

## **Eve Teasing in Bangladesh: An Overview**

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**Abstract:-** Teasing young girls is not a new incident. Eve teasing has remained an anxiety since many years, but at present it has become one of the severest evils of Bangladesh. Eve teasing is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, which includes Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal for public sexual harassment or molestation of women by men where Eve alludes to the very first woman, according to the Biblical creation story. The real depiction of Eve teasing in Bangladesh is about 90% girls between the ages of 10-18 are affected by eve teasing and severely infringes the freedom and right of mobility. Many female students are forced to reside at home giving up their studies. Parents are marrying off their school and college going daughters in order to pass up this atrocious situation. Eve teasing or non-euphemistically sexual harassment or molestation of women in public places is a growing concern in Bangladesh and also throughout this sub-continent at present. It actually means teasing and dishonoring the whole “nation of mother” because it is gendered crime which is associated with sexual obsession. Eve teasing has become the burning issue for the country because of its adverse long term effects on the young girls of Bangladesh. Because surveying the reports & newspapers the rate of suicide cases among young girls due to eve teasing is shocking. So to stop this gendered crime to enforce the existing laws are not enough but also a united protest from all classes of people is needed in fact.

**Key Words:** - *Eve teasing, problem, consequences, awareness.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

Our Society is suffering from many social tribulations at the present time. One of the worst evils is the Eve Teasing. Now Eve teasing is one of the main intimidations for Bangladesh because it is destroying the social equilibrium. It has become a part of every young girl’s life and become a prevalent social immorality. It is all invasive — beaches, roads, cinema halls, buses, work places, and sadly even in educational institutions. Eve teasing stands for a kind of sexual harassment of a young woman. Though Eve teasing is considered as a public nuisance all over the world, in our country it has gradually become atrocious form of sexual harassment often resulting in grievous hurt, abduction, acid throwing, rape murder and forced suicide. It has become a serious issue resulting in terrible and sometimes shocking consequences. For this reason social degradation and suicide rate are increasing. That means, eve-teasing in Bangladesh has reached its maximum assortment. Many occurrences remain unreported as the majority of the victims of eve teasing prefer to pay no attention to this out of fear or not to be ‘disgraced’ or part of a social ‘gossip’ (Rashid, 2007). Male aggression toward the female is not a new phenomenon in our society, but what was new is the silence of the people. The situation has become so alarming that, in general, it can be argued that at present no girl has been spared from being a victim of eve teasing in one form or another (Rashida, 2012).

### **II. FORMS OF HARASSMENT:**

Eve teasing was ongoing in Bangladesh long time before. Eve teasing begins as a stab to aggravate a girl or catch her attention in this study eve teasing means disturbance or harassment of girls in social atmospheres. This type of violence has no boundary no definite form, as a hidden way eve teasing is becoming the grave issue for the young girl which throwing to them in the dark world of fear, disrupted education, social disgrace which sometimes bound them to commit suicide. Eve teasing is a hidden and most dangerous form of violence which many of the close people of the girls come to know when it is public in the newspaper ([www.bangladesh2day.com](http://www.bangladesh2day.com)).

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Eminent sociologist Pratikha Baxi of India has stated, “Eve teasing is a euphemistic expression that lives in post-colonial India and refers largely to sexual harassment of women in public spaces, thereby constituting women as ‘eves’, temptresses who provoke men into states of sexual titillation. This popular perception of sexual harassment posits the phenomenon as a joke where women are both a tease and deserve to be teased. Considered a growing problem throughout the subcontinent, eve teasing ranges in severity from sexually-colored remarks to outright groping” (Mia, 2008)

