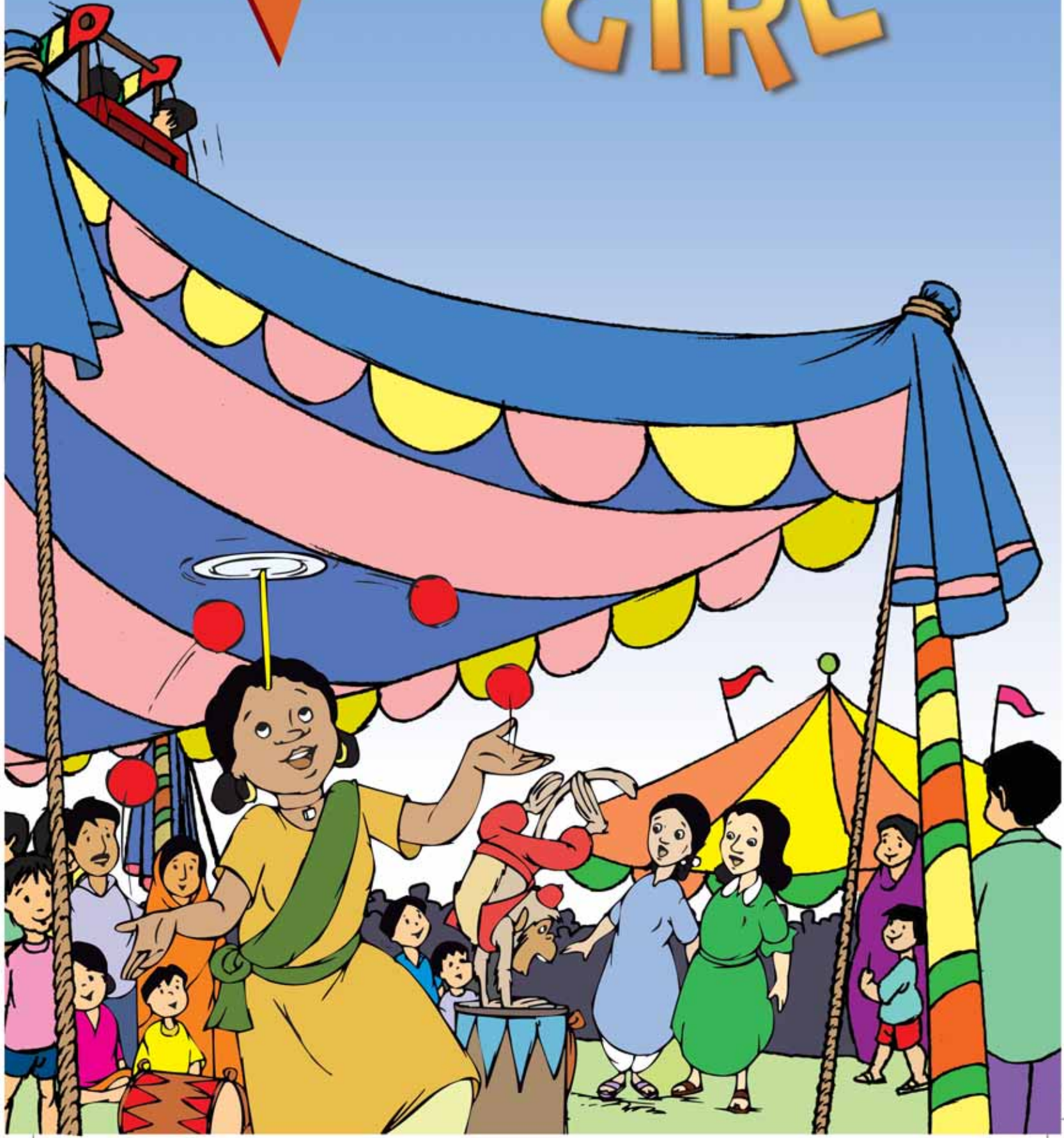




THE CIRCUS GIRL





THE CIRCUS GIRL



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Nijeke Jano

A COMIC BOOK SERIES

This is the second in a series of comic books of the "Nijeke Jano" or "Know Yourself" package of communication materials for adolescents. This series deals with various health and development issues and concerns of adolescent boys and girls.

The comic book series is centered around the Hossein family and their adolescent boy Sajjad, age 15, and girl, Shanu, age 13 who live in a small town in Bangladesh. The adolescents' father, mother, Aunt Rina, and mischievous little brother, Babu, are also important characters of the series. Hedayet is a teacher in the Hossein household and Sajjad and Shanu have many relatives and friends. These enthusiastic, energetic, and adventurous adolescents struggle to learn how to handle their concerns and problems, with some help from adults.

This series addresses a range of adolescent health issues with a special focus on reproductive health. Foremost, the series seeks to help adolescents gain the knowledge and life skills needed for positive behavior development. These skills include problem solving, decision making, critical and creative thinking, dealing with conflict and emotions, self awareness, and empathy, among others. Some of the health topics covered in the series include: emotional and physical changes in puberty, conception and pregnancy, avoiding early marriage and early pregnancy, preventing HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), and avoiding substance abuse, as well as other important health issues.



This second comic book talks about breast development and menstruation, common concerns of adolescent girls in Bangladesh. In the story, Shanu and her cousin Nasima have their first experiences with breast development and menstruation. Following her grandmother's traditional ideas and misconceptions, Shanu tries to use a false cure to ease breast development discomfort. Eventually both Shanu and Nasima come to understand that menstruation and breast development are part of growing up and that menstruation happens to all women. With the help of their family and friends, Shanu and Nasima overcome their concerns and fears.

The "Nijeke Jano" comic book series has been developed by the Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP) with technical support from the Health Communication Partnership based at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs and UNICEF. The comic book development involved an extensive process of design workshops with Adolescent Working Group members, writers, artists, researchers, adolescents and programmers as well as formative research with adolescents, parents and community leaders throughout Bangladesh. We hope you enjoy this story.

Produced with financial assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNICEF and with the active participation of the Adolescent Reproductive Health Working Group, Bangladesh.



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READER'S GUIDE TO SELF-ASSESSMENT

Dear adolescent friends,

This comic book on breast development and menstruation has been written for you and for all adolescents your age. We hope you will like the story and the characters. The story is humorous and entertaining with facts for adolescents.

You will surely read this comic book with great interest and attention. The following is a set of questions for you. After you finish reading the book, go through the questions and either think of the answers yourself or discuss the answers with others. This will help you to focus on the story and the messages that we want you to know.

- What is the subject matter of the story?
- Who are the characters in the story?
- Who do you think are the central characters in the story? Why?
- How old are Shanu and Nasima?
- What problem did Nasima face?
- What problem did Shanu face?
- What do you know about breast development and menstruation?
- Who did you find out about breast development and menstruation from?
- What kind of advice did Grandmother give to the girls? Was it all correct advice?
- How did Shanu try to solve her problem with breast discomfort?
- What would you have done if you were in Shanu's or Nasima's position?
- How can others be encouraged to treat menstruation as a normal process?
- What did you learn from the story?



Characters in this story



Sajjad: Adolescent boy, 15 years old
Shanu: Adolescent girl, 13 years old



Rina: Sajjad and Shanu's aunt,
works at the school
Babu: Sajjad and Shanu's
younger brother



Anowar Hossein: Sajjad and Shanu's father,
shopkeeper
Nazma Hossein: Sajjad and Shanu's mother



Hedayet: Lodging master at
Sajjad and Shanu's
house



Grandmother: Anowar Hossein's mother,
Sajjad and Shanu's grandmother
Nasima: Sajjad and Shanu's cousin

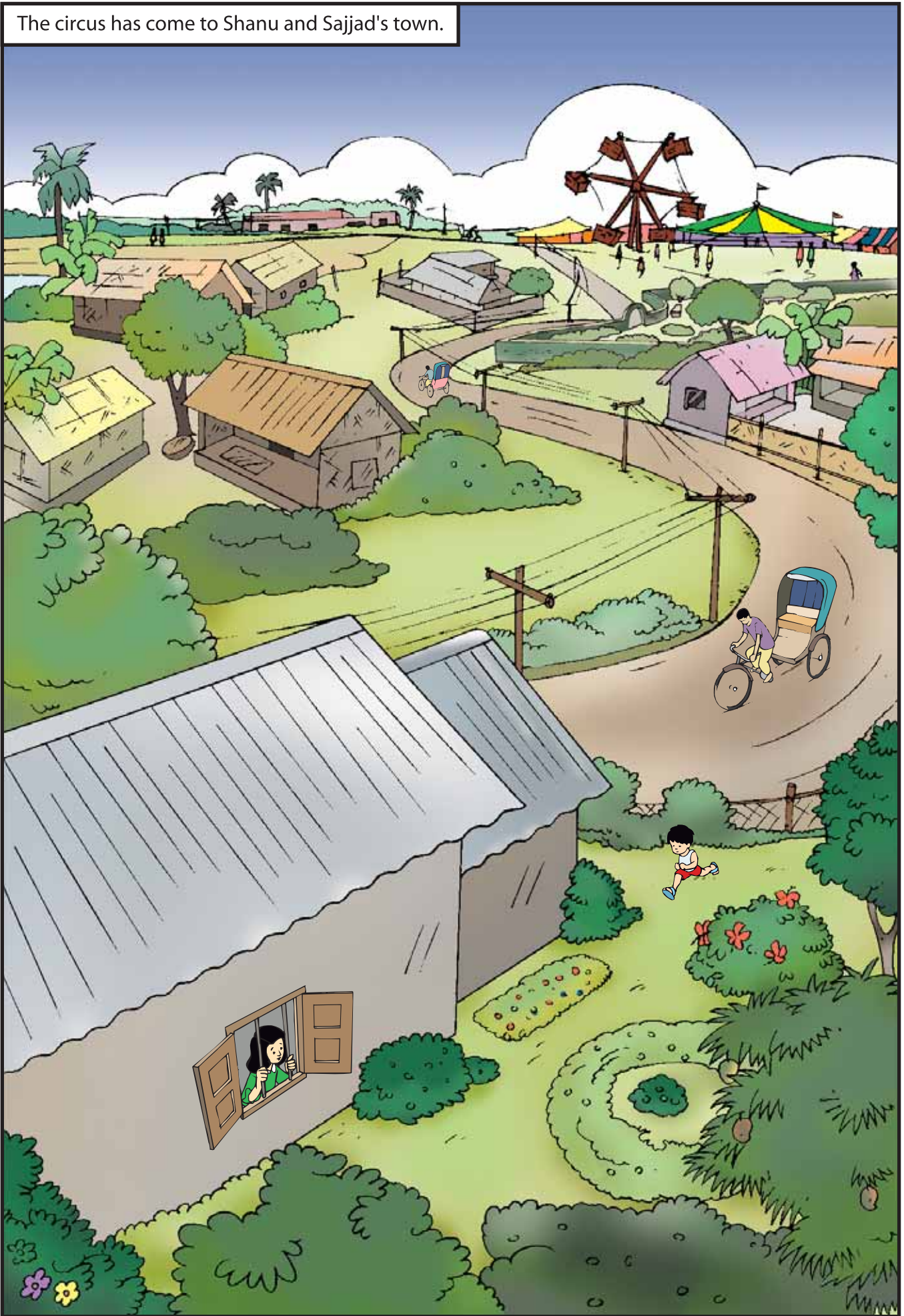


Lily: Circus girl
Bittu: Circus monkey,
Lily's playmate



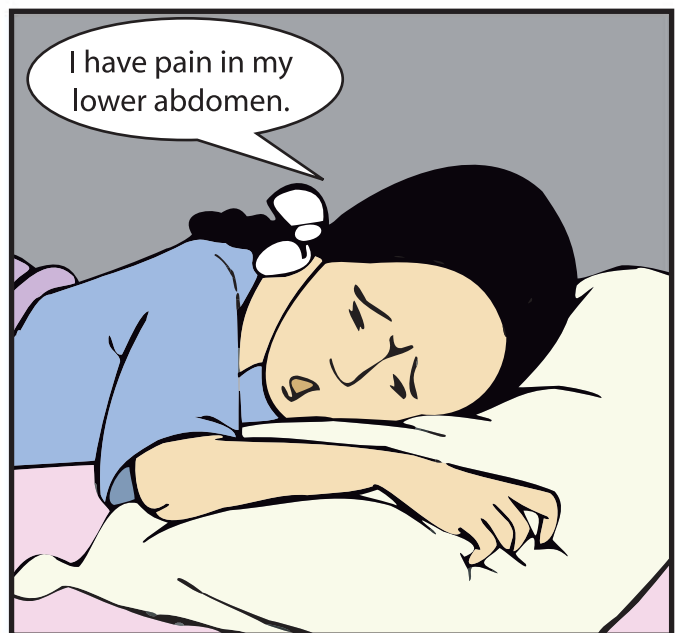
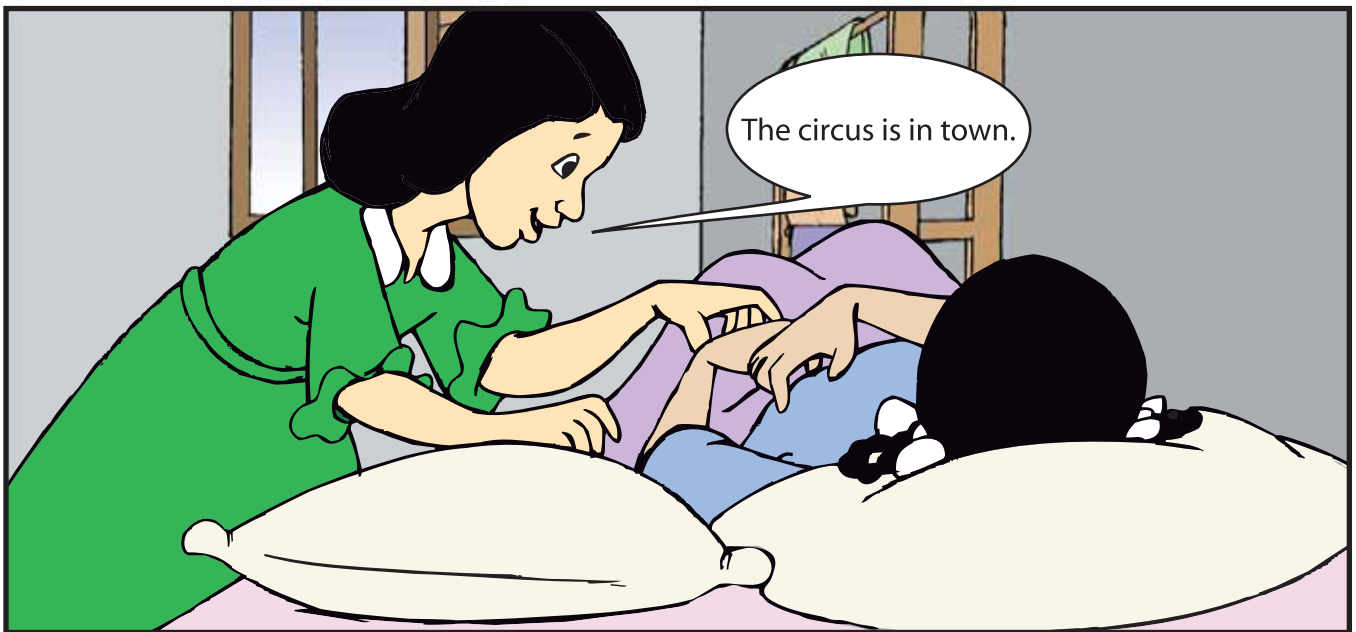
Masum: Sajjad's friend

The circus has come to Shanu and Sajjad's town.



Shanu's cousin Nasima has come to the house with their Grandmother. Nasima is not feeling well.







The family gathers for breakfast.

The circus has come.
May we go?

