



High Impact Factor 8.1458

ISSN



Vol. 8, No. 2

CLRI May 2021



Double-blind
peer reviewed



Referred Journal



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GENERAL IMPACT FACTOR

& More

The M.D.'s Dad is kidnapped!!!

Sambit Patnaik

Chapter - 1

‘Trrringg....Trrringg...’ the bell of the land-phone on my desk rang. My mobile was on my right ear with my dear wife on the other side; we were planning out a romantic movie date that night. Now that the landline had rung, I knew that my outing’s ruined. I hung up the phone on my wife and took the landline call.

‘Whitefield police station, Inspector Arjun speaking.’

‘Sir, my dad is missing. My wife and myself just returned home from office and found dad missing. He has been kidnapped and the kidnapper has demanded two crores ransom. Sir please come here immediately.’ said a man on the other side of the phone.

‘Ok. Don’t worry. Give me your name and address and I’ll be there right away.’ a bit frustrated me said as there was no real work that entire week and now when I made up a plan with my wife, a case had made its way to me. That was the fifth consecutive time that I had to cancel a movie date with my wife. It had been about a year since we went for a movie. But duty comes first. So I never said ‘no’ to my work, rather cancelled my personal schedules.

‘Mr. Amitesh Shetty. Plot-361, Whitefield, near Umiya Woods Apartments, Bengaluru-560003’

‘Ok, thanks...and your mobile number please.’

‘9431024134’

‘Fine. I’ll be there in a few minutes.’ I hung up.

I decided to first call my wife and inform her about the cancellation of our date. I called her and spoke in a loving tone.

‘Sorry darling, I’ve received a call and I need to go to a crime scene. We need to postpone our plan. I’m really sorry.’

‘Ohh honey...no problems at all. You do your duty. No worries. We’ll plan out some other day. Another great romantic movie is about to hit screens. We’ll go for that.’ my wife said.

‘I knew you would understand. Bye love.’ I was thankful to god for the fifth time to have given me such an understanding wife who are hard to find nowadays.

‘Come on guys, move. We’ve got to go. Take out the jeep.’ I instructed my team of cops, gave the address to the driver and we were on our way.

We entered the huge property indicated by the address given to me and hit the bell.

‘Ding Dong’ and the door opened instantly as if a spouse had been eagerly waiting for her man to come home with a marriage anniversary surprise.

‘Senior Inspector Arjun, Whitefield police station.’ I introduced myself proudly.

‘Yes sir, please come in. My master is waiting for you in the living room.’ the servant welcomed my team and me in.

‘Sir...my dad has been kidnapped. Please find him sir. Bring him back.’ the servant’s master said in a disturbed voice.

‘You Mr. Amitesh Shetty?’

‘Yes.’

‘Don’t panic. Your panicking won’t help. Be patient and tell us when it happened and what do you know about the kidnapping.’

‘Sir, me and my wife reached home from office around 6pm and found dad missing. The servant says he was off to sleep and woke up only when we rang the bell. Upon looking for dad after a while, we found him no where around. We went to his room and came across this letter on the back of his room’s door. Here it is sir.’

The letter stated, ‘We have taken Mr. Arvind Shetty, father of Mr. Amitesh Shetty along. If you want to see him alive, keep a sum of two crore rupees ready and wait for our call.’

‘What work do you do Mr. Shetty?’

‘I am managing director in Oracle, Bengaluru.’

‘And what about you Mrs. Shetty?’

‘I work in Infosys as the manager of logistics department.’ replied Mrs. Shetty.

‘Do you have any enemies in your circle that could do this? Do you have any suspicion on anybody?’

‘No. I have good relations with everybody.’ said Amitesh.

‘Me too.’ said his wife.

‘Fine...is there anything missing from the house?’ I fired another question.

‘No sir. I don’t think so.’ came Amitesh’s reply.

‘We would like to check the entire house once.’

‘Guys get to work.’ I ordered my teammates.

My team searched the entire property but could find nothing sort of a clue except a pack of ‘durex-thinnest ever’ from the room of the couple.

‘Ok. We’ll take this letter along and check the nearby areas. We would like a photograph of your dad.’

‘Yes sir. Ramu, go get a photo of dad from my study’s drawer.’ Ramu, the servant, rushed into the study room on Amitesh’s and got an old picture.

