



MANN KI BAAT

VOL.9



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My dear children,

It makes me very happy when I see young people like you shining in whichever area you choose. It does not have to be an academic or a professional choice — just seeing you follow your passion and working hard to hone your skills gives me great hope for our country's future.

In this volume, you will meet young Vedangi Kulkarni who enjoyed cycling so much that she became the youngest woman to cycle around the world! Nine-year-old Krishneel Anil was so fascinated with the Rubik's cube, that he turned it into art. Jigar Thakker was born with cerebral palsy but went on to become an award-winning para swimmer.



There are also adults who spread joy by making unconventional choices. Meera Shenoy has spent her life empowering differently-abled people, while Sridhar Vembu has chosen to empower the youth in rural India.

Just remember, your choices add quality to your life. Listen to your heart, and make the right ones.





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BADAUT VILLAGE

IT WAS THE SCIENCE PERIOD AND THE CLASS WAS LEARNING ABOUT SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

IF THERE IS NO PROPER DISPOSAL OF SEWAGE WATER, IT CAN LEAD TO THE SPREAD OF DISEASES.



THE SEWAGE PIPES NEAR OUR BUILDING BURST LAST MONTH. IT WAS YUCKY!

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO LIVE WITH THE SMELL?



WHO WANTS TO TAKE A BREAK AND LISTEN TO A MANN KI BAAT STORY?

YAY!

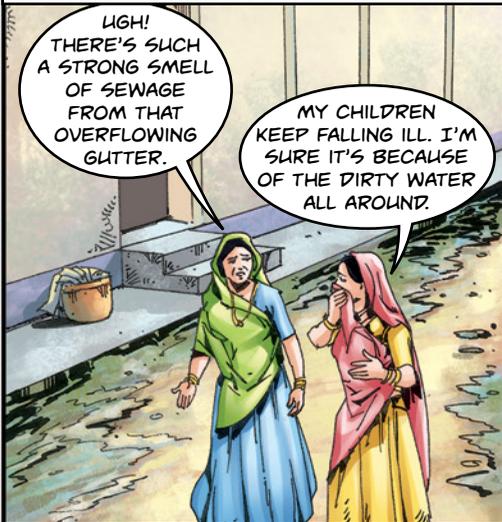
YES!



IN BADAUT VILLAGE OF PANCHKULA, HARYANA —

UGH! THERE'S SUCH A STRONG SMELL OF SEWAGE FROM THAT OVERFLOWING GUTTER.

MY CHILDREN KEEP FALLING ILL. I'M SURE IT'S BECAUSE OF THE DIRTY WATER ALL AROUND.



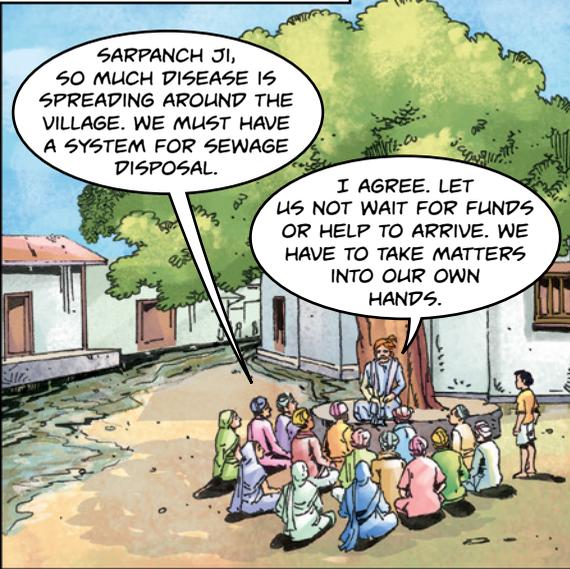
THE VILLAGE HAD BEEN FACING ISSUES WITH DRAINAGE OF SEWAGE WATER FOR A WHILE NOW.

I DON'T FEEL LIKE BUYING VEGETABLES FROM HERE. IT'S ALL SO FILTHY!

BUT THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS LIKE THIS. WHAT CAN WE DO?



THE ISSUE WAS A TOP PRIORITY FOR THE GRAM PANCHAYAT*.



SARPANCH JI, SO MUCH DISEASE IS SPREADING AROUND THE VILLAGE. WE MUST HAVE A SYSTEM FOR SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

I AGREE. LET US NOT WAIT FOR FUNDS OR HELP TO ARRIVE. WE HAVE TO TAKE MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS.

OVER MANY MEETINGS, A SOLUTION SLOWLY BEGAN TO EMERGE.



IF WE COLLECT ALL THE SEWAGE WATER IN ONE PLACE USING PIPES, IT WOULD BE EASIER TO DISPOSE OF IT.

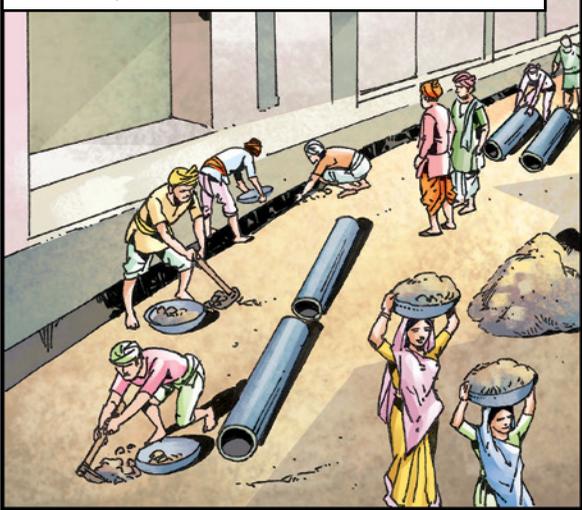
YES, WE COULD COLLECT IT OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE, AWAY FROM THE HOUSES.



WHY NOT FILTER THIS WATER TOO? WE CAN THEN USE IT FOR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES.

THAT'S AN EXCELLENT IDEA!

THE PANCHAYAT, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE VILLAGERS, BEGAN WORK TO CARRY OUT THE PLAN.



SOON —



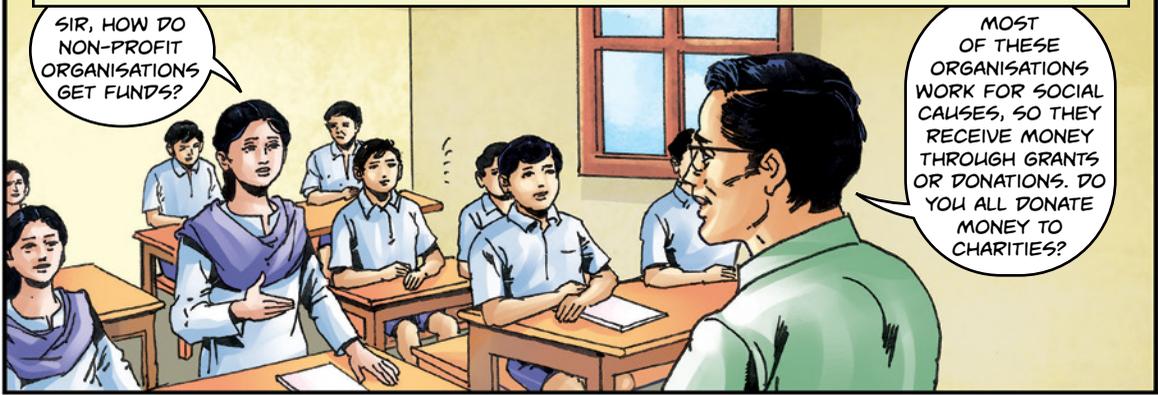
LOOK HOW CLEAN THE VILLAGE LOOKS AGAIN!

YES, I'M SO PROUD OF HOW THE PANCHAYAT SOLVED THIS PROBLEM AND HOW EVERYONE CAME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THEM!

THE PEOPLE OF BADALT WERE APPRECIATED BY PM MODI ON HIS RADIO SHOW, MANN KI BAAT.

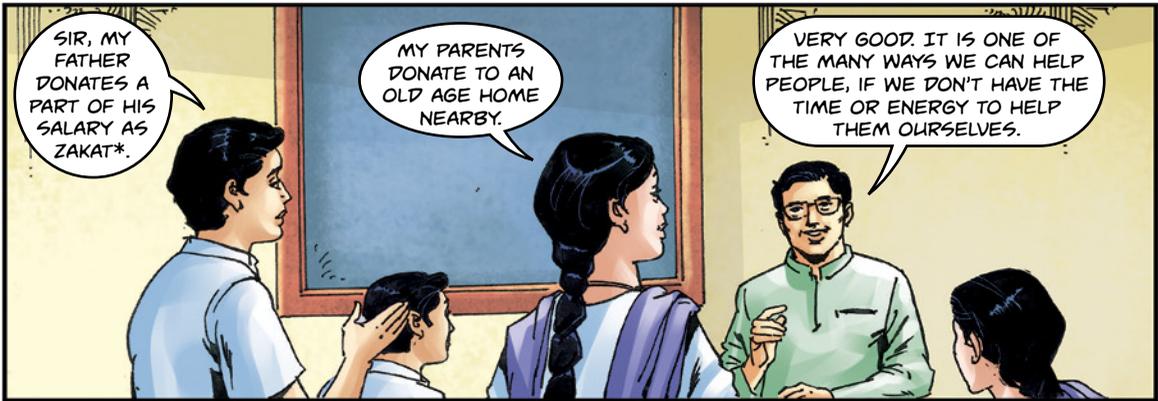
*VILLAGE COUNCIL

CHANDRAKANT KULKARNI



SIR, HOW DO NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS GET FUNDS?

MOST OF THESE ORGANISATIONS WORK FOR SOCIAL CAUSES, SO THEY RECEIVE MONEY THROUGH GRANTS OR DONATIONS. DO YOU ALL DONATE MONEY TO CHARITIES?



SIR, MY FATHER DONATES A PART OF HIS SALARY AS ZAKAT*.

MY PARENTS DONATE TO AN OLD AGE HOME NEARBY.

VERY GOOD. IT IS ONE OF THE MANY WAYS WE CAN HELP PEOPLE, IF WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME OR ENERGY TO HELP THEM OURSELVES.

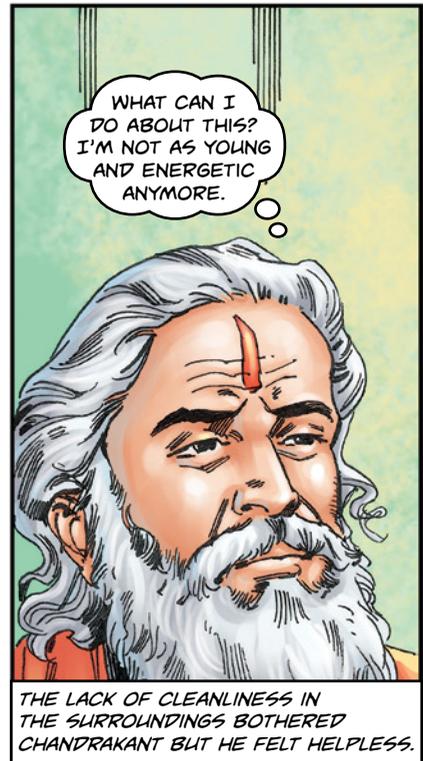


TODAY'S STORY IS ABOUT ONE SUCH MAN FROM PUNE, WHO IS DONATING ALMOST A THIRD OF HIS PENSION TO KEEP OUR COUNTRY CLEAN.



CHANDRAKANT KULKARNI WAS A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO RETIRED IN 2015.

THIS GARDEN USED TO BE SUCH A PLEASANT PLACE EARLIER. THE GARBAGE DUMP OUTSIDE MAKES THE AIR STINK.



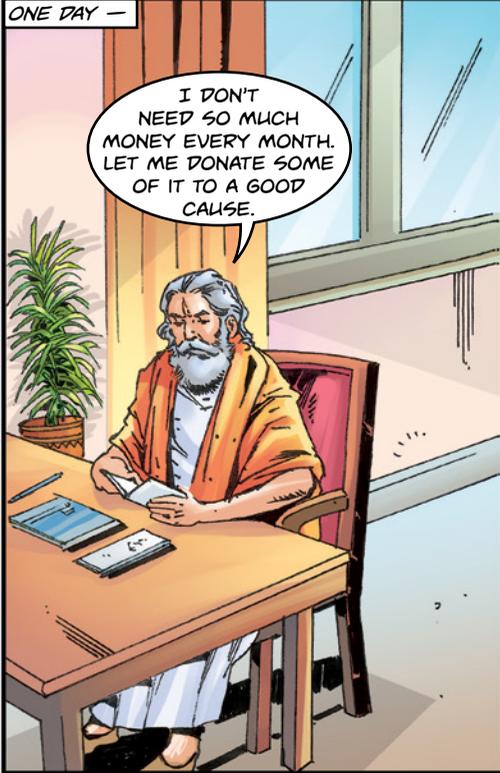
WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT THIS? I'M NOT AS YOUNG AND ENERGETIC ANYMORE.

THE LACK OF CLEANLINESS IN THE SURROUNDINGS BOTHERED CHANDRAKANT BUT HE FELT HELPLESS.

*A FORM OF DONATION OBSERVED BY FOLLOWERS OF ISLAM

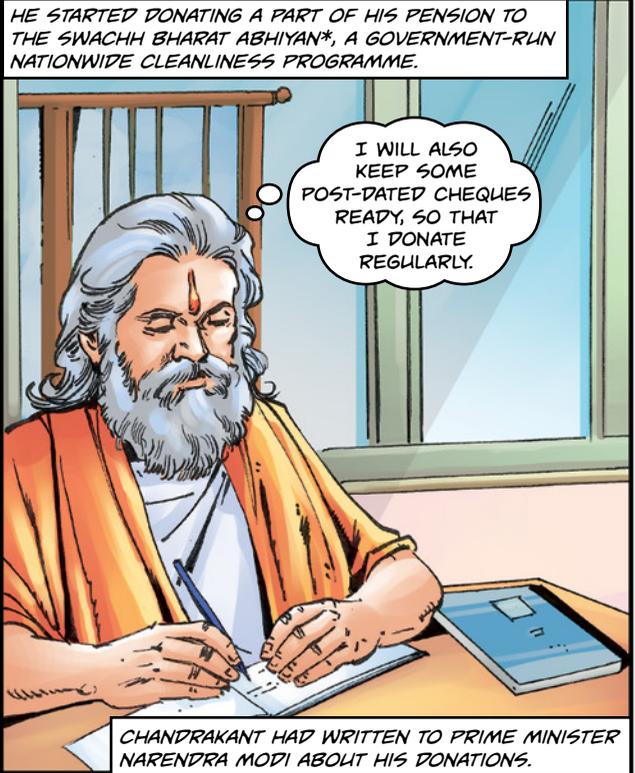
ONE DAY —

I DON'T NEED SO MUCH MONEY EVERY MONTH. LET ME DONATE SOME OF IT TO A GOOD CAUSE.



HE STARTED DONATING A PART OF HIS PENSION TO THE SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN*, A GOVERNMENT-RUN NATIONWIDE CLEANLINESS PROGRAMME.

I WILL ALSO KEEP SOME POST-DATED CHEQUES READY, SO THAT I DONATE REGULARLY.

