Behind the walls of limitation

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A Tale of the Right to Choose and Shifting Perspectives

I was sobbing uncontrollably from crying so much. The attic was my only refuge to get through the hard days; a place where I hid out of fear, but right there I found the courage to talk about my dreams.

That night, I had spoken about the traditional school (maktab-khaneh) and literacy.

I loved writing and learning, but I had grown up in a family that didn't consider literacy and studying very necessary for a girl. In their eyes, a girl should keep house, marry, and build her own life; not chase after lessons and school.

Every time the topic of studying came up, the opposition began:

"What does a girl need with these things? What is she supposed to do with her literacy?"

But I couldn't accept these words.

Was literacy bad for a woman?

Or was there simply no place designated for a woman even in the world of literacy?

Perhaps the real fear was exactly this: that an educated woman would learn new things, ask .questions, think for herself, and no longer easily submit to every dictate and coercion

I just wanted to learn. I wanted to be able to read and write and demand something more from .life than what they had determined for me

That is why I stood my ground for my wish for an entire year. I didn't want to get married and I .didn't want to give up studying

Those three months of summer passed very harshly for me. There were constant arguments and fights, and I wouldn't back down. I had cried so much that my eyes were sunken. Sometimes I .wouldn't eat and would hide in the attic out of sheer distress

.But in that very attic, where I hid out of fear, I thought about my dreams

?I told myself: Why should I be deprived of what I love just because I am a girl

I didn't want being a woman to mean only cooking, washing clothes, housekeeping, and raising .children for me. I wanted to be literate, study, work, and one day be independent

In those days, maybe even I didn't know what all this persistence was going to change. I only knew that if I gave up, I might spend the rest of my life regretting the very thing I could have .fought for

.Finally, the family gradually gave in, and I was able to go to school

For me, going to school wasn't just attending a class; it was as if a door had opened to a world I .had been standing behind for a long time

.I loved writing more than before. Every word I learned was a step toward what I wanted

Every new thing I learned and wrote seemed to heal all the coldness and suffering in my heart. My soul took flight from the joy of learning, and every time, the smell of ink and paper and the .murmur of the school carried me beyond dreams and fantasies of the future

They no longer saw me merely as a girl whose job in the house was to help with cooking and .daily chores; now they considered me literate, and this brought me to the height of joy

Every word and every new thing I learned, I would recount in utmost detail to my mother and the household. Each of them, either with a laugh or a frown, would say: "Mind your own business! .Have you gone mad? What are you saying?" And I was happy even with these reproaches

.But this wasn't the end of the story

!Years later, that same girl faced another great choice: University

My entrance exam results had come out, and I knew I could go to university, but the family .opposed it again

My mother was worried. She was afraid my father would get angry and even said a fight might .break out

For a month, I wasn't allowed to have a phone or leave the house so my friends wouldn't tempt .me to go to university

My mother sometimes spoke of marriage and said maybe it would be better to think of a different future. But I was still the same girl who had fought for a few lines of reading and writing years .ago

.I couldn't give up on university now that I had reached this point

My father was angry and mostly stayed silent; I didn't know how it would end either. His silence .hurt me more than any opposition and kept me in limbo

One morning, still pulling the warmth of the bed around me against the cold autumn air, my ears .were tuned to the whispers and words of my mother with my father at the breakfast spread

I heard my mother, selflessly and for my sake, trying to convince my father once again. She was talking, and my father's eyes were fixed on the tea; on the steam rising from it and vanishing into .the air

My mother said: "Until now you have seen with your own eyes how much enthusiasm she has for going to university. Her teachers also believe she will be successful in the future with these abilities. Yield and let her continue. She is very sad and sorrowful these days; she is even more '"?upset with you and constantly says: 'Why doesn't Dad say anything to me

My father finally broke his eerie silence. He said only one sentence; a sentence that pulled me :out of the heart of worries and threw me into the midst of my dreams

".Tell that girl to go and do whatever she wants"

".My mother asked in surprise: "You mean you agree? My child was worried to death

At that very moment, I laughed out of happiness. I couldn't stay hidden anymore; I quickly ran to .my father and kissed his hands and face

"!My father said: "Stop it, girl

.But for me, that moment was one of the sweetest moments of my life

.I was the first girl in that tribe to go to university

Perhaps that day only I knew how many times I had cried to get there, how many times I had .defended my desire, and how many times I had heard that it was impossible

But now years have passed since that girl's persistence, and the path she and girls like her opened has reached a point where girls going to university, choosing a career, and striving for .independence has become a more normal part of life for many families

Some walls are built of fears and dusty beliefs; of repetitive words spoken from generation to .generation that have gradually taken root

But the zeal and passion of one person is enough to tear down that same wall and build a new .path

Like a girl who one day killed herself and fought for a few lines of reading and writing, but herself .became a part of the transformation and change in perspectives

Subsequent generations, thanks to those very efforts, can have more paths to choose from and .pursue their desires more seriously

The issue isn't just where the restriction came from or who built it; the issue is that no human being should be deprived of the right to choose and achieve their dreams solely because of their .gender and position

Not all beliefs and thoughts should be a wall against arriving. Some of them must be pushed .aside so a generation doesn't hit a dead end