

# 1001

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Our storytelling program, 1001 Stories, brings meaningful learning to some of the hardest to reach populations around the world. We aim to facilitate the creation, development, and gathering of 1001 empowering stories from every participating local community.

Children love to tell stories. However, in many places in the world, their creative voices are rarely heard or cultivated. The 1001 Stories Program conducts storytelling workshops that build on children's natural potential to become original storytellers. Through the 1001 Stories Program, children are empowered while their literacy skills are developed.

When integrated with technologies, these stories become an effective tool for literacy by growing reading and writing skills grounded in local languages and local themes in underserved areas worldwide.



## Our Author



# SARASWATI SHARMA

“My name is Saraswati Sharma and I am 10 years old. I live in India and I want to become a teacher when I grow up.”



1001 Stories Presents

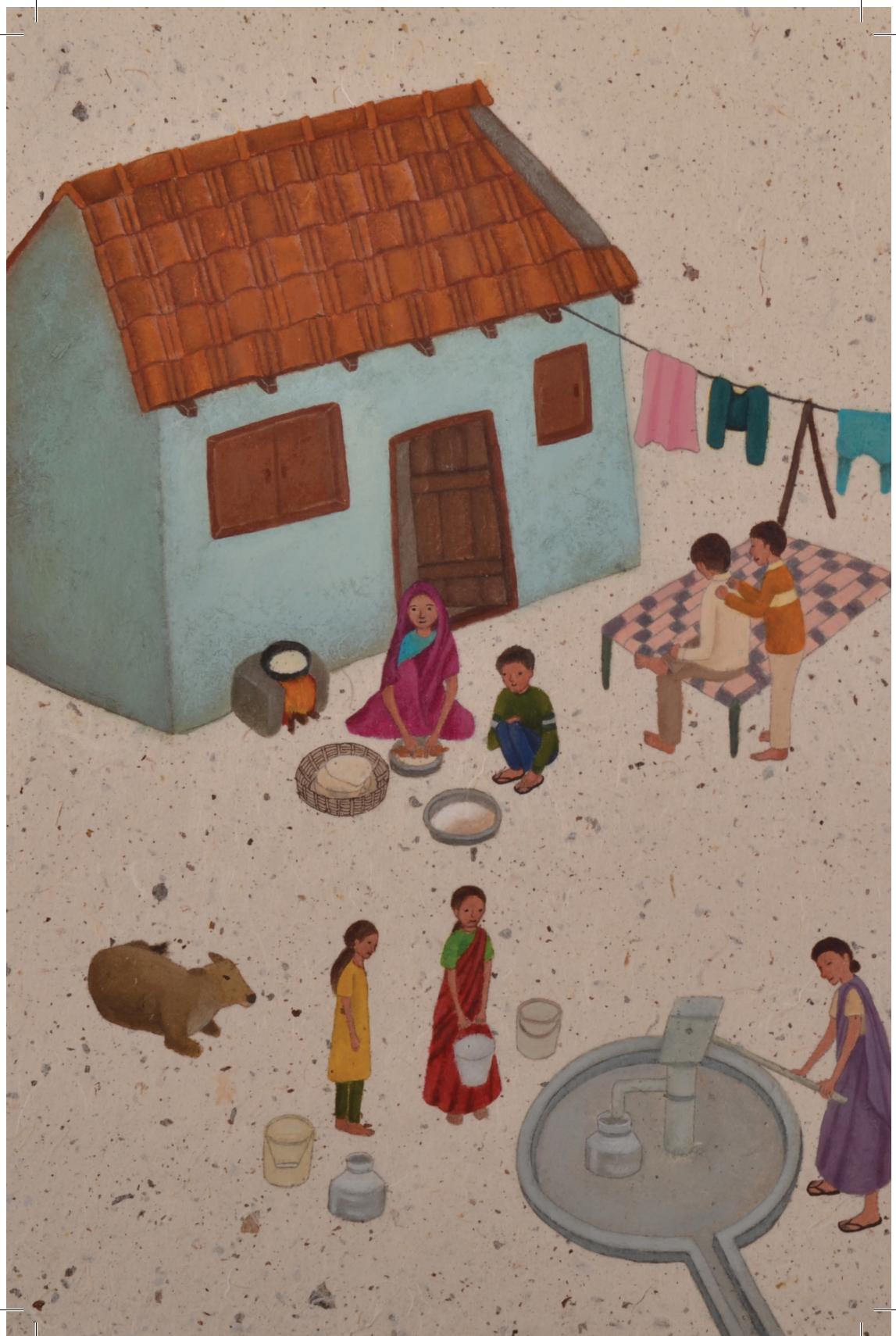
# THE INDIAN BOY'S LAST PETITION

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In the small village of Chandra Babu Nagar, there lived a very happy family of four: a young boy named Rajesh, his mother, his brother and his father. Rajesh's mother was a lovely lady. Despite the fact she had no education as a child, she worked hard to pay for her own education and get a decent job in the village. Rajesh's father also worked in the village, as a street cleaner.





