

Is this Normal?

| FROM PAGE 22 |

Her mother really hates her, she concluded. But why? She had nothing to do with her being born. She didn't ask to be born. How is it her fault?

"Ughhhh," she cried out in frustration. It is always like this. Her mother destroys her and then she looks for reasons. Reasons which will show its Sarah's fault. And then she can be at peace. Her mother's mental tortures would make sense. Her mother's indifference to her would make sense. It's like a vicious circle. She is tired of looking for her own flaws.

This time it is her mother's fault. There is no other reason. Suraiya hates the life Sarah has, is envious of Sarah's life. Sarah has freedom, Sarah has the privilege of options. Perhaps Suraiya never had that?

Is it Sarah's fault that her mother got married early?

Why should Sarah suffer? It is her mother's parents who got her married at the age of 13. Her father was 24. She doesn't know what kind of a couple they were when they got married. She doesn't know what kind of a husband her father

When the days are good, she could think of a million reasons. Today she can't even think of one. The tears in her eyes blurred her vision. They silently fell on her lap. The family picture on her wall came into her view. She isn't in the picture, but everyone else is in it. She was behind the camera. Maybe that was how it was supposed to be. Maybe she was never meant to be born. Her eyes slowly traced all the people in the photograph.

was at that time. He seems like a nice husband now but what happened when she wasn't there? Was she the result of a terrible incident?

She stopped herself. Her father at least cares a bit about her. Her father is the only parent who sometimes sits with her and tries to pay attention to her.

Whatever happened in the past is none of her business. It happened before she came into the picture. Or is it?

Her father knocked on her door and came into her room. 'Eat something, aren't you hungry?' He said from the doorway as if he didn't want to enter and didn't want to know what happened.

"I'm fine," she lied. She stared at her father, willing him to ask her what happened, willing her to ask why she was crying.

He stood at the door uncomfortably for a few seconds and started to leave.

Sarah couldn't help herself. "Arya is leaving the country. She is going to the USA forever. I wanted to meet her today. Mom didn't let me. She is leaving with her entire family tonight. Maybe she will never come

back to this country."

She waited for her father to say that her mother was wrong to do so. She waited for her father to say that it will be okay. She waited and waited. Her father just stared at her and said, "Oh they are leaving? I didn't know. You should have told me. I would have taken you. You know your mother doesn't like all this. Stop crying now. Come and eat something."

"You weren't home! I told you yesterday to talk to her so that I can meet Arya today! Why didn't you tell her?" Sarah wailed.

Her father was uncomfortable with this conversation. He sighed and left the room.

Her mother entered to take away her phone for the night. Sarah knew very well that her mother would check her messages, her call logs, and her phone balance. Then probably the next morning will refuse to give her phone at all. Then she would know her phone had been seized.

If she would try to ask why, her mother would reply, "How dare you to ask me questions? I will do as I please, don't you dare to ask me this question."

Logic and reasoning fail Suraiya. Sarah would then gently remind her mother that her mother didn't buy her phone. Neither did her father. It was a gift from her uncle. She was 19; she really didn't have the right to seize her phone anymore.

Then Suraiya would verbally abuse her. Say all kinds of curses which mothers shouldn't say to their daughters. And she would bow her head and wait for God to do something. But God was always too busy to help her.

"Don't take my phone tonight, just let it stay with me for one night." Sarah said in a small voice. She tried not to beg because according to her mother if you want something badly, that's enough of a reason not to give you.

"Arya's flight is at 3 in the morning; she might call me before she boards the plane." Sarah added, hoping her mother's heart isn't hollow.

"Might call me before she boards the plane?" Sneered her mother. She took her phone and walked away with it.

Sarah stared at the place her mother was occupying. At that moment she could not hate her mother any less. She hated her mother and herself.

She took the small knife from the kitchen and tried to cut the veins in her feet. She needs to put a lot more pressure. She tried to increase the pressure on her knife. Her skin cracked, but that's it. She stopped. She couldn't do it. She wasn't brave enough. She despised herself so much. She was a coward.

She silently prayed to God, "If You can't make my life better, then don't keep me alive. Give my time of life to someone who really needs it."

She waited, waited for something to happen. Waited for a miracle to happen or lightning to strike her down.

She stared blankly at nothing and something at the same time.

Waiting. Is this normal?

Is it normal to wait for your death?

Is it normal to want your death?

She could vaguely feel a small voice in her head, reminding her that there are people much worse off than her. She tried to think of things she is grateful for, but she failed.

When the days are good, she could

think of a million reasons. Today she can't even think of one. The tears in her eyes blurred her vision. They silently fell on her lap. The family picture on her wall came into her view. She isn't in the picture, but everyone else is in it. She was behind the camera. Maybe that was how it was supposed to be. Maybe she was never meant to be born.

Her eyes slowly traced all the people in the photograph. It was a good click by her; it was a good day. There wasn't any screaming or shouting. Whenever her maternal grandmother is present, Suraiya keeps herself in check.

She could feel her brain slowly waking up. She forgot her grief for a moment and started to think. Suraiya behaves with her grandmother exactly the same way Sarah behaves with her mother! Suraiya is the epitome of 'The subservient and obedient daughter.'

All these years, she had missed something. There was something off about the relationship of Suraiya and her mother. Now Sarah knew what was wrong. Suraiya and her mother lack the same thing Sarah and Suraiya lacks, love, warmth, compassion and understanding.

Maybe Sarah is not that much different from her mother. Perhaps there is finally something common between Sarah and Suraiya. They both have horrible mothers.

How old was grandma when she got married or when she had Suraiya? Sarah wondered.

She remembered grandma was 17. Didn't she say that on her seventeenth birthday? She could clearly remember that conversation because it gave her chills.

"Happy birthday Sarah. Seventeen years old! Time really does fly fast. Why I was seventeen when I had your mother! Suraiya, the girl is all grown up. You should start looking for a groom!"

"I don't think so, mother. Sarah is still a child. Getting married early is a stupidity. I am not going to make her make the same mistake I did." Suraiya replied firmly.

"Wait till she finds a groom for herself. Then don't come to me for help!" her grandma replied smugly.

"When did I ever come to you?" Suraiya muttered softly, it was like she was talking to herself. Then she repeated firmly, "It will never happen. My daughter will marry whoever I choose. She will not bring disgrace to our family."

That night, on the eve of her birthday, her mother would seize her phone. Sarah would cry herself to sleep, all the time wondering what she did wrong.

Suraiya is spiteful without an ounce of love for Sarah. But why?

It is because Suraiya doesn't know how to be a mother? Or is it because Suraiya, like Sarah, has never known or seen what a mother's love is.

Is this normal?

Everybody knows about child marriages and the adverse effects it causes physically on young mothers. But what about emotional effects? Scarred by trauma, do these mothers, like Suraiya despise their children because motherhood limited their lives?

Is Sarah just another shackle on her mother's feet?

Nazia Zabin recently graduated from North South University. She is inspired by J.K. Rowling and Kristen Hannah.