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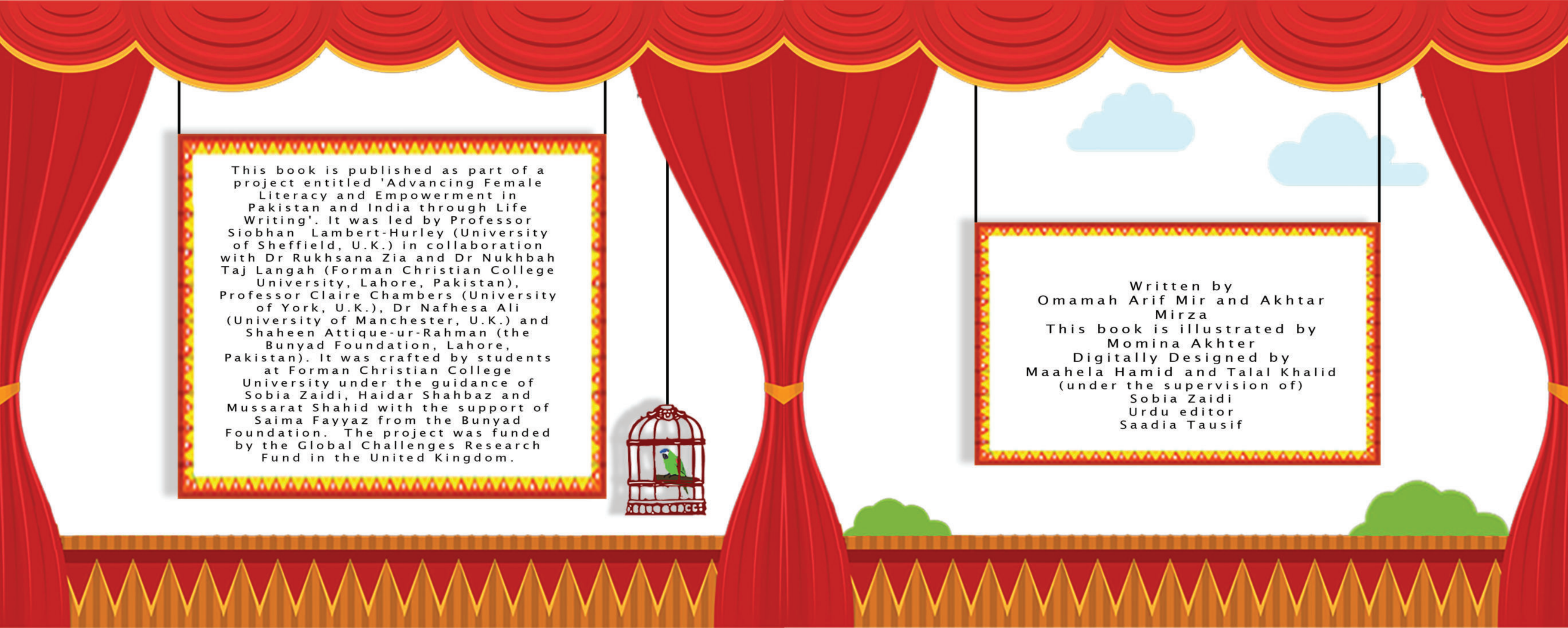


