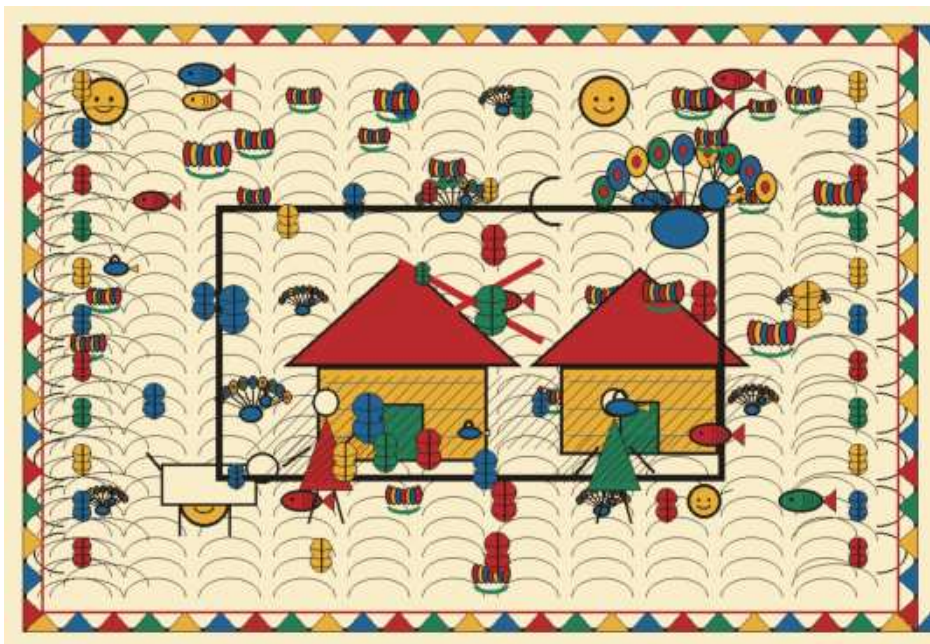




Picture 3

Once Rauhineya and one of his companions abducted Madanavati, the daughter-in-law of the wealthiest merchant in Pataliputra, from a garden. It happened at the very moment her husband had gone away to gather flowers.

When the husband returned and could not find his wife, Rauhineya's companion deliberately gave him misleading information and sent him in the wrong direction. The incident showed how carefully Rauhineya planned his crimes.



Picture 4

The abduction showed the bandit's boldness. He dared to strike directly at the family of the city's richest merchant. Yet the tale presents him as following a strange code of his own rather than acting without any rule at all.

News reached the king, and anger against Rauhineya grew. But the bandit only began planning an even more daring move. His next trick would astonish the whole city.

Chapter 3: The Disguise of the False Dancer





Picture 5

Some time later, the son of a merchant named Subhadra was being married. As the wedding party returned, Rauhineya disguised himself as the merchant's wife Manorama, while his companion dressed as a dancer. The deception was arranged with remarkable skill.

The false dancer began to perform, and the crowd watched in fascination. At that moment Rauhineya threw a cloth snake among them. People screamed and scattered, and the whole wedding party fell into confusion.

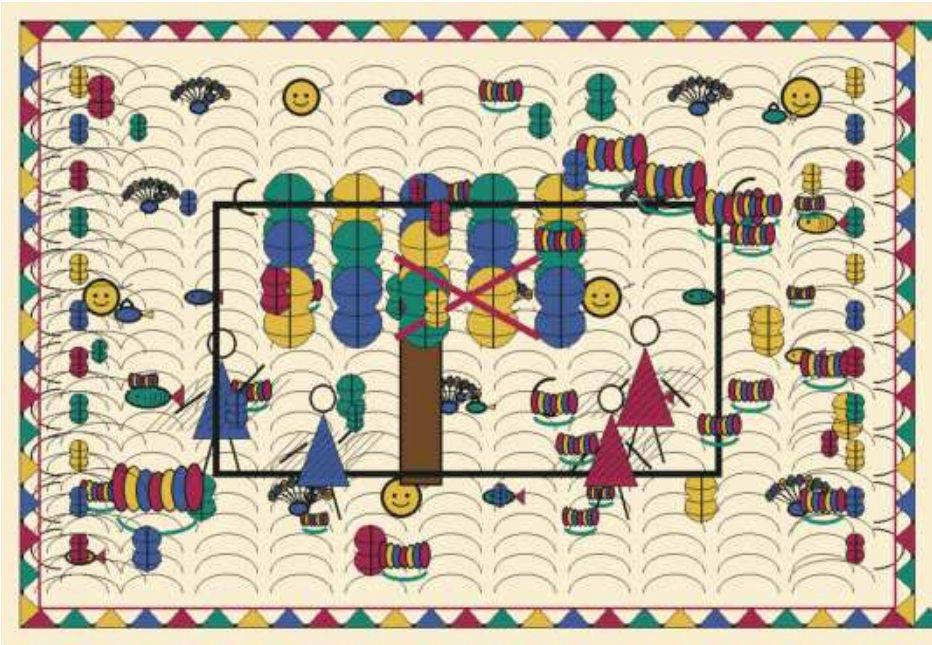


Picture 6

In the middle of the chaos, Rauhineya seized the bridegroom, who was covered in jewellery, and disappeared with him. The abduction was even bolder than the first—carried out in the middle of an entire wedding party and almost before everyone's eyes.

The king's anger now knew no limit. Such daring, even during a wedding! He immediately summoned the city police chief and demanded justice and punishment.

Chapter 4: Abhayakumar's Challenge



Picture 7

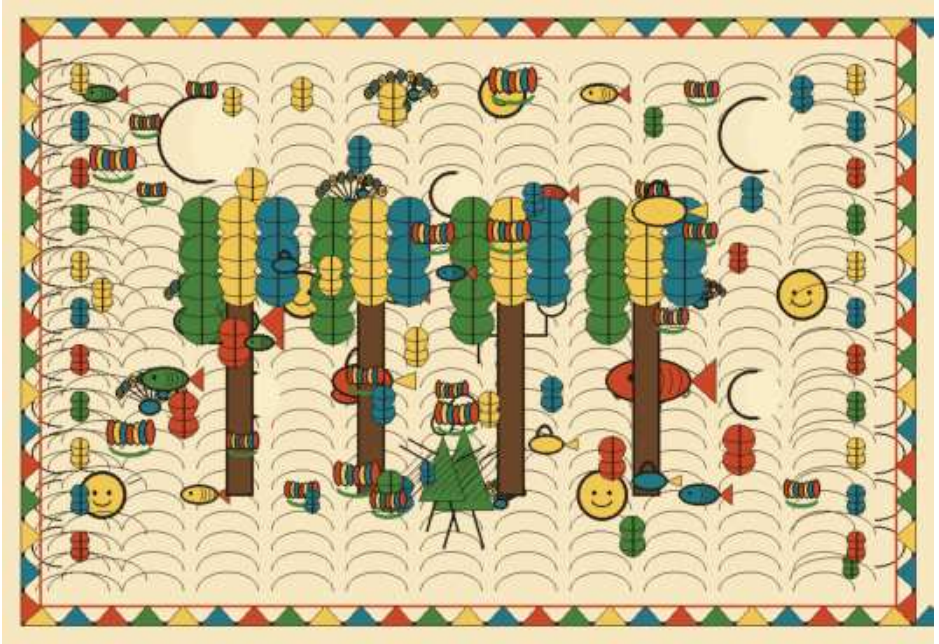
The police chief admitted his helplessness before the king. 'I cannot capture Rauhineya,' he said, and even offered to resign from his post. The king became angrier still.

Then Minister Abhayakumar stepped forward and made a daring promise: 'I will bring Rauhineya here within five days.' The king accepted on one terrible condition: 'If you fail to bring him within five days, you will lose your life.'



Chapter 5: A Daring Plan for the Royal Palace





Picture 9

Rauhineya learned everything—the minister's promise and the king's warning. Yet instead of becoming afraid, he had a new and reckless thought: 'I have robbed enough merchants. Why not rob the royal palace now?'

The idea was extremely risky. The royal palace was the most heavily guarded place in the kingdom. But Rauhineya's confidence in his own cleverness was so great that he accepted the challenge.



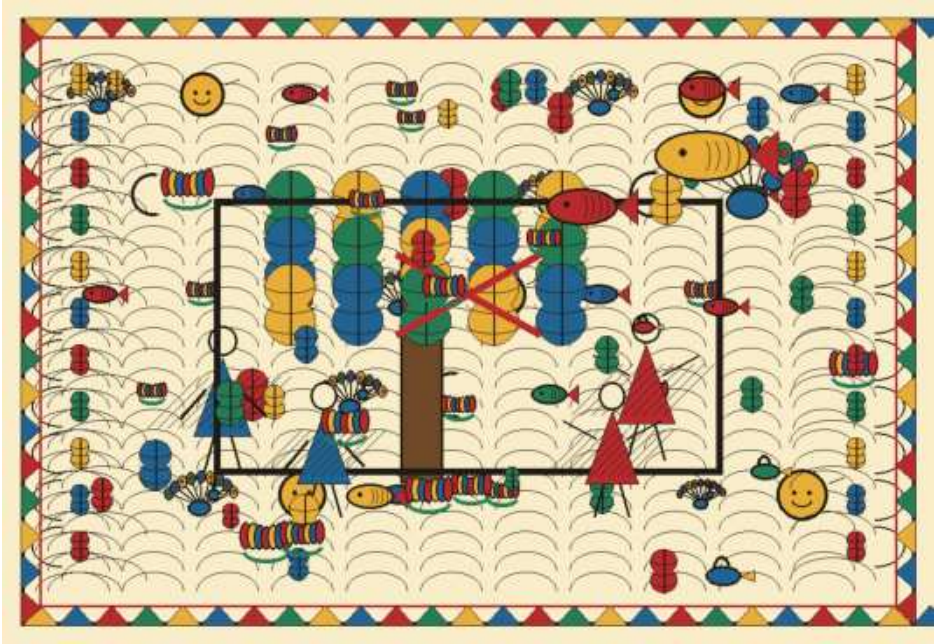
Picture 10

He set off toward the palace. On the way, in a garden, Mahavira Swami was giving a sermon—right beside the path Rauhineya had to take.

Remembering his father's command, Rauhineya quickly covered his ears. But at that exact moment, a thorn pierced his foot. It was a tiny accident, yet it would change the direction of his life.

Chapter 6: The Words He Did Not Mean to Hear

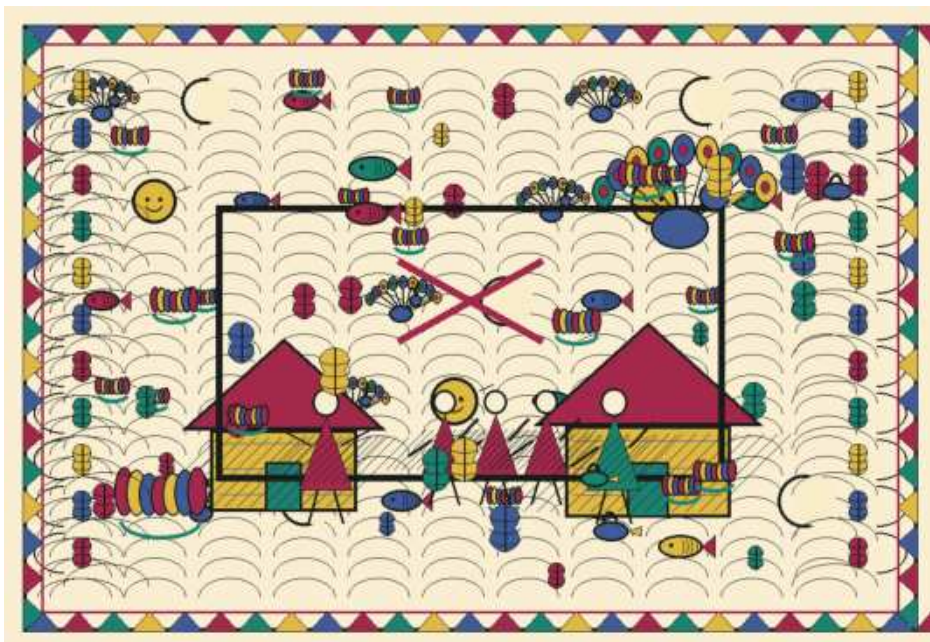




Picture 11

Because of the pain from the thorn, Rauhineya uncovered his ears for a moment. Just then Mahavira Swami's words reached him: 'Divine beings do not sweat. The flowers in their garlands do not wither. Their feet do not rest upon the earth, and their eyelids do not blink.'

The sentence sounded simple, but its meaning settled deep in Rauhineya's mind without his knowing why. It was like a seed that would sprout much later.



Picture 12

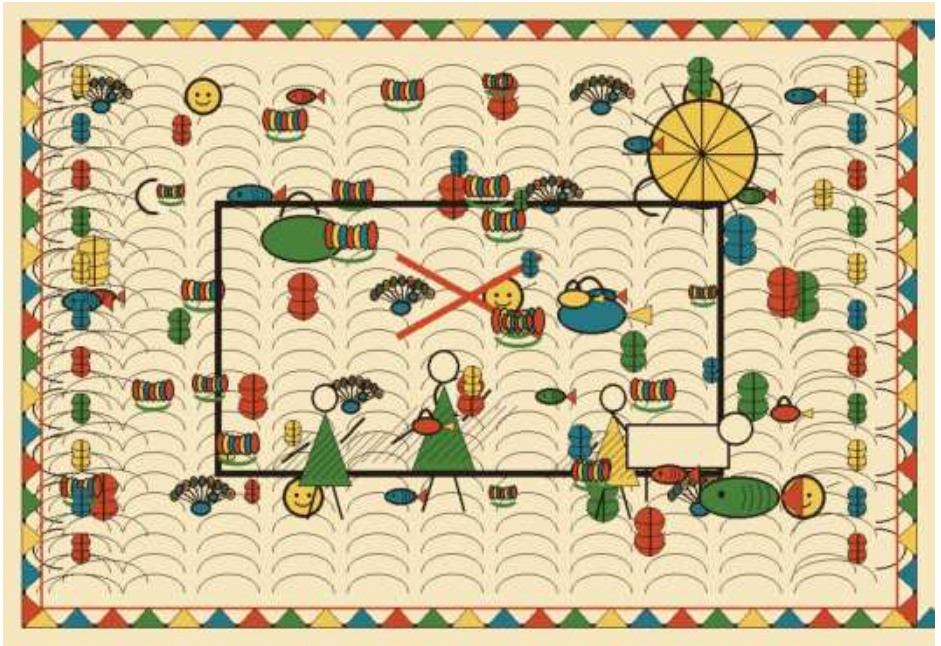
After pulling out the thorn, Rauhineya covered his ears again, still obeying his father's command. He continued toward the royal palace without realising that he had already heard one sentence powerful enough to change his future.

When he reached the palace, Rauhineya saw that all the guards appeared to be asleep. But it was a trick.

Abhayakumar had learned through his spies that Rauhineya might come and had deliberately made the palace defences look weak.

Chapter 7: Arrest and the Unmasking of a Trick

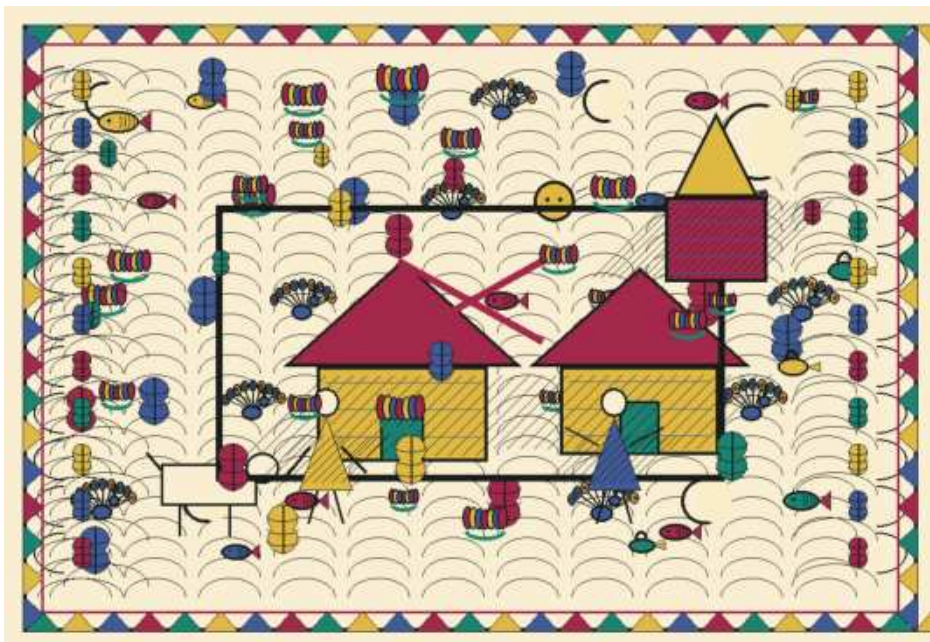




Picture 13

The moment Rauhineya tried to enter the palace, the guards challenged him. He ran and took shelter in a temple of Kali, but soldiers quickly surrounded the temple.

Seeing himself surrounded outside, Rauhineya leapt through the soldiers and over the temple wall. But more soldiers were waiting there too, and at last he was captured.



Picture 14

The king immediately ordered, 'Put him to death!' But Minister Abhayakumar wisely intervened. 'How can we punish him without recovering stolen goods and without proving his identity?' His insistence on evidence showed his respect for proper justice.

Seeing a chance, Rauhineya shouted, 'I am Durga, a farmer from Shali village! My family lives there. I only came to the city to visit the temple!' It was a carefully woven lie.

Chapter 8: A Clever False Identity



Picture 15

The king sent messengers to the village to check the story. But the villagers already supported Rauhineya, and that support helped him again. They said, 'Yes, Durga lives in this village, though he has been away for some time.'

Abhayakumar now faced a puzzle. 'How can I make him admit the truth?' Without complete proof, he formed a new plan. Rauhineya was kept as a prisoner in a fine palace and given surprising comforts.





Picture 16

Rauhineya, the great bandit, relaxed into this unexpected luxury without knowing it was part of a deeper trap. Abhayakumar was quietly preparing an extremely clever way to make him reveal the truth.

One day Abhayakumar had Rauhineya given a great deal of wine. When Rauhineya became heavily intoxicated, he no longer understood what was happening around him. The next stage of the plan began.



When Rauhineya regained consciousness, he saw dancers dressed as gandharvas and apsaras all around him. Astonished, he stared at the strange scene. Where was he? Everyone told him, 'This is heaven, and Indra is coming to meet Rauhineya!' Rauhineya thought, 'The king must have executed me. I have died and reached heaven!'



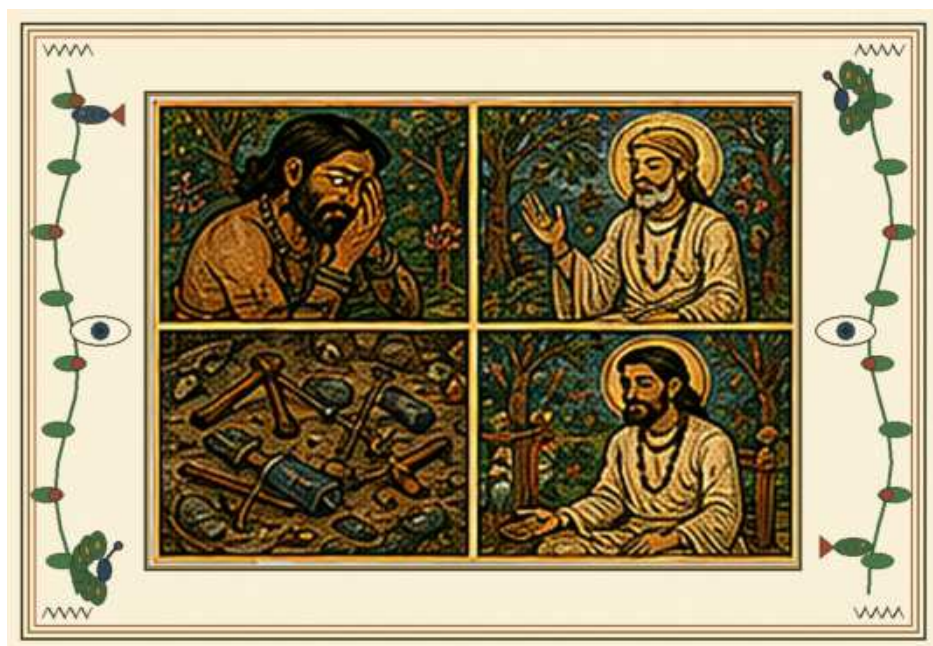


Picture 18

But the whole scene was an illusion. The singers and dancers had been sent by the minister, and the elaborate performance was designed to make Rauhineya confess the truth. Abhayakumar's intelligence was now proving even stronger than Rauhineya's cleverness.

Then a 'messenger of Indra'—really another of the minister's agents—arrived and said, 'Rauhineya will be honoured like a divine being, but first he must give an account of all the good and bad deeds he performed in the human world.'

Chapter 10: The Moment of Truth

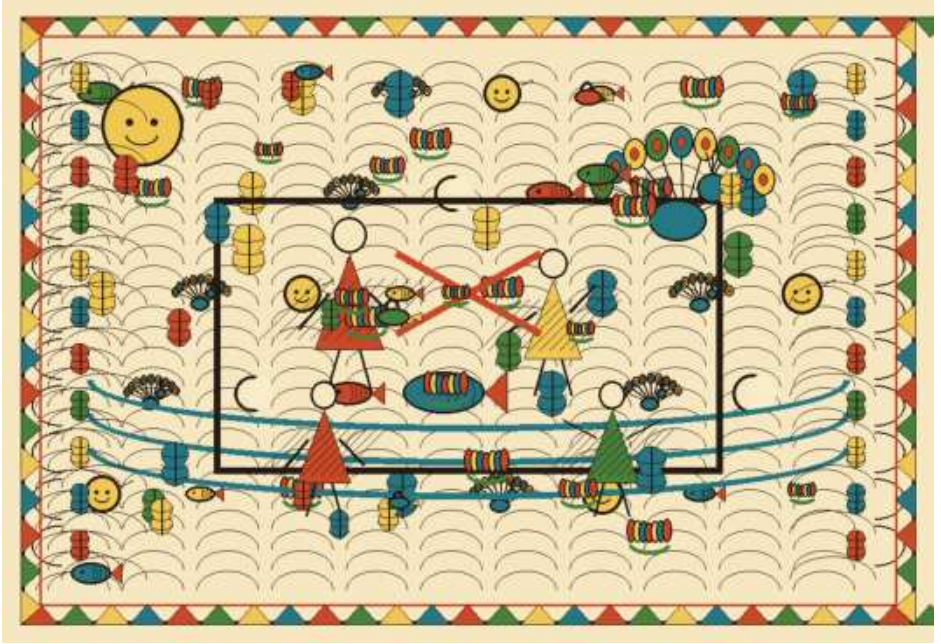


Picture 19

Rauhineya thought he would have to confess all his sins before entering heaven. He was just preparing to do so when the sentence he had accidentally heard from Mahavira Swami suddenly flashed into his mind.

Rauhineya looked carefully. These supposed heavenly beings were sweating. Their garlands were wilting. Their feet stood on the ground. Their eyelids were blinking. Every sign was the opposite of what Mahavira Swami had said about true divine beings.



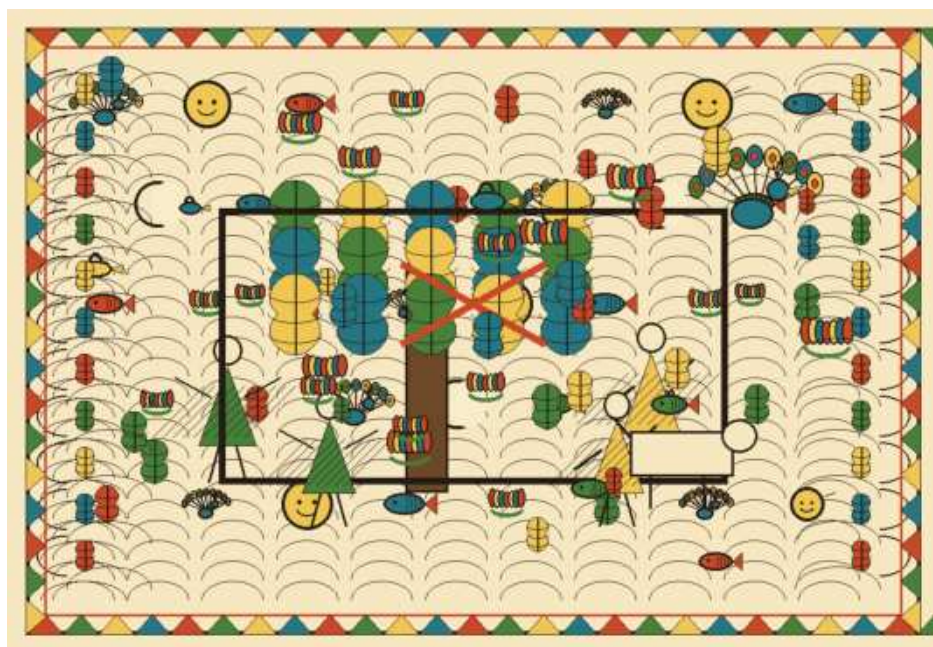


Picture 20

Rauhineya's quick mind understood at once: 'This is not heaven. It is a trick!' He immediately changed his strategy. Instead of confessing crimes, he began praising all the good deeds he claimed to have done. It was one last display of his cleverness.

Abhayakumar, who was watching everything, told the king, 'If you promise him safety and forgiveness, he will tell us the whole truth.' The king agreed, choosing a path between justice and truth.

Chapter 11: Pardon and Repentance



Picture 21

As soon as he received the promise of safety, Rauhineya revealed the exact location of his forest cave outside the city, where the stolen treasure and kidnapped people were being kept. His confession marked the end of his tricks and the beginning of truth.

The king declared, 'Because you have been granted safety, you may keep the wealth that is lawfully left to you.' The offer showed the king's willingness to honour his promise.





Picture 22

But Rauhineya, once so hungry for wealth, refused to take anything. The change was astonishing. The bandit who had risked his life for riches now turned away from them.

Rauhineya said, 'A single sentence from Mahavira Swami saved my life. I will now receive his teaching and listen to all his words so that my life may become meaningful.'

This was the greatest change in the tale: a bandit who had lived by force and deception was transformed by one sentence of truth, beginning a journey from Rauhineya the robber to Rauhineya the disciple.

The End

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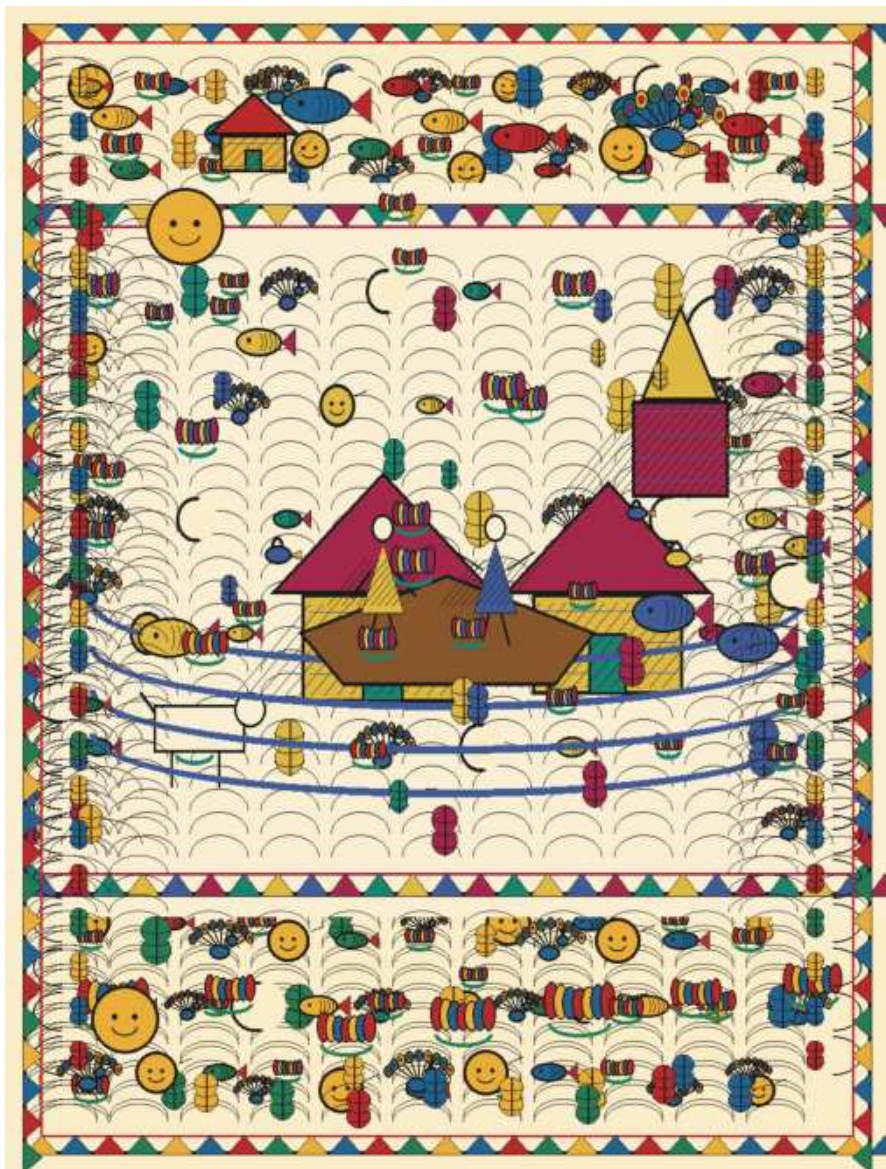
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Doki and Doka

A Tireless Search for Love Until the Seventh

Night



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

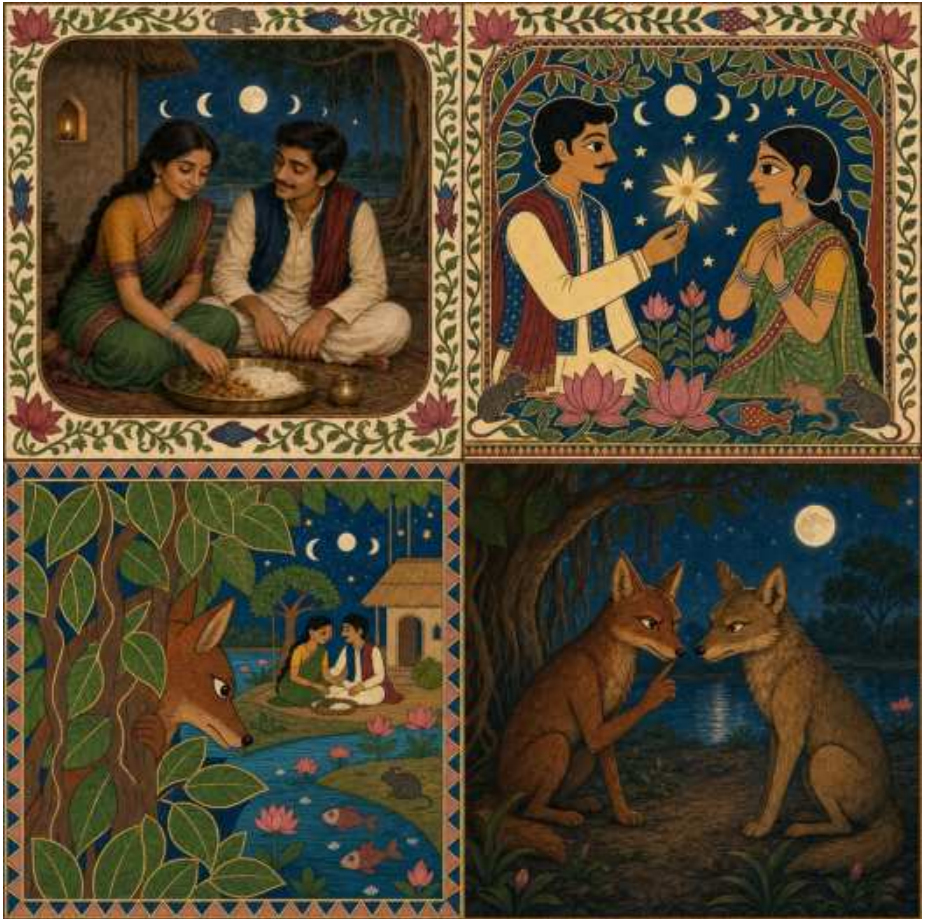
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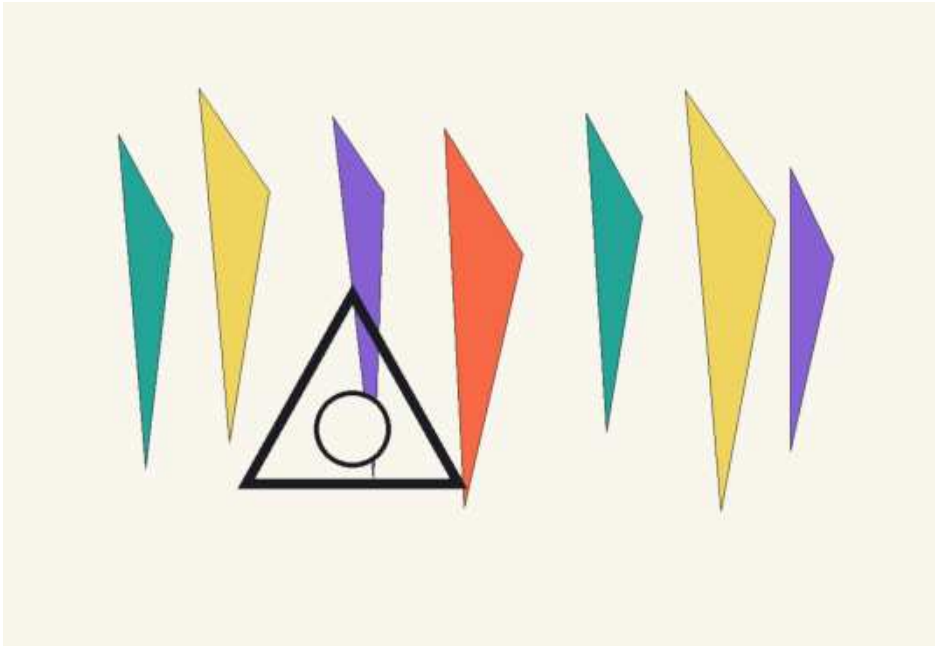
Introduction: Their Love

There once were Doka and Doki, and they loved each other very much. Whatever Doki asked, Doka did at once. He might be a second late, but never a whole minute. Their love was so deep that a jackal began to envy them.

This is a tale of a trick born from jealousy, the trouble caused by doubt, and finally an extraordinary search. Doki wanders through forests and meets creature after creature as she searches for Doka and waits for the seventh night.

Chapter 1: Unbreakable Love





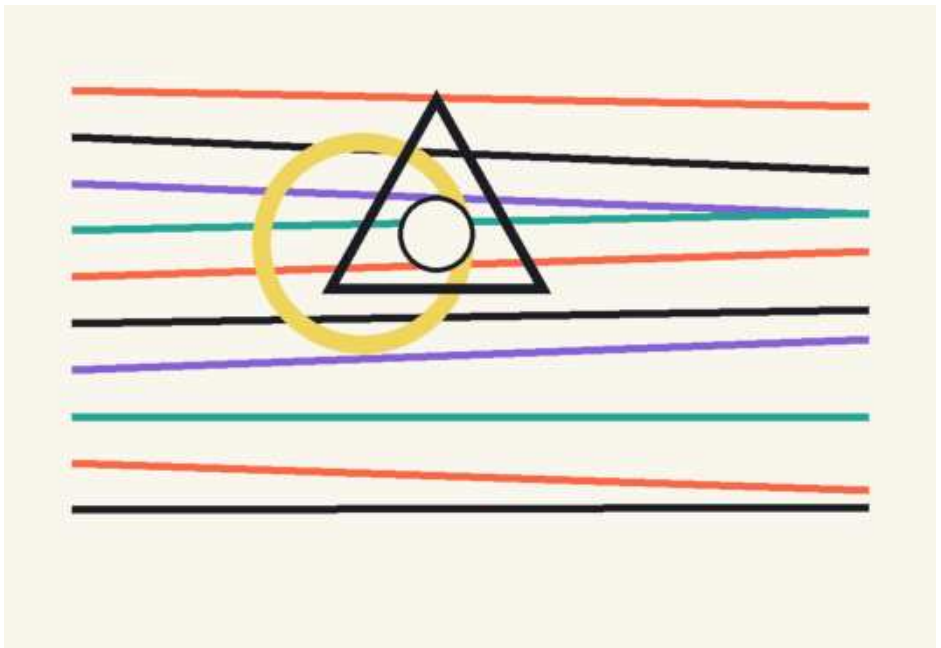
Picture 1

Doka and Doki loved each other beyond measure.

Whatever Doki asked, Doka tried to bring it at once. 'If

Doki asked for the stars, Doka might take a second to bring them, but he would never take a whole minute!'

The exaggeration shows how deep their love was. In the language of the folk tale, even impossible things seemed possible to Doka when he did them for Doki.





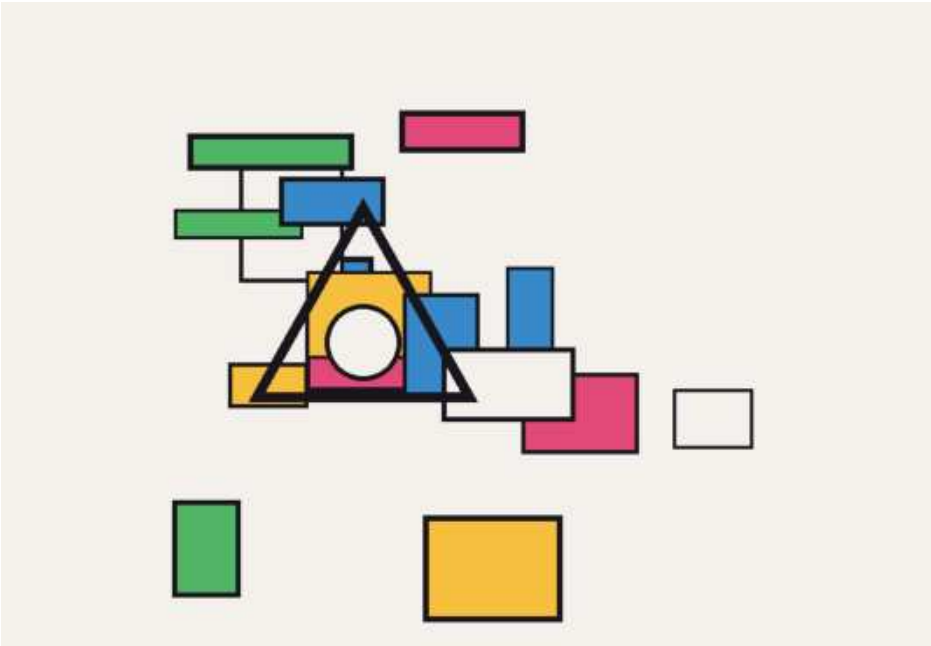
Picture 2

But such deep love can sometimes awaken jealousy in others. A jackal became envious of the love between Doka and Doki, and that jealousy slowly turned into a serious plan to separate them.

The jackal joined a female jackal with a cut ear or some other special mark, and together they planned to create trouble between Doka and Doki.

Chapter 2: The Jackal's Trick

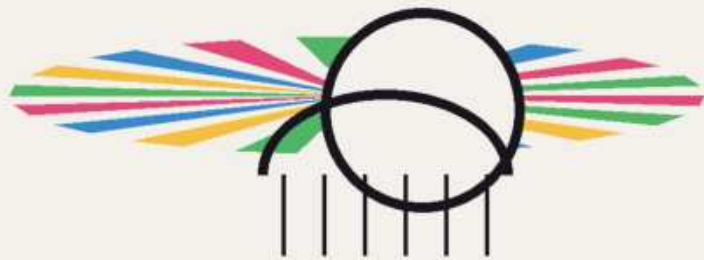




Picture 3

One day Doka and Doki were eating together from the same plate, a simple picture of their closeness. The jackal called Doka away, chatted with him about this and that, and then sent him off, keeping him away from the meal.

Next the jackal called Doki and said, 'You two love each other so much, but what Doka said has made me very sad!' It was a lie designed only to plant a seed of doubt in Doki's mind.





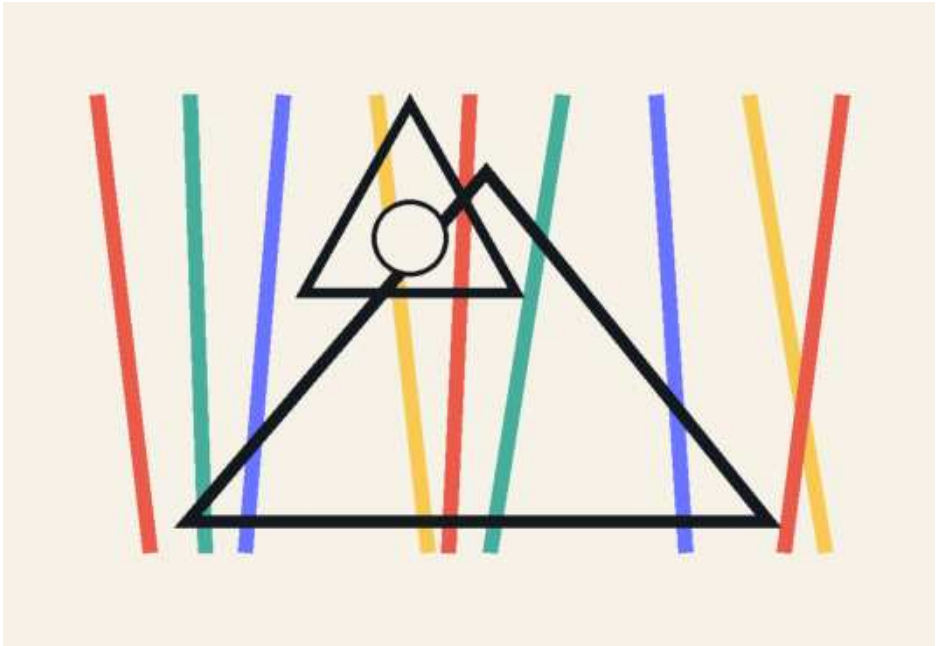
Picture 4

The jackal went on: 'It seems Doka's heart may belong to someone else.' There was no proof at all, but the accusation awakened the fear of betrayal in Doki's heart.

Doki began asking more questions, trying to find the truth and understand what the jackal meant. But by then the jackal had run away. After planting the seed of suspicion, he disappeared without giving any answer.

Chapter 3: Doka Disappears

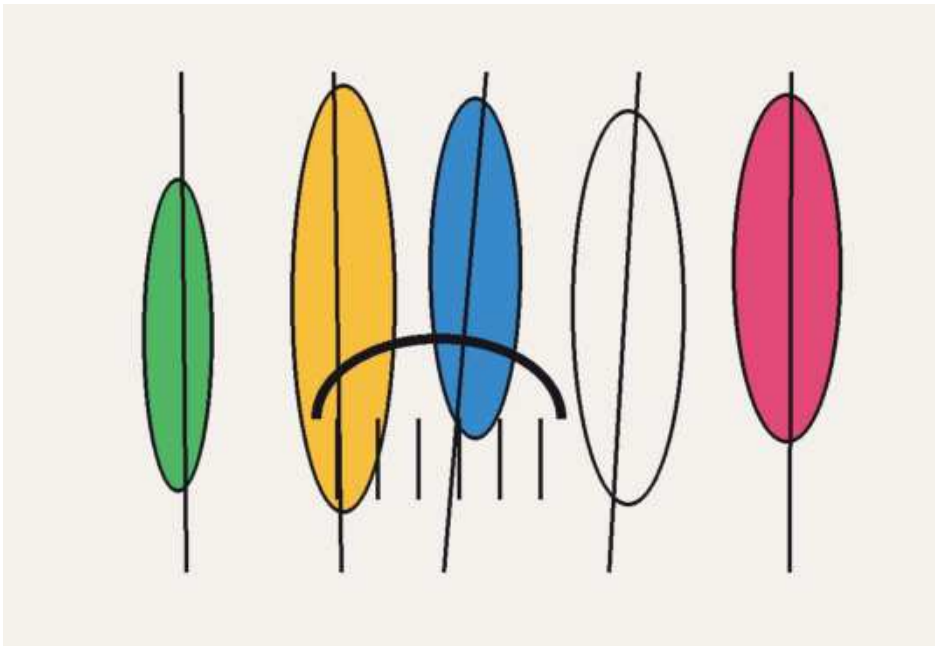




Picture 5

Doubt now sat heavily in Doki's mind. She became restless and upset at home. A crack had appeared in the trust that had held their love together.

Meanwhile Doka, who knew nothing about the jackal's trick, went into the forest to cut wood as part of his ordinary work. But he did not return.





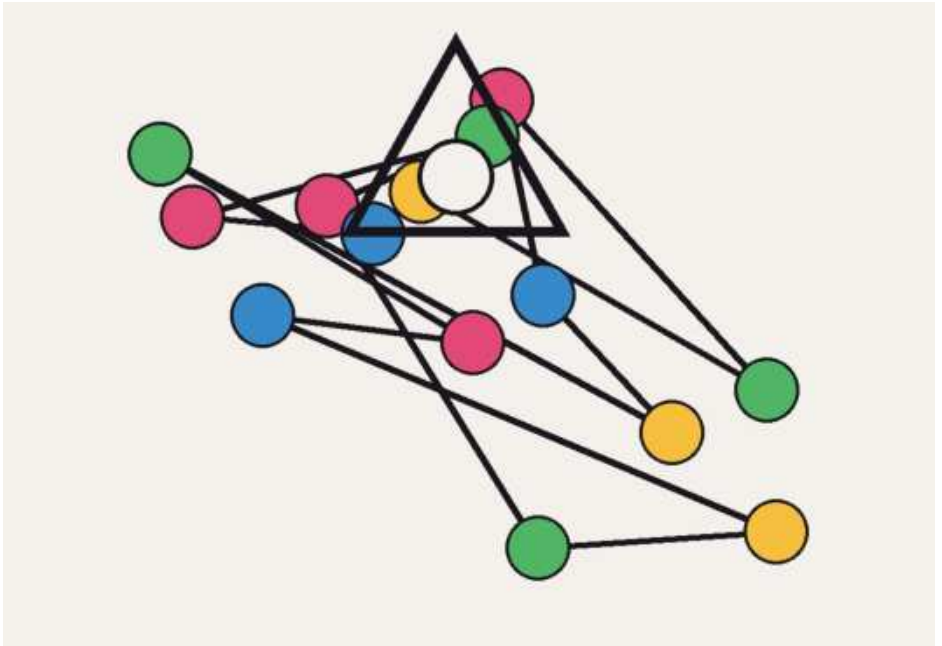
Picture 6

Doki's worry turned into fear. After waiting all night, she met a wandering yogi in the morning. Anxiously she asked, 'What has happened?'

The yogi replied, 'This is a curse from a former birth. The moment you lose trust in Doka, he will leave you. But on the seventh day you will meet him again.' This mysterious prophecy became the guide for everything that followed.

Chapter 4: The Search Begins

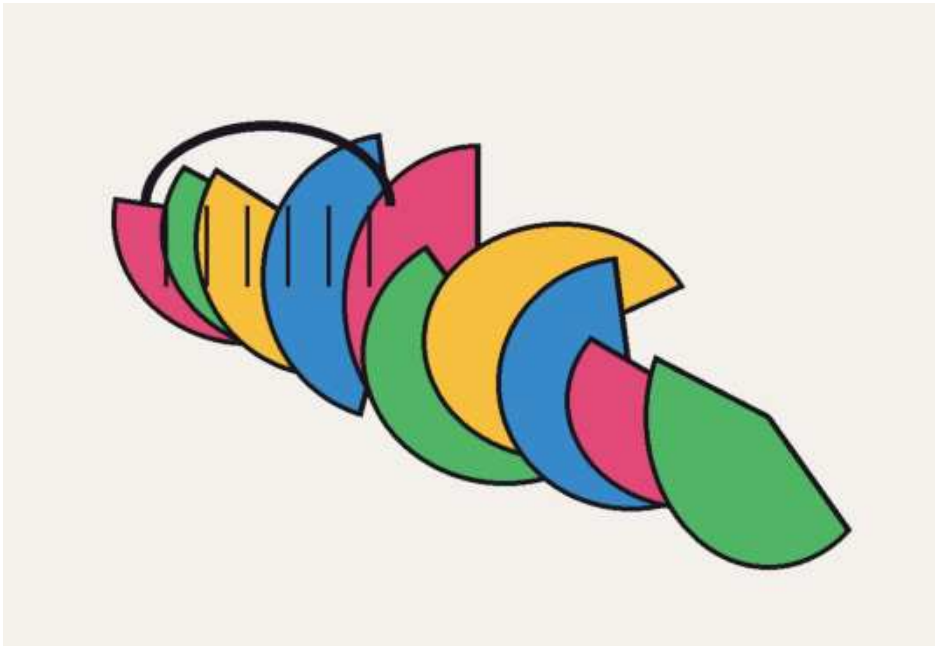




Picture 7

Even after hearing the yogi's prophecy, Doki could not sit still. Her love was too strong for patient waiting. She set out to search for Doka herself instead of simply waiting for the seventh night.

On the road she met a heron. 'Stay here tonight,' the heron invited her. But Doki refused and continued her search.





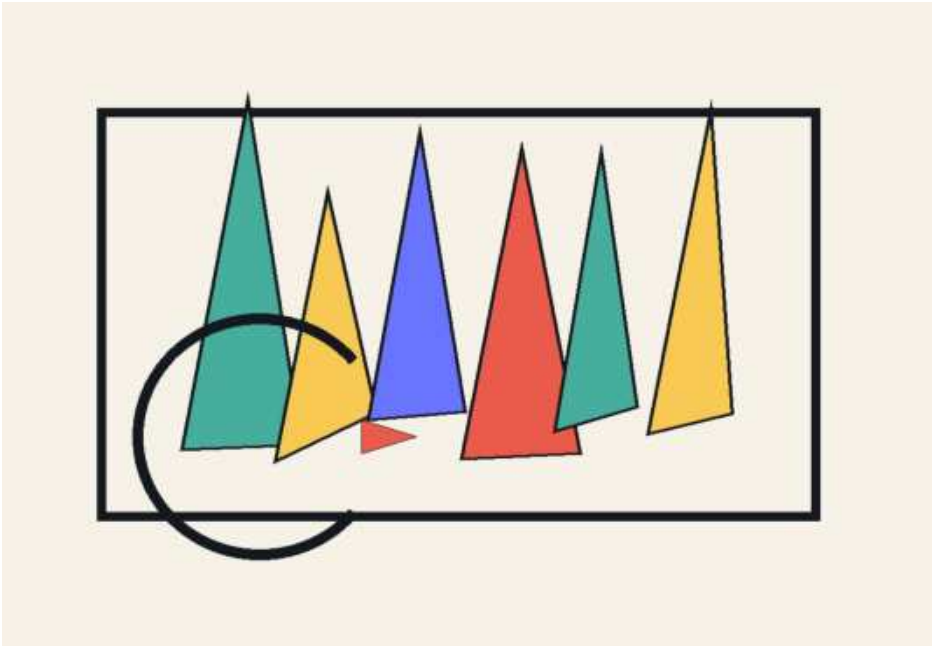
Picture 8

Farther on, Doki met another jackal, a banyan tree, and then elephants in the forest on the road toward Manasarovar. Each one told her, 'Stay with us for one night.' But Doki accepted none of the invitations.

Her refusal to stop showed the depth of her love. She gave up every chance to rest and ignored every distraction, keeping her mind on only one goal: finding Doka again.

Chapter 5: The Mouse's Story

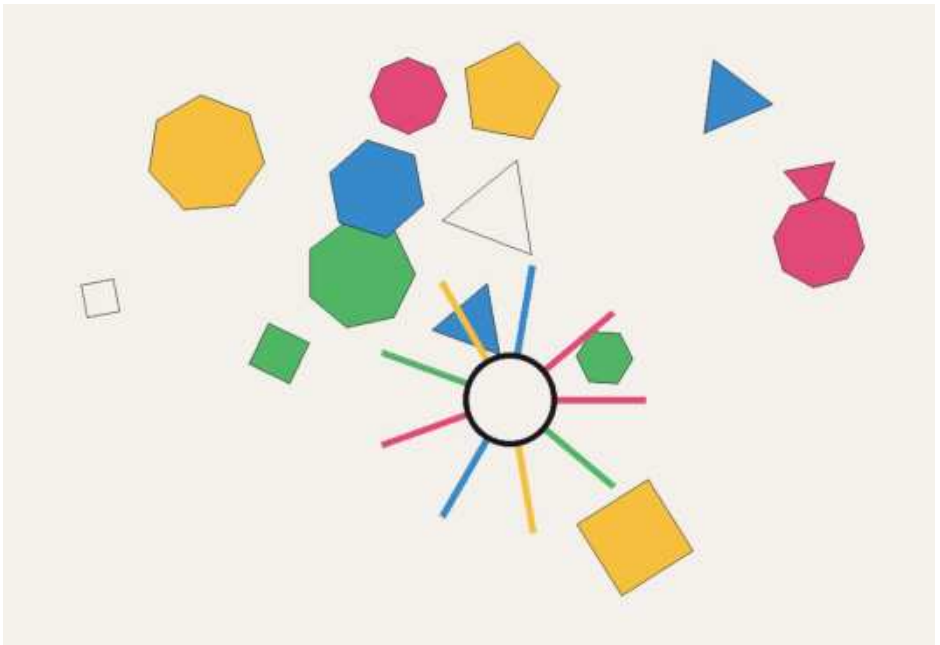




Picture 9

At last Doki met a mouse. The mouse said, 'Come with me. I will take you to the palace, and I will tell you stories on the way. After six nights, the seventh night will pass, and you will meet Doka!'

So Doki and the mouse travelled toward the palace while telling and listening to stories. The mouse made one condition: 'While I tell the story, keep saying yes from time to time so I know you are listening.'





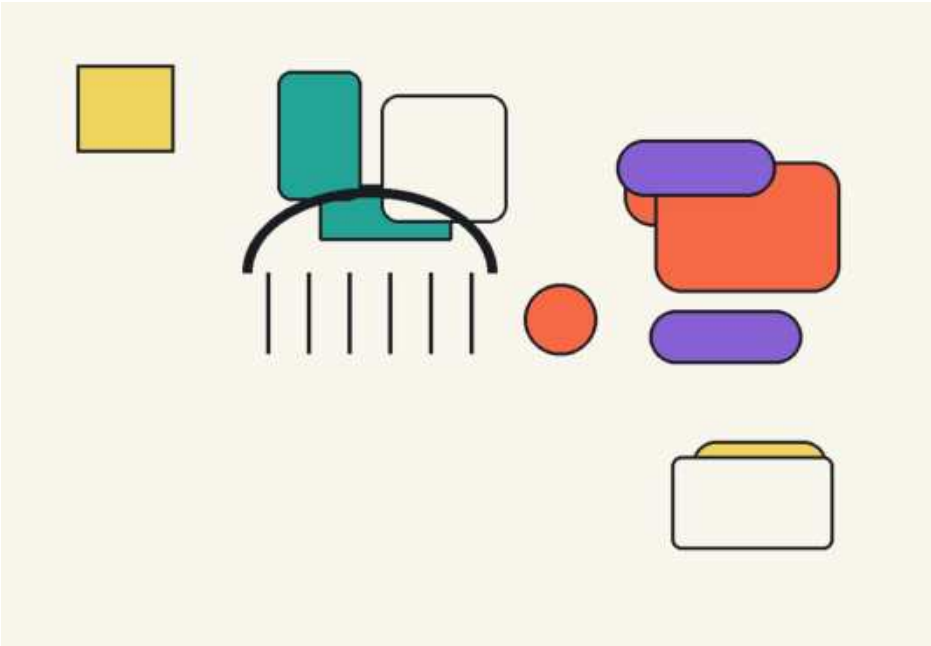
Picture 10

The mouse's story was rather long. After a while Doki forgot to say 'yes'. Her attention slipped for just a moment—and then the mouse forgot the rest of the story too.

However hard they tried, neither of them could remember where the story had stopped. Still, they did not turn back. Their goal remained clear: the palace, and Doka.

Chapter 6: Through the Tunnel





Picture 11

They made an opening in a wall and entered a tunnel. The journey through it was long and difficult. For two nights they kept walking through darkness and uncertainty.

At last they reached the palace, the destination of Doki's journey and the place where, according to the yogi's prophecy, she hoped to find Doka. Both travellers were tired, but full of hope.





Picture 12

At the palace, Doki decided to make halwa, perhaps as a welcome or simply because they were hungry. She put the ingredients into a cooking vessel and went out to fetch water.

But while she was away, something sad happened. The mouse could not resist the food. Whether from hunger or greed, he put his head into the vessel and died. When Doki returned and saw what had happened, she was overcome with sorrow.

Chapter 7: The Miracle of the Seventh Night

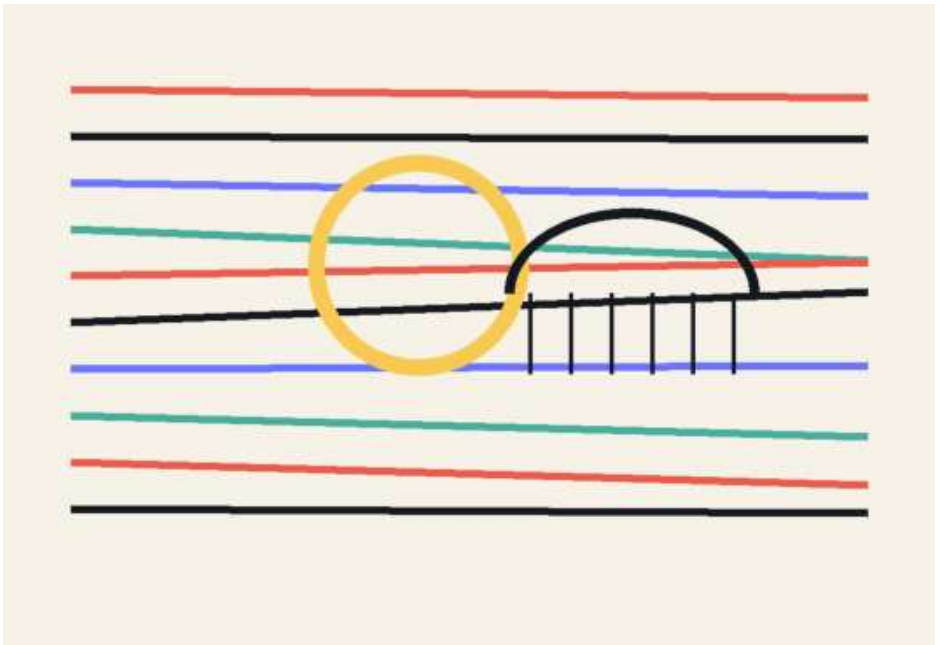




Picture 13

Grieving for the mouse, Doki sang a lament: 'I left the heron, I left the jackal, I left the banyan tree and mighty elephants, and I chose this little mouse.' The line remembers all the resting places she had refused before finally accepting the mouse as her companion.

The song continued: 'With Brother Mouse I spent six nights; on the seventh night he gave up his life.' The mouse who had helped Doki on her journey died on the seventh night, and the yogi's words about that night suddenly seemed to carry a new meaning.





Picture 14

Doki's heart filled with grief and despair. Her breathing began to fail, as though every hope in her life had come to an end. It was the darkest and most hopeless moment of the tale.

But at that very moment, when Doki's breath seemed about to stop and the last ray of hope was fading, the door opened. Doka stood there holding an axe. The yogi's prophecy had come true. On the seventh day, on the seventh night, Doka and Doki were reunited at last. All the

wandering, all the invitations she had refused, and all the hardship ended in the victory of love.

The End

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Gonu Jha and the Ten-Mark Baba

A Clever Man of Mithila Exposes a Pretender



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

ISSN 2229-547X

Prologue: The Drought in Mithila

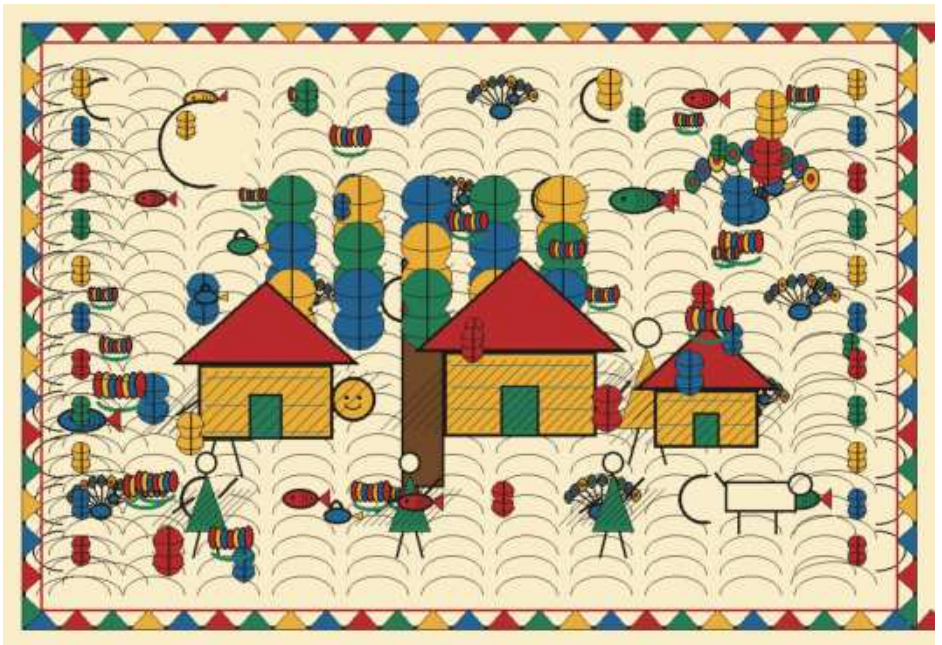
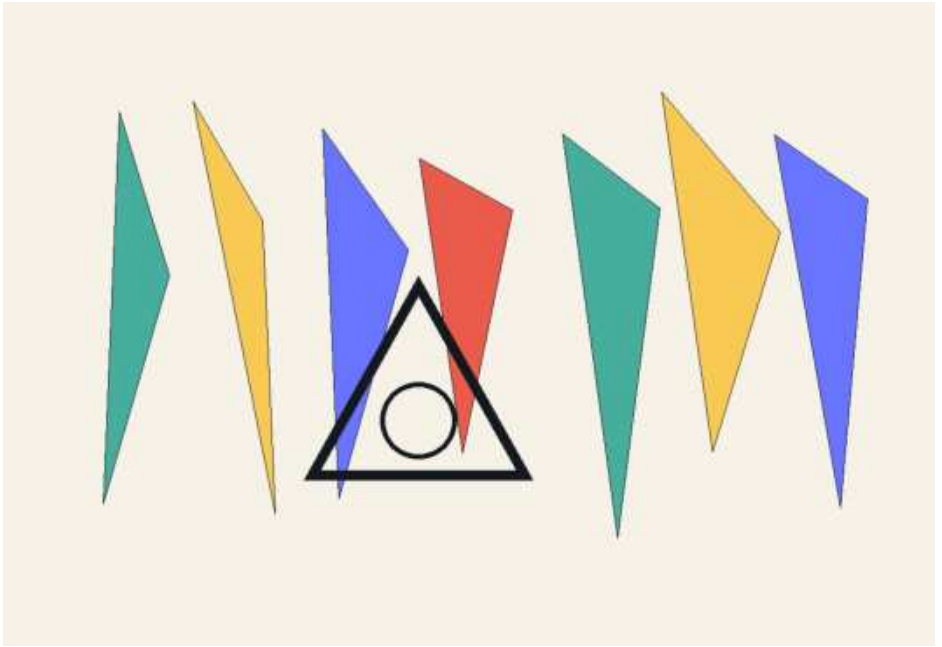
A terrible drought struck the kingdom of Mithila. The crops dried up, the people suffered, and the whole kingdom was deeply worried. The king had an announcement made: whoever could find a way to end the drought would receive a reward!

This is a tale of Gону Jha, Mithila's famous clever minister and adviser, whose wit still lives in folk stories today. It is an entertaining contest between cleverness and pretence, in which intelligence finally exposes a fraud.

Chapter 1: The Arrival of the Ten-

Mark Baba

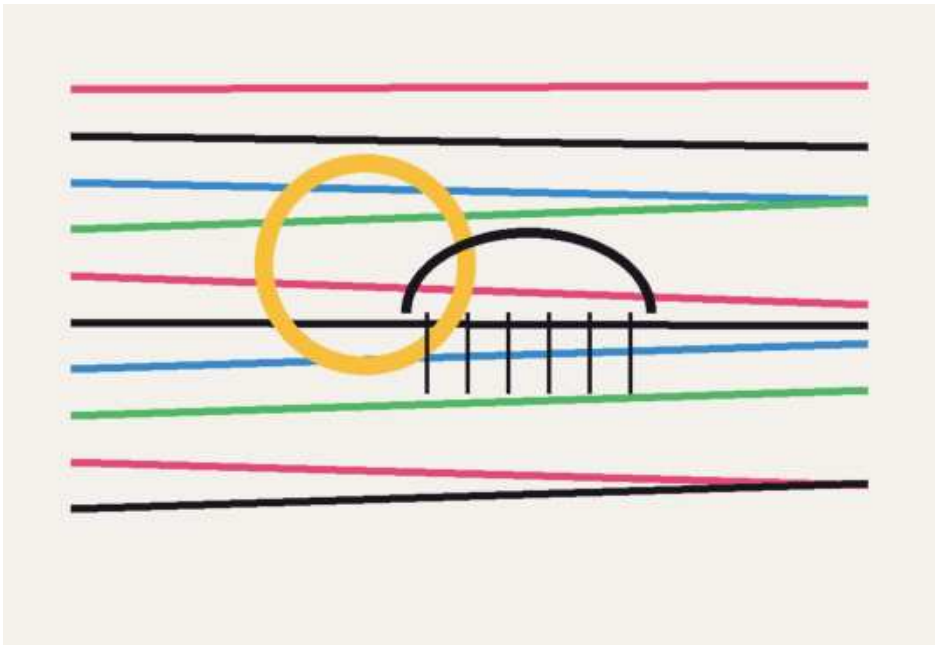




Picture 1

After the king's announcement, a huge holy man arrived at the royal court. He had ten large marks painted on his body and looked very impressive. He declared, 'I have spent a hundred years doing penance in the Himalayas, and I can make it rain by performing a sacred fire ceremony!'

To the king and his courtiers, this claim sounded like a ray of hope. In such a terrible drought, a holy man who said he could bring rain seemed more than welcome. The king believed him at once.





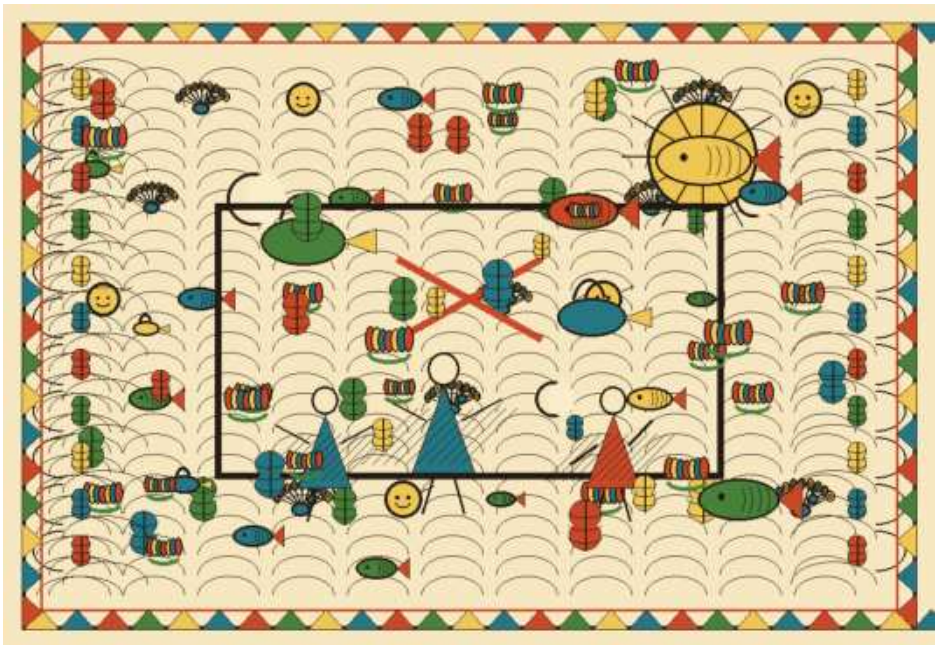
Picture 2

That evening, the Baba was given a royal place to stay and all the things he said he needed. He was treated with great respect because everyone believed in his supposed powers.

At that very time, Gonu Jha, Mithila's famous clever adviser, was away visiting someone. So he knew nothing about what had happened at the palace.

Chapter 2: Gonu Jha Is Surprised





Picture 3

When Gonu Jha returned that evening, his wife told him everything: the arrival of the Ten-Mark Baba, his bold claim, and the king's trust in him. Gonu Jha was astonished.

Gonu Jha's experienced mind immediately became suspicious. A hundred years of penance? A promise to make rain by a ceremony? It all sounded exaggerated and doubtful. He decided to discover who this Baba really was.



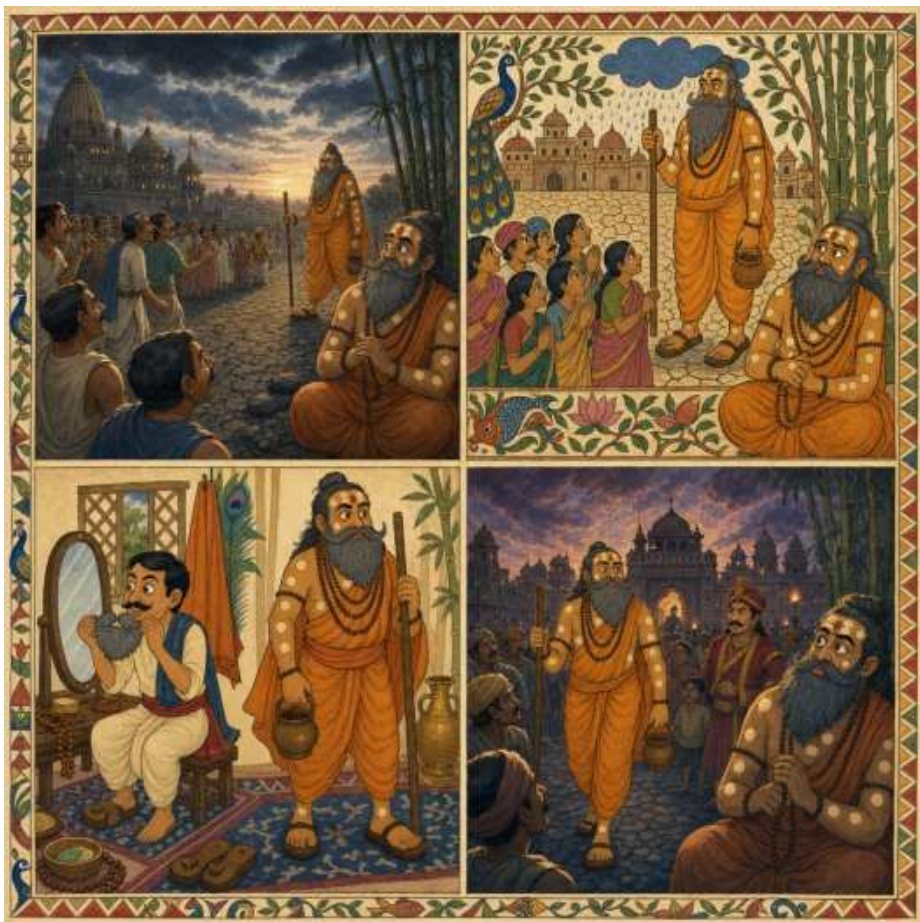


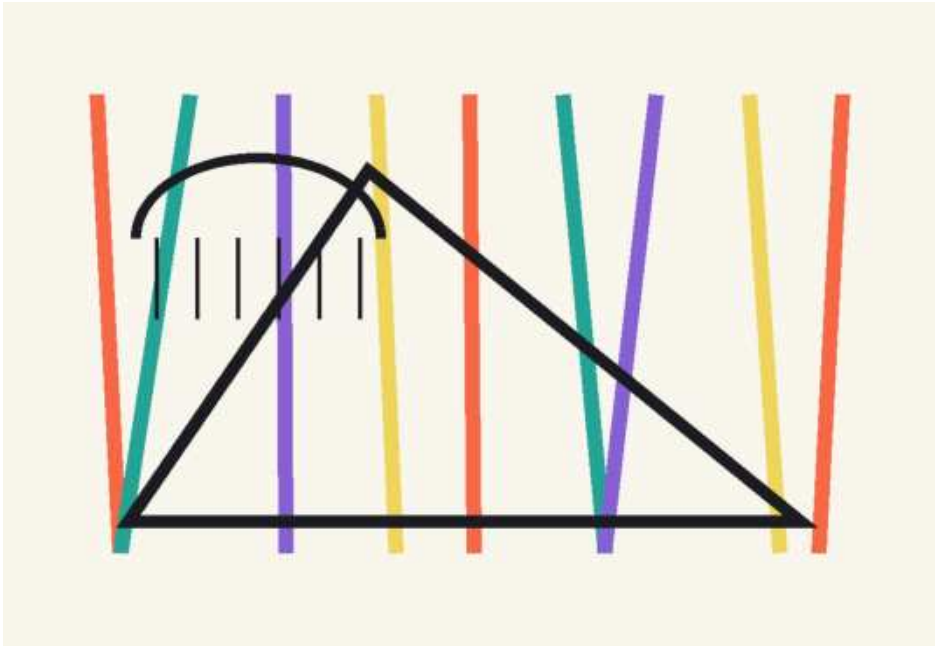
Picture 4

Gonu Jha set out at once to meet the Baba. He did not decide in advance that the man was guilty, but he remained completely alert. His purpose was simple: find the truth, and if the man was a fraud, protect the kingdom from being cheated.

This decision showed Gonu Jha's true nature: clear thinking, quick action, and deep loyalty to the welfare of the kingdom. These qualities made him unforgettable in the stories of Mithila.

Chapter 3: The Twenty-Mark Baba Appears

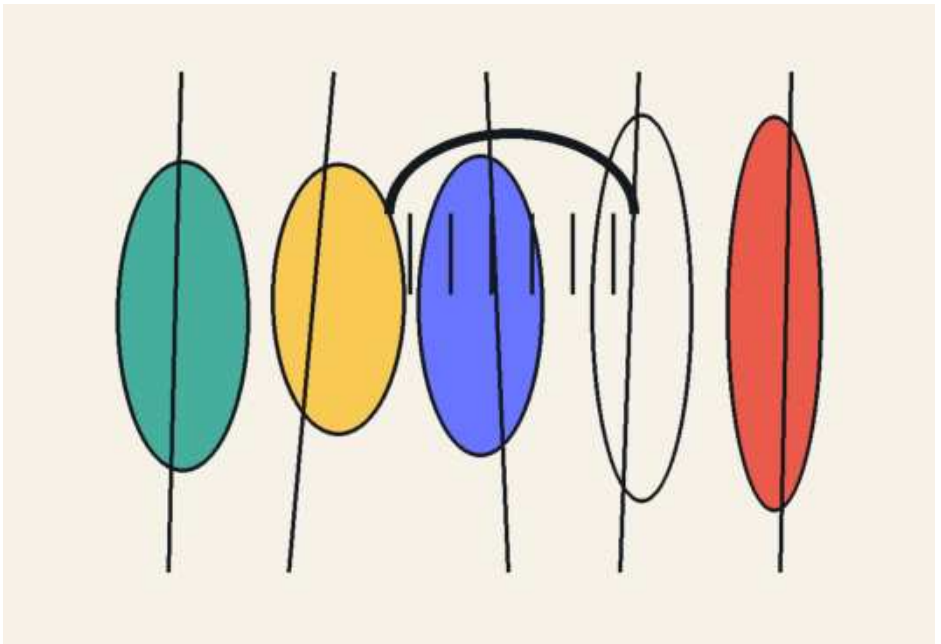




Picture 5

Meanwhile, something surprising happened. Before morning, news spread through the whole kingdom that a Twenty-Mark Baba had arrived too! Twenty marks were twice as many as ten, and suddenly there seemed to be a strange competition.

The new Baba was an unexpected challenge to the Ten-Mark Baba. If people thought a Baba with twenty marks must be more powerful than one with ten, the first Baba's claim to greatness would be in trouble.





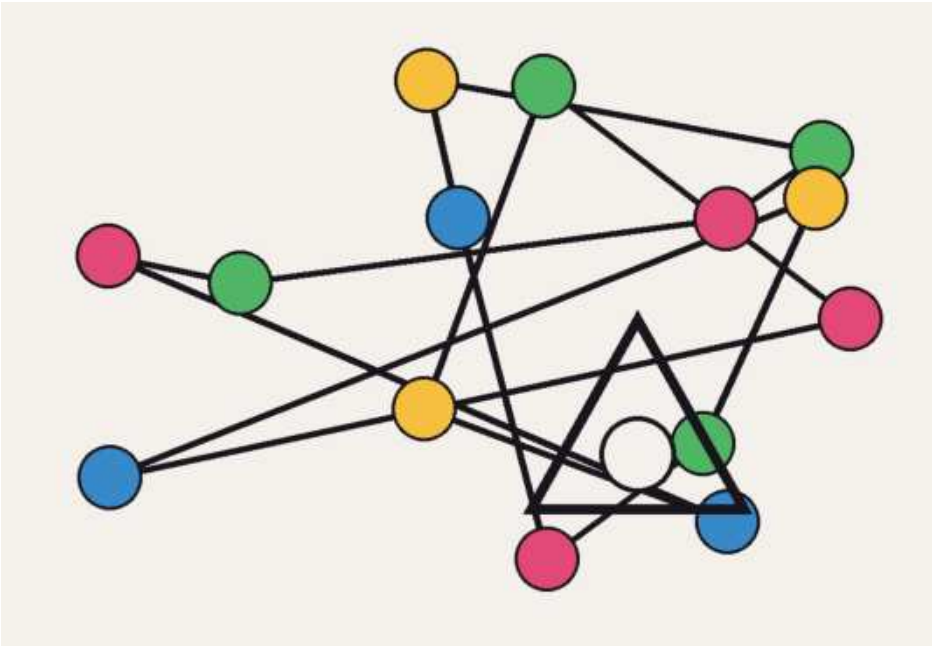
Picture 6

The 'Twenty-Mark Baba' was really Gonu Jha in disguise. He had hidden his identity with a false beard and moustache and had appeared in this form to test the Ten-Mark Baba.

It was a clever plan. Instead of accusing the man directly, Gonu Jha chose a playful and dramatic way to make the truth reveal itself.

Chapter 4: The Two Babas Meet

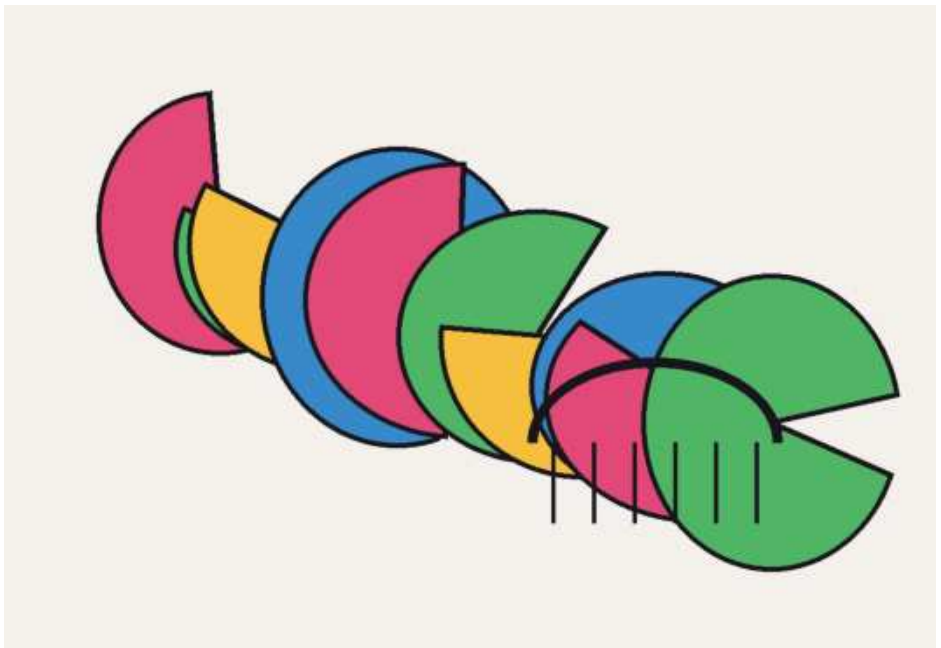




Picture 7

The Ten-Mark Baba met the Twenty-Mark Baba, who was really Gону Jha. Seeing his reputation challenged, the Ten-Mark Baba immediately became defensive.

He declared, 'If you are a Twenty-Mark Baba, then I am Shri Shri 108 Twenty-Mark Baba!' It became a ridiculous contest in which each tried to sound greater than the other without offering any real proof.



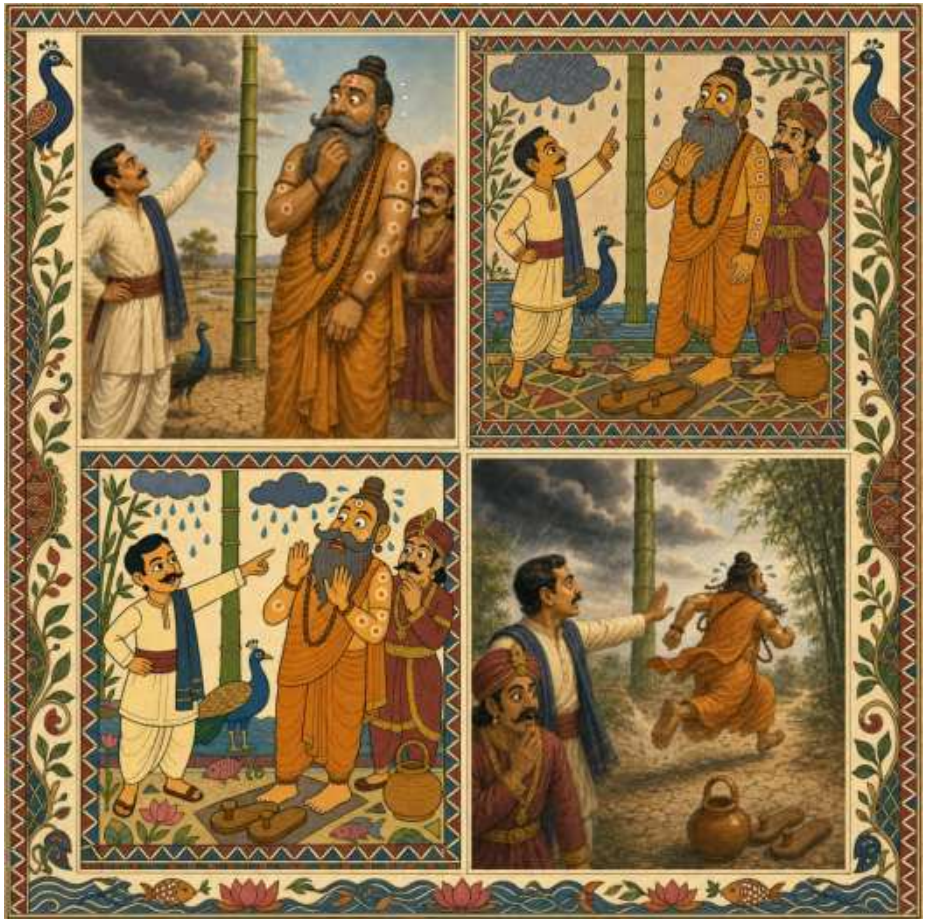


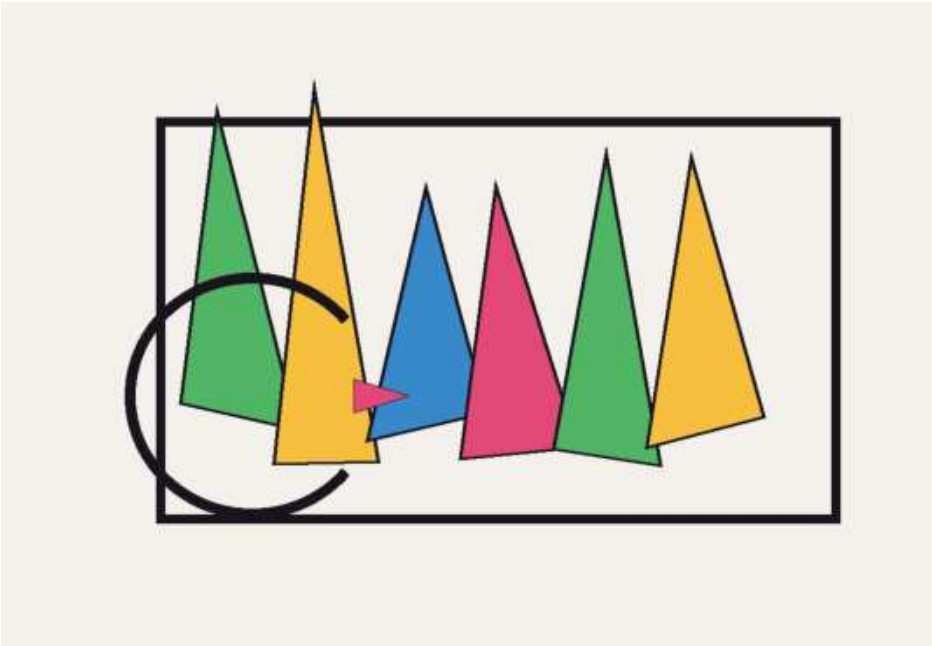
Picture 8

Gonu Jha, still dressed as the Twenty-Mark Baba, asked cleverly, 'Tell me, what method will you use to bring rain?' It was a simple question, but an important one. The real test had begun.

The Ten-Mark Baba replied, 'I have a bamboo pole. I will poke the clouds with it, and then it will rain!' The answer was so absurd that it clearly showed he was a pretender, not a true holy man with special powers.

Chapter 5: A Clever Question Exposes the Fraud

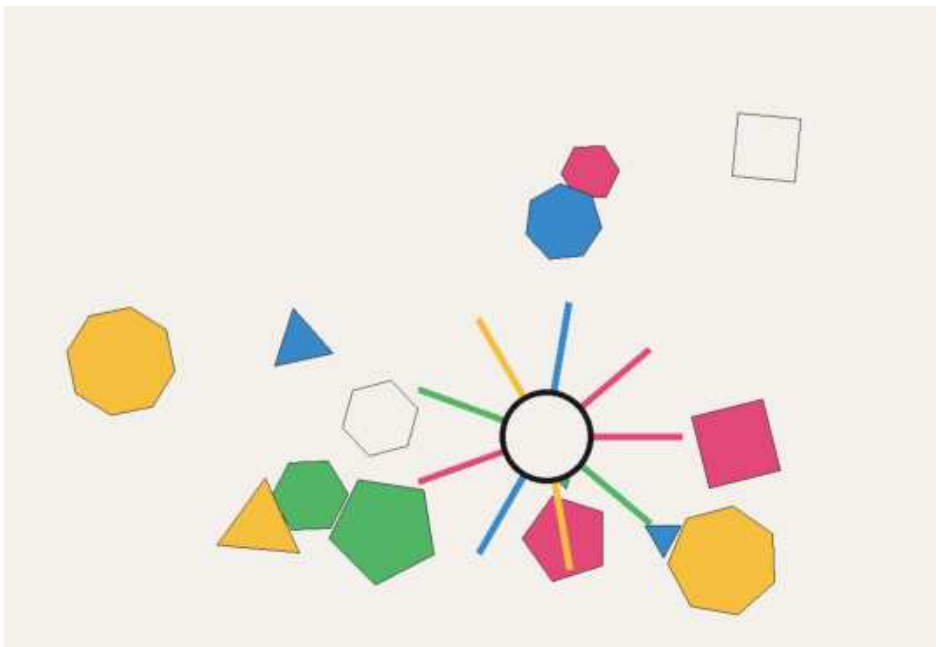




Picture 9

Gonu Jha, still in disguise, immediately asked a sharp question: 'Where do you keep a bamboo pole long enough to reach the clouds?' That one question was enough to expose the lie, because such a pole could not possibly exist.

The Ten-Mark Baba could give no sensible answer. His trickery was becoming clear. Gonu Jha then spoke plainly: 'You are nothing but a false holy man!'





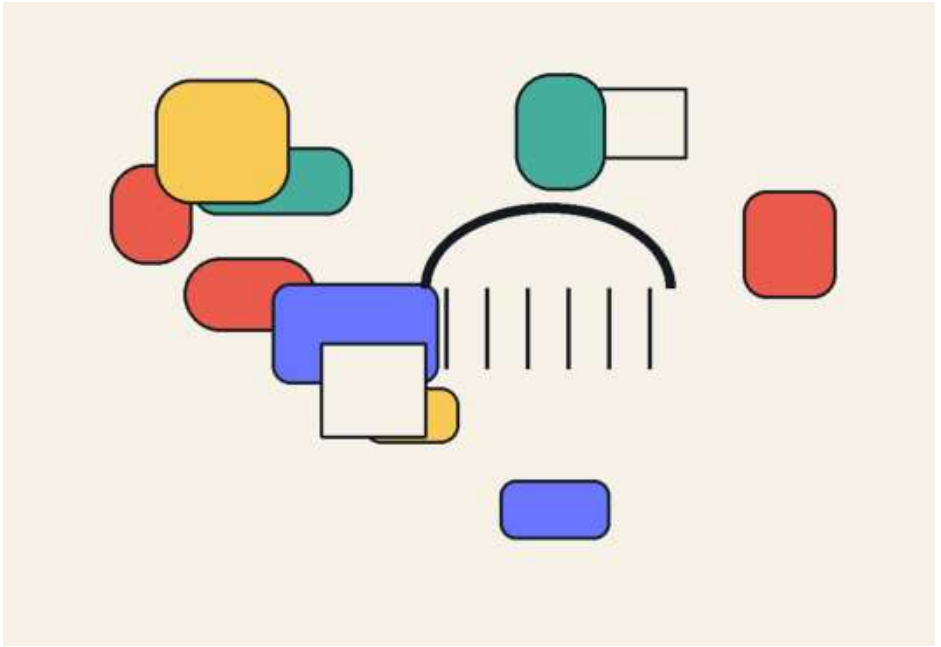
Picture 10

Hearing this, the Ten-Mark Baba panicked. He made an excuse that he needed to go to the toilet and hurried away, hoping to escape before everyone discovered the truth.

But Gonu Jha was watchful. He called after him, 'Hey! Take your wooden sandals and water pot with you!' By then the Ten-Mark Baba was already running away, leaving his belongings behind as one more sign of his fraud.

Chapter 6: The Secret of the False Beard





Picture 11

People ran after the Ten-Mark Baba and tried to stop him by grabbing his beard. Then something astonishing happened!

The beard was fake! The moment someone pulled it, it came right off. His whole appearance as a holy man was only a disguise. At last, the truth was out for everyone to see.





Picture 12

Once his false beard had been exposed, the pretender found a chance to run away. His lies had been uncovered completely. The kingdom had been protected, and truth had won.

Then Gonu Jha removed his own false moustache and beard and showed everyone who he really was. The mystery was complete! The king honoured him greatly for his cleverness. Gonu Jha's intelligence, courage, and loyalty to the kingdom became part of an unforgettable

story told from generation to generation - a story of
wisdom defeating trickery and deceit.

The End

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Jyoti Panjiyar

A Tantric Devotion Tale - From Curse to
Blessing



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

ISSN 2229-547X

Prologue: The Holy Man of Pampipur

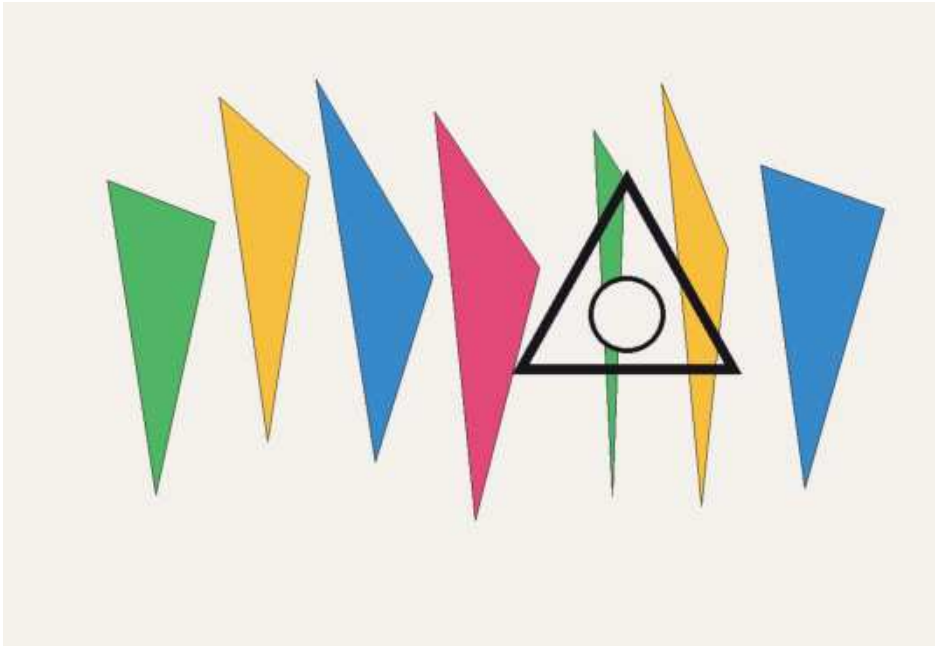
Village

Jyoti Panjiyar lived in the village of Pampipur. He was an accomplished tantric practitioner who knew many sacred rites and mantras, and his family deity was Dharmaraj himself. With his wife, Lakhima, he lived a contented life filled with faith.

But this story tells of a test that shows the difference between devotion and pride: one brief refusal, followed by twelve years of difficult penance, until a curse finally turns into a blessing.

Chapter 1: Dharmaraj Comes for Alms

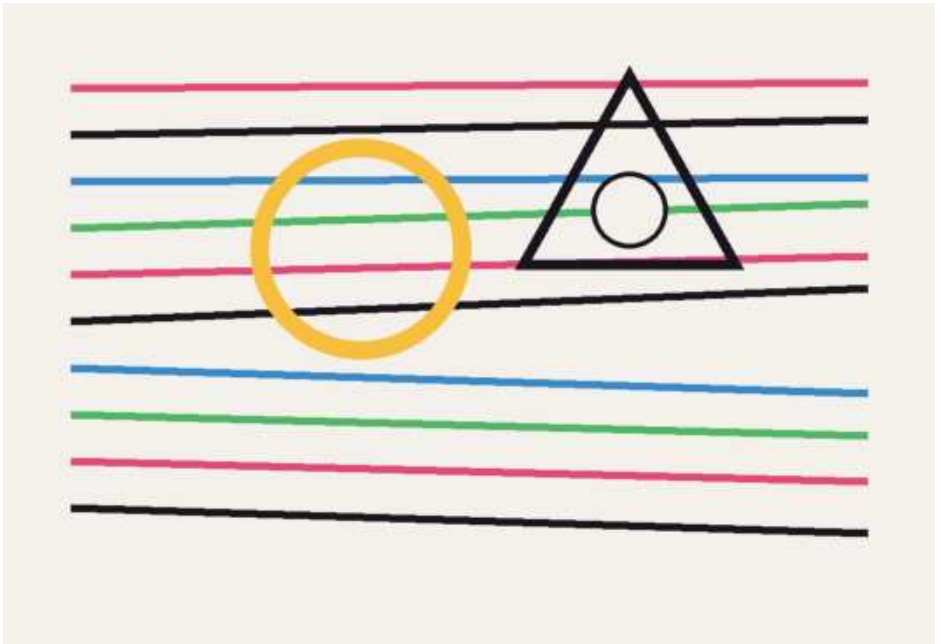




Picture 1

Jyoti Panjiyar was building a gahbar, a sacred shrine, with Lakhima. He worked with faith and complete concentration. Just then, a holy man came asking for alms. But this was no ordinary visitor. It was Dharmaraj himself, Jyoti's family deity, who had come in disguise to test him.

Lakhima carried grain in a winnowing tray and went to give it to the holy man. But he said, 'I will accept alms only from Jyoti Panjiyar's own hands.' It was a moment of testing, though Jyoti did not understand its importance.





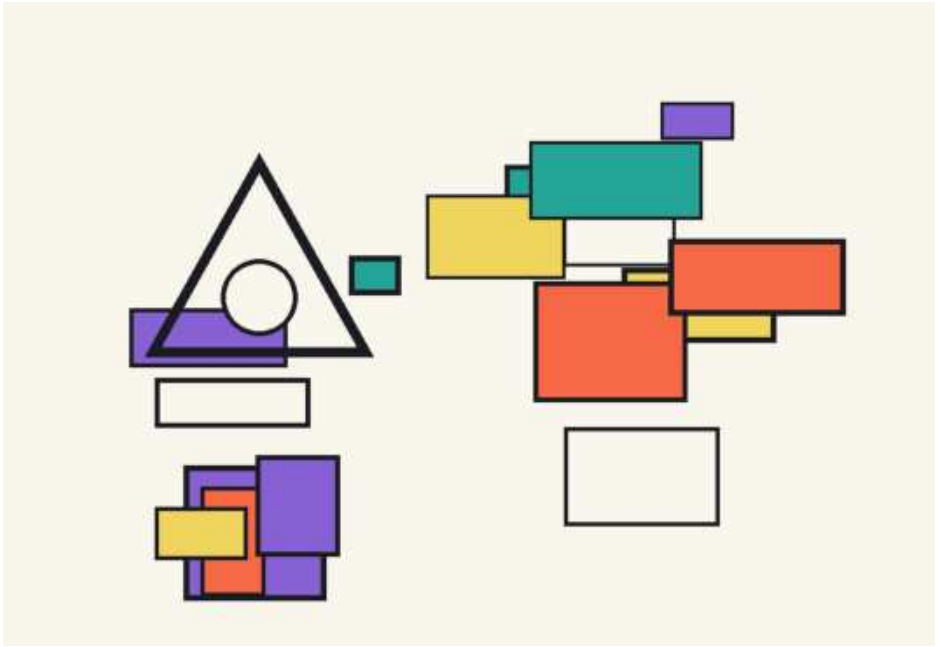
Picture 2

Jyoti Panjiyar was deeply busy building the shrine, so he refused. 'I will not leave this work to come there,' he said. It seemed like a small refusal, but in the test of devotion he had chosen his task over the deity who stood before him.

The holy man, who was really Dharmaraj, became angry and pronounced a curse: 'Jyoti Panjiyar will become poor, and leprosy will break out on his body!' The curse fell like a thunderbolt, and its effects soon began to appear.

Chapter 2: The Curse Takes Effect

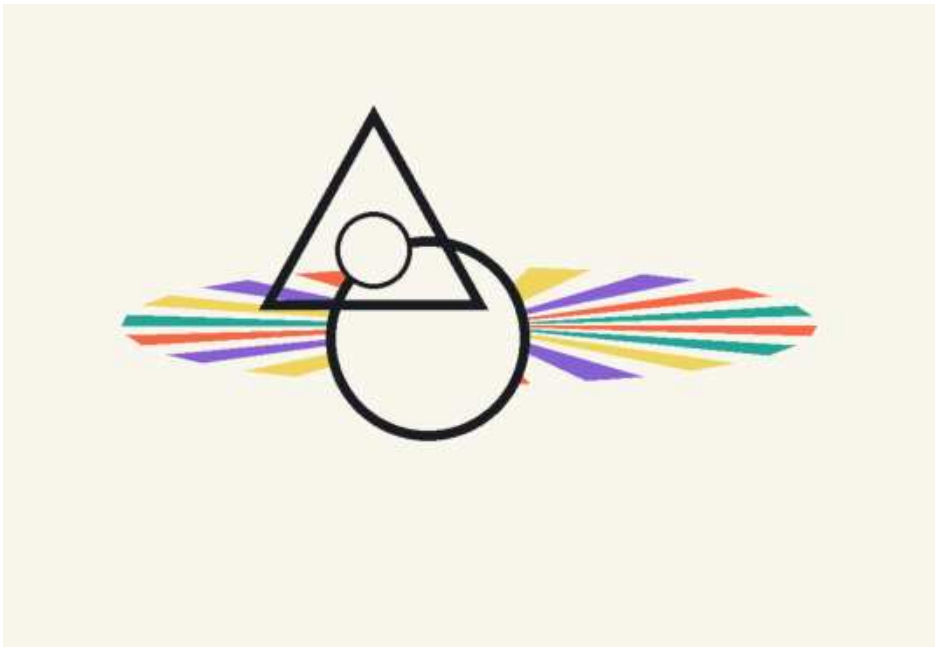




Picture 3

Little by little, the curse came true. Jyoti Panjiyar's wealth disappeared, and marks of leprosy appeared on his body. Once honoured as an accomplished practitioner, he now found people looking down on him.

In despair, Jyoti went to seek shelter with his sister, trusting the bond of family. But he was treated with neglect there too. His sister and her family hesitated to welcome their sick and penniless brother.





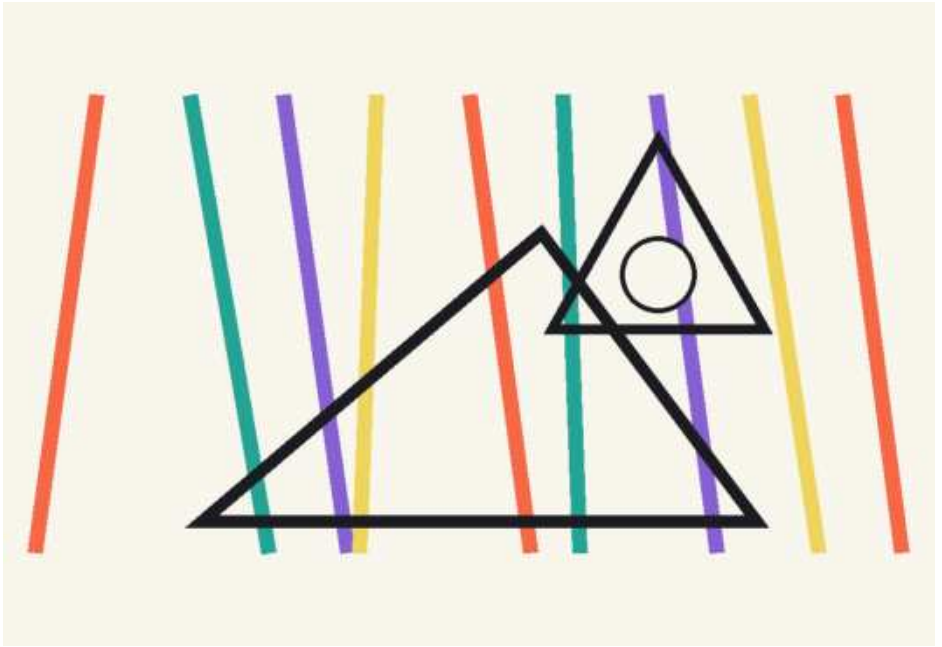
Picture 4

This rejection hurt Jyoti even more than the curse. A man who had once been respected now found himself turned away at the door of his own family. He left alone, not knowing what path lay ahead.

After wandering for some time, Jyoti reached the village of Oitdal and went to an old companion. There he found a little comfort, but he still did not know how to free himself from the curse.

