

Commuters. Characters. Chaos

RINI JOSHI



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For permissions requests or inquiries regarding this publication,
please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

www.BlueRoseONE.com

info@bluerosepublishers.com

+91 8882 898 898

+4407342408967

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Dedicated to;

The ones I cannot replace.

Metro: Quirks and Perks

Earlier, when the metro train had newly come up, it felt like luxury. The coaches were clean, stations quiet, people were cautious not to intrude in personal spaces, and contributed in their own ways to make the trip comfortable for all.

The only sound you heard were the announcements and occasional sound of an arriving train. A brief stir as people boarded and alighted, then the eerie returned, keeping the calm.

The train truly gave a sense of sophistication and convenience, making daily commuting a pleasant and elite experience. One felt premium. Passengers were few, mostly office-goers or college students. Managing was also easy. There was an unsaid moral code of conduct people stuck to. Each one kept in line with their basic civic sense.

Even if some tried to deviate from rules, societal pressure and constant monitoring by the metro staff and the public ensured discipline and an orderly system. The system was smooth and efficient and felt like royalty.

But gradually as the metro started connecting millions of people across the city, it had to compromise with its own decorum.

This growing swarming crowd brought in its own chaos and confusion.

Like every system has its own constraints, Metro is no different. The system ultimately had to yield to this turmoil.

In an attempt to becoming a lifeline to many, came the challenge of accommodating to the varied personalities of people also. The concept of crowd etiquette and respect for personal space just disappeared in the same crowd.

Vanished or invisible?

However, I believe people are innately good in nature and no one wishes to trouble anyone unnecessarily. But over time, familiarity can lead people to overlook or undervalue things. They take for granted what's easily available to them. Hence, they need constant reminders to adhere to rules; the same rules which have been in place for their own convenience. Being a daily traveller, I feel well-placed to comment on this.

As a regular commuter, I can say for sure that the metro ensures comfort and satisfaction for everyone. Irrespective of who is the passenger, the metro offers its benefits and services to all alike. But among the "all," there will always be a person completely acting out of line.

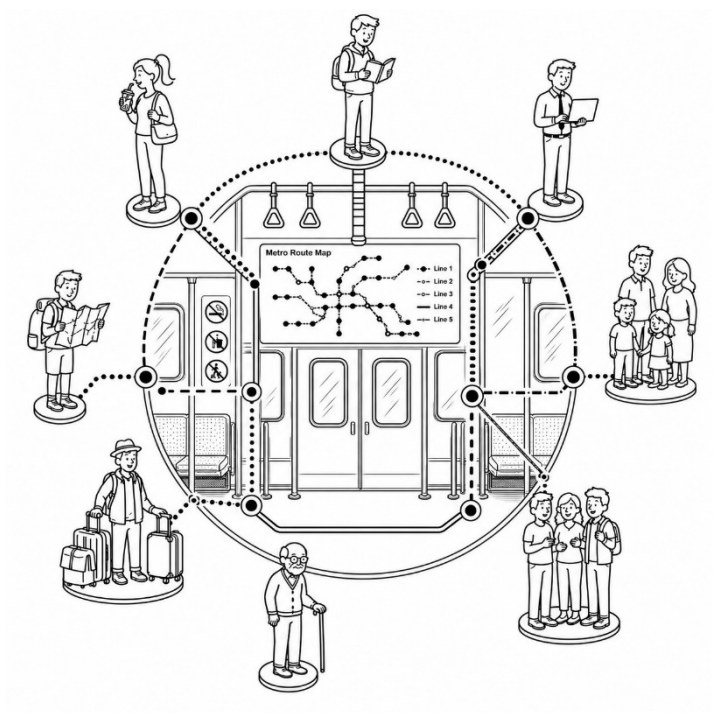
These quirky ones are interesting in their own ways. These gifted ones have a talent for turning a good mood upside down instantly and vice-versa too. They live in their own bubble, busy enjoying their own mischief.

Observing these passengers has become my own little adventure. Pure fun, no pun. A daily traveller's humorous diary events compiled in a book.

And after reading this book, you will enjoy being a part of this amusing journey too.

Varieties We'll Meet

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1.

The Foodie Ones

Oh! This lovely distraction—the aroma of sweet corn. Someone must have entered this coach with tasty, steamed, buttery, spicy, sweet corn. Holding up my drooling expression, I looked up nonchalantly, trying to locate the smell while pretending not to have noticed it. I saw a young, thin woman holding a disposable paper cup covered with a tissue and a heavy purse on her left shoulder. A piece of her scarf was half out of her purse. She looked like an office-goer—she had an ID card around her neck. Her hair was messy after her tiring day, her makeup faded, her face exhausted. She had found herself a seat. Paying no attention to the passengers around her, her eyes focused only on her tempting spicy corn, full to the top—food, her only relief.

I was so hungry and tired myself. To make it worse, she was sitting right in front of me. I couldn't control my salivating mouth; my eyes were fixated on her cup, my yearning expression clear on my face. Then she started eating that corn—yum. As she gobbled it, I noticed how her demeanour changed with each bite. She started to feel at ease; the snack was changing her mood. Sweet corn is my favourite—I wished I were her friend; she would have shared at least one spoon with me. I love to enjoy my food without someone watching me savour it, so I prefer eating alone and taking my time with it. I can't have it on the platform or standing near the stalls—with round, waist-high tables. I don't like to pack it for later; the food gets tasteless, and it kills the anticipation of enjoying it. The food loses its charm more than its taste—especially when you buy it on the metro platform. It's not really food, just snacks—sandwiches, burgers, French fries, coffee, corn, rolls—they get soggy, disfigured, cold, with toppings spilling out. But this young woman seemed to enjoy every bite.

There has always been a “no eating or drinking inside the coaches” metro rule, and yet there has always been someone openly defying it. The announcements in both understood languages, are loud and clear enough. Who’s listening? It’s not taken as seriously as the passenger’s approaching station announcement. You will still hear wrappers rustling, slurps of some drink, cans opening, fizzy drinks, peeling groundnuts, giggling, the snap of a lunchbox lid, steel spoons, folding paper bags, rounding foil into a ball, squeezing plastic cups, breaking plastic spoons, naughty chuckles if it’s a group, mumbling with food in their mouths, and open, shameless burps.

With these sounds come sticky fingers being placed on every spot the foodie touches, crumbs falling on the floor and being pushed behind to hide them, their endless ruminating mouth, brushing food off their clothes or lips. If our eyes connect, they stare as if we are the ones flouting the rules. Their tricks to act casual are; naughty nudging the friends if in a group, avoiding others by scrolling their phone or looking out the window, glancing up to check for their station, scanning for metro guards. Some eat a chip while pretending to look for something in their bag. Since it’s not a full-course meal, some pretend that eating small items like chocolates, biscuits, or nuts is permissible.

I have taken my time in all these years analysing them.

Since it’s an everyday occurrence and someone is always munching on a snack, you even know what someone is eating. You can identify different items just by smell, without looking up. I know if it’s a bakery item or a fried one, home-cooked food, oregano on a pizza, momo with its chutney, green chutney in rolls. I can even smell the flavours of chocolates, chips, or biscuits. The drink might be coffee or ginger tea. If there is mayonnaise in the sandwich, peri-peri sauce, mustard, or ketchup—I can tell. The aroma of the food and the satisfaction on people’s faces while they eat, makes me wish I had brought some for myself as well.

Equally true is the opposite: I am exposed so much to the same kinds of smells that it becomes overpowering, especially

when the aroma stays in the air inside the closed metro doors. The snack that once tempted me now makes me queasy. For a daily commuter like me, it might be an everyday struggle, but the foodie doesn't have to go through it.

Since I have nothing engaging to do inside the metro, I enjoy watching how these foodies behave—how a short metro ride can turn into a captivating experience if you carefully study a foodie's patterns. I am talking about those who use secretive tactics to fulfil their mission discreetly, trying to avoid the guards or the passengers' notice.

It's funny how a person can bring out all their skills when the need arises. You have no idea what mischievous talents or cleverness we all have inside us. Adults can be mischievous too—adventurous, playful, patient enough to wait for the right time to grab a bite. We have heightened observation skills and awareness. The methods we use to defy rules can be innovative and resourceful.

Foodies generally scan the whole coach, mostly looking for metro guards. Once the area is clear, their covert mission starts. If they enter with a solid food item, some people keep it in their bag while non-verbally telling others that they don't intend to eat it inside the metro. But subtly, during stations when people are busy moving in and out, they take a quick bite. They chew fast and take extra bites to last until the next station. Some hide snacks like nuts or candies in their pockets or the palms of their hands, sliding their hands in every minute or two to pop them in their mouths. Some pretend to look occupied reading a book or scrolling through their phones while nonchalantly taking bites. They act so casual about it, it's repulsive. Either you do it openly or you try to hide your act.

Some passengers get awkward about the obvious —their wrapper rustles when they are trying so hard to be secretive about it, the aroma of their food even they can't hide or lessen, a sudden “no eating” announcement when they are eating.

Their eyes survey, hands ready in action, demeanour hurried, body adjusted to balance cans or containers, eyebrows lifting randomly as if studying something, tucking a stray hair behind an ear, adjusting a sleeve or bag, stealing glances from passengers. If they seem to relish the food, their face changes from relief to calm. If a passenger catches them eating, some simply smile and look away. They want the passenger to understand the foodie.

The hungry foodies look as if they haven't had breakfast. Other hungry ones, like late office workers gobbling food, don't seem to savour the taste. Some eat slow on purpose, it seems as if they boarded the metro just to eat. They will slowly take out their container or item in hand, making sure the passengers are the audience to this scene. Then they take their time removing wrappers, tissue, or foil, ensuring the audience has a full view. Now they will blatantly see who's watching, look them in the eye, and take a bite. All this risk just to eat inside the metro. They don't seem starving- can't they wait an hour to eat at ease in their homes. I wonder what their reasons are. I don't want to be judgmental also playing detective does no one harm. These conversations are all in my head. What's wrong with being analytical? I have nothing better to do right now. I am too tired to think about something productive or serious—yes, this is how I like to refresh my mind: observing and coming to my own conclusions.

I wonder what appeals to these foodies.

An early morning missed breakfast, or being tired after finishing off 80 percent of this tiring day? Evening foodies want a quick bite before they gorge a full course at home. Couldn't they have snacks at stalls, kiosks, in the office, or nearby.

Maybe it's for the thrill, especially for young college students. There's quite an excitement in doing something slightly forbidden or frowned upon. That small "rule-breaking" spark makes each bite feel like an earned prize. Giggling and flaunting

their audacity among peers make them feel like a big shot, inflating egos –egos controlled entirely by peers.

This thrill is different for someone who finds joy in watching the train in motion—the trees outside, passengers waiting on the lit-up platform, colourful attire of people entering, many personalities, red light of cars stuck in jam during evenings, the dark underground route, glistening sunlight on windows in the morning, the clean blue summer sky, raindrops on the windows during the rainy season, fog playing hide-and-seek in winter, green breezy branches of trees swaying, the turning of the metro—for them eating is a psychological satisfaction. Like enjoying popcorns while watching a movie.

