

FREEDOM without **DISCIPLINE**
is more of a curse than a **BOON**

The Albert Barrow Memorial All India Inter School

CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION 2013



Council For The Indian School
Certificate Examinations

Albert Barrow
1918-1990



Foreword



The Albert Barrow All India Inter School Creative Writing Competition was initiated by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations as an effort to showcase the creative and linguistic talents of the children under our care. Over the years the competition has only done us proud as we have unearthed rare talents from among the students. This year's topic "Freedom Without Discipline is more of a Curse than a Boon" highlights one of the greatest challenges facing education today. On the one hand, we are faced with a strident demand for freedom in all the spheres of education and on the other, a realization that growing indiscipline may plunge us into chaos and anarchy. The efforts of our children in both the categories, Classes X and below and Classes XI and XII reveal a surprising maturity and awareness. We at the Council, have also been struck by their felicity of expression and the sheer creativity of their writing. It is with great pride that we bring their best efforts to you.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate and express my deep gratitude to all the Principals and teachers of the affiliated schools for the encouragement and nurturing that they have provided to our fledgling talents. To all those who participated in the competition, I would like to place on record my deep appreciation of their talent. I would also like to wish them all the best for their future endeavours. This compilation is a labour of love of all the officials at the Council office and I laud them on their tireless efforts to make this volume possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerry Arathoon'.





















(Gerry Arathoon)

Chief Executive & Secretary

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**Responsibility is the price
of freedom.**



CATEGORY 1



The Chintels School
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh



AMAN DWIVEDI
Class XII
The Chintels School
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

The Chintels School established in the year 1989 aims to deliver quality education to the denizens of Kanpur. Idyllically situated amidst verdant green surroundings, the school delivers holistic education to its students. The school prides itself on its teaching methodology which is a unique blend of traditional classroom instruction methods and breakthrough technology.

At Chintels, great emphasis is laid on moral education in addition to stress on character building. We nurture young minds and arm them with life – skills so that they are prepared to face the challenges of the future.

BORN FREE BUT IN CHAINS EVERYWHERE

I was born in the mountains of the Cape of Good Hope,
Where the winds blowing through the woods played a soothing tune.

My tribe was a famous one, the invincible Lowankars,
My mother, the princess of the tribe, and my father, the chief hunter.

As I wandered through the forests and valleys, I heard the wind
whispering secrets to the trees.

Their language became mine, their spirit filled my being.

The birds talked to me and the leaves showed me their dance.

The mountains were my shelter through the long nights when
I went hunting,

The boars and bears fell to my sharply angled spear.

My family never lacked food for I brought them enough and
more to spare.

Love, honour, dignity, I had it all,

I would sigh in happiness as I sailed on the mighty Congo as it
wound its way through numerous Drongs.

I sailed far and wide,

Travelled to islands and through seas.

I traded in sheep, wheat barley and rice,

Brought back clothes and goods for my people.

I tamed the wild horses who thundered through the valleys,

My gemmed bridle held firmly in my hands.

I would wander across villages dressed in my sheepskin coat,
with my sharp dagger by my side.

It was a happy life, a content life.

Made happier when I met shy, dark eyed Shaori at the carnival
of villages

And made her my wife.

Like a bolt from the blue they came,

Out of the wild and untamed seas.

The white men descended on our lives so gay!

They came in thousands with queer weapons that blasted fire

Faced with their bolts of lightning, we cowered and ran away.

They raped our women and took us captive

Destroyed our villages and set our homes ablaze.

They stuffed us in the holds of their huge ships and took us
away across the seven seas.

I didn't know where Shaori was, or even our new born son.

They were torn away from me even as I tried to hold on to
them.

Hoping that even through disaster, we would be together.

After months of journeying over wild seas,

We reached an unknown, a strange land.

There were no mountains seas or lakes.

All that the eye could see were plains.

At the town square we were bound in chains and sold to people,
Who poked and pried us as if we were cattle
Overhead, I could see an eagle lazily wheeling
And envied its freedom.

I was taken to a farm and kept in a dark room with twelve others,
As nervous as wild eyed and as silent as I was
I felt like a caged animal, no better,
The masters talked in a language which I didn't understand.
They would make signs which I tried to understand. All day we
worked in the farms for no pay,
And food so meagre that our stomachs grumbled all day.
Every mistake was answered by lashes of the whip by the
overseer.
The white men worshipped Jesus and crossed themselves in
prayer.
But in their eyes I could see Satan at work.
All they craved was money.
And the money was squeezed out of our blood.
Their grand homes rose from the dust of our bones.
In my prayers, I raved and ranted,
At last, tired, spent, I prayed that God would forgive them.

Hope came at last from a man named Abraham, known for his
bravery.
He wanted to end this mockery of justice and free our souls
from slavery
And launched his campaign in the north
The heat of the fire travelled southwards too
Civil War engulfed the nation,
As for justice all right thinking men stood united.
As the armies marched against each other
City after city burnt to ashes.

I was in the fields when the armies marched in.
The handsome Captain, led them in his uniform starched
After aeons I heard kind words and saw a smile on a face that
was not black.
At first the word 'free' did not have any meaning.
I wondered, was he talking to me?

It felt strange to think what I would do with my freedom,
Could I return to my land across the sea?
Where were they my family, my people,
Alive, or dead were they also free?
Some dreams would have to go, I realized.
These dreams were never to be.
My freedom, one with a new meaning, seemed precious
Especially after all the captivity.
What would I do with this freedom? I wondered
What meaning would it have for me?
Could I make a new life, one with grace and dignity.
Only education would do this for me.
I resolved to use this freedom in the best way I could.
Go to school and earn a degree.
And with my hard earned learning, fight for those who are not
free.
Those, the underprivileged, the marginalized, the poor,
Who still find themselves in captivity.
The chains which destroyed my freedom,
Would then be truly thrown away.
Man is born free, he finds himself in chains
But with effort and will these too can be cast away.
Like the phoenix we will rise again and again,
Affirming the right to the freedom of Man.





The Shri Ram School
Aravali, Gurgaon, Haryana



MALHAR BHATTACHARYYA
Class XII
The Shri Ram School
Aravali, Gurgaon, Haryana

Nestled in a green recess amongst tall buildings and the buzz of Gurgaon this educational establishment is dedicated to four core values- pride in one's heritage, integrity, sensitivity and pursuit of excellence which are integrated through co-curricular activities, sports and academic curriculum.

The mission of the school is to provide each student a diverse education in a safe, supportive environment that promotes sound values, self discipline, motivation and excellence in learning. The school joins hands with the parents and community to assist the students in developing skills to become independent and self sufficient adults who will succeed and contribute responsibly in a global community.

I'M AN ADULT NOW AND I DEMAND THE RIGHT TO DO AS I PLEASE

The six o'clock alarm wakes me,
And I sleepwalk to the bathroom.
Another workday to endure;
I can barely keep my eyelids from closing
And yet I would rather be at work
Than be trapped in the merciless affliction of nightmares.
Adulthood has not cured me of my childhood fears.
I browse through a fine selection of formal garb,
Which hang from hangers in my closet.
"Oh, how does it matter?" I snap exasperatedly;
I decide on a "comfy" pair of sweatpants
And next thing I am in a cab,
The driver giving me odd looks through the rearview mirror.
As I sit nonchalantly
But secretly cringing with embarrassment at his silent judgment.
I can do as I please.

Yesterday was my twentieth birthday,
I went out with my friends,
To drink apple martinis and reminisce
Although I secretly craved the warmth of my bed and a mug of cocoa
Later we went shopping
I bought myself some expensive shoes,
The thought of paying this month's rent nagging me
No matter, I say,
I can indulge in my whims.
I am an adult, and,
I shall do as I please.

Tonight on my way home from work,
I pass a music shop selling bass guitars.
The soft pink lights lend an ambience to
An otherwise dilapidated shop front.

I remember, how I had always wanted to learn an instrument
 But the preoccupation of college degrees, counselling, job interviews
 And later, rents and health insurance,
 Buried the childish desires that I had.
 Oh, well, I shall learn to play the guitar some other day.
 After all I am an adult,
 And I can do as I please.

Reaching home,
 I shut the door,
 Its creaking masking my sudden sobs.
 A blackened river,(my "adult mascara") leaves trails down my cheeks.
 As a hundred chores come to mind.
 My apartment is a mess,
 Dirty linen strewn everywhere,
 The sharp smell of stale Chinese takeout,
 Mixing with my aura of self pity and depression.
 The plaster has peeled away in one corner of the ceiling,
 And the linoleum has dirty track marks,
 The single plant which I had brought to liven up the living room.
 Droops wearily on the sill.
 I switch on the T. V. for some company.
 The forced animation of the presenter jars on my nerves.
 All's right in her heaven, not mine,
 The sofa springs creak in protest as I collapse on it,
 My boss' words echoing in my mind.
 Another deadline to be met, another presentation to be made
 Another notch to be marked in my belt.
 If I have to get anywhere in the hierarchy, there is no time to stop and self indulge.
 Wearily I get to my feet,
 Tomorrow is another day,
 Tomorrow, I'll tackle the washing and cleaning.
 Let the mess lie around another day.
 "I am an adult," I say to myself as I wipe away my tear-stained mascara,
 I can do as I please.

I call my mother and cry over the phone.
 She is anything but sympathetic.
 She tells me to snap out of self pity,
 To get a hold on my life, if required, a more satisfying job,
 One that didn't plunge me into a gloomy stupor.
 After all, I am an adult now, she reminds me,
 I had told her that I had it all under control
 And could do as I please.

Lying in bed, the exquisite pointillism of
 New York traffic lights blinking through the windows, I realize
 That I am not twenty years old,

But an amalgamation of the years I have lived.
 Sometimes I am three years old,
 Crying and beating my fists on the floor,
 Finding a strange release and happiness in my tantrum.
 Sometimes, I am fifteen,
 Putting on my make-up
 And talking to school friends.
 My conversation tinged with a strange mix of sarcasm and apathy.
 Sometimes though,
 I am simply broken;
 A twenty year old washout
 With no direction in life but down.

I think of my safe secure, carefree childhood.
 Whole summers spent in the south of France,
 Sunbathing and scuba diving.
 Someone telling me exactly how many sandbags I need
 Someone telling me to record my breathing levels under water
 And telling me not to undo this strap,
 Or that zip
 Things were easier then.
 There was always someone around to take the burden,
 To ease life's path,
 And to help me change direction.
 Someone to care if the smile slipped from my lips,
 Or a frown furrowed my brow.
 Someone to care that my life was not going the way it should
 Who would take my hand and show me the way.
 But then I was not an adult
 Demanding the right, the opportunity, to do as I please.

Today as I fall and scratch myself on the thorns of life,
 "I am an adult," I tell myself,
 I demand the right to do as I please.
 I should be able to choose my direction,
 To make my choices without any hindrance.
 And yet why does my freedom seem a little too free for me?
 I am not an adult, you see
 I am scared and I am lonely,
 My freedom does not seem so exciting any more
 The strident voices around me frighten me
 I feel cornered and afraid.
 I realize that I am stuck in a freefall
 With no direction in life but down.

Am I an adult?
 I ask myself.
 I don't really know.
 But oh, well,
 I demand the right to do as I please,
 And tonight I will cry myself to sleep.



St. James' School
Kolkata, West Bengal



ISHAN AGARWAL
Class XII
St. James' School
Kolkata, West Bengal

The school is administered by a Board of Governors of St. James' School. The school comes under the minorities institutions under the Church of North India, Kolkata Diocese, with a student strength of 2100 and over 72 staff members.

The students of the School participate in various State, National and International extra curricular events that instill in them a spirit of self-confidence and achievement.

In 2007 St. James' School won the prestigious ISA Award under the aegis of the British Council. The School was inducted into the hall of fame by The Telegraph Education Foundation in the Telegraph school awards after winning the award six times.

BORN FREE BUT IN CHAINS EVERYWHERE

Long ages ago,
When our race was young,
When our lives much harsher were,
Our desire for freedom was strong.

Scarcely had cities been built,
Scarcely had the sea been conquered,
But our deeds revealed
The hopes that we had harboured.

And independence every man sought,
Though alas! They sought in vain!
For a time when man should live for another,
Free from hunger and from pain!

