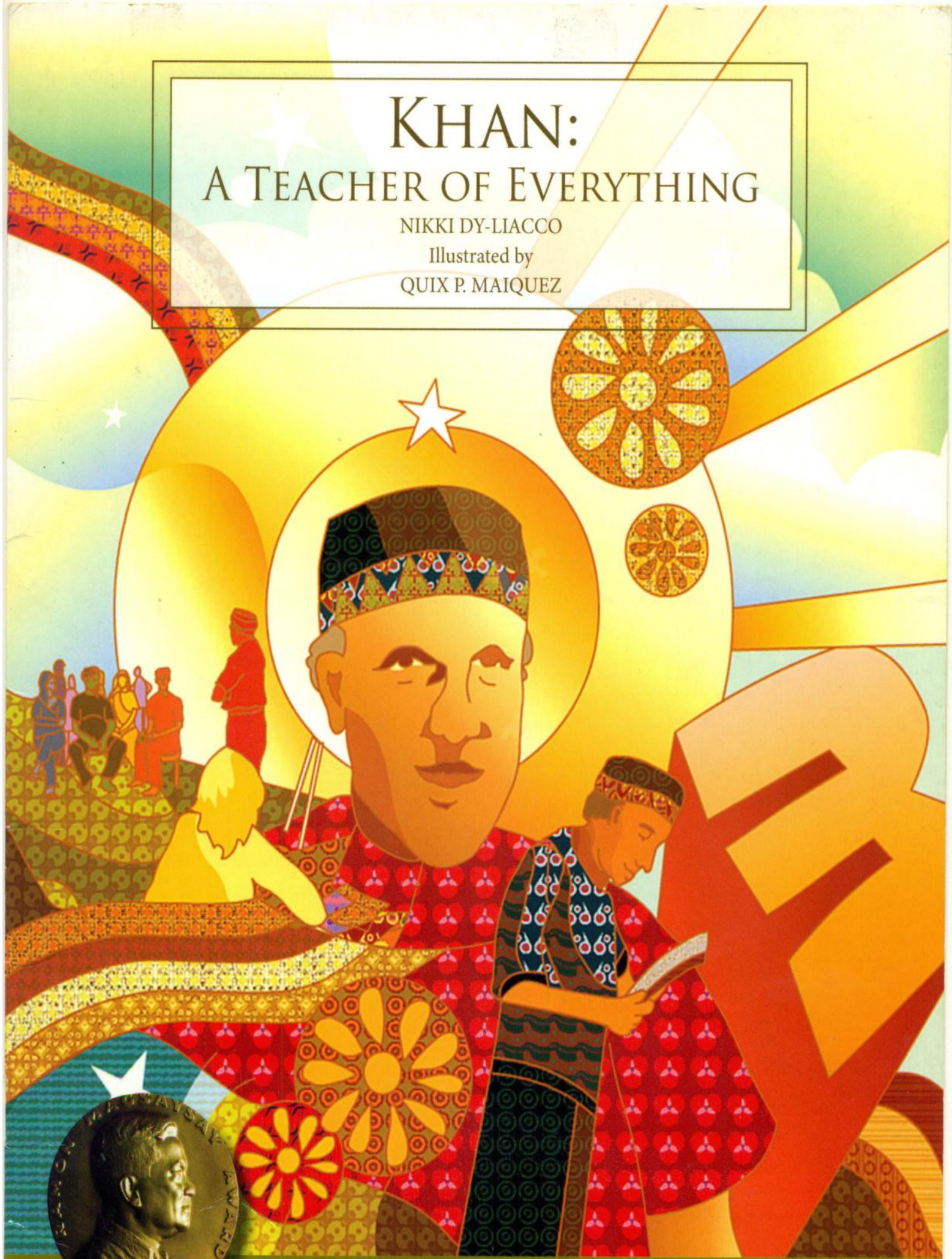


KHAN: A TEACHER OF EVERYTHING

NIKKI DY-LIACCO

Illustrated by
QUIX P. MAIQUEZ



Great Men and Women of Asia - Children's Series

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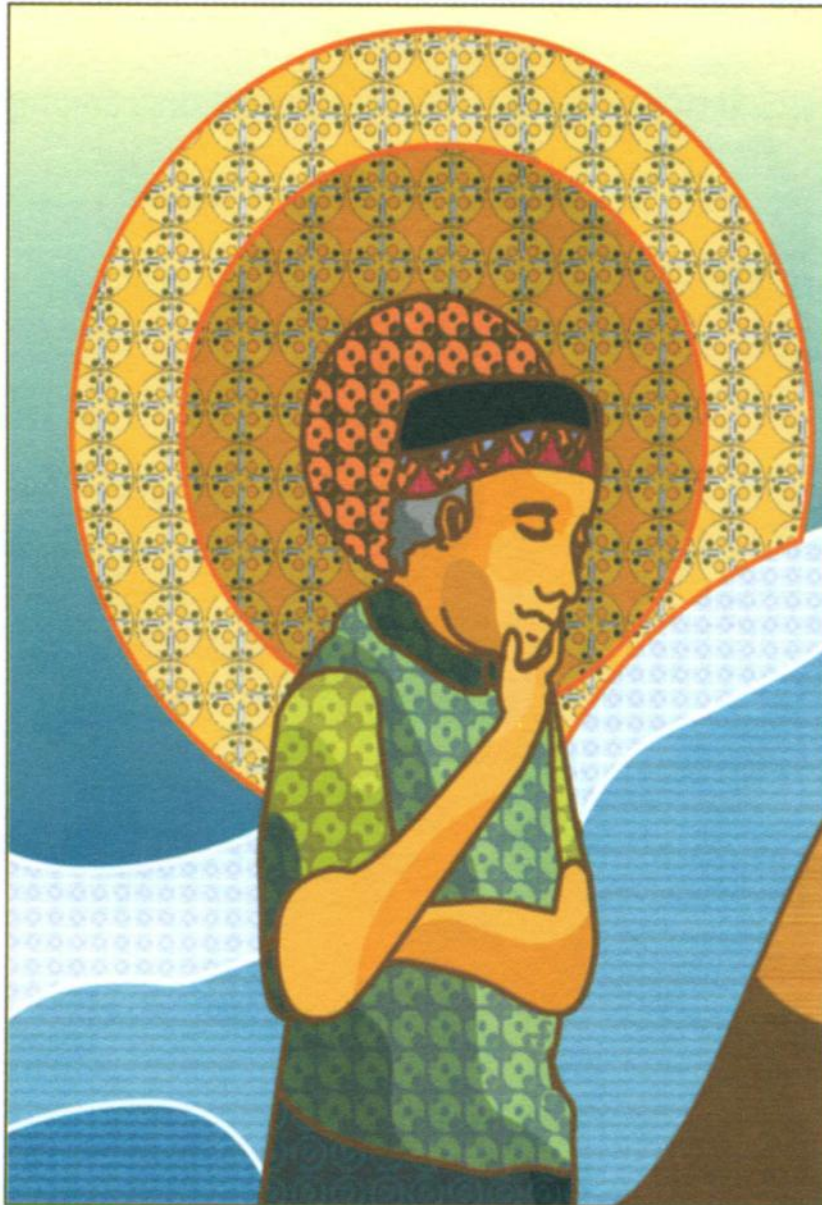
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Great Men and Women of Asia - *Children's Series*



