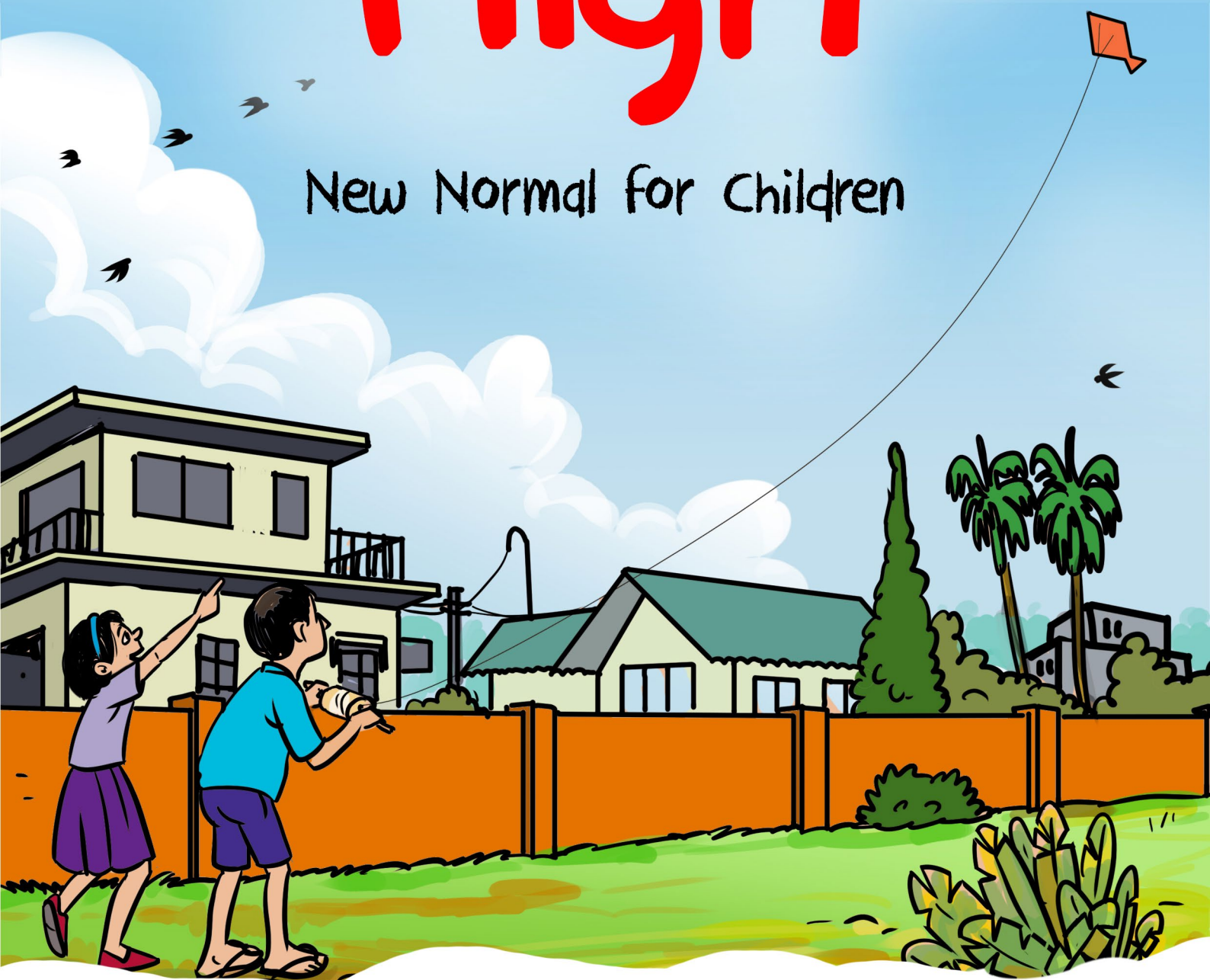


Kiting High

New Normal for Children



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SAMAGRA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

