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DESIGN PROJECT III

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YOUNG INDIA - THEN & NOW

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of

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by

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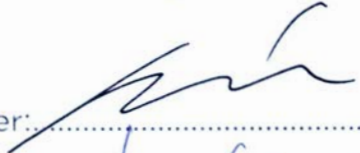
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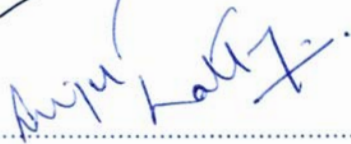
APPROVAL SHEET

The design project 3 titled 'YOUNG INDIA - THEN & NOW' by Reshal Shah (126250003) is approved in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Design degree in Visual Communication.

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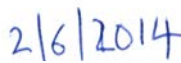
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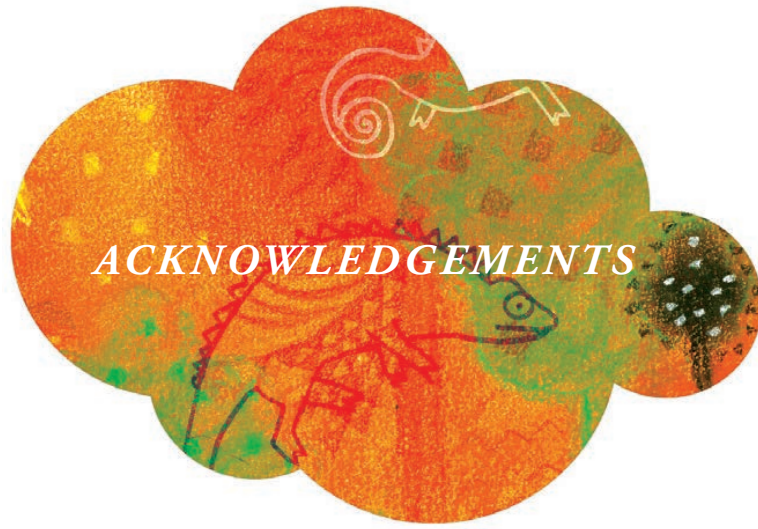
DECLARATION SHEET

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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Reshal Shah (126250003)

Date:.....



This project has given me an experience and joy I cannot express. I thank Prof. Raja Mohanty for introducing me to the uncertainty and getting me to find the joy through discovery. Whether sharing the thoughts that worried me, or excited me, the discussions were always very interesting and helpful.

The storytelling would not have been possible without the inspiring conversations with all the young people who gave me their valuable time and shared their journey with so much enthusiasm. This project is dedicated to all these wonderful souls.

I am grateful to my mother and grand-mother who narrated all the fascinating stories in my childhood, which have got me to attempt storytelling in this project. A big thank you hug to my father, who even today has ears open for his daughter's stories, sane or insane.

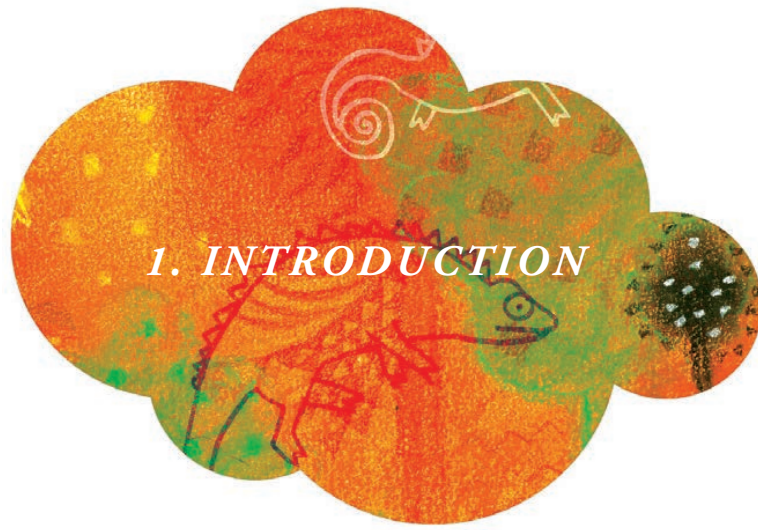
My gratitude and appreciation goes to the IDC faculty for their constant advice and exposure to various thoughts and ideas. Here, I have a chance to explore the project in the medium I love, a chance to be able to express what I wish, thanks to IDC.

An extended note of thanks to friends who have been a constant support and believers in my work as well as critics. They have constantly reminded me of the madness that one needs to stay alive; in order to live and not just survive.

Special thanks to all those people and events in life that have constantly reminded me of my passion for art and design; without whom I would have been lost in the not so much of wonderland.



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1. INTRODUCTION

People often talk by generalising about the youth, having positive hopes in some sense, as well as a few complaints against them. But what are the young people of India doing in reality? Why are they doing what they are doing and what keeps them at it? These questions made me think that it would be interesting to talk to the young faces of my times and know their journeys.

Looking at what others did in the past, in their youth would allow me to reflect and understand in some way, as to how we all are connected and how we have conversations, between 'then and now' with a thread that binds us all together.

The title of the project, 'Young India - Then and Now' has somewhere emerged from Gandhi's 'Young India'. This Young India was a journal that had the thoughts and opinions that inspired many people. It was focussed at addressing various problems of those times, during the pre-independence era and contained highly motivating views and messages from people who believed in their mission and worked actively towards it. Thus, my journey of this project began with what was happening 'then' amongst the Indian youth. The questions about the youth 'now', that were yet to be answered had their roots in the past, and thus, the journey of this project in itself, became 'Young India - Then & Now'.

Through this project, I wish to bring out the essence of these experiences in the form of storytelling. The goal is to bring in my own image and text in an interesting way, to give out the message in a richer form, maintaining the traditional strengths.



2. LOOKING AT 'THEN'

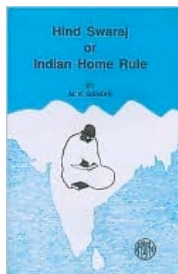
Reading and peeking into a few books gave me an idea of what people did in pre-independence era of India. The aim was to get a gist of what had been happening in the younger 'then'. Only after reading and looking into the past, I could probably come to understanding of its relation to present, and associate to the connections, if any.

As mentioned earlier, the project emerged from Gandhi's 'Young Inida'. This weekly journal was published by Gandhi from 1919 to 1932. He used Young India to spread his ideology and thoughts for organising movements and to urge readers to work towards India's independence struggle. The paper was a medium to reach the masses and was highly inspiring.



Each one who wrote, contributed to what they believed in with great determination. The journal contained articles related to highly motivating agendas and topics like satyagraha, non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity, agendas and meetings, untouchability, khadi, swadeshi, village industries and such. Gandhi was jailed in India for his bold articles printed in Young India but he never submitted to any order issued by the British. He was confident that he could always persuade his readers to copy his editorials for him and circulate the news, even if he was not allowed to write. He knew his paper could be suppressed but not its message. This was indeed a heroic remedy for heroic times. One can only realise how much power one has, only if he is determined enough to use it.

I also started reading what Mahatma Gandhi thought and wrote. Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule is Mahatma Gandhi's primary work, and a key to understanding both his life and thought, and South Asian politics in the twentieth century. It is in Hind Swaraj that one finds Gandhi first announcing his own life-mission.



Along with Hind Swaraj, I was also reading 'Gandhi - My life is my message', a graphic novel. This richly illustrated novel is a biography that narrates Gandhi's story from childhood through youth and his assassination.



Both the books were different in a sense that one is written by Gandhi himself, and the other is a biography of Gandhi. However, they both show his environment, events, thoughts, ideas and his beliefs; thus explaining how and why he did, what he did.

It was not possible for me to read all the books, and so I peeked into the subjects and concerns that a few other authors had discussed.

Arthur L. Basham talks about the glory of ancient India in his book 'The Wonder That Was India'. He talks about India in the times of Harappa and Aryans, evolution of planning and government and architecture.

Ramchandra Guha's book 'India After Gandhi', is about the journey of Independent India, struggling to maintain its democracy, breaking apart due to enormous differences of language and religion among its people, fighting and killing within itself but always coming together again, stronger than ever.

William Nanda Bissel's book 'Making India Work' makes one think as to what could India be? The author is the Managing Director of Fab India stores, and believes that India's poverty is a result of its poor management by ruling elites who have mastered the art of winning elections but have no interest in the deeper issues of governance. He proposes idealistic, yet logical solutions for a complete revamp of the way India is governed.

Arundhati Roy's Broken Republic talks about issues that India is confronted with almost as an everyday reality – Maoism, mining, debates over development, violence, poverty and such.



3. MEETING THE 'NOW'

Going back to the idea where the project had begun, I started meeting young people around, to know about them. I did not want it to be interviews, but rather casual conversations, that would let me know about their beliefs, passion, work and life in general. I was keen to know what made them choose what they were doing, as profession and how they got there, their future aspirations, and such stories.

I was open to hear what they had to share and it was absolutely wonderful to get to know each one of them so closely. The conversations that I thought would happen for half an hour each went on for more two hours at times. The sparkle in the eyes of these young people while they were talking was the most beautiful experience that happened.

ANKIT CHADHA



Ankit is a **writer-storyteller**.

Writing gives him the kick that keeps him going, and telling the stories he writes is something that he enjoys. He might take months to write a story. This may involve reading, discovering a theme, falling in love with the subject of the story and connecting the dots. It's **this journey** of months that is **more exciting** and personally satisfying than the 40 minutes that he takes to deliver what he experienced. At the same time, the sheer joy of being able to **transmit the juice** of his journey, at once, to hundreds of people is something that cannot be expressed. This is something that I instantly related to.

Writing excited him from the very beginning. From naughty parodies to the so-called "meaningful poetry", that was something that came from inside. He loved Street theatre and the concept of entertaining people around an issue. Later he wrote plays with dialogues so long at times, that he ended up the only person who could memorize them. Gradually, he started enjoying performance. After graduation, he worked in a corporate marketing job - still writing but mostly promotional stuff which was more boring than the projected fascination of ad copy writing. But, those were days of immense learning.

It was almost after two years in this job, that he stumbled upon an event page on Facebook - the first **Dastangoi** workshop ever conducted in Delhi - in June 2010. He had never thought of becoming a Dastangoi storyteller. It was never a plan. It **just happened** - like all the best things in the world do :) Like love does.

Like street theatre, here was an art form that did not require a team to be gathered, lights, sounds, properties, stage, etc. It was just him and his story. Inspiration for him could be anybody and nobody. From Anand Bakshi whom he saw winning the Filmfare award for the Best Lyricist when he was 8 years old, to his classmates in school who were following what everyone was following and which he did not want to follow.

