

# चार गावे (CHAR GAVE)

## A Murder Mystery in Rural Maharashtra

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### PART I: THE NIGHT IT HAPPENED

*September 15, 2002. 2:47 AM.*

The monsoon had been cruel that year. Three years of drought, then floods that wouldn't stop. The lake—Korde Tal—had swollen beyond its banks, swallowing the old temple steps, reaching toward the village like a hungry thing.

Gauri More, twelve years old, woke to a sound.

Not the rain. Something else. A whisper. A song. The kind of melody that crawls into your dreams and pulls you out of bed before you know you're walking.

Her brother Aarav, eight, followed her. He always followed her. Through the back door their father never locked. Past the sleeping dog that didn't bark. Into the mist that rolled off the lake like breath from a cold mouth.

The path to Korde Tal was familiar. Every child in the four villages knew it. Every child was warned about it.

*Don't go to the lake at night. Don't go alone. Don't go when the mist is thick. The twins are watching.*

Gauri went anyway. As if she had no choice. As if something was calling her name.

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Farmer Gopal Phadke found the boy at dawn.

Curled in the wet grass. Shivering. Eyes open but seeing nothing. Clothes soaked with mud and lake water. His lips moved but no sound came out.

"Aarav? Aarav! Where is your sister?"

The boy's eyes finally focused. He looked at the farmer. Opened his mouth.

And screamed.

They found Gauri's body three hours later. Floating face-down in the shallows of Korde Tal, among the lotus stems and temple offerings. Her eyes were open. Her expression was peaceful. As if she had simply... let go.

The police ruled it suicide. Depression, they said. The pressure of rural life. A child who couldn't cope.

But Aarav knew. Even if he couldn't speak. Even if the words wouldn't come.

His sister didn't walk into that lake alone.

Something took her.

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## PART II: THE CURSE OF KORDE TAL

They say it began fifteen years ago.

Twin girls. Ira and Asha. Eight years old. Daughters of Kalyani from Vasti—the lower-caste settlement at the edge of the four villages. Beautiful children. Identical. Inseparable.

They drowned in Korde Tal during the monsoon floods of 1988. Their bodies were never recovered. The lake swallowed them whole.

Their mother, Kalyani, went to the water's edge every day for a month. Calling their names. Waiting. And then one morning, she stopped speaking entirely. Not a word in fifteen years. Some say grief stole her voice. Others say she saw something that night. Something that followed her daughters into the water.

The priest who performed the death rites—Pandit Dattatray—died that same week. Heart attack, they said. But witnesses at the funeral puja claimed he was speaking to someone no one else could see. Arguing. Pleading. Then he simply... stopped.

The zamindar—Gadkari Saheb, the old landlord whose family has owned these lands for generations—was at that puja. They say he hasn't slept properly since. They say he walks the halls of his wada at night, talking to shadows. Asking forgiveness from children who aren't there.

That's when the sightings began.

Two small figures by the lake. Holding hands. White clothes billowing in windless air. Faces that shift between innocent and terrible. Sometimes they beckon. Sometimes they sing.

The twin spirits of Korde Tal.

Waiting for company.

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Seven years later, they got it.

Neelam and Omkar Karande. Siblings. Fourteen and twelve. Found drowned in the same lake. Same peaceful expressions. Same open eyes.

The police ruled it suicide. A pact between siblings. Exam pressure. Family problems.

Their father, Harish, accepted the ruling. What else could he do? Fight the curse? Question the spirits?

But their mother, Nirmala, never believed it. Her children weren't sad. They weren't struggling. They were asking questions. Curious questions about the village, about old stories, about things that happened before they were born.

And then they were dead.

Now, eight years after that, Gauri More has joined them.

Six children. Three incidents. Fifteen years. One lake.

And one little boy who survived. Who saw something. Who can't—or won't—speak.

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## PART III: THE FOUR VILLAGES

चार गावे. *Char Gave*. Four Villages.

- **Talegaon** — The main settlement. Temple, school, police outpost, the sarpanch's office. Where respectable people live respectable lies.
- **Bhatti** — Named for the brick kilns that have operated here for three generations. Smoke rises day and night. The Gokhale brothers run the operation. Good employers, people say. Generous. The kind of men who solve problems quietly.
- **Babhul** — The farming hamlet. Sugarcane and sorrow. This is where the Karande family lives, still mourning children eight years dead.
- **Vasti** — The outcaste settlement. Dalits. Untouchables. The people polite society pretends not to see. This is where Kalyani lives in her silence. This is where the curse began.

And at the center of it all: **Gadkari Wada**. The old zamindar's mansion. Crumbling grandeur. A family haunted by something none of them will name.

The lake—Korde Tal—sits between all four villages. Sacred and terrible. A place of beauty and death. The villagers still perform pujas at its shores. They still wash their cattle in its waters. But no one swims anymore. No one lets their children play near the edge.

The spirits are watching.

The spirits are hungry.

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# PART IV: THE INVESTIGATORS

## Dr. Leena Shirke, 27

She wasn't supposed to come back.

Scholarship to Pune. Medical degree with honors. She was supposed to be in a city hospital by now. Instead, she requested a rural posting. To this place. To the village where she was born.

