

draining work day she got on the bus to discover that as usual, all the women's seats were occupied by men. "That day, I had just had enough!" Khaleda said. "I looked at this young man sitting in the women's seats, and I said to him 'you need to get out of my seat'."

"The funny thing is, he *did* get up to move to a different seat on the bus, but there was another man there who was very offended by the fact that I had demanded a seat. He addressed all the other passengers, saying "Just look at the way she talks! She's telling him to get off her seat! She should be asking him nicely and saying 'Bhaiya, do you mind getting up and letting me have this seat; I am a woman, you see, and I'm not strong enough to handle this journey standing up.' If she had any shame, she would behave like a normal woman and ask for the seat like that.'"

His comments further inflamed Khaleda, who turned to him and interrupted his grandstanding to the other passengers, by smartly retorting "Are you sure that it would be good enough for me to just *ask* him for the seat the way that you have described? Perhaps, in your opinion, I should have got down on my knees and begged him for it instead?!"

According to Polly, another source of friction can be the sign above the woman's seats that reads "women, children, disabled". As she puts it, on more than one occasion, she has seen some wit make a comment along the following lines - "Yes, yes, I suppose you have to give them those seats. After all, it does say women, children and disabled together; I suppose it just makes it clear that women are unfit to handle themselves in public places because they are socially disabled. So you have to take pity on them and let them sit down"...!

One of the reasons why many young women are reluctant to fight for their rights in these situations is that, according to a number of people, when a woman argues back, there is a tendency for public sympathy to go against her (even if she is technically in the right) because her behaviour is perceived as aggressive or "unfeminine". Understandably, this can be very frustrating, so it's not surprising that some women choose to give way in these circumstances.

But fortunately, I have also heard of instances where other passengers, including male passengers, will stand up for a woman who is trying to get access to what is rightfully hers. So, in a play on the issue of "seats reserved for women, children, disabled", on one occasion when a group of young men were occupying the women's seats and refusing to give up the seats when a number of women boarded the bus, another young man addressed them sardonically, saying, "It's ok, ladies, we should let them keep the seats since they want them so badly. After all, they are clearly not women or children, so they must be disabled!" Needless to say, this was sufficient to make all of the young men spring up in an attempt to prove their masculinity...