



Volume Number: 2-04

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Thought for Today

➤ **From the MD's Desk:**

Dear Friends,

The problem of the dry lake has been vexing us for some time. The outflow tract was leaking and this was rebuilt a few months ago. This had no significant impact on retaining water in the lake. Two weeks ago a 'lake expert' - Mr Arbind Gupta - introduced by Mrs Vathsala, visited Suvidha and inspected the lake. His observations and suggestions are as follows:



- The lack of inflow because the water source is blocked outside suvidha boundaries is a problem.
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- To optimize water inflow we could cut small channels around the lake and let the rainwater flow into the lake rather than flow around it.
-
- make the southern part of the lake a little deeper
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- to reduce seepage of water - this is the most significant step - cover the bed with clay and compact it.

A rough estimate for this work is eight to ten lakhs. When the finances permit, these steps will be considered.

Mr Jaisim has suggested that we build check dams in the existing water channels using boulders that are in the village. This can be done at very little cost and this will be undertaken soon.

Another important issue is the discontent among some residents about the rules that we have collectively laid down in the RVM. This has to do with maintaining 'uniformity' in the landscaping and the exteriors of cottages. This came about because this 'uniformity' ensures some standards. Some

Website: <http://www.suvidha.co.in> Phone: 91-080-26951000 / 212 Email : pmc05_cardiac@yahoo.co.in

residents want freedom to do the landscaping as they wish. Lack of this is seen as infringement of their rights. Others want changes like putting up glass shutters, change doors etc that change the appearance of the cottages. Without these, they feel that their safety is compromised.

The rules in the RVM are laid down by the SH. The management is making sure the rules are followed. A process, as outlined below is in place and is being followed.

- A written request for the changes sought is to be submitted to the office.
- This will be scrutinized by the technical committee if technical issues are involved
- The board will then examine the issues involved as to whether the requested changes fall within the provisions of the RVM.
- If the answer is 'yes' to both the technical and RVM provision aspects, the requested change is allowed.
- If the matter involves landscaping issues, the SLC examines the request and takes a decision.
- If the matter involves maintenance issues, the resident directors and MD collectively take a decision.

When a request is denied, accusations of favoritism fly thick and high. Past transgressions are quoted vehemently. Decisions of the board are severely criticized. the language used to express this in verbal communication and sometimes even in writing, has been uncivil! If the rules are unacceptable to a majority, the RVM has to be changed in a AGM.

Should we not respect democratic functioning?

Should we not follow process based decisions rather than ad hoc individual decisions?

Why are we finding it so difficult to accept democratic decisions with grace?

In the evening of life, why should there be such egoistic approach to issues?

Why are we working actively towards factionalism?

Why can't there be some give and take, some friendly banter and camaraderie?

The way we are going, while we may attain financial stability, the vision of a retirement community where residents live in peace and harmony with good financial, physical and emotional health is a pipe dream.

In spite of the best efforts made by us to improve communication, have collective decisions through email exchanges and 'open houses' and showing good results in the form of improving ambience, providing facilities and a vastly improved financial status, the strife in Suvidha continues. the unhappiness continues - at least in some quarters. Sadly there are some who put their personal egos and agendas ahead of Suvidha's good. It is for the 'silent' majority to become vocal. Or, if you feel that the present style of management needs a change, please let us know. If you do not respond with your views in large numbers, a small minority of SH will hijack Suvidha.

Regards

Dr. K. Lakshman.

➤ Event Highlights:

Last month witnessed the following interesting events. It would be very interesting to recapitulate these happenings.



22-03-2015 : Demo of Quingo Electric Scooter

Mr. Mohammed from Quingo gave a Demo on 5 Wheel mobility electric scooter which is very useful for senior citizens for internal movement in a gated community. Mr. Bram van den Boom, Director of the Five Wheels India presented the innovative five wheels to the audience and conducted an interactive session to clear the doubts in the minds of the seniors. Soon after the lecture the seniors are allowed to have the first hand driving experience of driving their vehicles in two models. The seniors who drove these five wheel Quingo scooters appreciated the ease of operation,, stability with five wheels as well as the driving comfort. The company also sponsored the lunch to the participants. Further information could be obtained from Mr. Mohammed Ali S, Lead Sales 917406062888 : info@fivewheelsquingo.com : <http://www.fivewheelsquingo.com>



29-03-2015 : Ugadi Celebrations

SUVIDHA welcomed the New Year by celebrating the Ugadi Festival. The programme started with an invocation by Mrs. Raji Subramanya. The highlight of the function was a detailed deliberation on "Significance of Celebrating Hindu Festivals" by Professor Trichur Rukmini of Cottage 73 – 74, who is a distinguished scholar on Hinduism, Vedantha and Sankya yoga. Ugadi celebration ended with a "Ugadi" lunch comprising of traditional lemon + mango rice and Obattu.

