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Understanding Effect of Globalisation and Gender Based Aspect of Acid
Violence in India

by

Ankita Yadav*

I. INTRODUCTION

"Half of the Indian population too are women. Women have always been discriminated against and have suffered and are suffering discrimination in silence. Self-sacrifice and self-denial are their nobility and fortitude and yet they have been subjected to all inequities, indignities, inequality and discrimination."

—Justice K. Rama Swamy¹

Women have contributed in mostly all spheres of life and they enjoy a peculiar status in every society across the world, but unfortunately they suffer in silence. Women have always been considered to belong to a class which is in a pitfall position on account of several barriers and impediments. India is a country where women are personified as Shakti, considered to be Goddess Lakshmi of home, given a dignified status. But reality is that despite these facts they are still abused and need empowerment.

Empowerment of women is needed in all spheres whether it be social, political, economic or legal. Is equality and empowerment in any way based on the gender sensitivity of society towards their issues? All across the world escalation of women rights and issues is reflected in the form of various Conventions especially passed by the United Nations. The issue of gender equality have always escaped from the constitutional clause of equality before the law and the equal protection of law.

With the era of globalisation and development, human beings have made unremarkable progress and development in several spheres of life. But regrettably male has not grown enough to overcome the self-made mental



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slavery to the laws of the jungle. Since time antediluvian the laws of physical strength thrives at the expense of the weak and has made women the primary under-dogs of an exploitative society.

If we look into the real picture of our country we will find that in the lower socio-economic level of society, women do more hazardous manual labour than men. Interestingly they do more than half of the agricultural works in India. Still men are considered to be the "bread winners" of the family. This sense of women being inferior is passed on from one generation to other through psychological conditionings and the manner they are nurtured.

Across the world women were considered inferior to men. And from a long span gender issues were not in the limelight. Same was the situation with India. The Constitution makers while drafting the Constitution were sensitive to the atrocities faced by women in country and made special provisions for the upliftment of women. Many provisions were included in Penal Code, 1860, Criminal Procedure Code, Indian Evidence Act and many more acts are made for improving condition and protection of women such as Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, Domestic Violence Act, Suppression of

Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 and many more. But jarring reality is that despite of so many provisions for protection and upliftment of women their condition is deteriorating day by day. Women are still looked down upon as the fragile sex and are lagging behind in number of areas due to prevailing social norms and stigma.

Violence against women along with globalisation in the form of rape, prostitution, dowry death, acid attack, sexual harassment and female foeticide etc. is still in present time prevalent. Women in this so called globalised era are exploited, abused and are still deemed as inferior to men. Due to many factors crime against women is mushrooming and in fact new forms of crime are being developed to hamper their identity and individuality. This paper looks into the emergence of a new form of crime i.e. acid attack and how it is predominantly gender based crime.

According to Acid Survivors Trust every year more than 1500 cases of acid violence are recorded worldwide. But in reality data is in all likelihood considerably higher as numbers of cases go unreported. The sheer barbarity of acid attacks, which takes only few seconds to carry out but cause lifelong disability, as well as agonizing pain and disfigurement, makes victims unusual and noteworthy. Isn't the act of acid violence against women demonstrates gender inequality and discrimination in India? Acid attacks, in majority of cases are perpetrated against women for transgressing conventional norms. The paper discusses how issue of acid attack violence is also



one form of violence against women. These attacks does not only damage bodies but also soul and conscience of human beings and societies.

II. ACID ATTACK: MEANING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Throwing of acid, also called as Vitriolage is a form of violent assault². In simple word to say it is an act of throwing or administering acid on to the body of a person. It is most of the time with the intention of injuring or disfiguring the body of human being. It may be out of different reasons like jealousy or revenge and further resulting in burning and dissolution of the victim's skin, tissue and even bones³. Vitriolage subsist of flinging of strong sulphuric acid or any concentrated mineral acid, Corrosive Alkalis, Carboic Acid or Acid juice of semecarpus over face or body of the victim⁴. Acid attacks are considered particularly dreadful as they cause perennial suffering to not only victims but their loved ones. If acid comes in contact with body it gives catastrophic effect. As it not only causes peerless degree of pain but leaves the victim mutilated and scarred. Attacks also results in disabilities which are permanent in nature.