It was a huge shift in the work process - **from numbers** in a corporate job, **to intangibility**. His work has got the recognition he deserves, and he constantly pushes himself to become more innovative with both his stories and his telling. He says that when you don't get a salary, you work more :) And, money may still not come. But, one has to be in the game. There was a moment when he asked himself why was he doing it when he could not sustain himself. And then, somebody who had invited him to perform sent a letter after the show, saying "Thank you for doing what you do." Nobody had said that to him in 4 years of his corporate job. It must have meant something to him. **He stayed. The belief stayed. The passion stayed.** One of the primary reasons for staying there was his mentors - Mahmood Farooqui and Danish Husain. Mahmood sir, who immensely shaped the way he thought and worked.

He says kids, with xBox and iPads today, are receiving more images, but listening enables them to create images. Ankit is quite happy performing live for **smaller audiences** in intimate spaces. Ankit dreams of enabling people to **talk in stories**. He believes that **adults need stories more** than kids do. Kids are sorted. It makes things simple - something that adults need in the age of relationship statuses becoming increasingly complicated.

He tells me, "**Find your own story.**" :)



Nikita Pimple must be in her early 30-s and has always been interested in **teaching** and took it up as a career. But she was highly **dissatisfied** with the way schools taught. She quit her job after a year and while figuring out what next, her **father who runs a school for the kids of fishermen** community in Manori became an **inspiration**. With the support of her husband, she decided to open-up a school for the weaker section of society. However, she was not confident because of no knowledge about administration.

Nikita was sure that she wanted to bring about a change in the teaching methods and this belief made her initiate **Valmiki Eco School** in 2010. She went to the slums herself to talk about this school and had 9 students in the beginning. This number changed to 45 in a months time. The students are kids of milkmen, workers and such. They were **encouraged** to send their kids as the fee was low, no donation and the lesser number of kids in 1 class gave them the assurance that the students would be able to study well. They also have 2 teachers in 1 class, which is usually seen only in ICSE schools.

She **collected notes** from other schools, libraries to make the best for the kids. When she saw that 2 of the kids were much brighter than others in Jr. KG, she took their **class separately** in her office as Sr. KG class. Her school follows teaching with **1) day-to-day experiences 2) emotional quotient or sanskaar 3) observation**. For example, a lesson about Shivaji Maharaj is not about how brave he was and how many forts he acquired on which dates, but it is more about how he made the right decisions, how he behaved and brought changes. This is explained to children by examples of their qualities in day-to-day situations.

Nikita is also involved with another initiative Eco-folks. The kids celebrate World Eco Day combined with the annual day every year. Each year is dedicated to one group of **biodiversity** like insects or birds and so on. Nikita aims at creating **curiosity** amongst the kids instead of spoon-feeding them with knowledge and thus, kids get into the field to learn about these species closely. Nikita has observed that in competitions, these kids come up with better ideas than others who only talk about air pollution, water pollution, global warming and such. The picnics of these kids also cannot be in fancy resorts but instead are field trips to national park, nature parks, etc. Which in turn is something that each kids enjoys. And this she knows because she takes a personal **feedback** from each one.

She also organizes workshops and **classes for parents**, so that they learn what kids learn. This makes

them feel more confident and not so alien. At personal front, she aims to study and take up **child counselling**. She is happy that the school is growing and 1 class is added each year. She also sees to it that teachers do not go through **mundane administrative tasks**, so that they can give more time to teaching and learning themselves. They are all enthusiastic, young teachers with much freedom needed.

She calls her school **parent-teacher-student and eco friendly**.

BHAVYAPRAGNASHREE

When I started conversing with young people, I was keen to know about someone who had decided to walk the spiritual path at a young age. Many of us have an inclination towards spirituality, yet one needs determination and something more, to walk the difficult path. After much wait, when I had almost lost hopes of meeting one, this opportunity knocked my door.

Bhavyapragnashree ji is 36 years old. She became a **Jain monk** when she was 30. One can only mistake her age and feel she is very young with her radiant face and sweetest smile. Jain monks derive a new name when they embrace monk-hood, marking the birth of their new life. For them, the guru of whose troupe they belong to, becomes their parent here. When Bhavyapragnashree ji willingly spoke to me about her journey and how she chose to become a monk, I was quite surprised. It was quite an unpredictable side of her; she was just like me, a few years ago.

She used to live like any **modern** free-spirited girl does. She says she has done a job, watched a lot of movies and eaten at restaurants as well. Her home was a religious one, but equally liberal. It so happened that her friend asked her to join for a 'pagpaadaa sangh' for company. (*Pagpaada sangh is an act where a group of people lead by monks walk a few days/months to reach a place of pilgrimage. They often observe fasts or similar eating habits for those number of days.*) To this, Bhavyapragnashree said that she found this idea very **crazy**, as she knew she couldn't have walked with a one-time food fast (eating only once a day) everyday. Her friend pleaded and suggested that they would quit whenever they wanted to. Thus, both of them decided to go and give it a try. Bhavyapragnashree took it as an adventure and a break from her job, and gave it a shot. This gave her an **experience** like never before. She felt extreme

peace in those 2.5 - 3 months. There was neither any worry about the future to come, nor of the past. She realised that the life she lived otherwise, that she now calls as the life 'outside' was much more stressful and difficult. She came back home from the pagpaada sangh with a thought in mind that she wanted to become a monk and lead the life of great peace. What must the experience be like, for such a strong thought! Thus, with this in mind, she took a break from her job and tried to live like a monk at home for 6 months. People used to feel this is a temporary phase of hers and she would return back to her much westernised culture, the 'life' as they call it. They also challenged her directly, or indirectly. But she was determined. She felt peace from within, and this made her continue her practice. Later, with this decision stronger, she went on to live like a monk for 1.5 years with other elderly monks. This was again, just a trial period, after which she became sure of her path. She says that she experienced a life that was truly unknown to her.

She feels **dharma** should be included along with other studies. It is important because when one faces bad times, the teachings only help the person to accept and stay calm instead of going into a phase of depression. Everything, including education and age, are growing at a lightning speed. She has had counsellors and parents who have come to her and spoken about kids with extreme psychological cases. She has had parents coming and talking about kids who are often very aggressive, or have some sort of compulsive disorders and so on. She says that there is Shakti or strength in dharma. "People run blindly for money in our times. But why?" she asks. It is some sort of greed that makes people go to yatras. There is so much power that human beings possess and how much they do to attain things like a job, a child, a house, etc. But what do they do for their own **soul**? Indeed a thought to reflect upon!

PURNAYASHA

Another Jain monk I met was Purnayasha ji. Her name too has been changed when she attained monk-hood at the age of 19. Now, she is 29 years old. I wonder if I understood even little about life and spirituality when I was 19! Purnayasha ji, belonged to a highly **religious family**. She lived in a place where not many monks would arrive. So she often travelled with her family to the place where a troupe of monks was likely to visit.

When I asked her about her journey and if this was the only thing that influenced her, she recalled an **incident**, a happening that transformed her path. She said that she lost her brother when he was just 22 years old. It was absolutely unexpected and beyond imagination. It was then that she realised, that there is no surety about life. Everything is so **uncertain**. It is very important that we live this short life well, she says. She was in a state where a lot of **inner talk** happened. She used to attend a few talks by an elderly Jain monk to feel positive and strong. These talks made her realise the importance of '*aatma saadhna*', nurturing one's **soul**. She asked me, "Don't you think that should ideally be the most important thing for each one? After all we are not our bodies, but our souls." She gave examples of people who go to extreme heights to attain some book records and of patients who listen to everything that a doctor says. "So why not listen to someone whom you believe in, to do some good to your own soul!", she said. And this was the beginning point of her life-transforming journey.

Purnayasha ji feels that one should **not wait**. Life is short. One must be a good human being, as this life as a 'human' is very powerful. Instead of running behind happiness, one must desire peace. Everything we do for money, power gives us temporary happiness and sadness. Instead one must put in the energy towards one's soul. Indeed, words of great wisdom!

MOKSHAGUNASHREE

Mokshagunashree ji was not very young in age compared to the other 2, but she was a very interesting personality to talk to. She had done her **MA** and **PhD in Jainology** after attaining monk-hood. She belonged to a **very religious family** and her mother was the one, who always supported and pushed her to attain this path.

She spoke about the religion as the right path to follow, about how every aspect of Jainism is **scientific and logical**. She feels sad that people do not have a deep and complete knowledge, due to which we often do 'bad' instead of doing good about it. She also resonates what other two monks said about the privilege of being a human being. She poses one **question** to reflect upon, indeed an important one, for young, old and all: 'What am I born to do in this life?'

She also shares how visual material for kids is helping them understand dhrama in a play-way manner. They have a series of books called 'learn and turn', that helps the kids learn about their own 'sanskriti'.

She recalls her **younger days** when she was very pampered with luxuries by her family, being the only sister of six brothers. But her mother's blessings and sanskaar helped her attain this path for her soul.

Talking about **difficulties**, she says that they face times when they have to stay in cow-sheds, garages and such places while moving from one place to another. But these are lesser than what one faces in samsara.



THE HEALER

JINAL SHAH

Jinal is a **physiotherapist** and currently pursuing her masters in USA. She never shows sympathy towards her patients, but **empathy**. She was always interested in healthcare and **direct service towards people**, because of which she had planned to get into medicine.

For her, physiotherapy is more about interacting with people and motivating them. It is like a rehabilitation science where one has to be energetic herself and **transfer that positivity** to others. It involves no medicines, but teaching ways of overcoming illnesses with a lot of **counselling** indirectly. Jinal says that a

physiotherapist often becomes a connect to the other healthcare professionals. She deals with many different sort of personalities each day, and she has grown to **become a good listener**. She feels that a healing touch has been developed. There is **immense satisfaction** that she experiences through her work. She feels the peace when someone comes back and tells her that they are happy to see her as someone who helped them recover in difficult times of pain. This makes her **feel very special**.

She chose to put a pause to her practice and go for further study because a few therapies are still not practiced in India. Sometimes the therapies are same, but the approaches are different. She has learnt how to analyse a study and research and apply the same in practice. She prefers a lot of evidence based study now and has realized that older schools of thoughts are being revived. This, she **wishes to teach in India** as well. She is sure that she would be coming back to India because this is where her heart lies, and it is here that **we need** much more. She wishes to bring her learnings of alternative therapies that are still not much practiced much in India.

After returning, she wants to continue going to a **paraplegic foundation**, where previously, she gave her service to heal the under-privileged. She also wishes to extend to schools with mentally retarded and special kids. She urges young people to **make time and begin as soon** as they feel for something. It might be too late later. She feels highly privileged as her parents have sponsored her expenses for study and realizes how important the value of money is. Being aware of malpractices where doctors often cheat the patients by asking patients to continue physiotherapy even when not needed, she is definitely going to stay away from them.