Although I empathize with those foodies do it for convenience; who have limited time at home and a long distance until their destination; it saves them time and eases stress. It's mostly the working mothers or students preparing for coaching classes. They should genuinely be allowed, I feel, but genuineness is subjective too. Food is an escape for these foodies.

The concept of ideal or idle time is true for many; how to pass it? —munch on something. Better to keep the mouth busy than the mind. For some, tasty food can be a mood relaxant. “Comfort food” is not just a saying. This behavioural coping mechanism, chosen by foodies –to ignore stressful situations at home, office, or life in general, can be understood if you have ever done “emotional eating.” So I have no complaints. In fact, not many complain either. And that is what empowers the maverick. Not that people don't notice or give non-verbal clues, but no one reacts because mavericks are shameless and would backfire. An unspoken agreement exists: as long as the eater is discreet and not disturbing anyone, no one objects. Especially when you see a senior citizen doing so—or mother trying to force food on her child as if it's her right inside a metro—this ill-mannerism or behaviour by both is simply ignored by others. Even metro guards let it go.

Others choose to be busy with their own thoughts, messages, or tired journeys home. Passengers can be timid also, trying to convince themselves that questioning a stranger about a small snack is unnecessary, even intrusive.

We all share the same emotions, yet how they emerge varies with our own mood and circumstances. This daily routine of foodies brings out irritation, ignorance, temptation, envy, and amusement in all of us at some point.

We as passengers might tolerate them on practical or psychological grounds. But how do these foodies feel, knowing they are flouting rules and earn passenger's scorn?

Some may be unaware, some choose to be unmindful, young teens or college students may feel victorious- disregarding rules and showing this off will boosting their ego in front of their friends; some may feel guilty but they console themselves that they have no choice but to break the rule, some get self-conscious when they are openly stared at, some are embarrassed that they have made the floor or the seats filthy. Their emotions also emotions; resonates with the ours. They are We only. You never know—we could be the same someday: a foodie inside the metro.

Thus, regardless of the reasons, the mission of the foodie continues.



2.

The Complaining Ones

Metro is not just a transit system it's a whole ecosystem. Ecosystem works on interdependence, Flow of energy and adaptation. The Train, The Passengers and The Staff all help in serving the community as a whole.

Connects not only places but also people. Daily encounters make strangers feel familiar and close. When I don't see them the next day, I find myself looking for them or thinking about them. The habitual route and faces lift up my spirit and I feel uplifted to take up the new challenges of the day. And for those travelling far, it's a third home- a brief pause to the outside chaos. Far from home or office tensions.

The complaining ones can turn this restorative peaceful ride into a mentally draining ordeal. Someone or the other is always complaining about one thing or another. I tend to focus on the positives and thus usually ignore these whining ones.

One day, I was having a rough day, and the person next to me was complaining loudly to their friend about something. The negativity in her tone, language and gestures was making me feel even low. She was so loud it was like she was talking inside my ears and like a woodpecker pecking my brain. I could not even change my seat. In a crowded metro, seat is more precious than your bag. Bag -thief you can still catch and locate or the door can close on them but Seat-that you can never get if you make the mistake of vacating them even for a moment.

On usual days I hardly listen to others around since I am so engrossed with my phone or immersed in my world, but today I thought I'd listen to see what went wrong for her-whose day was worse—mine or theirs?

Are the complaints of whining ones genuine enough? worth disturbing their own peace of mind or-others? Is it really necessary to share this with everyone? Do people even need to know? And then this gave me an interesting thought—why not explore all the things that makes these chronic complainers complain. What has made the metro moving therapy?

At our core, we share the same human nature, and our complaints arise from it alike; our circumstances and the situation we are in. However, what truly differs is the importance each of us assigns to them, depending on our perspective and what we choose to prioritize.

I have noticed environmental discomfort, human behaviour, system inefficiencies, or unmet personal expectations are the main causes of inconvenience to people.

We mostly complaints about other people's actions, attitudes, or lack of consideration. When the basic human norms aren't met, one may feel disrespected or ignored. We all want to be treated fairly. For some its more about a personal offense against them a matter of ego. This human behaviour will reflect in all aspects of social interaction; workplace, family and neighbours.

When I listen to the workplace complaints I feel as if they are saying exactly what's happening to me, they are saying out loud what I am usually thinking. My day doesn't start with a good morning it's the starts with emails that I had been sent after office hours and your pendency starts reflecting from there, this adds to the already workload and stress—The boss who wants to the have task done by the time his eyes blinked and then micro-manage for MS Word font size 10 or 12, calibri or times new roman while he goes out for a smoking and brag to his like-minded friend. Well, these are the problems of almost everyone, there was no point playing it like a loop for others. Instead ask for solutions to your friend who might be facing the same issues- together you can solve it better.

Then there are the ones who have complaints only about certain person in their life; in-laws mostly and the adjustments to the extended family. The partner issues; who's doing the household chores, who's a spendthrift and who's a thrift, annoying habits one tolerates. complain about children- well I would say more of concern about children they want to talk about-how their child's academic performance is dropping, their diet and health issues, how their have started lying and spending more time with mobile or friends, schools are becoming machines. These ones make you feel as if you are watching a reality show.

Another level of performers here are the ones who expose their health issues in the public. They will tell you every symptom, their medicines, the hospital they are visiting, the sounds they make to add to describe their conditions. If you have been observant throughout your daily travel with these ones, you have become half a doctor yourself.

The coach have become a concert of funny noises. It's gross when someone try to imitate the sound their stomach makes when its upset or during and after washroom. Who needs to know what these people had last night. No one needs updates on your burp or bloating.

Then these Coughzillas- who are talking and complaining about their repetitive thunderous cough and how they are allergic to so many things that might have put them in this condition. It's a metro coach not a clinic. A complaining one with a joint issue will definitely a grimace on their face, have their back slightly twisted on a side with hands supporting this contorted body. Cracking, Gurgle, Groaning, Popping, Sighing, Squeaking, Snaping-a complete soundboard. It's contagious and your facial expressions starts reacting on its own.

The only complaining ones who actually impact me most are the ones complaining about life style diseases. High sugar, Blood pressure problems, how the kidneys have got effected, heart blockages due to cholesterol, Fatty liver etc. Listening to their suffering and enduring tales on medicines, ICU, sacrifices,

hospitals, scans, injections, surgeries make me disheartened. It is an unwelcoming reminder about my own health concerns and makes me question my own life choices. Having to leave my love for food, naps, and procrastination makes me feel so hopeless. And now I am basically feeling guilty about enjoying the pleasures in life. These complaining ones have managed to change every one's mood from delight to despair.

Some fun are these low-budget weather broadcasting anchors. They enter the metro as if they survived a natural disaster. Either they will be fanning themselves frantically in summers or trembling like a malfunctioning appliance in winters. Then repeat the weather forecast outside and to almost every person who is present inside or entering the train. Chanting the weather updates to everyone every time isn't going to change the weather at all nor make you less prepared for it. This is going to happen every year. Every year the weather breaks some record for being the hottest or the coldest year.

The metro is shielding the passengers from otherwise hassles of other public transport like getting stuck in traffic, getting exposed to weather conditions, and dealing with unpredictable delays. And if this metro, which offers a consistently temperature-controlled environment isn't enough for you, you are free to become your own thermostat.

The most shocking complainer ones are the ones complaining about the metro ride itself- are they the regular riders or the occasional ones- criticizing the same train which is working to make their lives smooth and easier?

A metro train ride is generally predictable and reliable, designed to follow fixed schedules and routes with minimal disruptions.

The occasional travellers complain are general discomforts not related to specific pattern or issues. These may be base be based on an emotional or an immediate problem during their metro ride. Everyone is using the metro. If it were really that bad,

would everyone still go? Ask a regular commuter the importance of a metro.

Without the metro, navigating a city would become chaotic, time-consuming, and stressful due to traffic jams and long distances. The system's punctuality, coverage, and affordability make it indispensable. The metro enables millions of people to maintain their routines efficiently. Complaints often stem from unfamiliarity rather than real inefficiencies. So, these occasional travellers complain can be ignored unless they are genuine.

The regular ones are more informed and precise so they complain about specific operational issues. Understanding that no system is completely free of issues, a calm and cooperative attitude helps maintain a smoother experience for everyone. While occasional delays or technical issues may occur, they are not a daily occurrence. Regular commuters should be assured that any issue affecting the majority will be addressed. Hence, they are expected to remain patient during delays or inconveniences.

Any system, in general, is designed to make processes smooth, predictable, and convenient for people. It is meant to serve the very people that made it function. But when it breaks down, it doesn't just stop working—it affects people and the normal flow of their daily lives. People lose faith in the system; systems often link multiple parts of a process. A malfunction can disrupt this flow, build frustrations and reduce productivity as whole.

Every one at some point of time in their life will deal with inadequacy; corruption related, bureaucratic delays, outdated technologies, poor accountability, resource misallocation and inflexibility. So, when the time energy and efforts of people is getting wasted, their displeasure is justified. Thus came the self-appointed guardians of the society who need to ensure that everything is perfect and in place. They feel it's their moral duty to voice out and comment on every flaw of this system.

The complaining ones here are just describing the problem to others. And that too, to an already exhausted audience. These people travelling in metro are not the decision makers, they are the decision followers.

The metro train is not the right place or the right platform for venting out. Psychologically to them, pointing this defect in the system will somehow make things right or atleast their energy spent on highlighting the inefficiencies will be justified. Their outburst here is more like a noise rather than a signal. These complainers may be constructive critics who are more observant than the others and may have solutions to the problems or maybe good change agents. But the setting they choose to rant out is not working for anyone's benefit. They seem more like chronic complainers. Moreover, their lack of specificity on problems weakens their complains.

The complaining one's demeanour can put a damper on everyone's spirit and spoil everyone's mood. one already starts feeling disheartened. Their face highlights their tense eyebrows which are raised, eyes roll or narrow around, their lips in sarcastic smiles. The tone of voice is monotonous and whiny low pitched and will use words like "always"" never"" un fair" "good for nothing". Will keep repeating or muttering some episodes of misfortunes in their lives blaming the system. The defensive body language geared up for a fight.

People often complain when there's a gap between expectation and reality. When what happens doesn't meet what they hoped or anticipated, it creates frustration, disappointment, or stress, which often gets expressed through complaining. Complaining in a metro is like encroachment, because it affects others in a shared space. Emotions are after all energy.

The complainer's restlessness energy spreads out like waves affecting everyone in the train. The listener gets even more stressed and anxious. There is an emotional fatigue causing irritability and influencing the outlook towards life. It causes plain

pessimism. The others around absorb the negativity without even realizing it, will normalize negativity and even advertise it.

It is similar to second hand smoking- you don't get to enjoy even half the experience but damage done to you is double.

3.

The Trashy Fashion Ones

All that glitters is definitely not gold; it may be the glaring, flashy clothes some people enter with—the showstopper in our metro ride. As a daily commuter, I get to enjoy being a part of some runaway fashion show every day.