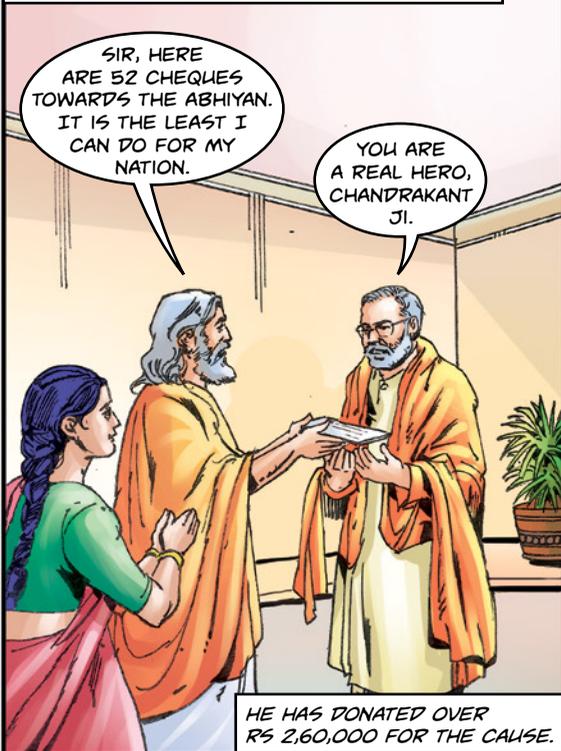


CHANDRAKANT HAD WRITTEN TO PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI ABOUT HIS DONATIONS.

TO THANK HIM FOR THIS GREAT CONTRIBUTION, PM MODI ASKED TO MEET WITH CHANDRAKANT AND HIS FAMILY, WHEN HE VISITED PUNE.

SIR, HERE ARE 52 CHEQUES TOWARDS THE ABHIYAN. IT IS THE LEAST I CAN DO FOR MY NATION.

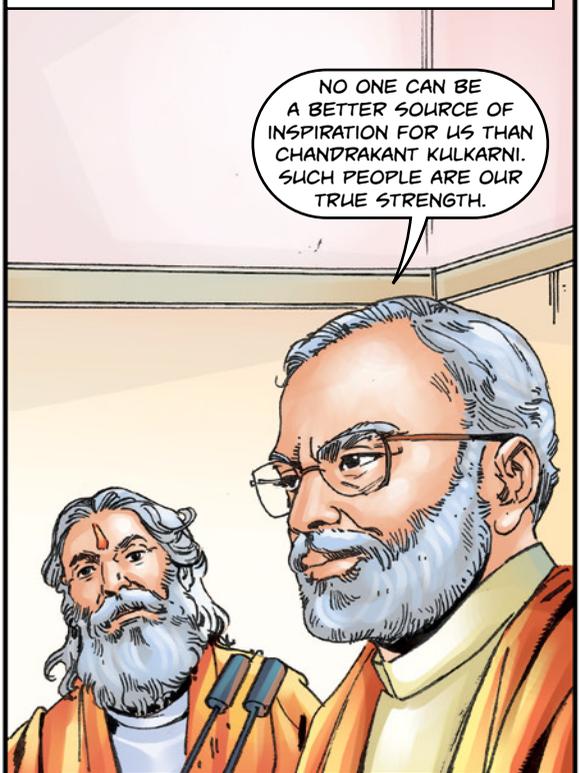
YOU ARE A REAL HERO, CHANDRAKANT JI.



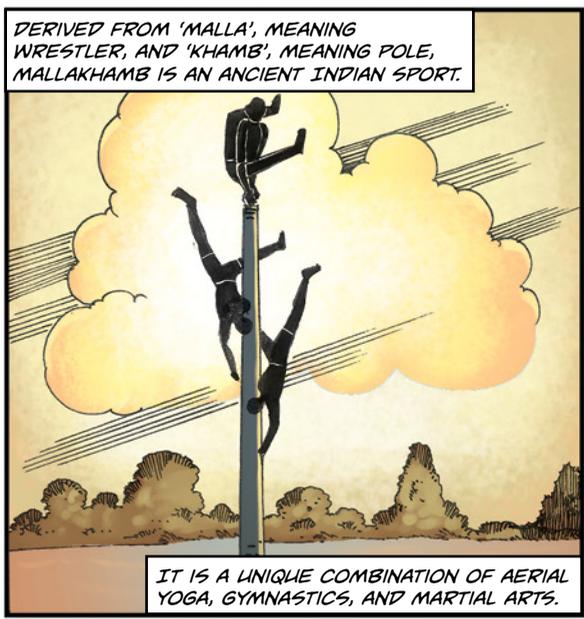
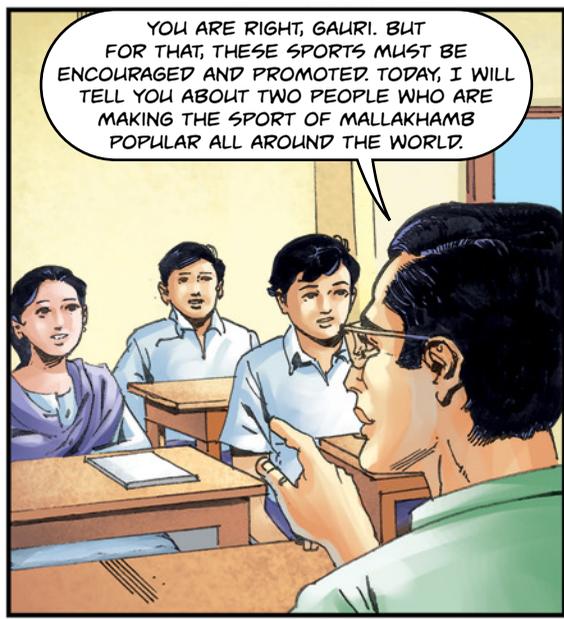
HE HAS DONATED OVER RS 2,60,000 FOR THE CAUSE.

CHANDRAKANT'S CONTRIBUTION ALSO FOUND MENTION ON THE PM'S RADIO SHOW, MANN KI BAAT.

NO ONE CAN BE A BETTER SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR US THAN CHANDRAKANT KULKARNI. SUCH PEOPLE ARE OUR TRUE STRENGTH.



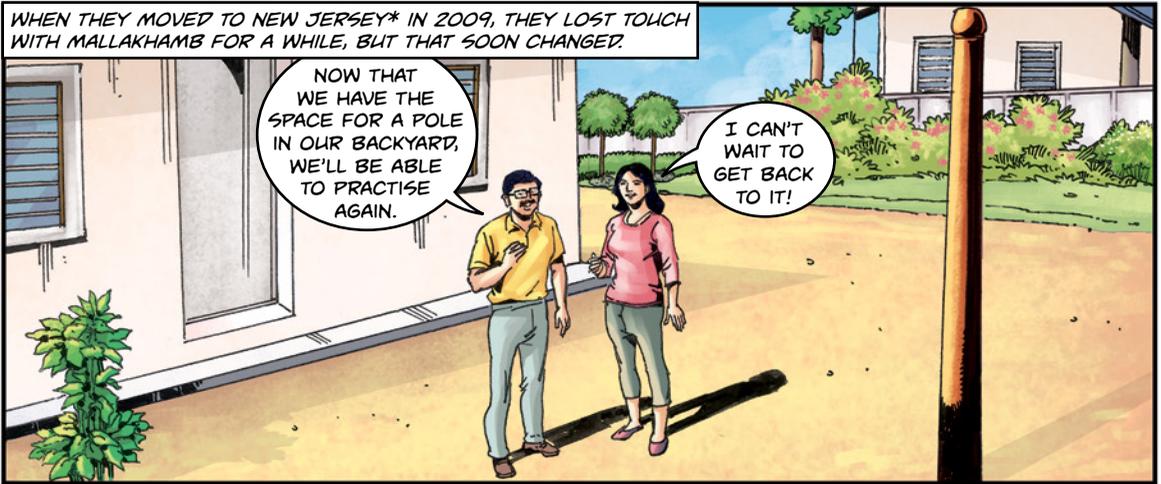
CHINMAY AND PRADNYA PATANKAR



CHINMAY AND PRADNYA PATANKAR, A YOUNG COUPLE FROM FLINÉ, WERE ACCOMPLISHED MALLAKHAMB PERFORMERS.



WHEN THEY MOVED TO NEW JERSEY* IN 2009, THEY LOST TOUCH WITH MALLAKHAMB FOR A WHILE, BUT THAT SOON CHANGED.



NOW THAT WE HAVE THE SPACE FOR A POLE IN OUR BACKYARD, WE'LL BE ABLE TO PRACTISE AGAIN.

I CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO IT!

INITIALLY, IT WAS JUST A FEW FRIENDS WITH A SHARED HOBBY. BUT AS WORD SPREAD...

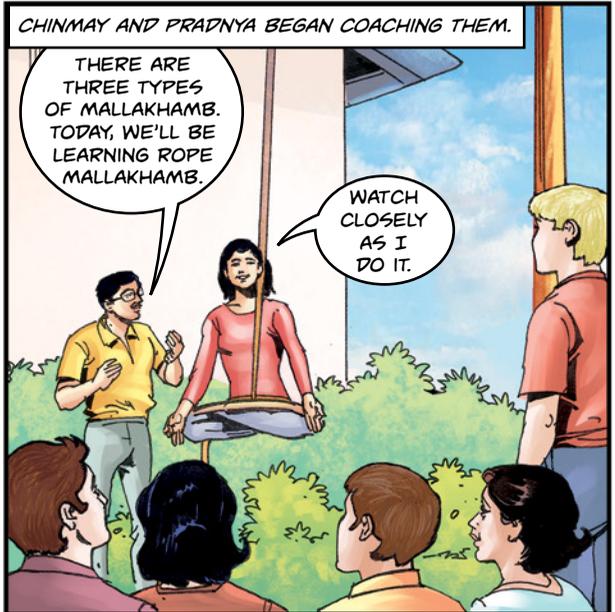


YOGA ON A POLE!

MOM, I WANT TO LEARN HOW TO DO THAT!

...CURIOUS PEOPLE BEGAN SHOWING UP

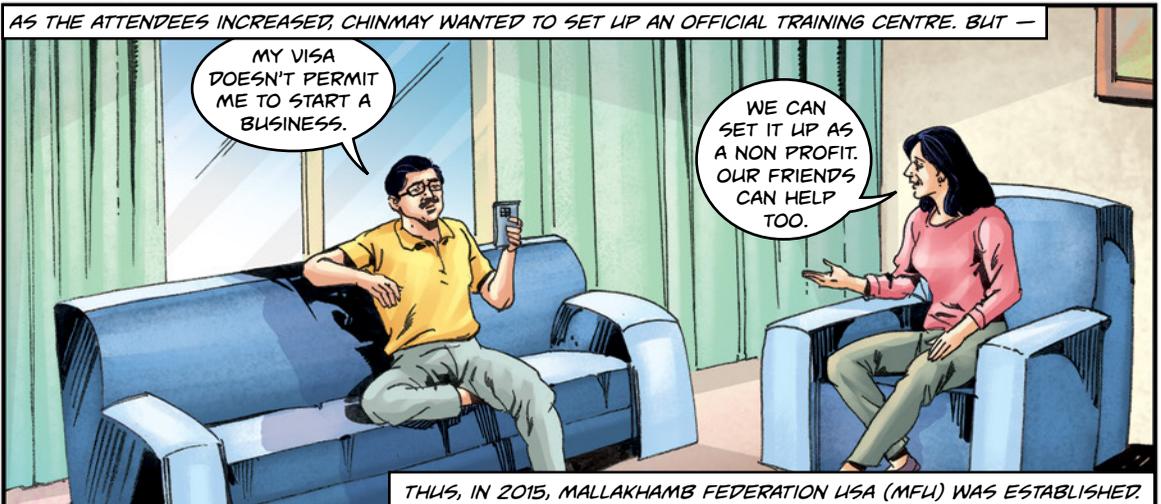
CHINMAY AND PRADNYA BEGAN COACHING THEM.



THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF MALLAKHAMB. TODAY, WE'LL BE LEARNING ROPE MALLAKHAMB.

WATCH CLOSELY AS I DO IT.

AS THE ATTENDEES INCREASED, CHINMAY WANTED TO SET UP AN OFFICIAL TRAINING CENTRE. BUT —



MY VISA DOESN'T PERMIT ME TO START A BUSINESS.

WE CAN SET IT UP AS A NON PROFIT. OUR FRIENDS CAN HELP TOO.

THUS, IN 2015, MALLAKHAMB FEDERATION USA (MFU) WAS ESTABLISHED.

*A STATE IN U.S.A.



AS MFU BEGAN OPENING MORE CENTRES, THEIR PROGRAMME GREW MORE STRUCTURED.

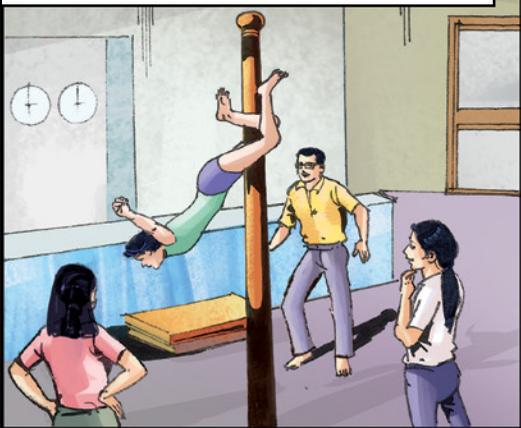


THESE EFFORTS PAID OFF ON 21 JUNE*, 2017, MFU PERFORMED MALLAKHAMB AT THE UNITED NATIONS.



THEY HAVE ALSO PERFORMED AT TIMES SQUARE, THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, THE LINCOLN CENTRE OF PERFORMING ARTS, AND OTHER PRESTIGIOUS PLACES.

CHINMAY COACHED TEAM USA FOR THE FIRST WORLD MALLAKHAMB CHAMPIONSHIP IN 2018.



PRADNYA HAS COMPILED ALL THEIR YEARS OF KNOWLEDGE INTO A BOOK.



BEING A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION, MFU HAS FINANCIAL STRUGGLES DESPITE THE SUCCESS IT HAS ACHIEVED.



*INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY



HIRAMAN KORWA

THE CHILDREN WERE ALL READY FOR THEIR MANN KI BAAT STORY OF THE DAY.

WE HAVE JUST FINISHED OUR SANSKRIT TEST, SIR. NOW I NEED A GOOD STORY TO RELAX.

THAT'S TRUE! NOBODY SPEAKS SANSKRIT THESE DAYS ANYWAY. WHY DO WE HAVE TO LEARN IT?

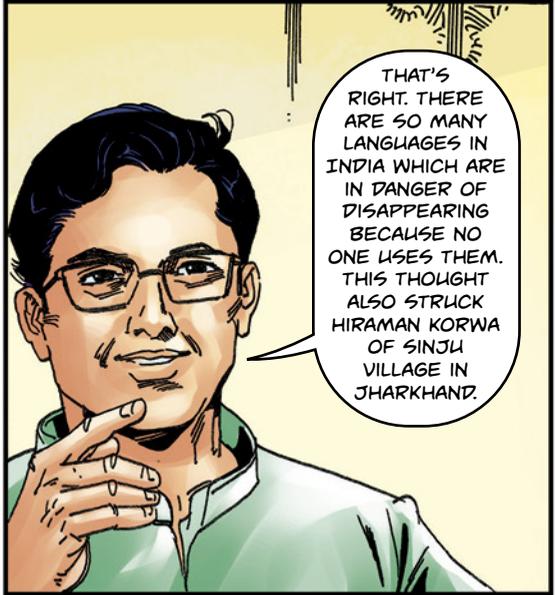


THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO SPEAK IT. BESIDES, WITHOUT KNOWING IT, HOW WOULD WE BE ABLE TO READ OUR ANCIENT TEXTS?

LIKE THE RAMAYANA AND THE MAHABHARATA?



