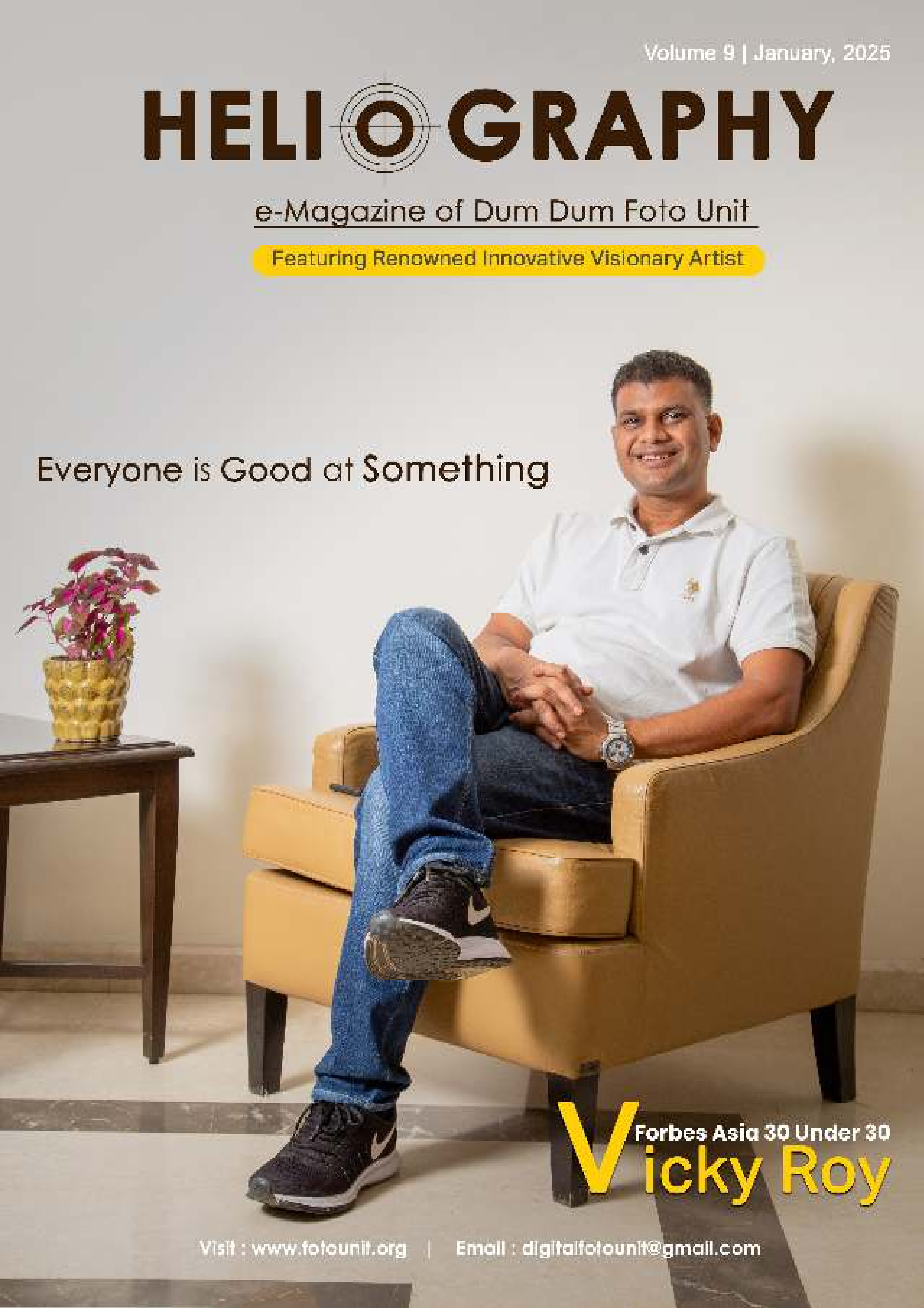
Volume 9 | January, 2025

HELIOGRAPHY

e-Magazine of Dum Dum Foto Unit

Featuring Renowned Innovative Visionary Artist



Everyone is Good at Something

Forbes Asia 30 Under 30

Vicky Roy

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Con

Tent

In Focus

Asim Moulik
Vice-President, Dum Dum Fotounit
Editor -in-Chief, Heliography

Greetings Photography Enthusiasts,

Welcome to the 9th edition of Heliography, our beloved online photography magazine, brought to you with immense pride by the passionate members of Dum Dum Foto Unit. As we step into 2025, it is with great joy that we present this special issue, highlighting an extraordinary body of work that promises to captivate and inspire.

In this edition, we are thrilled to feature the remarkable photographer Vicky Roy, whose thought-provoking project "Everyone is Good at Something" invites us to reflect on the innate talent and untold stories of individuals from diverse walks of life. Vicky's work challenges our perceptions and sheds light on the beauty of everyday human experience. His images speak not only to the technical mastery of his craft but also to the deep empathy and storytelling ability that underpins his approach. We are honored to present his work and explore the rich narratives that unfold through his lens.

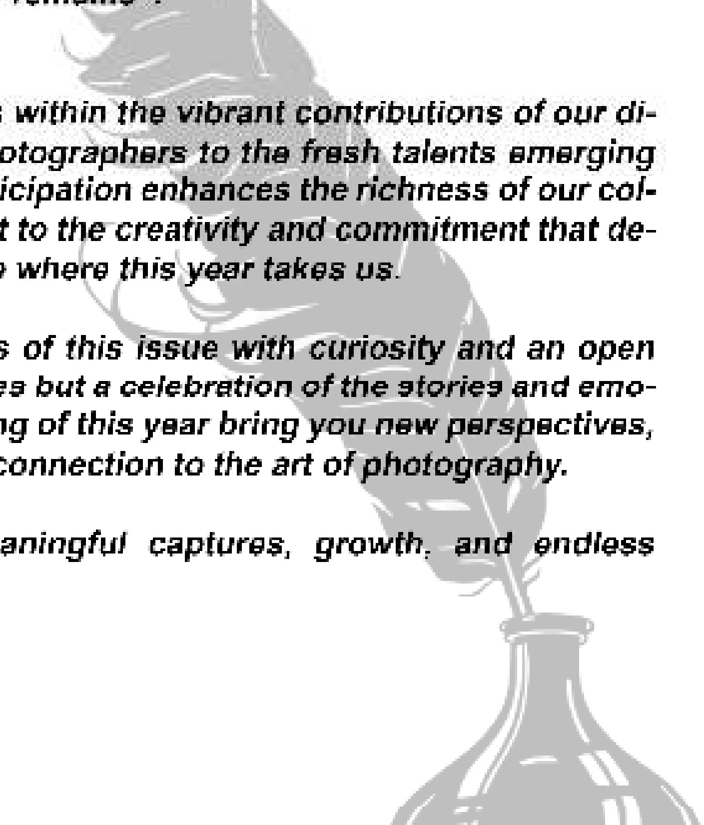
In addition to Vicky's featured work, we are proud to present our regular columns, which continue to enrich our community with knowledge and insight. Dr. Anjandeb Biswas takes us deeper into the technical dimensions of photography with "Micro four third – New Era", while Sri Tapas Basu delves into the fascinating realm of "Fantasy & Surrealism within the photographic frame", exploring how these imaginative concepts transform reality into something dreamlike and thought-provoking and Sri Anindya Phani, ever the insightful observer, contributes a thoughtful piece on the interplay of light, camera technique and emotion in photographic expression in his masterpiece "After fading everything love remains".

As always, the heart of Heliography beats within the vibrant contributions of our diverse community. From the seasoned photographers to the fresh talents emerging from our ranks, each submission and participation enhances the richness of our collective journey. This edition is a testament to the creativity and commitment that defines our space, and we are excited to see where this year takes us.

We encourage you to dive into the pages of this issue with curiosity and an open mind, as it is not only a collection of images but a celebration of the stories and emotions that connect us all. May the beginning of this year bring you new perspectives, creative breakthroughs, and a deepened connection to the art of photography.

Wishing you all a year filled with meaningful captures, growth, and endless inspiration.

Warm regards,
The Dum Dum Foto Unit Team



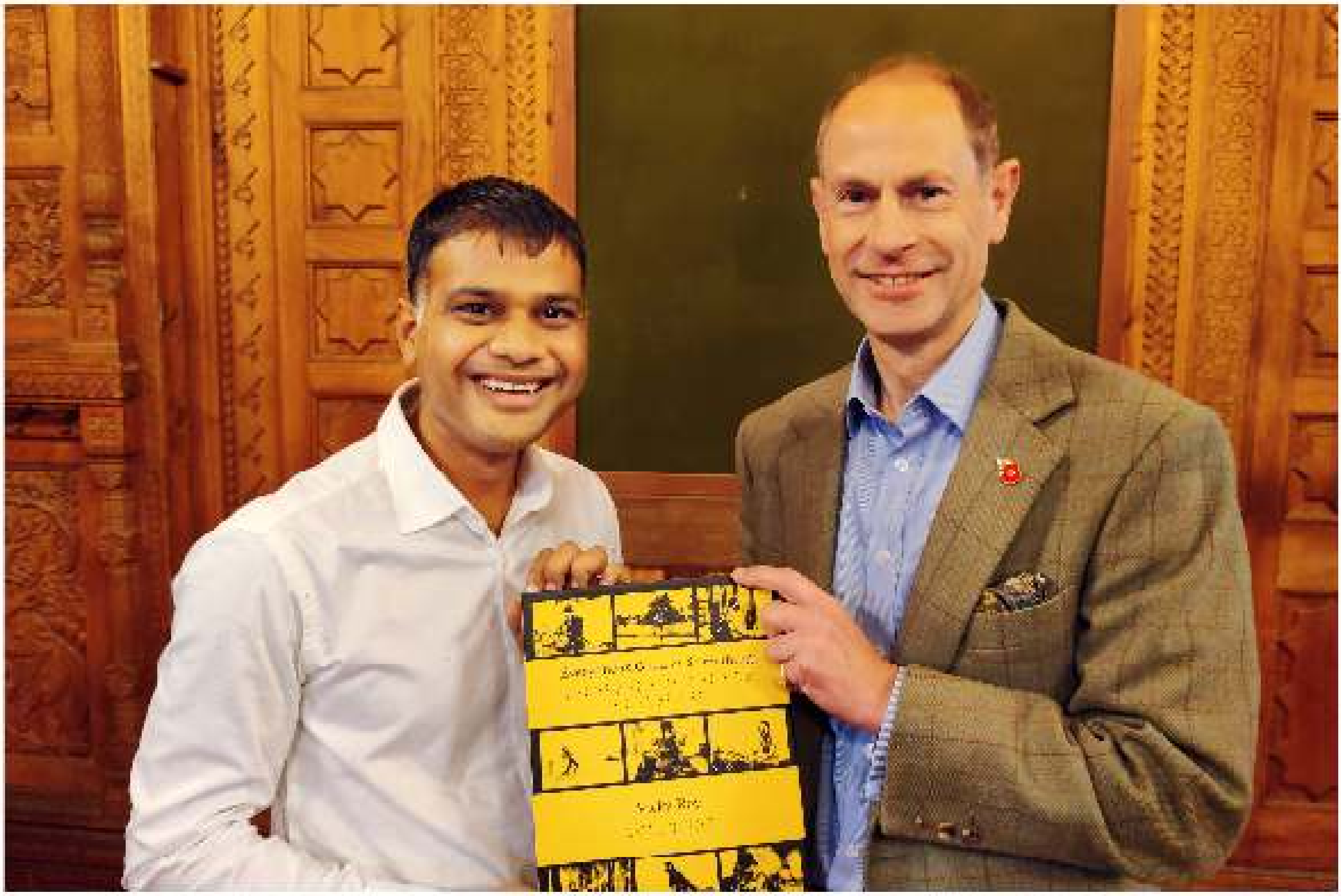
With V.R Ferose, founder of the India Inclusion Foundation

Everyone is Good at Something

Vicky Roy

Photographer | Forbes Asia 30 Under 30
MIT Media Lab Fellow | Speaker

Although, according to the WHO, Persons with Disabilities (PwD) constitute 15% of the world's population, India's official data shows up 28.6 million PwD in the country, a mere 2.2% of its total population. India has yet to conduct a credible disability census as part of its national census conducted every 10 years. The country's comprehensive Rights of PwD Act (RPwDA) was enacted only in 2016.



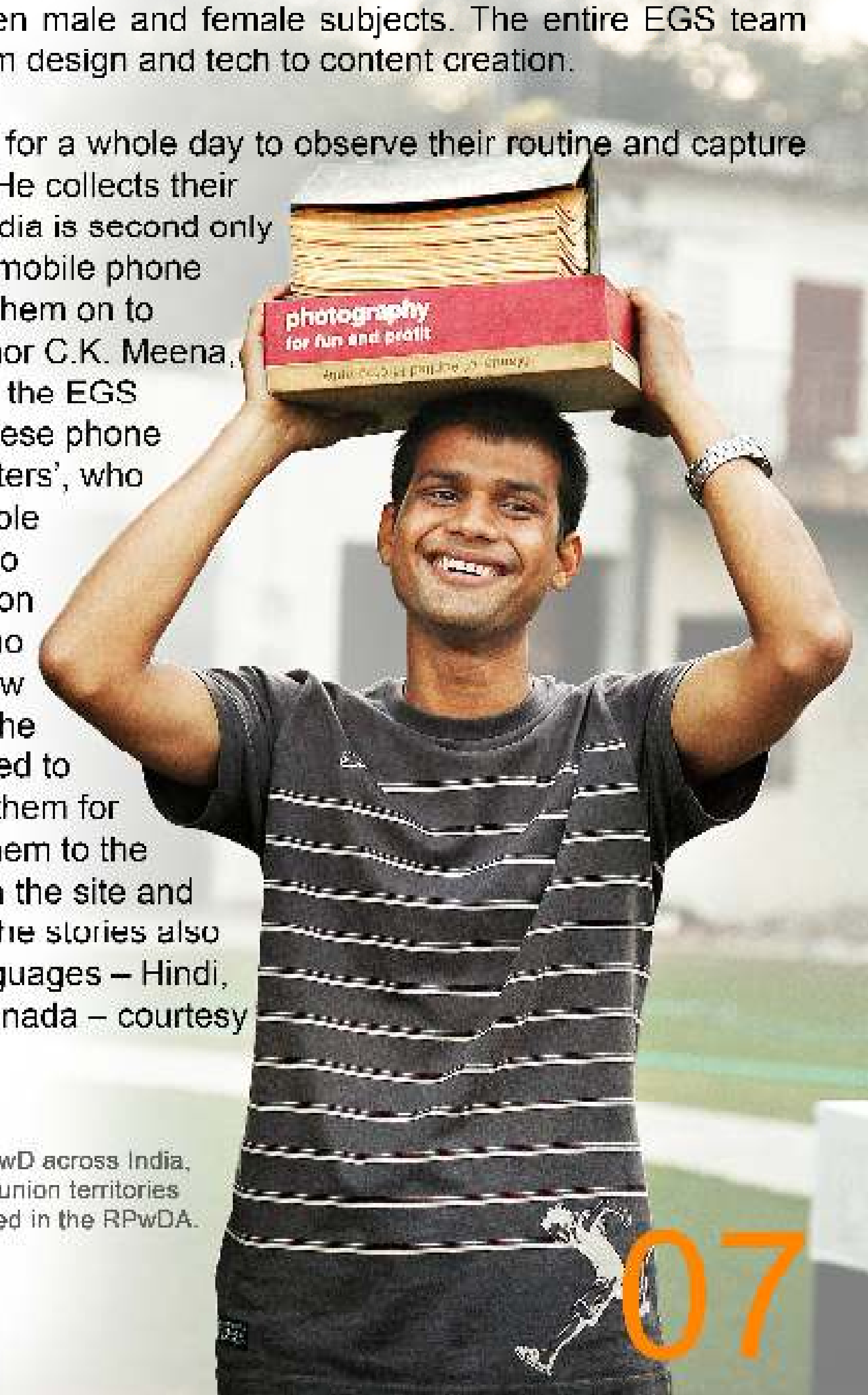
With Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh

V.R. Ferose, whose day job is as a senior vice president of the multinational software company SAP, is also a disability evangelist with a lofty mission: “Make India Inclusive by 2030” (the year that the UN has set as a deadline for achieving its Sustainable Development Goals). In 2012 he initiated the India Inclusion Summit (indiainclusionsummit.com), an annual event in Bangalore that brings together Indian and international thought leaders and unsung heroes from the field of disability and inclusion with the aim of driving social change. IIS is entirely volunteer-driven.

