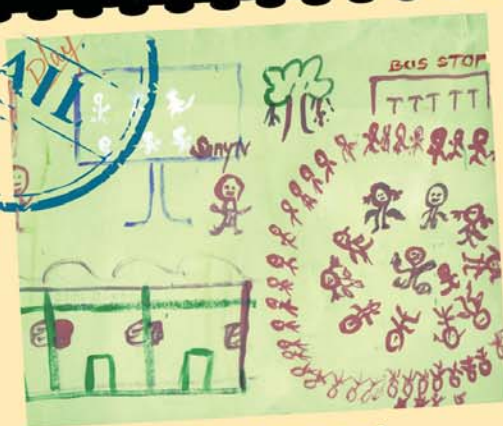
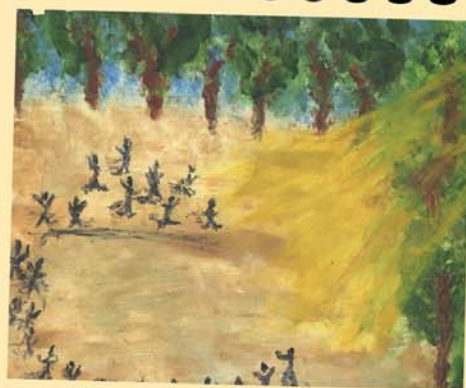


STREAMS OF PLAY

a glimpse of headstreams through stories





Facilitators' Impressions



for all of us

Life is creative. It plays itself into existence, seeking out new relationships, new capacities, new traits. Life is an experiment to discover what's possible. As it tinkers with discovery, it creates more and more possibilities. With so much freedom for discovery, how can life be anything but playful?

a simpler way
wheatley & rogers

introduction

We all receive briefs of our work, things to be done upon this earth. The act of interpreting a brief, though joyful, can also be a slightly risky enterprise. This was a usual and common brief, one that often emerges at a critical juncture of an organisation's journey. We were to document a decade of headstreams' journey from existing compilations, reports and videos and the knowledge resources they had co-created, to arrive at the ethos and core values that headstreams embodies in its work. We were to create something that would be meaningful to any person wanting to join headstreams' circle of fellow travellers.

As we explored headstreams, we found at its core a matrix of play, learn and change, connected to each other dynamically. Play headstreams says, provides the most enabling environment for learning, which in turn inevitably leads to change. Much of their work is best understood as catalysing learning and change by creating or expanding spaces of choice and self-directed learning, spreading the joy that comes from pushing one's boundaries in safety. And so today, they identify as play facilitators across multiple contexts.

So, we played along. We met members old and new. Spoke to them for hours, reminiscing, drinking chai, listening to and understanding their engagement with headstreams. We listened to how they had either witnessed or experienced this space of choice, pushing boundaries, learning and change, this experience of play. And then we gave them a brief: to capture their journey in their own style. And so they did, some as bare narratives, some as slightly fictionalized accounts, and some as outrightly fantastical pieces.

What has emerged is a mosaic of stories, a tiny snapshot of what headstreams is and where it is now in its journey, They have been written by those who have founded, worked with or supported headstreams. Taken together these stories have emerged as the repository of all things headstreams: their history, their understanding of the world, and the core values and ethos undergirding their work.

We now present this mosaic, this repository to you, with the hope that it will take you on a journey of play into the very heart of headstreams.

an observer

an acknowledgement

It is perhaps the oldest mystery of time: how does something beautiful emerge out of nothing? Something life-giving and filled with fullness emerge out of emptiness? Looking back after ten years, we can now see a tiny corner of the mystery revealed in the manifold grace that has covered our attempts to serve, when all we could offer was clear and sincere willingness to work through our inexperience.

We have always been bound by a core desire to allow the people we serve the freedom of choice without judgement. To be responsive and not imposing our will was our primary and collective urge. And the only way we wanted to work was with honesty and respect. The only people we wanted to serve were the ones without contextual power.

We did this variously. The women we met wanted financial help, so we started Self Help Groups (SHGs). They wanted to enhance their job opportunities and asked if we could help with learning English and computers. We did. We explored various possible livelihood options for the youth in the communities we worked with. The children were curious about us and wanted to interact with us, so we spent time with them. We sensed a need for awareness of health issues, and so we conducted workshops on these.

Increasingly we saw that the desire and the need in the community was the shaping of the future. The women that we worked with were primarily preoccupied with the idea that their children should have a better future than their own present.

They spent inordinate amounts of time and energy in efforts to build this. We then realized that perhaps the best way to help these communities was to focus on the children. And so we began focusing on the needs and desires of the child.

As we spent time with the children, very organically, our affiliation, understanding and belief in the transformative nature of play emerged. We saw how play was the space in their lives that allowed the children the essentials required to grow and thrive in spite of their often severe socio-economic challenges. We became guardians, ensuring that the children we work with enjoy and experience their childhood. This manifests in our work with over 15,000 children over the last seven years, through our various children's programmes: Caravan, Tackle Fest and our flagship Arivu-Disha with the state government of Karnataka.

As we dug into play, we saw that it was actually the space that allowed for all of us to remain human and practise our humanity. We all – adult and children alike – need that little space where we can exercise our choice freely, we can do things for the sheer joy of it, we can direct the path of that present activity or process, where we can be relaxed and have fun and enter a world that is somehow magical in just what it makes possible. The criticality of this non-judged space is evident in the larger conversation of capabilities and freedom.

So, increasingly, we at headstreams have become ambassadors and messengers of play. And while our work has primarily been with children, we now increasingly see ourselves in the service of play and self-directed learning for humanity, play for learning and change.

Indeed reflecting back, we are so grateful that we have been provided with the luxury of being able to play in our approach to work itself, being able to choose what we wanted to do, direct the path of how we wanted to do, and always being invested more in the process of the movement than with the goal. We are amazed at how many times we have wished for some funds or talents or vision, and these have magically been provided at just the right place at the right time. And when it

was time for people to move on, carrying with them the play they re-learned, the transitions have always resulted in deep friendships. We have been constantly overwhelmed by the sheer generosity and kindness of the people and institutions that have journeyed with us, be it government departments, district authorities, various institutional heads, our funders or our partners, or our communities. And every time we witness how powerfully and deeply the experience and importance of play resonates with others, every time we witness a transformation through play, we know then that an incomprehensible power far greater than us is at work here. And in that we are then able to continue to rest and play on!

headstreams

stories

milestones

site map

kai's magic

2008

secret society unregistered

2009

should i stay or should i go?

2010

a job that treated a doctor's illness

2011

to sweden, with a
planetarium in my suitcase

2012

how 'bout a headstreams
school of play

2013

find joy in your journey

2014

broken tent

2015

a matter of conversation

2016

lila's rescue

2017

catching the monster

2018



Recognition



Institutional Milestone



Programme



Focus Area



kai's magic

Long long ago, when the mountains were young and the rivers full, to the beautiful Gurukul of Rishi Muni came a young lad Kai. How he came to be there, is a story in itself!

Kai was the son of Ajapa, a goatherd, and would often take his family's goats up the mountains to graze on the abundant, sweet grassy slopes.

Kai was charmed, blessed even, many would say. Because Kai carried sunshine and happiness with him. Truly! When he was in the meadows, butterflies would give chase around him, flowers would burst open in song, sweet honeybees would abound, and even the streams would gurgle louder around him!

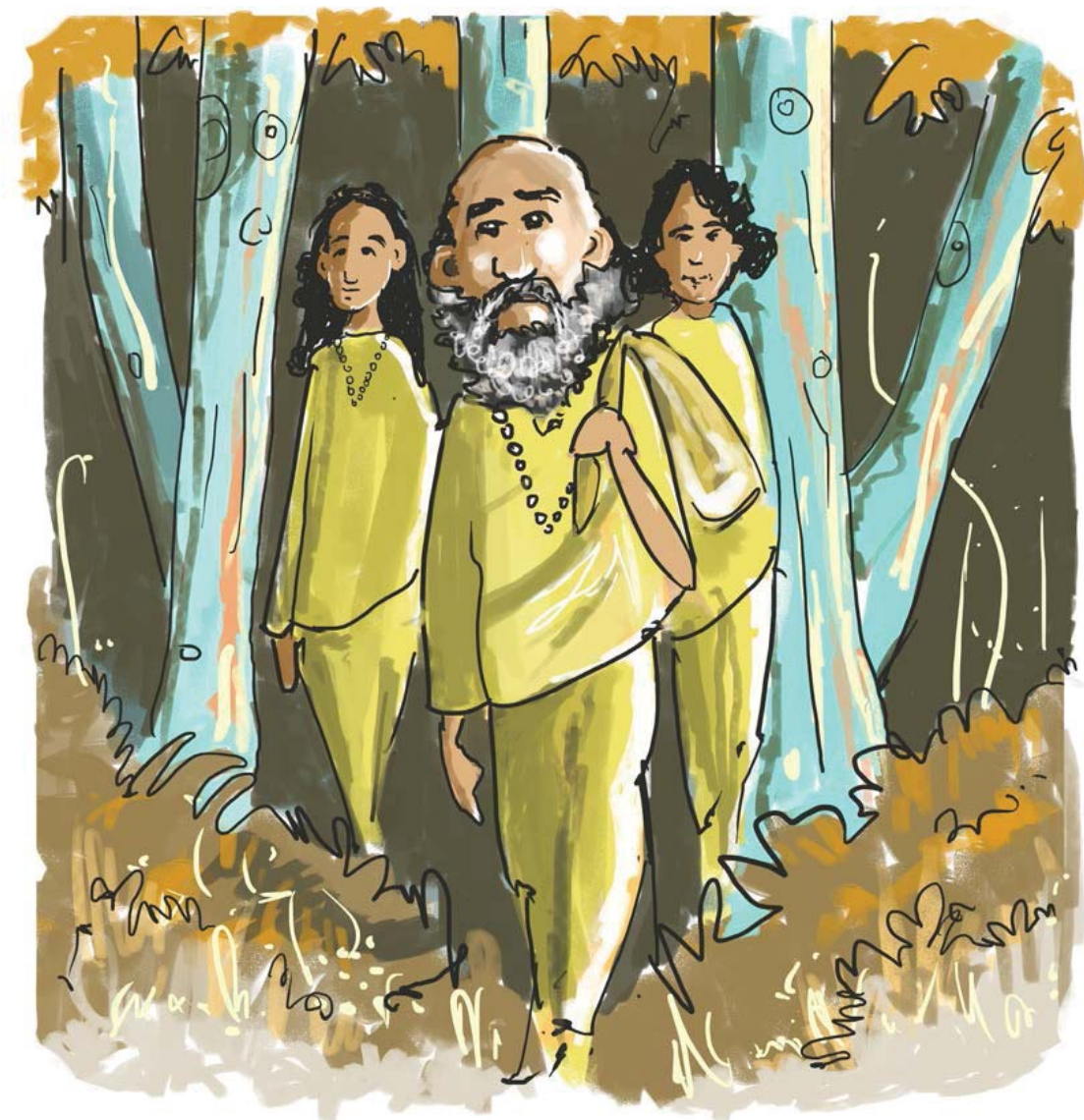
But that was not all. Kai had one even more magical ability. He could hug things, sometimes even just smile at them, and make them better. Just the other day, Kaku's cow, Tara was moaning loudly, as if in pain. Kai was summoned! "Arre! Poor Rani! You don't feel so good, do you?" he said, caressing her. Then he put his tiny arms around her thick neck, all the while cooing and talking to her... and as if by magic, within no time, she actually started looking and sounding better!

Rishi Muni's Gurukul was high up in the mountains. Even so, word of Kai's magic spread there too. The Rishi was amazed and he wanted to see for himself this young boy and his magic! Two nights and a day he travelled, down the mountain, with some of his students, to meet Kai. With him was Swayam, an intelligent young man studying to be a physician.



"Welcome to our humble abode," said Ajapa, as he ushered in the Rishi and his students, and touched the Rishi's feet in reverence. "How can I be of service to you, Great Master?" asked Ajapa. Rishi Muni said, "We wish to meet Kai! We have heard much of his ability to heal people, animals... why! Even plants!" Ajapa was awestruck! "Such a learned man has come to meet my boy!" he thought. Ajapa sent one of the village boys to go fetch Kai from the slopes while his wife served the visitors a quickly assembled meal of delicious fruits and milk.

Soon enough, Kai came bounding in, carrying with him a wave of freshness, happiness, plentifulness! "The Great Master is here to meet you Kai! Touch his feet" said Ajapa. Kai bowed to Rishi Muni to seek his blessings. "Arise, child! We are here to see your magic!" he said gently, to the child. Swayam stepped forward, very self-importantly, and proffered something to Kai. "Here," he said. "This is a bird with a broken wing we saw on the way down. I have bandaged it but let's see you heal it," he challenged little Kai.



Now Kai was hardly paying any attention to Swayam. All his attention was centered on the bird that he held, ever so gently, and he started cooing and speaking to it. "You poor thing! I wonder how you hurt yourself. All will be well. You see! You will be right as rain in no time!" He nuzzled the bird against his little cheek with great gentleness and love, and in just a little while, the little bird cheeped back and gingerly jumped down to walk about! "Yaaay," cried Kai, clapping in delight!! "You are already better, my friend! Soon you will be flying back up there, high in the blue sky!"

Everyone who watched was entranced at the sight! The boy was indeed gifted! All except Swayam. He was happy for the bird of course, but wondered: "How has this boy done it?" He said, "I bandaged the bird, have carried it down the hill and all this time it showed no sign of activity! Were it not breathing, I would have even believed it to be dead! How did you do it, Kai?" Kai, smiling his sweet, carefree smile said: "Easy-peasy! I just wished, with all my heart, for it to be well, to fly again. That's all!" Swayam shook his head in disbelief.

