

The Secret of Pangolins

(Indian Pangolin)

Original Marathi Story : Bhau Katdare

English Translation : Dhanavanti Hardikar

Cover and illustrations : Abha Bhagwat



Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra,
Chiplun



The Secret of Pangolins

Original Marathi Story :
Bhau Katdare

English Translation :
Dhanavanti Hardikar

Cover and illustrations :
Abha Bhagwat

© : Bhau Katdare
6, Shubham Sahniwas,
Near New Bhairi Temple,
Chiplun-415605
Dist - Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, India.

Publisher

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra,
11, United Park, Markandi, Chiplun,
415605, Dist -Ratnagiri,
Maharashtra, India.

E-mail : sahyadricpn@gmail.com

Web : www.snmcpn.org

First Edition : September 2019

Layout & Design

Mudra, 383, Narayan Peth,
Pune - 411030. Maharashtra, India.

For free distribution

This book is an attempt to inform students, youth and the general public about the pangolin which is a less known and greatly neglected animal. Pangolins are one of the rarest species of animals. They have been classified as Endangered in IUCN's red data list. Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra is striving for their protection and conservation by approaching all strata of society. This book, too, is being published as a part of that effort. We hope it will help us reach the message of pangolin protection to all people.

Abha Bhagwat has brought the pangolin alive in these pages beautifully through her illustrations. Mr. Amod Bhoite provided excellent layouts and design. Ms. Dhanavanti Hardikar translated the original Marathi text into English without losing any of its spirit.

I would like to thank everyone for their guidance and cooperation.