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Kitting High

New Normal for Children

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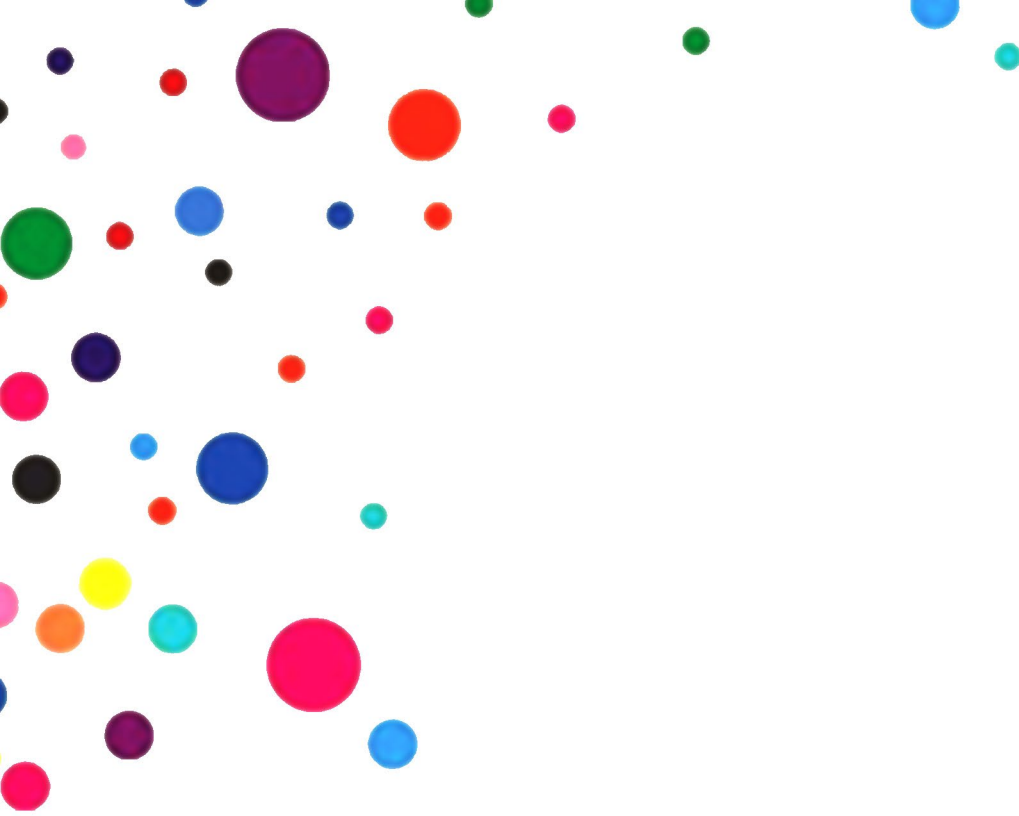
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Dear Children,

It must have been hard for you to stay cooped up at home during the pandemic. Not just you, for all of us these are trying times. Your schools are beginning to reopen or about to do so. But so long as we are not completely free from the clutches of Covid-19, there are certain rules to be followed, which we call the New Normal. These rules don't just apply to you, the elders in your family too must follow these and stay on guard. To inform and encourage people about staying physically and mentally strong during the pandemic, Dr. Anamika Ray Memorial Trust has been bringing out publications like Covid Katha, Break the Fake Toons and Motivation, and was thereafter planning to come out with a book like this for you. In partnership with UNICEF Assam, this is our attempt to share with you some facts about facing and beating COVID-19 in the form of a story. It is our earnest hope that you all will overcome the pandemic by following the New Normal. Let us now take up the story of Bolin, Rashmi and others as they adjust to a changed world.

