

YES, NO, IT'S COMPLICATED

# #MeTooIndia: Will it change the way men behave?

**YES**



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Women can expose men and cost them their jobs. Power is a language that men understand

Judge Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed to the United States Supreme Court after allegations of attempted rape against him divided the country on his nomination. In India, politicians were mostly silent on the allegations against M.J. Akbar until public pressure and more allegations forced him to resign as Minister of State for External Affairs. Actor Nana Patekar, who had the support of faceless online mobs, has not shown any remorse after the allegations against him. Both Mr. Akbar and Mr. Patekar have filed criminal defamation suits

against their accusers.

It's hard to be hopeful and say that the behaviour of men will change after the #MeToo movement. However, I would like to believe that this will happen. The first and toughest step in fighting any oppression is to tell the oppressor that his power over you is not absolute and that it will not remain unchallenged. #MeToo has enabled women to take that step against workplace harassment. Such harassment had been normalised to the extent that most women believed that it was a price they had to

pay to become a part of the workforce. The next generation of women will not grow up with that flawed belief.

Male dominance over women is systematic, institutionalised, and, above all, physical. Power has been demonstrated through threats of harassment and rape, sexual assault, acid attacks, domestic violence and making spaces of cohabitation a source of constant threat. Women have taken to social media to challenge this and it's working.

**Men are rattled**

Despite the vicious fightback by the accused and their supporters, po-



werful men are evidently rattled. A film production and distribution company, Phantom Films, has been dissolved; a Minister of State was forced to step down; Aamir Khan has 'stepped away' from

Mogul after sexual misconduct allegations against a team member; journalists in more than one prominent media organisation have been asked to step down, or have volunteered to do so, after allegations against them; filmmaker Sajid Khan's *Housefull 4* has been stalled; Farhan Akhtar, along with several leading women directors, has decided not to work with harassers; and so on. Beyond the hea-

dlines, invisible wheels have started turning. Industries that had no sexual harassment policy or redress mechanisms are being forced to set up committees. Corporates are being forced to proclaim that they have zero tolerance for sexual harassment. Conversations around sexual harassment that were earlier hush-hush have become loud. The lasting impact of #MeToo, long after it stops making the headlines, will be on men who know that they don't have the guarantee of silence, that they will be made answerable for abuse, and that their 'boys club' won't be enough to protect them.

**Empowering women**

Despite the number of men who

have come out in support of #MeToo, I do not believe men will have a sudden change of heart. But their actions will change because #MeToo has forged an alliance of the sisterhood.

The modern economy needs women in the workforce. The #MeToo movement has made it evident that being on the wrong side is also bad for business. And economy is a language that men understand. #MeToo has given women the power to expose men, socially shame them, take away their jobs, and upset their private and professional lives. Power is a language that men understand. Fear, too, is a language that men will soon come to understand.

**NO**



**ABHINAV KUMAR**  
is a serving IPS officer  
officer. Views are personal

The success of #MeToo will depend on instilling faith in due process

The #MeToo movement has taken India by storm. On social and traditional media, women have come out with disturbing accounts of sexually predatory behaviour by various men, including famous ones. The accounts describe a spectrum of male behaviour, from the obviously criminal (rape, assault, molestation) to the less physical and more verbal and non-verbal manifestations that may not be obviously criminal but are creepy and obnoxious. These accounts have successfully blown away the veil of shame and taboo that hung over the issue of sexual harassment, which is

good. However, as a law enforcement officer, serving at a time when police organisations are rightly facing flak for not doing enough to ensure women's safety, I have good reason to express a note of caution and concern.

**After the Delhi gang-rape case**

We would do well to recall the public mood following the 2012 gang rape case in Delhi. An outraged nation demanded and got the death penalty for the rapists. Some of us expressed reservations at this and argued for better enforcement of existing laws, but the public mood

was unrelenting. Nearly six years after that case, brutal rapes continue to take place. We tend to forget that in the wake of a public outcry, passing laws is just the first step in tackling an obvious evil. However, our criminal justice system – the police, the forensic and medico-legal facilities, our prosecutorial agencies and our courts – has not been provided with sufficient additional resources to give teeth to the law.

