

REFLECTION

The first time I stepped on a stage I was 10 years old, little did I know that this small serendipitous encounter would provide me with a life-long friend, who would stand by me in the darkest and the most gruesome times of my life; holding my hand and providing me the anchor that would make me survive, to write this assignment.

For roughly 15 years, Theater proved to be my only constant till I found therapy in 2015. Theater always gave me an escape from my unbearable, restless reality where I lived with dissociation with my body – consequence of sexual, emotional abuse as a kid and physical abuse as a teenager. It was a place where I would shed off my miserable being and get into characters, lives and stories that were far different than mine: few stories made me experience feelings and worlds that were, entirely, opposite and alien to me; Few made me face my own monsters – the shouting and crying that I could not do in my real life, I wrapped them up in the characters and cried my soul out on the stage. In a nutshell, theater fused my dissociative self to reality, in some ways.

But It, still, could not fill the void and quench my uncontrollable restlessness till I decided to take the most courageous and fulfilling decision of my life – to start therapy. Since 2015, I have been continuously exploring some or other modality of psychology – started with Carl Rogers focused personal therapy for almost two years (2015-2017), coupled it with a yearlong Eric Berne's TA focused group therapy (2016-2017) to exploring Moreno's Psychodrama (since 2019 – till this date) now. These attempts were focused on healing. Therapy gave me resources and outlook to create my own unshakable foundation, that has been holding me alive and firm since then. Little did I know that another fortuitous encounter with therapy would provide me with another friend, who would not only be my companion but also a guide/mentor and would nurture me when needed.

Due to my love for theater I, from the day one, have been utterly fascinated by Psychodrama. In the starting the idea of group therapy did feel threatening to my mind but slowly the power of tele and shared human emotions made me feel belonged, cared and seen in the group. Now I cannot imagine doing it any other way, in coming future.

The basic tenets of Psychodrama – Protagonist, Stage, Auxiliaries, Tele, Director, Roles, Doubling, Mirroring – in the start did not feel foreign but at the same time they held in them a charm of an unknown. I remember, the first time, I undertook my first auxiliary role in Jan-2019 during a Workshop that was conducted by Sue Daniel in Ahmedabad, India, I remember not only I was struggling to accept the new definition of familiar terms – stage and director- but also I felt so unsure of playing the auxiliary. To this date when I can feel somatic experiences as soon as I take the Auxiliary role, to promptly speaking and acting out my auxiliary role driven by my tele. These two years have been satisfying and utterly enriching. Every time I have attended a workshop either by Sue Daniel or Meenakshi Kirtane, I have felt a shift in my being, my thoughts and my outlook, I have experienced such dramas surfacing in my head, which I had never known ever existing inside me.

My Journey started with unraveling and showcasing dramas related to my generational and family trauma. I resonated in many pieces as auxiliary and audiences where the similar themes were explored. The healing was immense and deep. From there my next stop was exploring some future-scapes and dabble in surplus reality – and through this attempt, I realized, I need to develop more tolerance for peace and happiness post which my work towards surplus reality and future-scapes would be far more impactful and healing. To my current state, where I keep putting up pieces related to my severed relationship with my body and have seen incredible progress in my outlook and efforts. The biggest healing that Psychodrama brought to me was lessening the dissociation, in my 2-year journey with Psychodrama I, proudly, can say that I no longer feel dissociated with my reality, my body and my senses. I never knew how it felt to be coherently present in the moment to feel the emotions and let them wash over you, but Psychodrama taught me to be mindful and spontaneous, and helped me bridge the dissociation. The healing I underwent in every session was immense, even when I decided not to participate and just be a viewer, I felt healed. I, now carry with me, a list of pieces that I want to work upon during my next Psychodrama workshops.

In the starting I used to fumble at mirroring and role reversals, slowly I have gained my footing in auxiliary roles. My trust in tele has grown multifold from the day I heard this term for the first time. My understanding of the social atom, role reversal, role theory and sociometry has deepened compared to what I knew, 2 years back. Like Theater, Psychodrama gives me a glimpse of roles, characters, stories that I would never have had chance of living and experiencing, on top of this, it gives me an unprecedented healing. One can heal not just as a protagonist,

but also as an auxiliary or an audience. The economic aspect of Psychodrama is the biggest reason for me to invest in this modality further as a practitioner. The idea of exploring this modality in depth and learning the nuances of it, still generates curiosity and happiness the way I had felt on my first of the psychodrama workshop. It's unique thespian approach amalgamated with the psychology and therapy has taken my heart and trust.

I feel privileged to have stumbled across this magical modality – where two of my friends walk hand in hand. I feel I, finally, found home and I am looking forward to building a mansion with these two.

-Surbhi Tiwari