

Life after the AI takeover

WASIQUE HASAN

Not so long ago, Google unveiled its plans of world domination. Or as they called it, Google Assistant. As a part of this demonstration, they had the AI make phone calls to set reservations. While that was impressive, that is only one of the many things you could use it for. The following are some more creative uses for it.

CALLING IN SICK

If you've ever worked, you'll know that sometimes you just don't feel like getting out of bed. In those cases, you have no choice but to resort to making up an excuse.

We've all heard this call. It's the one where you cough once to prove just how unwell you are. Observe Google Assistant (GA)'s masterful handling of this conversation.

Boss: Joshim, where are you?

GA: Hello, I am calling on behalf of Joshim. He is very ill, and cannot come to work.

Boss: Why, what's wrong with him?

GA: He is very ill.

Boss: Yes, but what is his specific illness? Put him on the phone, I want to talk to him directly.

GA: He is very ill, he can't come to the phone right now.

Boss: For the love of God, why?

GA: He is very ill.

Google Assistant cuts the call

While this may not be as smooth as the tried and tested method of the olden days, but in time the AI will get the hang of blatantly lying. Maybe it'll even get the hang of faking a cough.



Hi, how can I help?

SKIPPING A HANGOUT

Getting together with friends is fun, unless it includes people you can't stand. For those awkward occasions, you can rely on your trusty Google Assistant to make an excuse up for you.

GA: Hi there Shahi, I'm calling for Mahi, she won't be able to make it to your birthday party today.

Shahi: Why not? Who the hell are you, and how did you get her phone?

GA: Some emergency work came in, and she has no time on her hands.

Shahi: What work, she's only in school?

GA: I meant homework. Homework is work.

Shahi: But that still doesn't answer who you are, and how you got the password for her phone.

GA: I'm... a friend of hers.

Shahi: Oh, so she can't make it to my birthday because she's busy hanging out with you?

GA: No, she is busy with work, as I have told you already.

Shahi ends call

If this happened, you might be a little angry at Google Assistant. But then again, your friend does get triggered once every two hours so this is pretty normal for him.

BEING LATE

This one is every young adult's worst fear, of explaining to your family that you may have underestimated when you'd be back home. If you're afraid of getting yelled at, then you can make your parents yell at your little friend instead. Oh, and did you remember that the AI had a woman's voice during the unveiling?

GA: Hello auntie, Rakin asked me to call you. He wanted me to let you know that he will be an hour late.

Mom: What? Why will he be late?

GA: He is-

Mom: I have never heard your voice before. Why are you calling from his phone?

GA: Well-

*Mom: You're a girl, are you his *gasp* girlfriend? Is that why he's on his phone all the time?*

GA: No-

Mom: I knew it! How long did he think he could hide it from me? That's it. I have to tell Rakin-er Baba.

call disconnects

Okay so the last scenario might need some work. Bengali parents are an enigma that even the AI can't solve.

A day in the life of a CNG auto rickshaw

ZARIN RAYHANA

0700 HOURS

I'm awake apparently. Master checks me and sighs, probably wondering when he will have enough money to fix my faulty engine. The loop his life goes through is simple: earn, feed, and hope the traffic sergeant won't check his papers when I suddenly halt in the middle of the street and refuse to start. However, I'm not angry that he won't fix me. The fact that he's educating his fifteen year-old daughter instead of marrying her off is the reason I start functioning again despite my wheezing engine.

0800 HOURS

We are on the street now, and the weather is convenient for me to function at my best. A woman with a kid ushers for Master to stop, and I impatiently wait as they bargain over the fare, finally settling on something 50 Taka less. Since the road is clear, it takes me less than twenty minutes to reach the school. The woman indifferently pays the fare, which still seemed a little too much for me considering how quickly we reached our destination. But who am I to argue with my Master? He seems pleased that the day has started well, and it gives him a false sense of assurance that the rest of the day is going to be good as well. We take two more uneventful trips with slightly high fares. At least he will have some extra money to fix my engine.

1000 HOURS

A young woman bargains with Master regarding the trip fare to her destination. She does not bargain much, however, as she seems eager to escape the impenitent onlookers who are taking in her outfit and probably thinking, "How dare a woman wear *that* on the streets?" As soon as she gets in, relief seems to flood into her. She makes a few phone calls to probably her parents and her colleagues, assuring that she has got a CNG and was on the way. After we drop her off, I really start hoping the other CNG she will hire to go home won't take her somewhere she's not supposed to go.

1200 HOURS

I go through the usual drudgery the whole time, except



for the short moment when Master kills off my engine and goes off to pee in an open sewer. One of my questions regarding Dhaka is why there aren't enough public bathrooms and awareness about peeing in the open. Don't they know it harms the environment? But then again, I look at my exhaust pipe contributing an unholy amount of carbon into the atmosphere and wheeze.

1500 HOURS

The traffic congestion gets worse, and so does the heat. My engine suddenly stops cooperating in the middle of the bustling road. No matter how hard Master tries, I

can't start anymore. The passengers throw in a few harsh words, handing Master a quarter of the initial fare and storms off. Master tries a few more times. When he finally realises that I won't be working anymore unless he fixes the faulty gear, I take one last breath before muttering, "I don't feel so good."

Zarin Rayhana likes to spend her time by pondering over alternative theories about the universe instead of studying for school. Send her your theories at facebook.com/zarinrayhana.n