

A Study on Patriarchal Scars

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Abstract: *In 1996, the World Health Assembly declared violence a major public health issue. Violence is not a single kind of activity, but rather a socially defined category of activities that share some common features. A social problem, in general, is the condition, which is not ideal and disrupts the balance of a society. This reflective study analyses the demographic and geographic incidence of the reported attacks. It depicts the statistics of number of incidents reported and perpetrators of the crime. According to the statistics available with The Acid Survivors' Foundation of India said about 250 acid attacks were reported in 2015, with 250 to 300 acid attacks reported every year, despite laws regulating the sale of acid. According to the acid Survivors Foundation India (ASFI), acid attacks have significantly increased over the past five years, with about 800 cases recorded across the country since 2011. ASFI also revealed that there was a 300 percent increase in the attacks in the year 2014 alone, with 309 cases recorded across the country. In this study, causes for aggressive behaviour in men are supported by theoretical concepts. The incidence report tabulates the gender – specific crimes, perpetrated by men and the prevalence data shows the record of crimes registered state-wise. The implication of the study throws light into our society being patriarchal. In addition to laws and regulations, attitudinal change in men and being mindful and resilience among women are the best suggested possible solution to lower the rate of these kind of heinous crimes.*

Keywords: Acid Victims, Violence and Abuse

1. Problem Statement

Violence against women is present not only in the majority of families of one particular society but in all families of all types. Rape, sexual assault, female infanticide, dowry related cruelty etc, are other form of violence against women in addition to domestic violence. The common elements in all these types of violence against women are due to colonization of gender and power. In majority of the cases, perpetrators are predominantly men, who display more violence and cruelty, while the cases of men as victims can't be ruled out, lowering the crime rate and strengthening women in all spheres is still far from reality.

65% of Indian men believe women should tolerate violence in order to keep the family together, and women sometimes deserve to be beaten. In January 2011, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) Questionnaire reported that 24% of Indian men had committed sexual violence at some point during their lives.

Acid throwing, also called an **acid attack**, a **vitriol attack** or **vitriolage**, is a form of violent assault defined as the act of throwing acid or a similarly corrosive substance onto the body of another "with the intention to disfigure, maim, torture, or kill". Perpetrators of these attacks throw corrosive liquids at their victims, usually at their faces, burning them, and damaging skin tissue, often exposing and sometimes dissolving the bones. Although acid attacks occur all over the world, this type of violence is most common in South Asia.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India, reported incidents of crime against women increased 6.4% during 2012, and a crime against a woman is committed every three minutes. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, in 2011, there were greater than 228,650 reported incidents of crime against women, while in 2015, there were over 300,000 reported incidents, a 44% increase. Of the women living in India, 7.5% live in West Bgal where 12.7% of the total reported crime against

women occurs. Andhra Pradesh is home to 7.3% of India's female population and accounts for 11.5% of the total reported crimes against women.

2. Conceptual Background – Psycho – Social Perspectives

Feminist theory argues that domestic violence is systematic and structural mechanism of patriarchal control of women that is built on male superiority and female inferiority, sex stereo typed roles and expectations and economic, social and political predominance of men and dependency of women.' Along with verbal, emotional, and economic abuse, violence is a means of maintaining male power.

Socio-Psychological theories The Socio-psychological model assumes that criminal violence can best be understood by a careful examination of the external environmental factors that exercise an impact on the behaviour of individual offender. These theories also examine the types of every day interaction i.e. stressful situations or family interactional patterns etc., which are precursors to violence.

Frustration-Aggression Theory In 1939 Dollard, et.al, proposed the Frustration-Aggression Theory of violence. This theory derived many of its basic postulates from Freudian theory (1930). It explains the process by which frustration are linked to aggression. Whenever something interferes with an individual's attempt to reach some goal or end, he feels frustrated and frustration in turn leads to some form of aggression.

The psychoanalysts explain violence on the basis of the 1)Theory of Perversion and the 2)Theory of Symptom Formation. According to Freud's early theory (1949), Freud concluded that "all humans are innately perverse". He found the roots of such perversions in infantile sexuality—in 'the child's "polymorphously perverse" inclinations with the "aptitude" for such perversity is innate'. In the pervert infantile traits fail to undergo the normal process of

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integration during puberty but are not converted into neurotic symptoms. Violence can be the product of strong inborn derives or of pathological experiences in infancy or early childhood. In the latter cases, childhood conceptions of the relations between the sexes as being aggressive and sadistic and the idea of pleasure as a negative process, essentially achieved by a relief from a state of "unpleasure" are carried into adulthood

The Cycle Theory of Violence and Psycho-Social Theory of Learned Helplessness:

Two of the most often discussed theories on battered women are **Lenore Walker's "The Cycle Theory of Violence" and 'Psycho Social Theory of Learned CO Helplessness'**. Lenore Walker was one of the first researchers to describe a dynamic process in abusive relationship that she called the "Cycle Theory of Violence". Walker described three phases in the cycle of violence (Walker 1979, 1984)." These three distinct phases associated with a recurring battering cycle

- (1) The tension building stage accompanied with rising sense of danger;
- (2) The acute battering incident; and
- (3) Loving contrition.

The theory of learned helplessness suggests that victim give up the belief that they can escape from the batterer in order to develop sophisticated coping strategies. Learned helplessness theory explains how they stop believing that their actions will have a predictable outcome. It is not that they cannot still use their skills to get away from the batterer, stop the abuse at times, or even to defend themselves, but rather, they cannot predict that what they do will have the desired outcome, sometime they use force that might seem excessive to a non battered woman in order to protect themselves.

