

A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and blue trousers is swinging on a tire swing. The swing is suspended from a large, leafy green tree on the left. The person is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background features a bright blue sky with a few white clouds and a field of tall, golden-brown grass at the bottom. The overall scene is bright and cheerful.

Everyone in my family is an entrepreneur

MY FAMILY TREE

One bright morning, Seema's grandmother walked across the fields to go collect water from the well. This morning, like any other, she was enjoying her peaceful walk when, suddenly, the silence was broken.

"Dadi! Daaadi! Dadi, I want a swing!!!"

"Not now, Seema. I have to go and collect water."

But Seema would not give up. "But everyone has a swing Dadi. I want one too."

"And this is the first thing that you say to me in the morning? No namaste, no greeting. Where are your manners, child?"

"Sorry Dadi...namaste. Now can I please get a swing! Please please"

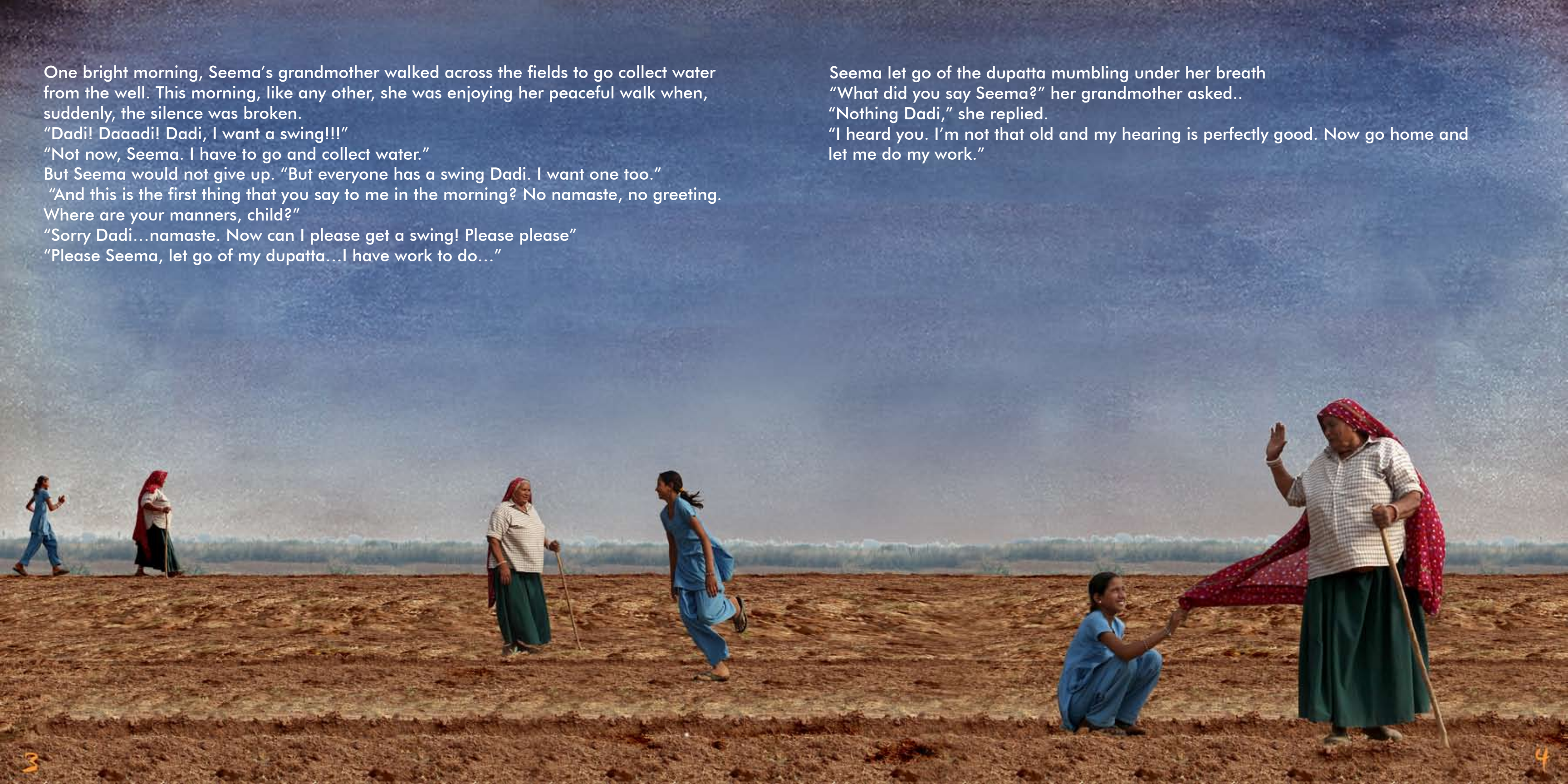
"Please Seema, let go of my dupatta...I have work to do..."

