

SAMMANIT JEEVAN

(Living with Dignity) For Teens

PHOTO STORY



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Rita is a 15-year old girl from rural Parbat district, Nepal.

Shyam is a 17-year-old boy from nearby Baglung district.

Rita, her cousin Laxmi, and friend Shanti go to Baglung Bazaar one day. Shyam is with his friend Kiran at the Chaitedashain Mela (a festival). Shyam sees Rita.



Shyam: "Look at that beautiful girl. I've never seen her before. Who is she?"



Kiran: "She is from the nearby Kushma Bazaar in Parbat district. She is our classmate Laxmi's cousin, and her name is Rita. She studies in one of the secondary schools in Parbat bazaar."



Shyam: "Could you please provide me with her contact details? I want to chat with her. Could you ask Laxmi for her number?"



Kiran approaches Laxmi, who he knows from school, and asks her for Rita's phone number and Facebook name.

Laxmi gives Rita's number to Kiran, who gives it to Shyam.



Shyam sends Rita a friend request on Facebook. Rita accepts his request. They start sending messages and talking on the phone regularly.



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Shyam develops strong feelings for Rita and sends her romantic text messages.

Shyam: "I love you Rita...I cannot live without you. I love you to the moon and back."

Rita does not feel as strongly as Shyam at first.

Rita: "Shyam, I need some time to think about my feelings. I will think for a few weeks."



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After one month, Rita decides that she also has strong feelings about Shyam. They start chatting regularly, meeting for walks, and going to the market together.

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After one more month of seeing each other regularly, Shyam thinks that their relationship should become physical.



Shyam: "Rita, we have been seeing each other for a very long time. I think we need to take our relationship to the next level. I love you so much and I know you trust me. I don't want to lose you. I think we should have sex."

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Rita: "Ahhmm...I am not sure, I'm hesitant. We should get married first. It is not good to have sex before marriage. I trust you, but I want to marry you first."



Rita is hesitant to have sex before marriage, so to make Shyam happy, Rita suggests that they should get married first. She feels pressure to do this.

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Shyam and Rita decide to get married by eloping. However, they are very young – below the legal marriage age of 20 years. They also belong to different ethnic backgrounds: Rita is from a Brahmin family and Shyam is from a Magar family. Therefore, they won't be able to convince their parents to let them get married.

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Rita and Shyam leave their homes to get married without the consent of their families. Their communities also do not support them because their marriage is inter-caste.



They move to a rented flat together, since their families do not accept their marriage.



Neither Shyam nor Rita know about using contraception, so after two months of marriage, Rita becomes pregnant at age 15.

Shyam tells his friend Kiran that he is surprised that Rita became pregnant. Rita and Shyam don't know much about pregnancy or pre-natal healthcare.





After Rita becomes pregnant, they both stop going to school and realize that they need money.



Shyam tells Rita: "We got married without consent from our parents, we belong to different ethnic groups so society does not support us, and we are feeling financial pressure because our baby is coming.

We have a huge responsibility now. We have not completed our studies, either. I will not find any job in this community. I think I have to go abroad for foreign employment. I will make plans to go Qatar for work so that I can send money back to you and our child."

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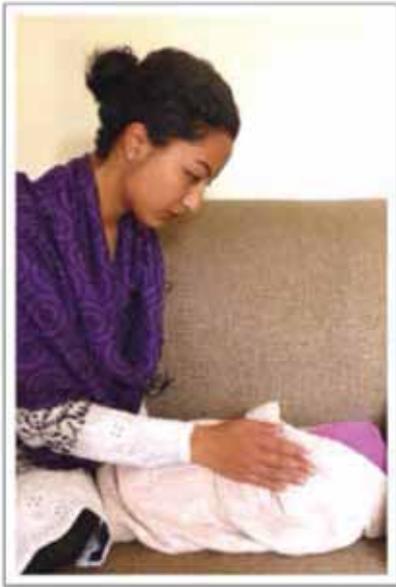
Rita gives birth to a baby girl. Rita did not get enough pre-natal healthcare and rest, so her baby is malnourished when it is born.



Shyam: "Well, my plans for working in Qatar are complete, and I will leave next week. Please take care of yourself and our daughter. I will call you and send money frequently."

Rita: "I have asked our landlord to provide us a loan of 2 Lakh rupees. But we have to pay NRs. 5000 interest per month. Please send money from your work to me, so that I can pay this interest and buy food for me and baby Prakriti."

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Due to not receiving correct information about foreign employment, Shyam did not get a good job in Qatar and could not send money to Rita. He experienced many hardships while working abroad and became depressed.

Meanwhile, Rita did not get support from her or Shyam's families, so her life became stressful and lonely. She had very little money to buy food for her and baby Prakriti, so they were often hungry.



What can Rita and Shyam do next?



1. Group Discussion :

- a. Do you think Shyam and Rita have a good relationship? Why or why not?
- b. What are some of the problems that they faced?
- c. How are they affected by these problems? List the effects on both teenagers on a flipchart.
 - i. Divide participants into 3-4 groups, give them flipchart and pens and ask them discuss the consequences of these problems on both teenagers' lives using a spider diagram.
 - ii. Give each group time to present on these consequences.

2. Explain that at the end of the story, Rita is left to take care of her baby alone at a very early age because Shyam left for a migrant job.

- a. Ask participants to sit in pairs or small groups: half of the pairs should discuss what advice they would give Rita and the others should discuss what advice they would give to Shyam.
- b. Remind participants that while they are discussing their advice to the two teenagers, they should keep in mind how the problems can be avoided.

3. Ask everyone to return to the full group and present their advice taking turn to present advice for Shyam and for Rita.

- a. What advice do you have for Shyam? What advice do you have for Rita?
- b. As a group, assess whether the advice is fair on either Shyam or Rita. Is there advice that seems to be giving responsibility to one person not the other?
- c. If your friend was in a similar situation, what would you advise them?

4. Summarise the consequences of early marriage and impact on both health and life if not taken into consideration at early age. In Shyam and Rita's story both of them cannot continue their study and compelled to go abroad leaving Rita to take care of baby alone.

Note: The advice provided by participants is meant to help them to think about the occasions where right decisions are not taken lead to negative consequence. Discussing different types of advice will help them to explore how teenagers can try to avoid the problems experienced by Shyam and Rita.

VSO Nepal

Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) is a development organization that fights poverty through volunteers and by advocating on behalf of marginalized communities. Our approach brings people together to share skills, build capabilities, promote international understandings and action to change lives and make the world a fairer place. VSO began its operations in Nepal in 1964 and aims to strengthen efforts by Nepal's stakeholders to be more responsive to and actively engaged in supporting disadvantaged groups. We achieve this through our signature programmes in Social Accountability and Inclusive Education.

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Bhimpokhara Youth Club, Baglung

Bhimpokhara Youth Club, Baglung is a non-governmental organization established in the year 1985 by a group of young, energetic, like-minded youths from Bhimpokhara VDC with a motive of giving back to the community. Initially it was established as local youth club, but today BYC operates as a national level NGO carrying a wide range of programs focused on three districts of Dhaulagiri zone. BYC envisions Nepali Society to be a "self-reliant" society whose aim is to advocate for self-reliant, equitable and just society being aware of roles and responsibilities covering a wide range of social, political, environmental aspects to develop into an independent, inclusive and a dignified society. It has been supporting various communities in conducting trainings, supporting livelihood programs and in the construction of infrastructures like roads, water taps, toilets, suspension bridge etc.



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