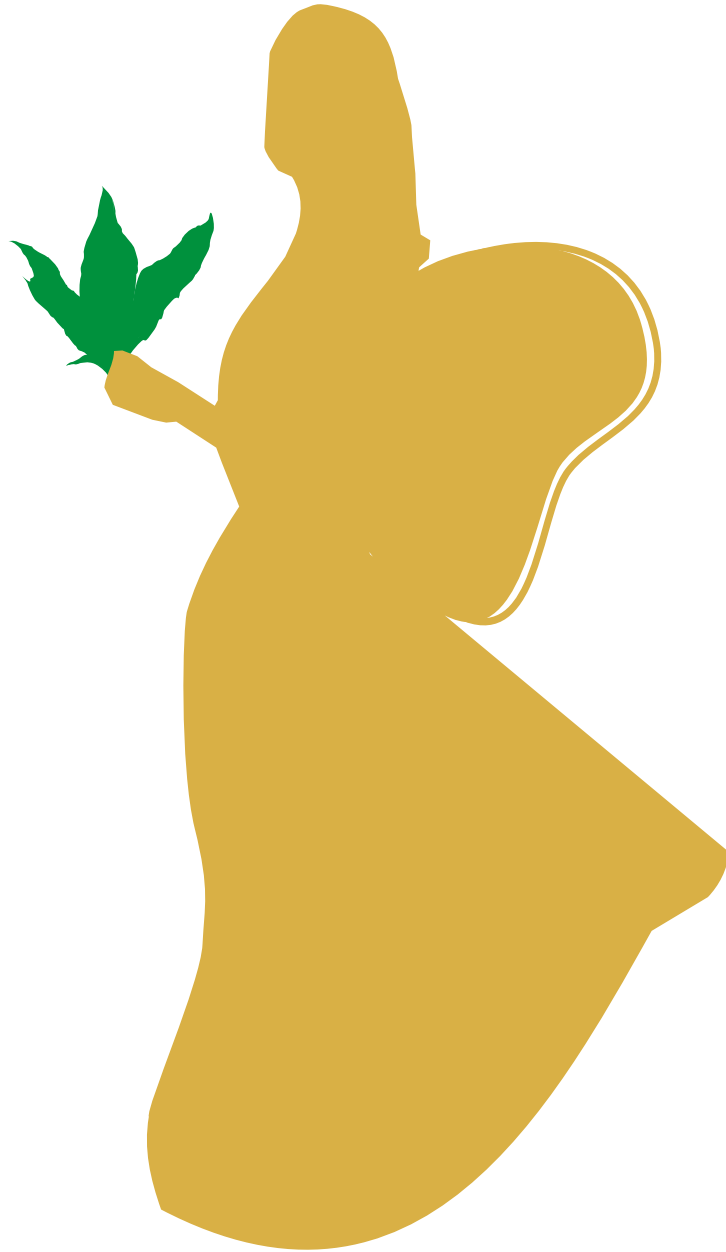


Satori



STORIES OF TRANS-FORMATION

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STORIES OF TRANS-FORMATION



Archana Vishaye



Builqess Shaikh



Durganand



Kanchan Lotlikar



Neetu Singh



Priya Avhad



Rashmi Mogare



Sandeep Yadav



Sanjana Kamat



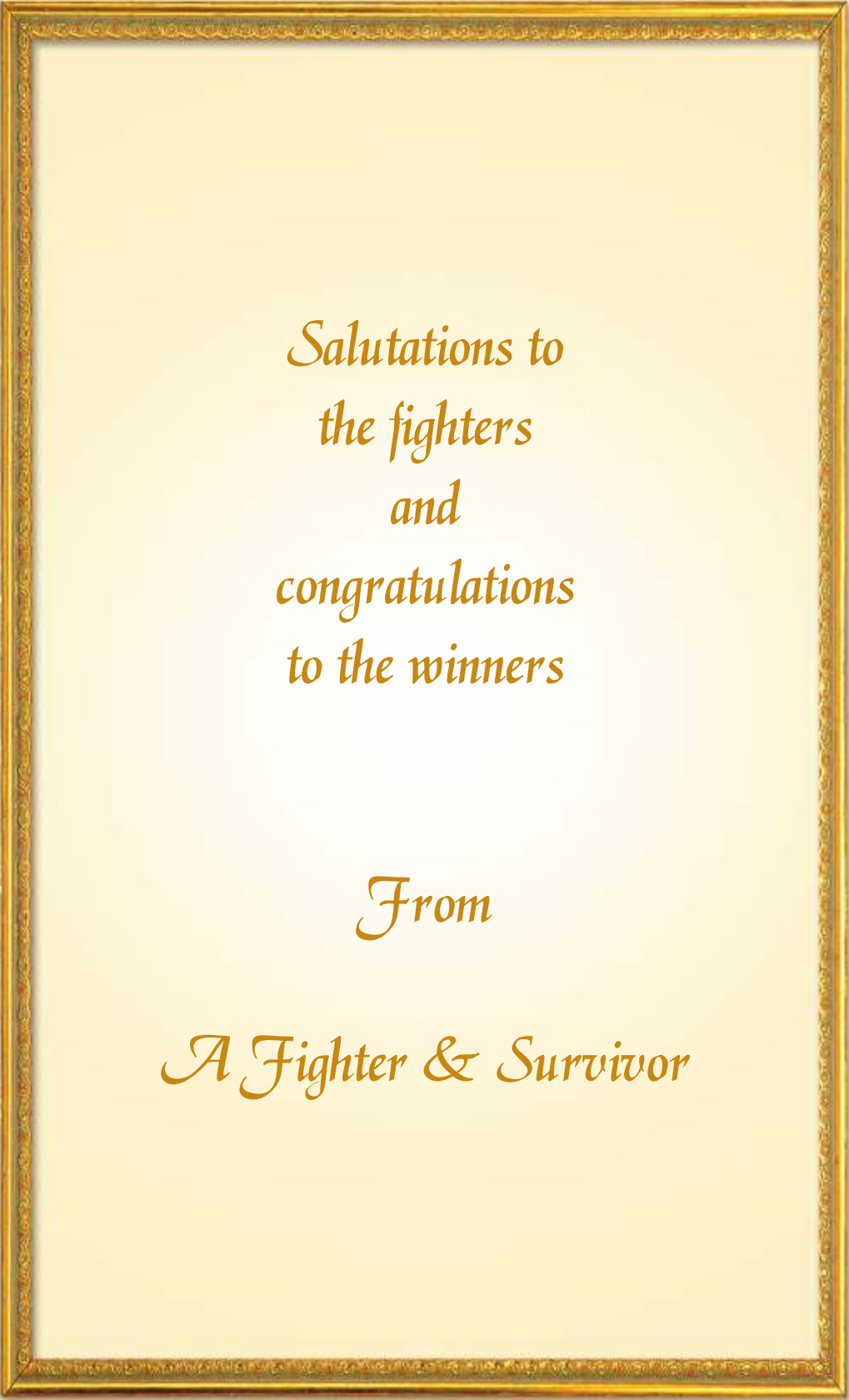
Shanu Shaikh



Sonal Virkayade



Sudip Das



*Salutations to
the fighters
and
congratulations
to the winners*

From

A Fighter & Survivor



Prelude

We all grow up sharing our stories with our families and friends.

As children, we shared them with our Moms, as adolescents we shared them with our friends. These small tete-a-tetes, surrounded by love and warmth, always left us with a feeling that we are cared for.

However, once adulthood arrived most of us became guarded. Conscious of being constantly evaluated and judged by family, friends, colleagues and others, we stopped sharing experiences in life. Resultantly, we lost on the joy which came by sharing blissful experiences and also the healing which happens by sharing struggles.

In 2009, when diagnosed with a triple negative stage 3 breast cancer, I was in a fix. Will I be better off talking about it or hiding it? Will guarding my space reduce my pain or intensify it?

