

EPISODE EIGHT

WE REMEMBER



**AS I
AM**



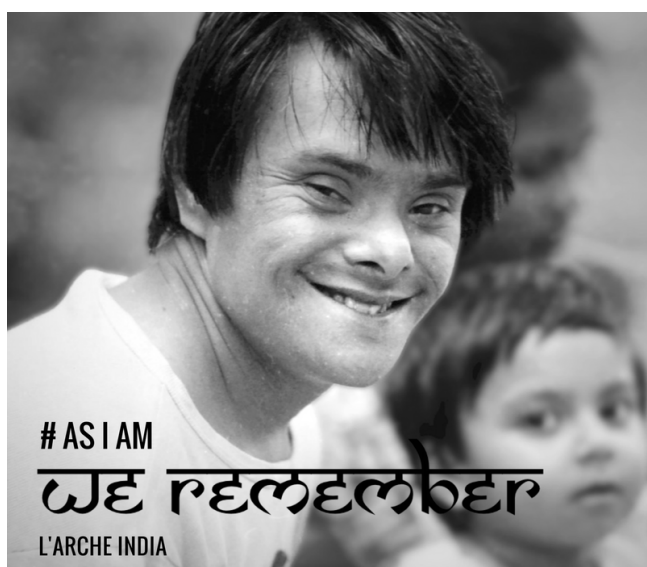
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FILM SUMMARY

When a life is over, we grieve. But there are certain lives, even certain populations, which society would have us forget. Bapi Sarkar, a man with Down Syndrome from India, lived with the daily experience of being dismissed, disrespected, and forgotten. Bapi's message to those who would tease him was, "We are all human beings." This film is a collection of affirmations that attest to that truth. Through the memories of Bapi's friends and, most significantly, through Bapi's self-affirmation, we learn that every human life deserves the dignity of being remembered.



"WE ARE ALSO
HUMAN BEINGS."

-Bapi Sarkar

FILM THEMES

- **Mourning**

When someone dies, loved ones often enter into a period of mourning. Different cultures around the world have customs that dictate how to mark and move through the grief that accompanies death. The people who knew Bapi experienced grief at his passing. Tridib mentions continuing to make his bed each night. Binod talks about being sad ("big sad"). Bapi's death was unexpected and the film was made less than a month after it happened so many of Bapi's friends were in the early stages of mourning.

- **Faith**

There are several lines in the film that give insight into Bapi's faith life. His friend says, "I don't know to which god he is praying but he prays." His other friend talks about going to temple AND church with Bapi. Although he did not practice any single religion, his cremation followed Hindu traditions and his friend explains that his ashes were put in the Ganges to ensure his passage into rebirth.

- **Memories**

Memories are the things we hold onto when we lose our loved ones. Those memories are preserved in stories and photographs. During the interviews, Bapi's friends share vivid details to bring Bapi to life. The photographs scattered throughout the film also help us envision Bapi's love for dance, his sense of humor, and his tenderness.

- **Human value**

The film opens with a list of things typically talked about at someone's funeral. If, from the society's perspective, that person had nothing to show for their life, what do we say? The observation is designed to raise questions about what determines human value. Are human beings valuable because they produce things? Are they valuable because they know things? What does this mean for people who are living in destitution or people with intellectual disabilities?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As a society, who do we mourn? Why?
2. In your opinion, did Bapi leave a legacy? If so, what was it? If not, why not?
3. What do you think Bapi's friend was expressing when he said, "Bapi died. I die more."?
4. What does it mean to value the human person?
5. Throughout history, the question of who counts as human has been debated in many forums. Various identity factors have been used to deny the status of human being to certain people. During Aristotle's day, one of the biggest debates was whether women have souls or not. Up until the late twentieth century, political factions still debated the full humanity of certain ethnic groups. There are currently debates among medical professionals about whether certain people with profound intellectual disabilities should be considered fully human. Why do you think some people are not considered human beings?

BEHIND THE SCENES

In the process of making this film, the director was told countless stories about Bapi. If this film were longer, it would include the story of Bapi's illnesses and recoveries and how he changed the environment of the entire floor of the hospital where he was being treated. With the strength of his charisma, he converted service providers into friends. Nurses would come and work with Bapi during their lunch breaks and doctors waived the fees to Bapi's complicated surgeries. When Bapi died, people from all over the world sent letters of love and condolence to the community. This is perhaps even more remarkable when we consider how Bapi's life began. Bapi was orphaned as a child. He was taken in by Saint Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity when they found him on the streets. Their ministry at the time was heavily focused on their "home for the dying" and Bapi was full of life and vibrancy. When the L'Arche community came to visit the Missionaries, Bapi followed them around and even attempted to board their van. He repeatedly showed a desire to spend time with the L'Arche community. His determination eventually paid off and he was invited to live in the L'Arche community.

IMAGINE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY

The general population has an endless attention span when it comes to celebrities, politicians, musicians, athletes, and the like. The simple act of paying attention to people who are forgotten can have a transformative effect on the world. Think about your local area and make a list of people who seem forgotten. How can you practice remembering those who are actively forgotten about? When human dignity is honored, all of us benefit.