Sadly, this “Trashion” show is more about trash and less about fashion. Amusingly, our own threshold for this trash fashion is increasing day by day.

Earlier, clothing often acted as a visual identifier of a person’s social status, profession, or region. Appearance or attire used to signal discipline or care. Just by looking at someone’s clothing, you could often “read” a lot about them. You could tell an office-goer who dressed in formals or a business suit, with properly ironed tucked-in shirts, polished shoes, combed hair, blazers, and ties—these all invoked a sense of professionalism and credibility. You looked at a teacher modestly dressed in traditional attire or a formal pant and shirt, and it automatically created a sense of respect. Medical professionals in bright white lab coats invoked belief, while legal professionals in white shirts and black coats commanded authority and confidence.

Clothing suited to each role isn’t just random; it’s functional, symbolic, and socially meaningful. It instills a sense of trust and reassurance. Seeing a group of people in uniform gave us a feeling of unity and teamwork. The whole system felt simple and harmonious.

Earlier, people used to treat the metro almost like a formal event. There was an unspoken expectation of decency. Even in crowds, a sense of mutual respect and restraint prevailed. Boarding a train felt like stepping into a shared, respectable space,

where everyone subtly upheld social norms. The metro used to be a place where one would dress in elegance. People earlier, were particular about how they carried themselves in public. It was an extension of public civility. Naturally, a basic social standard was followed that went without saying for all. Manners, style, and decorum were the code.

This was also because the metro was primarily associated with office workers and students. These groups had the most regular and predictable travel patterns. Office workers needed a fast, reliable way to commute to their workplaces every day, while students travelled to schools and colleges at fixed times. Both relied on the metro for its speed, punctuality, safety, and convenience, which helped them avoid traffic congestion that other transport modes faced. But it was relatively expensive compared to buses or local trains, making daily travel unaffordable for many. Moreover, the metro network was limited, covering only a few parts of the city, so people living farther from stations found it inconvenient.

Overtime the metro has become far more accessible and inclusive, welcoming every type of traveller. The expansion of routes and the opening of new stations have connected people from different areas, making it easier to travel across the city. Earlier the metro which used to invoke refinement and class now feels purely functional. More than just a means of transport, it is a shared public space that brings together people from diverse social and economic backgrounds, reflecting the changing urban lifestyle.

As metro networks have grown, more stations have been built across the city, making it easier for everyone to use—literally everyone. Ironically, with the metro crowded with people of all types, rules regarding behaviour and public conduct are almost non-existent or ignored.

While the system ensures safe travel from point A to B, with stern rules and announcements for that, there are hardly any checks on decorum, dress, or social etiquette. Commuters are in

casual or shabby clothes—t-shirts with stains, worn shoes, pajamas, or oversized hoodies. Hygiene, grooming, and dress seem optional. These are largely left to personal choice, inevitably leading to casualness in people's demeanour. Ironically again, this is not the case when they use other means of transport. People tend to dress more modestly and behave more politely—perhaps due to smaller crowds, more personal space, or feeling someone is watching in a managed setting.

I am not blaming the metro or undermining the efforts of its staff, who work hard to ensure safety and smooth operations. However, with such a large and diverse crowd using the system every day, it becomes practically impossible to monitor every passenger or enforce rules on everyone. With the sheer volume of people, it is difficult to maintain perfect order or ensure that decorum, social etiquette, or personal behaviour standards are followed consistently. In such a situation, lapses in manners or casual behaviour are almost inevitable—not due to negligence but because it's not possible to keep a check on each and every one. So, the trashy clothing ones or the trash ones roam around unrestrained.

Of all the kinds of clothing, I haven't yet understood the concept of body-hugging clothes. It's basically your naked-coloured body. These clothes squeeze every contour of the body. These aren't your spandex gym clothes, so where are they going? These days, office formals have come to casual formals, and college clothes flaunt all sorts of asymmetrical cuts—but this sticky dress? What institute is endorsing these types of clothes? Even if you are fit and healthy, with an ideal 10/10 figure, and love your body, how does it matter to a person with a 9:30 a.m. meeting, a person visiting a bank, or a teacher rushing for her classes travelling for actual work? The six-pack abs and sculpted shoulders popping out through tight shiny clothes—their attempt to show off their gym body—would be appreciated in an international pageant. Try there. Imagine an impressionable young boy revising for his exam and a young lady enters wearing a body-hugging blouse. You can see the folds of her

undergarments. Is it appropriate? This definitely isn't female freedom. It's more about the place than the actual dress. Who knows, if you were wearing this at a beach or in the gym, it wouldn't have been so eye-catching.

These skin-tight costumes you wear in the name of body expression aren't impressing anyone.

And what's up with the new fashion of flaunting your undergarments? There's a reason they are called "under" garments. Everyone knows their purpose, even a child, so what's the reason to display them? The boldly printed brand label on the thick strip of your undergarment looks repulsive rather than appealing. Endorsing an undergarment brand looks purposeful only on a TV commercial. You may be wearing the most expensive brand in the world, but inside a metro, you are just another regular commuter. No one is going to give you VIP treatment just because you can afford a luxury brand. This is not the definition of rich, if that's your plan.

Some trashy individuals put all these efforts into their saggy pants just to show their undergarments—and they are so cool with it. If their pants fall off, would they be embarrassed or pleased about accomplishing their goal of brand endorsement? I don't know what sort of crowd they are trying to impress in a metro train during office and school hours. That blue panty strip outside your jeans—did you see a mirror before leaving your house? What purpose does intentionally showing off a tight orange bralette strap serve at 9 a.m. in the morning metro rush?

Some trashy ones take this fashion further, pairing it with a backless or very airy tiny top, ensuring the entire bra is visible from at least some angle. It seems the tiny or backless top is worn just to show the undergarments inside. Don't use your lingerie or boxers to remind us of the importance of garments. No one needs a tutorial on why underwear exists. Others flaunt their underwear or bodies in see-through dresses. Men wearing these "cellophane" t-shirts with nipples peeking through is disgusting.

Another example of trashy fashion is wearing briefs or boxers as shorts or even just a bralette. The first time I saw someone in just their briefs, a few days later a girl in just a yellow bra. Just because these briefs are colourful and patterned doesn't mean they can pass off as actual shorts. Are they aware they are wearing briefs or bras in a fully loaded metro? Are these people sleepwalking? Otherwise, why would someone in their conscious mind do this? At first, I honestly thought they were mentally disturbed. But encountering more instances made me think this is the latest fashion I am not aware of—extreme boldness.



It made me question whether I have gotten too old for this generation. Have I become too conservative? Seeing their brazen audacity made me feel out of place. Is this the ascending or descending order of trashy fashion? First come body-hugging clothes, then showing a bit of undergarments, and now, to top it all, entering the metro in just underwear.

If it's about free will and expression, then even lechers may think they have a justified reason for their behaviour. Is it okay if you are subjected to outright lewd comments about your body or the hugging dress you are wearing? Is it alright if you get

unwanted attention from passengers who weren't even noticing you in the first place?

Sadly, our society still isn't free of predatory behaviour by certain individuals. It is already hard to identify these people and the lurking danger—you know you will eventually get out of the metro. Why put yourself in that spot?

The ones I feel should be monitored and screened thoroughly in metros are those who carry hatred or agendas on their clothes—racial slurs, provocative messages, vulgar graphics, violent images, or controversial symbols. These individuals are a class apart from the nude trashy ones. The nude trashy ones give their nude show a name like the latest fashion trend—it is vulgar but at least not intimidating or threatening. The trashy ones displaying hatred messages or racial slurs are dangerous and incite fear. Extremists are scared of losing nothing and can go to any extent to propagate their agendas. They are so brainwashed; talking to them is like signing your own death warrant. I just pray that they don't sit near me—what if they don't like what I am watching on my mobile or any of my other activities? I am scared not only for myself but for everyone inside the coach and the metro station at large. What if there is a whole gang and they start a riot right there? The violent images on their t-shirts—blood, killings, skeletons, or someone burning—make my heart pound with fear.

The racial slurs written on their black hoodies covering their heads terrify me—what if I am one of the racial types they are targeting? It's an unsafe feeling in my own country. Now I can imagine how fellow countrymen feel when racially targeted in a foreign land—a land they consider home. People wearing clothing that promotes hate speech or controversial political symbols should not be allowed entry. Letting them in is courting trouble. It's only a matter of time before they act.

Equally trouble-inviting but not threatening are those displaying suggestive vulgar messages. They think showing cartoon characters in compromising positions is funny. These

tops citing a big F or F**** using asterisks—do you expect the reader to applaud themselves knowing the word? In fact, it makes them feel cheap. What will a parent traveling answer if their curious child asks them to fill in the blanks? If the child searches themselves, they open a Pandora's box. Even worse, young ones popularize taglines like “Bad Boy Energy,” “Glam-Doll,” “Chick,” “Sexy Babe,” “Baddie,” or “Available Tonight.” This misleads younger children and sways peers to follow suit. When it comes to fitting in or being “cool” with friends, parents have no chance explaining right or wrong. Moreover, anyone wearing these slogans doesn't really have a purpose to be anywhere. Which institution encourages these types of people? Where exactly are they traveling to in the metro?

These trashy ones like to express themselves through stylish, colourful, bold, graphic clothing or accessories. Accessories are no better than the clothes. Either the effort went into statement clothes or statement accessories, but it is clear they attempted to get ready, whatever their style. They didn't just roll out of bed.

But some trashy ones did. They just woke up and entered the metro. But where are they even going? With this unkempt, sloppy look, it doesn't even seem like they woke up—they just opened their eyes while still asleep and walked in. Their eyes are glazed, faces still have sleep lines, dried food stains on their cheeks or lips from the day before, random dirt marks, wax in their ears, some grey secretion. Hair ruffled and greasy, mud covering forehead, eyes, or ears. Fabric stained red, yellow, brown, or black. Clothes rumpled with wrinkles as if rolled into a ball and unfolded for wearing. Fabric hanging from t-shirts, broken buttons or zippers, muddy and smelly shoes, worn-out heels, holes, undone laces, torn parts of shoes. Dandruff falling on clothes, stubble on face. Posture lethargic, shoulders slouched, fidgeting or restless, disengaged, apathetic or unconcerned. Even hiding in a corner, sweaty, sour body odour chokes the compartment. Luckily, the metro is clean; efforts keep it so, otherwise flies and cockroaches would swarm.

It's uncomfortable for many passengers, irritating, though some may feel empathetic. Some interpret messiness as a sign of struggle, loss, or sacrifice, creating their own backstory and justifying apathetic behaviour. These unkempt ones appear without aim or purpose, making them frightening. Their social alienation causes fear rather than empathy. Those indifferent to their existence may extend this hatred to surrounding objects—a directionless person can be a potential threat.

While dressing up is a matter of personal choice and appropriate wear is subjective, but deep down we all intuitively know the difference between what is acceptable and what is not in public.