**FORMAN  
CHRISTIAN  
COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

RANI LAKSHMI BAI



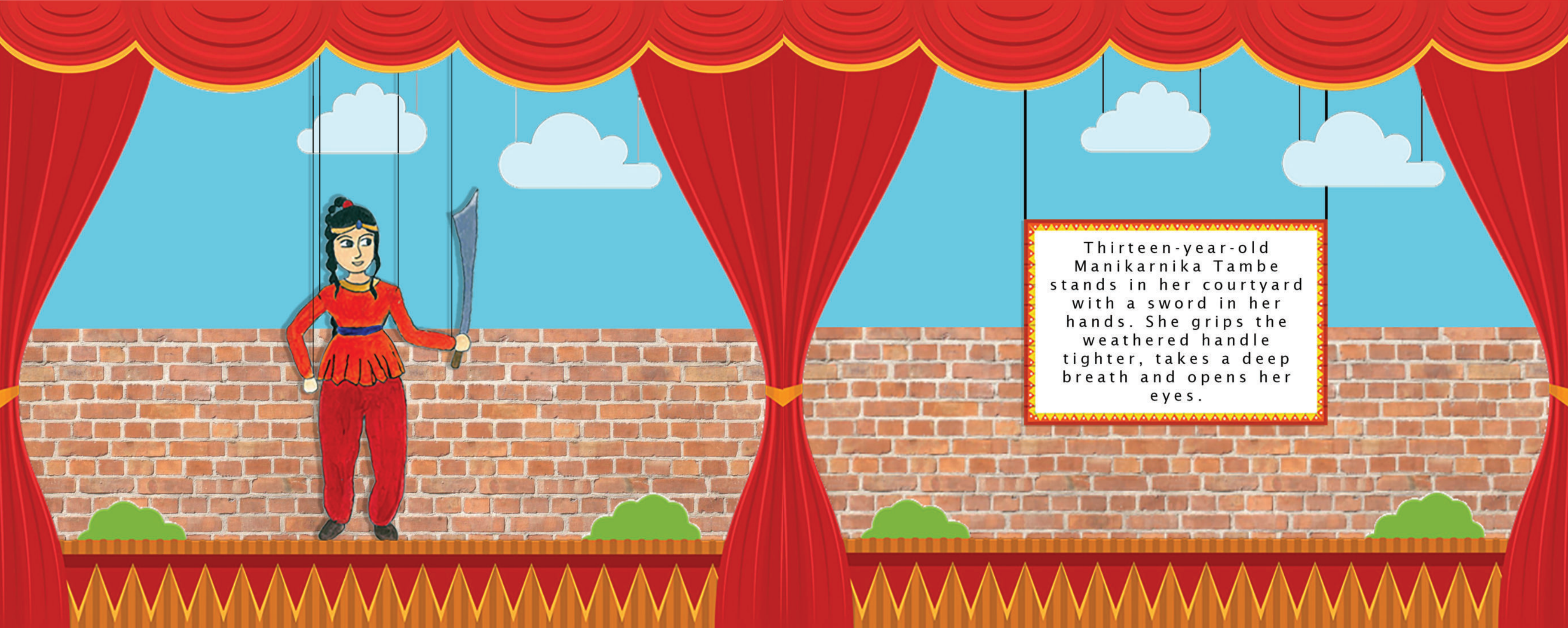




This book is published as part of a project entitled 'Advancing Female Literacy and Empowerment in Pakistan and India through Life Writing'. It was led by Professor Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (University of Sheffield, U.K.) in collaboration with Dr Rukhsana Zia and Dr Nukhbah Taj Langah (Forman Christian College University, Lahore, Pakistan), Professor Claire Chambers (University of York, U.K.), Dr Nafhesa Ali (University of Manchester, U.K.) and Shaheen Attique-ur-Rahman (the Bunyad Foundation, Lahore, Pakistan). It was crafted by students at Forman Christian College University under the guidance of Sobia Zaidi, Haidar Shahbaz and Mussarat Shahid with the support of Saima Fayyaz from the Bunyad Foundation. The project was funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund in the United Kingdom.

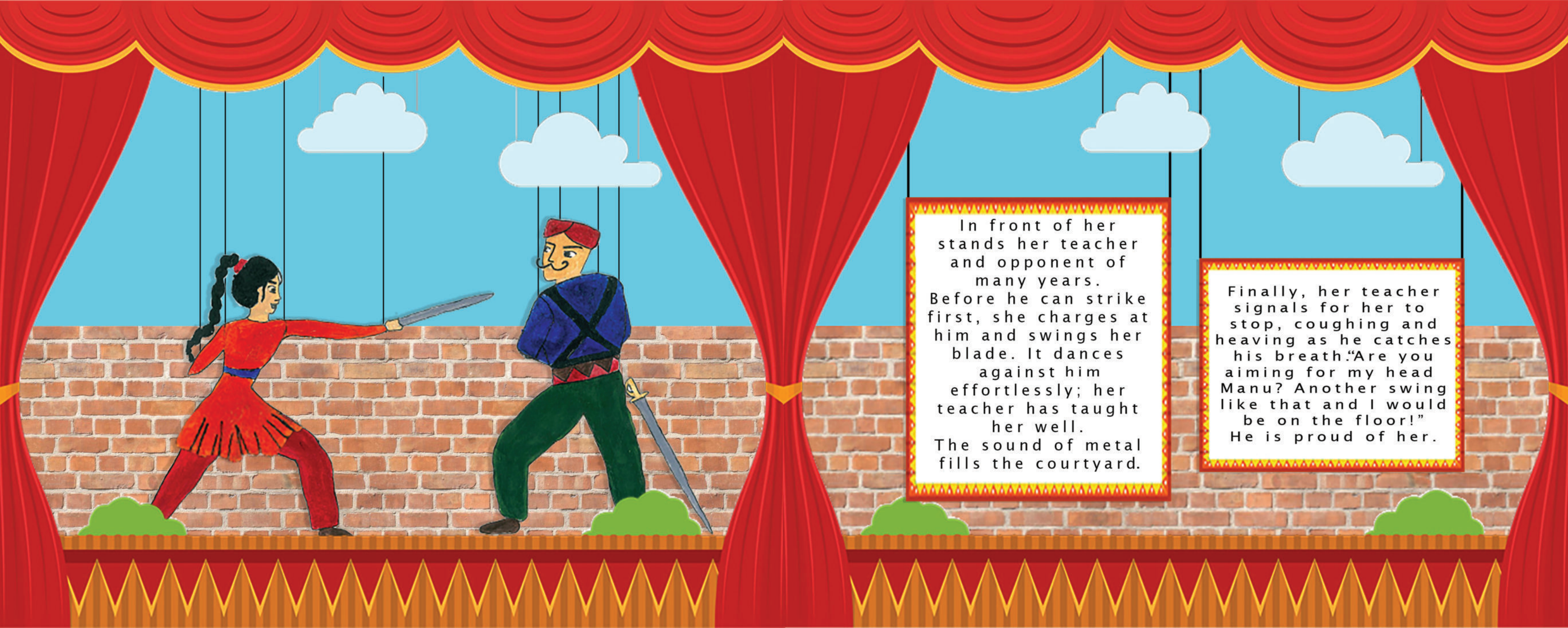
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Thirteen-year-old Manikarnika Tambe stands in her courtyard with a sword in her hands. She grips the weathered handle tighter, takes a deep breath and opens her eyes.