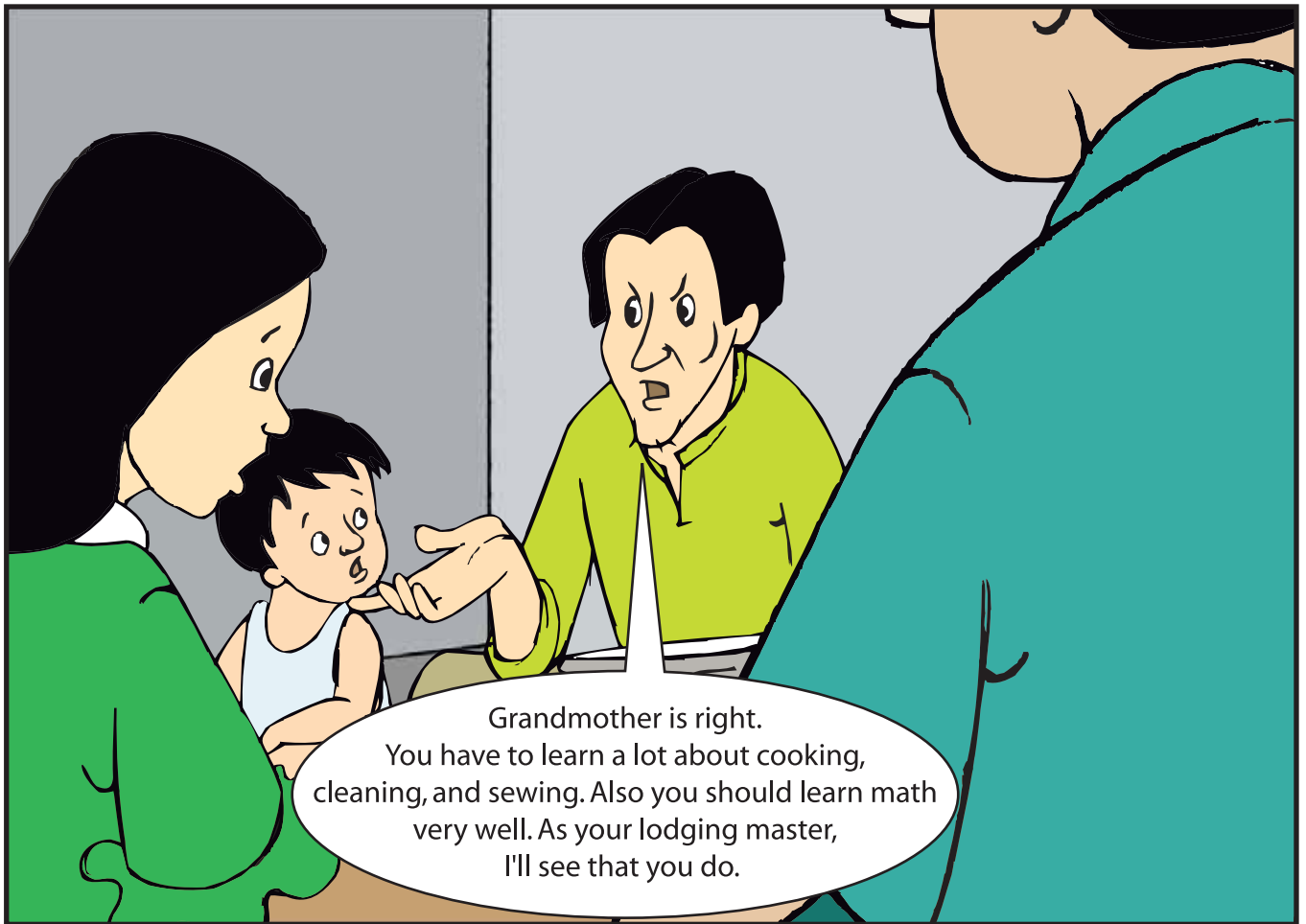


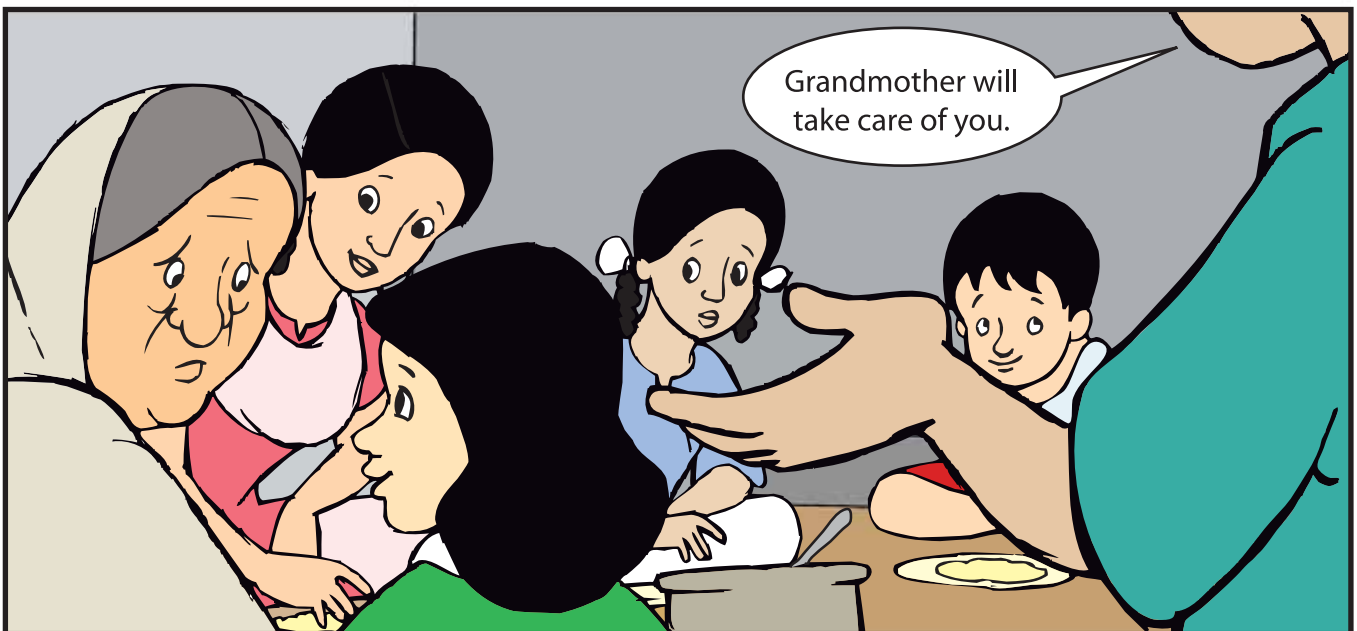
Circus? At your age,
girls should stay at home ...

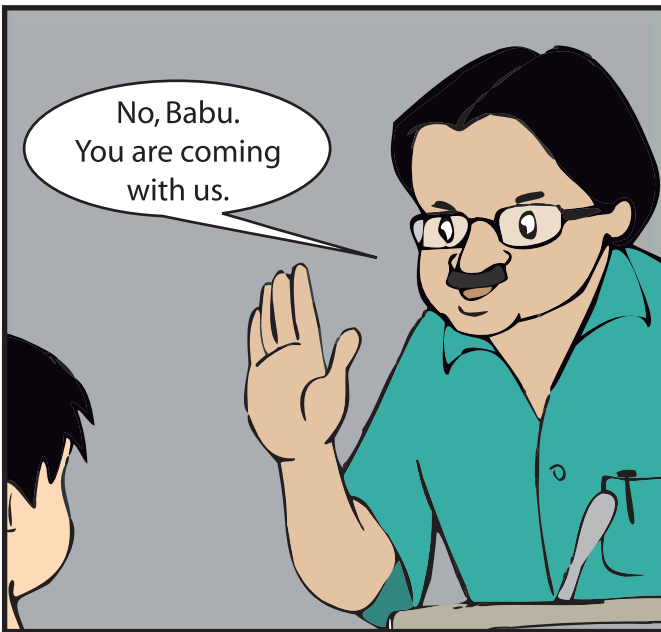
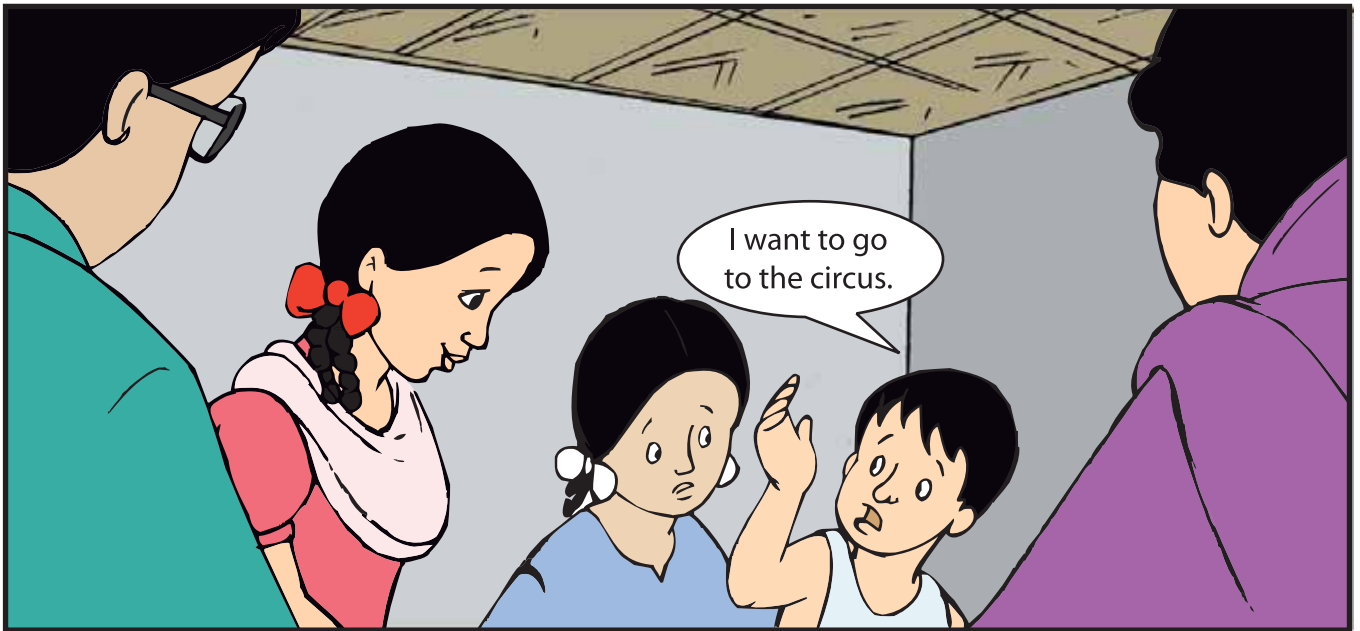


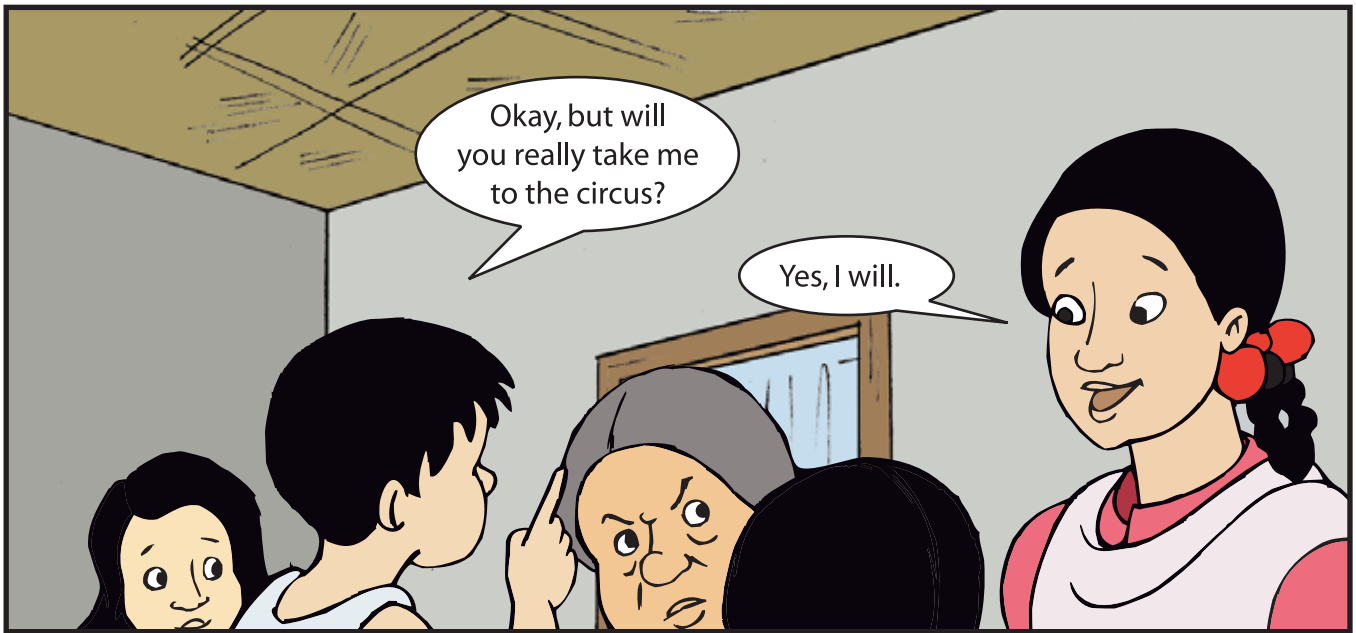
... and learn
household chores.



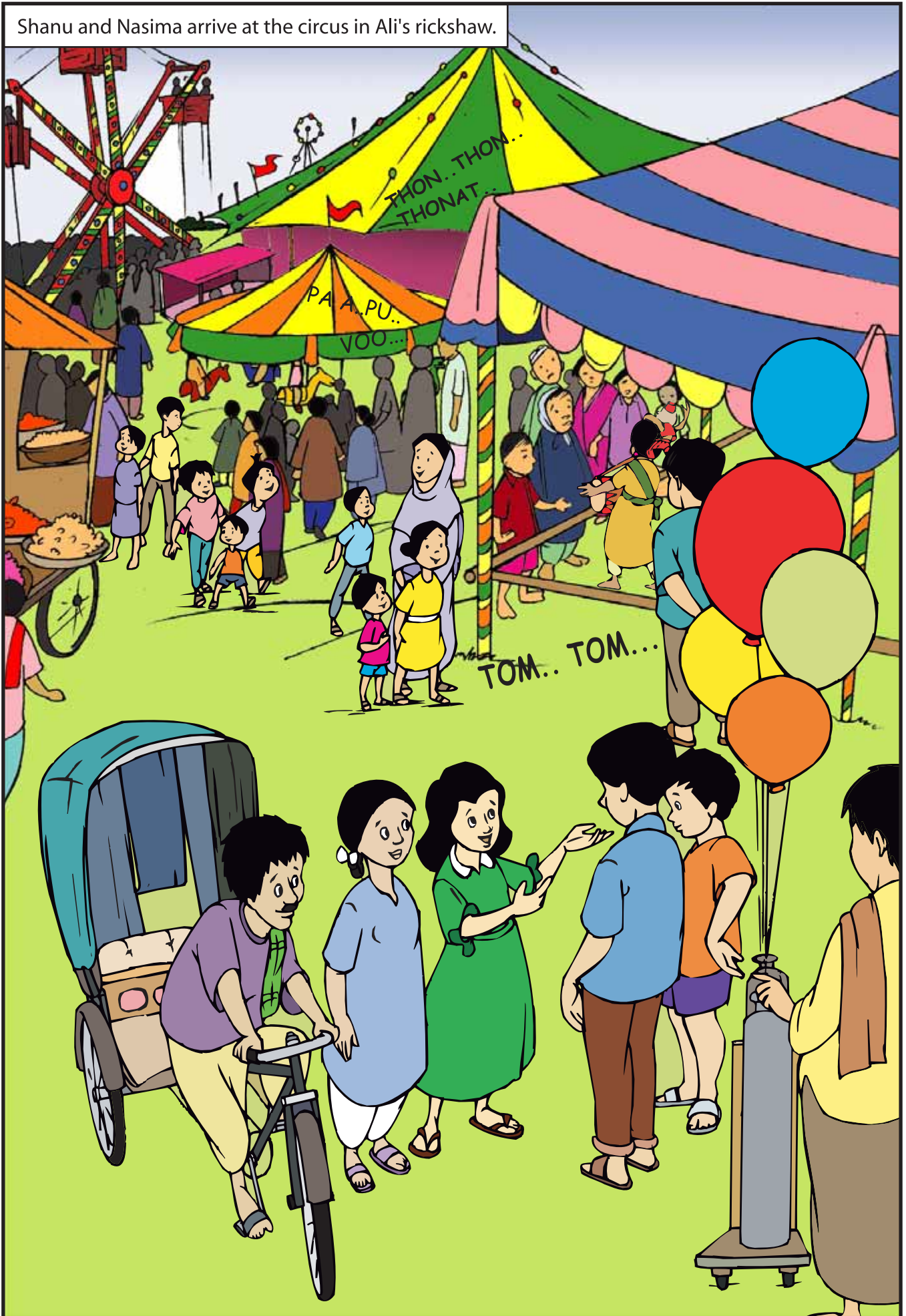






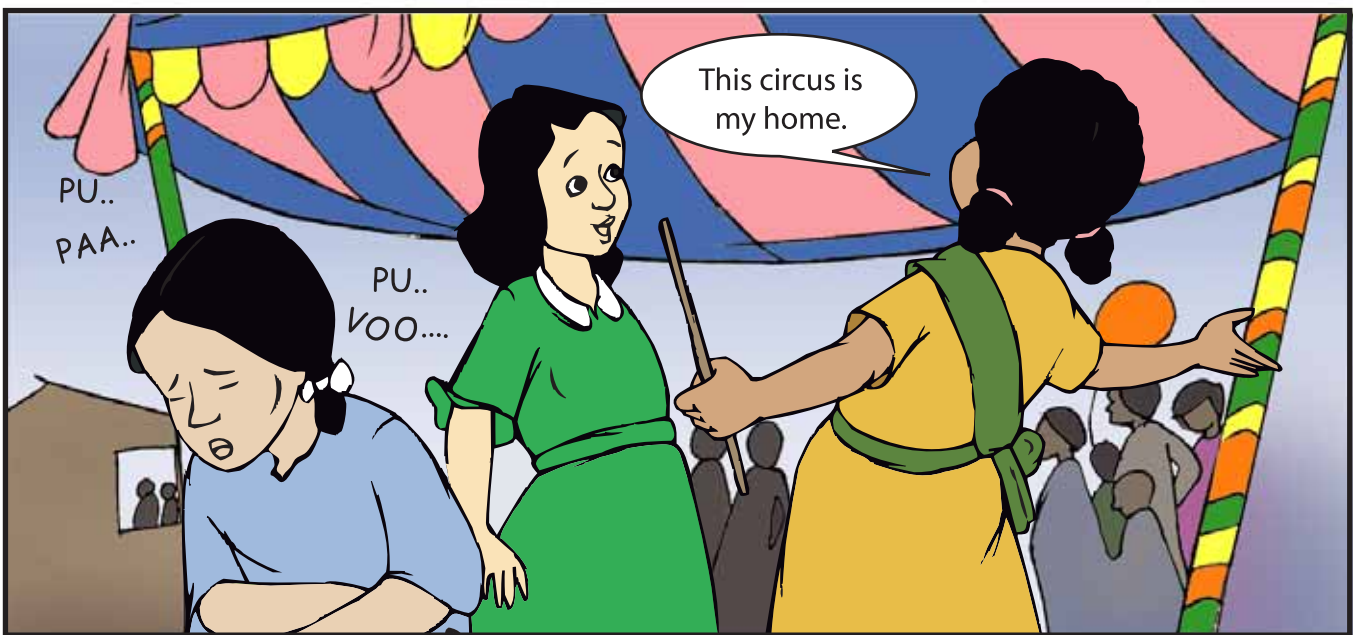


Shanu and Nasima arrive at the circus in Ali's rickshaw.