I did, what came naturally to me i.e. I started sharing this experience with whoever I came across, be they friends, family, colleagues, neighbors and at times even complete strangers.

Sharing helped. The more I talked about it, the more detached I felt from the misery and pain I had to endure. Importantly, the more objectively I looked at my pain, the more it opened me to others' experiences and journeys.

This consciousness, that I could help in sharing their pain, spurred me to start 'Sanjeevani... Life Beyond Cancer'.

In this journey, I have come across wonderful people who have gone through a cancer experience and have converted it into an opportunity to lead transformed, meaningful and more evolved lives.

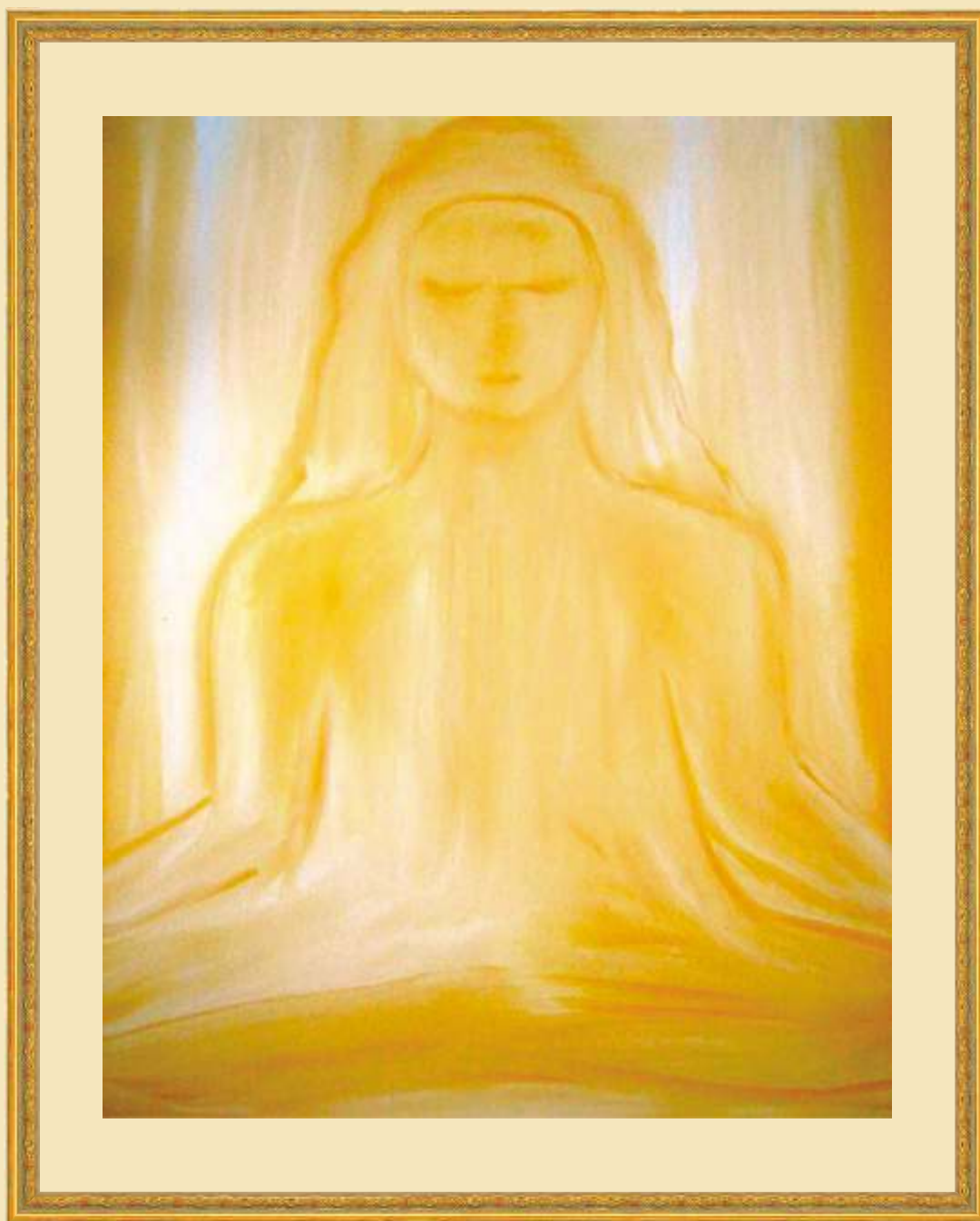
This book is a compilation of stories shared by some of these 'Cancer Victors'. They have come forward and shared their stories with a hope, that these would inspire others fighting cancer. I salute them and thank them for sharing their experiences.

I would like to make a special mention of and take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my mentor Shri Narayan Varma, who has always been an inspiration. His story will need a separate volume.

These stories enriched me and I hope that they enrich you too.....

SANJEEVNI
...life beyond cancer

Ruby Ahluwalia I.R.A.S.
Founder & Managing Trustee
Sanjeevani... Life Beyond Cancer



*The expansion of consciousness makes the Being one with
HIM and a state of SAMADHI is experienced*



Foreword

Over 1 million Indians are diagnosed with cancer each year and most people would know someone who has had cancer or is undergoing treatment for cancer. Yet the word 'Cancer' strikes fear in our heart. Cancer is generally associated with long and difficult treatment; financial hardships for the family and above all the uncertainty of cancer coming back or being fatal. While this is true to some extent for advanced cancers, it is not the case when cancer is caught early and treated well. Awareness about risk factors for different cancers and their avoidance; awareness about early warning signs of cancer and taking prompt action if any of these signs appear and healthy living can prevent many cancers or at least take the sting out of cancer. In western countries, vast majority of cancers are detected in early stage I & II and are cured with modern treatment. 'Cure' means they have no trace of cancer in their body and the chances of cancer coming back in future is negligible. Millions of such cancer survivors or victors go about their normal life till a ripe old age, sometimes troubled with long-term side effects of cancer treatment. In our country, due to lack of public awareness, inadequate diagnostic or treatment facilities outside big cities and limited affordability, majority of cancer cases are diagnosed in late stages or deprived of timely or adequate treatment.

Doctors, nurses and hospitals treat the cancer to the best of their ability but for the person to move on with life, the scars in the mind have to be healed.

Support of the family, friends and well-wishers can ease the journey through cancer and also helps in overcoming fears. Having dealt with thousands of cancer patients and their families over the last 25 years, I have realized that the fight against cancer is almost always led by the person afflicted with the disease. Their courage and will to fight against all odds is the motivating force for their families, well-wishers and also doctors.

The stories of people going through the journey of cancer are so varied but have a common theme as evident in many of the stories shared in this book. From the initial stage of shock and disbelief, upheavals during the treatment and then regaining full control of life after treatment, most people go through a vast range of emotions and practical situations and often need support. It is heartening to note that voluntary organizations like Sanjeevani have taken a holistic view of the menace of cancer and have joined hands with doctors and professionals in raising awareness about cancer and in providing all possible support to families in their fight against cancer.

The burden of cancer in the country is so huge and its impact on a family is such that in a very short period we have to increase public awareness, sensitize policymakers to make nationwide cancer prevention and early detection programmes a reality. This has to be backed by wider availability of affordable cancer care. I have personally witnessed how Sanjeevani has evolved and its reach has increased in such a short time. Knowing the vision and passion of its founder Ruby, I am not surprised. I wish that Sanjeevani continues to grow organically and touches many more lives.



v SProf. Rajiarin
Incharge, Cancer Genetics Unit
Tata Memorial Centre.



*Complete absorption and tranquility leads to opening
the conduit to let the cosmic consciousness flow in*

Oil on Canvas by Ruby Ahluwalia



ARCHANA VISHAYE



Lucky to be able to at impact lives in a positive way.

