



# INFORMATION IS **POWERFUL:** It Can Change Your Life

Stories of Change  
by the Akshara Team

Information is Powerful: it can change your life  
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Produced in 2017  
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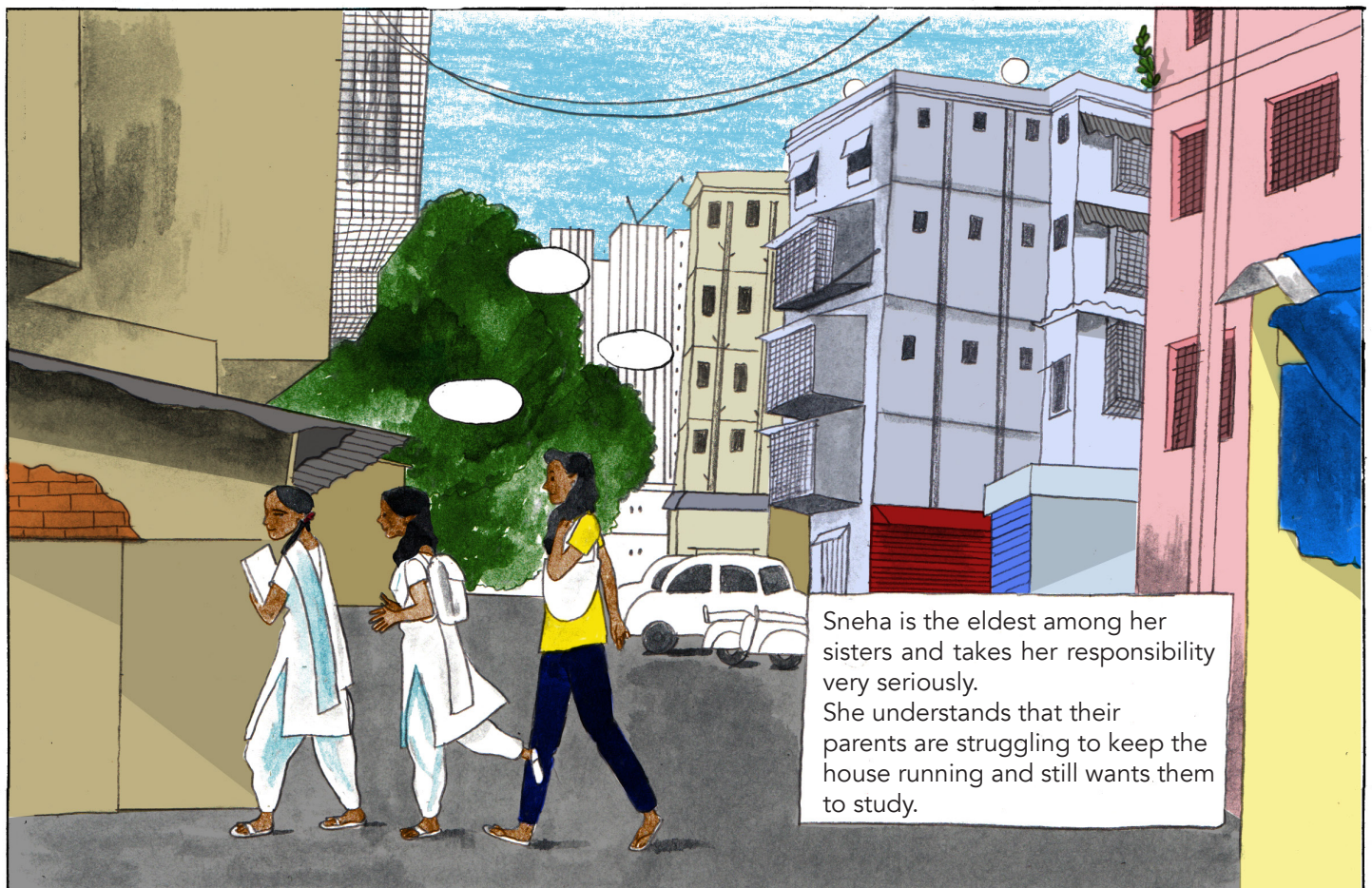
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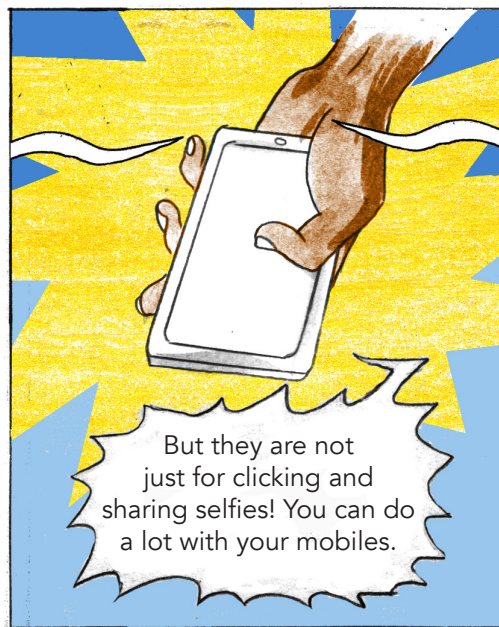
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It has been three years since Sneha's father passed away. The family is struggling to survive. She finished college last year and has been taking tuitions classes at home to support her mother and two younger sisters.



