

## Speech for Freedom

15<sup>th</sup> August 2011

Honourable guests respected Principal and teachers, and you all my fellow friends; my name is Nikita Patil. I am studying in 8<sup>th</sup> standard.

I am very much pleased to attend school after a gap of 2 years and to get freedom to deliver speech before you on the Independence Day. I greet you all on this auspicious occasion of Indian Independence Day.

Little children to great leaders, near about all Indians struggled over the years against the British slavery. As a result, our country means we Indian people got Independence on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. You all know and aware of this struggle. I shall not repeat it again. I shall talk to you about a different slavery in our society and the struggle for freedom against it.

Since my early childhood I understood that I am trapped in a disobeying and inappropriately moving body. This is known as 'Quadriplegia', a type of disability. Just look at me! My head is trembling of its own. My face gets distorted. My legs, hands and fingers too move uncontrolled. Gradually I started to learn living independently with my body trying to lock in me in dependency. Meanwhile I realised that it is not my body, I am actually trapped in the bigger prison and slavery of the 'community's negative attitude'.

I have heard that nowadays births of girl child are denied in our community by female foeticide. On the contrary even though I am their daughter, my parents are labouring hard to free me. They know that education, higher and higher education is the only way to liberate me from such slavery. That is why they wandered here and there, met many teachers and somehow managed to enrol me in the school.

As you see, my fingers of both hands and legs are bent irregularly that I can't hold pen to write. Even I can't hold pen in my distorted mouth. Instead of helping me in such condition or finding the way out to overcome my problem everyone tried to force me out of the school.

Just because I was unable to pay Rs.500 per month in the residential school where I was studying in 6<sup>th</sup> standard, they coerced me to clean the toilet and floor. I had to satisfy my hungry belly on only one chapatti. I was very much upset. I used to weep all the time. It was not possible for me to concentrate on study. Lastly my mother brought me home.

My mother's continued efforts to enrol me in school failed everywhere on the strong ground that I couldn't write, the basic eligibility to pass examinations. Refusal was experienced at schools in AnjangaonBari too. I was out of school for two years. I used to sit in front of the door looking at the school going children and wept for why not school for me.

During this summer, when I was travelling from AnjangaonBari to Badnera in the shared autoriksha, I met one 'Sir' (Rahul Bais, social activist) who doesn't teach in any school but helps children with disabilities in getting the school education. He enquired about me and suggested my mother to visit him for details. Accordingly within a fortnight I visited him with my mother. After getting all information about me he guided my mother to approach to appropriate authority at Amravati in respect of my school admission. My mother followed the instructions and see what change happened by the phone call from the authority to concerned schools. That residential school home delivered T.C. to me and I got enrolled in this school directly in 8<sup>th</sup> standard.

Now I came to know that 'Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995' and 'Right to Education Act, 2009' provides me opportunity of un-interrupted education. Government should provide me writer's assistance in examination.

But kindly perceive the people's attitude towards me. They are forcing slavery on me. They are denying education opportunities to me. Children of my age-group seem to have adopted same attitude of elders. Instead of helping me either in going to school or in writing, they used to tease me and run away. Is this type of people's attitude proper?

You must know that I am not alone. More than 10 million children with disabilities in India are living in such slavery situation. Indian people refused British slavery and fought against it. Shall we, the persons with disabilities also have to fight against slavery of our own Indian people? We are also beloved children of our *Bharat Mata*. Brave and heroic. We shall also fight against our own people's unfavourable attitude, if needed. But why to wait for such undesired situation.

When we, the children with disabilities feel that 15<sup>th</sup> August is our day of Independence for all, for you and us, then you will see how our national flag is wavering joyously. The whole world will rejoice our *Bharat Mata*.

Today, while requesting you for this attitudinal change, I say – "Jay Hind!"



(Translated script from original speech delivered in Marathi Language.)

Nikita Ramesh Patil, age 21 years in 2016 AD, is struggling for esteemed life, living with her congenital disability of 80% due to Quadriplegia. She is residing with her parents, younger sister and brother. She is pleased to secure seat in senior college by obtaining 86.68% marks and 65% marks in 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Board examinations respectively. She is preparing for Public Services Commission Examination.

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