With the tagline ‘Everyone is Good at Something’, IIS has become a movement involving Corporates, NGOs, Government, Schools, and Volunteers. More than 10,000 people have physically attended the annual event which has an online viewership of over 15 million. All the events are fully accessible and free.

In 2020, Ferose and photographer Vicky Roy put their heads together to conceive a photo campaign to spread awareness about disability. They decided to borrow the IIS slogan to name the campaign: Everyone is Good at Something (everyoneisgoodatsomething.com) or EGS for short. A fully accessible website was designed. Once the pandemic lockdown period was over, Vicky started his pan-Indian sojourn.

EGS features the stories of PwD across India, covering all 28 states and 8 union territories and all 21 disabilities mentioned in the RPwDA. It highlights the stories of ordinary persons with disability, particularly lesser known people from rural or remote regions. It shows them not as objects of pity but as people pursuing their simple dreams alongside their everyday struggles. The stories appear weekly, alternating between male and female subjects. The entire EGS team consists of volunteers, from design and tech to content creation.



Vicky follows each person for a whole day to observe their routine and capture them in different settings. He collects their mobile phone numbers (India is second only to China in the number of mobile phone subscribers!) and passes them on to veteran journalist and author C.K. Meena, who coordinates and edits the EGS website. She distributes these phone numbers to a group of 'writers', who are not journalists but people working in various jobs who volunteer their time, often on weekends. The writers, who are given guidelines on how to interview people, send the information they've gathered to Meena who then rewrites them for publication and conveys them to the tech team for uploading on the site and posting on social media. The stories also appear in other Indian languages – Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada – courtesy volunteer translators.

> "EGS features the stories of PwD across India, covering all 28 states and 8 union territories and all 21 disabilities mentioned in the RPwDA."

UNICEF Headquarters, New York

Human Rights Advisor Team and Universal Values Team, UN Headquarters, New York.

Shri Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice. He launched the book

The United Nations office in New Delhi held a photo exhibition, titled ‘Ability in Disability’, of 21 EGS stories each featuring one of the disabilities mentioned in the Act, from 5-7 December 2023. On 26 February 2024 the exhibition was displayed at the Mughal Gardens on the premises of the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

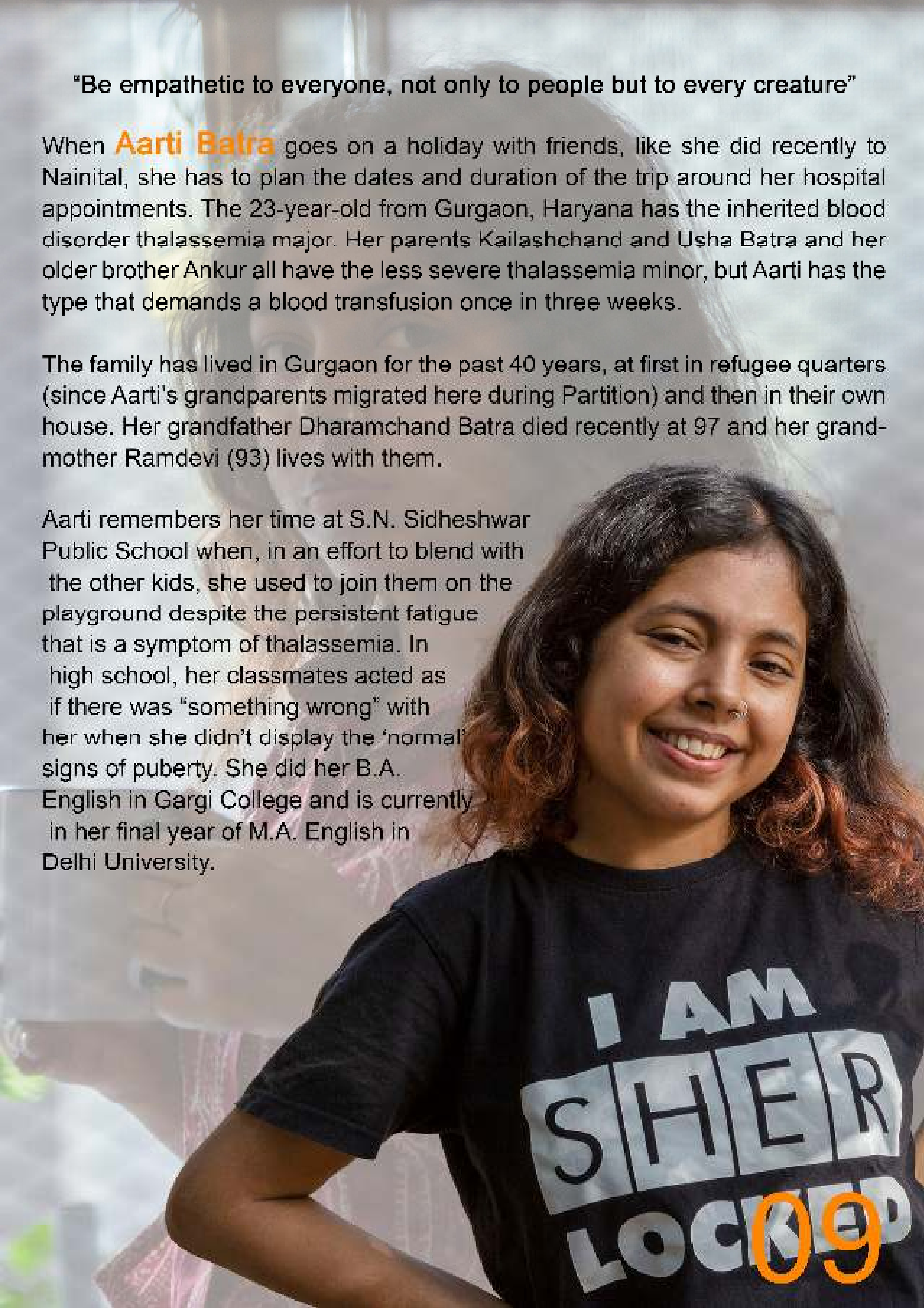
On 17 November 2024 a coffee table book of 100 selected EGS stories with accompanying photographs was launched during IIS 2024 in Bangalore.

"Be empathetic to everyone, not only to people but to every creature"

When **Aarti Batra** goes on a holiday with friends, like she did recently to Nainital, she has to plan the dates and duration of the trip around her hospital appointments. The 23-year-old from Gurgaon, Haryana has the inherited blood disorder thalassemia major. Her parents Kailashchand and Usha Batra and her older brother Ankur all have the less severe thalassemia minor, but Aarti has the type that demands a blood transfusion once in three weeks.

The family has lived in Gurgaon for the past 40 years, at first in refugee quarters (since Aarti's grandparents migrated here during Partition) and then in their own house. Her grandfather Dharamchand Batra died recently at 97 and her grandmother Ramdevi (93) lives with them.

Aarti remembers her time at S.N. Sidheshwar Public School when, in an effort to blend with the other kids, she used to join them on the playground despite the persistent fatigue that is a symptom of thalassemia. In high school, her classmates acted as if there was "something wrong" with her when she didn't display the 'normal' signs of puberty. She did her B.A. English in Gargi College and is currently in her final year of M.A. English in Delhi University.



In 2018 Aarti did an internship with The Wishing Factory, a Mumbai-based organisation dedicated to enriching the lives of young thalassemia patients. She is a recipient of the 2021 NCPEDP-Javed Abidi Fellowship on Disability, has cleared the entrance test of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai and is waiting for round two of the selection process.

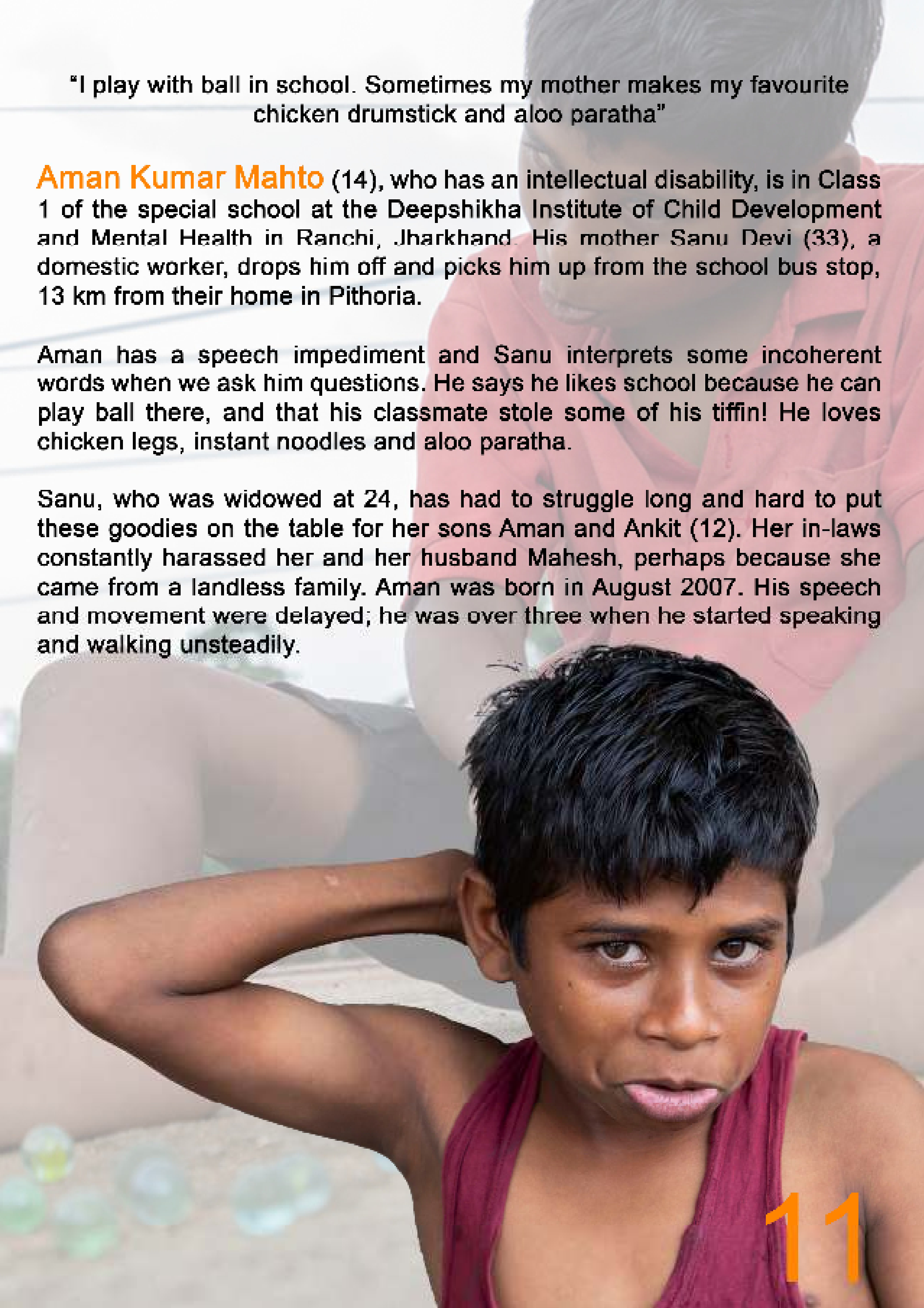
Aarti feels strongly that we in India have a long way to go in dealing with disability with sensitivity. We wouldn't be surprised to see her develop into a vocal advocate for the cause of disability rights.

"I play with ball in school. Sometimes my mother makes my favourite chicken drumstick and aloo paratha"

Aman Kumar Mahto (14), who has an intellectual disability, is in Class 1 of the special school at the Deepshikha Institute of Child Development and Mental Health in Ranchi, Jharkhand. His mother Sanu Devi (33), a domestic worker, drops him off and picks him up from the school bus stop, 13 km from their home in Pithoria.

Aman has a speech impediment and Sanu interprets some incoherent words when we ask him questions. He says he likes school because he can play ball there, and that his classmate stole some of his tiffin! He loves chicken legs, instant noodles and aloo paratha.

Sanu, who was widowed at 24, has had to struggle long and hard to put these goodies on the table for her sons Aman and Ankit (12). Her in-laws constantly harassed her and her husband Mahesh, perhaps because she came from a landless family. Aman was born in August 2007. His speech and movement were delayed; he was over three when he started speaking and walking unsteadily.



Meanwhile, battles with her in-laws continued. They finally ordered the couple out of the house. Both started working for daily wages, until Mahesh caught filariasis, a parasitic infection that makes the legs swell up enormously. His health deteriorated and he died in 2012. Sanu's siblings helped her survive. There were times when she ate one meal a day or nothing. She got a house built with a government grant, and a private loan on which she pays monthly interest. Aman's disability pension of Rs 1,000 helps lighten her financial burden and Deepshikha has waived his school fees.

Aman, who watches cartoons and plays mobile games, may not fully understand the struggle his mother goes through to cook for him the chicken he craves.

"I've never celebrated my birthday. One should celebrate each new day, since one never knows what life has in store."