‘Does he look this young?’ I was a bit surprised.

‘Not exactly. A bit older. He’s seventy now. We only have this one picture of him.’

‘Ok, no problem. We’ll take this and leave now. We shall update you when we find traces of Mr. Arvind. If you get a call from the kidnapper’s side, inform me immediately.’ We left.

Chapter - 2

I sent the details of Mr. Arvind Shetty to all the police stations of Bengaluru city for search. My team began the hunt from Whitefield itself the next day. We interrogated the shopkeepers near plot-361 thoroughly. None could identify the old man; not their faults though but the architect’s who designed the shops- the main desks were towards the interior such that they couldn’t see a thing outside. And Whitefield, being such an expensive and hi-fi locality, hardly had any small tea or paan shops.

But at a distance from the Umiya Woods Apartments, there existed a milk booth which my team hadn’t visited yet. I went to the booth and showing the picture of Mr. Arvind asked, ‘Hey man! Have you seen this man around recently?’

‘Yes sir, this man had come to my shop yesterday to buy cigarettes.’ the shopkeeper replied after pressurizing his brain.

‘In which direction did he go?’

‘That way sir.’ the shopkeeper said pointing towards the Shetty’s residence.

‘And what time was it?’

‘Around 4 P.M. sir.’

‘Ok great. If you see him again, just give me a call. Here, keep my number.’ I ordered, writing my mobile number on a pad on his counter.

These rich men couldn’t be trusted, so I ordered to put the phones of the Shettys and even their landline for tapping. They might have plotted the kidnap to grab Arvind’s property. The servant- Ramu, had been left out. He might be associated with the Shettys or might have kidnapped Arvind to get his hands on two crore rupees and lead a lavish life thereafter, free from serventery. I was trying to study the case from every angle.

Chapter - 3

An inner voice asked me to gather more info on Arvind’s personal life and his relationship with his son, daughter-in-law and servant. I decided to meet some of the Shettys’ neighbours and get to know more about the family. So I hit the doors of some neighbours on the next day, which was a Sunday, as people would be having day-offs from work. Two or three of them said that everything seemed good within the Shetty family and they didn’t bother much about the Shetty’s personal lives; they had their own set of problems to worry for.

But in every locality, there is always that typical Indian aunty whose eyes could give tough competition even to CCTVs, scanning everything going on in the surroundings. I finally came across that lady at the residence, south of the Shettys’. I pushed their doorbell and an old lady of about 70-72 years to age opened the door.

‘Hello ma’am, I am Inspector Arjun, Bengaluru police. I want to have a word with you regarding the adjacent Shettys.’ I said.

‘Who is that mom?’ a lady’s voice came from inside the house.

‘It’s an inspector from the police department.’ replied the old lady.

The woman hurriedly came to the entrance from probably her kitchen as it had been about 12:30 p.m., she was wearing an apron.

‘What happened sir?’ asked the lady in a tensed voice.

After taking in, the soothing smell of the chicken curry, I replied, ‘I wish to speak to you about the Shettys next door.’

‘Oh. Come in sir.’ The young lady welcomed me into her living room.

I settled down and was just about to ask my questions to them, just then a tempting odour tickled my nostrils; the delicious chicken curry in the kitchen was ready to be jumped upon. I was too hungry but for being in uniform, couldn’t violate its code. So ignoring the temptation, I started off my interrogation.

‘How are the Shettys? I mean what kind of people are they?’

‘They are good to everyone. On many Sundays, they’ve brought us some wonderful dishes cooked by Mrs. Shetty and we’ve also done the same on several occasions. We both are good with one-another.’ replied the younger lady.

‘And what about Mr. Arvind Shetty?’

‘We haven’t seen much of him. He is out somedays for morning walks on the road and at home the other days.’

Amidst this conversation, I noticed that older woman, wanting to say something, but stopped after some thought.

‘Why are you asking about them sir? Have they done anything?’ the younger lady shot the question at me.

‘No...may be...Mr. Arvind is missing since two days. We are searching him’

‘Kidnapped?’

‘May be...’ I didn’t want to confirm that it was a case of kidnapping. I was having some doubts.

