



Body Positivity



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Illustration: Saurabh Pandey

IMAGINE YOU have a sofa or a chair in your house that you really like. You love sitting on it. It's like your safe spot. It provides you comfort. You can sleep while sitting on it, also read, eat, relax on it.

One day, a person or a relative comes to your house. He/she looks at your sofa and starts criticizing it. He/she criticizes its colour, its texture, its shape, the mark it has from the *sabzi* that fell on it once. Thereafter the person leaves, having nothing to do with your sofa now.

And then when you sit on it again you realize it's still providing you the comfort it did before and you still love your safe spot.

Now imagine your body as the sofa. It provides you with comfort, you feel confident in it, you are able to do so many things because of the body you've got. Then a relative or a classmate comes and starts criticizing it, passes comments on it. He/She starts saying you're too short or too tall, too fat or too skinny, makes fun of the scar on your left arm or the acne on your face. Will this affect your body? Will it become less resourceful?



No, it will not. It will remain the same body you felt comfortable and confident in before.

So, stop doubting yourself, stop judging your body just because someone who doesn't

even play a significant role in your life, comments on it. Because just like your favourite sofa, your safe spot, your comfort spot, someone's comment will not change your body. ♦

It's Okay To Fail

Smridhi Tandon (15)

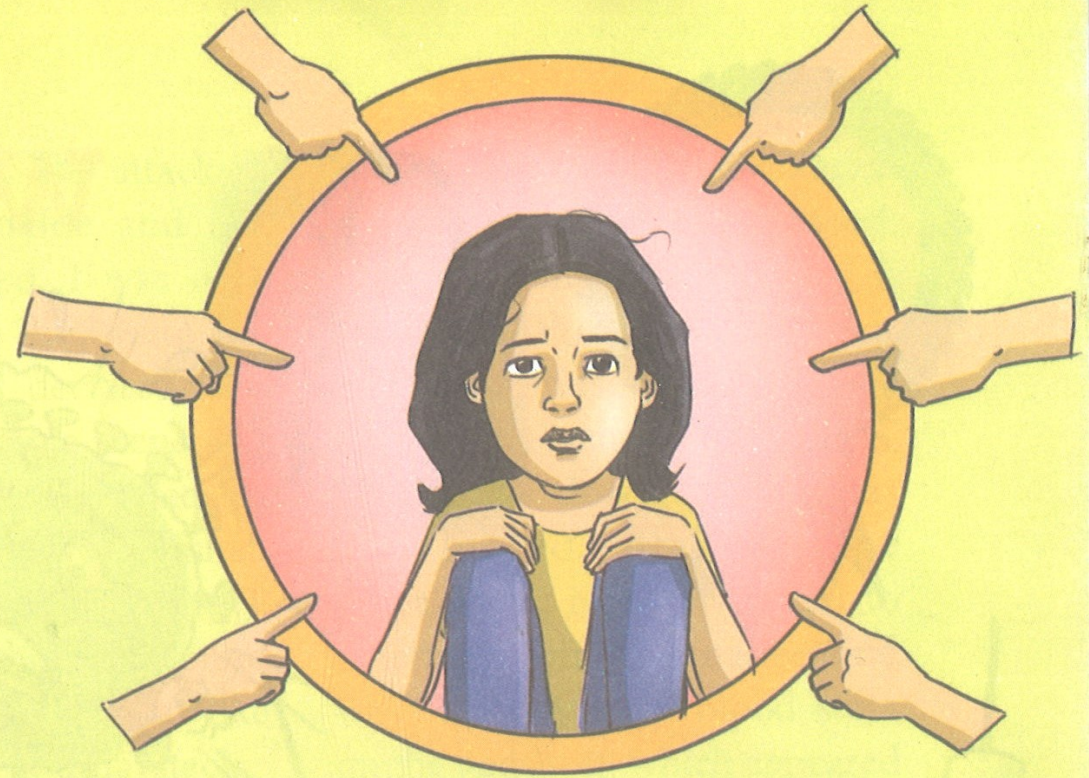
Illustration: Saurabh Pandey

*"You lost the game, what a shame!
You didn't win the competition
Oh! What humiliation!
What would you do? Where would you go?"
A thousand accusations of being a failure
On you were put.*

*"But what's the big deal?" the other students asked,
"Its not like it's the end of the world," they laughed.
Societal standards answered from the other side,
"Failure is not an option, if you want to thrive,
We have taught our children from a young age,
That success should be your only aim."*

*"But isn't giving your best that matters?
Calling a child a failure after all their efforts
Would cause them to shatter!"*

*"Oh, all that's rubbish!" the societal standards replied,
"Good marks, colleges, jobs is what we look for,
Not your failed tries."*



Listening to this, a surge of anger inside them ignite...