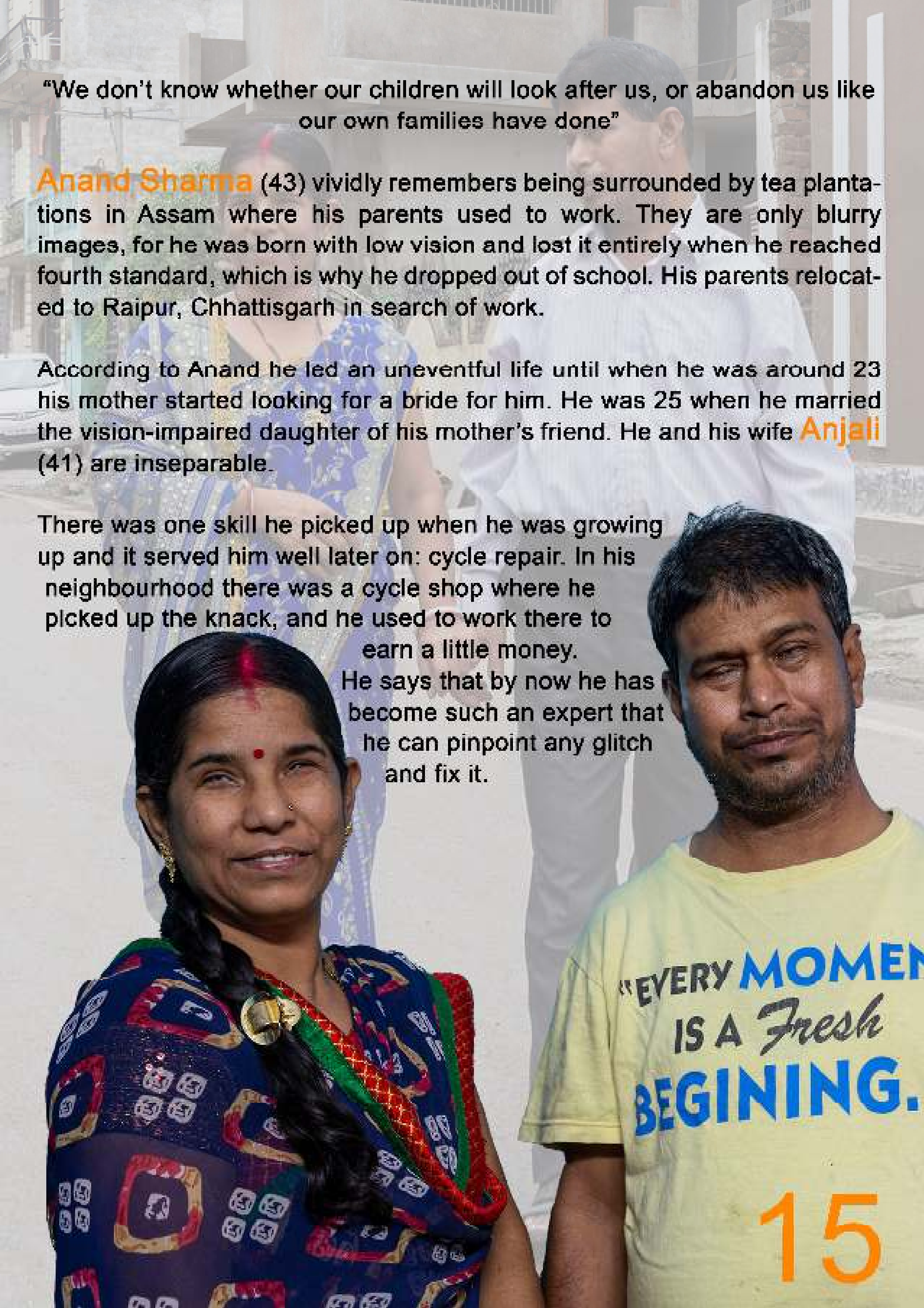
Amir Hussain Lone of Wagham village in Kashmir's Anantnag district is not sure when he was born; his guesstimate is 1989. But he is dead certain about the year he went to his father's sawmill to deliver lunch for his brother. It was a Sunday in 1997. He was playing around a mechanical saw when it snagged his jacket and chopped off both his arms.

Amir recalls his life experiences as vividly as if they'd happened yesterday. He describes how villagers left him for dead, how a neighbour approached the army camp from where the soldiers took him to a hospital in Baramullah, and how his father had to sell their land to pay for his treatment. When he emerged after years in hospital he heard villagers suggesting to his parents that they "inject him with poison, he is worthless" but his beloved grandmother Fazee (who died in 2010) nurtured him, soothed his troubled mind, and persuaded him to go to school in Marhama village.

Bit by bit Amir learnt to adapt his feet for all daily activities such as shaving, bathing, eating, drinking and writing. Bit by bit Amir learnt to adapt his feet

for all daily activities such as shaving, bathing, eating, drinking and writing. He even taught himself how to swim by imitating the ducks paddling in the Jhelum river. Watching Sachin play on TV not only made him a lifelong fan but also motivated him to try playing himself. Hours of gruelling practice paid off. Amir bowls with two toes and bats by tucking the bat between chin and shoulder. In 2016 he captained the J&K para cricket team and in 2017, won the Punjab Swabhimaan award.

When we spoke to Amir he was prepping for a match in Anantnag the following day. His dearest possession is a bat signed by Sachin and his dream is to meet his “guru”.



"We don't know whether our children will look after us, or abandon us like our own families have done"

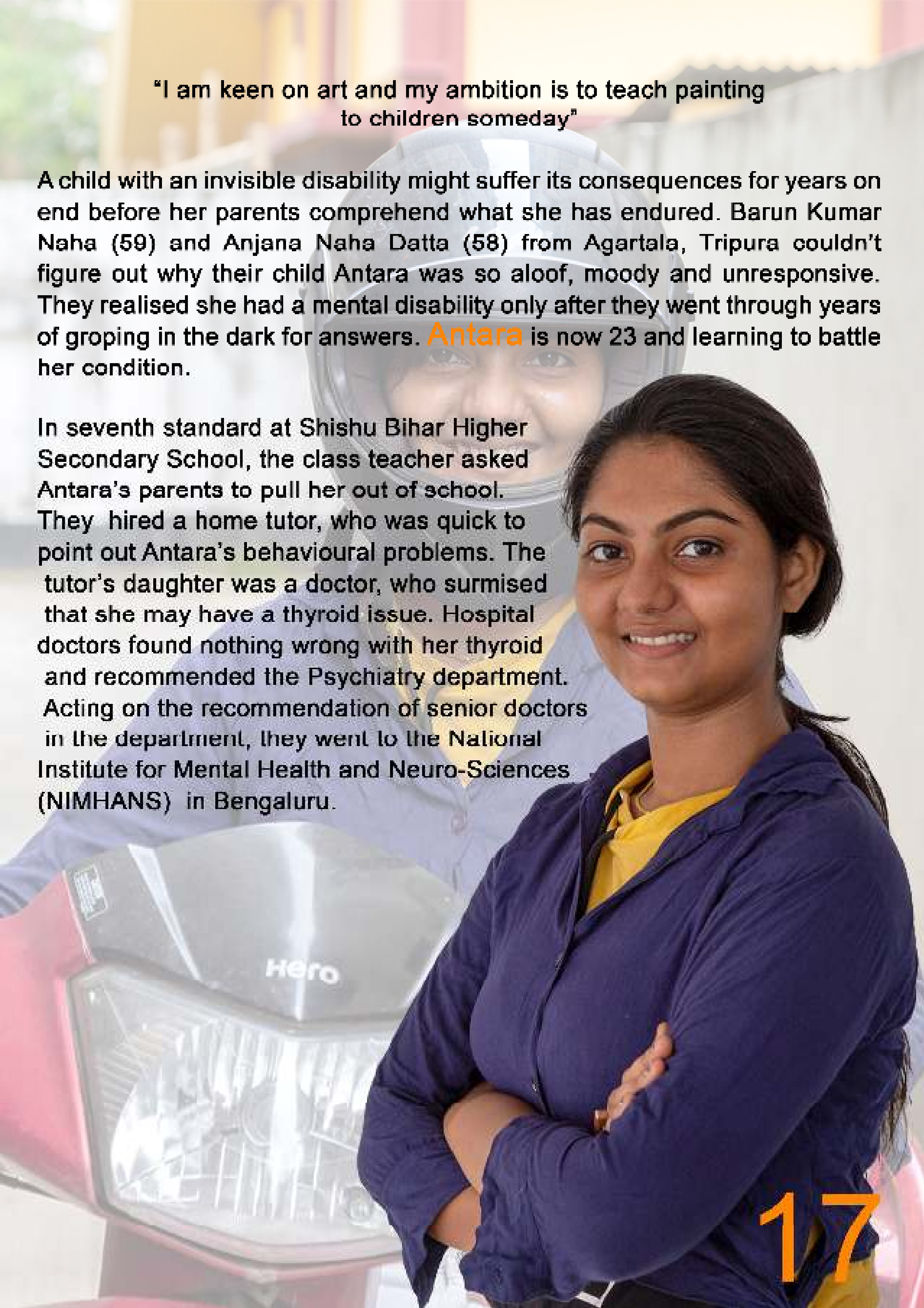
Anand Sharma (43) vividly remembers being surrounded by tea plantations in Assam where his parents used to work. They are only blurry images, for he was born with low vision and lost it entirely when he reached fourth standard, which is why he dropped out of school. His parents relocated to Raipur, Chhattisgarh in search of work.

According to Anand he led an uneventful life until when he was around 23 his mother started looking for a bride for him. He was 25 when he married the vision-impaired daughter of his mother's friend. He and his wife **Anjali** (41) are inseparable.

There was one skill he picked up when he was growing up and it served him well later on: cycle repair. In his neighbourhood there was a cycle shop where he picked up the knack, and he used to work there to earn a little money. He says that by now he has become such an expert that he can pinpoint any glitch and fix it.

He works in a cycle repair shop and the money he earns there, combined with his disability pension of around ₹500 per month, constitute his income with which he supports Anjali and their children Anushka (12) and Vinit (11).

Anjali has lost touch with her parents and Anand says that none among his three sisters and four brothers have kept in touch. Even as Anjali says that both her children are good in studies and she hopes someone will fund their education, the couple fear that they may not look after them later in life. “Since our own family members have abandoned us due to our disability, will our children also do the same?” they wonder.



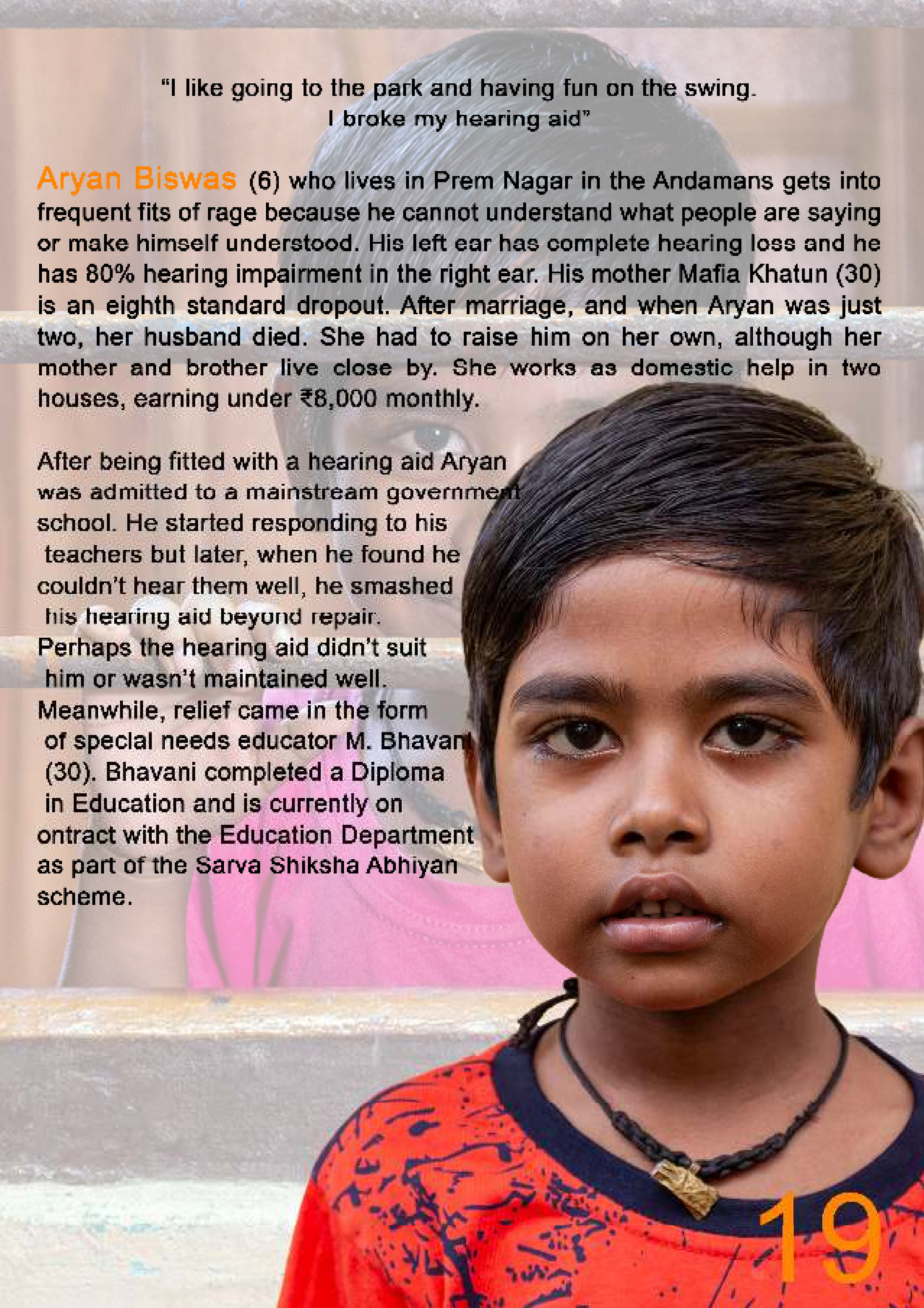
"I am keen on art and my ambition is to teach painting to children someday"

A child with an invisible disability might suffer its consequences for years on end before her parents comprehend what she has endured. Barun Kumar Naha (59) and Anjana Naha Datta (58) from Agartala, Tripura couldn't figure out why their child Antara was so aloof, moody and unresponsive. They realised she had a mental disability only after they went through years of groping in the dark for answers. Antara is now 23 and learning to battle her condition.

In seventh standard at Shishu Bihar Higher Secondary School, the class teacher asked Antara's parents to pull her out of school. They hired a home tutor, who was quick to point out Antara's behavioural problems. The tutor's daughter was a doctor, who surmised that she may have a thyroid issue. Hospital doctors found nothing wrong with her thyroid and recommended the Psychiatry department. Acting on the recommendation of senior doctors in the department, they went to the National Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru.

A new chapter opened for Antara at NIMHANS. The doctors told them that apart from the medication, she should always be kept in a happy frame of mind. That became the mantra for her family. Antara and her 15-year-old sister Ambika have a strong bond. Anjana quit her teaching job to be with Antara and motivate her. To keep her mind and body active they enrolled her in yoga, which significantly helped her, and swimming, which she likes.

Since art appealed to her greatly, they admitted her in the Government College of Art and Craft where she is in her final year. She likes to celebrate Durga Puja, loves the colour red and enjoys travelling. "I wish to teach painting to children someday," she told us.



