

Disfigure to Social Figure: A Study of Women Acid Attack Survivors

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Abstract: *Violence against women takes many forms, and disfigurement through acid attacks, cutting, burning, body scars or injury represents one of the most brutal indicators of controlled patriarchy. The deliberate disfigurement of women by men through acid attacks is a new form of violence, is rarely due to physical appearance alone. It is all about control, domination and punishment. In patriarchal systems, men often view women as belonging to them (husbands, fathers, relatives, friends, work fellows or even supporters). Disfiguring them becomes a tool for imposing power and control when a woman resists. such violence is often triggered by women's rejection for example disobey patriarch norms, values and morality, toxic masculinity, sick customs and entrenched gender inequalities, breakups, rejection of marriage proposal, one side love, rejection of sexual intimacy, detachment, romantic or marital advances, defiance of male authority, or perceived threats to male honor and so on. In Acid attack cases, both punishment and control are achieved through disfigurement, which aims to diminish women's social value by targeting their appearance while instilling fear in broader communities of women. Ultimately, disfigurement of women is less about individual rage and more about systemic enforcement of patriarchal power, making it a critical issue for feminists, activist, legal reform, and global human rights discourse and media. Apart from this harsh reality survivors are not only breaking the taboo of societal isolations, disconnection with relatives' friends and society. These survivors are taking helps from social media platforms, well- knowing the power of social media. So, they come with disfigure faces, sharing their stories, challenges and reasons of attack, in return from social media platforms they are gaining supports by peoples, earning followers, posting photos, making reels, and using social media platforms to earn name, fame, money, love and supports. This paper examines why men resort to disfiguring women. It also tries to make an attempt to study how are acid victims transforming from disfigurements to social figures through social media platform.*

Keywords: Women, Acid, Acid attacks, Survivor, Social- Media, Disfigure, Social Figure

1. Introduction

Acid attack is a new form of violence in which a person or group tries to throw corrosive substances or acid on women, usually with the intention of killing, torturing, disfiguring and murdering purposes. Basically, they have a plan-based intention to destroy physical appearance and beauty of women and girls. And perpetrators had a strong notion to damage the face value of women and give them permanent scars, so that victim could lose her values in the society and could not even forget the reason of ditch-ness or rejection (Nikola Bailey for Actionaid.org.uk). Whereas, women are worldwide facing a great threat of acid attacks, there are approximately 1500 yearly acid cases recorded globally, some of the cases go to unreported for just a fear of retaliation. The greater impact of this crime is founded in southern Asian countries including Cambodia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India; whereas with the different variations of culture and system have not been made any big difference in the mindset of patriarch men. Though acid remains cheap and easily accessible and working as a helping agent for acid throwers, this corrosive substance is commonly used in domestic chores, labs and production units. Meanwhile, Acid attack occurs throughout the world, but most of the South Asians countries have been facing disproportionately. Hence violence against women in India has been damaging the name of India worldwide. Nowadays hike in crime graphs and patriarchal treatment to women and failed policy are the major challenge in contemporary times. Therefore, a patriarchal society bears expensive and big fat celebration at the time of birth of male child in 21st century, while female child receives less importance than male one. It is also a matter of pride to family and relatives and throughout of his

life circle male gets privileged in private and public sphere. As of result in most of the cases; men have a great advantage of 'supremacy theory' to divert attention from cases for example; to blackmail victim and gives her 'izzat ka hawala', to mislead the case, to pressurize the victim family, to offer the compensation, to drag the case long lasting and so on.

Definitions of Acid Attacks

Attacks have been defined as follows:

UNICEF stated that "In an acid attack, a man throws acid (the kind found in car batteries) on the face of a girl or woman. Any number of reasons can lead to acid attacks. A rejected marriage proposal is offered as justification for a man to disfigure a woman with acid".

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

"Defines Acid attack is any act or omission caused by corrosive substance/acid to be thrown or administered permanent or partial damage/injury, deformity or disfigurement to any part of the body or organ or cause death of such victim. In any form on the victim with the intention that such person is likely to cause the other person".

Draft Prevention of Offences (by Acids) Act 2008

"Acid Attack means any act of throwing acid or using acid in any, form on the victim with the intention of or with knowledge that such person is likely to cause to the other person".

