

ACID ATTACK

Prize winning Entry in Essay Writing Competition in Zakir Husain Delhi College

"One of them pinned me down and another held my hands and legs. The father of my boyfriend then forced acid down my throat". She slipped into unconsciousness. They had stripped off her clothes and had the remaining acid poured at her private parts."

The above incident of acid attack was against a medical student named Shabana, living in New Delhi. In her case, the father of her boyfriend felt that she had defamed the honour and pride of their family by having a relationship with his son. After 70 years of independence, our country has made development in terms of communication, health, education and defense but has failed to change the patriarchal society and its conservative thinking. The incidence of acid attack is not only prevalent in India but also in many parts of the world including Pakistan, Bangladesh, United Kingdom, Vietnam, China and so on. London is highly reported as the acid attack capital in the world since 2012 because in London, 2 cases are reported everyday. Bangladesh tops the list of reported cases.

Acid attack means to throw corrosive substance such as hydrochloric acid or nitric acid to target the face of the victim with the intention of disfiguring, torturing or killing her. It is senseless and inhuman act. The incidence of acid attack is a blot on our country. Every few days such an incident is reported. According to a report of USA Today, every year 300 cases are reported. Mostly the victim of acid attacks are women or girls. 70-80% of these victims are between the age of

14 to 30 years and 30-40% of the cases are related to issues such as refusal of love, marriage, etc.

The primary reason of acid attack in India are:

- 1) Personal conflict such as refusal of love proposal or the proposal of marriage.
- 2) Racial discrimination of minority conflict.
- 3) Religious conflict, that is, during riots, for example, the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984.
- 4) Conflict related to property, land, domestic violence, etc.

Laxmi Agarwal, a victim of acid attack, propounded that the crux of this incidence is patriarchal society and its conservative thinking that girls are inferior in comparison to boys.

The only solution to the problem of acid attacks are:

- 1) Legislative reforms by making stringent laws and imposing heavy fines as compensation.
- 2) Regulating sale and purchase of acid in India, in many places acid is sold at ₹. 20 per litre openly. The government must execute and implement laws properly.
- 3) Role of NGOs – many NGOs give free legal counseling, treatment and monthly support to victims. Last year Isha Foundation gave free meditation classes to provide relief to victims from psychological distress.

4) *Lengthy imprisonment – since the accused usually get bail and are freed after such a heinous crime, it gives no fear about such an inhuman crime. Section 326A of Indian Penal Code provides that an acid attacker gets imprisoned for at least 10 years or for life. In Bangladesh, the penalty given is of death. In Pakistan the accused must feel the same pain. This is done by putting some drops of acid in his eyes.*

People can make an effort to help acid attack victims by donating money to the website www.stopacidattack.org. It is crowd funding website. People should contribute because the treatment is very costly, as such an attack can partially destroy the skull and can

cause deafening, blindness, burnt eyelids and respiratory problems.

We want to make India into neither a patriarchal nor a matriarchal society but we demand for an egalitarian society or a civilized society where rights of men and women are equal and they have equal participation in decision making. As it is, the crux of acid attack incidence is patriarchal conservative thinking. Love means sacrifice and not revenge. Lastly I would like to conclude by saying, "if you like someone, throw your efforts, not acid".

STOP ACID ATTACKS!!

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