



# EVERYDAY HEROINES

Stories of change by the Akshara team



**Everyday Heroines**  
**Stories of Change by the Akshara Team**  
**Produced in 2017**

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Only happens in Hindi films.

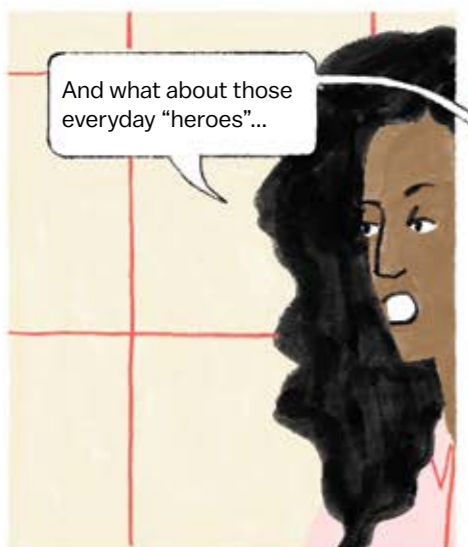
They want to show how macho the boy is.



It's supposed to be romantic but it's rubbish.



Give the girl a chance to think and say yes or no.



And what about those everyday "heroes"...



...who pull at duppatas, whistle...



...stare, touch you up?

When I travel in the local train, I put my rucksack in front so no one will touch my breasts.



When I enter my lane I walk with my eyes down...



...so I don't have to see the group of boys hanging around.



What about those guys...

Sometimes I feel like having a tea at our nearby stall but I dare not go. The looks I would get!



...who spread their legs in bus seats?





# WHY DO MOST GIRLS TOLERATE SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

## SELF DOUBT

You wonder if it was what you were wearing or the time of the day/night or that particular road. Can you call this harassment or was it something too trivial to worry about?

## SOCIAL CONDITIONING

That it is fate, a part of a woman's lot or a gender or occupational hazard. You are not sure how many bystanders or people from the public will help you or restrain the harasser. Instead they just might stand and watch!

## FEAR OF RETALIATION

If you tell your parents, they place restrictions on you, like not letting you go to college.

If you tell your friends, you are no longer 'cool', they might laugh or talk behind your back. If you tell your teacher or boss, it becomes official and you are likely to be called before a committee, or even fired on other pretexts.

## NO HELP FROM OTHERS

It's your word against the harasser's – there is seldom 'hard evidence', so it's likely you will not be believed. Suddenly, you become unpopular!

"Don't be difficult" is what you hear, or "Don't you have a sense of humor?". Very few people want to stick their necks out for you.



What if we were to teach boys a lesson?

What if we harass them?

Then they would understand why girls get angry and frustrated.



I guess the answer is not to behave as badly as they do.

Maybe if we were not that scared we could react differently.

I had gone to a self defense session in which they said the same thing.



What fun! I would like to pull a shirt off a boy!

I would blast his ear with a loud whistle.

I would get my friends to crowd and frighten a guy.



Walk confidently on the streets. If someone is following give the message that you don't like it.

Move away from the person or group of boys who are harassing you without feeling scared.

Use every day things like your purse or umbrella to dissuade a harasser

But the most important thing, they said, is to ask yourself what are you scared of? Look at your own fear and try to get over it.



Let's just admit that we are too scared to do anything, let alone touch boys.



Plan your own Strategy. Fear can be overcome by knowledge. Read up what harassment is and what can be overlooked. You will find info on [www.standupagainstviolence.org](http://www.standupagainstviolence.org). Websites like [www.howrevealing.com](http://www.howrevealing.com) or [www.stopstreetharassment.org](http://www.stopstreetharassment.org) gives you a lot of stories women have posted about their experiences. It will help you in understanding the different types of harassments.



Read up the law. IPC 354 and 509 are concerned with word or gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of women. These laws are generally used for street sexual harassment.

Remember that harassers are basically bullies who prey on girls and women. They usually try out their stunts in crowds so they are anonymous. You have to show them that you are not afraid. Look at the harasser and shame him with direct statements like "Why do you keep touching me?", "Please move".



Share your stories on [blog.blanknoise.org](http://blog.blanknoise.org), an Indian blog created in Bangalore. Don't allow harassers to defeat you or curtail your mobility.

Take some action or the situation might get worse. Either talk to the person to back off or find a way to avoid him. Remember the emotional impact of not doing anything is severe. Silence will breed more fear. Explore your options carefully. For one off instances, you can either confront the harasser or find support to help you to confront him.