But the term 'eve teasing' itself is faulty because 'eve' represents temptress and the term actually signifies that eves tempt or provoke males for vulgar comments and behavior. Eve teasing might seem harmless ‘fun’ to some, but gets the nerve of the victims. The severe impact of eve teasing is taking away the lives of young girls. Eve Teasing is a term which usually involves young men annoying or disquieting girls or women by making sexual innuendos against them in public or in work places. Eve teasers frequently undergo unnecessary touching, pushing, shoving, or vulgar comments on the public transports and streets, while on the other hand they are also frequently harassed at workplaces by male colleagues or bosses. These experiences severely hinder women’s productivity as well as mobility. In the long run, these women and girls, their families, and thus the whole society endure. A vulgar stare, a sly whistle, a wink, a well-timed clap, an unwarranted bump, a seemingly casual touch, a lingering look at a vulnerable time, the humming of a suggestive song, passing downright uncouth comments, cheap gestures, the display of an indecent snap or video, bikes flying close with hands stretched to feel around, passing by in slow moving cars blasting loud music with many eyes inside measuring. A coarse stare, a sly whistle, a well-timed clap, an unwarranted bump, a seemingly causal touch, a lingering look at a vulnerable time, the humming of suggestive song, passing downright uncouth comments, cheap gestures, display of indecent snaps or videos, giving “unwelcome call” or “missed call”, sending indecent texts etc. all these are archetypal examples of eve teasing (Alom, 2012).

### **III. THE SITUATION IN BANGLADESH:**

Eve teasing is an extensive social evil. Eve-teasing is not a victimless crime and has resulted in deaths, and when it goes unchecked could lead to public humiliation of women even in broad daylight. Eve-teasing is a typical social crime, where the perpetrators and victims are ordinary people. In the current development context, eve teasing is being recognized as formidable challenges to women’s mobility as well as to the overall development of the society. Eve teasing causes different unpleasant situations to women at individual and social level. Moreover, eve teasing is often viewed as normal, romantic and moderate crime unlike rape or murder even by the authorities despite the fact that it violates a women's basic right to live with dignity. This is something that the women are supposed to either just put up with or are even accused of bringing it upon themselves. In Bangladesh, almost 90% of girls aged 10-18 are victims of public sexual harassment, according to the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers’ Association. According to another report published by Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK) on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010, Sexual harassment against girls and women in Bangladesh is turning deadly, 28 women have committed suicide this year and another seven attempted it to escape frequent sexual harassment. According to Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organization of Bangladesh one statistics has revealed that during January-July 2008 period only, about 13,000 women became victims of eve teasing of different forms across the country. This figure counted only reported cases. Many occurrences remain unreported. This situation is becoming alarming that, in general, it can be argued that at present no girls have been spared from being a victim of eve teasing in one form or another in everywhere. From electronic media to our nearby street, we are almost used to seeing girls subjected to teasing. Even middle age women while go outside of home, they are more likely to become a victim of indecent verbal comments or physical gestures, anytime, anywhere and by anybody. There can be found numerous instances where due to teasing girls being forced to discontinue their education, working women to quit their job. The Bangladesh education statistics 2011 report said although the dropout rate among girls was higher than their male counterparts. According to the report 46.73 percent of boy dropout in 2011 while it was 56.43 percent among girls, it said. The enrolment rate in primary level had increased tremendously to 9.83 percent though the dropout rate was still high, 39.80 percent in 2011. Education statistics show that there is a significant decline in the number of females enrolled from primary to secondary school (UNESCO, 2000). Eve-teasing has been a notoriously difficult crime to prove, as perpetrators often devise ingenious ways to attack women, even though many feminist writers term it as "little rapes", and usually occur in public places, streets, and public transport. If we put our eyes on daily newspapers, and we find the news of suicide of any school or college going girl which is the outcome of eve-teasing. Eve teasers are any person on the street, in front of schools and colleges, in the bus, train, lift, shopping mall anywhere teases girls in any form of vocabulary, gesture, or directly physical assault. Among the eve teasers from rich to poor, being illiterate to educated, being young to middle age men are included. It is very sad that, a healthy number of educated boys from reputed families are growing lust towards this practice. According to the report from ‘Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association’ (BNWLA) the probable eve-teasers on the streets of Bangladesh are teenage boys, traffic police, rickshaw pullers, bus drivers, supervisors or

colleagues of the working women. Statistics suggests 32% of the eve teasers are students, 33% are middle-aged men while 35% are anti-socials (<http://www.violence against women>).

#### **IV. CONSEQUENCES OF EVE TEASING:**

Eve-teasing has a great cynical convince over the family, society and of course the country. The demerits of eve-teasing are very apparent to us. Almost every young girl is a victim of teasing, especially by the local young teaser. The most of the people may let alone it as a common matter with young generation. Yes, it is happened most of the time without a doubt. But it is not every time. It can be tolerated until no girl is being attacked. But when it crosses the line, it will raise as a problem to us. It is surely a social problem. These days, many girls have committed suicide only to safe themselves from eve-teasing. This is against the women rights without any doubt. In addition, eve teasing is often viewed as normal, romantic and moderate crime unlike rape or murder even by the authorities in the face of the fact that it violates a women's crucial right to live with dignity (Khair, 1998).