01

For Archana Vishaye it was one of the support group meetings which she regularly attended where the Ngo Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer had come to make a presentation and asked if anyone would be interested in volunteering. Archana raised her hand

through babysitting in my house post cancer. But she had a desire to help other cancer patients so they don't see the atrocities and cold-heartedness of people who they approach for help." She continued to go for her follow ups and her support group



thinking at least she could make some difference to one human life and her journey began.

Archana who was detected with breast cancer in early 2012 says, "When I approached Tata Hospital there was no help available for me. I didn't know where to go or who to talk to. I was clueless and lost. When my doctors said that my chemotherapy would cost about 13 to 14 thousand per session, I decided I would not undergo any treatment simply because I didn't have enough funds even for one chemo session. But who was I kidding? I obviously had to get myself treated, at least for the sake of my daughter. When I did my first chemo session, I had to borrow money from my daughter's friends." Archana says there was hardly any help available for her through the treatment. When she approached the various NGOs who were known to help cancer patients, she always came back with empty hands and tears welling up her eyes. But she managed to get herself treated with a few well-wishers' help.

In 2013, when Archana was declared to be in remission, she started baby-sitting to earn her living and support her family. "I was earning a good amount

meetings before she finally quit her babysitting business and started working with Sanjeevani.

"I enrolled for the course too, only to help others. I consider myself lucky to be able to at least impact one life in a positive way. I know it is not a lot, but it does provide me with a sense of satisfaction and happiness."

The best things about the course which Archana liked were the course contents, helpful nature of Faculty and learning on correct nutrition. Since many of the students in her class were not from a medical background, the dedication, patience and perseverance of the professors to teach the various concepts, facts and working of the human body and cancer were fabulous. She specifically remembers Dr. Majumdar who would time and again ask every student if they understood what she was trying to explain and that she would never get tired of answering the same questions again and again. .

Another thing that Archana feels she has gathered through the span of the course is a deeper sense of understanding for people.

"Through the course, there was a point when I was frustrated with many things that weren't going right. That hurt me and I wanted to really quit, I didn't want to go ahead and get back to my older life of taking care of kids – children gave me a lot of joy and made me not think of cancer. But then, when I spoke to the founder of Sanjeevani, Mrs Ruby Ahluwalia, she counselled me. Though I was still not very keen on continuing the course, I did as I thought that once the course was over I would quit and never come back. I still wasn't hundred percent convinced that this is what I wanted to do."

"The session on anger and stress management was a wake-up call for me. The various tips and solutions that were provided in the class were exactly what I needed. That session revealed to me that I really didn't have to bother about what others think. I had a new conviction, a new way of looking at life. I was in a much happier space after I went back home and contemplated on what was taught in the session. Also, I learnt to control my anger and stop stressing about petty things."

With that, Archana decided she would complete the course and work with Sanjeevani.. She says very matter-of-factly, "It is not a really high paying job in terms of money. But it is the highest paying job in terms of emotional needs and satisfaction."



Archana says, "My journey has been incredible. I feel transformed, from being someone who knew very little, to someone who is now able to change another person's life is phenomenal. It is all thanks to Sanjeevani's initiative to come up with something that is needed and yet lacking in today's era. The course does truly address the need of the hour."

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BILQUEES SHAIKH

She's mother of three, and a happy-go-lucky person, her voice is thin but it is filled with boundless energy and positivity. Meet Bilquees Shaikh – a two time cancer survivor and an immensely loving and caring person.

radiation, her doctors warned her from having any more babies as there was a risk that the hormonal changes could lead to a relapse.

All aware of the risks, Bilquees yet again got pregnant, not because she wanted to have more



When pregnant with her third baby, Bilquees during the eight month, she noticed an unusual lump in her left breast. When she informed the doctor, she was advised to undergo a set of tests and a biopsy immediately without any delay. Complying with the doctor's instructions, Bilquees underwent the prescribed tests. As the biopsy results revealed that she was suffering from breast cancer. Being pregnant, complicated things further. For starters, she could not undergo chemotherapy and radiation as it would affect the child badly. All she could do was wait till she delivered her baby. Only then would she be allowed to undergo her first chemotherapy.

After delivery, her doctor suggested that she undergo a set of tests again to check the progress of cancer as it had been left untreated. The tests revealed that her cancer had advanced to an extent that if she didn't undergo mastectomy to surgically remove the affected breast, she had little chances of survival. The progression of the disease was so rampant that chemotherapy and radiation alone were not enough to treat it. Out of the Operation Theater and while undergoing chemotherapy and

babies, but because she wanted to give one baby to her brother-in-law and his wife as the couple were childless for many years. Looking at their plight, Bilquees was hurt and wanted to have a baby so that they too could enjoy the joys of parenthood. As the doctors feared, she had a relapse soon after delivering the baby. Bilquees underwent chemotherapy and radiation and is now declared to be in remission since 2012.

Since then, Bilquees would regularly visit Tata Hospital for her follow up visits. It was one of these days that she came across a lady in OPD who would sit outside the check-up area and talk to everyone. She introduced herself as a volunteer of an NGO Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer and was there to help people coping with cancer. It was then that she told Bilquees about a course in Tata Institute of Social Sciences, initiated by Sanjeevani, for cancer caregivers. Though initially she was not very keen on taking up the course, she realized that taking the course would give her the required knowledge to handle cancer.

She enrolled for the course and even welcomed it as a change after many years. She liked the feeling of being a student again, attending college and making new friends who too were survivors or rather victorious warriors as she likes to address them.

For Bilquees, the course worked in many ways. She says, "I was always a happy person, cancer in no way defeated me really. But when I see others who have undergone trauma because of the disease, I feel bad. I know for a fact that if I can survive it, anyone can do it. All it needs is a strong and healthy mind to create a healthy body Understanding of this fact for self as is the first step. The course was more like a tool through which I could help rebuild many a lives and spread happiness."

"If you ask me if the course has impacted me on a personal level, then yes, it most definitely has. Being a full time mother in itself is a challenging job. The course being a full day one came as a time for personal space, just like 'me time', if you will. Also, it has helped me in the sense that I am more empathetic towards others now as I can understand the physiological changes that happen in the body while going through cancer. Although right now I am in a phase where I can not pursue care giving as a full time career, I definitely want to provide this as a service to as many cancer warriors as possible," explains Bilquees.



"I enrolled for the course and even welcomed it as a change after many years. I liked the feeling of being a student again, attending college and making new friends who too were survivors or rather victorious warriors."

"I was always a happy person, cancer in no way defeated me really. But when I see others who have undergone trauma because of the disease, I feel bad. I know for a fact that if I can survive it, anyone can do it. All it needs is a strong and healthy mind to create a healthy body Understanding of this fact for self as is the first step. The course was more like a tool through which I could help rebuild many a lives and spread happiness."

"I definitely want to provide this as a service to as many cancer warriors as possible."



DURGANAND

SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

A man with a mission

09

“As teenager, I saw my older brother battle uro cancer. It didn't end there, there were a zillion problems both me and my brother faced in terms of getting the access to the right kind of treatment, understanding where to go, whom to approach and

cancer patients coming from across the country there for treatment. Soon, looking at Bhola's experience and conviction to help others, he got a job in Tata Memorial Hospital as a counsellor, unfortunately Durganand didn't get a counsellor's job. But that



why really it is so difficult to deal with the disease,” recalls a 21-year-old Durganand Sharan whose lives with his brother Bhola Kumar in Mumbai.

Hailing from a small village in Madhibani district in Bihar, the two brothers came to Mumbai leaving behind their parents and a younger brother to get his older brother treated in Tata Memorial Hospital in the year 2009. Bhola, who used to study and do a part time job at a pathology lab in his village used to eat antibiotics by himself as he understood medicine. But when his discomfort continued, he underwent a test by himself at the pathology center and then went to a senior doctor to show and discuss the results. But even before the doctor could say it, Bhola knew it could be cancer.

