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By now, you're probably heard of the tidal wave of people quitting in the US which has been dubbed The Great Resignation or The Big Quit. In the US alone, 4 million people quit their jobs in July 2021 — that's 2.9% of their workforce. In India too, data indicates that a reshuffle of talent is upon us. LinkedIn data shows that there were 61% more job transitions in March 2021 as compared to a pre-pandemic March 2019. Hiring was 65% higher at the end of July 2021 compared with July 2019, and 68% higher at the end of August 2021 when compared with August 2019.

While some of these resignations may be because the pandemic has given people the time and perspective to re-evaluate their careers, another happier reason is that after the Covid-induced lull last year, the job market is once again alive and stirring. Ronesh Puri, managing director of specialist headhunting firm Executive Access, says due to the pandemic, there was a backlog of normal attrition when people looking for greener pastures were not able or did not resign. Now that hiring has picked up again people are exercising more options that are available, he says. "Secondly, people have changed their priorities in life with all the pressures and stresses they've had to deal with. Talent is looking at more impact and meaning in their jobs with more purposeful jobs being preferred. This has led to a huge increase in resignations in virtually every sector and industry," he says.

Those changing priorities are reflected by surveys. According to a new AI@Work

**The pandemic made me realise that it was time to break out of my comfort zone. I had been creating content on Instagram for a while now and wanted to follow my passion**

—UPASANA KOCHHAR  
Quit advertising to become a content creator



2021 study by Oracle and Workplace Intelligence, a majority of the Indian workforce (96%) said the meaning of success had changed for them since the pandemic. Their priorities now included work-life balance, mental health and flexibility over when and where they worked. LinkedIn's Future of Work survey found that half of India's workforce (52%) believes work-life balance is just as important as salary.

For film producer Akshita Wadhwa, both were impacted in the pandemic. "We got a 50% pay cut and were told that because

## Why Indians are job hopping like crazy

*Job transitions are on the rise as the pandemic makes many young people rethink their career and life choices*



of the pay cut, it would be a three day work-week, but that didn't end up happening. I was working 18 hours a day," she says. The 25-year-old quit her job, and used her savings to start her own company where she did design and animation work with a curated roster of artists. While the company did really well initially, projects began to dry up early this year. She has since taken a consultant role at a firm, which she balances along with her business.

While walking out is easy, the road to a new job or career isn't smooth as Dhaval Rawal, 29, who had been working at a PR agency where his clients were mainly in the restaurant and hospitality sector, found out. "With Covid, business was not good and we were facing salary cuts. I quit in June this year and spent a few months looking for jobs, freelancing and trying to travel a bit," he says. That latter part of the plan caused some trouble at home. "Family pressure is there in middle class families. People feel like if you're not working, you are going nowhere. I also had a loan to pay so I was desperate to find something," he said. He managed to land a job at an influencer marketing agency in September.

Another reason for the quitting spree is that remote work during the pandemic gave some people time to spend with their families or hobbies while getting rid of irritants like long commutes. Now, they aren't willing to let it go though many employers want them back at the desk. For 27-year-old Tarana Farooqi who works in the development sector, one of the main reasons she was looking for a new job was remote work. "Last year, around September-October, they wanted people to come in every day. My new job is a lot more flexible. People are working from their hometowns and travelling as needed for meetings."

Sunit Sinha, Partner and Head — People, Performance and Culture, KPMG in India, admits that attrition has been higher than in 2020 and back to pre-pandemic levels, particularly for "hot, in demand skills across technology, environmental, social and corporate governance, risk and assurance". Part of the reason for this is that people are seeking more flexibility in location and work hours. He adds, "I look at this as an opportunity for both people and organisations to rethink their tradi-

tional and time-tested work arrangements and be bold in experimentation of newer models which are hybrid, tech-enabled and provide greater degrees of empowerment and satisfaction."

For others, the uncertainty and fear of the Covid era pushed them towards their passions. Upasana Kochhar had been working in advertising for over five years. "I realised that it was time to break out of my comfort zone. I had been creating content on Instagram for a while now and realised that is my passion. You put limitations on yourself thinking about what you can and can't do but I wanted to break out of that," she says. She is also working on a microbrewery she is starting along with her sister and father in Shimla.

Wadhwa says that the pandemic has made her more malleable to other kinds of opportunities. "It felt like the world is ending so you might as well do what you want to," she says.

