CHILDREN'S WORLD

BRAVER
AWARD
EVERY CHILD IS A WINNER
A report on the National Bravery Award winners.
Dr. Shiv Dhawan

A LETTER TO YOU

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PEN-FRIENDS

Cover design
Deepak
Harichandan
Dear Editor...

I love reading *Children's World*. It generates so many emotions. One can relate to each and every feature. It sensitively portrays ‘our world’ so well. A world which few can understand. Yet so many aspects of our life are projected so creatively in this magazine.

The editorial ‘Teachers Day’, (September 1993 issue) was very moving and I LOVED it.

Wish you a very happy new year, and all the best for ’94.

Sarvar Abbi, Patiala

...Dear Readers

Bravery is being alert. Bravery is conquering your fears. Telling the truth is bravery. An act of courage is bravery. Saving somebody’s life at the risk to one’s own, is bravery. Fighting for the country’s honour is bravery.

“Brave,” insists a recently widowed lady, “is the small school boy who returned my purse with its contents intact. It had been burgled from the house the previous night and abandoned by the thief because it contained no cash, but keys to the house, car, locker, licences and insurance papers... useless to another—priceless for me... only a brave boy would care to bring it back when most others would not spare a second glance at it.”

So true. It is amazing how, year after year, the deeds of children stun the nation, the world and the conscience. These little acts of courage have saved lives, young and old alike. They have saved property, averted disasters, outwitted criminals and bandits—given their very lives... “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread...?”

Oh foolish world... were it not for these wingless angels—the universe would be an ugly place indeed. Whereof would poets have found inspiration to sing of bravery and valour?

How would mothers sing lullabies of strength and vigour, of sacrifice and bravado, suffusing the babe-in-arms with an aura of courage - were it not for the tales of such acts?

Whether it is tales of bravery, or the victory of mind over matter, in that fleeting nano-second before an act of bravery is enacted, it is really difficult to gauge. It is a fervent prayer however, that, if ever confronted by just such a moment, we - you and I - would be able to conquer our own fears and apprehensions in order to act immediately, just as the winners of the national bravery awards have done for the last forty years or so.

Yet, even as we strive to draw inspiration from them, we are aware that all bravery is not apparent, lauded and sung of. It is the little invisible acts of bravery and courage, of conscience and heart, that make this earth a beautiful place to inhabit.

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom’d caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Thomas Gray’s ‘Elegy written in country churchyard’, could well provide for us, the desired drive to forge a brave new world.

In February, when the year is new still and young, like a babe-in-arms for us to mould and model, and the skies full of promise, are vast and blue, let bravery be in everything we say and do...
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Every Child is a Winner

Text: Shiv Dhawan

Photographs courtesy ICCW

Republic Day has a special significance for children, with its colourful pageants, smartly marching soldiers and latest weaponry on display at the parade. An important part of this year's parade will be 20 children, all recipients of the National Award for Bravery, atop caparisoned elephants.

The Indian Council for Child Welfare selected 22 children for the National Bravery Awards-1993. Two children have been awarded posthumously. Selection of children for these awards was made by a high powered selection committee. Under the Chairmanship of Rear Admiral M.M. Chopra (Retd.), the selection committee consisted of senior officials from the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Women & Child Welfare, Home Ministry, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Youth & Sports, All India Radio, Doordarshan, Directorate of Education, Police Headquarters Delhi, Advisor to Uttar Pradesh Governor Shri B.K. Goswami and ICCW office bearers and members.

The Geeta Chopra and Sanjay Chopra Awards instituted in 1978 to honour a brother and sister team who were brutally murdered near the Ridge in New Delhi were awarded to Prachi Saban from Madhya Pradesh (Geeta Chopra Award) and Dusi Suri Babu (Sanjay Chopra Award—posthumously) from Andhra Pradesh.

Fifteen-year-old Prachi, without paying heed to the grave danger her life was in, on June 17, 1993, fought a group of armed bandits and saved not only the lives of her relatives but foiled the bandits' plan of stealing the valuables her family was carrying.

Dusi Suri Babu, following in the footsteps of Sanjay Chopra (who died defending his sister's honour) lost his life on November 4, 1992 at the tender age of 14. He saved his classmates from
who died on July 26, 1992 at the age of 13, while saving two women from drowning.

Pradeep, from New Delhi, too received the Bapu Gayadhani Award for showing presence of mind when armed robbers entered his house and attacked his mother. By informing the police in time, this 7-year-old child saved not only his property but more importantly his mother's life. Nilesh

The praiseworthy incidents for which they were rewarded are as follows:

Kumari Lopamudra Pattanayak from Orissa received the award for being crushed by a truck while herself bearing the brunt of the speeding vehicle. Pradosh Mishra also from Orissa performed a brave act of saving his eight-year-old friend from drowning in a well. Likewise Viren Madhukar Ambekar, Kumari Kavita Anil Govande, Parmeshwar Shivajirao Pichkewar (all from Maharashtra), Khyothungo Kikon (Nagaland), and Manav Krishan (New Delhi) displayed exemplary courage in saving drowning persons. Muvva Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy of Andhra Pradesh showed great presence of mind and courage when he saved his parents and sisters from a house set aflame by extremists.

Thirteen-year-old Parameshwar Shivajirao Pichkewar studying in Class VIII chased and caught a ruffian who had stabbed his classmate.

Sixteen-year-old Mohd. Murtaza sustained serious injuries on January 28, 1993 while saving his

**Dusi Suri Babu**

being crushed by a speeding truck, but himself got crushed to death under its wheels. This valorous deed earned the teenager from Andhra Pradesh a posthumous Sanjay Chopra Award.

The Bapu Gayadhani Awards instituted by the Indian Council for Child Welfare in 1988 were presented to P.S. Anurag Murthy of Andhra Pradesh (posthumously)

**Nilesh Umale**

Saheb Rao Umale a 13-year-old lad from Akola, Maharashtra, also bagged the Bapu Gayadhani Award for saving four drowning girls although he endangered his own life.

Similarly seventeen other courageous children were selected for the National Bravery awards.

**P.S. Anurag Murthy**
companions from a speeding and recklessly driven truck. Fourteen-year-old Sudhir Kumar from New Delhi saved a two-year-old child from being crushed under a speeding train. Akhilesh Shandilya displayed courage when he held on to his friend's feet as he dangled precariously from the parapet of the school hostel roof and prevented the boy from crashing to the ground. Arvind Pandey and Krishan Pandey braved a fire in their village and saved six animals entrapped in a burning stable. Six-year-old Kumari M. Pavitra of Bhopal saved her classmate from electrocution by first disengaging him from the livewire and then attempting to revive the shocked child by pressing his chest and body. She even carried him to his house which was 400 metres away from the accident site so as to get him timely medical attention which saved his life. Ten-year-old Biplob Chakraborty from Tripura entered a burning hut risking his own life and rescued a three-year-old infant. Kumari Bhumika only seven and from West Bengal, was ambushed by militants while travelling with her brother and BSF personnel in J & K. The militants showered the vehicle with bullets, three of which hit Bhumika on her back and waist. In the face of terrible odds, despite being seriously injured, she showed presence of mind. Without caring for her personal safety, she covered her brother with her body to save him from a direct hit by the militants.

The Sanjay Chopra and Geeta Chopra Award winners will each get Rs. 2000 in cash besides a silver medal, certificate and gifts. Bapu Gayadhani Award winners will each get Rs. 1500 in cash plus a silver medal, certificate and gifts while each of the National Bravery Awardees will receive a cash prize of Rs. 1000, a silver medal, a certificate and gifts.

In order to encourage other children to be fearless and brave, the government has also made arrangements to reserve seats for National Bravery Award winners in degree and diploma courses in Engineering and MBBS institutes. This will ensure that today's young heroes and
heroines emerge as archi-
tects of a modern, strong
and self-reliant India.

A majority of the prize-
winners this year are in
the age group of 12 to 14
years and have predomi-
nantly won their laurels
saving people from drown-
ing. Out of 22 children
selected for the National
Bravery Awards, eight
have won the award for
saving their companions
from drowning, while four
have won the award for
averting rail and road
disasters.

These 22 children who
have brought glory to
their parents, teachers
and themselves are truly
the pride of the nation.
Each one of them has
shown in their own spe-
cial way that the secret of
success lies in developing
the qualities of courage,
sensitivity and presence
of mind.

As they parade past the
President on Republic
Day waving to cheering
crowds, they will pass on
a message "Today we are
the nation’s pride, tomor-
row it could be any one of
you—remember every
child is a winner!"

Anamika Mukherjee
The Indian School,Kuwait

They left their world,
They shut the last door,
Are we going to do the same,
After the Third World War?
They left their world in tears,
Not at all in ease,
Our world is close to destruction,
There’s no more peace.
Why doesn’t everyone,
Understand the other?
Why don’t the countries
Reach a solution rather?
If only my voice would be heard,
If only they’d understand
I could easily solve their problems
And fulfil their demands.
My solution would be simple,
Not bombs to operate,
I wouldn’t suggest a deadline,
My answer would be ‘just co-operate!’
Dear losts and founds,

It was a bright, sunny day. It was the kind of day that seems to exist only in mystery books along with terrific food, terrific mothers and no school. But if you asked me where Heaven is, I think I will have to laugh. Laugh scornfully, I mean. And I’m sure you will sympathise and laugh with me. Laugh scornfully, that is.

As I said, it was a bright, sunny morning with just a hint of exams in the year. I went to school with a song on my lips and a smile in my heart or wherever because I had done all my homework and remembered to take my Geography notes as well. The last Geography period I had been told that I would be thrown out of the window if I didn’t bring my Geography notes. Well, this time I would not be thrown out of any window, not even from our ground floor classroom.

Little did I know. Little did I know that the Sun was a hypocrite and the brightness of the day was just a clever disguise. Little did I know that the world and nature and Raghu were always conspiring against me and that... Anyway, let me tell you what happened.

Everything went okay till the Geography period. I had been so lulled into a false sense of security that I did not see the thunder clouds gather at the classroom door or the stroke of lightning that made its way to my blissfully unconscious desk. In other words, as I got up to greet the Geography teacher, I tripped and fell with a crash to the floor. And not to miss out on the fun, my Geography textbook, my notes and my stupid, jangling pencil box accompanied me in the crash.

You might ask how it happened. You might ask but I may not answer. Because I don’t know. I mean I know but I have no proof. And let me tell you, proof is very very valuable in school, much more than in a criminal court. And it’s even more difficult to get. My own feeling is that Raghu stuck out his foot as I got up and Raghu has almighty long toes.

Anyway I crashed down to the floor and lay there with my Geography text on my stomach, my notes scattered over my knees and the compass and setsquare from my pencil box hanging decoratively over my left ear.

“Pradeep”, thundered
the Geography teacher. "What are you doing there on the floor?"

I almost said I was imitating a sand dune (we were doing hot and cold deserts that period) but then I caught sight of another pair of shoes next to the Geography master's and they looked a lot like Mr. Krish's shoes. Mr. Krish, the Vice Principal. And his shoes looked angry.

I scrambled up, unhooking the compass and the setsquare on the way but I knew, with a sinking in my heart, that it was no good. I finally recognised the storm that lurked behind that deceptive bright and sunny day.

Mr. Krish did not say much. He did not need to. He did ask whether I had lost my mind or something to that effect but then the Geography teacher went on to how I never had a mind and even if I had, it was smaller than an ice cube at the mouth of a volcano. By the time he finished, we had revised an entire chapter on earthquakes and earth fissures.

But there was one consolation. And as far as I am concerned, it was a big one. And it came from Mr. Krish. Even as I was leaving the classroom with my head in an imaginary noose, Mr. Krish suddenly said, "Raghu, I think you had better come out, too. Or would you like to have your toes cut to size?"

How did Mr. Krish know? I mean what proof did he have? But proof is not as important to Vice Principals and teachers. I have bitter cause to know this unalterable fact—that if a teacher wants to mark you out as belonging to the criminal classes, then nothing, not even a letter from the Eternal Witness can help. You are hanged. In other words, you spend the day in the corridor, inspected by thousands of impressionable eyes, (including my brother's) and hear comments like, 'Is he wanted by the police?' 'I like his haircut. Must be a prison haircut'. etc. etc. etc.