Chapter 3: The Tantric's Instructions

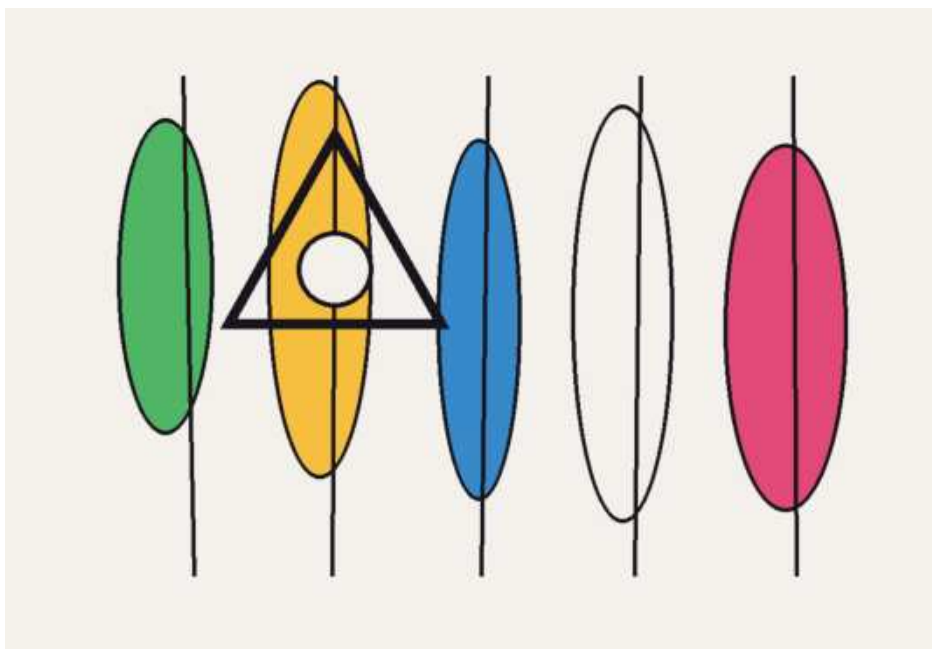




Picture 5

A learned tantric practitioner came to Oitdal and saw Jyoti's condition. He suggested a remedy: 'You must live in the banana forest for twelve years. Worship Dharmaraj there. Build a shrine and plant the sacred wooden posts. Make a bamboo house for Dharmaraj.'

'Dharmaraj will appear before you, and you will be healed,' the tantric said. Those words became Jyoti's only ray of hope. He was sick, poor, and rejected, yet he trusted the advice and prepared himself for twelve years of hard penance.





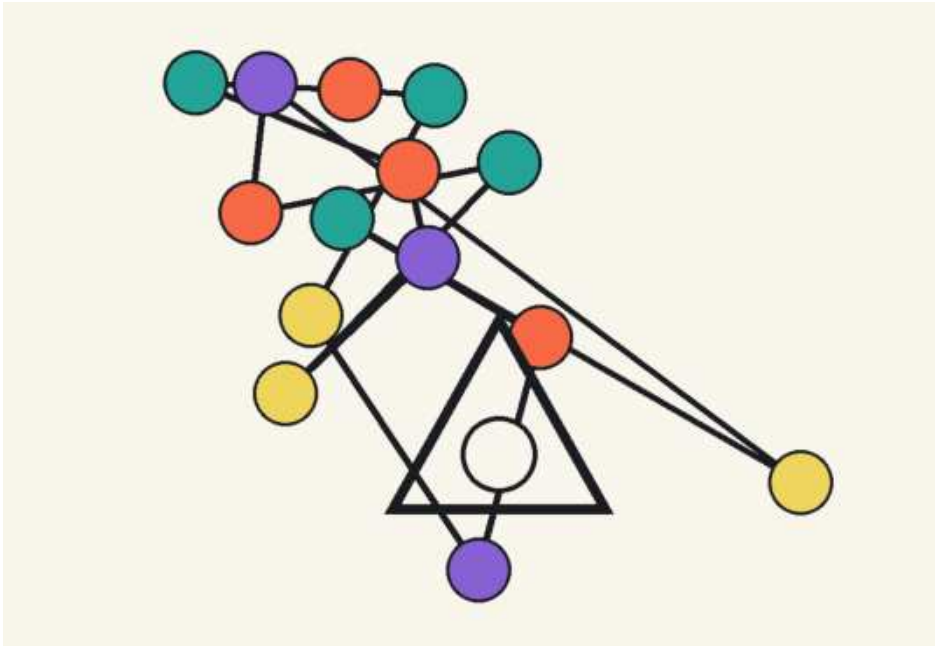
Picture 6

This was no easy penance: twelve years in the difficult wilderness of a banana forest, alone and in a diseased body. But the pride that had caused Jyoti's first refusal was gone. In its place was humble surrender.

Jyoti Panjiyar set out for the banana forest. He carried the burden of the curse, but also the hope of a blessing. The road was long and painful, and his true test began on that journey.

Chapter 4: The Sacrifice of the Saini Tree

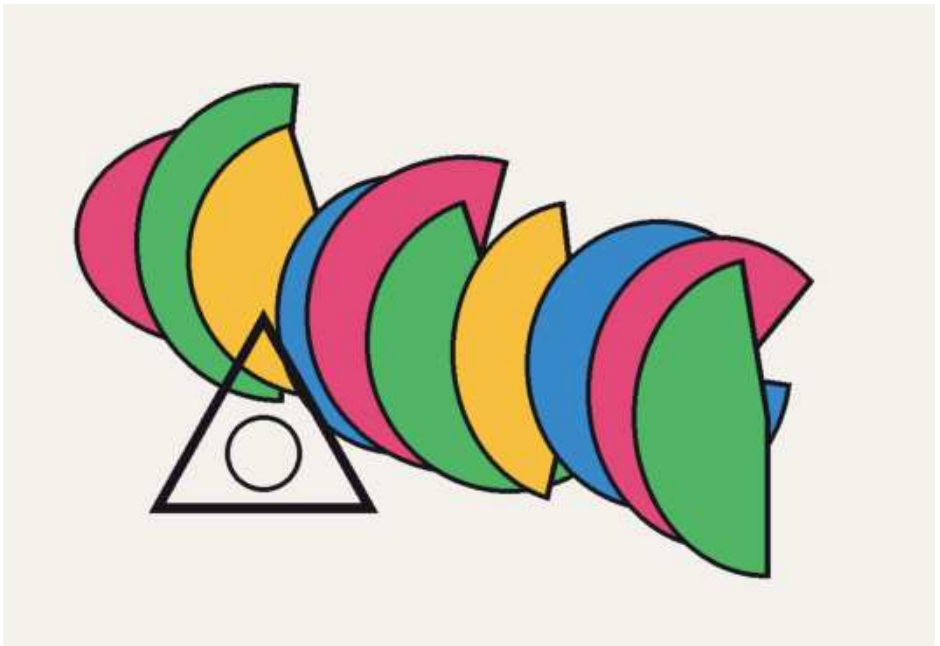




Picture 7

On the way, Jyoti came upon a great shady saini tree. His tired body badly needed rest, so he sat beneath its cool shade for a little while.

But the rest proved deadly for the tree. Perhaps because of the strange power of Jyoti's curse, or for some other unknown reason, the tree dried up, cracked, and fell.





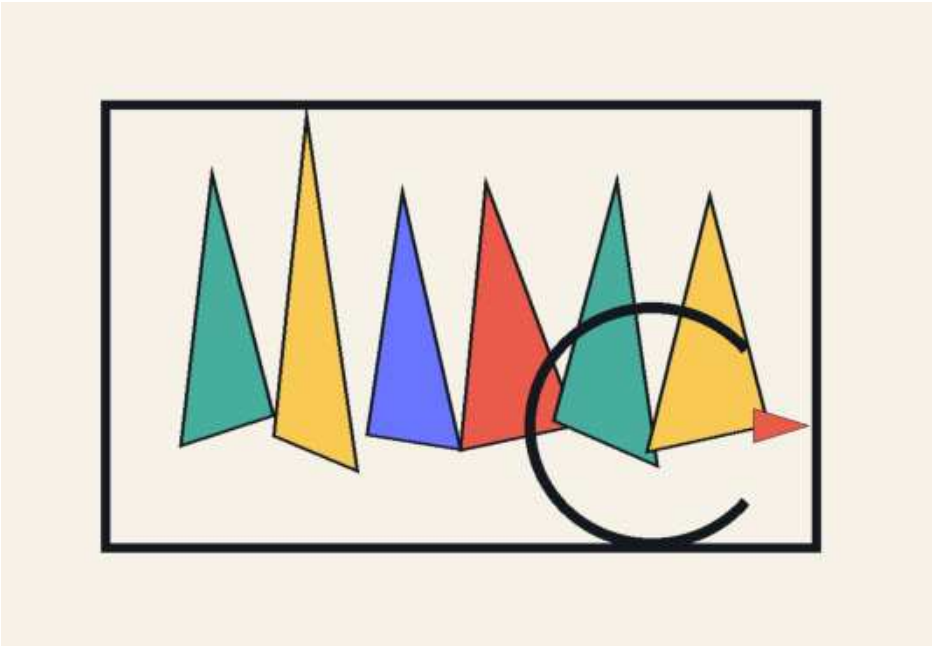
Picture 8

Jyoti stood stunned. The tree that had given him shade had died after he rested beneath it. The curse no longer seemed to affect only his own body; sorrow followed wherever its shadow fell.

The sight left deep pain in Jyoti's heart. He continued on, but now he stepped carefully, afraid that anyone else might suffer because of his curse.

Chapter 5: The Sacrifice of the Cuckoo

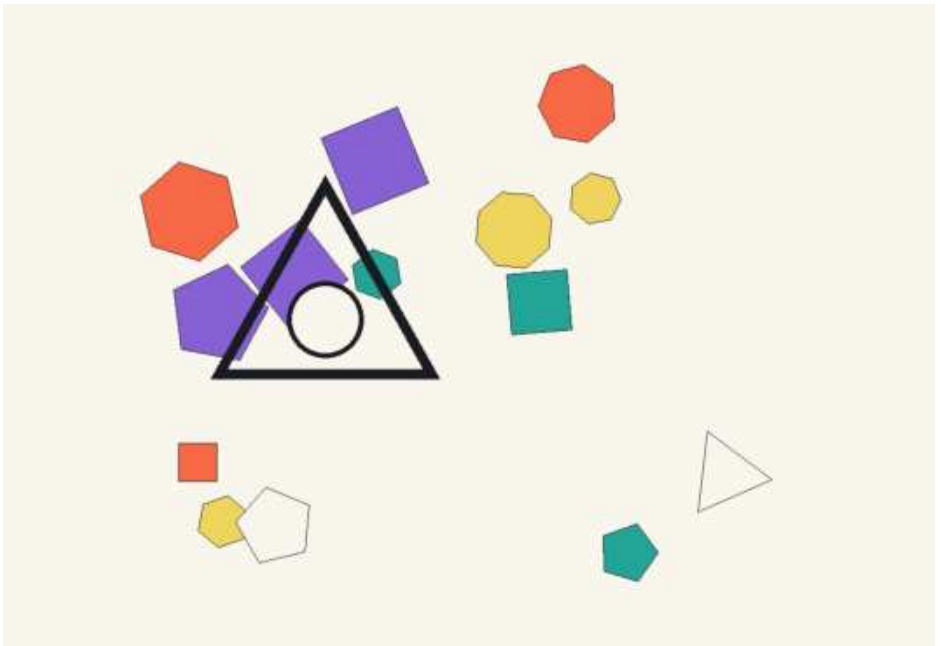




Picture 9

As Jyoti travelled on, he became thirsty. A cuckoo was with him, perhaps as a companion or helper, and Jyoti asked the bird to fetch water.

The cuckoo obediently flew away, but suddenly a fierce storm arose. The little bird could not survive the powerful wind and rain.





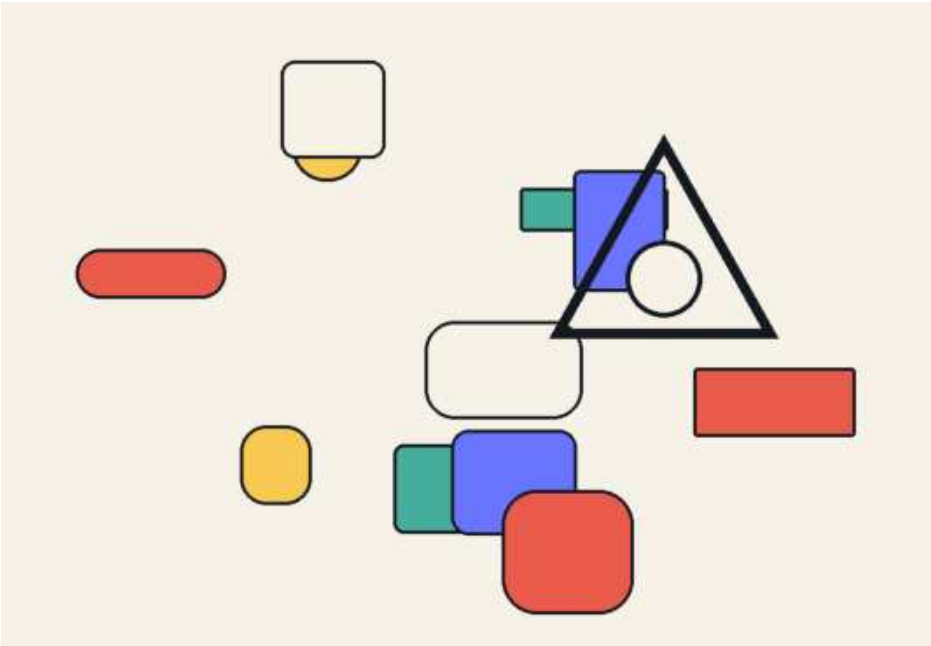
Picture 10

The cuckoo died while trying to serve Jyoti. It was the second loss on his journey, and his heart grew even heavier. First the saini tree, now the cuckoo - wherever the shadow of the curse fell, destruction seemed to follow. Still, Jyoti did not stop. His heart was full of sorrow, but he had no choice except to continue. The banana forest, the place of his penance, was still far away.

Chapter 6: The Journey to the Banana Forest

Forest

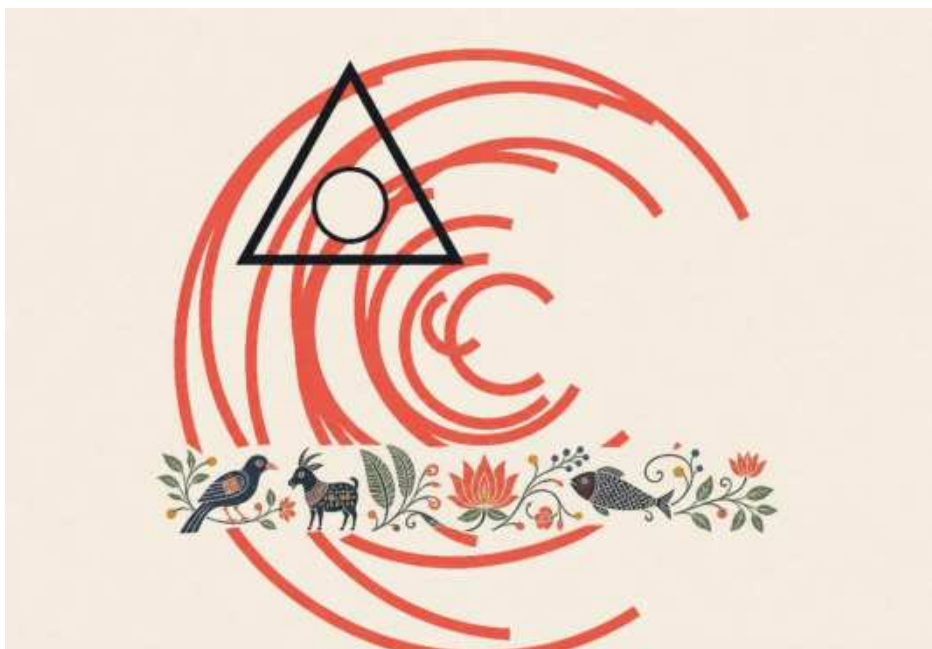




Picture 11

Jyoti reached the banana forest as if flying there - perhaps through tantric power, or perhaps this was a poetic way of describing his long journey. There he met a buffalo herder who told him, 'Go to the village of Achhmitpur.'

The buffalo herder was really Dharmaraj in disguise, once again testing or guiding Jyoti. The same deity who had once cursed him was now quietly showing him the way.





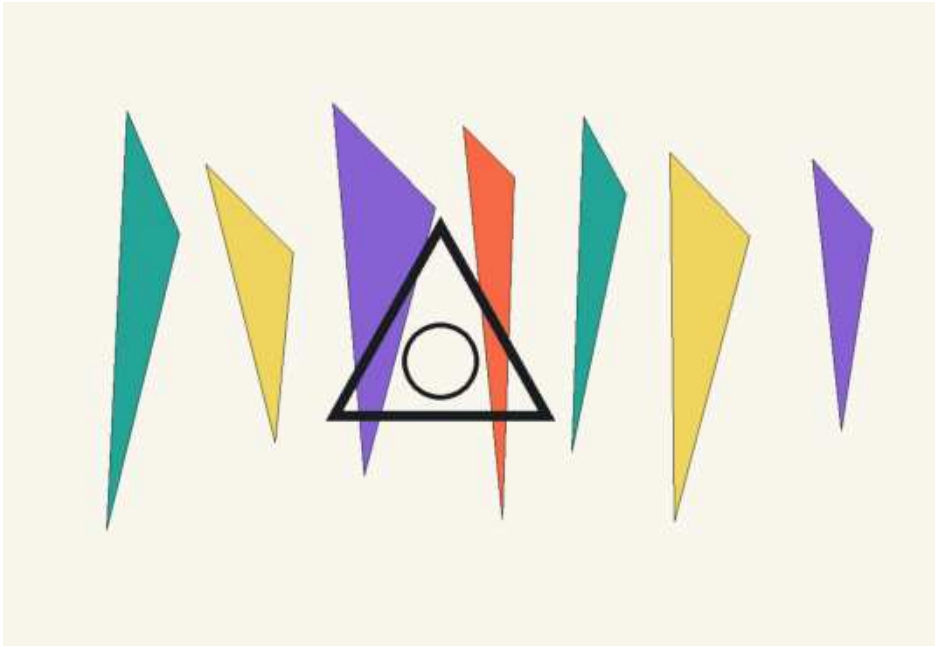
Picture 12

Farther on, Jyoti met another mysterious person, another divine form, who said, 'Ahead you will find a banyan tree. Pluck one of its leaves. The answers to all your questions will be written on it.' After saying this, the person turned into a pigeon. The play of the gods was becoming clear.

Jyoti plucked a banyan leaf. Written on it were the words: 'This is Achhmitpur.' His destination was now clear. The king of that place had no child, and this fact would become important in what happened next.

Chapter 7: The Blessing of the Goat

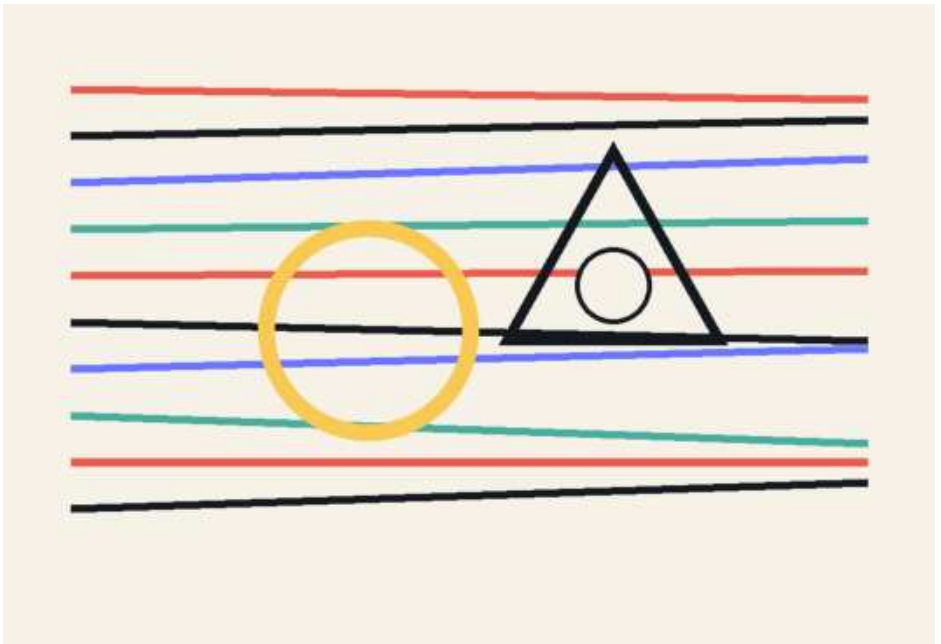




Picture 13

When Jyoti reached Achhmitpur, he blessed the king. The king's sorrow at having no child reminded Jyoti of his own suffering. Jyoti said, 'Begin raising a goat on the very day a child is conceived. When I return from the banana forest, this goat will free itself from its tether.'

It was a mysterious blessing: the goat's release and the king's hope for a child were tied together. The king trusted Jyoti's words and raised the goat exactly as he had been told.





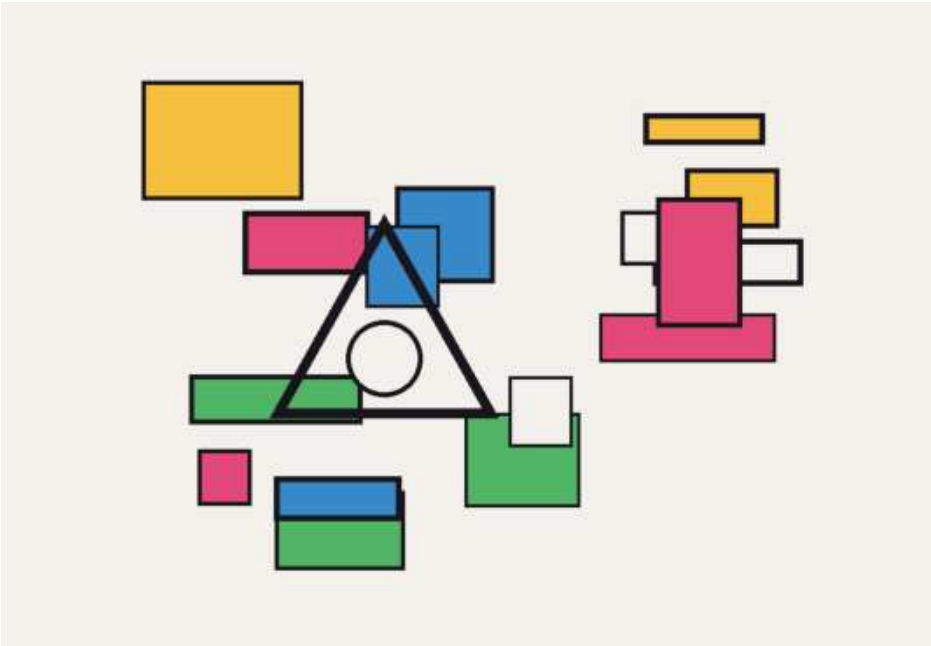
Picture 14

Jyoti then returned to the banana forest to complete his twelve years of penance. He built the sacred shrine, planted the wooden posts, and made a bamboo house for Dharmaraj, following the tantric's instructions without neglecting a single part.

Twelve years passed - long and difficult years, yet filled with steady faith. Jyoti did not complain and did not lose patience. His penance became an act of repentance for his earlier refusal. At last, Dharmaraj was pleased with him.

Chapter 8: Twelve Years Are Complete

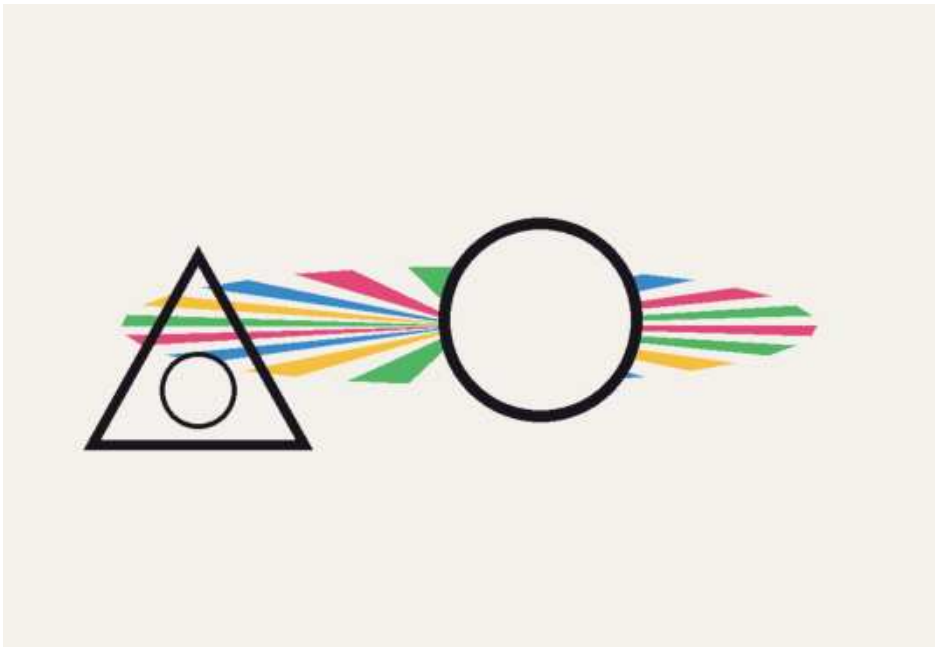




Picture 15

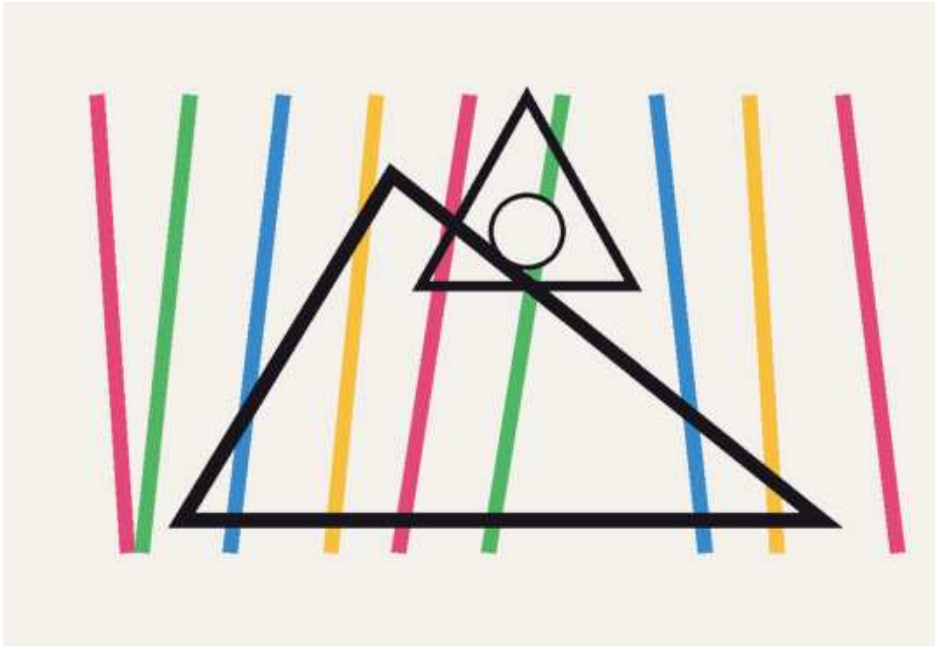
At the end of twelve years, Jyoti Panjiyar left the banana forest. The curse had been lifted, and he had received a blessing. The results of his penance now began to appear in wonderful ways.

The cuckoo that had died while serving him was brought back to life. A stream that had dried up began flowing with water again. Life returned to places where the curse had brought loss.



Chapter 9: The Miracle at Achhmitpur

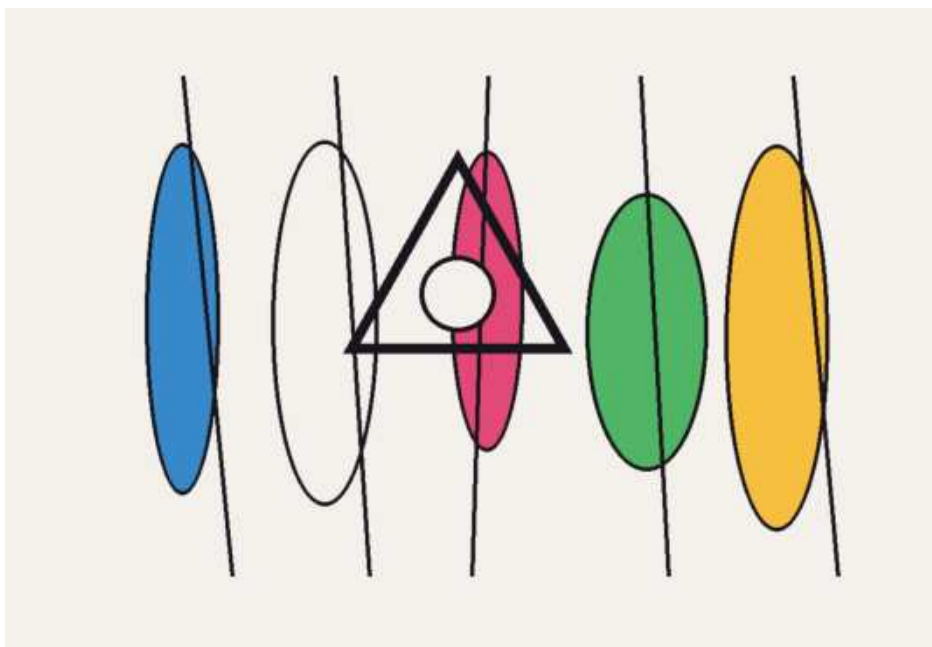




Picture 17

In Achhmitpur, the king gave Jyoti sad news: 'The goat and my son both died on the same day.' The joy the king had felt when a child was born had turned into deep grief.

But Jyoti Panjiyar was now free of the curse and filled with spiritual power. He brought the young goat back to life. That was the first miracle, but a greater mystery still remained.





Picture 18

Jyoti said to the young goat, 'Go to the stream in the banana forest. Climb into a boat there, and you will receive human form.' The command was mysterious, but the young goat obeyed because Jyoti's words now carried great power.

Meanwhile, the king's son also returned from the banana forest, riding home on a horse after hunting - alive and well! The mystery became clear: in some strange way, the lives of the goat and the prince had been linked, and Jyoti's penance had restored them both. Jyoti Panjiyar

then returned to his village of Pampipur, carrying the sacred shrine in his cloth. He was humble, free from the curse, and spiritually accomplished - a witness to the greatness of devotion and penance.

The End

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The Crow and the Fuddi Bird

A Tragic Chain Tale - The Final Price of Greed



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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Prologue: Dearest Friends

A crow and a fuddi, a small bird, were very close friends. This tale is about a test of friendship, a clever trick, and then a long chain of tasks that ends in an unexpected and sad way.

It belongs to a kind of story in which one request leads to another, and that one leads to a third. The chain keeps growing until, at last, one sudden turn brings the whole journey to an end.

Chapter 1: The Trouble of Famine



Picture 1

The crow and the fuddi were the closest of friends. Their friendship was so strong that they stayed beside each other in both happiness and hardship.

Then a terrible famine came. Food became so scarce that the crow and the fuddi decided they would eat their own young. The thought was dreadful, but the famine had made their hunger desperate.





Picture 2

The crow's turn came first. The fuddi and the crow together ate the crow's chick. It was a heartbreaking choice, but even in that terrible time the two friends stayed together.

Now it was the fuddi's turn. But the fuddi was clever and tricky. She loved her own chick and made a plan that might keep the crow away for a long time.

The fuddi said to the crow, 'You eat all kinds of things. My chick will become impure. Go and wash your beak in Mother Ganga first, then come back.' It was a clever excuse: in the name of cleanliness, she sent the crow far away.

The crow was simple-hearted and did not understand the fuddi's trick. He agreed and flew all the way to the Ganga, eager to finish the task.





Picture 4

At the river, the crow prayed, 'Mother Ganga, please give me water. I will wash my beak, then eat the fuddi's chick.' His plain request showed how innocent and trusting he was.

But Mother Ganga did not give him water at once. She said, 'Bring a small pot, and then I will give you water.' That was the first condition, and it sent the crow on a new journey. The chain had begun.

Chapter 3: The Potter and the Search for Clay





Picture 5

The crow went to a potter to ask for a small pot. But the potter did not simply hand him one. He said, 'Bring me clay, and then I will make you a pot.' A second condition, and a second journey.

The crow went to a field to get clay. The owner of the field said, 'Bring a deer's horn so you can dig the clay.' It was a strange request, but the chain continued, with each step creating a new search.



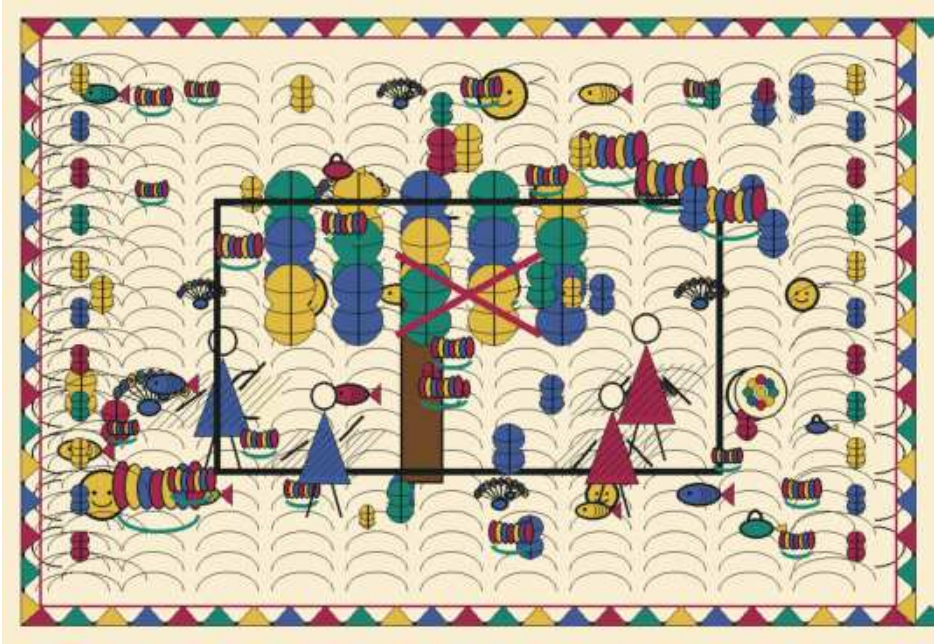
Picture 6

The crow went to a deer and asked for its horn. The deer said, 'Bring the lion here. Let him kill me, and then you can have my horn!' This was the strangest and most frightening condition yet, because the deer was speaking of its own death.

The chain had now entered a circle of life and death. Each creature needed the help, or even the sacrifice, of another. Without stopping, the crow went farther into this complicated web of tasks.

Chapter 4: The Lion's Condition and the Cow's Condition





Picture 7

The crow reached the lion and explained what the deer had said. But the lion replied, 'I am old and weak now. Bring me some cow's milk. If I drink it, I will become strong enough to hunt!'

The lion's answer admitted his weakness. Even the king of the animals can become helpless without food and strength. So the crow set out on yet another search.

The crow went to a cow and asked for milk. But the cow would not give him any. She said, 'Bring me grass. I will eat the grass, and then I will give you milk.' The chain grew longer still.

The grass told the crow, 'Bring a sickle and cut me!' Now even the grass required a tool before it could help. Still not giving up, the crow flew toward what seemed to be his final stop: the blacksmith.

Chapter 5: The Blacksmith's Two Sickles





Picture 9

The crow reached the blacksmith and sang the whole story of his journey: 'Brother Blacksmith, give me a sickle. I will cut the grass, feed the cow, get milk, give it to the lion, the lion will kill the deer, I will get the deer's horn, dig the clay, the potter will make a pot, I will fill it with Ganga water, wash my beak, and then eat the fuddi's chick!'

The song gathered every part of the long chain into one place. This kind of rhythmic repetition is a special feature

of chain tales, where each new step is added to the steps that came before.

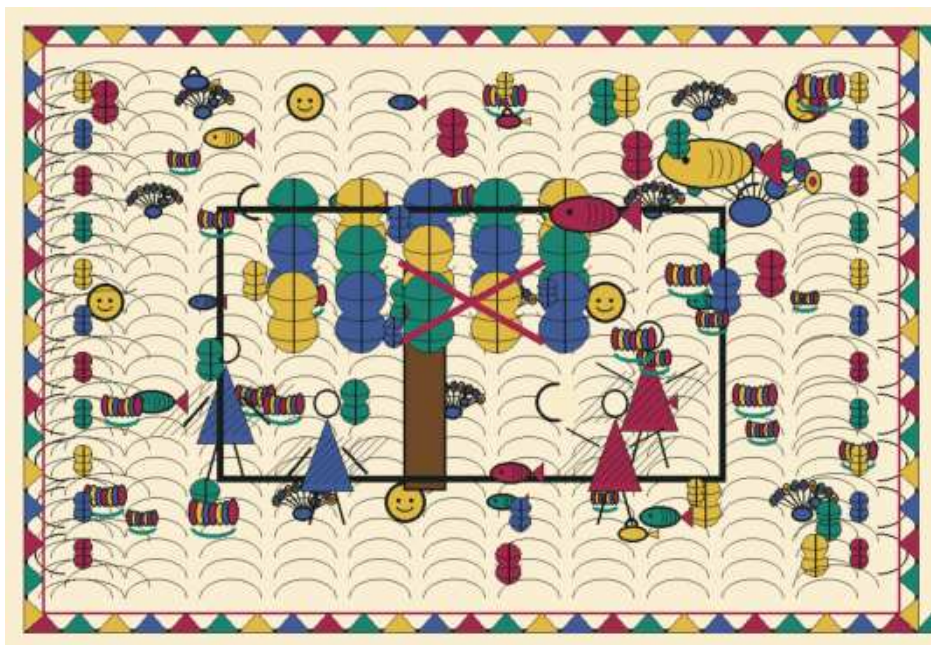


Picture 10

After hearing the whole story, the blacksmith said, 'I have two sickles, one black and one red. Take whichever one you like.' It sounded like an easy choice, but that choice would decide the crow's fate.

The crow liked the red sickle. Its bright colour attracted him, and he did not know how dangerous it was. That choice became his final decision.

Chapter 6: The Final Mistake



Picture 11

The crow did not know that the sickle was still red-hot from the blacksmith's fire. It had only just been made and had not yet had time to cool.

The moment the crow gripped it in his beak, he struggled in pain and died. The ending was so sudden and unexpected that the whole long chain of tasks came to nothing in a single moment.



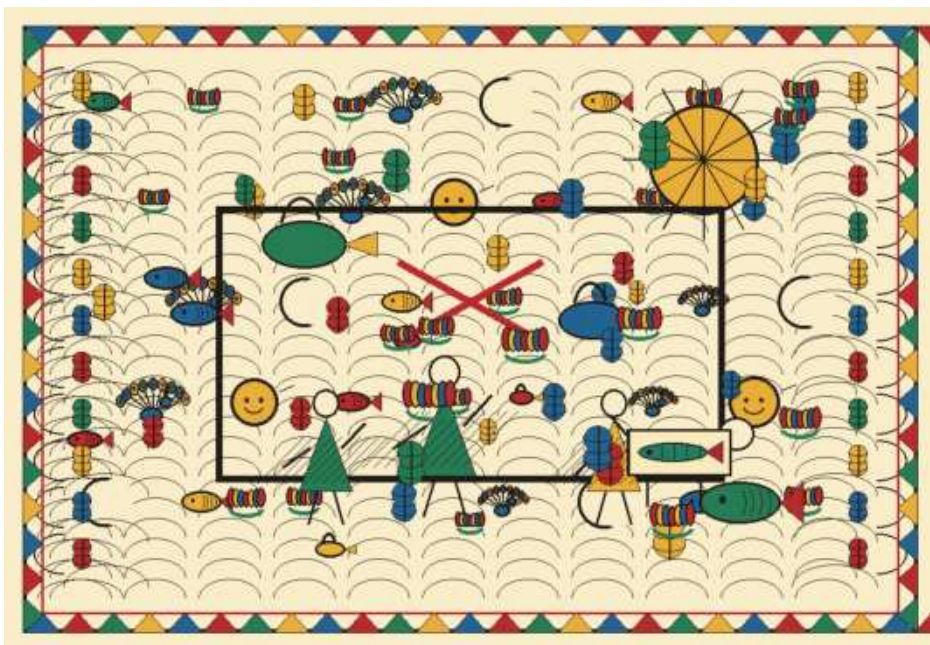
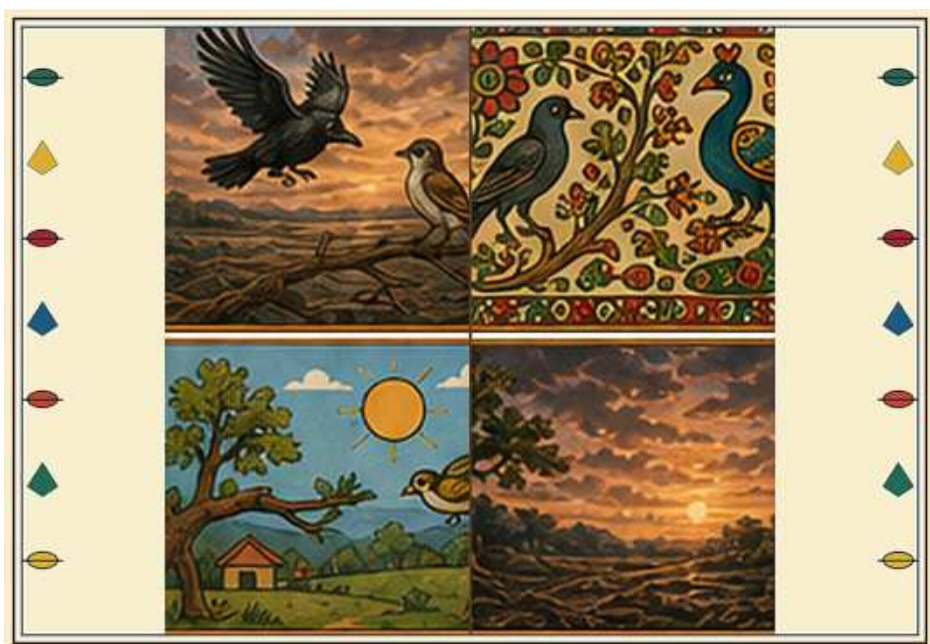


Picture 12

Think of it: the Ganga asked for a pot, the pot required clay, the clay required a horn, the horn required the lion, the lion required milk, the cow required grass, and the grass required a sickle. After such a long and difficult journey, the crow never even reached his goal of eating the fuddi's chick.

This was the saddest and most ironic turn in the tale. The fuddi's trick had only been meant to delay the crow, but it ended in his death. She saved her chick, but at the terrible cost of losing her friend.

Chapter 7: What the Chain Teaches



Picture 13

The tale gives a thoughtful lesson: our needs and wishes are often connected to one another in long chains of dependence. Even a simple task, such as washing a beak, can become complicated when it depends on many other things.

The fuddi's trick began only as a plan to save her chick, but it ended with the loss of a life. A plan built on trickery can bring results no one expected, even when the first intention seems understandable.





Picture 14

The crow's trusting nature teaches another lesson. He accepted every condition without questioning it or thinking about where the journey was leading him. Sometimes being too trusting can also be dangerous.

Finally, this story is a fine example of a cumulative, or chain, tale. Each part leads to the next, and then one unexpected turn brings the entire chain to a dramatic end. The story of the crow and the fuddi has remained a memorable part of Mithila's folk tradition - a tale that can

make children smile at its pattern and also make them think about its meaning.

The End

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Madhav Singh and Amta Village

Raga Megh-Malhar, Rain, and a King's Final
Journey



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

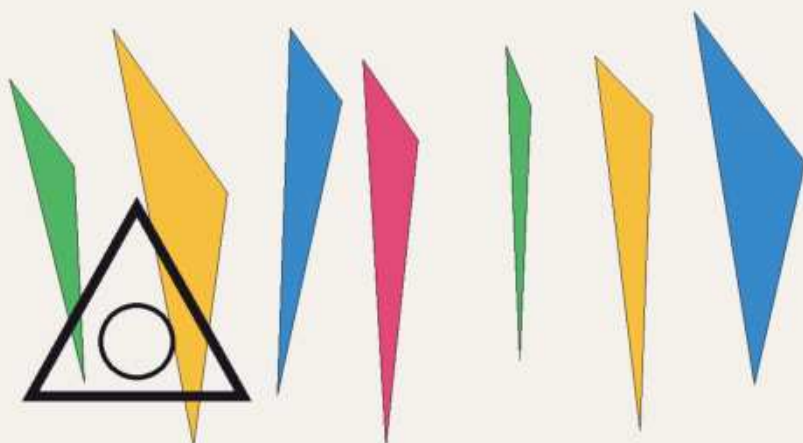
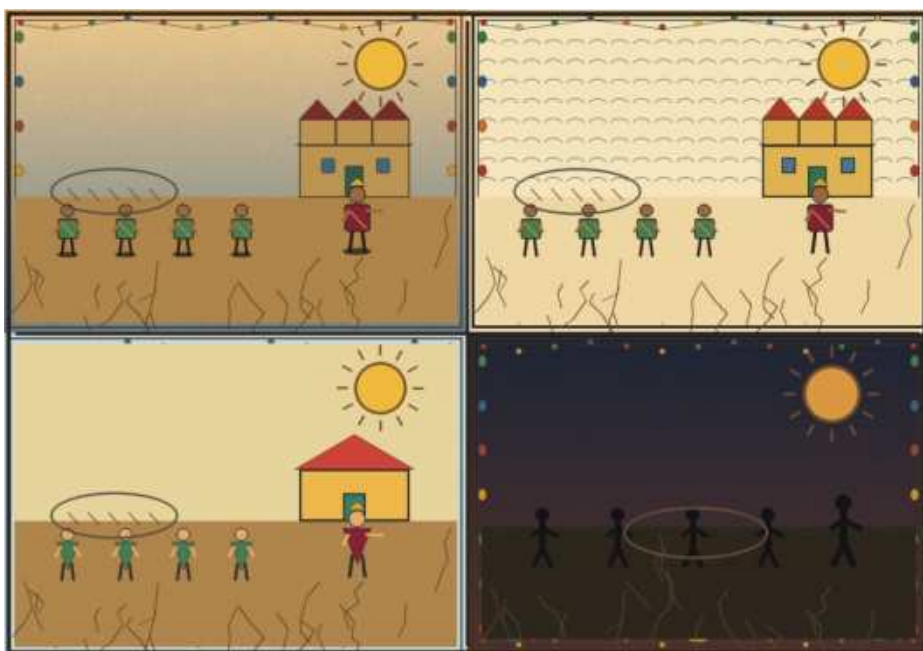
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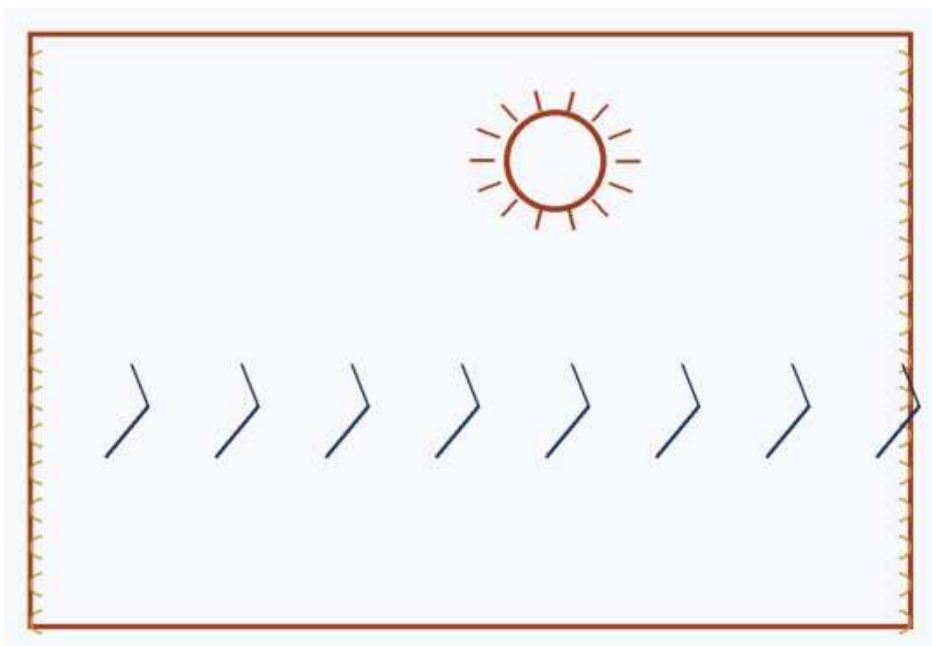
Prologue: Music and Water

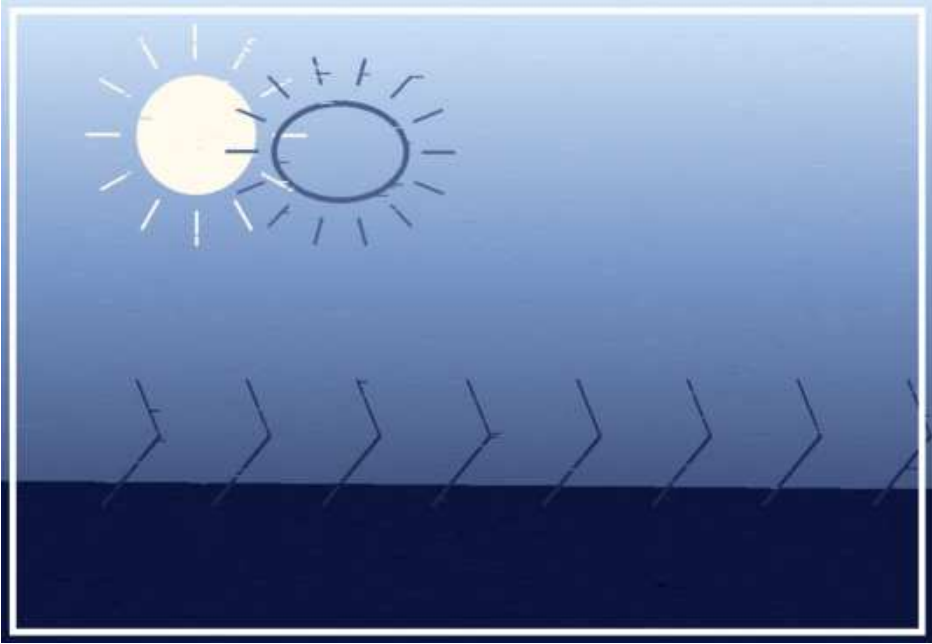
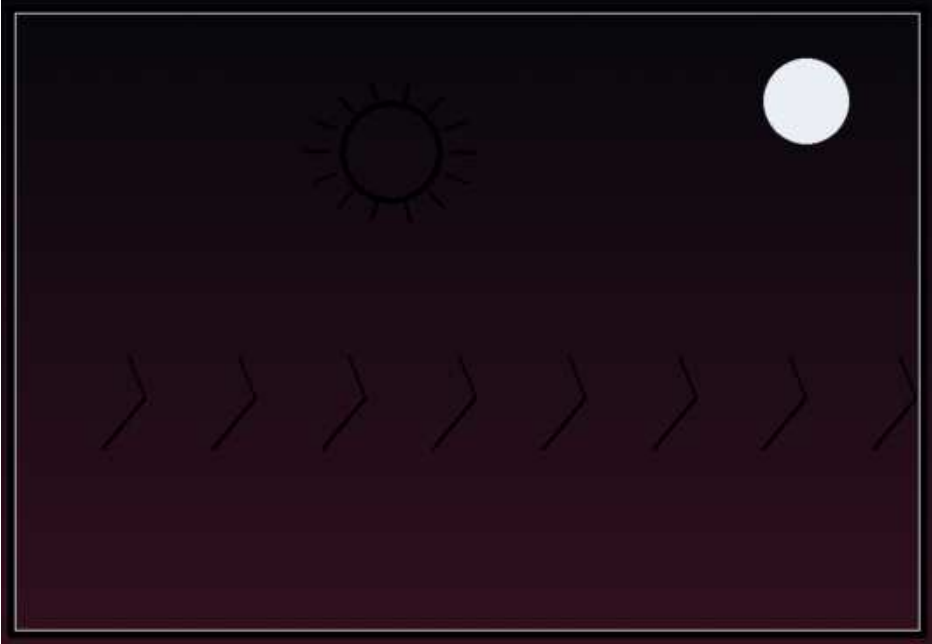
This is not a tale of swords, but of musical notes. There is no battle here - there is rain; no army marches - a raga does.

This is the story of King Madhav Singh of Mithila, two singer-brothers from the court of Nepal, the mysterious khiri tree of Amta village, and one last wish that remained unfinished on the road. It is a short tale, yet after hearing it, you may feel the beat of dhrupad in every drop of rain.

Chapter 1: A Dry Mithila



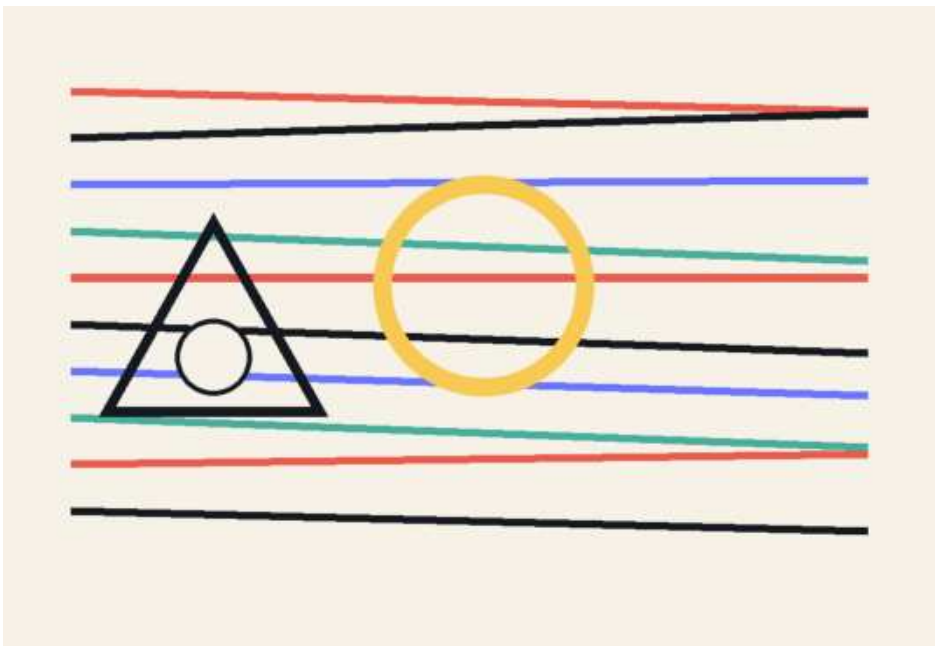


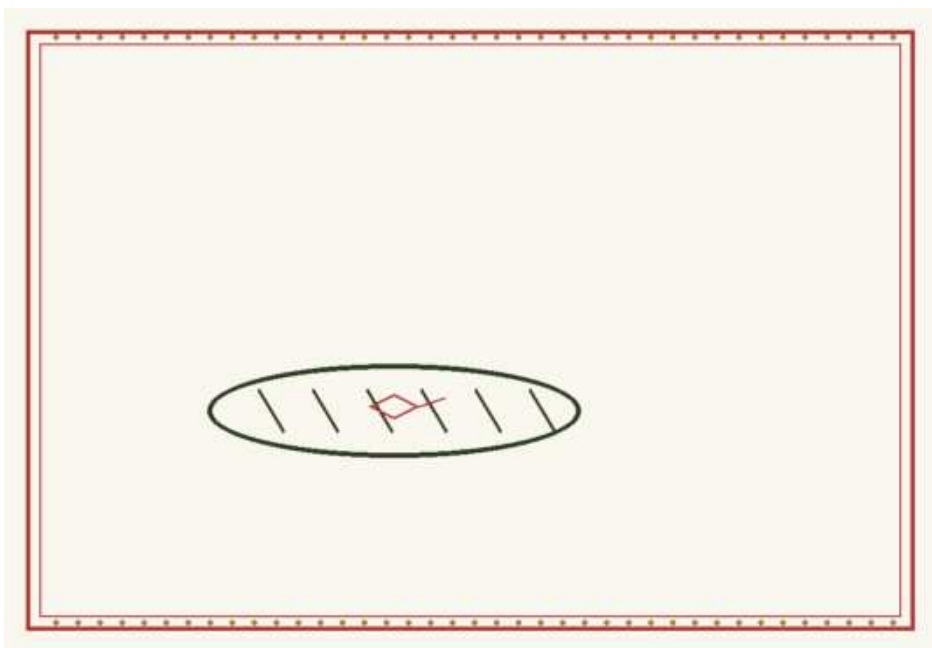


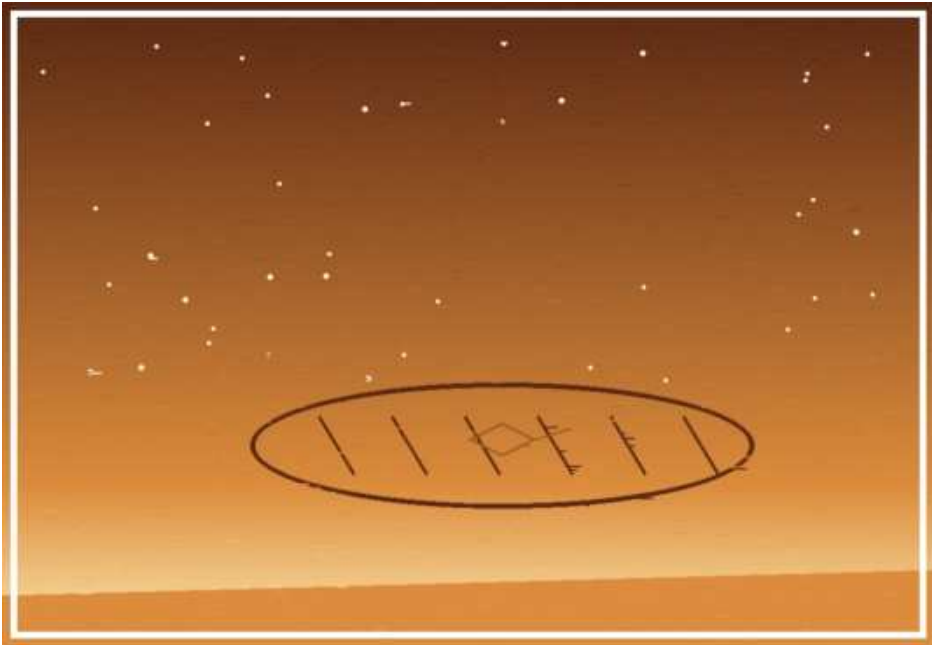
Picture 1

Madhav Singh ruled Mithila, and that year a terrible drought spread across the land. The sky seemed so hard and dry that it was as if someone had locked away all its water.

Ponds and pools dried up. Where fish had once swum, the earth cracked. Where buffaloes had once rolled in cool mud, dust now blew in the wind. Rice plants died while still young, and farmers stared at the sky until their eyes grew tired.





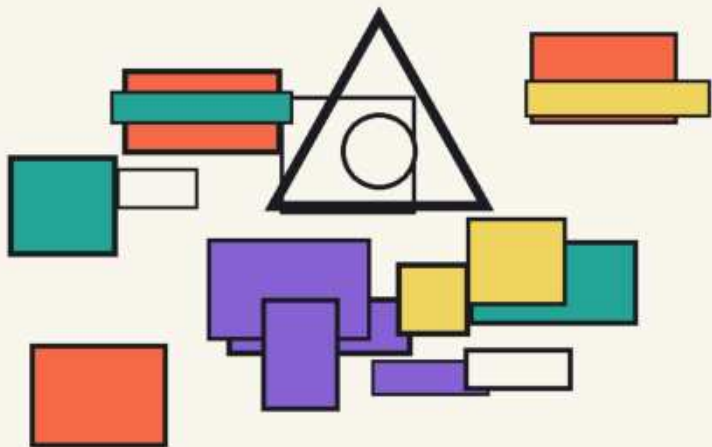


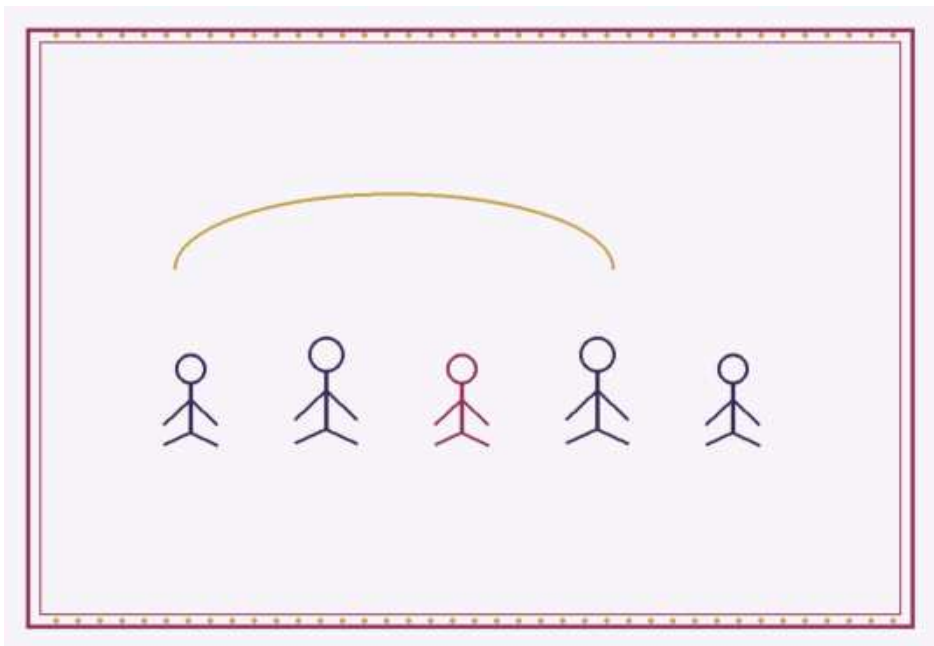
Picture 2

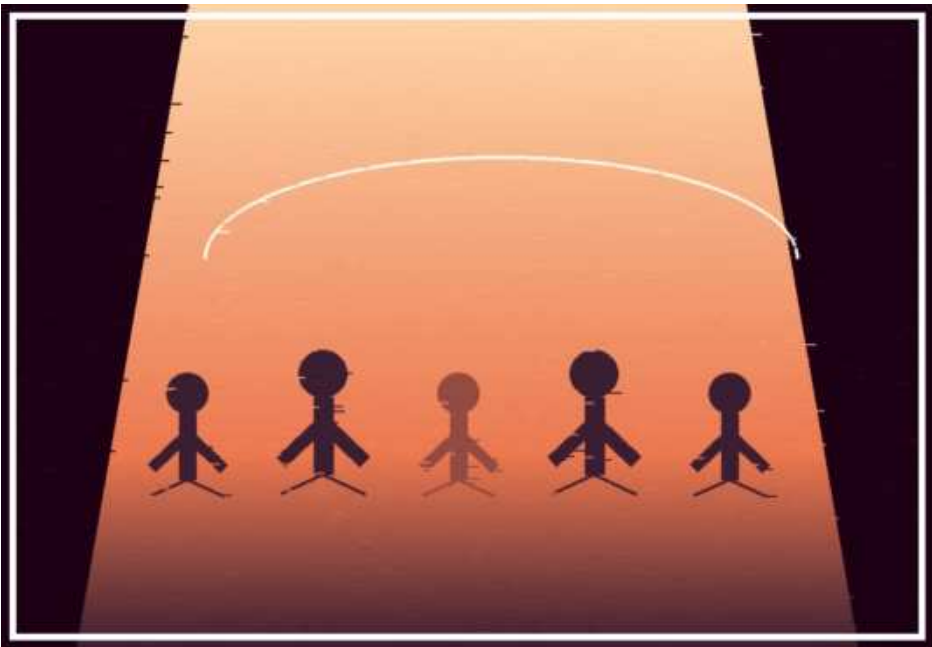
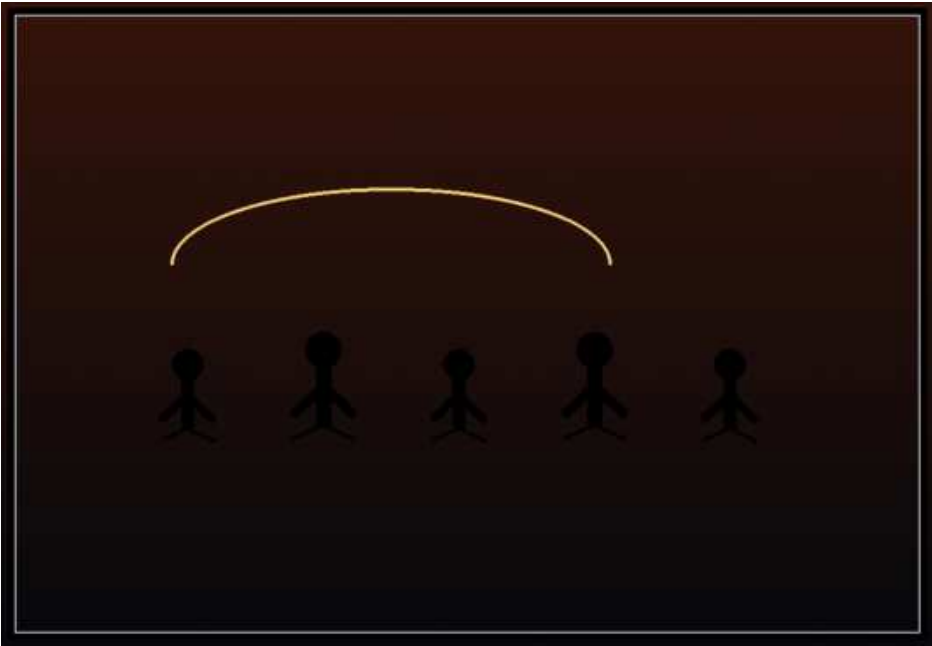
Every village cried out in distress. There was no cool mud anywhere and hardly a sign of green. A waterless Mithila seemed impossible, for Mithila was a land of ponds and streams. Yet that year it was as if fate had rubbed the colour blue from the map.

At night, King Madhav Singh stood on the roof and searched the sky. There was not a single cloud. At last he called his court together. When nature gives no answer, people must bring forward their finest knowledge. That day, one art was spoken of in the court: music.

Chapter 2: Advice in the Royal Court





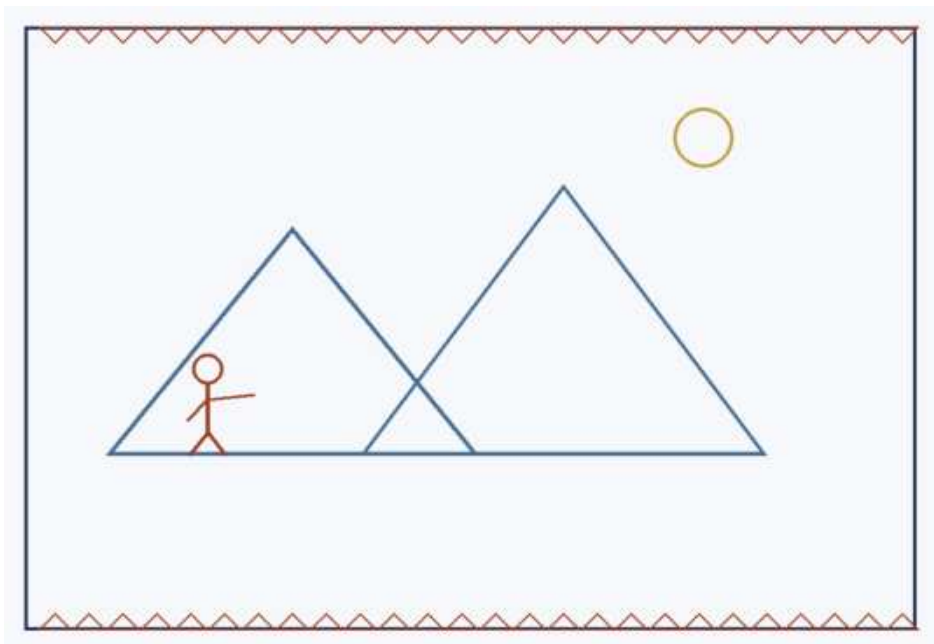


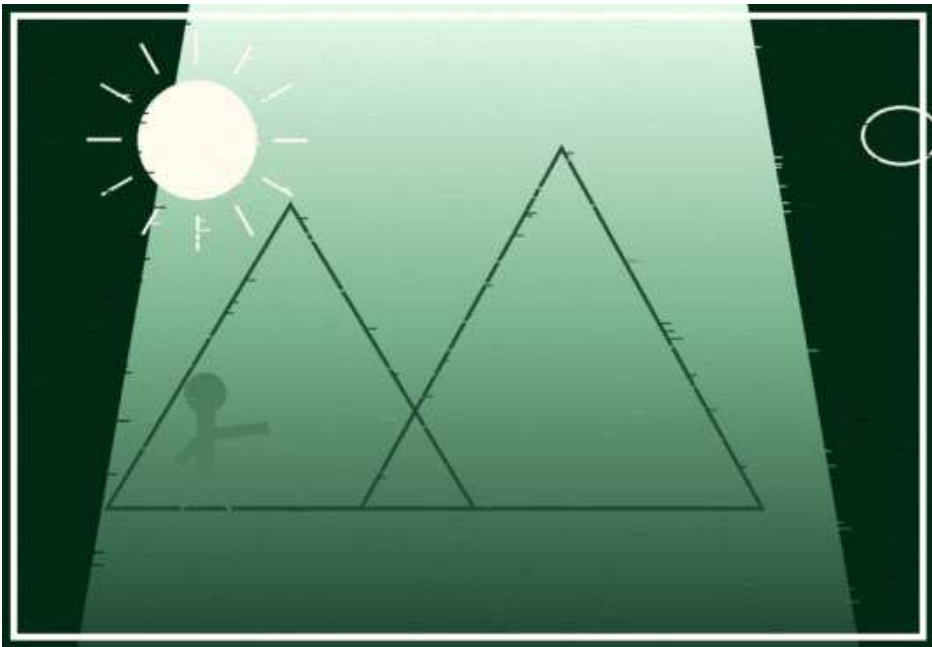
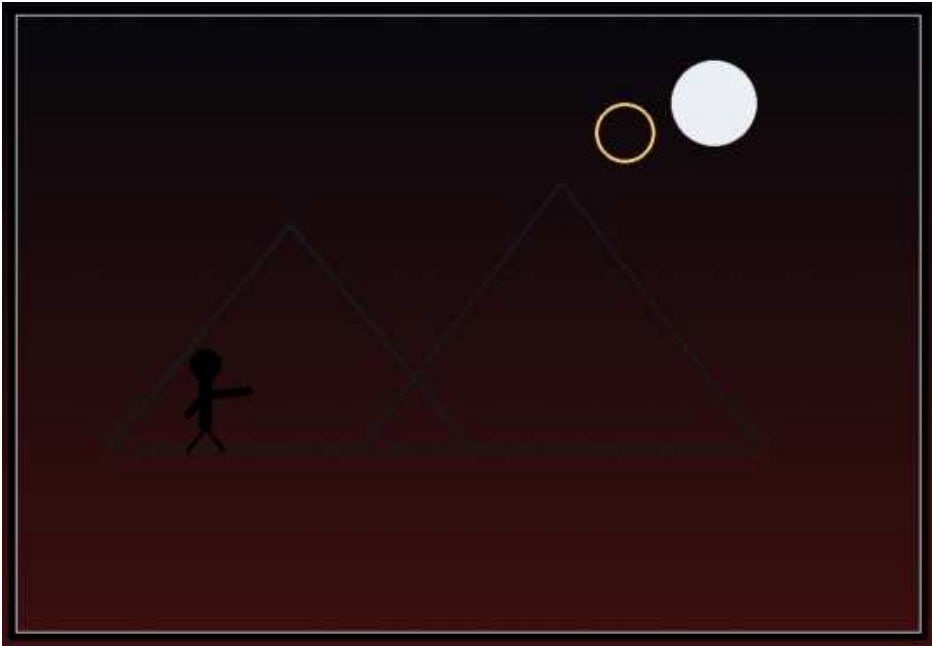
Picture 3

The court assembled - ministers, scholars, and representatives of the people. Many ideas were suggested: sacred ceremonies, charity, digging wells. All might help, but the rain itself had to come from the sky. Who could reach the sky?

Then an elderly courtier stood up. 'Your Majesty, I have heard that four brothers are musicians at the court of Nepal - Ramnawaz, Sitaram, Radhakrishna, and Kartaram. People say their music is so powerful that when they sing the right raga, rain falls.'





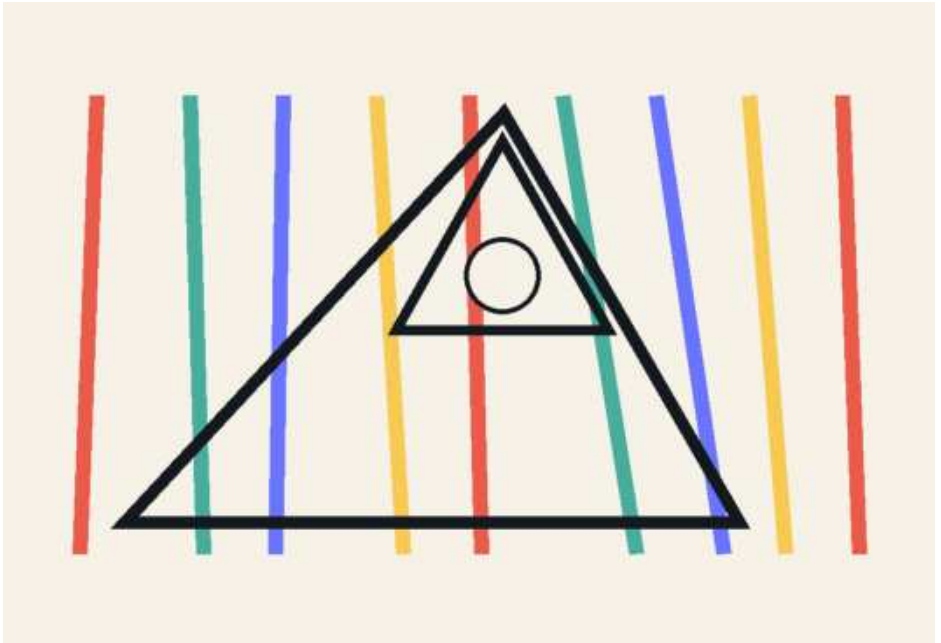
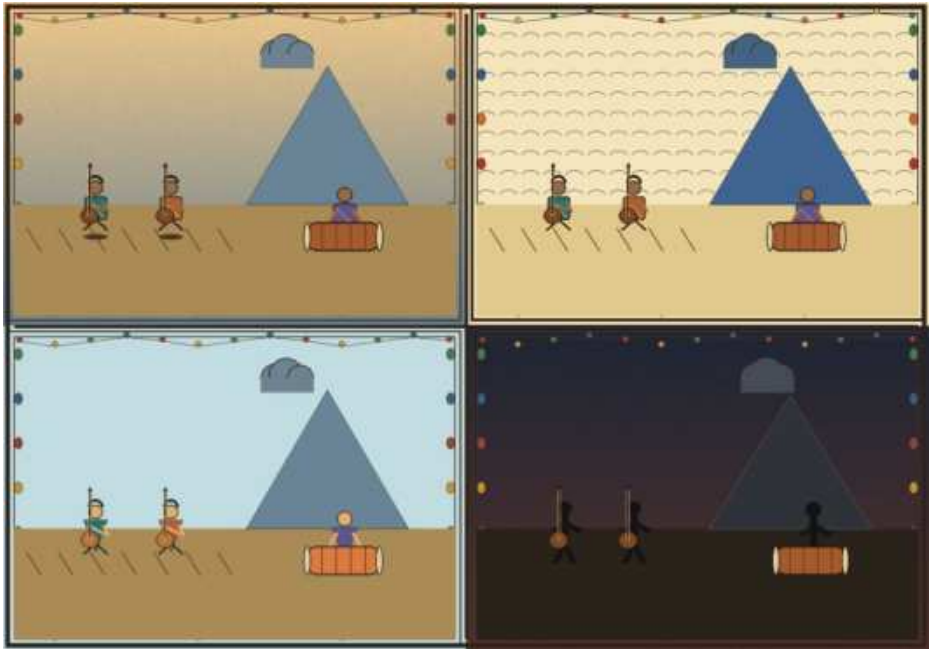


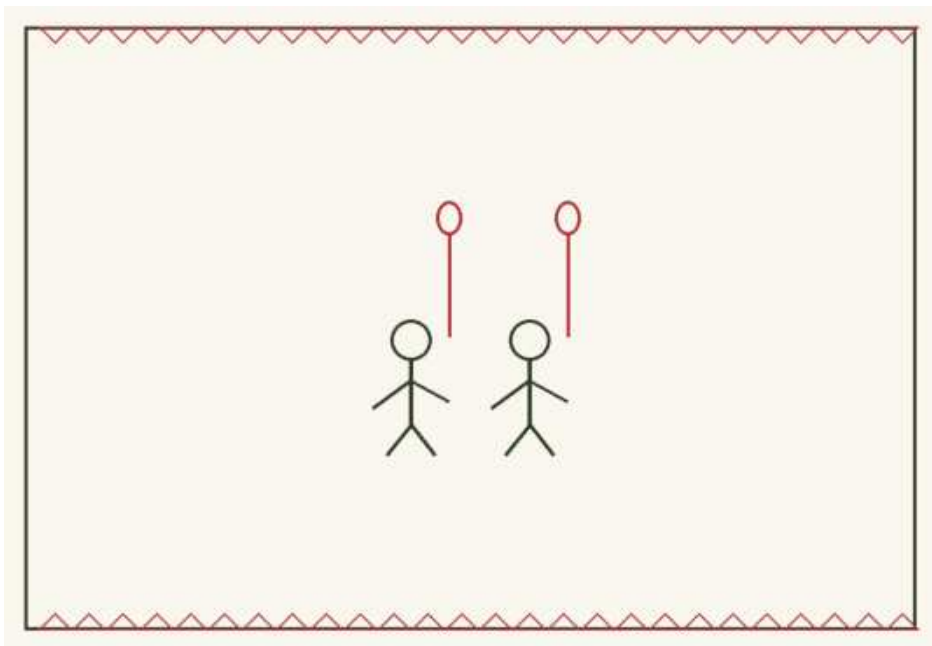
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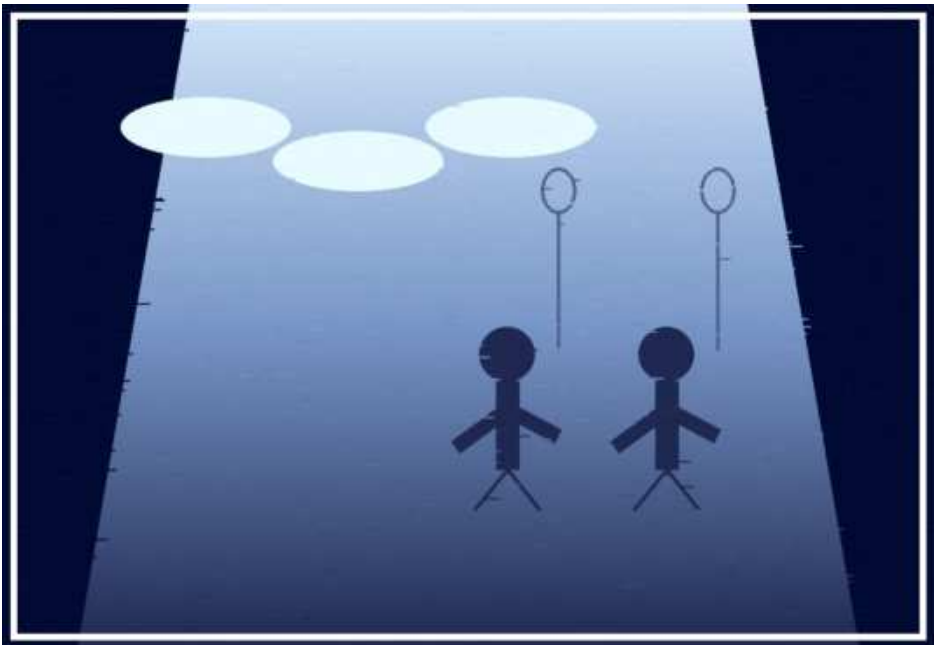
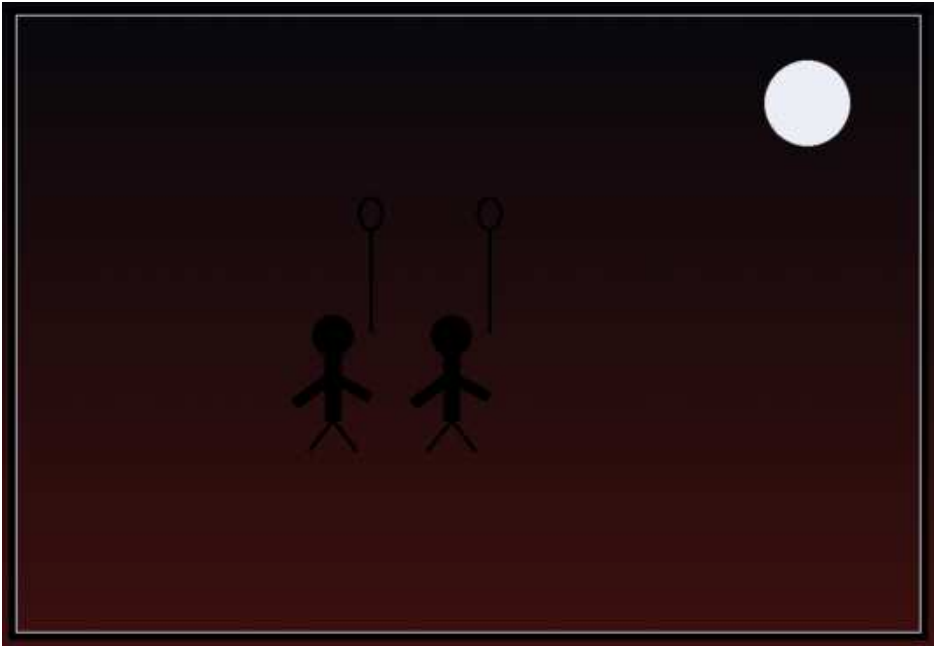
For a moment the court was silent. Rain from a raga? A few people smiled. But Madhav Singh did not. He knew that music could hold many kinds of power. And when a whole kingdom is sinking into hardship, even a small hope can seem great - and this was the ancient knowledge of sound itself.

'Send a request to the court of Nepal,' ordered the king. A messenger left toward the Himalayas, and Mithila began to wait - not only for water, but for music.

Chapter 3: Two Brothers from Nepal



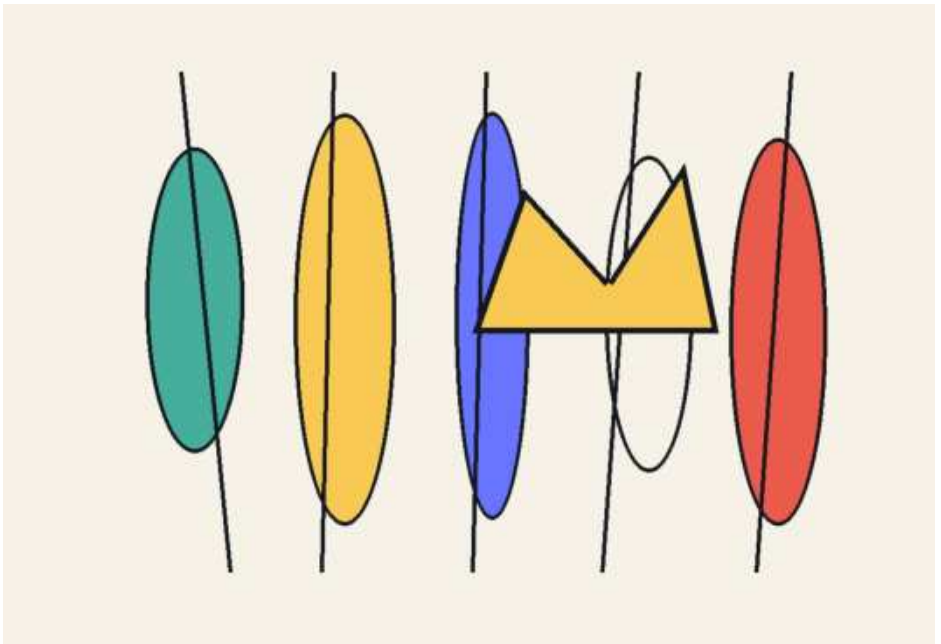


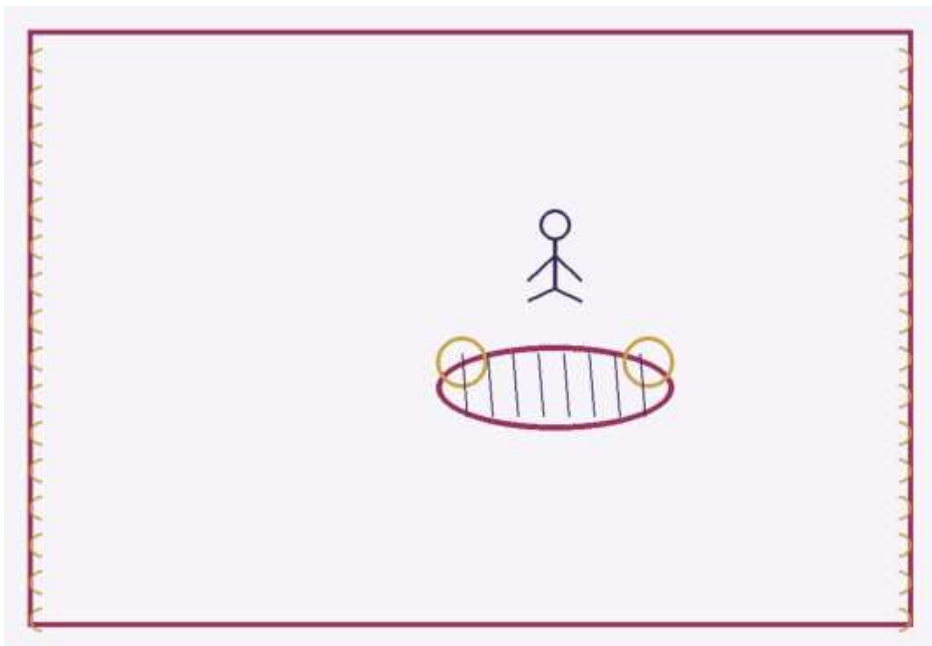


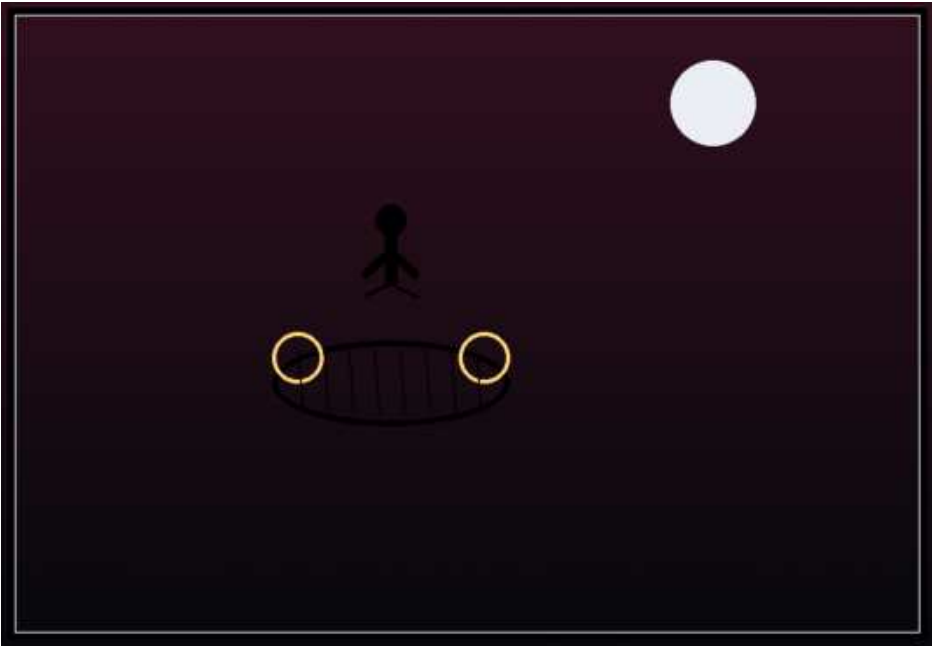
Picture 5

The court of Nepal accepted the request. Two of the four brothers set out for Mithila - Radhakrishna and Kartaram. Both were dhrupad singers, devoted to a deep and serious style of music in which singing is not show, but disciplined practice.

They carried a tanpura, books of music, and the training of generations. Along the road the brothers spoke little. A singer gathers his notes before a performance, just as clouds gather water before rain.





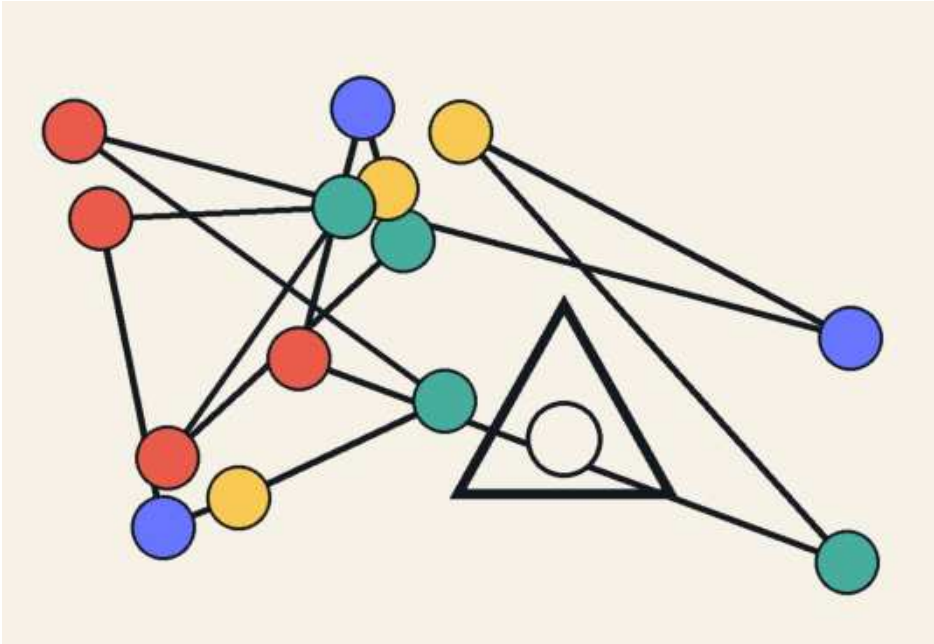
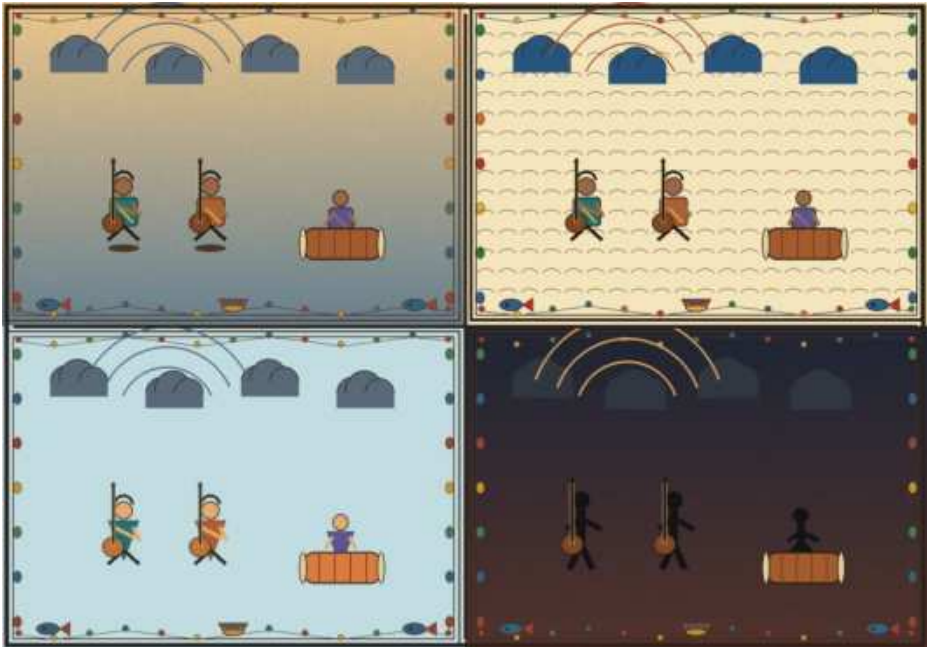


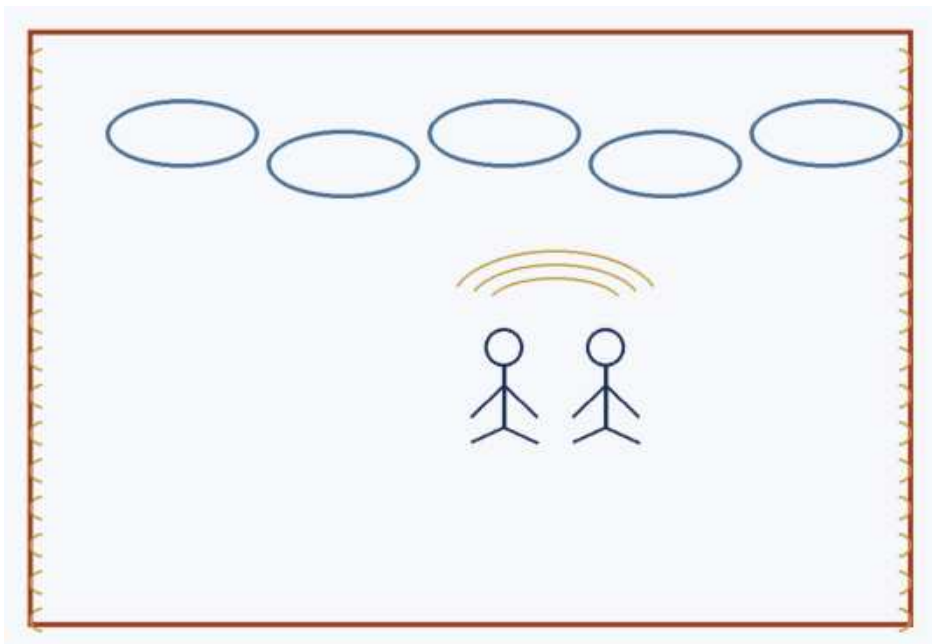
Picture 6

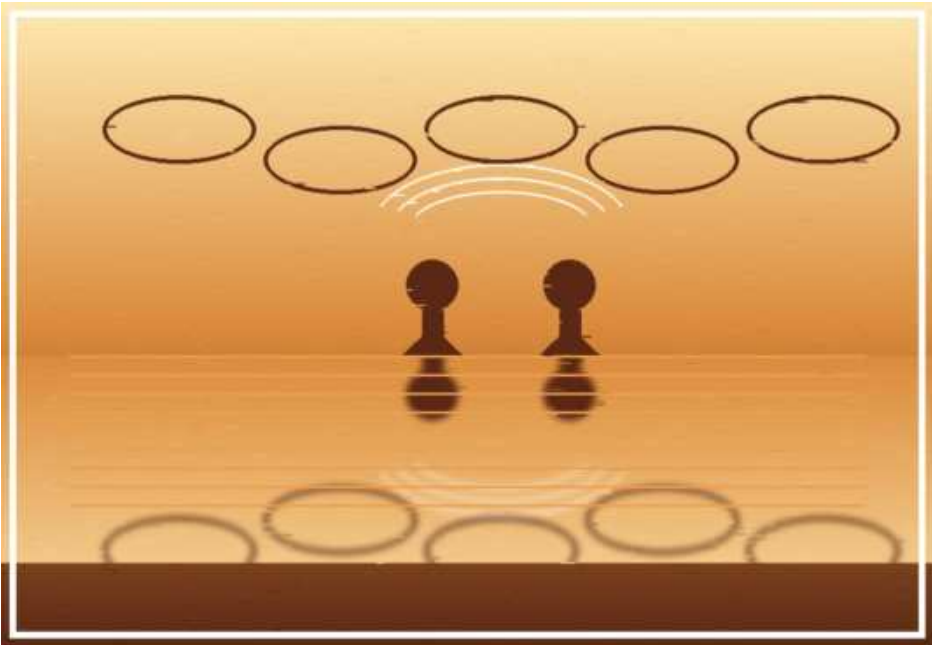
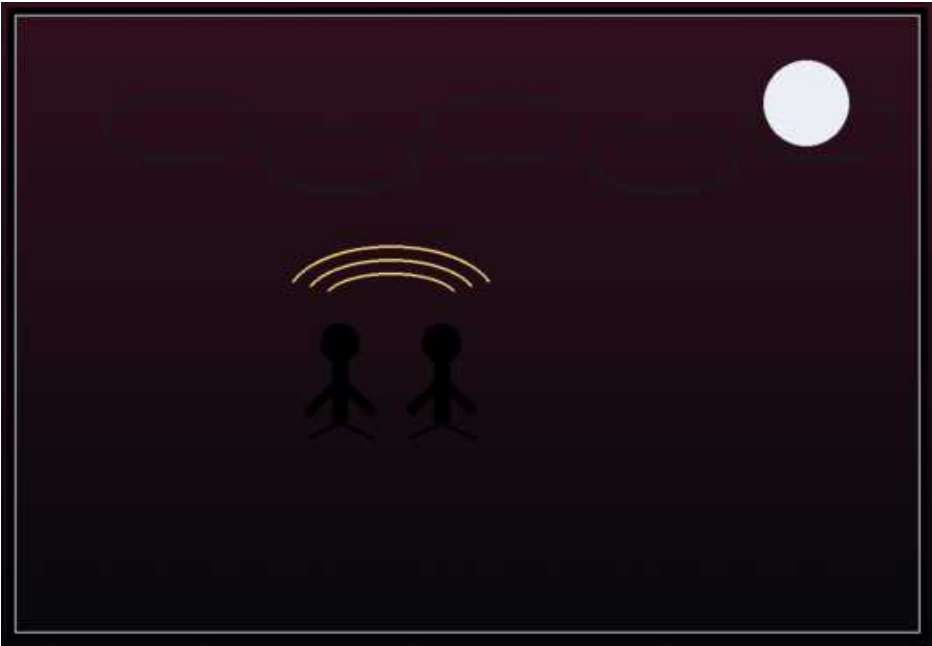
When they reached Mithila, what they saw would have shaken any musician's heart: cracked fields, dry ponds, and thousands of hopeful eyes. Kartaram quietly said to his brother, 'We are not here simply to sing a raga. We are here to bring life back.'

They were welcomed in Madhav Singh's court. To accompany them came a treasure of Mithila itself - the pakhawaj player Bhim Mallik, whose drumbeats seemed to carry the rumble of thunder. The stage was ready: two voices, one drum, and above them an empty, pitiless sky.

Chapter 4: Nom-Tom



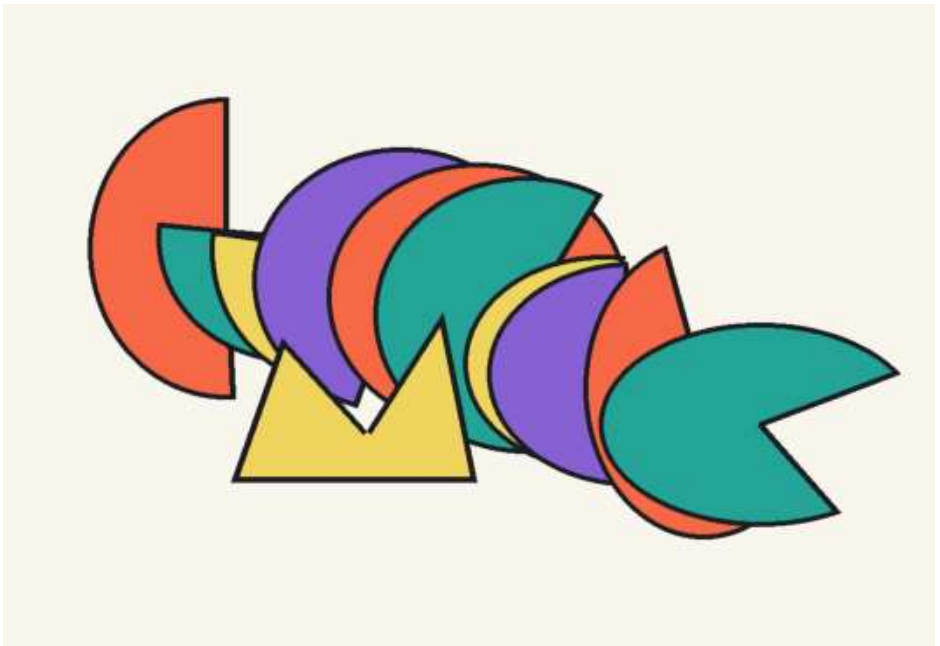


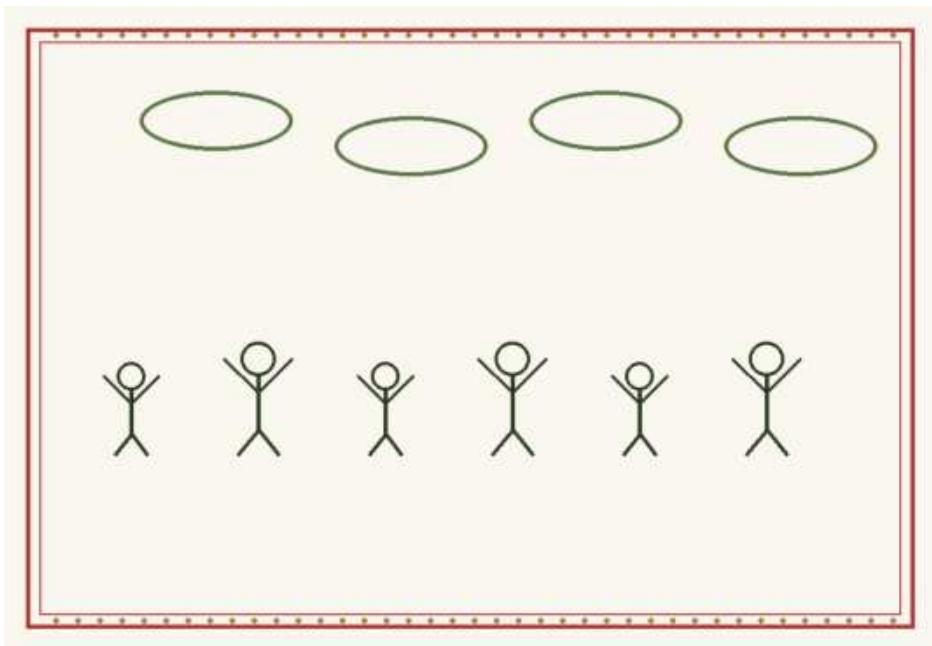


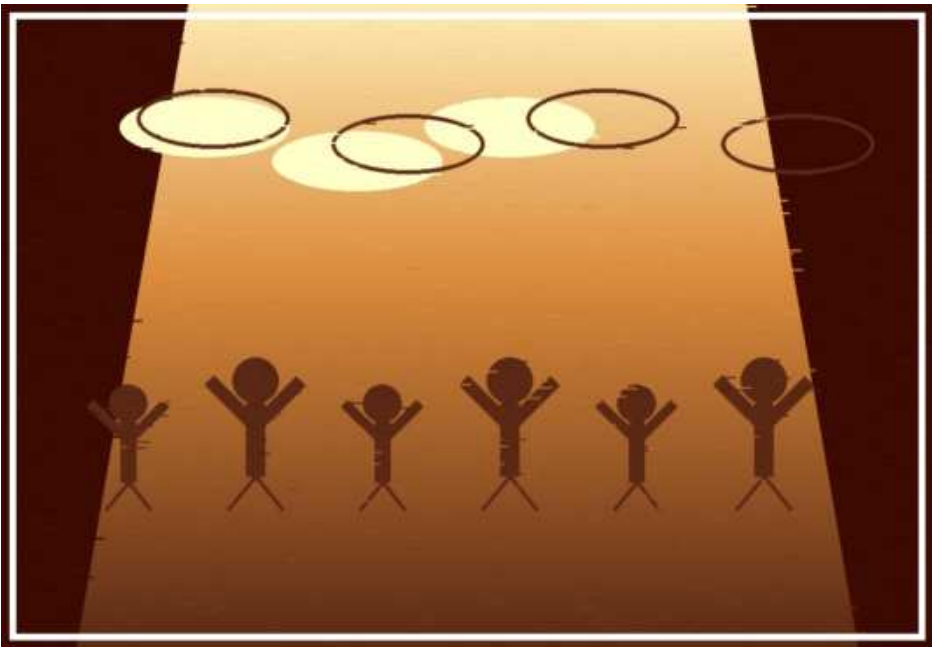
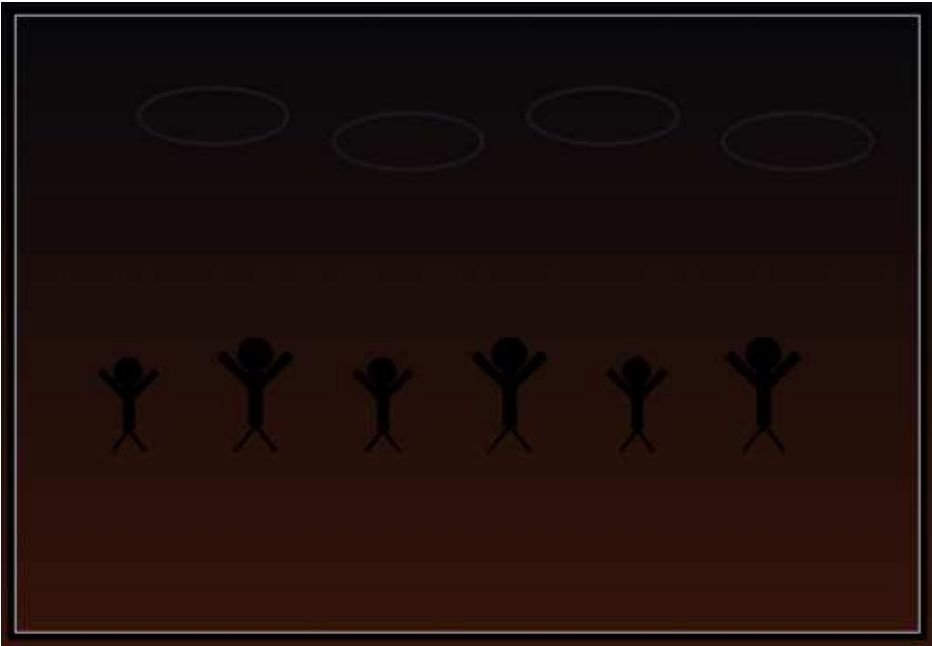
Picture 7

They chose Raga Megh-Malhar. Following the dhrupad tradition, they began with an alap called nom-tom - wordless notes through which the singers slowly shape the body and mood of the raga.

