Every Drop Counts

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"Mina Chachi is here!" Samir said excitedly. Samir had been waiting all day for his Chachi to arrive.

She was an expert in water conservation. She had promised Samir that she would help him with his school project.

Samir ran down the steps and hugged his Chachi!
"I am glad to see you too, Samir," Mina Chachi smiled.

"Chachi, my project is due next week! I have to list down different ways by which we can save water. I only have two so far." Samir said.

"Not bad! What are the two ways you have thought of?" Mina Chachi asked.

"I asked Nani and Nana what they do. Nani said that they water their plants with the water they use to wash their vegetables.

I thought that it was a great idea." Samir said.
"That is an excellent idea," Mina Chachi agreed.

"What is the second way you have come up with?" Mina Chachi asked.

"Umm...I thought if I put a bucket on the terrace every time it rained, I could collect water. Then I could use the bucket of water in the toilet, instead of flushing," Samir explained.

"Wow! You are trying to set up your own rainwater harvesting system, by collecting rainwater. That's clever of you," Mina Chachi said.

"A few months back I helped the people of an apartment complex reduce their water usage. I think it would be useful if you spoke to the residents," Mina Chachi said.

"That sounds interesting! I will take my notebook so that I can write down everything!" Samir said excitedly.

Mina Chachi and Samir arrived at the apartment complex. "I can't wait to meet all the people!" Samir said excitedly.

"Have fun! I will wait for you in the car park," Mina Chachi said.
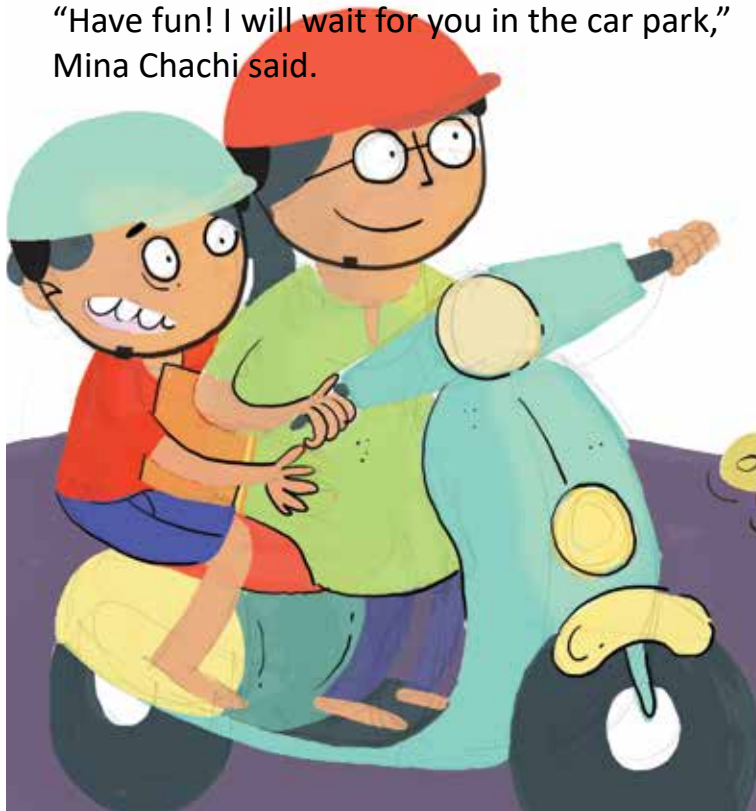
Samir rang the bell. A cheerful aunty greeted them at the door.

"Hello Tara Aunty! I am Samir."

"Yes, yes, Mina said that you would be coming! How can we help you Samir?" Tara aunty invited him in.

