

The Other Side: A difference in poverty

Sofya Mehta



'THE OTHER SIDE'

Hi Readers!

I'm Sofya Mehta and every week I will write a short, insightful piece for my column to create a perspective on problems kids don't fully understand. The column explains the importance of acknowledging what happens outside our small community so we know how our world works.

You can write comments about the column and your own opinion of the Other Side.

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A small girl is running across the street. She has an old, and probably stolen, bag, strapped across her frail, thin back. Inside are her belongings - half an apple which is three days old, a Bisleri bottle that she found on the side of the road, and a tiny drawing book that comes with a pencil, a sharpener, and half an eraser. The drawing book was her biggest treasure, but she felt guilty for having it as she stole it from a local vendor. When she finds a safe place to rest, she would draw rough pictures

of her dream self: her getting a home in which to rest and play, a family to comfort her, and especially, an education. She dreamed of going to school and learning something new every day.

But now was not the time to dream, she thought to herself. She has been constantly on the move, worried about being forced into marriage, worried about the scarcity of food and water because she does not know when her next meal will be, and worried about her safety, getting sick with malaria or beaten up. It seems to her that she can no longer run away from these dangers anymore. Her body is too tired to keep up. When will this stop? When will it ever be normal? When can she call a place a home and live there happily? Never, she thought to herself. Never will it be normal and never will it stop. Tears flood her eyes and trickle down her hollow cheeks. She did not deserve this. She did not deserve to suffer and cry every night. As the girl ran across many roads and alleys, she passed a beautiful house with majestic windows and a grand door. The family who there was seated at the dining table. And from an open window, she heard them throw complaints at their servants about the food being served late and tasting bitter.

There are so many bad sides or results of things. For the climate, global warming is wrapping its deadly arms around the Earth. For politics, things may look systematic, but many governments are actually collapsing. For each of us who are fortunate, there are almost as many others who live in poverty. According to Unicef and the World Bank Group, there are globally 385 million kids like this girl, that are in extreme poverty, and they don't know when their next meal is. They are the "other side", and they are not so lucky.

One of the most important things to help them is education. With education, a person can get a proper job, and with a job, they can earn a living. So without education, it's hard to keep a good and healthy life. Education is the one thing we should never complain about because there are millions of kids who want to learn but cannot.

So what can we do? First, we should take every opportunity education provides, and work our hardest. Then we can use our knowledge to help those in need. Also taking the time to understand people from the other side is vital. There are 385 million kids who need our support. We should be thankful for what we have and who we've got and use this advantage to start solving this problem. And this can only happen if you choose to do it.



Written by: Sofya Mehta, a freewheeling 7th-grade student of Woodstock School in Mussoorie. She is an enthusiastic community volunteer and social service participant.