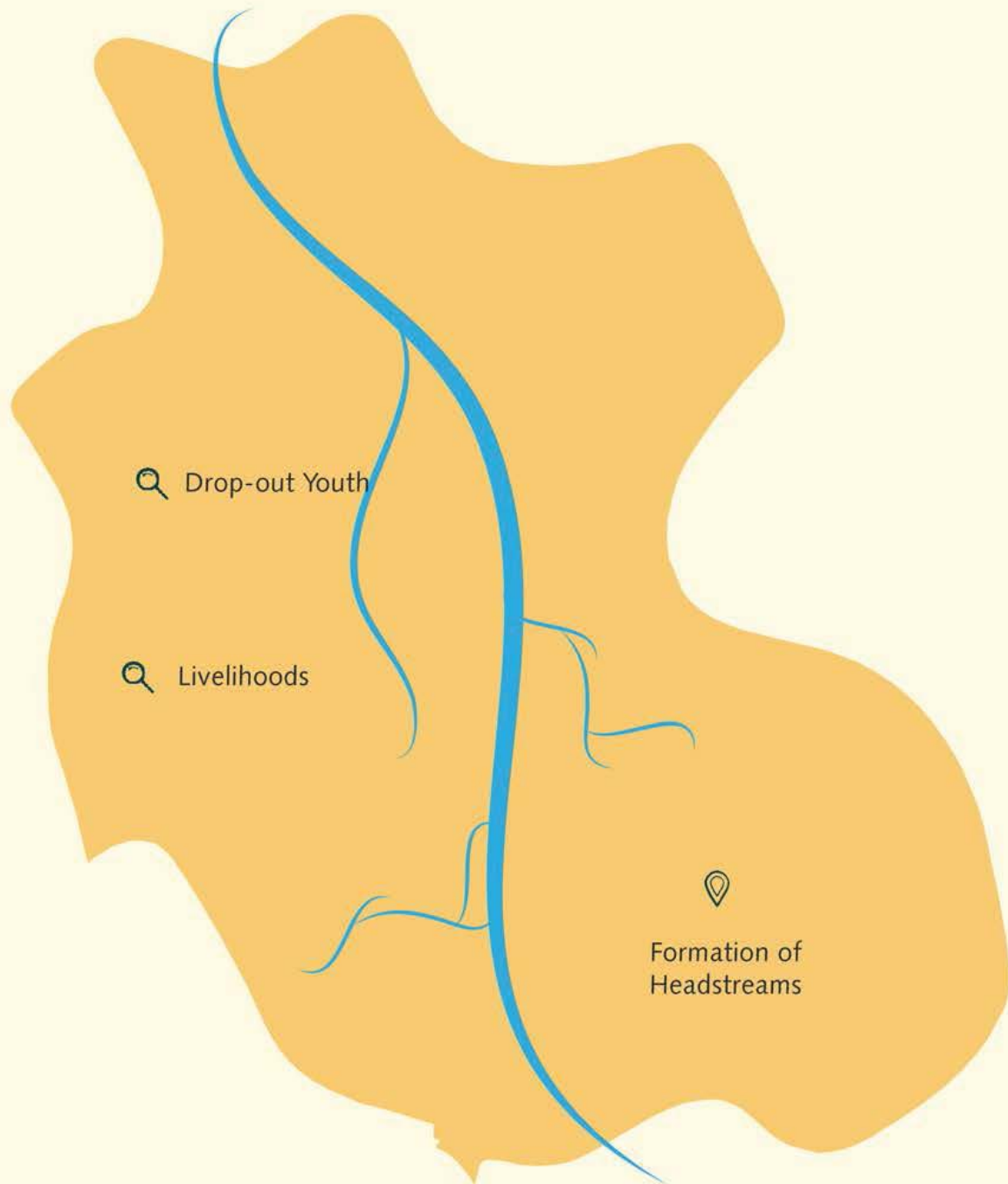
“Ajapa, send Kai with me. I wish to train him formally to become a physician. And I believe we all have much to learn from Kai as well!” Ajapa was overwhelmed! And so it came to pass that Kai went with Rishi Muni to study at the Gurukul.



vandana nadig nair

In 2014, Phicus Social Solutions initiated work with headstreams on scaling for maximizing social impact. They co-created Arivu-Disha, a ‘learning through play’ programme that was launched in government schools across 3 districts of Karnataka, through an MOU with the Department of State Educational Research and Training (DSERT). The Phicus team is lead by the author of this story, who truly believes in the power of headstreams’ magic in healing others, which comes from true focus and honest intentions. She says, “Whatever they imagine, it manifests.” Hence, she calls them “Destiny’s Child.”

milestones



in 2008

	Recognition
	Institutional Milestone
	Programme
	Focus Area




secret society unregistered

I found the sports classes in my school rather baffling. For some reason, I felt, it aroused the animal spirit among a section of the student body. Aggression of any kind being unsuitable to my rather genial personality, I secretly disapproved of the sports class. As a young scholar, it was beyond my capacity to act upon my disapproval. Hence, I decided on a diplomatic path of public silence on the issue, combined with private resolve to amuse myself with the goings-on, so that the time apportioned to sports was bearable to my sensitive mind. But I soon realised that the sports class was failing miserably in its attempt to amuse me. The spirit of competition, which was the unspoken value propagated by the institutions of learning that I attended, was at full display during the sports class, and I did not hold a very charitable view on that. The other such arena where this uncouth demonstration was highly encouraged, was of course the myriad class tests and examinations. To my keen young eyes, it soon became apparent that there was, in most cases, an inverse relationship between the success at sports and success at the competitions of academic nature. Since early in my life, I had decided not to encourage aggression of any kind within myself, and I had consciously kept a low key on both these fronts (namely sports and academics), which saved me from any undue attention and helped in focusing on higher pursuits of life.



As they say, birds of a feather tend to flock together. I did find some fellow students, who held, if not exact, but similar opinions on subjects of both the sports and academics. With my regular association with them and constant exchange of ideas, there arose a secret society of sorts. The secret society kept away from any organised sports, at least during the recesses, and we also decided upon following a passive aggressive approach towards academics. Instead, we engaged ourselves in activities which we found to be highly satisfactory in nature. These included, to name a few, creating a temporary mud pit and squelching it with our fingers,

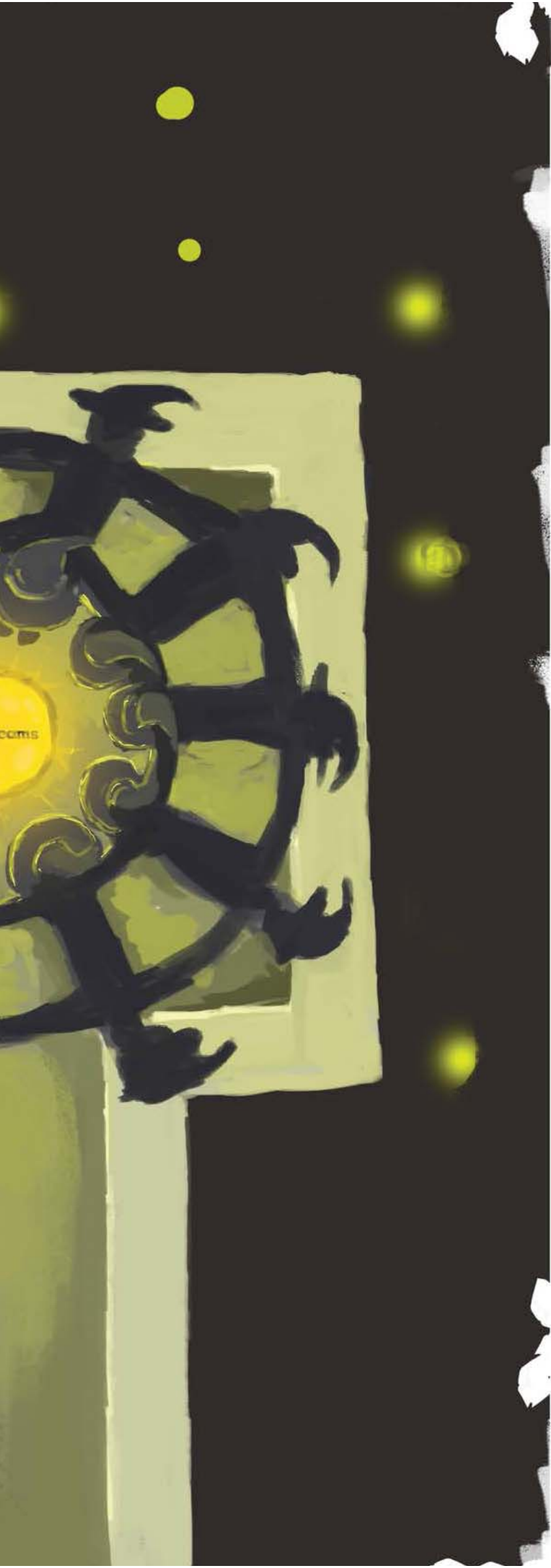


collecting stones of interesting shapes and making mounds of them, hide and seek, jumping over each other's backs, etc., which we collectively called 'play' as against sports (kindly note the subtle difference between the two terms). We loved these activities and very soon the graph of quality of life at school, which had always been nose diving southwards, showed a slight upward movement. Having tasted the resounding success of the secret society at school, I decided to open a branch around my residence, which also gathered a respectable membership.

The basic unspoken rules of this 'Informal Society Against Organised Sports and Academics (Unregistered)' were simple. Firstly, we did not encourage the spirit of competition, which we believed to be highly injurious to the development of future citizens. Secondly, aggression of any kind was highly discouraged. Thirdly, we did not support organised sports. Our opposition to organised sports was based on many grounds, including it requiring kits, such as bats, rackets, balls etc. which we thought was based on economic disparity and created a hegemonic relationship between the haves and have-nots. For example, the person who owned the bat would be considered out only after he got out thrice! The last and the golden rule was unbridled pursuit of the pure human joy of play. We pursued the pursuit much more vigorously than our elders pursued us to pursue studies. Activities preformed under the aegis of the secret society, were the only few golden pages in the otherwise dreary book of my childhood. With dawning of adulthood, the secret society dissolved itself without any formal resolution. But the spirit of values which the secret society had instilled, lived on in my heart. I missed the secret society and its activities dearly, but that was only up until a decade ago.

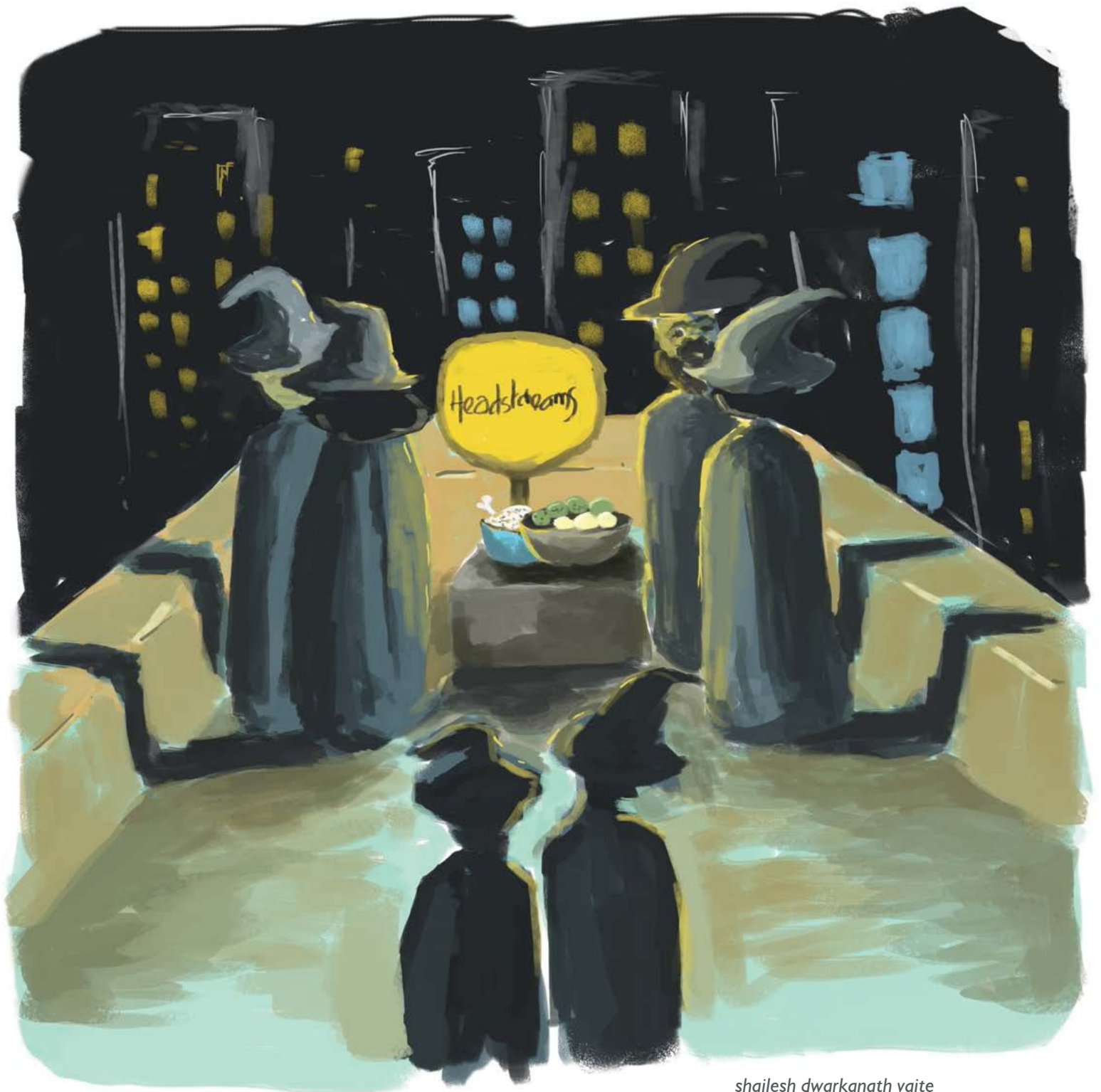
Around 10 years ago, there was a not-so-secret meeting of people in the city of Bengaluru, to which I was invited. I was the odd one out in the small gathering as the rest of the group comprised of respectable ladies and gentlemen. The group resolved to establish a Society called headstreams. Being a man of discerning choices and free spirit, I took some time before I consented to be part of headstreams. What clinched the deal for me was that the values and principles of this newly found Society were similar to our erstwhile 'Informal Society Against Organised Sports and Academics (Unregistered)', except that headstreams was neither against organised sports nor against academics. However, I was assured that headstreams would not propagate the spirit of competition or aggression. But the most important issue where the ideas of the two organisations overlapped was in the support of choice and freedoms, today seen in the unbridled pursuit of pure human joy of play. Having understood this, I decided to offer my wholehearted support and active participation at headstreams. I soon understood that the rest of the members of headstreams,





were an extremely agreeable lot and also rather sincere and hardworking. As I am in general indisposed to either mental or physical labour, the rest of the team being hardworking proved to be rather beneficial. Though lacking in mental and physical labour, I made it a point to be generous in my contributions in terms of encouragement, moral support and advice.

Since the formation of headstreams, I have stopped lamenting the demise of my childhood secret society, as I realise that the baton of human joy of play is being carried forward by headstreams. What we have achieved in the last 10 years is phenomenal. First of all, we have gathered this large group of young playful men and women who firmly believe in playing and they are ensuring that wherever they are able to reach, they are spreading the word and the play. We have not spared the adults and let me tell you in confidence, even the teachers! As former member of the 'Informal Society Against Organised Sports and Academics (Unregistered)' it gives me immense joy to see this development. I really hope the caravan of playful people keeps growing in size, and the joy of playing spreads everywhere!



shailesh dwarkanath vaite

In 2008, nine people met on the top of a terrace, ate much, dreamt plenty, ruminated, envisioned together and created headstreams. Here, the author, a co-founder, builds the narrative from his own childhood stories around the 'joy of play' and tells us how headstreams with its focus on 'play, learn and change' is continuing to keep the spirit of this narrative alive in his life.

milestones



in 2009

	Recognition
	Institutional Milestone
	Programme
	Focus Area



should i stay or should i go?

When I joined headstreams, my idea of social work was highly romantic. I assumed I will be working with children - enjoying, playing with and educating them - and that this was going to make me content and happy. In my head, it was very colorful because I believed that we would help children with their needs, and their lives would be transformed.

It didn't take too long for me to face reality. After just a month at headstreams, things changed. One day when we were having our training at Lahe Lahe, Naveen asked me if I'd like to work in a special needs school. Without much thought, I said, "Ok, I can try." It would be interesting to do something very different from what I had ever done.

Soon my first visit came about. We visited a special needs school near Indranagar. This was the first time I was going to such a space. There were children screaming for nothing; there were a few of them on wheelchairs; some of them were just sitting in the corners, staring at nothing; and some were uncontrollably walking up and down. Overall, it was a depressing picture.

Suddenly, my pretty picture of "social work" went down the drain. At that very moment, I knew this was not meant for me. I could not do it. So I went back so disappointed and in tears, and told Naveen, "I just cannot do this. I can't help, I cannot be around children who are so helpless." But he asked me to give it another shot. He said, "I want you to go there because it burdens you and makes you uncomfortable." He requested, "Just a few more times."

With a very heavy heart, I agreed, but in my mind I knew I will visit a couple more times and then come back and tell him “NO.” I didn’t think I could be around children who were so dependent on me to move around, to play, to laugh and to just get up from their seats. Although it disturbed me to see them that way, I was sure I was not the support they needed. So I went there a couple of weeks only because Naveen asked me to give it a shot.



These were days when they clung to me and did not let go. One of the kids who moved me to tears was little Roshan. Every time he saw a familiar face, he would get so excited and begin banging on benches. He would come hold your hand and smile at you, kiss you and never let you go. But the moment he realized you were leaving, he would scream hysterically. Every one of them had idiosyncrasies and ways of communicating. This way I finished my two weeks of visits, as had been discussed. Soon that become a couple of months and then it was a year. Surprisingly, I never went back to

Naveen, to tell him “I can’t.” Although every single day at the School was an emotional battle, I kept going.