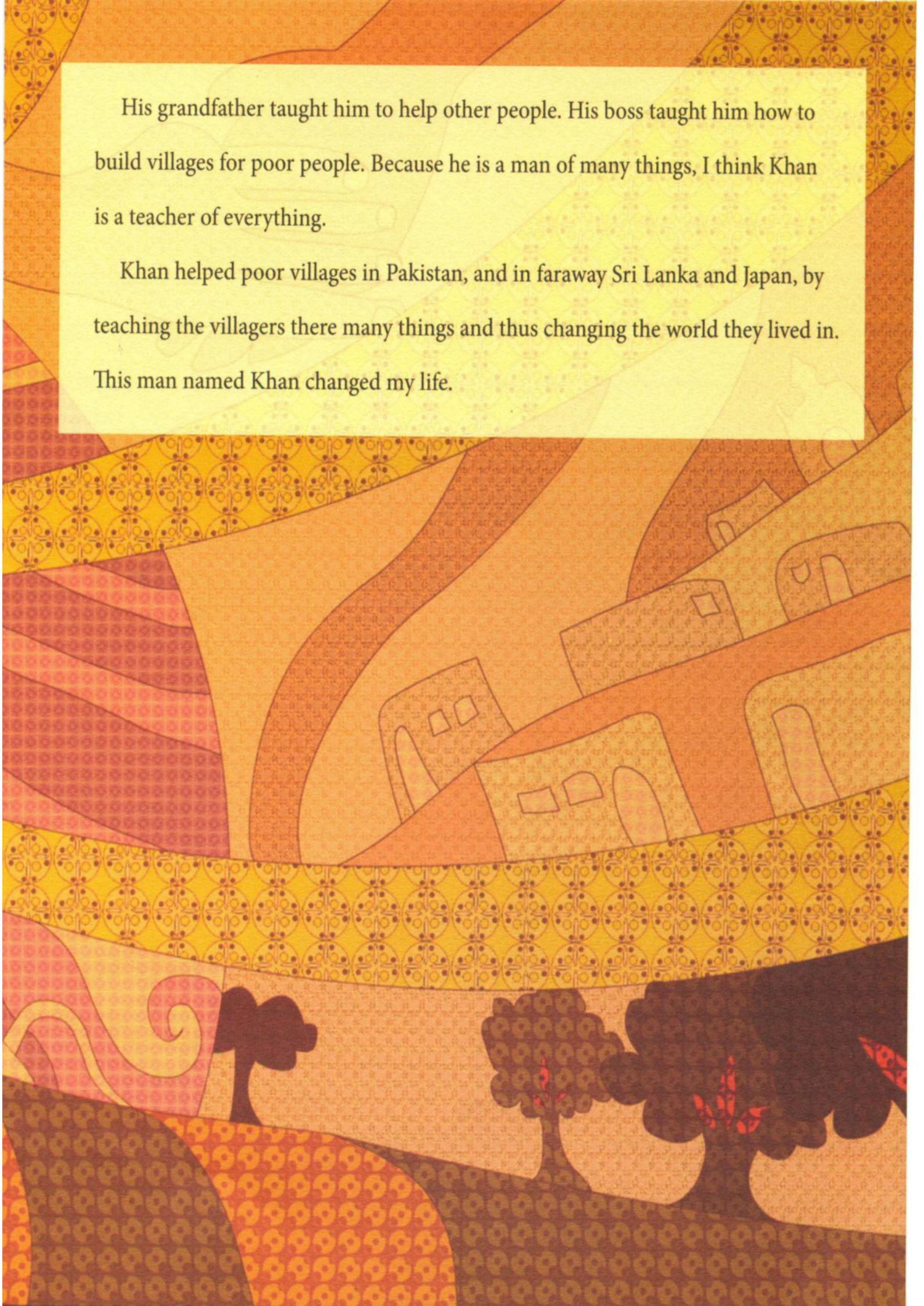
A man named Khan changed my life.

Khan is a man of many things. He speaks five languages. He has worked not only as an English teacher in school but also as a judge, a money collector, a philosopher and a leader. He can tell stories about living on a mountain, camping near tigers, working with farmers, or riding a car across ten countries.



His grandfather taught him to help other people. His boss taught him how to build villages for poor people. Because he is a man of many things, I think Khan is a teacher of everything.

Khan helped poor villages in Pakistan, and in faraway Sri Lanka and Japan, by teaching the villagers there many things and thus changing the world they lived in. This man named Khan changed my life.



I live on one side of northern Pakistan's spiky mountains, huddled together through the country's angry summers and long painful winters. Everything in my world would disappear at night, including the Karakoram Highway and the narrow dirt path leading to my house.

With few roads and no electricity, only brave men would journey to the city and only my neighbors could find where I lived. My house sat on crumbly soil, guarded by skinny trees which would fall whenever landslides came.