Actionaid.org.uk

Acid attacks are a form of violence in which acid or another corrosive substance is thrown at a person - usually a woman or a girl with the intention of maiming, torturing or killing them. Acid attacks perpetrated against women and girls are used to permanently scar the survivor - they are an extreme form of violence against women and girls. They are used because so much bearing is placed on the physical appearance of women and girls”.

Major Causes of Acid Attack on Women

- Refusal of marriage proposal
- Refusal to have physical intimacy
- A girl entered into extra affairs
- A girl having sexual encounter with another mate
- No satisfaction with dowry
- Jealousy after rejection
- Marriage disengagement
- Separation
- One side love or affection
- Family revenge
- Family property disputes

a) Challenges of Acid Attack Survivors

Acid attack survivors in India face numerous challenges, which become even more pronounced as they age. These challenges are not only physical but also psychological, social, and economic, compounding their difficulties as they grow older.

b) Physical Health Challenges

Acid attacks cause severe burns, disfigurement, and permanent disabilities, requiring ongoing medical attention. As survivors age, the long-term effects of these injuries become more complex. Scar tissue can tighten, restricting movement, and the need for surgeries or treatments may increase over time. Moreover, the trauma caused by the attack can lead to chronic pain and complications such as infections or skin issues. For older survivors, accessing specialized healthcare becomes more difficult due to financial constraints, mobility issues, and a lack of appropriate medical infrastructure.

c) Psychological and Emotional Health

The psychological impact of an acid attack is profound, leading to conditions like depression, anxiety, and PTSD. As survivors age, these mental health challenges can intensify, especially when coupled with the loss of physical strength and social isolation. The trauma of the attack, combined with the difficulties of aging, can result in heightened emotional distress and a reduced capacity to cope with new challenges.

d) Social and Economic Isolation

As acid attack survivors grow older, they often face increasing social isolation. The stigma and discrimination they face due to their appearance are compounded by age-related changes, such as declining energy levels and physical abilities. This makes it harder for survivors to engage with their communities, leading to feelings of loneliness and rejection. Additionally, many survivors struggle with financial independence due to the inability to secure stable employment, further deepening their dependence on family or external aid.

2. Role of Social Media

Social media denotes websites and applications that are intended to allow people to share content quickly, capably, and in real time. Whereas many people access social media through smartphone apps, this messaging tool started with computers, and social media can refer to any internet communication tool that allows users to broadly share content and engage with the public. The facility to share photos, opinions, and events in real-time has altered the way we live and the way we trade. Social media is any digital tool that allows users to quickly create and share content with the public. Social media includes a wide range of websites and apps. Some, like *Instagram*, specialize in the distribution of links and short written messages. Others, as *Youtube* and *Facebook*, are built to optimize the sharing of photos and videos. What makes social media exclusive is that it is equally broad and relatively free. While many social media companies impose some limitations such as taking down images that display violence or nudity there are much fewer limitations on what someone can share than there with other means of mass communication like newspapers, radio stations, and television channels. Anyone with internet access can sign up for a social media account. They can use that account to share whatever content they choose to, and the content they share reaches anyone who visits their page or profile.

Nielsen Social Media Report (2011)

- Social networks and blogs continue to dominate time online, now accounting for nearly a quarter of total time spent on the Internet;
- Nearly 4 in 5 active Internet users visit social networks and blogs
- Close to 40% of social media users access social media content from their mobile phones
- Social networking apps are the third most used among U.S. Smartphone owners (behind games and weather, but ahead of maps, music, news and entertainment).

Useful Social Media Platforms

Leading Social Media services worldwide by active user account, in Millions

Social Media Services	Accounts
Facebook	1415
QQ	829
WhatsApp	700
QZone	629
We Chat	468
LinkedIn	347
Skype	300
Google +	300
Instagram	300
Baidu Tieba	300
Twitter	288
Tumblr	230
Snapchat	200
LINE	181
Sina Weibo	167

This chart summarizes the importance and growth of social media. A standout figure relevant to marketers from this chart is the 99 percent of total social media users accessing via mobile at some point.

