

The Moment I Lost My Voice

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Have you ever loved a woman from her voice alone without ever having seen her face? This is how relationships for 30 million people in Saudi Arabia work.

For a year I kept wondering why my best friend's girlfriend believed in his love even though he had never seen her face, since the Niqab kept her face hidden. "Along with her magical eyes, what really attracted me was her musical voice," he said. Then after four months of conversations, he finally saw his girlfriend's face for the first time, but still her voice stuck in his mind more than anything else!

When my friend had to travel to the United States for his master's degree, they assured each other they would stay together. However, the time zone was a stumbling block to stay in touch because his sleep time overlapped her breaks from her university where she could call him away from her strict family. She would send him occasional texts of photos of herself, but she could not call. Although he still could see her face, something was missing. Her voice had disappeared, and a love story died.

The bitterness of my best friend's story made me find the secrets of sounds. My life flooded with books and dozens of reading reviews, and I observed that readers should associate with tone as much as with words. As a result, I learned that novels cannot be scientifically analyzed, but they have to be felt by sympathizing with the depths of the author's heart. This perspective has led me to acknowledge that each writer has a personal tone and orientation: if lovers of novels were given an unknown piece from *Life is Elsewhere* (Milan Kundera), they would recognize him automatically from the evocative rhythm of writing.

Realizing that sound plays an essential role in reflecting culture, dignity, and love, I thought, “What if I lost the voice that represents my thoughts?” That is exactly what happened in 2016 when I wrote a passage on Multiculturalism. After a competition with 14,000 readers, I reached the list of 40 qualified to be among the ten speakers to deliver their concepts on a major stage. During the first rehearsals, I was terrified and put the microphone aside, sneaking from the stage while tears raced down my cheeks. I lost hope and thought only about my parents and three beautiful sisters who waited for me on the other side of the country, 1,400 Kilometers away. Then, gathering my courage, I forced myself back to the stage again, but now with more than 2,000 in the audience.

Crying in front of my competitors brought me to realize the real challenge is not to defeat others, but understand and master the self until the best comes out. Fate gave another opportunity to speak about my experience in reading in “I-inspire Talks” in front of 4,000 people. At the end of the event, I was astonished to see a woman turning toward me with tears staining her Niqab. The tears signified the reflection of my words on her love for reading and writing—she was young and wished she would have more opportunities to achieve her dreams.

During my press work, I have become acquainted with the meaning of not being heard every time the editor-in-chief rejects a report because it conflicts the newspaper’s policy or style. However, I discovered that my voice will remain audible as long as it is dedicated to speaking to people’s hearts. The real achievement is not in greatness of the theater on which I stand, or the importance of the newspaper I write in, rather in hearts which have been inspired: whether in a café, bar, or even a nook where one of the homeless reads a book while a boy beside him begs his father to buy it.