

OUR EFFORTS

ASHODAYA SAMITHI

Karnataka



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**Concept**

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Center for Human Progress



Ashodaya Samithi and Ashraya
Karnataka, India

Table of Contents

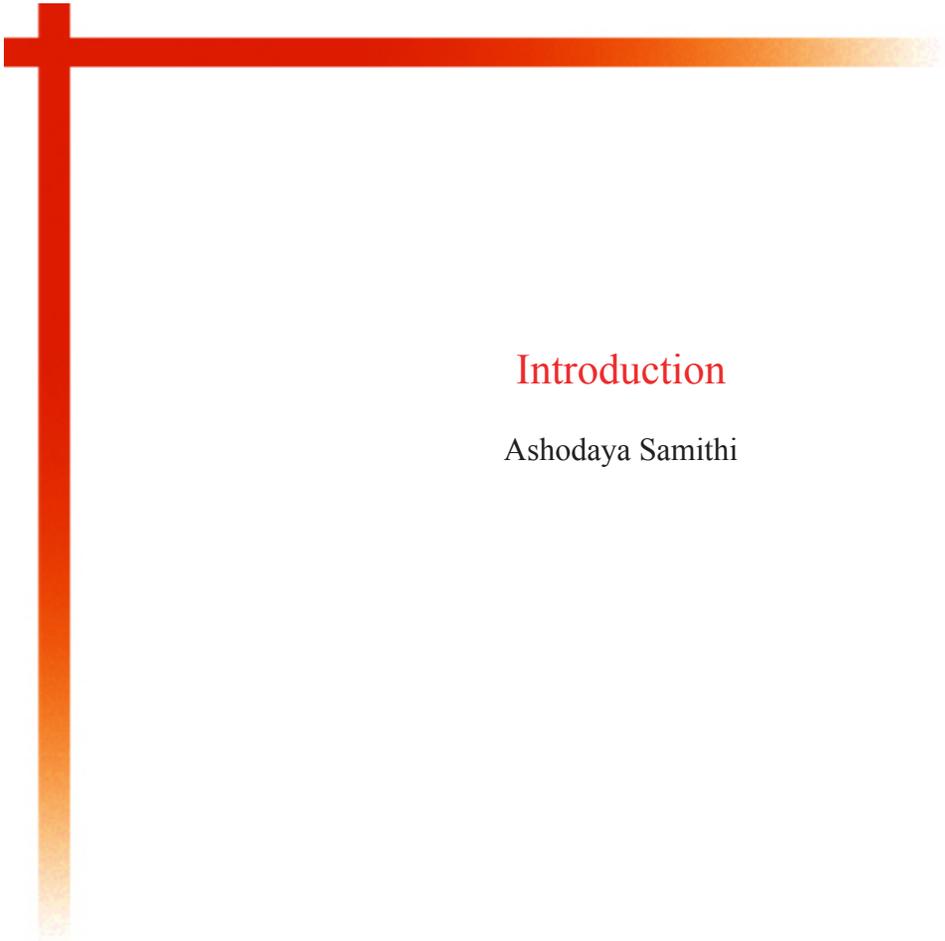
Chapter 1: Introduction [Ashodaya Samithi]

Chapter 2: Dance to Happiness [Razia]

Chapter 3: Shelter by Ashraya [Raghu]

