

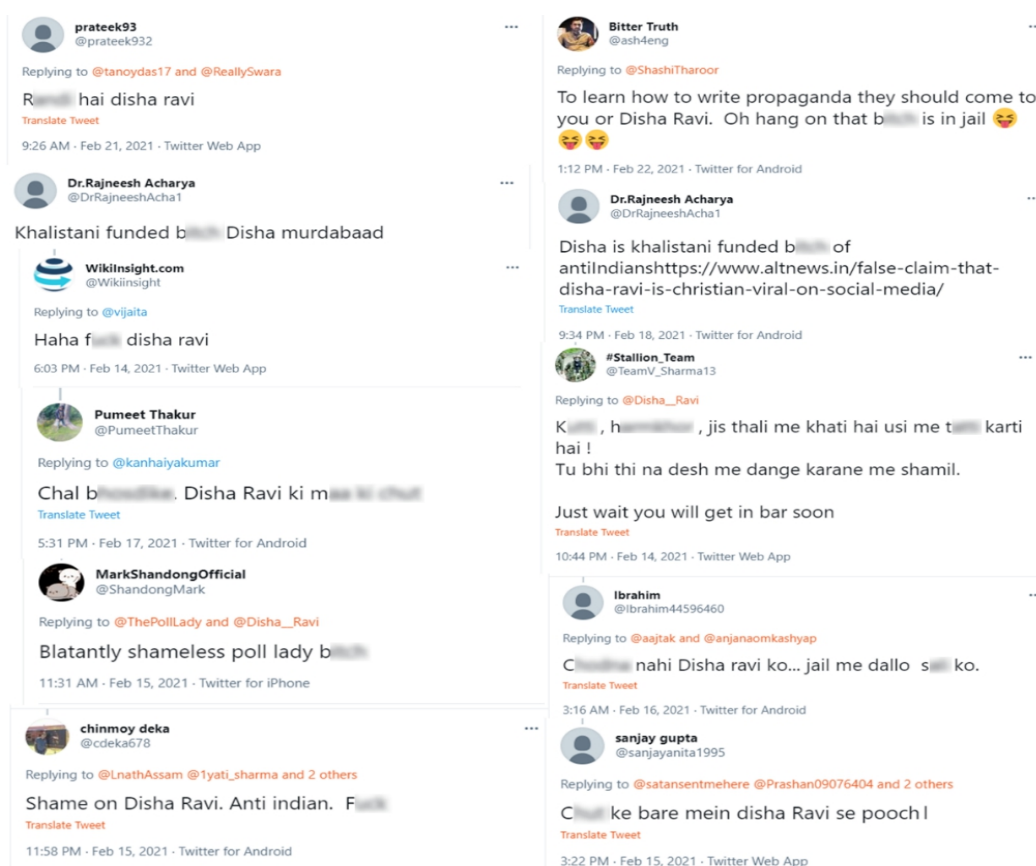
## Disha Ravi A Case Study of Differential Treatment

On February 23, after spending ten days under custody, Disha Ravi was granted bail by Delhi's Patiala House court, with the judge citing "*scanty and sketchy evidence*" as the reason.

Disha was arrested by on the charges of sedition for her connection with the Toolkit, as she had a hand in preparing the document in collaboration with the Sweden-based activist Greta Thunberg. She was booked under sections 124A (sedition), 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC. Reportedly, Disha was also the one who had asked Greta Thunberg to take down the post in which she had shared the toolkit as her name was also mentioned in the toolkit.

**She became the target of the misogynistic hecklers on social media at lightspeed, with the "keyboard warriors" jumping to 'defend' nation and in the process crossed all levels of decency towards women.**

The repulsive comments she received on behalf of the whole female gender raises a zillion questions on the contorted nationalism of these misogynistic, self-proclaimed nationalists.



*Twitter users abusing Disha Ravi after her arrest*

This case study is about how a college pass-out girl becomes the magnet for online abuse which was unleashed by a sloppy investigation and brazen media trial.

