"...Enough Chaami, stop splashing water... your hair is already wet, better you come out of the bathroom or else you will catch cold!...". Chaami's mother on that Sunday morning amidst her daily chores, was exhorting. However, her raised voice did not affect Chaami. She continued splashing water all around and playing in the bathroom. Splashing water on the face was a kind of play, Chaami had enjoyed all the while. At last, Chaami came out of the bath.

"...Get dressed up soon Chaami and have your breakfast. I want you to go to our washer man's home and bring a bottle of hair oil for me. He has promised me to refill it tomorrow. However the bottle has gone empty and I need some oil today ...", Chaami's mother told her. She was regularly using the herbal hair oil prepared by their washer man. But Chaami was unwilling. "...No Mummy, my Biology teacher has asked us to collect the plants used for cosmetics... you know that is my assignment topic too. I have to find out from Daddy what are these cosmetic plants and then collect the samples...I have to submit them tomorrow. Don't ask me to help you today..." she replied with reluctance. However her mother was not ready to give up. "...Oh! Is that so! then it's easy for you too. There is no need to nag your daddy also. Instead go to the washer man and ask him, he knows all those plants used for hair oil, shampoo and cosmetics. He will straight away give you the plants you are looking for. And your job is done...", Chaami's mother told her in a decisive tone.

Chaami was thrilled to find an easy way of getting the plants but she could not believe and asked her mother repeatedly to confirm that it was possible to get those plants used for cosmetics from the washer man. Later she hurriedly finished her breakfast and pulled Buddu out of his study and went straight to the washer man's home. There, Chaami and Buddu found the washer man doing something in a small shed in the compound. On looking the approaching kids, the washer man nodded at them invitingly. He was busy brewing something on a small stove. Chaami told him she was sent by her mother to take a bottle of hair oil. Pointing at the stove, the Washer man told them the oil was getting prepared and he needed some more time.

Chaami decided to make use of the time to know about the plants used for cosmetics. Pointing at the herbage lying beside the stove, Chaami asked him, "... my mother told me that you know several plants used for preparing cosmetics and hair oil. This must be one such plant. What is this plant called? can you please show us a few others also...?". The washer man smiled at them and asked her.
Chaami & Buddu with hair oil plant

**COLOUR AND IDENTIFY THE PLANT**

**CHAAMI**

**BUDDU**

**COLOUR PALETTE**

- Stem: Deep Brown
- Leaves: Dark Green
- Flowers: Creamish White
- Buds: Creamish White

**My name**

Eclipta alba

**My nick names**

- Bhringaraj
- Bhangra
- Garugada soppu
- Karishalanganni
- Galagara
- Karisalangani

**How to identify me?**

My aster like white flowers, slightly rough and bristly leaf surface and my marshy habitat help to identify me.

**Story Line** - Shaalmala

**Line drawing** - Suma

**Illustrations** - V K Acharya

**Design** - Santosh
How do I look?

I am a prostrate, hairy annual herb. I have short flat or round stem, deep brown in color. My leaves are simple, linear-oblong with toothed margins. Leaves are arranged opposite to each other. The leaves have very short stalks; some times they are absent. I have small white, almost button sized, flowers which resemble those of aster. They are either solitary or in paired clusters. The flower stalk is long. Seeds are black in color.

Where is my home?

I am a common weed, cosmopolitan in occurrence, specially in warm climate. I am commonly seen growing in marshy areas, waterlogged crop fields through out the plains of India and upto 800m above sea level.

Hey kids!! Did you like the children's page? Please write to us

How useful am I?

I am the principle ingredient of the medicated hair oil used for preventing premature graying. The medicated hair oil is popular under the trade name 'Bringraja taila'. In Southern India, the leaf juice is a popular remedy for jaundice. In some parts of Madhya Pradesh, the root is used to treat conjunctivitis. The leaf juice is applied externally to stop bleeding from open wounds and cuts.

How to multiply me?

I am propagated through seeds.
“Why do you want to know?”, “Because they are interesting and useful to us”, Chaami replied confidently. “They are very small plants, you don’t find them attractive”, the washer man was testing whether the kids were really wanted to know the plant. “That’s OK for us. The fact that a plant can be used as a cosmetic is indeed thrilling, Please show us.” the kids replied in a chorus. It appeared that the washer man was convinced. However he said “I would have loved to come with you to show the plants but, I am busy now, I have to complete this oil preparation and washing of the cloths. So I suggest you, go on your own and look for the plants. I shall tell you where you can find the plants...”. Saying so he decanted the oil from the bowl on the stove into a bottle and handed that to Chaami. “This is the bottle of hair oil that will last for the next 3 months. Take this home carefully and tell your mother that the cloths will be washed and delivered tomorrow.”, he said. Taking the bottle from him, Chaami looked convinced and said. “That’s agreeable, but you didn’t tell us what this plant is”. Chaami, was not willing to give up. The washer man this time replied to the point. “Oh! this is the plant I have used for this hair oil. This can also be used for preparing hair dyes. I shall show you some thing interesting...”, saying so he took a twig and cut its bottom with an iron knife and rubbed the cut end on the knife blade. After several rubbings, he showed the knife blade and there was a thick black cream!. Scraping the cream with his finger he showed that to the kids and told “this is the hair dye!”. It was unbelievable to Chaami and Buddu. Chaami touched the cream to see her fingertip turning black. The kids were spellbound for they had witnessed the washer man making a dye in front of them in a minute.

Chaami’s curiosity grew much more. She pleaded with the washer man to show her where she could find that plant. Looking at the excitement of the kids, the washer man did not want to trouble them and readily gave the directions to reach the place. “...Take this footpath and walk till you reach the paddy fields near the tank. All along the boundary of the fields you will find the channels irrigating the fields. Look on the bunds for this plant and many more species...” even before he finished telling, the kids had rushed out. They soon reached the paddy fields. The area was very pleasant with a vast turf of rich green paddy fields. The breeze was cool and refreshing. There was water, coursing in the channels with serene sounds. Chaami was too happy to see the greenery and just forgot every thing. The kids soon jumped into the channels and started walking along its course often splashing the water with thumping steps. After walking for a while, they sat on the bund with their toes immersed in running water. The water was fascinating Chaami. Suddenly she found on the other bank of the canal right in front of them, small plants, which resembled the herbage they saw with the washer man. She was not sure whether the plants were the same ones. She asked Buddu "Are these the same plants Buddu?" Then came a soft voice from the direction of the plants.

(What did the plant tell the kids? turn to page 14.)