And merely to scorn the element's fury,
They were hardly satisfied,
For years they slaved under a tyrant's yoke,
Till the day man-made kings they defied!

And indeed then till now,
Now, the age of democracy-
Man has yearned to breathe free air,
Yet even now, he is hardly free.

For despite many glorious sacrifices,
And innumerable wars waged,
Not a step close to our goal are we,
Having learnt nothing as the world has aged!

Our Freedom is but a mirage.
An idol we worship as pagans did their gods.
Though tyrants and despots have been overthrown
We see now more cruel lords.

For though the chains of slavery,
Democracy's sword had rent apart,
The freedom we gained is an idle boast,
Empty, hollow and meaningless
For man is not free in his heart.

Now different chains bind us,
So dark and fine, they are not even seen.
Yet if we could notice them,
They might remind us,
Of has not yet been.

For freedom eternal is wasted,
On most who inhabit the world,
Many must still be uplifted-

Before the banner of freedom is unfurled.
For men still live in poverty,
Hunger thirst and pain.
Various fears encircle them,
Ignorance still wields its whip,
Men continue to strive in vain.

For the cloud of abject poverty,
Still darkens many a home and face,
How can they dream of liberation,
Lacking food, shelter and a home?

Still many live hand to mouth
They know not in the morning about their evening meal!
Such men can't even dream of freedom,
To fill the stomach, the noblest
Must beg, borrow or even steal.

What a disgrace it is indeed
For man to lose his humanity,
Some men grow rich off the fat of the land
While others live in abject poverty!

We pay lip service to the poor and maimed,
Headlines in the newspapers,
A walk or two held in their name.
However once all the show is over,
They are forgotten, much to our shame.

The chains of dead habit bind us,
Blinding as they ensnare,
Till even the wisest,
Of ever breaking free despair.

And alas we live in prejudice
The various races fight among themselves
Though their children would rather brothers be
They don't understand why wages unreasonable hatred
Except that through history these wars have been waged
Even if we want peace and brotherhood
THEY won't let us be.
It is to their benefit
If in chains of distrust we are tied
Hatred and ignorance begets hatred.
These chains tie us
While others benefit from our misery.

It does sorely grieve the heart to see
Hindu and Muslim youth
Who, as all youth, hope for harmony,
Destroyed by black prejudice
And harbouring hatred which they do not want,
The hopes of yet another generation destroy.

Ours, it is a modern world,
(Ha! Here I repeat what only others say)
The empty words echo and snigger mockingly
"Ancient evils still live to this day"
For even when every town a college has,
And every village has its school,

Still the beast will grow yet stronger,
Let us not be fooled!

Man may harness the very stars,
Our lives we may extend
And live perhaps as the very Gods,
Yet on this we may depend-
That the path which we now walk,
Cannot take us to the freedom that we seek,
With time we may grow wise and strong
Yet in many ways we will still be weak.

If you look at your own society
With eyes made keen by wisdom and reason
The scales of complacency will fall off your eyes
And what you see will make you aware
Our own society
With all its learned and rich
Is still moving in darkness and self interest
And this is what makes our society weak.

Indeed look at this world with bewilderment
At this modern time
Where to speak out is to call for sorrow
And to be different is a crime!

The labour of man is great!
It has helped us to touch the sky
Yet as for those who say that man is free
I declare, indeed they lie!

For though our progress astounds even ourselves,
I must ask you again-
That if we rival the Gods in luxury,
Yet live with hearts constrained, what gain?

All honour lost,
All faith is lost.
The world had deadened man's soul
And now that we know the cost,
We pray, God make us whole!

For hunger thirst and ignorance,
Poverty and pain-
They are born of a single misery,
That resounds in all as a refrain.
I speak of that which blights all freedom,
That mocks our strength, making it weak,
I speak of that which undermines us
It is of human apathy that I speak.

We have forgotten that we gain by giving
To care we have lost the capacity
Alas! That we are not more loving
That for kindness, we have lost the ability.

For this I pray to God above,
Everywhere to do away with these chains
For when everyman looks at his fellows with love,
Only then shall we be able to cast aside the chains which bind us
Only then shall we be truly free!



Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhanian School
Thane, Maharashtra



ARATRIKA CHOUDHURI
Class XII
Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhanian School
Thane, Maharashtra

This school was founded in 1968 by Shri Gopal Krishna Singhanian. With a strength of more than 6450 students the school is situated on 12.5 acre land amidst greens and natural environment allows students to strive for excellence and flourish. True to its motto "offer equal opportunities to all so that they could rise to their fullest potential" the school imparts holistic and experiential learning thus instilling in students the strong moral values and principles. The school owes its accolades in no small measure to its visionary Hon'ble Dr Vijaypat Singhanian.

The school with its entire team of Teachers and Principal firmly believes in pedagogic innovations and in developing a truly global mindset as the school has developed a culture of excellence in sports, cultural activities, international exchange programmes and community outreach with students excelling on the National & International fronts.

BORN FREE BUT IN CHAINS EVERYWHERE

It was a boy.
The doctors caressed the cherubic toes,
The nurses squealed in delight.
She drew him close and whispered,
"I do not know how much time I have left my son,
I am going where you came from.
But always remember,
Your soul is invincible and my love for you eternal."

The pulse dropped, all efforts were futile.
The child grew up without knowing the warmth of a mother's embrace,
The solace found in a fountain of affection.

He grew up in a dystopian world,
Where fathers wasted themselves away in the addiction of alcohol.
Directing vehemence towards the formless clay of his character.

Yet he persevered.
Flying a soaring kite that became the chariot of his dreams.
He wished to be as unfettered as the roaring wind and the gurgling river,

Which meandered through the realm of his Deep Fantasies.
As the stream of his mother's love.

He toiled; delaying gratification,
He indulged in a piece of bread,
Soaked in water,
And persevered.

He earned fancy degrees Magna cum Laude
Grasping every opportunity as if he were
Scavenging for diamonds in the sands.

The world ruthlessly tried to clip his luminous wings.
It drained the last ounce of energy within him
But he transformed its hatred seamlessly into a potent force
That made his every nerve sinew and muscle
Serve their turn long after they were gone. When there was nothing left in him,
Except the will that said "'Hold on"
And hold on he did
Realising the truth of Rousseau's preaching,
That Man was born free but in chains everywhere.
But he had the audacity to dream

He dreamt of building an organization
That advocated the true Trinity of Justice, Liberty and Equality.
A building that would nurture many like him
Whom Destiny had not favoured.
But given the indefatigable to persevere.

The sceptics mocked him and the abuse grew worse.
They cynically proclaimed him to be a born loser for having
dared to dream.
And though they lamented that the world was degenerating
into chaos,
They preferred to couch this anarchy into the Romanticism of
Unpredictability of the World Order.
Impeding anyone like him who dared to illuminate the way.

So they gave him the cement, the wood, the steel and the
stones,
To build his Living dream.
But he didn't realize the ignominy of their hypocrisy
He had trusted the wolf hidden under the skin of the sheep.
And when he walked the last mile
There was a deafening cacophony-
The Building had collapsed.

Chaos ensued, tears flew
Then came the crushing void, the vacancy too loud,
He became the broken man, the epitome of a man whose
dreams had become
A mere figment of his Imagination.

As he wallowed in self pity,
On one ordinary day he saw an ant. Oh yes an ant.
It tried to carry off a sugar cube,
That seemed to huge for his size
He sneered at the attempt
How could it break the natural shackles of its tiny size?
Disillusioned, he didn't realize that he had become a cynic.
He had become one of them.

Yet something deep within his soul stirred.
When the ant finally marched off with its load,
Smartly walking towards its destination.

He laughed, Oh how he laughed!
Deep within he beckoned,
And reined the lashing waves of grief
With indomitable grit and unrelenting passion
For "Rebirthing" his dream
Brick by brick.

This time, he made the glass, he crafted the wood,
Hammered in the last nail,
He bled and bled,
But he refused help.

The cynics watched wide-eyed,
And he laid the foundation of Honesty,

To raise his edifice as an ode to Humanity.
He was branded insane, a rebel.
He became a shunned outcast.

But he wished away the delusional grandeur of empty words,
He became the child of a Day that knew no end
And a Night that knew no beginning.
Consumed by an all encompassing passion
For building the edifice of his dreams.

And then the masterpiece was done.
The skyscraper towered over the rest.
His relentless tenacity, discipline, determination and devotion
Had finally paid off.
The irreplaceable spark within him burned brighter,
When the building was unveiled,
With the blinding light of a thousand Milky Ways.

And lo! he earned the sobriquet of a winner,
A born winner, mind you,
He was lauded as one who triumphed over all odds
His portrait adorned all public places.

But the day he finished, he disappeared.
Some say he was too exhausted
Other declare that it was a conspiracy to deceive the world.
But I like to believe
He went off to the Horizon
And there under a million stars
I can see him laughing
Oh! Such sweet laughter
As the breeze brings him memories
Memories of a mother he had never known and a persevering
ant.
And he realized he was lonely, but not alone.

I like to believe that his victory was a beacon
For all of us to realize
There is an indefatigable spirit within us
That demands that we persevere.
That eggs us on to realize and find solace in
The contentment of our soul.
That teaches us to believe in
The endless possibilities of our mind.
And bring them to reality to achieve
The pinnacle of our endeavours.

He taught me to understand that
Man may be born free but is in chains everywhere
However, it is up to me
To decide how and when to break those chains and emerge free
And so doing, rid the world of all the miseries.
I do not know if the wild untamed Man,
Who had the courage to cast off his chains
Will ever return to be among us.
But of this I am sure,
His spirit is within ME!



Cathedral & John Connon School
Mumbai, Maharashtra



DEVIKA KAPADIA
Class XII
Cathedral & John Connon School
Mumbai, Maharashtra

Standing tall in Mumbai's fort area, the school completes a century and a half of excellence in education in the country. Known to mould traditional values into a contemporary, real world context, the institution prepares the students to embark on a journey of academic as well as personal excellence.

Founded in 1860 the school has imparted the finest education to its students for 153 years. Cultural activities and games are an essential part of the curriculum. Inter House & Inter School debates, dramatics and elocution, team games and individual games promote a sense of loyalty and healthy competition.

BORN FREE BUT IN CHAINS EVERYWHERE

A young eagle perches gently atop a hill. From afar, it seems majestic, surveying the miles of landscape around it with haughty dignity, almost condescension. From afar, it exudes power. However, the wretched eagle is chained, and though it struggles in frustration, it cannot fly. Its majesty is belied by the sheer weight of rusted metal around its delicate legs. Over years the eagle grows into a fine strong creature, and one day, in an act of human kindness, a shepherd boy smashes the bird's constraints. The eagle does not leave its hill, it cannot. Its physical restraints are gone, but its will has been broken. Metal no longer encases its body, but its grip on the creature's mind cannot be shaken.

"Man is born free, but is in chains everywhere." In France, prior to the Revolution, when these words were first said, these chains were tangible physical restrictions, restrictions of expression, of social mobility, of class oppression. The nature of freedom in the modern world has chained. We live in an age of democracy, in an age of increasing "liberties" and rights. We live in an age where each man is granted a voice, a soapbox, and the mobility to reach his goal. We live in what some would say, "a free world."

Yet the echoes of pre- revolution France still resound in our society. In spite of the progress everywhere we turn, we see

men in chains- chains of the mind. For in spite of our newly earned 'freedom', we are still captives. We now have voices, but not the independent thought that would give us something to say. Our blindfolds have been removed, but our eyes have been trained what to see and what to overlook. Our lenses have been tinted; our blinkers firmly set in place. Our minds are controlled by society.

Our freedom is therefore superficial. We have free bodies, but we lack free minds. We are the fledgling eagles, free physically, not mentally, and, we cannot leave our hilltops.

The forces that restrain our minds are ancient. They have existed for centuries moulding and transforming human thought. It is these forces that merge and blur our individual identities, shaping us into minute parts within our massive social whole.

