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Acid Attacks: The Gnawing Problem of Gender-Based Violence

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women is rooted in unequal power relations between men and women. An acid attack (Vitriolage) is a gender based crime against women and is one of the most brutal forms of violence, in which acid is thrown onto the face and body of women with the intention of disfiguring her. This paper is an attempt to reflect the most gnawing issue of chemical assault with acid prevailing in India. It is much more intentional act and graver than even rape and murder. This gruesome crime footprints the victim miserable living condition or even it results in death. Acid is perhaps the most easily available lethal weapon, capable of causing death or at least permanent disfigurement and in some cases, blinding, quite instantly. Although acid attack can be resorted to against anybody, in India and other south-Asian countries, it has mostly been gender specific. This extreme form of violence has been used against women for taking revenge in cases of rejection of marriage proposals, sexual advances and as a means of domestic violence. As per the reports of the National Crime Records Bureau, there have been 1402 (source: Crime Statistics reports of NCRB2014 to 2018, released in January 2020) reported cases of acid attacks and attempts there to in these five years. The number of victims in these attacks as stated to be 1483. In such situations, it is very pertinent to discuss the present laws that governing this crime and the horrendous effects that acid attacks have on the victims-physically, psychologically, socially and economically. Additionally this paper, aims to bring acid attacks and the concept of skin banking in our mainstream conversations so that more and more people are aware of them. Donation of eyes has become a widespread practice, but people are still not aware of skin donation. Highlighting and talking about such causes openly and even on public platforms will help spread the word.

Keywords: *Gnawing; Vitriolage; Skin banking; Gender violence.*

1.0 Introduction

Violence against Women affects the women of all races, classes, religions and ethnic, groups and nationalities. It is a life-threatening problem for an individual woman and a serious problem for all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. 1 Violence against women is a manifestation of historical unequal power relation between the sexes, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men. 2 In order to subordinate the women various ideologies have been constructed to validate submission to patriarchies. 3 According to the famous sociologist Sylvia Walby, "Patriarchy is a system of social structure and practices in which dominate oppress and exploit

women". Resistance to these systems by women has resulted in humiliation, assault and even torture. Rape, domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual abuse, incest, female infanticide, prostitution and genital mutilation are among the many examples of this. 4 Acid violence is another such form to punish her for being a woman. An acid attack (Vitriolage) is one of the most heinous crimes against women, in which acid is thrown onto the face and body of women with the intention of disfiguring her. The crime is not meant to kill the victim, but instead to punish her for perceived misdoings by destroying her health and family, social and work life. Acid violence involves the intentional acts of violence in which perpetrators throw, spray, or pour acid on the victim.

It causes immediate damage, disfigurement, pain and long lasting medical complications for victim,

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Though acid attack is a crime which can be committed against any man or woman, but if we see various cases, it has a specific gender dimension as most of the reported acid attacks have been committed on women, particularly young women for spurning suitors, for rejection proposals of marriage, for denying dowry etc. A number of women are affected by the acid attacks.⁵

2.0 Importance of Study

Acid attack is not something unheard of in India. The problem of acid attack cases increasing day by day. India's inability to grapple with this heinous crime. Thus the importance of my study lies in the fact that this issue needs immediate discussion and action on the acid attacked victims and in what manner we can help the survivors. It can also helpful to raise new dimensions related to women discourse and the concept of skin banking. The study will also be helpful to assess the issues and challenges faced by the acid attack victims in the society where the women have theoretically worshiped as goddess in Hindu culture.

3.0 Objective of the Study

- To study the socio economic status of acid attack victims.
- To find out the reason of women victimized with acid.
- To study legal perspectives of acid attacks in India.
- To make the people aware regarding skin donation and skin banking.
- To inspire the people to support the victims.

4.0 Research Methodology

The study is based upon the doctrinal research method. The doctrinal study will include study of secondary data which includes text books, legal journals, statutes, reports, judgments, and reports of Law Commission, Legal Commentaries, newspapers, website, digests and published statistics.

5.0 Acid & Acid Attacks

In an acid attack, the perpetrator uses some kind of acid for attack. Acid means any corrosive

substance which has the character of acidic or corrosive or burning nature that is capable of causing bodily injuries leading to scars or disfigurement or temporary or permanent disability.⁶ The most common types of acid used in these attacks are nitric acid, hydrochloric acid sulphuric (oil of vitriol). These acids have a chemical action of corroding and destroying the tissues they come into contact with. Acid attack is the thoughtful attack where acid is used as a weapon and is thrown on someone to torment, pester and harass that person. Acid attack, also known as acid violence or vitriolage, has appeared as a spiteful and vicious act that shows the gravity and enormity of the enduring atrocities and violation of human rights.

