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Illuminated memories

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A Drop of Sunshine, a documentary tells the tale of a schizophrenic girl, who gave up medication and fought her mental battles with her willpower

Schizophrenia, a psychological disorder, is considered a stigma in society. Instead of getting support from society, a schizophrenic has to fight other battles along with the battles within.

While recovering from schizophrenia without any medication is nothing short of miracle, Reshma Valliappan, a city-based girl has fought the disorder for 10 years and has come out of it with the help of sheer willpower. To take her courage to people, a documentary titled, A Drop of Sunshine has been made on Reshma's life.

The English film by Aparna Sanyal takes on through the symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, self-discovery and recovery process that Reshma underwent. Connecting, an NGO, which works towards prevention of suicide, is showcasing the documentary on the occasion of World Suicide Prevention Day on Saturday. Reshma, who runs a mental health campaign called The Red Door, was gutsy about candidly sharing her journey with the audience. "The film is based on 10 years of my life which got me where I am today. It's a process of self-discovery," she says.

Reshma was suffering from schizophrenia since she was in college. She would go away from home for months and stay in cars for days. "My behaviour was difficult for my parents to accept. I used to travel in a car, rent a room, and do odd jobs," she says.

Reshma says she hasn't been on medication and that's the main highlight of challenge. "I constantly got into relapse while I was on medication on and off for six years. Finally, I decided that I don't want any medication. Medication has severe side effects and it makes the person behave like a robot," says she.

Then came a turning point in her life. "I believe there was always a turning point, I just refused to see it. While it seems easy to give up, one needs to find one's way. The voices inside my head which troubled me for years guided me to come out of it. It is called controlling your voices. A friend suggested that I listen to those voices. I did that and the voices became constructible. Now I paint, write, listen to music," she says.

The documentary has Reshma, her parents, her younger sister Karishma, her friend, doctor and people she worked with narrating the experiences. "Aparna was open and non-judgemental. Not only did she know what I was talking about, but also gave me a lot of space," says Reshma.

After getting a grant from Public Service Broadcasting Trust I wanted to tell a positive and inspiring tale of a schizophrenic patient but none of them was ready to talk on camera. But Reshma was the first person to come on camera. She is off medication for more than a year now which is incredible. I have used a lot of colour, sound design, and abstract sequences to tell her story," Aparna says.

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