Among the most pervasive of these forces is religion. Religious indoctrination is not a practice restricted to Taliban run Madrasas. It is not the sole weapon of extremists. It happens in every church, mosque and temple, every institution that teaches individuals to accept truth merely because it is written in some holy tome or have been accepted for centuries. The rational, questioning function of the human mind is either gently lullabied or abruptly forced to sleep – it has no place in

organized religion. Individuals who accept their fundamental philosophies and morals unquestioningly are chained, restricted individuals. They sacrifice their individual thought processes at the altar of blind belief. They have been taught to believe and not to think and these people form the collective of the keystones of brainwashed societies.

Another force, particularly in India, is education. In our education system, information is valued over knowledge and understanding, even though rational understanding is the pathway to rational questioning. Our education system teaches us implicit belief- belief in teachers, textbooks, notes and examinations. We are equipped in belief, but in this rapidly changing world, what we truly require is skepticism which will help us to arrive at the truth.

We must challenge the truths that we are presented with in modern India. We must challenge the assumption that corruption is too ingrained in our system to be uprooted. , that women will forever be inferior, that religion or caste dictates the worth of a man. We must challenge, and to challenge, we must be free of all inhibitions.

Yet our system breeds conformists, not individuals. we are frightened to detach ourselves from the all- powerful social

institutions we draw so much from. We may have the right to speak, but we have not been given the courage to do so. We are brainwashed, mass-produced robots and we do not realize it. The freedom that we cherish so greatly- the freedom that we pride ourselves on- is nothing but an illusion.

Yet it need not be so. We have been told that we must think out of the box, but that box has been locked for so many centuries that its keys are rusty. There is hope however. All is not lost. However rusty, the keys are in our possession. We must be brought to the realization that we are our own jailors. There are indeed forces that keep us within our boxes, our cages. We are too timid or afraid to break our chains, or like the eagle we have lost the will to fly. Our captivity seems comfortable and safe to us. However the insurmountable power of individual freedom far exceeds these forces that hold us back. We must have the courage to break away from our mental chains of irrationality, of conformity, of blind belief. We must be unafraid to question, to challenge, to be different, to be individual minds free and unafraid. John Watson once said," My first act of free will shall be the decision to believe in free will."

Let our first act of freedom be to unleash ourselves from the chains that bind us, and to find the courage within ourselves to be free. We are the eagles. Let us spread our wings.





Jasudben M.L. School
Mumbai, Maharashtra



MOHAN VASUDEVAN

Class XII
Jasudben M.L. School
Mumbai, Maharashtra

Jasudben M. L. School was founded in 1979 by Dr. Madhuri Shah an educationist par excellence and a dynamic personality with vision. The school is managed by the Gujarat Research Society a premier registered charitable trust. It provides a synthesis of the best in the culture and traditions of our ancient legacy and the rapidly increasing scientific and technological knowledge of today. The motto of the school for 'Knowledge is adorned by character' best exemplifies the values the school holds dear.

Our endeavour from the beginning has been to develop the 'whole personality' of our children as 'individual excellence' and 'enrichment of each child's personality' is the goal of education.

Sports and games are a vital parts of our programme. The modern facilities and latest technology offered by the school and the innovations introduced have made Jasudben M. L. School one of the premier educational institutions in the city.

I AM AN ADULT NOW AND I DEMAND THE RIGHT TO DO AS I PLEASE

ENTRY#394 Date: 19.7.2013

Today was my fifteenth consecutive day inside my cell- I mean, my room. I'm not grounded, but for some obscure reason, I wish I was. Grounding implies that you went out and did something you weren't supposed to do. Most kids get grounded....because most kids go out.

My name is irrelevant, but my story is not. I have spent the past seven years of life locked up in my house, forbidden from going out. My parents, strangely, are the most loving people on this side of the universe. And It's understandable, they love me, and would hate to see anything bad happen to me. Again.

My involuntary incarceration began the years ago, when I was eight or nine years old. I was playing in the local playground, as I always did, but my friend wanted to play cricket and I wanted to play football. Being as immature as we were, he hit me. Naturally, I hit him back. This went on for a while until both of us were dusty, dirty, bruised and in pain- but laughing. We were friends after all, fights were inevitable.

My parents ever vigilant, ever present soon came to my aid. They rushed me home, bandaged me up, cleaned me, fed me and did everything that normal parents would do. However, it was after that that they retained that nagging suspicion that something would happen to me and that they would not be around to prevent it from happening. It is a noble sentiment and naturally, cannot be faulted. Any decent parents would be scared for their child. But I'm afraid their paranoia only grew when I was twelve years old and had my first minor accident. I was riding my bicycle, when a maniac,(possibly drunk) flew past me in his car. The rear view mirror clipped my front wheel and then my thigh and I remember falling over and losing consciousness.

My parents were there predictably, when I woke up. I had bruised my thigh and had a scrape where I had fallen over. But then on started the rule...no the Commandment, that stated that I would never leave the house again lest something happened to me. In case you are wondering, I did go to school, but in a car with drivers and guards. That was it, back home and

nowhere else. Tutors would come to me, so would films, video games and so on. The world came to me, I could not go out and meet the world. And here I am, seven years later, in the same room in which I had stayed for countless hours and weeks before, and will stay for countless days to come.

How can I hate my parents? They've shown me nothing but love since the day I was born. Admittedly, it was obsessive, selfish, greedy love, but it was love nonetheless. Many people live in this world. Many have never experienced their parents' love. So how can I complain about mine?

On the other hand it has been fifteen consecutive days since I have last felt the sun's rays on my brow. I see the sun everyday through the window in my prison- I mean, room, but it's not the same. It's like the sun is begging me to come out and play and I miserably decline. The last time I went out was when I was sent out under supervision to get bread. The wind was in my hair..... only for a few minutes. But it was magical. And I decided that it was finally time to feel that magic again. At nineteen years of age, it's about time that I went out to see what the world has to offer, good or bad; for better or for worse. It's time, I think.

Entry # 395 Date: 29.7.2013

It's been ten days. Ten days since I confronted my parents. It took me a long time to get through to them. They were a little bit deluded in their love, but that did not give me the right to raise my hand or my voice on either of them. I had to explain to them what I had become. I was legally an adult. A prison cell with two loving jailors was not the appropriate environment

for me. It took them a while to realize that I was not twelve years old anymore, that I was capable of survival in the harshest surroundings. It was hard for them to come to terms with this. But one statement, I think, yanked them out of their seven year inertia:

"I am an adult now. It's time I took my own decisions."

It shook them at first. They were scared. Of course they were. But they were not beyond change. They understood and repented and asked for my forgiveness.

And how could I say no? But for once the choice of making an adult decision- to forgive seven years of loving, doting incarceration- was left solely to me. Once I knew that they did what they did because they loved me, it was an easy decision to make.

So here I am, ten days later, on my first ride in a train, to a close by town where a few of my old friends live. This is not a story of my incarceration (such as it is), or the struggle of a nameless nineteen year old boy. This is a story of freedom. Of personal freedom. Of a person, tied still to his old life, but no more by the manacles of concern; but by happiness and love. It is undeniably a happy ending. But all endings can be happy if you exert your adult choice and right.

This will be my final entry here. As a fully functioning, decision making adult, I am now capable of making my own happy ending. And trust me.

I plan to do just that.





The Frank Anthony Public School
Kolkata, West Bengal



SHREYA BANERJEE
Class XI
The Frank Anthony Public School
Kolkata, West Bengal

The Frank Anthony Public School situated at 171, A. J. C. Bose Road, Kolkata-700014, is a co-educational institution founded in the year 1965 by Mr. Frank Anthony. The school is affiliated to the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, New Delhi. It has classes from nursery to twelve with three streams in Classes XI and XII, with a total strength of 2156 students and 103 staff members. The school administrative body is headed by the Principal, Mr. Ian Theodore Myers. The system of assessment in the junior school is in grades. The middle and senior school has two terms. The school offers various facilities for its students.

BORN FREE BUT IN CHAINS EVERYWHERE

I am unstoppable. I can wash away everything in my way like an all-consuming tidal wave. I am a relentless force, strong enough to tear down huge mountains and barriers. I can bring chaos and rebel against all those who strive to pull me down. I am born free. I can do anything.

But I have been shackled. Heavy chains entwine my soul as they seek to destroy the very qualities which make me what I am. They even threaten to consume the very root of my existence as they grow painfully stronger as time passes by. I am drowning in a dark endless abyss of despair.

I am the voice of millions of adolescents who are on the threshold of adulthood. Why can't I be what I want to be? Why do I have to go through my life with my head bowed due to your whims and wishes? Yes, you look down on me with that derisive sneer on your smug face; you who crush all my dreams without a hint of remorse; I refuse to be dictated by you. I want to live my life my way.

Chauvinistic traditions have been passed down through generations in this male-dominated society. There is some underlying male ego which creates social pressures and dictates budding young minds. A weird conception is that men cannot be poets, writers or artists or pretty much anything that encourages creativity and imagination. And women should

always work at lower positions than men or stay at home and look after their children. All these foolish meaningless "rules" destroy all the aspirations of a million young children.

Now, I want to address my family. I was born in your lap and I drew up in its comfort and safety. You taught me how to understand the world as I listened intently with curiosity and wonder. You made me what I am today and always told me to be a human being in the true sense of the term. But, somewhere along the way, you got lost. You tried to use me to realize your unfulfilled dreams. You threw away my own wishes and pushed me into a rat-race to be the best. Instead of encouraging me, you told me that I was useless and that I would never amount to anything. On top of that you placed so many restrictions on my personal freedom.

I have to follow your orders in what I wear, what I eat, where I go and even whom I roam around with. I cannot stay out even a minute beyond the time dictated by you. I know you are worried: all the horrible news in the papers have made you deeply concerned. But I have to learn what the world out there is like. I have to keep in touch with reality outside your protective cocoon.

This is a message to everyone, who, like me, is struggling to get free, and escape these choking bands – people will try to pull

you down. They can chain you up, they can gag your individuality, and they can even take away the very meaning of your wretched existence. But always remember, they can never tame your spirit. So, fight back, even when it all seems hopeless – and do believe that very end of the road may throw up a new beginning.

Finally, I would like to address all you disbelievers and critics out there. Whether you like it or not, we will lead the world one day. How do you expect us to succeed in carrying on your legacy if you bind us up in various restrictions? Why are you crippling us instead of encouraging us and leading us forward? We are at a vital point of our lives. Adolescence is the time you are supposed to mould us and help us to get ready to take on whatever life throws our way. The flames of determination in my soul are burning low. Years of opposition have reduced them to flickering embers. But I warn you, a single spark can set ablaze the tinder which has been gathering over time.

We don't want to live in a golden cage. We are meant for great things. The whole world is waiting for us. We are the new dawn, bringing new hopes, inspirations and dreams to the desolate people who have lost their will to live. But if you cut off our wings and stubbornly refuse to let us live life our way, we will set the fire of revolution and advancement blazing till it consumes everything in its way and reduces the world as you know it, to crumbling debris. And then, we will create a new world without stupid superstitions, "rules" and chains.

So, let us fly, let us spread our wings and soar high above the clouds. We will touch the sun, fly across the endless seas and reach the zenith of progress. There will be no restrictions- the sky will be the limit. And we the youth, whom you refuse to acknowledge as adults, will take the world to unattained heights of glory.





**Amber Valley Residential School
Chikmagalur, Karnataka**



MEGHANA H R

Class XII

Amber Valley Residential School
Chikmagalur, Karnataka

Amber Valley Residential School situated on a 45-acre pristine campus, in Chikmagalur, Karnataka, has the magnificent bio-diverse Western Ghats forming the backdrop of the school. The semi-rural location is integral in fostering an appreciation for a harmonious co-existence with the natural eco-system. The School's natural surroundings act as an enabler in a lifelong journey of imagination and creativity.

The School provides a challenging, enriching and purposeful learning environment believing that this engages students in maximum learning. To achieve cognizant sensitive, reflective, participate and confident individuals, the school engages its students in holistic, value based self-development through nurturing life skills in an affirmative learning environment.

Vision Statement" All Our Learners Shall Succeed"

I AM AN ADULT NOW AND I DEMAND THE RIGHT TO DO AS I PLEASE

Twenty one years. Twenty one years of nagging, yelling and shouting. Twenty one years of "do this", "do that", and "you never do what you're told." A kid could not sit peacefully in his/ her room without someone telling him/her what to do. It's either going to the store to buy something for the house, or cleaning out our perpetually untidy rooms.. A child can't be forgiven for thinking, "I can't wait to be an adult with my own home and own rules!!" All those nights and days spent hating our parents and teachers, for telling us what to do and what not to do. Well. I'm twenty one now and I'm free to do as I please.