The Ugadi celebration was followed by a presentation on suitable Solar Energy Resources for SUVIDHA by Mr. Ramesha Dasharatha Ram; Chairman, Technological Value Solutions Automation Controls, Bangalore and Chennai. +918939754496, +919600125199
Email:mail@tvsautomationcontrols.com ; <http://www.tvsautomationcontrols.in>

Power Generation potential - Village			
PV Solar Installation KWp	5		Investment
Power Generation capacity installation	5	KWp	₹ 5,00,000
No of solar panels/cottage	21		
Power Tariff EB @Rs 7.55/Unit without escalation for inflation present	₹ 7.55	per unit	
Approx power generated - village - per day	21.38	units/day	
Approx power generated - village - in full year	7,803	Units/year	
Total village power generation/day	₹ 161	per day	
Total village power generation/year	₹ 58,913	Per year	



12-04-2015 : Talk on Patanjali's Yogasutras – Session 1

The Suvidha Ladies Club has planned a series of five very interesting and informative talks by Dr. T. S. Rukmani, PhD, D Litt., on our cultural roots derived from Vedas and Upanishads. We thank her for graciously agreeing to give talks of one-hour duration each. Session 1 took place on Sunday the 12th April 2015. Broadly the talk covered the deeper meaning of Yoga and Patanjali's Yogasutras in particular. This talk will address itself to the beginnings of Yoga and trace its growth and development through the ages up to the time of Patanjali. It will also highlight some of the original sutras from the Yoga sutra to get a flavour of the style of Patanjali.



The audio recording of the talk is presented at the following link. Hope you will find it informative and interesting. Click on the link to download audio mp3 file or login to your gmail account and play it on the web.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzTGYY9kvPaEZkNNNTRUMkdsczg/view?usp=sharing>

➤ **Suvidha On The Move :**

During the month, the following developments have taken place.

- **Office Extension:** Office extension is on the way in order to improve the ambience at the SUVIDHA Office and give some relief to the office staff from frequent disturbances whenever a visitor enters the office. The office extension is envisaged to have a separate chambers for MD, Manager in charge, Reception and a Board Room. These chambers will have state of the art technological innovations like Wi-Fi connectivity, networking, video-conferencing and lap-top presentation facility. It is also envisaged to have an air-conditioning facility. The entry to this floor will be from the western road side which will be very close to the proposed new car park area.
- **New Cards Table and Chairs :** Substantial donation by Mr. Rajashekar [#100] towards acquiring a brand new cards table with chairs has brought cheers to the SUVIDHA residents who are fond of the game. The facility will be provided at the commercial hall situated to the left of the main door as we enter the club house. It is planned to cordon of the facility with a proper partition with a door.
- **Composting :** Mr. Rama Subbarao has designed the weed shredding area to house the shredding unit in a 12' x 12' x 10' shed with mesh covering on three sides. In front of the shredding area there will be a shredded recovery area for formulation of the compost. There will be three compost stacks of size 4 x 3 x 2.5 feet each with a wire mesh top.. These structures will come up by the side of the present STP plant.
- **Name Boards :** Now the new sign boards in the Club house guide the visitors to the desired location. It is envisaged to put up some more sign boards with a different colour combination in the administration floor. Thanks to all the respondents to our call to suggest suitable names.
- **Open House :** It was held on Sunday the 5th April 2015 and this time there was a good attendance and the residents participated in discussion fruitfully. The MD welcomed the gathering and started with a presentation, the link for which is given below:

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/54985496/Suvidha%20Open%20House-150405.pptx>

He explained that focus for the last 16 months has been to build cottages and sell shares so that the financial status of the company can be stabilised. This process is going well. But selling shares has not been easy. Suvidha has to keep a note of the competition, which was non-existent 5 years ago. To that end, while not being ostentatious, some form of a 'decent' get up for the estate is a requirement. To meet this goal, the frontage is being developed along with an aesthetically pleasing car park. An office extension is being built with aluminium partitions so that interaction with SH and potential SH can occur in a 'decent' ambience. Finally, when finances permit, the club house has to be completed. The board has chosen the option to harness the demand for car park to raise funds for building the frontage.

Phase 1a progress

The construction is progressing well. The number of cottages subscribed to stands at 13; there are serious enquiries for 2 more cottages. The board has decided not to build the road from the clubhouse to the cottages. Instead, the approach to cottages on the higher reaches will be to go south on the west side road first, go round a circle to be built around the rock and proceed north on the east side road that will be built only up to the northernmost cottage.

Office extension

It was clarified that there is no need to do anything on the 'sly'; it is within the prerogative of the board to plan and execute these 'jobs' like the office extension, for the good of Suvidha. Details about what is being done was given during the presentation.