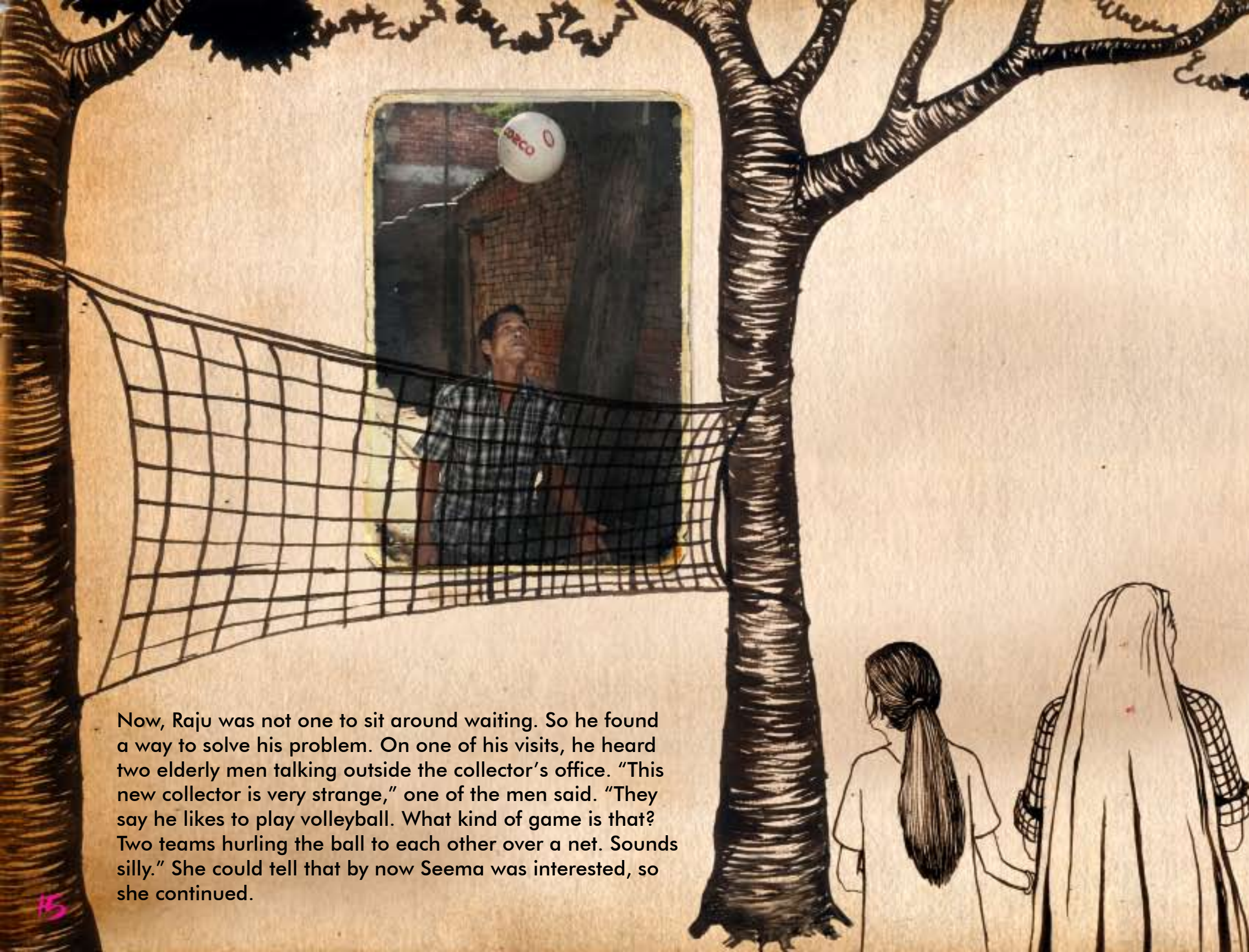
Seema let go of the dupatta mumbling under her breath

"What did you say Seema?" her grandmother asked..

