

# A glimpse into the crazy, irrational mind of a woman



NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Aasha Mehreen Amin  
is joint editor at The Daily Star.

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

Women are crazy. Women are too emotional. Women are irrational. Women are too complicated and too difficult to understand. I agree with all these statements, even the last one. Now before my fellow comrades go hysterical (because women are prone to hysteria, remember) at such outright treachery from one of their ilk, do hear me out.

Women are crazy because they set the bar ridiculously high for themselves, with no thought of self-preservation. Why do they think they can have a full-time job and then come home to cook a dinner for the seven friends their clueless other half has impulsively invited, and later, in a somnambulant state, read Baby her favourite story for the 67th time and then finish the ironing before collapsing into bed? I mean, how insane would you have to be to stay up all night to make 100 parathas for your son, who's going off to college in Canada, so that the poor fellow will have

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something homemade in the freezer in case he gets snowed in or on those days when the fridge is like a barren igloo?

Women are too emotional. They cry oceans at the corniest film scenes and believe every sob story that is told to them, making them premier targets of beggars' syndicates and mediocre con artists. Of course, in most cases this empathy is well targeted, but there are also times it can backfire. Like the time you gave a loan to an office staffer whose mother apparently needed "a life saving operation" and after a year or so of no repayment and continuous waffling, you decided to just write it off as a bad debt that will never be paid. Later, you found out that the person was a compulsive gambler and your "help" only enabled the addiction. Sounds a bit like the state of our banking sector.

Women can be pretty irrational. No matter what they achieve, it is just not enough. They are constantly in guilt mode and refuse to completely believe in themselves. A woman may have reached the pinnacle of success in her field, say making it to CEO of a company, with her peers being all highly acclaimed men. She has won umpteen awards and is on all kinds of important male-dominated boards. But she still suffers from imposter syndrome and gets depressed at the laugh lines near her eyes or because she cannot get back to her pre-wedding weight.

Low self-esteem and female-hood are BFFs. Thus, there are women in their twenties and thirties with hourglass figures who still think that they need to lose weight and are old! The beauty standards set by the fashion and cosmetics industries, and society in general (dictated by mostly men), make sure this self-flagellation goes on in the 30s, 40s, 50s, and so on. The menopausal 50s constitute



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

the decade when self-loathing reaches its peak thanks to the hormonal roller-coaster rides, the attaining of the official Auntie or Khalamma title, the end of lustrous hair and buttery smooth skin, and the beginning of eternal belly fat. It also means becoming very high-maintenance, trying to conceal a myriad of unsavoury secrets: thinning, greying hair; droopy eyelids; that I'm-so-tired-of-everything look. Hence the cardinal rule for all males: no matter what age they are, NEVER EVER ask women how old they are.

Women are complicated, for sure. Sometimes they are so complex that even women don't understand women. But the male species seems to have a special gift for obtuseness where females are concerned. When a man asks his wife, "Are you upset that I didn't get you anything for our anniversary?" And she says, "Not at all," in an unusually shrill voice, it doesn't mean she is

magnanimous enough to overlook such an unforgivable oversight. It means she has put a big black mark next to his name on her mental list of grievances. Women's minds are just too hard to read. They will complain that they have to do everything in the house and the husbands are not of much help. But they will never be happy with the groceries their clueless mates have brought. This is because it's just not much fun to have to cut two huge katla and fit in a few months' worth of turnips in the fridge, after a whole day of keeping house. This is why men should shut off their brains when they go grocery shopping and just go with the "list."

Men should realise by now that women don't "say," they "expect." They expect men to forgo their daily evening adda with their buddies and instead talk to them about feelings and stuff. They expect minimal effort to show their proclaimed devotion on special

days even when they say they don't care about those things. They expect their partners to help with the dishes or put the kids to bed, and just allow them to feel human again. They expect frequent hugs and affectionate gestures even when they are 80 years old.

So agreed, we are sometimes overemotional, irrational, complicated, and a little crazy. But any guesses as to why we're such stressed-out timebombs? Could it be that women have to put up with the mind-blowing discrepancies birthed and nurtured by a universal system of male domination, in other words, the patriarchy? Could it be because this system requires women to look like Raquel Welch but behave like Mother Teresa? Could it be that women are required to be supermoms, super-wives, and super professionals while being given second class citizenship? Points to ponder during our once-a-year celebration of womanhood.