6.0 Definition and Meaning of Acid Attack

- As per the provision of the **“Prevention of Offences (by Acids) Act 2008, (National Commission for Woman – Draft Bill)”** constitute the definition of Acid Attacks and Acid. According to Section 3 of said Act: **“Acid”** shall mean and includes any substance which has the character of acidic or corrosive or burning nature that is capable of causing bodily injuries leading to scars or disfigurement or temporary or permanent disability.” **Acid attack”** means any act of throwing acid or using acid in any form on the victim with the intent of or with the knowledge that such person is likely to cause to the other person Permanent or partial damage or deformity or disfiguration to any part of the body of such person.
- **The Indian Penal Code, 1860** by virtue of Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 under the Explanation 1 of Section 326B has defined acid to include:”any substance which has the acidic or corrosive character or burning nature, capable of causing bodily injury leading to scars or disfigurement or temporary or permanent disability”.
- **National Commission of India, July 2009,** Acid attack can be perceived as “any act of throwing acid or using acid in any form on the victim with the intention of or with the knowledge that such person is likely to cause to the other person permanent or partial damage or deformity or disfiguration to any part of the body of such person.

7.0 Acid Attacks: Gender Based Violence

The terms “acid attack” describes an attack against an individual in which a corrosive substance is employed as a weapon to cause severe burns. 7 Acid attack is gender based violence. It has its roots in our patriarchal system, embedded in the vicious desire of men to control women’s live. Over-the-counter availability of acid provides men with misguided intent an insidious tool to seek „revenge“. Many beautiful lives of women have been devastated, disfigured and maimed both psychologically and physically, often by jilted lovers. 8 In such crimes against women it is always the case that these incidents are either localized or individualized. It is the pathetic status of women that is perpetuated by the system that is responsible for such evils. In India, like in most countries, women are treated as second class citizens and are never given the opportunity to assert themselves by refusing the so-called love proposals and advances. 9 These attacks are aimed to dominate and to control the women. According to special report by India non-governmental organization, 80 percent of victims are female, and of these 40 percent are girls younger than eighteen years of age. 10 The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, defines “Acid attack” as any act or Omission, caused by corrosive substance/acid to be thrown or administered in any form on the victim with the intention that such person is likely to cause to the other person permanent or partial damage/injury or deformity or disfigurement to any part of the body or organ or cause death of such victim.¹¹

8.0 History of Acid Attacks

Acid has been used in metallurgy since prehistoric times and for etching since the middle Ages and antiquity. The rhetorical and theatrical term “La Vitriol use” was coined in France after a “wave of vitriol age” occurred according to the popular press, where in 1879, 16 cases of acid attacks were widely reported as crimes of passion, perpetrated predominantly by women against other women. On October 17, 1915 acid was fatally thrown on Prince Leopold Clement of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, heir to the House of Koháry, by his distraught mistress, Camilla Rybicka, who then killed herself.

Sensationalizing such incidents made for lucrative newspaper sales. The use of acid as a weapon began to rise Asia. The first recorded acid attacks in South Asia occurred in Bangladesh in 1967, India in 1982, and Cambodia in 1993. Since then, research has witnessed an increase in the amount and severity of acid attacks in the region. However, this can be traced to significant under reporting in the 1980s and 1990s, along with a general lack of research for this phenomenon during that period.¹²

9.0 Consequences & Effects of Acid Attacks

An acid attack survivor once said that she will become a victim of acid throwing every single day. The most noticeable effect on a victim is the lifelong bodily disfigurement and damage, which requires long term and elaborated surgeries that can be unaffordable for the victims. Acid attack - 4 - survivors experience a host of psychological repercussions. One mother lamented how her own children were scared of her appearance¹³. “Acid attack leads to the destruction of both body & soul.” The horrendous effects and consequences of acid violence are:

9.1 Physical effects

Acids are corrosive substances that will cause visible necrosis (death) of human skin tissue and will even corrode a metal in higher concentration. They can cause serious poisoning; burning and serious injury can result from exposure to strong acids. Commonly available acids include Sulphuric acid, Hydrochloric acid, Hydrofluoric acid, Phosphoric acid etc. Acids are used in laboratories and factories/industries. In an acid attack the skin is the main organ of contact. The effects of acid on the skin may include redness, and burns. In severe cases, it could lead to shock and death. Some other effects include permanent hair loss and scarring. If inhaled in large quantity it can also lead to pulmonary disorders. Acid eats the two layers of the skin, i.e. the fat and muscle underneath, and sometimes not only eats to the bone but it may even dissolve the bone. The deepness of injury depends on the strength of the acid and the duration of contact with the skin. Burning continues until the acid is thoroughly washed off with water.¹⁴

