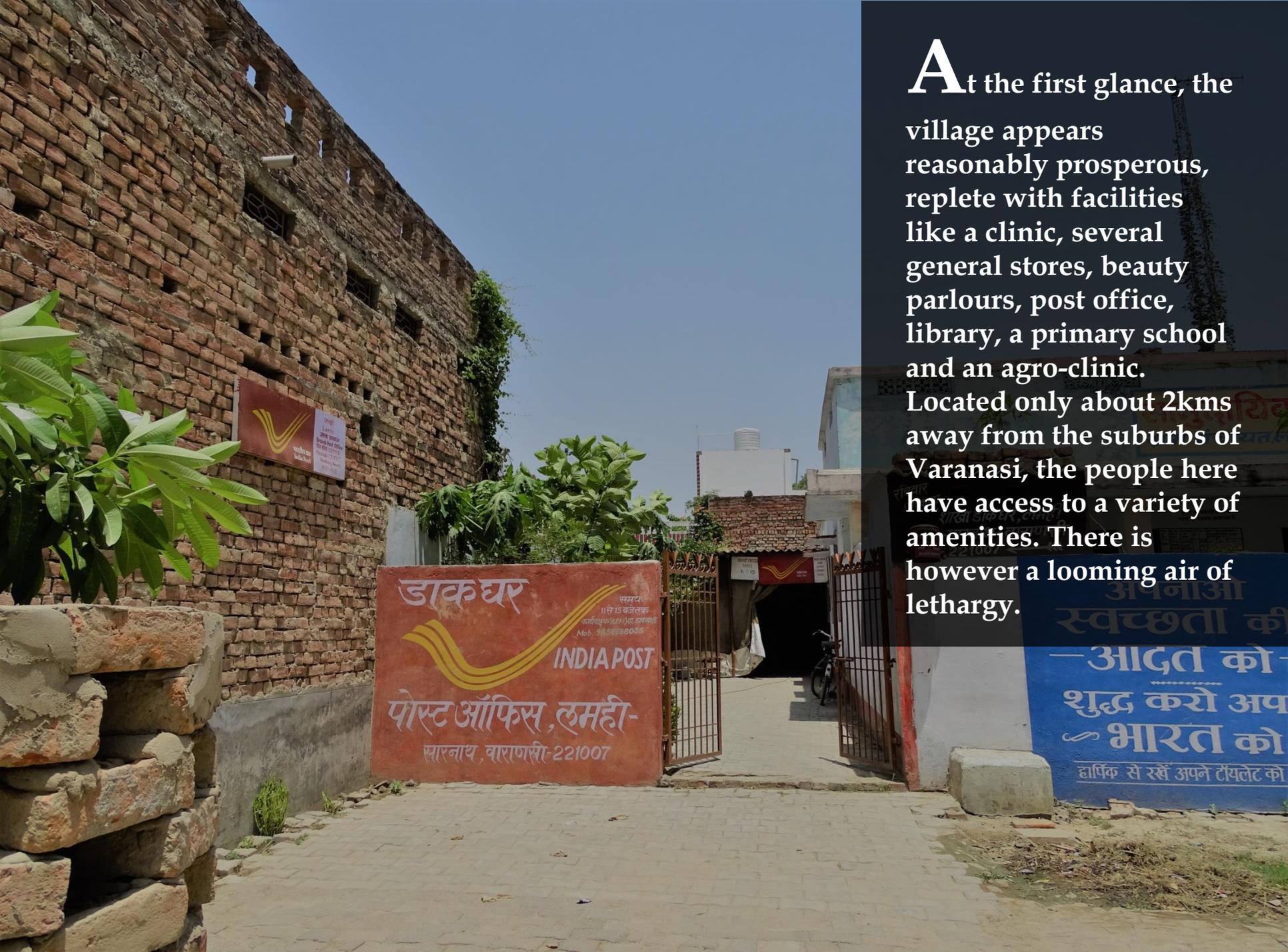


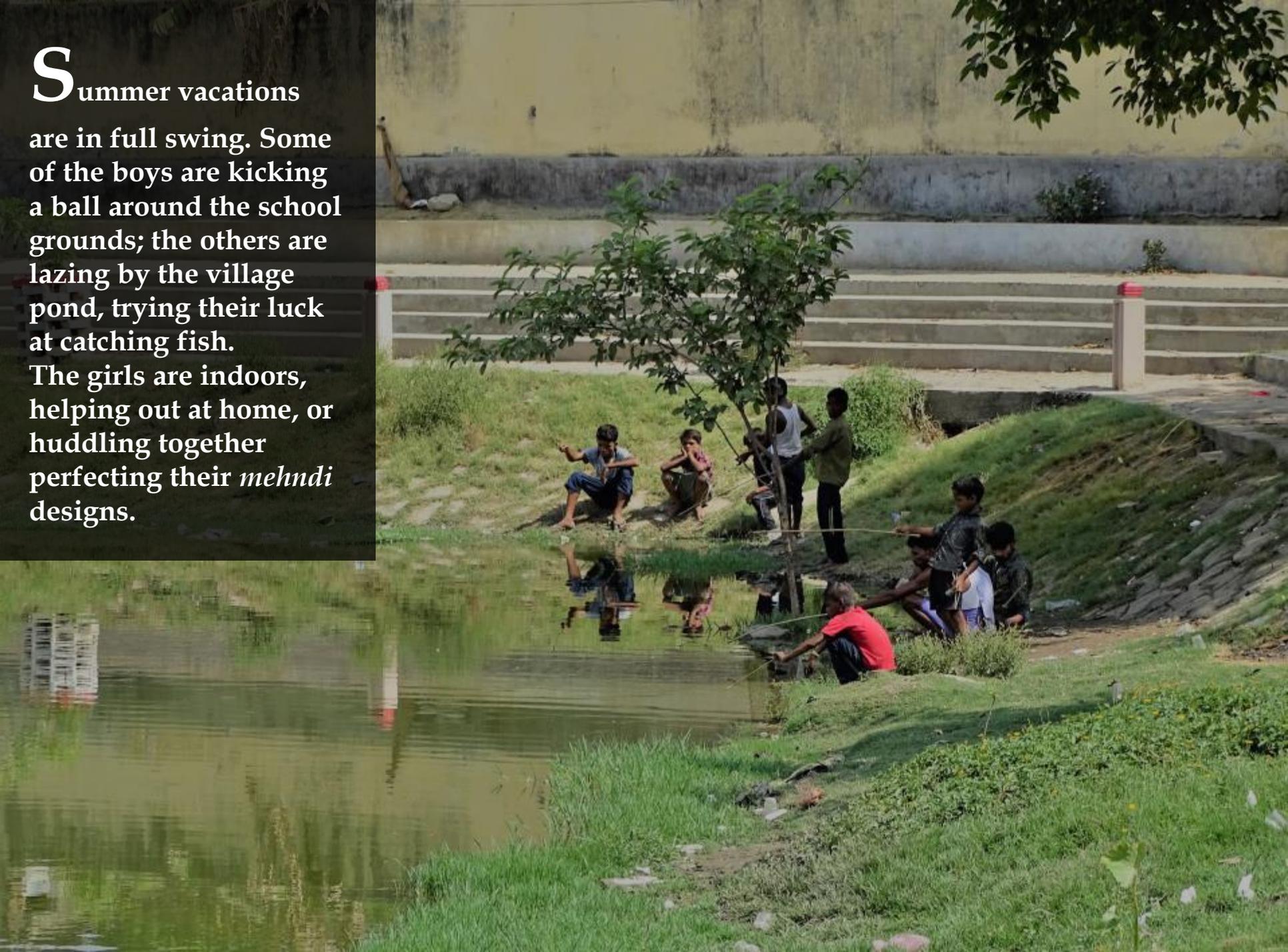
This is the story of a village
in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh,
and its **youth.**



At the first glance, the village appears reasonably prosperous, replete with facilities like a clinic, several general stores, beauty parlours, post office, library, a primary school and an agro-clinic. Located only about 2kms away from the suburbs of Varanasi, the people here have access to a variety of amenities. There is however a looming air of lethargy.