*"Our peace of mind and happiness
Is what really matters to us," they cried.*

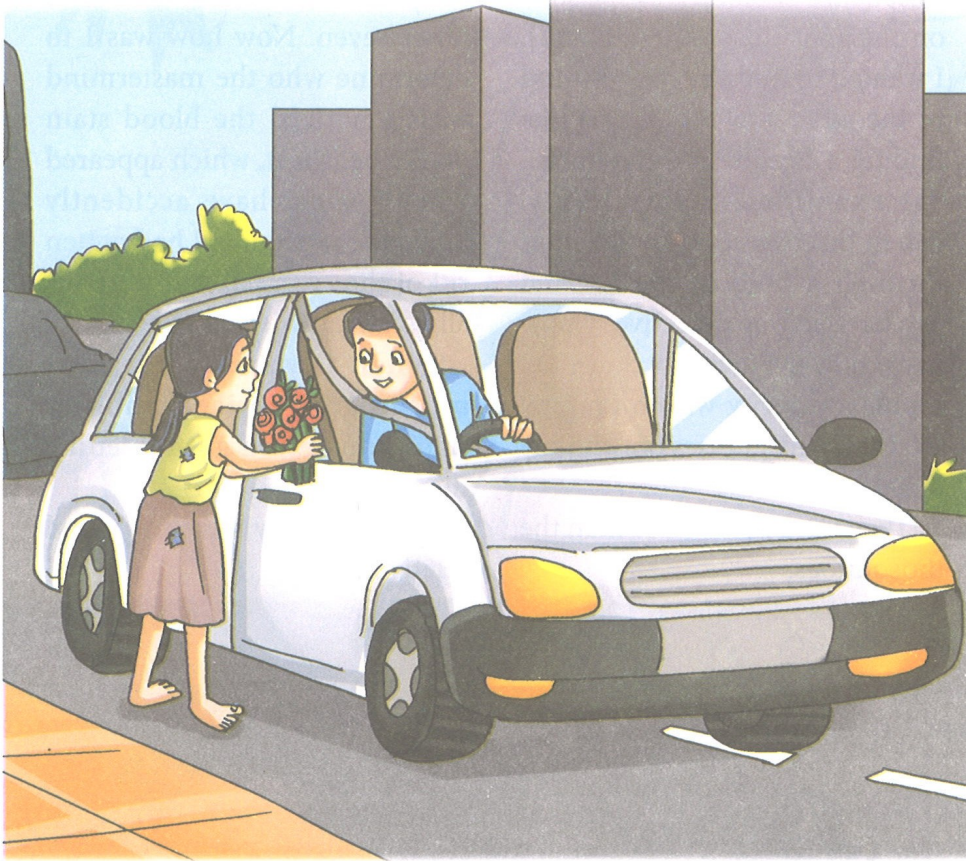
*"All these years marks is what
All these standards have asked for,
What about our talents, that no one ever thought of?
And winning, is not all we care about,
So dear societal standards,
We have learnt to accept our failures,"
They said with pride,*

"Because we know that it's okay to fail, at times."

Free



Aarohi Singla (15)
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Illustration: Shivani



SHE WAS born at dawn on the 20th day of May in the small city of Adampur, Haryana. Her mother clung to her as the society blighted her for giving birth to a girl child. They called the baby a bad omen for she had been born out of wedlock. No one knew who the father was.

In a country which worships goddesses, this beautiful creation was looked down upon like a curse. She did not get the opportunity to go to school, for her juvenile days were spent knocking on car windows and

selling flowers as she ran barefoot on the hot, concrete roads. She was forced to grow up too fast when she returned to her empty house only to know that her mother had been dragged out by the debt collector's goons, never to be seen again.

Scarred for life and scared of the collector's return, this time to get her, she climbed a truck with the clothes on her as her only possession, setting out into a blizzard called Mumbai. She battled every day, struggling to make a living in that alien land.

She travelled back to her

makeshift hut at night living with the fear of being found, trafficked and sold off like a slave by the local dealer. There was not much food available, just some rotten pieces of meat from the canteen she worked at. The life here was no different than where she came from. She was looked down upon like an animal that could be exploited as and when wished.

*

She is 15 now. She has been kidnapped. As she lay in the dark, moss-ridden room near the gutter with no source of electricity, she thinks of the shackles that have bound her down to such an atrocious life. She dreams of the dreams that would never be fulfilled.

As she looks out into the moonlight from her broken window, ignoring the splinters that have now started to penetrate into her skin, she hears the nocturnal nightjar jarring through the night, while the honking of city cars continues in the distance, imagining it to be flying off somewhere into a rotting building after a long day of finding food for its younglings, free. She is reminded of the nights when she rested her head on her mother's lap as she listened to her stories in their small abode; of the times when she could roam around the city with her friends; of the midnight snacks which included nothing more than a half-eaten cookie she found in the dumpster. She wishes to fly far away towards those memories into the darkness just like the