When I say "free to do as I please," I will obviously maintain my limits but I demand the right to do what I want to do. I am not going to bomb some random country or dance on tables at a hotel when I'm restless. I want to do the things that I couldn't as a child. My parents will have finally gotten fed up with telling me what to do. I can dress the way I want to and people can't tell me, "You look too grown up." As an adult, I have the right to wear what I want to within limits of course.





I have the right to be with the people I want to be with. No one can question me or tell me that they'll spoil me or that they're bad company. That bit will be my problem now. If I feel they're fine enough to be with, I'll "chill out" with them.

No more curfews! No more, "you are ten minutes late" and "come back before it gets dark". I'm an adult now and I will be back when I feel like it. I can finally have fun without the disapproving face of an adult spoiling my evenings.

I can watch T.V. till four in the morning. I'll probably end up with a headache the next morning but I'll cherish the freedom of not having an adult frowning at me and switching off the T. V. at an "acceptable" hour. I would be able to watch all the shows and every movie that comes on T.V. at night. Bliss.

Did all this seem a bit extreme to you? Well, I agree that it is an extreme reaction. It's my version of a Utopia without disapproving, dictating adults. I realize of course that I will have to be responsible for my actions. I would probably get the right to do as I please, but I'll have to make a conscious effort to see that it doesn't hurt or adversely affect the people around. For example, I can't talk loudly because I have the right to do so.

At my workplace if I am overloaded with work or if my boss is in a particularly cranky mood, I might have the right to say something about it but again, my protests have to be mature, reasoned ones, not the loud wails or outbursts of an adolescent.

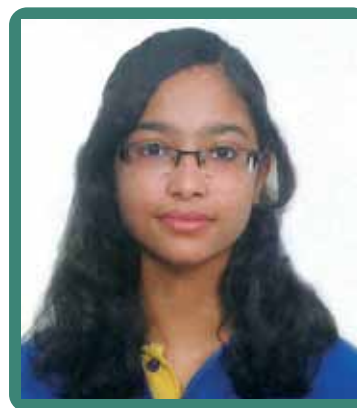
No I am an adult now and my rights bring with them a lot of responsibilities.

Actually, when I state that I "demand the right to do as I please," I mean that I want to do the things that please my soul, not those which will be against the law or the rules set by society. I want to fulfill my wishes and follow my desires. These are the things which a restrictive adult world restrains us youngsters from doing. They have their own logic, I agree. They have their own versions of right and wrong. Unfortunately these do not always tally with mine. Though I would like a guide and mentor, I would at the same time like my freedom. I don't want to be caged up and confined in the wishes and thought processes of another. And I am going to take very good care to ensure that my freedom does not hurt or offend another person to the extent that he wants to shoot me or slap me across the face.

I would like to quote Peter Parker's or Spiderman's uncle, Ben Parker. "With great power comes great responsibility." These words hold a great deal of meaning for me. As an adult I will have power, perhaps not the power to change the world, but the power to direct my own life. I have to use this power with restraint and responsibility so that I don't go astray. I realize that as a young adult I have great power and potentiality within me. If I use this power carefully and intelligently, who knows, I could end up making a difference to the world!



Billabong High International School
Vadodra, Gujarat



TANVI AJAY JOSHI

Class XI

Billabong High International School
Vadodra, Gujarat

Billabong High, Vadodara is one of the 18 Billabong Highs that exist all across India and Maldives. Billabong High's Inspirational Dream is 'To Ignite Human Greatness in growing children and pre-adults by fostering a love of learning, a talent for thinking and respect for hard work.' The genesis of the school philosophy is that all children should be taught not only to make a living but to live a joyous fulfilled life.

The revolutionary curriculum methodology that teachers use in the classroom is developed from research in the fields of neuroscience and energy science. The aim is to develop the brain, heart, spirit and soul of each student. The focus is on equally developing aptitude along with effective attitudes or the correct habits of mind that will lead to success as we gradually exit the information age and enter the conceptual age.

Billabong High Vadodara Playschool to Grade 12 is operated by The Lina Ashar Foundation.

I AM AN ADULT NOW AND I DEMAND THE RIGHT TO DO AS I PLEASE

"Hey! Are you going to Rahul's party tonight? There will be many cute boys!" said my best friend Reena, stressing on the word "boys".

"I'd love to go. But you know how mom feels about parties without parental supervision." I sighed

"Naina, you have to come! Sneak out somehow!"

"Don't worry, I'll ask. Maybe, mom will say yes."

I put down the phone. I knew that Mom would never let me go but what's the harm in asking? I strolled over to the library where my mother was reading an Agatha Christie. My Mom loves crime and mystery novels.

"Oh, Naina, there you are. I wanted to ask whether you would like to come with me to the local bookstore. We can look for a good Psychology reference book for you."

"Gee mom. I actually wanted to ask you if I could go out for a

party tonight with my friends." I held my breath, hoping that she would say yes.

"Who's going? And where's the party? Don't even expect me to say yes if there's no parental supervision."

I knew it. I knew it! "Mom can't I go out this once? Please?" I pleaded.

"No way. Now go and finish your homework."

"Hello, Sweetie! How's my little girl?" said my father as he entered my room. I love him, but it can be a little exasperating the way he treats me as if I'm a five year old.

"You know there's a thing called knocking," I said rolling my eyes

"None of your sass on me, young lady. Now why are you sulking?" said my dad in a stern voice.

"I wanted to go to this awesome party, but mom didn't let me." I said in a sad voice.

"And she is right. You shouldn't go to such parties. What if something happened to you?" Gosh, dad worries so much.

"Nothing would happen Dad. I would go to the party, dance a little, and have a little to drink....." Oh no why did I say that? Dad hates alcohol and hates the idea of my drinking.

"There's absolutely no chance you are going to that party now. Eat your dinner and go to sleep."

"You never allow me to do anything! I'm an adult now, I need some freedom. " I yelled and slammed the door" .

The next day I heard some shocking news at school.

"Guess what? Last night at the party, I and Jay got together again!" Reena said, her eyes sparkling with happiness and her lips widening in a smile.

" Gosh! What if your parents find out?"

"Who's going to tell them? Besides it's my life."

I envied her. If only I could stand up to my parents and tell them that I had the right to take decisions about my life. That day, I made the worst decision of my life. I would become a rebel; disobey my parents in every way possible. I would drink, go to parties, and have a boyfriend, just like Reena. I started that very day. Instead of studying for my exams, I snuck out to my friend Priya's house. Liquor flows freely at her house. I decided to have a sip.

" Come on Naina, Don't take such a long time to have a sip ," teased Priya.

Gathering my courage, I took a hesitant sip and came up sputtering. It tasted terrible.

" Come on, another sip," encouraged Priya....and another...and another...till I was completely drunk. How I reached home I will never know.

"NAINA, what happened? You're drunk!" shrieked my mother.

I winced at her shriek. "Stop it mom, I'm okay," I slurred the words and blacked out.

The next morning I got a huge lecture before I was sent to school. I ignored my parents completely and after school I bought a packet of cigarettes from a local shop. Reena and I smoked two cigarettes each.

"So, our good girl is finally becoming bad," remarked Reena.

Days passed and I continued on my path of disobedience and self destruction. My parents were in a state of shock but I didn't care. They didn't give me freedom. Well now I would take it. Let's see what they could do. Somehow, All that I was doing was not giving me any pleasure. My parents' white anxious face would come back to haunt me and to shut them out I went on an endless orgy of drinking smoking drugs and worse.

This continued till one day, I ended up in hospital. My parents were by my side crying. It was the first time that I had seen my father Cry. But where were my so called friends and my recently acquired boyfriend Neil? I was totally broken, my liver was damaged. Somehow I seemed to have awoken from a stupor into which I had sunk abandoning all dignity and self worth. I apologized for my behavior and broke down weeping. My parents hugged me tightly assuring me that they were always there for me and would never desert me. I had never felt so safe in my life.

Today I stood second in Maharashtra. I have a life, a job waiting for me and a good stable boyfriend whom my parents approve of. Having misused my freedom, I now understand its worth. In the words of the poem "The Road Not Taken", I took the road less travelled by and it has made all the difference in my life.

The Road Not Taken

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sign
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.



Clarence High School
Bangalore, Karnataka



JOANNA KOSHY
Class XII
Clarence High School
Bangalore, Karnataka

Established in 1914 by the missionary brothers, Alfred and Walter Redwood, Clarence High School, with a student strength of 1956 and over 100 staff boasts of a century of exemplary, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual training through ICSE and ISC streams and the department for the specially challenged.

A strictly implemented moral code expressed through a verse from the Bible “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom” is an enduring legacy that has elevated Clarence to a towering moral beacon.

The pursuit of excellence and imparting of knowledge with responsibility is a major thrust at Clarence. The school motto “our utmost for the Highest” is indeed the secret of its ongoing progress.

TOO MUCH FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION CAN RESULT IN EXTREME INDISCIPLINE AND CHAOS

Freedom of expression is a great and valuable gift bestowed on every Indian citizen. As such we Indians, have learnt to take this miraculous freedom that we have been given so freely, as a matter of course. We do not comprehend that it is this very freedom that is the safeguard of our democracy. The liberty to express what we feel and think is the only thing that all human beings have been given in equal measure, irrespective of financial position, age, gender, colour or any other wall that man builds to separate himself from his neighbour. However this privilege of free and untrammelled expression comes with a great deal of responsibility, an aspect that we seem to completely ignore.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” – a manifestly false assertion that children have chanted for years. A stick or a stone might cause a physical injury, fleeting in impact and influence, but a word carrying the weight of thought and reason, can irrevocably affect the most eternal of all created things- the human spirit. And these dangerous weapons, these words, have been carelessly placed in the grasp

of individuals, who have been otherwise kept away from knives and guns. Words have been used to build and inspire, but in many more cases they have been used to rip apart, instead? How can we be certain that in giving the power of speech and expression to a person, that he will not one day turn around and tell someone something that is so cruel and ugly that the effect is worse than death?

On a larger platform, people have used their freedom of expression to topple governments, to start revolutions and in many cases to fuel the spiteful fires of racism and intolerance. We would have been nothing without the freedom of expression, but it is also true that this freedom has been in many cases grossly misused. So, should people be given this right at all? Wouldn't it be best to deny them this responsibility, just as arms are not given to someone not qualified to handle them?

Certainly not. While it is true that the ability to say what one thinks, be it in the intimacy of a private conversation, or the public arena of a newspaper or other media, can, and often does have negative effects; to take away , or even modify this

liberty would open the flood-gates to a storm of evils. Some people say things, or publish things that are destructive, belittling, offensive and even downright stupid, but to deny them the ability to do so would cripple everything that India and most right thinking nations of the world stand for. It would destroy the cause that so many great men died to uphold.

When people speak of the chaos that results from "too much freedom of expression" the question arises "what then, is just enough freedom?" And who gets to decide? Consider the recent political upheavals which have taken place in Egypt. This upheaval was started off by a discontented nation expressing itself on Face book. The revolution was indisciplined. The breaking of the chains that held the people of Egypt captive for years was certainly chaotic. With these considerations in mind, shouldn't the Egyptians have been stopped from starting the uprising by curtailing their freedom? The government should have modified their rights, so that while comments on harmless subjects such as the weather would have been allowed, inflammatory remarks on the political regime certainly would not.

When an individual is denied the right to protest, to complain, to speak of the injustice that he sees around him, he loses all his power to make a change. The ability to make changes so that

a better society, a better world, is created is the greatest gift to humanity. It is the only thing that allows right thinking people to respond to the sorrow, the misery, the wrong doing that they find all around them. When one has lost one's voice, one has lost everything.