Like mentioned earlier, Jinal was sure she wanted to make a career in the healthcare sector. Her first choice was MBBS. But **fortunately**, she never got an admission to that, which is when she had to choose physiotherapy. And she realized how lucky she was years later, when she actually got into the practice. She has also come to realize that she never **found real joy** in celebrating her birthdays. Parties, outings that her friends appeared to enjoy were not where she belonged. It was these interactions she had with her patients and seeing them feeling better after the treatment that made her truly happy. It gave a **new meaning** to her life. One indeed has to be lucky to have such a **positive aura**. Jinal is a perfect example to the youth, who has strived to **work for the good of others** and strived for excellence. Money, power would anyway follow. Following the heart and passion is the biggest treasure one can have in life.



Surekha is a **household help**. She must be around 30 years of age, though she does not remember. Her parents very well brought her up in Khandala, where life was quite easy for her. She was married to Vinod in Mumbai. She did not like this city in the beginning and would often go away to Khandala. But after pregnancy, she had to cut down on her visits.

When her daughter Aarti was 15 months old, she was at her mothers' home in Khandala. Vinod was on his way to meet her and their daughter when he met with an **accident**. It was a terrible phase for her. She recalls that it was Amavasya night and she neither felt good on that day, nor did she anything. Later, next day she was told that the accident had put her husband into **coma**. It was something absolutely unimaginable and came as a shock to her. Little did she expect this would happen, for she herself travelled Mumbai-Khandala very often! She says that life could not have been any more uncertain. She was absolutely lost, not knowing when and if things would ever fall back in place. After a month, when her husband came to consciousness, he was operated and had a rod inserted in his leg. There was a peace that he was conscious now, but the pain and helplessness on his face made each day extremely depressing. This was further worsened when he met with **another accident** while going to see the doctor for a check-up. Her eyes are lost in the air, as she describes the sight that she can never forget - the rod from his leg was externally visible and the flesh had been separated during the accident.

Vinod was on bed now, and Surekha was worried for her daughter, her husband and herself. She used to ask for money and food from her mother and her mother-in-law. Few and many days passed by this way. Once, her mother-in-law said that it was high time she earned for her family instead of asking. Before this, she had never felt

strong enough to think of anything else and coming out of the phase of **sorrow and depression**. The unfortunate and **unexpected happenings** had turned her life upside-down.

Her childhood flashed, the times when used to run away to a nearby Shiv temple to play instead of going to school. She **regrets** that she should have studied a little, for it would have helped her today. Now, she does household work to earn some money. Whatever little her husband earns is spent on his medicines. She says she is the '**man of the house**'. She sees to it that her daughter studies well and runs around for her betterment. Surekha does not understand English but she gets Aarti all the books that are recommended. She is grateful to the women where she works to have been supportive enough to help Aarti with her studies. She wants Aarti to study a lot and become a Police officer, so that she becomes very strong through the training. However, she would be very happy with whatever she chooses to do. She says that she'll make her daughter very strong and independent. She keeps asking the aunty where she goes to do housework if there is any add of government aid in newspaper. She has tried applying as well, but nothing has ever worked. All she wants is a **house** of her own; she is tired of changing a rented 'kholi' every 6-8 months. She has started suffering from severe knee pain at this young age.

She only **prays and hopes** everyday that Vinod gets completely well soon, and her happy past returns. She says it is destiny, but to live and survive, one not only needs hope, but **courage** too. Her strength surprises her own-self at times, she feels proud of it but sad at the same time. Her daily routine continues from 4 am to 12 am, and this shall continue till her destiny gets her some relief.



SAROJ KUMBHAR

SHYAM KUMBHAR

THE POTTERS

Saroj Kumbhar and Shyam Kumbhar are young **terracotta artists** from Koraput district of Odisha. I met these bright, enthusiastic and hard-working lads in the Ceramic studio at IDC, where they had made lovely clay pieces of horses and Ganesha. I feel lucky to have been able to meet them, for they flew back to Odisha that same day. They usually make **animals and local gods and goddesses** back home. They also conduct **workshops** for kids to try hands at clay-work. They have also participated in various events like the National Children's festival held there.

Both of them studied in school and got interested in Terracotta work in childhood. Their fathers are terracotta artists and so, this art has been flowed from one **generation** to another through blood. As kids, they used to come back from school and learn clay-work. They said that it took them **years of patience** and continuous **practice** to make proportionately correct pieces. Later, they went on to take this up full time, when they dedicated 3 years to this art. They

used to work from 7 am to 10 pm while learning from their guru. Usually, they sketch every night and try doodling different forms. They are very sharp and find it easy to make anything, once they see it. However, they **never copy**. They only get inspired and hence, are always keen to see newer things done by others. Their works are extremely clean finished and quite ornamental in nature. Saroj likes modern forms and designs while Shyam likes traditional pieces. Both of them are **keen to find** more exposure and learn ceramics. Most of the people around them have been working with terracotta and not ceramics. For now, they shall be soon pursuing studies of 3 years in terracotta sculpture at a college in Odisha. They are very **content and passionate** about this art and wish to explore more. They also aspire to learn modern ceramics at Golden Bridge Ceramics in Pondicherry someday. They do not like the way the customers come and bargain at their studio and wish they would understand that it is not just clay, but the priceless artistry that goes in the making.

There are no happier people on this planet than those who decide that they want something, define what they want, get hold of the feeling of it even before it's manifestation and then joyously watch the unfolding as, piece by piece, it begins to unfold. That's the feeling of your hands in the clay.

~Abraham

Their passion and love for pottery have let them remain artists and pursue the same further. I was very happy when they willingly shared their sketches and catalogues of previous works with me. The works are marvellous, simply marvellous!

Ayesha was someone who I have always related to in some manner or another. She has studied Applied Art like me and worked in an advertising agency for a year. But now, she is an independent artist who **likes to make stuff** and express her opinions and learnings about life and the world through things and words and dreams and sound. It comes naturally and nothing can compare to the joy it brings. She **doesn't define herself as a designer, artist, dreamer or a thinker**. She says, "It is all the same, it does not really matter. **Labels are too restricting** to the kind of people we are. Isn't it!" Ayesha loves questions and she loves looking at the **moon**.

There are a couple of things she believes in and is planning to work towards. But right now she is in a phase where she needs to quietly just put her head down and do a lot of work, like an ant with blindfolds on, who needs to polish the rough edges and just be hands on. She does not want to be pretentious and say; hey I want my art to make a better society. Of course that is the aim in some way but she has a lot to do and miles to go before she makes such an important commitment. At the base of it, she just wants to make beautiful things.

Ayesha's work is highly **experimental**. She **loves to go through the entire experience and tell stories**. She did an art residency for two months and it was here where she forgot about everything else and had tuned into her own space. She was surprised with the kind of work she did art when she **was being herself**, fully naked, and reason, logic meaning all of that followed. She refused to explain her work to the viewers as she did not want to limit it with her explanation. However, not everyone appreciated this from her.

HER VIEWS

On Advertising:

Double edged sword! Sometimes advertising can be great but the rest of it is just bullshit. It is great for a businessmen. If the medium of advertising is used intelligently and correctly, it can work wonders but if it is abused, it just turns out to be dishonest.

Message to young:

Just **keep the fire burning**. Let it burn and keep feeding it with things or words or activities that will make it shine brighter and stronger. You know, just let it burn because your light can brighten up the whole room and has the potential to light another...maybe 100 others. Who knows what's lies ahead...

Plight of the society:

The government needs us, politics needs us. Our country has hope because our generation is mighty. People are waking up. We all know how society works, the very fabric of it and **everything bothers me!** But experiences and time have taught me things. The key is to be able to contain your wits while everyone is losing theirs. I read that on a light board while returning from sailing once. Mind was clear and that line just stuck :)

AYESHA KAPADIA

MS. NO LABEL





THE DESIGNER
PAVITHRA DIXIT

Pavithra is a **visual designer** by choice. But, she has **problem with education and it's ways**. She feels there is lack of **holistic teaching**. Pavithra aspires to use design in order to make learning look and feel good. It is behaviour design, one of the most difficult things to do.

To experience and make a beginning, Pavithra conducted an 8 week **workshop** with the kids who were mostly from the slums of Dharavi. It just **happened** to her that a friend who is a fellow with the **Teach For India** offered her to come and teach. So she got a chance,

to experience and execute what she wanted, though not directly being a part of the organisation. Her main motive was to get kids to **imagine and observe**, and learn from their own experiences. She feels sad that when a kid is asked to draw a scenery, it is a typical picture of mountains, river, a tree and so on that is taught to him since childhood. But where is his imagination? Where is HIS scenery in this?

She therefore conducted workshops where it took time for them to break out of the conditioned learning and bring out their own observations. She wanted them to imagine words with pictures and vice-verse, not the way they are taught to, but the way they actually imagined. This was a good learning experience for her in many ways. It gave her the opportunity to interact with kids, volunteers as well as teachers to understand it deeper.

She realised that there are lots of people who are interested in education and education reformation. But in a school setup, there is too much of hierarchy, administration process and so on. And so, the teachers and education enthusiasts find it difficult to change things even if they feel for it, due to which again, they lose interest. So according to Pavithra, it is better to do your work **from outside** and try to bring in the change.

Pavithra feels the need for a **pattern** to help the students learn better. The challenge is not teaching about textbooks, or to make it look good but to **bring in interest** and joy of learning about the subject and content. **Design** plays a very important role in making education better, look good and understand better. Pavithra believes that **everyone is born sensitive** but is **conditioned to be mature**, which is why people later become quieter and stay shut. She urges young people to **explore, evoke** what is burning inside them.

Another fact that really bothers her is that Indians thrive in the misery of neighbours. She **hates gossips**. She has stopped watching television as a lot of time goes underutilised. She doesn't like **the way women are portrayed**. "Why can't the woman be showing as working? Why does she have to be powerful after all the bad happens to her?", she says. But she does not like to blame. Instead she **believes in being there** for the change. Indeed, Pavithra has her mind shaped strongly, to get people **not to be 'influenced or conditioned'**. She believes in this 'idealistic' goal about education.

PRASHANT SACHAN



Prashant is my batch-mate and a student of **Interaction Design** at IDC. He is one of the most enthusiastic and lively chap amongst us, and his interests in various college activities makes me curious to know what has his journey been like and how did he plan to choose interaction design. Currently, he is in Bangalore for an industry project working in the area of data integration, which he believes is very dull. He is the young blood who, like many, says that the industry is a lot stupid to not use the processes that one learns in school. These are time-consuming lengthy processes and have no worth in deadline driven businesses.

Though he knows where he is heading in the near future, he says he is **still exploring**. And this uncertainty all his life has made him taste so many different things, resulting in his diverse interests. This has shaped into what he is today. Prashant does not like this uncertainty. He says, "Every particle has a desire to settle down. Each one wants a peace of settlement." Once upon a time, he wanted to become an eye specialist for personal reasons. He was a bright kid and his father is an engineer who makes airplanes. Prashant has been born and brought up where everyone is an **engineer**; neither a doctor, nor a businessman, but only an engineer. However, since childhood, he had an inclination towards arts and basketball. He used to **write** for Dainik Jagran once upon a time and also had the thought of running away from home to become a journalist. However, he did not.

