

# THE ISLAND OF LIGHT

CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS AND THE BEHAVIOUR WOULD CHANGE

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PARISHRAMALAY

YUVA PARIVARTAN

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION :

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DEDICATED TO  
HON. SHRI BALASAHEB KHER,  
FOUNDER OF KHERWADI SOCIAL WELFARE ASSOCIATION,  
HIS ASSOCIATES WHO TOOK FORWARD HIS MISSION WITH  
DEDICATION AND SELFLESS SPIRIT AFTER HIM  
AND  
THE INNUMERABLE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE THE FUTURE  
OF INDIA  
AND WHO ARE THE OBJECT OF THIS MISSION

KESWA'S  
YUVA PARIVARTAN ACADEMY  
GIVING YOUTH A SECOND CHANCE.

**VISION**

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL DROPOUTS AND DEPRIVED  
YOUTH  
TO HELP THEM LEAD PRODUCTIVE AND SOCIALLY USEFUL LIVES

**MISSION**

TO GIVE A SECOND CHANCE TO THE LESS EDUCATED DEPRIVED  
YOUTH  
THROUGH WAGE OR SELF EMPLOYMENT BASED ON URBAN AND  
RURAL  
LIVELIHOOD TRAINING PROVIDED IN PARTENRSHIP WITH  
STAKEHOLDERS.

## FOREWORD

It gives me a great pleasure and pride to present *Prakashace Bet (The island of Light)* dedicated to the youth and their families.

As a Chairman of the Advisory Board of Kherwadi Social Welfare Association (KSWA), I am proud of the work done by Yuva Parivartan (YP), a flagship project of KSWA, which is impacting the lives of thousands of youth, who are less educated, aimless, misguided and unemployed.

Yuva Parivartan is a positive movement, which gives every deprived youth a “Second Chance” to be guided, counselled and trained with a skill to be able to become economically independent.

I am also proud of Kishor and Mrunalini’s leadership, who have built this organisation with a passionate, disciplined and professional team of over 800 people working in the remotest areas across the country.

It is a book of hope and dreams encapsulating the stories of YP youth, the youth you come across in your daily life. It shows how sensitively Yuva Parivartan has taken up the cause of the deprived youth cases and guided it successfully.

Yuva Parivartan , may your work bring hope to many more such young boys and girls and bring light to their life.

-R.A.Mashelkar, FRS

Chairman, Advisory Board, KSWA

## **A word of Gratitude**

**By**

**Kherwadi Social Welfare Association**

**And**

**Shri Kishor and Smt. Mrunalini Kher.**

- Thanks to all who have helped, directly or indirectly, the work of Kherwadi Social Welfare Association.
- Also, Thanks to –
- Smt. Smita Khanzode, her associate Smt. Uma Sundarraman and the Marcom Team of the organisation.
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- Shri Shitin Desai (for sponsoring 1000 copies of this book), Smt. Lata Parekar and Shri Vitthal Parekar (for sponsoring 1000 copies) with a view to conveying the contents of this book, which is so important, to maximum number of people.

### **Thoughts which came to my mind after reading this book**

True identity of an organisation is revealed by its work. The very name of the organisation Yuva Parivartan points to the process of transformation. To transform the youth is, in a way, a difficult job, but could also be an easy task. Difficult because of the possibility of pride which generates in that age. The attitude of pride that “I am fine. I don’t need help from anybody” can be a hindrance in the path of progress. Once pride starts working against oneself, it becomes difficult to control oneself. Easy from the angle that the age is basically amenable to transformation. If one gets guidance in taking the right path, transformation becomes easy.

The environment and the state of mind are closely inter-related. Both of these are dependent on each other. The state of mind is affected by the good and bad effects of the environment and one creates environment around him in accordance with one’s state of mind. There is a strong possibility that the state of mind of children coming from unfavourable economic and social environment is disturbed. Such state of mind may sometimes take a violent turn which may be a source of harm to others or may resort to self destructive ways such as addiction. “Yuva Parivartan” has been striving for the last so many years for transformation of such youth. The problem cannot be overcome merely by providing opportunities of employment for such children. To induce them to take up employment itself is often a tough problem. Sometimes, the impediments in the development of their brain or psychic maladies could hamper their day to day work. Wherever the state of mind becomes a source of obstacles there is no alternative to psychological treatment – counselling. The role of the counsellors in this organisation is extremely important. To hear and understand the problem of the person in front of you, to make that person look at his / her problem from a different perspective, to help him / her choose the right alternative from those which are available and to follow up on the psychological processes are the various facets of the process of counselling.

The question frequently asked is : what exactly is the difference between advising and counselling ? Here, a good example given by the famous management guru Stephen Covey comes to my mind. Suppose you have gone to an ophthalmologist to check the number of your spectacles and the doctor, instead of checking the number of your eyes, puts his glasses on your eyes and says “Go, now”; what would you feel ? Advice is like this. To look at the problem of the other person through your glasses is not counselling. Counselling is to look at the patient sympathetically (not mercifully –that is, not saying “Oh, poor guy”, but by imagining the various circumstances through which the patient has been going through ) and provide advice after considering all aspects of the problem. (Now a days there is a spate of self- proclaimed counsellors saying “Psychology was a subject for my B.Sc., so I

can do counselling”. One should beware of such people.). Counselling requires a formal training in that subject and skill too.

In olden days, consulting a psychologist or going to him for counselling was considered taboo. The natural question which was asked was “ Is he Mad ?” People did not have the correct idea about what exactly counsellors did. Psychological treatment which could be completed over a short period was not available. The rate of success of the therapy was low. Hence, the avenue of counselling remained neglected. Awareness increased as new knowledge took root. People afflicted with psychological issues started turning to counselling. This resulted in some lives coming on the right track. This gave rise to some success stories. Some such success stories happened through the counselling process offered by Yuva Parivartan. This book has done a valuable job of bringing them before the readers. This book contains pathetic stories of many young persons. These children were likely to become or had become vagabonds or had strayed away from normal life. These stories describe the paths shown to them through the medium of counselling. All these stories have happy endings. But these are not merely entertaining stories. Each of these stories has the capability of transforming tragedies. In the process of counselling, it is very important for the chemistries of the counsellor and the subject to match. From the stories in this book it would be observed that the bond between them was very strong. Behind these stories is a bond of mutual trust . The readers would not only get a glimpse of the work of Yuva Parivartan, but more important is that it would undoubtedly serve the purpose of eliminating the prejudices prevailing in the mind of the reader regarding psychological issues and counselling . Congratulations to the counsellors of Yuva Parivartan and hearty best wishes for the good work which the institution is doing.

Dr. Manoj Bhatavdekar,

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### Some Thoughts

We desire to do many things in life but are not necessarily able to accomplish them; but then unexpectedly an opportunity comes your way and you feel happy. It was somewhat like this that happened in the case of writing this book. I received a call from Smt. Smita Khanzode.

Because I am fully aware of the significance of the work they are doing. Yuva Parivartan, brings back school drop outs and first time offenders into the mainstream. This task is strewn with several hurdles. Besides, 100 % success is not assured. There is no possibility of getting money. There is always a shortage of dedicated people. And yet the work has to be carried on. This is the deprived class of the society. Indeed, the dream of a prosperous, thriving India would not materialise without them. That is why those who reach out to them and offer a helping hand must be considered fortunate. It was impossible for me to devote time to “Parivartan” on a daily basis, but by doing this assignment I was to get an opportunity of at least partially redeeming my obligation to the society. And I availed of it.

Many many thanks to Smt. Smita Khanzode, Uma Sundararaman, Kherwadi Social Welfare Association and its office bearers Smt. Mrinal and Shri Kishor Kher.

In the course of this assignment, Smita would tell me the stories of those who approached or who were brought to “Parivartan”. Each story was different. But the disturbance and restlessness that I felt was the same. I got a glimpse of the world outside the closed frame of the middle class of the society to which we belong. I felt that this work should reach the affluent class and that it should inspire each of them to take up something similar on some scale. Hence this sincere effort at writing. The object of this book would be achieved if only the perspective of looking at that class of the society, whose aspirations are smothered even before they blossom, is transformed.

The stories from this book are such as would haunt us, make us restless, take us into a world not known to us so far. They spurred me to put them down on paper. But I had not given a thought to the title of the book and, suddenly, the words came to my mind : “The Island of Light”. It is dark everywhere, the mind is depressed, the mind is seized with negative thoughts, the path lost, the urge to live has been lost, and, suddenly, a ray of hope in the form of Parishramalay of Yuva Parivartan should come in sight. This ray of hope should bring a new identity and one should start marching towards it with a newly found vigour. I felt assured that the name would be very appropriate for this collection of true success stories. I am sure many would find this book a source of guidance. Would show them the path of light. So, thanks again to Smita and the Association. My prayer to God : Please give an opportunity like this again , Thanks !

- Anuradha Gore



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## INTRODUCTION TO KESWA

### CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR LIFE WOULD CHANGE

This is the mission statement of 'Yuva Parivartan' of Kherwadi Social Welfare Association which has transformed the lives of lakhs of Indians living at the lowest rung of the social ladder.

There are many who cannot complete their school education. Consequently, the doors of employment and progress remain closed for them. However they also have many capabilities. To search them and offer education which is suitable for the capabilities, so that he / she would be able to stand on his / her own legs, would become a useful part of the society. Such youth are present in both, urban as well as rural areas. Opportunities are absent specially in rural areas. And yet, they should not run to cities but develop the capability of starting a business or profession. That is what Yuva Parivartan tries to do. Often, the organisation does not stop only at providing training to them but also provides employment, financial assistance – though with the help of others. According to one estimate, the number of young men and women, who need to be reached, is more than 300 million. The organisation reaches out to about 1,00,000 (one lakh) of them every year. For achieving this, the organisation lays emphasis on the most modern training for its staff.

The organisation also provides the facility of e-learning in addition to direct training. This is specially needed in rural and remote areas. Efforts are also made for personality development along with skill development. Consequently, the youth starts probing himself and his capabilities. It gives a boost to his confidence. He gets the confidence for going ahead by tackling circumstances. It is as if, by coming to Yuva Parivartan he is born again.

Many youths are so much burdened with social, financial and family problems that Yuva Parivartan means a ray of hope for them.

Kherwadi Social Welfare Association, of which Yuva Parivartan is a part, was established by Hon. Balasaheb Kher in 1922. He was the Premier of the then Bombay Province and then the first Chief Minister of the then Bombay state. A true social worker and social reformer following the path of Gnanthian philosophy, he laid the foundation of selfless service. He had started practising the slogans 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', 'Make in India', 'Antyodaya Yojana' which we constantly hear today in 2017.

The organisation which was working in Bandra East in the fields of education, medical assistance, community welfare, improvement in productivity for 88 years decided to take its dream all over India. Presently, it is the largest social service organisation in that field. This organisation has transformed the lives of 5,00,000 (five lakh) youths over the last 18 years. Naturally, Shri Kishor Kher, the present

Chairman and Trustee of the organisation and his wife Smt. Mrinal Kher and their associates feel proud of this achievement.

A small incident in 1905 became the source of inspiration for this transformation. At that time, there was considerable marsh around the place where the building of the Association is now situated at Bandra East. This entire area was then known as Chambhar Wadi or Chambharwala ki Wadi. About 100 cobbler families lived there. They faced a very adverse environment, poverty and unhygienic surroundings. Even drinking water had to be fetched from far away. Balasaheb took pity on seeing all this and he rushed to their help.

With the help of like minded people, an Ayurvedic Dispensary, a Kinder Garten and training in trades like yarn spinning and stitching, which could feed larger industries, were set up there.

In due course, roads were built, electricity and water came and through voluntary labour, a 'temple' also came up, the name of which is Parishramalay. Countless people visited and blessed Parishramalay. Sardar Vallabh bhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachary were some of them. Parishramalay was inaugurated in 1955 by the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The foundation laying ceremony of a match box factory was also performed at the same time. Many Gandhians, like Smt. Maniben Nanavati, Shri G.B.Kora, Hon. Shri Vaikunthalal Mehta, the promoter of the cooperative movement Shri Giridharilal Kotak, Ramanikbhai Patel, Prof. V.G.Rao participated in the Shramadan along with the local people for building this temple. In fact, Prof. Rao camped there.

Production of Match boxes and soap was started with the help of Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan and Gramin Udyog.

This was the picture of Kherwadi Social Welfare Association till about 1988-90. 1988-89 was the year of the birth centenary of Shri Balasaheb Kher. A committee was set up to celebrate his birth centenary. The postal department printed a special commemorative stamp to mark the birth centenary. It was released by the then Prime Minister Hon. Rajiv Gandhi.

Prof. V.T.Kamath was the chairman of the committee while the former Vice President of India Shri B.D.Jatti was the Vice Chairman. That is when the transformation of Kherwadi started. Persons whose objective was to lend a helping hand to those whose future was still dark, whose dreams had remained unfulfilled, whose capabilities were still not recognised and used even after 40 years of independence, took up the challenge of transformation. Various programmes were organised at Kherwadi, Adivasi Seva Mandal, Thane and Borivali, Pune University, Mani Bhavan and other places.

The next year, i.e. in 1990, Kishor Kher, a successful corporate executive and his wife Smt. Mrinalini Kher decided to participate in the project actively. They took up the challenge of transforming and expanding KSWA and that marked the start of the galloping progress of KSWA. The Institute of Vocational Training and Entrepreneurship was set up in Parishramalay in 1998. By 2003, Kherwadi had completed 75 years of social service. A special function was organised to mark that occasion and the Chief Guest was the then President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam.

After 2003, KSWA started using more professional techniques based on modern technology, science and management principles. Today, KSWA is the largest NGO doing this kind of work in India. Now the organisation has spread all over India. Now Parivartan has 67 branches. Also, now it has the strong support of the 4 pillars of vocational training, placement assistance, industry partnership and role models (Bombay Alumni Project) which make its work more effective and imposing.

KSWA is operating in 136 districts of 17 states of India. 483 employees are working in the Livelihood Development Centre which finds employment for the youth. They are guided by 27 Area Managers.

MLDC (Mobile Livelihood Development Centre) : A permanent centre can be set up in a big city. However, this cannot be done in a small town or a remote area. Mobile centres have been set up for this purpose. 119 persons work as coordinators and 1169 as leaders in these centres..

ATCC (Authorised Training and Livelihood Development Centre) : Yuva Parivartan's own team does not work in these centres. But others work on behalf of Yuva Parivartan. There are 86 course conductors in these centres. Apart from these, there are Multi Dimensional Training and Employment Centres also.

The organisation also works for the overall development of rural and remote areas. Several programmes, such as industrial training, making available employment opportunities, agricultural development, introduction to improved technology, introduction to supplementary occupations are conducted in rural areas. Where the organisation itself is unable to reach, efforts are made to reach the youth through E-learning.

All these centres offer various courses such as wireman, air conditioning and refrigeration, automobile mechanic, car driving, nursing, nursing assistant, tailoring, embroidery, beautification, entrepreneurship, computer courses, conversational English, etc. Apart from these, Yuva Parivartan also works on retailing connected with manufacturing / industry, hospitality, construction, health care.

The crux of all these courses is "Soch ka Parivartan" i.e. transform the mind – change the way of thinking of the youth who come here. They live in such areas and houses where they cannot be brought up properly. On the contrary, the possibility of

their going astray, being spoiled is stronger. Normally, these children remain deprived from what children from families like ours learn naturally. All such good influences have been divided into 19 different segments. However, they are not water-tight compartments. It is expected that the thinking, and the behaviour of the youth coming here should get transformed automatically. The youth are taught all these things from the time they are admitted here to the time they complete their course. One value is chosen every Saturday. Then during the following week, efforts are made to imprint it on their mind through various media such as stories, songs, dialogues, discussions. The boys and girls learn several things like how to set your goal; how to dispel negative thoughts; how and why should one think about positive things; even how to take a positive view of problems and calamities; how and why should one accept the responsibility of one's actions; what is the importance of time (every moment of the day is important and that is why it should not be wasted); how to utilise the available time to improve one's personality; how that would develop one's capabilities which in turn would enable one to get a better employment or would be helpful in running and developing one's business; how to ensure a congenial atmosphere at home; how to look after your family members; how to maintain personal hygiene; how to prepare the application for a job; how to compile the bio data; what are the expectations of the person who is going to offer you employment or business; why it is important to report for work regularly and punctually; how to use and/or save the money when it is received; where should one keep one's money to ensure its safety; even after taking so much care, sometime you are in two minds, get worried – how to keep one's cool and think practically instead of getting upset, angry, irritated, or get into futile arguments and quarrels under such situations; how to overcome difficult circumstances ...etc.

Before telling all this, silence is observed for two minutes. Such an enormous affair and scale of operation. And yet, the organisation is not complacent. Because, what they are doing at present is only a fraction of what needs to be done. The Human Resources Development Department collects various statistics from time to time and it is published. That forms the basis for preparing the road map of the course of action for the future. According to one of their reports, 50 % of the population is in the age group 18 to 21 and less. From this, 130 lakh children, i.e. 29 %, do not go to school or drop out midway. In short, they miss the direct or indirect good influences which are imparted in schools. The reasons could be absence of a school in the village or the locality or that the parents do not enrol them in a school or both.

Some of those who join a school cannot adjust with the school, friends, studies etc. and then they drop out. They number 80 lakh i.e. 18 %. All these children drop out from the primary school itself. From those who cross this phase successfully and join a middle school, 69 lakh, i.e. 16 %, quit education halfway. Now a days, due to the policy of not failing any student, they cross the 8<sup>th</sup> standard. But they are unable to cope with the syllabus for the 9<sup>th</sup> standard. This is because the skills which should

have been developed by the time they enter the 9<sup>th</sup> standard are not developed. Then, once they are in the 9<sup>th</sup> standard, either the school asks them to leave or they quit on their own. The number of such children is 127 lakh or 29 %. This is the picture of India which dreams of becoming a super power by 2020. There is need for many more movements like Kherwadi Social Welfare Association and Yuva Parivartan.

This being the state of affairs of the nation, Yuva Parivartan has decided its direction of expansion. The organisation plans to open 105 new centres over the next 5 years. Can we work with other social organisations where it is not feasible for Yuva Parivartan to reach ? Would it be possible to join them with Yuva Parivartan ? The search is on for the answers .

A company 'Tees' implements a project "Prayas". Under this project, prisoners , especially temporary prisoners , are given vocational training. Human beings are basically not bad. Circumstances make them bad, makes them commit crimes. They face many issues after they are released from the prison. Would the society accept them ? Would the near and distant relatives accept them ? "Parivartan" team visits jails in Mumbai and Pune to provide vocational training and counselling. Looking to the large number of jails in the country, "Parivartan" feels that this effort needs to be considerably expanded.

The most neglected class of the society is sex workers and rag pickers. Also, persons afflicted with serious diseases like cancer need support. Some organisations are now working in that field in India. Efforts are on to explore the possibility of working with them.

Publicity media have not yet reached rural adivasi areas. Parivartan has accepted the challenge of taking development and the new options of change to them. Efforts are to be made to enable them to successfully take up projects such as vegetable farming, horticulture, nurseries, rain water harvesting, construction of ponds in farms, composting etc. The organisation is also helping them run Goshalas and find market in some measure.

Indeed, all this work is like lifting the Shiva Dhanushya – accepting a formidable challenge. However, people associated with Yuva Parivartan are doing this job happily and sincerely. Because they know that helping hands are better than begging hands. When one sees their smiling faces and craving to help, how can the "Angels of God" could be different from them. Sometimes they feel sorry that people for whom they work or those for whom they should be working, do not approach them because of poverty, ignorance and lack of information and they themselves cannot reach all of them. Often they have never heard the word counselling.

As we approach these people or try and get to know Kherwadi Social Welfare Association and Yuva Parivartan , we tend to realise the significance of their work. One wishes that like the proverbial touch stone, we also should be endowed with

nice hands and a pure mind. If all of us are endowed like them with the drive and passion to reach out to the man at the bottom rung, the day of realising the dream of a rich, prosperous India would not be far off.

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## The Leap

‘The sky is not too high for our aspirations..’ Merely listening to these words of that famous song energises the listener. What would happen if one actually gets to meet such persons...Let us meet such people.

There are some people or families for whom the horizon they see is never broad enough. A new horizon beckons them. With their feet firmly rooted to the ground they are ready to take flight for the sky. Their conscience and the urge to do something is always alive. While espousing old values they are adept at using modern techniques. A detached mindset, an passion for achieving the goal and transparent dealings constitute the foundation of their work. They prefer collecting people rather than wealth. They do not mix politics, religion and social work.

One such rare family is the Kher family. The first prime minister of the then Bombay province, Education Minister, India’s High Commissioner in London, and much more : Hon. Balasaheb Kher.

The Kher Family is originally from Konkan. Their house was opposite that of Lokmanya Tilak. Naturally, Balasaheb was strongly influenced by the thinking of Lokmanya. He was very intelligent since childhood itself. After passing SSC he went to Pune for college as per the tradition at that time and, as luck would have it, he completed his education while living with Namdar Gokhale’s family. He became a solicitor. He set up a firm in Mumbai: M/s Manilal Kher Ambalal. He also worked as a judge in a court for some time. It was then that he came under the influence of Gandhian philosophy. He started taking active part in social work and politics. Eminent leaders like Pandit Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Bajaj, Nanavati visited his house. Edvina and Lord Mountbatten also visited him at his house. He, his two sons, their wives, grand children all lived together. It was as if the entire family got connected to Indian politics and social work along with him. His sons became solicitors and started working in his firm.

The politics and politicians of that time were much different from the present ones. Politics had a beautiful lining of socialism. That gave rise to several organisations under the leadership of Balasaheb Kher. Kherwadi Social Welfare Association was one among them. At that time, Bandra creek was the boundary of Mumbai. It consisted of a creek and marshy land. Families of cobblers and tanners lived in that area. There also lived the original Mumbaikars and poor people who had come from North India to find employment. Poverty, superstition and ignorance ruled the roost. Balasaheb decided to work for them and that opened a new leaf in the history of Mumbai – Kherwadi. The land was divided into 150 plots. They were given on 99 years lease for constructing houses. A small house surrounded by fruit trees, a cow or a buffalo tied up on the rear side . The objective was that a family should live comfortably by maintaining ecological balance. Many people from that colony were addicted to opium, marijuana, liquor. They were persuaded to gather at

Parishramalay to enable them to quit addiction. They would chat, sing devotional songs. That is how it started. Rural industrial activities like making matchboxes, soap were initiated. The idea was that ladies should gather here after finishing household work. Classes were started to train them in tailoring and knitting. They started earning some money without neglecting household work. That boosted their pride, stature and confidence.

Balasaheb himself was busy working at various places in various positions. However, his colleagues were sincerely looking after the affairs of Parishramalay – medical camp, dispensary, baalwadi, school ( this school was later handed over to BMC). B.K.Rao, P.G.Kher, Vishnu Prasad Desai, V.G.Rao, Narayandas, Tulsidas were some of his colleagues. The work was carried on in a simple fashion and without any attempt at publicity, in the true spirit of Gandhian philosophy.

In 2003, however, KSWA , Kherwadi, was ready for a transformation. That was the year of the birth centenary of Balasaheb. Rajiv Gandhi was the prime minister. A postal stamp in the name of Balasaheb was released at his residence. All the colleagues of Balasaheb were approaching old age. They desired that the management should now be handed over to the young generation. The location and Bandra area in general were getting transformed rapidly. They requested Kher family, “ You are the heirs of Balasaheb. Please look after Kherwadi.” Balasaheb’s grandson Kishor Kher and his wife Mrunalini acceded to their request and took charge of the management of Kherwadi. A new leaf was turned in the history of Kherwadi. Kherwadi was ready to take flight again into the 21<sup>st</sup> century under the leadership of thje new management with a new vigour.

The number of students when they took charge was only 100. Now it has reached a lakh and a half. Kishorji, who was till then working in the corporate sector, managed the NGO on corporate lines and has made it the largest organisation working in the field of transformation of the youth in India. It has spread to all the states of the country. There are 67 branches. But he is not content with this. By covering new horizons like rural development, mobile education, e-learning etc. he aims at taking the small dot of Kherwadi to the world map.

The reason is quite simple. The type of work which Kherwadi Yuva Parivartan is doing, is badly needed in the world, especially in India. In today’s India of the youth, there are lakhs of children who have not gone to school or have dropped out midway. There are many who have been prosecuted. They have been stamped as criminals. All these people have the same right as us to live a good life and earn a decent living like the rest of us. The government’s efforts to reach such people are falling short. Besides, people who do government work with dedication and sacrifice exist only as an exception. Kherwadi can do not only what the government wants to do, but also a lot of other things which the government may not be able to do. It can shine a ray of light in the dark lives of many. They are confident about this.

Kishor Kher has been tremendously influenced by his grand father. Some of the initial years from his childhood were spent in a joint family. He was enrolled in a Marathi medium school in accordance with the wishes of his grand father. When he was in the fourth grade, his grand father was posted in London as India's envoy and Kishorji went to London. He studied there for the fifth grade. The medium of education, the climate, the culture were totally different, but he adjusted to all that nicely. A different world opened before him. On returning from there, he joined an English medium school. The credit for this goes to his mother. She was engrossed in work all the time. And she was firm on her principles. She was one who struck a fine balance between freedom and rights. She had passed only SSC when she got married. Then she did B.A. from the SNDT University and started teaching there. She wrote several books. Then she did M.S. from the Tennessee University of USA and became the principal of SNDT. While the joint family system has its advantages, there are also some disadvantages, so she decided to live independently. That proved tremendously beneficial for Kishorji. His mother taught him to lead life with confidence, taught him to take own decisions and accept the responsibility for his decisions. It gave him the strength to swim against the tide. That is how he joined an English medium school instead of the Marathi medium one. Though there was the own firm of solicitors he decided to do MBA from Ahmedabad. Then he joined a multinational company and rose to the position of Managing Director.

After some years he started getting bored with the routine work. By that time, the winds of liberalisation had started flowing. He resigned from his job, bought some brands and started manufacturing them. He had plans to convert the company into a public limited company, but it could not be done. By that time his financial reserve had run out. He sold the company. He was living at Colaba at that time. The flat belonged to the company. He shifted to Prabhadevi and started working in Kherwadi. Smt. Mrunaltai also started visiting Kherwadi regularly. Both considered Kherwadi as their own and started working whole heartedly. Now Kherwadi was ready to take a big leap.

Kherwadi benefited from Kishorji's knowledge and the experience of the corporate world. Kherwadi started functioning based on the principles of willingness to take risks, making proper preparation, deciding the strategy, using scientific methods, getting the necessary approvals, transparent dealings, perfect accounting, accepting novel ideas and sensing the pulse of the society accurately. Use of new technology was started. He persuaded several persons known to him and who also shared his vision to join the Board of Advisors and the Board of Directors. All these people looked ahead of their time. New young people started flocking to Kherwadi and Yuva Parivartan grew from strength to strength.

Kherwadi implemented several programmes during the birth centenary year of Balasaheb Kher. As a part of this, an important programme was a seminar on Yuva Parivartan. It was attended by the then Chief Minister and the President of India

Abdul Kalam. They whole heartedly admired the work which Kherwadi was doing. The visit of the visionary who had presented the Vision Document 2020 was a mile stone in the progress of Kherwadi. He now felt that the Kherwadi premises were inadequate.

Yuva Parivartan crossed the border of Mumbai, Maharashtra and started working in other states. Axis Bank, HDFC Bank extended a helping hand. By now the permit Raj was over and a new era of privatisation and liberalisation had started. The flow of financial assistance increased as also the expanse of work. Own centres were set up at some places. Several trainee teachers were kept ready. However, looking at the difficulties of expenses and infrastructure, the idea of partnership came up. A standard curriculum was prepared. It was built on a structured basis. Handbills, pamphlets were printed. The frame work of 'Yuva Parivartan means Soch ka Parivartan' was ready. A computerised programme was prepared. In small towns, there are small and big coaching classes or organisations which teach some skills. But their syllabus is not updated. They cannot grant a certificate and if they do, it has little value in the market. Yuva Parivartan started working in association with such organisations or schools, colleges, gram panchayats in small towns. Small organisations command good influence in their surrounding areas. Entering into a partnership with them resulted in fast development of Yuva Parivartan. Many short duration courses were started. If children could not reach schools, the schools reached out to them. A mechanism for transmitting information about the courses to remote areas was developed. Efforts were made to persuade young people to take up an activity supplementary to farming in their own town instead of running to the city. Yuva Parivartan started extending help by providing video clips, promoting savings groups, providing financial assistance to self assistance groups, offering guidance in management and skill development. Presently, efforts are on to keep in touch with people located away on the mobile phone.

Now that he is nearing 70, Kishorji is toying with the idea of retirement. However, sitting idle is not in his blood. He has decided to withdraw from Kherwadi's day to day working. He now desires to use the free time [for](#) rural development. India is happy if the farmer is happy. However, the farmer, and especially the tribals are bewildered by the changing climate, technology, complexities of the market place, new innovations, new projects, new schemes, constantly changing policies of the government, and the intricate government machinery. Apart from these problems he also gets stuck in the debt trap, in addiction. He is still bound by the shackles of tradition. Kishor ji wants to do many things for him. He has started work in Javhar, Vikramgad, Gadchiroli. He has set up a training farm at Wada. IRDP i.e. Integrated Rural Development Programme is his dream. Such projects have been started outside Maharashtra in Chhattisgad, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh. This programme is expected to transform the rural area.