Nirmala Menon, CEO of HR firm Interweave Consulting, says this kind of re-evaluation is common. "People want roles that are fulfilling but aren't going to stress them out." Plus, some have been preparing to move upwards and onwards. "Many have used this time to upskill and reskill and better equip themselves for new opportunities," she says.

Bengaluru resident Sneha, 34, is one of those who used the pandemic to do certifications, and move on. "At my previous organisation, there was a lack of investment in promoting and providing opportunities to employees within the organisation," she says. Working remotely too, the rapport she shared with her manager was not the same. "So, when the job market opened up, I

**People have changed their priorities in life with all the pressures and stresses they've had to deal with. This has led to a huge increase in resignations in virtually every sector**

—RONESH PURI  
Executive Access



pounced on it." Her new job offered remote working, flexibility (as a mother to an infant, it was essential) and long-term incentives like stock options.

Employer behaviour during the pandemic has far from gone unnoticed. Puri points out, "Some companies were very kind to their employees during the pandemic, others shed their workforce quickly." Little wonder that employee loyalty too vanished just as quickly. Plus the fact is that it's easier to bid adieu remotely, especially if you haven't ever met your boss or co-workers.

## Tip, tip and reaching the tipping point with Adele & Malala

It's an anaconda of a voice. Jaws wide open, she draws you in. Octave by octave you surrender, cradled within a network of vocal cords. When you hear Adele performing, 'Easy on Me,' the phantom hair on your arms stand, as if the follicles have forgotten they have all been lased off.

Making a comeback after six years, the chatter around Adele has been more about her 100-pound weight loss than her new album about heartbreak. There is a sense among her followers of being let down. An assumption that by losing weight she has abandoned all the women who saw themselves visually represented through her. "The most brutal conversations were being had by other women about my body," she said in a recent interview. It makes you wonder why, with a voice that is so supremely extra-large, we are even talking about her dress size.

Women though live in a dichotomy where conditioning and aspirations come to a head repeatedly. I may tell you that Adele should not be defined by her weight or her weight loss, yet for the last 24 years, the weighing scale and I have had a daily conference where the numbers mock me and I get off and eat a cookie in despair.

Recently, I finally got rid of some stubborn pounds and I found myself showered with compliments including the ubiquitous, "You have shrunk," like I was a sweater that got accidentally thrown into the washing machine. These well-intentioned, banal statements did add a skip in my step and I liked the way the dent in my sides could almost be mistaken for a defined waist.

There is a part of me that judges this as shallow and so will a few who read this. There will also be a large section who will wonder, what diet did she go on, perhaps we should try it too. Well, it was not keto, paleo, low cal, or low fat. I got my weight-changing, and some life-changing, tips from an 80-year-old. I had an opportunity to interview Waheeda Rehman and she gave me some sagacious advice, "Whenever I put on a kilo or so, I start eating omelettes for dinner till I lose it." Since then, I have consumed so many omelettes that I have a feeling even my ovaries are now confused if the eggs floating around in my system are produced by them or an army of chickens.

Ageism, sexism, feminism and our own jism are all the weapons frequently used against us. While it's bad enough that we function within a patriarchal framework, it's odd that women often judge each other the most. In a book on Uday Kotak, there is a snippet about how Nykaa founder Falguni Nayar, who recently became India's richest self-made woman, a billionaire with her successful IPO, wanted to quit her job and join her husband when he was being transferred to London and then New York. Instead, Uday Kotak asked her to stay on and start offices in those cities. Instead of applauding her business acumen, people are arguing about how she was doing a disservice to feminism by wanting to quit her job and follow her husband.

Marriages are not a public limited company where you are selling shares and need to give investors their money back. But they still seem to be everybody's businesses, instead of just yours. If I paid attention to the comments thrown my way, then either I should get a divorce because my partner and I hold opposing views on multiple issues or wear a sari and gyrate to Tip Tip Barsa Pani on alternate weekends to keep the marriage alive.

On a dull afternoon, I decided to pay heed to the latter suggestion and make a video with my own rendition of the iconic song. Unfortunately, I ended up singing this to my plants with a watering can and not to the man everyone seems to serenade with it. This has less to do with not wanting to be objectified and more to do with my brain having an existential breakdown while doing hiprolls and singing off key. As I have explained in the video, I am just the

**Mrs. Funnybones**



TWINKLE KHANNA

sort of person who will start worrying about things like...