3. Social Media-Made Personalities

Lakshmi: is the 26 years old girl from India, she was represented as the “First Acid Survivor Model” and who got selected for the campaign “Face of Courage”. At the age of 15, her spurned suitor was doused over her face, the intention to disfigure her beauty. She realized to face the world with a burned face was a tough decision but she took that step, one thing she understood well was that the motives of the perpetrator were to destroy the physical beauty of a woman and teach a lifetime lesson. She drives herself as a clothing brand of the company, where it went an inspiration for all acid attacks survivors who came across this indecent journey. “Her choices, she hopes, would question our mindset that judges a woman’s worth by her physical beauty” is the best example in this case; she got more support from social media platforms, earlier her case was not recognized by mainstream media, as she wanted to show her acid attack journey. In this case, she became more popular on social sites. Laxmi is running one channel that is Laxmi Agarwal has 141k subscribers on the YouTube channel” Laxmi Agarwal Motivational speaker” 67,134,754 views till now, July 2022.

Monica Singh: Monika has a different kind of the story of a journey. Monica studied at the prestigious “National Institute of Fashion Technology”, Delhi. She came back home at the time of summer Break; this is the time when most of students waited to go back home. Unfortunately, it was the time when she had gone through a hard time in her life, her male friend attacked acid on her face due to rejecting a marriage proposal. And for eight years she had been passing out one by one reconstructive surgery. “She rejoined school and finished her undergraduate studies in apparel design and applied to renowned design schools for graduate studies. She got accepted at Parsons New School of Design in New York. Her tuition and living costs were entirely dependent on the crowdfunding source with the help of the Acid Survivors Foundation of India and became a fashion designer”.

Anmol Rodriguez: “Jahan pe real life me log mujhe accept nahi kar rahe the, wahi virtual platform par log mujhe accept kar rahe the,” said Anmol Rodriguez. Miss Anmol, an Indian model and acid attack survivor. 802,606 views Mar 30, 2021 When she was a newborn, Anmol Rodriguez of India was attacked with acid. She is currently an Indian influencer and model who uses her social media to raise awareness of this problem and aid other people who are suffering from depression. Through social media, she began to receive modelling opportunities, and she has worked on ramps and in brand collaborations. She currently works as a blogger and social media influencer. She has huge range of Instagram followers. She also uploads her pictures on Instagram post. People appreciate and like her posts. Today, with 122k followers on Instagram, Anmol is an inspiration to all. At the Dr Batra’s Positive Health Awards an initiative to honor the remarkable individuals, Anmol Rodriguez was awarded with Dr Batra Positive Health Award, 2019.

Resham Khan: Reshma Khan, an aspiring model and acid assault survivor who earlier this year showed incredible bravery by uploading images of herself on social media, has repeated the action. Khan, who was attacked on her birthday, June 21, along with her cousin in east London, recently posted

photos of herself looking absolutely stunning with the message “Time to stop hiding”. Since it was posted on October 29, the image has received over 1800 likes as of this writing. People on social media have shown Khan tons of support. One person remarked, “You are lovely, don’t ever hide” while another said, “Your beautiful in every aspect”.

Rangoli Ranaut: Kangana Ranaut: Hanging the culprit is not enough, the mindset of our society must change. Rangoli was a victim of a brutal acid attack in 2006. She fought back after almost losing an eye and ear, but she still hasn’t forgotten the trauma. Today, she’s come into her own and works closely with her star sister. But her battle for survival has been horrific. Though in her case, she’s had a great support system in Kangana and her family.

4. Conclusion

Acid attack on women and girls is not only brutal attack on humanity; it is the most inhumane crime in the world. More shocking to know about the reasons of acid attacks, are jealousy, revenge and rejections. These three are the core factor of acid attacks on women. Whereas, most of cases were recorded where perpetrators are known one. His key intention to satisfy the male ego and fulfil the moral of patriarchy, where patriarchy teaches them, male dominance is supreme. Hence, disfiguring of women and girls not only make them ugly, it also makes the world unpleasant to them, but this is the time of social media where it is easy access and connect with social world, so survivors have been associated with social media platforms, using almost all the popular platforms, where they are sharing their stories, incidents, journey. In this paper researchers founded that survivors are getting so much love support, respect and financial independency for example Laxmi Aggarwal, Reshma, Rangoli and many more the know faces in social media platforms. So, the intention of perpetrators had to destroy the figure of women and make her rejected from the world. But social media power has changed the whole scenario, now survivors are regaining their lost identity, earned more popularity and found her mate also, living their happy independent family life.

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