Covered Car park

The house was in favour of the present location. Alternative locations have their own drawbacks – like interference with building cottages (if required) on the north-western part of Suvidha or the need to have a full-fledged road on the eastern side of the property if the car park is located on the southern part of Suvidha. Wherever it is built some cottages will end up being far away from the car park.

Letter boxes and cycles

There were a lot of suggestions about the issue of letter boxes; the majority opined that letter boxes, either in the clubhouse or in front of cottages, was not a good idea. If staff are reluctant to use cycles, it was suggested that we could buy electric scooters. The feasibility of this would be explored; the alternative is to insist on the staff using cycles.

Fixing Glass Shutters on sit out

After a fairly heated debate on the issue, the house decided by a majority that such glass shutters are permanent structures and that they cannot be permitted as the 'exterior'/elevation changes contravening the rules laid out in RVM. The MD promised the SH concerned that her issue of insects/reptiles creeping into her sit out will be addressed by some other means.

Noisy traffic in Suvidha

This topic was discussed only in passing; in fact, one of the residents asked for allowing free use of SH owned vehicles to overcome the difficulties in getting a buggy on time. The MD mentioned about the noise even with the present restricted use of own vehicles. He promised to enforce the rule strictly to reduce the noise levels.

Allotment of 2 slots in the old car park to the same SH, earlier

The MD made enquiries about this past event in the office. He was told that 2 slots were given to the same person as the company needed the money at that time. This view was contested by others who mentioned that all the residents were not contacted at that time. The present board had no part to play in these events. The house requested, and the MD agreed, that we would request the concerned SH to consider relinquishing the 2nd slot. The house was unanimous that it would be incorrect to stop someone from renting out the slot.

Renting of cottages

The MD clarified that the focus of the company is to sell shares for Phase 1a. The limited office resources cannot be diverted to renting activities. The office facilitates the renting process if the SH find a tenant. The SH are at liberty to advertise on the web, take the help of other SH etc. in renting out their cottages. In all these years only one tenant has gone on to buy a cottage in Suvidha.

Housekeeping services

The house felt that the enforcement of the schedule drawn up for housekeeping was not effective. The MD requested residents to volunteer to supervise these and other activities. Mrs Bharati and Mr Chigateri volunteered to help Mr Reddy to streamline this process.

The MD stated that Mrs Vathsala's letter regarding canteen, buggy services and the garden would be looked into.

Many issues were discussed in 'other matters' as under:

- Mr Jaisim wanted check dams to be put up in various places to try and keep the water within Suvidha. The MD promised to take this further after a one on one discussion with Mr Jaisim.
- Many residents complained about a bad smell in the toilets. Residents' suggestions to install gully traps and making venting 'holes' will be undertaken.
- To a question, MD clarified that the issue of installing water meters has been dropped for now. The major use of water is in the common areas and the cost of installing the meters may not be justified.
- Stray dog menace was mentioned. The perimeter compound will be attended to by having a mesh to close gaps in the wall to prevent dogs from entering Suvidha.
- Residents requested first aid training. Dr PMC agreed to arrange 'Basic Life Support' training to the residents.

➤ **Suvidha Family News :**

- **New Residents:** We extend a hearty welcome to the new permanent residents – Mrs. Geetha Sudharsan and Major Sudarsan, Cottage # 42. We wish them a happy and contented stay in Suvidha Village.



- **We wish her well in her future career:** All the shareholders of SUVIDHA are very familiar with Smt. Grija N, Manager Suvidha, who joined the company ten years ago, at its very inception as a novice. During the last ten years she became a walking encyclopaedia on all aspects of SUVIDHA. Her seniors found her very honest, sincere, professional in the discharge of her responsibilities. Her appetite for learning and getting ahead in career resulted in her acquiring MBA as well as CS qualifications in spite of her busy schedule. With these advanced qualifications SUVIDHA is not in a position to retain her and had to let her go to seek better pastures. On Sunday the 5th April 2015, a farewell party was organised. This function was well attended by the staff, residents and the members of the Board of Directors. All the participants wished her good luck in her new endeavours. Smt. Girija N handed over the charge on 10th afternoon. The new incumbent is expected to report shortly. You may see the photos at the following link.



<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6134221185554036977?authkey=CLS189qOhqn3Mq>

➤ **Picture Gallery:**

A picture says a thousand words. So goes the common saying. Hereunder, we have presented the major events in pictures to transport you to that very event with just one click. So relax and enjoy!!!