Since there was hardly any facilities available in their village, Bhola called up one of his relative who was a surgeon, with his help he went to a cancer hospital in a nearby town before finally coming to Tata Hospital in Mumbai. His treatment at Tata went on for about a year, but after the ordeal was over and Bhola was declared to be in remission in 2010 he and his brother wanted to be in Mumbai and help other

didn't make him sad and give up on his new dream.

Durganand continued his education and started working in a textile factory as a supervisor.

Durganand says, “Though I wanted to be a counsellor, I couldn't get a job because I wasn't educated enough. So I continued my education and took up a job at a textile factory to support myself. I had decided once I graduate, I would take up a professional course. But one fine day when I returned home from work, my brother informed me about a course that was going to start in Tata Institute of Social Science in association with Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer. It was a golden opportunity. Not because it was a counselling course, but it was the first cancer-specific caregiving course I came across. I obviously jumped at the opportunity.”

Bhola got to know about the course while attending one of the support group meetings where Ruby Ahluwalia was informing the attendees about the course, Durganand recalls.

Enrolling for the course changed Durganand's life to a great extent. He says, “For starters, I changed! To give you a small example that absolutely anyone can relate with is when my brother used to

get irritated. Though I would do whatever he told me most of the times, but there were instance when I used to think why can't he do it, why do I always have to do this particular chore, etc. This went on for some time and there were even instances when I would even go to the extent of ignoring what he was saying or asking. I didn't understand then why he was asking me to do those chores, only now that I know what cancer really is and in how many different ways can it impact a human's life do I regret what I did. I realise my mistake and feel sorry for my actions. But that said, today, when my brother gives me a job be it the silliest of things, I do it, because I know and am able to understand why he is telling me to do something."

Durganand also believes that he has changed in the sense that he now thinks before speaking. He says, "In the past, if someone told me anything I would react, today I act upon it consciously. I first try to understand what the person is saying and why he is saying that, then I act accordingly."

Moreover, he says he is immensely blessed to have had an opportunity to undertake this course, he adds, "We had this professor called Dr. Majumdar, she taught us about human body. Now think of people coming from different backgrounds, some who don't have any basic knowledge and teaching them everything about the human body in detail. The amount of patience that she displayed moved me to

the core, but what struck me hard was the fact that when the human body module of the course was over, on the last day she said to each one of us, 'If you ever have any doubts, not today or tomorrow, but whenever, don't shy away from calling me. I will always be there to help.' She is a renowned doctor who is extremely busy, but her dedication to spread awareness, teach people and most of all, help others irrespective of where they come from is truly a heartwarming experience. I will be highly indebted to all the help she has provided to me and every single student in our class."



SANJEEVANI
... life beyond cancer

"I always dreamt of being able to help others. So, unfortunately, when I didn't get a counsellor's job, I felt sad but never gave up on my dream. I continued my education and started working in a textile factory as a supervisor."

"One fine day when I returned home from work, my brother informed me about a course that was going to start in Tata Institute of Social Science in association with Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer. It was a golden opportunity. Not because it was a counseling course, but it was the first cancer-specific caregiving course I came across. I obviously jumped at the opportunity."

"In the past, if someone told me anything I would react, today after completing the course I act upon it consciously."



KANCHAN LOTLIKAR

SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

There is a belief that habits cannot be changed, this four month course proved that to be a myth.

13

It was only in 2009, at the age of 60, when diagnosed with cancer of the ovaries did she come face-to-face with this infamous condition.

Today, at 67, Kanchan is more lively than any other

Hospital. Kanchan, being the helpful soul she is, asked the lady about the reports and offered to help in anything she might need. The lady said her name was Ujwalla Parker and took Kanchan's number.

Four years later, Ujwalla, now a close friend



lady half her age. Kanchan says that her battle with cancer was a weird one. "I hardly had any side-effects of chemotherapy and radiation. I was all chubby and going about the house fulfilling my daily duties as a mother and a wife. In fact, on the day I would undergo chemotherapy, I used to come back home and cool," Kanchan reveals with a hearty laugh.

Kanchan says that when she was undergoing treatment, she met many who were depressed, broken and shattered because of the sheer news of cancer. Working as a staff nurse at Cama Hospital for a major chunk of her life, Kanchan believes that helping others is a part of her nature and looking at sick people drowned in fear of where the disease would lead them to, ignited her desire to help them, yet again. That's when she decided to take up counselling.

Though an amateur counsellor, Kanchan would counsel people she would come across in her daily course of life. This was around the time when two of her neighbours too were diagnosed with cancer. One fine day, while travelling by the train, she came across a woman who held the reports from Tata Memorial

informed Kanchan about a course she wanted to undertake in Tata Institute of Social Sciences on Oncology Caregiving. This piqued Kanchan's interest and she too wanted to join the course. Citing her age, she was earlier not considered to be a serious candidate, but her persistence to learn more about the condition and her desire to help, convinced the TISS and Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer management to reconsider the age limit for the course.

"I wanted to do the course, come what may. I really consider this a blessing because for four years I was waiting for education in Oncology. Of course, I could understand many a things given my medical background, yet, oncology was a territory unexplored for me. The cherry on top was that it included counselling as well, while providing us with theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject."

Ask her what she enjoyed about the course, Kanchan says, "As a nurse, there is a perception that we do all the hard work, but during our practical training, when I looked at the doctors in Tata Memorial, I was stunned at the amount of hard work

and dedication they put into each patient. Plus, I have to give credit to them for teaching people who come from various backgrounds, some who are not even aware of the medical terms, about cancer in its most clinical form is worth an applause."

Being one of the oldest students, Kanchan says, "Though I don't have any grandchildren so far, I today feel like I have 16 children and grandchildren, thanks to the course again. It brought me in touch with the youth whom I learnt a lot from after hearing their journey."

"It is rather an understatement to say that the course is excellent, the course has changed me in ways I never thought I would. You know there is a belief that after a point habits cannot be changed, this four month course proved that to be a myth. I have changed mentally and emotionally in a way no words can explain," Kanchan revelas. On insisting to know about how the course has impacted her day-to-day life, she says, "To give you an example, most in Mumbai travel by train and buses. Earlier, I would be as annoyed and frustrated as anyone else if someone pushed me in the trains or the bus, though I would not make a scene about it, I would actually be angry in my mind. But today, if someone pushes me, I say 'It's okay beta' I actually have started to wear a smile on my face at every given point. Smiling now seems to be a part of who I naturally am."



Kanchan further adds, "I am grateful and fortunate that my efforts to be a caregiver has been recognised by Ruby Madam in a way that she has offered a position of a counsellor in one of her many branches in Mumbai. When she first approached me, she asked me if I will be able to do it. Pat came my answer, 'There is no doubt about it. I want to and I will do counselling at any cost!'"

"Today, my aim in life is to touch as many lives as possible. I am in a very happy space, the space I never knew existed. The thought of death too doesn't scare me anymore, even if it is the next day, I wouldn't regret anything. I know I have done my best," Kanchan signs off...



SANJEEVNI
...life beyond cancer

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NEETU SINGH

For a 21-year-old, cancer showed her that humanity and love are bigger than money.

Growing up in a joint family, Neetu cherished the love showered upon her. The only child to her parents, Neetu's father seldom moved about as low immunity left him with little strength to do anything. Her mother, a homemaker, was always consumed

to transform herself from a cancer survivor to a cancer caregiver.

Hearing about the transformation from a survivor or a victim to a caregiver in itself filled her with curiosity to know more about the course. After



with making the best of things for the apple of her eye.

Born in Lucknow, Neetu's family soon shifted to their native in Uttar Pradesh. Neetu wanted to grow up to be a teacher, but life had different plans for her. At 15 years of age in 2009, Neetu suddenly started having high fever. Frequent episodes of fever rendered her to miss school and thereby her board exams and go in for a detailed diagnosis of her condition. Neetu was diagnosed with Stage 2 of Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia. Without wasting any time in delaying the treatment, Neetu's maternal uncle immediately arranged for Neetu and her parents to come to Mumbai. In order to get Neetu the best possible treatment, her uncle decided it would be best to take her to Tata Memorial Hospital. By January 2013, Neetu was declared to be in remission.