Radhakrishna and Kartaram closed their eyes and began the nom-tom. The sound rose little by little - first from the earth, then through the air, then toward the sky. The court held its breath. Bhim Mallik still rested his hands on the pakhawaj, waiting for his moment.





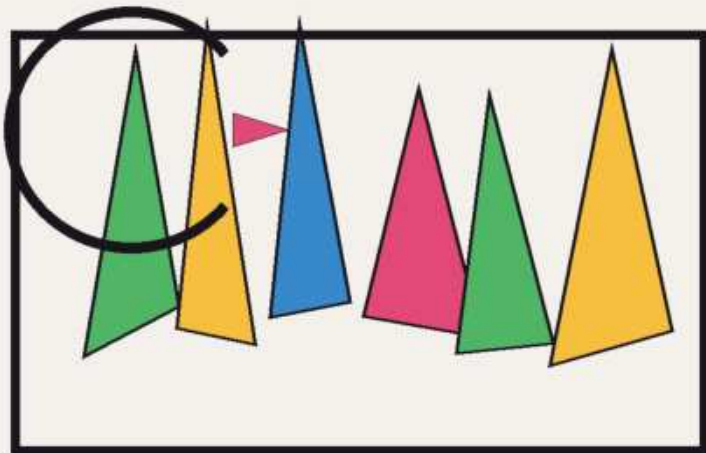
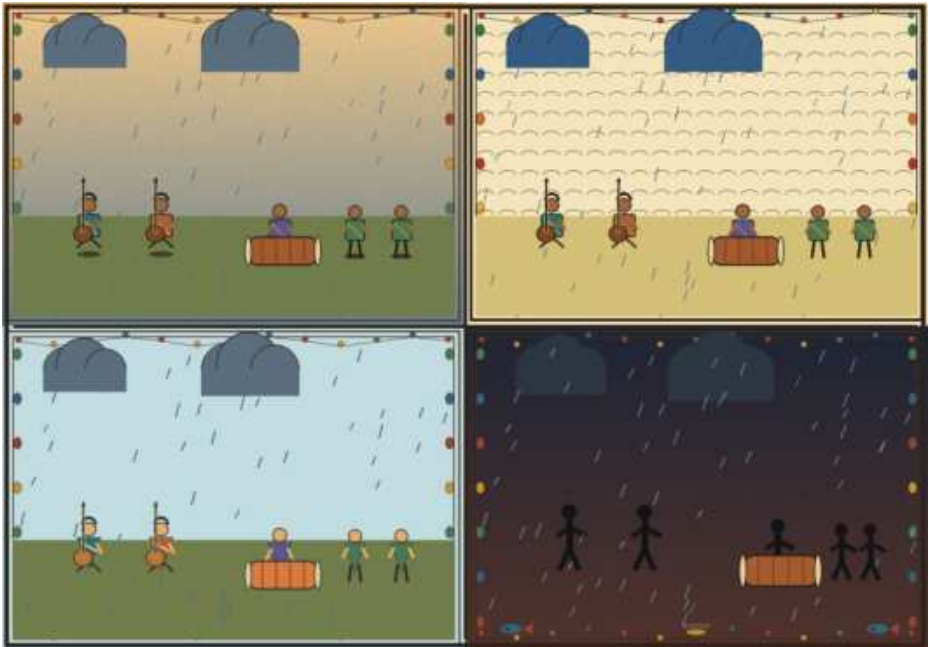


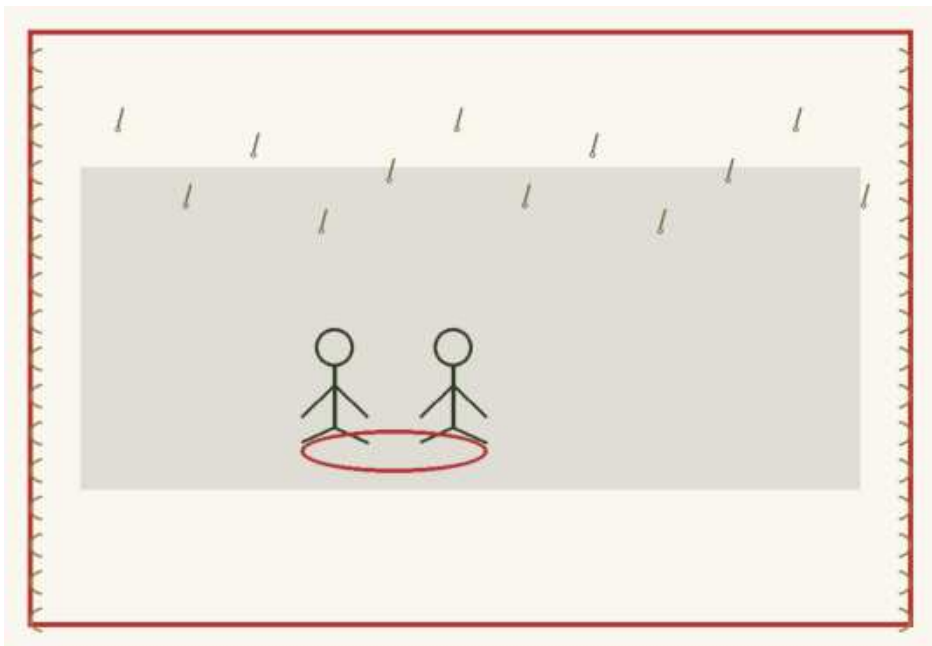
Picture 8

When the alap was complete, a shout came from outside the court. People ran out to look at the sky. Dark clouds were rolling in from every direction! Clouds that had seemed to forget Mithila for months now came as if pulled by a thread of music.

Excitement swept through the court. But the brothers did not even open their eyes. A true musician knows that bringing clouds is only half the work; the clouds must still be made to rain. For that came the composed song - and with it, the beat of the drum.

Chapter 5: The First Drop



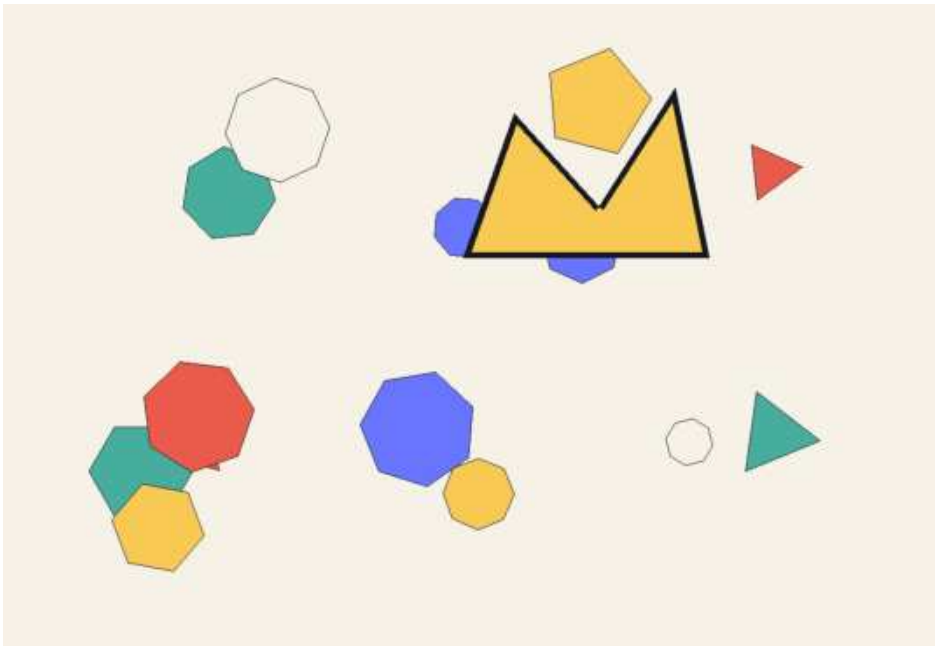


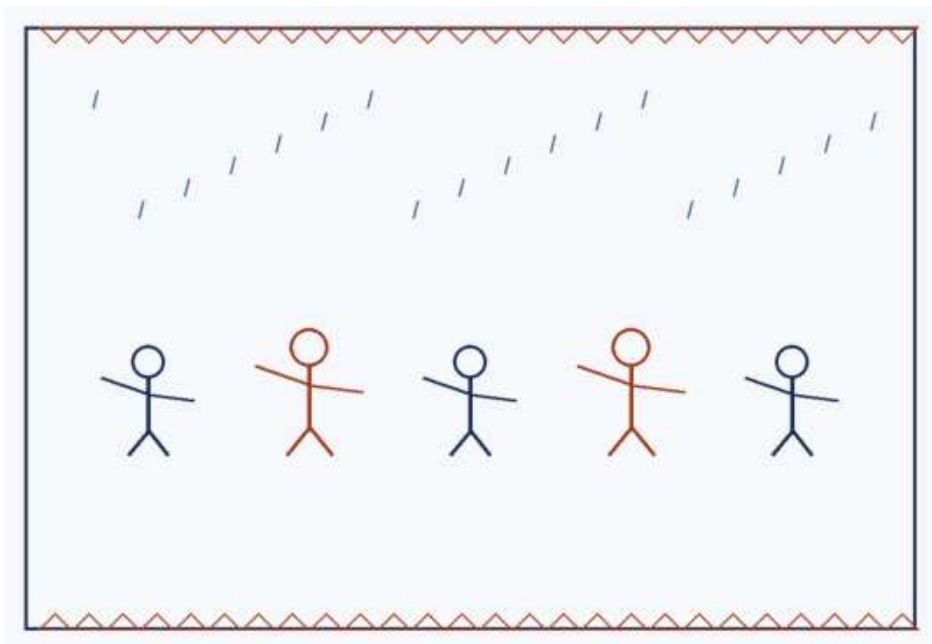


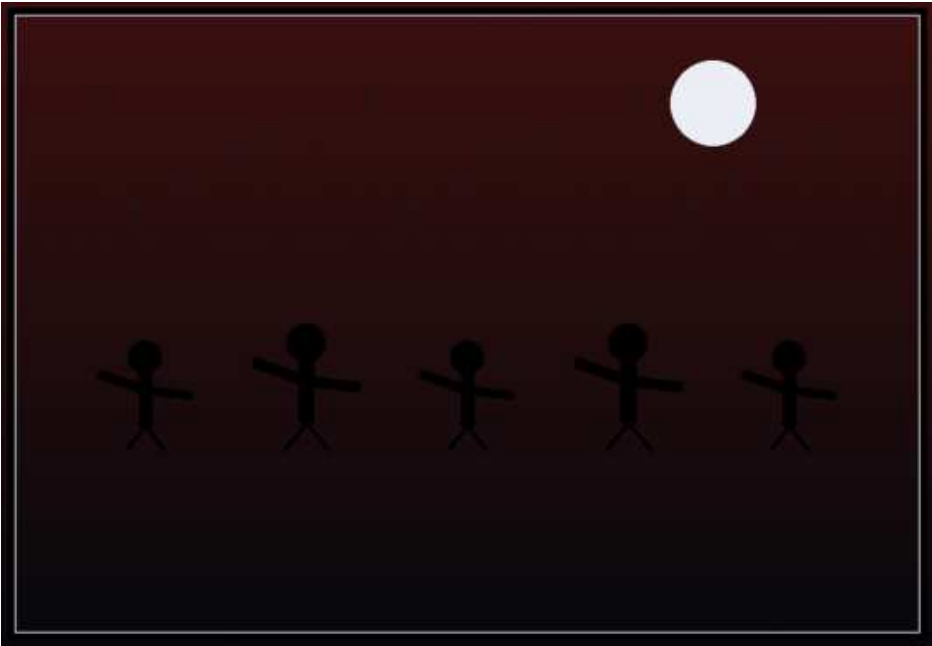
Picture 9

The composition began, and at the same moment Bhim Mallik's pakhawaj came alive.

As the words of the song moved forward and the drumbeats sounded, the clouds grew heavier and darker. Then the first drop fell. One drop, then another, then a third - and suddenly the rain poured down!





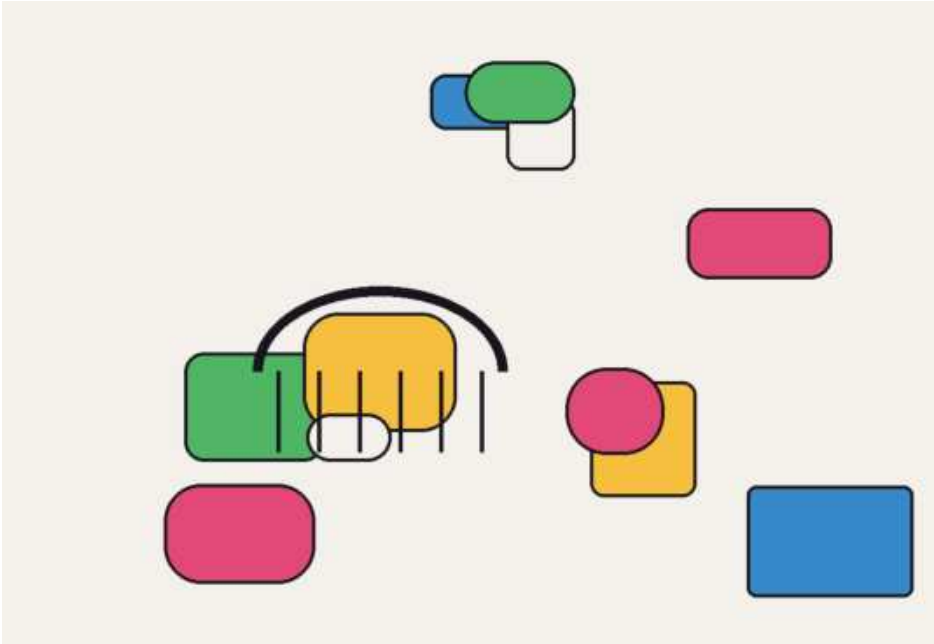
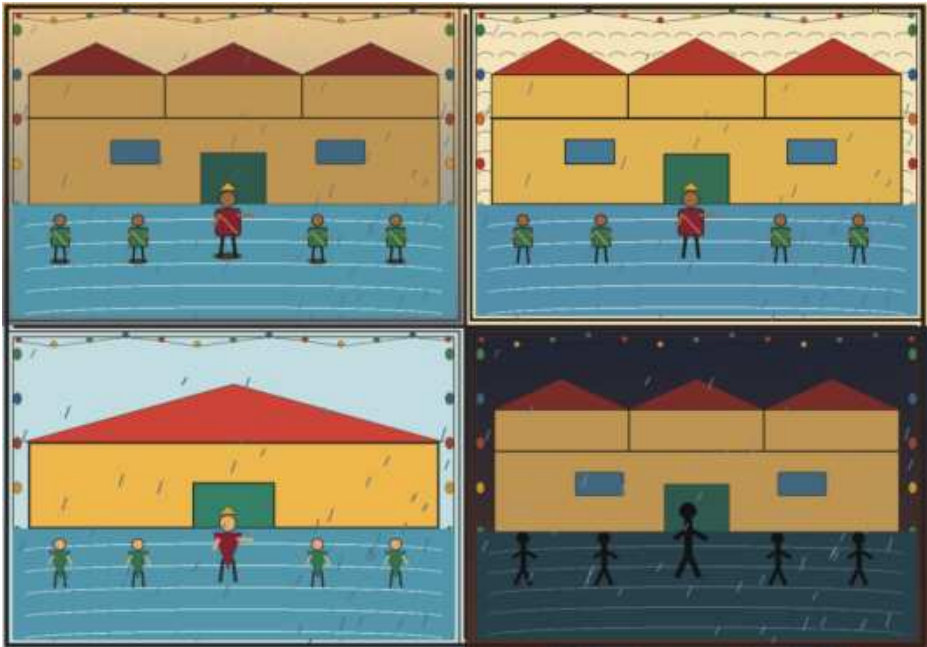


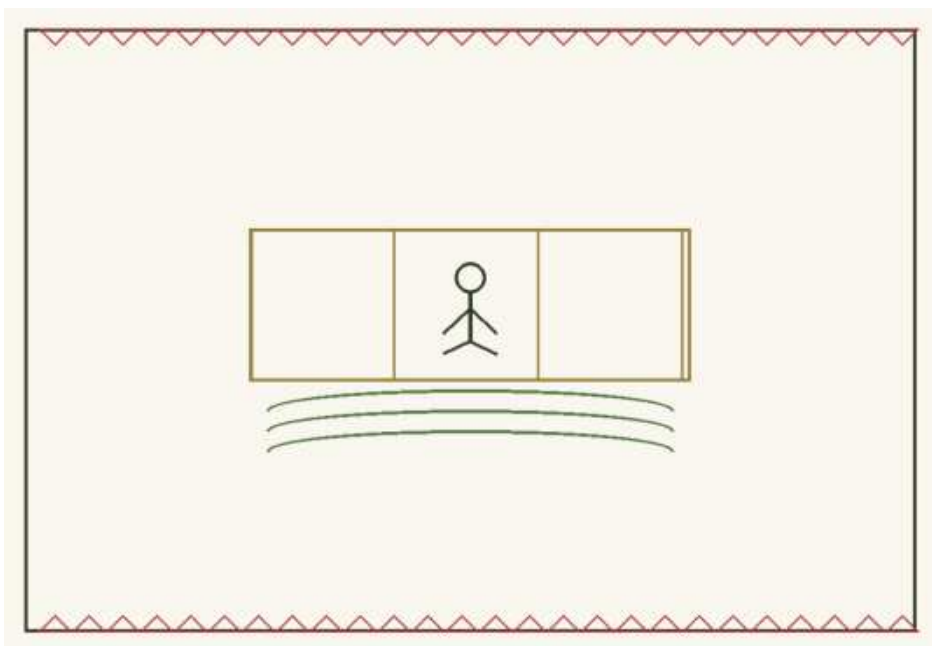
Picture 10

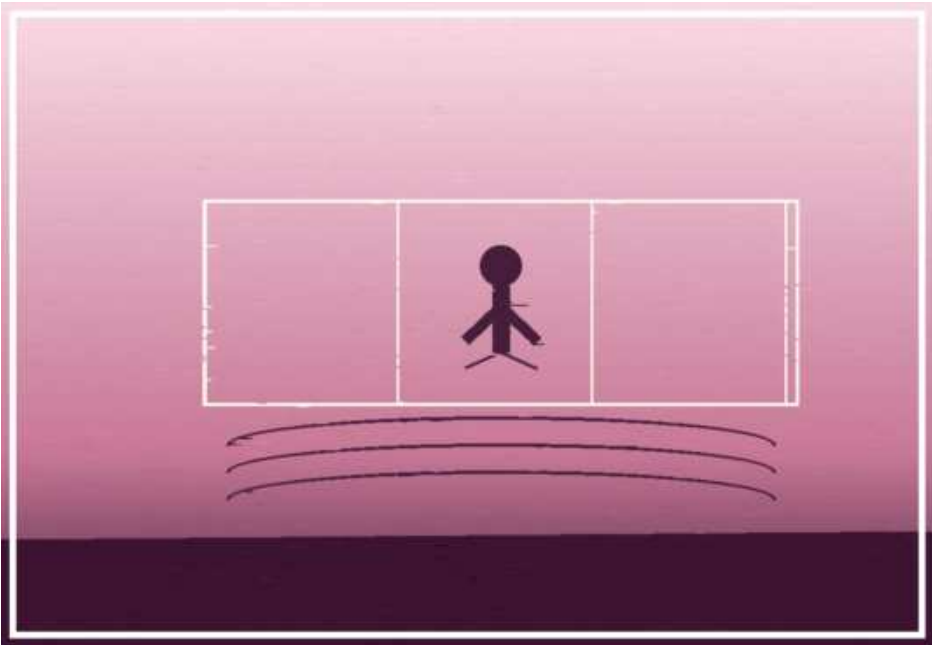
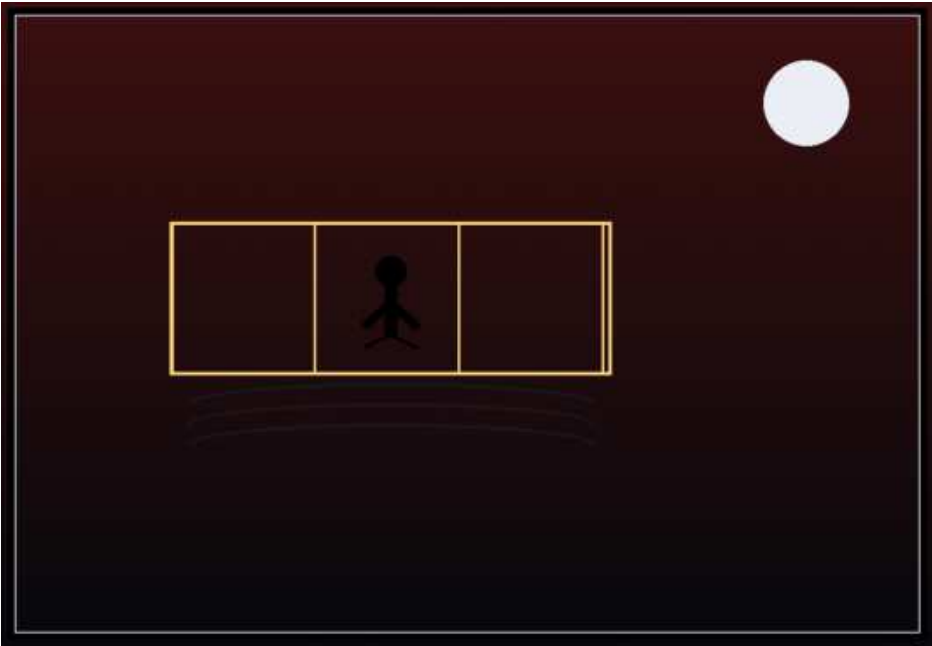
Raindrops struck the dry earth, and the first scent of wet soil rose into the air - a fragrance sweeter than any perfume. The people of the court forgot all formality. Some ran into the courtyard with their hands stretched out. Some cried, some laughed, and many did both at once.

On the stage, the three musicians - two voices and one drum - remained absorbed in their work. To them this was not a trick, but the natural fruit of their art. When a raga is true and practice is complete, even the sky can become a listener. And when a listener is deeply moved, tears fall. The tears of the sky are rain.

Chapter 6: Water in the Court





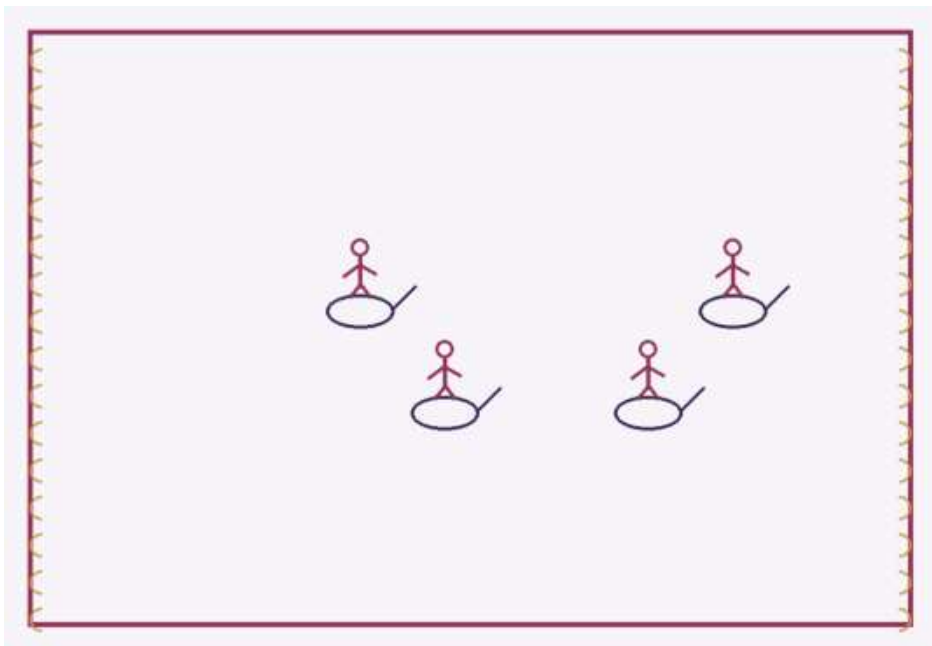


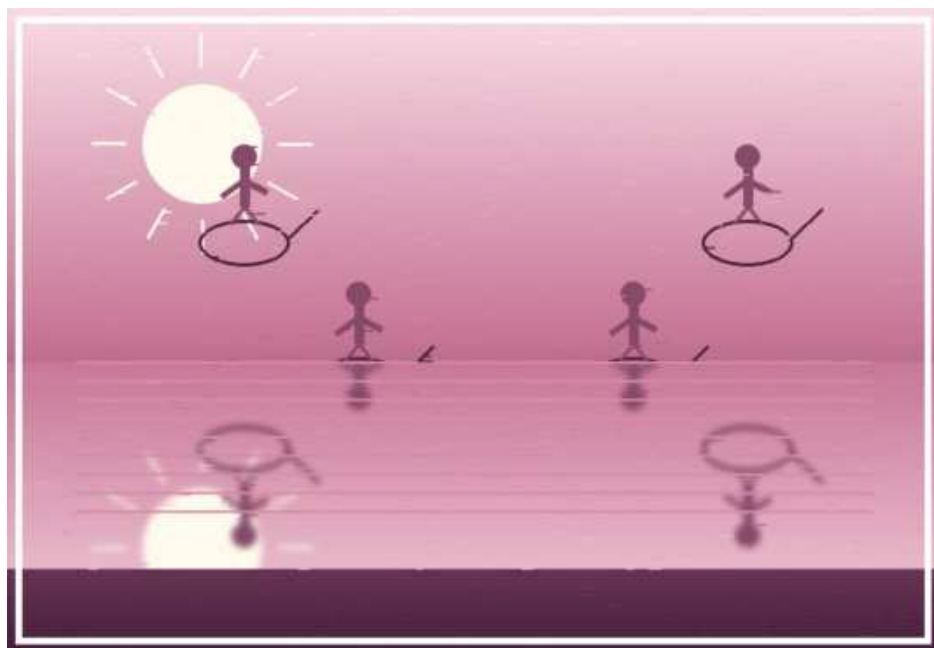
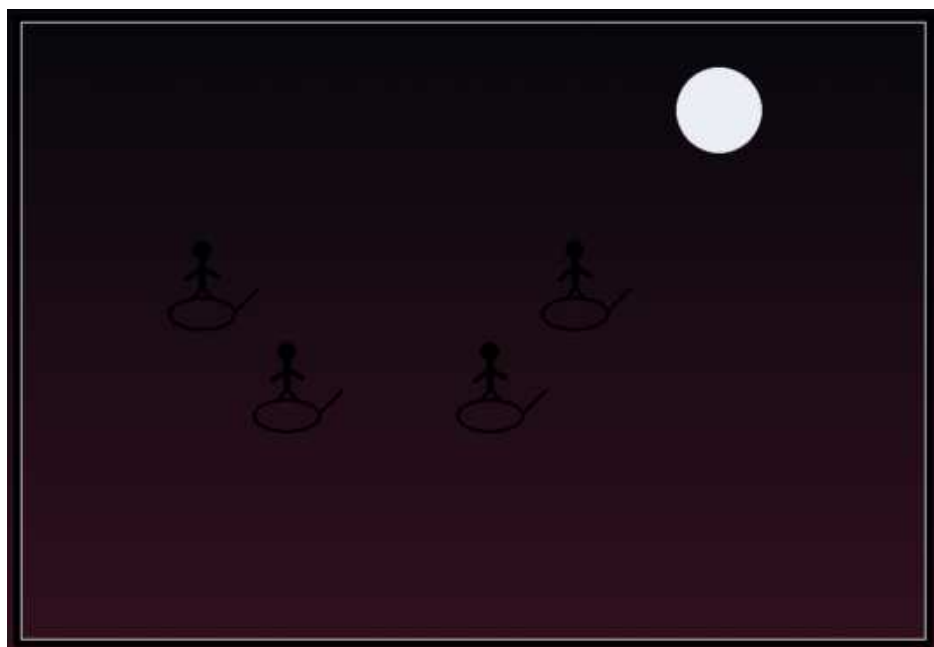
Picture 11

The singing continued, and the rain grew stronger. Soon so much water fell that it entered the royal court itself! Streams ran across the smooth floor, and the reflections of laughing courtiers trembled in the water.

Madhav Singh rose from his throne. His eyes were full of gratitude, but he still worried like a king: had rain truly reached every part of the land, or had some place been left dry?





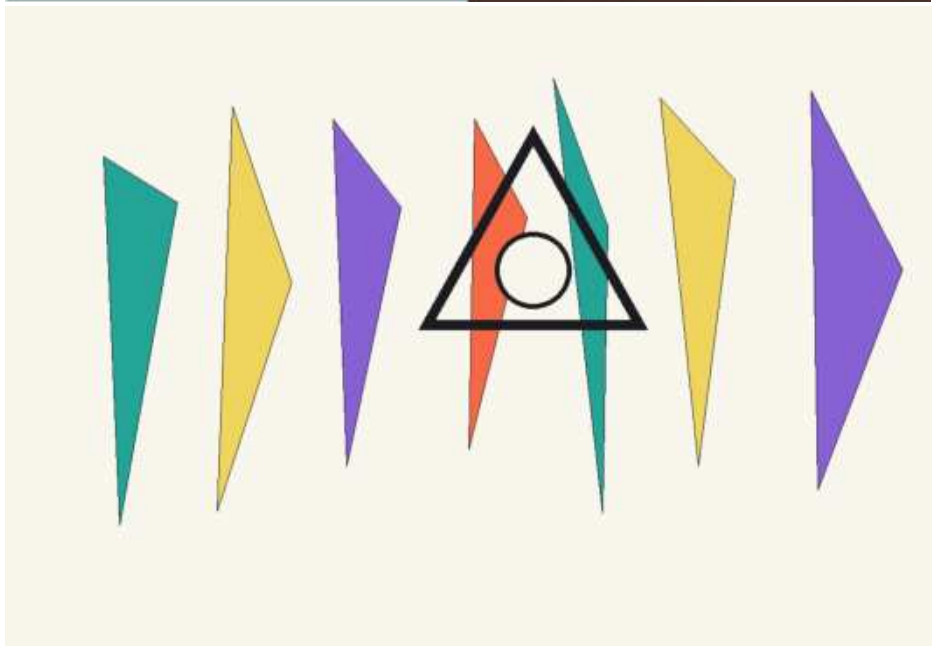
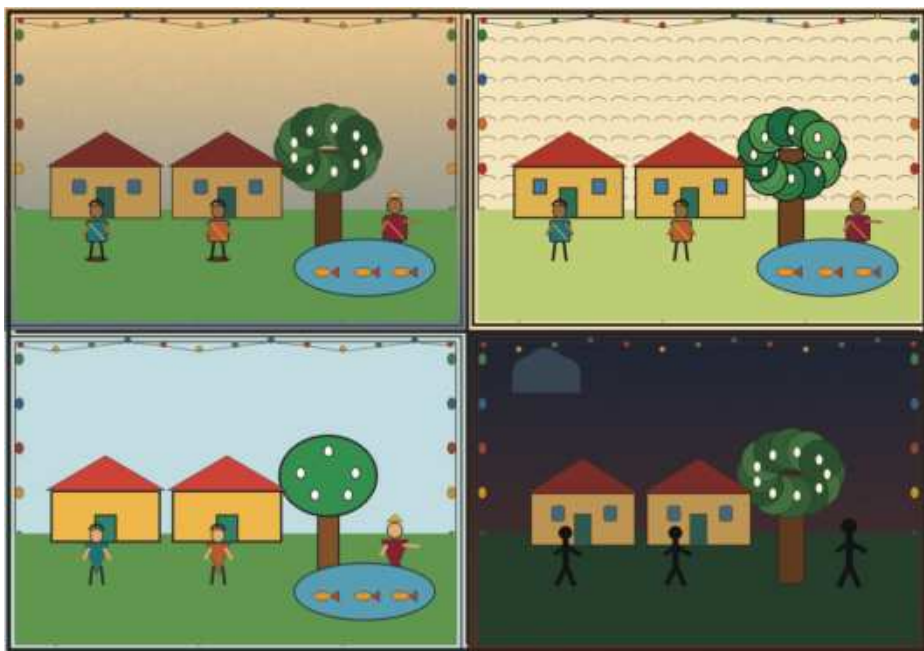


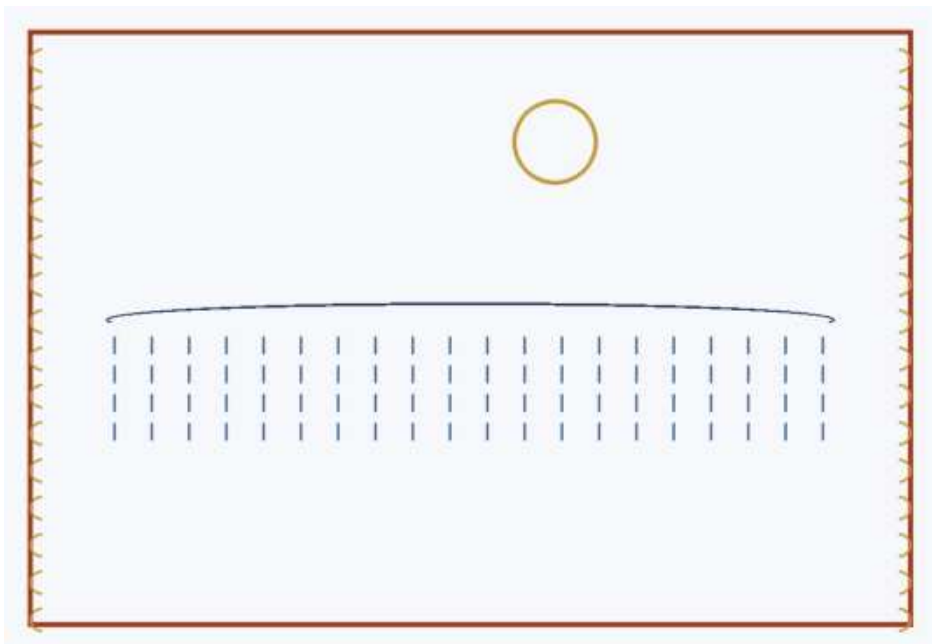
Picture 12

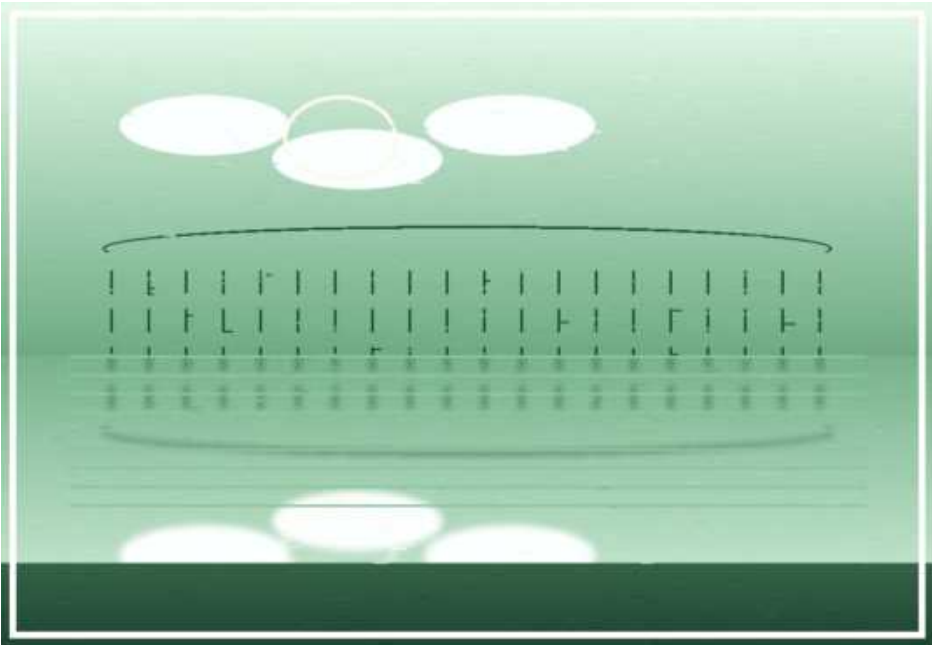
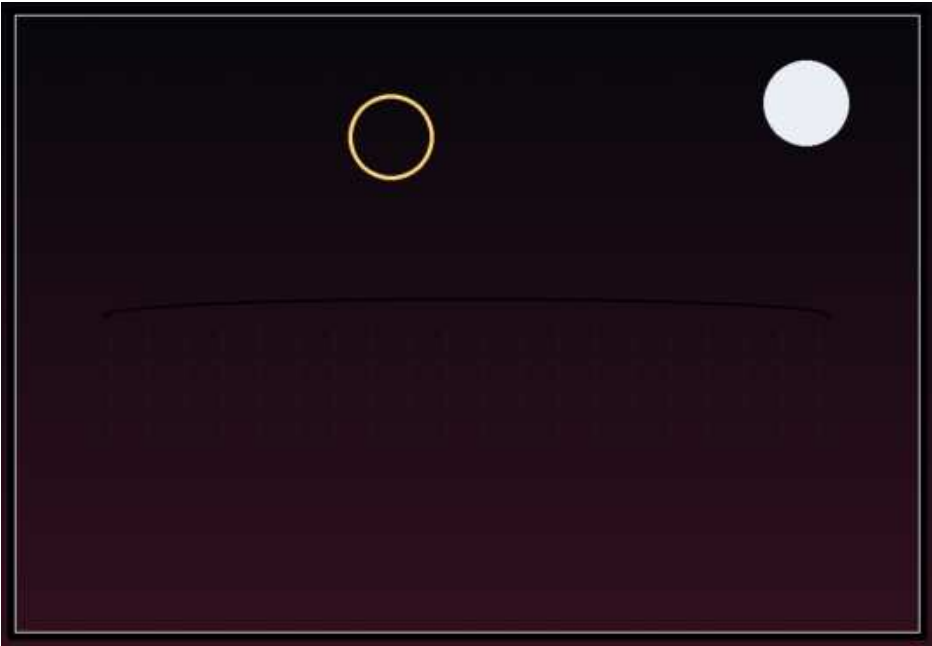
Messengers were sent in every direction with an order:
'Look everywhere. Is any part of the kingdom still dry?'
They rode from village to village - east, west, north, and
south.

The answer came back: 'Your Majesty, nowhere is dry.
There is water everywhere, and the land is satisfied.' Only
then did the king give a signal and the musicians stopped.
The voices fell silent, the drumbeat ended - but the rain
kept falling in its own rhythm, as if the sky had learned
the raga by heart.

Chapter 7: The King's Gratitude



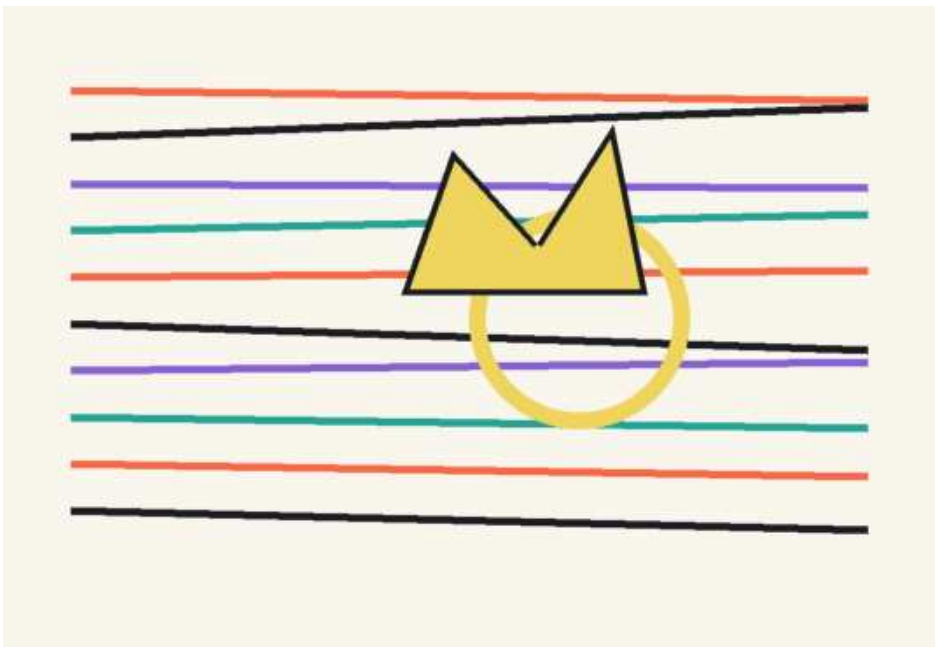


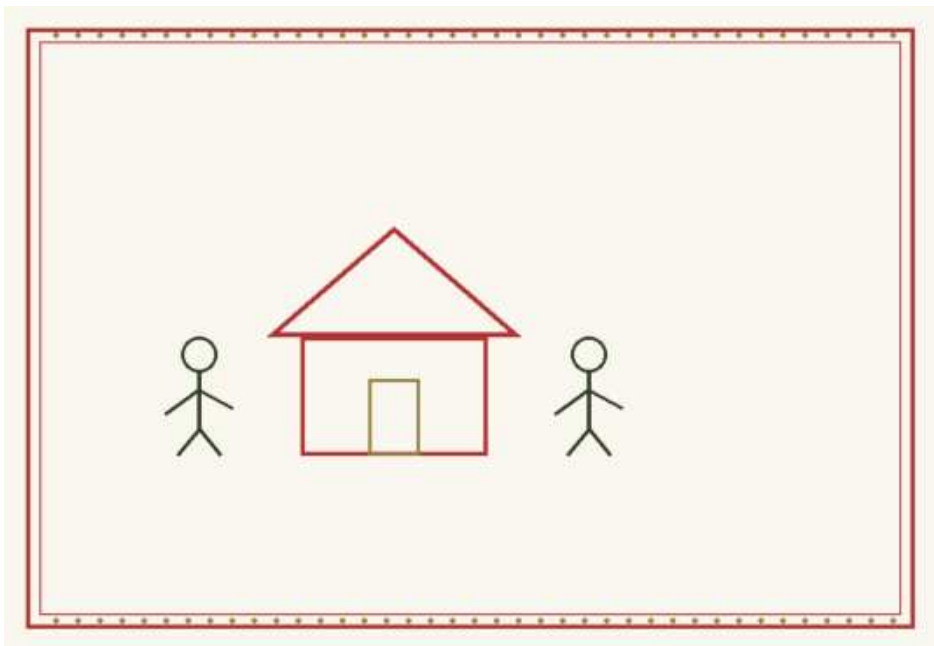


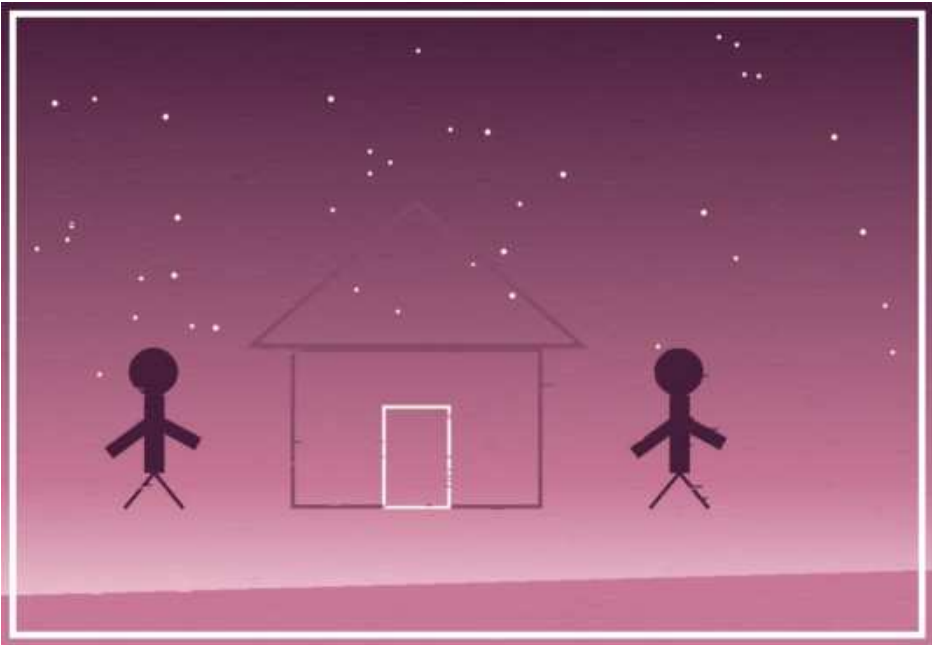
Picture 13

Mithila came alive again. Ponds filled, fields turned green, and fish returned to the pools. Now King Madhav Singh faced another question: how could he repay the musicians for such help?

Money? For great musicians, money is not everything. A title? What use is a title to someone devoted to art? The king thought for a long time. Then he gave them a gift few kings think to give: a peaceful place to live.







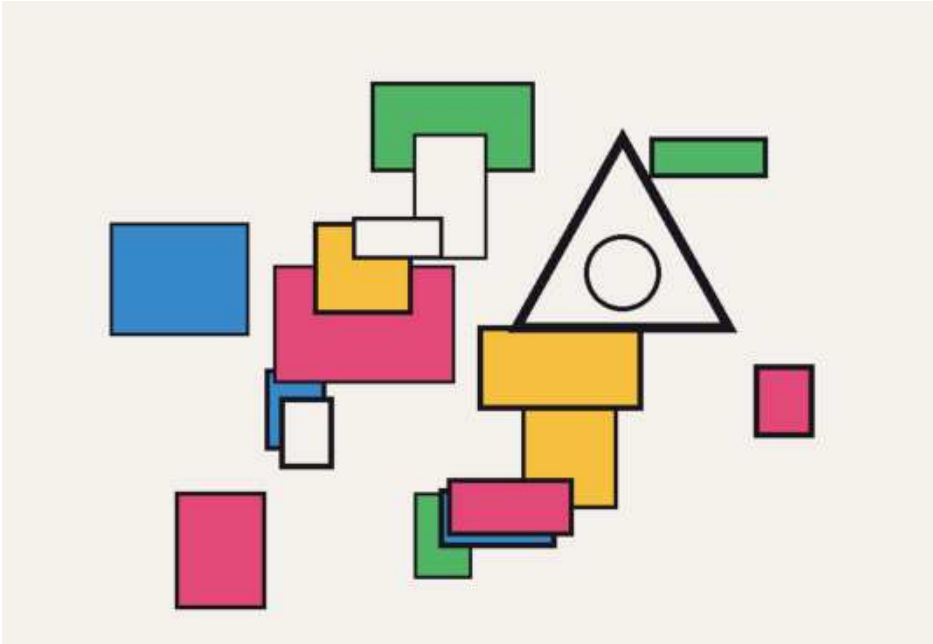
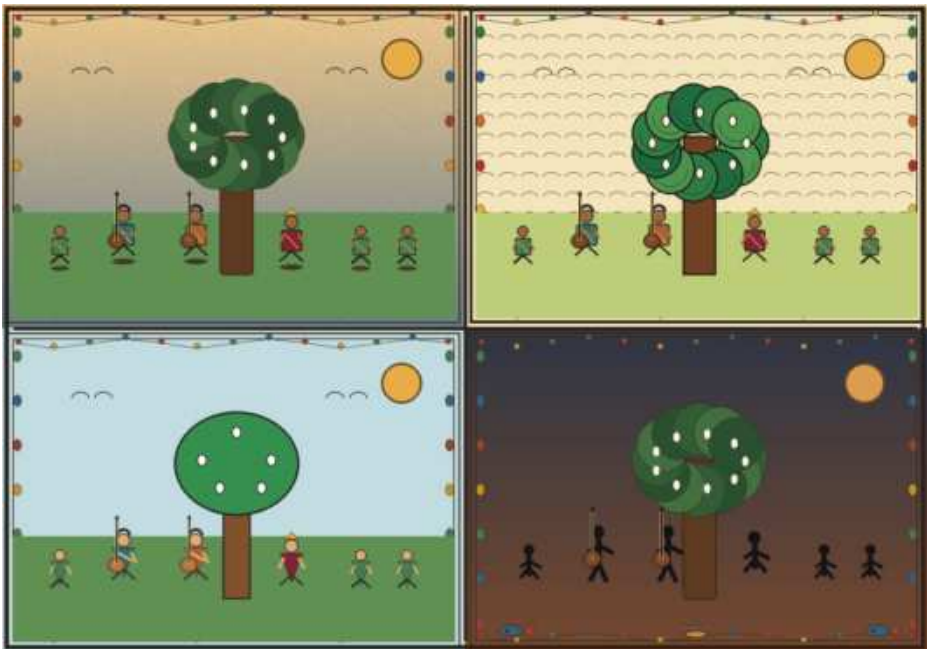
Picture 14

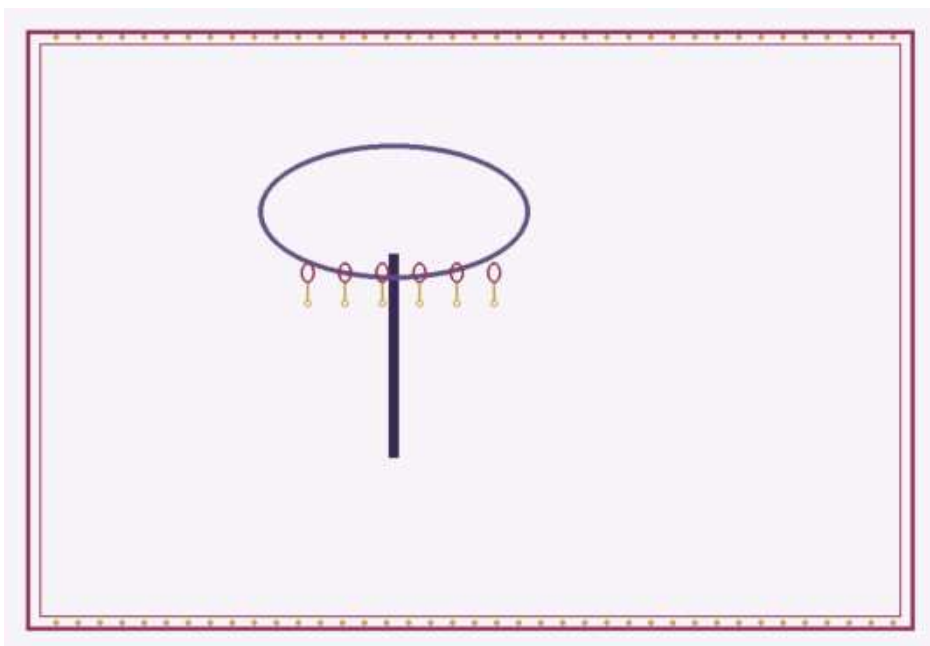
In Amta, a quiet and beautiful village of Mithila, the king built homes for the two brothers and arranged everything they needed. What greater gift could musicians receive than a place where they could practise without worry?

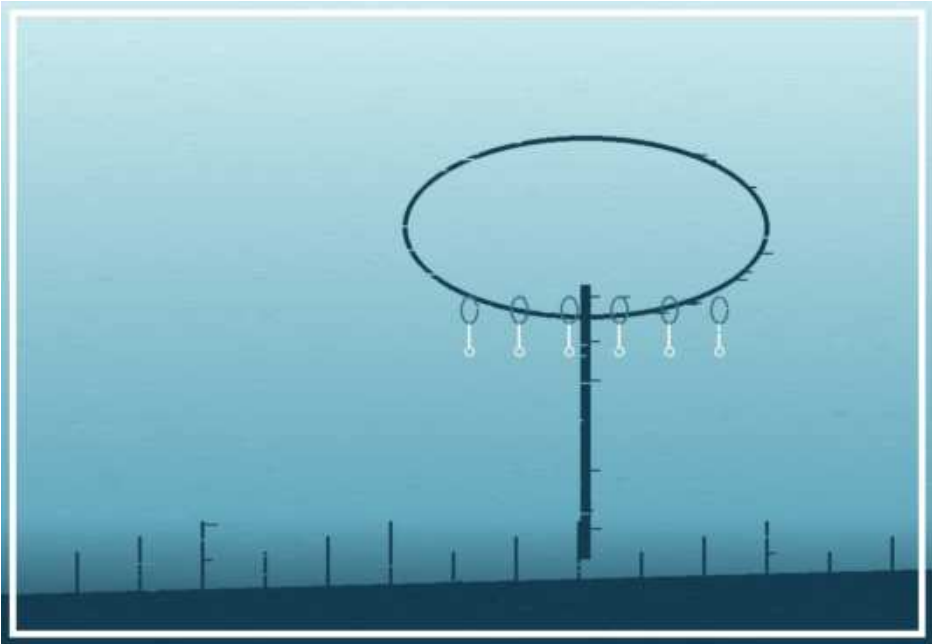
Amta had another unusual wonder too - a khiri tree.

People said its fruit held milk inside! It was as if the soil of the village itself was so rich that even the trees produced nectar. Music, the khiri tree, and Amta together became a special point on the map of Mithila, a place to which the king's heart returned again and again.

Chapter 8: Evenings in Amta Village



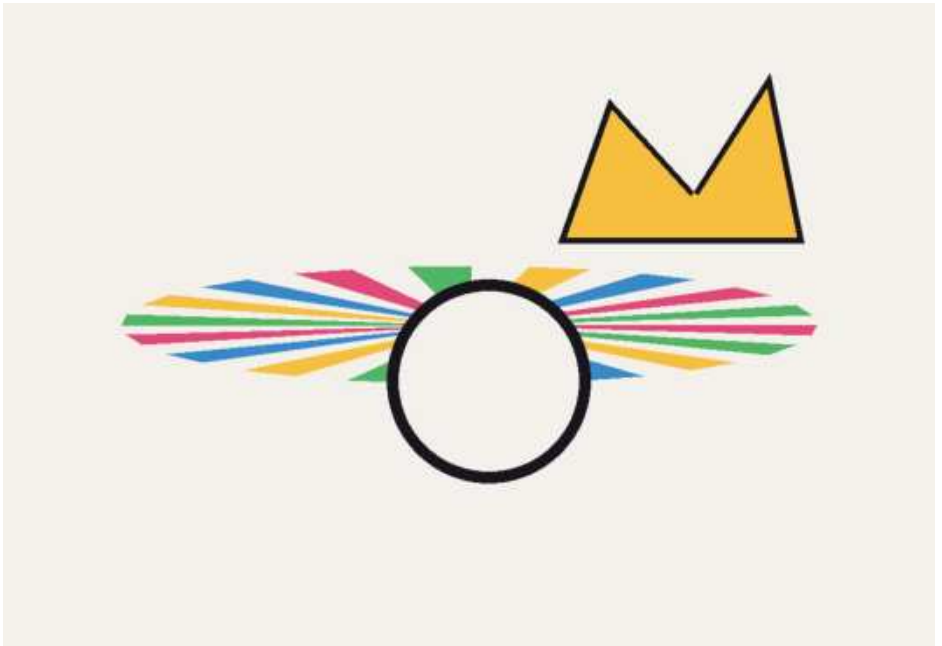


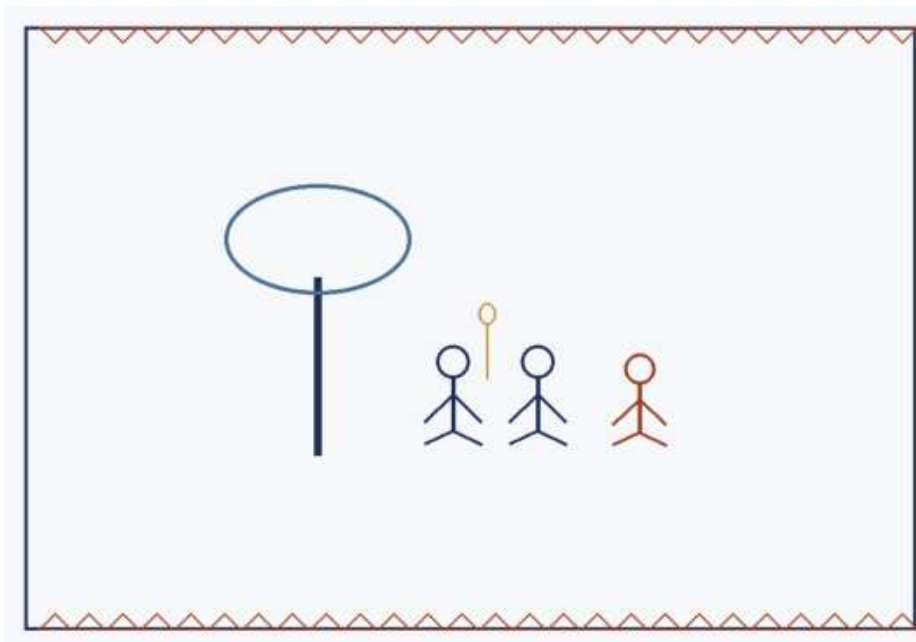


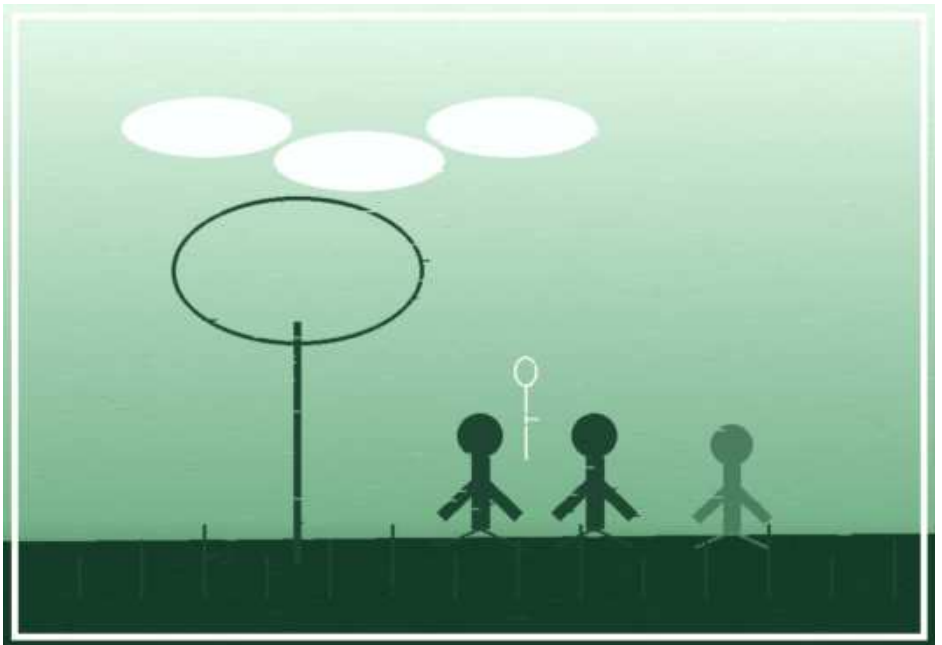
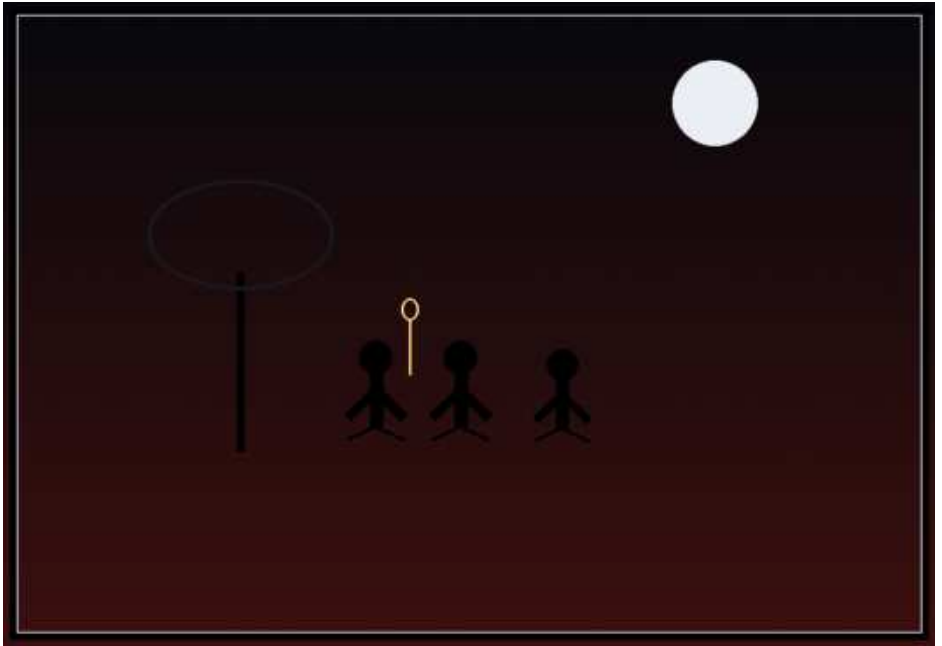
Picture 15

A new habit became part of King Madhav Singh's life: he began travelling to Amta to listen to dhrupad.

He did not go with royal splendour. In the evening he travelled simply, with only a few companions. Beneath the shade of the khiri tree, Radhakrishna and Kartaram would begin to sing. The king would close his eyes and listen - not as a ruler, but as a listener.





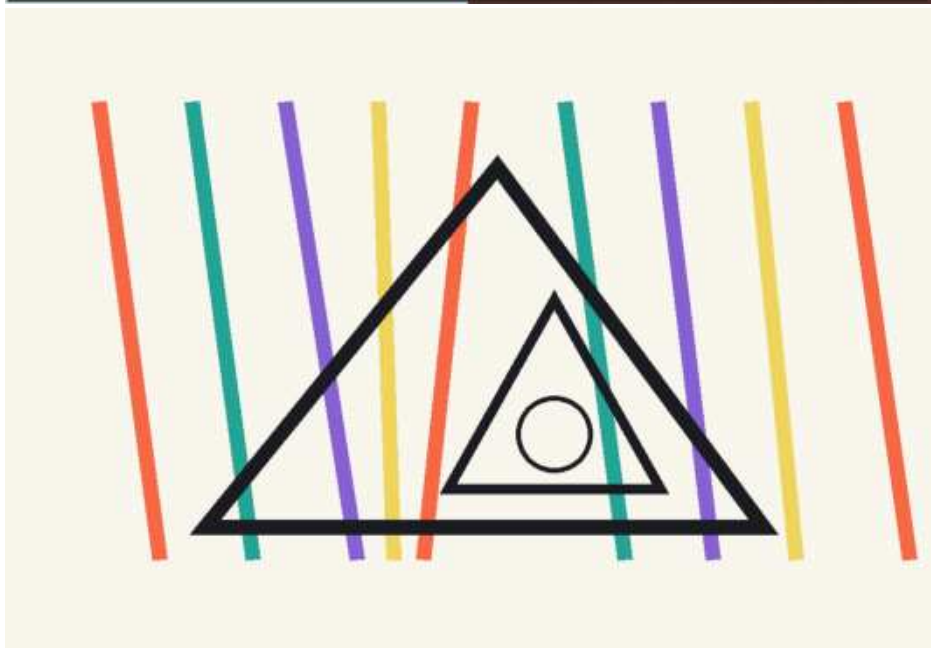


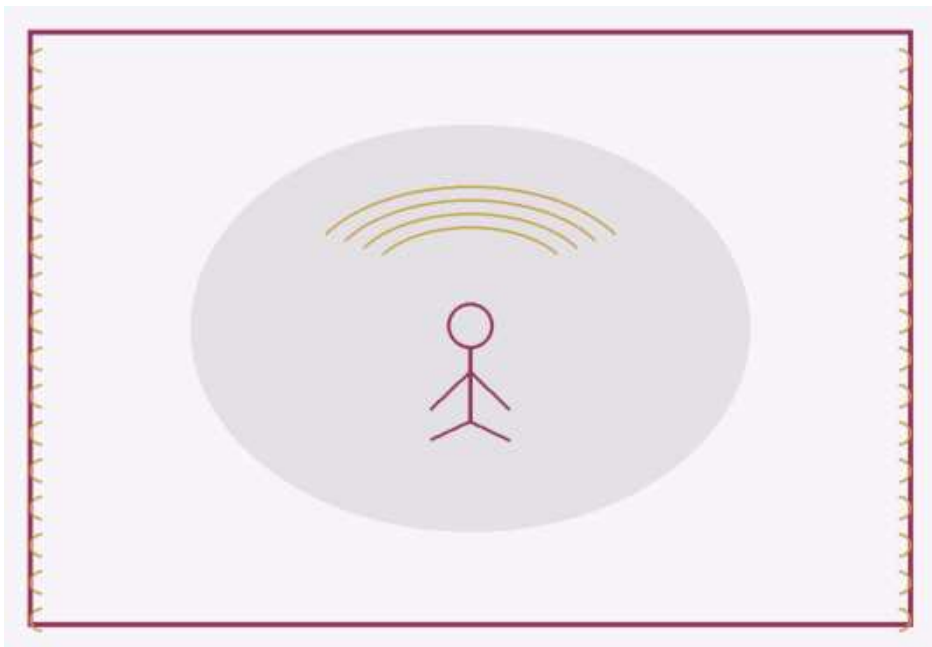
Picture 16

There was no throne at those gatherings. Before music, everyone was equal - king, singers, villagers, even the birds in the tree. The deep alap of dhrupad floated through the evening air, and Amta slowly became a sacred place of music in Mithila.

Years passed. The king's hair turned white and his steps grew slower. But the road to Amta and his love of dhrupad did not grow old. People said, 'Of all the life left in the king's body, half of it comes from the music of Amta.'

Chapter 9: The Final Wish



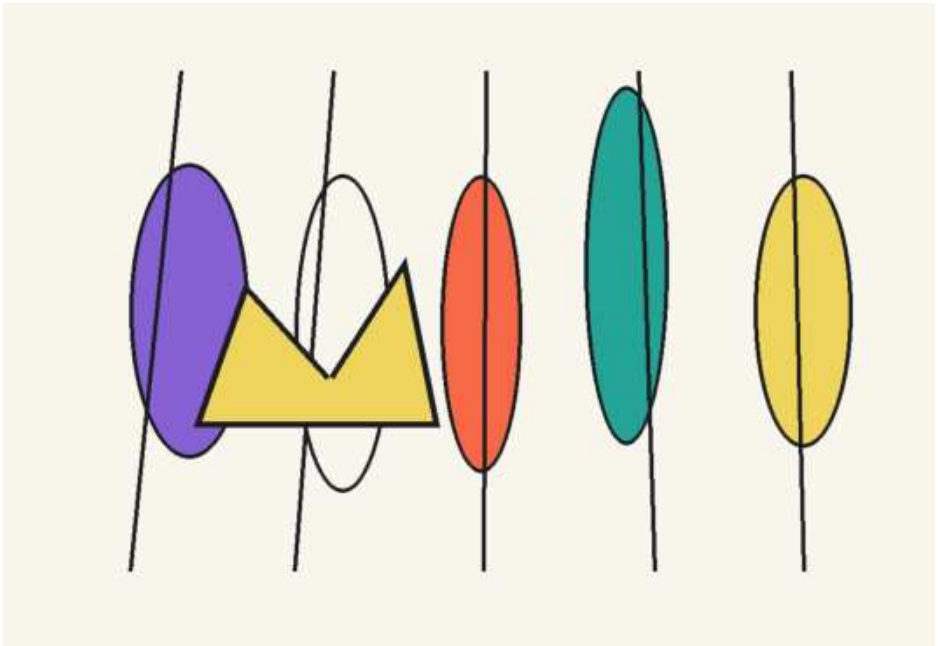


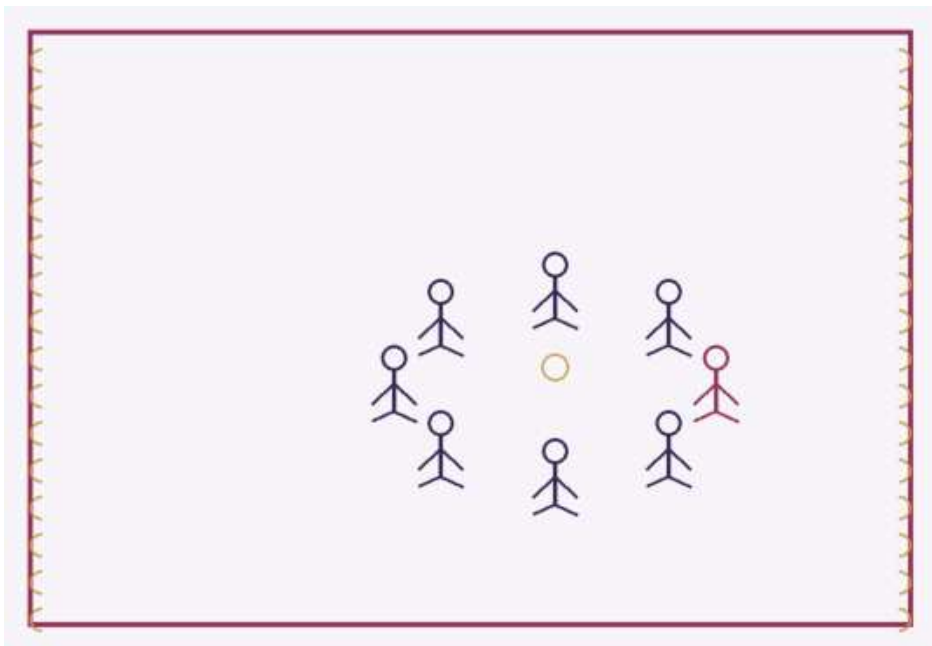


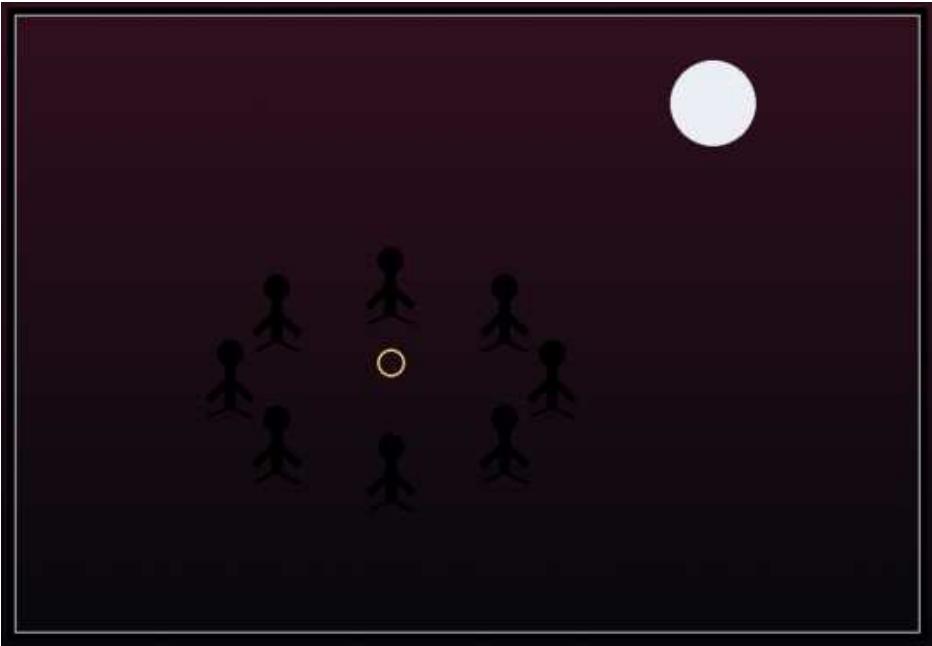
Picture 17

Then came the time that comes in every life: King Madhav Singh was near death.

He lay on his bed, the doctors unable to help him, while the court waited anxiously. Yet there was no fear of death in the king's eyes. He longed for something else. In a weak voice he said, 'Take me... to Amta. Just once more... dhrupad...'





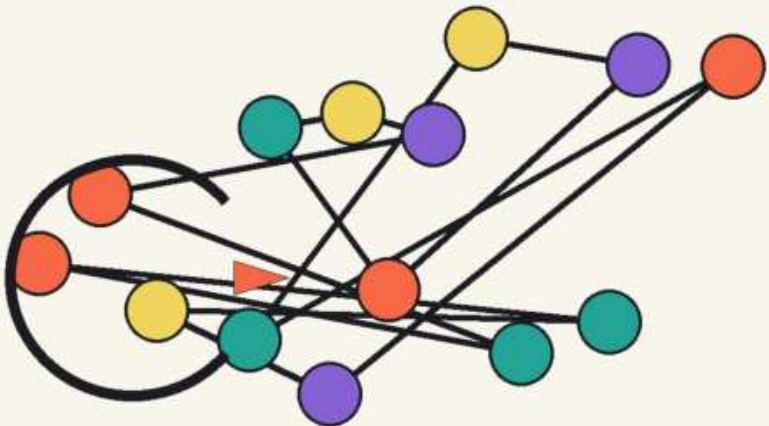
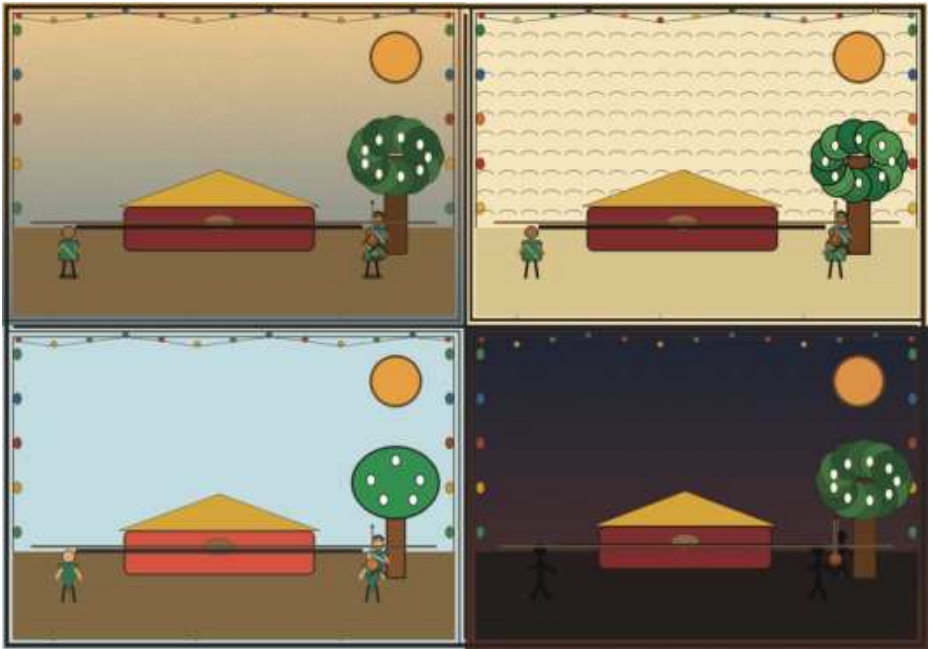


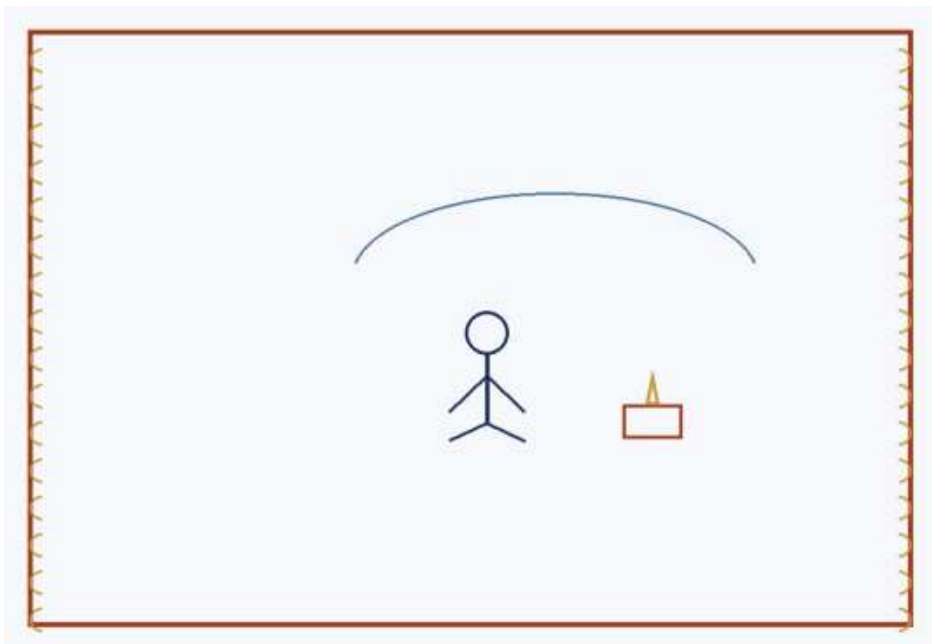
Picture 18

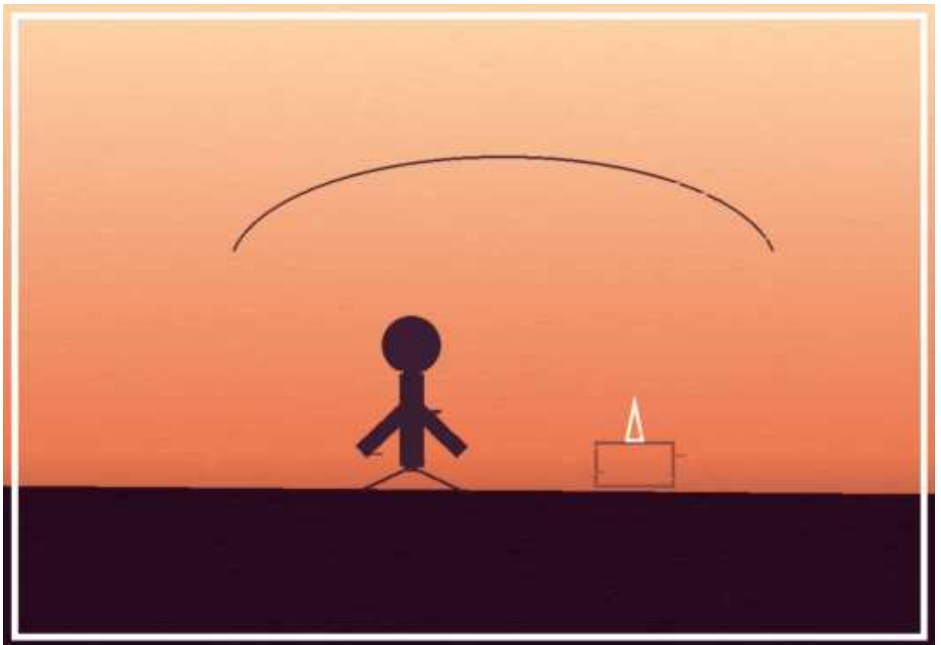
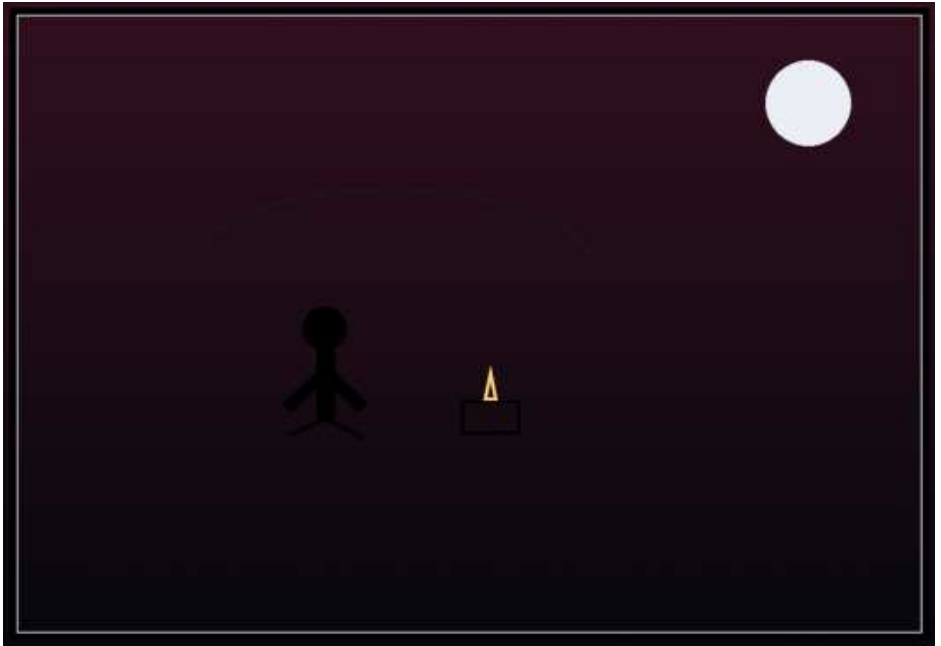
That was his final wish. The dying king did not speak of his kingdom or worry about who would rule next. He wanted only the music that had once brought water from the sky. Perhaps he felt that the raga which had brought a dying Mithila back to life could also send his own life away in peace.

A travelling couch was prepared, and his sickbed became a palanquin. The procession set out slowly toward Amta, as if every step begged time itself: 'A little longer... only until we reach Amta...'

Chapter 10: On the Road



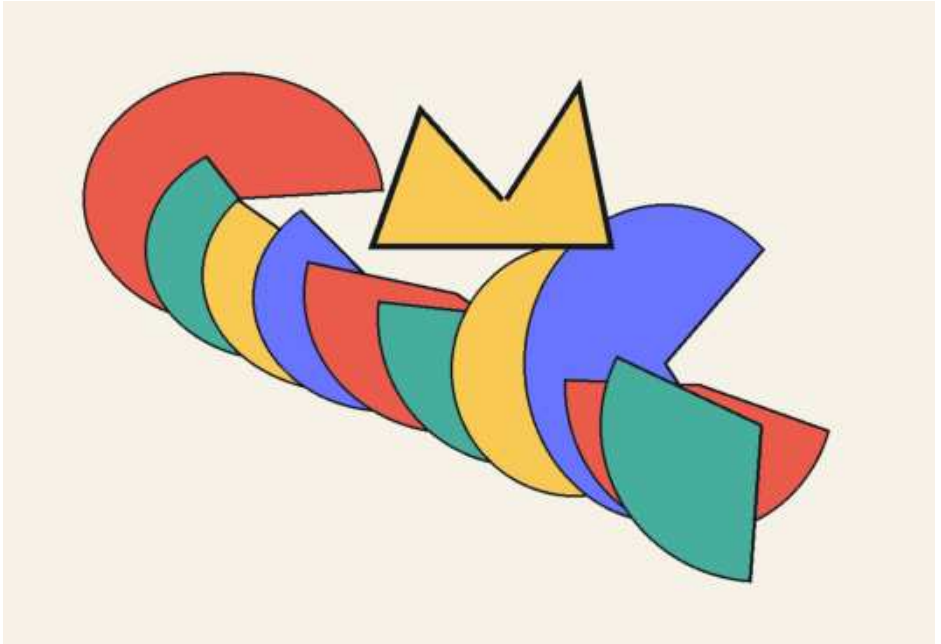


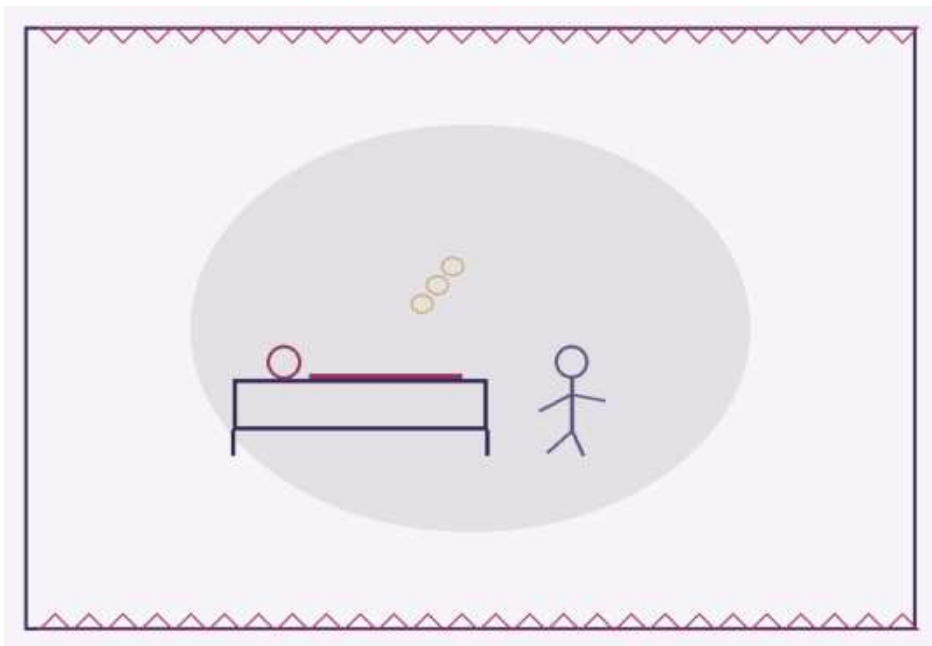


Picture 19

But time does not grant such requests.

Amta was still some distance away when the king's breathing stopped inside the palanquin. Madhav Singh, the king of Mithila who loved music, died on the road with his last wish to hear dhrupad still unfulfilled.





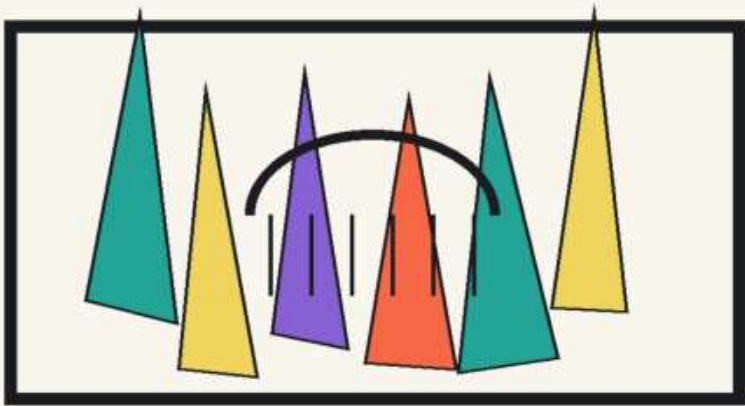
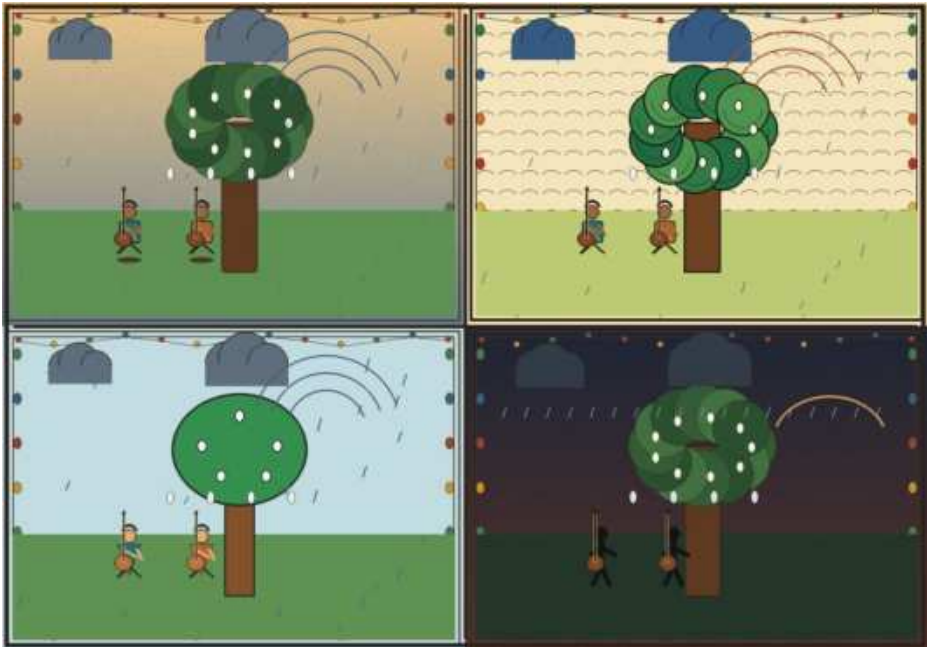


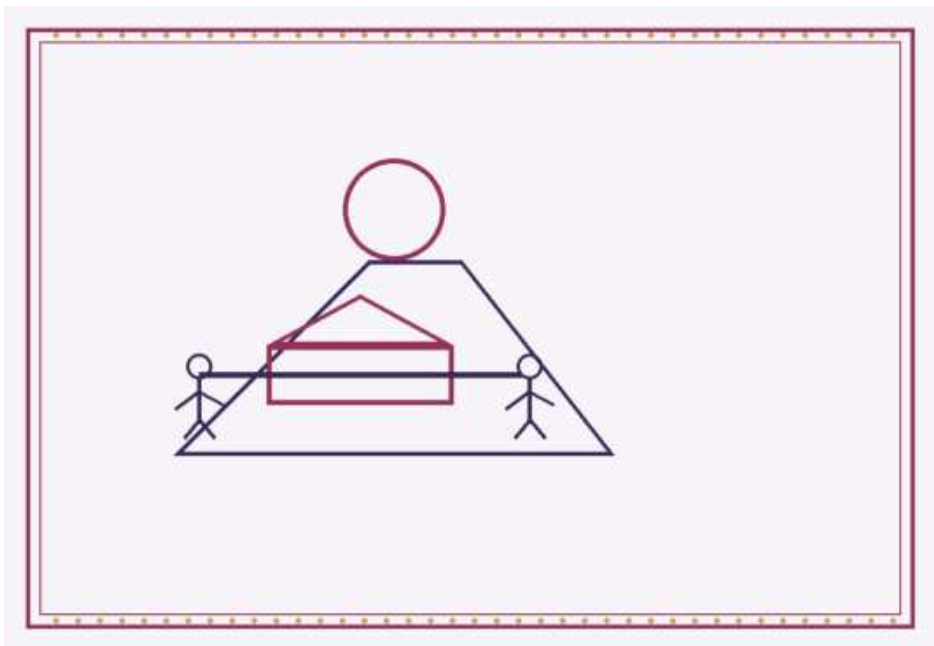
Picture 20

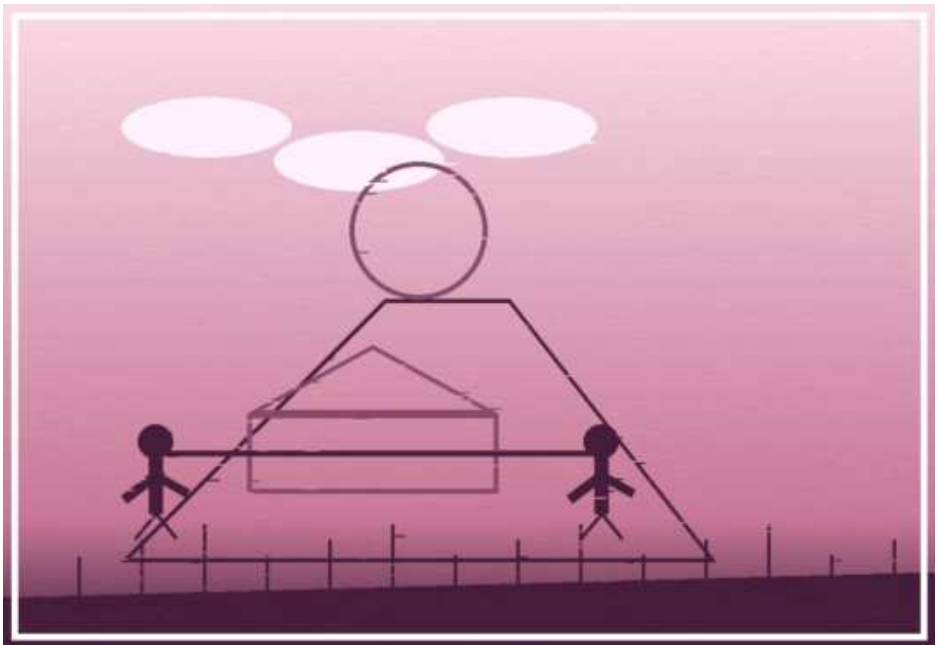
The procession stopped. Evening was falling. Ahead lay Amta, where perhaps a seat had already been spread beneath the khiri tree, the tanpura was being tuned, and the two brothers were waiting. But on the road stood a palanquin whose traveller had left the journey halfway.

That is the sorrow of this tale: small, quiet, without any great cry. There is no curse and no battle - only an unfinished wish left hanging forever in the air of Mithila. The king who once seemed to bend the sky with music could not reach his final song. Sometimes fate is like that: without explanation or fairness, it simply makes a journey shorter than we hoped.

Chapter 11: Amta Mourns



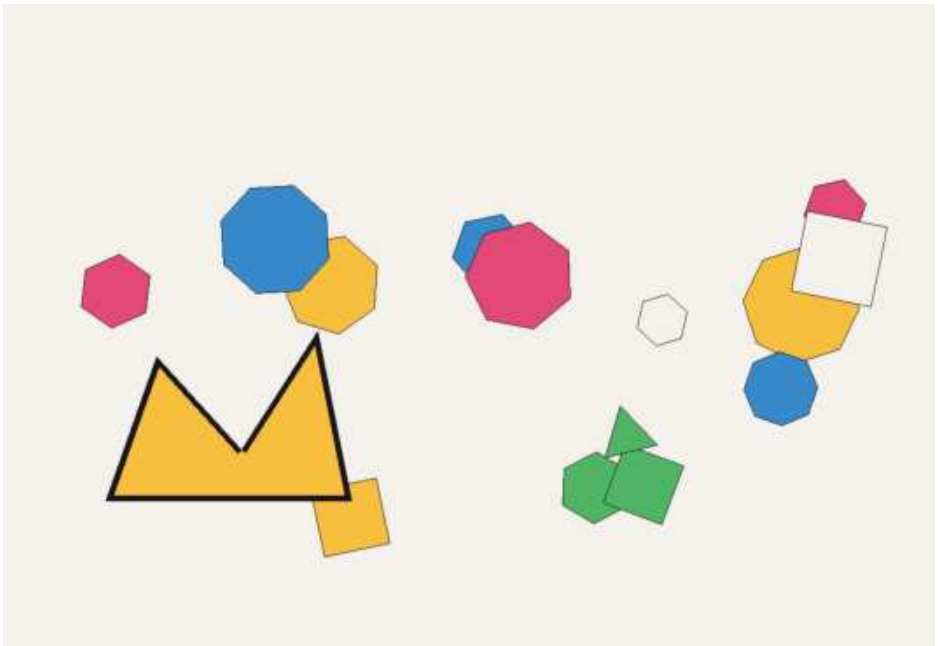


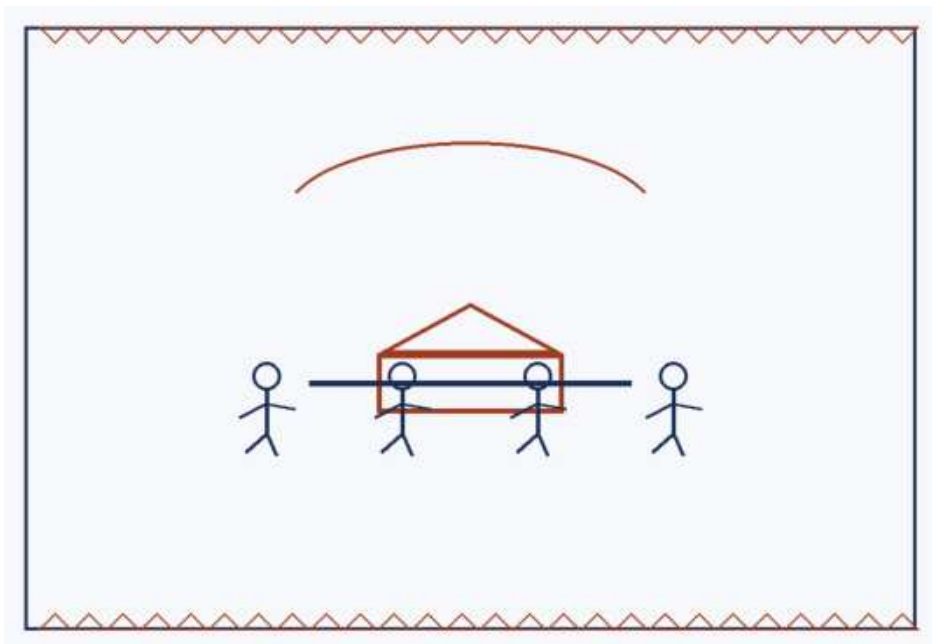


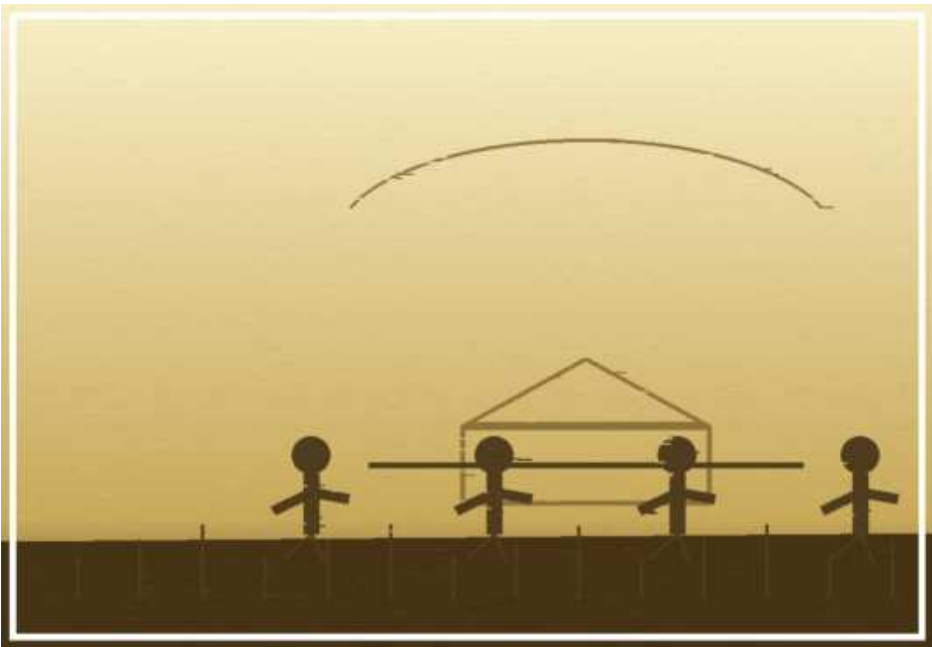
Picture 21

When the news reached Amta, people say that on that evening the fruit of the khiri tree seemed to drip tears instead of milk.

For many days afterward, Radhakrishna and Kartaram did not sit on the performance platform. How could they sing when their greatest listener had been left on the road? When someone asked Kartaram, he said only, 'Our greatest listener now lives inside the raga that we cannot bring ourselves to sing.'







Picture 22

But music is greater than grief, and true musicians know that an offering of sound can itself be a final tribute. After some time, the tanpura sounded again in Amta. The first raga they sang was Megh-Malhar. People say that drops of rain fell that day even though there were no clouds. Perhaps, somewhere, a listener was still listening.

Amta village still exists, and so does this story in its air. In Mithila, when dark clouds gather and the first drop strikes the earth, elders sometimes look up and say, 'That is the music of Radhakrishna and Kartaram, and Madhav Singh is listening.' The king never reached Amta on that last journey - but in the story, he reached it forever.

The End

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Motisaeri

The Princess of Morang - A Tragic Tale of
Greed, Deceit, and Freedom



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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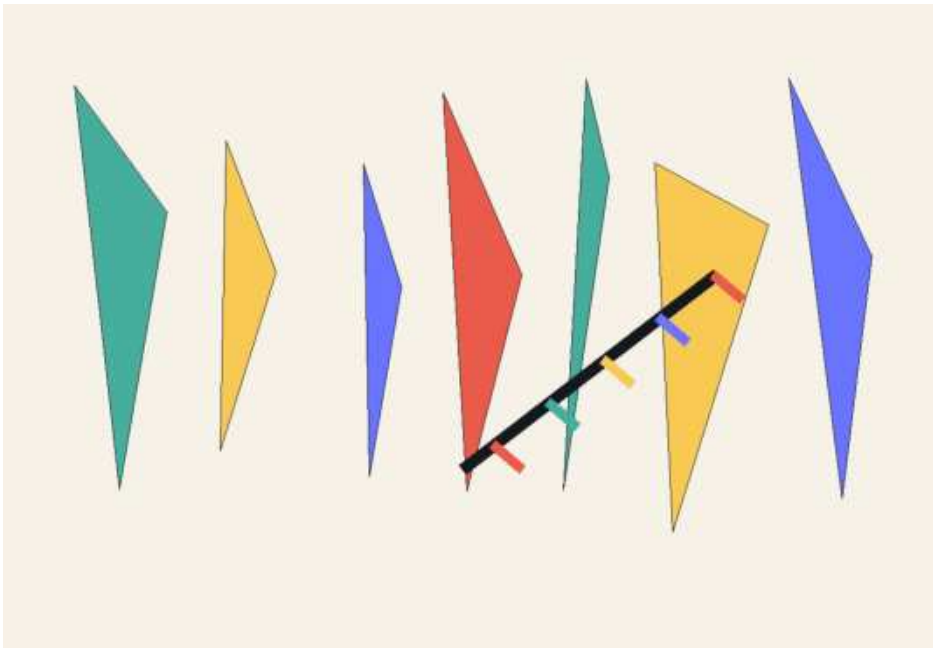
Prologue: Morang

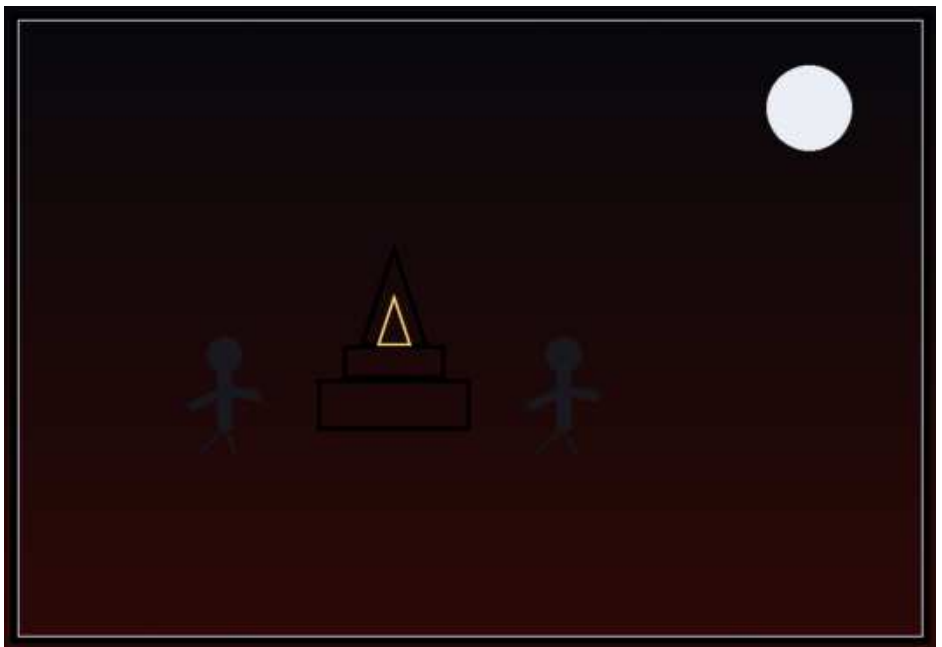
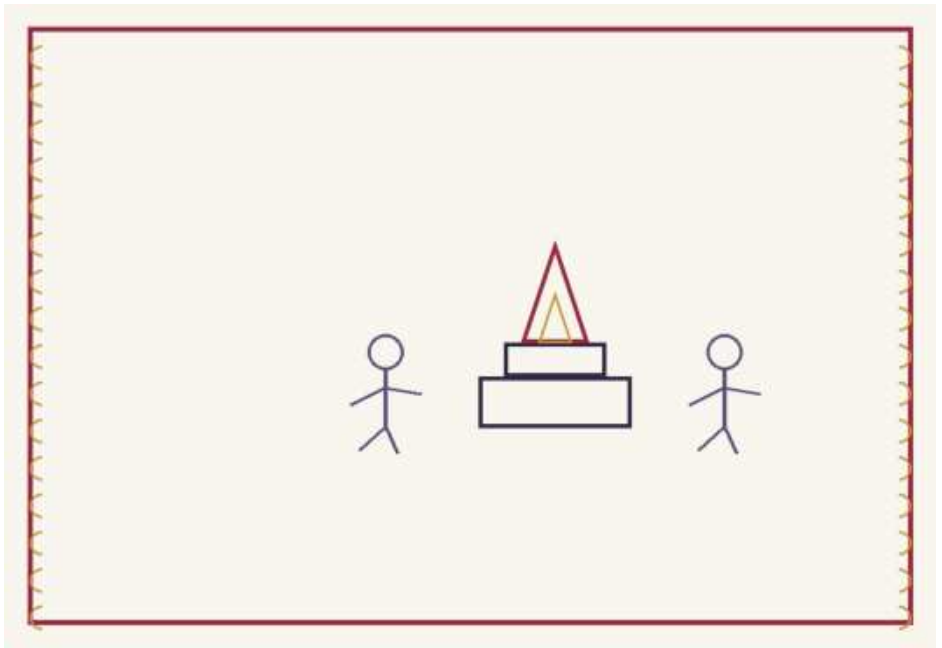
At the foot of the Himalayas, between forests and streams, lay Morang. Its ruler was King Bhimsen. He had a kingdom, wealth, and every comfort - but no child. This story begins with that empty space in his family and ends with a curse that swallows an entire kingdom.