North East, i.e. Assam, Arunachal, Tripura, Meghalay, Mizoram, Nagaland is an area which has remained neglected even after independence. That is why the slogan “North East is calling ” is being heard. The family which is always in the forefront of tasks of development of the nation is the Tatas. The Tata group has shown keen interest in setting up a project of this nature in Tripura. It would be based specially on milk production. Preparations for launching this programme [are](#) on. Yuva Parivartan’s work would soon start there also. In short, this an endeavour to bind the entire country as one\_ by supplementing the Gandhian concept of rural development with modern technology. Kishor ji wants to hand over the reins to CEO Shri Mahesh Ranade smoothly like a ripe fruit dropping from a tree. He is contented and happy with life. He says, “ I have done whatever I aspired to do. Luck was also with us. But we never ran after money. Didn’t compromise on principles.” Kherwadi was to him like his own child, so he never took any remuneration. One cannot always do good things by abiding to the framework of government rules. However, while ignoring government rules the good of the last man in the society , the thought that he also has the right to live, that he would benefit from my actions was and is always at the back of the mind. For example, while granting admission to Yuva Parivartan, the main criterion is whether the young man or girl seeking admission has a genuine desire to learn . If this is satisfied, things like whether he/she has the birth certificate or Aadhar Card or not are considered secondary.

That is why the Kher couple stresses that go after your goal, not after money. Other things come by themselves while [p](#)ursuing the goal.

The other, equally important name associated with Kherwadi is Smt. Mrinal Kher. She is also equally devoted to Kherwadi. She is very clear about what is to be achieved. And yet, there is flexibility in what she says and does. The easy going and one who makes everyone who comes in contact with her comfortable Mrinal tai was Mrinalini Chaitanya Gangoli before marriage. Her father was in the police department. Hence frequent transfers. So her initial education took place at various places like Pune, Nashik, Mumbai. That developed the ability of adjusting to prevailing situation and her childhood was rich with a variety of experiences. As she progressed in school, her parents kept her with [her](#) aunt Vasundhara Chandavrakar at Lonavala. The aunt’s husband, Ganesh Laxman Chandavarkar was the principal of Raja Ram Mohan Roy High School. He was a follower of Bramho Samaj. Active in politics. Mrinaltai was getting influenced by him. However, after passing 11<sup>th</sup> , Mrinaltai told her father, “I am now fed up with going from place to place. I would now prefer to stay in a hostel for further education.”

She took admission in the Elphinston College, Mumbai and that proved to be a turning point in her life. The shy and quiet Mrinalini was transformed into a mature and bold young lady. Now she had to make her own decisions and the other factor was that she was now in a miniature world. Girls from various parts of the country, speaking different languages, belonging to different castes, religions and cultures,

observing different dress codes were living together. It was during this period that she met Kishor Kher and she became Smt. Kher.

She worked for a year in Arya Vidya Mandir. Then five years with the Spastics Society at Colaba. Each experience taught her something new, made her mature. She became the President of Inner Wheel and public speaking became a part of her daily life. She came in contact with a large number of people. Fund raising and social work became a part of her life. She got vast experience of both the fields. All this was to benefit her in the work of Kherwadi.

She works as the secretary / Trustee at Kherwadi. The top management of Kherwadi comprises veterans of Gandhian philosophy as also Kishor ji's friends from the corporate world. There are experts from various fields as also common people living in the vicinity of Kherwadi. She was not a frequent visitor at Kherwadi till 1988 which was the centenary year of Balasaheb. That year it was decided to carry out repairs and renovation at Parishramalay and then the task of publicity and fund raising for the work was assigned to her. She did it with devotion. A tidy sum of some lakhs of rupees was collected. She was commended and more responsibility was assigned to her.

Now she started visiting Kherwadi regularly. She organised various programmes to refresh the memories of Balasaheb during the centenary year. Balasaheb's work was quite extensive, Balkan Ji Bari, Adivasi Seva Sangh, and many others. He also worked as a Trustee in several organisations like Manibhavan Trust. She found out all such institutions and organised various programmes in them too. It was a busy year after which she got the time to look at the work at Kherwadi.

Tailoring classes, Balwadi, an Ayurvedik and Homeopathic Dispensary were already in operation. People from surrounding areas could get treatment in these at nominal charges. Medical camps were also organised from time to time; ENT, Eye and other specialists started participating in them. The school was, however, handed over to the Municipal Corporation. Several village industries were also in operation. Mrinal tai reviewed all these and chalked out a plan.

When Kherwadi was set up, medical services were badly needed in that area. There were no doctors in the vicinity. But now the number of patients coming to Kherwadi for medical services had declined, because many doctors had set up dispensaries in the surrounding areas. So she discontinued all medical services other than dental treatment. In addition to the tailoring class she started classes for English conversation, beautician, fashion designing, computer education. A counselling centre was also started.

The biggest problem she observed was that children could not read and write. So she started a study room in Parishramalay. The grim reality that students from the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grades could not read or write came to the fore. So she induced elder boys and

girls from the area to teach the children by offering some fees. A Balwadi was started. The proportion of children dropping out of school after 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>/10 grades was quite high. Because, basically, they could not read or write. They found the studies harder and harder as they went to higher grades. Then there was no alternative but to quit school. They would not get work because they were not educated. The future of such children who have nothing to do is horrible. It was decided to work on them. Young people rarely visited Parishramalay till then. So a gymnasium was set up for them. Various competitions were organised. Vocational Training, placement, a help line, awareness programme were started.

The 2009 floods of Mithi river caused tremendous damage to Kherwadi. Computers were swept away. Valuable records were damaged, some [were](#) lost. But a new beginning was made again.

Now the work is growing rapidly. KESWA is growing rapidly – horizontally and vertically. Much of the credit for this goes to Kishor and Mrinal tai.

Now many big companies, trusts, funding agencies are backing Yuva Parivartan. Some of them depute some employees also to help out. CEOs of multinational companies, film stars, role models for the societies also visit Kherwadi. Some of them have now become advisors to Kherwadi.

That is how Kherwadi Social Welfare Association and Yuva Parivartan are aspiring to take a bigger leap.

Let us wish them success [for](#) their aspirations.

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## WHAT IS COUNSELLING ?

Some children enjoy the attention and pampering they receive from their parents and other elders in the house when they fall sick. But sometimes, your body really disagrees with you. Eyes are sore, nose flowing, you are running a fever, the ear aches, you are short of breathe, respiration becomes difficult, you feel giddy, there is indigestion. Then, we first try out the household remedies. If that doesn't work, we go to the doctor. The doctor sometimes prescribes some pills, or other medicines or gives an injection. If that doesn't improve the condition, we run to the specialist or a hospital. If it turns out to be a disease like cancer, blood pressure, AIDS, then everybody panics. In addition to the doctor's treatment, other measures like fasting, poojas are resorted to. However, many of us could be suffering from diseases of the mind like the physical diseases. Recovering from them also needs somebody's help. We don't realise that neglecting them could prove disastrous. As a matter of fact our mind is extremely strong. We can do anything if we decide to. If only we realise the strength of our mind.

When we say all-round development, or we say that the child is growing, development of the mind, the emotions, feelings is also taken for granted. Just as milk, fruits, vegetables, pulses, cereals, etc cause the development of the body, so also things like prayer, hymns, trust in God, respect for the elders, listening to stories and music, devotional songs, lectures, attending social programmes, listening to or participating in discussions-debates, participating in sports or music competitions, listening to the radio, reading –all these are necessary for moulding the mind and this is where sometimes something goes wrong.

Just as a healthy body also can sometimes get out of tune, so also the mind. The only thing is that the mind going out of tune is often not noticed promptly. Sometimes you have shivers, you might perspire, or the throat may go dry, or you may not be able to sleep well, you might lose appetite, you might hallucinate, you might feel frightened, you may not be able to concentrate on study or work, you are unable to speak, you feel scared, you feel irritated, angry, you feel like banging your head or thrashing somebody., You become extremely uneasy, you start hearing strange sounds, you start hallucinating, some people keep washing their hands all the time or keep muttering, Some people behave as if there is nobody around. Some fall prey to addictions- Pan, Tobacco, Guthka, scented supari, brown sugar, etc etc. Some turn to a liquor den or a dance bar. The ailments of the mind manifest in various forms, like murdering somebody, getting into fights, stealing, robbing, dackoity, thinking ill about others, suspicions. Some ailments are of a temporary nature while others are permanent. In order to overcome them, to keep them under control, the first thing which is necessary is that one must realise that there is something wrong with him/her. In order to recover from the ailment and to regain control over the mind, the most important entity is you and your mind. Determination, persistence, efforts,



give us the strength to achieve the impossible and unattainable. That is what results in new discoveries, setting new records, displaying bravery, and winning.

That is why if you wish your children to learn A B C D from the childhood, you should also know how to read their mind. If the peace of mind is lost for some reason, you should learn how to get it back with the help of yoga, prayer, sports, music, hobbies and if you are unable to get it back, then you should approach an expert, i.e. the doctor of the mind. Just as we have family doctors, ENT, eye, skin specialists so also there are career guides, child psychologists, marriage counsellors, clinical psychologists, criminal psychologists, and other doctors of the mind. They are available in schools, colleges, social organisations, government hospitals. Big hospitals like KEM, Nayar have a separate section for psychological treatment. As a matter of fact, the study of the mind is in existence since time immemorial and it would ever continue because the power of the mind is immense.

If one realises or someone brings to your attention that your mind is unhappy or not under control then, like in the case of physical illness, one may first try home remedies and, if necessary, approach a counsellor or a psychotherapist. They diagnose the problem and the root cause of the problem by talking to the patient and other people or by using various therapies. Then, treatment is given either in a group or to the patient alone. Sometimes the problem is over in a short time, in few sessions whereas sometimes the treatment needs a long period. Follow up has to be done repeatedly. Some maladies are not curable whereas others need extended treatment. Sometimes a mere talk is sufficient whereas sometimes the doctors prescribe medicines. Administering shocks could also be a treatment.

The treatments aim at soothing the mind. Thoughts get a different direction. In some cases there is transformation like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Confidence improves. It is reflected in the patient's manner of sitting, posture of standing. His behaviour changes. There is clarity in thinking. He becomes cheerful, energetic. Obstinacy, anger, hate, negative thoughts reduce. Complexion brightens. Hunger grows. He sleeps well. The weight increases.

However, the proportion of patients approaching a counsellor or a psychotherapist is small. Because, in the first place, we do not admit that we have a problem. We are afraid that people would call us mad. We don't know exactly where such doctors or counsellors are available. Their fees are unaffordable. Shortage of such experts is particularly felt in small towns. Then these children or men remain without treatment. People around them give wrong advice. Their illness becomes serious. Life starts going downhill like the bogies of a train start going downhill. Some times it is in shambles. And, as the life of the other people in the house is tied up with them, the whole house is ruined.

In all this, there is one more thing and that is : elders are not prepared to accept that children or young people can have some problems or tensions. What does he know

? He is like that only, he is lazy, stubborn, beyond reform, spoiled, he is a prankster. Don't pay any attention to him, he will look after himself, leave him to his luck.....such preposterous comments are made.

As a matter of facts, India is a country of the youth. Today's youth are our future for tomorrow. They constitute 50 % of the total population and we are neglecting them. The problem of quality education has become serious. Very few children from this [age](#) group have knowledgeable parents, good schools, good teachers. The surroundings are not conducive.

According to various organisations and reports, still lakhs of children in India do not go to school. Very few from those who enrol in the first grade [can](#) complete their education. The dropping out starts from the first grade itself. Because of the new Government policy and right of education, now children from urban and semi urban areas reach the eighth grades. ~~But there is tremendous proportion of dropping out in the eighth, ninth and tenth grades.~~ This is the age when physiological changes take place and crores of such children from the 15 to 18 age group wander aimlessly. They have no skill. There is no possibility of getting employment. There is nobody to guide them. Often, domestic problems, quarrels, absence of parents or quarrelling parents are the cause of their problems and handicapped children are in a totally different world.

Yuva Parivartan works [speci](#)ally for such children. Often, children of advanced age and adults also approach. Yuva Parivartan provides them with an opportunity to live. Some of them are from surrounding localities. Some approach with somebody's introduction . Sometimes, their schools themselves send them here. Sometimes, social workers operating in slums bring them here. Police bring children who were involved in crime or those living in reformatories. Yuva Parivartan volunteers regularly visit the Arthur Road and Yerawada jails.

The head quarter of Kherwadi Social Welfare Association is at Kherwadi, Bandra. Yuva Parivartan has been working for school drop outs and first-time offenders for the last 20 years. They are offered career counselling, skill training, change in work culture and are taught manners and etiquettes. Efforts are made so that they do not [miss](#) the second chance in life . They have trained staff. First, Smt. [Smita](#) Khanzode started counselling at the instance of Smt. Mrinalini Kher. The biggest qualification she has is that she has tremendous love for children and her work. She [feels](#) happy when she sees each child changing, becoming self reliant, taking off with a new dream. She is [a](#) trained counsellor. She was working in the children-parents association of Lokamanya Seva Sangh for 15 years. She has also worked with the well known Psychiatrist Dr. Manoj Bhatawadekar for prevention of drug addiction in many schools. She has worked on mental health in Shivaji Vidyalay, Shailendra Education Society's school, Sane Guruji Vidyalay, BPM Khar School, Manas Counselling Centre.

The first thing she did on joining Kherwadi was to organise an exhibition on mental health. She prepared posters and organised a career fair. She conducted IQ tests on the children coming here and looked for various activities suitable for them. [She](#) prepared various programmes like Smart, Soch ka Parivartan (Change in thinking). She invited the staff from the mental health department of KEM Hospital as also renowned experts like Dr. Ashish Deshpande, Dr. Dandekar. Gradually, the work expanded.

Ms. Uma Sundarraman, who joined Yuva Parivartan as a volunteer, also became an employee. She has done M.Sc. with Psychotherapy. [Ch](#)andrakant Samudre [is](#) also in her team.

Due to all these young people, Yuva Parivartan ~~can~~ use new technology to the best advantage. Consequently, they are able to take their work to far away places. Since people from here would not be able to physically go to remote states, villages, habitations they use the “Train the Trainer” programme. It has its own web site and a help line. They have also prepared short IVs or video films based on several incidents and issues.

Yuva Parivartan centres are in many states and they [are](#) e-connected with each other. Programmes are implemented in villages and small towns with the help of others. Posters are used for remote areas which are difficult to reach. Messages are sent on the mobile phones. Workers reach where there are crowds – in bazaars, fairs. Programmes of short duration designed to suit the needs of the area are organised. Yuva Parivartan doesn't stop merely with teaching, but jobs are arranged for many. The workers not only get field experience but are able to earn some money also. Contact is maintained through the help line.

There is [a](#) difference between courses of this type conducted by the government and [by](#) Yuva Parivartan. Those working in Yuuva Parivartan consider them as their social responsibility. They say that it is easy to teach subjects relating to skill development but to inculcate discipline and good work culture is a very difficult job. That requires tenacity. As an example of this, she says, “ Once a job was arranged for a Muslim girl in a mall. The salary was Rs. 10,500/- Nobody from the family was earning so much. But she quit the job within a month. The reason was that somebody scolded her for not resuming work immediately after lunch time and for talking on the mobile when at work. Once, a salesman's job was arranged for a boy. His mother came and said “my son will not go by train. He won't stand for such a long time. Please look [for](#) some other type of job for him. Some want work near their house. Many things like reporting at work on time, reporting for work regularly, saving some money from the salary, behaving respectfully with superiors, have to be hammered into them and this needs to be done persistently.

But these workers ~~devoted~~ to Yuva Parivartan keep doing this without tiring.

As a matter of fact, training in respect of one's feelings, thoughts, behaviour needs to be given right from childhood. But, unfortunately, these things are not taught in our schools. Then, when there is a problem relating to these issues, the person who offers sincere advice without getting emotionally involved is called the counsellor.

And, the friendly advice, suggestions offered to the person in trouble is counselling. Counselling is not merely giving advice but to induce the concerned person to stop behaving irrationally in the heat of the moment and induce him to think rationally, to control improper feelings and to help generate proper feelings, to teach him to strike a balance between thoughts and feelings. While doing this, the person's age group as also the educational, financial, social background is taken into consideration. The counselling offered -varies from person to person. Counselling can be broadly classified as follows –

**Educational Counselling :** Intellectual of some children can be lower than the average level. They find difficulty in reading and writing while some children have difficulty concentrating. This creates problems in study. Such children are given some tests and tools and techniques are suggested depending on the findings of the tests.

**Family Counselling :** In some cases, the mutual relations of members of a family are not affectionate or a member of the family could be suffering from depression or schizophrenia or given to addiction. This affects their mutual relations. Other members of the family are at a loss to decide how to deal with them. They are briefed about these maladies and guided as to how to handle them so as to maintain good relations.

#### **Pre-Marriage and Post Marriage Guidance :**

Guidance is offered on issues such as what should one expect from a partner, how to choose the partner, how to maintain cordial marital relations, etc.

**Vocational Counselling :** Many persons are confused about what occupation they should choose. In such cases, tests are conducted to assess their intelligence, capability, preferences, personality and advice is offered about which occupation would be most suitable for them. Many are not aware of vocational opportunities suitable for them. Apart from this, the following things are also offered –

- Counselling for de-addiction,
- Assistance to elderly people,
- Life skills for adolescent children
- Creating awareness about mental health.

In cases of patients afflicted with diseases like cancer, AIDS, his / her relatives are guided about how to deal with diseases. Groups of persons having similar problems are formed, they are offered useful guidance. Members of such groups can support each other, exchange mutual experiences.

**Guidance to parents :** Becoming a parent is easy, but discharging that responsibility is difficult. What is quality parenting and how to do it ? Guidance is provided in groups or individually.

Some people wonder whether such problems did not exist in the past ? It may be said that problems did exist but there was not much awareness about them. Also, life in the old days was not as complex and stressful as it is today. The means of livelihood were limited. There was less competition. The joint family system was common. Many people were connected with their native place or followed their traditional vocation. Elders from the house or the village would offer words of experience. There were people around to open your mind or tell problems and they would sincerely listen to you and offer advice. Hence the need for approaching some outside expert or a professional counsellor was not felt.

The family life went into a turmoil as a result of- the increasing population, urbanisation, impact of the mass media, the effects of progress in the field of science. Family members living in the same house could not find time to interact with each other, understand each other. This resulted in tremendous increase in psychological problems. That gave rise to the need for professional counselling. Counselling is also a team work. Persons who wish to do counselling have to complete some courses.

- Some become Psychiatrists.
- Some are Psychologists.
- Some work as Remedial teachers.
- Some work as speech therapists.
- Occupational therapists assist in the growth of students by prescribing suitable exercises.

The type of expert is chosen depending on the need of the individual patient. All of them work together with the aim of making the individuals and through them, the society happy, contented and rich as a whole. Having a psychological problem, being ignorant, confused is quite natural. It is not a blot or something to be ashamed of. Such ailments are not necessarily hereditary. Hence, one should avail of the help of a counsellor without any reservation. This is essential for improving the quality of life.

So, whenever you feel the need, Yuva Parivartan centre of Kherwadi Social Welfare Association would be glad to be of help to you. Visit personally or contact on phone :

Kherwadi Social Welfare Association,  
Parishramalay, Teen Bungalow Road,  
Kherwadi, Bandra (East),  
Mumbai 400051.

Tel : 2647 4381, 2647 9189, 2647 5359.

E-mail : [info@yuvaparivartan.org](mailto:info@yuvaparivartan.org)

Greetings and best wishes to all the readers and their friends from Yuva Parivartan.

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## THE SCHOOL OF PRACTICALS

Yuva Parivartan takes the help of many others while executing its programmes. Smt. Sadhana Bhankhande in one of them. Let us see what she feels about Yuva Parivartan programmes. :

Inspired by the desire for continued growth, Yuva Parivartan, which throws open to the youth the avenues of knowledge, technical skills and suitable vocation freely, is a service oriented organisation. Blossoming with youth in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, it strives to make the youth realise that they are useful not only to themselves but also to their family, the society and, indeed, the world at large

Yuva Parivartan's team, which moulds children with love and discipline and by putting in great efforts - children who have lost the path of progress due to failure in school, adverse financial condition and lack of requisite support - is a huge undertaking which produces capable and sensitive people and moulds them.

For a social worker like me, working in the Psychiatry department of KEM Hospital, I have always realised the extraordinary significance of this organisation. Yuva Parivartan is the laboratory for testing the efforts- made by the hospital for creating psychological health in the society.

Those who have failed in school get a second chance here. Having realised that a person's emotions are as important as his brain, misguided youth is tenderly moulded at the appropriate time so that he becomes productive. The organisation has taken the initiative in settling innumerable youth in life. The beneficiaries are from the weaker section of the society. They have to struggle in daily life. They find it difficult to get daily necessities of life. Consequently, they have to face physical, psychological and social deprivation and have to spend their life in an ambience of crime, addiction and violence. Small huts or huts with 3 or 4 lofts one above the other or shanties packed in small lanes are the homes for these children. 10 / 15 persons live in one room. Routine matters like sleeping, eating, bathing, toilet become big issues. It becomes difficult to keep balance of mind due to the foul smell, squalor, inadequate food, malnutrition, prevalence of contagious diseases . Yuva Parivartan reaches out to such people. Introducing the concept of vocational education to young boys and girls from rural and tribal areas is by itself a challenge. Yuva Parivartan has reached such remote areas.

These boys aspire to become big on their own but they are at a loss to know what they should do for that. When a trainee comes to the organisation, he is in a confused state about his occupation and trade. His self image is weak. He is seized with pessimism and a negative mindset. That is why, it becomes necessary for him to seek the help of the teachers and counsellors.

Even after completing his training, he is unable to take up a job or start his own activity for want of financial support from the family. In some cases, he neglects his career due to unhappy relations in the family. Sometimes, his expectations are unrealistic. He rejects opportunities which come his way and then instability becomes the norm of his life.

Then he prefers to take up jobs like working at a tea stall, operating a rickshaw in the absence of the owner, working as a domestic help, securing seats for passengers in a railway compartment, working as a coolie, washing cars, doing house keeping, working as a waiter with a caterer. Such jobs provide immediate money for meeting daily necessities and then he tends to continue with that. He finds it difficult to [take](#) enter a stable field.

Sometimes, children in the adolescent stage become aggressive, arrogant. They defy discipline, rules, restrictions. Some become adults prematurely because of having a single parent or an addicted parent. Some have to face sexual atrocities. Sexual attraction, unsafe sexual relations : all this happens very fast. Yuva Parivartan extends great support to children facing such challenges. The organisation makes them realise that they also have great strength in them.

There is a story about the owner of a circus who wanted to close down the business. He releases five of his tigers into a jungle. Within a week, three of the five tigers get killed by wild dogs in the jungle. Because, while they had forgotten the art of killing a prey as they were living in the circus since beginning, the dogs, living in the jungle, had learnt to kill to feed themselves.

In short, Yuva Parivartan sees to it that children coming to them do not become circus tigers. Children learn on their own, they sustain themselves and become successful. Lakhs of blessings from me to all such children.

-Sadhana Bhatkhande,  
Social Welfare Officer,  
Psychology Department,  
KEM Hospital, Parel, Mumbai.



**COME, LET US READ THE TRUE STORIES FROM THE PRACTICAL  
SCHOOL OF YUVA PARIVARTAN**

True Stories which teach a lot to the youth, their parents and teachers from any part of the country.

Stories of success. True Stories of young boys and girls who transformed their lives by conquering problems, limitations, handicaps and started marching on the path of progress.

Each of these true stories is different.

Each represents a different problem.

That is why, open any page, read the story, close the book and talk to yourself with closed eyes.

You would find thoughts, feelings, experiences which you have never experienced before.

So, let us join hands with the work of Yuva Parivartan.

## 1. THE PUZZLE

“ Was it Bunty’s accident or murder or suicide ?” The question keeps haunting me. As a matter of fact, I know that I am not going to get the answer ever. But still the question makes me uneasy. And then Bunty’s pale face appears before my eyes, posing the question even after the body had become lifeless.

That day, I got a call from Bunty’s neighbour and I rushed to his house. It was a colony of well to do people located in a decent area. A large crowd had collected in the open space. People were talking in a muffled voices. I reached his house wading through the crowd. Her mother burst into a cry on seeing me. In fact, she had not stopped crying at all. But.. “Doctor, please see what’s happened. Our Bunty is gone...” Right in front was Bunty’s body wrapped up in a cloth.

They said he was standing in the door of the train compartment while returning from college. As a matter of fact it was not the rush hour. Yet, he lost his balance and was thrown out of the train. His face had been battered. He had suffered from a lot of internal injuries. There was lot of internal bleeding and he breathed his last within a short time. Someone pulled the chain when he fell out of the train. Phone calls were made to the Police. But everything was over by the time they reached. A relative of Bunty was briefing me.

As a matter of fact, his words were not registering on my brain. What came before my eyes was Bunty who had come to see me only recently; his innocent face; such as would charm anybody. Neat dress. He had come to seek my blessings as the examination was close by. I was very happy bidding him goodbye with a smiling face. “Now, there is no cause for worry.” I had said to myself.

However, my guess had proved wrong. After all it proved correct that once one gets derailed it becomes difficult to get back on track.

Bunty was from a well to do family. Smart, happy go lucky, clever in his studies. But a little too bold. His parents put him in a good school with enthusiasm. The school was rather far from the house. He had to travel by train everyday. But soon he started travelling alone. Once somebody approached him and asked him “ Would you deliver this small package to such and such person ?”. Initially, Bunty ignored him. The man also kept quiet. But he was not willing to let go. “Look, I would pay you.” Bunty was tempted for\_a moment.

He consented. Then it became a routine, an everyday job. Bunty was getting money. Hotel, fun, . However, he was not to let anybody at home know this secret. He was a little scared of his parents and he didn’t realise that he was doing something wrong.

One day, he came to know the secret of the parcel. He opened it, tasted it and, what a wonder ! He felt as if he was in heaven. Should I steal a parcel? But that would not

have remained a secret. That man kept accurate account. He would have recovered the money. Bunty was tempted by the parcel. He felt like tasting it everyday. His income declined and expense increased.

At home, his parents had a feeling that his behaviour was changing. But he was going to school regularly; there was no complaint from the school or his friends. He would sleep rather too long and his eyes looked somewhat drowsy. His interest in eating had also reduced. He was talking less. But, after all, he was growing. However, they satisfied themselves thinking that such things do happen in that age.

Bunty was feeling suffocated. By now he was hooked up on the powder. He wondered how to get money to pay for it. While he was sitting at the railway station engrossed in these thoughts, a well dressed man approached him. He was looking for a prey. He charmed him, persuaded him and Bunty became a member of the gang. The man had said “ your parents would not come to know anything about this.” His assurance kept ringing in his ears.

He had become a member of a gang which stole mobile phones and sold them. His sweet face, fluent and polite English benefited the gang so much that they named him “Hero”. Now he started thinking that he had really become a hero. He was tempted to bunk school. His interaction with parents reduced. He was in a different world.

But this false world of pleasure was not to last long. He was caught by the police while travelling. He was bewildered for a moment. His pathetic attempt at bluffing proved futile. Being from a white collar family and one who had never experienced caning, he lost his nerve. He started crying and told the police everything. The police detained him in the police station and called his parents.

The parents were aghast. They rushed to the police station. Bunty was ashamed to face them. He clung to his mother, started crying . His parents collapsed for some time, but they took a vow : “We will bring him out of this.”

And then this case came to Parivartan. The case had many angles:- To de-addict him, to get him out of the clutches of the gang, to see that he is not harmed by them and, most important, to enable him to stand on his own feet with confidence. That he had committed a big blunder was true. But he had not done it consciously. Now his parents, relatives, his school, friends, all would be looking at him from a different angle. He should be kept away from all that. Several issues...Doesn't matter if it takes some time but we would bring this innocent boy out of this mess ...that's what I decided and started my therapy.

As such, he was not of a criminal nature. His upbringing was good. He had admitted his mistake and was determined to come out of this. His parents would cooperate fully. So the task was not difficult. The only unknown factor was the reaction of the

gang peddling drugs and selling stolen mobile phones-; how much they could harass him, how formidable they were. Who is their leader ? But we were very hopeful of help from the police in this regard. With their motto “For the protection of the good, destruction of the evil”- we were confident that the police would certainly help us.

During this period, he had dropped out of the school. The school had struck his name off their roster. It- was the year of the ninth grade. Bunty and his parents reported for counselling regularly. Bunty soon came out of the situation only on the strength of their support. He filled in the form for the SSC examination as an external student and started preparations. Being originally an intelligent student, Bunty had a liking for studies. His parents looked for a good guide. They were watchful that he should not come in contact with the gang. As a result of all this, he passed the 10<sup>th</sup> grade examination with good marks. However, the incidents which had happened in the recent past kept nagging him. He couldn't -just waive them away as a bad dream. The centre, the police, the parents all had to remain alert. We kept in continuous touch with him on the mobile phone apart from personal meetings. All of us were taking care to make sure that he would not feel hurt by the interaction with his school friends and neighbours and return to the old ways. That is why he took admission in a college which was rather away from home.

Bunty soon got used to the new way of life . He accepted this new way of life without problems. But this was only one side of the coin. The drug and mobile thief gangs would not allow this to proceed so smoothly. It was certain that they too would be-tracking him. The fact that there were evil as well as good people in the world could not be forgotten.

Bunty didn't tell but it was possible that they ~~could be~~ trying to catch him in their web again. It was necessary to see how Bunty, having experienced how small inducements had led him into deep trouble, recovers and handles himself. After all, the strings of his life were in his hands only.

The accident had taken place only a few weeks after the college had opened. This complicated the matter. Could it really be an accident ? Or had he ended his life, unable to bear the strain of the experiences he had gone through during the intervening period and of deciding what was good or bad ? Or could the gangsters have killed him ? Whatever the truth, Bunty was now far away from all. He had gone, touching many hearts and leaving many questions unanswered. That was a fact.

## 2. DEVASTATED

Today was a little different. Clouds had collected in the sky and my mind was uneasy. Our social worker had somewhat forcibly brought a young girl to us. As a matter of fact, where could she have gone instead of coming here, was a big question. She had no home, nor anybody who cared for her. Our words of advice and support could not be of much help to her. Her entire life was ruined and the future was a big question mark.

She had tried to commit suicide and a friend had got her admitted to a hospital. Our social worker had brought her here after she was discharged by the hospital. We gathered around her, ordered tea for her. I was trying to console her and reassure her by patting her back and induce her to speak out. But tears kept welling in her eyes. She was scared of her past and she was afraid that the future, like an unknown monster, would swallow her. She wondered why God had kept her alive at all.

