

This is a sample chapter from Part Two. This is not its final version however. It has been edited to take out some material that would allow too much information about the mysteries that prevail in subsequent parts.

CH. 63: OF BHAGGU AND LAGGHU

Where we come to know, quite intimately, the origins of the names and the origins of these two goons; where we learn why these two are always together – because nobody else wants them near them; where we find out the similarities between these two and our Dattu; where their sorry lives are laid bare after a clinical dissection; where they reveal what they are up to – while doing a minuet with threatening Aura; where we see the goodness in them; where they offer their help to our youngsters; where they make an expected request concerning Aura; where Amanat requests them for something; and where Bhaggu suffers a bout of temporary amnesia while Lagghu goes through an existential crisis which could be a sar-khujam (but don't tell that to the Goonda Gardi! Please!).

Addressing Bhaggu, Amanat said: “I remember seeing you earlier. Weren't you the one who winked at me at the end of the fight in the tunnels?”

Aura looked daggers at Bhaggu and asked Amanat: “He winked at you? I will *whonk* this *wily whonker* ...” She alone would know what she meant by that.

Those words and eyes did convey the right amount of menace, though. So, given that the content may be

unclear, but the intent is crystal-clear, let us leave it at that. Language is about communication, and she had communicated her desires to the duo.

The Eternal Coward wavered between *Ayee re! Bhaago!* and *'Aai re! Wachaw!* (In *Marathi*: Blessed Mother! Save me!).

He then tapped into a well of courage he did not know he had and hastily drew on this courage to stutter: “It was a wink of comradeship, of understanding...”

Aura started up and made as if to advance threateningly towards them; but Amanat called her back with a soft whisper. “Hush! Aura! We are among friends!”

Our Serene One looked at the cowering duo and said: “I understand. Firstly, how may I address you two?”

Bhaggu took the lead and said: “Miss Shoor, I am Bhaggu and my partner is Lagghu.”

An amused Amanat mused and said: “Hmm ... That implies that you were both named ‘Raghu’, but your names became mangled up due to some mess-up. Am I right?”

Bhaggu said: “In my case, yes. In Lagghu’s case, his father had a lisp!”

Amanat asked them: “Would you like us to call you both ‘Raghu’ or would you like to be addressed as ‘Bhaggu’ and ‘Lagghu’?”

Bhaggu looked at Lagghu, who looked back at him, equally questioningly. Then the taller one of the two said: “If it is all right with you, I have got so used to

being called ‘Bhaggu’ that any other name will sound strange – I may not even respond to being called Raghu.

The same is also the case with my friend here – don’t you agree, Lagghu?”

Lagghu piped up: “Miss Shoor, thank you for asking.

“Nobody has ever asked me this before ... And thank *you* for calling us your ‘friends’.

“Obviously, you can see that I am a midget, so I am more an object of ridicule than of consideration.”

Our Didactic One looked at him as she would look upon everyone else and said: “If you hold on to the ridicule and scorn that come your way, they will stay *with* you, *in* you.

“They will be constant companions, pestering you even in your dreams, turning them into nightmares of self-disgust.

“If you can let them go, do so and you – and others – will eventually see the dignity in yourself.”

Aura, uncharacteristically, looked at Amanat with tears in her eyes, which were reflected in the suddenly brimming and streaming orbs of Bhaggu and Lagghu.

She was picturing her own self of a few years back.

Our goons were seeing themselves as they were then.

Aura looked at the two ex-goons and said: “Just listen to her ... You won’t regret it!”

Finally, with the preliminaries out of the way, Amanat asked the duo: “How can we help you?”

Through his tears, Lagghu said: “Oh! We don’t need any help just yet.”

Bhaggu, twin runnels of catharsis (the real one, not that *khatta-sis*) cleansing his dust-encrusted cheeks, added: “In fact, we are the ones who want to help you.”

Bhaggu, with the *namaste* and the bow still present in his demeanour and his actions, asked: “May we call you all by your first names?”

On receiving Amanat’s assent, Bhaggu said: “*We* would like to help *you*.”

Aura, her moment of impropriety forgotten, flared up instantly and growled: “Why do *you* want to help *us*?”