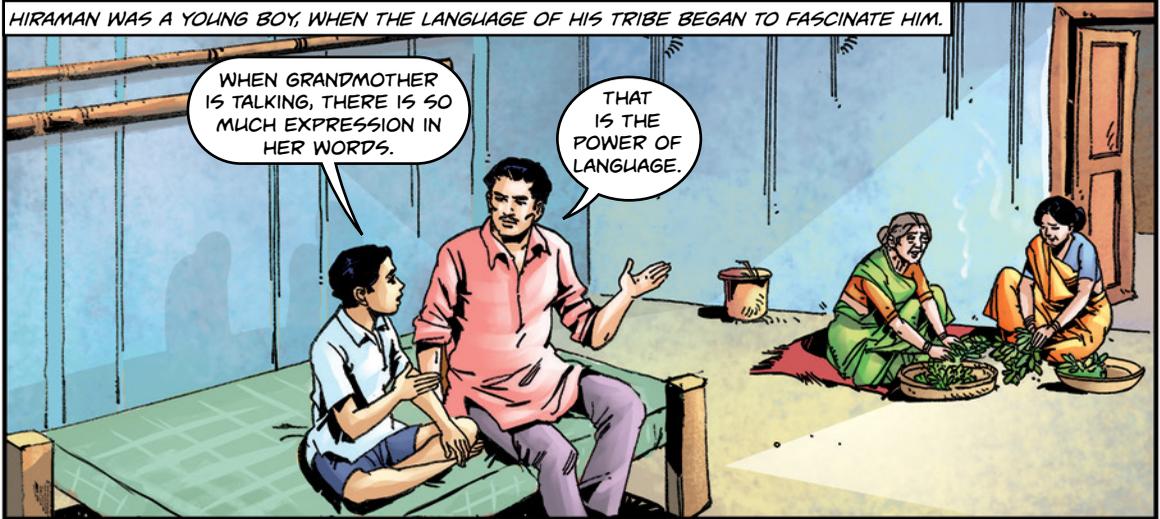
THAT'S RIGHT. THERE ARE SO MANY LANGUAGES IN INDIA WHICH ARE IN DANGER OF DISAPPEARING BECAUSE NO ONE USES THEM. THIS THOUGHT ALSO STRUCK HIRAMAN KORWA OF SINJU VILLAGE IN JHARKHAND.

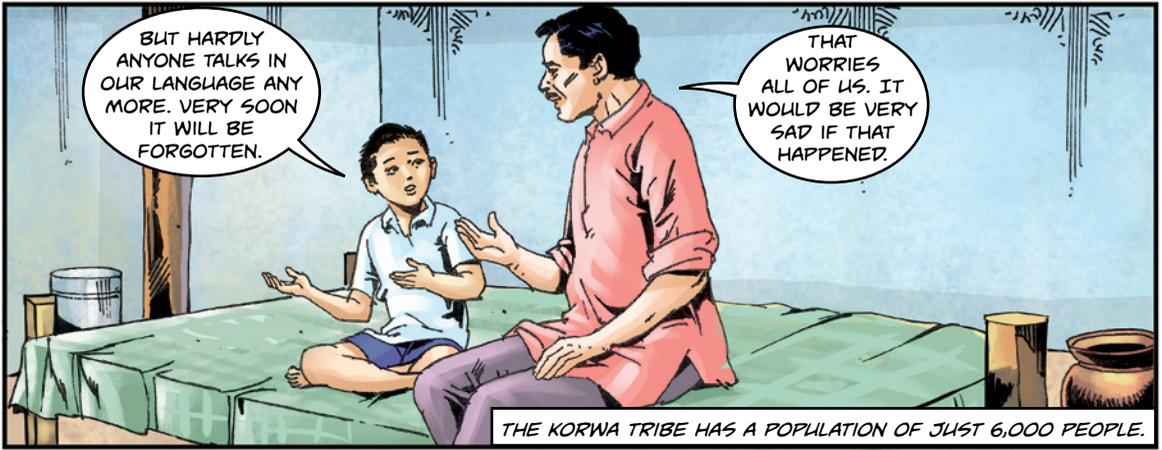


HIRAMAN WAS A YOUNG BOY, WHEN THE LANGUAGE OF HIS TRIBE BEGAN TO FASCINATE HIM.

WHEN GRANDMOTHER IS TALKING, THERE IS SO MUCH EXPRESSION IN HER WORDS.

THAT IS THE POWER OF LANGUAGE.

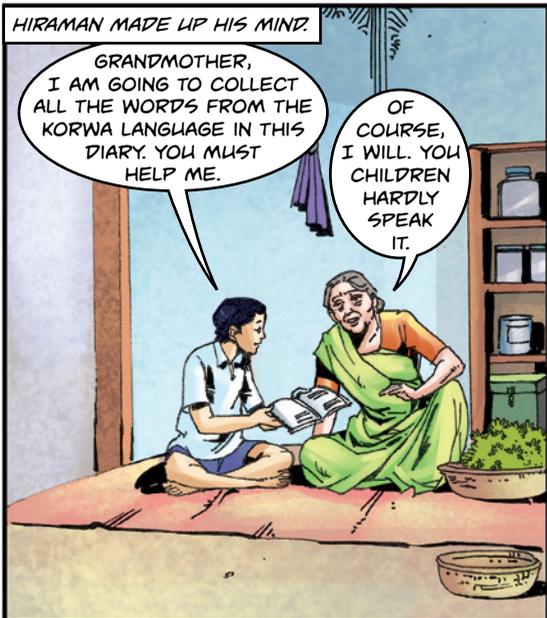




BUT HARDLY ANYONE TALKS IN OUR LANGUAGE ANY MORE. VERY SOON IT WILL BE FORGOTTEN.

THAT WORRIES ALL OF US. IT WOULD BE VERY SAD IF THAT HAPPENED.

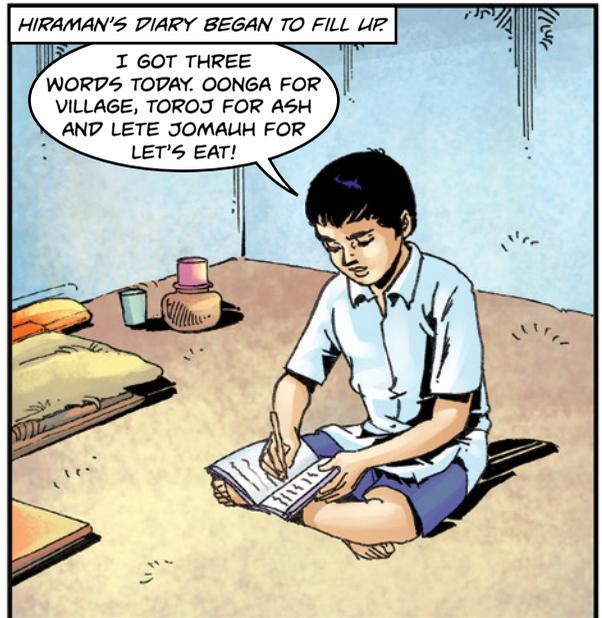
THE KORWA TRIBE HAS A POPULATION OF JUST 6,000 PEOPLE.



HIRAMAN MADE UP HIS MIND.

GRANDMOTHER, I AM GOING TO COLLECT ALL THE WORDS FROM THE KORWA LANGUAGE IN THIS DIARY. YOU MUST HELP ME.

OF COURSE, I WILL. YOU CHILDREN HARDLY SPEAK IT.



HIRAMAN'S DIARY BEGAN TO FILL UP.

I GOT THREE WORDS TODAY. OONGA FOR VILLAGE, TOROJ FOR ASH AND LETE JOMAUH FOR LET'S EAT!



AFTER FINISHING SECONDARY SCHOOL, HIRAMAN TRIED FOR ADMISSION INTO GOVIND HIGH SCHOOL, GARHWA*, BUT —

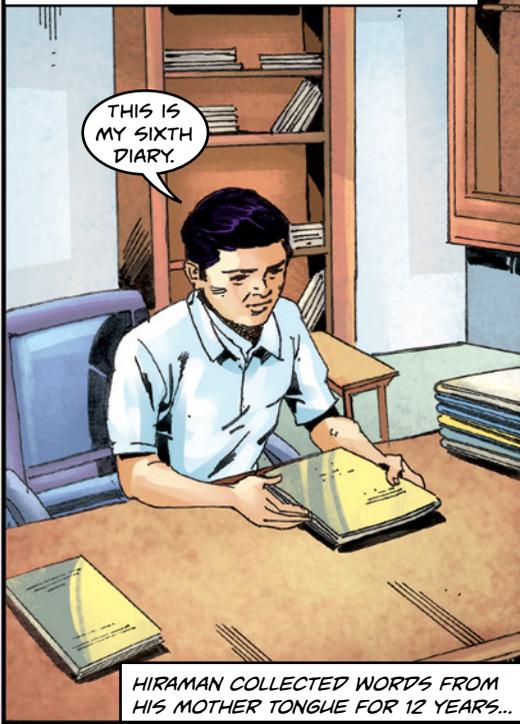
THE ADMISSION FEES ARE TOO HIGH, MA.

THEN WE'LL SELL SOME OF OUR CHICKENS AND GET THE MONEY. YOU MUST NOT STOP STUDYING.

*A TOWN IN JHARKHAND

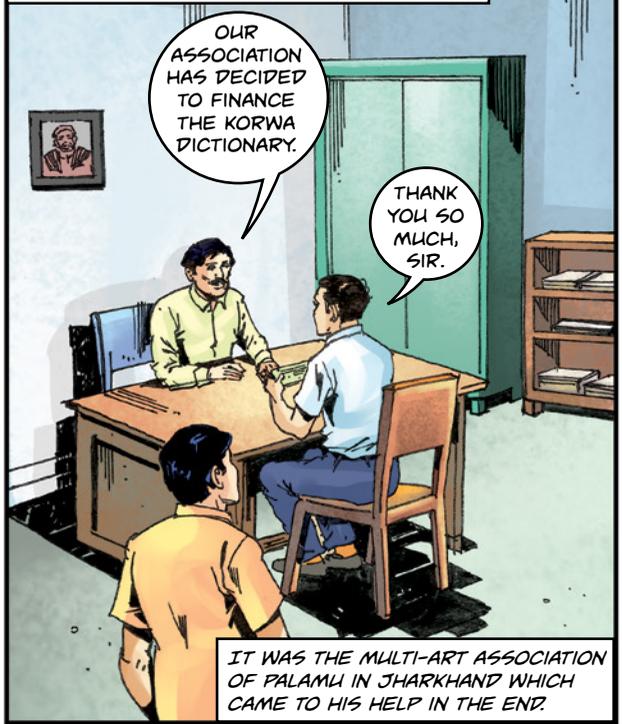
THE PRINCIPAL OF GOVIND HIGH SCHOOL ENCOURAGED HIRAMAN TO STUDY FURTHER. MEANWHILE, THE NUMBER OF DIARIES WITH KORWA WORDS KEPT GROWING.

...BUT DID NOT HAVE THE FUNDS TO PUBLISH IT AS A DICTIONARY. THOUGH HE WORKED AS AN ASSISTANT TEACHER, HE HAD TO LOOK FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT. FINALLY —



THIS IS MY SIXTH DIARY.

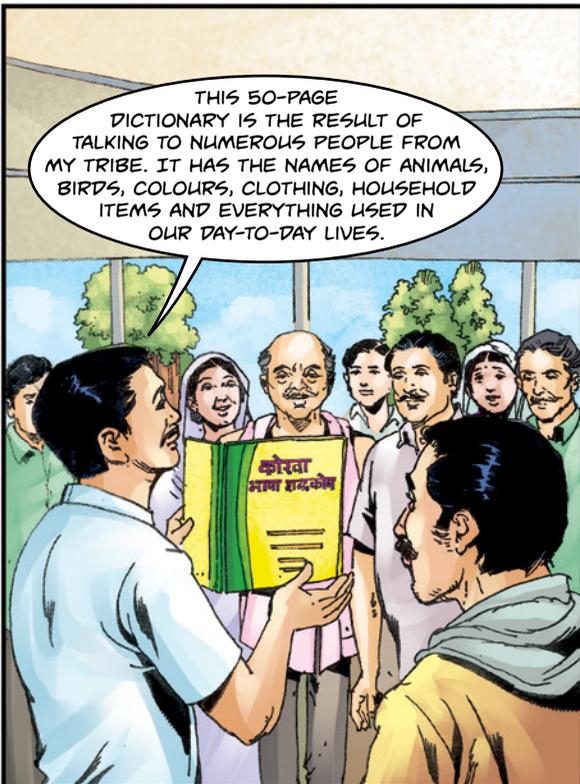
HIRAMAN COLLECTED WORDS FROM HIS MOTHER TONGUE FOR 12 YEARS...



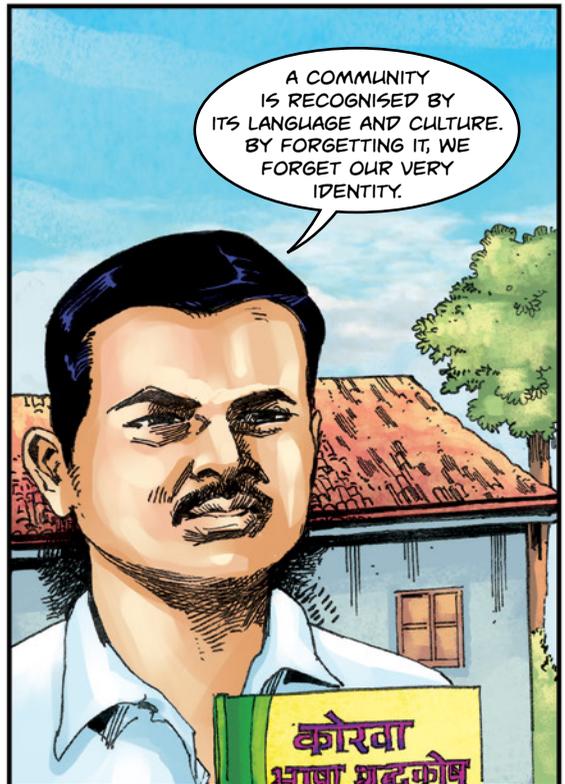
OUR ASSOCIATION HAS DECIDED TO FINANCE THE KORWA DICTIONARY.

THANK YOU SO MUCH, SIR.

IT WAS THE MULTI-ART ASSOCIATION OF PALAMU IN JHARKHAND WHICH CAME TO HIS HELP IN THE END.



THIS 50-PAGE DICTIONARY IS THE RESULT OF TALKING TO NUMEROUS PEOPLE FROM MY TRIBE. IT HAS THE NAMES OF ANIMALS, BIRDS, COLOURS, CLOTHING, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND EVERYTHING USED IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES.



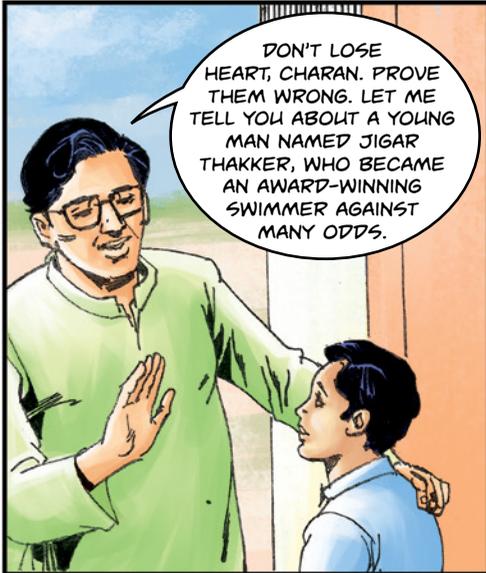
A COMMUNITY IS RECOGNISED BY ITS LANGUAGE AND CULTURE. BY FORGETTING IT, WE FORGET OUR VERY IDENTITY.

JIGAR THAKKER

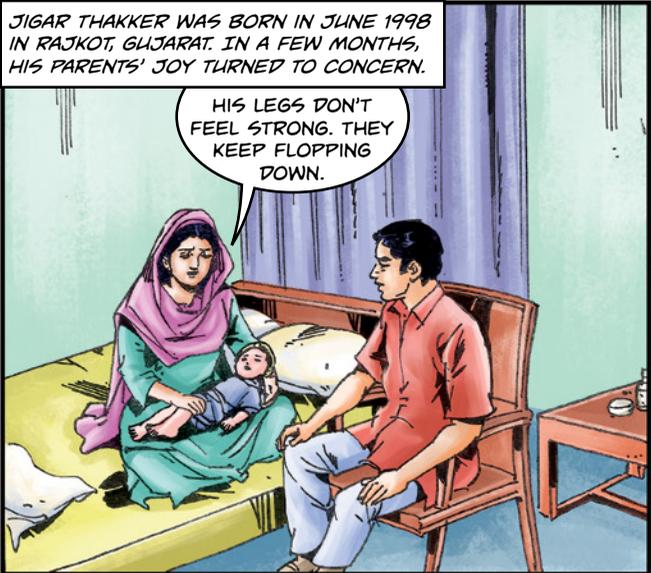


WHAT'S THE MATTER, CHARAN?