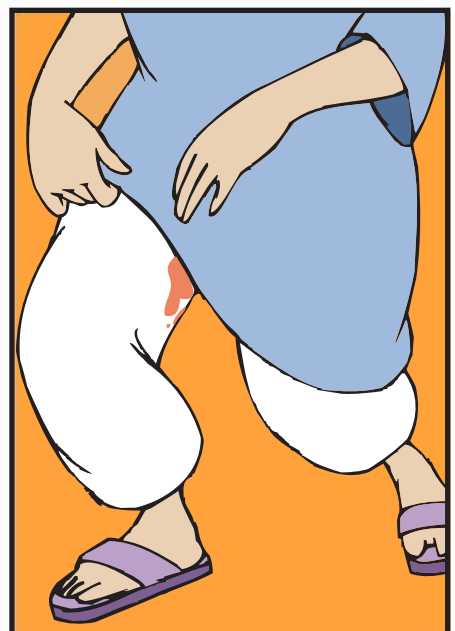
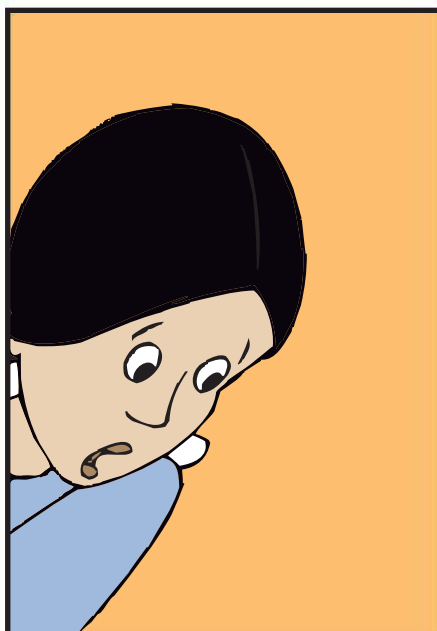
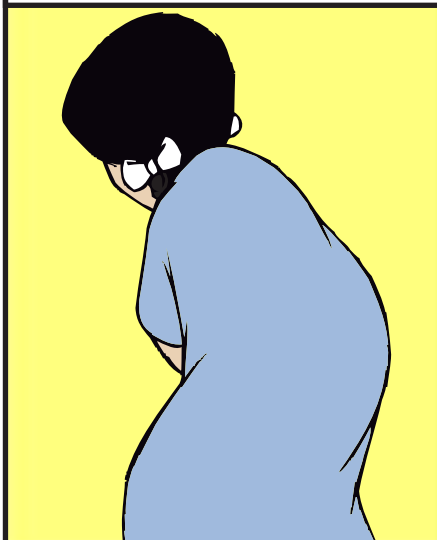




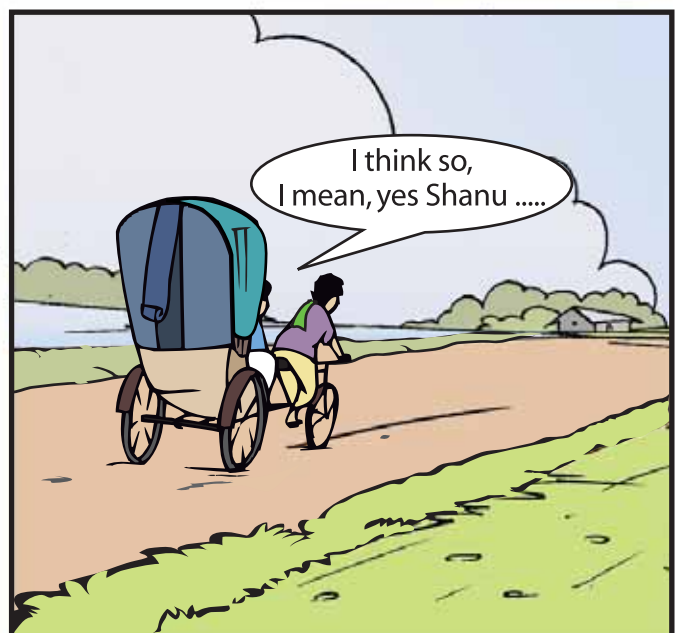
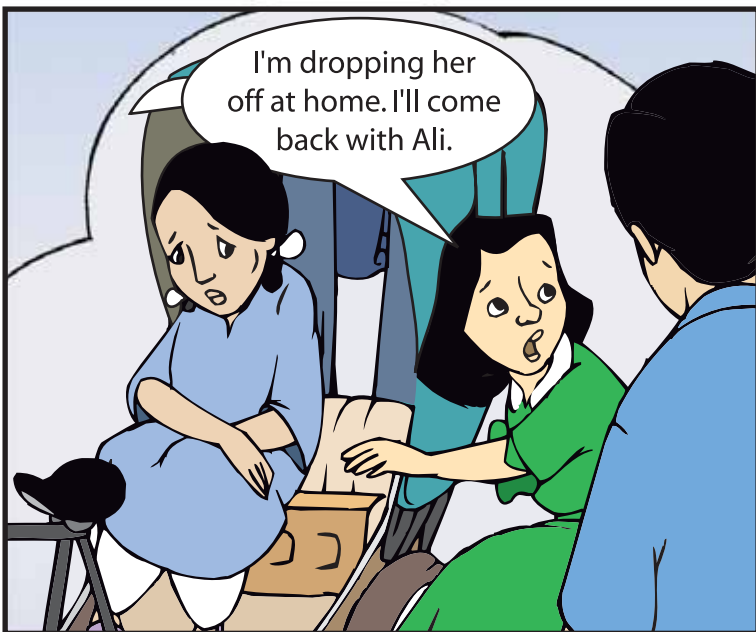




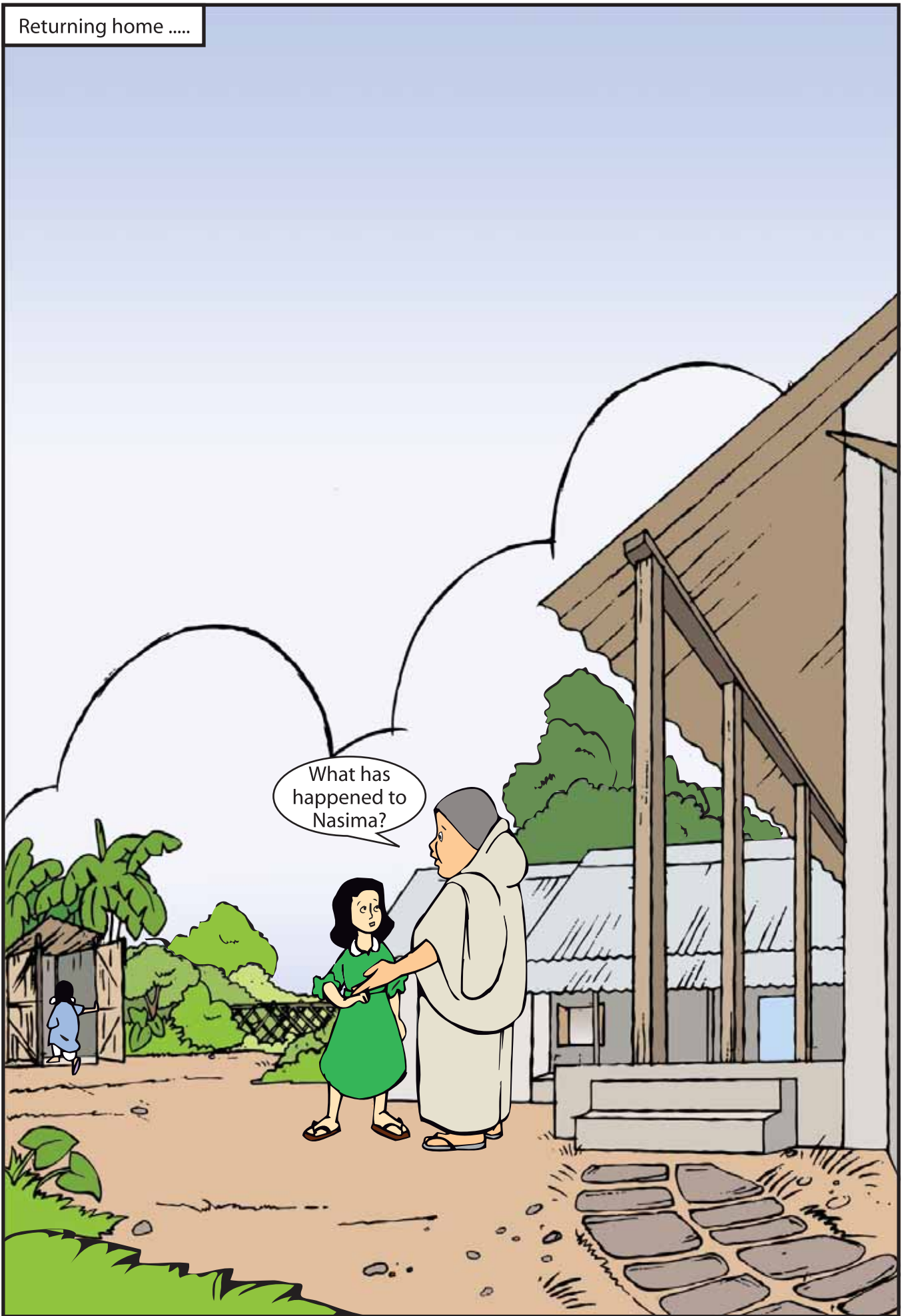
Nasima suddenly feels pain in her lower abdomen. She gets scared.

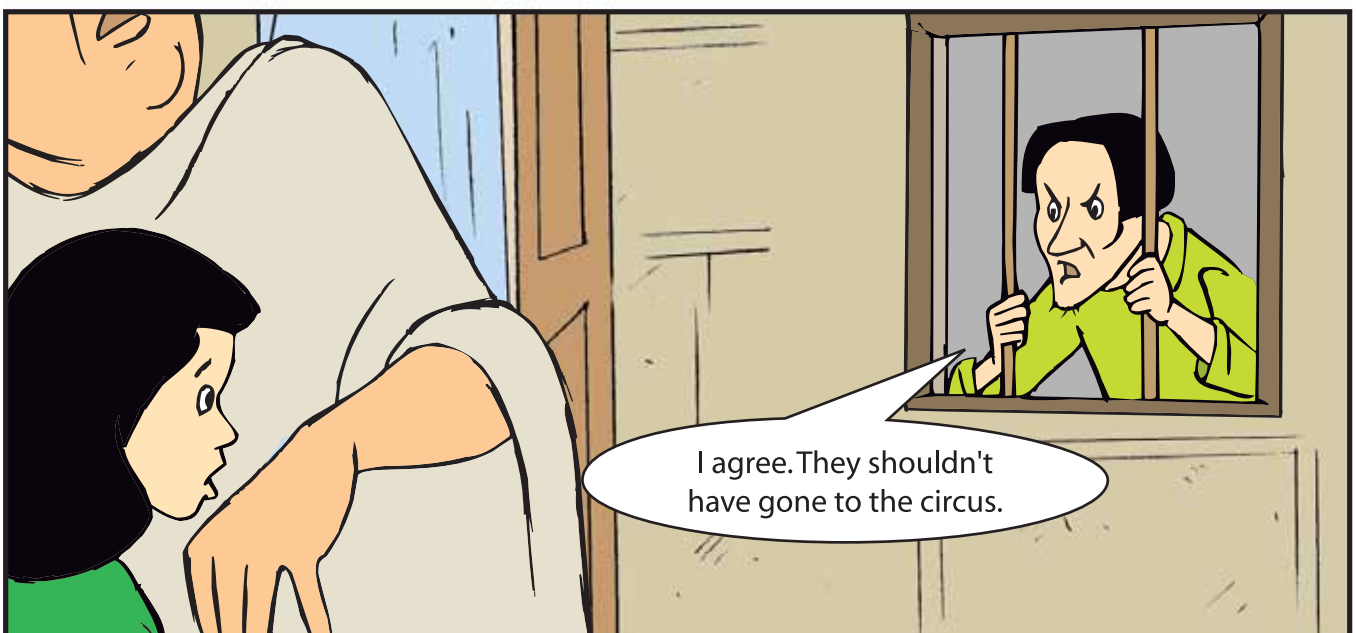
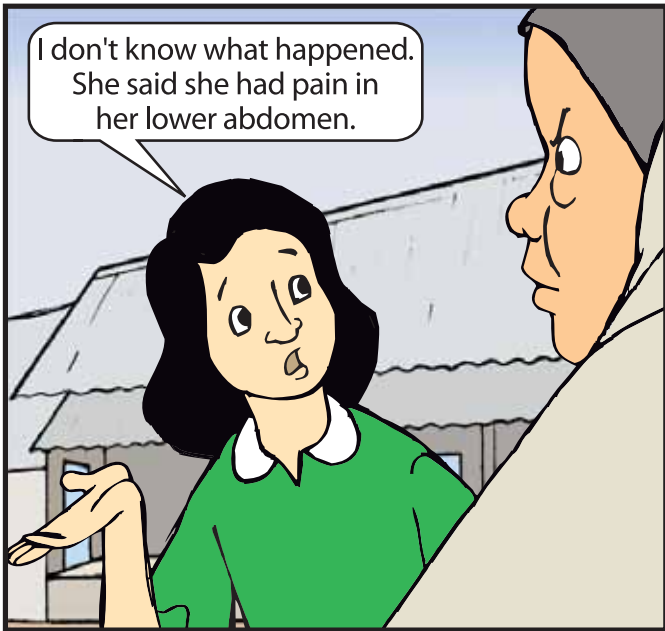


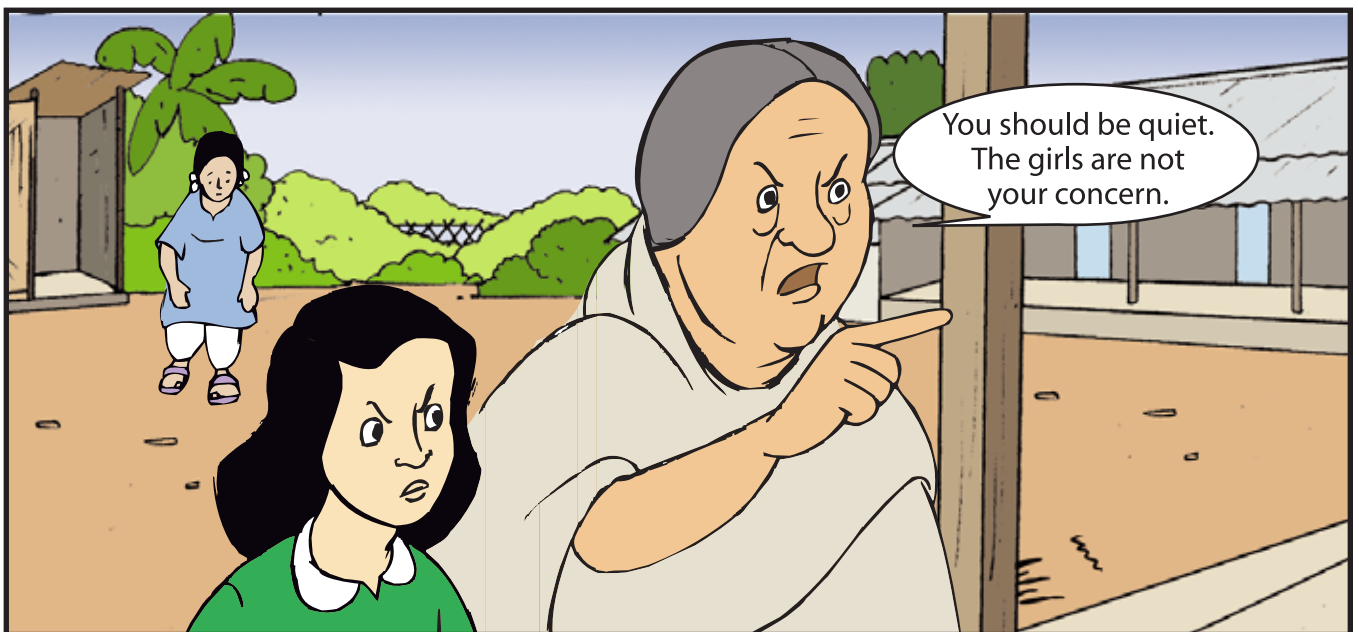
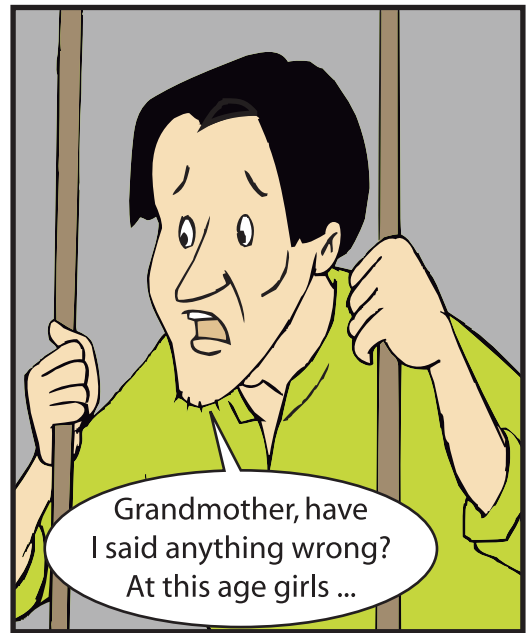


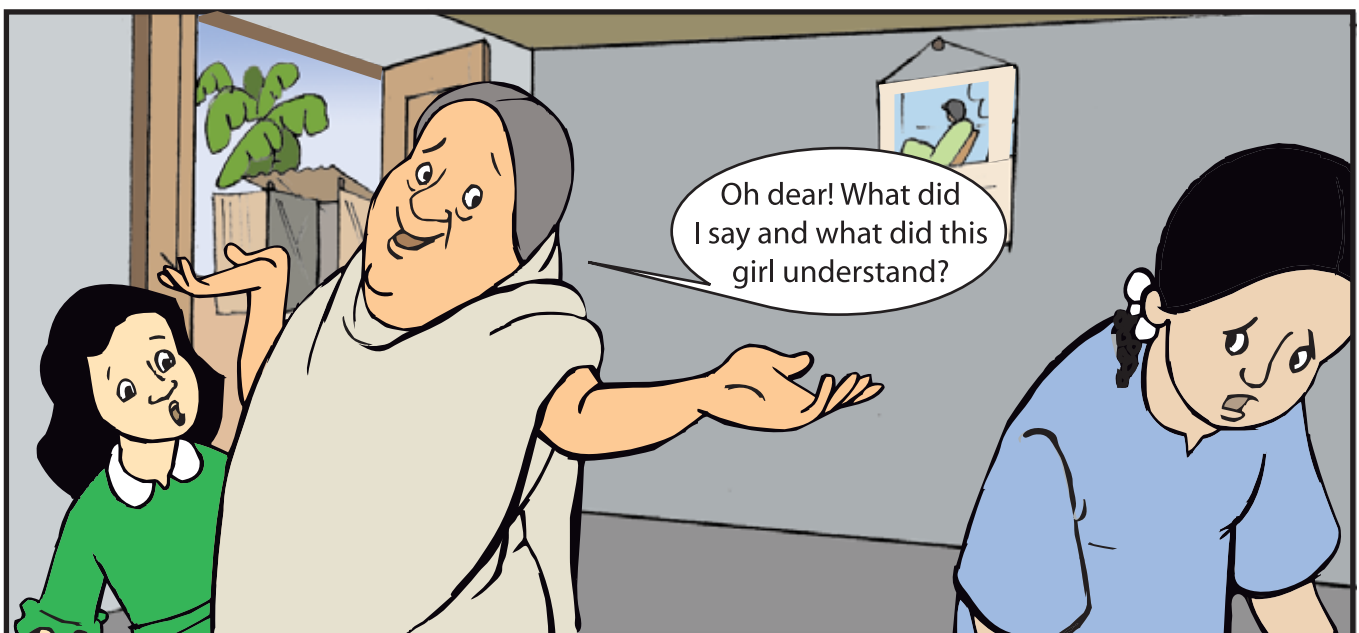
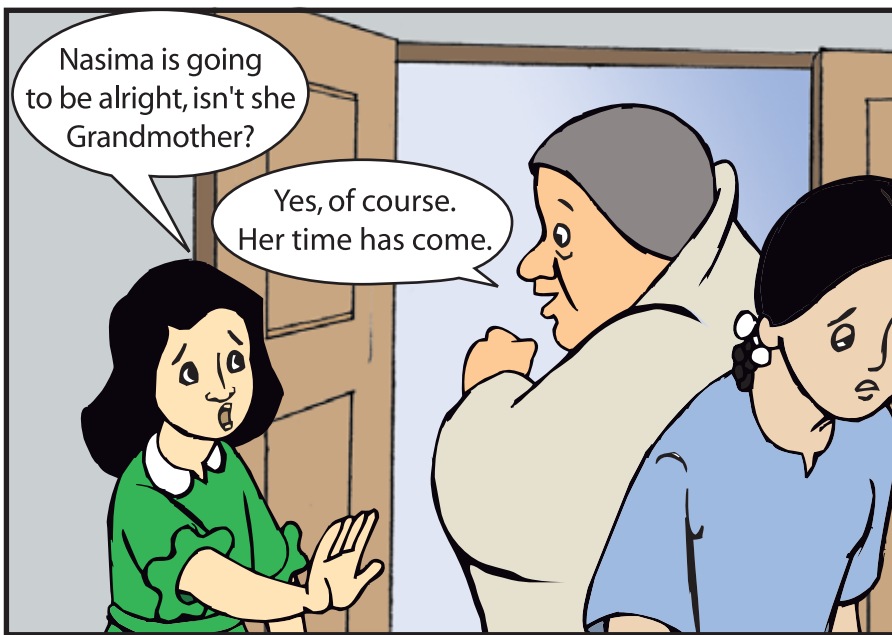
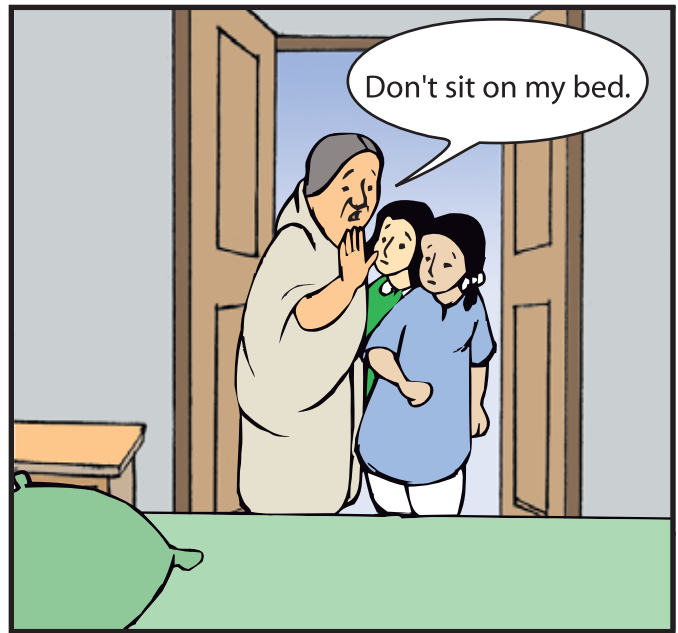