‘Madam, I think your chicken curry is ready. You should get it off the stove or it’ll turn into ashes. And could you get me a glass of water- chilled and normal mixed, please?’ I wanted to talk to the old lady alone so tried to send the younger one in.

‘Yeah, sure. Just give me a minute.’ the woman went into the kitchen.

I turned my attention to the older one.

‘Ma’am, do you want to say something?’

‘No...nothing...’ she replied hesitantly.

‘Ma’am, may be you can save Arvind from some grave danger.’

The old woman gave it a thought as I looked upon at her, giving her the impression that Arvind was at her mercy. She finally opened up.

‘I’ve been observing Arvind for quite some time. He looks very lonely to me. His son and daughter-in-law are always busy. Even in weekends, they plan out with each-other leaving Arvind alone at home with the servant, Ramu.’

‘Ohh...I see...’

‘You don’t tell this to Reena. She doesn’t like my spying on neighbours.’

‘No...not at all. Don’t worry. You must keep a check on your surroundings. And thank you for your help ma’am.’

‘You’re welcome.’

‘Are you doing well with your daughter?’ I asked as a responsible public servant.

‘Yes, absolutely great. She’s my daughter-in-law by the way. She loves me a lot. My son has been to the nearby restaurant to get some tandoori rotis for lunch to be eaten with the delicious chicken curry that Reena has cooked. And yes, both take great care of me.’

‘That’s good to hear.’

‘Your water sir.’ Reena came in and handed me a glass of water.

‘Thank you.’

‘Your curry is giving out a fantastic smell...really tempting to the nose.’

‘Thank you. Would you like to taste it? I’d be glad.’

‘No thanks. I’m on duty and can’t do it now...some other day definitely. Now I must take leave.’ I left.

The details given by the neighbouring old lady gave a complete new direction to the case. I started getting goosebumps; ‘did the lonely old man commit suicide? The milk booth man had told that Arvind had last bought a cigarette packet. May be he loved smoking and it was the last wish before death...’ thoughts like these stormed my mind.

Then I shooed these thoughts away; no dead body had been reported recently. And then there was this ransom letter as well demanding two crores. What would the man do with the huge sum after death? So I closed the suicide angle for the time being.

‘Aahhh the letter!’ a thought struck my brain when I entered the police station and sat on my soft rolling chair; ‘the letter must be examined again and the writing must be matched with the family members.’ I decided after pondering over the evidences for long.

Just then, the constable, who had been tapping the telephones of the Shettys came running into my cabin, ‘Sir, the ransom call has come. Here is its audio clip’ he played it. The kidnapper had demanded a bag with two crore rupees to be dumped in the dustbin in front of Umiya Woods at 2A.M., the following night and threatened of dire consequences if his wish wasn’t fulfilled. I wanted to wait for the Shettys to inform me about this themselves since they had no knowledge of their phones being tapped; so I wanted to see their course of action.

The mi tune rang and my mobile started vibrating along. I picked it up, Amitesh was on the other side. ‘Sir, the ransom call has come. The human hijacker has demanded a bag with two crores to be put in the dustbin right in front of Umiya Woods apartments.’

‘Ok, I get it. You get the sum ready...won’t be a big deal for you. We will catch the kidnapper at the spot.’ I replied rather casually.

‘I need to give the money to the kidnapper?..’ Amitesh was puzzled and probably didn’t want to lose any money.

‘You won’t lose your money. Don’t worry. It’s just a bait. Now don’t waste time and get the money ready. We’ll make the preparations to catch the kidnapper.’ I disconnected the call.

‘Hey Aman...go get samples of the Shetty couple’s, Arvind’s and Ramu’s handwritings...quick. I will summon a handwriting expert to examine them.’ I ordered my junior.

‘Yes sir.’ he set out immediately.

The handwriting expert reached within an hour to the PS. It was 2P.M. already and we had just twelve hours in hand to solve the kidnap mystery. I asked the expert to wait for some time until Aman came back with the samples and ordered tea for him. I was hungry too but decided to replace lunch with tea and some cakes due to the time constraint.

Aman entered the police station at 2:30 P.M. with the samples.

‘Reason for delay Aman?’ I fired the question as soon as he entered my cabin.