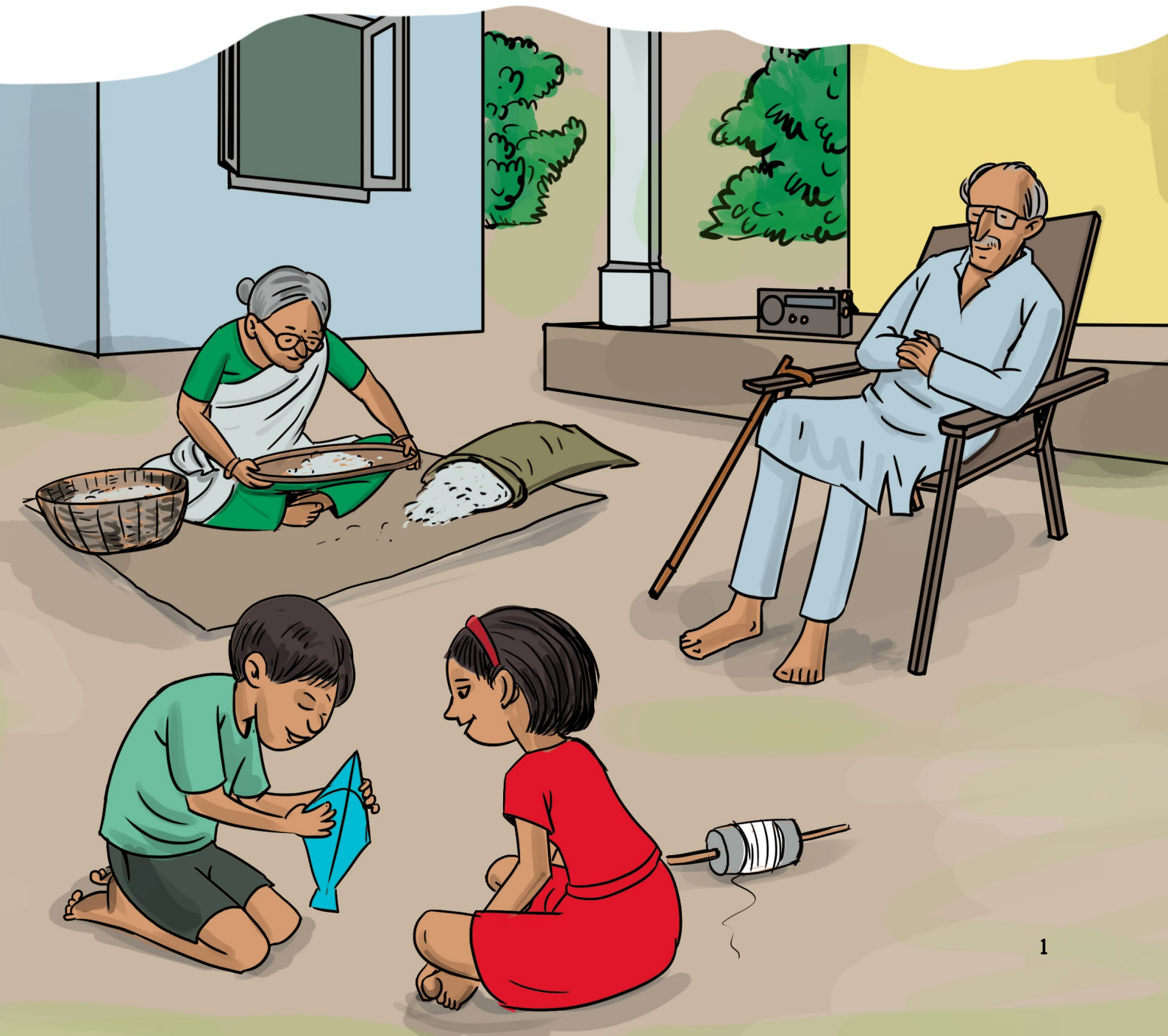


Bolin's village is pretty, with flowers and fruits aplenty. Despite lockdowns elsewhere due to the pandemic, it is joyful here. Rashmi had come down from the city, having a great time with cousin Bolin at their grandparents' home. Racing across fields, playing hide and seek, learning to fly kites... so many fun things to do all day! Grandpa is outside now on his easy chair listening to the radio, while grandma is cleaning rice. Hark!

Grandpa: Did you hear that? Aren't you through fixing that kite? Listen to the news, the schools are reopening!

Bolin: Oh, that'll be so good! I haven't seen Nipu, Raktim and the others for ages!

Rashmi: Great news! We can go to school again! Miss Rumi will be there, and everyone else...



Grandpa calls Bolin and Rashmi near, telling them how their studies would benefit once schools reopened, which is more important than re-union with classmates.

Rashmi: But grandpa, we have been attending online classes all this while!

Grandpa: Online class? What kind of class is that without going to school?

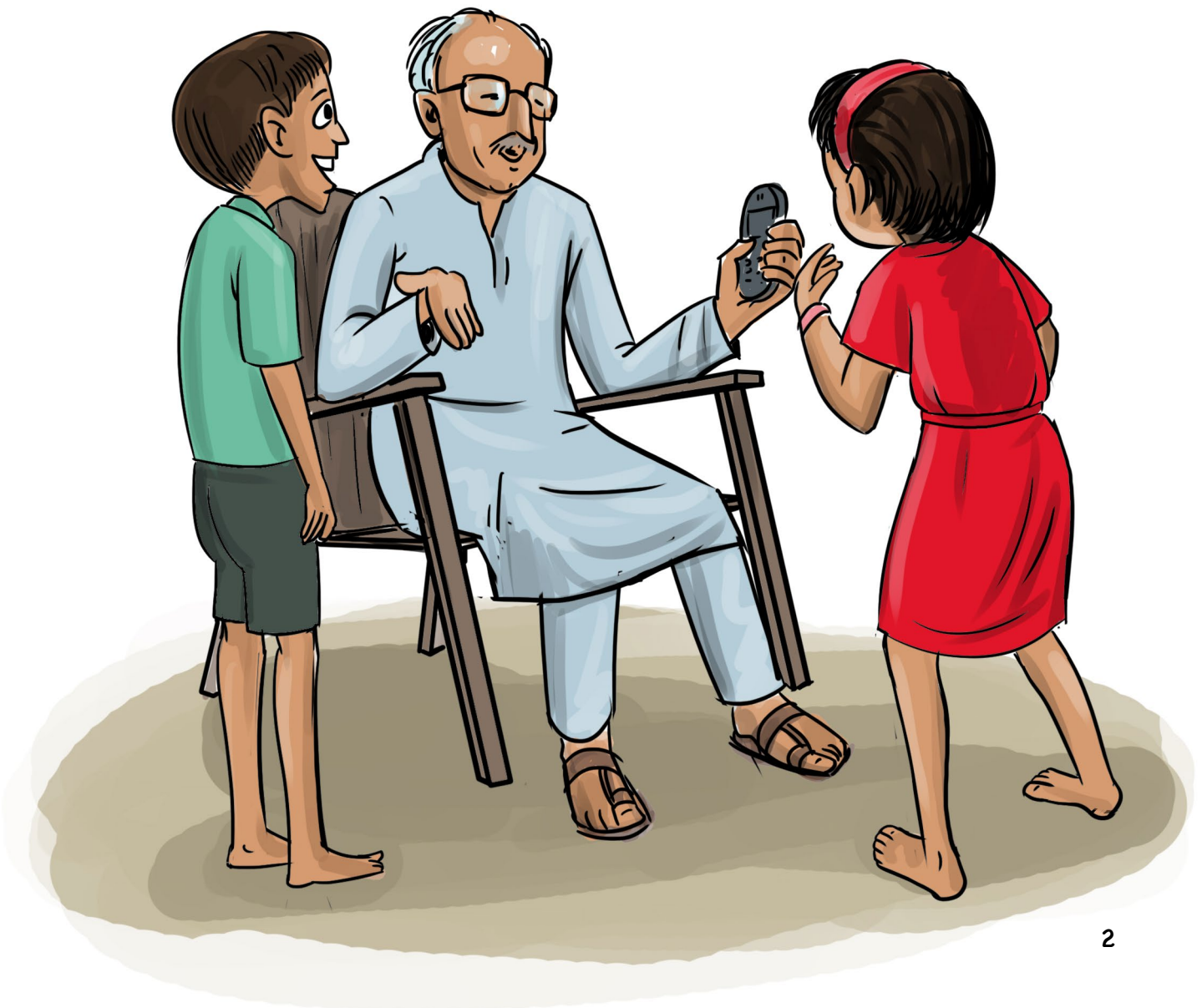
Rashmi: We see and hear our teachers on phone and they teach us various subjects.

