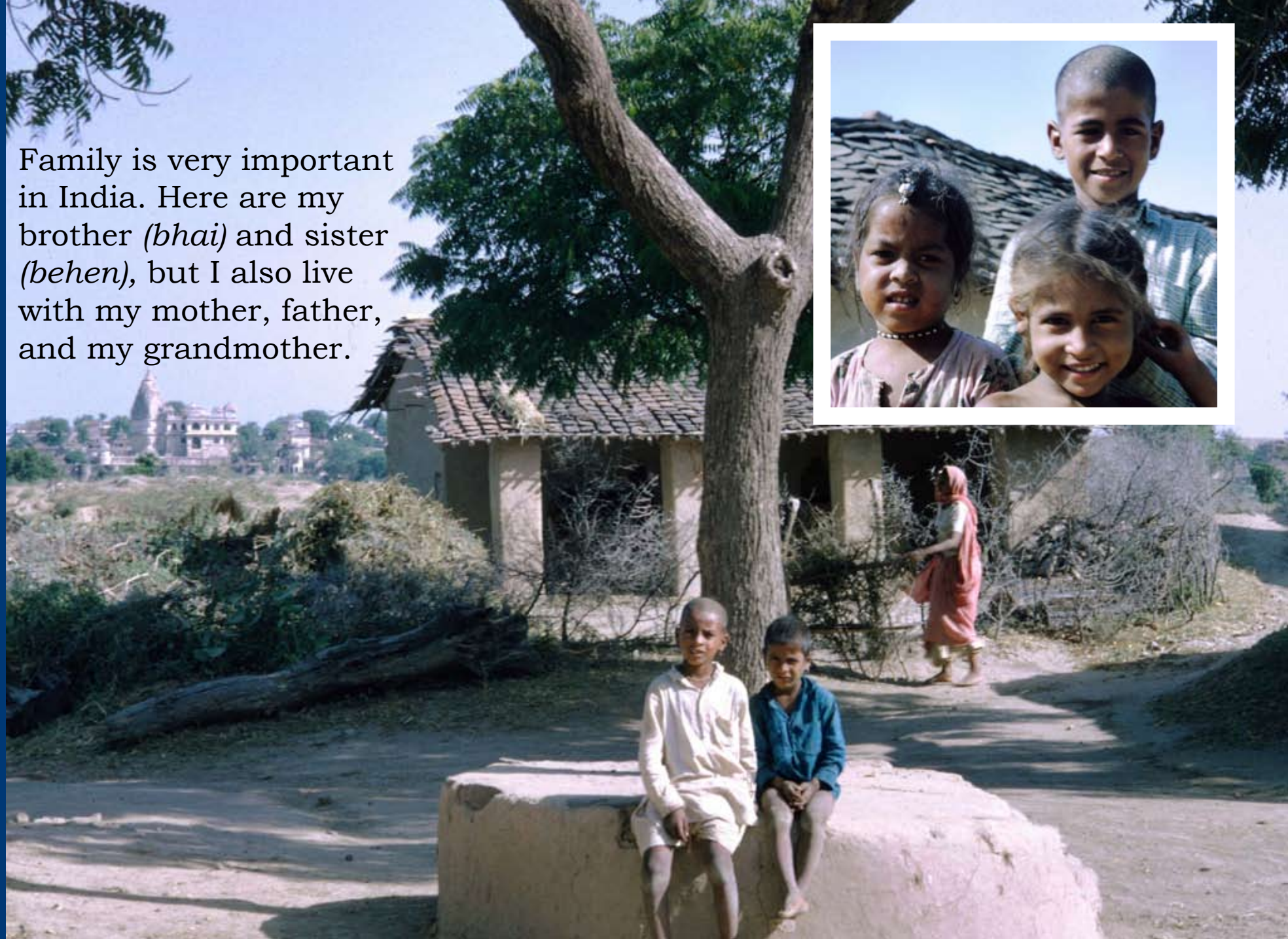
Asha's Village
in India

My name is Asha. I live in the country of India.

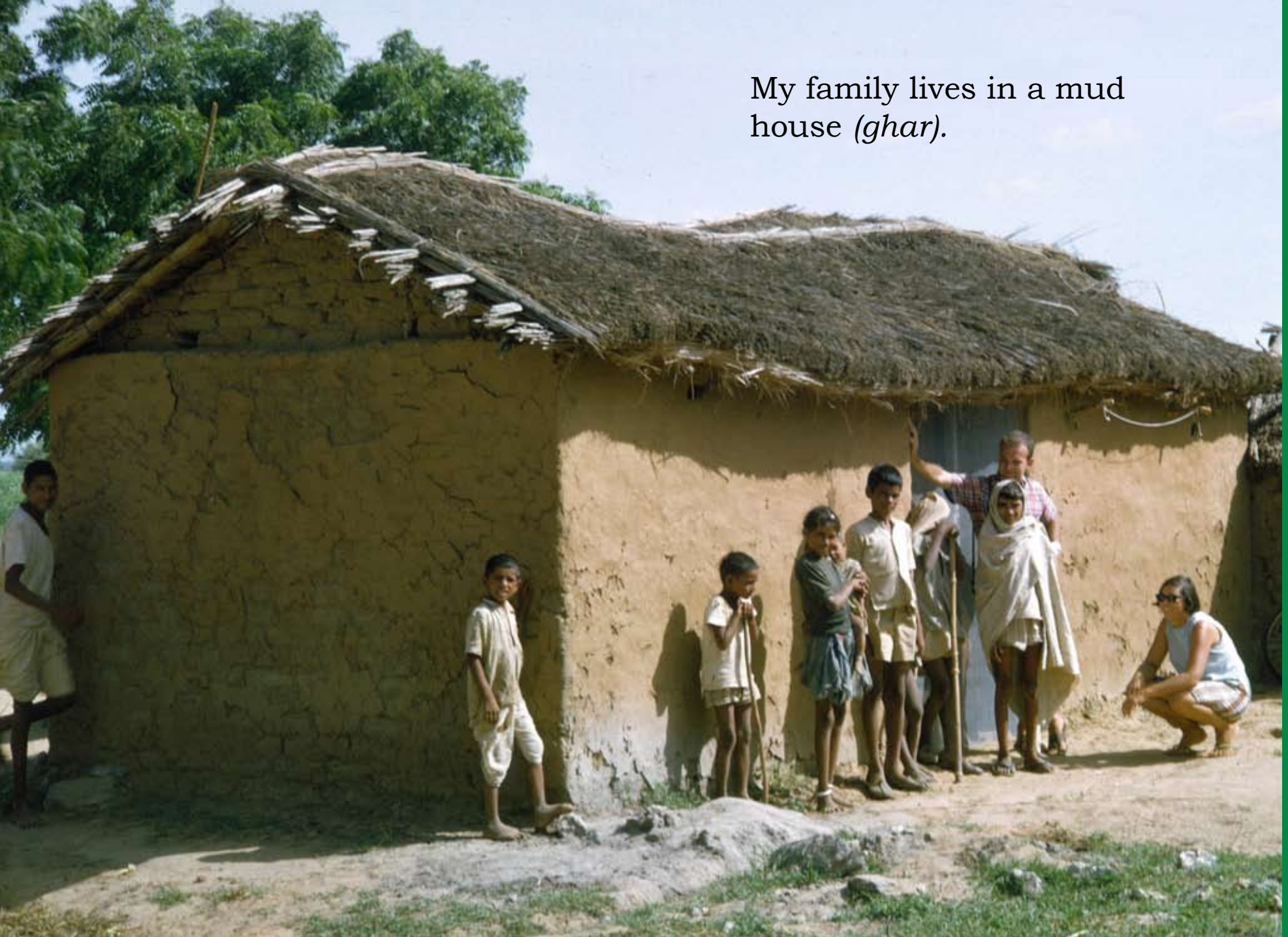
Have you ever been to India?

