

The Silence of My Dreams

In the heart of darkness, when everything falls into silence, only the sound of silent dreams echoes in our ears. These dreams live in the heart of an Afghan girl; a girl who holds dreams and hopes in her heart. But in the real world, amidst the ruins of war and oppression, her dreams die one by one.

I'm an Afghan girl. A girl who sat in the classroom during the day and slept all night with big dreams. I wished to be useful to my country one day through my education. In my world, education was the only asylum for me. But the Taliban came, and everything changed.

I remember that one day in Seyed al-Shahda, there was an explosion, and thousands of girls became martyrs. That day, it wasn't only those girls who became martyrs; the souls of thousands of other girls were buried with them. Our house was near that school. I witnessed how parents and families were broken, and how they died because of their pain. I also cried for them, for my country, for thousands of girls.

The next morning, when I went to school, I saw a blood-stained bag near to the mosque. I couldn't control myself and cried. As I walked the half-hour distance to school, I kept crying. Perhaps thousands of other girls were being destroyed too. That day, the entire class was hopeless and upset. No one wanted to study. I will never forget when our English teacher came in, greeted us, and then started teaching. But no one wanted to study or even answer. When our teacher asked why, everyone said, "Why should we study? In the end, our fate will be the same as theirs. Our life is over. We have nothing to live for. We will die, too."

But our teacher said something I have never forgotten: "You should study for yourselves and go abroad through scholarships or any other way. Don't stay here." In that moment, the only thing I thought about was my country and my people. "If you and I are supposed to run away, then who will build this country? Who will serve it?", I responded. "You don't want to go?", he asked me in disbelief. "No, why should I leave?", I replied seriously. If a million dollars were offered to you, would you still not leave?", he asked me again. But I stood with what I have said before: "No, I will never leave Afghanistan." This was my final answer.

He gave me a puzzled look. After a while, he replied: "You say this now, but one day, you will wish to leave." "Never!", I stated with certainty.

But how wrong I was. I was a girl who never wanted to leave. Because I was not afraid of death, but I was afraid of the destruction of my dreams. And that day, I said those words because I wanted to prove myself through knowledge and education. I wanted to achieve my dreams in my beloved home and country.

I was a girl whose entire life and everything, even my belongings, was only knowledge. It was the only thing that was important to me. I was so serious about my studying and school that I had even distanced myself from my childhood world. The day I first entered school; it took me years to realize that my father had passed away. Before that, I didn't know and thought he was in Iran. But two days later, when I had just

entered school, I found out that my father had died. For a girl who had wished for seven or eight years to see her father just once, this news was harder than anything else. Some nights, I cried under the blanket, but I promised myself that one day, I would make my father proud. My father had brought us from the village to the city for education, and I promised that through education, I would make him proud.

When the Taliban took over Kabul, I was studying a history book. When I heard that the Taliban had taken the city, I closed the history book and said to myself: "Finish." And it truly finished. At that moment, I forgot myself between the pages of the book and felt that I wasn't there (Is that what you mean?).

After that, my mother became ill, and I went from being a girl who saw her life in education to a girl who was only a nurse and caregiver for her mother. The situation had changed so much that I couldn't even get close to my books. When my mother recovered and I returned to my books, everything had changed.

The Taliban killed my dreams with their actions. My dreams died. The dreams I once had were all destroyed in this country. Now, the only thing I want is to leave this country. See what the Taliban have done to this girl. What have they done to a girl who once had no desire to leave? My dreams and goals were all tied to this country and its government, but the Taliban took them from me by closing the doors of knowledge. Even if I go to the best country and study the best fields, I will never be the same girl again.

My dream was to study at Kabul University. To walk through the streets of Kabul and find a job. My dream was the happiness of my people and their smiles. But these dreams are dead. They were buried under the banner of the Taliban. Even if I leave one day, I will still not be the same girl. In reality, the Taliban killed a girl whose homeland was her life. They killed everything within me that was called "patriotism".

Sometimes, I ask myself: "Where have I gone? What part of my life am I in now?" I was the girl who loved her country. Now, how can she leave it? Even if years pass, I will never find myself. The Taliban killed dreams that could have been realized in any country, except in their own. Even if I achieve my goals, my dreams are dead. Because in this country, no dream is fulfilled. This is the truth of the death of dreams.

I can no longer live as I once did. The Taliban, in fact, not only killed our bodies, but our souls and dreams as well. This pain is harder than anything else. I am now in a place where I do not know where I stand. In a world where everything has changed. That girl who always dreamed of building a better country is now in a place where she can neither find herself nor achieve her dreams. The Taliban, by closing the doors of knowledge, did not just destroy my life; they destroyed all the dreams that could have improved this country. And I still wonder if there will ever be a day when I can rebuild this country. Maybe I cannot. Maybe I will just have to live with the memory of my dreams and remain loyal to them in my bold heart.