Grandpa: How can you do classes on phone? Mine does not show any pictures!

Bolin: Oh grandpa, this phone won't do! You'll need a bigger one like the phone Borta has.

Rashmi: Those are called smartphones.

Bolin: Yes Rashmi, you all are getting ahead. Here we hardly have any power to charge phones, let alone reliable networks!





It is true Bolin and his schoolmates in the village hardly had any online classes over the long months at home. Nevertheless their teachers have kept in touch with them, passing on instructions whenever they met at the naamghar, the fields, or under the huge tree at the village centre. Family elders were often requested to relay messages to children for doing homework. Besides, the youngsters followed educational programmes on TV and radio as suggested by their teachers.

Grandma: Like your classes, do you also appear for exams online?

Rashmi: Of course, grandma! Lots! And we have to keep our smart phone camera on whenever we take these tests.

Bolin: Well, we have been enjoying here. No exams!

Rashmi: Father tells us not to study with only exams in mind. It is more important to understand concepts thoroughly.

Grandma: He is right!

Just then their village ASHA worker Menaka appears at the gate. She must have come to know about arrivals from the city to their home.

Grandma: Isn't that you, Menaka?

ASHA worker: Oh yes! I have been told your grandchild has come from the city. Did they get themselves tested for Covid?

Rashmi: Yes we did! Several rounds of testing have been carried out at our apartment itself.

ASHA worker: Well, you are a good child! But do you know the rules about Covid-19?





Despite being children, Rashmi and Bolin know quite a few things about the pandemic. Being naturally curious, they are always ready to ask and learn. Now they rattle off the Covid rules to the pleased ASHA worker.

Rashmi: Wear mask always.

Bolin: Wash hands with soap.

Rashmi: Don't spit about.

Bolin: Take care when coughing or sneezing.

Rashmi: Keep apart from others.

Bolin: Avoid crowded places.

Rashmi: Get tested whenever necessary.

Bolin: Stay clean and hygienic.

Grandma listens to them with proud amazement. At such tender age, they do know quite a lot! The pandemic seems to have made them more aware of happenings around. She turns to speak to the ASHA worker –

Grandma: Menaka, I hear this 'Corona' is about to vanish. Haven't they come out with a vaccine by now?

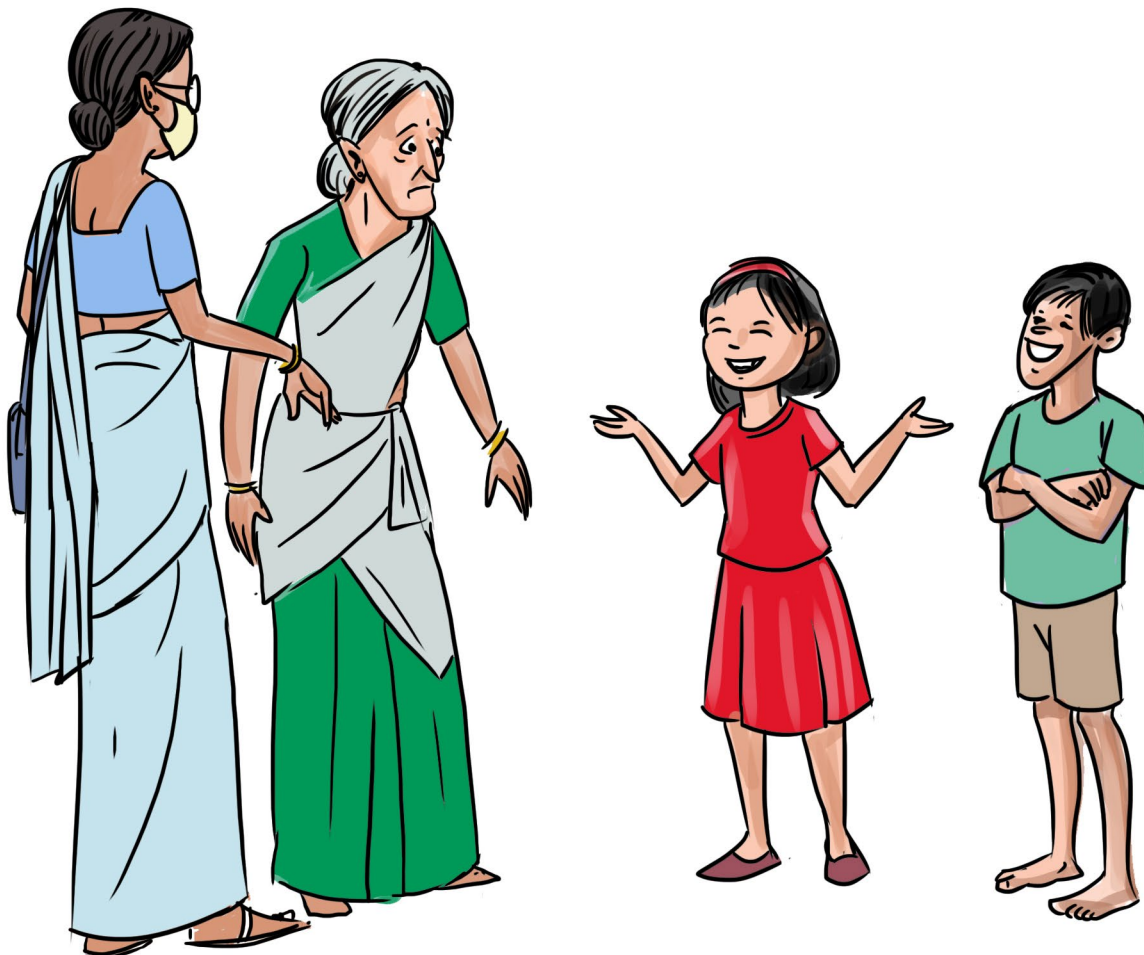
ASHA worker: There is no medicine yet, while vaccines will take time to be widely available. So Covid-19 is not leaving us anytime soon. What we can only do now is to be careful.