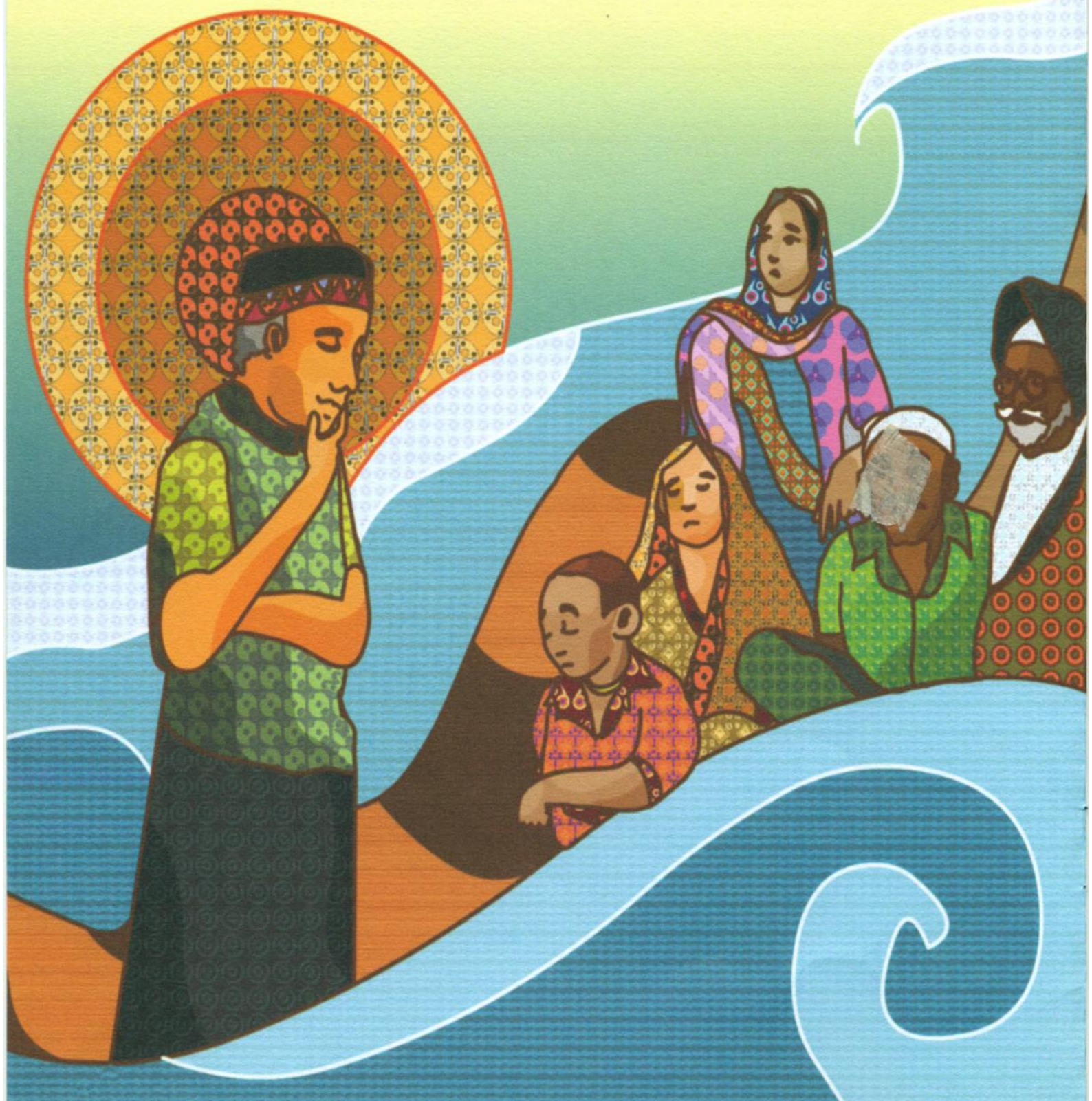
I walked for hours each day, searching for food and firewood. My family would often have to sleep with noisy stomachs and freezing feet. My neighbors were just as hungry, cold, and lost.

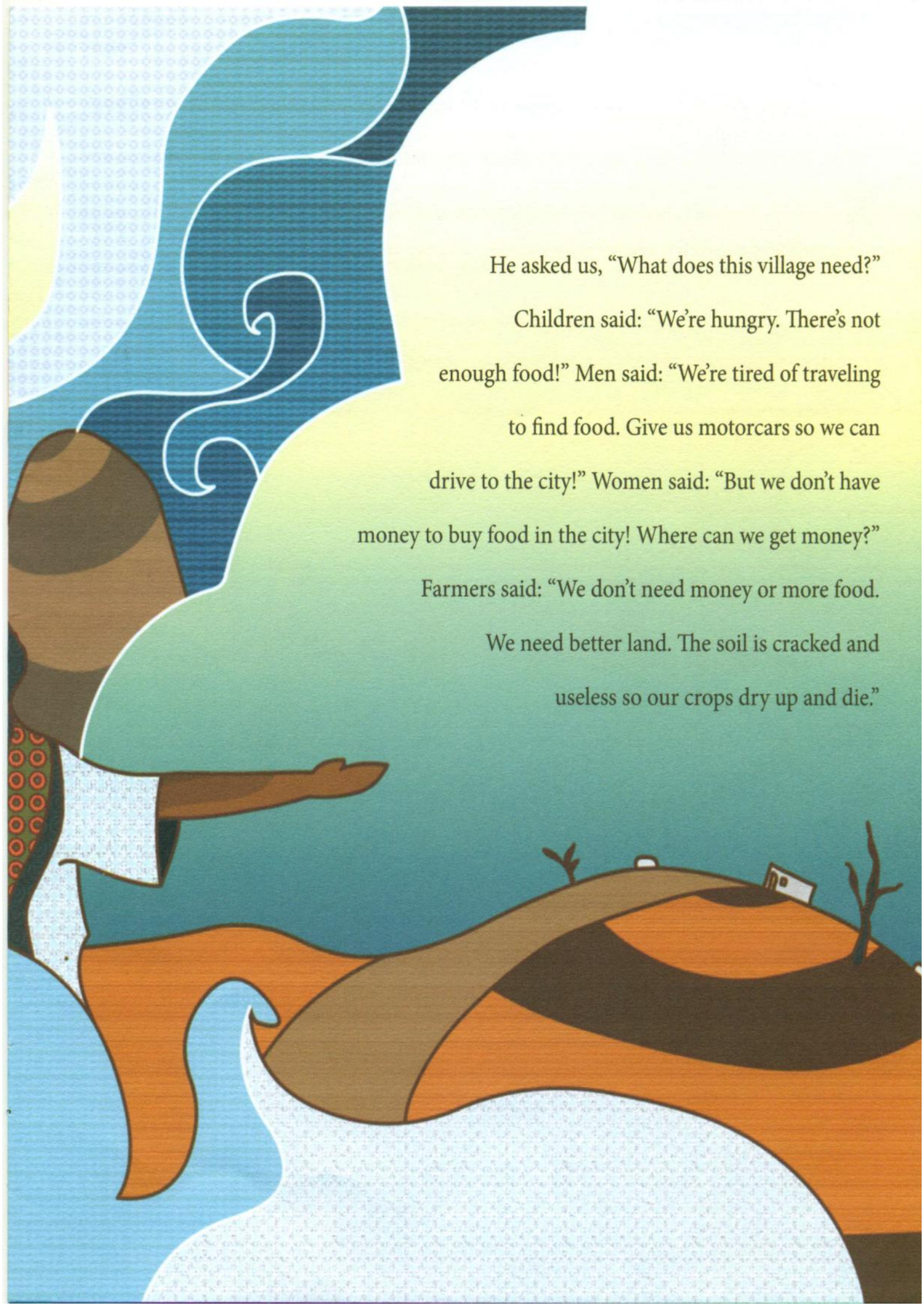




There were thousands of us scattered around the mountains of Gilgit.
No one ever visited to help us or to work with us here. No one except
for the man named Khan.