Rajesh's father worked very hard to support his family and to send his sons to school, often working extra shifts to cover the family's expenses. He would sacrifice anything for the family's happiness because to him, nothing was more important than family.

Although he would come home stressed from the workload every day, he was still happy. He was always very tired but remained calm and found time to spend with his wife and two sons.

He was a loving father, but he was very strict and he disciplined his two sons harshly, who learned from him to become better people with stronger character.

One day after work when Rajesh's father was sleeping, Rajesh' mother was cleaning the clothes and found a pain killer tablet in Rajesh's father's jacket pocket. She started to panic and cried to Rajesh, who tried to calm her down. Together, they asked father why he was using the medication.



Father told them that he had been hiding his chronic stomach pain from them. Mother forced father to go and see the doctor at the city clinic and sent Rajesh with him. Father and Rajesh left the house the next morning and began their journey to the city clinic by bicycle.





The journey took 3 days. On the way, Rajesh told his father stories to help him forget about the pain. One story that Rajesh had heard in school was about a brave African boy named Kakama, who saved his entire village. Rajesh tried to give hope to his father even though he was scared himself.

When they arrived at the clinic, the Doctor did a free checkup and reviewed the results. He then told Rajesh's father that he was suffering from stage 4 stomach cancer, which had already spread to his other organs, and that the only way to cure him would be a surgical operation.

"Unfortunately", he said, "the surgery is very expensive".

Rajesh started to cry and couldn't stop his tears.

"Although", the Doctor said, "Once a month, we offer one free surgery to the person who writes a petition convincing enough to inspire the director to sponsor the surgery."

The doctor continued, "The chances of winning are very low, winning needs a high literacy skill."



Rajesh's father was illiterate, so he didn't think he had a chance in the competition. They rode back to their village in silence, but Rajesh still had hope in his heart. When they got home, Rajesh told his brother about the competition and, together, they promised their parents that they would win.

Father's health condition soon got worse and he was fired from his job. Rajesh's mother started to work more hours cleaning people's houses and the boys dropped out of school to find jobs: Rajesh in a Mechanic shop and his brother in a restaurant. They all tried to earn enough to pay for the surgery, but they were nowhere close. Rajesh and his brother, with help from their ex-schoolteacher, worked on the petition day and night, writing 33 drafts in all. Finally, they submitted it to the clinic, but it was rejected.



Father didn't want to be the reason for his children leaving school and his wife becoming a maid. He blamed himself and felt useless. He couldn't stand the pain any longer and made up his mind to hang himself in order to rescue his family from this situation. He wrote this note to his family: Rajesh started to cry and couldn't stop his tears.

Dear Family,

Thank you all for everything. My sons, Rajesh and Suresh, take care, go back to school and study hard to get into college and make a better life for your mom. My lovely wife, Sakshi: stay strong and do not feel left alone because you know that I will always be with you and with our sons. I cannot live in this pain any longer; I cannot see you suffering because of my health condition. I'm ending my life and I leave you to God.

Love,

Anand





The next morning, after everyone had left home to go to work, father placed the note beside him and put the rope around his neck.

Just outside, Rajesh was returning home early to pick up his tools, which he had forgotten to take to work. Rajesh opened the door and saw his father hanging and choking.



He jumped up and cut the rope with his knife, allowing his father's body to fall to the floor. Rajesh shook his father's shoulders hysterically and called out his name.

He prayed to God to save his father, whose eyes then slowly opened. Rajesh told him:

"Dad, you always taught us to be hopeful and trust God. Why are you doing this? We will write the petition 100 times again until we win the competition and get you that surgery."

Father felt very regretful and asked for forgiveness from Rajesh. They decided not to tell mother or brother what happened.