The consequences of Eve teasing are given below-

##### **1. Suicide:**

In many cases when eve teasing crosses borders and is known to everybody, it becomes bigoted to the victims and sometimes she is forced to commit suicide. Media, newspapers etc are always full of dangerous news of suicide after being teased by vagabond. From January to December 2010 Odhikar documented that 129 female victims were assaulted or injured by stalkers. In addition, 25 women and 127 men were assaulted or injured due to protesting against stalking. Also 25 women and a father of a victim committed suicide and 10 women were saved from the attempts of suicide. 7 women and 14 men were also killed in stalking related incidents (Odhikar, Human Rights Report-2010). Another report of Odhikar shows that 29 girls committed suicide in 2011 because of Eve teasing (Odhikar, Human Rights Report 2011) ([www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)).

##### **2. Blocking Education:**

Many of Girls are sensation insecure to go the schools. As a result, the parents are not allowing the girls to go to school or even outside of home. This is how the drop-out rate of female students is increasing day by day. They are of the opinion that it is better to save life of their children than education. The education minister admits that some schools and their examinations have to be closed down temporarily to minimize eve teasing (Faruq, 2011).

##### **3. Child marriage:**

Eve teasing is a main cause of force marriage and child marriage. UNISEF world children situation 2009 says 64% or more girls are married before maturity and major cause these marriages are to save girl from the clutches of the eve teasers. A girl married age of 15 says, though she wanted to be doctor or engineer but could not be such because eve teasing and force marriage. This underage marriage problem is also increasing by this eve-teasing problem. The guardians assuming, their daughter will be safe and fine with her husband. Basically the rate of illiterate people is high in Bangladesh. This illiteracy is a curse in this modern era. The female illiteracy is higher toss (UNICEF. The State of the World's Children 2007). In this case, if this eve-teasing problem exists for a long time, Bangladesh will let down from worse to worst in terms of female education. If the girls are getting married in an early age, they will probably having more babies, which will make the population problem destructive.

##### **4. Mental disease:**

Most of the girls under prey on the eve teaser suffer from various types of mental disease and some go mad for all through their life. Sometimes father mother also become upset and suffer from various mental socks. The entire family of a girl who is under eve teasing may suffer either this way or that way and there are many cases death of father and mother by heart attack, killing brothers, salting fire on houses.

##### **5. Family trouble:**

Some time eve teasing may bring new and enormous family trouble. A girl under the umbrella of eve teasing when discloses the matter to the family, a troublesome miss understanding may arise in the family. Father mother may blame the victim unknowingly rather than the teaser. There may be some troubles regarding marriage proposals of the girls (Akhter, 2010). The family blames the girl as soon as the proposal is negated.

##### **6. Killing and Oppression:**

Eve teaser and their hoodlums never hesitate to kill, suppress, loot, arson, torture the opposite parties if they fail to eve tease or eve teasing is countered by kith and keen and others. The various types of activities by

teaser are throwing stone, undressing, throwing acid, kidnapping, raping, torturing and killing etc. Odhiker says in the month May 2010, 51 girls are raped and 7 girls acid thrown for opposing eve teasing (Shabab, 2015).

7. Eve teasing may be a windfall:

Sometimes eve teasers are so powerful that if the victims tolerate eve teasing, habituated with the eve teasing then they may be benefited by offered illegal unwanted gifts and facilities from the eve teaser. This is a great mischievous activity of eve teasing (Kabir, 2010).

So in a sense, it can be said that Eve-teasing may create more problems beyond our expectation. The eve teasers are becoming more dangerous. They are willingly doing all these and asking hazards in society. They seemed to be committed of doing anything they want in the sake of their wish. These young teasers are turning out to be a terrorist in the coming days.

