

**The #MeToo movement through the lens of fourth-wave feminism in India**

**MA Thesis**

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## **Introduction**

In 2017, opinions within the #MeToo movement in India became divided after law student Raya Sarkar encouraged women, mostly in academia, to name their harassers on a list. Shortly after she posted this list online, several other female academics and activists on Twitter, Facebook and blogs such as Kafila asked to have the list taken down, because in their opinion, it does not provide any context nor explanation on the acts of harassment by the accused, who were often male academics. This event caused a debate mostly among veteran feminists and younger generation of feminists in India,

As Raya Sarkar's list and the debate caused by it was within academia, however, the #MeToo movement had a more extensive reach. It rapidly moved the focus of its discussion from spaces such as the film industry and everyday lives to other spaces such as the art world, politics, and online platforms. The voices and spaces within the #MeToo movement in India changed, and not everyone agrees; there are still many women who prefer not to call themselves feminists even though they might support certain aspects of the #MeToo movement.

Feminism as a concept originated from Europe and started out during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was concerned with gaining equal rights for women. The second wave of feminism took place during the 1960s and 1970s along protests which focused on women's inequality, in areas such as family, sexuality, the domestic space, and work. The second wave never ceased to exist, it continued along the line of the next, third-wave feminism, which originally started in the 1990s and is also still present.

The use of the term feminism is quite modern in India, but women's movements have existed much longer. In India, feminism and women's movements appeared in two eras: before and after the Indian independence. During the first phase (1850-1915) social reformers attempted to create a new 'Indian woman', which would suit the new social values of the nation. The social reform movement helped with removing some of the prejudices against women's education and the visibility of women in the public space. Before the social reform movement, the space for women was mostly in the religious sphere (Pande 2018, 2-4). The second phase (1915-1947) was the time that Gandhi's politics lead to the legitimization of women's active participation, the acceptance of female education, and the creation of female freedom movements. During the politics of Gandhi, women struggled against colonialism, but also within the domestic space, for example due to issues related to property rights (Pande 2018, 5-6).

The third phase (1947 to present) was, and is, the time in which women have gained the right to vote and have gain equality within the constitution of India due to their efforts and role in the freedom struggle. Women from all classes were being mobilized for political purposes in mass organizations (Pande 2018, 7).

Fourth-wave feminism started around the 2010s in America, building on the previous waves of feminism, but also focusing on problems connected to the work floor, and gender equality in expressing emotions. This was done through different news outlets, through new technologies, and social media. In India, fourth-wave feminism started around 2012, and still deals with issues related to the previous waves and phases (Kurian 2020).

When writing this thesis, I need to think of my own biases and privileges, and evaluate the research based on this. This might sound obvious but is a good thing to keep in mind during the writing process. Additionally, those from diasporic Indian communities, such as myself, sometimes also still deal with similar issues related to gender and sexuality.

The thesis focuses on the split within the feminist movement in India due to the debate that happened because of the questions around Raya Sarkar's list. The discussion around this "disruption" or "split" of the #MeToo movement is examined through the lens of fourth-wave feminism, on the social media platform Twitter.

Social media is a powerful tool that people can use to convey messages at the present time. Twitter is a platform which provides easier access to scraping data from messages through using Python or Gitbash, for example, and this is the reason why I focus on this platform. Future research on this topic can possibly be conducted through platforms such as Facebook, even though Facebook's user agreement forbids data scraping so to scrape data from Facebook would basically be breaking the rules of the service that the user has agreed to when creating an account. This might still be possible, but it is somewhat unclear on the legal side.

Media theory and social behaviour online have been studied; however, not much research has explicitly focused on discussions of gender, sexuality, and gender inequality on online platform Twitter. Not a lot of research has been conducted in the field on what kinds of consequences social media activism and hashtag activism in relation to the #MeToo and the Raya Sarkar list have been conducted within the timeframe from 2017 until 2018, especially what kind of consequences it has on the society of India. Research that has been done often is related to a new wave of protest movements and its relations with social media activism, in particular hashtag activism. (Upuda, Venkatram and Khan 2020, 344). Hashtag activism and social media

activism can be successful in India, but only if its being picked up on by the mainstream media. (Pallavi Guha 2015, 156). The reason to mention this kind of research is because the #MeToo movement started with the hashtag on Twitter term and spread out. The # MeToo movement is also a recent phenomenon, and thus not many studies have been conducted, especially with regards to framing of media of the #MeToo movement (Naik, et al. 2020, 91).

The primary source material of this paper is a corpus of data which is obtained from Twitter messages by using a (Python) script, and the application GitBash, that has been specifically prepared for this purpose, searching for specific keywords among messages posted in India. The keywords are based around the events of the ‘disruption’, this split in opinion of Indian feminists that was caused by Raya Sarkar’s list which took place in 2017, and its effects in 2018 in cities in India. The results are based on analysing this corpus of material through quantitative and qualitative research methods. The approach is an interdisciplinary one as it combines digital information-sourcing technologies with socio-anthropology, gender studies, history, and politics. The supporting secondary literature mostly focuses on three main issues: (fourth wave) feminism in India, the #MeToo movement in India, and how these relate to social media platforms. Additionally, topics such as caste, class, religion, history, laws and politics are also examined through secondary literature on a case-by-case basis.

So, related to this split in feminism and women’s rights movements and the forcing of people to act in certain ways, it is useful to ask the question: how does gender inequality create boundaries within the #Metoo movement on social media in India and why and for whom are these boundaries problematic?

This research is expected to find out some of the “mechanics” of online social behaviour in India regarding female sexuality and gender. It is geared towards finding out how social media platforms and interaction can affect the lives of Indian women in the “online” and “daily life” spaces, which are not separate spaces.

It is hoped that this research will mainly shed more light on the character and thought system of social interactions of the #MeToo movement in India from 2017 till the end of 2018, and if that resonates with majority of the Indian society, or if there are not changes. Additionally, it will inspect the social status among different women in Indian society, as well as the interactions of Indian women on social media platforms regarding their religion, caste, class, sexuality, and gender.

The next segment explains the methodology in-depth, describing what readings and concepts the research will examine and how the corpus of data will be made and analysed. The literature review then provides an overview of the most important and relevant information on the topics related to this research. Chapter 1 presents a historiography of the three feminist waves before the fourth wave in Europe, and the origin of feminism in India, in order to grasp an understanding of the discussion of fourth-wave feminism in India specifically. Chapter 2 explores the background of the #MeToo movement and its origins in America, and how it later manifests in Indian society. The changes it brings are brought within the context of the #MeToo movement in India. It attempts to clarify the split in ideology concerning the third wave versus the fourth wave. Chapter 3 focuses on the representation of the data and analysing the data against the background of the previous chapters.

### *Methodology*

This is an interdisciplinary study relying on ideas from media studies and gender studies, with a more specific focus on feminism. In order to write this thesis, secondary sources about the history of feminism, the “MeToo movement, and how they differ in the West and India are looked into. In this way the sources are also used in the research process, but they are not a major part of the methodology per se. Research is about creating knowledge and feminism has a special approach to knowledge and within feminist thinking knowledge and power are seen to be closely linked.

According to Pande (2018, 12), “Fundamental to feminism is the premise that women have been left out of codified knowledge, where men have formulated explanations in relations to themselves and have generally rendered women invisible or classified them as deviant. The description and analysis of women as autonomous human being has been one of the most significant contribution made by feminism” (Pande 2018, 12).

Knowledge has been recognized also as a form of capital, to which several individuals and groups are more privileged to gain access to than others, which then becomes a source of power and control for those that can gain access (Pande 2018).

If necessary, sources related to politics will be used to frame the discussion in India, for example related to power structures and the construction of gender in the nation.

The main primary sources consist of a created corpus of data that is from Twitter (where the #MeToo movement discussion started in India) that is looked at and analysed through creating word lists in which the searched-for words are connected to the topic of fourth-wave feminism and #MeToo in general.

Additionally, as the primary source, this thesis will create a corpus of data by using the “GetOldTweets3” script that can get these tweets into files, by looking at tweets posted in specific Indian cities within the timeframe of 2017-2018. This is done by searching for keywords such as “MeToo” or “sexual harassment”. This corpus will then be analysed qualitatively and quantitatively, in an attempt to draw conclusions from the nature and frequency of the tweets. The quantitative analysis will also be done by using the GetOldTweets3 script that will calculate the frequencies of the keywords. Other literature will be used to support the claims made in an analysis of the data found in the corpus. This literature will consist of articles (secondary sources), but also newspapers and blogposts such as those taken from Kafila.

### *Literature review*

This chapter introduces the most important literature related to the themes that this thesis explores such as the history of the different waves of feminism. The themes focused on are feminism in India, fourth-wave feminism and the #MeToo movement. Reeka Pande (2018) explains the historiography of the three feminist waves and women’s rights in general in Western countries and shifts her focus then on the history on India in relation to feminism. She also explains how women’s studies and gender are being perceived in the Indian context. The article posits that there are differences between the historiography of feminism in Western countries with that of India. It will be useful as the main article for a lot of background information in Chapter 1 of the thesis, which focuses on the historiography on gaining a grasp of understanding the history of women’s movements and women’s rights, specifically in India. Martha Ramptan’s piece (2008) fills up the gaps of Pande on the general parts of the modern feminist waves in a Western context, mostly in England and America.