I know I haven’t changed their lives, but at least I could be there with them.

sneha susan john

In 2016, headstreams explored the possibility of bringing play into the lives of the differently abled in institutionalised settings like the opportunity school. In this account, the author, then a fledgling NGO social worker, documents the transformation she experienced as she facilitated play for persons very different from her.

milestones



in 2010



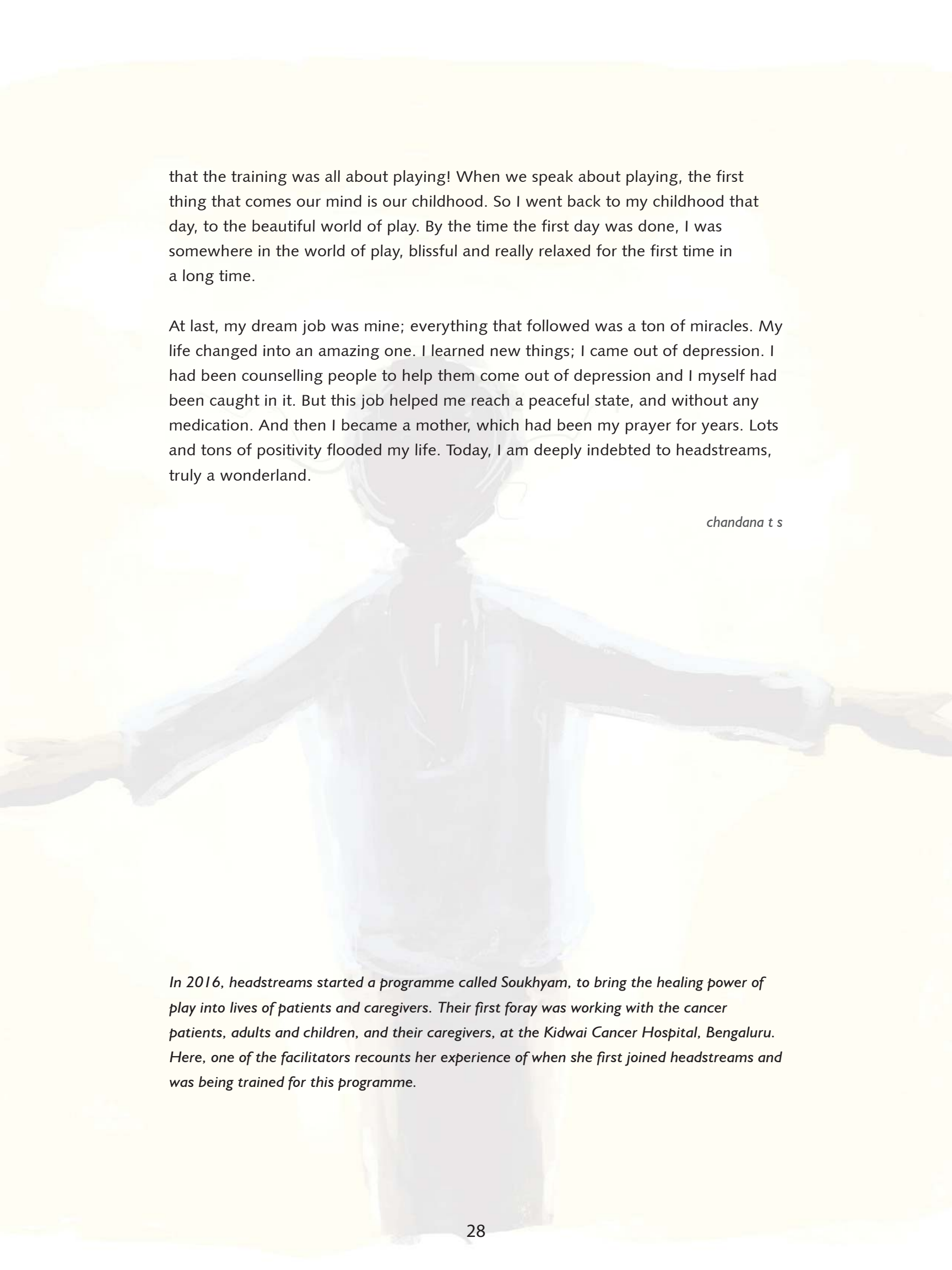


a job that treated a doctor's illness

I am a psychologist, one among those who like to lead a simple life. As you all know, it is not so easy to lead a simple life in this era. Though I had a good job, a satisfying salary, and name and fame in my field, I wasn't satisfied with my life. I didn't have the feeling of meaningfulness and purposefulness, which would help me smile. One day I visited a friend. As we talked about our work and life, deep in my heart I heard a whisper urging me to apply for a job in the organization she was working for. I had heard enough of "if you really need it, it will come to you."

So I joined headstreams, and I still remember the first day so clearly. We had all assembled for training and were wondering what was going to happen next; what tasks will be assigned to us. As you all know, experience doesn't really help put you at ease when it comes to the first day of work at a new place. I was tense and nervous.

Then Naveen entered, with Anu and Maggi, two other employees. They introduced themselves and then told us we were going to play a game!!! We were dumbfounded. Were we really going to play?? Keeping my eyes fully open, I looked at them. As time passed by that day, I realized that headstreams was not a "work place"; it's a magical school, where you get to play to learn and learn to play, and



that the training was all about playing! When we speak about playing, the first thing that comes our mind is our childhood. So I went back to my childhood that day, to the beautiful world of play. By the time the first day was done, I was somewhere in the world of play, blissful and really relaxed for the first time in a long time.

At last, my dream job was mine; everything that followed was a ton of miracles. My life changed into an amazing one. I learned new things; I came out of depression. I had been counselling people to help them come out of depression and I myself had been caught in it. But this job helped me reach a peaceful state, and without any medication. And then I became a mother, which had been my prayer for years. Lots and tons of positivity flooded my life. Today, I am deeply indebted to headstreams, truly a wonderland.

chandana t s

In 2016, headstreams started a programme called Soukhyam, to bring the healing power of play into lives of patients and caregivers. Their first foray was working with the cancer patients, adults and children, and their caregivers, at the Kidwai Cancer Hospital, Bengaluru. Here, one of the facilitators recounts her experience of when she first joined headstreams and was being trained for this programme.

milestones



in 2011





to sweden, with a planetarium in my suitcase

Dear Ms. Sharma

Thank you for your email. I am sorry I must have put you off when you approached me after the lecture and introduced yourself as a reporter for the Daily Chronicle. I hope you didn't think I was putting up my price. I really didn't have time that day because I had to rush back to the lab as I had set up a new experiment and had to get back before the timer went off. That's why I gave you my email ID and asked you to mail your questions, saying I would answer at the earliest opportunity. Thank you for taking me up on it.

Let me take up your questions one by one. Well, on my feelings on getting the Young Scientist Award - I am overwhelmed. I didn't expect my design for a new composite material with applications in aeronautics to catch the state government's attention this soon. Well, the credit should go not just to me but to every member of the team I lead. Materials science is impossible without teamwork.

You ask me how I reached this milestone. I can't answer that without telling you the story of my life. I will try to be as brief as I can but there are details that I have to sketch in for you if you are to get the full impact. So, here goes.



Let me take you back to a time sixteen years ago when I was fourteen and studying in standard eight in a government school. Let's say you were around then and came to see me. After asking some four times for directions, you finally came to the door of our house in the heart of the Viveknagar slum. I said house but that is sheer hyperbole. It was a shack made of corrugated zinc sheets and consisted of a room, ten feet by twelve, to which was attached a kitchen. It barely had space for an adult and a child at a time. That single room was our living room, bedroom and dining room all rolled into one, where my family of four – me, my younger sister, my mother and father - lived or, to put it more aptly, survived for twenty-five years. There was a government-built public toilet and bathroom at the end of each long row of houses. There were five cubicles in the one we were assigned to and it was meant for some twelve homes. I am sure you would have felt somewhat queasy.

My father, Selvaraj (now no more), was a very skilled house painter but very early on fell victim to drink. I don't recall a single week when he was not drunk at least for 3 days. On those evenings when he was sober, he was a decent guy and did show affection. But as the years went by, such evenings became fewer and far between. I say evenings, because he never went to work drunk. But that version of him we rarely got to see at home. When drunk, he made life really irritating for us and sometimes even traumatic. He'd be very noisy and keep yelling at my mom. He'd say all his bad luck dated back to the time he married her. After the yelling and ranting, he'd fall asleep. In the morning he was sobered up and very quickly and silently finished his morning routine, ate breakfast and was off to work by the time we kids had barely woken up. There were even times when he'd get violent and drag my mother by the hair and slap her because she refused to give him money to go out and get one more drink. Then he'd storm out anyway. Though rather rare, this disturbing phenomenon would throw me into depression and suppressed anger for at least a week after each episode. For all that, I never once saw my mother standing up to him. "Keep quiet, what will the neighbours think?" was all she would say. She would discourage all discussion of this domestic abuse. By my reckoning this used to happen at least four or five times a year. By the time I reached the sixth standard, however, my father started working for a new contractor who'd send him out of town on assignments that lasted a week or two at a time. My mother, my sister and I owe our sanity today to those spells of absence. I once calculated that in certain years his absences added up easily to a total of some five or six months.

My mother, Lily, has always been devout and hard-working. She has studied up to 7th standard in the Tamil medium. She never misses Sunday mass. She lives with me and in spite of the middle-class comforts she now enjoys, is never idle. I keep telling her I will hire a housemaid because we can afford it, but she simply rejects the proposal each time. Now her pet preoccupation is to look out for a girl for me, although I tell her I want to delay marriage by at least a couple of years. I am only 30 anyway.

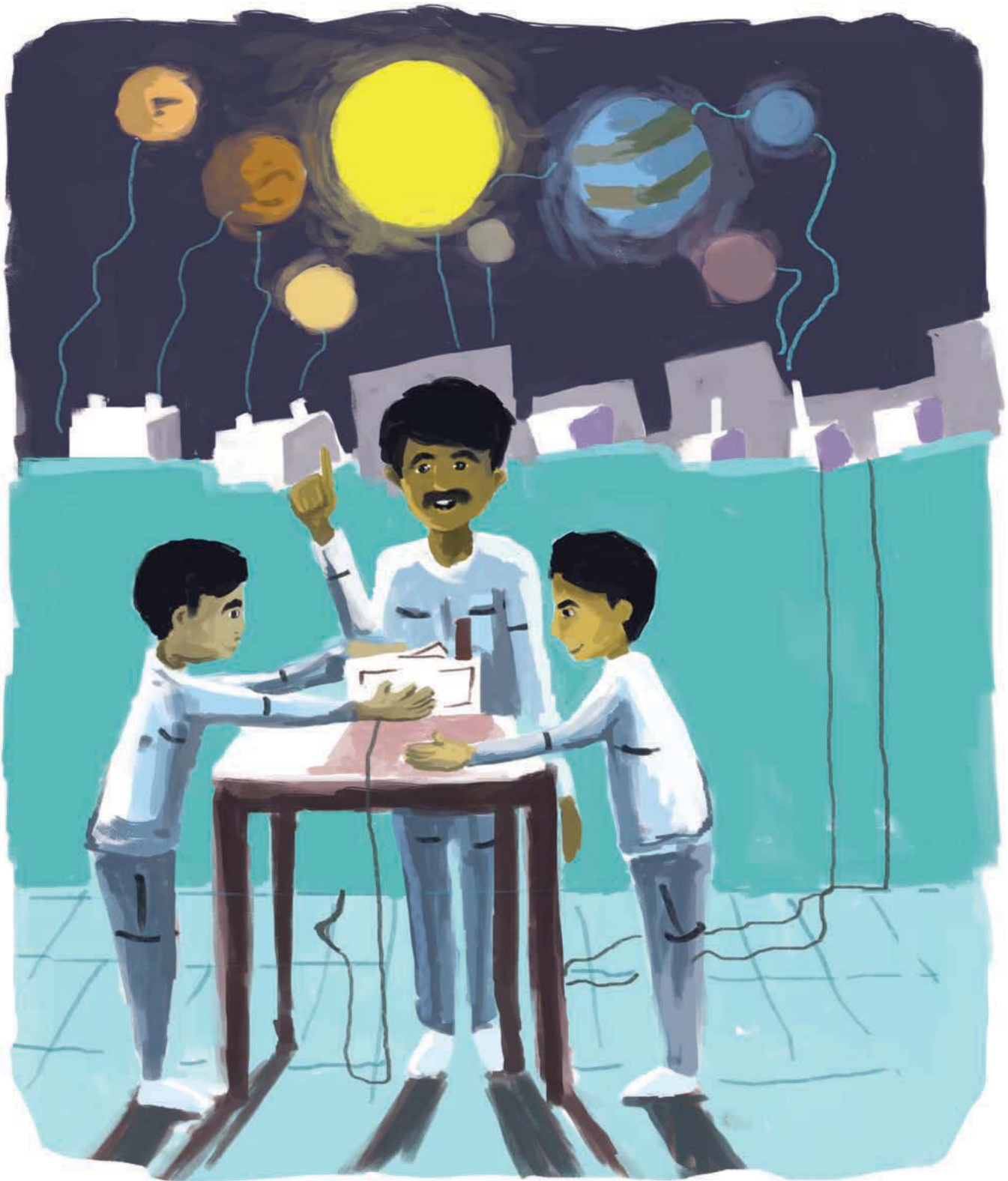
Back in those days my mother was virtually the sole breadwinner because very little of my father's fairly decent wages would be left over after his drinking spells. Christmas season was an exception. When that came around, my father would become a temporary angel and he'd actually buy everyone some clothes and other goodies. Most of each year, however, my mother would slave away as a housemaid

in three upper-middle class homes a kilometre away. She put us in the nearby government school and did everything she could to keep us clothed and supplied with uniforms and books. There was of course the blessing of the free mid-day meals which were occasionally tasty but, to be fair, always sustaining. Tuition was free, thankfully.

Up to standard eight, I just scraped through at school. I couldn't care enough and no one at school bothered. I wasn't very social and would often be under what I now discern was some kind of mild depression. Then something happened which turned everything around for me and launched me on the trajectory that would eventually lead me to my current position. If that hadn't happened I would most probably have dropped out at ninth standard and drifted off to be some mechanic's apprentice or, who knows, a good-for-nothing layabout and an alcoholic to boot.

An NGO called headstreams started a collaborative venture with our school – I don't remember what it was called – 'Learning through Play' or something like that. Twice a week, volunteers would come and do sessions with us. Each session was for an hour and a half. The very first session was such a delight and a welcome break from routine. I have very vivid memories of it. Sheel akka and Solomon anna got us out of our dingy classroom and into the school's small playground (an apology for a playground really, but still something was better than nothing). They taught us two brand new games. Very enjoyable. Before long, we were squealing in delight and enjoying each other's company. Then we learned a delightful action song in English. Then Akka and Anna taught us about the solar system by getting us all to stand in concentric ellipsoid circles and move around as planets and moons while a fat boy called Shekhar stood at the centre and acted as the sun. In the 20 minutes that we did that exercise, I learned the whole concept of the solar system in a way that I could not in my classes for months on end or through our rather sub-standard textbooks.

In another session we learned about atoms and the periodic table through a really enjoyable game that these two geniuses had devised. One day, they brought a moving model of the solar system and on another day, they got us to do a whole map of India on the playground with rivers and mountains and cities and states all marked on it, and each one of us stood inside one state and described it to the others. Akka and Anna brought us interesting things – models, videos, illustrated



books and got us to do interesting things – models, maps, charts, a whole exhibition on health and nutrition. Oh! I could go on and on. I eagerly looked forward to those two special days each week. And in the summer there was a whole one-week camp which combined learning and play.