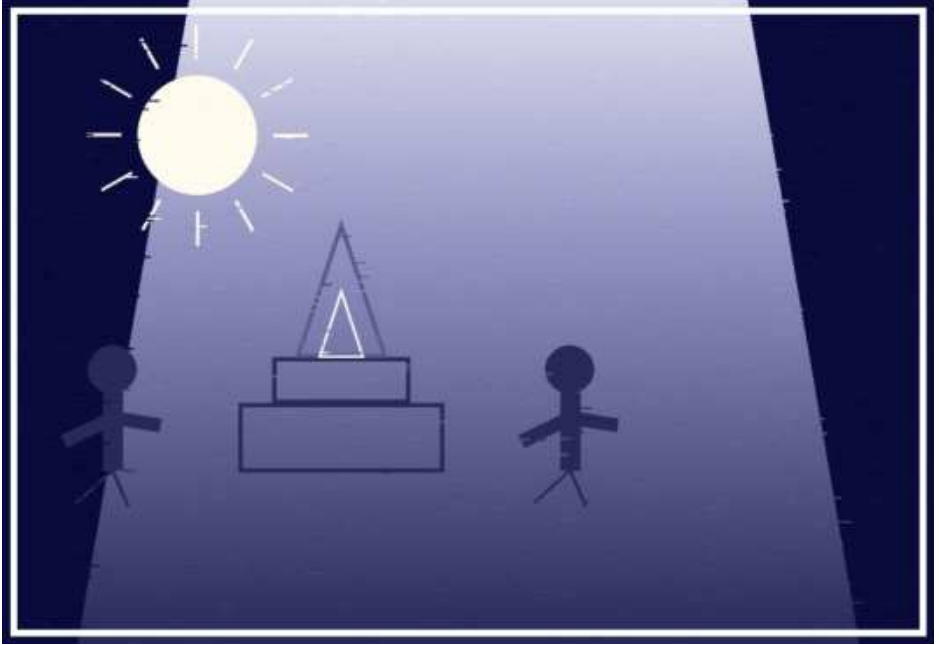
It is a story of three kinds of greed: the priest's greed, which sent a daughter floating down a river; the king's desire, which made him blind to truth; and the greed for power, which brought one battle after another. Between all three stands a girl named Motisaeri, the most innocent person in the tale, who suffers the most.

Chapter 1: The Gift of the Sacred Ceremony





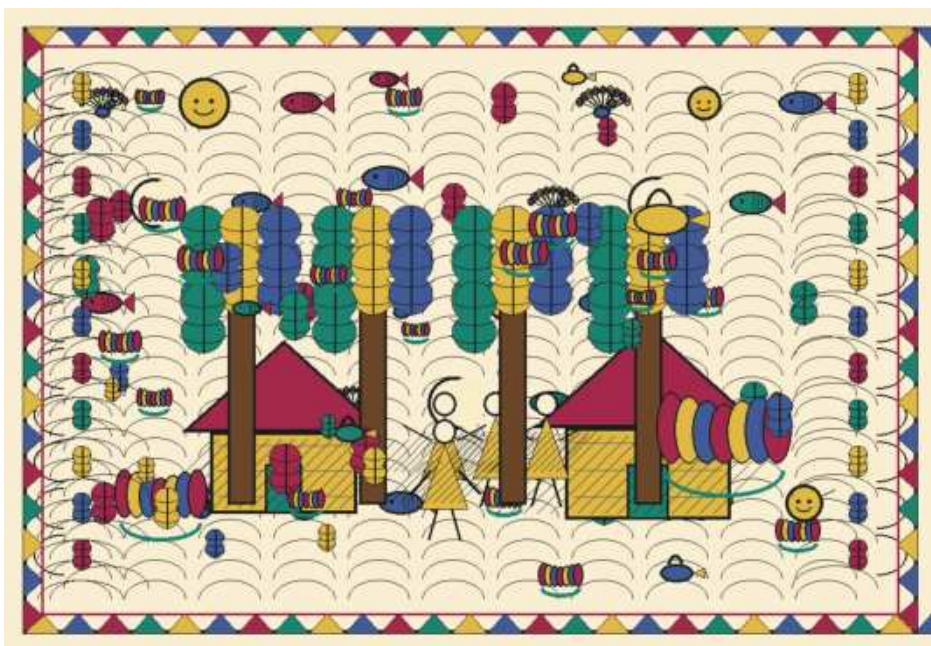
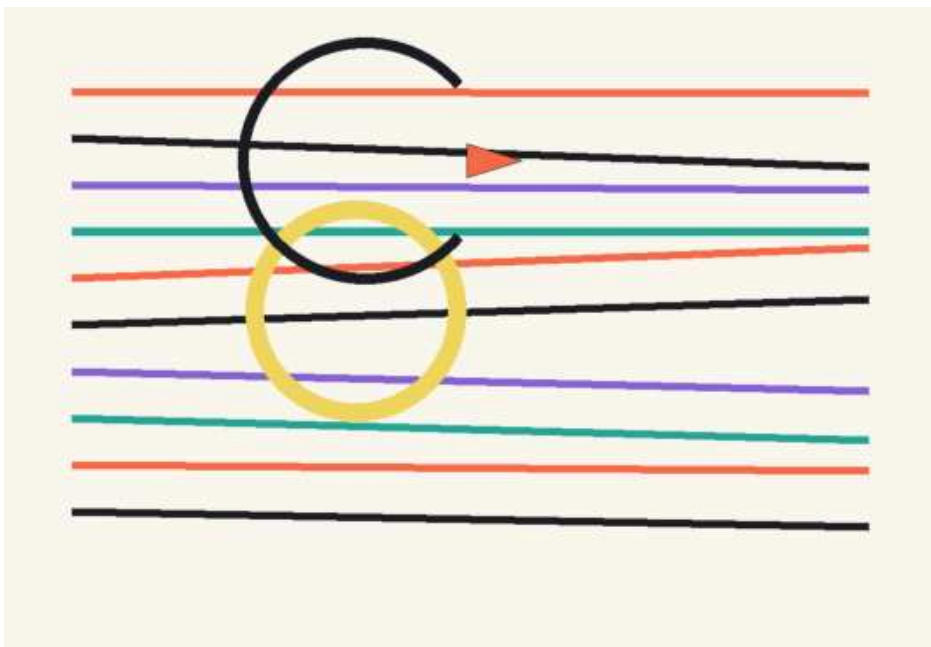


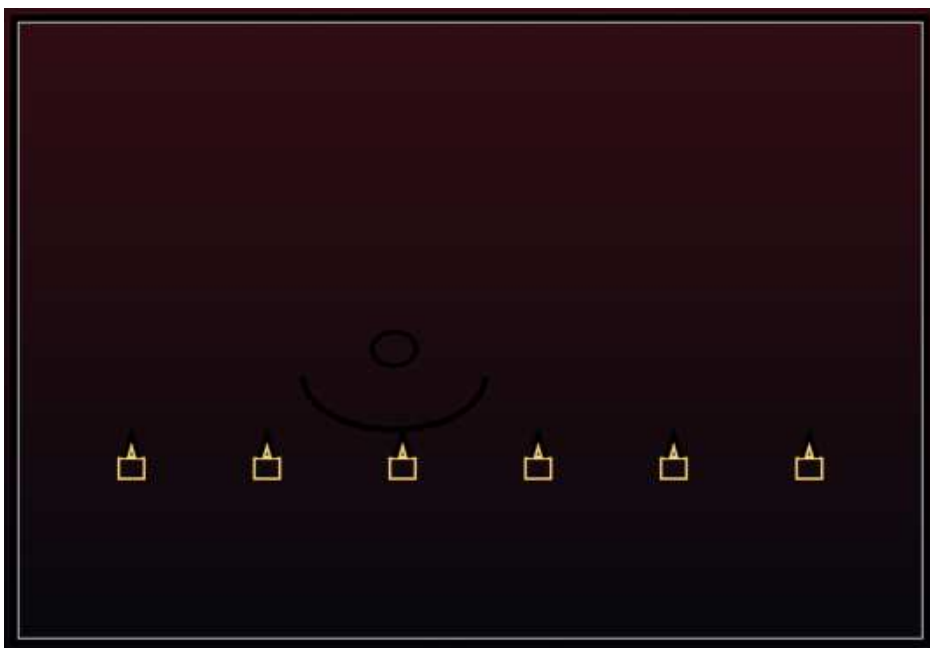
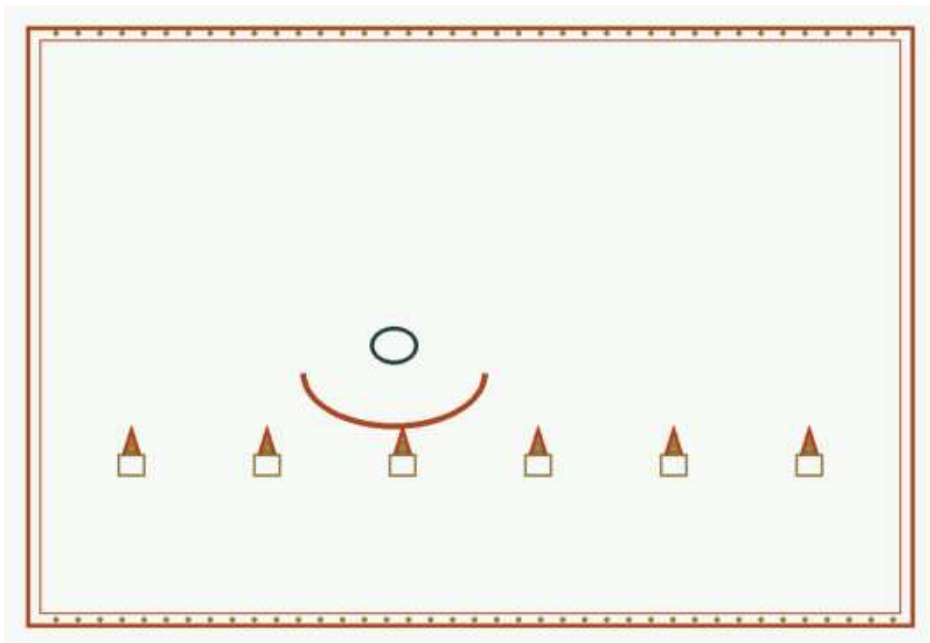


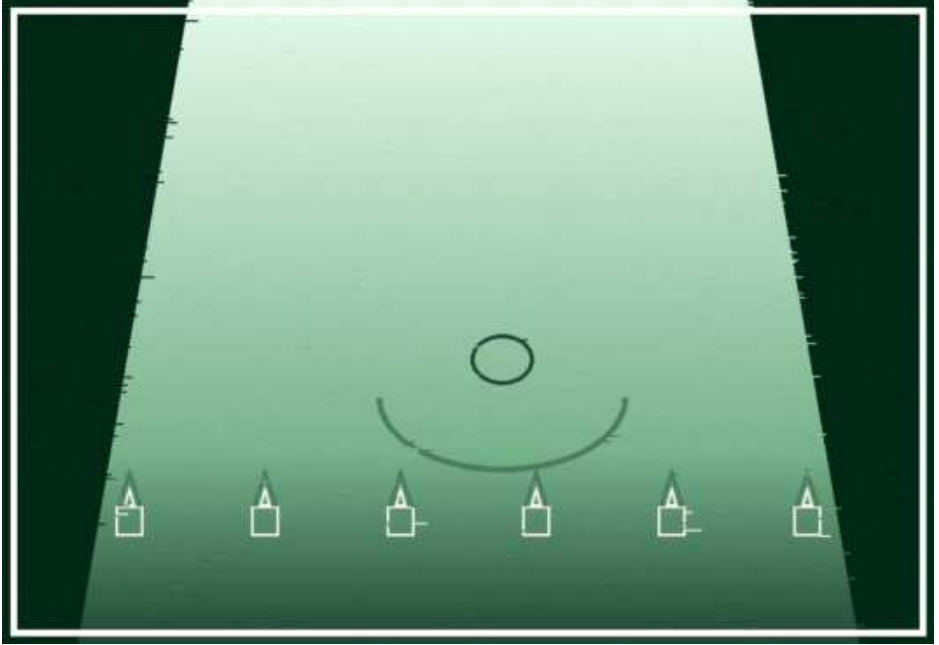
Picture 1

King Bhimsen had no children. His court had every comfort, but inside the palace there was one great sorrow: there was no heir. The queen looked toward the prayer room and the king looked toward the sky, both asking for the same blessing.

At last, a sacred fire ceremony was performed with full rites and learned priests making offerings day and night. The ceremony bore fruit: a daughter was born in the palace. She was not a son, but Bhimsen's joy was no less. A child was a child.







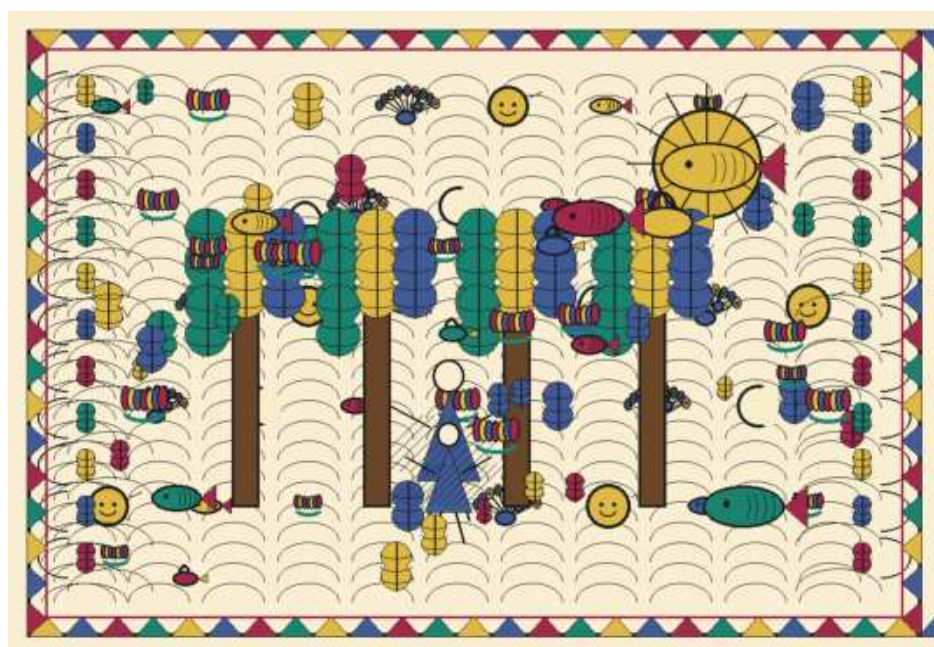
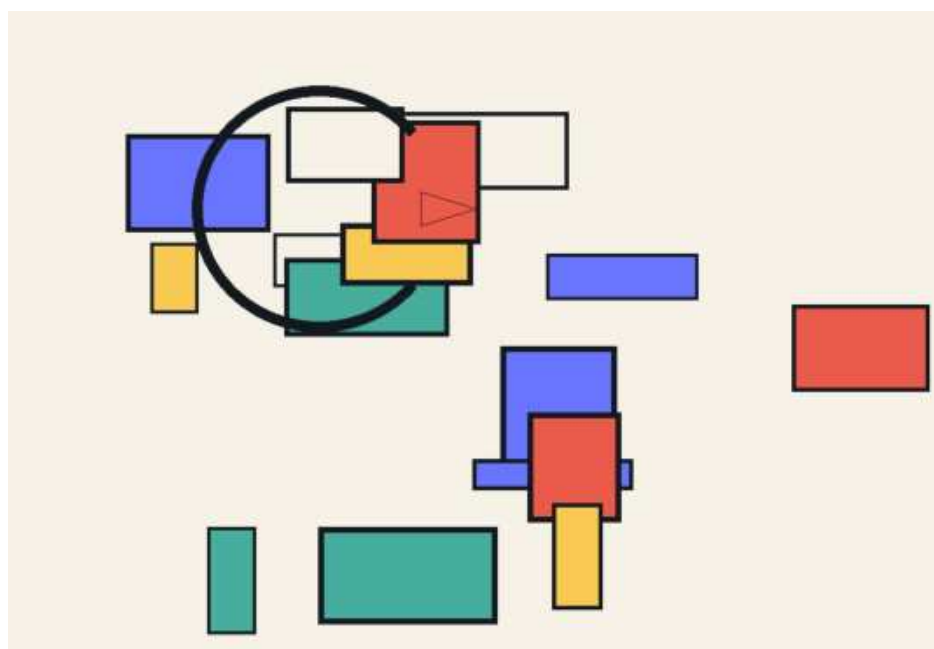
Picture 2

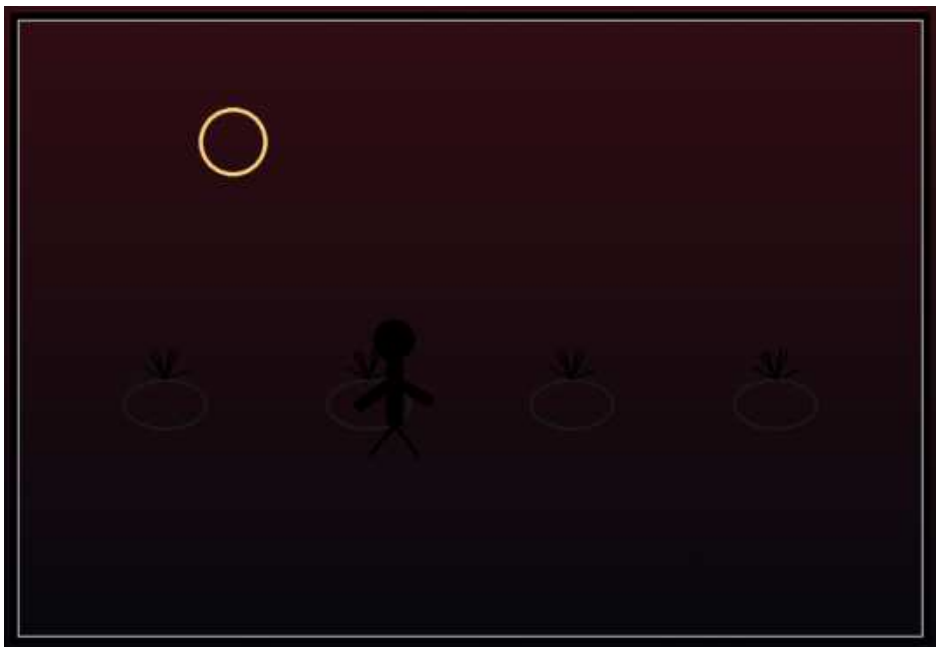
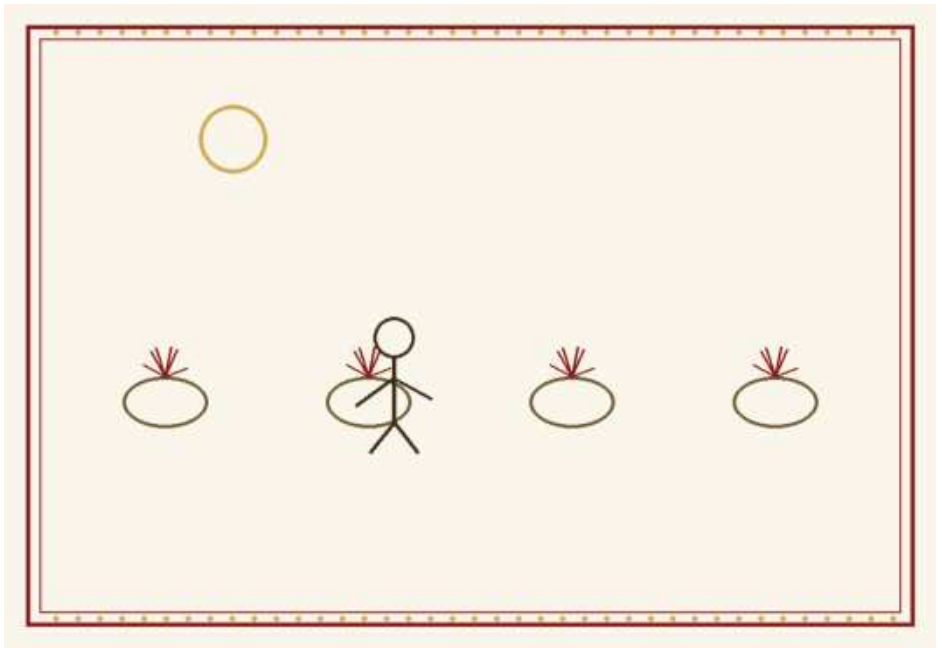
She was named Motisaeri. Her beauty matched her name: bright as a pearl, with deep eyes like a quiet lake. Morang celebrated. Prisoners were released and food was shared among the people.

But remember the rule of old tales: a child born after a great sacred ceremony rarely has an ordinary destiny. Something unusual was written in her horoscope - something that could become a blessing or a disaster, depending on the intentions of the person who read it.

Chapter 2: The Horoscope and the Priest







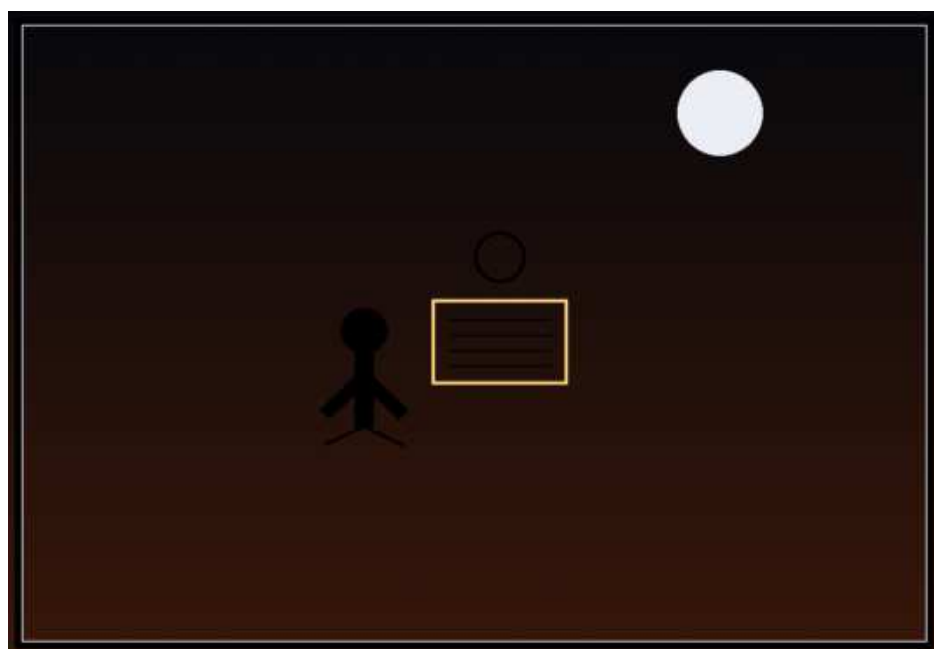
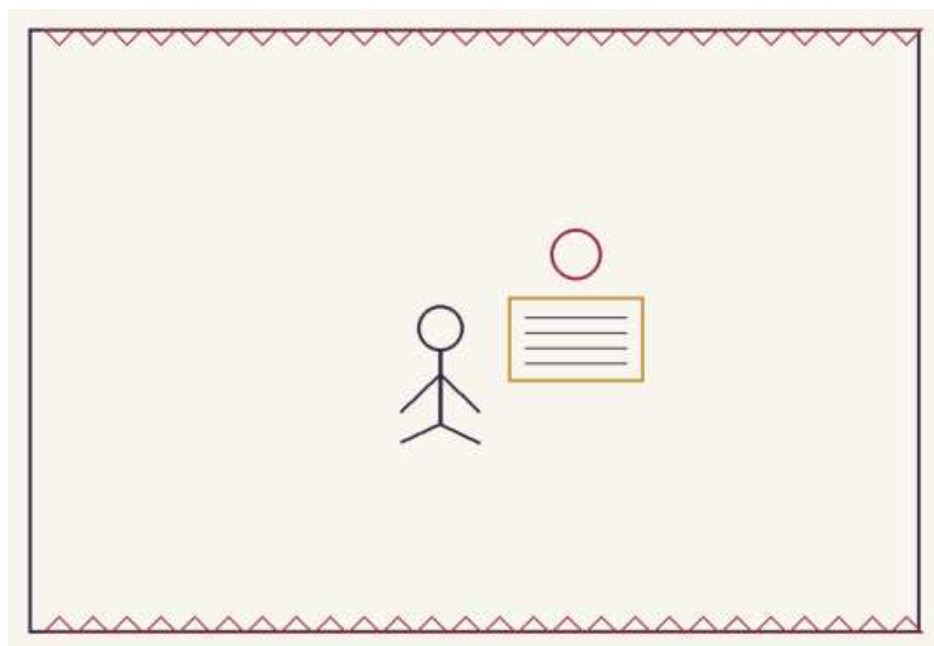


Picture 3

Motisaeri grew up with beauty, good character, and kindness. The king called the royal priest and said, 'Read her horoscope. What does the future say about my daughter?'

The priest opened the horoscope, and his eyes stopped. The signs were extraordinary: whoever married this girl would gain every happiness the world could offer - kingdom, wealth, honour, and more than anyone could imagine.





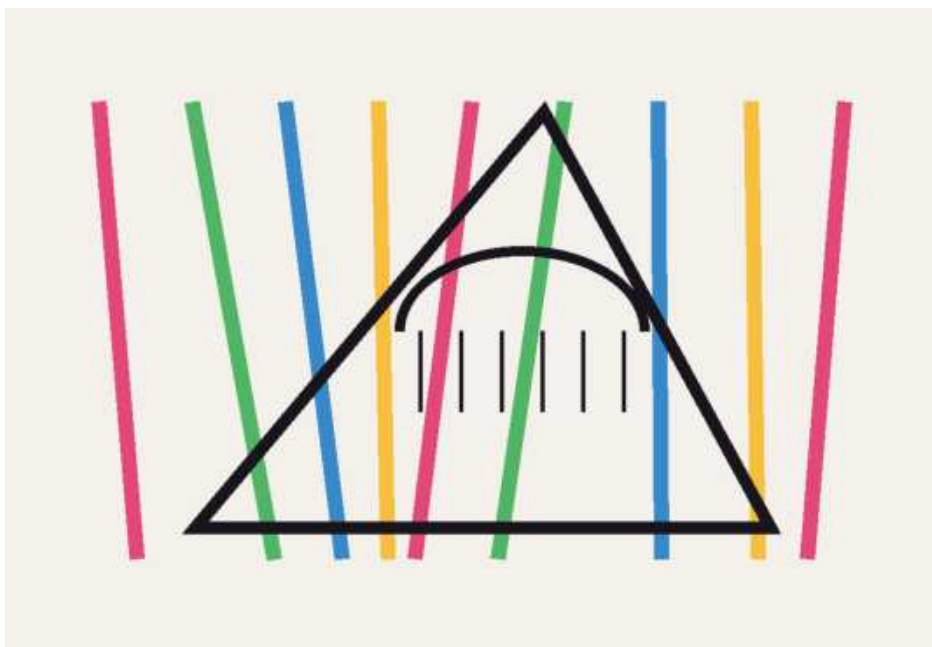
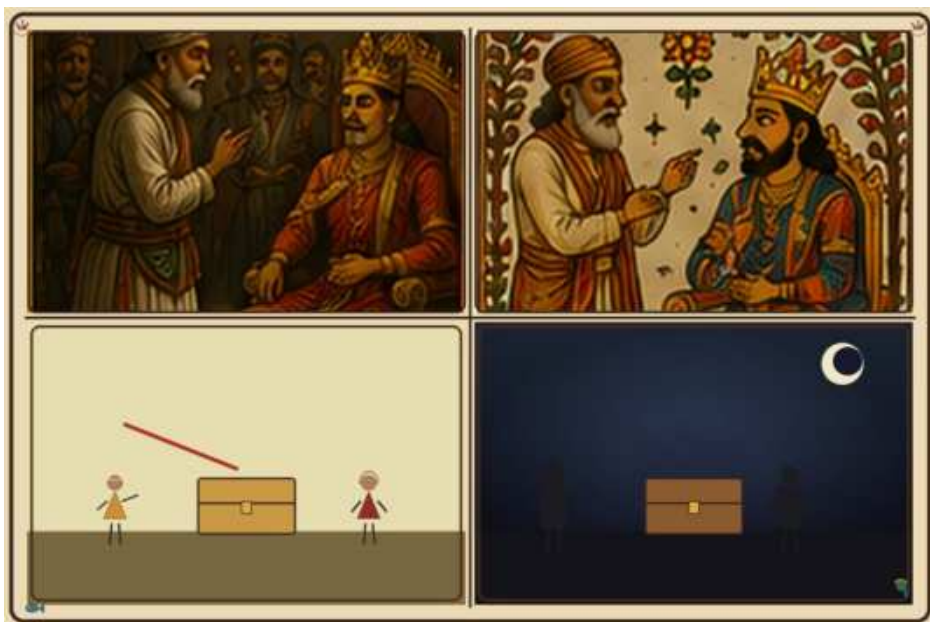


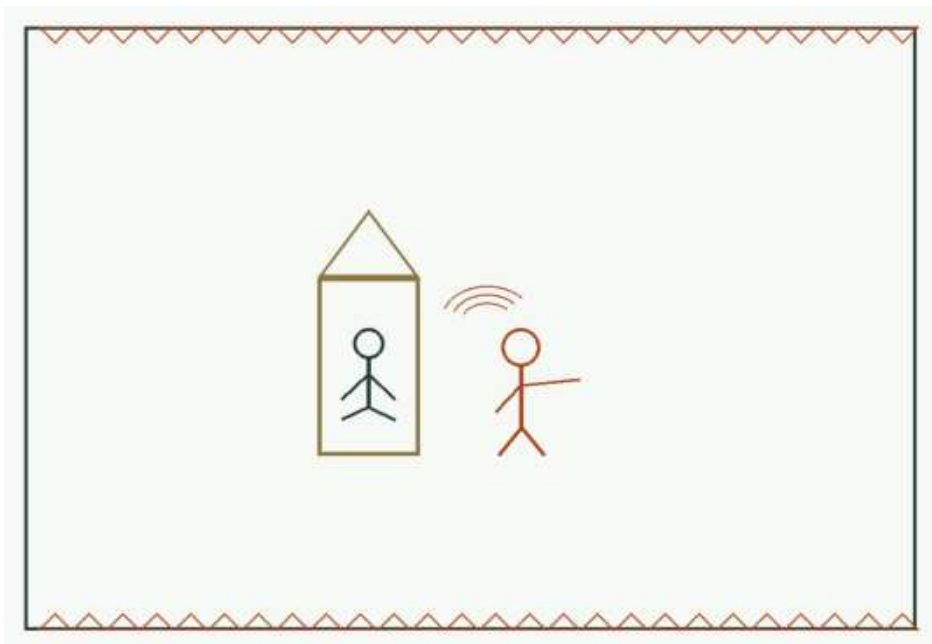
Picture 4

The priest's hands trembled, not with fear but with greed. A thought rose inside him that he could not silence: 'How wonderful! What if... I marry her myself?'

The royal priest, whose duty was to speak truth, became a trader in truth at that very moment. But how could a priest openly marry the king's daughter? The honest path was impossible. So he chose the path greed often chooses: deception.

Chapter 3: The False Prophecy



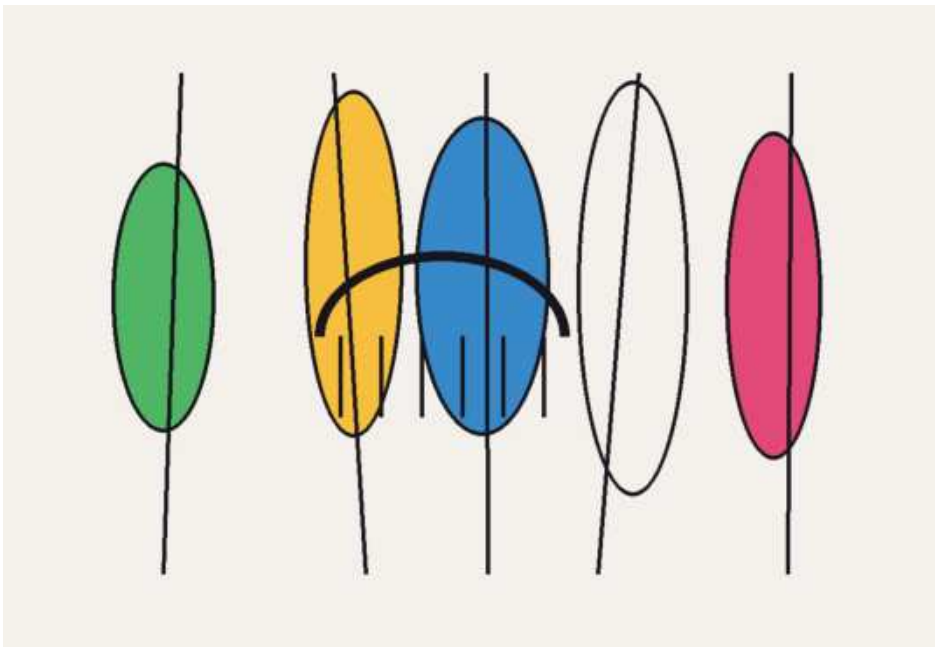


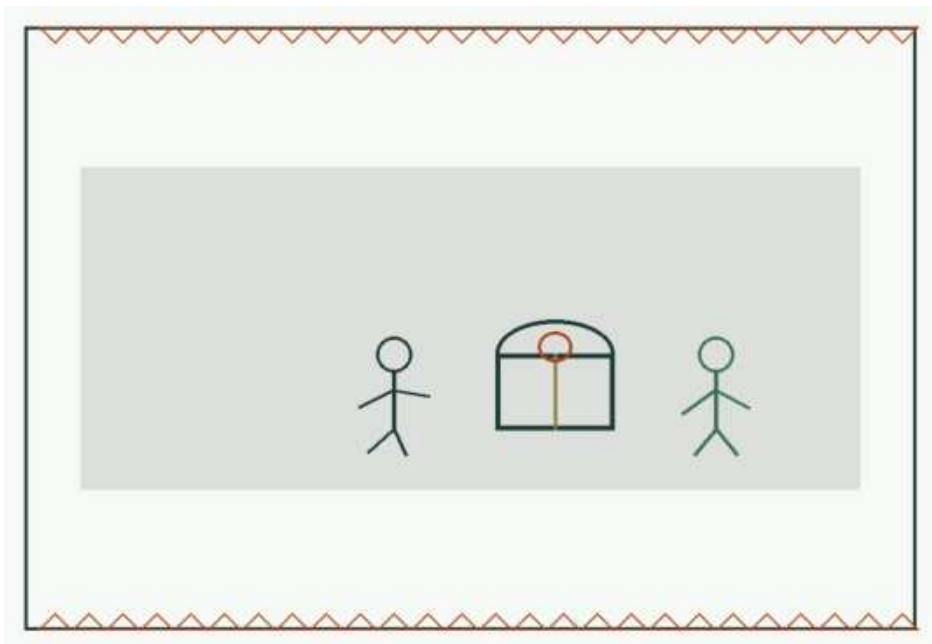


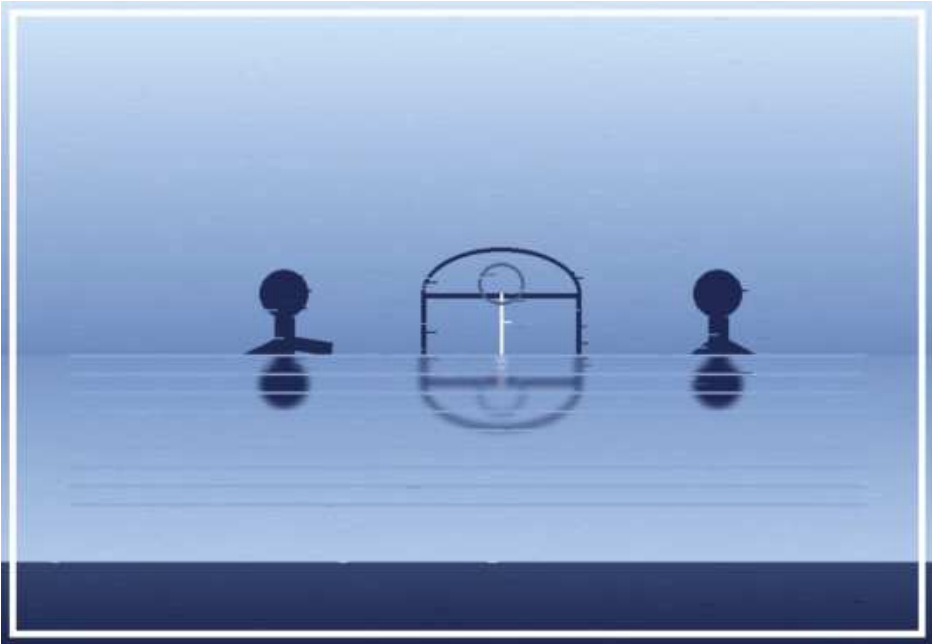
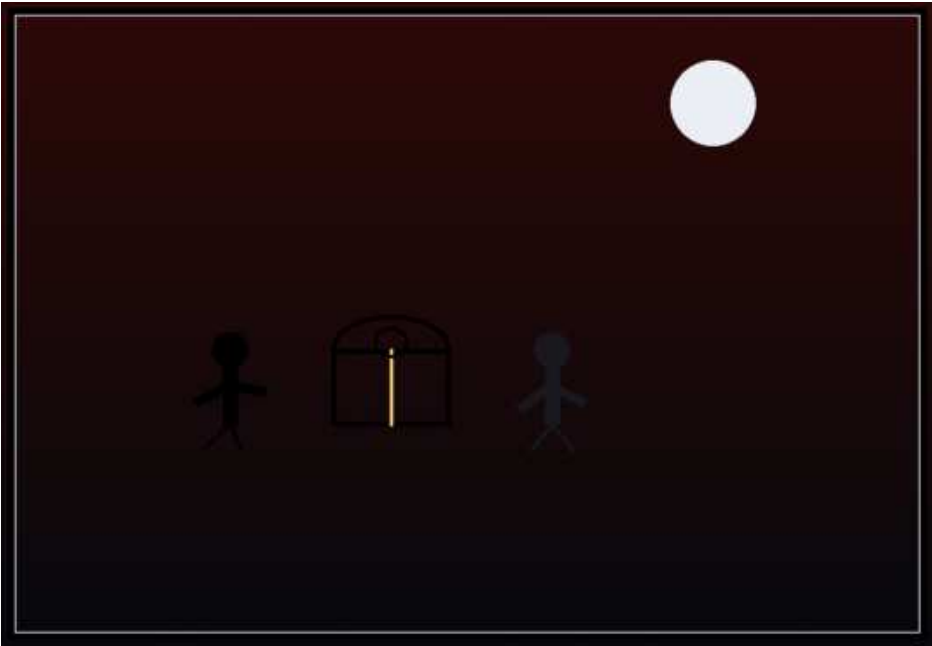
Picture 5

The priest stood before the king with his head bowed and a mask of worry on his face. 'Your Majesty,' he said, 'what I have seen is so terrible I can hardly speak. Your daughter's fate is full of disaster. If she remains here, you and your kingdom will be destroyed. Send her out of the kingdom at once!'

The words struck like lightning. The daughter for whom the king had prayed was now said to be a danger to the kingdom. Bhimsen was broken. The queen wept, and the palace wept with her. But who would question the royal priest, the man trusted to read the stars and scriptures?





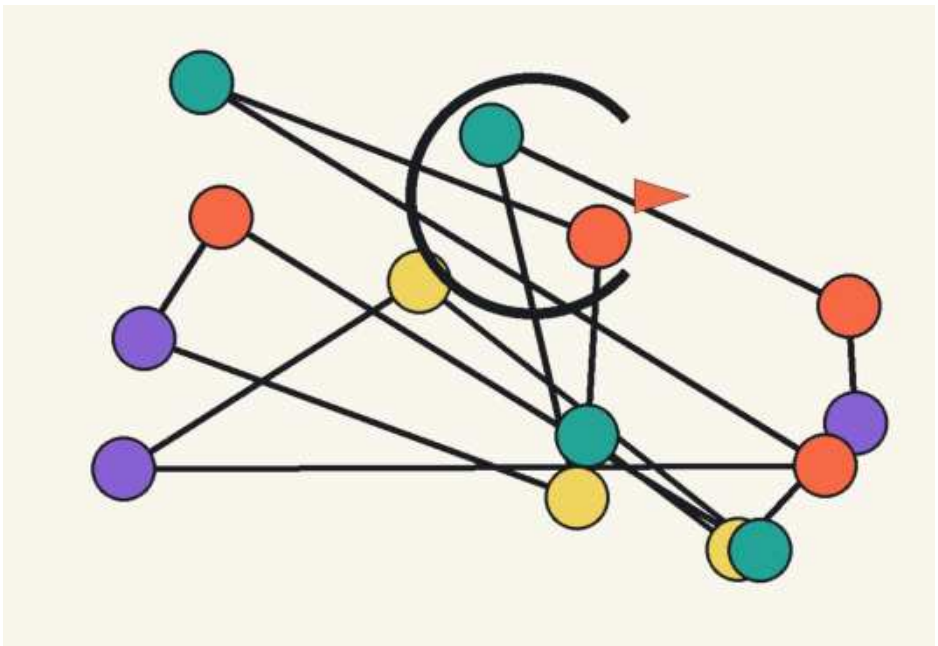
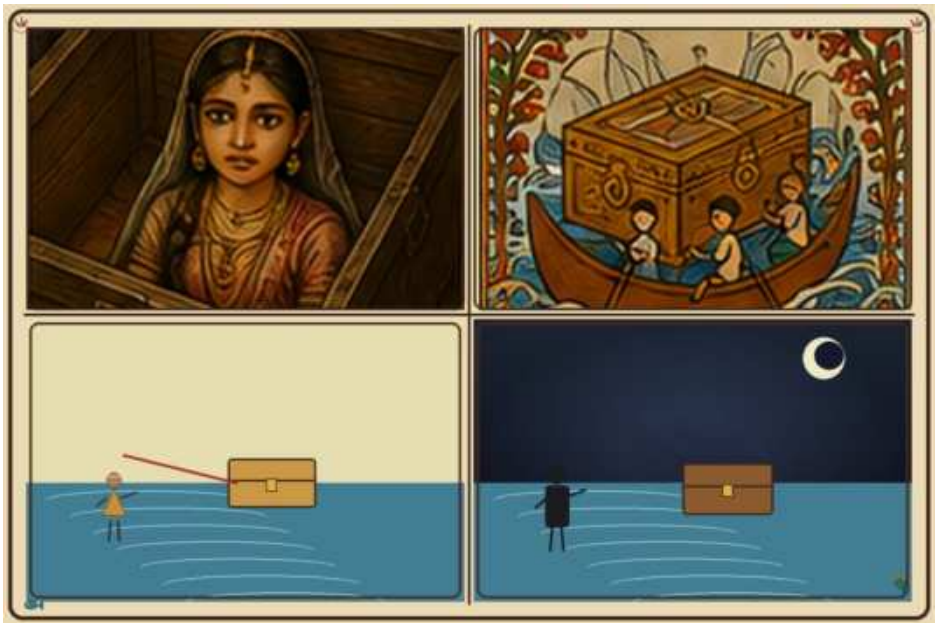


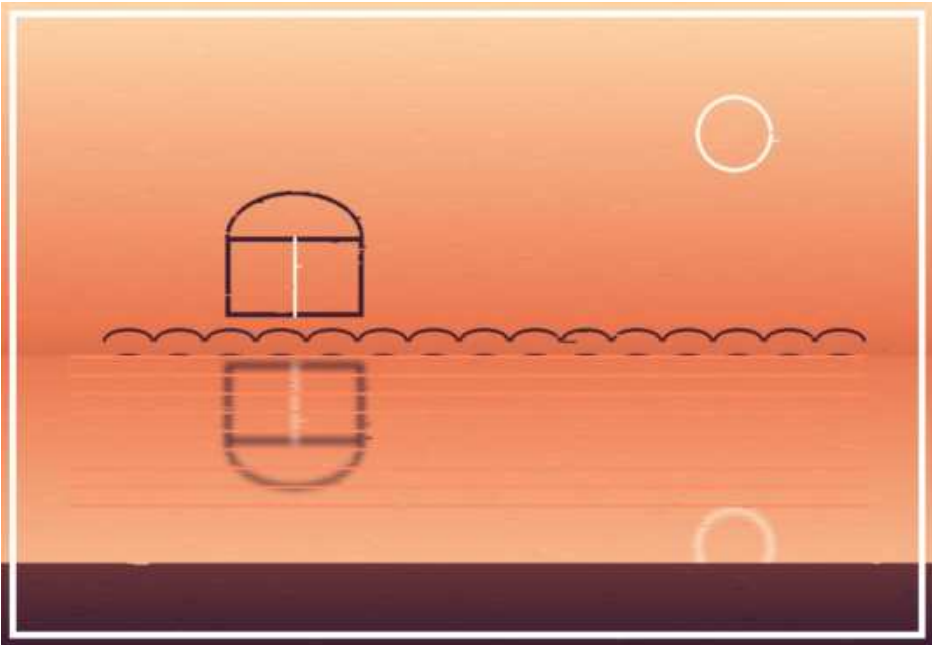
Picture 6

In the name of duty to the kingdom, a father's duty to his child was sacrificed. It was decided that Motisaeri must be sent away. But a princess could not simply be left by the roadside, so a large chest was brought.

Motisaeri was shut inside the chest with food and water. She was a prisoner without having committed any crime. Her only 'fault' was that her horoscope had been too fortunate. The chest was set afloat on the river. People say the palace lamps seemed to go out by themselves that night, as if even fire felt ashamed.

Chapter 4: The Floating Chest

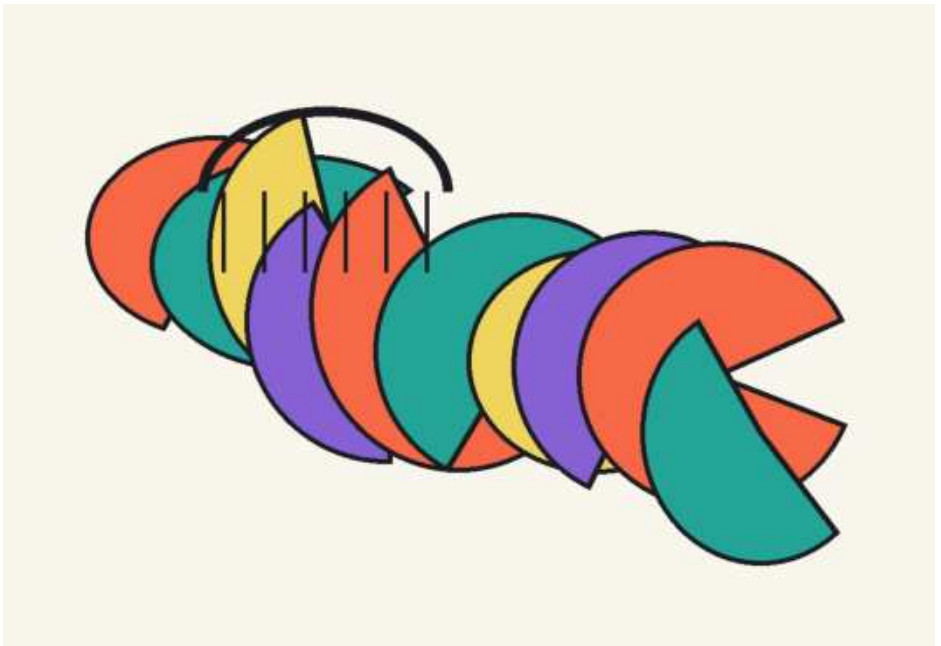


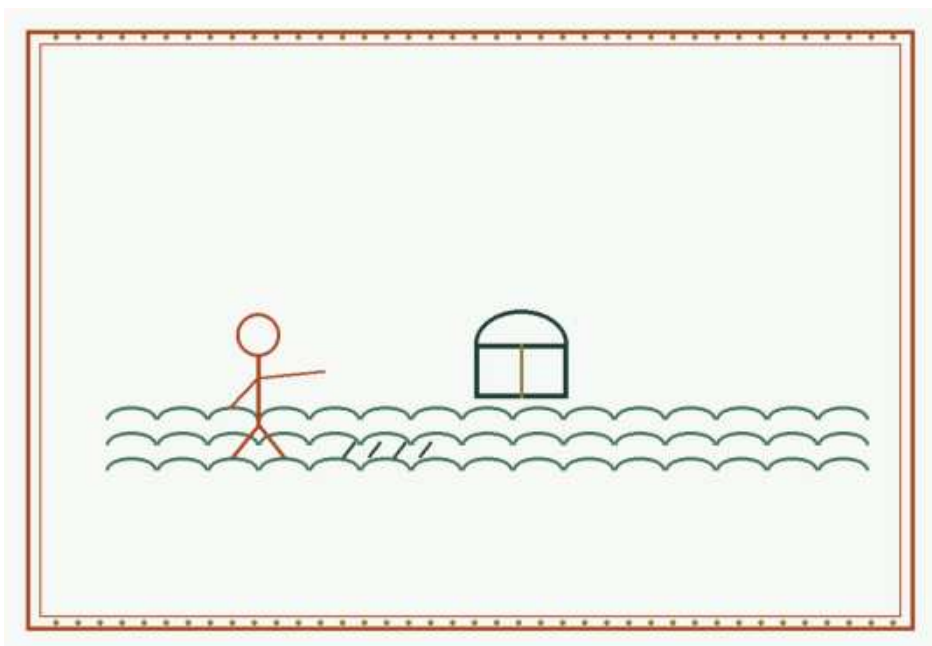


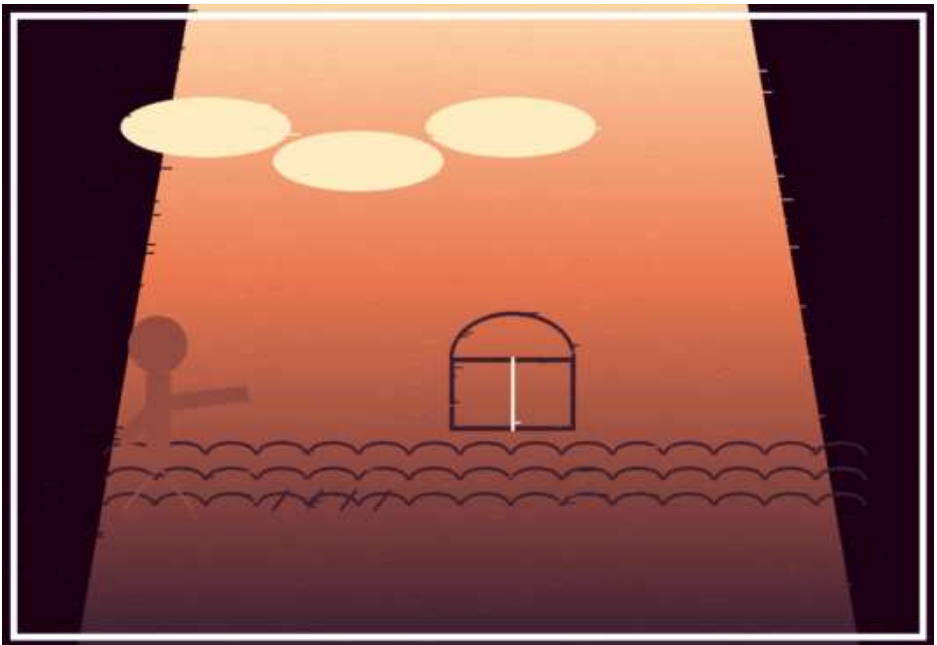
Picture 7

Now see how greed runs ahead. The priest was already waiting farther downstream! His plan was complete: the chest would float to him, he would catch it, take the girl out, marry her, and gain all the riches promised in the horoscope.

But fate does not serve greedy people. That night the current was so strong that the priest could not even touch the chest. It swept past him, dancing on the waves as if the river itself were saying, 'This treasure is not for you.'



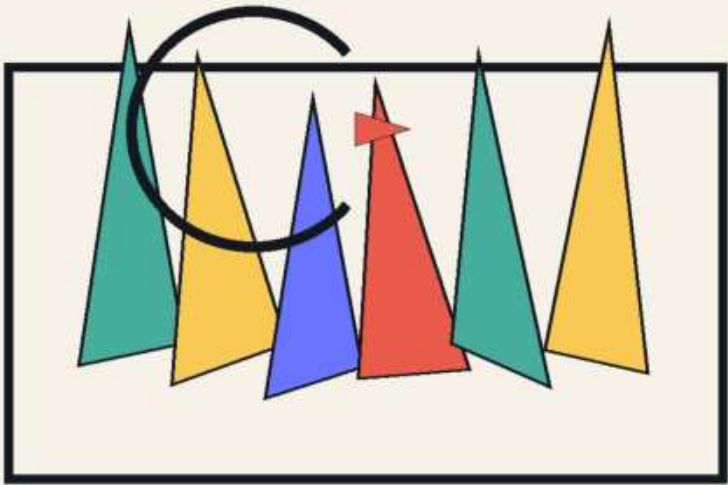


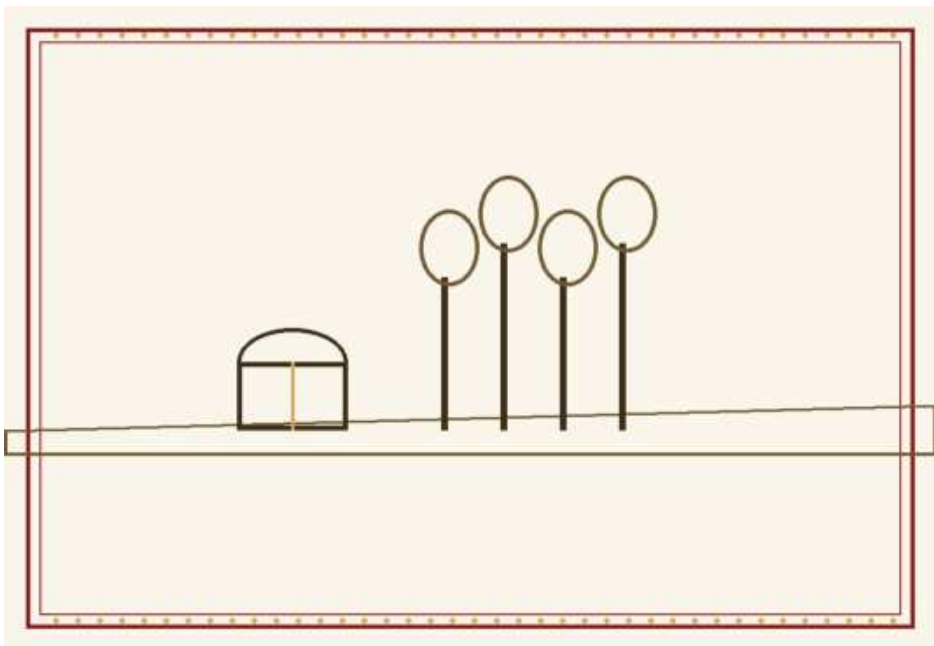
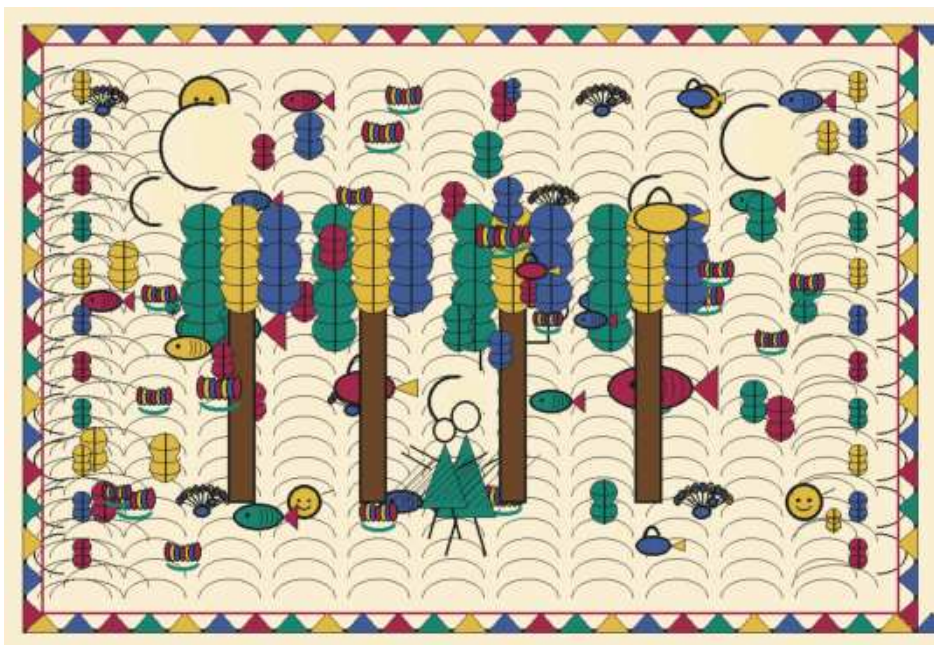


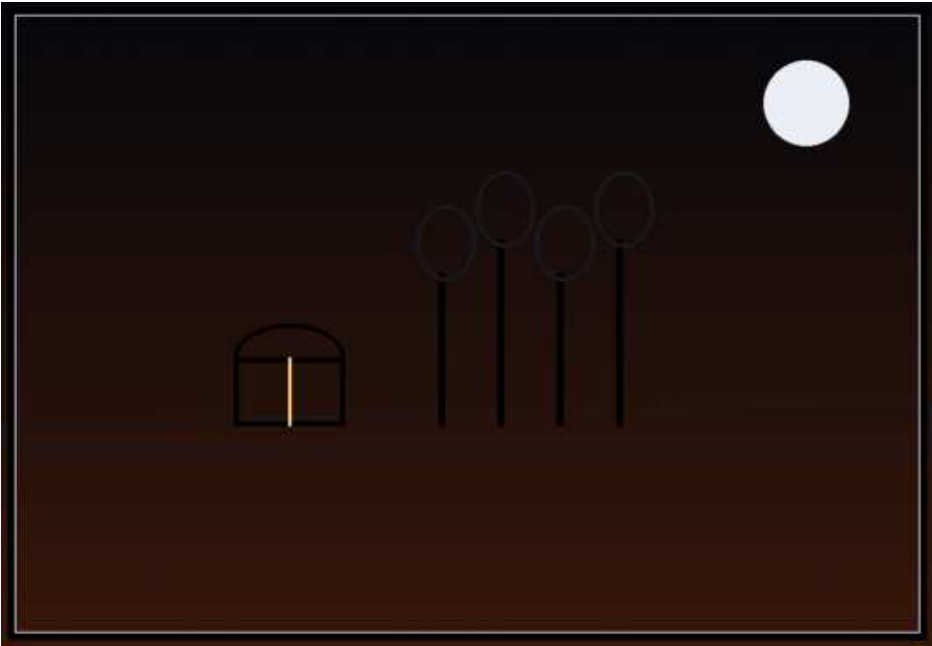
Picture 8

The priest ran along the bank, shouting and stretching out his arms. But a river does not stop for anyone's wishes. The chest floated farther and farther into the darkness. By morning, it came to rest near a thick forest in Morang. There was no palace, no priest, and no horoscope there - only trees, birds, and the forest's own wild kingdom.

Chapter 5: Gaval, Chief of the Forest



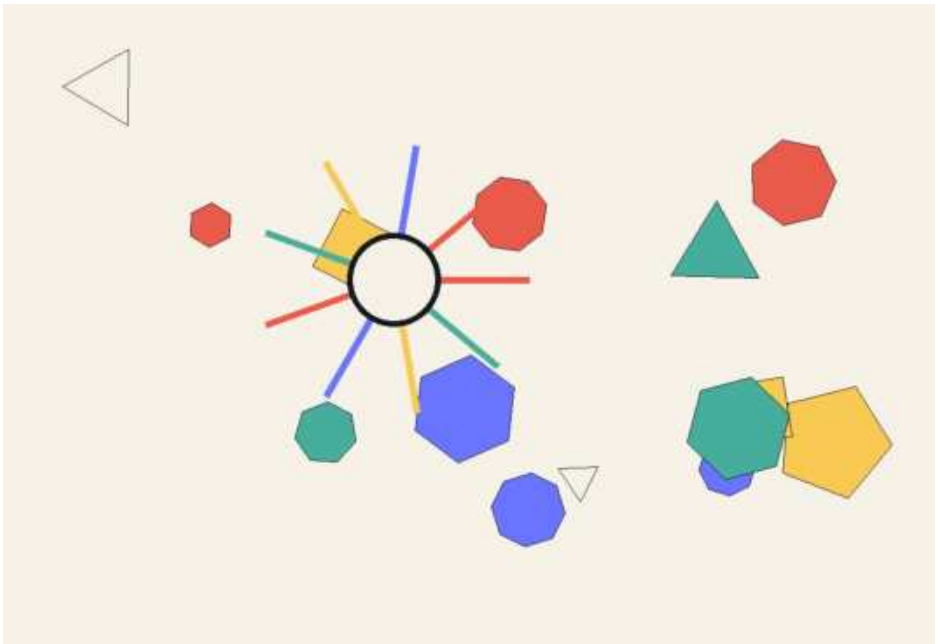




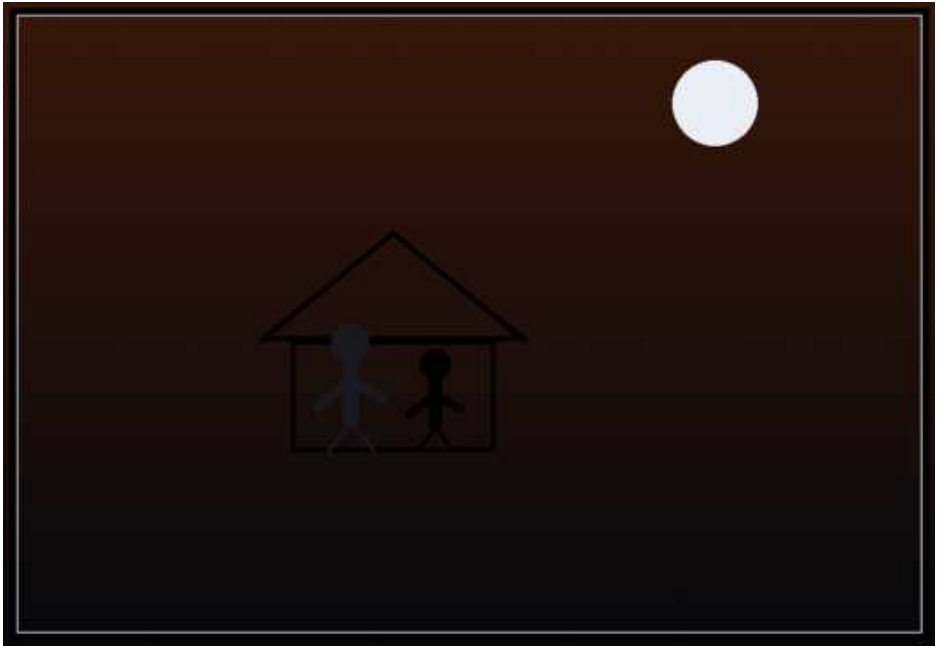
Picture 9

The chief of that forest was Gaval. He was like a king without a crown or throne. Every leaf and path of the forest seemed to know his command. He had a strong body and a straightforward heart.

On his morning round, Gaval found the chest beside the river. He opened it, and out came a young girl - tired and frightened, but still carrying the dignity of royalty in her eyes. Gaval looked at her for only a moment before his forest heart made its decision.





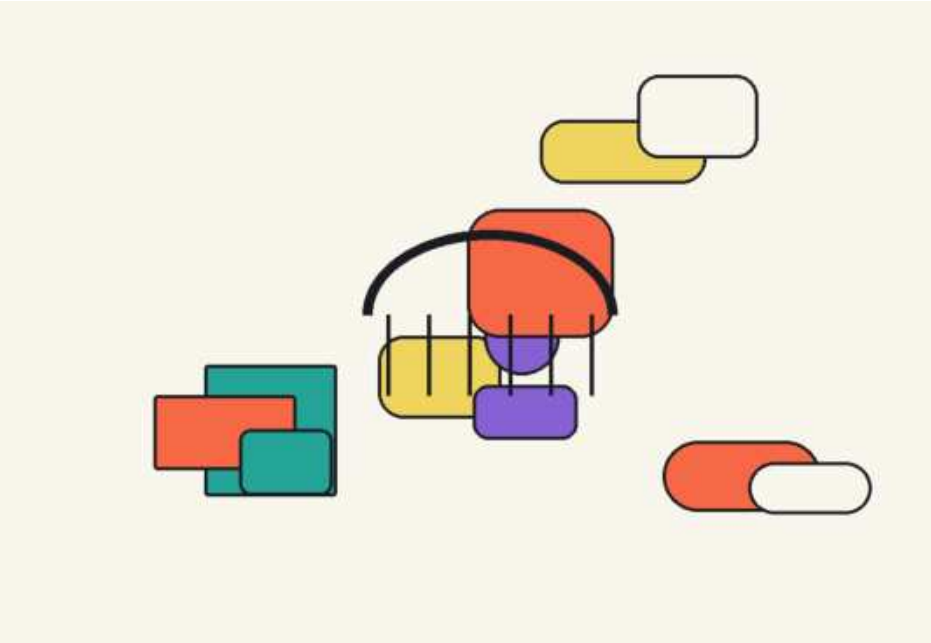
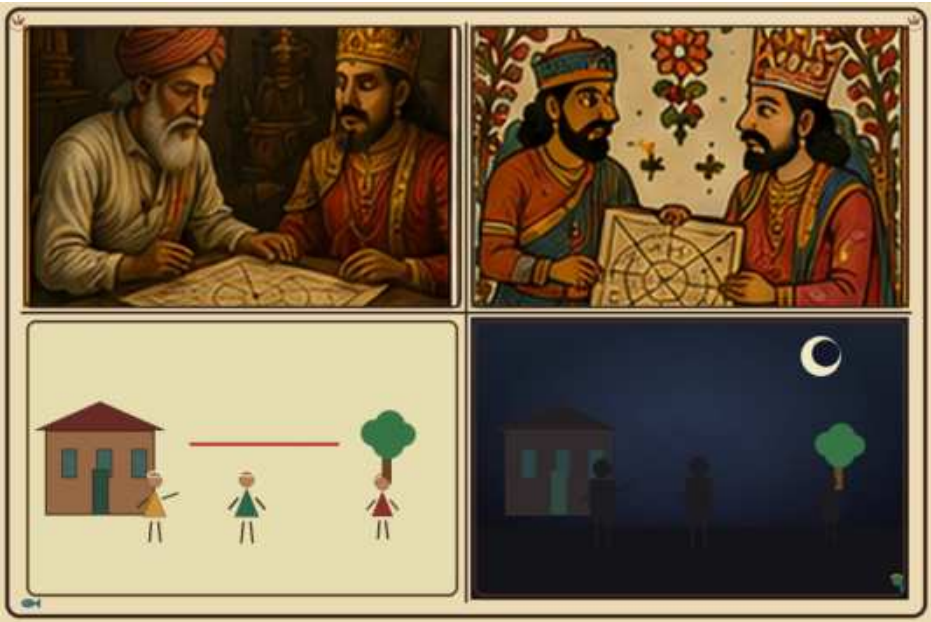


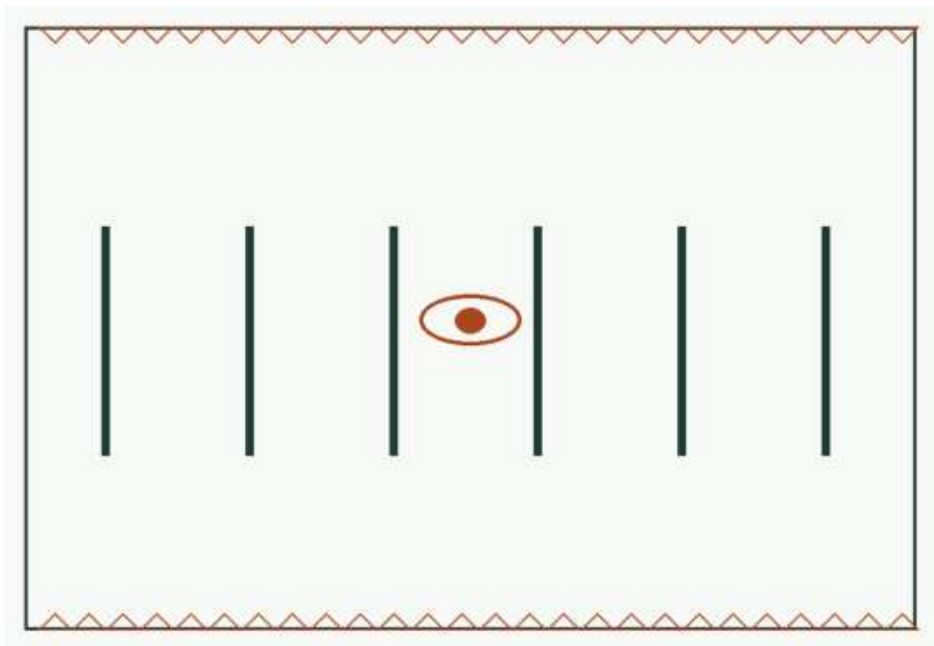
Picture 10

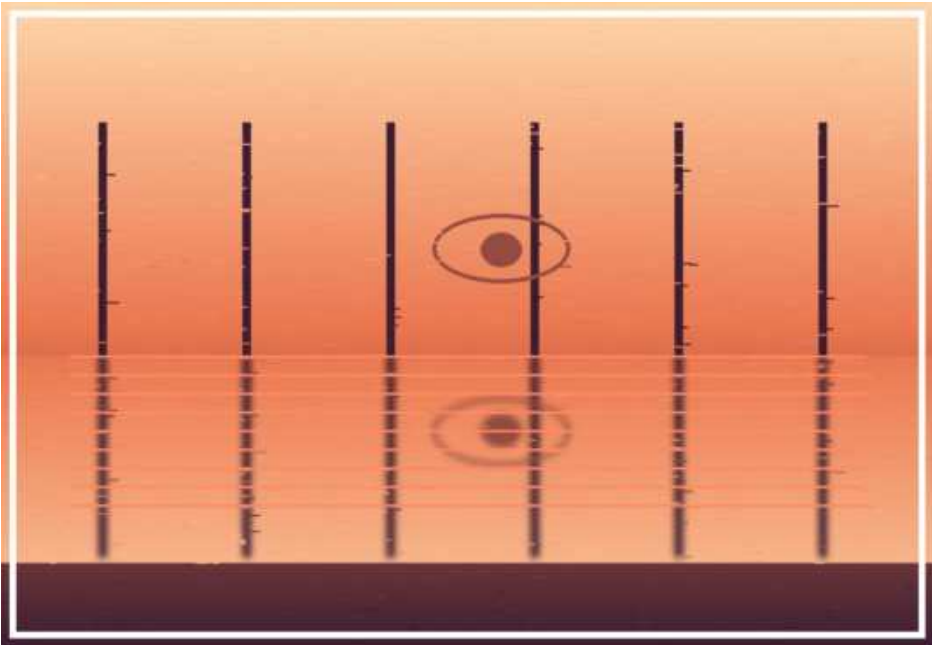
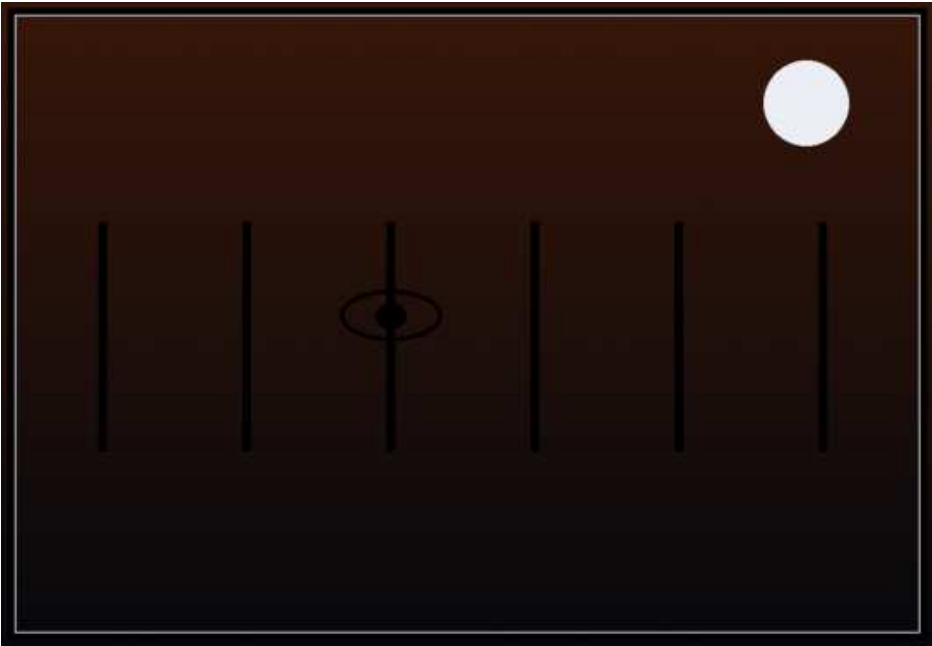
'From today, you are my daughter.' He did not ask her caste, family, or story. The law of the forest was simple: if the river placed someone in your care, that person became a trust to protect.

Gaval began to treat Motisaeri not like a daughter, but truly as his own daughter. The love that had been defeated in a royal palace by one page of a horoscope was given freely in a forest hut. Motisaeri became the daughter of the forest, and for a few years, this tragic story finally had a peaceful chapter.

Chapter 6: The Priest's Second Scheme





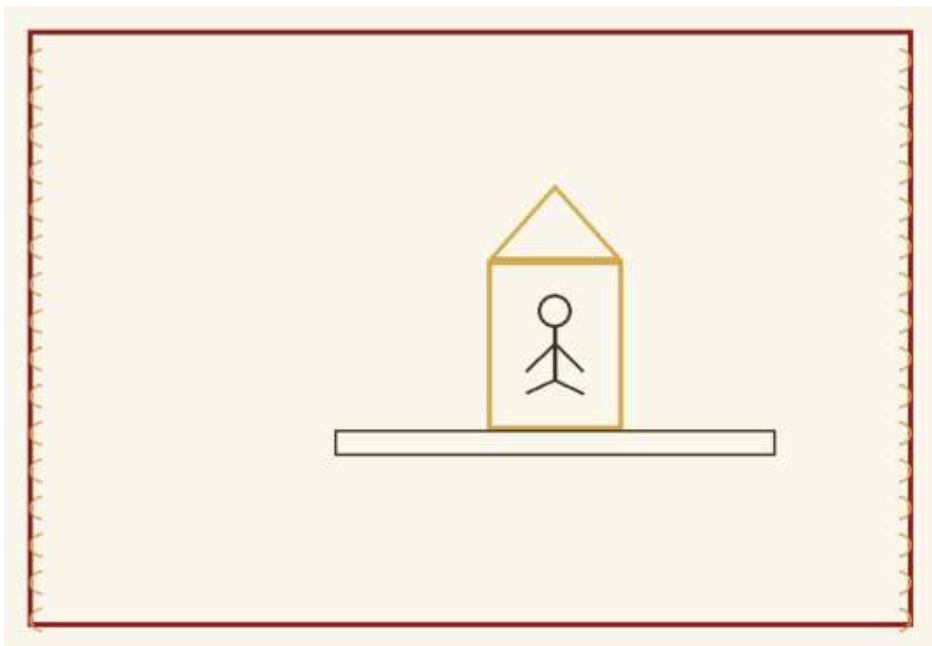


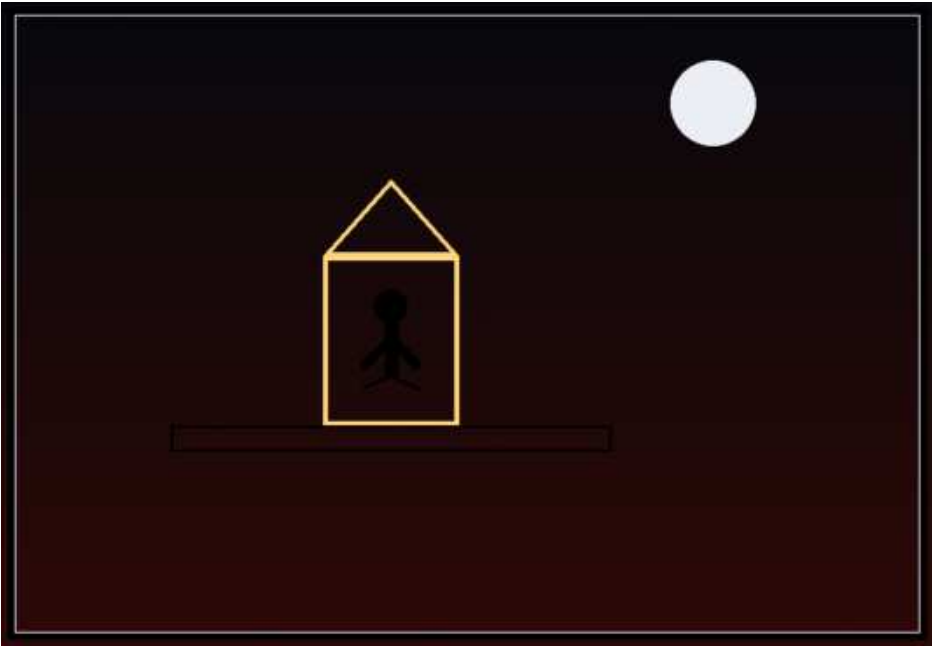
Picture 11

But greed does not die. It waits. Somehow the priest discovered where the chest had landed and where Motisaeri had grown up. The plan he thought lost came alive again in his mind.

At the same time, King Bhimsen again longed for a child. His daughter had been sent away as an 'evil sign', old age was approaching, and there was still no heir to the throne. The king asked the priest, 'What can I do?'





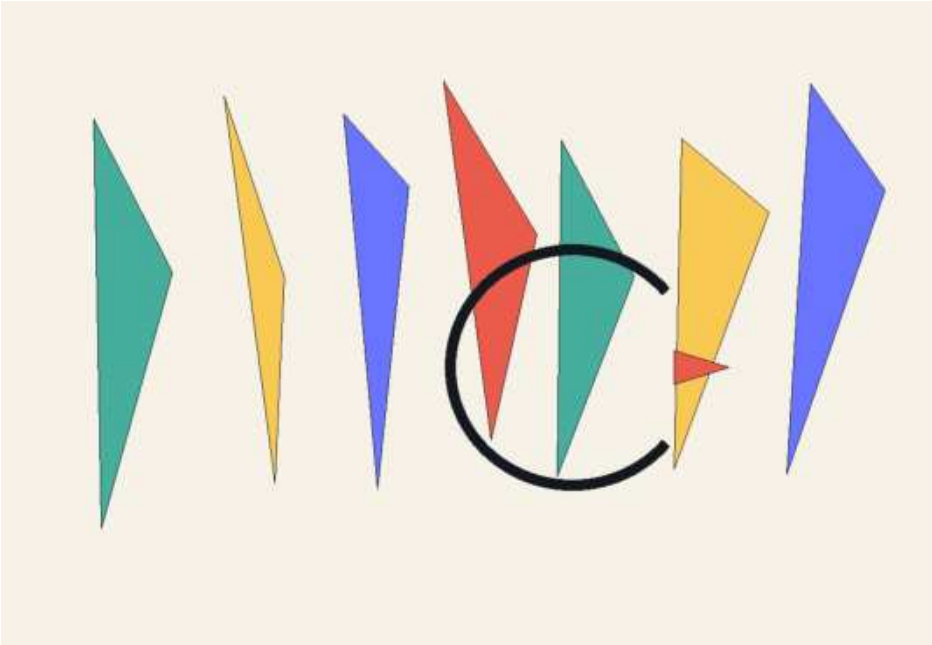


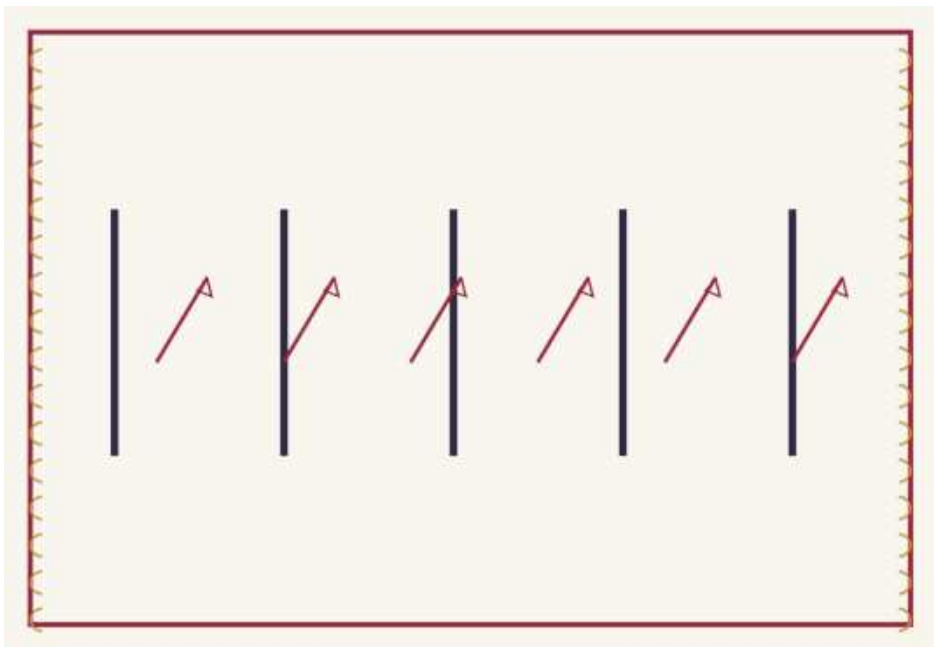
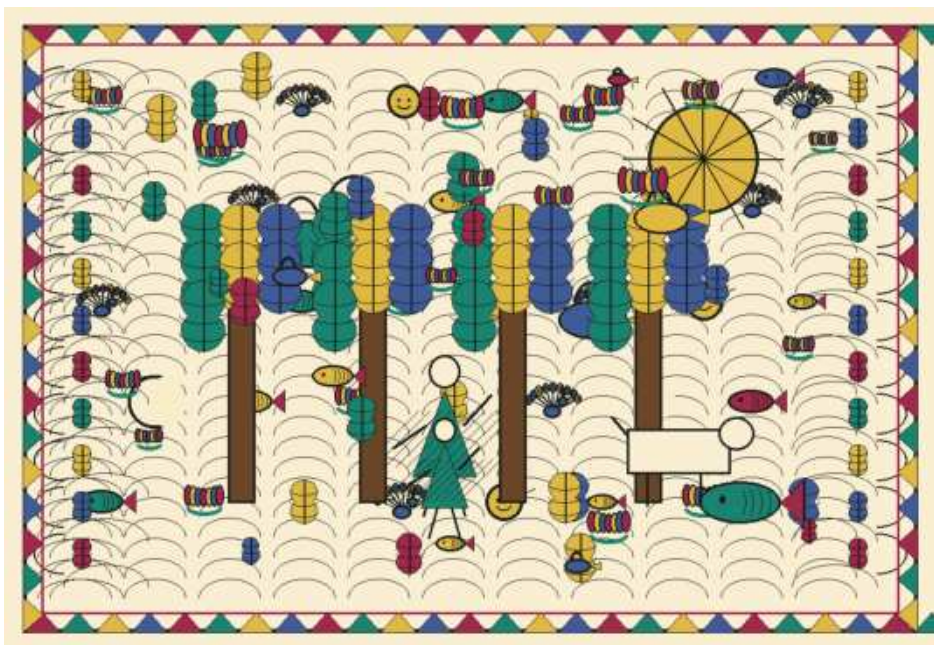
Picture 12

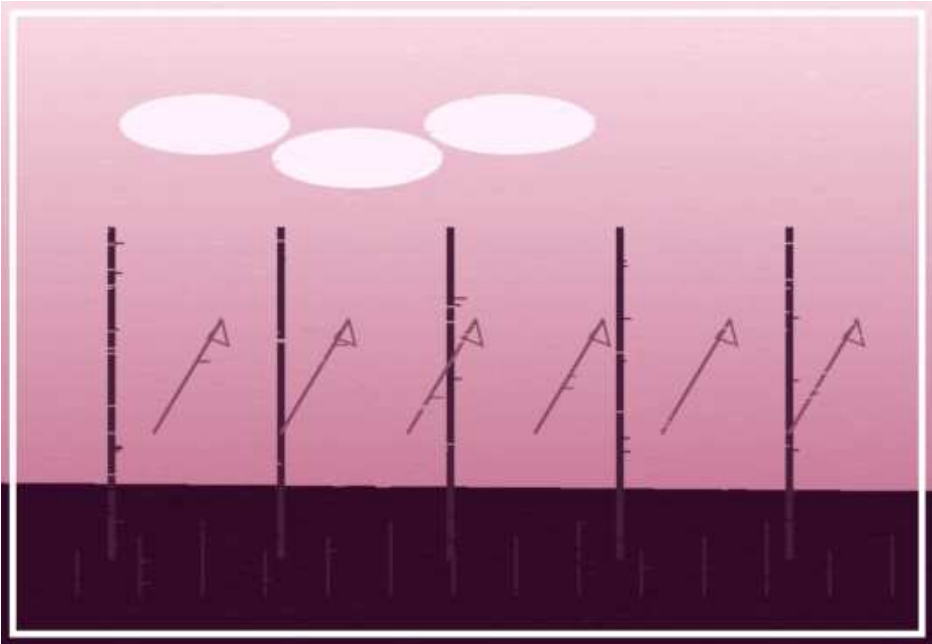
The priest's eyes shone. This plan was even more twisted than the first. 'Your Majesty, if you marry the daughter of Gaval, the forest chief of Morang, the stars promise you a son!'

Gaval's daughter meant Motisaeri - which meant the king's own daughter. The priest knew this; the king did not. The priest's calculation was cruel: if the king married his own daughter without knowing it, he would lose his honour and his right to rule. Then who might take the empty throne? The priest. The greed that had once sent a daughter down the river now wanted to send an entire family into disaster.

Chapter 7: War with Gaval



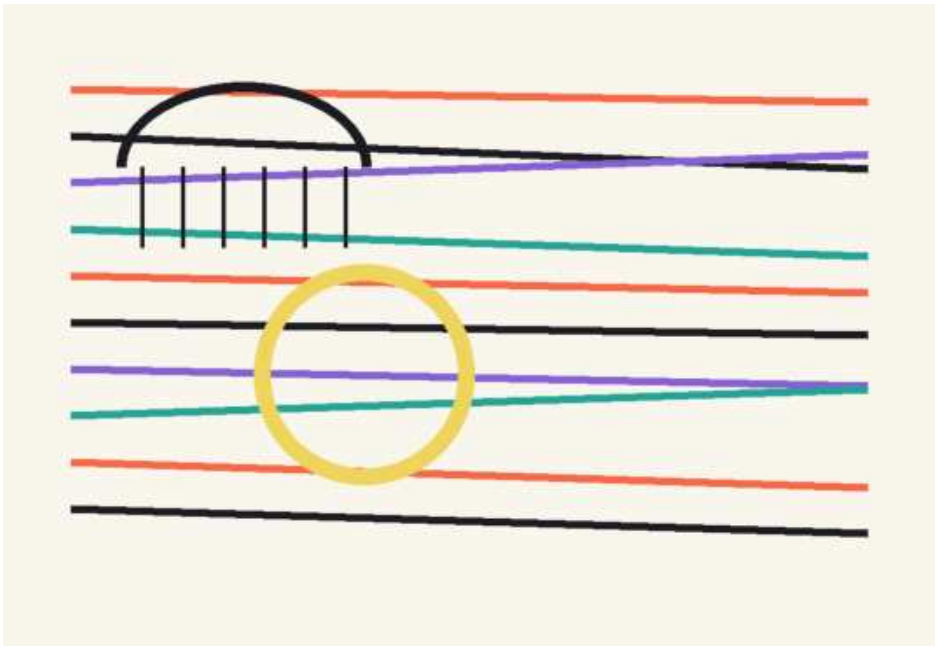


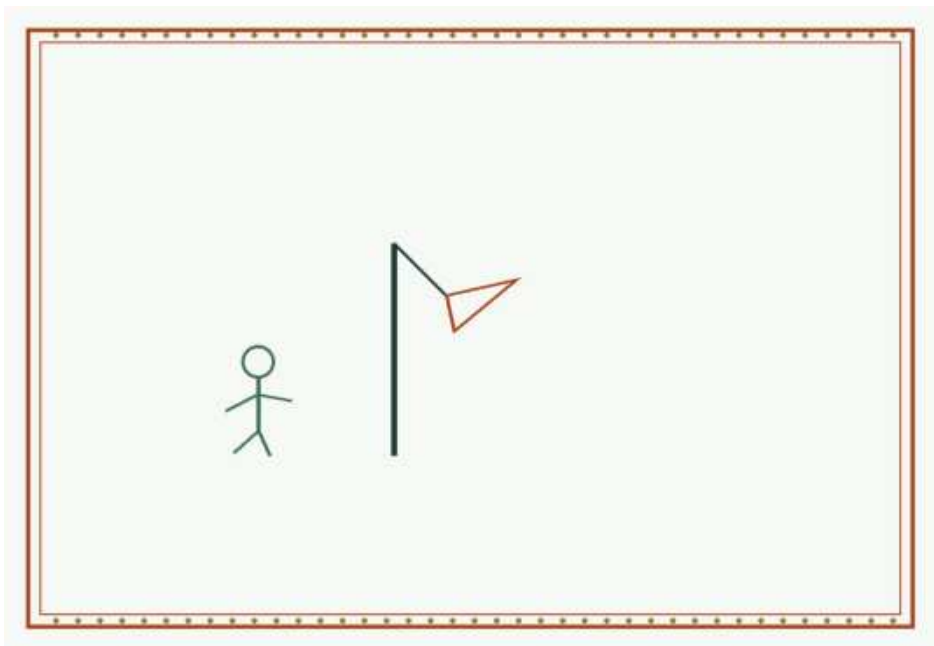


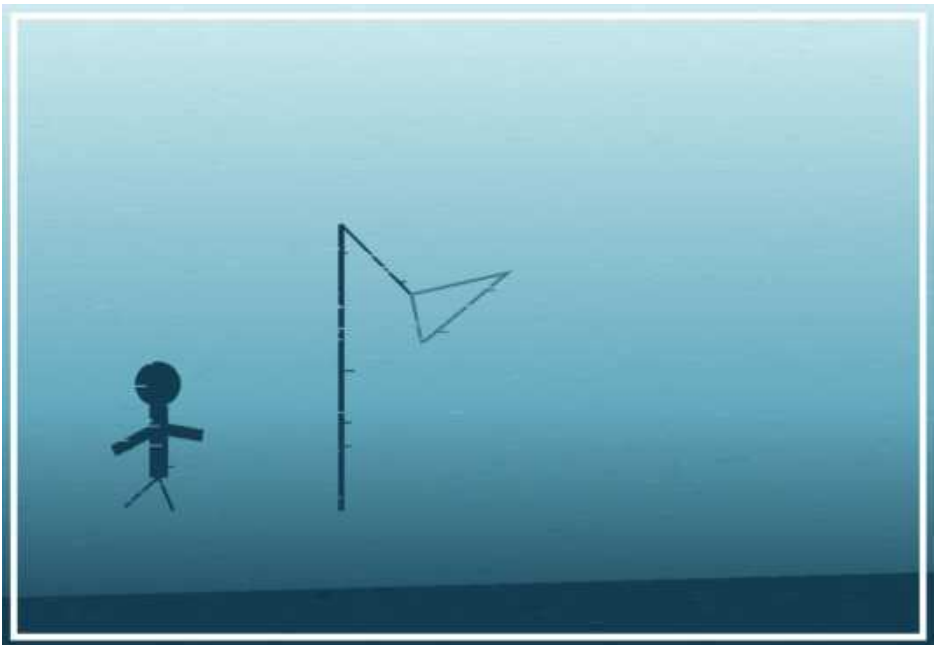
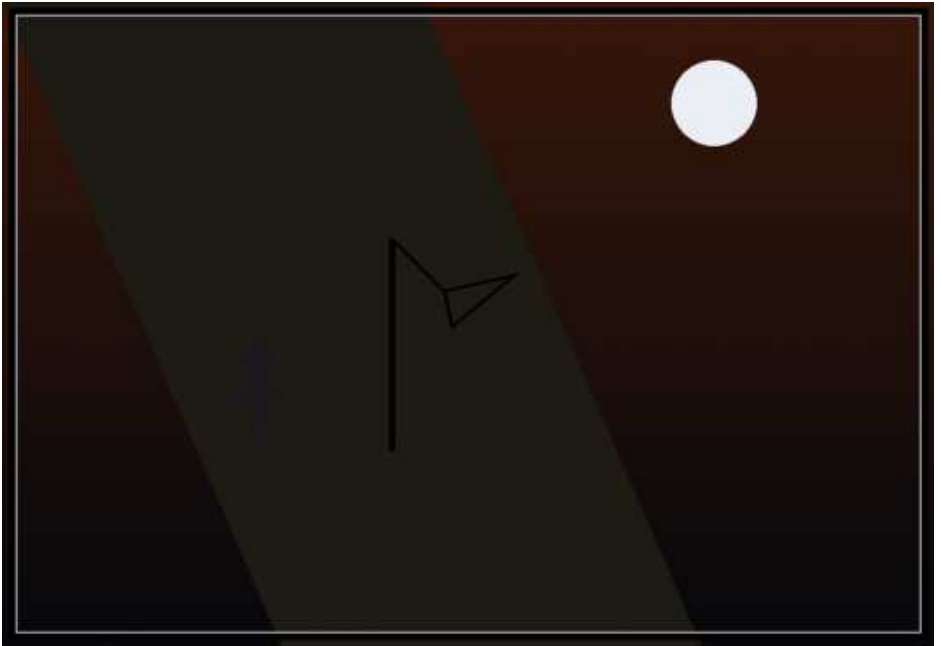
Picture 13

King Bhimsen sent Gaval a marriage proposal. Gaval answered with one word: 'No.' A forest chief did not sell his daughter - not for a kingdom and not out of fear.

Then came what kings in old stories often did when a proposal failed: they attacked. Morang's army marched into the forest, and a fierce battle began with Gaval.





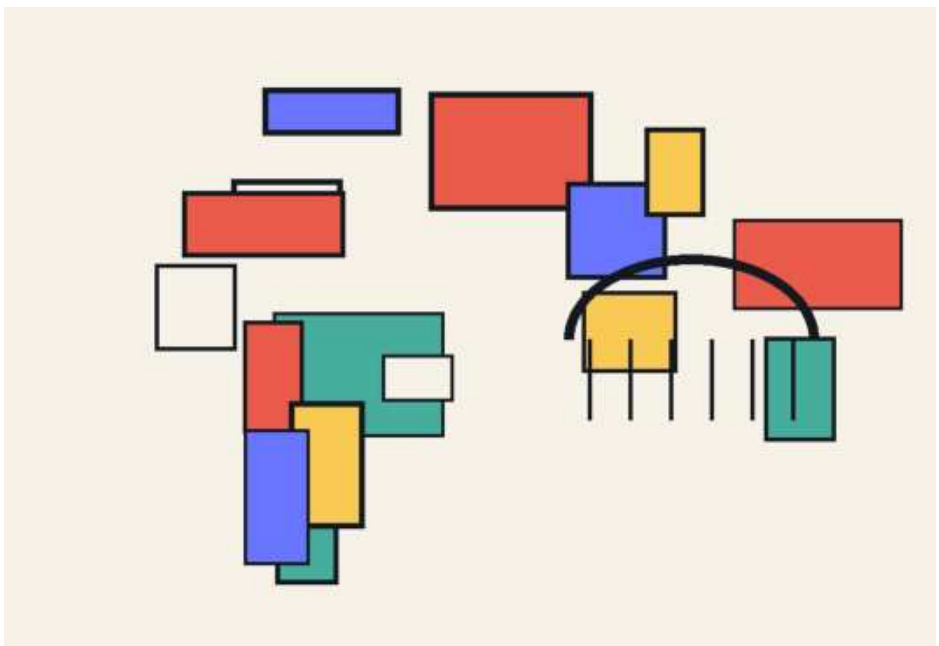


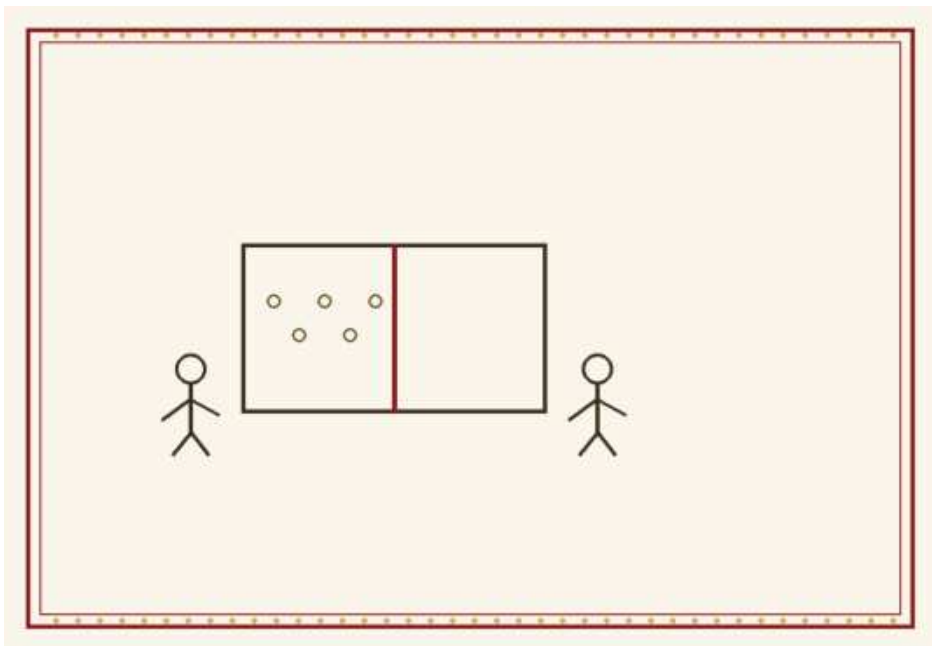
Picture 14

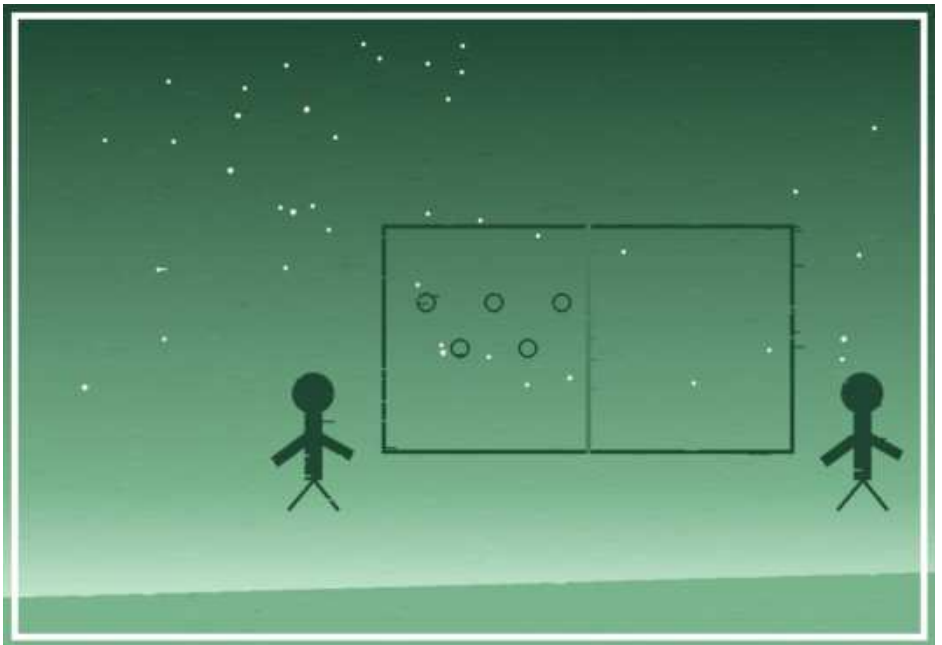
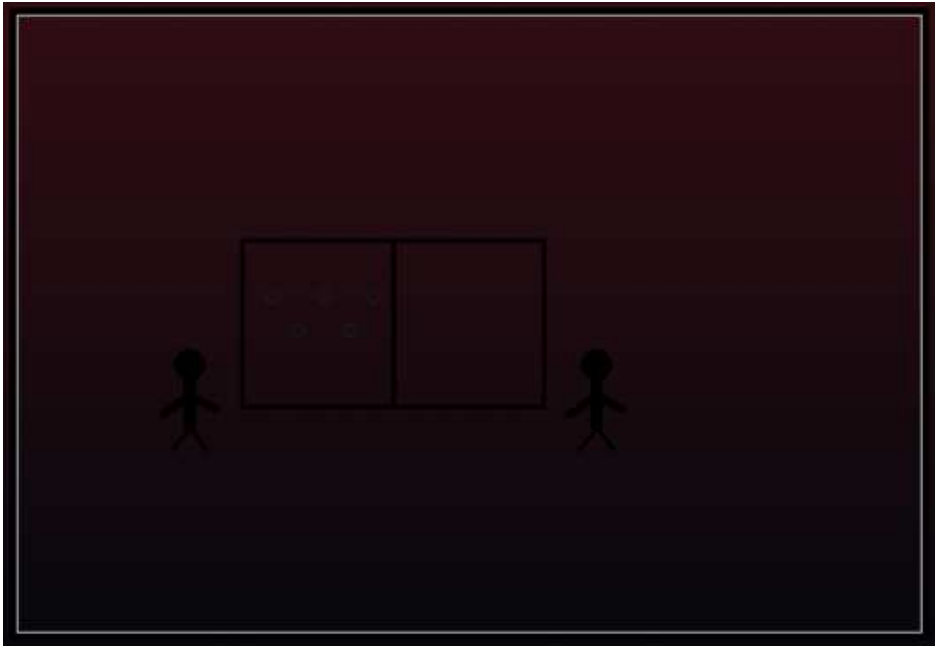
But the forest fought beside its chief. Trees became shields, bushes became traps, and Gaval's forest warriors struck from the shadows. The royal army lost its way among the trees, and Bhimsen was defeated.