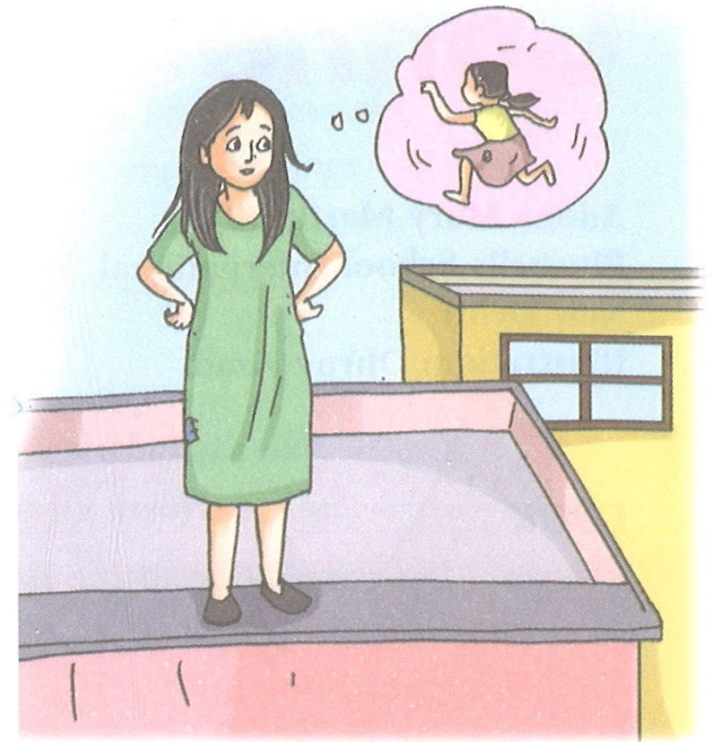
nocturnal creature.

She climbs atop the tin roof, careful not to wake up the men guarding the apartment, and takes a deep breath. She stretches out her arms, extending them to allow the monsoon wind to swallow her up. She feels like that nocturnal creature returning back to her younglings.

She feels free. She feels free remembering those days when she used to run around, zig-zagging through those alleys

with her friends, She feels free to think about her mother, the woman who gave birth to her, the woman who fought for her, the woman who worked day and night aspiring for a bright future for her daughter, the woman who held her fingers while she took her first steps...

There's still hope, she thinks. That life is worth living for. That she could fight for herself just like her mother had. That she could still hope.❖

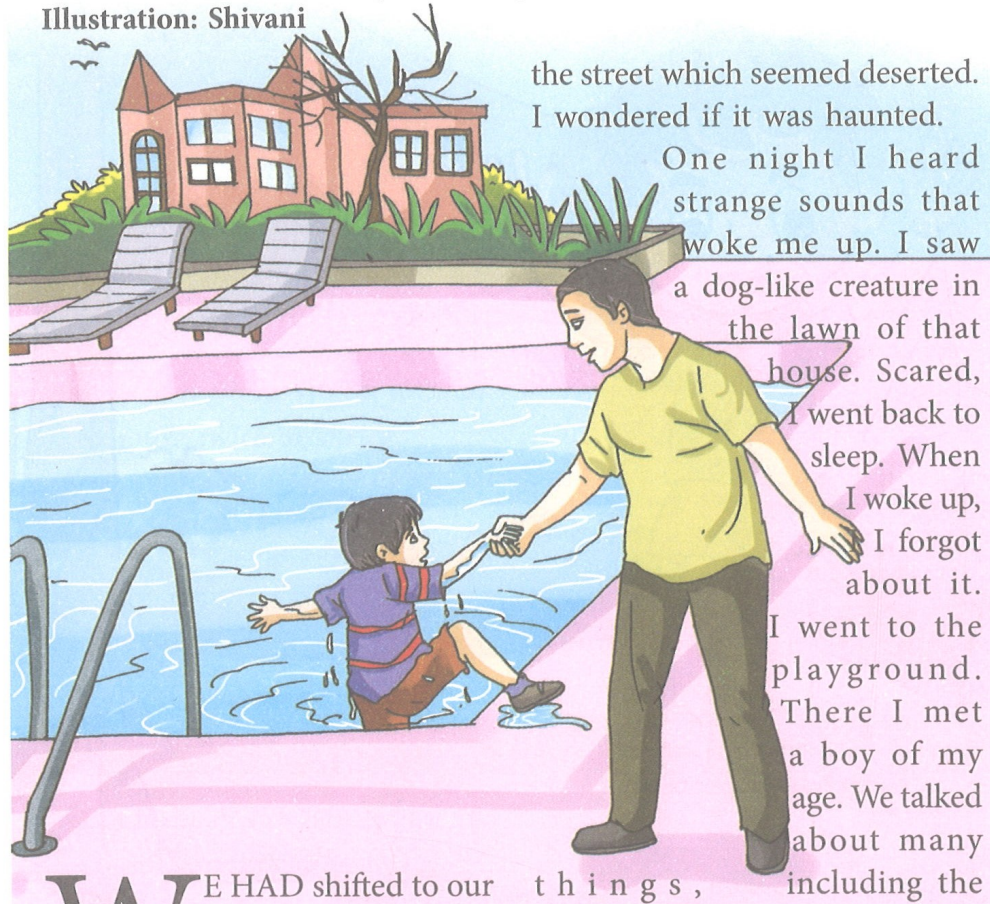


THE HAUNTED HOUSE

Manan Sharma (14)

Salwan Public School, Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi

Illustration: Shivani



WE HAD shifted to our new house. I was both excited and nervous. Excited to make new friends and nervous as I didn't know who my friends would be.

