

Resilience Seeking Hope, Love in Durjoy Datta's Till Last Breath

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<p>Received: 29 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 25 Aug 2025; Accepted: 30 Aug 2025; Available online: 04 Sep 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords—Durjoy Datta, Till Last Breath, resilience, necroed generative, death, love & loss</p>	<p><i>This paper explores resilience, hope and love in Durjoy Datta's Till Last Breath. It focuses on the battle to death, the ultimate reality, and the pain for those who are close to the person because death is ultimate. The paper emphasizes the worth of human life, and they learn the lesson and must move on after loss. Dushyant is a young man whose life has been characterized by suffering, addiction, and estrangement. Dushyant Roy is a self-destructive young man. He is twenty-five years old and has descended into alcoholism when his girlfriend Kajol left him for a wealthy man his sadness and his parents' incessant criticism drove him further, and he has reached the point of no return due to liver failure. Pihu and Dushyant wound up in the same hospital, in room 509, fighting their different ailments. Pihu is a gifted medical student who suffers with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), a degenerative 'necroed generative' illness that damages nerve cells that drive voluntary muscle movement. ALS causes muscle weakness, twitching, and eventual paralysis, ultimately affecting breathing and leading to death. There is currently no cure for ALS. Pihu is conscious that her time is limited; she confronts death with courage, aiming to leave behind memories of joy rather than despair.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Dushyant Roy is a young man who does himself harm. The curtain had been wide open for quite some time now, letting the strong rays of the sun rush in through the open window onto the face of a prostrate Dushyant, who lie in bed draped in a worn-out hospital bedsheet, very uncomfortable in his sleep but still immovable. His eyes flickered through the night, and his fingers trembled. He was asleep and didn't wake up; it wasn't a good night's sleep.

After tossing restlessly from side to side, he woke up and tried opening his eyes. One of them refused to open, swelled from a massive cut just above his left brow, which was severely taped and bandaged. He felt the bandage and checked for blood with his other half-open, drowsy eye. He was surrounded with medical equipment, a lot of it connected to him, a small television in one corner of the room, and an empty bed on his left side. It wasn't the first time he was in one of these beds, but this time it seemed a little more serious than the other times.

He had been accustomed to falling unconscious after a succession of violent vomits and head spasms. He had tubes connected to needles that delved into his veins and arteries, pumping liquids from translucent pouches hanging from the stand on his right side. He was certain his parents were unaware of his whereabouts. He knew none of his buddies would have given the hospital authorities his parents' phone numbers or addresses; he had no desire to see or speak with them, now or ever. The hands of his mobile phone watch touched; it had been twelve-fourteen hours since admission. Last night, like many others, was a night of debauchery, pornography, poker, drink, and smoking with six of his friends in his tight one-room apartment.

The door opened, and a short, fair girl walked into the room. She had large eyes, like a schoolgirl in Japanese cartoons, and appeared to be a puzzled child in a candy shop with a gold coin in both palms, unsure what to buy, yet her palms were gripped around the handle bar of her crutches. Her legs bowed at the knees and appeared to lack the ability to support her petite five-foot-two frame.

Excuse me? He said and waved at the girl, who was in a robe slightly better than his. "Can you call me nurse?" I think I can, but you know, I could have been a doctor. "I am still studying," she said and looked at Dushyant and smiled. Dushyant didn't know how to react. Can you call her? "Being angry won't help your case," she said. She walked over gingerly to the bed next to him and drew the curtain between them and then pulled it away. "Excuse me?" They will think you're dying, and I hope, at least then, that someone will come running to check on you," she explained and chuckled. "And well, if no one does, you're in a really bad hospital." You should get a second opinion. I am not going to do that. "He retorted," she said, and slowly limped over to his bed. She picked up his medical chart, which hung from the other end of his bed, her eyebrows knitted, and continued, "You have to wait till three when a nurse comes in and draws some blood for some tests—not a long wait, just two and a half hours!" Whatever, he said, closed his eyes, and put his head back on the pillow. Fine, bye. Hope to see you again. I might pick this room. page (Durjoy 14)

Pihu simply grinned and moved slowly towards the exit at the gate. She glanced at the number and

said to herself, "Room 509." When Dushyant noticed her nodding, she disappeared into the corridor with the other sick individuals. Pihu Malhotra, 19, Arman noticed Zarah's anguish on the file; she didn't move a muscle. Is there an issue? He inquired, "She has ALS?" like in Lou Gehrig's Disease When Arman first heard about the case, he could detect the shock in her voice, which was a clear indication of a young, inexperienced doctor.

