**THE COLOURS OF AUTUMN**

IN EVERY CHANGE, IN EVERY FALLING LEAF, THERE IS SOME PAIN, SOME BEAUTY.AND THAT’S THE WAY NEW LEAVES GROW.”

I never before had a fascination for autumn. The very word “Fall” used to give me a feeling of sadness. The leaves falling from the tree and the branches bare against the wind.This picture always gave me a sense of melancholy till I saw the amazing painting made by Palash. A painting , so bright, so intense and so beautiful.

The hall was packed with audience and the upcoming , budding artists , all children and adults with special needs.

Palash had won the 1st prize for her painting in the category of ‘landscapes’ .Her painting was a beautiful autumn scene of falling leaves,leaves of all different colours and vibrant hues, all scattered on the mother earth.

I had accompanied Palash on behalf of the school for this award function, Plash had the honour to receive the Trophy and a cash prize of 5000 rupees from the renounced professor from the faculty of Fine Arts.

Palash is a victim of Hemiplegia, a type of Cerebral Palsy, she has a deformity in her left hand and left leg. Palash is a regular student of the school for children with special needs. My association with her as an educator is just 3 years old, but our bonding with each other is much stronger and deeper. She is 28 years old young woman, married and divorced. Inspite of all the odds , she is a very enthusiastic and promising student of our school.

I saw her for the first time in the Vocational training centre of the school, completely engrossed in the candle -making. She was guiding other students and helping them out. I soon learnt from her that she had a great interest in drawing and painting.so I got her enrolled in the Art and Craft section of the school Academy. Now I used to meet Palash regularly. and our friendship grew stronger as the days passes by.

“Palash, how beautiful is your name!” I complimented her several times. “ Everytime I utter your name, I can picture a tree with the palash flowers in full bloom.” She just smiles and says nothing. Her smile is true and genuine. Only a few strong people can preserve it amidst endless trials and struggles.

One day I heard her narrative from her own mouth though I had a faint picture of her life. She was too happy to tell me about her; may be she had found someone who was genuinely concerned about her.

“ Mam, which chapters do you want to hear?” She asked me smilingly.

I was taken aback. I had thought she would get emotionally upset.

“Tell me right from chapter one.”I also told her with a smile , putting my hand gently on her shoulder.

Her story is really tragic and soul stirring . Palash comes from a lower middle class family. She had lost her mother when she was 20.Her father got her married at the age of 22 and just within a year her husband divorced her. She came back to her father’s house utterly broken and shattered. Her father learnt about the school for special children and enrolled her. This was only the last ray of hope which he could give his daughter.

I listened to her story with a heavy and troubled heart; the storm was raging only in my mind. Palash was totally calm and composed. She had got over it and moved on. Palash is not very intelligent or smart. But she has a powerful sense of observation and an amazing imagination. She has won many prizes at school level for her paintings but this award was her most acclaimed achievement.

She always calls me her driving force and a source of motivation. I am humbled by her recognition. I tell myself , success isn’t always just what you accomplish in your life it’s what you inspire others to do.Her strong determination, her willpower and her unfailing perseverance has also helped me to see life in a new perspective.

Palash had worked on this painting for almost two weeks , all the participants had to do it under the supervision of their educators. Palash is slow in her work but precise. She had taken care of all the minute details of her painting, the sky, the earth, each leaf, all the colours gently merging, with one another; soft , subtle, yet intense in its own way.

“Palash, now your painting is ready, what’s going to be its title?”

She looked at her painting, and then to me and said softly ,” The colours of autumn.”

“ ‘The colours of autumn’? what does it signify Palash?”

“ Mam , the trees quietly watch their beautiful leaves falling and drying, but they do not weep. They

have a hope that they will get new leaves very soon.”

I just looked at Palash, and pondered on every word she uttered .All these years I had not seen this side of autumn, but today I saw it through Palash’s eyes.

She hardly has any formal education, has not read any books on philosophy, but her experiences have taught her some of the most valuable lessons of life.

I looked at Palash once again. She smiled at me.

“Mam, my life too is like the trees in autumn, I have also lost all the beautiful things in life, but I just

don’t look back and cry.

“Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the Fall .” someone has rightly said.

“I know God has a beautiful tomorrow for me. “

I had no words to reply to her self-assuring statement. I just held her hands and smiled.

Now I looked at her standing on the stage, she had the coveted trophy in her hands and a thousand

dreams in her eyes. I was too happy to be a part of her unforgettable journey.

**Curie Pereira**