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Paar Nazar Ke / Beyond the Line of Sight

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Delhi, June 2008

the traveller!
the wanderer
tourist
passerby,
hawkers,
shopkeepers
tailors,
Embroiders,
labourers,
sweepers
seamsters
antisans,
cobblers
bamblers
stewards
leaners,
doctors,
factorywork
salesman
waiters
flight crew
nurses,
ayahs,
security
guards

enrollee
Lites
A...



diary

A NEW EXCITING SPACE IS OPENING SOON



I walked through the heat of the April afternoon down the Khirki road, past small tea stalls and betel/cigarette stalls, half-shuttered for the siesta. I stood in front of one of these, and the vendor became curious. He gave me a friendly smile and asked who I was. I explained that I was doing a project with Khoj that involved interactions with local people. He suddenly became wary and suggested that I talk to his employer who, it turned out, had gone to his hometown in Bihar.

I kept walking, and noted that most of the small shops were closed in the afternoon. A colony of south Delhi, Khirki has been unauthorised for decades. Clusters of small dwellings and stalls cling to the existing walls of the historical ruins that are a local landmark. I came to a tiny tailoring shop, no more than 10 x 10 feet. The man there was operating a sewing machine. He barely raised his head to acknowledge my greeting. Obviously, the practice was to run the machine all day with rarely a break. All he would say in response to my tentative questions was that he had to deliver the complete work to his "madam" within a fixed time.

I then came to two big gates of a wide compound with rented rooms along the sides. I did not go in, hence cannot identify the kind of work that is done there.

I next encountered a barber's shop, 6 feet long and 4 feet wide, with two attached compartments. One side adhered to the colony's old wall; the other side was open to the street, with a temporary shutter dangling from the roof. The shop had mirrors, two chairs in use, and a bench for people to sit on while they waited their turns for haircuts and shaves. Even in the sweltering afternoon the shop was full of customers. All were absorbed in gazing at the television fixed to a wooden upper shelf.

The tiny compartments are rented as living space by two individuals. These 'rooms' are like bunks in a ship's cabin. Once inside, it is literally impossible even to turn around fully.

NOOS
RENTING
IS OPENING SOON

A NEW EXCITING SPACE

Shops line both sides of the narrow winding lane passing through congested Khirki Village. They sell groceries, videos, mobile phone cards; they rent out DVD players and pirated DVDs. A doctor's small chamber extends into an STD phone booth.

I was walking to the embroidery workshops at Hauz Rani, a locality that is an extension of Khirki Village. The lanes through both areas culminate in the large sprawl of the authorised middle-class colony of Malviya Nagar. The houses of Khirki are three and four storeys high, some old and dilapidated, others newly constructed. Despite the blazing heat, the lanes of the concrete slum are clogged with slushy mud and patterned with countless footprints. The surface seems to be excavated several times each month, the potholes as well as the piles of sun-baked sludge left just as they are. Few manholes have covers. The passers-by are indifferent to this now-routine disruption.

The way into Hauz Rani became narrower, the sun increasingly blocked out by overhangs, the leached sky barely visible in the slits of glare. Large dhabas lined the road. They seemed to be emptying out, cus-

A NEW EXCITING SPACE



OPENING SOON



IS OPENING SOON

tomers dispersing after the busy lunch hours. Some dhaba workers were now eating. The dhaba owner was taking a nap inside. These dhabas seem to be open round the clock. Clouds of flies buzzed around the large vessels of cooked food, the carcasses on hooks at meat stalls, the cut watermelon slices ripening on hawker's carts.

The oppressive weight of a sweltering summer afternoon pressed upon me as I approached the hand-embroidery workshop. At the entrance is a huge iron shutter like that of a garage. Inside is a hall with two cupboards and a stack of utensils on one side, and a loft up at the back, reached via a bamboo ladder. Here the workers rest after their shifts.

The workspace is on the ground floor. Each worker sits behind wooden frames on which fabric is stretched. The embroidery is mainly zari (gold thread). Work begins at 8 am and carries on till midnight, with two half-hour breaks. It involves the deft use of needles, beads, silver appliqué and satin threads, along with the zari itself, in the making of intricate floral patterns. As I stepped, squinting, from harsh sunlight into sudden shade, the cloth threw out an iridescent flicker.

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AN OLD EXCITING JOB IS CLOSING SOON

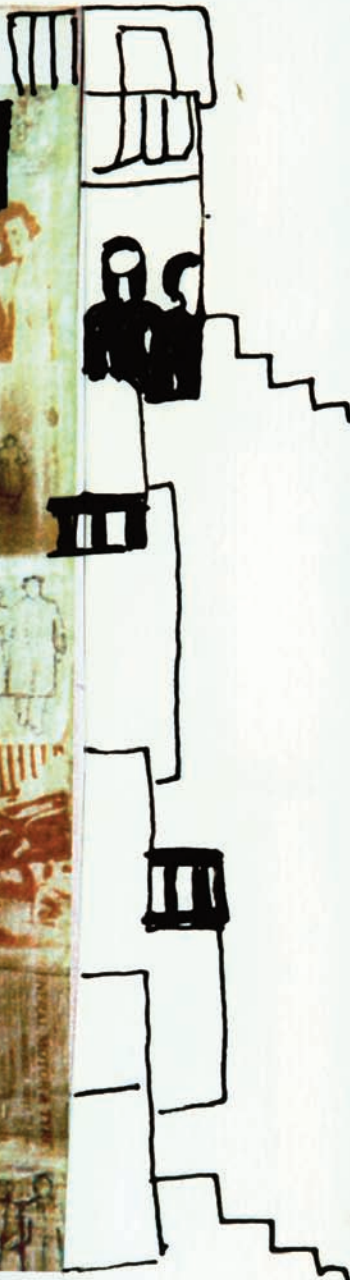


AN OLD EXCITING JOB IS CLOSING DOWN

AN OLD EXCITING SPACE IS CLOSING SOON

AN NEW EXCITING SPACE IS OPENING SOON

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A NEW EXCITING SPACE IS OPENING SOON

It was very quiet in the workshop. All that could be heard were the many unerring needles as they swiftly plucked at and penetrated the tightly stretched weaves.

The owner greeted me with a pleasant smile and asked me to sit. After I explained the purpose of my visit, he agreed to talk with me each day at 1 pm. In our introductory dialogue he said he was from Bengal. He lived with his family on the first floor of the workshop. The 10 workers of his unit were all from Bengal, Bihar or UP.

While I was there, not one worker raised his head to look at me or stayed his busy hands for even a second. I was somewhat disturbed by their absolute focus, and the mechanical aspect of what I intuited were complicated individual subjectivities.

I did not stay very long, as I had to also visit a machine-embroidery workshop nearby, owned by a young man from Bihar.



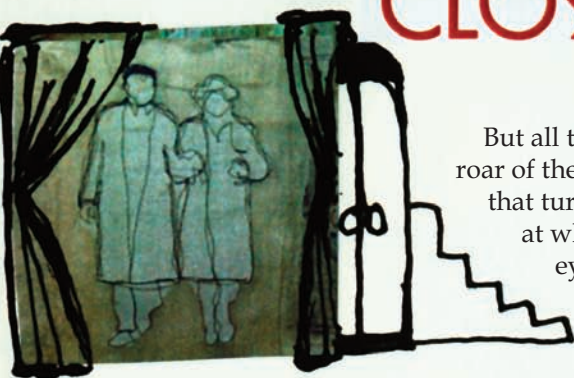
I slowly walked towards the machine-embroidery workshop, close to the hand-embroidery unit. The lane was uneven, the heat seemed more intense. I began to feel disoriented. I called the owner of the unit on his mobile, thinking I would stay in the workshop till it became cooler.

I went down some stairs into the basement of a three-storey building. The workshop is more a cell than a room, humid and claustrophobic despite warped exhaust fans whirring at full speed near street-level vents. Their grimy blades churn the sweltering air into the ongoing stream of call-in chatter, chirpy advertisements and blockbuster Bollywood numbers playing on an FM radio.



CLOSING SOON

AN OLD EXCITING SPACE IS



But all this is drowned in the incredible roar of the three converted pump motors that turn the aged makeshift machines at which the workers sit hunched, eyes glued to the designs miraculously forming on the fabric, hands flying between cloth, thread, needle, bobbin.

Not one of the three young men looked up for even a second as I came in. They work here for 12 to 14 hours each day. Juddering and snarling like a pneumatic drill in the suffocating little room, the brutal reverberation muscles incessantly through the fragile canals of their ears.

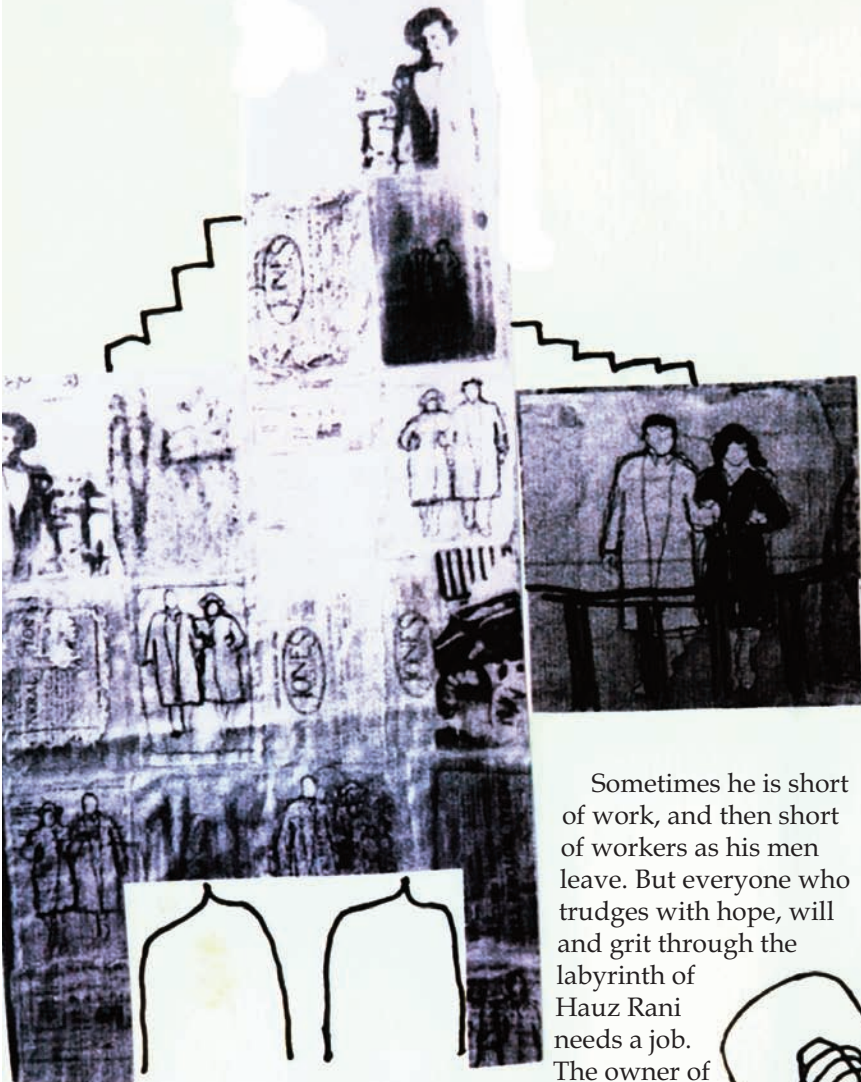
How long does it take for such thunder to finally congeal into a deafening void within the skull?

My nerves seethed as I shouted my questions to the young owner of the workshop, standing by an ironing platform in a tiny inner compartment piled high with cloth. He said had migrated to Delhi five years ago from Bihar. The workers in his unit are also from Bihar.

The unit has survived thus far, but the production level is actually going down.