If you haven't, this is a great chance for me to show you how my family and I live, and what life is like in my village.

I will also be teaching you some words in my language of Hindustani. The word for village is *gaon.*



Family is very important in India. Here are my brother *(bhai)* and sister *(behen)*, but I also live with my mother, father, and my grandmother.



My family lives in a mud house *(ghar)*.

Just like us, many people here decorate their homes with hand-painted pictures during special festivals.

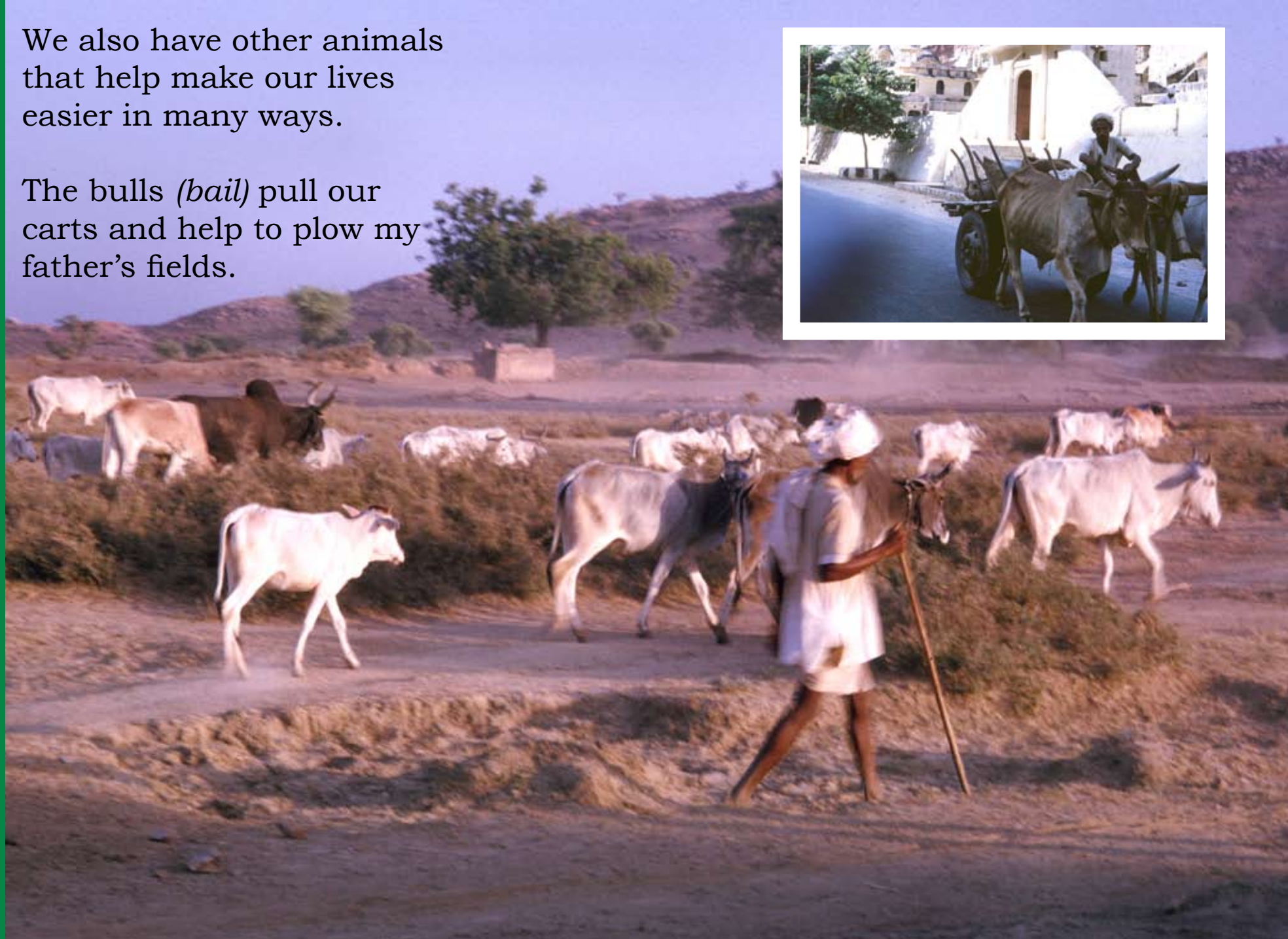
Our kitchen might look very different from yours.

Most of the time we cook outdoors on stoves, called *chulas*. We cook outside so the smoke can go straight up in the sky and not into our house.

My milk comes from our water buffalo *(bhains).* They are big gentle animals but don't look like American buffalo, do they? My mother uses milk and the wheat my father grows to make porridge for my breakfast.