Something similar is happening with the #MeToo movement. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, which replaced the Vishakha guidelines, was



passed after the Delhi 2012 case. However, it has not been backed by additional resources. But it is not just the lack of adequate resources that is a cause for concern; it is the view that levelling charges alone is enough to ensure that the accused faces punishment. So, instead of complainant and accused, we are happy to change our vocabulary to victim and perpetrator. This is a dangerous trend.

**Formal complaints needed**

The principles of natural justice and other fundamental precepts of our criminal justice system, namely innocent until proven guilty and proof beyond reasonable doubt,

cannot be done away with so easily. Those narrating their plight on social media must be prepared to back it up with a formal criminal complaint. Otherwise they expose themselves to the possibility of facing action under our law for criminal defamation. If those accused of murder are entitled to a fair trial by due process, those accused of sexual harassment are also entitled to the same consideration.

I have seen cases of dowry where the complainant has implicated the entire family of the husband simply to teach them a lesson. Similarly, in cases of sexual harassment where the complainant has had a relationship with the accused, I would carefully examine the evidence before deciding to file a charge sheet or

drop the case. It is a fact that in the absence of strong laws against perjury, and against filing false police complaints, sexual harassment laws are just as prone to abuse as any other law. The proponents of #MeToo should also remember that in general, our criminal laws are moving towards stringent grounds for arrest and liberal grounds for bail. So, the kind of swift and harsh action that is being demanded against the accused in such cases may not be possible in most cases.

The success of #MeToo will depend on creating a sense of faith in due process, which, in turn, will depend on the capacity of our criminal justice system to have sensitive, fair, transparent and time-bound interactions with citizens.

**IT'S COMPLICATED**



**PRAGYA TIWARI**  
is a journalist and was editor of Vice India

#MeToo will have to find a way to transcend its relatively small, elite, urban sphere of influence

Women have taken to social media to talk about being harassed, humiliated, assaulted and bullied by powerful men. The sheer volume of stories and the unflinching solidarity for these women is unprecedented. Expectedly, attempts are being made to derail, politicise, discredit, and misuse the movement, and suppress those testifying. Others are questioning what the movement stands for, its circumvention of due process, and what qualifies as harassment. This sort of consternation has in the past derailed meaningful conversation about change.

But this time, the storm is too powerful for that to happen. It is too early to say if #MeToo will have far-reaching consequences, but it has the potential to dislodge oppressive attitudes towards women.

**Impossible to look away**

Almost none of the stories being told are surprising. Yet, the horror is manifest in the relentless surge of testimonies. It is impossible to look away, and that is a necessary precondition for change. Another strong element of the movement is ironically what has been labelled as

its biggest weakness: it is anarchic and revolutionary. Instinctive and systematic oppression taking place over centuries cannot be challenged by organic, incremental change. Women are talking about all kinds of subjugation and transgressions. The sheer spectrum of incidents makes it difficult for accused men to say "I am no harasser/rapist" and move on.

By taking the conversation out of the realm of criminality, #MeToo has made visible misogynistic words and actions, and the spectre of an unequal, oppressive and sexist playing field. It is obvious that if unequal power and privilege exist,



they will be misused, especially where oppression is so endemic that it is often unrecognisable by the perpetrator as well as the victim.

No man confronted with the outpouring can honestly say that he has never been complicit in perpetuating the status quo without asking himself at least a couple of hard questions. Like women, men are finding strength in numbers to hold other men to account for misogyny that they would have let pass earlier. But real change requires that men hold themselves accountable. And for the first time, at least some men seem willing to listen, introspect,

and let women lead this. Where conscience is not being evoked, fear is. Many men are anxiously scanning their past, afraid that they might be called out. Fear is also palpable in men railing against what the movement portends. And where fear is not palpable, it is being instilled. Perpetrators pretending to be allies have been called out by survivors – at times only because they were posturing. Fear may only lead to cosmetic changes, but even that can be of value in the long run.