Bhau Katdare

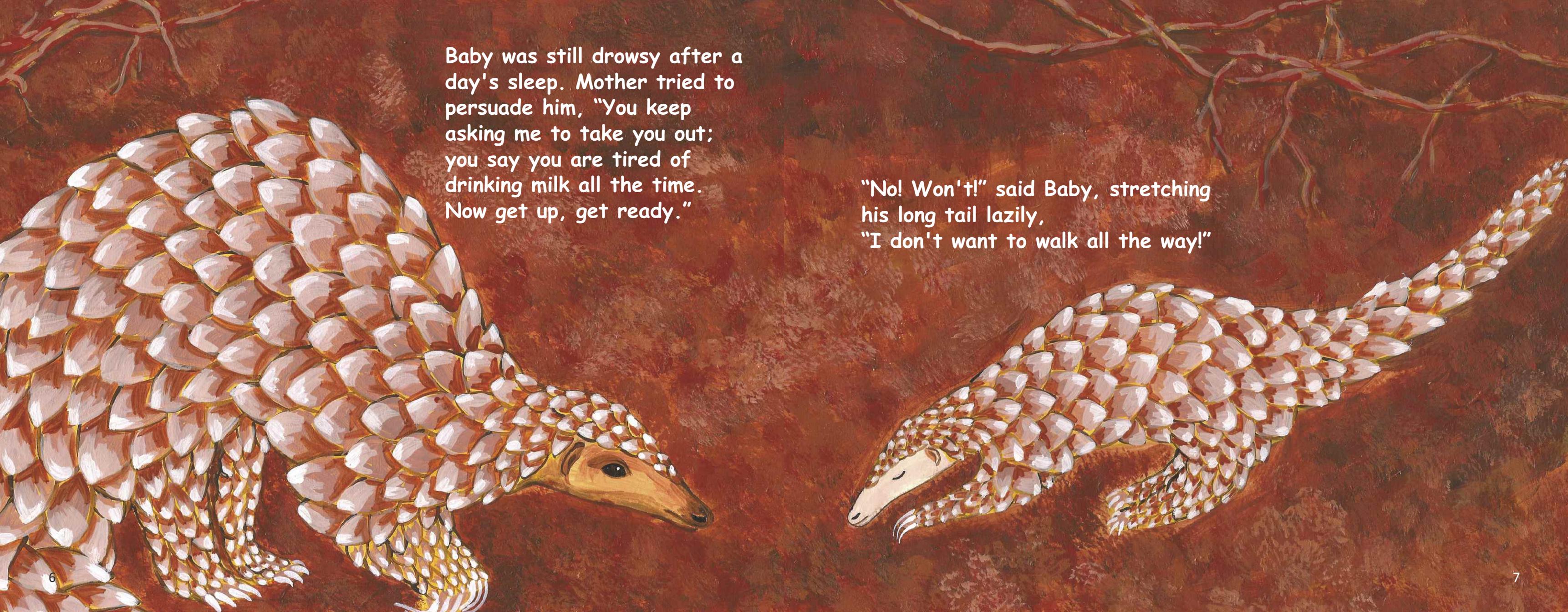
President

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra



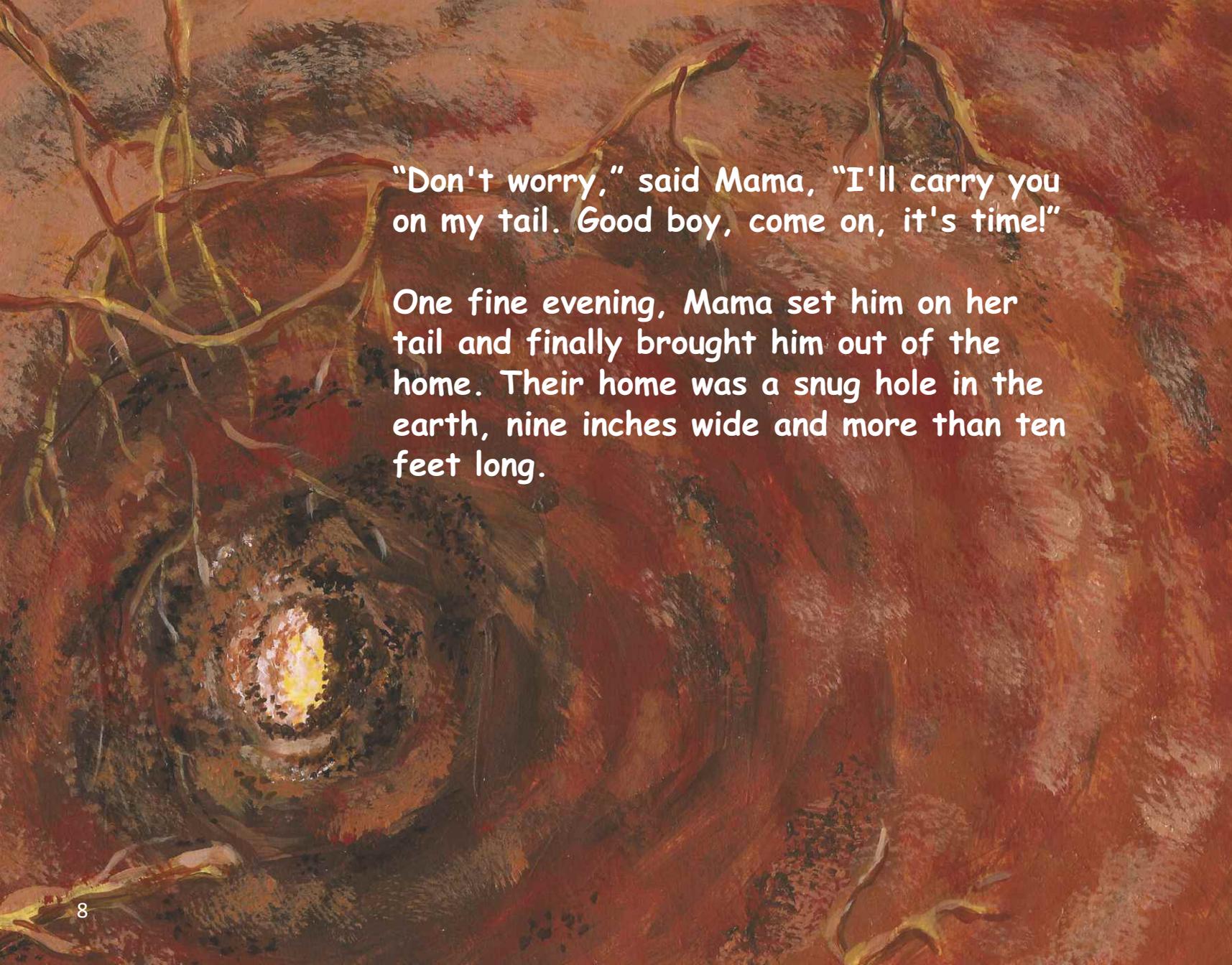
"Come, Baby, Wake up ! We will go anteating today!" Mama Pangolin gave a gentle loving push to her three-months old baby, with her long tapering mouth.