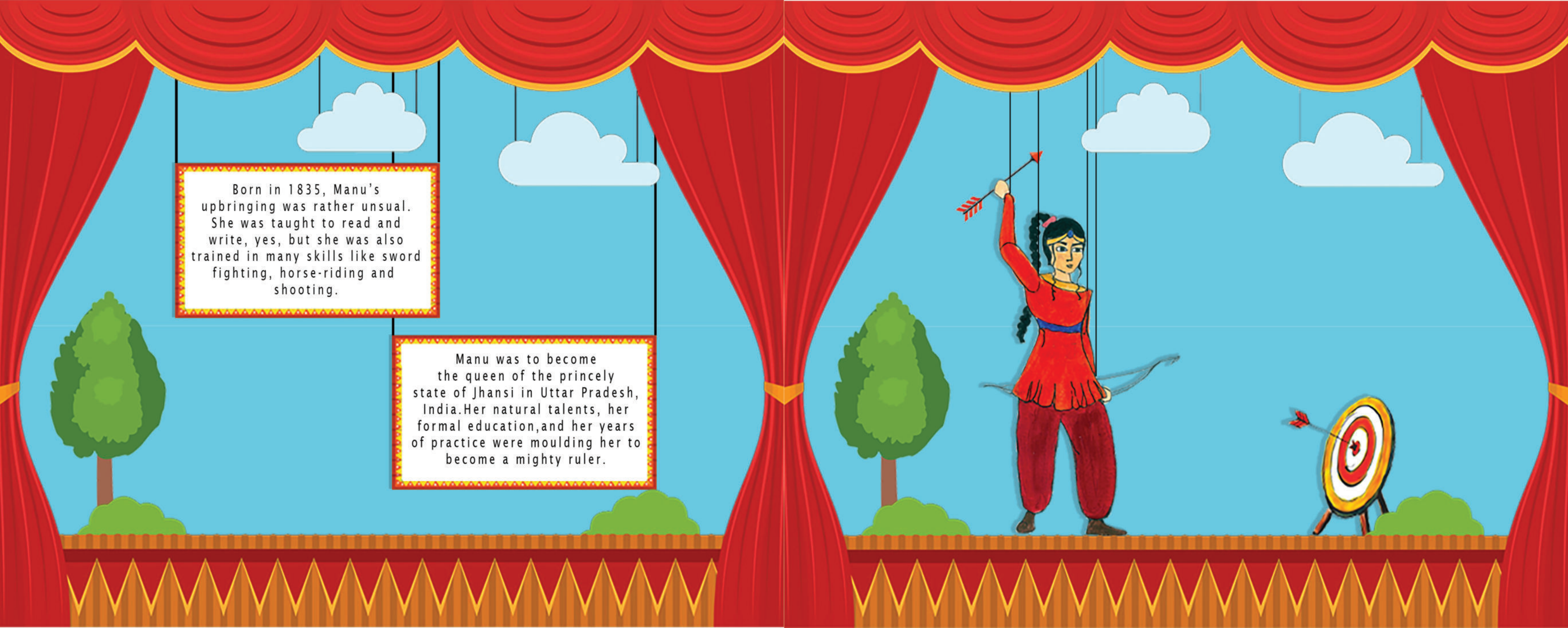




In front of her stands her teacher and opponent of many years. Before he can strike first, she charges at him and swings her blade. It dances against him effortlessly; her teacher has taught her well. The sound of metal fills the courtyard.

