

# Crumbling Egos

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The stressful travel schedule had already robbed me off sleep during the last one week. The hope of having a short, but tight sleep on the business class of my overnight flight to Doha was short-lived as the head was more interested in processing the wanted and mostly unwanted things from the hectic travel in Germany. The easy and quick emigration clearance and hotel transfer assistance raised the hopes for a pleasant sleep in the hotel the airline had arranged for the long transit time in Doha. Coming out of the exit gate, I looked forward to a quick transfer to the hotel, which was announced by the airline itself as its most preferred hotel. The information by the transportation coordinator that I would have to wait for 14 minutes for the shuttle service as they operate it only at 30 minutes intervals drove reason behind impulsiveness. Almost losing my patience, I rudely rejected his offer and proceeded to the taxi station to fetch a taxi to my hotel.

Filled with the feeling of having saved 14 minutes, I proceeded to the hotel reception for check-in. Initial pleasantries quickly changed mood as I was informed that the airline had put a ceiling of 175 QR on the meal allowance, even though a breakfast would cost 130 QR and a lunch approximately 200 QR. I was more annoyed by the hiding of such facts by the airline than the apparent humiliation thrown to me by the reception staff. I could not resist from telling him that I was not seeking any refuge but would pay the extra amount as it temporarily satisfied my ego and the need to protect my self-esteem. However, I was wondering why the hotel did not ask me to give the credit card details for any extras unlike their counterparts in Europe.

My mind required some good amount of time to come to peace and I gradually fell into a deep sleep I was badly longing for. The flight mode on the mobile cared for absolute silence during my sleep in a very comfortable room, whereas a glance out of the window showed me many guest labourers toiling at their outdoor work sites. It was around 12 noon when I pushed myself out of the bed with much difficulty, so that I could have my lunch to compensate for the missed breakfast in the morning.

The young hostess at the entrance to the buffet received me with an infectious smile, but my smile faded away quickly when she asked me to present the voucher from the airline, which I had left in the room. As it was my mistake, though I felt like a refugee with a food coupon, I went back to the room to fetch the voucher. "Sir, the airline would pay only 175 QR and you have to pay the rest", said the hostess to me. In a harsh voice I replied that I was not a beggar and would pay the money. The poor girl must have thought I would be insane, for sure.

The large and delicious lunch spread had a feast for my eyes and the taste buds. Upon finishing my lunch, the hostess came to me and requested me to pay an additional amount of 21 QR for the lunch I had consumed. Expecting the normal

process of settling the bill while checking out, I instructed her to pass it on to the reception for settlement while checking out, which she said she couldn't as she had to collect the money then itself. My fury was about to explode, as I did not have my wallet by my side. Controlling myself and trying to come to reason, I somehow obliged and went to the room to get my purse and pay the balance amount.

Politely and with all humility, the young hostess asked me in her soft and soothing voice: "Sir, are you not fine? Are you not feeling well? Did you miss your connection flight?" "Sir, I am sorry for the inconvenience caused to you, but you brushed me aside when I tried to explain the restriction of meal allowance to you. Please understand that we are here only to execute the instructions given to us."

I started to feel the melting away of my anger. I wondered how she could talk to me in such a pacifying manner despite being subjected to an unfriendly attitude from my side. Clearly surrendering myself to her eyes that radiated contentment and happiness in spite of living in a foreign nation as a guest worker, I walked with a palpable shame back to my room.

Her face and her words occupied my thoughts until I checked out. I felt an urgent need to meet her and apologize for my rude behaviour. Just before leaving the hotel, I literally ran to the restaurant to see her, but she had by then left for the day, said the new hostess. I could not resist my urge to tell her that I was feeling sorry for my attitude to the previous hostess and wanted to convey my apologies to her and that she had taught me a good lesson for the rest of my life. She told me that the young colleague was from Kenya and she would certainly convey my apologies and the little amount that I wanted to pass on to further pacify my conscience.

Feeling completely grounded and finding peace within, I slowly got into the shuttle bus, together with other unknown passengers.