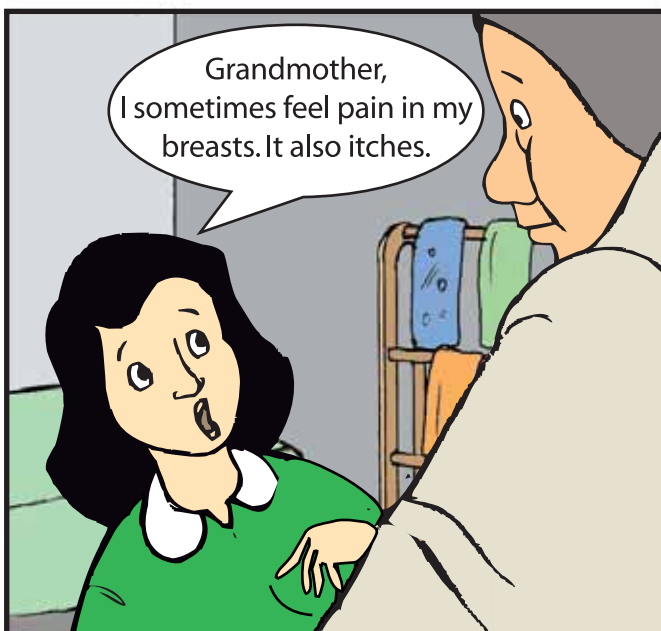
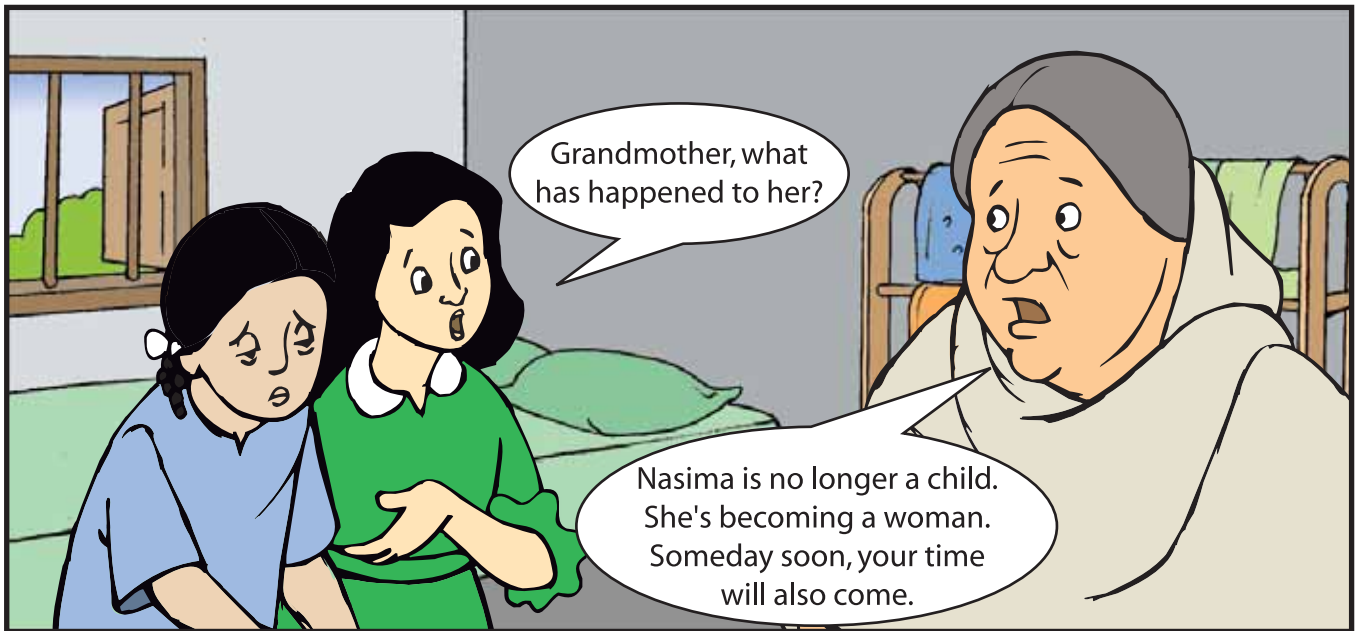
Returning home

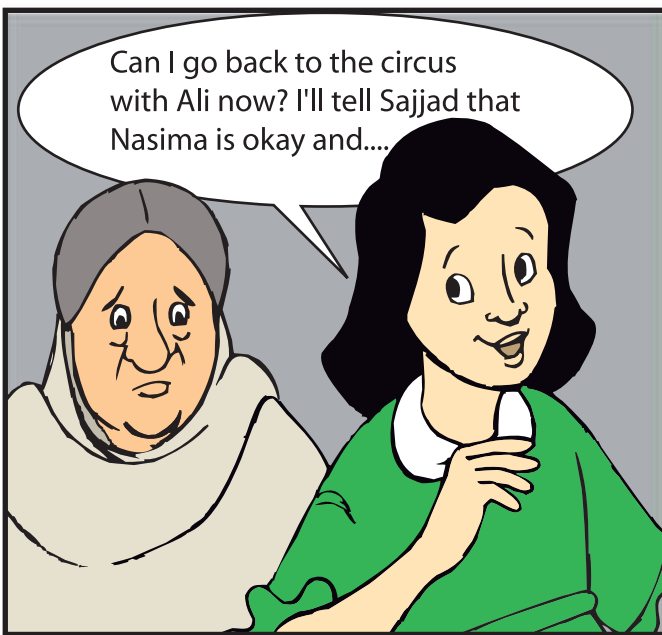
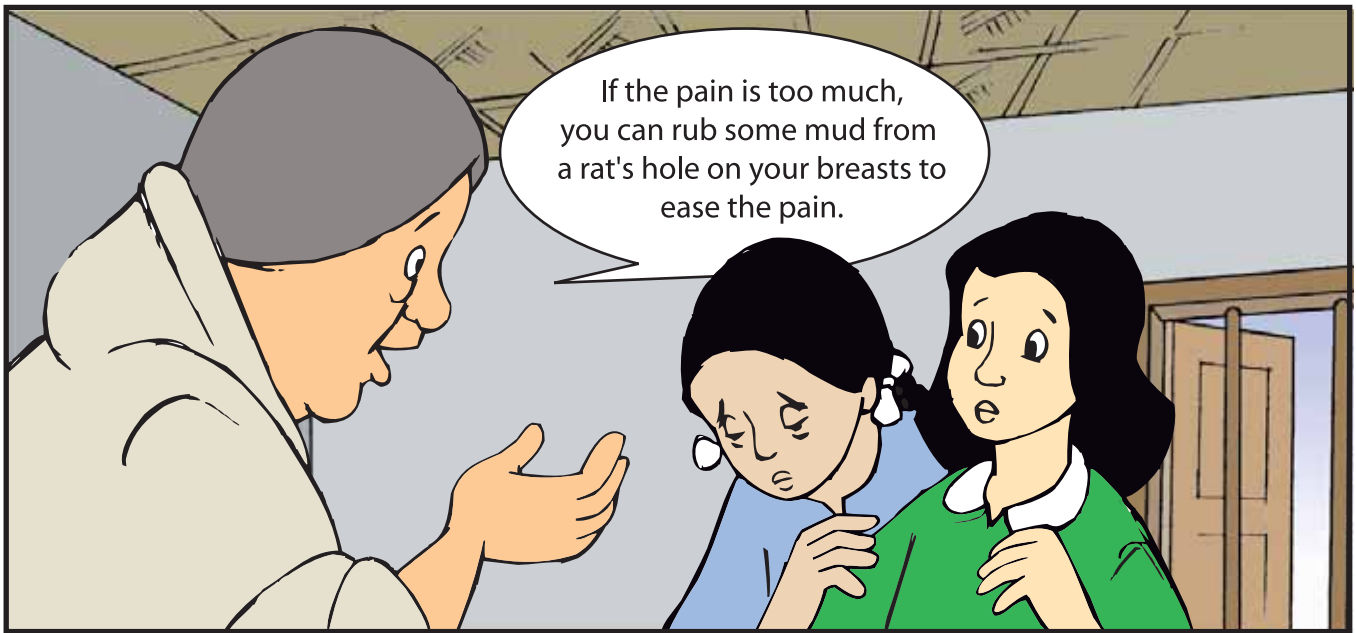


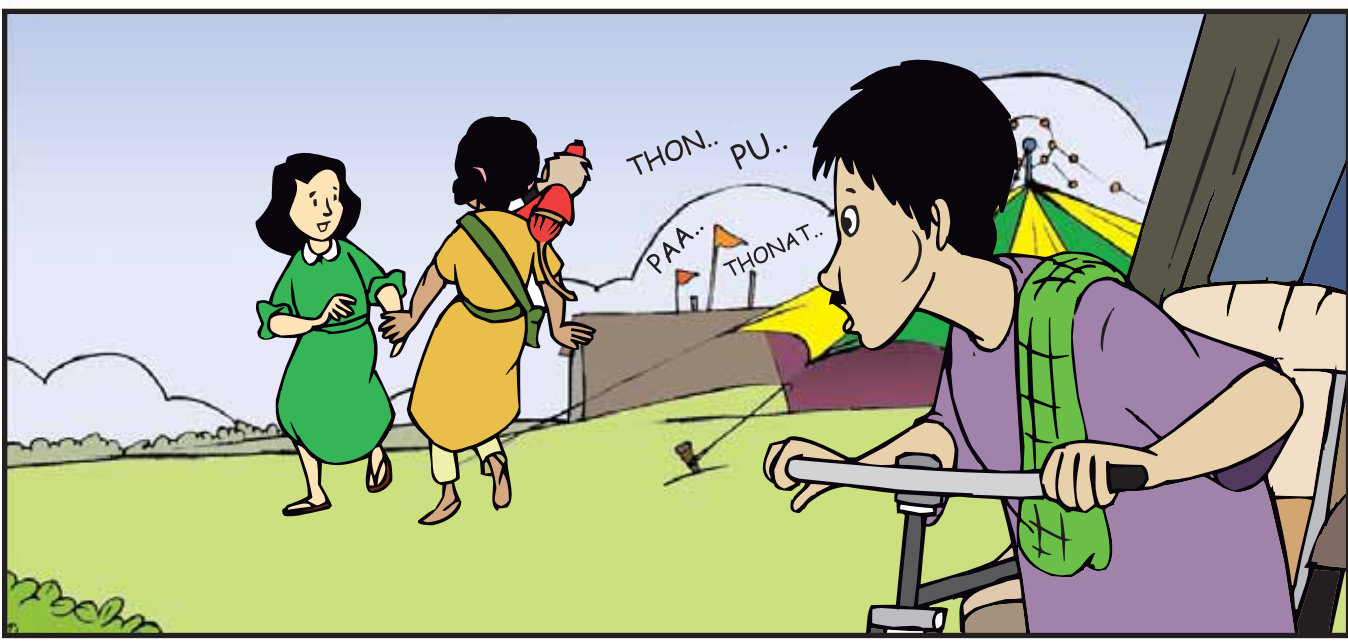
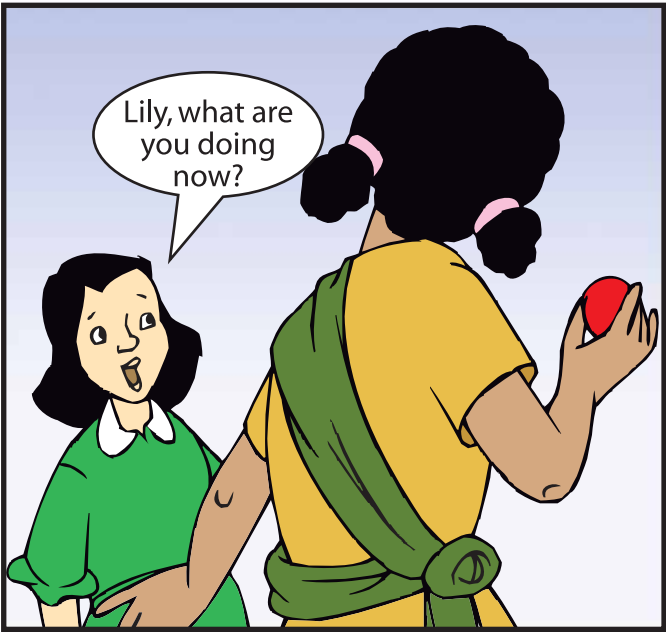
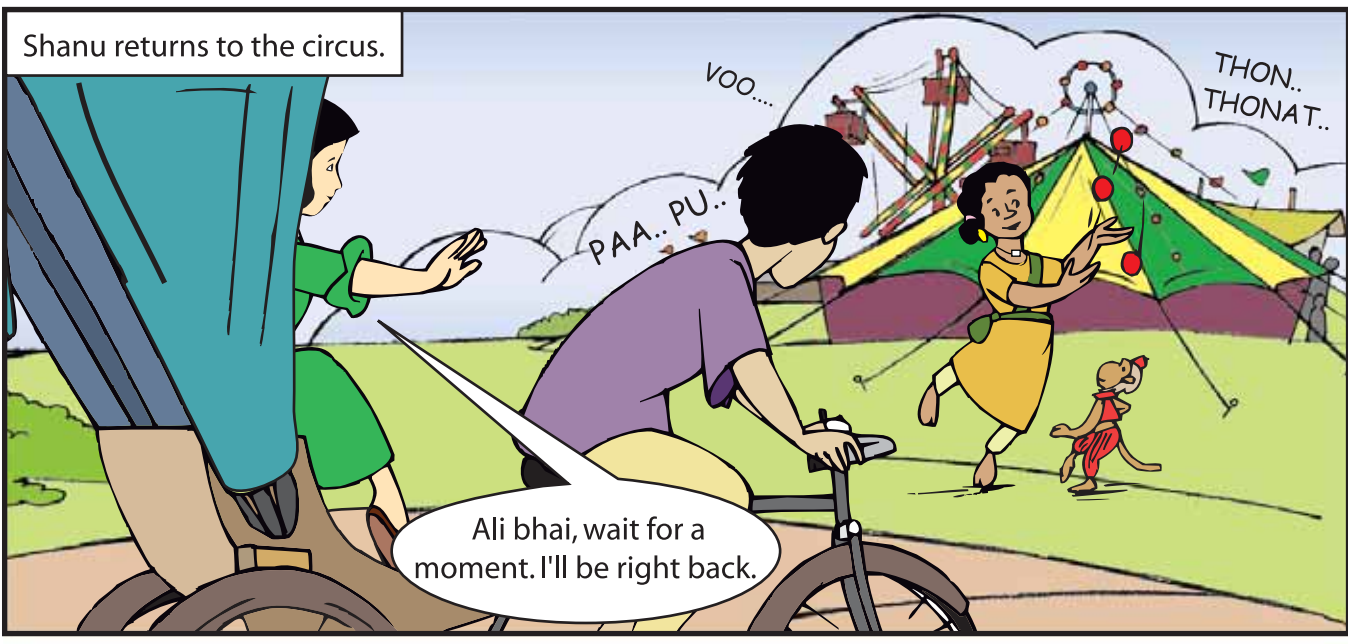