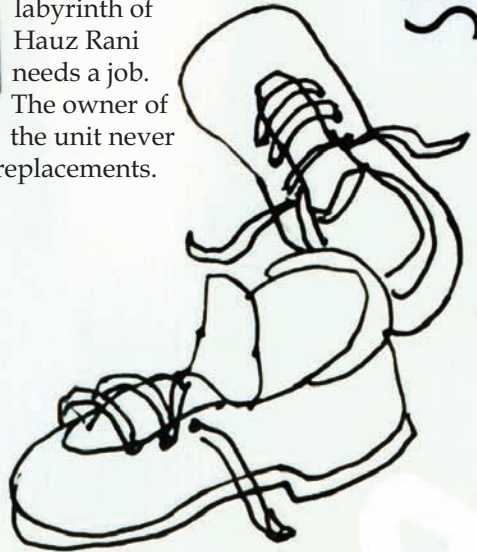


A NEW EXCITING JOB IS




Sometimes he is short of work, and then short of workers as his men leave. But everyone who trudges with hope, will and grit through the labyrinth of Hauz Rani needs a job. The owner of the unit never

has a problem finding replacements.




NOOS

OPENING




I was finally able to take a breath of fresh air after climbing up out of the machine-embroidery unit. It was dusk, and the atmosphere of Hauz Rani had changed. The lanes were full of children playing. There is no park or open ground in the colony, nowhere to play except the narrow alleys.

The stalls were becoming more animated, people were emerging from the upper storeys of the houses and strolling along. Women in burqas as well as Western clothes were moving from shop to shop. The big dhabas were starting to prepare dinner. Persistent motorcycle and autorickshaw horns seemed to be forcing people through the congested twists and turns.





The dim street lights came on. Vendors who had napped away the afternoon were becoming active again. Radios blared from cigarette and video rental shops. Small knots of people gathered at the corners were chatting in groups; others stood at hawkers' carts and ate snacks.



The barbershop was full; customers waited in the street, watching the television in the shop, while the tenants of the two adjacent compartments were absorbed in transactions with customers.

The torpor of the afternoon had vanished entirely. My own fatigue slowly dissipated as I walked through Khirki's lanes in the evening.





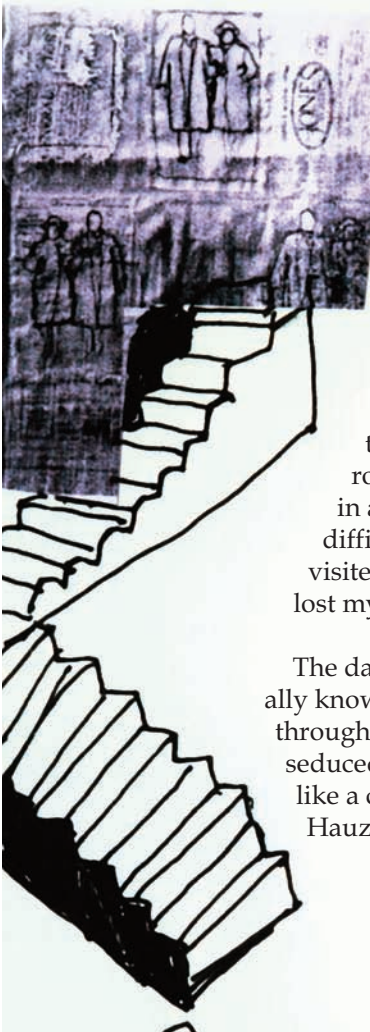
My conversations with local shopkeepers, artisans and workers in the Khirki area enabled me to understand how the locality was changing. Over the past one year the rents have escalated, and the available space – small rooms shared by tenants – are mostly occupied by people working at Max Hospital or Select Citywalk Mall.

The locals accept the change but have dissatisfactions too, though they are profiting overall. Some people remarked that the area was becoming cosmopolitan, and consequently people were more open in behaviour and more expansive in outlook. Women walked around the lanes more freely, disregarding whistles and cat-calls. Earlier, the youth were more repressed.



I went to Max Hospital to meet a nurse who lives in Hauz Rani and works in the Emergency Department at Max. I waited till late in the evening in the hospital lounge till she ended her shift. The lounge was almost as luxurious as a 5-star hotel, a surreal contrast to the grimy environs of Hauz Rani

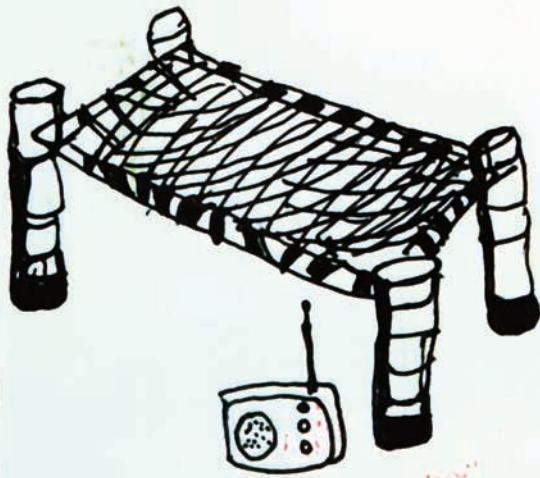




that tenaciously nudge the manicured grounds of the huge corporate entity.

The young nurse was quite exhausted when she finally came to me, having struggled all evening with a complicated case. It was late, but she insisted that I visit her home and meet her three room-mates, all nurses at Max. As we walked through Hauz Rani, she narrated her daily routine. We reached her place, rented quarters in a small muddy lane. It would have been very difficult for me to find it on my own. Each time I visited the nurses during this project, I invariably lost my way in the cluttered warren of Khirki.

The day I forced myself to visit the Mall, I didn't really know where to begin and where to end. I went through a security check and entered, immediately seduced by the central air-conditioning that felt like a celestial breeze after the sultry heat of Hauz Rani.





ISD STD

নব বর্ষের শুভেচ্ছা



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Constantly bright lights, escalators and the sophisticated décor of branded shops merged into a hallucinatory vista of unremitting allure as well as perennial satiation. I avoided looking at the extravagant prices as I persistently went into store after grandly designed store to try and find Khirki residents who worked in the mall.

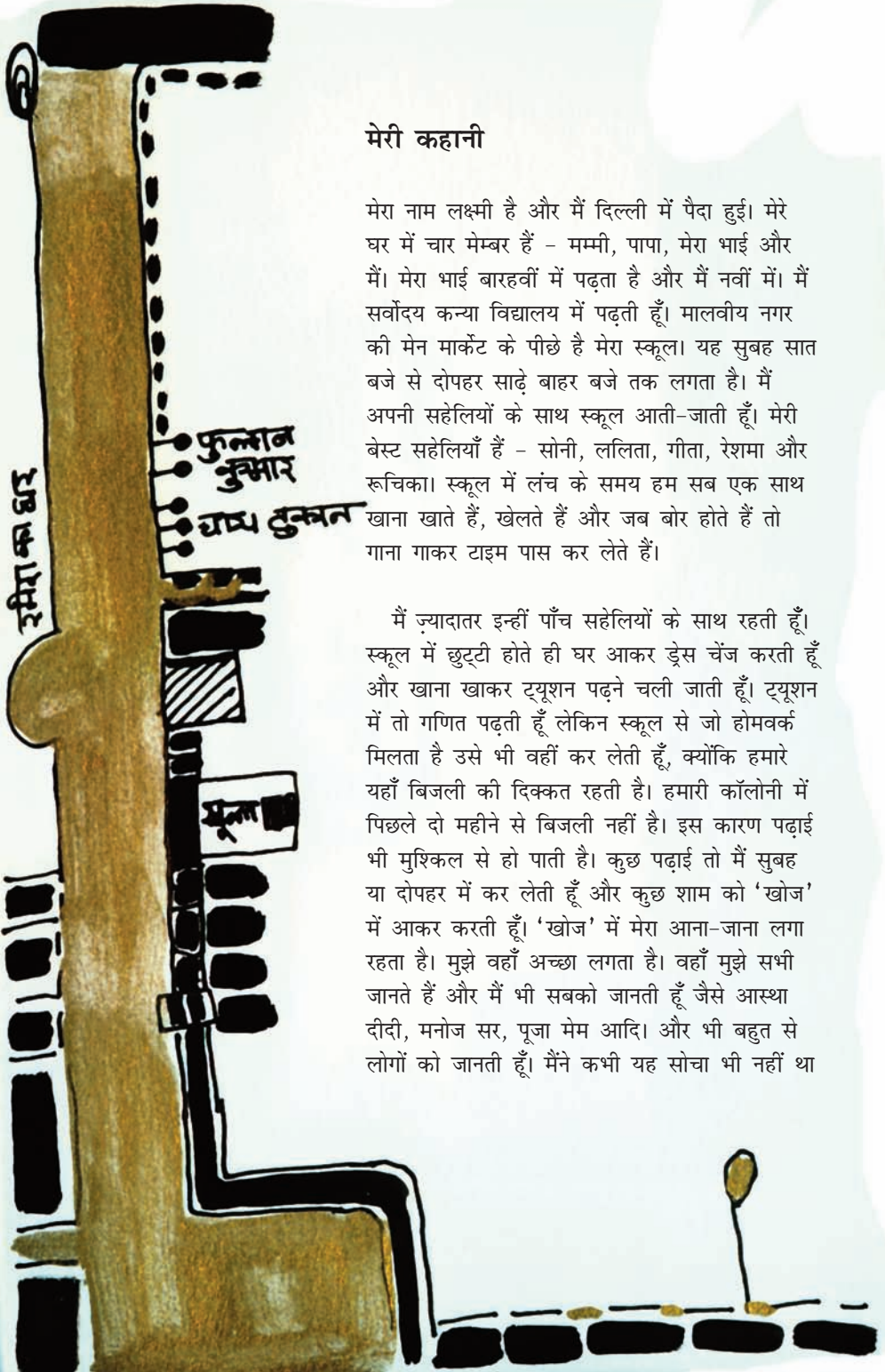
I did find a few who had successfully modified themselves to their jobs and were willing to describe this transformation.

**A NEW EXCITING JOB
IS OPENING SOON**

मेरी कहानी

मेरा नाम लक्ष्मी है और मैं दिल्ली में पैदा हुई। मेरे घर में चार मेम्बर हैं - मम्मी, पापा, मेरा भाई और मैं। मेरा भाई बारहवीं में पढ़ता है और मैं नवीं में। मैं सर्वोदय कन्या विद्यालय में पढ़ती हूँ। मालवीय नगर की मेन मार्केट के पीछे है मेरा स्कूल। यह सुबह सात बजे से दोपहर साढ़े बाहर बजे तक लगता है। मैं अपनी सहेलियों के साथ स्कूल आती-जाती हूँ। मेरी बेस्ट सहेलियाँ हैं - सोनी, ललिता, गीता, रेशमा और रुचिका। स्कूल में लंच के समय हम सब एक साथ खाना खाते हैं, खेलते हैं और जब बोर होते हैं तो गाना गाकर टाइम पास कर लेते हैं।

मैं ज्यादातर इन्हीं पाँच सहेलियों के साथ रहती हूँ। स्कूल में छुट्टी होते ही घर आकर ड्रेस चेंज करती हूँ और खाना खाकर ट्यूशन पढ़ने चली जाती हूँ। ट्यूशन में तो गणित पढ़ती हूँ लेकिन स्कूल से जो होमवर्क मिलता है उसे भी वहीं कर लेती हूँ, क्योंकि हमारे यहाँ बिजली की दिक्कत रहती है। हमारी कॉलोनी में पिछले दो महीने से बिजली नहीं है। इस कारण पढ़ाई भी मुश्किल से हो पाती है। कुछ पढ़ाई तो मैं सुबह या दोपहर में कर लेती हूँ और कुछ शाम को 'खोज' में आकर करती हूँ। 'खोज' में मेरा आना-जाना लगा रहता है। मुझे वहाँ अच्छा लगता है। वहाँ मुझे सभी जानते हैं और मैं भी सबको जानती हूँ जैसे आस्था दीदी, मनोज सर, पूजा मेम आदि। और भी बहुत से लोगों को जानती हूँ। मैंने कभी यह सोचा भी नहीं था