If I hadn't lost my mind in the morning, I certainly had at the end of that long, unending, desert day!

Yours lost in sand dunes,
Perky
Once upon a time...

Text: O.P. Bhagat

If you ask your parents or an uncle or aunt what they did in the evening when they were children, they will most probably say that they listened to stories.

Until about 50 years ago, story-telling was common. As night fell, children gathered round the grandmother and asked her to tell them a story. And she told them, often more than one at a sitting.

If it was not the grandma, it was an elderly aunt. Or it was a servant in the family, or someone in the lane.

Children still like stories. But very few ask their grandmas or other elders to tell them one—at least not in the big towns and cities.

Most them listen to the radio or watch TV or go to the movies. Or they read
storybooks and magazines. Some mothers read out stories to their kids at bedtime.

With the coming of radio, TV, video and cinema and the printing of more children's books and magazines, the change had to come. In some countries it came earlier.

It has its advantages. But story-telling has suffered as a result.

Luckily, in many places people tell stories and children listen to them as before. Sometimes story-telling is arranged in city schools and libraries.

Like story-writing, story-telling is an art. Just as everybody cannot write a story, everybody cannot tell one. That is, so well that people listen to them with interest or pleasure.

In the Sindbad story, the old sailor himself tells of his experiences or adventures during his seven voyages. And how he charms you with his telling.

Or you must have noticed how, with the relish of a tale, a mama or grandma makes a reluctant boy eat his food or makes him forget his sulking or the mischief he is playing.

That relish is the interesting way in which, or the gusto with which, the person tells a story or spins a yarn. Some story-tellers even inflect their voice and make gestures. They thus make the telling dramatic, or almost enact the story.

When there was no radio or TV or movies and the story-books were fewer, the story-teller was among the foremost entertainers. He or she regaled from a handful to a hundred, even more, people at a time.

This was almost everywhere and in every age. Most of the tellers used everyday speech. Some others, like balladeers, sang or recited the stories. Their language was also simple.

What kind of tales did they tell? Or, for that matter, what kind of stories does the grandma tell today? Mostly folk-tales or fairy tales.

A folktale is a popular story, handed down from the past by word of mouth.

Now we have hundreds of books of such tales from all over the world. But the stories were recorded or retold in the last century and our own.

As they are stories of olden days, many of them begin with the words “Once upon a time...” If it is about a king, the story-teller says: “Ek tha raja—once there was a king...”

The tales are mostly about common people—a peasant or a trader or an artisan or a thief. Or may be a simple chap, even a fool or a stupid boy, as is Stupid Jack. Or a clever man or woman.

Or it may be a family story—of a man who saves every penny but whose wife or son wastes money. Or of three or five or seven brothers or sisters. Or of a nice and sweet girl and her scheming or stone-hearted stepmother.

Or it may be a clever or humorous tale of some individual or centring round a wise and witty courtier like Birbal or Tenali Raman.

Even when a king is there, he is more or less like a common man with a common man’s problems.

He may be childless and desiring a son. Or he may be looking for brides for his sons or a groom for his daughter. Or he may be pestered by a thief or some mysterious character.

Or he may set some riddles or puzzling questions to solve, as is King Vikram by the Vetala
(goblin). Otherwise hardly anything of the royalty or of the affairs of the kingdom comes in.

Sometimes animals, often talking animals, are also there. But what men do or happens to them is more important. Similarly, a god or goddess is there just to spur the story or bring it to a conclusion.

In the tale of the woodcutter whose axe fell into a stream, the man’s honesty rather than the god’s help is more important or appeals more to the reader or listener.

Magic may also be there in a folktale. But it is less than in a fairy tale. The same goes for the role of a witch or a ghost or any other spirit.

By the way, a fairy story is a kind of folk story. Sometimes the two are so alike that it is not easy to label them.

You will almost always find The Ugly Duckling in a book of fairy tales. But there is no magic or supernatural element in it as a fairy tale demands. So is it with the story of the little girl, Goldilocks.

As the tales were passed down orally from one generation to another, some were changed in the telling. Or two or more versions of the same story continued to be told.

This is why you sometimes find the same story told in two or three different ways in different books.

Just as men go from one place to another, so do stories. Thus you may hear the same tale in Punjab and, with some variations, in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Centuries ago, when some Indians went to other countries of South-east Asia, some of their stories also went with them. This is how the Indian epic stories are still popular there.

Or when the traders and travellers visited India, they took some stories back home to West Asia and further west. The Arabian Nights and
the Italian Decameron have some tales which are of Indian origin.

In India itself some writers retold, expanded or adapted many oral stories. Thus we have treasuries of tales like the Panchatantra and the Kathasaritasagara (The Ocean of Stories).

Some modern writers have written stories in the folktale style. One such example is Lady, or the Tiger? Thackeray’s Sultan Stork seems to have come from Scheherazade’s fund of stories.

Many folktales have been filmed. Stories of Aladdin and Ali Baba have also been staged as plays. And many have been presented as comics.

Folk stories are stories of plot. The characters are vague or sketchy. Or they are types—a peasant or a bania or a simpleton or a rogue.

And there is not much of an atmosphere either. The place where the events take place is just a village or a town or a jungle.

The incidents are what matter. One thing follows another. In what will come next lies the interest of the story. A moral may or may not be there. But the happenings must arouse the listener’s curiosity. In other words, some suspense should be there.

Equally important is the way the tale is told. A poor teller mars a good story. A good narrator makes a simple story charming or intriguing or thrilling.

Or, to use Sir Philip Sidney’s words, a well-told tale “holdeth children from play, and men from the chimney-corner”.

Shreekala Ram
The Indian School Kuwait

She suffers everything calmly,
Tortured by the merciless society,
Born as a girl in poverty,
Destined to grieve through eternity.
She toils hard day and night,
Having nothing but stale bread and water,
slapped, jeered, mocked by everyone,
Still there is no end to it.
Locked in the cellar the whole night,
Nothing but an old rug to cover,
The cold, damp smell of the cellar,
Wakes her up each time she gets sleep.
Why was I born?
Why should I live?
Why can’t I die?
Ponders she, but in vain,
As fate frowns upon her,
And the deadly system prevails.
GRAPES ARE SOUR

1. Fox jumps on grapes.
2. Fox misses grapes.
3. Fox continues jumping.
4. Fox reaches for grapes.
5. Fox thinks.
6. Fox climbs up.
7. Fox jumps on grapes.
8. Fox steps on grapes.
9. Fox declares they're sour.

REALLY, THEY'RE SOUR!
The gray dawn penetrated the black night. The little flat on the top floor of the south building stood out dull and quiet as ever with a gloomy feeling hanging around it. Anyway it was always gloomy. As gloomy as the old man who lived in it. He was always snappy, infuriated with everybody who came to him, even with the little boy Rahul, who used to do his household chores. Rahul was a 12-year-old orphan who was taken in by the old man when he lost his parents at five. He was particularly fond of sweets. But the miser would never buy any for him. Rahul was fond of the old man and did whatever he could for him but he too received his set of scoldings. The people from the other flats also kept their distance from him. He hardly ventured out of the house so they were least bothered about him.

The old man blinked off the drowsiness from his eyes. Something about the gray dawn struck him. He thought and thought and recollected his past memories. It was painful to remember the past. His sons had left him long back as a nestling sparrow leaves its nest. He had lost his wife when the boys were still young. He was all alone now. Everything was over for him. His diary was his only solace.

Suddenly he remembered. He remembered what was so special about this day. It was his birthday.

'I wonder why I should be so happy about it. There's no one to wish me anyway,' he grumbled as he got out of bed. He felt dizzy as he looked for his slippers. He felt ill and found he was suffering from high fever. As he
could do nothing himself, he lay down on his bed. The clock struck eight. Rahul came in with the tea. He became anxious and worried on seeing the old man lying on the bed.

"Can I do anything for you, Grandfather," he asked.

"Go away from here and let me die in peace," was the curt reply he got.

Rahul went away with a worried frown. A doctor was needed. But he lived four blocks away. Well he'd have to be brought somehow. He slipped out of the house and ran down four blocks till he came to the doctor's residence. The doctor hurried with him to the house and examined the old man.

He gave some medicines, patted Rahul's shoulder and said, "Don't worry, son. Give him this medicine and he'll soon get better."

Rahul took out his hard earned money and gave it to the doctor.

"I'll not take any fees from you," said the doctor, smiled at Rahul's grateful face and went away.

Rahul remained beside the old man giving him whatever he needed. It was evening when the old man's eyes opened. Rahul went off to get some tea. The old man sat up on the bed feeling a little better. It was then he noticed a little card lying on the table. He picked it up. It was a card all right, small but beautifully made. Inside were written the words, "Dear grandfather, many happy returns of the day, from Rahul." Tears welled up in his eyes "Oh! I am so glad," he whispered.

Rahul came in with the tea. "Do you like it grandfather?" he asked joyously, "I know it is a small thing. But I made it with great care and devotion and I was sure you'd like it. You had told me the date long ago. Do you remember? And because I loved you so much, I made this small gift to show how much I cared for you."

The old man looked deeply at Rahul's earnest face. And suddenly he hugged him. He spoke in a gentle tone which he had never used with the boy. "Well Rahul, I do like it, I do," he said and could speak no more and neither could Rahul.

Now they wouldn't care whatever the people said. They both had nobody in this world and now they had each other to take care of. Any how later they were going to the market to buy the sweets. And as they walked together the old man thought, 'This is the happiest birthday I ever had.'
AHMEDABAD’S WETLANDS

Text: Madhavi Joshi
CEE-NFS

Illustrations: Subir Roy

A

HMEDABAD’S

talavdis or wet-

lands are falling

prey to privatisation and

new developments. These

shrinking and often

contaminated patches of

water are being slowly

filled in to create urban

property that can be used

more “gainfully”. Resi-

dents around these water

bodies heave a sigh of

relief to be finally rid of

what is, in most cases, a

nuisance. They probably

will not connect water-

logging in their areas

during the monsoons to

the disappearance of

talavdis which serve as

reservoirs for rain water

run-off.

Ahmedabad district is

fortunate to have Nal

Sarovar—the biggest

wetland of Gujarat de-

clared as a bird sanctu-

ary. However, pollution

through fertilisers and

pesticides is degrading

and threatening this

important wetland, too.

So is the case with other

water bodies in the dis-

trict which are drying up

and dying because people

fail to appreciate their

significance for urban

development planning.

Marshy areas, marine

or freshwater bodies

having a depth upto six

metres can be described

as wetlands. Wetlands

recharge groundwater,

collect rainwater run-off

and provide a natural

breeding ground for

aquatic flora and fauna

which thrive here.

Ahmedabad district is

visited by a large number

of migratory birds from

Siberia on their way to

Saurashtra and onward

to Arabia and East Africa.

Owing to its central

location on the migratory

path, the district provides

a convenient stop-over

and resting place for the

birds. Nal Sarovar and

Thol lake become a veri-

table paradise for bird

watchers after June-July

every year. Even today

one does not have to go

very far from home to

watch the graceful Painted

Stork or the Shovelers.

An early morning walk to

the neighbourhood

talavdis is a visual de-

light, despite the dirt and
filth around. Observations at talavdis within and around Ahmedabad have recorded the presence of more than 2000 birds at one time. Migratory ducks like the Shoveler, Gargeny, Pintail, Common Teal are found in large numbers. These tribes of waterfowl dip into shallow waters to feed on algae and other organic material. Highly gregarious, they always migrate in flocks. Migratory waders—strong, long distance travellers like Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper also visit the area on their way southwards. Greylag and Barheaded geese which were seen earlier only in parts of North Gujarat and Kutch in small numbers, are now seen in big numbers at Thol lake, Nal Sarovar, Viramgam dam and Gangasar tank of Viramgam all in Ahmedabad district.

