Dr Manjubala Panda is a renowned Epidemiologist from Odisha leading the stream of medicines. She is known for introducing readers to the world of variegations and illusions derived from real-world stories. Her books are epitomes of idiosyncratic fame. Each of her stories is meant to teach her readers valuable ethics of life

The suspense story, “Daga” (Stain) revolves around the incidents of a college where the so-called events of freshers’ day take up a devastating figure staining the seniors with persistent guilt. But the story takes a novel turn where the incidents were co-related with psychological health care.

Aadityaamlan Panda is a poet, writer, critic and literary translator obsessed with words. He prefers writing texts embedding hidden messages for society. An ardent nature observer who loves thinking deeply even on miniature visions of nature, witnessing life as a flamboyant ambience of resplendent aura enforcing one to take up some significant role.

He has translated the story “Daga”, originally written in Odia into the English language to enable English readers witness the suspense of the story a chance for getting deeply engrossed in its theme.

We all are accountable for this stain!!!

**DAGA (STAIN)**

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“Nishtha!”

“Yes Sir.”

“Listen carefully. I want to hand over the responsibility of Special Cabin One, especially to you. You are very well acquainted with the reason. This is the patient’s third suicidal attempt. First, he attempted to hang. But while assembling all necessary equipment, his family members sensed the air of his plan and consequently suppressed it. Next, he tried sleeping pills. A stitch in time could merely save him. And this time, he pierced his radial artery. Excessive blood loss. He has been transfused with two units of blood still his condition is quite serious. Our minor casualness may enervate fatal consequences.”

Nishtha knows it. Dr Samantray Sir hands her the charge of nursing patients requiring sincere and dedicated care. The senior consultant of “Ambrosial Drops Psychological Health Care”, father figure, Dr Samantray had an abyss of trust and faith in her.

Cabin One. Sanket lay flat on the bed. An oxygen mask covered his mouth. Saline was infused into that sliced artery. The woman sitting near him was perhaps his mother. Seeing Nishtha, she stood up at once. Grasping her palm, she spoke on an emotional note, “To call someone my son, I have one. Please cure him. Doctor Sir said that your touch embeds ambrosia, you utter words wrapped in charm.”

Nishtha needed to figure out Sanket’s state of mind. But he was not in a condition to speak. Hence Nishtha decided to converse secretly with his mother.

“Aunty, if you be frank enough to reveal everything about Sanket, then only I can appropriately counsel him in the proper direction. Hence please reply honestly to whatever I enquire.”

“Sure daughter!”

“How is Sanket in his academics?”

“He is a bright student from the beginning. But due to his repetitive suicidal attempts, out of fear, we have prevented him from joining his college back. “

“No one immediately resolves to commit such an extreme step as suicide, Aunty. Please inform me about his former mental and physical health.”

“No, he never had any visible deformities. Quite a healthy and fine boy. He is humourous and ever cheerful.”

“His hobby?”

“His love and respect for singers. He was good at singing.”

“Please inform the names of his best friends once. They might convey a lot about him.”

“He is a friend to almost everyone. I cannot particularise anybody.”

“Had he any intimate relationships? Or in other words, his girlfriend.”

“No no. I must have known otherwise.”

“Any misdemeanours? Nowadays it is a problem with kids, hence I asked. Do not take it otherwise.”

“No.”

Mandira looked nervous. She was swallowing Globus intermittently. Nishtha felt as if she was concealing some facts. However, it agreed with her experience, a usual scene in any psychological healthcare. Counselling must be done with great patience.

Likewise, a week passed.

Besides her assigned job, Nishtha visited Sanket twice a day. Sitting on the chair adjacent to his bed, she caressed his temple and inquired about his well-being.

Dr Samantray’s successful treatment and Nishtha’s utmost care healed Sanket to some extent. During his visitation, Sanket thanked Dr Samantray. He used to get worried during Nishtha’s absence. Upon her arrival, he smiled and greeted her hello. He even replied good morning and good evening.