Archives:

- **Light Music Programme - 5-03-2015**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6122968366850694321?authkey=CO3ujLHsqvPTcA>
- **Spring Carnival - 15-02-2015 :**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6116679344584298001?authkey=CLXw0LrBxdCcywE>
- **Ladies Picnic - 27-01-2015:**
<https://picasaweb.google.com/110142373058695926282/LadiesClubSrirangapatna150127?authkey=Gv1sRgCL3- 8mRpcGZwAE>
- **Waste Management - 26-01-2015**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6109271834004216833?authkey=CLPi0MiW4lbrggE>
- **Republicday Celebrations - 26-01-2015**
https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6109272081926882609?authkey=CKz0v4Sw9Y-3_gE
- **Light Music Programme - 17-01-2015**
https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6105636160068792241?authkey=CPriyvP_0YP31gE
- **Discourse on Upanishad : 11-01-2015**
https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6104225980469096433?authkey=CM7NieOc5Pmr_QE
- **New Year Celebrations – 31-12-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6099384845647941521>
- **50th Wedding Anniversary of Dr Shekar Couple -- 17-11-2014**
https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6082717539941833649?authkey=CNXL0J_HnPvHMg
- **Kannada Rajyotsava -- 1-11-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6078045167637707377>
- **Staff Sports – 25-10-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6076179498871069585>
- **Divali Celebrations - 23-10-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6076363233510266001>
- **Ayudha pooja celebrations – 3-10-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6065922506997420081>
- **Gandhi Jayanthi – 2-10-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6065621288180490177>
- **International Day of Older Persons – 1-10-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6065621728240223265>
- **Beauty parlour, Library and Banquet Hall inauguration – 27-09-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6064320275129696065>
- **Ground Breaking Ceremony – 26-09-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6063396405392137953>
- **Rotarians from Rotary Cantonment - 25-09-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/108282941260356382969/albums/6063271329055857393>
- **Ganesh Puja – Library – Beauty Palor - 31-08-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6053920250576543425>
- **Bandstand Inauguration - 17-08-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6048464450147649377>
- **68th Independence Day 2014 – 15-08-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6047691657626994961>
- **Suvidha Vanamahotsava 2014 – 10-08-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6045854550653105985>
- **Musical program "Baar Baar Dekho" – 2-08-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6046887354098837889>
- **Marketing initiative for Suvidha's Phase-1A – 2-08-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6046889931783647761>
- **Living Will and Organ Donation – 29-06-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6034403211395729665>

- o **Veena Recital & Art Appreciation Program – 15-06-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6025077471979169665>
- o **Nutrition for Senior Citizens – 01-06-2014**
<https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6019891682683628625>
- o **Photography Workshop at Suvidha - 25-05-2014**
https://plus.google.com/photos/117291397490350207875/albums/6018309312138203793?authkey=CMmP-eWG7_adoAE

➤ **News Makers :**

How Vaidyanathan.A's year old startup PAQS is helping clean the polluted air

Malavika Murali, ET Bureau Apr 3, 2015, 06.45AM IST

BENGALURU: Clearing the air in India's polluted metropolises might be a gargantuan task for governments, but an intrepid entrepreneur is showing that he is game for the challenge.

Management graduate Vaidyanathan A is building a set of digital devices that he claims can help to monitor and alleviate the effects of air pollution at public places as well as for individuals. His year-old start-up PAQS, which stands for Personal Air Quality Systems, is using the concept of internet-of-things where machines communicate with each other to build devices that work synchronously with smartphones.



"Using technology as a tool to make individuals more aware, healthier and better is the objective," said Vaidyanathan, an engineer and graduate of the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.

With just 280 pollution mapping centres for a population of 1.2 billion and some of the most polluted cities, India is hungry for solutions that can improve air quality.

PAQS aims to target enterprise customers with its device, My Air, which maps surrounding pollution levels, and can be attached anywhere - in office spaces, hospitals, houses or cars. PAQS is in talks with large corporations to use the device on campuses, said Vaidyanathan, who was unwilling to disclose the names of the companies he is negotiating with. He is also working with several medical research institutes and pulmonologists to add more features to a 'smart inhaler' that his company is building.

"We are currently evaluating the product. It is a mobile healthcare (device)," said G Padmanabhan, chairman of the government-run Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council, which aims to foster research and entrepreneurship in the biotechnology space. "The (smart inhaler) can navigate and provide pollution data to asthma patients who face unexpected attacks."

The technology-enabled inhaler registers parameters such as body temperature, external temperature, and pollutants in the atmosphere, all of which is controlled by an application on a smartphone. Investors are of the view that the devices need to be validated on two counts - data and scientific assessment.

"The first is easy. If the second is done, then doctors can recommend it to asthma patients," said Ramesh Babu, a cardiologist who is now a partner with the Ventureast Tenet Fund. Cleantech fund Infuse Ventures is also working with PAQS to commercialise the two devices "My Air is something that can be attached in a car, in a house, anywhere, and provide helpful data for individuals and corporations," said Shyam Menon, investment director of Infuse Ventures.

