

July 2014: How it started:

It was a hot searing summertime afternoon in Kolkata. I left my desk for a quick cup of tea at a roadside stall right outside my office. Suddenly a miserable, somewhat scary sight struck me. It was a tattered barefoot little girl holding the hand of a skeletally thin woman walking by -- that must be her mother! This mother was begging for food. The diminutive girl was holding the lady's hand with great care so that the trundling mother could get some support. It was broad daylight. People were looking at the woman in utter surprise, how could a living human be so thin, a walking skeleton!

That was the first time I saw Reshma, that six year old girl who was trying her best to support her frail mother. It is a cruel world, I had so much of work to finish and so little time. I thought I should ignore the duo, finish my cuppa and go back to my desk. But somebody inside me was holding me back. "*What can I do*", I wondered, "*give them some money at most?*" I was afraid to confront that bundle of bones; she looked fearsome, ghostly enough to scare all kindness away. Still I don't know why I could not leave that place. Probably I lost my conscious self, and it was irrationality taking over. I held my breath and stepped towards her. I asked, "*What happened to you, are you ill?*" People standing nearby were looking at me. It was definitely not normal to go and talk to such an apparition. She was not able to talk properly, going out of breath every now and then; her muddy eyes kept rolling in every direction looking for something in a restless fervour. After a few minutes, she seemed to settle down a little. Her daughter offered her some water from a dirty plastic bottle. Expressionless, she gave me a vacant look, sighed heavily and started telling her story.

Story of Hasi Sardar and her daughter Reshma:



Hasi Sardar, 28, was suffering from **drug resistant Tuberculosis**. I heard Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by bacteria that most often affect the lungs. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel TB germs into air. A person needs to inhale only a few of these germs to become infected. I became afraid for myself, people with TB can

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die if they do not get proper treatment. Drug-resistant TB occurs when bacteria become resistant to the drugs used to treat TB. This means that drugs can no longer kill the TB bacteria. Hasi's husband died of the same disease. She used to sell puffed rice for living. As she looked different and diseased people stopped buying from her. She was hungry, she needed medication, food. The only support she had in this world was Reshma, her six year old daughter. My soul was bleeding. I could feel the pain she was going through. I thought I must try to help her. I gave her Rs 500 and passed on my mobile number. I told her to give me a ring if she needed any more help. And I left.

It did not end there. I thought she would never call me back. But after a few days I received a call from Hasi, she had requested someone to call my number. She asked me to see her outside my office at least once. I could not ignore her request. I went to meet her outside office. She requested me if I could give her some money so that she could buy some milk, some eggs for her and her daughter. I said that I would try. Before I came back she would tell me in teary eyes, "I know my days are numbered. But after I die there is no one to take care of my little daughter. Please look after her if possible". I gave a brief reply, "I will try". That was the only way for me to escape from reality.

I discussed her matter with a number of my colleagues and friends. One of my friends told me that I should not fall in her trap, she could well be a member of some begging racket. Maybe she was just acting, my friend reminded me of a famous Bollywood movie "Traffic Signal", which dealt with the story of the business of begging. I had similar experience in the past too. So I thought I should verify her claims. I decided to visit her home.

Beside the special economic zone (SEZ), Sector V, Salt Lake City, Kolkata there is a small village where Hasi Sardar lived with her elderly parents and daughter in a very small, single roomed tenement. There was no window, no way for sunlight to enter. It was complete darkness inside. I wanted to see her prescriptions, medicines to cross-check her story. I took mobile snapshots of her prescriptions, X-ray reports and medicines and sent those to a doctor. He confirmed that it was a genuine case of TB. I made up my mind to help her. I decided to provide her food, money, medicine -- whatever it would take to bring her back to life.

I kept an elaborate logbook of whatever happened since then. I started requesting friends to help her, fiercely trying to gather whatever help was possible. I kept a log of everything and shared the status with all those kind-hearted people who donated money for Hasi. I will show you the sequential pictures of incidents that happened since then from my old facebook posts. I am going to share the screenshots of those posts. There will be a direct link alongside. You may click on the link which will direct you to the [facebook page](#) of *Maha Jiban*, a charitable organization founded by me, where I posted these incidents years ago.

August 27 , 2014:

[Met Hasi Sardar at her home](#)

 **Jiban** added 4 new photos.
Published by Subhadip Mukherjee [?] · 30 August 2014 · 🌐

Came across this extremely malnourished woman near ecospace, Rajarhat, Kolkata. She had her 5 year old daughter with her. She was walking very slowly and begging. I never saw anyone so much malnourished in my life . I asked her and came to know that she was suffering from TB and as a result this happened to her. Her husband is dead. She used to sell puffed rice. As she looks different no one buys from her. She needs medication, food . I went to where she stays. I have seen everything in my eye and its a genuine problem. Please donate nutritious food, cloths to her.



