

*The empty darkness gives way to hope
Hope flows through the mountains
Crushing and banging on the terrains.
As the light fills the world
Hope gathers courage to stand with reality
Only to grow or die
Either way it's originality maligned...*

The radio beeped an authoritative voice boomed from it. *This is your Captain speaking, the flight....* She looked out of the window as if this was the last time. Absently staring at the night sky with innumerable stars and a half moon. Her heart sank, eyes searching, hands numbed. Though secured in seat her entity seemed lost. She wanted to cry loudly like her little self, run away from the present to past, from strangers to family and friends, from unknown to known, if only it was possible. She wanted to be out from the present mess. The voice was still on...

The hardcover suitcases of varying size were packed to its capacity. The teenage girl stepped out of her car for boarding the airplane. This was first time she was travelling thousands of miles all alone. Sia wanted to stop back and move out of the present. She wished hard for time to stop but it did not. Everybody that mattered in her world - her parents, siblings, family and friends were with her. She wanted to be with them. She knew this feeling- her heart yearned. She had grown up with it and knew it had to grow out.

She hugged each one tighter than the previous one just like her little self. Sia did not wanted to go. But it was her decision now there was no choice . She wished time would halt. Time speeded up. Her departure announced on the flashboard. She dreaded this

moment and so did her dear ones.

Tears welled up but did not flow. Everyone trying to avoid eye contact. She was going had been planned months back.

Everybody prayed there would be a miracle and she would stay back. Though all her well-wishers wanted her well-being. Hearts ached, eyes wanted to pour out, hands wanted to hold her but unconsciously waved. The dark night could not have been much darker.

Their hearts poured blessings while hands waved good-bye wishes. Her friends and family peeped through the airport window waiting for last-minute miracle. It happens only in the celluloid world. Trying to catch a last-minute glimpse of her, to frame her in memories. Sia knew it would be terrible if she stopped and looked back. With a heavy heart she kept on moving to a bright and prospective future while the family moved to the memories.

The aircraft jerked and moved forward. There was a strange nauseating feeling. Sia wanted to cry, move back, stay grounded like the Earth. But in no time, she was one in the air. Flying slowly and steadily to her destiny.

Tears rolled down her cheeks. As the salt water passed through her face, her little heart yearned. The nimbus cloud covered the morning earth. Loneliness gloomed making her tears flow rapid. She was sitting in the playroom with her favourite toys and classmates. The playroom was a riot of colour, rainbows painted on the wall with sun peeping from the cloud, the night sky with moon, stars, and rockets but loneliness gripped her.

The toys were stacked neatly on the shelf.

The teacher tried to console her. But no amount of coxing and consoling helped the little girl. She was crying to her heart's

content. It was her first day in the play-school. She was wearing her favourite pink dress with matching shoes and ribbons. Her teary face and blurred eyes were searching for someone- her mother. She had stepped out and promised to be on time but was late.

After some time when her mother arrived the little girl ran to embrace her. Sia embraced her tightly as if never to leave. Tears flowed in high tide. She was angry with her mother and complained about her being late. Holding her mother tightly the little girl cried profusely. Her mother hugged and kissed her. She tried apologising and bribing her with chocolates and toys. Today, nothing would suffice her.

The modern Indian family was discussing their child's future. This has been the usual scene- the discussion for the past year and a half. But nothing concrete could be decided. The discussion matter was grave involving Sia's career. The gravity of the matter could be understood by the fact that the family tried to discuss every detail.

"I want to travel and explore the world" said Sia.

Her mother replied, "Go for a world trip."

The trio, Sia's mother, father and herself had their own stand. The teenage girl was confused and wanted to explore more possibilities. Her mother harboured big dreams but all in conventional manner with safety nets. While father had desired Sia for going abroad for higher studies, but dreams and reality were harsh amalgamation.

For Sia this was an uncharted area. She wanted to fly, spread

her wings but was unsure of her directions. She had taken every help. But to make matters worse they had confused her. Surrounded by this dilemma she was unable to choose a path for herself. But she was sure she wanted to be an independent individual away from the shadows of her family. To build a place for herself in this world. This world was not an imaginary teenage world but a real world. A world where she is responsible for herself, where she is not judged by her actions or appearance, where even if she falters it is to rise high for the zenith. Her mother harboured her dreams for Sia. Unlike herself, she wanted her daughter to be independent. Armed with a bachelor's degree she lacked the risk-taking ability. This among others set apart the mother- daughter duo. Sia's father wanted Sia to be independent but within his set limits. He represented the Young India's father community. The types that wanted and did not want at the same time.

We stay in free countries where we are guided by a set of rules and regulations. These laws need to be revised frequently. Humans have different set of laws for every individual. The half of our population enjoys all the luxury. The other half is shunned in the darkness. Sia knew she belonged to the shunted group. She wanted to grow, be an independent individual financially, emotionally and socially.

Sia came to sit near her father. She wanted him to

understand her desire and mentor her.

“I want to go abroad for higher studies” said Sia.

Sia’s mother felt a bolt struck her world.

She said, “first be sure of your choice, then we will plan it.”

Sia’s mother wanted to cut the weed at its roots.

She was aware of little Sia. The scene of little Sia in her arms flashed before her eyes.

“It is a girl “ the nurse exclaimed as in the billboards. The family comprising the parents and grandparents were overjoyed. They had waited for this moment since time immemorial.

“See how her eyes are shining” the overjoyed father said. Indeed, the infant’s eyes shone through the darkness of the night. The mother dreamt about the infant’s tomorrow. How the little one’s future would be different from her. She would write her own destiny. She weaved innumerable options without any restrictions. As the golden rays of the sun spread through the hospital room the serene face of the mother shines as it has found a way in her dreams. A dream to be worked upon for years, to be cherished later.

“Maa, I will choose a course that gives me the flexibility to change” said Sia breaking her mother’s thoughts.

“This is impossible and even if it is, it will be sheer wastage of time and money,” said mother. She wanted Sia’s father to dismiss the subject on this account.

“Maa, there are many students opting for this course.

Moreover, it is not expensive. I will share the details with you” said Sia.

“There will be lot of competition. It is an unknown world. You will not be accepted, and this will dishearten you.”

Sia’s mother knew she was fighting a lost battle. She wanted Sia to grow but was scared. Sia’s phobia of loneliness combined with fear of failure was worrying her.

“Maa, let me try at least” said Sia.

Sia’s father had been a mute spectator to this conversation. He knew the stage had been set and the focus was on him.

“I am glad that you are serious about your tomorrow” father said.

Sia’s mother exchanged angry glances with her husband.

Later that night the husband-wife had heated conversations. While Sia’s mother was practical in her approach. She wanted Sia to study and be independent. She did not want her to spend huge sum of money on something that was unsure. She wanted her to reap gold but without any pain in a comfortable way. Her father saw a larger picture- he wanted his daughter’s future secured unlike his wife’s.

Both right in their ways.

“Hello, hello Mom I have reached” the voice crackled the darkness from the other side of the world. The news

was received with mixed sentiments- relieved and disturbing. Disturbing because Sia was thousands of miles away. Relieved that one milestone has been travelled.

“The weather is freezing here. Everything is settled, do not worry. I will call you later,” with this the line was disconnected. Not waiting to hear the answers from the other side. The parents were relieved that they could at least hear their daughter. Their days of anxiety **had begun or ended was unknown.**