I saw there was a house across

the street which seemed deserted. I wondered if it was haunted.

One night I heard strange sounds that woke me up. I saw a dog-like creature in the lawn of that house. Scared, I went back to sleep. When I woke up, I forgot about it. I went to the playground. There I met a boy of my age. We talked about many things, including the haunted house.

"That house is haunted," said the boy.

I was shocked.

He also added, "No one lives in that house anymore."



This made me curious. I decided to visit the 'haunted house'. I asked the boy to come with me, but he refused saying, "My mother will not allow me."

So I went alone. I took my baseball bat with me. As I knocked on the door, I saw a shadow move. I was frightened and stepped back. In my hurry I fell into the swimming pool.

Soon a man came and pulled me out of the pool. He took me inside the 'haunted house'. He offered me a cup of coffee and gave me a towel to wipe myself. I asked him about the creature I had seen.

The man laughed and said, "It was the preparation for Halloween."

I was dumb struck. It was a great adventure for me. ♦



Wings To Fly Away

Palak Gupta (13)
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Illustration: Udaya Sankar. T

*There's a bird outside my window,
It sits there every day.
I often wonder what it's like,
To have wings to fly away.*

*Birds fly away as they please,
There's no one to restrict.
Without rules and regulations,
The sky is their limit.*

*I love to see how it flies around
My house twice or thrice.
Then comes and lands at my window,
And I feed it grains of rice.*

*It's been days since I last saw it,
I wonder where it's gone.
Oh look! There it is! Wait,
Is that a nest in the lawn?*

*I see through my binoculars,
It indeed resembles a nest.
I think I see some eggs in there,
What a cozy place to rest!*

*Little birds are now hatching,
And learning how to sing.
Now they're growing feathers,
And flapping their cute little wings.*

*The little ones are grown up now,
They have beautiful white wings.
I see them glide in the bright blue sky,
Flying around clouds, making rings.*

*And now there are many birds
Outside my window,
They sit there every day.
Even now I wonder what it's like,
To have wings to fly away.*



Saksham Bidani (12)
Salwan Public School
Rajendra Nagar New Delhi

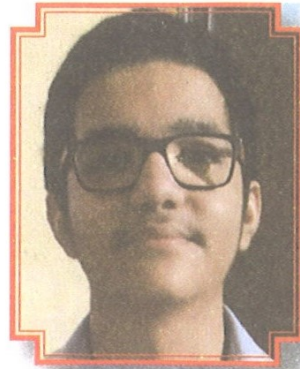
The New Day

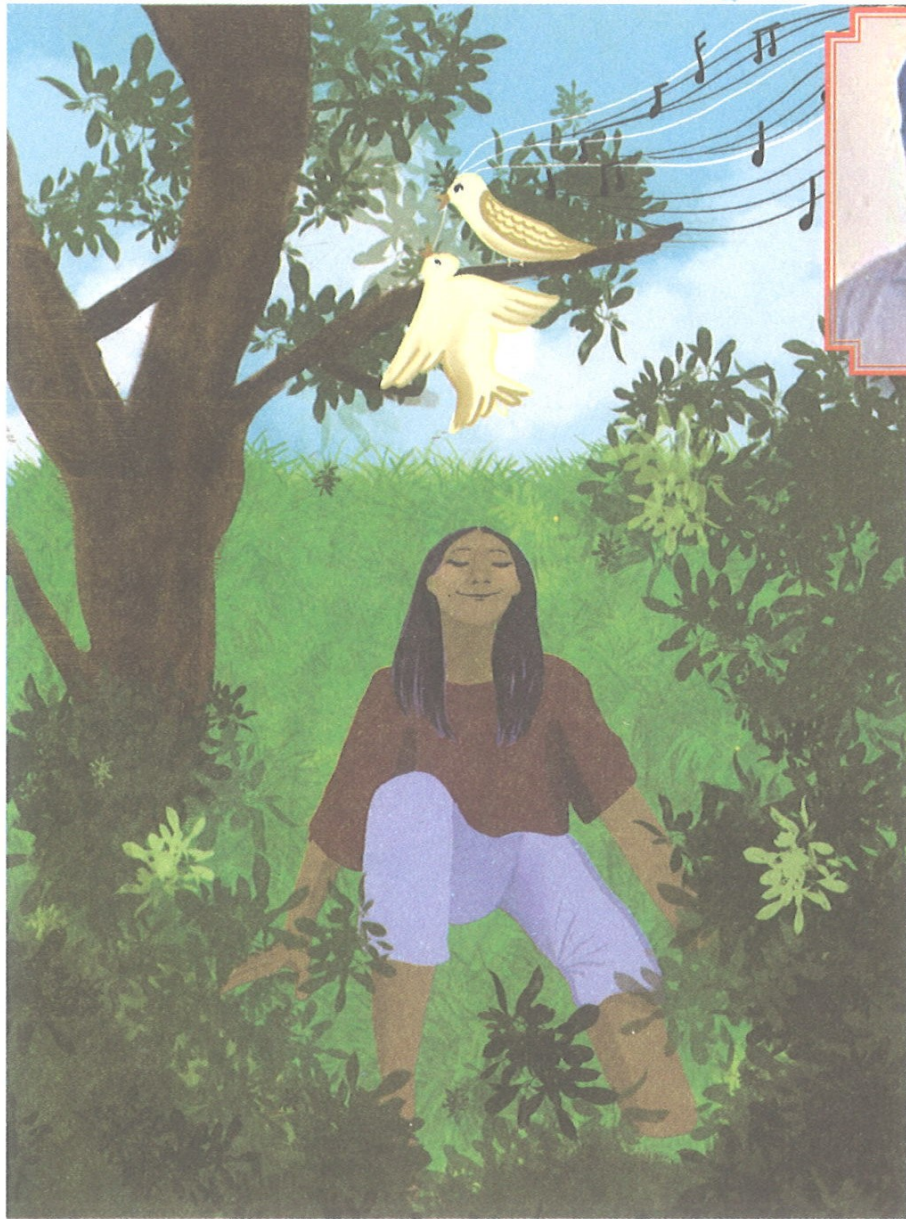
*The pretty world isn't the way it was before,
Instead, a new day lies on the shore,
Nothing is as calm as it was before,
Nothing is as true as what lies on the shore.*