Sneha, her mother and sisters have been asked by their grandmother to visit their village.

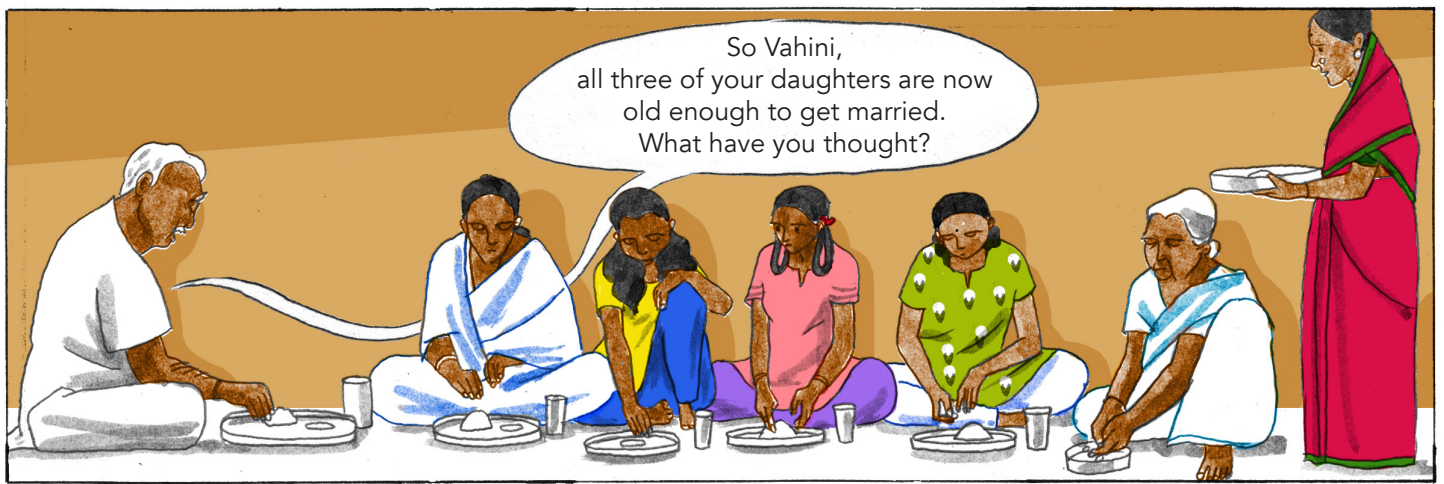
Why do we have to stay a week in Lanja?