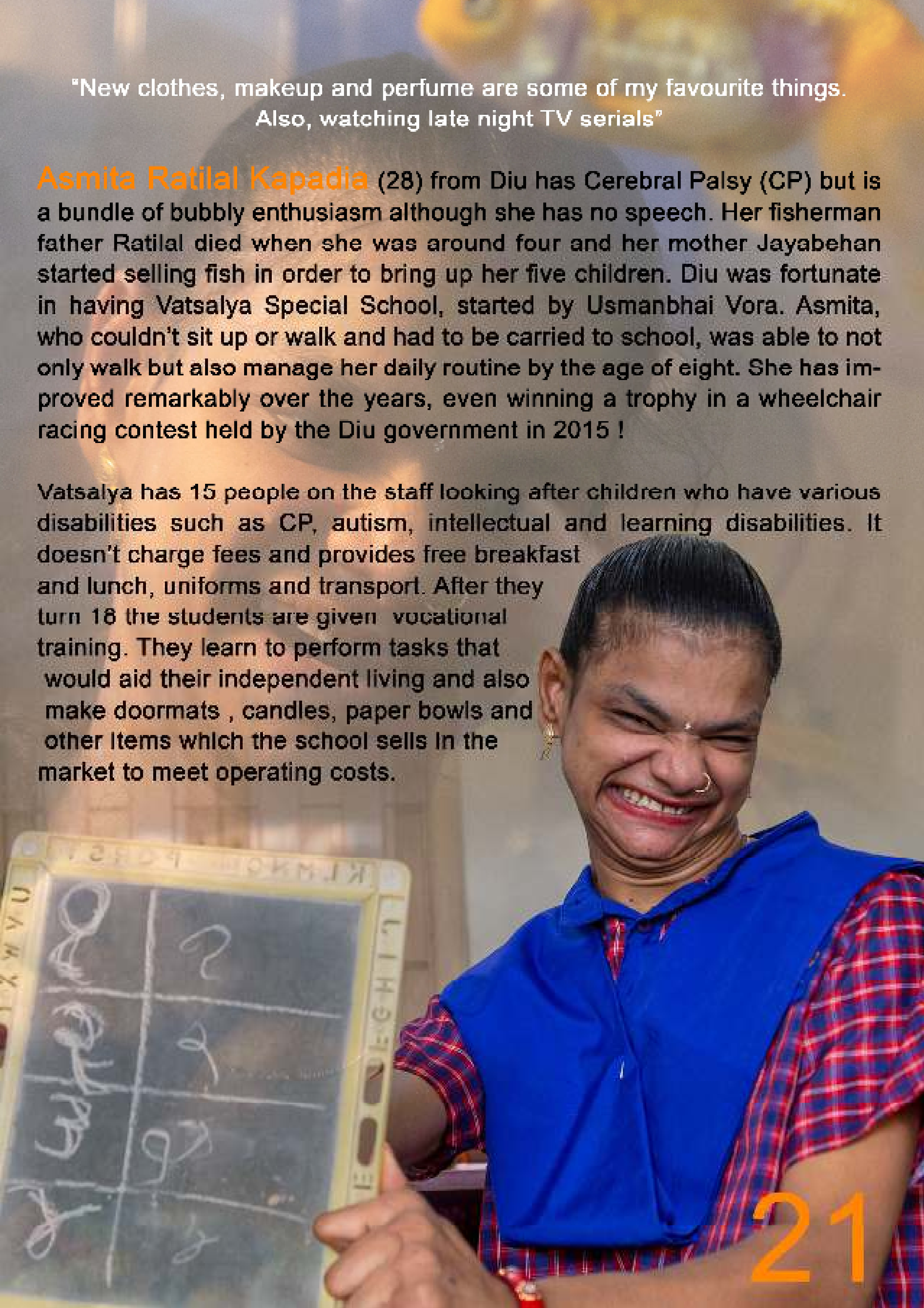
"I like going to the park and having fun on the swing.
I broke my hearing aid"

Aryan Biswas (6) who lives in Prem Nagar in the Andamans gets into frequent fits of rage because he cannot understand what people are saying or make himself understood. His left ear has complete hearing loss and he has 80% hearing impairment in the right ear. His mother Mafia Khatun (30) is an eighth standard dropout. After marriage, and when Aryan was just two, her husband died. She had to raise him on her own, although her mother and brother live close by. She works as domestic help in two houses, earning under ₹8,000 monthly.

After being fitted with a hearing aid Aryan was admitted to a mainstream governme school. He started responding to his teachers but later, when he found he couldn't hear them well, he smashed his hearing aid beyond repair. Perhaps the hearing aid didn't suit him or wasn't maintained well. Meanwhile, relief came in the form of special needs educator M. Bhavan (30). Bhavani completed a Diploma in Education and is currently on ontract with the Education Department as part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme.

Along with another teacher, she teaches 25 children with disabilities, aged 4-15 years, at a resource centre in Jungli Ghat, Port Blair. She teaches Sign Language to the Deaf and hearing impaired as well as average children.

Aryan's attendance has been irregular since Mafia cannot always find time amid work to take him. "If he has a hearing aid I can give him speech therapy," says Bhavani. "He will be able to quickly pick up because he is very young." A cochlear implant for him is beyond Mafia's means. Unless he gets a hearing aid and is assisted to keep it in good shape, he cannot get the benefit of a regular school education.



> "New clothes, makeup and perfume are some of my favourite things. Also, watching late night TV serials"

Asmita Ratilal Kapadia (28) from Diu has Cerebral Palsy (CP) but is a bundle of bubbly enthusiasm although she has no speech. Her fisherman father Ratilal died when she was around four and her mother Jayabehan started selling fish in order to bring up her five children. Diu was fortunate in having Vatsalya Special School, started by Usmanbhai Vora. Asmita, who couldn't sit up or walk and had to be carried to school, was able to not only walk but also manage her daily routine by the age of eight. She has improved remarkably over the years, even winning a trophy in a wheelchair racing contest held by the Diu government in 2015 !

Vatsalya has 15 people on the staff looking after children who have various disabilities such as CP, autism, intellectual and learning disabilities. It doesn't charge fees and provides free breakfast and lunch, uniforms and transport. After they turn 18 the students are given vocational training. They learn to perform tasks that would aid their independent living and also make doormats , candles, paper bowls and other items which the school sells in the market to meet operating costs.

"Usmanbhai takes care of them as if they are his own children," said Jayabehan, speaking through a local interpreter Nilesh who translated from Gujarati.

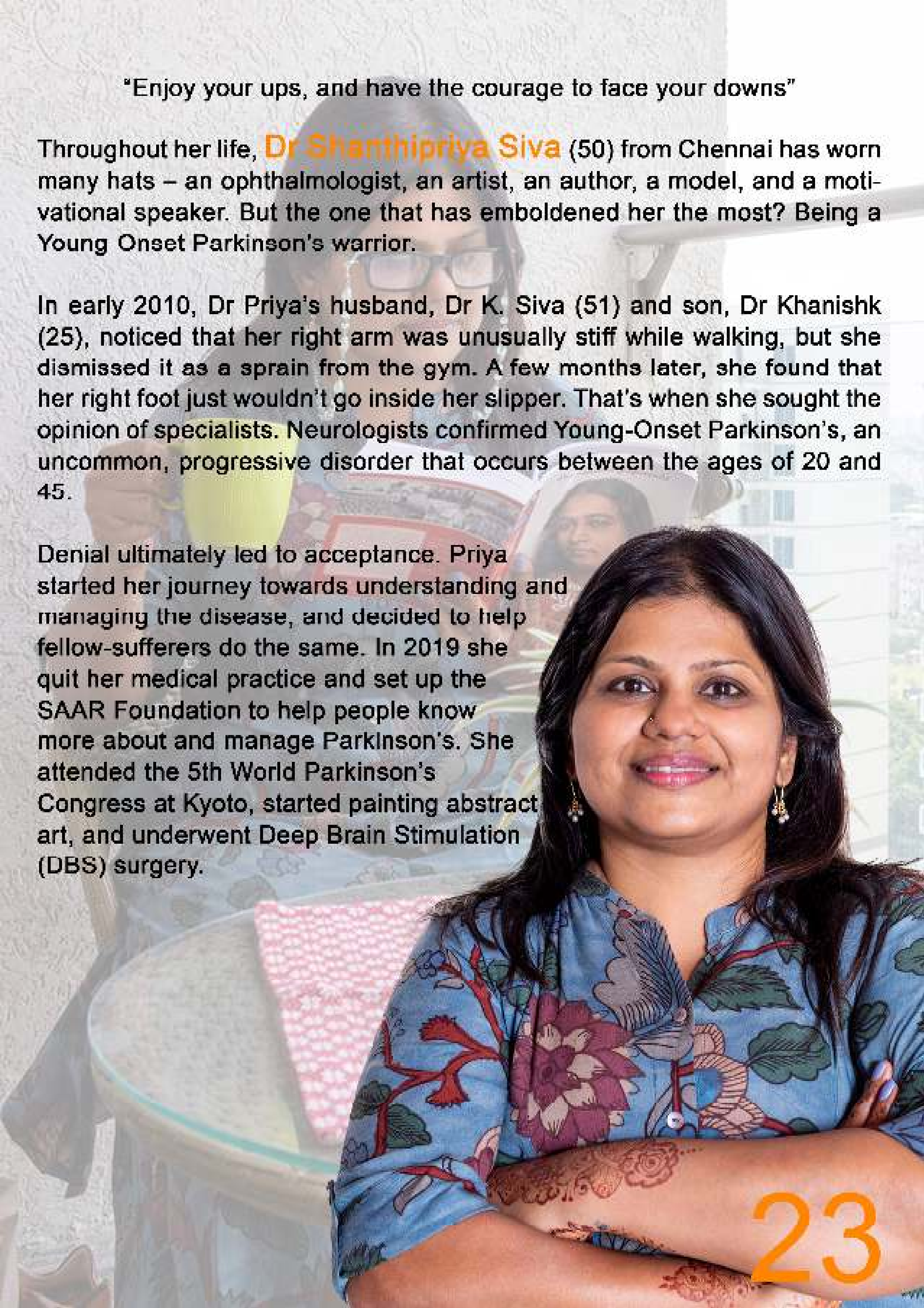
Physiotherapy exercises are an intrinsic part of Asmita's regimen and her younger brother Manish often assists her in doing them. She is fond of dressing up and wearing makeup and perfume. In her spare time she mingles with neighbours, plays with their children, plays games on her mother's mobile and watches Star Plus TV serials. She loves to travel and has visited all the popular tourist spots in Gujarat – the Statue of Unity is next on her list.

"Enjoy your ups, and have the courage to face your downs"

Throughout her life, **Dr Shanthipriya Siva** (50) from Chennai has worn many hats – an ophthalmologist, an artist, an author, a model, and a motivational speaker. But the one that has emboldened her the most? Being a Young Onset Parkinson's warrior.

In early 2010, Dr Priya's husband, Dr K. Siva (51) and son, Dr Khanishk (25), noticed that her right arm was unusually stiff while walking, but she dismissed it as a sprain from the gym. A few months later, she found that her right foot just wouldn't go inside her slipper. That's when she sought the opinion of specialists. Neurologists confirmed Young-Onset Parkinson's, an uncommon, progressive disorder that occurs between the ages of 20 and 45.

Denial ultimately led to acceptance. Priya started her journey towards understanding and managing the disease, and decided to help fellow-sufferers do the same. In 2019 she quit her medical practice and set up the SAAR Foundation to help people know more about and manage Parkinson's. She attended the 5th World Parkinson's Congress at Kyoto, started painting abstract art, and underwent Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery.



DBS helped control the symptoms and reduce the medication, and also led to compulsive behaviour: she completed a new artwork every other day and started to write. Her painting, ‘Meraki’, was selected for the London Art Biennale in July 2023. Last year, she went on an inclusive trek up the Meesapulimala peak in Kerala, the second highest in the Western Ghats. Priya has now started working on her book, ‘Living Well with Parkinson’s’, to help persons with Parkinson’s and their caregivers cope with the disease. “I don’t think that I’m disabled,” she says. “Parkinson’s has made me an artist, an author. It made me a better person.”

“I shave in front of a mirror although I can’t see it”

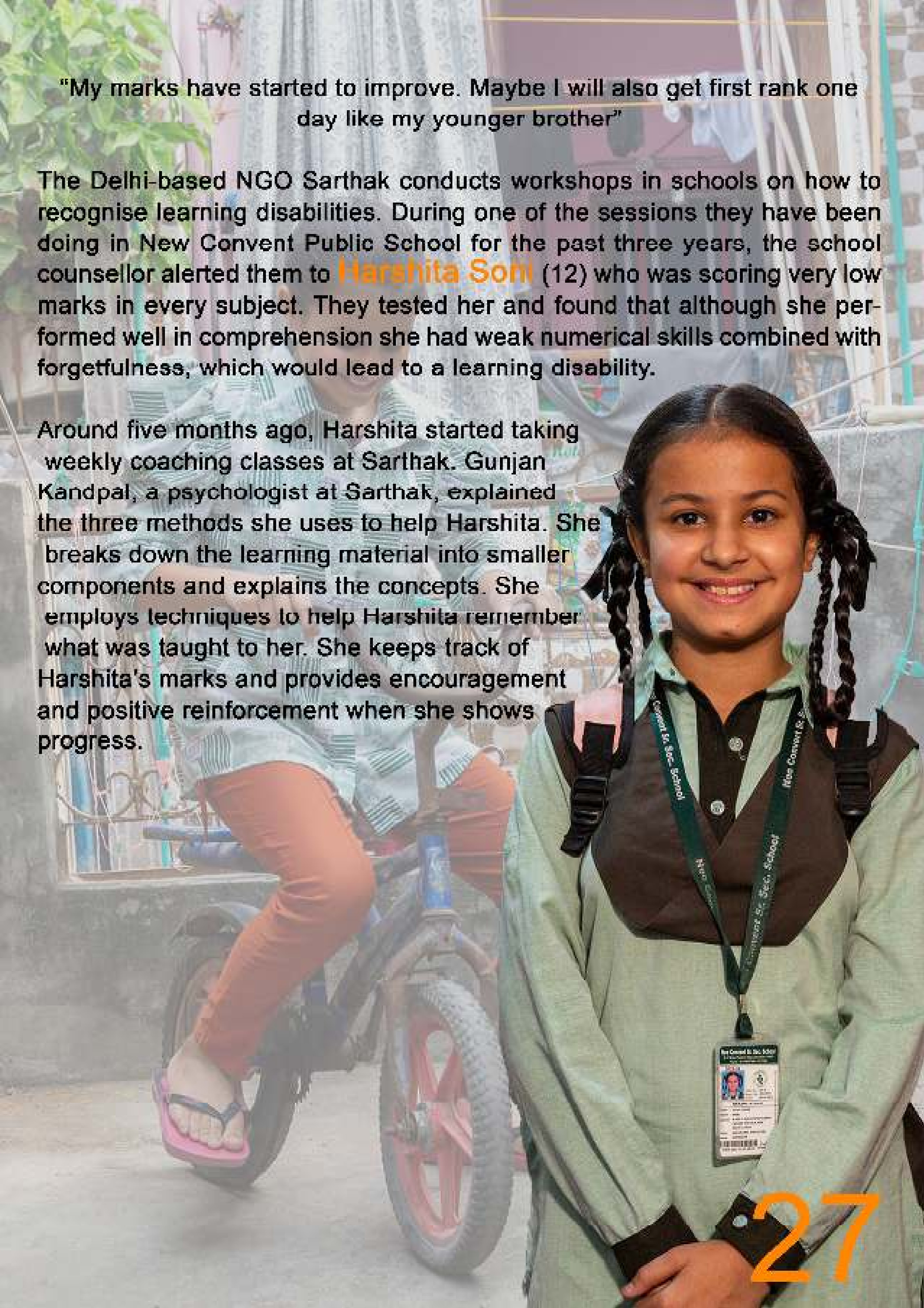
Gobinda Majumdar of Chhaygaon likes to walk to his favourite tea stall 4 km from home and buy sweets for his nieces on his way back. It’s nothing unusual, except that he happens to be deafblind and mute.

The 37-year-old from Kamrup district in Assam knows the geography of his village like the back of his hand — the hand he uses for tactile signing, his sole means of communication. Deaf from birth, he was two when he lost his eyesight from a Rubella infection, limiting his memory of the world to whatever he saw till that age. He was fortunate in that Sparsh, a unit of his school Shishu Sarothi in Guwahati, is the Deafblind regional resource centre for the north eastern states. His teacher Mehbubar Rahman was the interpreter for this interview.

Gobinda, the eldest of five siblings, is fiercely independent although he stays with his mother and married brother. His father, who died seven years ago, taught him all the agricultural work on the family’s two-acre farm. He harvests paddy and mustard and manages the cattle. Using raw material sourced from the farm he manufactures bamboo doors and makes jute rope and coconut leaf brooms that he sells in the market.

Gobinda keeps his room spick and span. He prefers vegetarian food. He says he is scared of “deep water” and dislikes traffic. He always asks any new visitor, “Are you married?” He is eager to tie the knot, and says if he had Rs 2 lakh he could “open a shop selling puja items” so that he can support a family.

When photographer Vicky Roy visited, Gobinda fingered the shape of his camera. Click! He snapped a picture. Lively, curious, resourceful — that’s Gobinda for you.



