

---

# # ME TOO; @MEN TOO AND # THE PRIDE PARADES OF THE LGBTQ+: EXAMINING THE MEDIA REPORTS ABOUT THE SOCIO-LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THESE GENDER MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

**Dr. Radha Madhav Bharadwaj**

Associate Professor in History,  
Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College (Univ. of Delhi),  
Dwarka, Sec-3, Delhi

**Received: Apr. 2019 Accepted: May 2019 Published: Jun. 2019**

---

**Abstract:** Of the multiple layers of gender relations and issues related to feminism in contemporary times, at least three have surfaced as most glaring and have taken the form of movements in the Social circles and the Media. These are the #Me Too, #Men Too and the # Gay Pride Parades of the LGBTQ communities in the world in general and India in particular. While the first and the last are directly an off shoot of the movements raging in the world, the middle one is peculiarly an Indian movement, although not unheard of in other societies, and may perhaps travel to other societies in the world and take the form of a movement there as well. Herodotus in his 'Histories' (Enquiry) and 'Periodas' has said that the task of a historian is to enquire about or investigate into the causes of the recent past or near-contemporary events for the posterity<sup>1</sup> and Thucydides in his 'History of the Peloponnesian war' replaced the word 'recent' or 'near-contemporary' with 'contemporary'<sup>2</sup>. In that sense these gender-related movements are contemporary events and products of the complex gender relations and have been thoroughly covered by all forms of Media- Print, audio-visual and the social media. The #Me Too movement started in the US in about 2006 and gained momentum a decade later on the social media when many actresses aired their grievances about sexual advances, predatoriness, molestation and rape in their lives about a famous Bollywood director Harvey Weinstein which gathered momentum and hundreds of women came forward to claim '# Me Too'. This travelled to India where a former Bollywood Actress Tanushree Dutta made allegations of sexual harassment against a famous Bollywood actor Nana Patekar and since then hundreds of women have come forward to claim '# Me Too'. A Journalist made such allegations against a minister and former Journalist M. J. Akbar who was a Minister of Foreign Affairs and who had to resign his position. This has become a strong social movement in India since 2017. A new movement called the # Men Too has surfaced of late in India when a woman, who was in a relationship with an actor called Karan Oberoi, filed a case of rape and extortion (FIR) against him and got him arrested on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2018. His friends under the banner of the Music band *A Band of Boys* went live on social media and Facebook to defend him saying that he has been falsely implicated and the laws are heavily loaded in favour of women. Men

---

<sup>1</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano (1981), 'History and Biography', in M.I. Finley (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece: A New Appraisal*, Clarendon press, Oxford, pp. 156-160.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.160-62

are falsely implicated, harassed, lose their dignity and many a time they commit suicide hence there is an urgent need of a # *Men Too* movement and a Men's Commission to redress the grievances of the men.

# *Gay Pride parades* have been another social movement by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people who are different about their sexual preferences and may be categorized as third gender, have countless problems of their own and have been facing a number of problems like unacceptability by the family and society, violence, unemployment and arrest but the honorable supreme court of India in its landmark verdict dated 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018 defanged the 158 year long torturous law of IPC 377 and legalized gay and lesbian sex and relationships amongst the consenting adults.

These are some of the contemporary movements of socio-legal significance in the field of gender, feminism and neuter gender and needs a thorough investigation as their socio-legal implications are very far reaching and significant and they have the power to greatly impact the society and the law in coming days and years. This is a humble attempt at understanding these layered issues facing the society. Let us see their eruption and development in India and their intentions and the possible ramifications.