अपनीआ
स्वच्छता की
—आदत को—
शुद्ध करो अप
भारत को
द्वारिक से रखें अपने टॉयलेट को

Summer vacations are in full swing. Some of the boys are kicking a ball around the school grounds; the others are lazing by the village pond, trying their luck at catching fish. The girls are indoors, helping out at home, or huddling together perfecting their *mehndi* designs.





Barring a few, all of the village youth go to school. They study, because that is what is expected of them to do.

They have dreams; most of them even have the means to work towards these dreams. But there seems to be a gaping disconnect between their aspirations and their present circumstances. Most of the village youth is going through high school oblivious to what they have to do in order to realize their dreams.

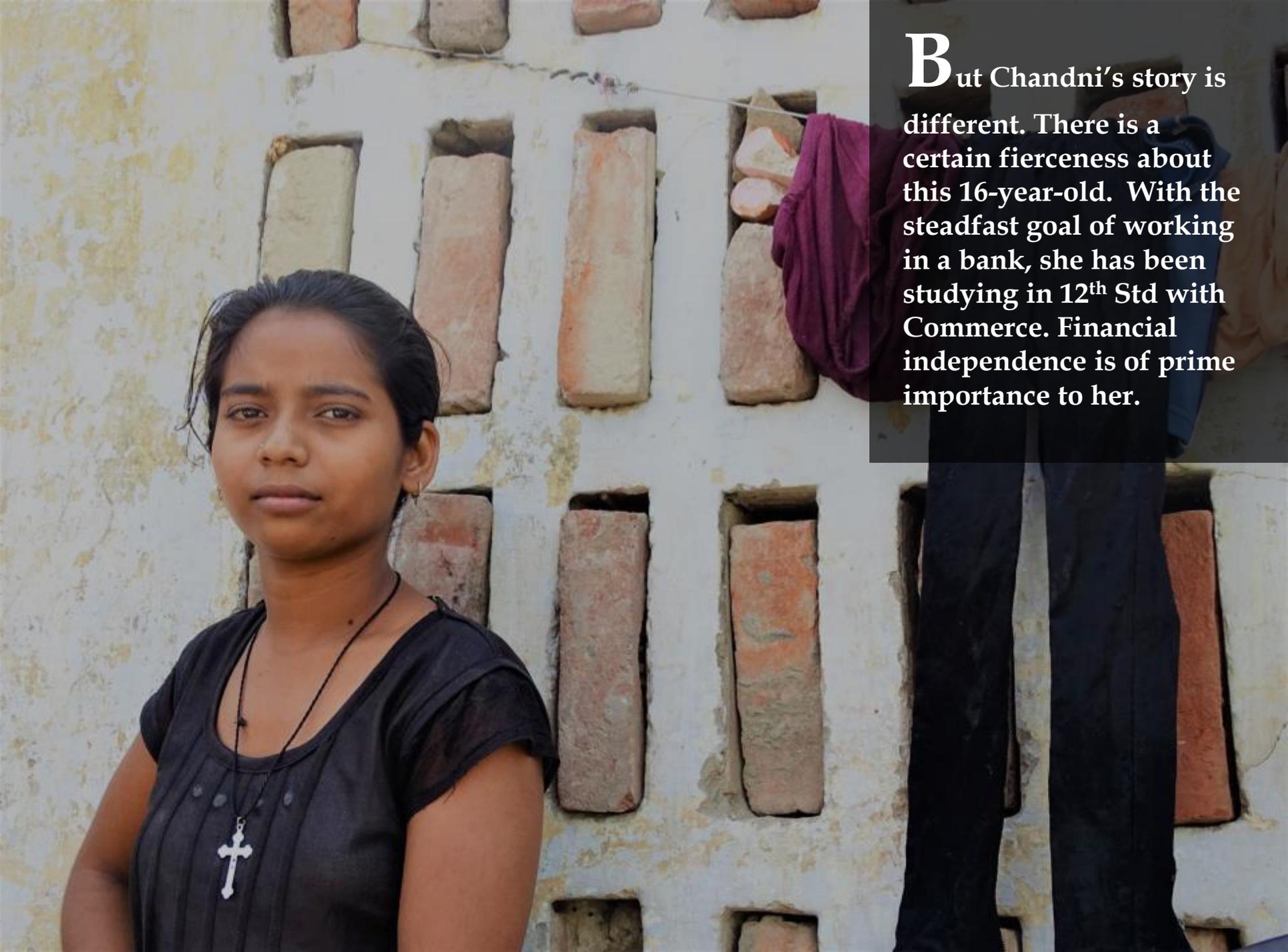




The girls of the Prajapati clan never leave their house, except when they go to school. Both Neha and Ayushi are enrolled in the 9th Std. Drawing inspiration from her uncle who is an advocate, Neha wants to become a lawyer. Ayushi aspires to become a doctor, but does not know how. Despite the fact that there are reasonably educated elders in their family, the lack of guidance is apparent.

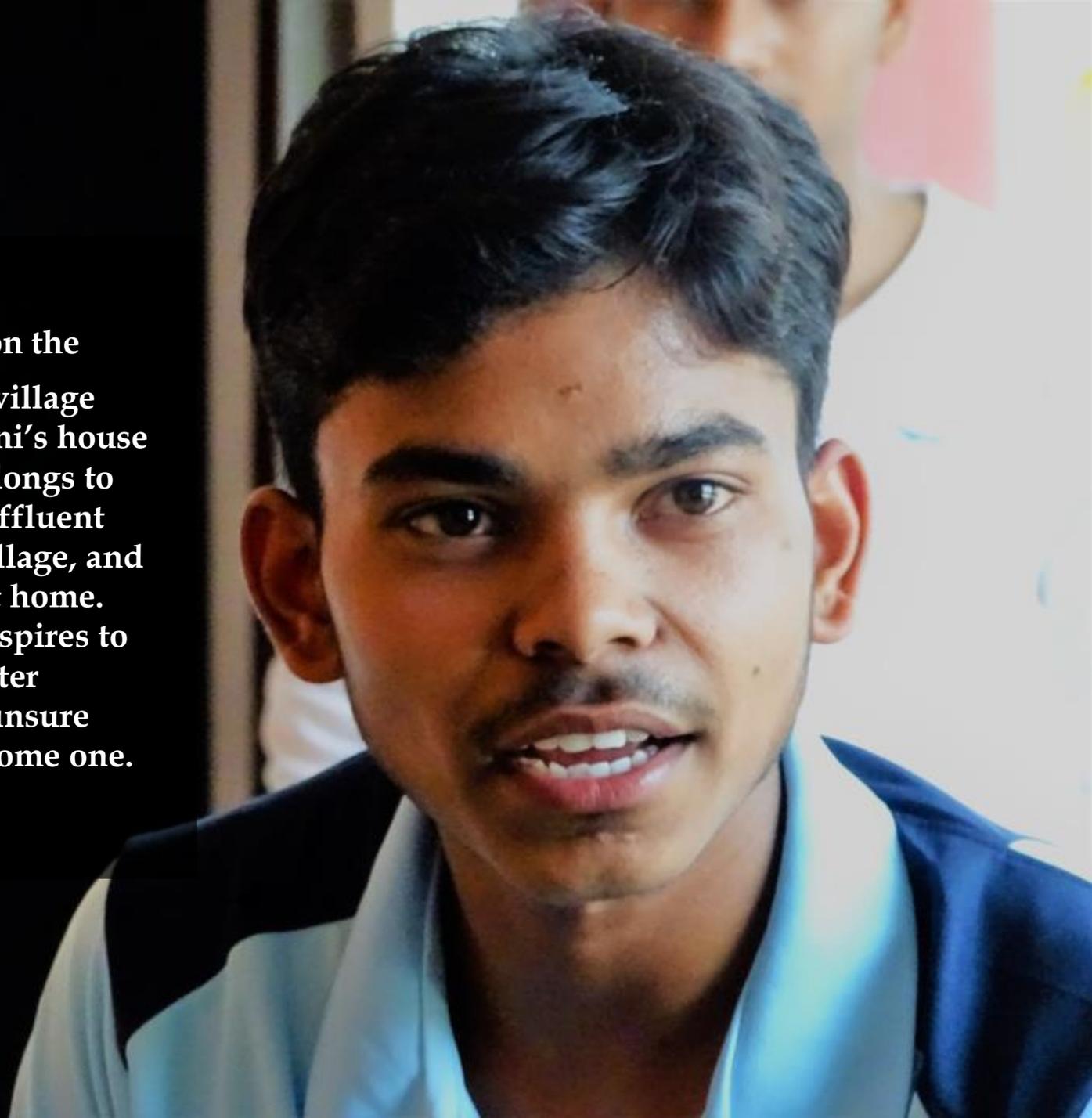
Mohini is 19, and lives with her grandmother in a different part of the village. She is currently enrolled in 11th Std, and wants to study further. However, because of her financial circumstances, she will have to drop out of school soon. She plans to join the local beauty parlour training centre to fend for her grandmother and herself.