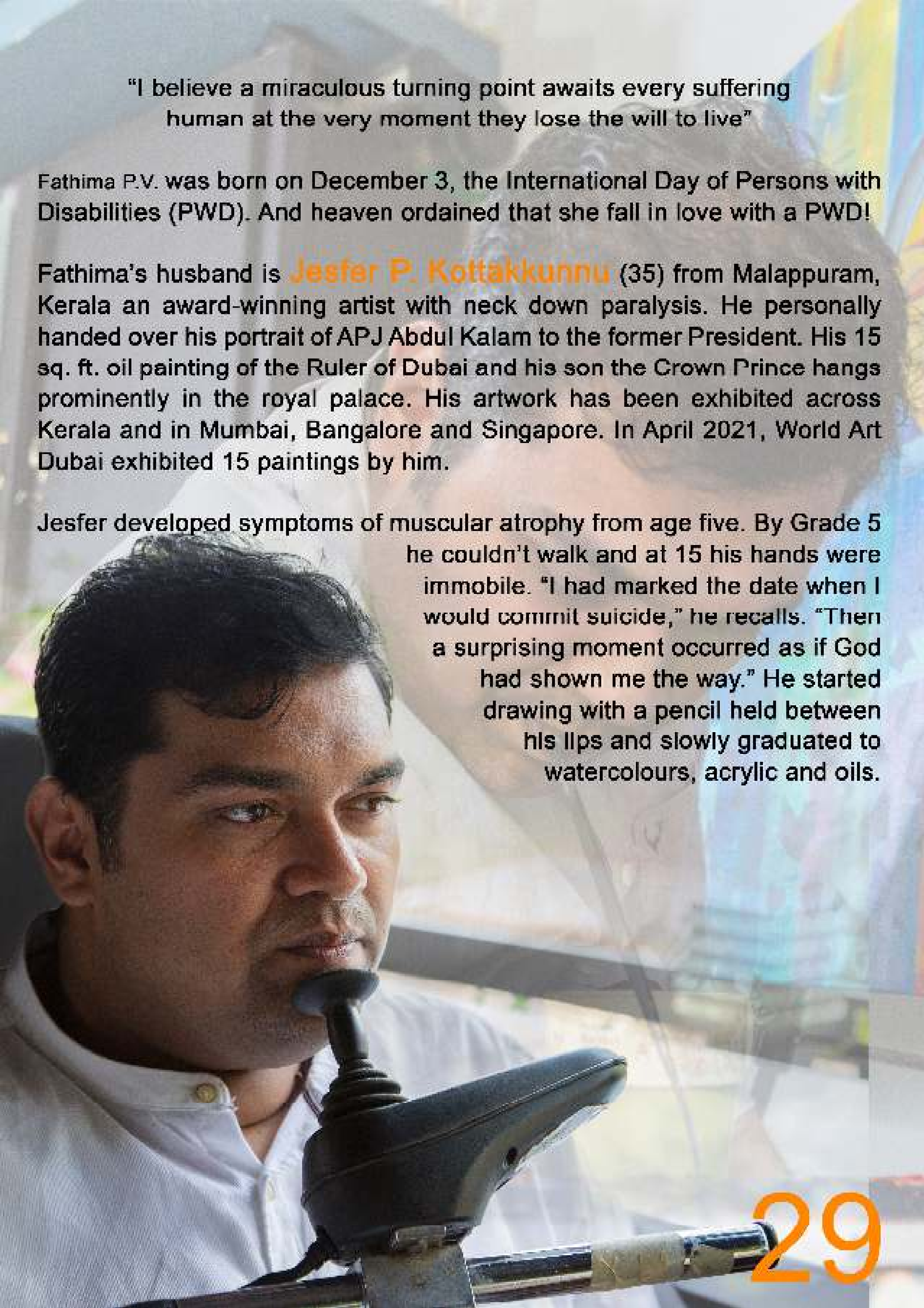
> “My marks have started to improve. Maybe I will also get first rank one day like my younger brother”

The Delhi-based NGO Sarthak conducts workshops in schools on how to recognise learning disabilities. During one of the sessions they have been doing in New Convent Public School for the past three years, the school counsellor alerted them to Harshita Soni (12) who was scoring very low marks in every subject. They tested her and found that although she performed well in comprehension she had weak numerical skills combined with forgetfulness, which would lead to a learning disability.

Around five months ago, Harshita started taking weekly coaching classes at Sarthak. Gunjan Kandpal, a psychologist at Sarthak, explained the three methods she uses to help Harshita. She breaks down the learning material into smaller components and explains the concepts. She employs techniques to help Harshita remember what was taught to her. She keeps track of Harshita’s marks and provides encouragement and positive reinforcement when she shows progress.

Harshita's father Vijay Kumar (42) had tears in his eyes when he saw his daughter's marks begin to improve. "At first I couldn't understand what was happening to her," he said. "The teacher of every subject – Maths, Hindi, English, Social Studies – would send notes home, complaining that she was not studying well. But now, no more complaint notes!"

Vijay is a welder who runs a two-wheeler and autorickshaw repair shop. He and his wife Annu (38) also have a son, Aryan Kumar Soni (8), who is a class topper. At home, Harshita likes to listen to music, watch TV, especially the Kapil Sharma comedy show, and YouTube videos, especially vlogs about drawing – something that she enjoys doing. Her best friend in school is Jaspreet. Harshita is confident that she will also get good marks like her brother and make her parents proud one day.



"I believe a miraculous turning point awaits every suffering human at the very moment they lose the will to live"

Fathima P.V. was born on December 3, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PWD). And heaven ordained that she fall in love with a PWD!

Fathima's husband is **Jesfer P. Kottakkunnu** (35) from Malappuram, Kerala an award-winning artist with neck down paralysis. He personally handed over his portrait of APJ Abdul Kalam to the former President. His 15 sq. ft. oil painting of the Ruler of Dubai and his son the Crown Prince hangs prominently in the royal palace. His artwork has been exhibited across Kerala and in Mumbai, Bangalore and Singapore. In April 2021, World Art Dubai exhibited 15 paintings by him.

Jesfer developed symptoms of muscular atrophy from age five. By Grade 5 he couldn't walk and at 15 his hands were immobile. "I had marked the date when I would commit suicide," he recalls. "Then a surprising moment occurred as if God had shown me the way." He started drawing with a pencil held between his lips and slowly graduated to watercolours, acrylic and oils.

With activist Raees Hidaya and others, Jesfer co-founded Green Palliative, an NGO that addresses disability and social concerns. Fathima, a Malayali raised in Oman, used to respond to Jesfer's posts on Green Palliative's social media group. The two formed a personal connection, and when Jesfer proposed a year later she readily accepted although he had described his disability in elaborate detail.

In November 2015 Fathima flew to Calicut. At the airport, Jesfer met his bride for the first time! "We got married on November 30 and Fathima actively participated in the December 3 programmes." Their son Kenzal Rumi was born in 2018. One imagines an older Kenzal's friends listening spellbound as he describes his unusual parents and the poetry of their lives.

"Do your best. God will do the rest"

In the voice of someone who has successfully passed an exam, **Patrick D'Souza** (40) from Goa jovially says he scored 98. It is the percentage on his disability certificate! He has Muscular Dystrophy (MD). His hands still function partially but not the rest of his body. Currently an upper division clerk of the Directorate of Official Language, Patrick aims to join the civil service.

Born in Margao, Patrick was 10 when his father died; his mother Julie D'Souza, a government school teacher, has been his motivating spirit ever since. He was 14 when a doctor at Goa Medical College revealed that he had MD. At first his family didn't realise the gravity of the disorder. After all, he was still active in sports: he loved to play cricket, football, hockey and table tennis. His muscle weakness and loss of body mass increased inch by inch over the years.

After tenth grade he wanted to do a diploma course in Hotel Management but during his viva, an examiner noticed he had a problem with his legs and suggested that a deskbound job would be more appropriate. Disheartened, Patrick completed his 12th grade in Commerce, lost interest in studies, learnt typing and computer, worked in a few jobs for low salaries and finally did his graduation through a correspondence course.

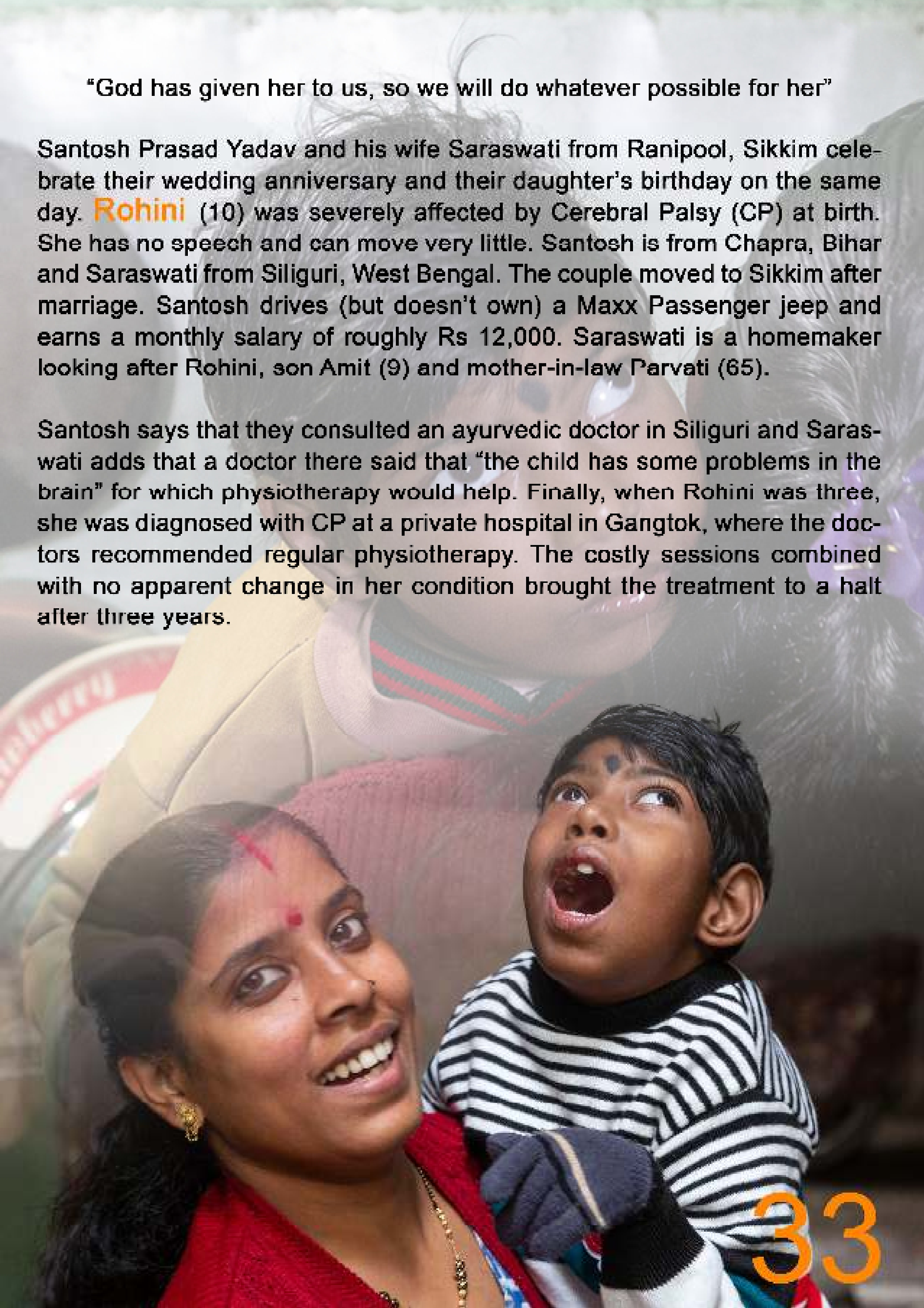
Patrick attended 20-25 interviews for government jobs reserved for the disabled and finally succeeded only in 2008. He started using a wheelchair in September 2012 but did not let it impede his office duties. He has now employed a fulltime caregiver and lives in government quarters in Panjim.

Patrick's passion for cooking remains alive. He delights in preparing various meat dishes including Goan specialties like pork vindaloo and chicken cafreal on his weekend visits to his home in Margao.

“God has given her to us, so we will do whatever possible for her”

Santosh Prasad Yadav and his wife Saraswati from Ranipool, Sikkim celebrate their wedding anniversary and their daughter’s birthday on the same day. **Rohini** (10) was severely affected by Cerebral Palsy (CP) at birth. She has no speech and can move very little. Santosh is from Chapra, Bihar and Saraswati from Siliguri, West Bengal. The couple moved to Sikkim after marriage. Santosh drives (but doesn’t own) a Maxx Passenger jeep and earns a monthly salary of roughly Rs 12,000. Saraswati is a homemaker looking after Rohini, son Amit (9) and mother-in-law Parvati (65).

Santosh says that they consulted an ayurvedic doctor in Siliguri and Saraswati adds that a doctor there said that “the child has some problems in the brain” for which physiotherapy would help. Finally, when Rohini was three, she was diagnosed with CP at a private hospital in Gangtok, where the doctors recommended regular physiotherapy. The costly sessions combined with no apparent change in her condition brought the treatment to a halt after three years.



In 2017 Rohini came to the notice of Ambika Chhetri, who is a special educator in the state government's education department. Entirely through her consistent efforts, Rohini got a disability card, a free wheelchair, and free physiotherapy sessions at the government-run Composite Regional Centre (CRC). However, the lone physiotherapist at CRC left four months ago and has not been replaced.

Ambika also taught the parents how to communicate with Rohini and how to teach her to express her physical needs through sounds and gestures. Rohini is completely dependent on her mother for all her needs. Santosh says, "God has given her to us, so we will take care of her till the end."

> “I don’t want to be pitied for being disabled.
> I want to be a role model for others”

Just 22, **Shabnam Khan** has endured heartlessness enough for two lifetimes. It all started with a leprosy diagnosis when she was in Grade 9 when she found she could not hold anything in her hands as they were shaking so badly. The disease caused both her hands to be disfigured. The resultant stigma marred her school life and she withdrew into herself, finding comfort in just a few friends. What she did have was her teachers’ support, inspiring her to rise above her situation.

By the time treatment began her condition had aggravated greatly. Because she had lost sensation in her extremities she suffered burns on her right hand, destroying her index finger, on the eve of her Grade 10 exams. With great difficulty, without using her index finger, she wrote her exams. Her father, Islam Khan, who is a property agent, pressured her to give up studies after school but she devised methods to secretly attend college and is now the first graduate in her family. She is currently pursuing an MA in political science.

A friend told her about an NGO, Sarthak, which provides vocational courses and helps with job placement. Two months ago, she enrolled with them and is currently attending classes that teach skill development, retail marketing, communication, etc. She is also preparing for public service exams so that she can live an independent life.

Shabnam likes to draw and watch movies or listen to music on her phone. “I don’t want to marry now; I first want to stand on my feet,” she says. “I want people to look at me and say, ‘Look at her, despite her condition, see what she has managed to achieve.’ I want to be a role model for others.”

> “Parents of visually impaired children should not hold them back. They should support their children by utilising the opportunities the government provides”

When **Shekhar Naik** (36) was a little boy growing up in Shivamogga, Karnataka, he wasn’t included in games because he was born blind. But he grew up to excel in a game that would win him the national award – cricket.

Shekhar’s father Lachma Naik was an agricultural worker. His blindness is hereditary: his mother Jamila Bai was blind and so were her parents and many of her other relatives. When he was eight, Shekhar had a fall and was taken to a health centre. The doctor there mentioned that it might be possible to partially recover his vision. His parents immediately brought him to Bengaluru where, after an operation, his right eye acquired 40 per cent vision.

