A New Low

This happened last Saturday morning. I was going to the "Shawpno" chain store on Central Road from Hatirpool. While my rickshaw was waiting in the slight traffic on the connecting road from Hatirpool Bazar to Central Road, a very disturbing set of incidents took place. Two girls, possibly students, were walking by when a man, dressed in a long panjabi and prayer hat (*toopi*) sporting a long beard, stood in the middle of their path and appeared to be reading a poster on the wall. He had both his arms on his waist with his elbows extended out as far as possible. The girls tried their best walk past him without physical contact, but he kept stepping backwards towards them in what he probably wanted to look like a careless manner. His intent of brushing up against them was somewhat successful. My rickshaw moved forward a bit but I still had a clear view of him. He spotted a woman on a rickshaw, about to get off after paying the rickshaw puller and he slowly walked over to the back of the rickshaw. Then, to my shock and amazement, he spat on the woman's back! She was busy trying to take her things out of the rickshaw so she probably didn't even notice, but I was rooted to the spot.

I was so angry I was on the verge of screaming. That was the moment when he must have spotted my rickshaw. Since I was wearing sunglasses and was a bit inside my rickshaw's hood, it didn't look like I was looking at him. I sat very still and out of the corner of my eye I saw him cross the street and come towards me. He went around back, crossed four or five rickshaws in front of mine and came towards my rickshaw looking innocent. Just before coming towards my rickshaw, he reached out his hand just as carelessly as before, I was ready for it. At that very moment, my rickshaw swerved a bit to the right to overtake the rickshaws in front of it and the man's hand caught on the side of the hood and then hit very hard. He gave a muffled scream of pain and I'm guessing his wrist may not be functional for any such activities for at least a few days!

What I'd like to point out is why doesn't anybody notice these things happening? I can understand the elbow part, a lot of people do that, and I personally have hit some of these 'elbow perverts'. But spitting on unaware women? What is this world coming to? Has "eve-teasing" reached a new level? These events make hard times like now even harder for us women.

Konineeka Nasreen
Via Email

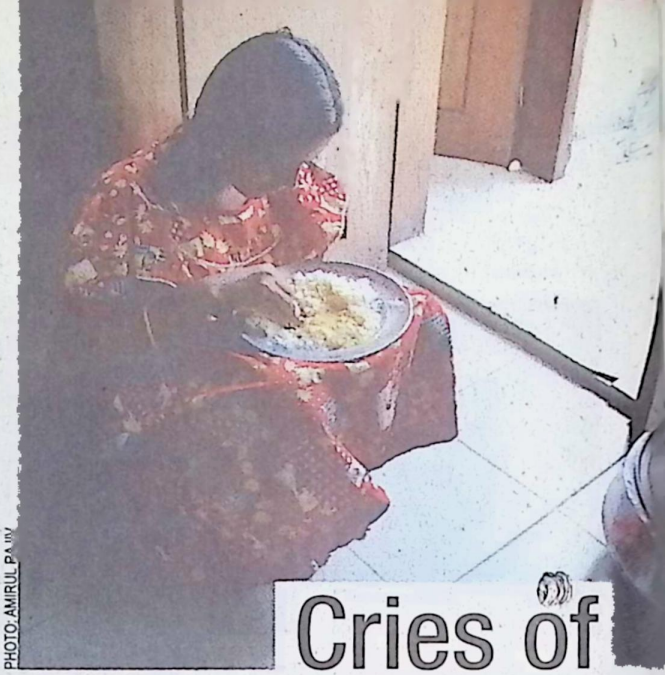


PHOTO: AMIRUL PA

Cries of Desperation

I usually stay up late at weekends, catching up on my reading. A few days ago I was doing just that, when around 2:15 am I heard muffled screams coming from the house next door. My window is literally three feet away from the building next to mine, so I listened closely and it seemed like someone was crying in between screams and saying "*Ar na*" (no more). I also heard angry retorts coming from someone and then a loud sound I could not identify. After about five minutes of this, I understood that the people next door were beating up their maid. I woke my father and brother up and we went over with our security guard to our neighbour's house to put a stop to whatever they were doing. When we explained to their guard what we had heard, he accompanied us to their flat. No one answered the door at first, after about ten minutes, a man answered the door looking highly irritated. We explained what we had heard and he immediately denied it, even though we could hear sounds of muffled crying coming from inside the apartment. My father threatened to call the police which seemed to scare the man a little and he mumbled something about his wife being ill and shut the door. We waited a while to see if the sounds continued and still feeling uncomfortable with the situation, left. The next morning we went to the local police station and reported the incident, but when we went to enquire after her the next day, they said the maid had left. Not one of the guards could confirm this. I find every incident of domestic violence deeply problematic and I really wish there was an emergency hotline we could call to report these so the police can take immediate action to protect defenseless people who put their trust and lives in our hands when they come to work for us.

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Via Email