Sanjana Pegu’s article consists of an analysis after conducting an interview with five women; Christina Thomas Dhanaraj (co-founder of Dalit History Month, a campaign and online collective, Leena Doley (veteran in the Assam Police department), Makepeace Sitlhou (an

independent journalist), Rosey Mukherjee (an activist with Chitranganda, a Kolkata-based initiative against gender discrimination), and Tania Devaiah (a Goa-based researcher with the Centre for Policy Research). Pegu's article provides the main background information related to the #MeToo movement's origins, especially on the #MeToo movement in India, and its criticism. It serves as the backbone for chapter 5, as there are not many academic articles written on the #MeToo movement in India. It will be supported by more blogposts such as those from Kafila, and also online newspaper articles.

Dubravka Zarkov (etc. 2018) point out their concerns about the #MeToo movement, and the problems of sexual harassment and violence. Zarkov showcases the way how the #MeToo started and then spread around the world. Stavrola Pipyrrou (etc. 2018) agrees with Zarkov as they also ask the questions of 'what is being accomplished' and 'what should have been accomplished'. These articles look critically at the #MeToo movement and its accomplishments.

Pallavi Guha (2015) points out that the #MeToo hashtag campaigns are not being similar all over the world in their usage. Guha claims that the feminist hashtag campaigns are not able to succeed in a digital environment in India unless these converge with the mainstream media. What is relevant here is also to keep in mind more literature on addressing the split within the feminist movement in India. The article will help with gaining an understanding out the MeToo hashtag, and how the digital environment takes place in India.

Mark Hansen (2006) focuses on media theory and the differentiation of 'the new media from mass media' and its political potential. His work on media theory, as well as the ones he refers to in his notes could be of relevance when trying to understand my data and the importance of social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. It will be useful in the understanding of behaviour of people on social media.



## Chapter 1: The historiography of feminism

### *Feminism in the West*

Because the thesis focuses on the #MeToo movement in India on social media it is relevant to investigate the history of feminism and women's rights in Western countries, and then, more importantly, in India.

Several scholars have attempted to locate the origins of feminism in ancient Greece or the medieval period, however Olympe de Gouge, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Jane Austen are perceived as the foremothers of the modern women's movements (Rampton 2019).

In India, the women's movement were an earlier phenomenon, while the term feminism was a modern one (Pande 2018, 2). Pande refers to the work Geneviève Fraisse, which mentions that the term feminism was first used in 1871 in a French medical text to describe "a cessation in development of the sexual organs and characteristics in male patients who are perceived as suffering from a 'feminization' of their bodies". Alexander Dumas later picked up this term to describe 'women who behaved in a masculine manner'. The term became widely used in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, which was also the time when the women's rights movement emerged in the United States of America with the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 (Pande 2018, 2). Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Mary Wollstonecraft's writings took the injustices meted out to women in question, and women stated to themselves question their inferior status and demanding an amelioration of their social position (Pande 2018). The term feminism caused friction amongst many groups as they were not comfortable with it, and they did not identify their struggle for women's rights with this term. The reason behind this was that the term feminism had 'betrayed its anti-capitalist roots in favour of identity politics as it failed shift its focus from collective ideologies to individual history, achievement which results in an unwillingness to give space to people with different opinions, worldviews, and histories (Pande 2018, 2). These kinds of arguments are found to be against the use of feminism in India Currently, the term refers to social, cultural, and political movements, theories and moral philosophies which are concerned with gender inequalities and the equal rights for women (Pande 2018, 2).

The first wave of feminism took place in Western countries around the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and at that time it was mainly concerned with gaining equal rights and creating opportunities for women, especially the rights to suffrage. It emerged out of the environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics (Rampton 2019). In Britain,

the Suffragettes campaigned for the women's vote, and in 1918 the Representation of the People Act passed and granted the vote to all women over the age of 30 who owned houses. Ten years later this right was extended to all women over eighteen (Pande 2018, 2).

During the 1960s and 1970s the second wave of feminism took place along protests which were focused on women's inequality, including areas such as family, sexuality and reproductive rights, and that worked against the background of anti-war and civil rights movements and a self-consciousness of different minority groups around the world (Rampton 2019).

This was also the period in which first-wave feminism was being criticized in the European and American contexts for often disregarding the existence and participation of women of colour and black women more specifically. During the first wave of feminism, women of ethnic minorities were sometimes included, but often they were not (Rampton 2019). This was also something that happened in relation with British women who wanted the right to vote and compared themselves with the status of the women in India who were perceived by them as being backwards in comparison (Rampton 2019).

The second wave also became more connected to a fusion of "neo-Marxism and psycho-analytical theory, and it started to associate the subjugation of women with the broader critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and the woman's role as wife and mother" (Rampton 2019). It was also the time in which the concepts of sex and gender were not any longer synonyms, but were differentiated, as the former refers to "biological, and the later a social structure which varied from culture and over time" (Rampton 2019). During this wave, development of women-only spaces and the notion of women working together was something that also became more prominent, as women were "thought by some to be more humane, collaborative, inclusive, peaceful, nurturing, democratic, and holistic in their approach to solve problems. To capture the sense their biological connection to earth and the lunar cycles, women were natural advocates of environmentalism, and the term 'eco-feminism' was coined to embody it" (Rampton 2019). The second wave of feminism continued to coexist with the third wave of feminism during the 1990s (Pande 2018, 2).

The third wave of feminism started around the early 1990s. The women's liberation movement arose around this time as a response to the failures of the second wave (Pande 2018, 2-3). The third-wave feminists often focus on 'micro-politics' and challenge the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females. Post-feminism is a term which is used to describe a

range of viewpoints reacting to feminism. The term was first used in the 1980s to refer to the backlash against the second wave of feminism (Pande 2018, 3).

This wave was also “informed by post-colonial and post-modern thinking, and many constructions were being criticized and destabilized, including the notions such as ‘universal womanhood,’ ‘body’, ‘gender’, ‘sexuality’, and ‘heteronormativity’” (Rampton 2019). “Another aspect of this wave was that women reclaimed the lipstick, high-heels, and cleavage, which was identified before with male oppression” (Rampton 2019).

Third wavers became aware of also the ambiguity and refused to think in terms of “us-them.” This was another reason for the majority to refuse identifying with the word ‘feminists’ as they find it limiting and exclusionary (Rampton 2019).

The fourth wave of feminism started around the 2010s in America, and it built on the previous waves of feminism, but also focused on problems connected to the work floor and gender equality in expressing emotions, doing this with different news outlets, through new technologies, and social media. In this wave it became more visibly prominent that “feminism is now moving from the academic field back into the realm of the public discourse.” “Some people, who like to identify with this wave also have troubles to identify with the word ‘feminism’ as it not only has the older connotations with radicalism, but it also carries assumptions of a gender binary and exclusion subtext: ‘for women only’” (Rampton 2019) “Many of the people who sympathize with the fourth-wave are worried that it is hard to get their message out without getting a label, however the term actually raises awareness to problems in society, and how it is gendered. Feminism in this case, does not refer to the struggles of only women, but is a call for gender equity” (Rampton 2019).

### *Feminism in India*

During ancient times in India women have been less privileged have restricted to confined spaces in comparison to men. Examples about women, like Gargi from ancient India mention that they were great scholars, however the examples lack to provide information on the accessibility of education for women. Women were expected to do all the chores, while not given any rights according to the Hindu Dharmashastras. Despite, great achievements of women in the spheres of literature, art, philosophy, administration and warfare, Indian women in general given an inferior status. (Dutt 2019, 55).

In India, feminism is manifested in three phases. The first phase (1850-1915) showcases that the women's movement began as a social reform movement, and made attempts to create a new Indian woman, who would follow suit with the new social values of the nation. The social reformer criticised social aberrations, such as polytheism, polygamy, casteism, sati, child marriage, and illiteracy, which they believed to be such that they stagnated the progress of women. This resonated with the idea that a society cannot make proper progress if the women of said society are backward. The reforms noticed that the position of Indian women was quite low, and their attempts were directed on an overall improvement of the status of women through legislation, political action, and propagation of education (Pande 2018, 4).

The social reform movement did not radically challenge the patriarchal structure of the society or questions related to gender. The women's institutions and organizations that were created during this period did not have an independent ideology, and only took off from what the men were stating, which was understandable because it was mostly the wives and sisters of the reformers who initiated the establishment of these institutions and organizations (Pande 2018, 4). This led to the result that even when women spoke for themselves, they spoke only the language of the men, a language that was defined by male parameters. Therefore, there were also no attempts made to alter the men-women relation in the power structure that is within society (Pande 2018, 4).

The reformers attempted to create a 'new Indian woman', who was truly Indian but also sufficiently educated and tutored, of course according to their 19<sup>th</sup> century values. The education provided to girls was not meant for self-sufficiency, independence, or emancipation, but rather to train them to follow some skills to become 'good' housewives (Pande 2018, 4-5). Even though reform movements were not homogeneous and varied a lot in the terms of their ideals, they managed during this phase to help out with removing some of the prejudices against women's education and the visibility of women in the public space. Before the social reform movement, the space for women was mostly confined to the religious sphere (Pande 2018, 2-4).