It was one her visit to Tata Memorial Hospital for her follow-ups in early 2015 when Neetu came across the NGO Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer. She was informed about a course that was about to start in the Tata Institute of Social Sciences that would enable her

gathering information on what all the course would provide her and how it would make her a counselor, Neetu was convinced that this is what she wanted to do. Without consulting anyone, she signed up for the course and went back home in Uttar Pradesh. She was told that she would be called well in advance when the course would commence.

As one month passed and the phone still didn't ring, Neetu was a little disappointed, but the call did come after another few days. Once she got the call, she informed her parents and uncle about her new endeavour. To her surprise, Neetu's uncle immediately said that he would take care of the fees and that she need not worry about her accommodations as she would be living with him. Neetu's happiness and gratefulness knew no bounds.

On taking the course, Neetu came to an important realisation – yoga, played a major role in her recovery and should be recommended to as many as possible. Neetu who has been practising yoga since she was about two-and-a-half years old, gave up on it while recuperating with cancer.

Another thing that Neetu learnt was to control her emotional upheavals. Thanks to all the mental health and wellbeing classes. Neetu says, "While I was undergoing the treatment, my mother used to be at the receiving end of all my tantrums and emotional upheavals. Today, I feel bad for all that I did, I was naïve maybe, and I wish there was someone who counselled me about how to control these emotions. But now that I know, I definitely would help as many as possible with this knowledge. Sure enough, parents and loved ones are sympathetic towards the one undergoing the treatment, but that doesn't mean that we take them for granted, it is equally important to rebuild our relationship to a whole new level when we are out of it."

Talking about what she wants to do with the knowledge she has gathered through the course, Neetu says, "Earlier I thought I would take it up as a career, but as we met a few patients through the course (the course also provides practical knowledge of counselling patients in Tata Memorial Hospital), the happiness I derived out of it sometimes left me teary-eyed. My communication skills were always good, but now they are better. Plus, many feel that youngsters don't really take anything seriously, and I want to debunk that myth and take up counseling as social work. Financially, I am sure something would pan out, that is not my concern currently."

But of everything, if there is something that Neetu has been stunned with, it is the lesson that in a time when money is at the crux of major crimes committed worldwide, her uncle's love and conviction to get her cured and educated was phenomenal and selfless. Neetu believes, her uncle's act should restore faith in humanity and love in everyone.

Neetu says, "There was only one regret that I harboured as I took the course, that had I followed what the doctors and nurses told me, I would have recovered much earlier. I have learnt that there is no point in regretting something, it is better to take every challenge as a learning opportunity. Only now that I have studied the human anatomy and how diet, yoga, meditation coupled with counselling help in the treatment of cancer, do I realize the importance of it all. From now on, I want to make sure, no one else repeats my mistake; I want everyone battling the deadly disease to come out victorious and healthy."



SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

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"Many feel that youngsters don't really take anything seriously, and I want to debunk that myth and take up counseling."



PRIYA AVHAD

Job of a counsellor is to take out the fear attached to cancer from the patients.

Filled with enthusiasm and a clear vision of taking up a career which will provide comfort, happiness and peace of mind for people suffering from medical conditions is 29-year-old Priya Avhad from Chembur.

to take the course and pursue counselling as a career. She says, "It was a perfect opportunity for me. You know it's said that sometimes the right opportunities come your way only when you are open to accepting it in the many different forms it may come. It didn't



After working in the healthcare industry for a few years, Priya shifted to a corporate job citing the very low rate of growth in the healthcare sector. "I worked as an assistant to doctors in a nursing home, though I don't have formal education in medicine, I wanted to work in the industry for the sheer love of helping the ones who are going through tough time and medical crisis. But I found there was little scope for growth there and soon shifted to a corporate where I was doing a receptionist-cum-admin job."

Priya's desire to help others always remained in the back of her mind and soon she quit her job at the corporate firm as well looking for something that would help her live her dreams. It was almost two months she was jobless and at home looking for new opportunities, that's when her mother's employer, Kavita Bansal informed her mother about a course that was about to start in Tata Institute of Social Sciences on Oncology that would enable her to become a counsellor. Priya at last found her way to fulfill her desires.

The idea coming from her mother's employer, took little efforts on Priya's part to convince her family

take any motivation or convincing for me or any efforts to convince my parent and brothers to let me take the course. It was a divine plan."

The other thing apart from the course coming from her mother's employer which worked in her favour, Priya says, "Every parent would want their child to do well and help others. Especially when what their child is doing is benefiting the society, parents would never restrict them, this too worked in my favour."

When asked why she didn't look at counselling as a career option earlier she says, "I started working after I passed my HSC exams. There was little awareness and knowledge about what were the various career options I could explore to fulfil my desires and dreams. Financial issues were another reason why I couldn't continue my education. But the

Oncology course in TISS has served both the purpose of educating me as well as providing me the knowledge to explore a whole new career."

So how did the course help her, we enquire. Priya says, "Counselling and learning to be a counsellor is

life changing. It impacts you as a student pursuing to be a counsellor in enough ways to transform your entire personality. The most basic transformation which is visible not only to you, but also to the others around you is the regard you develop for others. There is now a shift in my perception. I understand the fact that each human has a history, a past to them which makes them react in the way they do. Be it family or anyone else."

Priya explains that she now has a gone from a person who would back answer to a person who thinks before she utters a word at all, especially when there is an argument going on. "There are even times when I don't utter a word. And my family members get tensed as to what happened to the girl who used to fling the phone across the hall at the drop of a hat," Priya recollects while laughing her heart out remembering the amused looks on her family members' faces.

There are no family members of Priya or even distant relatives and friends who have succumbed to cancer, for her, it is the sheer love of helping others that made her take up the course. She says, "As a person who has been isolated from the treacherous and life-threatening world of cancer, gives me a whole new approach to the disease. Most people associate cancer with death and that instills a huge amount of fear and negativity in them. When I look at

it, to me it is like any other medical condition that can be cured if one undergoes the right treatment. My foremost job as a counsellor is to remove the fear from the patients' minds about the condition in itself. Then comes the part of providing them with valuable inputs. My aim right now in life is to take up counselling as a career, a full-time job."

Priya's conviction to be a cancer caregiver reminds us of a famous Hindi adage, 'Ek teer se do nishaane' (Aiming for two things with one arrow). Why? She is not only fulfilling her desire of helping the society and making a living out of it by choosing that as a career, it is also to a great extent an act of social work, an act of giving back to the society.



SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

"It was a perfect opportunity for me. You know it's said that sometimes the right opportunities come your way only when you are open to accepting it in the many different forms it may come. It didn't take any motivation or convincing for me or any efforts to convince my parent and brothers to let me take the course. It was a divine plan."

"Every parent would want their child to do well and help others. Especially when what their child is doing is benefiting the society, parents would never restrict them, this too worked in my favour."

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RASHMI MOGARE

SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

Gathered knowledge not just about cancer but behavioural aspects also, that redefined her life.

25

It was the year 2001. At 25 years of age, with an eleven month-old baby, Rashmi Mogare was still learning to be a hands-on mother. Unlike many women who would have wanted to work in the corporate industry, Rashmi wanted to be a housewife

normal as soon as I could, I never had those moments where I would feel like not moving out of the house, or cook or do my daily chores. Even though I used to feel weak, my enthusiasm and desire to keep my family happy kept me going. In fact, there were times when



and help her mother-in-law in daily chores and cook delicious food for her husband, a dream many women would have harboured at some point. But the sudden demise of her mother-in-law left her alone to take care of her husband, father-in-law, brother-in-law and her eleven month-old baby. It was around this time that she had undergone some tests for a lump in her breast. When the results arrived, they revealed findings she had never even thought of – she was suffering from stage 3 cancer of the breast.