Finally, her teacher signals for her to stop, coughing and heaving as he catches his breath. "Are you aiming for my head Manu? Another swing like that and I would be on the floor!" He is proud of her.



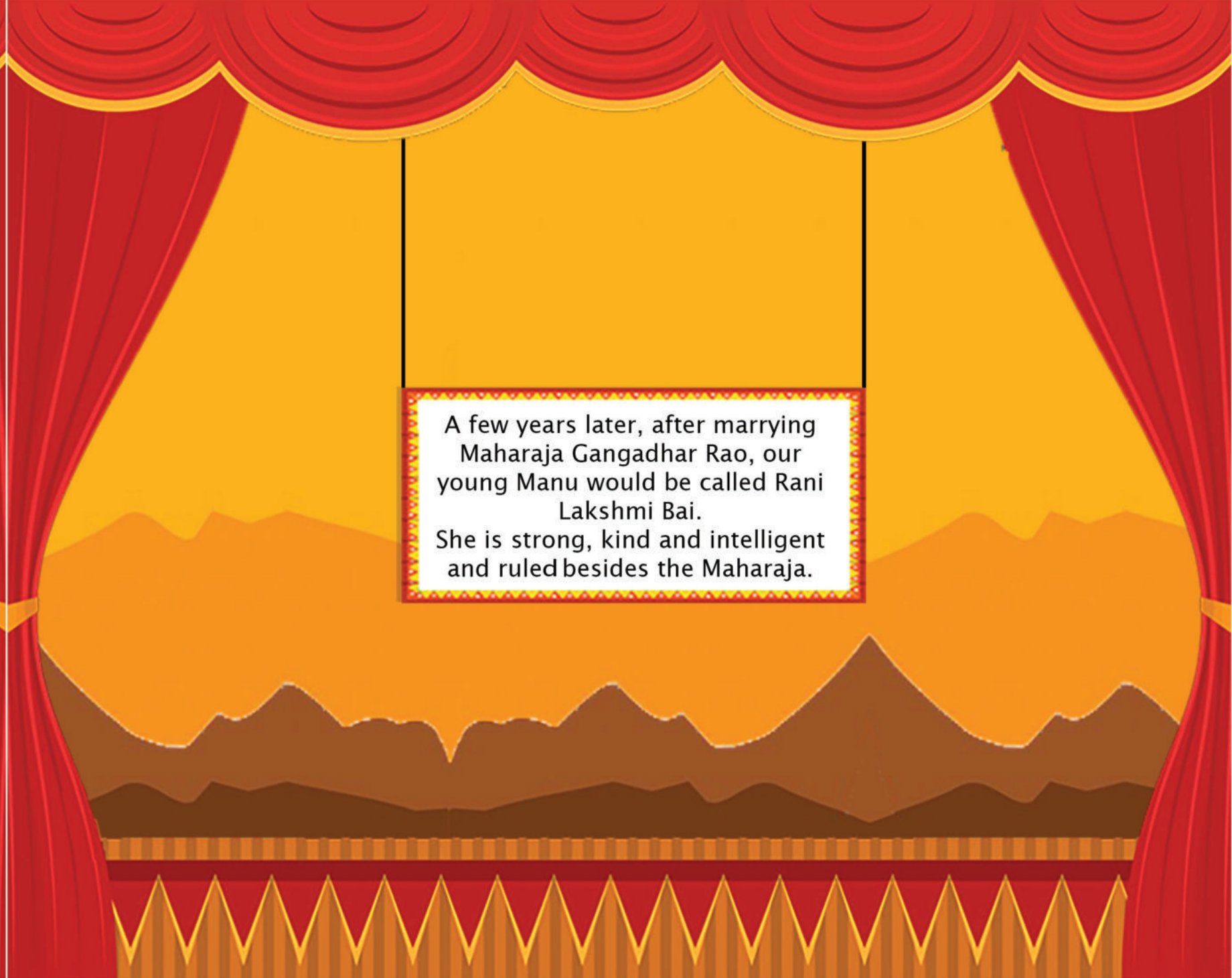


Born in 1835, Manu's upbringing was rather unusual. She was taught to read and write, yes, but she was also trained in many skills like sword fighting, horse-riding and shooting.

Manu was to become the queen of the princely state of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh, India. Her natural talents, her formal education, and her years of practice were moulding her to become a mighty ruler.



