

Do you have any way to move forward? Footpaths are also occupied by the parking cars to impede your marching. You may rebuke the car owners but remember they pay tax for their vehicles, which you do not do as a passer-by. So you mustn't mind their parking. They will entertain you with black smoke, crazy honking and splashing road-water while darting past you. They are the lords of the road. You are worthless. When they are in motion, they will make your heart beat faster. And when they are stationary, they will care to make your walking pace slower.

The rainy season adds to the woes of the adventurous Dhaka walkers. After a moderate downpour, the whole city is a sea. The sewerage lines are clogged and the roads are overflowed. No scope for headway. You have to take off your shoes and fold up your pants. Then wade through the black water, contracting skin disease. If you know how to swim, you get an opportunity to practise it, free. In some places of the city, boats are available so you can enjoy a short cruise.

You can try to take an overpass, if available, to avoid hazard. But that is not safe as well. You mount up the steps through a haze and then you descend on an alien land, haunted by the ghosts of haggard figures. You look around and see the over-bridge has not been cleaned since its commission. The iron frame is rusty and dusty as if they were excavated from the ground centuries back. There is no authority to look after the orphan urban structures, which are dwelled and ruled by only the street urchins and drug abusers.

If you are lucky you reach home or workplace safe. But luck may not favour you all the time. Dangers lurk in every step of your ambling. Running vehicles may hit you. You may slip into the manhole. Or you may be mugged. The rogues just encounter you in broad daylight or darkness and demand your phone, money and whatever you have. You are a pauper in a moment. You may be stripped of your clothes, if not of your skin. Again, if you are lucky, you are not injured or killed by them. If unlucky, you perish. The point is that you have to saunter along the Dhaka streets keeping your life in palm.

So always take the name of Creator when you have to ride your shank's pony in the streets of Dhaka. Walking here is the hell of hell. Only sinners are born and brought here to sustain such pain. I am one of them.

(The writer is Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English, Daffodil International University.)