The second phase (1915-47) was the period during which three major organizations took form: Women's India Association (WIA), National Council of Women in India (NCW) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC). During the emerging of these organisation women were engaging with issues related to women's political participation, women's franchise, communal awards, as well as leadership roles in political parties (Dutt 2019, 56). These organizations

were formed by women between 1917 and 1927, after World War I (Pande 2018, 5-6). Around that time Mahatma Gandhi's politics led to the legitimization of women's active participation, acceptance of female education and the creation of more female freedom movements. The women's movement were incorporated by Gandhi into the Indian Freedom struggle. Gandhi legitimised and expanded Indian women's public activities as he believed that women by nature were non-violent and would be more successful in carrying out his programmes of picketing and non-cooperative movement against the British Raj, hence when Gandhi brought India's Freedom struggle to the masses, most women were active participants. He made it possible that women were exalted from "their feminine roles of caring, self-abnegation, sacrifice and tolerance" as he created a niche for them within the public sphere. Dutt 2019: 56).

During the era of the politics of Gandhi, women struggled also against colonialism and other issues that were mostly related to their roles and duties in the domestic space. (Pande 2018, 5-6). However, women joined men on an equal footing during the independence of India. It made it possible to rethink the participation of women with the national struggle, and the breaking down of traditional concepts as well a change of attitude of women (Dutt 2019, 56).

The third phase refers to the phase from 1947 to the present time and is perceived as the time in which women have gained the right to vote and gained equality within the constitution of India due to their efforts and role in the freedom struggle (Pande 2018, 7). During this period independent women's organisations started to focus on the fair treatment of women in the domestic space, workforce, and their rights after marriage as well as their right political parity. Indian women started to take up positions and status by "becoming Governors, Cabinet ministers, and ambassadors." (Dutt, 2019, 56). During the 1970s many women in India as well as feminist carried on with fighting for the cause of women. The Constitution of Indian stated to provide a equal status and opportunity to men and women alike. The Parliament passed several Acts which brought a social change by industrialization and urbanization for women's emancipation in the political, social and legal realm (Dutt 2019, 56). Indra Gandhi, who became the first women Prime Minister of India became the pride of many Indian women. She was considered to be on of the most powerful women in the contemporary period (Dutt 2019, 56).

However, even after women were granted a large number of policy documents by the State, in reality there was a great gap between the theoretical statuses of women and their rights as defined in these, and what existed in reality. During this period women from all classes were being mobilized for political purposes in mass organizations (Pande 2018, 7).

### *Fourth-wave feminism in India*

Fourth-wave feminism in India also took place a bit differently, and a bit earlier than in America. “The earliest campaigns that took place in India started with the 2003 Blank Noise Project against eve-teasing, the 2009 Pink Chaddi (underwear) movement against moral policing, and the 2011 SlutWalk protest against victim-blaming, which set the tone for a new mode of protest. The campaigns such as the 2011 WhyLoiter project on women’s rights to public spaces, the 2015 Pinjra Tod (Break the Cage) movement against the sexist curfew rules in student halls, and the 2017 Bekhauf Azadi (Freedom without Fear) March, resonated with a larger number of women, and became a social media-led phenomenon” (Kurian 2018).

These online campaigns represented the level of frustration among the youth in India, even after many decades of feminist activism. Mary John points out that one of the most troubling issues is the obstacle of ‘gender sensitization, as here against the background of the Delhi gang rape female students are being given curfews by hostels. The most troubling about this exposure is the method of silencing students by the administration and parents which results in blaming the victim (John 2020: 144).

“The difference with this kind of feminism was that before Indian feminism focused more on issues such as child marriage, sex-selective abortions, and dowry related violence. Sexuality of women was only mentioned in the terms of extraordinary forms of sexual violence against marginal women, e.g. rape of Dalit, tribal, or Muslim women, or women living in military zones such as Kashmir or the North East” (Kurian 2018). Now, issues related to eve-teasing were being mentioned and spoken about, as before this was rendered as supposedly harmless.

The Nirbhaya gang rape case from 2012 was the tipping point that led to an unprecedented number of youth launching a rally to create awareness for women’s unconditional freedom, especially in regards of women’s absolute right to their choices, bodies, and their movement in public space at any time of day or night. They addressed and challenged the outdated cultural beliefs related to the idea that women invite sexual violence through their clothes and behaviour (Kurian 2018).

The shift of the discourse of freedom, sexuality, choice and desire from the private to the public realms such as the streets and on social media displayed agitation which forced the government to expand its legal definition of rape, and it installed harsher punishment for rapists and criminalizing stalking and voyeurism (Kurian 2018).

The movement in India is quite unique as it attempts to combine “freedom for sexual oppression with freedom from caste, ethnic and religious oppression” (Kurian 2018). “The Chalo Dilli or #NotInMyName movements rose up against the right-wing violence against Dalits and Muslims” (Kurian 2018). Kurian argues that the movement is created as a ripple effect for other struggles to break out, and this new kind of feminist agitation represents an impressive level of maturity, inclusivity and political sophistication. Kurian points out that while British journalist and writer Kira Cochrane and the American feminist blogger Jessica Valenti defined the fourth wave in the West as online feminism, in India it is different. Kurian claims that it is “a mostly social media-led holistic movement that combines women’s freedom with a wider call for social justice for minority men and women” (Kurian 2018).

In India some of the younger actresses spoke out about sexual abuse within India’s film industry, Bollywood (Kurian 2018). In 2018, Bollywood actress Tanushree Dutta accused actor Nana Patekar of sexual harassment, which led to some increase in awareness within the film industry, and among Indian people in general (Naik et al. 2020: 85). In that same year in America, law student Raya Sarkar posted a list on social media which contained the names of at least 50 allegedly sexually abusive academics.

In chapter 2 the focus will be more on the #MeToo movement in general and India, and the consequences of the conversation through Facebook and Twitter. The following chapter will focus briefly on the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, and their relation to the issues of digital activism and hastening regarding the #MeToo movement.

## **Chapter 2: #MeToo movement**

This chapter explains the MeToo movement’s origins in America, and how it spread to India almost one year later. It points out the reasons behind its success in India, but also looks at what the movement is still lacking or what it has been criticised about, and in what kind of forms it did create a split within the beliefs around (the fourth wave of) feminism.

### *The #MeToo movement in the West*

In America, an activist and Afro-American woman, Tarana Burke, coined the term #MeToo, and started the campaign in 2006 to support survivors of sexual harassment and assault. The campaign started from “[...] Burke’s reaction to the grievance of a girl who was frequently

assaulted sexually by her mother's boyfriend." The main concept the campaign stated with were the words 'me too' with the idea that the victims are not alone, and that there are also others who experienced similar trauma. (Naik et al, 83-4, and Pegu 201, 152). On 15 October 2017, the term got further popularized by actress Alyssa Milano on Twitter, when she was making an appeal for a friend in the wake of the allegations of harassment and rape against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein (Kazmi, Pegu 2019, 152). "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet," Milano posted through her Twitter account accompanied by the following text:

Me Too. Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

(Fileborn and Loney-Howes 2019, 3)

The #MeToo movement had allowed not only actresses to speak up, but also activists, academics and journalists, as it gave them a space to be heard and to name and shame predators in their work environments and ensure action (Mustafa 2018). Several names had emerged, some people have gone quiet, others have protested, and several have lost their jobs or stepped down while pending enquiry (Mustafa 2018). The #MeToo movement has also included men attesting to harassment, calling out other men, or in some instances, female harassers (Mani 2019). The #MeToo as hashtag was used more than 19 million times in only the English language on Twitter by 30 September 2019. Before October 14, 2018, the hashtag was the most searched topic on Google in India. The top 10 search on Google was #MeToo in relation to sexual misconduct and the #MeToo campaign on that day. (Naik et al 2020, 84-5).

There are also voices about the #MeToo like Kelsey Matheson, who worry that the #MeToo campaign and the movement will fade after it gained a momentum (Matheson 2018). Matheson points out that many women do not address what has happened, and what they are going to do about it, and only mention a #MeToo. The question is if women are still willing to feel supported enough to take action against their abusers, or talk about their stories to groups of girls and other women, will they manage to educate women and men to speak up against rape culture even when it is not considered a hot topic by the media (Matheson 2017).

Matheson evaluates that through the MeToo the empowerment of women to create safe spaces is needed, whether it is an online group for women or a committee at the work floor. A space where women can talk freely about their issues in regards of gender equality, human rights,



and women's health. It needs to support the survivors, both men and women, and encourage them to be able to speak up, and act against their abusers, and ultimately advocate their rights. The victims need to feel trust of their community. Conversation with men who do not abuse their power need to be held, and men in powerful positions need to speak up against abusive men in order to shift the toxic culture. Sons need to be educated in respect to what it means to behave with integrity; and they need to respect and expect the same behaviour from their peers, friend, and colleagues. Daughters need to be educated on how to protect themselves, and also to speak out against abuse (Matheson 2017).