कि 'खोज' में मुझे इतना कुछ करने और देखने को मिलेगा। मैंने 'खोज' में पतंग बनाना और चित्र बनाना सीखा। कलर भरने में भी लोगों की मदद की। मुझे यह सब करना बहुत ही अच्छा लगा। लेकिन अब समय नहीं मिलता कि कुछ कर सकूँ। इच्छाएँ तो बहुत हैं पर समय न होने की वजह से कुछ कर नहीं पाती। जब कभी समय मिलता है तो 'खोज' जाकर पेंटिंग करती हूँ। मुझे पेंटिंग का बहुत शौक है। नौ - साढ़े नौ बजे तक घर जाती हूँ। हाथ-मुँह धोकर खाना खाती हूँ और थोड़ी देर इधर-उधर घूमने के बाद सो जाती हूँ। सुबह छः बजे मम्मी मुझे जगा देती है। वह हमारे लिए नाशता बनाकर, टिफिन पैक कर देती है। मैं पौने सात बजे तक घर से स्कूल की यूनिफॉर्म में दो चुटियाँ बनाकर, आई-कार्ड लगाकर स्कूल चली जाती हूँ। स्कूल में प्रार्थना के समय छोटी कक्षा के बच्चों को लाइन में लगाती हूँ और फिर स्टेज पर जाकर माइक फिट करती हूँ। ड्रम बजाना मुझे बहुत ही अच्छा लगता है। सुबह की प्रार्थना करने में बहुत ही मजा आता है। स्कूल से घर आकर खाना पकाती हूँ और साफ़ सफ़ाई करती हूँ। पौने तीन बजे खाना खाकर सो जाती हूँ। उसके बाद ट्यूशन पढ़ने जाती हूँ। पाँच बजे तक घर लौटकर रोज शाम को चाय पीने के बाद पूजा करती हूँ और सात बजे तक 'खोज' आ जाती हूँ।

कुछ गाँव के, कुछ अपने

आज तीस तारीख़ है और आज मेरे स्कूल की भी छुट्टी है। कितना अच्छा लगता है छुट्टी के दिन। सुबह-सुबह उठकर मंदिर जाना या पार्क जाकर योग करना। मुझे सुबह छः बजे का समय बहुत अच्छा

TEA STALL

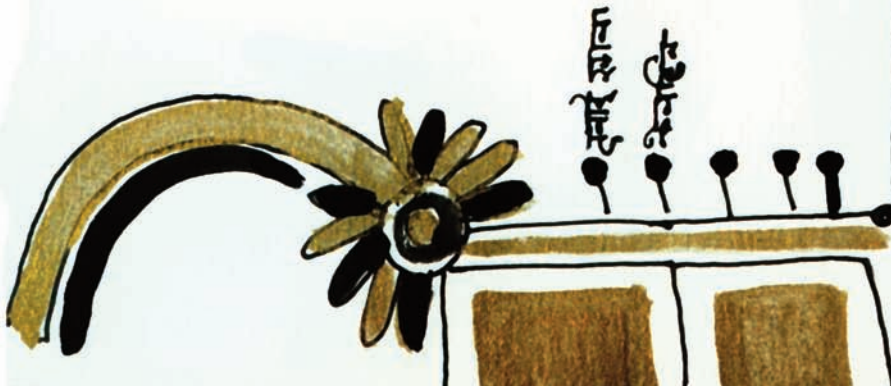
BARBAR
SHOP

CD
RENTAL
SHOP

MULLAI
STOVE
REPAIR
SHOP

MOBILE
SHOP

TAILOR
SHOP



GROCERY
SHOP

LAXMI'S
HOUSE

VIDEO
RENTAL
SHOP

STATIONARY
SHOP

SMALL
CANTEEN

MEDICINE
SHOP

लगता है। पार्क से आने के बाद फ्रेश होकर चाय पीने के बाद मुझे नौद आने लगती है और मैं सो जाती हूँ। सात-साढ़े सात बजे तक सोकर उठती हूँ। अब तो दो महीने की गर्मी की छुट्टियाँ भी हो चुकी है। छुट्टियों में तो कुछ अलग ही करने का मन होता है। पर क्या करूँ? वक्त ही नहीं मिलता। पहले छुट्टियों में अपने अंकल या बुआ के घर जाती थी। हमारे अंकल बीस साल तक हमारे साथ रहे लेकिन जब उनकी फैक्टरी आया नगर शिफ्ट हो गई तो हमारा आना-जाना और बोलचाल कम हो गया। अंकल कभी-कभी आते हैं या हम कभी त्यौहारों में उनके घर चले जाते हैं। फोन पर कभी-कभार बातचीत हो जाती है। उनका परिवार बड़ा है - चार लड़के हैं और एक लड़की। लड़की का नाम शोभा है बहुत ही प्यारी और सुन्दर है उसकी आवाज़। लेकिन दूर होने की वजह से हम मिल नहीं पाते।

आज मम्मी की छुट्टी है। मम्मी और पापा घर पर हैं। मम्मी ने आज मेरे स्कूल की ड्रेस और बैग धोकर, जूतों पर पॉलिश करवाकर उन्हें अच्छी तरह पैक कर दिया। मैंने छुट्टियों का होमवर्क करने के लिए निकाला हुआ है। हम सभी बारह मई को गाँव चले जायेंगे लेकिन जल्दी आ जायेंगे। हमारा गाँव वेस्ट बंगाल, सिलीगुड़ी के नज़दीक जयपुर टी. गार्डन के साइड में पड़ता है।

हम छः साल से गाँव नहीं गए हैं। गाँव में हमारे दादा-दादी तो नहीं हैं पर नाना-नानी, मामा-मामी, चाचा और बाकी सभी रिश्तेदार हैं। गाँव की याद तो आती है पर दूर होने की वजह से हर साल नहीं जा सकते हैं, मुश्किल से ही गाँव जा पाते हैं। गाँव में नदियों में, तालाबों में मछली पकड़ना अच्छा लगता है। गाँव जाते समय सबके लिए नए-नए कपड़े ले जाते हैं। मैं इस बार अपनी भतीजी के लिए जीन्स की पैंट



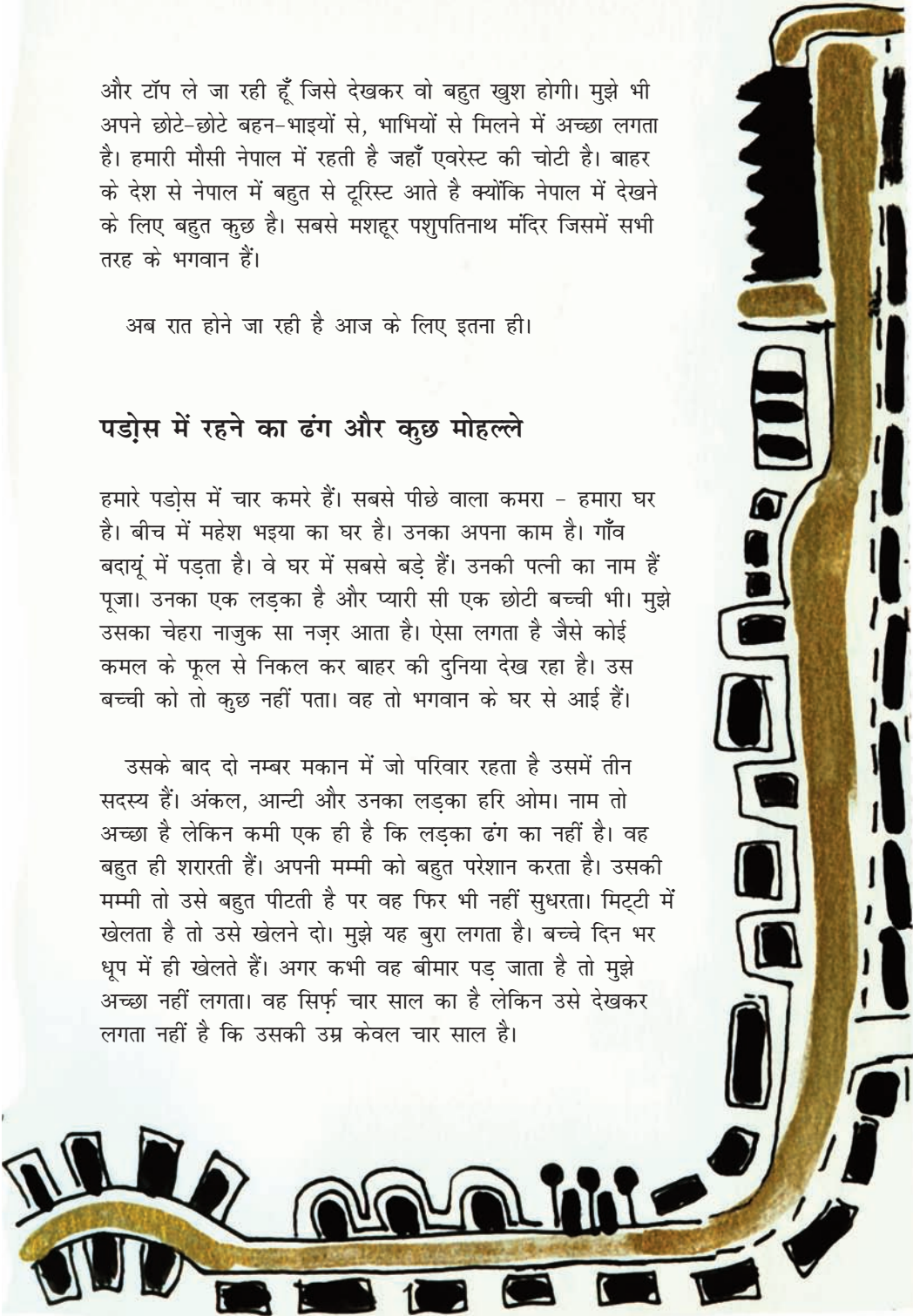
और टॉप ले जा रही हूँ जिसे देखकर वो बहुत खुश होगी। मुझे भी अपने छोटे-छोटे बहन-भाइयों से, भाभियों से मिलने में अच्छा लगता है। हमारी मौसी नेपाल में रहती है जहाँ एवरेस्ट की चोटी है। बाहर के देश से नेपाल में बहुत से टूरिस्ट आते हैं क्योंकि नेपाल में देखने के लिए बहुत कुछ है। सबसे मशहूर पशुपतिनाथ मंदिर जिसमें सभी तरह के भगवान हैं।

अब रात होने जा रही है आज के लिए इतना ही।

पड़ोस में रहने का ढंग और कुछ मोहल्ले

हमारे पड़ोस में चार कमरे हैं। सबसे पीछे वाला कमरा - हमारा घर है। बीच में महेश भइया का घर है। उनका अपना काम है। गाँव बदायूं में पड़ता है। वे घर में सबसे बड़े हैं। उनकी पत्नी का नाम है पूजा। उनका एक लड़का है और प्यारी सी एक छोटी बच्ची भी। मुझे उसका चेहरा नाजुक सा नज़र आता है। ऐसा लगता है जैसे कोई कमल के फूल से निकल कर बाहर की दुनिया देख रहा है। उस बच्ची को तो कुछ नहीं पता। वह तो भगवान के घर से आई हैं।

उसके बाद दो नम्बर मकान में जो परिवार रहता है उसमें तीन सदस्य हैं। अंकल, आन्टी और उनका लड़का हरि ओमा। नाम तो अच्छा है लेकिन कमी एक ही है कि लड़का ढंग का नहीं है। वह बहुत ही शरारती हैं। अपनी मम्मी को बहुत परेशान करता है। उसकी मम्मी तो उसे बहुत पीटती है पर वह फिर भी नहीं सुधरता। मिट्टी में खेलता है तो उसे खेलने दो। मुझे यह बुरा लगता है। बच्चे दिन भर धूप में ही खेलते हैं। अगर कभी वह बीमार पड़ जाता है तो मुझे अच्छा नहीं लगता। वह सिर्फ चार साल का है लेकिन उसे देखकर लगता नहीं है कि उसकी उम्र केवल चार साल है।





आज चार अप्रैल 2008 और दिन है सड़ें। आज घर में सभी खाली बैठे हैं इसलिए मुझे भी कुछ करने का मन नहीं कर रहा। लिखना मुझे अच्छा लगता है इसलिए मैं लिख रही हूँ। आज मेरी नींद सुबह साढ़े छः बजे ही खुल गई। पार्क गई और थोड़ी देर घूमकर सात बजे तक घर आ गई। फिर हाथ मुँह धोकर चाय पी और सभी बर्तनों को अंदर से निकाल कर बाहर रख दिया। इधर-उधर घूमकर जब मैं घर आई तो मम्मी पापा ने मुझे डांटते हुए कहा - तुझे कुछ काम नहीं दिखाई देता है कि दिन भर घूमती रहती हो"। उनकी डाँट सुनकर मैं चुप रह गई। घर में साफ-सफाई करने के बाद थोड़ी देर बैठ गई।