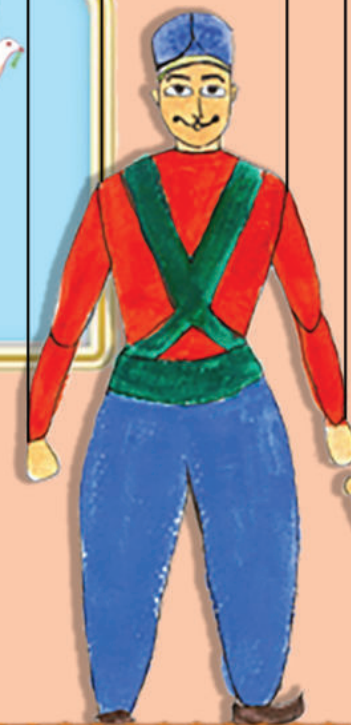




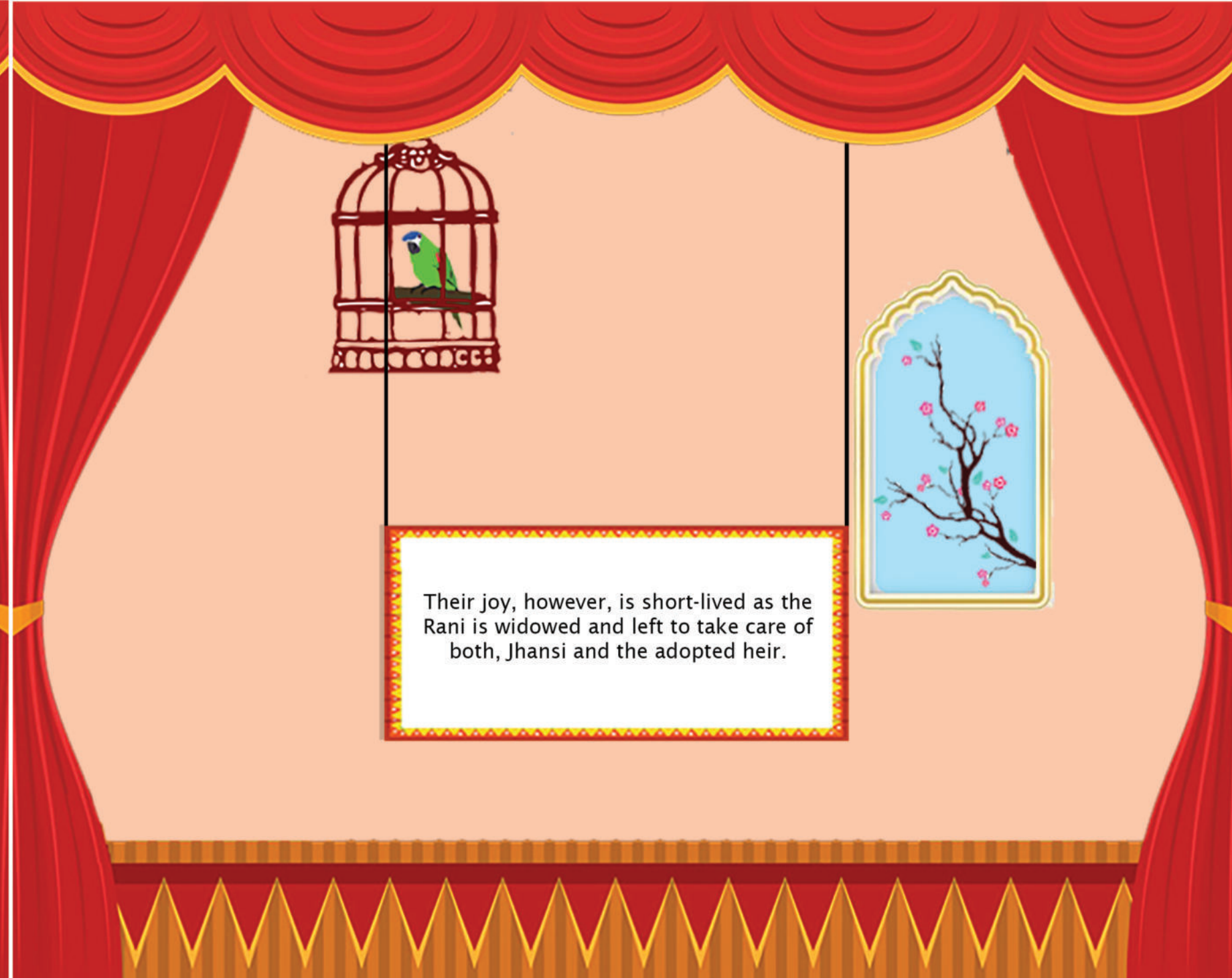




After the early death of their firstborn, Damodar Rao, the King and Queen decide to adopt a child and name him after their lost son.  
Damodar is loved dearly and their family is complete.