Grandma: Well, we too faced such days in our time. When small pox was a terror, we had to follow similar rules. It was a huge relief when the vaccine became available.

ASHA worker: Yes, but I understand that those affected were widely shunned. We nowadays tell everyone to care for those affected, not to stigmatize them.

Grandma: Have a betelnut-paan before you go, Menaka.

ASHA worker: Thank you, but I have stopped chewing paan. Else I have to spit, and that spreads disease!



It is time for Rashmi to return to the city. Grandma's eyes fill with tears.

Rashmi: Don't be sad, grandma. We will be visiting again during Bihu, and you will be coming over to our flat in holidays!

Grandma: Yes, dear! Bolin, you are going with her, but what about your school here?

Grandpa: It will take some days more for his school to reopen. After all, it had been turned into a Covid centre, so they will have to thoroughly disinfect it now.

Rashmi's father: Hurry up! We are getting late.

Rashmi: Bolin, why aren't you wearing mask?

Bolin: Oh, my mask must be somewhere, now I have to hunt for it!

Rashmi: It's okay, you can have this mask I stitched with mother during lockdown. You too can learn to make such masks with me at our flat.



As their car turns at the gate of the apartment block, the security guard approaches them.

Bolin: Hey! Why are you pointing that 'pistol' at me?

Rashmi's father: Bolin, it's a thermal scanner. He is using it to check your body temperature. If you are running a fever, you will have to get tested for Covid.

Rashmi: Thank heavens, you have no fever! But before we get onto the lift, we need to sanitize our hands.

Bolin: With soap and water?

Rashmi: Yes, or we can use sanitizer solution. Inside the lift, Bolin, don't press switches with your finger. Use your elbow instead!





Ever since the pandemic began, Rashmi's father had been stressing the importance of keeping body and mind healthy. It was now a habit with him to get up early at dawn for exercise and yoga at the lawn in the apartment grounds. This day, Bolin is with him and Rashmi. Just then, Dr. Ahmed on his morning walk, stops to accost them.

Rashmi: Good morning, Doctor Uncle! This is my cousin Bolin.

Dr. Ahmed: Good morning. I am happy to see you doing yoga. A healthy mind resides in a healthy body!

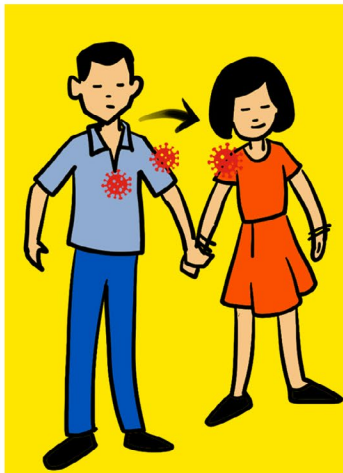
Rashmi's father: Do you know, Doctor Uncle has to work late into the night to treat sick people! Ever since this pandemic began, we have hardly seen him.

Dr. Ahmed: You understand the tough times we are going through, which is so encouraging. There are some who suspect us to be carriers of the disease!

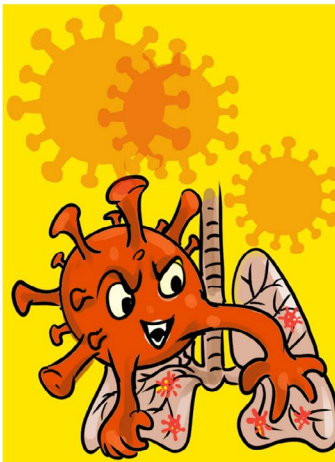
Bolin: What actually is Covid? Is it about running high fevers and losing the sense of smell?

Rashmi: Is it true Covid takes a tighter grip if other diseases are already doing damage to someone?

