

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

Life's meaning is in its multiplicity

(Original)

S Priyashini

(Age 23, Singapore)

Life, I think, is a prism. Science tells us that when light passes through a prism, it breaks up and we see different colours. When we try to break down what life means, I think we will end up with a multitude of experiences and emotions that renders it almost impossible to say that we have only lived one life.

By the end of our borrowed time here, it is possible to say that a single individual would have lived more than once and as more than one person. Is it possible for one to live in multiplicity? Yes, because each moment teaches us enough lessons to let us become different people. We keep growing into newer versions of ourselves with time.

When one realizes that life isn't just one linear journey in time but actually a compilation of many different lives in every day, minute and seconds, they understand that living in the present is what enriches each moment they spend awake and conscious. It's not about the mistakes we make or the achievements clinched. Rather it is about the unspoken values and perspective each individual is left with when all the good and bad is stripped off them.

I graduated with a degree in 2020 during the pandemic. On top of the anxieties of Covid-19, I left school feeling extremely unsure about what I wanted to make of myself. But the past one year has taught me a very simple lesson: A job one does is not how they live their life. Living life means seeking to understand the world inside and outside me.

It occurred to me that I can be a writer, an office worker, a daughter and sister all in one. I am different people at different times. That is because my mind and heart seek to create magic out of each moment, by exploring each aspect of life without searching for a concrete reward. It is easy to get swept away by anxiety and stress and lose our sense of the present if we live life like completing a to-do list.

One also gains much more meaning by broadening their thinking to accept that each individual has so much to offer to this world when they dig deep inside of themselves and ask this question: What is it that makes me feel alive? More often than not, this opens up multiple avenues for them to engage in thoughts and activities that lets them have a healthy relationship with themselves. This could mean engaging in a hobby, taking up new opportunities, or even seeking professional help if needed.

As much as having a healthy relationship with our inner self is important, our lives are not separate from the environment and its health. The history of human development has shown us that we have always been enriching ourselves at the expense of the natural environment. Yet, people and governments simply cannot agree on coming together to save our ecosystems and biodiversity. They throw blame at each other to absolve themselves of responsibility. It is not possible to lead a fulfilling existence by destroying the very source of life – Earth. If we want to enrich our lives, taking care of our surroundings should be the first step.

We can start by questioning our consumption habits and their potential effects on the environment. This could spiral into a large world population of socially conscious youth who look beyond their own self gains when making decisions. Such actions can take many forms, including studying environmental sciences more, or choosing to reject environmentally harmful products and brands. Governments and leaders would be left with no choice but to engage with us and start making climate change an urgent priority.

At the end of our lives, most do not want to feel regret, but contention. That can be achieved if we start being in tune with ourselves and our surroundings as young people now. There is no strict rulebook on how one can live, but the secret to a meaningful life is in exploring each of life's possibilities to the fullest.