“Are you going to become traitors – betray your former boss now and then betray us later when the opportunity presents itself? Are you doing it so to avoid a beating?”

Bhaggu did not react to Aura’s taunts; and still looking at Amanat, said: “Can we speak honestly? Really, really honestly?”

Amanat quelled Aura and told the duo: “Please do so. You are among honourable people.”

Bhaggu said: “*Nobody* has ever listened to us. Everybody either *barks* at us or *sends* us away. *Everybody* discounts our presence. *You* noticed us enough to acknowledge our presence; even acknowledge our existence. Thank you, Amanat and Aura, for listening to us – looking *at* us.

“A precise answer to Aura’s question about betrayal is ‘No, we won’t betray you’. We have long been in contact

only with evil, so goodness has never impacted on us. Through Amanat, we have experienced what goodness, what justice can be like and we would like to take this opportunity to change ourselves, to turn over a new leaf.

“Would you allow us that opportunity, Amanat?”

Our Serene One stared deep into their eyes for a few moments, and then said: “*I can't do that.*”

There was dejection and rejection on two faces as they began to turn away.

That was when our Perceptive One said: “It's not *I* who can allow you that opportunity. Why do you seek the approval of others?”

“When *you* want to change, you *will*. Every caterpillar *has* to metamorphose into a butterfly; every dark cloud, into life-giving rain.

“Why won't *you*? What's stopping *you*?”

They turned back to her.

That got both of them thinking ... and their silent tears flowed anew in a manifestation of the slow and gentle letting-go of emotions that had been held pent-up for decades; of acknowledging their ‘higher’ selves; of purification; of the recognition of all that could be and was good in them.

Finally, Bhaggu and Lagghu found that the same goodness had been rekindled in them.

One act of kindness, of mercy, of justice ... can become a 'pay-it-forward' gesture, birthing a whole sequence, a chain reaction of similar gestures; similar in intent, if not in content.

Further, such an act of kindness leaves behind a large residue of goodness on the part of the doer; even if the one on whom the procedure was performed, may not even be aware that goodness had touched him/her.

To understand this, think of the love constantly showered upon you by your parents ... Do you thank them for *each* and *every* act? Do you even *notice* each and every act?

This, thankfully, does not stop the philanthropic sequence, because the doer, once tasked with the job of doing good, will, most probably, continue on the same path.

It's like giving away to charity what you have plenty of... The giving never ends, because the plentitude never ends.

With me, it's words.

The doer – suffused in the afterglow of satisfaction, of charity done to a fellow being – will most probably continue on this same path.

Possibly, when the acts become plentiful, impactful or noticeable enough, people will acknowledge them and the truth may emerge; provoking others to follow suit.

Aman and Ayelan walked in then.

Aura chafed a little, but just a little, at this emotional tableau, but acknowledged why the formerly comical duo before her needed the release, so she kept quiet.

When the two had regained some normalcy and composure, she asked: “So, how do you plan to help us?”

Bhaggu said: “... by ensuring that you are advised of any evil intent directed towards you... by letting you know what Vikathor may plan in future, and whether those plans are likely to mar the ‘goodness’ that you represent.”

Amanat looked at the two, and said: “Thank you. If you need to contact us, leave a message with Dattu or, if it is urgent, come visit us at the clubhouse. I will ask my parents to see how we can repay you.”

Bhaggu said: “No, thank you! We hope that we will have something important to offer you. However, we are not looking for pay – just the fact that we have found that core of goodness inside us, that we can help goodness in some way, is payment enough for us.”

Lagghu, looking querulously at Aura, asked Amanat: “May we request one thing?”

Amanat guessed where this request was going and reaching over, held on to a surprised Aura’s hand by entwining her fingers in Aura’s. Then, with a smile on her lips and in her eyes, she told Lagghu: “Yes, she will!”

“Can your Vindictive One be a little gentler with us in the next fight? Please? Pretty please?” Lagghu said, then was surprised that he had already been answered.

Aura began to get up at being called ‘vindictive’, but Amanat’s hold held her back. Our Prescient One looked at our Vengetarian as if to say, ‘You can say it with your mouth, rather than your fists.’