पीस के धागे कटवाने में मम्मी की मदद की। कुछ देर बाद मम्मी ने दाल-चावल और आलू का चोखा बनाया। तब तक मैंने बर्तन धोये और झाड़ू-पोछा किया। काम करते-करते डेढ़ बज गए। मैं थककर सो गई। कुछ देर बाद मम्मी आई और मुझे उठाकर कहा-खाना खा लेना और बर्तन धोकर सो जाना। खाना खाने के बाद मेरा सोने का मन नहीं कर रहा था क्योंकि बच्चे बहुत शोर कर रहे थे। मैं भी बाहर चली गई। साढ़े चार बजे के आसपास मौसम थोड़ा-थोड़ा आँधी जैसा होने लगा। लेकिन रात में इतनी गर्मी थी कि सोया नहीं गया। मैं उठकर बाहर कुर्सी पर बैठ गई। बाहर अच्छी हवा चल रही थी। मैं बाहर आकर सोना चाहती थी। पर बाहर सोने में डर लगता है क्योंकि हमारे यहाँ बड़े-बड़े घूस हैं। पाँच-छह का झुंड बनाकर बिल से निकल जाते हैं। उनका घर ज़मीन के गड्ढे में ही होता है। मुझे तो देखकर ऐसा लगता है कि अंदर जाकर घर से निकलूँ ही नहीं। पर क्या करूँ? जब रात में पेट दर्द हो रहा था तो मैं बाहर निकलकर बैठ गई। इतनी देर में देखा तो मेरे पैरों के ऊपर से घूस निकलकर गया।



मोहल्ले की फैक्ट्री के बारे में

मेरे घर के पास बहुत सारी फैक्ट्रियाँ हैं जिनमें सिलाई-कढ़ाई का काम होता है। इसे करना हमारे बस की बात नहीं पर सीखने में तो कोई हर्ज़ नहीं। इसे सीखाने में पाँच-छः महीने लग जाते हैं। इस काम को करने वाले बड़ी मुश्किल से ही मिलते हैं। अगर एक-एक कारीगर एक पीस को कढ़ाई करता तो वह छः-सात हजार से कम का नहीं होता। पर ऐसा होता नहीं है। उसे छः-छः कारीगर मिलकर बनाते हैं। तभी वह पीस खत्म हो पाता है। ये पीस साड़ी, सूट, लहंगों का होता है। यह कढ़ाई पीसों पर की जाती है। उन्हें ढेर सारी मोतियों और सितारों से सजाया और करतूस से सिलकर पक्का किया जाता है जो देखने में प्यारा और अच्छा लगता है। कढ़ाई के बाद साड़ी, सूट, लहंगे आदि इतने भारी हो जाते हैं कि उन्हें उठाने में परेशानी होती है। जब यह काम आता है तो सौ-दो सौ पीसों का आर्डर आता है। सभी कारीगर इसे बनाते रहते हैं। कभी-कभी तो वे एक मिनट भी खाली नहीं रहते। उस दौरान कारीगर काफी व्यस्त रहते हैं। उन्हें खाने का भी समय नहीं मिलता। ज्यादातर पीस बाहर सप्लाई किये जाते हैं जिन्हें मॉडलिंग व शूटिंग के दौरान हीरोइनें पहनती हैं।

दूसरी फैक्ट्री में सिर्फ बाहर देश जाने वाले सामान का ऑर्डर का काम होता है जैसे - रजाई, सूट, टी-शर्ट, स्कर्ट, कमीज़ आदि। इन पीसों पर छपाई की जाती है। जिस फैक्ट्री में यह काम होता है उसके बेसमेंट का किराया पन्द्रह हजार रूपए प्रति महीना व बिजली का बिल भी दस हजार रूपए तक आता है। फैक्ट्री के मालिक की पत्नी भी कभी-कभी उनके साथ आती है। और पीसों की चेकिंग

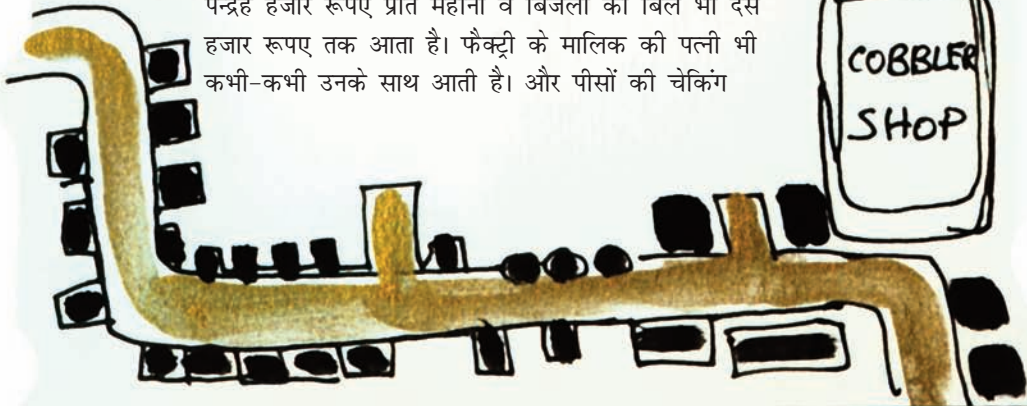
PAN
SHOP

ELECTRIC
SHOP

MEAT
SHOP

BIG
DHABA

COBBLER
SHOP



TENT
HOUSE

MASJID

GENERAL
STORE

MOBILE
SHOP

DOCTOR
CABIN

MEAT
SHOP

करती है। उनके पास पैंतालीस कारीगर हैं। इन कारीगरों के खाने का इन्तज़ाम भी वही करती है। वह इन कारीगरों को हर रविवार को ढाई सौ रूपये खर्चा देती है। त्यौहारों में ढाई सौ रूपये हफ्ते के अलावा बोनस भी मिलता है।

पीस की फिनीशिंग देखकर रेट तय होता है। कभी-कभी एक-एक कारीगर चालीस से साठ पीस बना लेते हैं। जब पीसों का धागा काटने का काम आता है तो हम बहुत मजे से काटते हैं। इससे हमारे भी स्कूल का खर्चा निकल जाता है। बहुत सारी महिलायें पीस का धागा काटती हैं। जब पीस के पैसे मिलते हैं तब थोड़े अपने पास रखते हैं और बाकी अपनी मम्मी को देते हैं।

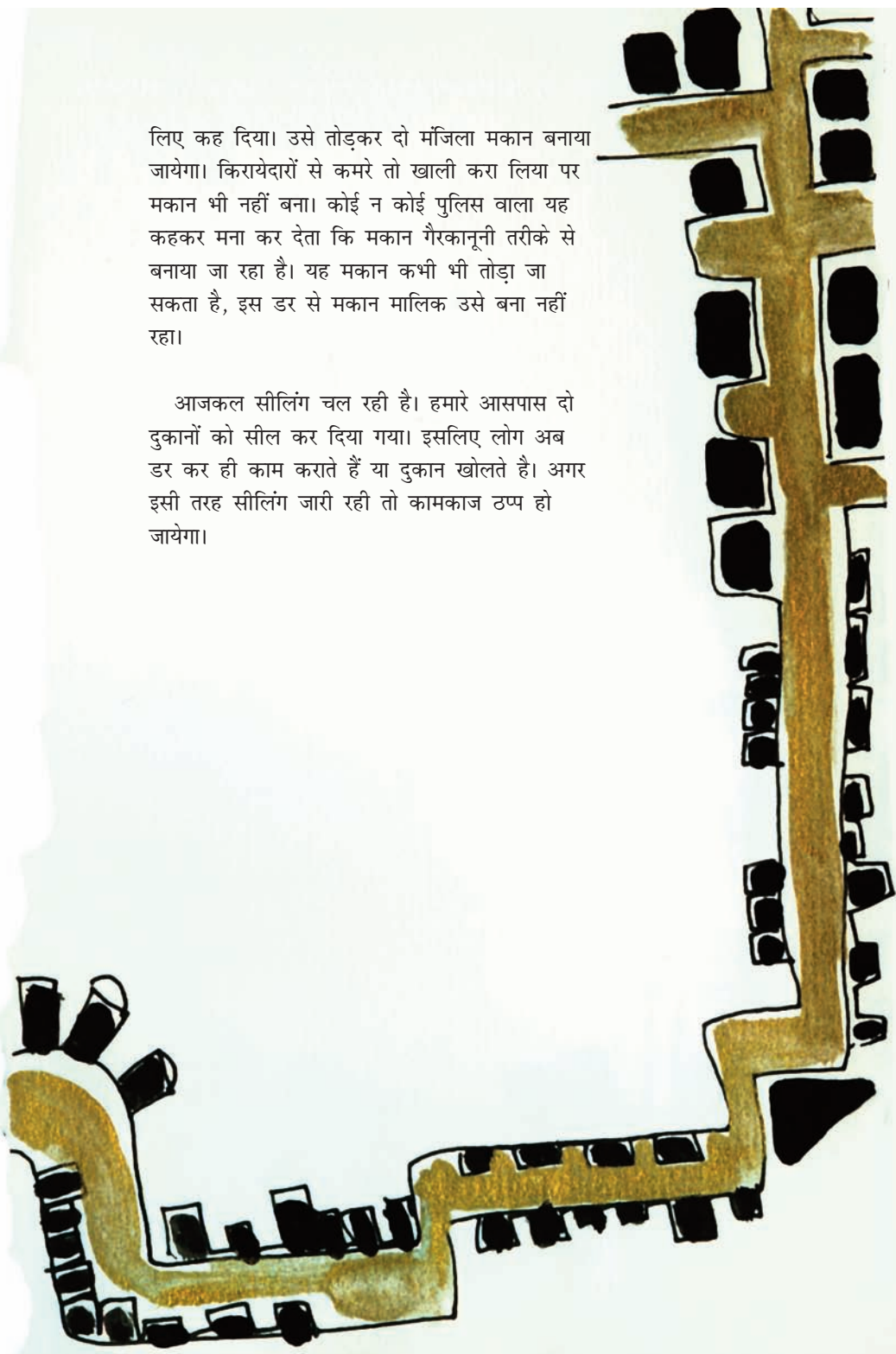
फैक्ट्री वाली आँटी की भी तीन बेटियाँ हैं। दो बेटियों की शादी हो गई है। अब इनकी फैक्ट्री यहाँ से खाली होकर गुडगाँव चली जाएगी क्योंकि अब कोई फैक्ट्री यहाँ नहीं रह सकती। मशीनों से यहाँ प्रदूषण फैलता है इसलिए उन्हें शिफ्ट करनी पड़ेगी। यहाँ से ज़्यादा कढ़ाई की फैक्ट्री तो हौजरानी में है। फैक्ट्रियों की चेकिंग चल रही है। फैक्ट्री मालिक सीलिंग से बचने के लिए चेकिंग के दौरान अपनी फैक्ट्री में ताला लगाकर इधर-उधर भाग जाते हैं। कुछ समय पहले सरकार की तरफ से सीलिंग का आर्डर आया था। दो-तीन सालों से सीलिंग बंद हो गया था पर अब फिर शुरू हो गया है।

हम जहाँ रहते हैं वहाँ घरों के नीचे जो दुकानें बनाई गई हैं उन्हें भी तोड़ने के ऑर्डर आ गए हैं। हमारी आन्टी का घर छत के ऊपर था। वह उसमें तीन-चार साल से रह रही थी। उनके मकान मालिक ने पंद्रह दिन पहले ही कमरा खाली करने के



लिए कह दिया। उसे तोड़कर दो मंजिला मकान बनाया जायेगा। किरायेदारों से कमरे तो खाली करा लिया पर मकान भी नहीं बना। कोई न कोई पुलिस वाला यह कहकर मना कर देता कि मकान गैरकानूनी तरीके से बनाया जा रहा है। यह मकान कभी भी तोड़ा जा सकता है, इस डर से मकान मालिक उसे बना नहीं रहा।

