

Essay on Bus Trip During Office Hours

It is ten o'clock, and I take my place in the queue at the bus stand. The queue system is certainly an improvement on the chaos that otherwise prevailed. A bus arrives, and the line pushes forward to get in. there is a momentary collision between the out-coming and the in-going passengers.. it is over, and the line is pushed into the bus by pressure from behind. As many get in as there is room to accommodate them and then the conductor gives the signal and the bus is off. Those who are left behind, among whom I am one wearily take up position for the next bus. It comes, and again the scene is repeated, but among the numbers propelled into the vehicle, to my good luck. I happen to be one.

Within the bus, we are packed like sardines. There is no question of getting a seat. I manage to hold on somehow to the overhead cross-bar. I am jolted backward and forward, but there is no question of falling down, there is no space for it. It is hot and stuffy. Some get irritated and hot words are exchanged every now and then. Often the poor conductor has to bear the brunt of it all, though he is as much a victim as any of us. Overall this he has to collect fares from us and in a crowded bus, this is not easy to do. At every stand, there is all the trouble of going out and getting in, and much heaving and pushing the result. Sometimes, the bus crashes to a dead stop; an accident has been averted; it was not, there would not end of troubles. Occasionally, the bus goes out of order, and passengers have to wait for the next, – though how they do not get in is anybody's guess.

I approach my destination. I push my way slowly through the crowd of passengers. I try to be as careful as I can. Even so, it is bound to add to the discomfort and the consequent loss of temper. At the steps, there is quite an ado. Eager crowds try to push in before we

can get off. But is over; perhaps a shirt is torn or a button is off, – or if you happen to be off your luck on that day. You find yourself neatly relieved of a pen or a purse. These are minor casualties. It is enough that your life is intact and your limbs unbroken.

This goes on and has been going on, since I can remember, and the trouble is not less but more. We have learned to take it philosophically. We are reasonably law-abiding people. When we are told that the population has increased so many times, that buses cannot be procured for want of foreign exchange, that Calcutta streets cannot take heavier traffic; we appreciate the reasons submit to our fate, and prepare ourselves to face the next ordeal. After all, a bus-drive in Calcutta is a test of nerves, of physical endurance, of mental adaptability, and in these qualities, a citizen of Calcutta is surely well ahead of the rest of the world. That is no small gain, I console myself. And for consolation, we dream of the day when Calcutta will have a tube railway underground to relieve congestion overhead.