



Death of A Caterpillar

MINU BUDHIA



Dedicated to my darling daughter Prachi

*Clouds came floating into my life
No longer to carry rain or usher storm
But to add colour to my sunset sky*

-Rabindranath Tagore

I am a blessed individual. I have a warm, encouraging husband, Sanjay, who is the wind beneath my wings, and a kind, supportive family. I have two loving daughters. Preeyam, my elder one, a bright young woman handling the family business, is my friend and my weakness. Prachi, my younger darling, is my strength and my inspiration. She led me on a path of rediscovery and taught me to appreciate life like never before.



When Prachi was born, my happiness knew no bounds. Tears of joy rolled down my cheeks. I was holding my baby! My girl! It seemed like the wealth of the whole world was wrapped in my arms! When I gave birth to my elder daughter Preeyam, I was a child myself. But now, this was the moment I had been longing for, to hold my second daughter, kiss her pink lips, and caress her tender fingers. I enjoyed every moment of her growing up.

As she turned two, I got her enrolled in the best Montessori in Kolkata. Within a short while, complaints started to pour in. Her school did not realize that she actually needed special help. I could sense that something was not right. Every day became a nightmare for me because of unending complaints. I took her to NIMHANS in Bangalore. After the assessment, the report placed before me shattered my world. It stated that my baby is 'neither normal nor abnormal.' I went into severe depression and even forgot to ask God, "Why me?"

My husband immediately took me to a psychiatrist in Mumbai. I needed more help than my daughter. I was put under medication even as the doctor tried to assure me that everything would be fine. Soon after, I took Prachi to the UK and got her assessed again. I asked a lot of foolish questions as I could not accept the truth and started reading books on mental disorders.

During one half of the day I would think that she is normal, and by the other half I would conclude that she is abnormal. I was swinging like a pendulum. Every morning I would call my mom and cry. I planned to commit suicide. I thought my death would set everything right, little realizing that my daughter would be left all alone in this

*Don't limit your
challenges,
Challenge your
limits*





*It's the little
things in life...*

self-centered world. No plan seemed to work out. I chanted the Gayatri Mantra aloud every day to soothe my restless mind. Slowly I started responding to my medicines and my journey with Prachi started afresh.

We put her in a regular school (Loreto House, where my elder daughter studied), not realizing that this was not appropriate for her. She could not cope in a class of 50 children. Life showed me another failure. Prachi did not know her colours. To teach her, I designated a particular colour to each week – our 'Red Week' comprised everything red, even our clothes. And thus we had a 'Yellow Week', a 'White Week' and so on. She started to recognise all colours except blue. Then I kept a tutor at home for her writing skills. This teacher turned into Prachi's caregiver Anita.

I was determined to get Prachi treated. I cut myself off from the world and devoted all my energy to her. The thought that she would be dependent on me her whole life would not let me sleep. I came to know about a centre in Philadelphia, USA, where similar children were treated. We flew down and started the recommended intensive programme for Prachi, along with Anita's help.

I would sleep with my watch on my wrist to ensure I wasn't late. Every single day, for a whole year, we crawled and crept from 8 am till 4 pm. The first floor of my house was turned into a crawling and creeping track. She wore a mask to breathe every 4 minutes and was shown sight word cards. The programme was tough and she was put through a lot. But despite all efforts, we failed. There was no improvement and we withdrew from the programme.