

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

C'est La Vie

(Original)

Meghali Banerjee

(Age 21, India)

To me, the term 'Life' is all encompassing. I believe that Life is more than working twelve hours a day at the office, or buying a new sports car. When I contemplate upon what Life is, I think about its psychological and physical form. I associate this term with all the creatures around me, even the smallest tadpole. I think about how this term does not differentiate between an ant and a human being. I define myself as 'full of life' because to me, Life is a symbol of a fresh start every single day, Hope, and Positivity.

I choose to say that I'm full of Life because I have had the opportunity to understand and value what the word – a simple four-lettered word – means. Five years back, I developed an eye condition rapidly within a few weeks. My right eye was severely affected; my vision was obstructed by flashes of light. It turned out to be a retinal detachment in progress. I was operated on an urgent basis within the next few hours of my visit to the ophthalmologist. I was told that delay in being operated could lead to blindness. The entire event happened so fast, I barely had time to recollect it, or to even address my own feelings. I felt numb at the thought of being visually impaired. That was the very first time I ever thought of what Life is as I knew it to be.

I had to spend a fortnight in a dark room after my successful surgical procedure. I was taken care of entirely by my parents. This entirely changed my perspective on Life. I used to feel that I am a self-sufficient person, and I required no support at all to survive. But the post-operation period shattered my notions. I had to depend on other individuals for my bare necessities. I was unable to see anything. My eye was bandaged, and I was surrounded by complete darkness mentally, and physically. I wondered how blindness feels like – to not know what shall happen next, to not have any idea of colours, to not have an opportunity to see the faces of loved ones. How would I eat, walk or dress myself if I had lost my vision?

It has been a long journey since then. I have emerged as an individual aware of her immense strength, courageous enough to chase her dreams. That situation made me differentiate between Survival and Life. I am now grateful for the life that I have been blessed with, to be able to see the colours, to be able to see the world even with my imperfect eyesight. I am thankful for whatever is left with me, thankful for the privilege of having access to proper nutrition, healthcare and so much love and patience. I cherish my life every single day; I paint with the brightest of colours, read books, take a walk all by myself and spend time with the people I love.

I believe that being content is the key to appreciating Life. I've found happiness in the smallest of things – the sound of rainfall, petting adorable kittens, listening to the radio, and star gazing.

In a world where people have forgotten that Life is not synonymous to the rat-race they see around them, and do not feel guilty to crush the life out of a spider with their shoes, it is very crucial that we slow down for a while to notice everything around us in a less complicated manner. We need to stop turning every run into a race. The only race we should participate in, is one in which we are our only competitors. This is the message I would like to spread to others now, and later in the journey of my life. We need to pause and count the numerous blessings that we have been gifted with, without us wishing or asking for them. We should be thankful to our destiny to be born with the power of consciousness and expression, and our ability to contemplate upon billions and billions of years of evolution – Life.