The number of trashy and flashy individuals has increased so much that seeing many more like them on a daily basis isn't shocking anymore. We are visually bombarded with reels, shorts, ads, and online trends, so now we no longer feel odd seeing indecency around us. This visual overload has reduced our social sensitivity and lowered our own standards. Thus, people choose to overlook traditional standards of modesty and style, accepting revealing or sloppy outfits. "All is fair" or "anything flies" in the name of comfort or casual dressing. People have accepted trashiness in clothing as individual freedom. The term freedom is now used loosely and with anything; choosing to do whatever in the name of individual freedom. So, people are wary of each other and think it's best to avoid arguments and conflicts in metro. Squabbling in the metro causes not only inconvenience but also tension. It's either a time we peacefully want to go to our workplace or calmly return to our homes after an already stressful day. Many think that dressing up well is suited only to an occasion and requires effort. Since their routines are repetitive, they feel there is no longer need to dress up well. But since when did clothes considered indecent once come to be accepted as casual or style? People usually avoid this type of casual clothing in other means of transport. Probably because in metro there is so much crowd which means strangers. The anonymity in this crowd unlike the other means of transport reduces your pressure to dress

up knowing that there's little risk of social feedback. Sometimes there's practical constraints due to which people avoid delicate or expensive clothing like long standing, walking, climbing stairs, uncomfortable sitting or standing when the train is crowded. But then again, one is not talking about wearing comfort clothes, expensive or delicate clothes, the question here is about decency in clothing at a public place. And how uneasy it can be for commuters of all age groups.

Dressing well isn't just about creating a good impression—it has advantages for oneself as well. Don't you feel more confident and uplifted? You feel ready to face challenges. It connects you socially; people get drawn to you. Every human secretly craves appreciation and compliments—they elevate self-worth. A nicely dressed person strengthens relationships, and people view them and their opinions seriously. A well-groomed person automatically encourages respect. Most importantly, a positive self-image motivates you to become a better version of yourself. There's a reason people pay for grooming classes. Clothes aren't merely about style, fashion, or brand; it's about cleanliness, maintenance, fit, coordination, and appropriateness for occasion and place. They act as visual cues, giving much information about a person without words. A well-curated appearance conveys seriousness, competence, and awareness of the occasion, subtly shaping how others perceive and respond.

Some argue that those who pay attention to clothes or appearance are superficial or judgmental and have a shallow mindset, which needs “fixing your own mindset first.” The truth is, humans are biologically wired to respond to external stimuli, and much of what we feel—happiness, desire, moods, expression, gestures, voice, noise, motivation—is influenced by the world around us. We are inherently visual and social creatures. This becomes especially relevant in shared public spaces like metros, where people from diverse backgrounds, age groups, and sensitivities come together.

Dressing appropriately in public environments doesn't mean suppressing individuality; it reflects an understanding that we are part of a collective space. Public places are shared spaces. Just as we expect others to behave in ways that don't cause discomfort, the same awareness can guide our choices. It's about balance—between personal freedom and social responsibility. It's about recognizing that we are all participants in the same social fabric.

The reality is that we live in constant interaction between inner and outer worlds. We work, strive, and push ourselves largely for material and social gains. Society influences us, but we are also part of that society. It's a loop. Our behaviour contributes to the environment we live in, and that same environment shapes us.

Placing the entire responsibility on individual mindset while ignoring the impact of external factors has no logic. If everything were purely internal, why would so much of our happiness be tied to external things—homes, cars, achievements, recognitions, hobbies, fitness, health, food, jewellery, shopping, technology, travel, or social connections? The list is endless.

Ultimately, we cannot place the burden entirely on “fixing the mind,” nor can we ignore the influence of the external world. Both are interconnected.

So, respect the public and its opinion, because you too play a role in it.

4.

The Chatty Group Ones

A sudden, irritating voice woke me up; this chaotic noise of college-goers continuously laughing, just got inside the metro. My eyelids were heavy with sleep. Their sudden, excited voices almost drilled into my skull.

Why- my coach? I was really dozy and just wanted to go back to sleep. Imagine sleeping peacefully, and a horn blew right into your ears. They were talking childishly, mocking each other. Boys talking to impress the crowd in the metro or the girls around, and the girls talking loudly to impress the boys.

My home is too far from my office; the travel from office to home takes 2 hours, and I have to switch between 2 metros. I just want to sleep quietly and make use of this time. At home, other pressures are waiting, so sleeping is more important than gold to me. I can't read, eat, talk, or work on laptops or notebooks like many others. The anxiety in me, the moving train—doesn't really fit this into my style of travelling.

The seats in the middle are most uncomfortable for me—I, as a short person with legs barely reaching the floor, find it even more difficult to sleep comfortably since I am always disbalanced, height-wise and also due to my obese torso. So I am like a ball, all piled up and vulnerable to fall. And it becomes uncomfortable also when you are falling foolishly onto others; sometimes, for me, my saliva drips. For some societal reasons, I have to avoid this embarrassing scene, as it makes me look less of a girl and my character being judged.

Most of the corner seats are also reserved—for disabled, old, or pregnant ladies, or something like that. I support this, but then it's the best place to sleep. Only a few lucky times do I get the

corner seats which are unreserved, and I can cling to the glass and sleep peacefully, like no one's watching. Since my saliva would drool from my right or left depending on the side my head tilts, the glass covers this scene too, and in this process I can still feel girly.

But these chatty ones, usually traveling in groups of students or office colleagues, often stand close together near the door or sit in a row, leaning toward each other as they talk. They talk loudly, constantly teasing, laughing openly, and reacting dramatically to every story shared among them.

The student ones— their conversations jump quickly from one topic to another: college gossip, funny memories, weekend plans—each person eager to add something before the other speaks, so they raise their voice even more, and then the other does the same, creating a clamour. Just a mixture of sounds and no words actually. You can't really make out what they are talking about, that too so loud. They just want to finish their conversations or topics before each one reaches their stations.

Then there are office colleagues too, looking both exhausted and relieved that work is finally over. Their formal appearance— shirts slightly wrinkled, ID cards still hanging from their necks, and bags filled with laptops. One of them begins complaining about an endless meeting that could have been an email, while another dramatically imitates their boss's serious voice, making the whole group burst into laughter. Someone else joins in with a story about a small mistake at work that somehow turned into a big problem. Their voices rise with excitement. They look absolutely relieved and done with it. Free from the pressure of that particular day. "Workday zombies" magically transform into loud, chaotic children in a playground.

Around them, I see the fellow passengers trying to show how disturbed they are—quietly shifting seats, raising eyebrows, or hiding behind their phones. It's amusing sometimes how they are in their safe little world, safe in the sense that if some passengers say something, the whole group would either ignore,

fight back, or support each other in the group. If they ignore what the passengers said, it's embarrassing for the passenger, so a person like me would simply curse or abuse them, but stay quiet. Some passengers, me too, often pretend not to listen to these noises while secretly hearing every detail of their gossip. I like to eavesdrop on the conversations. Everyone is buzzing, but no one is talking. The only thing you can tell is whether they are office goers or students, mostly college ones.

Sometimes, I like to simply make my peace with them, deciding that the only survival tactic is to pull out my headphones and watch something online, pretending the chaos didn't exist. But these videos play the same type you once scrolled or watched. They don't even suggest something new. So even these videos become irritating over time.

Sometimes, when I am not sleepy, I long for that kind of carelessness, that freedom to talk and be loud without a single thought for others—wishing I could be there, unrestrained. The rest of the metro is calm otherwise, people scrolling phones or staring out the window, while this tiny bubble of noise is dancing in its own oblivious universe. Each person feels important. It brings back memories to me, remembering my own college days or office chatter, and then feeling envious looking at the other group. They are strangers to you, but this human connection seems to unite me with them too. No point in getting bothered or annoyed with them; I would want that too sometimes. These chatty groups must feel the same about others if alone in the metro. You can't really call them strangers now. Some of their joys, anxieties, and regrets feel almost as if you are living them yourself. It evokes my good side, plainly enjoying their childlike prattle and shared experiences.

These chatty ones are completely carefree, in their own bubbles, unaware that twenty quiet passengers are also there watching them. The chatty group in the metro seems to live in their own little world. They talk and laugh like nothing else exists, nothing is important; it's only the present they have. They

forget the quiet they will have alone once they get down at their stops or get separated from each other one by one. Yet they all are giggling and snorting laughs, sharing stories and jokes only they understand, making their bubble feel even closer. It's fun to hear office drama and connect it with your own, making you nostalgic about your own college days when your group was the troublemaker, and people tolerated you.

In the mornings, it is a different experience with the chatty ones, and in the evening, when you are tired, it's a different one. If your usual long monotonous route is calm on other days, these chatty ones seem to create a bubble of energy.

When you are absolutely drained and burned out in the evening, this lively group brings out the evil in you—beat them with a stick. Apart from eating, drinking, and other announcements, why can't there be a "quiet please" announcement too? Crowd doesn't have to necessarily mean chaos.

If it's an evil "do wrong" feeling you have about this screeching noise of the chatty group, the almost urge to literally kick them, blow a loud trumpet into their ears, or punch them—you try to remind yourself that feeling irritated doesn't make you a bad person—it's just a natural human reaction, and then it weighs less heavily on your conscience. You feel a burden off your shoulder; you aren't a bad person at all. Realizing that you are not the only one having these emotions, and that it's okay if you also have stressful situations, there are others like you too. You share the space with all humans being alike.

And when you think we all are the same, equally true is the fact that it's heart-wrenching to know that it can make you feel less unique and that your life isn't really that special. You are a drop in the ocean, and the ocean is seen only in totality, not by measuring drops. You aren't a drop in a dropper where each drop holds its value. Yes, you are irreplaceable, indispensable.

You wonder if your laughter, your pain, your memories, are really yours. You are invisible I feel; sometimes I feel so safe in it, and sometimes it makes me lonely.

But if you are happy or at peace with your situation, and at a phase where you are enjoying these human commotions in the train, their energy makes you feel alive. You are reinvigorated and refreshed. Their silly jokes make you smile too. It makes you feel so positive about life—how you feel oneness with them, how this same screeching noise makes you realize that if there's bad, there's good too, there's hope too.

We need each other just as we are; let go and enjoy the flow.

5.

The PDA; Touchy Couples Ones

And it's sometimes when you board the metro during afternoons, during the college hours or on weekends, you meet the touchy couple kinds. These are mostly young teenagers who have sneaked out of their homes. They seem relieved to get out of their homes.

Touchy ones are of every age, but in the metro it's the college ones, where it's the hormones riding them more than the responsibilities. The moment they enter the coach, it's not exactly the seat they will be looking for. Unlike many of us, finding a seat in the metro is the biggest accomplishment and the best part of that day. You may have been awarded any prize in your office or other workspace or at any level, but the actual joy of finding a whole seat to yourself after fighting the mob, is the only real achievement. Otherwise, to hide your embarrassment, you just pretend you really didn't care about the seat or that you weren't even looking for a seat in the first place even if your distance in the metro is 1 hour. I abuse curse inside, eyeing for the seat, subtly watching the movements around and the gestures of people who seem like they might get down at the next station or the next station, and questioning my luck all throughout this drill.