The king lost the battle, but not his desire. Back at court, he asked the priest for another plan. This time a new name was suggested: Krishnaram, a famous Yadav chief known for his courage. The king said, 'Bring me Gaval's daughter, and I will give you half my kingdom.' Half a kingdom as the price of one girl - that was the terrible market created by greed.

Chapter 8: Krishnaram



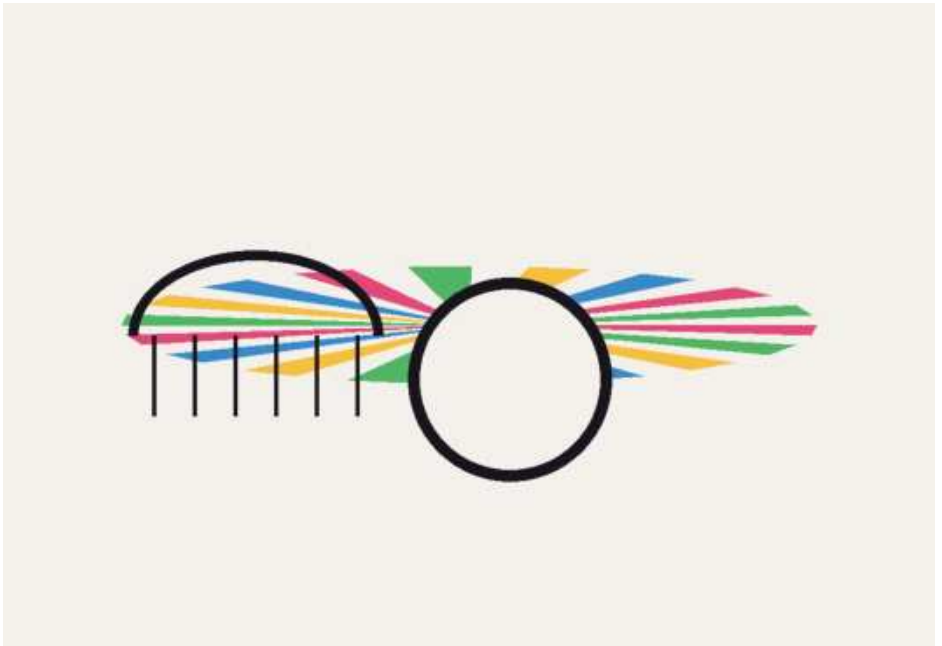


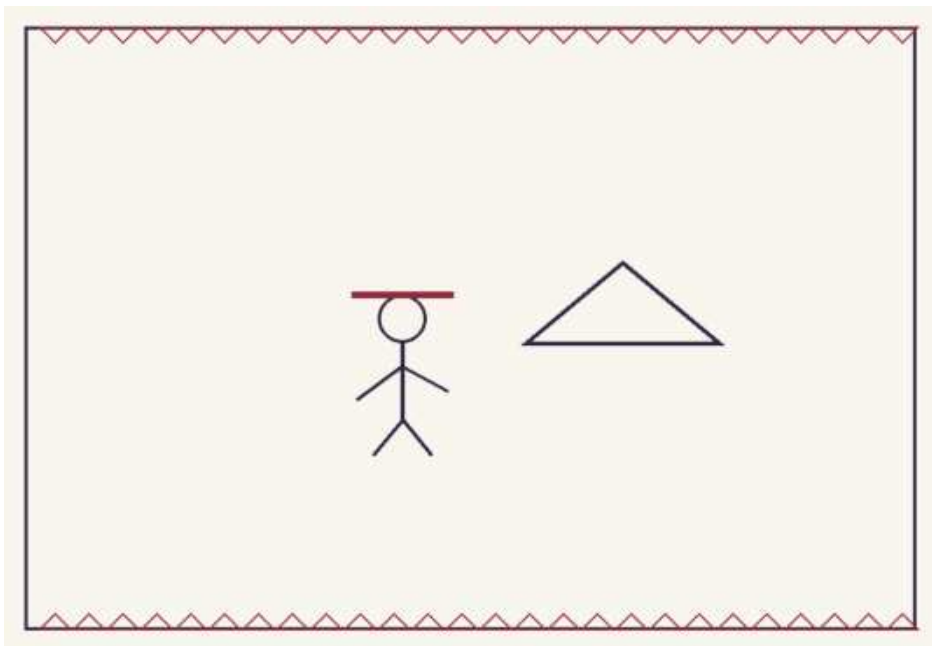


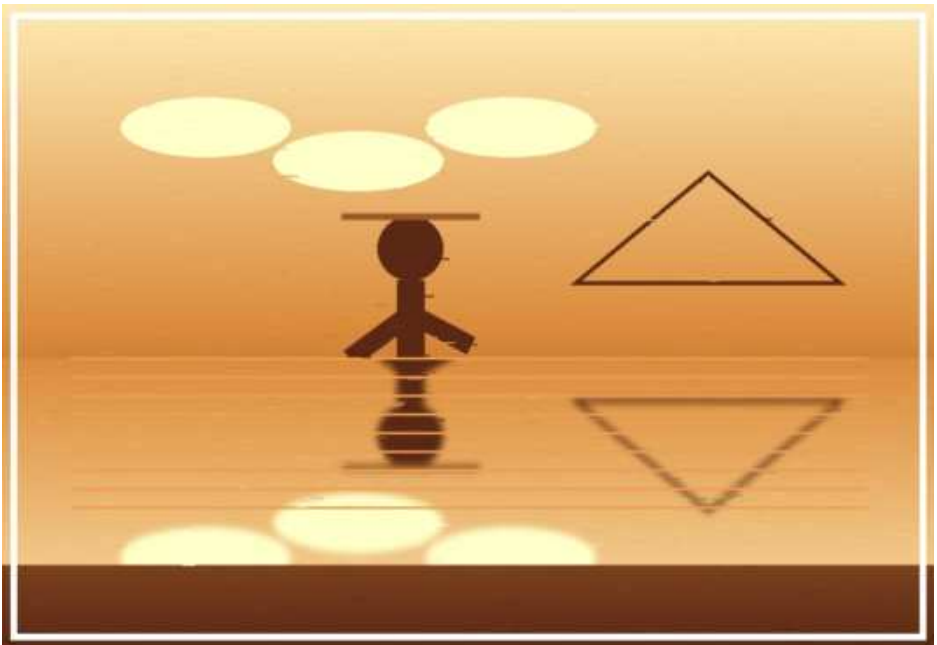
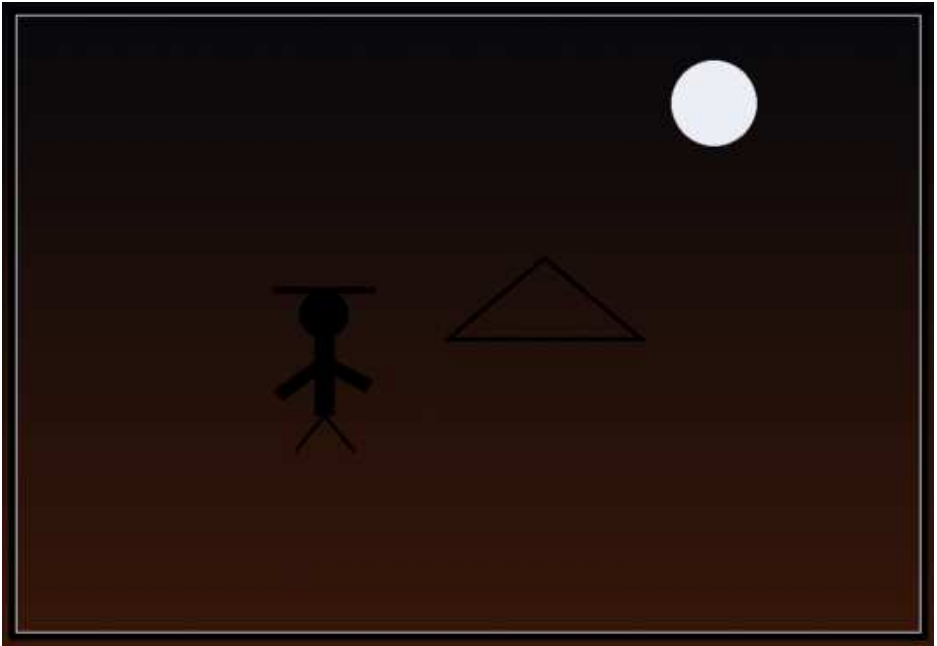
Picture 15

Krishnaram first tried persuasion. He explained the possible advantages of the marriage, warned Gaval about the king's anger, and tried every argument he could. But Gaval would not agree. His answer remained the same: 'My daughter is a trust placed in my care, not something for sale.'

Then Krishnaram attacked. Another battle was fought, and once again Gaval did not lose. His roots in the forest were so deep that even a famous warrior's sword could not pull him out.





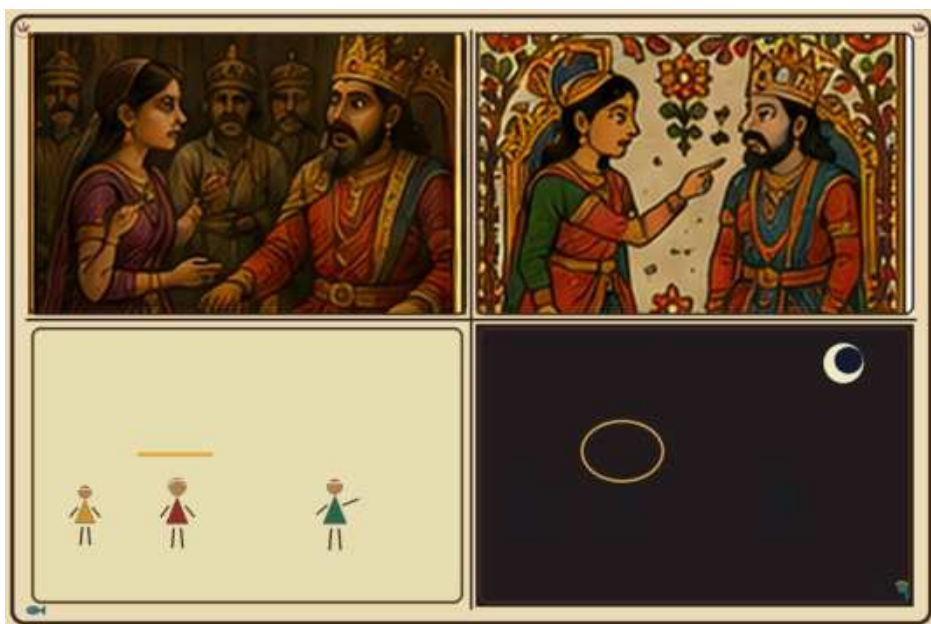


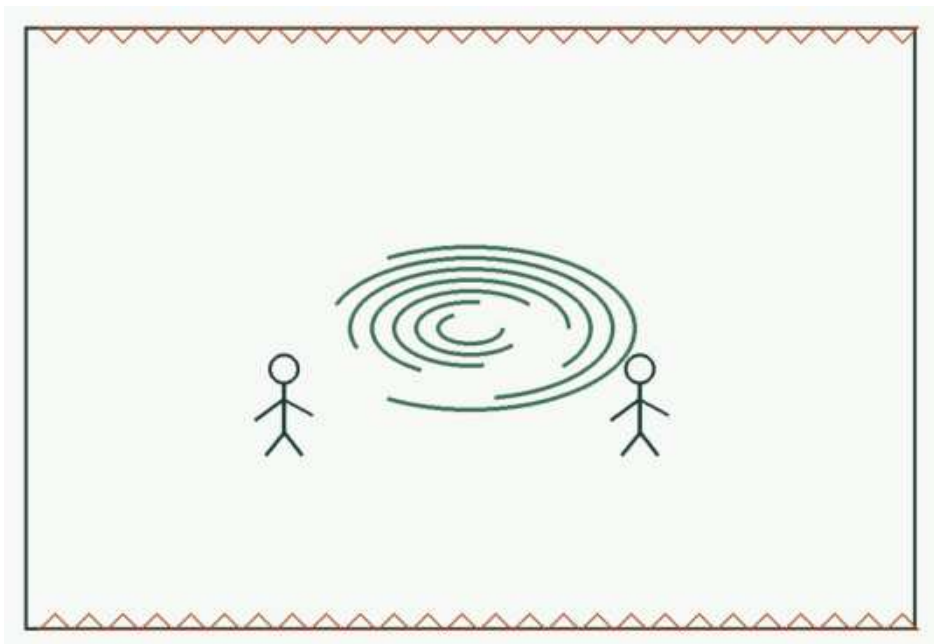
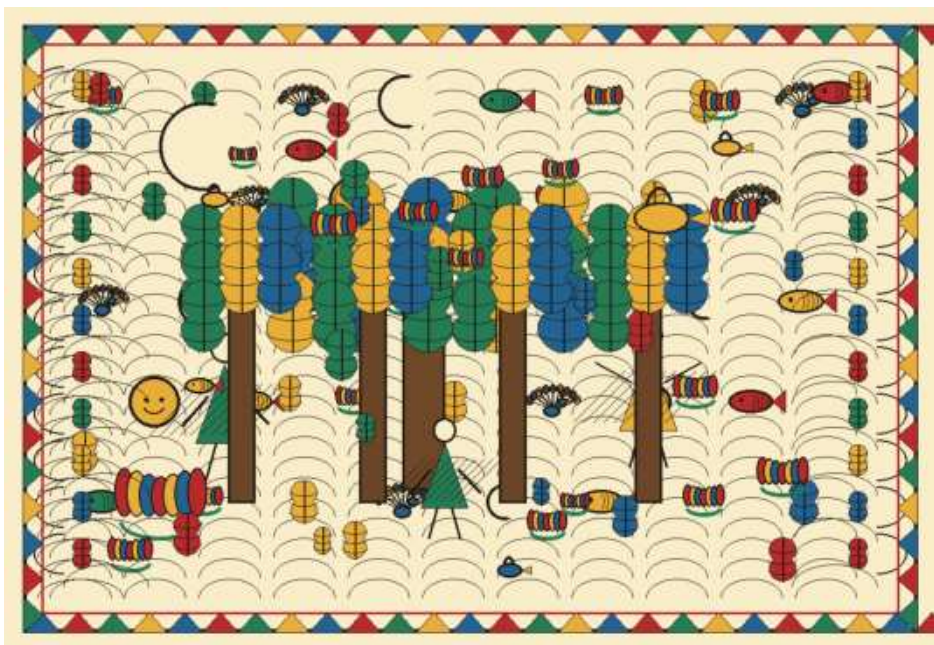
Picture 16

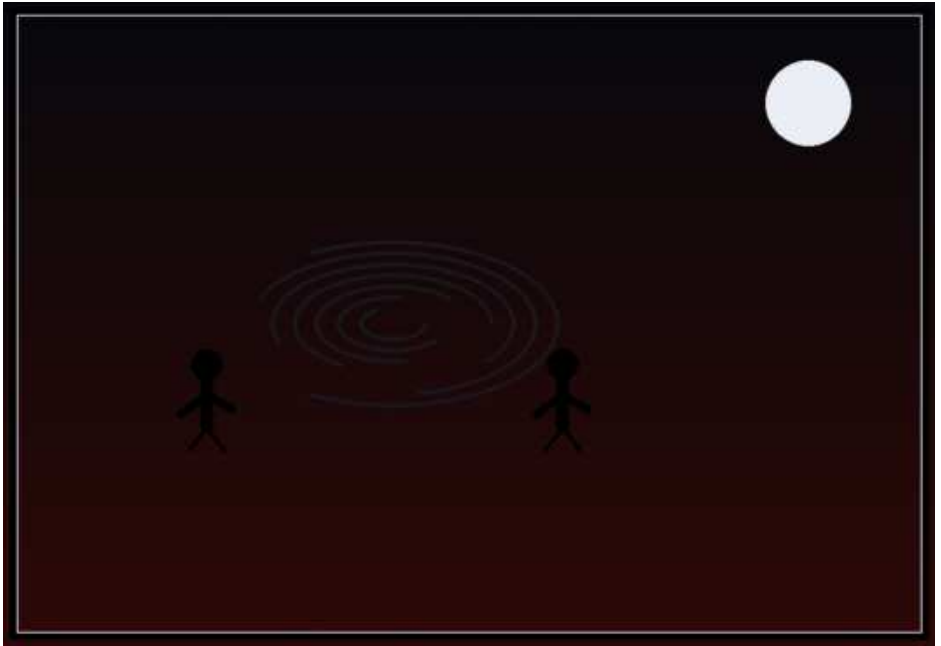
So when force failed, deceit was used. Krishnaram had irritating dust scattered through the air. As soldiers squeezed their eyes shut in the stinging cloud, Motisaeri was seized. The daughter of the forest was taken away not by victory in battle, but by trickery.

Krishnaram delivered Motisaeri to Bhimsen and received half of Morang as promised. The bargain was complete, and everyone received the part they wanted - except the young woman whose life had once again been treated like something packed into a chest and moved by others.

Chapter 9: The Proposal



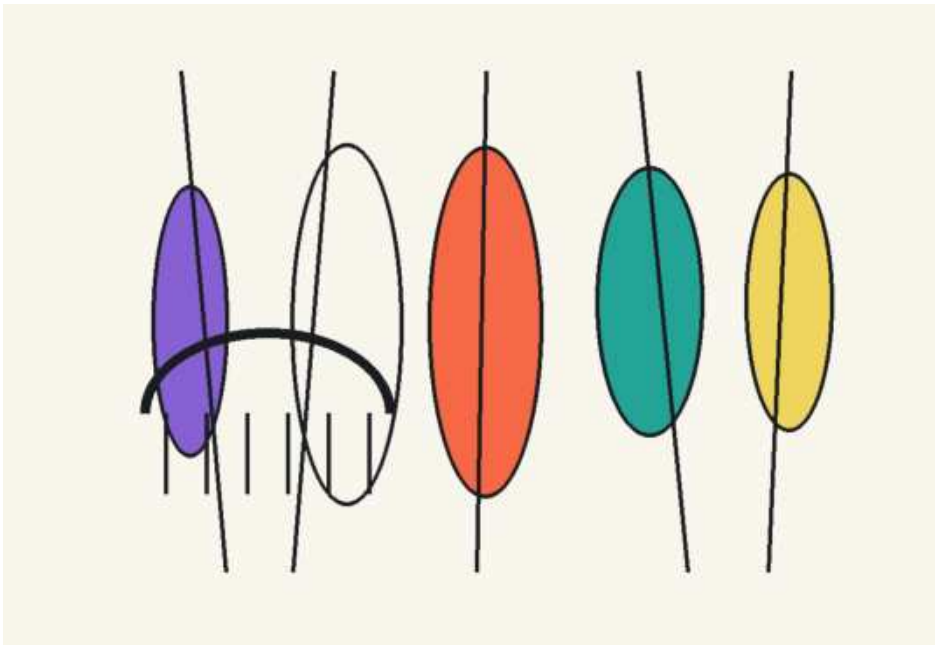


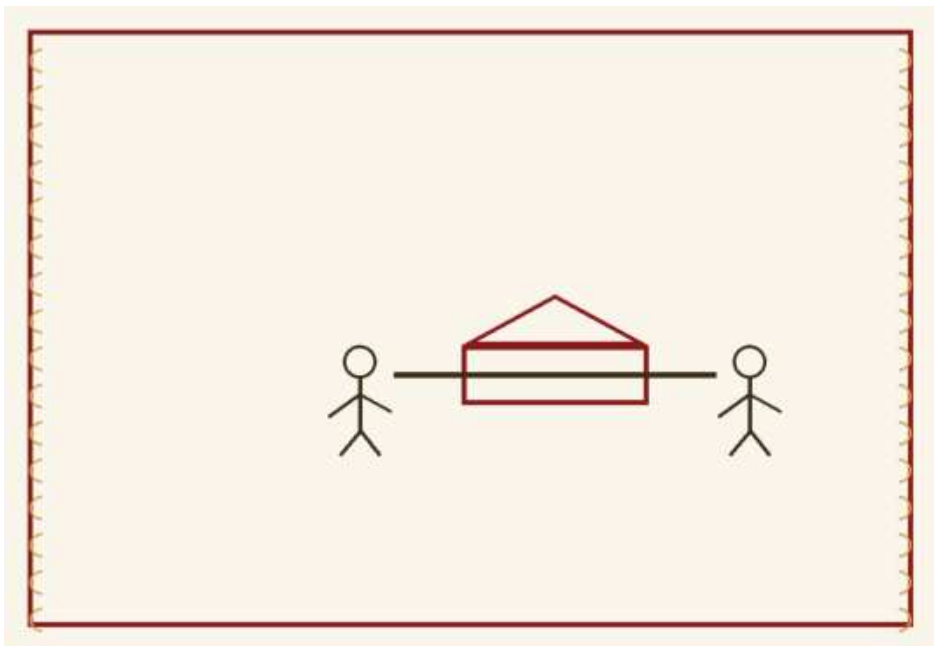


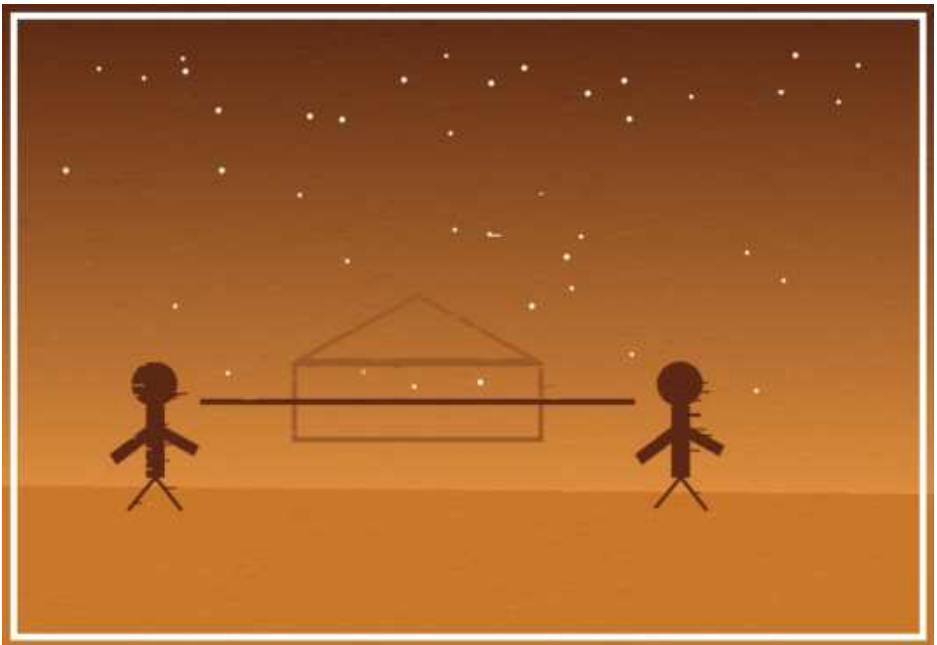
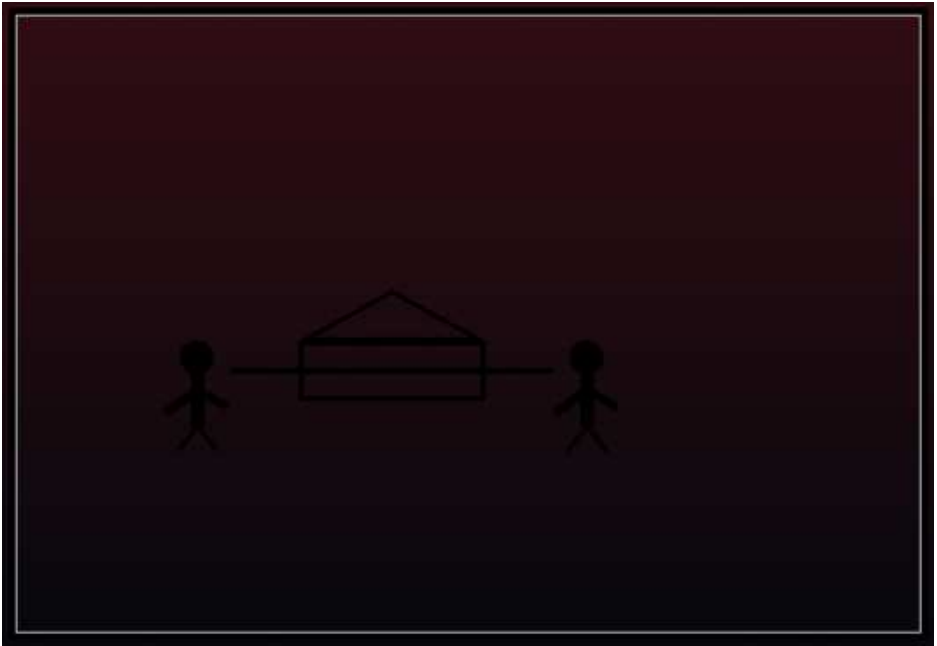
Picture 17

Motisaeri stood in the royal palace where she had been born, before the very king who was her father. But Bhimsen did not recognise her. Twenty years had flowed between the tiny child sent away in a chest and the young woman raised in the forest.

Blinded by his wish for a son and trusting the priest's prophecy, Bhimsen placed a marriage proposal before her.





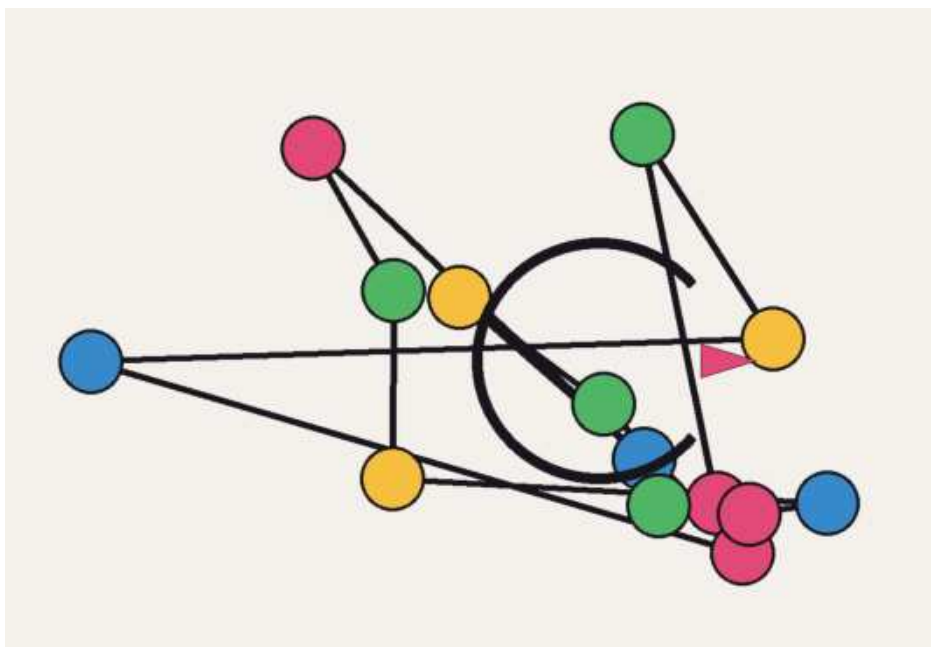
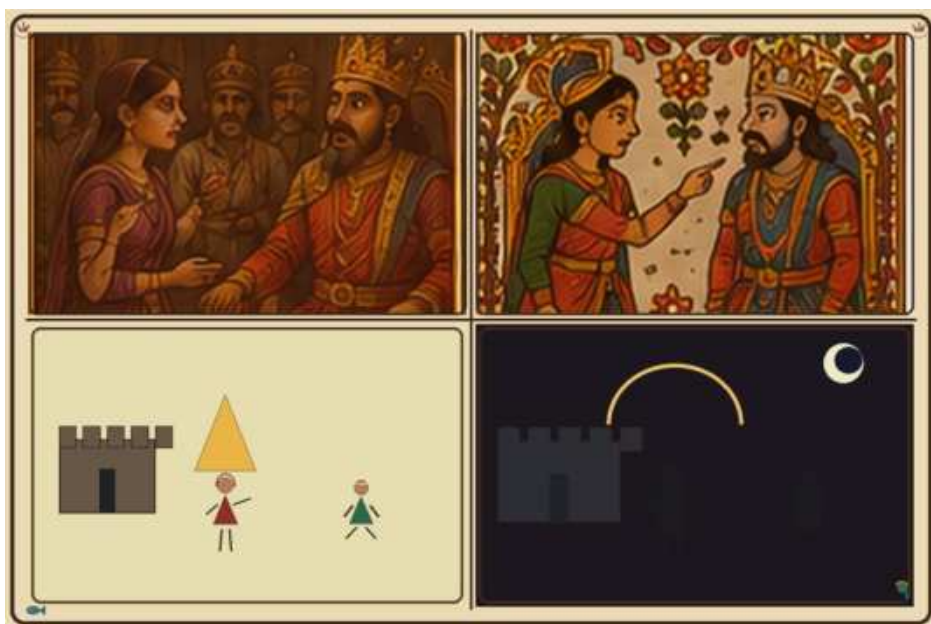


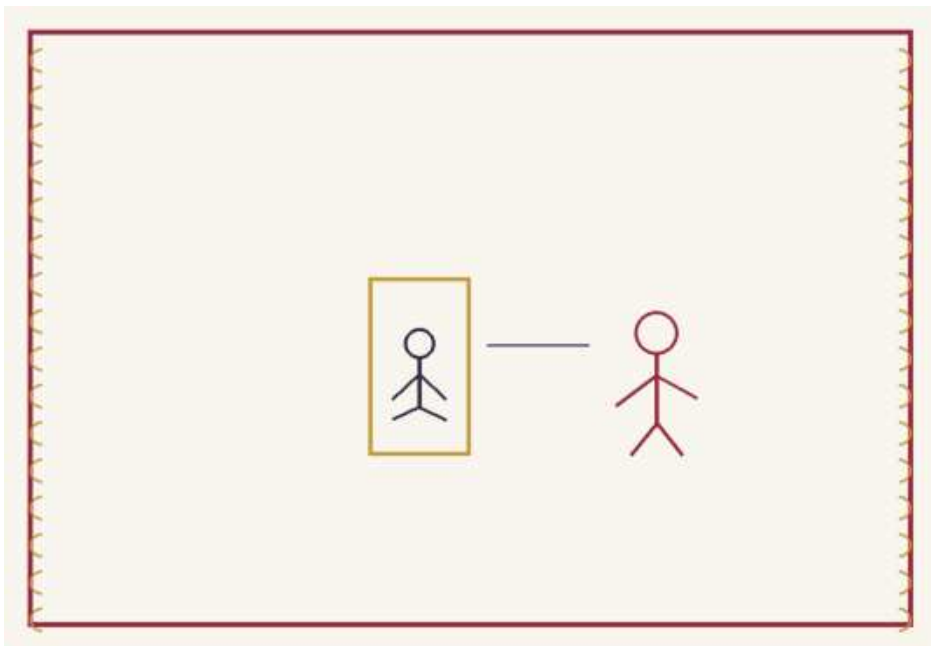
Picture 18

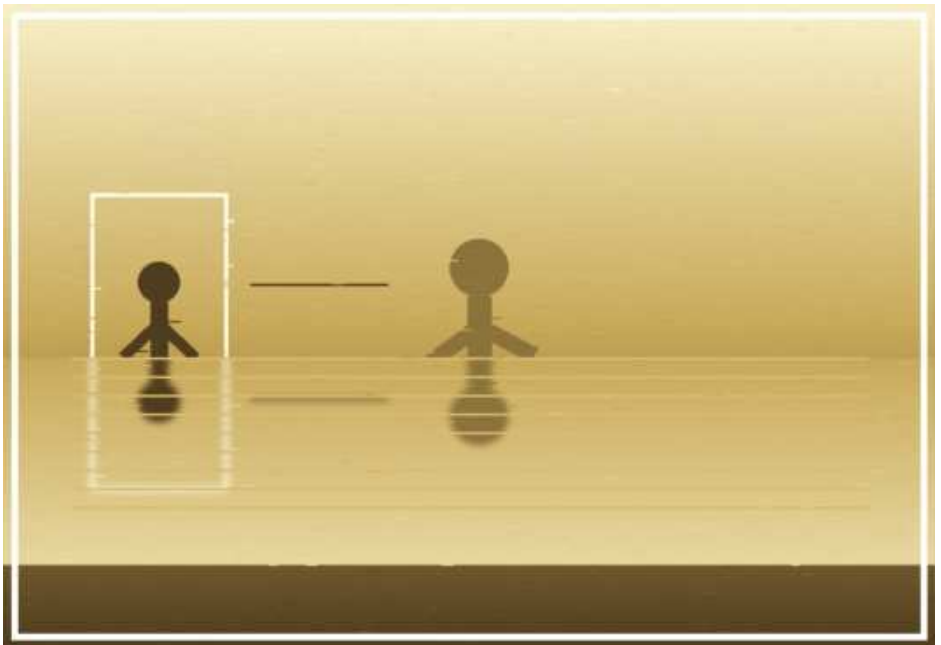
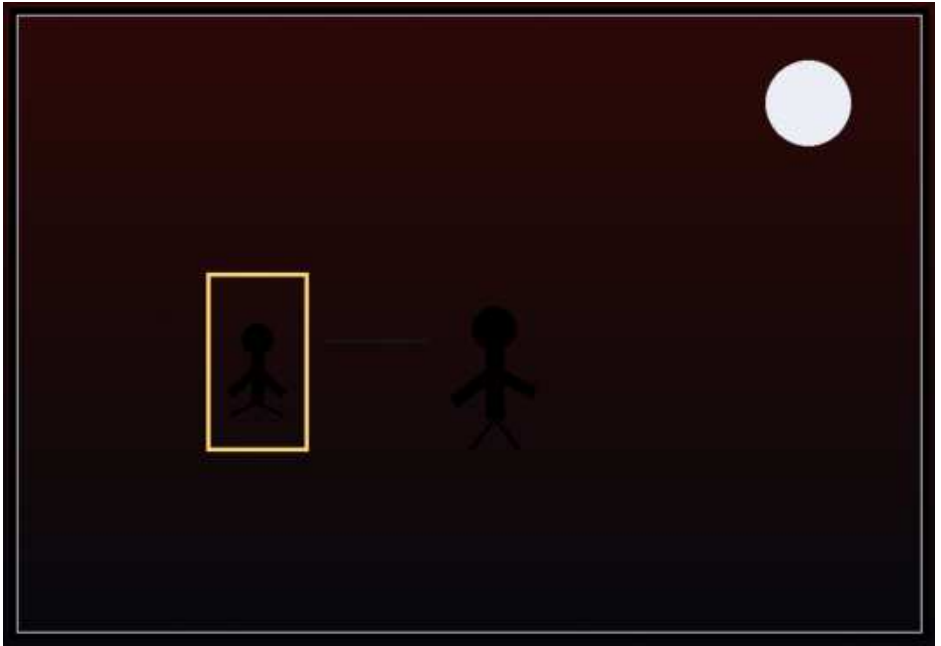
For a moment, time seemed to stop. It was the most painful scene in the story: a father, without knowing it, asking to marry his own daughter - all because of a trap created by a greedy priest who dreamed of the throne from behind the curtain.

But Motisaeri, the girl born from the sacred ceremony, suddenly understood everything. Her birth, the priest's lie, her father's ignorance - all the hidden curtains burned away before her inner vision. Tears did not rise in her eyes. Anger did.

Chapter 10: The Curse





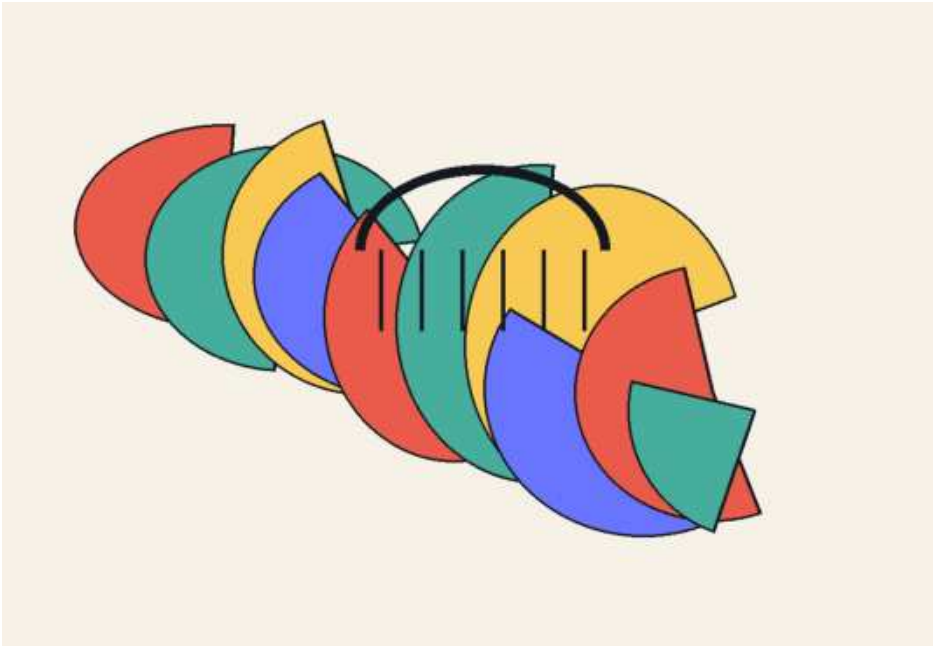


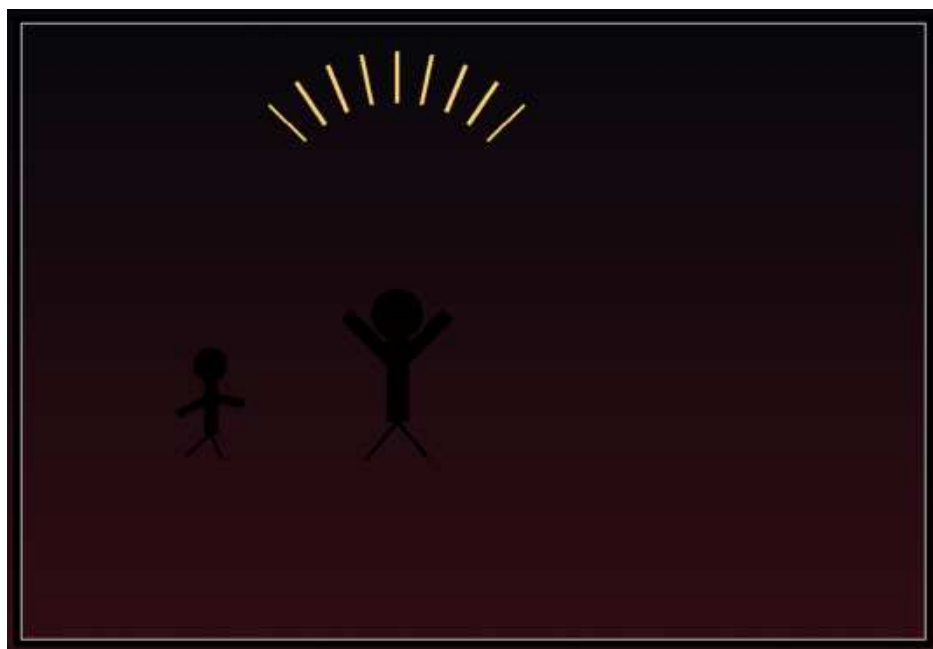
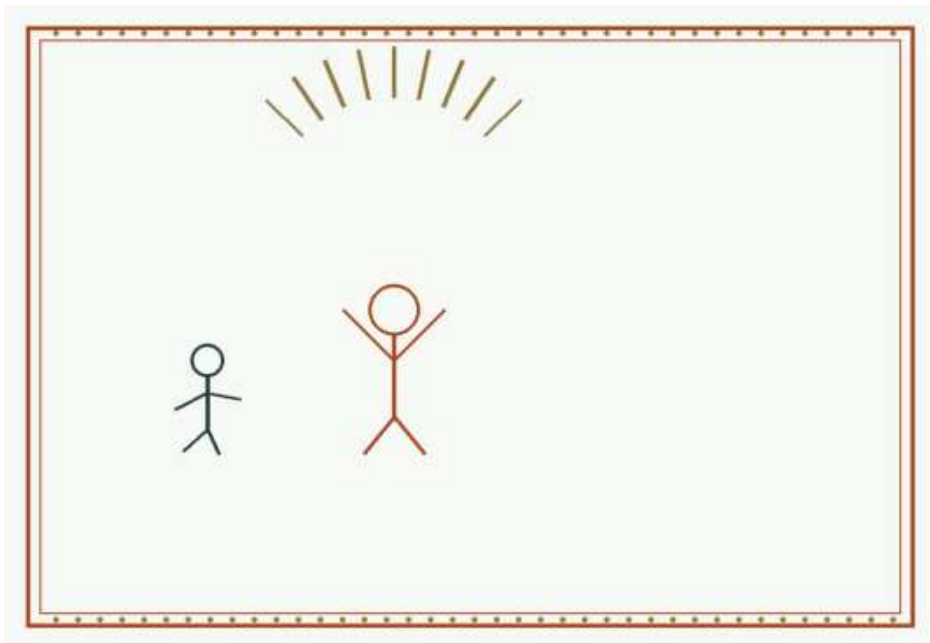
Picture 19

Motisaeri pronounced a curse.

It was not a curse born from a small burst of anger. It was the weight of every injustice gathered through the story: shutting a daughter in a chest, floating her down a river, stealing her from the forest, and finally making this terrible proposal. 'A kingdom that treats its daughter in such a way will not remain a kingdom!'

As she spoke the curse, Motisaeri herself vanished from sight, like a lamp flame that has completed its work and disappears into the air. She gained moksha - freedom from the worldly life in which others had tried to control her. The prophecy came true, but in a way that seemed to mock the greed of those who had misread it.





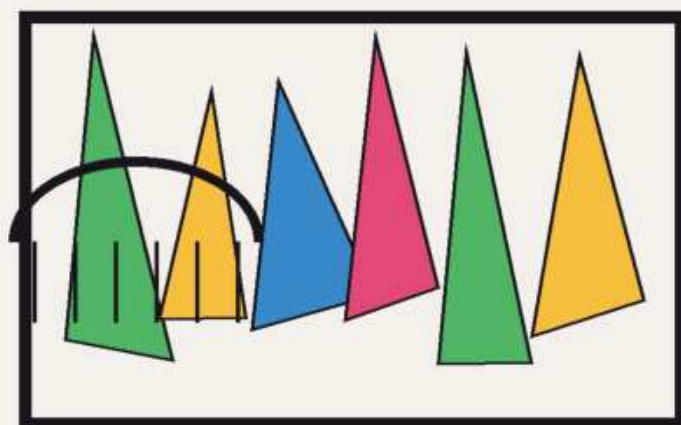
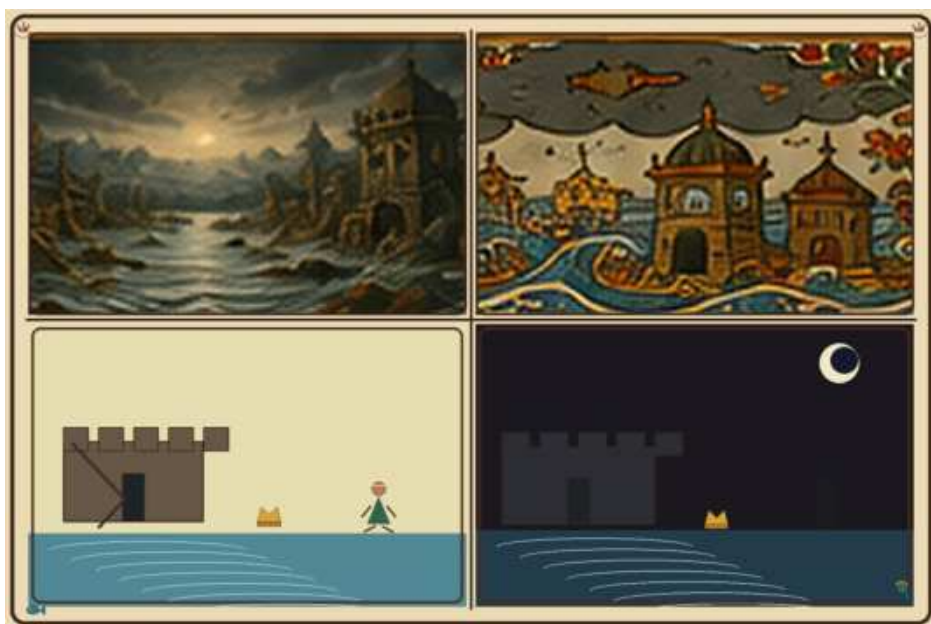


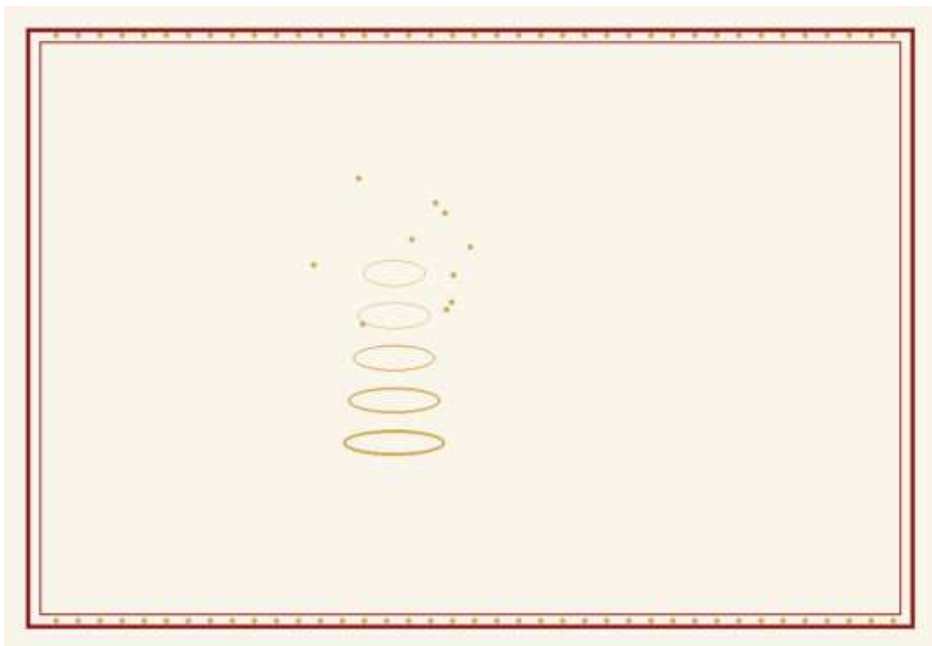
Picture 20

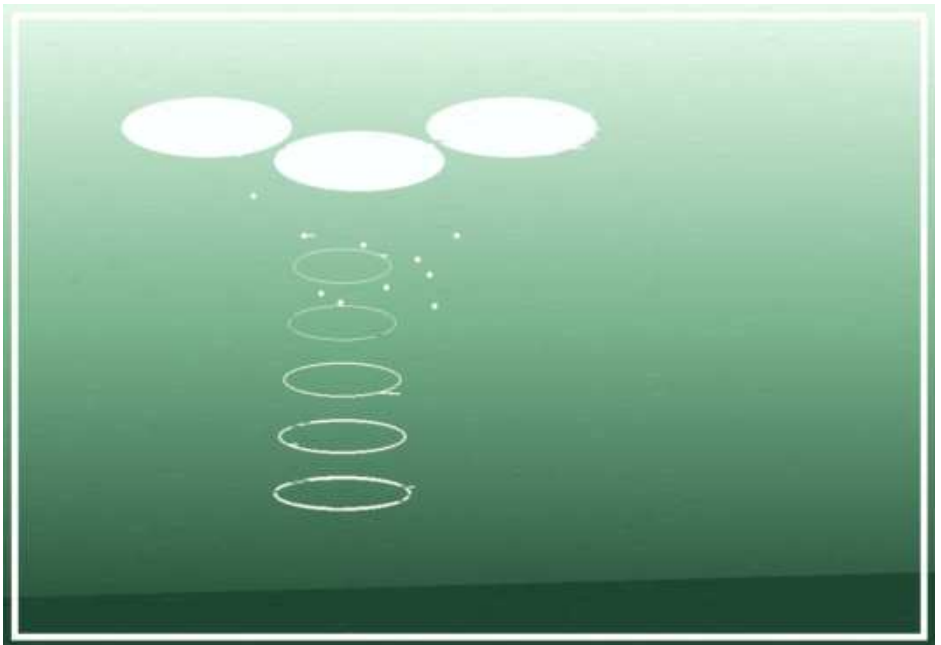
Bhimsen stood frozen and empty. His daughter's final words pierced his mind. Then, far too late, every secret became clear: the horoscope, the false warning, the chest, the forest, and the truth that the young woman before him had been his own daughter.

Some truths are so painful that a person can feel dead even while still alive. That day Bhimsen lost his child for a second time - and with her, everything else.

Chapter 11: The End of the Kingdom



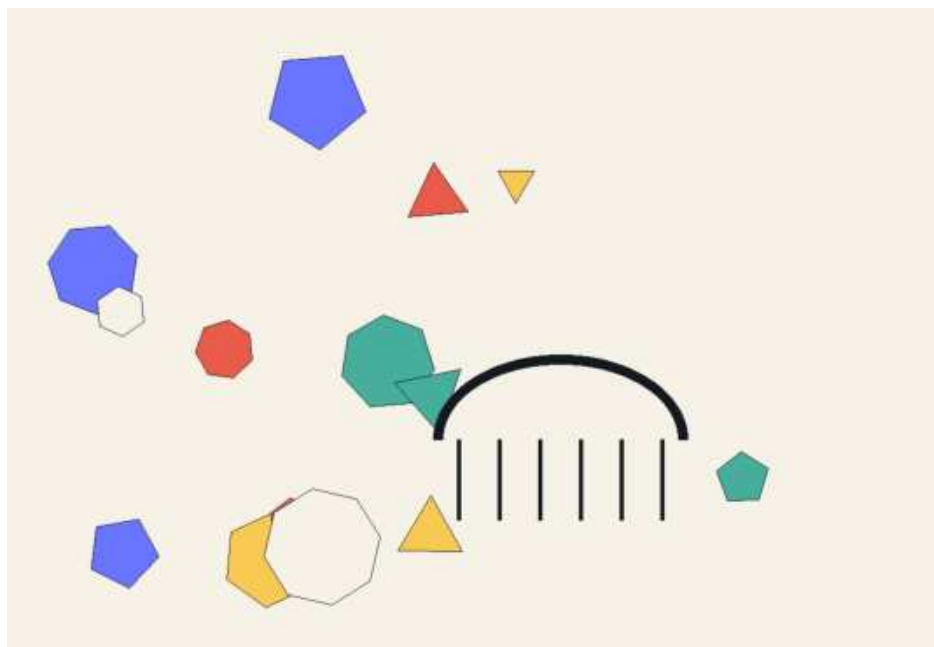


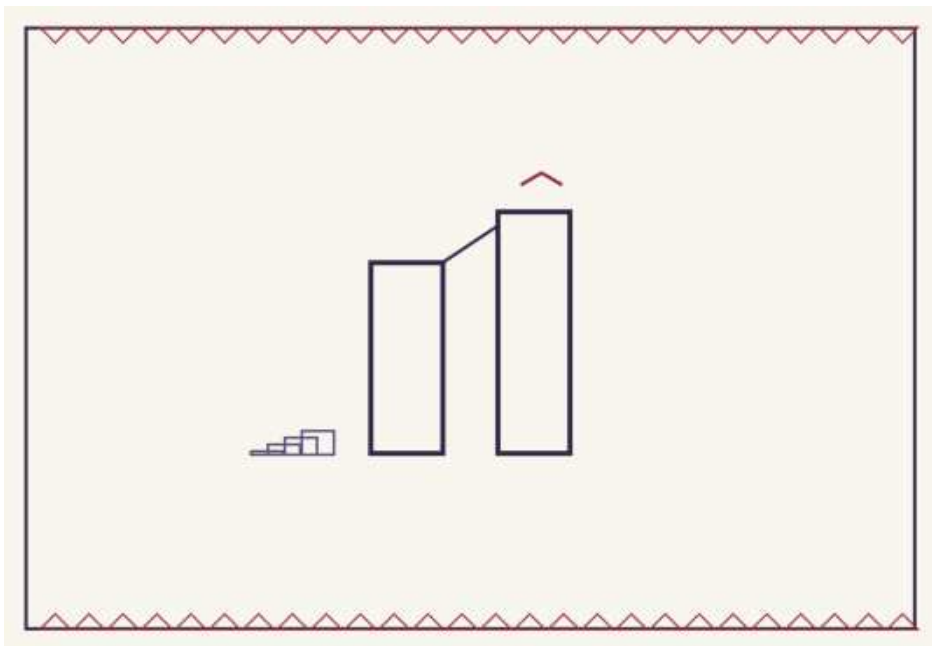


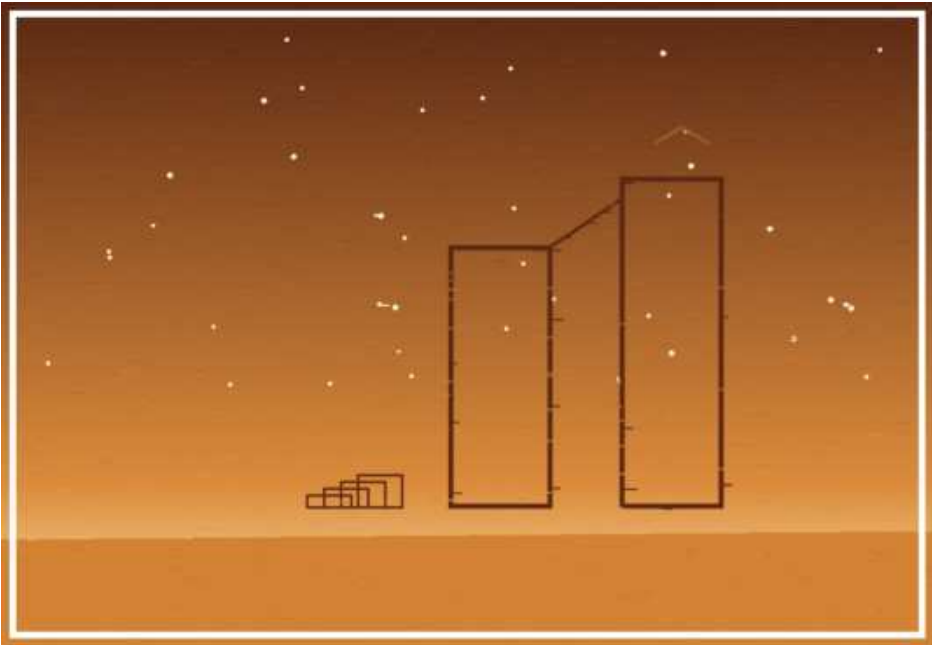
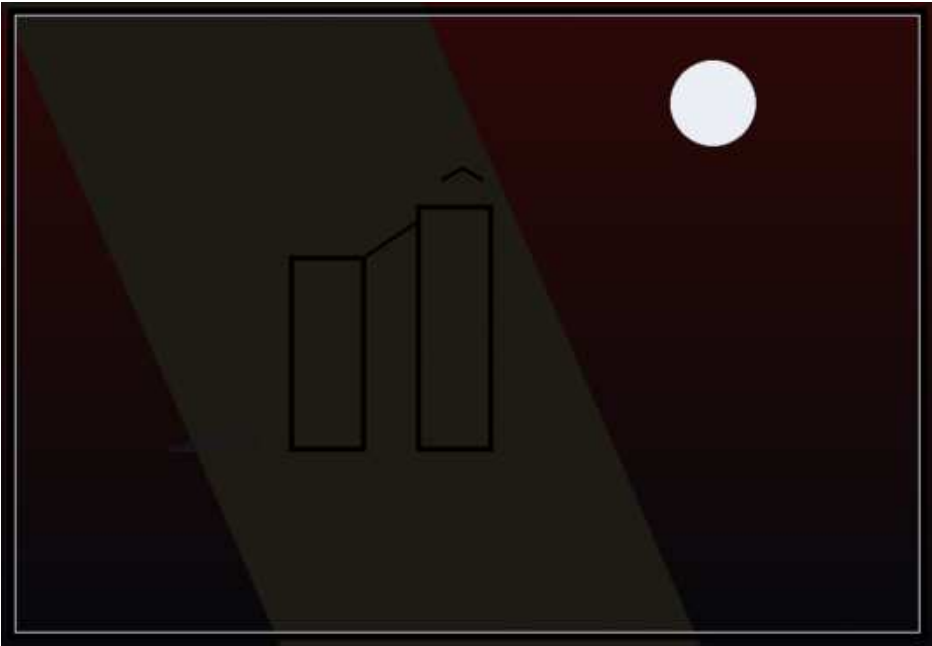
Picture 21

The curse came true. Bhimsen's kingdom came to an end.

The tale does not explain every detail of how it ended, and it does not need to. A kingdom that sends away its most innocent child has already become hollow from within. An outside enemy is hardly needed; the curse only gives the final push.





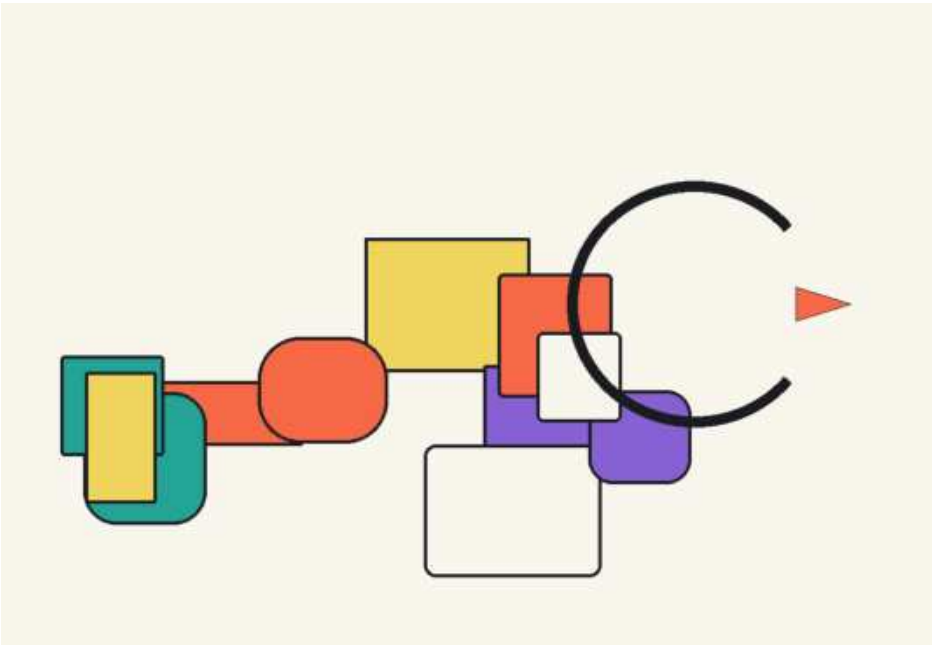


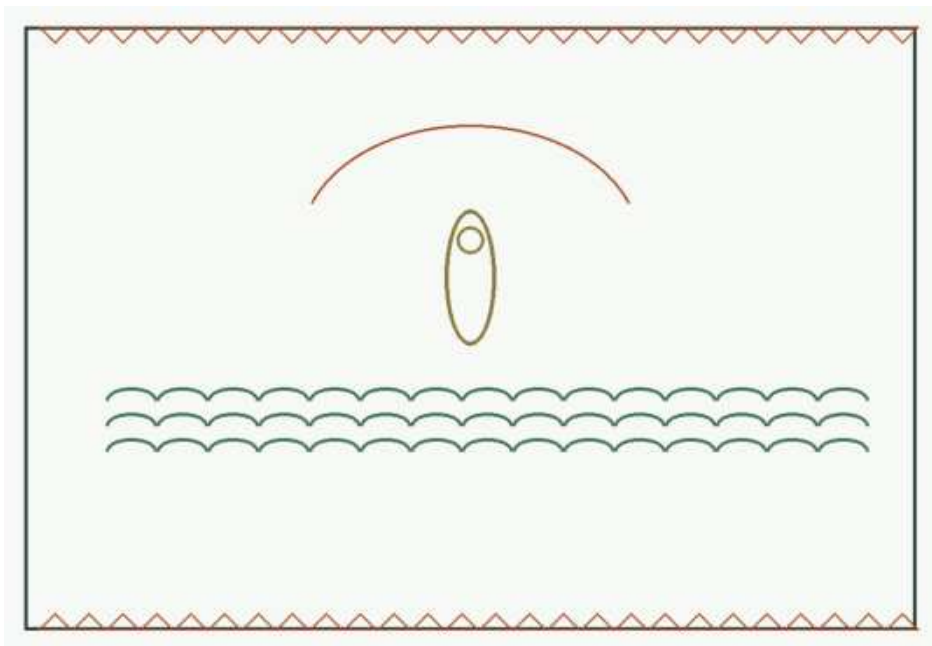
Picture 22

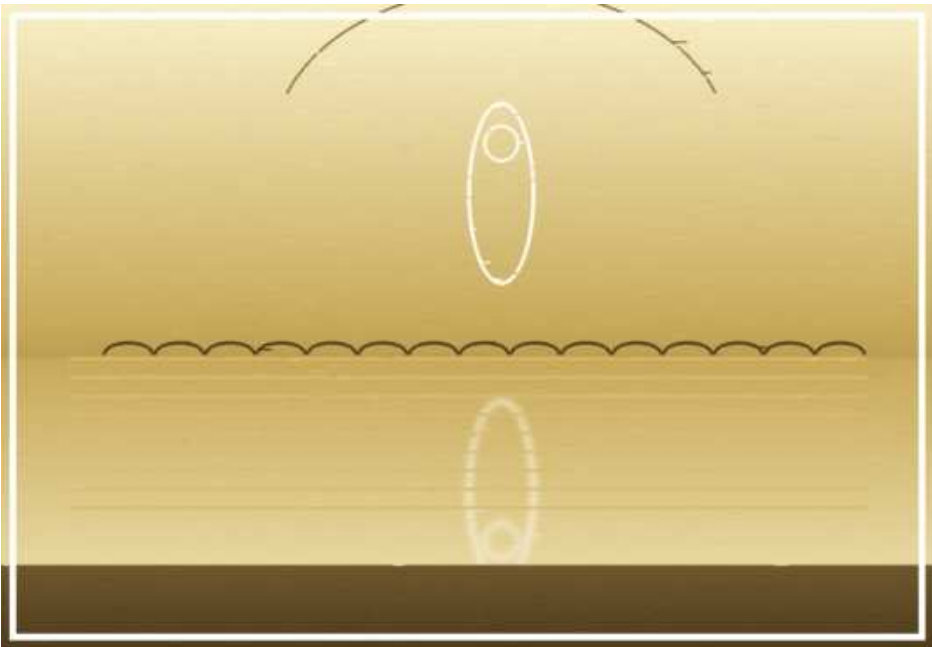
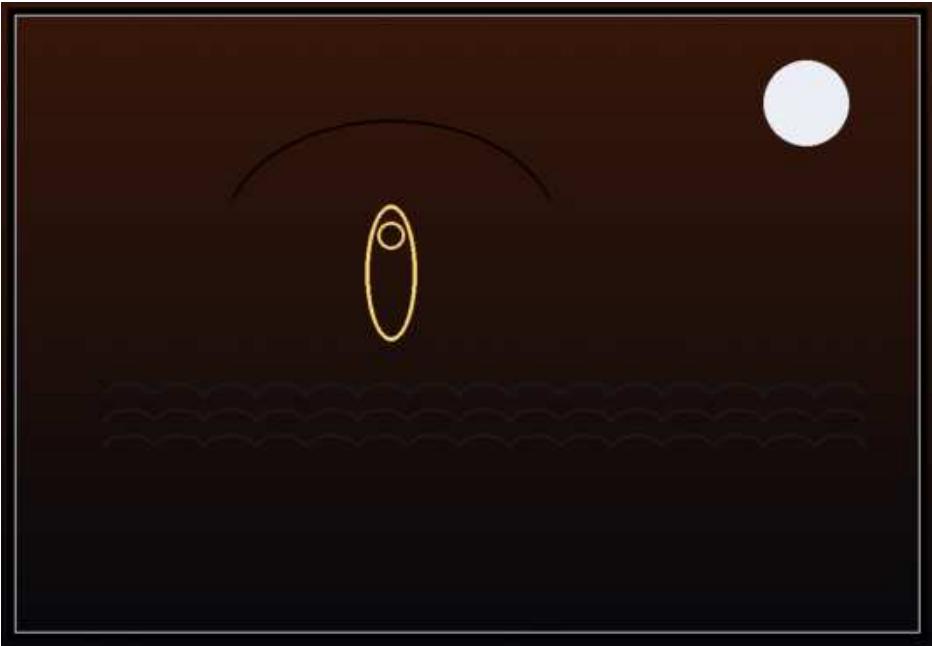
And the priest? The tale does not even record his ending. Perhaps that is his greatest punishment. The greedy man who plotted so much to gain everything disappeared from history without honour: no kingdom, no princess, no lasting name. Greed's final profit is often nothing.

Krishnaram with half of Morang, the broken King Bhimsen, and the ruined court were all left with the ashes of what they had gained. In the forest, only Gaval remained, sitting beside the river in the evening and remembering the daughter the river had once given him and deceit had taken away.

Chapter 12: The Meaning of Freedom



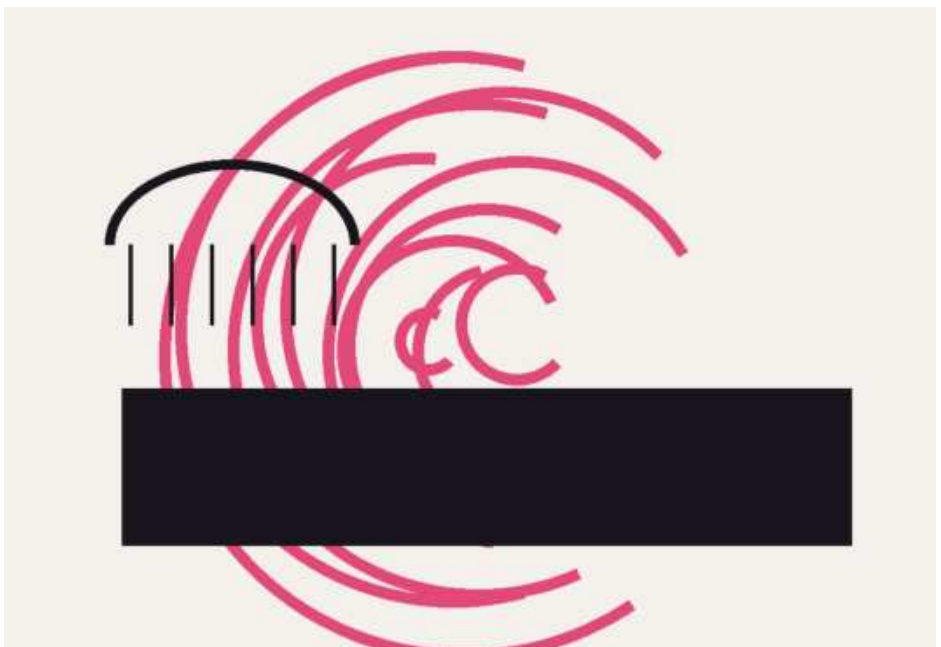


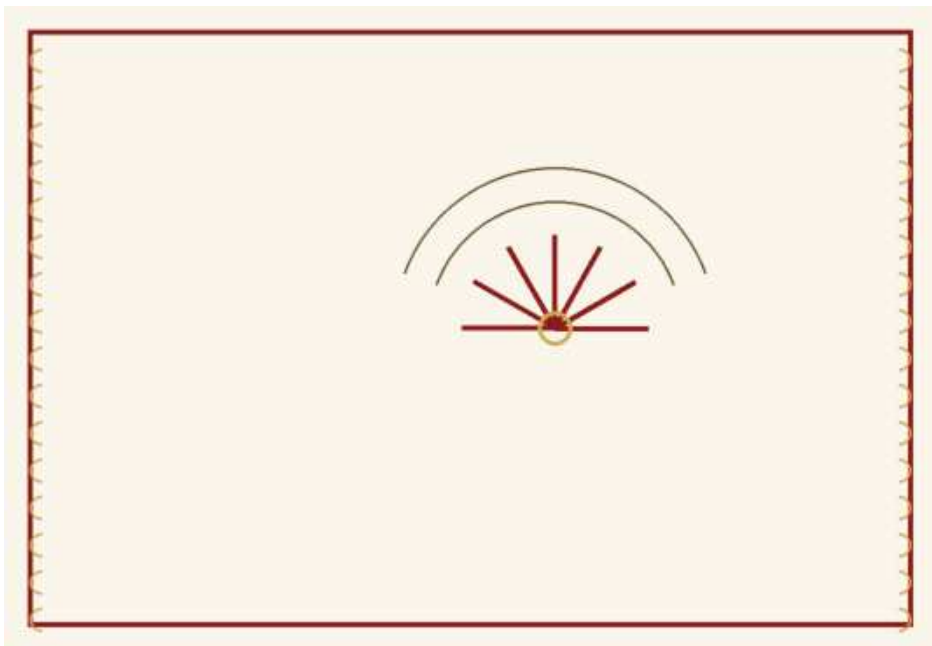


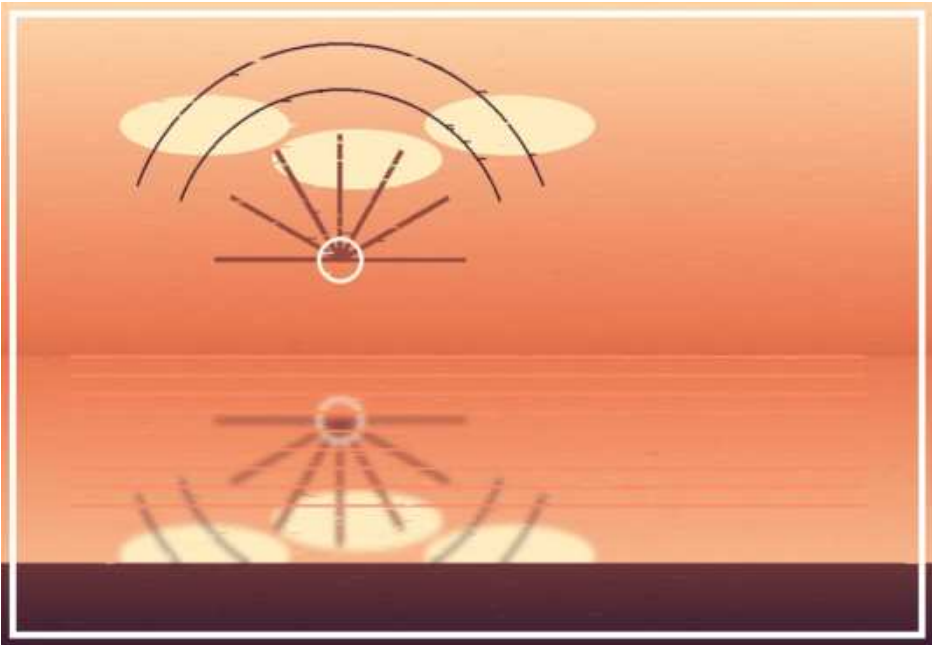
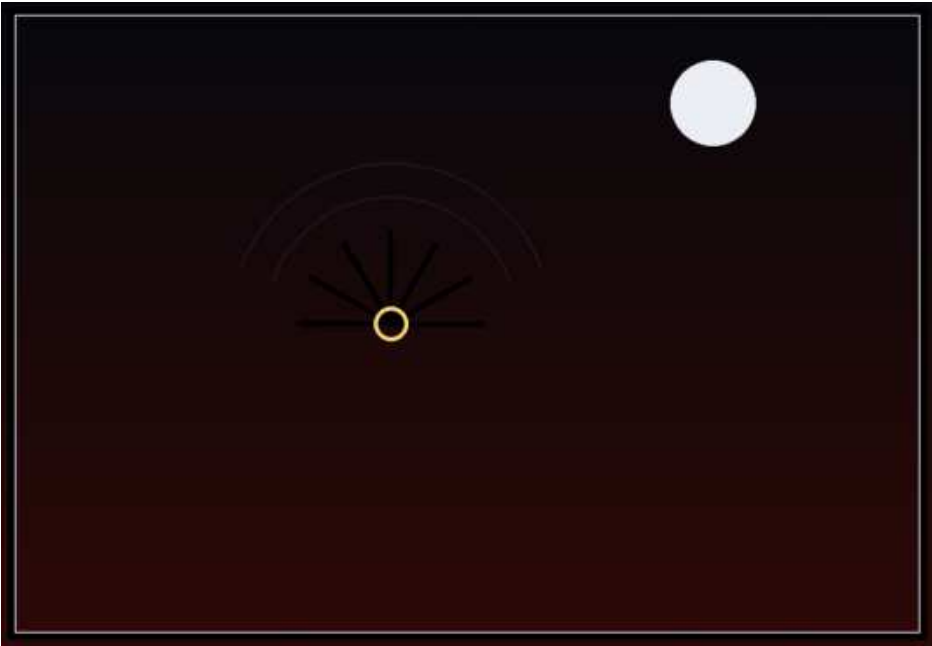
Picture 23

So what does this story tell us? It tells us that Motisaeri was never truly defeated.

She was shut inside a chest, yet she found a new father beside the river. She was stolen from the forest, yet she stood in the palace as the fire of truth. And when the world placed its ugliest demand before her, she refused the world itself and chose freedom. Those who tried to defeat her remained trapped by greed; she rose beyond them.







Picture 24

Elders in Morang say that even today, in the early light beside that forest river, people sometimes glimpse a pale figure - bright as a pearl and calm as a lake. Who knows? Perhaps Motisaeri still comes to see her forest and the father Gaval who loved her.

This tale is also a mirror for every home where a daughter's future is weighed by someone else's words. A horoscope can be misread, a priest can become corrupt, and a king can become blind - but a daughter is a blessing. A kingdom that throws away its daughter may itself be swept away. The story of Morang remembers that lesson.

The End

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The King of Fools

The Ridiculous Journey of an Extremely
Foolish Boy



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

ISSN 2229-547X

Prologue: An Extremely Foolish Child

There once lived a cowherd who had a son. The boy's mother died when he was born, so his grandmother raised him. But this child was unbelievably foolish!

This is a tale filled with comedy - the story of a boy whose every action and every sentence becomes a new example of foolishness. His journey is full of laughter, yet it also points to a strange truth about life: even foolishness can seem to have a logic of its own.

Chapter 1: The Extremely Foolish Boy



Picture 1

The cowherd's son grew to be twelve years old, and he was married - but he even forgot that his marriage had taken place! His foolishness was hard to imagine. Something as important as his own wedding simply would not stay in his memory.

His grandmother had grown old and was finding household work difficult. After explaining things carefully, she told the boy, 'Go and bring your wife home for the traditional gauna ceremony.'



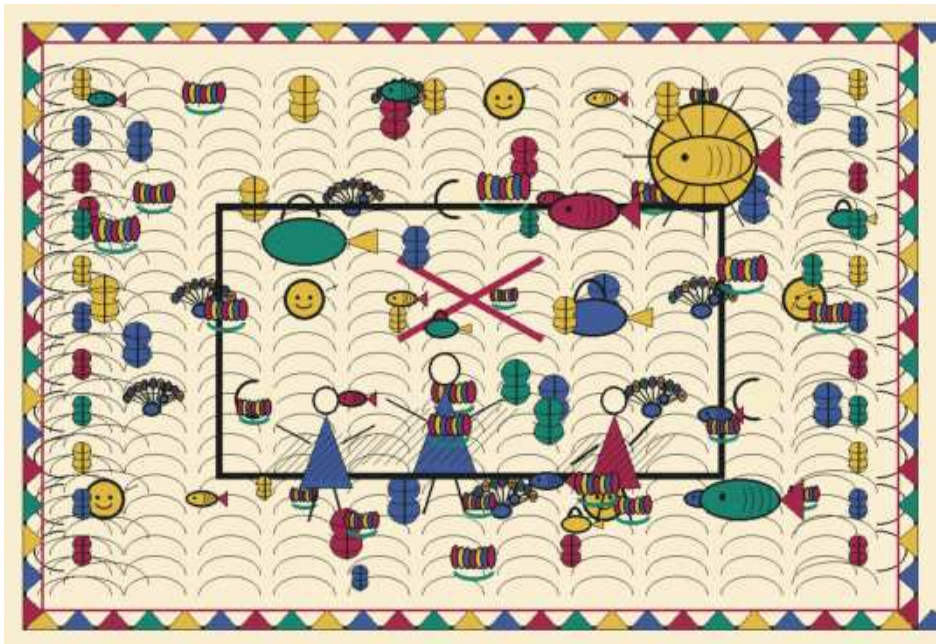


Picture 2

For his journey, Grandmother tied some puffed rice in a cloth. It seemed like an ordinary preparation, but this puffed rice would begin the first link in a long chain of foolish events.

The boy set out with the cloth bundle to bring his wife home, without any idea how many beatings his foolish words would earn him along the way.

Chapter 2: The Flying Puffed Rice

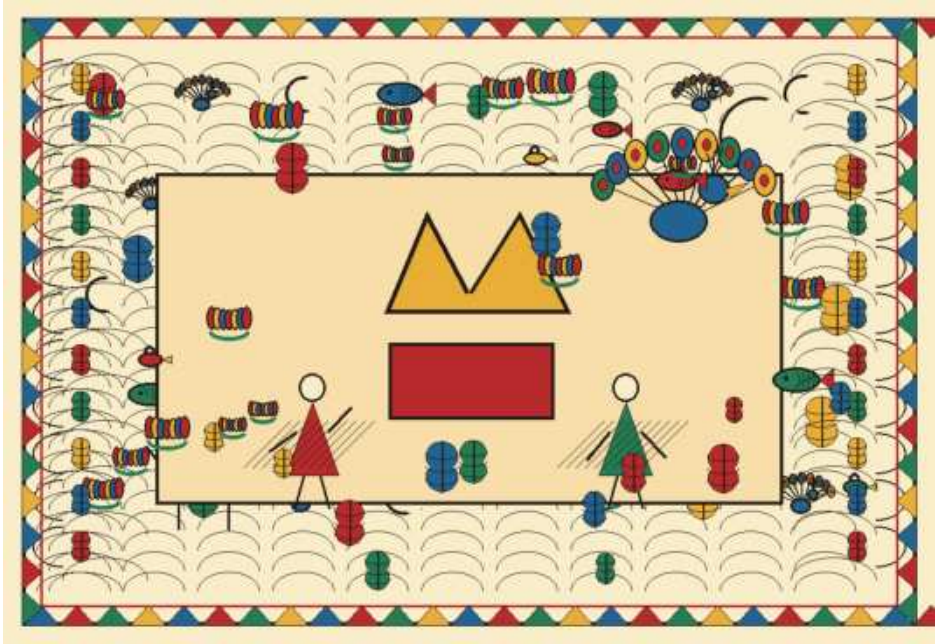


Picture 3

On the road, the boy became hungry. He took some puffed rice from the cloth and tried to put it into his mouth, but gusts of wind kept blowing the grains away. He tried again and again, and each time the rice flew off.

Annoyed by this ridiculous problem, he began saying, 'Come on, come on - fly away!' In his foolish excitement, it sounded as though he were encouraging the puffed rice to fly.





Picture 4

Nearby in the forest, a bird-catcher had spread a net to catch birds. When he heard the boy saying, 'Come on, fly away!' he became furious. He thought the boy was deliberately warning the birds and making them escape.

The bird-catcher grabbed the boy and gave him a hard beating - the first punishment for his foolishness. Crying in pain, the boy asked, 'At least tell me what I did wrong!' The bird-catcher taught him, 'Don't say that. Say, Come here and get caught.'

Chapter 3: A Chain of Beatings



Picture 5

The boy walked on repeating his newly learned words: 'Come here and get caught.' Evening was falling, and he was almost out of the forest.

Some thieves were nearby making a secret plan. When they heard the boy calling, 'Come here and get caught,' they thought he was trying to have them arrested by warning travellers about them.





Picture 6

The angry thieves gave the boy another hard beating - his second punishment. Again he asked, 'Then what should I say?' The leader of the thieves taught him a new sentence: 'Say, May this happen in every house.'

The boy continued with this new sentence, never understanding that different places and moments need different words, and that one sentence cannot be right everywhere.

Chapter 4: Anger at the Cremation Ground





Picture 7

Soon he reached a cremation ground. A landlord's only son had died, and the family and villagers had come to perform the funeral. The air was heavy with sorrow.

Even at this serious moment, the boy repeated the sentence he had been taught: 'May this happen in every house!' To a grieving family, it sounded like a terrible wish. Everyone there became furious.



Picture 8

They gave him another hard beating - his third punishment. By now his whole body ached, but his foolishness remained perfectly strong.

Again the boy asked, 'What should I have said?' The people at the cremation ground told him, 'Say, May this never happen in any house.' Carrying this new sentence with him, he walked on toward the next trouble.

Chapter 5: Insulting the Wedding Procession





Picture 9

The boy reached a town where the king's son's wedding procession was taking place. There were lights, music, celebration, and joy everywhere.

The wedding guests heard the boy saying, 'May this never happen in any house!' On such a happy occasion, the words sounded like a wish against marriage and celebration. The guests became angry.



Picture 10

They beat the boy again - his fourth punishment. His body was now sore all over, but his journey was still not finished.

He still did not give up asking. 'Then what should I say?' This time the answer was completely different: 'Say nothing. Keep your mouth shut!' Perhaps the wedding guests had decided that silence was the safest thing for a boy like him.

Chapter 6: Silence at His In-Laws' House





Picture 11

The boy reached his in-laws' home and obeyed his latest lesson perfectly. He said nothing at all - and he did not even eat anything, because eating would require opening his mouth, and he had been told to keep it shut!

His in-laws were amazed by the new son-in-law's silence. They thought he was wonderfully calm and self-controlled. No one guessed that the real reason was simply his extreme foolishness.

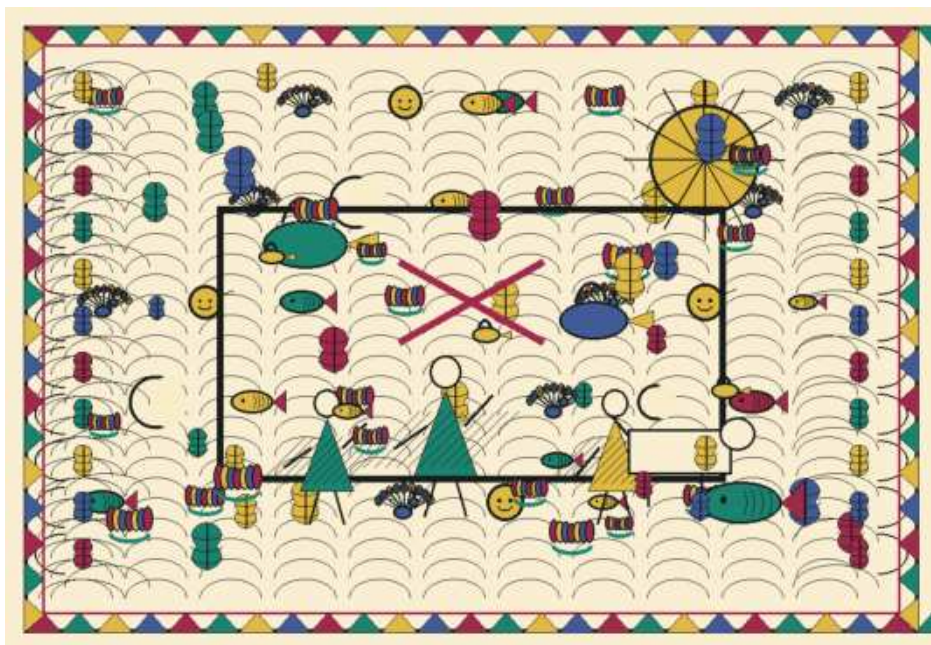


Picture 12

Early the next morning, the family sent their daughter away with the boy, completing the gauna tradition. He started back toward his village with his wife.

The sun was very strong on the road. Both the boy and his wife became tired, and the heat made them need a rest.

Chapter 7: The Smudged Sindoor



Picture 13

Even inside a mango grove the air was hot and close. The boy's wife began to sweat heavily, and the sindoor in the parting of her hair became smudged and faded. It was only the natural effect of heat and perspiration.

But the boy's foolish mind reached a terrible conclusion. 'My in-laws have cheated me!' he thought. 'They have given me a wife whose sindoor is already broken and faded!'





Picture 14

He convinced himself that his wife must already have been married to someone else and that the faded sindoor proved it. He never understood that the heat and sweat were the simple cause.

The boy thought, 'What will I do if I take such a wife back to my village?' That foolish idea became the basis of his next decision, the most ridiculous event in the whole tale.

Chapter 8: Exchanging His Wife for a Goat





Picture 15

On the road, the boy met a barber who was grazing a goat. The boy finally opened his mouth because he could no longer keep his worry inside. His rule of silence was forgotten.

He told the barber everything: the smudged sindoor, his belief that his in-laws had cheated him, and his confusion. The barber immediately understood that he was talking to a true king of fools and made a plan.

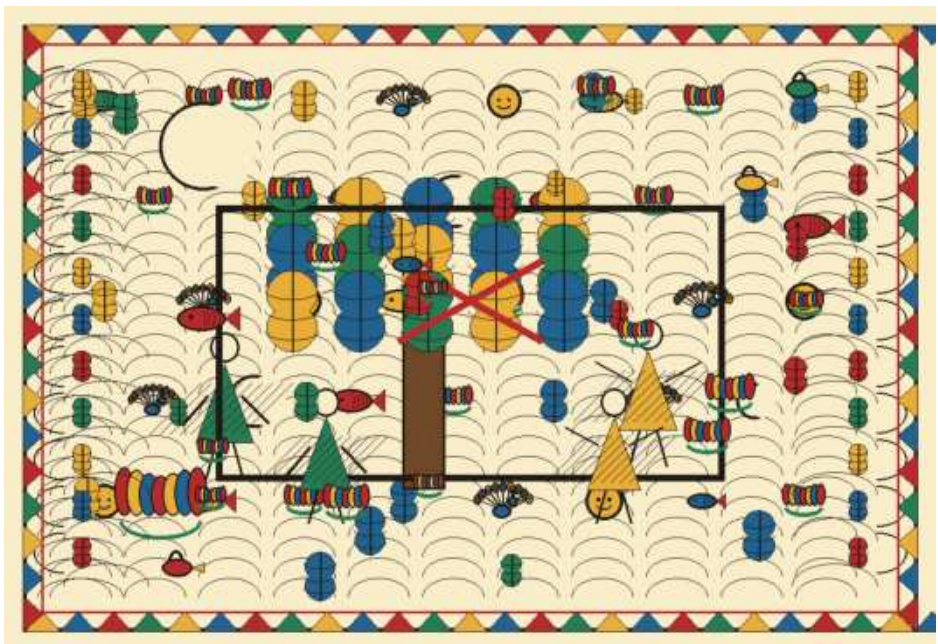


Picture 16

The barber said, 'Exchange your wife for my milk-giving goat.' It was an absurd offer - a human being in exchange for a goat.

But in his complete foolishness, the boy happily agreed. He gave up his wife and took the goat, without understanding how shocking and ridiculous such an exchange was.

Chapter 9: From Goat to Kadima



Picture 17

As he continued, the boy became tired and tied the goat to a post. The goat began bleating and moving its mouth, which was perfectly normal behaviour for an animal.

But the boy's foolish mind produced another strange idea: 'The goat is making faces at me!' He misunderstood even the simplest behaviour of the animal.





Picture 18

The boy took the goat to a market and exchanged it for kadima, a kind of preserved mango food. The living goat, which he had received in exchange for his wife, was now traded away for something to eat.

This chain of foolish trades - wife for goat, goat for kadima - showed just how little he understood. The result would become clear when he reached home.

Chapter 10: Grandmother's Lament



Picture 19

When the boy reached his village, he met his grandmother. She was delighted at first. She thought the kadima must be a gift sent from his wife's family, a happy sign that everything had gone well.

But when Grandmother could not see her daughter-in-law, she became worried and asked, 'Where is your wife?' Without shame or hesitation, the boy told her the whole story: the smudged sindoor, the barber, the exchange for the goat, and then the exchange of the goat for kadima.





Picture 20

Grandmother struck her forehead in despair. This final display of her grandson's foolishness was almost too much for her. The wife she had sent him to bring home had somehow been turned, through his foolish trades, into a jar of kadima!

Completely untouched by Grandmother's grief, the boy went off to play, calling back, 'Make a vegetable dish with the kadima and keep it ready!' That final line is the comic peak of the tale: he had no idea at all how disastrous his decisions had been.

The End

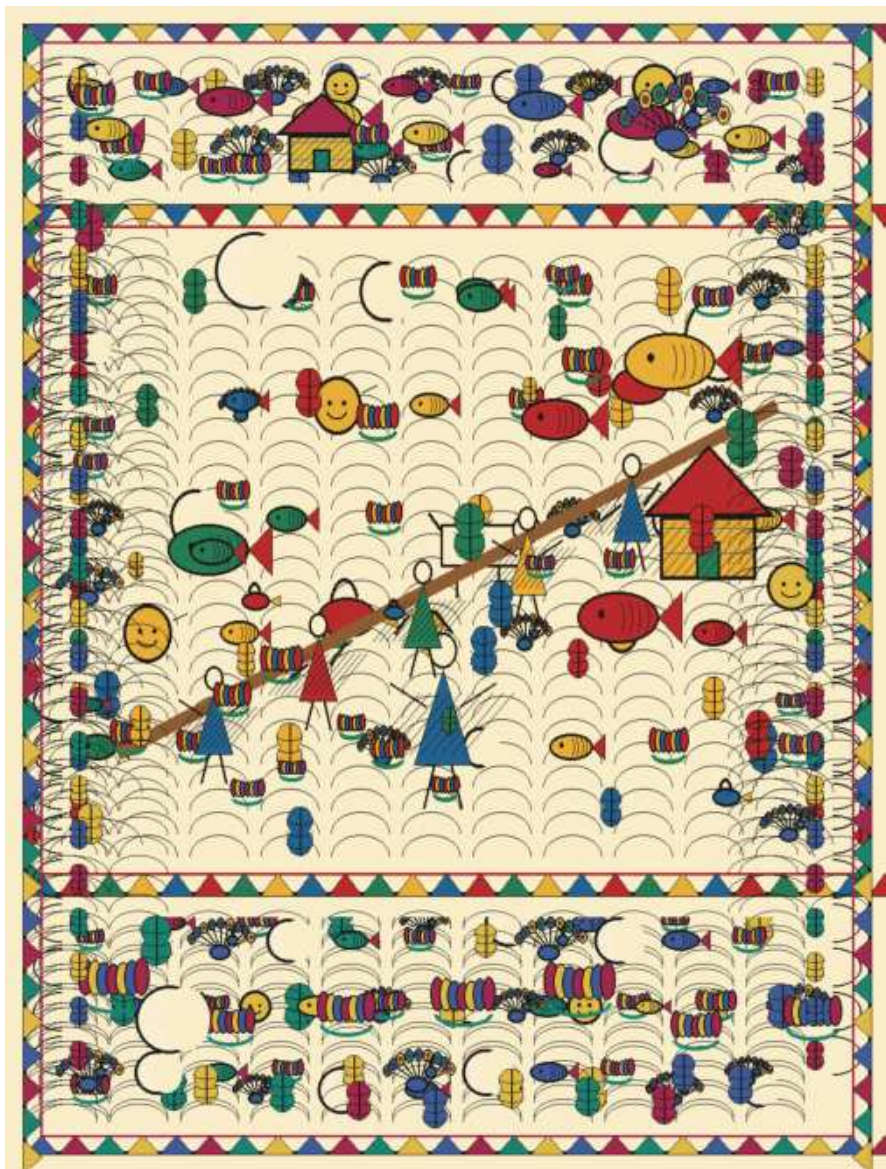
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Naika Banjara

A Tale of Twelve Years of Separation and a
Secret Blessing



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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Prologue: Shobhanayak, the Merchant's Son

Shobhanayak was the son of a merchant. He married a woman named Bari somewhere in Tirhut. But soon after the wedding he left for Morang on business, without spending even one full day with his wife.

This is a story of waiting and separation - twelve long years apart, and the hardship an innocent woman had to endure. Yet in the end, truth wins and a broken family comes together again.

Chapter 1: A Sudden Departure



Picture 1

Shobhanayak, the son of a wealthy merchant family, married a woman named Bari in Tirhut. The wedding was celebrated with joy, and after the traditional gauna ceremony he brought his bride home.

But before they could enjoy married life together, business duties called Shobhanayak away. He left for Morang to trade, before he had spent even a single full day with his wife.





Picture 2

The sudden separation was very painful for Bari. She was newly married but had to remain alone without her husband's company. The rules of society and the needs of business left little room for what she herself wanted.

Shobhanayak began his journey toward Morang, not knowing how long this separation would last or how much trouble would come to his wife while he was away.

Chapter 2: The Dakhar's Prophecy



Picture 3

One night on the road, Shobhanayak stopped to rest beneath a tree. His body was tired from the long journey, and he needed sleep.

As night deepened, he heard a sound above him. A dakhar, some kind of bird or creature, lived in the tree with its mate. The two were talking, and their conversation would change Shobhanayak's life.





Picture 4

The pair said, 'This is a very lucky night. A husband who spends this night with his wife will be blessed with an exceptionally gifted son!' Shobhanayak heard the prophecy clearly.

At once, a strong wish rose in his heart to spend that special night with his wife. He left his business journey unfinished and turned back toward home immediately.

Chapter 3: The Ring of Recognition



Picture 5

Shobhanayak hurried home and reached his wife in the darkness of night. He came quietly and secretly, hoping that the dakhar's prophecy would come true.

But one worry troubled him: what people might say. If anyone saw him arriving secretly at night, rumours and misunderstandings could spread through the community.





Picture 6

To prevent such rumours, Shobhanayak gave his wife a ring as a sign of recognition and proof. If questions arose later, the ring would show that the secret meeting had truly been with her husband.

After giving her the ring, Shobhanayak left again for Morang to finish his business. Bari remained alone, carrying a secret within her and having only the ring as proof of what had happened.

Chapter 4: Twelve Years of Trade



Picture 7

Shobhanayak reached Morang and began trading. What was meant to be a business journey became a very long stay. He remained there for twelve years, working and earning wealth.

During those years, his contact with his wife and family was lost. In those days, travel and communication were slow and difficult. There had been one secret night together, followed by twelve years of silence.





Picture 8

In Morang, Shobhanayak became a successful merchant. His wealth grew and his business connections expanded. Yet in the middle of his success, he knew nothing about what was happening to his wife at home.

At last the thirteenth year came, and Shobhanayak decided to return home. His twelve-year trading journey was over, and it was time to go back to his family.

Chapter 5: Bari Is Driven from Home



Picture 9

Meanwhile, while Shobhanayak was away, Bari's life had become full of suffering. When she became pregnant as a result of that secret night with her husband, her parents-in-law began to suspect her.

Because her husband was not there, the pregnancy became a serious social scandal. Her parents-in-law did not know the truth and were frightened of what society would say. They forced Bari out of the house.





Picture 10

The exile was unbearable for Bari. She was innocent, and the child she carried was her husband's, yet she was treated like someone guilty of a crime. Society can sometimes judge what it sees more quickly than it looks for the truth.

In the middle of this hardship, Bari found one supporter: Shobhanayak's younger brother, Chaturgan. He knew the true story, perhaps because Shobhanayak had told him about the secret visit.

Chapter 6: Chaturgan Gives Her Shelter





Picture 11

Chaturgan was wise and kind-hearted. He gave Bari a place to stay because he knew she was innocent. He understood that the whole situation had grown from an unusual chain of events and Shobhanayak's honest return home that night, not from any wrongdoing by Bari.

Bari lived under Chaturgan's protection, carrying the burden of pregnancy, society's rejection, and the pain of her husband's absence. His support gave her the strength to survive that difficult time.

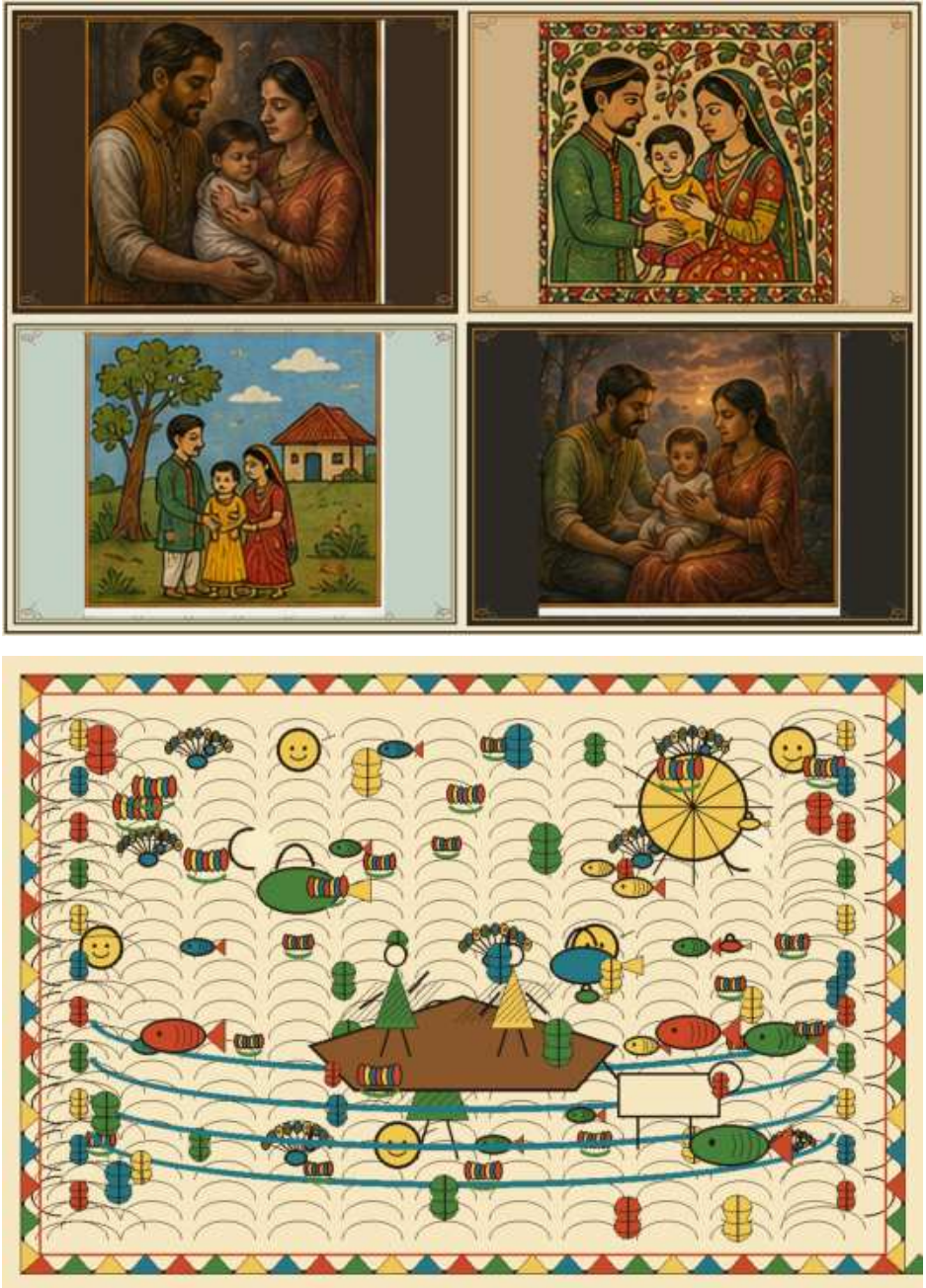


Picture 12

Bari's grief during this period was expressed in a touching folk song: 'Tab Bari re kanay jaar bejaro kanai re na' - Bari weeps bitterly, helpless and full of sorrow.

The song continues: 'Durga ge swami ke lai ke kohbar ghar lewa ne kelahi re na, kohbar ghar se hamro nikaliyo delakai re na.' Bari prays to Goddess Durga and laments that, with her husband absent, she has even been driven out of the bridal room and home.

Chapter 7: Truth Is Restored



Picture 13

In the thirteenth year, Shobhanayak finally returned after twelve years of trade. He came home expecting that everything would be peaceful and just as he had left it.

Instead, he learned the whole truth: Bari had been driven out, had suffered greatly, and had survived only because Chaturgan sheltered her. Shobhanayak's heart filled with pain when he understood what his long absence had caused.





Picture 14

Shobhanayak went straight to Bari. Using the ring of recognition, he explained the entire truth to his parents and the community: his secret return that night, the dakhar's prophecy, and the ring he had left as proof. At last, the truth was clear to everyone.

Once the mystery was understood, the family came together again and began to live happily. Bari's innocence was proved, her suffering ended, and after twelve years of separation and injustice, Shobhanayak and Bari could finally begin family life again with honour and peace. The

sorrowful folk song about Bari still remembers her long
wait and unfair suffering, while the ending of the tale also
remembers the final victory of truth.

The End

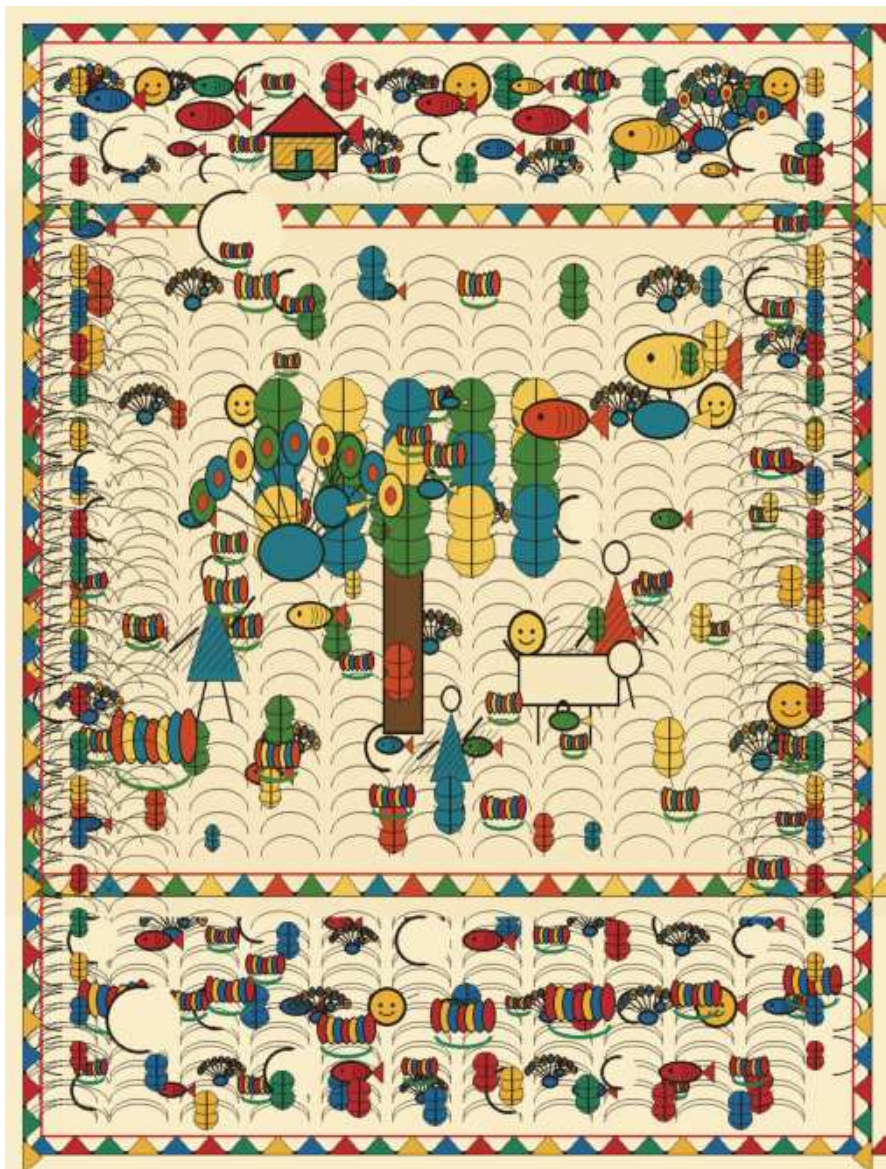
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Raghuni Marar

The Unconquerable Strength of a Devotee and
the Victory of Justice



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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Prologue: Three Brothers

Devdatt, Kashiram, and Raghuni Marar were three brothers who herded cattle. They belonged to an ordinary farming family, but the youngest brother, Raghuni, carried within him a strength and devotion that would reveal itself during a terrible famine.