During January 1990 and February 1991, observers at the Vastrapur talavdi in one of the newly developed areas on the western fringe of Ahmedabad city, have noted a rich variety of migratory birds. Some species of Grebes, Cormorants and Darters, Herons and Egrets, Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills, Geese and Ducks, Cranes, Finfoot and Jacanas, Shorebirds and Waders, Gulls, Terns and Skimmers have been spotted here at the same time. Unbelievable, as it may sound, the observations can be corroborated by scores of photographs of flocks of birds which bring alive the otherwise neglected talavdi. Obviously, the talavdi still provides our migratory friends with food and the required stop-over before they take off for yet another sojourn.

Disappearance of talavdis would mean the loss of a resting site for the migratory birds. We would never be able to watch flocks of dipping ducks foraging for food in the water with their tails pointing to the sky. We may be able to watch the spectacle of stately cranes flying high up in the air in a strong 'V' but, we may never witness them gliding over to land gracefully on the water's surface.

Wetland areas have the potential to be developed into urban recreation centres that can continue to attract waterfowl and other bird life. This will necessitate changing the existing status of such areas from kharabo or wasteland to protected areas. Citizens of Ahmedabad today, are very much in need of urban recreation centres that will provide relief from the crowded and congested streets. The wetlands can, if developed innovatively, offer them the needed respite.

Gerard Manly Hopkins has a winning argument for the preservation of wetlands everywhere:

"What would that world be once bereft,
Of wet and wilderness?
Let them be left,
O let them be left,
Wildness and wet,
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet."

CHILDREN'S WORLD FEBRUARY 1994
Cheeky and Meeky
Popcorn Makers

Story: Manorama Jafa

Cheeky and Meeky were busy flying kites when they heard Uncle Painter, “Come down boys, I have brought popcorn for you.”

The moment they heard that, Cheeky and Meeky descended three steps at a time to get to Uncle Painter. They happily took the popcorn and thanked Uncle Painter four times. Uncle was very pleased.

Finding him in a good mood, Cheeky asked him, “Uncle, can’t we make popcorn ourselves?”

“Of course, you can. I will teach you how to make some today.”

Cheeky and Meeky accompanied Uncle Painter to the market and bought some corn. Back home Cheeky brought a pan and Meeky some butter and salt.

Uncle Painter lit the fire, put the pan on it, and greased it with some butter. When the butter was hot, Uncle put in the corn and sprinkled some salt on it and covered it.

Pop.......Pop.......Pop.......Pop

The corn began popping. Uncle Painter
lowered the flame and removed the lid.

"My goodness, so much popcorn!" cried out Cheeky.

"What a miracle!" explained Meeky.

Cheeky and Meeky and all their family members had their fill.

Early next morning, on their way to school Cheeky said, "Meeky, let's make pop-corn and sell it in school."

"That's a wonderful idea. We can earn lots of money," Meeky clapped with two fingers.

In the recess when the teacher was not in the class, Meeky and Cheeky stood on the teacher's table and Cheeky announced, "Friends, today Meeky and I will show you how to make popcorn."

"Make popcorn, sell pop corn, eat popcorn and make money too," Meeky added.

Soon Cheeky and Meeky collected pocket money from their classmates and rushed to the market. They bought corn, borrowed a pan, butter and salt. A make-shift hearth was made out of bricks, the fire was lit, a pan was put with the butter in it and salt was sprinkled.

Pop.....Pop.....Pop.....Pop

The popping corn started flying all over and soon there was hardly any popcorn left in the pan.

"We are sorry today, tomorrow we will come prepared with a pan, its
lid, corn etc, etc," said Cheeky in a low tone. His class fellows understood. Meeky requested them...

"Please bring your own corn tomorrow."

"We will make some paper bags to seal the popcorn in," suggested Cheeky.

The following day, all the boys came prepared to make popcorn. They gathered at a lonely place behind the school building. While Cheeky and Meeky were busy making popcorn the other boys made paper bags. Soon a hundred paper bags were filled and all of them were ready to be sold. As the bell for recess rang, Cheeky and Meeky with their classmates stood at the school gate. The boys rushed out and soon all the popcorn was sold. The school started again but

Cheeky and Meeky and their class fellows who had lost all sense of time, missed their class. They counted the money and divided it amongst themselves.

"We have earned a lot, Meeky."

"Yes, we are all great."

On the fifth day, when Cheeky and Meeky entered their house Uncle Painter called them, "Boys, come here, quick."

Cheeky and Meeky came smiling, "Hello Uncle." They were in a good mood.

"How was school today?"

"Great, Uncle!" chuckled Cheeky.

"How did you do your class test, day before yesterday?"

"It went off well, Uncle," said Meeky.

Uncle Painter went close to them and caught Cheeky and Meeky by their ears.

"Tell me the truth, why did you not attend classes?"

Cheeky and Meeky looked at each other.

"Missing classes? Selling pop-corn? Leaders of the class?" and Uncle Painter read out a letter written by their class teacher.

Cheeky and Meeky just could not lift their eyes.

Uncle Painter felt their pockets.

"Empty your pockets," he ordered.

Cheeky and Meeky took out all the money and handed it over to Uncle.

"No pocket money this month," he declared.

And later on, their mothers too repeated the same thing.
The ‘Perfect’ Health Mela?

A report by TSS

It looked like any other mela. Colour splashed all round, camel rides, merry-go-rounds, et al. For a moment, I wondered if I had arrived at the wrong venue, before a host of stalls to my left displaying material—posters and so on—about AIDS, cancer, tuberculosis etc., convinced me that it was indeed the Perfect Health Mela, at the Talkatora Gardens.

The eight-day jamboree held in December sought to address issues relating to basic health care. This was organised by the Heart Care Foundation of India, the promoters of Perfect Health. The mela was preceded by a ritual ad blitz with Ranga’s cartoons pasted all over town. For example, an elephant claiming: “I do not get heart attacks because I eat natural food.”

The message, however, seemed to be hopelessly lost at the venue whilst volunteers explained how the dreadful diseases could be successfully prevented—the food stalls on the other side were virtually thronged by hungry Delhites. Precautions and basic hygiene habits had been thrown to the winds and the volunteers with badges pinned to their kurtas were oblivious to all that. Flies swarmed over the uncovered eatables even as the visitors gulped them swiftly and with relish.

The organisers had flaunted the mela as trying to reach out to children also, because after all, you have to start from the base. But one wondered what message was going to get across to the hapless kid. One stall advised against consumption of bidis, cigarettes and zarda. But four stalls away, a local person was proudly occupying one, selling—yes—zarda.

These discrepancies were not all. Ladies of a particular family crowded an old man claiming to be a palmist. This too was part of the health mela!

Aloka, a 12-year-old girl who had come to the mela with her parents, said that she was interested only in the eatables and merry-go-rounds. Cancer, AIDS, had she heard of these ailments? She drew a blank.

There was confusion all round. Loudspeakers blared free heart check-ups, blood pressure tests, lost kids, quaawwalis and fancy dress competitions—all in the same breath.

According to the organisers, the idea was to make this an entertainment-based mela. As one of them said, “No one comes if you have dry exhibitions on health.”

True, but then one wondered if the intended message had gone across to the thousands of kids who came visiting. Or was it an opportunity lost despite a huge expenditure?

I left the mela confused, without an answer.
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T 8 o'clock when the door bell rang, Tito knew it was Asimbabu. His sense of timing was as keen as his zeal for doing difficult sums, whereas mathematics was Tito's perpetual nightmare. He barely passed in the final exam of Class VII and mother said, "Nothing doing, we must get a tutor to teach you maths at home." In two weeks time she got hold of Asim Mitra—dark, tallish, with thick hair and high-powered glasses. He was twenty-six years elder to Tito. Asim had just appeared for his B.Sc. exam with maths honours.

"He is a genius," mother was proud of her discovery. "At least three people told me their wards had progressed by leaps and bounds after Asim took charge of them. Look at Kumar's results," she raised her finger and also her voice. "Last year he just scraped through in maths but this year he scored a neat ninety."

"I wanted to be a scientist if not an explorer," the first day Asim Mitra came, he spoke of his dreams, "Like Sir C.V. Raman or Livingstone. I was trying for a scholarship to go abroad. But family problems came in the way. My father wanted me to start earning so that I could pay for my brother's education."

In just a week's time, Tito realised how seriously Asimbabu took his job. At 8 o'clock when he entered his room till 9-15 when he left, he was absorbed in doing sums. Most of the sums he did in a very casual manner—like he was tasting a Chinese dish. It was only when he was confronted with the tough ones that he bit his lips and scratched his head. And when he solved them he laughed like a kid.

"Every problem has a solution," Asim babu would sip the tea Tito's mother had brought for him and observe, "only you are to find it out. Each sum is a new experience for me," he smiled. "The more sums you do, the more you know about the world."

But Tito had a feeling
that Asim babu’s world consisted of algebra and arithmetic only. He did not care to know how much Tito loved to play. Tito dreamt of becoming a Gavaskar and concentrated on batting only. But then he began taking interest in bowling, too. So now he aspired to become an all-rounder, like Kapil Dev. He looked forward to the day when he would play in test matches in Wankhede stadium or Eden Gardens and how his friends would shout from the galleries, ‘There’s our Tito. Buck up young man.’

Every day before going to school Tito would play cricket for a while in the park near their house. Snatching an hour between study time and catching the school bus was fun. Just when he, Ravi and Deep found the game picking up, his mother would appear in the veranda and shout, “Tito, Tito, run quickly you will miss the school bus.”

If he did not return in ten minutes time Raghu dada would appear on the field, “Come little master, It’s nine already.”

Back home with the cricket bat in hand mother would yell at him, “Is this the time to play?

How many times should I remind you not to play in the morning?”

Under the shower in the bathroom Tito could hear his mother still complaining, “Let your father return from tour. This has to stop anyway.”

But Sunday was different. Tito was free to leave his table at 8 o’clock, sometimes even before breakfast and continue to play till luncheon. His mother would patiently bear with this and sometimes even sent him a glass of milk around 11 a.m.

All this changed after Asim Mitra joined. When Tito first heard the news he asked his mother in a low voice, “What time is he coming, Ma?”

“In the morning of course,” was the cut and dry reply. “He is very busy in the evening—two tuitions and a coaching class.”

Tito looked the picture of gloom. A few days ago his parents had had a few unpleasant words to say after going through his progress report. Father was upset and mother determined to fix him up with a private tutor for his poor showing in the exam.

“Morning is better,” father commented while sipping his coffee. “You should understand difficult sums with a fresh mind.”

“And that would stop you from going out to play too,” Mother added with a smile, as she left the room with the tray in
hand.

It was not long before Tito realised the meaning of that smile. It spread over the weeks which soon rolled into months. Asim Mitra was punctual to the dot. ‘He is as dry as the pages of the geometry book,’ thought Tito. Only once did he cast a glance at the cricket bat gathering dust in one corner of the room.

“So you play cricket?” he blinked at Tito.

Tito nodded. He fondly wished Asim babu would ask him a few questions so that he could tell him how much he knew about the game.

“At your age,” he opened the chapter on simplification, “it is important to be totally involved in your studies.”

“You’ve never played cricket,” Tito objected, “so you can hardly know.”

Asim Mitra looked at Tito and raised his eyebrows, “Not too much,” he said. “I did occasionally hit a ball or two. But I found this more interesting,” he patted the arithmetic book. “Now this chapter,” he suddenly became business-like, “I want you to do twenty sums at random so that one would know how you have learnt it. And let me tell you one thing, all famous cricketers were good students when they were kids like you. May be they were good in maths too…”

Just then, Mother entered the room with Asim’s cup of tea. He stood up promptly and submitted, “Excuse me, madam, it’s about a month I am teaching maths to Tito. I want to see what progress he has made by now. So this Sunday I am going to take a test. Sunday morning, I hope you don’t mind…”

“Not at all,” Tito’s mother flashed the broadest smile she could manage. “You may do anything to see that this fellow improves in maths.”

“Thank you,” Asim sat down and sipped the tea with a look of satisfaction on his face.

“Sunday,” Tito suddenly screamed, “but mummy, this Sunday Rahul, Gora and the others would expect me to play. There’s a match coming up with Evergreen.”

