

Dreams Come Alive

Dr. Smita is busy running a vaccination camp in the Shivaji Nagar slum community. In a tiny hut, within this community, is where she once lived as a child.

“Doctor, there is someone here to see you,” says one of the nurses. Standing at the door grinning is one of her best friends, who she grew up with.

“Puja, how wonderful to see you!” exclaims Dr. Smita, as she runs over to hug her childhood friend. As the two friends sit down for a quick chat and tea, they take a trip down memory lane, to a day not unlike today, when the city of Mumbai was soaking wet with advent of the monsoons.

Many years ago when they were children, Puja and Smita huddled up along the window in Puja’s house, watching the pouring Mumbai rain.

“I just love the rain in Mumbai. I get to dress up like little Red Riding Hood, in my red raincoat, red rain boots and eat hot Butta¹ off the streets!” exclaimed 11-year old Puja.

“I love watching the big red buses splash poor pedestrians with water,” said Smita cheekily. Puja then returned to playing with her Lego set.

Later Smita tried to concentrate on her science homework as she waited for her mother to finish cleaning and cooking for Smita’s family. But the sound of the rain, the thunder and the water gushing through the streets distracted her. Smita knew that if it continued to rain so heavily, her small hut in the slums across Puja’s house would soon flood. This would force her family to look desperately for temporary shelter. The thought of being homeless yet again during the rain sent a shiver down her spine. Puja noticed Smita seeming pensive and quickly distracted her.

“Smita, look at my building. When I grow up, I will become an architect and design flats like this that sit on concrete pillars and will be flood resistant,” said Puja.

“Wow, this is great Smita! I do hope that soon you will become an architect and design flood resistant housing that can be cheaply built for families like mine,” said Puja, relieved yet still worried at the same time.

“Waaaaaah,” the scream of a baby brings Puja and Smita back to the present.

“Those were such wonderful times,” says Dr. Smita.

“Smita, I came to see you today for a special reason. I have won “The Best Architect of the Year” award for my designs on flood resistant housing. The Architects Association of Mumbai will be giving me this award next week. It would mean a lot to me if you came with me for the award function. You have motivated me more than anyone else to work on these designs,” says an excited Puja.

“This is wonderful news! Of course I will go with you!” says Smita hugging her friend.

¹ *Butta*: is barbequed corn, a popular street food in Mumbai, eaten especially during the monsoons.

Time had gone by and a lot had changed, yet many of their childhood dreams had come true, and as Smita and Puja laughed together and remembered more of their past ambitions, they felt sure that even more of their dreams were yet to come alive.