Shekhar studied in Sri Sharada Devi Andhara Vikasa Kendra, a centre for the blind that imparts free education and gives prominence to sports and cultural activities. He learnt to play the veena and perform Yakshagana, a traditional theatre form of coastal Karnataka. But cricket was to remain his driving force. The Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI), an initiative of Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled, spotted his talent. His cricketing prowess progressed step by step – playing in the state blind cricket team, then the national team, winning ‘Man of the Match’, then ‘Man of the Series’, captaining the Indian team, and finally garnering the coveted Padma Shree award.

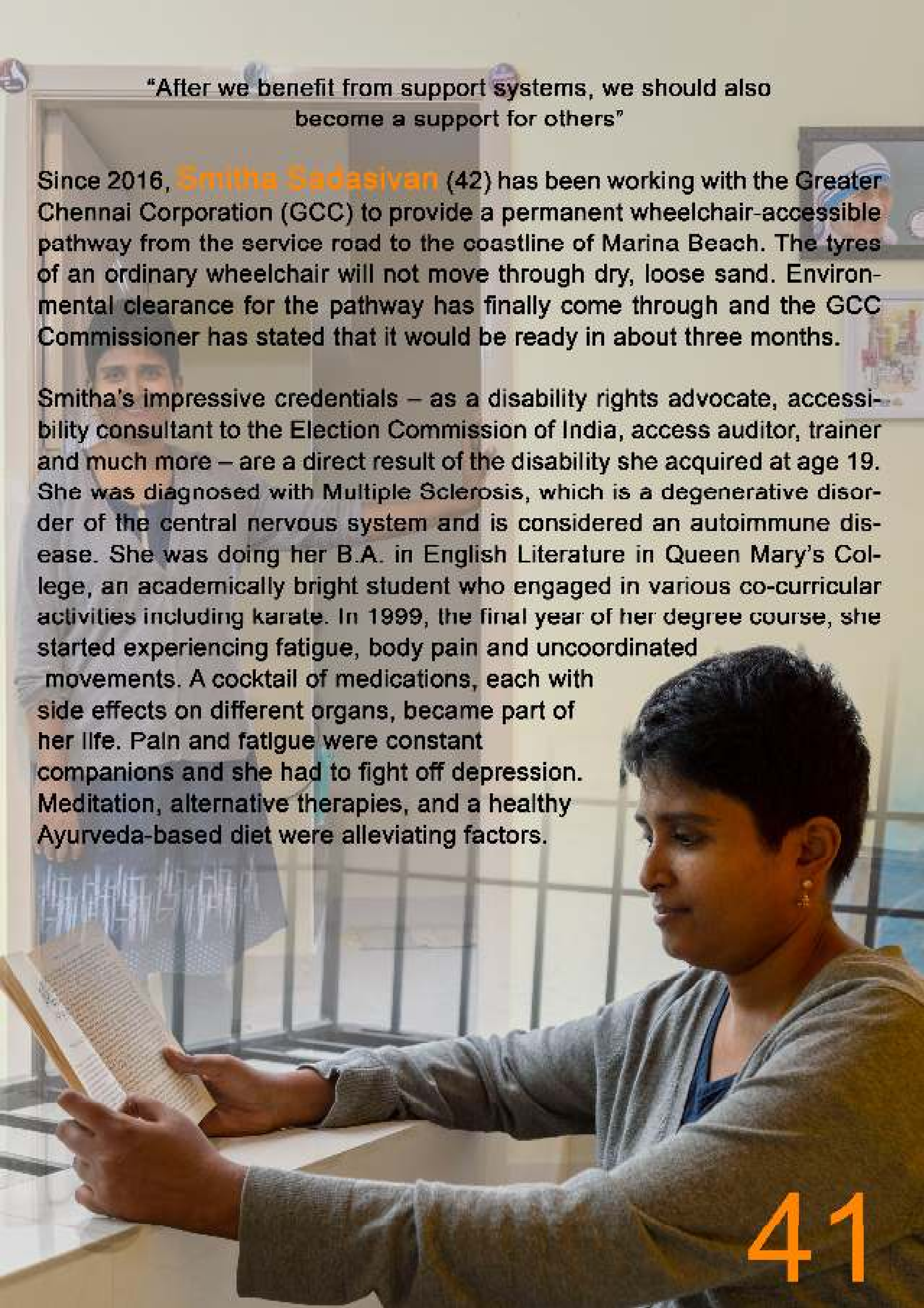
Shekhar married Roopa K.C. while she was working at Samarthanam. They have two daughters: Poorvika (12) and Sanvika (7). In 2019 he started the Shekhar Naik Foundation to support upcoming blind cricketers. Shekhar informs us that he expects to lose his vision completely due to retinal pigmentation. But he adds: “Disability is not a weakness. It is one’s strength.

"I go to the gym with my father every day. And I love to sing"

It was quite a shock for Nelson Singh to discover via his adolescent son Shimon's blood test that he himself was a carrier of the sickle cell gene. Fortunately for both father and son it was only the Sickle Cell Trait (SCT) that got passed on, not Sickle Cell Disease (SCD), a group of inherited red blood cell disorders that includes Sickle Cell Anemia. SCA is incurable and can cause episodes of acute pain besides other complications.

Nelson Singh (58) and his wife Reeta Singh (54) who are both in government service have been living in Bhopal with their two sons Sharon (29) and Shimon (22) for the past 30 years. After a simple blood test confirmed that Shimon had SCT, the parents were tested as well. Nelson carried the gene, which meant there was a 50 per cent chance of a child inheriting it. "The doctor said that SCT would not stop Shimon from leading a full life, and he pointed to me as an example," says Nelson. "I hadn't even been aware my entire life that I carried this gene!"

Reeta says that Shimon is extremely disciplined and likes following a routine. He has an excellent memory, and his parents narrate numerous instances of his powers of recollection. Vehicle numbers and phone numbers are instantly and automatically imprinted in his brain. While Sharon is Assistant Professor in Jagran Lakecity University, Shimon has finished his B.A. and his parents have enrolled him in a B.Ed course. Shimon goes to the gym with his father every day, keeps up with news through the newspaper and TV, and loves to sing. Shimon says that although he has friends, "my dad is my best friend".



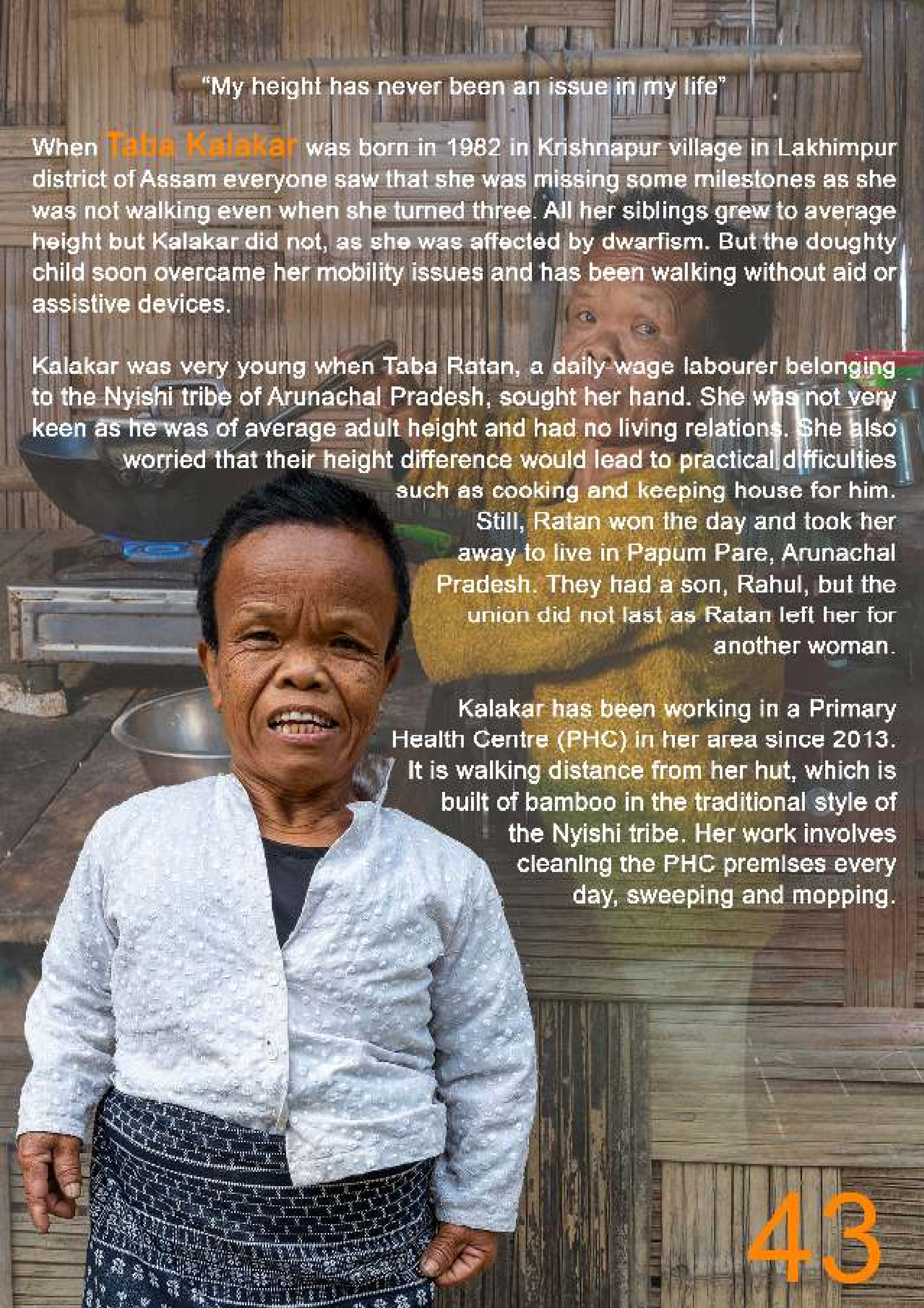
“After we benefit from support systems, we should also become a support for others”

Since 2016, **Smitha Sadasivan** (42) has been working with the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) to provide a permanent wheelchair-accessible pathway from the service road to the coastline of Marina Beach. The tyres of an ordinary wheelchair will not move through dry, loose sand. Environmental clearance for the pathway has finally come through and the GCC Commissioner has stated that it would be ready in about three months.

Smitha’s impressive credentials – as a disability rights advocate, accessibility consultant to the Election Commission of India, access auditor, trainer and much more – are a direct result of the disability she acquired at age 19. She was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, which is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system and is considered an autoimmune disease. She was doing her B.A. in English Literature in Queen Mary’s College, an academically bright student who engaged in various co-curricular activities including karate. In 1999, the final year of her degree course, she started experiencing fatigue, body pain and uncoordinated movements. A cocktail of medications, each with side effects on different organs, became part of her life. Pain and fatigue were constant companions and she had to fight off depression. Meditation, alternative therapies, and a healthy Ayurveda-based diet were alleviating factors.

Smitha finally graduated in 2003 and later did her Masters and M. Phil in Psychology. She got a job at Vidya Sagar, a resource centre for persons with disabilities, where she was coordinator of the disability legislation unit till 2017; she is now a member of their independent living project, Trust Enabled Decisions and Support Systems.

Over the past 19 years Smitha has expanded her horizons and worked in diverse areas of disability. Accessibility and inclusion are the main planks of her activism, and what she hopes our country will eventually embrace.



“My height has never been an issue in my life”

When **Taba Kalakar** was born in 1982 in Krishnapur village in Lakhimpur district of Assam everyone saw that she was missing some milestones as she was not walking even when she turned three. All her siblings grew to average height but Kalakar did not, as she was affected by dwarfism. But the doughty child soon overcame her mobility issues and has been walking without aid or assistive devices.

Kalakar was very young when Taba Ratan, a daily-wage labourer belonging to the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, sought her hand. She was not very keen as he was of average adult height and had no living relations. She also worried that their height difference would lead to practical difficulties such as cooking and keeping house for him. Still, Ratan won the day and took her away to live in Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh. They had a son, Rahul, but the union did not last as Ratan left her for another woman.

Kalakar has been working in a Primary Health Centre (PHC) in her area since 2013. It is walking distance from her hut, which is built of bamboo in the traditional style of the Nyishi tribe. Her work involves cleaning the PHC premises every day, sweeping and mopping.

When she has to reach objects at a height, the nurses help her, she says. On Tuesdays, when the PHC conducts vaccination for children, she has to stay there the whole day as she has to clean up after the children. She also has to take photos of each child who comes for vaccination there and submit it to the doctor in charge at the end of the day. She gets a monthly salary of ₹10,000.

"Never look back. If you look back you will get stuck and you won't be able to move forward"

The women who run Sheroes' Hangout Café are as vibrant as its décor. "My beauty is my smile" says the slogan on their T-shirts. The back reads: "Stop acid attacks."

Of the 10 female staff who work here in shifts, the five we spoke to were all teenagers from poor families when they were attacked with acid. Rukaiya Khathun (37) who hails from Aligarh had dreamt of becoming a fashion designer. When she was 14 her sister's brother-in-law claimed he wanted to marry her and when he was rejected he poured acid on her. Dolly (20) had wanted to be a doctor; she was 13 when she was attacked. Roopa (27) was 14 when her stepmother poured acid on her face. Madhu (40) was 17 when a man whose marriage proposal she rejected attacked her. Bala Prajapati (26) from Bijnor was 17 when her mother spurned a man who lusted after her; he wreaked vengeance by attacking Bala.

Besides the years of isolation and depression they went through, most of them got no justice or compensation, and multiple plastic surgeries were beyond their reach. The restaurant, started by Alok Dixit who set up the Chhanv Foundation, gave them a new lease of life.

"I used to hide my face behind a burqa," says Rukaiya, "but now I am comfortable in jeans and T-shirt." She would like to work in the café kitchen someday. Roopa wants to design and sell clothes online, while Dolly would like to open a dance academy. Madhu is proficient on the computer and is fascinated with video editing (the Foundation trained the women in various skills during the lockdown).

Bala speaks for all the Sheroes when she says, "Life does not stop just because our faces are scarred."