Pihu is young and aspires to complete her medical education, but she is plagued by ALS, a horrible disease. It begins with the patient being clumsy; you drop things, get weary easily, and the sensation in your limbs gradually fades until paralysis sets in. After then, you are at the mercy of your assistant.

Pihu's parents were pleased when she passed all of the All-India Medical Examinations and chose to join Maulana Azad Medical College, one of India's leading medical schools. Pihu had exchanged smiles, handshakes, and hugs. She knew that was just the start; admission tests were a necessary evil. She knew she'd make it when news broke in her hometown that her AIR (All India Rank) was third; coaching institute owners had flocked to her house, pleading with her to advertise their highly qualified staff and fully air-conditioned classroom with a picture of their most illustrious student, Pihu Malhotra. A few days later, she was in the local newspapers; her parents' aspirations were realized.

She complained to her parents about unusual sensations in her right arm after going to the hospital and having a blood test done on her own. She identified herself as a medical student. First year, Maulana Azad. She completed the tests herself.

'What tests?' The doctor's shocked expression turned into concern and sympathy. She said she had ALS. I understand that no genetic history means no cure. She knew she was slowly dying. She could be gone this year or next, but she will die. She has read everything there is to know about the condition. She understands that she will be unable to eat, use the restroom, or breathe independently. The patient stated that a pipe would be placed into her throat to facilitate breathing since she was afraid of choking on her saliva. She lacked the strength to share her sad destiny with Venugopal. Initially, it appeared impossible for her. After describing her own death to the doctor, she

came to terms with it. The news had finally sunk in. Her hopes of becoming a doctor faded in that moment, and her parents' sad expressions reminded her of her reality.

Her eyes glazed over, and she vowed not to cry. There is a mistake! This should not happen to me. I've done nothing to deserve this. I am completely healthy! Her heart cried aloud. (Durjoy 29)

ALS is a horrible disease. It starts when the patient becomes clumsy. We tend to drop things, become tired quickly, and experience dimmer sensations in our limbs until paralysis occurs. After that, she may be unable to eat due to weakness in her tongue and jaw muscles. She may also be unable to speak quickly or for long periods of time due to mouth fatigue. She may need crutches before being transported by wheelchair. Soon, she will be unable to roll the chair due to a lack of forearm strength, leaving her immobile. Tubes will be implanted in her body to aid in digestion, breathing, and elimination. Machines will keep her alive, but it's a tragic way to die. She apologized, wishing she could do something. Venugopal handed her some books to read on others who had battled the sickness.

They didn't win, but they died happy; she can't lose to sickness. She would just wish for her to tell my parents she does not have the courage, she said, and the tears came again. She tried to stifle her sobs the best she could; never had she thought her.

Parents would outlive her. What greater misfortune can there be for a parent?

'You're the most courageous patient I have seen in the longest time,' he said and added

With a pause, 'I have a daughter. She is seven.'

'Does she want to be a doctor too?'

'Yes. You remind me of her,' the doctor said, looking down at the reports in his hands and

closed his eyes. (Durjoy 30)

The doctor began explaining the world as it was blacked out. Her parents' denials, yells, screams, charges against the incompetent doctor and the irresponsible hospital, and assurances that their daughter was perfectly well had no effect on her brain. She had only one image burnt upon her retina. She was going to die motionless on a hospital bed, with a tube down her mouth.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The book that made my heart wrench with tears—Till Last Breath by Durjoy Datta—is more than just a story. It's an emotional journey that explores the fragility of life, the strength of love, and the power of redemption.

The story concentrates around four characters: Dushyant, Dr. Arman, Zarah, and Kajal, who plays an important role in shaping Dushyant's life. Let's start with Pihu. What a lovely soul she was—nineteen years old, intellectual, compassionate, tenderhearted, and full of possibilities. She had her life planned out, dreaming of becoming a doctor and working relentlessly to achieve her goals, but reality had other plans.

