"Come home Chaami, I shall show you some thing interesting"- Buddu was calling Chaami on a Sunday afternoon “What is it Buddu?” She asked curiously. Buddu said, “Our gardener from my daddy’s village has come. He has brought us two big bunches of banana, however they are all green and not ready to eat. But, he says that, he has a quick technique of making them ready to eat”. Not ready to believe, Chaami said in a stern voice, “How can that happen!?, My Daddy says starchy fruits take more time to ripe because the process of conversion of starch into sugars requires that much time; how does your gardener make the fruits to ripen in just two days time?”. Not willing to lose, Buddu told her in an equally strong voice, “I do not know all those details Chaami; may be that is true under an ideal situation in nature; but our gardener does it in front of us and that is the reality you know; he is currently engaged doing that at my home; if you are interested to see that, come and see for yourself”. Chaami was not ready to believe, but she was interested to see that quick technique. She went with Buddu to his home.

There, they saw Buddu’s gardener busy separating the banana hands from the bunch. Also seen were a big earthen pot and a bundle of green foliage of a plant lying beside. They sat near the pot and peeped into it to see a layer of banana hands spread at the bottom. As they watched, Buddu’s gardener spread over the banana fruits a layer of the green foliage lying there. Above that he placed one more layer of fruits. With alternate layers of fruits and the green foliage he filled up the pot and closed its mouth with a lid to finally seal it all round the brim with wet clay to make it airtight. While Buddu’s gardener was doing all this, Chaami and Buddu remained spell bound. While the two kids were watching the gardener, Buddu’s mother brought them their afternoon tea. Chaami and Buddu found the tea unusually distasteful. Sensing their discomfort on the faces, Buddu’s mother clarified. “This is the herb tea prepared from the dried flowers of this plant. It is slightly bitter yet it is good for our health, drink it”, she insisted. Ignoring her words, Chaami and Buddu left behind the tea cups and ran out cursing her. However, their curiousity brought them back to the gardener. With much disbelief Chaami asked the gardener. “Are you sure that this process will not spoil the fruits and there will not be any rotting either, because you have made this pot airtight”. Buddu’s gardener smiled at her only to explain in an assuring voice. “Fruits will not get spoiled my dear, these green foliage which I have used here is known to hasten the process of fruit ripening. In our village this is how we induce ripening of mature green fruits; otherwise banana fruits take almost a week to ripen. Even then, the ripening will not be uniform. However, the fruits by this process, will not only ripen uniformly but also develop an acceptable colour and flavour. You can see for yourself the results in the next two days”.

(Turn to page 14)
Chaami & Buddu find the plant with ear lobes

**My name**
Cassia auriculata

**My nick names**
- Tanner's cassia
- Avaram
- Thangadi
- Avarttaki
- Tarval
- Aaviram
- Avirai

**How do I look?**
I am a highly branching shrub. My branches are reddish brown. My leaves have 8-12 pairs of leaflets. They are referred to as 'compound' leaves. There is a pair of large 'stipules', at the base of my leaf. They are ear-like in shape. My flowers are bright yellow and found in axillary clusters. The petals are 5 in number and they resemble saucer in shape. My fruits are 'pods'. They are flat, thin, papery, pale brown, deeply depressed between the seeds. My seeds are more or less kidney shaped and dark brown with hard shiny seed coat. 10-20 of them are present per pod.

**Colour Palette**
- Stem: Reddish Brown
- Leaves: Dark Green
- Flowers: Bright Yellow
- Fruits: Pea Green
- Stipules: Light Green

**Story Line** - Shaalmala
**Line drawing** - Soma
**Illustrations** - V K Acharya
**Design** - Santosh
How to identify me?

My bright yellow flowers found in clusters and the large ear shaped stipules at the base of my leaf help you identify me.

Where is my home?

I am commonly seen growing on dry stony open areas. In wild I am seen growing throughout Central and Southern India, often along the hedges and cropland bunds.

How useful am I?

My bark is used in tanning. The dried flower powder is used to make herbal tea. This bitter preparation is found to be antidiabetic. In rural India, my fresh foliage is used as a medium for ripening fruits. It is also used as packing material.

All my parts are medicinal too. My roots and leaves are used to treat skin diseases and ulcers; the flowers are used in diabetes and the seeds are used in worm infestations and conjunctivitis.

How to multiply me?

March is the best time and loamy soil is most suited soil for my growth. You can multiply me through seeds. Sow my seeds in moist beds. You can see me germinating with in 20 days

How to play with me?

Take a few hard green fruits of banana, sapota or guava, from the fruit shop (prevail upon the vendor for the unripe ones!). Take a medium sized mud pot with lid.

Spread my green twigs at the bottom of the pot. Place the unripe fruits on the twigs. Cover the unripe fruits with a layer of leaves. Close the pot with the lid. Seal it with wax or wet clay. Keep the pot undisturbed for a day or two. When you open it, you will find ready - to - eat, ripened fruits.
Inspite of his confident explanation, Chaami was still not convinced. However she asked, “OK, then tell me what is this magic plant called?”. Buddu’s gardener didn’t heed to her. “ I don’t tell you the name of this plant. But I shall tell you its identification characters. Try locating this plant in the field. If you are unable to find one, I shall show you the plant. This is frequently seen in your neighbourhood”- He said in a challenging tone. Chaami agreed. “OK tell me the field features, we will find the plant”- she was confident. “Listen then, this plant is a small bush with a cluster of yellow flowers at the tip; the fruits are flat and resemble those of green peas. The more striking feature is that, the plant has ear lobes...” . He stopped and looked at the kids. Chaami was amused to hear that, the plant has ear lobes! She argued with a strong voice, “How can that be possible?! I have not heard of any plant having ear lobes”. Buddu’s gardener replied patiently, “May be that is true with other plants my dear; but this plant does have a pair of earlobe like structures at the nodes on the stem; however they do not perform the function of hearing, like us”.

Two days later, Buddu again called Chaami to see for herself the ripened fruits being taken out of the pot. Chaami went there again only to see the unbelievable change. She had seen two days ago some dull looking green fruits being put into the pot and the same are now taken out with an attractive golden yellow colour. She told to herself once again, “ How can this happen?”. She decided to go in search of that plant and persuaded Buddu to accompany her.

Later, the kids went in search of that plant. On the way to the temple, along the way side fence they saw a small bush growing. Was it the one they were searching for? Noticing a cluster of yellow flowers on the plant, Buddu plucked a twig. They saw on the twig, a few flattened pods that resemble those of green peas and a pair of earlobe like green structures at the base of the leaves. Indeed they had found out the right plant. Chaami told to herself once again, “How can this be possible - a plant with earlobes!”. However She asked Buddu “What is this plant called Buddu ?”

(From page 12)

(Before Buddu could give a reply, they heard a pleasant voice coming from the direction of the plant. What did Chaami and Buddu hear. Turn to page 12)