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 - [»All India](#)
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 - [»South Asia](#)
 - [»Asia](#)
 - [»Middle East](#)
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 - [»Europe](#)
 - [»Americas](#)
 - [»Oceania](#)
- [Metros](#)
 - [»Delhi](#)
 - [»Kolkata](#)
 - [»Mumbai](#)
 - [»In Other Cities](#)
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 - [»Economy](#)
 - [»Market](#)
 - [»Companies](#)
 - [»Autos](#)
 - [»In Other News](#)
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 - [»Health](#)
- [Metros](#)
 - [»Fashion](#)
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 - [»Food](#)
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 - [»Horoscope](#)
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- [Editors' Picks](#)
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Bura mano, Holi hai!

THE ASIAN AGE. | [SURIDHI SHARMA](#)

Published : Mar 12, 2017, 12:15 am IST

Updated : Mar 12, 2017, 6:37 am IST

4    

‘Bura na mano Holi hai’ is quite the handy phrase on Holi for men who take liberties with women under the garb of festive revelry.



 Volunteers from MenEngage Delhi campaigning for a safe and consensual Holi.

‘Bura na mano Holi hai’ is quite the handy phrase on Holi for men who take liberties with women under the garb of festive revelry. But for women subjected to unwanted touching, it is definitely not a matter of playful fun. This Holi, they are being asked to take offence — and rightfully so.

This year two city-based groups — Men Engage Delhi and Ek Saath — have come together to campaign for a harassment-free and consensual Holi with the slogan #BuraMano. Badar Uzzama from Men Engage Delhi, an alliance of NGOs working with men and boys to promote gender equality, says, “It is important that people don’t brush aside consent on this day. Holi is no reason to touch another person in an uncomfortable manner. We have had several sessions with college students in Delhi and got a positive response. While many agree with our campaign, we have also faced a lot of backlash as some feel that we have no right to make a fuss about a traditional festival. But that will not stop us from campaigning for a safe Holi. Consent matters, even on Holi, and people have to be held accountable for such actions.”

Anjali from Pinjratod, a feminist collective fighting for the rights of women in universities, says, “For the past week women in localities around the campus have been subjected to this kind of harassment which is often accompanied by extreme sexualisation of the female body — the ‘fun’ of watching a woman’s body drenched with water and the overall pleasure of violation. Most women think twice to even go out to buy groceries from the nearby market.”

Anjali strongly feels it’s high time such behaviour stopped getting a silent, tacit approval from society. “It is horrifying behaviour that disguises itself as a friendly and socially-acceptable form of sexual harassment that has been going on for years. It derives its strength from silence, at the same time locking women in their rooms, hostels and houses. It has to stop,” she says.

Talking about how rowdy revelry associated with Holi ends up confining women to their homes, Shaily, a Delhi university student, says, “Can you deny that many girls after attaining puberty are not allowed to play Holi outside by their mothers, for fear that they would be harassed by local street gangs? I can’t. I was not allowed to step outside my home on Holi by my mother. It’s only now when I live on my own that I go play Holi with my friends outside. But this autonomy and my choice of playing Holi outside the safe confines of home hasn’t stopped the harassment. I love Holi but some people just don’t seem to understand that there is an element of consent they need to heed.”

Most women who love the festival unanimously agree that the spirit and beauty of Holi is marred by this utter and blatant disregard for consent.

Travel photographer Deepti Asthana, who went to Vrindavan to shoot the festivities that start a week ahead of Holi, faced crowds that reminded her of Bengaluru’s New Year harassment incident. “People surrounded us and we were trapped in the crowd. I am from UP and have faced and dealt with everyday eve-teasing which has become quite the routine. But they don’t dare to touch you on those regular days. Holi it seems gives them a license for a few days to grab you and touch you. The worst part is, unlike other days, you can’t even call for help, as no one will help you considering it is Holi and supposedly everything is ‘playful,’” says Deepti.

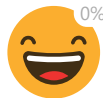
Another travel writer Meghana Sanka, who also attended the Holi festivities in Vrindavan, shares, "I love Holi, but my hands and legs got cuts when people threw water mixed with sheera on me. When the water hits you with force and has glass powder mixed in it, it can cause a lot of harm." Sheera is crushed glass that is often added to dry colour or water and used on Holi in many places. "Forget consent, it is unsafe. Such incidents change our perception of something so beautiful," says Meghana.

Tags: [holi](#), [offences](#), [ngos](#), [harassment](#)

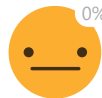


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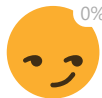
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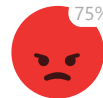
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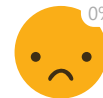
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