Crowdsourced data and continuous air mapping are the biggest selling points besides cost effectiveness, said Vaidyanathan, who has tested the smart inhaler in seven cities across the world, including Chennai and Bengaluru in India. He has applied for global patents for both products. "The convergence of cleantech, biotech and infotech is exciting. It is technology for a larger cause, and that's what we are here to do," he said.

➤ **Talent Corner:** Under this banner we plan to introduce to our readers, the contributions of our Suvidha family members who have developed substantial special skill sets as hobbies. Hope you will all enjoy such presentation. We welcome all such talented members to participate in this endeavour.

- **Paintings:** Dr. Narayanan R, a popular gynecologist and a resident of Cottage No. 107 at SUVIDHA, will be introducing us to the fantasies of flora / fauna around the Village through his intricate miniature paintings.



Bougainvillea



The first European to describe these plants was Philbert Commercon, a botanist accompanying French Navy admiral and explorer Louis Antoine Bougainville during his voyage of circumnavigation in 1789. The first European to observe these plants was Jeanne Bare, Commercon's lover and assistant who was an expert in botany; because she was not allowed on ship as a woman, she disguised herself as a man in order to make the journey (and thus became the first woman to circumnavigate the globe).

Through the ensuing years, this Brazilian beauty has assumed its rightful place as one of the most popular, spectacular and beautiful tropical plants. The modern day hybrids of *Bougainvillea spectabilis* (B. Brasiliensis) and B. glabra are among the most beautiful of flowering vines. These tropical members of the Nyctaginaceae family, are very vigorous, evergreen, woody vines with spines. Although normally climbers, they can be trained to stay bushy as pot plants, hanging baskets, or as standard 3 or 4 feet high. They will bloom beautifully on branches on 18"-20" long.

Keep all long shoots cut back to 18"-20" for best bloom. The vibrant color of this vine comes not from the small white tubular flowers, but from the 3 large paper-like bracts that surround each flower.

The blooms as we know them are not true flowers, but are 3 large papery bracts that encircle small, white, tubular inconspicuous flowers much like the poinsettia.

Many of today's bougainvillea are the result of interbreeding among only three out of the eighteen South American species recognized by botanists. Currently, there are over 300 varieties of bougainvillea around the world. Because many of the hybrids have been crossed over several generations, it is difficult to identify their respective origins. Natural mutations seem to occur spontaneously throughout the world; wherever large numbers of plants are being produced, bud-sports will occur.

Some of the best bougainvilleas to look for in your local garden are: California Gold (golden yellow), Juanita Hatten (dark pink), Barbara Karst (bright red to crimson), Jamaica white and Texas Dawn (pink).

- **Birds of SUVIDHA:** This is a series of beautiful and at times stunning pictures of birds that are either resident of or visitors to our Village. Mr. Ashok Dey, a permanent resident of SUVIDHA since November 2010, has been able to photograph as many as 69 different species of birds in the Village.



Mottled Wood Owl



While passing our plant nursery at dusk many walkers have heard a loud, quavering, eerie but yet somewhat pleasant call from near the western boundary wall, which goes something like *chu-hua-*

aa, sometimes followed by a mellow hoot. Both Lakshmi and I knew that it was the call of an owl but it was Sarath Champati (who with his wife Indu has moved into Cottage # 115-A (who recognised the call as that of the **Mottled Wood Owl (*Strix Ocellata*)**). Reading about this bird I learnt that it is mostly nocturnal and crepuscular and keeps to thickly wooded areas. But one morning a few weeks ago, I got very lucky. While waiting under the very large fig tree behind Sarath's cottage I heard the cawing of crows followed by loud rustling sounds. And lo and behold, suddenly this beautiful bird emerged from the thicket beyond our western wall and perched on a branch of the fig tree. It sensed my presence very quickly but before it could fly away I was able to take a few pictures. Here's one of them. This owl is as large as a *Pariah Kite* but looks dumpier and has a short tail. With dark eyes, black concentric barring on pale facial discs, white and rufous mottling on upper parts and a prominent white 'half-collar' on its upper breast, it is quite a sight.

➤ Readers Corner :

A CHANGE OF HEART

A short story by: Mr. SM Subbarao, Cottage # 139, SUVIDHA

Retd. General Manager (Capacitors Divn.) ABB

The phone rang sharply at Chandru's residence in Mayur Vihar, Delhi. Chandru instinctively knew who might be calling. Yet, hoping he may be wrong, said 'Chandra Shekhar speaking....'

'Chandru, *Anna* here. How are you... and how is Hema?'..... '*We are okay. How are attige and you doing?*'.....

'We are fine too.'..... '*Good. What is happening in Bangalore? Surely, you have not called me so early in the morning just to enquire after our well-being. Is it about mother?*'.....

'You are right. I need to talk to you about her. It is important.'..... '*What about her? Is she sick or something?*'.....