## **V. LAWS RELATED TO EVE TEASING IN BANGLADESH:**

Despite the fact that Bangladesh has declared sexual harassment illegal, state interventions have been not enough in stopping this grave malaise to date. It is a shame for the country that such inhuman repressions on the vulnerable female part of the population can go on, largely unpunished and uncontrolled, year after year. The Penal Code of 1860 addressed sexual offences with due importance, but neither sexual harassment nor eve teasing was mentioned there. In said Code, offences having sexual connotation are used in three different phase. Among them rape is addressed under the headline of sexual offences. To constitute the offence of rape physical contact of the offender to the victim is must. The Penal Code 376 punishes the offender with a maximum term of rigorous life imprisonment. The non- penetration sexual assault, under the section 354 of the Penal Code, punishable with a maximum term of two years imprisonment of either description or with fine or with both. The last category of sexual offence is the non-contract sexual insult which is punishable with a maximum term of one-year simple imprisonment, or with fine or with both under section 509 of the Penal Code. But it was not used as sexual offence in the Code. So it is clear that though the Penal Code did not incorporate the term eve teasing, it tried to address the offence in various sections (Faruq, 2011). The prevention of Violence against Women and Children Act 2003 does not address eve teasing. There was provision of penalty against offences like "indecent verbal or physical gestures motivated with an illegal sexual intention" (article 10.2) in the original version of the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Act of 2000. But the act was amended in 2003 where no one can be charged with sexual abuse of a woman until it is physical. And thus those who bother women in public places such as streets, shopping places and buses can no longer be tried under this law. In Bangladesh the frequency of eve teasing is growing high, but unfortunately there is no specific law against eve teasing. Laws do exist for prevention of repression of women and children and they allow for tough penalties. But there are gaps in the laws and their interpretation and application that often allow the street Romeos to use the loopholes of the laws to escape appropriate punishment for eve teasing. A new law expressly defining eve teasing and prescribing tougher penalties needs to be enacted. The operation of such a law and its rigorous enforcement should aim at extending justice to the sufferers. Its deterrent value should also be considerable. In Women and Children repression and Prevention Act-2000 an excellent provision was included in section article 10 that teasing of women like making obscene comments or gestures was an offence covered by it providing for up to seven years of simple imprisonment or meticulous imprisonment for two years. But the act was amended in 2003 where no one can be charged with sexual abuse of a woman until it is physical. Gender discrimination leading to gender violence is deeply embedded in Bangladeshi social structure. In other words, violence against women in Bangladesh is culturally accepted, tolerated and 'in certain prescribed forms and given contexts' it is legitimized (Alim, 2011). Eve teasing is the result of the unequal status between the sexes.

Actually Eve-teasing is a very common term in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Eve Teasing is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh. Every other day, women come across some sort of eve teasing incidents that leave a deep psychological disfigurement on them. This is a pathetic state of affairs faced by women of different age. The effect of eve teasing in women life is very agonizing. We are observing this cruel fact every day in our society; every single daily newspaper must have this news almost every day. This is well known to all of us but the question is how much we know about the laws related to eve teasing? The answer is very little. The government established the Ministry of Women's Affairs just a few years after liberation. Eve teasing is not a new hitch in Bangladesh. It is an alarm since many years. Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance of 1976 first addressed eve-teasing directly. Section 76 of the ordinance defines women teasing as, "willful and indecent exposure of one's person in any street or public place within sight of, and in such manner as may be seen by, any woman, whether from within any house or building or not, or willful pressing or obstructing any woman in a street or public place or insulting or annoying any woman by using indecent language or making indecent sounds, gestures, or remarks in any street or public place".

That was for the first time, in Bangladesh, a law other than the Penal Code addressed the teasing offence against women. Women-teasing is punishable under section 509 of the Penal Code, 1860 with a maximum one year of imprisonment, or with a maximum two thousand Taka fine, or with both. However, the term 'eve teasing' is still not used properly. Likewise, the other five metropolitan police acts/ordinances made similar provisions to penalize the offence of teasing women. However, these laws have no jurisdiction outside their respective metropolitan areas that makes the offence exclusively a local and urban phenomenon. Special laws penalizing the offence of teasing women having nationwide jurisdiction was yet to be passed. Later, in 2000 the government enacted tougher law to protect the vulnerable women and children of the country from various typical offences. The Prevention of Women and Children Act-2000 came down heavily on the oppressors of the women. In section 10(1), the law defines sexual torture as, if a man touches the sexual organ or any other organ of a woman or of a child by any of his organs or by any other objects with a view to fulfilling his illegal sexual desire, such act of the man will be termed as sexual torture". This definition, in fact, includes the attempt of rape or outraging the modesty of a woman by actual physical contact. The law punishes the offender with rigorous imprisonment of minimum 3 and maximum 10 years and also an indefinite amount of fine. In section 10(2), the law defines sexual harassment as, "if a man, with a view to fulfilling his illegal sexual desire outrage a woman's modesty or makes erotic gesture, such act of the man will amount to sexual harassment". A rigorous imprisonment ranging from 2 to 7 years and additionally an indefinite amount of fine is rewarded for this offence. According to this definition sexual harassment is an offence that is committed by not coming with actual physical contact. However, the section 10(2) was abrogated when the law was last amended in 2003. A new provision has been added under section 9(ka) of the present law that states, if a woman is forced to commit suicide as a direct consequence of somebody's willful dishonor/sexual harassment/ assault, then the offender will be liable to a maximum of ten years and a minimum of five years of imprisonment. The amendment actually denied the remedy of sexual harassment of non-contact nature.

