

# Chanda's secret-stigma

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Sang 1 Sang To Meeraal Shafaat Interpreting Texts 20th December 2012

Final draft AIDS- The stigma of life Since the invention of medicine, never have human beings needed to face as a big challenge as the present: The AIDS epidemic! When people have HIV virus and it continues to develop seriously, the HIV virus badly damages their bodies' immune systems, which leads them to the risk for opportunistic infections, meaning they easily get sickness without any protection. In this period, their disease will turn into AIDS, which has taken countless lives of people and left the pain for many families in society.

Surrounding this incurable disease, there are plenty of intractable problems. Especially the perceptions about AIDS of community and even the patients are not enough to rescue the patient from improper judgments of society. To bear resentment against society for having boycotted the patients, Allan Stratton wrote Chanda's Secrets. Through this novel, he shows us the real lives of AIDS patients, the loss, the loneliness and their tragic fates while facing death in the contemporary society. Not only Africa but also all over the world there is a lot of prejudice and misunderstanding in society about AIDS and the people who get this disease.

AIDS is the most horrible disease that everyone fears whether they suffer from it or not. Despite the reason leading to their diseases, they are shunned and despised by community. As Stratton describes Jonah, "Jonah liked to party" and after Sara was born "he just stayed at the shebeen getting drunk on shake-shake." (21) At that time, he usually goes out with Mary and probably that is the reason Sang 2 why he gets AIDS. Until the disease is

evidently shown on his body, “ He’s a skeleton. The flesh has been sucked out from under his skin.

The skin’s dried so tight to his skull that the bridge of his nose has ripped through. ” (106) he is outcast and his sister- Ruth is the first one to detect his symptoms of disease. She left him because she has to protect herself and herfamilyfrom being infected. Everyone keeps at a distance from him. He is immediately kicked out of that society and seen as a disgusting creature. This time, he really needs someone to stay with him and protect him from being alienated and folks’ disdain. Occasionally, he sees Mary, the one he used to be close with when he was healthy, in the crowd.

He is so happy and he believes that only she can save him this moment- when everyone stays away from him, looks him as an alien, a monster. However, life is not as expected, “ Mary tries to keep behind the Sibandas, but they grab her by the elbows and push her into the front. ” (107) Mary is also really scared of his illness so that she pretend not to know him; she callously abandons his honor to protect her identity and prevents from being implicated. Jonah just likes other AIDS patients are seen as a tumor of society that must be eliminated or at least they are isolated from the community.

Despite being tired of the disease attacking theirhealthevery day, infected persons have to overcome it in loneliness and unhappiness. Infected persons may be rejected even from the people closest to them. They may lose their jobs, their homes or important relationships as a result of people’s negative attitudes about AIDS. Because of the stigma attached to AIDS, people may find it difficult to tell others about their disease. Stratton shows Jonah’s

emotions when he asks Mary for help; Mary warns him not to come towards her “ But Jonah does not listen.

He staggers forward,” (108) because he really wants someone cares about him. Until Mary throws the stones through Jonah's face, he puts off catching her. During this time, he is in shock and panic; he cannot believe his sight because the last one he could trust is also leaving him. His Sang 3 desire to escape from this hell is broken. How poor he is now when seeing people turning away without mercy, perhaps he feels mortified and solitary, this place is a proper hell for Jonah and other infected persons.

Instead of encouraging AIDS patients, people disdain, avoid meeting them and put contempt into them. These patients not only have to fight against the disease that is taking their lives day by day, but they also have to fight back the community's prejudices of their unwanted diseases. Victims of AIDS have to face the death without anyone standing by such as Jonah after being abandoned, he just receives an excuse from Mary, “ Sorry, old friend. ” (108) Actually, no one can understand the death in the coldness, loneliness, and shame they are suffering.

Because of having a disease that people fear and see them as stigmas that need to be prevented from their lives, they are shunned by relatives and all people around them. They feel empty. They are humiliated. There is only a world that is indicative of their own to cope with illness; they crave the voice, laughter and someone's care more than ever, but it is just their dreams. The patients know that living with a serious, stigmatized and potentially life-threatening illness can be extremely stressful and difficult, they also scare that society will alienate their family.

To avoid the bad reputation of the family being involved infected patients, whether voluntary or forced, most of them have to leave their family. Jonah's death is probably caused by his pessimistic thoughts about life, no one even look at him and his life means nothing. As a result, not until the disease kills him, his survival ends in the bottom of an abandoned well. In contrast, Chanda's mother does not die in loneliness but at first, she chooses to leave her children because she wants to protect them. She is smart enough to realize her illness " Mama's headaches. Her weariness. Her joints.

The way she's gotten so thin. " (109) so that she pretends to believe in superior that her house has devil and she has to come back Tiro to solve it. Her Sang 4 intention is to die in Tiro and will not come back. The folks will not know about her death and that is the last thing she can do to avoid damaging her children's lives because of her. She does not want her children live the rest of life with scary and hiding. She makes her children believe that she stays in Tiro or if they know she dies by hearing anyone says, they will not be hurt as much as directly seeing their mother dies.

It is true that not every infected person is bad; there are those who have their own problems need to be solved but the reality does not allow them. Hence, the patients' families will be underestimated. However, the most pitiful victims are still the children. The children may be infected or not, but if they instantly have any of their relatives gets AIDS, they have to endure the fierce wave of public opinion. The early deep hurt and the loss in life makes children have no fun and opportunities in studying. AIDS brings bad reputations, and then it breaks up many families by carrying away the patients' lives.

As a result, these shocks cause a huge impact on the change of children, which leads to their mental problems or their lives. Stratton also mentions Esther's parents die because of AIDS. Then no one can take care all of her siblings, they are separated to other relatives' home (75, 76). Due to being sad and miss her siblings, Esther says " Well, things are going to change. I have a plan. This time next year we'll all be together. " (80) This is also the turning point of her life, the way she chooses to earn money in order to bring her siblings back, make her become infected.

It can be said that the environment also has an impact on children's growing up; they easily step into the path of sin. That is why Chanda's mother decides to sacrifice herself dying in the dark instead of making her children's lives become dark. Only Jonah is enough, she does not want her children sustain the bad reputation anymore. Stigma and discrimination will kill AIDS patients before the disease kills them. In such a rigorous society, patients are more likely prone in complex, lose their faith and live without Sang 5 responsibility for community.

By verbal gestures, people's contempt can severely affect the psychology of patients and their families. The folks deprive the right to live and social integration of the patients. AIDS takes happiness away, breaks up many hearts. Why don't people help infected persons get through adversity? If they continue to discriminate with AIDS patients, it will be hard to decrease the number of infected persons. Through Chanda's Secrets, Stratton wants to show the hardships, consequences and implications of AIDS, which can be decreased or increased, still bases on the total awareness.