This is a story about the power of devotion to the Goddess - how an ordinary cattle-herder stood firm against the schemes of landlords, the dark magic of a yogi, and an unjust king, because his faith made him impossible to defeat.

Chapter 1: The Trouble of Famine



Picture 1

Devdatt, Kashiram, and Raghuni Marar were three brothers who spent their days caring for cattle. Their life was simple but peaceful: grazing cows, farming, and living with their family.

Then a terrible famine came. Crops dried up, animals suffered, and ways of earning a living disappeared. In this hardship, Raghuni decided to leave his village and seek a new life far away.





Picture 2

Raghuni travelled to Bidia Barahampur village in the Banma block of Saharsa and made a new home there. It was a new place with new possibilities, but the future was uncertain.

The powerful local landlords there were Jugal and Kamla Prasad. In time, Raghuni's future would become connected with their family.

Chapter 2: Victory in Wrestling and a Gift of Land





Picture 3

One day Jugal Prasad organised a dangal, a wrestling competition that was a matter of local pride. Raghuni showed remarkable strength and skill and won the contest.

Jugal Prasad was impressed by Raghuni's victory.

Respecting both his strength and his character, he invited Raghuni to stay under his protection.



Picture 4

Jugal Prasad gave Raghuni one hundred bighas of land, an extraordinary gift that completely changed his life. The farmer who had fled famine as a refugee now became a landholder.

Raghuni built a bathan, a cattle and farming centre, in Sugma village. He began farming there and started a new, settled life away from his original home.

Chapter 3: Trouble in the Landlord's Family

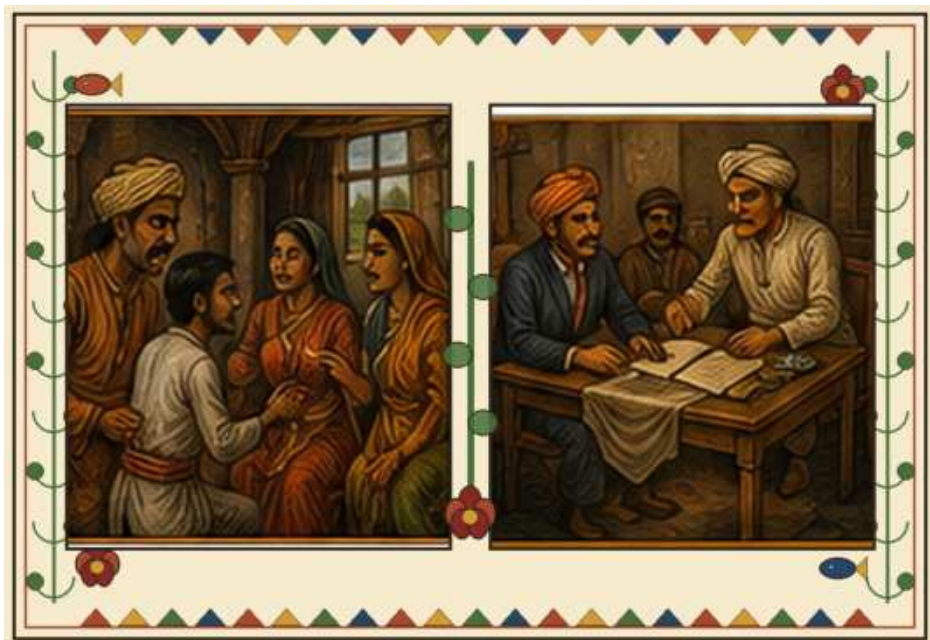




Picture 5

Meanwhile, a dispute broke out in Jugal Prasad's family. The tale does not explain all the details, but the result was serious: Jugal Prasad sold his lands and estate to the ruler of Gagori.

When Raghuni heard the news, he was deeply saddened. The estate whose owner had given him land was now in someone else's hands, and this change made his own position uncertain.



Picture 6

Raghuni wondered what would happen under the new landlord, the ruler of Gagori. Still, he continued with patience and faith instead of allowing worry to control him.

Soon another person entered his story: the Chaudhary of Simri village, whose jealousy would bring a dangerous struggle into Raghuni's life.

Chapter 4: The Chaudhary's Jealousy



Picture 7

One day Raghuni went with a friend to watch a dance performance at the Chaudhary's courtyard in Simri. What seemed like a simple evening of entertainment would become the seed of jealousy.

After the performance, the Chaudhary rewarded the dancer with a ring and a shawl, showing his generosity. Raghuni was pleased too and told the dancer, 'Go to my cattle-yard and take a pair of cows you like.' It was Raghuni's own generous gift.



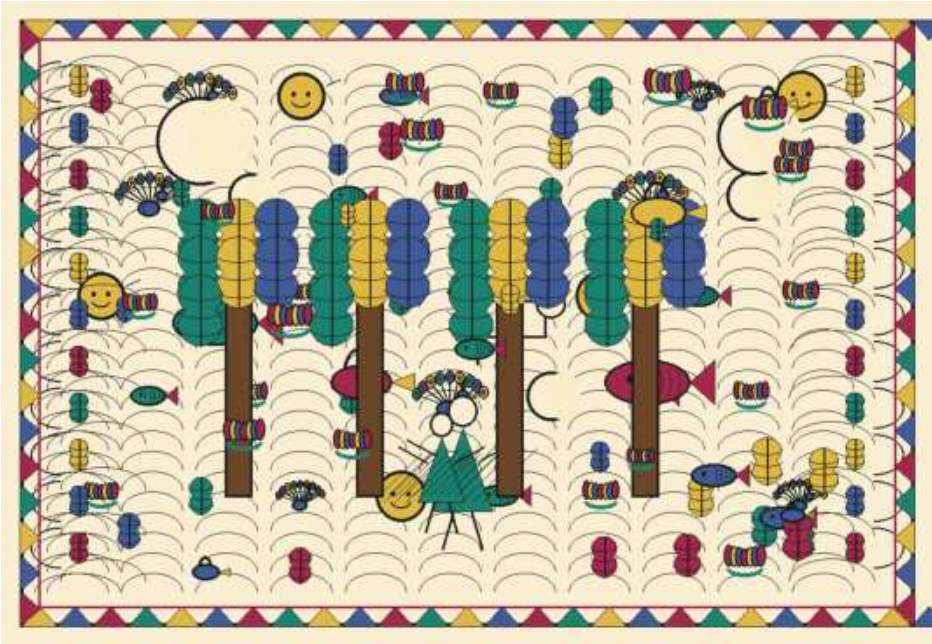


Picture 8

The happy dancer brought two excellent cows and proudly showed them to the Chaudhary. But the Chaudhary understood the gift in the wrong way. He thought Raghuni was trying to make him look small by showing off his greater wealth.

That misunderstanding made the Chaudhary's jealousy burn even more. He did not dare challenge Raghuni openly because Raghuni was known for his strength and good name. So instead, he chose a secret and dishonest path.

Chapter 5: The Yogi's Dark Magic



Picture 9

The Chaudhary went to Makdoom Yogi, a magician and worshipper of the Goddess. He asked, 'Make Raghuni my servant!' It was a jealous demand aimed directly at Raghuni's freedom and dignity.

The yogi blew charms over mustard seeds and scattered them toward Raghuni in an attempt to control him. But Raghuni was a devoted worshipper of the Goddess, and the magic did not work. His faith proved stronger than the spell.





Picture 10

Angry that his first attempt had failed, the yogi performed a powerful tantric practice connected with Chandika. By that power, he had Raghuni surrounded and killed by a hundred tigers.

The attack was terrifying - a hundred tigers at once. But Raghuni was protected by devotion. Kamakhya, described in the tale as Chandika's sister, came and brought him back to life. It was the strongest sign yet of the Goddess's grace.

Chapter 6: The Yogi Is Defeated



Picture 11

Discouraged by the failure of his second attempt, the yogi tried a third time. But when he took mustard seeds into his fist to charm them, his hand became stuck tightly closed and would not move.

This was the complete defeat of the yogi's power.

Raghuni's shield of devotion seemed so strong that none of the yogi's magic could touch him. Three attempts had been made, and all three had failed.





Picture 12

The Chaudhary and the yogi were stunned. Unable to win by magic or force, the Chaudhary began thinking of a political trick. What direct attacks could not achieve, he would try to achieve through deception.

He learned that Raghuni had not paid tax to the Gagori estate, perhaps because of confusion after the change of landlords or because of an administrative mistake. The Chaudhary saw a new chance to trap Raghuni through the law.

Chapter 7: A False Accusation



Picture 13

The Chaudhary went to the ruler of Gagori and made a false accusation: 'Raghuni has not only failed to pay his own tax - he is telling everyone else not to pay either!' The double charge tried to make Raghuni look both dishonest and rebellious.

The king believed the accusation and became angry. He sent soldiers to arrest Raghuni. But Raghuni was not in the village at the time, so the soldiers could not find him.





Picture 14

Instead, the soldiers took Raghuni's brother Devdatt Marar with them - an innocent man being punished in place of someone else. Near Kejaridih on the road, Devdatt saw Raghuni, and Raghuni saw him.

Strangely, the soldiers could not see Raghuni at all. It was as though an invisible power hid him from their eyes. Once again, the tale presents this as the protection of the Goddess.

Chapter 8: A Miracle of Justice



Picture 15

The king locked Devdatt in a dark cell and ordered the soldiers to beat him. It was an unjust punishment for an innocent man. But when a soldier raised a whip, a miracle happened: the blow struck the person using the whip instead.

The message seemed clear - those who tried to hurt an innocent person were themselves hurt. The king was shocked and frightened. This was no ordinary event.





Picture 16

The king immediately admitted his mistake. He told Devdatt, 'I was wrong. Now I will do whatever you ask.' The once-unjust king became humble after seeing the miracle.

At Devdatt's request, all the tenants who had been imprisoned for failing to pay taxes were released. One family's suffering led to justice for the wider community.



Trying to make amends, the king asked Raghuni Marar for ghatti, described in the tale as some special right or privilege, perhaps connected with a water mill. The request was a sign of respect rather than punishment.

The ending shows the complete victory of Raghuni's devotion and honesty. The yogi's dark magic failed three times, the Chaudhary's jealousy and deception were defeated, and the king's unjust order turned back on those who tried to carry it out.





Picture 18

Raghuni Marar had begun as an ordinary cattle-herder who fled his village during famine. In the end, through patience and devotion, he received both honour and justice.

The tale teaches that devotion, honesty, and patience can finally overcome force, trickery, and injustice. Raghuni Marar is still remembered in the Mithila region as a symbol of faith and justice - a hero whose strength came not from a sword, but from belief.

The End

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King Ansari

A Dream Fulfilled - The Wonderful Tale of the
Golden Tree and the Silver Trunk



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

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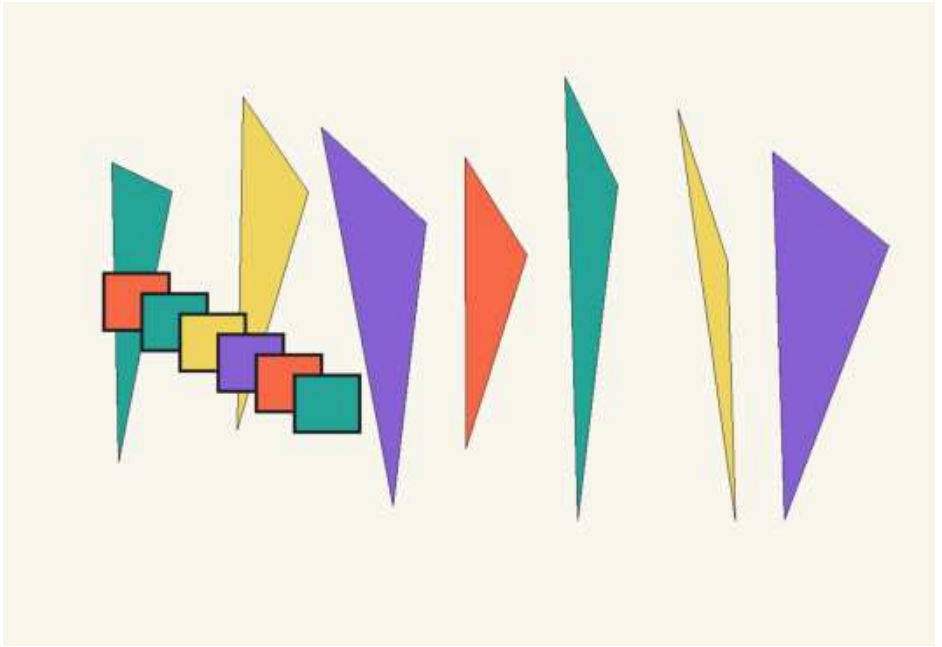
Prologue: A Kingdom Fourteen Kos Wide

King Ansari was a great ruler. His kingdom stretched for fourteen kos, he had three sons, and almost anything he wished for came true. But this tale begins with a dream - a dream whose fulfilment sent one son across seven seas and brought back something whose meaning even the king could not understand at first.

This is a tale of wonders: a yogi, blessings, a parrot, and fairies all appear in it. Yet its deeper meaning lies in the way a child keeps faith with his promise, makes the king's dream come true, and understands the language of the dream before the king himself does.

Chapter 1: The Promise of the Three Sons





Picture 1

King Ansari's kingdom stretched for fourteen kos. It was full of houses, mansions, gardens, and every comfort. He had three sons, and whatever he wished for usually came to pass. Few kings enjoyed such good fortune.

One night the king had a strange dream. He saw diamonds and pearls falling inside his house, while a mysterious creature called a mojar picked them up and ate them. The dream was so clear that in the morning he told his sons exactly what he had seen.





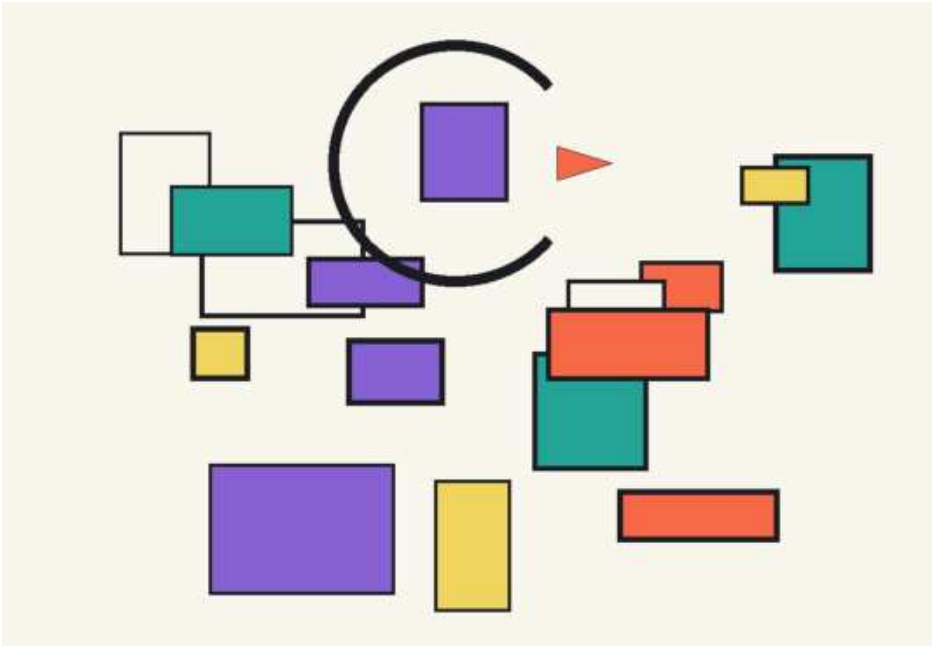
Picture 2

'Listen, this is the dream I saw last night,' the king said with some worry. He could not understand what such a dream meant. Was it lucky, or was it a warning?

The youngest son, whose heart was full of both courage and confidence, answered at once: 'Father, do not worry about it. I will make your dream come true.' The king was amazed. How could anyone make a dream happen? Yet the boy spoke with such certainty that the king did not question him.

Chapter 2: Brothers Lost in the Forest





Picture 3

The three brothers decided they would have to travel if they were to fulfil the dream. Early the next morning their horses were made ready, and they set out toward an unknown goal, knowing only that they had to discover something extraordinary.

After travelling for a long time, they entered a frightening forest. Thick trees blocked the light, shadows lay everywhere, and no road was clear. Deep inside the forest, the three brothers became separated when the path divided in different directions.





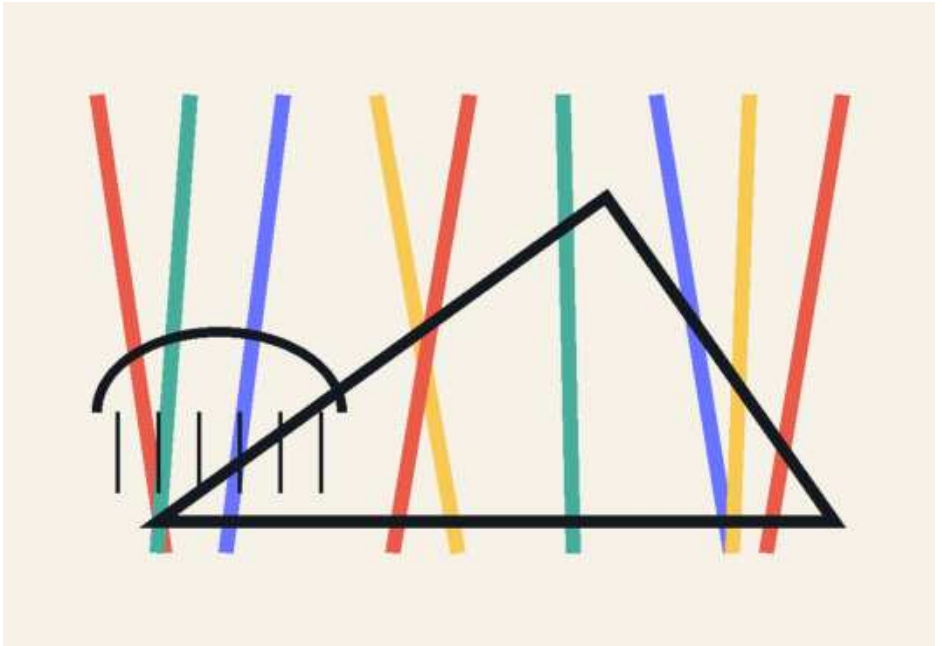
Picture 4

Two of the brothers wandered in one direction for days without finding their way. The tale does not tell much more about their journey, because from this point the main story follows the youngest brother.

The youngest, who had made the promise to the king, became weak with hunger and thirst. His horse could go no farther, so he continued on foot, tired and alone, still carrying the weight of his promise.

Chapter 3: A Traveller Shows the Way

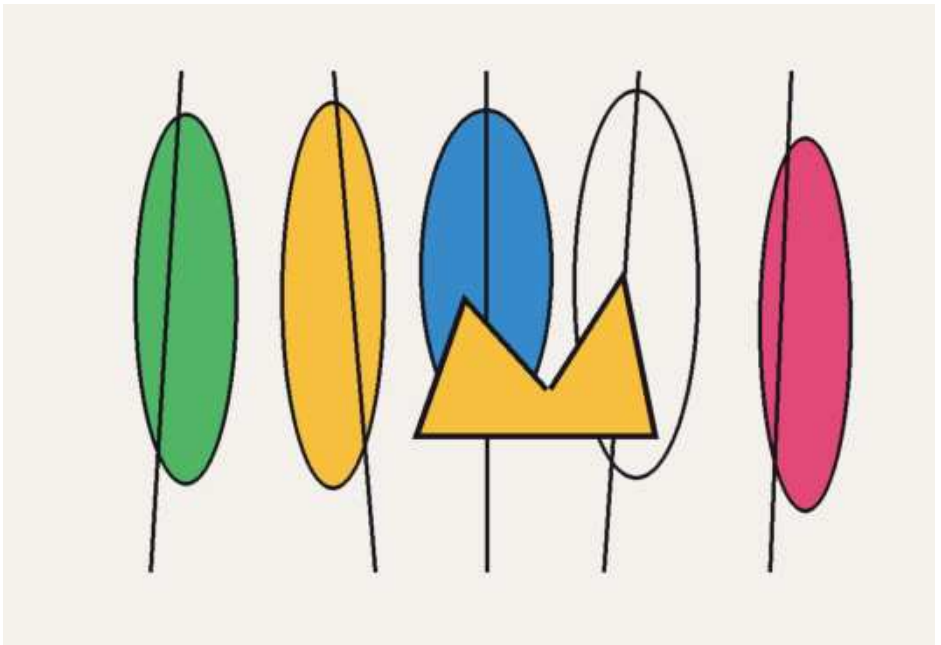




Picture 5

Hungry, thirsty, and exhausted, the youngest son kept walking through the forest without knowing where the path led. Then he met a traveller coming along the same lonely road.

The boy explained his search: 'I must find a golden tree and a silver trunk from which pearls fall, while a mojar picks them up and eats them.' It was exactly the strange scene his father had seen in the dream.





Picture 6

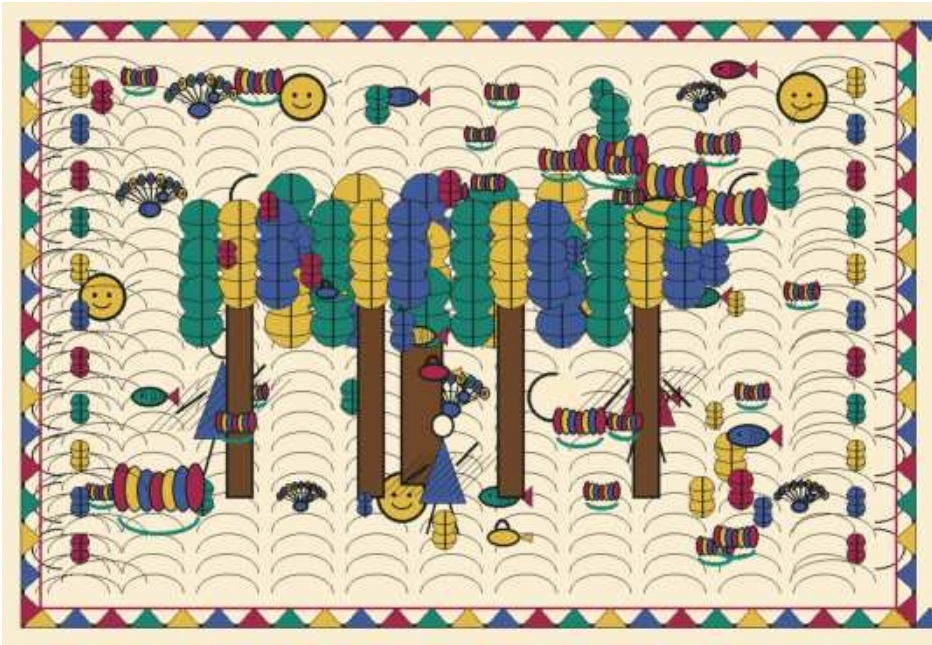
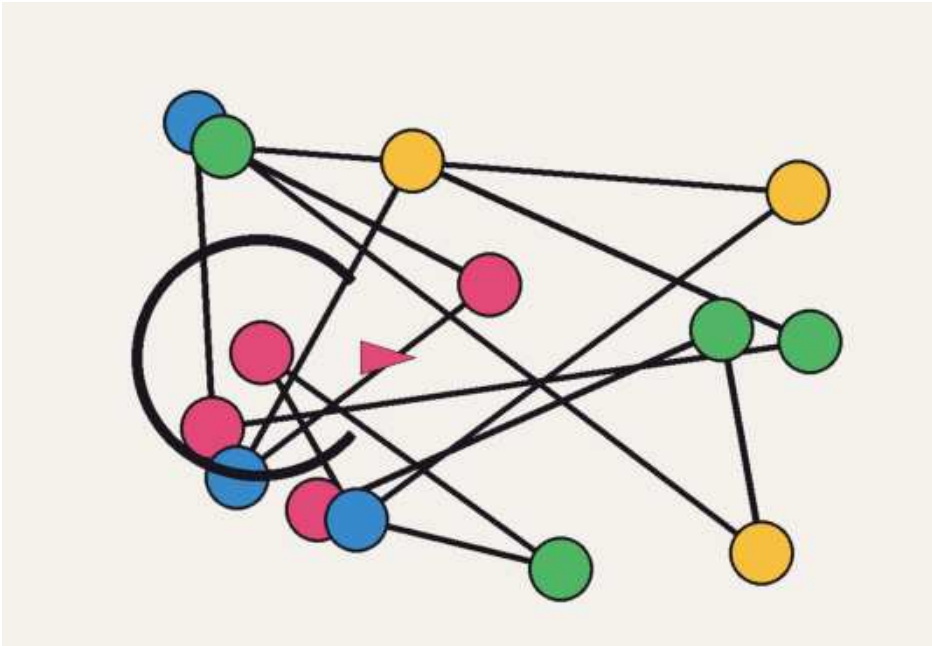
The traveller listened carefully and pointed out a path.

'Follow this road. Ahead there is a well, and through that well there is another way.' The advice was simple, but the traveller did not explain what lay behind it.

Thanking him, the boy continued along the path with the last of his strength. He was tired, hungry, and uncertain, but he held on to one belief: if a path had been shown to him, he must follow it.

Chapter 4: Falling into the Well

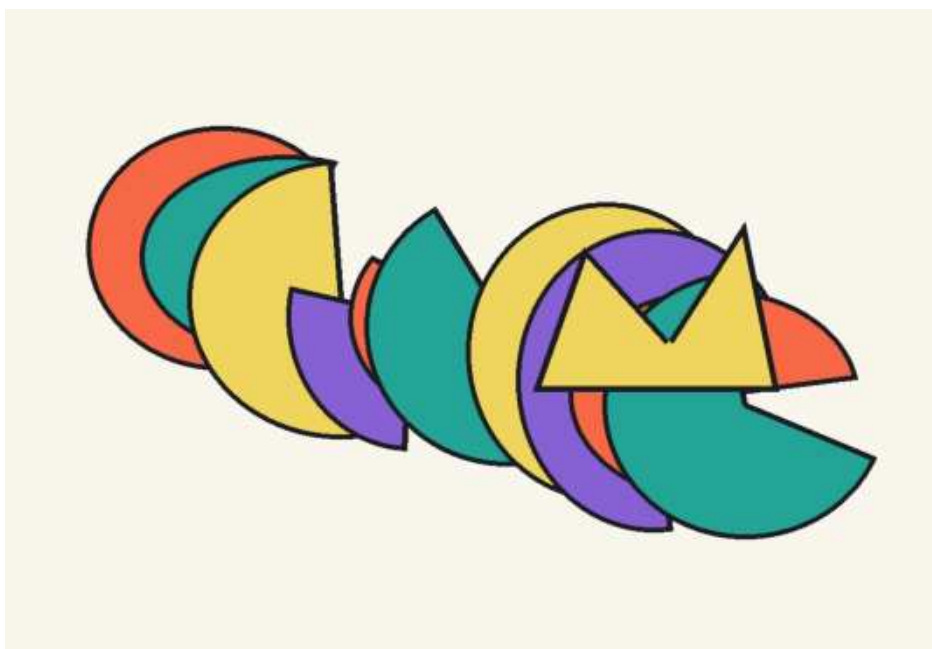




Picture 7

At last the boy reached the well the traveller had described. The path seemed to end right beside it, as though fate itself had led him there.

The boy went down into the well without turning back, as if he somehow understood that this was not the end of his journey but the doorway to a new one.





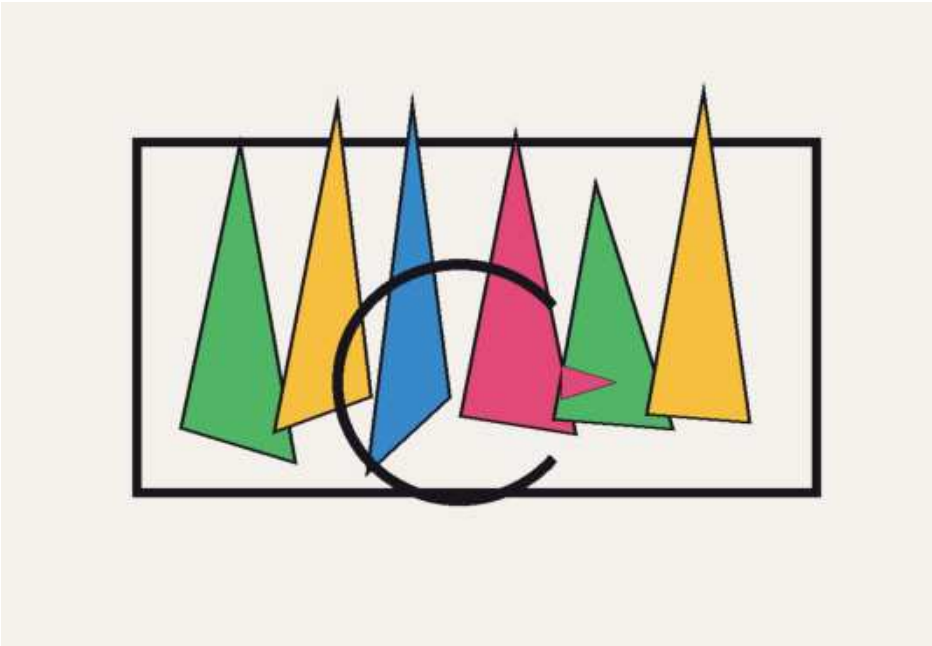
Picture 8

Inside the well was darkness and an unknown passage, but the boy kept moving. He did not let fear stop him. His courage seemed greater than his age, perhaps because a promise can give a person unexpected strength.

Eventually he reached a place where Bhairavanand Yogi lived, a spiritually accomplished hermit whose hidden place of meditation had never before been reached by another human being.

Chapter 5: Bhairavanand Yogi

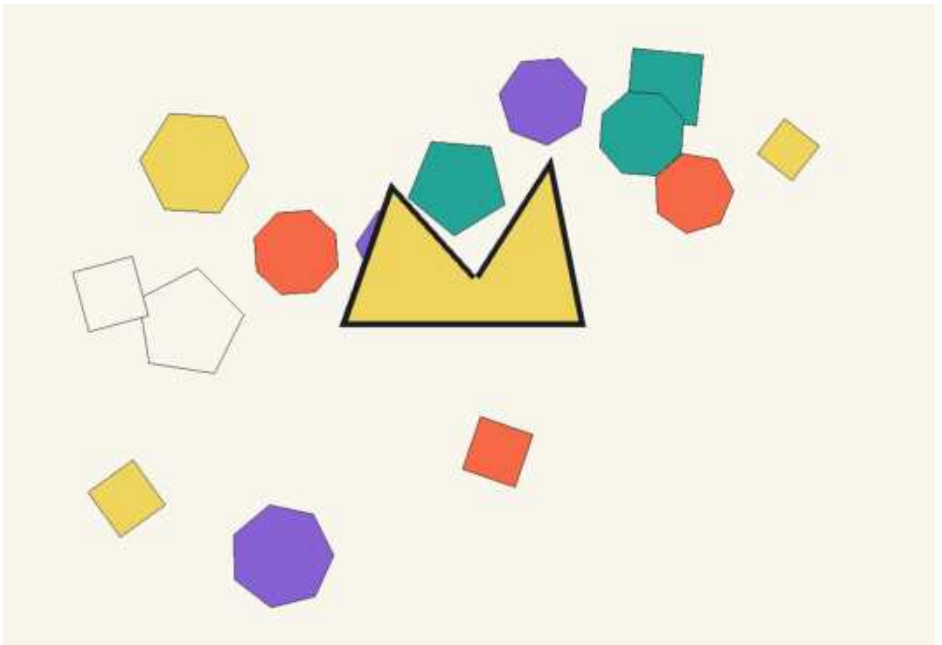




Picture 9

The yogi stared at the boy in surprise. 'Child, where have you come from? No human being has ever reached this place before!' His question showed both amazement and respect for the boy's extraordinary courage.

The boy told him everything: his father's dream, his promise, the forest, the traveller's directions, and the well. The yogi listened carefully and began to feel affection for the brave child.



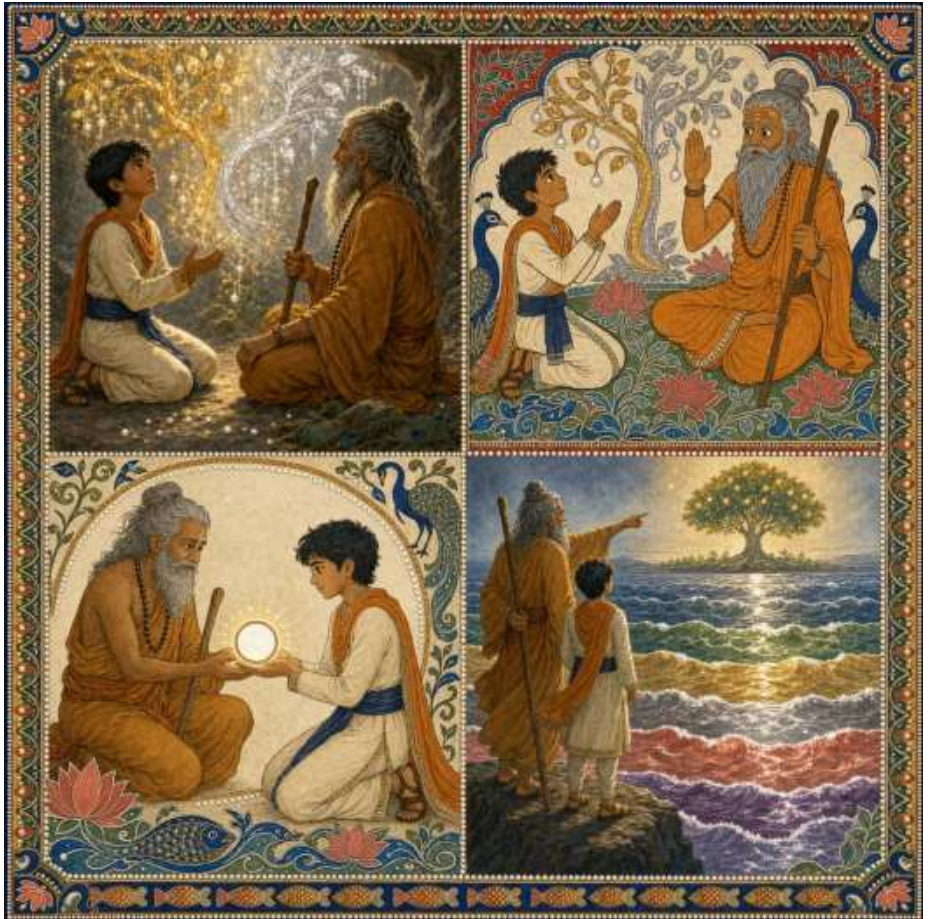


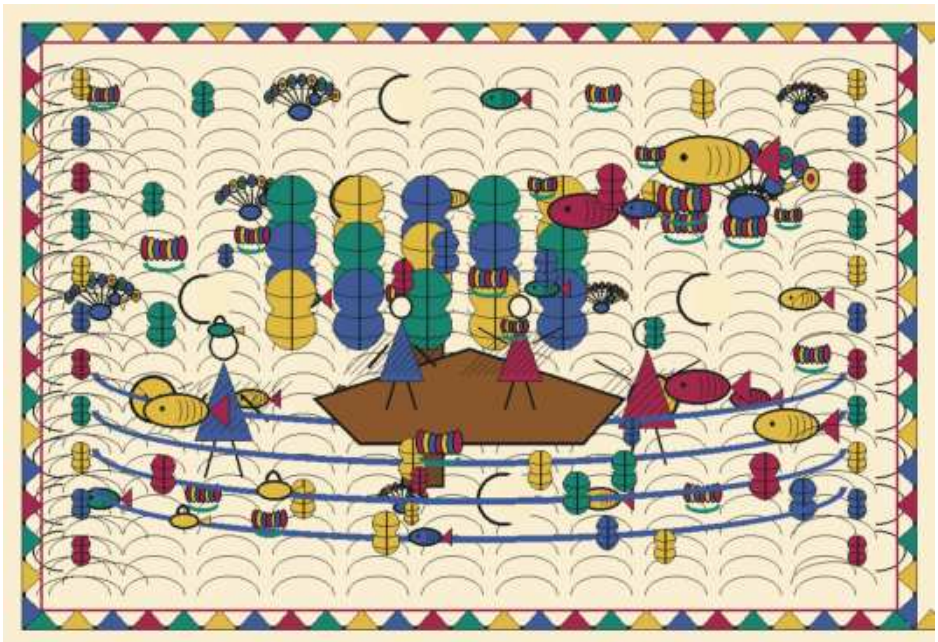
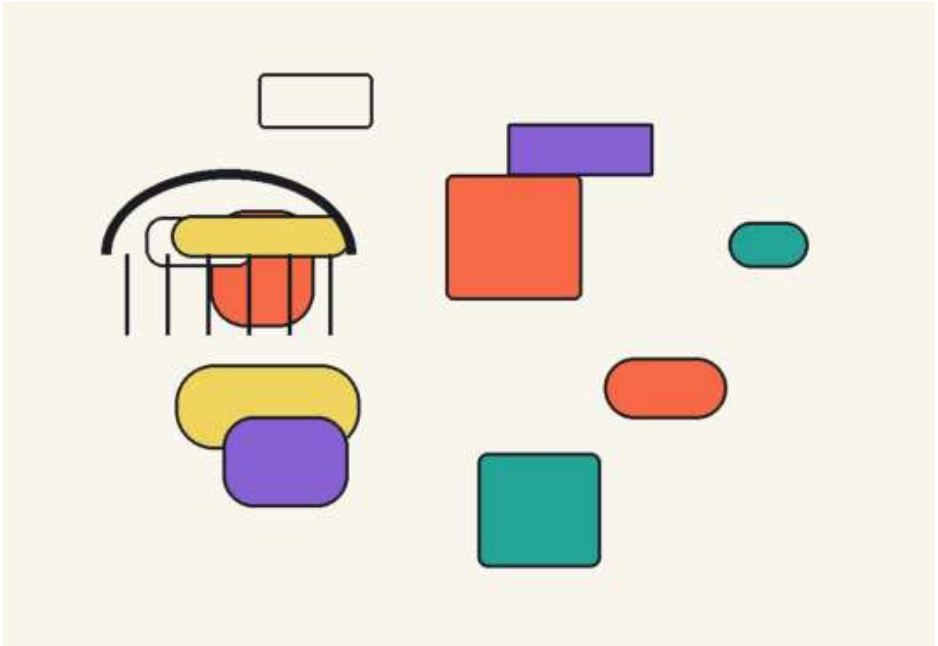
Picture 10

The boy stayed there and served the yogi. He did not complain or speak of his tiredness. He simply helped him faithfully, as though service came naturally to him. Days passed, and the yogi grew very fond of the boy.

After some time, the pleased yogi said, 'Child, ask me for whatever you wish. I will give it to you.' The moment for a blessing had arrived, even though the boy had not known he was waiting for it.

Chapter 6: Asking for the Blessing





Picture 11

Without hesitation the boy said, 'Yogi Baba, I want the golden tree and the silver trunk from which pearls fall and the mojar picks them up and eats them.'

The yogi was astonished. 'How did you learn about such a thing?' he asked. There was a deep mystery in the question, because this was not knowledge an ordinary child should have been able to discover.





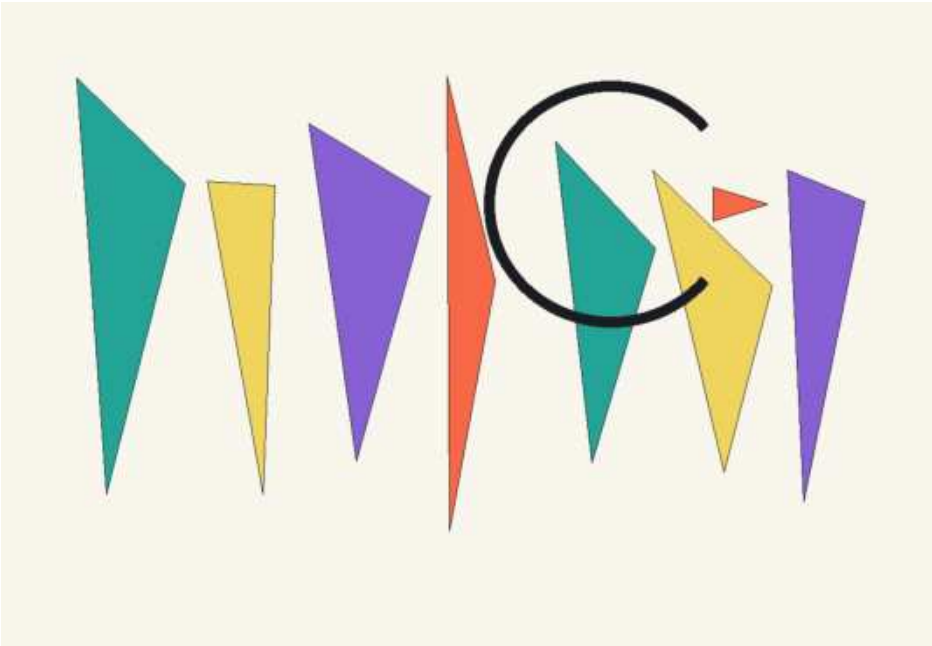
Picture 12

But the yogi had already promised a blessing, so he said, 'Very well. Since I have given my word, I will help you. But you will have to face hardship.' It was a warning that the next part of the journey would not be easy.

At dawn, the yogi gave the boy a magical device and said, 'Cross seven seas. There you will find a tree that bears the fruit of immortality. Bring me one fruit from it.' The first stage of the new quest had begun.

Chapter 7: Flying as a Parrot

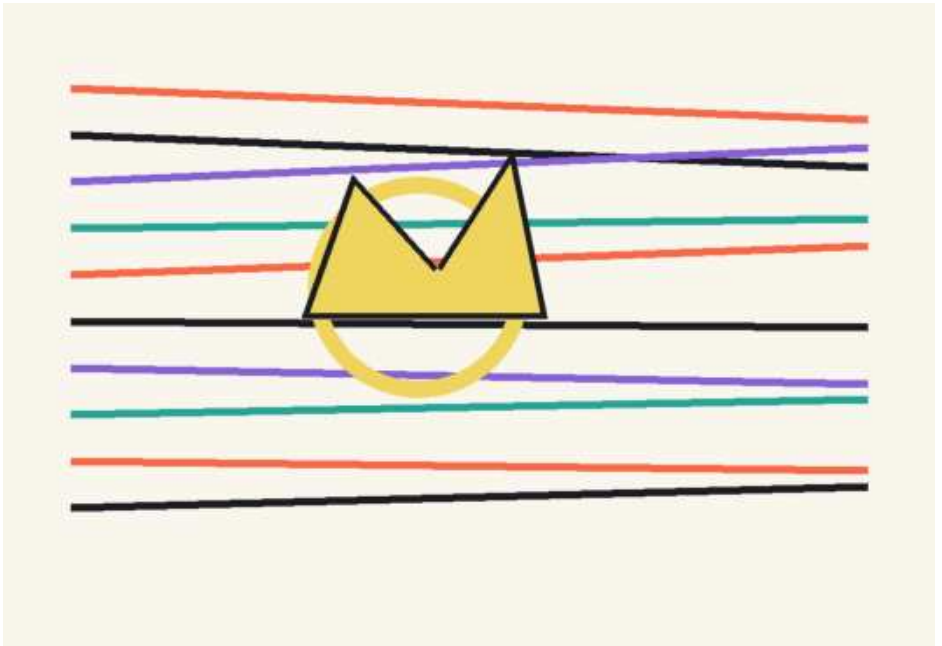




Picture 13

With the yogi's magical device, the boy took the form of a parrot and flew across seven seas. It was no ordinary journey: an immense distance through unknown skies, with only one goal in mind.

Across the seven seas, he found the tree of immortal fruit exactly as the yogi had described. Still in parrot form, he landed on a branch and carefully picked one fruit.



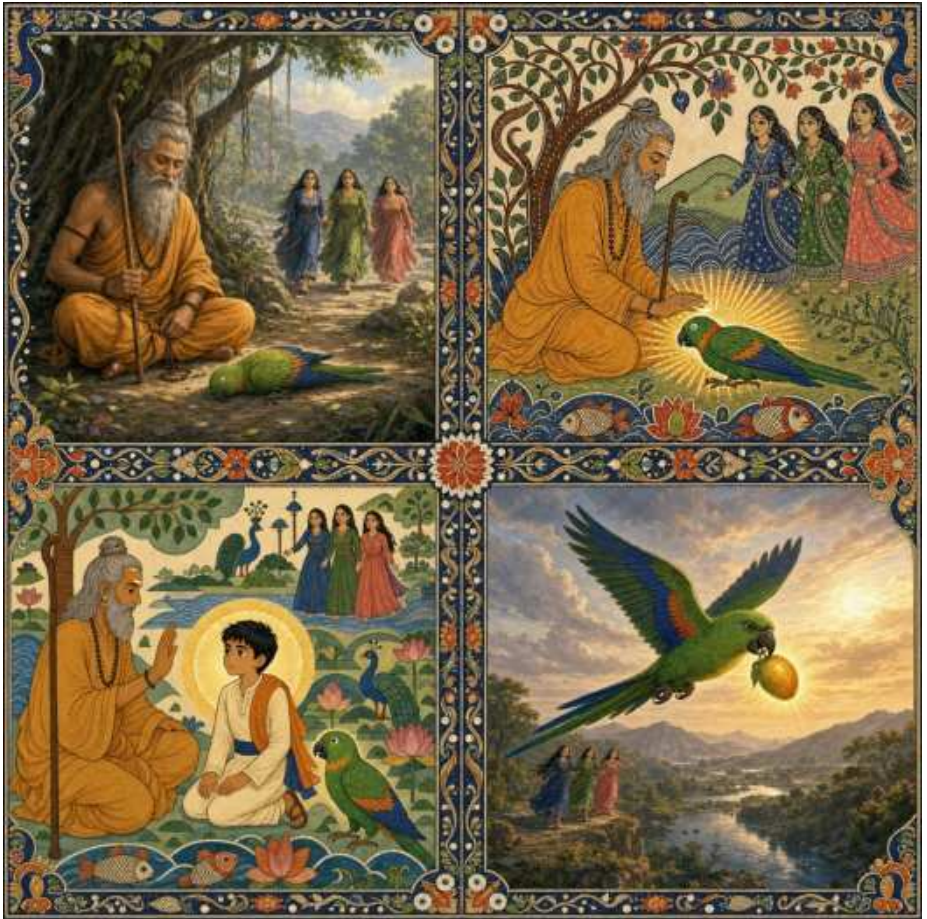


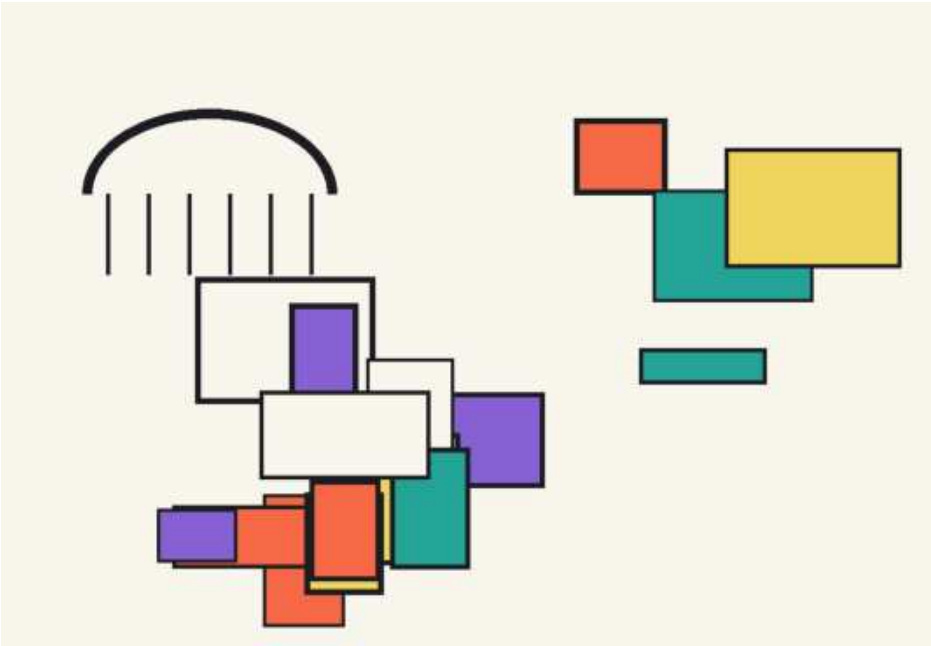
Picture 14

As soon as he took the fruit and began to fly away, three fairies followed him. They were beautiful and mysterious, calling again and again, 'Turn around and look!' Their voices were full of enchantment.

The parrot kept flying while the fairies followed and called after him. But after crossing the sea, he forgot the warning he had been given and turned to look back. At once he died. A single moment of curiosity became the line between life and death.

Chapter 8: The Yogi's Miracle

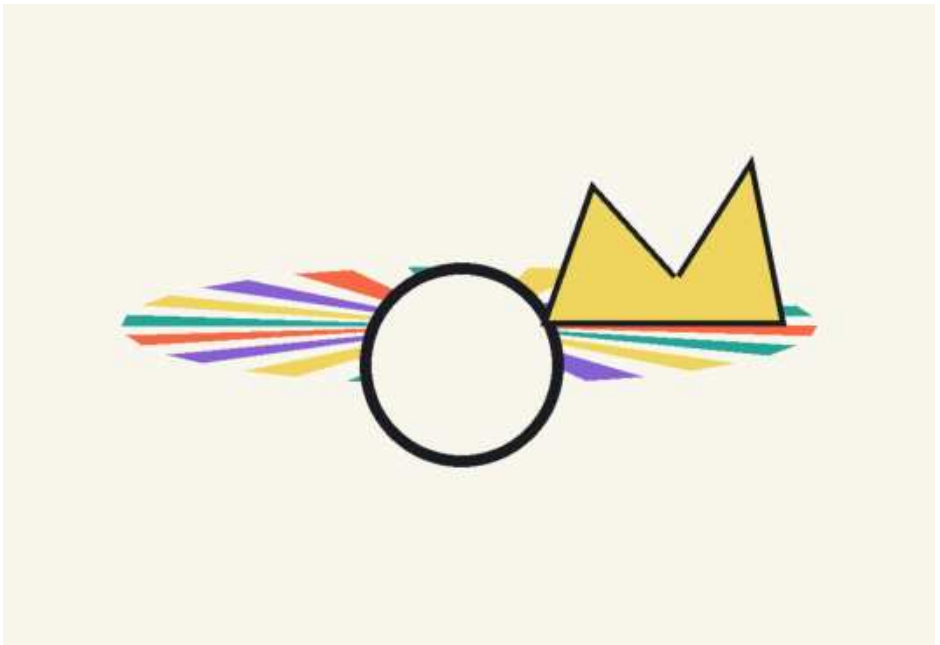




Picture 15

Through meditation, the yogi had been watching everything from far away. When he saw the parrot die, he felt deep sorrow. The brave child had crossed seven seas, only to lose his life because of one mistake.

The yogi immediately took a special staff or sacred tool and went to the place. There he struck the parrot with it and brought the boy back to life, showing the extraordinary power of his spiritual practice.





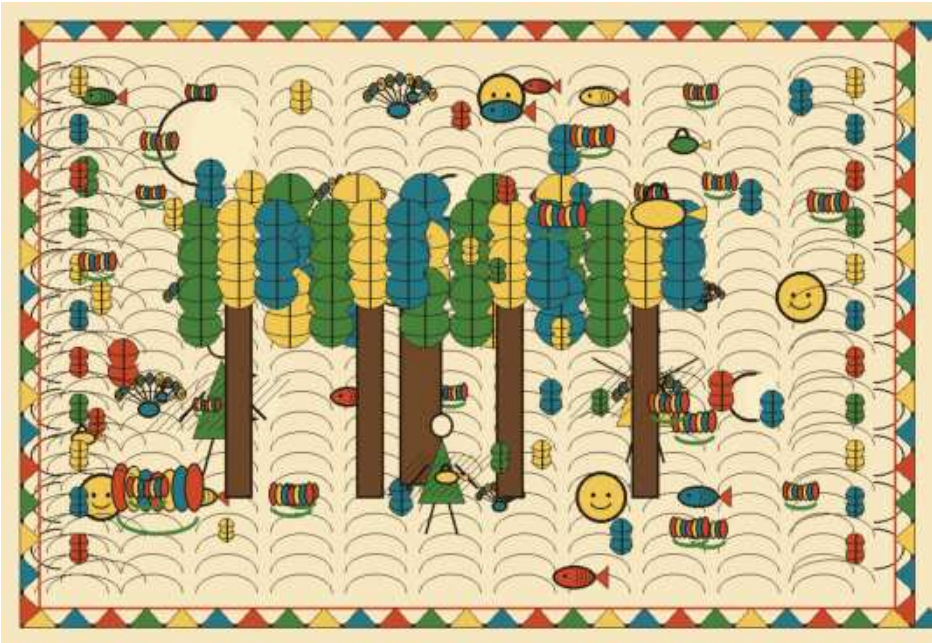
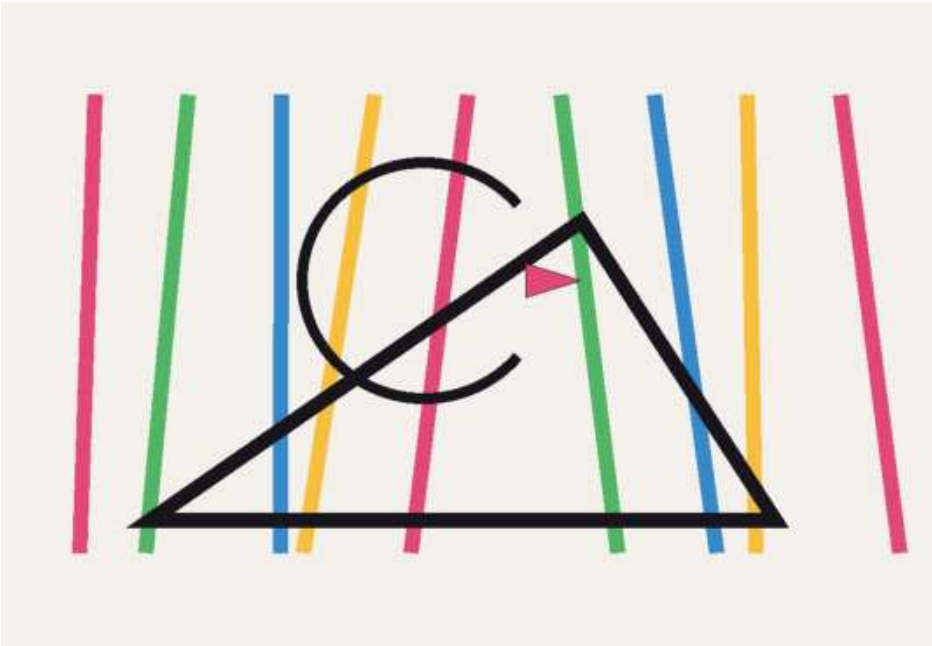
Picture 16

After restoring him, the yogi gave a clear warning: 'Go again. When you have taken the fruit and are returning, do not turn around.' This time he repeated the condition plainly so the mistake would not happen again.

The boy set out once more, picked the fruit, and this time did not look back even when the fairies called to him. He flew on and on until he reached the yogi safely, having learned from his first mistake.

Chapter 9: The Blessing of Immortality



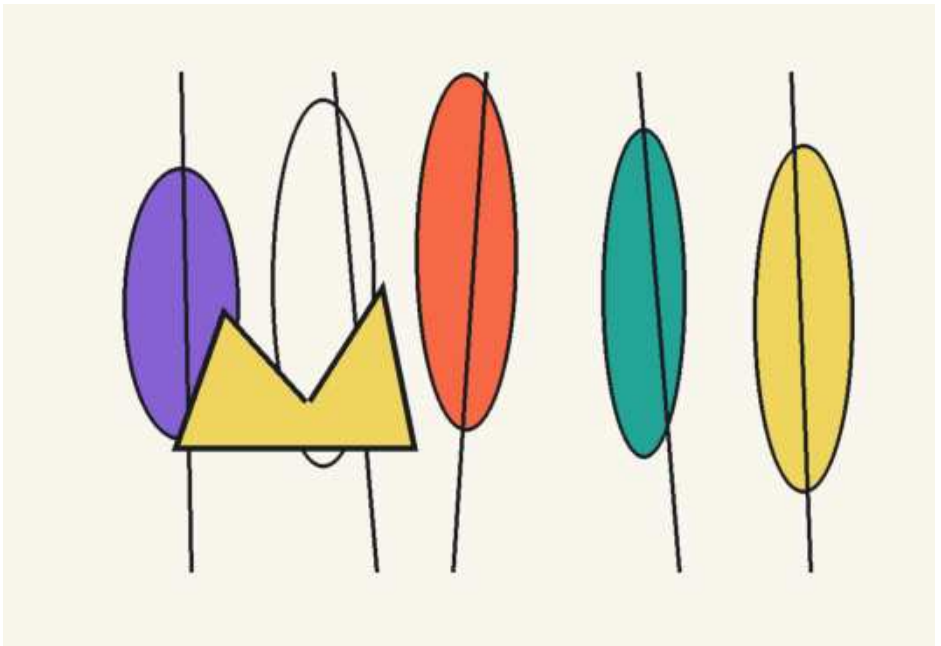


Picture 17

The boy placed the immortal fruit in the yogi's hands.

Pleased, the yogi gave him some of it to eat and said, 'Now go. You have become immortal.'

Receiving immortality completed the second stage of the boy's quest, but the tale was still not finished. The yogi now gave him another instruction and another test.





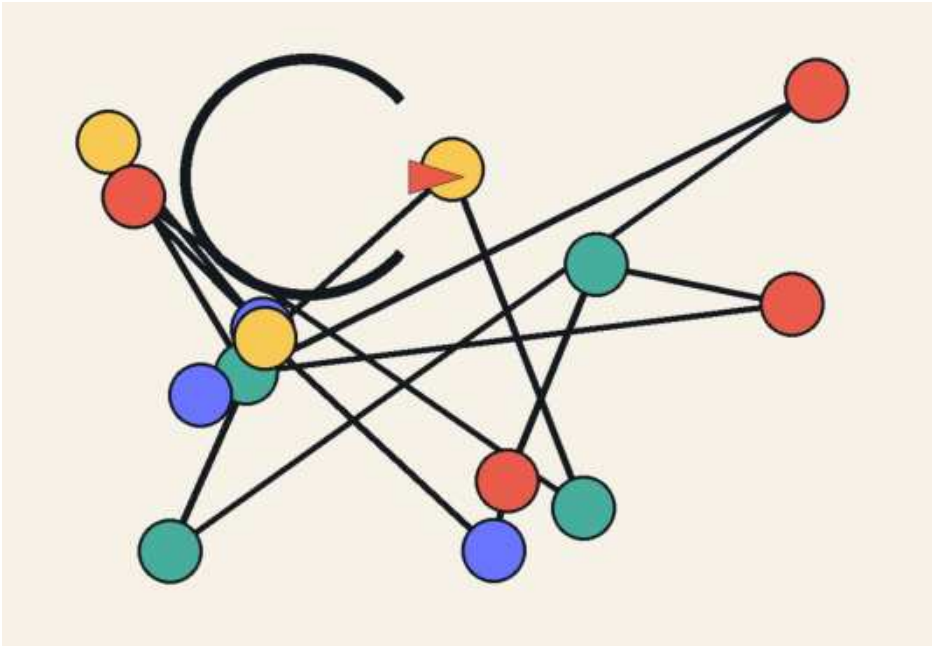
Picture 18

'Across the same seven seas there is a grove. Three sisters live there. With them, your task will be completed.' The instruction was mysterious, but the boy's trust in the yogi was now complete.

So the boy crossed the seven seas again, this time searching for the three sisters who held the final secret of the golden tree and silver trunk.

Chapter 10: Meeting the Three Sisters

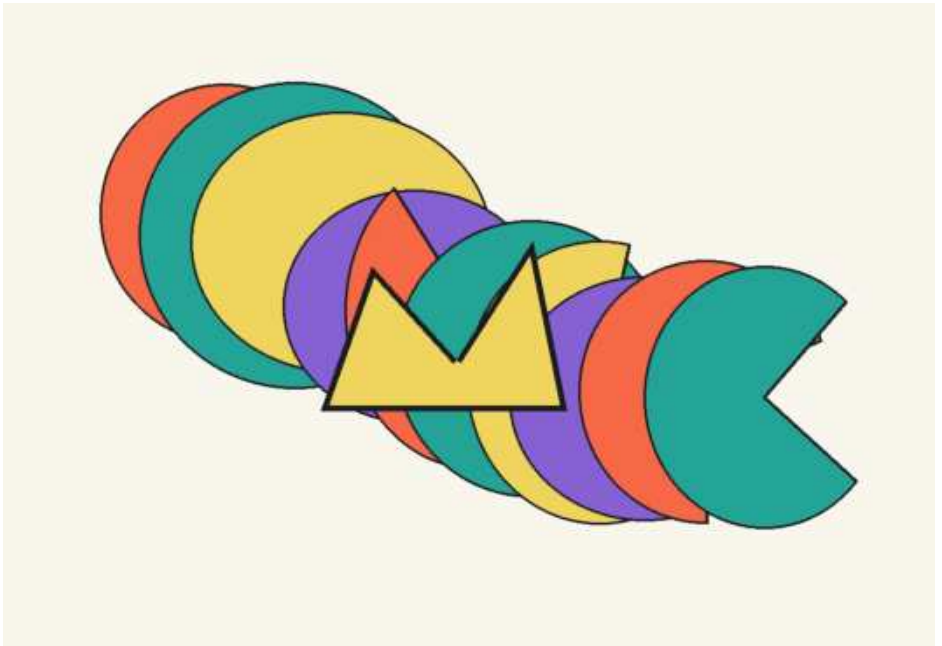




Picture 19

Across the seven seas, the boy reached the grove. He first told his story to the eldest sister. She sent him to the middle sister, as though each sister formed one step of another test.

The middle sister then sent him to the youngest. The boy went from one to the next without complaint, patiently following every instruction.





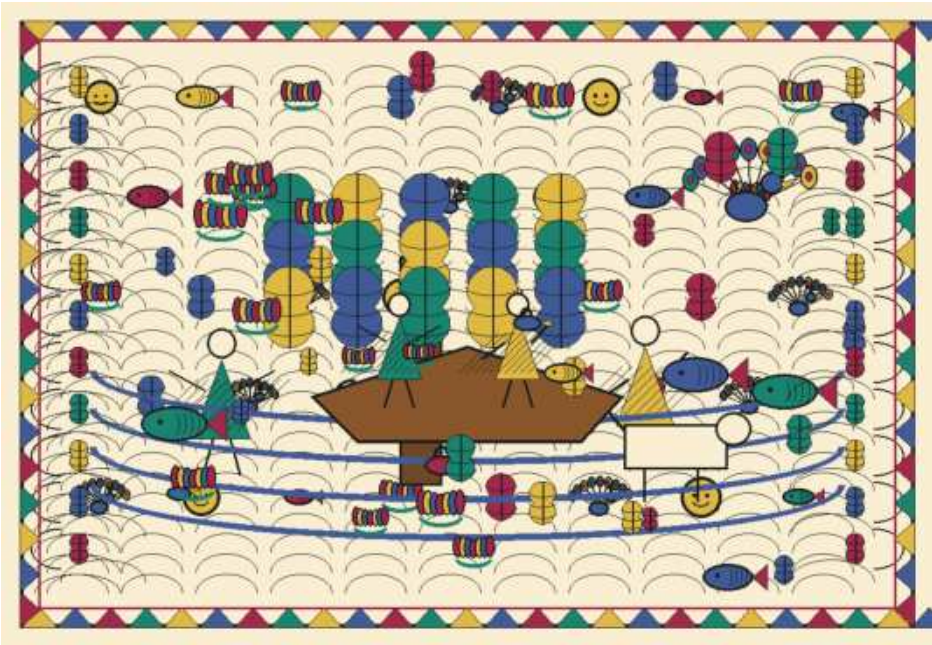
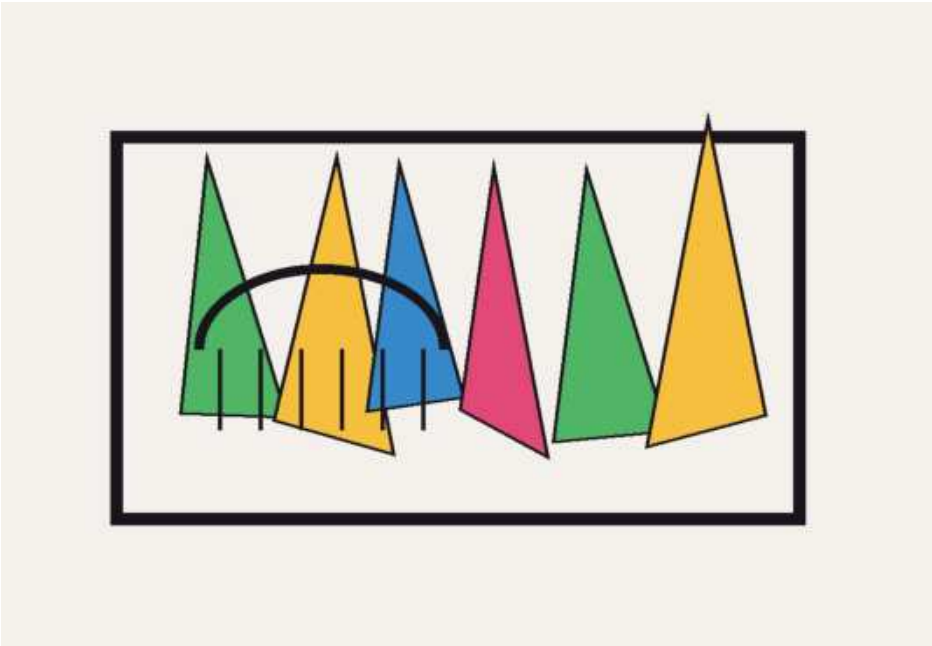
Picture 20

When the boy reached the youngest sister, she came with a knife in her hand to where the two older sisters stood. The scene was mysterious and a little frightening, and the boy still did not understand what it meant.

The three sisters asked together, 'Where have you come from?' The boy replied, 'Yogi Baba sent me. All three of you must come with me to him.' To his surprise, they agreed at once.

Chapter 11: The Yogi's Final Wonder

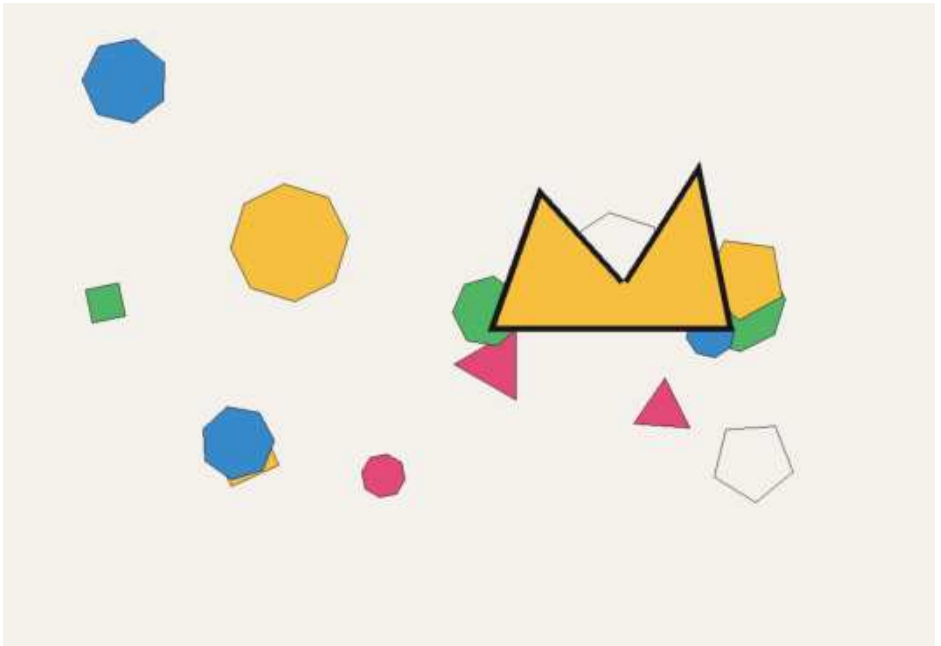




Picture 21

The boy and the three fairies reached the yogi. As soon as he saw them, he said, 'Daughters, now all three of you must go with this child.' They agreed without protest.

The boy asked the yogi, 'But I still have not seen the tree.' His question showed his innocence and curiosity. He still did not understand how the golden tree and silver trunk would appear.





Picture 22

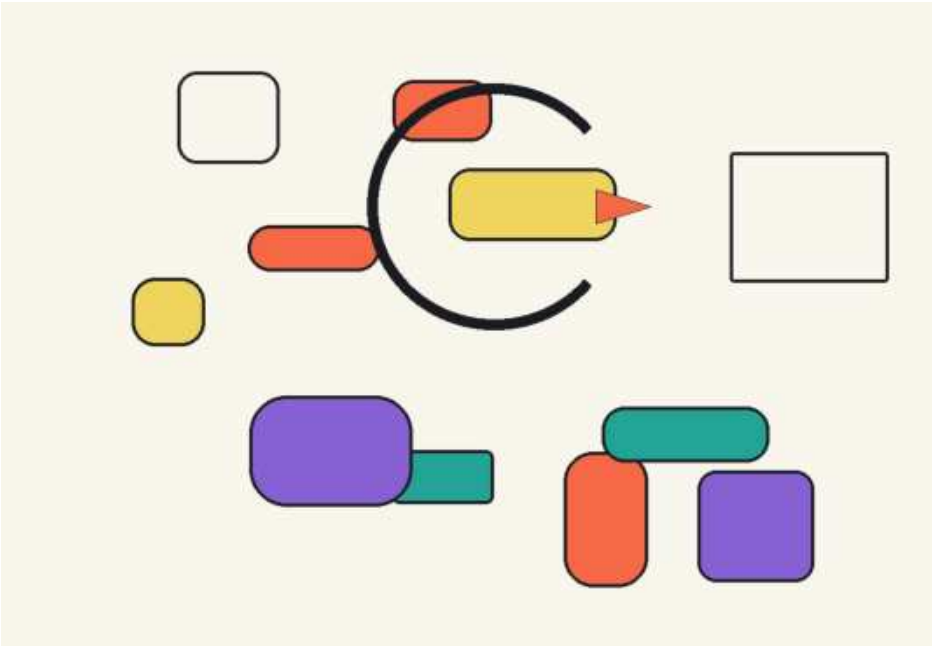
Then the yogi showed him one final wonder. The three fairies stood in a row, and the yogi placed a knife in the boy's hand. He instructed him to cut across the necks of all three fairies in one movement and then do the same to his own neck.

The command was strange and frightening, but the boy trusted the yogi completely and obeyed. A miracle followed: the golden tree and silver trunk appeared, pearls began to fall from them, and the mojar picked up

the pearls and ate them. The very scene the king had seen in his dream was now real.

Chapter 12: The King's Dream Comes True





Picture 23

After seeing the miracle, the boy knew that every word of the yogi had been true. All the difficult journeys and tests had led to this moment. A few days later, he left for home with the three fairies.

When he reached the palace, the boy told his father, 'Father, I have brought the golden and silver tree.' The king was amazed, but when he saw that his son had returned with three young women, he became confused.

The king said, 'Foolish boy! You have brought three women and you are telling me you brought a tree!' From the outside, the king's reaction was understandable. He could see only three young women and no golden tree at all.



Picture 24

But the boy remained calm because he trusted the yogi's miracle. He said, 'Call everyone in the city, and then I will show you.' The king gathered the whole town, and people came full of curiosity.

Before everyone, the boy repeated the same mysterious act with the knife on the three fairies and on himself. At once the golden tree and silver trunk appeared, pearls began to fall, and the mojar picked them up and ate them. The dream that the boy had promised to fulfil for his father had finally come true.

The End

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King Dholan

The Tigress's Curse and the Final Victory of a
Servant's Son



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

ISSN 2229-547X

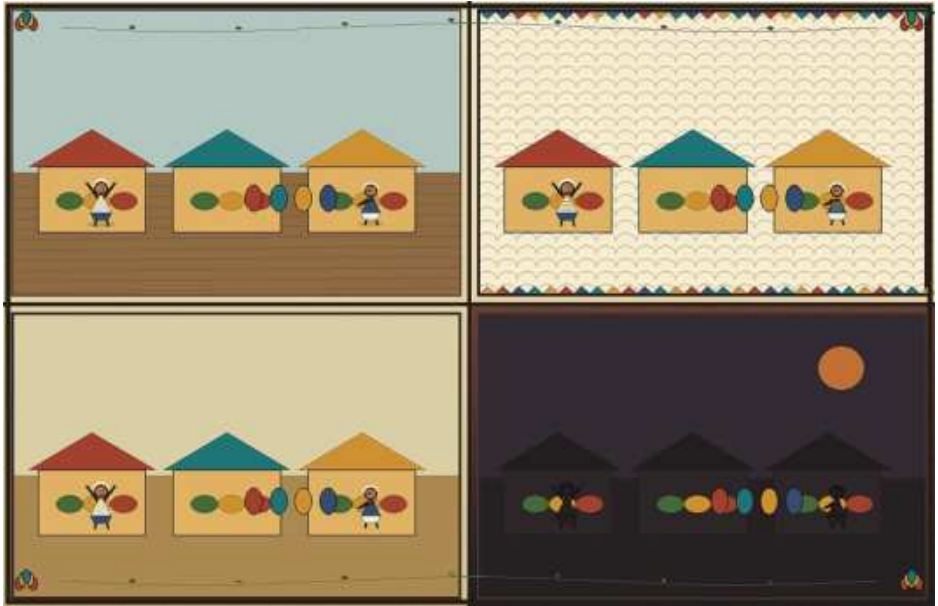
Prologue: The Market of Garh Nariyal

King Daksh of Garh Nariyal was a powerful ruler, but one unusual decision pushed his whole kingdom into trouble. This tale begins with that decision and follows the son born to him after he became a servant. The boy's fate becomes tied to that of a princess, and in the end he wins back honour and a kingdom through his own courage.

The story includes the curse of a tiger and tigress, the schemes of two magician sisters, and finally the victory of courage and truth. Between those moments lie so many hardships that the tale becomes a strange mixture of sorrow and happiness.

Chapter 1: The King's Stubborn

Market Rule

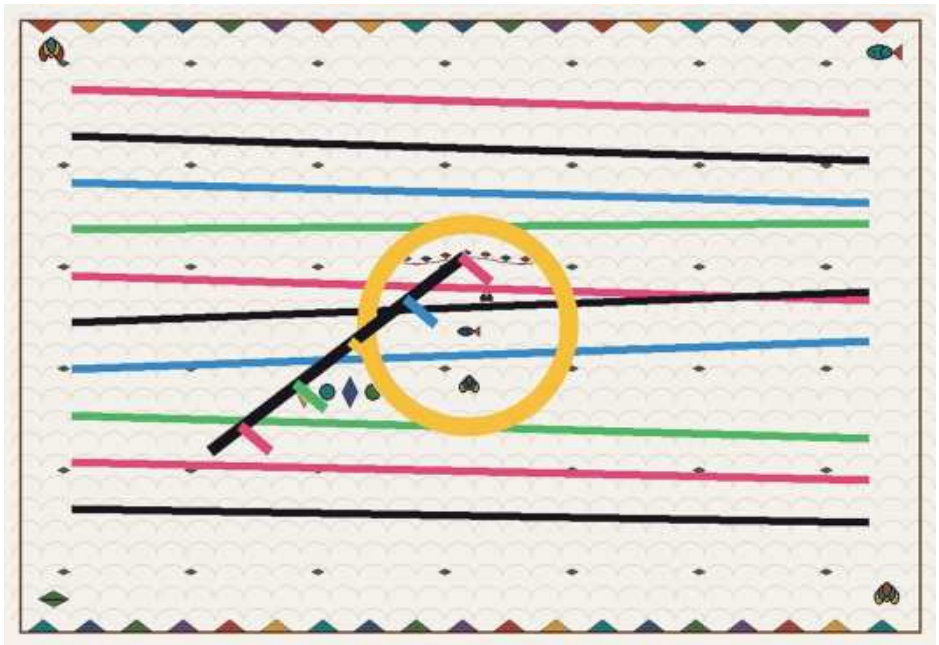




Picture 1

King Daksh of Garh Nariyal was very powerful, but there was no regular market in his kingdom. The king wondered, 'How can I make a market begin here?' He answered that question with a decision that later became the cause of his downfall.

The king had an announcement made throughout the kingdom: 'A market will be held here, and whatever goods remain unsold, I will buy myself.' Hearing this, people from across the kingdom began coming, and the market grew.



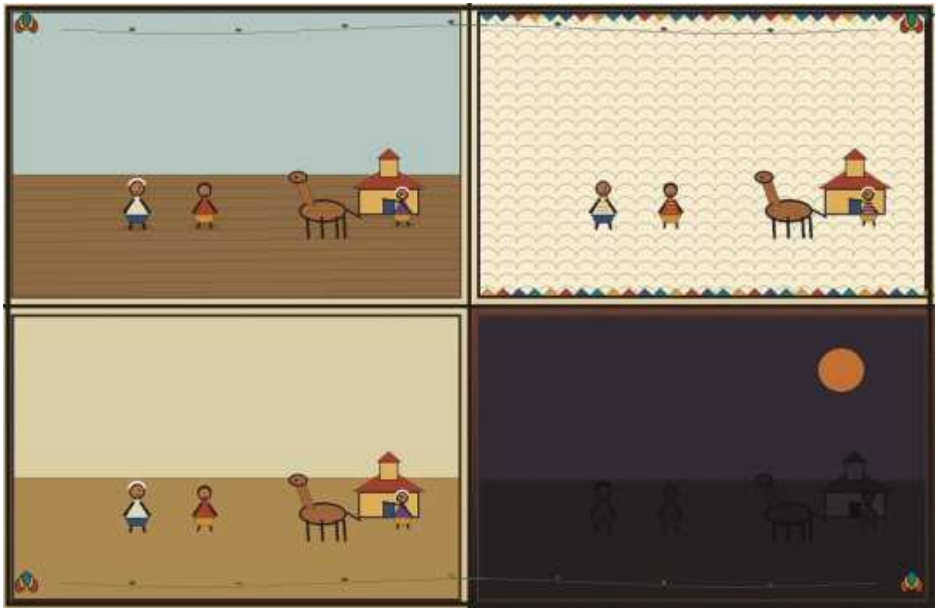


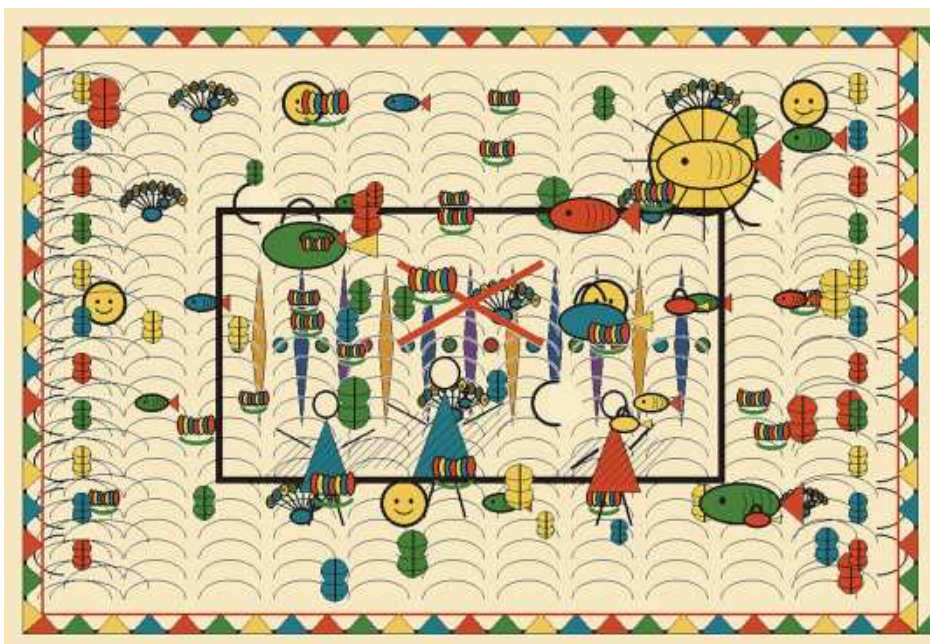
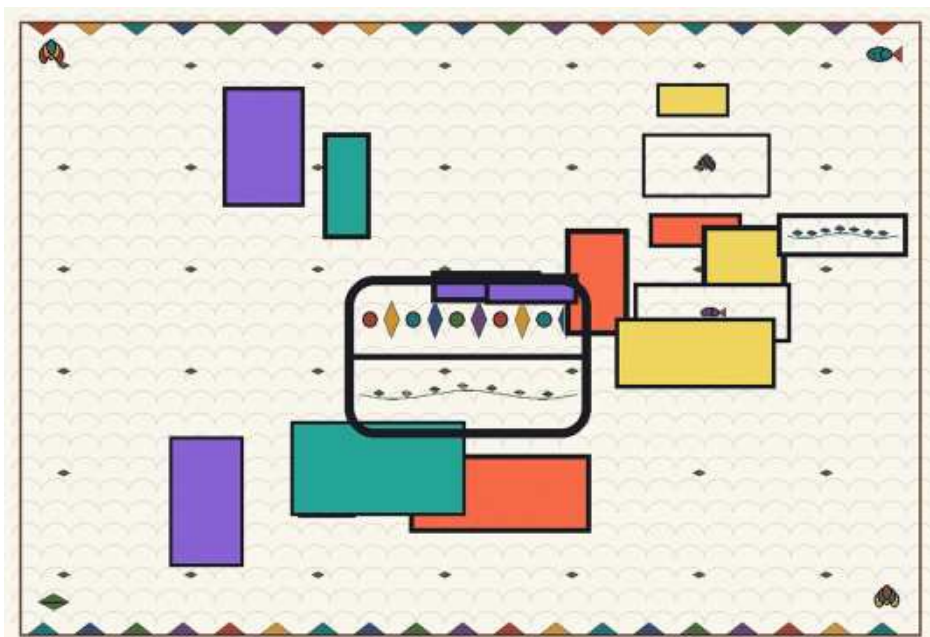
Picture 2

For some days everything went well. Whatever remained unsold, the king purchased. Then one day a thread-seller arrived, but by the time he came the market was closing and his thread had not sold. Keeping his promise, the king bought the thread too.

From that very day, as if an unknown curse had begun, the king's condition grew worse. The ruler who had once been rich and powerful became poor within a short time, almost as though buying that thread had invited disaster.

Chapter 2: Leaving the Kingdom and Becoming a Servant

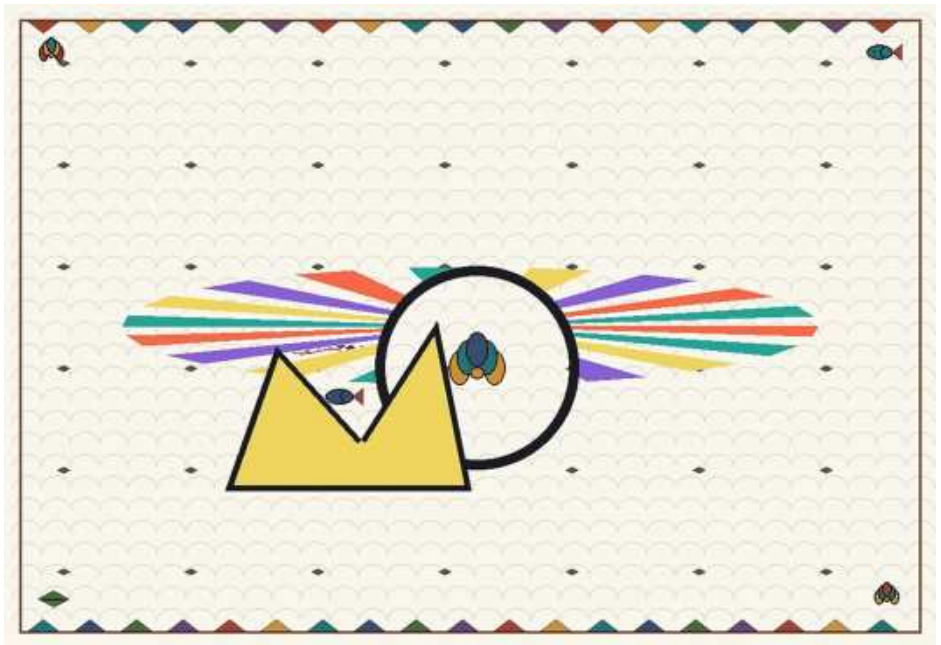


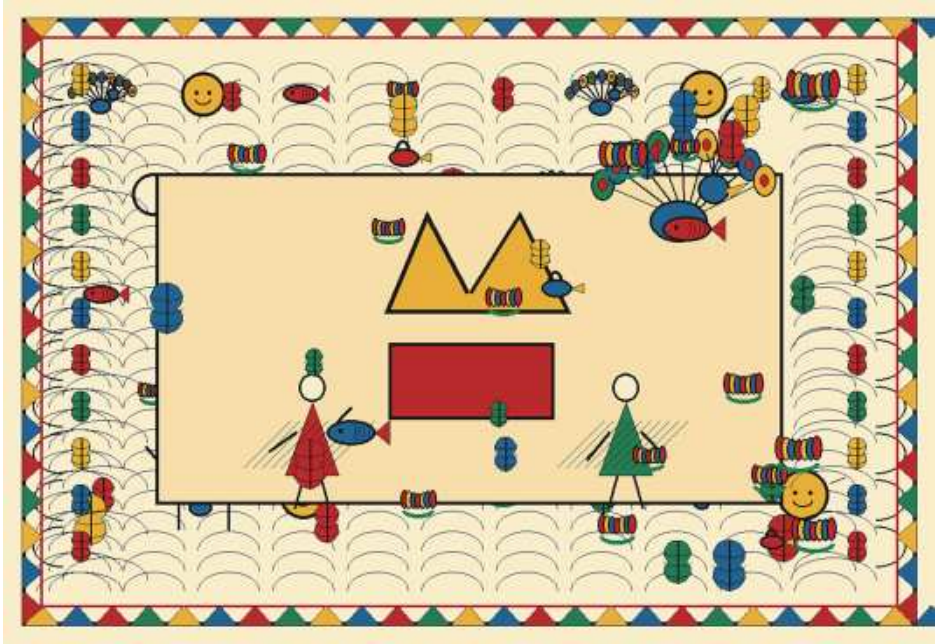


Picture 3

King Daksh said to his wife Ambika, 'Listen, poverty has spread through our kingdom. We can no longer live here as we did before.' It was a painful decision, but for a king who had once been powerful, staying in a ruined kingdom felt unbearable.

The king and queen left their land and travelled until they reached a country called Garh Pingal. The ruler there was known by the same name as the country. Wandering through the city, the former king asked, 'Brother, will anyone give me work?'



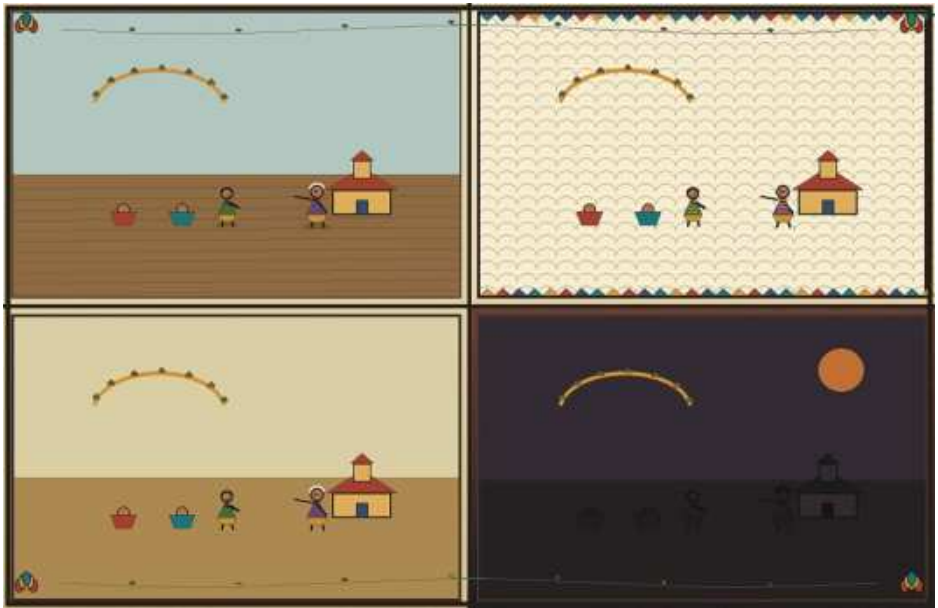


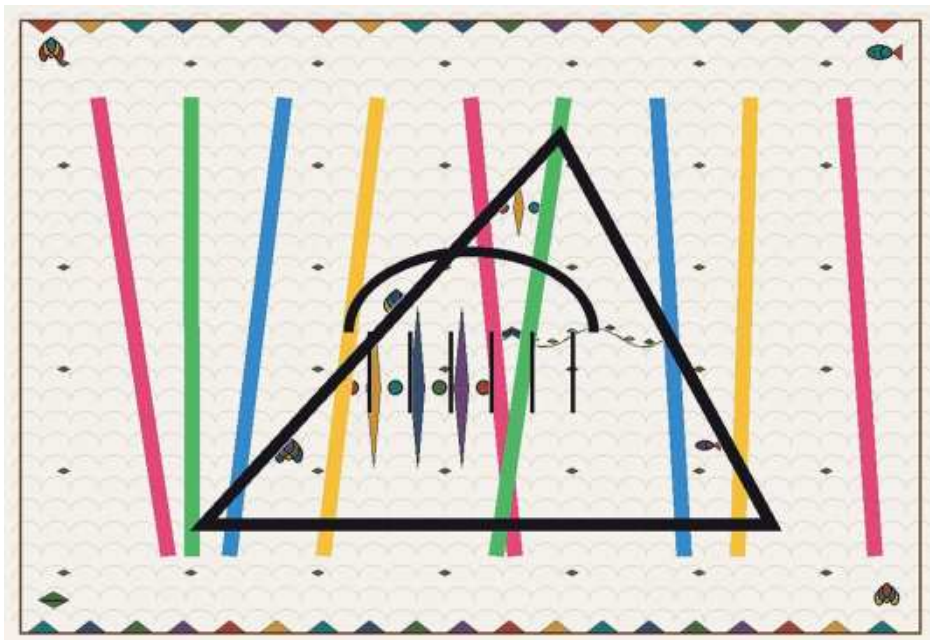
Picture 4

The King of Garh Pingal agreed. He owned 101 horses and already had one hundred servants, so he needed one more. In this way, a man who had once ruled his own kingdom became another king's servant, cutting grass and caring for horses.

By chance, the wife of the former king of Garh Nariyal and the wife of the King of Garh Pingal were both pregnant, and both gave birth on the same day. That coincidence planted the seed for the next turn in the story.

Chapter 3: Madhuvan Is Born and a Marriage Is Foretold

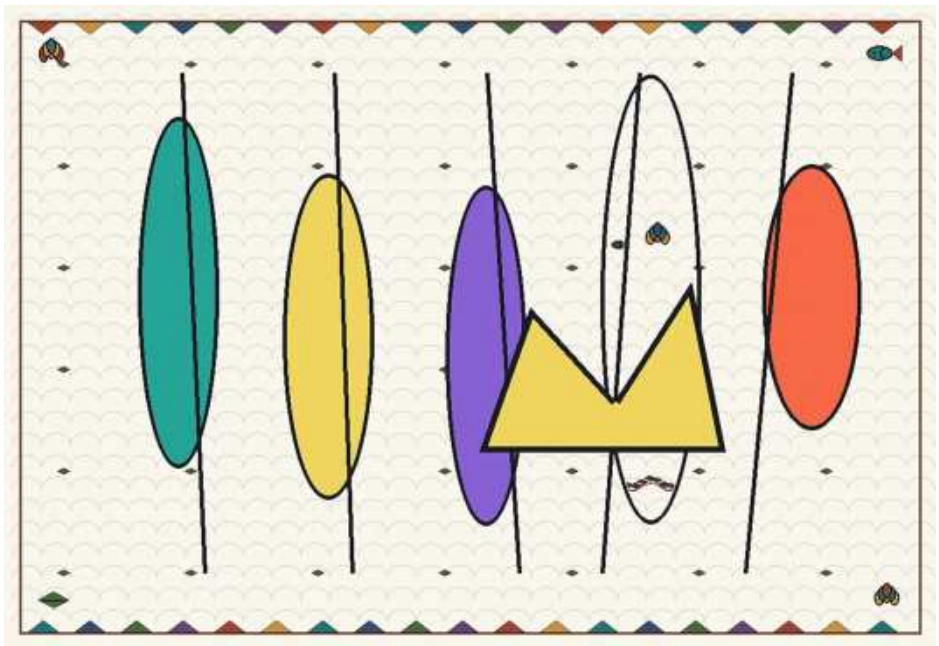




Picture 5

A daughter was born to the King of Garh Pingal. The king called a Brahmin astrologer to read her future. The girl was named Madhuvan, and the astrologer foretold that she would be married on the sixth night after her birth.

The king was troubled. A wedding on the sixth night? Where, and to whom? He searched everywhere in the kingdom but could find no suitable bridegroom.



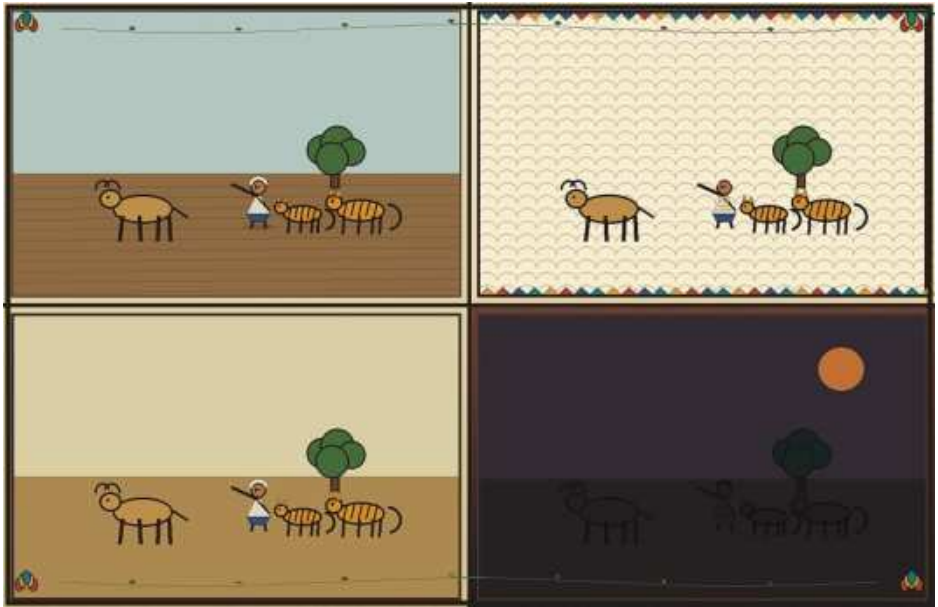


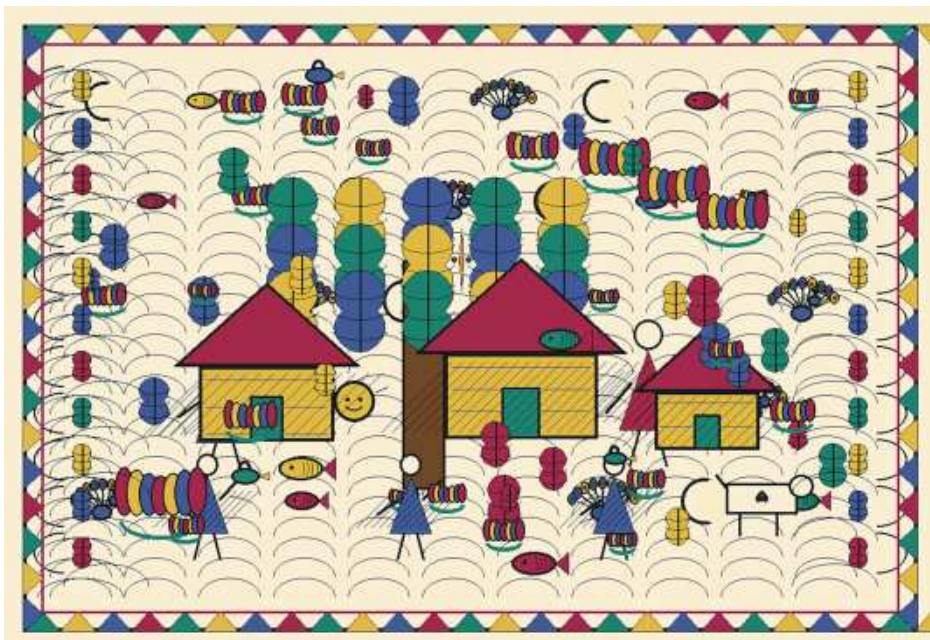
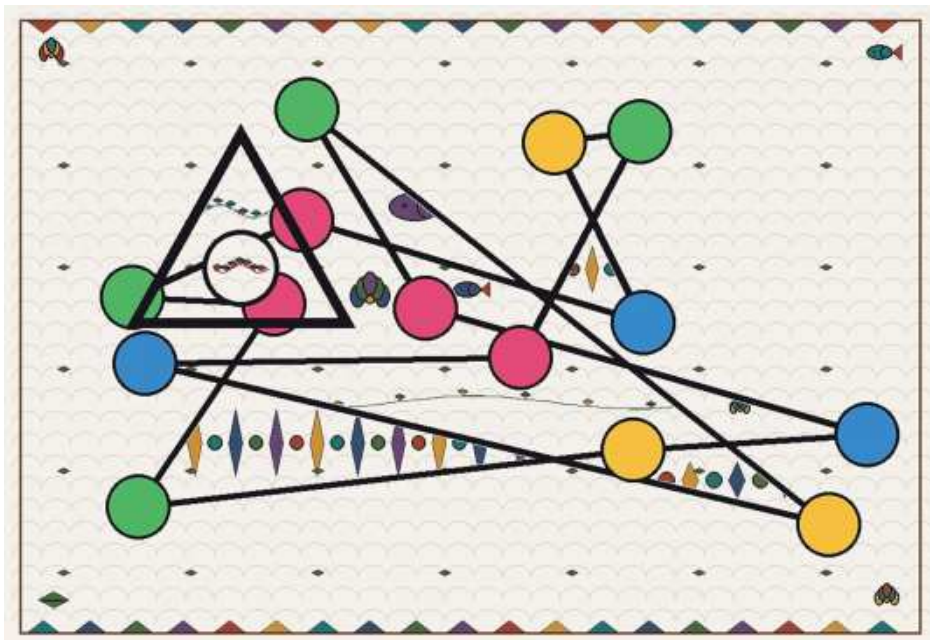
Picture 6

Then a maidservant offered a suggestion: 'Why worry? The servant you hired most recently, King Daksh of Garh Nariyal, has had a son here. Let the princess marry him.' According to his horoscope, the boy was named Raja Dholan.

The King of Garh Pingal liked the idea. 'Since the boy is nearby, let the marriage be with him.' The date had already been fixed by the prophecy, so on the sixth night Madhuvan and Dholan were married, though both were newborn babies and understood nothing about it.

Chapter 4: The Tigress's Curse

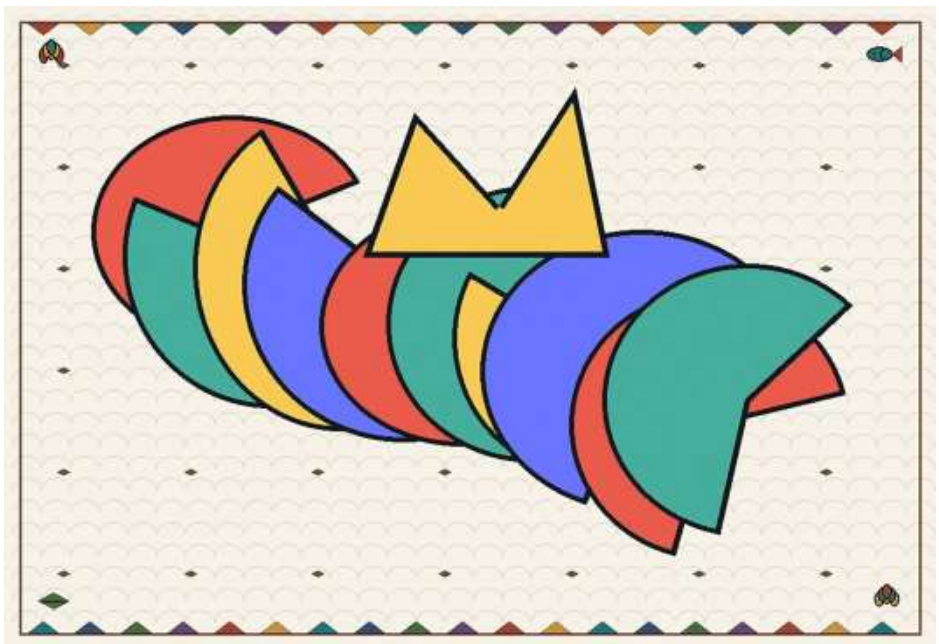




Picture 7

Some time later, King Daksh thought it was time to return toward his own land. He spoke to the saadhin, the animal on which he and his wife had travelled, and said, 'Now let us go home.' The king and queen mounted and set out.

On the road they came to a forest where a tiger and tigress lived near a pond. The king thought, 'When our child grows up and travels this way to his in-laws' home, these tigers may kill him. It is better to remove the danger now.' So he killed the tiger.



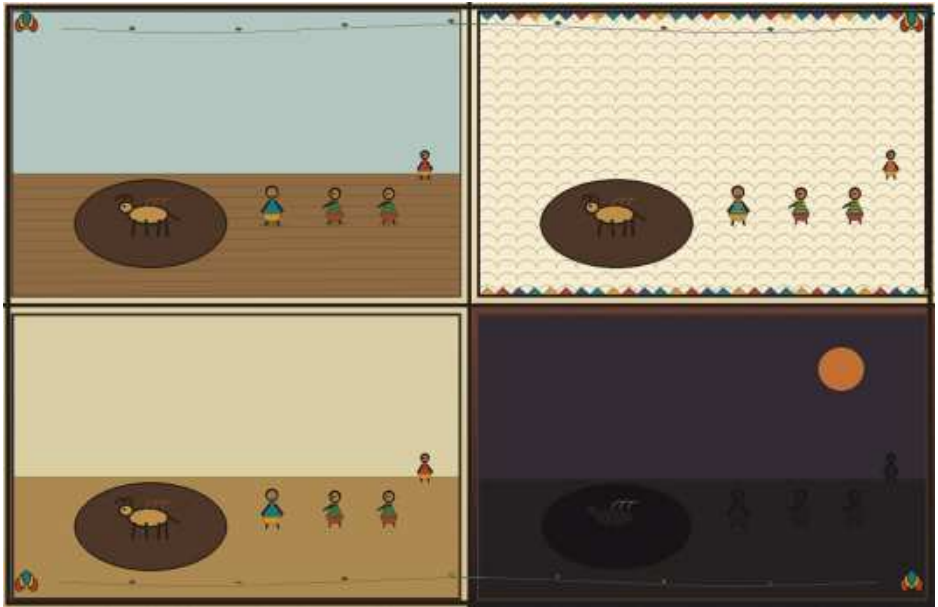


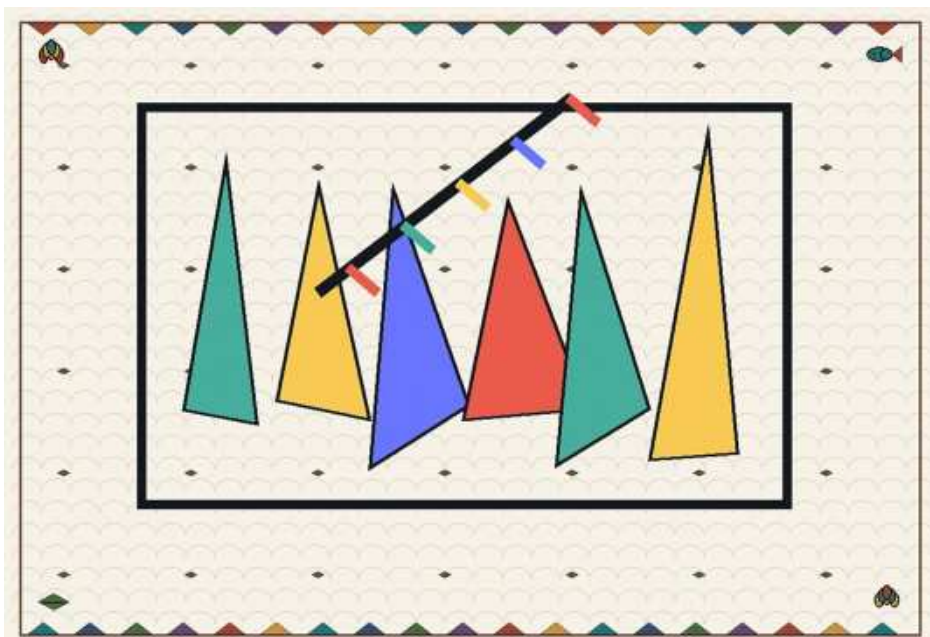
Picture 8

As they moved on, the tigress roared after him: 'King, you are leaving me a widow. In the same way, when your son goes to his in-laws' home in Garh Pipli, I will make his wife a widow too!' Her words became a curse hanging over the future.