However, Mandira had placed Sanket under her meticulous surveillance. She never allowed Nishtha to discuss any of his subjective issues. She whispered into her ears, “My son gets annoyed at the discussion of his studies or college. Then you may fail to console him. Please talk carefully, dear.”

Nishtha pressed hard against her temple. Dr Samantray Sir said, “Intense psychological depression is the cause of his repetitive suicidal ideations.” But why such depression? Failure in exams or rejection in love?? Or something else??? Without the knowledge of the actual cause, the diagnosis was impossible! Again Mandira is neither revealing the fact nor letting Sanket!! Quite a complicated situation!!!

Sanket will be discharged today. Along with prescribed medicines, Dr Samantray has even delivered some important counsel. He has even warned Sanket’s parents to keep a vigilant eye on him.

Mandira pleaded afore Nishtha, “Please, keep visiting our home at least once a day dear. Sanket respects you a lot. I am ready to pay whatever compensation it would require.”

Sanket is the only Vishikeshan (According to the legends of The Mahabharata, he was the only son of Karna) son of an executive dad. In exchange for everything, they want their son’s recovery.

Not aim for earning more, but, just like other patients, she sensed her affection for Sanket. Moreover, Sanket’s innocent looks resembled the eyes of Nishith, naïve, delicate and dreamy. Oh, Nishith! She feels a nail dragged into her chest. Blood flows in abundance from it. She heaves coalescing her lips.

Now Nishtha resides only with her widowed mother. When both the siblings were young, their father passed away. Their mother served people in their homes and earned a living for them. But alas! Nobody can visualise what grief might overpower them. Her beloved brother emptied her mother’s love and passed away six months before. From thence, her mother’s tears remain unevaporated.

This year itself, after completing his matriculation, her brother joined another college. What not had her mother dreamt of regarding him! He will study. Join a job. He would drive away our poverty. Marry. Bring her a daughter-in-law. It fluctuated in her eyes the visions of worldly pursuits.

Ah, needy people like her mother have in their dreams a house, a splendid one! It collapses in no time with a blink!!

From dining on the same plate to sleeping on the same mattress, the siblings had lived like twins. Nishtha’s world had perished without her younger brother. In the hectic schedule and hustle-bustle, the day passed away. But in the darkness of night, she recalls the cute and adored one. To conceal her tears, she turns away from her mother during the night. Their pillow gets drenched in their tears. Her mother’s thoughts keep blending then. Either of the eyes precipitates into tears aside from each other.

In what way can veracity be avoided!

That evening, Mandira said, “My friend’s husband passed away of cardiac disease, daughter. I must go to visit her. But I am not able to cope with my mind. I am not able to leave Sanket alone. By the time his father returns, it is midnight. During your presence, may I go visit my friend once?”

Mandira had gone. Nishtha was alone with Sanket. Some necessary questions could be asked in this opportunity. Of course, as per Mandira, exempting his college and studies.

Nishtha was enquiring. Sanket kept answering. No, not at all, nothing to doubt. How could depression enter into an atmosphere of such happiness and innocence?

Suddenly, after a thought, Nishtha handed over 2 sheets of paper to Sanket. One pink and another white. She said, “Whom you like the most, write that person’s name on the pink colour sheet. And in the white one, that name which you want to forget.”

Sanket thought for a while. Smiled a bit. That smile enclosed grief. After writing he stretched them to Nishtha. Nishtha got shocked as if she saw a ghost. Either of the papers had the same name! That too…!!How is that possible!!!

He contained herself. Controlled her emotions. She was a dedicated counsellor. She had come here for counselling. “Again, many people in the world have the same name”. One should not feel so heavy for only a name. She said, “Sanket! Why do you want to forget the person you love the most?”

The agape, blue and vivid sky got suddenly overcast with unseasonal dark clouds. What! Sanket wrapped his face with his palm and started crying desperately.

This sudden, unpredicted change astonished and agitated Nishtha. Aunty had given her Sanket’s responsibility for a little while only. But what did she do! She started fearing holistically. Why did she ask such a complicated question!!

“Oh, what happened Sanket? I have unknowingly hurt you. Believe me, I had no such intention. Calm down, please.