I WANTED TO TRY OUT FOR THE LOCAL BASKETBALL TEAM, SIR. BUT THEY REJECTED ME SAYING I'M NOT TALL ENOUGH.



DON'T LOSE HEART, CHARAN. PROVE THEM WRONG. LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT A YOUNG MAN NAMED JIGAR THAKKER, WHO BECAME AN AWARD-WINNING SWIMMER AGAINST MANY ODDS.



JIGAR THAKKER WAS BORN IN JUNE 1998 IN RAJKOT, GUJARAT. IN A FEW MONTHS, HIS PARENTS' JOY TURNED TO CONCERN.

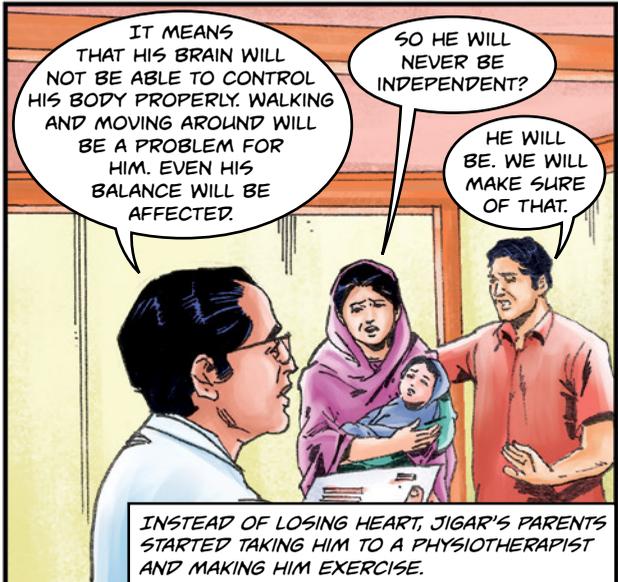
HIS LEGS DON'T FEEL STRONG. THEY KEEP FLOPPING DOWN.



BY THE TIME HE WAS NINE MONTHS OLD —

I'M SORRY TO TELL YOU THAT JIGAR HAS A DISORDER CALLED CEREBRAL PALSY.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?



IT MEANS THAT HIS BRAIN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL HIS BODY PROPERLY. WALKING AND MOVING AROUND WILL BE A PROBLEM FOR HIM. EVEN HIS BALANCE WILL BE AFFECTED.

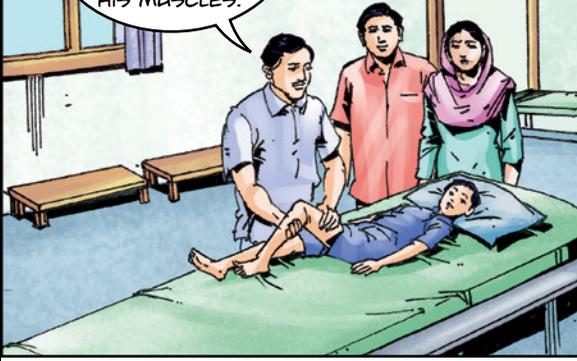
SO HE WILL NEVER BE INDEPENDENT?

HE WILL BE. WE WILL MAKE SURE OF THAT.

INSTEAD OF LOSING HEART, JIGAR'S PARENTS STARTED TAKING HIM TO A PHYSIOTHERAPIST AND MAKING HIM EXERCISE.

WHEN JIGAR WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD —

HE IS VERY MOTIVATED BUT IT WILL HELP IF WE CAN FIND SOME SPORT THAT HE LIKES. THAT WILL STRENGTHEN HIS MUSCLES.



THEY TRIED A FEW SPORTS BUT NOTHING WORKED OUT.

THEN, THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST SUGGESTED SWIMMING.

NO. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO PROTECT HIM IN THE POOL. HE COULD DROWN!

IF I LEARN TO SWIM FIRST, I CAN BE WITH HIM IN THE WATER AT ALL TIMES.



JIGAR'S MOTHER LEARNT HOW TO SWIM AND SOON, JIGAR WAS IN THE WATER TOO!

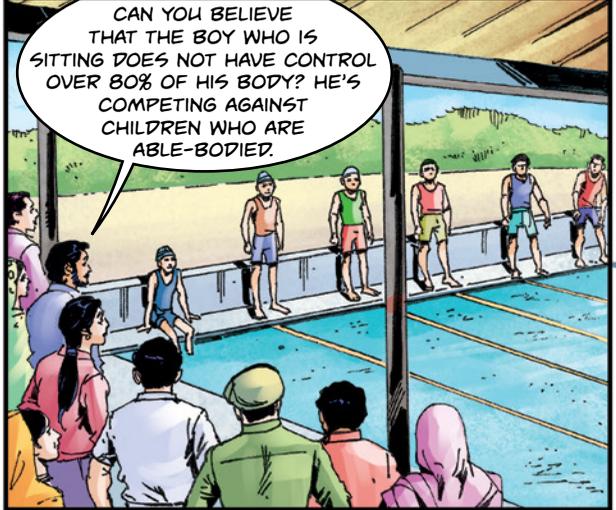
HEE HEE!

HE LIKES IT!



THE VERY NEXT YEAR, JIGAR REPRESENTED HIS SCHOOL AT THE DISTRICT-LEVEL SWIMMING COMPETITION.

CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT THE BOY WHO IS SITTING DOES NOT HAVE CONTROL OVER 80% OF HIS BODY? HE'S COMPETING AGAINST CHILDREN WHO ARE ABLE-BODIED.



BY THE TIME HE WAS 14, JIGAR WAS VERY MOTIVATED AND AMBITIOUS.

I WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NATIONAL PARA SWIMMING COMPETITION. I RESEARCHED IT ON THE INTERNET, AND GOING TO THE GYM WILL HELP ME PREPARE.



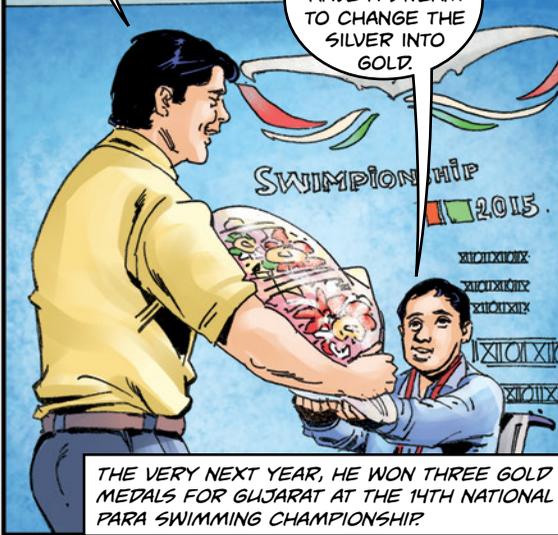
SOON, JIGAR HAD A ROUTINE IN PLACE. HE WOULD SWIM IN THE MORNING, GO TO SCHOOL, TRAIN AT THE GYM AND THEN GO FOR SWIMMING PRACTICE AGAIN.



IN 2013, HE WON THE BRONZE AND SILVER MEDALS IN THE 13TH NATIONAL PARA SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP.

CONGRATULATIONS, JIGAR!

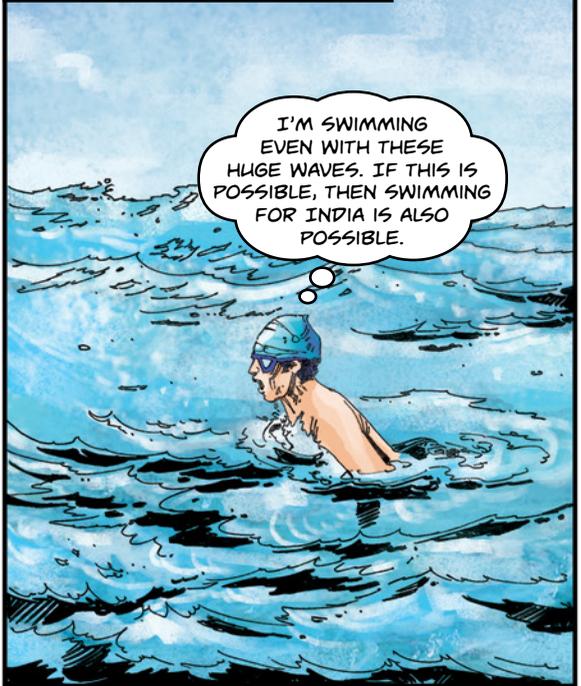
THANK YOU, BUT NOW I HAVE A DREAM TO CHANGE THE SILVER INTO GOLD.



THE VERY NEXT YEAR, HE WON THREE GOLD MEDALS FOR GUJARAT AT THE 14TH NATIONAL PARA SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP.

IN 2016, HE CHALLENGED HIMSELF FURTHER BY SWIMMING IN THE SEA.

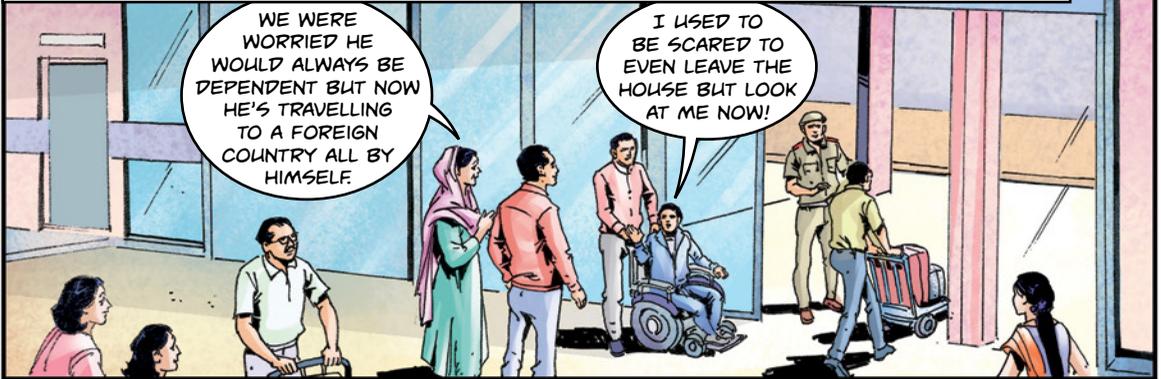
I'M SWIMMING EVEN WITH THESE HUGE WAVES. IF THIS IS POSSIBLE, THEN SWIMMING FOR INDIA IS ALSO POSSIBLE.



THUS BEGAN HIS DREAM OF REPRESENTING INDIA IN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS. HE BEGAN TO TRAIN HARD AND IN 2017, HE WAS CHOSEN TO REPRESENT INDIA IN THE IDM* BERLIN WORLD SERIES.

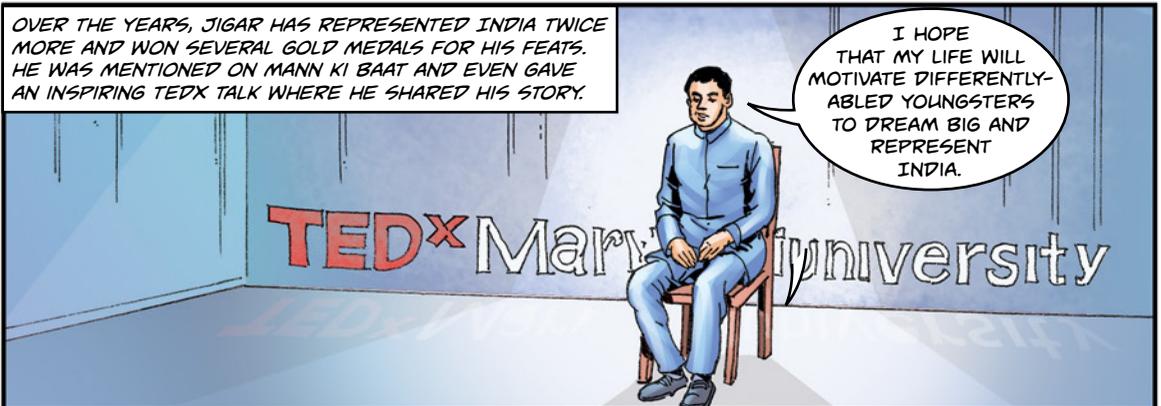
WE WERE WORRIED HE WOULD ALWAYS BE DEPENDENT BUT NOW HE'S TRAVELLING TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY ALL BY HIMSELF.

I USED TO BE SCARED TO EVEN LEAVE THE HOUSE BUT LOOK AT ME NOW!



OVER THE YEARS, JIGAR HAS REPRESENTED INDIA TWICE MORE AND WON SEVERAL GOLD MEDALS FOR HIS FEATS. HE WAS MENTIONED ON MANN KI BAAT AND EVEN GAVE AN INSPIRING TEDX TALK WHERE HE SHARED HIS STORY.

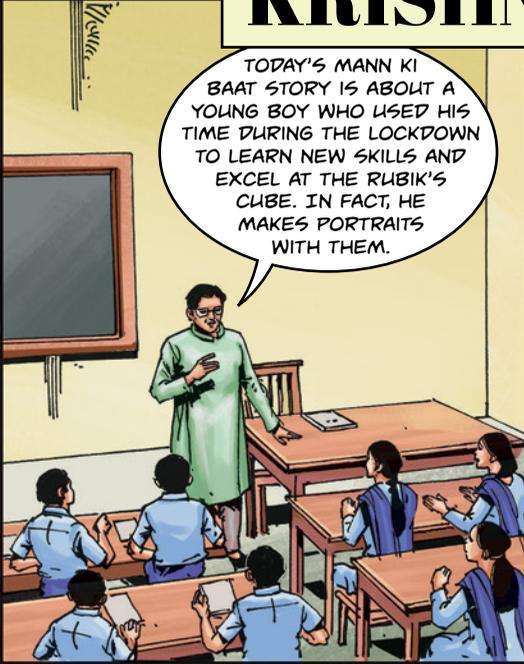
I HOPE THAT MY LIFE WILL MOTIVATE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED YOUNGSTERS TO DREAM BIG AND REPRESENT INDIA.



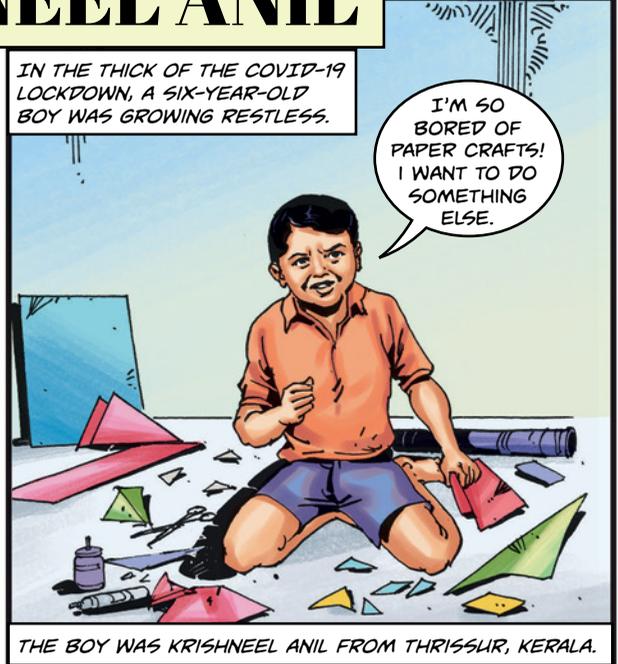
*INTERNATIONALE DEUTSCHE MEISTERSCHAFTEN, A PARA SWIMMING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP HOSTED BY GERMANY.