**# *Me Too Movement*:** The year 2018 saw the rise of the #*Me Too* Movement in India. The Indian women, inspired by an international campaign against sexual harassment, assault and rape opened up and shared their experiences of abuse by men in power. The anger of Indian women about their sexual mistreatment by colleagues in workplaces and suppressed for years by entrenched social stigma has finally come out in India's own #*Me Too* movement.<sup>3</sup> It all began in September, 2018 with Tanushree Dutta accusing famous Bollywood actor Nana Patekar of sexual harassment at the time of the shooting of the film 'Horn OK Pleasss' in 2008. 'The allegations of obscene behaviour by her against a powerful man like Nana, changed the course of the #*Me Too* Movement in India and opened the floodgates for many other women working in the film industry, media and government to allege sexual harassment by high profile men. Social media platforms were flooded with #*Me Too* stories and outrage, highlighting what has always been a taboo subject in India: the harassment and violence against women, along with the deep-rooted injustice and inequality they face'<sup>4</sup>. On 7th October 2018, she also filed an FIR against him and others. Mr. Patekar denied the allegations and slapped a legal notice on her to withdraw the case. She also put a curse on the film choreographer Ganesh Acharya, producer Sami Siddiqui and Rakhi Sawant for what she suggested was enabling the abuse.<sup>5</sup> The Economics Times gives a list of men against whom such allegations have been made like Author-producer Vinta Nanda's alleged rape against actor Alok Nath 19 years ago, actress Saloni Chopra's allegation of sexual misbehavior against Sajid Khan, singer Sona Mohapatra's and Shweta Pandit's allegations of sexual misconduct against film producer Anu Malik, writer and Yoga teacher Ira Trivedi's against famous writer Chetan Bhagat (who later apologized to her for his messages).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Barkha Dutt, (oct.14, 2018), '*What is next for India's # Me Too Movement*', thelily.com

<sup>4</sup> Sunita Toor (Sheffield Hallam University),(Feb. 15, 2019), '*India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence*', The Conversation.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Abhery Roy,(updated 01 June, 2019), '*The year when the # Me Too shook India*', Economics Times Bureau, The Economics Times, Economic Times.com

This movement began a year after the allegations against the Hollywood filmmaker Harvey Weinstein were revealed. In the same year in 2017, Miss Raya Sarkar, a young Calcutta law student made a sensation by compiling a list of alleged sexual harassers in academia.<sup>7</sup> A new article says that Raya's list consists of 75 Professors and 30 academic institutes in India but nothing happened and no enquiries were instituted.<sup>8</sup> Amongst the most high profile men to be accused is Mr. M.J. Akbar, a minister of state for external affairs and a former journalist. A journalist named Priya Ramani wrote about him without his name, in an oct.2017 article for Vogue and alleged that he made unwanted advances in his hotel room. Six other women also came forward to reveal how they were harassed and violated by Akbar. The impact was he had to resign his position.<sup>9</sup> The list is very long and exhaustive.<sup>10</sup>

The impact of this movement was immediate and revolutionary. Ms Sunita Toor of the department of criminology, University of Sheffield, US, has said that 'it has raised awareness about one's behavior and actions. That high profile and powerful men have been accused demonstrates that no one is immune and can be spared. There is recognition among men that there are repercussions for their inappropriate and violent behavior towards women. Women will no longer stay quiet or shamed.'<sup>11</sup> There are other repercussions as well. Many men in positions of power had to resign on moral grounds as Mr. Akbar.<sup>12</sup> Many people voluntarily stepped down as Mr. Sajid Khan from the film 'House Full'<sup>13</sup> and only three days ago, on June 1, 2019, the popular Bollywood music composer and reality TV show judge Anu Malik, who stands accused of sexual harassment by multiple women like singers Sona Mohapatra and Shweta Pandit, has reportedly been banned from entering Yash Raj because the production house apparently has a strict policy against the sex offenders<sup>14</sup>. Apart from these, the moral and psychological let down of the accused in the society has been amazing despite their accusations not yet been proved in many and most cases.