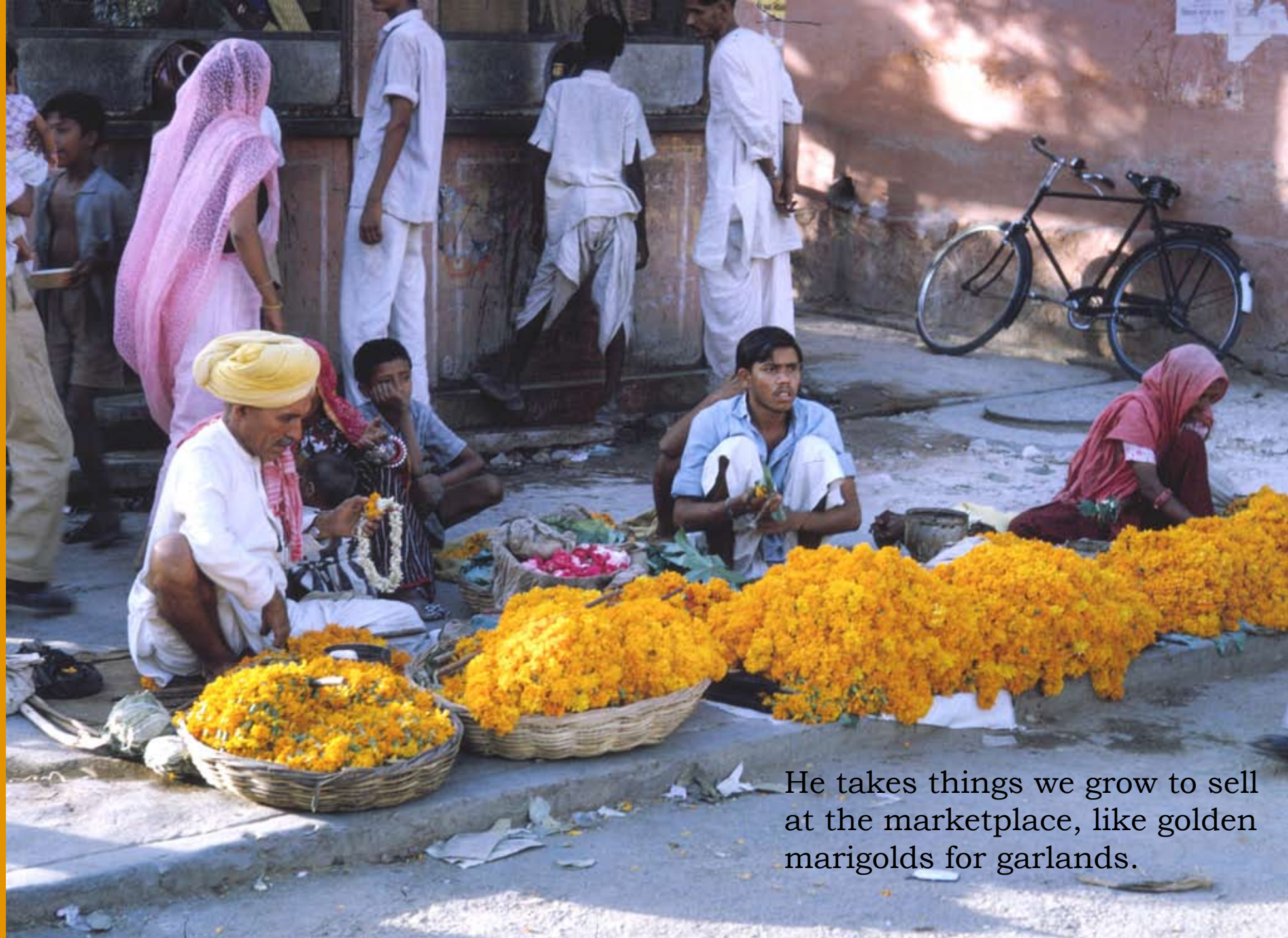
We also have other animals that help make our lives easier in many ways.

The bulls *(bail)* pull our carts and help to plow my father's fields.



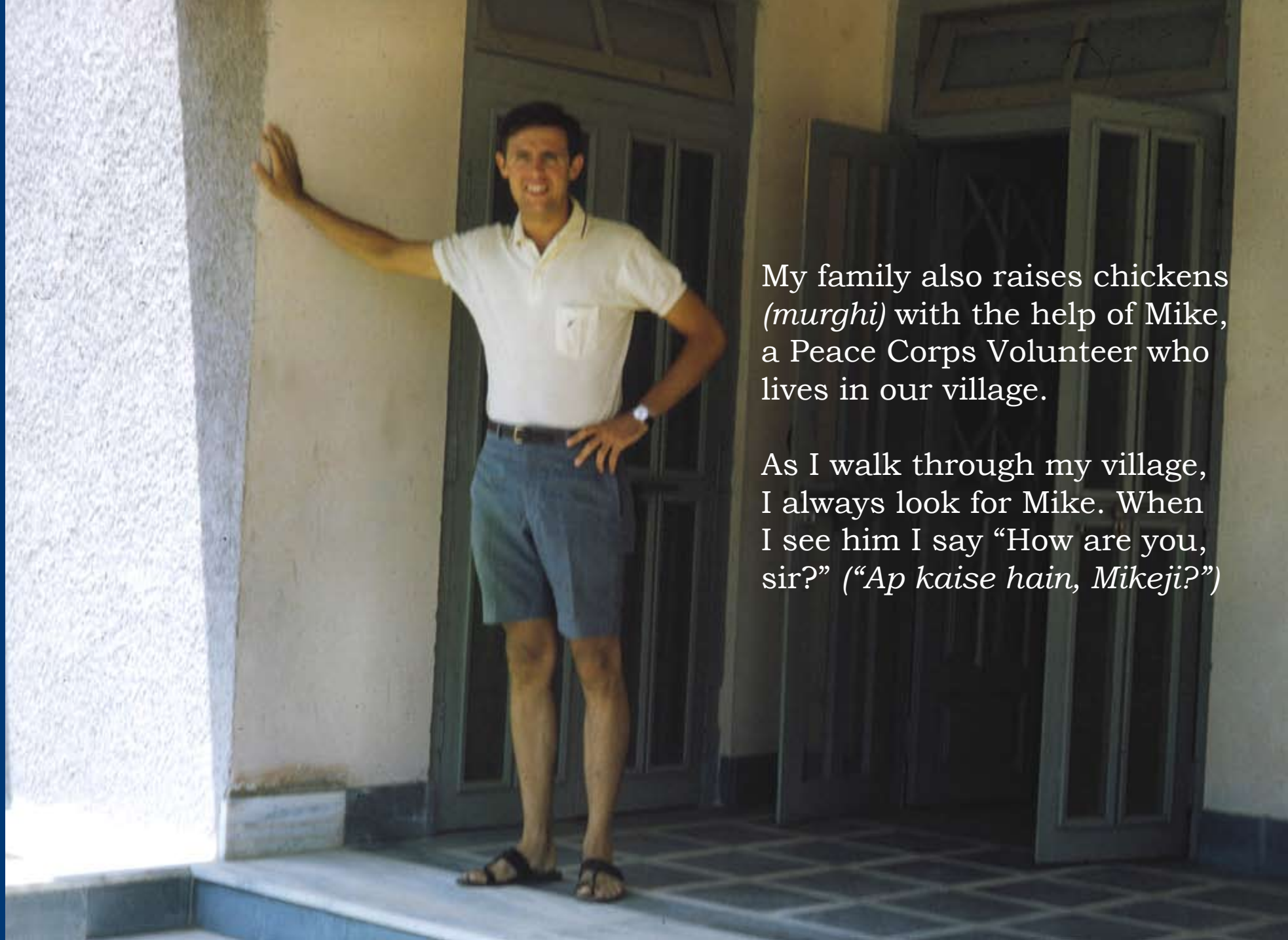
My father *(bapu),* who is a farmer, works very hard to help my family.