As soon as he arrived in Gilgit, Khan looked around, his eyes like
dark pebbles shining after a drizzle.





He asked us, "What does this village need?"

Children said: "We're hungry. There's not enough food!" Men said: "We're tired of traveling to find food. Give us motorcars so we can drive to the city!" Women said: "But we don't have money to buy food in the city! Where can we get money?"

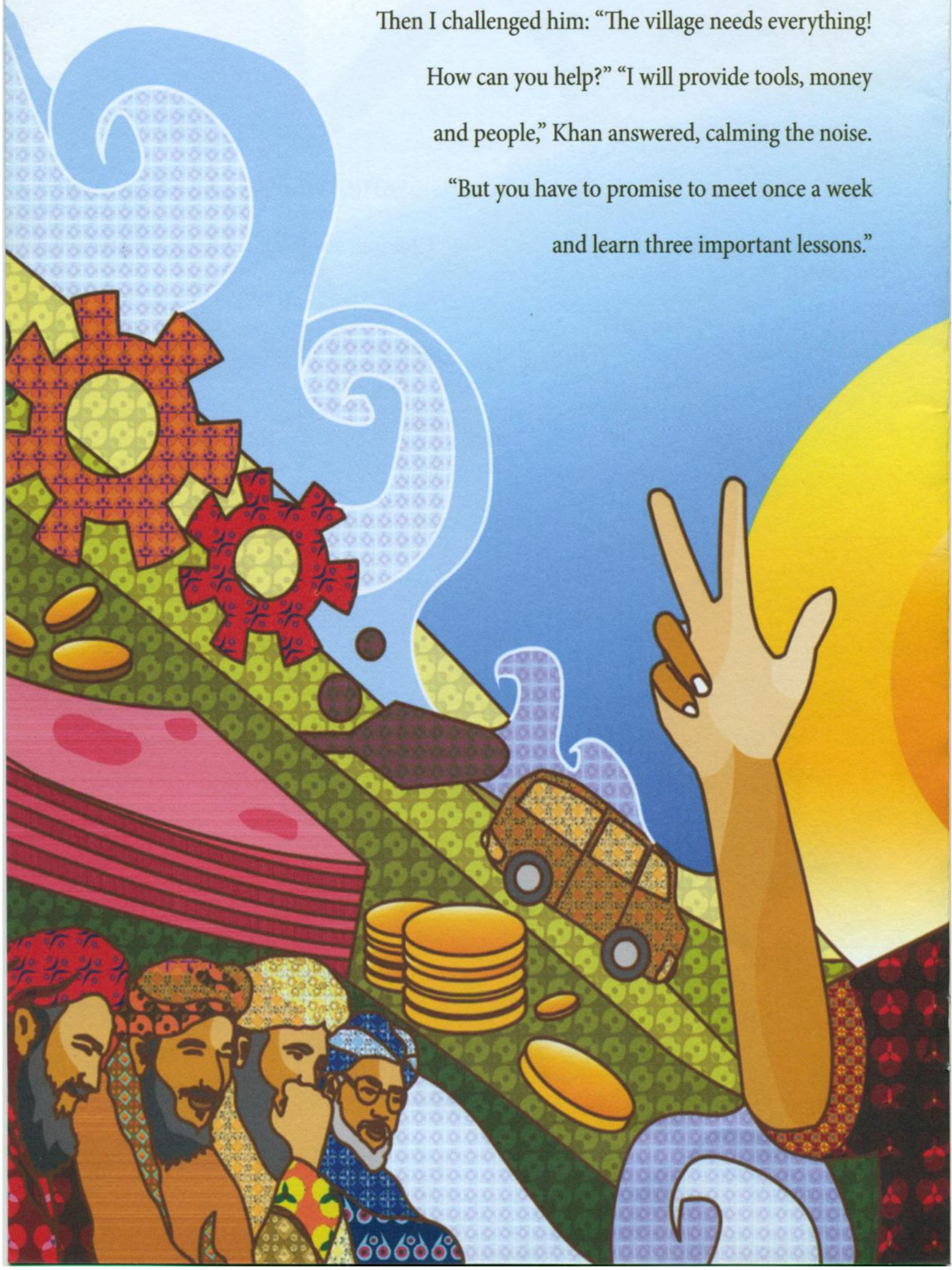
Farmers said: "We don't need money or more food.

We need better land. The soil is cracked and useless so our crops dry up and die."

Then I challenged him: “The village needs everything!

