

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – Honorable Mention]

Legacy of Life

(Original)

Paridhi Verma

(Age 12, India)

Delhi Public School R.N. Extension, Ghazibad, Uttar Pradesh

29 May 2018- My cousins and I expeditiously decorated the entire home for grandpa's birthday; he had been admitted to the hospital a few days back however, we were confident he would return, as happy and cheerful as ever, excited to celebrate his birthday with his entire family, bargaining for one more piece of his favourite milk-cake. And I was waiting for him to return home, to narrate his favourite tales from epics and mythologies; he never returned, I kept waiting.

I had failed to understand what had happened then and I was too afraid to ask; the elders wailed, neighbours gathered in our home to offer consoling words though no one told me he would never be coming back. Initially, I thought he had gone on a hiatus, and I was scared that I might have upset him in any way. As time passed, I gained an understanding of the depth of the situation. It was the first time I had lost someone I cared deeply about and it saddened me that I could not do anything to protect him.

"Write about your favourite habit of your grandfather", read the prompt we received as homework to submit an essay on Grandparent's day. There were a hundred different things I wanted to write about- his habit of being glued to the TV during the World Cup, his custom of donating food to the poor every week, his habit of appreciating even the littlest things in life, but somehow I didn't write a word, probably because I was afraid to acknowledge that he has remained merely as a memory. It felt as if I had discovered the meaning of life, its undeniable ultimate truth, which screamed by every means the transient nature of human life. I thought how unfair it is to all those people who work endlessly, love their families and probably have weaved multiple dreams for their future. Life is uncertain; one moment you are, the next you exist only through memories.

Having developed a distorted perception towards life in general, I reached my grandparents' house with my parents to pay our respects to my grandpa on his 70th birth and 1st death anniversary. After conducting a religious ceremony, we went to the nearby old-age home with several food items and gifts for the elderly. I was surprised to see the massive amount of senior citizens there; they belonged to different age groups- the 60s, 70s, 80s, even 90s. I was even more bewildered when the manager told us how several of them had been abandoned by their very own children and grandchildren. But there was something common among all of them- they seemed content. I asked an elderly lady if she missed her home, she replied with a smile, "But I am in my home." All the elders of my family helped to prepare a full-course meal for the people in the home while all us children served it to them. When they got to know the occasion of the feast was my grandpa's birth anniversary, they all asked us questions about his life. None of us could stop describing all the good qualities he possessed- how he had been a true feminist throughout his life, his quality of adapting to the new generations and his quality of appreciating the good in everyone.

That one day transformed my entire perception towards life- it is not its transient nature that defines someone's life but the legacy they have left behind. My grandfather was remembered by everyone not for his wealth or money but for his unconditional love for all and habit of giving.

After reaching my home, I took out a paper and wrote the essay I was supposed to write for grandparent's day. And when somebody asks me if I miss my grandpa, I just say, "But he is with me, in my heart."

I now have a goal to live my life for others as much for myself so that people remember my legacy with a smile. I aspire to work with civil society organisations and the United Nations when I grow up to improve the lives of people who are abandoned and have nowhere to go.