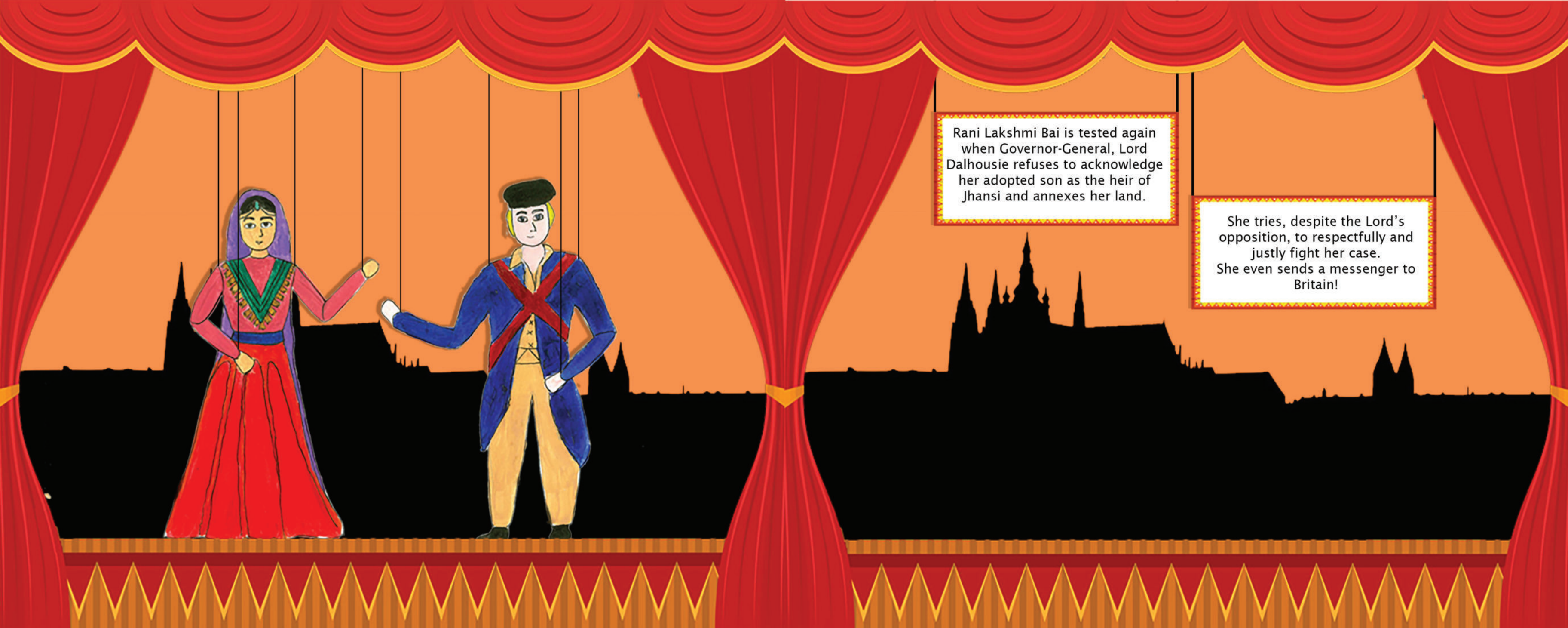






Their joy, however, is short-lived as the Rani is widowed and left to take care of both, Jhansi and the adopted heir.





Rani Lakshmi Bai is tested again when Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie refuses to acknowledge her adopted son as the heir of Jhansi and annexes her land.