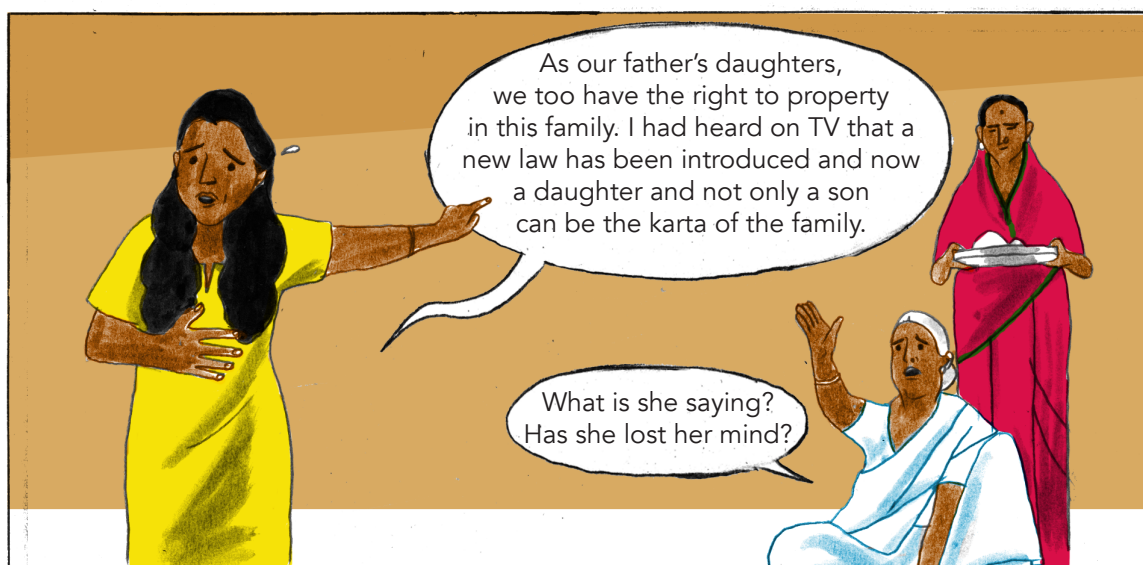
I don't like it there. All they have to talk about is my marriage.

Ssssh Sneha, don't talk like that. They are our relatives and your father was very close to them! We must follow our traditions.

Lanja is a serene village tucked away in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri District.



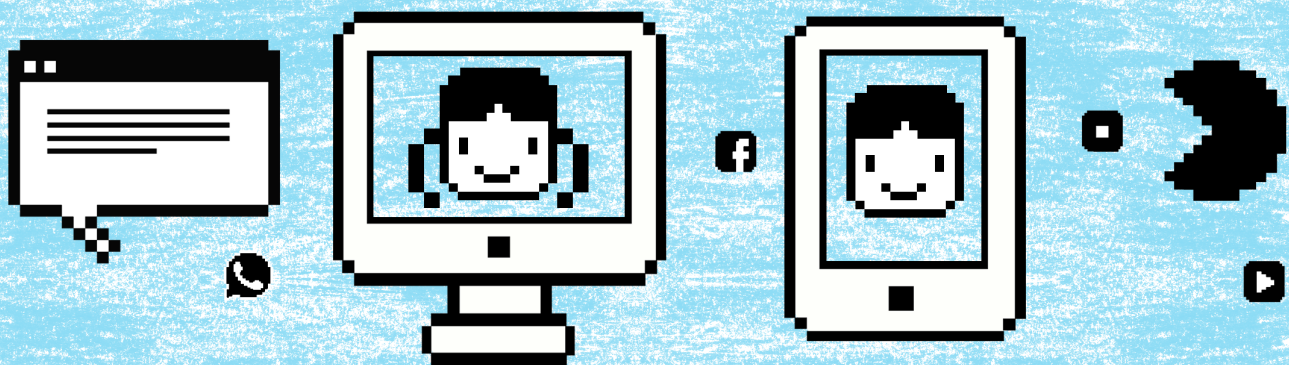




## BEING SAFE ON THE NET

The Internet is a great way to connect with your friends through FaceBook, What's App and other apps. You can also search for info by using various search engines like Google or Yahoo or Bing and learn new things.

But its also important to stay safe because you can become a target for abuse, strangers might try to meet you, photos which are private might be put up in public spaces. There are a few ways you can help make sure you're not in danger when you use the internet.