But these touchy couples seem to love this mob that they rushed in with; they look for corners only, which is equally difficult to get. They wish to be discreet since they have a lot of public displays of affection to complete. Discreet in a metro? I don't know what they are so confident about. Sometimes when I have a seat and this couple is around me, I love to watch the boldness and shamelessness of this romance. The way they touch each other is absolutely not love; it's just raging hormones. These hormones want to fulfill their desires, but these poor couples are

too restricted at home or by societal boundaries, so they have to be shameless somewhere. And without bothering about who's watching or what others are thinking, these touchy ones just focus on touching each other. Time is running for them.

I wonder what excuses they must have made at home for their endeavours: studying for exams, group projects, left the assignments or books with a friend, hanging out with a group of friends—can't say just a friend; the word "group" would have been used. These days even gym or health classes is a plausible excuse. If these couples are especially in a metro for open displays of so-called affection, then they must have been inventive and crafty with excuses.

So, the moment the touchy ones enter a coach, they are simply determined to find the corner spaces, mostly the door, where the boy will lean over the girl, absolutely covering her torso with his body. The girl is glued to the boy, so much so that you can only watch the contours of her body—not even the side of her face or torso, just the outline of her figure. Their hands are tightly interwoven, and the boy's eyes drip lust. One partner might place an arm loosely around the other's waist or shoulders, pulling them closer when the coach gets crowded. One might hold the overhead pole with one hand while the other arm wraps loosely around their partner's waist. The girl knows the boy's intention and will provoke him either by resting her body on his shoulders, his chest, or lowering her voice to whispers. The boy, already lurking for his chance, will grab her or kiss her. Their legs are angled in some degrees, twisted around each other. If the girl is so brazen about it, why should the boy let his chance go? Then he will try to hug her, and not in a nice cuddling way; trying to be sneaky about their behaviour, knowing that people will overlook this indecency.

If they get seats, this obscenity will still continue. Just the angles and positions change; now everything has to be done sideways. Their hands are rarely apart. Fingers may be intertwined, or one person's hand rests on the other's arm, knee,

or back. Sometimes they slowly trace circles on their partner's hand or wrist while talking quietly. The boy waits for a moment to fix a strand of hair or adjust her scarf; the girl twirls her fingers over the boy's t-shirt. When the train stops suddenly, they instinctively hold onto each other for balance rather than the pole. I have never held a person next to me for balance or stopping myself from a fall, even though my legs rarely reach the floor, and I am always the most disbalanced. The boy and girl are infatuated. I have rarely noticed a relaxation or affection of any kind during these PDA episodes. They smile often, maintain long eye contact, and occasionally laugh at something only they seem to understand. Sometimes they share small, private moments—showing something on a phone screen, whispering in each other's ear, or playfully nudging—after all, all they want is touch.

They know they are being watched. Why would one want to miss such a movie, that too right in front of your eyes? Real theatre. You might watch and enjoy these scenes in the movies on your own quietly, where you will not be judged about it. But here, when it's right in front of your eyes and you behave like you have no choice but to watch these couples, no one is going to judge you, and you become equally brazen about it. Nothing is going to matter to these touchy ones—strangers, announcements, passengers' constant movement, quietness in the metro, chaos in the crowd, staring judging eyes of fellow people; these couples seem wrapped up in each other, ignoring the others knowingly. They pretend as if what they are doing is something casual, and their body language comes naturally with being a couple.

Sometimes it's the thrill—almost forbidden touch in public—that triggers adrenaline. It's subtle enough to not get anyone's attention, but just naughty enough to feel exciting. The romantic rebels. The rules of society cannot stop their madness or passion. The shackles of society aren't strong enough to contain them. They are on a mission and are hunters for the perfect space, corner, or seat, sharing snacks, sharing the same Bluetooth leads, using bags and jackets as covers to touch each other, adjusting their postures even if completely contorted,

It evokes in me so many emotions depending on my mood that day, or the time of the day, or the situations back home or in the office. Also, it depends on what kind of couple they look like: are they college ones, neighbours, long distance ones, friends with benefits, office colleagues, tuition ones, extramarital ones. the touchy one's the type and originality in the way they touch each other, how interesting they make their displays, are they loud or sly. How they are dressed up, what they are wearing, is it revealing, is it inviting, is it accessible to the partner? Also, what age they are in. It's mostly the young, unmarried ones; they don't seem to disgust so much. You can feel their helplessness, seeing them fail their own mind control. Are they coming from restricted, conservative homes? Or too permissive homes where it's ok to stray and flow with their pubescent hormones.

The touchy ones don't realize that their own hormones are distracting them; crucial periods of career building are being traded with their own body control. But to them, they think the time to engage in PDAs in the metro is finite. It's actually this time that is limited for them. Sometimes it's older ones also. For them, it is assumed that they know exactly what they are doing and the consequences. But touchy ones all come with a common intention: open unapologetic touch.

Sometimes I simply like to enjoy watching the kinds that come. Some come fighting over an issue, arguing about something, but when they find a corner, the fights turn into covert touching. It leaves you completely puzzled how they paused this fight just to focus on PDA, and then the moment they are out of the metro, they resume their fight. It's amusing to see how the defensive body demeanour they entered with, shifts in seconds into total surrender. Similar to these are the dramatical ones too: loud and squeaky, making sure that passengers are being treated as audience. Trying too hard for the audience. This forced show has already lost its value for the audience, even though it's free. They are like exclamations in an otherwise normal routine sentence.

Sometimes I just ignore them, used to seeing such things in public spaces, and nowadays no dearth of this content on social media. The market and channels are full of it. It doesn't excite you anymore. The boldness, talks are also unfiltered, everyone ready to normalize cheapness in the name of freedom or feminism. So, it's neutral acceptance or detachment.

Sometimes, when seeing the PDAs, the way they longingly look into each other's eyes, or make excuses to touch each other, smiling with each other like a child who lied and thinks that no one knows. I blush seeing the boy towering and giving shelter to the girl. These gestures make me yearn softly for this kind of cuteness. I am a daydreamer kind of person, so the feeling of nostalgia for my crushes in school, colleges, or at work comes naturally to me. Just a basic human desire for connection, a feeling that someone passionately craves your presence. Movie scenes can actually be true. Although I don't approve of genuine affection being displayed in public, an intense envy or longing has never been my emotion for these.

Yes, but if the PDA becomes crude, I feel a slight sense of awkwardness or second-hand embarrassment, disapproving. Disrespectful of the societal norms or when they are leaning into each other's spaces for their own indulgence, it fills me with outrage. Were they being bold, self-absorbed, too confident, or disregardful, thinking like they are invisible in public spaces or crowded places? There is no policing here; metro announcements don't allow eating, drinking, or loud music but don't disapprove of obscenity either.

The only sad part is that the journey or this movie right in front of me has to stop midway; either the couple or it's me who has to get down at the station. This brings a sudden jolt to my running mind, the emotions that had been stirred up, the spatial-temporal disorientation, the trance of being absorbed in my own zone—all will snap.

Their parting made me realize that I had unwittingly made a bond with them. After this disconnect, they won't be sharing the

same space—they don't know me and I will never know them. It's not my presence that mattered that day, but somehow the touchy ones ensured an impact on at least someone that day. They were being watched.



6.

The Sleepy Ones

There is something calming about watching someone sleep. The gentle face, stillness in the expression, relaxed eyebrows, unguarded shoulders, breaths so slow and even, - the complete ease.

When you enter the metro after all the morning or evening hustle and chaos, seeing someone sleep so peacefully instantly melts away your own stress and fatigue. Atleast someone's mind is resting. It's my own little mental break. While I take my seat or some spot, I enjoy sneaking glances at them—not out of ill intent, but just to feel peaceful and comforted.

The setting is so conducive that it irresistibly lulls you to sleep. The rhythmic motion of gentle rocking-side by side, increasing and decreasing speeds, the turn it takes, low vibrations which are consistent and not abrupt.

Watching the trees, poles, platform, stations create a repetitive motion that makes it hypnotic and drowsy. Moreover, in the morning hush and the tiring evening chaos, one is already exhausted especially the ones who are travelling long distances or late-night sleep deprived, metro ride is a good place to pause and gather your senses.

The regular commuter, habitual to predictability of the route, time, stations, even people and without having to worry about missing their stops or anything urgent coming up their way, makes your mind relaxed. The mind senses no danger, the body feels safe, no continuous stimulation of the mind; the ride disconnects you from the outside alertness, noise, stress and social interactions.

The temperature-controlled environment knows exactly how to shield you from the harsh weather outside. The metro ride provides you comforting escapes during the scorching sweaty summers and the chilly bone-breaking winters. The cool AC soothes your mind and the heater in winters wraps you cozily in its blanket.

The rules in metro discouraging loud Music, Eating or Drinking while the fellow passengers with their smirking eyes keeps your loud or incessant talking in check, creates a peaceful coach; lets your mind be silent and puts your brain to rest.

Thus, the backbone of metro or the regular commuters, have mastered sleeping during their metro ride. They have become the perfect “sleepy ones.”



Three groups of passengers are the backbone of metro trains; the office-goers, the students and the Laborers / Early Shift Workers. They have already honed the skill of sleeping inside the metros- be it any spot. Then there are occasional sleepers who are still trying to figure out how. And as a daily

commuter in the metro, it's easy to notice the difference between regular commuters and occasional sleepers.

The office goers which form the largest group, mostly dressed up tidily formally professionally, reserved demeanour, carrying laptop bags, huge handbag or neatly packed backpacks in the morning rush to work. After this 9-5 routine driven job, evening rush back with their shoulders slouched, bags resting on knees or dangling beside them. Metro becomes the lifeline for the city-centric jobs that connects their home to workplaces. This fixed nature of their travel makes most of these passengers habitual of their route.

An Alert Nap; Sitting upright, trying to take up minimum space, feet flat on the ground, head bending forward to avoid left or right nodding, tugging bags close to themselves; ensuring a professional demeanour even in their sleep. Mostly chose the corner seats avoiding attention for their micro-naps. Eyes open for brief to scan for visual cues-signs, announcements and platforms, their belongings or sometimes who's the new neighbour. Their semi-sleep state is the perfect balance between recharging and staying aware. Wakes up gradually in a relaxed posture. Two stops before their station they will adjust hair, bags, clothes, make up and check their watches or phones. And when their station arrives, rises up so seamlessly that it seems they had never slept at all.

Then there are students-college ones or the coaching ones. Brimming with energy. chirpier in groups. Be it the vibrant ones dressing up in bright trendy clothes, messy hairstyle or weirdly coloured hair. Or the casual ones with loose relaxed style. Or the low-key introverted composed ones. With their hands or bags loaded with books, clinking stationaries, chatter about projects, exams, teachers, classes, bags. The unintentional ink marks on fingers, hands, forehead, clothes. Browsing their phones for apps, social media, feeds and study videos. Groggy eyes or the anticipating eyes, lost in the headphones or an avid reader; The

mere presence of the students adds a touch of exuberance to an otherwise monotonous metro ride.

The uninhibited ones; spreads out freely, bags taking up seat space, legs stretched out, unrestrained neck or shoulders, feet angled or crossed, frequently shifting positions,

mouth slightly open, hand loosing grip of book or notebooks, totally absorbed in sleep. They will sleep unaware the whole journey and then wakeup startled just in time for their station. And then in a frantic manner, dart for the exit without a second glance at their belongings or appearances.