“So what? Tell them you cannot make it,” mother dismissed his plea altogether. Before leaving the room she looked at Asim and with a benign smile added, “and Sunday I want you to have breakfast with us. Being a holiday you wouldn’t be in a hurry so I think…”

“That would be fine, madam,” replied Asim.

That evening Tito drew a cartoon of Asim Mitra in his drawing book. He drew occasionally. But that day he was full of rage. First, the tutor deprived him of free time on his weekdays and now he was trying to grab his Sunday morning—the time he looked forward to the whole week. This was the time when all his friends would be playing cricket and the balconies around the park would be full of people watching them play. Tito and his friends would get all the encouragement they would need from their parents and others who watch them play.

The cartoon of Asim Mitra showed him poring over a copy-book while a cricket-ball rushed at great speed to hit his head from behind.

“I am not playing this Sunday,” Tito told Rahul and the others when they met in the park on Sunday afternoon. “My maths teacher is to take my monthly test on Sunday morning.”

“He must be a bore!” said Gora while helping
himself to the *alu-chhole* they had just bought from a vendor.

"He certainly is," replied Tito. "But I can do nothing. Mummy is a great fan of his and my maths result was very bad last year."

"Then shall we drop the match with Evergreen on Sunday?" Rahul looked at Ravi. "If Tito doesn't play we are sure to cut a sorry figure."

"But we can't do that," nodded Ravi, the plump wicket-keeper and captain of 'Dare devils.' "We have postponed it so many times. Certainly, Tito's absence would weaken our team but calling off the match would be shameful."

"We will miss you Tito", Rahul took Tito's hand in his and said.

Tito returned home with a heavy heart. The match with the Evergreen boys had been planned since last year. The Dare devils had been pinning their hopes on Tito—the only all-rounder in the team.

Back home Tito opened his sketch book, looked at the cartoon and mused, 'If only you knew what joy Cricket is...'

Next morning Tito was at his table doing the sums. Asim babu had asked him to do twenty sums in an hour's time—a test to see how fast he could do the sums correctly. His father's wrist watch lay beside his notebook on the table.

Around eight-thirty, Tito's mother appeared with his breakfast. She kept the tray on one side of the table. Tito had the unhappiest look on his face. In half an hour's time the joyous shouts and excited chatter of the Daredevils and Evergreen teams would rent the air.

"It's pleasant to see you busy at work." Mother remarked in a soft voice as she drew aside the curtains to let in the daylight. "Even though your teacher is not present and cannot come today..."

"Why?" Tito looked up with a start.

"I do not know," she shrugged, "whether it's because of the way you behaved that day when he suggested that he might come on Sunday or
because he has some personal work.

“He telephoned in the morning and apologised for not being able to come today. Some work he said and that it may not be proper to take your test on Sunday...”

Tito hurriedly finished his breakfast and picked up his bat and ball. ‘Did I behave too rudely that day when Asim babu suggested that he would take his test on Sunday morning?’ he reflected, as he ran towards the park.

“No not on Sunday,” he had protested strongly but Mother frowned and it produced a feeble effect.

“Cricket?” Asim Mitra had looked at him with smiling eyes.

“No, no you come,” Tito’s mother gave the ruling with an air of authority, “Heaven will not fall if he doesn’t play on one Sunday.” Tito was in high spirits when he left home. But on reaching the park he realised his folly. The match was being played at Northern park. That was the field which was insisted upon by Evergreen. It was around three miles away. So there was no one in this park now.

He felt like crying. Asim babu did him a favour by not coming over today. But he also saw to it that Tito missed his Sunday match. That was just like one who hated cricket.

“Hey,” Tito heard just as he turned to go back to the house. He turned and found a beaming Asim emerging from behind the watchman’s quarter. Dressed in white and with a country cap on his head he looked dashing and different.

“So there’s no one here,” he grinned. “How about a match between the two of us? I heard you are Gavaskar and Kapil Dev merged in one.”

Tito felt shy. But he managed to overcome it soon.

“Oh sure,” he said throwing the bat to Asim babu, which he grabbed smartly.

“Now, I have the chance to show you how well I play this game,” he said to himself.

But he was proved wrong next moment when Asim babu pulled him to extra cover boundary with a fine sweep. The second ball was an off-break but this one was also nicely tackled. The third and fourth ones he hooked as if he had been playing for ages.

“Oh, you are great,” exclaimed Tito.

“No, I am not,” retorted Asim Mitra glancing the fifth ball in a truly Tendulkar manner. “I play cricket only when I feel bored doing algebra and...”

The sixth delivery was a googly and Asim Mitra pulled it hard. It was a pretty difficult catch. But Tito took it leaping into the air as if he could touch the sky.

“Bravo,” the maths teacher clapped. “Now it’s your turn to bat. Well, I am getting warmed up, you know. There’s something in the game that makes you forget everything.”

It was true for Tito also for he didn’t know how the morning passed. Around lunch time when he returned home his mother cast a glance at him. “You look as if you have won a match today, Tito.”

“Not just a match,” Tito nodded. “I have won a friend today, too. But, no more talk now, Mama,” he raised his finger. “I will finish the seven sums out of the twenty I left untouched in the morning, then have lunch...”

‘He has not looked so happy or so confident,” mother thought, ‘ever since the annual results came out last December.’
ONE DARK NIGHT IN RAJAPURAM, GOVINDA THE PRIEST OF THE ANCIENT SUNDARE-SWARA TEMPLE, LAY AWAKE.

THESE ROBBERIES IN THE TEMPLES OF THE NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES... WILL OUR TEMPLE BE THE NEXT TARGET?

WILL THE VALUABLE IDOLS AND THE PRECIOUS EMERALD LINGAM OF LORD SIVA BE SAFE IN THE STRONG ROOM? BUT NOW I'VE HIDDEN THE LINGAM.

WHAT'S THAT SHADOW THERE?
NAGESH... YOU!

WHO'S IN HERE? ANSWER ME.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE, NAGESH?

WHY'RE YOU LURKING ABOUT LIKE A THIEF?
WHERE'S IT? WHERE'VE YOU HIDDEN THE LINGAM?

WHAT?

DON'T WASTE MY TIME, OLD MAN. THE LINGAM ISN'T IN THE STRONG ROOM. TELL ME WHERE'VE YOU HIDDEN IT...IF YOU WANT TO LIVE.

YOU FOOL...THE EMERALD LINGAM I'LL NEVER BE YOURS. I'M NOT SCARED OF YOUR THREATS.
NOW I MUST RUN BEFORE SOMEONE FINDS ME HERE.

NEXT MORNING, CHINTAMANI THE VILLAGE POSTMAN TALKING TO OTHERS.

I WENT OVER AT DAWN TO GOVINDA'S HOUSE. WHEN I DIDN'T FIND HIM IN I WENT TO THE TEMPLE AND THERE HE WAS BY A PILLAR, BARELY BREATHING.

INSIDE THE PATIENT'S ROOM.

NANDI ... THE FOOT OF THE NANDI.

HE'S DEAD, INSPECTOR.
WHEN Ruchi gave birth to three lovely kittens for the fourth time, Ma was in a fit of rage. If the unfortunate Ruchi came into view, Ma’s shouting and scolding would start. She would say, “Who will look after this litter now?” If Ruchi goes on giving birth to kittens every six months this house will be full of cats and we won’t be able to step inside the house!”

Then she would start scolding Dada loudly, “Hurry up, and take all the cats and leave them somewhere.

“She (Ruchi) will give birth to kittens every six months and I’ll have to feed them! No, this will not be!”

So, Ma’s anger would cool down and she would go inside to do her work in the kitchen. Then, quickly, we could run outside and become busy with the kittens. We would start playing with them.

With light eyes, pink ears and brown fur the kittens really looked very cute. On the whole, it was a lot of fun playing with them. They roamed about making peep-peep sounds and scattered all the litter. They also had a fancy for slippers and all kinds of shoes. If a visitor came and left his shoes outside, they would hide inside the shoes and play hide and seek. They thought it was great fun. But, one day the game soon ended when, Ma accidentally stepped on their tails and in pain they tried to claw her.

So, Ma beat them with a stick.

Gradually they grew up and the tip of their tails turned black, making them lovely. The kittens were christened by us as Tiger, Tiki and Tipu. They accompanied their mother Ruchi on little hunting trips and kept themselves very clean by constantly licking their...
bodies. They loved climbing trees but, could not go very high. We always gave the kittens and Ruchi tid-bits and biscuits and hid pieces of meat and fish during dinner to feed them later. Dada wanted to build a house for them but, Ma refused. 'If you become more attached to them,' she predicted, 'they would become lazy. Go take them away.' Hearing Ma's scolding Dada's plans were foiled. The kittens used to roam around in the verandah, trailing behind Ruchi. We would leave our homework and come running to see the kittens whenever Ruchi called them in her special tone, to their meals.

Ma had told father beforehand. "This time Pinku and Pankhi will surely fail because of the kittens! Do something and leave them outside the town."

When we heard this about our cute and pretty kittens, it made us very sad. Dada requested Ma, "please let them stay here until they can fend for themselves. Then I shall myself leave them somewhere."

Ma answered harshly, "Yes, but only for one week! But after that"

One evening I was reading a story book. Suddenly, I heard the sound of heavy rainfall. Ruchi was sleeping with her kittens near the steps. Oh! now what will happen! She must have become wet! She will have lots of trouble, poor Ruchi! If only we could keep her inside the house but we were afraid to tell Ma.

Dada also quietly came and stood beside Ma. "Pankhi, Ruchi must have got wet. The kittens will also die because of cold." he said.

I was greatly upset. "But, what can we do! Ma is so angry! She will certainly not give us permission to keep Ruchi and her kittens inside until the rain stops."

'Let's go and see Ruchi.' Though Dada called, I was afraid to go.

If Ma came to know that we were not studying, we would surely get a sound scolding.

No, I couldn't wait, just because of Ma. Slowly and
silently we (Dada and I) moved towards the steps. The steps were in the back verandah facing Ma’s room. When we peeped inside, she was not there and we gave a big sigh of relief. With muffled steps we walked towards the place where Ruchi had been sleeping. What was this? Someone had kept father’s big black umbrella and in full curiosity, we went to see what was under it. We noticed a slight movement under the umbrella.

We went down the steps without bothering what Ma might say.

To our great joy, we discovered Ruchi sleeping snuggly with her kittens on top of three sacks and one old table-cloth. Near her was a plate of biscuits and little tid-bits with a bowl of water nearby.

Dada slowly said, “O, now I know why Ma was searching for father’s umbrella. See, Ma covered the kittens and Ruchi thinking that they would become wet.”

At that particular moment I fancied Ma’s regular angry face change to a smiling one.

Grow trees

Saurabh S. Kalekar (9)

Let’s grow more trees!  
To make the earth look green,  
To make the air clean,  
Let’s grow more trees!

Let’s grow more plants!  
They bear flowers and fruits,  
We eat their stems and roots,  
So let’s grow more plants!

Let the forests spread.  
The wild animals can thrive,  
And for many years survive,  
So let the forests spread.

Let the earth be a pleasant place!  
Full of green plants and trees,  
With gentle, cool and fresh breeze,  
Let the earth be a pleasant place!
BLIND CRICKET

Sportsmanship the Visually Impaired Way

Text : T.S. Sudhir

Photographs on cover II and these pages courtesy: George Abraham

Oh, say! what is that thing call’d light,
Which I must ne’er enjoy?
What are the blessings of the sight?
Oh, tell your poor blind boy.

-Colley Cibber
The Blind Boy

Young boys playing night cricket. But it’s not the Australian Kerry Packer kind. The Society for Communication and Research (SCORE) which organises these tournaments for the blind, are in no way related to the pyjama cricketers and their coloured clothing. Yes, we are talking of matches for the visually handicapped - ‘without the lights’.

SCORE, under the able guidance of its founder, George Abraham, organised the 1993 Challenge Cup in Ahmedabad between December 16-18, 1993. Sixteen teams from all over India participated. The Cup was won by the Shree Ramana Maharishi Academy for the blind, Bangalore, which beat Vijay Merchant XI, Gujarat, in a nail-biting finish by six runs.