## Do women need the separate metro rail carriage?



Tasnim Odrika is a biochemist and a writer. She can be reached at odrika02@gmail.com

TASNIM ODRIKA

On February 20, Facebook was flooded with posts about how unbelievably crowded a metro rail platform was that day. One post in particular gained viral attention, narrating how hordes of men flooded into the women's compartment during the crowded commute and refused to leave. The writer of the post took pleasure in sharing that, in response, the women in the compartment rallied together, blocking the gates during stops to teach the men a lesson. She enthusiastically described the wholesome sense of girl power and unity that pervaded the compartment that day. This viral post triggered hundreds of other discussions, primarily centred around the question: why is there a separate women's compartment? And what purpose does it serve? Certain metro rail commuters thought it was unfair that women get to have a separate compartment even during peak hours, when men don't.

While the reasons behind having a women-only compartment might seem obvious to most, the existence of this seemingly magical compartment remains shrouded in mystery for some others. Before delving into that, let's take a closer look at what unfolded that day. According to multiple accounts, the metro rail platform was exceptionally crowded due to a delayed train. In a last-minute announcement, it was specified that the very last compartment was designated for women when usually it is the first compartment.

Initially, one might assume that the overcrowded setting led to confusion, with men inadvertently entering the women's carriage. However, as the train reached less crowded stations, and uncomfortable women (alongside the guards) requested the men to disembark or shift to other carriages, they adamantly refused to comply. The women in the compartment then resorted to blocking the gates and subsequently prevented the men from getting off at their stations. From that point onward, discussions unfolded regarding the perceived severity of the treatment these women imparted to the men that day. Some voiced their discontent, arguing that if the roles were reversed, men would not subject women to similar treatment. This debate eventually led to questioning the purpose of



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having a separate women's compartment.

In the online discourse, the separate compartment was painted as a privilege, prompting people to question why women, who are currently striving for equality, would desire such "special treatment." The conversation then expanded to include the debate about the need for designated seats for women on buses as well. Some argued that, in the past, men used to willingly offer their seats to women during crowded commutes,

but this practice has dwindled as women now perceive themselves as equals to men.

But Bangladesh is not the only country to employ designated women's compartments in metro trains. In countries such as India, Indonesia, Japan, and Mexico, there are women-only spaces in trains. Countries such as the UAE have also taken initiatives to introduce pink taxis driven by women for female passengers in several cities. Some

countries face severe sexual harassment in public spaces and are victims of institutional discrimination.

In Bangladesh, as per a 2018 research study by BRAC, a staggering 94 percent of women utilising public transportation reported instances of verbal, physical, and other forms of harassment. The severity and prevalence of sexual harassment in public spaces is one of the key deterrents to women's

spaces in place, women were found to be vulnerable to sexual harassment in buses predominantly occupied by men.

This is why when the Dhaka metro rail was inaugurated, and it was announced that a whole carriage would be reserved for women, relief seemed to spread among female commuters. Reports of women who typically relied on Uber rides or CNG-run auto-rickshaws for added safety now opting for the metro rail were common. However, the allure of this dedicated space is slightly diminished due to improper enforcement, as men continue to breach the designated compartment.

Access to safe public transportation and simply being in public without the fear of harassment constitute a fundamental human right, often denied to women in Bangladesh. In this context, the women-only compartment on the metro rail serves as a sanctuary, offering women a sense of security. Those who might have refrained from travelling due to fear of harassment now find solace in this designated "safe space." It's not an added privilege, but a necessity for ensuring women's basic rights.

So, let's ask ourselves this question:

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In 2024, do women still need a separate compartment on the Dhaka metro rail? In an ideal world, the answer would be "no." Not only does sex segregation of this sort not reflect privilege for women, it actually reflects gender inequality. However, in Bangladesh, where gender inequality and safety concerns for women persist, having a designated compartment is a step towards ensuring inclusivity of women in public spaces. On this International Women's Day, let's actively reinforce the presence of these existing "safe spaces" for women in our community to foster inclusivity.

equal participation in higher education and the labour force. In Bangladesh, buses have for long designated seats for women at the front, not with the assumption that women are less capable of standing but because standing in these crowded buses makes them more vulnerable to sexual harassment. Even then, these reserved seats are frequently disregarded by male passengers with little to no retaliation from other passengers. And, unfortunately, even with these designated

countries, such as Malaysia, also introduced women-only buses.

Creating these safe spaces for women is not restricted to public transport. One can find women-only community centres, banks, and clinics. "Safe space" is the keyword here as these places were not constructed to give women a leg up or provide them with an added privilege. What do the countries providing separate commuting spaces to women have in common? Women in all these