“My wish to love or forget him is worthless now. He is no more. He died. No, we all cumulatively and collectively killed him. I am stained in that deplorable guilt.”

The roar of the tides of tears reverberated the vast sea.

From somewhere some delicate kids would newly step into college. How will they grow smart without ragging? Thus, before the admission of a novel batch, some seniors psychologically prepare themselves. Their ragging campaign is flamed as soon as the freshers start residing at the hostel.

Sanket had an innate weakest towards music. On the eve of the Freshers’ Day function, the boy who sang from the novel batch’s side, wonderstruck senior student Sanket and he fell in love with him from the beginning itself.

The next day, after the class, by searching and enquiring, Sanket reached the boy’s room. A calm, simple and handsome boy. He listened to songs of his wish from him. After conversing, he came to know about his extreme poverty. He observed that with mere assistance, the boy can excel with flying colours.

Art has a unique magnetising influence. First, it's a temptation, then attraction. The hue of friendship was getting deep deeper sequentially.

That day, midnight admitted excessive ragging of first-year students. Imported drinks had already entered the institution even though secretly. Ragging again demanded a mood. Alcohol was mandatory for that mood! Rich students like Sanket sponsor wine. Uncultured guardians, irresponsible teachers. Illogical social support, overall diseased mentality.

Senior students are notorious and crazy. First-year students’ condition is like goats taken to a scaffold. Several methods of torture. Some were asked to utter obscene words while others were made to jog in their undergarments. On disobeying, some were given good better while some were given cigarette sparks at awkward sites.

“Oh, this boy was singing nicely that day. Today also he is going to sing.”

“Fine, fine. Sing an appeasing song. Come take, this is your microphone.” Somebody rolled an A4 sheet to resemble a windpipe and moved unsteadily to hand it over to him.

“Oh what. It won’t suit at all if he sings from behind. Let him stand on the parapet so that it would seem like a stage.”

“Yesss”, voices roared all together in support.

A feeble voice now sounded from behind, “I will sing. But standing on the floor of the roof itself. Looking down from the parapet, I feel dizzy. I vomit out of nausea.”

“What! Are you a girl? With such a butter-soft body, how will you study and join a job? Come, climb now, enough!” Somebody pulled him by his arms.

Looking down from the roof of a four-storey building, the kid closed his eyes.

“This is somewhat a girl. Will he listen like this? Hey, you! Will you climb or forcibly will we put you there?”

“Brother! Brother!! Sanket Brother!!!”

Who is calling! This voice is his!! What was his name!!! Why am I not able to remember!!!!

Perhaps Sanket is highly drunk today. Cannot open his eyes. How can eyelids be so heavy! After lots of effort, with dizzy eyes, he looked. Like a shadow, someone was climbing up the parapet. Many are encouraging him with claps. But who was calling him now! Oh…At this time, why is his memory not working fine!!

Thud!!!

Nishith!!!

Collective roar. The bulky mountain placed on Sanket’s eyelids collapsed. Everybody’s vertigo and hangover vanished at once.

Nishith’s ensanguined, motionless body lay on the concrete road next to the hostel’s portico.

“Nishith had yearned for my help that day. If I had not consumed wine, surely I could have guarded him. Yes, I have only killed him. I must be punished. Let me die sister. I have to visit him and ask him to pardon by touching his feet.”

The ceiling fan kept oscillating. Nishtha stared at it blankly. Like a sequential panorama, events of the past encompassed her eyes. It is her teens. Nishtha has brought her younger brother Nishith to the fun fair. Her friends are enjoying the giant wheel. They are signalling her to join them. Her mind is getting desperate. But with a scared look, Nishith has grasped her frock. Nishith fears this giant wheel. Once he had gone for it that he got unconscious and had to visit the hospital. She pressed his shoulders, “Don’t fear, brother. Your sister is not going to leave you alone? Let’s go from here. I will buy you a mouth organ, you will play.

“Nishith! Where did you depart my dear brother!!”

“Sister???!!!”

Cloudburst precipitation! It rained snow!! Frozen hearts either!!!

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