Since the cancer was in its advanced stage, Rashmi had to go under the knife. She was then put on to chemotherapy sessions followed by radiation. She says, “My doctor had said that I could skip radiation, I didn't really need it. But I decided since I was already undergoing treatment, why not finish it off once and for all. Then, if in case, there is a relapse, I shouldn't regret my decision, because then it would be of no point. I approached some private hospitals for radiation, but I couldn't afford the costs. That's when someone suggested visiting Tata Hospital.”

But all the while Rashmi was undergoing her treatment, she was optimistic. “I wanted to be back to

my doctor would say, 'Let 21 day get over, let the platelet count become higher. Have some patience.' All I wanted was to get well at the earliest.” Rashmi's treatment got over in 2004 and six years later, in 2010, she was declared to be cured of cancer.

Though cancer was now long gone, she continued her follow-up with her doctor on a yearly basis. It was one such visit to Tata Memorial Hospital in 2014 at the age of 39, when she met Archana from Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer, in one of the OPDs. “I was normally conversing with Archana when she asked me if I attended support group meetings. I replied that I didn't even know such things existed,” she recalls. Soon Rashmi started attending the support group meetings, to share her experiences and to gather some inspiration from other survivors. Then, one fine day, she got a call from Archana who informed her about an Oncology Caregiver course in Tata Institute of Social Sciences in collaboration with Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer.

For Rashmi, taking up the course was more of a conscious choice to understand exactly what cancer was. Plus, she wanted to socialize a bit, meet

new people, and especially meet people who have gone through the same whom she can relate to. Plus, there was a huge name attached to the course, the name of one of the premier institutes in the country. This gave Rashmi a new reason to look forward to the next day.

She says, "The course was somehow a perfect for me because firstly I wanted to know what the disease was, and secondly I now will have a chance to step out of home, but at the same time, I love my family a lot. That said, I enjoy looking after them and being there to help them whenever they need, no matter how miniscule their problem. The course was just four months long, which was not a long duration, so everything worked out well."

Explaining the impact that the course had on her, Rashmi says, "Today, I not only know where and how cancer starts from, I also know the different terminologies that are related to different kinds of cancer. All these years, I just had knowledge about breast cancer. I discovered that the technology of diagnosing and treating cancer has changed to a great extent from the time I underwent chemotherapy and radiation. Apart from that, it has changed me as a person to a great extent. The course is not only educates you about the condition, but it also helps you look at life from a different perspective. It has had a huge impact on me on a

mental and emotional level, all for good. To give you a small example, my son is now 14, which is a very vulnerable age, and talking to him in a certain way is extremely important. Earlier, I used to get irritated with his behavior and shout at him. But not now. Now I have realized that I have to change my approach towards him, which I have. I didn't just get care giving lessons, I got lessons that I am very sure will redefine my life in many a ways."

So will she be a counsellor? "Of course, but if you ask me whether I will be a professional one, then no, at least not now. Firstly, there are other courses for being a professional counsellor that I will have to undertake, and secondly, my son is still young, and like I said, I like to look after my family. But I am definitely practicing all that was taught about counselling, especially with my near and dear ones."

Rashmi says that she considers this as a training period but someday she will surely take up the cause of counselling, when she has little responsibilities.



SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

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SANDEEP YADAV



"Cancer made me a better person and a social worker in making."

"As a kid of twelve, reality doesn't really hit you as bad as it hits your parents. I was diagnosed with cancer of the bone marrow and the doctors said they will have to cut off my right arm so I could live," Sandeep Yadav, 21, narrates.

also emotionally assuring me and my father that we would pass through this phase successfully."

He states that it is not only the patient who needs words of positivity, and strength, but the family member who are by the side of the patient need it



Sandeep looks like any other young guy, well dressed, well spoken, coming from a small village in Uttar Pradesh with dreams in his eyes. A BA student now studying in Lucknow, Sandeep believes that it is only through helping others that one get real satisfaction. Here, he recalls his battle with cancer that was to claim his right arm.

It was in 2007 March that Sandeep was diagnosed with Ewings Osteosarcoma of stage 3. Soon he came to Mumbai for treatment at Tata Memorial Hospital where most of his treatment cost was taken care of by the social workers in the hospital. Exactly after one year in March 2008, Sandeep boarded the train to return home after he was declared to be in remission.

He says, "My year-long treatment in Tata Memorial Hospital changed me to a great extent, when I saw the amount of hard work the social workers put in for me and many others who were battling the disease just like me. Before I left, I decided that I wanted to be like them, help all the others who need it." Back home, Sandeep continued his education and started pursuing an Arts degree from Lucknow. He recalls, "The social workers not only helped us financially, but

equally. He is of the opinion that if it is the survivor who goes through a traumatic struggle, the family goes through double struggle for they not only take care of the one battling the disease, but also of the other day-to-day activities as well as the added trauma of financial pressure.

When asked if his passion never died after going back home, he says, "though I was back in the normal education system, I used to visit Tata hospital every three months for my follow up. Every visit only rekindled my passion and enthusiasm to be a social worker. It was during one such visits to Tata when I attended a seminar that was going on where Ruby madam was talking about a course on cancer that would transform lives. Though I didn't understand much then, I still signed up for the course thinking I might discover what it is later, and also, not everyone gets a chance to study in Mumbai that easily in a premier institute. That's how my journey in TISS started."

The course, Sandeep says has changed him in many ways, "I used to be a brat before cancer, the disease made that quality wither away. But still there

new people, and especially meet people who have gone through the same whom she can relate to. Plus, there was a huge name attached to the course, the name of one of the premier institutes in the country. This gave Rashmi a new reason to look forward to the next day.

She says, "The course was somehow a perfect for me because firstly I wanted to know what the disease was, and secondly I now will have a chance to step out of home, but at the same time, I love my family a lot. That said, I enjoy looking after them and being there to help them whenever they need, no matter how miniscule their problem. The course was just four months long, which was not a long duration, so everything worked out well."

Explaining the impact that the course had on her, Rashmi says, "Today, I not only know where and how cancer starts from, I also know the different terminologies that are related to different kinds of cancer. All these years, I just had knowledge about breast cancer. I discovered that the technology of diagnosing and treating cancer has changed to a great extent from the time I underwent chemotherapy and radiation. Apart from that, it has changed me as a person to a great extent. The course is not only educates you about the condition, but it also helps you look at life from a different perspective. It has had a huge impact on me on a

mental and emotional level, all for good. To give you a small example, my son is now 14, which is a very vulnerable age, and talking to him in a certain way is extremely important. Earlier, I used to get irritated with his behavior and shout at him. But not now. Now I have realized that I have to change my approach towards him, which I have. I didn't just get care giving lessons, I got lessons that I am very sure will redefine my life in many a ways."

So will she be a counsellor? "Of course, but if you ask me whether I will be a professional one, then no, at least not now. Firstly, there are other courses for being a professional counsellor that I will have to undertake, and secondly, my son is still young, and like I said, I like to look after my family. But I am definitely practicing all that was taught about counselling, especially with my near and dear ones."

Rashmi says that she considers this as a training period but someday she will surely take up the cause of counselling, when she has little responsibilities.



SANJEEVANI
... life beyond cancer

"My year-long treatment in Tata Memorial Hospital changed me to a great extent, when I saw the amount of hard work the social workers put in for me and many others who were battling the disease just like me, I decided that I wanted to be like them, help all the others out there who need it."

"I used to be a brat before cancer, the disease made that quality wither away. But still there was a lot of suppressed anger in me. The sessions provided by various teachers and professors, especially session by Ruby madam has helped me a great deal. I couldn't channelize my anger then, but now I have found positive ways to do so."

"When I visited Tata as a student of counselling and oncology, I met the doctors who treated me. I saw in their eyes a hope that I will make a phenomenal change. I could sense their expectation that tomorrow when I step out, I will be instrumental in changing many lives. That is something I want to live up to."