In conclusion, the generous dosage of the freedom of expression that we have been given, may result in unfortunate situations that could have been prevented, had some one not made an inflammatory statement or one in bad taste. This is a matter of upbringing, education and a cultivated mind. A truly educated person will take care to make his dissent forceful but not hurtful. It is the right of man to say what he thinks, and his wisdom to do so responsibly. Birds sing, tigers roar, the trees whisper and the stream babbles. Each one is expressing itself. The Egyptians did so by updating their Facebook statuses. If we could not express ourselves we would have nothing left to defend ourselves with. I believe that freedom of expression is like the truth. There can never be too much of it. It cannot be changed or altered for then its very character would be changed. The truth sets us free. The universe was created out of chaos and after chaos there is always order.



**FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION:
A RIGHT AND
A RESPONSIBILITY**



**May we think of freedom,
not as the right to do as we please,
but as the opportunity to do what is right.**

CATEGORY 2



Lokhandwala Foundation School
Mumbai, Maharashtra



ISHIKA CHATTERJEE
Class IX
Lokhandwala Foundation School
Mumbai, Maharashtra

Located at Kandivali in Mumbai, Lokhandwala Foundation School was established in the year 1992 with the vision to impart quality education. The School provides a supportive learning environment that encourages a perfect blend of academic excellence, physical growth, artistic expression and a global outlook. The students of the School participate in various State, National and International level events that instill in them a spirit of self-confidence and achievement. The School strives to prepare its students to be discerning individuals who are sensitive to the needs of society and contribute towards building a better tomorrow.

WHAT FREEDOM MEANS TO ME

Dear Ali,

My dear child, this is your grandmother writing a last letter to you. This unknown illness has won the battle. It was fighting against me and I know that I have only a few days to live. It is a great pity that I am leaving this world without getting to know you better. You are a mere child of four now. When you become eighteen years old, all you will have is a vague, hazy memory of me. If at that time you want to know what your grandmother was like, what were her views and her thoughts, all you will have to do is break open the seal on the envelope in which I enclose this letter, and read.

Last night, I was watching you sleep. You slept so soundly. Not a care in the world, no worry about anything. You looked like you were free from all troubles and sadness. It was then that I realized that you, someday in the future, would need to know the value of freedom so that you could sleep soundly every night....

I was born in 1932 in a country which does not resemble the country that you were born in. It was a country subjugated, terrorized, tortured and ruled by some other country, full of white people. There was nothing called freedom then. Freedom was like this vague concept that our countrymen could not

grasp properly. All that our countrymen wanted was to drive these white people away so that they could call their country their own.

People like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru emerged. These were not ordinary people. They were the ones whom the countrymen of India recognized as God. These gods fought tooth and nail to make India a better and honourable place to live in for the future generations like yours. After a very, very, painful struggle, freedom was achieved. The countrymen of India were delirious with joy. They believed that all of their troubles were going to simply go away and India would emerge as a mighty country, rearmed with her ancient culture, tradition, dignity and freedom.

But this was not what happened. Yes, India did become free but only in one sense; she gained POLITICAL freedom. She was yet to attain the other kinds of freedom. She was yet to be a country whose countrymen's mind was without fear and whose heads were held high. India still had to break the restrictions on education and make it free for all. The people of India still hesitated to speak words from the depths of truth. She still had to strive tirelessly to achieve perfection. She still had to convince the ignorant, illiterate people to step away from the

stagnant and backward superstitions and traditions and to follow the path of reason and logic.

So, was India free from the terrorizing reign of another country? Yes, it was.

But, was India free from the clutches of social backwardness, illiteracy, ignorance and other social evils? No, it was not. Ali, my child, what does freedom mean to you? It probably means breaking free from the disciplining clutches of your mother, running away from school and playing cricket all day long with your friends. You feel as if you are free then.

Freedom is such a subjective notion. For a criminal, it would be to break free from jail and loot a bank. For me, it would be to break free from the clutches of death and live life once more. For a young girl in some small village, freedom means going to a school and gaining an education, so that she earns a respectable livelihood. According to the dictionary, freedom means a situation where one is free to do just what he wants without any force opposing his wishes.

For me, freedom means a lot of different things. When I was thirteen, I ran away from my socially backward village and, through a tiresome struggle, started attending school and learning English. I felt as if I had attained freedom then. When I was twenty-five, I got married to a man of my parent's wishes. This man was an abusive, sexist masochist and I found the strength to file for divorce and break free from him. I felt as if I had attained freedom then. There were lots of instances in my life where I believed I was free.

People say that death answers a lot of life's questions and it is very true. Now that I have lived my life and am about to close my eyes forever, my eyes have opened for one last time and have gained a fresh perspective. I can now clearly see what freedom means....

Freedom is being happy. Freedom is having peace of mind. Freedom is the satisfaction of knowing that one's life was worthwhile. Freedom is loving your country. Freedom is fighting against evil. This is because being happy, peaceful, satisfied and fighting against wrong will make you feel as if you have lived your life the proper way. When you leave this world, you will have no regrets and your minds will be free.

I feel free now that I have lived my life. I can hardly hold the pen now and hence I will stop writing. All I will ask you to do is to give thought to this letter. Try to understand what I have been trying to say. Try to make this country progress and really be free, my child, for this country is not even close to being free. Make India a far better place than it is today.

I now fold this letter and seal it in the envelope. It is going to be kept in your mother's safe and she has been given instructions to give you this letter on your 18th birthday. That will be the last time I will talk to you.

Your loving,
Grandma





**New Millenium School
Bangalore, Karnataka**



ANNA MARIAM CHACKO
Class X
New Millenium School
Bangalore, Karnataka

New Millennium School, Homavaru Agara, Bangalore was established in 1999 by the Sree Saraswati Trust under the dynamic leadership of Geeta Lakshmi, Chairman and Dr. Kishen, Founder Secretary whose vision has been to provide child-centered, value based education in a positively-tuned progressive and secure environment. The secular co-educational institution serves all sections of the society from nursery to class ten and offers a model infrastructure with State of the Art Technology to help students with excellent results. It has 500 students at full strength designed to give clear emphasis on quality and all round development.

The school motto sums it up: The best that I can do, the best that I can be.

WHAT FREEDOM MEANS TO ME

A child was born into this world,
Healthy, happy, alive.
And here begins the story of one
Who lived life as any man should.
His childhood was spent in fun and games
His freedom undenied.
For his right to live was no man's to give
It was his and his alone.

The child grew up into a young man.
His nation was plunged into war.
And this young man, hot-blooded and free
Was ready and anxious to fight.
His bravery helped him fight for his land.
It did not, however, save him from prison
So now we have a sorry situation
With an imprisoned land and an imprisoned man.

But still he continued to wage his war.
Still he refused to give in
And slowly step-by-step, inch-by-inch,
He reached the stand of victory.

And so we see how a man who had
Freedom in his life, kept his freedom
But progressed little
To win freedom for his nation.

Released from prison he was free again,
But this time free in body.
He continued his life as it had once been
Content and happy and free.

Next in this story came family life;
He married and settled down.
To his wife he was a loving husband
To his children a caring father.
Surrounded by friends and family
He had a certain peace of mind
But no man is perfect, and the mistakes of his life
Nagged him far worse than a nagging wife.

He turned to religion and found what he looked for
Forgiveness and something to believe in.
Combined with the peace of knowing he was loved

He now found true freedom of mind.

After a long and eventful life
The man reached the doorstep of Death
There he paused for a minute to reflect
Then on he went.
He reflected on how he was satisfied with life,
How much he had enjoyed living
Now here he was, waiting for the next adventure
For whatever would happen after death.

I will not claim to be this man.
In fact, I am a girl.
I will not claim to know the truth of life
Or what freedom truly means.
But I will say this that I wholly agree
With this man's idea of freedom
With all the facets and sides that are
In the freedom of each person.

Freedom is health and happiness and fun,
It is the knowledge of belonging to a free land,
It is being free to live your own life
Free in body and mind.
Freedom of mind comes from peace in life,
From being loved and giving love.
For his right to live was no man's to give
It was his and his alone.
Finally there is freedom of the soul
Which comes with death.

In short freedom consists of opportunities.
The two greatest opportunities being
Life, which is the opportunity to have everything
Mentioned before, and Death, which is,
In all truth, an opportunity to discover the unknown.
And this is all I have to say,
All my opinions and beliefs.
This is what freedom means to me.

A FREE MAN
IS SOMEONE WHO
FOLLOWS HIS DREAMS
AND TURNS THEM
INTO REALITY



Sophia High School
Bangalore, Karnataka



CHANTAL D'GAMA ROSE
Class X
Sophia High School
Bangalore, Karnataka

Sophia High School, one of the premier institutions of Bangalore, began its journey in the field of education in the year 1949, under the name of the Convent of the Sacred Heart.

What began with 17 children then, has now a strength of nearly 3000 students. The school offers holistic education, developing both intelligent as well as emotional quotient. Notre Dame education rests on four cornerstones- dignity of the teacher, centrality of faith in God, thoroughness of instruction and worth of the student.

The school rears every child on its motto, 'Truth and Universal Love,' fortifying every child to face the world.

ONE EVENING ALONE AT HOME. THE FREEDOM TO DO AS I PLEASE

WILL I BEHAVE AS MY PARENTS EXPECT I WILL?

An empty house. An entire evening alone away from the rest of the world; the same world, which at present, had more evil in it than good; the world which has more troubles and difficulties; the world in which my life was always under someone else's thumb. I had an evening to escape this unfair world. This thought shone bright in my mind and I couldn't help but smile wide like a child who had just received a gift from Santa.

As I stood at my front door, the reluctance with which my parents were leaving me completely alone for the very first time was clear in their voice. But they were compelled to leave in such a hurry. My Mom put forth as many instructions as she could- lock the door, don't leave the house, do a little housework, wash the dishes, tidy your room, etc. She went on for quite some time, talking about how much she trusted me. But it all seemed unimportant to me. It was like a drone that I just kept shutting out. After what seemed like eternity, my parents gave me quick hugs and then shut the door. After that was silence.

The silence was like a call of freedom- freedom to do what my youthful heart desired and what my curious mind pleased. I was cooped up in my house surrounded by four walls. But these blank walls, instead of being signs of restriction, displayed a visage of colourful dreams- my dreams. I felt like a caterpillar that had just broken out to become a butterfly- a free butterfly.

My mind began to wonder. Would I follow it where it went? Would I let my dreams and thoughts control me? Whether I liked it or not, it was going to happen anyway. I was dreaming big. It was as if there was a green signal flashing in my mind telling my thoughts to speed up.

Suddenly, I was snapped back into reality by the sound of the heavy rain falling on my roof and children playing and enjoying themselves. These sounds woke me up from my own fantasy of freedom and almost instantly, it was like there was an invisible force that seemed to drag me outside so that I could enjoy myself just like the free and happy children.

But, I stopped dead in my track. My parent's strict instructions flooded my mind. Why was I feeling so restrained?

I was in a dilemma. Even though I was as free as a bird, my mind, however, felt otherwise. I was rooted. I did a little dance just to make sure there were no ropes around my arms and legs holding me back. No, I was free all right. Then, what was the problem? Twisting and spinning around dancing like a clown, I caught sight of- 'The Cupboard'. It seemed to be glinting like a treasure. All I wanted was to give in to the cupboard's persuasive calls. One step at a time, I made my way towards it, thinking about what my parents could be hiding inside all these years. Just a few more steps and I would soon find out. But this did not happen! As I went closer, the repelling force became stronger and soon I couldn't withstand it any longer. I beat a quick retreat.

What was happening to me? I was supposed to be like a bird,

spreading its wings and taking off but instead I seemed caged up, worse than before. Why wasn't freedom treating me well? Then it struck me. I sat down slowly and began to ponder about what freedom meant to me. First, I wanted the freedom to think- I already had that. Then there was freedom of expression. I had that too, freedom of movement- it was in my possession as well. What was I craving? Why was the rebellion in me trying to breakout?

The idea of freedom that I had had was too mainstreamed and a little overrated. I was trying to look beyond what was in my line of sight. I was asking for something that was not mine to have. That was not what freedom is supposed to be.

My conscience had finally broken through the layers of dirt and wrong thoughts and I decided to do the right thing. So when my parents returned they returned to a spick-and-span house, tidy room and their trustworthy daughter fast asleep in bed. Everyone was happy. Everyone was free.

