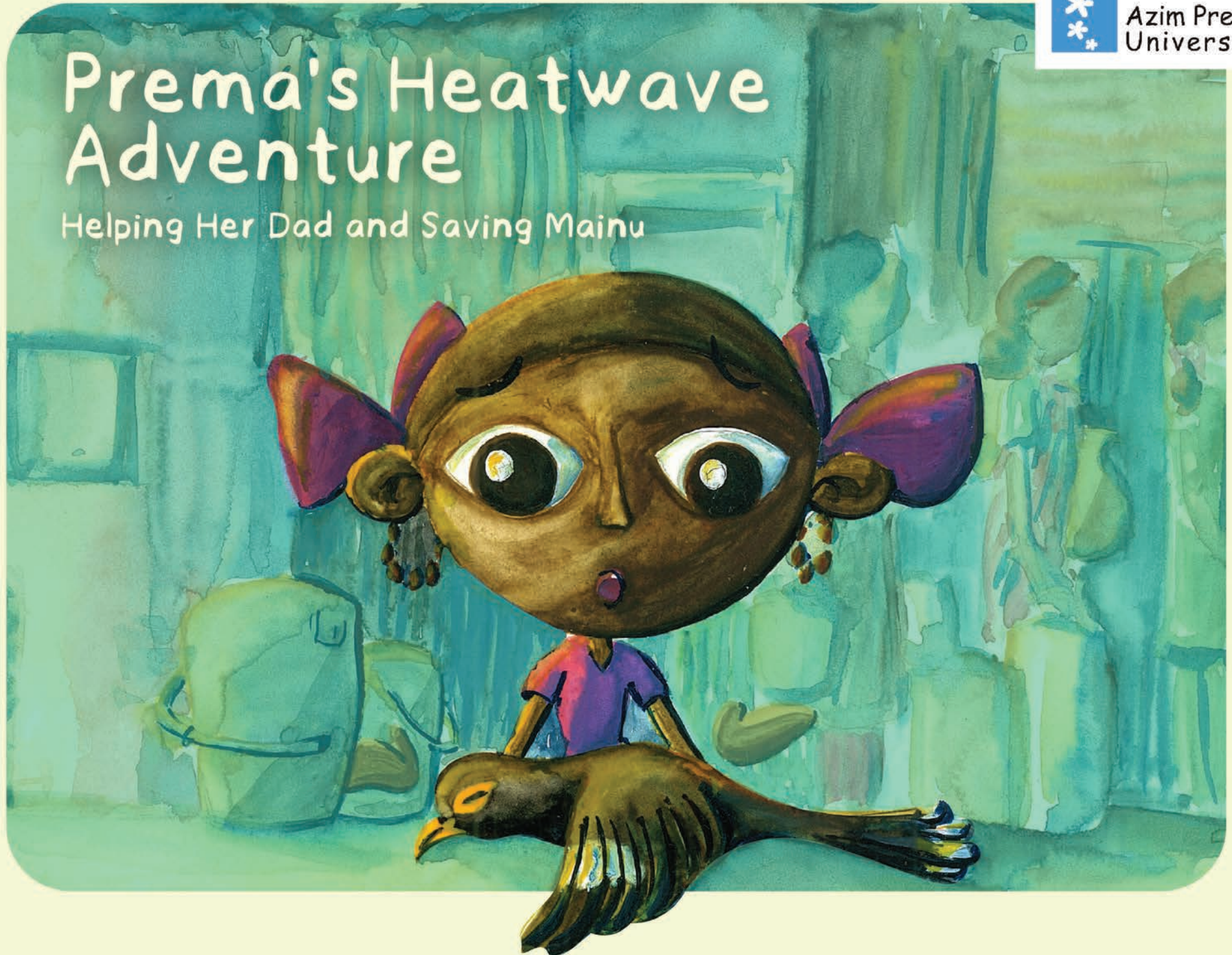




Azim Premji
University

Prema's Heatwave Adventure

Helping Her Dad and Saving Mainu



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Early morning at home Prema wakes up and sees her father, who works as a construction labourer, getting ready for work.

Prema: "Papa, are you okay? You said you were very tired from the heat yesterday."

Papa: "I'm fine, Prema. Your papa is strong!"

Prema: "Please don't go to work today papa."

Prema notices her father still looks unwell, but he doesn't listen and heads off to work.

Prema (worried): "Please be careful, Papa!"



At the community water tap Prema stands in line to fill water when she sees a small bird, a myna, on the ground.

Prema: "Oh no! The poor bird looks hurt."

She gently picks up the bird, and to her surprise, the bird talks!

Myna: "Water... I'm so thirsty... please."

Prema: "Hold on, I'll get you water!"



Prema runs to the front of the line and asks Madhavi aunty to give her some water urgently. She pours the water into a small container to help the myna drink. She also sprinkles water on the bird.

The bird feels slightly better but is still unwell.

Myna: "It's so hot... I need some shade."

Prema looks at the sun, blazing down on them.

She takes the bird under the shade of a tree nearby to help the bird cool down.