KRISHNEEL ANIL



TODAY'S MANN KI BAAT STORY IS ABOUT A YOUNG BOY WHO USED HIS TIME DURING THE LOCKDOWN TO LEARN NEW SKILLS AND EXCEL AT THE RUBIK'S CUBE. IN FACT, HE MAKES PORTRAITS WITH THEM.

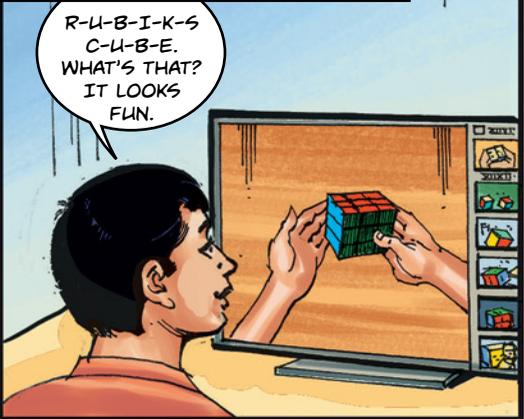


IN THE THICK OF THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN, A SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY WAS GROWING RESTLESS.

I'M SO BORED OF PAPER CRAFTS! I WANT TO DO SOMETHING ELSE.

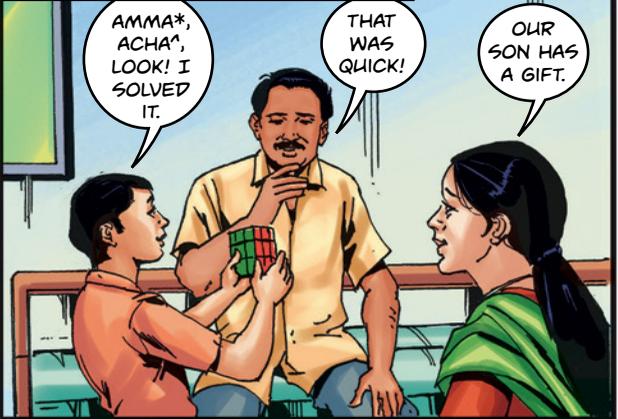
THE BOY WAS KRISHNEEL ANIL FROM THRISSUR, KERALA.

AS A CHILD OF THE DIGITAL GENERATION, WHEN KRISHNEEL WENT TO THE INTERNET FOR AN ANSWER —



R-U-B-I-K-S
C-U-B-E.
WHAT'S THAT?
IT LOOKS FUN.

WATCHING YOUTUBE TUTORIALS, KRISHNEEL SET OUT TO CRACK THE MYSTERY OF THIS COLOURFUL CUBE.



AMMA*,
ACHA*,
LOOK! I
SOLVED
IT.

THAT
WAS
QUICK!

OUR
SON HAS
A GIFT.

WITH TIME AND PRACTICE, HE COULD SOLVE A CUBE IN THIRTY SECONDS. THEN, HE BEGAN DREAMING BIGGER.



I WANT TO MAKE MOSAIC ART WITH RUBIK'S CUBES. FOR THAT, I NEED MANY MORE CUBES.

THAT'S GOING TO BE COSTLY.

THIS HOBBY MAKES HIM HAPPY. LET'S ENCOURAGE IT.

*MOTHER IN MALAYALAM
^FATHER IN MALAYALAM



STARTING WITH SIMPLE PATTERNS LIKE FLAGS OF COUNTRIES...

...KRISHNEEL WAS SOON MAKING FULL-FLEDGED MOSAIC PORTRAITS.

HE HAS MADE PORTRAITS OF HIS FRIENDS, TEACHERS AND EVEN OF ATHLETES AND FILM STARS.

SOME OF THESE PERSONALITIES RESHARED HIS WORK ON SOCIAL MEDIA, EARNING HIM RECOGNITION.

KRISHNEEL HAS ALSO MADE MOSAIC PORTRAITS OF RAHUL GANDHI AND PM MODI. RAHUL GANDHI PAID HIM A VISIT AND PM MODI MENTIONED HIM ON MANN KI BAAT.

AFTER MASTERING THE 3X3 RUBIK'S CUBE, HE LEARNT TO SOLVE CUBES OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES.

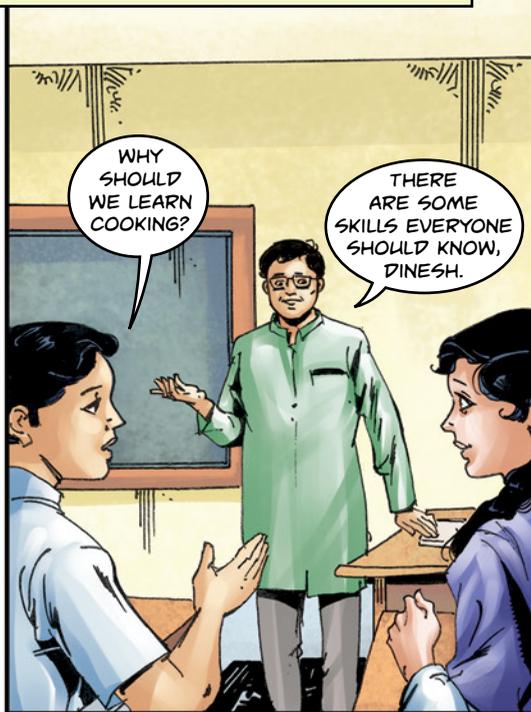
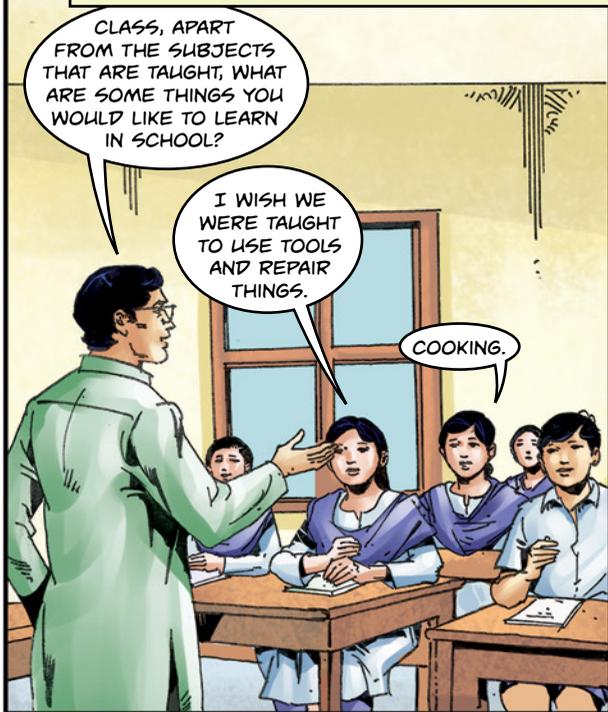
HIS YOUTUBE CHANNEL, 'KRISHNEEL ANIL', BOASTS NEARLY 200 VIDEOS. IT CONTAINS TIME-LAPSE FOOTAGE OF HIS MOSAIC PORTRAITS, VIDEO REVIEWS OF DIFFERENT CUBES, AND TUTORIALS HELPING OTHERS SOLVE THE RUBIK'S CUBE.

FIRST, YOU HAVE TO MAKE A CROSS ON ONE SIDE.

KRISHNEEL, NOW NINE YEARS OLD, PARTICIPATES IN CUBING CONTESTS AND AIMS TO SECURE A GOOD RANK AS A PLAYER SOMEDAY.



MADURAI CHINNA PILLAI





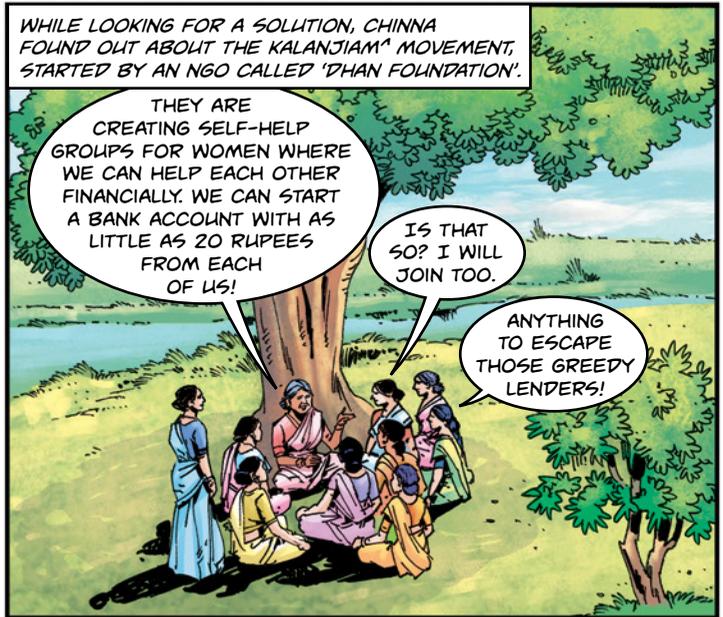
BECAUSE OF CHINNA, I CAN SET MONEY ASIDE TO PAY BACK MY LOAN.

I HOPE THEY DON'T INCREASE THE INTEREST THIS YEAR.

THE SMALL FARMERS AND LABOURERS OF PULLISERI* WERE PLAGUED BY LOW WAGES AND MONEYLENDERS WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THEIR POVERTY.



THESE LOAN SHARKS WILL NEVER LET US LIVE IN PEACE. WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO HELP EACH OTHER.



WHILE LOOKING FOR A SOLUTION, CHINNA FOUND OUT ABOUT THE KALANJIAM[†] MOVEMENT, STARTED BY AN NGO CALLED 'DHAN FOUNDATION'.

THEY ARE CREATING SELF-HELP GROUPS FOR WOMEN WHERE WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER FINANCIALLY. WE CAN START A BANK ACCOUNT WITH AS LITTLE AS 20 RUPEES FROM EACH OF US!

IS THAT SO? I WILL JOIN TOO.

ANYTHING TO ESCAPE THOSE GREEDY LENDERS!



IN 1989, CHINNA JOINED THE KALANJIAM COMMUNITY BANKING PROGRAMME AND ENCOURAGED MANY TO JOIN TOO.

HERE YOU GO, LAKSHMI. YOU CAN PAY YOUR DAUGHTER'S SCHOOL FEES WITH THIS.

THANK YOU!

WITH SMALL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM EVERYONE, THE WOMEN WERE ABLE TO TAKE LOANS FROM THE PROGRAMME AT LOW INTEREST RATES.

*IN TAMIL NADU
[†]MEANING BOTH 'GRANARY' AND 'PROSPERITY' IN TAMIL

CHINNA ALSO EDUCATED WOMEN AND SPREAD WORD ABOUT THE PROGRAMME FROM VILLAGE TO VILLAGE.

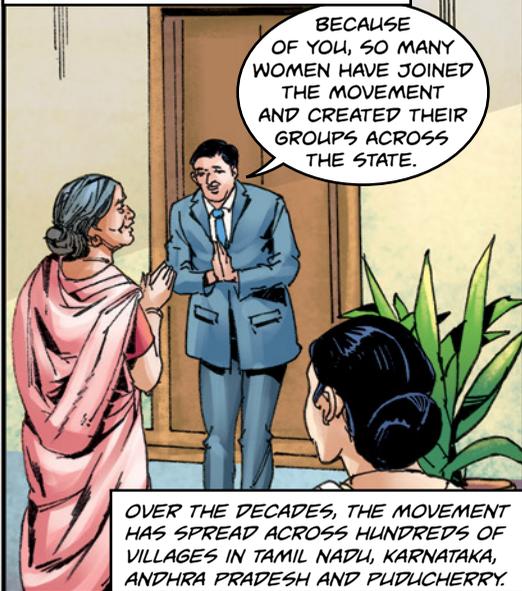


WE HAVE BEEN DOING THIS FOR A FEW YEARS. WE ARE NO LONGER DEPENDENT ON OTHERS.

WE SHOULD START ONE TOO!

YES.

BECAUSE OF HER INCREDIBLE WORK, CHINNA BECAME A MEMBER OF KALANJIAM'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.



BECAUSE OF YOU, SO MANY WOMEN HAVE JOINED THE MOVEMENT AND CREATED THEIR GROUPS ACROSS THE STATE.

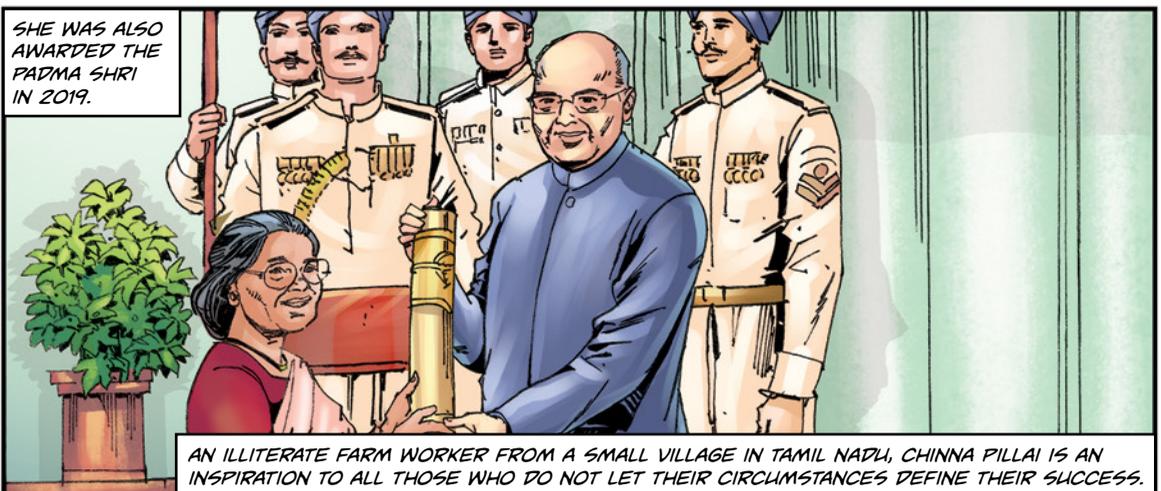
OVER THE DECADES, THE MOVEMENT HAS SPREAD ACROSS HUNDREDS OF VILLAGES IN TAMIL NADU, KARNATAKA, ANDHRA PRADESH AND PUDUCHERRY.

FOR HER WORK IN THE FIELD OF MICROFINANCE AND COMMUNITY BANKING, CHINNA PILLAI BECAME ONE OF THE FIRST RECIPIENTS OF THE STREE SHAKTI PURASKAR IN 1999.



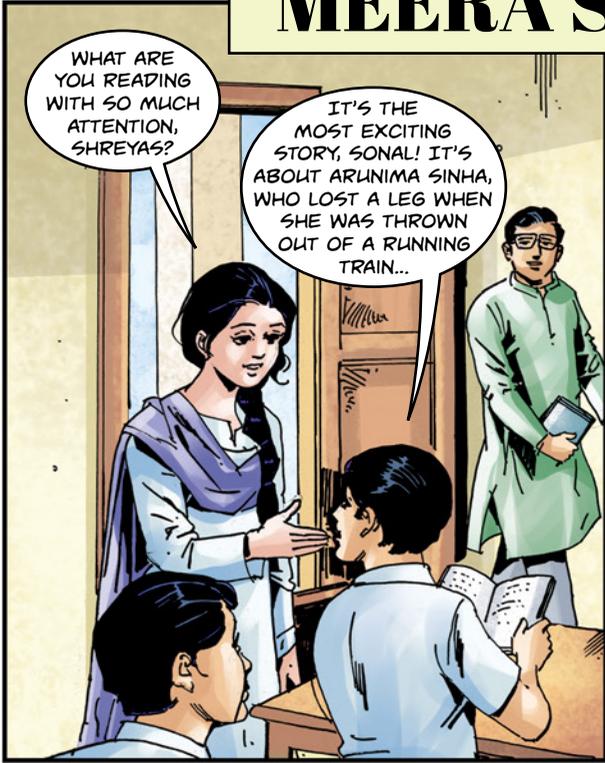
OVERWHELMED BY HER STORY, THE THEN-PRIME MINISTER, ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE, TOUCHED HER FEET IN RESPECT.