After his junior college, he went to coaching classes for entrance exams, to become an engineer like the tradition followed. Here, he bunked classes to watch a lot of movies. He also got attracted to architecture that time but with the thought of no great future, he did not pursue that. Finally he got into Mechanical engineering. This

was the time where he took part in **plays** and explored these interests. His loves for **movies, direction, acting** all derived a small platform through engineering. He made his first ever film, which now he feels was extremely amateur, yet it is still closest to his heart. There was a lot of learning, but only a beginning. Prashant was surely an opportunist. He also noticed that his college did not have some cool t-shirts like other engineering colleges. From here began a small business of printing t-shirts and selling them. A small starting point led to **collaborations** with a lot of people. Prashant had just under-graduated and obviously, making T-shirts was not enough to chalk out a 'successful and rewarding career'. It was an indication that there is a lot more left that Prashant had to chase and discover.

His inclination towards **entrepreneurship** and his small stint with T-shirts led him to think of pursuing MBA. This was when it '**happened**' that a senior told him about Industrial Design Centre and CEED. Prashant's creative aspirations and his exposure to varied interests, had now found a path. And thus, the journey to IDC began. Prashant has always **spoken out** whatever he's thought. Even though he is pursuing studies in Interaction Design, he is very active and his passion for writing, films and plays has not faded away.

His mantra for life is '**Stay empty, stay open to learning...**' The **environment** in which one grows does make a difference in who you become, but that cannot restrict one's dreams and aspirations.



4. *THOUGHTS & INSIGHTS*

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover" - H. Jackson Brown Jr. says in P.S. I Love You.

But I am not sure how many of us realise this in our youth, before these twenty years pass by and when we have the hearts that dream and the minds without fear. Talking to these people was like talking to souls who have had the courage to follow their hearts, do what we believe in, irrespective of the hardships they faced while doing so.

The most wonderful thing about the journeys of the people whom I interacted with is that there is an invisible thread that ties each of them together, inspite of their varied occupations and passions. Each of them has had a 'happening', an incident or an event in life that changed their perceptions. If not a change in perception, such events or happenings have shaped their aspirations and given them an opportunity to do what they believe in. This was true for Gandhi as well. It took me back to what I had read in the books and how I could relate to 'Then & Now'. Most of the people are or were sailing in the ocean of uncertainty, and there is no doubt that the kind of environment and exposure they belonged to, made a lot of difference in where they had reached. But inspite of the restrictions, the passion and belief got them the path they ought to walk. What they achieved in return was something common to each one of these young souls. These conversations and experiences have been extremely enriching and inspiring to me.

Being overwhelmed by these, I was aware of my next goal and that was even more challenging - to bring in the richness of these experiences along with the previous readings, in the form of engaging images and text. Some of the important insights I penned down that my (fictionalised) story would have to bring out were:

- People who stick to their dreams and beliefs might not find rewards now, but great satisfaction and rewards in the future. They might not become a Mahatma, but surely attain something that they are not even aware about.
- These people are aware of the uncertainties that come in, and are not just fooling themselves.
- There are special moments and happenings in life that give it an interesting shape or become turning points in their lives. This is when they find their paths and move towards them with conviction.
- This is seen in Young India 'now, and then': for e.g. Gandhi became Mahatma but he had no idea he would be called one. He just followed towards what life had to offer him by walking the path with his beliefs. Another such example is that of Gautam Buddha, who did not know what he would have attained when he set off leaving his kingdom. He had his realizations and walked the path of his belief, and later attained great satisfaction and peace.
- Also, it would be good to notice and bring in the fact that, inspite of such determined people; there are a few others who are self-absorbed and who keep following the 'race'.



5. STORY WRITING

The aim of the project was to narrate these experiences in a richer and an interesting way. Using a metaphorical parable might make the story interesting. However, care had to be taken that the story held the passion and the spirit of these young people I met. I wanted my story to be an inspiration in itself, to those who have forgotten to believe in their passion and follow their hearts.

I scribbled down a few possibilities, that is rough sketches, out of which one of the stories would be chosen and written further.

POSSIBILITY 1:

Nineteen years ago, lost in the Wonderland, Alice (From Lewis Carroll's) experienced many unexpected and imaginative adventures. It was a whole world of dreamy, curious creations of her own mind. She had pictured herself as to how she would grow to be in after-time, like a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood; and how she would gather about her other little children and make their eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago; and how she would feel with all their simple sorrows and find a pleasure in all their simple joys remembering her own child-life and the happy summer days.

Alice has now grown to be a pretty lady, managing all the responsibilities of an adult young woman. But, is she the way she had imagined herself to grow? How has Alice in Wonderland that we all know, grown to be like? Yes, she is still full of dreams and imagination. But she has stopped believing in the wildest impossibilities with all the trust that only dreamers know. She surely is still curious, but not wildly curious as she was, once upon a time. She is often silenced by the society for being a question mark and over-inquisitive. Alas!! Alice has started living by the rules of society. She is no longer empty and eager towards the enjoyment of life's madness and uncertainty. She has forgotten the wonderful happy hours she experienced during her childhood, when all was new and fair, when sin and pain were only words – empty words that meant nothing. Oh Alice, where has your Wonderland vanished?

As the story would progress, Alice would come across and meet all these different characters, who in some way or the other, give her a piece of wisdom to reflect upon. These characters would be as surreal and whimsical. For example, she meets a gypsy mermaid, faceless monks, a herd of slaves who do not know why are they enslaved and so on. After writing a little of the story, I also attempted an illustration for one of the chapters.



POSSIBILITY 2:

They say, 'a chameleon does not leave one tree until he is sure of another.' And what happens when he starts living forever in one tree?

This is the story of Jushti, who along with her fellow chameleons, lived in a tree, in a beautiful and colourful forest. But this forest did not seem wonderful to them. They were not sure if colour would be safe as much as it appeared wonderful. Jushti and her fellow chameleons often used colour only to hide from their enemies. They rarely celebrated their gift of colour and felt that their ability of changing colours had become a curse in disguise. They say that a chameleon who chose to be colourful ended up being alone, for they are feared by the rest. Afraid and intimidated, they stayed shut in their tree. A special tree that they had found where everything was black and white. They were sure that it was easier to stay rigidly black and white in this tree rather than change colours to hide. And once they entered the comfort bubble, they never dreamt to go back to the colour outside.

Jushti, amongst all the chameleons, often questioned herself and felt empty inside. She often asked herself looking outside, "Who am I?" For what is a chameleon like, if she does not change colours! Does Jushti ever come out of the black and white tree and feel the colours again? Does she find her answers and fill the emptiness that she feels inside?

Thus, the story takes us through the turning point in Jushti's life and explores how she finds her joy back. We see how events, uncertainties, courage and belief help Jushti find her happiness.

POSSIBILITY 3:

This is the story of a perfectly square paper, who belonged to a set of neatly cut papers. These papers live comfortably in a box, still blank and un-scribbled. They all talk about how life is for other papers outside and discuss how exploratory others are, yet how risked their lives are as well. Some of them too wish to become a news daily paper, some a fragrant paper staying in a fancy home, some wish to have an untold story written on them, some wish to play with kids and become crafty and colourful and so on. But this is if they last for so long. But if they stay in this box, they can never unfold themselves. One of the papers, however, is always eager to step out and find, what all it could explore. He yet does not know what he wants to do but is open and so, one night, he sneaks out of the box. Being open makes him learn and meet a lot of other papers and their journeys. While doing so, he was unknowingly shaping himself. This little blank paper, went on writing every experience it had, thus becoming so rich that, someday when he would sit and look back, he had a wonderful journey carved for himself. Not only for himself, but he became a source of inspiration for so many others.

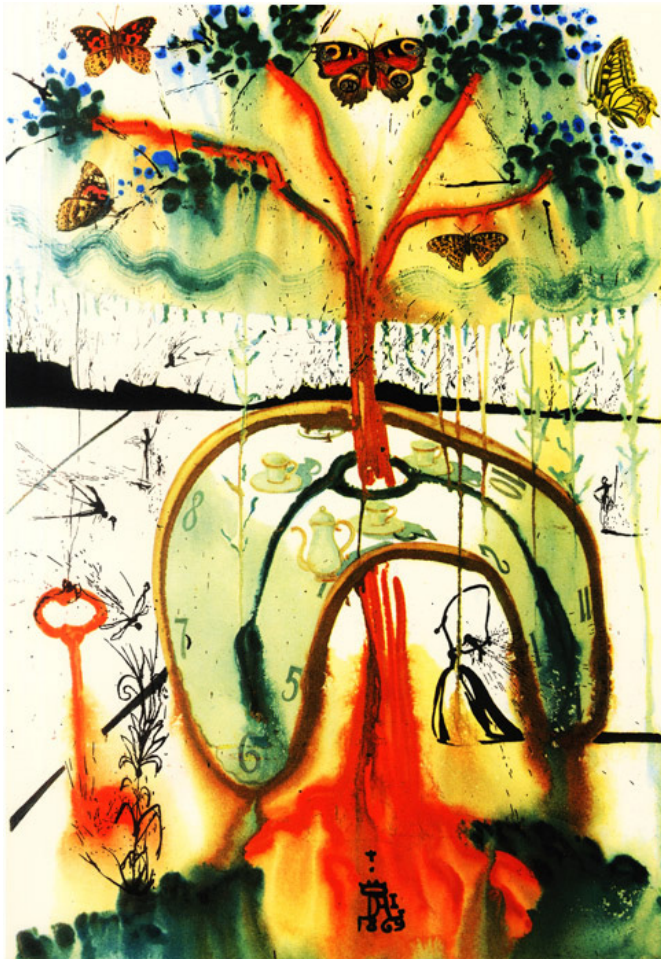
I chose to work further on **2nd possible story of Jushti**. The insights I wanted to bring in were best coming out through this story in my view. Also, there was a lot of metaphorical play that could happen if well-explored. I was equally enthusiastic about Alice's story but felt, somewhere the richness of my conversations were being lost when I was attempting to write it further. Similarly, the third possibility of the paper tale was not bringing out what we call as 'magic', neither was it capturing the interest towards what the story had to say. Thus, I decided to work on Jushti, the chameleon's story.



6. INSPIRING WORKS

To narrate the story by bringing in my own text and images in an interesting manner, there were a few works that I considered as inspirations. They helped me imagine where my project was heading. Thus, before fine-tuning the selected story and making the imagery for the same, I looked at a few inspiring works as well.

First, of course, is **Alice in Wonderland** by Lewis Carroll. The descriptive text is as inspiring as the images of the fantasy world created in the tale. Its narrative and structure, characters and imagery are extremely engaging. It plays with logic and fantasy creating a lasting experience for adults as well as children.