Additionally, if thrown acid, comes in contact with the eyes of the victim during an attack, as is common in these cases, it damages permanently their vital body parts. The victims are not only permanently debilitated due to several and grave disfigurement but are enforced to surrender their education, work and even public life. Certain more consequences of acid attack on victims are discussed here.

Consequences of Acid Attack

1. Physical consequences: Acid eats the skin, the fat and muscle underneath, and many a times not only eats through to the bone but it may even melt the bone. If acid is thrown on persons face it melts the face like rubber and disfigures it. Unless the acid is washed off thoroughly it continues burning in victim's body. If the quality of acid is strong and it remains in contact with body for long time then injury may cause the death of the person on whom thrown.



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When acid is thrown it pulls the skin of victim very tight, thus producing thick scars and damaging several body parts. Mostly acid is thrown on the face of victim so it leads to destruction of upper body portions in such kinds:

Death: In many a case acid attack has resulted in the death of a victim.

On November 20, 2014 a middle-aged woman was killed in an acid attack at her residence in Salbatpura area of Surat by a person with whom she was in relationship before her marriage. In the attack her parents were also injured⁵.

Vinodini Jayapal, 23 years, a software engineer by profession, lost her life after 3 months when acid was thrown on her by one of her colleague who was forcing her to marry with him⁶.

Skull: When acid is poured above head then most of the times it leads to complete loss of hair and skull is also partly disfigured and deformed.

Forehead: In many attacks it has been seen that when acid is thrown on forehead then scars are there and skin may also shrink.

Ears: Hearing capacity may be lost, partial or full, immediately or later. They may be deformed or totally melt away. The cartilage is destroyed and ear exposed to future infection and hearing loss.

Eyes: Directly acid in the eyes leads to blindness or sight is affected. Eyelids are likely to be damaged, deformed, and eyes become prone to blindness. In most of the cases of acid attack victims lost their eyes, either one or both.

Nose: It is narrowed and dwindle. Due to destroyed cartilage the nostrils may close completely.

Mouth: Mouth may lose full range of motion as it can become shrunken and narrow. Lips may be permanently destroyed leaving teeth exposed. Movement of mouth and lips can be difficult leading to inability to eat food properly.

Chin: It may be scarred, deformed and run downward, welding to the neck.



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Neck: When the victim is attacked not only his face but neck is also badly destroyed. Victims feel difficulty in moving it in any direction or in particular direction. They are not able to lie properly.

Chest, shoulder and hands: These portions of body are also heavily scarred and skin is melted. It also has negative effect on the development of breast in the case of young girls.

Sometimes victim are forced to drink acid. In such type of cases chronic pain and a burning sensation down from throat to lower abdomen makes it difficult to even keep a step on the ground. Here injury is not visible as it is inside, victim only feel the burning pain even if they try to swallow a lentil seed.

One study found that on an average, patient suffered burns to 14% of the body surface area with areas most commonly affected, including the face (81%) of the victim, head and neck(67%), upper limbs(60%), and chest(54%) and around a third

of the victims suffered(31%) suffered complete or partial blindness⁷.

Rupa an acid attack survivor's mouth, lips, cheeks, nose, chest and shoulders were dissolved from burns the day when her stepmother poured acid on her while she slept at her home in Kandla, in the state of Uttar Pradesh. She was just 15 years old. Her disfigurement left her ashamed⁸.

2. Psychological consequences: Acid attacks not only ruin the appearance of victims but also affects their psychological condition. And this psychological condition is even more pathetic and painful in comparison to the physical injury. Memories of the assault itself can also lead to stress or mental illness. Anxiety, depression, fear and post-traumatic stress are all consequences of acid attack. Acid violence survivors also face different mental health issues upon recovery. This mental injury is not only on victim alone but also on their family, friends and society at large. For every individual face is their identity, you are recognised by that. If that is injured means your identity is injured. In countries like India even today girls are not judged by their talent in fact are judged by their beauty.

A deep psychological trauma is suffered by helpless victim when she feels that her skin is burnt off. For them death is better option than the disfigurement and the disabilities which they have to bear for the rest of their lives.