"Nothing Dadi," she replied.

"I heard you. I'm not that old and my hearing is perfectly good. Now go home and let me do my work."





Now, Raju was not one to sit around waiting. So he found a way to solve his problem. On one of his visits, he heard two elderly men talking outside the collector's office. "This new collector is very strange," one of the men said. "They say he likes to play volleyball. What kind of game is that? Two teams hurling the ball to each other over a net. Sounds silly." She could tell that by now Seema was interested, so she continued.



"This gave your uncle a good idea. He bought a volleyball set and started to practice with your other uncle, studying a book on the rules of the game as he went. In the beginning, people thought he had lost his mind, but soon everyone in our village would race to watch the matches! Once this game caught on, he organized a volleyball tournament-got the referees, put together the two teams and then invited the district collector as the chief guest. Well, the DC couldn't refuse the invitation, and that's how your Raju Chacha was able to present his plan and even get public land."

Seema was listening with rapt attention, and as the story ended she jumped up and swing on a banyan root, exclaiming, "So both Raju Chacha and Great-Grand Nana did not give up, and in the end they both found creative ways to get what they wanted." Seema's grandmother nodded. "That's right, Seema. I'm glad you see the similarities."

"So, Dadi, can I have a swing?"

Seema's dadi cleared her throat disapprovingly and continued, "Then there are the women in our family. Persistent like you, they were always making plans. Your uncle's wife, Sonam Chachi, who you thought was just a housewife, started a tuition center for older women in the community who had not gone to school and could not read or write." Her grandmother laughed softly at Seema's shocked expression. "She knew that she would not get permission from her parents to do this, so she told no one. She found a small, unused hut and invited the women to come and learn."

Everyday she would talk to the women and tell them something different about what they could do if they could read and write. 'You'll be able to read your son's letters', she would say. Or, 'You'll be able to read the newspaper and travel the world.' And when it was time to take the census, each woman was able to sign her name and write about the work she did, how many children she had and say that yes, she supported the construction of a secondary school for girls." Seema's grandmother chuckled to herself. "Entrepreneurs solve problems. They organize, make plans, get together and make friends-friends who help you no matter where you may go."



The next day, Seema ran all the way home from school. She ran towards her grandmother and began pulling at her big, colourful skirt to make her sit down under the giant banyan tree." Tell me more Dadi" Seema said

Her dadi smiled "Well Seema then there's your dadaji. He was crazy about the movies. Yes, he was the headmaster of the school and he read encyclopedias-every one of every series. But when he was young, he was crazy about movies. Funny movies, love stories, dramas-he watched them all. Every time he went to the town or city he would watch a movie. Finally, one day, he decided to bring movies to the village. He bought a movie projector and set it up to show movies in a hut with cow dung-caked walls. People came from all around, and it became a night time festival in our village.



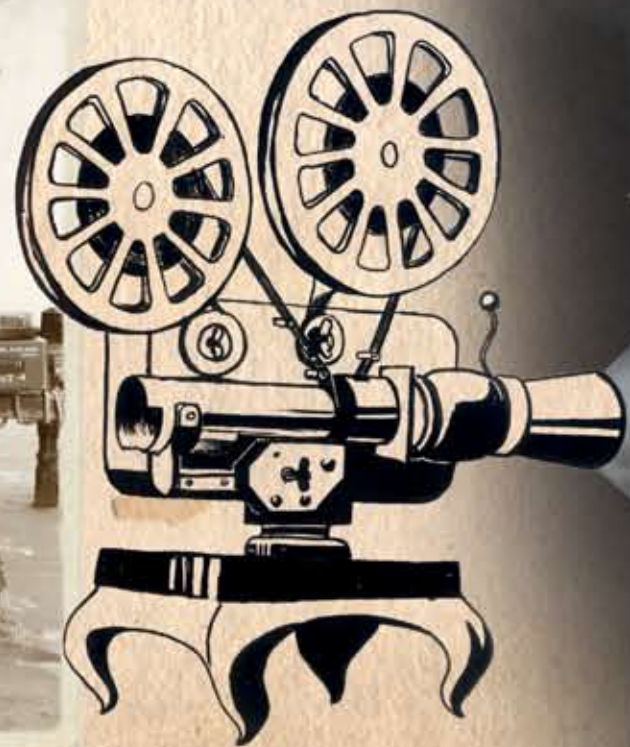
Of course, there was no way to keep all this quiet from the officials. One day they shut it down when the big companies complained that your Dadaji did not have the license to screen the movies in public. But he did not give up. Your Dadaji waited every day for a year under a tree in front of the district collector's house until one day the district collector had to give in. He created the license, and your Dadaji was back in business. Now even the officials come to watch."