But how exactly is cricket for the blind played?

A blind player bowls an underarm delivery to a blind batsman and believe it or not, the
Tendulkars and the Kamblis among the batsmen lift the deliveries even for mighty sixes. The highest individual score, for instance, at Ahmedabad was 173 by Mahesh from Aligarh. The ball is a hard plastic ball, white in colour. Since cricket is basically an audio sport for the blind cricketers, the ball has ball-bearings inside which rattle to help the batsman take the audio clue, locate the ball and hit it effectively.

A visit to Dehradun in 1988 by Abraham, gave him the idea of initiating such a venture. There, he saw blind school students playing cricket with admirable finesse. He inquired and found that they had developed an interest in the game by listening to cricket commentaries on radio. Recalls Abraham, "Their teacher told me that if they had their way, they would probably play cricket the whole day."

Abraham and his wife, Rupa, who were already working for the blind, saw in cricket a factor which would build confidence, determination and ambition among the visually handicapped, thus contributing to their all-round development and exciting future. Says Abraham, "When sport gets competitive, a lot of good qualities crop up and a desire to succeed is an essential positive quality. Being a sportsperson offers him initiative which unfortunately the education system does not offer."

However, easier said than done, it was.

Organising a tournament required funds and more helping hands. Both were hard to come by initially. Most of the institutions for the blind do not have enough funds and notwithstanding a 75 per cent railway concession, the first tournament in Delhi in 1990 cost about Rs. 2.5 lakh.

Says Abraham, "Both Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil
Dev agreed to be our patrons lending SCORE immense credibility. Twenty-four institutions responded to our invitation. Tata Steel sponsored the tournament.”

The next time, however, at Bangalore was a better organised affair. While the 1990 Cup was won by the National Institute for Visually Handicapped from Dehradun, Amreli’s Blindmen’s Training Centre triumphed at Bangalore.

Age is no criteria for eligibility. Neither is sex—and a few girls have been seen in the teams, though they are yet to take it up with a vengeance. Each team comprises of six totally blind and five partially blind players. The yardstick for a partially blind cricketer is that his eyesight should be worse than 3/60 in the better eye. In other words, what a normal person can see at a distance of 60 feet, this partially blind person is able to see only at 3 feet. While the totally blind can ask for a runner, the partially blind has to run himself. However, some enterprising totally blind players choose to run themselves.

At all time, one of the two batsmen has to be totally blind. Therefore, great care has to be taken while formulating the batting order. The wickets at both ends are screwed together because the bowlers tend to feel them to get a sense of direction and unscrewed wickets fall often. No protective gear is used and normal bats are wielded. The boundary is at a distance of 45 yards instead of the conventional 75 yards. The half pitch is marked and the bowler has to bounce the ball once before the half pitch. A no-ball is declared if he
overpitches. A minimum of three-fifths of the total number of overs have to be bowled by totally blind bowlers and in the first 10 overs, at least five have to be sent down by totally blind bowlers. An injured blind fielder can be replaced only by a totally blind substitute.

Abraham looks back at the three tournaments held so far (the 1992 Cup was not held) as a very enriching experience.

He recalls that when Kapil Dev had come to the grounds during the Delhi Cup, blind players brought up on tales of his exploits on the field, crowded around to touch him, as if to feel what he was made of.

The sponsors too have been pleased with the response. For the first time, Coca-Cola sponsored a tournament on its own. At the earlier two tournaments, there was always more than one sponsor. The players were interviewed daily on TV and radio. Abraham also recalls with amusement TV personality Vinod Dua’s reaction when the former told him about the endeavour. “What are you trying to prove by forcing blind people to play cricket, I don’t understand. Nevertheless, I will send my crew.”

At Delhi, Army Public School students prepared the pitches and cheered the cricketers all along. Later many students also did projects on the disabled.

There is, still, a long way to go, however. For one, there is a need to fine tune the ball further. “The audio quality deteriorates after 15 overs. Also, if things go well, we will introduce overarm bowling,” says Abraham.

Looking ahead, SCORE plans to organise a World Cup for the Blind at Delhi in 1998 for which Coca-Cola has already promised support. Wouldn’t this brand of night cricket be as exciting?

You bet, it will be.

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**DESERTS**

**Rakesh Kilaru (9)**

A desert is a barren place,
Away from all civilization.
No people come,
No people go
Cactuses, sand, and sandstorms galore!
Now think of the Sahara,
Desolate, quiet.
How the wind blows!
Think of living there.
Far off from the sea
How lonely and sad,
You would be.
If you are running away from the sea,
Think of how sad,
You would be.

CHILDREN’S WORLD FEBRUARY 1994
In order to save the African Black rhino from extinction, conservationists have been forced to the extreme measures of dehorning them. Not that one is oblivious to the noxious side of tampering with the natural order of life and living, but the Black rhino population having dwindled to a mere 2400 now, there seems to be no alternative method of conserving the species.

This magnificent creature has been hunted through the years for its horn, a weapon of defence to the animal against a predator that might attack its young but to the poacher, an invaluable commodity. Rhino horn, used in manufacture of dagger handles and also as an aphrodisiac by people who believe in its potency, fetches a sum that ranges from five lakhs to twelve.

Rhino horn really isn't horn at all but keratin fibre. The horn grows from the flesh and does not emerge from pedicles as in the case of the deer family. If dehorning is the only answer, then the animal has to be subjected to the ordeal with each regrowth. Be that as it may, what if anything is a hornless rhino?

Rhino can be classified under five categories and among the Asiatic species, the Indian rhino is the largest. The Javan rhino too is one-horned but the Sumatran which in size is about the same as the Javan, sports two horns. African wilds hold the White or Square-lipped rhino and the Black or hook-lipped one and of these the White rhino is greater in bulk.

The Himalayan foothills, the Terai region in particular, was ideal rhino habitat once with its abundant vegetation to shelter and sustain the massive herbivore. Centuries of rhino-slaughter and shrinkage of habitat have reduced the Indian rhino population to dismally low numbers. Kaziranga, Manas and Chitwan are our rhino habitats and “rhino action” groups strive hard to save the animal. Kaziranga provided ideal haven for rhinos until poaching became rampant. Added to this was the severe pressure from human population and the best way out was the translocation of some rhinos to the Dudhwa National Park, a move that sparked off much controversy as tourist
influx in the Assam sector had been rudely affected. But Dudhwa being the "natural home" of the rhino, translocation seemed justifiable in more ways than one. Recent newspaper reports however disclose the disturbing news that Kaziranga and Manas are a haven today more for poachers than the animals that dwell within the sanctuaries!

The rhinos' quaint armoured look is due to the deep skin folds studded with raised knobs. This beast that appears to sport a coat-of-mail has generated many a myth, the most familiar being the one about Lord Krishna having chosen the creature as a war animal only to reject it later on account of the stupidity it displayed and substitute it with the elephant. Sultan Nasiruddin Ahmed though, considering perhaps the rhino's charge power, thought it worthy of inclusion in his battalion.

It is recorded that in the sixteenth century the King of Cambay despatched a rhino as a gift to the King of Portugal, presumably the first Indian rhino exhibited in Europe though of course the African rhino had already landed on European shores.

The rhino which looks so like a living relic from pre-historic times indeed dates back to a distant past. Mohenjo-daro seals bear the imprint of the beast, the likeness remarkably accurate. History records that Emperor Timur in the course of his shikar killed many rhinos in the Kashmir frontier and emperor Babur's memoirs very volubly describe his rhino-hunting adventures.

Among the denizens of the forest, the rhino, like the elephant, will charge at the slightest provocation and therefore cannot be trifled with. The rhino's habit of sometimes stopping abruptly in the course of a charge and turning back has prompted a writer to
compare it to a man who suddenly forgets the purpose of the mission he is heading towards and cries halt. If you have read 'Rage of a Rhino' which appeared in the February 1990 issue of Reader's Digest which reports an incident that occurred at Nepal's Chitwan National Park, you would know exactly what a rhino's ire means. It narrates the story of Manfred Philler, a 22-year-old Swiss, who was severely wounded by a charging rhino—ripped, gashed and bitten by horn and tushes. But for the timely help of his Nepali guide and two Australians, this young man keen on animal photography, would never have seen the light of another day. Incidentally, when a rhino attacks, the tushes, the large incisors present in the upper and lower jaw, cause gashes which are very often mistaken for wounds caused by the horns. African rhinos attack and cause severe injuries with the horn for they are not endowed with tushes that are as powerful as those of the Indian rhino.

A quaint habit peculiar to the rhino is its manner of depositing ordure (dung) in the same place each time, a quirk which makes it rather vulnerable to poachers settled near a dung-heap. Moreover, to relieve itself, the rhino heads for the mound rear-wise and this makes it easy target. Man, is the rhino's greatest foe.

The life-span of a rhino is seventy years, the cow's gestation period being about nineteen months. The young one is zealously guarded by the mother who follows the calf around instead of leading it in tow. During the three years of calf-rearing, the female does not breed and this slow breeding rate adds to the threat of extinction, if the animal is foully hounded by poachers.

The horn which spells doom to the rhino found a lucrative market in most Asian countries from North Yemen in the west to Japan in the east. China, Malaysia, Burma and Nepal too were places where rhino products fetched a good deal in terms of money and until recently Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea had no ban on rhino horn trade which factor fostered poaching within Asia and Africa to a very great extent. Now with a total ban on the ivory trade, rhino horn has been substituted with cow or water-buffalo horn in the manufacture of dagger handles and for fever-reducing purposes or as an aphrodisiac, the Saiga antelope horn has been found to be equally effective. A belief also prevailed once that rhino horn cups cracked when poisoned potions were poured into it and therefore such cups were used to test potions suspected to contain toxic substances. Dr Esmond Bradly Martin who carried out investigative researches into trade in rhino horn products declared a decade ago that demand for rhino horn was at a decline... "tapering off" as he put it. But at present when one thinks in terms of dehorning as an inevitable measure, are things really hunky-dory for the poor beast? After all, man's greed is insatiable and the deplorably low numbers suggest that Rhinoceros unicornis may, like the lore its appearance has inspired, become a legendary beast after all.
RILA will you please take your books and get out of the class,” boomed a voice through the classroom. Forty pairs of eyes turned to stare at me. Mrs. Peters repeated her statement, this time more obstinately, compelling me to leave. Fighting back tears of humiliation, I picked up my books and walked out. As I passed Mrs. Peters, I fixed a look of intense dislike on her. If looks could kill, I am sure Mrs. Peters would have dropped dead. After I had left, Mrs. Peters declared to the class, her voice shaking with rage, “the audacity of the girl. She is getting out of hand. I must report to the Headmistress.”

During recess the girls crowded round me wanting to know why I had been punished. I indignantly replied, “How should I know? Ask the trumpet.” (Mrs. Peters was nicknamed so because of her loud voice).

My battle with Mrs. Peters started two years ago when she joined the school. She was my maths’ teacher and maths was one of my weak points. And with Mrs. Peters, the Maths period everyday spelt the dooms’ hour for me. Thus began a saga of scoldings and punishments for not only was I bad in maths, but had the nerve to be cheeky and cheek was something Mrs. Peters could not stand. My friends used to enjoy my encounters with Mrs. Peters thoroughly and pass it on with their own exaggerated details. These versions reached her, often with me emerging triumphant from the tussle and suddenly I found myself out of dramas, science projects, assembly speeches and numerous other things which Mrs. Peters was in charge of. In her worthy estimate I was the black sheep of the whole school. Mrs. Peters was highly qualified with excellent credentials and it was also rumoured that she would end up as the Headmistress of the school in a year or two. She was a very good teacher too but strict and could stand no nonsense. Many students had been suspended and had landed up with a red mark in their calendars thanks to her. No wonder she was not very popular with students. As for me, I felt I simply hated her. I kept imagining it was because of her that I had been suspended twice and lost endless essay-writing.