August 30 , 2014: [Requested people to help her by sending a video of her.](#) In this video she spoke about her problems.



September 21, 2014:

[Started getting her monthly food at her home](#)

- 1) We are arranging her monthly food. She is not in the position to earn her food . For her disease she needed nutritious food. We are purchasing her food for a whole month: 15 kg rice, 2 kg daal, 10 packs soabn, 2 eggs daily, 250 ml milk everyday. Thanks to people like Avijit Mukherji, Sumathi who is helping us to do this by donating.
- 2) We have given her and her daughter used clothes which are in good condition. Her daughter has shoe to go school.
- 3) We are trying to take Doctors to her and guide for her treatment.



October 15, 2014:


[Food for October.](#) She told us she was feeling a little better.

October 30, 2014: A doctor visited her at home.

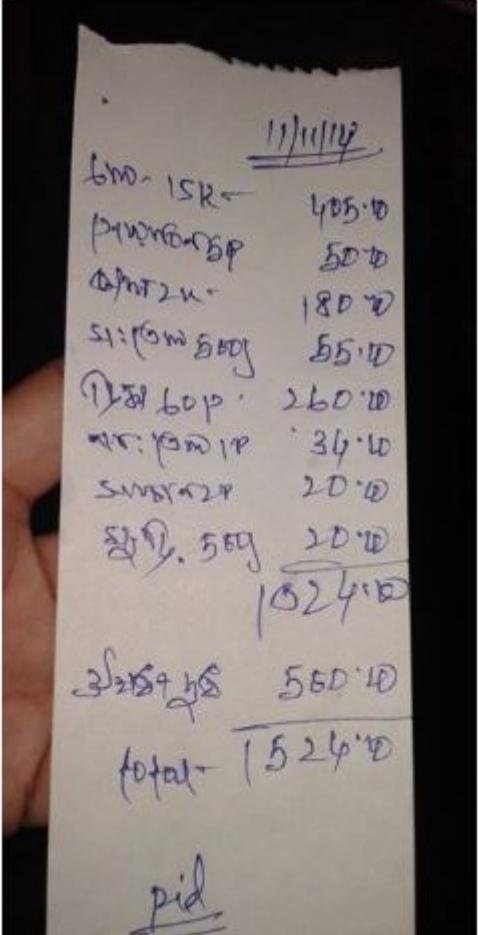



November 2014: [Things started getting better.](#)

Along with food, got them new clothes as winter was knocking at the door. Brought some toys for Reshma. Hasi's health was improving.

 **Jiban** added 2 new photos.
Published by Subhadip Mukherjee [?] · 11 November 2014 · 🌐

Food and medicine for Hasi Sardar for the 3rd month. This month Paramita Chakraborty donated to save this woman. Hasi Sardar, age 28, almost at last stage of drug resistant TB. To feed herself and her 5 year old daughter she were begging for food when we noticed her 3 months ago.




| 11/11/14 | |
|---------------|---------|
| 6m - 1SR | 405.00 |
| Prinorone 500 | 50.00 |
| Ampt 2x | 180.00 |
| SI: 10m 500g | 55.00 |
| Prinor 60p | 260.00 |
| SI: 10m 1p | 36.00 |
| Sunstar 2x | 20.00 |
| SI: 50g | 20.00 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 1024.00 |
| 3x 50g 2x | 560.00 |
| <hr/> | |
| total | 1524.00 |
| <hr/> | |
| pid | |

Little Reshma, [started going to school.](#)



January 31, 2015: As it got colder, Hasi Sardar's health started deteriorating. We admitted her to Hospital.

**Jiban**
Published by Subhadip Mukherjee [?] · 31 January 2015 · 🌐

during this months visit to give food to Hasi Sardar we saw that her condition became worse suddenly. We tried hard to admit her to Govt hospital. finally today she has been admitted to a govt hospital . These were sequence of events we had to follow to take her to hospital with many people's help.

- 1) Dr Tanmay Mahapatra advised she need hospitalisation immediately. He told to take her to R G Kar medical college DOT+ clinic.
- 2) Subhadip Mukherjee went to her home to convince her family to admit her to hospital. to ensure financial assistance.
- 3) Ramjiban Mukherjee took her to R G Kar hospital in Taxi.
- 4) At R G Kar Hospital dr advised hospitalisation. But they needed a certificate from District tuberculosis officer at Barast far away from R G Kar medical college .
- 5) Ramjiban Mukherjee took her to Barasat for certificate.
- 6) with the certificate she was advised to go Jadavpur T B Hospital.
- 7) Again Ramjiban Mukherjee took her there. Initially they refused to admit her . But finally convinced.

all required money was spent from fund donated by @Paromita and @Basubhadra.

February 2, 2015: Hasi Sardar passed away. Uncertain future for Reshma.