As we played and learned, I found myself changing – from gloomy cynic to curious young scholar. For the first time, I felt the desire to take my education as far as I

could take it. I remember one day asking Solomon *anna* what was the highest standard one could reach in the college he was studying in. He said it was called Ph.D. and I told him I want to one day pass that standard also. He corrected me and told me it was not called standard but a degree - the highest degree. I said, "Yes, I want that." *Anna* told me, "Yes, why not? You can surely earn that degree one day. And then they will call you Dr. Edwin Selvaraj." That was a big psychological boost to me. I could see that Solomon *anna* really believed I was capable and that made me feel good about myself. No one had done that for me before.

One day I heard Sheel *akka* talk so wonderfully in English and I asked her if someday I could be so fluent in English. She said, "Certainly!" After that she took a special interest in helping me improve my spoken English. My mother noticed the transformation in me and one day came to the school during session time. She almost touched the feet of Solomon *anna* but he quickly restrained her. I remember how with tears in her eyes she thanked both of them for the magic they had worked in my life.

The next year we were taken to Solomon *anna*'s college as part of something called Tackle Fest. There were so many stalls where the college students showed us fascinating experiments in Physics and Chemistry and Microbiology and a whole lot of other subjects. My interest in Chemistry was born there. Actually Solomon *anna* was doing his Ph.D. in a branch of Chemistry called materials science. He promised to take me one day to his lab and show me the wonder of making new lighter and yet much tougher materials than iron and steel or aluminium. They were called composites. He kept his promise.

During the vacation, I got to spend two whole days in his lab. He had a knack of explaining the whole thing in a very simple way. This fired my imagination. I was hooked. I got admission in the very college Solomon *anna* studied. By then he had moved on – to Sweden. I got a scholarship. After completing my degree, I got this absolutely stunning opportunity to do a masters and Ph.D. in Germany. In Materials Science! I got back with a Ph.D. and now I am indeed Dr. Edwin Selvaraj! Just as



Anna predicted so long ago. I work for the National Institute of Materials Science and am heading a new project. My team earned our first patent just a week ago. My sister was anyway doing somewhat better than me in her studies, and her graph really took off after college. She now works for a PR firm. Hers is just as

exciting a story as mine but we'll keep it for another day.

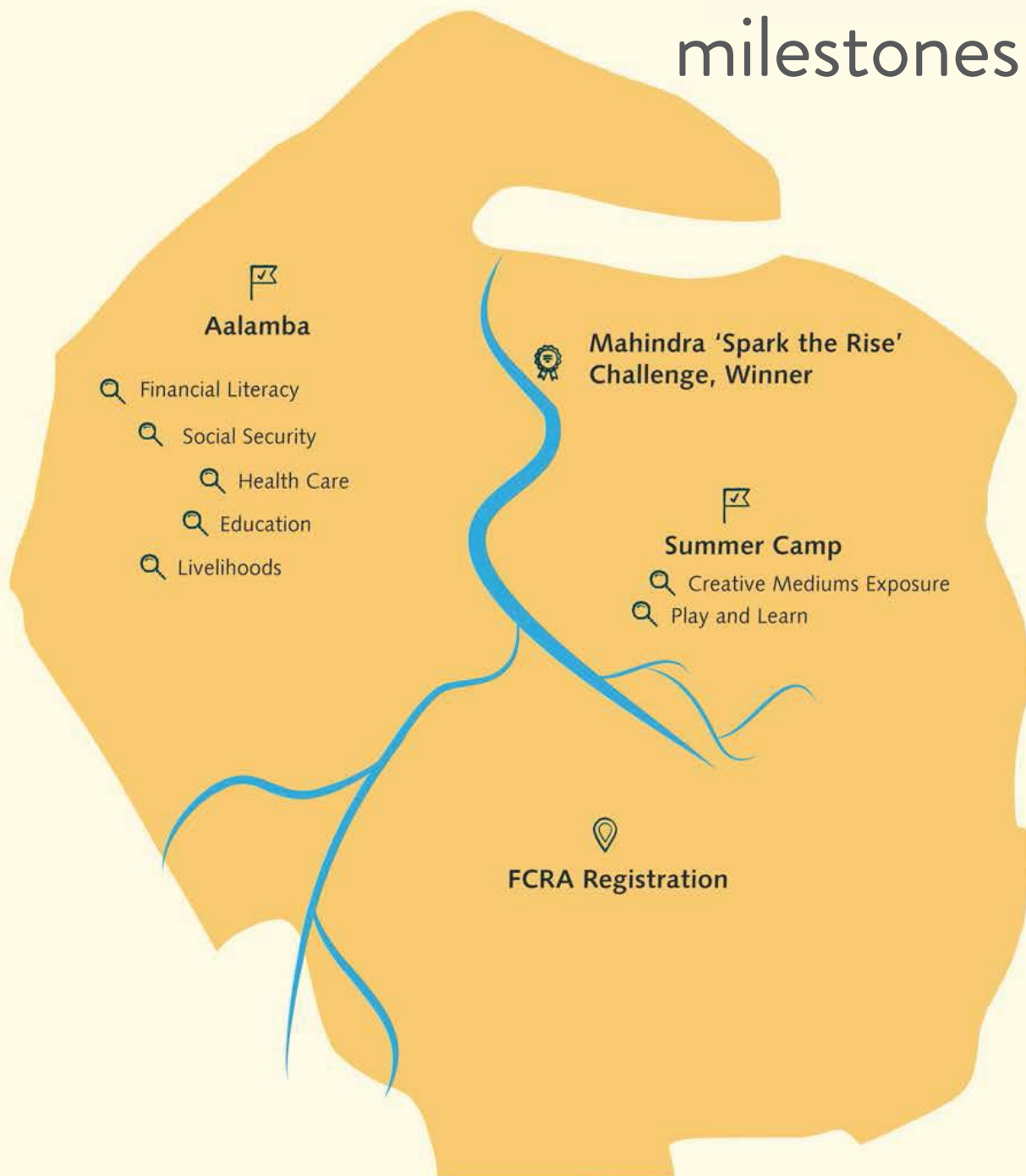
Next month I am heading to Sweden to take part in a conference. And no marks for guessing who has invited me. Why, Dr. Solomon Kumar, of course - my beloved Solomon *anna*! He heads a research institution there. I am going to take something special for him – the small model of the solar system that I had made along with a wonderful classmate (we're still in touch) all those years ago, using wires and beads on a cardboard base at summer camp, under *Anna's* guidance.

Sincerely,
Edwin

cheriyan alexander

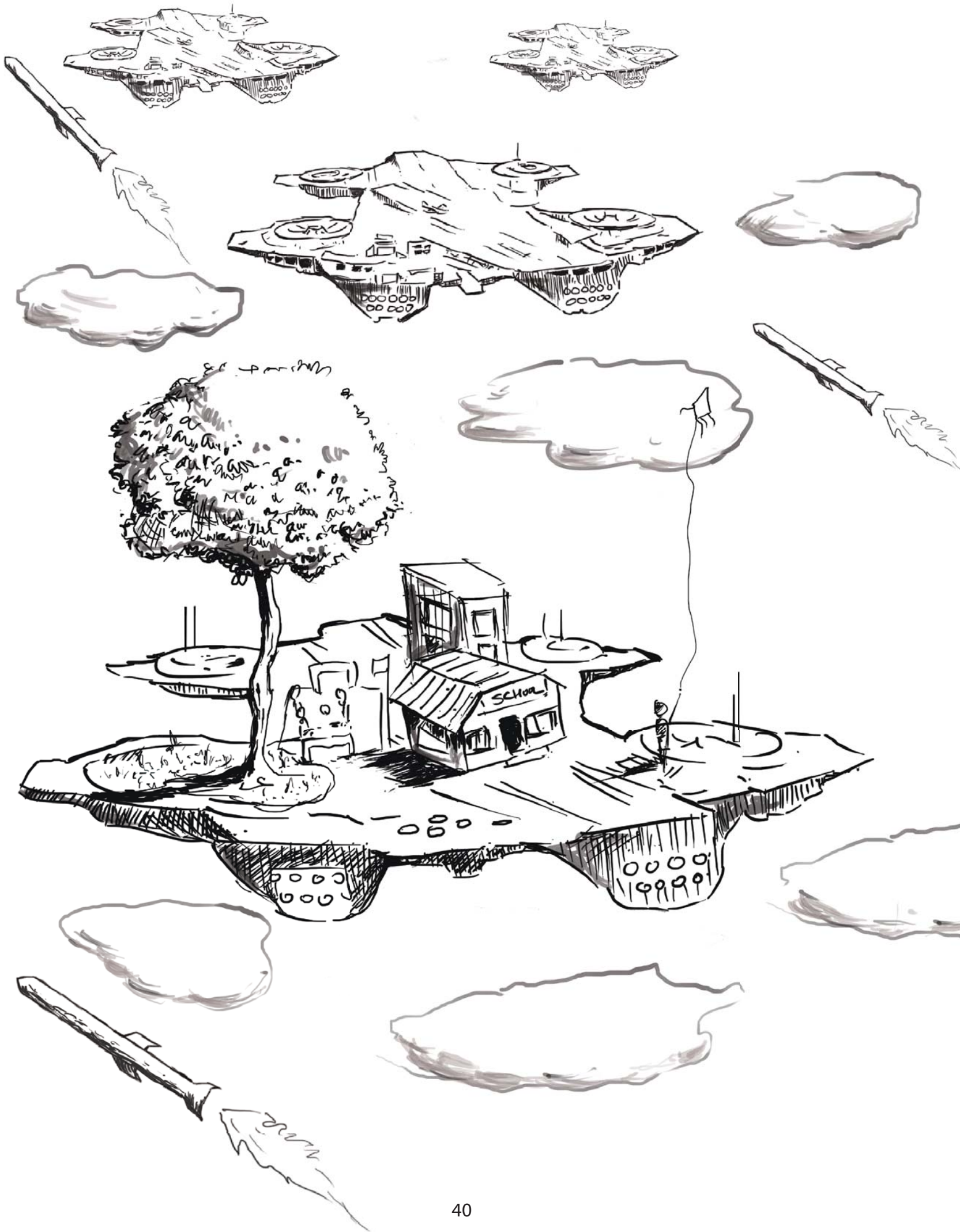
The author, a co-founder of headstreams, narrates a transformational story of a boy from a "gloomy cynic to a young scholar." It brings alive the desired impact of all of headstreams' dreams turned programmes. His imagery makes us believe in the infinite possibilities of our work, much of which we will never know.

milestones



in 2012



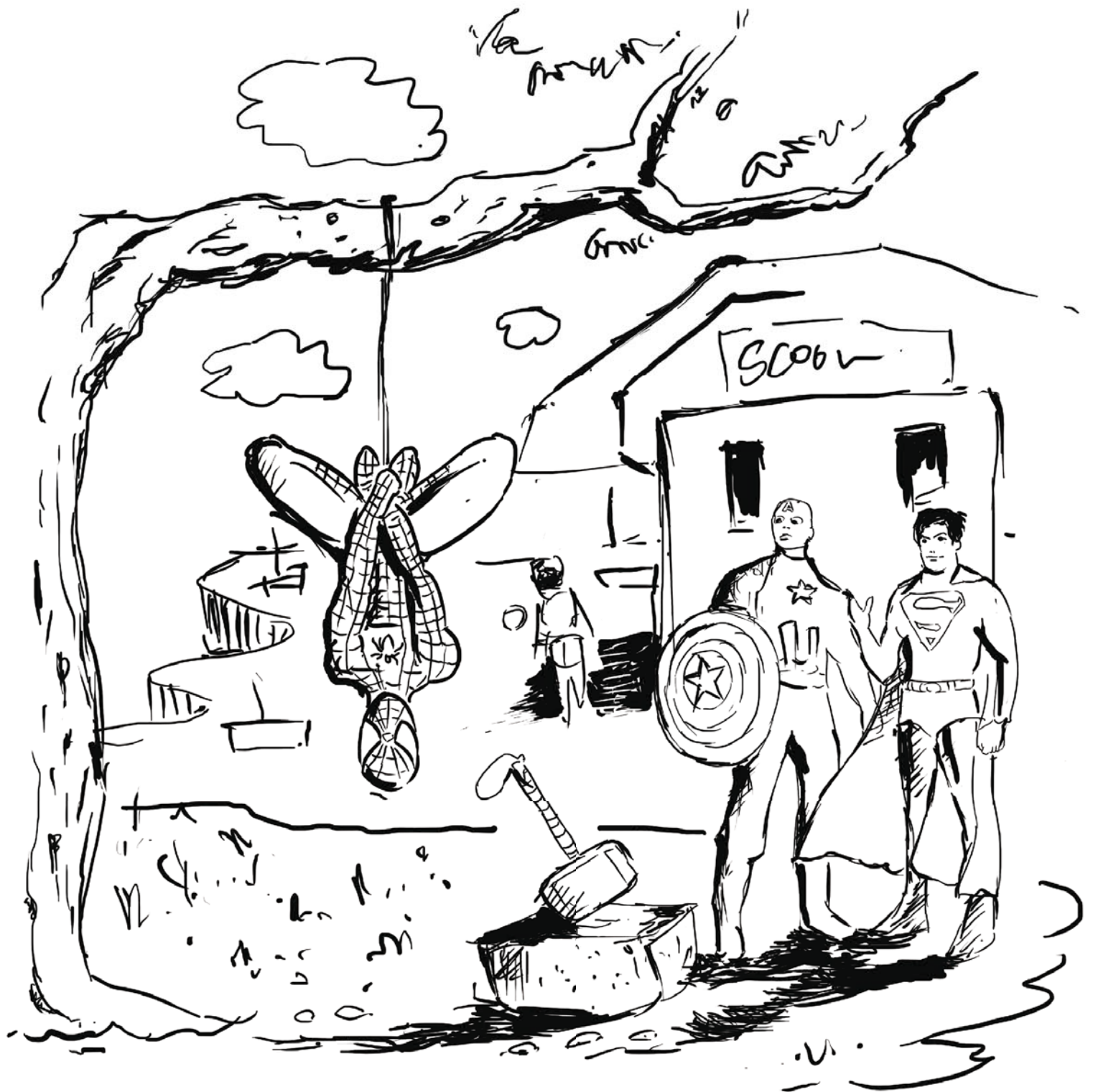


how 'bout a headstreams school of play?

Ameya, reeling under his extra classes during vacations, comes to me and says, “*Amma!* Imagine if I could go to school dressed up as Captain America, carrying my shield and wearing my half mask! I would be reporting for duty and will be so focussed at school, like the Captain!”

