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I can too

Geeta Dharmarajan

Art by Jai



This book belongs to

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कथा KATHA

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About Katha

Katha, a nonprofit organization founded in 1988, works in the literacy to literature continuum. We work with slum communities and municipal corporation schools to ensure that every child learns to read for fun and at grade level. We also work with women and teachers so that all children achieve their potential.

Our books, workshops and learning centres strive to forge cross-cultural connections through story and Story Pedagogy®. As one of India's finest publishers, our initiative has been recognized as "a unique and special moment in Indian publishing history" by *The Economic Times*.

Katha's books have received global recognition, including the nomination by an international jury for the prestigious Astrid Lindgren Award, the world's biggest prize for children's literature.

We love to work with new and established writers, translators and illustrators.

Do you like writing, illustrating, translating for children? Write to us at editors@katha.org to become a cherished member of the Katha family!

"[Katha] ... an educational jewel in India's crown."

— Naoyuki Shinohara, Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund

"Katha stands as an exemplar for all the creative projects around the world that grapple with ordinary and dramatic misery in cities."

— Charles Landry, *The Art of City Making*

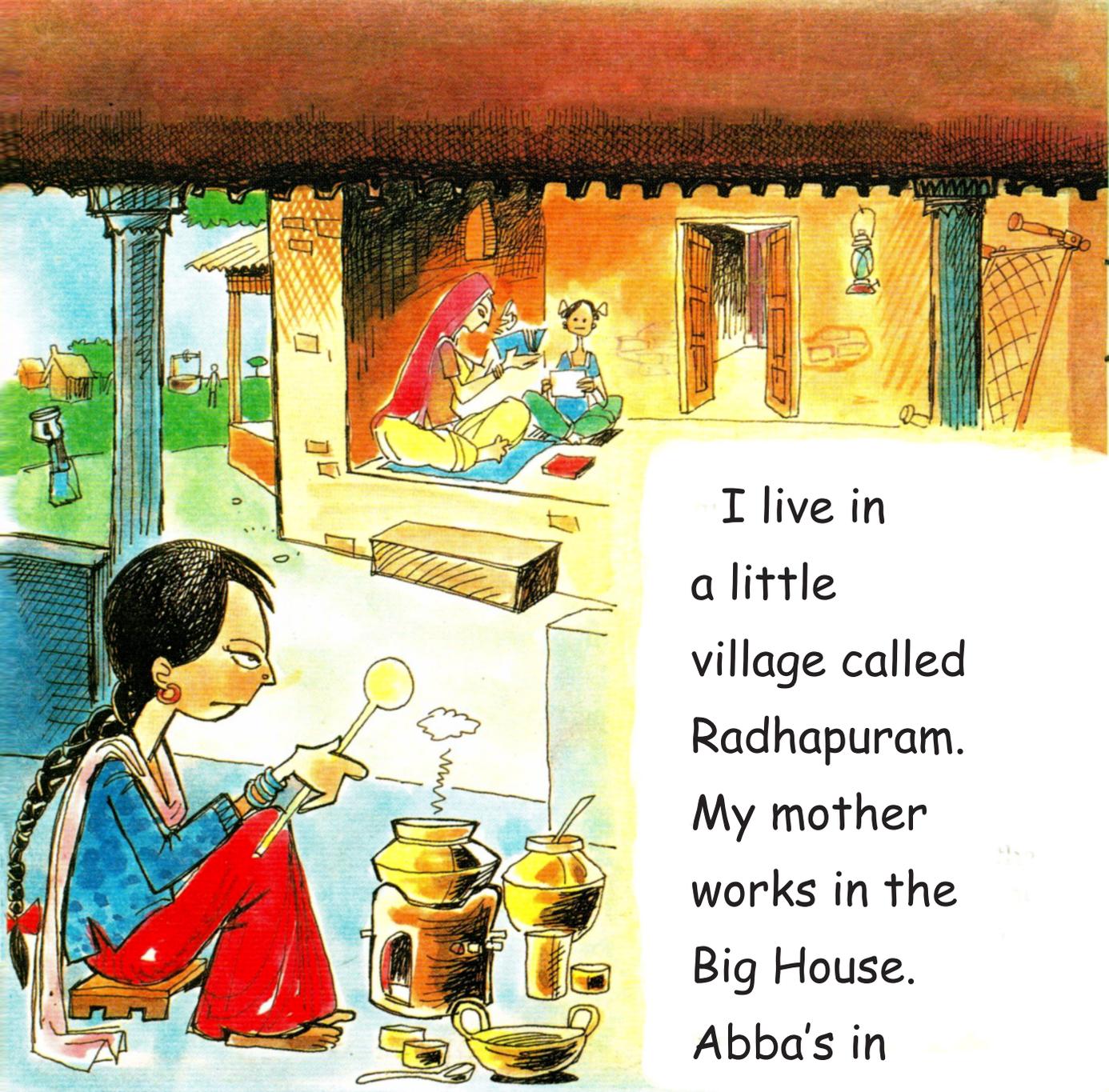
"Katha has a real soft corner for kids. Which is why it ... create[s] such gorgeous picture books for children."