Mad Tea Party

Many artists and illustrators have been inspired to create the wonderland of Alice in their own imaginative styles. The one I chose is legendary **Salvador Dali**. It feels like a match made in heaven, both text and illustrations being surreal, imaginative and melting. The images appear abstract but when the reader reads the descriptive text, and looks at these images, he would be able to imagine the details well. Dali created images for each chapter that reflected the nature of the tale. They also give space for more imaginations in there. He has also played with the form of text, suiting the expression of the meaning.

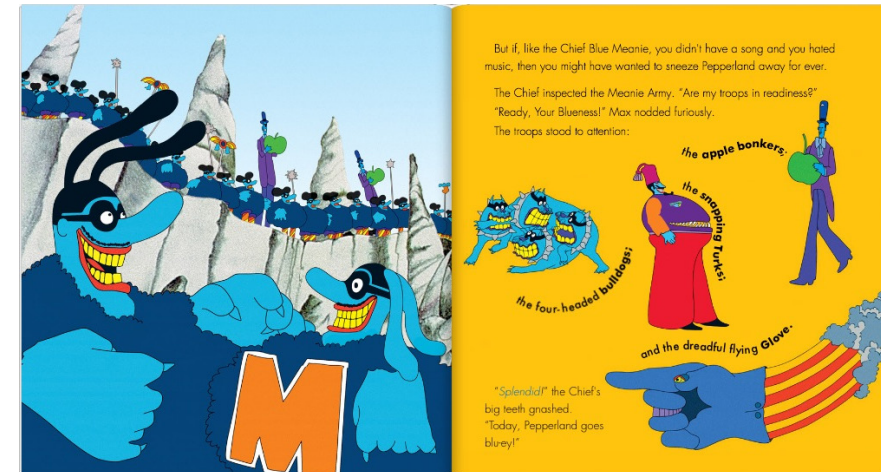
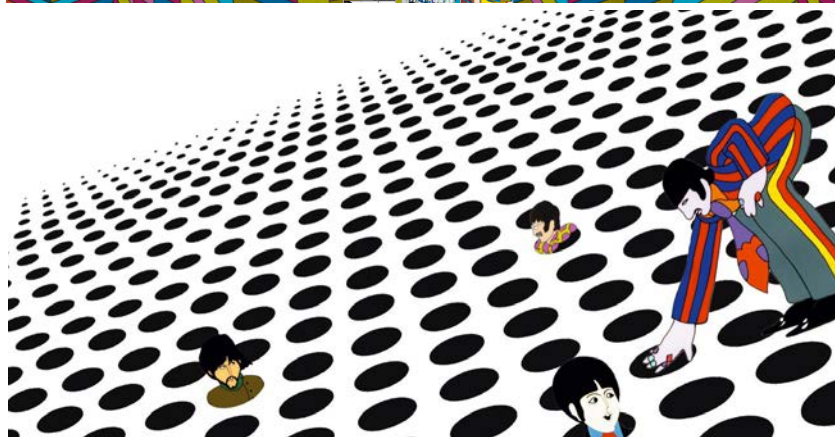


Down The Rabbit Hole



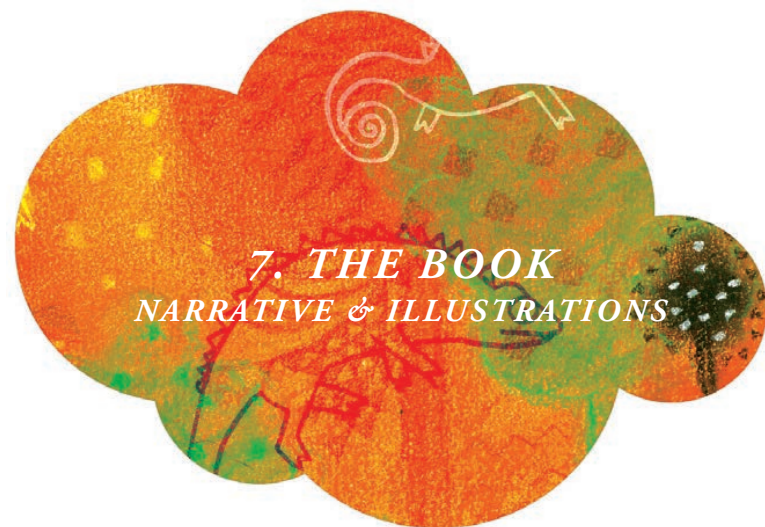
The Queen's Croquet Ground

Another inspiring work is **Yellow Submarine**, animated musical fantasy, comedy film based on the music of The Beatles. The images created in this animation are as trippy and fantasy-like as the story. The story is about The Beatles who agree to accompany Captain Fred in his Yellow Submarine and go to Pepperland to free it from the music hating Blue Meanies. One is mesmerised and lost in the experience. The animation was later adapted in a book format, and also in an e-book format.



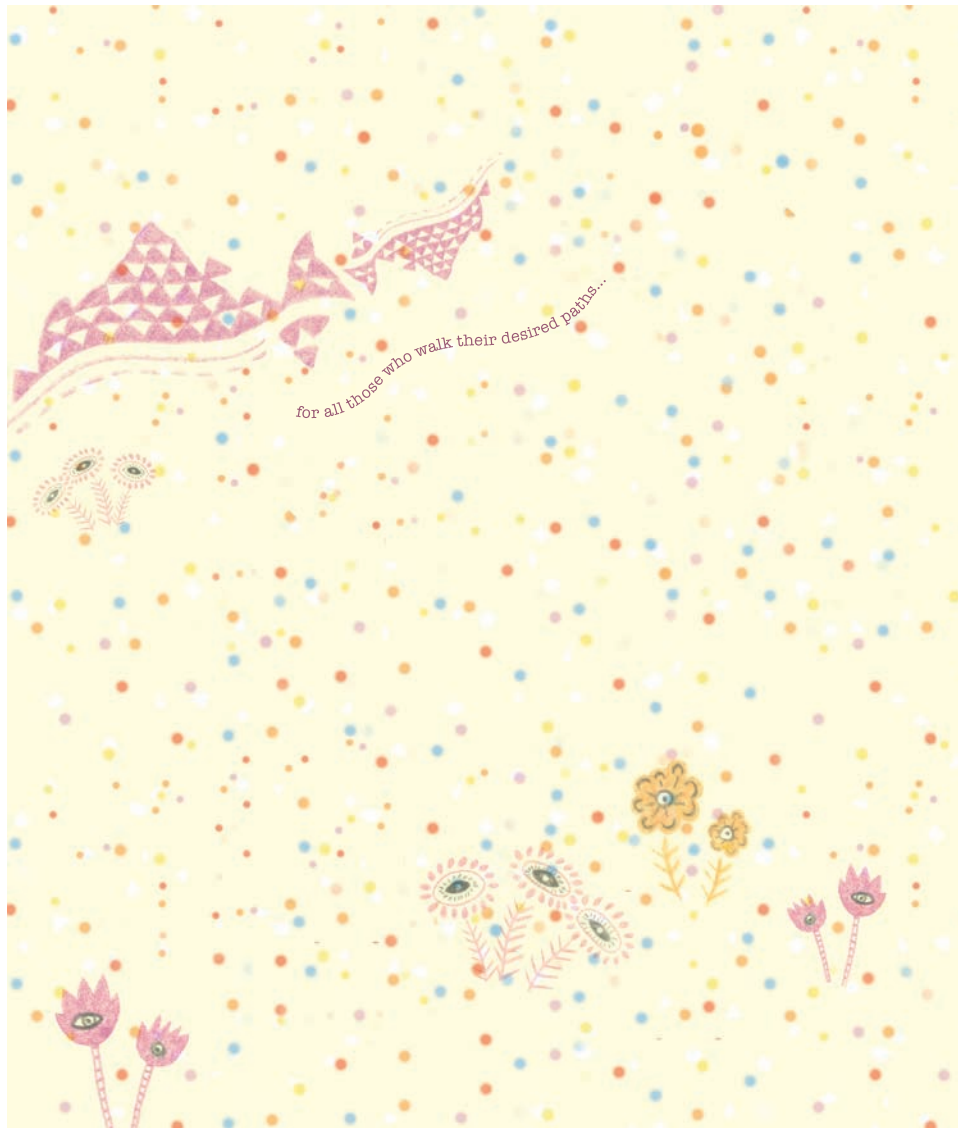
Sandman: The Dream Hunters is a novella featuring striking painted artwork by **Yoshitaka Amano**. Set in ancient Japan, it tells the story of a humble young monk and a magical, shape-changing fox who find themselves romantically drawn together. As their love blooms, the fox learns of a devilish plot by a group of demons to steal the monk's life. With the aid of Morpheus, the King of All Night's Dreamings, the fox must use all of her cunning and creative thinking to foil this evil scheme and save the man that she loves. The details are so amazing and the images so rich, that they only compliment the imaginations that the text creates.





IN OUT WITHIN





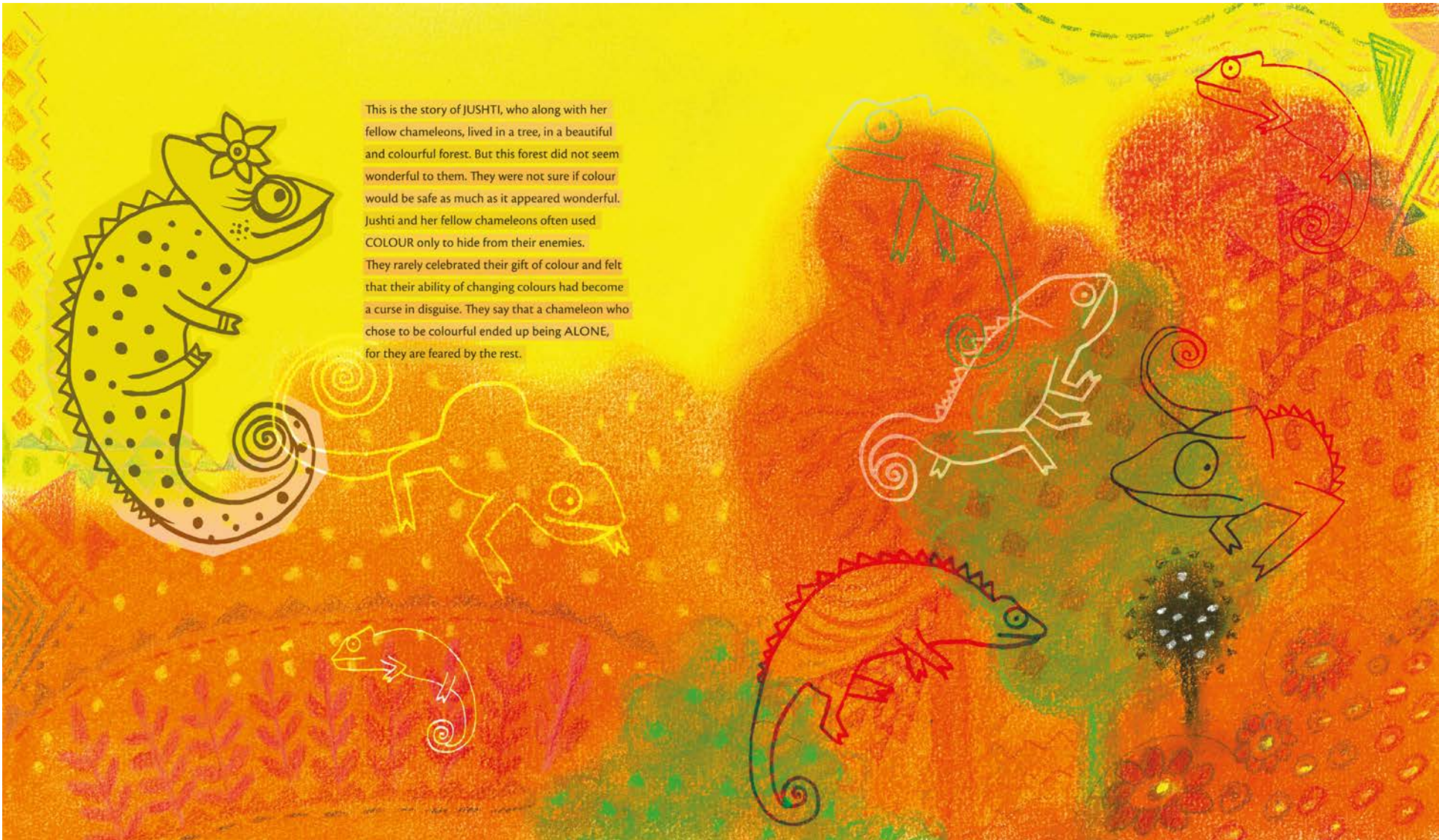
for all those who walk their desired paths...