Dr. Ahmed patiently answers all their queries ---



Covid 19 is a highly contagious disease sweeping the world



SARS-CoV-2 virus primarily affects the lungs, causing respiratory difficulties. It also attacks other organs of the body



General symptoms are dry cough, fever, difficulty in breathing, aches, tiredness, diarrhoea, loss of sense of smell



Older people with medical conditions like heart/lung/kidney disease, diabetes, cancer etc. are more at risk



It takes time to develop medicines & vaccines in the lab. Before these are cleared for use, extensive field trials must be carried out



We can avoid infection by taking precautions like wearing mask, washing hands with soap or using sanitizer, keeping physical distance etc.

Rashmi and Bolin frolic with others up and down the apartment block. The lockdown had been unbearable, forcing them indoors for long months. The glow is now back on their faces. Rashmi is now off for the first day at school after reopening.

Rashmi's mother: Do take 2-3 masks. When you come back, these must be thoroughly washed. Keep a separate container for masks.

Rashmi's father: Don't forget your sanitizer. Spray it wherever you sit or whatever you touch, like door handles, desk-bench, computer keyboard...

Rashmi's mother: Don't allow anybody to touch your tiffin box or water bottle.

As the school bus drew near, Rashmi's parents caution her: "Keep your distance, be careful of catching infections from others!"



There are very few students at the school gate. Crowding there is forbidden. On finding a student running high temperature, the security guard tells him to return home. When he protests, a teacher advises him to consult a doctor at once.

Student: But I am going to miss my classes!

Teacher: Don't worry about that. You can join your classes online if you feel good enough. Your attendance will be marked.

As the students make their way along the corridors, they keep their distance from each other by following the markers. Washbasins with liquid soap had been installed at either end of the corridors, sanitizer bottles had been placed at the door of every classroom. A few classes are also being held at the big open courtyard. The school prayer meet at the courtyard was not being held; instead, students will pray at their desk before starting classes for the day.





Inside the classroom, students are seated on benches spaced well apart. Everyone is wearing mask. Half the students are attending the morning session, the others would come at noon. Classes will meet three days a week, with three periods each day.

Student: How can we complete the course if so few classes are held?

Class teacher: Online classes can be arranged for other days. You should come to class to understand concepts, clear off doubts and correct your mistakes. Collecting facts and practising on the exercises ought to be done at home.

Another student: No tiffin breaks or game periods have been scheduled in our routine!

Class teacher: There will be time and facilities for sports & games after classes are over. You can surely play, so long as you follow the rules.

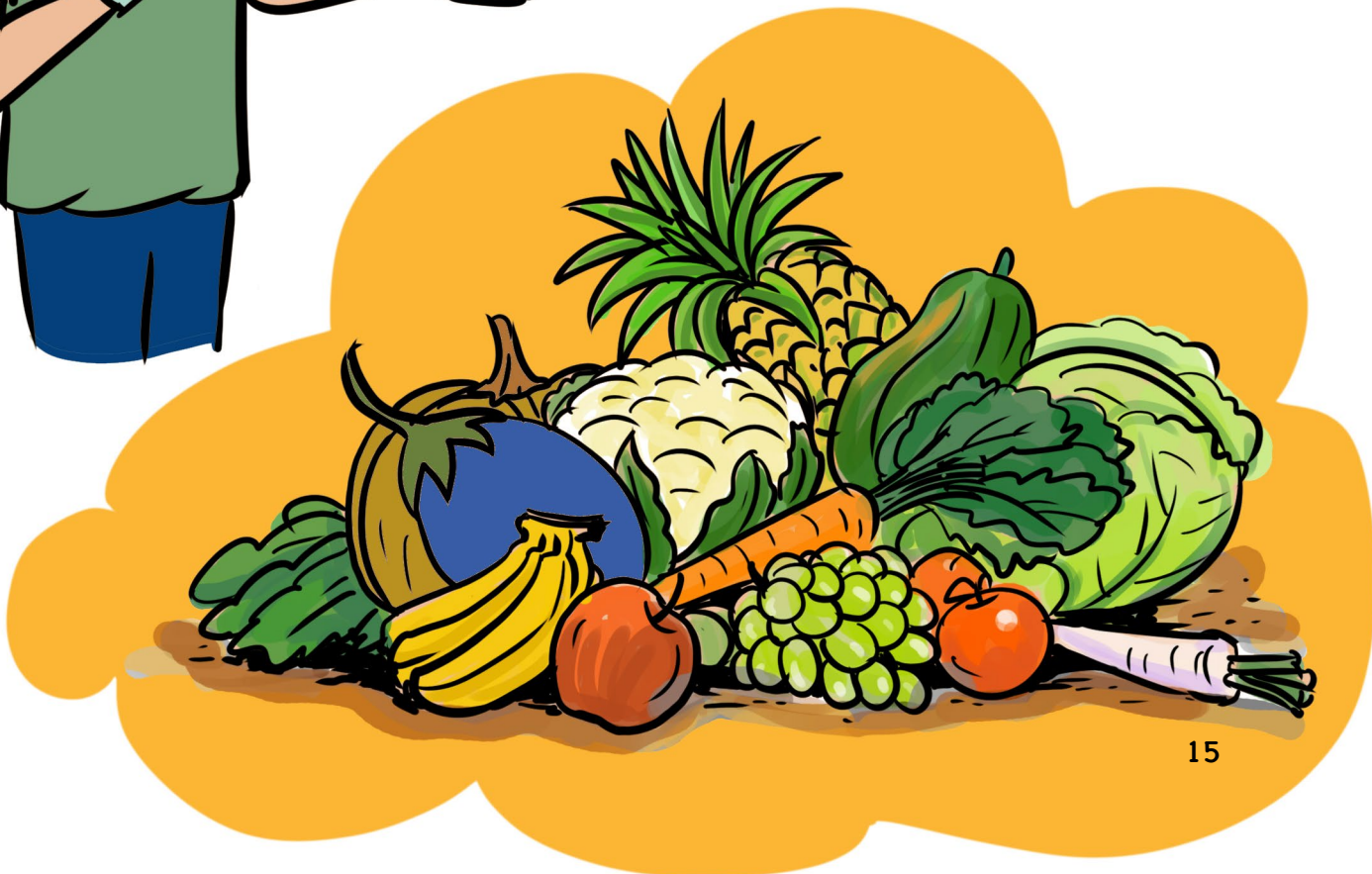
At the playground, the physical training teacher is waiting for them. He tells them to note down the rules -