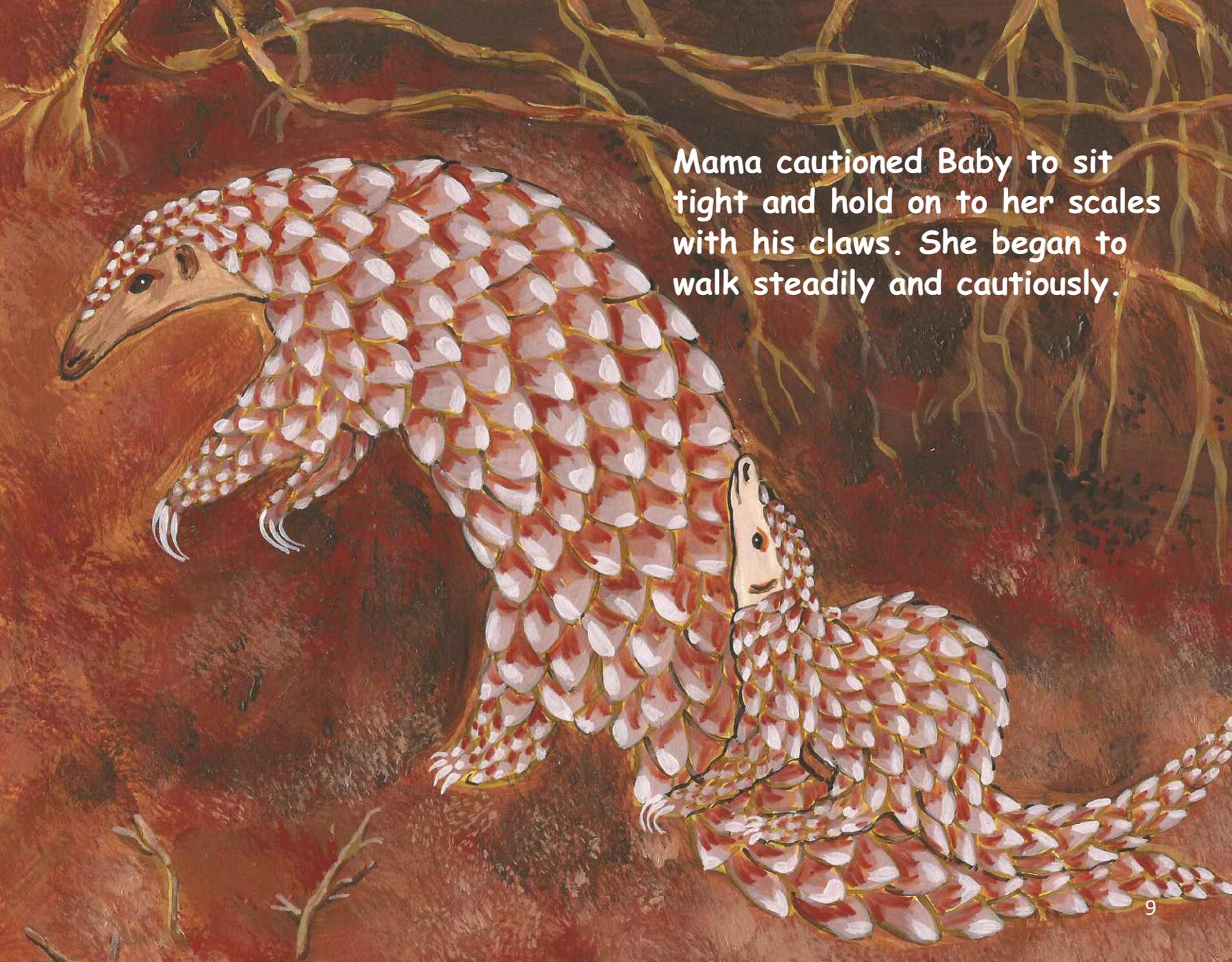
Baby was still drowsy after a day's sleep. Mother tried to persuade him, "You keep asking me to take you out; you say you are tired of drinking milk all the time. Now get up, get ready."