1. Now I must send this sari to the laundry, can't just hang it back like all the ones I wear to wedding functions.

2. Shit! Water going into my ear will mean I can't hear the music, so how will I know when to sing and when to stop.

3. My period is meant to come the day after, I hope it's not planning on catching some early bird special to visit me right now.

4. How embarrassing if the children see me doing all this from the balcony.

5. Hanging out in wet clothes for so long, it's very likely I will get thrush or some other fungal infection!

6. My back is going to kill me. Better put some iodex on it tonight.

7. And, of course, the most important part — no one is paying me for this!

Now that I have digressed enough to fall off a cliff let me return to the tricky landscape of 'picking a

Chad Crowe



**Marriages seem to be everyone's business instead of just yours. If I paid attention to comments, then either I should get a divorce as my partner and I hold opposing views on many things or gyrate to Tip Tip Barsa Pani to keep the marriage alive**

life partner. As the world and especially all nosy buas know, Malala recently married Asger Malik. But besides blessings, Malala was also showered with terms like hypocrite and anti-feminist. All because in an earlier interview she had said, "I still don't understand why people have to get married. If you want to have a person in your life... why can't it just be a partnership?" Meanwhile, I am left wondering, if you take a bullet to the head for standing up for other girls, the least you could be allowed to do is change your mind?

In my opinion, Malala must join Adele in crooning. I was still a child. Didn't get the chance to feel the world around me. Had no time to choose. What I chose to do. So go easy on me!

It doesn't matter if you are an icon like these women or the only people following you are the 22 members of your extended family on Instagram, you will all be judged. If you are single, you better get married. Married, then where are the children? Working women, aren't you neglecting the kids? If you don't work, then you are setting a bad example for the same brats. Do you agree with your husband? You are such a doormat! And if you disagree, then why are you still with him? Those lines on your forehead make you look like a dadi amma! Are you using Botox to wipe off the wrinkles? How fake! And if like Malala, you change your mind, which should be a natural progression of growing older and hopefully wiser, then you are clearly a fraud.

It's almost comical that no matter what you choose to do, there will always be people telling you that your choices are not good enough. Tragically, after hearing it time and again, we begin to believe all these voices too. So, how about for a change, we listen to Adele, and go easy on each other and especially on ourselves.

## BOLD AND BREASTFEEDING

*More and more Indian moms are confidently nursing in public and proudly sharing pictures online too*

Neha Bhayana

Mumbai resident Harshal Kulkarni drove down to Daman for a weekend with her husband and 10-month-old son to bring in her thirtieth birthday this October. The neuro-physiotherapist hoped to unwind with a glass of red wine while enjoying a peaceful dinner but her son was too cranky. Without a moment's hesitation, Kulkarni pulled up her top and started breastfeeding him in the middle of the restaurant. The baby settled immediately and Kulkarni enjoyed her drink, the view and music while he enjoyed his feed. If people were looking, she didn't care to notice. In Chennai, software engineer Harini Ganesan too unabashedly nurses her 10-month-old daughter in buses, malls, restaurants, and even temples without covering up. "If people are uncomfortable, they can avert their gaze," says the 27-year-old.



**DARE TO BARE:** Actor Neha Dhupia has been using #FreedomtoFeed to fight the stigma around breastfeeding in public

**Some men stare, and the older women tend to get scandalised but I'm not shy. If more moms breastfeed in public spaces, it may stop being such an unusual thing and people will stop staring**

—HARINI GANESAN | Software engineer

Though breastfeeding in public is still not a common sight in Indian metros, a small but growing section of young mothers is changing this scenario, one feeding session at a time. They are not hiding behind dupattas or nursing in toilets. They are breastfeeding their babies in public places and proudly sharing pictures on social networking sites.

A few celebrities including Neha Dhupia, Lisa Haydon and Amrita Rao too have posted photos that show them breastfeeding their babies in recent times. Dhupia has been using the hashtag FreedomtoFeed to fight the stigma around breastfeeding in public. The Breastfeeding Support for Indian Mothers (BSIM), a closed Facebook group with over 1.4 lakh mommy members, has also been spreading awareness to normalise breastfeeding and demanding a law that protects women against discrimination for nursing in public. It is normal to find pictures and videos of babies at the breast (without blurring or strategically added smiles) on the group which provides peer support to nursing moms.