Victims suffer many Psychological problems, such as:

- Depression: It is a state of low mood where victim feels despondency and dejection, as they feel that they can never live a normal and happy life. In fact for them death is better than life.
- Sleeping problems: Victims become insomniac or start seeing many nightmares.
- Excessive thinking and worrying.
- Headaches, weakness and tiredness, difficulty in concentrating, focusing and remembering things, etc.
- Fearful: Afraid not only that perpetrator will harm them again but also afraid of other people.
- Victims think themselves boycotted and castaway from society. They always prefer to remain in their house and if out then cover themselves.

3. Economic consequences: In most of the cases of acid attack it is found that victim is from poor or middle class family. Medical treatment such surgeries, counselling are required on regular intervals which leads to the heavy financial burden on family. After attack victims depend on their families for food and money, which makes the family financially poorer and leads to conflicts among family members.

It is not only the victims, who suffer, but also their families, from such attacks. In some cases victim herself is a sole breadwinner of entire family, in such cases family is left with no option and treatment of victim is incomplete. After attack it is very difficult for the victim to get job and if got also then payment is very less which is insufficient for her and family to meet basic expenditure. Thus victims of vitriol age also have to face a high degree of discrimination in employment prospects and have to live a depended life full of hardships. Employers often discriminate on the basis of the survivor's disfigurement and rarely hire survivors regardless of their qualifications, especially in service industries.

These kind of difficulty is likely to find survivors trapped in a life of poverty and

depression. With specialised treatment and surgeries costing many lakhs of rupees over a number of years, mostly all acid attack survivors lose their saving and are faced with an overwhelming amount of debt. According to the Indian Law Commission report of 2009, acid attack survivors are often left without any economic resource whatsoever and many "become dependent on others for food and money."²



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Shalu Jain, a 29-year-old insurance company saleswoman from Rajasthan was attacked by a stalker in 2009 and the surgery itself cost her family around 1.5 million rupees. Add to it hospital charges, doctor bills and medicines, and the numbers fast double.¹⁰

The consequences of an acid attack also limit a survivor's present and future earning potential as injury is such that they can't join their jobs so easily. Regular visit to hospital for treatment and surgeries makes it difficult for survivor to attend job or schools for month.

It often becomes extremely difficult for a survivor to get employment, since physical disfigurement, disabilities, and psychological issues are likely to affect their efficiency. Many a time's acid attack survivors are automatically out caste from jobs before they are given a chance to profess their qualifications or experience.

4. Social consequences: Victims face a life time discrimination from society. It is difficult for them to come out and face the world. In patriarchal society like India it even becomes for difficult as people blame the victim only for such incidents. Victims become lonely and ashamed as people blame them for their bad fate, stare at them and many a times children get afraid of them. They are abandoned by friends and even family members.

They restrict themselves to their homes and lives in a cage of suffering, misery and fear. Those victims who are unmarried are likely not to get married due to their disabilities caused by attack and those already married also have to face many hardships and atrocities in life. These kinds of crime against women have adverse impact on women's empowerment and mobility.

5. Familial and marital disruption: Familial relationships many a times are in verge of break down in the wake of an acid attack. The financial and social implications also leads to the change in behaviour of family members as medical treatment and other court proceedings leads to heavy financial burden. Some family members also feel ashamed or disgusted by the survivor's altered appearance, and sometimes due to societal norms may even blame the survivor for the attack. Many victims find themselves rejected or abused by their families and are not even provided with proper care which is needed. It has been observed in many cases that relatives and friends after sometimes even stop visiting the victims and their family. They totally ignore them.



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For unmarried women, disfigurement caused by an acid attack in India lessen their opportunities for marriage and having children, while survivors who were married at

the time of their attack are at increased risk of abandonment by their husbands and in-laws and also have to face potential loss of contact with their children.

As in case of Meena Soni, she was allowed to see her children after two years. Without a spouse or a family most of the acid attack survivors are left with no choice but to seek employment, which is very difficult task for the survivors. The social and economic impacts can be particularly devastating, for a women who have been attacked by their husbands. It is likely that the victims will not be able to live separately of her attacker due to economic dependency, difficulties gaining a divorce, or a desire to avoid the social stigma attached to divorce.

Like in case of Neetu and her mother, they for forced to live with attacker for 14 years as they have no other means to live. Married women are also less likely to report their husband to the police for similar reasons. Fear of social stigma, fear of retribution, economic dependence, or mistrust of the criminal justice system encourages many wives to conceal their abuse from the authorities, and thus protect their husbands from the law¹¹.