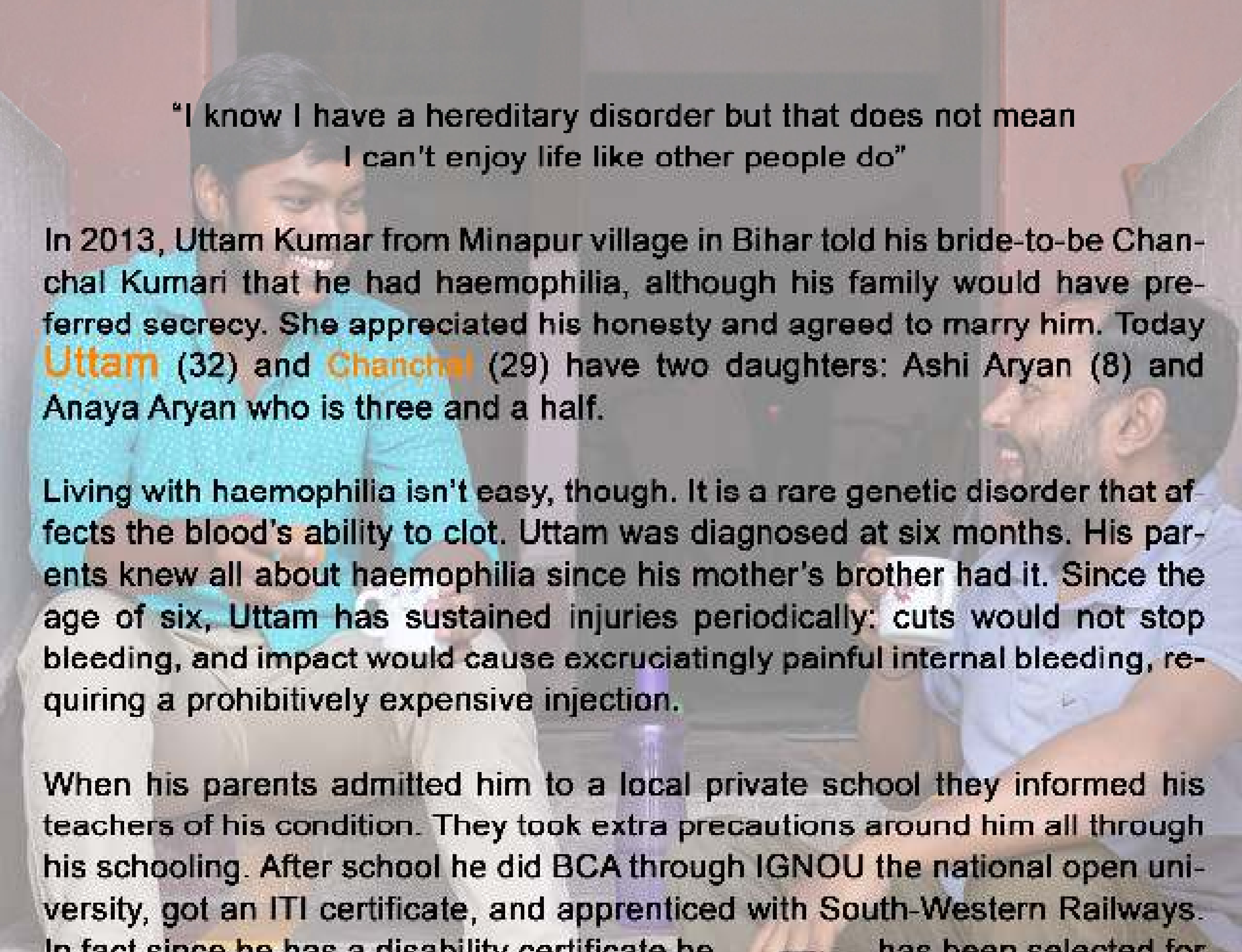
"I love Bollywood songs and have been practising the keyboard for two years"

Tribidya Sengupta (26) cannot tell the time yet but is good at art and music. It has been a long journey for this young man and his family from Agartala, Tripura. He was diagnosed with both ADHD as well as autism as a toddler. With no resources to help their child, and mainstream schools unable to help, the parents took it upon themselves to start a special school in their hometown, together with some other parents of special-needs children.

They founded the Vidya Welfare Society in Agartala and started a school, Vidya, in 2004. Vidya, which has three special educators, focuses on holistic development and trains the children in life skills through dance, music, arts and crafts. It has 22 students, most of whom are boys. Children up to the age of 18 get schooling but those over 18 are taught vocational courses related to textiles, jewellery making, art and crafts. The society is supported by donations from parents and well-wishers. Attempts to secure government assistance have thus far been unsuccessful.

Tribidya has thrived under parental care and enjoys going out and travelling. He loves to listen to music and is entranced by Bollywood songs. *Main koi aisa geet gaoon aur aarzoo agar tum kaho* is his favourite. His favourite dishes are aloo bhajaa (fried potatoes) and egg curry.

While the family has faced callousness from society in general, Ratnabali's colleagues are very supportive, including the principal. If she requires time off, she gets it though she makes it clear she does not want to take advantage of her circumstances. Tribidya's condition inspired his maternal aunt, Kathakali, to do a special education course at the National Institute of Mental Health in Kolkata; she now works at the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy.



> "I know I have a hereditary disorder but that does not mean I can't enjoy life like other people do"

In 2013, Uttam Kumar from Minapur village in Bihar told his bride-to-be Chanchal Kumari that he had haemophilia, although his family would have preferred secrecy. She appreciated his honesty and agreed to marry him. Today **Uttam** (32) and **Chanchal** (29) have two daughters: Ashi Aryan (8) and Anaya Aryan who is three and a half.

Living with haemophilia isn't easy, though. It is a rare genetic disorder that affects the blood's ability to clot. Uttam was diagnosed at six months. His parents knew all about haemophilia since his mother's brother had it. Since the age of six, Uttam has sustained injuries periodically: cuts would not stop bleeding, and impact would cause excruciatingly painful internal bleeding, requiring a prohibitively expensive injection.

When his parents admitted him to a local private school they informed his teachers of his condition. They took extra precautions around him all through his schooling. After school he did BCA through IGNOU the national open university, got an ITI certificate, and apprenticed with South-Western Railways. In fact since he has a disability certificate he has been selected for a Railways job but he was apparently told that he would be appointed only after they created a special post for him, considering his condition.

Meanwhile, Uttam has created a WhatsApp group called “Appreciate” for people with haemophilia. Since there is very little knowledge about the disorder he wants to spread awareness, provide help and information, and motivate others with haemophilia by using his own experiences (his family tree has members living with haemophilia). He rides a motorbike despite having trouble bending his knees, loves travel, partying, feasting, and listening to music. “I know I have a hereditary disorder but that does not mean I can’t enjoy life like other people do,” he says.

“After fading everything love remains”

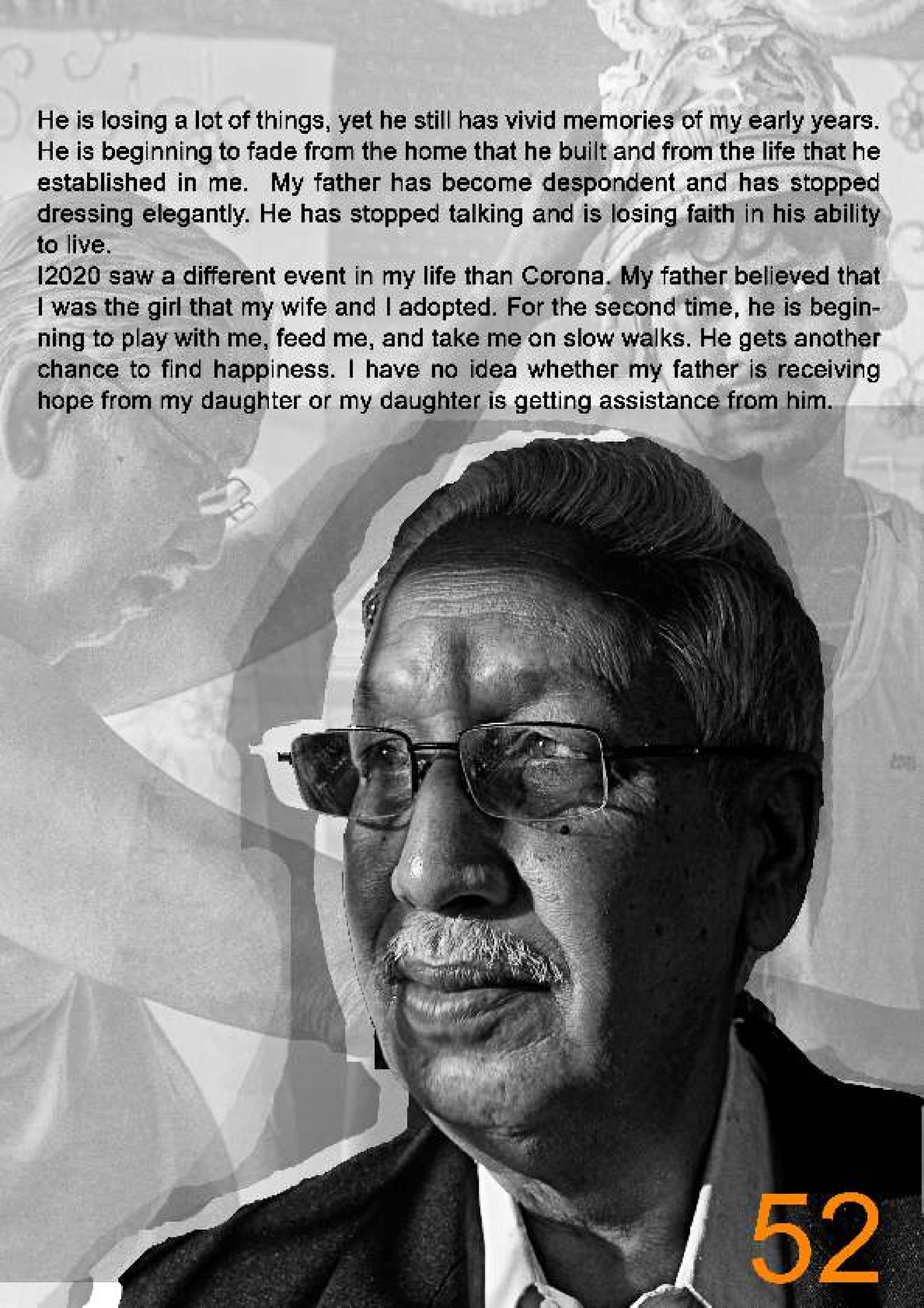
By Anindya Phani

The man of the family was my father. He assumes full responsibility and carries it out. He instils in me an artistic mindset while educating us. He enjoys watching movies and reading books. He showed me this affection. He retaliates when things go wrong and cherishes their happy moments. In the rain, sun, and storm, he always stands tall like a tree.

However, as time passes like a river, my father ages as well; occasionally, he forgets the name of a person or location. It is a common occurrence in elderly age. He is gradually losing all of his expertise. He always enjoys reading, and he can finish a book in two or three days. However, we have since seen him read the same book two or three times. He is watching the same films back-to-back twice or three times.

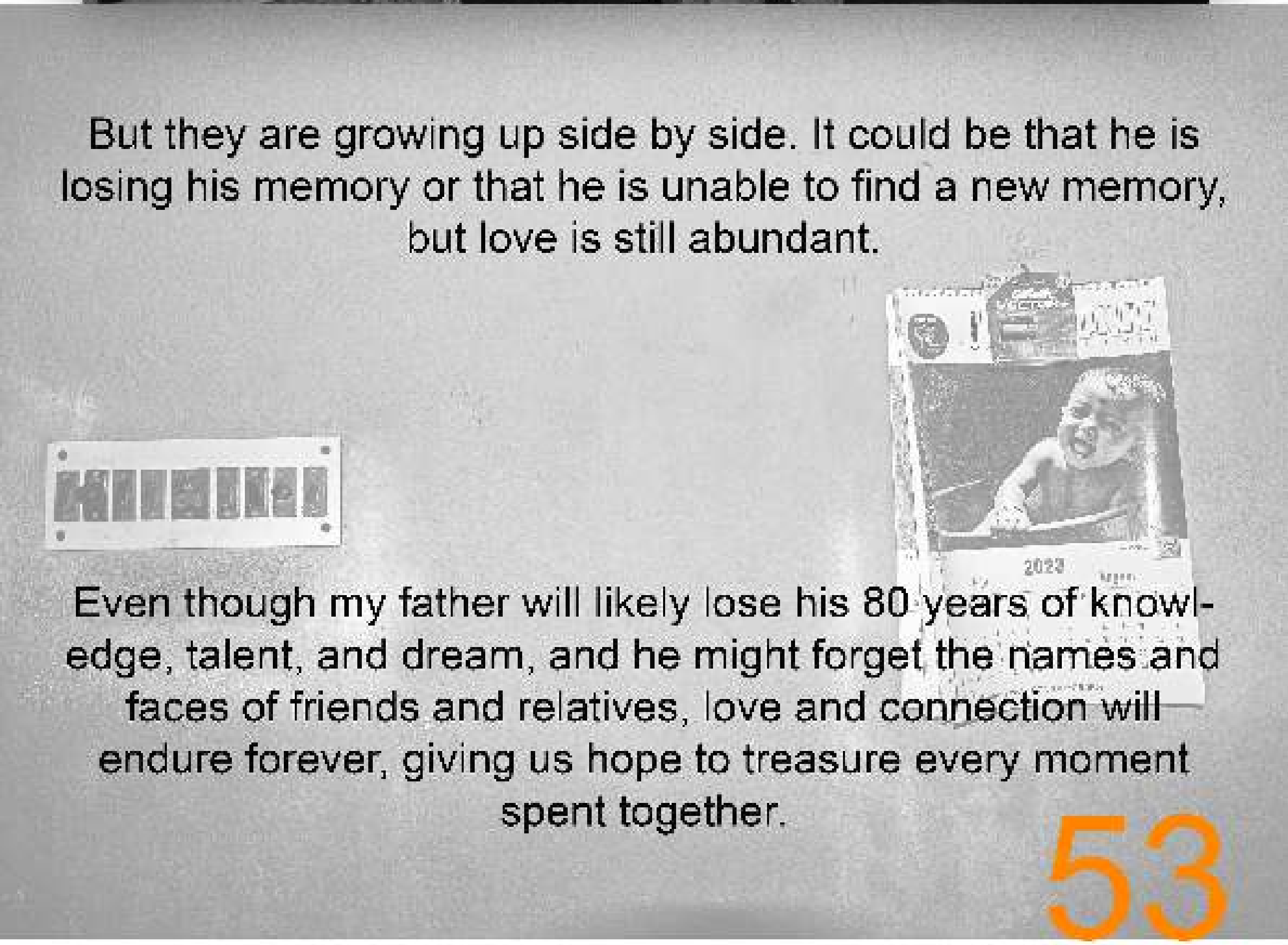
He is losing a lot of things, yet he still has vivid memories of my early years. He is beginning to fade from the home that he built and from the life that he established in me. My father has become despondent and has stopped dressing elegantly. He has stopped talking and is losing faith in his ability to live.

I2020 saw a different event in my life than Corona. My father believed that I was the girl that my wife and I adopted. For the second time, he is beginning to play with me, feed me, and take me on slow walks. He gets another chance to find happiness. I have no idea whether my father is receiving hope from my daughter or my daughter is getting assistance from him.



But they are growing up side by side. It could be that he is losing his memory or that he is unable to find a new memory, but love is still abundant.