"No! Won't!" said Baby, stretching his long tail lazily, "I don't want to walk all the way!"



"Don't worry," said Mama, "I'll carry you on my tail. Good boy, come on, it's time!"

One fine evening, Mama set him on her tail and finally brought him out of the home. Their home was a snug hole in the earth, nine inches wide and more than ten feet long.



Mama cautioned Baby to sit tight and hold on to her scales with his claws. She began to walk steadily and cautiously.



Just then, a porcupine went past them.

"Who's that?" Baby wondered.

"Oh, that! That's a porcupine!"

"And who are we?"

"Hmm," Mama began to explain as she walked.

"We are pangolins. We have many cousins.

Four of them are in Africa and four are in Asia.

"We live in India, so people call us Indian Pangolins. In the northern part of India, our cousins Chinese Pangolins are also seen.

"God has endowed us with excellent protective scales. Even bullets can't break them easily. That's why we are safe in the wild."



By now, Mama and Baby had reached the termite mound. Mama used her strong, sharp and curved front claws to quickly demolish the termite mound. The termites inside began to run helter-skelter.

In and out, in and out went Mother's one foot long sticky tongue. She began to devour the termites. "Look, Baby, they're delicious! Eat them up! Quickly! This is how we pangolins gobble up termites!"

Baby watched Mother and tried to follow her example. Slowly, slowly, Yes! Baby could do it too! In and out, in and out went his tiny tongue. This was his first solid meal after being nursed on mother's milk for three months. And he found the termites truly delicious! Just like Mother had said they would be! She, too, was happy.

"Good! Baby, remember, this is the proper food for us. We don't have teeth like other animals, so this is what we eat!"

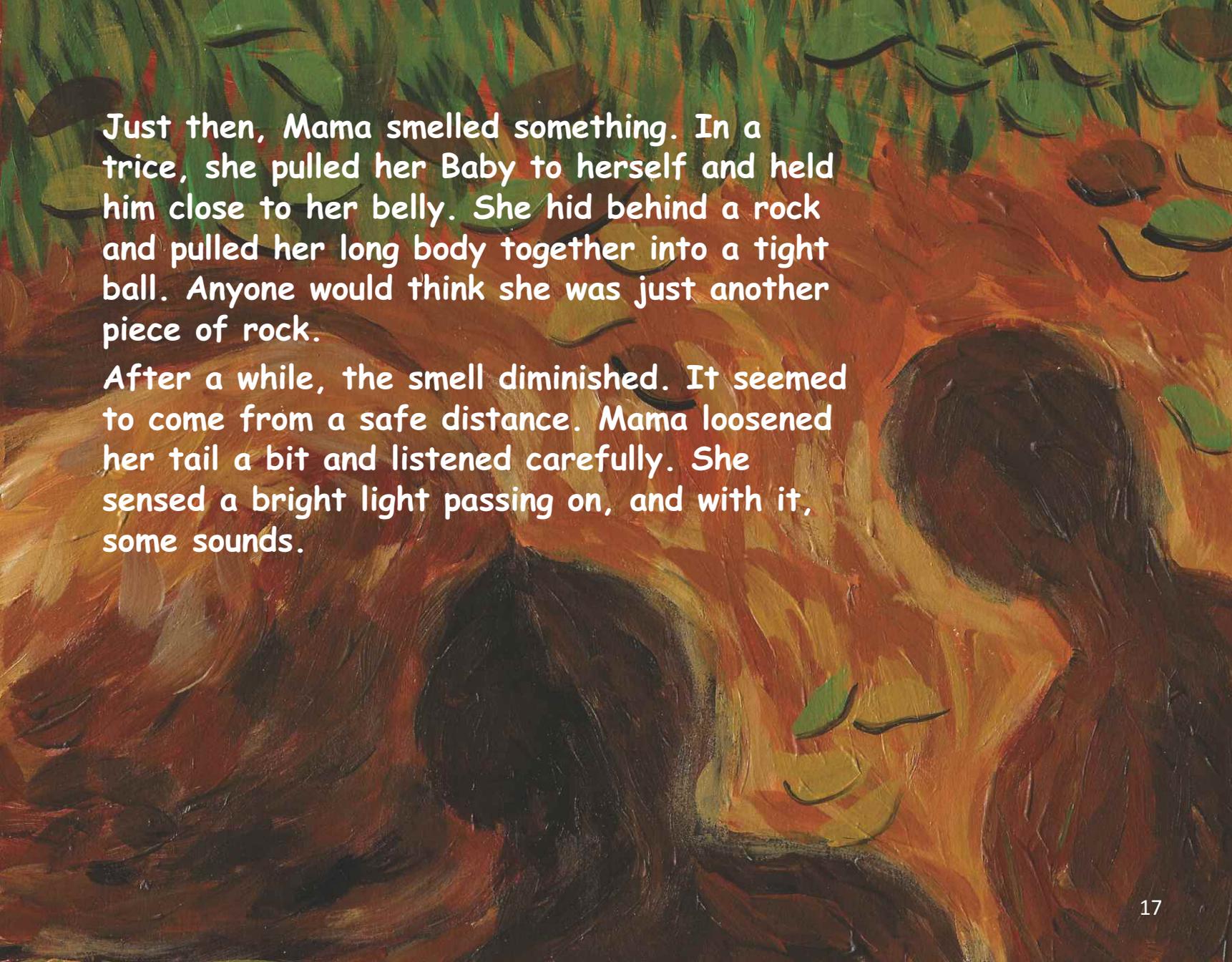
"There are these red weaver ants that build their nests using tree leaves. They, too, are delicious, but you need to be able to climb trees to get at them. And that's going to be your next lesson. How does it sound?"





