



Ambar's Song

When some people look at Ambar, they see a boy in a wheelchair, but Ambar is so much more than just that.



Ambar's Song
Pranika Koyu

Let's Read



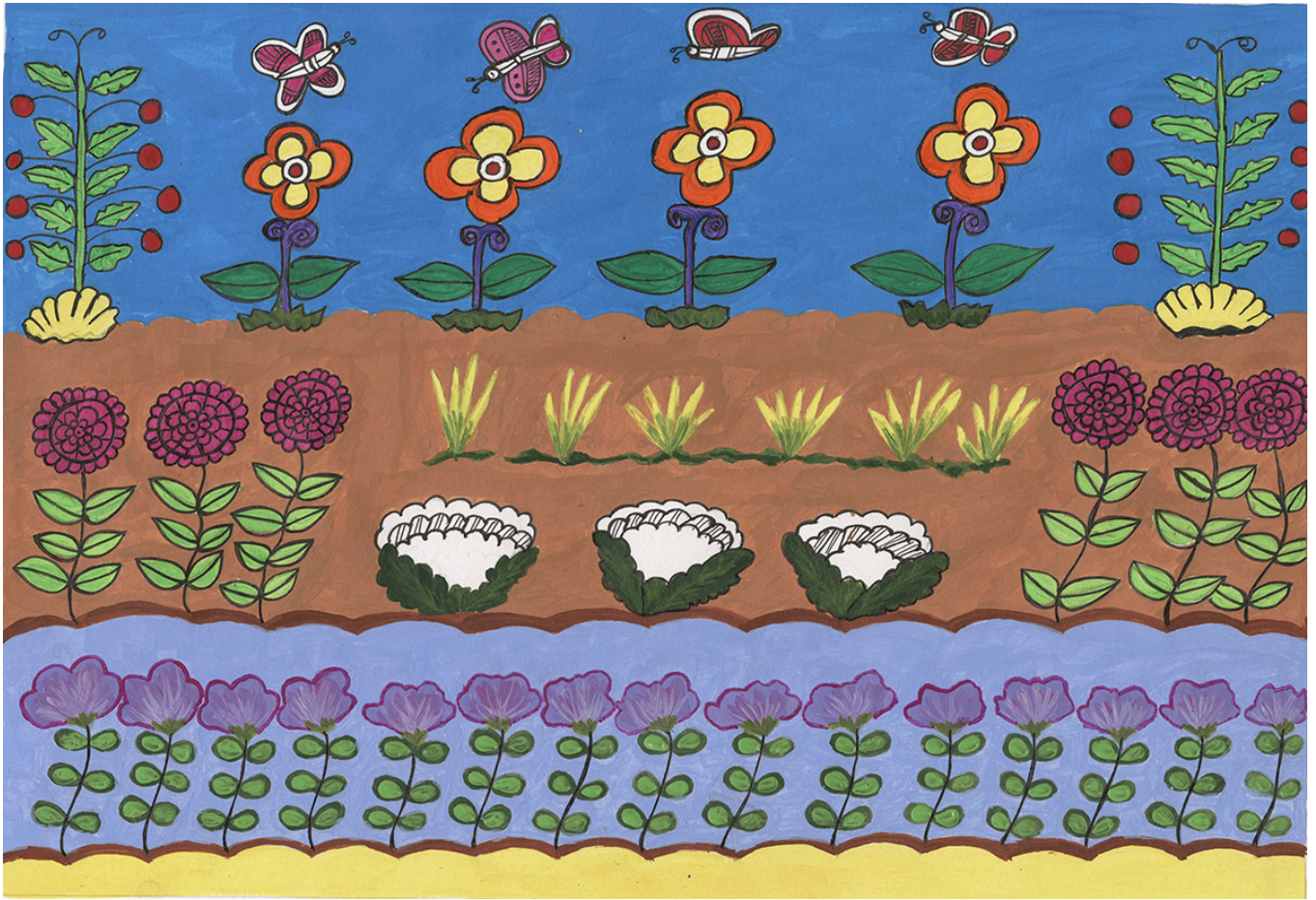
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I am Ambar. Aama and Aatto love me very much. Aama lovingly calls me Kola, and Aatto calls me Baba.



I wake up at five in the morning. Aama turns the radio on, and together we listen to songs. She combs my hair and washes my face. Then I walk to the kitchen with Aatto. We eat breakfast together.



After breakfast, Aama takes me to her garden. She waters all the flowers and vegetables.



I sit in my wheelchair and look around. Then I walk all the way up to the rooftop with Aattho.