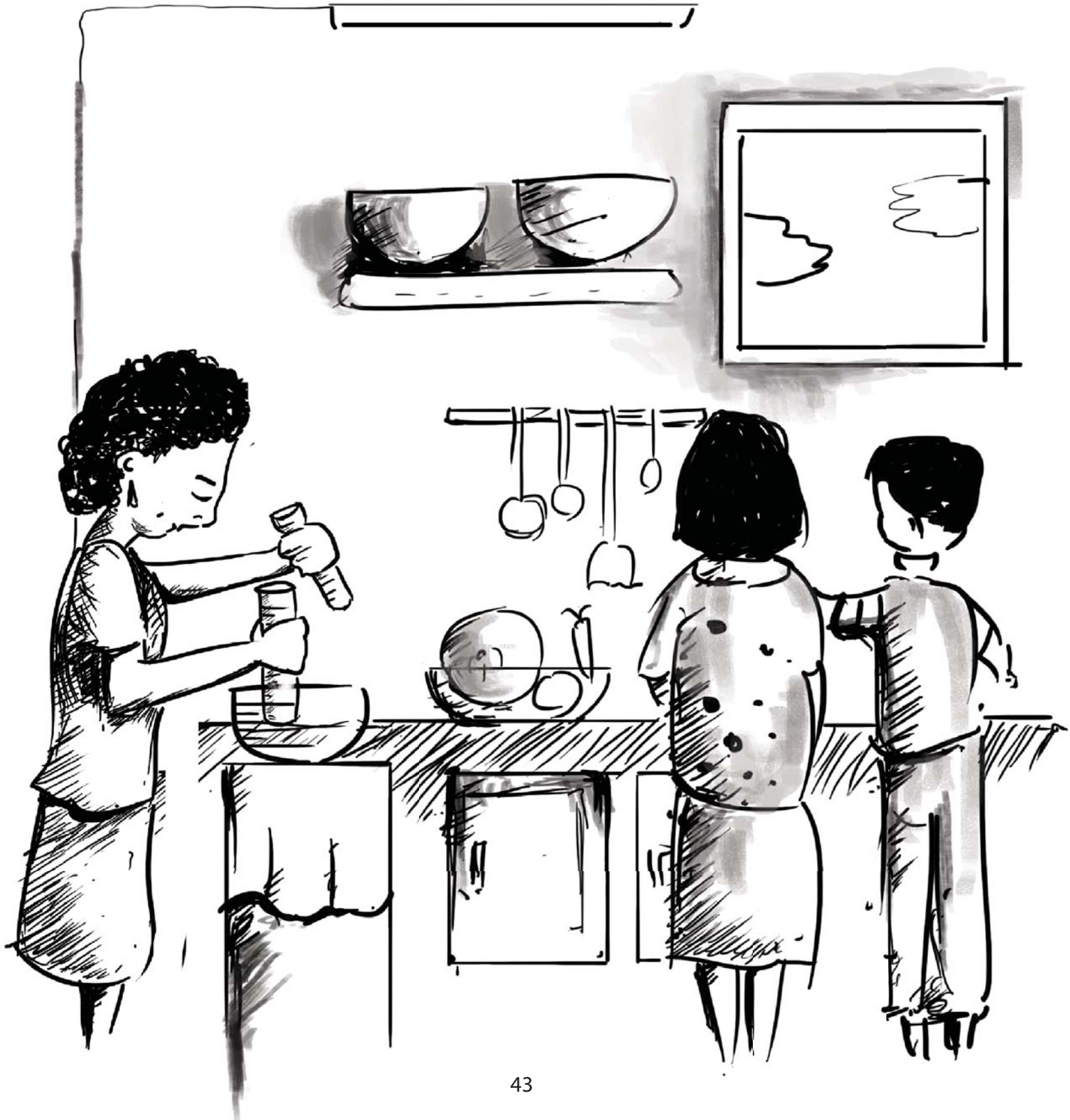
My indulgent smile eggs him on to continue, “It would be fantastic to have our school housed in the helicARRIER, so I can also learn alongside the Avengers, saving the world.”

Now my dormant imagination wakes up too! Of course I would love it if Ameya’s classmate could be badass Rocket Raccoon inspired by a Beatles song, who puts in hard work to be fast, with acute senses of smell, sight, hearing and touch. Or someone who can scale walls, buildings, and trees with ease. Or be an accomplished starship pilot, or a brilliant engineer and technician, or an expert marksman. Or the heroic and noble Groot. And the teachers would be handpicked from the Avengers Assemble; the “PTM” would come with a quick spin alongside the guardians of the galaxy.



Sure, we could figure out a syllabus that would interest us. We could learn maths with *jembe* drumbeats. Or chemistry by cooking. We could climb trees for a game of tag, or just hug a branch and see small leaves sprouting, or just admire the flight of a dragonfly, and understand the drama, the persistence in nature, to ensure survival. Indeed, we would prepare for life at our own pace! Right in the middle of a serious conversation, we could doze off, and wake up to a water fight. We would take our pet along to all our classes, and understand how fireflies need grandfather snail to glow. We could just PLAY. Have fun. Enjoy the game. And learn at the same time!

The progress would be the happiness of the students in the school and would be measured by the guffaws and the squeals of the soooo looong wavy-haired Jabba-clad grown-up child with layers on, who slips frequently when he guffaws – Naveen PhD – who understands the travails of the students as he himself has come back from the brink. The louder the guffaw, the more the learning! Jolted out of my reverie, I realise my “unearthly” thoughts.



So, do we need a parallel universe to make learning fun? To ensure an element of play? To accept diversity? To keep alive a sense of wonder? To revel in creativity? To lovingly explore play through music, art, dance and make children reach for the stars?

I am happy when we see all this happening on account of the headstreams family. A family not by blood, but has within its fold the kind of people that accept you for who you are, who inspire people to become independent thinkers, spirited learners, avid writers, lifelong learners, and socially conscious participants in their communities. And most importantly believe -- we are never too old to do goofy stuff!

mahalakshmi parthasarathy

As a mother this co-founder of headstreams mulls on the possibility of a universe where learning is actually intrinsically motivated, mentored and fun. In doing so, she presents headstreams and the people within it as lifelong learners, who inspire others by the work they do through play and by their dreams of how this work will manifest in the lives of children.

milestones



in 2013

	Recognition
	Institutional Milestone
	Programme
	Focus Area



find joy in your journey

Diya, a post-graduate student, lived in Bangalore. On completing the course, she decided to work on herself to realize her potential before getting into anything full-time and started looking for ways in which she could do this.

One bright sunny morning, while on a walk, she saw an old man, sitting on the park bench and reading a book. Diya said, "I love the book you are reading. It kept me up for two nights." The old man replied, "Indeed, when I read it for the first time, I also had the same experience." He sounded friendly and scholarly and this conversation led Diya to talk about her current state and how she was looking for ways in which she could work on herself. The old man gave her some wise advice, "If you want to work on yourself, you should work with people." Saying this, he showed an interesting ad to her, which read: **"Hurry up and be a part of us to create and experience a world where every person has opportunities to realize their inherent potential to live a positive, confident and socially productive life."**

This interesting line made her read the complete article, which spoke about an upcoming treasure hunt event: **"Are you a person who can communicate and collaborate with different people and solve problems in creative/ innovative ways? Here is chance to prove yourself. Get registered for Headstreams Paragon/ Khazana (towards fullness of life!). Don't miss this chance to explore yourself better than ever!!"**



Diya felt this was an opportunity for her to act, so she got registered and prepared for the event. When the awaited day arrived, and when according to the prescribed guidelines she reached the starting point, she was late by 20 minutes. The event had already started. She collected her hunt kit and began her search. There were people ahead of her and also a few around, who were as clueless as her.

Her first clue said: ***“Remind yourself that you cannot fail at being yourself. Acknowledge and accept multiple aspects of your life by creating your vision board.”*** Diya sat down with a few magazines, paint, glue, and scissors and in sometime had made a vision board which she felt described her. Through the process she had started feeling positive and confident about herself, and towards the end of the task was pleased with how things had turned out for her.



On completing the board, she was directed to her second clue: ***“We cannot become what we want by remaining what we are - Max Depree. Play the way and make your choice; realize your potential to win the situation.”*** This clue sounded a little tricky and made her think for a while. To break the silence, flyers and posters that had been put up buzzed to answer the question. Looking around, she noticed posters which quoted great people. Pondering over these, she chose one as her answer: “If it’s challenging you, testing you, and pushing you... it’s helping you become more of who you are meant to be - Mandy Hale.” Her submission was acknowledged by a volunteer, who gave her the third clue.



The event was well organized. By now people around had started to talk to each other and Diya had managed to make friends. This third clue took some effort to solve. It said: **“Dig deep to find your piece; to reach the next clue, find your group and complete the phrase.”** This reminded Diya of the kit she had received at the beginning. On digging through the kit, she found a piece of paper which had one part of an idiom written on it. She realized the task was to find the other parts and complete the phrase. This was an opportunity for everyone to build positive relationships. Diya had to move out of her comfort zone and explore the new to make the process enriching for her.

The process was exciting and warm, and Diya got her next clue after working with the group. The clue spelled: **“Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction. – John F. Kennedy... Dare to share your life’s passion and purpose; find your favorite four to share more.”** Volunteers and organizers standing by the side in similar T-shirts became Diya’s audience to hear about her passion and purpose.

By now there were a few participants who had backed off and were leaving. Diya found this depressing, especially because this group included a few of Diya’s friends. They were leaving, saying things like: “The treasure is not that great”, “I will find a better place to explore”, “It’s a tiring experience”, “the crowd is not supportive”, “I have something better to do”, etc. When Diya also thought of quitting, the fourth clue made her question her plan of action. Trying to understand her purpose of being a part of the event, she decided to continue her search.

On completing the task, she was directed towards her fifth clue, which said: **“Find your best to entertain the rest; group of five would be your hive; call out a song to not be wrong; and know your surroundings to make the best noise.”** Diya hurried to converse with the different people and was soon part of a team of two boys and three girls. Together they cracked the clue by performing a song using the available materials. This turned out to be a delightful experience for Diya.

On completing the task successfully, the team earned their last clue: **“The image of an ideal self should drive and empower you to grow; Picture the perfect you to see what’s new.”** And with the clue came an art kit, which had sheets of paper, paints, and other stationery in it. Diya was excited: She was not just finding herself through the process but creating one!



Finally, Diya was through to the Headstreams Khazana door, which looked dull and dusty from a distance. As the door opened, the shadow of a woman was visible! But when she looked closer, it was a middle-aged man with a humble smile on his face, kindly receiving the people who reached there. In seconds, the man disclosed the treasure board which spelled “You have gained the most valuable treasures. Think twice and be wise to double the treasure by recognizing it.” This left Diya addled for a while.

Reflecting back on the last few hours though, gave her an insight into how the process had been more exciting and enriching than anything one could have received at the destination. She had been part of situations where she had had to communicate, collaborate, solve problems, make decisions, think critically and be creative, which is after all what self-growth is about!

Finally she realized how instilling these values in oneself would make every walk of life beautiful and enriching. Diya thanked Headstreams for the opportunity to gain this learning and returned home, happy with her incredible box of treasure which would never diminish but would rather multiply through constant use.

vineetha c

This story illustrates the inner journey of a person trying to make sense of the world and finding ways to grow. The author, a co-worker at headstreams, highlights the challenges inherent to an open-ended meaning-making process, such as taking part in a game. She realizes that transformation occurs, not at the end, but in the willingness to engage with the process itself.

milestones



in 2014





broken tent

Aradhya wanted a tent as a gift for her 3rd birthday. I postponed the instant gratification for more than a year. I felt that it could only be given to her as a reward for demonstrating exceptionally good behavior or if her aunt gifted it to her for her 4th birthday. Five months before Aradhya's 4th birthday, she started asking me every day: "Ma, is it my birthday today? Isn't today 8th of March? When will *Anuma* (Aradhya's aunt) send my tent, my birthday gift?" It was tough to distract her every day and deny her the pleasure of having a gift that she had been wanting for so long. I always thought that children had short term memories and that once you distracted them, they quickly moved on to new things that captured their attention. But having a tent house became such an obsession with Aradhya that every conversation with her aunt would begin and end with, "*Anuma*, when are sending my tent house?"

The day finally came when the tent arrived. With anticipation and excitement, I let Aradhya open the much awaited gift. A hyper happy child, she was disappointed to discover that her gift needed to be assembled! I promised her that we would have the tent assembled and kept it ready for her when she returned from school. She displayed patience and in the evening when she came, the tent had been assembled. She was super thrilled to see it. She went in and out of the tent and

decided that forever and ever she was going to live inside her tent, and invite her friends and have parties and play dates there. Within half an hour she called her friend Rakshit from next door, and within 15 minutes, Aradhya and Rakshit had dismantled the tent house, which had taken us an hour to assemble.



Under normal circumstances, I would have reacted wildly, punished Aradhya, given her a time out and would have denied her the pleasure of playing in her tent house. But I had been transformed. I saw Aradhya and Rakshit's disassembling of the tent not as a mischief but as part of a learning process. I understood that it was out of their curiosity to see how it had been assembled and that their curiosity would not be satiated unless they were a part of the process of assembling it in the first place.

I decided that I will seek Aradhya and Rakshit's help in reassembling the tent house. It took me another hour again but I felt at peace and my child's curiosity was laid to rest.

How did this transformation happen in my life? It would not have been possible without my active interaction with Headstreams and their amazing work in the space of education for children that integrates play into learning. It was through Headstreams that the world of active play and learning opened up for me. It is a belief that needs endorsement not just from parents like me but also from those working within the education system, who develop pedagogies and methodologies, train teachers and determine policy. Headstreams taught me through Arivu program what Joan Almon (former chair of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America) said in her article titled, "The Vital Role of Play in Early Childhood Education": "The child's love of learning is intimately linked with a zest for play. Whether children are working on new physical skills, social relations, or cognitive content, they approach life with a playful spirit." There she further expresses her apprehension that, "As play disappears from the landscape of childhood, we need to recognize that its demise will have a lasting impact. Decades of compelling research have shown that without play, children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development is compromised. They will develop without much imagination and creativity. Their capacity for communication will be diminished and their tendency towards aggressiveness and violence will increase. In short, human nature as we have known it will be profoundly altered, intensifying many of the problems that are already afflicting children and society. If we do not invest in play, we will find ourselves investing much more in prisons and hospitals, as the incidence of physical, and mental illness, as well as aggressive and violent behavior escalates."

Headstreams started this journey a few years ago and I can already see the traction the Arivu program has received. It needs more support, strengthening and institutionalization. It needs to transform into a national movement to restore play spaces, challenge the way children are taught, and discover how learning outcomes can be improved not just for today but for life.

meenu bhambhani

The author is thrilled to share what she learnt while engaging with headstreams. It made her look at her child differently and understand her better. Having journeyed with headstreams since 2009, the author is a firm believer in its philosophy and actions. Her unwavering support has enabled headstreams to scale new heights.

milestones



in 2015

	Recognition
	Institutional Milestone
	Programme
	Focus Area



a matter of conversation

The first job in everyone's life is always a big deal. It wasn't very different for me. I got a dream job, if you may call it a job. The interview lasted for two whole hours and was a conversation with two people. A conversation where I just spoke about myself - my dreams, what I wanted to do differently and why I wished to work with people. A conversation where I was listened to.

Looking back at the organic roller coaster ride it was, we did many things at headstreams: worked with women, forming self-help groups, focused on livelihoods, gradually moving into education of children and then overall development of children. But what really strikes me, now, looking back is how we moved from or added domains of work. It invariably began with a conversation, of sharing experiences and brainstorming to try new things.

For example, I remember this conversation I was part of. We wanted to work with children. While brainstorming what to do, even while we were busy with our work with women, we talked about how we needed to first find out the needs and desires of the children. And right there we decided to begin working with a school as a pilot. As we did those sessions, we started getting excited and would spend long hours reflecting on what our experience there meant. These were informal chats and before we knew it, the programme of Caravan had been created.

We designed Caravan to be a space where children could play freely, and could laugh, experience diverse mediums, make choices of their own. I think our experience with Satyanarayana best explains the magic that happens in the Caravan. Satyanarayana always tagged along with his sister Satya to the Caravan in their local government school. He had been denied admission in the local government school, under the pretext that he couldn't sit still. It was obvious he was 'too much handle' for an adult who had the responsibility of 60 other children.

Satyanarayana was hyperactive, a bundle of energy, restless. He would fight with other children for their toys and refuse to share, and hit older volunteers. He would even give instructions to adults to do his work! Soon he appeared to be bullying and bossing around the caravan, strutting around in his half khaki shorts, hitting and biting; his swag will forever be etched in our memories. Every facilitator de-brief session was replete with questions of how we could help this child.

We started by visiting his home. It was evident that the family was very poor. The father, a cobbler by profession, spent most of his earnings on alcohol; the mother, a cleaner in the BBMP (municipality), suffered from diabetes; his two sisters went to the local school and did most of the housework. Their home was built of two walls, the other two being borrowed sidewalls of other homes, with a makeshift separation using a saree. A broken chair, jars of water and some utensils were their only possessions. It also seemed apparent that Satyanarayana was beaten and scolded at home for his cheekiness and truant behaviour. No one knew what to do this little boy, so violent and naughty, and rejected by all.

Then we realised in our feedback sessions that he loved playing with board games, puzzles and memory games. Our conversations led us to allow him to play. He had made his choice and we made space for him to do what he wanted. Something shifted for this little boy and he would play with us for hours, with his puzzles and games, sitting in one place. He stopped hitting others. In front of us we saw him change – all we did was play and create an atmosphere of love, care and positivity.



