

FROM PAGE 13

That summer, I started taking driving lessons. And I realised I wasn't that bad. Driving was useful, it got me places. I happily got a license and said goodbye to the public transport system. My mother and I quickly figured out that two people can't drive one car when they are going to different places every day. Once we made this amazing discovery, I started hunting online for a car of my own. I had a ridiculously overpaid part-time job back in those days, and my parents were willing to contribute, so I had an adequate budget for a second-hand hatchback that was manufactured in the past decade in good condition.

I was yet to fall madly in love. I was hoping for a cherry red number, but after a fair bit of searching we found a white Nissan Sunny belonging to a really nice lady in great condition. I packed away my red car dreams for later; an insignificant university student can't aim too high, after all.

When I started driving between home and classes, I came to realise that driving didn't just entail working out how a car works. It definitely helped that I lived in a city which was as buzzing with life as the Sahara desert.

This meant that driving was quite a no-nonsense business, when I had some time to myself. I could choose to focus on just driving, and enjoy the peace that came with it. Or I could turn on some music and wail to my heart's content, with no one around to tell me



to shut up.

I always thought driving long distances would make me sleepy. On the contrary, I remember driving on and on, not minding the time that passed by. If I had the right music with me, I could do it for hours at a stretch.

One of my finest memories with my car was on the 1100 km journey from Gold Coast to Canberra. We started off from Gold Coast at 7am and I had the first shift, so I was left to my own devices: driving and munching on a cinnamon roll while my friends were fast asleep. I set

my iPod to shuffle mode and turned the volume down so as not to disturb them.

For a couple of hours, it was just me, my scratchy voice, and the long stretch of road ahead of me. I was at peace with my own thoughts, there was sweet freedom, the wind was playing with my hair while I got pleasantly surprised every now and then as a much-loved but long-forgotten song started to play.

For me, the driving experience is incomplete without some tunes playing and the window cracked open to let in the fresh air.

My dad jokes that it's because I save petrol money on the air conditioner, stingy as I am. But on this count, Dad, I must assure you that my intentions are innocent.

Saying goodbye to my car when I moved to Bangladesh wasn't easy. The buyer was a teenage girl who had a beaten-down red Corolla with butterfly stickers along the doors and no rims. When she gave me the money and drove away, I felt like a horribly negligent parent giving her baby away to hooligans. I still get traumatised thinking about the condition my precious car must be in now.

Sadly, I find no pleasure in driving in Dhaka. For me, driving was an expression of freedom, a ticket to places, an average speed of 80km/h, a Mac Miller rap that I could sing along to perfection. I can barely turn on the radio while driving in Dhaka, for fear I'll miss hearing someone's horn and hit their vehicle. It's not because I'm conscious about being a female driver; it's more to do with the fact that when I'm behind the wheel in Dhaka I feel quite like a bird stuffed into a cage.

Next time I find myself somewhere with wide-open highways, I am taking full advantage of them. I long for the day I can rent a car, fill my iPod with all my latest favourite songs, and head off somewhere. Till then, I prefer to take the backseat, and reminisce about my good old friend Nissan, my very first car.

By Mehreen Aziz

Model: Aayan Raza, Zamsad

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Pepsodent



3X PROTECTION FROM CAVITY CAUSING GERMS*

TOOTHPASTE



vs



HOURS AFTER BRUSHING







NON-STOP

ATTAAAAACK!

UPTO 12HOURS*

Creative visualization. *Based on scientific study Vs standard fluoridated toothpaste without anti-germ actives. Brush twice daily.