

#PERSPECTIVE

FINDING SERENITY BY THE SEA

A meditation retreat to remember

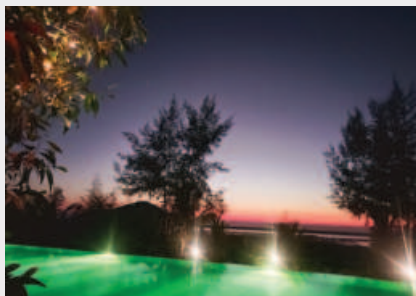
It's hard to imagine while sitting in Dhaka traffic, with horns blaring all around and vehicles both moving and not moving at the same time, that there is a bay out there some 400 kilometres away. Yet, the sea is where I escape to in my mind as I sit through traffic on the way back from work, when my boss says something triggering, or when my co-workers are being judgmental about my life choices.

The sea is my escape. This is all I need and I can hardly relate to friends and colleagues saving up for top-notch destinations. I mean I get the attraction but those places don't pull me like the sea does.

Meditation/yoga/wellness etc. are hot topics in Dhaka right now, and I had heard of these retreats. However, this is the first time I tried something like this. Luckily, I was surrounded by friendly faces, as the retreat was hosted by a place, I frequent — Satori Meditations.

I made it a point not to go on this trip as a tourist but as a traveller or seeker. Sure, I didn't know what I was seeking, maybe it was myself or maybe inner peace. I didn't know, and I considered it a good thing to go in without preconceived notions. Sometimes, we find exactly what we are looking for, only to be disappointed once we get it. On this trip, I was far from disappointed!

We took a morning flight on the first day of the trip. As the plane landed, I got a



great view of the sea and beach, and the stress of city life was already melting away.

The retreat would be taking place at Mermaid Beach Resort and the diet would be vegan. This was a required part of the trip. This doesn't suit everyone as most people want to have barbecued fish at least once on a Cox's Bazar trip.

I am, however, on a journey to discover what I can and can't do without, and I decided that I could do without fish, meat, and dairy for a couple of days. It felt easy but it was not so for everyone, and one participant broke down and had fish on day two. And yes, that, my friends, is a scandalous thing to do on a vegan retreat!

Scandals aside, we had a great time. Old friends joined me on the retreat, and I made new friends too. It's not every day that you get to be surrounded by like-minded people.

On the first day, we didn't do many



activities — we watched the sunset by the pool and participated in a sound bath. I suppose I should try to capture the beauty of the sunset with words, but I don't know if I can. Not that I lack the eloquence or the will to try; it's just that sometimes, words can restrict beauty by trying to define it. And maybe the word limit of this article won't allow a decent attempt. In short, the sunset was breathtaking. At twilight, I sat by the pool and sipped on an orange juice, wondering about the activities of the next day, which did not disappoint.

On the second and main day of the trip, we had a morning meditation. After the meditation, we had breakfast and just relaxed until lunch. Some people relaxed by the pool; others went for a swim, or practiced painting. It was very wholesome.

I, on the other hand, took a nap. I know it sounds a bit boring, but it was

one of the best naps ever and added to my relaxation. After the nap, I joined everyone else for lunch and we headed out on a long drive on the marine drive.

The drive was extremely scenic and as we listened to music and chatted among ourselves, one of the participants commented that it felt like a scene out of the movies and truly, that's exactly how it felt.

After we got back, we had dinner and a short night meditation. A few of us headed to the resort's private beach to sit on swings and do some star gazing while the ocean roared around us. Adding to the magic of the moment was a bonfire set up in a small grove of trees beside us.

On the final day, the day we returned to Dhaka by train, I left the group for a while after breakfast and sat reflecting on the trip. I hadn't gone knowing what I was looking for, but as I sat and pondered, I realised what it was that I had found; acceptance.

The relaxation and meditations by the sea had instilled in me a sense of acceptance towards the world. I found myself accepting the ways of the world, all things good and bad, and this gave me a sense of renewed energy and I looked forward to going back to my ordinary life, feeling quite extraordinary indeed.

By Proma Gulshan

