

What is Freedom?

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Last summer, I watched a movie called “The Lady — Aung San Suu Kyi”. I didn’t know about Aun San Suu Kyi until I saw this movie, and I found her life very interesting. There was a line from the movie that particularly stuck in my mind. A soldier told Aun San Suu Kyi, “You are free to choose, madam; your husband and children, or your country.” She answered, “What kind of freedom is that?”

The way in which the soldier used the word “free” was certainly not correct. Both her family and her home country were important and necessary for her, therefore, Aun San Suu Kyi didn’t have the freedom to choose. After hearing her line, I started to wonder: what is “freedom”? The dictionary states that freedom is “the right to do what you want without being controlled or restricted by anyone.” I could understand the words written in the dictionary, but I couldn’t grasp their meaning.

In our lives, there are many kinds of freedom — from freedom of thought, to freedom of religion, to freedom of expression. We also have the right to be free and to act in any way. Some people may understand the meaning of freedom in this way, but we must not forget that there is always some kind of constraint.

At Doshisha Girls’ High School, we students know we have the freedom to wear whichever clothes we choose, insofar that we abide by the school’s restrictions. Our school gives us the restrictions so that we can focus on our studies. However, we’re misunderstanding the meaning of freedom of expression. We don’t have the freedom to break our school rules if we wanted to wear more attractive clothes. We should be satisfied with our situation and feel grateful. Most schools don’t allow students to wear casual clothing. This makes me feel that the importance of freedom is in controlling and understanding ourselves.

In an orchestra, if players played their instruments however they liked,

without paying attention to the conductor, it would become just noise, and not music. Also, when you ride a bicycle, you must go along with traffic rules to have a nice ride. You could possibly hurt someone or yourself. Alternatively, in bicycles or cars, you have a requirement to drive safely. In this way, I think “freedom” always comes with responsibility or requirements. This is why we don’t have the freedom to do just what we like.

While people do have many kinds of freedom, rules for each freedom is necessary. We should not always express ourselves without restrictions, because that attitude can make people around us feel bad. Sometimes many rules and little freedom is a general good, like in an orchestra and with traffic rules. There are also times when freedom is useful and necessary for self growth. At the same time, we should not abuse our freedom by forgetting that freedom always comes with responsibility.