

Important lessons

It is surprising how my only child teaches me life hacks and survival tips I did not know were ever doable on my part. Along with helping me with getting rid of my inhibitions and prejudices, from her I learn to embrace sadness and still be able to smile.

But these are a different chapter of my learnings; I will only stick to life hacks for now.

No matter how broken down my car is I cannot think of commuting without it and carpooling with my not-so better-half makes my daily movement even more difficult than it already is. To simplify, I would just say that I live in Uttara and my work place is in Karwan Bazar; so my fellow Dhakaites can easily comprehend and empathise with my daily woes. Every day is like heading towards Chittagong and back. (In fact with four lane highways, I would reach Chittagong faster than I reach Karwan Bazaar).

Anyway, as if this going to work was not big enough a woe, my after work meetings and catching up with friends are an equally important and --ahem-- harrowing experience. But I must, at any cost, maintain whatever flimsy social life I have.

Thus last weekend after having a great time with my girlfriends I needed to go home; well naturally! But getting a ride became difficult when my always-in-a-combat-mode-other-half refused to wait a little longer for me. For him, weekends are the dogs and not helping stranded-always-on-the-road-wife.

Whatever, I did not bother much because I knew if I call my favourite 'limo-service' and my taxi driver Zahir, he would come to my rescue. However honking through Thursday night traffic even Zahir failed me.

I was still not miserable. I am an independent woman and so I would grab a CNG

or another taxi and go home, after all its just Banani 11 to Uttara; I was already half way home, but availing anything at that ungodly hour called for special commando forces. So my friends called up another friend of ours who also lives in Uttara; luckily she was heading back home. So my problem was solved.

They dropped me off on the main road. I took the escalator Footover Bridge and feeling proud of our city corporation's effort



and humming my new favourite song, I waited at the other side of the road.

Traffic gods around Dhaka city take a break during that time of the week, which I forgot for a split second. My friend who dropped me off gave me anxious calls to take anything home and not wait for my ride, because the entire Mohakhali flyover going upwards was at a standstill.

I was in grand spirits that night and still

humming; in spite of the weird looks I got because a chubby woman in heels at the Banani sidewalks at 8pm was indeed a scene from the Tamil movies script; I tried to hail anything that had wheels.

Just at that moment, like a flashback scene from the movies, I remembered how I was in a similar situation with my baby and who that day just grabbed my hands and hopped on a local bus. (Riding the local bus or getting on a non a/c bus to Mymensingh

and handling the stares from the bus full of people.

The story, I wish ended here, but alas! When the young conductor asked me for the fare, which was Tk.10, I innocently said 'do you have a change for Tk.1000?' He was about to throw me out of the window taking me for a mad woman who ran away from home. His stare was enough to get a heart attack, I gathered my courage and in my sweetest tone asked him to see his wallet as he must have change.

Frantic I starting pouring my bag out, my last change was given as tips to the servers; in the irony of my situation I could not help my laughter. I was thinking about my child who always had change and scolded me for not bothering with small notes. This good soul beside me who was my baby's age said 'Aunty please take it from me.' He was getting down at a different stop.

I was desperately calling my driver to be at the bus stop with ten taka, but of course he was stuck in traffic too. Out of the blue the angry conductor told the little one 'Let her off, that man paid for her.' My knight in shining armour at that hour was a gentleman who worked at Delhi Public School; I repaid him at the bus stop. He said, 'You don't take the bus often-- that smug smile on your face says it all!'

Yes I did learn to ride the local bus and smile amid crisis. And yes there are good souls in Dhaka. But I honestly wish that our city corporation would think of better bus service throughout the city so we could easily hop on and more often too. After all we do take the bus or tube when we are outside our borders.

By RBR
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