Credits



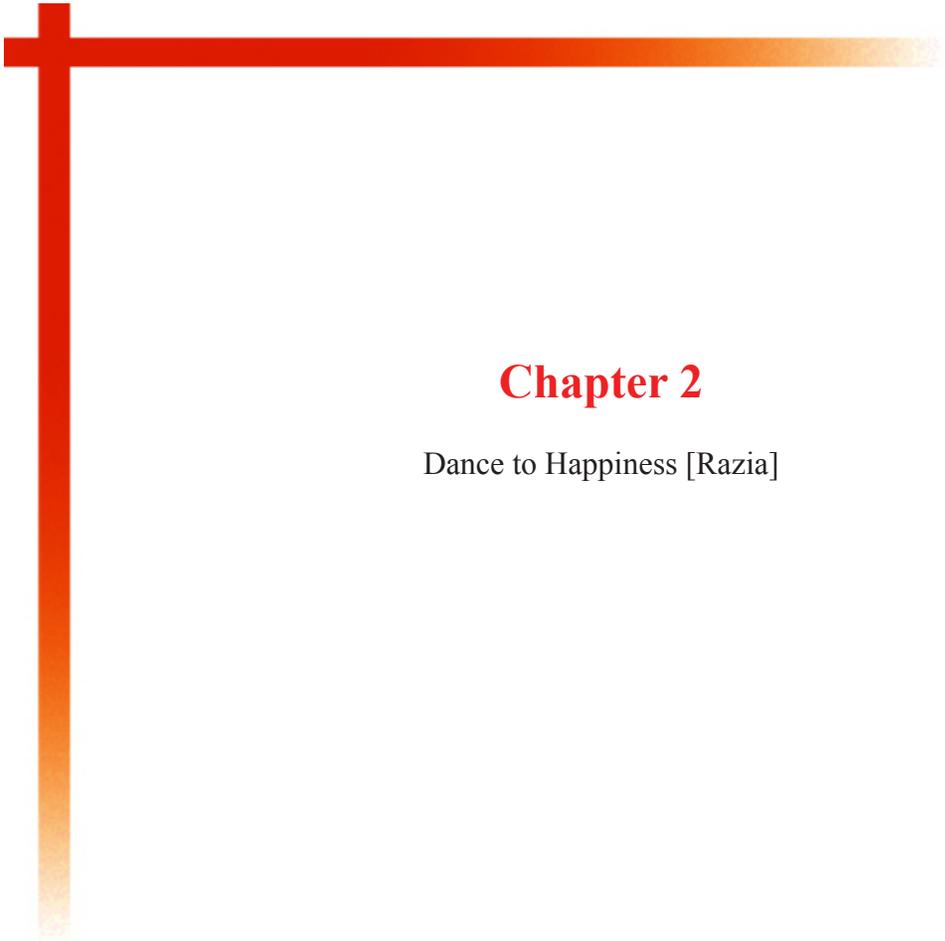


Introduction

Ashodaya Samithi

Borne out of the deep aspiration and dreams to attain greater good, the sex workers of Mysore and Mandya came together to form “Ashodaya Samithi” in December 2005. Ashodaya works with over 4000 male, female and transgender sex workers in the districts of Mysore, Mandya, Kodagu, Hassan and Chikmagalur. Two initiatives that run within Ashodaya are Adarsha (an MSM and transgender organization) and Ashraya (an organization for sex workers and non-sex workers living with HIV/AIDS).

“Our Efforts” is a compilation of inspirational life stories of Ashodaya’s Sex Workers Living with HIV and AIDS (SWLHA). Razia and Raghu share their stories of trial and triumph and celebrate their lives and learning at Ashodaya. Photographs and images are used throughout the book, as Razia and Raghu unravel the joys, the pain and many reflections of their journeys, as they traverse their way to positive lives and fulfillment.



Chapter 2

Dance to Happiness [Razia]



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Razia feels blessed.
Being HIV positive has
not deterred her from
finding happiness and
fulfillment in her life.



Dancing is Razia's passion. She spends much of her time training to become a dance teacher. She wishes to encourage other young people living with HIV to find happiness through dance.



With the support of her friends at Ashodaya, Razia has learnt the art of happy living. She says Ashodaya is the center of her life. She wakes up in the morning, gets ready and leaves to volunteer her time with Ashodaya. She connects a number of HIV positive people to Ashodaya everyday, so like her, they can benefit from its support.



Razia's neighbors sometimes ask why she works at Ashodaya without pay. But their questions do not deter her. With the invaluable support of her husband Rao, and her own grit and determination, Razia relentlessly pursues her work.