### **Getting to know Disha Ravi/ Lesser-Known facts**

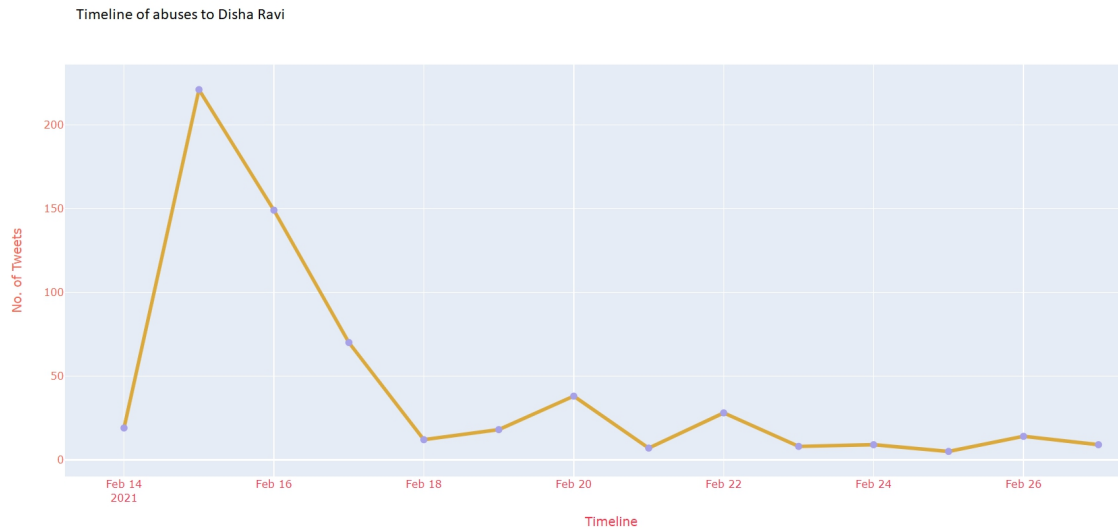
- Disha Ravi, full name, Disha Annappa Ravi is a Bangalore-based 22-year-old climate-change activist.
- She is one of the co-owners of Fridays for Future (FFF) movement, an international movement led by students raising awareness against the climate crisis and demanding action from the political leaders to prevent the repercussions of the situation.
- Disha Ravi became a climate activist after her grandparents struggle with the effects of the climate crisis. Her grandparents are farmers.
- Disha featured in Britain's Vogue magazine in September 2020, for working against environment racism.
- She wrote to Union Minister Prakash Javadekar requesting him to reconsider the government's draft on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in 2020.

### **Timeline of Disha Ravi's controversial arrest**

Disha's arrest in the toolkit row received mixed reactions from social media as one segment especially, global audience criticized the Indian government and Delhi Police, while others started abusing her and passed derogatory remarks.

- **On February 3, 2021**, Sweden-based climate activist Greta Thunberg tweeted on the farmers' protest in India. She happened to share a document (toolkit), a standard template that is now a days used for most of protests or online campaigns.
- **On February 13, 2021**, Disha Ravi was arrested in the afternoon from her residence in Bangalore. Another accused Shantanu Muluk was also arrested for being one of the key-conspirators in curating and sharing the toolkit on the farmer's protest.
- **On February 14, 2021**, Delhi Police confirmed the arrest of both Disha from her residence that created a lot of buzz on social media with mixed reactions.
- Shantanu Muluk was granted a transit anticipatory bail of ten days, while Disha remained under police's custody for the five days.
- **On February 15th, 2021**, students in Bengaluru organized a joint protest to show solidarity against the arrest of Disha Ravi.
- Disha along with the lawyer Nikita Jacob (another accused) were also questioned by the police for their alleged role in the toolkit creation.
- **On February 23, 2021**, Disha was granted bail and subsequently released from jail after spending over 10 days.

