

# Haseena Speaks



**“My father is a labourer. He has never bought a set of new clothes for himself. Not even on Eid,” says 18-year-old Haseena, speaking of how her father always put his children first; prioritising their food, fees and daily transport for school. She remembers feeling jealous of her cousins using WhatsApp and Facebook on their fancy phones, but her father told her she would have to choose between her wants and needs.**

**She speaks fondly of her father but is also aware of his bias towards her brother. “When my friends went for tuitions, I was told we couldn’t afford them. But somehow my brother’s tuitions were paid for. Despite this, I got better marks than everyone. My father was happy and told me I am like a son to him. I asked why him I have to be like a son? Can’t I just be a daughter?”**

**She mentions how most young girls in her village don’t study beyond class V. “People think girls are only good for getting married and having children. Yes, this is one role that women play, but there is a time for everything.”**

**Haseena spent a few years being educated at a madrasa where she learnt a lot about Islam. She began wearing a hijab because she felt it was a good display of religiosity. This changed during the four months she spent at ETASHA. “I learnt many skills here, but more importantly ETASHA changed the way I see the world. I now feel I am religious but modern too and I dress according to the environment of a place,” she says, speaking of why she chose to stop covering her head. “I also used to be very uncomfortable speaking to boys, but I am confident now because I understand what is expected of me in the world of work and I try to do my best.”**

**She now works at Haldiram’s and is happy to be supporting her family and paying for her own education. She wants to be a role model for young people at her village.**



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