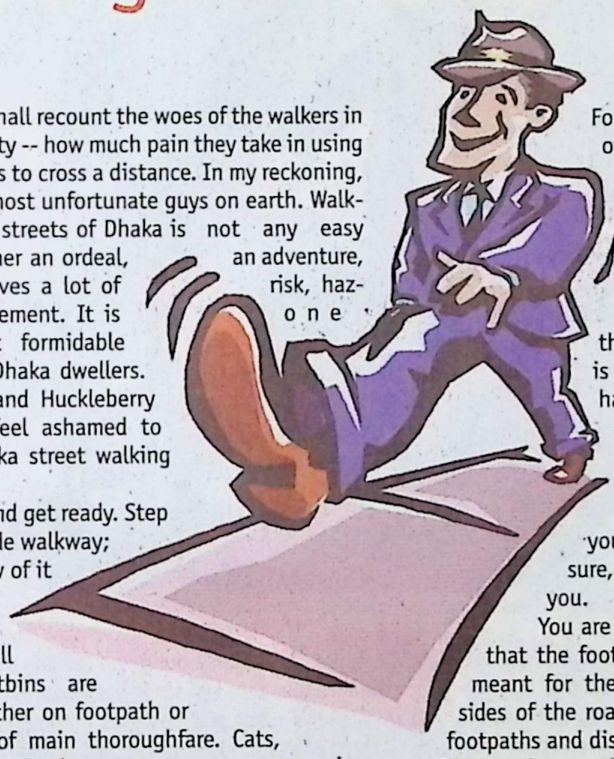
Dhaka Street
Walking Adventure



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TODAY I shall recount the woes of the walkers in Dhaka city -- how much pain they take in using their legs to cross a distance. In my reckoning, they are the most unfortunate guys on earth. Walking down the streets of Dhaka is not any easy task; it is rather an ordeal, an adventure, since it involves a lot of risk, hazard and excitement. It is one of the most formidable jobs for the Dhaka dwellers. Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn would feel ashamed to hear the Dhaka street walking adventure.

Warm up and get ready. Step on the roadside walkway; and what view of it you get first? Filth and dirt is spread all around. Dustbins are wide open either on footpath or on the side of main thoroughfare. Cats, dogs, crows and other scavengers are rummaging through the bins, sprinkling bits about. You shoes trample the garbage lying on the way and carry its trace up to your home or office. Part of the dirt is human waste, solid and liquid, which makes the roadside an open toilet. You may come across the live scene of responding to natural call, frequently, here and there. Stink from old and fresh grime will tickle your nose and you will be bound to say: "Sundar gandha, bhola jai na." (Oh, what a smell!) The utterance will give the walker a psychological relief.

If the sidewalks are smooth and full of greenery, one can walk for hours and for miles, tirelessly, without any boredom. But there is no way. Ninety nine percent footpaths in Dhaka city are in dilapidated condition with holes and bumps, mud and displaced bricks. You can stumble any time and sprain your legs. Somewhere manholes are open to welcome you to its bosom. What an opportunity to wallow in mire and stagnant drain-water. Treading such a rough path -- if you will not call it adventure, then what?

For strolling through the streets of Dhaka, you will have to be a wrestler. So many people will come upon you and clash with you physically that you will feel intimidated. In no way you can avoid the jostle -- the grim face of the bustling crowd. The crowd is sickeningly thick and you have to make your way through it like a mole. If you are strong, you are a hero. If you are weak, there is every possibility for you to swoon. And if you happen to be female, be sure, nobody is more ill-fated than you.

You are a pedestrian, but don't think that the footpath is for you. It is mainly meant for the encroachers. The shops on sides of the roads will occupy part or full of footpaths and display their goods and gadgets. The roaming vendors will also sit on particular locations and entreat the passing passers-by. If a building is under construction, then footpath is the ideal place to pile rod, cement and bricks. You have to hop over them like a mountaineer. Other places you might discover electric or telephone cables hanging over your head. Does it lure you to hang yourself? Resist. You can enjoy a swing like Tarzan in African forest. You get the real taste of an adventure, don't you?

Nowadays bus companies set up ticket booths on footpaths. You may find a long queue on the way waiting for a ride. You have to struggle to break through the queue. When any bus arrives on the street you see the ado. The road is blocked and the sidewalk is choked. You feel helpless. Nudge and knuckle are regular prizes for you in this kind of situation. By the time, beggars approach you for some alms. You feel pity looking at their poor face and dress. As you hunt for your money-bag, alas, you find your pocket has been picked. What a bolt from the blue!