The following graph represents the timeline of the abuses that Disha Ravi received during the period. It shows a steep spike in the online abuses directed in the aftermath of her arrest by Delhi Police on February 14. Leaving beside her possible role, under Indian laws (and under natural justice system) an individual is presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, the social media mob not only declared her culprit, but set on to punish her – with ugly abuses.



## **A Tale of Two Genders: Disha Ravi and Shantanu**

While the neo-nationalist social media jury is equally unforgiving to anyone who is deemed ‘anti-national’, some culprits in their eyes are more equal than others – or more culprit than others.

Another name that came up in the same case was Shantanu Muluk. And if you can’t recall it readily, thank it to his gender. Muluk’s name came in the same probe in which Disha Ravi was apprehended, but Shantanu Muluk was granted pre-arrest bail by the court. It was surprising that while both Disha and Shantanu were accused, only Shantanu was granted anticipatory bail; whereas police got Disha’s remand for several days.

Disha’s gender didn’t betray her only once.

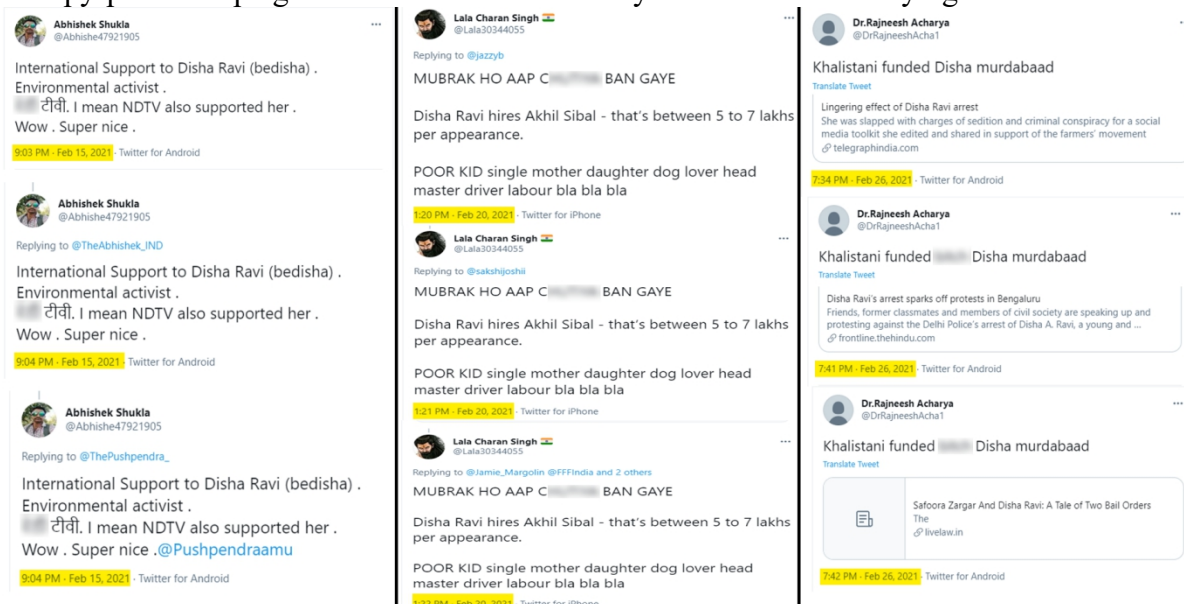
She also became the target of online abuse, who didn’t either know about Shantanu or didn’t care. As always, it was the ‘her’ who was being targeted by the hecklers and not ‘him’. The attendance of Ravi’s abusers reached 582 on social media while the number of people targeting Shantanu were almost negligible!



**Shantanu Muluk**

## Coordinated Campaign to Target Disha Ravi

The outpouring of anger of misogynistic Indian social media users was not only spontaneous. There were coordinated copy-paste campaign to humiliate her and everyone else who was trying to defend her.