Here he is washing his bicycle. He uses his bicycle to ride to the larger town nearby where there is a marketplace.



He takes things we grow to sell at the marketplace, like golden marigolds for garlands.

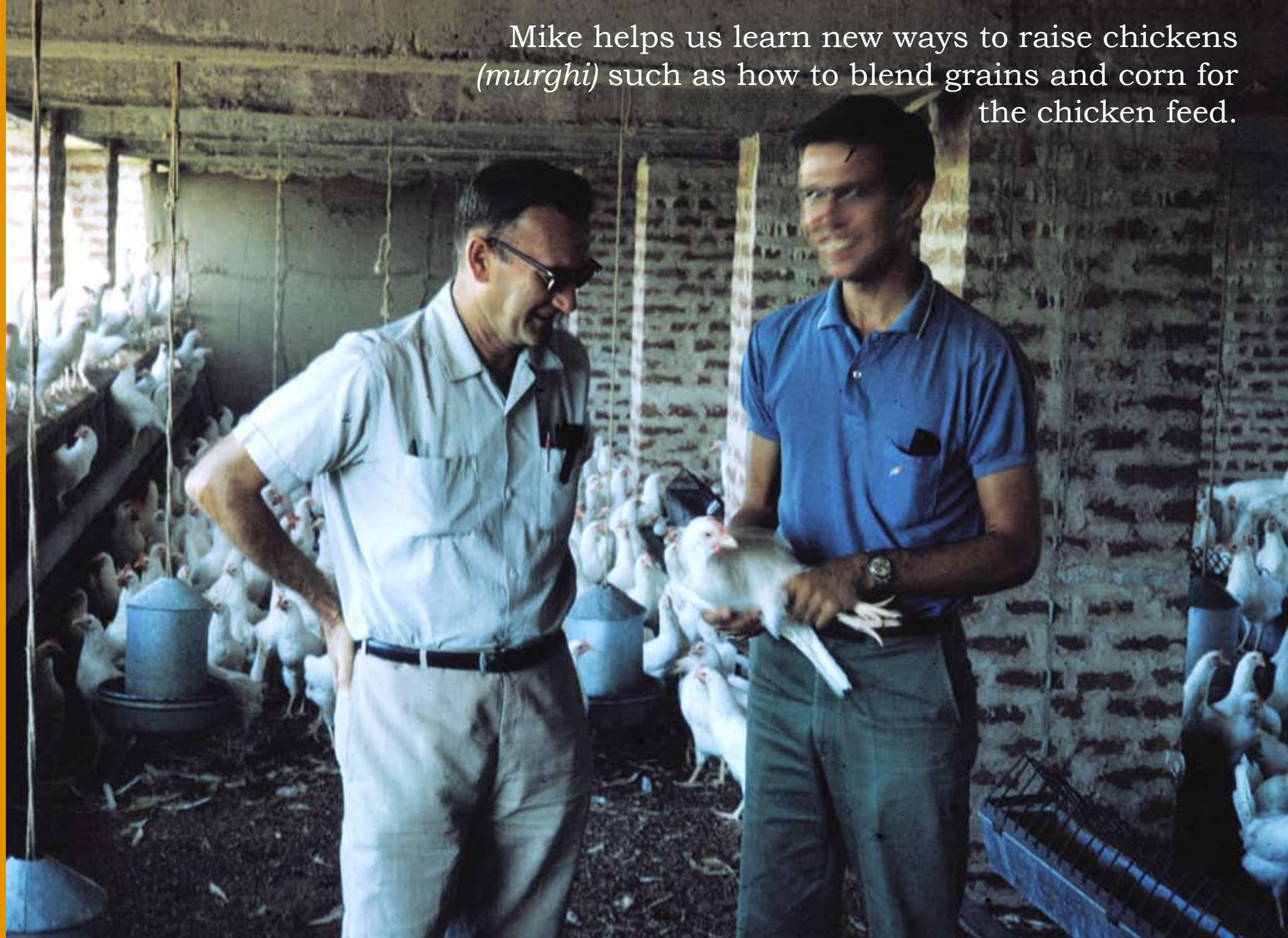
He often takes vegetables too.



My family also raises chickens *(murghi)* with the help of Mike, a Peace Corps Volunteer who lives in our village.