**freedom is
the right
to be wrong
not the right
to do
WRONG.**

John G. Riefenbaker



Innisfree House School
Bangalore, Karnataka



GAURI M KONANOOR
Class X
Innisfree House School
Bangalore, Karnataka

Innisfree House School, Bangalore is being run by the Bolar Education Trust for the past 26 years on the 9th Cross, J. P. Nagar, II Phase. At Innisfree House School the focus is on the child and his or her individual needs.

“Vasudaiva Kutumbakam” the world is one family - this is the corner stone of the philosophy and commitment of Innisfree House School. The school firmly believes that there is only one race- the human race and we inculcate this belief in all our children.

We stress on the importance of every individual. We believe that all of us have an important role to play in our own way even though we might not all become leaders of National and International importance.

ONE EVENING ALONE AT HOME THE FREEDOM TO DO AS I PLEASE. WILL I BEHAVE AS MY PARENTS EXPECT I WILL?

DISCLAIMER : The poem is merely an adaptation of ‘The Slave’s Dream’ by H.W. Longfellow.

7:00 p.m.

Among the ungathered books I lay,
A pencil in my hand.
My mind was blank, my tangled hair
In a rubber band.
Again in the mist and shadow of sleep,
I pictured La La Land.
I hear the key click into place and turn exactly two times, which
means the door is locked. The gate clanks shut, and the car is
started . My parents **varoom** their car away to the restaurant,
leaving me alone. At home. All on my own.
I should study, right?

Yeah, I should. The history test isn’t going to answer itself, right?
Causes of the Sepoy Mutiny. Doctrine of Lapse. Subsidiary
Alliance....Annexation of...
My phone lights up and buzzes, indicating that I had received a
text message.
“Omigosh, Gauri, Grey and Shepherd just got married !!”
Okay, that gives me two options—study

Or don’t study. What do I do?

One evening alone at home. The freedom to do as I please. Will
I behave as my parents expect I will?

They have given me the freedom to do as I wish. They can’t
possibly believe I will study when I clearly have other better
ways to pass my time. They probably left knowing fully well that
I will not study. This is probably a sign from them, ordering me
not to study.

So why should I study?

I turn on the TV and flip through the channels until I find the
desired one.

I don’t have to feel guilty. Freedom is the right all people have
to be as happy as they can.

Right?

9.00 p.m.

“ Clearly, you don’t know what a cute couple is. Yang and Hunt
are any day cuter than—“

'Ah, you're telling me about cute couples, Gauri? Really? What is wrong with you? Grey and Shepherd are made for each other!'
"Hey, I didn't say they aren't."

"Now you're changing the whole---"

"I was saying that Yang and Hunt are more....made for each other than Grey and --"

"More made for each other. Gauri, at least speak proper English even if you are going to stick to your ridiculous disposition that--"

"God, you're so uptight! Correcting my English and all."

"I'm not uptight. In fact--"

"Besides, people start correcting grammar when they start losing an argument. It's the only defence they have left."

"I'm anything but uptight!"

"No, you're not. Sometimes I wonder how a girl can be so uptight."

"Why can't a girl be uptight?"

"Does this mean you agree that you're uptight?"

"What? No! When did I..."

"You just agreed! I just won the argument!"
Perna hangs up in a fit of desperation.

11.00 p.m.

I sit and wait for the popcorn to finish cooking, wondering if I was doing anything wrong. I go back to my room and try studying, but my mind keeps wandering to the other things I can be doing instead.

Having freedom for a whole night, one keeps wanting more of it. The freedom. The liberty. The happiness. None of the mundane things I have to do everyday.

But in the larger scheme, do I really want this kind of freedom? The kind I have right now?

Getting to watch TV and eat popcorn. All day...Every day...

I guess that's why we have parents. If I was given total freedom, my life would be a wreck.

Then again, I haven't been given total freedom. I'm free for just this one night.

Ting.

The oven beeps, indicating that the popcorn is done.

Well, I have freedom for one night. I guess it's okay to exploit it...

12.00 a.m.

"Honey, we're home. Done studying?"

"Um, yeah...?"





Shikshantar Senior Secondary School
Gurgaon, Haryana



SANYA SHARMA
Class X
Shikshantar Senior Secondary School
Gurgaon, Haryana

Shikshantar began its first school year in April 2003 for Nursery, Kindergarten and Class one. Presently it has a strength of 1100 students from Nursery to Class XII. It is led by a team of experienced progressive educators with emphasis on teacher training and teacher development.

Shikshantar recognises each child as an individual being with her own special set of strengths and talents.

FREEDOM WITHOUT DISCIPLINE TAKES MAN BACK TO THE DAWN OF CIVILISATION

Out of chaos, Ma'at was born.

Order cannot exist if there is no chaos.

Order is discipline.

Order is knowing your limitations and boundaries, and not crossing them.

Order comes in the form of the rising Sun Chariot of Ra, which signifies continuity and timelessness. Without order, the world plunges into the dreary, dark fires of chaos.

I woke up a free man, but there was plague and misery all about. Loot, plunder, crime..... Those are the words you would use to describe what I saw all around me, but back then, at the dawn of the human civilization, it was just your freedom. When the serpent of chaos bit the world with its poison fangs, the ranks of society were altered. He who you call a dishonorable, cruel, or evil human today, was then a king who commanded respect.

When Aphophis resigned, there was nothing to stop Pandora's jar from being unleashed upon the world. The evil of the Seven Deadly Sins went unrecognized. It was all about my wishes, my needs, my wants and my desires. Excuse my uncivil demeanor, but to hell with the world. Why do I need you when I have me,

you know?

Out of chaos, ma' at was born.

Ma' at. Order. There's something magical about the word itself. It brings to mind peace and serenity. It makes me feel calm.

It also chokes me.

I'm dying. My limbs are shackled and long, cold fingers grip my throat and heartlessly squeeze the life out of me. I cannot breathe.

Discipline, you are so harsh.

So rigid, unrelenting, unyielding you are. You don't give me space. Are you better than chaos all by yourself?

You may keep peace and order, so long as the world isn't consumed by flames of fire, but you'll kill us all anyway. Where there is order and no freedom, there is no colour. It's only black and white; rules and laws don't believe in grey. There is no vibrancy, no radiance, no creativity, no expressiveness, no humanity; chaos blurs black and blue and green and pink and a hundred thousand other shades, but order is so very bland.

The point of order is to have the human populace survive, but

what's the point of humanity when there is no freedom or individuality?

Ma'at and chaos.

Discipline and freedom.

Heads and Tails.

There's no difference really. They're two sides of the same coin. They provide stability; they co-exist. Without one, the other will make the world perish.

Today, once again, I woke up a free man, where 'the mind is without fear, and the head is held high.' I can be myself. I am free to do as I please; I can live and learn and love. I can let my true colours shine through.

I live in a world where there is so much I have the power to do, but growing up, I learnt what is possibly the most important lesson of my life from Spider-Man-

"With great power comes great responsibility."

My 'ba', my soul, it lived through the dark ages of Aphophis' rule when humanity had just begun. I do not want to go back there again.

I value my freedom, but I don't want to plunge into disorder again, because it is so inconsiderate and selfish that I don't get the full potential of my rights, and nor does anyone else.

Order exists for a reason. If I had just freedom and no discipline, what would I be today? My passions would burn unfulfilled and I would be discontent. Excess corresponds with a disease, and a disease, if left untreated, kills you?

Where would I be today if I was free but chaotic, undisciplined, disorderly?

I'd be just like a demon fighting for survival.

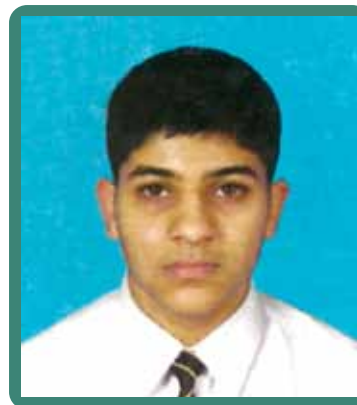
*"True freedom
is impossible
without
a mind made
free by discipline."*

Mortimer J

23 Feb 2013 2:20 pm



Hutchings High School
Pune, Maharashtra



OJAS TOHRA
Class X
Hutchings High School
Pune, Maharashtra

Hutchings High School is an institution which is 135 years old. The school was founded in the year 1879 AD by Miss. Emily Hutchings also fondly known as 'Mama Hutchings'. She was a zealous missionary with a caring nature and great vision. This zeal and vision gave birth to a school which soon took shape in the form of a school for needy and underprivileged girls. Today this institution proudly stands as the 'Hutchings High School'.

Hutchings High School is an ICSE school affiliated to The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, New Delhi and is run under the supervision of the Bombay Regional Conference of the Methodist Church in India which has Classes from Pre-Nursery to XII.

It has become one of the premier institutions of Pune with the School Motto 'Look Up, Lift Up' from where thousands of students have passed out and are spread all over the globe as successful professionals holding various respectable positions in the society and are contributing towards the progress of the society and the onward march of the nation.

WHAT FREEDOM MEANS TO ME

One day the spirits,
Emboldened by time and faith,
Took their leave of Paradise,
To walk far the world of man.

Serene and peaceful,
They stepped into the unknown,
Minds roving, over thoughts;
Such as men knew not.

Flame from Olympus carried down,
The gods watched delighted,
As the word of freedom walked unchained.

Listless had been man in the Dark Ages,

Woe betide. Slavery turned monsters out.
These men thought not about,
The greater forces.
Believed they not the power of the heart and mind.

Master of them, stood armed with a whip,
They feared to appeal.
Terror held them speechless.
Nature's bounties not to enjoy for them.

Little they knew that messengers of peace
Were coming.....

The spirits descended, found a mortal soul,
Weak and bruised,

Teacheth their lessons to him.
The soul revived once more.

"Speak you the truth?" asked the man.
If so I shall move mountain and boulder
To deliver thy message."
And thus, there stood one more;
Ready to beseech the world,
With the lessons of immortality.

Free walked they to those bound by servitude.
Added they a million more.
Pleasant tidings brought the waves,
from afar.

The people thought such as never they had
They dreamt of visions- of love and mystical
majesties as they never had.

The city they had never known existed,
Sprung up from the endless Blue.
Heroes walked its hall from dusk to dawn-
Free and divine.

The spirits their task complete.
Heaven-ward returned.
Men now bathed
In the sun, dreaming golden thoughts.

Freedom then began losing its sheen
A priceless metal-rusting in the winds of time
Walked men past its halo.
Servile once again.

But the spirits had left,
Even God's abode.
The man had to teach himself,
The glory of the knowledge he had
once known.

Far had not freedom gone.
Every now and then a sacred conclave
Would opine about the beautiful maiden
But yet, lost was the fabled
'Myth' of Atlantis.

The road to the truth and freedom
Lies now dark.
Littered with the bodies of
Men who tried to walk
Its unlighted path.

"Shall you attempt to walk the road",
I asked the youth.
"Aye!", replied he.
"But you know that all who tried
Perished, as strong as you were they."

"Ah! But they held not the flame I do
My heart burns with the will to
Seek my true mistress. Immortality-
Not for me, but search I shall
For freedom. Bless me. May the gates
Of her palace be open to me.
And if none else, if I perish,
The fact that I tried, shall ride
Me in a chariot to heaven."

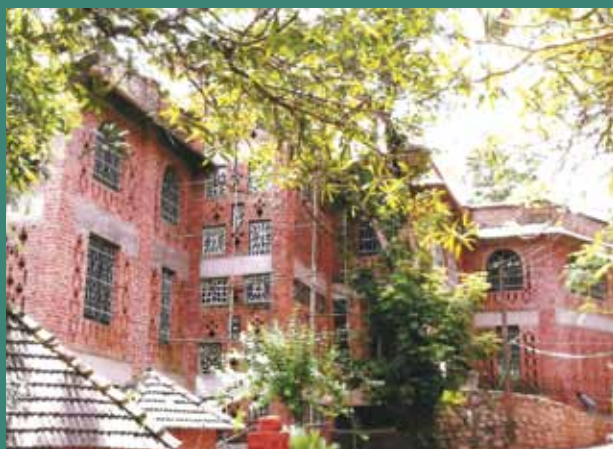
Thus, he spoke and walked on.
No more did he look back.