'She is okay. But listen, I have now received the job offer from Schuster. I am to be based in Vienna, starting two months from now. They have also offered to take on your sister-in-law as a sub-editor for the English edition of their corporate newsletter. It is too good an opportunity to pass up. I need your help.'..... '*Congratulations—but—'help'? Are you suggesting I get *Amma* to Delhi and care for her?*'.....

'Well, y-yes—anything wrong with that? She is, after all, our mother.'..... '*Of course. No denying that, but... sorry, *Anna*. Please understand my situation. I did look after her for all of six years when you were in Nagpur, didn't I? Even after your return to Bangalore, *Amma* remained with me. Don't you remember how things were between Hema and *Amma*? There wasn't a moment's peace in the house—and it is not easy to forget that. Hema was at the end of her tether, having to endure *Amma*'s cranky ways and insults all the while. Fortunately, I was transferred out of Bangalore. I regarded it as divine intervention. Why would I want to start the same story all over again?*'.....

'*Amma* does not always keep well. She cannot go over to live in Philadelphia with Anant at this stage of her life—not that our brother wants her there. Moreover, we cannot expect Claire to care for *Amma*.'..... '*Anna, let me be frank with you. Hema has declared that she cannot put up with *Amma* anymore and if I bring *Amma* home, she will walk out on me. If that happens, who is going to care for my school-going boys? In any case, *Amma* cannot withstand the extremes of Delhi weather.*'.....

'So, Chandru, you do not care even if it is a question of my job with Schuster, is that it?'..... '*I feel bad about it, but I do not see how I can help, *Anna*. Maybe you should ask Schuster to give you a posting in Bangalore. Give it a try. Got to hang up now. Goodbye.*'

@@@@@@@

Prameelabai's health had declined steadily. During the last year, every part of her body seemed to play up. When Shankar

told her about his new job offer and the need for him to move to Vienna, she asked what would become of her.

Shankar lied, 'I have spoken to Chandru. He is terribly busy at work and said he will get back to me after a week.' *Why on earth am I buying time like this? A week is going to change nothing.....* 'Chandru? He is henpecked and afraid of Hema. Anyway, that is his business. But whatever happens, do not throw me at the mercy of that wretched girl.'

'Amma, we all know about Hema and you. Maybe you should live in a place like the *Seniors All* old age home. I believe they take very good care of their wards. Alternatively, we could arrange for a whole-time attendant to live here with you and take care of your food as well—but there are bound to be days when she may go away to visit her relatives. An old age home would be a good option.'..... 'So, you want to cast me off as if I am some beggar! Can't Sujata remain here and take care of me? She never fights or talks back to me; she is so different from Hema. I am sure she will not mind making this small sacrifice for me.'

That is what you think, Amma. Little do you know that Sujata, forever the silent sufferer, is also delighted at the prospect of getting away from you! 'No, Amma, I cannot live there alone. Austria is a meat-eating country and you know I cannot even eat eggs. I will just die of starvation. Besides, Sujata will be working there too.'..... 'Then take me to Australia with you. I will cook for the two of you.'

'It is not Australia, Amma, but Austria, which is in Europe. How can you go to such a cold country at this age? The language, the culture—*everything* is so alien that you will hate having gone there. That is not possible, Amma. Please be sensible.'

Prameelabai could not believe her ears. Three sons—all of *three* sons— whom she had brought up painstakingly on her own after she had lost her husband—and not *one* of them wanted to take care of her when she needed them most!

Tears spewed forth from her eyes. 'Fine sons all three of you are! An aged mother who may pass away at any time, and no one wants to care for her!' She looked skyward. 'Hey Ram, why don't you take me away this instant?'..... 'Amma, don't talk like that. All of us have our compulsions, you know. We are not throwing you out on the streets. Please understand.'

'I understand everything. All of you are heartless. You are condemning me to some strange place in the evening of my life. Why don't you just bundle me up in a *saree* and throw the bundle in Sankey tank tonight?' She burst into a bout of coughing, even as she sobbed.

Sujata, who had remained mute all this while, brought a glass of water. 'Here, Amma, calm down and drink this.'

Prameelabai could not drink. Her violent coughing soon turned into a series of gasps.

The next day Prameelabai was admitted as patient no. 26502 in the ICU of East Side Hospital.

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Shankar and Sujata visited the hospital at different times during the next few days. Prameelabai's condition remained critical. On the fourth day, however, Dr. Girish said to Shankar, 'I may soon have some good news for you, Mr. Shankar. Your mother is a tough woman. Anyone else may not have survived this long.'

Does it mean that Amma will soon be well enough to be sent home? 'Oh!'..... 'You do not seem to be pleased.'

'No, no. Of course I am happy. I suppose my mother will have to remain in the ward for a few days, right?'..... 'Yes. She has to recuperate, maybe for a week or two. We will let you know when she is fit enough to go home.'

