

Diana.



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How often we mortals relate our most innocent and happy-self to places and faces back from our childhood or college days. I am not saying all, but most people do. Some of my priceless memories were with my college friend Diana Rajkumari. We lost her to a brain tumour on June 30, 2019.

Not even in my wildest imagination, have I ever thought that my first trip to Manipur would be to attend her funeral. She was from Manipur. This could have been her marriage or some other happy occasions. But, no.

The mourners came pouring in, a sound of wailing from here and there, but mostly shattered; constant ritual chants and deeply melancholic songs in the background. In this chaos, I saw her smiling face in a photo frame, alone in the corner with flowers and fruits below it and surrounded by loved ones. Still, she seemed so alone. This hit me hard. She was actually gone. We won't be able to see her in flesh and blood ever. She won't be coming back saying, "Hey, I'm fine now".

And, lately, I have been recollecting memories of my college life with a tint of nostalgia (many moons after I graduated). I am unsure where to start. My memories are splintered across the campus; classrooms; the hostel rooms, Mysore city, in the laughter and the sad moments with my friends. And, I can't recall how my first meeting with Diana was.

Was it on the first night in the hostel—I was homesick and sobbing alone on my bed in my room? Some of the girls came to greet me. Or the next day, when Gargi, Mcdonna, Kalsang, and She- Diana were laughing whilst pulling each other's legs on the way to college. While, I was nervous, anxious; my insides were literally in knots anticipating how the first day at college would turn out to be. And, seeing them so carefree, it numbed my feelings. I chuckled at their jokes. I felt at home.

We remained friends ever since. We laughed. We cried. We lived every bit of those moments. I remember how we raced to the washroom to avoid standing in the queue or running with 'gobi manchurian' in our hands to reach hostel before curfew time (6 pm), the midnight snacks-cum-ghost stories, jokes, meaningless talks, pulling stupid ghost pranks on each other, imitating some hilarious dance steps from yesteryear movies. Every time one amongst us pulled some funny stuff, we rolled on the bed, on the floor and cracked so hard that our insides hurt.

Often times, there were complaints from sisters and mother (Christian College) that our laughter could be heard even from the floor below ours'. This, after midnight, when the lights were automatically turned off for all by 11 pm itself. Then, we didn't realise such moments would be memories now. Or the quiet moments when we were homesick, bawling our eyes out, would sit in front of the window share hometown stories, secrets, dreams and aspirations about future.

Diana was in each of those moments. Our hostel and college days' memories are incomplete without her in it.

We all moved to different destinations for further studies and livelihood. We didn't know what life had in store for us. We laughed our worries away. Like literally. I wish we could do the same now.

Diana was not someone extraordinary. She was like most of us with lots of dreams. She was definitely loved more because of her lovely and humble personality. She was quiet, that is, until you become close. Then, she would be super talkative. Also, she had this beautiful smile. It worked like magic. And, how she remembered minute details of others, somehow, made us feel special about us. Despite living in different states, her efforts to maintain friendship with each one of us was remarkable. She loved plants, orchids. In fact, she was doing her PhD in a subject related to it from Mizoram University.

She had an excruciatingly painful on and off fight with brain tumour. Her family shared the equally tough journey with her. A guilt, which will remain with us —we couldn't be with her on her last days. We thought she'll recover again. To make it worse, in one of our conversations, post her then recovery, out of blue moon she'd told me that they (doctors) found something in her right side of the brain, again. I jokingly said- her illness will never leave her alone. It actually took her. We often take people's presence for granted.

The Visarjan, the final ritual was performed by her family and loved ones on July 15, 2019.

Taw Nana

Taw Nana is a journalist and a social activist based in Itanagar. She blogs at thewhisperingvoices.wordpress.com

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