

## An Initiative That Urges Indians to Do Away with the 'Yes Sir, Yes Madam' Culture at Workplaces

The initiative No Sir No Madam aims to eradicate obsolete mannerisms, like calling superiors sir or madam, and encourage people to create a healthier work environment based on mutual respect.

Recent times have seen great changes in the prescribed mannerisms for workspaces. Today's work culture doesn't necessitate the use of words like 'sir' or 'madam' while addressing superiors to show respect. Mutual respect is believed to be expressed through work ethics and healthy professional relationships rather than honorific words.

In India, the scenario is still quite different, particularly in traditional workplaces and one initiative is trying to change that.

"We still largely follow the formality of addressing people with words like sir or sahib. Calling one's boss by name or even answering him or her without the suffix sir/madam at the end is considered a sign of disrespect. To change this scenario and to make people aware, I have started this initiative," says Hardik Dave, founder of the movement titled No Sir No Madam.

No Sir No Madam is a cause, in which Hardik is trying to involve as many people as possible. The initiative aims to spread the message of extending equal respect to everyone at workplace and doing away with the discriminatory yes sir/no sir system.

After working in several multinational companies in the Canada, Hardik relocated to India in 2013. While interacting with many senior executives in private companies and government officials, he witnessed the sir/madam culture, which left him baffled.

"At present, in the majority of workplaces in India, a clerk or junior cannot connect to the boss and/or senior at the professional level. It seems that there is workplace discrimination. This leads to a low self-esteem, lower confidence, bowing and flattering rather than face-to-face professional communication. We need to understand that calling someone sir or madam is not the only way to show respect," says Hardik.

So how does the initiative spread awareness? Hardik has put together a team of volunteers, who produce several short animated videos to put forth their cause.

These videos are shared widely through the official website, Facebook and WhatsApp. No Sir No Madam has connected with over 2.5 million people on WhatsApp. In addition to English and Hindi, these educating videos are made in regional languages such as Punjabi, Gujarati, Telugu, and Malayalam. The goal is to expand the initiative to all of India with content in every Indian language.

<iframe width="642" height="352" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/d6lRhqTWG-A" title="YouTube video player" frameborder="0" allow="accelerometer; autoplay; clipboard-write; encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture" allowfullscreen></iframe>

“We use the voices of famous RJs of regional radio stations to make them more relatable to people. There’s been a huge support to this initiative since we started. Many people, even from the government, have appreciated it. An Assistant Commissioner of Commercial VAT from Gujarat lent his voice for one of the videos in Gujarati to show his support,” he says.

Interestingly, after coming across one of the videos, a citizen requested more information about any rule that makes it a rule to address one’s superior as sir or madam under RTI, and discovered that no such rule exists.

The culture has been ingrained for so long that it becomes difficult to remove it from our psyche. Thus the system continues, perpetuating class divide through workplace dynamics.

Even after Hardik moved back to Canada, he has continued the initiative by collaborating with the volunteers in India. “We can already see the change from startups to multinationals, where the work culture is discarding traditional system and it fits well in the global arena. Furthermore, in the global arena, it puts a better professional outlook while communicating with overseas clients. It’s time the traditional workplaces and govt institutions follow the suit too,” he says.

To know more about the initiative No Sir No Madam, visit the website <https://nosirnomadam.com/> or the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/nosirnomadam>