आजकल सीलिंग चल रही है। हमारे आसपास दो दुकानों को सील कर दिया गया। इसलिए लोग अब डर कर ही काम कराते हैं या दुकान खोलते हैं। अगर इसी तरह सीलिंग जारी रही तो कामकाज ठप्प हो जायेगा।





Wandering

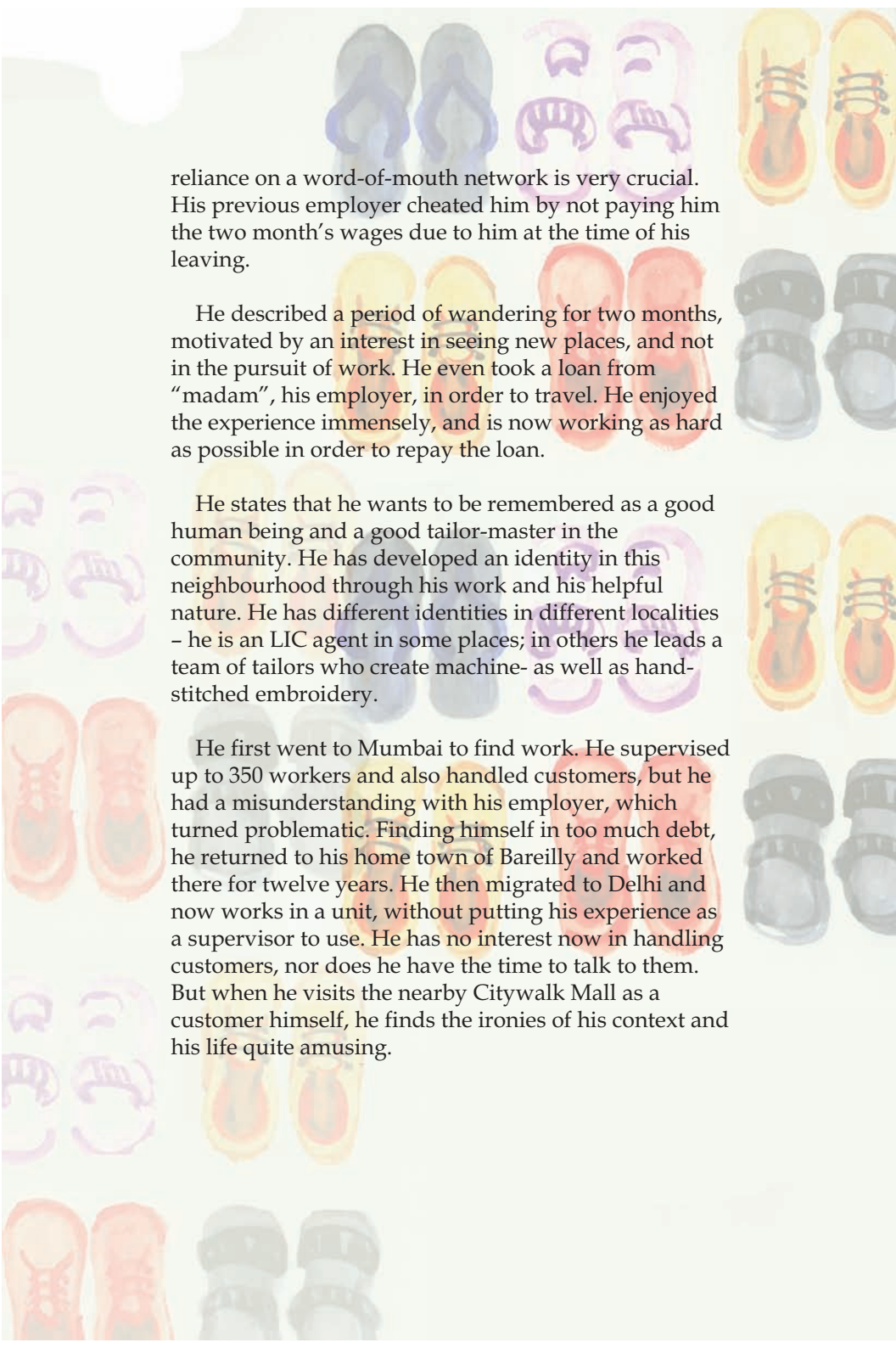
He shares his anguish about how over time he has had to come to terms with the fact that his struggles to survive have forced him to crush his aspirations; this seems to be common to workers' lives. He realises that the life he is forced to lead will not give him the chance to follow his own dreams and passions.

Though quite young, he is aware that as a migrant to Delhi from the village where he learnt his trade, he has to focus on earning and saving, and then returning home to take on family responsibilities. He wants to travel and see new places and meet new people, but feels this is not possible now.

He expresses his wish to see the Republic Day Parade in Delhi. He repeats that he had migrated to Delhi to be able to work at a job that allowed him to sustain himself as well as send enough money home, but his earnings were too small. Consequently, he had to work in other places in India to be able to support his family. This cycle of uprooting and re-settling affected everyone in this unit, for several workers were in the same situation.

He reacts to the word "wandering"; he insists that this had never been part of his nature, but circumstances have made him a wanderer. Now he works at one job for as long as there is a demand for the embroidery; he is always aware that he will have to move out in due course and pick up work elsewhere.

He can only work for an extended period in a place where he felt comfortable with his employer and his colleagues. In his profession, trust in the employer and

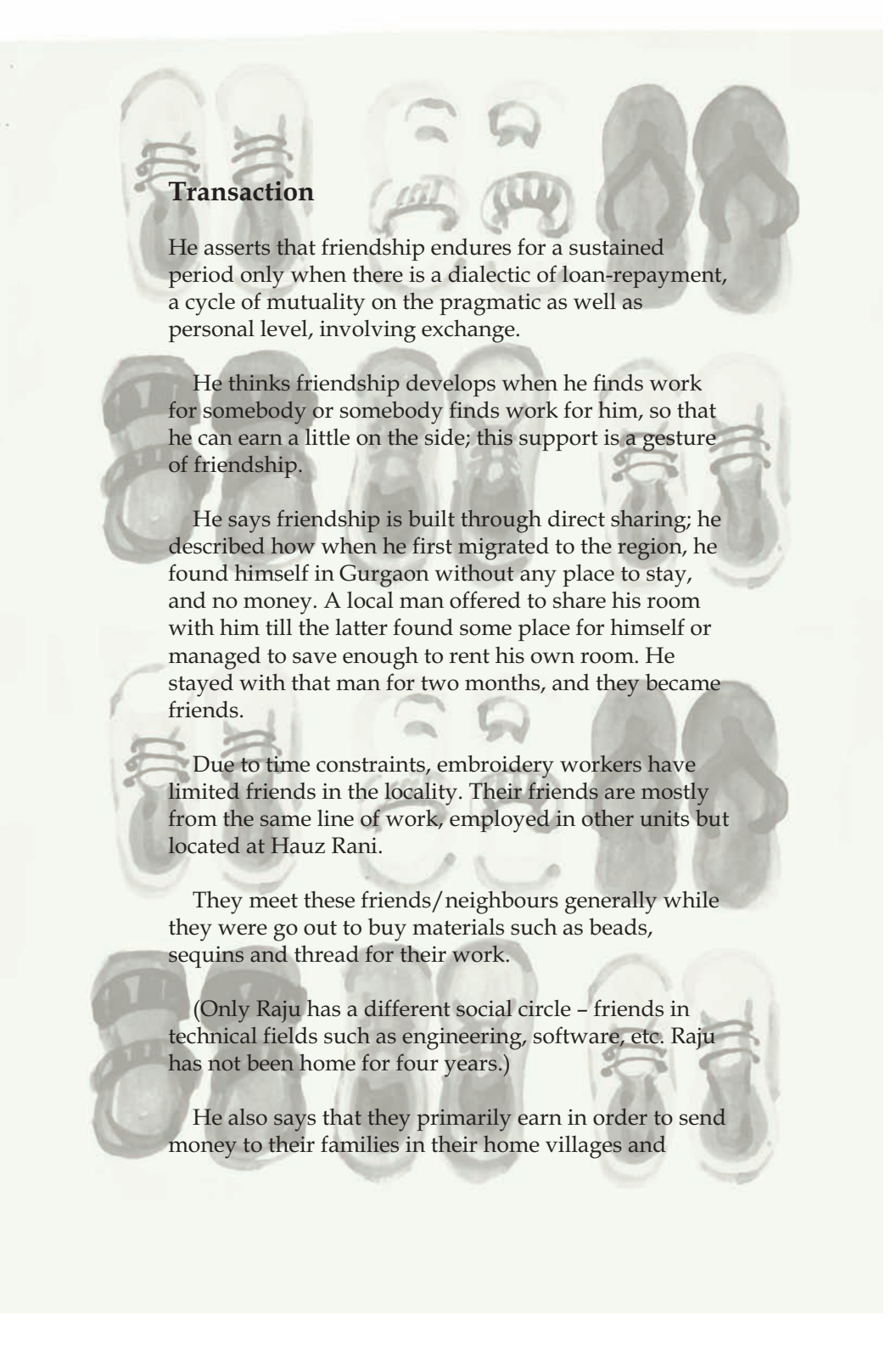


reliance on a word-of-mouth network is very crucial. His previous employer cheated him by not paying him the two month's wages due to him at the time of his leaving.

He described a period of wandering for two months, motivated by an interest in seeing new places, and not in the pursuit of work. He even took a loan from "madam", his employer, in order to travel. He enjoyed the experience immensely, and is now working as hard as possible in order to repay the loan.

He states that he wants to be remembered as a good human being and a good tailor-master in the community. He has developed an identity in this neighbourhood through his work and his helpful nature. He has different identities in different localities – he is an LIC agent in some places; in others he leads a team of tailors who create machine- as well as hand-stitched embroidery.

He first went to Mumbai to find work. He supervised up to 350 workers and also handled customers, but he had a misunderstanding with his employer, which turned problematic. Finding himself in too much debt, he returned to his home town of Bareilly and worked there for twelve years. He then migrated to Delhi and now works in a unit, without putting his experience as a supervisor to use. He has no interest now in handling customers, nor does he have the time to talk to them. But when he visits the nearby Citywalk Mall as a customer himself, he finds the ironies of his context and his life quite amusing.

The background of the page features a repeating pattern of two types of images: a pair of white sneakers with black laces and a pair of brown flip-flops. In the center of the page, there are two stylized, light-colored faces with simple features like eyes, noses, and mouths, appearing to be part of the overall design.

Transaction

He asserts that friendship endures for a sustained period only when there is a dialectic of loan-repayment, a cycle of mutuality on the pragmatic as well as personal level, involving exchange.

He thinks friendship develops when he finds work for somebody or somebody finds work for him, so that he can earn a little on the side; this support is a gesture of friendship.