The king alone heard the warning. When he reached home, he told no one, fearing that if the secret spread it would one day reach his son. Because of that fear, he also avoided arranging the gauna that would send Dholan to live with his wife.

Chapter 5: The Saadhin Is Shut Away

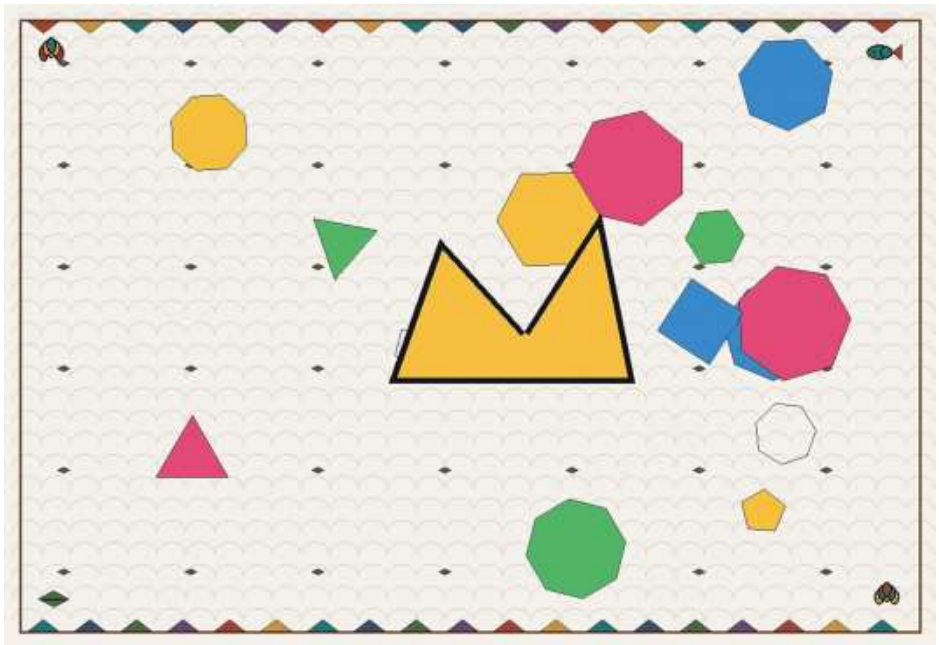




Picture 9

In fear, the king dug a large pit and shut the saadhin inside it. He worried that if she remained outside, she might somehow reveal the secret of the tigress's curse to Dholan. The innocent animal was imprisoned for something she had never done.

Young Dholan was placed in the care of two gardener sisters, Hareba and Pareba, in the flower garden, almost as if his identity and history were being hidden from him. The sisters took good care of him, and he grew up without knowing the truth.





Picture 10

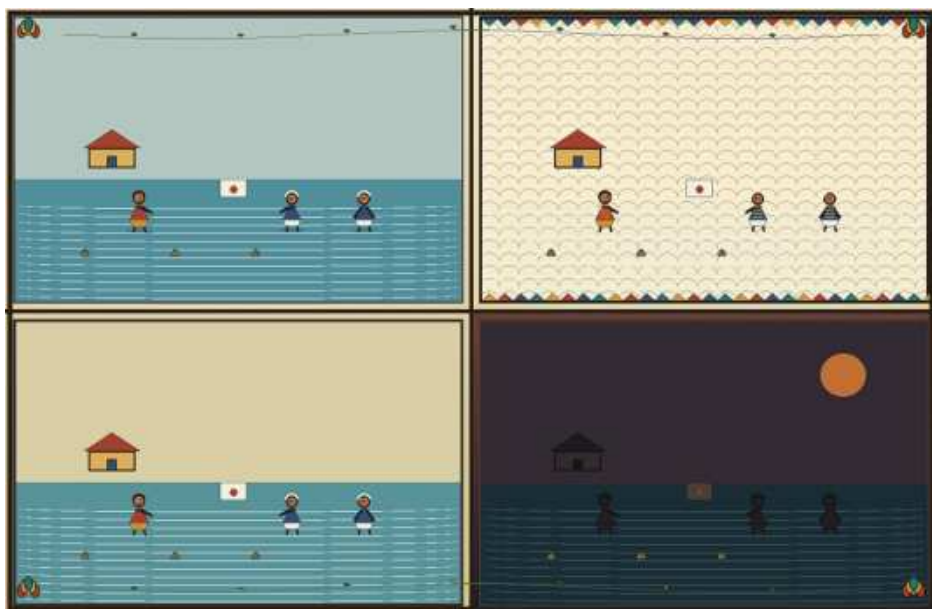
Years passed, and Dholan became a young man, still unaware of his true identity, his childhood marriage, or the reason so much had been hidden from him.

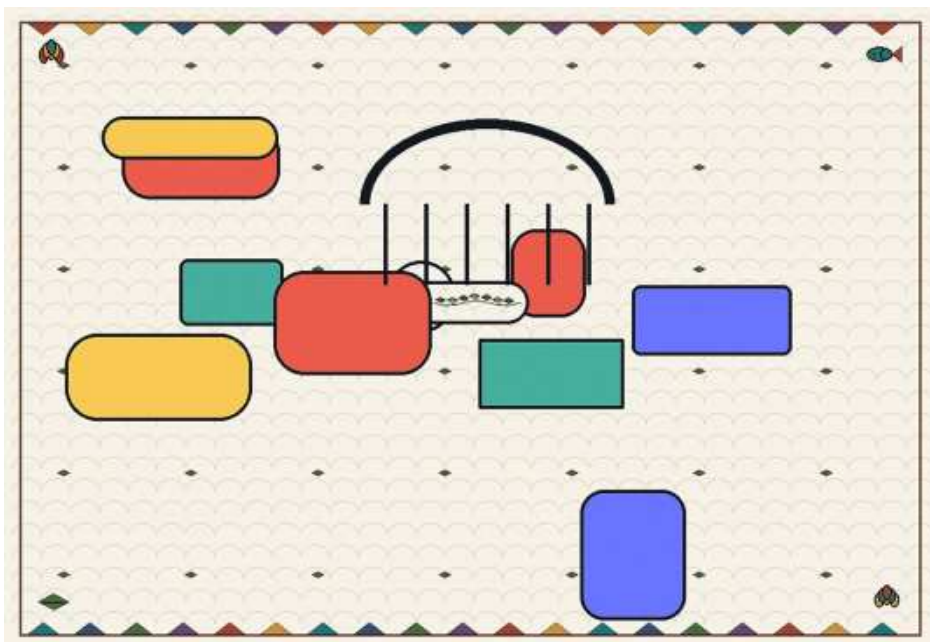
Meanwhile, Madhuvan also grew up.

When Madhuvan became a young woman, her friends teased her: 'Sister, you are grown up now, but your father does not seem to be thinking about your marriage!'

Madhuvan became very worried, because she herself knew nothing about the marriage that had taken place when she was a baby.

Chapter 6: Charity by the Jamuna and a Letter





Picture 11

Madhuvan stopped eating and lay sadly on her bed. Her mother asked, 'Daughter, why will you not eat?'

Madhuvan replied, 'My friends keep teasing me and asking why Father has not arranged my marriage.' Her mother then told her the truth: 'You were married on the sixth night after your birth. Your in-laws are in Garh Nariyal. We do not know why your husband has never come for you.'

Hearing this, Madhuvan made a plan. 'Build me a house beside the Jamuna and arrange everything there. For twelve years I will give food and charity to travellers.' The king agreed. Madhuvan began the daily charity, hoping that one day someone would bring news of her husband.



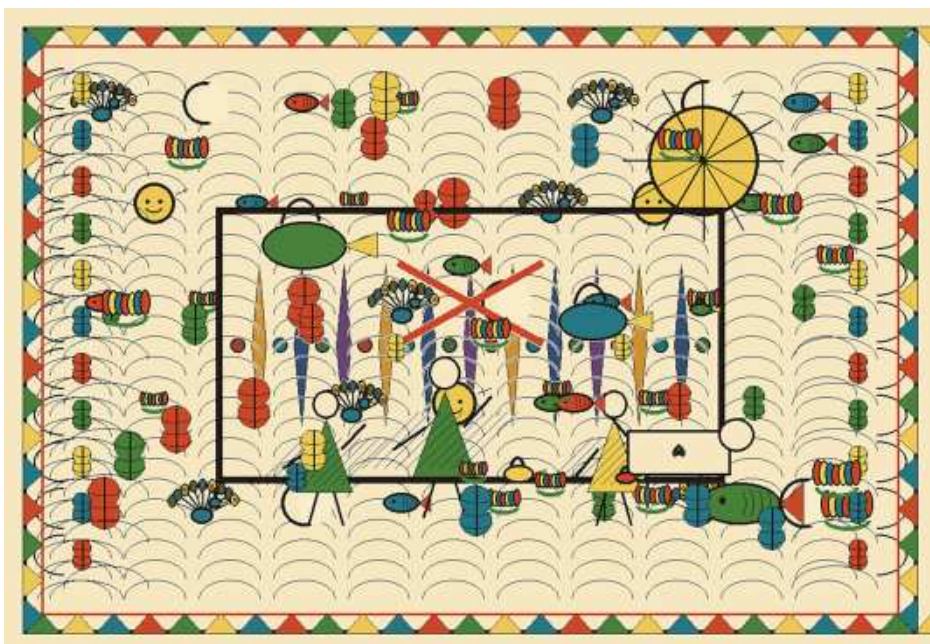
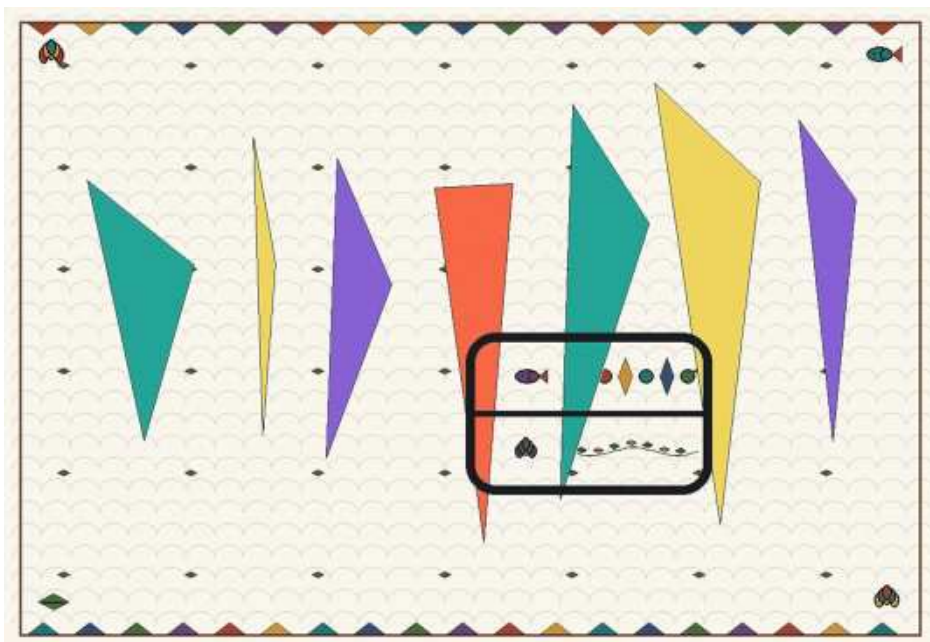
Picture 12

One day merchants travelling from Garh Nariyal toward Garh Pingal passed beside the Jamuna. Madhuvan asked them, 'Where are you going, and where have you come from?' They answered, 'We come from Garh Nariyal and trade diamonds and pearls in Garh Pingal.'

Madhuvan asked, 'When you return from your trading, will you take a letter for me?' The merchants agreed. 'Write it and keep it ready. We will surely carry it.' For Madhuvan, this was the first real ray of hope.

Chapter 7: The Burned Letter and the Brave Parrot

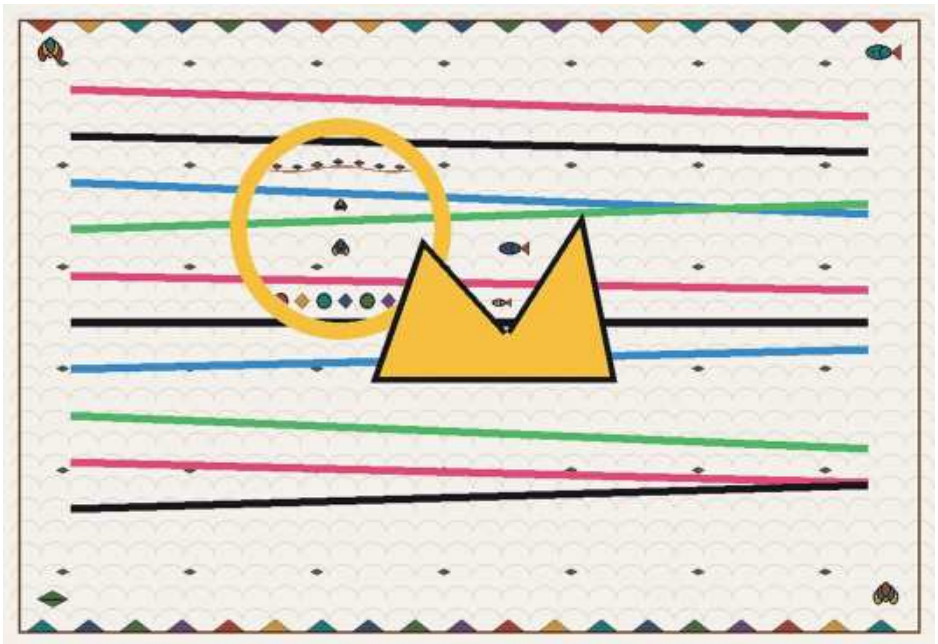


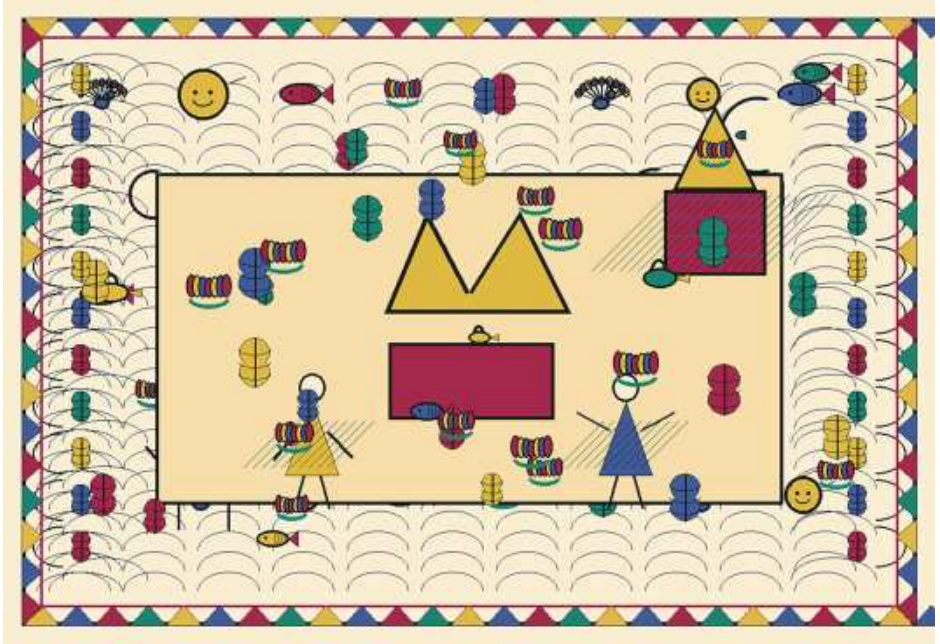


Picture 13

When the merchants reached Garh Nariyal carrying the letter, the sisters Hareba and Pareba, who were powerful magicians, discovered the whole matter through their magic. They informed King Daksh, snatched the letter from the merchants, and burned it, making sure Dholan never knew it had come.

Madhuvan's first letter was destroyed. She waited for an answer that never came. Days passed, but her hope did not completely die.



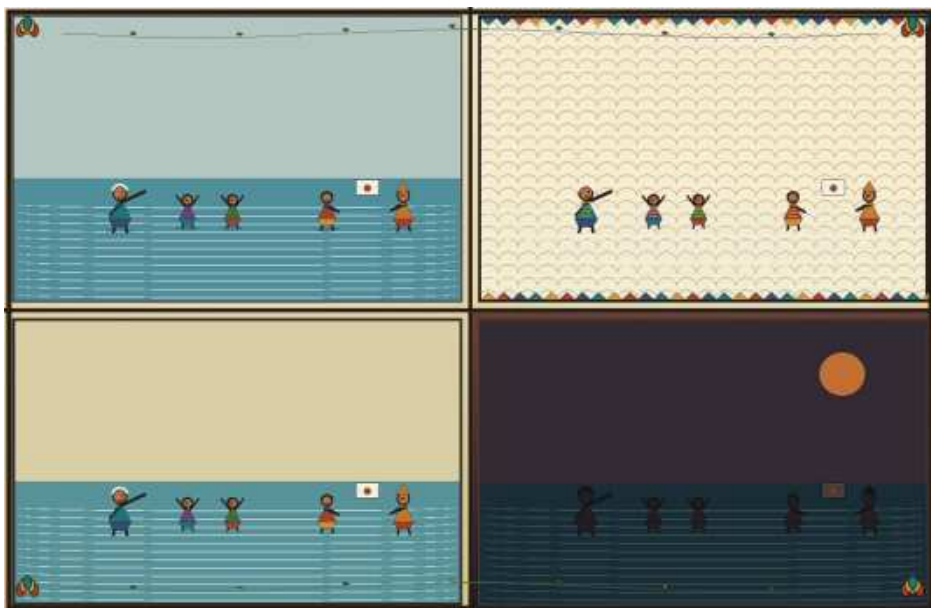


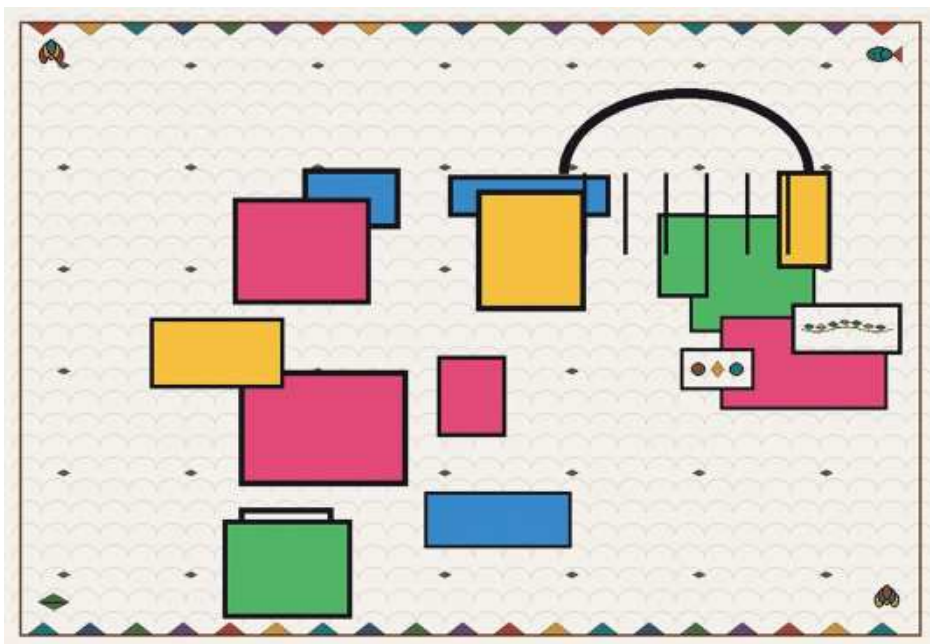
Picture 14

Madhuvan kept a pet parrot. She asked it, 'Can you carry my letter?' The parrot answered, 'Yes, I will give it to the king.' Madhuvan wrote another letter and tied it around the bird's neck. 'Go,' she said.

The parrot flew toward Garh Nariyal, where Hareba, Pareba, and Dholan lived. It landed on Dholan's shoulder and cut the thread with its beak so that the letter fell. But it was winter, and Dholan was sitting beside a fire in the garden. One of the gardeners threw the letter into the flames.

Chapter 8: Dholan's Anger

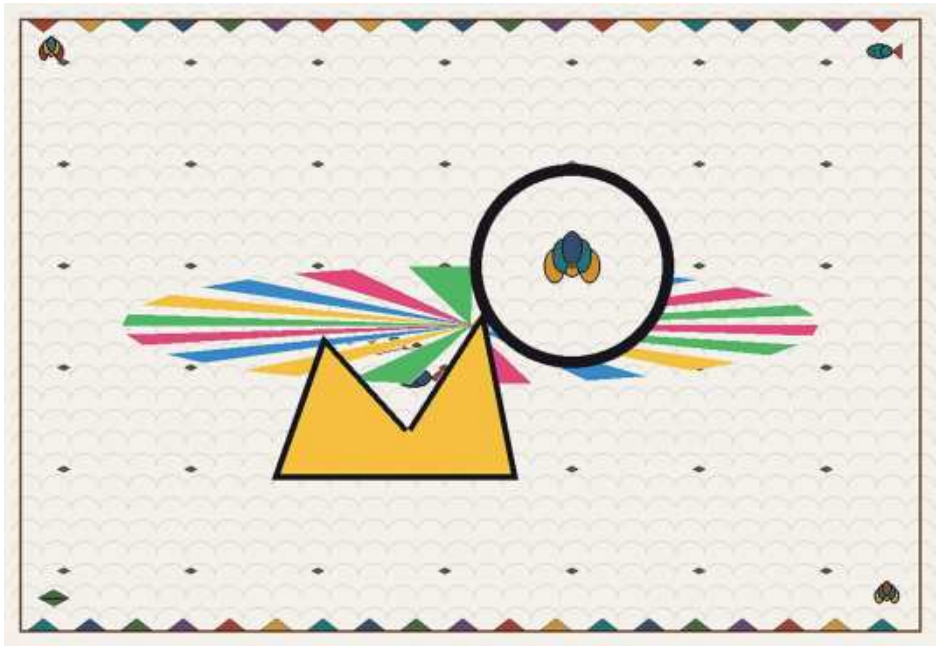




Picture 15

Dholan became very angry when he saw what had happened. He slapped Hareba and Pareba twice each and ordered, 'Both of you leave this place!' The sisters begged for forgiveness and tried to calm him.

Madhuvan's second letter was lost as well. She grew more and more worried. Two attempts had failed, and still more time passed without any answer.





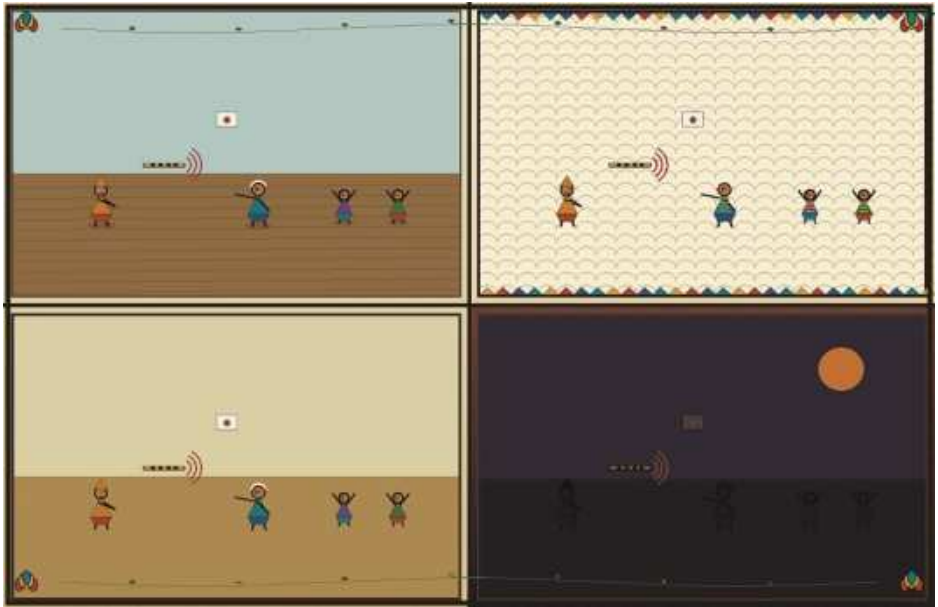
Picture 16

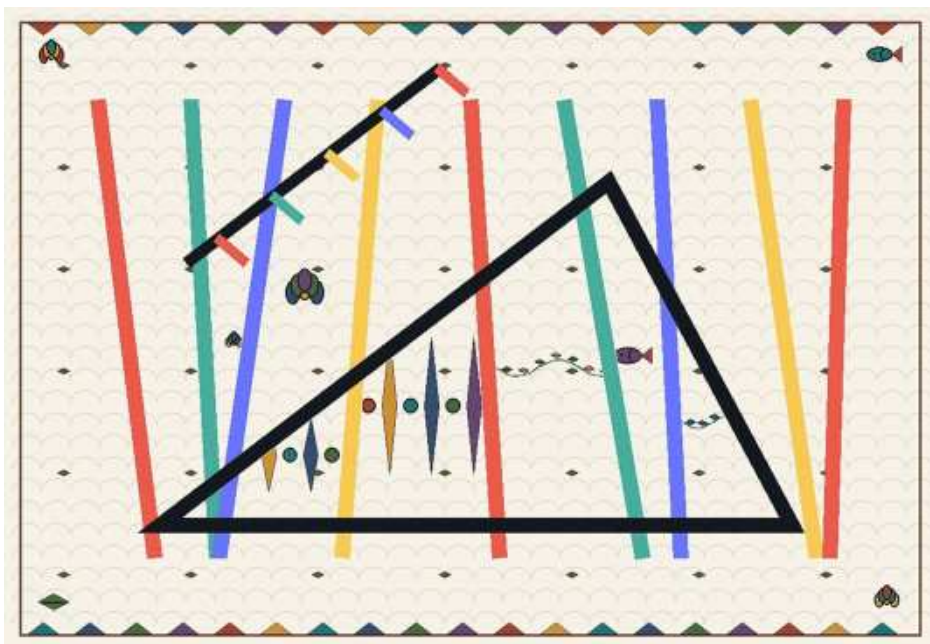
One day, a holy man travelling in the form of a yogi passed along the bank of the Jamuna. He saw Madhuvan weeping in great distress, came closer, and asked why she was crying.

Madhuvan told him everything: the childhood marriage, the missing gauna, the two letters, and how both attempts had failed. The holy man said, 'Write one more letter and give it to me. I will deliver it.' Madhuvan gave him the letter and also gave him ganja, bhang, and opium,

perhaps as part of some plan for dealing with the magician sisters, as the old tale describes.

Chapter 9: The Enchanted Flute

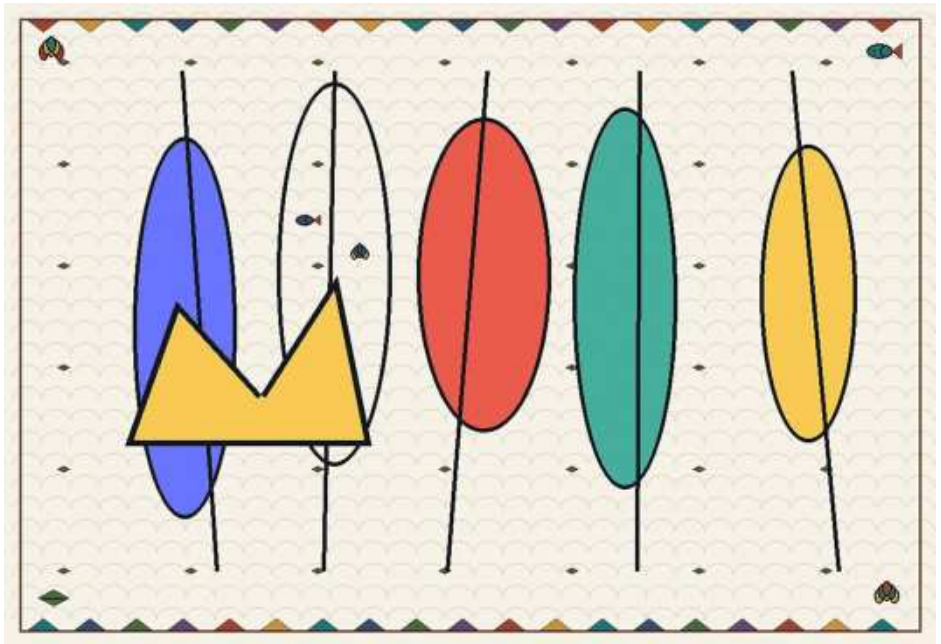




Picture 17

The holy man travelled toward Garh Nariyal and after some days reached the place where Hareba, Pareba, and Dholan lived. He set up his resting place in the middle of the garden.

Near dawn, the holy man took out an enchanted flute and began to play. When Dholan heard the sound, he rose and prepared to go toward it.



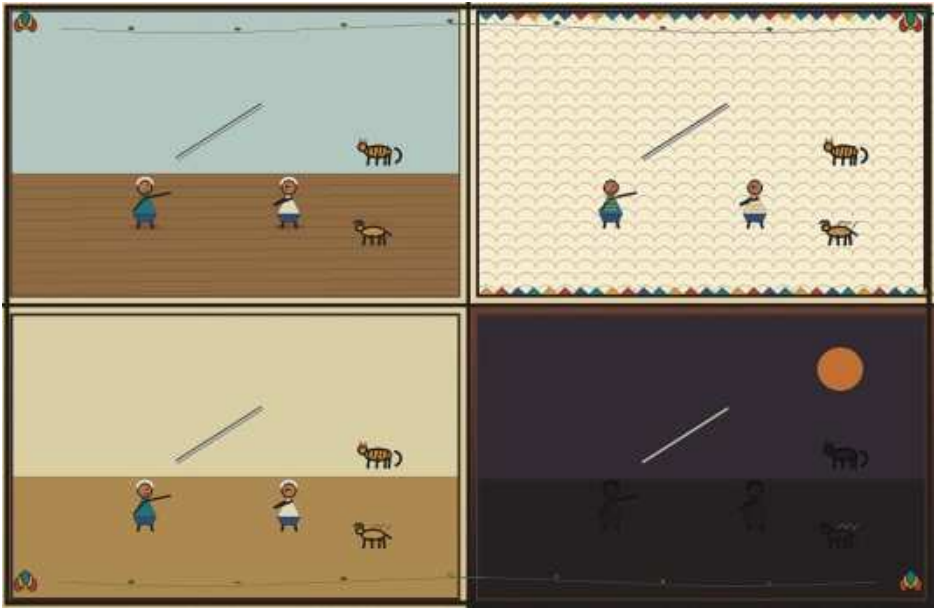


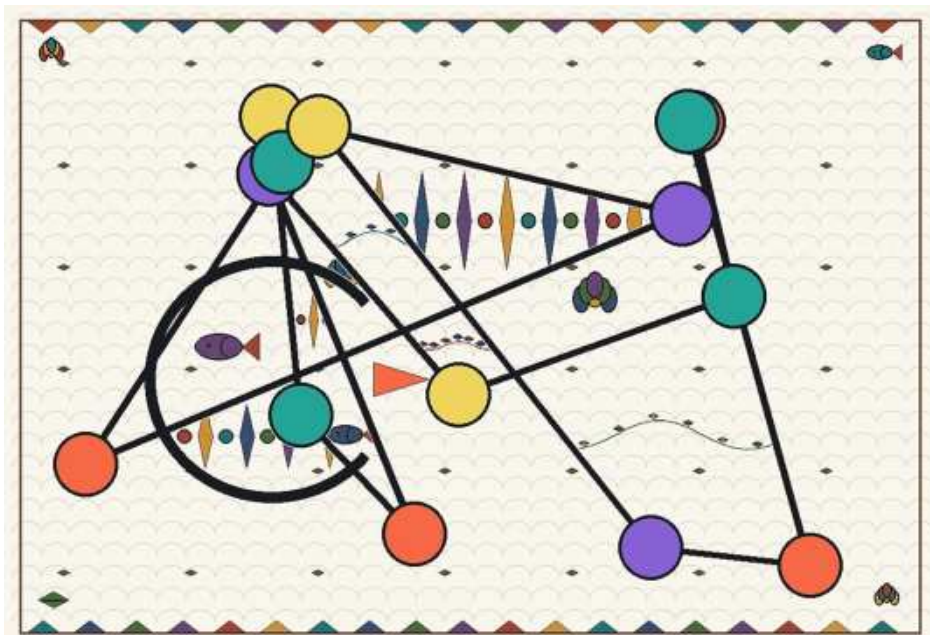
Picture 18

The two sisters used many kinds of magic on the flute and the holy man, trying to stop him. But none of their tricks worked. The strength of his spiritual practice was greater than their spells. Dholan got up, kicked each sister twice, and went to the holy man.

The holy man took out Madhuvan's letter and gave it to Dholan. The moment he read it, Dholan burned with anger. The truth stood before him at last: he had been married, his wife had been kept from him, and the secret had been hidden for years.

Chapter 10: His Father's Confession

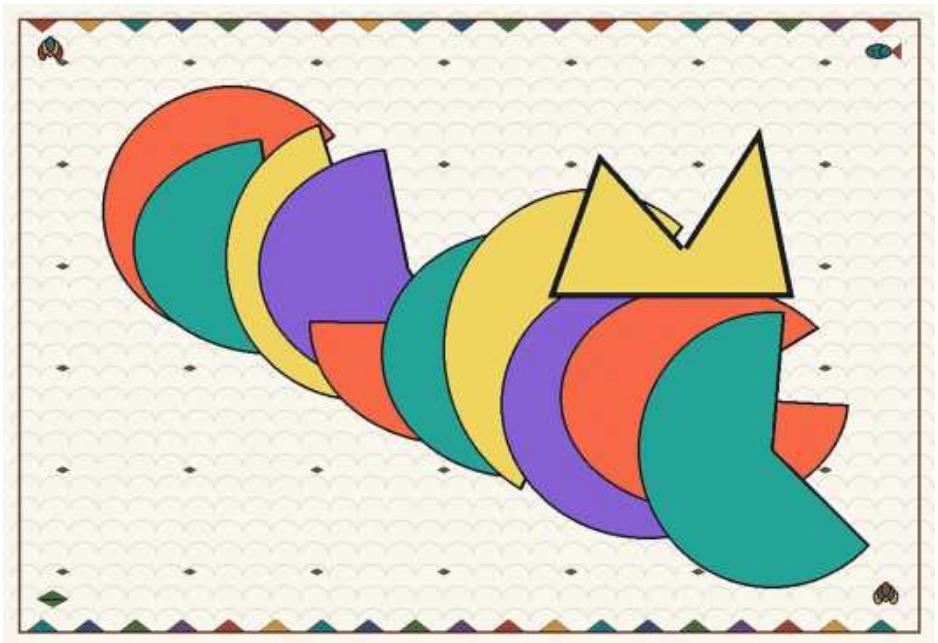




Picture 19

Dholan went straight home, took a sword, and asked his father, who still lived as a servant, 'Tell me - where was I married?' Remembering the tigress's curse, his father became afraid and lied: 'I never arranged any marriage for you.'

Furious, Dholan placed Madhuvan's letter before him. His father read it and became deeply troubled. It was no longer possible to hide the truth.

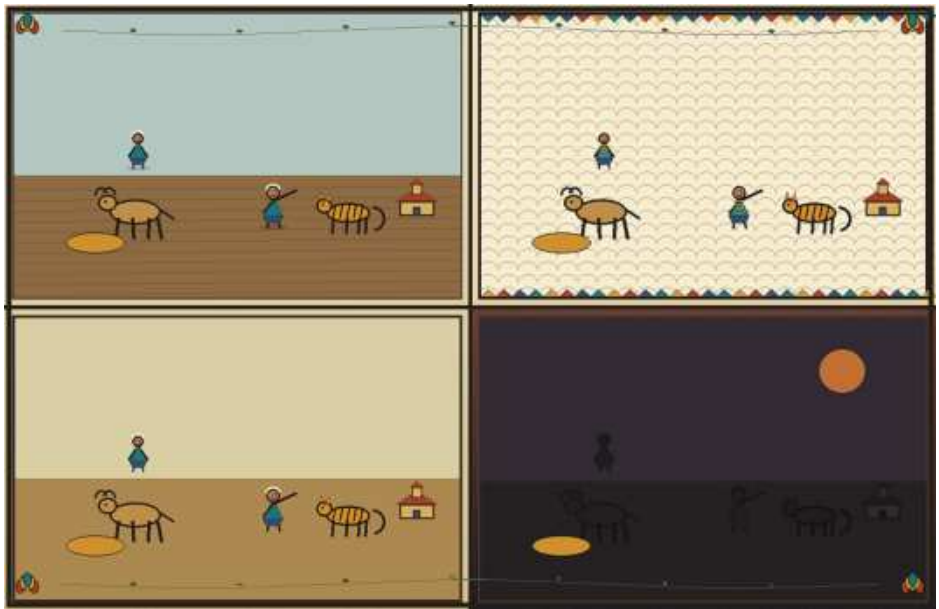


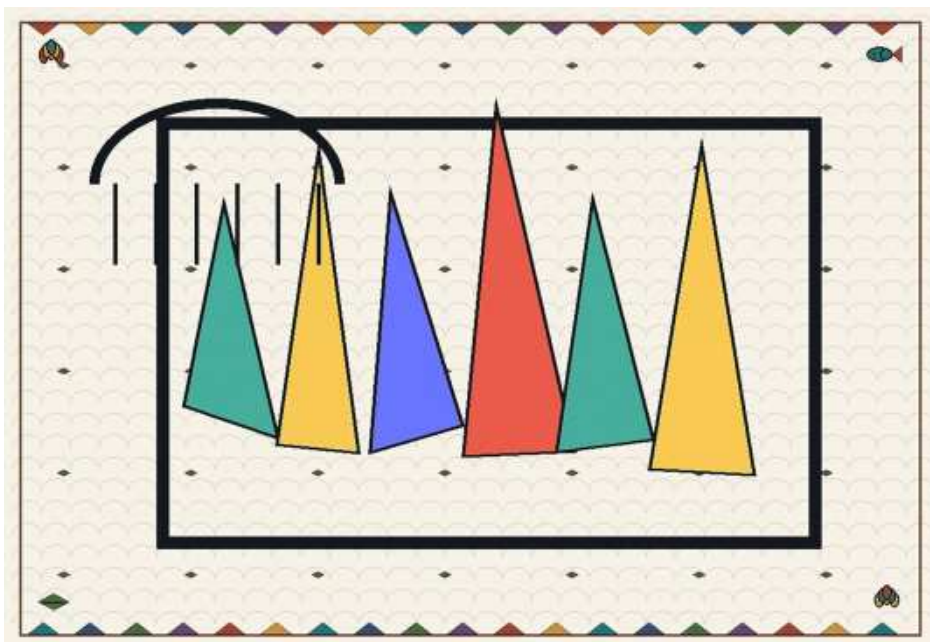


Picture 20

At last King Daksh confessed everything. 'Listen, son. I did arrange your marriage on the sixth night after your birth. I never completed the gauna because, while returning home, I killed a tiger.' Then he told the entire story of the tigress's curse and why he had hidden the saadhin away. After hearing the truth, Dholan made up his mind. 'Where is my mount? Give her to me.' His father replied, 'The saadhin is still beneath the pit. I do not know whether she is alive or dead.' The words themselves carried the shame of so many years of neglect.

Chapter 11: The Saadhin Returns to Life and the Journey Begins

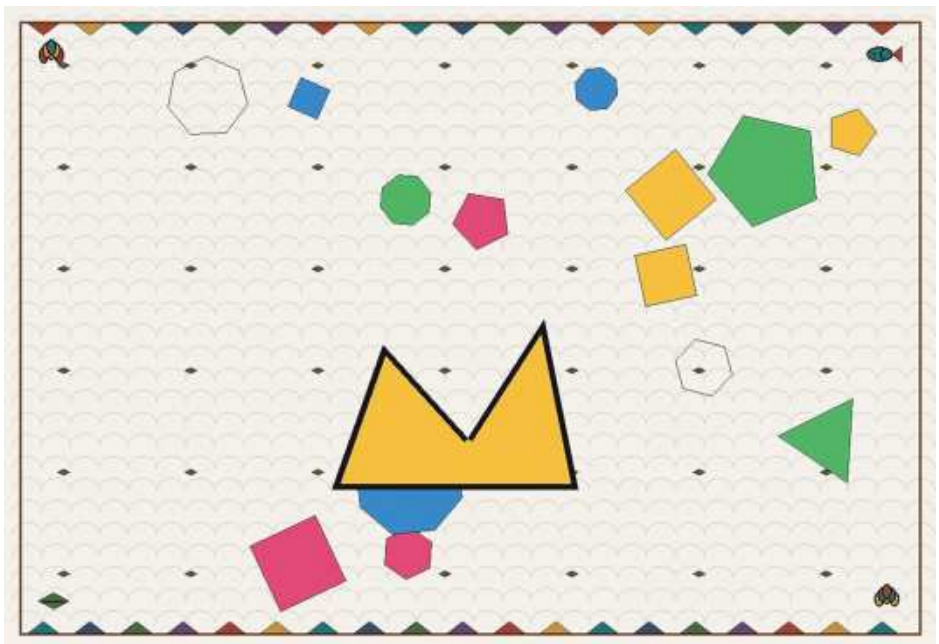




Picture 21

Dholan brought the saadhin out from beneath the pit. Her body was covered with signs of years of neglect. He cleaned her and fed her chickpeas and other food. Little by little, she became healthy and strong again.

Dholan said, 'Saadhin, your legs have been tied for many years. If you can cross fourteen kos in a day with four great bounds, I will know your strength has returned. We must reach Garh Pingal again.' After years of captivity, she quickly recovered her old speed.



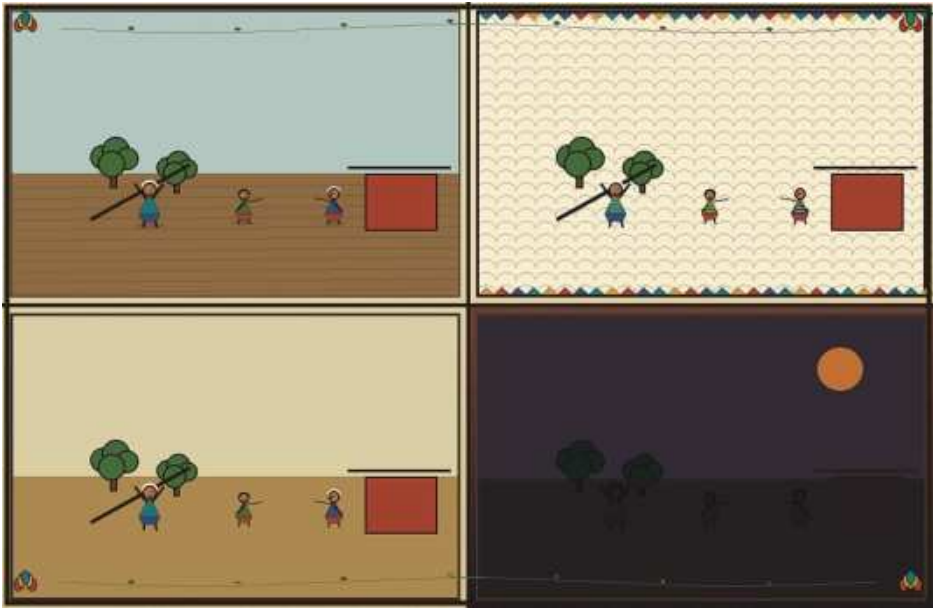


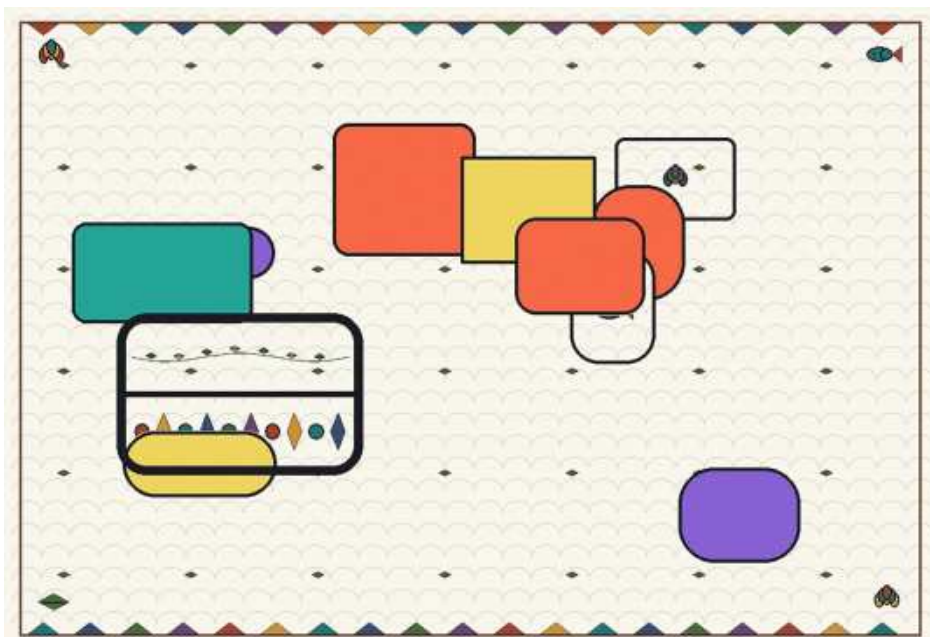
Picture 22

Dholan mounted the saadhin, carried a gun on his shoulder, and set out toward his in-laws' land. On the way he reached the same forest where the tigress lived. As soon as he saw her, he killed her, ending the curse that had frightened his father for so many years.

After killing the tigress, Dholan travelled on to Garh Pipli and made camp in a flower garden without revealing who he really was.

Chapter 12: His Identity Is Restored

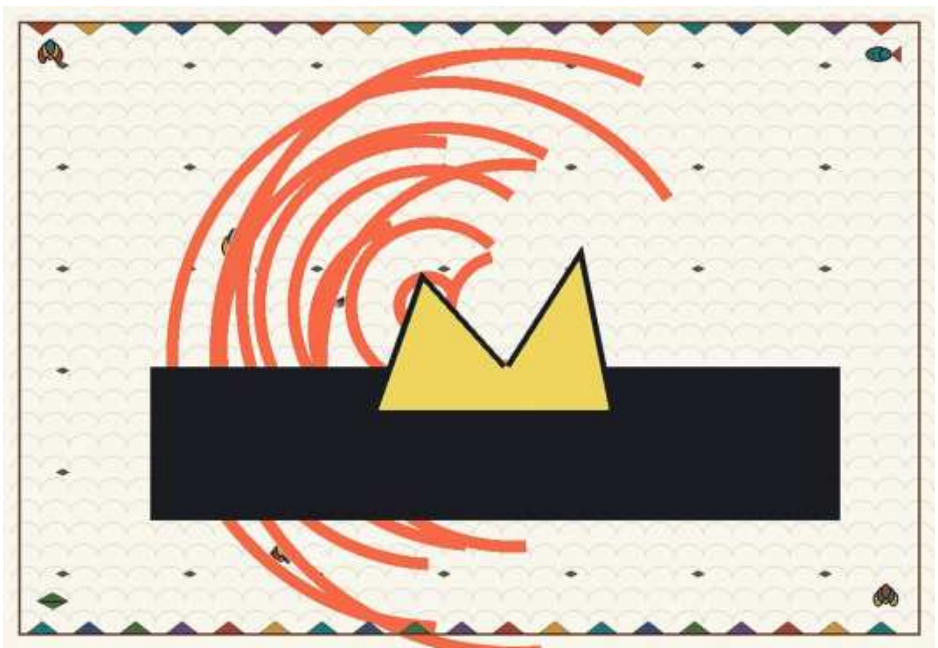




Picture 23

Leaving the saadhin nearby, Dholan tore through the flower garden and caused a great deal of damage, perhaps from years of anger and frustration. The gardener woman shouted, 'I will have the king punish you, and you will pay for everything you have destroyed!'

Dholan answered fearlessly, 'Go. Do whatever you want.' The gardener rushed angrily to the king and complained. The king asked, 'Where is this man from?' She replied, 'He says his home is Garh Nariyal.'



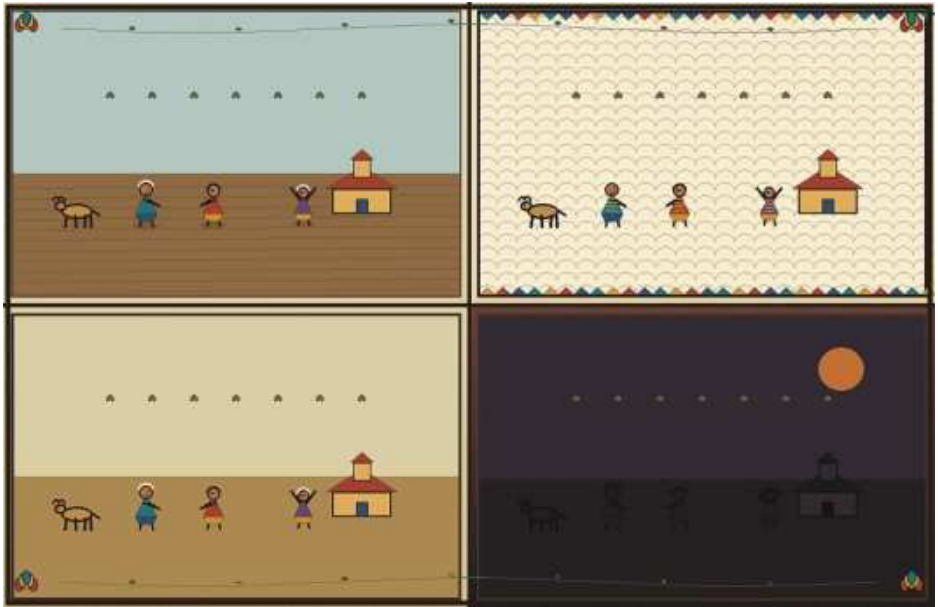


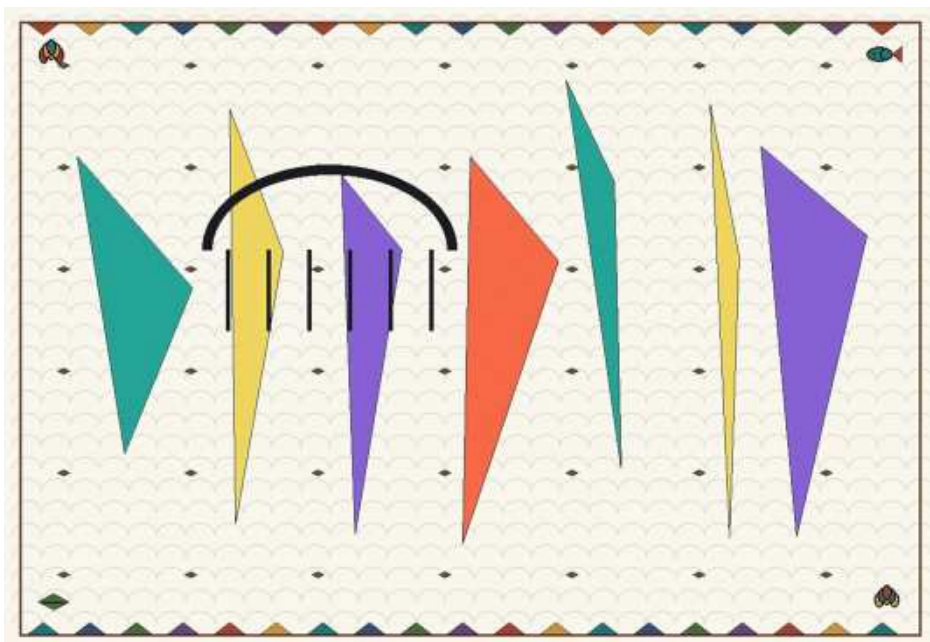
Picture 24

The king sent soldiers. They asked Dholan, 'Who are you and where have you come from?' Dholan replied, 'My home is Garh Nariyal, and I have come to my in-laws' country of Garh Pingal.'

The soldiers carried the message back. The king rose happily and had Dholan brought to the palace in a palanquin. After years of separation, the true son-in-law had finally reached the door of his wife's family.

Chapter 13: Reunion

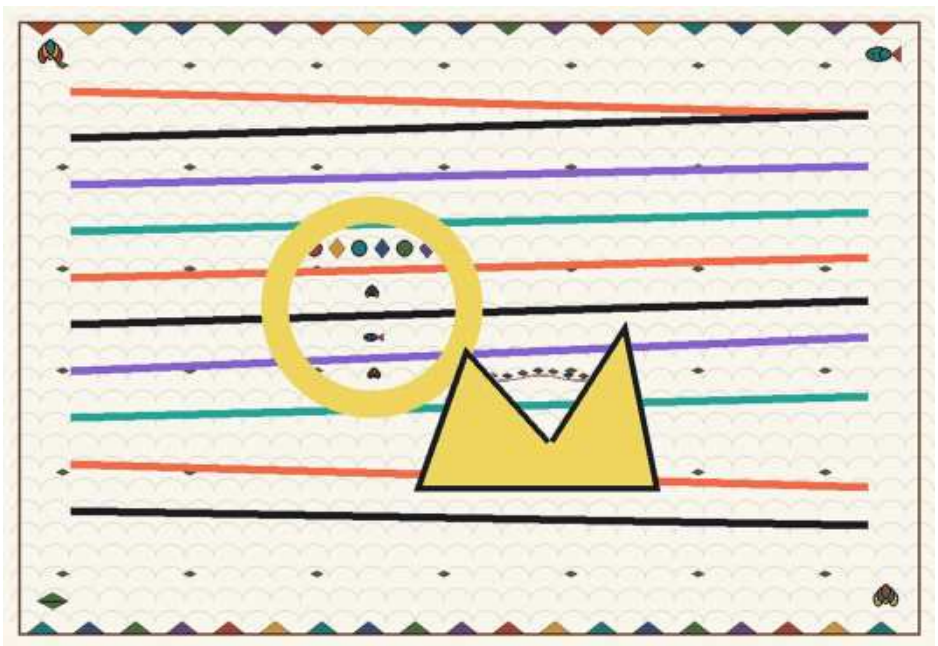




Picture 25

The King of Garh Pingal welcomed Dholan with great celebration. After some days, he sent his daughter and son-in-law away from Garh Pingal toward Garh Nariyal with the honour that should have been theirs years earlier.

Dholan and Madhuvan travelled home to Garh Nariyal, the kingdom from which King Daksh had once fled in poverty. Now his son and daughter-in-law returned there with dignity.





Picture 26

Madhuvan, who had spent twelve years beside the Jamuna giving charity and waiting in hope, finally found her husband after failed letters, the schemes of the magician sisters, and the tigress's curse had all been overcome.

Dholan and Madhuvan then began to rule their kingdom. A servant's son, whose true identity had been hidden for years, became the husband of a princess and ruler of the land. The story teaches that truth, courage, and patience

can finally win, however long and difficult the road may be.

The End

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Ugna

Mahadev Becomes Vidyapati's Servant - A
Tragic Tale of Devotion



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

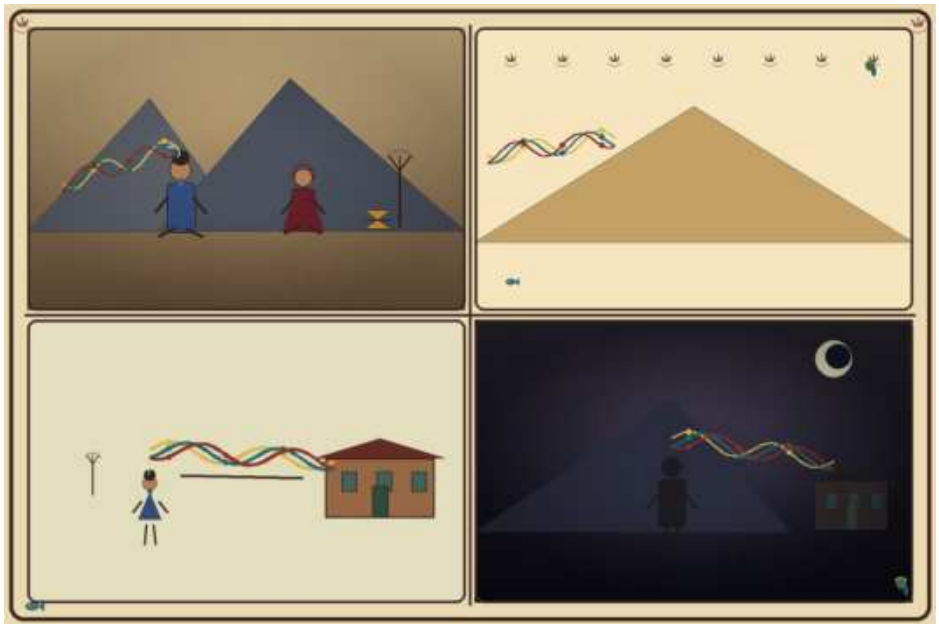
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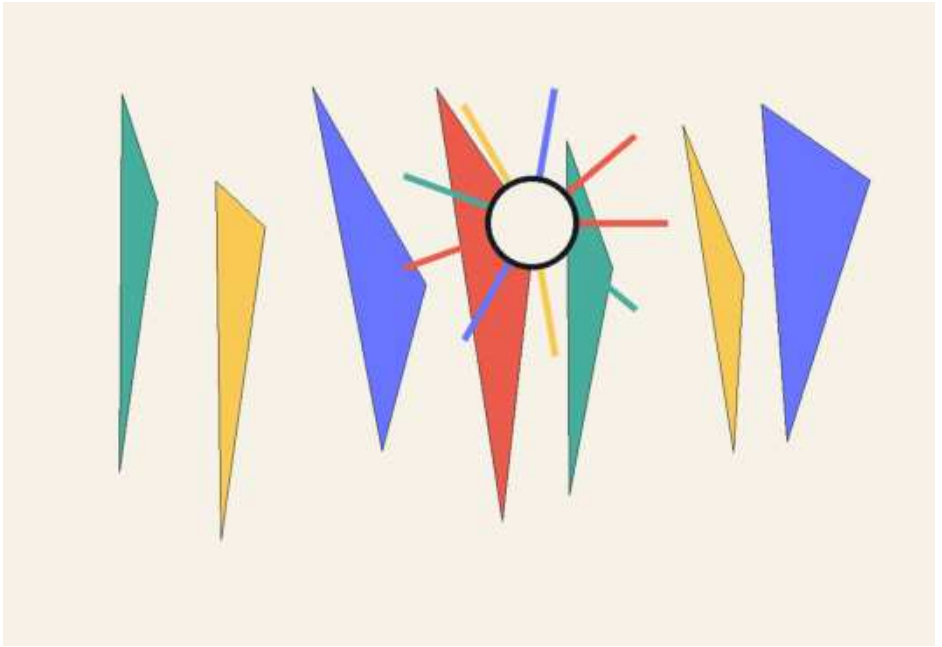
Prologue: The Nachari Songs

There once lived a poet in Mithila named Vidyapati. His songs were so beautiful that people said even the earth seemed to sing when it heard them. His nachari songs - songs of devotion to Shiva - were said to be so moving that Lord Shiva himself danced on Mount Kailash when he heard them.

This tale grows from those songs and from the wonderful time when God, hungry to hear a devotee's music, became the devotee's servant. It is one of Mithila's great stories of devotion, and also a sad tale in which separation comes not from sin or a curse, but from a broom raised in anger and one divine name spoken aloud.

Chapter 1: The God Who Hungered for a Song

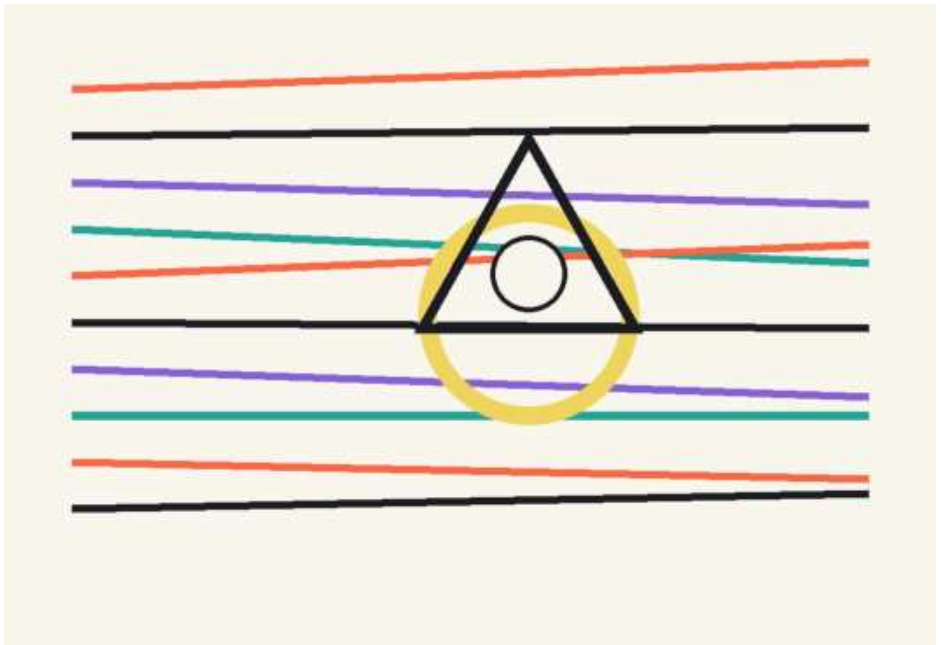




Picture 1

One day on Mount Kailash, Mahadev sat with his eyes closed, gently swaying. Parvati asked, 'What has happened?' Shiva replied, 'Listen... Vidyapati is singing in Mithila.'

Vidyapati's nachari was addressed to 'Bhola Baba'. It carried both the playful complaints of a devotee and the loving freedom of someone speaking to a beloved Lord. Shiva had heard countless hymns of praise, but this song was different. It did not merely worship him; it spoke with him.



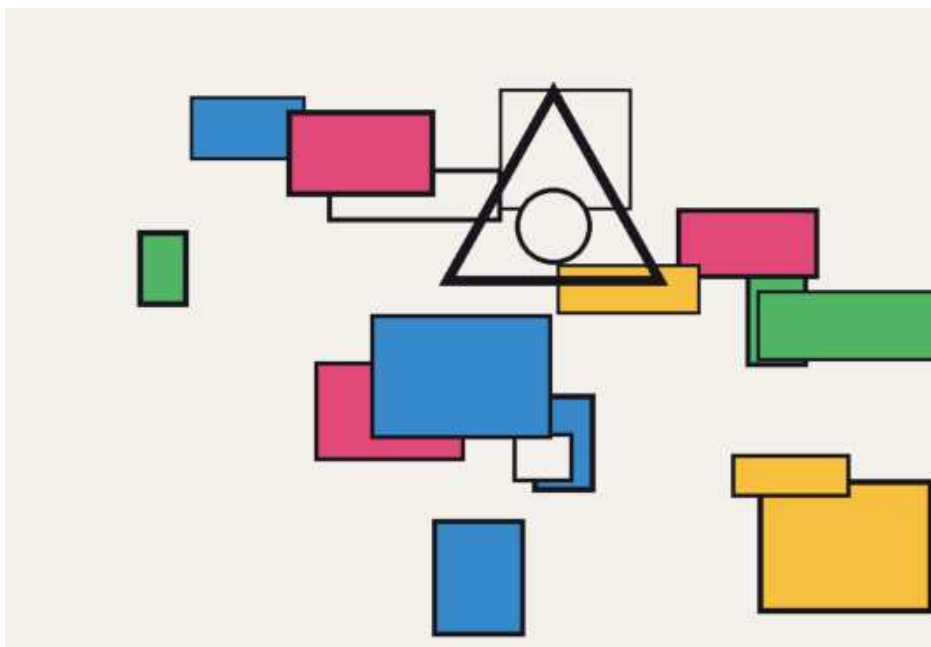
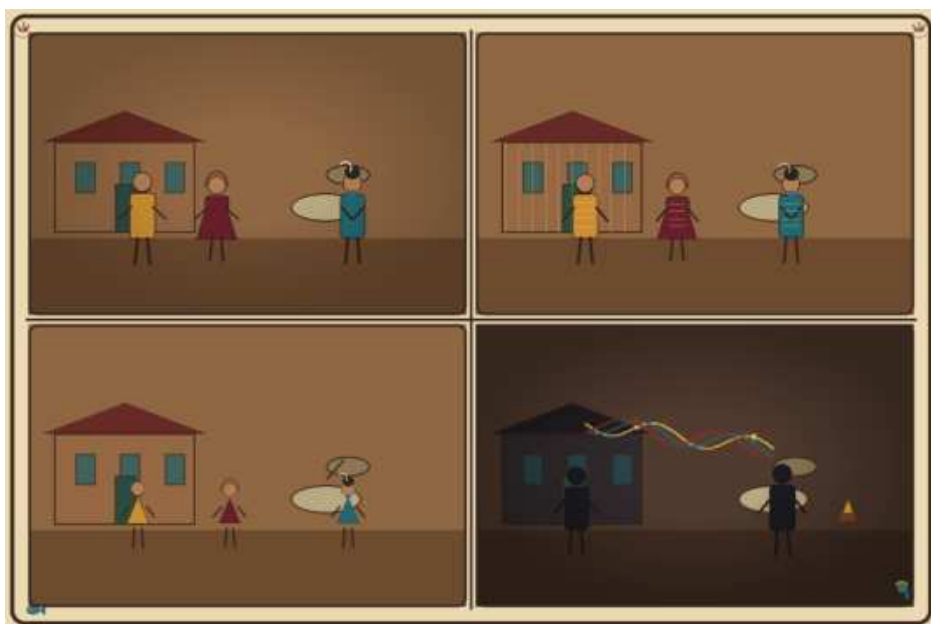


Picture 2

As Shiva listened, a wish arose in his heart unlike any wish a god might usually have: 'I want to hear this song every day... from nearby... while living in his own home.'

But in what form could God live in his devotee's house? As a guest? Then his identity might be discovered. So Shiva chose one of the sweetest reversals in devotional storytelling: the Lord of the universe would live in his devotee's home as a servant.

Chapter 2: Uгна Arrives

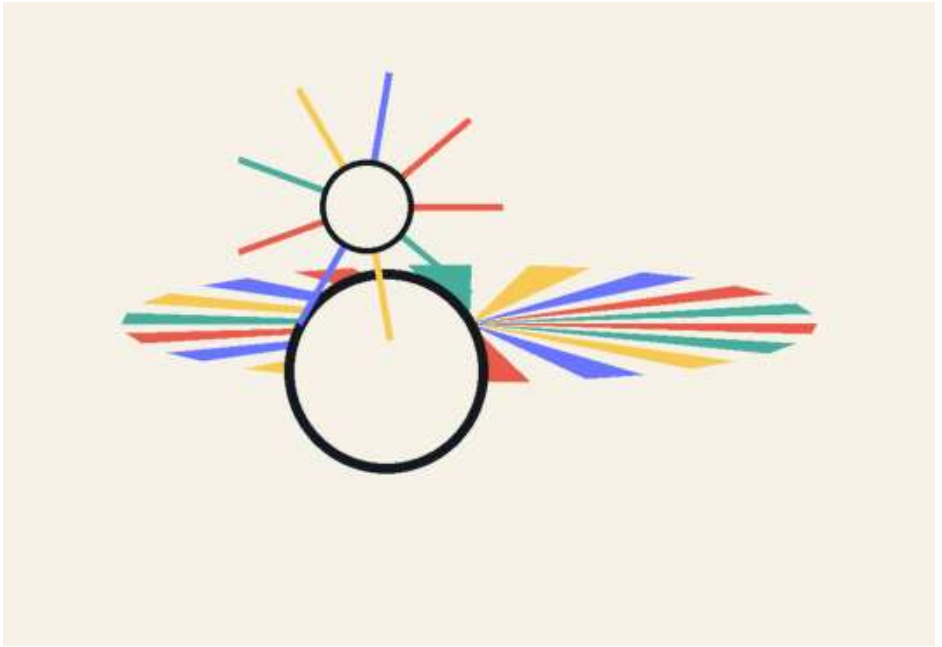




Picture 3

At Vidyapati's house, his wife Chandan carried the heavy burden of household work. There was too much to do and too few hands. One day a young man appeared at the door. His clothes were simple, but there was something peaceful in his eyes.

'Your name?' - 'Ugna.' - 'What do you want?' - 'Work. Food and clothes are enough for me.'

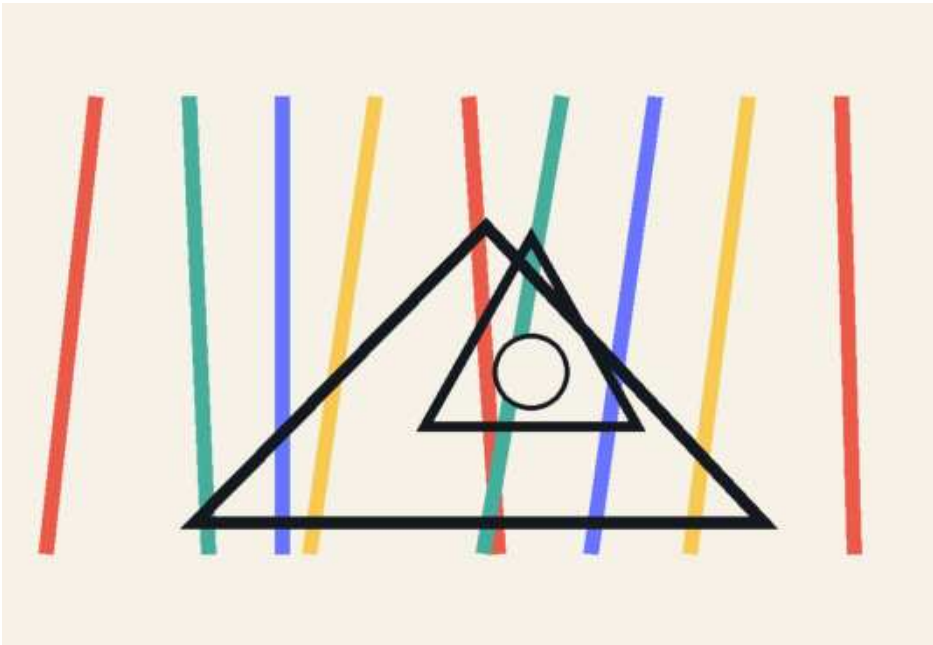
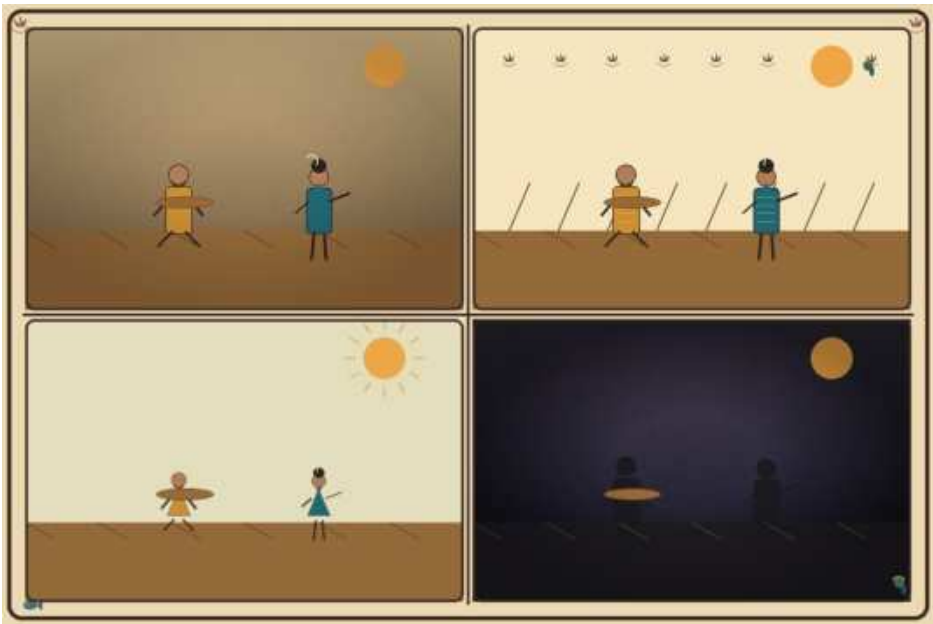


Picture 4

Vidyapati had already been looking for a servant to help his wife, so he hired Ugna. Ugna began working at once. No one had ever seen such a servant. Ask for water and it appeared; give him a task and it was completed; and there was always a gentle smile on his face.

Chandan felt very lucky. Such a servant, she thought, came only through good fortune. She did not know how small the word 'fortune' was for what had really happened. The hands sweeping floors, washing dishes, and lifting pots were the same hands that held Shiva's damaru and trident - all because he wanted to hear one poet sing.

Chapter 3: Thirst on the Road

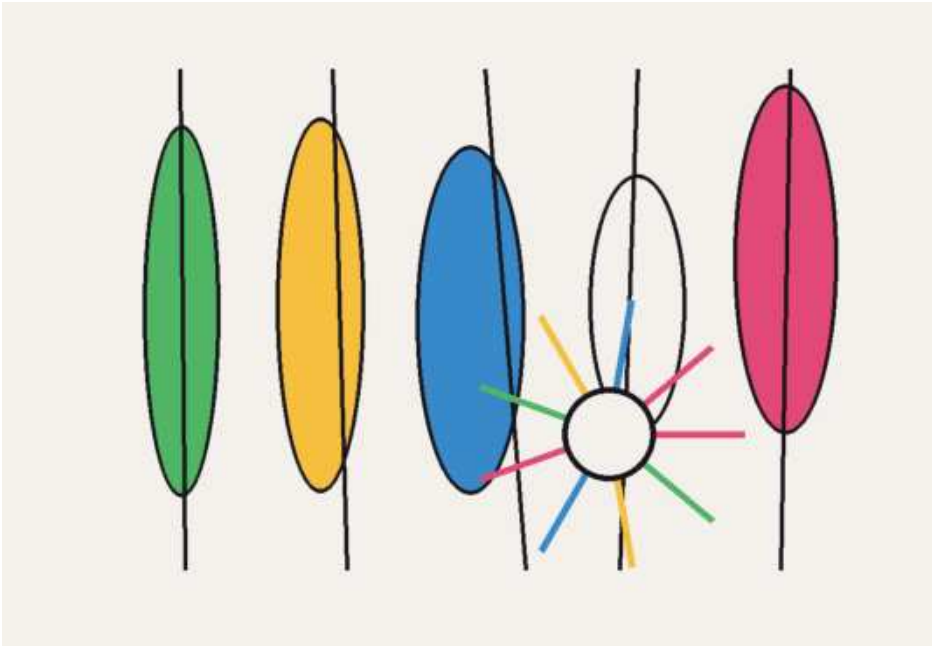




Picture 5

Once Vidyapati had to travel far away, and Uгна went with him. It was the fierce heat of Jyeshtha. The sun seemed to rain fire, and the road was empty, with no shade.

The heat became unbearable. Vidyapati grew so thirsty that his steps began to shake. 'Uгна... water...' he whispered. But there was no pond, no well, and no village anywhere nearby.

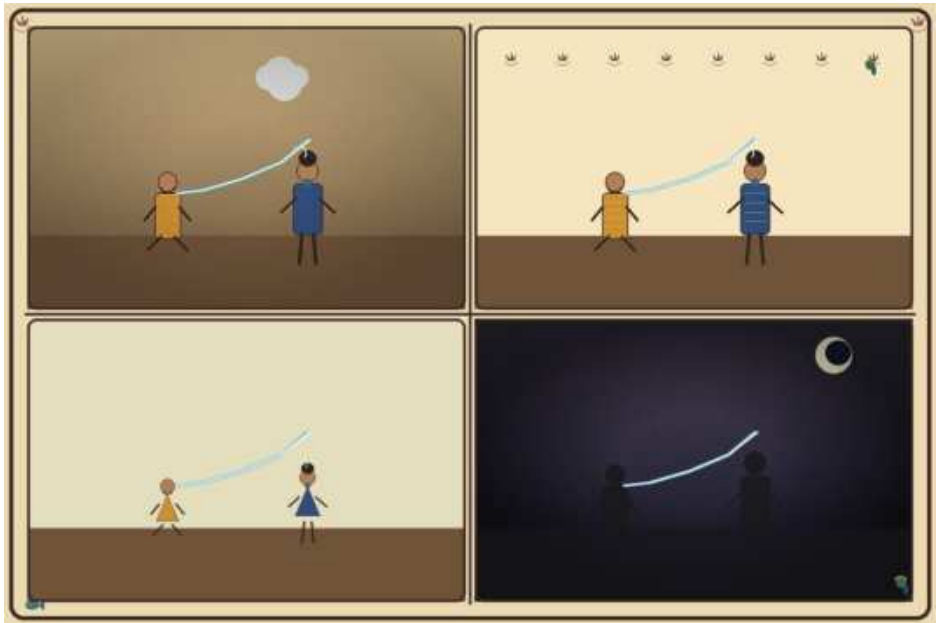


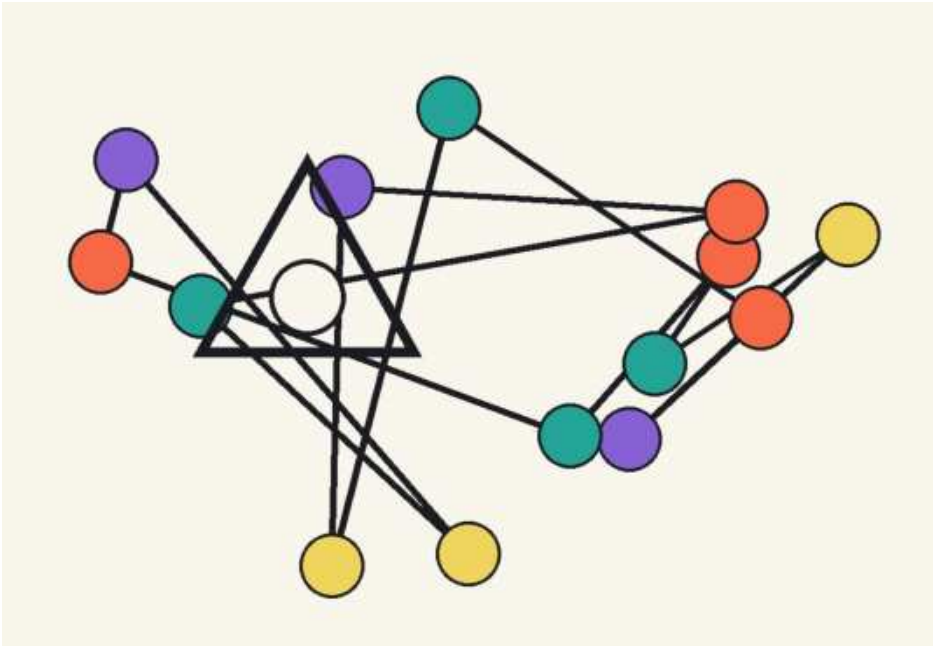
Picture 6

Ugna searched in every direction, following paths and looking around settlements, but found no water. When he returned, Vidyapati had fainted on the ground. The poet's throat, from which the nachari songs usually flowed, was dry as wood.

What could a servant named Ugna do? Nothing. But the being hidden inside Ugna had access to the waters of all three worlds. His devotee's life was in danger, and the disguise suddenly became a burden. Ugna looked around. No one was there. Then came the moment at the heart of this story.

Chapter 4: The Ganga from Shiva's Hair

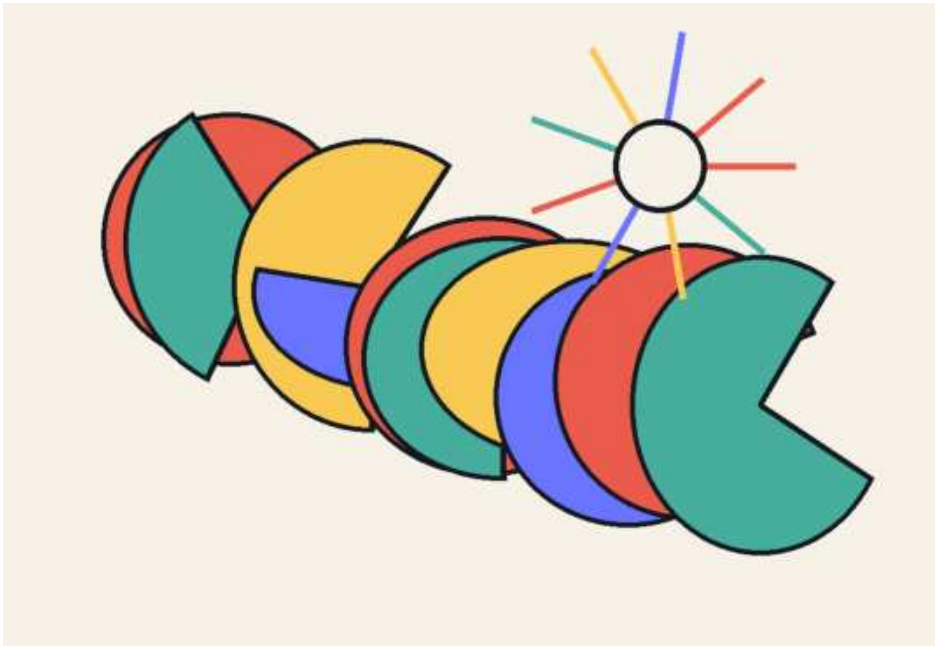




Picture 7

Ugna revealed his true form - Lord Shiva himself. He opened his matted hair, and from it flowed the Ganga, cool, pure, and sweet as nectar.

Shiva gave Vidyapati that sacred water to drink. Water touched the poet's throat, life returned, and his eyes opened. By then Shiva had already become Ugna again, as though nothing unusual had happened.





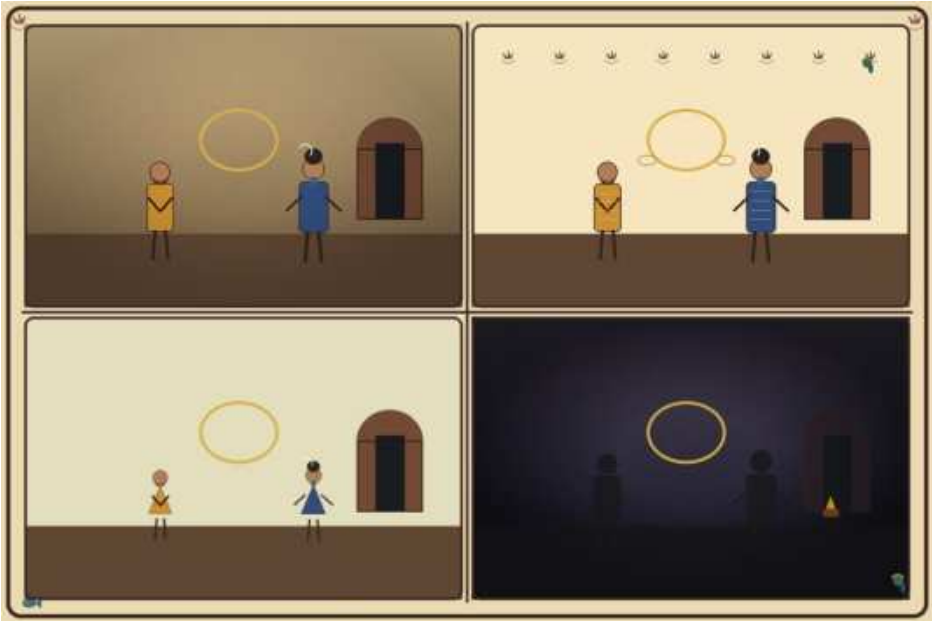
Picture 8

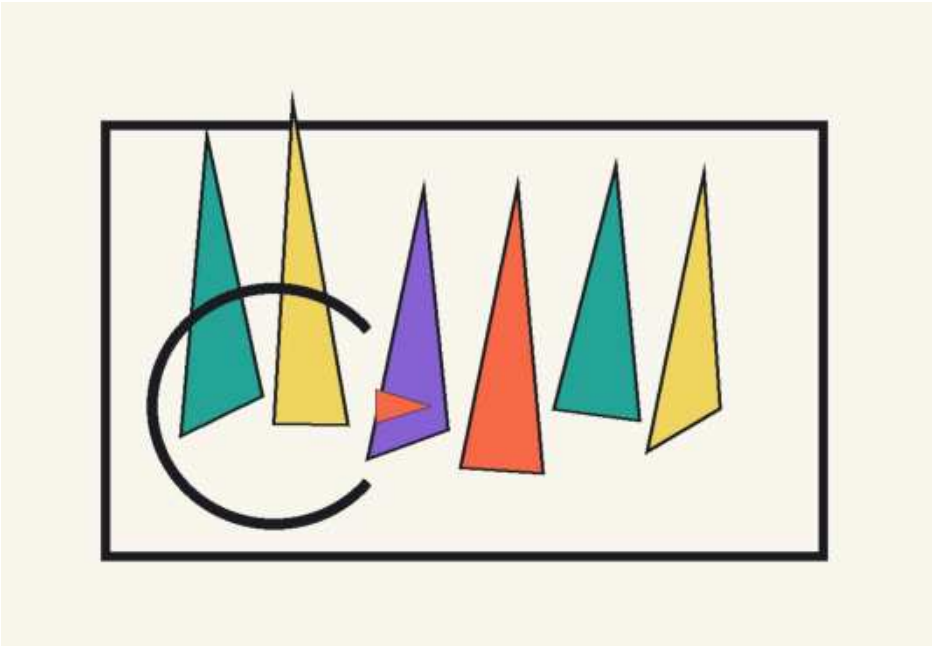
But Vidyapati was a poet, and poets remember tastes and sensations. The moment he drank the water, something inside him recognised it: this was Ganga water! On a lonely road where there was not even a drop of ordinary water, where could Ganga water have come from?

Then his eyes fell on Uгна. Uгна's hair was still wet. Wet matted hair, the taste of the Ganga, that quiet smile...

Vidyapati's hands folded by themselves. 'You... you are...' For the first time, the poet whose words rarely failed him had no words at all.

Chapter 5: The Secret and the Condition

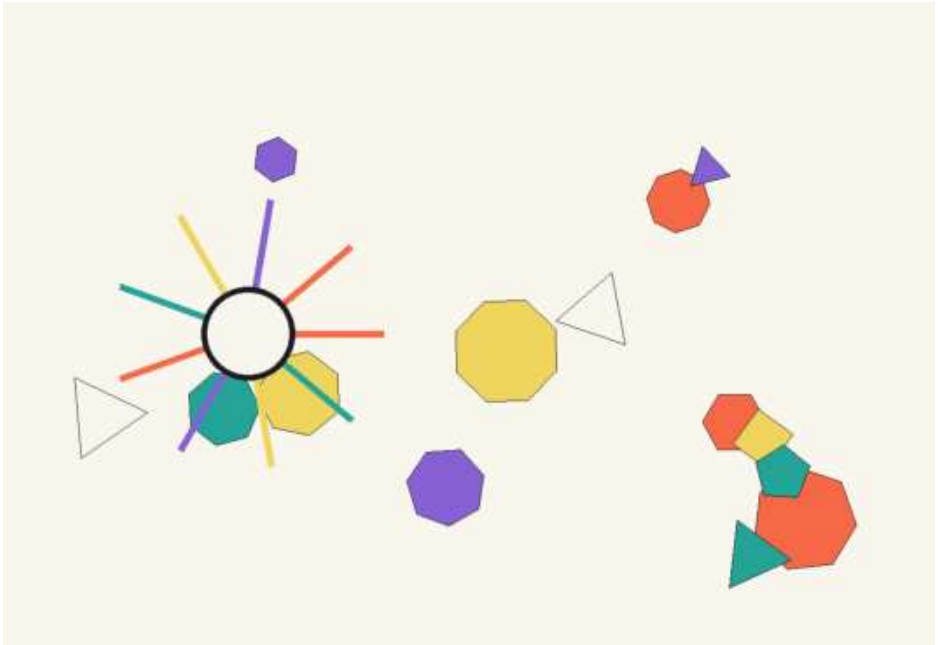




Picture 9

Shiva showed Vidyapati his true divine form. The form for which sages perform penance for ages stood before the poet dressed as an ordinary servant and smiling.

Vidyapati felt more shame than joy. 'Mahadev! I kept you as my servant? I made you wash dishes and fetch water. What have I done?'





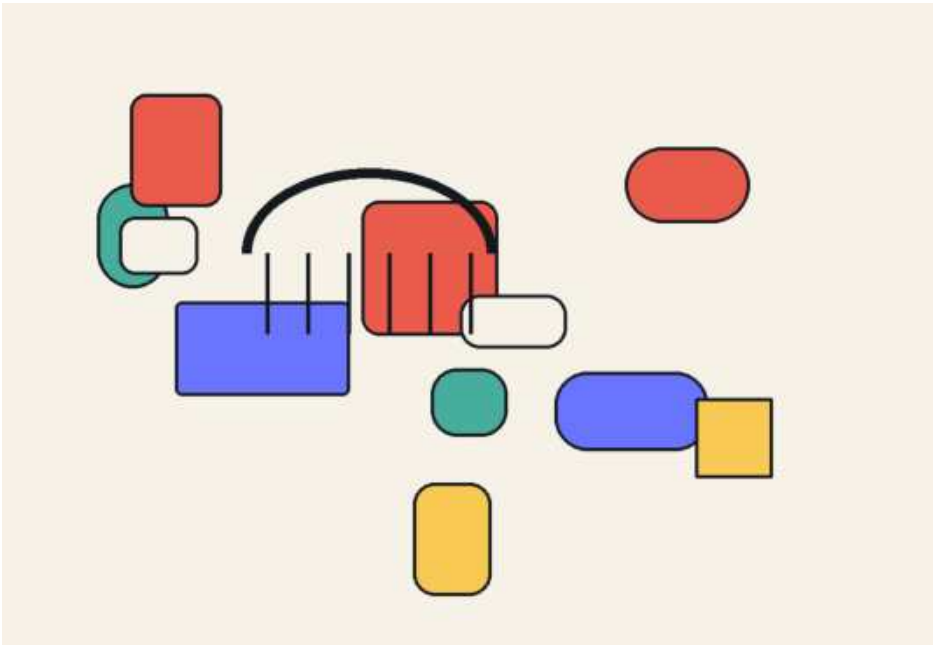
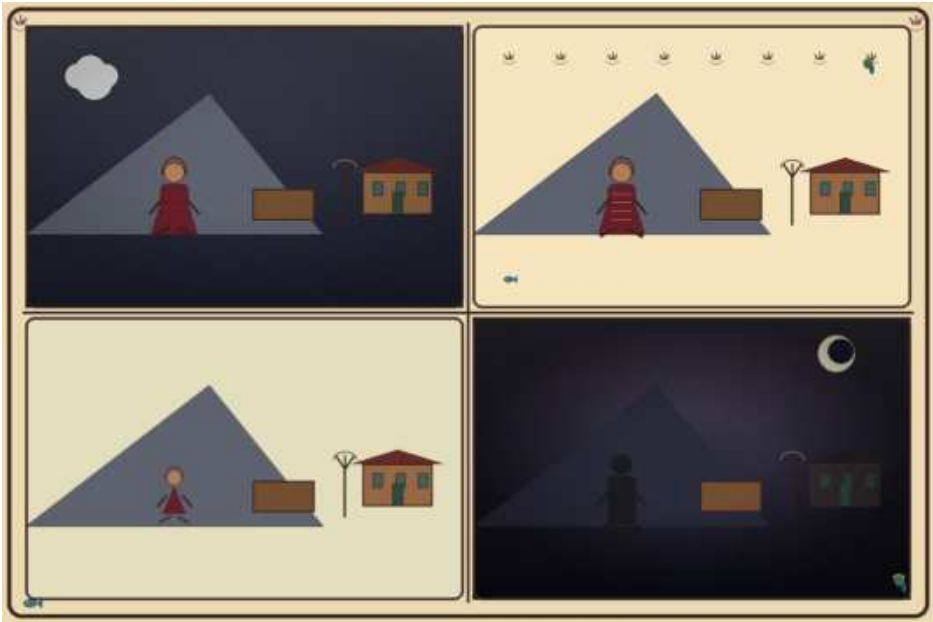
Picture 10

But Shiva laughed. 'Wrong? I am hungry for your nachari songs, Vidyapati. I became your servant so I could sit nearby and hear you sing, and I wish to remain here.'

'But there is one condition,' Shiva said seriously. 'The day you reveal this secret to anyone, the moment my true name comes out of your mouth, I will disappear.'

Vidyapati promised. They returned home as master and servant, though the deeper truth was the exact opposite. And like every condition in an old tale, this one carried within it the day on which it would be broken.

Chapter 6: Parvati's Loneliness



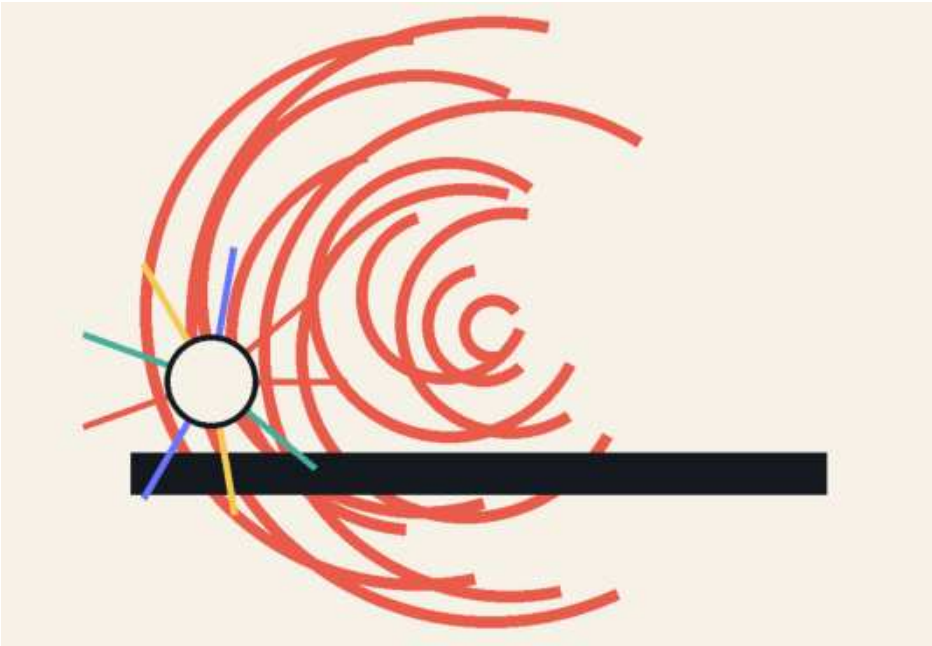


Picture 11

Meanwhile on Kailash, Parvati was sad. Her husband was living in the human world as a servant - washing dishes and carrying loads - while Kailash felt empty without him.

At first she waited. Then she sent messages. Then she tried to comfort herself: 'He wants to hear the songs. Let him satisfy that wish.' But the wish never seemed to end.

Months passed, then years, and Uzna showed no sign of returning.

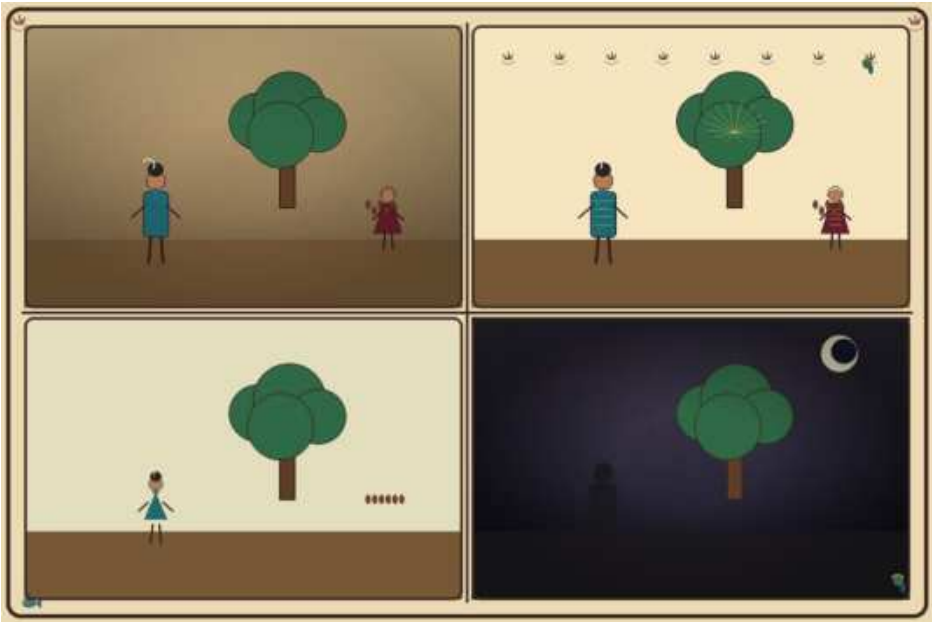


Picture 12

At last Parvati had a thought that grew from love and longing: 'If he will not return by himself, then circumstances must make him return.' She knew Shiva's condition. If the secret came out, Uzna would have to leave.

But how could the secret be made to come out? Vidyapati kept his promises firmly. Something had to happen that would make the name 'Shiva' burst from his mouth without thought. Parvati's attention turned to a small sour fruit: tamarind.

Chapter 7: The Tamarind Trick

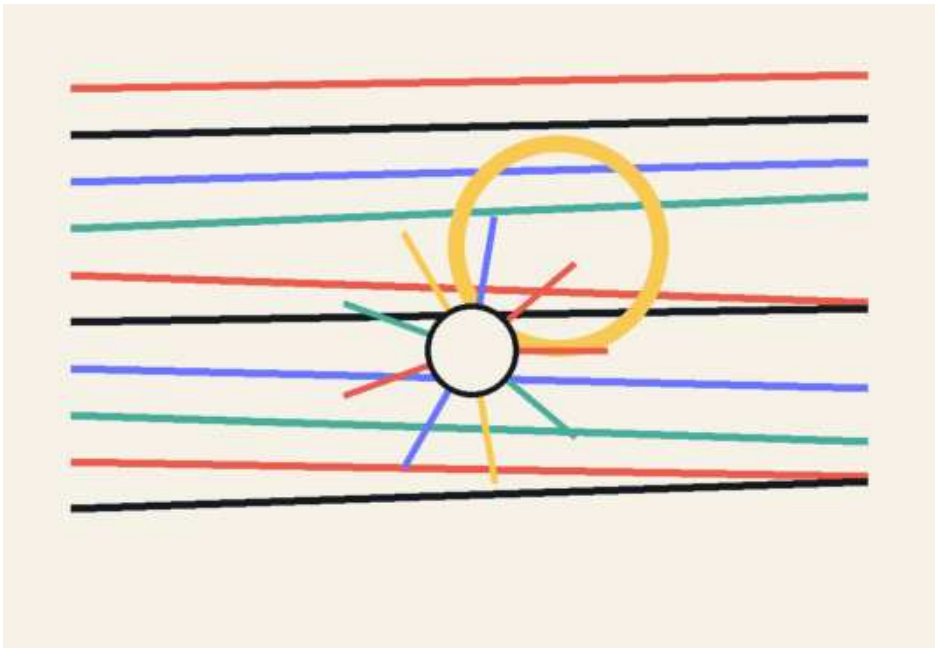




Picture 13

One day Chandan sent Uгна to bring tamarind for cooking. The tree grew near the village, and she needed something sour for the meal.

But when Uгна reached the tree that day, it was completely empty. Not one tamarind remained - not on a branch, hidden by leaves, or on the ground. Why? Parvati had already taken every fruit from the tree. It was a tiny trick, but exactly planned.

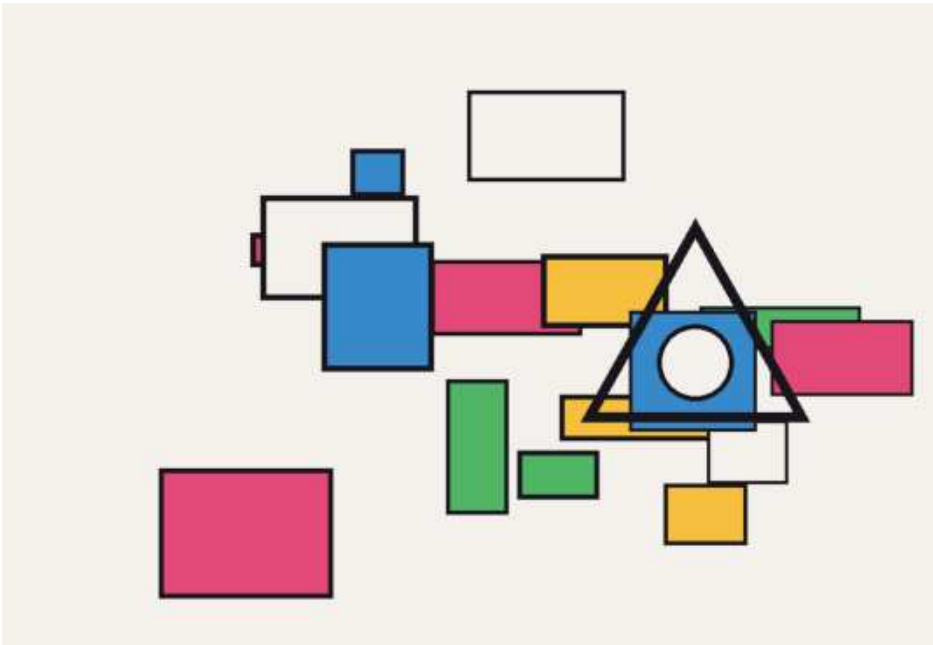
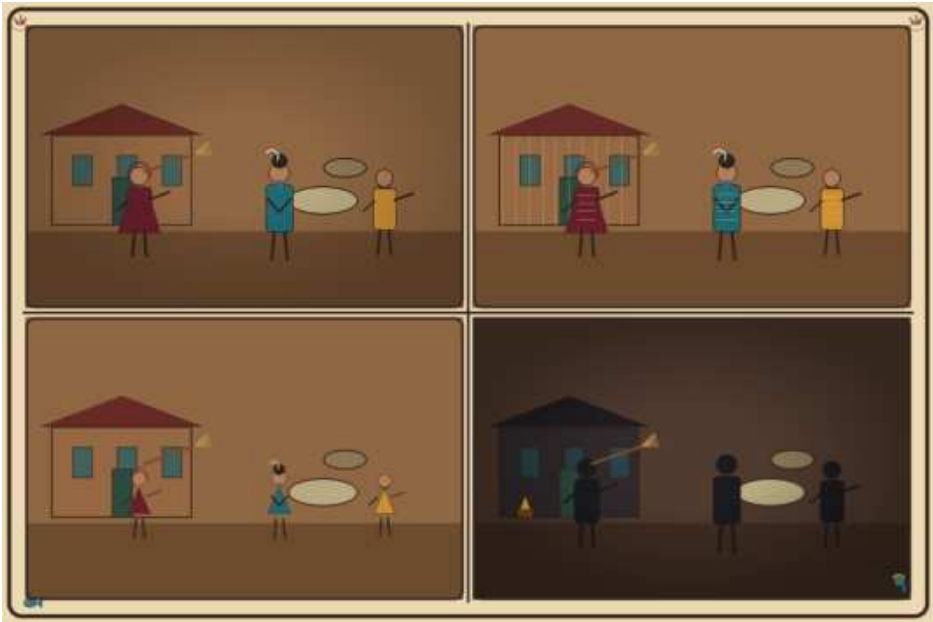


Picture 14

Ugna was Lord of the three worlds. If he wished, he could have covered the tree with tamarinds in a moment. Yet he returned empty-handed. Why? Because an ordinary servant named Ugna could not perform miracles without revealing the disguise. Keeping the disguise itself had become a kind of penance.