9.2 Psychological trauma and emotional effects

The acid violence survivors live with their physical scars or disfigurement, it is not surprising to

say that the psychological repercussions would be severe. Getting negative reactions from the people leads the survivors to anxiety, depression and in some cases suicide. The attackers for obvious reasons, targets mostly the face, which represents a person's identity. Thus, by causing damage to the face, attacker not only generates physical pain but a life sentence of emotional and psychological trauma. After the attack, survivors struggle with insomnia, nightmares, shock, anxiety and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They have to go through long term therapies and psychological treatments at every stage of recovery.¹⁵

9.3 Economic and social effects

Acid attacks usually leave victims handicapped in some way, rendering them dependent on either their spouse or family for everyday activities, such as eating and running errands. They face a lifetime of discrimination from society and they become lonely. These dependencies are increased by the fact that many acid survivors are not able to find suitable work, due to impaired vision and physical handicapped. As a result, divorce, abandonment by husbands is common in the society.¹⁶ Moreover, acid survivors who are single when attacked almost certainly become ostracized from society, effectively ruining marriage prospects. They are embarrassed that people may stare or laugh at them and may hesitate to leave their homes fearing an adverse reaction from the outside world. Victims who were not married are not likely to get married and those victims who have got serious disabilities because of an attack, like blindness, will not find jobs and earn a living. Discrimination from other people, or disabilities such as blindness, makes it very difficult for victims to fend for themselves and they become dependent on others for food and money.¹⁷

10.0 Reasons/ Causes of Acid Attacks

“All history attests that man has subjugated women to his will, used her as a means to promote his gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasures, it be instrumental in promoting his comfort: but never has he decried to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior”

Sarah Grimke¹⁸ Throwing acid is one of the worst crimes that a person can commit. The perpetrator usually does not want to kill the victim, but wants to do something worse than murder – make the victim suffer forever. During the analysis of the study it is found that following are the contributing factors for such attacks:

- 1. Cheap and easy Availability of Acid:** Acid is used as a weapon in various countries because concentrated acid is cheap and easily available. For example, a bottle of sulphuric acid sells in Dhaka, Bangladesh for as little as TK. 15 (\$0.15USD); Cambodia sells it for about 3,000 Riels, (\$0.12USD). In India, a liter of hydrochloric acid costs between Rs. 16 and Rs. 25 (\$0.37 to \$0.57 USD).¹⁹
- 2. Patriarchal Societies and Male Ego:** Patriarchy is the term generally used to describe a society in which there is an unequal distribution of power and privilege between males and females. Historically, and even to some extent in contemporary life, men have had jurisdiction over both the public sphere-political, economic, and cultural affairs and the private sphere of the home, whereas women were expected to involve themselves only with the private sphere of the home and the raising of children.²⁰ Now the situation is changing in the term of women emancipation. Today, women are coming out as winner in every field of life: there is an increasing opposition and intolerance among men towards these achievements. Women are asserting their interdependence in matters of career etc. Ironically, it is the attitude that spells trouble for them threatening their lives.²¹
- 3. Rejection in Love and Refusal of Indecent Proposals:** Rejection in love and marriage proposals is another major reason of acid attacks. Men justify their act of disfiguring women that often springs from her refusal to reciprocate their love. Males are not conditioned to hearing „No“ from a woman. The violence is the revenge caused by the intolerance of being rejected. As long as women did not gather the courage to say „no“, it was fine with society, women remained vulnerable and exploitable and society could maintain its status quo.²²
- 4. Land or Money Disputes; Business Conflicts:** In some cases land, money or business conflicts

are the reasons of acid attacks. Property and land disputes can be sometimes motive for acid attacks against men.²³ In India, nearly 20% of the attacks were between unrelated people because of business disputes, sales disputes land disputes, or revenge between families.²⁴