### *The #MeToo movement in India*

In 24 October 2017, the law student Raya Sarkar created an anonymous, crowdsourced list (LoSHA, list of sexual harassers in Academia) and posted it on Facebook with the goal to encourage other women in Indian academia to call out their sexual harassers (Pegu 2019, 152). Shortly, after Sarkar posted the list online, it got support from many women in their support and attribution to the existence of the list reacting upon their own pent-up frustration with “ineffectual due process and the survivor's right to choose their justice mechanisms” (Pegu 2019, 152). However, several other female academics and activists on Twitter, Facebook, and blogs such as Kafila called the list a dangerous tool, as it undermined the due process and the efforts of decades of feminist work and delegitimising it (Pegu 2019, 152). Another issue with the list was that it had many academics, whom were renowned and admired for their progressive scholarship, which became one of the controversial aspects of the #MeToo politics in India (John 2020, 150).

In India, the #MeToo campaign gave space to voices within the fields of comedy, journalism, the art world, the NGO sector and film industry among other sectors. (John 2020, 149). For example, on 7 October 2018, when actress Tanushree Dutta made allegations against the actor Nana Patekar and narrated her experiences when she was working with him on a film in 2008. The #MeToo campaign impact caused increased awareness, and well-known personalities such as the Union minister M.J Akbar had to step down when the sexual harassment charges against him were made public (Naik et al. 2020, 85). The politics in India also enable parts of the controversies that have appeared once the #MeToo campaign reached to the Union ministers. Reports from the newspapers such as the Hindu have stressed that the interpretative reporting

transfers the burden of responsibilities on women without defining the need for change in the social construction (Naik et al 2020, 100).

There are many people in America “who fear that the #MeToo has become a movement for the privileged ones”, and this is one of the reasons of many Indians rejecting this online feminist movement, claiming it to be too elitist in a country where approximately only a quarter of its population has access to the internet (Kurian 2018). The Indian caste system causes some people to have more caste privileges than others. Indian society is classified according to Hindu caste beliefs based on texts such as the *Manusmriti*. The caste system is hierarchical, and there are four classes or varnas: brahmins (priests, scholars and teachers), *kshatriyas* (rulers, warriors), *vaishyas* (agriculturalists and merchants) and *shudras* (laborers and servers (Dumont. 1980, 66-72). The people, who are born into one of these communities are called *savarna*, while those who are born outside the caste system, such as Dalits and tribal people, are referred to as *asavarna*. The caste system leads to more inequalities on top of gender inequalities. Pegu’s article is in line with this, and elaborates this a bit more, by mentioning that many voices within the #MeToo and mainstream *savarna*-led feminist movements often failed to “include and amplify the voices of marginalised women — Dalits, Bahujans, Adivasis, Muslims, as well as queer and disabled women” (Pegu 2019, 153). However, many of the Dalit activists have asserted that the MeToo movement in India has drown out the stories of the most oppressed women, and often the situation is so that credit is not really given to the survivors for speaking up against their perpetrators (Pegu 2019, 153).

In India, the #MeToo movement was needed to start the spreading and creating of awareness around the transgressions, trauma, and humiliation experienced by many generations of women, across the divides of class, caste, and location as it was considered as ticking bomb (Pegu 2019, 165). The main success of the #MeToo was that now thousands of women came out with their stories mostly online, while battling against centuries-old odds and the stereotypes held against the brave survivors (Pegu 2019, 165). Mustafa also adds to this, saying that it creates an space in which the victim does not get the feeling of being blamed and has to suffer from the insecurity of being a victim (Mustafa 2018). However, in India the #MeToo lacks intersectionality which is threatening to undo some of the good work (Pegu 2019, 165).

Pegu addresses an important point in her conclusion, which is that the movement’s nature has ensured that its tools and successes are accessible only to the privileged. The movement is

leaderless, but however it has been co-opted by privileged voices, and it has not been able or has been unwilling to expand to acknowledge and empower those who are perceived as a bit more oppressed and disenfranchised (Pegu 2019, 165). This creates an erasure of their voices and labour, and a caste-class blind spot of the structural inequalities of Indian society is not only a #MeToo phenomenon (Pegu 2019, 165).

The question at hand is about inclusion, which is not as clear a path as many upper-caste women seem to believe. Marginalised women have been leading feminist struggles, and MeToo-like experiences preceded the current movement. To create a sense of sisterhood and inclusivity, it would be effective if savarna women joined in the battle, hopefully through breaking away from the shadow and hegemony of the Brahminical patriarchy in their own homes and lives (Pegu 2019, 165). Mustafa also points this out, as the movement is more connected with the mobile elite in the couple of big cities and has thus no resonance with smaller districts and villages (Mustafa 2018).

Harassment at the workplace has become a cultural and structural issue. The former indicts the toxic culture in organisations that idealise upper-caste men, and turns a blind eye towards discrimination, which engenders ruthless and unfair competitions and hierarchy, while rewarding or condoning immoral or unlawful behaviour. The structural problem of workplace harassment is also linked with economic forces which rule over many lives (Pegu 2019, 165).

Women in low wage and precarious jobs are at a higher risk of sexual violence and have lower access to recourse. They are stuck between the choice of maintaining livelihoods or seeking justice in a system that is not going to work out for them. Thus, it is not surprising that most women choose not to opt for the least bad option. In this case, speaking up is subverting a system with tied hands (Pegu 2019, 165).

Devaiah mentions in the interview with Pegu that legislation does not prevent or help if the management of corporations take the issues of the harassment and discrimination on the work floor serious. The POSHA Act (Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace [Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal] Act, 2013) is less meaningful and useful if women from lower castes do not understand the law, and thus they have no viable access to act upon their rights since they might not even know what they should do in reality (Pegu 2019, 158).

Solidarity which is built on empathy as well as sisterhood, while creating a space of recognising human flaws and led by the most marginalised people, would drive changes that could dismantle the interlinked exploitative structure, and lead to providing the foundations for

rebuilding towards an intersectional feminist stage. The #MeToo movement in India has, like many feminist movements, not provided any space yet for the LGBTQIA+ community, disabled people, refugees, illegal immigrants, or engaged with men and created a culture in which toxic masculinity is reduced, and feminist men are being more widely accepted (Pegu 2019, 166).

Mustafa examined the “tone and tenor of the #MeToo movement” on social media, and noticed that the movement has an inability to differentiate between men who are guilty of rape and sexual assault, and men who solicited women with a drink or sent an unacceptable text message; which are all unpleasant behaviour. However, the movement responds to it in a similar manner, as it offers the same punishment for all (Mustafa 2018). Mustafa addresses another point, which is that the #MeToo as a movement has a powerful voice, and it is too subjective, arbitrary and acts as if it has no responsibility. There are cases in which women pointed out men, without any enquiry or evidence, and with a lack of subjectivity. It becomes a mob mentality, but one that happens online, in which it sets women against men (Mustafa 2018). This does also refer back to the events around the list posted by Sarkar, which created a split among feminists, or the two kinds of waves of fourth-wave feminism in India.

This list consisted of alleged sexual predators mostly in Indian universities and created a storm of debate. Sarkar claimed to have gathered the names from students, with the intention of warning other young women about sexual harassers in academia (Chowdhury and Deep 2017). Another activist and blogger Inji Pennu created a Google spreadsheet, and invited others to add more names with some other details such as description of the complaints and the number of complainants. The alleged crimes that were being listed against the professors, politicians and others ranged from verbal abuse to molestation and rape (Chowdhury and Deep 2017). A month later, the list and spreadsheet were no longer public, as they had been deleted from Facebook and Google spreadsheet. According to many, the list puts an issue in the spotlight which needs to be addressed as it is rarely discussed on Indian campuses. It is mostly because ‘due process’ for those who seek redress against sexual harassment is hard to achieve in universities. The universities respond that they cannot do much without official complaints; they cannot take action.

Public lists like the one by Sarkar violate the sanctity of a confidential inquiry, “as it denies the accused a hearing and also does not consider the context in which the alleged act took place” (Chowdhury and Deep 2017). The LoSHA list was also an anonymous list, which makes it an

ambivalent phenomenon as it on “one hand does not point out any knowing what the accusations were and how they fit within the existing definitions of sexual harassment” and perhaps are indicative of other experience of violation and discrimination. “On the other hand, the character of a list” as the one mentioned goes beyond individuals, and points out a larger problem, in this case the focus is on the academic culture. A potential complainant might get off worse with her complaint instead of obtaining relief (John 2020, 151). This is important because the nature of the actions which are construed as harassment vary widely. Sarkar, who compiled the list told BuzzFeed that she had evidence in forms of screenshots, emails, and testimonies. However, she was not going to share this evidence with the universities if she was not given consent from the victims (Chowdhury and Deep 2017).

Sarkar did receive backlash from several prominent Indian feminists who did not agree with the action being in the same line as the #MeToo movement and feminism. On the blogsite Kafila, some of these prominent Indian feminists, such as Nivedita Menon made a statement in which they expressed their concern with the situation, and displacement with the list on Facebook. They worried that anybody can be named anonymously without answerability. They also point out that the procedures and the principles of justice need to take place, but that cannot take place in this manner of naming and shaming and makes the task as a feminist more discreditable and difficult. They appealed to those behind the list to withdraw it, and to follow due process, and to also be assured of support by the larger feminist community (Menon 2017). With ‘due process’ Menon refers to the transparent processes of adjudication at institutional level, and refers to a course of formal proceedings which go in accordance with the established rules and principles, which are set up in any institutional context (Menon 2017).