At that small moment, every thread of the story tied itself together: an empty-handed servant, a tired housewife waiting beside the cooking fire, and a goddess watching from behind the scene. Only one spark was needed. That spark became Chandan's anger.

Chapter 8: The Broom

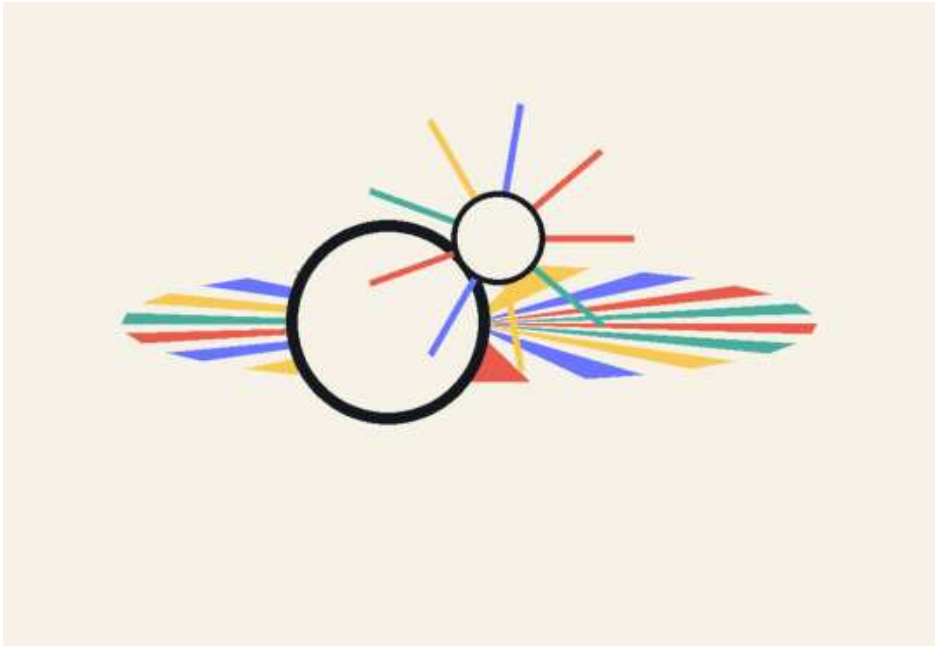




Picture 15

'Where is the tamarind?' - 'There was not a single one on the tree, Mistress.' - 'The whole tree is usually full and you found none? You are only making excuses to avoid work!'

Chandan's anger rose - the tired anger of someone carrying a household's work, which can sometimes fall on the person with the least power. In that house, who appeared to have the least power? The servant. Chandan lifted a broom and rushed toward Ugna.

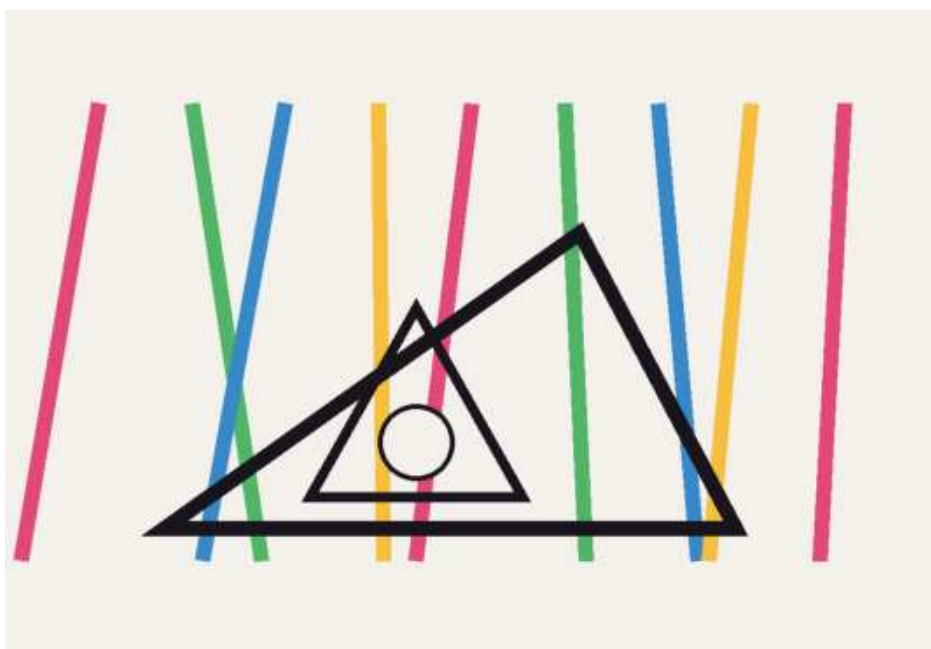
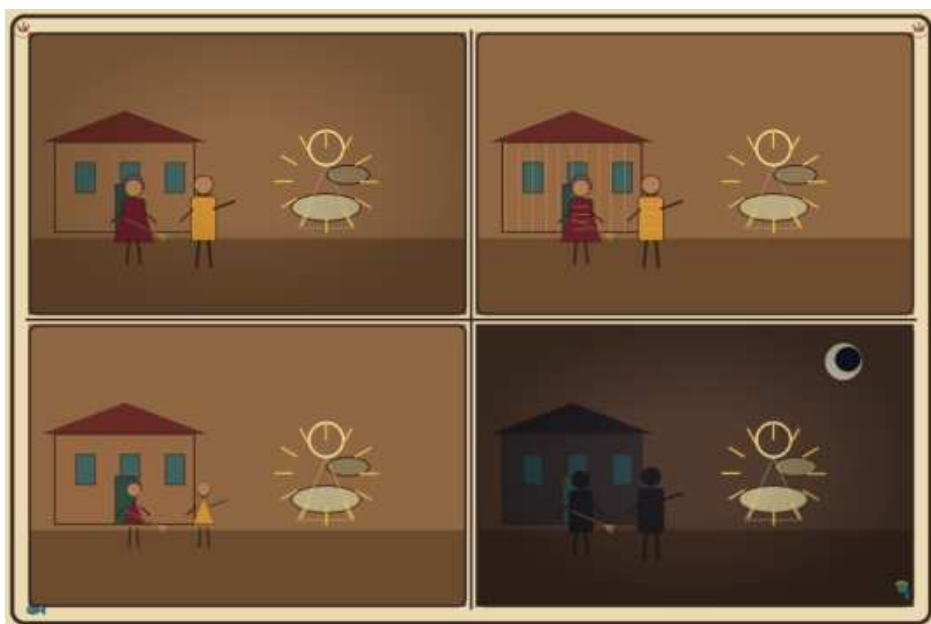


Picture 16

A broom was raised over the body that gods themselves worshipped with flowers. And Uzna? He did not move away, reveal his true form, or speak a word. As a servant, he stood quietly with his head bowed.

But a third pair of eyes saw the scene. Vidyapati had arrived. To see a broom raised against Mahadev himself was more than a devotee's heart could bear. His promise, Shiva's condition, and every consequence vanished from his mind in a single instant. A cry burst from his mouth - the one name he had promised never to speak.

Chapter 9: Ah, Shiva!





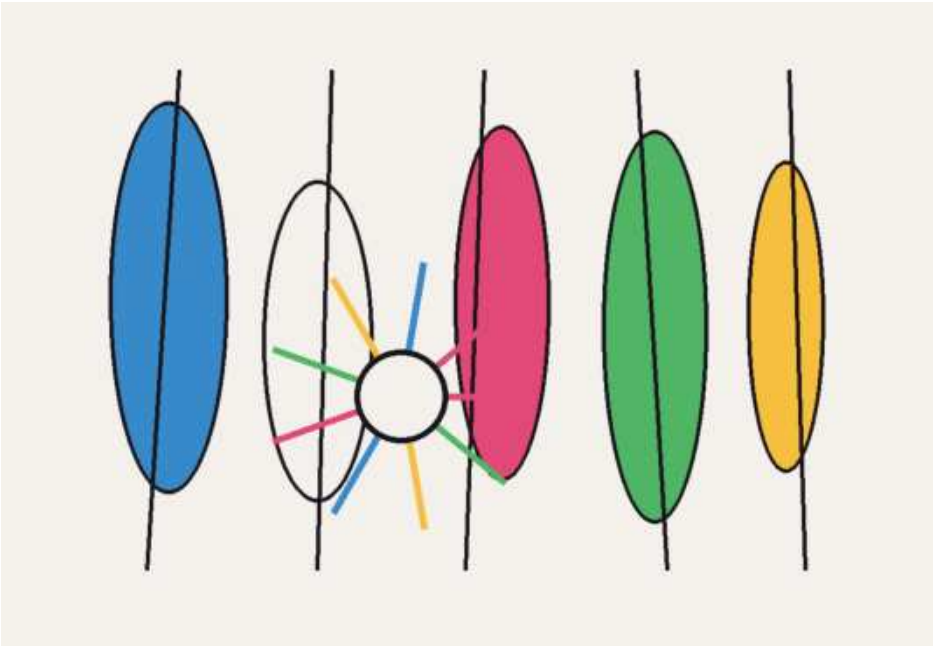
Picture 17

'Ah, Shiva!'

Two words - and everything changed. The condition was broken. In that very instant, Shiva disappeared. There was no farewell, no final vision, and no last sentence. Chandan stood with the broom in her hand, Vidyapati stood nearby, and between them there was only an empty space. Uzna was gone.

The broom fell from Chandan's hand. When she learned who he really had been - that the servant who had washed her dishes for years was the Lord of Kailash - her shock

was beyond words. The hand that had raised the broom,
the tale says, trembled for the rest of her life.

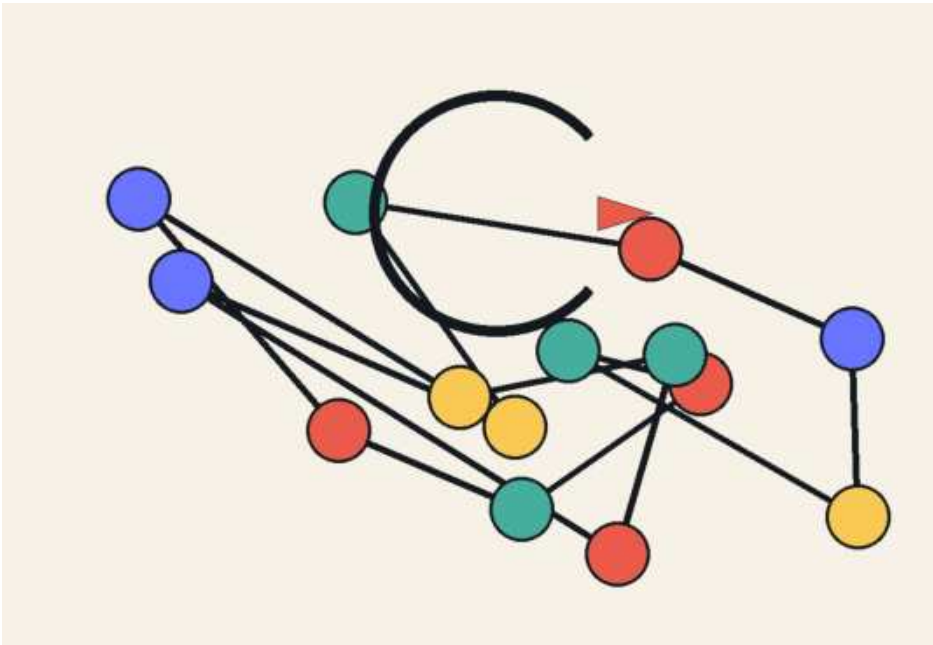
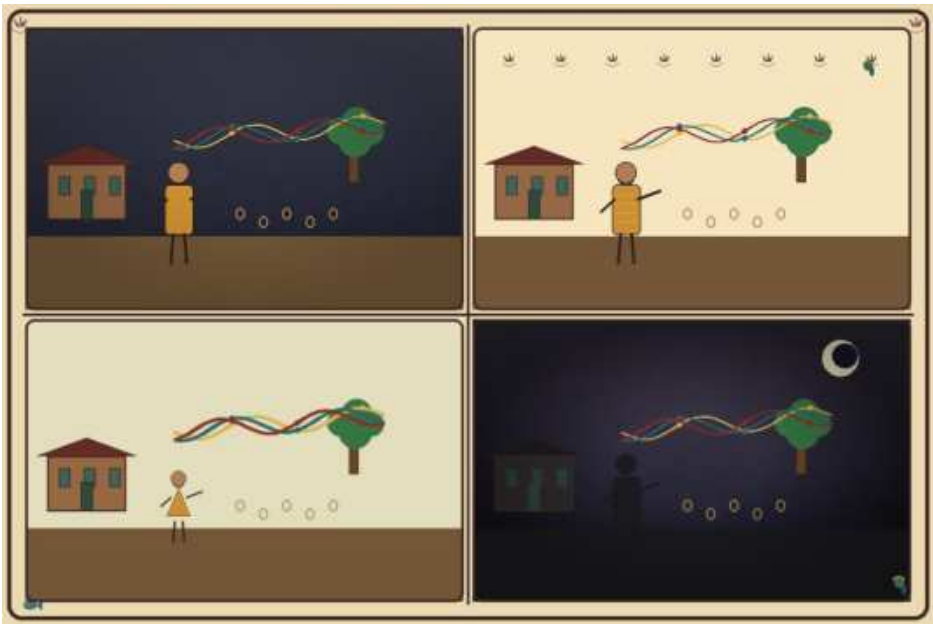


Picture 18

And Vidyapati? He sat down in the very place where Uguna had vanished. Again and again he stared into the empty space, as though looking hard enough might shape Uguna out of nothing once more.

He had broken the condition, but why? Because of devotion itself. What kind of devotee could remain silent while seeing Shiva struck? Yet by speaking, he lost Uguna. It was one of those painful choices in which both paths seemed to lead to sorrow.

Chapter 10: The Grieving Poet

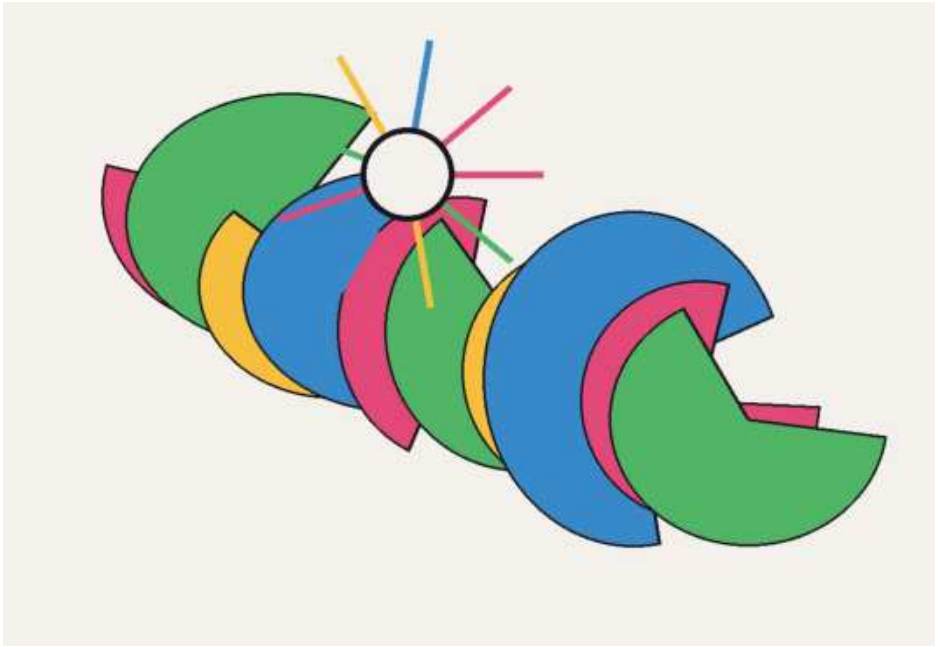




Picture 19

For many days afterward, Vidyapati wandered in a state of deep grief.

On roads, in orchards, near riverbanks and fields, he kept calling, 'Ugna re mor katay gelah - Ugna, where have you gone?' People wondered what had happened to the poet. 'He was only a servant,' they said. But they did not know who that 'servant' had been.

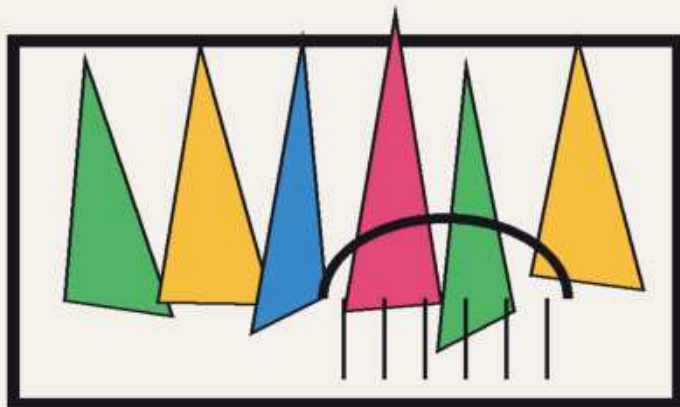


Picture 20

Vidyapati's songs became even deeper because separation now lived inside them. The nachari songs that had once been filled mainly with love became cries of longing. People say those songs of separation are among the most moving Shiva songs in Maithili, especially the songs of Ugna that are still sung today.

Look at the strange play between devotee and God. Shiva became a servant because he hungered for songs, and after he left, his absence made those songs even more powerful. Vidyapati's voice was refined in the fire of longing. Sorrow can become a deep well for a poet, and pearls can rise from that depth.

Chapter 11: The Shrine of Uгна





Picture 21

Mithila did not forget this tale. At Bhith-Bhagwanpur there is still a shrine known as Ugna Mahadev, where Shiva is remembered and worshipped in the form of Ugna the servant.

Think of the many forms in which Shiva is worshipped across the world: Nataraja, Mahakal, Ardhanarishvara, and more. In Mithila, he is also Ugna - a poet's servant, with wet hair, searching for tamarind. Mithila has a special way of bringing even its gods into the family.

And Chandan? The tale does not place all blame on her. She was angry with a servant, not knowingly with a god. The disguise had been kept so perfectly that even a broom could be raised without the truth being seen. If anyone must be blamed, perhaps it is the love that was so strong it made God become a servant in the first place.

The story ends in separation, yet its sorrow has a strange sweetness. A god who once came because he was tied by the thread of song - could he truly go away forever? The people of Mithila say no. Wherever a nachari is sung with a pure heart, somewhere nearby, perhaps someone with wet matted hair is standing quietly and listening.

The End

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The She-Camel

A Comic Tale of a Fake Doctor



Gajendra Thakur

Editor, Videha: First Maithili Fortnightly e-Journal (since 2000)

ISSN 2229-547X

Prologue: An Evening with Grandmother and Om

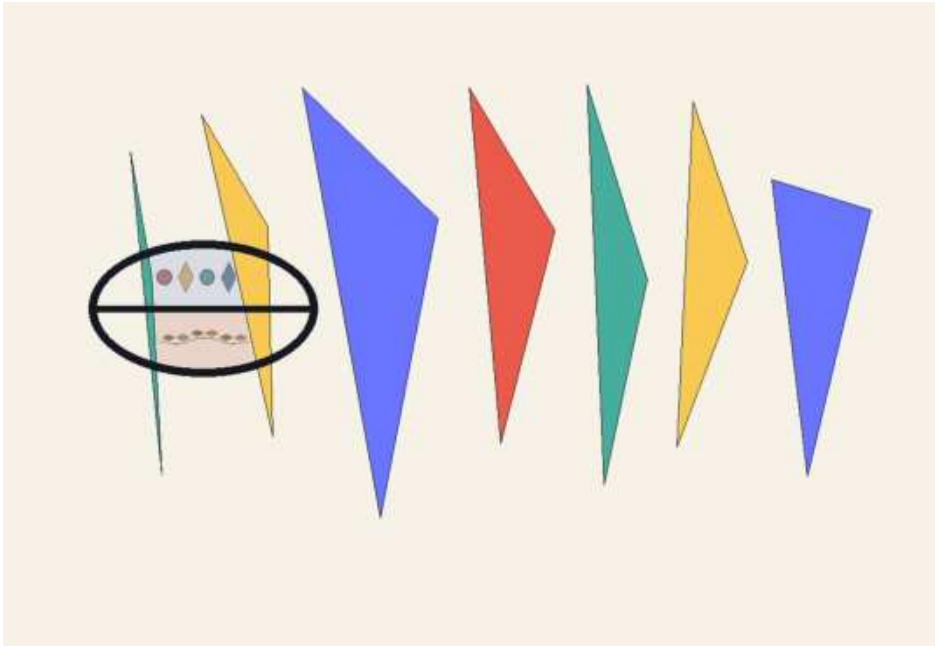
Evening had fallen, and Om was very determined.

'Grandmother, tonight I want a funny story, not a scary one!' Grandmother smiled and pulled from her bag of stories one of the funniest tales in the Maithili folk tradition. It also teaches an important lesson: a person who merely copies others cannot go beyond what he truly understands.

'Listen, Om,' Grandmother began. 'This story has a farm in Haryana, a she-camel, and a very unusual doctor whose treatment will make you laugh and laugh!'

Chapter 1: A Farm in Haryana

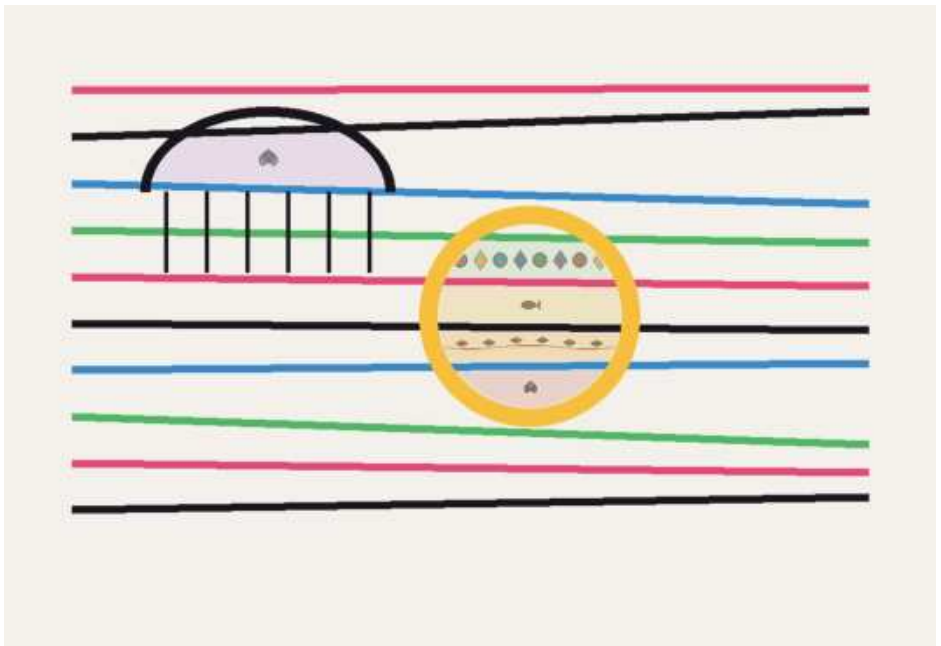




Picture 1

Farming in Haryana had its own ways. In some places, she-camels were used to pull ploughs, and jaal trees grew along the edges of the fields. Their yellow fruit ripened in the hot summer winds.

One day, a farmer was ploughing such a field with his she-camel. The sun was fierce, the animal was tired from work, and the farmer was busy with the plough.



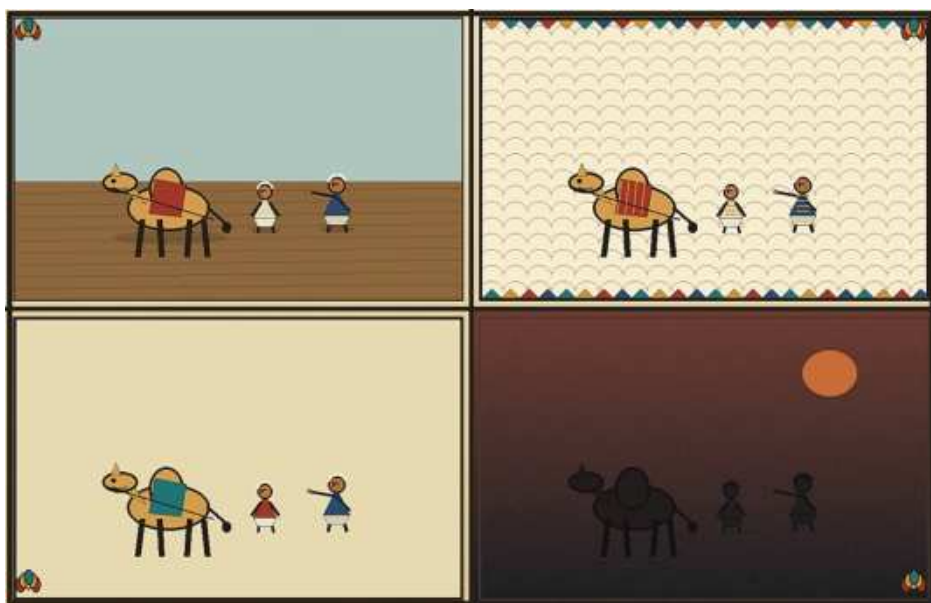


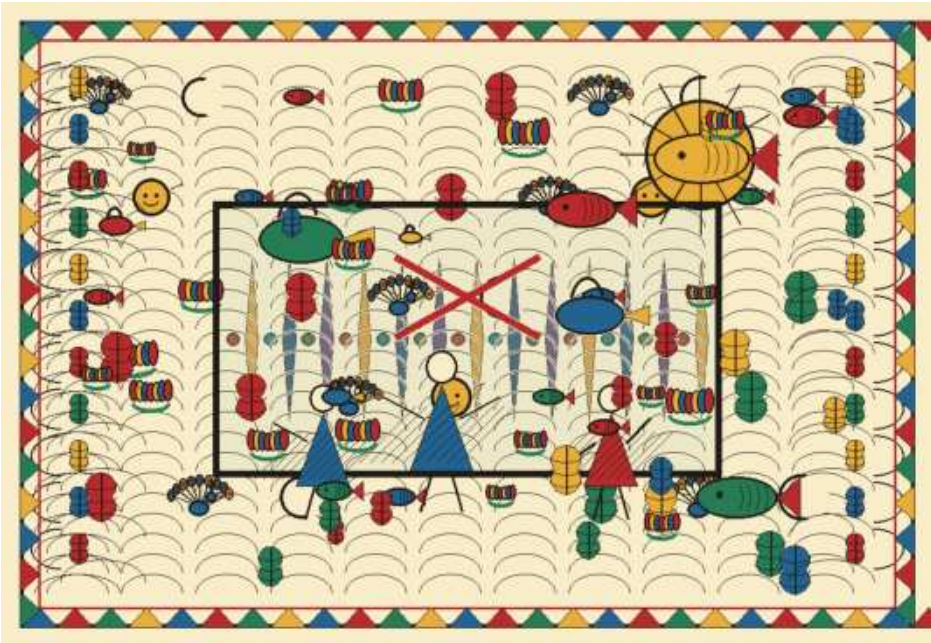
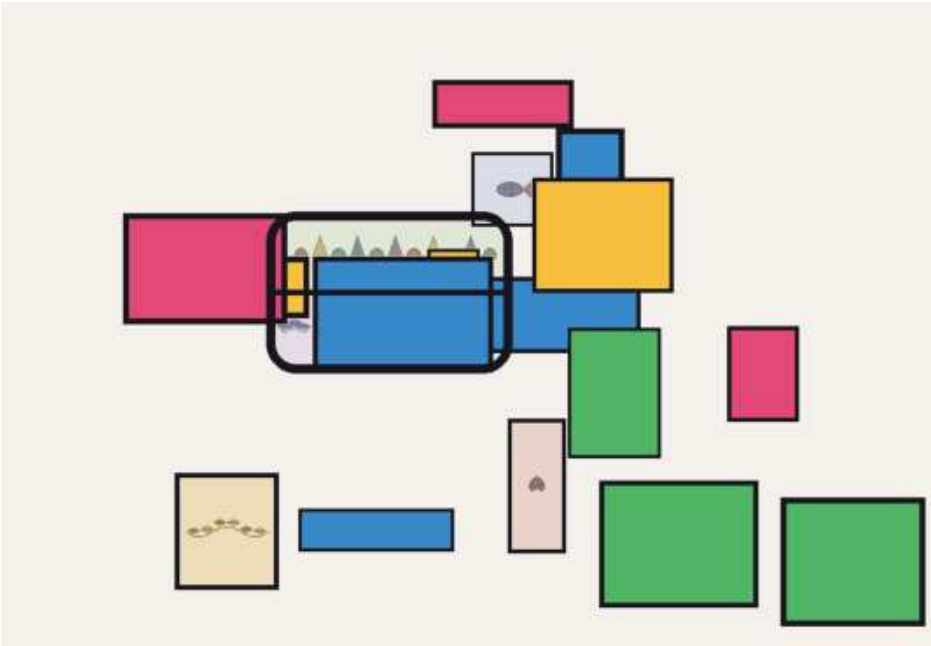
Picture 2

The she-camel had a long neck. As she worked, she turned toward a jaal tree and reached for a green leaf, not realising what would happen next.

By bad luck, the leaf did not go down properly. It became stuck in her throat, and the she-camel grew restless. The farmer dropped the plough rope and hurried over. 'What has happened to you?' he asked anxiously.

Chapter 2: A Traveller Arrives

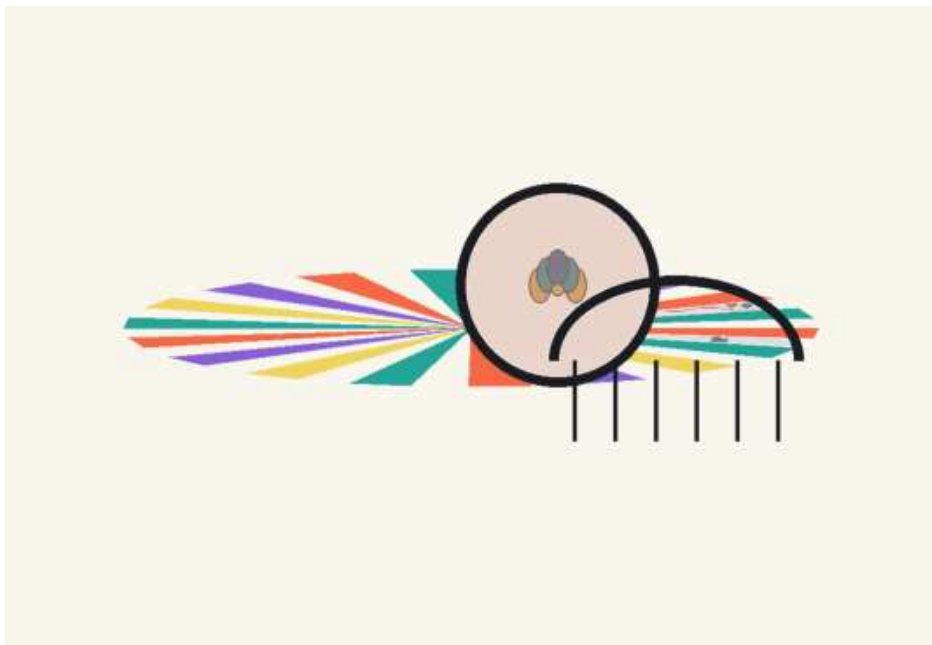




Picture 3

Just then, a traveller happened to be walking along the edge of the field. Seeing the restless camel and the worried farmer, he stopped.

'What happened?' the traveller asked.





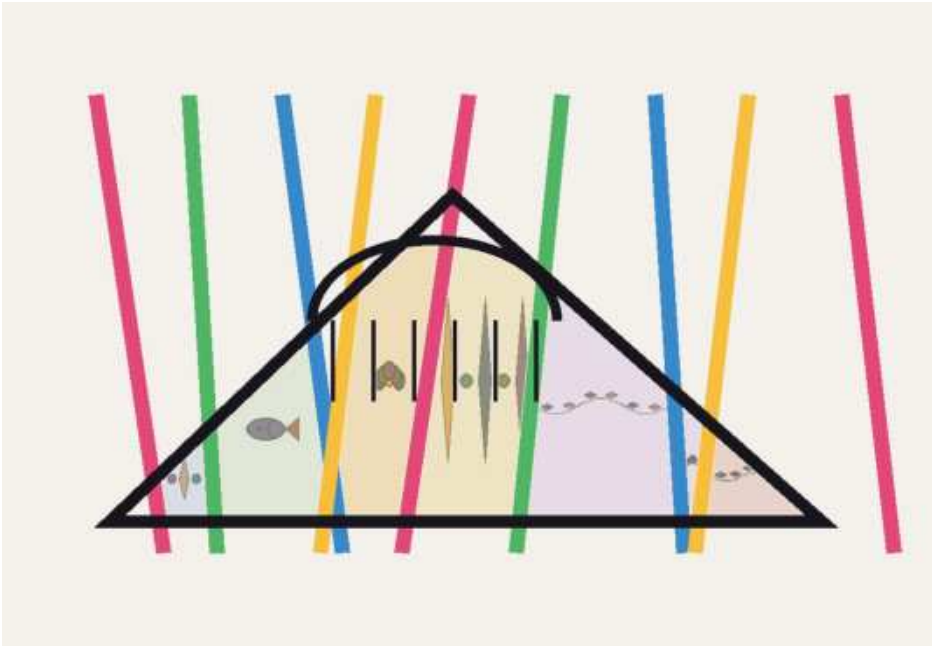
Picture 4

The farmer replied, 'Something is stuck in my camel's throat. She has stopped working and is very uncomfortable. I do not know what to do.'

The traveller became curious. He went close to the she-camel, examined her carefully, and began asking questions in a strange, serious way, almost like a doctor questioning a patient.

Chapter 3: A Series of Questions

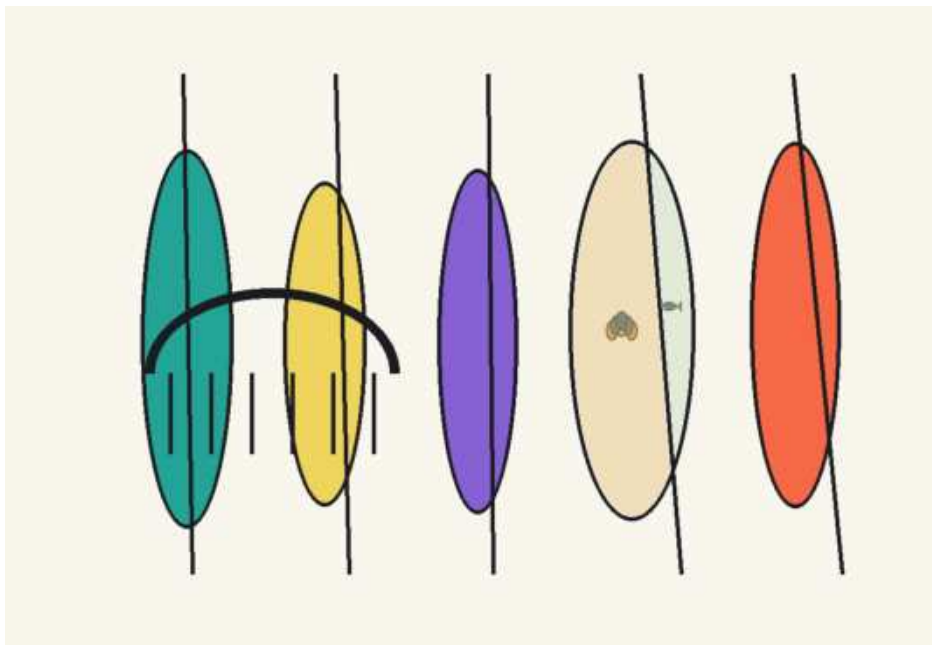




Picture 5

The traveller asked, 'While ploughing, did she go toward the right?' The farmer shook his head. 'No.'

'North?' - 'No.' 'South?' - 'No.' 'Left?' - 'Yes!' At last the farmer gave an answer the traveller seemed to want.



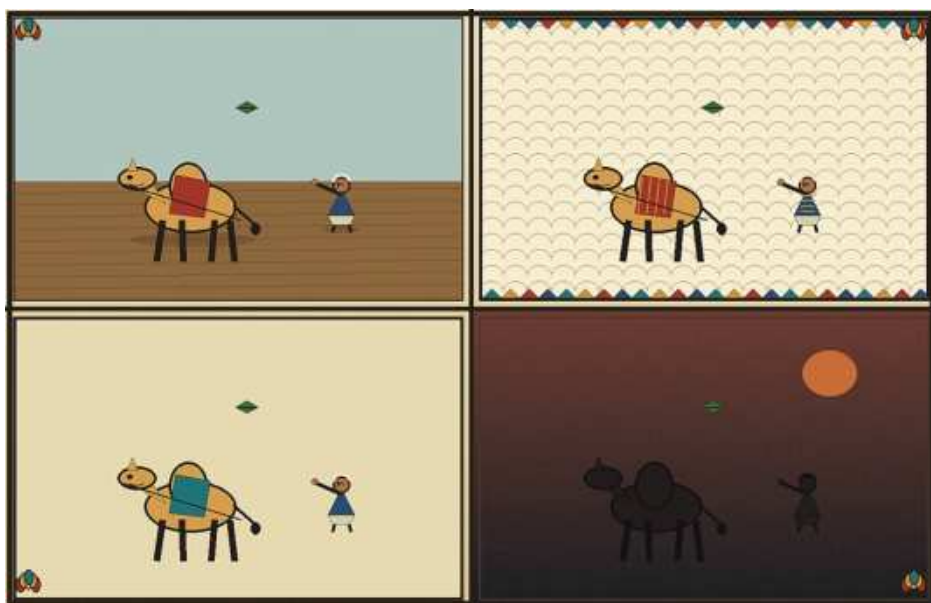


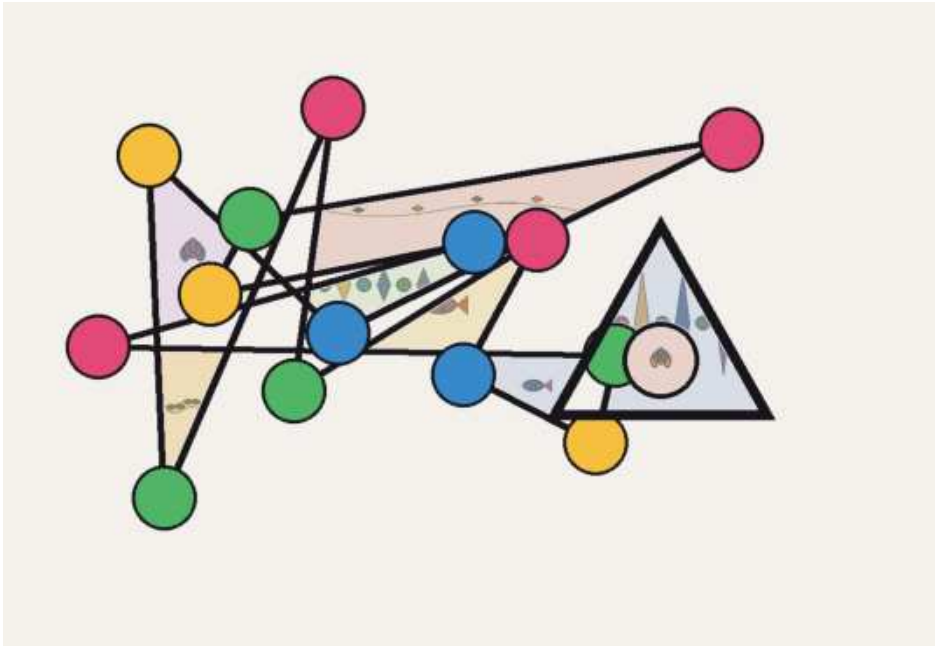
Picture 6

The traveller asked another question: 'Then did she reach toward a leaf of the jaal tree?' The farmer thought for a moment and said, 'Yes, she probably did!'

'No problem,' said the traveller confidently, as if he now understood everything and only the treatment remained.

Chapter 4: A Hand on the Neck

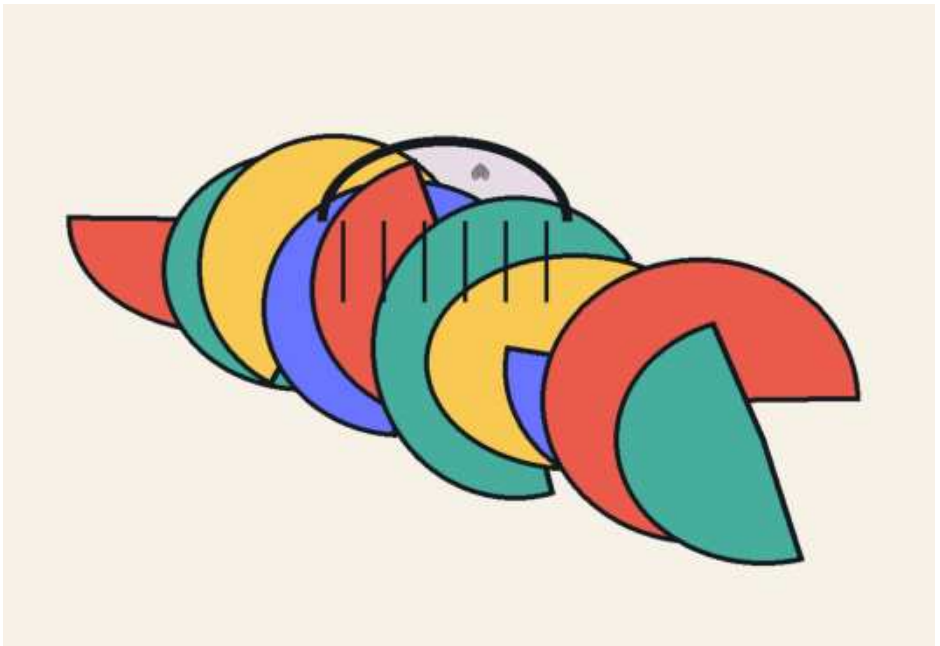




Picture 7

The traveller gave the she-camel's neck one firm slap.
'Thump!'

And it worked! The crumpled jaal leaf came out of her throat, apparently loosened by the blow. The she-camel immediately became calm, straightened her neck, and returned to normal.



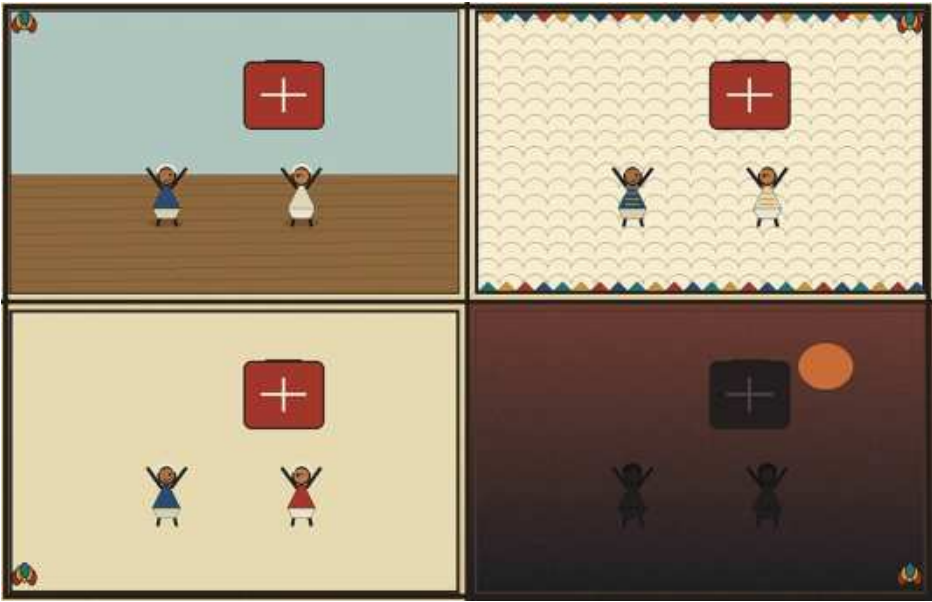


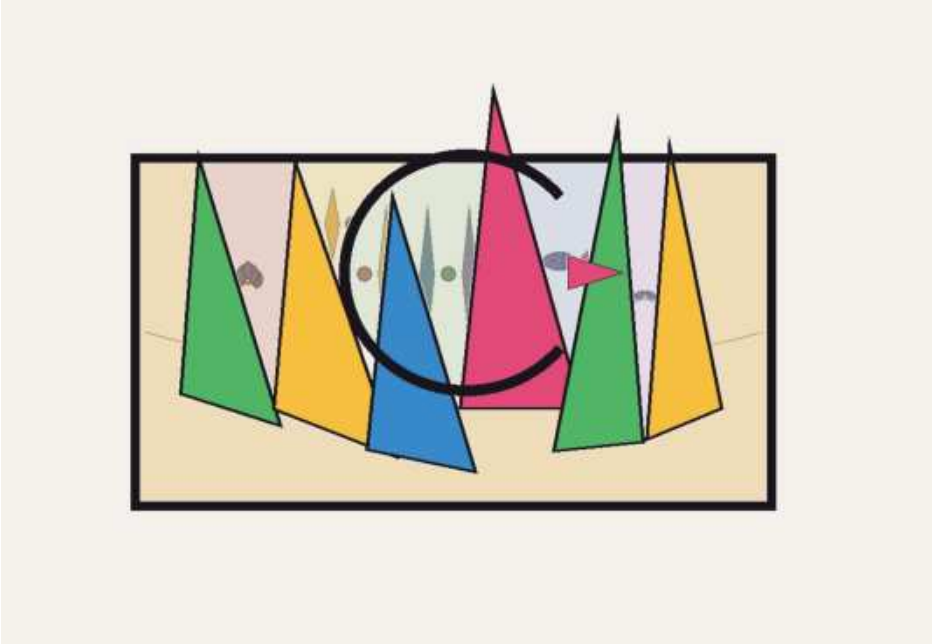
Picture 8

The farmer stared in amazement. 'That was wonderful!' he said. How had the traveller solved the problem so quickly and easily?

'How did you know what to do?' the farmer asked eagerly.

Chapter 5: The Claim to Be a Doctor

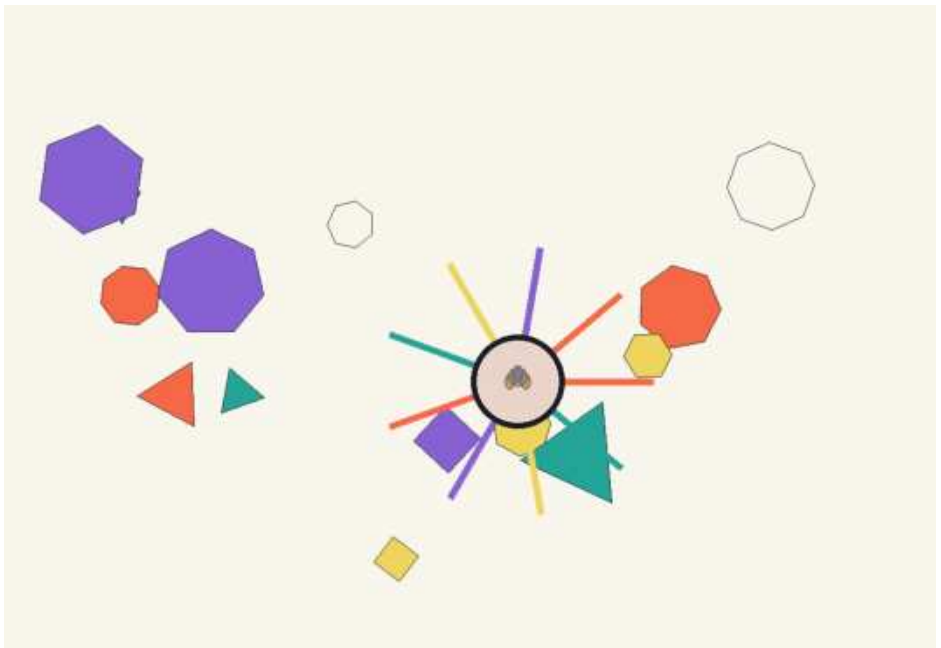




Picture 9

The traveller smiled proudly and said, 'Because I am a doctor.'

That was all he said, but the words planted a dangerous little seed in the farmer's mind. The farmer thought the treatment had looked very easy. The traveller had only asked a few questions and then slapped the camel's neck. What could be difficult about that?



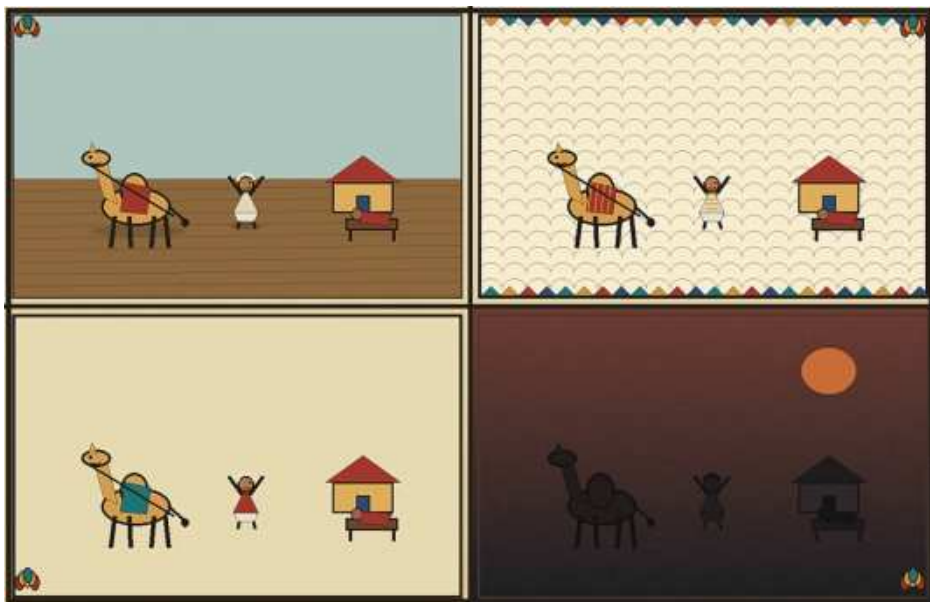


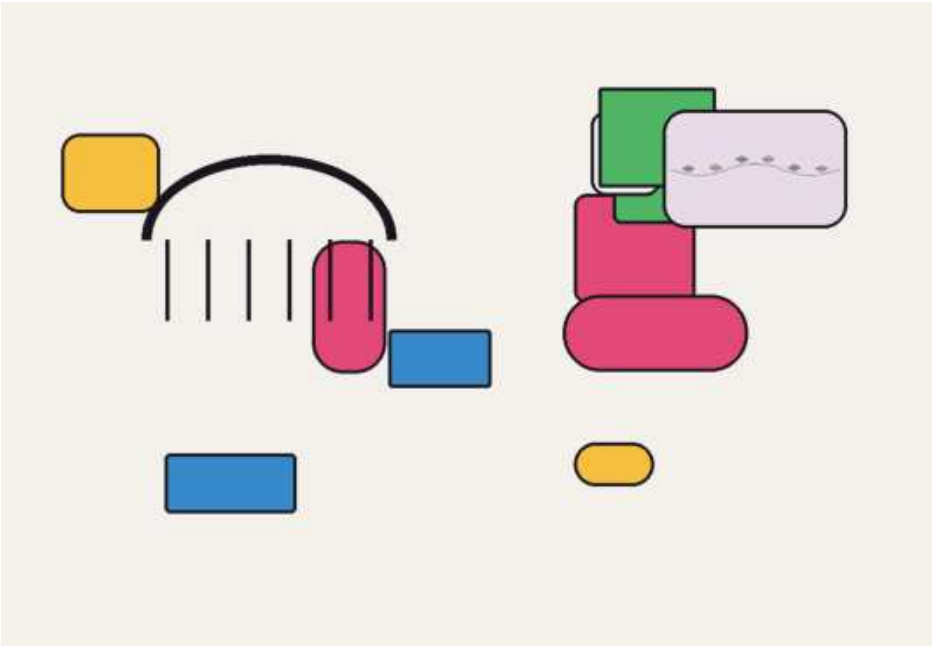
Picture 10

A thought flashed into the farmer's mind: 'In that case, I can be a doctor too!' He imagined that medicine was not a complicated skill at all, but something anyone could learn simply by copying what he had just seen.

The traveller continued on his way, never knowing what strange idea his simple treatment had placed in the farmer's head. The farmer remained there dreaming about his new career as a 'doctor'.

Chapter 6: The New 'Doctor' Goes to a Village





Picture 11

The farmer left his ploughing work and took the she-camel toward another village, eager to test his new 'medical knowledge'.

As soon as he reached the village, he began shouting, 'I am a doctor! I am a doctor! Anyone who needs treatment, come to me!'



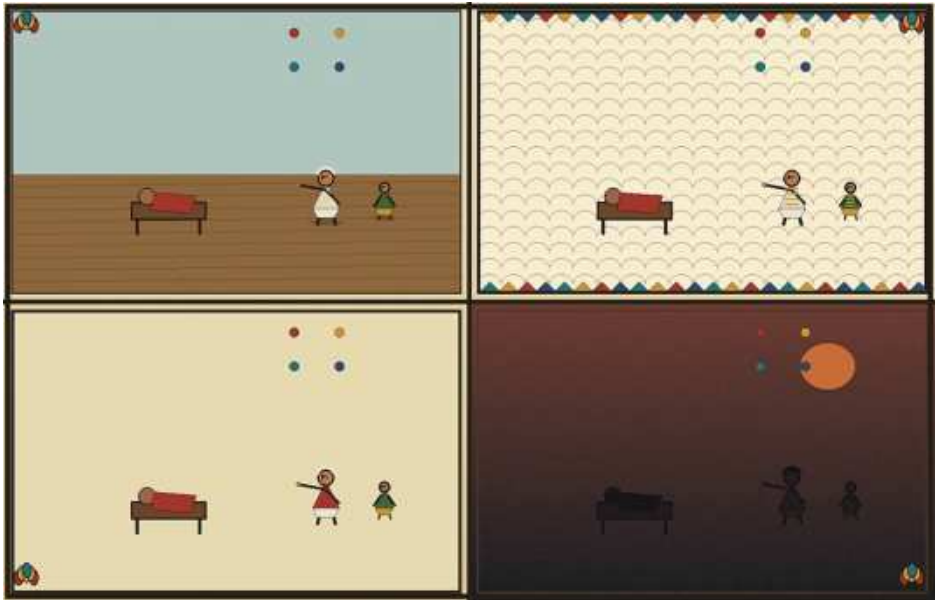


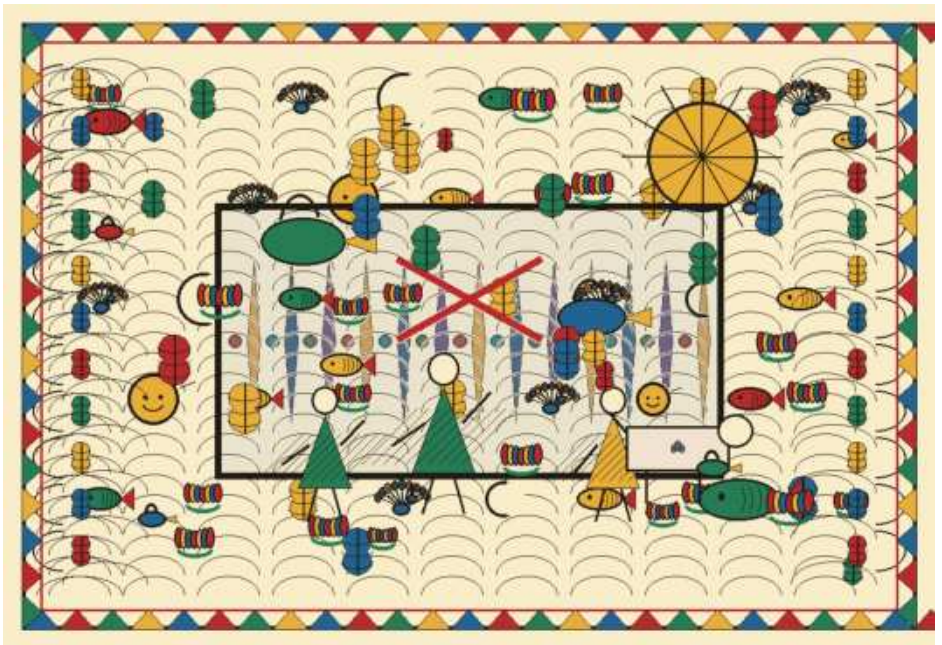
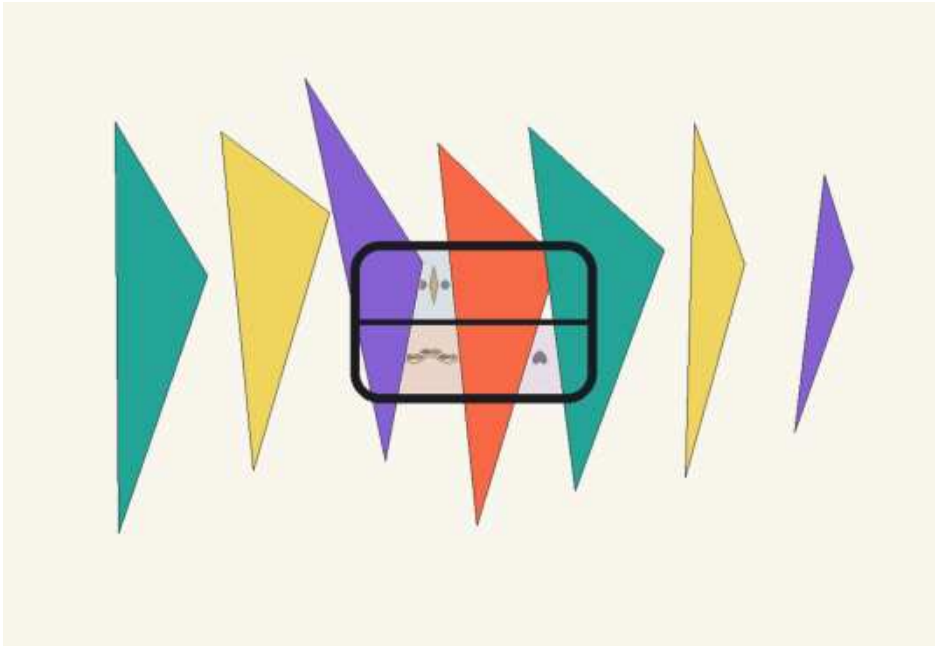
Picture 12

The villagers looked at one another in surprise. Who was this new 'doctor' who had arrived shouting so loudly about his skills?

In that village, an elderly woman lay sick on a cot. When her family heard the new doctor shouting, they quickly called him over. 'Doctor Sahib, please come and see our old mother.'

Chapter 7: The Copied Questions

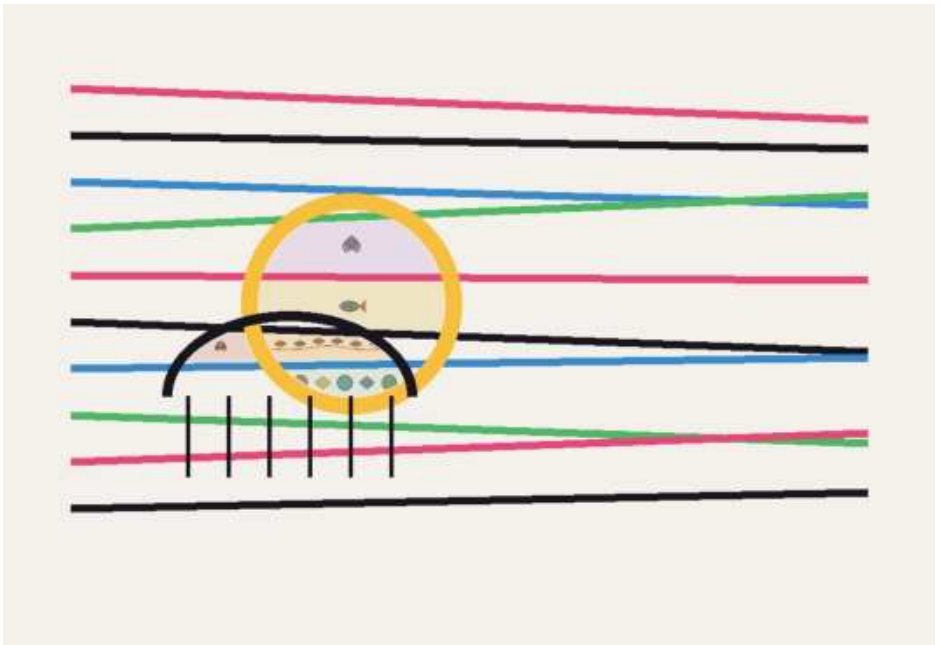




Picture 13

The farmer, now calling himself a doctor, came to the elderly woman and began asking exactly the same questions the traveller had asked about the camel. He did not understand that those questions had been about one animal's particular problem, not about human illness.

'Did the old lady go toward the right?' he asked. The family stared, then answered, 'No.' 'North?' - 'No.' 'South?' - 'No.' 'Left?' - 'No.'





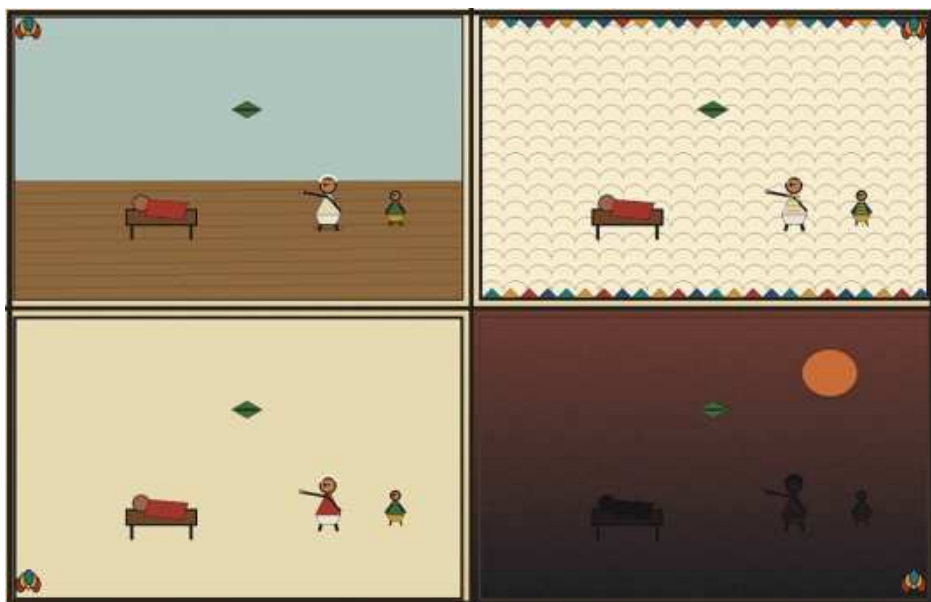
Picture 14

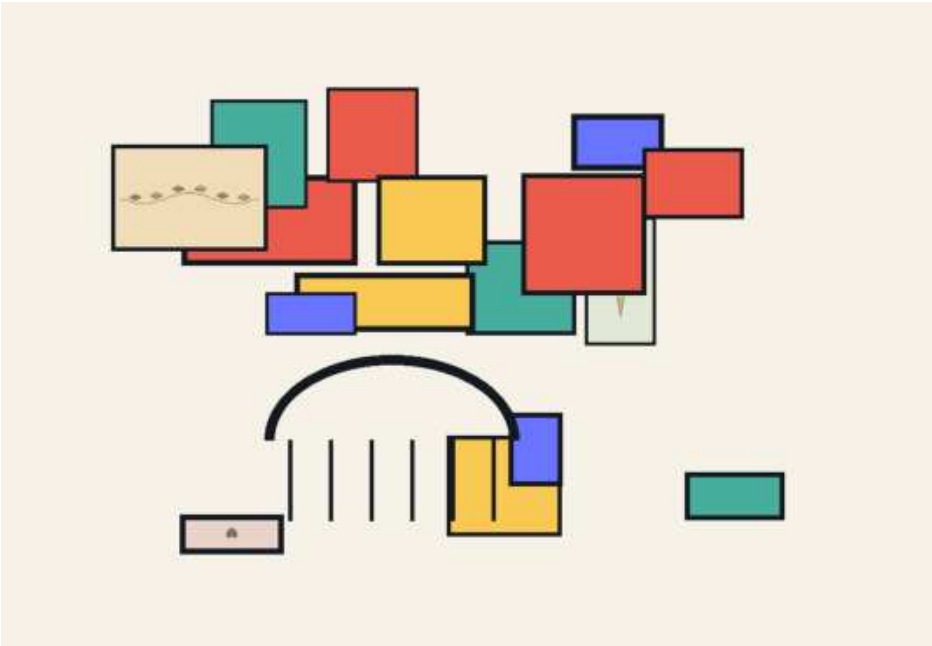
Hearing 'no' every time, the farmer-doctor became uneasy. The traveller's treatment had seemed to begin working only after someone said 'yes'. So he insisted, 'Just try saying yes once!'

Trusting the supposed doctor, the family finally said, 'Yes,' without even knowing what they were agreeing to.

Chapter 8: The Ridiculous Question

About a Jaal Leaf

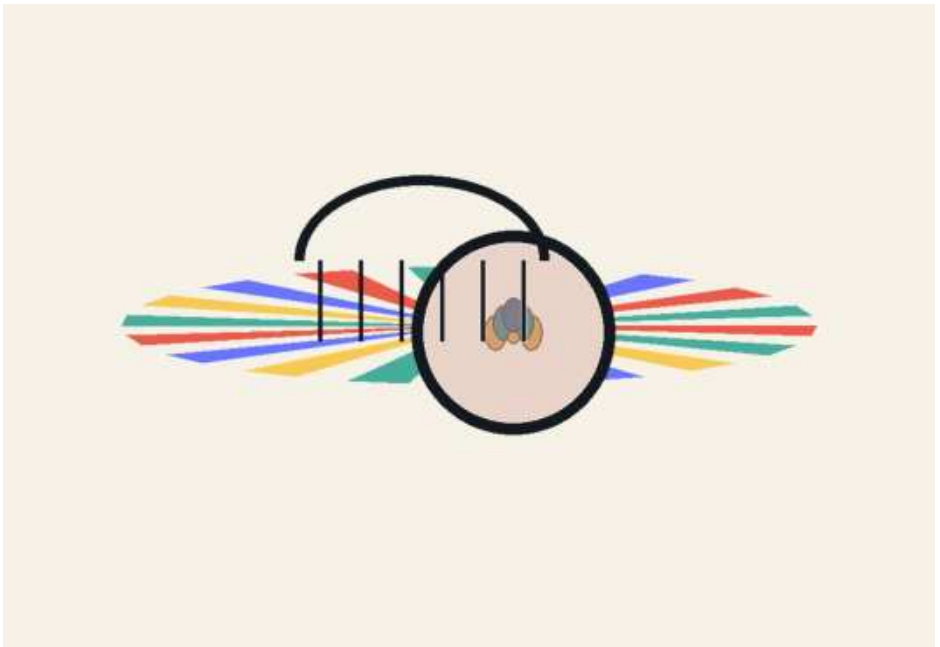




Picture 15

Now the farmer-doctor asked his final question: 'Then did she reach for a jaal leaf?' It was exactly the question that had made sense for the she-camel, but it made no sense at all for a sick elderly woman.

The family was astonished. Why would a person be eating leaves from a jaal tree? The question could have made everyone laugh, but the 'doctor' sounded so confident that no one dared challenge him.



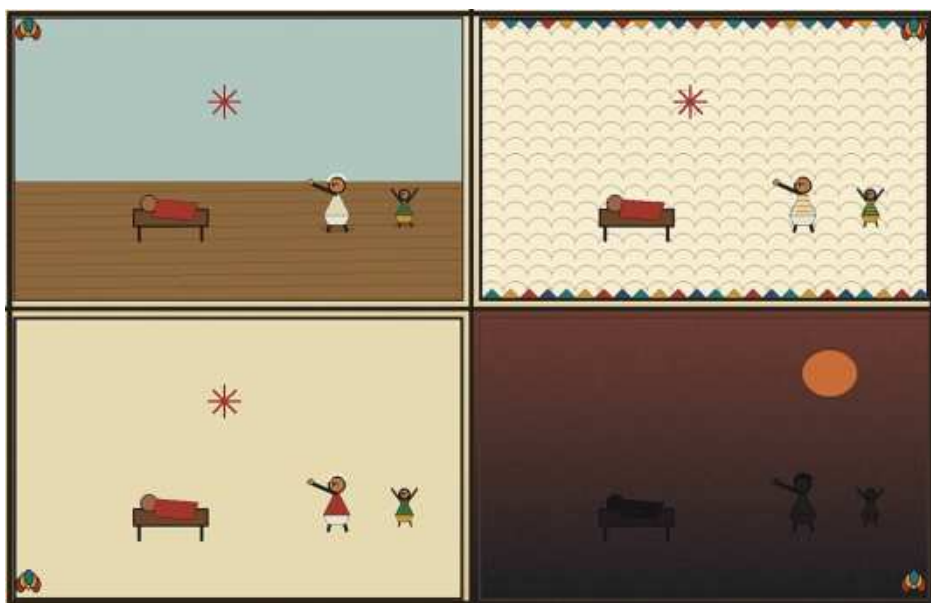


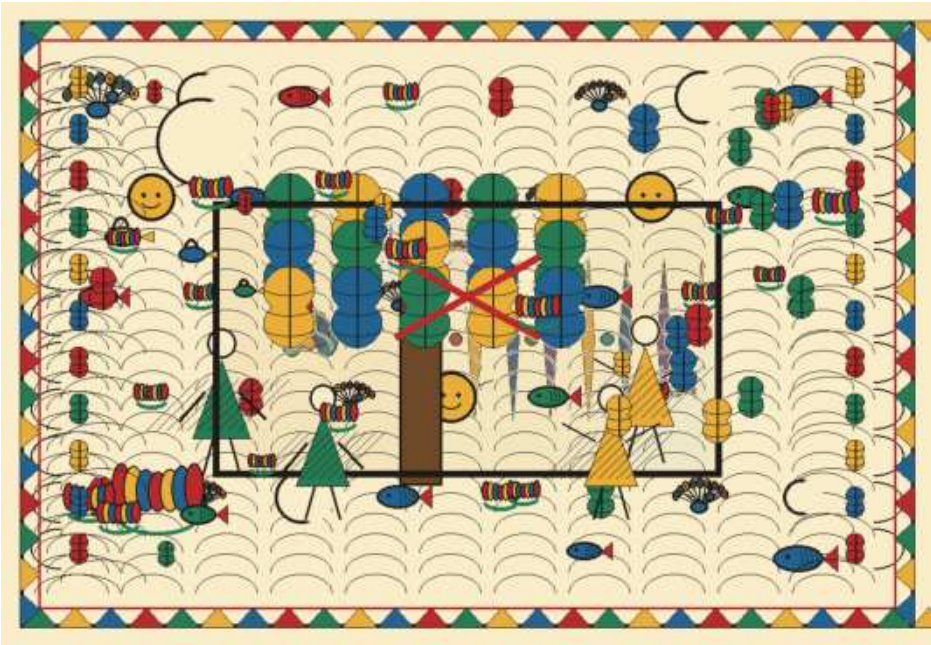
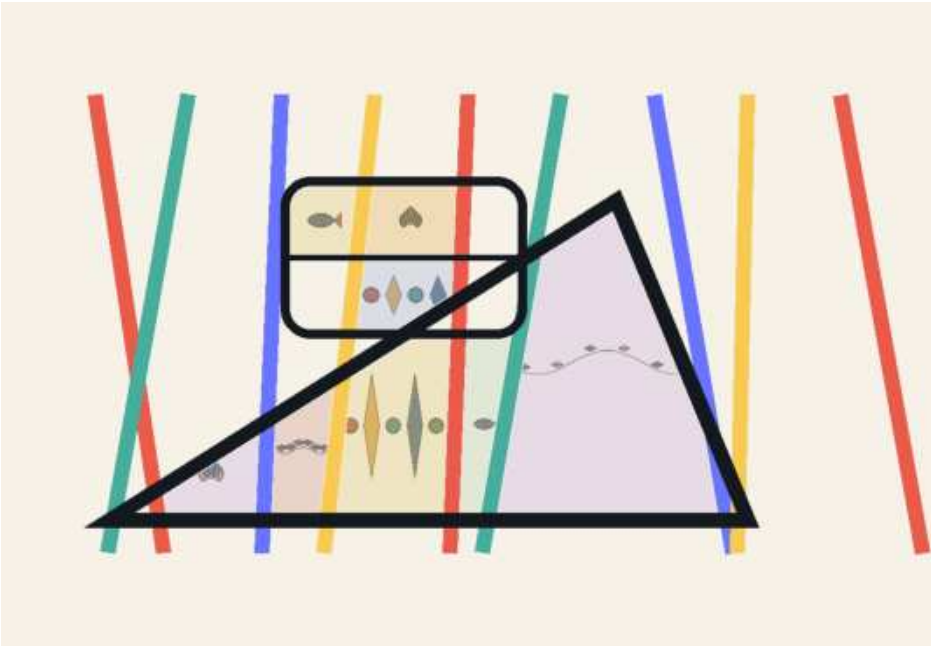
Picture 16

At last, because the farmer-doctor kept insisting, the family said 'yes' to this question as well, perhaps wondering whether the old woman might somehow have eaten such a leaf, or simply feeling they had to agree with the doctor.

Now all the questions were finished, and the farmer-doctor felt completely confident. In his mind, he had made the diagnosis and only the final treatment remained.

Chapter 9: A Tragic Turn

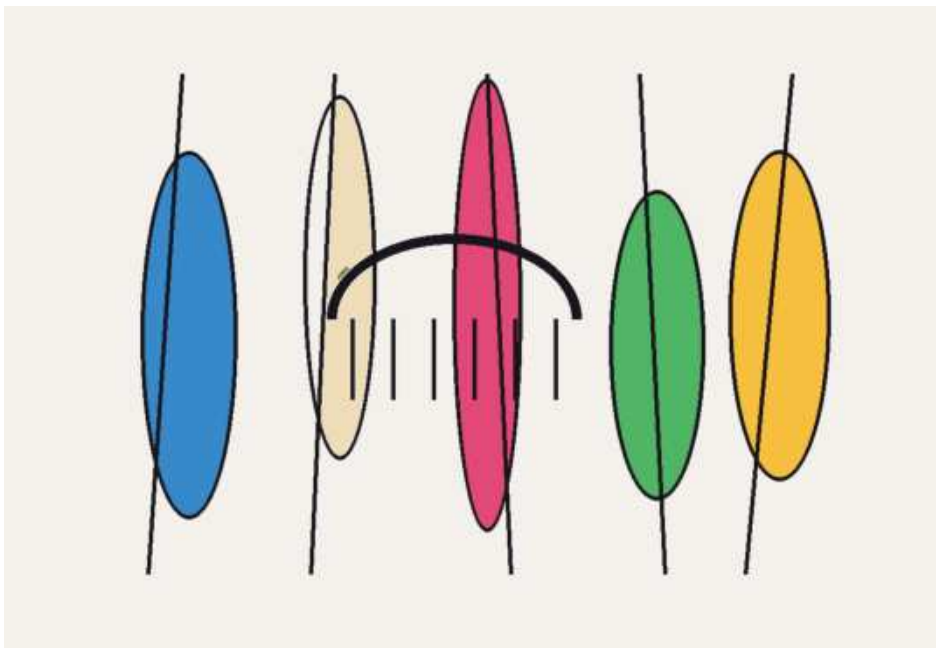




Picture 17

Following the traveller's method, the farmer-doctor struck the elderly woman's neck firmly, just as the traveller had struck the she-camel's neck.

But a camel's neck and a human neck are very different. The old woman was already weak and ill, and her body could not bear the blow.



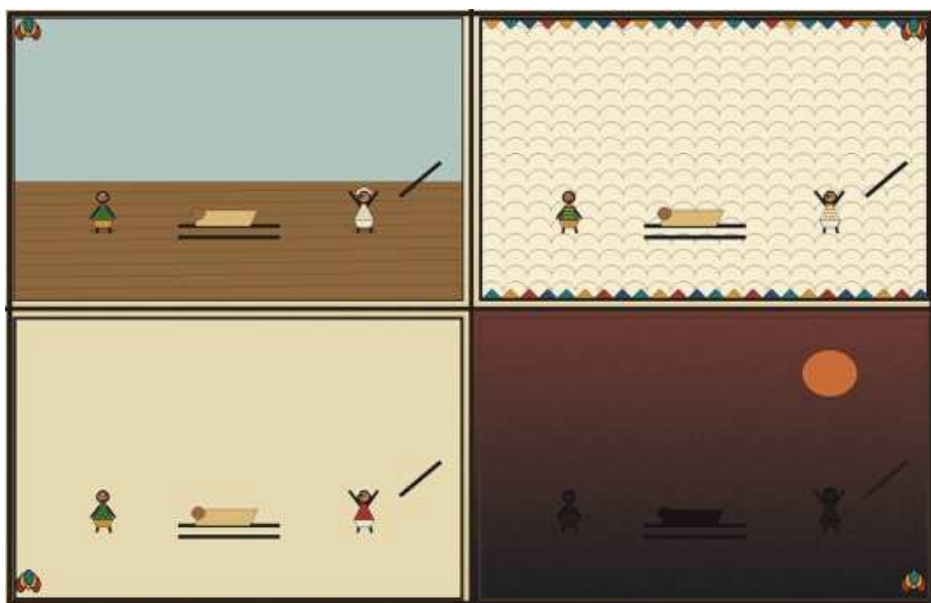


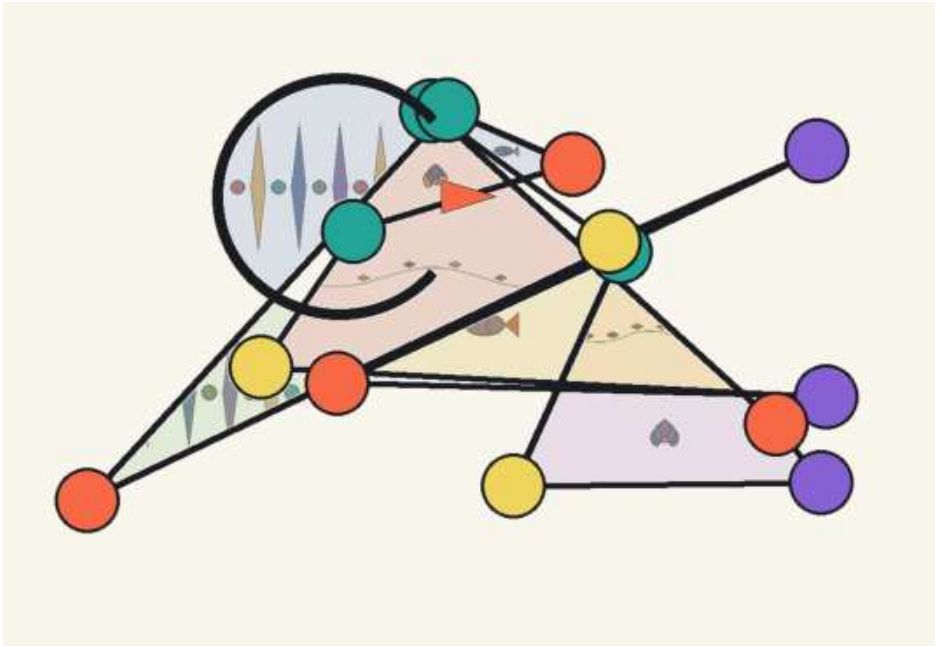
Picture 18

The elderly woman died there. In a single moment, the funny story took a terrible turn. A treatment that had happened to work for a leaf stuck in a camel's throat became deadly when foolishly copied on a human being.

The household filled with cries of grief. The family was stunned, and the farmer-doctor, who had been so proud only moments earlier, became frightened and confused by what he had done.

Chapter 10: Carrying the Body

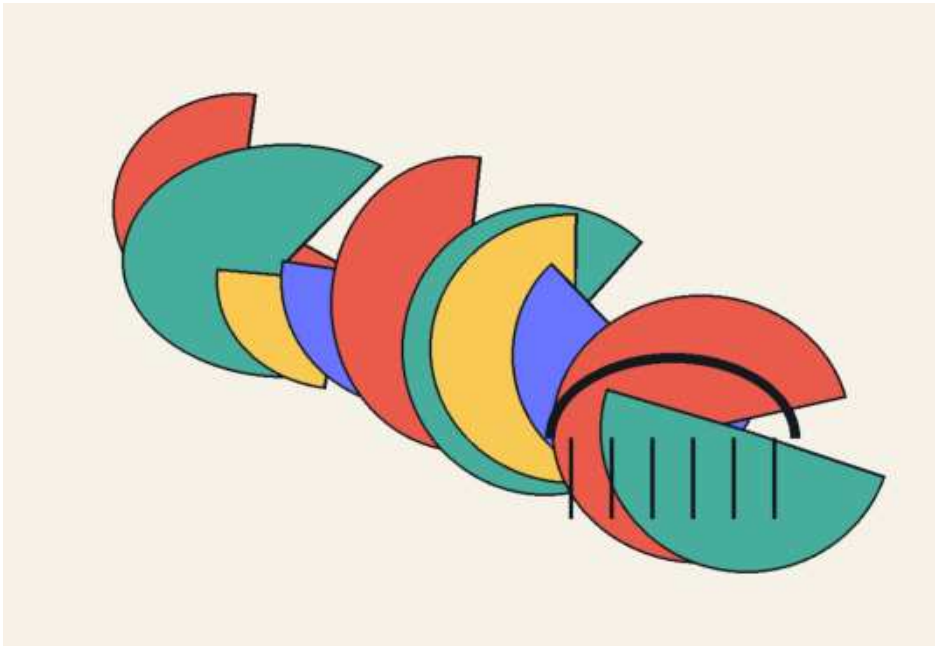




Picture 19

Only three people in the family were there to mourn, and there were not enough shoulders to carry the body. With no other choice, they told the 'doctor' to help carry it too.

The farmer, who had arrived to give treatment, now found himself carrying the dead woman's body. He was overwhelmed. The weight was not only physical; it also carried the burden of what his foolish action had caused.



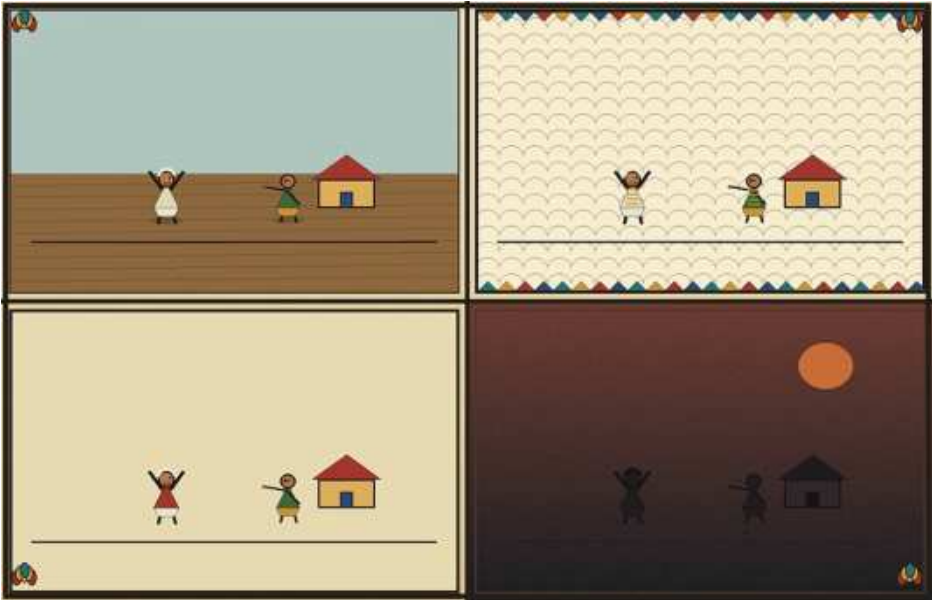


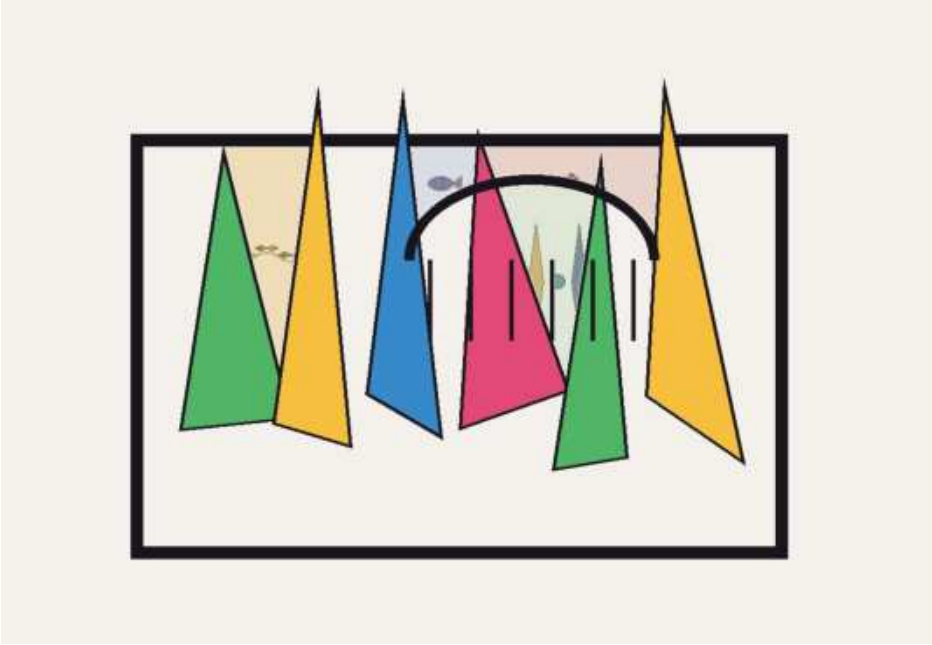
Picture 20

The elderly woman's funeral rites were completed while the village remained quiet with grief. Yet when everything was over, the farmer-doctor went to the family and asked for his fee, almost as though nothing had happened.

That was too much. The family beat the fake doctor and drove him out of the house. The man whose copied 'treatment' had caused a death was now being beaten because he still expected payment. It was the sharp and bitterly comic justice of the tale.

Chapter 11: On the Road to Another Village

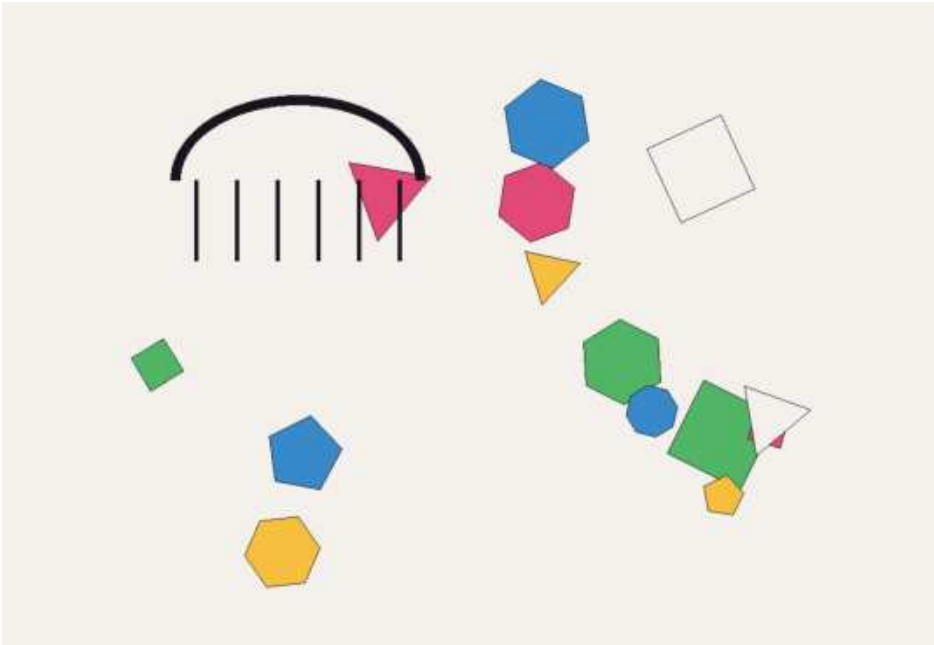




Picture 21

The farmer ran away after the beating and headed straight toward another village. Strangely, he had learned almost nothing from his first failure. His enthusiasm for being a doctor was still alive.

As soon as he entered the next village, he began shouting again: 'Get treatment! Get treatment! I am a doctor!'



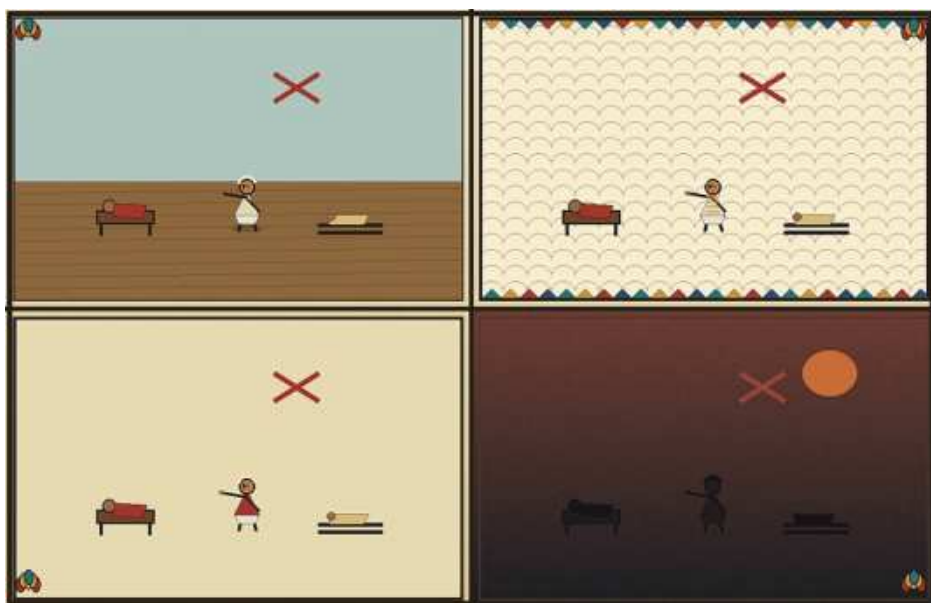


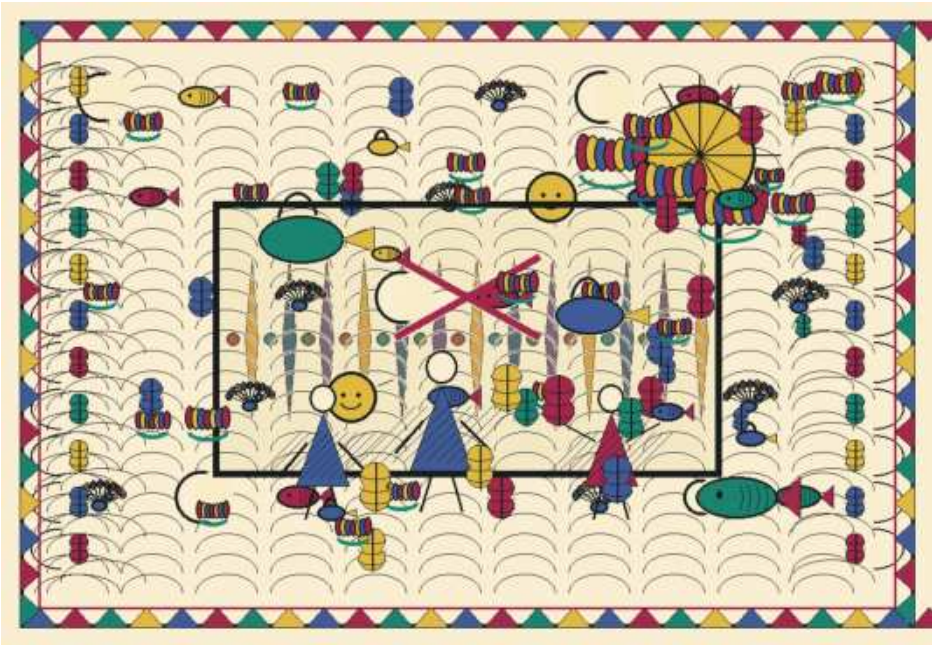
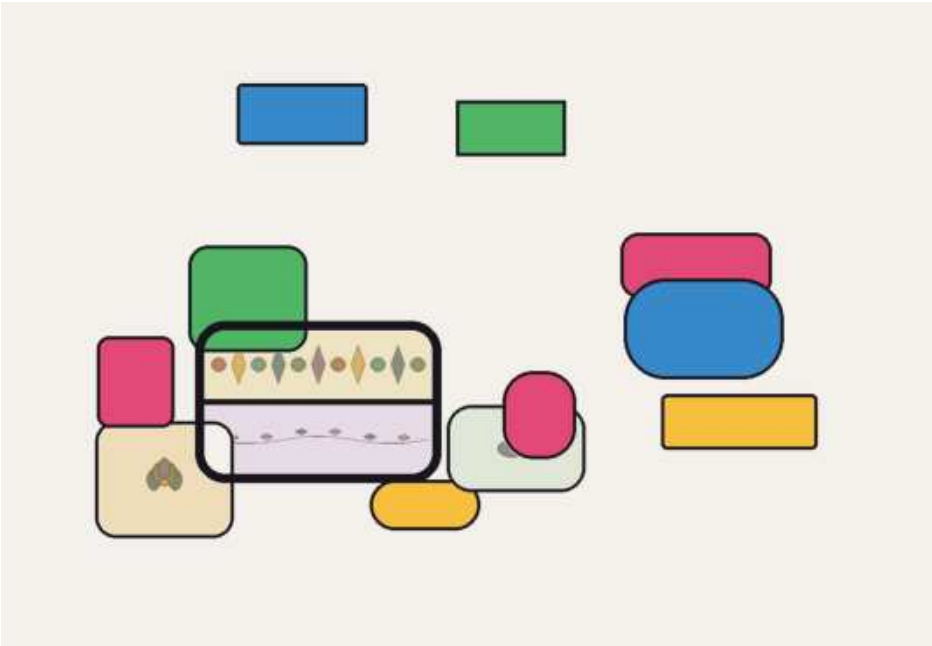
Picture 22

Villagers gathered around. One man stepped forward and said, 'Come, Doctor Sahib. My father is unwell. Please treat him.'

For perhaps the first time, something from the earlier disaster made the farmer a little cautious. The memory of what had happened in the previous village was still sitting somewhere in his mind.

Chapter 12: The Final Condition

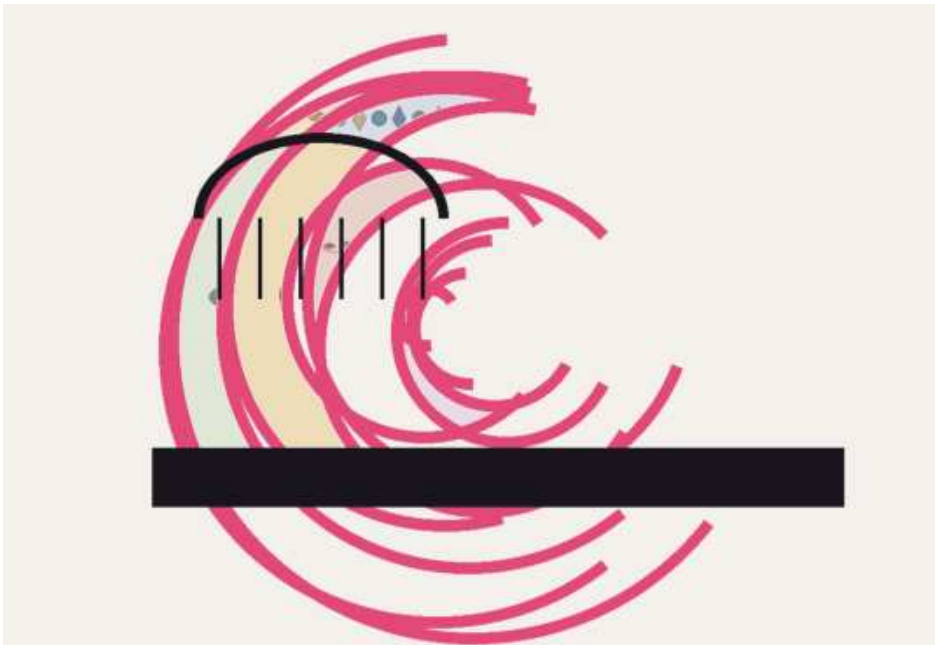




Picture 23

The farmer, who still believed himself to be a doctor, gave the man the funniest and most revealing answer in the whole tale: 'I will treat your father - but I will not help carry the body afterward!'

Everyone who heard this burst out laughing. Even now, the farmer had not learned that his treatment itself might be wrong. The only lesson he had learned was that carrying a dead body was difficult work.



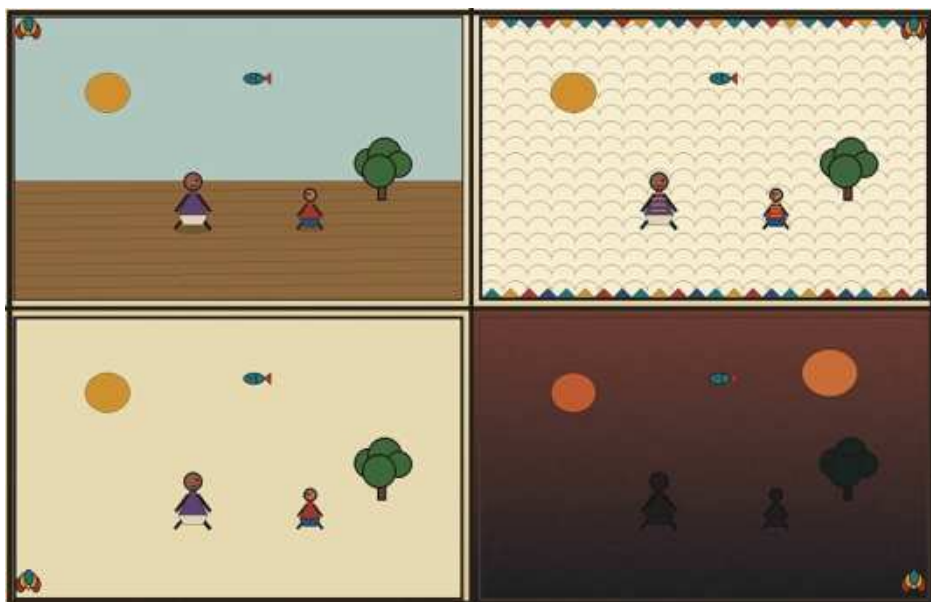


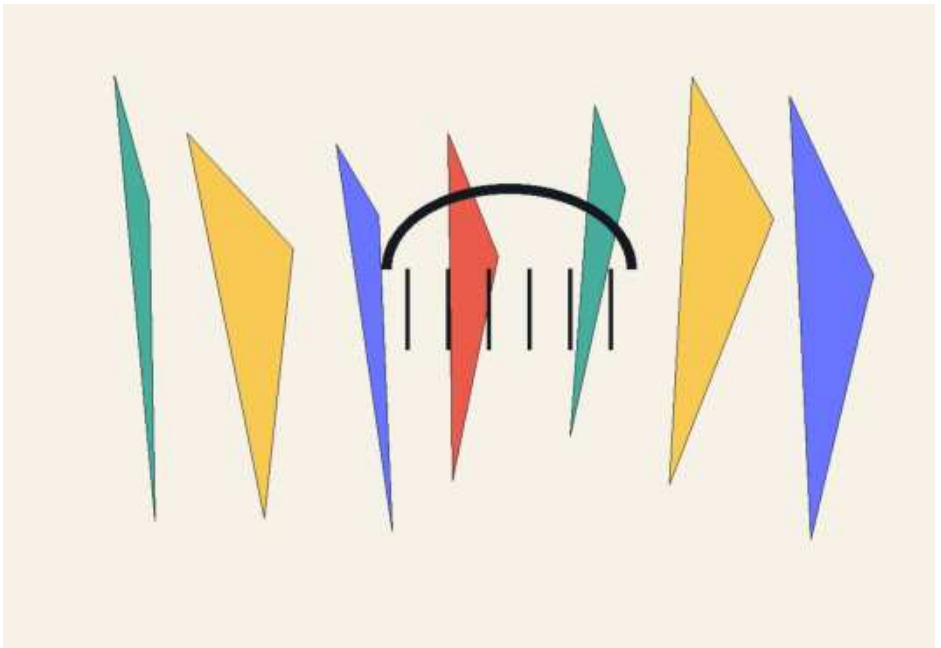
Picture 24

That contradiction is the heart of the story. A person who only copies may never understand the real mistake; he may learn only the most superficial lesson. That is the difference between real knowledge and imitation.

Grandmother ended the story by telling Om, 'Do you understand, child? The traveller treated the she-camel using his knowledge and experience. The farmer copied only the actions, and the result was a death. Before doing any skilled work, you must understand how and why it is done. Simply copying what you see is not enough.'

Chapter 13: Grandmother and Om at the End



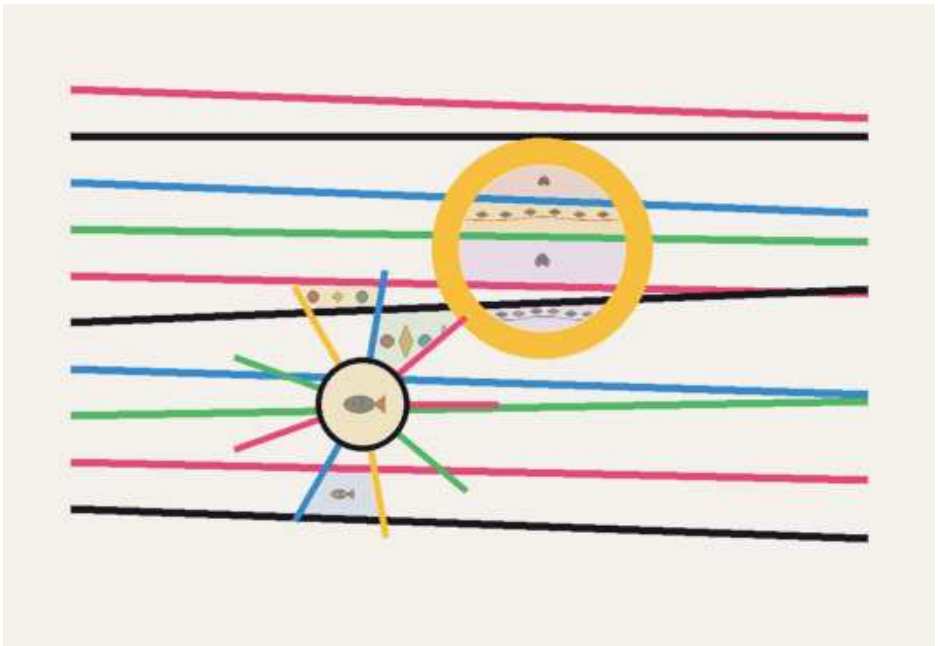


Picture 25

Om burst out laughing when the story ended.

'Grandmother, that was very funny! But what a foolish doctor he was!'

Grandmother smiled. 'Yes, child, but there is a serious thought behind the laughter too. Do not imagine that stories like this happen only far away from us.'





Picture 26

Om asked in surprise, 'What do you mean, Grandmother? Stories like this happen here too?'

Grandmother laughed. 'Of course they do, child. I thought you already knew that, so I did not say it!' Om laughed again and settled down to sleep with his head in Grandmother's lap.

The End

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