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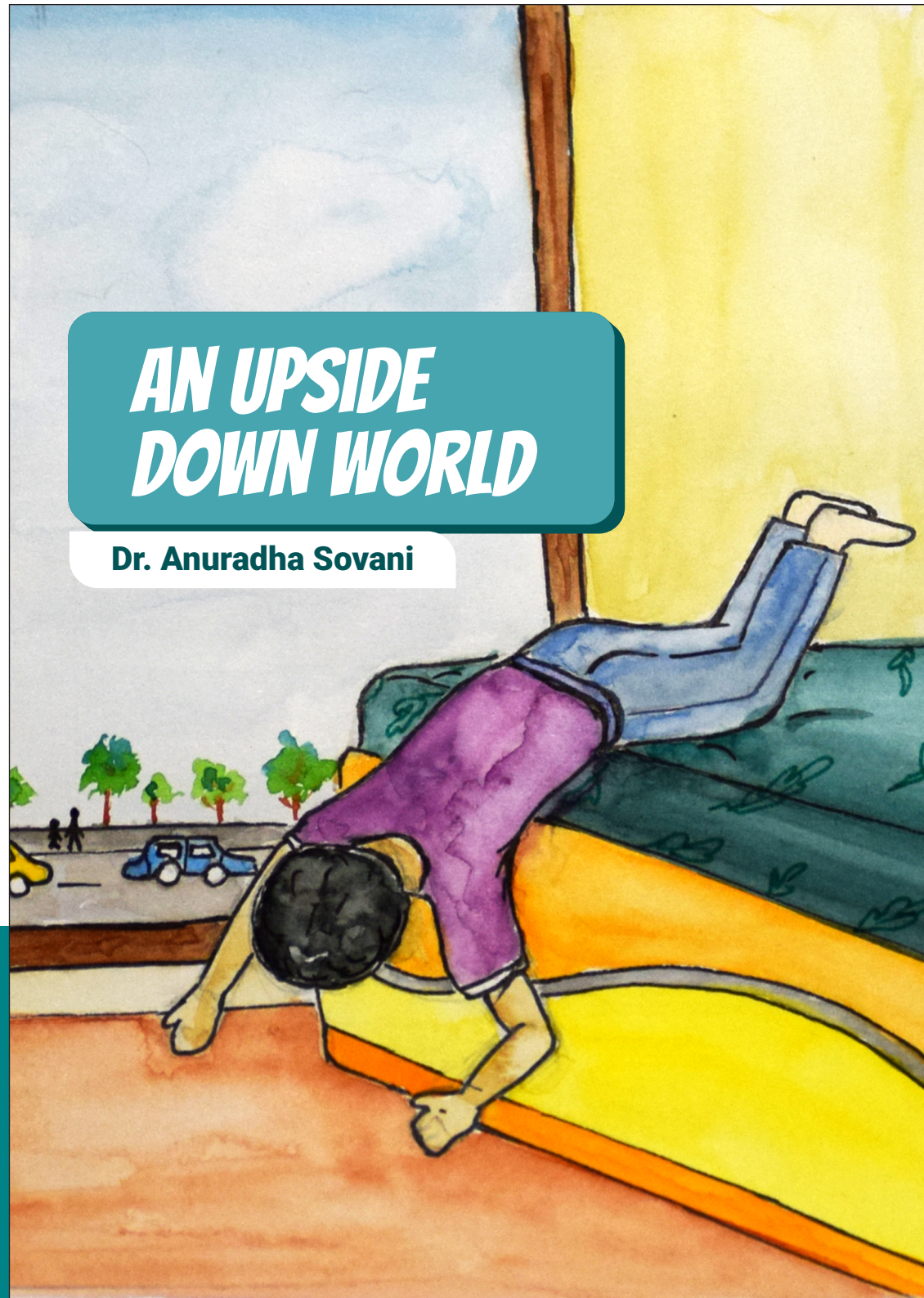
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AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

Dr. Anuradha Sovani



An upside down world

Story By - Dr. Anuradha Sovani

Vik lay on his stomach on his parents' bed. His legs and hips were on the bed, and his torso and head were hanging down over the edge. From this angle, he could see the garden outside. He felt like a bat looking at an upside down world. Or like a stalactite, hanging down from the ceiling of a cave.

That was a nice word, stalactite. He had just watched a documentary on stalactites and stalagmites, and these icy pillars in caves, formed by centuries of water dripping down, looked so beautiful. He smiled to himself proudly since he had thought of a good way to remember which was which.

The treetops in the garden outside were at the bottom of his range of vision.

The brown earth was way up there...it seemed weird, and yet looked good. The cars all looked so funny upside down, their wheels up, like the legs of a dead beetle. People walking by looked odd too, and Vik laughed aloud.

Vik realized that so much depended on what you thought was the right way up. Like their neighbours' little baby just lay flat on her back in her little cot. She must be thinking the ceiling was the world. Or maybe if she was on her side, she may think everything is sideways, just the way she could see it.

He, and bats, and stalactites could get used to thinking that the brown earth was up there, if they stared at this world long enough.

And the neighbours' baby would soon believe that a pandemic face mask was part of the body, and may start crying if she saw people's lips and teeth!

Vik was glad his mom and dad could understand when he said stuff like this. Some older people just did not get it, and told him not to talk nonsense. He would not tell these nasty people his trick of how to remember about stalactites and stalagmites. He would just tell his parents, that the stalactites hang 'tight' to the ceiling of the cave, and the stalagmites 'might' reach them one day to make a pillar. He thought his trick to remember the words was clever.

He went back to thinking about how people see the world.

Like if he was walking along the road, he would definitely notice the ice cream shop. His dad would see the shop that sold garden tools and fertilizer and his mother would never miss the bookstore or the library. The uncle in the flat below would notice the stall where they sell cigarettes, and maybe people who liked to drink alcohol would notice the wine shop right way. His parents did not know that Vik knew where wine and beer and other alcohol was sold, because children were not supposed to know these things.

He knew a lot of things and places, but that did not mean he would go there, because it smelled awful and made him feel sick. People who drank or smoked often smelled disgusting too, and he never got into the same lift as they did.

He wondered how they may be seeing the world. Smoky? Faded? Shaky? He did not know and did not want to find out.

Vik thought smart people chose a good and healthy way to see the world. It was good if we could see things that taught us something new. Things that could help us make other people happy. If we choose to do unhealthy things, we become miserable, and soon others start avoiding us. He saw that happen to boys and girls in senior school. They would smoke to impress each other, and then their teeth and nails would look yellow and their lips would look black, and no one wanted to be friends with them anymore.

Life was complicated, Vik thought. People did things because they thought it was cool

to do them, and realized too late that it was not really cool at all. It was best to do what was right, and be nice and helpful to your parents and friends, and eat healthy food, and stay clean and honest.

It must be harder being a grown up and much easier being a child, Vik said to himself. No wonder grown ups looked tired, and angry and sad and puzzled much more often than children did. Vik shook his head thoughtfully, and decided he would just hang there for a bit till the upside down dog trotted across the lawn.