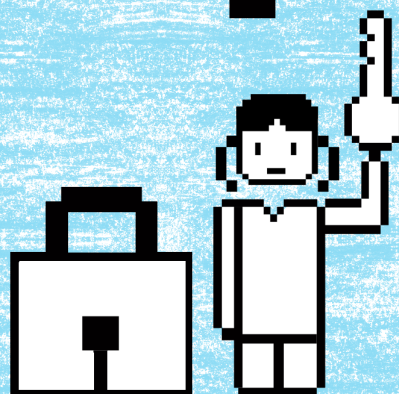


Avoid giving personal info and addresses on FB.  
Check your privacy settings regularly.

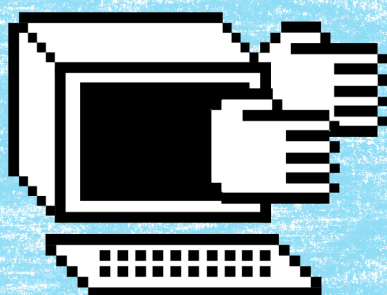


Check whether your address is being used.  
Think before you click and share in public. Don't upload or share anything which will get you in trouble with your parents or teachers. Once its public you are never sure who will see it.

If a person you don't know adds you as a 'friend' ignore and delete his/her request.  
Don't join What's App groups which you don't know about.

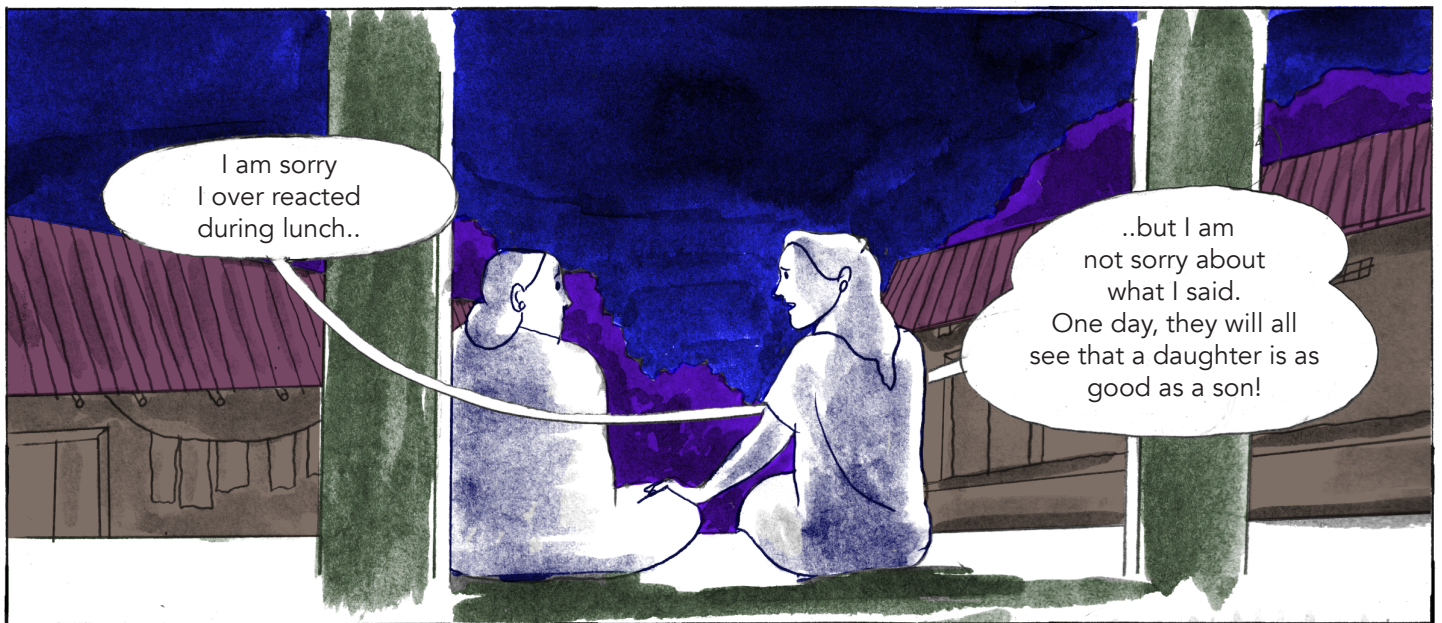


Use strong passwords that are hard for others to guess and never share them with anyone no matter how much you love them.