Our Gruff One then said: “I won’t promise anything ... but I will see where I can hurt you less – but just a ‘little’ less,” to wincing of remembered pain and future to-be-remembered pain on the faces of the two.

Just as the two were about to turn away, Amanat called out to them and said. “Now *I* have a request to make of you. I will tell you what it is before I ask whether you will agree to it. Is that okay?”

Both Bhaggu and Lagghu said with alacrity: “It doesn’t matter. If you are asking, it will be done.”

Amanat sighed, then smiled and said: “Thank you! Do you remember all those glowing lights (...) in the tunnels, and the bolt that struck you down ... I request that you not talk about that to anyone else.”

Bhaggu said archly: “I don’t remember anything! It’s an occupational hazard. What (...) tunnels?”

“In fact, which tunnel are you referring to? The one on the highway leading to Shivapur or one of the ones on the expressway to Mumbai ...?”

Lagghu, on his part, put on a falsely innocent face and said in mock seriousness: “Fight? *Us* and *fight*? We don’t fight. *Nuh Uh!* In fact, we have never got involved in a fight so far! So rough ...!

“What do you think we are? *Goondas*?”

Amanat let loose, like a tinkling bell! She did!

It was good for her to let go, once in a while, after having to keep all that lovely bubbling laughter bottled up whenever it threatened to surface after *each and every* Auracle and Ayerony.

Aura was surprised with Amanat’s continued laughter. It was a delight to hear because she did that so seldom ... (*Can you guess why?*), but wasn’t it inappropriate?

Weren’t these two actually *goondas*? Where was the *humour* in that?

“Why are you laughing when they say they are not *goondas*? When did they become *No-goon-das*? (As in the surname Das.)

“Is this what is known as a ‘*sar-khujam*’!” she asked. Her fellow adventurers let loose – really, really loose. They were joined by nervous titters from the two *no-goon-das*; though they kept one eye each on Aura and religiously adhered to the *paanch gilli, paanch danda* rule.

I believe Aura wanted to say ‘sarcasm’. However, ‘*sar-khujam*’ is very, very, appropriate too. Without the affectatious ‘m’ as a suffix, it could mean ‘scratching your head in consternation’.

We all do it around Aura, often ... that '*sar-khujam*'. She cannot do sarcasm, but her Auracles sure can! It is about all that *paanch gilli, paanch danda* stuff. Sarcasm needs that chasm.

Oh! We all do the latter around her as well, but it is all '*sar-khujam*' to her, so the effort is wasted, or at least, she makes it appear to be wasted.

'*Sar-khujam*' comes with appropriate and obvious physical head-scratching movements, which delight her.

Sarcasm appears to be lost on her!

Is it any wonder that we don't let her *paanch gilli paanch danda* near a dictionary?

Regarding the question that Lagghu posed ... he was surely thanking whichever deity he revered in gratitude that nobody from the *Goonda Gardi* was around at that time.

Such statements and questions from a known goon would have been treated as an 'existential crisis' in the making and the goon would have to be 'treated'.

On very rare occasions, this involved doctors and psychiatrists.

On most occasions, it involved chains, concrete shoes and a confirmed seat for one, reserved at the bottom of a nearby river or ocean.

It was a breathless, memorable, once-in-a-lifetime experience that offered total immersion to the experiencer!

Some called it a *goondectomy*.

The one who is experiencing it normally couldn't go beyond '*Glurgl!*'

At most, it would be followed by a 'gl' as even the 'glur' would have given up the ghost of its breath by then.

So, about Bhaggu and Lagghu's utterances... I won't tell the *Goonda Gardi* about them. I hope you don't do so either. They have just found the path to goodness and they could well be important to our AdvenChaar.

Further, Bhaggu could be pardoned for having that temporary occupational amnesia we dealt with when talking about the *Goondom* Code in Part One.

The Code allowed for such incidences.

It, however, did not allow for a complete negation of what ought to be the purpose of a *goonda*'s vocational existence – which is what Lagghu had done.

After this episode, our quartet headed outwards.

“The Beating has left the building!” was the *muezzin* call given by one goon who had been thrown high up into an upper story. Everybody, a revived Vikathor included, got down on their knees to pray and offer benediction to whichever deity they revered.