This caused a split within the #MeToo movement among the feminists, as is described by another blogpost by Menon. In this post Menon debates more about the reaction of feminists, who were agreeing with the action of Sarkar, and bashed the “Statement by Feminists on Facebook Campaign to Name and Shame.” Menon explained the reason of the list being a dangerous tool. In Indian courts there is an increasing atmosphere around ‘false’ complaints of domestic violence, and ‘misuse’ of rape laws, and context and explanation around claims of sexual harassment are often needed (Menon 2017). These kinds of lists and the politics behind them are not only dangerous for men, but also to the feminist struggle, such as sexual harassment on the work floor and to attack cultures of impunity. Growing lists like these cause a suspicion in the academic field, and regard women as ones who are making irresponsible

false complaints, and that sexual harassment is only a “figment of the fervid feminist imagination” (Menon 2017).

Menon argues that the statement that she, and several other feminists who have signed, do not stem from “the denial of rampant climates of sexual harassment, misogyny and patriarchal privilege”, as they also have struggled as young feminists themselves one time (Menon 2017). She points out that this justice can only work if a community works out their acceptable norms of behaviour and appropriate punishment. Several of the supporters of the list perceived the statement by Menon and others as a ‘condescending’, or ‘lecturing’ one, when it was a request to rethink their strategy. Several of the people called themselves feminist, while at the same time they were making abusive statements about the signatories about the statement, referring to them as ‘aunties’, or ‘mother-in-laws’, who are using their ‘power’ to silence ‘young feminists’, but also that they are protecting their ‘own men’.

Menon, and others were called ‘savarna feminists’, who dare to advise Dalit Bahujan women on how to behave themselves. Accusations were made about their academic backgrounds and the connections between them and the men on the list, as well as being powerful enough to close down Sarkar’s Facebook account, and that the statement was discrediting the voice of survivors (Menon 2017). However, what stood out for Menon and many others was not that the list was compiled by women from a range of caste and class positions, but the issue about male privilege and impunity in general, and the best manner in countering it (Menon 2017).

Menon points out that the academic circles in India are small, and their effort was not to protect the men on the list, but “to protect and strengthen the procedures which would help to bring justice, and change the sexist, casteist and classist atmosphere of the academy. In the statement it explicitly was expressed that students could bring in formal complaints, and that the signatories would express their support” (Menon 2017).

Menon also debunks the myth around generational divide, as there have also been young women from several campuses expressing their preference for due process over the ‘name and shame’ list online, and most of them want a redressal on the campus through the bodies such a GSCASH (Gender Sensitisation Committee Against Sexual Harassment) (Menon 2017). These bodies, however, often have not been functioning as they should, and some students mention that they are often invariably co-opted by power (Jha 2017).

### **Chapter 3: The representation of the data and the findings**

The data collected here are from Twitter and have been sourced by using the GetOldTweets3 script designed for this purpose. The keywords that are used are “MeToo”, “sexual harassment”, “rape”, and “gender equality”. These words are quite central in seeing what people have been tweeting, since they are general and one would assume that these are some of the key concepts related to MeToo. The data are collected from the years 2017 and 2018, and location-wise, the data comes from near 20 cities spread throughout India, and many are from some of the biggest cities in India. Tweets from smaller, rural locations are not considered here since it is not possible to do within the time constraints of this thesis, and in any case, tweeting is mostly a “big-city” phenomenon.

It is interesting to see that in Delhi, the number of Tweets related to the MeToo movement is almost doubled in the amount of Mumbai, while in Chennai it is relatively less with fives. The messages from Delhi, and Mumbai imply that there is more activity in these cities, while in other cities the spread of the #MeToo took place a bit later, or in a different form. The creation of awareness about the amounts of women facing harassment is most visible in the tweets from Delhi, Mumbai, and surprisingly Kolkata with one out of ten tweets messages, referring that that every woman growing up has faced some form of a #MeToo experience. In the case of Hyderabad, three out of six tweets were referring to the cause of Gaurav Dutta, through the hashtags, the name, and a link.

The term “sexual harassment” was not mentioned in this period on Twitter in the cities Bangalore, Kolkata, and Hyderabad, whereas Chennai has one message about sexual harassment in relation also to children. Mumbai’s tweet messages are posted by the same person and focus on empowerment of women when it comes to sexual harassment. Delhi had the largest number of messages about sexual harassment of mostly women in the workplace. These were often news headlines, and not messages from people themselves. Out of 112 messages, only two messages mention the sexual harassment of women in more rural areas.

The term “rape” is often brought up in the context of political parties, and their ideology. However, also in brought up with cases connected with rape, such as the Nirbhaya case. The term rape is mostly mentioned in the tweets from Delhi, with 178 messages. In Delhi, the tweets refer to marital rape, but also that rape survivors are being humiliated and degraded and often are not finding any chances to get justice. In Kolkata, one tweet refers to the role of the media in relation to human trafficking and the definition of the degree of “brutal rape” and “normal

rape”. In most of the tweet messages, whether news headlines or messages from citizens, it becomes clear that rape is used as a political tool, and that laws on their own do not prevent rape. In all cities it is an issue, however it makes one wonder about the amount of cases that are not being voiced either out of fear for humiliation.

It is interesting to see that with all the terms used as keywords, Delhi showcases the most activities in the number of messages, as well as content, whereas Mumbai and Kolkata tweets also provide some content. Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai provided much less interactions with the terms “rape” and “sexual harassment”, however there were a few messages about “gender equality” and “MeToo”.

The keyword that are used are connected to discussion about the list of Raya Sarkar, and the discussion on the split within the MeToo movement due to the discussion. The keywords are: ‘feminist’, ‘MeToo’, ‘rape’, ‘sexual harassment’, ‘women’s rights’. The keywords are analysed as word within the content of the message or hashtags. The amount set to search for tweets within the timeframe of 1 January 2017 till 31 December 2018 is set on 1000 tweets. However, the amount of tweet within this scope was less than 200 for all the cities.

The data consist out of 20 cities spread over the Indian subcontinent, several of which are considered quite big cities. The cities that are being mentioned are: Agartala, Aizawl, Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Dehradun, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jammu, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Patna, Raipur, Ranchi, Srinagar, Thiruvananthapuram.

Research for the keywords Raya Sarkar and LOSHA ended up in no results for any of the cities. Several cities such as Aizawl, Dehradun, Ranchi, and Raipur did not reveal any of the keywords.

#### *Agartala*

The keyword rape is only mentioned ones by one user on 14 April 2018, who calls out the BJP, and to stop the increase of rape and standing up with rape victim, while convicting the culprit. Other keywords did not provide any tweets.

#### *Bangalore*

In Bangalore, 22 messages were posted by 8 users which contain the keyword ‘feminist’, either in their message or as a hashtag. The first tweet from February 15, 2017 mentions



feminist and connects it to liberal or left politics. Ten of 22 messages were posted by the same user, and they mostly refer to empowerment of the self, connecting the keyword feminist with phrases such as “Do it, woman” or “Women, be your own superhero.” It gives the impression that these tweets are just to hype women or used in a form of ‘coolness’ instead of having the knowledge behind the concept of being a feminist. One user mentions on 15 June 2018 the phrase “Be strong, be a feminist, and unapologetic one.” Another user tweets the hashtag feminist with the goal of it being a trendy hashtag with phrases such as “Tag your friends”. One user posted on 20 December 2018 on tweet about travel goals and posted the hashtag feminist along with girl power, feminism, equality. Some of these hashtags are also in the other messages. It is the only message referring to mobilisation of women.

In 2018, only two tweets are mentioning the keywords ‘gender equality’. One of the messages, posted on 4 March mentions gender equality at the workplace through and interactive session on leadership. This could suggest more leadership positions being opened up for women, or some kind of assertion training. The other message posted on 7 October 2018 by another user points that the one should start the conversation for gender equality. Between 31 October 2017 and 20 November 2018, 8 messages have been posted with the keyword ‘MeToo’ among 7 Twitter users. In 2017, only one message mentions the hashtag mentions MeToo with “Online Integrity Pledge”, it is hard to understand a tweet like this. This could be mentioning integrity with the MeToo movement. On 20 October 2018, a user mentions the launch of a MenToo campaign, and the month October representing the month against domestic violence. This tweet is connected to the “split” in the MeToo movement, taking the “side” of those who argue that MeToo should also concern men as victims and not only perpetrators.

Another user confuses the hashtag MeToo as ‘me too’ with the context “Because everyone posting their Diwali pics”, which is not what the hashtag refers to anymore.

In Bangalore, the keyword ‘rape’ is mentioned 10 times by 10 different users. On 5 March 2017 on user mentions rape in relation to state about being cleared of charges in rape cases. The user mentions that this is perhaps too high as there are a lot of false cases, often Vendetta based cases. On 23 September 2017, an user mentions that in relation to rape it will be difficult to trust “saffron-cladded Baba’s” The tweet message indicates that Babas (holy men) are being now brought up in relation to incidents of rape and molestation by these Baba’s

have increased. On 1 October 2017, a Tweet message is disagreeing with the rape case of a minor by Asaram Babu Ji, and the conduct of the 'rape law' only being used to frame the convict in question. One user calls out the Prime Minister on 14 April 2018 about not speaking up when rape is done by a person connected to the BJP or RSS. On 15 April 2018, a user calls out to people to stand up in solidarity to fight for justice, and death for rape.

