

# SO CLOSE YET SO FAR

I could often imagine the anguish I might feel being away from my loved ones. Distance forces us to accept reality, but I could never imagine how it feels being so close, and yet be so far. Shared moments wrapped in laughter and sorrow shape a life, and those moments move into the rear-view mirror one day, where they can only be cherished afar.

Being many miles away on a personal quest, I have had to learn to come to terms with reality, often enduring the pain of not having to see the ones that have shaped the fibres of my being. There is often no other way but to reminisce until another moment of reunion appears. The departure pulls down the curtain of finality, at least for the foreseeable future. Little did I know the feeling of a double departure.

After a recent visit to Dhaka, I had said goodbye to my family with a heavy heart to prepare for a long journey, thinking that those last words, the wonderful sights, and those moments together would resonate in my mind the entire flight.

Dropped off by my teary-eyed mother in the evening, things progressed well toward the final wait at the gate. After a patient wait, word finally came out that my flight would be delayed. The fear of cancellation loomed as the minutes ticked by, without any word from the airline authorities. The dreaded news of cancellation finally came. By then, my luggage had been checked and it was past midnight.

Mosquitoes, sensing our plight, jumped on us with vengeance, their screening process was certainly hassle-free, without any luggage and travel documents. Treated to a heavy meal in town earlier, they had checked in for some dessert, I guess.

After wrangling and bargaining with the authorities, and wondering why Dhaka did not have a single decent airport hotel on site, my turn finally came to force my way onto a van for a city hotel, because families were being given priority before me and I was in pain.

I thought care of basic travel elements such as passengers, hotels, clean and modern restrooms, efficient cargo handling, restaurants, and other services in an international airport was needed more than fussing over the name of the place.

The front-seat ride unveiled an unperturbed Dhaka basking in her own identity, waiting to be explored, just as the cockpit reveals the inviting city lights below after a long flight in dark monotone. In the light drizzle, the flickering sodium lights turned emotional, as I sped along the rain-drenched roads, oblivious to my recent sufferings.

I was here as if I had never left, but the joy was fleeting, as I soon realised I had long checked out, and felt like a window shopper, unable to claim anything anymore in this town. A sharp pang of statelessness overwhelmed me, to the extent of asking probing questions of me about my identity.

Where did I belong?

I could not just break free from my shackles into the sights and sounds I had related to all my life. She stood ready at her best — blissfully unaware of my humanly struggles.

I thought of the priceless moments I cobbled together, only to be stored in the corner of my heart: that restaurant where we would have kebab, those corner haunts that I would frequent for my favourite chotpoti and haleem, the grounds I'd play in, the careless people that I thought I could never part with.

Some impressive new edifices, suggestive of her cosmopolitan status, now dotted the Dhaka skyline. There had been count-

less new gleaming shopping arcades and office towers. Although I had missed many of these developments, I now felt immensely proud. I could see all the new ones clearly now in their own glory, and the old ones standing the test of time. A deep sense of vacuum suddenly overwhelmed me.

Here I was, a stone's throw from my home and the bed I had warmed for the last few weeks, and yet they all seemed so distant and out of reach in the matter of a day. I was a prisoner of my own making. As free as I was to reminisce, I could never return. I was neither here nor there. I couldn't go home in the wee hours, because I didn't know exactly when my flight would leave in the morning.

When I finally checked into this nice hotel, it was almost early in the morning. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that Dhaka now had more international standard hotels with modern amenities. From my hotel room, I called up my mother to let her know how much I wanted to have one more breakfast at home with family. I kept her awake, rambled on the phone with the sense of incarceration in a staging environment.

My past, and my childhood days were flashing by before my eyes, like some optical illusion. As Elvis would say, "so close yet so far". Now, I had to wait inside these glass doors until the doors opened on the other side.

Early next morning, I had to scurry down to the lobby as our flight was now due to leave around noon. Sleep-deprived, I hurriedly went down, had breakfast, and

hopped on the van for the airport. This time though, the plane was on time and I knew my plight of statelessness would soon be taken care of.

As I settled down into my seat, I realised that my fellow passenger was not only a box of fond memories, but also an army of tiny creatures that would drag me on flight to the thoughts of Dhaka lest I drifted: mosquitoes.

Yes, they managed to board with me and statelessness did not bother them. But I am grateful for what this place has given me, for how she groomed me to be what I am today, and I will carry a piece of her with me wherever I hang my hat.

I have weighed arguments and equations about the pros and cons of living in a certain place in my introspection. But what these equations do not account for, is often the permanent loss of the people that one holds dear. That is the reality, one would argue, but in many years, I have not been able to cope with it gracefully.

The majestic airplane just started veering sharply, reminding me of the other corner of my life where I'd soon vanish into. But I remain fond of this place because I feel a strong sense of belonging here that I feel nowhere else. I plan to be back here to give back, in some capacity, because I sense that all the elements for rapid growth and progress are in place now. This is the place to be and I don't want to miss out.

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## LEARN. KNOW. GROW

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# Life Lessons Only Books Can Teach You

Books are a man's best friend. What your surroundings can't teach you, the pages of a book will. But unfortunately, many of us are losing the great habit of reading books. With our busy lives, we try to look for motivation from watching videos or listening to audio books. However, the sense of fulfillment that comes from reading books can't be duplicated by technology. Reading teaches us many practical aspects of life. So let's take a look at few life lessons that only books can teach you.

## 1. LEARNING DOESN'T NEED TO BE EXPENSIVE:

Many people think that if you invest in the best and most expensive education experience, only then you can educate yourself to the fullest. But it is furthest from the truth. A good book can teach you the best lessons of life without costing a fortune.

## 2. THE VALUE OF LIVING IN THE MOMENT:

Of course, technology has its own charm, but the impact that comes from reading a

good book can't be measured by the number of views it gets. Now that we are all obsessing over social media popularity, books can teach us the value of living in the moment.

## 3. EXPERIENCES ARE BEST SHARED THROUGH WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Take it from a man who has hundreds of videos on YouTube, the response I am getting from people for my new book 'Unleash Your True Potential' within such a short amount of time is immeasurable.

## 4. PRACTICING THE ART OF FOCUS:

Focus is something that we all struggle with, more or less. Reading a book requires a look more dedication and focus than watching videos after videos. So it strengthens our ability to focus.

Books are a priceless possession of mankind. The lessons that we learn from reading books don't have any alternatives. So it's high time we realise what great power books provide us with, and indulge more into this goldmine of knowledge called 'books.'