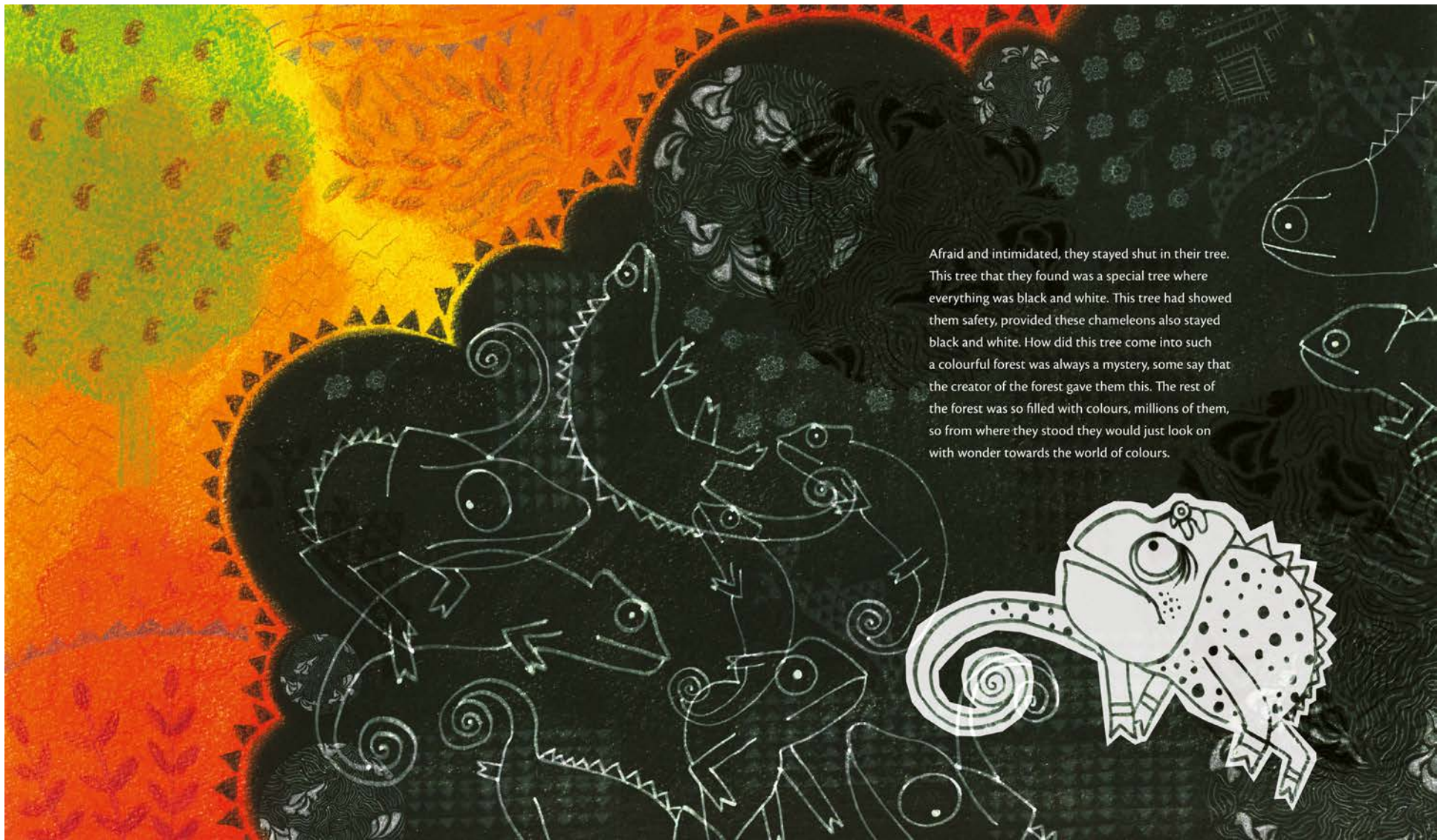
*They say, 'a chameleon does not leave one tree until he is sure of another.'
What happens when he starts living in one tree forever?*



This is the story of Jushti, who along with her fellow chameleons, lived in a tree, in a beautiful and colourful forest. But this forest did not seem wonderful to them. They were not sure if colour would be safe as much as it appeared wonderful. Jushti and her fellow chameleons often used colour only to hide from their enemies. They rarely celebrated their gift of colour and felt that their ability of changing colours had become a curse in disguise. They say that a chameleon who chose to be colourful ended up being alone, for they are feared by the rest.



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Afraid and intimidated, they stayed shut in their tree. This tree that they found was a special tree where everything was black and white. This tree had showed them safety, provided these chameleons also stayed black and white. How did this tree come into such a colourful forest was always a mystery, some say that the creator of the forest gave them this. The rest of the forest was so filled with colours, millions of them, so from where they stood they would just look on with wonder towards the world of colours.

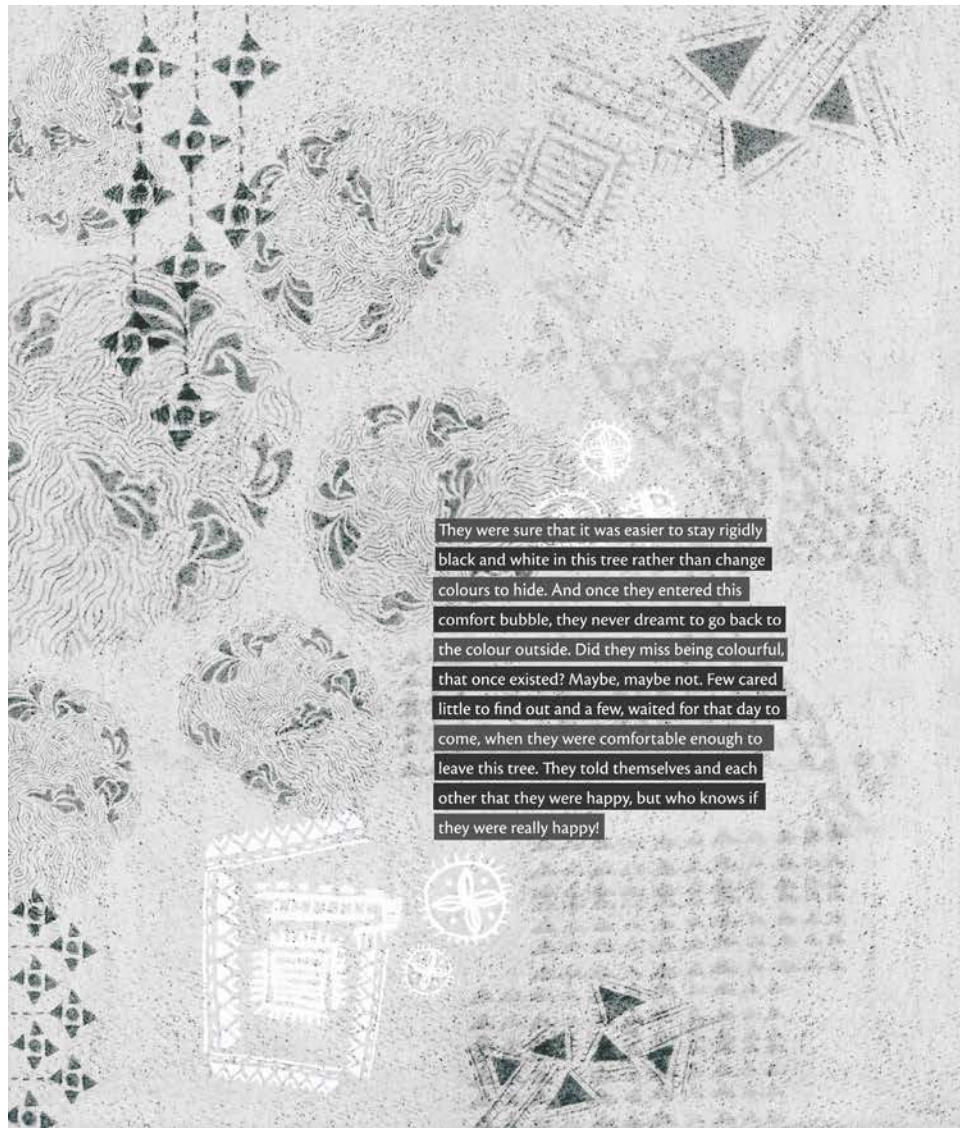
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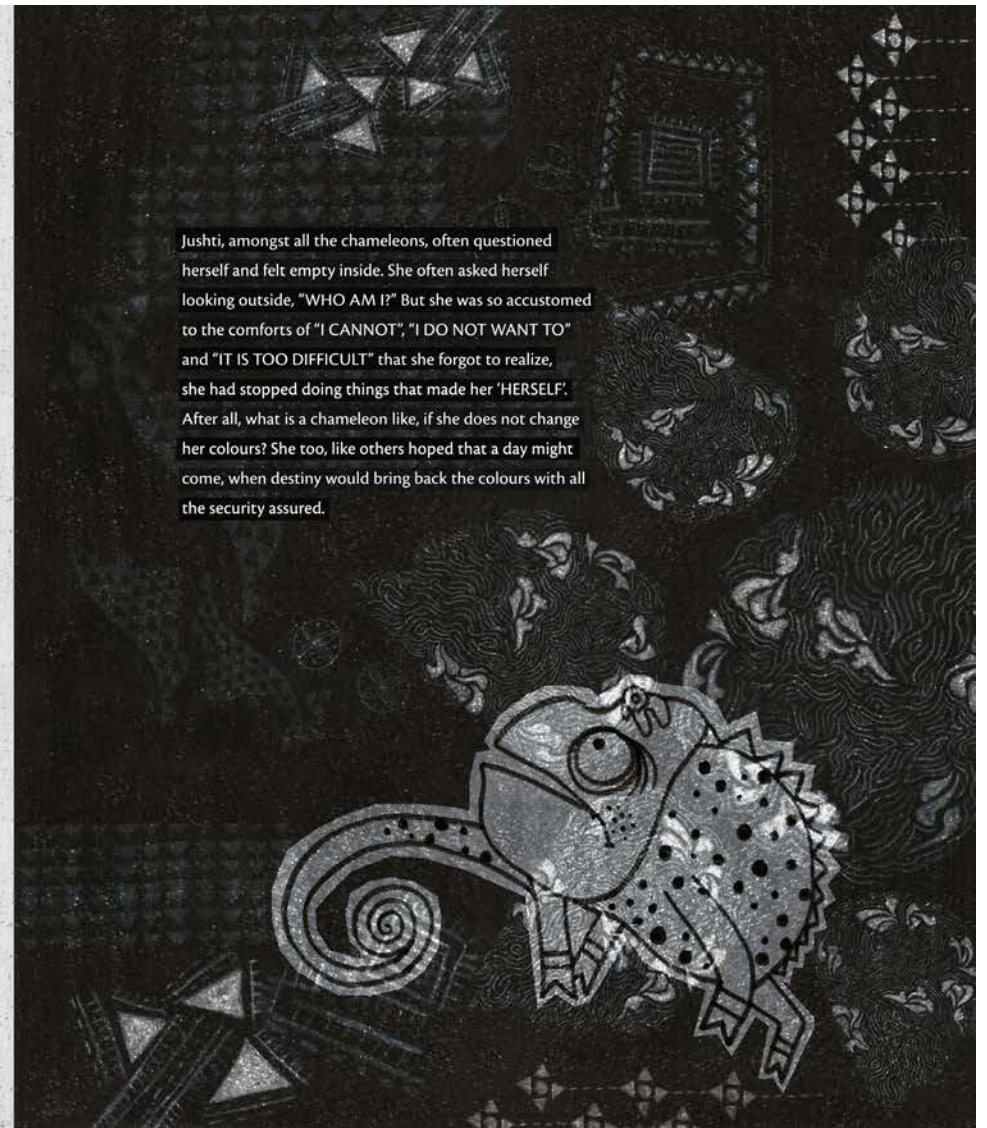


