

April 30, 2018- Two helpless little girls got noticed on a railway platform-

I can still remember how extremely hot the day was. It was like a living thing, pressing down on me, suffocating me. The sun beat down on the concrete platform, and the air was thick with the smell of sweat and exhaust fumes. I could feel my skin burning, and my clothes were sticking to me like glue.

I was waiting for a train, and the platform was crowded with people. Everyone was trying to stay cool, fanning themselves with newspapers or handkerchiefs. Some people were sitting on the ground, trying to find a patch of shade. But there was no shade to be found.

The only sound was the occasional rumble of a train in the distance. The heat was so oppressive that it seemed to silence everything else. I felt like I was going to pass out.

Suddenly something drew my attention. A group of young street children huddle together in an alleyway, their faces hidden in the shadows. They are sniffing dendrite, an industrial glue that is cheap and easily accessible. The glue gives them a brief feeling of euphoria, but it also comes with a high price. Dendrite addiction can lead to health problems, mental illness, and even death.

That was the first time I met Mira and Sumana, two young girls who would be around just 10–11 years old. The children were sitting on the ground, huddled together for the smell of a pot. Some other boys were with them from 18 to 30 years of age. They were wearing dirty clothes, and their skin was covered in dirt and grime. The smell of dendrite is strong and pungent. It can be detected from a distance, and it leaves a lingering odor on the children's clothes and skin. The children themselves often look unhealthy. They were thin and malnourished, and their eyes were bloodshot and vacant. They had lost interest in their surroundings and in the future. All they cared about was getting their next fix.



Picture - Sniffing Dendrite (Picture is for representational purposes only, downloaded from the internet)

I held their little hands and almost dragged them out from there. Others started laughing at us as if they knew that these addicted children can never be changed. 3 of us sat on a bench on the platform and I brought two bottled mango juice from a nearby stall and requested them to drink. They were not in their senses completely. So I told them to open their mouths and started pouring some juice into their little mouths. After some time, they started becoming more aware of their surroundings. Till now, they were not in a position to talk. But now when they have come to their senses, the first thing they did was to go away from me. I held their hands and stopped them. Why are you stopping us-one of them asked impatiently. " You should not go to that place. Go back to your own home and study". I was baffled by their reply, "We do not have anywhere to go. Our mothers have died and our father remarried. The stepmother beats us mercilessly and doesn't allow us to enter the home. This platform is the only place where we can stay". I became numb and speechless, I didn't have anything to reply to them. Gradually, both of them disappeared from my sight.



Picture -During the time when I first found them.

Mira and Sumana were two young girls who lived on a railway platform in Sheoraphuli. They were abandoned by their parents when they were very young, and they had been living on the streets ever since.

Mira, who lived in a small village in India, was just 10 years old. Her mother died when she was very young, and her father remarried a few years later. Mira's stepmother was a cruel woman who treated Mira like a servant. She made Mira do all the housework, and she often beat her for no reason.

One day, Mira could no longer take it. She ran away from home and went to the Sheoraphuli Railway Station. Sheoraphuli Railway Station was a dangerous place. It was full of drug addicts, criminals, and human traffickers. Mira knew that she was in danger, but she didn't know where else to go.

Mira slept on the streets at night and begged for food during the day. She was often hungry and cold. She was also scared. Furthermore, she didn't know who to trust. She got addicted to the smell of dendrite adhesive, a dangerous drug that is often sold to children on the streets. She would spend hours sniffing the dendrite, which helped her to forget the pain of her life.

Sumana was a 9 years old girl who lived with her father after her mother's death. Her father was a rickshaw puller, and they lived in a small hut on the outskirts of Sheoraphuli railway station.

One day, Sumana's father remarried. His new wife did not like Sumana. She would often make Sumana do all the housework, and she would never let her go out to play with the other children.

One day, Sumana's stepmother threw her out of the house. Sumana was homeless and didn't know what to do. She went to Sheoraphuli railway station and started living there.

Sumana soon became addicted to the smell of dendrite adhesive. She would spend hours sniffing the adhesive, which helped her to forget her troubles. Some men at the railway station started to disturb Sumana. They would call her names and make fun of her. Sumana was scared, but she didn't know where to go.

May 10, 2018 - They got noticed by Maha Jiban.

One day, I was volunteering for a small Not For Profit Organization called [Maha Jiban](#). We were working on various railway platforms to help the street children. The first time I saw them, they were sitting on the pavement, sniffing dendrite. They looked so lost and alone. I knew that I had to do something to help her.

I sat down next to them and introduced myself. Their names were Sumana and Mira, and they were around 10 years old. They told me that they had been living on the streets for a few months after their mother had died. They said that they didn't have anywhere else to go, and that dendrite was the only thing that made her feel numb.

As I listened to Mira and Sumana's narrative, I experienced a profound emotional ache. I couldn't imagine what they must have been going through. I told them that I wanted to be their friend and that I would help her get off Dendrite. At first, they were hesitant. They didn't trust anyone. But I kept coming back to visit them, and I slowly started to earn their trust. I would bring them food and water, and I would listen to them to talk about their life. I never judged them, and I always let them know that I cared about them.

May 31, 2018 - Necessary support for food, education and shelter.