Once there, I sit on my pink gym ball and bounce. It's fun to bounce like this.



At nine in the morning, Aama and Aatto take me to school on the scooter.



At school Aama leaves me with Nana Mala. Nana sits with me in all of my classes. She helps me do all the things that Miss Bina and other children do. Nana Mala is mine alone. Miss Bina is everyone's.



When I play doctor with my friends, I always lie flat on my back. They touch my forehead with their palms, press my wrist with their fingers, and listen to my chest (all the things that Aama and Aatto do). I am ticklish. On the playground, the other children run around. But I don't run like them. I sit in my wheelchair. Why can't they sit in one place like I do?



There's a trampoline on the school grounds. I sit in the center and my friends jump around me. When they jump, all of us shake. I laugh. Nana Mala and all the teachers keep a sharp eye on us.



But not everyone jumps on the trampoline. As soon as I sit on the trampoline, Ajay jumps off. He talks to Nana Mala. He looks at me while talking to her. The next day, Pemba and Mohan do the same. They jump off the trampoline and say to Nana Mala: “Why isn’t he like us?” “Please don’t bring him here anymore.” “He's not our friend.”



My friends and I do things differently. One day Miss Bina gives us each an outline of a flower and asks us to color it. Rhea, Nhuga, and Tenzin paint theirs with a brush. But I just dip my palms in paint and stamp the flower. Dab-dab.



Later, Nana Mala gives the flower I made to Aama. Aama looks at it and smiles.



When it's time for lunch, everyone eats what's on their plate, but I don't eat that food. I only eat the food that Aama packs for me. Worried that Nana Mala might try to feed me the food on my plate, I zip my lips shut. With Miss Bina's permission, Rohan and Aabha eat my share of the school food. This is why Rohan and Aabha always sit next to me during lunch.



In the afternoon, Aama comes to pick me up. We wait on the street outside the school for a long while. Aama tries to stop many vehicles. She calls out to each of them, but not even one stops to give us a ride home. "There's no space!" shouts the minibus driver.



“Take a taxi instead!” shouts the bus driver.



“It will cost 500 rupees!” shouts the taxi driver.



Sometimes we go home on a bus and sometimes we ride a taxi. On the way home, I always look out the window. Aama is usually quiet but holds me tight.



Every other day Aama, Aattho, and I go to a different place. It's not my school. It's very far away. I always fall asleep on the way there. I don't like to go there. Uncle Manjit and Aunt Rina make me do a lot of exercises I don't like. Even though we aren't related, I call them uncle and aunt because they are grown-ups that I see often.



Aama and Aatto repeat the same exercises at home. I don't want to do them. They scold me. I cry. But I have to do the exercises. Whenever we go to that place, Aatto and Aama look sad. Aatto holds me close to him. His breathing becomes long and heavy.



Every day Aama reads a big paper. I sit next to her and listen to her. One day while she's reading the big paper, she suddenly stops and throws the paper to the ground. She turns to me and holds me close to her. She cries. After that, Aama doesn't talk with me for many days. I don't know why Aama and Aattho act like this sometimes. Maybe Aama read something in the paper that made her worry about my safety.



In the evening, we eat dinner together. After dinner, Aatto plays the guitar. He also lets me strum it. I bang on the guitar with my palms. Aama looks at me and smiles. She strokes my cheek.





Before going to bed, Aatto combs my hair, washes my face, brushes my teeth, and helps me get into my pajamas.



I lie down with Neeli, my tortoise, while Aama writes a letter to me in her notebook. When she's done, she reads it to me. I hold her hand, listen to her story, and smile my way to sleep.



December 6, 20 19 Dearest Kola, Miss Bina told me today that you played the keyboard in class. I was surprised. When you were younger, your cousin gifted you his small keyboard. At home, you played it your way. The keyboard made you so happy that you'd try to lift it up. Many times it fell to the ground. One day, it broke. Today in music class, you apparently spotted a keyboard next to Mr. Nagendra. You tried to pull it toward you, so he placed it in front of you. You played it slowly. I heard that all your friends clapped and danced while you played the keyboard. I heard they said, "Ambar is our friend!" Dear Kola, you have found your music. Now everyone has heard you. They will listen to your song. We must all listen to your song.



Wonderful Words
Aama - mother, in many languages spoken in Nepal
Aattho - father, in the Thakali language spoken in Nepal
Kola - child, in Thakali
Nana - Sister, in the Kiranti and Tamang languages. It can be used to refer to a girl older than you whether or not she is a member of your family.
Baba - a term of endearment for a boy
rupee - the currency of Nepal and nearby countries

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