While all this was happening, the thought that I had seen her somewhere before kept nagging me. Suddenly, I asked, “Aren’t you Sarita?”. She nodded.

“Oh my God!” I said to myself. Is she the same Sarita who used to come well dressed and neatly groomed only a few months ago? What could have gone wrong? Was she the same Sarita, who was doing the nursing and English conversation courses simultaneously and said, “As soon as the courses are over, I would secure a job and a husband at the same time.”

I would try to fathom the developments of the intervening period of her life by connecting the thread of developments during that period. My reassuring touch and eyes were enough to improve her morale. She realised that here was somebody who could understand her, encourage her, help her. As if, while being in a deep pit, one would see a ray of the sun and feel reassured that there was hope of escape from there.

During the previous course, her enthusiasm, her taking interest in each item was noticed by all. “Soch ka Parivartan” is the soul of each course of ours. From the time a student joins till he/she leaves, we bombard them with life skills and values. She had participated in that also quite sincerely. After completing the course, we arranged a job for her in a hospital, with a monthly salary of Rs. 10,000/-. She was very happy when she got the first salary in hand. Now she was financially independent. Her confidence was improving. However, her financial independence was to give a boost to her addiction.

I reviewed all this in my mind. “Didi, now there would be no job nor home. I am unable to decide where I should go-, what I should do. I am finished, Didi, I am finished.”

The intervening period was difficult in her life. “Didi, when I came for the course last time, I had hopes for my life. It was also an attempt to run away from home. I thought I would get a small job after doing the course. I would also get a husband just as Aai got. I would have a home..”

She stopped while speaking. Chandu, a friend of hers, who looked like a gangster at first sight, had come. “Hey, crazy woman, what have you done ? Do you want to go to jail ? Come, let us go home...” He was threatening her showing as if he wanted to help her.

She looked tired too. I said to her in a persuasive tone, “Now you go home. But do come again tomorrow morning. I want to talk to you a lot. “ She contemplated for a while and as if helplessly she left with him. Our social worker said to him, “Do send her here again tomorrow, otherwise you would have to face me.” Her experience made her say so.

The next day, we keenly waited for her. But she came without making us wait too long. We, however, told her friend to go away. She felt relieved. Now she could talk freely.

“Didi, let nobody have a fate like mine. I, my parents, we had a nice little house. Baba died unexpectedly. Aai took up a job. She put me in -a school. But with the responsibilities of the house and the job, she didn’t have time to pay attention to my studies or looking after me. I was growing with the help of neighbours. Playing, watching TV was my world. I had no interest in studies. I wished I could wear fancy dresses and look pretty like them. I would dream about myself wearing a make up and fashionable clothes like them. This ended up as it would. Sometimes failing and sometimes passing the examinations, I reached the ninth grade . Then, I left the school. My mother wasn’t bothered much about it. She did fulfil my wishes but I never felt that she loved me intensely like the other mothers. Maybe she was tired, I tried to satisfy myself..

However, later she also started scolding me, “You are just sitting at home. You are a burden. Look for a job. Learn to stand on your own legs. “ I wouldn’t take her seriously. Relaxing, sleeping, watching TV.. I was happy. Since quitting school I didn’t have any friends. I was happy in my virtual world. Was waiting for the prince charming of my dream.

And, one evening, I was shocked. I kept gawking at my mother who had returned from office and the man who was with her. She was wearing a new sari. She was wearing a make up for the first time. A string of flowers on her hair bun.... A large Kumkum on the forehead, a long Mangalsutra around the neck. There was silence for some time. Then aai said, “Why are you gawking like this ? He is your new Daddy. Touch his feet. We had a registered marriage. Go, make some tea.”

I started making tea. But I didn't like the man. I wasn't willing to call him Daddy. There in the small room started our new inning. I heard that the man's first wife had died. They would make love to each other in front of me. In the night, I could hear them talk in a subdued voice. Although it was dark and there was a curtain, I felt very awkward. I would be curious. Sometimes I would be scared of that man. What if mother was not in the house and he...I would shudder at the thought.

The neighbours now looked at our house with a strange gaze. They would ask me pointed questions. I felt like running away from the house. That is why I was coming to Parivartan. Then I also looked for new friends. They were drug addicts, not friends. They would talk loosely. They made fun of me. Now Mother had started vomiting. She would just lie down, would ask me to do the cooking and other work in the house. I was not used to it. She would then shout at me. Would scold me. As if she didn't like me now. After a few days, her belly started bulging. Now I started hating her. I was upset with that man. Friends, Parivartan and a small job became my world. Now mother asked me to do the entire household work. I was extremely upset. But nobody cared for my rage. I felt like running away from the house.

Now I had started taking drinks, smoking and even taking morphin with my friends. My staying away from home suited my mother. Then came the new child and I felt more isolated. A friend, Sheru, became close to me. I started liking his company. He would say. "I am here to help you. Why are you worried? We would get married." I started depending on him more and more. We celebrated his birthday. I got highly intoxicated and when I came to, I found that I had been "looted".

I felt ashamed of myself. Now my friends would take me for granted. I was in a fix. Felt helpless. I didn't know how to get out of this mess. Then Sheru suggested a way out. "Come we would run away. Would go to my village and get married." Crazy as I was, I trusted him.

One day, I hoodwinked mother and left the house with a bag. The funniest thing was that mother also didn't try to search for me. We went to his village by train. I don't know what he had told his family, but I felt all the people were looking at me with a strange gaze. Sheru vanished in a few hours after reaching the village. Nobody in the house talked to me. However, all the house work had to be done by me alone. I used to get tired. In a couple of days I was fed up. But the worst part was yet to come. They gave me a room and all the men from the family used me to satisfy their sexual hunger. I felt suffocated. I cried. I kept pleading with them. There was no talk about marriage. I wished I died. Then One day I took courage, and ran away when an opportunity came my way. I ran all the way to the station, asking the way to the station. Luck was on my side. I got a train immediately. I returned to Mumbai without a ticket.

Now my condition was even worse. The door of the my house was closed for me. I again went to my group of friends. I cried. Slapped myself. It seems Chandu took

[pity on me](#). He said, “Don’t cry. Come to my house. I would look for some work for you from tomorrow. “ I had no alternative. I dragged myself after him. I couldn’t guess what more was in store for me. Every moment I was dying. Where was I and where had I reached. But, like they say, you don’t think properly when the end is near. That is exactly what happened. And, to tell the truth, I felt ashamed of myself. I didn’t know how to face people who knew me before. I kept repenting all the time. Sometimes I thought if I went to mother she would pardon me, will take me in the house. But the memory of “that man” made me uneasy. Chandu was a *banel* fellow. I started fearing him too. I would dig my face in the pillow and cry. There was nobody to help me. And one day I tried to hang myself.

But I didn’t succeed or maybe I didn’t dare. I became unconscious but didn’t die. [Ch](#)andu took me to a hospital and the lady in the hospital brought me here. Didi, please help me out of this mess. Please find some way. I am terribly scared.

We didn’t know how to console her. We were thinking of admitting her to some charitable institution. In the meanwhile, we sent her to a doctor. Started treatment and medicines.

She came here for a few days. I am living with Chandu, she said. But suddenly she stopped coming. Our social worker tried to find her but didn’t succeed. Chandu also was untraceable. She never came back again. She didn’t even call on the phone.

We remember her occasionally. Wonder where could she be. In the red light area ? or in the colony of people having AIDS ? Could she be begging in the streets ? Or would Chandu have sold her to somebody ? To whom ? To those who lead such women to the brothels or to those who are engaged in human trafficking ? Poor Sarita. Really, nobody should have a fate like hers.

Sometimes we feel sorry. Should we have lodged a complaint with the police ? Should we have quickly found shelter for her in somebody’s house or in some institution ? Should we have tried to locate her mother and handed her over to her ? Were we late in taking action ?

But all these questions are meaningless. That is why we feel for all the countless Saritas like her and pray for them. We pray that God should give us the strength to help people like her stand again in life.

That brings the limitations of Parivartan into focus. We realise that our efforts are like trying to patch up the sky.

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### 3. 'SUPERSTITION'- QUIT INDIA !

Hasan and his 'Abbu' had come to Parivartan. Hasan was a sweet boy of 9-10 years. He appeared bewildered and Abbu looked worried. Abbu, who was a teacher in a school, had come purposely. He started scanning my room while easing into a chair. Many children from the neighbouring area were playing merrily outside my room. Their happiness appeared to overflow. They appeared extremely happy. They were playing without bothering about anything. Hasan gawked at them.

After completing his survey of the room, Abbu started speaking. "Madam. I am terribly worried." His worry about his son was palpable in his words. I didn't consider it proper that he should be speaking this in Hasan's presence. So, I asked Hasan, "Would you like to join those children? I can tell them." Hasan was probably looking for this opportunity. But his parents would not have allowed him to go out. He looked at his father. As if having no alternative, Abbu said to him, "Go, go, but take care." Hasan jumped and ran outside.

I was noting down what Abbu was telling, in my diary. I was listening. Taking notes. Suddenly, there was noise outside. The children stopped playing and had gathered. Some were running toward their houses, while some were beckoning me while coming to my room. I and Hasan's Abbu ran outside. I understood immediately. Abbu said, "See, Madam, he does like this from time to time. But he would be alright in a short while. He pretends like this because he doesn't want to study. Ammi says, somebody has cast a spell on him. My wife says that Hasina and Marina, who have no children, envy us. They only have done something. They have jinxed Hasan. They used to take him to their house and feed him when he was a child. All my relatives tell me to take him to Peerbaba. Only he would be able to suggest some cure." He kept talking.

By now, somebody had held an onion to Hasan's nose, somebody was holding a leather chappal to his nose, somebody was splashing water on his face, somebody was massaging his hands and legs. Hasan was lying on the ground, surrounded by them. His hands and legs had stiffened. His mouth was frothing. Eyes staring at the sky. The combined efforts of all were showing some effect on him. I shouted at others and told them to move back. He needed some clean fresh air. His Abbu took out a small packet from his pocket. "Good I was carrying this." He sat beside Hasan, He prayed to Allah holding the packet in his hands. He opened the packet. It appeared to contain ash, which he blew over Hasan's body. "Please Get Water." He said. He poured the remaining ash into the water and started putting drops of that water into Hasan's mouth. Hasan revived after some time. He got up and sat with an apologetic glance at those around him. He appeared quite tired. I told all to go home. Abbu helped Hasan to get up and brought him to my room.

By now, I had phoned and called for some tea with ginger in it. "Look, madam, he keeps doing like this from time to time. You have seen now. He became alright as

soon as he received Peerbaba's blessings. The children might have said something and that was enough. He was ok when he was a child. I don't know...." Abbu's commentary was going on. I was listening while writing a note to the doctor from the government hospital. I said to Abbu while handing over the note to him, "I have understood everything. Please take him to this hospital and get their report."

Abbu was at a loss. Because he had never thought about Hasan's malady. Though he was somewhat educated, that was only in the madarsa. Back at home, his mother and aunt had the last word. He had no freedom of action. Hasan's mom was uneducated. They were worried because of the fits which afflicted Hasan and which made him unconscious. They were worried about his future. That is how they willy nilly agreed to take him to a doctor. They brought the report. My guess turned out to be correct. The doctors had started the treatment. They had also explained the action to be taken whenever Hasan suffered a fit. He would have to take medicines for a long time.

I told them to keep in touch. We gave various tests including the aptitude test to Hasan. Gradually, the frequency of Hasan's fits was reducing. So was Abbu's worry.

We were sure that Hasan would be cured. Only one thought worried us. When would we, Indians, be rid of the superstition and ignorance ? Initially various saints and then social workers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Agarkar, Karve had strived to achieve that. The Andh Shraddha Nirmoolan Samiti had taken the task forward. Even a law was passed. But what next ? The fact is that even today many people are in the grips of superstition. Just like the "Cleanliness Campaign" and "Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao" (let the daughter learn and be saved) a campaign called "Superstition, quit India" needs to be taken up now. Though late, Hasan came to our centre. Had he not come, his life would have been ruined. God only would know how many such Hasans are there in the villages and nooks and corners of India. Would be good if only we could change the area around us, if not the whole country. And the satisfaction of doing such work would be our reward.

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## 4. WE WON !

It was a day as usual. I opened the cabin door and entered. Switched on the fan. Opened the window. Took a glass of water while sitting in the chair. There entered a boy ,age about 15/16 years. Rather, a woman of about 40 brought him in holding his arm. Most probably his mother.

Slim, average height, face lined with worry, sunken eyes showed the toll taken by circumstances. She almost collapsed in the chair in front of me. Greeting me, she made the boy sit in the next chair. He was behaving like a puppet. In his age, he should have been bristling with enthusiasm, energy; but he was quiet, lost in himself. Vacant stare, blank face and the strangest thing was his hair – bunches of them. I offered a glass of water and said, “ Sit down. Rest for some time and then tell me what is wrong. Would you tell me your name ?”

Actually, I had posed the question to the boy. But it was the mother who answered. “I am Maya and he is my Ravi. Madam, please cure him. Let him start playing, laughing, talking again. What a mess he has made of himself.” Ravi had no reaction to this. He was static like a statue. I tried to make him talk. What is the name of your school ? You are in which grade ? Who are your friends ? But he was not willing to speak. “He is completely seized by worry and despair,” I was talking to myself. What could have happened ?

His mother, Maya said, “ Hey, say something. Madam is asking so many questions...” Her sentence remained incomplete. Ravi’s face changed suddenly. His hands and legs stiffened. Teeth started chattering. Eyes were blood shot. And suddenly he plucked his hair. He rose from the chair and shouted at his mother, “Why Have you brought me here ? Here too only questions. No, I don’t want to say anything. I can’t do anything. Now I am going to quit school. I won’t be able to do anything. I am fed up with everything...” And then he went into his shell again.

Maya – his mother- tried to passify him and said, “ Madam, this is how it is going on..A month has passed. Doctor asked me to take him to you, so I have come. Please cure my child. I don’t mind even if he fails in the examination, but I want my son back.” Her eyes were full of tears.

I called my assistant and told him to take Ravi out. I went near Maya, patted her on the shoulder and tried to assure\_ her. “Don’t cry. Everything would be ok. Please tell me what’s wrong with Ravi.” Maya started telling, “ Madam, Ravi is a playful boy. A little stubborn. However, no good in studies. We are poor . But I wished that Ravi should get educated. Should get good marks. So I put him in a good English school. Also got a tuition for him because we ourselves couldn’t teach him. We were spending money like anything, but Ravi wasn’t taking to studies. Teachers would complain- he doesn’t do home work, doesn’t complete experiments. What not. His father would get annoyed if the teacher called him to school for a meeting. He would

say, “you have failed us”. But he would not bother. Then his dad would get angry. He would beat him up. Then as he grew, his demands increased. He wanted clothes, pen, computer, tab, mobile like his friends. He kept asking for these. Now we couldn’t afford it and even if we gave him something, he was not improving in studies. In the last examination, he failed in 5 subjects; his dad was furious. He beat him up mercilessly, locked him up in a room, made him starve and threatened that he would throw him out of the house...”

“But, didn’t you intervene ?” I asked her. “What could I say ? I was like a drum taking beating from both sides. They would avoid being- at home at the same time. If, by chance, they happened to be in at the same time, they wouldn’t speak to each other. Both would blame me only. Dad felt that I had pampered him and Ravi thought why so much fuss about marks, am I mad ? He would site examples of famous people.. “Look at Sachin, How much educated is he ? And what about Sonia Gandhi ?...” I couldn’t understand what he said. He would say, “ Explain to dad that one day his son would be famous ..” His dad heard him saying this to me and started beating him, cursing him. “ You are good for nothing. It would be better if you were dead or you weren’t born at all.” And he threw him out of the house. I think there must have been something wrong at his office also and then all this started.”

Slowly, things started unravelling to me. Both of them went home after some more talk. When he came after two days, I told him, “Ravi, let us forgive Dad. Even elders make mistakes sometimes. But instead of telling them that they are wrong, it is better to prove that by our own behaviour. Have you heard the name of Bill Gates ?”

The mere mention of Bill Gates brought a spark in his otherwise blank eyes. He said, “Even he was not educated. But My dad...” I interrupted and said, “OK, forget that. Would you like to learn the computer ?” When he said, “Yes”, I told him to take admission in the Computer Centre. I tried to find out if he had any difficulties in his studies and gave him some tips for overcoming them. He was happy. He was settling down gradually. The hair on the head were growing !

Once he came sporting a nice hair cut. I said, “Great! You are looking smart ! As if tomorrow’s Bill Gates!” He was pleased. I pushed further, “ But, alas ! he is in America. And we are in India. We must pass at least the 10<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> grade ! Don’t you agree ?”

He appeared to agree. He promised that now he would study. Our chats, visits, medicines were continuing from time to time. His mother felt somewhat reassured. His father also realised his mistake. Gradually, the bitterness between them was gone. Some years passed and one day Ravi stood before me. “Madam, here are some pedhas. I have passed the 12<sup>th</sup> exam. But now no more studies. I am going to do a course on computer hardware...” Now there were dreams in his eyes. The nice locks of hair suited his face well. No more worries. The pedha given by him tasted sweeter to me. I was as happy as if I had won a battle.

## 5. BEWARE !

“ This suggestion is for the parents as well as the children. Often, when a girl child is born the parents get worried. But, now a days, bringing up sons has become as difficult as bringing up daughters. The perversion in the society is increasing. These perverts can prey on boys as well as girls to satisfy their lust. That is why parents and schools should sensitise children to be on guard. They should be sensitised to discern what is wrong and what is ok, what is good and what is bad. They should be taught to say “NO” and also digest if somebody says “No.” The relation between a child and mother should be free and frank. If something inappropriate happens, they should- feel free to tell the parents. On knowing the truth, the parents, instead of -feeling guilty or blameing the child, -should develop enough courage to expose the pervert.” I was weaving a web of thoughts in my mind. There, in front of me, was Deepak. He was asking me. “ Madam, I want to come out of all this. I want to file a complaint with the police. What should I do, Madam-? Please tell me what I should do.”

I could see mixed emotions on his face. Anger, hatred, desperation, annoyance for injustice. He was caught in this web and was trying to come out of it. Deepak, who had quit school midway had taken admission to a course on repairing mobile phones. It was my pet job to teach work ethics to such children. Because, it is not sufficient to merely have a skill in your hands but in order to translate it into concrete income one has to observe certain written and unwritten rules. ~~To~~ keep an appointment, ~~to~~ work with sincerity, ~~to~~ keep record of the incoming as well as completed work etc. etc. And it was then that Deepak came to my notice. When I spoke about counselling, he would listen attentively. He would get his doubts cleared. Once, when the class was over, he met me, “Madam, I want to meet you” he said. “OK, come anytime.” Said I and then I bid good bye to him.

The next day he came and entered my cabin. He straight away came to the point. “I want to lodge a police complaint, Madam. Please tell me what and how I should go about it. The fellow must be punished.” He was very angry. Howsoever justifiable his anger might be, it was necessary to think coolly. I tried to pacify him and said, “Sure. What you said is absolutely right. I would help you. But, first tell me what has happened.” Deepak had apparently thought about it and had finalised how he would put forth his case. “Madam, I am fed up...” He started pouring out his complaint. Anna who lived in front of his house was plainly “using” him for over a year now. It could not even be called sexual exploitation because Deepak was going to his house on his own. But he had been caught in his web. ...Before hearing the next part of the story or lodging a complaint with the police, I wanted to sober up Deepak. I wanted to take him into confidence and explain to him how he should behave from now on. It was also necessary to get some medical tests done on him. I

said, “We would certainly find a way out. I would find out. Come tomorrow.” And I bid him goodbye.

Deepak returned the next day. He started telling how he got entangled in Anna’s web. He was living in a shanty colony. Their houses were opposite each other’s. All the residents were poor. He had lost his father when he was a child. His mother worked in a factory and left home early in the morning. She cooked his meals before leaving and keep it on a table. Deepak would get up leisurely and go to school. He would play after returning from school. His mother would return quite late. And she used to be tired. Deepak never realised his responsibilities. He never took to studies. This ended as it must. He was out of school after the eighth grade. He would just idle away at home. Would watch TV or play with other children. That is how some months passed. The summer vacation was over. Other children again started going to school and there was loneliness in the shanty.

A new tenant had come to live in the house opposite that of Deepak. His family was at his native place. He was a sturdy man. Age about 35-40. A muscular athletic body, a little hefty, mustache matching the body. Impressive personality. Deepak was enamoured by him. What a hefty fellow. I also must have a body like this. He wished to get introduced to him.

And what a surprise ! One day, when Deepak was playing with pebbles in front of his house, Anna beckoned him. Deepak was drawn to him as if hypnotised. He affectionately enquired about Deepak. Offered him Coke, bhajias, and urged him to visit again the next day. That day, he had already made all the preparations in advance. He closed the door after Deepak entered. They started chatting while eating. “ Don’t you have any girl friends ?..” He switched on the TV. A blue film was on. All this was new to Deepak. As he was gawking Anna started fondling him. His fingers started groping his body. Then inside his pant. Deepak felt awkward but was at a loss to decide what to do. When Anna was done, he said, “ Enough for today. I have to go to work.” Deepak just kept staring at him.

The next day again, as soon as Anna called him he was attracted to him like a magnet. Being an adolescent he also felt excited and liked it in some way. Now Anna had become bolder. He had sensed Deepak’s weakness. That day, he stripped Deepak and ‘enjoyed’ him till he was fully satisfied. And then it became a daily affair. Deepak also got addicted to the pleasure. \_He didn’t realise what he was doing. Some weeks passed.

Now his mother started pestering him. “ Go to school or look for some job. You have grown up like a palm tree but what’s the use ? I am also getting tired now. “ There was no possibility of going to the school. As regards a job, where could I get one ?” He looked for some jobs like delivering milk and news papers, washing cars; but they were done in the morning. The day remained idle. Somebody told him about Parivartan, gave him the address and Deepak came here. He was briefed about

the various courses. He accepted the option of Mobile phone repairing and started attending classes. He got new friends. He started feeling disgusted about his relationship with Anna. But then he was scared. Could he have taken my photographs ? Will he show them to others ? Today it was Anna; tomorrow it could be somebody else....He was startled. Am I a eunuch ? That too allowing to be used by others without taking any money ? Or Gay ? ...He was confused. He could not sleep. Couldn't eat. The same fear started haunting him. No, I Am not a eunuch, and certainly not gay. Anna duped me. I was not like this. I am not going to remain like this. I want to live life like others. He started asserting to himself.

It was good that he wanted to come out of this. By now, his counselling had also started. Medical Tests were done to check if he had contracted any diseases from his relationship with Anna. Luckily all the reports were normal.

We were discussing whether we should report the matter to the police or should just call Anna and reprimand him. It would not be so easy to report the matter to the police. Deepak was going to Anna on his own. But, at the same time, we also felt that Anna should not be able to exploit others, like he did to Deepak.. Deepak's course was about to end. We summoned Anna. He came. First he didn't have any clue, however, later, as we all fired a barrage of questions, he got scared. He begged Deepak for pardon. He promised that he would not do it again. However, we were not contented with this. We got everything from him in writing. We told him to vacate the house at the earliest. Anna left.

Deepak felt relieved. He was crying like a child for a long time. We let him cry as much as he wanted. Deepak had another fear too : while Anna had left from there sheepishly, would he take a revenge when he returned to the shanty ? And what if mother came to know about this ?

We did our best to alley his fears, give him courage. We kept in touch with him. After completing the course, he also got a job in a shop. He would phone us from time to time. We pressed him to appear for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> examinations as an external student. The objective was to keep him occupied all the time.

Our efforts were bearing fruit. He appeared for the 10<sup>th</sup> exam and started preparing for the 12<sup>th</sup>. He had won the battle. He wanted to forget the past and chart a new course.

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## 6. COINCIDENCE

I got a call from Shaila, my friend. Her father was not well. He was depressed. She said, “Come and chat with him, he would feel better.” I went to her place after a week. Shaila was not at home. A young man of about 18/19 opened the door and welcomed me. At the same time, he took the precautions which one should take while allowing a stranger into the house.

As I sat with Baba, he brought me water. I felt a warmth for the man and I started enquiring about him. Who was he, he was from which place, how he happened to be here, did he like the work? I gave him my card and invited him to visit me whenever he could. My friend had appointed Ganesh for attending on her father.

He didn't say he liked the work but said he felt happy to attend on Baba, that all the people in the house were very nice and that he also got time to do some reading and studying when Baba took a nap. He said he had decided to appear for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade examination as an external student. That increased my admiration for him.

Ganesh came to Parivartan after about a week. Wheat complexioned, wearing a red vermillion spot on the forehead. The same smiling face. I asked him to sit. I said he was taking good care of Baba which was good, but how long would he do it; instead, do a nursing course; you would get a job in a good hospital... My advice appealed to him. He took admission for the nursing course which was scheduled to start in a few months. He was the only male student in the class but he didn't mind. He completed the course and indeed, he is now employed in a large five star hospital. He has also started a male nursing bureau. He phones from time to time. “How are you Madam?” Every time he has some news: I got my sister married, have booked a residential place, I have bought a scooter. &c.

Of course, all this was the fruit of his endeavour. No work is below anybody's dignity- was his belief and whatever the nature of work, the return from it is the same. The belief that it meets your needs. Ganesh's family comprised of his parents, one brother and a handicapped sister. His father was working in a mill. The mother had to look after the sister, so she could do only one job. The other residents of the locality were also mill workers. Time was passing without much difficulty. And, suddenly the workers went on a strike. The mill owner decided to close the mill. He sent notices to workers to vacate their houses. Now the family was in big trouble. Those who had a house in the native place went there. From the meagre funds which his father-received from the mill owner while closing down the mill, they bought a small room in the suburbs. Father had no job. So the mother took up more jobs. It was a strain for her. To add to the woes, there was not much rain in the native place that year. So there was almost no harvest. His uncle sent his sons to Mumbai for school. They couldn't say no to him, but making both ends meet was a big problem. Baba was terribly worried. He became depressed. He would just keep sitting idly with a vacant gaze. Mother would say to him, “Forget what has happened. Make



some efforts.” But he would not respond and then one day he passed away when he was asleep. One more calamity.

But Ganesh was very mature. He could see the strain on his mother. First, he took upon himself the responsibility of looking after the house and he also started accompanying his mother [to](#) her job. He had also to attend the school during the day. He was getting tired but he didn’t complain. After passing the ninth grade he decided to quit school. He explained to mother “ I can pass the tenth and eleventh grades as an external student. Maybe it may take a year more. But, anyway, it’s not going to be possible to join a college. I would take a degree of the Yashvantrao Chavan University. Havn’t you named me Ganesh after the God of knowledge ? Then I would make it. Don’t worry.”

Now Ganesh took up many more jobs. Washing cars, escorting children to and from the school, - cleaning houses apart from helping mother in her jobs. He would study whenever he got some spare time. Then, one of my friends employed him to attend to her ailing father on a handsome salary. She [had](#) got a trusted person. Ganesh already had the experience of attending to his handicapped sister and basically he was loving. He attended on my sister’s father very sincerely. Then he got some more similar jobs . By this time he had completed his course. He realised that one can earn the same amount of money by doing this work instead of doing an office job. [Besides](#), one would be independent. He sent some more girls to [Pari](#)vartan to do the Nursing course. He set up a bureau for supplying trained nursing attendants while he was working. Our meeting which had taken place purely by coincidence led him to a different path of progress. Of course, one reason also was that he was very sincere. Ganesh would always have blessings from all of us. But, of course, -such coincidences are rare.

## 7. TALLY

Tally is the software which is used for keeping accounts of a business and preparing balance sheets etc. at the end of the year. It is used very commonly these days. That is why many young people learn it. They also become expert after working on it but that doesn't mean that all are able to prepare a balance sheet of their lives. Pravin was one of those who could. Poor by circumstances, stunted emotionally, he had become a loner as he was not accustomed to the ways of the society. No friends, lack of encouraging atmosphere at home had led to a feeling of suffocation and anger. He would not realise that he was hurting his own kin by his anger. That also resulted in spoiling the atmosphere at home, but -he didn't realise it.

Pravin passed the tenth exam and started coming to Parivartan for coaching in Tally. He could not use the software like others. The reason was quite simple. Most of the other students were more educated – some had passed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and some even B.Com.- who had already studied accountancy. They were familiar with that subject. They were only going to keep accounts on computer instead of writing them manually. Pravin's case was different. He had to learn all those things and, being an average student, he found that difficult. The fact that he couldn't understand it made him angry. He did not find courage to consult others on the issue and that increased his reluctance- to mix with others.

The teachers also had noticed this. They were even prepared to allot more time to him. But the initiative had to be taken by him. The decision to go for Tally instead of going to college was his. There was nobody at home whom he could consult. He was not close to his relatives or neighbours. Somebody told him “go for Tally, you would get a job.” That was all. He saved money with great difficulty, paid the fees and started coming to Parivartan for the class.

Then suddenly he stopped coming. Some days passed. Now everyone was worried. His teachers tried to make enquiries but nobody could tell why he was not coming. After a week or so his teacher took down his address and went to his home to find out. Pravin was not at home. The teacher returned after talking to his parents and trying to assess the situation. The only thing she came to know was that Pravin was away on his job and that he returned home late.

After seeing his house the teacher took pity on him. His house was almost a small hut. The kitchen in one corner, a cot with a soiled bed sheet in in another corner and his father lying on the bed. He must be bedridden for a long time, suffering from TB. Attending to him must be occupying the time of his mother and tiring her. The house had one door which was rather short in height and one small window – about one foot by one foot which didn't let in much light.

