

FILM

DWANDO

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Even though grounded in real emotion and ideas of substance, Suman Ghosh's "Dwando-Conflict" (Bengali/English, 95 mins, colour) is buoyant and richly tinted. Under moonlight, besides a river, along green foliage, three young men and two young ladies are drinking and singing. They work in a software information technology company. The debut sequence is in dark sepia. Soon, three friends take leave as they have a flight to catch next morning. Conversation sprouts between Sudipta (Ananya Chatterjee) and Rana (Samrat Chakrabarti). Anik (Koushik Sen), Sudpita's husband is in USA, for the past six months. Sudipta grew up in Ahmedabad, and her parents are now in Kolkata. In Anik's absence, Sudpita is staying alone. There is an off screen rumble of an aircraft. Though successful in software development, Sudipta and Rana feel they are preoccupied with boring and mundane things. Creative work, like painting and plays, is not garbage. The wine affects the two friends slowly and moments get frozen. It is 11 p.m. Sudipta is glad to receive attention. Overcoming the immaturity of a romantic, Rana crosses boundaries, and invites Sudipta to his room.

The dark background is transformed to the bright lights of a hospital corridor. Sudipta's husband, Anik is being rushed on a wheel-bed to intensive care. There are more time shifts. Sudipta recalls that there has been no sex with Anik, since his illness. At the hospital, Anik is in convulsions. Time swings to a party, where Sudipta and Anik with friends are playing sign language. Rimi's mute sign language is made to add up to the title of Stephen Daldry's film, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind". There is a ghazal song, and friend Kunal chops vegetables in the kitchen. Boys who cook well are supposed to be sexy. On the outer varandah, Anik and a friend peer at Kolkata's high rise night sky, where lives are confined behind windows. There is music and dancing. Anik feels isolated, and sweats. He notices Rana close to his wife, Sudipta, trying to pluck something from her eyes. Upset, Anik rushes out, and finds Rimi and Kunal hugging in another room.

Returning home, Anik accuses wife Sudipta, of flirting. Sudipta maintains parties are meant to chill out. Flustered Anik keeps changing TV channels, where news is of a political Third Front. Sudipta keeps flipping DVDs, and accuses Anik of drinking excessively, and passing a mid-life crisis. But Anik is ill, and collapses on the floor. Time sequence shifts again. When Sudipta barges into the chamber of Dr Ashok Mukherjee (Soumitra Chatterjee) at the private nursing home, where Anik Basu is admitted. Dr Mukherjee declines any audience. Neuro-surgen Dr Mukherjee cares for his patient Anik. He is also building a neuro-science hospital. There are shots of an operation theatre and CT Scan reports. Anik is down with brain tumour. Biopsy examinations were for next day. Dr Mukherjee passes instructions to the junior doctors in the presence of Sudipta. Anik is in bed, eyes full of tears. Sudipta remains present when Anik's head is being shaved. She frets as she walks along the nursing home corridor. When she returns home, one hears Sudipta's mother speaking on the telephone answering machine. The land phone call gets terminated with a mobile ring from Rana, now in USA.

Sudipta looks at a photo of herself and cries. She conveys to her lover that her husband may die. Rana claims their relationship a reality, and two realities could not be accepted. Sudipta wants to be left alone. Standing below a banyan tree, she surveys the river Hooghly flowing. There is background Rabindra Sangeet. Happy moments at home are recalled - Anik arranging books, cutting salads, and watering flower pots. Sudipta is on the river bank steps, and memories drift to Anik on his laptop. A friend Annesha visits Sudipta, at her residence, and they discuss the problem. Sudipta is pregnant, from the relationship with Rana. It would be difficult to leave husband, Anik, if he recovers. On a rainy night, Sudipta rushes to Dr Mukherjee's residence. He is listening to western classical music, and enjoying his drinks. He declines to meet Sudipta. The servant Haren brings Sudipta to Dr Mukherjee's inner room, when she is afflicted by an asthmatic cough. Dr Mukherjee recalls that in childhood he was fond of watching lambs being beheaded. Sudipta maintains that there is more to life than saving lives. There was sensitivity and decency. Dr Mukherjee observes that the human body was a machine, which bleeds; and refers to Walter Whitman's poetry of anatomy. Sudipta confesses that she was pregnant three months and wants to know if her husband would live. She was married for ten years, and the child she was carrying was not of Anik. The brain tissues have been sent for biopsy in lab. The rain continues. Sudipta has no control of the situation. She wants to be true to both males; and her husband was ignorant. If the husband was not ill, she would have left him. Now if Anik lives she will have to go for abortion.

Sudipta remains confused with lies, love and truth. Pointing to his wife, Neela's photo on the wall, Dr Mukherjee informs that his wife died while giving birth to a deceased child. He feels from experience that Anik's tumour is malignant. Sudipta in nervousness drops a glass. When she is leaving, Dr Mukherjee hands over to her the asthma-blower, left behind. As Sudipta is walking back home, she learns on telephone that the biopsy report indicates that Anik's brain tumour is benign. The operation would be after ten days, and Dr Mukherjee is exhilarated that one soul has been saved from lies. "Dwando" is designed, shot and edited with unusual finesse. The languor of youth fails to hide the directionless lives of the protagonists. The acting is exaggeratedly self involved. The protagonists, including Dr Mukherjee are quirky, and never succeed in attaining any alternative universe of detachment. Suman Ghosh finds the right nuances of lightness and gravity. Except for the bright lights in the clinic corridors and the operation theatre, the soft lights are filtered time, as it revives hazy memories. The script allows the film to have a subdued look. Barun Mukherjee's camera is mobile, observing the characters in long and horizontal shots. Mayookh Bhaumik's music supplements the film's dominant mood of brittle life and scary death. However the selection of songs from Bengali soul to ghazals to Tagore does not match the images and the portraiture. □□□