Those caravan conversations led to more conversations, and then the crux of each conversation, the crucial learning we arrived at, would slowly transform into a programme. A conversation is also how our flagship programme Arivu-Disha came to being. Truly at headstreams no conversation is forgotten, no words are wasted. Conversations are our way of dreaming and drawing up plans of what to do next. It

is a way of pooling together everyone's experiences to get at the meat of the matter. And when we see our programmes, there is even a sense that we're all listening and being listened to.

My life at headstreams is dotted with tales of women, children, teachers, corporate employees, volunteers, interns, trainers, consultants, vendors and the like, whoever came in touch with headstreams. But it is this that stands out most for me: how a simple conversation of sharing an experience inevitably reveals itself as a full-fledged programme. In that sense, it is a place where dreams turn to reality. Mine did.

anu thomas

The author has worked directly across most of headstreams' programmes in these ten years. Arivu, the flagship play-and-learn programme holds a special place in her heart, as she was instrumental in conceiving and growing it. In illustrating the impact of the Caravan programme on a child, she also highlights the transformational power of play.

milestones



in 2016

	Recognition
	Institutional Milestone
	Programme
	Focus Area

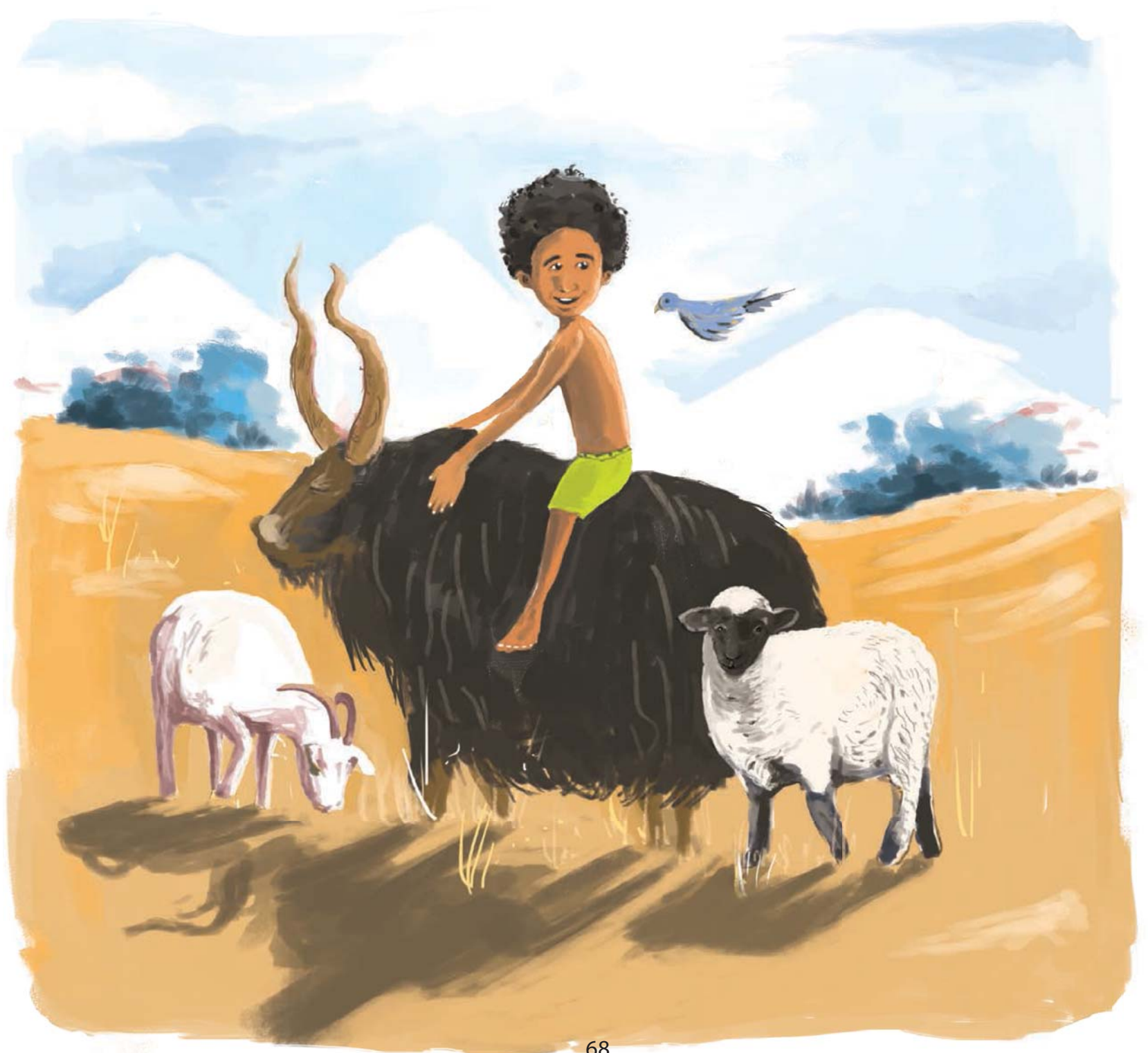


lila's rescue

"*Julley* (Joo-lay, hello in Ladhaki), I am home." The familiar greeting rang out through the long empty hall, as Lila returned from school. But even before anybody could answer, Lila was out of the door of the monastery through which he had just entered. He had dropped off his school bag and uniform robes, changed into his home clothes and rushed out. Though Lila was only eleven years old, nobody could remember how he came to be called Lila (meaning playful or spontaneous) or what his real name was or who his parents were. He was cared for by the monks in the monastery.

As his cup of butter tea sat there getting cold, Lila was running through the apricot orchards, towards the mountains which he knew like the back of his hands. He ran like the wind, faster than the magpies overhead, and crossed the cold streams flowing down the mountain. Very few people had made it across the streams, but Lila knew just where to step and what to hold on to, to prevent himself from being washed down the treacherous rocks. Just beyond the streams, Lila slowed down and tiptoed the rest of the way. He had a glint in his eyes, as he stopped, hid himself behind a large rock and threw some apricot kernels on the path ahead of him, making light plonking sounds. As if in response, loud, happy, excited animal voices came from the other side of the rock, breaking the silence of the high mountainside. Lila screamed out "*Julley*" and jumped out from behind the rock, to

where, in a large enclosure on the mountain side, many sheep, goats and yak had all gathered around the gate to welcome their friend. They looked and sounded as if it had been ages since they had seen each other, even though it had been less than a day. He called each one of them by name and greeted them, while checking one's hoof to see if it had healed, and pulling another's ears to check for injuries, and dusting the dirt off another's back. The yak stood a respectable distance, waiting patiently for Lila to join them. Lila was soon with them, hugging and patting them and talking to them all about his day and how he had missed them.



After he had greeted the last one, Lila's demeanour changed. He turned to the herd and said in a loud voice, "You know what we have to do. Are you all ready?" He walked up to the gates of the enclosure and led his troop of assorted animals out. As he walked, he collected the seabuckthorn berries from the shrubs that grew on the wayside. As they went down the familiar mountain trail, Lila began whistling a loud, high-pitched song. The sheep and goats bleated in time and the yak grunted. It was an unusual choir. Lila suddenly stopped and pretended to pick up something from the path, and the heady train behind him got all derailed with the animals bumping into each other. He turned and laughed at the playful disruption he had caused. The animals had come to expect this from him, but they just didn't know when he would pull this trick on them.

Soon they reached a clearing, and Lila paired off the animals and sent them down different routes. A sheep and a goat went down one path, a goat and a yak down another, while a yak and a sheep went up a different trail. Lila stood and watched as each pair went off purposefully down the paths chosen for them. While most of the animals had been paired and gone off on the mountain trails, a few remained with Lila. He made himself comfortable under a magical evergreen Juniper which stood majestically, almost in defiance of the cold inhospitable surroundings where hardly any tree grew.

He pulled out the seabuckthorn berries from his pocket and scattered a few of it before the assembled sheep, goats and yak. "*Don-ley*" (Go on, eat it) he told them, as he made a face when he chewed on the sour berries. Now Lila had the gift of zoolingualism – the power to understand the speech or emotions of animal life forms. And needless to say, the animals understood Lila perfectly.

He told them, "As we wait for our friends to get back, let's play a game. I am going to close my eyes and count till ten. You are going to hide and pretend as though you are separated from all of us. I will then come and find you." As Lila slowly counted to ten, all the remaining sheep and goats and yak went and found their own hiding places. Now, Lila knew the mountains intimately and there was no hiding place that he had not explored. "One, two, three,, nine, ten, ready or not, here I come," he called out and went about searching for the hidden animals. He tried hard not to look at the obvious places where he knew the animals would most probably be hidden. He walked around pretending to look hard, and slowly one by one, he called out to the hidden animals by name when he located them. The animals really enjoyed the game and there was laughter and frolic all around.

They played the game for three more rounds and then they all sat down under the Juniper, tired from running up and down the mountainside, playing hide and seek.

As they sat there, Lila asked them, "How did you feel being separated from the rest of the group?" The yak with the feeblest grunt, who hardly ever spoke since Lila met her, spoke up. "Today it was fun, but when I was separated from the rest of my herd last week and I fell down the rocks, I was very scared. I thought I was going to die, until the sheep and the goat found me lying injured and helpless in the thorny bushes. Thanks to them I am alive and here today." All the other animals around her bleated or grunted in agreement. All of them had been either abandoned or separated from their herd either accidentally or by design, and rescued by the valiant animal troops of Lila. Lila's throat had a lump listening to the grateful story of the yak. He cleared his throat and said, "Do you know, like you were rescued by the others, each one of us have been rescued by someone else at one time or the other? I was rescued too. All the sheep and goats and yak who have gone out were also rescued and brought here. Though we are all different, the fact that we were found and rescued unites us together. And there are so many others like us who have fallen off the cliffs, wounded and lying in the mountains, whom we need to find and rescue."



As Lila was saying this, the pairs of sheep and goats and yak began returning from the mountain trails. Several of them brought severely wounded animals with them, and some of them brought sick or dying birds. Some of the animals carried food they had collected from their trails. Lila and all the animals who were sitting around

rushed to help the wounded animals, treating them and tending to their wounds. Some of the new ones who did not know what to do, watched their more experienced animal friends tending to the wounded animals, so they did what they could do in that situation. One of the goats bleated comfort songs; some of the sheep shook their leg in comic style to make the wounded baby animals laugh; while some of the yaks grunted stories of how they had also been lost and then found, and how there was nothing to fear as they were all together. Some of the other animals, wanting to be useful, tried to make pluck some seabuckthorn berries



to give the wounded and scared animals. They however ended up bruising their hands in the thorny shrub and yelped in pain. Some of the little animals who saw this began laughing and soon the whole place was filled with the laughter of joy, relief and camaraderie.

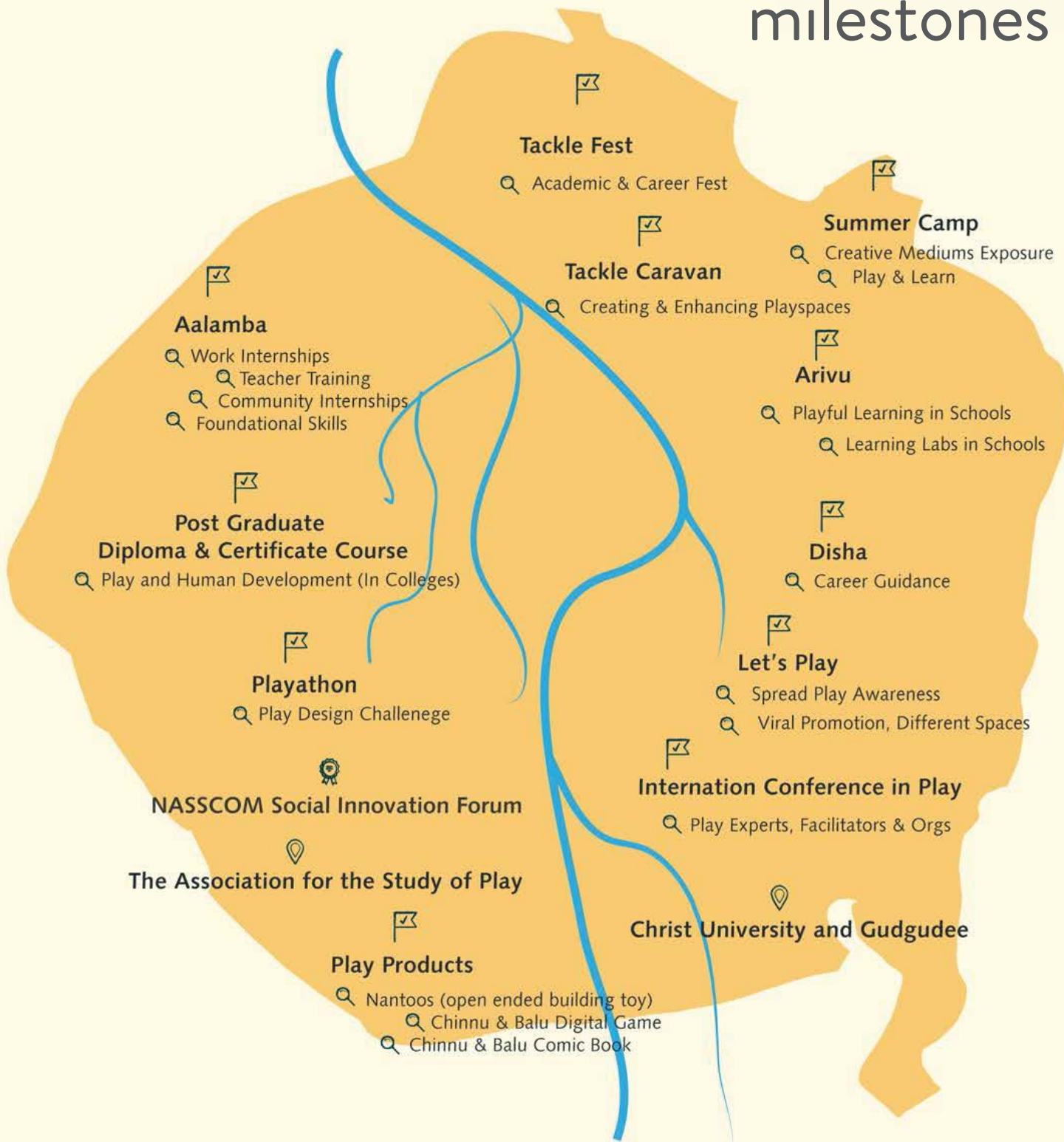
It was getting dark and Lila had a long way to run back to the monastery where he lived. He got all the animals to move to the animal enclosure so that they could be safe and warm during the cold night. They soon reached the enclosure, and the more experienced animals made the newly found animals comfortable and showed them around. They shared the food that some of the animals had collected for them. As they were tucking in for the night, Lila wished them all good night and ran like the wind, back to the monastery. He was going to be late, and would get scolded for staying out late again.

As he ran back over the streams and the mountains, past the apricot orchards, Lila could not stop grinning. He'd had a hard and tiring day, and the sight of the wounded birds and animals always broke his heart. But he was happy that the animals that he had rescued were now rescuing others in need and giving them a joyful, meaningful existence while nursing them back to good health. Within no time Lila was back at the monastery. He tiptoed around the entrance and sneaked back in without anyone noticing and went straight to bed. Missing dinner was better than being pulled up for going out late again. As he lay down on his bed, the same thoughts that haunted him every night came to him again. He saw images of each of the animals that were rescued, starting with the latest. He saw their wounds and their transformation as they healed. The images were all clear, till he reached the oldest rescue in his memory, his own rescue. Then the picture got hazy. And as his eyelids grew heavy and Lila fell into peaceful sleep, his question remained unanswered: "Who had rescued Lila and why?"

naveen i thomas

Through this layered story, the author, a co-founder of headstreams highlights how most programmes here are designed keeping in mind the needs of the young facilitators and what would help them work on themselves, such that they become co-travellers in the inner transformational process. The story also illustrates the great power of working in twos and teams, something headstreams applies as its design strategy fruitfully.

milestones



in 2017

	Recognition
	Institutional Milestone
	Programme
	Focus Area





catching the monster

Let's do something.