But Chandni's story is different. There is a certain fierceness about this 16-year-old. With the steadfast goal of working in a bank, she has been studying in 12th Std with Commerce. Financial independence is of prime importance to her.

Dinesh lives on the other side of the village pond that Chandni's house overlooks. He belongs to one of the more affluent families in the village, and has a computer at home. The 17-year-old aspires to become a Computer Engineer, but is unsure about how to become one.





Further down the byzantine lanes of the village lives 16-year-old Arjun. He is enrolled in 8th Std, and likes Math. He hasn't really thought about what he wants to become when he grows up, and no one at home is educated enough to guide him.

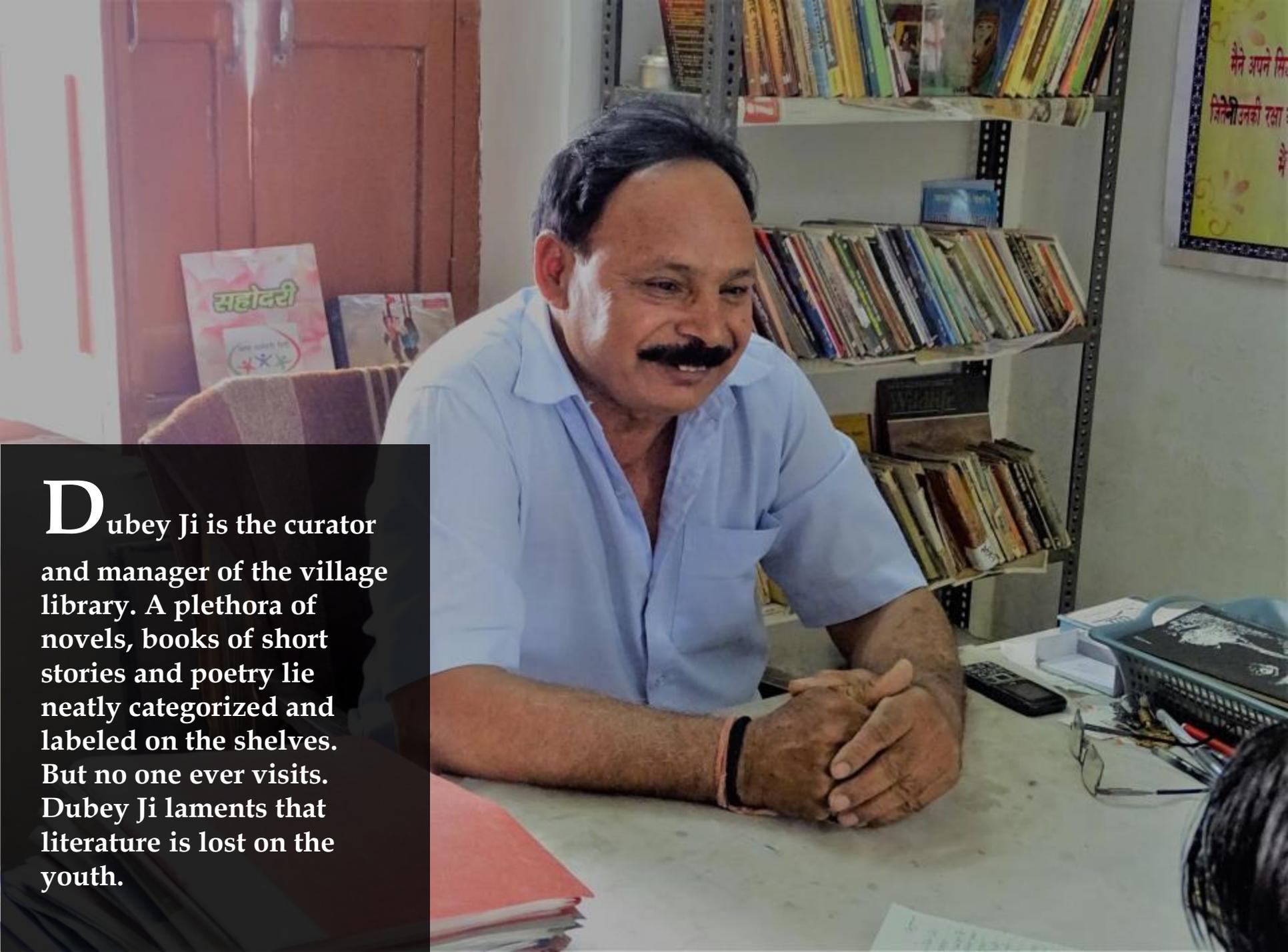


Despite the fact that almost everyone is enrolled in school, the Pradhan is quick to dismiss the youngsters in the village as unproductive and useless. The villagers have sold off their farmlands, and are sitting on neat sums of money – so they don't feel the need to work. This lifestyle is affecting the younger generations. Pradhan Ji has been proactive in trying to involve the youth of the village in a variety of government schemes. He is concerned that they are slipping into a serious alcohol and gambling habit.