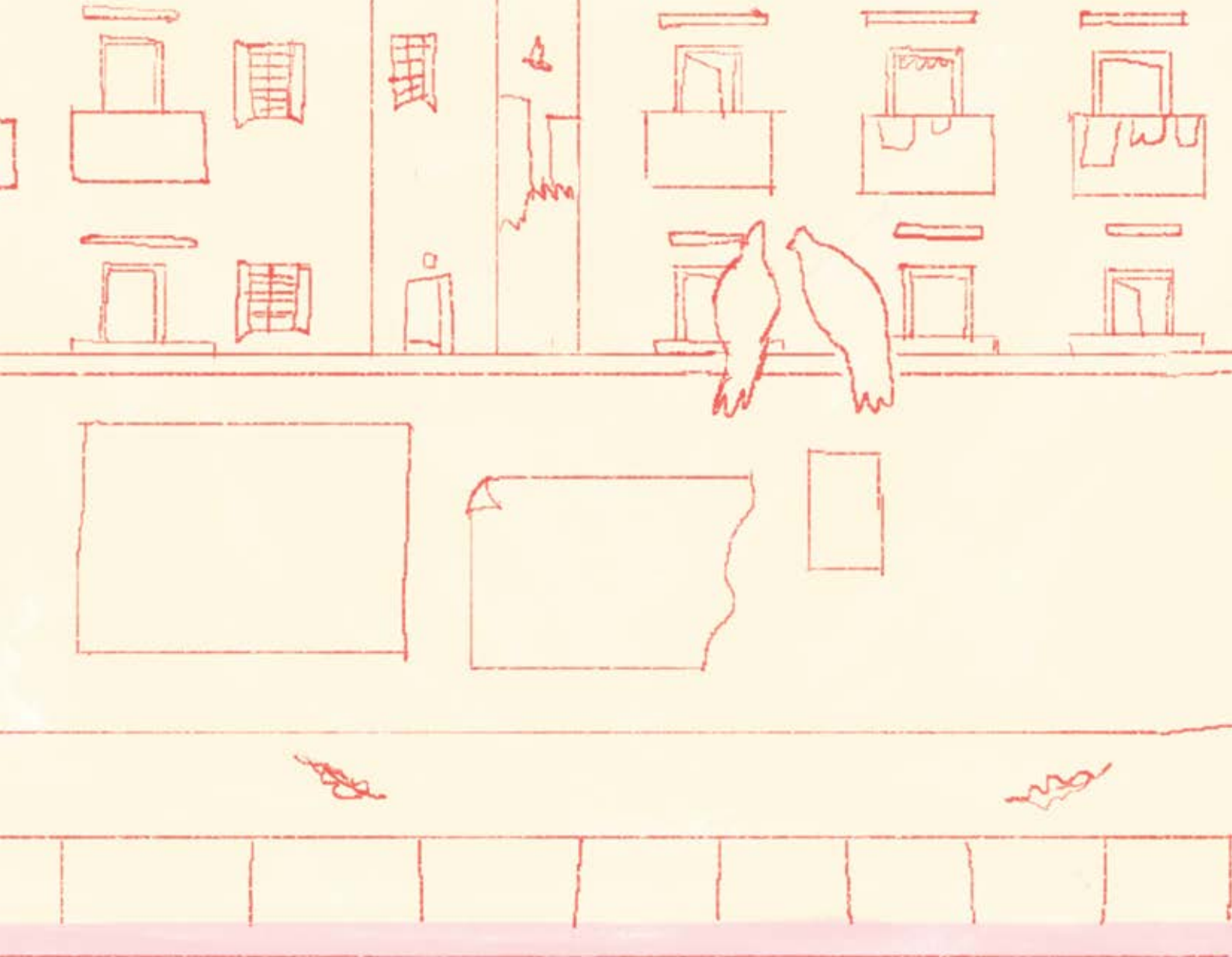


If you think of going to the police, take some friends or elders with you so there is pressure on them to register your complaint. If you can, consult a lawyer beforehand. For official complaints you will need to gather evidence like conversations on your mobile, letters, sms or emails, etc.

In many cities there is a helpline for women. Call them and talk to them about your case. In Mumbai, **103** is the helpline number for women. Nationally, the helpline number is **181**.

**This booklet was conceptualised and written by Nandita Gandhi based on the stories of change which emerged from the innovative evaluation tool used during the Mapping Change Project.**

Sincere thanks to all the girls of the 2016 batch who so generously shared their lives and stories. We are grateful to Madhuri Kamat for supervising the project, Sunita Bagal and Ujjwala Mhatre for program co-ordination and the Advisory Group of Dr Kalyani Talvelkar, Dr Ketaki Ranade, Shweta Ghosh, and Sudipta Dhruv for their invaluable suggestions. The first draft was written by Vishakha Gupta. Special thanks to Manjima Bhattacharya and the American Jewish World Service, USA for supporting the project. The striking cover and illustrations are done by Shreyas R Krishnan for the Kadak Collective.



Akshara's focus is on half the population of India or its women and girls, especially those who are socially and economically underprivileged and bear the brunt of violence. Akshara, a Mumbai-based, non-profit women's organisation and resource centre, has for 22 years been working for the empowerment of women through educational scholarships, building livelihood skills and understanding one's gender rights. In order to curb and prevent violence against women so that women can lead productive and dignified lives, Akshara engages with young men to introspect and work towards gender equality and the State to implement laws and provide services for a Safe, Inclusive and Sustainable City.

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