



Woman's World



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Afternoon Despatch & Courier

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SLUTS 'R' US?

>> The Slut Walk movement has gained momentum the world over and will be taking place in Delhi and Mumbai as well



>> The Slut Walk movement first started in Canada



Slut Walk brings out fishnet stockings and cropped tops in the name of equality. But, will Mumbai embrace or shun the movement? **Henna Achhpal** and **Rhea Dhanbhoora** find out...

A sentence uttered by a cop in Toronto led to a campaign that has become a rage the world over, including India, with women campaigning for the right to wear what they want without being blamed for 'inviting' rape. After stops at places such as Holland, Australia, Brazil, Sao Paulo and even the unambiguous Matagalpa, the Slut Walk is about to make its mark on Delhi and soon, if Facebook groups are to be believed, on Mumbai. But will such a protest work in our country? We talk to a few people and find out what they think of the Slut Walk.

RIGHT TO LEISURE AND FUN

"As one woman on the Delhi Slut Walk Facebook page put it, "If rape was related to clothing, then winter should be rape free season." Which, clearly, it is not. Feminism has room for all kinds of protests and movements and the Slut Walk (and for that matter the Pink Chaddi campaign) are no exception. The Slut Walk has a limited reach, restricted to an urban, middle and upper middle class but this does not make it irrelevant. Feminism needs all kinds of movements and forms of protest. Our struggles against violence are not separate from our quest to demand the right to dress as we like, go where we please and enjoy ourselves. The Slut Walk also makes the point that women have the right to be out in public for no reason at all. As we argue in our book,

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>> The aim of Slut Walk is to change the mindset that girls who wear revealing clothes 'invite' sexual harassment

>> "I wear what I want, when I want and I don't think I need to apologise for it." — Shibani Dandekar, Singer

A FEW SLUT WALK CAMPAIGNS ACROSS THE GLOBE:

- Toronto: April 3
- Melbourne: May 28
- Sao Paulo: June 4
- Amsterdam: June 4
- London: June 11
- Matagalpa: June 11
- Sydney: June 13
- Brasil: June 18
- Holland: June 25

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Afternoon

48hrs



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Why *Loiter*, the women's movement has enabled us to make significant strides in women's right to employment and political participation but it has not given women any rights to leisure, recreation or fun. Fun might sound like a frivolous issue but it is not. The right to have fun, especially in a public space, for women, reflects accurately our claim to public space. Fun or pleasure is also important precisely because it is so threatening to a large number of people."



— **Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade, Authors of *Why Loiter***

THERE'S A NEED FOR DRASTIC STEPS

"It is not the name given to it that is important but the concept and what it stands for. I'm in complete support of the movement. Agreed, one Slut Walk alone will not help change the mindsets but yes, it will be a drop in the ocean... a beginning. Maybe men need something drastic like this to be shaken out of their stupor. Sensitivity is what needs to be inculcated in men who must cease to view women as a commodity and respect her as a human being, giving her the space and choice to dress and behave the way she wishes and not judge her character only by her outward appearance. I feel very strongly about crime against women



and think rape is the most heinous crime a man can commit, far worse than murder. But to eradicate a malaise like this, men have to be educated, have to be sensitised towards women and a lot of work needs to be done in this direction, which cannot happen overnight."

— **Mini Ribeiro, Theatre Actor**

THE MOVEMENT WILL RAISE EYEBROWS

"I think the Slut Walk is a bold venture and a notorious way to get attention to a very important issue and I'm keen on being a part of it. The movement will raise quite a few eyebrows and that's always useful in gathering momentum. The point of Slut Walk, I believe is a strong response to the



wrong idea that women are responsible for the harassment they face. It's important to revolt against this notion. If I wore clothes that didn't suit someone else's taste, it doesn't mean I'm asking to be harassed."

— **Gayatri Parameswaran, Freelance Journalist**

WITH FREEDOM COMES RESPONSIBILITY

"I think women have the right to wear whatever they want and that doesn't justify raping them. But, I also think that if by dressing this way, it makes them an easier target then they need to accept responsibility for their actions. If my clothes attract attention, then that is my responsibility. That doesn't justify rape, but with freedom comes responsibility. I don't think I'd participate in the walk. In the short term, the movement might help the cause but down the line, I doubt it will have much of an impact. I agree with the idea in principle, I'm just not sure that the implementation is something I agree with."

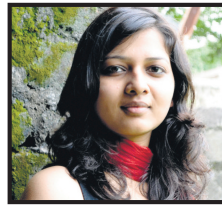
— **Lyandra D'souza, Senior Reporter**

IT IS MERE SYMBOLISM AND HYPE

"I don't think Slut Walk will do much to improve the situation. It is mere symbolism, a raising of voices and generating massive hype. It is classic Indian symbolism that has become all too typical. We 'feel' we have done a lot, but in reality we haven't done anything significant. The most apt example of this would be the Pink Chaddi campaign. It did not do anything to solve the problems surrounding the oppression of women and crimes such as rape and murder. Such phenomena make news once in a while but mostly end up in the graveyard of public memory. The problem is the lack of solutions that such events bring out."