*'Breathe in-breathe out' used to be easy,
For many it has become teasy,
Still, it is the masks we must adapt to,
It is 'normal' and it is new.*

*What not still exists around,
What on earth has got us bound,
From exploring this plethora of unexplored,
From unearthing what all we ignored,
We can access a surfeit of skill and enjoy,
What still has kept us at bay.*

*We can spend time with near and dear ones
Like we never did,
Behind the shadows of dread, why we hid?
It is just our viewpoint, just our pessimism,
We can be really happy, we just see the cataclysm,
To be happy we must find a way,
For this is the new normal, this is the new day!*





A Morning In The Forest



Binwant Singh (12)
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*You wake up by the sound,
The sound of the birds' chirrup,
You sense the cool and chilly breeze,
And smell beautiful, fresh-green herbs.
You realize you are in the kingdom of nature,
Where peace and greenery are main features.
Many types of plants and animals are around,
Including those creepy-crawly creatures.
This is where the sky is
As beautiful and clear as a crystal,
This is where there is no war,
No sign of arms and pistols,
You then thank God for all the beautiful creations,
Looking at them and feeling them is an education.*

Illustration: Anusha Salam

Mother Like You



Ishika Kawatra (14)
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New Delhi
Illustration: Shivani



*This is to the woman
Who carried me in her womb,
And stood by me from dusk till dawn,
She is none other than my beautiful Mom.*

*She laughs with me and cries my tears,
She helps me overcome all my fears,
She is always there when I need some cheers,
She loves me so much that I always feel dear.*

*She has always given and given,
Has never asked for anything in return,
Whenever I am in trouble,
She is the one most concerned,
She is the only one I can count upon
That I know won't ever turn.*

*She stood by me through thick and thin,
And whenever I felt I am nothing,
She made me realize the fact that
I am worth everything.*

*She is always the first one to come
When I need care,
I can trust her, knowing she will always be there,
Never ever she lets my eyes drop a tear,
Her presence truly freshens the air.*

*She and I have an unbreakable bond,
I have been blessed with her presence
From heaven and beyond.
She held my hand when I took my first walk,
Also, she makes my life a cakewalk.*

*In her I can confide, in her I can believe,
Talking to her brings me relief,
That is the magical effect she has on me,
She is always my supporting tree.
If she is the honeycomb, then I am the bee.*

*She is beautiful both inside and out,
She took care of me since I was a sprout,
She held my hand through good and bad,
The only thing she can't bear is seeing me sad.*

*She brings light in my day, being my sunshine,
I am so very proud to call her mine,
She is the reason I always shine bright,
No matter if it is day or night.*

*On bad days she is my only hope,
Never ever she lets me mope,
Oh! What would I do without my mother,
She can be replaced by none other.*

*Her words are always on time,
They make me feel like everything will be fine,
I don't care what age I am, be it hundred or nine,
The thing I cannot live without
Is the adorable mother of mine.*

*Her gentle love, her tender kiss,
Her soft warm touch on me when I am ill*

*Having her in my life is sheer bliss,
And it also is a great thrill.*

*No matter where I go, be it Paris or Rome,
She is the reason I will always look forward
To coming home.
One day I will make her proud,
So she can scream, "She is my daughter!" aloud.*

