Welcome to Mumbai

Today, I want to take you on a journey, to my own little adventure, when I moved from my peaceful, quiet, calm village Bidal to the fast spaced, bustling, vibrant where everyone was in some hurry, that is Mumbai. Let me tell you, for me life in the big city Mumbai was like stepping into an entirely different universe.

Honorable Contest Chair and esteemed audience.

My early days in Mumbai, I preferred using autos for transportation because they were convenient and easily available. I have one memorable incident where I was heading to my residence by auto. I vividly remember, it was cricket match day; the auto driver started discussing the cricket match with me, you know cricket is everyone's favorite topic, I also indulged in, suddenly he received a call from the hospital, and he was very happy. He was thrilled to share with me that his wife had just given birth to twin girls. I was happy for him too, and then he mentioned that he needed to drop me off immediately due to an emergency operation for his wife and needed to arrange ₹2,000. He approached me for help and promised to return the money to my address. Without thinking twice, I handed him ₹2,000 right away. Later, when I shared this incident with my friends, they laughed and said I had been scammed. They joked, "Welcome to Mumbai!". Today I am still waiting for that auto driver to come to me and give me 2k back.

Soon I started favoring trains more for my commute. During my college days, I used to live in Ghatkopar, and my college was VJTI at Matunga Station. In the excitement of those early college days, I used to leave home with shiny clothes freshly ironed and my bag perfectly packed. But after just a few days, I realized that the state I left home in was not the same by the time I got off the train at Matunga Station. When I get off at the station once-shiny clothes would be turned in to wrinkled, sometimes, people wouldn’t even let me get off at Matunga. I realized people gave respect and space when you wanted to get off at bigger stations like Kurla or Dadar, but if you said you wanted to get off at smaller station like Matunga, no one would make space.

I thought to myself, “The train is not for me,” and tried taking the BEST bus for one day. It was smooth, in fact I could reach college in the same state in which I left home. Next day I happily took a 6-month BEST pass. But in the same week of getting that pass, BEST bus started showing their true colors, bus started coming late. By late, I mean 30 to 45 minutes late. And you know how, when a bus gets late, everyone tries to grab it whichever bud comes 1st. Most of the time looking at crowded buses, I would let them pass and wait for the next one.

One day, during exam time, I looked at my wristwatch and realized that to be on time for the exam, I had to catch the next bus at any cost. As usual the bus was late; it was the most crowded I had ever seen. I didn’t get the chance to get in when it halted, I held both the bars on both sides of the bus back door with both my hands. For the next 5–6 minutes, I was standing on the last bottom stair, my complete body was outside of bus only hand and legs were connected to bus. After passing the next couple of stops, I finally managed to get inside. I felt relieved and thought it was good that I had not missed this bus.

To check the time, I looked at my wristwatch—but it wasn’t there. I realized that during my “door adventure,” someone stole it. That watch had been with me since my 5th standards, it was very special to me, I panicked and started asking people if they had seen my watch, but by my behavior, they realized I was new to Mumbai. In fact, some even laughed at me.

And so, after all those adventures—whether it was hanging onto the door of a moving bus or train, losing my precious wristwatch, or struggling to convince people that give us space to get down at Matunga. I finally understood one thing: Mumbai doesn’t just teach you how to commute; it teaches you how to survive. You either adapt, or, well, you are left hanging sometimes literally. From being the neatly dressed, clueless village boy, I slowly became a seasoned Mumbaikar, who learned the art of navigating the chaos.