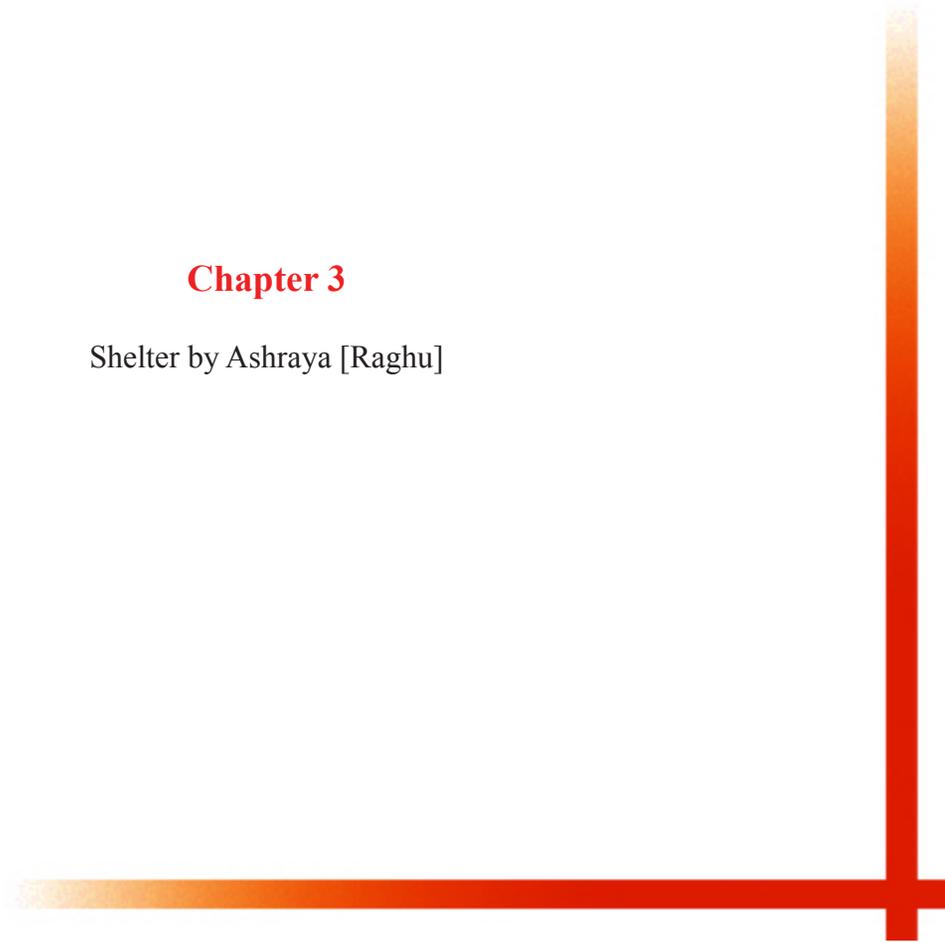
Razia's husband Rao is very caring. He makes a cup of tea for Razia when she wakes up in the morning. Before they leave for work he helps her cut vegetables and cook. After work, she and her husband have their dinner and go for a ride on his bicycle. She says Rao is the most important part of her life.



Razia believes if everyone gave people living with HIV the love and respect her husband gives her, the world would be a better place. Inspired to make a difference, Razia is working to become Ashodaya's upcoming youth wing leader. She wishes to be remembered as someone who supported many young people living with HIV to dance their way to happiness.

Chapter 3

Shelter by Ashraya [Raghu]





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Raghu's mother is the most important person in his life.



Raghu's mother is also his greatest source of strength and inspiration.



After becoming HIV positive, Raghu fell very ill. In the hospital, the only person who stood by his side was his mother.



Raghu was in the hospital, when his mother discovered that he is MSM (i.e., a man who has sex with men). The rest of his family rejected him, but Raghu's mother stood by his side and nursed him back to health.



Upon being discharged from the hospital, Raghu resolved to help others avoid the careless mistakes that he made, which caused his health to suffer. Raghu began making positive changes to his life and a difference in the lives of others.



Today, Raghu starts his day by counseling people like himself. He provides referrals and recommends regular health check-ups to his peers at Ashraya.



With his new found confidence and sense of fulfillment, Raghu has won back the respect of his family. Today, every member of Raghu's family loves and accepts him for who he is.

Credits

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