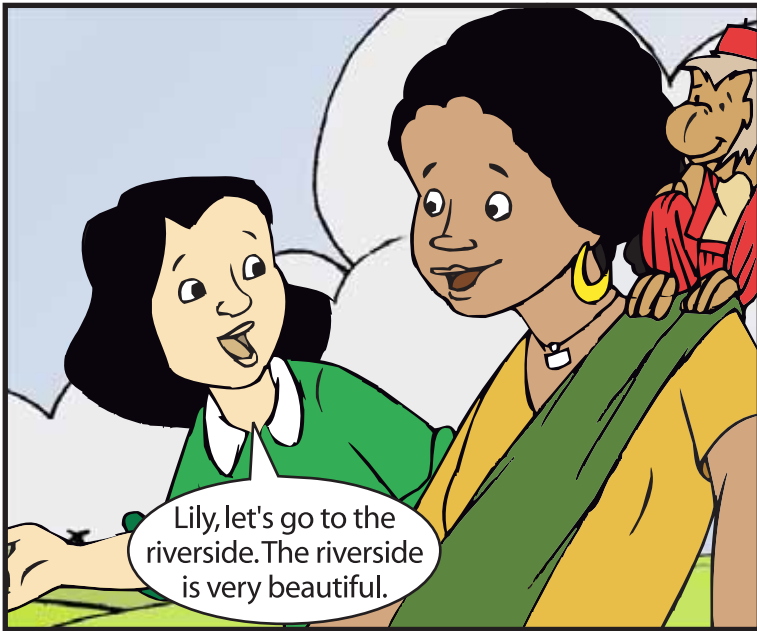






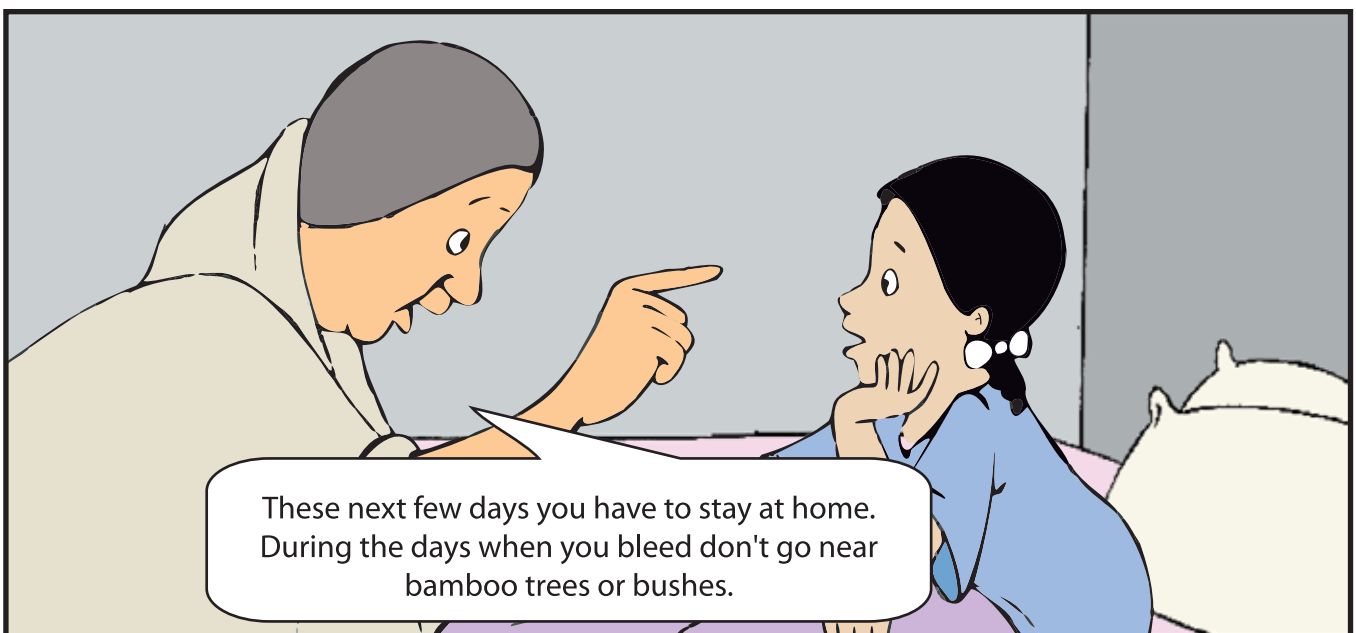


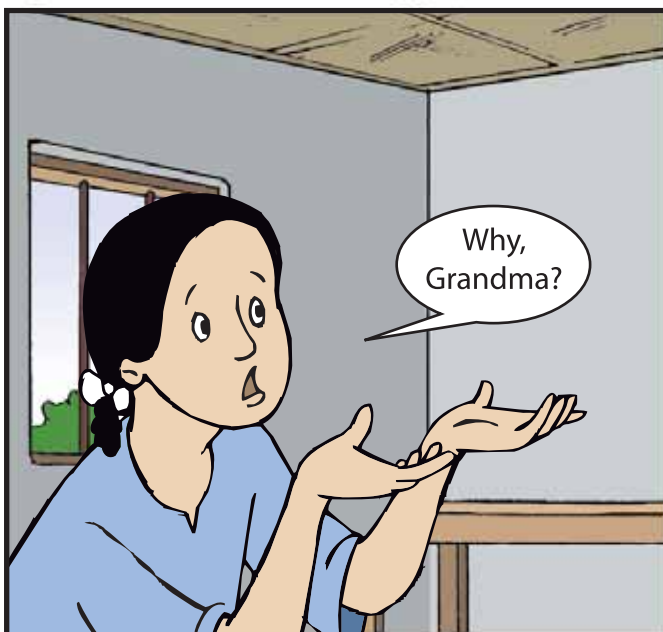
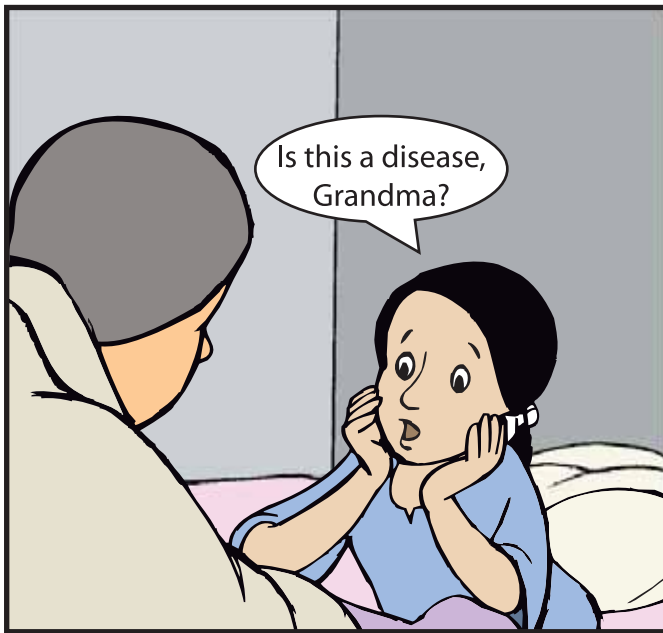




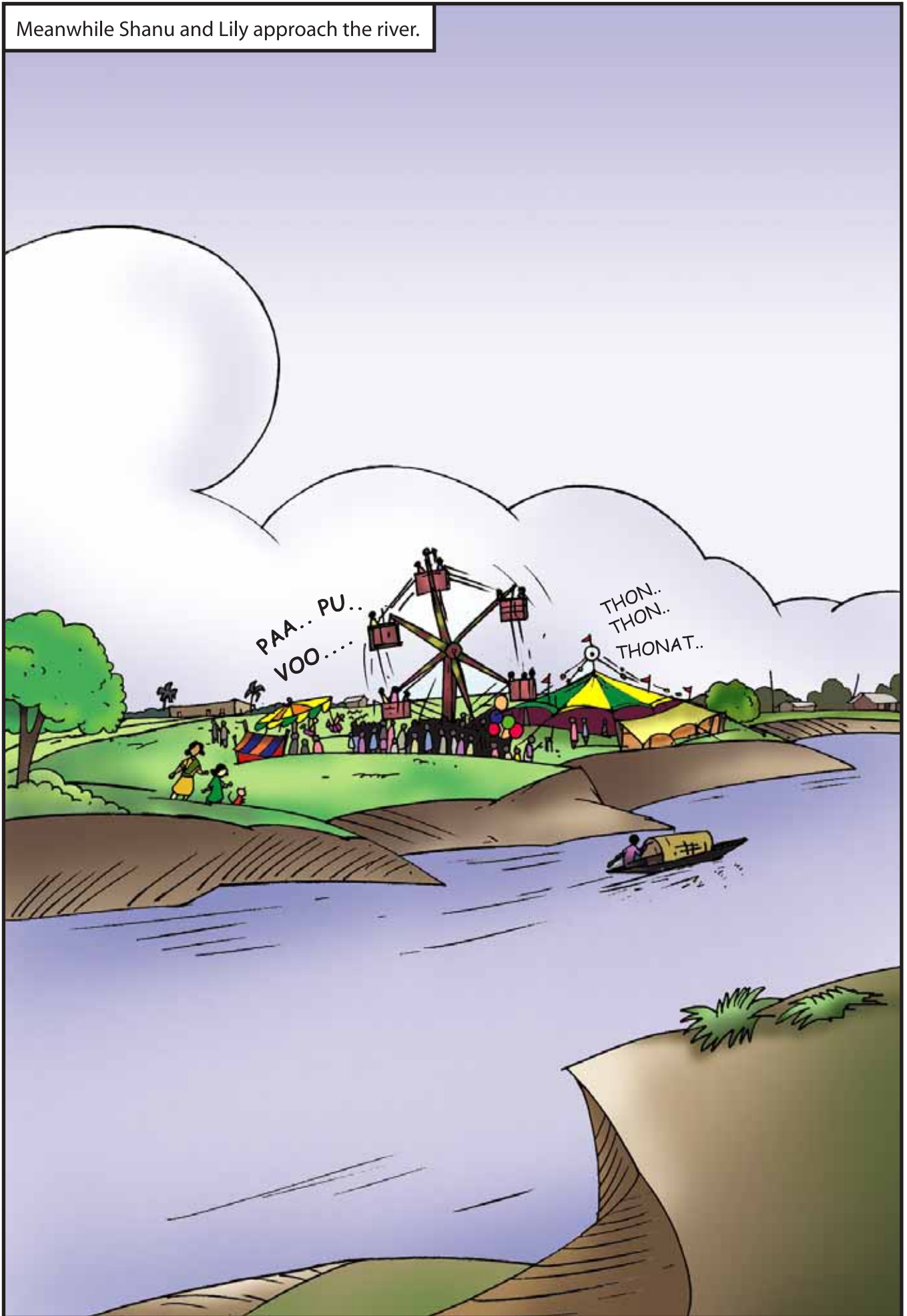
Meanwhile, back at home.

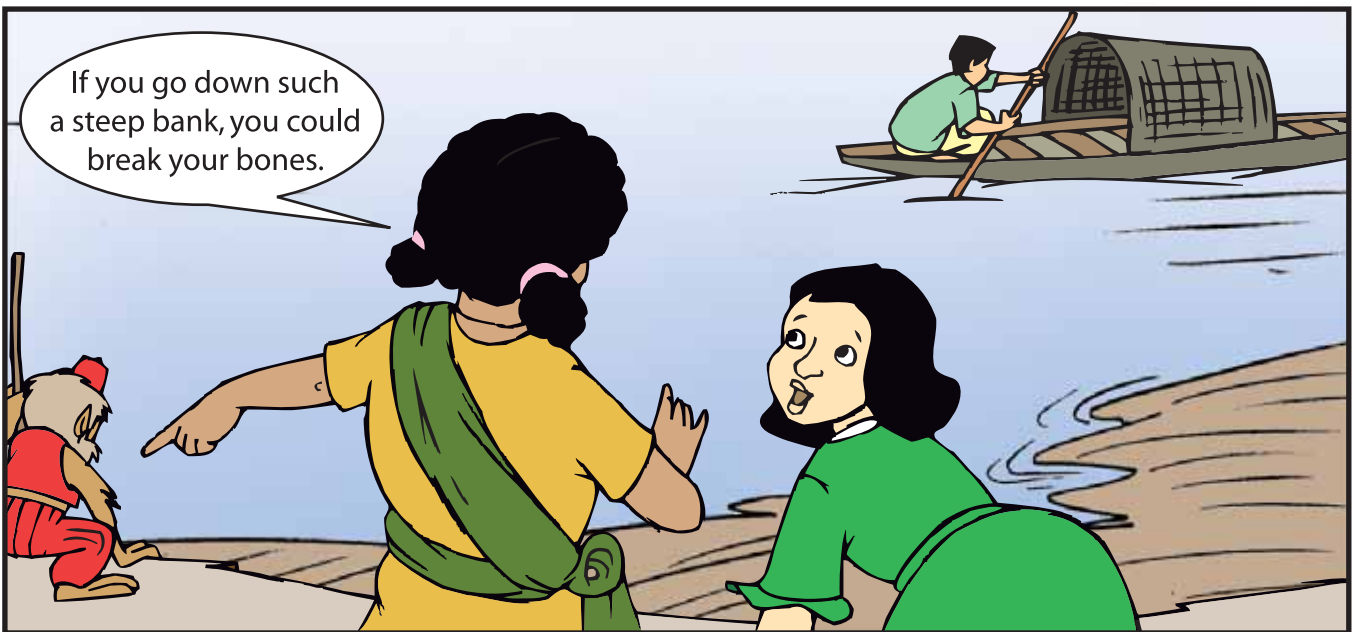






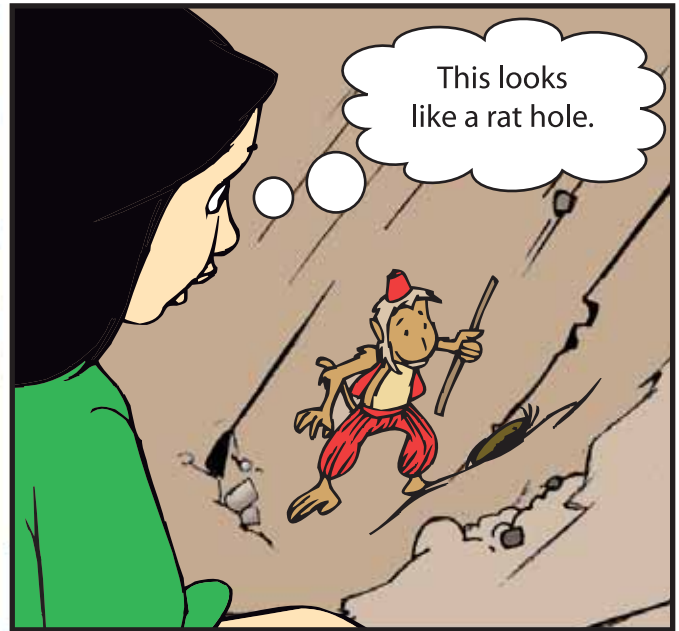
Meanwhile Shanu and Lily approach the river.



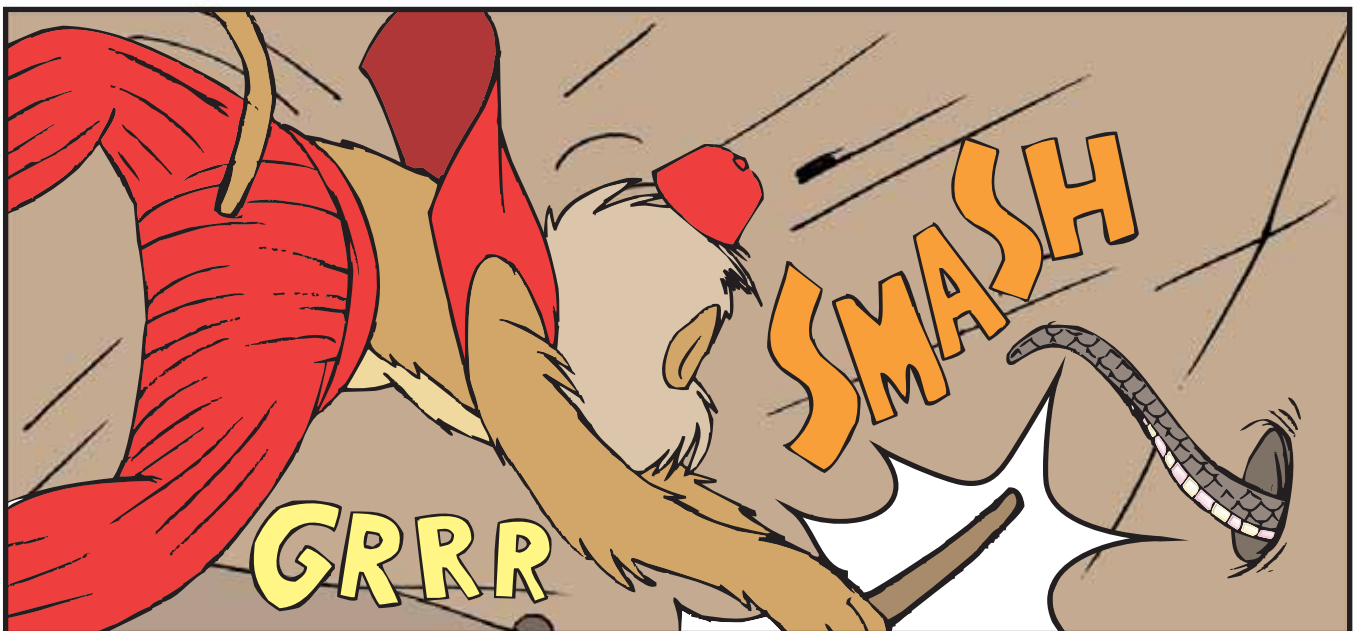


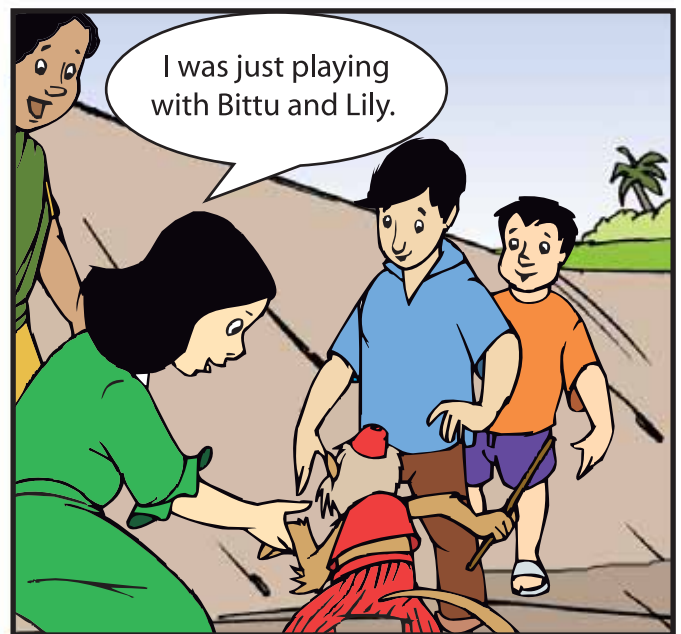
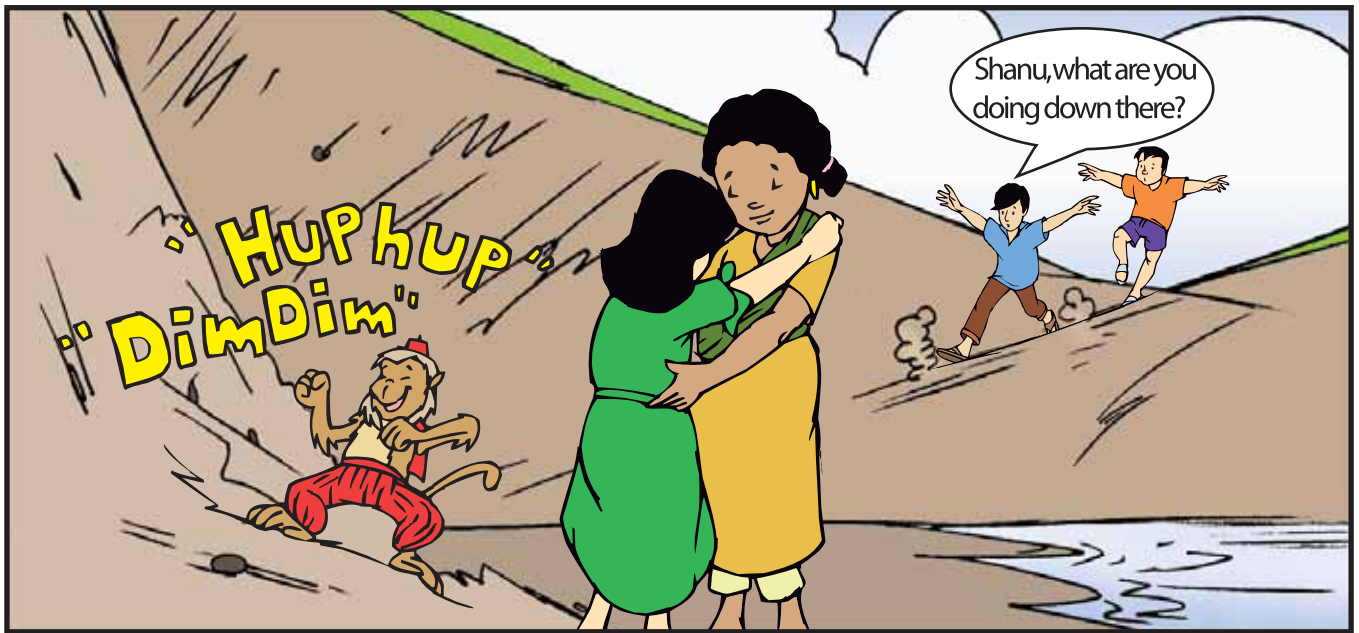


