

I wanted to make my own decision that would identify me as an individual. When I passed puberty, I had no other identity other than my family; by my family, I emphasised my father. Not that I want to exclude my rooted identity; I want to make it more meaningful and also meaningful for myself.

But, I had to make a life-changing decision once in my life, and I knew there was no going back. I could have lost it all, or I could have won it all.

To jump to the story of my biggest decision till now, let me tell you the background story of it.

I was born and raised in a very cultural environment in Chittagong. By cultural, I mean traditional; it is mostly negative, as I am stating. To emphasise the negativity here, boys my age do not care much about studies- they all have one aim in life: to earn money with a business or by going abroad. On the other hand, my father led a simple life and tried to give his best for our studies; by our, I mean my elder brother and me. My father did not get many opportunities for higher education; his only dream was to blur the negative tradition around us, and he tried his best for the proper education. My mother was the same as him; I used to get basic education from her. I remember the good old days when I used to sit beside her after the Maghrib prayer. She used to teach me basic social sciences and Bangla. I still remember the scent in her room and the darkness of the evening outside our house.

Since I was growing up, my father seemed more concerned about our education. My elder brother was in high school back then, and I was in school. I was a bright student; I had an inborn interest in science. I wanted to learn more about mathematics and physics, and I could solve the problems regarding these two. As I was interested in these two, my father assigned a home tutor for my brother and me, who would teach us mathematics and physics.

I remember the day vividly when I first met my home tutor. He was an average-looking man with average body language. He had no such charismatic nature when someone would gaze upon him. But when I started to be his student, I knew how much potential I was. Not that he always admired my efforts, but I could only understand when I used to look at his face after I solved anything hard. He was not that sincere, but he was that efficient in showing me the path where I had the potential to become an engineer.

Engineer. Studying engineering. That was my ultimate dream. I started cherishing this dream when I entered college—the hardest days of my life.

I could only imagine what would happen if I studied engineering. But I could never examine it because I had no person in front of me studying engineering. As I said, my paternal and maternal sides had fewer people with strong educational backgrounds. I passed my days only by studying, attending college, and attending coaching. I maintained my life well back then, and I was super hard-working. I can still imagine myself when I cross Chawakbazar in Chittagong; I passed my most precious yet hardest time here while I used to study at multiple coaching centres.

I also miss the days when Mahir was with us; Mahir is my maternal cousin who was not so good in terms of studies. Therefore, his parents wanted him to stay with us since my brother and I was attentive to our studies. Mahir no longer lives with us, but I still cherish our days in Chittagong. I used to help him in mathematics and physics; he used to run away from here to there for not studying-he was the complete opposite of us two.

I could never imagine losing in life: in any case. But, higher secondary-level science was more challenging than I imagined. I was highly ambitious and could not think of losing in such hours. But I was losing; I needed to make better grades while preparing for my higher secondary examination. I was hopeless, and nothing could give me hope.

I thought of multiple options for such hours. The only path I could attain by taking the utmost risk was attending the improvement examination. But I knew it would be the hardest decision for my family and me. But I was so anxious that I knew if I sat for my higher secondary examination now, I would not make good grades for engineering preparation.

So I took the initial decision myself. After that, I told my brother and my mother. I still remember their faces with sudden anxiety. We were afraid of how to propose this in front of my father and how he would take this.

The environment was congested with the anxiety of the three of us while proposing that I would again sit for my higher secondary examination after I passed my first one; the second time would consider an improvement examination. We proposed this to my father, who was shocked to hear it. He took a pause and again tried to speak and failed. He was silent; my mother tactfully handled the situation since nobody else could handle his temperament.

My father agreed a few days later. He told me to sit attentively for the first one as much as possible.

Mahir was the person who saw all these in a third-person eye and could take no initiative since he was young. But he used to sit silently beside me while I used to study for my examinations. The person who was not much attentive to his own studies, used to study beside me whenever I was studying.

That somehow hit me harder. Is he supporting me silently?

Everyone supported me while I was studying. My mother used to bring water and food for me; my brother used to buy me things I loved. Though my father was always anxious, he always asked me if I needed anything.

You always get to know people when you are in danger. I was close to my family always, but I got to know them better during my hardest hours.

However, day by day, I started to feel the pressure inside me- the pressure of expectations. I started to witness that my family around me believed me; otherwise, they would never approve of the improvement examination. I felt the pressure, yet I was determined to make sure that they felt proud of me; if not, I would never let them down.

But I felt down sometimes. But I had the hope of something worth coming. Though I sat for my first higher secondary examination, I kept thinking of the improvement examination.

I passed my higher secondary examination well, but I could have done better to qualify for engineering examinations.

After my higher secondary examination, I limited my social gathering as much as possible. All I did was anything related to studying. My wall was filled with papers with written equations of mathematics and physics.

I studied day and night, without looking anywhere.

Despite working this hard, I did not get an A+ in my higher secondary examination. I was shocked, and so were my parents. But we were satisfied that I could sit for the engineering examinations with this grade. I still can not think again about how I passed my hours; I still do not know how to hold my strength back then. But I was determined that my decision would make a difference to my life and the people around me.

I still clearly remember those days when I moved around from one place to another for my admission examinations. I sat for all the admission examinations in Bangladesh and was qualified in most examinations. I remember my father had a huge budget for my examinations: form-fillup, staying, and eating. I never stayed outside of my home for a night, yet, I had to stay away from my home for a week or more during the admission period. I re-examined life when I was passing this phase.

After all the examinations, I was satisfied with how much I tried. Since my aim was engineering, I qualified for the places I wanted, but I chose RUET.

I still remember the day when I qualified for RUET, not the happiest day of my life but the happiest day around my surrounding, my family. A few days later, my relatives and friends told me they saw a poster with my picture in Chawkbazar since I had qualified for RUET. I remember how people's perceptions changed while looking at me after RUET had happened in my life.

My improvement examination was when I suffered for the life I wished to have today. As I stated earlier, I wanted my identity to expand; I love my roots and identity, yet, I wanted it to expand and cherish. My decision has changed my life, teaching me to expand my hope and fight for my worth.

I still go to my father's workplace to help him and pass the roads where I only had suffering. I am the same person with the same past, roots, and identity: only a decision made the difference.