My back- bent with experience now,
The man, is yet to come home.
My heart's desire-wish I had
Sought out freedom with him.
And thus, the door lies open
And his footsteps I pine for...

Many a day later
The world talked about-
Beauty, love and peace again.
Was it freedom they spoke of?

Ah! The fair lady, although aged
Had returned.

She brought along with her-
All that we had lost.
The strength of life.
The emotion of love.
The world's peace restored.
The youth returned not.
A martyr was he.
But freedom he sent back.
The right, the true, the determined.



Pallikoodam
Kottayam, Kerala



K I JOHN
Class X
Pallikoodam
Kottayam, Kerala

Established in 1967, **Pallikoodam** is a co-educational school that is nestled among the verdant greenery of Kerala. "Think green and be green" is the motto instilled in each child. Solid Waste Management, cleaning the environment and maintaining a zero waste campus are our priorities.

Developing the child's personality through various activities and honing their skills lead to the wholesome development of the individual. They then become happy and responsible citizens of the world.

IF A GENIE GRANTED ME ONE WISH, I WOULD ASK FOR UNLIMITED FREEDOM

"You're fired!" I heard the words ringing in my ears long after the door had slammed shut behind me.

When I was born my heart was not beating. The doctors tried all resuscitation procedures that could be performed on a newborn child, but all were in vain. My limp and lifeless body was handed to my mother. As tears flowed down her cheeks, she held me close to her heart. She was weeping profusely but immediately she heard my soft shallow breathing. She held me up and listened, and sure enough, my heart started beating. The doctors were overjoyed, but no one was as happy as my mother. Somehow the beating of her heart and the feeling of her warmth had brought me back to life. The very tears she was crying out of sadness had turned into tears of joy.

The moment I walked out of my manager's office, I felt as if my heart had stopped once more.

The many years of hard work I had put into my job seemed to be a complete waste because not in any one of those years was I ever appreciated.

As I walked back to my home, with no more tears to cry, I reflected back on my life.

In school I was a very studious child. I always topped the class, but unlike most of the boys in the class, I was not athletic. This led to my being bullied by my classmates, as they told me I was not a man and did not deserve the title. I enjoyed writing stories and poetry, but if ever it was found by someone else, it became a new reason to be teased for. I was always excluded from activities and felt unwanted. At home I would cry everyday because of the hurt I felt within. Even in the mornings when I went to school my eyes would be red, but as usual, no one cared. I was unappreciated for my talent and felt that I had no reason to walk the earth. No matter how hard my life had become I had known that maybe someday, I could make a difference.

After school, college proved to be just the same and some days I would wake up on the college roof with innumerable bruises from the ragging of the night before.

Here I stood once again downtrodden by those I would have laid my life down for. A job that I had my eyes set on since my childhood had just slipped through my fingers. Fresh tears came to my eyes as I entered my home. How was I to pay the bills? How will I carry on with my life? These were the questions that troubled me most. My whole life I had been restricted from

being myself and was always made to stand behind barriers someone else had built for me. I wanted freedom.

Suddenly I heard a voice and slowly a figure began to materialize before me. It was that of a woman draped in a long gown.

She seemed authoritative but somehow portrayed an image of kindness. In a monotonous voice she said, "You have one wish," and with that the figure disappeared.

Without thinking I immediately said, "I wish for unlimited freedom."

There was an explosion of light and then complete darkness. I fell unconscious.

I woke up in a hotel room with an awful headache. I looked around to gather my bearings. The room was fairly large and spacious, but what caught my eye was a table near my bed. On the table was an array of plastic bottles. I inspected them and realized that they were all bottles of non-prescription drugs. All of them were empty. Fear was building up inside me. I ran to the bathroom and looked at the mirror. My face had lost colour and become sallow. I realized that all that was in those bottles was currently in my stomach. At the thought of it I became violently sick and threw up in the toilet. After I had cleaned myself up,

I left the hotel to see my parents. It had been ten days since I lost my job and what had happened in those days was a blank in my memory.

As I left the hotel I was not asked to pay and that is when it dawned on me. I had unlimited freedom. That is what had led me to where I was today. I rushed to my parents' house and as I entered the house my father began shouting at me. He told me that I had turned up at home one day very drunk. He said that Mother and I had got into a heated argument. He said that out of anger at her restrictions I had driven a knife into her. He cried as he told me this, but I stood there without any emotion. Emotion and guilt is what restricts one's freedom and prevents one from doing what one wishes. I had lost all sense of emotion on that fateful day. What was unlimited freedom had become a poison for me. No emotional ties or feelings at all. What I had craved for had led to my downfall. I slowly walked into the kitchen. I could still hear my father shouting in the background. The freedom I had become a restriction and now I wanted more freedom. I wanted freedom from this life. I picked up a knife from the countertop and took my own life.

My heart had stopped beating but this time I did not have a loving mother to save me.

FREEDOM
IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF COMMITMENTS,
BUT THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE--AND COMMIT
MYSELF TO--WHAT IS BEST FOR ME.

PAULO COELHO



Shishuvan English Medium School
Mumbai, Maharashtra



YASHVI GADA
Class IX
Shishuvan English Medium School
Mumbai, Maharashtra

Shishuvan is a cutting-edge English Medium ICSE School, rooted in Indian culture and global in outlook. It was established in 2001 by the Shri Hirji Bhojraj & Sons Cutchi Visha Oswal Jain Chhatralya. Core values of sharing community resources, working with the hands, respecting the environment, and nurturing talent, diversity and cultural differences are inculcated in the students. Subject teaching is integrated within the disciplines of Languages, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science through research, laboratory work, music, dance, art and craft, personal development and sports to create a holistic curriculum. The school promotes regular field visits and co-operative learning in groups.

FREEDOM WITHOUT DISCIPLINE TAKES MAN BACK TO THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION

War had just gotten over. It was a good time to be in Kyoto then. I didn't like war very much. There had been many wars. They had started when I was five years old, and now I was twenty years old—a fully grown woman. Kyoto was a rising country and our king attacked many nations. They said our army was very strong. They said we won most of the wars. I didn't like it. I didn't see the point of war. Why weren't people happy with the little piece of land they had? I lived on around ten feet of land. I never went out to war for more. All my life, I had lived in war. Those were hard times. No food, no water. Curfew at seven o'clock. Some days we weren't allowed to go to school. Some days we were not allowed to go out at all. Some days— the worst of them all— there were big, armed soldiers out on the roads. They used to gun down anybody who stepped onto the roads. The soldiers of Kyoto would come and fight with these soldiers. On the road I used to watch them from my window, hidden behind my light blue curtains. There used to be dead soldiers' heads and limbs on the roads for days, until a big green truck would come and pick them up. I used to die for a little freedom.

Fifteen years of war, and it finally ended. At last we could lead normal lives. By now, I was too old to savour my lost childhood again, but I wished good years in the coming for my children. I

was to be married to a soldier called Samar. He was handsome and tall, and we had met a few times before he left for the capital of Kyoto-Nagari. He was a nice person, and I trusted my parents. As I was thinking about him, I switched on our TV.

It was a small, thick, black and white box that sat on a dusty wooden table. I flicked the channels, though there were very few, till I reached the news channel. The female reporter was standing outside the castle and was saying, 'The soldiers have been sent back to their home towns. The king thanks them for their valour and efforts towards Kyoto. They hereby get a holiday for a week, after which they must return to Nagari.' I couldn't believe my ears. Samar was on his way home. I was beginning to like freedom. After picking up Samar from Nesbot Station, we went out to dinner. There was a new restaurant in town called 'Sahibaan.' There were celebrations everywhere. New clothes, the explosion of fireworks in the night sky, the sound of the crowds, the smell of good food. This was all new to me, and it looked overwhelmingly tempting. I was so excited to start a life full of freedom. That night, Samar and I had lots of fun. We danced, we ate, we sang— we were normal people for one night. It felt beautiful. It felt like I was free.

I woke up late next morning, and it was nearly afternoon. I was

brushing my teeth when I heard my mother call out my name, "SARAI! Come here and listen to what this woman is saying. The woman on TV. She says that the king has been killed! Is this a joke or something, which we old fashioned people don't understand?" I spat out the water in my mouth. "What? The king killed? That is not possible." I hurried to the TV and sat next to my mother. It was true. That woman on the TV, the reporter was explaining how he died. There was a picture of his dead body on the TV. He was lying in a pool of blood, and it looked like he had been shot many times. "No, Mama this is not a joke. Look. The king's dead body. Someone killed the king, Mama." I said softly. I didn't know whether to be sad, or happy. This man had ruined my childhood by going to war all the time. I had no feelings. I felt nothing upon hearing the news of his death.

Later in the evening, I went out to meet Samar. The same happiness I had experienced yesterday had died. There was a different silence in the air today. Somehow, I felt the presence of a wicked mirth in the city. By night, though, the sadness and mourning was gone. Everyone was back to normal in Nesbot. The days passed by fast and now crimes had begun to rise. There was no discipline in the freedom. There were riots and killings. Nobody had the courage to stand up and stop it. This

kind of freedom was not what I had wished for. There was no decorum, no one to organize and look things over, and the situation was turning into one worse than war. I had been attacked by burglars and pickpockets as well. These encounters were becoming more frequent by the day, and walking on the streets of Nesbot was becoming more dangerous and difficult. This kind of freedom was vulgar and disturbing.

I was standing outside my own house one day, waiting for Samar to come over when a burglar cornered me with a gun. Samar reached in time to save me, but the burglar aimed the gun at him instead. He asked me to run, but I wasn't going to leave without him." Go, stupid girl. Leave before I kill you both." The burglar said harshly. "No! This is not right. Just take this and leave us alone. We have not done anything to you." I said pleadingly. My eyes were on the verge of tears by now. The burglar took my wallet, smiled wickedly, and shot Samar. And he shot him one more time, and a final third time. The sound of those gun shots were ringing in my ear as the burglar ran away and I saw Samar fall to the ground with a thud. I was crying by now and I wept on his chest, his blood seeping through my fingers as well. I saw my city as a home for criminals. Nesbot was in ruins, and so was the rest of Kyoto. So much for land, and so much for freedom.

Discipline without
freedom is tyranny;
freedom without
discipline is chaos.



**La Martiniere For Boys
Kolkata, West Bengal**



UJAAN PURAKAYASTHA

Class X
La Martiniere For Boys
Kolkata, West Bengal

Established in 1836 through a Will, of its founder Major General Claude Martin, La Martiniere has been serving the City of Joy and the nation with pride and dignity for over 175 years. Steeped in tradition and heritage, it is not just an institution, it is no less than a second home, providing the perfect environment for one to learn and develop. Academics is always given the highest priority but the school never fails behind when it comes to providing students with a platform to develop as speakers, sportsmen and in general good citizens and members of the society. For La Martiniere-the school motto - **"Labore Etc Constantia"** makes this great institution more than just a centre for education.

FREEDOM WITHOUT DISCIPLINE TAKES MAN BACK TO THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION

"Come in!" I say, knowing very well who has come to meet me. He must have news and possibly vital information. He enters- of course- it has to be him. My partner at work. "Fate", I say, "How are you today?" "Have you exercised your control well enough? Have you exercised your expertise which you claim is hidden between your pages-have you therefore come to give me proper information?"

He replies, "Well, have I ever not gone by what is not within my pages? Everything that has happened, is happening and will happen in the sphere of mortals is all within me, and as usual another day has passed by. I have gone by the book with the most practical diligence and I have served my purpose. Today, however, I do bring news."

"What news?" I ask. "As you know", he replies, "the mortals are progressing. They are inculcating one of us into their grasp and they are using her to discover their roots."

Surprised I say, "But I thought they were far off. Do they have complete control over her now that they will find out EVERYTHING?" "Not yet," said Fate, "After all, we are the cause and the effect. We are the ENDLESS—Knowledge, You and I. They have summoned and used a part of knowledge but they

seem to be running around creating havoc more than anything else. Though they are close, knowledge is neutral in her stance- she believes in her omniscient mind that she can never be controlled."

