



## **A LINE FROM THE DIARY OF LIFE (Short Story)**

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God be with me.

The year of hibernation turned out to be a period of realisation and transformation. Every second unknowingly I broke ties with the world. I was transported to a metaphysical world - a world which was contained only by faith in the Supreme Being. Nothing has gone awry after that. Blind beliefs in the Supreme Being and from then I never have regretted that faith. The road that led to the hibernation was indeed a tough one and as the saying goes when the going gets tough, the tough gets going.

A few years back, I belonged and then at the same time, I didn't belong. The family I was born into belonged to me but somewhere and somehow I seemed to be a misfit. My parents, my siblings .... But did the 'my' ever come close. Nothing to say, that we are a family. Totally broken up inside, bleeding, drawing blood – that is the best how it could be described. Where were the comfortable, happy evenings that a family should have; a feeling of security, a feeling of belonging, a feeling of complete faith and trust. Where, oh! Where has it gone? Parents, who should have been supporting and protecting seem to have disintegrated and were in want of support and protection from their children. Is this the family, the writers wrote about vividly in their flowery language. If it was so, then I was sorely missing it somehow.

Appa was the most handsome man and amma, a very beautiful lady. Theirs was a picturesque wedding that took place surrounded by a lot of lilies and red roses. Happiness hung in the air and everyone wished them happiness ever after. But in a matter of a few months, happiness disappeared. "Love", a feeling that was supposed to develop day after day in every novelist's view, seemed to be dwindling day after day. That is when I realised that life is ephemeral. Nothing is permanent. The birth of the first child was a gift that should have bonded the love between the parents but it seemed to have an opposite effect. The responsibility of a child





seemed to have thrown a cloud over the virgin love that existed between the couple. Egos gave way to discussions and what should have been a protective parents' cover slowly turned to be a shroud of despair and darkness.

Akka tried in vain to infuse some understanding into my parents. They seemed to be two different spheres under the same roof. Though Akka and I were too young to understand the intricacies of a married life, we did know that all was not well with our family. Appa used to go to work and amma looked after the household chores but appa and amma communicated with each other through us. In fact, they shared their heart burns with their children. They hardly spoke to each other and even if they did, it was to keep up pretences before the people around.

It is usually said that childhood days are supposed to be carefree – free from the trials and tribulations of middle aged life. But our childhood was marked with the responsibility of running the family. The spats that our parents had began to take a toll on us physically and mentally. We seemed to be slowly messing up our lives while trying to keep the family together.

Then one day, appa decided that he had nothing to do with us anymore. We were at least financially secure till then, but his decision brought in economical insecurity. We heard that appa had remarried, got a transfer to another place and settled there. Our father, our own father, who was supposed to provide our needs, forsook us. Amma tried in vain to make both ends meet with the little she had saved. But soon, she found herself a new consort and introduced him to us as our new father. By then, we were disillusioned with the concept of fathers and no longer believed in it. But we had no choice. We had to accept a complete stranger as our father and go on with life as if nothing had happened. If life had been complex till then, it turned turbulent afterward. Neither akka nor I was comfortable with this complete stranger. His strange looks and words invaded our privacy and we became a recluse in our house.

This is when love found a way to my heart. I was at a point of breakdown and was planning to end my life when I met my boyfriend. He created an aura of love around me. His presence filled my heart with joy and happiness. I thought that I had at last found a meaning to life. I started depending on him to dispel my inner darkness and to fill the love vacuum that my parents had left in me. He seemed to be god sent. I never believed in a supreme being till then. I began to discover new feelings and he started to guide me to understand myself. I had never thought of my physical appearance till then. Girls my age were indulging in all kinds of cosmetics and beautifying themselves. All these had no charm for me until I met my boyfriend. Being a recluse, I had no friends. Akka too had no idea of cosmetics. I started stealing from





amma to buy things that I needed. As mom was too busy with her new husband and hardly at home, she never discovered the small amounts of money missing from her purse.

