

# PROFILING NARCISSISTS IN LOVE



NADINE SHAANTA MURSHID

**K**HADIZA, a university student in Sylhet didn't respond to Badrul Alam's romantic proposition. He couldn't handle being rejected. He responded by attacking her with a machete in public. A bystander recorded it and the video went viral on social media.

This is yet another attack on a woman in Bangladesh for not reciprocating a man's amorous advances. When we were growing up, we used to hear about acid attacks on women for rejecting men. In recent times, the machete has found popularity and has become the weapon of choice. Khadiza was attacked multiple times and is now fighting for her life. Badrul seems to claim that it was out of love.

But let's think of his profile, or whatever that we know of him as a starting point. 1) He is senior assistant secretary of BCL, which means he has considerable power to use and abuse. 2) He couldn't handle being rejected by his love interest. 3) He admitted that he didn't want her to talk to any other men, indicating that he felt he had property rights over her. 4) Because he had power in one domain of his life, his disempowerment, if you will, caused by the rejection made him want to regain control, which he presumably did by hurting Khadiza. 5) That he admitted and justified his intention to kill indicates that he has no empathy.

All of these ideas put together remind me of all the narcissists that I've met in my life, complete with fluctuations in self-esteem (from high to low) corresponding with the kind of feedback they receive from others. If he indeed is a narcissist, he has an inflated sense of self and his own worth, is manipulative, self-centered, disregards other people, feels entitled, attributes problems or failures to other people or circumstances and successes to himself, and is a know-it-all.

Add to that the idea that narcissism is more strongly correlated with self-competence than self-liking (Campbell & Foster, 2002 in *Personality and Social Psychology*).

This idea has implications for how narcissists behave with other people, particularly in inter-personal relationships, because the focus on competence translates to a focus on power, or acquiring power, much more than intimacy (Campbell & Foster, 2002). As such, they are likely to respond to negative feedback, such as rejection by a love interest, by lashing out, including in violent ways. Lambe and colleagues' systematic review on the journal *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* suggests.

This is because narcissists feel a threat to

their egos when they experience rejection, which negatively affects their self-esteem. Research has consistently indicated that narcissists have inflated but *fragile egos*; they embody both high and low self-esteem.

Brown and Bosson (2001) in their article *Narcissus Meets Sisyphus: Self-Love, Self-Loathing, and the Never-Ending Pursuit of Self-Worth published on Psychological Inquiry* explains the role of self-concept in allowing the co-existence of this apparent conflict between high and low self-esteem, which they categorise into explicit and implicit self-esteem, or as Lambe and colleagues (2016) put it, "a dissociation between an unconscious sense of inadequacy and a

conscious feeling of superiority."

Brown and Bosson show that narcissists report high on *explicit self-esteem* that is "overt and conscious", but low on implicit self-esteem that is "automatic and non-conscious", thus differentiating between actual high self-esteem, which is when both explicit and implicit self-esteem are high, and *narcissistic self-esteem*, which is when only explicit self-esteem is high.

In other words, narcissists may *consciously* indicate how well regarded they are, while unconsciously indicating the opposite. This is why self-reported measures of narcissism are correlated with self-reported measures of self-esteem - there is considerable overlap since

on, for example, parenting styles), and biases that they have acquired over time, and can only be measured covertly, for example by measurement tools such as the Implicit Association Test that measures implicit self-esteem by checking automatic concept-attribute associations.

But that's not something just anyone can do even though it is important to understand individuals who are narcissists given that they're especially well-placed to wreak havoc in the lives of others.

So here's some words of advice based on a quick skim of the literature coupled with my personal experience with narcissists: it's perhaps best to be wary of people who are

self-absorbed with incredulous, grandiose ideas of the self because they have no space for anyone else in their lives, those who quite obviously lack empathy, those who make simple things chaotic, those who find it difficult to be straight and indulge in convoluted counter-intuitive logic that is supposed to pass as superior intelligence, and obviously, those who have a history of violence or cruelty. Not to say that people aren't capable of change, people are not static but dynamic beings after all, but the change should be *demonstrated* and not merely assumed.