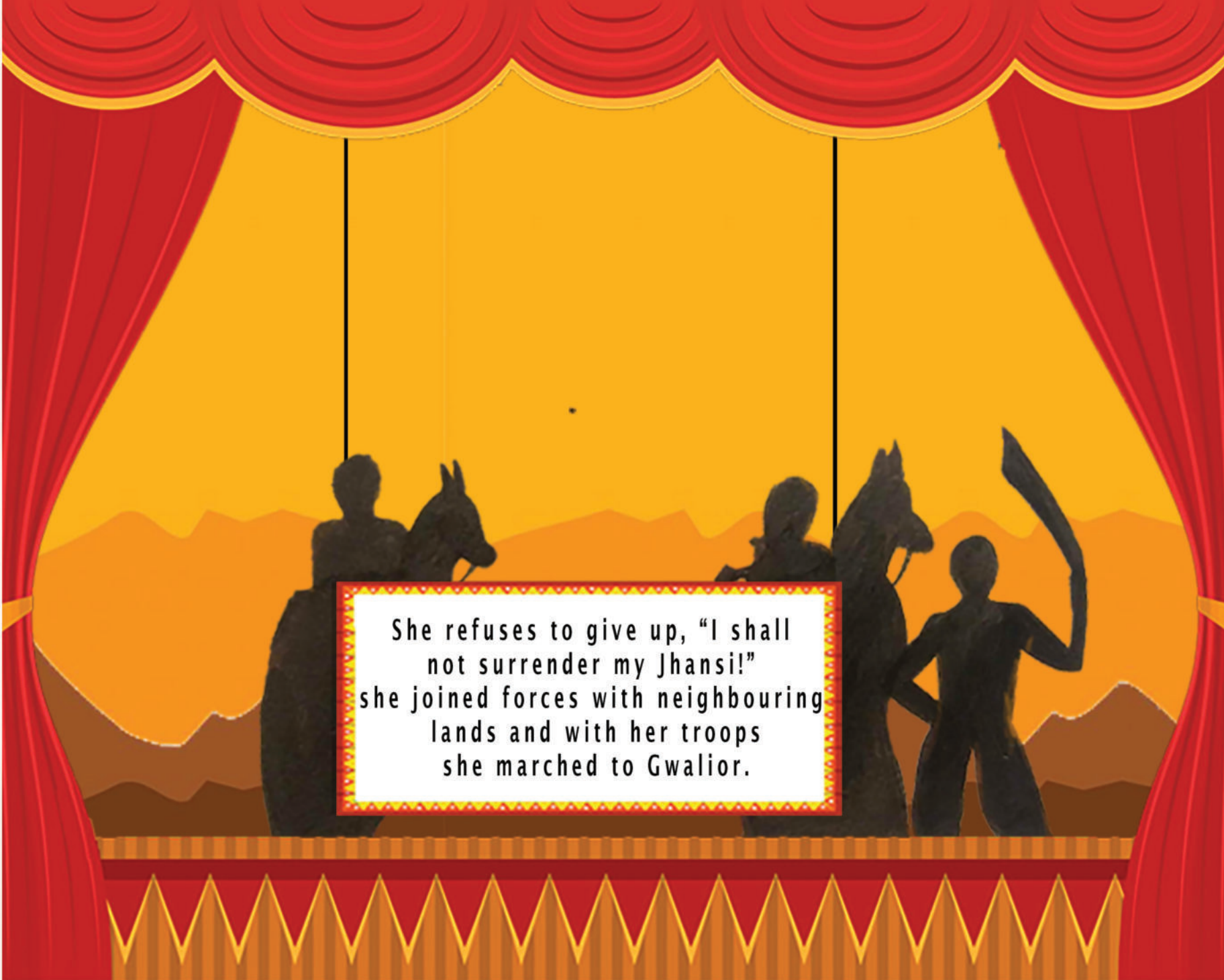
She tries, despite the Lord's opposition, to respectfully and justly fight her case. She even sends a messenger to Britain!





However, Jhansi isn't the only land that faces unrest all around her, Hindus and Muslims, are preparing for mutiny, tired of the injustice. Rani Lakshmi Bai does not wish any harm to the British but her attempts to debate had not worked.





She refuses to give up, "I shall not surrender my Jhansi!" she joined forces with neighbouring lands and with her troops she marched to Gwalior.



Lakshmi Bai fights beside her people. She might only be twenty-two years old, but Maharani has trained all her life.

She leads the mutiny with the courage of a skilful warrior, taking down all those who dared to stand against her. "I live for my land and I fight for my land!" Her valour pushes her people to continue the fight.





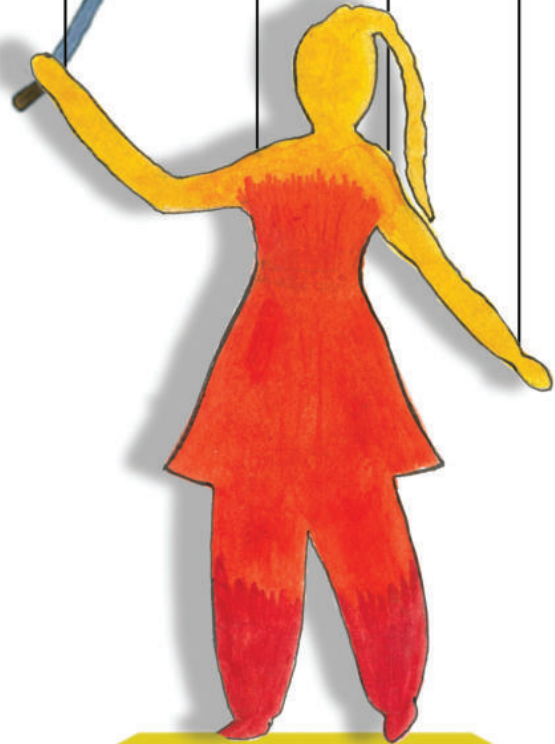
Rani Lakshmi Bai is in the thicket of the battle when she is shot by someone from the British Cavalry.

