

## THE GOOD INDIAN GIRL'S GUIDE TO ONLINE MISOGYNY

so, you, young aspiring writer that you are, have a Facebook account and a Twitter handle and a snazzy blog and a book-in-progress. Soon, the prose and the poetry that burns up your insides will set the world on fire, you will begin to worry about your carbon-and-controversy-footprint, but before all of these unmentionables happen, you should brace yourself for the hate on the Internet. You will have to destroy the delicate darling image that you channelled in your teenage. You will have to develop a thick skin. You will have to take deliberate pleasure in having a political opinion.

Nowhere else in the universe will you be hailed as whore, slut, bitch, terrorist, jihadi, prostitute and Poonam Pandey for the slight exertion of having shared 140 characters. In this virtual world of instantaneous reactions, you don't need to write a doorstopper to earn a fatwa.

Learn to handle all questions with the equanimity of the Buddha. When asked to go back to the kitchen, tell them you are too busy in bed. When they speculate about your lovers, laugh. When it is a threat of acid attack or rape or murder or all of this at once, tell them you are not afraid. When it gets too personal, be the shrew that Susan Sontag was when she refused to be dragged into a cat-fight about Camille Paglia.

Block. Report spam. Twitter will write back to you politely and tell you that they found nothing offensive about the threats and the character assassination. Don't bother writing back to Twitter.

Against popular wisdom, feed the trolls to let them die of fatigue. When abused, use the #MisogynyAlert hashtag. Because people deserve to know the kind of women-hating specimens that inhabit Twitter, use the retweet button.

If you would like a little outdoor adventure, make a trip to your city's police commissioner. Nothing will probably come out of your complaint, but at least you will come back home with story ideas. Perhaps, the police will come to you as they did to the two girls in Palghar.

Even after all this, stay the way you are. Refuse to turn into a social media celebrity. Stake your claim in the public sphere but remember that capitalist consumerism wants you to perform all the time. Bring up all the difficult questions. Break silences. Share nothing that will help a stalker.

When everything else fails, don't go offline and admit defeat.

Quote obscure arguments from French philosophers, link to strange news-stories from faraway lands, share songs that make you weep, write a novel in six words, or burst into twitterverse. My last tweet read: When you borrow a man, don't leave love-bites on him.

Trust me, I was trying to get away from trouble.