I reply, "I am enraged. Fate, as you have stated, being the Endless it is important that we establish our permanence: that we stay put and not panic. The mortals are a very basic form of us- much to their own belief, they think they can control us. They have already made this mistake with me; they have called me many names. Chanted, prayed and hoped- they have tried to summon me for their own purposes as well. I, Energy—I am the epitome of creation, the all-encompassing factor and today- they believe they can control, I daresay, even me?"

"The mortals, they have a tool, a tool which they think they can use. Man—the most dangerous of the mortals, though trivial as compared to us, think they themselves have harnessed an Endless."

"Who?" asks Fate, clearly engrossed in our discussion. "Not who. What? That is the question. They believe they invented freedom." "Impossible," replies Fate. "He was banished from the Endless world millennia ago. He cannot have returned."

I smile. "Yes Fate, I know he is your long lost enemy, the only Endless obstructing your flow through the path of time."

"Not is. Was," replies Fate, clearly not very happy on hearing what I had to say. "I shall use that specific word if you wish. As I was saying—the leader of the mortals, the sphere of men have harnessed freedom on a very miniscule scale. Very mistaken in their belief of what freedom actually is. Man thinks he is progressing, through what he calls civilization. Man believes that he can use this miniscule form of freedom to discover and ultimately establish in their minds—the Birth. The history of us. Our roots. I believe they call this unit through which they wish to discover my roots—the God Particle. Ha Ha Ha. What ignorance."

"I do not understand Energy how you can say that man is ignorant if you say that they have harnessed part of freedom and that they are making use of it?" I think, and then I reply, "Tell me, Fate. What is going to happen at the turn of the century—open your pages and tell me." "You know I can't Energy. That is forbidden. I have certain boundaries."

"What stops you?" I ask, clearly having a bit of fun. "Well....." says Fate, struggling for an answer. "I'll tell you what Fate. Discipline. The determinant of flow, the control for ever us—the Endless. This is what the mortals lack—this is why they will always be at the very starting point. On the horizon. At dawn. Never rising. For them, this is where they fail. They do not realize that even we—the controllers of the cause and effect, the ultimate, are

still not worthy of being called "omnipotent". For even we are at the mercy of the determinant—

DISCIPLINE. You, Fate, you as an Endless still exercise discipline. I as Energy follow certain rules. The lower beings, namely the mortals, do not have discipline and this is why whatever their endeavours, however they wish to use even a part of us, like they have tried with knowledge and freedom—the mortals cannot hope to succeed. They will always be back to square one."

"But Energy, man has discipline, or so I think. I will have to consult Knowledge about this"—says Fate.

"I have spoken to Knowledge already. She feels the same. Humans—the so-called 'civilized beings' feel they can use their form of discipline along with the fragments of the Endless and progress. But they do not understand the principles of discipline, the concept of and therefore they will not succeed. Discipline is too powerful to control—it lives in the world of determinants—the highest level known to the Endless. Many say it is at the highest pedestal."

I see Fate smiling slowly; I understand the implications. I say—"Fate. If man controls an Endless like freedom with a determinant like discipline—do not know what can happen?" Fate looks at me, expecting an imminent answer. I reply, "They will rightfully progress through civilization and ultimately—" Fate cuts me off. "Become more powerful than the Endless." "Yes," I reply, "and that is what I fear the most."

Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility. For the person who is unwilling to grow up, the person who does not want to carry his own weight, this is a frightening prospect.

Eleanor Roosevelt



Nasr School
Khairatabad, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh



TANYA MITAL
Class X
Nasr School
Khairatabad, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

Nasr School caters to girl students from the age of three to seventeen. Founded in 1965 with 12 students and 3 staff members, today it caters to more than 3000 students. The motto of the school is Nasrum Minal Lahi Wa Fathum Qareb (With God's help Victory is near).

Nasr School aims to provide holistic education of the highest possible standard in an environment that fosters the pursuit of personal and academic excellence. At Nasr School stress is laid upon developing the ability of the students to think creatively and independently, read widely and critically, encouraging them to participate in various extra activities so as to develop their self confidence.

IF A GENIE GRANTED ME ONE WISH

Genies and almost every other magical beings, which are just mere figments of our overactive imaginations, are famous for interrupting our command, instructions or 'wishes' in case of a mistake in pronunciation or intonation. A very minor mistake, but the enchanted creature will take advantage of it and the unlucky [and essentially careless] mortal will find himself in a sticky mess.

Take Bartimaeus, one of my favourite Djinnns for example. He was once summoned by a magician in the middle of an earthquake. The magician, desperate for survival and self-preservation, commanded, "Preserve me!" The next moment he found himself in a vat of pickles, full of the salty preservatives and a few pickles for companions. If Bartimaeus were asked to justify this action he would ask, "How do I preserve a man without adding preservatives?" He had correctly followed orders; the magician was to blame.

So, now, when I find myself face to face with a Genie, who demands that I make my wish, I plan to be very careful and very vigilant. Firstly, let me just give you a brief idea about how I found this generous Genie. I was just cleaning up the subjects for our 'still life' portraits when this Genie appeared out of an antique lamp that had been lying around for ages.

I really wondered if he was just being melodramatic when he said that I was the first person to free him in over a decade. I had just asked one question, "Aren't you supposed to grant me three wishes?" He sneered and replied "It's my wish. Just be grateful I'm granting you one."

Oh boy, wasn't I grateful? This was the perfect opportunity to have anything and everything. Maybe, I'll ask for the whole collection of Rabindranath Tagore's works or a new hull for my laser 4.7. It was just then that my gaze fell on the paper in which I had jotted down, Emmeline Pankhurstin's speech 'Freedom or Death' delivered in Hartford, which I had chosen as my declamation speech.

Just the word 'freedom' made me wonder about all the things I had been denied recently. My arts teacher Mrs. Farooqui had not allowed me to do a city scene. My father stopped me from downloading the 'Grand Theft Auto-Vice City' from the internet. My mother forbade me from using the phone for more than an hour a day. Maybe, I should choose 'ultimate freedom'. It sounds so nice.

I would have to be very articulate about my wish because saying 'I wish for ultimate freedom' is very vague. I would ask for a freedom where I could say whatever I want, to whomever

I want. I would choose to be allowed to make my own choices- good or bad. I want the freedom to roam the world.

Another thought struck me, if I could speak whatever I want, to whom-so-ever I want. I wouldn't be following protocol on many occasions. If I could do whatever I pleased, I would be imposing on other people; taking away their freedom. I already make my own choices. Yes, I take advice but it just influences my final decision. I could roam the world, be whatever I want but it would be so boring to do this alone. And knowing that someone is losing their rights because of my selfish 'freedom', I would never be happy. If I had 'ultimate' freedom and others just had normal freedom, I would most definitely be imposing on them.

This 'ultimate freedom' was not a very good idea. I couldn't ask for this, maybe I should ask for immortality or beauty. At this point the Genie, who is very miserly because he is prepared to grant me just one wish, interrupts and disrupts my train of thought. He says, 'Would you please hurry up? Time, tide and Genies wait for none.'

He had been blabbering all this while but I had ignored him. I felt rather agitated on being interrupted when I was being so mature and philosophical that I said, "I wish you would just be quiet!" He did not speak a word after that. A few moments later I realised my mistake. He glared at me, made a very rude gesture and disappeared with a poof of smoke, back into his lamp.

I howled- I had lost such a good opportunity. Trying to console myself, I thought, well atleast I know what freedom is. As I continued my formally abandoned task of cleaning all the objects, I thought to myself, "Atleast I can still do what I want, whenever I want, however I want so long as my mother agrees without stealing anyone else's freedom."

NOTE- Bartimaeus is a fictional character belonging to Jonathan Stroud. A laser 4.7 is a sail that is used for woman and boys under 18. 'Grand Theft Auto-Vice City' is a violent video game. 'Freedom or Death' is a speech delivered by Emmeline Pankhurstin's in Hartford on November 13, 1913 during the suffragette movement in which women demanded the right to vote.



For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

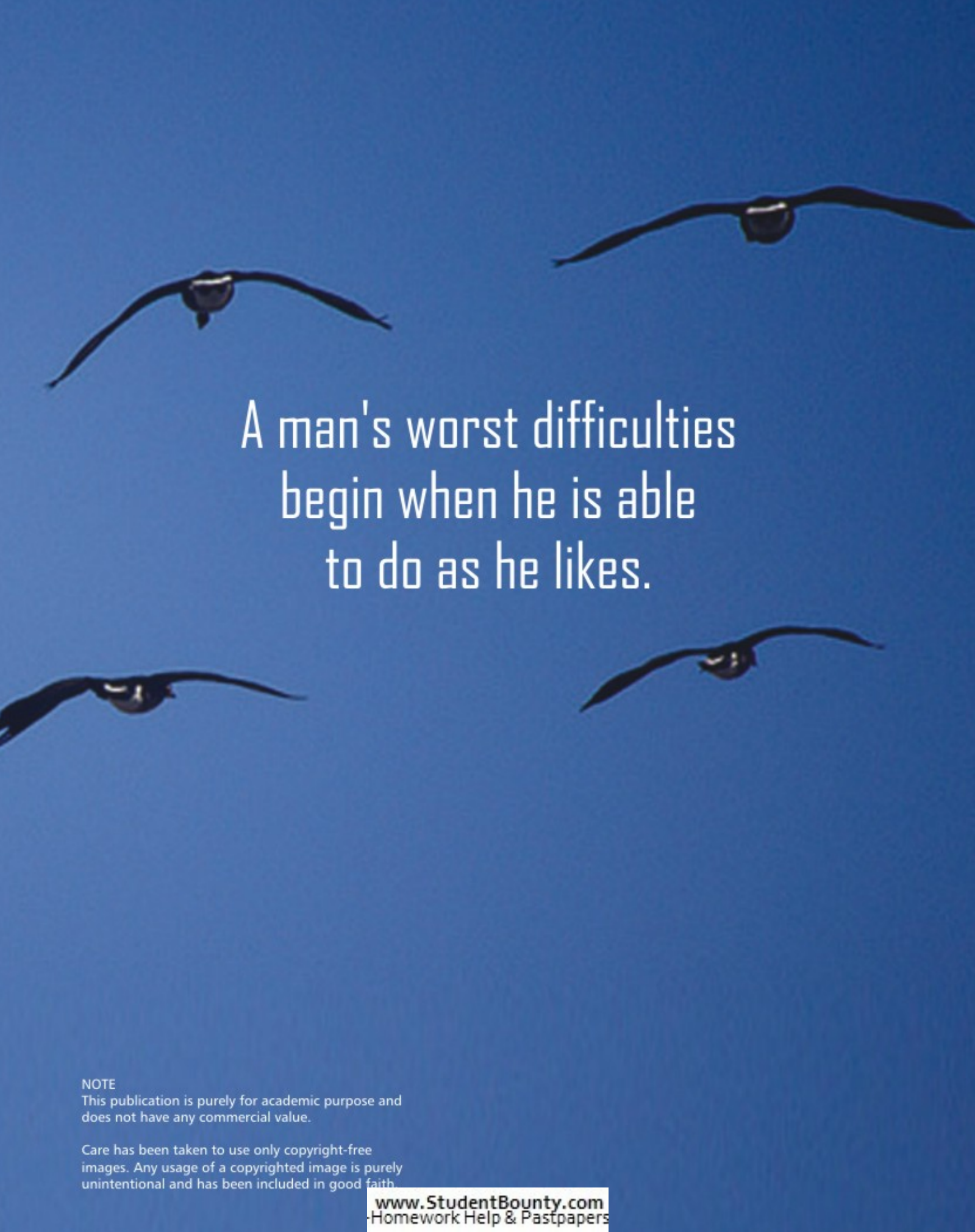
- Nelson Mandela



A photograph of a forest with tall, slender trees. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of green leaves, creating a dappled light effect on the forest floor. The trees are dark, and the leaves are a vibrant green.

**“Seek freedom and
become captive of your desires.
Seek discipline and find
your liberty.”**

**“IF YOU WANT
FREEDOM,
PRACTICE DISCIPLINE,”**

A photograph of four birds in flight against a clear blue sky. The birds are silhouetted, with their wings spread wide. They are positioned at the top left, top right, bottom left, and bottom right of the frame, leaving the center open for text.

A man's worst difficulties
begin when he is able
to do as he likes.

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