



Let no one snatch their joys

Sonika was back to her parents' home when monsoon started. Her friend Latika was very happy. Although both were of same age, Sonika was married off as her grandmother wished her marriage to take place before her death. It was not new in their village. For ages they had been following this tradition of marrying children early. Latika's parents were against this system of child marriage. Latika could continue her studies whereas Sonika had become a responsible daughter-in-law and wife. During monsoon all married women visit their parents so did Sonika. She was blushing to see

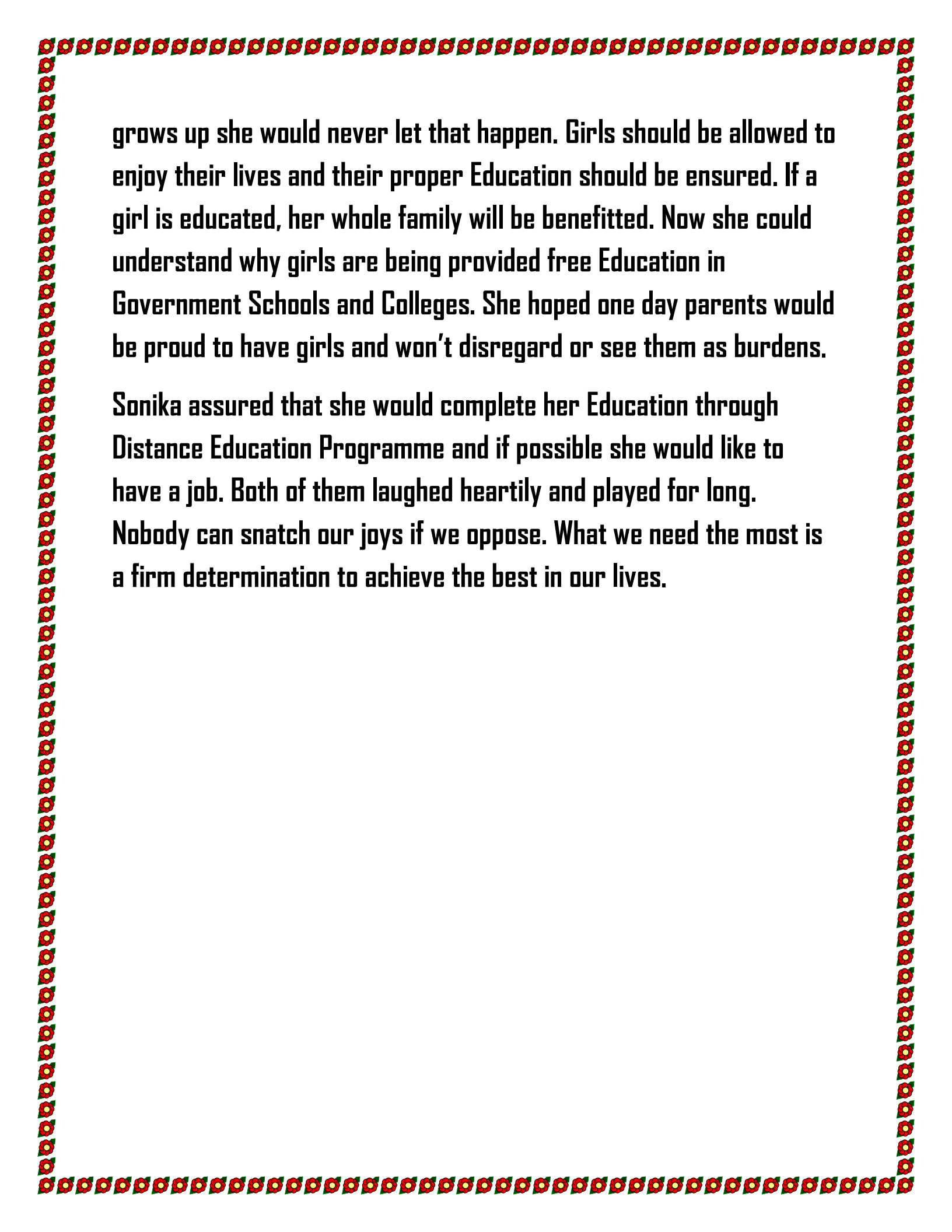
people of her village. Latika hugged her tight. Sonika had been a bright student in School and her teachers wanted her to continue her studies further but her in-laws refused saying that they won't allow her to take a job in future so there was no need of education. For a girl family's responsibilities are the main duties and for a respected family a working woman is a shame.

Latika was curious to know what does in-laws home look like, so she had to investigate a lot. But as Sonika was tired, she left her.

Next day, after School Latika went straight to Sonika's house. The weather was pleasant so they came out to play. Latika saw that her friend has grown weak and that childish look is missing on her face that used to be.

On enquiring, Sonika told her that in-laws expect a lot from her. She woke up early in the morning and worked till late night. In her parents' home she used to be carefree but it was not the case there. Everybody asked her to do this thing or that. She told Latika that she was lucky to have such affectionate parents.

There were tears in Sonika's eyes that told the whole story. Latika was wondering why elders become so indifferent to their own children. Child Marriage has been prohibited by Government still people are disobeying the laws. There is so much protest but a few cases like this one put us to shame. She resolved that when she



grows up she would never let that happen. Girls should be allowed to enjoy their lives and their proper Education should be ensured. If a girl is educated, her whole family will be benefitted. Now she could understand why girls are being provided free Education in Government Schools and Colleges. She hoped one day parents would be proud to have girls and won't disregard or see them as burdens.

Sonika assured that she would complete her Education through Distance Education Programme and if possible she would like to have a job. Both of them laughed heartily and played for long. Nobody can snatch our joys if we oppose. What we need the most is a firm determination to achieve the best in our lives.