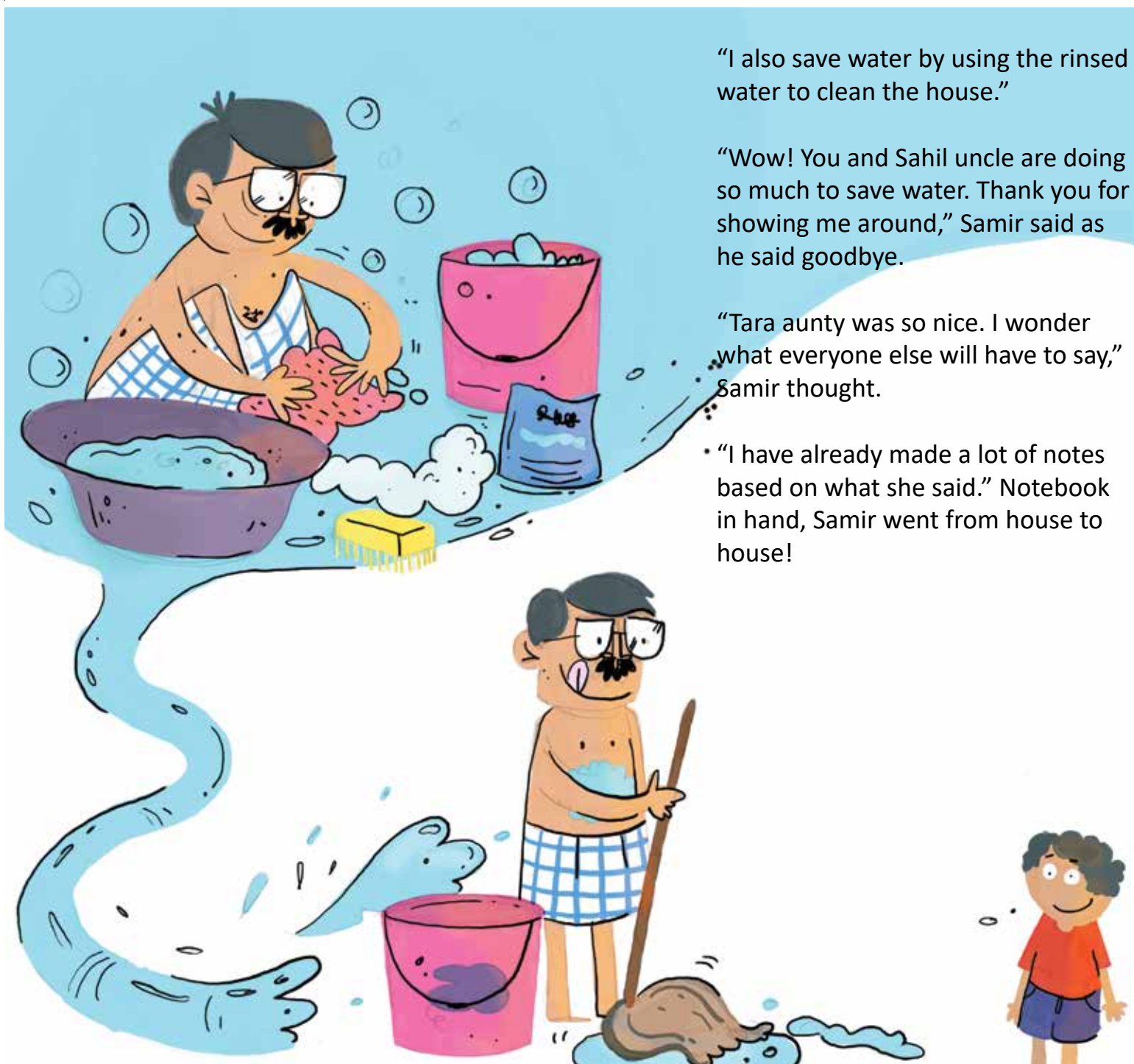"I wanted to know what you do to save water," Samir asked.

"Well Samir, both Sahil and I use just one bucket to have a bath. It uses a lot less water than a shower," Tara aunty explained.

"I am also very careful about any leaks in the house. I repair a broken pipe without wasting any time."

"I also save water by using the rinsed water to clean the house."

"Wow! You and Sahil uncle are doing so much to save water. Thank you for showing me around," Samir said as he said goodbye.

"Tara aunty was so nice. I wonder what everyone else will have to say," Samir thought.

"I have already made a lot of notes based on what she said." Notebook in hand, Samir went from house to house!

"I use only a cup of water to brush my teeth. A running tap uses too much water," Adi explained.

"My father and mother do that too."