She tells herself it's duty. Service to her community. The noble work of a doctor in a place that needs one.

The truth is simpler and more terrible.

She knew them. The first twins. Ira and Asha. They were her playmates. She was supposed to meet them at the lake that day—the day they drowned. Her mother kept her home. Some excuse about chores. Some reason she can't remember.

They went without her. They never came back.

She's carried that guilt for fifteen years. The survivor's question: *Why them and not me?*

Now she runs the Primary Health Centre in Talegaon. Two rooms. Rusted filing cabinet. One examination table with stains she's stopped trying to identify. At night, she reads the old medical records. Births. Deaths. Patterns.

Some patterns don't make sense.

When the CID officer arrived asking about the More children, she was ready. She'd been waiting. Waiting for someone else to notice. Waiting for someone to ask the questions she's too afraid to ask alone.

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## Arjun Gadkari, 28

His colleagues in Pune think he's visiting family.

That's partially true. His grandfather—the zamindar, Gadkari Saheb—is deteriorating. His grandmother wrote letters. *Come home. He's getting worse. The guilt is eating him. He won't tell me what happened, but he talks to them at night. The twins. He begs their forgiveness.*

But Arjun had another reason.

He'd seen the files. Three incidents. Six children. Same lake. Same village cluster. Same dismissive rulings. Suicide. Accident. Curse.

No real investigation. No hard questions. Just a convenient supernatural explanation that let everyone stop thinking.

He asked to be assigned to the case. His superiors laughed. *You want to investigate a curse? In your own grandfather's village?* They said no.

So he took leave. Personal time. Family visit. What he does on his own time is his business.

He uses his mother's maiden name professionally. Gadkari is a heavy name in these villages—the zamindar's name, the landlord's name, a name that makes people bow and lie and tell you what you want to hear.

He doesn't want to be the zamindar's grandson.

He wants to be an investigator.

He wants to know why six children are dead and no one has ever really asked why.

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## PART V: YOUR MISSION

You are CID investigators from Pune.

One of you carries the weight of childhood guilt. One of you carries the burden of a family name. Both of you have come to Char Gave for reasons that are professional and personal and impossible to separate.

### Six children have drowned in Korde Tal:

Incident	Year	Victims	Official Ruling
First	1988	Ira & Asha (twins, 8)	Accidental drowning
Second	1995	Neelam (14) & Omkar (12) Karande	Suicide pact
Third	2002	Gauri More (12)	Suicide

One child survived: **Aarav More, 8**. He was found at dawn, traumatized, unable to speak. The police dismissed his fragmented testimony as hallucination.

The villagers blame the curse. The twin spirits. The hungry ghosts of Korde Tal.

The police have closed every case. Accidents. Suicides. Supernatural misfortune beyond human control.

**Your job:** Find the truth.

Are these deaths accidents? Suicides? The work of restless spirits?

Or is something far more human—and far more terrible—hiding behind the legend?

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# PART VI: HOW TO PLAY

## Phase 1: The Curse

Read all materials in PHASE\_1/ in numerical order.

You will meet the grieving families. The village authorities. The religious figures. Everyone has a story about the curse. Everyone believes—or claims to believe—in the supernatural.

Your goal: Establish the setting. Understand the legend. Note the inconsistencies.

*Trust nothing. Question everything.*

## Phase 2: Cracks Appear

After completing Phase 1, move to PHASE\_2/.

The survivor speaks. The workers whisper. The records reveal patterns that shouldn't exist.

Your goal: Follow the money. Follow the land. Follow the fear in people's eyes when they change the subject.

*The curse is starting to crack.*

## Phase 3: Two Conspiracies

Read PHASE\_3/ materials.

Old secrets surface. New connections emerge. The picture becomes clearer—and more complicated than you imagined.

Your goal: Form your theories. Identify your suspects. Prepare for confrontation.

*The truth may be plural.*

## Phase 4: Confrontations

This phase is **request-based**. Tell your moderator:

*"We want to confront [NAME] with [EVIDENCE]."*

If you've gathered sufficient proof, the confrontation will unlock. Confessions will follow. The truth will emerge.

*Be certain before you accuse. The innocent deserve protection. The guilty deserve justice.*

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## PART VII: CASE FILES

Your moderator will release evidence documents as you progress:

**Phase 1:** FIRs (First Information Reports), death certificates, official records

**Phase 2:** Medical examiner notes, land transfer records, payment logs

**Phase 3:** Survey reports, trust deeds, closure memos

These documents contain physical evidence. Study them carefully. The devil is in the details.

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## PART VIII: WINNING CONDITION

To solve चार गावे, you must identify:

- **WHO** killed the children
- **WHY** they did it
- **HOW** they covered it up
- **WHO** helped them stay hidden

*Warning: There may be more than one answer.*

*Warning: The truth may be worse than the legend.*

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## FINAL NOTE

The curse of Korde Tal has protected someone for fifteen years.

The twin spirits have taken the blame for human sins.

Six children are dead. One child survived. One village has been silent for far too long.

You are not here to appease ghosts.

You are here to find justice.

Begin with Phase 1. The interviews are waiting.

The truth is watching to see if you're brave enough to find it.

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*Good luck, investigators.*

काळजी घ्या. (Take care.)

*The lake remembers everything.*