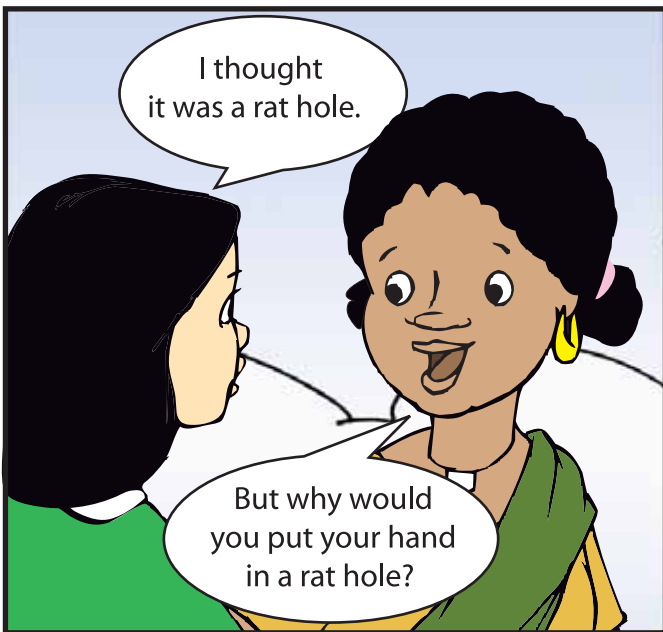


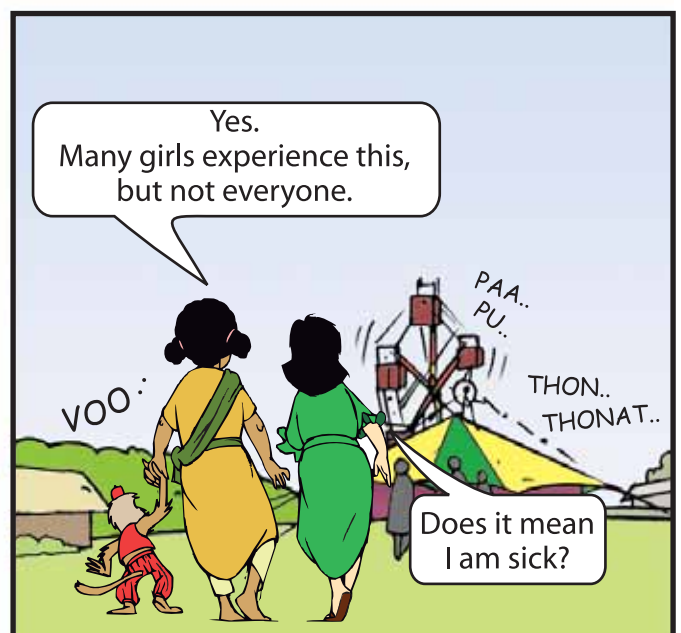
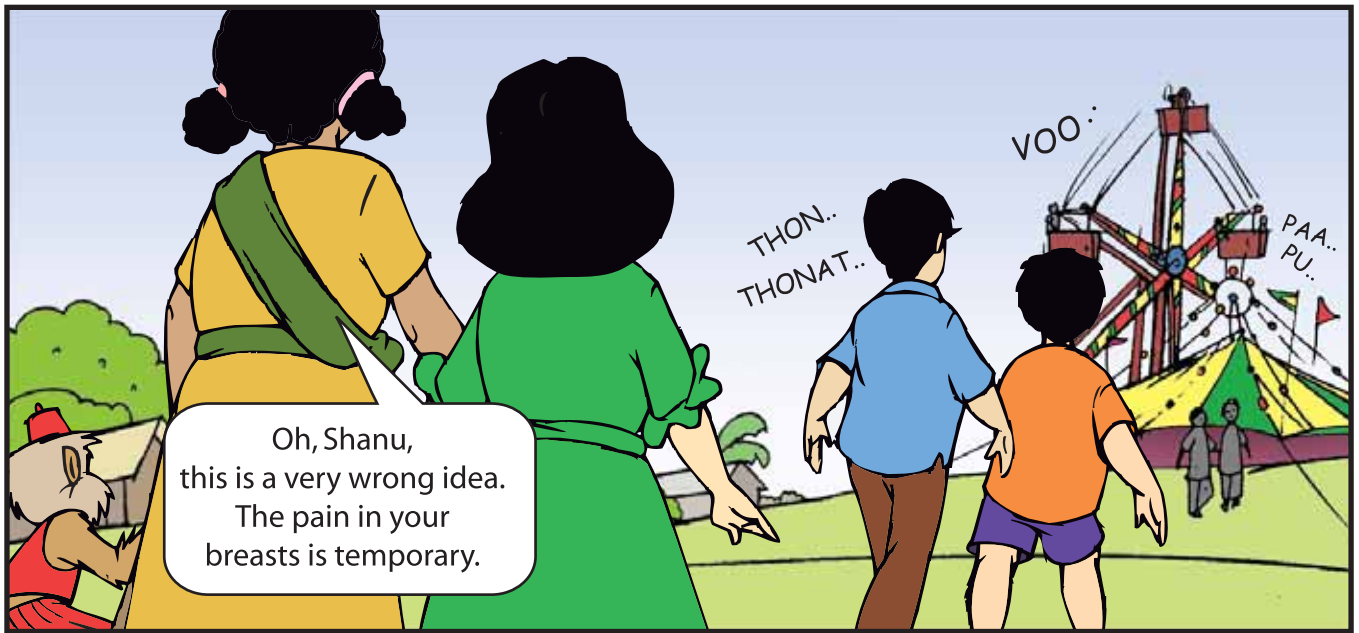


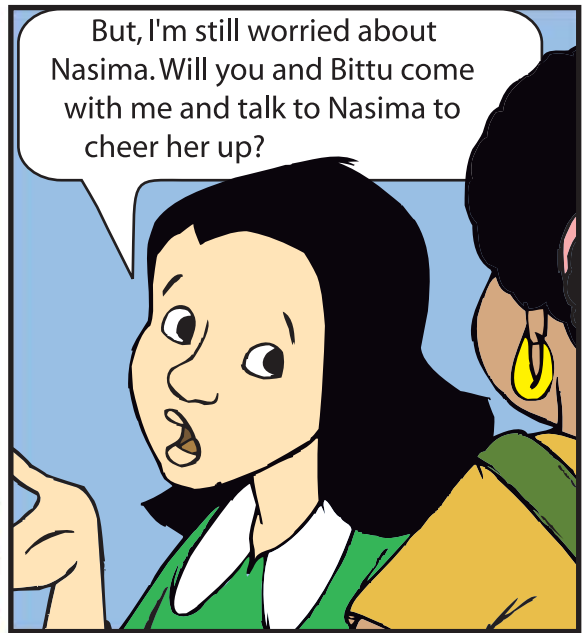


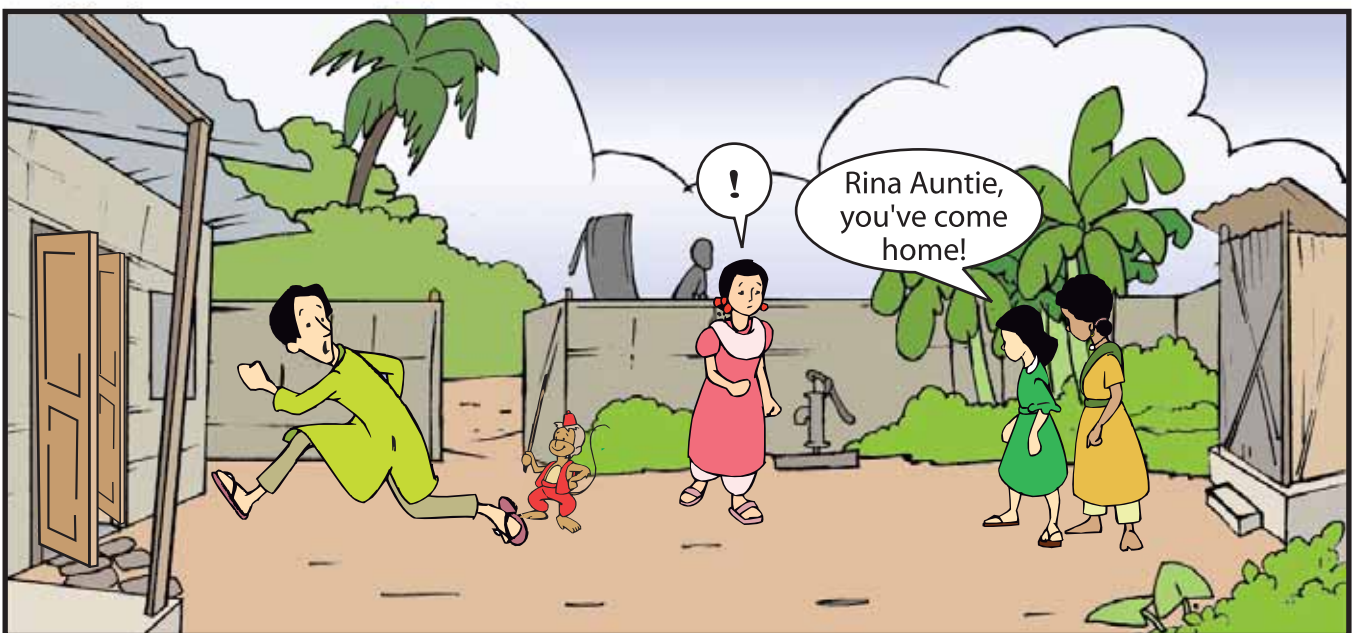
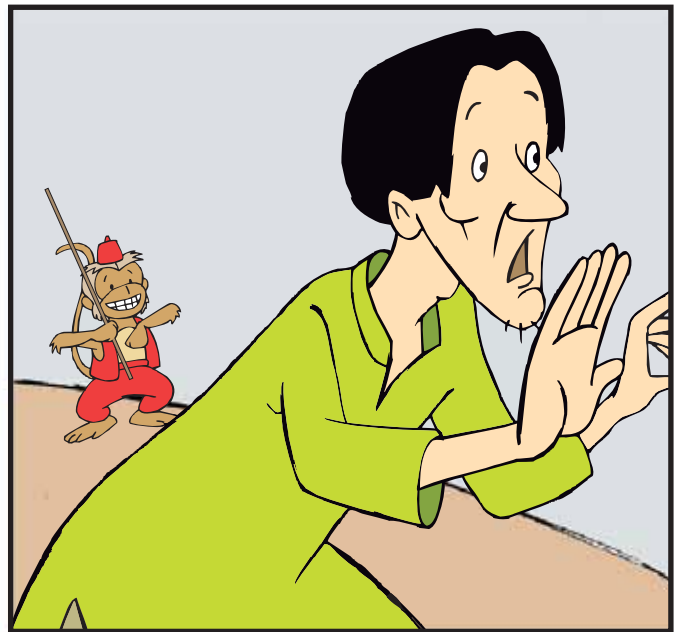
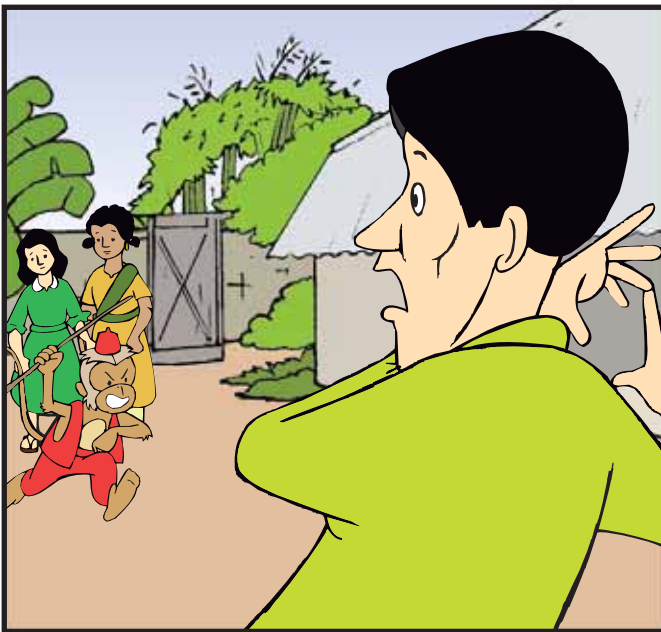
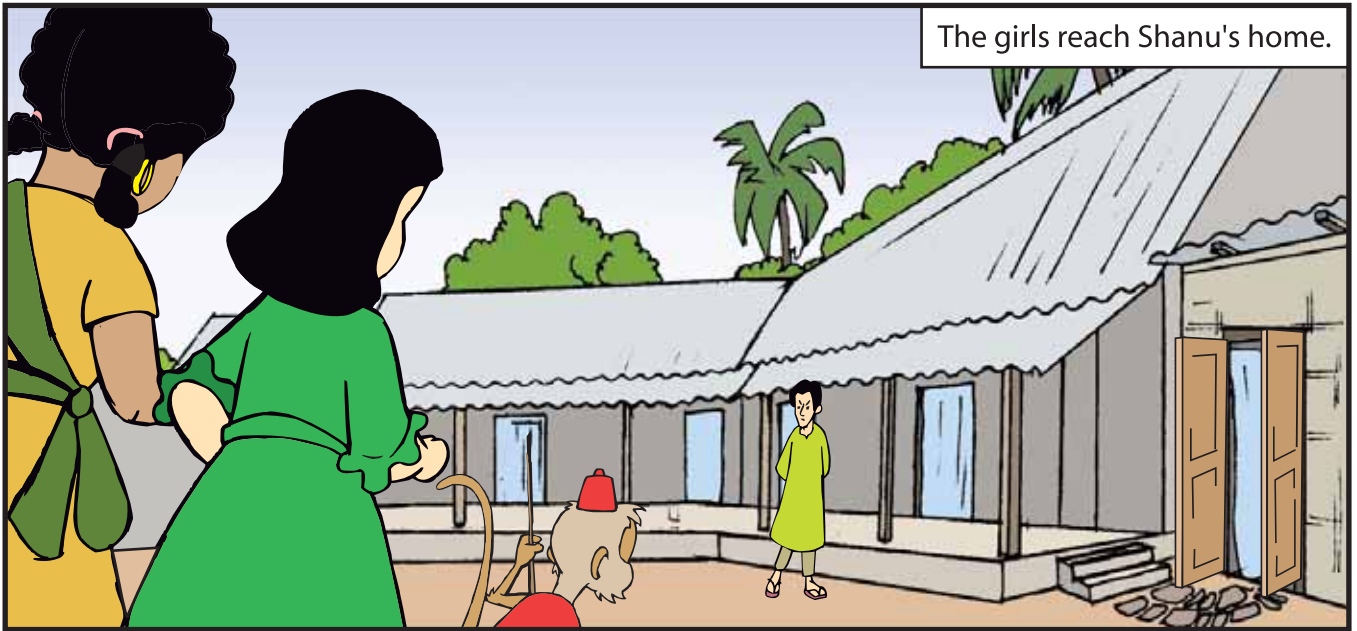






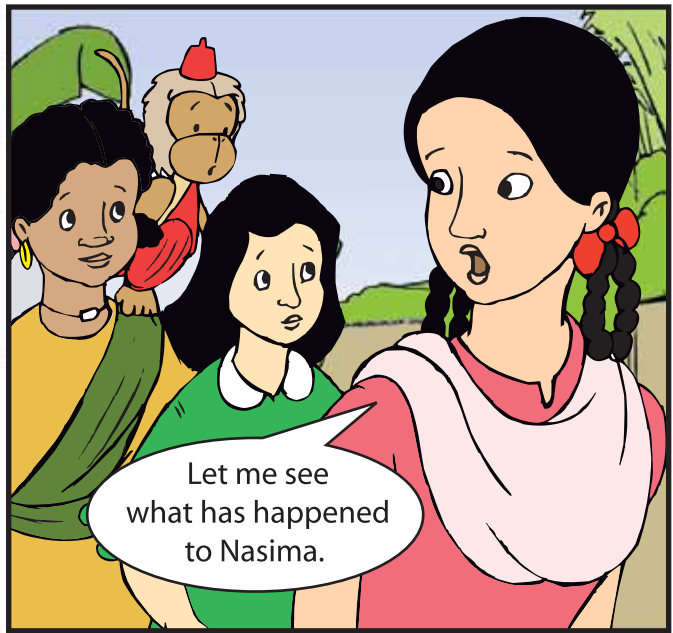




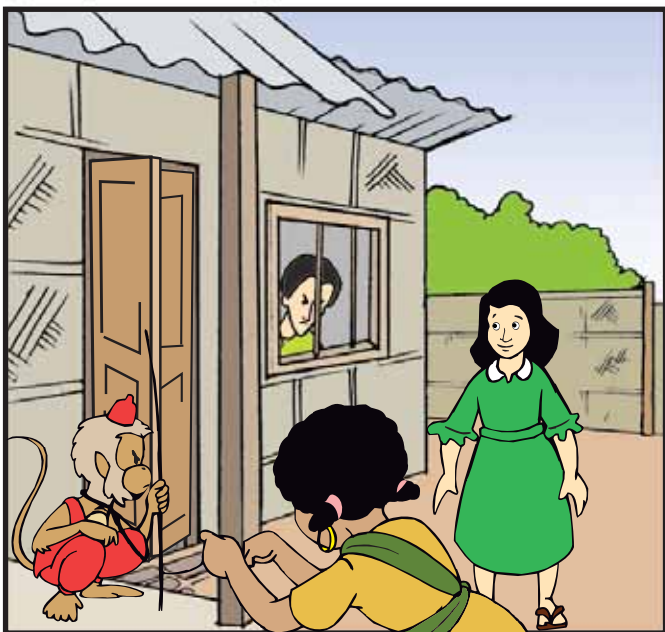




Nasima is sick. I've brought my friends Lily and Bittu to visit her.