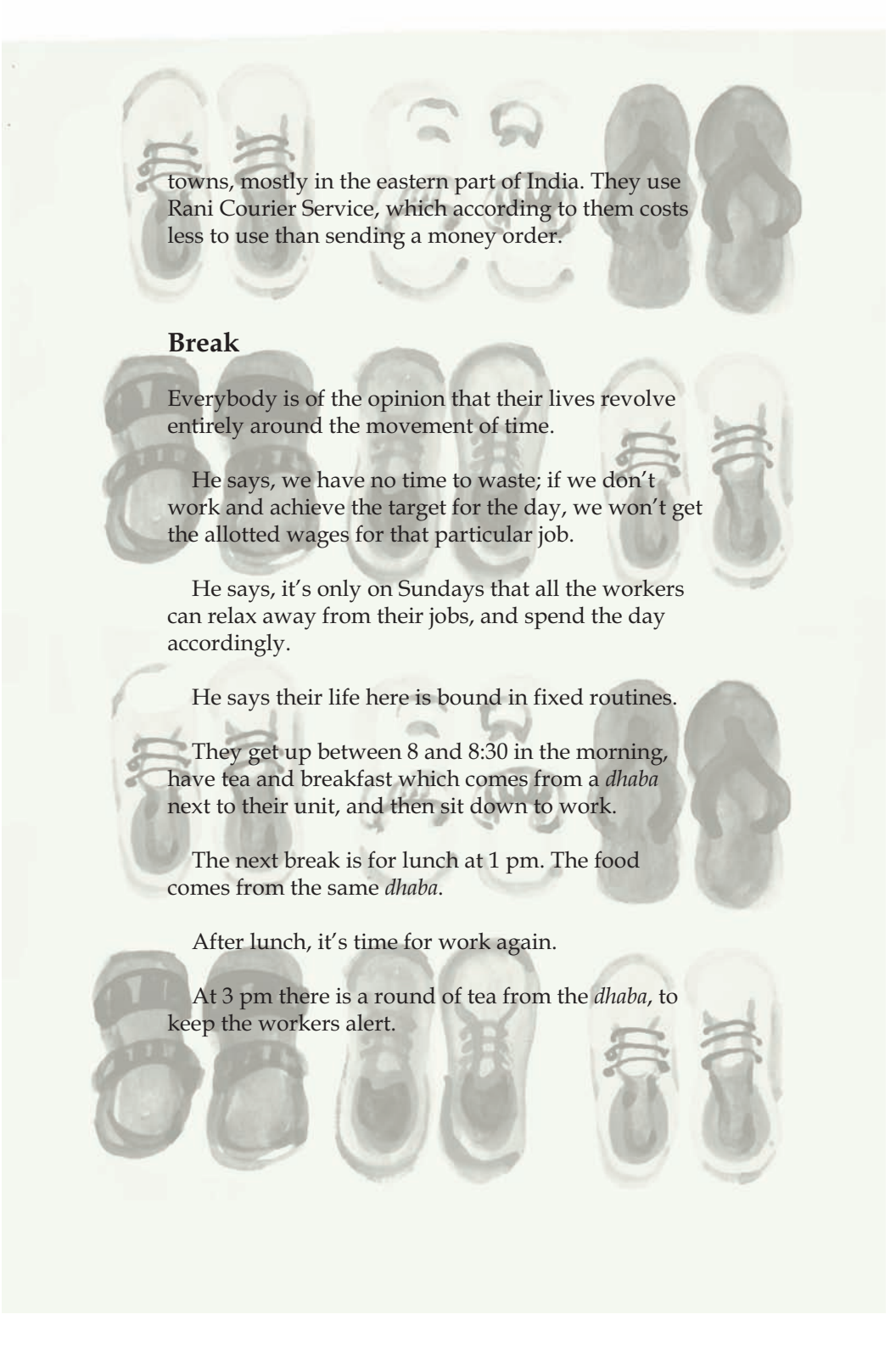
He says friendship is built through direct sharing; he described how when he first migrated to the region, he found himself in Gurgaon without any place to stay, and no money. A local man offered to share his room with him till the latter found some place for himself or managed to save enough to rent his own room. He stayed with that man for two months, and they became friends.

Due to time constraints, embroidery workers have limited friends in the locality. Their friends are mostly from the same line of work, employed in other units but located at Hauz Rani.

They meet these friends/neighbours generally while they were go out to buy materials such as beads, sequins and thread for their work.

(Only Raju has a different social circle – friends in technical fields such as engineering, software, etc. Raju has not been home for four years.)

He also says that they primarily earn in order to send money to their families in their home villages and



towns, mostly in the eastern part of India. They use Rani Courier Service, which according to them costs less to use than sending a money order.

Break

Everybody is of the opinion that their lives revolve entirely around the movement of time.

He says, we have no time to waste; if we don't work and achieve the target for the day, we won't get the allotted wages for that particular job.

He says, it's only on Sundays that all the workers can relax away from their jobs, and spend the day accordingly.

He says their life here is bound in fixed routines.

They get up between 8 and 8:30 in the morning, have tea and breakfast which comes from a *dhaba* next to their unit, and then sit down to work.

The next break is for lunch at 1 pm. The food comes from the same *dhaba*.

After lunch, it's time for work again.

At 3 pm there is a round of tea from the *dhaba*, to keep the workers alert.



They sit again and work till 9:30 or 10 pm.

They eat their dinner, probably at the *dhaba*.

If there is an important deadline to meet, they might have to work late, sometimes the whole night.

To break the monotony while embroidering, they listen to music on the FM radio, or make fun of each other, or just keep up a conversation.

His chief pleasure is to play cricket on Sundays in the open space across the road. But he can't do that any longer. The ground they played on has been appropriated by the mammoth Mall.

So he uses his free time on Sunday working as an LIC agent.

Sounds

In the lanes of Khirki and Hauz Rani, sounds drift in from different sources, and are a constant in the daily lives of the embroidery workers. The speed of their fingers never falters as they listen without attention, without distraction, without remembering, without forgetting...

He says the first sound of his day is water dripping from the bathroom tap, rupturing his exhausted sleep...

All day, the whirr of the electric cutting machine and drill in the furniture shop next door...

The shouts of different hawkers selling different



wares at different hours...

The call of vegetable vendors in front of the *dhaba*, following the afternoon tea break...

As evening approaches, the thickening clusters of voices in the lanes...

At dusk, the *azaan* from the mosque...

At night, the bell of the *kulfi* seller's cart...

All day and all night, the relentless, impersonal tick of the clock...

The steady rasp of needles puncturing the fabric stretched on the frames in the hand-embroidery unit...

He says that sometimes songs on the radio, or the sounds of crows and other birds, makes him nostalgic.

The sound of rain reminds him of the wheat fields in his village; during the monsoon he would run through them, getting drenched for no reason at all.



Name: Sameer

Age: 23

Employee, Barista Coffee Company, Select Citywalk Mall, Saket

I am from Meerut. I moved to Delhi a year ago. I live in Malviya Nagar, Khirki Extension, close to my workplace. It is about one kilometer from the coffee shop.

I like working at Barista and at this outlet in particular, because it supposedly has the highest sales in India.

Previously I was working with Taj Flight Catering in Mahipalpur. I enjoyed that job. There was very little work pressure, and I had no problem handling it. The longest shift I ever had to work was 8 hours. The company had a pick-up/drop facility for the employees. I was put through 3 months of training and then given an 18-month contract. It was fixed work – all I had to do was to set up breakfast and lunch for Executive class. After a year I quit because I didn't want to work on a contract basis. During that year I tried to get a permanent job with the company, but I didn't succeed.

At Barista we handle lots of customers all day long; some are easy and some are difficult. The flow is constant.

The work pressure is in general very high. I am assigned kitchen duty, where the pressure is most intense. For the last three months I have been on the night shift, 11 pm to 8 am. My manager assigned this because I live

near the mall and he assumed that therefore I would not have a problem getting to work at night.

This shift is most exhausting, but my colleagues are very sympathetic. When I get too tired, they help me out.

I am responsible for the entire kitchen – from its cleaning to the *misa* – i.e., the preparation for the next day.

I am comfortable in my job – I don't mind the pressure and the fatigue. The only objection I have is that night duties throw my whole schedule off balance.

After my night shift I like to sleep a lot. During my days off I spend time with my friends and watch movies at home. This relaxes me.

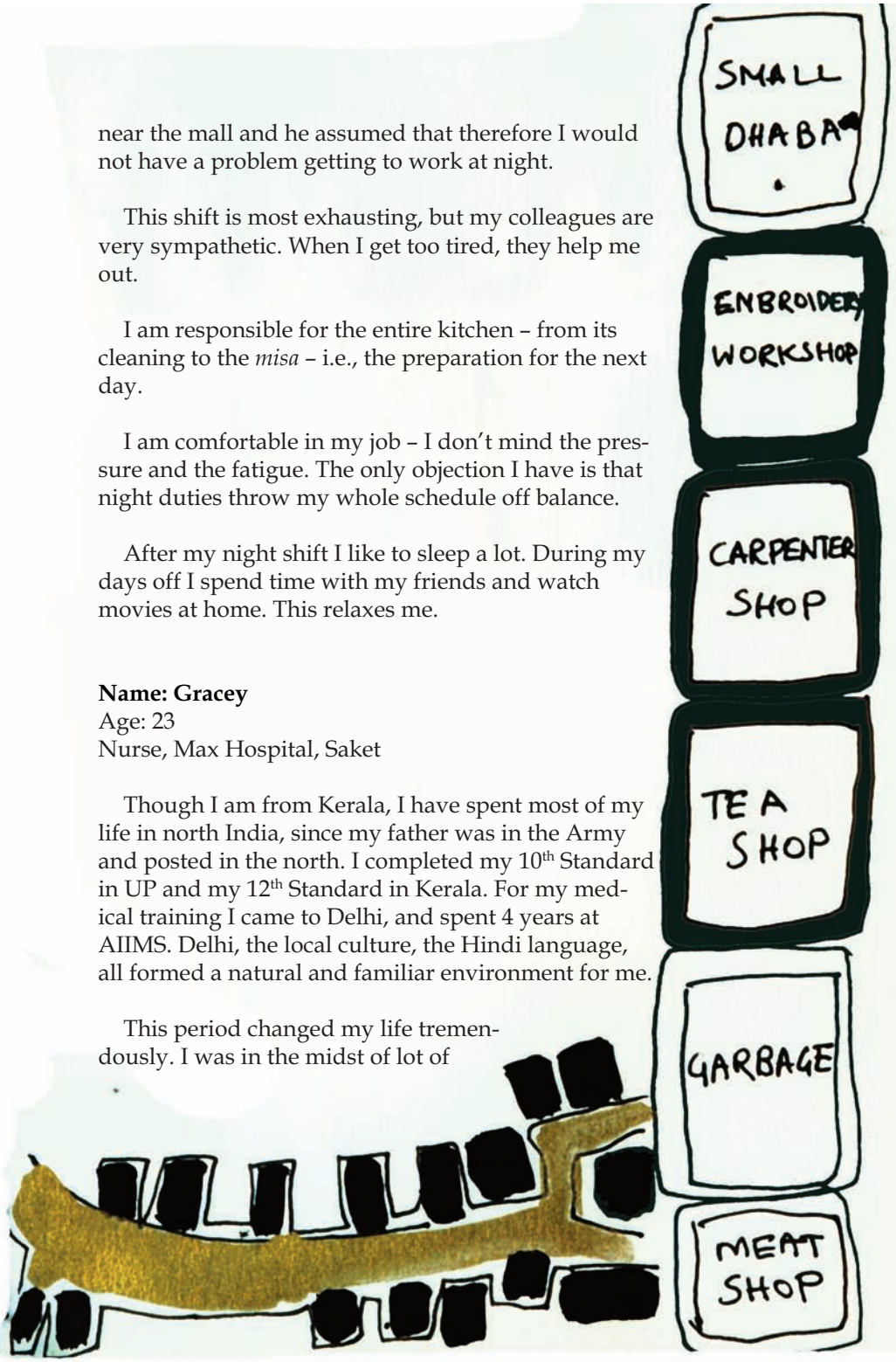
Name: Gracey

Age: 23

Nurse, Max Hospital, Saket

Though I am from Kerala, I have spent most of my life in north India, since my father was in the Army and posted in the north. I completed my 10th Standard in UP and my 12th Standard in Kerala. For my medical training I came to Delhi, and spent 4 years at AIIMS. Delhi, the local culture, the Hindi language, all formed a natural and familiar environment for me.

This period changed my life tremendously. I was in the midst of lot of



SMALL
DHABA

ENBROIDERY
WORKSHOP

CARPENTER
SHOP

TEA
SHOP

GARBAGE

MEAT
SHOP

HANDMADE
EMBROIDERY

sick people night and day, and my duty was to treat them all alike, with equal commitment to each case. I have seen people on the verge of death, in extreme agony, and crowds of the poor in the hospital corridors giving up hope after endlessly waiting for someone to attend to them. Witnessing all this daily, I experienced how compassionate almighty God is, giving me the chance to help people who are suffering.

KERALA
SHOP

After my graduation I joined Max, a private medical institution at Saket. I lived with three roommates in a nearby colony called Sheikh Sarai. Commuting to work by bus, we observed huge malls being constructed, month after month. At that time this area was not very developed. But to my surprise, within two months of the malls coming up, the face of the area changed completely.