Hmmm... sisters and doggie?

Yes, I want to be the doggie.

Why do you always want to be the doggie?

She likes it.

Woof! Woof!

Come here doggie!

Good doggie!

Woof! Woof!

I have to take doggie for the walk.

I am the big sister. Only big sisters are allowed to go out alone.

I want to be the sister. The big one.

No, I want to be.

You were last time. Now I want to be.

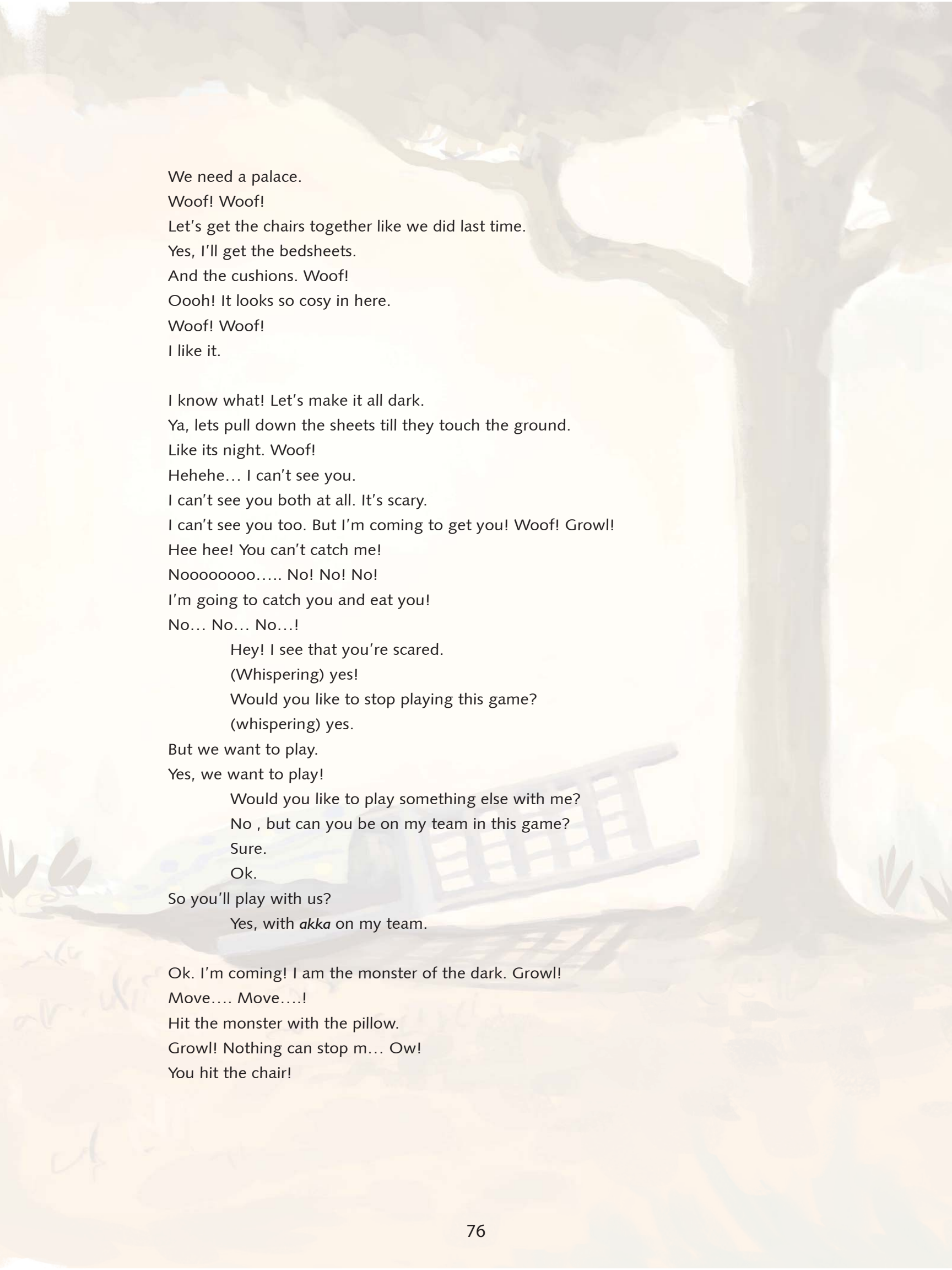
I want to be this time also. I am the biggest here.

Then I won't play.

I think she can be the big sister this time.

Ok, fine! You be. But I still am wearing the blue duppatta for my hair.

That's ok. My favourite colour is purple anyway.



We need a palace.
Woof! Woof!
Let's get the chairs together like we did last time.
Yes, I'll get the bedsheets.
And the cushions. Woof!
Oooh! It looks so cosy in here.
Woof! Woof!
I like it.

I know what! Let's make it all dark.
Ya, lets pull down the sheets till they touch the ground.
Like its night. Woof!
Hehehe... I can't see you.
I can't see you both at all. It's scary.
I can't see you too. But I'm coming to get you! Woof! Growl!
Hee hee! You can't catch me!
Noooooooooooo..... No! No! No!
I'm going to catch you and eat you!
No... No... No...!

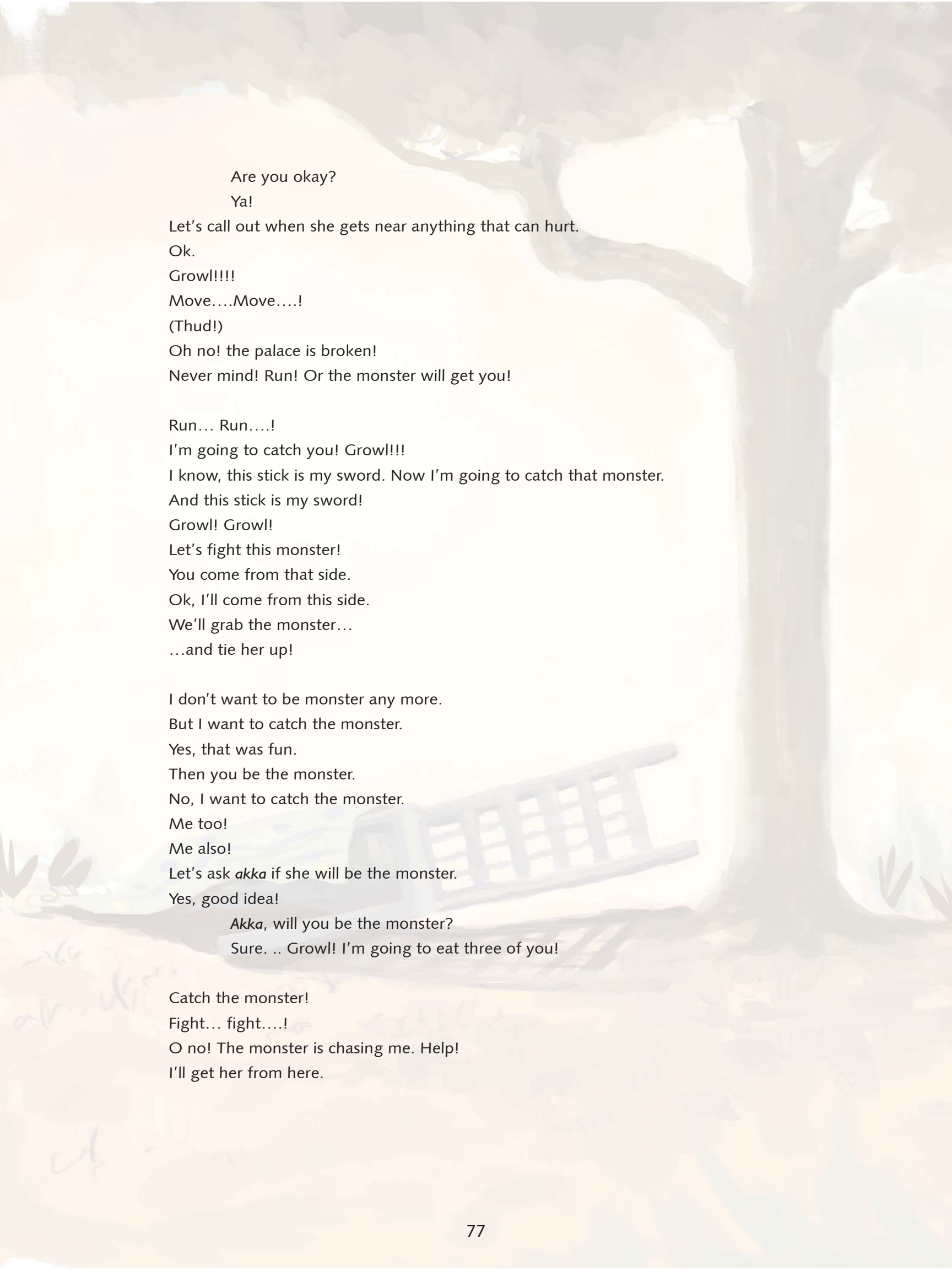
Hey! I see that you're scared.
(Whispering) yes!
Would you like to stop playing this game?
(whispering) yes.

But we want to play.
Yes, we want to play!

Would you like to play something else with me?
No , but can you be on my team in this game?
Sure.
Ok.

So you'll play with us?
Yes, with akka on my team.

Ok. I'm coming! I am the monster of the dark. Growl!
Move.... Move....!
Hit the monster with the pillow.
Growl! Nothing can stop m... Ow!
You hit the chair!



Are you okay?

Ya!

Let's call out when she gets near anything that can hurt.

Ok.

Growl!!!!

Move....Move....!

(Thud!)

Oh no! the palace is broken!

Never mind! Run! Or the monster will get you!

Run... Run....!

I'm going to catch you! Growl!!!

I know, this stick is my sword. Now I'm going to catch that monster.

And this stick is my sword!

Growl! Growl!

Let's fight this monster!

You come from that side.

Ok, I'll come from this side.

We'll grab the monster...

...and tie her up!

I don't want to be monster any more.

But I want to catch the monster.

Yes, that was fun.

Then you be the monster.

No, I want to catch the monster.

Me too!

Me also!

Let's ask *akka* if she will be the monster.

Yes, good idea!

Akka, will you be the monster?

Sure. .. Growl! I'm going to eat three of you!

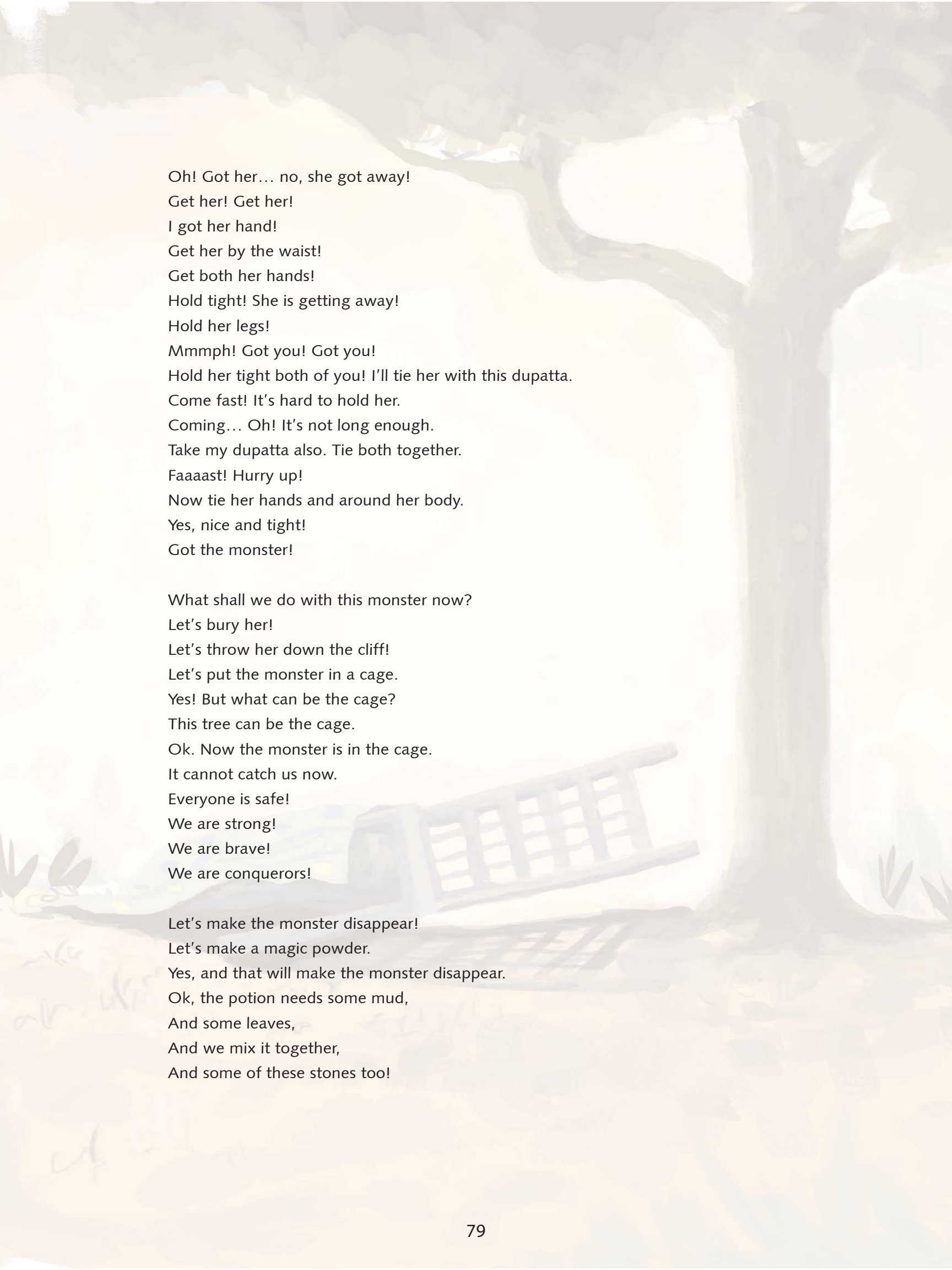
Catch the monster!

Fight... fight....!

O no! The monster is chasing me. Help!

I'll get her from here.