Just then, Mama smelled something. In a trice, she pulled her Baby to herself and held him close to her belly. She hid behind a rock and pulled her long body together into a tight ball. Anyone would think she was just another piece of rock.

After a while, the smell diminished. It seemed to come from a safe distance. Mama loosened her tail a bit and listened carefully. She sensed a bright light passing on, and with it, some sounds.



She uncurled herself very very cautiously and let the Baby go. "Did you note the smell just now? Remember it better than anything else. This is the smell of man. Some of the men are wicked beyond measure. They search for our burrows and dig them up. They kill us, eat our flesh and sell our scales to earn loads and loads of something called money. They claim that our scales are medicinal!

"Actually, our scales are made up of keratin but so are the nails and hair of humans! If our scales are medicinal, so must be their own nails!

"But they simply cut their nails and throw them away. After that, how can they even believe that our scales can be medicinal?"



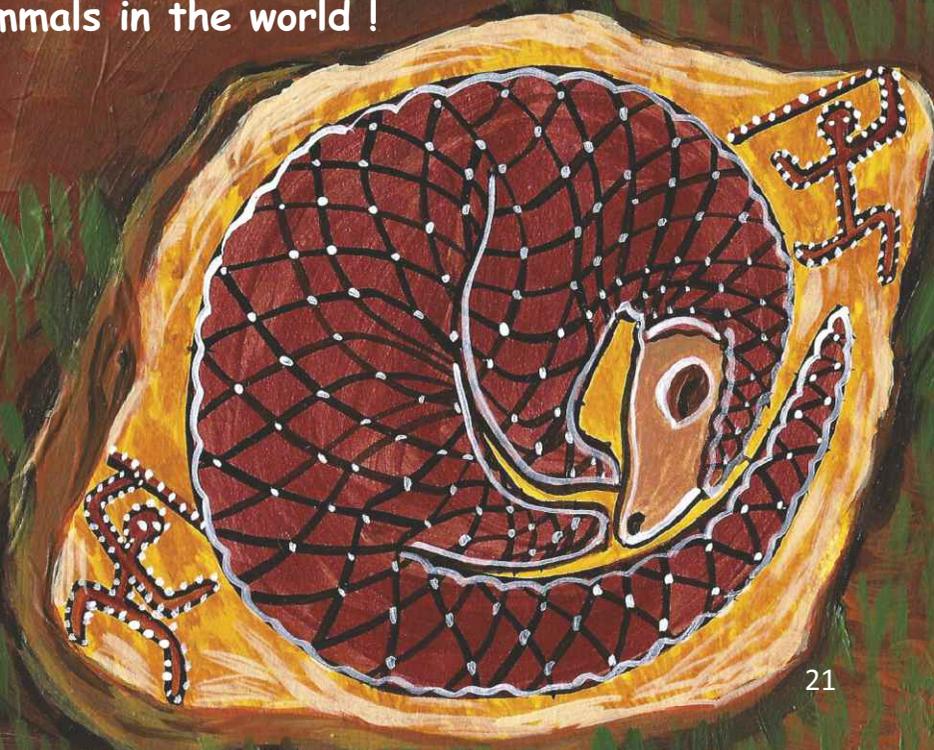


"Long ago, when only tribal people living in the jungles knew about us, the situation was not so bad. They too killed animals but not for greed."

"Now you have to be on your guard against greedy people such as those we smelled just now. When we step out for our nighttime wandering, they flash harsh torch lights to spot us and kill us. They even dig deep inside our burrows to prey on us."

We pangolins, Baby, it hurts so much to say, are the most poached and trafficked mammals in the world !

(An imaginary painting in the Stone Age style)



A painting of a pangolin curled up in a nest. The pangolin is covered in its characteristic overlapping scales, which are light brown and white. It is positioned on the right side of the frame, curled into a tight ball. The nest is a shallow, circular depression in the reddish-brown earth. To the left of the nest, a large tree trunk with thick, gnarled, light-colored bark rises vertically. The background is filled with green foliage and leaves, suggesting a forest environment. The overall style is a textured, painterly illustration.

"The Government of India has given our species the best possible legal protection they can. Legally, we are as well protected as the tiger! Even then, some men are out to kill us! These very same wicked people have destroyed our habitats and cleared away jungles. There's no room for us to build our homes and to roam around anymore. Life is now full of hardships. You can never tell when someone lurking around might kill you. Be warned, Baby, be careful!"

"These men don't realize we are their helpers - we remove millions of ants and termites for them. They will spend huge amounts to do that themselves but will not spare us. May God give them good sense!"