SHE WAS ALSO AWARDED THE PADMA SHRI IN 2019.



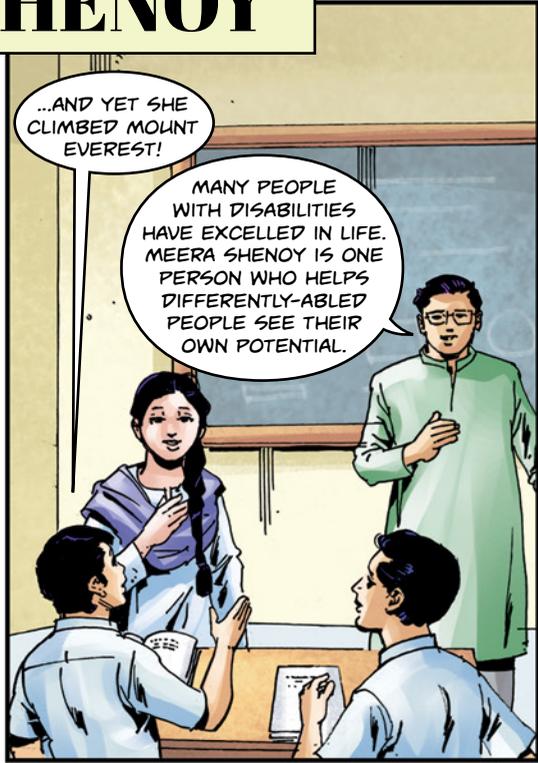
AN ILLITERATE FARM WORKER FROM A SMALL VILLAGE IN TAMIL NADU, CHINNA PILLAI IS AN INSPIRATION TO ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT LET THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES DEFINE THEIR SUCCESS.

MEERA SHENOY



WHAT ARE YOU READING WITH SO MUCH ATTENTION, SHREYAS?

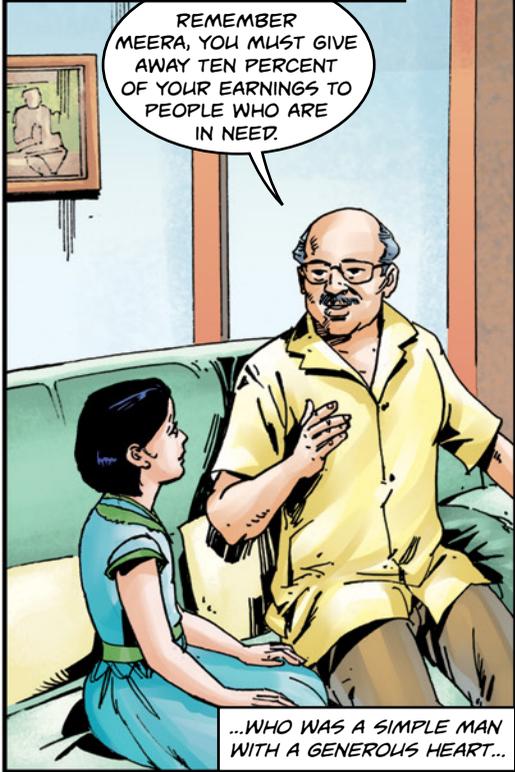
IT'S THE MOST EXCITING STORY, SONALI! IT'S ABOUT ARUNIMA SINHA, WHO LOST A LEG WHEN SHE WAS THROWN OUT OF A RUNNING TRAIN...



...AND YET SHE CLIMBED MOUNT EVEREST!

MANY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE EXCELLED IN LIFE. MEERA SHENOY IS ONE PERSON WHO HELPS DIFFERENTLY-ABLED PEOPLE SEE THEIR OWN POTENTIAL.

WHEN SHE WAS GROWING UP, MEERA SHENOY HAD TWO PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED HER. HER GRANDFATHER...



REMEMBER MEERA, YOU MUST GIVE AWAY TEN PERCENT OF YOUR EARNINGS TO PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NEED.

...WHO WAS A SIMPLE MAN WITH A GENEROUS HEART...

...AND HER MOTHER, WHO LEARNT TO NAVIGATE THE STOCK MARKET AND TURNED HER SMALL INHERITANCE INTO A SUBSTANTIAL FORTUNE FOR HER DAUGHTERS.



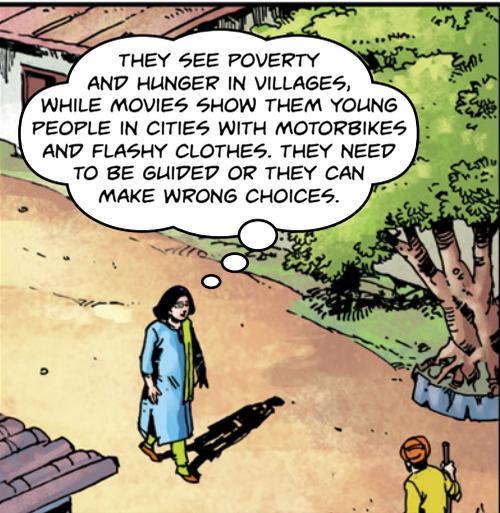
I MISSED MY CHANCE TO STUDY MEDICINE AFTER I GOT MARRIED. BUT YOU GIRLS MUST DO EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO DO.

WHEN MEERA GREW UP, SHE REALISED THAT HER INTEREST LAY IN TURNING POOR RURAL YOUTH INTO CONFIDENT CITIZENS OF INDIA.



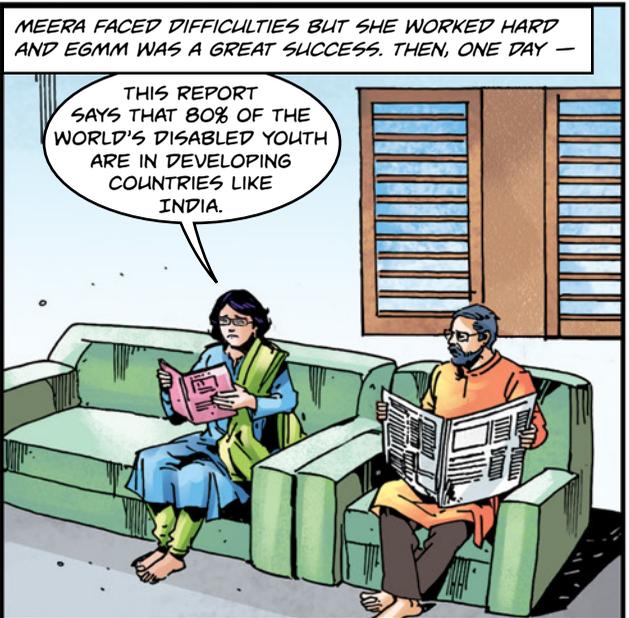
WHAT IS WRONG IN BEING A FARMER? I AM ONE, YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS ONE....

EXACTLY! WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN POOR BECAUSE OF IT.



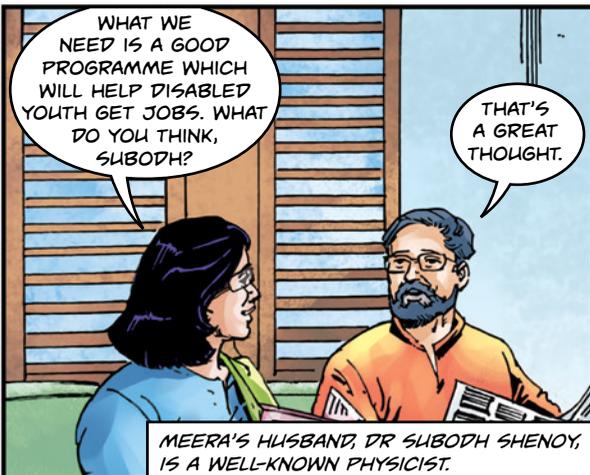
THEY SEE POVERTY AND HUNGER IN VILLAGES, WHILE MOVIES SHOW THEM YOUNG PEOPLE IN CITIES WITH MOTORBIKES AND FLASHY CLOTHES. THEY NEED TO BE GUIDED OR THEY CAN MAKE WRONG CHOICES.

MEERA SET UP INDIA'S FIRST SKILLING MISSION FOR THE ANDHRA PRADESH GOVERNMENT IN 2005. IT WAS CALLED THE EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AND MARKETING MISSION (EGMM).



MEERA FACED DIFFICULTIES BUT SHE WORKED HARD AND EGMM WAS A GREAT SUCCESS. THEN, ONE DAY -

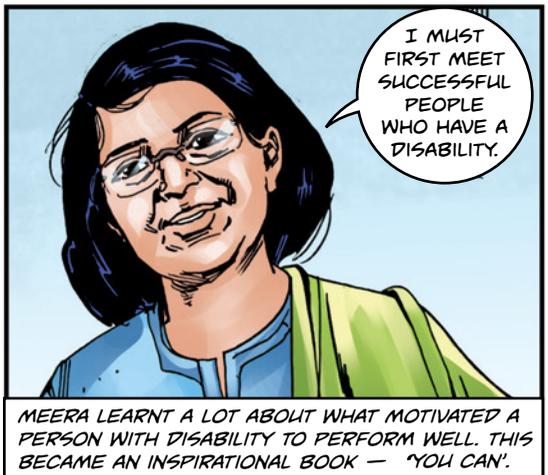
THIS REPORT SAYS THAT 80% OF THE WORLD'S DISABLED YOUTH ARE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LIKE INDIA.



WHAT WE NEED IS A GOOD PROGRAMME WHICH WILL HELP DISABLED YOUTH GET JOBS. WHAT DO YOU THINK, SUBODH?

THAT'S A GREAT THOUGHT.

MEERA'S HUSBAND, DR SUBODH SHENOY, IS A WELL-KNOWN PHYSICIST.

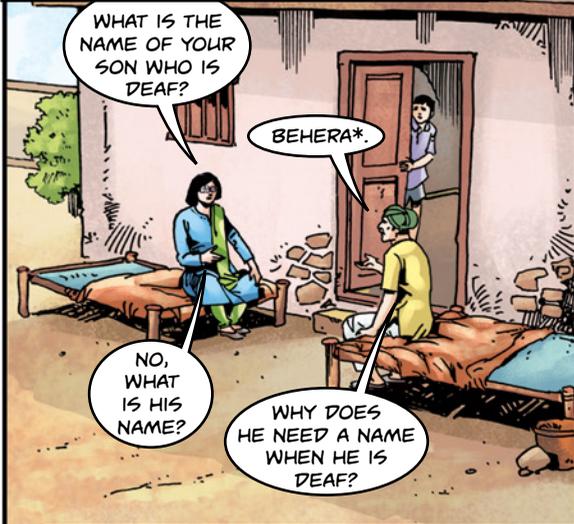


I MUST FIRST MEET SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE WHO HAVE A DISABILITY.

MEERA LEARNT A LOT ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATED A PERSON WITH DISABILITY TO PERFORM WELL. THIS BECAME AN INSPIRATIONAL BOOK - 'YOU CAN'.



SHE FOUNDED 'YOUTH4JOBS' AND STARTED SKILLING PROGRAMMES FOR PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT KINDS OF DISABILITIES. IT WAS A TOUGH ROAD SHE HAD TAKEN.



WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR SON WHO IS DEAF?

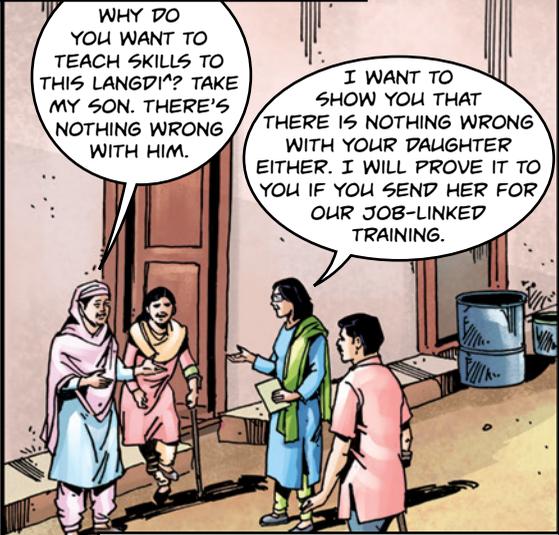
BEHERA*.

NO, WHAT IS HIS NAME?

WHY DOES HE NEED A NAME WHEN HE IS DEAF?

IT WAS SAD BUT TRUE THAT PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS, FELT THAT CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES DID NOT NEED AN IDENTITY.

SHE FACED MYTHS AND AGE-OLD ATTITUDES AROUND DISABILITY.



WHY DO YOU WANT TO TEACH SKILLS TO THIS LANGDI**? TAKE MY SON. THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH HIM.

I WANT TO SHOW YOU THAT THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR DAUGHTER EITHER. I WILL PROVE IT TO YOU IF YOU SEND HER FOR OUR JOB-LINKED TRAINING.

AFTER 40 DAYS OF SKILLING, SHEELA, FOR THAT WAS HER REAL NAME, STARTED EARNING MORE THAN HER FATHER. THE WHOLE VILLAGE WAS PROUD OF HER.

MEERA WENT ON TO CREATE 'SWARAJ ABILITY', AN AI** TRIGGERED PLATFORM TESTED BY THE DISABLED FOR THE DISABLED.



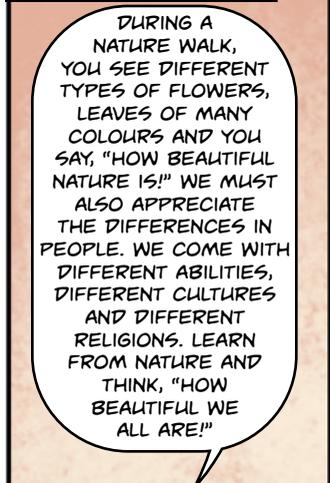
I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT SWARAJ ABILITY IS THE LARGEST SUCH PLATFORM IN SOUTH EAST ASIA. IT IS ONE THAT ANY DISABLED PERSON CAN USE EASILY TO NAVIGATE AND FIND SKILLS AND JOBS.

MEERA HAS WON NUMEROUS AWARDS FOR HER GROUNDBREAKING WORK. THEY INCLUDE THE NCPEDP-SHELL HELEN KELLER AWARD, THE NATIONAL AWARD FOR EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES...



...INCLUSION AND INNOVATION CHALLENGE OF MIT, AND IS ALSO A HARVARD BUSINESS CASE STUDY.

MEERA HAS A MESSAGE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE.



DURING A NATURE WALK, YOU SEE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FLOWERS, LEAVES OF MANY COLOURS AND YOU SAY, "HOW BEAUTIFUL NATURE IS!" WE MUST ALSO APPRECIATE THE DIFFERENCES IN PEOPLE. WE COME WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES, DIFFERENT CULTURES AND DIFFERENT RELIGIONS. LEARN FROM NATURE AND THINK, "HOW BEAUTIFUL WE ALL ARE!"

*DEAF
**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

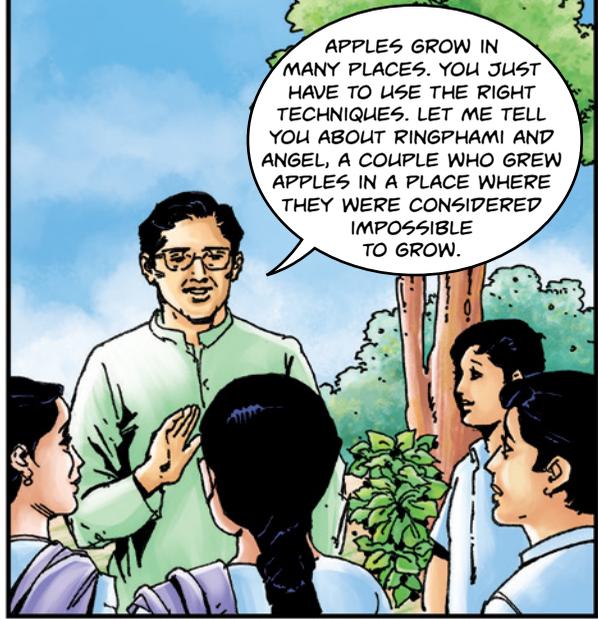


RINGPHAMI YOUNG



EVERY TIME I'VE PLANTED APPLE TREES HERE, THEY GROW A LITTLE BUT NEVER BEAR FRUIT.