Thus I transformed from an ordinary looking girl to a fashionable and socially acceptable woman. My boyfriend took me to boutiques and bought me clothes that accentuated my zero size and my fair looking skin. I started moving in circles that admired my presence. I lost myself in the crowd. My depression was drowned in drinking and dancing till dawn. No one missed me except my sister who was aghast at my behaviour. She kept awake all through the night waiting for me. She was the only soul who truly loved me, but I hardly acknowledged her concern for me. I was determined to treat the society as it treated me. My drunken bouts became common and slowly I could feel a difference in the attitude of the people around me. My neighbours who till then sympathised with our condition, turned against me and refused to talk to me. I didn't care. I was strong surrounded by the love of my boyfriend and his friends. Life seemed to be too good, too high.

Little did I realise that all this was ephemeral. There came a day when love started diminishing. The more I depended on my boyfriend, the more he decided to shirk me. He began looking for new vistas. I panicked. My very life depended on his love. I couldn't bear to live without him. Life without him would be unbearable. I surely would perish. I did not want the darkness around me again. By now, I was also addicted to drinks and drugs. I surely could not get hold of these without the help of my boyfriend. I thought I could somehow bring him around. Then, one day, I saw him walking hand-in-hand with another beautiful girl. I admired her beauty at first and then realised that I had lost what I considered was the most precious. I was alone, totally alone – bruised both mentally and physically, with no one to turn to. I began to walk. I walked and walked for miles together totally oblivious to the surroundings, or the heavy rain. I wished I could drown in the water in the clouds that were hanging above. I felt there was nothing more left in life. I had seen and experienced everything that a lifetime could offer in a space of 21 years. This was it. There was no need for living any more. I had enough of life. I was sure no one on earth would mourn my loss. The only regret I felt was not saying good-bye to my akka. But then I felt that I had broken my bonds with her in the past few months. So, she too might not miss me much. I was wrong.

While I was intent on taking revenge on the society by destroying myself, my akka was giving more to the society. She concentrated on her studies and after graduating, she enrolled in an NGO for destitute women and worked day and night for them. I had no inkling of this. She served selflessly and gave what she could to girls who had nowhere to go and were completely broken by their respective backgrounds. She found love there and satisfied her longing for her





family with these girls and the sanyasinis who ran the home. Her face radiated an inner peace. Peace, Oh! Peace! This is what I had not known all my life.

My walk was never ending. I passed through towns. At one point of time there was no more energy left in me to move forward. I looked around and found myself in a village. The serenity of the village had an effect on me. I sat down under a tree. I could feel curious eyes on me, unlike in the towns where no one had time for anyone else. I stood up but fell down due to acute fatigue. I slowly faded into blissful oblivion.

When I opened my eyes, I wondered where I was. Slowly, by and by, I remembered what had happened and tried to sit up but a pair of loving hands pushed me back. I lay there, looking at the stranger who tried to pat my forehead with a wet cloth. That is when I realised that I was burning with fever and my whole body was in pain. The spasms in my stomach grew and I moaned in pain. I could take in the pain no longer. The lady who stood by my bed ran out of the room and brought in a doctor who administered a dose into my veins. It quietened me and slowly I fell asleep. When I got up the room was bathed in the soft light from a night lamp and there was the scent of the fresh flowers pervading the room. The pain in my stomach had subsided for the time being but my head hurt badly. I looked around. My throat was parched and dry. I slowly got up and walked out of the room.

The corridors were dark. With the help of the only light from a low watt bulb on one end of the corridor, I groped my way in the dark. I opened a door at the end of the corridor and found myself in a beautiful hall. The perfume of the incense sticks incensed my senses sending a positive energy through me. My eyes had by now adjusted to the darkness around. I could sense a lone figure on her knees praying silently. I went near her, knelt beside her and prayed. What or whom I prayed to, I had no idea. Till then an atheist, I did not know what made me bend my knees. The only thing I realised was that I could feel an inner peace. Something settled down within me. I could feel a lightness pervading my soul. I didn't know how long I was in that trance. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder and opened my eyes. The girl who was kneeling beside me had gotten up and seeing me, touched my shoulder. I looked up into her kind face and was taken aback. It was my sister, who was working in this institution for destitute women.

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