Myna sounding relaxed but weak:

"Thank you, Prema. I need to rest."



Prema fans Mainu – which is what she decides to call him – just like she has seen her grandparents do for Prema when it was very hot.

Mainu starts feeling better after some rest but is still unable to move much.

Prema thinks to herself, “What should I do now? Oh! I should take Mainu to the doctor!” She remembered visiting a doctor when she had fallen ill. The teacher at her school had told them that some doctors also treat sick birds and animals. Prema knew one such clinic not very far from the slum where she lived. And so decides to take Mainu to the veterinary doctor who treats birds and animals.



Doctor: "You saved the bird, Prema!

What did you do to save him?"

Prema: "I gave him water to drink and then let him rest in the shade of a tree."

Doctor (smiling): "You did all the right things.

That's how you beat the heat!"

Prema: "I'm so glad Mainu is feeling better."

Doctor: "You should also make sure to drink lots of water and stay cool, Prema. The heat is very intense today. You should also look for newspaper warnings about the weather so that you can be prepared for hot days like this."



Prema takes Mainu home to care for him.
As the day gets hotter, she starts worrying
about her father working under the hot sun.

She decides to give him a call from her
mother's phone.
But her dad does not answer the call.



Worried, Prema, grabs a water bottle and rushes to the construction site, which is not too far from her home. She sees her dad working and notices that he does not look quite well.

Prema: "Papa! You need water.

And you need to rest... please come home."



She doesn't leave until her father agrees to come home. She makes sure he drinks water, stays in the shade, and rests that day.



The next morning, Mainu feels a little better and shares his worries with Prema.

“My family is in danger too,” he said softly.

“My grandma used to say the world is getting hotter every day.”

Mainu pauses, looking troubled.

“I never really understood what she meant until today,” he adds with a frown.

“I had to leave home to search for water, and the heat was just too much for me.”

“Why is the heat increasing, Mainu?” asked Prema.

“I have heard about this,” Mainu replied.



“I used to live in a beautiful university campus”

Mainu continues,

“One day, I saw a lot of people visiting the building next to our nest and they were discussing how the heat is increasing due to human activity.”

Mainu said: “Can you take me out on a walk?”

I can show you what they meant.”

Prema: “Sure! But not now, since it is hot outside.”

Prema keeps a bowl of water at her window for other creatures who may need a drink.

As the day cools, Prema and Mainu go for a walk. Mainu shows her what he had overheard about why it was getting hotter every day.

They see a lot of cars with fumes from their exhaust, factories at a distance giving out smoke, and trash on the ground. Prema also sees a large area of trees being cut down for construction.

Mainu: "This is why it's getting hotter. Because of all the pollution and cutting of trees. We need to take care of our Earth!"

Prema said determined:

"We can make this place green and cool again!
I want to learn more and help protect our planet."





Mainu, now fully recovered, flies high into the sky and waves goodbye.

Mainu: "Thank you, Prema!

Take care and keep helping our Earth."

Prema: "I will! See you soon, Mainu!"

That night, while Prema was having dinner with her family, she told her father what an eventful day she had.

Prema: "Papa, today I saved a myna and also learned something from him."

She continued: "Mainu told me that the world is getting hotter because of the things people are doing, like cutting down trees and using too many cars."



Prema added: "I had to take Mainu to a doctor to save him."

She further added:

"The doctor was very nice and told me how we can stay safe from the heat. We need to drink lots of water, stay in the shade, and avoid going outside during the hottest part of the day. And keep ourselves updated about heatwaves by listening to the news."

Prema hugged her father: "Papa, your health is more important to me than anything else. But how will you do all that the doctor has asked to stay safe when your work requires you to be in the sun?"

Prema's father smiled and gave her a big hug. "Don't worry, Prema," he said kindly. "I'll do whatever the doctor said. I'll carry water, wear a hat, and take breaks in the shade."

That night, as Prema lay in bed, she thought about Mainu, her father, and the hot weather. She realised that since the world is changing, people need to find ways to live with these changes.

“If we plant more trees, make shaded spots, and be careful with how much we construct, we can keep everyone safe—even when it's really hot” she thought.

“And maybe I can teach my friends and family how to do this too.”

Prema smiled as she hugged her pillow. She felt proud that she could help her family and the planet. Soon, she drifted off to sleep, dreaming of a cooler, safer world for everyone.

About heatwaves, how they impact humans and birds, and what can we do?

Heatwaves are when there are extended periods of high temperatures, many times with high humidity. Heatwaves are dangerous for both humans and birds (and animals as well). Normally, our body can regulate its own temperature, but during heatwaves we are at risk of getting a heat stroke. This can even result in death.