**Change is possible now**

The day of reckoning is here: those who could not see their complicity now can, and those who conscious-

ly abuse power cannot carry on unopposed. If change were ever possible, it is now. The extent of it will depend on the brutality of the resistance men put up, and its sustainability will depend on how the movement goes forward. For change to persist, fury will have to be followed by steadfastness, strategy, consensus building and concrete reforms. And #MeToo will also have to find a way to transcend its small, elite and urban sphere of influence to include women excluded by the nature of the medium on which this is playing out, women negotiating the intersection of caste and gender oppression and women for whom the stakes of speaking out are impossibly high.

**SINGLE FILE**

## Peddlers of hate

At a time of fake news, there can be no compromise on responsible reportage

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ



**K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ**

How does a low-profile academician whose work focuses on the 12th century Vachana movement in Karnataka become a target for zealots? The answer may well be in the way he was portrayed by the media. In 2014, at a seminar in Bengaluru on the proposed anti-superstition Bill, M.M. Kalburgi quoted an anecdote from writer U.R. Ananthamurthy's autobiography. A 10-year-old Ananthamurthy had urinated on an idol and was overcome by fear of divine retribution, which never came. Kalburgi's recounting of Ananthamurthy's anecdote was distorted by the local media, especially by a Kannada channel owned by a current BJP MP. The clips were edited in such a way as to show the scholar calling for "people to urinate on idols". On August 30, 2015, Kalburgi was assassinated. One of the suspects told the police that it was this remark that cost Kalburgi his life.

The same suspects allegedly played a role in the assassination of editor-activist Gauri Lankesh. Unlike Kalburgi, Lankesh was an outspoken critic of Hindutva. But she too was a victim of media distortion. In 2012, a video of her talk on caste, colonialism and Hinduism was posted on platforms like YouTube as the "real face of secularism". She was trolled relentlessly, say investigators, and became a target for members of an organisation, whose mission it was to target Hindus they deemed to be "anti-Hindutva". The same organisation is also reportedly linked to the assassinations of Govind Pansare and Narendra Dabholkar.

None of these personalities held sway on a national platform. So, on what basis was this hit list drawn up? They were "anti-Hindu," the accused reportedly told investigators. What is the criteria for being "anti-Hindu"? The accused have not read any of the works of those targeted, believe investigators. Instead, the victims were simply chosen based on how the media covered their public statements. Right-wing handles on social media also influenced the accused.

Participating in the first-year commemoration of Lankesh's murder, playwright Girish Karnad, also named on the hit list, carried a placard around his neck that read: "Me Too Urban Naxal". A leading Kannada newspaper followed it up with a front-page campaign accusing him of being "anti-Constitution and anti-national". Readers' comments were vitriolic; police complaints followed. His family is worried.

Jawahar Lal Nehru University student leader Umar Khalid, who was shot at in New Delhi on August 13 by two men, said: "The real culprits are those spokespersons of the ruling party and the prime time anchors and TV channels who have spread canards about me, branded me anti-national based on lies and virtually incited a lynch-mob against me." What the media publishes or broadcasts has huge consequences. At a time of fake news, especially, there can be no compromise on responsible, fact-based and verifiable reportage.