It is also not always clear as to why narcissists resort to hurting people,

self more than anyone else's, narcissists are not likely to be agreeable, which makes them ineffective in communication; so communication is not a tool that they can use to resolve conflict. Moreover, because they lack empathy and often put others down to maintain their own self-esteem, the use of violence, emotional and physical, and the negative effect that violence has on other people is not conceptualised as a problem (Brown & Bosson, 2001; Campbell & Foster, 2002), to the narcissist, that is.

For narcissists, violence is a tool of control, a tool that allows them to have their needs met. It's not about the person they're hurting, at all. That others suffer because of their actions is a minor offence that they forgive themselves for quickly.

But, those who experience such manipulation and violence often become embroiled in what many call a "whirlwind" that they find difficult to get out of as they get caught up in it, psychologically and emotionally. The impact of that experience is long lasting, with negative ramifications for health and wellbeing, mentally and physically. In the context of South Asia in general, and Bangladesh in particular, it is difficult to cut loose of such relationships for fear of retribution.

Khadiza and Badrul's case is an excellent example of this.

I can't help but imagine that Khadiza tried to distance herself from Badrul knowing who he was. That Badrul had, in his imagination, "marked" her as his indicates the kind of hold that he had wanted over her. That Badrul, as part of Bangladesh Chhatra League, quite obviously felt that he was immune from the justice system indicates the kind of power he presumably had/took for granted. The machete-attack that Khadiza experienced is one of the kinds of retribution that women fear; this is what keeps many women silent.

I'm not suggesting that all men are narcissists.

But, the globalised capitalist system rewards behaviours of narcissists. A recent study even showed that many individuals in leadership positions display narcissistic traits. This means, men in pursuit of their capitalist goals (such as the capitalist notion of success and masculinity), are encouraged to be narcissists, be "men" of a particular type. This type isn't conducive to healthy relationships.

It is about time we understand this: violence is not merely a psychological, individual-level problem; this structure produces much of the violence we see around us. The system promotes narcissistic behaviours among men.

And, narcissism creates Badruls, wife-beaters, misogynists, oppressors.

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SOURCE: SHRINK4MEN FILES

## Under cricket's shadow



AHMEDE HUSSAIN

**B**ANGLADESH holds the ignominious title of being the world's most populous nation not to win any Olympics medal ever. Our performance in the Commonwealth Games is also no less than shabby. The country has participated in the quadrennial sporting extravaganza eight times and has so far won only six medals. At the Asian Games, where Bangladesh has been participating since 1978, the country has won only one gold medal, that too in cricket, which has remained our lone face saver. Other sports seem to be deprived of the expectation and enthusiasm that cricket generates, and there are reasons behind it too.

Bangladesh's performance in athletics and such individual sports has witnessed a sharp decline. Boxer Mosharraf Hossain made history in the Asian Games in Seoul when he clinched the men's light heavyweight bronze medal in 1986. None of our boxers have won any medal in the Asian or Commonwealth Games since then. To make matters even more grievous, save for golfer Siddiquir Rahman, all our participations in the Olympics have been

wildcard entries. The only event where we can compete with some ease is the South Asian (SA) Games. That, too, is getting difficult for us. In the SA Games held in India this year, 409 participants of Bangladesh won only four gold medals. Kabbadi, our national sport, is a case in point. In the 2016 SA Games, our men's team had won bronze, Pakistan won the silver and India the gold.

Our ever deteriorating performance in the international meets is not shocking. In fact, it is a natural by-product of the neglect and indifference that has reigned supreme in the sector for a long time. Save for Asif Hossain Khan, the first Bangladeshi shooter to strike gold at the Commonwealth Games, and cricketers like Shakib Al Hassan and Mushfiqur Rahman, our only government-run sports institute in Savar has not yet produced any internationally renowned athletes since its establishment in 1986. This is sad, given that the institute admits students in different areas of sports such as athletics, basketball, cricket, football, gymnastics, hockey, swimming, shooting and tennis.

