



Down the memory lane: Dr Siddharth Sarkar



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AS a newly joined junior resident, we had a class by our Head of Department, **Prof Rajat Ray**. The class was about introduction to Psychiatry as a specialty and what to expect in the course of time. One of the things he taught us then was that you would keep your work (and psychiatric training) at workplace, or your personal life may get affected. At that time, I did not understand much about what was implied in the statement. Nonetheless, took a mental note of it as a newbie in the field of psychiatry.

But later, I could understand the depth of it. And that too at a social occasion. In a party, someone remarked that are you psychoanalyzing us right now. This comment came with a whiff of curiosity and apprehension. The perceived concern was that whether I could delve into the personal and private thought by merely observing. The query seemed genuine enough. While clarifying that we do not

know things not told to us, I did quip back that I have to stop ‘working’ when I leave the workplace. I assured to keep myself in balance, I would need to do so, and not carry back work and practice to non-work situations. The answer seemed sincere enough to allay concerns.

Subsequently, of reflection, I surmise that it is important to tune off ‘psychiatric’ mode in social situations and otherwise. We probably get better at inferring cues and putting our thought processes, heuristics and tropes at assessing situations and motives of others. However, this may become off-putting to others, especially in our non-professional encounters with others.

This leads me to contemplate the question of whether training in psychiatry changes us. And my conclusion would be yes and no. Yes, it makes us more aware of ourselves and others. On the other hand, it may not lead to substantive and additional changes to our personality profile to whatever changes time and living inculcates. Just to let you know, we'll need to make sure we use our skills at observation daily. Hence, I dare suggest making a conscious effort not to be a psychiatrist when not at work and enjoy and endure lives as we would otherwise.