MAYBE THEY CANNOT GROW IN DELHI'S CLIMATE.



APPLES GROW IN MANY PLACES. YOU JUST HAVE TO USE THE RIGHT TECHNIQUES. LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT RINGPHAMI AND ANGEL, A COUPLE WHO GREW APPLES IN A PLACE WHERE THEY WERE CONSIDERED IMPOSSIBLE TO GROW.

RINGPHAMI YOUNG, AN AERONAUTICAL ENGINEER FROM UKHRUL IN MANIPUR, WAS ALSO KEENLY INTERESTED IN FARMING. IN 2019 —



ANGEL, THE NORTH EASTERN COUNCIL WANTS TO TRAIN PEOPLE FROM OUR AREA IN APPLE CULTIVATION. THEY ARE HOLDING A TRAINING PROGRAMME* IN HIMACHAL PRADESH FOR THIS.

APPLES? APPLES DON'T GROW IN UKHRUL.



EXACTLY! THAT'S WHY I WANT TO GO AND SEE WHAT THEY ARE SAYING.

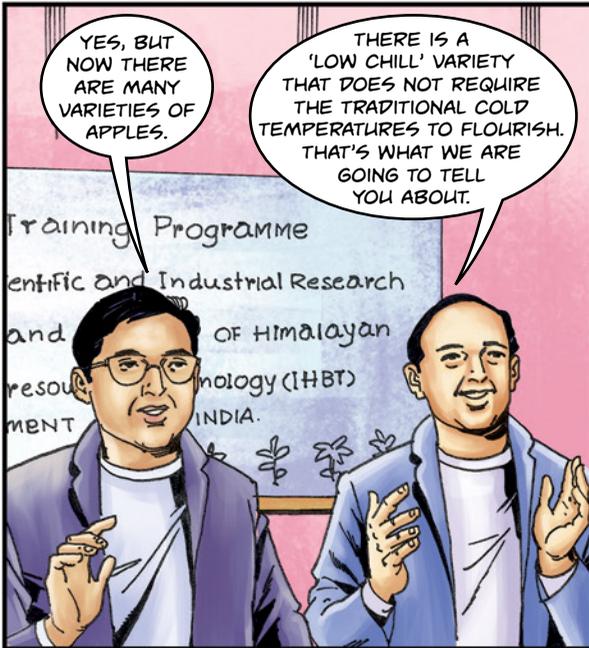
CURIOS, RINGPHAMI AND SOME OTHERS ATTENDED THE TRAINING.



APPLES NEED COLD TEMPERATURES TO GROW. I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT OUR REGION IS TOO WARM FOR APPLES.

ANGEL WAS HIS WIFE AND EQUALLY INTERESTED IN FARMING.

*A JOINT PROGRAMME BY COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH (CSIR) AND INSTITUTE OF HIMALAYAN BIORESOURCE TECHNOLOGY (IHBT)



YES, BUT NOW THERE ARE MANY VARIETIES OF APPLES.

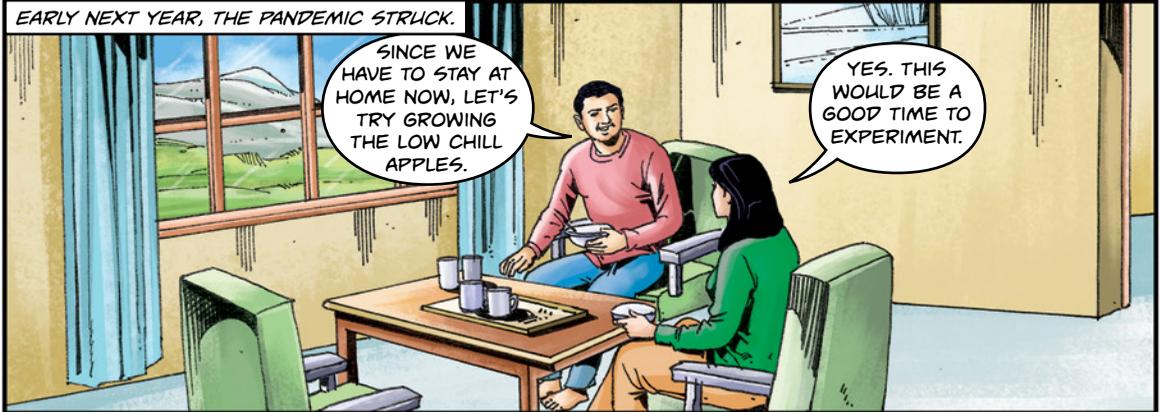
THERE IS A 'LOW CHILL' VARIETY THAT DOES NOT REQUIRE THE TRADITIONAL COLD TEMPERATURES TO FLOURISH. THAT'S WHAT WE ARE GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT.



THERE IS STILL NO GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL GROW. WHO IS GOING TO TAKE SUCH A RISK?

MANY PEOPLE WERE NOT CONVINCED, BUT RINGPHAMI FOUND OUT ALL HE COULD ABOUT SUCH APPLES.

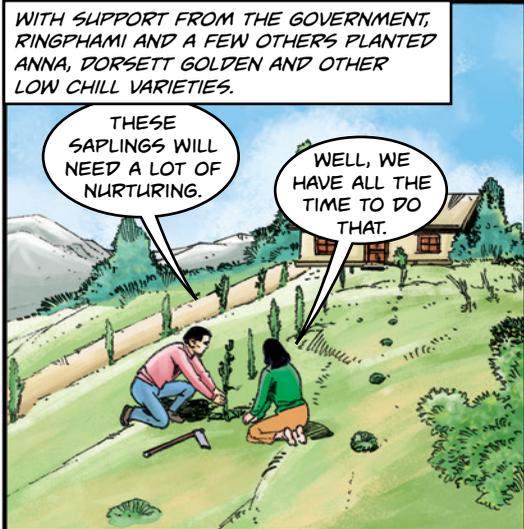
EARLY NEXT YEAR, THE PANDEMIC STRUCK.



SINCE WE HAVE TO STAY AT HOME NOW, LET'S TRY GROWING THE LOW CHILL APPLES.

YES. THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO EXPERIMENT.

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, RINGPHAMI AND A FEW OTHERS PLANTED ANNA, DORSETT GOLDEN AND OTHER LOW CHILL VARIETIES.



THESE SAPLINGS WILL NEED A LOT OF NURTURING.

WELL, WE HAVE ALL THE TIME TO DO THAT.

THE COUPLE PROVIDED THE CARE THE SAPLINGS NEEDED. THE TREES STARTED GROWING...



I PLANTED 90 SAPLINGS AND 85 HAVE SURVIVED.

...AND BLOSSOMING. IN 2021 —

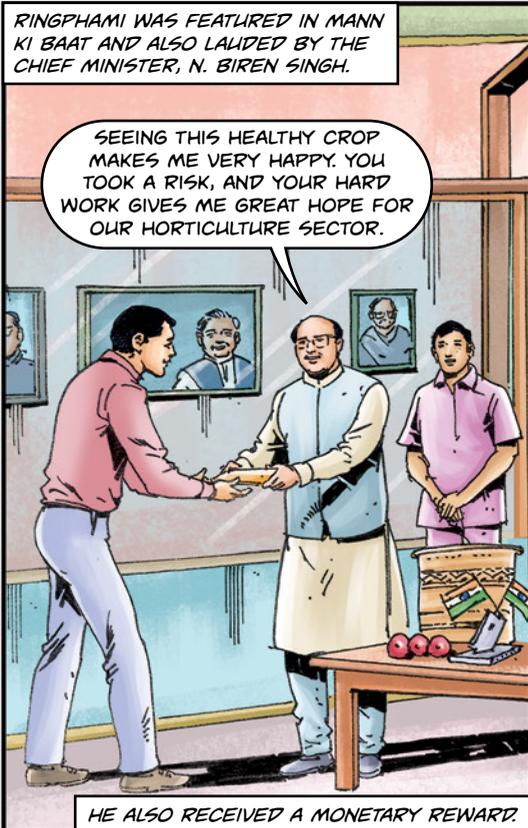


THAT VERY FIRST YEAR, THEY PRODUCED ABOUT 200 KGS OF APPLES!



TO CELEBRATE, RINGPHAMI DISTRIBUTED MOST OF HIS PRODUCE AMONG HIS FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

RINGPHAMI WAS FEATURED IN MANN KI BAAT AND ALSO LAUDED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER, N. BIREN SINGH.



HE ALSO RECEIVED A MONETARY REWARD.

WITH THIS MONEY, WE CAN EXPAND OUR APPLE PLANTATION.

WE WILL ALSO NEED COLD STORAGE AND FOOD PROCESSING FACILITIES IN LIKHRUL. THAT WILL HELP US AND OTHER FARMERS. OUR PRODUCTS WILL THEN HAVE A GREATER SHELF LIFE AND BE ABLE TO REACH THE MARKET.



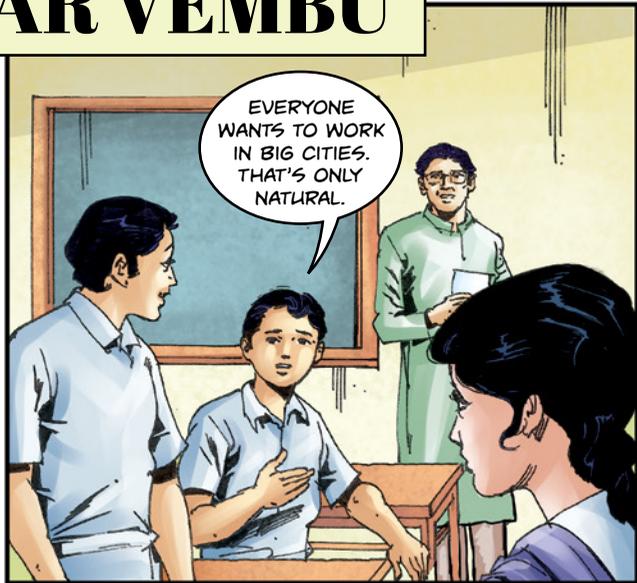
RINGPHAMI IS NOW GOING TO TRAIN OTHER FARMERS IN APPLE CULTIVATION SO THAT MANIPUR CAN BOAST OF HOME-GROWN APPLES OF ITS OWN.

SRIDHAR VEMBU

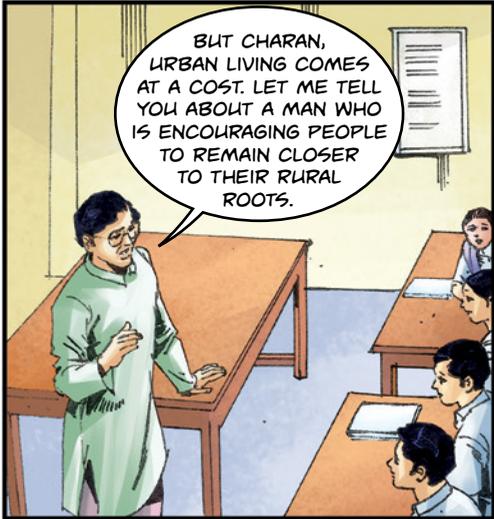


MY OLDER BROTHER IS MOVING TO BANGALORE FOR HIS JOB. I'LL MISS HIM SO MUCH!

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, DINESH. MY SISTER MOVED AWAY LAST YEAR TOO.

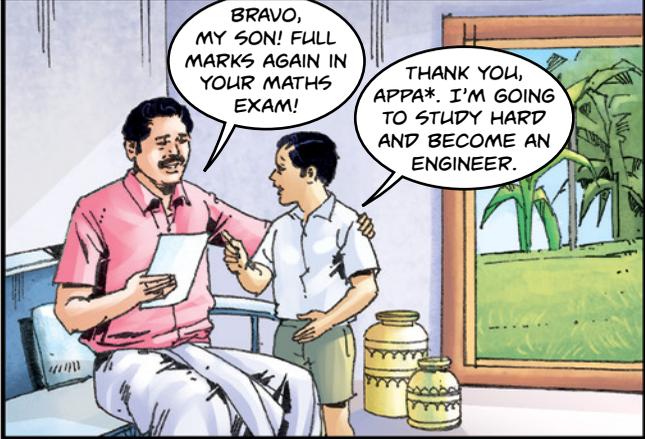


EVERYONE WANTS TO WORK IN BIG CITIES. THAT'S ONLY NATURAL.



BUT CHARAN, URBAN LIVING COMES AT A COST. LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT A MAN WHO IS ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO REMAIN CLOSER TO THEIR RURAL ROOTS.

SRIDHAR VEMBU WAS BORN IN 1968 TO A MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY IN THANJAVUR, TAMIL NADU. HE GREW UP TO BE A BRIGHT YOUNG BOY.



BRAVO, MY SON! FULL MARKS AGAIN IN YOUR MATHS EXAM!

THANK YOU, APPA*. I'M GOING TO STUDY HARD AND BECOME AN ENGINEER.

TRUE TO HIS WORD, SRIDHAR GRADUATED WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING FROM THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CHENNAI.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU, SRIDHAR? ARE YOU APPLYING FOR A JOB?

I'M NOT DONE LEARNING YET. I WANT TO GO ABROAD TO STUDY FURTHER.

WITH HIS EXCELLENT EDUCATIONAL RECORD, HE SOON FOUND A JOB IN THE U.S.A. WITH A REPUTED COMPANY.



WELCOME ABOARD, VEMBU. I CAN TELL FROM YOUR HISTORY THAT YOU ARE SURE TO HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE WITH OUR COMPANY.

THANK YOU, SIR.

SRIDHAR SECURED ADMISSION IN PRINCETON UNIVERSITY[†], WHERE HE COMPLETED HIS MASTER'S DEGREE AND THEN, A PHD.

*FATHER
†A PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITY IN NEW JERSEY, U.S.A.

SRIDHAR ALSO NURTURED AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT. IN 1996 —

HOW LONG CAN WE KEEP WORKING FOR OTHERS? WHY NOT START OUR OWN COMPANY?

WE WILL BE BROTHERS-TURNED-BUSINESS PARTNERS!



TOGETHER, THEY STARTED A SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT HOUSE CALLED ADVENTNET.

LIFE WAS ON AN UPWARD TRAJECTORY FOR SRIDHAR AND HIS FAMILY.

OUR COMPANY REVENUE HAS EXCEEDED TEN MILLION DOLLARS WITHIN FOUR YEARS!

THERE IS NO STOPPING US NOW!



THE COMPANY WAS RENAMED ZOHO CORPORATION IN 2009. WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE, IT HAD BECOME A REPUTED TECH COMPANY IN THE U.S.A. AND ALL OVER THE WORLD.

HOWEVER, THERE WERE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS ON VEMBU'S MIND THAN BUSINESS AND PROFITS.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF ALL THIS SUCCESS IF I CAN'T HELP MY OWN COUNTRY? I MUST GO BACK. I MUST USE MY RESOURCES TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT AND HELP MAKE INDIA SELF-SUFFICIENT IN THE SOFTWARE SECTOR.