"I use a twin flush system. I have a small flush that uses very little water and another big one that uses more water.

I use the flush according to how much I need. It has helped me save a lot of water," Nikhil Uncle said.

"We scrape all the food wastes from the plates before washing anything. We also wash all the dishes in a sink full of water, instead of running the tap. We also wash the vegetables in a bowl full of water." Rao uncle said.

"I collect all that water and use it for the plants," Rao aunty said.

"My Nana and Nani do that too!" Samir said, excitedly.

"I don't use a hose pipe to wash my car and bike," Mala aunty said.

"I use a bucket of water instead. In fact, I try and use rainwater for most of my washing.

Samir said goodbye to all the residents and went home. "I think I have enough to finish my school project, Mina Chachi! Thank you so much," said Samir. "I am always happy to help my favourite nephew!" Mina Chachi smiled.

"I am going to try and use everything I learnt today to save water in our house," Samir said. "I also realised that we use the least amount of water for drinking and cooking. Is that correct?"

"You are right, Samir," Mina Chachi said. "Where does all the water go then?" Samir asked.

"Most of our water gets used in flushing, washing utensils, washing clothes, gardening and bathing," Mina Chachi replied.

"Wow! I will put it in my school project." Samir said, writing everything.

"You really helped the residents reduce their water usage, Mina Chachi. I am beginning to understand how you did it."

"Do you know why we need to save water?" Mina Chachi asked.

"Because it is impossible to live without water," Samir replied.

"That is true, but also because 1.3 billion people in India don't have clean water like you and me!"

"1.3 billion! How much is that? It sounds like a big number," said Samir.

"It is a big number. It is a number made out of 13 digits!" Mina Chachi said.

"There are some people who travel for four hours just to fill two buckets of water! When we save water, we help all those people!"

"That sounds terrible, Samir said. I thought we found water everywhere!"

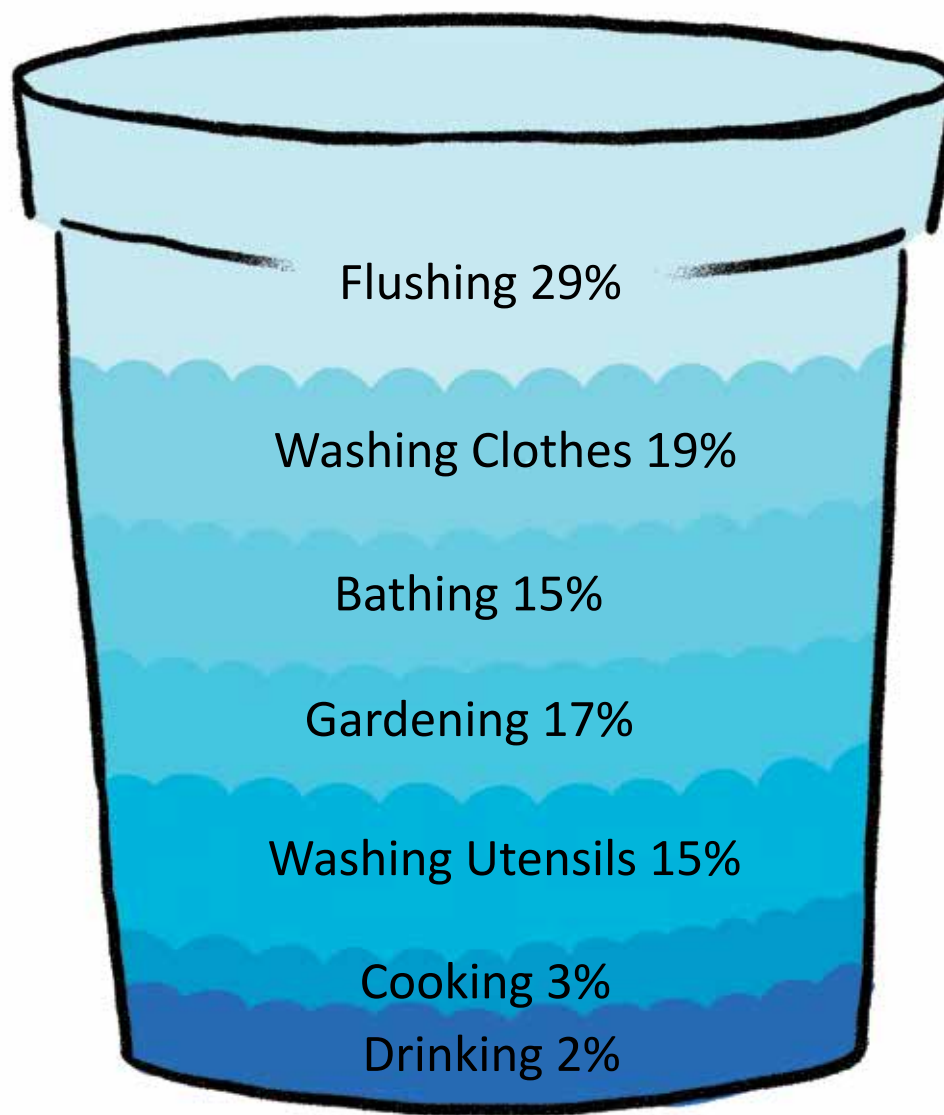"That is why it is so important that we save water," Mina Chachi said.