This still has many limitations: Ms Toor's insights into the limitations of this movement are revealing. She says that 'It is important to acknowledge that there is a distinct class narrative to the # Me Too movement in India. It is elite, upper class, empowered and financially independent women who are coming forward. For lower class, rural, uneducated and disempowered women, the # Me Too movement provides little safeguard from the daily abuse and harassment.'<sup>15</sup> In this regard, I am reminded of the sexual harassment and rape of the agricultural women laborers in Punjab by their contractors and owners published as a recent newspaper report<sup>16</sup>. This is the story of

<sup>7</sup> Kamakshi Ayyar, 'People Feel There is a chance of Being Believed: India's #Me Too Movement gathers Momentum', Time. com

<sup>8</sup> Piyasree Dasgupta, (26.10.2018), '# Me Too in India: 75 professors, 30 institutes; What happened to Raya Sarkar's List of Sexual Harassers', Huffpost.

<sup>9</sup> Dutt, 'What is next for India's # Me Too Movement'.

<sup>10</sup> Roy, 'The year when the # Me Too shook India'.

<sup>11</sup> Toor, 'India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'.

<sup>12</sup> Dutt, 'What is next for India's # Me Too Movement'.

<sup>13</sup> Toor, 'India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'.

<sup>14</sup> News 18.com (Updated June 1, 2019), 'Anu Malik Banned from Entering Yash RAJ Studios Over # Me Too Allegations'? (Follow News18 Movies for more).

<sup>15</sup> Toor, 'India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'.

<sup>16</sup> IP Singh, Neelkamal & Manish Sirhindi, 'Dalit Women labourers in Punjab battle Sex abuse', The Times of India, New Delhi, May 11, 2019.

the financially dependent and weak women laborers in agricultural and unorganized sectors which often remain submerged and unreported. They are neither aware of the # Me Too movement nor the # Me Too social media leaders bother to reach out to them. The number of such hapless women is large and unlisted. Also that for many the journey to justice from filing a complaint with the Police to prosecution is an arduous task. It is also time consuming. The legal due process in India, or in many parts of the world so to speak, is laborious and bureaucratic. A more effective implementation of the laws is the need of the time. The laws are there but their effective implementations are cumbersome and tiring and are restrained by pressures from various known and unknown quarters.<sup>17</sup>

**2.#Men Too Movement:** This movement began with the arrest and incarceration of a TV and film actor Karan Oberoi on a complaint of alleged rape (IPC 376) and extortion (IPC 384) by a 34 year old woman astrologer who was in a living relationship with him since 2016 till they fell out in October 2018 and the filing of a non-cognizable complaint of harassment against her in the same month. This led to an outrage on the social and print media by Karan's friends to defend him. His lawyer and friends say that it is a fake case that has falsely implicated him for sheer personal grudge and vendetta and a blatant misuse of the lopsided laws that see women rape victims as weak and 'Holy cow'. The friends of Karan, TV anchor and film actress Pooja Bedi being the most prominent amongst them, say that 'since she was in a 'live-in relationship' with him and that she had showered him with gifts, done up his apartment, and that she felt bad to pressurize him for marriage as his financial position was not very good at that time which she herself accepted in a November 2018 interview she gave to The Times of India<sup>18</sup> but in first week of May, 2019, she filed a complaint of rape and extortion claiming that happened in January 2017. Statements in her interview are in direct contrast to her FIR in May 2019. Pooja says that the Media jumped onto it, hashtags of # rapist, loss of his reputation damage to his career, his family in turmoil, the physical distress given conditions of lock-up... the list goes on. She says that she and friends showed the police overwhelming evidence in regard to her messages on his phone but it is sad that even if the Police can see that the man is innocent of the charges, they have to take action based on the FIR, arrest him and follow due process of law. Even more bizarre was the fact that they both were sent for medical tests even though the alleged incident happened 2.5 years ago.<sup>19</sup> This brings into light the increasing need to focus on men's rights as a human rights issue as well. She says that women have rights but they are not above the law and that needs to be made clear by prosecuting women who file fake cases. We need equally stringent punishments for women who baselessly use provisions of law to torture men. Most important in the quest for equal rights is the need to protect the identity of men until proven guilty. Why is only a woman's reputation sacred and not a man's? If a woman is found guilty of a fake case, she should also be publicly named and shamed. Let's fight for equal laws to protect, punish and for an equal society. It's time for #Men Too'.<sup>20</sup> In her 26<sup>th</sup> May's post in the Times of India, Pooja has come up with better argumentation as to why we need Men Too and why it is not against #Me Too. She says that rampant misuse of stringent laws meant to protect women is only going to backfire on women's rights. #Men Too is not anti #Me Too because no movement that focuses on equality, equal rights, equal laws and equal protection of