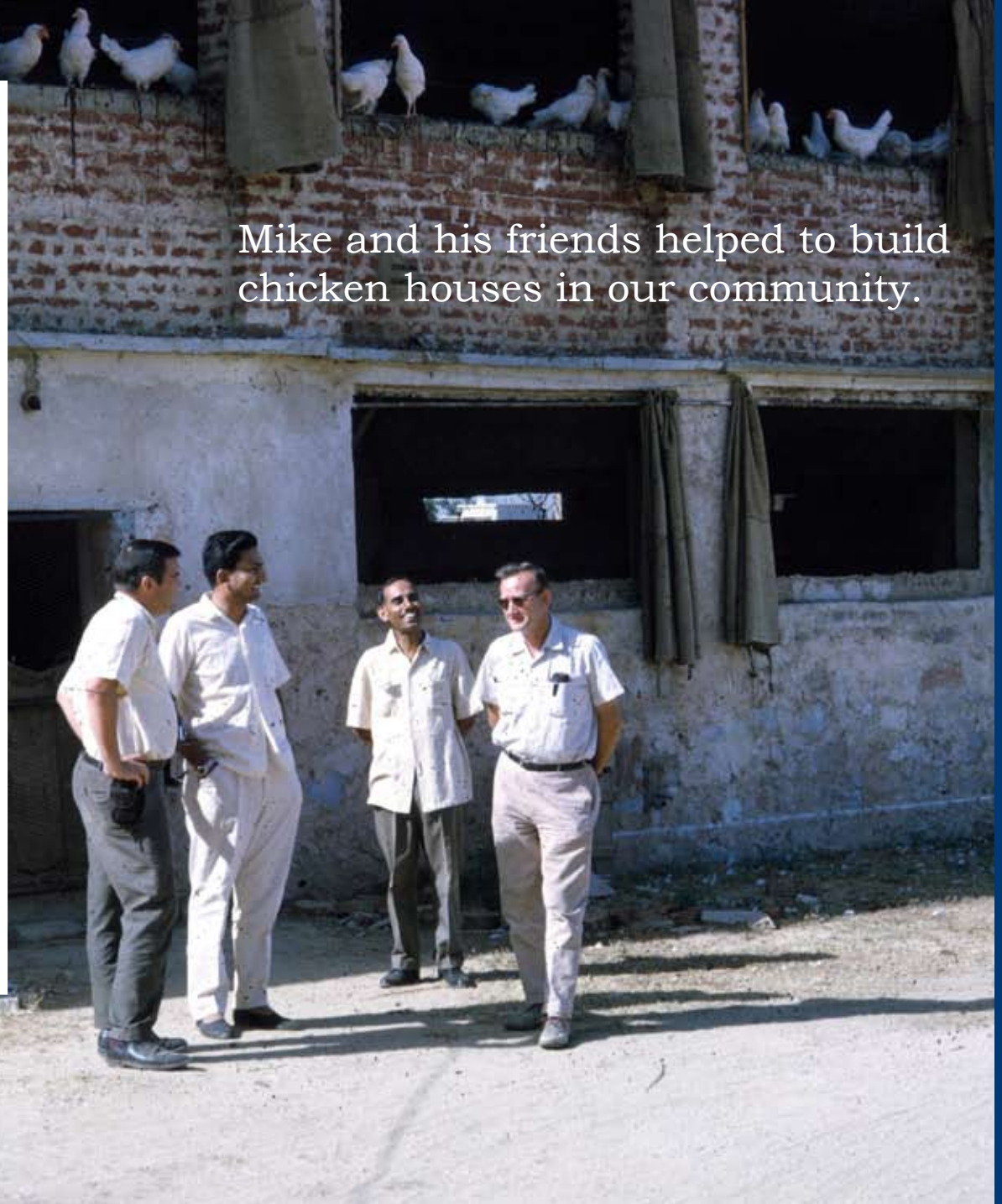
As I walk through my village, I always look for Mike. When I see him I say "How are you, sir?" *("Ap kaise hain, Mikeji?")*

Mike lives and works with us. He is the first person from America that I have ever met. I love it when he tells us what life is like in the United States. As you can see, Mike, who is on the far left in this photo, sometimes wears a *dhoti* around his waist and *kurta* as his shirt.