*Sometimes she is my biggest critic,
Sometimes she is my partner in crime,
I know I don't need a guardian angel for me,
I don't care if the whole world disagrees with me.*

*She taught me the meaning of unconditional love,
From the rest, you are above.
She understands me without saying a word,
Disobeying her is the thing most absurd.*



*Whenever I need to get through the night,
She is the one who shows me light.
And then she hugs me tight,
And tells me that everything will be alright.*

*My life is a dream because of her,
For making all my wishes come true I thank her,
She taught me always to be brave,
And never hesitate to go after what I crave.*

*Thanks to her I have a hopeful tomorrow,
She taught me how to deal with my sorrow.
She taught me how to fight like a knight,
She is the one from whom I got all my might.*

*She is the most precious thing to me on this earth,
Without her my life wouldn't have any worth.
She stood by me since my birth,
Without her my life wouldn't have any worth.*

*On her I can write
Pages and pages of appreciation,
To make her happy is my life's only mission.
To see pride in her eyes is my biggest inspiration,
I forever wish to be in her possession.*

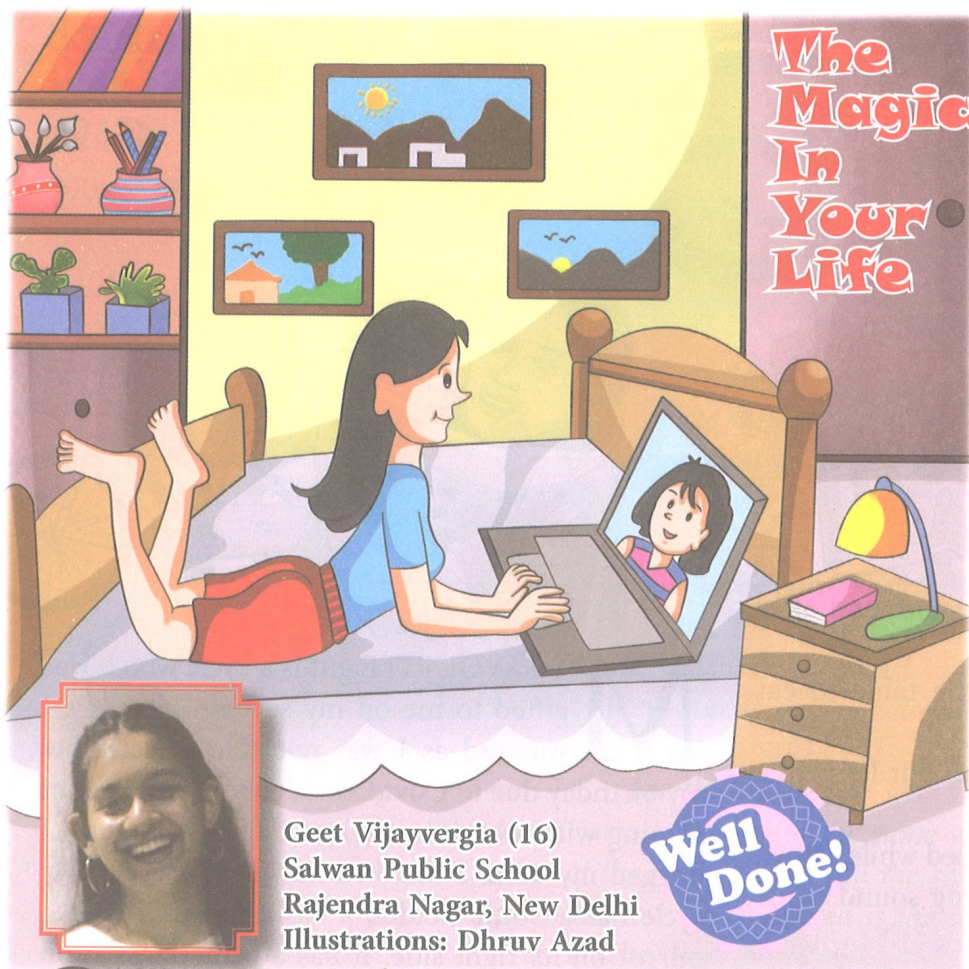
*When God created mothers
He kept for me a special one,
Thank you, God, for what you had done.
The gift you gave me I love it tons,
More than anything and anyone.*

*I am intrigued by her spirit of sacrifice,
Her presence in my life alone would suffice.
She is as beautiful as a bay,
For hours on end on her I can gaze.*

*She is the noblest soul I have ever seen,
Always and always understanding she has been.
She understands me without saying a word,
I will be content even if I become of her one third.*

*Her love for me has grown
From the moment on me she set her eyes,
Such is our telepathy that I can never tell her lies,
I love her more than there are stars in the skies.*

*Thank you, Mom, for teaching me how to shine,
Thank you for tolerating all my whines.
Thank you also for your patience and time,
Oh sweet mother of mine!*



Geet Vijayvergia (16)
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Illustrations: Dhruv Azad

SASHA AND Kriti lay in their beds, miles apart physically but together right now, thanks to the gift of video calling.

