TO MY NANI

Days turned weeks, weeks summed up in months, and still we are clueless how long we will be quarantined. The monster named covid ended endless lives and is still on its rampage to destroy humanity. The harm done during covid is unmatchable. But, we failed to realize that covid gifted us the time and vision, to ‘celebrate’ life and not just ‘live’ it. The gift of time to look around and notice, and to actually take a ‘break’. The time to appreciate the significance of health and family. So, I decided to pen down my feelings for my grandmother.

“Bhalo theko”, my grandmother said before she hung up the phone last Sunday. ’Bhalo theko ’ is a Bengali phrase for ‘take care’ or ‘be well’, but last Sunday it meant much more than that. It left a melancholic taste in my mouth, and the realization that this might be the last time I’m talking to her. Unintentionally and unknowingly, I felt a stream of hot tears rolling down my cheek.

The Bengali word for grandmother is ‘Dida’, but due to my strong influence of Hindi as my second language in school, I call her ‘Nani’. She also calls me nani, I don’t know why. I never question her why she calls me that, I love the way she is. My nani is not very old, though her original birthday is unknown. Maybe the birth of a girl child as the first child in the generation, wasn’t expected or accepted, so my great grandmother decided to not mark the date. The merciless time tested her again and again, to make her weak, of all the tragedies and traumas of her life. Yet she is strong, and weak at the same time.

This covid made me stop visiting my nani for more than 9 months now, and still counting. She protected me from my mother’s unnecessary rage, she bought me the iconic ‘Bangali sandesh’ which is still the trademark of my childhood, and her unconditional love makes me her biggest fan. I still remember her crooked skin, fragile bones, that touch of devotion and her handmade love, which makes me want to run back to her. Yes, I miss her a lot. That inbuilt sweetness in her voice, I don’t remember her ever scolding me. I talk to her nearly every day, but it isn’t enough, I want to see her. Her voice seems to the same everyday, but now a days it seems distinct, and far away. Far away from me, from a place where I can’t go. Her voice seems to fade away into the oblivion.

Maybe I was today-years-old when I realized her importance, the importance of her presence. We all take people for granted, don’t we? Especially the near and dear ones. But it’s too never late to appreciate one’s presence in our life. So yes, I love her today, and might even love her more tomorrow. But I can’t visit her right now, so I have my back plans. So till the covid ends, I have found my own ways by taking advantage of the technology available. I voice call and video call her even thoroughly now, and she seems to appreciate it.