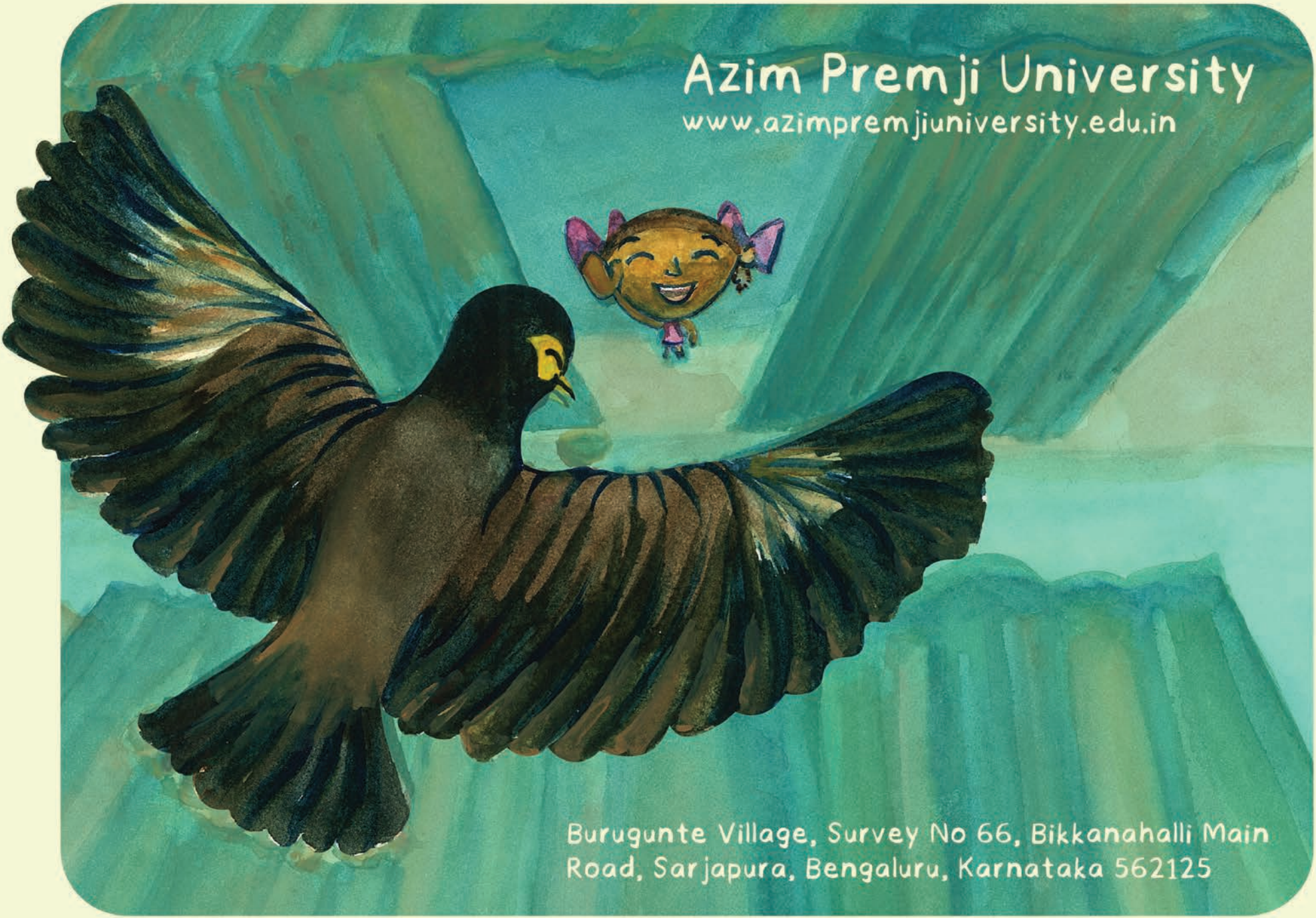
Heatwaves are especially dangerous for those who must work outdoors – like Prema's father who is a poor construction labourer. There are others such as street vendors, sanitation workers, and delivery persons who are forced to bear with the heat and dust because their income depends on their work outdoors. Heatwaves can be very fatal for them.

There are many ways we can protect ourselves from heatwaves such as staying indoors in the heat and keeping ourselves hydrated. We can plant trees in our neighbourhood and reduce concrete surfaces to make the city itself cooler. But these are not options for all who live in cities such as Prema and her family. Prema's father cannot skip a day's work even if he is unwell because of the heat – if he doesn't work, his family that includes Prema, cannot eat. Tree covered roads are usually in wealthy layouts. And not in congested slums where children like little Prema and her father live.

Birds are also affected by heatwaves – as we saw with Mainu. In normal conditions birds have different ways of dealing with heat. They do not sweat and pant; their feathers help regulate temperature, and some venture out only at dawn or dusk when it is cooler. Birds may take a quick dip in a puddle of water to cool their body. We can help birds like Mainu during heatwaves by putting out a wide bowl of water, and planting trees to provide them with shade to rest.

Because of climate change many parts of the world are facing the risk of heatwaves. And everywhere the worst affected are the poor like Prema and her father, and voiceless birds like Mainu. We must of course individually protect ourselves from the heatwaves, but we also need to ensure that Prema, her father and Mainu are also kept safe. For this we must ensure that trees are planted to provide shade across all neighbourhoods, ensure there is access to water in everyone's home especially during the hot summers and think more imaginatively about materials we use in building our cities.





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