— Time Out

"Katha's work is driven by the idea that children can bring change to their communities that is sustainable and real, just as the children do in [their books]."

— Papertigers





I live in a little village called Radhapuram. My mother works in the Big House. Abba's in the army.

That means that Ammi and I are alone most of the time.

Evenings, Ammi reads the Koran with Amina, the daughter of the Big House, while I cook for the night.

She teaches Amina the Shahadat Kalma sitting in the front room of their house, the Jannat-ul-Firdaus. She asks, 'Who are the Mallaks?'

'Messengers of God!' I want to shout.



But Amina is quiet. Ammi has to tell her. Yet, 'She's clever,' says Ammi, cleaning the vessels that night.

Her fingers are flat and worn out. 'Amina will go far.'

That night I can't sleep.

I want Ammi to say the same thing about me. I want to study, become the best teacher in the world! I want Ammi's fingers to look less tired and worn out. But how do I get her to send me to high school?

Days and nights speed past.



'Must think of marriage for our little Jameela,' says my father when he comes home. He tweaks my plait. Ammi smiles.

Like Amina, I am twelve. 'Amina will go to college. And I? I'll have lots of babies!' I grumble.

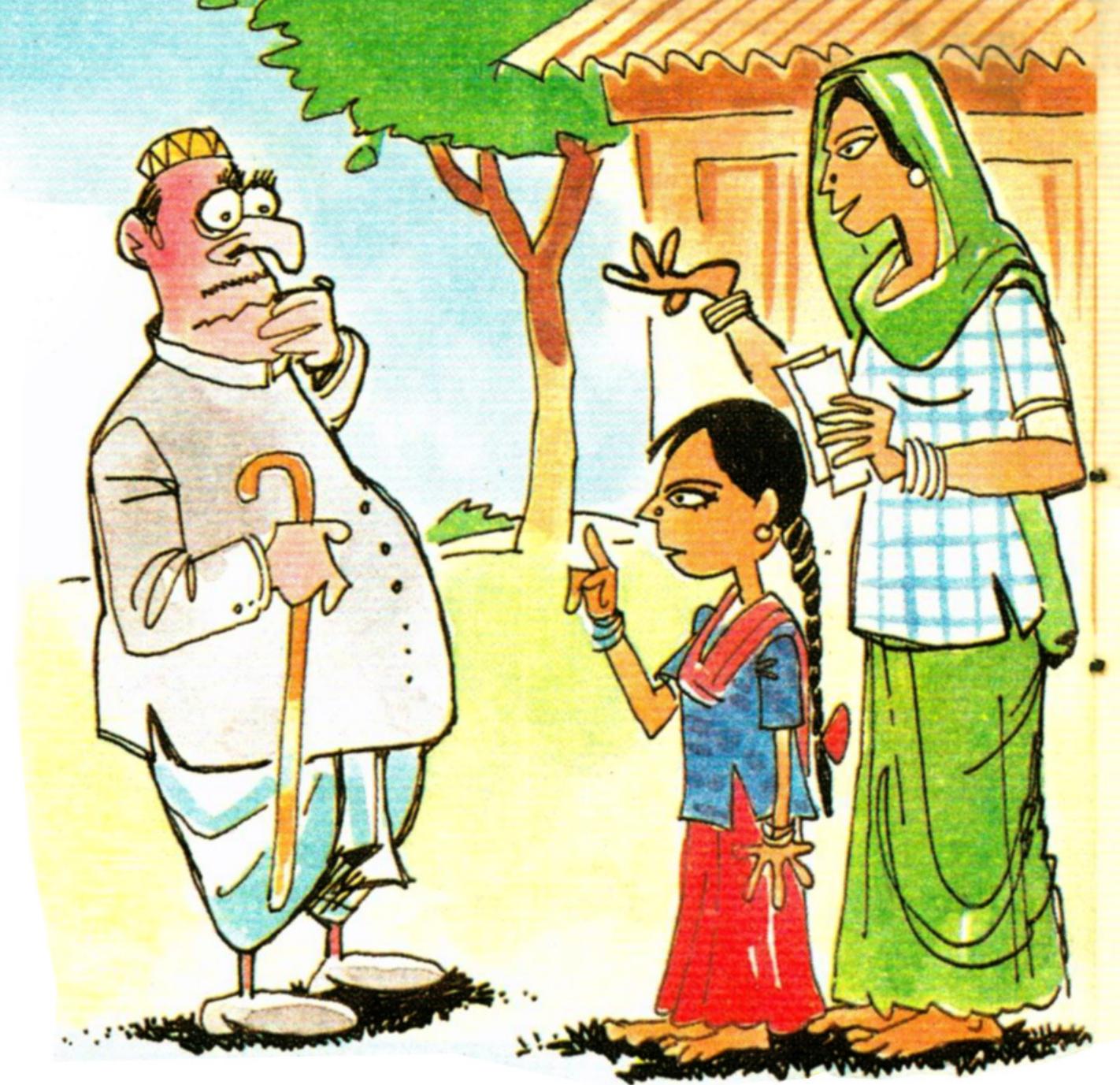
Ammi smiles. 'Babies are nice,' she says. That night I cry myself to sleep.



