

LIFE IS VERY BEAUTIFUL! WE JUST NEED TO EXPLORE IT...

LAXMI, BAWANA

When I see my daughter, Mansi play in front of the house, I am swept by this sudden rush of feelings and emotions. It makes me ponder over her childhood and I know these days will be remembered by her as her most peaceful days for the rest of her life. But the thing that makes me wonder most is how different my childhood days were.

Sitting in the veranda with a cup of tea on a cloudy day and recalling my childhood days is my most favorite past time. Childhood is one of the most beautiful phases of anyone's life; no problem and no tension. The best part was that I lived in a joint family with my paternal grandparents. I was born and brought up in a Bengali family where I never faced any discrimination between me and my brother. Those were the best days of my life.

One day within a fraction of a second life my life took a u-turn. It came so fast that I didn't even get a chance to understand what actually going on. I was in 8th standard. On 31st march, 2004 when I came back from school I saw everything was messed up, the house in which we were living was no more. I was so happy because I had passed my 8th class with good marks, and I wanted to tell to my mother but stopped dumb-struck on seeing this. The bulldozer had just destroyed my house in front of my own eyes and as the bricks fell away, the beautiful days I had spent there, were coming back to me in flashes only to haunt me with the fact that none of it was going to come back to me ever again!

My father had a tea stall near the Red Fort and was earning enough to run the family, but after this we were forced to leave Yamuna Pushta and forced to resettle to JJ colony in Bawana, where we were allotted one plot. The builder cheated us and told us that we had to pay Rs 7000 to save the plot within the next 24hrs. It wasn't easy for us to give the money in such short notice. So we were forced to sell that plot, but we shifted to JJ colony where we started living in a rented house. Here my journey amidst struggles started.

The colony lacked many basic facilities that were promised to us by the government. We used to go to nearby canals to take bath, which was frequented by the boys from nearby village and they tried to molest us many times. Many a time they passed comments and pulled our dupatta. When the boys from JJ colony came to know about this they solved the matter and the molestation, teasing decreased henceforth. My father left his previous business as it was not easy to travel long distances and started pulling rickshaw. My mother also started working and I didn't have any other choice except to drop out of school as I was the eldest daughter so I had to look after my younger brother and sister. All my dreams came crashing down in front of me.

Soon I joined in a street play group that focused on awareness generation among



people on issues such as HIV/AIDS, PDS etc. It was from there that I started working formally. I joined Action Aid as a community staff, as during that time Action Aid was funding a project for this community for sanitation and health services. By participating in this street play group I started becoming extrovert and realized that there is no place for anyone who can't share their views. People will only listen to such people who know their own values and know how to express their own views.

In 2005, I joined JAGORI as a member of "Sathi Samooh", where I learned many things. Gradually I became a fellow at JAGORI and now I am a staff at JAGORI. This organization has helped me to learn to raise my voice against what is wrong and to know the society in better way. In the mean time I started my schooling again. I took admission in 10th standard and completed my 10th and 12th class through distance education. I felt very satisfied.

In 2007, I got married to the person whom I loved. After marriage things became difficult for me. My in-laws were not supportive and wanted me to be a housewife. They didn't want me to continue my studies further. That time my husband supported me and insisted on following my dream. Gradually my in-laws stopped taunting me and understood, valued the things that I stood for. They started adapting the good things and also engaged in spreading the same in the society. Now they understood that their daughter and daughter in-law are same.

Now I am blessed with a daughter. I am currently pursuing my BSW course from IG-NOU, New Delhi and I am doing my job as well. I have achieved things that I always wanted in life. Trust me, life is very beautiful! We just need to explore it more and change our views to see this beautiful world in a whole new different way!

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DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

25th November to 10th December, 2015

2015 Theme

End To Gender-based Violence And Violations Of The Right To Education!