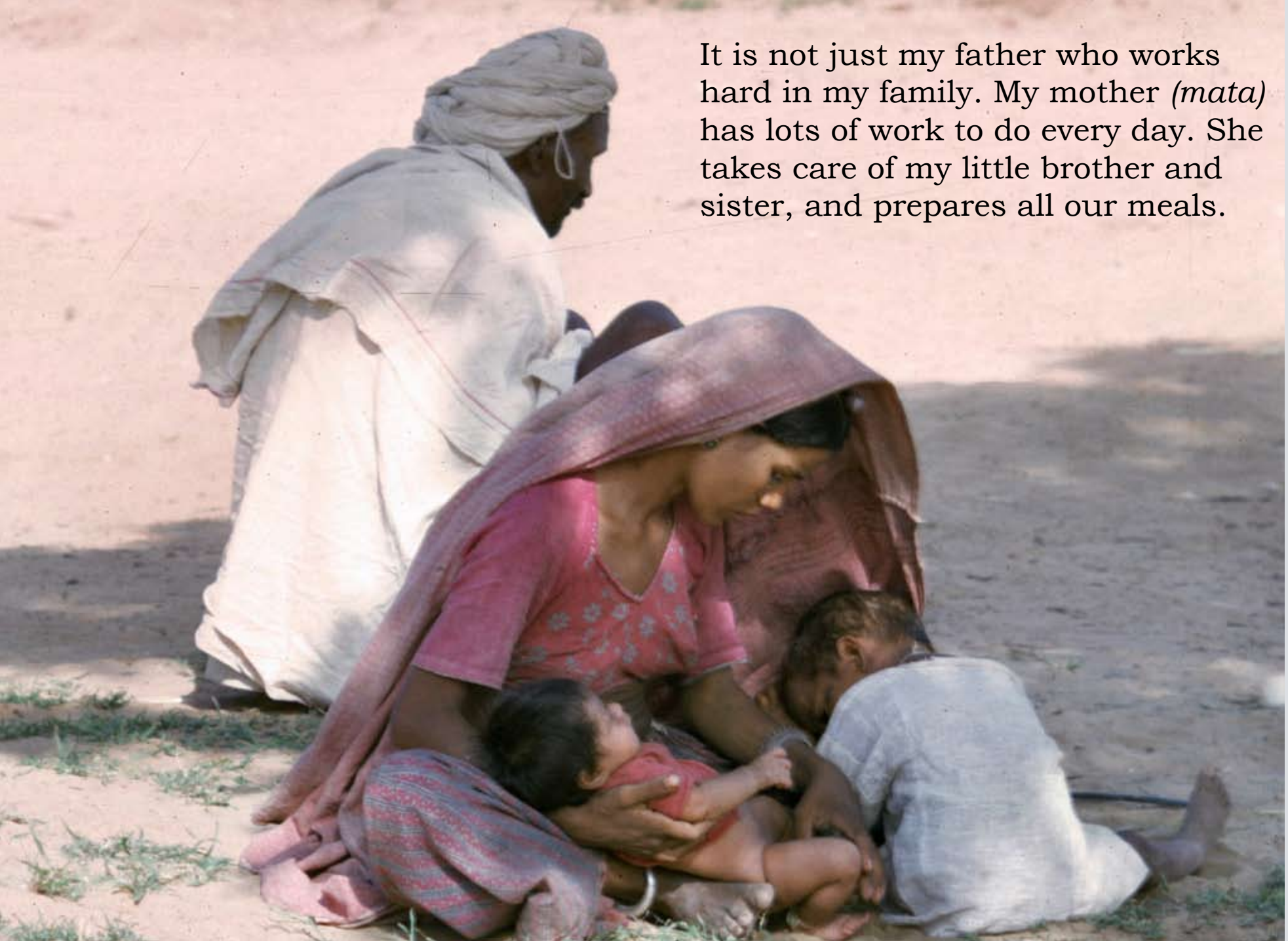


Mike helps us learn new ways to raise chickens *(murghi)* such as how to blend grains and corn for the chicken feed.

In this photo, you can see Mike and Eleanor giving the chickens shots to protect them from diseases.



Mike and his friends helped to build chicken houses in our community.

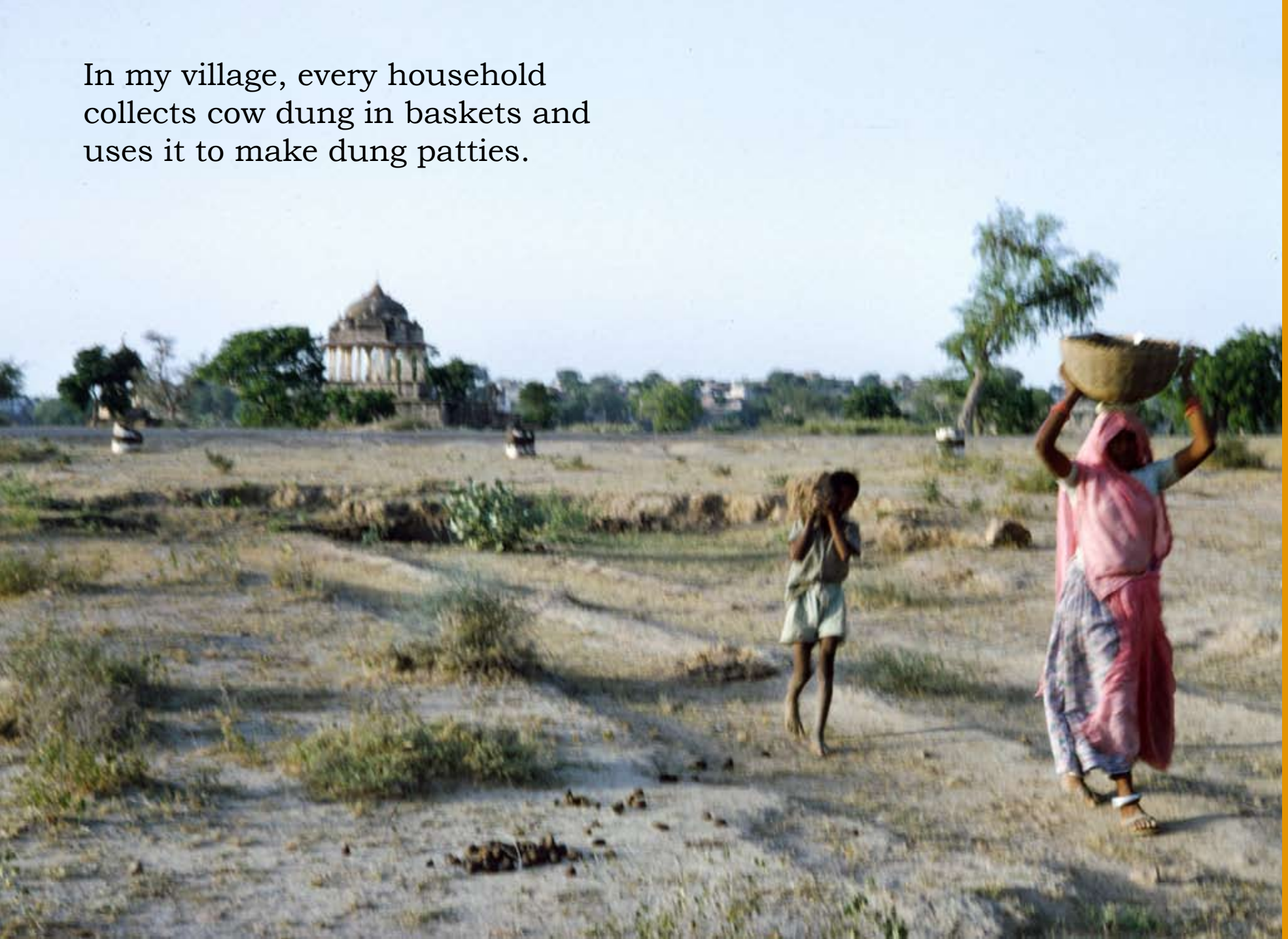


It is not just my father who works hard in my family. My mother *(mata)* has lots of work to do every day. She takes care of my little brother and sister, and prepares all our meals.

She gathers water at the well or from the river in large brass and earthenware pots, which she carries on her head.

I have chores too. Where I live, we cook our food on stoves that burn dung patties. I make dung patties from cow manure. You'll probably say "Whew! I wouldn't do that!" But guess what? We use cow manure because it is freely available, dries in the sun, doesn't smell after drying, and burns evenly. We don't have to spend any money to make it.

In my village, every household collects cow dung in baskets and uses it to make dung patties.



I also help by stacking the hay for our cows. I have to cover my head and mouth so I don't breathe in dust.

My friends and I don’t always wear shoes. It is fun to walk barefoot through the village. I like to feel the soft dust between my toes when I walk to school.

Where I live in India, it is often very hot. Because of this, I probably don’t need as many clothes as you do.

My brother likes to play hoop after school. His other favorite thing to do is ride the carousel when he accompanies our father to the big town. His daily chore is to take the cows out to pasture and return them home later in the day. Everyone in my family helps out.