Furthermore, I talked to the girls and I learned about their daily life. They were given unconditional love. Arrangements were made so that they can go to a nearby hotel and eat 3 times a day, breakfast, lunch, and dinner for free. They were provided with clean new clothes. Arrangements were made so that a teacher will visit them regularly and start teaching basic things. A tab was provided to show them interesting educational content like rhymes, ABCs songs etc. Getting them to study was a very difficult job. They were reluctant to study. I tried to make it interesting for them so that learning would become fun. One day, they told me that they were ready to try to get off the dendrite. I was so happy for them. Some people criticized us and remarked, "It is impossible to change such children. They will migrate to other stations, and you will not be able to find them. Better spend your time and money on the children from regular homes". Some people said, "This is just for showing up and clicking pictures. I know these NGOs, they click pictures to post on social networking sites". Some said, "Mafias

run a begging racket with these children. If you get away from here, they will take revenge on you”.



Picture-New Bag and Shoe for the School.

While we were providing them food, education and mental support, they were still living in one of the huts near the rail station. We did not have any safe home where we could keep them. After months of effort, the other volunteers could convince Mira and Sumana to go to a safe house. They took them to one of the best orphanages in India named Children's House (Original Name Changed). They were taken to their nearest branch. Likewise, they were given a safe place to live, and they were enrolled in school.



Picture - We showed them the place where they are going to stay. They liked the place and agreed to stay.



Picture - New clothes before going to their newly found house.

Jun 10, 2018 - Cold Turkey - drug withdrawal symptom.

At the Children's House, Mira and Sumana received the care and support they needed to overcome their addiction to dendrite. But, initially, they had difficult times because they were not taking dendrite. They became restless and told us to drop us to the Rail Station again. They started smelling gums, chewing rubbers and becoming restless. Furthermore, they wanted to smell dendrites.

We became helpless as the children were reluctant to stay there. The Home administration was also under pressure because if this attitude spread to the other children and all of them may be spoiled.

But sometimes in life, we get some unexpected help. When this problem was going on, we called the Child Protection and Child Right Commission's Secretary and explained our helplessness to her. She was a very kind-hearted woman. She listened to the problem and suggested we take her to a child-friendly Drug de-addiction centre. Not only that, but she ordered that they would be in the de-addiction centre for a few months, and they will return to Children's home after that. Someone asked her - what to do if they do not want to stay there and go back to the Seoraphuli Rail Station. She made sure that none could send them back again to the railway station. She told everyone - don't even think about sending them back to that hell. They are children, she told, and they still do not have the age to make the decision to return to the railway station. There were many legal problems associated with such matters. But she stood by our side and made sure we did not face any legal hassle. She confidently told everyone that they will be absolutely fine after a few months. Both of them were sent to an authorized and child-friendly de-addiction centre

July 10, 2018 - In the de-addiction centre.

In the de-addiction centre, they were treated with love and care. They gave them a routine that they had to follow. There was a morning prayer daily at 6 a.m. Naturally, the girls didn't follow the routine and did not join the morning prayer initially. But someone came to them and gently woke them up with love and care and took them to the prayer hall. After a few days, they started to wake up at the right time and join everyone in the prayer hall. Exercise and Yoga sessions were regularly held in the de-addiction centre.

It helped their body and mind to become calm and healthy. In school time, they were given crayons and papers to draw whatever they wanted. They started scribbling and gradually wanted to draw more. They had good, healthy food every day. Sometimes they were dressed up neatly by some lady in the centre, as if a mother is dressing up her daughter. They comb their hair, give them a new salwar suit, place a “red Bindi” on the forehead and put oil in their dry hair. Probably this was the first time in their life they got such love and care.



Picture - In the de-addiction centre.

September 30, 2018- Complete Recovery

After 2 months they were declared completely fit to return to the Home. We were witnessing two new children standing up with smiling faces. Everyone was astonished to see that they completely changed into calm, obedient and smiling children. From that day till today, they are living very happily there. They never wanted to go back again to live in the Seoraphuli Rail Station. Last week, when one of us went to see them, they told us many things which are going on in their life. They informed me that they have scored good marks in the school examination. They told me about their dance classes where they are learning Bharatanatyam and Kathak. Most importantly, they looked very happy and beautiful.



Picture - Mira, Moitreyi (Who has been referred to as “I” in this story) and Sumana

With the help of Maha Jiban, Mira and Sumana were able to turn their lives around. They got off Dendrite, and they started to rebuild their lives. We were also surprised to hear that every day they spend some time helping the younger kids in their studies who are in primary school. Not only that, but they also made new friends, and they started to feel like they belonged to the place.

The life of Mira and Sumana has changed dramatically since they were rescued by [Maha Jiban](#). They are now clean from dendrite, they are good at studies, and they have peace of mind. They are also surrounded by people who love and care about them. Not only that, but they are living proof that it is possible to overcome addiction and build a better life.

Moitreyi Banerjee, one of our volunteers, took a major role in this initiative. She has been referred to as “I” in this story. Subhadip Mukherjee, another volunteer, has written this true story.

The original names of the children have been changed and faces were blurred for their safety. The name of the Shelter Home has also been changed.

Join Us- We are a small organization that works for needy children. We can do more if you join and help us.

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