If someone is persistently asking you questions and telling you to do things, beware he/she might be recruiting you or 'grooming' you e.g. many young people have run away from home to marry a stranger.





Use your mobile for information.

There is so much you can learn if you use it properly and safely. My info changed my relations in my family. My uncle is now helping me to learn how to handle our property instead of asking me to waive my rights to my cousin brother or him. Whatever problem you have, look it up on the Net and but don't forget to verify it with authentic sources.

As girls we should find out more info and educate ourselves so that we know our rights. Tell me how many of you knew that women can inherit property? How many of you know the rights given to you by our Constitution? And how many know that most of these rights are denied to women?

More often than not, girls and women in our country are discriminated by families, society and other institutions and not given the same status as boys and men. They are socialized into thinking of marriage as their whole life. This often leads to women themselves not thinking of themselves as creative and productive citizens rather as wives and mothers. Yes, women need the support of others to come out of these old, orthodox and unequal ways of thinking. But women too need to stand up, speak for themselves and learn and prove that they too are capable, independent and brave human beings.





**HERE ARE SOME FREQUENT INJUSTICES  
THAT TAKE PLACE AGAINST WOMEN  
AND  
THE LAWS AGAINST THEM**

- 1) If you are harassed on the streets or at the workplace you can use The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 to lodge a complaint with the police or employer.
- 2) It is illegal for parents to marry children before they have become adults. Our government has enacted the Prevention of Child Marriage Act 2006 which has provisions to prohibit child marriage, protect and provide relief to victims and punish those who abet, promote or solemnize such marriages.
- 3) There is criticism that the police do not take down the complaints made by women. We have a right to demand a lady officer being present when we complain. In case of being searched or medically examined, we can ask for a woman officer. And a woman cannot be arrested before sunrise or after sunset, except under the directive of a magistrate.
- 4) When working in an office or factory, you should be observant to notice any form of discrimination between you and your fellow male workers.  
The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 states that it is the duty of employers to pay equal remuneration to men and women workers for same work or work of similar nature. No discrimination should be made while recruiting men and women workers.

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- 5) According to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, daughters did not have any rights to the ancestral property of their father. But this changed after the Hindu Succession (Amendment Act), 2005 (Amendment Act) came into effect. Daughters in a joint family were now granted the statutory right in the co-parcenary property (property that has not been partitioned or alienated) of their father.
- 6) Dowry is a common practice but the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, says that if any one gives or receives or even helps the exchange, he or she will face a jail term five years or more and a fine of Rs 15,000 or the sum of dowry, whichever is more
- 7) Many men and even women believe that a little beating in the family is no big deal. But it is wrong. No one can beat up a partner or spouse. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 attempts to address the concerns of the victims by first of all recognizing the fact that domestic violence is a reality.
- 8) If you are offended by a movie or an advertisement, you can use The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 and amended in 2012 to ensure that the portrayal of women in the mass media by means of advertisements, writings, publications and illustrations is not such that could be termed “indecent”.


*Sources: National Commission for Women,  
<http://ncw.nic.in/frmLLawsRelatedtoWomen.aspx>*

## Acknowledgments

This booklet was conceptualised and written by Nandita Gandhi based on the stories of change which emerged from the innovative evaluation tool used during the Mapping Change Project.

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Akshara's focus is on half the population of India or its women and girls especially those who are socially and economically underprivileged and bear the brunt of violence.

Akshara, a Mumbai-based, non-profit women's organisation and resource centre, has for 22 years been working for the empowerment of women through educational scholarships, building livelihood skills and understanding one's gender rights.

In order to curb and prevent violence against women so that women can lead productive and dignified lives, Akshara engages with young men to introspect and work towards gender equality and the State to implement laws and provide services for a Safe, Inclusive and Sustainable City.

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