Story: Srila Nayak
Illustrations: B.G. Varma
and elocution competitions where she was also a judge. Whereas before she arrived on the scene I was the one who used to walk away with the first prize in almost all extracurricular activities be it essays, elocution or dramas except, perhaps, sport. But I had accepted that fact long ago; I never was cut-out to be a la P.T. Usha. I have now become even worse in maths because Mrs. Peters is my maths teacher. Scolding parents and endless tuition teachers could not help. I had simply lost interest in the subject. Oh boy, life sure was difficult with Mrs. Peters figuring a lot in it.

As I walked home from school, my best friend Tara, quipped “Do you know the latest news - Mrs. Peters is going to be the new Headmistress in a week or two.”

“Well”, I snapped back, “it is not going to make things any easier for me”. Tara looked at me sympathetically. She very well knew about my losing battle with the formidable trumpet.

The next two days, Mrs. Peters was absent. This was rather unusual, as Mrs. Peters had hardly ever been absent for a week in a whole year. Anyway, my friends and I had a whale of a time during the 45 minutes maths period. On the third day there was an announcement over the intercom during the morning assembly by the Headmistress, “I deeply regret to announce the sad demise of Mrs. Peters’ husband and her 12 year-old-son in a serious motor accident the day before yesterday, we pray to god ———” the Headmistress’s voice trailed away, but I ceased listening. I felt numb with shock. Could I have wished this tragedy to befall her? Was my hatred so deep-rooted? No; No; it couldn’t be. The days passed by in a daze. There was talk of Mrs. Peters leaving the school.
She rejoined after two weeks.

The day she joined, during the first period, Mrs. Khatri my class-teacher asked me to collect all the maths notebooks and take them to Mrs. Peters as she wanted to see them. I hesitated as I approached the staff-room but I walked in. Mrs. Peters was there alone, staring out of the window. I whispered “ma'am”. She turned round to face me. The once ramrod straight and stiff figure seemed now bent under the weight of the terrible tragedy, the hawk-like eyes were now dimmed. Tears came to my eyes. I rushed to her and holding her hand I stuttered, “Ma'am I am really sorry. You won't leave us all and go away, will you?”

She put an arm round me and said with firm determination: “I don't give up on life that easily. I have all of you — my students to look forward to.” Then she looked deep into my eyes and said, “I hope you are my friend.”

I nodded and smiled through my tears and looked out of the window. The afternoon sun was shining brightly overhead.
Weeds

Chandrahhas Choudhury (13)
Illustrations: Viky Arya

You dig up the soil,
And plant the seeds,
Then, who takes over?
Of course, the weeds.

You watch, as they develop,
At a ratio of five to a plant,
And outgrow them rapidly,
No wonder you rave and rant.

They shoot up in height, growing,
By what seems an inch a day,
You may uproot them,
But you still can't keep them away.

Back they grow again,
And do their evil deeds,
Slowly strangling the plants,
The name makes you cower—weeds.

When you water the plants,
You also administer to their needs,
And so when it's time to pluck the crop,
All you get, is a harvest of weeds.
Chandrahas Choudhury (13)

It is a mystery,
How history,
Can be read,
And digested.

This history, I'm sure,
Is insomnia's very best cure,
Settle down with a history book so born
Before you realise it, you're asleep and
snoring.

Ever so many dates and facts,
Innumerable treaties and pacts,
Full of queens and kings,
In addition to many other things.

Hundreds of pages, that's quite a lot,
Of ancient wars and battles fought,
Loads and loads of places, too,
From Waterloo to Timbuctoo.

That's why I repeat it's a mystery,
How history,
Can be read,
“P"RIYA, hurry up.
Daddy has gone to
take the car out,” I
heard my brother call. I
could hear him clattering
down the stairs.
“I am ready,” I called
out and after a hasty
 glance round the room, I
too ran down. Mummy
was waiting at the front
door.
“Hurry up, Priya. I
want to lock the door,”
she said. I ran out to the
car where Daddy was
tapping on the steering
wheel with his fingers.
“What a family!” Daddy
exclaimed. “Never ready
on time, the play begins
at 5.30 p.m. and it is
already past five. Now,
what is your mother
doing? There! She has
gone inside again.” He
honked impatiently.
Mummy came out,
locked the door and joined
him on the front seat. “All
the taps were open. By
the time we would have
returned the house would
have been flooded. You
know that the municipal
water supply is switched
on at 6 p.m.,” Mummy
said as she rolled down
the window.
My 14-year-old brother,
Ravi, immediately be-
came engrossed in the
view. He knew he was
due for a scold, for he
always forgot to close the
tap if he found that the
water supply had stopped.
I felt sorry for him and so
before Mummy could say
anything to him I tapped
Daddy on the shoulder
and asked: “Daddy, can’t
we go any faster? It is
5.15 already.”
“1 am trying, I am
trying,” Daddy muttered
as he dodged through the
evening rush-hour traffic.
“By the way, who has
the tickets?” Ravi asked
suddenly.
“Daddy.”
“Mummy.”
After the chorus both
Mummy and Daddy fell
silent. They looked at
each other. Ravi and I
looked at both of them.
“Look in your bag. I am
sure I saw the tickets
there this morning,”
Daddy told Mummy.
“Yes, but I took them
out this afternoon and
kept them next to your
wallet,” Mummy replied.

“So in short, we are on our way to see a play without any tickets,” Ravi summed up the situation.

“Oh, Daddy, what shall we do?” I asked. “We don’t have the time to go back all the way and get the tickets.”

“Well, we’ll just go and see,” replied Daddy. “I’ll try and explain to the gate-keeper. Maybe he’ll let us in.”

But the rest of us did not share his optimism.

By the time we reached the theatre it was 5.35 p.m. The parking lot was full and the foyer empty. Somehow Daddy managed to squeeze in, between an Ambassador and a Toyota. But then we found that the car’s doors could not be opened fully. Somehow we slithered out and walked towards the entrance.

“Tickets!” snapped the gate-keeper thrusting a dirty black palm towards Daddy.

“Arre Bhaiya,” Daddy began in a genial voice. “It is like this. We have left the tickets at home. But I assure you that we bought them. Won’t you let us go in?”

The gate-keeper’s eyes took on a look of stubbornness as Daddy fin-ished his explanation. He just kept looking at all of us. Mummy looked up at the ceiling while Ravi and I shuffled our feet.

“You see, sir,” he began. “This is an old story. I have heard it many times. Sorry sir. No tickets, no enter.” And he sat down humming a tune under his breath.

However, Daddy was not prepared to give up. He cajoled, he coaxed, he bribed till the gate-keeper agreed to let us go in. It was 6 o’clock by now.

It was dark inside the theatre. After the brightly lit foyer, we could not see anything. We stood for a minute in the aisle wait-ing for our eyes to get used to the darkness.

“There are four seats vacant in the third row,” Ravi hissed.

“Ok, I’ll lead and all of you follow,” said Daddy.

“But don’t go too fast. I have not brought my glasses,” warned Mummy in a loud whisper.

By now people sitting nearby had begun to grumble and hush us down. Slowly we began walking towards the empty seats. As long as Daddy walked he was visible to all of us. But once he sat down we could not make out where he had parked himself. At last I called out in a loud
whisper, “Daddy, where are you?”

“Here, just three seats ahead of you,” came the reply.

“Shhh!” hissed a man seated in the row behind. As we walked on I stepped on somebody’s foot.

“Ouch! Look where you are going,” said a voice.

“I would if I could,” I retorted smartly. At long last I reached the seat next to Daddy’s and sat down. Soon Mummy too fumbled her way to us. I could see Ravi hovering near the fourth empty seat.

“Sit down Ravi,” I hissed. “That seat is empty.” Ravi immediately plonked himself down. The next moment a subdued howl was heard and Ravi jumped up. He had missed the empty seat and had sat on a fat lady’s lap. Now Ravi was no lightweight and he had sat down quite hard as though he was relieved to end his meanderings in the dark. He must have got a rude shock to find somebody under him. Mummy pulled him down on to the empty seat next to her.

I sat back and got ready to enjoy the play. Everybody at school had already seen “Androcles and the Lion” and Ravi and I had felt quite left out. That was why Ravi had persuaded Daddy to bring us to the play today.

I waited for the lion to come on to the stage. Its antics were quite funny, I had been told. But to my immense surprise a man walked in saying something about a sword dangling in front of him.

“Bhaiyya, which play is this?” I asked Ravi, leaning across Mummy.

“I don’t know. But it is certainly not ‘Androcles and the Lion’,” he replied.

Again our neighbours shushed us and we fell silent.

Soon it was interval. Daddy turned to the person sitting next to him and asked, “Could you tell me which play this is?”

“Macbeth,” replied the man mumbling something about people who walked in late and came for a play without knowing which one it was. Mummy, Ravi and I looked at each other. But before we could say anything the lights dimmed and the next act began.

Once the play was over and we were walking to the car all of us pelted Daddy with questions.

Daddy only shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

When we reached home it was late and we were sleepy. We had stopped for dinner at a restaurant and had had a really gorgeous meal. Nobody could explain what had gone wrong and how we had landed at the wrong play. Ravi and I walked up to our room while Mummy went to her room. The next minute we heard a loud exclamation from her. Both of us ran to Mummy’s room. Mummy stood before the dressing table holding the tickets for the play in her hand.

“The tickets are for tomorrow’s show, not tonight’s,” she said.

All of us turned towards Daddy who stood at the door, a sheepish expression on his face.

“To think that we forced our way into a play we didn’t want to see,” said Mummy in an exasperated voice.

“But look at the bright side. We can go for the right play tomorrow and see it right through without missing anything,” said Daddy.

And, as always, he was right!
PART-Y

In spite of being blind, Ramu can recognise Mr. Gopalan's murderers. But the police is not interested in a blind boy's account. So Ramu and Sunil go to a private detective, Om Prakash. Om Prakash listens to their story, but warns them against meddling with "smugglers". Later an attempt is made on Ramu's life and the boys have no recourse but to go to the police. The SP Lalkaka tells them Gopalan was no smuggler but a police plant, helping the CBI to nab a gang of dangerous antique smugglers...

THE MESSAGE IN BRAILLE

The message was concise, its language telegraphic. Ramu's fingers flew over the letters as he read out.

"From Gopalan to Lalkaka. Have discovered hideout of antique-smuggling gang. Need two more weeks to furnish you with all details."

"Shabash" exclaimed Lalkaka. Chaudhuri agreed with a vigorous nod.

"Smugglers using company names Hind Exports as front. Located five kilometres outside city, on national highway from city to Daridabad. Proprietor's name Hari Singh. He is the boss. Other top members of gang Birjinder Gossain, Anwar Hussain, Lalit Khanna alias Lalu and Prem Shah."

"Do the names ring a bell?" Chaudhuri asked.

"No, they seem familiar, but I can't place them. Maybe they are persons without any previous records. Let's see if the directory of companies has anything on them."

Lalkaka picked up the intercom and spoke into it. "Bring me the directory on all commercial establishments in the metropolis and the suburbs," he told his secretary.

In a few minutes a man entered with the directory. Lalkaka quickly leafed through it, stopped at a page and stabbed at a name with his pencil.

"Here it is. Hind Exports, manufacturers and exporters of Indian curios and souvenirs. A perfect
cover. Not many people would know the difference between a curio and an antique. The location is the same as given by Gopalan. But that’s all the information here. Suspicious, what? No names, no board of directors, not even a telephone number.”

“Hardly surprising,” Chaudhuri said. “If they are using the company as a cover for criminal activities, they wouldn’t like to draw attention to themselves. But maybe we will find something in Who’s Who.”

The directory containing names of important citizens was fetched. The name Hari Singh leapt up at them.

Singh, according to the Who’s Who, was a financial magnate with political contacts. A list of companies owned by him or with which he was associated was given. Hind Exports did not figure on the list.

“Now, I remember,” Lalkaka said. “I met him once while covering a political rally. A powerful man, both physically as well as politically. He struck me as a dangerous character. Can it be the same man mentioned by Gopalan?”