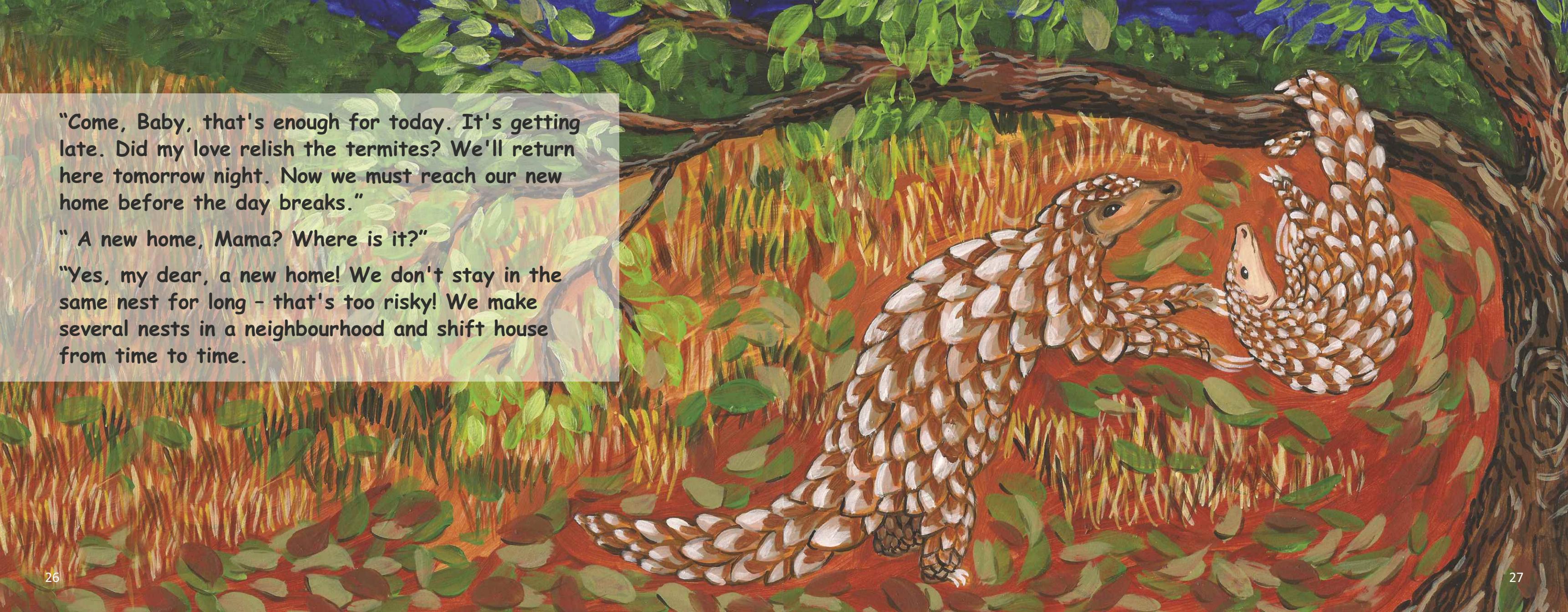


"But yes, my little one, there are some good people, too. They know our importance in the food chains in nature. They strive to make our life easier, to help us grow in numbers.

"Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra and other organizations in Maharashtra, India run awareness campaigns with the help of the Forest Department. They hold meetings in villages and urge people to protect us.

"They put up posters with these messages everywhere and hand out pamphlets. They try hard to put a stop to international smuggling. They set up modern trap cameras to get our photographs and study us.

"I do hope these good people will succeed in their work. Our life will be easier and our kith and kin will flourish.



"Come, Baby, that's enough for today. It's getting late. Did my love relish the termites? We'll return here tomorrow night. Now we must reach our new home before the day breaks."

"A new home, Mama? Where is it?"

"Yes, my dear, a new home! We don't stay in the same nest for long - that's too risky! We make several nests in a neighbourhood and shift house from time to time."

"See, we are home! I have dug it out nicely only the other day! Come, move inside, let me push some earth near the opening so that we are safe inside!"



Bhau Katdare

Founder, Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra, Chiplun
Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra has been working for nature conservation since 1992, and Bhau Katdare holds the lion's share in the work of protecting various species. For the last three years, he has been busy in the protection and conservation of pangolins. He is currently a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Pangolin Specialist Group.



Abha Bhagwat

Artist Abha Bhagwat has turned the idea of participative wall painting into a reality, involving the young and old alike. So far she has executed more than a hundred and fifty such paintings in various places across India. She teaches expression oriented art to school children in Pune and holds art workshops for children as well as parents. She has illustrated many books and book covers. She writes about art in several well-known magazines.



Dhanvanti Hardikar

Dhanavanti Hardikar worked on producing school textbooks and other educational materials for children and teachers, and guiding others to do so, as part of her job at Maharashtra State Textbook Bureau for more than 35 years. She has written many articles and newspaper columns for children.



The pangolin is the most hunted and trafficked animal in the world today. In all, eight of their species are seen – four in Africa and four in Asia. In India, the Chinese pangolin is found in the northern regions, and the Indian variety is found in the rest of the country. Indian Pangolins have been classified as endangered species in the Red Data List of Threatened Species published by the IUCN. Efforts for their protection and conservation are being made in all parts of the world.

This animal weighs about 8 to 10 kilos. Its entire body is covered with tough scales that don't break easily even with bullet shots. That is why, it has few natural enemies. With its one foot long tongue, this nocturnal animal eats up about 700 to 800 million insects, namely, ants and termites in the course of one year. When it feels threatened, it protects itself by curling up its body into a tight ball.



Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra, Chiplun was founded in 1992. For the last 27 years, it has put in concrete work in the field of nature conservation with the help of the Forest Department. Some of their successful projects include the conservation of Indian Swiftlets, White Bellied Sea-eagles, Vultures, Turtles and Pangolins.

Pangolins are the most hunted and trafficked mammals in the world today. SNM has been working for their protection and conservation since the last three years. They have undertaken many surveys and public awareness programmes, especially for students and youth. On all fronts such as trap camera surveys and studies, creating alternative sources of livelihood for local people to ensure actual protection of species through their participation, efforts are being made through a number of programmes.



Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra,
Chiplun

www.snmcpn.org

Save Pangolin

<https://www.snmcpn.org>

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/in-situ-conservation-of-indian-pangolin-in-chiplun/>

