

2018 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize]

## **I Want to Live My Life**

(Original)

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When I was born, my mother bewailed my birth because I was not a son, I was a daughter. When I grew old, I was admitted to a school unlike my brother who went to a private school which was a privilege. When I entered high school, my father, with the advice of my mother, wrapped me in a burqa. The burqa covered my eyes, nose and mouth in which I could not freely breathe nor could I see clearly. My world was made blurred before my eyes. My face was covered and my identity was taken from me. The burqa forced me to join the worthless herd of women around. I did not utter a single word. The burqa led to one more injustice: It did not save me, contrary to our cultural opinions, it attracted thousands of hungry male eyes upon my body. I could not withstand this cultural hunger. I shrank into myself. I did not say a single word for myself.

My mother was not happy at all with my going to school. She argued, "You should stay at home, what use of going to school? You will soon get married and then serve your husband." She was partially right. She cared for me and for my future; she wanted to protect me from my society. I loved school so much. I could not obey my mother. I had to insist on my educational journey but my insistence gave way to the orders of my family.

After matriculation, I had to discontinue my education. I was held back at home where I felt a kind of housemaid, serving my parents, brothers and sisters. I had to comply with their orders and they were quite satisfied with my imprisoned life.

For one whole long year, I served my home, kept thinking and gnawed at my heart for my condition which was shaped by someone else. During this period, I was also forced to get engaged to a person whom I had not even seen before. After all, I had to yes, and I yessed.

It was quite a slavish and meaningless life for me. This life was against my grain. I was not made for this life and I was breaking inside. I thought I have to speak for myself. Who else will speak for me if I don't? I raised a faint and shaky voice in front of my family for my

education to start again. They laughed away my eager voice. How could it be started after having stayed at home for one year? I gathered courage and strengthened my voice to reach to the soft corners of my family' heart. They did not listen. I repeated, they ignored; I shouted, they frowned; I resisted their frown and they started thinking about me. Though I had got shrunk into myself, yet I brought out my inner being without any regard to the fear of being called disobedient and rude which are the qualities most expected from women.

I wanted to get rid of my betrothal and I succeeded in breaking it which was not an easy task. I had to bear so many nasty judgments of the people. I got admitted to a Postgraduate College where co-education has recently been introduced; where again the males try to keep us confined to our classrooms only, where there are no sports opportunities for female students; where the female students are expected to keep their eyes down in respect, honor and shyness to the males and where they are not encouraged to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

I speak for myself. I encourage my female class fellows to speak for themselves to be equal and not be treated discriminately.

I have overcome the fear which had made me dimensionless. The fear is gone by now. I am me; I am someone; I want a due recognition. I want to convince in my favour such people who want to efface me from the social fabric and who feel ashamed of the existence of their daughters, sisters and mothers. This change I made and this change I will make.