Many women accept domestic violence as their husband's right and as a normal facet of married life, and continue not only to live with their husband, but to suffer further abuse at his hands.¹² For many women, the threat of acid violence is enough to keep them trapped in an abusive or unhappy marriage.

Thus, acid attack is a crime which has damaging consequences not only for the victim but also for the society and humanity as a whole.

III. GLOBALISATION AND EMERGENCE TO ACID VIOLENCE

Globalisation is a word with which almost every person is familiar with and each individual has different notion about it. This topic is discussed in almost every academic field and an enormous writings are available. There are many staunch supporters of it and some disfavour it. Technically the word 'Globalisation' means integrating our economy with world's economy. It is a concept through which there is flow of information, ideas,



technologies, culture, goods, peoples etc. This process is as old as the beginning of human civilisation itself. But, its magnitude and impact in the last few decades has been enormous. It has effected every aspect of human civilisation. And women are no exception.

In India concept of globalisation was introduced in 1991 and if we count the achievements of our economy we find that it has improved magnificently. But when looked upon cultural aspect of globalisation it is dismal particularly with deteriorating condition of women in India.

The relationship between women and globalisation is one that concerns all of us. Impact of globalisation on women has been of considerable interest in mainly developing countries. Tackling the impact of globalisation there are two views. According to first view, globalisation has been a source of more pressures and responsibilities on women, while as per second view they consider globalisation as a source of several advantages for women.¹³ On positive side the concepts like opportunities in the employment and got global exposure. While, on the negative side the concepts like commodification of women and increase in crime against women are also of complex interplay of global forces and traditional norms. Globalisation in India has made in short span exposure to the culture of other counties particularly west which in return confused, altered and vulgarised Indian culture. Different crimes like

acid attack and other are due to this cultural globalisation and increasing concept of commodification of women body.

This concept of commodification has been discussed and debated by many feminist scholars. Commodity by its very definition means something which is desired or is in demand during that time. If we look around various television commercials or internet sites, interestingly we will find that women body is treated as a thing to be desired. For example we look at the ads, like of xyz perfume, are made such that “xyz” commodity takes a back seat and its effects, i.e. making women fall on you, are seen as desirable. In this process, instead of actual commodity, the women body becomes a commodity in itself. This commodification plays role in reiterating gender stereotypes and roles.

According to Jean Kilbourne, “Advertising many times turns people into objects and women's bodies, and men's bodies too these days, are dismembered, packaged, and used to sell everything. But unfortunately people don't understand that there are terrible consequences when people become things. Self-image of person is deeply affected. The self-esteem of adolescent girls



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specially plummets as they cannot possibly escape the message that their bodies are objects, and imperfect objects at that.”¹⁴

Perceiving a woman as a commodity, as an object makes her a ‘thing’ and not a fellow human in the eyes of men. And, psychologically, one does not feel any empathy towards a thing. This psychological phenomenon makes women more prone to violent crime as she is treated as a thing which can be desired, destroyed and controlled by will.

There are many contentions that there is no conclusive evidence that so called objectification of women body, via advertisements or pornography, results in violent attack on them. Many psychological studies relating to effect of media on aggressive behaviour show that some behavioural changes do occur. Lanis and Covell¹⁵ worked to examine the effects of advertisements in which women were presented in either a sexually provocative or a non-traditional manner, on sexual attitudes supportive of sexual aggression. The authors hypothesized that if advertisement portrayals of women influenced beliefs, then scores on the Sexual Attitude Survey would be higher following exposure to advertisements in which women were portrayed as sex objects compared to those showing women in progressive roles. The authors concluded that the findings supported the hypothesis, stating that “media portrayals of women can influence sexual attitudes and beliefs”¹⁶. Thus it was concluded that males who were exposed to ads where women were presented as sex objects were more likely to be more accepting of interpersonal violence than males who exposed to other types of advertisements.

Thus, though not conclusive, it can be stated that commodification of women has some role in instigating violent behaviour against women.

Now after understanding the concept of globalisation and commodification if we trace history of acid attacks as from the 18th century we notice that Sulphuric acid, more commonly known historically as “vitriol”, was first manufactured on an industrial scale in England. In the 1740s, people started using it for violent purposes in Western Europe and the United States as it was easily obtainable. By the 1830s, a Glasgow periodical editorialised, “The crime of throwing vitriol has, grieved to say, become so common in this part of the country, as to become almost a stain on the national

character." In addition Sulphuric acid was a common weapon in domestic disputes in addition to being used as a weapon in labour clashes,



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for example, in 1865, the New York Times highline that a jealous husband was arrested for disfiguring his wife with acid after threatening to "spoil her figure".

