

Uses of a bus-stop

Shashank V. Parulekar

A bus-stop is a place where different buses stop to let passengers board or get down. Some people call it a bus-stand. The most conventional use of the bus-stop is to wait for a desired route bus. However the innovative mind of Indian man/woman goes beyond the conventional things and finds many other uses for the same.

A bus-stop is used by some people as a place of rendezvous. It is a precise spot (if the details are accurate), so that two or more persons can meet there without missing the spot or the other person(s). In case someone arrives before the others, he can wait in the shade of the bus-stop without the appearance of a person loitering around aimlessly. However, if the details are not accurate, this meeting place may become a disaster. "At the first stop or beginning stop of route 201" may sound very precise, but it can result in one person waiting at one end of the route, and the other at the other end. Even at the Sharadashram bus-stop of route 201 is not accurate enough, as there are two bus-stops at that place, one for the north-bound buses and the other for the southbound buses, on opposite sides of the road. Two persons can stop at two stops, waiting for each other, if the two bus-stops are not within gazing distance of each other. Both of these examples are based on real life experiences.

The bus-stop serves as an excellent shelter when caught in an unexpected drizzle. It is OK if the bus-stop is not very crowded. But if it is, occupying the place just for shelter is unethical, as that denies a sheltered standing place for a genuine passenger to be. However there is no way of differentiating between the two. The difference is evident only when the drizzle stops and the shelter seekers walk away. Those who got soaked because they had to wait for a bus outside the shelter of the bus-stop can (and do) get mad, but can do nothing about it post facto. They cannot complain too, because they behave the same way some other time.

A bus-stop near a school or college is a good place to hang around in the interval between two lectures. It offers a place to sit in a group, a shade, and freedom to make as much noise as desired, which is not permitted in the school or college premises. It is unethical if the bus-stop is crowded, but children and teenagers are usually not bothered by such .

A bus-stop can be an excellent meeting spot for two young things in love with each other, There is an apparently perfectly valid reason for sitting very close to each other in a public place - waiting for a bus. There is no law prohibiting two persons waiting for a bus from speaking to each other. Though they cannot do more intimate things there, it is better than not being together at all.

A bus-stop is a temporary stop on a walk to whenever to stop and rest awhile, if one gets a call on a cell or gets tired of walking. Ethical principles discussed before apply here, too, but those who do this seem not to be bothered by such silly thoughts.

A bus-stop is a good place for finding clients if one is a beggar or a pick-pocket. A person waiting for a bus is static until his bus arrives, he is a captive client, much better than a passer by, for begging. He is forced to listen to the begging routine, and has the time to find some money in his pocket. A pick-pocket also finds a stationary victim for his job. It seems the best time to pick a pocket or a bag is while the victim is boarding the bus. His defenses are down.

while trying to get in, the pick-pocket has a valid reason for getting very close to the victim without arousing suspicion, and he can let the victim board while he stays behind at the bus-stop, so that the risk of getting caught is minimal. Our aim of providing these details is not to train pick-pockets (they are well-trained by professionals and don't have to read such articles) but to warn people so that they don't become victims.

We have seen bus-stops being used by hawkers to setup roadside shops, forcing people to stand on the road to wait for buses. We have also seen huts built under the roofs of bus stops, using poles of the stops as pillars of the huts. People waiting for buses have to stand well away to avoid smelling the huts and their contents, and catching diseases (these fears may be entirely imaginary, but the result is as described). Getting rid of the hawkers is relatively easy for a policeman, but getting rid of the slum under a bus-stop is almost impossible, because it is some politician's vote-bank and hence well protected. Another protective trick of the pick-pockets is to toss the wallet or purse picked onto the roof of the bus-stop. Even if the victim catches the culprit, the latter is found to have nothing on his person that would incriminate him. He retrieves the stolen goods later on, after the dust settles.

Because the bus-stop is visited by so many people who stay put for variable periods, it is a place chosen by some manufacturers, vendors, or service providers for advertising. They put their ads on the front of the roof of the bus-stop, where they are seen by people walking by, people waiting there, and people on the buses passing by.

The bus transport company that maintains the bus-stop makes a bit of money by renting out the ad-spot. Free-loaders paste their pamphlets there for free advertising, though it is a crime to do so.

Some people who don't have a place to sleep at night climb on the roof of a bus stop for a night's rest. It is like sleeping on a cot rather than on a mattress on the floor. The risk of being run over by a vehicle off course is avoided, while it is quite real for those who sleep on the sidewalks. One must take care not to roll off the roof in sleep, as it can prove injurious to health.

Those who are badly off and have to steal something to make a living sometimes steal the metal rods that make the framework of a bus-stop. They cannot sell the rods as scrap in open market, but there are buyers who buy them at prices much lower than market prices and keep quiet about the theft in return. Stealing and buying stolen goods are both criminal offenses, (we state this for the benefit of those who don't know or suspect this).

Small children practice gymnastics on the rods and bars of the bus-stop while waiting for a bus. Their parents permit this activity even if it bothers others standing nearby, because children so occupied are less trouble to control than those asking for ice cream or crying for going some place else. Perhaps a few parents see future Olympians in their children working on parallel bars here.