‘Sir, a lot of question-answer. Finally I apprised them of your order for the samples and that they should give them instantly.’ replied Inspector Aman in a frustrated tone.

‘Ok good! Sir here are the samples. Just match these writings with this letter.’ I turned to the handwriting expert handing him the samples and the letter.

‘Yes...give me a few minutes.’ the expert got engaged in his work.

After about forty minutes, he had a result to announce from his thorough study of the writings.

‘Officer, this one here...this handwriting matches with that in the letter.’

‘And whose is this?’ I asked Aman.

‘This one is the writing of Mr. Arvind.’ replied Aman with a shock.

‘Ok expert Sir. You’re done. Thanks for coming and helping us out in the case. My man will drop you at your place.’ I bid farewell to the handwriting expert as I asked a constable to drop him home.

Aman was quite confused on the match of writings but I, somehow, wasn’t surprised as much. I had predicted this after listening to the neighbouring old lady of the Shettys.

But some riddles were unsolved- why did the man kidnap himself? To get attention or to get money...and he must have got assistance from another person and finally where did he keep himself these two days?.I was curious to get answers to these questions.

Chapter - 4

It was 3:30 P.M. and we had just ten hours and thirty minutes to solve the puzzle. I knew if we got to the man who abetted Arvind, we could decode the entire riddle.

I tried to recall the clues that we had come across in the case thus far- a ransom letter written by Arvind, Arvind being unhappy with his family and a phone call for the money. Yeah! We had missed this basic thing.

‘Aman...do one thing. Just find out from where the ransom call was made.’ I ordered with a new flame in my eyes.

‘Right sir.’ Aman jumped to work.

After a few minutes, Aman came running as if he had found the missing piece of the puzzle.

‘Sir, the call had been made from a PCO telephone in Whitefield. It’s near the milkbooth which Arvind had visited last’

‘K...fine...let’s go.’ we were in the jeep and on our way to the PCO.

Upon enquiring about the call, the PCO cum general store owner gave a casual response. ‘Sir, many people make calls from here...how I can remember them all...’

‘A ransom call has been made from your phone and you say that you do not know anything. Didn’t you hear the guy speak?’ I said looking at him with destructive eyes.

Upon pressurizing his brain, he replied, ‘Yes, sir...I can recall something...’

‘Now tell me fast.’

‘A man had come and was behaving suspiciously. He wanted to make a call but wasn’t doing it, as if he wanted none to hear him while speaking. Upon asking about the reason for not making the call, he replied that he was unable to remember the number he had to phone and requested for time. When a customer came to buy some groceries, I went in to get the items as per the list. In the meanwhile, he did his job and was away before I was back and had kept the money on my desk.’

‘Who was he? Where did he come from?’

‘I haven’t seen him before. He had come from the direction of that estate.’ said the man pointing towards Umiya Woods.

The milk booth owner had been listening to the entire conversation and approached me to say something.

‘Sir, the person this man is talking about is Ramu, the servant at the Shettys’ place. He comes to my shop to buy milk. And today, he had come to this PCO to make a call.’

‘Ohhh...I see.’

Now I could figure out the situation. Ramu, who stayed with Arvind all the time at home, might have kidnapped him to get two crores

and lead a lavish life thereafter, free from the difficulties of a servant. But then why did Arvind write the ransom letter for him? I was still a bit confused.

‘Ok, thanks for your help.’ We left for Plot-361 to arrest Ramu.

My police team with myself upfront entered the Shettys’ residence, picked up Ramu and drove straight towards Whitefield PS.

‘Sir, forgive me...forgive master...’ pleaded Ramu even before I could ask him anything.

‘You seek forgiveness for a crime? And that too kidnapping of your master’s dad?’ I was enraged.

‘No sir, I didn’t kidnap him. He was the one who had asked me to make this call. Arvind uncle has kidnapped himself.’

‘Why would he kidnap himself? Tell me the truth or look right there...you’ll be next in there.’ I threatened showing him a cell where a criminal was being offered a great ‘mehmaan-nawazi’ on his first visit to my police station.

‘No sir. I am telling you the complete truth. His son and daughter-in-law never spent time with him; he was often lonely at home even during his son’s holidays and had just me to talk to. He was frustrated with his life and wanted to leave home. But I stopped him somehow and asked him to put to test, his son’s love and care. I just suggested him to go away for a few days and give it a look of kidnapping. Then he could see how much his son and daughter-in-law loved and wanted him.’