Sasha and Kriti were cousins, but were like sisters born and living in the different cities of Mumbai and Delhi respectively. They'd call each other often, to catch up and have a good laugh. They were so close that Kriti felt that she was there when Sasha went to the beach and Sasha felt that she was there when Kriti went to India Gate.

Mumbai rains, Marine Drive, local trains and film shooting excited Kriti, while Sasha felt that the forts, street food, markets and metro beckoned her.

Listening to each other's daily routine nurtured a desire in their

hearts to experience the other's city for themselves.

As much as the other's city intrigued them, their own city looked uninteresting to them. It might sound unbelievable, but the beaches and the delicious street food felt nothing out of the ordinary to the two. The metro and the fancy malls had no appeal to them, and they did not know why. However, the other city seemed like a new world, filled with new sights and experiences.

So they decided to visit each other. That way they would get to meet after a long time and see the cities they knew so well through stories, in person.

Kriti couldn't have been more excited to see Sasha in Mumbai. The day finally arrived, and she

flew with her family into the airport where Sasha greeted them. Kriti spent a full week exploring all of the unique aspects of the city: visiting Bandra Market for shopping; driving down Marine Drive during sunset; tasting *vada-pav* at Chowpatty Beach while taking selfies along the way! The waves washing her feet was something she had experienced for the first time in her life and it was one of her favourite feelings now.

And just like that, their adventure was over. It was now time for Sasha to go back home.

Kriti had planned a tour to fulfil Sasha's Delhi bucket list. From the famous markets of Sarojini and Janpath, her favourite Connaught Place cafes, or even taking in some sights like Chandni Chowk—Kriti knew there was something for everyone. And as she watched from afar with wonder on her face while watching Sasha take it all in stride; she couldn't help but feel that this would be one visit never forgotten by either party!

Like all good things, this trip was about to end, too.

The night before Sasha had to leave, she and Kriti sat together with a cup of tea in their hands, looking back at the two weeks they spent together.

As Kriti told about the rains being her favourite in Mumbai, Sasha realized that Marine Drive and *vada-pav* held a special place in her heart. Likewise, Sasha's favourites in Delhi—*chole bhature*—rekindled Kriti's love for Sarojini Nagar and the

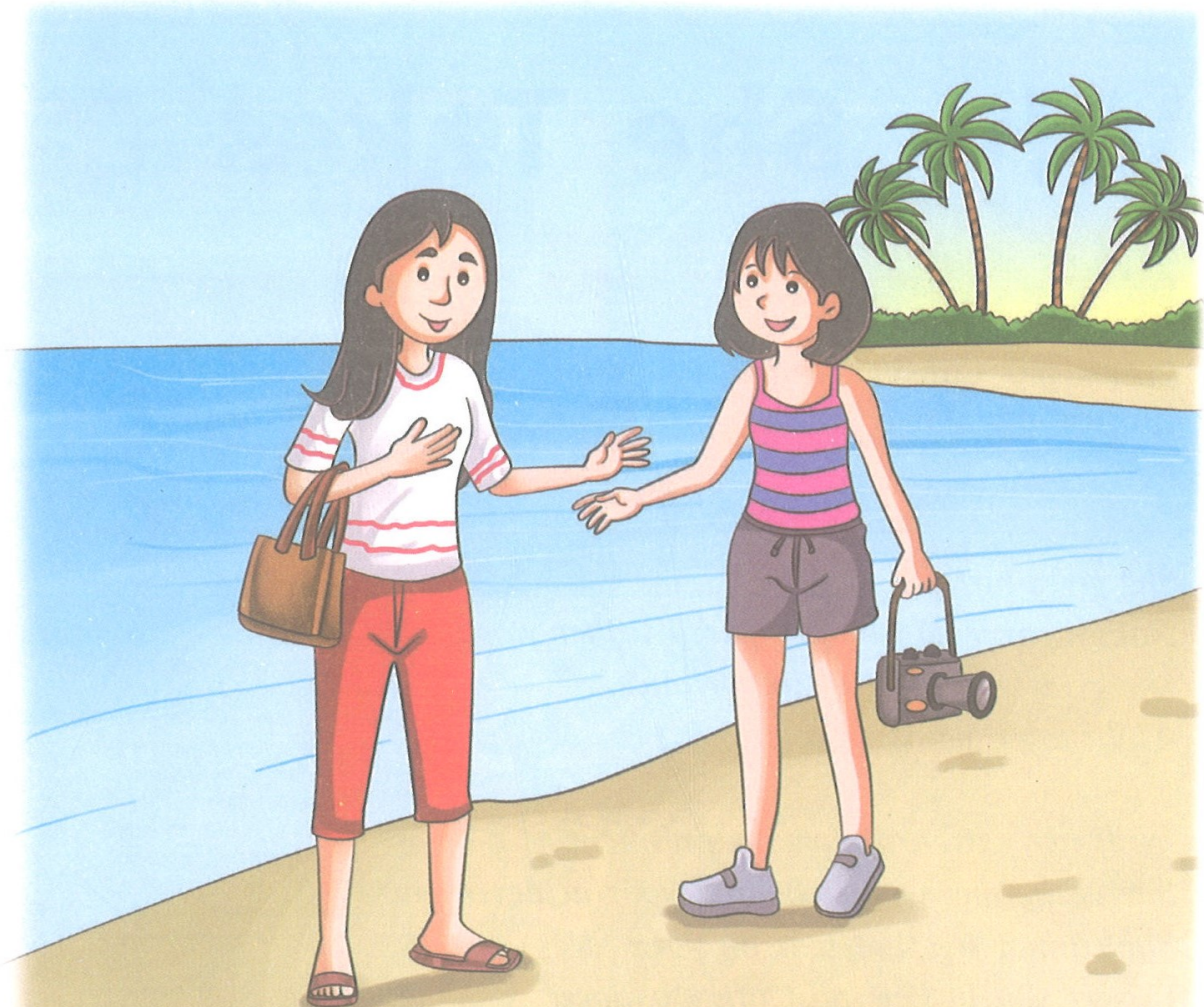
majestic India Gate.