The ones who have truly earned their sleep are the blue-collared workers. The physical backbone of our society who literally build, maintain, and sustain the structures, services, and systems that keep our communities alive, functional, and thriving.

The physically demanding work like lifting, carrying, repetitive movements causing strain to muscles and joints. The long unpredictable schedule- working late into the night or in the wee mornings while the rest of the world sleeps peacefully at home. Exposure to hazardous outdoors or industrial environments on a daily basis. Eyes heavy, Hands rough, Sweat and Dirt marks on the body or clothes and tired faces-Completely drained by the Day's Toil. Not only physical fatigue but mental exhaustion as well. The battered mobile phone, tool bag, handkerchief, tattered shoes or stained shirts, a dented water bottle and lunch box mirroring the weariness of body and mind that the worker carries.

Out of all, they have perfected the art of sleeping on the metro. The only ones who can doze off even while standing. Their sleep appears unpolished but genuine. Deep and heavy sleep, legs firmly planted on floor, instinctively adjust to minor jerks and loud noises, remaining aware even in their sleep. Hands clasped together, arms folded tightly, grip is tight and back firmly against the seat, wall or corner space or even the coach connector. Unselfconscious, surrendered, audible breathing, jaw relaxed,

mouth open, and unguarded sleep. Even with eyes closed, these workers remain attentively aware of their station. They listen closely to announcements, letting the sound guide their timing without fully waking up. With rugged bags grabbed quickly, droopy eyes, clothes rumpled, they exit with the same workmanlike efficiency and a purposeful haste.

Now and then there are occasional commuters who struggle to just hold themselves if sleepy. Some are the tourist or the first timers or business travellers. The city, route, station and even people feel new. even if they are sleepy, they distract their sleep by opening their eyes wide, having sips of water, scrolling on phones, trying to talk to someone near them, keep gazing at the sign board for stations or trying to listen to announcements carefully, mumbling something in their language, even read the advertisements on the metro.

Metro is visited by way too older people as well. They like to chat, compare their times with this generation, some are grumpy and some are overly enthusiastic. Seat is not a problem for them since most people kindly offer them seat. They adjust their back to the stiff plastic seats, holding the floor tightly with their feet. And if they are tired after running some personal errands, the metro train offers their frail bodies a soothing cradle and they doze off calm and cautiously. They sleep light getting disturbed by the announcements or the crowd movements.

Occasional sleepy commuters are easily recognisable by their continuous fidgeting. You can tell how uncomfortable they are. Micro-adjusting themselves, trying to balance their bodies to the swaying of metro keep, legs firmly on the ground, eyes open to sudden announcements, jerk, crowd movements, loud noises. Tightly clutch their belongings; they look a soldier ready in action. but if they doze off deep, then their body sprawls diagonally, encroach the neighbour's space and even snore helplessly.

Since I travel every day, I often see the same faces, which makes it easy—and surprisingly entertaining—to study their little patterns of sleeping.

Some are the “corner seat ones”; their gaze fixed on the corner seat only. It’s like their own little world where they sit down relax themselves hold position themselves well and then doze off to sleep. They are helpless if they get any other seat as they haven’t trained themselves to sleep in any other seat. Some need the glass side of the seat where they can easily rest their head for a home like comfort, hold their bags tightly on the glass glide knowing it’s safe and then go off to sleep.

Most common sleepy ones are the head nodders. The head resonating with the rhythm of the train, these bobbleheads look so adorable. The head jerks in motion sometimes bumping shoulders with the neighbour, waking up with startled look and then again drifting off to sleep. While they themselves are unaware of their seemingly painful head dropping, I worry for them that their heads might be affected by the constant bobbing.

The shoulder leaners are equally helpless. Although they seem embarrassed disturbing the neighbour with their head banging against them. Not that they are doing it on purpose, these sleepy ones do hold up an upright position checking to be in their personal space only, but slowly with the rocking metro movements their position becomes relaxed and their head tilts. The tilt is light at first but once their head sees no resistance from the neighbour, the head leans even more heavily on them. If for some reason the adjacent does flinch, then the sleepy one wakes up self-conscious and gives an apologetic smile to the neighbour passenger.

Opposite to them are the “self-conscious” sleepy ones. They will definitely reach out for the corner seats only, position themselves straight back and chin up, act as if they are awake and vigilant. They have a battle of their own- fighting sleep and maintaining their poise. And when they wake up suddenly knowing that they had been unaware of their deep sleep, they

sheepishly smile. They behave as if they were caught doing something illegal.

I am not judging or generalizing anything here but I have noticed this more in our female passengers. It may be because of how society perceives how a man and women should behave and conduct themselves in public. Safety reason can be another one; if you can't fight then It's better to avoid the miscreants or the harassment in the metro. Besides finding a safe spot preferably lady seat or near a female, they look for seats where they will not be noticed much. They will totally avoid looking dishevelled; will make sure their make-up is in place, hair is not messy, there is no saliva drooling from their mouth, face doesn't look tired or eyes aren't groggy, there are no eye boogers, the scarf or the shirt is in place and adjusted. Even during their heavy sleep, they will sleep curled up and compact but have this peripheral awareness of the surroundings. They are only hoping that nobody noticed them.

If they are so self-aware without having any reason to be so, what about the droopy sleepy ones and the snoring ones. This is an embodiment of a totally exhausted person. Eyelids heavy, jaw slack, faces contorted in various funny angles, lips parted and cheeks sagging; sometimes snapping awake with a startled expression, quickly wiping the evidence of their sloppiness. The snoring ones wake up with their own rumblings only to realize later that it's their own snore that woke them up. Their cluelessness of their snore is comical and entertaining to watch.

Despite all of this awkwardness no one in the train judges these sleepy one. A sleeping person appears completely harmless. Sleep softens every line on the face and the person seem unguarded and almost childlike—stripped of any threat or aggression they might show while awake. Even if they were a thief, a gangster, or someone with a rough exterior, they become non-threatening and vulnerable themselves.

As a daily traveller seeing the same faces every day, I've started to view people more as friends than just fellow passengers. I relate to the sleepy ones. You may be the one the next day. I

understand that a short nap is restorative and a mood booster. One feel rejuvenated and optimistic-ready to tackle the next challenge of the day.

Many fellow passengers also empathize with the sleepy ones. Their empathy need not be loud or performative but in their own ways.

They try to take up minimum space themselves and moving aside intentionally while letting the sleepy one doze off comfortably. They avoid contact with them or avoiding nudging them by mistake. They keep their noise low or avoid speaking loudly on phone. Self-conscious people are already on the edge, so passengers don't stare at them or make the sleepy ones uncomfortable by glancing at them or smirking at them. Even for the droopy and snoring ones, the fellow passengers don't get irritated by them; they treat the drool or snore as a part of usual stress-relieving sleeping process.

It's satisfying enough to see that with all the hustle and bustle, at least someone managed to enjoy few peaceful moments for themselves

7.

The Smelly Ones

The comfort that the metro bought in our lives is absolutely incomparable to any other travel relief. No other means of transport provides such a complete package of convenience to us. It's well-connected, time-efficient, carries loads of passengers daily, money-saving, safe, cost effective, reliable, even environmentally friendly. Gradually it gives you a feeling of a second home.

It won't even be an exaggeration to say that metro train ride has its own psychological advantages especially when you are a regular commuter. It's a stress reducer and provides mental peace; knowing that I am spared of the uncertainty and the commuting stress that the other means of transport provides as a default. Congestions, non-predictable time, the honking of vehicles, the traffic jams. And when you see a clean metro bright shiny, instantly it gleams you as well.

For an extrovert like me, I like to meet a lot of people even if I am not able to talk to them, being able to observe them also gives me happiness. I like to see their smiles, see their child like joy when they find a seat, someone reading, someone secretly enjoying their snacks, couples trying to be sneaky about their handholding, someone lost out of the window, some in their music, students discussing their question paper, friends mocking each other playfully, colleagues sharing their boss stories, someone angry at some passenger, someone going out of the way to help a new passenger. The list is endless. But all of these are so real and vibrant with life. It's like my life is being played like a movie.

Some part of the daily action is also related to me directly or indirectly. we all are a part of same fabric binding each of us together ultimately brings down our egos immediately. Our uniqueness are also just permutations and combinations of different emotions. While you have your own personal space, you are also a part of this known anonymity. It relaxes your mind. You can actually enjoy the rain, the breeze, the shiny sun and the fog in the winter sitting well protected inside.

While one is stuck in the daily chaos before and after metro, metro provides a break-mentally and physically. A disconnect from the two phases in between. you can think, reflect and be lost in your own world; rarely will anyone notice. It's like a mini cubicle to yourself. This positivity reflects as a part of our adjustment when the metro becomes completely packed with people. So even if you are squashed up from all sides, each one is adjusting with one another without complain.

And while we are finding our peace in this horde, there is this smelly one who is reeking with body odour. The short ones like me are the worst affected. First, we anyways are always breathing the exhaled air of the tall people in a crowded metro. I think we are taking in maximum carbon dioxide than the plants themselves; we don't even need it but have to involuntary take it in. and now to top it all when these tall ones stand near me and they lift their hands to hold the steel railing above, their bushy armpits peeping from their shirt hole makes me vomit. The railings are so high I cannot reach them so I am basically held together in place by people surrounding me. I am already unable to breath in this crowd and then this bad sweaty body odour right in front of my nose. This bad body odour going directly into my brain slowly blocking all my body senses.

Sometimes I try to give non verbal cues like making a frowning face, grimace at them, try to act condescending, holding my hanky or my bag near my nose, try to turn my head around or fidget my body showing restlessness. but no use. Either they don't understand my cues or they pretend non to. Some gives me a

reaction “can’t help it” or “bear with it” some are empathetic to me so they just smile back. The only respite is when the door opens for the station. I quickly try to crane my head forward breath in some new air. I have tried many other tricks like control my breaths, inhaling a long breath then holding it as long as I can and then when I am shaking then I suddenly release the air. But this only causes me to either try to breath in more air or my breathing increases. This yoga practice of pranayama also isn’t helping me in avoiding the bad body odour.



Slowly I started my own grossly adventure. I started noticing the types of body odour. Some have the sour smell, some have this wet earthy smell, some have this strong ammonia smell, some have this plain metallic smell, dampness smell, some have this rotten egg smell. The only respite to me is that I am not surprised by a new enemy smell. Over time I have tuned my brain to smell few familiar smells and so I have gotten used to these body odours. The other respite is the winter season which naturally drastically decreases the body odour smell for obvious reason. Less sweat less body odour.

But season is no respite when there are other smelly ones contributing equally to their share of bad smells. Body odour is ok something one can’t control. It is sweat related, but those ones who wear this unclean cloth. Clothes in, which, wearing it over a period of time has built up bacteria and causes this dampness

smell. Are these the stale cloth they are wearing or that they haven't taken a bath. There are some that do not like to take a bath or change clothes thinking that they will anyways get sweaty so what's the point. Their hair all greasy and muddy having a smell of its own. Even if some do take a bath, their clothes are the ones they must have been repetitively wearing for a long time. equal to not bathing at all. If the person sweats on their shirt, it dries inside the airy metro and then this sweat sticks to the cloth fabric contributing to a bacterial filled-up shirt. The smell lingers.

