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"I remain amazed at the economics and logic that would justify the ignoring of the crucial vertical transportation aspect of any building. When millions and billions are being invested, how could the life line be ignored?"

Lifting Malls?..... Part II

Rewind to "Lifting Malls?" where I had written, ".....The final concluding experience was at a newly constructed mall cum multiplex. After a movie, the only way out was a climb down eight flights of enclosed stairs"

The movie buff that I am, the visits to the multiplex continued. After every movie, we would be deposited outside the mall and onto a pot hole ridden drive way. However with a new twist – before the movie we had to queue up outside the mall for the mandatory security screening. This in itself was okay, except that we would be accompanied by people who had just finished watching the previous show but wanted to get back into the mall to catch a bite or whatever. Considering that these people had already been sanitized twice – once at the entry to the mall and second at entry to the movie hall – this really was a waste and a discouraging barrier to the "impulse behavior" that retails outlets thrive on. *The dime hadn't dropped.* The



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identity of this fairly new mall is not important, it might just as well been any other mall. So here goes.

- **Mall** – "Some Mall"
- **Location** – "Some where"
- **Outlets** – anchor store (a prominent department store), healthcare, fashion labels, home electronics, food, gaming zone etc. etc.
- **Time of visit** – mid week, non peak time

Most things about the mall appeared to be straight from a text book and just right. Yet, I couldn't help but suspect that the outlets wouldn't meet their sales budget. Would the selling skills of the store manager and his team match up to the ill-planned (most likely not planned at all) vertical transportation system?

What caught my attention on parking my car was that the mall designers did not expect me or my companions to be physically-challenged. A fairly long flight of stairs was the only way into the mall. Obviously requirements similar to those mandated by the 'Americans with Disability Act' (ADA) do not apply here. Once inside the mall, the escalators and elevators required to constitute a vertical transportation system were all in place. Yet a casual look was enough to point out that the location, quantity and specifications did not really have any scientific backing.

There were more people climbing up and down stairs than those using the escalators – *it was not as if these people were scared of using escalators.* The

physical effort to reach the next escalator in the direction of travel was significantly more than the effort of reaching the stair and climbing to the next level. For all practical purposes the escalators might not have existed.

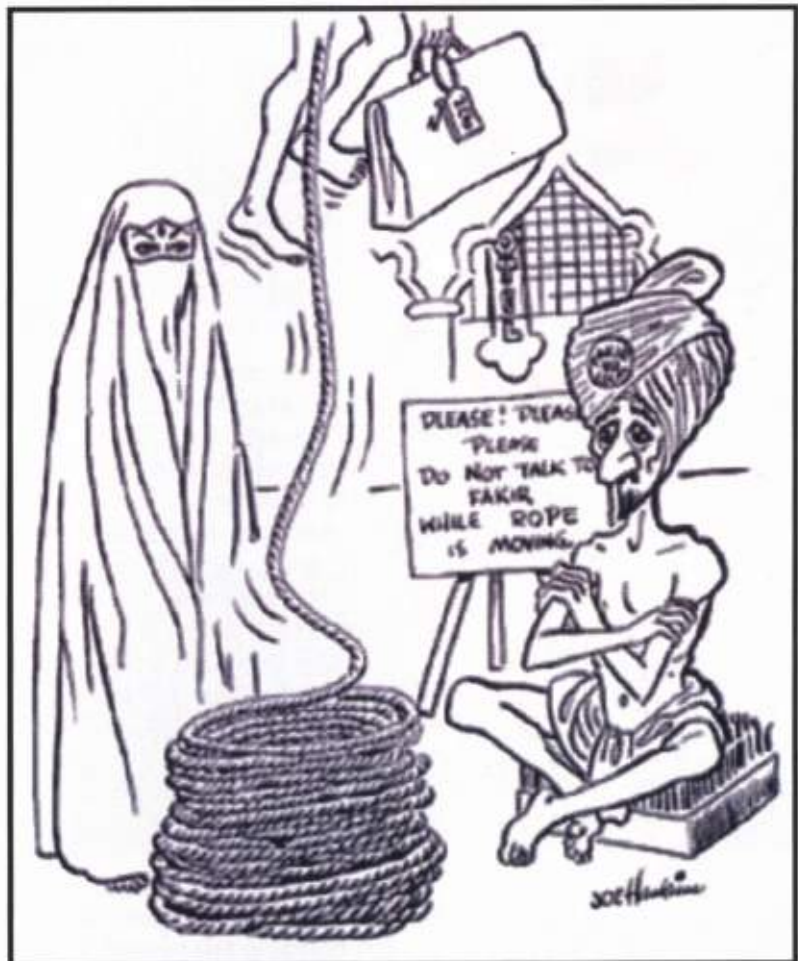
The ground floor outlets appeared to be doing okay. The outlets on the intermediate floors wore a despondent look. My brief queries indicated that this was not related to the timing of my visit.

The anchor store (a department store) was located on the top-most floor. The intention was obvious and excellent from a retailer's perspective. Except that the vertical transportation system did not support the intention. The only transportation provision for the shopping carts consisted of 2 small lifts.

The average waiting time for the lift if you had a cart was about 20 minutes, a little less if you decided to dump the cart. Considering that this was after the 10 minutes at the cash counter, it was not surprising that the shoppers were not smiling. Just imagine their state of mind trying to get to their car – *remember the long flight of stairs leading into the mall.*

Will they be back? – I do not know. Will I be back to shop? – I don't think so.

On looking around, it was obvious that the vertical transportation inadequacy was impacting not only the shoppers at the anchor store (and the other outlets), but also had potential of leading to serious



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incidents. The two young mothers maneuvering their infants in prams down the escalator looked almost suicidal. You couldn't blame them, having waited for the lift for quite a while, they had few choices but put themselves and their infants at risk. *I just couldn't handle it any more.*

From an academic perspective my colleagues and I reviewed possible remedies. Any approach involved significant expense, modifications and interruptions. Could it be executed? Would it be worthwhile? We couldn't decide.

The only cheap remedies we could come up with were very crude. Crude, yet with a higher chance of success than the approach that was adopted in the first place. On the other hand, we were equivocal that the problem could have been avoided.

I remain amazed at the economics and logic that would justify the ignoring of the crucial vertical transportation aspect of any building. When millions and billions are being invested, how could the life line be ignored? 😊