During one of her exams, something devastating happened—her hands stopped responding. She couldn't write couldn't move. I imagine the horror of being trapped in your own body, unable to control it. Her central nervous system was failing her, and tears flowed down her cheeks, soaking down her answer sheet, as she sat there powerless and devastated. It was a moment of pure devastation not just for Pihu but also for anyone reading her story.

Pihu's experience is even more extraordinary because she self-diagnosed her disease. She discovered she had ALS, an incurable disease, through a horrible twist of fate. Dushyant's tale was one of calm strength, whereas his was one of chaos and self-destruction. Dushyant, a once-promising young man of twenty-five, became addicted to alcohol after his girlfriend, Kajal, abandoned him for a wealthy man. His sadness and his parents' incessant criticism pushed him deeper into the abyss, until he reached a point of no return: liver failure. Dushyant's pain felt raw and real as a result of his decisions. Both Pihu and Dushyant ended up in the same hospital room 509, battling their own illnesses. However, this story is not about their love affair; rather, it is about the strong link they shared, which was formed through shared difficulties, grief, and feelings of optimism.

Two reputed doctors, fighting their own demons from the past, are trying everything to keep their patients alive, even putting their medical licenses at risk. These last days in the hospital change the two

patients, their doctors, and all the other people around them in ways they had never imagined.

Death looms in the tiny 12X13-foot room as they fight for every breath of their lives, even as the doctors put them through unapproved experimental treatments to prolong their lives.

Dr. Arman, Pihu's doctor, and Zarah, who cared for Dushyant, were equally integral to the story. They weren't just medical professionals; they were human beings, followed and compassionate, willing to risk everything, even their medical licenses, to save their patients. Dr. Armaan's dedication to Pihu and the quiet understanding that developed between them was beautiful; similarly, the bond between Dushyant and Zarah added another layer of depth to the narrative.

And in the end, one of the patients is no more in this world after struggling hard, but before she leaves, she makes her lasting impression and makes sure that the other one can still live a peaceful life.

III. ILLNESS AND BROKEN DREAMS

Pihu's hopes of becoming a surgeon were destroyed as her body deteriorated; she was forced to forsake medical college, her identity and future slipping away. Pihu's condition had gotten worse. The first indicators of an ALS relapse appeared in her body. The nerve conduction tests revealed a severe loss of sensation in her legs. She had banged into the door that morning while going to the bathroom. Her hands began to betray her again. She had begun to drop objects and becoming clumsier. The misery of being an ALS patient has returned. The lack of sensation and control disturbed her less than it did Arman, who was the first to review the findings. Pihu assured her mother, 'Maa, I will be okay.' She reassured her mother, who was heartbroken after seeing her daughter struggle to accomplish the simplest tasks again. The sickness was back, and it was worse than before.

They had already discussed the treatment. Pihu saw it as a win-win situation, despite its illegality and danger. The radical stem cell treatment had a clear conclusion with only two options. Either die quickly and painlessly, or be cured. It made great sense to after seeing herself deteriorate and almost die, she realized what it required for her to get

through that period. Despite her confident demeanor, she remained a fearful child. She preferred the treatment over the possibility of death from the condition.

Her sobbing mom excused herself for a bit, and her dad sat near her.

'Do you think we should do this, beta?'

'Dad, it's our only option. And Dr. Arman is a brilliant doctor. He is putting himself on.

the line to try this out. I am sure he has something in mind,' she assured him.

'But what if—'

'Don't worry. I am in good hands,' she said, and her dad snickered like a child (Durjoy 109)

Dushyant groaned in pain as a syringe injected a clear liquid into his circulation. His gaze was drawn to the unoccupied bed next to him. Zarah failed to administer the medication and obtain blood. 'You seem distracted,' Zarah observed. Dushyant looked away from Pihu's bed and said, "Not really." You didn't arrive in the morning.

Why?'

'My parents are living with me. They wanted me to spend some time with them. So I took

'the day off,' she said and rolled her eyes.

The first time she was reading the book, and she knew it wouldn't be the last.