But ignoring general hygiene-is it due to personal neglect, poor access to hygiene facilities or physical exhaustion. A body is a holy place. As much as self-care, Hygiene is a part of self-respect too. Stepping out for work in a dishevelled unkempt manner shows the commitment towards one's work. The same work which is feeding your family.

If you yourself are not serious about yourself or your work, it's a vice versa situation. People may perceive you in a negative way as well, may put you in wrong light, build distrust about you which may affect your confidence or zeal for social interaction or work. It's bad for productivity also. Still these smelly ones continue with a motivation of their own. It's not like they don't know they're this dirty—it's just a puzzle what encourages them to stay that way.

Despite loud announcement about no eating and drinking inside metro, people remain unaffected to rules. So, someone or the other will still eat inside the metro train. They will secretly open their tiffin box and start eating. some will openly eat it. The food is atleast 1 hour stale due to- to and fro from office or home and the smell makes it even more obvious. The older your food in lunch box, the bad it smells. The one eating may not even notice the smell; it's their food and it's satiating their hunger so for them its food that they just want to devour. But maybe the food inside lunch box isn't an aroma for the nearby passengers.

The strong smell of chapattis, the vegetable smell, the smell of onion garlic, even spices of the chutney or pickles. The worst is

when people carry eggs or fish. It smells most foul. The metro is a closed and air-conditioned so the smell of any food doesn't go out easily, it locks up inside. Fresh food has an aroma stale has an odour.

Everyone knows that there are food stalls in most of the metro stations, even benches on the platform to eat, still people want to wait till they are inside the train to have their snacks. Just because they are sold inside metro station doesn't mean they have to eaten inside the metro.

It's difficult to understand what the people crave more-snacks or the thrill of blatantly ignoring the rules. The snacks tempt you sometimes, sometimes the fried oil grows on you and it becomes too much. Gradually the smell overpowers you and upsets your stomach as well as your head. I realized that the uncooked cabbage in the mayonnaise sandwich emits a rather pungent sour odour. I never realized it when I was having it, ofcourse never inside the metro. My taste buds reacted first when I was eating it and then concentrated only on enjoying it. even the crispy corns or the steamed corn the buttered ones first draws you to eat it but then slowly the butterly smells lingers on for too much time grows on you and you feel full. the steamed momos starts smelling stale due to the flour gone hard and cold. even the chutney starts emitting a strong chilli oil odour. the chilli garlic is no more appealing and this garlic smells suffocates the whole coach. If this smelly one sits beside you, they are already somehow have coated themselves in the garlic smell and breath. And if they sit beside you, even you start smelling likewise. The worst is when they open their mouth to talk, the half-digested food in the mouth with all the saliva fills their mouth with a foul breath. Seeing the people relish their food in a childish manner with cheese, crumbs, juice dribbling from the sides of their mouth, sticking to their fingers while they are clumsily trying to fit the food inside their mouth.

And to add to this visual overload is the bad breath. And if a person with a bad oral hygiene is your neighbour and equally fond

of random small talks, then off goes your day. This odour is directed directly at you and you can't even escape it, it blows right onto you. You feel so dirty like someone spat inside you, their whole warm smelly breath on your face, one may feel cringy especially for someone like me obsessed with hygiene and cleanliness. Do these eating smelly ones not realize their mouth is like a meat shop.

The other smells atleast find its zone of torture with the whole coach for the smell and the smell then slowly dies down also. But what about this bad oral hygiene smelly one? Sometimes people are too humble and just bear the situation due to politeness. But then someone should inform these smelly ones. It's the one thing which is entirely in their own hands to take care of. If not a stranger at least someone closer home or friends should notify this person. How can they let someone close to them roam around the office or college carrying such a bad mouth odour. People must be repulsed. But this type of smelly ones- are they actually unaware or just being ignorant? It's their mouth they maybe tasting the breath themselves. Do they choose to neglect people's opinion or the physical cues that people might give the smelly one? like turning their nose, smirking, leaning or stepping back, sitting slightly apart from them, covering their nose with handkerchief.

Metro is not even a place to eat, so many like me aren't wrong about feeling like I do. Annoyed, angry, frustrated and nauseated.

Then there are the silent but violent kinds. They are the skilled ones when it comes to spreading their share of smell. The farty ones. It is a natural process beyond one's control and yet the task has to be secretly achieved. They have to perform and then act normal. They will finish their task and then it's time for acting. With their innocent faces, they will pretend to be unbothered, look out of the window, stare at their phones, look here and there as if to find the culprit. Others will move around in their seats,

adjust their bags, try to engross in listening to music on their phones.

Sometimes in trying to be subtle, the noise in this secret operation fails the plan. Smelly ones if are young or middle gets embarrassed, their faces turn red or they smile sheepishly. But if it's an elder person, they openly release gas not even apologising about it and simply stating old age or a biological truth as a reason for this brazen performance. The worst among them are the sadist ones that fart right before their stop and just leave. Deep down laughing off the curses that people might be hurling at this mischief. Be it the peppy morning-people or the pale worn out passengers of the evening- all equally miserable. Who did it, and who's stuck sniffing it? some just let it go as a part and parcel of life and bear it, so it's a win for the bad smelly ones not giving a care for what others might think or feel.

Equally opposite are the other ones who think and try too much to smell good. These perfumed ones draw attention in a magnetic way. You try to smell the source of this captivating scent. Their clothes, their body or hair will smell good. Even their accessories, bag; something or the other is exuding fragrance. Even for the casually dressed up ones or the ones who didn't have a bath, using perfume shows some effort on their part to smell good.

A person smelling good gives the impression of being fresh and well groomed. The faint fragrance enhances the mood of others around and the one wearing the perfume. For these fragrant ones, maybe it's about the psychological positive effects on the wearer; one feels confident, rest-assured, motivated and boosts their self-esteem. They look energized and vibrant and this positive energy spreads all around them. It's a mood lifter and a stress buster in subtle ways.

Thus, perfumes are meant to be used subtly only. As a thumb rule, if people notice your perfume before they see, then your perfume is overpowering. The perfume should enhance your presence not dominate over you. Even good smells fragrance can

become excessive if the amount applied is too much; the intensity decides the effects of the perfume and whether it made the impression you wanted to make. Faint lingering smell will always be inviting adding to a pleasant experience. Perfume is meant to be applied and not be drowned in it.

I am no expert and neither should I discuss how to apply a perfume correctly, but as a sensory person one can decipher mild from extreme. The smell should uplift the mood and not make you sneeze. When your nose knows that something stinky is coming up, the brain is somewhat prepared to suffer and the stink still becomes bearable. But the brain gets totally confused when an overload of scent is there. First, it is drawn to the misty, citrus, musky, woody or earthy scents and the purpose of the perfume feels justified. But if the wearer has applied it too much, the same smell starts to bite you. Are you aware of the term nose blindness? When the nose can no longer identify any smell. It becomes numb. There is an olfactory fatigue. The poor brain is in more fix; should it produce the stress hormone cortisol or the happy hormone Endorphins.

The disoriented brain gets a headache, dizziness worse it may trigger a migraine. The overwhelming scent cause reactions like-continuous sneezing, skin reaction, watery eyes, eye irritation. Breathing difficulties especially in people who have asthma or allergies. These are the extreme rare effect but chances are real. Other physiological response, there are psychological reactions too. It causes irritation, annoyance and a bubbling restlessness. even calm composed can find it disturbing. So much exposure to sensory stimuli can causes panic and mental fatigue. Moreso one is in a closed space, one may have feel enclosed, this fragrance explosion can cause anxiety.

Also, perfume is only meant to add fragrance to the body. It's not going to control your body odour. Body odour is about being hygienic. And the body odour mixed with a perfume-this chemical clash-only adds to the horror and torture. The sufferer effected by the fright or flight response.

The sad part is that you can still avoid visual irritations by choosing to look away. One cannot ignore a smell: mild or wild.

Your eyes can look away not your Nose- so choose to come prepared.

8.

The Cameo Ones

As the name suggests, these cameo ones have a small but noticeable appearance. But they add to your entertainment equally. The best part is that cameo ones are an even more captivating, assorted mix of people.

a. The Baggage ones

First are the baggage ones—they walk in, staggering from side to side, trying to balance their heavy bag weight and their own selves. Then they step inside the metro, dodging the rush outside, inadvertently hitting and bruising others with the corners of their bags. The moment they enter the coach, a sign of relief is on their faces, and they just let themselves and their bags go.



After catching up on their breath and the reality around them, they will scan for a seat to relax and lower their guards. If they don't find seats, then they will scan for some free space to rest their bags at least, so that they don't block people's paths. They are equally cautious and aware, making sure they or their bags do not cause any trouble to people nearby. They know they are new here; this city might have its own customs, its own system, so they will have to integrate into this city and throw fewer tantrums.

These baggage ones look anxious and tense—shoulders drooping, eyes red, and in search of something, a puzzle on the face, a white pallor. Their movements are brisk and seem impatient. They seem desperate, trying to look for someone who can help in case they are lost. There's a sense of urgency and tension. They will avoid talking much, trying to focus mainly on their routes and station names. If they are first-time travellers, they will have a map of the city; if they are regular travellers, then they look assured and enjoy the scene outside the windows.

Some baggage one swoop in with large families, creating a temporary surge of commotion. The calmness inside the coach converts into disruption—bag rolls, a chorus of high-pitched noises, stomping footsteps, voices overlapping, children fidgeting and shouting inside, running whenever they find some space, parents calling out to children, giving them instructions, trying to hold them together. Zippers open with a ripping sound forcefully; a pungent aroma of food, spices, or pickles fills the air. The whole atmosphere is disrupted. The whole coach seems in a mode of physical activity.

The ones coming from the airport will carry hard-shelled bags with telescopic handles, often with tags and stickers still attached. Hardly 1–2 in number, they are mostly clean and unstained. They look well-defined, smooth-rolling, and stylish, and may have many organizers or pockets.

The bags from railway stations or buses are more about convenience. Cloth or fabric bags suited to wear and tear and

uneven surfaces. They are rugged and dusty. Some even carry jute or large yellow-and-white plastic bags, secured with a thin string, sometimes with shreds coming off. The number of bags is usually 5–6, ranging in all sizes—the owner is bewildered themselves, trying to adjust and balance these bags to avoid tripping, avoid blocking people’s pathways and their disparaging eyes, struggling to remember the number of bags and what each contains, opening each one from time to time to search for something. The sheer number of bags creates disturbances for all, and the owner spends all their time managing them. A checklist is running in their mind, and panic is on their face. Slowly, with each passing station, they let themselves and their bags go.