It is enthralling to know that during nineteenth century also acid attacks were popular in western countries. It is startling to know that in other 19th and early 20th century cases, women threw acid on the men who impregnated them outside of marriage or on former lovers who spurned them, or on their husbands' mistresses. During the middle portion of 19th century, women use to attack by acid particularly those women who did not require the strength necessary to use knives or revolvers as these were more difficult to obtain than acid.¹⁷

But in 20th century there was emergence of crime chemical attacks by men against women in the third world war not only in western countries but also in developing countries like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and also in other Asian and African countries. Acid, by mid of 20th century, was used in the United States and Western Europe in domestic disputes. Better regulations and women empowerment in the western societies controlled it. In the late 20th and 21st century, throwing acid gained prevalence in other parts of the world. Since 1960s, the areas of South Asia, South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America became severely affected by it. Scholars believe that gender inequality, acid's cheapness, failure of conviction and lack of regulation are correlated with the acid violence.

No doubt acid violence on women is mainly due to gender inequality and patriarchal system but if the history of acid attack particularly in India is traced then we will find that in 1990's case of acid attacks have been started to be reported. It is during 1990's only the concept of globalisation was introduced in India. It is interesting to know that in Indian epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. there are incidences of crime against women such as rape, abduction etc. but we don't find any trace of acid attack. Crimes like acid attack were not even in limelight prior to 1990's. In India it increased in 1990's only and rate of crime is increasing day by day. According to a data published in The Wall Street Journal, India¹⁸ in the year 2010-57, 2011-83, 2012-85, 2013-66 and in 2014, 304 cases were reported respectively. Seeing the data in the national context of India, the rise in acid attacks needs to be understood not only in relation to existing gender inequality but also within its complex and shifting socio-economic, political, and cultural processes as they intersect with neoliberal development policies



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and globalisation. As globalisation gives both men and women equal opportunity but men often have an interest in maintaining gender arrangement that provides them with higher status and more comfort.

Some feminist argue that globalisation has led to empowerment of women which in turn has resulted in a control over their bodies and sexuality¹⁹. This is not acceptable by many men in patriarchal society like India. And as discussed with emergence of globalisation there is also the concept of commodification of women body growing. John Berger argues that in the history of painting, the bodies of female were displayed

for the proprietary claims of male viewers, and feminist studies of film confirm a similar representation of female body for the male gaze in today's era.²⁰ Can from this it can be attributed that somewhere new ways of crime against women like acid attacks are also result of globalisation. Late last century Durkheim (1984) proposed and recent studies seem to be confirm (Leavitt, 1992), that increase in frequency of crime relate to social differentiation as a process of socio-economic evolution.²¹ From his view we can agree and deduce that increased crime rate especially against women is natural consequence of cultural modernisation or social diversification in India.

In India, as more and more women are getting education, taking up jobs, drive cars and bikes, and work both day and night shifts and opt to live on their own, men seem both unprepared and unwilling to accept this public visibility and independence. Traditionally men consider women to exist for their pleasure and this has been portrayed and in fact promoted by our social norms, stereotypes, media etc. Globalisations in India especially through various forms of media have portrayed women's sexuality as a commodity, suggesting the role that these portrayals play in maintaining male dominance. Particularly non-elite men often expound the fresh possibilities introduced by cultural globalisation within the prevailing frameworks in which they live.

Men were perceived as active and women as passive, this cultural emphasis, on men as positioned to look and women as positioned to looked-at, and on the imperative that women act for men's pleasure has been intensified by the newly-available transnational cultural resources.²²



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It is harsh reality that globalisation has not changed structural realities in ways that improve women's position in social context, but has resulted in her commodification in India. The conflict between the new emerging socially empowered women and traditionally backward men taking wrong cues from globalisation gives rise to the stage for conflict. And this conflict results in crimes like acid attacks. The data shows that acid is mainly on teenage girls by jilted lovers who are attracted to newly-available cosmopolitan celebrations of male power, and aggressive behaviour precisely because they believe to have authority over female.