In the house were his parents, younger sisters and Pravin. Mother was doing jobs like making chapaties, baby sitting, cleaning utensils and was managing the house

from whatever money she received. Her income was not sufficient to meet the household expenses as well as the childrens' education. That is why when Pravin grew up and realised this, he started helping his mother. He did jobs like delivering milk, washing cars, escort children to school, etc. There was no time for playing and [chatting](#) with friends. He had to also attend on his father when his mother was away on work. [And](#)-even otherwise, his mother didn't allow him to go out to play. He was getting suffocated. His world was getting cramped. He was losing on development of his personality. He would think, "Why this fate only for me ?" But there was [no body to whom him to he could](#) pour out his mind. So he took his anger out on his mother and sisters.

When Parvin was attending Tally classes, somebody asked him, [“](#) There is work for 15 days. You have [to](#) deliver some goods. It's a responsible job. But you would also get good money for it.” And he was in need of money. However, he had to lift heavy boxes, search addresses and deliver the goods, which was quite tiring. Also, his boss was rather short tempered. He would fire him. He felt insulted, but there was no scope to complain.

The work was over. He started attending classes again. I called him. Made him talk. Perhaps this was the first time somebody had shown interest in him. He poured out his heart. “Madam, now I am feeling relieved. But what's my future ? It worries me all the time.”

We gave him examples of many others. Told him to be happy, Told him that the steering wheel of his life was in his hands only. Gave him tips for keeping his temper in check : listen to music, read a newspaper everyday, play games on the ground, greet everybody cheerfully; if at all you get angry, take a deep breath, count numbers in the mind, etc. He was basically quite mature. He was accustomed to compromise with circumstances and hence he readily accepted the advice. He started working whole heartedly. After he completed the course, we got him a small job. [By](#) nature he was quite industrious and he appreciated help. When he came to meet us he would ask , “Is there anything I can do ?” We were pleased by the change in him. We arranged for a laptop for him. He also started taking assignments from those who didn't have a computer. They were pleased. People from his family [start](#)ed respecting him. So he was pleased and, most important , he was free of anger.

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## 8. FULFILLMENT OF A DREAM

Unless one has a dream it cannot materialise, that's the reality. Some people even forget to dream. Some people do have it but they don't know how to [bring it into reality](#). Then they get irritated, they are annoyed, they start hating, quarrelling, throwing tantrums. Such people need some support. A few words of sympathy, and, most important, the need to keep trying with a cool head. One who can do this, realises his dream. An excellent example of this is Salim. Today he owns a food cart. [He](#) is dreaming to have more carts, and eventually start a small restaurant of his own. That would be a great achievement for him, but all this hasn't come easily. Parivartan has played a valuable role in all this.

It was a few months ago – I frequently saw two young men of about 20 near the gate of Parivartan. They would just keep standing for a long time. I wondered – How could they spare so much time ? In due course, we started smiling at each other . Then, I took the lead and invited them to visit Parivartan. I also made some enquiries with them and I came to know ~~that~~ they had taken admission for the course on Hotel Management. Their names were Ravi and Hasan. They were not old friends. They became friends after coming to Parivartan. They had no special attraction [for to keep them](#) home nor did they have to attend a school or college or office. So, when the day's lectures were over, they just kept hanging around the gate.

Soon, I started taking classes for their course on subjects like conversational skills and English conversation and I came in contact with them everyday. I invited them to my counselling room. The only object was : 'to [know](#) more young people like them and especially about their future, their plans about career. Also, other students used to frequently complain about Hasan – [that](#) he flies into a rage very quickly and then hits the table with clenched fists –[I wanted to find out what exactly made him angry to go to the root of this behaviour.](#)'

Both of them came as promised. At that time, many toys and blocks were lying scattered on my table for some reason. They looked in amazement with wide [eyes](#).. Probably they were seeing something like this for the first time.

On noticing their curiosity I said, "Come , let's play this game. Which one would you like ? Have you played like this before ?"

As I was asking the above question, the expressions on Hasan's face changed. I could see ~~a~~ a combination of anger, hate, [despair](#). He said, "Didi, all these are not for us. We would be happy if we only get a house for living and a roof over the house." He was talking freely like this for the first time. Maybe he had not met anybody who [had](#) showed interest in him, till then. The condition in his and Ravi's house was not much different. They had their parents, grand parents, aunt, uncle, younger brothers and sisters living in the house. They had not even been able to complete their school education. They had never experienced pampering, new clothes on the occasion of

festivals, picnics, sweets. As if this was not enough they had to do small jobs to earn some money to help the parent meet household expenses. Even now, Hasan was working as a helper in a small restaurant – cut vegetables, roll chapaties, deliver food orders, whatever he was asked to do. He always felt : why do I have to do this when other children of my age are enjoying life ? But there was nobody to whom he could open his heart. So he sort of took out his rage on others - he would shout, or hit somebody, or even slap himself. and as if this was not enough, ~~now~~ a serious problem had cropped up : their colony had been demolished a few days ago. This had brought his family on the road.

That is why he hadn't attended class for the last few days. He paused after telling his story. There was a big hotel in front of the restaurant where he was working. He would always stare at it while working. He saw customers visiting that hotel and the owner sitting at the cash counter all the time. As he recalled that, he said, "Didi, I have a dream. I want to own a hotel. I would wear thick gold chains, a costly watch on my wrist, rings. I would come wearing well ironed clothes!" Then, suddenly, he stopped talking.

This was the moment to talk to him, to explain. We did our best. He started attending the hotel management course regularly. I told him to do the English speaking course also. Advised him to accept his situation, control anger, etc. Impressed on him that there was no alternative to hard work.

As soon as the course ended, we found a job for him in a big hotel. He had to learn by working on the job. He was to get a stipend. He worked sincerely. We kept in touch with him and reminded him about his dream from time to time.

The report about his performance there was quite good. He had to help in the kitchen. He observed everything keenly. He worked in that hotel for some years. Then he resigned. By then he had saved some money. He started with a hand cart offering snacks. He was a good cook. The business was good. By now, he had learnt to talk nicely, learnt good manners, being polite. He would phone me from time to time. "Madam, that day I saw toys for the first time in my life. I wished I could get them for my brothers and sisters and for my children also." I would then tease him, "Have you tied up with some girl ?" "No, Didi. According to our custom....But I would get married sooner or later. "Yes, he was now a young man of 25/ 26 having own business. His parents had started looking for a suitable bride for him. Indeed, Parivartan had given a positive direction to his life.

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## 9. A RAY OF HOPE

“Chhotisi Aashaa, Chand Taronko chhooneki aashaa..” (“A little hope. The hope of touching the moon and the stars..”) The lines of this song enthral the minds of every person. Because life is the truth. They have attracted all of us at Parivartan and, most important, they attracted Monu. Only the desire of becoming something, doing something in life could bring Monu on the right path.

This happened a few years ago. Whenever I went to the classes of English Speaking, Motor Mechanic, Mobile repairing for group discussion, - one face used to be common. That was Monu. Age About 16/17 years, smart, brown complexion and one that impressed everybody. He became the favourite of all the students in all the classes. He had a treasure of songs and jokes. Such was his style of speaking that the person in front of him would be delighted.

I also found him interesting. Sometimes I wondered why he was here and what could be his motive, his goal in life? I was planning to talk to him about this, and Lo! I saw him coming to me only. “Namaskar Madam! I want to meet you sometime. I wanted to know why so many boys come to your room. What do you teach them?” “Ok, come tomorrow after the classes.” I told him. Accordingly, he came the next day, like a breathe of fresh air, Whistling. Wearing goggles and wearing a colourful T shirt. As soon as he entered, he greeted me with “Good evening, Madam, Namaste.” And he started observing my room.

I told him to take a seat And said, “First of all, please tell me about yourself. Why are you coming here, why have you taken admission for all the courses, is it just to pass time or because you want to start some business.?”

He sat quietly for some time. Perhaps he was wondering how to start his response. “I am Monu..” What he told was something like this: His father was a daily wage worker at some construction site. Mother did various jobs in the house. Both of them were not educated. Monu was their only son. He had two sisters. His parents were not very particular about him going to school. They were of a happy-go-lucky nature taking each day as it came. So, Monu also didn’t develop any interest in studies. The teachers in the school were also not of a kind who would take pains to inculcate in him a liking for studies nor explain the importance of studying. The only result was that even though endowed with good intelligence, he didn’t develop any interest in studying..He wouldn’t pay attention in the class. So he would indulge in things like teasing somebody, get into fights, harassing other boys as well as teachers, do something to attract the attention of other students when the teacher was teaching. Some times he would involve other students also in his pranks. He was expert in gathering students around him by telling jokes, stories and by singing songs. He didn’t do homework. He didn’t do any reading or writing in the class too. He would occasionally yawn, would ask irrelevant questions. The only consequence was that teachers would punish him – do push ups, run around the ground, stand

outside the class., don't come to school for a week. The only consequence was that his dislike for studies became stronger and stronger and he was removed from the school when in the ninth grade.

Now that he was out of school, he had ample free time. Here was a smart guy with nothing to do. A video piracy gang spotted him. They appointed him to sell pirated CDs on commission basis. Monu was not aware that the work was illegal. He was happy that he could help his mother by giving some money and could use some money to enjoy. But this activity suddenly came to a stop. He didn't reveal the reason for this in our first meeting. In fact, he lied : " I have been expelled from the school but I am going to appear for the SSC examination as an external student". However, the fact was that this intelligent boy had no interest in studies.

By now he had become very popular in his class. All the students were his fans. He would talk to me freely about home and school. We were also counselling him about careers. What can he do, which activity would suit him, what kind of training he should take for that, etc. Suddenly, he didn't come to Parivartan for 3-4 days. He was absent in the class too. Later, when he came back, he was downcast. He would not speak. And then suddenly he flew into a rage, " I want a gun. To kill the police." There was blood in his eyes. After we managed to pacify him, he told us everything. "It was an afternoon. He had displayed CDs in an inverted umbrella. He was standing at a vantage point. And the police swooped on him. They confiscated his CDs, took him to the police station and beat him black and blue. They extracted information from him and then released him. Monu felt terribly insulted. His only means of earning some money had been stopped. He was despaired, felt helpless.

So, first I had to explain several things to him. What is a lawful business, what is an illegal business ? Whatever happened was for good. Now he should concentrate on passing at least the 10<sup>th</sup> grade examination. Which is the course of his choice ? What are the opportunities in that business ? I explained all this and more.

I persuaded him to fill in the form for the 10<sup>th</sup> examination and also explained to him how he should proceed with the preparation. He agreed. Once he was convinced, our job became easier. By this time he had completed his courses. He had passed all subjects with good grades. We appointed him as a teacher in one of our courses on mobile repairing. He started earning some money. He also passed the examination of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, though with average marks. This boosted his confidence. Then he appeared for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade examination also. He was teaching very well in his class. All the students were very happy with him. He started doing mobile repairing work in spare time. But then, suddenly, one day he stopped all these activities and he disappeared !

We would remember him off and on. We wondered if he had again fallen on his old ways. Had all the trust we had shown in him and the efforts we had taken gone waste ? But that was not the case. He had left Parivartan with a small hope of walking on a



straight path, earn some money and look after his parents well. Then, one afternoon, a tall, slim, Monu wearing a full sleeved shirt and a tie entered my room. "Have you recognised me Madam ?" he asked. He had passed the examination for 12<sup>th</sup> grade. He had taken admission in some management institute for some course. He had also opened a small shop for repairing mobiles. Now his confidence had increased further. He had undergone a transformation. He was looked upon as a responsible member of the family. Having come in contact with good people Monu, who was himself basically a good person, had decided to improve further. After completing the management course he would move to his native place and start a shop there. Buying a place here was too expensive. A place at his native place would cost much less. He was telling all this with lot of enthusiasm. "Madam, I don't know if we would meet again, so please give me your blessings now only. I want to prove my worth. I would certainly come to meet you again after achieving more. You have given me so much. You have taught me. I can't forget you. May God give you a long life." His eyes became moist. He bowed and left- with a new hope in his as well as our minds.

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## 10. AS SUCH OUR RUPA..

Rupa's mother keeps saying , “ As such ,our Rupa is intelligent, but she isn't good in studies...As such, our Rupa is quite mature, but often she is rather adamant...” &c. Though Rupa was an answer to their prayer for a child, she took a long time to accept Rupa as she was. The realisation that, if my daughter is special, different, she must also be brought up differently, took quite some time to occur and so was the delay in accepting responsibility as a guardian. However, the fact that she accepted it, though somewhat late, was good enough.

Both of Rupa's parents were working. A middle class family. Living relatively comfortably. They had to wait for quite some time to get a child. At last, with many prayers and medical help, Rupa was born. They were happy with Rupa who had Chubby cheeks, thick hair. Due to the belief that if the first child is a girl, she would bring lot of wealth, her grand mother also pampered her. However, as Rupa grew everyone was somewhat worried. It took quite some time for her to start turning on the side and crawling... Her progress was quite slow. Not only that, but she was unable to recognise her parents and others in the house. Grand mother triedd to give them courage by saying, “ Don't worry. It happens in some cases. Some children progress late.” But that was not the case. Mother's leave was over. Grand mother returned to her place. Rupa's mother started going to work after keeping Rupa in a crèche.

The sister from the crèche had handled many children. She immediately realised that it would be difficult to take care of Rupa. Just as her crying loudly and violently, beating other children was unusual, she also could not look after her personal hygiene or play games or do things as other children would do. So she suggested that the parents should get Rupa examined by a doctor.

However, Rupa's parents took things seriously only when it became difficult to get her admitted to a KG. With great difficulty they could get admission for her in a small crèche. But the realisation that Rupa was different became stronger. After keeping her in the crèche for 4 years instead of two they got her admitted to the first grade in a school which was close by. However they had still not taken this issue very seriously. Neither of them had the time to pay attention to her due to their jobs. The only good thing was that they didn't have another child after Rupa. But that also resulted in Rupa becoming more stubborn. She knew that she could get whatever she wanted by throwing tantrums. She didn't know what to eat and how much. She was not yet toilet trained. She did not play much and hence had started putting on weight. That made her movements slow. As she grew up, her eyes looked as if sunk in the chubby cheeks and puffed up face. Her height was also not increasing as it should have. Her paws and feet appeared too small compared to the body. She was also not good in studies. She could not recognise letters, numbers, nor could she count.

The teacher from the school told Rupa's mother repeatedly: "Madam, please do something for your child. Look for a different school." But her mother would say, "She is a kid, Please try to understand her"— She did only one thing : she arranged for tuitions for Rupa in the morning and evening. She presumed that since she was paying handsomely for the tuitions they would have some effect. By now it was certain that she did not fit in the conventional educational system. Rupa was about 10 or 12 years by that time.

Rupa came to Parivartan with her mother, stamping her feet, holding her dress and swaying from side to side. I sized them up from a distance. She entered my room, plumped in a chair without asking. Started laughing for no reason. She was scanning the room from one end to the other. She would put her thumb into the mouth from time to time. "Rupa, say Namaste to Didi" her mother said to her. Rupa was lost in her own world. I told myself : "Mentally retarded".

Rupa's mother said while taking a seat ,: "Your organisation has a big name, so I have come with great expectations. As such, Our Rupa is very nice. But today's schools are no good and the teachers also are not that devoted. They are after me saying that she won't be able to fit in their school. Shift her somewhere else. . But what is to be done after withdrawing her from school ? I can't leave a girl like her alone at home. Please see if you can suggest some way out." She was pleading.

I also took pity on her. It is true that the role of the parents of such children is very difficult. But this is the time when parents need to be considerate. And then again Rupa was a girl. The society is bad. Their worries are bound to increase as Rupa grows. That was a fact.

I tried to explain to Rupa's mother, "You would have to find more time for her. We will get some tests done and then teach her only what she would be able to absorb so that she would be able to earn something. But help from all members of -the family would be a must. Looks like she may not be able to do something on her own. Possibly she may be able to make chalks, dusters, files". Her mother agreed too.

There was still some time before the new course started. By then, luckily, her mother's sister also got a transfer to an office near Rupa's house. She got a house near Rupa's. She had a small business of making imitation jewellery. Rupa's mother dropped her at her sister's place while going to office. Rupa took interest in stringing necklaces of pearls and beads. Soon- Our course started. A woman would drop Rupa at Parivartan. But from her behaviour it looked as if she did not much like this work . There was no way of knowing what others thought about this work nor could I know what they talked about her. But slowly, she started grumbling. She would quarrel with other boys and girls in the class and would remain absent from time to time. And then she stopped coming.

Her mother wasn't answering the phone. But after about a month, I don't know what she thought, but she phoned. "Sorry, Rupa left your course. She didn't like it and also felt humiliated by it. My husband also said....., Besides she is going to my sister's place. We made enquiries at a coaching class which is nearby. We have found a teacher. He will prepare her for the 10<sup>th</sup> exam. In a family like ours, she must have at least pass the 10<sup>th</sup>..." Her mother was telling so many other things too. I didn't feel like listening to all that. Because there was no possibility of Rupa passing the 10<sup>th</sup> examination.

Some years passed and Rupa came to Parivartan again. Now she must be 20 years old, but her IQ was that of a 10 years old child. She had become fatter. Hair had thinned. One of the front teeth was missing. Now she wanted to do the beautician course.

She was accompanied by her mother. Her mother started with "As such Rupa..." Rupa likes to dress up. She is good at make up when she is to go out. Our neighbour Sheela earns lot of money by doing make up, hair dressing, massage. She has kept two girls to help her too. She has promised Rupa also that I would give you work once you complete this course. And, you know, Rupa is going to a gym also these days." She kept talking and Rupa kept nodding and rocking in the chair. I wondered how much of our conversation she understood.

I interrupted and said, "But where were you all these years?" Her mother started talking.. "Believe me, we tried so much. First we started the curriculum of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. But the teacher said she won't be able to cope up with it. Then we started the open school, Rupa studied hard; she used to read, write, recite, would remain awake during the night to study. But she didn't pass. She appeared for the October exam, then March, then October again. Then we thought let us give her a break."

It was clear that Rupa would not be able to do the beautician's course. I suggested some other simple business activities. Like selling chutneys, papads, or sprouted pulses, do packing work for malls or large traders. But it didn't appeal to her mother. So just because of her mother's insistence we admitted her to the beauticians' course. But she was not able to cope up with it too. She would quarrel with her classmates. Her teachers were hard pressed to tackle her. They were always worried that she would do something untoward. However, she was doing ok in the head massage.

We kept calling her mother and showing her how she was faring. Rather than Rupa, it was her mother who needed counselling. She should have started some domestic business with the help of Rupa. She should be devoting more time to Rupa.

By now, Rupa's mother could retire with a pension. She was pondering over our advice. We got her to meet a prominent doctor. He tried his best to convince her that Rupa was a retarded child. He convinced her that Rupa would be able to do

something only with help from the parents. Our efforts were successful. Her mother did a course on entrepreneurship. She quit her job. She started selling packed ready to use vegetables. Rupa started offering head massage. She was happy that she was able to do something and earn some money. As a matter of fact, she had no future. Rupa's parents should have made some other arrangement for Rupa. What would she do when they became old or were no more ? We offered them advice on that issue too. We are hopeful that they would consider it objectively. One change is that now they are in constant touch with us. Her mother concedes that she was late in appreciating the problems relating to Rupa. After all, being their own child, they must be obviously worried about her. Let us see what the future has in store for her.

We are satisfied that Parivartan extended maximum cooperation and help. We had not spared any effort.

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## 11. WOULD SOMEBODY GIVE ME A HOME ..

A very impressive dialogue from the well known drama “Natasamrat”. Natasamrat (The great actor) who doesn’t have a home in the last leg of his life, asks this pathetic question. Hundreds of people who don’t have a shelter also keep posing this question, “Would somebody give me a home ?” Because they have only the ground for a bed and the sky for the rug. They set up a house under the open sky with a tarpaulin, an old sari or a bed sheet. That is where they run their house, they have children who grow up, compare their condition with that of the people living in the crowded houses surrounding them. Some of them blame their fate and say “That’s my fate.” Others have a dream of eventually owning a house from own money. They are prepared to undergo hardships. But they need somebody to guide them as to how exactly they should go about it.

Shweta was one of them. She was living on the terrace of a building with her parents and two younger siblings. They had erected a shelter of about ten feet by ten feet in the corner of the terrace. That was their home. They would get roasted in the summer, shiver in the winter and get drenched in the monsoon. That was their kitchen, the bedroom, study and bathroom. Once they grew up, they felt embarrassed at having to sleep and bathe in the open. They did not dare to invite their friends. Are the houses from the stories really like this ? They wondered. They wondered if they would get a house like that sometime. As they grew, they realised that it is not easy to buy a house. That requires lot of money. So we must earn lot of money. For that, we must go to school and college. For that we would need a good school. We must have space to study. We must have parents to guide us. Lots of toys, lots of books.... But how would this happen ? That’s the question Shweta would always have.

Formerly they used to live in the same town but in a small single storied chawl. The room was ten by twelve but was owned by them. Grand parents and an aunt also lived with them. The Aunt was the youngest, and hence everyone’s favourite child. She became sick suddenly. Doctors diagnosed cancer. Everyone from the family was scared. They started offering prayers Doctors’ treatment, surgery. All available money was spent, but there was no sign of her improving. Father was an ordinary daily wage worker. How to meet the expenses ? Mother also started doing odd jobs. She was unable to make both ends meet. Love for his sister, worry about what people would say...father was clueless. He took a spot decision. He sold the house to meet the expenses of his sister’s treatment. He was working as a sweeper in one building at that time. He did his job very diligently, so the owner trusted him. So he allowed the family to stay on the terrace of the building. Perhaps he also thought that he would have company too. But there was nothing on the terrace for a family to live in. The responsibilities were increasing. So mother started operating a wada-pav cart. Father would help her and Shweta too when she grew up a little. Shweta was a good cook. Tea made by her became very popular. People didn’t miss the neatness

[in her](#)- whether she was cutting vegetables or frying bhajias. Her smiling face and friendly attitude attracted more customers. Her confidence was growing. However, after she passed the SSC examination, she started getting bored by the daily routine. How long [would](#) it go on like this ? She would feel depressed. That was when one of her friends gave her the address of Parivartan. “ You will get answers to your questions there.” She approached Parivartan with great hopes. She narrated everything sincerely. “Madam, my schooling is over. I work on the wada-pav cart with my parents in the evening. But I am not happy with that. I feel I should do something different. I want to earn lot of money and buy a small house of my own..We must have our own house.”

Shweta appeared sincere. It was necessary to talk to her further,[to](#) persuade her to accept the reality, [to](#) suggest a suitable course based on her preferences and capacity. After talking to her in details we recommended that she should take admission to the hotel management course.

She did accordingly. She completed the course by studying sincerely. We also found her a job in a hotel. Gave her [important](#) tips. Because the money she could get from the job was going to be limited it was going to be difficult to fulfil the dream of buying a house from that income. So we recommended to her that she should do the entrepreneurship course while working in the hotel.

Her parents were operating their food cart. They had a house- though under the open sky. She would be able to supply packed lunch, execute orders for snacks for small parties. That would increase her income. She and others from her family were willing to work hard. Her father didn't have any addictions. We also provided guidance on how and where to invest the money they saved. She continued to work in the hotel. She would call occasionally. Sometimes, she would bring some snacks prepared by her. “Didi. Please [taste this](#). I have made it with love,” she would plead. Some years passed and then Shweta came to Parivartan with pedhas. “Didi, it is rather far [away](#) but we have booked a house.” Her face was glowing with joy.

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## 12. WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY

A social worker from a school for the hearing impaired brought Hasan to the centre. Hasan was tall and about seventeen/ eighteen years old. He had been a student of that school from childhood. He was simple, straight forward and left no scope for any complaint. However, since about a month his behaviour had changed. Always grumbling, quarrelling with friends, fisticuffs, didn't do homework, came late to school. And, last week he did the unthinkable. He escaped from the school when it was in session without anybody noticing it. Everyone was shocked. His father was contacted on phone. Hasan had reached home late. The next day his teacher took him to the head teacher. On asking why he had run away, he kept quiet for some time. But suddenly his face changed. He was angry. He started hammering the table with his fists. He was nodding vigorously. He broke down when the head teacher tried to passify him. The social worker was telling us.

He started crying. "Abbu..., Abbu..., marriage..." he said something like that. Then within a few minutes, he said "I will leave. I am not well." We tried to calm him down. We told him that we could not allow him to leave the school, but that we would call his Abbu. Go to your class. You are in the tenth grade, an important year for you.

We called his father and requested him to come as soon as he could. Poor fellow, he came. After listening to the teacher, he listed his complaints against Hasan. "I am also unable to understand his behaviour. He is behaving like this lately. Gets up late. Keeps going out of the house again and again. Doesn't eat properly, quarrels with me". Ete. However, we had a feeling that -while telling us all this he was hiding something from us. There was no doubt about his love for and worry about Hasan.

The social worker had brought him to Parivartan during the school timing with his father's consent.

Hasan was born deaf. Consequently he -could not talk well too. So we tried to understand him through the medium of pictures, games etc. He responded well too. Because he felt free from frustration. He was keen to open his mind and share with somebody the turmoil and conflict in his mind. Not only that but he wanted to know how to find a way out of the present circumstances under- which it was difficult to carry on. He wanted somebody's help for that. That his present school had enriched his personality was clear to us.

Hasan had three siblings. A brother who was a little elder to him had recently started helping his father in his business. A sister, little younger to him, was studying in the eleventh grade. And another sister, the youngest, age about 8 or 10 years, physically and mentally handicapped. She was bed ridden. His father had a small business and earned reasonably well. But probably luck was not favouring him. Hasan's mother died after a brief illness. In less than a month after that, his father went to his native



place . The children were alone. Father returned in about 8/10 days but he had remarried. His new wife was almost Hasan's age.

This was a shock for the children. All the three children hadn't liked their father's act at all. Father tried to [offer](#) a lame explanation . "Who would do the cooking ? And who would look after the young sister ?"~~—etc.~~ The children also saw the point to some extent. That their father had married again was not the only cause for their annoyance, they had before them instances of some relatives who had married again. But they said, We could employ a servant for doing the domestic work or that the children could have helped or the eldest brother could have been married and if that also could not be done, you could have married a woman of [their](#) mother's age. The children had another worry too : what if their sister was married off [f](#) to [an](#) old man ? They had no grouse with the new mother. They took pity on her. Due to the various examples which they had learnt in the school they had developed a broader and liberal view which was different from that of their father who belonged to the old school of thought. They would often ask him "you are 47 and she is just 17..Is it not a shame ?"

Their father was confused. He never expected this type of reaction from the children. Though he tried to scold them, as a matter of fact, he was also repenting for having succumbed to the pressure from his relatives. His children had grown up. He could not hurt them. Nor could he disown his new wife. The children were getting upset on seeing her. All of them were feeling suffocated in that small house. Soon the youngest daughter died. That upset the children even more. " You are responsible for her death. You thought she didn't understand anything, but it was not so. She recognised her mother. Loved her. She couldn't bear what you did. God will not forgive you." They would say [to their father](#).

The children and their father came to the centre and spoke frankly. We and the social worker were trying to think of a solution to this problem. "We don't want the new lady in our house. " The children were firm on their demand. The father asked, " Where can I send her ? She has come as she trusted me. She has married me. Where can she go ?"

We advised both the parties to be lenient. We sometimes called the children [and](#) [,](#) their father separately, sometimes together and tried to find a solution. An educated young boy was located for the sister and they- were engaged. The father and his new wife were to go to their native place and look after their farm. The elder brother promised to learn his father's business and look after it. Hasan was to help him after passing the tenth grade. The father was to hand over the residence in Mumbai to them.

The atmosphere improved at least for the time being. The father kept his word. Hasan and his brother and sister came to Parivartan with sweets. Not only our



combined efforts had solved their problem but it was a harbinger of social transformation – the real parivartan.

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### 13. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME ?

This is the question which confronts many from the rural areas today. And then they run to the cities to find an answer to this question and get entangled in a web of other questions. Some of them come in contact with Parivartan, others continue to grapple with the problem. Some overcome the initial hurdles and find a new path. Some villages have evolved a nice arrangement. They take on rent rooms in the city and whenever somebody from the village desires to go to the city in search of a job he can use them. But there are so many other villages in India where people become helpless.

Chimanya was one of them, from a very remote tribal area of Konkan. It was a village with hardly 40-50 houses. Even the ST bus had not yet reached the village. The villagers had to walk to the weekly market using a small trail. There was a school with only one teacher and even he would be absent for several days. Exercise books, text books , games kits ..everything was hard to get.

But there was one thing. The village was clean. Situated in a low area at the foot of a small hill, surrounded by thick greenery. Small brooks appeared in the rainy season and strong winds. A scattering of huts built with grass and twigs. One or two calves tied to a tree in front the hut . Harvest of rice, millets, ragi, hardly enough for the family. Only solace was that the mango, jackfruit, cashew, palm, and supari trees helped them earn some money. The weekly fairs and bazaar were the only means of entertainment – the only “time pass’ which was available free. People would compare the real world around them with the one they saw on the small screen. They would dream and wonder if ever they would be able to live a life like that. Soon, the school would be over and then....

Chimnya was one of them. A tribal boy. He was growing, going to school, was learning , was enjoying like a jungle bird. No worries no thoughts. But, he grew up and one day went to the Taluka place with his parents. He was awed by the world there. The bicycles, the speeding rickshaws , the red ST bus, young boys and girls going about freely. He felt he was unlucky, that he should have been born here. Would I ever be able to live a life like this ? Often he would have dreams that he had reached the town, had nice clothes on and that he was living in a house like those he saw on the TV. Nice food, etc. etc. But he didn’t know how this could become a reality.

Once Chimanya had gone to the taluka place where he saw a sign board. Behind the sign board was a cart with a some one talking through a loud speaker. He was giving information about the entrepreneurship development course conducted by Yuva Parivartan. He was also distributing leaflets. Chimnya collected one leaflet. He read it again and again. That set him thinking.