Now it’s left to the fellow passengers—it’s their problem to adjust as per the baggage ones’ placement or the bags’ positions. Some fellow passengers are kind enough to understand that the baggage ones must be running late or tired after travel. People start giving them space for their bags and themselves, also because they are like guests in our city. They might be travellers or students, some looking for jobs, or some already having jobs here, far away from the comforts of their homes. People inside the metro tend to be more polite and accommodating—leaning against poles, giving space to their bags, guiding them for stations, helping move bags inside or outside, telling the baggage ones if a zipper or lock is open or if food or drink is dripping. Some fellow passengers may offer a seat or try to squeeze in a child if the train is crowded. The baggage ones are made to feel at ease; their embarrassment is countered by a reassuring smile.

Some fellow passengers might get irritated by this disturbance. They might feel encroachment on their personal space and wouldn’t even budge from their places. You can see impatience and frowns on their faces. But these emotions are best left unsaid.

Still, as a part of the daily rhythm of the journey, baggage ones—the transient travellers—and the fellow ones both make space for each other. Ultimately, passengers with baggage are like

an advertisement break in a running show—briefly interrupting the flow, yet naturally becoming part of it.

b. The Fighting ones

The other cameo ones who can actually calm a chaotic metro train are, ironically, the fighting ones. You'll usually notice their presence in the evening hours—for obvious reasons, I guess. We understand that evening is a time when everyone is exhausted and just wants to reach home to sleep. The least one wants is an argument or even to speak with anyone. Everyone is so exhausted, and then the peak-hour rush causes impatience in the passengers.

There is an internal rush, an unsaid anxiety inside the mind. The brain is processing everything—the office, the home, the work the next day, house chores, what to do, what went wrong—the list is endless. And on top of that, you are squeezed inside the coach with a crowd in a similar condition. This mental agitation, along with a drained body, is bound to cause an emotional spillover. And there will always be someone who succumbs to this trigger.

The reasons include seat issues—even a few centimeters of seat shouldn't go to waste, according to them. The fighting ones want to adjust themselves in any small space between passengers. Some fight over bags touching them. If the fighting ones are sleeping and someone happens to mistakenly touch their hands, then it's doom for the passenger. The emotional surge is just ready to come out at any time. Some fighting ones enter the coach and immediately start fighting. They are related to each other in some way or another. It's mostly a couple trying to seek the attention of the crowd. Most people tend to avoid these fighting ones.

If you listen closely to the topics on which these fighting ones fight, you will realize that they are fighting over absolutely petty matters. The fighting ones know this—or not, I wonder. It's interesting to note that things one would overlook otherwise, especially during morning time or when it's less crowded, can

provoke a person in the evening. Although in the evening each one is equally agitated, only a few react; others choose to suffer silently.

The so-called irritation factors are external, and one has no control over them. It's not in our hands—the number of people inside the coach, what people talk about, their tone of voice, if someone is eating and what they are eating, if someone is standing close to you in a packed coach, the different kinds of people inside, if the music is loud, arguing over reserved seats, and so many other small reasons. Sometimes the complaints may be genuine and should be addressed. But if the majority doesn't see the reasons as genuine complaints, then it's not a grievance but simply fault-finding.

Their hostile demeanour is more intimidating than their actual words. Their faces are red, eyebrows raised, hands and teeth clenched. Their bodies are tense and their demeanour alert. Voices go loud, changing tones. Their lips curl, hurling abuses; sometimes hands or bodies tremble, unable to take the adrenaline rush. They breathe heavily, sometimes sweating. Their clothes are also messy and rumpled, matching their body language. But what's more uncomfortable is watching an adult having a child-like outburst—emotions uncontrolled in public.

It's both sad and funny to see that the threshold for change or little discomfort is so low. Sometimes, even if the other person wants to quiet the situation or tries to adjust, the fighting ones still will not let go. They will make sure to keep escalating the matter. They will continue pushing, provoking, and blabbing.

If this fight turns physical, fellow passengers may break it up. Physical fights also take up space, which is already limited in a crowded coach. Push and pull may hit people nearby. If the fighting one is just the blabbing and shouting kind, some fellow passengers may try to calm or console them politely. Some fellow passengers would just move aside and avoid the area; some would enjoy the scene with sly eyes; some would put on their headphones and rather listen to noise on their phones. No one likes fights. The

atmosphere is so tense, spreading like waves, unsettling the air and making everyone uneasy. How can one manage in such a short-duration metro ride?

It's surprising to think how the fighting ones can manage to fight in such a brief metro journey. They arrive like tornadoes, whipping up chaos, and then disembark at their station, leaving an uneasy calm inside the coach.

And with a 5–15 minute role, they have made themselves the highlight of the day.

c. The Reading ones

The ones people tend to disturb the least are the reading ones. The readers evoke a feeling of seriousness toward them. They are perceived as disciplined, focused, and quiet, so people don't pay much attention to them. The readers coexist without interaction in a busy metro environment. Like a topper in a class, who no one troubles much and is given space to read and enjoy in their own zone, similarly, inside a metro, people choose to stay away from the readers.

Legs crossed, book held with one palm, eyes fixated on the book, head and shoulders bent, expression calm and composed, engrossed in their own world or the world the book has created for them. These readers occupy only a little space for themselves; they can adjust anywhere—inclined to the pole, leaning against the door, or squeezed between people standing or sitting.

Readers keep themselves away from any external environmental stimuli. Disengaged from the noise, announcements, people's activities, and the crowd moving around them, it's only the book that matters. They may slightly raise their head and eyes to check for the station and the current crowd situation on the metro, and after analysing, they go back to their book cave. While it's sometimes engaging to read inside the metro, avoiding the noise around, it can also be the opposite. It is difficult not to be distracted by the noise when you are trying to read. Someone or the other, in a crowded metro, will push you, nudge you, talk to

you, or talk loudly on the phone. People will giggle around you, someone will be eating near you, and with each new station comes new disturbances.



Moreover, I wonder how one can read inside a moving train. The continuous motion of the train, the stations every now and then, which cause the train to vary in speed—it was once taught in schools not to read inside moving vehicles, as it may cause motion sickness: dizziness, eye strain, headaches, and nausea. It's unfortunate that the book you chose to mentally relax with, can make you physically sick. While one may be trying to escape from the conundrums of everyday life by engaging completely in a good read, this absorption can also pose a safety issue—the risk of pickpockets, theft, or losing balance due to a sudden push from people or the train's jerky movement.

But these reading ones, so composed and engrossed amid the chaos, makes it feel as though they have quietly trained themselves for it. They know the risks involved and maybe it's a regular habit for them.

However, I as a bystander, just wonder if their love for reading on the coach is bigger than the risk they're taking—after all, trouble doesn't knock before entering.

d. The First-time ones

The new ones enter the coach with their confused, bewildered expression. Their eyes search for something, looking left, right, all around them, staring at people and outside the windows. They look around as if they are seeing everything for the first time. The wonder in the facial expressions of these new ones, their questioning eyes searching for something, and their gait as if they are in a rush—even if they are seated, they will keep moving around, peeping outside the windows to check for stations. Some keep their bags on the seat and stand close to the door, checking for each stop, blocking the way of entrance. The passengers coming in or going out watch this strange behaviour and may sometimes ask the new ones to get aside.

The first time ones may feel ashamed or openly remorseful. They will apologise immediately and try to stay humble. The usual commuters may talk to the new ones, trying to help and guide them on their route and ask them to wait for the right station and not be impatient or nervous. But the new ones don't trust easily, so they prefer to stand near the entrance and keep gazing at the station. Some new ones will stand below the display panel above the door; their eyes fixed on the names of each station.

Generally, the elderly ones or people from villages will keep asking passengers about their station—when it will arrive, how long it will take, how many more stations. Many of them will still not be assured; they will keep asking more people around. That will also not convince them. They are wary of every conversation, every advice. They will try to scan each and every station when the door opens. They try small talk, mostly for reassurance, as if asking for directions without speaking.

Since the new ones are overly alert, what is a habit for seasoned commuters is a signal, a sign to be cautious, for them. If these new ones are new to the city as well, then there is a nervous, scared, and curious excitement in their body language. They want to have the whole experience in this short period of time. They prefer standing and looking all around; they wish to absorb the

vibes, the newness of things. They even stare at city people as if they are an exotic species.

Some prefer to call or video call their known ones and show them what they themselves are experiencing. They will talk loudly, trying to grab the attention of onlookers rather than the call recipient. They will go to great lengths about their whole journey—the route, the ticket counter, the seats, the weather, the people, the description of stations. While these ones are confident, at least at face value, the majority are mostly nervous and reserved.

They are absolutely attentive to almost everything—the noise around them, the conversations of people nearby, the announcements, the advertisement boards, the body language of people in the coach, even the metro train's structure. They quietly, with intent eyes, see how the train is slithering like a snake, feel the cold rods, even counting the number of seats in each coach, getting up to observe the divider between each coach, trying to check the driver's seat if they are seated in the last coach. Some are naïve and unaware of the women's coach and have to be told so; they will look shocked or puzzled. Some seem offended by their mistake, while some are embarrassed by their ignorance.

These new ones are trying to show their best side; they pick up cues around them and are self-conscious of their behaviour. The best mannerisms are put into act. They are trying to read and read into things around them. They aren't slow; they are just processing what's happening around them. Absolutely new to an already set routine and daily rhythm, their body language is tight and guarded, but open also to the unpredictable. For the unpredictability, their keen eyes and watchful demeanour are already scanning for changes. They are fully prepared.

It is kind of ironic how these first-time ones are actually teaching the regular ones to commute. Instead of intention, we regular ones have become automatic and act based on instinct.

Because our route is routine now, we have stopped being observant and do not bother as well. We make deliberate mistakes: eating or drinking inside the metro, pushing the crowd, talking loudly on phones, listening to music without headphones, not allowing people to get down by blocking the way, fighting with fellow passengers, dressing inappropriately, breaching others' space, arguing with the metro official staff. The more seasoned we are, the less empathetic we are becoming. The new ones deliberately avoid being inconvenient to others—they are neither dismissive nor rigid.

While the first-timers are anxious and careful—the value of a minute, time in general, holds more weight for them, the seasoned ones are confidently late and their rush is due to their self-created laid-back attitude.

The first-time ones are not sluggish—they just make visible the human side that speed and routine tend to hide. The first time ones are True learners and true Teachers.

Metro; A Living Tapestry

This short train ride is the perfect place to feel the essence of unity in diversity. We are all like coloured beads of a necklace, held together tightly—so varied and yet so closely connected. Each one is important to complete the link.

It's striking to think that while everything around us is chaotic and rushed, thousands of lives can briefly align in a calm, synchronised movement. It creates a moment.

While there is the discipline of a system, there also exists the mischief of openly flouting the rules; if we are selfish today, we become selfless tomorrow; if we are bitter sometimes, sometimes we become saintly too. All of us are part of this captivating movie.

We are the actors, the villains, the side actors, the audience, even the critics. We fight, we adjust, we cry, we desire, we dream, we stare, we have crushes, we get loud, we get mean, we help, we sacrifice, we adapt, we ignore, we complain, we curse, but ultimately come out as survivors every day. Every day is a new theme.

The metro is not just concrete; it is crucial and collective.

And You're always welcome.