‘You gave this stupid idea to him???’ I was about to land a slap on Ramu’s cheek but stopped myself.

‘Where is he now?’ I asked with anger showcased in my tone.

‘I don’t know. He never revealed his location to me. He had just asked me to call Mr. Amitesh and tell him where the ransom had to be dropped. That’s it sir.’

‘Take him away.’ I ordered a constable.

‘Aman...enquire in all the hotels in Whitefield. Has any hotel room been booked in Arvind’s name...quick.’

‘Yes sir.’ Aman set out with a team.

At around 6:30 P.M., Aman and team returned to the den.

‘Sir, there are about sixty lodging hotels in Whitefield area. We visited all of them but no guest named Arvind Shetty has checked in recently.’ Aman reported in a disappointed and exhausted tone.

‘Then he must be having another flat or residence where he has taken shelter or some relative who has helped him hiding. Only Amitesh and his wife can unveil this now. Let’s go. We need to visit Plot-361 once again.’ We charged to our destination in our jeep.

Chapter - 5

‘Ding Dong’, the door opened with Mrs. Shetty behind. We pushed ourselves in.

‘Mr. and Mrs. Shetty, we have got your dad- Mr. Arvind.’ I said.

‘Really??? Where’s he? Who had kidnapped him? Tell me sir, please tell me.’ Amitesh jumped off his sofa.

‘He hasn’t been kidnapped by anyone. In fact, he has kidnapped himself. Your servant- Ramu has revealed this to us. You have not taken good care of your dad; he was lonely and frustrated. So he wanted to test your love and affection for him. You’re at fault Mr. Amitesh. If the “NGO for the elderlys’ welfare” comes to know about this, you’ll be ruined.’ I spoke sternly.

‘What are you saying? Why would he do that?’ Amitesh was puzzled.

‘Because you’ve been ignoring him since years. It’s that simple.’

‘And what would he do with the two crore rupees? We haven’t ever let money be a matter of concern for him. Then why would he demand two crores like that?’

‘It’s just to test you...whether you can sacrifice that big a sum for him.’

After a few seconds of utter silence in the living room, Amitesh eyes were filled with tears of guilt, ‘I am guilty sir...guilty of ignoring my dad, who is the very reason for what I am today...my fault Sneha...all my fault...’ Sneha, his wife, tried to console him with a set of her own moist eyes out of penitence.

‘Stop shedding your crocodile tears and answer my question. Does he have any other house or living facility other than this?’ I interfered in the couple’s crying-comforting session.

‘Another house...yes sir, he has a flat in Umiya Woods.’

‘When did you last go there?’

‘It’s been nearly a month.’

‘And where are its keys?’

‘One is with Sneha and the other with dad in his room.’

‘But we didn’t find any key in his room during our search. What’s the block and flat?’

‘Block-A, Flat-208.’

‘Fine. Come with us.’ my team, me along with the Shetty couple rushed to A-208 of Umiya Woods apartments, the biggest estate in the locality.

‘Ting Tong’, no one opened the door of A-208. I hit the bell once again and this time some footsteps could be heard behind the main door of the flat. The door opened with Mr. Arvind standing behind with exhausted and moist eyes. May be, he saw his son and daughter-in-law through the door’s peephole.

‘Dad...why did you do this? We were so much worried for you.’ cried Amitesh.

‘Really??? Were you worried Mr. Amitesh Shetty?’ Mr Amitesh asked in a sarcastic tone.

‘Yes, of-course dad. We had to call the police to find you.’ Sneha said.

‘Why did you do that? You could have just given two crores to the kidnapper and rescued me.’

‘We thought that you were really kidnapped. We wanted no harm to you. So for your safe and quick rescue, we called the police.’

‘Excuse me gentlemen and pretty lady. The police are still here. Will you let us do our job?’ I interrupted their family reunion.

‘Yes sir.’ Amitesh consented which wasn’t required anyway for me.