How can I collect money for the fee ? At home they were making both ends meet with great difficulty. Though education, note books and books, uniforms – all these were free... How can I ask father for money ? Which course should I do ? What should I do to get out of this small colony, save some money, buy new clothes for all...? He reached home thinking. After washing his hands and feet and having a cup of tea, he called the whole family. Not only his parents and brothers and sisters but other people who were around came too. He told them about the camp of Yuva Parivartan. All were curious. His friends said they would also like to give it a try.

They took a decision. Chimnya should join the course. Though he may not be able to buy cars like those one sees at the taluka place or in the movies, Chimnya would at least get to handle them. It was decided that he should do the course for automobile mechanic and repairing. Not only his parents and brothers and sisters put together whatever money they could find but even the neighbours also lent some money. Chimnya went to the taluka place on the appointed day. Filled up the forms and got admission for the course. He came to the taluka place everyday on foot, negotiating the hills and hurdles. He studied sincerely. Would-remembered whatever was taught. Reviewed it from time to time. He would get fascinated while handling two wheelers and four wheelers while repairing them and understanding their mechanism. On returning home he would excitedly tell his brothers and sisters what he did during the day. When the course was nearing its end he started wondering how he could get work in his village or would he have to move to the taluka place. He was confused. He asked his teachers.

The teacher made sure whether he would be willing to shift to the city which was nearby. Chimnya was excited. I would be going to the city. I would get a job. I would get money at the end of every month and that too so much as one doesn't get to see in the village ! His mother distributed sugar to celebrate when he got a job. She told him again and again : "Be careful. Don't compromise on health, eat well, etc etc."

Chimnya packed whatever clothes he had and left for the city. He reached the garage where he was to get a job. He showed the papers to the manager. The manager was a good fellow. He took a hard look at Chimnya and remembered his own early days. He too had come there -from a far away village searching for a job. He allowed Chimnya to use a corner of the shop for sleeping. But in lieu of that he had to do sweeping and cleaning in addition to his regular work. He also guided him to a nearby eatery. He sent him there with a man who introduced him.

Chimnya thanked the owner and the manager. He started working sincerely. The work was to his liking anyway. " I would learn everything and then I too..."he would dream. But as the days passed, he started getting bored. What could he do after the work hours ? He didn't like the loneliness. The air in his village was fresh, atmosphere free. Here , the dingy place in the corner, the constant smell of petrol,

stains of oil and grease, soiled clothes, the same meal of rice and bhakri everyday. And then pay for everything. That left little money in [hand](#) at the end of the month. While going home he could not go empty handed. All the money would be over. How could then he return the money people had lent ? He would get confused. He would get worried. Then he would phone Yuva Parivartan centre. “Madam, the thing is ...”he would narrate his worries. He would be reassured on phone. Chimnya was not the first case of this type. They knew how to boost the morale of homesick persons. Even these days would pass, how one could save money. Instead of eating at the eatery, why not cook rice-dal or rice vegetable at “home” and repay the borrowed money ? Learn some additional skill , say, driving. They were sure he would be uneasy for some time but would settle down soon for sure.

Chimnya was watching everything, [learning](#) . He was convinced that it would be wise to adjust to circumstances here rather than return to the village. He was preparing himself. Was settling down. He wondered how he should thank Parivartan. The period of learning was over. He became an expert in garage work. He didn’t spare any effort. Then he secured some jobs on his own. Got the driving license. Started earning on holidays by working as a driver. Joined a bhajani mandal to spend evenings. He became a volunteer of Parivartan. He joined a small Ganapati Mandal which did social work. His tribal look had undergone a complete change. He started encouraging other promising youths from the village. [He](#) brought his younger siblings also to the city. But he never forgot his old parents living in the village and Parivartan. He became the [role model](#) for many others who wondered “ How would I be [able](#) to manage ?”

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## 14. CONFUSED

A person like you and me does get confused sometime or the other. Can't decide what exactly one should do. But getting confused is the nature of some persons. A confused mind swirls like a vortex in the river water. That was the case with Pragati too. Added to that was the fact that there was nobody to guide her and those around her only added to [the confusion](#). Nobody was taking cognisance of the reality.

It was afternoon. A middle aged lady was coming to our centre with a girl of 15/16 years. The girl had held the lady's finger tightly as a small girl would do. She was sticking to her mother and was dragging her feet while walking. Her face wry. Apparently [she](#) was just recovering from some major illness. Her mother's face also showed signs of worry. Must be poor and added to that was the worry about her daughter.

She said from the door : "Can I come in?". I signed her to come in. "Madam, please do something about my daughter. She is in the tenth grade now; very important year. She should be studying hard, aim at good marks but there is something wrong with her. She holds a book in front of the eyes but is blank. Doesn't want to go to school. Doesn't do homework. Says "I am unable to understand anything." Till last year, she was passing with good marks. But failed in all subjects in the terminal exam this year. Having failed, she should have started studying hard, but no..." The mother was telling and was clearly upset.

I took out a paper from my drawer and started noting down her name, address, etc. I passified her mother a little and asked her, "What's your name?" She just said "Pragati" and again started looking at the ground [trying](#) to scratch the ground with her toe; also [clenching](#) the fists and [releasing](#) again. I pushed a paper towards her and said, "Draw a picture while I talk to your mom. Whatever you may like. And as you can. Sit outside. I will call you in five minutes."

After gathering information from her mother about their house, school, her friends, etc, I called Pragati in. She was confusion personified. It is not uncommon for such situation arising in the tenth standard. Only thing was that in the case of Pragati it was rather excessive. "This is the year of the tenth. Study hard. You must get so many marks," all would tell her. Added to that was the fact that Pragati, who had unknowingly vowed to become a doctor, was not sure whether she would be able to do that and hence was quite confused. As a matter of fact, the test was still far away, but the clamour in her mind grew so much that she could not concentrate on studies, could not remember anything.

I sent her to the doctor. Also told her to come to the centre everyday for some time. The preliminary examination was just a month away. Time was short. So, we decided to give her an aptitude test. Now we started using tips for studying, counselling, group therapy. The doctor had prescribed a medicine too.

Slowly, she was getting normal. I had noticed her capability and capacity due to continuous contact with her. She started studying. She came to meet me after the examination. Said that she must have done well in the papers. Though the examination was over, I was not yet done with her. I told her to do some courses in the centre. Started testing her. Her case was simple and straight forward. She wanted to be a doctor. Her parents were pressing her to go for commerce and then take a job in a bank. Her brother and sister were suggesting still something different. Relatives, friends were also making various suggestions. All this was subjecting her to lot of strain. She was confused. To pass with good marks was itself becoming a challenge for her.

By now, I also had concluded that she would not be able to get the marks which would be necessary for her to get a seat in medicine. Also, it was clear that her family would not be able to raise sufficient finance for that course. So I started persuading her to do doctorate. By now the result of the board examination was out. She had scored 76 %. She took admission to the science stream. The 11th grade was smooth sailing. In 12<sup>th</sup>, the same situation developed as before. But since I had full knowledge about her case, my job was easy. Therapies like Yoga, and meditation were also introduced. By reviewing her performance in all the examinations, I suggested the direction she should take... How many marks could I expect in the 12<sup>th</sup> Examination ? Where do I live ? What does my father do ? How much does he earn ?.. I explained these and such other factors and told her to give them a serious thought and then decide for herself. Consult me if you get confused. Tried to convince her that it would be wise to cut her coat according to the cloth. Also gave her the autobiographies of some persons who had done Ph.D. Becoming a doctor is not the end of everything. In fact, many inventions from the field of medicine had not been made by medical doctors but by “Ph.D. doctors”. Many of them have won the Noble Prize. I convinced her that looking to the impediments in becoming a medical doctor in her case, it would be better to aim at becoming a doctor by getting a Ph.D. She was convinced. The tension and confusion in her mind disappeared and she started concentrating on her studies. She passed the 12<sup>th</sup> examination.

I concluded that it was her nature to get confused, to not be able to think clearly about the future, to worry unnecessarily. She is likely to get confused at important phases in her life , like at the time of graduation, taking up a job, marriage. However, at least now, she is saying, “Didi, thank you. Your advice was perfect. ...Thank you...”

There must be many others like Pragati. There may not be a Parivartan centre near them or they might not be in a position to reach one.

That is why, I always feel that schools should conduct aptitude tests, offer vocational guidance etc. from the eighth / ninth grades only.

## 15. STUTTER

“Happy New Year, Didi”. Sudesh shouted as he entered my room. His friend of the same age had also joined him in greeting me. Sudesh had been coming to me for the last two years. He had failed in his examination. He felt ashamed. He stopped going to school. Would just keep lying in bed at home. His mother was worried. She brought him to me. I spoke to him and helped him overcome his guilty feeling. Now he was an absolutely normal boy. He came to meet me from time to time.

He introduced his friend :” “Didi, this is Ajay. My close friend. Right from childhood. We used to chat a lot, enjoy, but, of late, there is something wrong with him. Yesterday he fought in the class. The teacher punished him.” Ajay was listening with his head bowed low. I asked him, “ Is this true ?” Ajay said, “ Yes, Didi. But what can I do ? All the boys keep teasing me all the time. When I complained to the teacher, she said ignore them. But yesterday I got very angry. So I hammered them.”

I asked sitting in my chair, “But why and how do they tease you ?” Ajay was at a loss as to where to begin. Then Sudesh took over, “ Last some months he stammers while talking to friends. He stammers. Sometimes, words do not come out of his mouth for some time.” Ajay nodded.

Ajay took courage after some time and said, “ It was not like this till sometime ago. This has started recently. I get terribly scared. Can’t tell why. Then I can’t sleep in the night. Can’t concentrate on studies. I avoid talking to friends. But now that they know that there is something wrong with me, they ask me something deliberately and when I stammer, they laugh, they tease. Useless fellows.” He was very angry.

“Didi, please tell my father to take me to a doctor. There’s something terribly wrong with me.” He was perspiring.

And the funny part was that he was not stammering when he told me all this. I tried to console him, “Don’t worry. Everything would be alright.” I suggested some exercises to him and told him to come again after two days.

Could there be some problem at home ? Or was this due to the changes which could be taking place in his mind as he was entering adulthood ? I wanted to find out. The fact that he was aware of the changes taking place in him, that he wanted to seek help from his family and his keen desire to get back to normal were good signs.

He came after two days. Sudesh was with him. “Sit down, Ajay. What happened in the last two days ?” I asked him. “Didi, the last two days were holidays, so no tension...” He said laughing. That means he must be comfortable while at home. So it would be possible to get help from his family. On enquiring, he said, “ Didi, I am alone. I have no brothers or sisters. My mother goes to work during the day so that she could look after me. My father always works in the night shift. He sleeps during

the day at home. Sometimes Aaji is there. I am everybody's [peñ](#) at home. But I get bored at home. Nobody to talk to or to play with. Everyone is busy with his work." He narrated all this without stammering.

I had found the root cause of his problem. I phoned his father in his presence and requested him to visit me as early as possible.

His father came after two days. He asked me about Ajay. " But why didn't he talk to me at all about this ? And he speaks well at home , without any stammer. Never imagined that he could be having a problem like this at school." I tried to explain to his father: " Baba, now you must give more time to Ajay. Chat with him. Take him out for a walk sometimes. He needs his mother and you together. He is coming of age now and he is at a loss as to whom and how he can ask his queries." I gave him many other tips also.

He left. But I kept thinking. Today Ajay came to me for help, but there could be so many [Ajays](#) in the society in need of help. I and my colleagues started working on it. We collected stories, songs, films, videos. Arranged them in order and started using them when necessary.

Now Ajay is fully recovered. He has regained confidence. Now his talk is normal. His friends have stopped teasing him. And, consequently, many other questions have also been solved.

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## 16. TAREY JAMIN PAR

A famous movie. It certainly spread the message that children do have some psychological issues, but as a matter of fact, when such children are in a family or a school it gives rise to many problems. While it is true that one must understand such children, it is also true that one has to look after other children of their age [in the family](#) too. While the peace and discipline in the house gets disturbed, in schools issues regarding discipline arise. While parents of other children become aggressive, patience of teachers gets strained dangerously while trying to understand such children. Also, problems come up while teaching, the activity gets disturbed.

Usually, such children suffer from the ADHD problem. They are [hyper](#) active. They cannot continue to do any activity for a long time. They cannot concentrate. They tend to drop what is in hand and [start doing](#) something else. They engage in continuous activity, talking nonstop, gestures, so much movement that others get annoyed. However, this is an ailment just like cough, cold, fever. The child is afflicted with it from the birth. It cannot be cured, but can be controlled. For that, it is necessary to undergo counselling and medical treatment. This can be done only by special doctors and it goes on for a long time. Many parents refuse to accept this. Teachers are not well informed about this. Such specialists are not available everywhere. However, if treatment is given in time, these children can lead a normal life like others. What is needed today is that the society in general and teachers and parents in particular are made aware of this.

The reason why all these thoughts came to [my](#) mind was Suyash. Suyash and his father had come to Parivartan again after many years. The problem had become more complicated. On the home front, a new problem had cropped up. His father looked more tired than during his last visit, older than his age. Suyash had also become taller and thinner. Gone from his face were the happiness, innocence and smile. [He](#) appeared worried. The constant movements of hands, feet and neck were incongruent with [his](#) age. On seeing them, I tried to recall the past.

When Suyash came to us for the first time, he was in the fourth or fifth grade. He looked sweet with his chubby cheeks. Both his parents were with him. The school itself had sent them to us. Because the school - i.e his teacher, the children in the class, the principal, all- had become helpless before Suyash. Complaints of other students and their parents had increased so much that it was becoming more and more difficult for the school and the teachers to passify them.

Suyash never obeyed his teacher. His books and exercise books would be missing, so also pen and pencils. He would never be in the mood to read or write. He would not remain still even in the music, drawing, sports periods which are normally liked by all children. He would leave his place at any time, wander in the class or even go out of the class. He would come back after drinking water or would just go down the

stairs and come up again. Sometimes, when the teacher was busy teaching, he would open his tiffin and start eating and sometimes would eat tiffins of other students, tease them and run away. When the teacher tried to approach him, he would run away. He would climb the benches with his shoes on and walk everywhere. Sometimes, when the teacher came down from the dais to check the students' work, he would go on the dais and wipe out whatever was written on the board when nobody was looking. And then, according to the new government rules, shouting at a student or beating him or punishing him is prohibited. As a result, many teachers, facing discipline issues repent for having chosen this profession. Suyash would pull somebody's hair or shirt, pat somebody's back or pinch and then run away. If the teacher asked him to go out of the class, he would be happy. He would bend on the railing of the passage and look at the children playing on the ground. Or join them. The teacher would give up. Once he beat up many students with the ruler. Once he posed as the phantom and attacked students. Once he started beating students posing as the superman. Teachers wondered where did he get all the strength to do these things. The peon came on hearing the noise, he caught him and took him to the principal.

The principal also was fed up with complaints about Suyash. She summoned his parents. His mother had visited the school many times before on being called by Suyash's teacher. Suyash's behaviour in the house was not different. Added to that were the complaints from the school. Suyash was not afraid of his mother. She too would beat him up quite often, would starve him, would punish him. She was ashamed to visit the school. She would wonder how to deal with this boy and what is his future ?

The principal firmly told her, " Please take him to a doctor immediately, give him medical treatment and then only send him to school again."

Downcast, Suyash's parents came to us with him. They showed us the note received from the school. From that note, Suyash's movements and the expressions on his face, we immediately knew what the problem was. His problem was lack of concentration. He needed long term medical treatment, counselling and other therapies. We explained everything to them. Sent them to a doctor. Got various tests done and gave them appropriate advice. We also finalised a schedule of their visits to Parivartan. We met the class teacher and the principal of his school. Discussed with them what could be done in the case of Suyash and other students with similar problems. We were confident of success. It would be a matter of time.

The medical treatment and the counselling were showing positive effect on Suyash. Some months passed. We were pleased. But suddenly ~~they~~ he stopped coming to the centre. We knew the complications which arose if the treatment was discontinued halfway. So, we tried contacting them on the phone, but there was no response. We

even sent our man to their house, but the house was locked. Gradually we were engrossed in other matters and the case of Suyash took a back seat.

And now suddenly here he was with his father. We recognised him. He too smiled. He appeared to have mellowed with age. He missed his mother. She had passed away sometime ago. She was a cancer patient. The disease was in the last stage when detected and hence was beyond remedy. His father was busy looking after the mother. The neighbours said to Suyash : “ Suyash, all this has happened because of you. At least now behave like a good boy.” And, soon his mother passed away. She held Suyash’s hand in her weak and thin hand , and patted him on his back and head. Her worry about him was clearly visible. And she breathed her last with his hand in hers.

Relatives left after the last rites. Suyash’s father was finding it difficult to look after the house and the job alone at the same time. He was getting tired. There was little dialogue between him and Suyash. Suyash was feeling more and more lonely. Was feeling uneasy. Friends and relatives of the father urged him to marry again. But, with a problematic son like Suyash and especially when he was on the threshold of adulthood, he was not sure what he should do.

However, a friend of the father brought a proposal for marriage. The lady also had some issues of her own. She was beyond the normal age for marriage. She was willing to accept Suyash as he was. However, [his](#) father felt that he must take Suyash into confidence and that it would be desirable to do it through an appropriate person. That was the reason they had come to Parivartan again.

We were familiar with Suyash’s case. We took some tests again. We pondered over his tender age, the issues associated with that age and the change which was contemplated in his family. Besides, he was in the ninth grade, so a thought had to be given to his career too. We held several meetings with him, his father and his would-be mother. The doctor’s treatment was restarted. His father expressed regrets about his inability to continue the contact with us during the intervening period and assured that this would not happen again. Since he and the lady were educated, they were [conscious](#) of the situation. Suyash also decided to accept reality. He sought motherly love, which he had lost, in his new mother and she had also realised it. The [three](#) of them kept visiting the centre from time to time. His father got married. In the summer vacation, Suyash attended classes and also came to the [centre](#) for playing computer games. He spoke to us freely. He was changing gradually. He had a good IQ. We [were](#) hopeful [of](#) a bright future for him. The stars would not only be on the earth but would be in his hand.

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## 17. KARAN

“Hallow ! I am speaking from ...college. I am sending one of my students to you...”  
I was listening intently and then waited eagerly for Karan to come.

He came to me the next day. He was suspected of keeping drugs and supplying them to friends and, as a punishment, he was asked to serve in Parivartan. His teachers believed that he would improve due to the atmosphere and experience here. I can't say how much they and we succeeded in realising that objective, but all of us missed him. We wished he had stayed here for some more time.

Karan was a college going youth from a rich family. Tall, handsome, particular about clothes he wore, intelligent, creative, sincere, one who lived in his own world, soft spoken. He used to tell interesting stories to our external students. He had become very popular with all the children here within two months. He would eat his lunch with us, would wish Good Morning, Good afternoon, say thank you, sorry – very well mannered. Would appreciate our work from time to time. And yet, we felt he didn't come close to us.

But he was not our patient. We could involve ourselves in his case only up to a limited extent. He and his parents were in need of counselling. It was still time. We were sure that if they took some care while talking to and dealing with Karan, he would do really well in life. But later we lost contact with him. And he remained an enigma.

What we understood from him, his parents and the college was like this : Both his parents were self centred. They were rich. His father modernised his traditional business which he ran very capably. Hence the business prospered. He earned lot of money. However, the parents were not on good terms with each other. They would frequently differ and quarrel. However, they were one on one point : Provide the son with whatever he wanted - food, toys, costly clothes, money, And that if their son was to be all round and well mannered then the best way was to put him in a boarding school.

Karan spoke very well, he could swim, do horse riding, play several indoor and outdoor games. He was a good reader. Looked after himself well. Kept his books, papers, clothes and his room neat and tidy. He was polite with his father and friends. A little dare devil, but an ideal student on the whole.

This is how Karan was outwardly. He must have been quite sensitive. He was bewildered by the quarrels between his parents. Once he was placed in a hostel, there was nobody to whom he could open his mind. He felt lonely. He participated in all the activities of the school sincerely. But he was getting more and more alienated from his parents. In order to overcome loneliness, he went to movies, parties, picnics, ask for costly games and toys. His parents fulfilled all his wishes as

their duty. Nobody asked him “Why ?” or “What for?”. He never had to face “No” from anybody. After he grew up a little more, he preferred to go to his friends’ house or join them in picnics. Neither he nor his parents realised that they were going away from each other by doing so. His good marks, handsome appearance, grace, polite behaviour, excellent manners, his proficiency in using modern electronic gadgets – they took all these as signs that he was doing well. They never realised that they should try to fathom his mind, try to understand his emotions. And the differences and bitterness between the parents had only grown with age.

Karan passed the twelfth exam and they brought him home. They got him admitted in a nearby costly college. His father expected Karan to start looking into his business also. He was the heir for the large business. Let him study as much as he wants but ~~sometime~~ he should join the business at some point of time. His mother still considered him to be a young boy. She thought feeding him and giving him lot of pocket money completed her motherly responsibility. There was no change in her parties and outings. By keeping him away from home all these years and since it never occurred to her that a mother is expected to spend some time with her child, she had found her ways to pass time. So even though now Karan was at home, effectively he continued to be away from home.

And now, there was addition of high-funda college friends. He was now free from the boarding school environment, discipline, rules and the strict vigil of the teachers. Now he was free to behave as he liked. New avenues like modelling, stage shows, event management, ~~beauti~~c, gutta parlour, music nights, sunburn parties, rock music were now open to him. Being basically quite intelligent and multit talented he was used to ~~-taking~~ own decisions . He had also learnt to accept the responsibility of his own decisions. He was enjoying the college life unfettered. Because of his style and money many people were trying to be close to him. There was no way to know if he realised this or not .

In his college, some incident took place and Karan and his friends were hauled up before the principal. The college authorities made a good attempt to appreciate the issue. They took help of the college counsellor and the social worker and on their recommendation, Karan came to our centre in Parivartan for two months. One may treat this as a punishment or an alternative way for changing, whatever.

Karan quickly made friends with our children. He sincerely helped the project “Parivartan – Ek Soch” which is meant for children who do not go to school. He used innovative methods : video, pictures, stories, film clippings. Children were enamoured by his impressive way of talking. They were pleased with him. They called him Dada (Elder brother). His ego also was getting satisfied while giving them khau, pampering them, teaching them various games. He realised for the ~~th~~<sup>e</sup> first time that he was liked by somebody, that he was able to do something for them. The world here was much different from that he knew before. Basically, being a boy with

a noble mind, surely he must be thinking about all this. Though he may not have expressed in so many words, his thinking was getting a different direction. His feelings were expressed more in the form of actions rather than words. He was certainly enjoying his association with us.

His lunch box would arrive everyday at lunch time. He joined us for lunch, but sat a little away from us. His attention would be on his mobile. He would speak with his friends in hushed tones. He took care to see that we could not overhear his conversation. Sometimes, he would go out while speaking on the phone. However, if we asked whose call it was or what was the secret, he would not let us know. We had a feeling that he was hiding something from us. He would try to impress on us that though he was physically with us, his world was different.

Days, weeks and months were passing fast. The enigma about him was getting deeper as the days passed by. Did he have girl friends ? Was he addicted to alcoholic drinks or drugs ? Was modelling, body building, music his passion or a craze ? Which option would he choose for a career ? Neither could we ask him freely about these things nor did he talk about them to us on his own. As a matter of fact, somebody should have understood Karan by making him talk freely, should have loved him. The atmosphere at home should have been such that all members came together, talked, chatted. He also should have contemplated calmly. Somebody should have explained to him the difference between worldly pleasures and spiritual satisfaction.

We hoped that he had realised, at least to some extent, the meaning of life, in the company of poor children, orphans; starved of love, who could not go to school or who had to leave school halfway or those with a big question mark about their future.

Even now, sometimes we wish that Karan would unexpectedly come here to Parivartan and will talk to us. Let us see if that happens...

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## 18. POOR RANJANA

Ranjana was really poor. We wish that nobody should have to go through what she had to. But it is a fact that some things are not in our Hands. We are dependent on circumstances. Man is a pawn on the chess board of life. One can only say that God moves them as he likes. Sometimes he disturbs them while sometimes arranges them well.

Parivartan operates in the cities as also works in the rural areas for their development. Skill development classes are held in various places in remote areas which are difficult to access. It is a great opportunity for the rural youth. This is the story of a girl Ranjana from a remote area like that. Poor Ranjana ~~„how did she become ‘poor’?~~ How did her life straighten out ? This is her story.

Our volunteers went from town to town and distributed leaflets. They started accepting forms for enrolment. Ranjana enrolled for our beautician course. Though the name of the course was ‘beautician course’, it is our endeavour to help each participant to transform himself and his way of thinking. We hold a dialogue with the students before the start of the course itself. We try to develop their personality by telling success stories and by citing examples.

Ranjana had enrolled for the course with enthusiasm but she reported late everyday. She would not be there during the first 10/12 minutes. These 10/12 minutes carried the same importance in our course as the prayer and value education has in the school. As a result, there was no change in her behaviour, in the way of thinking as could be seen in the other students. She would come late, would not talk with anyone, would not mix with them. Sometimes she would even cry. Everyone could easily notice that she was not in a proper mood. Hence we even wondered how much ~~from~~ what was taught in the class registered on her mind.

Some days passed. Then the course facilitator tried to take her into confidence and make her open her mind. We learnt that the condition of her family was rather difficult. Her father was no more. It was difficult to even manage the two daily meals, leave alone having enough money for the bus fare. Ranjana walked to the centre after doing the household work and helping mother in her work and, naturally, get very tired by the time she reached the centre. The facilitator gathered all the students. Told them that we all must help Ranjana. All readily agreed. However, all of them were from poor rural families themselves. But they had a humanitarian streak. All of them contributed and got the bus pass for Ranjana. They also decided to bring food for her by turn. Ranjana was touched by all this. She was overwhelmed. Perhaps, after the difficult time she had gone through during the last year this was the first time that someone had behaved with sympathy and compassion towards her. People from her village, her caste and even from the family were not happy with her. Many times she had even contemplated committing suicide



but either she could not summon the courage or didn't know how to go about doing it.

This was the time when it was necessary to offer her help and support, to dispel the darkness from her life, to provide strength so that she could stand on her feet again. All this was quite difficult. Required delicate handling. Nobody should have the bad luck like hers. As an interim measure, we found her a part time job in a grocery store. Her work timing was just before that of our course. Now she started earning some money. That boosted her confidence. Even the attitude of members from her family towards her softened.

Ranjana was living in an adivasi hamlet. Like other adivasi girls she too didn't have much freedom. A young man living in the same hamlet liked Ranjana. He approached her mother and said he loved Ranjana and that he would like to marry her. Her family was anyway almost starving. Ranjana's mother thought if Ranjana was married, there would be one mouth less to be fed. So she consented to the young man and fixed the marriage.

Ranjana didn't like that man at all. But nobody cared for her opposition. Knowing that the elders were on his side, the young man started harassing Ranjana. He started forcing her into physical relationship. She abhorred it. She started avoiding him. In the adivasi society, having children before marriage was accepted practice so Ranjana's refusal to give in to the man's demands was not taken kindly by anybody. However, all this was bound to culminate into a terrible result.

One day, that man consumed poison and went to Ranjana's house. Her parents and brothers and sisters were in the house. He had brought a chit with him. "Ranjana has done injustice to me. I am committing suicide because she refuses to have physical relations with me." He gave the chit to her father. It was Ranjana and her father on one side against the man and her mother on the other. They were arguing and quarrelling and the man collapsed. Ranjana's brothers and sisters were watching all this in horror. There was chaos. Neighbours and others collected there. Some one complained to the police.

Police arrived. They did the panchanama. They caught hold of Ranjana and her father by the arm and pushed them in the police van, took them to the police station. They held them responsible for the man's death. They alleged that they had killed the man. Her mother sought a lawyer's help. But when there was no money to feed the family, how could she pay the lawyer's fee ? Her condition was pathetic.

Ranjana and her father were lying in the police custody. The ignominy of being in jail was to be a blot on her for life. Nobody could tell what more was in store for her. Now- nobody would marry her. She was in despair. She started thinking of committing suicide. But eventually, both were acquitted as the charge that they had murdered the man could not be proved. First Ranjana was dropped at home. Her



father was still in jail. Ranjana's condition had become worse. Her mother cursed her. Brothers and sisters would not talk to her. Even if she left home, nobody would employ her. Facing people was becoming a nightmare for her. While going to bed, she wished the sun wouldn't rise again.

While she was in such depressed condition, she came to know about the Parivartan centre. She started coming to the centre. Her mother mortgaged their small parcel of land to raise money and got Ranjana's father released from jail. Father came home. But he was terribly depressed. The stare of the people, the hardships which his wife was facing, the starving children, Ranjana's depressed condition....The strain was becoming unbearable for him. Ultimately, he consumed insecticide and ended his life.

While the father had found a solution to his woes, the condition of Rajana and her family became worse. Ranjana had lost the only person who sympathised with her. She became pitiable, helpless. Everybody at home and outside called her a devil, a witch, a murderer, woman of ill omen, and blamed her for the deaths of her husband and father. Those few who felt that she could not be blamed could not say so openly because they feared the wrath of the village. She felt lonely. At Parivartan, everybody tried to console her: don't hold yourself responsible for whatever happened; don't feel guilty; even these days would pass, all the days are not the same. They tried to inject courage in her.

She was emerging from the situation. The smile which had left her face appeared again. She was about to complete the course. Everyone at Parivartan gave priority to finding a job for Ranjana. Their efforts bore fruit. She got a job as a helper in a beauty parlour. The family had some relief. A young man who was watching her struggle, who had sympathy for her, came forward. He had some experience of the life in the city. He was partly educated. He felt that the fact that Ranjana had refused to give in to the demands of her husband to have sexual relations before marriage was not a crime but she deserved to be commended for her courage. He offered to marry Ranjana.

They had a simple marriage. However, Ranjana is not in contact with the centre now. But we hoped that the evil period in her life was over and that now she is happy in her life. She must be happy that she got a husband who could understand her. We are glad that we could give her courage during the worst period of her life. We got a real life example which we could cite to others. Whenever we remember Ranjana, we automatically pray that she should be happy wherever she might be.