This psycho-social theory of learned helplessness focus on the factors which reinforce battered women's victimization. According to this theory, battered women operate from a premise of "helplessness" which further serves to only aid passivity and a fatal acceptance of exploitative situation.'

The first recorded acid attack occurred in India in 1982.

Since then, research has witnessed an increase in the amount and severity of acid attacks in the region (www.wikipedia.com). Acid attacks have a long lasting impact on the lives of the victims physical, psychological and financial well-being. Victims usually do not die the aim of nearly all acid attacks is not to kill but to injure and disfigure (Finley, 2013).

Reasons of Acid Attack

- **Cultural Reasons-** Cultural attacks stem from gender, economic, or class inequalities, the culture of revenge, to calm misogyny.
- **Societal and Political Reasons** – It stem from impunity toward perpetrators, social permissiveness, history of punishment towards women, male dominated resources.
- **Situational Reasons** - Situational attacks are seen with family conflicts, low family education, geographic

situation, the emotional state of individuals, peer association, cost of acid.

- **Personal Reasons** – It start from interpersonal feelings like male shame, powerlessness, the age of the perpetrator or victim, poor anger management skills, childhood neglect, antisocial behavior etc.

3. Implications and Consequences of Acid Attack

The most notable effects of an acid attack are the lifelong bodily. The long term consequences of these attacks may include blindness, as well as permanent scarring of the face and body, along with far-reaching social, psychological, and economic difficulties

Health The health effects of acid attacks are extensive. As a majority of acid attacks are aimed at the face. Intensity of the damage depends on the type of the acid and the period of time taken for the initial treatment. The acid can rapidly eat away skin, the layer of fat beneath the skin, and in some cases even the underlying bone. Eyelids and lips may be completely destroyed, the nose and ears severely damaged. Acid attack victims also face the possibility of septicemia, renal failure, skin depigmentation, and even death

Psycho – Social Acid assault survivors face many mental health issues upon recovery. Acid attack victims reported higher levels of anxiety, depression, due to their appearance. They are prone for social stigmatization and leaves them financially handicapped. On a larger extent, it impairs social relationship and most victims are abandoned by their family.

Economic- As a consequence of acute physical disabilities resulting from acid attacks, many survivors are no longer able to perform even simple tasks without assistance and support. Thus they have to face a perpetual struggle to earn their livelihood. People are reluctant to hire them and for those already in services, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to retain their employments. Their financial dependence on family members coupled with expensive treatment adds to their stress.

4. Analysis of Prevalence and Incidence

Table 1: The gender based attacks in recent years (source: Ministry of home affairs; researcher Atul Thakur) number of women victims of acid attacks, persons arrested and convicted: 2014; Graphic courtesy: The Times of India

Year	Total incidence	Year	Total incidence
2012	101	2015	61
2013	147	2016	42
2014	225		

Table 2: The number of incidents recorded in statewide. - Acid attacks 2010, 2011, 2012

States	Victims	All India Total	
UP	39	2011	98
Delhi	31	2012	101
Punjab	21	2013	80
Haryana	18		
Bihar	16		

5. Reported Case Studies

Case Incidence 1: Laxmi Agarwal (born 1 June 1990) is an Indian campaigner with Stop Acid Attacks and a TV host. She is an acid attack survivor and speaks for the rights of acid attack victims. She was attacked in 2005 at age 15, by a 32-year-old man Gudda and his alias Naeem Khan whose advances she had rejected. She has also advocated against acid attacks through gathering 27,000 signatures for a petition to curb acid sales, and taking that cause to the Indian Supreme Court. Her petition led the Supreme Court to order the central and state governments to regulate the sale of acid, and the Parliament to make prosecutions of acid attacks easier to pursue.

Case Incidence 2: In an incident over a property dispute a young man aged 35 years was attacked by rivals throwing acid. The man suffered acid burn injuries and was a victim to

• **Case Incidence 3:** In the year 2013 in New Delhi four sisters were walking towards their residence when two men on a motorbike said unacceptable comments. The men threw acid on the girls and one of them suffered severe burns

• **Case Incidence 4:** In another case in a fit of argument, a man threw acid on his three year old daughter, son and wife. The man had illicit relations with another woman and wanted to divorce his wife. This had triggered the argument and made him do this heinous crime

Legal Process: In India, often incidences of acid attacks grab the headlines of Indian media. Unfortunately in India, there was no separate legislation to deal with acid attacks before the passing of The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. On 2nd April 2013 the Indian Penal Code was amended with the passing of 'The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. The amendment resulted in insertion of Sections 326A and 326B specifically for dealing with acid violence

6. Conclusion

The process of change is transformational and transforming towards adherence to the universal ethics and social contract is the best possible way to reduce crimes.

Secondly, sensitizing people about the long term consequences faced by the victims who live under the care of shelter homes with no or little way to enhance lives as fully functioning individuals with a shattered self –concept should be prominently highlighted.

In addition to Strong laws, adherence to it would restore justice. Besides this, awareness in all possible levels including educating the young minds on gender equality and de-centralization of power from men and emphasis on egalitarian approach would lead way to betterment. Psychologically woman should be trained to cognitive appraise instead of emotionally approaching, which might trigger her anxiety level. The same can be fostered by mindfulness training and be situation conscious.

Celebrity endorsements will bring in more awareness and thereby, it will sensitize individuals about the long – term consequences faced by victims.

Tougher campaigning, behavioural modelling and fostering resilience will make a great shift in their mental scripts. Lastly, tougher regulations and sanctions to be brought in to see the sale of acids. Preventive measure is always the best-sought way to stop victims traumatized.

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