SANJANA KAMAT



TISS course helped her understand the upheavals a cancer patient goes through

When her sister was detected with cancer, Sanjana Kamath and her parents thought that it was best that she head to Tata Memorial Hospital for her treatment. Ujwalla was detected with stage 3 ovarian cancer. As Ujwalla started going in for her treatments,

were a few bottles of water, each bottle had specific word written on it like for instance one bottle had the word 'Danger' written on it whereas another one had 'Happiness' written on it. When he tested the water under a microscope to understand the effect of these



she would regularly come across Archana, a representative from Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer in the OPD.

Soon Archana informed her about the course that was to commence in TISS on oncology. It didn't take much convincing for Ujwalla to join the course. In fact, on the other hand, her sister Sanjana too followed suit. Sanjana says, "I basically wanted to know what the disease was all about which my sister was suffering from. She is about eight years younger than me. At 41, which is still a young age, it was heartbreaking to see my sister struggle for her life."

Sanjana says that the classes were highly beneficial in giving knowledge about human anatomy, hygiene and diet that is needed by the patients owing to the strength they need to fight the disease.

Talking about the most memorable session, Sanjana says, "We went to Belapur, Navi Mumbai once for a session with Dr Singhal. There, the doctor showed us a video on how our thoughts and usage of certain words affect our bodies in different ways based on the nature of the word. In the video there

words on the water, the results were shocking. The molecules of water from the bottle which had the word 'Danger' written on it were not healthy. On the other hand, the molecules of water from the water which had 'Happiness' written on it were perfectly healthy. The doctor went on to explain, 'If these words could have such tremendous effect on something as simple as water, imagine the effect on our bodies.' This was like a shocker for my entire system, it made me realise the amount of damage we were doing to our bodies and health unknowingly."

"Of course," Sanjana said, "it wasn't easy to bring about this change in attitude. It is almost against our normal way of life where we indulge in believing that we are victims. To accept that it is our attitude towards life and other things in general that determine what and how we are, has changed me for the better."

For Sanjana, it was the first time she was taking a class with her sister Ujwalla, she says, "The course has brought us closer as sisters, it has helped me, to help my sister understand her body and her condition and help her overcome it."

new people, and especially meet people who have gone through the same whom she can relate to. Plus, there was a huge name attached to the course, the name of one of the premier institutes in the country. This gave Rashmi a new reason to look forward to the next day.

She says, "The course was somehow a perfect for me because firstly I wanted to know what the disease was, and secondly I now will have a chance to step out of home, but at the same time, I love my family a lot. That said, I enjoy looking after them and being there to help them whenever they need, no matter how miniscule their problem. The course was just four months long, which was not a long duration, so everything worked out well."

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Rashmi says that she considers this as a training period but someday she will surely take up the cause of counselling, when she has little responsibilities.



SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

"It doesn't matter if a person takes up a job as a counsellor or not after doing this course. This course is needed to understand the nuances of the condition, for patients and their families alike, because it gives you newfound confidence and strength to help them fight the disease while understanding the ups and downs that they might be going through."

"Of course," Sanjana said, "it wasn't easy to bring about this change in attitude. It is almost against our normal way of life where we indulge in believing that we are victims. To accept that it is our attitude towards life and other things in general that determine what and how we are, has changed me for the better."

"It is not only my relationship with my sister, but also with my husband and my son that have improved. A class on stress and anger management was very helpful."



SHANU SHAIKH

Living in Govandi, Shanu Ahmed saw her mother struggle to keep all mouths fed; Shanu, her three siblings and her father. Unlike many, Shanu's father had little sense of his responsibilities; neither did he work, nor did he look after his children. It was through

after looking at my condition, I was her only close friend. So I thought having a baby would change the atmosphere at home." Shanu added that having a baby also gives you the drive and motivation one needs apart from the fact that being around a child is



odd jobs that Shanu's mother helped her secure an Arts degree, so her daughter could have a proper, secure job.

Shanu's mother not only provided her with love and affection, but also the comfort of a close friend. "We are from a middle class family, my mother did all kinds of odd jobs not only to keep me and my siblings fed, but also help me secure a BA degree, so I wouldn't have to go through what she went through," says Shanu Ahmed, a 23-year-old from Govandi. Living in a small house, and being an introverted child, Shanu's only close friend was her mother.

They shared with each other all the highs and lows and together they battled Shanu's cancer.

Shanu who was suffering from stage 3 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma underwent chemotherapy and radiation till June 2015. In early 2015, when Shanu was undergoing the last part of her treatment, she decided to hunt for a job. She finally landed a clerical job in a local hospital which led to two life changing events for her. The first one was she adopted a baby. "My mother, though she never admitted, was sad

nature's best stress buster. The smiles, laughs, cries, everything was a boon that elevated everyone's mood at home. Soon the good news came knocking, the news everyone was waiting for – Shanu was declared to be in remission and her treatment was finally over in June.

The second life-changing moment arrived when she got to know about the TISS course. "My supervisor in the hospital where I was working informed me about this unique course. Honestly, I wasn't very interested initially, I thought it won't help me in anyway. Another thought that since I was over with cancer already, why take a course about it! It didn't make sense to me. But my supervisor didn't give up. He constantly told me that the very reason that I survived cancer makes me the best candidate. But what struck the chord was when he said that maybe knowing more about the disease would put my experience and trauma to rest. Which cancer survivor wouldn't want that? Though I have been mostly confident, I can't deny having thoughts about why cancer and why me. Plus he also added that I could help others, like me, who would be shattered in

the course of battling the disease. Both of these and especially the fact that I can help others as well, led me to enrolling for the course.

"I must say, it was one of the wise decisions that I have made. First and foremost, understanding the fact that cancer can happen literally to anyone helped me a great deal. This automatically brought about peace of mind. Secondly, so far, I was just a cancer survivor, but now with the knowledge and understanding of cancer, I can be instrumental in changing people's lives through counselling them. If anything, through the tenure of the course, I reached the point where I wanted to finish the course for helping others but me. The satisfaction you get out of helping a person will heal you better than anything else."

For Shanu, the most memorable part of the course remains to be the very moment she signed up for the course. She believes the transformation in her attitude from being a victim to being a person who has the power to change another's perception of the disease happened right then and whatever she learnt from the course are just cherries on top.

Talking about her approach to counselling Shanu has a strong stand. She says, "I would never tell the patients my complete history. Narrating my history is not going to help me or them in anyway. But just the motivating parts like my mother's support and belief



are the ones that will be beneficial for them, and at the same time for me, as it will reinstate my desires and hopes time and again. Doing the course for me is a win-win situation you see (smiles)."

Shanu aims to provide counselling to other cancer survivors and at the same time, secure a job for her which would help her buy back the part of the house her mother had to sell for her treatment. Marriage, Shanu says, though a norm for the society, she would think about it only when her brothers and sister are settled.



SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

"Honestly, I wasn't very interested in doing the course initially, I thought it won't help me in anyway. What struck the chord was when my Boss said that maybe knowing more about the disease would put my experience and trauma to rest. Which cancer survivor wouldn't want that?"

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SONAL VIRKAYADE

SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

Learning's not only helped strengthen the bond with her mother, but also change her as a person

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Like many girls, Sonal was her daddy's little princess. With two elder sisters and a younger brother, Sonal still managed to be the closest to their father over the years. Her bond with her mother pretty much remained as usual sprinkled with loads

anybody could enroll for it. And Sonal, jumped at the opportunity.

"I took up the teaching profession because helping others, solving people's little issues gives me satisfaction. Also being a good student with



of love and care, still not as special as her bond with Daddy. But ask her today, who she is close to. Sonal, without batting her eye says, "Mommy, of course!" What changed we asked her, and she replied "It is all thanks to the course she took in Tata Institute of Social Sciences as a cancer caregiver and counsellor."