It is clearly evident from the above collage that certain accounts devotedly abused Disha and anyone who came in her support. Interestingly, they popped up for a short period of time just to copy-paste the same reply to bully anyone who supported Disha.

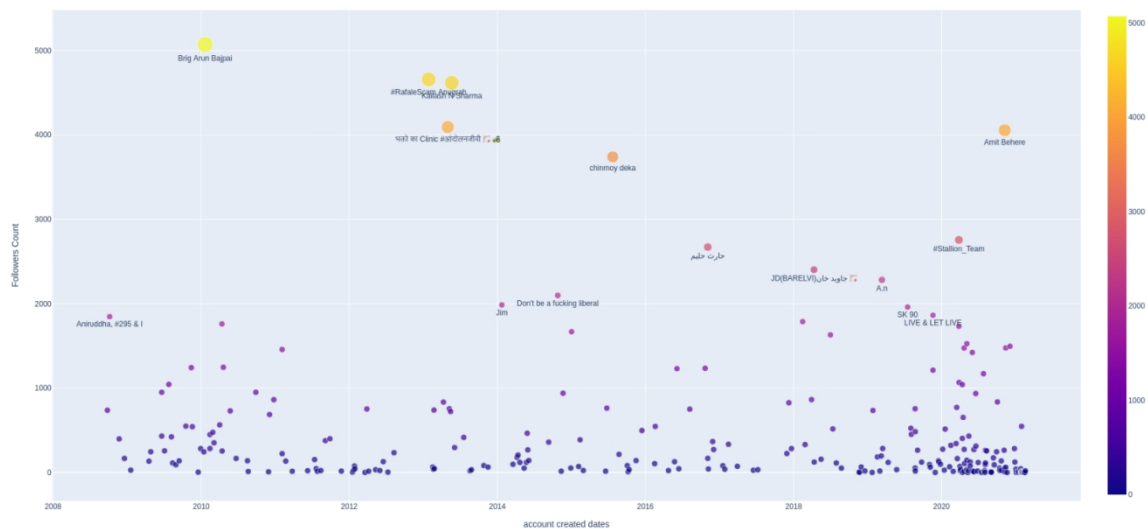
Disha not only became the new prey of the misogynistic trolls but faced extreme level of aggressive intimidation, slut-shaming, comments aimed at smothering her character—she faced every kind of insult that these internet war-hawks are ready to launch at women to remind them that the ecosystem of the internet is not a place they can call safe.

The following word-cloud depicts how the so-called social media intellectuals and trolls labelled Disha as an antagonist of the nation:



The case of Disha Ravi, just like many other cases of female figures, saw diverse and ‘colourful’ terms being used to pass vile comments on women they find vulnerable on the social media platforms.

### Accounts that abused her:



Interactive graph: [https://disinfolab.github.io/disharavi\\_abusing\\_accounts\\_bubble\\_plot.html](https://disinfolab.github.io/disharavi_abusing_accounts_bubble_plot.html)

- The above graph represents an approximate number of social media users, who blatantly called out names and used some of the most appalling gender-specific abuses to demean and insult Disha.
- While most of the abusers online tend to remain anonymous, some of the ‘prominent’ handles that used unparliamentary language were ‘Right Wing’ trolls. (one can hover at the accounts to get details)
- Most other accounts were, as expected, small anonymous trolls. Several accounts were created in 2021 itself.

### A Ray of Hope?

Disha Ravi's case also witnessed a resounding dichotomy of opinions. While one faction of the internet spoke against the 22-year-old climate activist, the other part of the internet came out openly in her support. #StandWithDishaRavi trended quite a few times on Twitter, and several national and international personalities expressed solidarity with her. That however doesn't reduce the sufferings and no amount of online support from howsoever big can compensate for that. It remains true that every Disha faces a real threat from online and real-life vultures – most of which are ‘small anonymous entities. The need is to make all spaces clean for Indian women – from real life to online.