Rahul Singh

Star India Pvt Ltd

7045645325

SUJATA SINGH (36) is a housewife living in a nuclear family in Amritsar. She was born and brought up in a village some 150 kilometer from Amritsar. As is usual in rural India, she was married off at an early age and gave birth to NISHTHA (16) soon after. Her husband PRAKASH SINGH (42) ran a successful wholesale dealership in …..

Sujata was a dedicated wife and mother and took care of all the household chores herself, not demanding any help from her daughter so that the latter could focus entirely on pursuing her dream of becoming a doctor.

She was protective about her daughter and believed that in a city like Amritsar, a young ambitious girl has to tread with caution. However, she never tried to restrict her daughter in any way and gave her complete freedom.

1. Sujata got late coming back from the market one day and it had grown dark. She had to pass some scantily lit nooks and pathways on her way home. She would usually avoid going out in the night because the locality had become infamous due to some recent incidents of petty thefts and chain snatchings. She was nervous but kept a brave face all along and kept chit chatting with the rickshaw puller to stave off the nervousness. Suddenly while passing a dark alley, she thought she heard a gagged scream of a woman. She asked the rickshaw puller if he’d heard it too but the he denied. Within seconds there was a second sound, this time a little louder. Rickshaw puller said he heard it this time and started to increase the speed. Sujata got really scared and asked the guy to keep the pace. However, the incessant cry for help got the better of her initial instinct to run away, and she asked the rickshaw puller to stop. When the guy denied and pleaded for her to keep going to avoid getting into any problem, she left the rickshaw right there and started moving towards the sound. She was extremely scared and nervous but she kept moving forward nonetheless, all the while challenging as well as shouting for help.
2. The rickshaw puller, realizing his mistake, pulled away in search of help and from another street, called a few men to the spot. When they all arrived, they saw a young girl sitting on the street alongside Sujata. The perpetrator had fled the scene without being noticed by either Sujata or anyone else. The young girl was crying while also thanking Sujata for saving her between her sobs. Everyone went up in a cry of joy and hailed Sujata. This act of bravery had made Sujata a local hero. She as well as her family was revered in the locality for a few days; however, after a while life went back to normal. People stopped talking about the incident.
3. Local elections were just a couple of months way and this time safety and security was a burning topic among citizens. Politicians molded their election campaign narratives around security. The incumbent MLA, Dhanraj Bhalla, was being cornered by the opposition for not having done enough for the safety of the people. Opposition attacked him by saying he had let goons run riot in his constituency. Dhanraj was a shrewd politician who had held the constituency for the last 15 years but this time his prospects looked bleak. He had to give out a strong signal to the electorate. He approached Sujata to become the face of his campaign.
4. When approached with Dhanraj’s offer, Sujata was taken by surprise and readily refused it. She didn’t want to get involved in politics. She didn’t trust politics and politicians. Pratap was of the same opinion and thought nothing good will ever come out of it. Nishtha, on the other hand, encouraged Sujata to take the offer. She argued that Sujata wasn’t going to be involved in active politics anyway, and there was no harm in getting in the public eye. Her words fell on deaf ears, however, and Sujata was adamant that this was all nonsense.
5. One day while coming back from college on her bike, Nishtha feels she was being followed by a couple of boys. She comes back home but doesn’t tell this to anyone. Next few days, the same thing happens and she gets really scared. She tells about the incident to her mom who tells Pratap later in the night. Pratap vows to accompany Nishtha to and from college but Nishtha, feels it would be embarrassing in front of her friends because she was a grown up and not a child anymore. Pratap defies Nishtha and starts to pick her up from her college but he knows this is not a permanent solution. He approaches police but the inspector gives him a cold shoulder saying he can’t take any action because no crime has been committed. Meanwhile, Nishtha stops going out anywhere apart from college
6. Sujata agrees to become the face of Dhanraj’s campaign. Suddenly there is an upturn in the public sentiment towards Dhanraj’s campaign. People knew Sujata to be the hero of that earlier episode and when she said she would help bring safety and security to the region, everyone believed her. The women in particular had turned in Dhanraj’s favor.
7. One day while campaigning, Dhanraj is shot by some goons and becomes critical. His party offers the ticket to Sujata. Sujata is reluctant but Pratap encourages her to take it.
8. Sujata takes the ticket and starts campaign of her own. Her house becomes her campaign office. Many in the neighborhood offer their help to Sujata in her campaign. Some people she likes and trusts while others she thinks were just being opportunistic. None, however, have much experience in politics apart from just being armchair political gurus.
9. The election campaign, however, throws the family into chaos. Their inexperience is quite telling. After making a few bad calls which threaten the campaign, Sujata seeks help of Suraj (38), the right hand man to Dhanraj. Suraj had offered his help earlier but Sujata denied because he was rumored to have been a local goon and a hardman. However, when one of her trusted neighbors, Mr Sharma presses her on the matter she goes to Suraj for help. He agrees to help but demands complete autonomy in tactical decision making.
10. Meanwhile, the opposition tries every political trick in the book to try to intimidate them. They try to threaten, appease, bribe and malign Sujata but she has grown to be resolute and more confident, although a little inexperienced. Suraj proves to be a great guide and help in tackling the opposition as well as planning her moves.
11. Particularly affected by the entire episode is Nishtha, who is unable to concentrate on her studies. She also attracts unwanted attention in her regular life which affects her psychologically. The special attention given to her by everyone – teachers, students, sometimes the media too – threatens to alienate her from her friends.
12. Nishtha, however, is very supportive of her mother even though the entire political storm had affected her quite significantly. She believes her mother is setting a great example for all the women out there who are thought to be incapable of doing anything significant with their lives.
13. One day during a rally, Sujata spots the same girl she had saved earlier. She was part of the crowd gathered to listen to her speech. Sujata calls her on stage which the girl readily accepts. However, on seeing Suraj behind Sujata, she panics and flees from stage without meeting Sujata. After the rally, Sujata enquires about the girl and goes to meet her. There she finds out that Suraj was the one who tried to rape her that night.
14. This news struck like a thunderbolt to Sujata. She had brought home a rapist and exposed her family and especially her daughter to him. On one hand she couldn’t do without Suraj’s help and on the other, he represented everything she stood against. She wanted to bring him to the book and discussed this with Pratap and Nishtha.
15. Nishtha argued that this would end her campaign. The opposition and media would brand her a fraud for taking help from a rapist while taking her position for women’s safety. Sujata didn’t care about winning too much but Nishtha thought she was too far down the road to go back and every woman was looking up to her. She had a duty towards every girl whose safety was at stake and couldn’t let down the women who saw her as a liberator.
16. Suraj had seen the girl at the rally and knew something was about to go rather ugly. He thought the best thing to do at this point would be to front Sujata and understand what she knew. He knew that the girl would be too scared to go to the police as the sub inspector was rumored to be Suraj’s childhood friend. This was also the reason she hadn’t gone to the police so far knowing well the identity of her rapist. However, Sujata may have her doubts because of the incident at the rally and she should be taken into confidence.
17. Suraj goes to meet Sujata at the campaign office, which was now moved to a new building closer to the market. Pratap and Nishtha were present there. On seeing Suraj, Sujata asked her how the campaign was progressing in the Muslim locality. She was completely normal which made Suraj, who was a little nervous when he arrived, a little at ease. Although he didn’t believe that Sujata knew nothing, he kept a straight face.
18. Nishtha, although, had argued to keep Suraj onside, started to grow allergic to his presence. She cursed herself everytime she thought about him and thought the reason for his continued presence was her.