Amma has lived a long enough and full life, hasn't she? She is my mother and I love her, but I have a life of my own, haven't I? She is going to come home and screw up everyone else's life. Good God! Is there no way out of this mess at all? Is it going to be goodbye to Schuster, even before I join them?

Shankar made up his mind on his next course of action. He would contact the Medical Director of East Side Hospital, Dr. Madangopal, for an appointment to explore how he could help in this predicament.

When Shankar called Dr. Madangopal, the latter wanted to know what the issue was, but Shankar pleaded that it was a delicate issue that needed personal discussion. The meeting was set for the next day.

'Thank you for sparing some time for me', began Shankar, 'but I am really embarrassed to be sharing a family problem with you.'..... 'Better to get it over with, isn't it, rather than worry about how to begin?'

'My mother is in the medical ward now, after being treated for a few days in the ICU. I am informed by Dr. Girish that she will soon be well enough to be sent home.'..... 'That is good. So, what is the problem?'

'You see, sir, the truth is that nobody wants her home.'..... 'Really? That is strange. Where do I come in?'

How on earth can I put it across to Madangopal? 'I... I... I mean she is old and may not have very long to live. Isn't it possible that she may have to go into the ICU again one of these days?'..... 'Perhaps so. Are you suggesting your mother should remain in the ward in anticipation of having to be admitted in the ICU again?'..... 'Y-yes. Is that possible?'.....

Madangopal looked at Shankar in disbelief. *This guy must be out of his mind. He perhaps even wants our help to expedite her end!*

'Sorry, I see no possibility of being able to help.'..... 'Let me explain the ground reality, sir. After hearing me out, you may be able to suggest something.'

Madangopal said nothing. Shankar proceeded to explain his predicament. After listening to Shankar without any interruption, Madangopal spoke up.

'Mr. Shankar, it is for Dr. Girish to take a call on how much longer your mother needs to remain in the hospital. However real your domestic compulsions maybe, the hospital cannot be used as a parking place for your mother in the expectation of further care in the ICU. The very idea is preposterous. Talk to your mother again and persuade her to go into a senior citizens' home, or persuade some relative who enjoys your mother's confidence to talk to her. In the extreme, some sacrifice may have to be made by one of you in the family. I can think of no other solution. Sorry.'

Why was I so foolish to expect anything out of this insensitive moron? I may as well have talked to a rock.

After Shankar left, Madangopal sat lost in thought for a long time. He had never received a request like the one made by Shankar; he did not quite know what he could do.

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Over dinner, Shankar talked to his wife about his meeting with Madangopal. 'Sujata, I am at my wit's end about Amma. I enquired from the chief of the hospital if she can somehow be allowed to stay on at the hospital, but he did not take kindly to it. He said my idea was preposterous.'

'You actually made such a request to the MD? You must be crazy! Just think of the sheer stupidity of expecting the hospital to host a healthy person, as though it is a hostel, even if for a short time! Moreover, in what way would it be different for your mother from a senior citizens' home that she objects to in the first place?'

'So you too feel that I must let go of this God-sent opportunity and continue to wallow in misery in my present job?'

'No, I did not say that, Shankar. Look, it is late now. Why don't we talk about this tomorrow? Maybe some solution will emerge.'

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As Shankar was about to eat breakfast before leaving for work the next morning, Sujata declared, 'I have decided to stay back and look after Amma after she comes home.'..... 'What? You can't be serious.'

'I am. I mean it.'..... 'What is to become of me? I can't get by on European food, you know.'

'Don't be such a helpless baby! You are not the first vegetarian Indian to have gone to live in Austria, surely. I will get you a whole lot of precooked Indian food and I will teach you some simple cooking before you go. I will also pack a book of

vegetarian recipes for you to try out. You will have a lot of time on your hands after work and you might as well put it to good use. Cooking can be fun, you know.'..... 'Nonsense! How long can precooked food packets last?'

'That's why I am asking you to learn to cook some simple Indian stuff like rice, *dal*, *rasam* and *palya*. There are Indian grocery stores in every part of the world now, where you can buy various kinds of spices and *masalas*. Even European supermarkets sell them. It is not like in the past, when you had to stock up with cereals and spices before you went abroad.'

Shankar gave Sujata a tight hug before digging into his breakfast.

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Sujata brought *Amma* home two days later. She did not wish to disclose her intentions to the old lady until after Shankar returned from work.

At dinner, Prameelabai asked Shankar, 'When do you take up your new job?'..... 'It is still six weeks away, *Amma*, but I am going alone. Sujata will stay behind to take care of you.'

Prameelabai got up and went over to the window. She remained silent for a long time before speaking up.

'Don't be silly, son. A wife's place is by her husband's side. Moreover, why should the poor girl sacrifice her job for my sake? Don't even think of leaving her behind.'

