

Gamchha: A Traveler's Best Friend

FATIUL HUQ SUJOY

Apart from the essentials like water, food and basic clothing, *gamchha* tops the list of things that make life easier during travel. To mention a quote I vaguely remember, "A towel *gamchha* is about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker a traveller can have."

First of all, *gamchha* is inexpensive. Whether you're short on money or just a miser by heart, *gamchha* won't hurt your wallet or morale. But that also depends on where you're buying it from. While at wholesale markets they can cost less than half a litre of mineral water, gift shops will quadruple that, twice, and include service charges.

Gamchha is a harmless inclusion to a traveller's backpack as well. It's so fine you can fit it *anywhere*. It's also practically weightless. It itself can be used as a satchel if ever you lose your bag and/or are isolated from human civilisation and have to collect dry fruits to survive.

Its biggest strength is its versatility. Among its many abilities, the most common one and the one it was originally made for is drying oneself. Just bathed in the river that's devoid of any aquatic ecosystem because of fatal contamination or in a lake which is now polluted with your filth? Take a *gamchha* and wipe yourself dry. Sweaty from a day's walk under the scorching sun or a hike up a hill or you're just a fountain in human form? Mop yourself clean with your *gamchha*.

Not just sucking out the external moisture, the opposite is also possible. Let's say you're in an adventurous trek. You're all tired and your body is aching. By sheer fortune you encounter a deep tube well or a pond or a



stream too weak and thin to be called a stream. But you don't have the time to take a nice cold shower? Take out your trusted *gamchha*, dip it in the cold water and you'll get yourself a DIY-*gamchha*-icepack for the rest of the walk. Put it on your head and you'll feel fresh in no time,

and you may also get a fever later on but Napa Extras weren't invented for nothing.

Speaking of putting *gamchha* on your head, it's a great alternative to the umbrella. Covering your head with a *gamchha* shields you from the sun, absorbs the occasional sweat and saves you from probable heat strokes. What it can't do is stop the UV rays from entering your body, mutating your cells and causing cancer. *Gamchha* is no ozone layer. Stop emitting CFCs or use sunscreen, whichever's cheaper.

Gamchha can be used as a quick defence against cold wind as well. If you have swollen, sensitive tonsils or a vulnerable sinus then you know that the sharp winter breeze can prove lethal. In case you defied your mom's orders to pack a "muffler", get your *gamchha* out immediately. Wrap it tightly around your face, covering your mouth, ears and nostrils. While you battle with death, your travelling companions will admire your new look.

And on that note, let's smoothly transition to the last attribute of *gamchha*: their use as a fashion statement. Wrap it around your neck and you're a hipster. Wrap it around your forehead and you're a *shonar chhele*. Wrap it around your whole face while wearing sunglasses and you're either starting your own supremacist group or hiding your ugly face. And let's not forget the sublime checks that adorn the *gamchha*, representing style and the motherland's heritage at the same time. Preserving *gamchha* is our duty as patriots.

Fatiul Huq Sujoy is a tired soul (mostly because of his frail body) who's patiently waiting for Hagrid to appear and tell him, "Ye're a saiyan, lord commander." Suggest him places to travel and food-ventures to take at fb.com/SyedSujoy

Lady Struggles: Dhaka Edition

FARIA KHAN

Roaming around the streets of Dhaka isn't something easy to do. Dodging the traffic, the puddles, and the forever rotting garbage chilling on the road make it even more difficult when you're a female. Listed below are a couple of problems that ladies in Dhaka come across regularly.

HUMIDITY

Going to a party or maybe a meeting? Did your hair all nice? But will it last though? Not unless you spend the entire time in a room blasting cool air from an air conditioner. No matter how much hairspray and how many bobby pins you use, the hairstyle will only last for two hours max, and if you have silky straight hair, best of luck. Moreover, your face will become super shiny with oil seeping out of your pores, so the hour spent in front of the mirror doing your hair and makeup pretty much all goes down the drain. Do you have the patience to fix your hair and makeup every hour, ladies? No? Oh and your dress is drenched in sweat? Well, then there's nothing you can really do about this unfortunate situation.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH A MAN ON THE STREET

First of all, wearing a t-shirt has an effect on certain men similar to a child seeing ice cream – they simply can't stop staring. More often than not, you will feel a filthy hand on your back and when you look back in disgust or anger, you'll see them walking away in the opposite direction; their heads turned 90 degrees towards you, with a dirty smirk on their faces. Recently a friend wearing a white *kameez* with an *orna* covering the front got a comment from a rickshawala, "*shamne dekhi shada duiti phool*". Now, why would someone say that?

THE BIYE ISSUE

"Ki ma school shesh? Eibar bolo tomar biye kobe khabo?" is something girls have to hear way too often from that overly nose-y aunty. Not only that, they feel free to pass comments on your looks, height, skin tone, weight, what not. They seem to lack the brain to mouth filter and don't really worry about the girl's feelings. *Kalo* – no marriage for you. *Forsha* – very pretty.

This is the 21st century. Yes.

