

Gurgaon's new traffic rule: Manners before management

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It was recently reported that the Gurgaon traffic police authorities have asked the traffic cops to say "Sorry" and "Thank you" when they stop people for violating traffic rules. This seemed superfluous to me since in my experience the traffic cops have always been extremely courteous when they inform me about how I could either "settle" the *challan* immediately or go spend hours in the traffic court to take care of it.

Recently I was stopped after a red light by one of them. My ostensible offence was crossing the intersection on yellow light. The intersection in question is a very long one and I had entered it on green light. However, by the time I was through the light had changed to yellow. I tried explaining this to the cop- he was very courteous and politely asked me to show him a video of what happened! I was a bit perplexed and told him to look at my white hair- did I look like a person who would even know how to shoot a video while driving? This led to some amusement among his fellow cops who then let me go with a warning.

The case of this intersection is a curious one- most lights now come with a time indicator which will tell you how many seconds before it turns yellow. However, at this fairly long intersection, the indicator mysteriously never works. And of course the cops are ready during rush hours to pounce on any poor hapless driver who happened to have entered the intersection on green like me but couldn't cross it in time.

The traffic cops are not just concerned with traffic violations- they also want to make sure you are safe. Driving on the Delhi-Gurgaon highway is usually a nightmare during rush hour. But at other times, vehicles can drive at a reasonable speed staying within the speed limit. The cops obviously don't want you to speed at all since it is dangerous for you. And so they have come up with an ingenious plan. They stop and check commercial vehicles and they do it precisely at places where there is a potential of a bottleneck. This closure of one lane obviously causes a huge jam and so the other vehicles inch along. A brilliant way to make sure you stay safe on the road.

A similar modus operandi is adopted by the Delhi Transport department people who check the permits of long distance sleeper busses from MP and Rajasthan. They are waiting for them at precisely the same place every morning. The problem is that the place where they stop them also happens to be a particularly narrow stretch of a very busy road. The tailback this causes is so predictable that I just factor it in while planning my daily commute.

The traffic cops don't need any instructions to be courteous- they are very courteous and go out of their way to help you "settle" the penalty for your traffic violation. And since they are busy making sure you pay for breaking the rules, the traffic, especially during rush hours becomes a free for all. Maybe the authorities need to instruct them to for once, manage the traffic instead of concentrating on collecting funds for the exchequer or

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