On 9 September 2018, the keywords 'women's rights' is mentioned ones. The message refers to creating a healthy home in a socially and economically progressive country where women are enjoying equal rights, education, and freedom. The message is positive about women's power, which related to the hashtag women's rights.

Overall, in Bangalore, a lot of messages are posted with the keyword 'feminist', and some with 'rape', and 'MeToo', but the less with 'gender equality', and none with 'sexual harassment'.

### *Bhopal*

Messages with the keywords 'feminist', 'sexual harassment' and 'women's rights' do not appear in Bhopal. One message with the keywords 'gender equality' on 19 January 2018, with the hashtags referring to a street play by Kaafila in Bhopal.

Only two messages by two different users showed up for the keyword 'MeToo' in October 2018. The first message refers to a wall as an ode to all the women, who were not able to voice their MeToo situation. In this context, the hashtag refers to the MeToo as term as intended by the campaign and movement. The other tweet mentions that the MeToo movement has affected many people in a different way.

Between 14 April 2017 and 17 April 2018, two messages mention the keyword 'rape'. The tweet on 14 April 2017 is written in Hindi, but in the Latin script. It is written in all capital letters and mentions that the "the one that rapes should have his male genitals cut off." (MERE SALAH RAPE K APRADHI KI PENIS KAT DENA) The other tweet message is also written in capital letters, and calls for justice for Asifa, and to stop rape, and kill the rapist.

### *Bhubaneswar*

Four messages with the keywords 'gender equality' were posted by three users. One user messaged the keyword 'gender equality' as hashtags to promote their pamphlet to fight against the patriarchy. On 27 August 2017, a user posted that gender equality is not a women's issue, but a human issue. This issue is affecting all people. The keyword 'MeToo' is mentioned as a hashtag one on 29 October 2018. The message is about that public singing is dangerous, and people response with MeToo. The user mentions that "everyone is a #victim.". This user mentions that they learn songs from Bollywood, and that these are perverted and sexist, however many people love them.

The keyword 'rape' is mentioned four times by four different Twitter users in the period between 27 August 2017 and 29 April 2018. On October 11, 2017, one message mentions a gang rape case of a minor girl by four armed personnel. They call upon the government to inquire and act as soon as possible.

One message is posted with the keywords 'sexual harassment' on 18 October 2018 about the actress Nandita Das. Two messages mention the keywords 'women's rights' in October 2018, both are about Manashi Pradhan and women's rights.

### *Chandigarh*

Three messages with the keyword 'feminist' appeared between 10 May 2017 and 2 July 2018 by three different users. One of the messages mentioned many of hashtags related to the keyword 'feminist' such as "#savegirlchild, #feminism, #equality, # womenempowerment." One tweet was posted on 27 May 2017 about a tea seller (chai walli), who was a freedom fighter and made improvements for gender equality. This message could refer also to Narendra Modi, who worked as a tea seller for his father.

In October 2018, the keyword 'Metoo' has been posted five times among five users. One of the two users mention on 16 October 2018 that the MeToo movement has given courage to many people to open up and share their stories.

The keyword 'rape' has been posted three times by three different users between 28 August 2017 and 13 April 2018. One tweet from 28 August 2017, mentions the rape case of Gurmeet

Ram Raheem. Another tweet from 13 April 2018 mentions the rape case of Asifa and asks for justice.

Two messages mention the keyword 'sexual harassment'. One tweet is about the resignation of an RSS veteran, who was appointed as the Meghalaya Governor, while the other tweet is about an IAS officer accusing her senior additional chief secretary of sexual harassment. In both cases point out sexual harassment on the work floor, in particular in the field of politics. The keywords 'women's rights' were not being mentioned.

### *Chennai*

Two tweet messages mention the keyword 'gender equality' as hashtags. The keyword 'feminist' is mentioned in only 2018 in six messages. Four messages are from the same user and promote a short Tamil movie called Sollu Di. The keyword 'MeToo' is mentioned five times in 2018.

The keyword 'rape' is mentioned ones on 14 April 2018 in relation the Asifa rape cause. On April 14, 2018, two messages with the keywords 'sexual harassment' were being mentioned. Both of the messages refer to a silent protest towards sexual harassment of women and children.

On 8 March 2018, a message posts the keywords 'women's rights' in relation to women's rights day, and women's empowerment as the message point out that "Women's Rights are Human Rights!"

### *Delhi*

The keyword 'feminist' appears 41 times in Delhi between 2 February 2017 and 2 October 2018. 32 messages out of 41 messages were posted by the same user, which were posted like news headline. On 14 January 2018 on user mentions tries to address feminists and thinks that they do not like to live with men.

The keywords 'gender equality' appear 61 times. Most of these messages relate gender equality to Indian politics and gender equality on the work floor. Ten out of 61 messages

refer to the Menstruation Bill. This bill refers to better work environment for women, and a 2-day paid leave every month (Ninong and Ranjan 2018).

The keyword 'MeToo' appeared 58 times in Delhi between 16 October 2017 and 27 December 2018. In Delhi, the hashtag 'MeToo' is being used to refer to describe unpleasant situations. A user posted on 26 October 2018 that people should stand up for themselves through breaking the silence.

The keyword 'rape' is mentioned 179 times in Delhi between 4 January 2017 and 3 December 2018. Several messages mention that the state government in Uttar Pradesh failed the Muzaffarnagar rape survivors from threats and harassments.

The keywords 'women's rights' appeared in 80 messages from 5 January 2017 till 1 October 2018. The messages do not generate any new information on women's rights in comparison to the other cities.

### *Hyderabad*

One tweet from 24 August 2018 mentions the keyword 'feminist'. The message is about a play based on the writing of a feminist Urdu writer Ismat Chughtai. The keywords 'gender equality' are mentioned in two tweets from October 2018. One message states that a safe workplace equals in educational freedom.

The keyword 'MeToo' was being mentioned in six messages from 17 October 2017 till 11 November 2018. One user posted a repost on 16 October 2018 with the message "Dear men, mend your ways" in relation to the hashtags #MeToo, as well as #TimesUp and #NOMEANSNO, and Sexual Harassment.

The keyword 'rape' appeared 7 times between 4 January 2017 and 1 September 2018. On 4 January, a user posted that eve teasing leads to rape, and actions against eve teasing should be taken seriously.

On 13 April, another user posts that the media needs to grasp an understanding that rape cannot be related to a particular religion. On 18 April, a user messages that the political parties divide the rapist and rape victim into Hindu and Muslim. In the thesis, this has not

been discussed a lot, but the media and politics does play around in how they antagonize victims' religious backgrounds.

The keyword 'women's rights' appeared ones on 20 December 2018, while the keyword 'sexual harassment' did not appear.

### *Jaipur*

On 11 February 2017, a message with the keywords 'gender equality' appeared. The message is about believing in gender equality. Two messages with the keyword 'MeToo' have appeared between 17 October 2017 and 2 October 2018. The first message from 17 October 2017 uses MeToo as a hashtag to promote a book, while other message from 2 October 2018 is about the Goddess Durga, being a symbol of strength, and that there may be no situations of MeToo.

Two messages with the keyword 'rape' appeared in April 2018. The first message from 16 April 2018 is written in all capital letters, and it reads as if the person is a bit upset. In the message they refer to being a human, and that they are ashamed of humanity. Rape is inhuman and religion should not be drag it. The other message from 29 April 2018, is refers to child abuse and rape attempts being a big issue that society struggles and suffers from. The keyword 'women's rights' appears two times in October 2018, and they refer to other hashtags. The keywords 'feminist' and 'sexual harassment' do not appear.

### *Jammu*

The keyword 'rape' appears twice during 2018. One of tweets appears to be in Hindi, written in Latin script, however the meaning of message got lost in translation.

The keyword 'sexual harassment' appeared on 30 May 2017 in a message about the protest at the Jammu University against a professor accused of sexual harassment. The keywords 'feminist', 'gender equality', 'MeToo', and 'women's rights' does not appear.

### *Kolkata*

The keyword 'feminist' appeared four times in messages. On 16 October 2017 at message refers to feminists not having an idea what they want.

The keyword 'gender equality' appears ones on 5 March 2017. The message is about that changing and fighting starts with oneself.

The keyword 'MeToo' appeared 10 times in from 17 October 2017 till 1 October 2018. On 28 January 2018, a user mentions that the MeToo has obviously not reached India yet. Another user points out on 11 October 2018 if the MeToo movement had stopped if it started from the corporate sector or another field. On 16 October 2018, Durga Puja is being mentioned in relation to the MeToo, however the in the message is mocking the MeToo as it refers to Durga Puja as MaaToo, a wordplay on the mother (Maa) goddess Durga.

The keyword 'rape' appeared ten times in messages, but message do not stand out and repeat content of the rape cases. The keyword 'women's rights' appears two times in on 8 March 2018. Both messages are about the celebration of the commemoration of the women's movement. The keyword 'sexual harassment' does not appear.

