



TCS outrage: The astonishment is the confession

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TCS outrage: The astonishment is the confession. (Image: File)

The Nashik TCS case has triggered national outrage, but beneath the shock lies a deeper reality: a society long conditioned to normalise predation, silence complaints, and avoid confronting its own complicity

What a society is willing to be surprised by tells you precisely what it has agreed not to examine. The TCS Nashik case produced, above all else, a week of national shock: eight women, four years of sustained complaint, a manager positioned to receive those complaints allegedly choosing instead to suppress them, sexual predation running alongside institutional self-protection alongside coercive pressure toward religious conversion. None of these three things is new. The predation, the cover, the reduction of religion to a numbers game: all three have been operating, visibly and continuously, across this society for as long as anyone currently registering horror at the case has been alive. And yet the country received these events as though they had arrived from somewhere else entirely, as though a Nashik call centre were a foreign country rather than a place staffed by people who grew up in the same households, watched the same films, and absorbed the same formation as the people now demanding accountability. That astonishment is not innocence. It is the ego's preferred method of self-protection: to locate the problem at a sufficient distance that no self-examination becomes necessary. To be shocked is to be excused.

A 2023 LinkedIn survey found that seventy percent of working women in India report experiencing sexual hostility at the workplace, not harassment in its legal, actionable form, but the ambient condition of predation operating just below the threshold of complaint. India has approximately three crore working women, already a reflection of one of the lowest female labour force participation rates among large economies at just above thirtyfive percent against a global average of fifty-two. In a recent year, complaints filed under POSH across the private listed sector numbered under three thousand, extended at most to twenty thousand when the public sector is included. Against three crore women reporting hostility, this is the voice of less than one tenth of one percent. What this produces is not a portrait of a mechanism that failed but a portrait of a society that has trained its women to absorb and continue. The Nashik case reached the surface after four years and eight voices too loud to ignore, and the country responded as though it had never encountered anything like this before. That response is not a sign of health. It is a symptom, and it belongs to the same condition that produced the events themselves.

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The instinct, once the noise began, was to locate the failure in the institution: POSH existed but was not enforced, committees were in place but compromised, emails were sent and ignored, a woman occupied the HR position and still chose suppression over accountability. The inference drawn was procedural: the framework was adequate, but the execution was deficient, so the remedy is stricter enforcement. This is the kind of conclusion that generates the most visible action while disturbing the least possible ground, which is precisely why it will not reach the problem. The problem indeed is structural, but the structure is not located in the Human Resources department of a Nashik call centre. It is located in what this society has, collectively and with considerable comfort, agreed to call normal.

Consider what surrounds us without controversy. Films are celebrated for their earnings, and the earnings frequently track the density of sexualised content, with no discomfort registered on any editorial page. Matrimonial advertisements describe women in the language of a commodities listing; complexion, height, build, the precise calibration of appearance required, published without remark in the same newspapers that will later carry opinion pieces on gender equity. Jewellery campaigns dress their subject in a manner designed to ensure the product is the last thing registered; the formula is so established that no one thinks to question it. Wedding celebrations, held among people who would describe themselves as respectable, have become competitive spectacles in which the sexualisation of the body is a feature rather than an aberration, and the women of the household participate with evident enthusiasm. The sidebar of the respectable news

website carries, beneath the serious reporting, a rotating catalogue of wardrobe malfunctions and beach photographs; the traffic data confirms this is what most visitors came for. ^

None of this is hidden, nor does anyone find it unusual. All of it is seemingly ordinary, and the people who produce it, consume it, and transmit it to their children are the same people who travel to offices and call centres and sit across from one another in performance reviews. The ego that learns at home, at the cinema, at the wedding reception, to process the female body as a site of display, negotiation, and transaction does not relearn itself at the office entrance. It is the only self it carries; it arrives already formed.

There is a further dimension the outrage has been careful not to linger on. The women who remained in that workplace for four years did so because the career was the calculation: the income, the identity built around the income, the weighing of what leaving would cost against what staying cost, and staying won. The formation that produces this calculation begins long before the first salary slip. It teaches a person that economic participation is the primary measure of worth, that its price is to be absorbed in silence, and that the person who refuses is the one creating the problem. When a society's education, formal and informal, in classrooms and in households, reduces a person to their productivity and their productivity to their compliance, the conditions for exploitation are established before the exploiter enters the room. She inherits them.

The Wound Is Not Where We Are Searching

Three elements converged in Nashik, and each is worth naming precisely because none is accidental. The first was sexual predation: the ego in its most legible mode, turning another person's body into an instrument for the relief of its own restlessness, reaching for what is available because it does not know what it actually needs. The second was institutional complicity: the same ego operating through hierarchy, protecting its position by protecting the abuser, treating a woman's sustained complaint as a threat to be managed rather than a truth requiring response. The third involved the use of religious identity as a mechanism of coercion, and here the principle extends well beyond the specific facts of this case.

Religion, as it functions in the life of the uninquiring ego, is not an inward path; it is an outward banner. It takes the ego's incompleteness and organises it at collective scale: my group, my numbers, my territory, my expansion. The impulse to convert by coercion or manipulation is not devotional; it is demographic. The logic is ancient and straightforward:

I do not know who I am, but I know how many of us there are, and larger feels safer. When religion is reduced to this, to identity, headcount, the organised pressure of the incompleteness against the incomplete, then whatever serves the expansion of numbers will feel justified regardless of means. This structure belongs to no single tradition. It appears wherever the ego is handed a religious vocabulary without any corresponding invitation to examine itself, which is to say it appears nearly everywhere.

The three elements share a single root, and it is not a policy failure. It is the uninquiring ego: the self that has never been required, by its education, its household, or its religion, to turn and look honestly at what it is. POSH will not reach that root, because POSH addresses behaviour, and behaviour is downstream of formation. The formation happens before the first performance review, before the first HR induction, in the household that defines a daughter's worth by her marriageability, in the child absorbing from everything around him that bodies are objects to be ranked and appropriated, in the person raised inside a religion that was never offered as a path of self-inquiry but only as an identity to be defended and enlarged. What arrives at the office has been built over years by forces no committee retroactively reaches. Cut one tree from this soil and three grow back. The soil itself has never been the subject of serious examination.

The Bhagavad Gita does not prescribe a new committee. It asks, before anything else, whether the person who will act has examined who they are. Nishkaam karma, action without attachment to outcome, is not passivity; it is the specific courage to refuse what is being offered as normal, to resist without first calculating whether the resistance is convenient, to act from honest reckoning rather than waiting for the permission of circumstance. Mahatma Gandhi had no material leverage over the most powerful empire of his era; he had only the refusal, maintained without compromise, to accept as legitimate what the machinery of power insisted was legitimate. The Gita calls this swadharma, fidelity to one's own truth, and holds it preferable to any degree of comfort purchased by surrendering it.

The women who finally spoke exercised exactly that refusal. The question the rest of us are being offered by the fact of our own astonishment is simpler and harder than anything a policy review will ask: why were we surprised by something we already knew? That question does not live in a governance report. It lives in whatever we have been willing to call normal, which is to say it lives in us. The noise will subside, but the formation that made the noise necessary will continue, until the one thing that has never been seriously attempted is finally attempted: the honest examination of the one who is shocked.

Acharya Prashant is a philosopher and author whose work centres on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life.



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