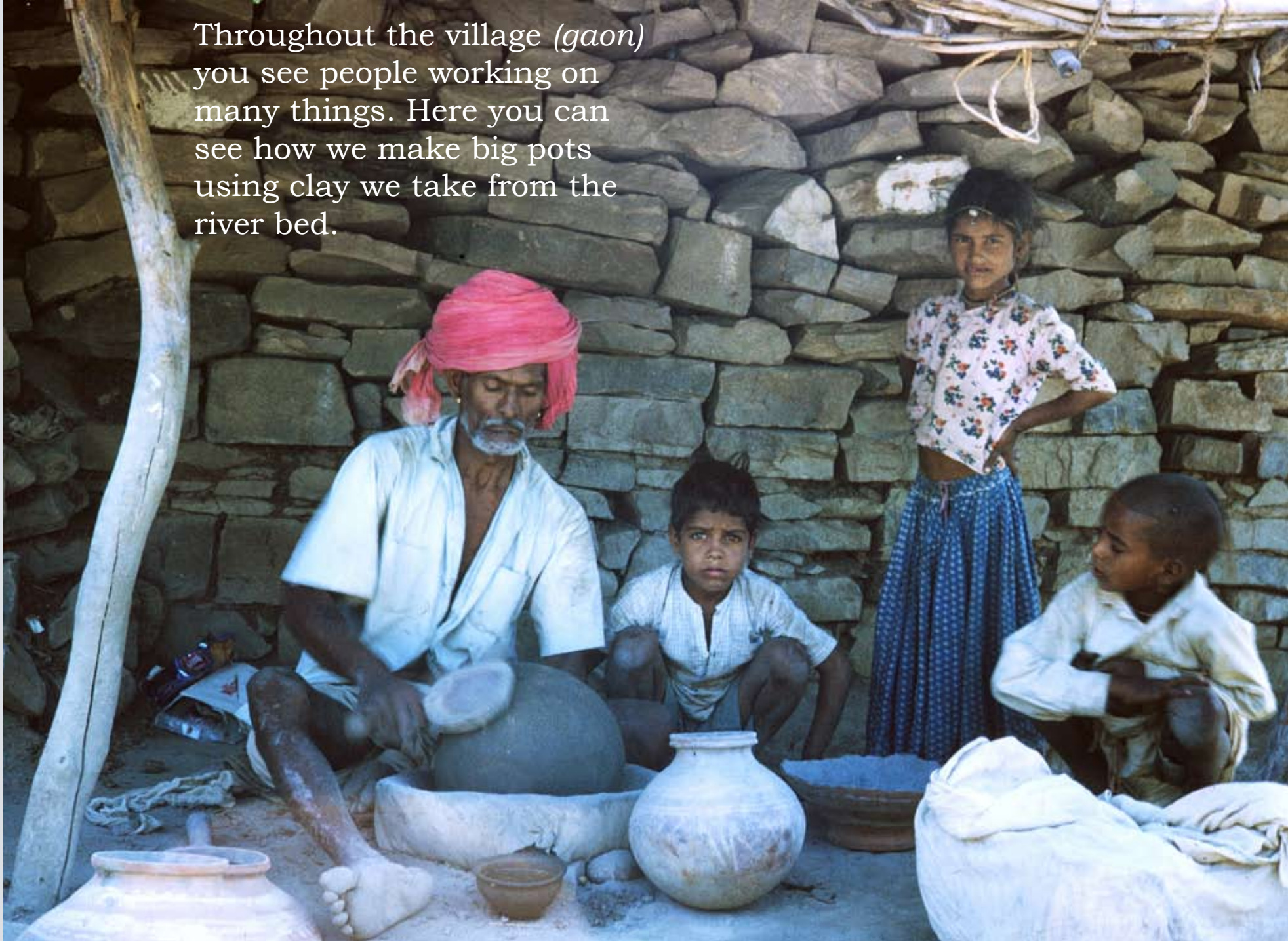
When the rains don't come, the cows sometimes can't find green grass to eat. In times like this, they will eat anything, even newspaper! I bet you didn't know that!

Many people in India own cows because they are very important in our religion, called Hinduism.

Cows are very gentle and help us by providing things we need to live.

My grandmother *(dhadhi)* makes bangle bracelets for me. Her bracelets are also sold in the marketplace. They are made from a natural resin, called lac, which we scrape off of trees. In America, you use lac to make lacquer, which is used on wood like paint.

Here you see women in the marketplace deciding which bangles they like best. We love to dress up for special occasions!