Let me see what has happened to Nasima.



Nasima, what happened?

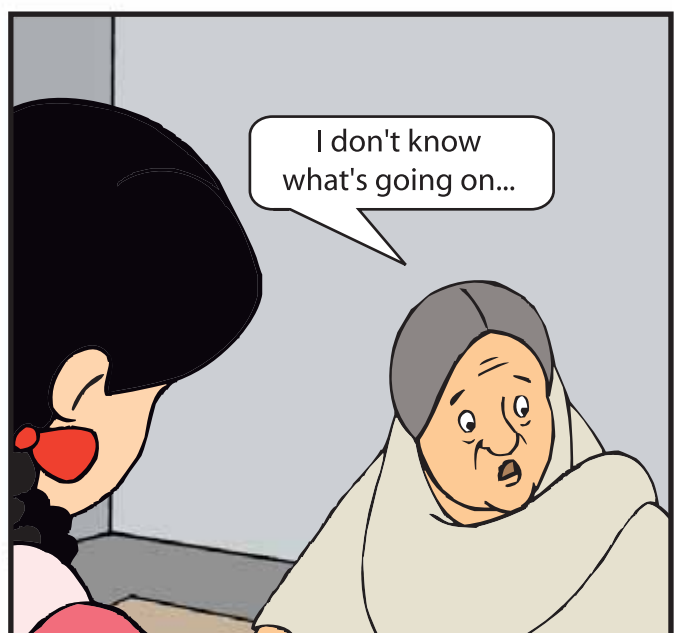
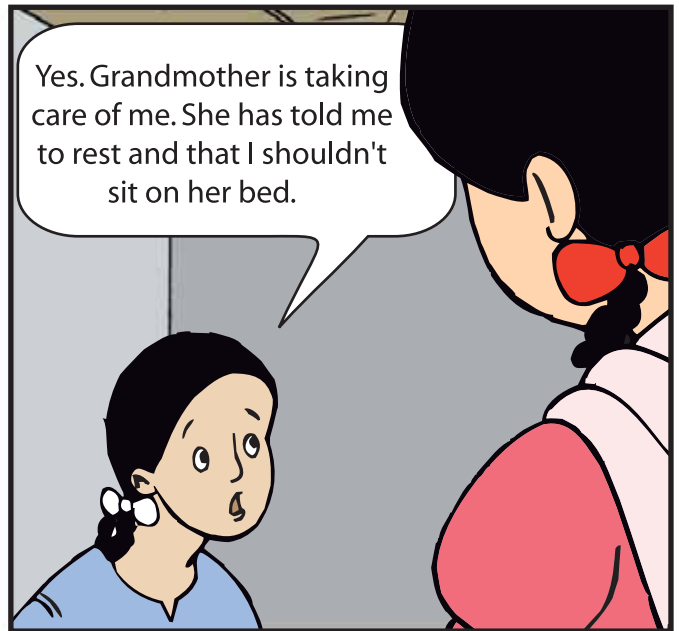


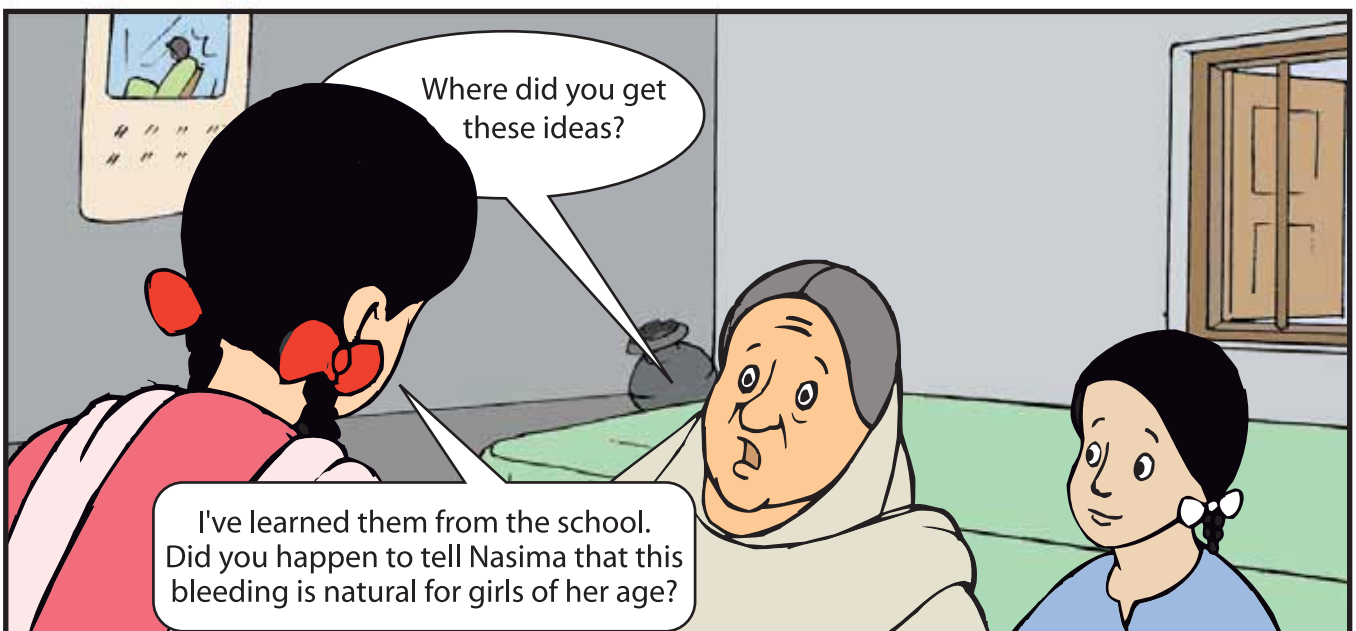
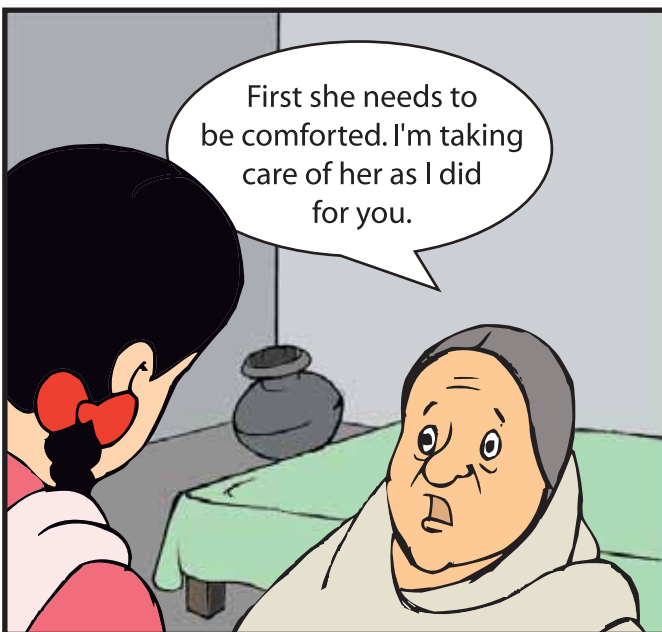
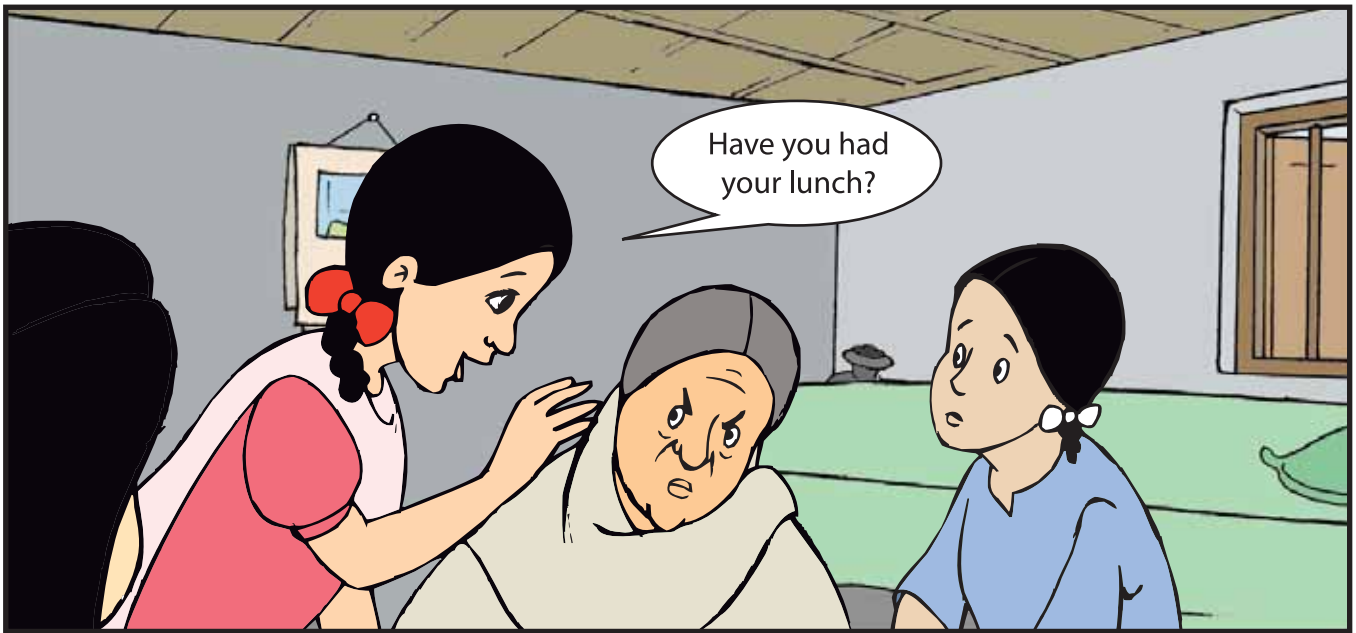
I had to come back from the circus.

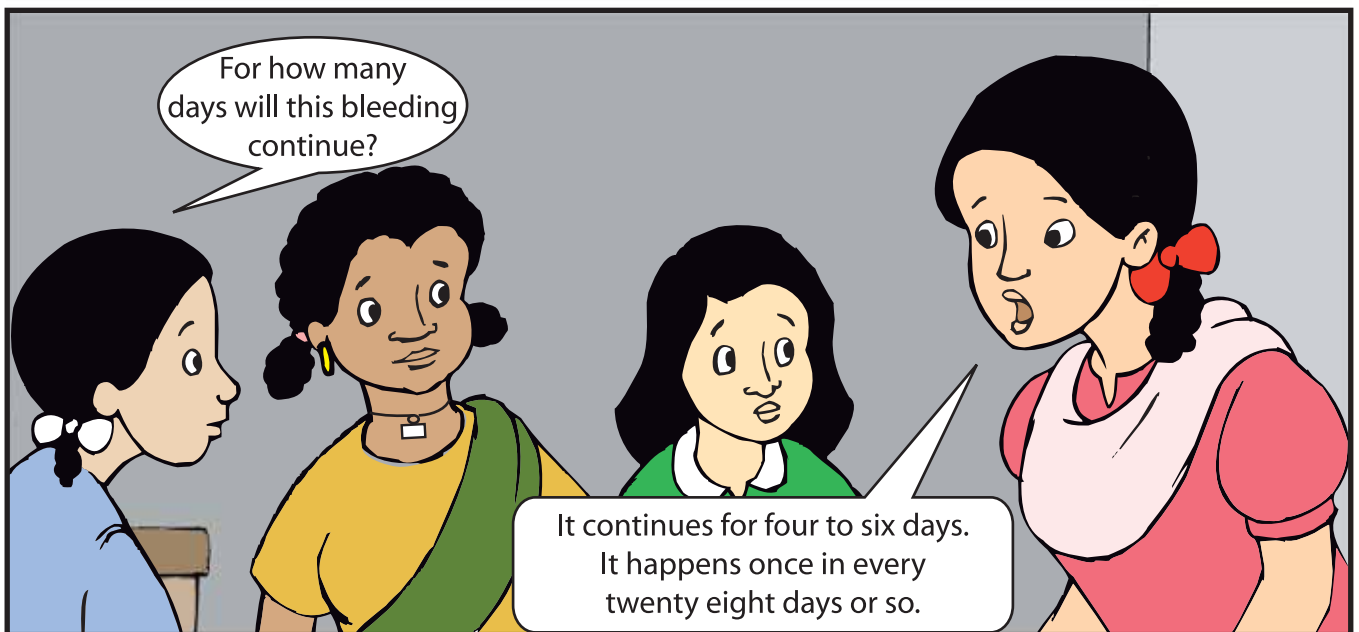
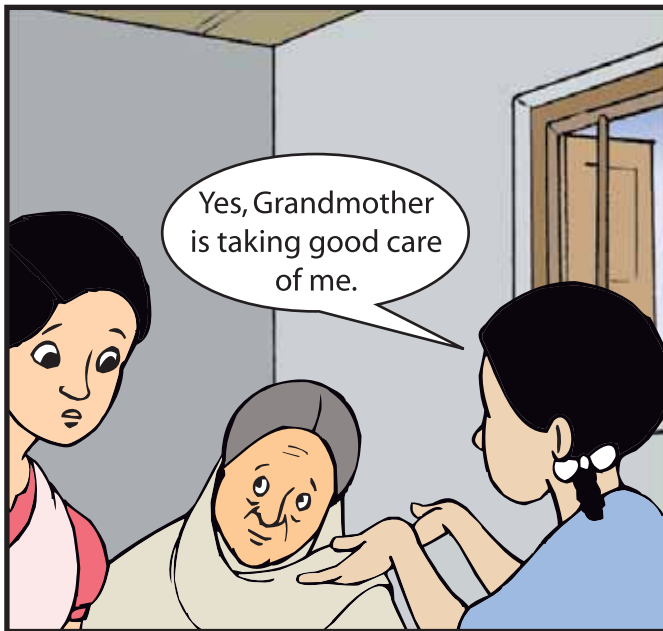


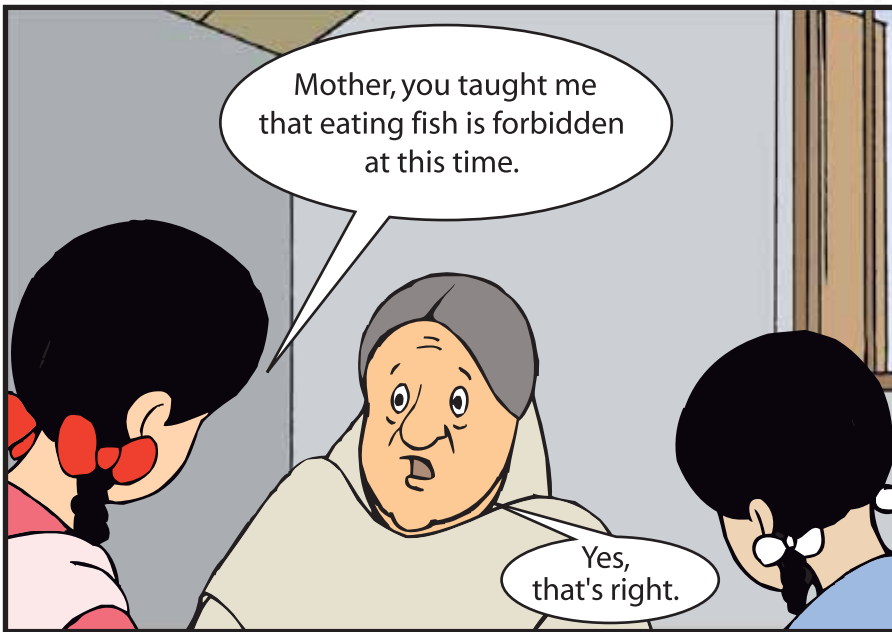
Why?