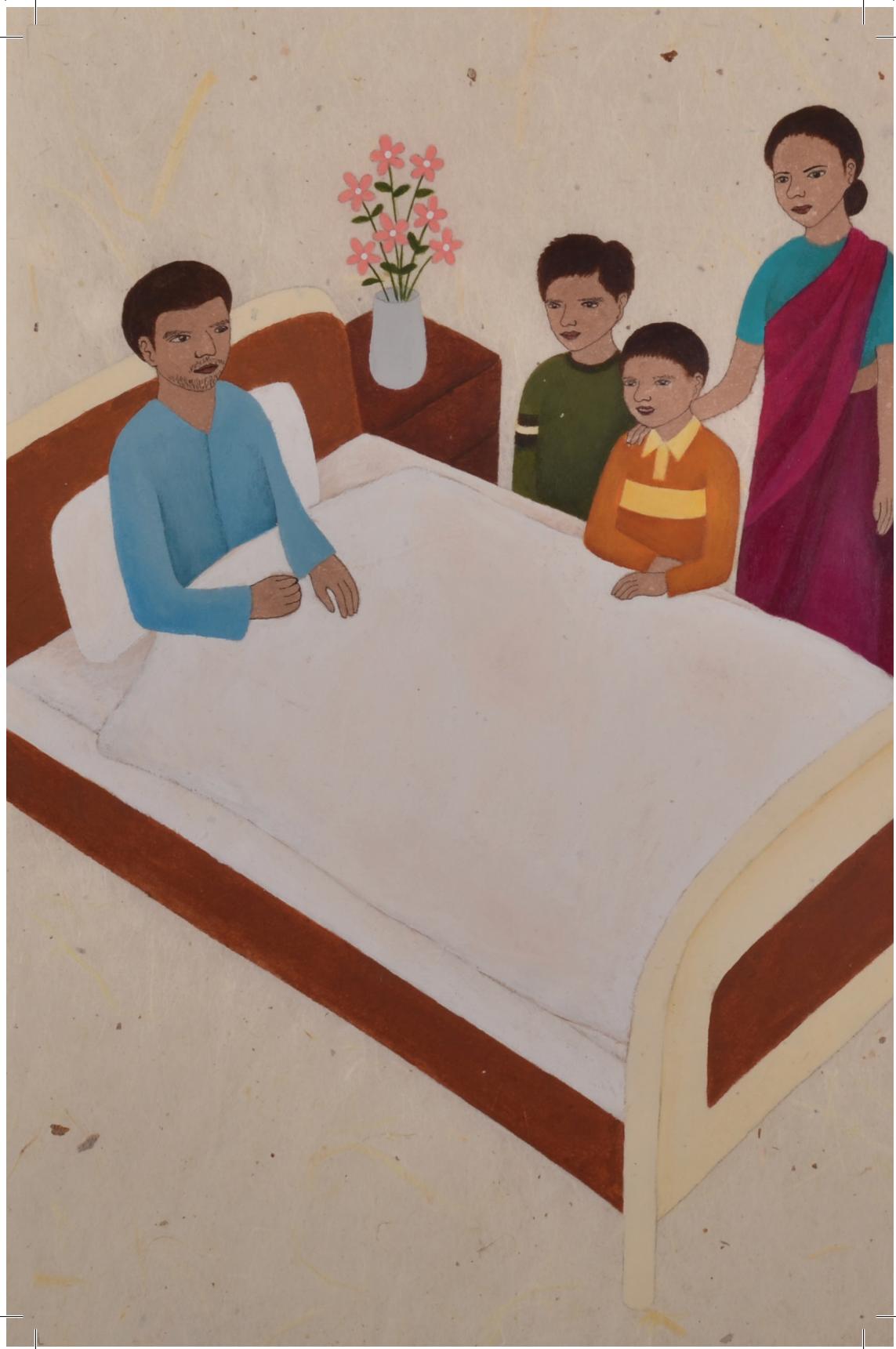




Rajesh worked harder and harder on the petition, praying to God for help and reading from books every night to improve his writing skills. After three months of this with no success, he considered selling his liver just to get some money for his family. In one last attempt, Rajesh put all his heart into his writing. He wrote about his father's plan to commit suicide and about his own plan to sell his liver.

The director of the clinic, so inspired by Rajesh's brave, hardworking and self-sacrificing personality, declared his story the winner and agreed to perform the free surgery for them.







**A**fter the operation Rajesh promised himself that when his dad got better and he returned to school again, he would study really hard to become a doctor to save other poor people. Father opened his eyes and looked at his brave son.

He had a beautiful smile on his face and saw the spark of hope in Rajesh's eyes and Rajesh smiled back at his father.