5. **Suspicion of infidelity:** In few cases the suspicion of infidelity is reason of acid attack. For example, in a case in India, Hazara Singh laboured under a strong delusion of the faithlessness of his wife. He used to ill-treat his wife due to suspicion and due to his suspicion one night he pours acid on his wife. The witness found that the Anant Kaur (wife of Hazara Singh) was lying dead burnt almost all over her body by acid. The deceased's forehead, face, chest, abdomen, external genitals, thighs, buttocks and mostly all other parts of body were burnt with acid.²⁵
6. **Lack of Laws for Restrictions on Sale and Purchased of Acids:** There is lack of laws restricting sale and purchase of acids in India. Recently Supreme Court of India in July 2013 in the case of Laxmi v. UOI.²⁶ has given guidelines to restrict the sale and purchase of acid.
7. **Family disputes; Domestic Violence; Relationship Conflicts:** In the case of domestic violence, husbands perpetrate a significant portion of acid attacks against their wives. In India, several women have reported that their husband or other family members attacked them with acid.²⁷
8. **Dowry Demands:** In India, a wife's parents' refusal to give more money for dowry is frequently cited as reason for acid attacks perpetrated by the husband or the husband's family. In one case in India, Harvinder Singh went to home to his wife's father, where his wife was living at the time. He asked his wife for dowry but when she refused, he poured can of acid on her. She died the following day because of injuries caused by acid.²⁸
9. **Sexual Crimes:** Sometimes in the case of Sexual crimes acid is used as a weapon for revenge. For example in a case in India a nurse and a compounder conspired and poured a mixture and kerosene over a doctor as revenge for an alleged rape by him of the nurse. The doctor sustained 100% burn injuries and later expired due to them.²⁹

10. **Media:** Today media is also highly impacting such crimes. The visual media, cinema in particular influences the attitude and mindset of the general public to a great extent. Multinational corporations (MNCs) and Cinema Industry, with their neo-liberal approach, are treating women as commodities. These irresponsible acts lead young people to think in a perverted way about women, love and sex.³⁰

11.0 Criminalisation of Acid Attacks

In India the incidents of acid attacks are on rise. Various Non-Governmental Organizations and Human Rights activities have raised the issues relating to relief for victims under various legislative and constitutional provisions. On the persuasion of these NGO's and activists, the Indian Parliament has amended various legislations as well as inserted new provisions for the protection against acid attacks. The author would start with our basic document of the Country, i.e. Constitution of India.

- **Constitutional Provisions in India** The Constitution of India provides various provisions for equal rights and opportunities for both men and women. It also contains special provisions which protect women and give her special rights. The provisions of the Constitution manifest great respect for human dignity, equality and non-discrimination. The Principle of gender equality enshrined the Indian Constitution in its preamble,³¹ Fundamental rights,³² Fundamental duties,³³ and Directive Principles of State Policy³⁴ and other headings. The Constitution grants equality to all women as well as empower the state to adopt measures provides special rights to women. Although Indian Constitution has no specific provisions relating to acid violence but above mentioned provisions provides protection against such inhuman acts.³⁵
- **Legislative Steps for Acid Violence: Indian Penal Code, 1860: Section 320** – Grievous hurt: Acid attacks are considered grievous hurt as any permanent disfigurement, disability, or destruction of a body part is included in this section. **Section 325** – The punishment for voluntarily causing grievous hurt is a maximum of seven years. No minimum punishment is prescribed. **Section 326** – Voluntarily causing grievous hurt through a dangerous weapon or

another means: : A “corrosive substance” is specified as being a dangerous means, hence acid attacks will be covered. The punishment under this Section is for a maximum period of life imprisonment, or a period up to ten years. There is no minimum punishment prescribed. **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**, made the following changes: **Section 100** – When the right to private defence of the body extends to causing death: An act of throwing acid or administering acid, or an attempt to throw or administer acid which reasonably causes the apprehension that grievous hurt will be the consequence of such an attack. **Section 326A** – Whoever causes permanent or partial damage, deformity, burns, maims, disfigures or disables any part or parts of the body of a person with the intention or knowing that it is likely to cause such injury or hurt, shall be punished with either simple or rigorous imprisonment for a term of at least 10 years, which may extend to imprisonment for life, and a fine. The fine shall be paid to the victim, and shall be just and reasonable to meet the medical expenses of the victim. **Section 326B** – Attempting to throw or administer acid with the intention of causing permanent or partial damage, deformity, burns, maim, disfigure, disable, grievous hurt shall be imprisoned with either simple or rigorous imprisonment for at least five years, up to seven years, and a fine. are considered grievous hurt as any permanent disfigurement, disability, or destruction of a body part is included in this section. **Section 325** – The punishment for voluntarily causing grievous hurt is a maximum of seven years. No minimum punishment is prescribed. **Section 326** – Voluntarily causing grievous hurt through a dangerous weapon or another means: A “corrosive substance” is specified as being a dangerous means, hence acid attacks will be covered. The punishment under this Section is for a maximum period of life imprisonment, or a period up to ten years. There is no minimum punishment prescribed. **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**, made the following changes: **Section 100** – When the right to private defence of the body extends to causing death: An act of throwing acid or administering acid, or an attempt to throw or administer acid which reasonably