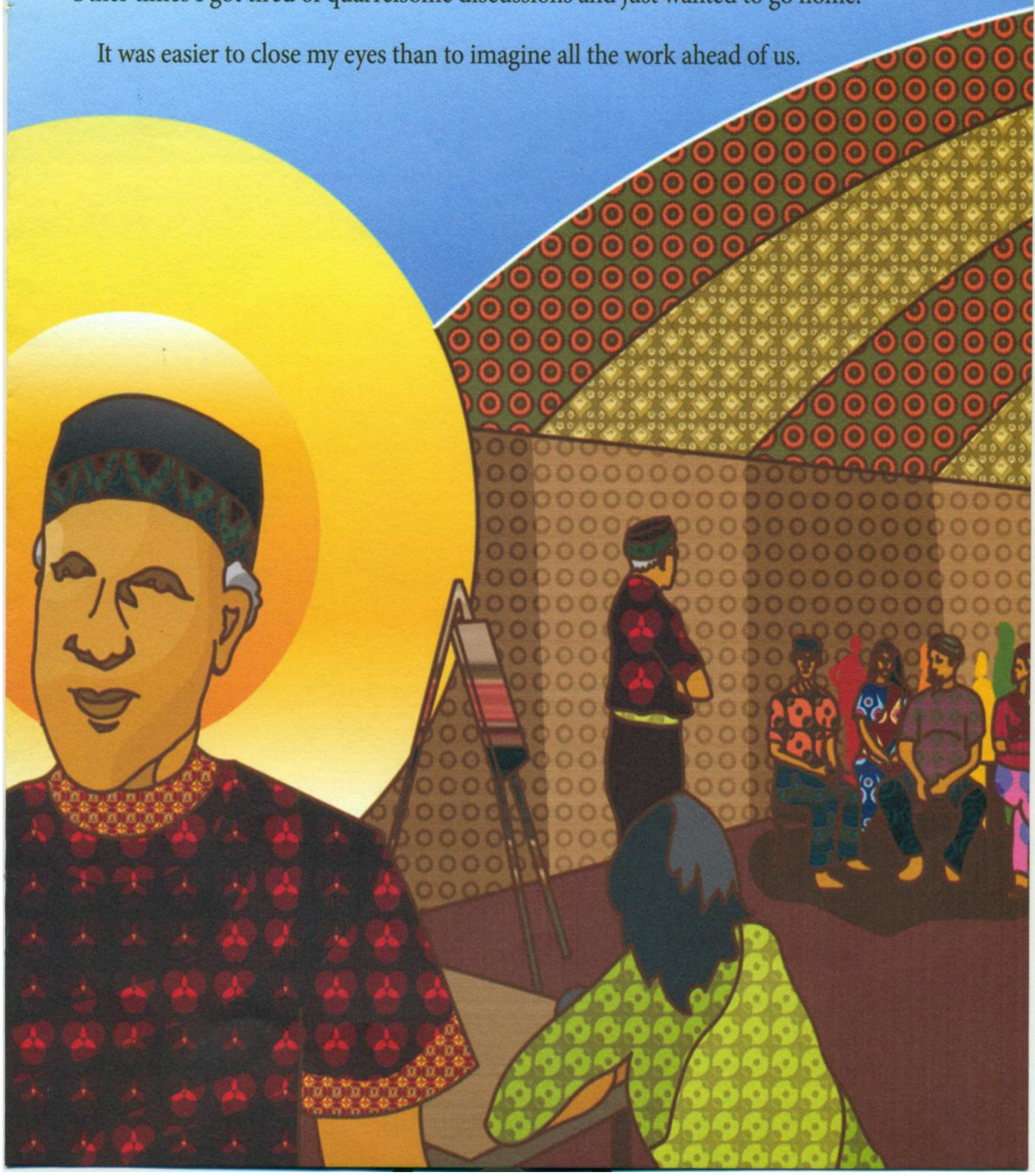
How can you help?” “I will provide tools, money and people,” Khan answered, calming the noise.

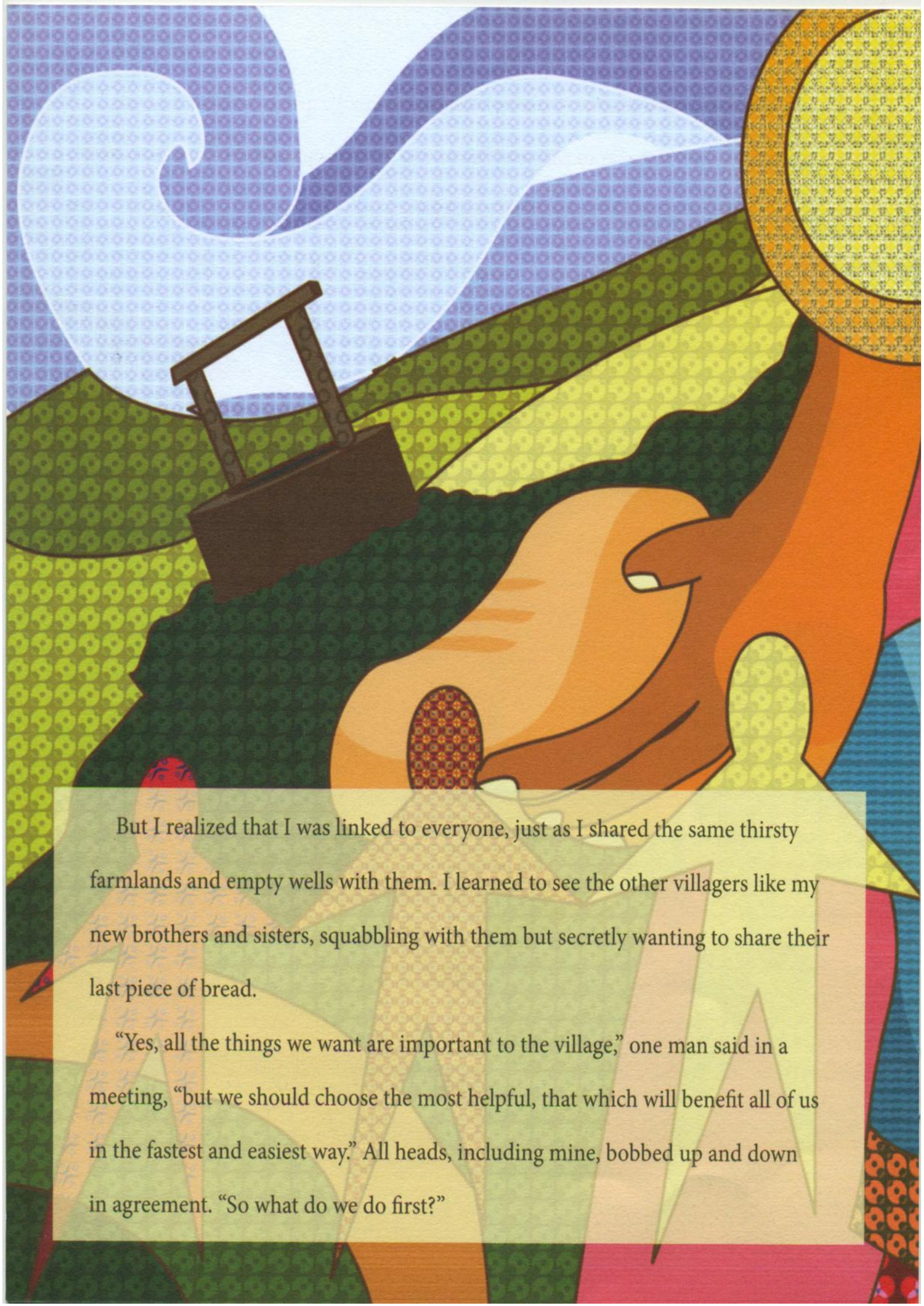
“But you have to promise to meet once a week and learn three important lessons.”



Lesson Number One taught me how to listen, and to make group decisions during our weekly meetings. Sometimes my head hurt from thinking too much. I was confused with new words like “irrigation channels” and “cash crops” and “generating capital.” Other times I got tired of quarrelsome discussions and just wanted to go home.