- ▶ Undergo regular testing
- ▶ Maintain physical distance
- ▶ Avoid embraces, handshakes, high fives
- ▶ Don't share equipment, towels or drink bottles
- ▶ Don't apply saliva or sweat on equipment like balls
- ▶ Train in small groups
- ▶ Avoid touching your face
- ▶ Keep sanitizing hands
- ▶ Don't train or play when feeling unwell



The P.T. teacher further reminds students that proper diet is important not just to stay healthy and strong, but also to boost immunity during pandemic times. When he quizzes them about what to eat, they vie with each other to answer-

- ▶ Meat-eggs for protein
- ▶ Vitamins are a must
- ▶ Greens are essential
- ▶ Iron, Calcium
- ▶ Avoid junk food
- ▶ Stay off fats





Back home, Rashmi is downcast. Things have changed beyond recognition at school. Even the rules for sports & games seem strange. She speaks to Bolin:

Rashmi: It was such fun at school before Covid struck!
Now everything has gone topsy-turvy.

Bolin: At least you have been doing online classes, while Borma is working from home. What can you not do with internet nowadays!

Rashmi: Yes, the internet has its benefits, but our teacher warns us to be careful while using it.

Bolin: I heard a radio talk that day. Do you know, there are bad people who do mischief through the internet – they lure away children, spread fake news, steal our data and even our identity?

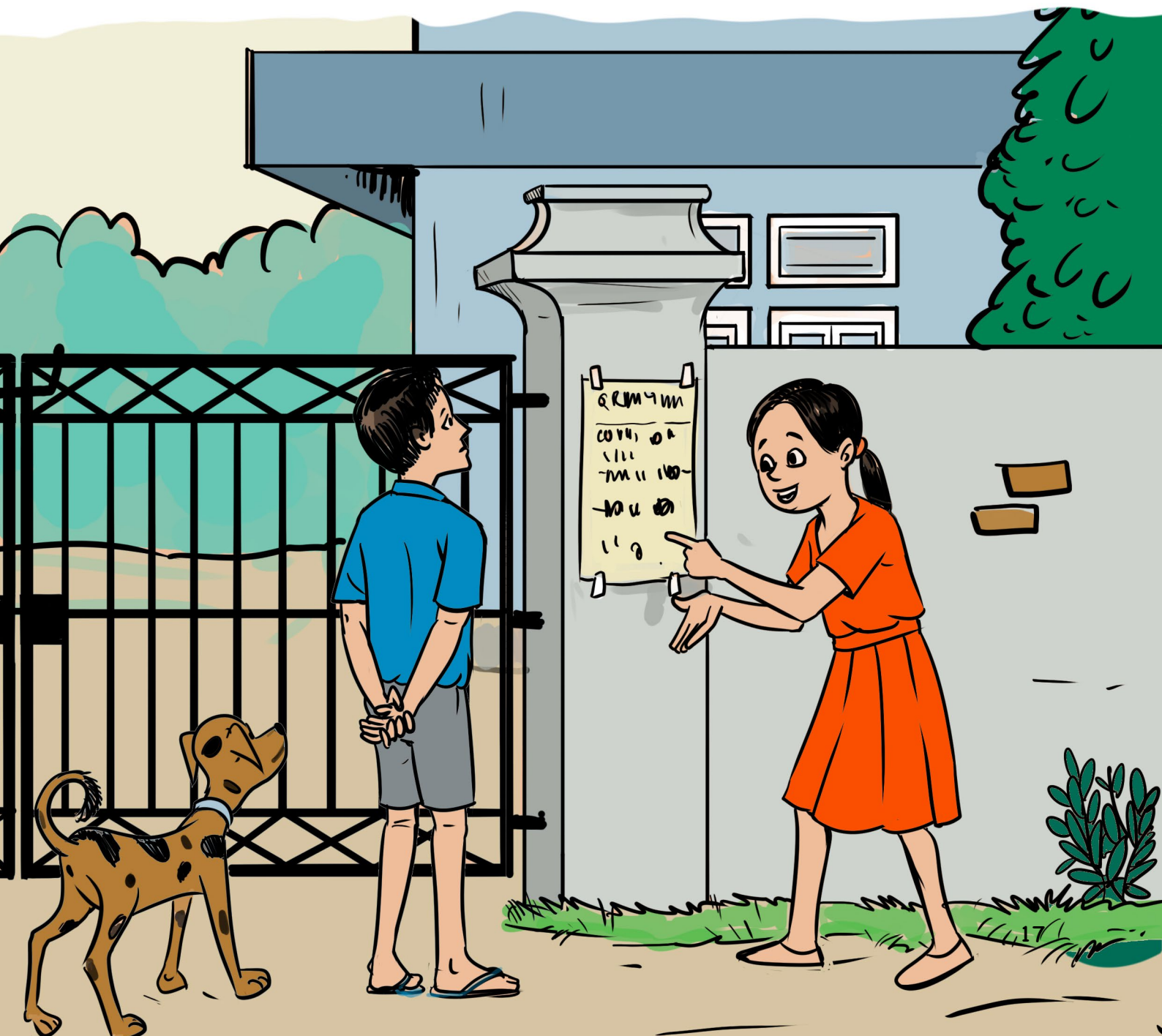
Looking for friends to play, Rashmi takes Bolin to Mary's flat. But what's this? Outside the door is fixed a quarantine notice. Mary calls out glumly from the window -

