Delhi High Court Unmasks Internet Slanderers

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In 2016 an aggrieved Tata Sons Ltd. approached the Delhi High Court for the grant of John Doe orders against anonymous individuals publishing defamatory and libellous emails against a senior officer of a Tata company. Three internet service providers (ISPs) were also made parties to the suit. Tata sought a permanent injunction against the circulation of such defamatory content along with an order directing the three ISPs to block the 35 email addresses which were being used for the dissemination of libellous material and reveal the identities of the individuals responsible for the defamatory emails. Pursuant to the court's directions on 7 December 2016, the three ISPs revealed under sealed cover to the court the identities of the 35 anonymous email addresses from which the derogatory material was disseminated. Tata then made an application to implead four individuals who were identified as the key perpetrators. Rejecting submissions against addition of the new defendants, the court allowed the impleadment application and the identities of the four anonymous individuals stood unmasked. The court also rejected the contentions of the ISPs that they should be deleted from the array of parties and considered their presence to be necessary in the suit. *Tata Sons Limited & anr v John Doe & ors.; before the Delhi High Court; Order dated 20.03.2017*

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