Amazed, Seema asked, "But didn't he get tired of waiting?" Her grandmother smiled. "Sometimes you have to wait to get what you want." Seema replied, "Time and persistence. It takes both, right, Dadi?" Her grandmother nodded several times. "Yes, Seema. That's true. And knowing when to wait, when to persist and which strategies move which people."

"Now let me tell you about Chulbuli Masi.

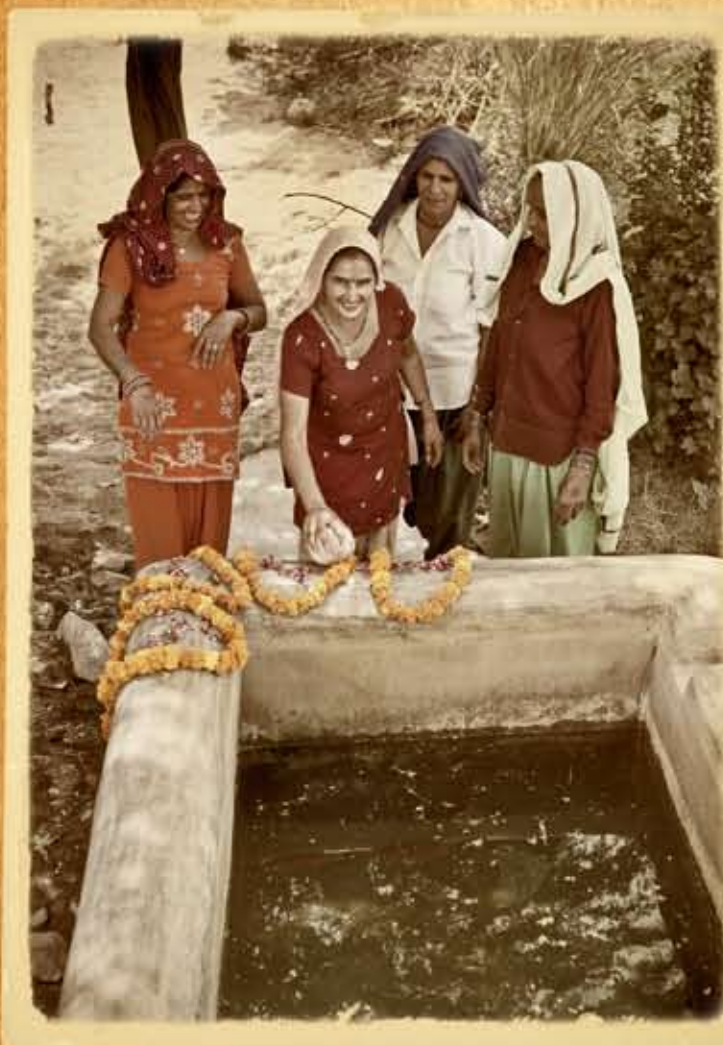
"Her house in the city, was in a very crowded place with no trees or plants. She really missed the green fields of her village. Chulbuli loved spinach, but it was expensive and not always available in the city. And so she thought to herself, 'Why can't I grow my own?' But there was no space. Then it occurred to her: 'What about my roof?' And that was how it began.



She grew delicious green spinach in old tins. Then she grew lemons, cauliflower and carrots, all in different cans or tins. Her roof garden became the talk of the neighborhood. Soon, she had formed a group of women who also wanted to farm on their roofs. They grew more than they could eat by themselves, so they started selling their vegetables and fruit in the market.