Both the cities had magic. It's just the girls had gotten used to it after seeing it for so many years. After all, the grass seems greener on the other side.

But the fresh perspective of their cousin made them realize that their city was special, too. It was not as boring as they thought it to be. It seemed like a place worth exploring.

Moreover, they realized that despite the wonderful gifts they have, it is the people who make life worth living. They are more important than any material possession—they give us joy and happiness beyond measure!

The cousins promised each other that the next time they come together, they would explore their own city like a tourist and tell each other stories about it just like they had been doing in the last trip. They



promised to have so much fun that it looked like the shooting of a college movie, highlighting the best elements of the place. They agreed that while their relationship with each others' cities (and their own too) had changed, their relationship with

each other would remain the same.

Sasha and Kriti realized that amazing things are everywhere, and there is magic in life too. One needs to look at them from a fresh perspective and maybe romanticise it once in a while.❖

Mystery House

Reesha Behl (11)

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Illustration: Shivani



ONCE UPON a time there was a house. Whoever went to live in that house got lost somehow. Then a family came to live in that house. They didn't know about the house. A few days later the family went for shopping. When they came back home, they were shocked to see "Where did you go?" written on the wall. They felt, other than them, someone else was also living in the house. Scared, the family packed their bags and left the place.

Nobody knew the secret of the mystery house. The details about the house were shown in the news also.

Two years later, a girl named Saina wanted to buy a house. She found the details about the mystery house. As she loved solving mysteries, she was very excited to live in that house. So she bought the house. She was so excited that she went to see the house the next morning itself.

When she opened the door of the house, she saw spider webs all around the house. The house had been closed for two

years. There were bats, too. A day before shifting into the house she decided to clean it. It took her a day to clean the house.

After shifting she decided to go to a restaurant to eat. When she came back home, she saw "Where did you go?" written on the wall. She found it weird but she didn't get scared.

From that day onwards whenever Saina went outside, she found the same question written on the wall. Saina kept ignoring it until one day she saw "I know your name is Saina!" written on the wall. Now Saina got a bit scared. Since that Saina saw different messages, related

to her life, written on the wall.

One night she wanted to use the bathroom. Suddenly she saw a person's shadow. She ran to her room and locked herself in. The whole night she couldn't sleep.

A day passed thinking about the strange person in the house.

The next day, Saina kept her hand on the wall and suddenly a piece of the wall opened like a door. She got really scared but still decided to go inside.

She heard a man laughing. "Ha! Ha! Ha! The rumours about the mystery house have spread all over the world. I am becoming rich by trapping people and stealing all their money."

Saina was shocked to hear this. She whispered, "Oh! So this is the mystery of this house."

The man heard her voice. He shouted, "Who is there?"

Saina said, "It's me Saina and I now know the truth behind the mystery house."

The man said, "What will you do? You will also be trapped like the others."

"Now you will be trapped. I have called the police," Saina said boldly.

"Then how will I become rich and famous?" the man shouted angrily.

"Well, you can definitely become famous...in the jail."

The man was arrested. Before going the man said to Saina, "I will take revenge."

However, the man spent the rest of his life in prison. Soon everyone got to know about the truth behind the mystery house. ♦

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Illustration: Udaya Sankar. T

*I don't have any map to tell me
If this road is right,
There's no way to go up
What I'm going through is a maze.*

*I should quit!
But can I risk losing?
We live in a world full of lies
Which clenches my guts
And holds me tight.*

*Feels like I'm running
On a track with no finish line,
A vicious cycle of tired body and heart,
But I'm the one who decides the end
So, what should I decide in the end?*

*Even though I can't see the end
I want to live, be alive,
There are shadows
Only because of the flicker of light.*

*Then I must walk onto the decisions
I make for life
'Cause later when I become addicted to life,
I want to look in the mirror
And tell, you aced it!
Bravo, we held out and survived.*