(Durjoy 117)

Since he passed out in Zarah's automobile, Dushyant had been sleeping for only a few hours per day. He was under close surveillance and progressively deteriorating. He had severe liver and renal damage and was taking multiple drugs. His days were spent lying in bed, moaning in anguish. Despite feeling much better today, he awoke with acute abdominal ache. He attempted to call for assistance in alleviating his discomfort. Is there a problem? Pihu inquired, looking up from the book she was reading. As she waited for him to speak, his face contorted in anguish and he rolled over, holding his stomach. Okay, I'll call somebody, she said, shouting for help. A nurse rushed in minutes later to check on Dushyant's drip. She asked Dushyant some questions, but his responses were inaudible. She gave

him an injection and assured that it would cure his pain.

IV. LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP

Pihu, who was solitary and on the verge of death, began writing Dr. Armaan Kashyap in need of both medical advice and personal connection. Her remarks are direct, honest, and occasionally melancholy. Armaan is initially skeptical, but is won over by her brilliance and spirit. The exchange of words, letters, emails, and chats allows characters to overcome disease and loneliness, giving each other glimpses of hope.

Dushyant adores Kajol, who abandoned him for a wealthy man, and his life is torn apart. He had had enough of the partying. Then he was admitted to the hospital for serious medical problems. There he met Pihu, who had ALS, and Dr. Zarah provided excellent care for him. Dushyant had a good rapport with Zarah and Pihu from the start; it wasn't easy, but he gradually altered his attitude and became extremely friendly with Pihu.

V. RESILIENCE AND HOPE

Pihu expresses her final farewell to her parents, Armaan and Dushyant, knowing that her time is limited. The book gave her the courage she needed to keep going and kept her fighting spirit alive. She confronts death with courage, hoping to leave a legacy of joy rather than sadness. Dushyant, too, is forced to face his mortality, regrets, and the people he has hurt. Even in its final minutes, the hospital room turns from a place of sadness to one of forgiveness, thankfulness, and affirmation of life.

When Dushyant's liver fails and no donor is available, Pihu's ultimate act of kindness is determined to be a match. After her death, Dushyant receives a liver transplant, giving him a second chance at life. The final sacrifices—ending one life so that another can continue—emphasize the stories' interconnectedness. Pihu's legacy includes not just the organs she provides, but also the transformation she causes in those she leaves behind.

Pihu's death leaves a void in the lives of people she impacted. Armaan is worried and disturbed by something he cannot know for certain. Dushyant,

who now lives with Pihu's liver, is haunted with both survivor guilt and a fresh feeling of responsibility. The characters start looking for solutions to move forward while remembering Pihu. Dushyant reconciles with his parents and envisions a life free of addiction and remorse. Zarah, having reconciled with her father, opens herself up to the possibilities of love. Armaan, who is still grieving, is inspired by Pihu's spirit and the risks he took for her. The story emphasizes that letting go entails honoring the past while looking forward.

VI. CONCLUSION

Dushyant detected choking sounds on the other side of the curtain. He drew himself away from the bed and the curtain, even as his body appeared to dissolve. On the bed, he noticed Pihu waving her hands around, rolling her eyes, and violently shaking her body. She had halted before he could reach her bed. He burst out crying when he saw her cease moving. He yelled and shook her, but she did not reply. Panicking, he slapped her several times, but her face flopped from side to side. With the last bit of power he had, he crawled over her bed, placed both hands on her chest, and began to push down. He had seen it on television several times before. He bent over her, breathed into her open lips, and then hammered her chest again. Nothing changes the course of life. After her death, Dushyant receives a liver transplant, giving him a second chance at life.

Did I find a donor? Yes, I did. it was her. The perfect match. We were room-mates. But that's not the only thing she gave me, fifteen days after my surgery when I was Shifted back to my room, the bed next to me was empty but for a little note, on top of it. I opened the note and it said:

'you were the best room-mate ever. Now, we're 2-2. Don't waste it'.

I cry.

Dushyant, who was before resigned to self-destruction, is now driven to live fully, inspired by Pihu's example. Zarah, having overcome her trauma, begins to rebuild her ties with her family. Despite his loss, Armaan continues to work with a renewed awareness. All wounds cannot be healed;

yet, life goes on, and purpose can be found even in pain. The story ends not with triumph, but with gratitude, humility, and the enduring power of human connection.

The novel's narrative alternates between Dushyant's and Pihu's points of view, stressing their common experiences with disease, sorrow, and hope. This contradiction allows for a thorough examination of how varied personalities cope with mortality and purpose.

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