

Your attention please

ஹலோ...

○ "கே.வி.ஆனந்த் எடுத்த அட்டைப் படத்தில் இருப்பவன் விஸ்ப்ரூடன் காட்சியளிக்க, கதைக் காட்சி அப்படி அமையாது வன்?" என்ற கேள்வியைக் கேட்ட வாசகர்களுக்கு நன்றி. நிங்கள் சூப்பர்நாயு உன்விப்பாகக் கவனித்தீர்கள் என்பதற்கு சாட்சி இது. திட்டப்படி முதலில் வரண முகை, போலீஸ் கைது செய்து விடுவதாகக் காட்சி அமைத்திருந்தோம். கடைசி விளையுடில் கதைமைய மாற்றி எழுதி விட்டதால் இந்தச் சிறு மாற்றம் ஏற்பட்டு விட்டது. ஸை!

○ கடித வடிவிலேயே கதையை எழுதிவிடுப்ப



5-19 பிப்ரவரி '92 இதழில்

'ஐயோ பாவம்
அமெரிக்கா...'

— சில திருக்கிரும்
தகவல்கள்!

சூப்பர்நாயுஸ்

20 பிப். - மார்ச் 4 '92 இதழில்

புதிய
தொடர்கதை
ஆரம்பம்

சென்க்காக்கல்
வாடிக்கையின்

Title page from the February 1992 issue of Subha's *Super Novel*. The letter from the authors at left reads: "Hello, thank you for bringing it to our notice that although K.V. Anand's cover picture for the last issue featured a character in handcuffs, no such scene occurred in the story. This is proof that our readers pay great attention to every detail in *Super Novel*! We had to change the climax at the last moment, and did not have time to change the cover. Sorry."

SUBHA

Subha is the *nom de plume* of not one but two authors: Suresh and Balakrishnan. This extraordinary writing partnership began when the two friends were schoolmates and continues to the present day. Since 1983, they have co-authored around 550 short novels, 50 longer novels serialized in magazines, more than 400 short stories, and a number of screenplays and dialogues for Tamil cinema and television. Most of their stories feature the spunky young couple Narendran and Vaijyanthi of Eagle Eye Detective Agency, along with their co-worker John Sundar. The two authors now run their own publishing company, which in addition to their three monthly novels also brings out non-fiction titles and the occasional special “team-up” story in which Naren and Vaij collaborate on a case with Pattukkottai Prabakar’s detective couple, Bharat and Susheela.

Suresh and Balakrishnan live with their families in adjacent apartments in Adyar, Chennai.

HURRICANE VAIJ

à¼ Cj ù ¹ ò™ (1993)

✎ 1 ✎

THE AUTOMATIC DOORS closed behind Narendran as he entered the airport lounge. With his hands in his pant pockets, he chose an empty seat next to a granite pillar, sat down, and crossed his legs. His eyes scanned the lounge, trying to figure out who the anonymous phone caller could have been.

Was it the man in the blue shirt, at the water cooler? Or the guy in the green shirt, browsing through a heavy book in the bookshop? What about the one in the gray safari suit, rubbing his lips after burning them

on a tasteless airport espresso? Or the one with the traveler's bag, talking to the policeman?

"Naren! Very, very urgent. Can you meet me at the domestic terminal at the airport? I have arranged for someone to meet you there. I am unable to come and see you directly at the Eagle Eye office. Please, please, please!"

Narendran could easily have ignored the phone call. But since Vajjayanthi had taken her mother to the homeopathic doctor, he had no company at the office. There was no good reason *not* to make a trip to the airport. And so, here he was.

But after five minutes of waiting, Narendran was already losing patience. The television monitor was displaying a list of planes that were indefinitely delayed. The words "Check In" flashed in red, next to the number of a flight that would probably not take off for another several hours. Some bratty kid was pointing at the ceiling, screaming like an air raid siren for his mommy to get the chandelier down for him so he could play with it.

He felt something nudge his elbow. He turned. It was the arm of the person sitting next to him.

"Car number TN-O9-7611 is waiting for you outside. They've got your information," the man said, hardly moving his lips.

"And who are you?"

"You don't need to know."

"I don't make a habit of jumping into the cars of people I don't need to know."

"Listen, I could tell you my name, but it wouldn't be of any use to you. I'm here at the airport on a different errand. I was asked to give you this information. That's all!"

Narendran got up, irritated.

In the car park, he found a green Fiat with the matching number plate. He opened the rear door and got in. Despite what he'd told the guy, this was the third case he'd been on where someone had arranged to meet him this way. So he sat and waited. After a moment, the driver

showed up, climbed in, and started the car. Narendran tapped him on the shoulder.

“I don’t have any answers for you,” said the driver.

“I don’t have any questions. I just want a match, pal,” said Narendran, a cigarette between his lips. The driver handed him a matchbox with his left hand. The car sped away from the airport.

Dragging deep on the cigarette, Narendran looked at the driver in the rear-view mirror. A square face, thick moustache, brutal brow, small scar next to the left eye—and a *rudraksh* tied around his neck, just visible above his top shirt button.

“Look, I’ll limit myself to really easy questions. Where are we headed?”

“To my employer’s house.”

“And you know your employer’s name?”

“You’re going to see him soon. Can’t you be patient till then?”

“Why don’t I try to guess who your employer is?”

“Think you can?”

“If I can’t figure out something that simple, what have I been doing working at Eagle Eye all this time?”

“Fine. Go ahead and guess.”

“Your employer is Surya Shekar, the opposition leader.”

“How did you know?”

“Well, you have a tattoo of the three doves, the party symbol, on your left wrist.”

“Any party cadre member might have the same tattoo. He could be employed elsewhere, you know.”

“Fair enough. But you also have a ring with the same design. I read in *Dhinathanthi* that Surya Shekar presented rings like that to twenty of his employees. Third page, second paragraph. Didn’t you read it?”

“You’re good.”

“I’m good, eh? Think I’m as good as your boss? Or better?”

The driver didn’t answer that.

“What’s going on, anyway?”