

In search of common sense

By Chandrika R Krishnan

As I make my way home to and from work, I pity the traffic police, who are forced to handle a bunch of ill-mannered, uncivilised and arrogant drivers and vehicle owners who have no idea what it is to stand in the middle of the road trying to direct traffic.

I, too, grew up to a steady diet of Hindi and other regional films where the police are often portrayed as no better than hooligans who take bribes or are killed and tortured if they happen to be honest!

The railway crossing that I need to cross every day, takes a minimum of 20 minutes though we are just metres away from the same. Whenever a policeman is not available to help regulate traffic (which is often the case), people are quick to point fingers at the lapse. Then, isn't it sad that the police are forced to have their authority scoffed at or not taken seriously by a group of 'rules and regulations challenged' individuals?

No one in my family is a policeman and hence my idea of their lives behind the scenes is limited to what I watch in movies. Neither did I try to befriend anyone and shied away from visiting the police station except to get the passport clearance or to get a verification letter for the purpose of a job.

Why then this sudden interest to pen down my thoughts? I can attribute the same to two different reasons. Firstly, the news item carried some time ago, that read, "Inebriated woman is arrested for misbehaving with traffic police."

The news item also had a quote from the deputy commissioner of police traffic (east), who said the motorists blame police for traffic but when it comes to following rules, they are least concerned.

The second reason is a personal one. My daughter was on her way home late at night around 11 pm from her workplace on a scooter. Being inordinately late, I was worried till I received a call that she needs our help to pick her up from a place which was some 3 km away from home as she had a punctured tyre.

Drunken driving

Having all sorts of thoughts playing in my mind, my husband and I rushed to the place where she was supposed to be when we saw her standing near a traffic island in the middle of the road where vehicles

coming from all direction would be in a position to see her! She told us how a friendly cop asked her to stand there and not in any shadowy corner till we reached her. Unfortunately, she told us this only after we left and we could not thank the policeman for his timely help.

Frequently, there are concerns on the aspect of drunken driving being on the rise and the steps taken to control the same. To allow the youngsters to herald the new year with a bang, we have police force doing extra duty to prevent untoward incidents due to misbehaviour. I always wonder that to allow one tribe to enjoy, the others have to forego their own family time or rest time.

Road lawlessness

The police have their task cut out for them by handling some spoilt, rich section of the society who believes that enjoyment needs to be as raucous as possible. Watching the way people drive, the scant regard for the rules and regulations does make even a saint frustrated, leave alone the police force. How difficult it is for civilised society to follow the rules?

I noticed a young educated couple driving with small children in the front seat, that too on a chock-a-block road. The boy of around three years was sitting on the lap of the one who was driving and the lady in the passenger seat had another toddler.

I wondered what madness makes the parents so blatantly break the rules that too on a road that has heavy vehicular traffic. I think like the West, we should have our cars fitted with baby seats or the parents should be heavily penalised and their licence revoked.

If the child had grabbed the steering wheel or even grabbed a fistful of the parent's hair, there would have been a terrible accident.

Every evening, I am left with a question that constantly preys in my mind, "Whither common sense?"

If every individual followed the rules laid down and struck to their side of the lane instead of occupying the entire stretch either side of the level crossing in the above example, the traffic can be cleared in lesser than five minutes instead of anywhere between 20 minutes to an hour. This can be achieved with a modicum of help from a more cheerful police force.

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