#### *Lucknow*

The keyword 'gender equality' appears twice on 29 April 2018. The keyword 'MeToo' appeared three times. Two messages call out people to spread solidarity and speak up. The keyword 'rape' showed up three times. One user post in Hindi through the Latin script about what if girls are not safe in cities such as Lucknow, then those girls in villages are less safe. (Lucknw me hi jb Girls safe ni hai thn Baki villge me kya suraksha denge hmarey) The keyword 'feminist', 'sexual harassment', and 'women's rights' do not appear.

#### *Mumbai*

The keyword 'feminist' appeared 18 times. One user mentions in four messages about the male vote dropping and put to a halt due to the preference of feminist, which comes before welfare and nation.

### **Conclusion**

Feminism in India started out differently than how it started in European countries and America. The fourth wave of feminism started in America and then spread to India. Issues around sexual harassment, rape and gender inequality had already existed before the #MeToo movement. The #MeToo movement created an online safe space for women to speak up against their abusers. These women were often from privileged backgrounds.

Gender inequality in India is often connected to the social structures with class, and caste. Within the #MeToo movement on social media in India it creates boundaries for those, who cannot voice their opinions and disagreements with issues such as ill-treatment of women (and also men) due to their financial circumstances, poor health, or poor living environments.

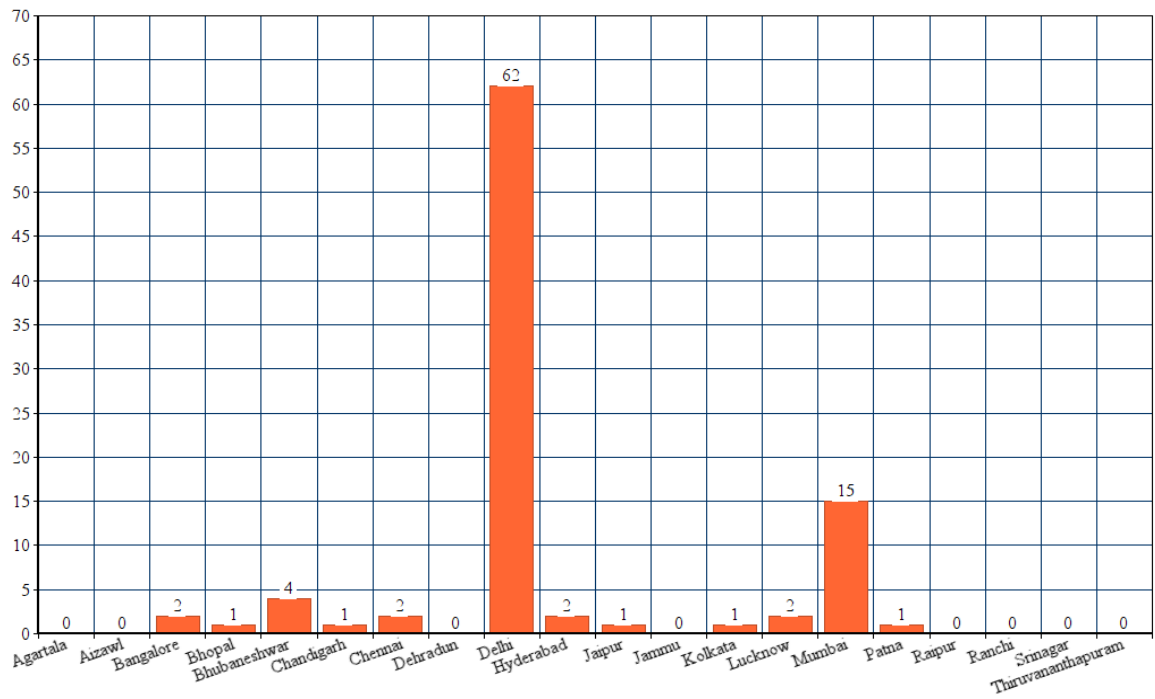
The boundaries that gender inequality causes within the #MeToo movement, were related to men now perceived as being bad, and 'all women' were perceived as victims. Not taking away that most victims are women, and most assailants were men. The split within the #MeToo movement in India caused an outrage in academia, art, and politics. Men who were on the #MeToo list could not prove their innocence and procedures against sexual harassment had failed the victims as well as several other people, who were on the 'list' by Raya Sarkar. It led to a division within the #MeToo movement, between some prominent Indian feminists, and media outlets continued to pour fuel in the fire.

The data of tweets from 2017 and 2018 showcase that when the #MeToo movement spread to India, six of the biggest Indian cities rarely mentioned anything about gender equality, for men, women, or children. Most messages referred to gender equality on the work floor, and in offices on a governmental level. None of the tweets from 2017 refer to the women in rural areas, those who need protection as well, as their voices are not being heard on Twitter due to various reasons such as poor internet availability or financial obstacles in paying for the required technology. Based on the tweets from biggest cities in India, #MeToo as a campaign did not really make much impact in the amounts of tweets, even though it did create more awareness on certain issues that women in India and elsewhere still face in their workspace or everyday lives. It also showcases that the arrival of the #MeToo movement in India did not have the same impact as that one tweet by actress Alyssa Milano had in the West, mainly in the USA, within 24 hours. The #MeToo movement in India is still trying to find its place, and many kinds of #MeToo-like movements took place before in the offline space among various marginalized women. Hopefully in the future, more research will be conducted on the #MeToo movement in India as it evolves to different forms and moves to account for various different spaces.