In our media, sport is almost made to be confined to cricket only. Football and hockey, which have earned the country glory in the early eighties, have become a part of our forlorn past. Cricket's success has

overshadowed the progress of all other sports. Who would, after all, want to be a second-rate shooter, when cricket, a short route to fame and glory, remains at hand?

Bangladesh badly needs to create a sporting infrastructure that will reflect its growing economic power. Sadly, that has not happened in the last 26 years since the restoration of democracy. On the contrary, we have witnessed the advent of a get-rich-quick lifestyle that has given birth to consumerist behaviour in our youth. Not only that, playgrounds that used to exist in different cities have been allowed to be encroached upon; their absence deprive children of any proper sporting facilities. A majority of the children who grow up in the cities do not

have any government-run facility at hand to learn swimming, let alone compete in track and field and other sporting events.

As a quick remedial measure, athletics and other sports should be encouraged from an early age. This can begin from the primary level. The authorities concerned can divide the country into small zones and the schools will be allotted coaches accordingly who, for their turn, will visit the respective institutions on certain days of the week. In this way, it will be possible for our youngsters to hone in their talents. Also, our sport organisers will be able to discover future Usain Bolts at an early age.

We must not forget that to build a sporting culture, we need to have well-trained coaches

with the insight and the expertise that will help young talents grow. To do that, we need to have training institutes for coaches in each divisional headquarters. Along with it, there ought to be government funded programmes to make sure the coaches get the opportunity to further their studies abroad.

One of the reasons youngsters shy away from sport is because it does not earn money. A nationwide biannual sporting meet can be organised which will be participated by the corporate houses and government-run organisations. It will encourage the big businesses to welcome more athletes and sportspersons under its fold. On the other hand, for the youngsters, it will be a motivating force in pursuing sport as a career.

Sport is the biggest deterrent against all forms of social malice. It is no less than surprising that our shaky existence in international sport is directly proportional to the social chaos that we witness in the country. A society with such a huge youth bulge runs the risk of getting derailed if it does not channel the youthful energy into something positive such as sports. Cricket alone is not capable of doing that.

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**QUOTABLE Quote**

**RABINDRANATH TAGORE**

*Let us not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless when facing them.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

ACROSS

- Kirk's Cohort
- Half Of A 1960s Rock group
- Poultry buy
- Scarlett's last name
- Tea party guest
- Vatican-based
- More smelly
- Before today
- Hole in one
- "Lolita" star
- Garden plot
- Temporarily transferred
- Strike doifiers
- Consult
- Upper limit
- Shop tool
- Gardner of film
- Atlanta team
- City on the Mohawk River
- Starts business
- Miller's salesman
- Sioux language
- Used up

42 Gauge

DOWN

- Secred beetle
- Regal digs
- Voiced a view
- Spigot
- High hose
- Cork sound
- "That's it!"
- Tropical fruit
- Region of Spain
- Styling site
- Drink now, pay later
- Free space
- Gatos
- Grassy clump
- Computer choice
- Prompt
- Warning
- Pay back
- Quarter-back, at times
- Carries
- Basilica part
- Paint buy
- Crumb carrier

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

A	M	B	E	R		N	O	B	L	E
B	E	R	L	E		A	C	R	I	D
S	T	I	L	E		G	A	I	L	E
S		A	I	D		R	A	I	N	
T	O	N	S			E	R	I	N	
O	A	T		T		R	A	N	C	E
S	T	R	A			F	A	R	C	E
S	H	O	W	O		A	H	A		
	T	E	S			K	N	O	T	
B	A	T	S			A	M	O	S	
O	R	I	O			E	A	T	A	T
S	E	E	M			S	L	O	P	E
C	A	R	E			S	A	N	T	A

**BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker

BEETLE, YOU SHOULD TRY TO LOOK MORE PROFESSIONAL WHEN WORKING IN THE KITCHEN

I LAID OUT SOME OF MY CLOTHES FOR YOU

**BABY BLUES** by Kirkman & Scott

LEIGH?

IS HE THE LOUD ONE, OR THE ONE WITH THAT ODOR?

WHICH ONE WOULD YOU MOST LIKELY SAY YES TO?