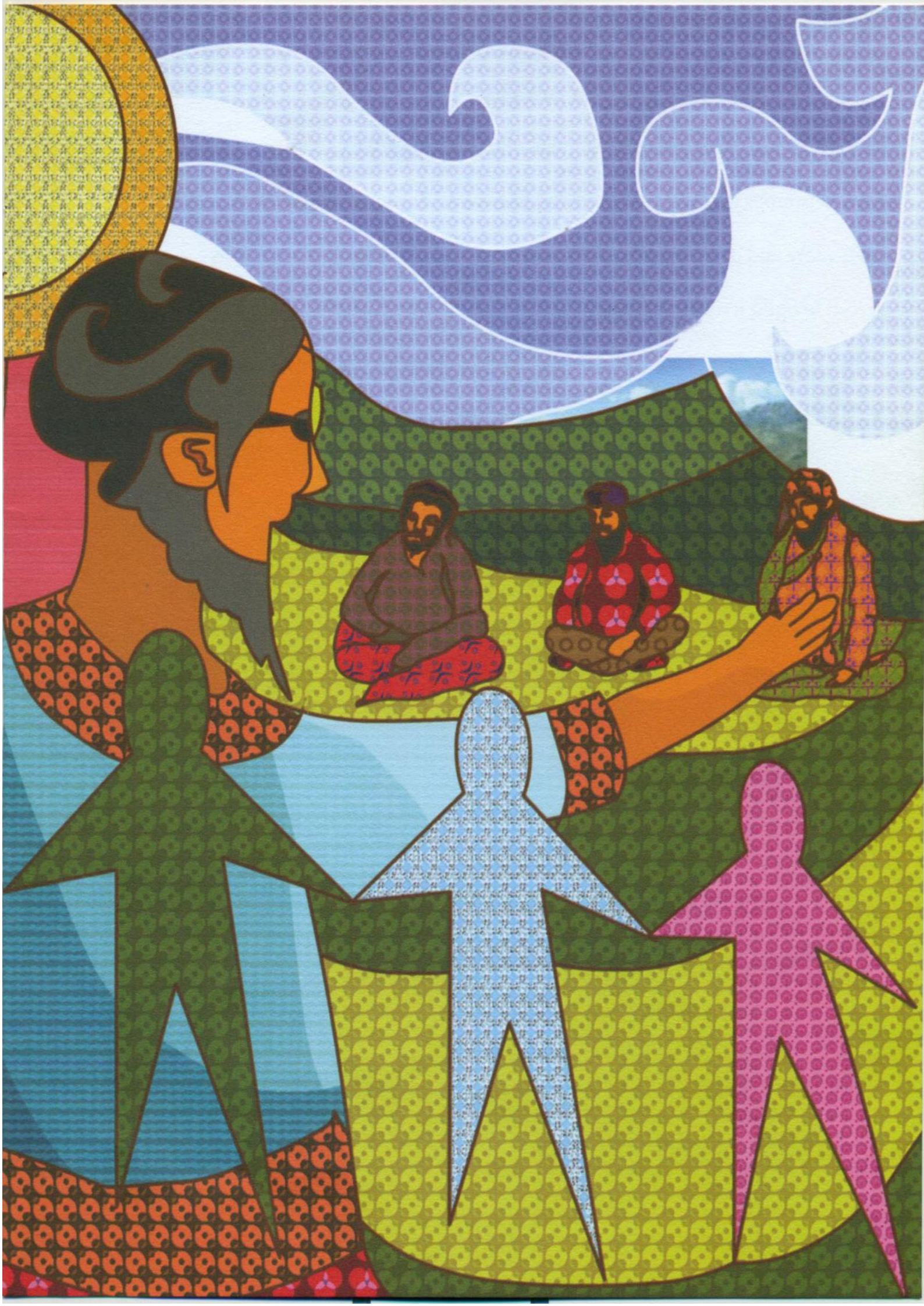
It was easier to close my eyes than to imagine all the work ahead of us.





But I realized that I was linked to everyone, just as I shared the same thirsty farmlands and empty wells with them. I learned to see the other villagers like my new brothers and sisters, squabbling with them but secretly wanting to share their last piece of bread.

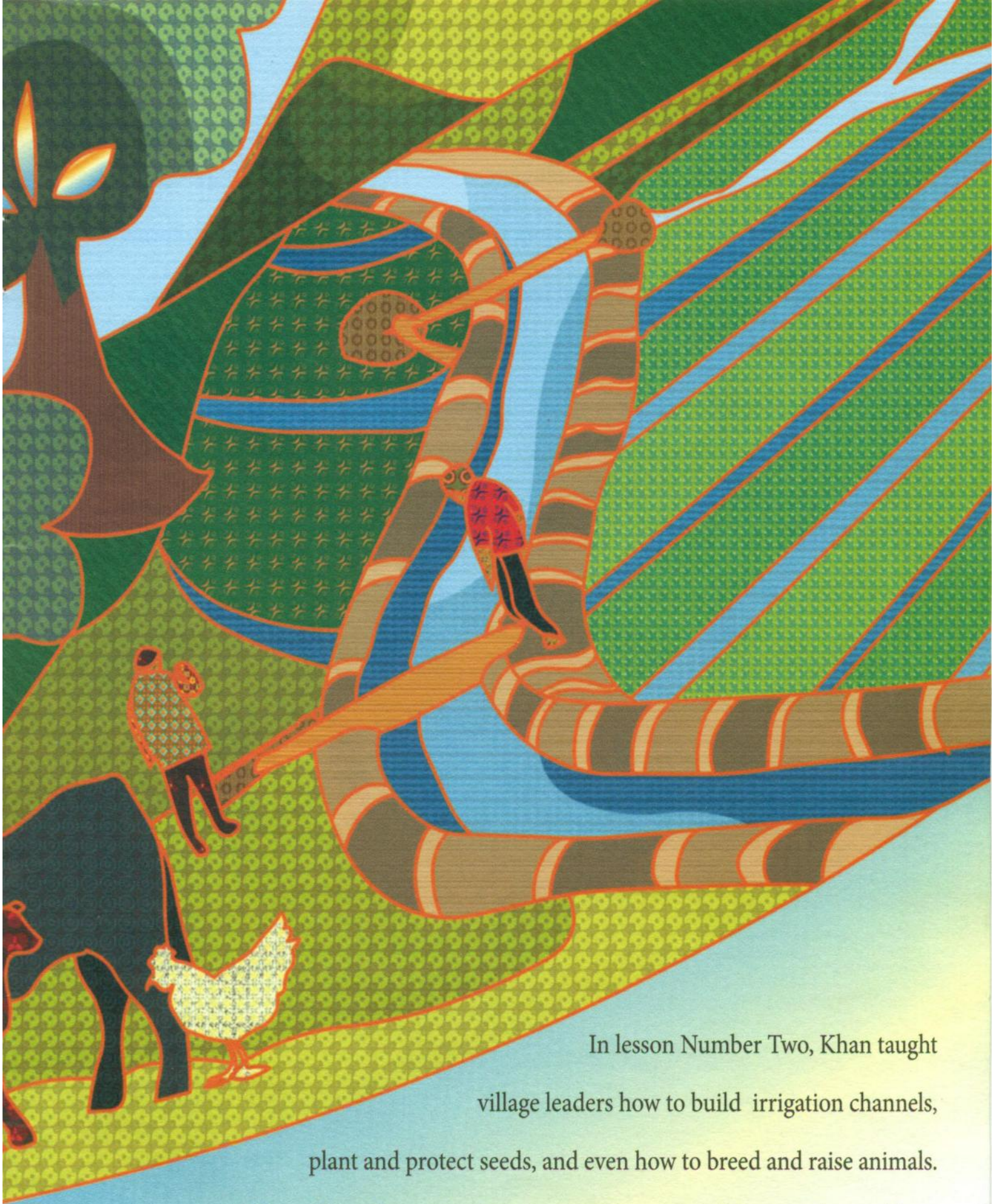
“Yes, all the things we want are important to the village,” one man said in a meeting, “but we should choose the most helpful, that which will benefit all of us in the fastest and easiest way.” All heads, including mine, bobbed up and down in agreement. “So what do we do first?”



