I recently came to know of a circulating spreadsheet that claims to be a list of Indian male academics who have been accused of sexual harassment.

I find that my name occurs twice in that list.

In the first instance, my institution is named as the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, with the figure 1 under the column “Number of victims”; the rest of the columns including “Description of complaint” and “Year of violence” are blank.

The second entry mentions my institution as Columbia University with the “Number of victims” column left blank. It is unclear why the second entry appears on the list.

I wish to state that there has never been a single complaint of sexual harassment made against me. Moreover, I am certain that in 44 years of my association with the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, I have never been involved in an incident in which I could be accused of having sexually harassed a student.

I believe it is fair for me to demand that the nature of the allegation against me be made known to me so that I could make a specific response to it. Otherwise, I demand that my name be removed from the list.

As far as I understand it, Raya Sarkar’s post in response to my statement suggests that no further information will be made available on the allegation against me. I also understand that the spreadsheet list has been deleted from the web. It is justified to conclude that the alleged complaint against me has no substance.

In a teaching career spanning almost five decades, I have always treated my students with dignity and respect and have, without exception, received dignity and respect in return. I am glad that the recent campaign has been unable to shake my faith in the integrity of my relation with my students.

This denouement also confirms the suspicion that, at least in my case, the allegation of sexual violence was motivated by a malicious intent to resort to wild vilification in order to tarnish the credibility of a scholar who continues to take critical, and sometimes controversial, positions in academic debates and the public sphere. It is heartening that, at least for now, the attempt has failed.

This personal statement is not the place to enter into a discussion of the widespread and endemic problem of sexual harassment on Indian campuses. But I do wish to make an observation that is relevant to the present campaign. It is an undoubted fact that effective institutional procedures for dealing with sexual harassment do not exist, or even where they have been created, fail to offer redressal to victims. The deep frustration this has produced is entirely understandable. However, the proliferation of lists based on unverified allegations, instead of isolating genuine offenders and penalising them through steps that enjoy broad support on the campus, is only likely to discredit the cause and diminish the moral force of the unquestionably legitimate demand to transform our universities into a safer place for women.