With the advent of new technologies and integration of economies, the process of globalisation will continue. It will result in churning in societies like India.

It can be concluded that social dimension of globalisation has impact on the life and work of people, their families and culture. This cultural shift because of globalisation to some extent is responsible for growth of such horrendous crimes like acid attack. Many feminist political philosophers have favoured that globalisation has contributed to human rights violations against women. Globalisation will most certainly continue, these forms of crimes against women are likely to increase as even today a woman is primarily judged by her body and seen as a object of desire. It is the duty of every member of society to see that phenomenon like globalisation results into development of societal interest and not its degradation.

IV. THE GENDER ASPECT OF ACID ATTACK ISSUE IN INDIA:

Increase in these senseless acid crimes is a blot on India. In India, the acid attacks are targeted mainly on women and the number of acid attacks has been rising in India.²³ There are no official figures available but it is estimated that here are, 1000 acid attacks a year in India.²⁴ In April 2014, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences; expressed concern about

India's "high incidence of acid attacks on women...despite the development of new legislative measures."²⁵ She noted, "Victims of acid attacks are mainly female those who dare to challenge patriarchal norms, including by opposing marriage



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or partner proposal."²⁶ The Special Rapporteur also underscored the wider societal implications of acid violence: "It foster a climate of fear among other women as regards the consequences they may face in case of failing to abide by and respect traditional practices and roles."²⁷

If data across the world is properly analysed then it can be concluded that acid attacks are mainly targeted on the women. It is topic of debate that why women are victims of violence. According to different scholars of feminism there are different reasons for it. First and foremost argument with which many agree is that she is physically weaker than their counter part. And next that in any society the values reflected in art, religion, and culture are prescribed by man, not by women in the society. Simone says "They are women in virtue of their anatomy and physiology. In every part of history they have always been subordinated to men, and hence their dependency is not the result of a historical event or a social change-it was not something that occurred... they have gained only what men have been willing to grant, they have taken nothing, they have only received."²⁸ It can be regarded totally true for women in India.

Though acid attacks are both on men and women but data shows that women are more prone to it. Particularly in reference to India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia as these countries have a specific gender dimension. One of the most ghastly guise of gender-based violence, a growing phenomenon in India, is acid attack. The courts in India have also termed acid attacks as one of the most "horrifying forms of gender-based violence", and urged to control these types of horrific crimes against women. On the one hand Indian women are becoming more liberated, but on other hand these types of violence against women imply worsening conditions for Indian women. The London-based charity Acid Survivors Trust International stated that around 60 percent of acid attacks are on women, and acid assaults are grossly under-estimated. As pointed out by figure 65.5% attacks are on women.



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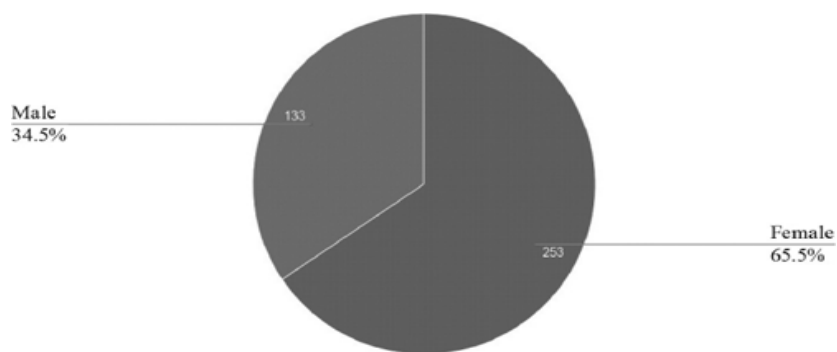


Figure showing number of attacks on male and female²⁹

Since about 70% of all acid attack victims in the Indian subcontinent are women, it would be incautious to say that acid attacks ignore the gender dimension. The Law Commission of India in its report has stated that the most of acid attack victims are women:

"... especially young women for different reasons like spurning suitors, for rejecting proposals of marriage, for denying dowry etc. The person who attacks cannot bear the fact that he has been rejected and seeks to destroy the body of the woman who has dared to stand up to him."³⁰ According to Anwary³¹, in Bangladesh, men attack with acid on women to show as a mark of their masculinity and superiority, to keep women in their place. In India also this perusal would apply as well, as there is also a strong patriarchal culture running through the veins of Indian society.