One day, the house-owner came for the rent.
'Rs 25.50 for electricity.
Rs 12.37 for water.

With the rent it'll be
Rs. 427.87.'

'The rent is Rs. 350/-
So, that's Rs 387.87!' I
burst out.

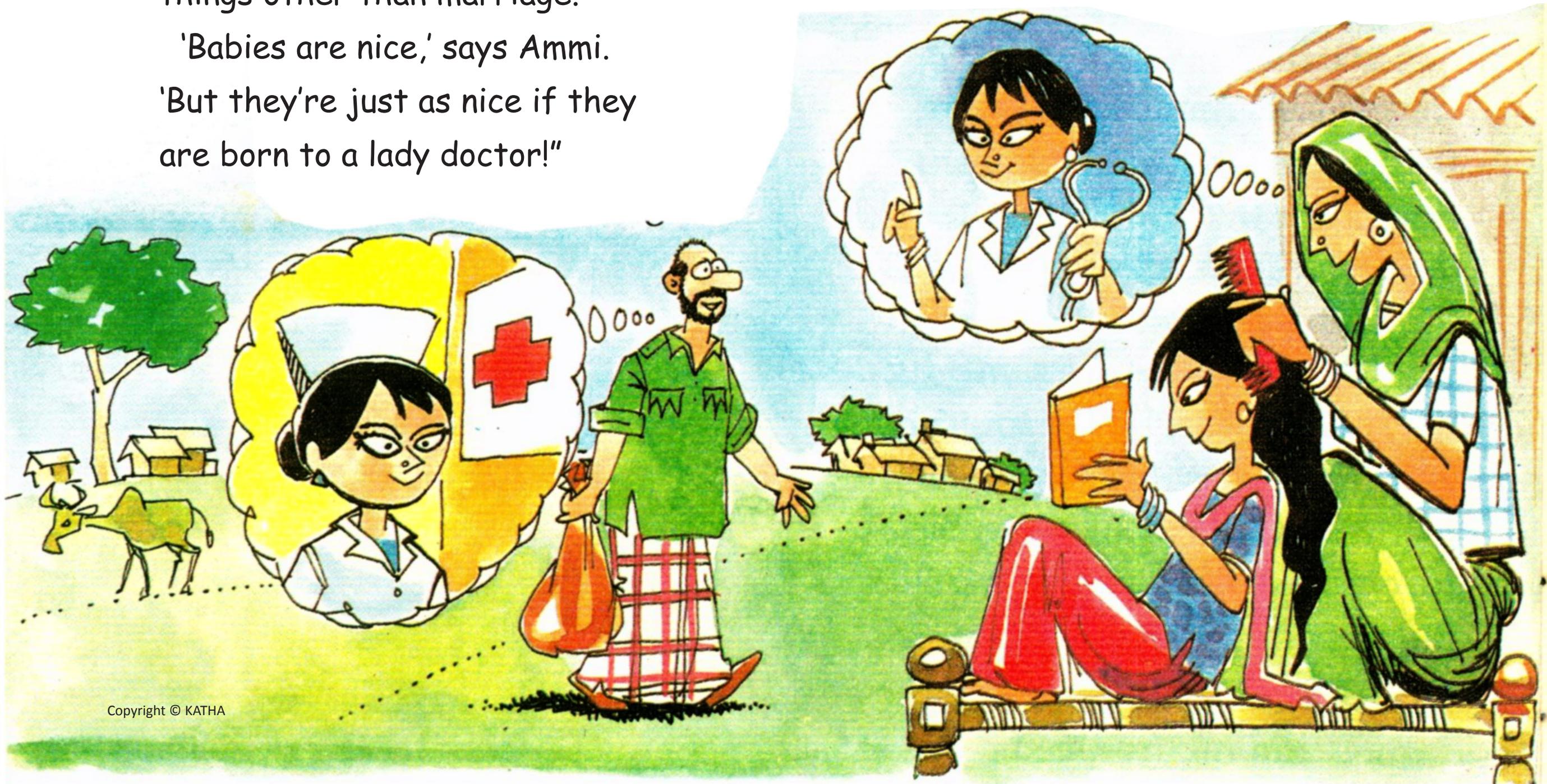


Ammi looks at me amazed. A
small tear starts forming in the

corner of her eye. That night,
for the first time we talk of
things other than marriage.

'Babies are nice,' says Ammi.
'But they're just as nice if they
are born to a lady doctor!'

'Right!' I say with a grin.





Geeta Dharmarajan loves writing stories for children. She was one of the editors of *Target*, a magazine for children, and *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, the magazine of the University of Pennsylvania. She was awarded the prestigious Padma Shri in 2012 for her distinguished service in the fields of literature and education.

A freelance artist, **Jay** draws inspiration for his works from nature and Indian folk traditions. He loves experimenting with various media and styles and has a number of books to his credit.

Jameela wants to study and achieve something big in her life. But her parents have other dreams for her. Get married and have babies, they say. Will Jameela realize her dreams or do they get crushed? An inspirational read that young readers would be able to relate to.