Shankar and Sujata could not believe their ears. *This cranky old lady, who had thrown a tantrum at their going abroad just a few days ago, was now singing a different tune!*

'But what about you, *Amma*? You cannot live by yourself at your age.'..... 'Who said I intend to live alone? I will live in an old people's home. I will have lots of company there.'

'But... but... you were totally opposed to such an idea when I suggested it to you.'..... 'Wait.'

Amma went to her room. She returned a few minutes later with a brochure.

'Read this, both of you. It describes a senior citizens' home called *The New Beginning*, in Coimbatore. If you can find a place like this for me to live in, I will gladly go.'..... 'We will read it, *Amma*, but what made you change your mind?'

Amma smiled. 'Remember that nice young doctor, Girish? He gave me this pamphlet. He brought his aunt Sarojini one day and said she lives in Coimbatore in *The New Beginning* and she never has a dull moment. Sarojini is a very friendly and knowledgeable lady. She lost her husband some time back, and her children have been living abroad for several years, with their children in school there. After her husband's demise, Sarojini did not want to be a burden to any of her children, so she decided to try out this home. She said the place provides spacious living quarters with cleaning service, a full-fledged dining facility, a reading room, a TV lounge, a recreation room, walking paths, a doctor on call, and a provision store. There is even a temple within the premises, where men and women congregate for prayer sessions. It is all described in the brochure. This lady has made friends with almost everyone there and they talk of common interests, their grandchildren, their own youth, and so on. Sarojini said this option would be more satisfying than living at home alone or with an attendant. She said she has the freedom to do just what she likes at any given point of time. She said she would not want to live any other way now. What more can one want? It really sounded very good.'

'Are you sure, *Amma*, this is what you want? If you feel unhappy for any reason after we are gone, we will not be able to do anything about it.'..... 'Do not worry. I will be okay. I have decided to be happy. Besides, I thought what Sarojini said—about the importance of giving our children the freedom to shape their own lives—made a lot of sense. I was very selfish earlier, and I really feel bad about it.'

Sujata and Shankar exchanged meaningful glances. Shankar gave Prameelabai a big hug.

'*Amma*, oh *Amma*! You do not know how much this means to us. You are an angel, do you know that?'

The old lady blushed.

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Shankar visited Dr. Girish the following day. He had a lot to be thankful to the doctor for.

'Dr. Girish, can I take a few minutes of your time?'..... "Of course. Is everything okay with your mother?"

'Yes. I came to thank you for introducing your aunt to my mother. You do not know what a big favour you have done me.'..... 'My aunt?'

'I am referring to your aunt Sarojini.'..... Girish laughed. 'Oh, that! No, Mr. Shankar, Sarojini is not actually my aunt – I mean, she is not related to me in any way. She is the mother of my neighbour, and I call her 'Aunty' out of respect. She lives in a senior citizens' home in Coimbatore. When I learnt she was visiting her daughter, I sought her help.'

'Doctor, how very good of you!'..... 'Well, I thought it was my responsibility to do something, after Dr. Madangopal told me about your predicament.'

Shankar gulped. 'Dr. Madangopal asked you to help?'

'Yes. He told me about the very unusual request you made, and how irritated he felt. Nevertheless, he said we could try to help you in solving your predicament. The method he suggested was to get someone from outside the family to talk to your mother. One may say it is a play on human psychology – don't we all know that we frequently fail to take note of a spouse's advice, but value the same advice given by a family friend or an elderly acquaintance? Even children tend to behave similarly when it comes to a mother's instruction and a teacher's. The source of advice or information often makes all the difference between acceptance and rejection.'

Shankar pondered over Dr. Girish's theory. *It seems fair logic, but does it always work?*

As if reading his thoughts, Dr. Girish said, 'It is possible, of course, that someone may not conform to this rule, but nothing is lost by trying it out. In the worst case, the target may not be persuaded, and we may have to try something else.'..... 'It worked with my mother, and that is what matters.'

'Well, there's something you should know about Sarojini Aunty', said Dr. Girish..... 'What?'

'Aunty herself was sort of 'tricked' into getting into the *New Beginning* at the start. Some resident named Padma told her the place was great, and she moved there excitedly—only to discover that there was no Padma there!'..... 'Who, then, was Padma?'

'I do not know, but I suspect that Padma may have been a setup, arranged by one of her sons – none of them admits to it, of course.'..... 'And, when Aunty found out?'

'Well, she felt cheated but gradually, she realized that her life at the *New Beginning* was way better than it had been with her tyrant husband, and later, when he died, with her sons and daughters-in-law. You see, the children never had any time for her, and it made no great difference to her when they went away to live in other countries.'

'So, in a manner of speaking, Aunty agreed to con Amma?'..... 'No, I wouldn't call it that. When she recommends the retirement home option to any one now, I can see that it comes from her heart.'

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