The 226 report of the Law Commission of India mentions that "acid attacks are used as a tool to silence and control women by destroying what is constructed as the primary constituent of her identity."³² It has been also stated that the overemphasis on the physical mien of the fairer sex in patriarchal societies is responsible for the rise of incidence of acid violence.³³



In countries like India parents of young girl are very bothered with the protection of their daughters' marriage seeing increase in such different crimes against women especially young girls. So not only physical appearance but a woman's virginity is another resource in the marriage market in India, and therefore, women's involvement in romantic relationships before marriage is anathema. The motivation behind acid attacks on female can be attributed to these different factors and feelings also.

Some perpetrators use acid to defile and blemish the victim's physical appearance in an expression of conscious anger, in an attempt to humiliate them and some nourish their deep-seated feelings of insecurity by expressing authority and power by throwing acid on women. These attacks are done on women in an effort to exhibit their everlasting control over the woman's fate. It can be figured that acid violence are a means of intimidation which men tend to use to keep women in a state of terror and control.

V. LAW RELATING TO ACID ATTACK IN INDIA

Before passing of 2013 Criminal law amendment acid attack cases were mostly dealt under hurt and grievous hurt i.e. Sections (hereinafter referred as s.) 324 or 326

of Penal Code, 1860 (hereinafter referred as IPC). But with 2013 amendment certain new provisions in IPC have been added to tackle with the menace of crimes like acid attack. S. 100³⁴ now provides for causing death in cases of right of private defence against body in case of acid throwing. Ss. 326-A³⁵ and 326-B³⁶ are new additions. These provisions are gender neutral and maintain parity in attack on either gender. Further s. 166-A of IPC prescribes punishment for a public servant who refuses to record information in relation to offence under ss. 326-A and 326-B. The



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punishment is an imprisonment of minimum 6 months and maximum 2 years along with fine. S. 166-B of IPC punishes for non-treatment of victims. It states that a person who is in charge of any hospital, and contravenes S. 357-A (which relates to fine too victim in certain cases) of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, shall be imprisoned for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or both.

In Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 s. 357-B has been inserted for providing compensation to acid attack victims and s. 357-C for free medical treatment to acid survivors in all hospitals, public or private, whether run by the Central Government, the State Government, local bodies or any other person.

VI. CONCLUSION

Acid attacks are mainly aimed at controlling and silencing women. On account of the patriarchal structure of our society, women have been constantly marginalised and ignored. They have gone through years of struggle. Globalisation has brought opportunities for women but unfortunately it has also commodified women body. Now it's high time that women should be respected and not to be treated as commodity. It should be realised that women have right to decide for themselves and no one can force them against their will.

To change the mind set of society and to achieve equality, stages of change do not have to be, in the Darwinian sense, but trivial steps in evolution can be fast forwarded by fundamental changes of attitude. We are glad to note that the voices of protest raised post the December 16, 2012 incident have symbolised the potential of the youth of the nation, and, perhaps, their need to disregard past perceptions in relation to women. 2013 Criminal Law Amendment in relation to acid attack has brought some hope but this alone is not sufficient. In addition to these amendments, the mind-set of people also needs to be changed and we have to realise that women are not just for men's pleasure.

This cannot be washed away in a day or two. We have to make transformative processes in society which will not only make society more secure for women, but give them equality, respect, and males will also be benefited as a result of their changed attitudes and liberation. The most important step that needs to be taken in order to curb these types of ghastly and horrendous crimes is to spread awareness among peoples. Peoples should be made aware about the impact of acid attacks on victims and their family, how their life becomes a dreadful dream.

* Assistant Professor (Law), Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow

¹ *Madhu Kishwar v. State of Bihar*, (1996) 5 SCC 125.

² Mittal P., Dhattarwal S.K., Vitriolage: The curse of human origin, *Medical Science* 6(21): 61-64 (2014).

³ VIJ K; CORROSIVE POISONS. IN TEXT BOOK OF FORENSIC MEDICINE AND TOXICOLOGY PRINCIPLES AND PRACTISE, 462 (5th ed, 2003).

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Provided that such fine shall be just and reasonable to meet the medical expenses of the treatment of the victim: Provided further that any fine imposed under this section shall be paid to the victim.

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