Interestingly, breastfeeding in public was a normal practice in India before the 1980s, albeit discreetly conducted behind saree pallus. But multiple factors including the over-sexualisation of breasts in movies and

advertisements made moms choose bottle over breast. The growing awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding, however, has inspired the current generation of moms to exclusively nurse their babies.

Most malls, airports and railway stations have designated child-care rooms for nursing or pumping these days. However, a majority of them are dingy stalls situated right next to the women's washroom and many moms prefer to avoid them. "Would I enjoy eating my burger while sitting in a stinking toilet? How can I expect my baby to eat there," asks Kulkarni, who works at a top Mumbai hospital.

Moms also feel that they should not be expected to miss out on all the socialising. "Everyone likes to sit at the table with the family and eat. Same goes for the child," says Michelle Noronha who breastfeeds her four-year-old daughter Myra. Over the years, she has nursed Myra at countless locations including a crowded Mumbai local and a church. "We have had 20-30 guests at home for dinner and I have nursed in front of them," says the event curator who has been sharing pictures and videos of Myra nursing via social media since she was three months old.

Noronha's posts have been widely lauded and sometimes criticised too. "Even within mommy circles, a small section feels I don't need to share explicit pictures to talk about my experiences," says Noronha, adding that she was mercilessly trolled after she mentioned in a comment on Instagram recently that she still nurses her four-year-old. "But I don't give a damn. I focus on the hundreds of positive messages I receive from moms telling me I have inspired them to breastfeed their babies freely and for longer."

Ganesan shares a similar attitude. "I don't feel shy. Some men stare, and the older women get scandalised. Sometimes I can sense that they are planning to walk up to me to object, but I glare at them and they stop in their tracks," she says. Ganesan says she wants to help normalise breastfeeding. "If there are moms openly breastfeeding in every house, every public space, it may stop being such an unusual thing and people will stop staring."

Bengaluru-based lactation consultant

### NURSING BECOMES CONTROVERSIAL

► In 2017, a woman was bullied and asked to get off a Pune to Mumbai Deccan Queen train because co-passengers thought the sight of her breastfeeding her baby was disturbing

► In 2018, a woman who complained about the lack of a nursing room at a mall in south Kolkata was told by the mall authorities that she should "do her home chores at home". This led to protests and the mall had to apologise

► The same year, there was an uproar after the Malayalam Grihalakshmi magazine cover showed a woman breastfeeding. Kerala HC ruled that there was nothing indecent about the photo, adding that "like beauty, obscenity lies in the eyes of the beholder"

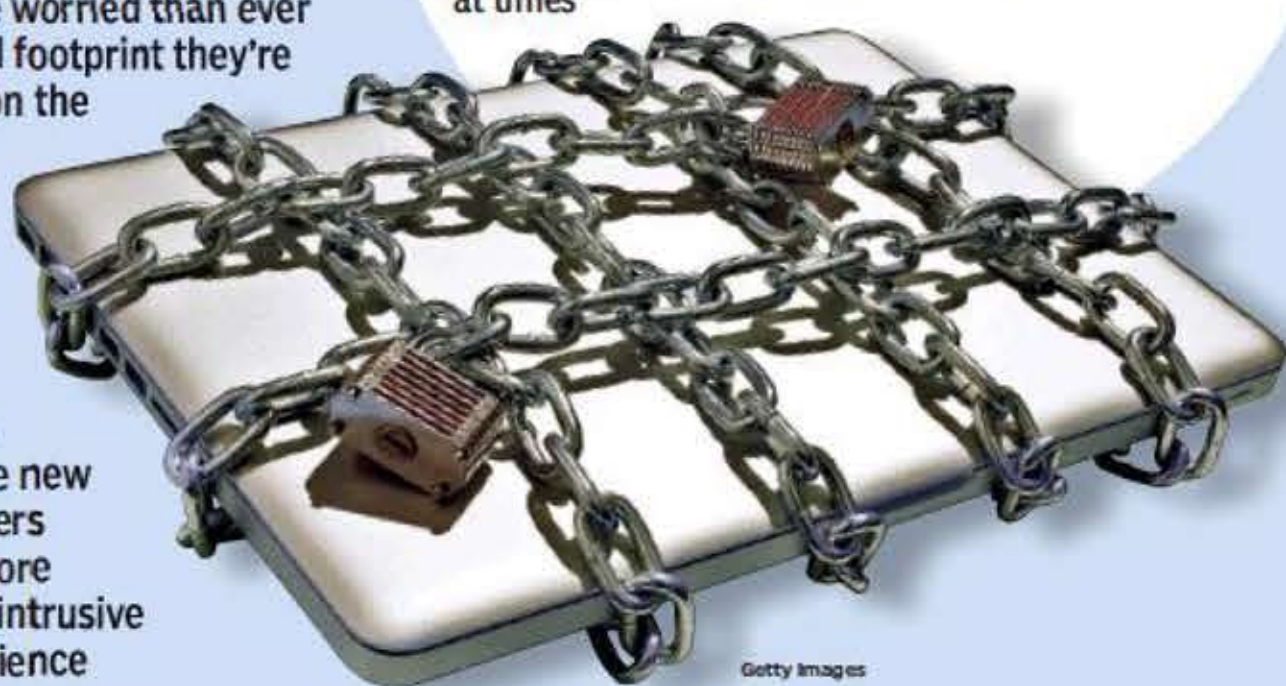
Sapna Krishnan points out that family support has helped make women like Ganesan more confident of nursing in public. "Earlier more than the woman her husband used to get embarrassed and wary. But now the partners are on board so moms are more comfortable," she says.