Mary: My big brother tested positive for Covid today. Now we all are stuck with him inside.

Bolin: If several homes in a locality have Covid positive cases, it must get tough for others there! The entire locality is marked a containment zone and no one is allowed in or out.

Rashmi: The same thing happening over a region or country brings forth a lockdown, forcing everyone indoors!

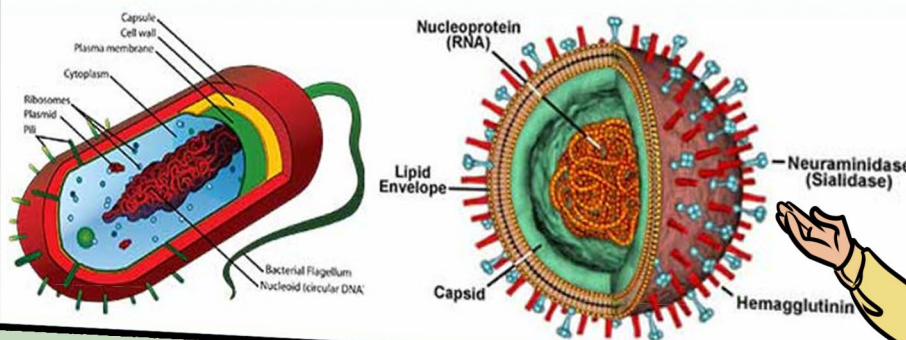
Mary: We'll be tested after two weeks. I may get to play with you then if I test negative...



The next day at school, Rashmi and her classmates are bursting with queries about why and how people across vast areas catch an infection fast, and what can be done to tackle it. Their science teacher explains:

- Infectious pathogens can be bacteria or virus
- Epidemics like bubonic plague and cholera were caused by bacteria
- Spanish flu, smallpox and Covid-19 epidemics were caused by viruses
- Bacteria are single-celled micro-organisms; viruses are much smaller
- Antibiotics like penicillin kill harmful bacteria, but their indiscriminate use also destroys good bacteria
- Viruses are made of genetic material DNA/RNA encased in protein sheath; they are in the borderline between living & non-living
- Viruses reproduce only inside host cells, so it is difficult to kill them while keeping host cells alive
- Antiviral medicines act by trapping viruses, disrupting their structure or reproductive process and thereby neutralising them

Bacteria Vs Virus





Rashmi returns home to find her mother deep in conversation with Mithu Aunty, whose daughter Brinda is her classmate.

Rashmi: I didn't see Brinda at school today, Aunty.

Mithu Aunty: Oh, she went after you! She is in the noon group.

Rashmi's mother then tells her to bathe after storing her uniform carefully in the laundry bag for washing.

Mithu Aunty: The lockdown taught us the importance of 'positive parenting' and forming support groups with parents and teachers. I nowadays really enjoy creative activities with the children!

Rashmi's mother: Children too seem more confident! Maybe it is because they have gotten more involved in household chores since those months.

Bolin: This is normal with us children in the village. We help in looking after younger kids, bringing the cattle home, running errands and doing household work. I am really missing home now! Our school too is about to reopen.

Rashmi: Okay Bolin. But you cannot leave us without teaching me the finer points of kite flying 24!



There is no end to pathogens. If one is subdued, another soon raises its head. Rashmi's class wants to know more about this continuing war. Their teacher tells them about deadly microbes and viruses which have plagued humans since the earliest times, and how these scourges were always overcome.

"India has successfully dealt with cholera, smallpox, polio, bird flu, dengue, Nipah and other deadly diseases. We'll beat Covid-19 too, it is just a matter of time. But remember, in this never-ending struggle for existence, it is with scientific temper that we triumph," she says.

The world may be racked by the pandemic, but the march of life continues. The tide is turning as countries begin to join hands, plan and act to stamp out the virus.

The kites of Bolin, Rashmi and other children soar high, bravely carrying their hopes and dreams. The many ills which afflict Mother Earth, pandemics among them, will surely cross their paths like unfriendly kites. And as inevitably these challenges will be cut down, for it is in the nature of rising generations to prevail against all odds.

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