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- **Indian Evidence Act, 1872:** The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013, proposed the insertion of following provisions in the Indian Evidence Act: **Presumption as to Acid Attack:** When the question is whether a person has committed the acid of throwing acid on the woman, the Court shall presume, having regard to this, Proviso was added in **Section 154, Cr.PC** by **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013** the circumstances of the case and the statement of the victim, that such person had thrown acid on the woman.³⁶
- **The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993:** In pursuance of Constitutional and International mandate to protect human rights, the Government of India has also passed a specific law known as the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993** to promote fundamental rights. This

Act provides for the establishment of National Human Rights Commission,³⁷ State Human Rights Commission³⁸ and Human Rights Courts for the better protection of Human Rights.

- **Prevention of offences (by Acids) Act, 2008:** The proposed law seeks to focus on: Classification of acid attack as a separate and most heinous form of offence. To assist the victim of acid attack by way of providing for her medical treatment services and also provide social and psychological support. To provide legal support to the survivors. To Arrange Rehabilitation mechanism/schemes taking into account the specific needs of the victim. Regulation and control of acid and other corrosive substances. This Act applies to the victims of acid attacks.³⁹
- **Compensation to the addition of fine:** The compensation payable by the state government under Section 357A shall be in addition to the payment of fine under Section 326A or 376D of the Indian Penal Code⁶⁴. Apart from this, the **National Commission for Women, New Delhi, also in its Report 2008–2009, drafted the ‘Scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation of Offences (by Acids) on Women and Children’.** The main objective of this scheme is to enable the acid attack survivors with suitable medical treatment and communal, mental and fiscal support. Additionally, it has also been observed by the **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** that legal service institutions can play a pivotal role in providing access to compensation under Victim Compensation Scheme. It came out with NALSA (Legal Services to Victims of Acid Attacks) Scheme, 2016. **Treatment of victims:** As per the Section 357C of The Code of Criminal Procedure, all hospitals, public or private, whether run by Central government, State government or any other local body, shall immediately provide the victims of the offences covered under sections 326A, 376A, 376B, 376D or 376E of the Indian Penal Code, with first-aid or medical assistance or treatment and shall immediately inform the police about the case.
- **Judicial Approach to Acid Attacks:** Prior to Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013, cases were registered under different sections of the Indian

Penal Code (IPC) particularly the sections relating to hurt, grievous hurt, grievous hurt by corrosive substances and attempt to murder and murder. Besides offenders were easily let out on bail. Compensation was hardly ever awarded to the victims of acid violence and even if given was grossly inadequate.⁴⁰ The case of *Laxmi v Union of India & others* (2006), is the testimony to the fact that Supreme Court has taken note of increasing trend in commission of vitriol age and the necessity to curb the same. **The Supreme Court gave the following guidelines⁴¹** in the instant case- **1.**Over the counter sale of acid is completely prohibited unless the seller maintains a log/register recording the sale of acid which will contain the details of the person(s) to whom acid(s) is/are sold and the quantity sold. The log/register shall contain the address of the person to whom it is sold. **2.**All sellers shall sell acid only after the buyer has shown: a) a photo ID issued by the Government which also has the address of the person: b) specifies the reason/purpose for procuring acid. **3.**All stocks of acid must be declared by the seller with the - 8 - concerned Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) within 15 days. **4.**No acid shall be sold to any person who is below 18 years of age. **5.**In case of undeclared stock of acid, it will be open to the concerned SDM to confiscate the stock and suitably impose fine on such seller up to Rs. 50,000/-. **6.**The concerned SDM may impose fine up to Rs. 50,000/- on any person who commits breach of any of the above directions. **7.** The acid attack victims shall be paid compensation of at least Rs. 3 lakhs by the concerned State Government/Union Territory as the after care and rehabilitation cost.