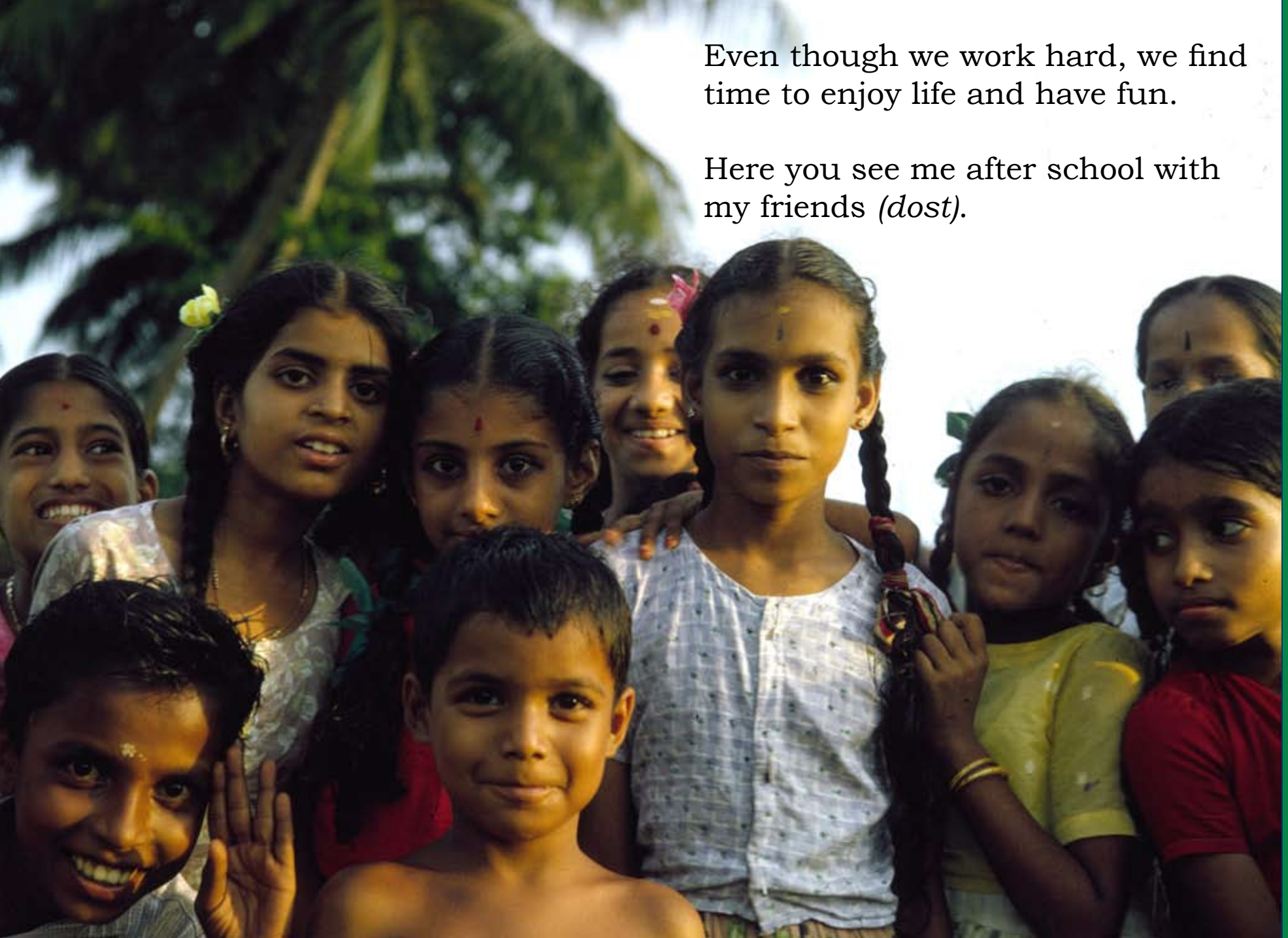


Throughout the village *(gaon)* you see people working on many things. Here you can see how we make big pots using clay we take from the river bed.

My uncle makes bricks from the same clay. These bricks are dried in the sun and then sold to make walls for our homes.

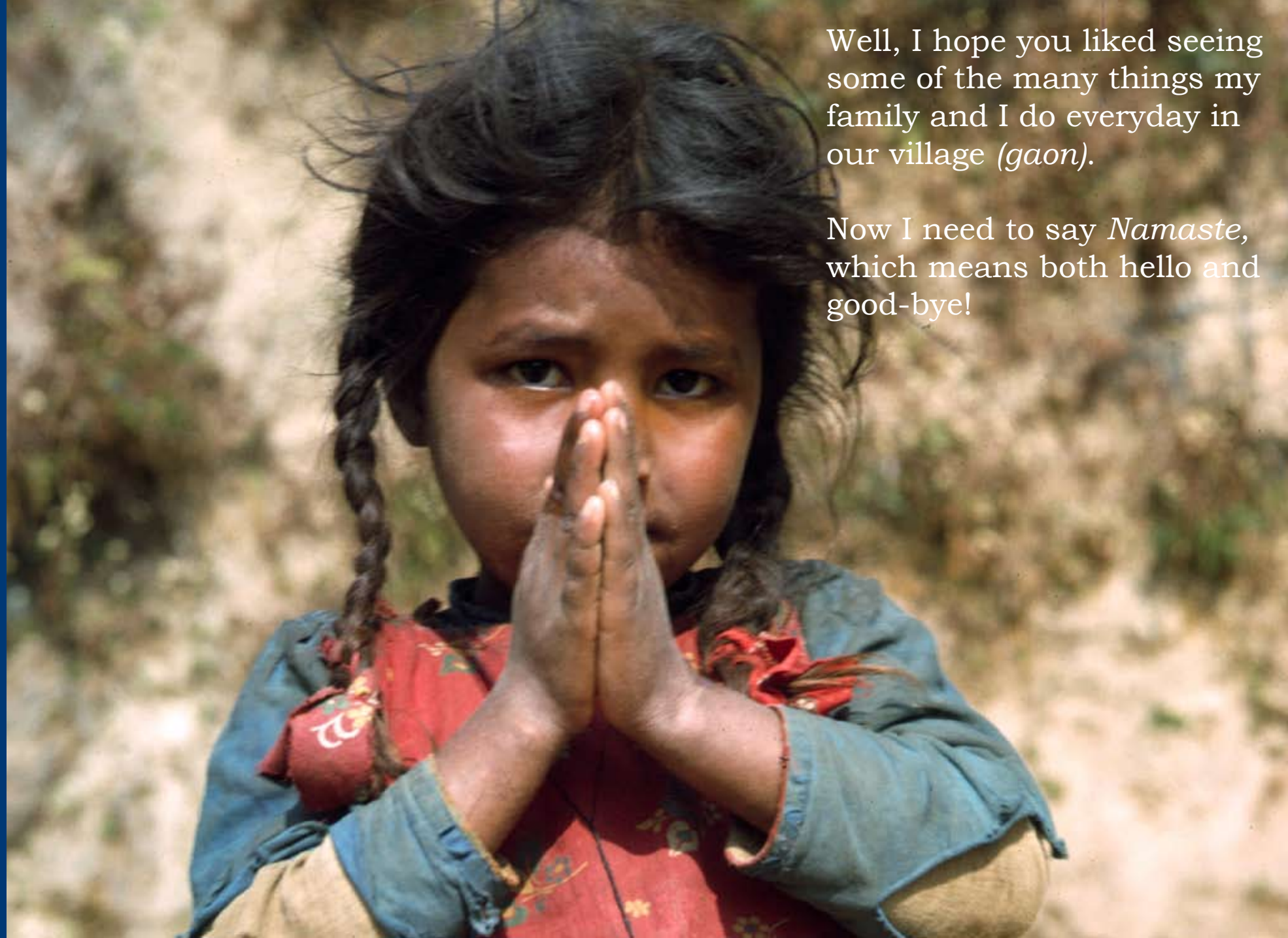
At the end of the day, you see many men and women down at the river *(nadhi)* where they wash clothes, pots, and pans.

It is a cooler time of the day, when the sun is low in the sky.



Even though we work hard, we find time to enjoy life and have fun.

Here you see me after school with my friends *(dost)*.



Well, I hope you liked seeing some of the many things my family and I do everyday in our village *(gaon)*.

Now I need to say *Namaste,* which means both hello and good-bye!

Written and photographed by Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Michael Gannett, India, 1965-1967. Thanks to...

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