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## 19. THE DEMON

“When a father rapes his own daughter, what should he be called ? The devil ? But there are such fathers. Not only that, but they roam freely and ,often, the judiciary cannot reach them. Cannot punish them. And that is unfortunate.”- The reason why all this came to my mind was Nayana.

She used to come to attend a course. Age about seventeen-eighteen years, tall, smart, neatly dressed, matching purse. She used to be jolly like other girls. But suddenly her mother died and she stopped talking. She would not talk to anybody, would not laugh. Looked like she was simmering inside. She wore a guilty look. She became thin, weak. We thought this must be because of her mother’s death and that she would become normal in due course.

But there were no signs of that . She had a friend. She started avoiding to meet him and even talking to him. She looked very weak, because she couldn’t sleep and had lost appetite. Her teacher felt disturbed. So she took Nayana aside and tried to find out what the matter was. But Nayana just kept weeping. Her crying made her more uneasy. So, as a last resort, she sent Nayana to Parivartan with a social worker.

Nayana came to us. She could not guess what we could do if at all. “ Hello Nayana. Are you not well ? Your teacher was telling us that you have become weak. You don’t talk in the class. Have you been to the doctor ?” But Nayana just kept staring at me. I sensed her confusion and said, “ Come I would come with you to the doctor, he will examine you...” However, even before I could complete the sentence she said, “ No, No. Please don’t.” Her eyes brimmed with tears. I let her cry for some time and , patting her on the back, I said, “ How would I know what is wrong if you don’t talk ? There is no problem, no difficulty which has no solution. We will try. We can get somebody’s help if we can’t handle it. But if you don’t talk the problem would only get worse with time.”

There was silence for some time. I held a paper and a pen before her. She was not talking but kept shaking her head. I tried to consol her just by looking at her. At last, she uttered just two words, : Didi, Baba...”and then she started crying again. I and the social worker immediately understood. We had a wave of sympathy for her. It was a very difficult and delicate job, but we decided to tackle it and help her. We asked her to come again the next day.

Nayana came, I assured her, “Whatever you tell will remain only between you and me and we will not do anything without taking you into confidence.” Nayana felt very awkward while narrating what had happened with her. But she wanted to get away from it all. She had some idea about the consequences. She did not blame herself but she didn’t know how to come out of the situation. Sometimes she felt like running away or committing suicide but she had a younger brother too in the house. What would he do ? Where will he go ? She didn’t have the answers.

Her father was not much educated. He was not of the type who loved his children. He worked in a small factory. Her mother used to do domestic work in 3-4 families. The parents, Nayana and her younger brother, made the compact family. Mother died after a short illness. Relatives stopped visiting. Nayana and her brother felt very lonely. Father didn't pay much attention to the house. Nayana was confused. Domestic work, cooking, making tiffins for the two ..she tried to manage as she could .

One day, her father returned late. The children had waited for him for quite some time. But then they had their meal and went to bed. It was past midnight when father came home. He was reeking of liquor. Nayana's mother never approved of her father taking to drinks. Nayana remembered that and said, " Baba, it is not even a month that mother has passed away and .." But before she could complete, father started slapping her. Nayana was in pain. She cried aloud, " No, Baba. No. Please stop." But father was not willing to stop.

Her brother also woke up due to all the commotion. Baba was intoxicated. He was no longer a human being but a demon. He tied Nayana's hands and raped her. The brother was terrified and was watching. After he was done, father said, " If you say a word of this to anybody, I will throw you out of the house..." Both the siblings were terrified. They didn't know what to do. They remained awake through the night. Next day, the brother went to school with an empty stomach. Nayana kept sitting in the house as if frozen.

Her father woke up. God knows whether he was sober or not. It didn't appear that he had any remorse for what he had done. He started cursing Nayana and ordered her to make tea and tiffin. He also threatened her, "If you open your mouth, you will have to face the consequences." This repeated 3-4 times after that.

Nayana was afraid of registering a complaint with the police against her father .After deliberating we took two decisions. One: To advise her friend to marry her at the earliest and two : confront her father, try to reason out with him, tell him the consequences if we registered a complaint with the police. We also told Nayana that if her father comes near her, she should shout and call the neighbours, dial 100. etc.

We did our job to the best of our ability. Her friend agreed to have a registered marriage with her at the earliest. But he needed some time.

He got married to Nayana after a few months. Her brother also moved to her house. But now there was a new problem. She was so scared by the experience with her father that now she was not allowing her husband also to touch her. So he again came to Parivartan with her. We counselled both . They left satisfied with a smile. I kept looking at their departing figures through the door. After going some distance away, they held each other's hand. We felt certain that Nayana would come back to visit us soon with sweets.

And that was exactly what happened. Now her parlour is doing good business. She accepts orders –small and big. Her child goes to a play group. Her brother is going to a college. Her father has disposed of the house, She and her father have -deleted each other from their lives.

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## 20. MAD FELLOW...

Often, funny things happen in Parivartan. We get funny experiences. That's what happened the other day. It was noon. Three girls, age about 15/16 years, were knocking on the door. They were looking around to make sure if anybody had seen them coming here.

As soon as I said, "Come", they entered hastily. Two of them had worn a veil. The third one was in a Punjabi dress. They almost collapsed in the chairs. They were panting. They were looking at each other confused. It appeared that they wanted to tell something. But, apparently, they couldn't decide who should speak and how.

At last, I took the lead. "Please remove the veil. Let me see your beautiful faces. What are your names ? Where do you live ? You look like close friends..."

The three of them nodded together. They were living in a nearby colony. They had quit school midway. They were earning some money by doing odd jobs and met each other in the evening to pass time. I asked, "What has brought you here ? Any problem ?"

They were expecting the question. They appeared to be scared. They were sitting with wide eyes and open mouths. They were bent over the table, with their elbows on the table supporting the faces, like models. Then, Rubina, the girl with the Punjabi dress, said, "Didi, we are very worried. We are in big trouble." They were talking looking at each other. They appeared to be at a loss as to who should speak and how.

At last, Rubina took courage and with her palm on the belly, said, "Didi, I am pregnant." Then, the other two – Karina and Sofia- also said, "Yes Didi, we too"

I almost jumped in my chair. "What ?" I almost shouted. Going near them I said, "Do you understand what you are telling ?" "Yes." They said in unison. They had missed their monthly period. And the fun was that this was a result of their ignorance and the resulting tension.

They were not able to concentrate on studies in the school. So they had quit school. They were doing odd jobs and earned some money. They would meet in the evenings at the ground in front of their colony. They made friends with some boys. They chatted, started liking each other's company. Then looked for a dark corner, held each other's hands, cuddled each other, kissed.. they were advancing step by step. They missed each other. The desire to meet the friends was becoming stronger. They tried to keep this from their families. Their orthodox families would never have approved of this.

Added to that was the coincidence that when Rubina was talking to her neighbour, she mentioned to Rubina that so and so lady missed her period, she is pregnant.. etc.

They were scared; they thought, “Oh God, we have been kissing, would our bellies also grow..would we get pregnant? ..” They had missed their periods just out of that fear.

I could not help laughing on hearing this. They had to be educated on two levels. First we explained to them about their age, morality, etc. Advised them that they should first complete their education, start earning and be on their own. We told them to visit us every alternate day for some time. We got some medical tests done. Explained the results of the tests to them. There was no cause for worry. We advised them to keep away from the boy friends.

We recommended some tonics for them. Soon their periods resumed. They were very happy. They came to Parivartan. We realised how important it was to offer sex education to the young generation.

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## 21. SUPPORT

Even a straw can be a support for a person who is sinking –this saying proved true in Priya’s case. That 14-15 years girl had monumental responsibilities on her shoulders. She was doing her best to discharge them. But she was at a loss to decide how to get out of this mess and the responsibilities. She got a ray of hope in the form of Parivartan. She survived with its assistance. Today she is working in a garment factory as a supervisor.

Priya had become an automaton which didn’t have a mind, intelligence and thinking of its own and worked round the clock. Get up early, do the cooking, attend on mother, send the younger siblings to school, make tiffin and then start stitching clothes as soon as the domestic chores were over. Poor girl didn’t even notice when the day was over. There was nobody around whom she could consult. The earnings of Rs. 25/30 which she got from stitching and the rent for the stitching machine which was let out to a tailor were the only sources of income for the family. It was difficult to decide whether that meagre amount should be used for the household expenses or for the mother’s medicines. The father was no more.

Due to all these responsibilities she could not go to school. Her name was struck off the muster. That really shook her. Her teacher gave her the address of Parivartan. Wiping her face with a tiny handkerchief, she was asking: “May I come in Madam ? Can I sit down?.” I was sizing her up and so was she sizing me up and looking around my cabin. She started telling, “ Madam, how can I manage ? I am not afraid of putting in efforts. But nobody can pretend to have money. My father died long ago. Mother does some stitching. Suddenly she also took ill. She has a knee problem. Doctors have forbidden her from doing stitching. They have advised her complete rest. I am the eldest in the house; two younger brothers. So all the responsibility has come on my shoulders. There is no sign of improvement in mother’s health. My neighbour has brought work for me from a factory – stitching pajamas. Three rupees for a pajama. I earn 25/30 rupees in a day. But because of that I cannot go to school. I feel miserable when I see other children going to school. Besides, I always have the fear as to what would happen if I loose this work too. Her eyes had welled while speaking. Her unspoken entreaty ‘Didi, please help me’ reached me. There were tears in her eyes. Her words, ‘Didi, please help me’ kept ringing in my ears.

She was tired but had not given up. She was not averse to toiling. She was still optimistic and full of hope. So it was not difficult to help her. I started thinking of ways to help her in as many ways as possible.

We arranged a stitching machine for her with the help of an NGO. We planned to train her in stitching various types of garments and then in fashion designing. We explained to her that she could appear for examinations as an external student by using form 15. We told her to first complete our tailoring course. We delivered the

new stitching machine at her home, She started earning some income from it. She filled in the form for appearing for the tenth grade examination. She would seek guidance in studies too. She was really working hard. Our role was to encourage her. She was doing well. As soon as she completed the tailoring course, we found her a job in a garment factory. This not only brought some income but also boosted her confidence and self respect. Now she was able to take care of the medical expenses of her mother. Mother's health improved and she started doing some of the domestic work relieving Priya of some burden. She passed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade examination with our help and also got a promotion in her job.

She visits us from time to time to report her progress. And she would always bring a chocolate with her. The smile on her face was the receipt for our efforts.

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## 22. I WILL NOT COMMIT THIS SIN

The well known industrialist Bill Gates says, “To be born poor is not a sin, but to die poor is.” There is no possibility that Faiyaz had heard this. But there is tremendous difference between Faiyaz when he came to Parivartan and today’s Faiyaz. As if he has vowed to transform the situation. Now he is dreaming. He sees a board “Faiyaz Mobile Repair Centre” festooned with electric lights. His Abba, Ammi are very happy. His younger siblings are playing around in new clothes. His relatives and neighbours have come to felicitate him. He is welcoming all with a smile. Sweets, namkeen and a cold drink are being served to all. The Head Mistress of his school who had often said that Faiyaz was good for nothing and should be thrown out of the school, was today the chief guest of the inaugural function. She was saying, “Faiyaz, I erred in understanding you. As a matter of fact, there is some skill in every child. I could not notice it. I wish each school had such facilities. Or it would indeed be very good if there is a system of sending boys whose capacity is in doubt, to institutions like Parivartan. March ahead. Our blessings are with you.” The eyes of the head teacher as well as his own are brimming with tears while saying this. He is telling them while bowing to them “Please do not shame me by saying this. Madam, whatever I am today is because of persons like you. My journey so far is like a bicycle ride. My efforts, will power, refusal to accept defeat are the front wheel of the bicycle and the things which provided fuel or power are you, the school teacher, Yuva Parivartan and their colleagues who encouraged me on my journey. I am extremely thankful to all of you.”

Faiyaz sitting in front of me was dreaming. His silence and his twinkling eyes were telling me a lot and I was overwhelmed with satisfaction. Poverty was the hall mark of Faiyaz’s childhood. Ammi, Abba both were illiterate. They had come here from Bihar to try their luck. They set up their ‘house’ in a hut erected on the bank of a gutter. Abba worked as a casual labourer. Things were ok initially, but later feeding the children and sending them to a free municipal school also became difficult. Faiyyaz was their eldest son. Then there was addition to the family each year. Ammi was at her wit’s end bringing up the children. How to manage with the meagre income? The toil and the frequent pregnancies affected Ammi’s health. She used to urge Faiyyaz “Beta, get education and become big. Earn handsomely. Now I am unable to cope up with the daily chores. Now it is up to you. Please do something.”

Faiyaz was going to school but he was not good at reading and writing. But he was expert in detecting faults in bicycles, stoves and other appliances. He liked machines of any type. He was attracted to the bicycle mechanic, stove mechanic, umbrella mechanic around the corner. He wondered why they don’t teach these trades in the school instead of reading and writing. But there was nothing one could do about it. The children around him were also more or less in the same boat. But the government’s policy that no child be failed in the examination was good for him. Sometimes he felt sorry that he was unable to read or write properly but he also felt

that it didn't matter. However, managing things in the ninth and tenth grades was difficult. When he was in the ninth grade, his teacher summoned his Ammi and Abba to school. "Your son would find it difficult to pass the tenth grade. He would have to work hard. You would rather withdraw him from the school. He would at least earn some money." But they had some hope that he would pass the tenth exam.

But it didn't happen. He failed. Friends from his class joined some college or ITI. Some found jobs. But Faiyyaz was at home all the time. Abbu Ammi were annoyed. They urged him to find some job. But where to get a job? And how? He was at his wit's end. Since he was partially educated, he considered casual work like that which Abbu did, below his dignity. He was despaired. He lost interest in food. Could not sleep. "Useless" he started calling himself. "What use is a life like this?" he felt. He was ashamed to meet friends. He had illusions that his younger brothers and sisters tease him "Failed, Failed."

Then somebody told him about Parivartan. And that had brought him – tired, worn out, ill dressed, wearing old tattered chappals, dishevelled hair – to my door. He was standing before me. "Please give me some work." He pleaded. I spoke to him. I tried to find out his likes and dislikes. We tested his capability. Our first objective was to build confidence in him. He was like a diamond in the coal mine due to circumstances. He had to be cleaned, polished. We suggested to him that he enrol for our mobile repairing and spoken English courses. He was happy. "Madam, would I be able to speak English?" was his innocent question. Even mobile phone he had seen only in the hands of others. Now he was to handle them, repair them. He was excited. I explained to him, "One who tries hard never fails. You would have to change. Work hard." He promised me, "Madam, I will do whatever you tell me. I promise..."

He kept his word. He would be in the class before others. His homework would be complete. He helped other students and the teachers. Since he had a liking for mechanical things he grasped everything easily. We at Parivartan have classes not only for mobile repairing but also for development of personality. He was taking interest in that too. He was hearing words like objective, work ethics, money planning for the first time. He worked hard and stood first in the examination.

We appointed him as a teacher for the mobile repairing course. He is a sincere worker. He now earns about Rs. 10,000 per month. He and others at his home are happy. Students say, "Go East or West, but Faiyaz is the best!"

He has become a role model for the children in his colony. Sayara Khan, volunteer and social worker at Parivartan sites his example to others with pride. Some times, even the professional mobile repair people seek his help when they are unable to solve a problem. He is now thinking of learning to repair TVs and laptops too. His horizons have broadened. And he is ready to fly to the sky.

### 23. POOR FELLOW

‘Stupid’, ‘Confused’, ‘Lazy’, ‘Dumb’, ‘Good for nothing’ : Parents and teachers label children. While doing this, it does not occur to them that the child could be having some born handicap. They don’t realise that they are doing injustice to the child by making such rash and irresponsible remarks.

The children get confused, they lose confidence, they start under-estimating themselves. Gradually they tend to become loners. Life of those lucky few who get help in time becomes normal. Like that of Dinu. Now Dinu is doing a diploma in ITI.

However, just a few years ago, his teachers and parents used to complain about him constantly. He used to get low marks. His hand writing was not legible not only to the teachers but to himself too. He could never complete his home work and studies. Even in the class, he could not keep with others when it came to writing. Sometimes, in the class he would just keep sitting. He considered languages and mathematics as enemies. His writing and maths contained innumerable errors. The teachers would get fed up explaining to him. And how much could they scold him ? They wondered which punishment would suit him. And as if this was not enough, sometimes he would fall fast asleep in the class.

Once it was the height of it all. The whole class was getting disturbed due to his snoring. The teacher was at her wit’s end. She took him to the principal. The principal was also tired of getting complaints about Dinu. She summoned his parents and also advised them to take him to Parivartan. This was happening for the first time.

Dinu’s father brought him to Parivartan. He began narrating : “ Madam, please see if some remedy could be found for my son. I am tired of getting complaints from his teachers. After I return from work, I spend almost two hours with him for studies, though I am tired. I have also arranged a tuition for him. I am doing so much but he doesn’t care. It doesn’t matter if he doesn’t get the first rank but should he not behave like normal students ? At least the complaints from his teachers should stop ?” His father was speaking desperately.

Dinu was sitting quietly in the chair. He had heard this often. His face was expressionless. But I wanted to hear from him. As I was about to ask him something, he said, “ I am not doing this deliberately. But what can I do if I can’t do something ?” I began to understand his problem. “Ok. Will you tell me what you can do, what you can make, what you like ?” “I like to draw pictures and paint them.” He said with enthusiasm. I immediately called for some papers, pencils and colours. I told him to draw whatever he liked. His face brightened. Soon, he was engrossed in drawing pictures. I asked him intermittently, “ What time do you get up ? Who are your friends ? Which teacher do you like ? Which sport do you like ? What do you

do when the teacher is away ? You can't write or is it that you just don't like it ? Do you sleep in the class ?" He was replying to my questions while drawing the picture.

His replies, the way he was drawing the picture and even holding the pencil told me that this was a case of Dyslexia i.e. learning disability. But the problem was how to explain this to his father and how to convince him that he should accept Dinu as he was.

I said to his father, " Let us take Dinu to an expert doctor. He would have to subject him to some tests. Don't worry. Everything will be fine. The doctor will give him some pills. Will prescribe some exercises. You would have to see that he does them. And, look, do we have any control over our complexion, height, nose, eyes ? Same is the case with a child's capacity to learn. While going out, we dress up nicely, comb our hair, apply powder, try to look nice, but from within we are the same. Isn't it ?"

I could not tell how much his father was convinced but he realised that there was something lacking in his son. But we had to take care that he didn't ask himself "Why me ?" We got done various tests on Dinu like IQ (Intelligence Quotient), EQ (Emotional Quotient), motor movement, aptitude and others. As we expected, he would find it difficult to acquire skills in language and maths. It would not make any difference even if his father made him study for the whole night. Instead, we had to go by what he could do, what he liked.

After getting the test results we sent him to the government hospital. Because, children like him, who have learning deficiency, get some concessions from the SSC Board : like getting help of a writer to write a paper, maths of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade examination, additional time for writing answer papers, option of choosing other subjects in place of languages, etc. We repeatedly impressed upon his father " Don't get tired. You would find it a botheration now but it would give good results later.." His father did everything sincerely. Often he had to take leave which he could ill afford. So his mother also started doing small jobs.

The medicines and exercises were going on. We also met his teachers. Told them that we would be glad to explain if they would like to understand why some children turn out to be like this, what are the remedies and how to detect them, etc. All this would not make any difference in Dinu's physical condition, but that it would help others understand him and help him understand others. They would understand his limitations -how much to expect from him. The punishments given to him and resultant ill effects on his mind could be minimised.

Tests were conducted on him in the government hospital. The reports were received. We showed them to the school authorities. We explained to them the concessions he would get from the SSC Board. By now, his father had stopped nagging him. His

teachers had appreciated his problem. Dinu was changing. Most important, he himself had realised his limitations. Dinu reached the tenth grade.

We had advised him to come to the centre in the vacation and take admission to any course of his liking. He took admission to the courses on mobile repairing and electrical fitting. He liked those jobs. He was happy with them. Slowly, we convinced him not to insist on going to a college like his friends. He decided to take admission to the Diploma course. By then, the SSC result was out. He had secured 76 % marks. He, his parents and his teachers all were pleased. He took admission for the diploma course. His parents distributed sweets, gave a party to friends and relatives.

The hurdles in Dinu's path were now over. He was now on the right track. However, I felt worried about the other Dinus who would not reach Parivartan or an institution like Parivartan. They would be objects of ridicule. They would be sad. Doors to many opportunities in their life would be shut. And that happens purely out of ignorance. It is a fact that there is need to enlighten the people about that.

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## 24. GOLU

I was going to my friend who lives in Andheri. I Was engrossed in my thoughts when suddenly somebody shouted, “Didi”. I looked out and saw Golu and his mother walking on the other side of the road. They had called me when they saw me and were now coming towards me. As soon as they came near, Golu bowed for a namaskar.

“Arey Golu, you have changed so much! You have become big.” He laughed heartily. His mother said, “ Now he is earning well.” She went on singing his praises. I delved into the past. I remembered the day when I first met Golu. It was afternoon. Sushila from our education class on the upper floor came to me dragging a 12 -15 years old boy. “ Look, this is the boy. His ball comes in the class so often. What if it hits and hurts someone ?...”She kept shouting and the small boy, scared and confused, looked at her and me alternately. He didn’t understand either Hindi or Marathi. His father had got a place somewhere near Parivartan sometime ago. He had brought his family here from a small village in Bengal. Golu was the name of their youngest child. He had not been put in a school because he knew only Bengali. So what could he do the whole day ? Either watch TV at home or go out and play. He had no friends either. So he would pass time by himself. He played with a ball which would go into the surrounding houses, would come in Parivartan’s premises. I too was seeing him for the last few days and here he was in front of me all of a sudden, today. No doubt it was difficult to have a conversation with him, but he too was not able to speak fluently. He had a heavy tongue. His face would distort when he spoke. Just sitting at home and eating he had become shapeless. The social worker recruited him in the computer class. Since he didn’t know any language other than Bengali, we started teaching him Hindi and the Devnagari script. It was then that we noticed that he had difficulty speaking, pronouncing. Also his sight was weak.

Then we decided to call his parents. Apparently, they didn’t take our call seriously because they did not come even after 10/15 days. However, by now, Golu was coming regularly though the reason was that he took it as a ‘time pass’. No school, no brothers or sisters, mother and father busy with their jobs and children from the neighbourhood would not play with him because of the language problem. Even if they accepted him on a rare occasion, they would be annoyed with him because he was clumsy in bowling as well as batting. The reason was that his eye sight was not normal. We noticed it.

When he came to the centre, he would be attracted to the computer centre. We were offering computer education free at that time. Children would be engrossed while playing on the computer and so would he. It was then that we were convinced that he needed glasses. Now it was necessary to meet his parents. We decided to send a peon to his house and ask them to visit us. His father did not come because he would

be busy with work. His mother came, but even she did not understand Hindi or Marathi. She was not ready to accept that her son was handicapped. At last we found some one who could speak Bengali and Marathi. We convinced her through him. By denying the problem the boy would be harmed. All the tests on Golu would be done free of charge but it would be necessary for them to come, give their consent, and follow the doctor's advice. By now, Golu's mother had started understanding Hindi and Marathi a little. We cited examples of many other children like Golu and told how they had overcome their handicaps.

Our other guess also turned out to be true. He needed to use a hearing aid. That would improve his speech automatically. The number of his spectacles was very high. That was the reason he could not play properly. At last, a hearing aid and eye glasses of thick lense were procured for him. Now his confidence improved. He could converse with others properly. He developed a soft corner for us. He started liking to visit Parivartan. He was learning by watching us and our visitors. He started greeting people with a smile and a "Good Morning".

At that time, we were designing a training programme "Parivartan Ek Soch" (Parivartan : a concept) for the innumerable children like Golu. Golu turned out to be the student of the first team under that programme. He too enjoyed the programme heartily. By now, we had become friends.

However, with his eyes and the thick glasses, it was not desirable for him to spend so much time on the computer. It would be better that he should learn something else – not just as a means of passing time but as an earning activity. So we subjected him to various tests. We took his parents into confidence. Now his father started visiting us. That was a sign of trust and gratitude towards us. Golu was given a specialised course on SIM cards. He did it sincerely. He was fairly intelligent. He too had started appreciating the realities of life. But one day he came to say goodbye to us. "Didi, we have to vacate our house here and shift to some other place." He said.

And now, I saw him unexpectedly after 4/5 years. He had not forgotten us. He was pressing us to accompany him to his house. "Didi, please come to my place." But I did not have much time. Then he ran and brought me a cold drink. Offering that to me, he said. "Didi, you have done so much for me. Please allow me to do something for you." He was pleading. His mother, who was watching, was also overwhelmed. Though she did not say anything, her face spoke a lot.

I had tears in my eyes. We had done our duty. His life had taken a different turn. This happens in the case of many, but not all remember or express. Today, we had received acknowledgement of our work through Golu.

## 25. OUT OF CONTROL

Sometimes news about dance bars appear in the news papers or on TV channels. I become restless when I see them and they bring back memories of Leela. It was good that we could get her back on track in time. I ask myself, “ I hope she hasn’t gone back to her old ways after leaving from here.” As a matter of fact, having such apprehension is meaningless. It spoils your peace of mind.

I still remember that day. Summer had just started. It was afternoon. A woman of about 50 entered my cabin rather haughtily. She had with her a girl of about 16/17 years. Good looking, who would create a good impression in anyone’s mind at first sight. But at that moment she appeared rather unhappy. She was literally tight lipped. But the lady – she was her mother – kept talking. She was extremely unhappy with the girl. And the girl didn’t like it. Her face spoke her annoyance. Creases on the forehead. Biting her nails. Looking at her mother through the corners of her eyes. Appeared pitiable.

The mother kept talking, threatening the girl, slapping her. I told the girl to wait outside and said to her mother, :Now please tell me everything in details and quietly. Should I call for some tea ? ..till then have some water....” She was engrossed in her thoughts for some time. Must be composing her thoughts. “ Madam, a letter came from her school and luckily it fell in my hands. She didn’t tell me about the first letter. ..She was not attending school. She was leaving home on time. Would return late. Said she goes to a friend’s place for studies. I , stupid, believed her. ...”

She slapped her forehead with her palm and started crying. She did odd jobs. Her husband did plumbing work. Both loved each other. But they had no child. After many years Leela was born. Naturally, she was the apple of their eyes. They pampered and spoilt her. As she grew up she looked still more beautiful. Mother would say, : My darling girl. Let no evil eye fall on her..

But it did happen. The school was closed for vacation. She was alone in the house. Because she was bored she went to her friend who lived in the lane behind her house. The friend had quit school half way. Many children of their age had gathered in her house. Playing, shouting, telling jokes. Then somebody said : Arre yaar, I am hungry.” So somebody ordered wada-pav, coke. All of them shared. Lila was enjoying. Then, they stopped talking. They started signalling to each other. Leela realised that there was something about which they wanted to talk in her absence. She said “Bye” and left . All of them told her to keep visiting. Guru was somewhat over smart. He had liked Leela very much. He shook her hand to see her off.

She was excited by his touch. Even after returning home she kept thinking about him. Her father returned home. She took his mobile phone and called the friend.. “ What were you hiding from me ?” . Her friend said, “ We were to watch a movie.



We were not sure if you would like it.” What kind of film could it be ? Leela kept thinking about it.

The next day, she dressed well and went to the friend’s house. They had planned to see a film on that day too. But they wanted to make sure. “Look, Don’t spill this anywhere. You can join us if you like. If you don’t like the film, you can leave.” They were rather harsh. Leela waited. It was a blue film. All the doors and windows were closed. Curtains were drawn too. All the boys and girls were enjoying. Guru was besotted with her. He came forward to accompany her to her house. He was determined ; “I shall get his girl.”

Leela now felt free. Now she started going to her friend’s place everyday even after the school started. Guru had left school when he was in his native place and come to Mumbai. He was street smart. He was doing odd jobs. His friendship with Leela and attraction for her were growing fast. In about a week he told her, “Come, we would visit my aunt at Virar.” In fact, there was nobody at Virar. But he won her over during that trip. He also promised to marry her and get a house. She was getting attracted to him without realising it. She surrendered to him fully. She started liking it.

Guru said, “ How long can we manage like this ? Let us rent a room. But for that, my income would not suffice. You also would have to work. I will find work for you.”

He found a job for her in a dance bar. She did not tell her parents. She was doing all this during the school hours. But how long could this go on ? There was chaos at home when the letter from her school was received. Lot of firework. She kept quiet. But her parents found out. They forbade her to leave the house. Her mother brought her to Parivartan. However, another bigger bomb was yet to explode.....

At parivartan, she was asked to join the Nursing course. She had been coming for counselling. But the response from her was nil. What could it be which made her not to speak out ? We had many surmises. I told her to visit a doctor. She was not willing but she had to go. Her mother was accompanying her to and from Parivartan regularly.

The doctor checked her and her secret was out in the open. She shamefully confessed everything. But there was no repentance nor anxiety for the future. Her parents were summoned. They were aghast on hearing all that. She was pregnant. But the doctors were not willing to do an abortion. It was too late. Her parents were horrified with shame. They were angry, they would get a bad name. What is to be done ? They were clueless. They were helpless. We gave them time to think. Told them to meet us again after a couple of days.

Now even they had to be told something and had to appreciate some things themselves. It was a very complicated case. Guru was also called along with Leela's parents. He was somewhat scared. But he confessed to everything. He and Leela had been meeting regularly. They had made love not once but many times. He did not deny that. He wanted to marry her. But both were still minors. Doctors had refused to carry out abortion. So the matter had to be handled with restraint.

Leela was still quiet. Had she realised the seriousness of the situation ? Had she thought about marriage, child ? How was she to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up the child ? Having fun for a few minutes was different from living a life with somebody about whom nothing was known. What if the person, who had asked her to dance in a dance bar for money, tried to sell her in future? It seemed that she had not thought about these and such other things. This was the consequence of lack of fear of the parents and absence of good upbringing. Guru and Leela was a good example of what happens when children take undue advantage of the freedom they get.

