

‘No, *Jani*, your treatment is not complete,’ he says, or, ‘These schools are good. You should stay here and gather knowledge so you can use your words powerfully.’

He is right. I want to learn and be trained well with the weapon of knowledge. Then I will be able to fight more effectively for my cause.

Today we all know education is our basic right. Not just in the West; Islam too has given us this right. Islam says every girl and every boy should go to school. In the Quran it is written, God wants us to have knowledge. He wants us to know why the sky is blue and about oceans and stars. I know it’s a big struggle – around the world there are fifty-seven million children who are not in primary school, thirty-two million of them girls. Sadly my own country Pakistan is one of the worst places: 5.1 million children don’t even go to primary school even though in our constitution it says every child has that right. We have almost fifty million illiterate adults, two-thirds of whom are women, like my own mother.

Girls continue to be killed and schools blown up. In March there was an attack on a girls’ school in Karachi that we had visited. A bomb and a grenade were tossed into the school playground just as a prize-giving ceremony was about to start. The headmaster, Abdur Rasheed, was killed and eight children hurt between the ages of five and ten. One eight-year-old was left disabled. When my mother heard the news, she cried and cried. ‘When our children are sleeping we wouldn’t even disturb a hair on their heads,’ she said, ‘but there are people who have guns and shoot them or hurl bombs. They don’t care that their victims are children.’ The most shocking attack was in June in the city of Quetta when a suicide bomber blew up a bus taking forty pupils to their all-girls’ college. Fourteen of them were killed. The wounded were followed to the hospital and some nurses were shot.

It’s not just the Taliban killing children. Sometimes it’s drone attacks, sometimes it’s wars, sometimes it’s hunger. And sometimes it’s their own family. In June two girls my age were murdered in Gilgit, which is a little north of Swat, for posting a video online showing themselves dancing in the rain wearing traditional dress and headscarves. Apparently their own stepbrother shot them.

Today Swat is more peaceful than other places, but there are still military everywhere, four years after they supposedly removed the Taliban. Fazlullah is still on the loose and our bus driver still under house arrest. Our valley, which was once a haven for tourists, is now seen as a place of fear. Foreigners who want to visit have to get a No Objection Certificate from the authorities in Islamabad. Hotels and craft shops are empty. It will be a long time before tourists return.

Over the last year I’ve seen many other places, but my valley remains to me the most beautiful place in the world. I don’t know when I will see it again but I know that I will. I wonder what happened to the mango seed I planted in our garden at Ramadan. I wonder if anyone is watering it so that one day future generations of daughters and sons can enjoy its fruit.

Today I looked at myself in a mirror and thought for a second. Once I had asked God for one or two extra inches in height, but instead he made me as tall as the sky, so high that I could not measure myself. So I offered the hundred *raakat nafl* prayers that I had promised if I grew.

I love my God. I thank my Allah. I talk to him all day. He is the greatest. By giving me this height to reach people, he has also given me great responsibilities. Peace in every home, every street, every village, every country – this is my dream. Education for every boy and every girl in the world. To sit down on a chair and read my books with all my friends at school is my right. To see each and every human being with a smile of happiness is my wish.

I am Malala. My world has changed but I have not.