MANDIR

To shorten the commute, we shifted to a locality called Hauz Rani near Khirkee Extension. All four of us felt a bit intimidated in the new place, from the point of view of security as well as lifestyle. Locals stared at us when we went out wearing jeans or skirts. Hauz Rani has dark and narrow lanes, and seemed a threatening place. But this tension eased after we explored the area for a week, discovering the shops, beauty parlours, etc. Life became easier for the four of us when we found two shops nearby that stocked goods from Kerala. We got all the items we needed. Nor did we ever have a problem recharging our mobile phones or making STD calls from phone booths.

KARIM'S
DHABA

Slowly we adjusted to the area and became a part of it. I realized that though the locals seem to be orthodox in certain ways, I enjoyed interacting with them. Moreover, a lot of local people were quite rich. They extended the living space of their houses as much as possible, and rented out those portions. Many tenants were nurses working in Max. Artisans and people em-

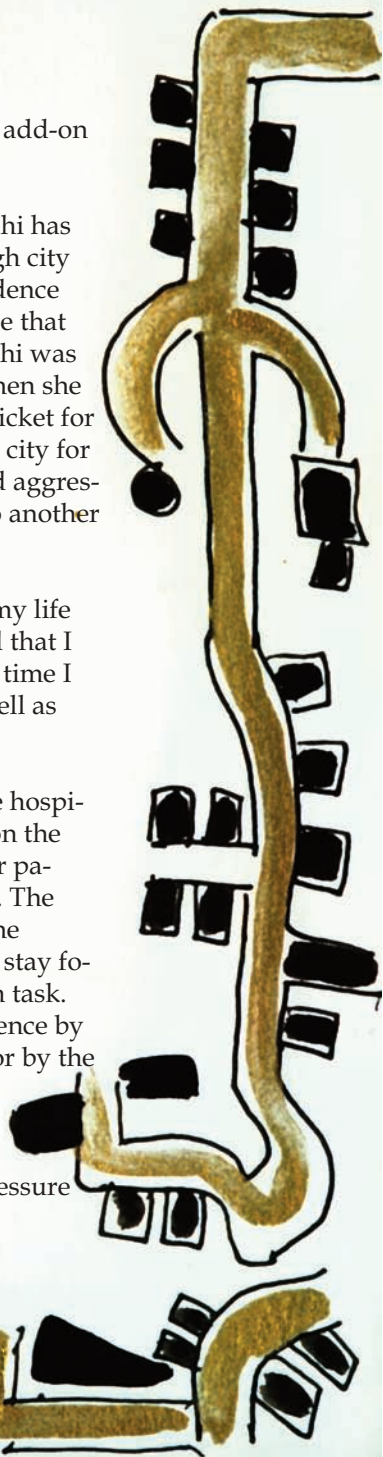
JUICE
SHOP

ployed in mall construction also rented these add-on rooms.

The experience of living and renting in Delhi has had a deep impact on me. Surviving this tough city and claiming a place in it has given me confidence and the strength to continue the daily struggle that gets more and more difficult. I know that Delhi was not always like this – my mother says that when she lived here in the 1970s, you could buy a bus ticket for one or two rupees and have a nice tour of the city for the whole day. But now it is so congested and aggressive that traveling from one part of the city to another is a real ordeal.

Shifting to Hauz Rani initiated a phase in my life that was a turning point for me, as I observed that I was becoming more responsible. For the first time I was supporting myself, and had to save as well as learn to spend my money wisely.

Life in Max is quite hectic. As it is a private hospital, the physical and mental demands made on the staff are quite intense. I learnt a new name for patients: they have to be referred to as “clients”. The hospital motto is that the staff has to please the “clients” in all circumstances. I have to really stay focused while on duty, and concentrate on each task. The hospital policy is that any fault or negligence by nurses has to be rectified and compensated for by the offender. Each item is rigidly tracked and accounted for. Any loss or misplacement has to be made up for by the one at fault. These standards and protocols put a lot of pressure on the staff.



SEWING
MACHINE
REPAIRING
SHOP

However, working in Max is also a very positive experience because it is a state-of-the-art hospital. We are exposed to the latest technologies and scientific procedures on a daily basis. The staff becomes competent enough to work in any hospital anywhere in the world.

TAILOR
SHOP

All these changes in my life have influenced my spiritual life. I feel that I am closer to God. I always pray before beginning my shift, so that I can stay focused and thereby avoid mistakes and accidents.

Name: Miriam

Age: 22

Nurse, Max Hospital, Saket

COURIER
SHOP

I was born in a small village in Kerala. My family migrated to Delhi when I was 4 years old. I was nurtured and pampered in a loving home environment while growing up. My independence has increased year by year, in this metropolitan environment. I have lived in a hostel while training to be a nurse, and now I live as a tenant, with my roommates. My education was in a government set-up, and now I am working in a huge corporate-run hospital. Life has shown me the extremes of everything.

PHOTO
SHOP

Delhi was always metropolitan, but over the last few years it has changed incredibly, due to increased economic growth, increased migration, increased industrialization and the increased presence of the corporate sector. The city is the centre of globalization in India.

PHONE
BOOTH
PAN SHOP

Earlier I lived in Pushp Vihar, a government colony. It was lovely - quiet and secure, lots of parks and open spaces, no commercial establishments. But today, all one sees there are shopping complexes, private

schools, district courts, malls, crowds, bustle and hassle. I miss that earlier peace and quiet.

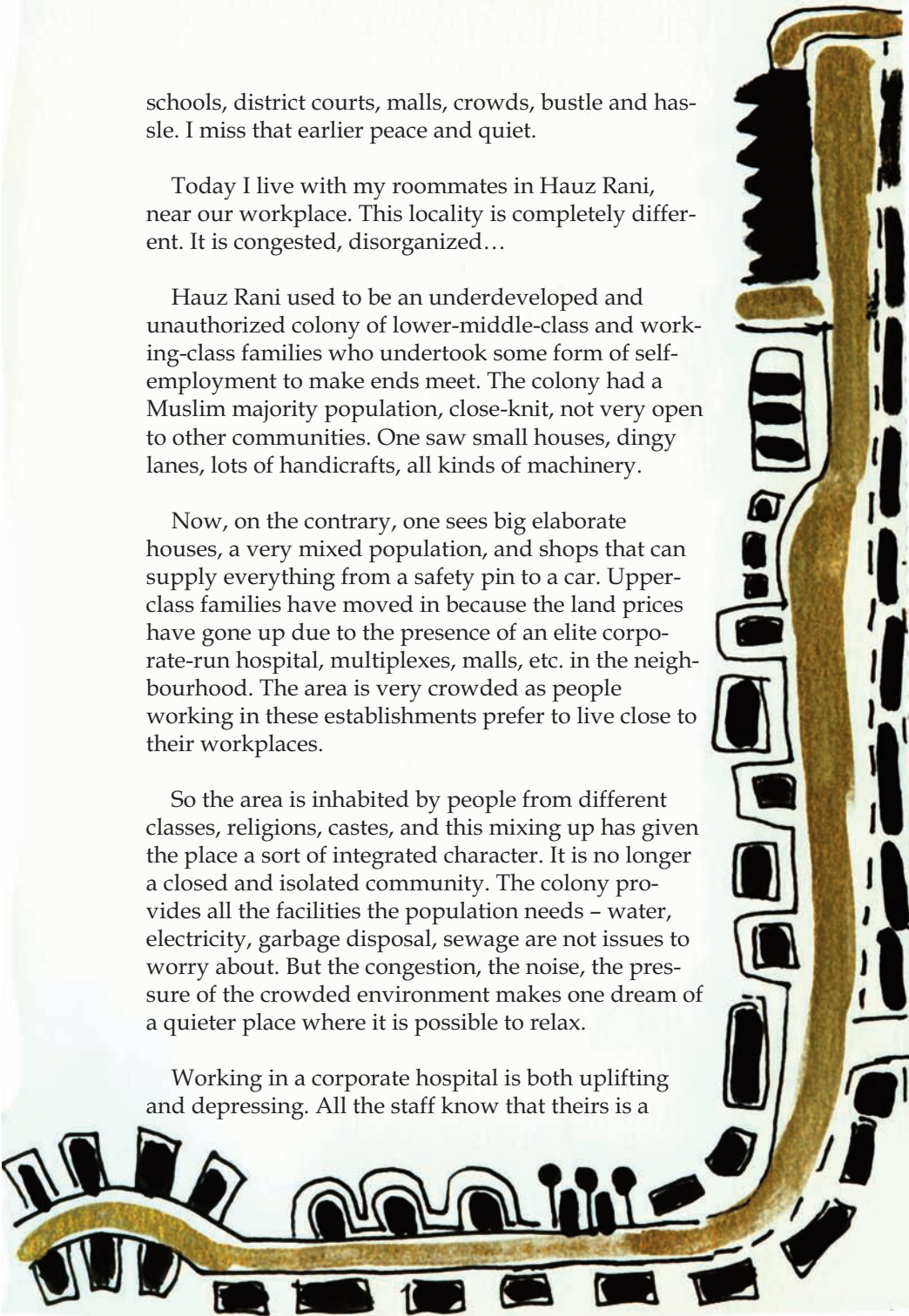
Today I live with my roommates in Hauz Rani, near our workplace. This locality is completely different. It is congested, disorganized...

Hauz Rani used to be an underdeveloped and unauthorized colony of lower-middle-class and working-class families who undertook some form of self-employment to make ends meet. The colony had a Muslim majority population, close-knit, not very open to other communities. One saw small houses, dingy lanes, lots of handicrafts, all kinds of machinery.

Now, on the contrary, one sees big elaborate houses, a very mixed population, and shops that can supply everything from a safety pin to a car. Upper-class families have moved in because the land prices have gone up due to the presence of an elite corporate-run hospital, multiplexes, malls, etc. in the neighbourhood. The area is very crowded as people working in these establishments prefer to live close to their workplaces.

So the area is inhabited by people from different classes, religions, castes, and this mixing up has given the place a sort of integrated character. It is no longer a closed and isolated community. The colony provides all the facilities the population needs - water, electricity, garbage disposal, sewage are not issues to worry about. But the congestion, the noise, the pressure of the crowded environment makes one dream of a quieter place where it is possible to relax.

Working in a corporate hospital is both uplifting and depressing. All the staff know that theirs is a



prestigious job, in a grand and stylish ambience. Air conditioning, bright lights, soothing and elegant interiors, the latest sophisticated technology, brilliant doctors and specialists – all this is very attractive. But it is a challenge to successfully negotiate the responsibility, the high standards of efficiency, the demanding patients, the strict supervisors, the regular auditing and assessment. No one dare talk rudely, because he/she is held accountable. Everyone's work is carefully monitored. All this is possible only because of the very high fees charged from the patients. Reflecting on this, one feels less proud of the structure one is a part of...

In a government set-up, the processes are long, inaccurate, below standard, and the fees are low, treatments subsidized. The patient load is huge, and the hospitals do not have the funds that corporate-run institutions are able to generate. You can't expect the same care that you would get in a corporate-run hospital.


If AIIMS had the number of staff per patient as Max has, the care provided at AIIMS would improve dramatically. Here the ratio is 1 staff member per three or four patients; in AIIMS it is sometimes 1: 40. Quality care is not possible for such a quantity.

Name: Rosie


Age: 22

Nurse, Max Hospital, Saket

I received my medical training at AIIMS in Delhi. I stayed in the hostel for those four years. I then got a job at the corporate-run Max Hospital.



GENERAL
SHOP




HAKIM
SHOP




GIFT
SHOP



PHONE
BOOTH



RATION
SHOP



MACHINE
MADE
EMBROIDERY

My first day working at Max was very interesting. None of the nurses knew what department they had been assigned to. Our supervisor read out the final list. It turned out that I was in the same department as Ruth, my colleague, former hostel mate and now my roommate. This made both of us really happy.