<sup>17</sup>Toor, India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'

<sup>18</sup> Pooja Bedi (9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019), 'Delhi Times', *The Times of India*.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

both sexes could ever be a threat to any credible movement. # Men Too aims to protect men as well as women from the brunt of fake cases. Sexual harassment to women as well as fake case against men are both violations of human dignity.<sup>21</sup> # Men Too is a society standing up against the misuse of laws and the humiliation, disrepute, agony and incarceration of innocent men to satisfy a woman's need for vengeance, extortion or manipulation and in this context she furnishes the data regarding fake cases made available by the Delhi Commission for Women and the NCRB. Even the Supreme Court has been quoted to have said that the law meant to combat the harassment of women by their husband or in-laws has often been used as a weapon rather than shield by disgruntled wives. The IPC 498 A being cognizable and non-bailable offence only worsens the plight of the falsely accused. Sections 354, 509, and 376 are there to protect women and to terrorise innocent men.<sup>22</sup> The # Men Too leaders believe that if there is a National Commission for Women to address the rights and grievances of women, it is only logical to have a National Commission for Men to do the same. Pooja further says that in an era of consensual premarital sex, Tinder and live-in relationships, women cannot be put untouchable pedestals as they oscillate from being emancipated one moment to suddenly being helpless the next. Rape is a heinous crime and # Men Too would demand clarity on laws as to what defines a rape. A woman claiming rape because a man refuses to marry her, or because she wants to settle score is hugely disrespectful to women who have actually been put through the trauma of real rape and abuse and their fight for justice.<sup>23</sup> Deepika Narayan Bharadwaj, a documentary film maker in her post in the Times of India's 13<sup>th</sup> May issue also makes a case for gender equality and talks of the fake cases of rape and extortion against men and that one should not be labelled guilty till proven so and that the identity of the victim as well as the accused be kept till the final judgement. This she has tried to show in her documentary called *Martyrs of Marriage*.<sup>24</sup> The ripples of the # Men Too movement has spilled on to the road also as a social activist named Barkha Trehan, along with her NGO members took out a peaceful protest between the India Gate and the Rajpath to demand justice for victims of fake rape accusations in the country, on Saturday, the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019. This was joined by many other tortured men implicated in false rape cases. They also demanded the formation of the *Men's commission*. She also warned that she is going to take this protest march, in favour of Karan Oberoi, to Mumbai also.<sup>25</sup>

*# Pride Parades of the LGBTQ+:* This mixed community of the lesbians, gay and transgenders have their own countless problems in the society. They have faced numerous problems which many of us cannot even imagine. They could not reveal their sexual preferences to their family members, to their friends and relatives, they faced violence and unemployment in the name of their queerness, they were laughed and sneered at and their families faced social alienation, they were abandoned by their families, they faced criminal proceedings and even death which continues till today in many countries. But in 1969 November, a movement of their own called the *Pride parade* took birth as a protest after a clash with the police which raided a gay bar in New York City. This

<sup>21</sup> Pooja Bedi (Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2019), '# Men Too Protects Society as a Whole, doesn't diminish # Me Too', Delhi Times, The Times of India, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Deepika Narayan Bharadwaj (Sunday, May 13), '# Men Too is as Important as # Me Too', Delhi Times, The Times of India, May 13, 2019, pp. 1-3.