“We can’t be certain,” Chaudhuri answered. “Gopalan’s death has indeed posed a problem for us. We have the facts, but in his absence, we shall have to check and cross check. That will take time.”

“True,” Lalkaka agreed. “Yet time is one thing we don’t have. Anyway Ramu, please continue with the message.”

“Hind Exports is the headquarters of the gang,” Ramu continued to read. “But they have contacts abroad, too. Names of agents and their activities can be obtained if Hind Exports is raided.”

“Seems to be a well organised gang,” Lalkaka intervened to say. “It has arms reaching down to all corners of the country. Gopalan believes that details of the organisation are at headquarters.”

“Such an extensive network requires an investment of lakhs of rupees,” said Chaudhuri. “Smuggling antiques is indeed a highly profitable business.”

“From what I know,” said Lalkaka, “a single icon can fetch over twenty lakhs in the American market. If it happens to be studded with precious stones or decorated with ornaments, its value doubles.”

“Whew!” Sunil exclaimed, startled by the figures.

“Method of operation,” Ramu read on, “is simple, systematic and fool-proof. Agents to steal antiques handpicked by headquarter. They scroun the country for rare antiques that might fetch fabulous sums abroad. Once an antique item is obtained, it is hand delivered to headquarters where it is stored in Hind Export warehouses. Shipped in crates together with company-manufactured curios, to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, from where foreign contacts take over.”

“A very comfortable arrangement indeed,” Chaudhuri said. “The antiques are disguised as curios and smuggled out with shipments of the company’s products. Another gang picks up the antiques abroad after making payments to this gang.”

“The affair seems to be getting bigger and bigger,” Lalkaka said, a worried frown on his features. “We shall have to alert INTERPOL.”

“Yes, but after we have caught the native fish,”
Chaudhuri pointed out. “We can get the details only from Hari Singh and company.”

Ramu continued to read. More details followed. Gopalan had been painstakingly thorough. Brief physical descriptions of the gang leaders were given. Lalkaka affirmed that there was a close resemblance between the Singh of Gopalan’s description and the businessman he had seen at the rally. He would have the department artist assemble an imaginary portrait based upon the descriptions and compare it with the one in his memory.

The end of the message contained another astonishing revelation. “At one point of time recently, I felt the urgent need to get in touch with the police, because I had a feeling the gang had begun to smell a rat. But that would have been dangerous. So I went to the private detective Om Prakash, instead and gave him the gist of what I knew. I requested him to contact the SP and pass on the information.”

There was a sudden hush in the room. The final piece of the jigsaw puzzle had dropped into its place.

“That explains how Gopalan’s cover was blown!” Chaudhuri almost shouted. The snatch of conversation Ramu heard, Boka and Ranga asking for an advance, was simply a ploy. They wanted Gopalan to take them to his room. And we know for what.”

“Poor Gopalan, he had no choice. I can visualise the whole situation. Gopalan was playing the role of a receiver of stolen goods, but the police force did not know it.

“Om Prakash knew. As I said, he is a garrulous fellow, inclined to boast. I’m sure he talked, possibly at the club about Gopalan and what he had said. The gang has its eyes and ears everywhere.

“So there you are. Gopalan’s goose was cooked then and there.”

“He would have done better to have got in touch with us to get him out of his predicament,” commented Chaudhuri. “Of course, it’s easy to be wise after the event.”

“True, we have the advantage of hindsight. I can imagine his dilemma. Here he was, hot on the gang’s trail. Possibly the gang was getting suspicious. So he took a calculated risk by revealing his identity to Om Prakash.”

“I suspect that Om Prakash’s aware that somebody is taking advantage of him,” Lalkaka said.

“Otherwise he wouldn’t have been so nervous when Ramu told him his story. But I can’t tip him off yet. Any undue interest in him by us might alert the gang.”

“I suppose you are right,” Chaudhuri conceded. “We have to tread warily. The stakes are far higher than what you or I imagined.”

“Let’s collect our facts, we hold all the trump cards. We know their method of operation. We have the location and the names. They don’t know we are onto them. We must confirm our facts and then move in for the kill.”

“This is an interstate gang,” Chaudhuri pointed out. “They have agents all over the country. The trouble is we don’t know about them yet, so we can’t nab them along with the gang leaders.”

“Yes,” agreed Lalkaka, “details we will get from Hind Exports headquarters after we raid it. Once they come to know their headquarters have been
raided, those elsewhere would go underground. But don't worry, we'll flush them out, though I too would have preferred a simultaneous operation.”

“We have two alternatives,” Chaudhuri said. “First, we wait to confirm the intelligence supplied by Gopalan before raiding their premises. That means a long delay. Second, we raid it tonight, keeping our fingers crossed that Gopalan’s facts are right. Which would you prefer?”

“If this Hari Singh is who we believe he is, then I would prefer to check my facts. If, heaven forbid, Gopalan is wrong, and we find nothing, he will raise a hue and cry. He wields enough political clout to send both of us running for home and mother.”

“But if we wait too long, the birds might fly the coop! Correct. So let’s make a compromise. We shall give ourselves two days to confirm our facts. Then we move.”

“Fine. Now how about our friends here?”

“You realise,” Lalkaka said, turning towards Ramu and Sunil, “that you two are in great danger.

“So this is what I want you to do. You will both stay together indoors all the time, till we nab the criminals. I shall give you full police protection.”

“Ramu can stay with me in my house,” Sunil suggested promptly.

“Good. Under no circumstances will you go out of the house. It should all be over within a few days. Then I shall send for you and we will celebrate the gang’s capture. O.K.?”

The boys nodded.

Lalkaka and Chaudhuri shook hands with them, cautioning them once again not to tell a soul what they had learned in that room. Then a police escort took them home.

**A Set-Back**

The two days Ramu spent at Sunil’s house were the most anxious ones in his life. The boys tried to concentrate on their studies, but their minds constantly wandered to the raid on Hind Exports.

The house possessed a small lawn and a backyard. Two hefty policemen in civilian clothes guarded both. In addition, another policeman sat in the front room, seemingly absorbed in a detective novel. All visitors to the house were checked.
The boys were quite safe. Yet they were tense. Hari Singh and his thugs were killers. They had tried once. They would try again.

Then, on the third day, the summons came. A trekker arrived to take them to the police station.

Sunil saw the faces of Lalkaka and Chaudhuri and at once knew something had gone drastically wrong.

“Sir, what happened?” Ramu asked. “The one Mr. Gopalan mentioned?”

“The very same, no doubt,” Lalkaka said. “We checked that before we went into action. The Board of Directors are the same, too.”

“Then Mr. Gopalan was wrong.”

“I don’t think so. I am a police officer with twenty years of experience. All my instincts say Gopalan was right. For one thing, Hari Singh is the proprietor of Hind Exports. He has taken pains to keep that off the Who’s Who.”

“I personally inspected the warehouse,” Chaudhuri added.

“Square imprints upon the floor clearly show that some crates had been recently removed.”

“That hardly means a thing, sir,” Sunil pointed out. “After all, they manufacture curios and export them.”

“True,” said Lalkaka. “But the same goes for the office. Rows after rows after rows of empty lockers. Those should have been stacked with files, invoices, sales statements and so on. But not even a scrap of paper.”

“So what do you think happened, sir?”

“It’s obvious. We were fools not to have thought of it earlier.”

“Gopalan had wormed his way into the gang. They found out he was a spy and they killed him. The minute they discovered Gopalan’s identity, they cleared out all incriminating evidence. They were expecting a raid any day, you see.”

“Their new headquarters can be anywhere. Logic says it must be in one of Singh’s financial institutions. But we will need weeks, perhaps months to find out,” Chaudhuri sighed.

“Here’s some more bad news,” Lalkaka said. “After the raid had failed, I called Om Prakash. There was no reply. And we can’t trace him. He was not at the office and none of his associates have seen him for at least twenty-four hours.”

The boys’ spirits sank. Gopalan’s death had been futile. They were back to square one.

The phone rang shrilly. Lalkaka picked it up.

“Hello… Lalkaka here…. What!…. Are you sure? …All right, give me the low down …..”

Lalkaka listened, grunting now and again
in monosyllables. From the tone of his voice Ramu guessed that more bad news was in store.

"They've found Om Prakash," Lalkaka said, putting the receiver down. He sounded tired and helpless.

"Thank God!" Chaudhuri exclaimed.

"He is dead," Lalkaka said in a flat voice. "They found his body inside a disused railway shed. He had been shot through the head."

The hush that fell over the room was so intense that Ramu could hear the ticking of the police officers' watches.

"That leaves us with no option," Lalkaka said, finally breaking the silence. "Chaudhuri, I think you had better explain it to them."

Both Ramu and Sunil had been wondering why the SP and CBI officer had called them to the office. They were, after all boys and couldn't have helped in any way.

Chaudhuri spoke slowly, deliberately.

"What these desperadoes are doing is to remove everyone who can implicate or identify any of them. First Gopalan was killed, then Om Prakash. They made an attempt on Ramu but failed. But you can be sure you continue to be their target."

A streak of fear shot through Ramu. He fought his fear down. Remember, he told himself silently, true courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to overcome it.

"You are in great danger," Chaudhuri continued. "Your only choice is to stay indoors under complete police protection. But you can't do that forever. The gang can afford to wait. The moment police protection is withdrawn, they will make another attempt on your life."

"So what do you suggest, sir?" Ramu asked, speaking with an effort.

"I suggest that you come out into the open. We shall lay a trap for those thugs. You will be the bait."

"But isn't that too risky?" Sunil asked, his voice fraught with concern.

"The risks are the same. You are their sole remaining threat. They will try to get you one way or other."

"Chaudhuri is right, Ramu," Lalkaka put in. "If I was not sure that the risks were the same. I wouldn't have agreed to this plan. We shall try to minimise the risk as much as possible. A plain clothes policeman will accompany you, night and day. If we remove all outward police protection, the gang might smell a rat."

"There will be other policemen all round you, but they will stay out of sight. A camouflaged patrol car will follow you wherever you go," Chaudhuri added.

"We shall also whet the gang's curiosity," Lalkaka said, "to try and ensure that they kidnap you instead. Tomorrow we shall splash the information you have given us on front pages of all newspapers. These will be a hint that you and we have much more information than the crooks suspect."

"Now it's upto you," Chaudhuri said. "You can opt out of it. We will understand. Believe me, the choice is yours and don't hesitate to say 'no'.'"

Ramu was sweating. Yet he felt cold rather than hot.

With an effort he said, "Yes, I'll do it."

"Good," said Lalkaka, "Now this is what we plan......"