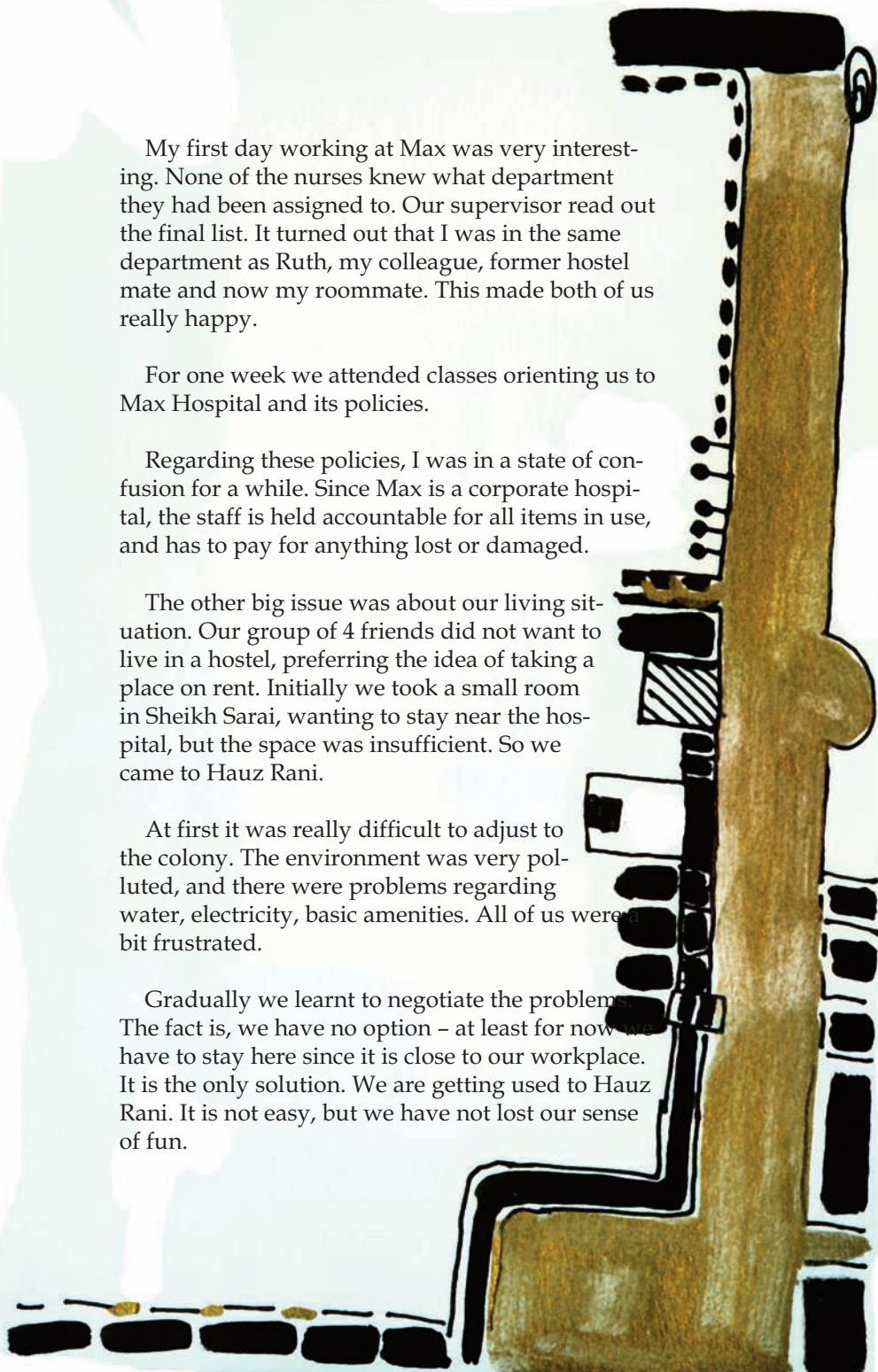
For one week we attended classes orienting us to Max Hospital and its policies.

Regarding these policies, I was in a state of confusion for a while. Since Max is a corporate hospital, the staff is held accountable for all items in use, and has to pay for anything lost or damaged.

The other big issue was about our living situation. Our group of 4 friends did not want to live in a hostel, preferring the idea of taking a place on rent. Initially we took a small room in Sheikh Sarai, wanting to stay near the hospital, but the space was insufficient. So we came to Hauz Rani.

At first it was really difficult to adjust to the colony. The environment was very polluted, and there were problems regarding water, electricity, basic amenities. All of us were a bit frustrated.

Gradually we learnt to negotiate the problems. The fact is, we have no option – at least for now we have to stay here since it is close to our workplace. It is the only solution. We are getting used to Hauz Rani. It is not easy, but we have not lost our sense of fun.



HANDMADE
EMBROIDERY

Name: Ruth

Age: 23

Nurse, Max Hospital, Saket

KERALA
SHOP

When I started work at Max, I was assigned to the Emergency department. I was happy because I like trauma work, and also because a friend who had been with me in hostel while I was undergoing my medical training was also assigned to that department. We were taken around the department and introduced to other colleagues.

MANDIR

For the first month our routine was just as it was during our training as nursing students - we stood to the side and observed the doctors and senior staff attending to patients. We were on general shift for that month - 8 am to 4.30 pm.

KARIM'S
DHABA

Working in Max was a different experience for all of us, since we were accustomed to the government set-up where we had received our training. At Max, everything is unique in that it is designed in a particular way. The Max way of doing things is that order and discipline prevail all the time. The staff is continually observed and assessed. We have to follow procedures not as we wish to, but the way the "client" - the name by which we had to refer to patients - wish us to. It is a state-of-the-art hospital, so we experience the satisfaction that comes from using the best equipment and meeting high professional standards, but it is frustrating to be monitored and kept under surveillance.

JUICE
SHOP

But I enjoy my work because I love it. The nature of my work, the professional environment and the good relationship with colleagues adds to my pleasure. There are problems at work too, but they are manageable.

The only really serious problem was accommodation. We took a house on rent in Sheikh Sarai.

But the landlord kept hassling us, so we shifted to Hauz Rani since we wanted to be near the hospital. At first, it was difficult to adjust to the locality, because we were used to a calm and quiet atmosphere; the congestion and noise of Hauz Rani disturbed us a lot. But we adjusted, slowly. Then we had to shift to another house, again because of a hostile landlord.

We have become almost expert in packing up and re-settling our home within a few hours.

This independent and flexible style of living away from home, with reliable friends, enables us to become more responsible and develop a mature outlook, as well as practical wisdom drawn from negotiating our daily struggle in this environment.

Reaching home after our shifts, we sit together and narrate our experiences of the long day at Max. To share life in this way, to laugh with each other and help with one another's problems, strengthens our bonds as friends and colleagues.



SEWING
MACHINE
REPAIRING
SHOP

Name: Neelam

Age: 40

Salesperson at a designer *sari* shop, Select Citywalk Mall, Saket

I have been living in Khirki Extension for the past 13 years.

TAILOR
SHOP

My work follows a regular routine. I have to check the stocks daily, discard old stock, arrange new acquisitions, initiate the sales. During week-days I work from 11.30 to 8.30 pm with 30 minutes for lunch. Weekends are the busiest time of the week, and on those days I work from 12 noon to 9 pm.

COURIER
SHOP

Before taking up sales work I ran my own manufacturing unit at my house. My clients were cloth dealers and shop owners involved in design aspects of *sari* production. When the big showrooms were sealed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, my unit became sick and I had to shut it down.

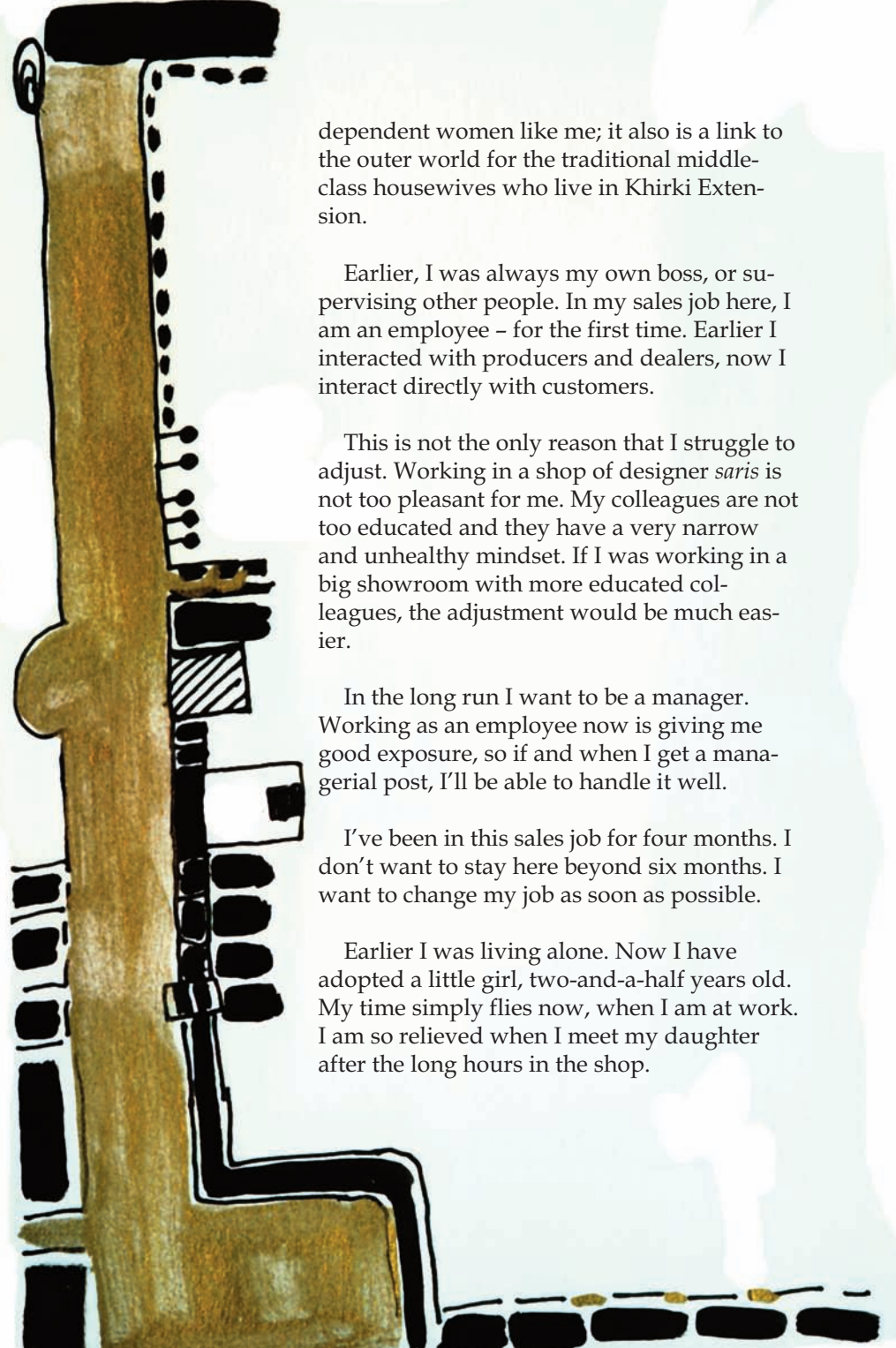
PHOTO
SHOP

At the same time I was undergoing a personal crisis — my marriage broke up, and that trauma induced a miscarriage in the seventh month of my pregnancy. The stress was too much to handle, so I gave up my work and closed down the unit.

PHONE
BOOTH
PAN SHOP

I tried to make positive changes in my life, and also attempted what I thought might be a more settled career: acting in television soaps. But that failed.

I think it's good that the mall has come up in this area. Not only does it give work opportunities to in-



dependent women like me; it also is a link to the outer world for the traditional middle-class housewives who live in Khirki Extension.

Earlier, I was always my own boss, or supervising other people. In my sales job here, I am an employee – for the first time. Earlier I interacted with producers and dealers, now I interact directly with customers.

This is not the only reason that I struggle to adjust. Working in a shop of designer *saris* is not too pleasant for me. My colleagues are not too educated and they have a very narrow and unhealthy mindset. If I was working in a big showroom with more educated colleagues, the adjustment would be much easier.

In the long run I want to be a manager. Working as an employee now is giving me good exposure, so if and when I get a managerial post, I'll be able to handle it well.

I've been in this sales job for four months. I don't want to stay here beyond six months. I want to change my job as soon as possible.

Earlier I was living alone. Now I have adopted a little girl, two-and-a-half years old. My time simply flies now, when I am at work. I am so relieved when I meet my daughter after the long hours in the shop.





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