"If you make an effort and tell enough people around you to save water, you will be helping the environment," Mina Chachi said.

"I will do my best, Mina Chachi!" Samir replied. "I promise!"

If you used only a bucket of water during the day then this is where all the water would get used

Flushing 29%

Washing Clothes 19%

Bathing 15%

Gardening 17%

Washing Utensils 15%

Cooking 3%

Drinking 2%

Here are some people and animals who you would be helping when you save water

I am Ram. I haven't gone to school for three weeks because my stomach has been upset. The water we drink is very dirty.

I am Bushy, the Egret. The water that comes from your homes into this lake is making it very difficult for me to breathe!

I am Nira. I walk for four hours everyday so that my children have some water to drink. This is the only water we get during the day.

I am Ghuru, the Gharial. The water in the Yamuna is becoming dirtier by the day. If you help save this water, you will also save my home!

What are the activities that Samir should do to save water and what shouldn't he do.

Draw all the activities from the list below that save water on a piece of paper and pin it up in your room so you can remember.

Use a mug of water to brush his teeth.

Wash his father's care with a hose pipe.

Wash vegetables under running water.

Have a bath with a bucket

Collect rainwater to use around the house

Run the washing machine when it is only half full

Use the shower to have a bath

Conserving water is one of the ways of being a responsible and active citizen. There are many other ways you can be an active citizen in your community.

Below is a pledge you can take to show your commitment to becoming an active citizen

I .... take the Active Citizen Pledge.

I am a citizen of India. I care about my responsibilities and rights.
I care about my friends, my family, and my community.
I respect the rules of my country and my city.

I pledge to:

Take care of my school, parks, playgrounds and other public spaces.
Treat everyone with respect.
Save water and electricity at home and school and wherever I go.
Follow road safety and traffic rules.
Segregate waste, not litter and always throw garbage in dustbins.
Use public transport.
Not throw plastic and other items in lakes and rivers.
Vote in elections once 18 years of age.

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About Janaagraha

Janaagraha (www.janaagraha.org) was founded by Swati Ramanathan and Ramesh Ramanathan in December 2001. It is registered under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882. Janaagraha's mission is to transform quality of life in India's cities and towns and it defines quality of life as comprising quality of infrastructure and services and quality of citizenship. We work with citizens to catalyze active citizenship in city neighbourhoods and with governments to institute reforms to city governance (what we call "city-systems"). Civic Learning, Civic Participation and Advocacy and Reforms are Janaagraha's three major strands of work to accomplish its mission.

Quality of Citizenship is an integral component of Quality of Life and therefore, Janaagraha's Civic Learning Program is aimed at catalyzing Active Citizenship in our cites. We firmly believe that systematic Civic Learning is a prerequisite for large-scale civic participation in our cities, whereby citizens will take ownership of their neighborhoods and cities and work constructively with each other and their governments to solve civic problems. Good citizenship is about what citizens do, rather than who they are. As citizens, we can make our cities a better place to live in and improve our quality of life. In this process we become responsible, engaged and active