To be continued
PEN-FRI CORNER

GIRLS

6064
Usha D.N. (15)
Class X
Krishna House
K.R.C.R. School for Girls
Post Kittur
Dist. Belgaum
Karnataka, India
Reading, making friends
Any country

6065
Jayasurya R. (12)
Jyothirmaya
Nechipozhoor P.O.
Pala, Kottayam Dist.
Kerala, India
Music, stamps
Japan, India

6066
Tshewang Dema (14)
Class V, Bikhar Primary
School
Tashigang, Bhutan
Reading, dancing
India, Germany

6067
Anju Rasaw (13)
Govt. J.V. School
Khazallang
P.O. Nafra-790001
Dist. Bomdilla,
West Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Collecting posters,
reading
Japan, Switzerland

6068
Negita Khontu (12)
Govt. Sec. School, Nafra
P.O. Nafra, Dist. Bomdilla

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**CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB**

**ENROLMENT FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member No.</th>
<th>.....</th>
<th>(To be used by editor)</th>
<th>Lst. date.</th>
<th>....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Name:** Master / Miss: ............................... urs
ars

**Address:** .................................

**Hobbies:** ................................. .................................

**Pen-friend wanted in (Country):** .................................

*Age limit: 10 years*

**Signature**
GIRLS

West Kameng-790001
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Swimming, music
Any country
6069
Nichhen Pen (12)
Daga Jr. High School
P.O. Dagana, Daga
Dzongkhag
Bhutan
Playing, reading
Any country

6070
Anita Pol (13)
1/48, O.C.L. Colony
Rajgangpur, Dist.
Sundergarh
Orissa-770017, India
Reading, music
Japan

6071
Rama Thapa (9)
House No. 267, Sector 1
Sadiq Nagar
New Delhi, India
Music, swimming
U.S.A., U.K.

6072
Mantu Singh (10)
C/O Shri G.S. Singh
Govt. Pry. School
Bomdilla, P.O. Bomdilla
Dist. West Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh-790001
Painting, listening to ghazals
India

6073
P. Kavita Rani (13)
7J3/Unit 2, Golebazaar

Kharagpur-721301
West Bengal
Stamps, singing
India

6074
Betty Marvin (13)
C-2/164 West Enclave
Pitampura
Delhi 110034
Tennis, music
Any country

6075
Mopi Linggi (14)
D/O Akene Linggi
P.O. Roing (MAYU)
Dibang Valley
Arunachal Pradesh-792110
India
Singing, photography
Any country

6076
Unnoti Linggi (15)
I.N.V. Roing
P.O. Roing
Dibang Valley
Arunachal Pradesh-792110, India
Tennis, badminton
Any country

6077
Ten Tshomo (14)
Class VI, Wamrong Jr.
High School
Tashigang
East Bhutan, Bhutan
Singing, dancing
Nepal, India

6078
Litha Hari (13)
House No. 352

Chandranagar Ext.
Palakkad, Kerala, India
Reading, pen-friends
Australia, Japan

6079
Rinku M. Shetty (13)
No. 29, 3rd Cross
Victoria Layout
Bangalore - 560047
Karnataka, India
Cycling, stamps
Any country

6080
Vidya Nair (13)
P/3-B, D.A.D. Qtrs.
Chirackal, Palluruthy
Cochin - 682006
Kerala, India
Reading, writing
Hongkong, Japan

6081
Tanu Bhargava (15)
D-901, Netaji Nagar
New Delhi 110023, India
Dancing, stamps
Any country

6082
Veena Murthy (13)
M-10 B.A.R. Qrts.
Postal Colony, Chembur
Bombay 400071, India
Painting, reading
Any country

6083
Shalini Reddy (14)
199/A Railway Qrts.
Gadag - 582101, Dharwad
Dist. Karnataka, India
Collecting greeting cards,
reading
Any country
6084
T. Sateesh Singh (12)
H.No. 304, LIGHAPHB
Colony
Moula Ali
Hyderabad-500040
Andhra Pradesh, India
Writing letters, stamps
Any country

6085
Dharminder Singh
Babbar (14)
512 Mandakini Enclave
New Delhi 110019, India
Computers, music
U.S.A., Europe

6086
Rahul Sansin (12)
C-74, O.N.G.C. Colony
Zazira - 785685
Assam, India
Stamps, reading
Uruguay, Paraguay

6087
N. Bejoy Pushpakaran (7)
D-790, Mandir Marg
DIZ Area
New Delhi - 110001
Painting, collecting stickers
Singapore, Switzerland

6088
Kshitiz Mohan (12)
533/29/18, Raj Nagar
Gurgaon, Haryana, India
Travelling, playing
Any country

6089
Aditya Kinra (12)

BOYS
BS-209, Shalimar Bagh
New Delhi
Stamps, making friends
Japan, China

6090
Keshik S. (13)
27, 1st Street
Abhiramapuram,
Madras - 600018
India
Reading, stamps
Any country

6091
Tshering Dorji (13)
Class VI
Lhuntshi Junior High
School
P/O Lhuntshi, Bhutan
Collecting photographs, pen-friends
U.S.A. Canada

6092
Lhendup Kelly (15)
C/O Dasho Dorji Nameyel
Tongsa Dzonedhag
Bhutan
Music, aeromodelling
Any country

6093
Vipin Allen (13)
107-109, Sadar
Kabari Bazaar
Meerut Cantt. - 250001
U.P. India
Reading
India

6094
P. Ravisharty (7)
S/O P. Sai Baba

Rly. Qr.No. H-11/T Unit-4
Chakradharapur - 833102
Bihar, India
Reading, drawing
India

6095
S. Hariprakash (14)
A-11, Lil Co. op.
Housing Society
Sector - 14
Vashi
New Bombay - 400705
Maharashtra, India
Coins, reading
Any country

6096
Gurpreet Singh(16)
845, C.A. Apartments
Paschim Vihar
New Delhi - 110063
Cricket, music
Any country

6097
D.K. Sudhakar (15)
87, Subbarao Street
Shoungur - 631102
Dist.- N.A.A., Tamil Nadu, India
Stamps, sports
Australia, U.S.A.

6098
Yashesh Sampat (11)
‘C’, 501, Khajuria House
Khajuria Nagar
Kandivli (W)
Bombay-400067,
Maharashtra, India
Reading, watching cricket
India
BOYS

6099
Nicky Thomas (13)
S/o Thomas John
Rajur Colliery
Tahwani
Dist. Yavatmal - 445309
Maharashtra, India
Stamps
Other than India

6100
B. Seshadri (13)
S/o S. Balakrishna
G.B. 18, H.A.L. Qtrs
Old Township, 2nd Cross
Bangalore - 560017
Karnataka, India
Painting, Stamps
U.S.A., Singapore

6101
Satish Vishvakarma (16)
22, Bhakti Nagar
Ujjain, (M.P.), India
Tennis, music
Any country

6102
Chandan Kashyap (14)
Sainik School, Goalpara
P.O. Rajapara-783133
Assam, India
Movies, pen-friends
Any country

6103
Jojo P.D. (16)
Nehru (Srs) Sainik School
P.O.
Thiruvananthapuram-
695585
Kerala, India
Dance, music
U.K. Japan

6104
Amit Nain (15)
Laidlaw Memorial School
Oakshott Cottage
Ketti
Tamil Nadu - 643215,
India
Coins, music
Australia, U.S.A.

6105
Bunty Singh (16)
B-II, 1016, Mohalla
Suddan
Daresi Road
Ludhiana-8, Punjab,
India
Reading, cricket
Any country

6106
Jojo Paul (14)
C/o K.J. Poulouse, Teacher,
Govt. Senior Secondary
School
Ferargunj
P.O. - Ferargunj
Port Blair, Andamans
Reading, coins
U.S.A., Germany

6107
Vinay Bharadwaj (16)
Type-3, Flat No. 20
Lal Bahadur Sadan
Gole Market
New Delhi - 110001
Reading, martial arts
Japan, India

6108
Arnab Pal (13)
Bungalow No. AG/3
P.O. - Indranagar
Jamshedpur - 831008
Bihar, India
Stamps and coins, cards
Any country

6109
Shail Gaurav (10)
D-59, Shastri Nagar
Ghaziabad, U.P., India
Painting, dancing
U.S.A., Australia

6110
Lester Sunith D'Souza (10)
Loyola School, PB-17
Kohima
Nagaland - 797001
Stamps, stickers
Any country

6111
Tias Thakur (13)
C/o Mr. K.K. Thakur
20, Saket Nagar
Kanke Road
Ranchi, Bihar, India
Stamps and coins
U.S.A., Canada

6112
Nishant Chawla (13)
KF 1/176, G.P. Slope
Kadma
Jamshedpur - 831005,
Bihar, India
Stamps, painting
Singapore, Iran

6113
N. Vinay (12)
No. C-6, RBI Staff Qrts.
Osborne Road
Bangalore - 560042
Karnataka, India
Reading
Other than India
BOYS

6114
Vinay Aggarwal (15)
2/57, Roop Nagar
Delhi - 110007
Cricket, table tennis
U.S.A., Australia

6115
Avneet Singh (14)
WZ-256 ‘G’ Block
Hari Nagar, Jail Road
New Delhi - 110058
Stamps, sticker collecting
Japan, U.S.A.

6116
C. Gopal (12)
402, Gurudeep - 4
Sahakar Nagar-II,
Dasha Bhuja
Ganapati Road
Pune - 411009,
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, reading
Argentina, Mauritius

6117
Abhijit A. Pachegaokar (13)
A/402, Pushpa Apt.,
Eksar Road
Borivali
Bombay - 400092,
Maharashtra, India
Music, dance
Switzerland, U.S.A.

6118
Prakrit Vaibhav Jena (8)
B-205, Curzon Road
Apartments
Kasturba Gandhi Marg
New Delhi - 110001
Reading, playing the guitar
Any country

6119
Arun Viswanathan (10)
C/o Mrs. R. Lalita
136, Golf Links
New Delhi - 110003
Stamps, reading
Finland, Australia

6120
G. Sreenivas (14)
C/o G. Bhaskar Rao
House No. 1518, Sector-74
Chandigarh, Punjab
India
Drawing, craft
Japan, U.S.A.

6121
Rajesh Sharma (15)
A-451, Shastrti Nagar
Delhi - 110052
Music
India, Bhutan

6122
Deepanjani Biswas (14)
106/9/A, Satyen Roy Road
Behala, C
Calcutta - 34, (W.B.),
India
Stamps, rock-climbing
Germany, U.K.

6123
Mario D’Souza (14)
Society
Opp. St. Charles School
Vakola
Santacruz (E)
Bombay-400055,
Maharashtra, India
Stamps & coins, postcards
U.S.A., Australia

6124
Satyajit Sadanandan (14)
B/1/489, I.P.C.L. Township
P/o. Petrochemicals
Township
Baroda-391345, Gujarat
India
Stamps and coins
China, Korea

6125
Prithu Srivastava (12)
25, Deshbandhu
Apartments
Kalkaji
New Delhi - 110019
Stamp & coins, stickers
Jordan, Austria

6126
Vinod Kumar Verma (16)
F-206, Mangal Bazar
Laxmi Nagar
Delhi - 110092
Dance, music
Any country

6127
Tuna Langhey
Ronrana (15)
Govt. Middle School
Balinong, P.O. - Namchik
Dist. Changlang
Arunachal Pradesh-792122
India
Reading
Any country

6128
S. Ganeshasai
Ramaswamy (11)
S/o Dr. R.
Shunmuganathan
No. 12/2, First Avenue
BOYS

Shastri Nagar, Adyar
Railway Qtr. No. 5A,
Type-III
Junagadh - 362001
Gujarat, India
Stamps, cricket
Any country

Mayank Shekhar (12)
D-II/338, Vinay Marg
Chanakyapuri
New Delhi - 110021
Music, coins
Any country

Mayank Verma (11)
32, Kotla Road
New Delhi - 110002
Coins, games
Bhutan, India

Kinzang (14)
Tashigang Upper Market
P/o - Tashigang
Bhutan
Reading, travelling
Any country

Nishant Aggarwal (10)
B-2/33, Paschim Vihar
New Delhi - 110063
Reading, stamps
Switzerland, Japan

Jason N. Coelho (13)
Modilo Vaddo, Assonora
Bardez
Goa-403503, India
Stamps, reading
U.S.A., Italy

Pankaj Bilandani (15)

6129
6130
6131
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6142
6143
6144

Aakash Jain (15)
A/12, Nizamuddin East
New Delhi - 110013
Stamps and coins
U.S.A., Japan

Amitabh Roy (16)
C/o Maj. D.D. Roy
(Edn. Offr.)
HQ. 168 INF BDE
C/o 56 A.P.O.
Reading, food/cooking
U.S.A., India

Amol Arora (16)
3rd Floor GP-4
Maurya Enclave
Pitampura
Delhi - 110034
Music, reading

Kohinoor Verma (15)
C-11, Vikaspuri
New Delhi - 110018
Films, making friends
India, U.S.A.

Harman Deep Singh (13)
511-R, Model Town
Ludhiana - 141002
Punjab, India
Stamps and coins
All country

Vikram Batra (14)
D-114, Vikaspuri
New Delhi - 110018
Table tennis, painting
India, Germany

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I remember the day we moved into our new home. The boys and girls on the block looked like they were having 'hazaar' fun. But no, they didn't look too interested in me.

How do you walk up to a new gang and make them your pals? Think...Think. So I just chuck a Try-Me in my mouth...walk my best tough-guy-walk and offer them a handful of Try-Me - "Go ahead, Try Me!" Yeah. I made five new best pals that day.