They were sure that it was easier to stay rigidly black and white in this tree rather than change colours to hide. And once they entered this comfort bubble, they never dreamt to go back to the colour outside. Did they miss being colourful, that once existed? Maybe, maybe not. Few cared little to find out and a few, waited for that day to come, when they were comfortable enough to leave this tree. They told themselves and each other that they were happy, but who knows if they were really happy!

Jushti, amongst all the chameleons, often questioned herself and felt empty inside. She often asked herself looking outside, "Who am I?" But she was so accustomed to the comforts of "I cannot", "I do not want to" and "it is too difficult" that she forgot to realize, she had stopped doing things that made her 'herself'. After all, what is a chameleon like, if she does not change her colours? She too, like others hoped that a day might come, when destiny would bring back the colours with all the security assured.



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Days passed and so passed the nights; she kept looking out with teary eyes. Lost in her confusions, it so happened that one of her fellows took his last breadth. Time was sad and much of pain. But, the death of her dear fellow taught Jushti the importance of life.

It was in this time of pain and silence when she realized that life was too short. There was no guarantee of the so-called future and maybe her wish to get out into the world of colour would die with her someday. This gave Jushti the courage to break out of the comfort tree. But was this an easy struggle?

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Her fellows tore her down, and so did her thoughts.
She had to take the challenge, overcome the FEARS
and dance with them. For everything she desired,
was outside the tree. To bring in the change; she had
to be the change. And this would come only with
SACRIFICE, the sacrifice of escaping the comfort
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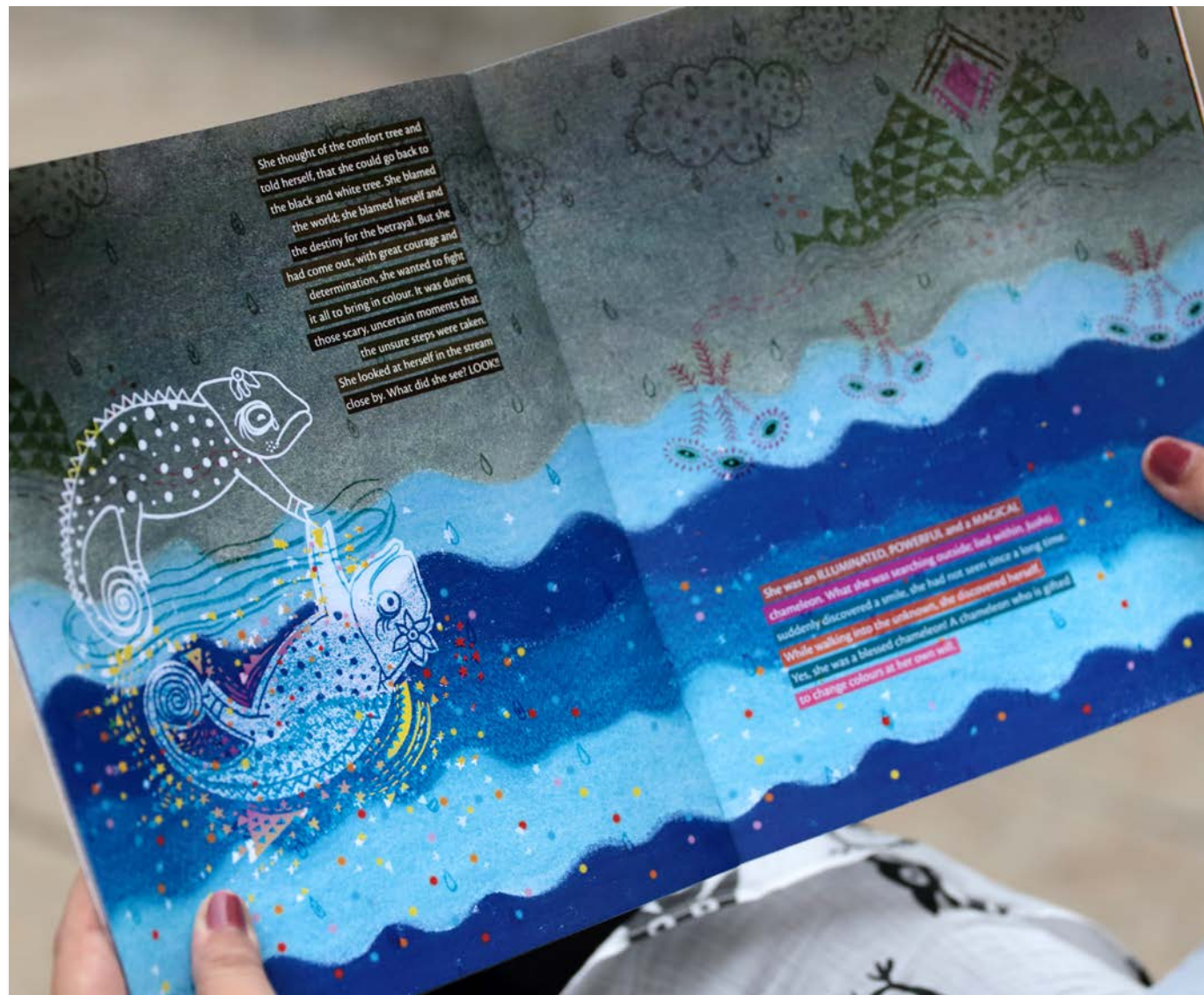
of escaping the comfort trap. After several failed attempts, Jushti pushed herself out. Now, she was uncertain, and equally scared. But, the desire to bring back colour to her life made her march ahead.



As she went farther from the black and white tree, she saw the world was no longer as she imagined. She was disappointed and devastated to see that the world outside had turned all PALE AND GREY. The flowers were drooped and the trees were bare. The cats were sad and the children gloomy, the houses so dead with people so sleepy. What had happened to it all! How scary it was for her to see such a sight!

As she went farther from the black and white tree, she saw the world was no longer as she imagined. She was disappointed and devastated to see that the world outside had turned all pale and grey. The flowers were drooped and the trees were bare. The cats were sad and the

children gloomy, the houses so dead with people so sleepy. What had happened to it all! How scary it was for her to see such a sight!



She thought of the comfort tree and told herself, that she could go back to the black and white tree. She blamed the world; she blamed herself and the destiny for the betrayal. But she had come out, with great courage and determination, she wanted to fight it all to bring in colour. It was during those scary, uncertain moments that the unsure steps were taken. She looked at herself in the stream close by. What did she see? LOOK!!

She was an ILLUMINATED, POWERFUL and a MAGICAL chameleon. What she was searching outside, laid within. Jushti suddenly discovered a smile, she had not seen since a long time. While walking into the unknown, she discovered herself. Yes, she was a blessed chameleon! A chameleon who is gifted to change colours at her own will.