— **Jay Maniyar, Journalist**

SUCCEEDED IN GRABBING ATTENTION



"I'm not against it but I question the means and the name. Slut Walk, although extremely catchy, gives the wrong impression about the purpose. I'm not sure how much it will help reduce the cases of eve teasing, molestation and rape. However, as far as awareness goes, the movement has

definitely managed to grab a lot of eyes and ears. For that reason, it is already a success. The long term achievements remain to be seen."

— **Anjali Garg, Interior Designer**

IT IS NOT THOUGHT THROUGH

"I think the Slut Walk is a force fit. India is on the list of the world's worst places for women because of trafficking, we kill our girl babies, panchayats order 'honour' killings and our women have no recourse to redressal. Now some urban



chicks with an internet connection want to imitate a protest that started because a Canadian cop, half a world away told college girls to prevent date rape by not dressing like 'sluts'? Specifically, in India, outside of our blinkered cities, wearing fewer clothes is a mark of shame. Fully dressed women are raped and then paraded naked to humiliate them! I'm embarrassed for how little these flag-bearers seem to have thought things through."

— **Genesia Tahlramani, Journalist and mother of three**

DON'T SEE IT WORKING IN INDIA

"As much as I desperately want the change that Slut Walk wishes to achieve, I really don't see it working here. In a land where moral policing is rampant, kissing in public is illegal, where various self proclaimed 'mighty rule makers' go around burning Valentine's Day cards, where women drinking in a pub in Bangalore were dragged out by their hair — what do we expect from a Slut Walk? The crazy Indian mentality (which unfortunately is in the majority) worries me."

— **Priyanka Mathur, Student**

WILL BE FORGOTTEN IN A FEW MONTHS



"I don't think the Slut Walk will serve any purpose. It will simply be forgotten and everything will be back to as it was. Even Rakhi Sawant has to keep coming up with new antics every few months to keep herself in the news. If some real results are to be achieved, the best method would be to educate the

public. The whole issue arises with the way most people are brought up in our society. Male members are brought up to believe that they can dominate women and get away with it. Unless it is followed by something substantial it will amount to nothing."

— **Mehul Ved, Information Technology**

DOESN'T FIT IN TO OUR CULTURE

"It's good that women are fighting for their rights as it helps men see them as fighters rather than helpless objects. However, it's not a good idea to imitate a Western movement. Our culture is different and any movement should be altered to Indian sensibilities. Many people who are not exposed to Western culture may not even know the meaning of the word 'slut' and here you are trying to change the connotation it has. We have been brought up with a certain mindset about sex. Even talking about sex openly is taboo here while abroad it is something casual. The right way to change the situation would be to first alter the mindset of people."

— **Sarayu Srivastava, Author of *The Last Pretence***



REFRESHING STEP FOR THE CAUSE

"I support the Slut Walk. Women don't need to restrict themselves just because men cannot keep their urges under control. Men have distorted beliefs that women dressed in a certain way are 'easy'. I believe it is a woman's right to be treated with dignity regardless of what she is wearing. I'm not sure that a Slut Walk can have much effect on the root level of the problem but it is certainly a refreshing step for the cause to gain momentum."

— **Manali Jagtap, Designer and Wedding Planner**

CAN'T BLAME WOMEN FOR SEX CRIMES



"As a society we have double standards. Many educated people also hold the belief that a woman should not 'ask for' trouble by dressing inappropriately. The Slut Walk is an attempt to remind all of us that we live in a democracy and are free to wear what we like. How can we, under the garb of a cultured traditional society, be such hypocritical snobs who blame the fairer sex for provocative attire? I am completely for the Slut Walk. Having said this, I also feel that people, men and women alike, have a responsibility to themselves and should exercise wisdom in their daily interactions."

— **Ishitta Arun, Interior Designer and Actor**

DILUTES THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ISSUE



"I support all efforts made towards awareness but I have my reservations about being a part of a campaign that's called Slut Walk. If the objective is something as serious as reducing sexual violence and abuse then the term 'slut' only blurs the meaning of it all. Don't dilute the seriousness of it by wearing provocative clothes. There is a risk that the entire effort will only end up being perceived as entertainment by male bystanders."

— **Shonali Nagrani, Actor**

MEN WILL LEER, GAWK AND LETCH



"Women, strut your stuff by all means but don't downgrade yourself in the bargain. What is this rubbish about slut-walking your way to feminist heaven? Get real. To start with, these kind of cheap stunts serve no purpose other than to titillate Page 3 paps. Besides, it's such a depressingly

'wannabe' thing to do. Why react to some dumb Canadian cop's sexist comment? By doing so, aren't women the world over giving him unwarranted importance and attention? Seen in our cultural context, the idea of a multi-city Slut Walk is an absolute no-no — even if the intentions are to shock the men of this country. The only response to such a gimmick is likely to be the exact reverse of what was intended. Men will leer, peer, gawk and leech. It certainly won't make them stop dead in their tracks to review their mindsets."

— **Shobha De, Writer**

IT'S A CHOICE, RESPECT IT

"I respect women and their choice to wear whatever they want, their choice to be pro choice and their choice of living life on their own terms. Slut Walk is also a choice. Some will stand by it and some won't. We can't hate or judge women who don't support it. In the same way, we have to respect their choice."

— **Sapna Bhavnani, Hairstylist**



NEED EDUCATION

"I hope that the Slut Walk achieves what the participants want. However, I feel changing the mindset of the public will only be achieved with a certain level of education and strict law enforcement."

— **Ehsaan Noorani, Musician**