It was in early 2014 that Sonal's mother Nirmala was detected with cancer of the ovaries. They decided to go to the best hospital in town for her treatment – Tata Hospital in Parel. The news about cancer made Sonal quit her job as a teacher and be by her ailing mother's side. She would always accompany her mother to her oral chemo session in Tata hospital followed by radiation.

It was one of these days that she met a representatives from Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer, while waiting with her mother in the OPD. The representatives informed her about a course that was about to start in Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The course was that of a caregiver and a counselor for cancer patients. She quizzed if she was even eligible for it, to which the representative replied that

inclination towards academics and good communication skills, I made a good candidate for the teaching profession. And now that I didn't have a full time job, I was free to take up a new course, a new challenge."

When Sonal initially undertook the course, she had a clear mind that she was doing it for her mother. Looking at her mother become weak and fragile instead of the usual one running about the house doing some chore or the other, broke her heart. Little did she know that the course would not only help her mother, but also help her change as a person.

"The course taught me not just about various aspects of cancer and care giving that one needs to provide the cancer survivors but also the fact that as cancer caregivers, one of our primary responsibilities is to listen to the agony of others. Unfortunately, till now, I was someone who could not stand it when others were in pain, it hurt me immensely, and even now it does. But the techniques and tips I have come across through the span of course, has helped me to be a better person in many a ways and especially not

being disheartened by looking at others go through pain and instead be instrumental in alleviating their suffering." she says.

The classes in TISS not only had lectures, but also sometimes had one-to-one sessions with the professors. One such one-to-one session with the course co-ordinator, helped Sonal immensely. She says, "It was one of the tips which has helped me immensely in terms of anger management and therefore avoiding a messy situation. I have benefitted to a great extent through the tip that 'whenever you are having an argument, close your eyes for a few moments and imagine that the person is filled with pink light'. Though I had known and heard of this tip in the past, I never exactly knew the proper application of the method, and hence it didn't work as effectively for me then."

Since discovering the correct methods of helping herself and the people who she would reach out to, Sonal says, "I have had a few small arguments since the time I have learnt the correct techniques, and started applying and using them properly, it has actually provided me with enthralling results."

Talking about the bond she shares with her mother today, Sonal says, "Earlier mom used to feel I am still naïve, but since the time I have taken the course, she knows and has the faith that what I would suggest would be ell thought of, just like the one

coming from experts. Not that she didn't trust me earlier, but she has a deeper regard for whatever I say now. Also, I now speak to her every single day about what I have learnt, that's more sharing that I did even as a kid."

These conversation with her mother has not only strengthened the mother-daughter relationship Sonal and Nirmala share, but also the fact that.

Today, Sonal believes that she has newfound energy to help others and put to rest her petty personal problems that she would face on a day-to-day basis. But her encounter with all the children in Tata who were undergoing treatment for cancer is what makes her stand out. Sonal says that she would, given a chance, definitely prefer working with children. She says, "I am not against helping adults, but being a teacher has given me an opportunity to understand and know how children think. And there are many children who are battling cancer in the world. Children are our future, irrespective of where they come from and I feel I would only be privileged to help them in the process of becoming sensitive and loving humans of tomorrow."



SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

"Somehow, becoming a care giver was something I never even thought about till the time I learnt about the Oncological Care Giving course."

"The course taught me not just about various aspects of cancer and care giving but also the fact that as cancer caregivers, one of our primary responsibilities is to listen to the agony of others and be instrumental in alleviating their suffering,"

"Being a teacher has given me an opportunity to understand and know how children think. And there are many children who are battling cancer in the world. Children are our future, irrespective of where they come from and I feel I would only be privileged to help them in the process of becoming sensitive and loving humans of tomorrow."



SUDIP DAS

SANJEEVNI
... life beyond cancer

Re-invented self in quest to help others

45

In his quest to serve people and choosing social work as his choice of career, Sudip Das came to Mumbai to learn a 'Cancer caregiver' course. Being a cancer survivor as a child (Sudeep battled Hodgkin's Lymphoma), he always wanted to grow up to be a

way to connect with people and help them at the grassroot level.

He signed up for the course immediately and shifted his base for to Mumbai, he however, had a huge battle ahead – the language barrier. Being born



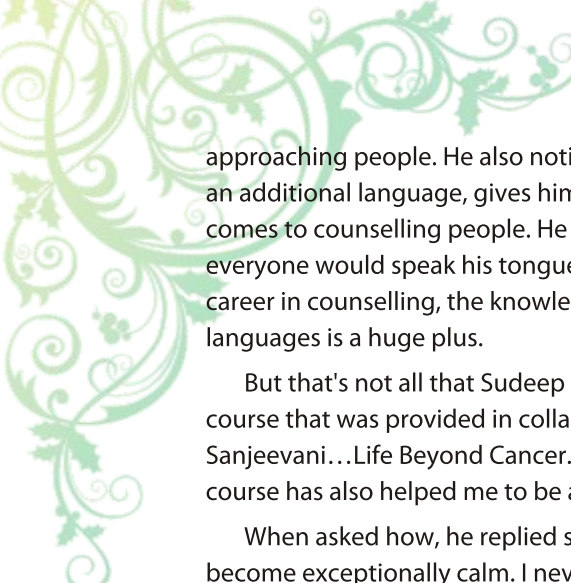
person who can educate others about cancer. Sudeep who feels that there is a lack of knowledge about cancer even today in the era of internet and technological innovation. "I was diagnosed with cancer as a child. Though I battled it in my hometown in Kolkata. But I always planned to grow up to be an educator or rather someone who would provide awareness about cancer to the ones who were unaware about it and motivate those suffering from the disease to fight it and live their life to the fullest."

Sudip who was part of a childhood cancer survivors group got to know about the course on Oncology caregiving in Tata Institute of Social Sciences through them. He jumped at the chance to do his bit for the people who were suffering from the life threatening disease.

A true believer of the mind-over-matter concept, Sudip feels that once the patient's mind is strong enough to accept his condition and look at the brighter side the most important part of the battle is won. Sudeep says he was naturally inclined towards a career in counseling as he felt that this was the best

and bought up in Kolkata, Hindi and English were languages he was least familiar with. Communication was a huge problem initially, but his passion got the better of the problem and within a few months into the course, Sudeep learnt Hindi and English well enough to converse with others in complete ease. He says, "I even got over the initial consciousness of 'What if I say something wrong' pretty soon. My confidence has gone on to an almost different level since I shifted base to Mumbai and learning two new languages within four month. I believe it truly has to do with the passion or else learning a language in such a short time is not really possible for many, and I feel blessed to have learnt it well. The course has helped me learn to believe and trust my potential to do things which otherwise would have been unknown to me."

He is of the opinion that being a counsellor, confidence is of utmost importance and that goes hand in hand with the ability to communicate i.e. communication skills. He says he learnt many things with his newly acquired confidence, and has noticed a considerable change in his way of talking and



approaching people. He also noticed that knowing an additional language, gives him an edge when it comes to counselling people. He says that not everyone would speak his tongue, hence looking at a career in counselling, the knowledge of two extra languages is a huge plus.

But that's not all that Sudeep has earned from the course that was provided in collaboration with Sanjeevani...Life Beyond Cancer. He adds, "This course has also helped me to be a better person."

When asked how, he replied saying, "I have become exceptionally calm. I never was this calm my entire life. There is a clear distinction that I can see for myself in the Sudeep before and after the caregiving course. I am more confident, energetic and optimistic. Plus, I am more understanding, especially towards my family members. I believe till the time your behavior with your family doesn't change you are not truly changed, and I have truly changed because the course has taught me to look and consider other's perspectives." He feels as a counsellor, the course has helped him shift his perception and literally look at things when in the opposite person's shoes.

"Also, I have learnt to be empathetic, something which is often confused with sympathy," he concludes in one line. Having gone through and lived to tell the tale of cancer at a young age, it has made him realise that sympathy won't cut it. But it is empathy that would take him forward.



SANJEEVANI
... life beyond cancer

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