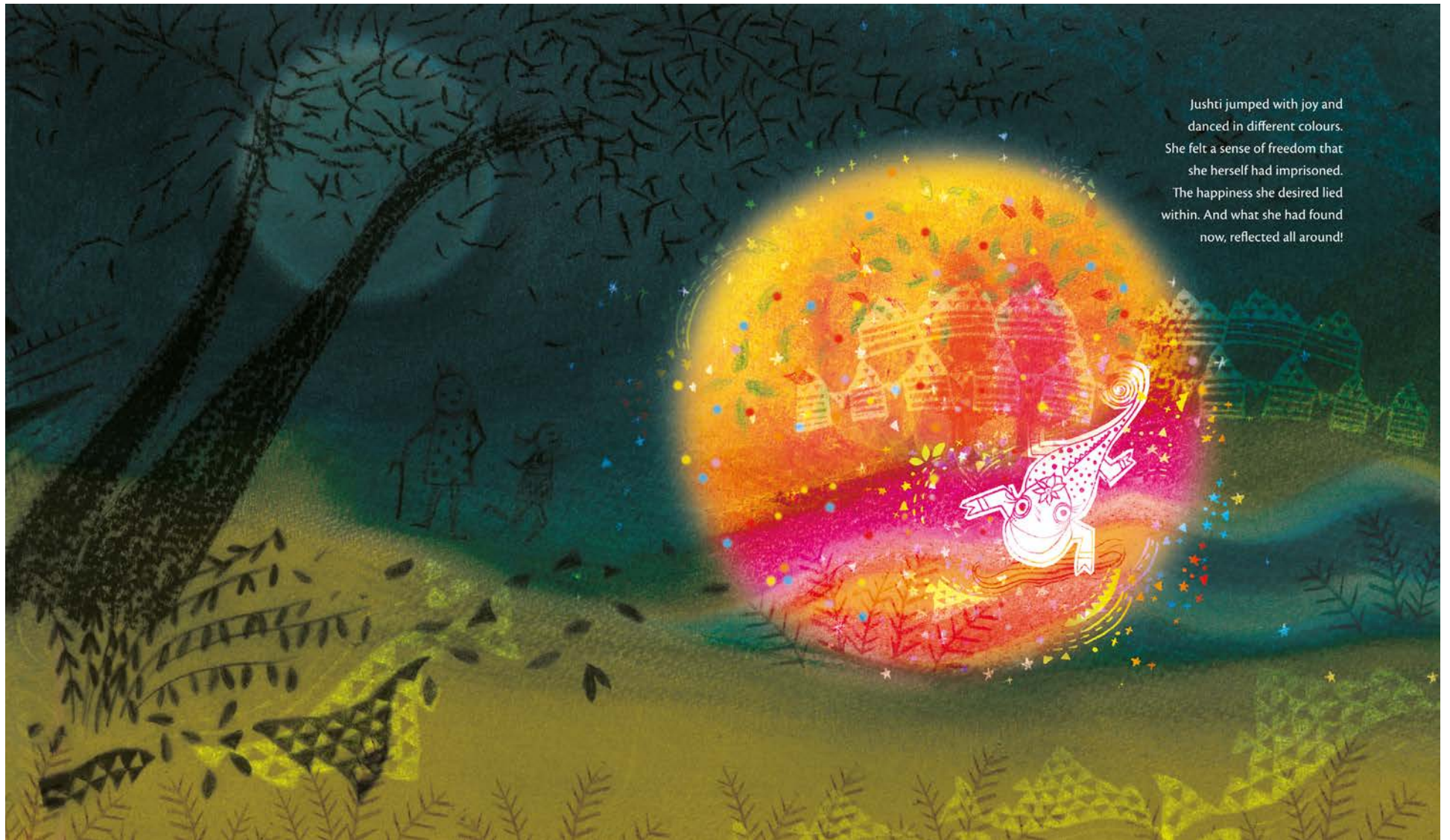
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Jushti jumped with joy and
danced in different colours.
She felt a sense of freedom that
she herself had imprisoned.
The happiness she desired lied
within. And what she had found
now, reflected all around!

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Just like for herself, she wanted everyone around to be colourful and happy.
She found her purpose and the **STRENGTH** that she had within. Her colours
were changing, but she could experience this joy and **CONTENTMENT** only after
she had hopped outside the black and white tree.

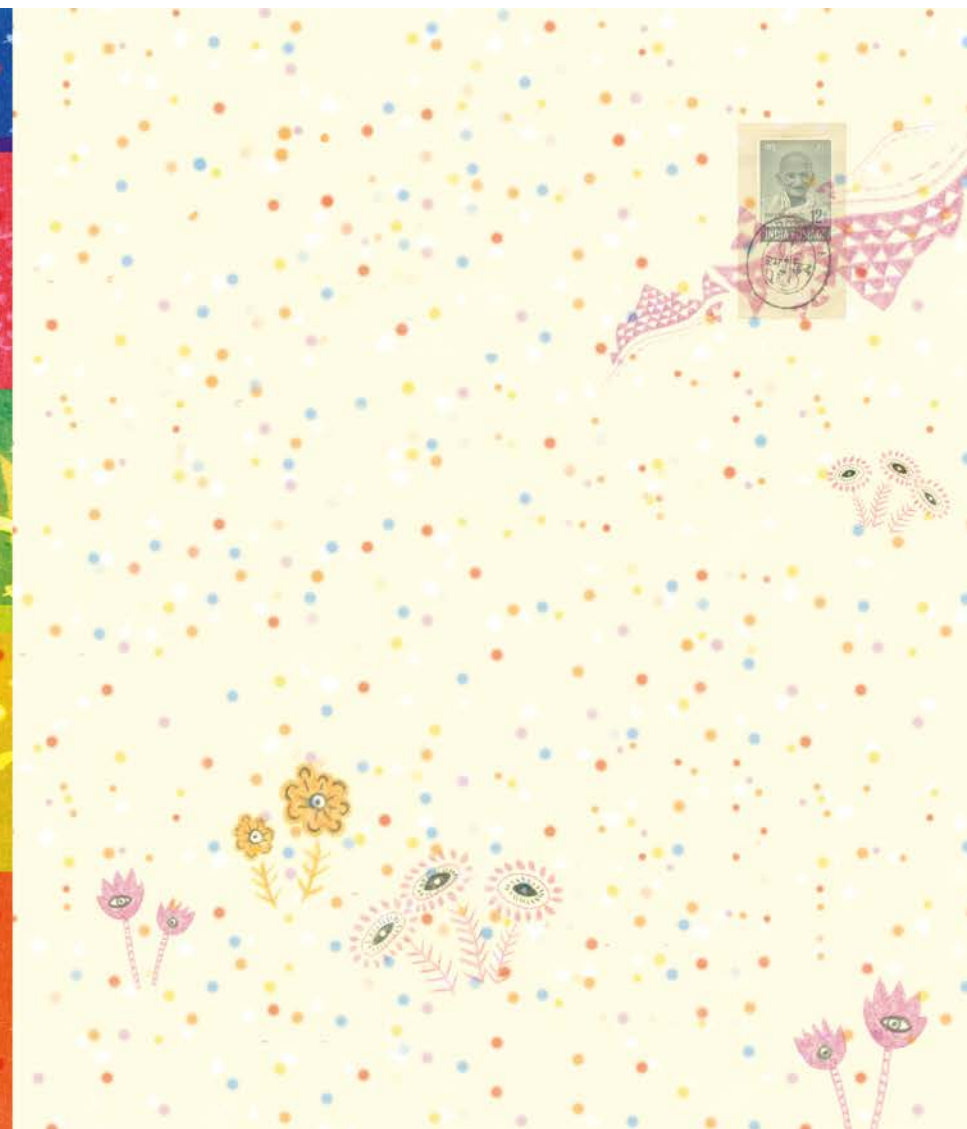
Just like for herself, she wanted everyone around to be colourful and happy. She found her purpose and the strength that she had within. Her colours kept changing; Jushti could experience this joy and contentment only after she had hopped outside the black and white tree.

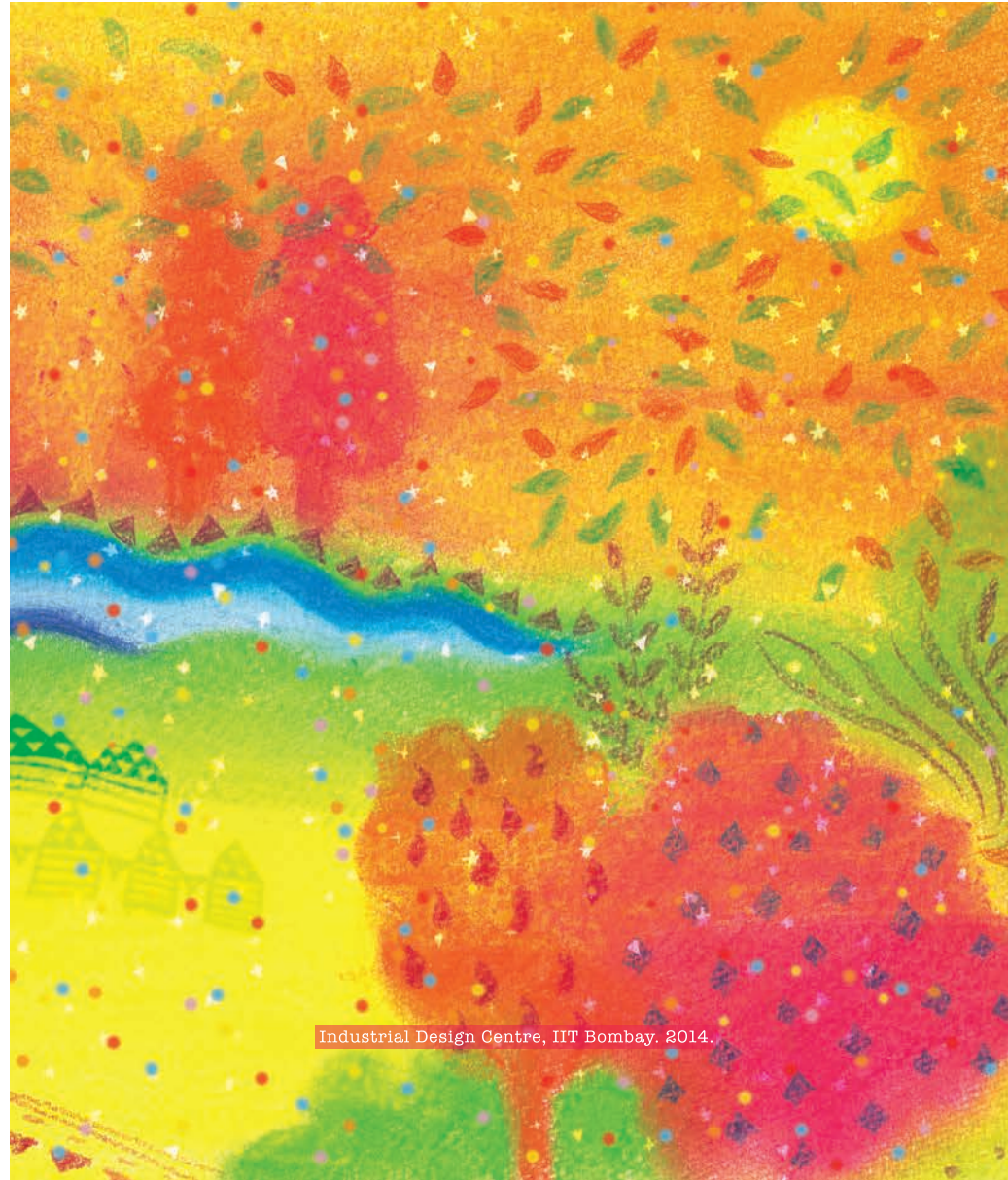


Just like for herself, she wanted everyone around to be colourful and happy. She found her purpose and the **STRENGTH** that she had within. Her colours kept changing; Jushti could experience this joy and **CONTENTMENT** only after she had hopped outside the black and white tree.



This was an experience she wrote to her fellows back in the black and white tree. She continued her journey, of spreading happiness within, and outside.





Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay. 2014.



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