And the grey, cement city has now become an urban jungle." Seema looked up at her giant tree. She couldn't imagine living in a place that had no trees. "While Chulbuli Masi was entangled in her urban jungle, your eldest masi was simply fed up with paying too much at the local ration shop that overcharged customers on everything. Everything was expensive—rice, dal, and kerosene. One day, your masi had been standing in the queue for almost half an hour in the hot sun to buy kerosene and just as she reached the window, he started pulling his shutter down.



"Kerosene is sold out," he smirked. Your masi had had enough. She spent the next few weeks getting other families together. Finally a group of them filed a Right to Information (RTI) complaint against the ration shop dealer and he was replaced."

"Wasn't she scared?" Seema asked, unable to believe that her mild-mannered masi had done something so brave. "Appearances are often deceptive" said her grandmother. "Reena Mami is another example: she may seem shy, but beneath that soft surface she is pure steel. Do you know the story about the tube well in the field beyond ours?"

See, it used to be that everyone had to use the distant well to get water, or they had to pay the rich farmer to use his tube well. Now, this according to Reena was very unfair. 'The government has to do something,' she said. Her parents told her that this revolutionary attitude would get her nowhere, but that didn't stop her. She went from house to house, speaking to men and women.



Fifteen of them went to the government office day after day until they finally got the official to sanction a tube well near their fields. And as you already know, this is the tube well that everyone uses to water their fields."

Seema began to speak slowly, "Dadi, Chulbuli Masi, Badi Masi and Reena Mami all got people together to get their work done."

"Yes, sometimes it's necessary to get people involved to get something done. It's called building relationships. Sometimes the only way you can be successful for yourself is to be successful in helping others."

"Dadi, can you tell me about Nana and Nani? Ma says that that Nani was AMAZING."

"Oh yes, both your nana and nani were quite exceptional" said her grandmother fondly.



That evening, Seema and her grandmother sat under the banyan tree. Seeing something in her grandmother's hand, Seema asked her, "What is that, Dadi?"

Her grandmother held out her hand to reveal a black and white photograph of Seema with her parents. "Your Subbu Mama gave it to your parents as a present. Do you know how Subbu started his photography business? I know it's hard to believe, but he was not always the successful person you know today. When he started his career as a photographer, people didn't know him, and he had a very hard time getting any business. And so he solved this problem by finding an ingenious way to get noticed and market himself: He would attend weddings and pretend to take photographs of the entire function.

That's right, he would only pretend to take photos, not actually take them. Slowly people started recognizing him as the same photographer from earlier weddings they had attended. They began thinking, 'He must be really good if everyone is calling him to take photos of their functions.' And that's how he got his first job!"

"Dadi, tell me about Bade Dadaji and how he built the bridge in our village."

"My father, who was your great-grand dada, was a bridge builder. He built bridges in the middle of nowhere, where people needed them. But did you know that he wasn't trained to build bridges?"

"But he was an engineer, wasn't he?" asked Seema. Her grandmother nodded. "Yes, he was an engineer, but in a different field. He wasn't trained for building bridges or buildings."

"But then how...?" Seema asked.





"Every year during the monsoon, the riverbed would flood and no one could cross it on foot as they did during the rest of the year. People would either avoid crossing it altogether or, if they really had to cross, they would do so on small, unsteady rafts. Accidents were common. Your great-grand dada had just finished his degree and people thought, 'He is an engineer, he can help us.' Now, he didn't know how to build bridges, but seeing the people's need, he decided he would learn what was necessary to help them. This bridge in our village was his first, but certainly not his last. He built bridges across rivers, ravines and ditches. He built bridges for farmers who needed access to markets, for children so they could go to school, and for people who would typically be trapped when heavy rains flooded canals and streams.

And that's not all, Seema. He was a very intelligent and fair man and did not believe in the common practice of paying a dowry for a woman to get married. He didn't accept any dowry from his wife's family, and when I got married he didn't give any dowry to your dadaji's family. Instead, he gave us 20 mango saplings as a gift, and those became the mango orchards you see around you."

Seema exclaimed loudly, "Dadi, Dadi! That's how you have your mango chutney business!"



And then, with no one watching but the sun and perhaps the old banyan tree,
Seema climbed up onto the tire and began to swing.