‘So, Mr. Arvind, you kidnapped and put yourself in this royal flat to teach your son and daughter-in-law a lesson. But you might have harmed yourself; living and managing everything all alone at this age is quite tough. And what about your food and other essentials? You didn’t even tell Ramu your location...’ I fired rapidly, my set of questions.

‘I can manage myself sir. I am quite habituated to it. I used to order food from a good dhaba nearby and other essentials from online retail stores. I did not tell Ramu as he may have revealed everything due to adverse circumstances. I took great care of myself in here, atleast better than Plot-361. I passed my time with my history and cultural books that I had brought here before leaving my son’s house. I was doing great.’ Arvind had a blank expression on his face while speaking.

‘Did you know that police had been involved?’

‘Yes.’

‘And still you didn’t come out?’ I felt as if the fear of police was no longer in the people’s hearts, by his casual reply.

‘I had already started off with my mission and just couldn’t abort it due to fear of police. I had to do this. My son has given everything needed to lead a comfortable life but didn’t give me what’s required to live a happy life.’

‘I turned to Amitesh and his wife with a monstrous face wanting to strike their heads and put them on Mr. Arvind’s feet. But I somehow controlled my rage.

‘You see what you’ve done. You leave him alone at home, don’t spend enough time with him, plan holiday trips without him...is this how it should be with a father who took all the pains to bring you up to the level you’re presently in? You both have violated law and for this I am empowered to arrest you.’ I stated the arresting power to scare the hell out of them.

‘No sir. Don’t do that. Forgive them...please sir...’ Mr. Arvind pleaded.

‘And we’ve arrested Ramu—’

‘No sir...he isn’t at fault. He just obeyed my commands. He is a good man. Please release him. I request you sir.’

‘Fine then... Aman bring Ramu back...go...and Mr. Amitesh and Mrs. Sneha, you must ensure your dad’s well being and happiness. Mr. Arvind, if they treat you like that again, just give me a call and I’ll be at your service.’ I ordered Aman and giving a threat to the Shetty couple, I handed my personal mobile number to Mr. Arvind.

‘That won’t be required sir. Dad... I’m really sorry for my attitude and behaviour towards you. I’ll never ever repeat this...you’re always my priority dad.’ Amitesh spoke with tons of remorse which had awakened his conscience.

‘Better for you...now we’ll take leave.’ I turned towards the exit.

‘Inspector Arjun...’called Mr. Arvind.

‘Yes, tell me uncle.’

‘You’ve toiled very hard to find me. I’ll be glad if you and your team dine with us tonight. It’s already nine.’

‘I’m really sorry sir. I can’t accept this hospitality in uniform. Moreover, I haven’t spent much time with my wife in the past few months due to work load. She must be waiting for me at the dinner table. I must leave or she’ll kidnap herself like you did. But I’ll visit

some other day for sure to check on your son and have a feast with your family. Good bye and good night to all.’ I spoke with calm and humour as I left.

I stayed busy for a month with other cases and with my wife; finally we had had a successful movie date after five failed attempts. One day, the thought of Mr. Arvind struck my mind while I was passing by his residence. So, I marched towards his house to enquire his well-being. But Plot-361 was locked. Even the servant- Ramu wasn’t available. I felt a bit impatient and curious to know about the situation. So I hit the neighbouring old aunty’s door, to the south of Shettys’ residence.

‘Oh son...I remember you. You are the officer who investigated Arvind’s kidnap, right?’ the old lady seemed delighted to see me at her doorstep.

‘Certainly...can you tell me where have the Shettys been? Their house is locked.’

‘Yeah...they are on a trip to Rajasthan. That guy, Arvind, he’s too fond of Indian history and culture. So his son and daughter-in-law have taken him on a Rajasthan trip, which is famous for its golden history and rich civilization.’

‘Ohh...that’s great.’

‘Yes...you’ve come here for the second time and I won’t let you go just like that. You’re even not in uniform. So there’s no obstacle for you to feast with us today. Come on in.’ she pulled me in. Her daughter-in-law, Reena and son were also present. Reena also seemed to be excited to host a police officer and put the plates on the dining table for me along with the others. Mr. Santosh, Reena’s husband and son of the old lady, and I chatted about the current affairs and political scene throughout the country and state and I had a great time with the family.

Sambit Patnaik

Sambit Patnaik is currently a student of College of Engineering and Technology, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

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