All concerned decided to take things cautiously. Leela's nursing course would get over by then. By then she and Guru would be adults. Hence there would be no problem in getting them married. Leela's parents felt hurt but, all said and done, she was their lone child. They consented to everything. They started preparing to face the relatives.

A tempest had engulfed the house. However, that home was saved from getting ruined only with the help of Parivartan. As soon as they became adults, Guru and Leela were married in a simple ceremony. Guru and Leela got suitable jobs. Their life together had a proper beginning. However, they would have to think and behave responsibly if it was to be happy and fruitful. So they wanted to continue their dialogue with Parivartan .. at least for some more months.

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## 26. JOHN

“Namaskar Madam”, the policeman greeted me while entering my cabin.

“Namaskar. What brings you here today ?” I asked him looking up from the file, but one look at the boy who was with him and I correctly guessed that he must be a first time offender...

“Come, what’s your name ?” I asked him while getting up. I was sizing him up : Age must be about 14/15, smart, straight nose, chubby cheeks – a boy anybody would admire at first sight. But the face was tired. There was a guilty expression. “So there are chances of improvement.” I said to myself. There was silence in the room for some time.

“Madam, this is John. Please take charge of him. A very naughty boy. Cheated his father easily. Cleaned up the house and ..” The policeman slapped him on the back. Perhaps the father in him had woken up.

In order to understand his past, I asked John what he liked and what he didn’t, did he see movies, who was his favourite hero, which games did he play, what was the name of his school, names of his friends and so on. I believed that children do go astray in that age. Instead of repeating the history they should be given an opportunity to change. New thoughts, new ideas, new dreams should be sowed in their minds and they should be helped to forget the bad memories of the past as fast as possible.

I took John around Parivartan premises. I told him about the various courses which were conducted there, what kind of work one can do after completing the courses, how much money one could earn, etc. While seeing him off, I said, “Give a careful thought to what I told you and come back tomorrow. We would register your name immediately.” This gave him some courage. I felt sure that he had developed confidence in me. It was probably for the first time that somebody had talked to him positively about his future. I decided to take things as per his inclination.

He came the next day in fine clothes. He wanted to do the wireman’s course. After he went away to the class, I called up his father and the policeman and understood his case. John was a child from a lower middle class triangular family. The only child and hence pampered. Father had a small job. The mother was a house wife. John was everything to her. They admitted John in a good school but John had no liking for studies nor was he good at it. He had no botherations, School in the morning, a nice meal in the afternoon which his mother fed him with much love, and then a nice siesta. Then go out to play, TV in the night and the day would be over. No thoughts and no ideas in the mind.

This was his routine till he reached the eighth grade. But his mother died of a sudden and short illness. The visiting guests went home and now John realised the reality.

Father was busy with office but was also looking after the house. He even cooked. But he could not replace John's mother. Treating him with love, asking about his day, understanding him..John was feeling lonely. He felt devastated. He lost taste for eating. He was not attentive in the school. He didn't like the idea of going to an empty home after school. Once, when he was on his way home, he saw some boys of his age playing cards. There were wada-pav packages by the side. They were eating and chatting merrily.

On noticing that John was looking at them intently somebody asked, " Hey, would you play with us ?". John came to his senses and quickly resumed his walk home. This became a daily affair. One day he threw away his bag and ran toward the children. He played with them. He ate the wada-pav offered by them. He reached home in the evening. Wow ! The day had passed beautifully. Even while sleeping he was talking to himself. Then he started taking interest in the game. Those children were like orphans. They did betting. Played lottery. Made small thefts skilfully. John started liking their happy go lucky way of living. How they are enjoying life. No studies, no tension. John got accustomed to it. He too started betting. Started loosing. Then he started pilfering money from his father's pocket. He even sold some articles from the house.

His father took some time to notice this. All that he could do was to try and persuade him, scold him, beat him. He had become helpless, hopeless. On realising that he could pick his father's pocket which he does not even notice John was elated. He would not pay any attention to his father's sermons. His friends under the bridge advised him : "Don't worry about father, join us. You will never be short of money." They were laughing and clapping. They introduced him to pick pocketing. Taught him to be carefree.

John changed. He found his new way of life thrilling. Bunking school, lying skilfully, bluffing, small thefts, pick pocketing, pilfering things – he could now do all these things skilfully. His confidence grew. The futility of all this, the falseness of all this – he considered it to be the truth. This was his defence mechanism to fill the vacuum created by the death of his mother.

And one day the reality dawned on him. A police van arrived when they were playing with stakes. Other children ran away. John was caught. He could not account for the money he had in his pocket. Once the police roughed him up, he told the truth. For a moment he felt light.

But now he felt ashamed of himself. How would mother have felt ? How should I face father now ? How would the teacher and other children from the school react ? Now all the neighbours and relatives would call me a thief. And how would I confess at the church on Sunday ? He started crying. He pleaded to the police. "Please release me. I won't do this again."

The police were quite used to such things. It was their duty to reform such wayward children. They took him to a reformatory. Children there gathered around him. ‘How was I and how have I changed ?’ He started contemplating. He felt the absence of his mother very badly that day. He just coiled up and laid down through the night. He clung to his father who came to meet him. He kept repeating, “ Daddy I am sorry. I erred. I won’t behave like this again. Please take me home. I am sorry Daddy, sorry..”

The police brought him to Parivartan. We realised that school was almost over for him. He craved for love. He was basically not bad. Apart from training as a wireman he received love and affection at Parivartan. He would come to me calling me madam or aunty, would talk. He learnt and worked sincerely.

Months passed. He had completed his course. But our responsibility was not yet over. We visited a church nearby. Met the Father. We had heard that they had a good network of their own. We soon experienced it. He himself was quite affectionate. He offered a job to John. Introduced him to others. John started getting small assignments. Started getting some money and some prestige too.

It was necessary that he should not come in contact with those children again, that he should be kept away from that atmosphere. We took his father into confidence. He was also worried about his child. He felt it was his mistake and felt sorry for it. It was necessary to get him out of the guilty feeling, make him think about the future and initiate a dialogue between him and his son. He gave his house on rent. Took another house on rent near the church where John was working. Now John had a full time job. There was somebody who would enquire about his day when he returned home in the evening. John was normalising. The Father planned to try to induct John in the social work of the church. He wanted to impress on John that the true penance for his mistake would be to caution others from such mistakes, keep them away from them, that people can be won with love, the bonds of love can be as strong as those of blood.

I felt very happy at all this. I phoned him from time to time, sent messages. He would be waiting for them. Neither he nor me noticed when I became an aunty instead of Madam. I knew that he would need my support for some time. Then, only memories would remain in his and my minds. The dialogue would get a full stop.

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## 27. BURDEN

Afternoon time. I was relaxing after having lunch, looking at the rain which was pouring outside. There was a knock on the door. Two young girls of about 15/16 years age were standing at the door. Their face reflected a mixture of curiosity and anxiety. "Come in", I said. I tried to size them up while encouraging them to talk. They had heard my name and the name of the centre. They had nobody at home or in the neighbourhood whom they could turn to for advice and so they had come to me.

They were Salma and Rizwana. Both of them were living in the same colony. They were of the same age. The financial position at home and their efforts to overcome it were also identical. Somebody told them that there are some vacancies in the nursing course in the centre, so they had come here. Without giving much thought, they had taken admission to the course with the hope that they could start earning after they completed the course.

Everything was fine till this point. However, trouble started when the course began. It turned out that Salma had a phobia for red colour. At the sight of red colour she would perspire heavily, her limbs would become cold, lips would become dry, and she would have a sensation of ants running around the brain. She would feel as if the head was spinning and that she would collapse and faint.

And this was a nursing course where she had to deal with blood. Rizwana was trying to explain this to me. Salma supported her by saying "Yes, Madam, that's true," from time to time.

I was listening to them quietly. "What happened the other day..." After they had described some such experiences I asked them, "If that is the case, why did you take admission for the nursing course? You could have chosen some other course." They kept looking at each other for some time. They must be wondering what exactly should we tell Madam and how much. "Tell me the truth. No need to be afraid." I was trying to encourage them. Salma sat up in the chair. She bent a little with both the hands on the table, "The thing is, Madam, ..."

Salma and Rizwana had very large families. Parents were not educated. Income was limited. They were the eldest children. They were followed by several children. Mother would get tired doing all the housework and attending to the children. All the children were students of the municipal school. None of them had interest in learning. They could not grasp what the teacher taught, could not read or write. Just due to the government's policy of not failing a student till the eighth grade they had reached the ninth grade. But now the mother was tired. And the number of family members was increasing. It was getting difficult to arrange two meals for the children. So she was falling sick often. Salma was getting tired helping her mother and father. Once when mother fell sick, Salma had to stay at home. She quit school. However she was keen that her brothers and sisters should not have to meet the same

fate. The only pastime she had was to chat with Rizwan in the afternoon after finishing domestic work. Both of them wanted to do something but did not know what to do and how.

That was when somebody had brought them to Parivartan. They enrolled for the nursing course, but then what about the fear which Salma had for blood and red colour ? She felt totally confused. “Why is Allah doing this to me ?” was her question. After hearing them out I felt that her case was not difficult to handle. She would not be able to do any other course and, besides, there was no guarantee she would start earning immediately.

OK, we would find some way out. “Salma, your thoughts are very good. Your parents are lucky that they have a daughter like you who thinks about them. You must take education, earn money, support your brothers and sisters, Don’t you agree ?”..” Yes Madam,” she nodded her concurrence. I gave appointment for the next meeting and sent her home.

My job was not difficult. To remove the fear of red colour from her mind. That was all. To enable her to shed the fear instead of asking her to change the course.

Salma kept meeting me. I explained several things to her by talking and by citing examples. Gave demonstrations. “Red is sign of aura, life. The colour of love is red. The sun is red, the bindi which we put on our forehead is red, not only that but our lips are red. When we blush, smile or get scared, that emotion turns our cheeks red.” This is what Salma who wanted to give up the nursing course because of her fear of the red colour was telling me. The money which she was now earning after completing the course, the help it provided to her family and the ability which it gave to her in fulfilling the wishes of her siblings enabled her to see dreams of the future.

Salma completed the course. She also got a job in a nearby nursing home on the strength of her sincerity. She received the first pay. Salma, wearing a red dupatta, came to meet me with a small box of pedhas in hand. That was also an afternoon; rain was pouring and our hearts were full of satisfaction. One more story had been added to the collection of success stories of Parivartan.

## 28. DRAG

One must keep the rudder of the ship of his life in one's own hands only. The life of one who can do this becomes straight forward, while that of one who cannot, goes astray. Sunila first grew under the influence of her father and then under the shadow of her husband. It was somewhat late by the time she realised that her future and that of her children had become dark. However, though rather late, when she started taking her own decisions, she saw a ray of hope. It was with the help of this ray that she was to lift herself from the valley of despair, was to bring her children on the right track again. Indeed it was already rather too late. But.....

Sunila first came to meet me with a maid working with Parivartan. Tall, slim, wearing a dress which did not suit her, hair also not tied up neatly. Unsteady gaze. She was walking with a drag. The maid introduced her to me, "Tai, she is Sunila." Sunila shot back at her, "Why are you telling my name to Madam ? Don't I remember it or can't I speak ?" She was laughing while speaking, speaking while laughing. "Madam, I am well educated, a graduate. I am working here as a clerk, Won't I be able to tell me own name ?" She kept blabbering for some time, incoherently. "Something has gone wrong." I said to myself. I continued to watch her. Age could be about 40, but she looked older than that. Confused mind. Financial condition rather bad. .. And, suddenly, without asking me she pulled a chair and sat down and snapped the chain of my thoughts. I was keenly scanning her from the top to the bottom. She was shaking her legs rather violently because of which she was unable to sit straight. Her body was swaying from front to back. She had clenched her hands as if she had caught herself. With no bangles, no necklace, no ear rings, she appeared rather strange. Would laugh intermittently without any reason. She started speaking again, " Madam, these people think I am mad. My ill luck is still haunting me. I have been harassed all along, first by my father when I was a child, then by my husband and now by these people. 'Do like this, do like that, don't do this, sit here, don't sit there', ..and they make me work like a peon. They should at least respect my age."

I and my assistant were listening to her patiently. She must have felt that after a long time she has met somebody who was listening sympathetically. I was trying to encourage her to talk by sympathising and asking questions. I calmed her and sent her home. I said, "come again tomorrow. I would wait for you. "

She came the next day in the same condition as yesterday. However, she looked somewhat fresh - probably because she had slept well in the night. She started telling her story frankly : "Tai, I am from a village near Wai, from a rather well to do family. My father was educated but orthodox. Mother had no value in the house. While the grand parents were there she hardly came out of the kitchen. She would not cross the threshold of the house. We didn't have any property. No big name which would make us feel proud. Father wanted a son. We were three sisters. I was



the youngest. When my eldest sister was born there was much jubilation due to the belief that the first daughter brings wealth. Mai was born hardly a year and a quarter after her. Now my parents were a little disappointed. They started efforts to ensure that the third child would be a son – medical treatment, vows, etc. They tried everything. And mother was pregnant again. All started taking good care of her. They said “looks like this time it is going to be a son”. But then I was born. As if it was my fault. My father didn’t even see my face for several days. Grand mother said “Why is she born? Would have been better if she was born dead.” And then started my neglect. No words of praise, no sweets, no pampering. All would treat me with disdain. I was not so good at school too. Added to that was the complex that nobody liked me. As a result I was not able to make any friends. No hobbies; boring, dry life. Was studying as I could. First school, then college. Nobody asked me about my preference. I somehow passed B.Com. Passed on the margin. Got a degree. Then I tried for a job and got one. Not a big one. Sometimes I would get new jobs and loose them. My age was increasing. Friends of my age were getting married. Some of them even had children. They would sometimes greet me and sometimes won’t. I too sometimes felt jealous of them , sometimes I would feel sorry for myself. Nobody was talking about my marriage. My dreams remained dreams only. Nobody came to meet me. I did not dare talk to anybody. I was past twenty five, thirty. I remained as I was. Silence in the house. Nobody talked to each other. Every body behaved like an automaton. Only when the sisters came, the atmosphere would be somewhat lively.

And then, all of a sudden, a distant aunt arrived. No doubt she had come with some motive. She broached the subject of my marriage. By then I was thirty five. Would I be able to manage ? Could I have children ? Would I be able to bring them up ? So many questions; but I could not ask them to anybody. Sometimes I thought : anyway I was not happy here, at least I would be out of this place, I would be able to manage. My parents were tired too. “Let’s see...” It appeared the aunt had expected this. She pressed. We conveyed our clearance without making due enquiries. The marriage was done in a simple way. There was some curiosity in the mind. I stepped into the new house with some anxiety. It was just a bachelor’s room. Untidy. In a couple of days I came to know about his addiction. Coming home late, blabbering, would threaten me if I dared to ask something...In short I realised that I had fallen from the frying pan into the fire. I became more disheartened. There was nobody back at home whom I could turn to. Then I decided to look for a job. Thought I must stand on my own legs. But even that was not easy. I was feeling nauseous because I was pregnant. I was feeling sick. My husband thought I was pretending. Shortage of money, alcohol addiction, shower of abuses and kicks...That became the routine. I got a son. Now I would shower all my love on him only, would bring him up. That’s what I thought. The anxiety about whether I would be able to do all this was there too. Soon I had another child . I was unable to look after two children in my growing age. Could not cope up with work. My husband’s addiction was growing worse. So

also the quarrels which ended in shouting and he beating me up. I got fed up, tired. Thoughts of leaving the house started coming to my mind. I felt like sleeping all the time, didn't feel like talking to anybody. But there was nobody who would care for me.

Then my husband adopted a different strategy. He declared me mad. Started telling every body that my wife has lost her head. My parents had disowned me long ago. He took me to a doctor. He gave me some medicines. Gave me shock treatment. I could not bear it. The beatings and cursing was going on.

But one day I dared. I got from a neighbour the address of an organisation which works for destitute women and left the house. I was so fed up with that house that even the ties of my children could not hold me back. I got a shelter there. They tried to persuade my husband. But they too had noticed his strange nature. Also, I had on me the marks of his beatings. I had no desire to go back to him. At last I decided to separate. I applied for alimony. That organisation got me a job too. But , look, here also..."I heard her story patiently. I pacified her. I told her that we would try to find some way out of this.

While leaving, she again broached the subject. "Madam, I won the case, I got alimony. That means my case was right, isn't it ? But see, what has happened to my children. He not only ruined my life, but didn't pay any attention to the children too. They have become vagabonds. They don't go to school regularly. Just sit at home for days together. How is all this to be changed ? If my job continues, I would look after them, but now..." Her eyes were brimming with tears. She tried to hide them and kept saying, "Madam, I am not mad. I will look after the children, would bring them up in life..."

I asked my assistant to come alone the next day. I wanted to understand from her the lady's behaviour in the office. She was not able to adjust here. Time had changed over the last 25/30 years. She was unable to do the work. She was making mistakes but she was not ready to admit that. She would keep crying when she thought of her children and would take her anger out on others by shouting at them when she remembered her husband.

I called her. I told her that if she desired to keep the job then she would have to learn more. Would have to learn the computer. If you loose this job, you won't get another. You will have to adjust with others. While talking to her, I also kept suggesting to her that such and such colour will suit you, use such type of dresses, tie your hair like this and so on.

She agreed with all I was saying. She improved her behaviour and way of dressing. That improved her confidence. She did some courses in Parivartan. Now her attitude in the office has also changed. Her confidence is improving. I am sure that her motherly strength would prove to be supreme. She would change herself out of her

love for her children and that the mother and the children would come together again.

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## 29. THE SWEET END

Today, I got the proof of the saying “All is well that ends well.” It was afternoon time. I had a file in front of me. I heard somebody asking, “Madam, can I come in ?” It was Shantipriya, with a young child in the left hand and a box of sweets in the other. She appeared very happy. Kept talking profusely about her village, her home and the parlour.

She got up to leave after some time. I entered the past looking at her departing figure:

The beauty parlour teacher had phoned : “Hey, I am sending a girl to you. She was doing very well in the beginning, participated in everything with enthusiasm. Her attendance used to be somewhat poor, but nothing to worry about it. But, of late, she is not attentive . She is very depressed, doesn’t talk. Something is wrong.” The next day, a girl of about 16/17 years came to meet me. “Madam, my teacher has sent me here. Don’t know why, but said I should meet you.” She spoke in a sweet voice. Her choice of clothes was very good. Looked very attractive, sweet. But the bangles in the hands and the sindoor in the hair did not suit her age.

I asked her to sit and started talking to her. “Where do you live ? Who all are at home?’ At first she appeared somewhat confused. She was not replying quite freely. But I was not to quit. I wanted answers for her absenteeism, her unhappy demeanour.

At last, she opened out. “Madam, I am in big trouble. Everything is finished now. My life is ruined. I won’t talk about this to anybody, but everybody is bound to know some day. My in-laws would not believe me. People in the family will make my life miserable. They will drive me out of the house. Where could I go ? What would I do ? I just don’t know.” She was crying uncontrollably. I told her to meet me again the next day. Reassured her. “ Don’t worry. We will find some way out.” The case was rather serious. I started thinking how to go about handling it.

Shantipriya’s family had migrated to Mumbai from Uttar Pradesh. They were in a small business. Nobody was educated. Shantipriya was admitted to a school but she had no liking for studies nor was she good at it. Then she quit school in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade. However, she did household work very well. She was influenced by the Mumbai lifestyle. So she lived in style. She came of age and her parents were eager to get her married.

They found a boy of their caste, their social status from the native village and married her to him. She was not yet quite mature. Was still somewhat childish. Was under the influence of TV and cinema. Was living in a dream world. The in laws were rather orthodox. They would not bring her home till the ‘gauna’ (a ritual in North India) was performed. Soon they sent her to Mumbai.

She was excited by the husband's fleeting glances and passing touch, the short exchanges of words which she had experienced during the stay of a few days there. The marriage and the life in the in-laws' place had sobered her. She felt like thinking seriously about life. There was nobody at home who could have appreciated her situation. Her friend brought her to Parivartan. After considering various alternatives she decided to do the beautician's course. She had plans to start her own parlour and earn some money on returning to the in-laws' place. She wanted to be proud as an earning daughter in law.

She kept dreaming, was learning with enthusiasm. One day she received a phone call from her husband. "I am coming to Mumbai. Come to meet me, but don't tell anybody. Shantipriya bunked the class, bluffed her mother, dressed up and went to meet her husband. He was a bit hefty, older than her. He had planned what he wanted to do but had not thought about the consequences. He was seized with passion. Had own wife but she lived far away. He became crazy. Enjoyed fully with Shantipriya. Her initial resistance had no effect. In a way, it was a rape. He enjoyed again and again over 3-4 hours and said, "Don't tell anybody at home. I will come again. Don't worry."

Now he was sort of addicted to it. Shantipriya was helpless, she had the passion which comes naturally, she looked forward to the secret meetings. She was finding it difficult to hide all this from the parents. They were meeting again and again. She kept quiet, but nature would not. Now she was scared. Didn't know what to do, how to handle the situation. It was a serious lapse on her part no doubt, but it was not a sin. She missed her period.

Her uneasiness did not escape her teacher. She took Shantipriya into confidence and found out about her parents and in-laws. Checked how long Shantipriya had been missing her periods. She said to Shantipriya, "Will you give me the mobile number of your husband ? I would have to talk to him. This problem cannot be solved without his help."

I called him at our centre. He appeared straight forward. Both of them sat before me. I could see guilty feelings on their faces. In a way that was good. What if he had denied everything ? But that did not happen. He was involved in Shantipriya. Was enamoured by her. He had realised his mistake. I first suggested to them that they should talk to each other and find a way out. People from both sides were not going to accept this. I told her husband that he should press his parents to complete whatever rituals they wanted to do as early as possible and said that if this secret had to be kept from all then doing abortion would be inevitable. I also impressed on them that they had to decide soon or else there would be legal problems. Now they had to think and also take a doctor's advice on what should be done to avoid a situation like this again. I assured them this would remain confidential and gave reference of a good doctor. They listened to me calmly and left. I was growing

restless. I was worried about Shantipriya. I was worried that her husband should not disown her. I was eagerly looking forward to her visit.

She came after about a week. She appeared free of any tension. Her worries were over. The doctor had guided them nicely. Their secret meetings continued over the next few months. But all the rituals were over. Shantipriya's course was also over and she left for her in-laws' place in UP.

Some months passed. She came to meet me after about a year and a half or so. She had come to show her baby, to take blessings and to offer sweets. I accepted the sweets. Gave my blessings to both. My hand on her back told her quite a bit. Her eyes brimmed with tears. She sat still for some time, wiped her tears and left. She had controlled herself. As if one act of the drama was over and the second had begun in which all the characters were going to play their own true roles..

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### 30. DID ALL THIS FOR THIS ONLY..

If we take a look at the history, names of several social reformers come before our eyes: Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule, Agarkar, Maharshi Annasaheb Karve and others. Women from the present century would never be able to repay their loan. Today's woman is educated, she earns, she has shone in several areas. The simple, straight forward, common woman has changed. She has started thinking about herself. The days when women considered marriage as the ultimate happiness are long over.

A good example of this is Sulekha and her approaching Parivartan on her own. Like the man in Kusumagraj's poem, who lost everything he owned in a flood but needed his Guru to just say, "Fight", she wanted someone's token support to implement the decision which she had taken. She wanted to divorce her husband and she got it too.

Sulekha came to the centre with a request, "Madam, I want to take divorce. Please tell me the process." Because of her small built she appeared younger than her age. She spoke little. But there was firmness and precision in whatever she said. Her thoughts were clear. She was educated and earning. Her parents were not rich. But they educated their children, brought them up well, made efforts to ensure that their daughter stood on her own legs. They got her married with enthusiasm. The groom was earning reasonably well and did not have many familial responsibilities. His parents had a small, but own house. Sulekha had earned enough for her marriage. She was conscious of the hardships which her parents had gladly faced to bring up the children. That is why even when she started earning, she spent money wisely. She helped her parents meet expenses of the family.

After stabilising in the job she started dreaming about life ahead. She knew that one should be realistic in his expectations. So she consented to marry the man chosen by her parents. The marriage was fixed and also solemnised soon. The bride and the groom meeting before the marriage would not have been approved by the parents on either side. Still they talked on the mobile and chatted on SMS a few times. He told her that they would be proceeding for honeymoon on the day they got married. She blushed. Her friends teased her. Gave some tips. She was extremely pleased, started dreaming. She thought she was lucky to get a husband who would care for her, understand her, appreciate her.

But what actually happened was different. She felt she was robbed, devastated. Her husband troubled her so much in those 4/5 days that she developed a loathing for him. She started disliking his touch, his gaze. She froze, got frightened. The tenderness of touch, the slow blossoming of feelings was not there. He tried to enjoy her as a right. He was mad with 'starvation' for a long time and wanted to extract pleasure as a right without any consideration for her feelings and body. He expected that he must get his pleasure whenever he wanted and as he wanted, that it was his right and that the wife must comply with it. He tried to 'enjoy' her in natural and

even other ways. It was as if she was going through repeated rapes. And that too by the husband. On the very first occasion of their union she had gone miles away from him.

She returned home. She could not tell anything at her home as also at the in laws' home where she was new. Her condition became more pitiable in the husband's house. It was a small house. One room and a kitchen. A loft had been erected in the room. That was to be the bed room of the newly married couple. Now her leave was over. She had to get up early, help in cooking, then travel to the office, then the return journey .. she would get tired. In the first place, she was not physically strong and then she was not used to so much work and travelling. And then, during the night, her husband would not allow her any rest. Would harass her through the night. Any movement on the loft would make noise. Other members of the family would be sleeping below. She felt very awkward. She was convinced that her husband was perverted. Lack of sleep would cause headache in the mornings. She was unable to concentrate on her work in the office. Her colleagues were observing her – her going into a shell, remaining silent. Sometimes some colleague asked “ Is everything ok ?”. A week passed like this. The pay day arrived and a new problem came up.

Her husband made an unreasonable demand. “Hand over your pay to me and take whatever money you need from me.” She was not prepared to accept this. For one, even her parents had not done like this and secondly, she considered it her duty to help her parents in meeting expenses of the education of her siblings. When she declined, the discord deepened. She would be quiet in the house. Her in laws did not bother to ask her if she had any problems. The mother in law never tried to build any affectionate relationship with her or sympathise with her; or perhaps she was in league with her husband. That shook her confidence. She started contemplating : whether to continue to go through this through out her life or separate in time. And one day, she opened her mind to a friend. The friend gave her the contact number of Parivartan.

She came to us. She narrated everything very soberly. We called her husband. He came. He narrated his complaints. “She doesn't behave like a wife. Doesn't respond. Why did she marry at all ? Have I not any rights as a husband ? Doesn't laugh, doesn't speak. If I propose that we go to a movie or for a walk on Sundays she refuses. Doesn't help in the household work too. When she is earning so much, should she not contribute something for the household expenses ?” He was talking like a typical husband. Otherwise he appeared normal. However, from their talk it appeared unlikely that their wavelengths would ever match. If the matter went to court, there would be unpleasantness for both, so we advised them to meet a counsellor.

We suggested a suitable and affordable counsellor. He tried his best to reconcile but Sulekha had developed a strong dislike for the husband and he was not willing to



change his thinking. After many sessions, they decided to go for separation with mutual consent.

Sulekha came to Parivartan to thank us. She was sure that her parents would support her but she was worried whether this episode of her unsuccessful marriage would have any adverse effect on her life and that of her siblings. We convinced her and advised her to accept everything with confidence and courage.

Sulekha left but left a trail of thoughts with us. How many more Sulekhas might have lived in the past or may be living now who have not been able to reach Parivartan ? What about them ? But we felt satisfied that we could save at least one young lady from living a life of misery.

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### 31. AYESHA BEGUM

“Didi..” Shouting from the gate itself, Ayesha entered my cabin. She removed the veil from the face on her own, kept the ‘Achievement Award’ carried in the purse on the table and said, “Look Didi, I have achieved my target. I have got an award too.” She was too happy. ‘How sweet she looks while laughing!’ I said to myself while looking at her. The white patches on the face and the black circles around the eyes had disappeared. This was perhaps the first time that she had experienced so much appreciation. She was very happy.

“Oh, very good!” I too praised her. “Now, henceforth always do a job well like this.” I said to her. I said to myself, “She should always be in this mood. The Ayesha when she came here first and today’s Ayesha..! How she has changed so much! She was keenly thanking the Parivartan team.

She had come to the centre some months ago as she had no option. ‘Nothing is wrong with me. I am being dragged unnecessarily.’ She felt. But there was no option after she was told that this is what the boss had told. She already had two memos and if she got a third one she would lose her job. Then what would happen to the education of the children? She would have to face a series of issues. Her voice was faint, hands trembling. Since her boss had briefed me beforehand, I too was curious to meet her. : ‘Sit down. Please remove the veil from the face.’ I told her. Because a person’s face is the mirror of his mind. She was somewhat reluctant. She had been brought up in a very rigid atmosphere and hence she was finding it difficult to accept it. But she had no alternative but to comply.

Half of my job was done. She was 40-45, but looked older than that. Hair had greyed. She had not dressed up as one would when one is going to meet somebody. Dark circles around the eyes, white patches on the cheeks and forehead indicated weakness and deficiency of calcium. The face was pale, too tired, disheartened.

I gave her some time to sit in peace and then started talking. I took her into confidence and slowly came to the point.

She was terribly shaken. She was afraid that she was going to lose her job and if there was no job that would shake her confidence and what about the children’s education? Her boss had advised her to go to Parivartan but she considered it as a humiliation. She was hurt. She could not sleep. She lost appetite for food. She asked me, holding the memo in hand, “Look Didi, Do I look mad? What do they think of themselves? They sent me here. I am not well, I get tired but still I do my best to complete my work. And yet they gave me this memo. They say they would have to sack me. Don’t know what sin had I committed in my previous birth..” She kept talking.

