The liberty to act - truly independent

Shayera Moula

PERHAPS impiety itself varies from location to location. For instance, a female smoker in Gulshan would not be as grotesquely judged anymore as one standing near the outskirts of Rampura. Not that I am a fan of puffing cancer, but this example shows that there is a division of culture within THE culture.

What is culture anyway? The way of life practiced by the mass of a geographical location, perhaps? Ah yes, abiding by that definition, maybe I can suggest the culture of a well known place in Dhaka:

Location: New Market (50 years old at least!)

The Culture: 100 % Deshi

It all starts with the very ride to New Market. A set of colloquial rudiments rubs on to you and so whenever you bump into a second hand car, whopping multicolored buses or underrated rickshaws with overrated pullers, a wonderful list of charismatic insults suddenly flourish around you.

Through the battering rays of sunlight you suddenly realize that your rickshaw puller has a much bigger vocabulary in this context than you will ever know! With an audience from all ages and genders around, you realize this isn't any PG rated drama. It is in fact the real deal with the rickshaw puller (the guy who understands all the sides of the roads as well as his bathroom) and the rich second-hand car owner on the other end (who understands bribery as the only way to afford a car you can decide which is worst!).

After some harsh exchange of melodrama, everyone gets back to their vehicles as they race pass the green light, overtaking whoever they please and giving the death glare to any new comer on the streets who wants to maintain 'proper order'. Who needs a regulated system when you can have the independence to even ride backwards?

Once you have reached the place, lift up your kameez, pants and saree's a little while waking. Stepping on various questionable items on the street can ruin your appetite afterwards! Spit scattered like rain drops can also be slippery so watch your step! It is not a disgraceful act, because after all one is not only clearing his throat and maintaining inner hygiene, but also they are exercising the independence to leave marks behind wherever they go.

Finally, for the women who plan to shop cheap, remember there is another prize to pay. With the liberty to use one's visual sense, you will always find a few pairs of eyes following your every move! The vocals start playing their part after some time as different love songs start pouring in from viewers on the roadside or sometimes even the shop keepers. These songs remind you of oversized actors dancing in the rain but then again laughing at the thought doesn't really help. If your road side Michael Jackson finds you responding to the song with mirth, you will be compelled to listen to the entire album! Even so, he has the independence to sing as loud as he wants and honestly, just because you are a female doesn't mean you can't sing on the roads to the passersby...it however means that you have a life!

Nevertheless, do try to avoid the "pinching pinchersons" on your way out. They don't travel independently but their actions are wholly self-regulating. They usually walk in opposite directions. Suddenly their hand twitters with uncontrollable irritation and 'ouch'...the minute you turn around, to see who it was, they have disappeared into the mooing crowd. If you complain, people will smile at you with glee and if you don't complain then your face will turn into a tomato with raging anger and embarrassment both of which you have to swallow in big gulps.

And so the journey ends and you return home. With this close encounter with a new culture that is just roads away from your home, you suddenly question the state of your independence. You find yourself more secure at home and wonder about the level of insecurity these people on the streets must have, for them to project their presence with such perverted actions and no personality!

In any case, there is no law against any of the things mentioned above so technically we all have the liberty to do whatever the culture permits. If it permits insulting others, flirting openly and considering every corner of the street to be a toilet, then all I can say is that we are actually very much independent. No doubt about it. Treasure the civilization!