Kulkarni agrees. Her husband was the one who captured her nursing at the restaurant and posted it on Facebook with the caption: "Happy birthday to my badass wife. Being the best mom while sipping a glass of wine." Kulkarni later shared the pictures on the BSIM group where it was liked by 1,700 mothers. While the majority patted her back, a few women wanted to know if it was safe to consume alcohol while nursing. Lactation experts who are part of BSIM's panel informed the concerned ladies that contrary to the popular belief, taking a light drink occasionally does not harm the baby.

Adhunik Prakash, founder of BSIM, believes that while women are becoming more open, a lot more needs to be done to normalise breastfeeding. "Some new moms are still hesitant to nurse in front of strangers because breasts are being used to sell everything from burgers to cars. We have forgotten that the primary function of breasts is to provide nutrition to babies," says the Pune resident who has authored a book on breastfeeding, 'Breast Potion'.

### THESE PRIVATE BROWSERS CAN STOP TRACKERS IN THEIR TRACKS

People are more worried than ever about the digital footprint they're leaving behind on the web but most don't know how to dump that unsafe browser. But thanks to the increased focus on privacy, some new (and old) browsers are offering a more secure and less intrusive searching experience



#### So, what are privacy browsers?

● Basically, they rely on private mode or incognito mode to make sure your search history is not stored. They also use tracker blockers — it stops the phishers and advertisers that are seeking information about you from following you around as you traverse the web. On the flipside, this can break parts of websites at times

#### It's still not better than a VPN though



● While they're helpful, these browsers can't stop your internet provider from seeing what you search for. So, if you're browsing the web at work or in a hotel, you can still be tracked. VPNs or virtual private networks encrypt your search history so that no one can get to it but they do cost money

#### The privacy browsers on the block

● You takes a new approach, not only when it comes to privacy but also user experience. On the privacy front, the browser, which is still in its beta phase, hides your IP address when you use incognito mode and claims that it will never have personalised ads for users. It takes on the principle that browsers like Google epitomise called the "one true answer". When you Google something, like what city



a celebrity is from, Google gives you a snippet at the top of the page. You.com, started by former Salesforce employees, does not do this. The whole point is that it allows you to sort and compare different results

● DuckDuckGo, whose popularity surged in the last year with more than 50m downloads, doesn't allow tracking of your online behaviour and doesn't let ad trackers load at all. And when you're done browsing, pressing the flame icon will eradicate the browsing session. The best part — it has a Chrome extension



● There's also good old Firefox which blocks third-party cookies by default. It's also the first major browser with plans to adopt the Global Privacy Control which tells websites not to share personal data



● Brave has a private mode that can be turned on and off as you please. Interestingly, it has its own ad network that does not track

your online behaviour. So, you can choose to watch an ad from Brave's network and earn a cut of the revenue in the form of a token