Hasi Sardar passed away in the hospital. It was very difficult for me to face it. I saw little Reshma crying in front of her mother's dead body. She became alone in this world.

I was clueless about her future. I hugged her tight. Bought her some food and chocolates.

She was staying alone with her elderly maternal grandparents.

Jiban
Published by Subhadip Mukherjee [?] · 2 February 2015 · 🌐

Hasi Sardar passed away today despite all our effort. Her only daughter Reshma is orphan from today.

113 people reached Boost Unavailable

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Madhulika Mishra Top comments ▾

Write a comment...

Arnab Bob Sarkar @Subha, Can I have the privilege to take Reshma's all education cost until she becomes independent? She is not orphan, amra achi.....
Like · Reply · Message · 4 February 2015 at 04:30

Debajyoti Chatterjee It's a very sad news! May her soul rest in peace.
Like · Reply · Message · 2 February 2015 at 18:35

Arindam Deb Tewary pretty bad makes me sad
Like · Reply · Message · 2 February 2015 at 14:43

Write a comment...

In search of a safe and good home for Reshma:

Reshma's relatives asked me if I could arrange an accommodation at some boarding school for her. They also told me that it would be very difficult for them to raise her. I was puzzled, I did not know of any suitable organisation. But a friend came to my rescue. She told me about an international organization, [SOS Children's Villages](#), in Kolkata. They had a place vacant for one child at the moment.



But to get an admission there Reshma needed a lot of paperwork and related formalities -- a birth certificate, consent from her grandparents, visiting appropriate government authority and explaining before them why her grandparents were unable to take care of Reshma. Reshma did not have any birth certificate. Her grandparents were illiterate and it was very difficult for them to arrange it. I used to visit them and guide them with regard to all necessary paperwork. I used to visit Reshma. Reshma did not break down. She was a brave girl, she used to talk with me -- I could feel that she felt reassured, happier whenever I visited her place. Reshma's smiles gave me the power to go through

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all these difficult procedural hassles. During lunch breaks, after office hours I spent time to get those formalities done. The representative from SOS children's village was also very cooperative.

March 29, 2015: [A new home for Reshma:](#)

Finally Reshma got a new home in the internationally renowned organisation which takes care of children like Reshma.



Jiban

Published by Sudeepta Ray [?] · 29 March 2015 ·

After Hasi Sardar's death her family members wanted to put her daughter in a boarding school/orphan age as there is no one to take care of her . Hasi Sardar's daughter Reshma got a new home @sos village...may this be the beginning of a new life for her - full of happiness and joy - as she deserves!! Thanks to all the friends who supported this effort. Many thanks to Subrata Roychowdhury for the guidance.

This is an international organization with good track record . Reshma will be here until she becomes self sufficient or married. She will be admitted to school. We can meet her anytime. Her family members can see her twice a year. She can return home after 18 years if she wants. Otherwise she can stay there as long as she wants.



August 24 , 2015 : [A happier Reshma.](#)



Jiban added 2 new photos.

Published by Subhadip Mukherjee [?] · 24 August 2015 · 🌐

A new Reshma as seen on August 22, 2015. Her health improved, she is getting education, joined dance class. She is smiling.





August 28, 2016 : Reshma, the Champion:

Visited Reshma, just before I travelled to Stockholm, Sweden on September 1, 2016. She was going to school, learning music, learning Karate with her other friends at the village. I could sense the confidence and happiness. I asked Reshma "Are you happy? Do you feel good here?" She smiled and told me that she was happy, she got her new mother there (a vivacious lady who takes care of ten children in one house, they call her their mother). Her teachers told me she was such a nice and smart girl! Waiting eagerly to see her again as soon as I return to India.



Reshma taught me some very important lessons in life :

1) To learn to be happy : We complain about everything -- an insufficient salary hike, a snarling office hour traffic, the questionable cooling efficiency of an aging air conditioner, a missed onsite money making opportunity, of not having the snazziest smartphone, of missing an attractive online shopping deal! We are the most unhappy people ever lived on earth. I found Reshma amazingly calm and smiling in every situation, always. She never complained about anything.

2) The poorest of the poor can share, but the richest of the rich may not : Eating an egg was a rare luxury for Reshma. Once her mother gave her a boiled egg from her own diet. I was visiting them at that time. I found Reshma dividing the single egg in four equal pieces and sharing that with three of her friends. The sight of Reshma sharing her food with her friends brought tears to my eyes. She taught me, generosity resides in our mind, not in our bank accounts. I have never seen anyone so generous as her. I felt that

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"Maslow's hierarchy of needs" is not always true.

3) If you want to be happy, help others :It is a punishment to think only about your own good. The sooner you start realising this, the better it is for your own mental health.

4) If you love it, you can do it : I never thought I could do anything for Reshma. But I loved that little girl and genuinely wanted to help her. Today it gives me confidence to reach out to people and help them at their times of need.