“Can we find a way to water our farms back to life?” People leaned forward to hear more from the woman who spoke up. “We could grow new crops and trees for food and firewood.” The group talked some more and decided to choose leaders for a water project. We agreed to build irrigation canals to bring water to the farmlands. Khan smiled because he knew that he could now start Lesson Number Two.

“The sooner you develop the land,” Khan said, “the sooner you will benefit.”





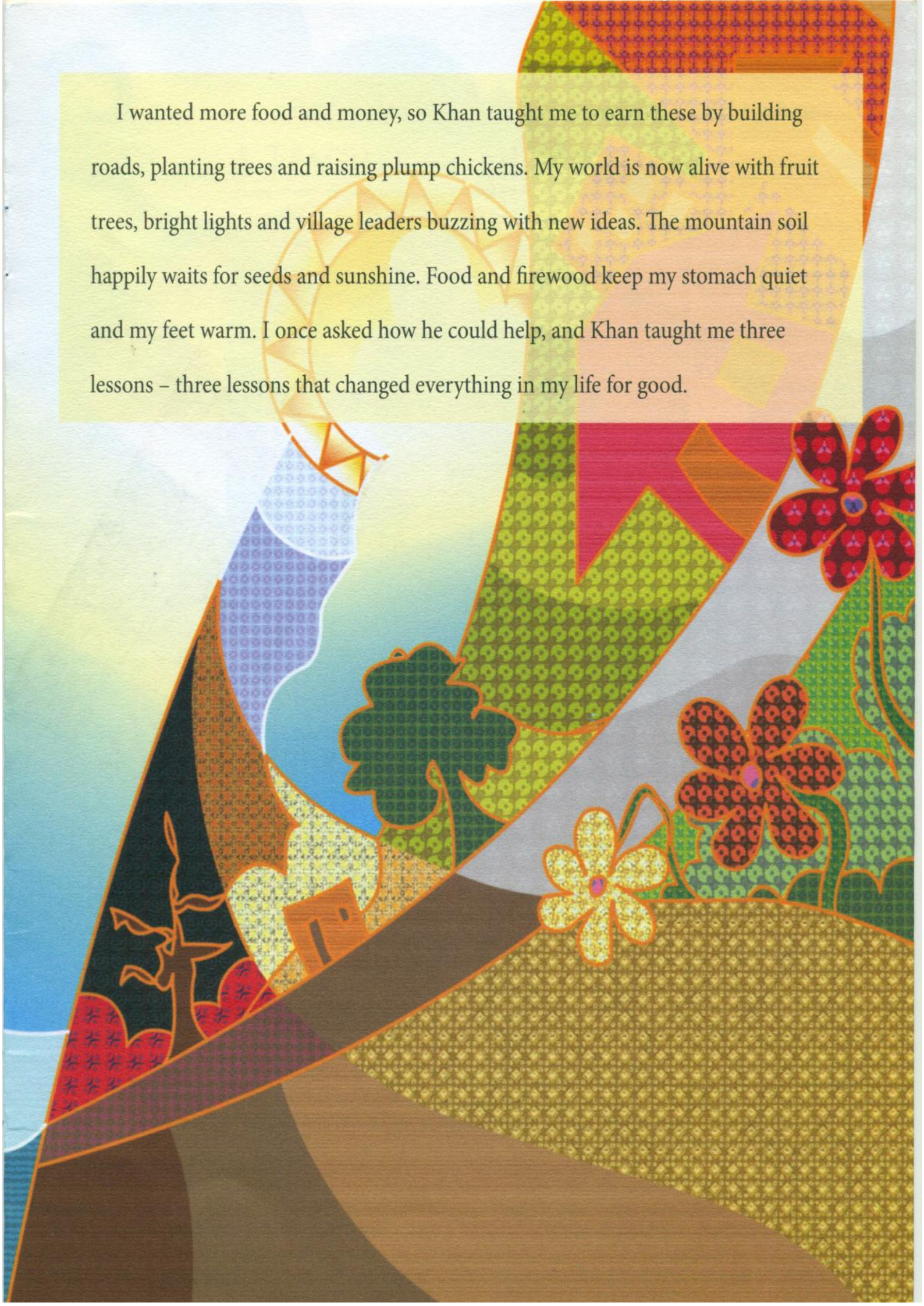
In lesson Number Two, Khan taught village leaders how to build irrigation channels, plant and protect seeds, and even how to breed and raise animals.

He taught us how to lead meetings and how to sell things. I learned how to plant the trees brought in by Khan on Gilgit's thin mountain soil. When I saw the first fruits from my apple and apricot trees, I realized I was ready for Lesson Number Three.