12. Conclusion & Suggestions

An acid attack is the most dangerous violence against someone, especially women. It not only effects physically but mentally and economically too, because of which the victim has to go through a lifetime of problems. Just because some women took a stand and said „NO“, does not mean they deserved a punishment like this. Further, some suggestions are proposed to assist in combating this heinous crime and to help the survivors:

- Spreading Awareness:** It is essential to spread awareness related to acid attacks, or else we will continue to see a rise in the number of cases. The need of the hour is to create empathy in people towards acid attack survivors. We need humanism and should let go of the victim-blaming mentality and instead support and embrace survivors, giving them a fair chance to pick up their lives. "Support arm's job is far more important than the combat job" The immediate need for the victims of acid attacks is for first aid. This is of critical importance. The areas of the face or body which have come into contact with acid must immediately be washed with profuse amounts of water. This dilutes the acid and reduces the corrosive damage. But how many people know this?. Skin Donation and Skin banking,⁴² the need of hour for the burn treatment. Donation of eyes has become a widespread practice, but people are still not aware of skin donation. Making awareness regarding the concept of Skin Banking will help the victims of acid burn violence a lot. In India, approximately 1 million people get burnt every year and most of them are from the lower or middle income strata. Therefore, it is obligatory to find out an economic way of treatment for the affected populace.
- Gender Sensitization** The inequality is deep rooted in our society. Each individual should make effort to change the patriarchal concept which allows male dominance and causes inequality. Both the female and male child should be treated equally. Parents should teach the children to respect each other in the childhood. The boys should be taught to accept the rightful rejection so that they should be able to accept - NO for something. The need of the hour is to create a human environment through consistent efforts of spreading awareness regarding human equality.
- Education:** Education is the best key to stop any kind of violence. A proper anti-violence education programs should be made part of our elementary education system. In this program, both the girls and boys should be taught to respect each other,,s feelings. Human rights should be the main subject in the schools. The primary focus should be to change the sick mindset of patriarchal society in the mind of each person. Girls should be given training to protect themselves. They should have knowledge how to fight back if somebody tries to attack her.⁴³
- Check on the sale of Acids:** Acid is so cheap and easily available so it is used by many Indians because they cannot afford expensive cleansers. And moreover, acid is used in some factories also. The total ban of acid might not be possible but still the guidelines of regulation of acid should be followed strictly. Shopkeepers and other authorities should also co-operate by following the guidelines. Alternative cheap cleaning agents should be introduced. Quantity of sale should also be restricted.
- Judiciary's due diligence:** The judiciary is playing a very active role in combating the crime against women but still some points should be concerned: Acid attack victims should be given free legal aid to ensure they do not struggle to get justice. The criminal justice system needs to be stricter in its handling of acid attacks cases. Strict punishment should be given in cases of acid attacks and any kind of leniency should be avoided. The victims should be treated with Courtesy and dignity while appearing in the Court. Victims have to face various physical problems. So the discomfort should be avoided by providing required facilities. Speedy trials should be done in the cases of acid attacks. The Court should never grant bail to the culprit otherwise the victim will be in threat to be attacked again. Women Courts should be established to give assurance of justice to women.
- Research:** Research helps to gain a clear understanding of the causes and effects of acid violence. It helps in identifying practical and feasible policy solutions. This enables consensus in favour for change particularly in persuading policy-makers to change policies, laws or implementation; quality research is needed to evidence the need for change.
- Partnerships & coalitions:** It is high point to recognise the importance of partnerships and coalitions. The coalitions of like-minded organizations can win on more fronts than organizations working alone at state and national level. These partnerships will led to medical care for survivors, raising awareness on rights of

survivors, access to legal support, assistance in psychological and social rehabilitation, livelihood support for survivors, training of medical staff, advocacy for changes to prevent acid attacks occurring.⁴⁴

- **Proper treatment & medication:** All the cities do not have the well-equipped medical treatment facilities suitable for the survivors. Even if the survivor goes to other cities for the treatment, the living expenses are really higher than the hospital fees. This causes problem for the victim to get treated out of the city. Another problem has been observed is the problem of aftercare. After the surgeries the skill of the survivors becomes even more sensitive so it needs extra care. They need to stay in very cool and helpful environment.

Indian society should awake and rise to the human value system of 21st century and through its collective conscience rise to the occasion and respect womanhood. The laws will be meaningful only if the minds of the people are ready to follow the rules. There is need to create a healthy environment of tolerance and sense of equality be infused into the young minds at the earlier stages of their bringing up. Be the change you want to see in this world.

“We do not believe in capital punishment. We do not ask for acid attacks in retaliation. All that we are asking for is a change in the mentality of the society.” Laxmi, Acid Attack Survivor 45.

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