The writer is with The Hindu's Bengaluru bureau



**DATA POINT**

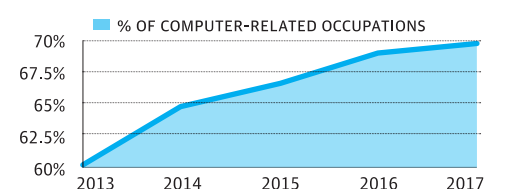
### Indian firms edged out

The top 10 companies which received the most number of certifications from the U.S. Department of Labor for H-1B visas in 2018 include only two Indian firms: TCS and Mphasis. This is a far cry from FY 2014 & 2015, when four Indian firms were in the top 10 with a significant number of the overall certifications, find **Vignesh Radhakrishnan & Varun B. Krishnan**

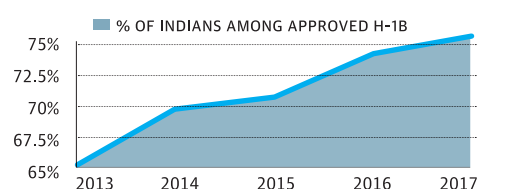
Infosys, Mindtree and Wipro, which were among the top 10 employers last year, found no place in this year's list. X: not in top 10

Company	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Ernst &amp; Young</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	151164
<b>Deloitte Consulting</b>	X	X	19115	45722	118406	163625	93838	69869
<b>Cognizant Tech.</b>	52558	40188	40416	54692	82662	97472	55350	47732
<b>HCL America</b>	9022	X	X	X	X	X	39808	42820
<b>Kforce</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	32996
<b>Apple</b>	X	X	X	X	X	23037	27274	26833
<b>Qualcomm</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	20723
<b>Capgemini America</b>	X	X	X	X	X	47224	16872	13517
<b>TCS</b>	X	X	21228	32880	43247	17116	X	20755
<b>Mphasis Corporation</b>	12382	18747	X	20002	19658	16245	21963	16671
<b>Infosys</b>	59320	52153	39992	23751	33213	25462	20578	X
<b>Wipro</b>	98843	76929	104493	44369	36151	32243	13640	X

**Software specialists are hot property**  
The share of computer-related occupations among the total H-1B visas granted has seen a steady rise



**The share of Indians among H-1B workers rises**  
Indians are still the largest contingent among H-1B workers, but non-Indian firms are hiring them more now



**FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES**

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO OCTOBER 26, 1918.

### Burma Co-operative Conference.

The first Urban Co-operative Conference met to-day [on October 25 in Rangoon]. There was a large attendance. Speeches were made by Mr. Graham, Commissioner, Pegu Division, Mr. Clayton, Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Joint Registrar and others. Points emphasised were the difficulties and opportunities of co-operative work in towns, the finance of the societies, condition on which loans were advanced to traders and craftsmen. The Conference meets again to-morrow to receive and consider sub-committee's report and recommendations. The meetings were held at the Rangoon College and Mr. Graham indicated hopeful connection between educated Burmans of the future and all movements for the development and prosperity of the province.

### Suffragette Successes.

The suffragette has won all along the line and the War has vindicated her aspirations in an extraordinary degree. Not only have women proved themselves capable of competing with men in the most arduous occupations of life, but they have shown so much endurance, courage and fidelity in carrying out their tasks that the proposals to extend the franchise to women and to enable them to practise as Solicitors were passed without any real opposition. The crown of masculine appreciation of her services and recognition of women's equality with him has been placed on her head by the House of Commons passing a resolution by 274 votes to 25 that a Bill be passed making women eligible as Members of Parliament. Of course the Lords will oppose this, as they invariably oppose any liberal proposal, but they will submit in the end to the inevitable.

### CONCEPTUAL Cream skimming

**BUSINESS**  
This refers to a business practice where a company decides to serve only customers who can add a substantial amount of profits to the company's bottom line. This means that companies may only serve customers who are willing to buy high-priced services or services that can be produced at a low cost. Low-value customers who cannot pay an attractive price for a product or choose only to purchase products with high production costs may thus be pushed out of the marketplace by companies. While the practice has been criticised as discriminatory, some have argued that low-value customers may still be served by other profit-seeking firms.

**MORE ON THE WEB**

Video: 'Across borders: Migrant caravan on its way to the U.S.'

<http://bit.ly/MigrantsCaravan>