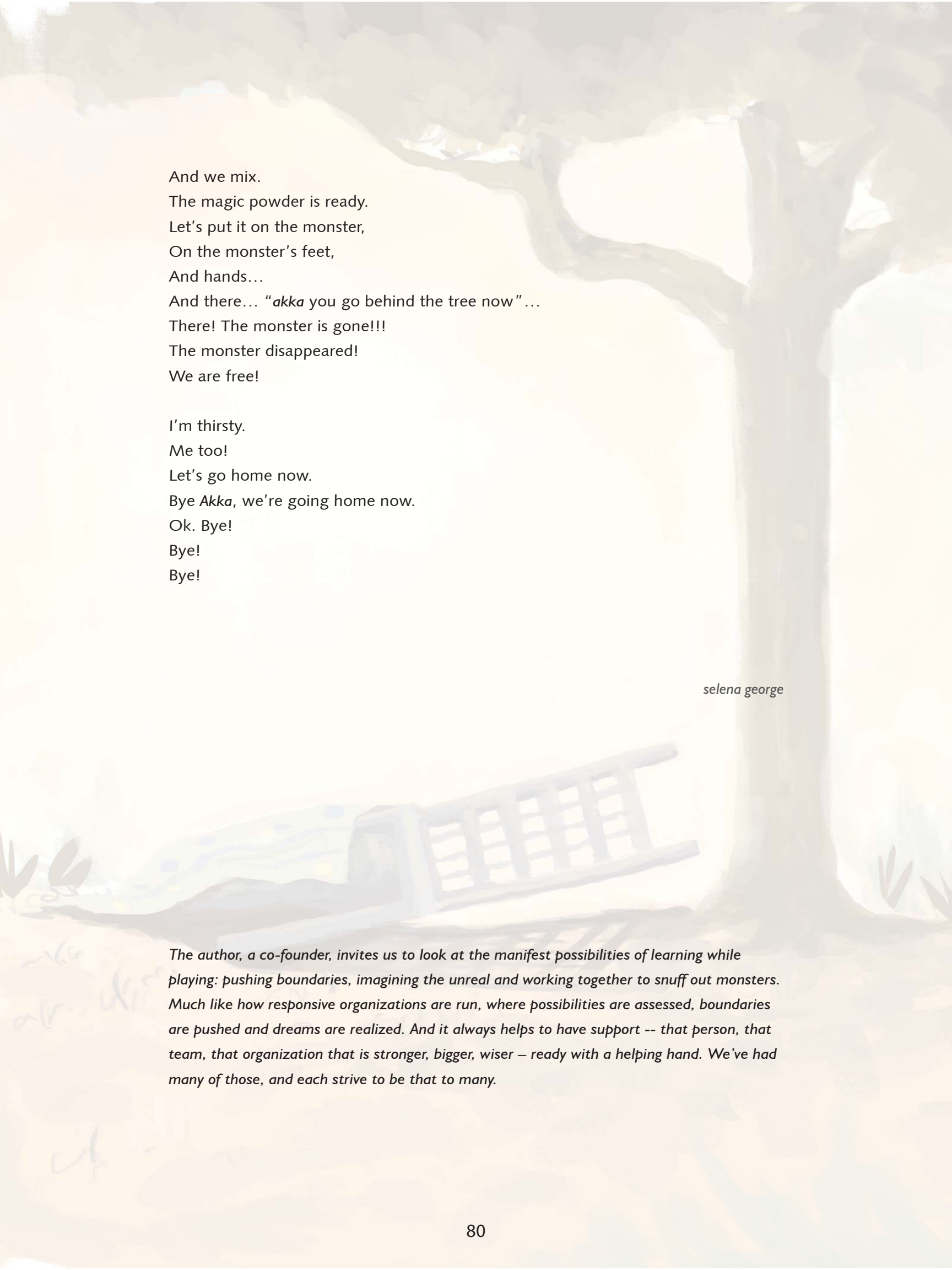




Oh! Got her... no, she got away!
Get her! Get her!
I got her hand!
Get her by the waist!
Get both her hands!
Hold tight! She is getting away!
Hold her legs!
Mmmph! Got you! Got you!
Hold her tight both of you! I'll tie her with this dupatta.
Come fast! It's hard to hold her.
Coming... Oh! It's not long enough.
Take my dupatta also. Tie both together.
Faaaast! Hurry up!
Now tie her hands and around her body.
Yes, nice and tight!
Got the monster!

What shall we do with this monster now?
Let's bury her!
Let's throw her down the cliff!
Let's put the monster in a cage.
Yes! But what can be the cage?
This tree can be the cage.
Ok. Now the monster is in the cage.
It cannot catch us now.
Everyone is safe!
We are strong!
We are brave!
We are conquerors!

Let's make the monster disappear!
Let's make a magic powder.
Yes, and that will make the monster disappear.
Ok, the potion needs some mud,
And some leaves,
And we mix it together,
And some of these stones too!



And we mix.
The magic powder is ready.
Let's put it on the monster,
On the monster's feet,
And hands...
And there... "akka you go behind the tree now" ...
There! The monster is gone!!!
The monster disappeared!
We are free!

I'm thirsty.
Me too!
Let's go home now.
Bye Akka, we're going home now.
Ok. Bye!
Bye!
Bye!

selenagorge

The author, a co-founder, invites us to look at the manifest possibilities of learning while playing: pushing boundaries, imagining the unreal and working together to snuff out monsters. Much like how responsive organizations are run, where possibilities are assessed, boundaries are pushed and dreams are realized. And it always helps to have support -- that person, that team, that organization that is stronger, bigger, wiser -- ready with a helping hand. We've had many of those, and each strive to be that to many.

milestones



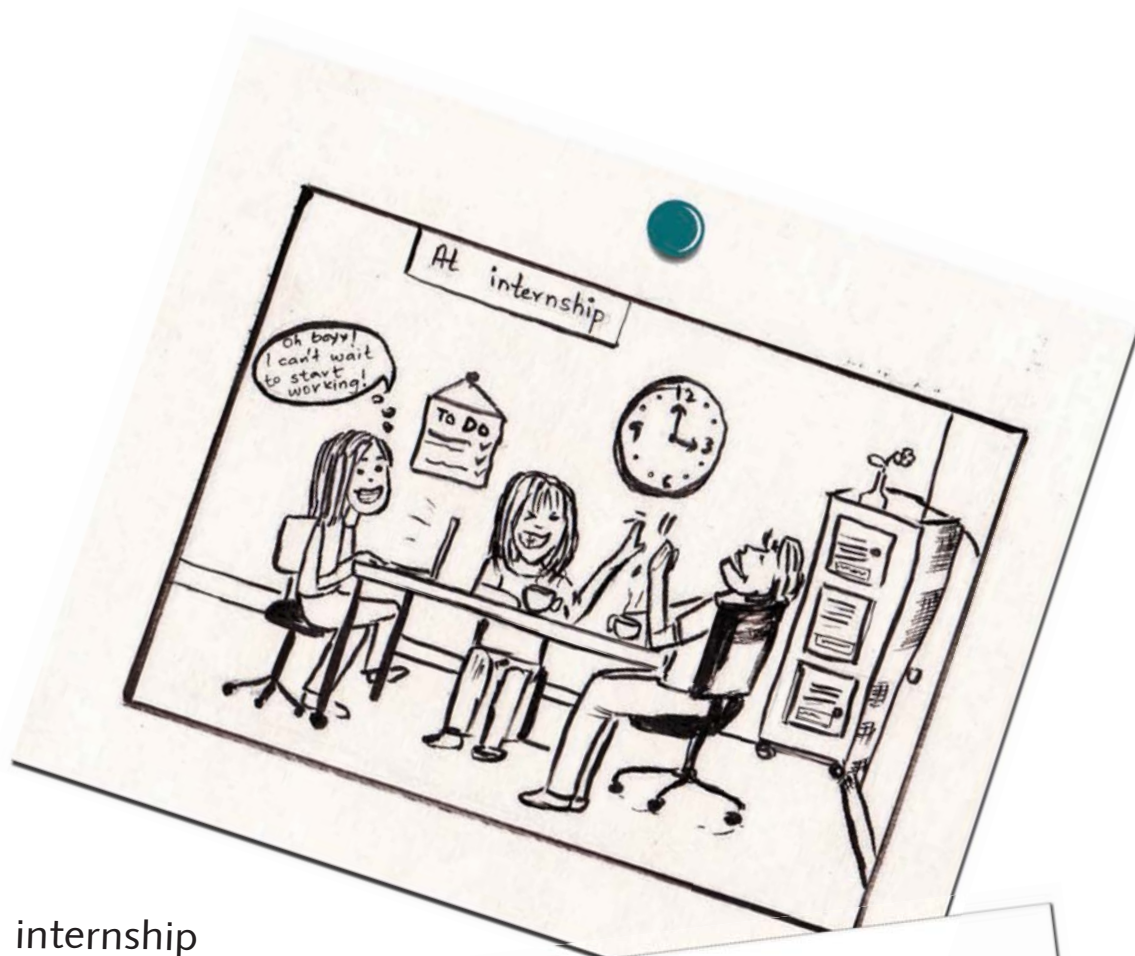
in 2018

	Recognition
	Institutional Milestone
	Programme
	Focus Area

in-house impressions

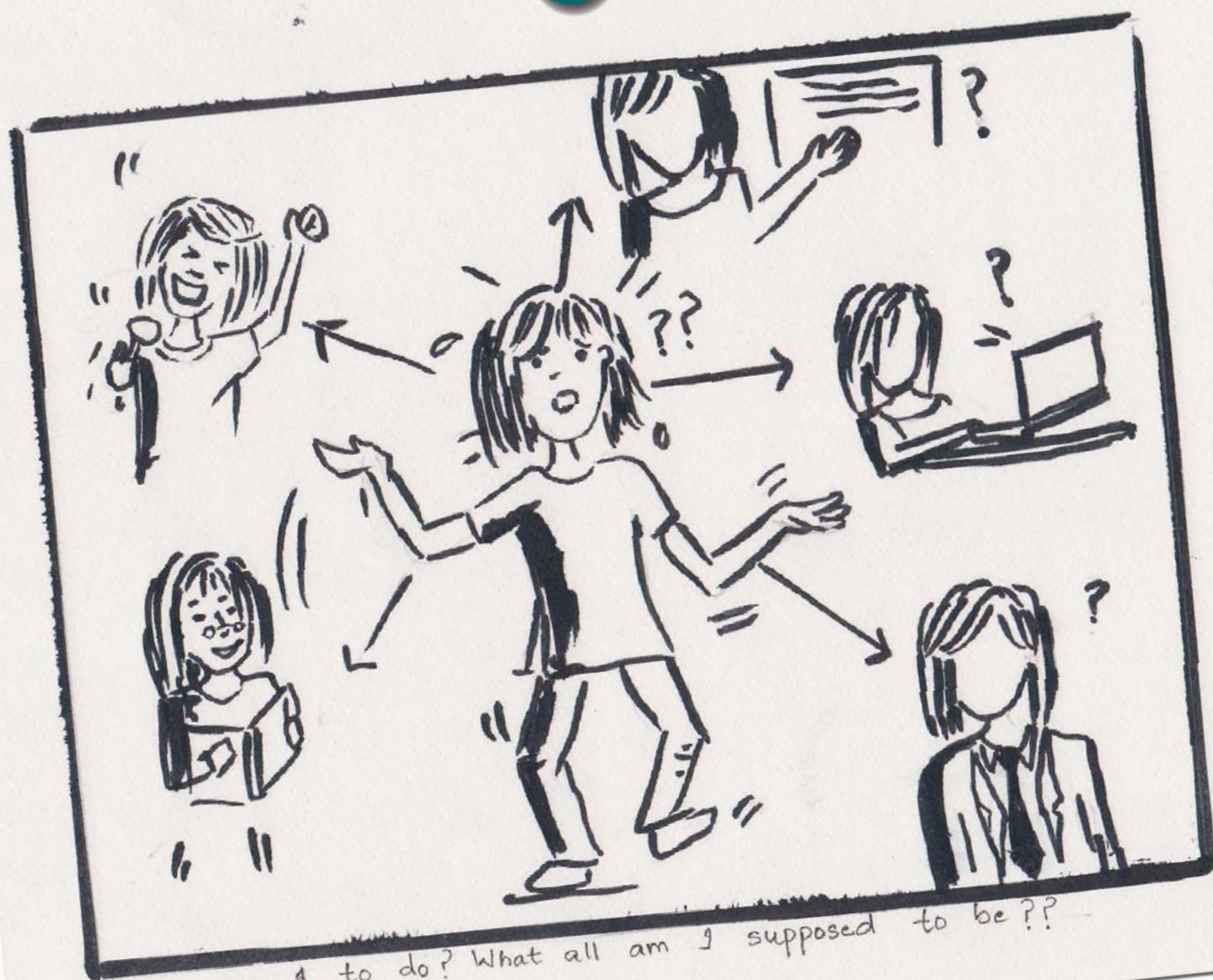


govt official visit



internship





What am I to do? What all am I supposed to be??

life at work



certificate course



the box of love

and she stood up...

Confident, compassionate and thoughtful,
Standing through love and loss, or just a pull.
She always knew, she could,
But with work and pressure,
Doubting herself she stood.
She didn't doubt her skill,
But it was a promise, she couldn't fulfil.
Bounded by time,
She was not tasting pepper and lime.
The work was due,
Digital art was new.
As anxiety grew,
Her faith flew...
With her confidence deflated, her pounding heart dilated.
She decided to talk to the boss.
He might shout,
Or chuck her out,
But can there be any other loss?
With all the courage she had,
She expressed, she was glad.
But his reaction left her in awe:
He said, "its okay, that's not a flaw."
She could breathe,
She could dip her brush and paint,
Software not working would no more be a complaint.
She again thought she could, with her faith stronger she stood.

madiha ansari



Ashima

What comes to mind when I think of Headstreams is the word 'gratitude'.

Ananya (8), said this:

"Headstreams organises the Caravan and plays games with kids. They make kids happy."

Santhy



Nithya

Headstreams has been a 'happy place' where ideas are never shoved but always taken with a "wow". It's a place of unending opportunity for your thoughts and concepts to take shape. It's where people connect to their true selves and live out those aspirations that have been in the back burner. With Headstreams, sheer joy is your true companion.

Jeon



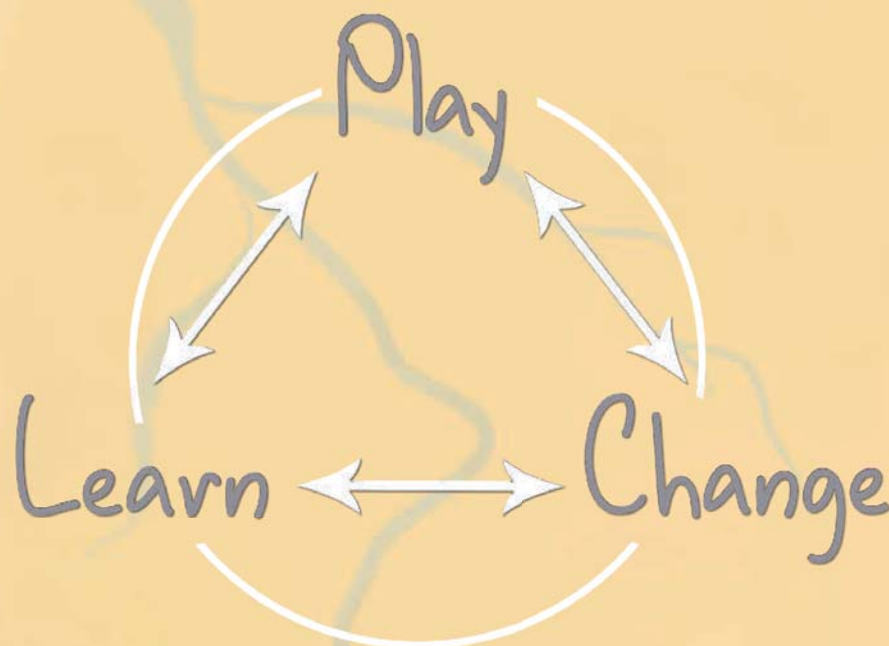
Vision

A world where every person has opportunities to realize their inherent potential to live a positive, confident, purposeful and socially productive life.



Mission

Promoting opportunities for everyone to explore, experiment, experience and enhance their capabilities in an environment that fosters security, empathy and freedom through creative means and healthy social interactions.



Headstreams is an NGO based in Bengaluru. Initiated in 2008, it envisions a world with opportunities for every person to realize their inherent potential to live a positive, confident, purposeful and socially productive life. Over the past decade, Headstreams has built its presence globally through networks in the fields of play pedagogy, promotion of 21st century life-skills and empowerment of individuals and communities. It has also earned a reputation as an advocate and facilitator of free play spaces that opens up opportunity for children and youth of marginalised socio-economic backgrounds to play, learn and change.

Headstreams started its journey working with young men and women in Karnataka on enhancing-employment and livelihood opportunities. Over the years, realising the challenges of didactic education practices, disengagement of children and youth in education, and the dipping learning levels of children, Headstreams focuses on enhancing learning through play.

Reached out directly to:

More than 15000 children across 3 districts of Karnataka

More than 1000 women from 50 SHGs

More than 200 pre-service and government school teachers

More than 100 livelihood units initiated

More than 1000 youth including volunteers, interns and college students



Credits

Conceptualisation and Design: Parijat Sarkar

Illustrations: Yathi Viswam & Madiha Ansari

Layout: Teerath Rawat

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