<sup>25</sup> Ria.sharma (Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2019), '# MENTOO SUPPORTERS PROTEST FOR MEN'S COMMISSION AT INDIA GATE', Delhi Times, The Times of India,

movement began to grow in number over the years, which is a symbol of the celebration of their liberation and acceptance. About thirty countries have accepted same sex marriages and many countries have decriminalized it. Last year in September 2018, the honorable Supreme Court of India also decriminalized the homosexuality and lesbian sexuality which is a great achievement and a law of liberation for them but the law has not extended the permission of the same sex marriages to them<sup>26</sup>. Through this law the society in at least the urban areas have come to accept the fact that their different and queer sexual preferences are not mental illness as China and Russia used to believe a few years back. Hopefully in gradually the society in general will accept them as they are and treat them with respect and as normal human beings. These Pride parades have played a wonderful role in the last fifty years to rehabilitate and bring respectability to the LGBTQ community and the third gender. The world and the society will have to understand the character and demand of this community and the third gender as they are also human beings and have rights to coexist as Such.

In conclusion we can say that we have seen the rise of the three contemporary and different strands and movements of relationship related to gender and feminism as products of the complex social, behavioural and physico-mental situations with significant socio-legal implications. We need to sensitise the people, both men and women, about their behavior, apprise the government and the court about the need to refine the lopsided laws related to gender, humanize the police force in such cases and establish a just and humane society. Thanks.

In the end, I thank all the journalists, authors and activists whose articles I have consulted and quoted in understanding and analyzing these complex contemporary movements related to gender and feminism in India.

### References:

1. Arnaldo Momigliano (1981), 'History and Biography', in M.I. Finley (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece: A New Appraisal*, Clarendon press, Oxford, pp. 156-160.
2. Ibid., pp.160-62
3. Barkha Dutt, (Oct.14, 2018), 'What is next for India's # Me Too Movement', thelily.com
4. Sunita Toor (Sheffield Hallam University),( Feb. 15, 2019), 'India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence', *The Conversation*.
5. Ibid.
6. Abhery Roy,( updated 01 June, 2019), 'The year when the # Me Too shook India', *Economics Times Bureau, The Economics Times, Economic Times.com*
7. Kamakshi Ayyar, 'People Feel There is a chance of Being Believed: India's #Me Too Movement gathers Momentum', *Time. com*
8. Piyasree Dasgupta, (26.10.2018), '# Me Too in India: 75 professors, 30 institutes; What happened to Raya Sarkar's List of Sexual Harassers', *Huffpost*.
9. Dutt, 'What is next for India's # Me Too Movement'.
10. Roy, 'The year when the # Me Too shook India'.
11. Toor, 'India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'.

<sup>26</sup> Abhimanyu Mathur 9Tuesday, 21st May 2019), ' From Legalising marriage to punishing by death: Nations see same-sex ties differently', *Delhi Times, , The Times of India, P.3*

12. Dutt, 'What is next for India's # Me Too Movement'.
13. Toor, India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'.
14. Xiv News 18.com (Updated June 1, 2019), 'Anu Malik Banned from Entering Yash RAJ Studios Over # Me Too Allegations'? (Follow News18 Movies for more).
15. Toor, India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'.
16. IP Singh, Neelkamal & Manish Sirhindi, 'Dalit Women labourers in Punjab battle Sex abuse', The Times of India, New Delhi, May 11, 2019.
17. Toor, India: how # Me Too is battling Gender-based violence'
18. Pooja Bedi (9th May, 2019), 'Delhi Times', The Times of India.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Pooja Bedi (Sunday, 26th May, 2019), '# Men Too Protects Society as a Whole, doesn't diminish # Me Too', Delhi Times, The Times of india, 26th May 2019.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Deepika Narayan Bharadwaj (Sunday, May 13), '# Men Too is as Important as # Me Too', Delhi Times, The Times of India, May 13, 2019, pp. 1-3.
25. Ria.sharma (Monday,20th May, 2019), '# Mentoo Supporters Protest For Men's Commission At India Gate', Delhi Times, The Times of India,
26. Abhimanyu Mathur (Tuesday, 21st May 2019), ' From Legalising marriage to punishing by death: Nations see same-sex ties differently', Delhi Times, , The Times of India, P.3

\*\*\*