The rebels had just lost their best. The battle rages on, as is its nature but the fighters were weakend, the loss of their Queen had dismembered them.

This battle though would only be a small defeat, as its spirit would fuel India for generations.

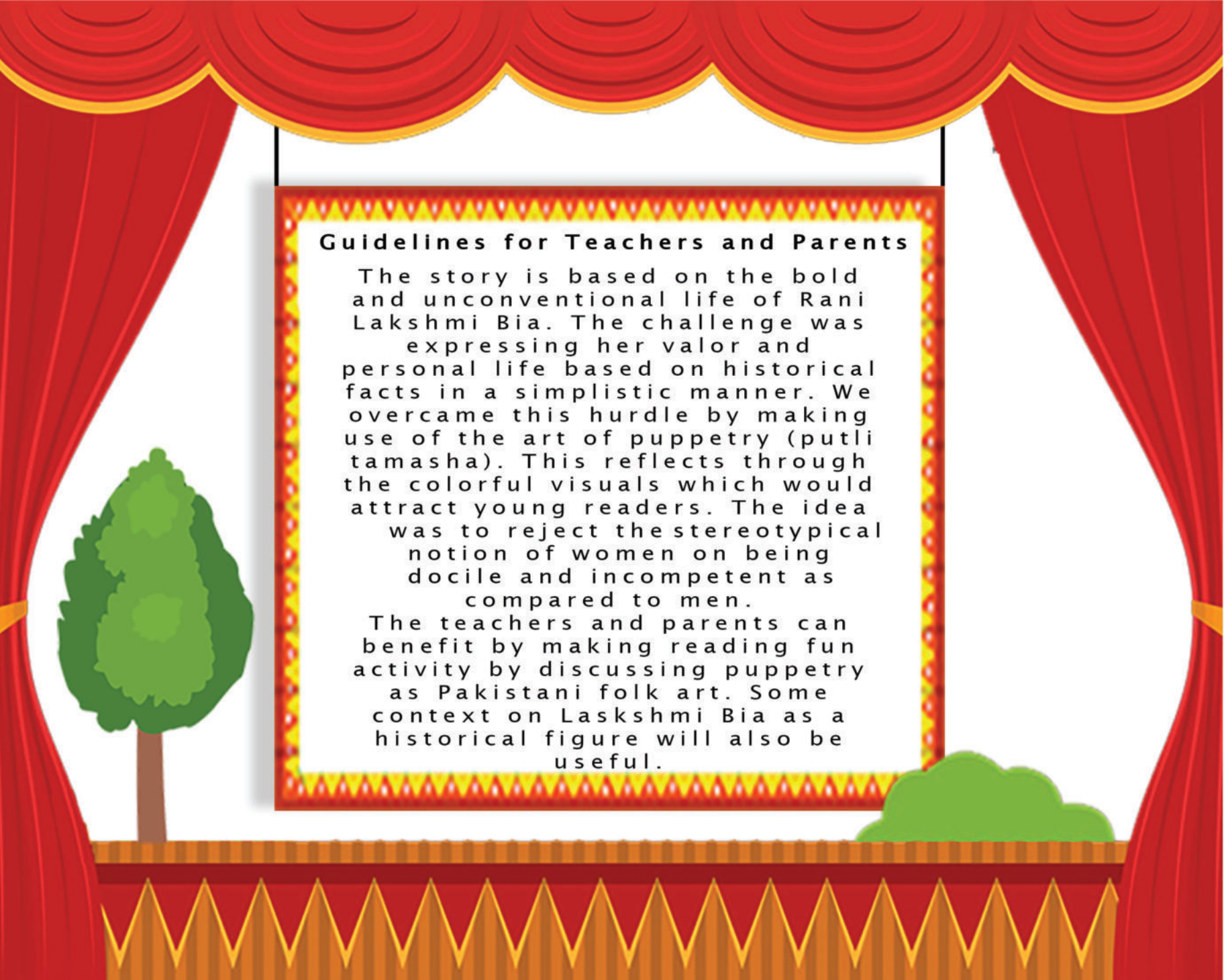






Rami Lakshmi Bai was named after a Goddess, and like her, she would remain in the hearts of India's people, who refused to bow down to injustice and continue fighting.





### **Guidelines for Teachers and Parents**

The story is based on the bold and unconventional life of Rani Lakshmi Bia. The challenge was expressing her valor and personal life based on historical facts in a simplistic manner. We overcame this hurdle by making use of the art of puppetry (putli tamasha). This reflects through the colorful visuals which would attract young readers. The idea was to reject the stereotypical notion of women on being docile and incompetent as compared to men.

The teachers and parents can benefit by making reading fun activity by discussing puppetry as Pakistani folk art. Some context on Laskhmi Bia as a historical figure will also be useful.