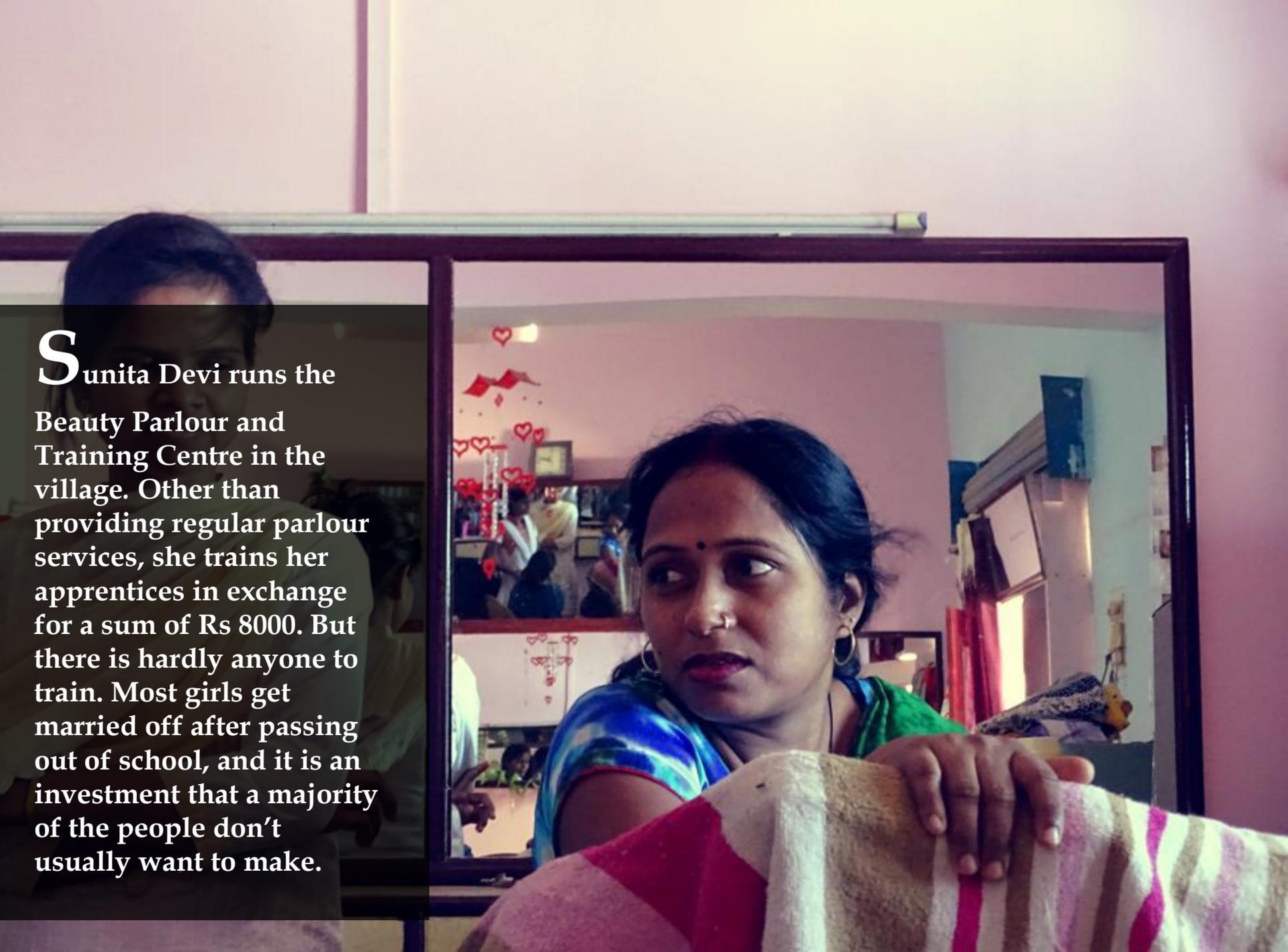
Anganwadi worker

Sursati Devi resonates the Pradhan's concerns . She too is of the opinion that the villagers are neck deep in alcoholism and gambling, and the youth of the village are getting swayed by the culture.





Dubey Ji is the curator and manager of the village library. A plethora of novels, books of short stories and poetry lie neatly categorized and labeled on the shelves. But no one ever visits. Dubey Ji laments that literature is lost on the youth.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue and green sari, is looking into a large mirror. She is holding a piece of fabric with red, white, and pink stripes. The mirror reflects the interior of a beauty parlour, decorated with red hearts and streamers. Other people are visible in the background of the reflection.

Sunita Devi runs the Beauty Parlour and Training Centre in the village. Other than providing regular parlour services, she trains her apprentices in exchange for a sum of Rs 8000. But there is hardly anyone to train. Most girls get married off after passing out of school, and it is an investment that a majority of the people don't usually want to make.



In the absence of role models, the youth of this village is stuck in a strange limbo. They have access to education, they're surrounded with a variety of opportunities and amenities. But the lack of guidance and awareness has left them goalless. They have dreams, but what they're studying does not align with the professions they want to pursue.

Because these kids have been focused on acquiring education for the sake of it, they are not aware that they could pick up the skills to navigate the course of their future. With the lack of guidance, the youth of this village are heading into adulthood directionless. What will then happen to the young workforce of this village? What steps need to be taken to ensure a more wholesome, well-rounded education for this age-group?