I was observing her calmly. After her outburst was over, I said, “Don’t worry. Everything would be fine. First go to the doctor. Take whatever medicine he prescribes. Come again the day after tomorrow. I would obtain your boss’s permission.”

It was necessary to talk to her husband to know more about her. Her boss said, “She took up the job rather late. She appeared needy. We employed her because she spoke English fluently. There were no serious issues in the beginning. She came in time. She was not familiar with the new technology but she was willing to learn. All others in the office were younger to her and were willing to adjust with her. But her behaviour changed suddenly. First, there were complaints about health, then she started bunking, then she started lying, not cooperating with colleagues, arguing with them, talking back and worst of all, giving false feedback without talking to the client. There was no change in her behaviour even after she was given a memo.” So he suspected that there might be some different reason behind this.

We called her husband. Her behaviour at home had also changed. But he did not suspect there could be something to worry about. He was fed up with her whimsical nature. He said, “I get tired looking after her. I am forced to keep quiet looking at the children. She is never happy. Always compares with others. Whatever amount of money I may give her she feels it is not sufficient. I am working beyond my capacity. She doesn’t care. If I say something to her she tries to assault me. Sometimes she is happy, talks nicely. Sometimes suddenly she gets angry. Sometimes she pretends to be sick.” He was telling, exasperated. In short, this could be a case of mood swings. That too quite chronic and untreated... I was trying to guess.

I had asked her to come again after two days. She came on time. She removed her veil on her own. She said, “I am feeling well due to the doctor’s medicine.” If I had to treat her, I had to know more about her. I wanted to know more about her childhood. After I gained her confidence, I learnt this : She passed her childhood in a very orthodox Muslim family. Many siblings. She was the eldest. Though there was enough food for all but no extra money for frivolous expenses. There was no pampering. One good thing was that her parents had put her in an English medium school. She could not mix with the other girls in the school. “Our ways are totally different. No pocket money, no going out like them...” She felt suffocated. She went to the junior college and suddenly her mother died of some ailment. Before she could get over it, her father married again. The children were confused. While Ayesha was trying to get over it herself as also helping the other siblings to get over it, her father fixed her marriage without even asking her.

Her husband was a simple man. Tailor by profession. He was earning just enough to survive. He loved her. But was not like the prince of her dreams. He was not capable of fulfilling all her material desires. Her education had discontinued halfway. She

could not share the turmoil in her mind with anybody. She was feeling more and more suffocated. All kinds of thoughts would occupy her idle mind. “ Others are like that, then why like this in my case ?” It did not occur to her nor anybody suggested to her that she should help out her husband in his work or complete her education. So sometimes she would be quiet, sometimes very happy, some times angry. Her husband would get confused. But he did not know what to do. Years passed. She had become the mother of two children. She looked after the children fairly well but would always keep comparing them with other children. She would scold them. They would get confused. While sometimes she would shower love on the children, sometimes she would be angry with them. Sometimes she cooked many dishes while sometimes she would cook just a few. Sometimes she would keep lying down in bed saying that she was not feeling well, would not care for herself, would not eat. As the children grew, so did the expenses. She felt depressed. She wondered how to meet the expenses. But instead of finding a solution she would go into a shell. She would be in a virtual world of her own. She was unhappy. Was shy of mixing with others.

Her siblings noticed this and they found a job for her. She was happy. Started getting some money. She could enjoy the world outside the house. She was short of time which reduced the brooding. Office work, the new colleagues, everything was fine. But there had been a wide gap in the intervening period. The new gadgets, the computer ..everything was new to her. She tried to catch up, but sometimes she would end up in despair. She saw girls who were much younger than her operating the system easily. Would I lag behind ? Would the job last ? She became anxious. Then sometimes she would try to learn while sometimes she would get disheartened.

Three or four years passed like this and there was a sudden change in her behaviour. She would remain quiet, get angry, sometimes she would keep sleeping through the day, she would easily get excited, start quarrelling...Everybody was bewildered. There was nobody at home who could understand her, but her boss was a nice person; he was experienced. It was he who first explained Ayesha's case to Parivartan. He sent her there for advice.

While talking to her, we realised that the malady was old. But it would be easy to cure her. If she was to behave like a normal person, it would be essential that people should try to understand her. On the one hand, medication was in progress. We were continuously counselling her, talking to her. Her problem about the people at home and office was partly psychological and part physical – imbalance in the chemical system of the brain – we explained to her. We gave her tips about behaviour. Appealed to the mother in her. Convinced her that she would have to change for them and she did change. Started working normally again. She completed the target given to her. Even received the achievement award. We were very happy on hearing all this. We felt our efforts had borne fruit. As if her achievement award was in a way a recognition of our efforts. We were happy. But our job was not yet done . It

was necessary to convince her that we must remain in contact and that we were with her and we were going to do it..from bottom of our heart.

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### 32. RELEASE

Today was the last day of the beauty parlour course. All students were to get certificates. Then each person would do as he/she pleased based on his/her capacity. Some were to look for jobs, while others wanted to start their own activity. Neeraja's decision was firm. She was waiting for this day. As soon as she got the certificate she was to leave Mumbai and return to Delhi – in the loving atmosphere of her parents' place.

She was feeling confused over the last few days. Not only there was psychological and physical agony, but she had a guilty feeling that what she was doing was morally wrong, a sin. She considered remaining home was worse than being in jail. But how to get out of this ? And what after getting out ? Would mummy and daddy agree to keep her. I am not capable of earning even a few rupees for myself. She was deeply worried.

That was when she came to Parivartan with the help of a neighbour. On hearing her story, we felt deep sympathy for her and we started thinking about the ways to help her. The first step was to understand her, what could she do, what did she like, what was her problem.

We had a short talk and asked her to come the next day. We felt that she was not opening out and that was a fact, Anybody in her place would find it difficult to tell the truth .

Neerja was from Delhi. Grown up in a slum where poverty and unemployment prevailed. She started going to school, but did not like it nor was she good at it. There was nobody in the house who would insist that she went to school. She quit school after the eighth grade and started helping her mother who worked as a domestic servant. In Diwali, a cracker exploded in her hand and she lost an eye. The doctors fitted an artificial eye. Her parents started worrying about her marriage. But she must be lucky. As soon as she became an adult, she was married to Ranjit.

Neeraja moved to Mumbai. She had her own house, though in a slum. In-laws were living close by. Husband worked in a factory. He had his own scooter. There was no need for her to start working and earning immediately. She was happy. Those were the initial days of their married life. Going to Chawpati, eating bhel..she was enjoying everything. Since she was not lazy, her in laws were also happy.

But the joy was short lived. It was afternoon. A call came on the mobile, "Come to the hospital. Ranjit has met with an accident.." All of them hurriedly reached the hospital. Everything was beyond imagination. He was not recognising anybody. He could not talk, could not move his limbs. Ribs were broken. He was brought home after some days. All the money was over and now Ranjit would not be able to walk, speak, eat by himself again. He was to be fed through a catheter.

He was moved to a loft in the hut. She had to look after his medication, attend to him. Money was over. She had to look for domestic work. In laws would pick faults, curse her. Our son is in this condition because of you – they would say. Sometimes they would even beat her. But she had nowhere to go.

And as if this was not enough, her brother in law molested her. She had a feeling that her mother in law and father in law were in league with him. Her husband was on the loft. There was no way of knowing if he understood all this. In any case, he was not in a position to help. Then this became a routine..happened any time – whether it was day or night. There was no way to know if she did not resist or was not able to resist or whether she encouraged it. But she got fed up, was scared. What if this secret is out or this results in something else ? She felt it would be good if she were dead. Most important, she could not tell this to anybody on her own. She had come to Parivartan with the hope that they would be able to help.

First of all, we gave her courage. We convinced her that if this was to be stopped, instead of investigating how all this started she must resist. We suggested various strategies for that. Call phone no. 100 or call me. We tried to understand how she viewed the future. Made her talk to her parents. They appreciated her position. They were willing to take her back home.

While all this was going on, we took her aptitude test and suggested to her that she should do the beauticians course. She completed the course in our school. She was very sincere at that. We wondered whether she would have the courage to leave her husband when the time came though she was saying she would be able to do that. They had lived together for only about a month after marriage. Then he became an invalid and how long it would take for him to recover, if at all, was quite uncertain. It would be unfair to expect that she spent her remaining life looking after him. She would have to go for divorce if she was to lead a new life. She could even get it, but what would she have to do for that ? We explained to her how she should prepare herself psychologically.

We kept in touch with her when she came to attend class. She developed the courage to resist her brother in law with the inputs we had given to her. That was our first victory. We made her buy a small mobile from her earnings. Taught her to use it. Told her to keep in touch with her parents and siblings. We arranged for her train ticket to Delhi. It was as if we were sending our own daughter home. We had got involved in her without realising it ourselves. We wished that she should start a new life with new vigour.

At last the day to leave for Delhi came. She came to say goodbye to all of us. Her eyes brimmed with tears. “Didi, please excuse me. I will never forget you. You have helped me so much. God will always keep you happy.” She took my hands in hers and just stood like that for some time. Then she bowed and touched my feet and then left without looking back.

She called on reaching Delhi. But did not call again. We hope she is well settled by now.

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### 33. MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

At various stages of life, questions like ‘should I do this or that ?’, ‘Is this right or that ?’ agonise us. Sometimes one gets confused about which alternative one should choose. And after choosing an alternative after giving it a lot of thought, one can never be sure that the choice would turn out to be right. But taking the decisions and owning the responsibility for the consequences has to be done by oneself. Parivartan provides the strength for taking decisions and accept responsibility for them. This does not find a place in the syllabus of school and college education. People don’t appreciate that the marks one gets in an examination are not indicative of the person’s SQ or EQ or even IQ. i.e. What is his Intelligence Quotient, or Emotional Quotient, can he team up with others ? What are his likes and dislikes ? What is his capability ? What kind of business or activity he would be able to do successfully, etc. On the contrary, academic success created a false impression which is unfortunate.

The story of Nimesh falls in the above category. A very ordinary boy. Went to school and hence went on till he passed the 12<sup>th</sup>. Then he graduated too. But the days when one got a good job just because one had become a graduate was over. He got a job in a trading company in Bandra and that too quickly. Salary was not much, but he and his parents thought it was great. He was spending 4-5 hours in travelling from Navi Mumbai to Bandra and back. Initially he found that thrilling. Nimesh, who had never travelled by train, enjoyed it.

Now that he had landed a job, his parents were keen that he got married. A girl matching him was found. They were married. The wife also did odd jobs and earned. Nimesh felt “I am the king of the world” because others in the office were even less educated than him. The keenness he showed in his job was commendable. Nimesh was one who mixed with all and had a sense of humour.

They gave birth to a child. And then squabbles started between his wife and the others in the house. Nimesh would get tired after the travel of five hours and office work of eight hours. He did not get time to pay attention to domestic matters. He could not find time to play with his son or take his wife out for a change. The scope of work in the office increased and so did the tension and the expectations from him. While he was feeling happy with all this, it was telling on his health. He used to get tired, felt like being alone for some days to escape the pressure of work. But getting leave was not possible nor did he consider it proper. The boss, who otherwise spoke sweetly, would get upset at the mention of leave. That increased his tension. The year end was approaching and it became necessary to sit late. He lost sleep. Lost appetite.

Once, while going to the office, he had palpitations. Eyes were drowsy. Throat was parched. He sweated profusely. He got scared by the feeling that he had had a heart attack. His limbs went cold. Thoughts of what would happen to his wife and child

bothered him. He sat with eyes closed and chanting God's name till his destination came. He fell asleep. Felt fresh when he awoke. But the worry in his mind had not gone fully.

He narrated the episode to his colleagues on reaching office. Kept his office bag away, had a cup of tea and came to Kherwadi. He narrated everything to the doctor. The doctor checked his blood pressure and did some preliminary tests and advised him to rest for 4/5 days. He also prescribed some tablets to relieve tension. But Nimesh was not satisfied. Has the doctor checked me properly and thoroughly – he started having doubts. He took leave for two days. But the targets, the strain of work, the heaps of files made him uneasy. Now he started having severe headache. Did not have the mind to even look at any food or drink. One evening, he rushed to Kherwadi after finishing work. He narrated his complaints to the doctor. The doctor felt he needed counselling. He sent him to me with a chit and also talked to me on phone.

I knew everything as soon as I saw Nimesh. It was clear from his face and the movements of his hands and legs that he was under tremendous tension. He was strained attending to the house and the office. It was necessary to talk to him to relieve him of strain. He needed to be advised about deciding priorities, time management, making use of the commuting time, etc. and it was necessary that he visited Parivartan for quite some time. And lack of time was the key issue in his case. It was not like taking some tablets or an injection. Even then, we talked to his office and had some meetings with him. Nimesh was calming gradually. He came to us for about two months and then he stopped coming. He would not pick up the phone either. On making enquiries at his office, we came to know that he had resigned. I was bewildered. What exactly could have happened ? The thought kept cropping up.

After some months I received a call from him. "Thank you Madam." He said, " I gave a thought to what you were saying and I started getting the answers by myself. I tried to understand what I wanted, what do the family members expect, etc. The office would get another person in my place, but my mother won't get another son or my son won't get another father. I also saw that the doctors' reports were normal. Then I decided to change the job. I decided to look for a job near my house. Doesn't matter if the pay was less. I would be saving time and money through shorter travel. Luckily I got a job. Now I get lot of time for the family. I would enjoy life like this for some time. Then I am thinking of buying an auto rickshaw by taking a loan. My son would grow. I must provide good education for him. People in the office said I was mad, I should not quit the job. But my decision was final and firm.

" And now I am happy. I am keeping good health. Too." I was happy to hear him. So his problem was over. We offered him our good wishes. Told him that he was welcome to call us again if necessary. No need to come here personally from such a

long distance. Either me or somebody else would talk to you. He said “Bye” and put the phone down.

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## 34. TRAPPED

“Namaste Didi,” Smita said entering my cabin with a smile. “Come. How are you ?” I asked. She used to come to me for career counselling. “I am fine. No tension.” She said in her typical style. “Didi, here is Usha.” She introduced her friend who was with her.

Usha smiled unwillingly, asked “Can I sit ?” and sat in the chair. Smita said, “ Didi, please teach my friend to smile. She was not like this before. She mixed well with others, used to be cheerful. She would take the lead when it came to helping somebody. She participated in all activities. We all did the preparations for her marriage with her. Attended the marriage. Lot of fun. We were planning how to tease her when she resumed office. But we don’t know what has gone wrong with her. She doesn’t speak, always tears in her eyes.” Smita was a bit over smart. She started teasing her in my presence, “ So Usha rani, Looks like your hubby isn’t allowing you to sleep in the night..” She kept talking for some time.

It was clear that Usha did not like this. She sat bent over the table with both the hands entwined. Creases appeared on the forehead and tears started streaming down from the eyes. Smita was a little shaken. She said, “OK, Didi, I would leave. Please do help her.” I made Usha relax after Smita had left. Made preliminary enquiries and told her to come again after two days.

She was a graduate. Her parents had toiled hard so that she could complete her education. They had brought her up well. They had named her Usha as she was the first child in the house. Small built, wheatish complexioned Usha studied sincerely. She had a younger brother. But he was no good at studies. He was a vagabond. So Usha was everything for her parents.

Her father worked in a small factory. He was nearing retirement. Usha had saved some money by working for 4/5 years. So they decided to find a good boy and fix her marriage. A friend of her father suggested a groom, Sham, and they were married.

Sham was quiet and good natured; had a small job. He was the only child of his parents. They had their own house at Ghatkopar, though it was only a one room house. Usha’s leave of 15 days for the marriage was over and she started going to the office at Santacruz. It was quite a bit of travel. Household work, making tiffin for herself – the routine was new. She would get tired. Nothing that her friends had expected and asked had happened during the leave. A pooja was performed in the house after the marriage. Guests who had come from other towns had gone back to their towns. She started feeling very lonely. Sham and his father were quiet. Both had started attending office. But the mother in law was a little strange. She would wash her hands every now and then, would rinse the utensils every now and then, would find faults with Usha’s work. “You modern girls...”she would keep berating.

Usha would say, "Please guide me and I would do as you want.." but that would not satisfy her. She would not allow Usha to go near Sham. She sensed that Sham and his father were under some pressure.

Though living together she could not speak to Sham in the house. So she was sending an SMS to Sham, " Please give me call when you are near the station, I will come to meet you..." The mother in Law saw it and started blabbering. She received a missed call from Sham but could not go to meet him. He waited for some time and then came home. He did not say anything. Mother in Law took his mobile and checked. This became a daily affair. This was becoming unbearable for Usha. But she could not confide in anybody. She was feeling suffocated. One day, she saw her Father in Law giving some medicine to the mother in Law. What could it be ? She wondered.

She came to her parents' place. But kept acting happy so as not to make her parents sad. While she was there, she took half a day's leave and went to meet Sham. Sham was also very pleased. They went to a restaurant. It was the first time they could talk freely. He admitted, " We should have told you before the marriage. But did not imagine that it would go to such extent." He was feeling guilty. His mother had died when he was very young. He didn't even remember her. He considered the new mother as the real one. She never treated him badly. But she would keep scolding him, keep him on tight leash. He could not live freely in the house. He always felt that his house was not like theirs. His father was also scared of her. She would be suspicious about him too. She would keep talking to herself in an angry mood. Her behaviour was strange. He saw Baba take her to a doctor and gives some medicine to her everyday.

Usha was telling all this to me. It struck me- Schizophrenia. I told her to take courage and ask the father in Law what medicine he gave to her and also told her to bring Sham and his Father also to the centre. I advised her too. "I think you should try to understand your mother in law. She knows that her behaviour with you is wrong but she is not doing it on purpose. She is suffering from an ailment of the mind which is just like the ailments of the body. Also, it is possible that she did not allow her to bear a child so that nobody could blame her for giving a step motherly treatment to Sham. She accepted Sham, but she could be finding it difficult to accept you. Do as she would like you to do. Avoid clashes. And if possible, live away for a few days." I convinced Sham too. "Not hurting your mother is fine, but Usha is your wife. If you don't treat her like a wife, she might leave you".

Both of them must have pondered over my advice. They found a house near the office and moved there. But bad luck struck again. While they were having some happy time together and understood each other, Sham lost his job. They could not afford to meet the expenses of living by themselves with only one salary. Going to her parents' place was not acceptable to her either. They returned to their original

home. Now the mother in Law had one more handle to taunt her. Usha was taking it very calmly and avoided talking back. But after all there was a limit to her tolerance too.

I told her to bring Sham and his father to me. They came. My guess turned out to be correct. Sham's father admitted that his wife was suffering from the psychological disorder since long. She would have to take medicines for life. Such patients avoid taking medicine. They can become more aggressive if the medicine is discontinued. Hence, the responsibility of ensuring that the treatment continues uninterrupted falls on the members of the family. The medicines must be given on time. I tried to impress all this upon them in details. But I thought it would be better if they consulted a doctor. But since they could not afford a private doctor, I referred them to KEM Hospital. I talked to the doctor there. I told Usha to keep in touch on the phone.

Usha was really a good girl. She handled things very wisely. She already commanded respect in the house because she was a graduate. Usha and Sham needed marriage counselling too. Usha phoned frequently and updated me. She had accepted the situation. She accepted the mother in law too thinking what she would have done if this had happened to her mother. The atmosphere in the house improved with the treatment of the KEM doctors. They sat together and came to a solution : Usha and Sham would go to Usha's parents' place on the weekends. Some years passed and Usha came with the good news. "Didi, We now have a daughter , Suvarna. I gave her in the hands of my mother in law and said Aai, now bringing her up is your responsibility. Please rear her with love and make her wise as you did in the case of Sham." The mother in law was pleased. Now she is busy with Suvarna. So automatically, she has less time for the domestic chores. All others make sure that she is given her medicines on time.

I was very happy on hearing this. This was a good example of how even big problems become simple if treated with due care and consideration.

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### 35. TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIND

“How much is 27 minus 9 ?” Emperor Akbar asked. All the people in the court answered 18. But Birbal alone said zero. All started laughing. Birbal explained. “ Out Of 27 stars, 9 are for rains. If it doesn’t rain during these stars then the whole year is futile.” And he was right. If we delete the skill form our hands, our life is meaningless, zero.

There used to be a similar story in our books. There lived a very beautiful girl in a village. When the prince was passing through the village he saw her. He proposed her in marriage. She said, “Learn some skill then I will marry you.” The prince learnt weaving and they got married. Some wicked people abducted the king. Threw him into a dungeon. But he escaped using the skill he had learnt.

Though the times have changed now, this reality has not. Merely passing the tenth or twelfth or getting a degree doesn’t mean one would get a job. Getting a job or doing something on your own needs something more. KSWA offers this ‘something’ to the young people through various courses and through “Soch ka Parivartan” (Transformation of thought) which transforms their lives.

Some examples –

**Farjana Khan :** I was a common house wife. My husband was an accountant in a company. Seven persons in the house. It was difficult to manage the house in the salary of one person. It was difficult to fulfil the wishes of all.

Once I happened to see the leaflet of Yuva Parivartan. I went to make enquiries and joined the tailoring course. I didn’t know anything about tailoring, but I started learning under the guidance of Kusum madam and I started liking it. Then I learnt everything fast.

After completing the three months’ course, I started accepting orders – small and big. As I did the work, I started getting new ideas. Then I did the advanced tailoring, fashion designing and embroidery courses too. That boosted my confidence. Now I am earning at least Rs. 7000-8000 every month. My husband and my children say, “we are proud of you.” I was about thirty when I started this training. I showed that age is no bar for learning any skill.

**Arif Shekh :** Arif Shekh, living in the D block of Jahangir puri was educated till the 12<sup>th</sup> grade only. Five persons in the house and the father was the sole earner. The salary he got as a lab assistant was not enough. A young boy of 17/18 like Arif was sitting idle at home. Who would offer a job to Arif who had passed with minimal marks ? Then he did the Tally course of Yuva Parivartan.

He got a job with Rs. 15,000 per month salary at Excel Labs. That changed the financial position of the family. Arif says “Soch ka Parivartan” changed his outlook apart from learning Tally. It gave me a new outlook. Now I am going to look for additional work apart from my regular job. I have realised that my future is in my hands.

**Suresh Pande** : Many members in the family but the income was limited. It was not possible to go for higher education. I was no good at writing and speaking English. But I had a strong desire that I should be able to speak good English. So I joined the course in English conversation at Yuva Parivartan. Simultaneously I also joined the computer basics course. English and computer courses are available at many places but the course in retailing is rarely available. I learnt about this course on joining Yuva Parivartan. I also learnt that one who completes this course has many opportunities. So I completed that course too. After completing the course I also got a job from a website. Now I have been working as a Sales Associate for the last seven years. I have been working sincerely. I got the reward for that. Today, I am working as a Department Manager in one of the branches of the company. I earn Rs. 16,000/- per month. This much income should be a matter of satisfaction for a boy who has studied only upto the tenth grade.

**Soni Kumari** : In a small place everything is in short supply. The education is over when you finish school. Our financial condition was not good at all. My father fell ill. He had to be admitted to a hospital. I attended on him round the clock. I watched how busy the doctors and the nurses were. If I requested, the doctors could not come but the nurses would rush to help. They gave us lot of courage. I developed tremendous respect for them. I thought, “How noble is their work. As if they are messengers of God serving the poor, the needy.” That inspired me to become a nurse. But that was difficult, given our financial condition. And my father passed away. I got information about the Nursing Assistant Course of Yuva Parivartan. I was very glad. Now my dream would come true.

I would get a job or could do private practice too. And that too while looking after the house. Yuva Parivartan was to infuse a new vigour into my stagnant life. Not only would I earn money and respect but I would have the satisfaction of serving people too. And that is what happened. That is why many many thanks to Yuva Parivartan.

**Jyoti Lodhi** : I am from Jabalpore. My father had a small shop. It would help him earn hardly Rs. 6000 in a month. So it was impossible to continue education after the tenth. But there was no alternative. But the prospect of just sitting idle at home was also not acceptable to me. It was then that I came across the mobilisation team of Yuva Parivartan. They gave me information about the various courses conducted by Yuva Parivartan. I had a liking for computers from the childhood. I did the basic course. I got a job as a data operator. Now I am earning Rs. 5000 per month. This income is of great help in these times of inflation. Thanks to Yuva Parivartan.

**Umesh Paul** : Yuva Parivartan has transformed not only my life but that of my entire family. Some times I shudder to think “What if I had not come across the mobilisation team of Yuva Parivartan ?” Then I would have lived blaming it on my poverty and my luck.

My family of six had to manage a month in Rs. 6000/- So continuing education beyond the twelfth was a dream. But I got information about the wireman’s course from the mobilisation team of Yuva Parivartan. This course of only three month turned my fortune. I completed the course and immediately started working as a wireman. Now I earn Rs. 12,000 in a month.



This has improved the financial condition of my family. My parents are now proud of me. Thanks to Yuva Parivartan.

**Anjana Halde :** Today I am living life with pride though I am an invalid. I am on my own. I can take care of my younger sisters. The credit for all this goes to Yuva Parivartan. Otherwise .. I can't imagine. I would have had to resort to begging.

Polio struck me when I was just three years old. My father cared for me. It was not an easy job to look after a girl who was paraplegic. But he looked after me untiringly. But bad luck struck my family. My father died. I had grown, become an adult. I kept feeling sorry that while I, being the eldest child, should have looked after my siblings, it was they who had to attend on me. I felt very sorry about this. But there was no other way. I started begging to support the family. That was when I learnt about the tailoring course of Yuva Parivartan. I started dreaming. The teachers and the social workers there helped me a lot. I started accepting stitching work as soon I completed the course. Yuva Parivartan gave me status in the society. Now many people come to me for getting their clothes stitched. – Not because I am an invalid but because they like my skill. I have become the mainstay for my siblings and my grand mother. All the credit goes to Yuva Parivartan.

**Faiz Khan :** Today my family doesn't have to go to bed on empty stomach. Doesn't have to spend the night restlessly. All the credit for this goes to Yuva Parivartan. Nobody in my family had a stable income. I had to do odd jobs from the time I was in school. As a result, education took a back seat. I could not pass the tenth examination. I thought I would have to spend the rest of my life like that only. And that was when I came to know about the mobile repairing course of Yuva Parivartan. The social worker who gave me the information was like God to me. While I was reconciled to seeing mobile phone in the hands of others only, I got the opportunity of handling the phones. I completed the course. I enjoyed it. The teachers said I had aptitude for that line. Now I am a teacher in the same centre and work in a mobile repair shop in spare time. Now I can feed two meals to my family without any problem. Credit for this goes to Yuva Partivartan.

**Harshanand Matal :** Those who used to laugh at me in the past, now approach me for advice. Isn't it great ? My father was a sweeper who swept the roads. That obviates the need to say anything more. I also worked as a compounder in a dispensary. While working there I developed interest in health care. Thought I should do something more than just being a compounder. I got information about the nursing course of Yuva Parivartan. Nursing is considered as the ladies' field in our society. So when I registered my name for this course, people made fun of me. Some people even said, "You are doing a ladies' job. You have lowered your own status." I used to feel sad on hearing such disheartening comments. But my teachers said your status goes up when you fulfil your dream. I realised my dream. I completed the course with good marks. Then I got a job in Cooper Hospital. Now everybody started praising me. Now many people come to me asking about Yuva Parivartan. I tell them, "If you wish to live with dignity, go to Yuva Parivartan."

**Sunita Paswan :** Mine was a happy family, with my husband and three kids. I was always worried whether I would be able to provide good education for my children ? How to meet both ends meet in my husband's salary ? I could not get a job with my low education. Once I was at the ration shop. The owner was a family friend. I wanted to borrow Rs. 1500. Instead of giving me the money, he advised me to join the beautician's course at Yuva Parivartan. I did that and lost all worries. Now I earn working at home. Now I would be able to educate my children properly. Thank you Yuva Parivartan.

**Vanita :** My parents got me married when I was very young. I got children soon after the marriage. But my life was not straight forward. My husband would come home drunk everyday and beat me up. That too in front of my children. That became a daily routine. I had the flog marks all over my body. My parents could not bear this. They took me home with my children. But I felt very bad being a burden on my parents in their old age. Once a representative of Yuva Parivartan had come to our colony. He told me about the beautician's course and I did that course and now I am working there as a teacher. My life changed.. I regained my confidence and self respect. By that time I had crossed thirty. I always wondered why somebody did not tell me about Yuva Parivartan before that.

**Mohammad Javed Ansari :** Nikamma, useless, good for nothing me . I was just sitting at home after the school was over. Somebody told me about Yuva Parivartan and their mobile repairing course. I thought of trying. Once I started attending the course, I liked it. Not only we were trained in mobile repairing but also how to behave in life. Time management, control over temper, saving money – I was hearing these things from somebody for the first time. I was happy. I was convinced that my decision was right. After completing the course, I am now doing mobile repairing as a business. Since I have started earning , my behaviour and way of speaking have also got polished. My mother is now proud of me.

**Surekha Bhojraj Wanve :** My education got a full stop after passing the tenth. My father was a daily wage earner. He would get work on some days while on other days he won't. Then there would not be enough money even for meals. The worry for tomorrow was always there. I used to think I am not of any use though I have grown up. I did not like accompanying mother on her domestic work. And one day, I got the leaflet of Yuva Parivartan. Thought let me visit and see for myself what it is like. After I was briefed there, I thought that the course of Nursing assistant would be suitable for me. I completed the course sincerely. Nine months were over without noticing it. I got a job after the course was over. Now I earn Rs. 5000 a month easily. If I get a job, well and good, otherwise I can offer my services as may be convenient to me. I am sure I would be able to work till I want to. I am sincerely thankful to Yuva Parivartan.

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Young friends, these were some representative examples. You would meet lakhs of people like these who developed confidence, learnt some skill, though perhaps late in life, and

started a new life. Yuva Parivartan is always ready to offer new courses, accepting new challenges depending on the changing times and new ideas, determined to help young people start a new life.

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