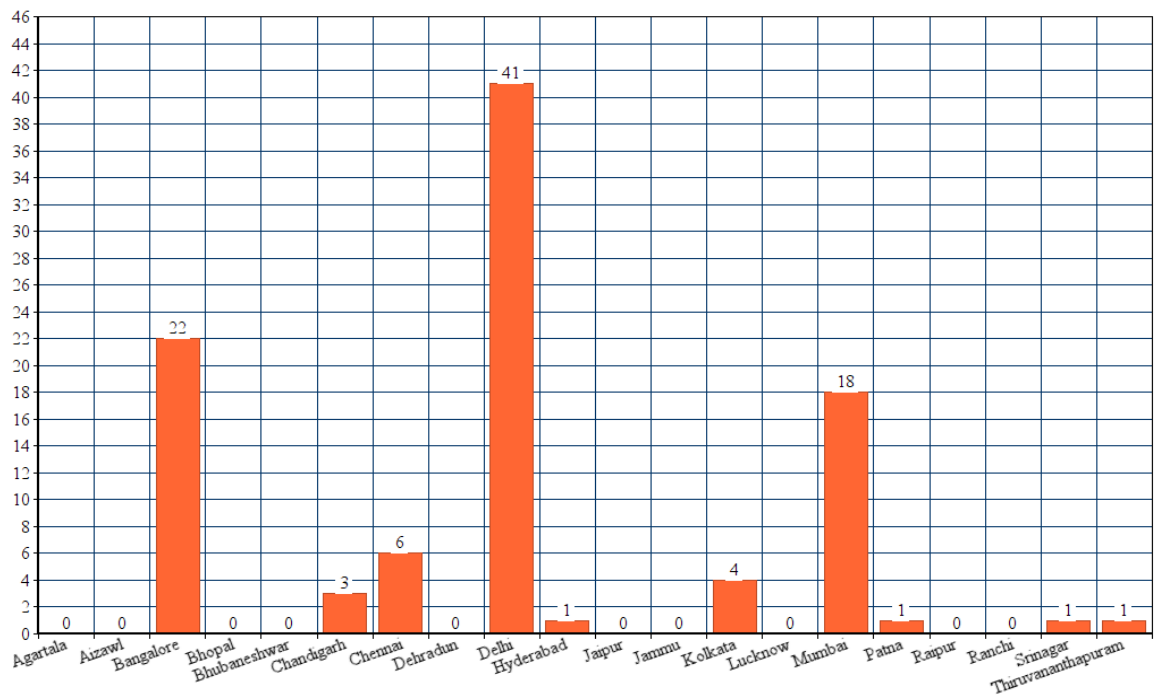


## Appendix: keyword frequency by city

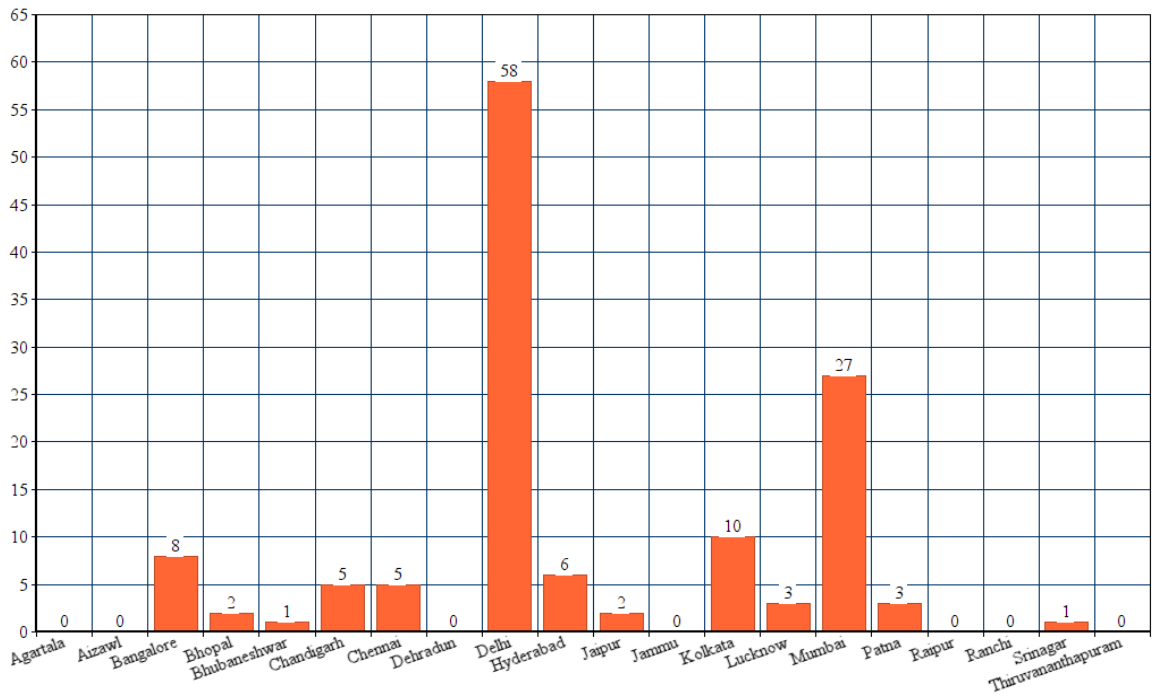
Gender equality



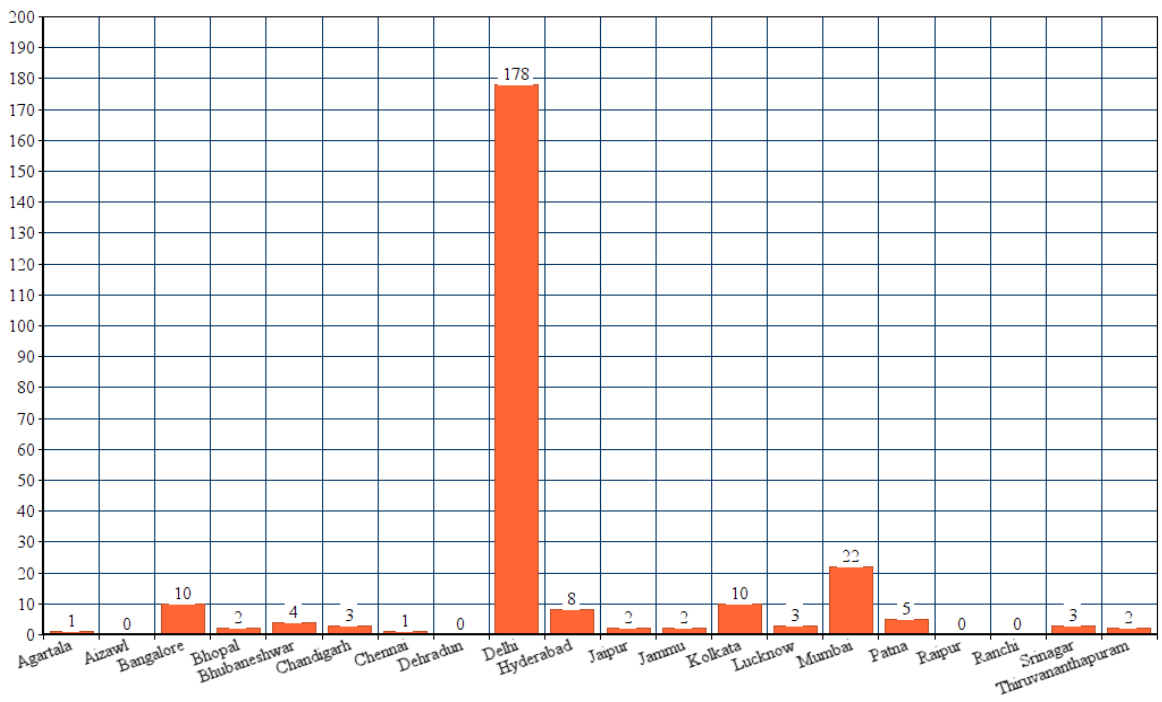
Feminist



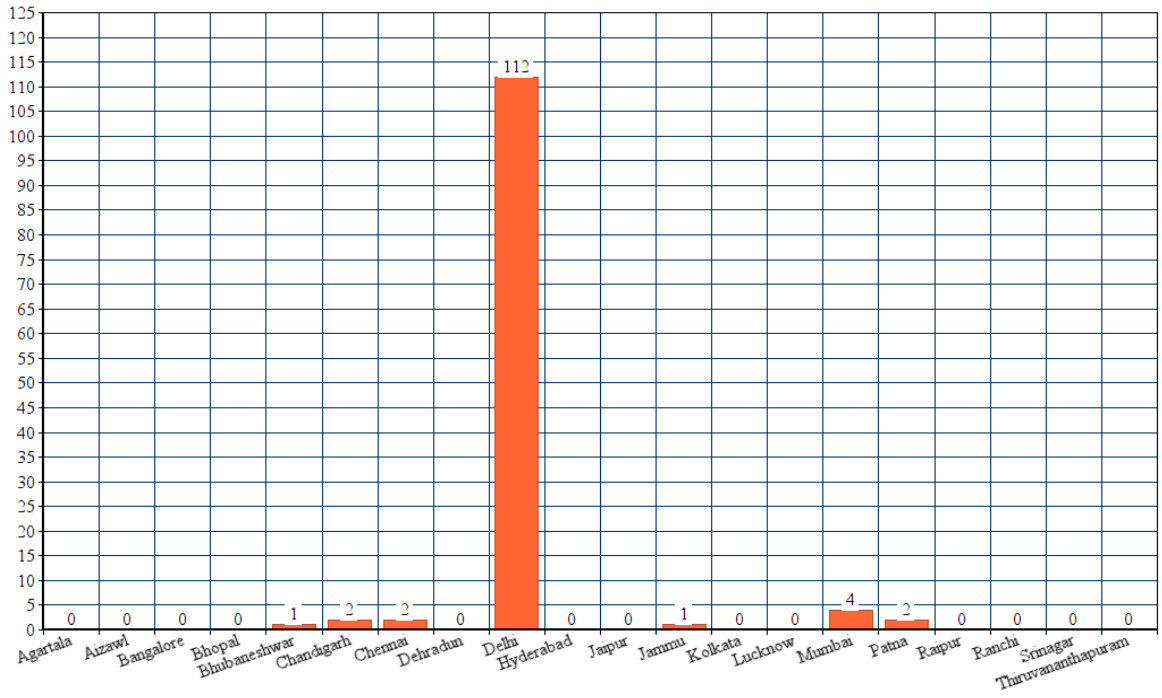
MeToo



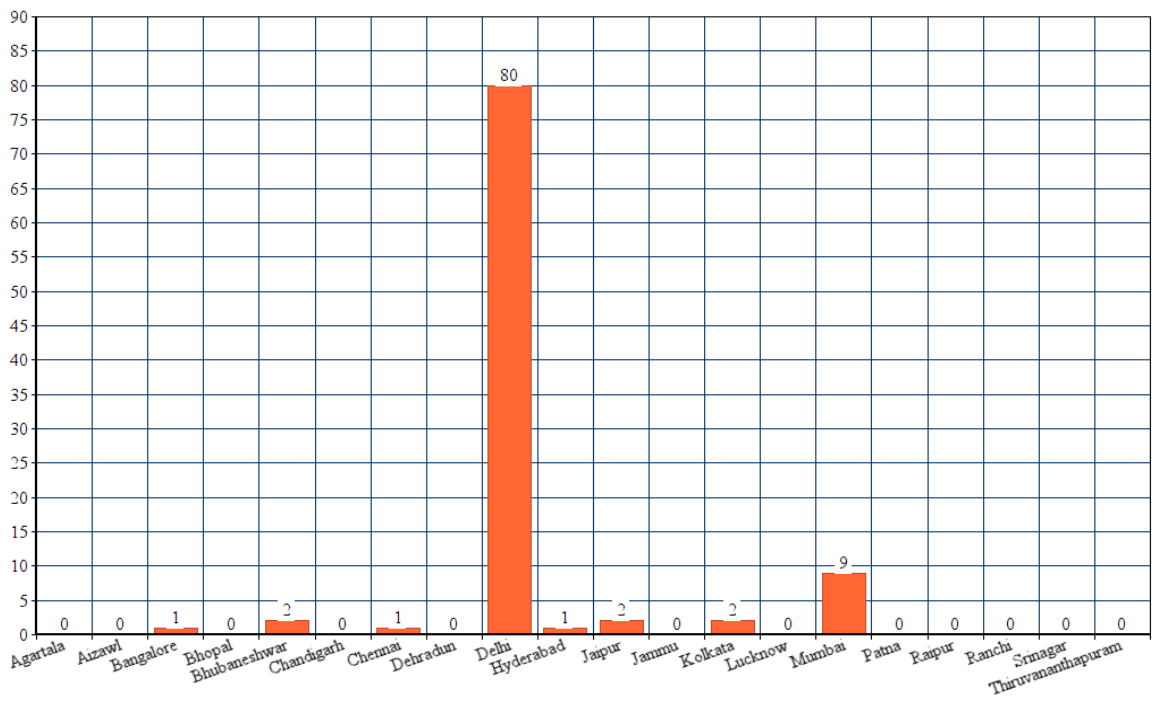
Rape



Sexual harassment



Women's rights



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