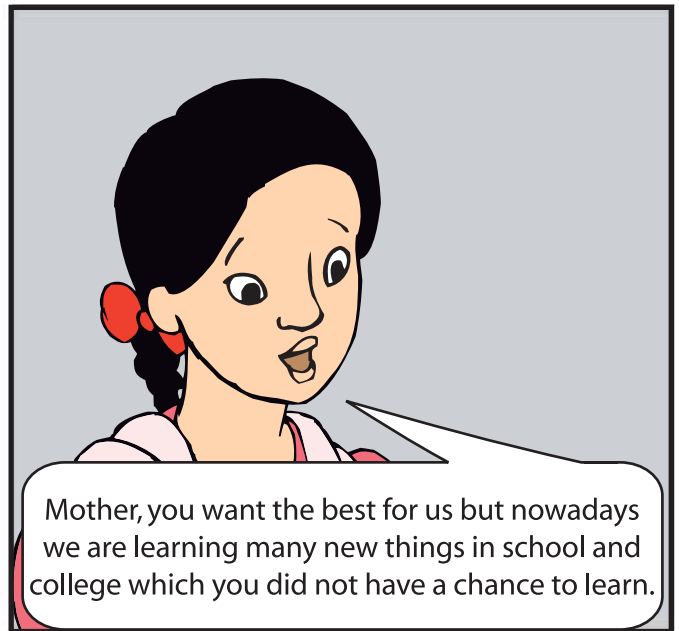
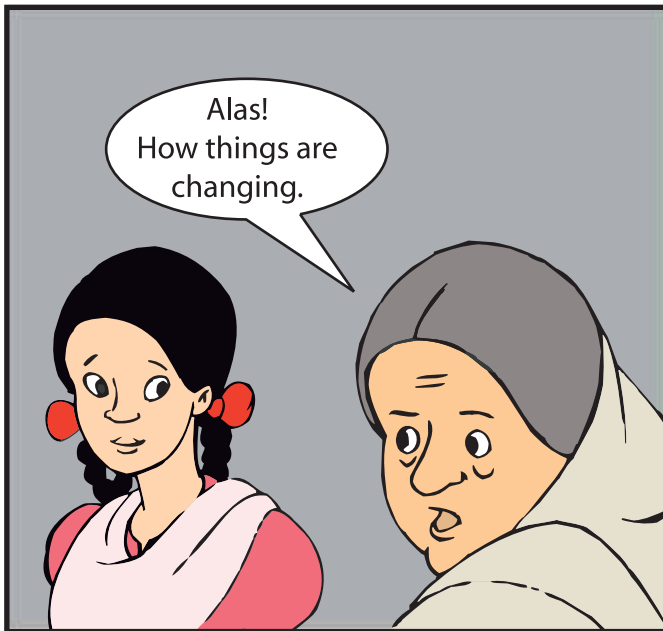
I'm becoming a grown-up.



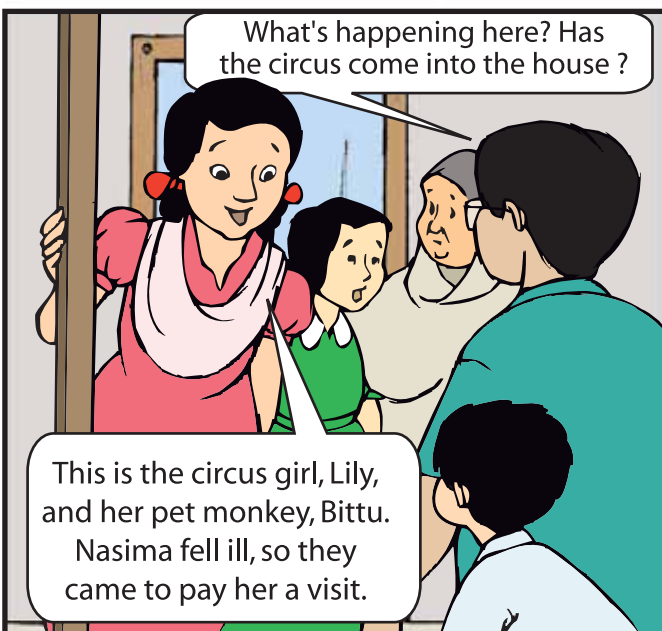
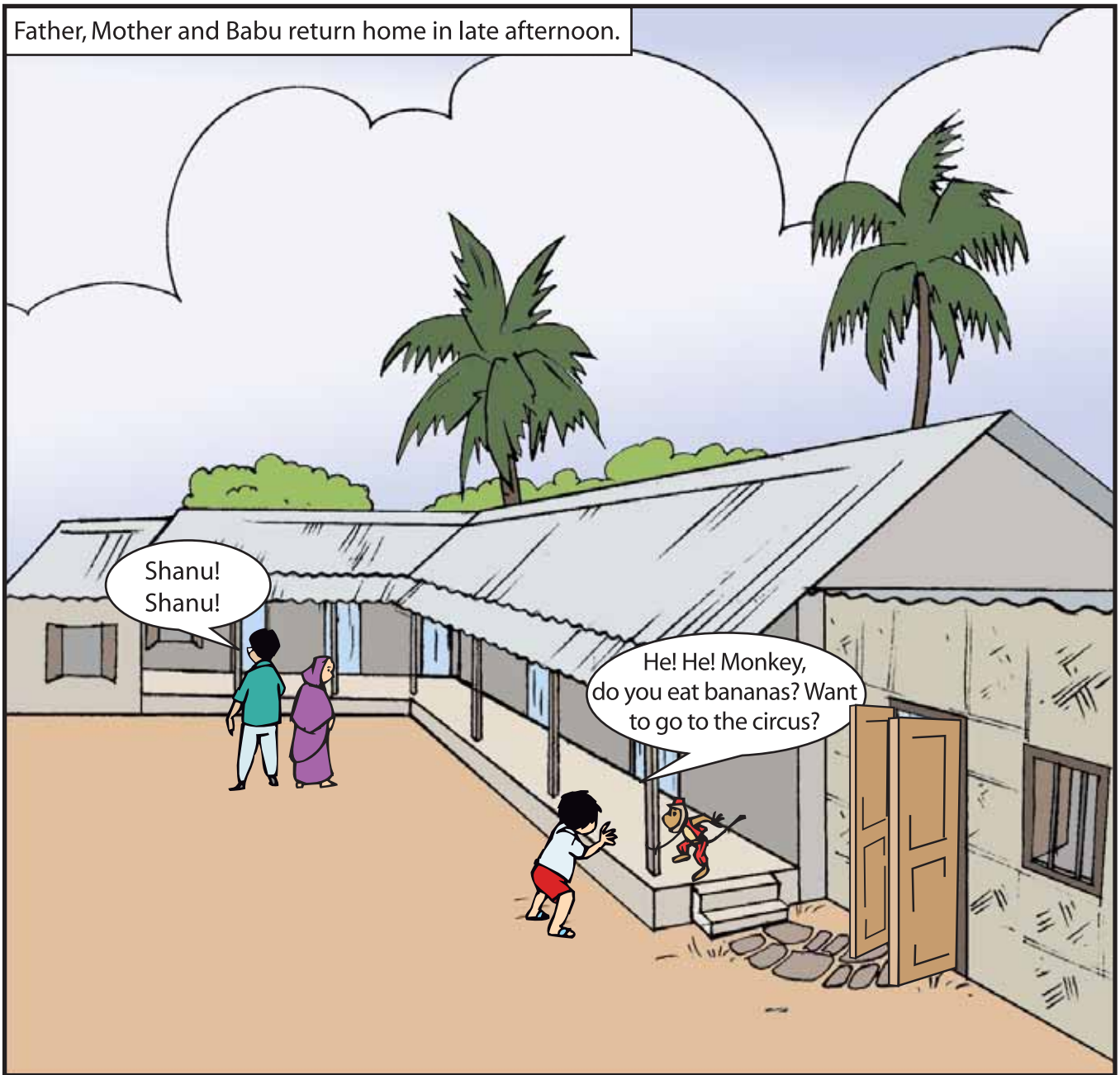






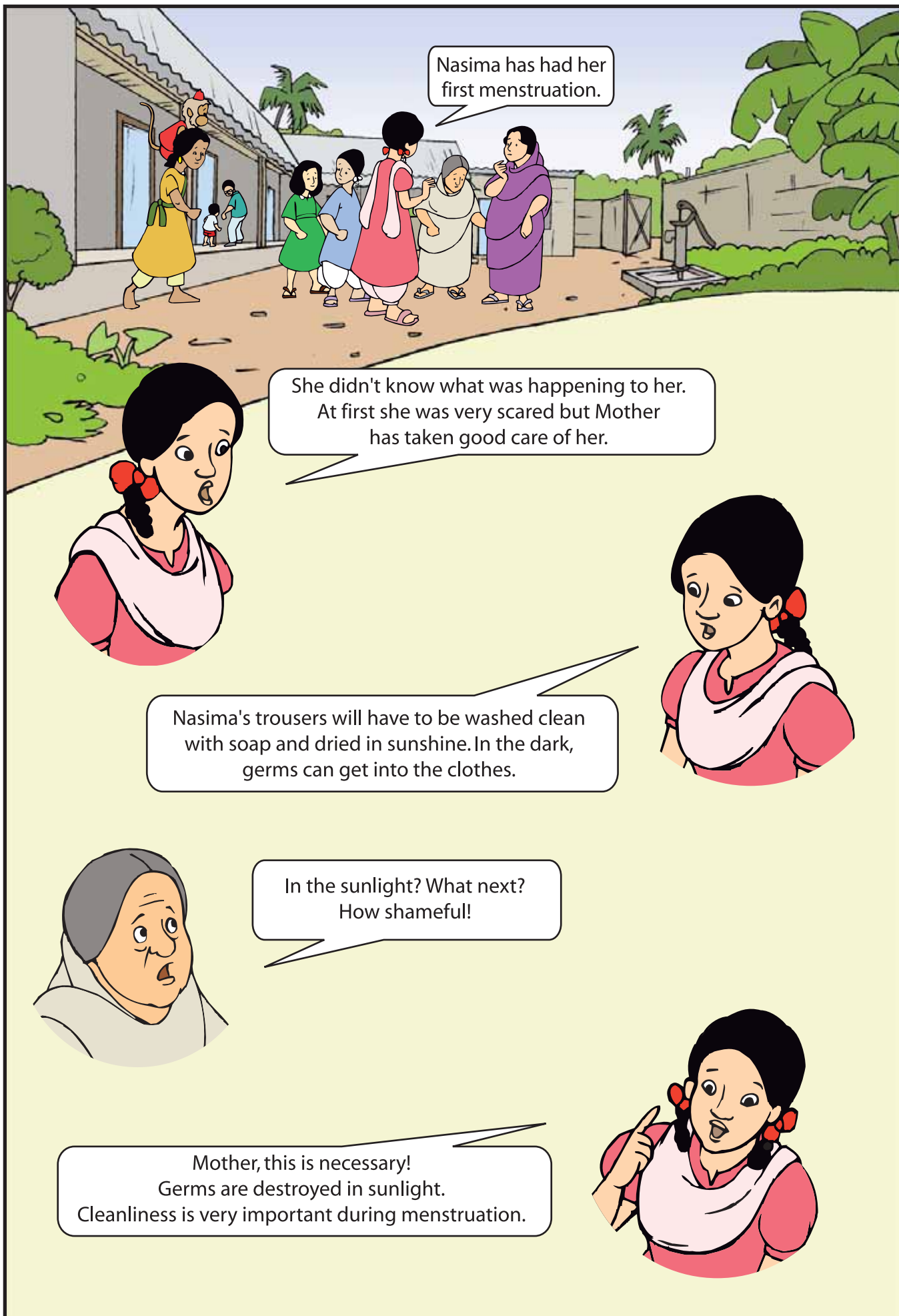


Father, Mother and Babu return home in late afternoon.



This is the circus girl, Lily, and her pet monkey, Bittu. Nasima fell ill, so they came to pay her a visit.







Nasima, Shanu. It's our fault that we did not discuss these things earlier with you. It should have been explained to you so you would have been prepared.



Yes, we should have told you about menstruation before it happened. Poor Nasima You will get more information on this from this booklet about the changes during adolescence.

Lily, your Bittu has fallen asleep. He doesn't seem to like this discussion.

Let's go and take Bittu to the circus, then we'll give him cotton candy to eat.

No. First, let's all have some rice with dal, fish and vegetables. After the meal we can go to the circus in the evening for cotton candy.



Evening at the circus.



PAA..
PU..

VOO....

Why do you laugh?

Which is better?
This or mud from a rat's hole?

The End

DISCUSSION GUIDE

There are various stages in a person's life. Adolescence, the period between the ages of 10 and 19, is a time of great development and change. Adolescent boys and girls go through profound physical and emotional changes as they grow into adulthood. It is a time of curiosity and excitement but also a time for learning how to cope with fear, embarrassment, shyness and tension.

When a girl reaches the age of 12 to 13, she undergoes many physical changes, including breast development and menstruation. The onset of these changes can cause confusion and embarrassment especially if the adolescent girl hasn't been told about the physical changes before they happen. This comic book shares an experience of adolescent girls dealing with their first menstruation and breast development.

Boys also experience physical and emotional changes at this time. Another comic book in the "Nijeke Jano" series called "The Wizard of Nightmares" addresses boy's issues.

At first, adolescents might not feel free to discuss these matters with others but it might relieve fear and tension to talk to trusted adults or friends. It is better to talk with someone than to keep secrets. In order to have these discussions, adolescents need to have correct and relevant information on the issues.

To address different issues of adolescence, a package of materials has been developed including:

- Question and answer booklets
- Videos featuring adolescents discussing issues
- Video facilitators' guides
- Comic books
- Radio programs
- Television programs

All these materials are intended to raise awareness and encourage positive behavior among Bangladeshi adolescent boys and girls age 10 to 19 years, regardless of marriage or school status. The materials also strive to address issues of hard-to-reach adolescents, especially working adolescents in domestic or commercial sectors.



The story theme

This second comic book talks about breast development and menstruation, common concerns of adolescent girls in Bangladesh and how they can come to understand them as normal processes.

Objectives

Using the entertainment-education approach, this lively, interesting and appealing story conveys messages specifically for adolescent girls and more generally for adolescent boys, family members, parents, teachers, opinion leaders and service providers. The comic book can be effectively used to:

- Stimulate discussion among adolescent girls on the facts of breast development and menstruation, which are a natural part of growing up.

- Encourage girls to maintain sanitary practices when they are menstruating.
- Encourage girls and their families to eat a balanced diet rich in protein without restriction during menstruation.
- Convince them that no treatment is needed for breast development or menstruation and there is nothing to worry about.
- Create awareness among parents on breast development and menstruation, and that girls should be told about these physical changes before they happen.
- Encourage adolescent girls and boys to discuss their problems more openly with peers, teachers, parents and family members.
- Advocate for clean, sanitary latrines for girls at schools.

Outlets for comic book

The comic book will be made available in classrooms, bookshops, school libraries, and public libraries. Furthermore, this comic book will be promoted through adolescent clubs and other important places.

Group Discussion

Group discussion allows adolescents to discuss the story with others. One member will facilitate the discussion, allowing others to join in with their opinions. This can be done in groups of six to ten. Such discussions can be arranged in same sex groups for adolescent girls and if possible, groups for boys. This guideline for asking questions can be helpful in guiding the discussion. If appropriate, discussed points can be noted and used as a reference for following meetings. Ensure maximum participation from everybody in the group by encouraging all participants to speak.

Guideline for asking questions

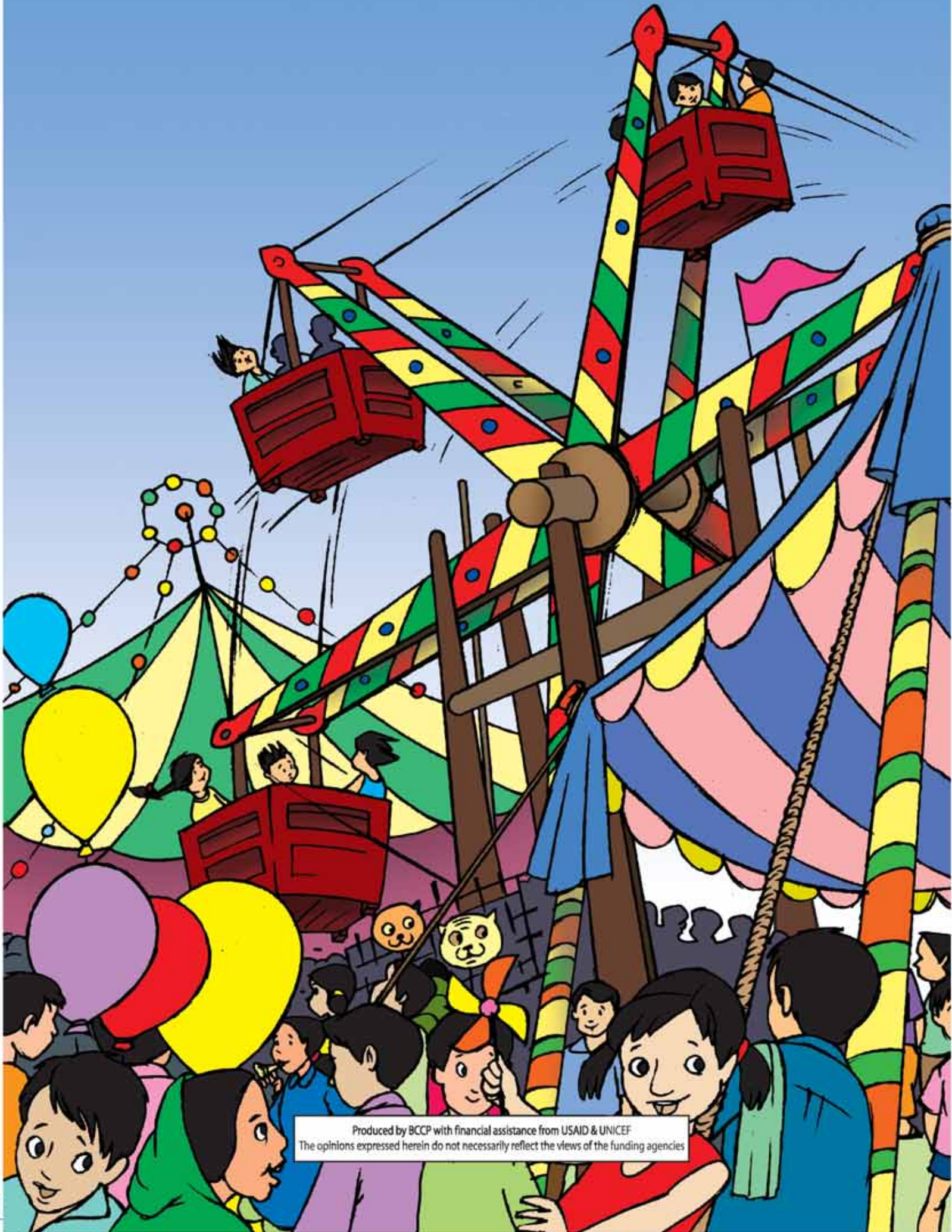
General questions

- Did you like the story? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- Which characters did you like in the story? Why?
- Which ones did you not like? Why?

Specific questions

- What is the subject matter of the story?
- Who are the characters of the story?
- Who do you think are the central characters of the story? Why?
- How old are Shanu and Nasima?
- What problem did Nasima face?
- What problem did Shanu face?
- What do you know about breast development and menstruation?
- Whom did you find out about breast development and menstruation from?
- What kind of advice did Grandmother give to the girls? Was it all correct advice?
- Do you have any friends or family that give old advice like grandmother?
- What did Rina tell Shanu and Nasima about menstruation?
- How did Shanu try to solve her problem with breast discomfort?
- What did Lily tell Shanu about breast development?
- What would you have done if you were in Shanu's or Nasima's position?
- How can girls treat menstruation as a normal process?
- How can others be encouraged to treat menstruation as a normal process?
- What did you learn from the story?
- Should girls know about breast development and menstruation before they happen? Give reasons.





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