

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

## **When Loss Becomes Gain**

(Original)

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The truth is: life is a continual series of losses. Like a swiftly flowing river- nothing remains the same for a moment. Everything is constantly moving, continually rushing downstream, one thing morphing into something else. In a way we can equate these changes with loss, because however hard we try we cannot hold on to anything pleasant for very long even when we try and try. But there is more to life too. Something beautiful. Something hopeful. Something more.

This year in May I lost my beloved grandfather to COVID-19. He was my everything. His passing rattled me to the core. I became numb for days. Everyday his memories would jolt me out of numbness demanding my attention, only to push me further into despair. Every minute I yearned for his laughter, his touch, his warmth but found only his absence. I lost will to do the simplest tasks, to do anything but lie in my room. Everything reminded me of him. Every promise that I made him haunted me in my sleep. I lost all purpose to live. Just when I felt that life has officially ended for me, I had a dream for the first time in weeks. I saw myself playing with a new-born child. I laughed with him, hugged him and played with him. When I woke up, I was momentarily comforted. I tried to hold on to the peaceful feeling of the dream, but it quickly slipped away. I tried to make sense of the dream, but in vain. Later in the day, my father came home with a small Mango plant, my grandfather's favourite tree. He announced that we will be planting the mango plant in our village in my grandfather's memory. And, in a moment of epiphany, everything fell into perspective for me. That dream. This plant. Everything.

In the holy book Gita, Sri Krishna says, 'Whatever is born will surely die; whatever dies is sure to be born again. Therefore one should not grieve for the inevitable.' With this thought I turned my loss into the greatest possible gain- spiritual insight. Next day after we planted the tree I sat in front of it for hours- Imagining the Mango tree grow, bearing fruits in the

future, poor children of the village gathering around the tree to collect its mangoes, travellers resting under its shade, birds building nest in its branches and soft breeze moving its branches. I could see why my grandfather loved Mango trees. Peace and purpose engulfed me. In that plant I found my strength, my will to live and thrive, and a purpose to water it regularly and see it bloom. That day I understood life. Paradoxical as it may sound, loss is the basis of life and personal evolution; And life is a series of loss becoming gain.

During this pandemic, loss has become a recurring theme in our lives. Many people have lost their dear ones, others lost their jobs, some lost their lifelong savings and many lost their mental peace. But these losses cannot define our life. Life is turning these extreme losses into positive gains, and even into an uplifting experience of self- transcendence. By changing our attitude towards what is happening to us, we can gain independence from external forces that tend to govern our lives. Loss has held us hostage and only independence will embolden us to navigate through these tough times. And the good news is: the decision and power to free ourselves lies with us. So life is what we make it: despair into hope, weakness into strength, isolation into solitude, poverty into minimalism, and most importantly, loss into gain. This is life. A swiftly flowing river. A journey of loss to gain.