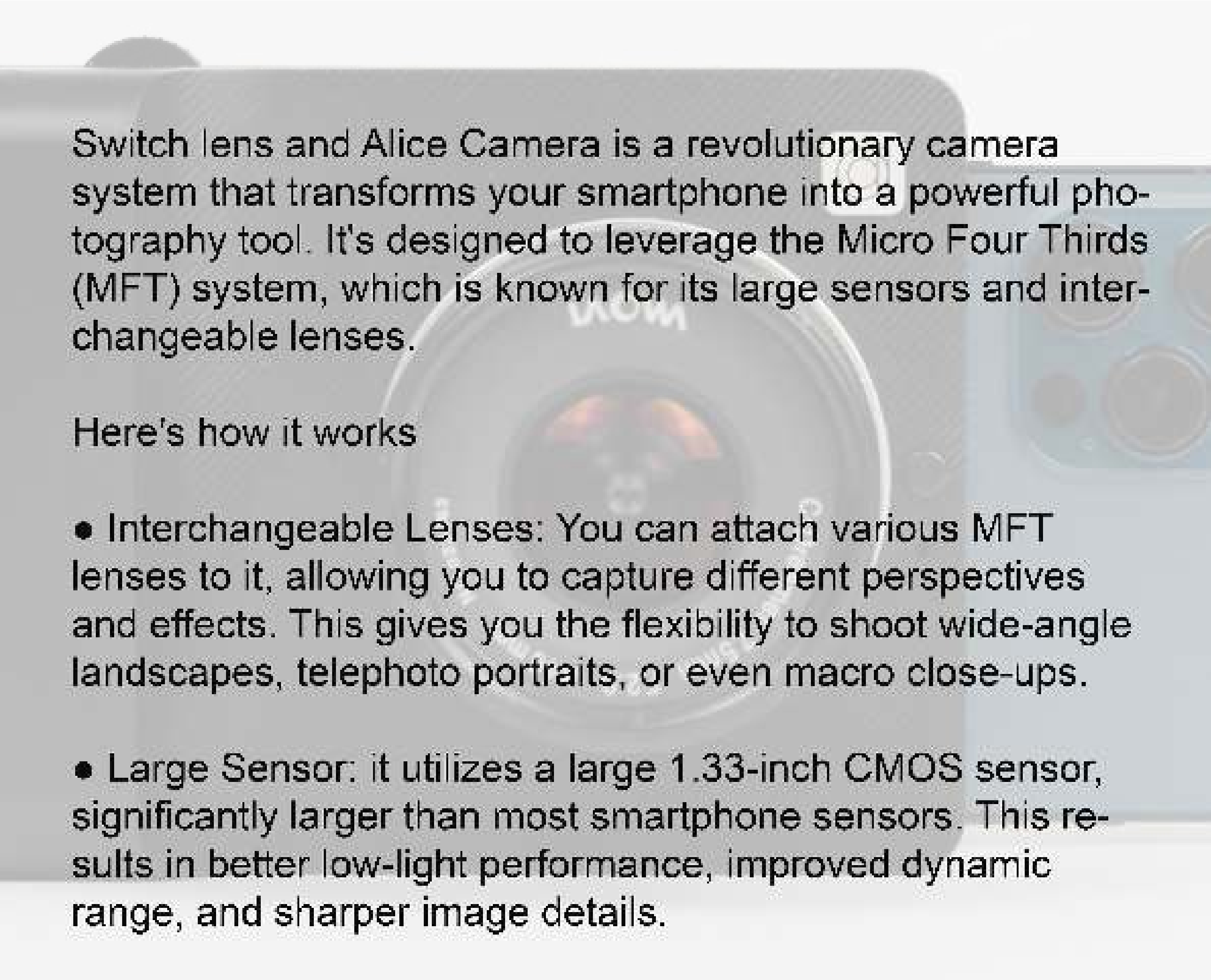
Even though my father will likely lose his 80 years of knowledge, talent, and dream, and he might forget the names and faces of friends and relatives, love and connection will endure forever, giving us hope to treasure every moment spent together.



Love remains.........................

Micro four third - New era

By Dr. Anjandev Biswas



Switch lens and Alice Camera is a revolutionary camera system that transforms your smartphone into a powerful photography tool. It's designed to leverage the Micro Four Thirds (MFT) system, which is known for its large sensors and interchangeable lenses.

Here's how it works

- Interchangeable Lenses: You can attach various MFT lenses to it, allowing you to capture different perspectives and effects. This gives you the flexibility to shoot wide-angle landscapes, telephoto portraits, or even macro close-ups.

- Large Sensor: it utilizes a large 1.33-inch CMOS sensor, significantly larger than most smartphone sensors. This results in better low-light performance, improved dynamic range, and sharper image details.

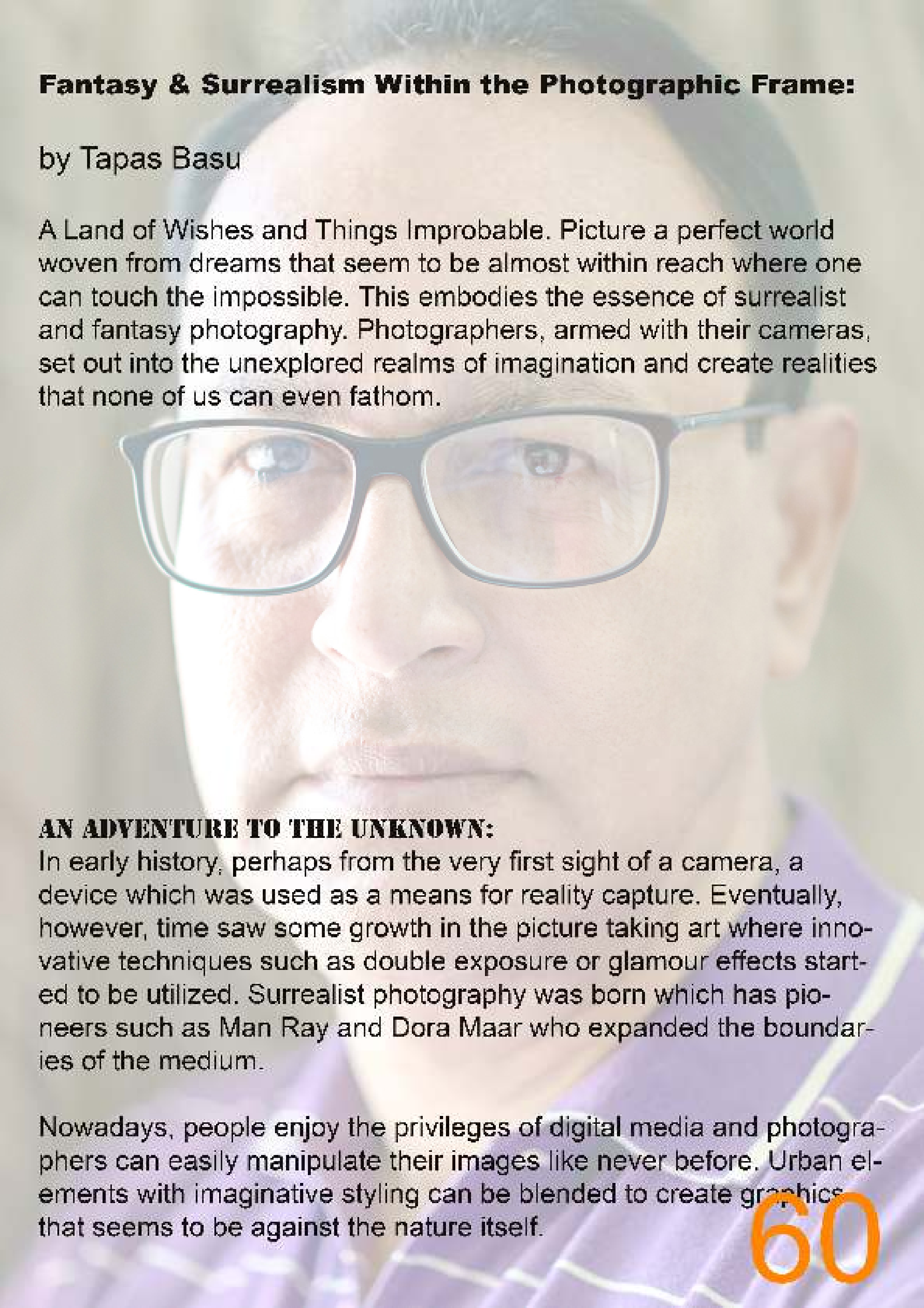
- Wireless Connectivity: it connects to your smartphone via Wi-Fi, enabling you to control the camera remotely. You can use your phone's screen as a viewfinder and adjust settings like focus, exposure, and zoom.

- Compact and Portable: Despite its powerful capabilities, it is designed to be compact and lightweight, making it easy to carry around.

- Compatibility: it is compatible with both Android and iOS devices, ensuring that a wide range of users can benefit from its features.

- AI-powered: The camera utilizes artificial intelligence to automatically adjust settings, optimize images, and apply filters, making the shooting process easier and faster.

Overall, SwitchLens and Alice Camera is a versatile and user-friendly device that offers a unique blend of traditional camera features and smartphone convenience. It's a great choice for anyone who wants to capture high-quality images without the complexity of traditional cameras.



Fantasy & Surrealism Within the Photographic Frame:

by Tapas Basu

A Land of Wishes and Things Improbable. Picture a perfect world woven from dreams that seem to be almost within reach where one can touch the impossible. This embodies the essence of surrealist and fantasy photography. Photographers, armed with their cameras, set out into the unexplored realms of imagination and create realities that none of us can even fathom.

AN ADVENTURE TO THE UNKNOWN:

In early history, perhaps from the very first sight of a camera, a device which was used as a means for reality capture. Eventually, however, time saw some growth in the picture taking art where innovative techniques such as double exposure or glamour effects started to be utilized. Surrealist photography was born which has pioneers such as Man Ray and Dora Maar who expanded the boundaries of the medium.

Nowadays, people enjoy the privileges of digital media and photographers can easily manipulate their images like never before. Urban elements with imaginative styling can be blended to create graphics that seems to be against the nature itself.

THE ENCHANTMENT BEYOND THE CAMERA:

Why is fantasy and surrealist photography so bewitching or attractive. Let's consider a few fundamental principles that allow you to realize such surrealistic visions and dreams:

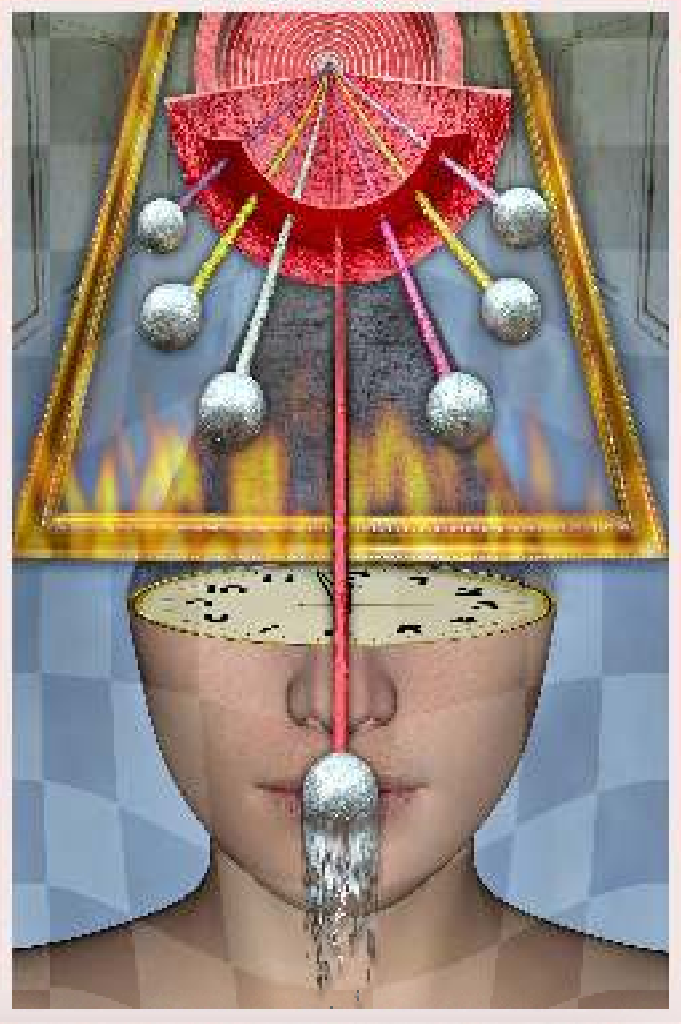
Surrealism or Dreamlike Environments:

For such surrealist photographers backgrounds seem to be equally important in their perspective in creating the feeling that the viewer will be shocked from fog, darkness, and strange angles that surround the viewers into a surrealistic world. If understood in a deeper context, these images feel like a catalyst of a stream of emotions from appreciation all the way to a level of terror and anxiety.

Classic without a Time Frame:

In times, when everything feels hectic and depressing, surreal or fantasy photography brings in solace. It gives us the ability to fantasize, to envision, and to reach out to the darker side within us. As long as there is imagination, this art goes on to enthrall and inspire.

Enjoy some of my surreal photographs which I am more than glad to share with you.

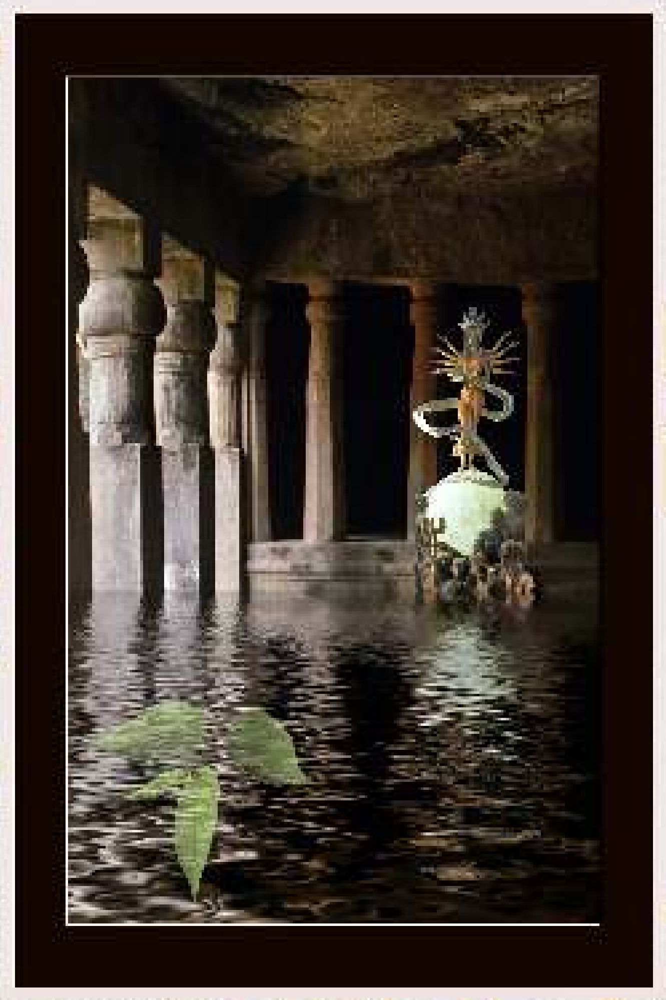


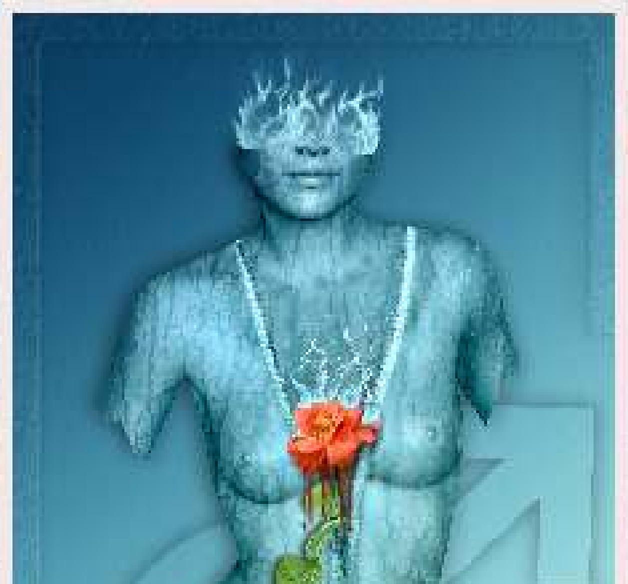
Photographic Imagination:

Wie Sicht Die Sicht Durch Peeks Into The Impossible. How would it be like living in a reality driven by dreams? This is the core of fantasy or surrealist photography. For, like they say, a picture is worth a thousand words, and so with the bliss of cameras in their hands, photographers take to the most unheard corners of their minds and create quite entertaining

Far from Normative:

And so it was in the beginning, when There is only a Repeating photography, the Era of mask and camera asked what more is a simple black and white image rendition that depicts any object or scene but is actually rather generic and bland. And this is when surrelist photograhpy came about, so that practitioners like Man Ray and self took that tweaking and imaging the real world Honer. And this is the beginning of the real thing.





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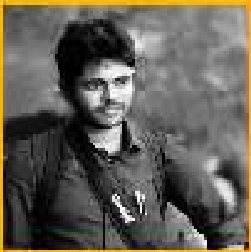
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