SOON —

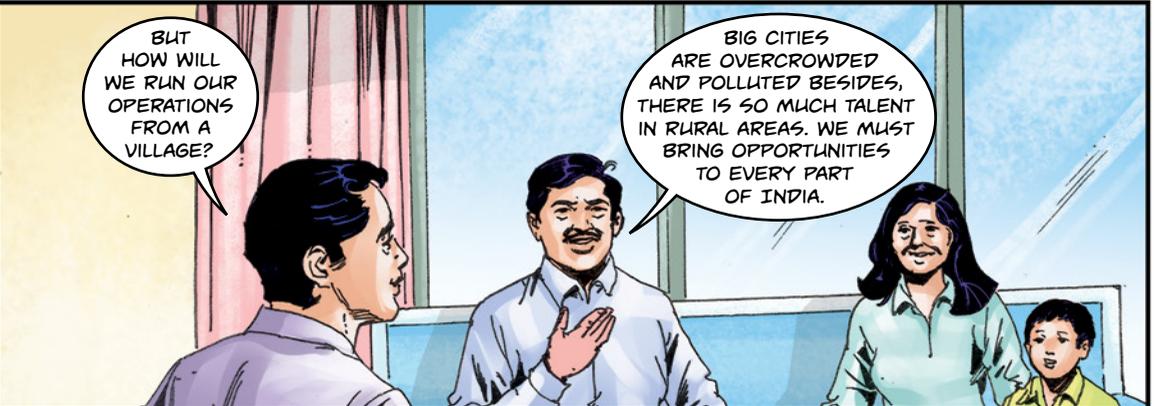
I WANT US TO MOVE BACK TO INDIA. I'D LIKE TO OPEN OUR OFFICES IN MATHALAMPARAI VILLAGE IN TAMIL NADU.

I LIKE THE IDEA OF GOING BACK TO INDIA.



BUT HOW WILL WE RUN OUR OPERATIONS FROM A VILLAGE?

BIG CITIES ARE OVERCROWDED AND POLLUTED BESIDES, THERE IS SO MUCH TALENT IN RURAL AREAS. WE MUST BRING OPPORTUNITIES TO EVERY PART OF INDIA.





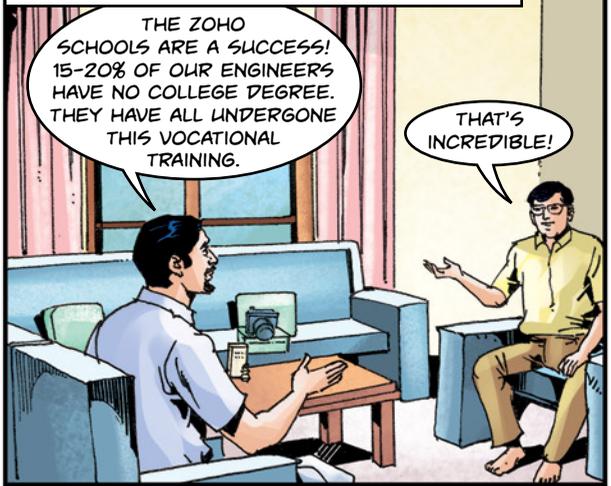
AS PER THE PLAN, SRIDHAR MOVED TO INDIA IN 2019, JUST BEFORE THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN.



IT'S SO GOOD TO BE BACK! THE CLEAN AIR, NATURE, THE QUIET LIFE... IT'S SIMPLY BLISSFUL.

SINCE THEN, HE HAS OPENED OFFICES IN RURAL PARTS OF TAMIL NADU AND ANDHRA PRADESH, PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT TO MORE THAN 500 PEOPLE. HE PLANS TO OPEN MANY SUCH OFFICES IN OTHER VILLAGES.

IN HIS BID TO EMPOWER RURAL YOUTH, SRIDHAR HAS ALSO STARTED ZOHO SCHOOLS IN VILLAGES. THESE SCHOOLS PROVIDE VOCATIONAL SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION.



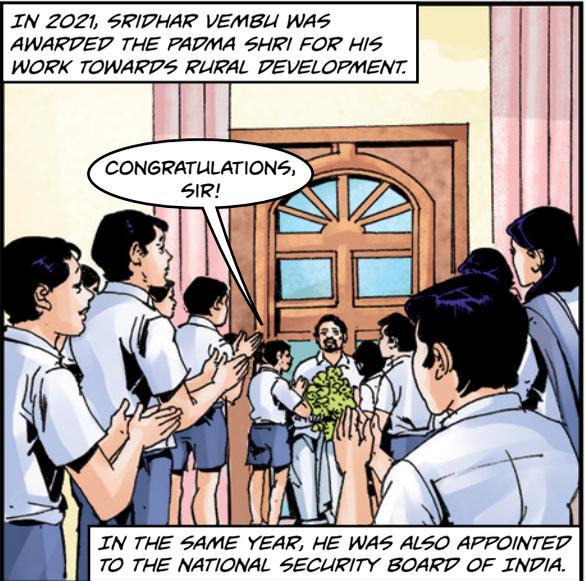
THE ZOHO SCHOOLS ARE A SUCCESS! 15-20% OF OUR ENGINEERS HAVE NO COLLEGE DEGREE. THEY HAVE ALL UNDERGONE THIS VOCATIONAL TRAINING.

THAT'S INCREDIBLE!



WHAT'S NEXT, SRIDHAR JI?

I WISH TO EMPLOY MORE PEOPLE FROM RURAL REGIONS AND OPEN MORE OFFICES. I'M ALSO GOING TO START A SCHOLARSHIP TO PROVIDE FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION TO CHILDREN IN VILLAGES.



IN 2021, SRIDHAR VEMBU WAS AWARDED THE PADMA SHRI FOR HIS WORK TOWARDS RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

CONGRATULATIONS, SIR!

IN THE SAME YEAR, HE WAS ALSO APPOINTED TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY BOARD OF INDIA.

TODAY, SRIDHAR HAS A NET WORTH OF APPROXIMATELY 3.8 BILLION DOLLARS*. DESPITE BEING SO SUCCESSFUL, HE LIVES A SIMPLE LIFE AND IS DEDICATED TO HIS CAUSE.

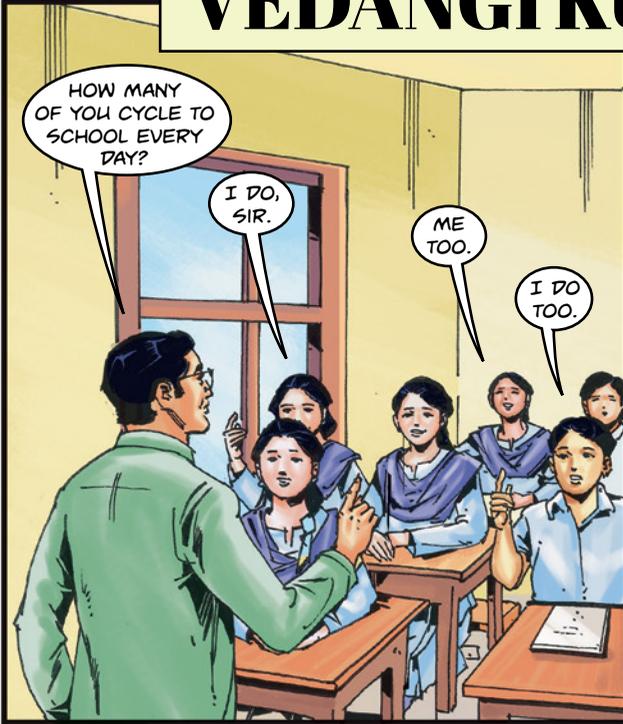


THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO. THE WORK HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN!

*MORE THAN 30,000 CRORES



VEDANGI KULKARNI

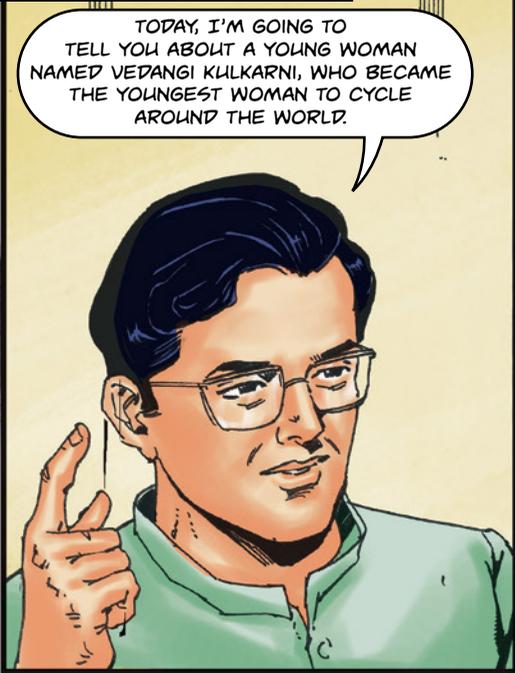


HOW MANY OF YOU CYCLE TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY?

I DO, SIR.

ME TOO.

I DO TOO.



TODAY, I'M GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT A YOUNG WOMAN NAMED VEDANGI KULKARNI, WHO BECAME THE YOUNGEST WOMAN TO CYCLE AROUND THE WORLD.

VEDANGI KULKARNI WAS RAISED ON ADVENTURE. GROWING UP SHE SPENT AS MUCH TIME OUTDOORS AS SHE DID INDOORS.

AT THE AGE OF 17, VEDANGI DECIDED TO CYCLE ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF HER PARENTS.

TWO AND A HALF WEEKS AND 767 KILOMETRES LATER, VEDANGI HAD CYCLED FROM MANALI TO SRINAGAR.



WHEW, THAT WAS A GOOD HIKE.

THE VIEW IS SO BEAUTIFUL!

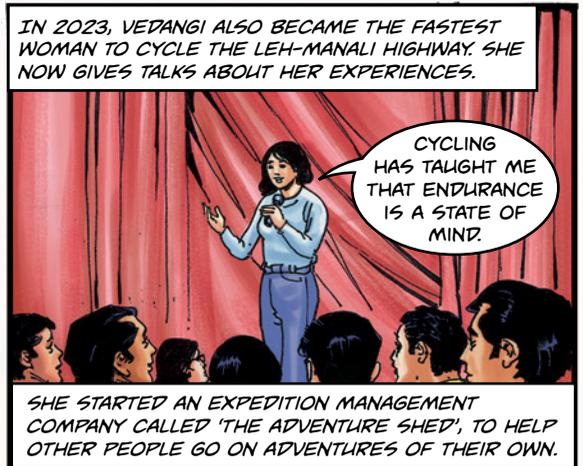
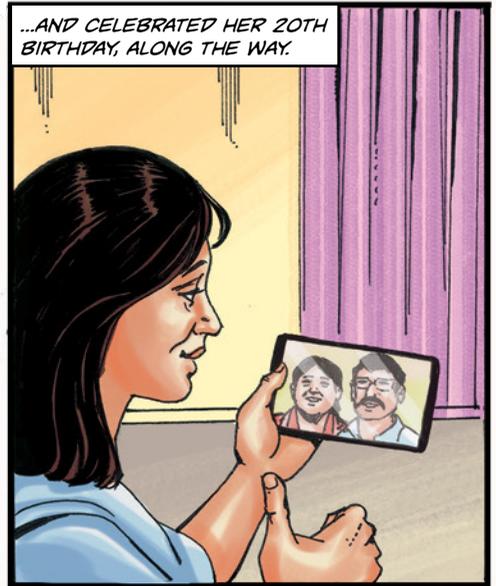


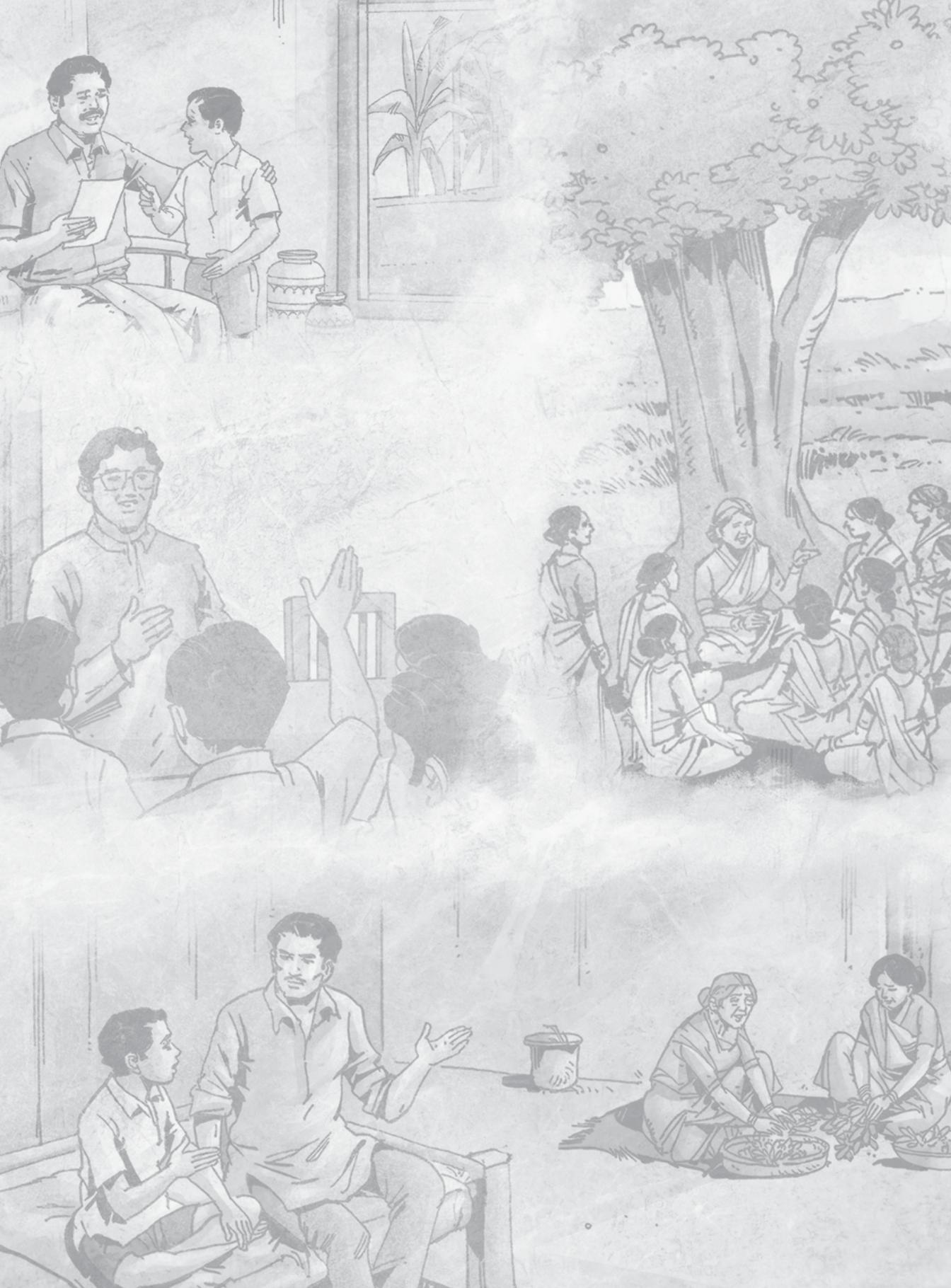
ACCORDING TO THE BROCHURES, SHE'S TOO YOUNG TO JOIN ANY OF THE TOURS.

WE'LL FOLLOW ALONG BY CAR. IT'S SAFER BUT SHE'LL STILL FEEL INDEPENDENT.



HMM, WHERE SHOULD I GO NEXT?







MANN KI BAAT

VOL. 9

Nothing is impossible for those who put their mind to it. Be it disabilities, poverty, lack of education or resources, people have overcome huge obstacles to help themselves and others achieve their goals.

The ninth volume of Mann ki Baat is about people from around the country whose grit and determination were greater than the challenges they faced.

From Vedangi Kulkarni, who became the fastest woman to cycle the globe at the age of 20, to Ringphami and Angel Young, who grew apples in a region where it was considered impossible to grow, and Madurai Chinna Pillai, who started a community banking group to help rural women like her become financially independent. These stories are proof that anything is possible if one has the will to make it happen.



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