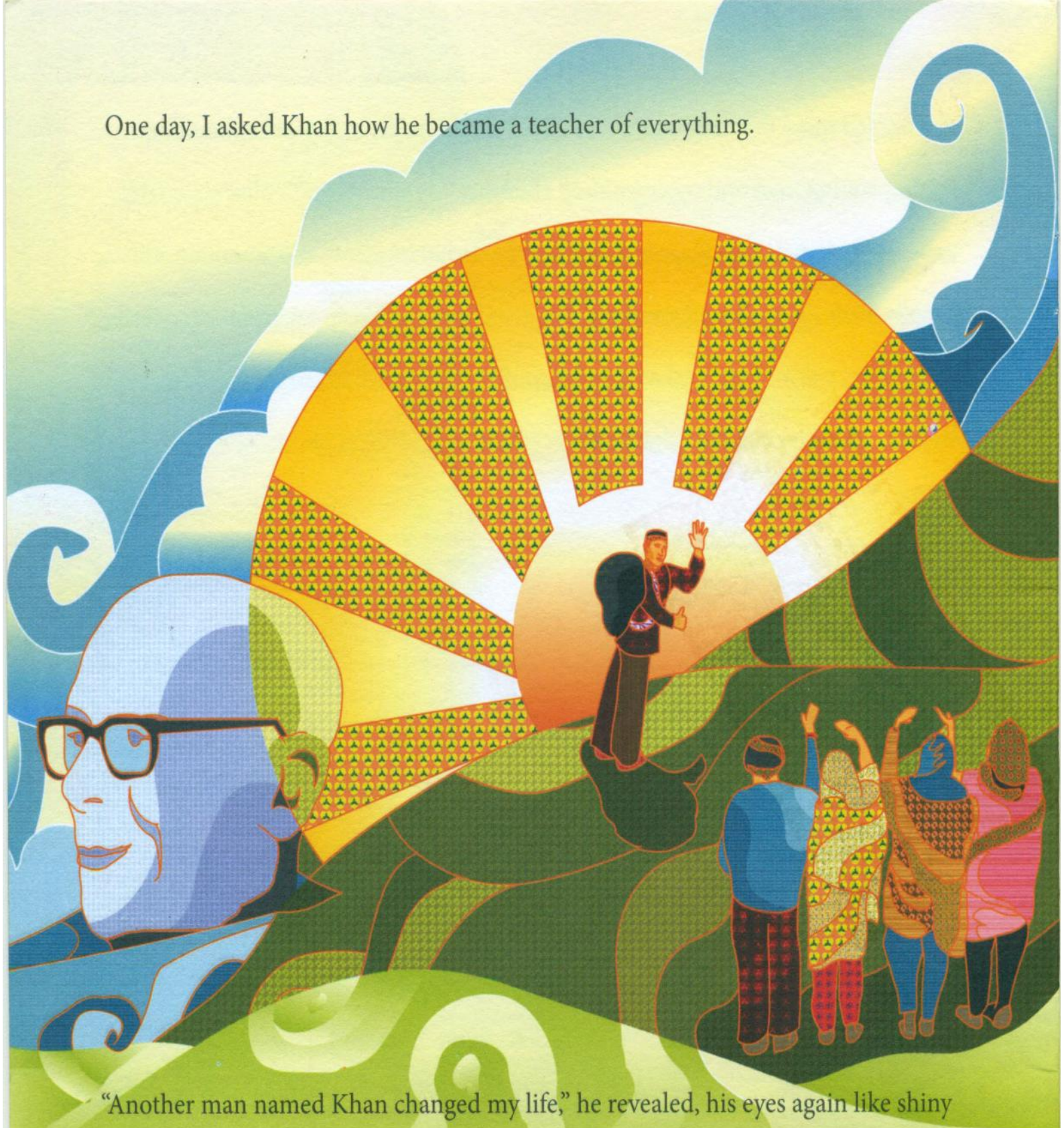
Khan gave us money only once, so Lesson Number Three taught me to give money to build the village fund. As I made money from selling apples and apricots in other villages, I learned that my work was linked to thousands of other farmers, just as Gilgit's new roads connected me to the world beyond these mountains. When I started saving my money in the village bank, and using it to borrow or make more money, I realized my life had really changed.



I wanted more food and money, so Khan taught me to earn these by building roads, planting trees and raising plump chickens. My world is now alive with fruit trees, bright lights and village leaders buzzing with new ideas. The mountain soil happily waits for seeds and sunshine. Food and firewood keep my stomach quiet and my feet warm. I once asked how he could help, and Khan taught me three lessons – three lessons that changed everything in my life for good.



One day, I asked Khan how he became a teacher of everything.



“Another man named Khan changed my life,” he revealed, his eyes again like shiny pebbles. “Akhter Hameed Khan was my boss and teacher of everything. He taught me to work in a group, to learn new skills and to make my own money – the very same three lessons I shared with you in Gilgit.” His eyebrows lifted slightly as he looked me straight in the eye. “As a village leader, you can now be a teacher of everything for others,” he said. Smiling, he sighed. “I’d rather just be known as a man named Khan.”



Shoaib Sultan Khan

Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Community Leadership, 1992

Shoaib Sultan Khan, who received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1992, has been building villages and changing lives of the poor in Pakistan for most of his life. Khan was born in India, and grew up with his grandfather, who was a sultan and civil service officer. He grew up along the rivers of Uttar Pradesh, lived in a house as big as “a palace” in Hamirpur, and enjoyed riding and hunting in Lakhimpur. Khan was raised in a multicultural environment and became comfortably multilingual as a child. He spoke Urdu and English, as well as Hindi and Persian and Bengali.

Following in his grandfather’s footsteps, the young Khan knew he wanted a career in the civil service. He earned a Master’s Degree in English from Lucknow University, a Bachelor of Law from Peshawar University and also completed a Public Administration course at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

Khan gives credit to his mentor and friend Ahkter Hameed Khan (1963 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Government Service) who taught him the theory and practice of rural development and who passionately believed that poverty can be systematically reduced with genuine people’s participation. Khan helped to build villages all over Pakistan, primarily around the snowy mountains of the Northwest Frontier province, in the city of Karachi, and in the Kushtia District which is now Bangladesh. He was also involved in community development projects in Sri Lanka and even in faraway Japan.

In early 1983, Khan began the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in the rugged, cold and isolated mountain region of Gilgit in Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier. He believed in empowering the people to be involved in improving and uplifting their own lives. He developed partnerships with the villagers and promised them one-time grant if they committed to meet regularly on community concerns, choose a physical infrastructure project they would complete, and contribute to a common village fund. Khan had a staff to closely monitor every new irrigation channel or road, and to ensure that the AKRSP maintained the needed program components – (1) organization, (2) human resource development and (3) capital formation.

In its first ten years, over 1,000 AKRSP projects were completed and 7,000 village leaders were trained in farming, forestry, animal husbandry, accounting and marketing. These changes benefited over 1,400 villages, or about a million people, in the remote Northwest Frontier. Soon after, roads and bridges connected Gilgit to the outside world, and more than 20,000 hectares of new farmlands were producing income-generating crops and fruits.

A charismatic grassroots leader, Khan continues to walk around the villages of Pakistan, asking questions and inviting the villagers to share their ideas. Khan believes that the needs of the villagers come first and that they now have the power to turn their own lives around.

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