

#PERSPECTIVE

The many faces of freedom

The very day I turned 30, I went straight to the bank to relinquish the fixed deposit and buy myself a red sports car. Immediately lowered it, adding in upgraded rims, and mounting a screen so that I could listen to my 'all-time favourite' rock bands while driving through the chaotic Dhaka streets.

Most people called it **midlife crisis**, I called it the freedom to do anything I wanted to. Freedom to do anything that made sense and yet was not possible earlier, all because I could not master enough courage to pursue what my heart bled for — a little bit of insanity.

Another friend, let's call her Maliha, despite being a high-flyer in the fields of law, one fine day left everything behind to promote solely the education for the girl child in her hometown. Apart from her new line of work, today, she spends most of her time encouraging youngsters to pursue their lifelong dreams — be it chasing a certain profession or rekindling a relationship gone sour.

Why? Because to Maliha, trailing what she deeply believes in, is almost synonymous with the ultimate freedom — being happy from the inner depths of her soul.

The next story is of my neighbour, Samiha — a single parent raising her 7-year-old daughter, Iliana. Over the last few years, Samiha has become more of a friend to me and because of the nature of our relationship, she has been able to repeatedly complain about how her daughter was being deprived of 'true' freedom, by which she meant the little one was cooped up in a rather small classroom during the day and later confined to their 1000 square feet apartment with nothing much to do but play with plastic dolls and being exposed to unhealthy levels of screen time.

Her only connection with the outside world seemed to be when she looked out of the rather restricted veranda to witness all the possibilities that she was missing out on. Simply said, childhood had gone all wrong.

That is exactly when Samiha, decided to take her daughter, off school for a whole one-month period and the duo went travelling throughout the country — learning important life skills like swimming, cycling, and how to manage emotions.

In other words, they both learned to take charge of their lives. In the process, they ultimately acquired the skills to instil confidence and protect both of them from depression and anxiety.

A month later, and to much dismay of Samiha's concerned family members, she returned to town with her little one. This time Iliana was smiling more and made friends easier and did not seem upset and gloomy as before. This act of running away momentarily from chaos and concrete, translated into freedom for my beautiful neighbour and her daughter.

These and many other stories let us believe that freedom exists in many forms, all we have to do is listen closely to our hearts first.

And when we can resonate with our inner feelings, will we be able to discover freedom which can also be translated into peace.

Certain names have been changed in the article to protect their identities.

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Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

In Frame: Mubashshira Kamal Era, Aerial Dancer