After the amendment of The Prevention of Women and Children Act-2000 in 2003, there remained no legal provisions in the country addressing directly the problem of sexual harassment. But, newspapers bring out pathetic reports on sexual harassment every now and then. In this crucial situation, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) filed a Writ Petition (No. 5916 of 2008) to the High Court Division. The Honorable Court, after examining the pros and cons of the problem issued their Judgment on 14.5.2009 giving the government an eleven-point directive which will fill up the legislative vacuum in the nature of law. In these directives the Court suggested a detailed definition of sexual harassment that included all other existing definitions of non-contact sexually connoting offences. It also incorporated the modern means of erotic insults against the women that are prevalent in our present age of information technology. However, though the ingredients of the offence of eve teasing are easily distinguishable from the order, the court did not use the term eve teasing. Actually, eve teasing, though commonly used and understood a term in Bangladesh, its legal definition is up till now to be established. The government has already started the process of fulfilling the directives of the judgment. Complaint Committees have been formed in many institutions according to the decreive no-9 of the judgment. Besides this, to combat this problem the government of Bangladesh has authorized Mobile courts in order to take legal action against those who are convicted of stalking and harassing a woman. The committees are protecting the women who are under the institution but the offenders who are still remain outside the legal limitation, then law is silent. So, the enactment of the appropriate law or extend the jurisdiction of the existing laws are immediately necessary to overcome the problem (Khan, 2015)

## **VI. DISCUSSION**

As we know our Bangladeshi Society has always remained and will always be male dominated. To the society, in general, being male signifies 'powerful', while the female is always a 'second sex' or weaker one. The women in Bangladesh have suffered a lot through stages. Eve teasing is a menace that has grown to alarming proportions. People need to know about the demerits of Eve teasing. Thus we need to raise our consciousness among the general people. The people also need to change their mind a bit. We always had a negative mind set for the girls. Many of us are not ready to accept the equality between a girl and a boy. It has been advertising and making people believe that there are no difference between a girl and a boy. We must see them as a human being. We must credit them if they be worthy of. We must believe a girl can do as much as a boy can do. To do so, to change our view, we need people to be informed about that. As the eve teasing problem is starting from schools, colleges or universities, we need to remonstrance this problem from the educational institutes. We have to make sure these educational institutes are free from eve teasers. At the same time, if we can eradicate this crisis, we will get our young generation back in their business. They will think positively and will be interested to do positive works for the society. The girls also should not try to blackmail any boys with this matter. We also need to formulate a mass awareness programme in this context. Media, NGOs and other social organizations may play pivotal role in this respect. Besides, the government should also initiate special projects focusing school/college students with a view to increasing awareness about and against eve teasing.

However, all the steps will be futile unless the male segment of the society change its patriarchal mindset. So, if we want to reduce this crime, we must launch a social movement against this in addition to introducing punitive legal measures. Education Ministry initiated with the declare 13 June as the Eve Teasing Protection Day, which is encouraged to protect this social evil. This declaration reflects increasing concern over the worrying number of girls and women. Recently, the government is planning to introduce a strict law against eve teasing. No doubt, this is a timely step to move forward. However, this did not work well as there was no step adopted there to launch any social movement against this. So, if we want to reduce this crime, we must launch a social movement against this in addition to introducing punitive legal measures.

## VII. CONCLUSION

A helpful mind from both Boys and Girls will help us to get rid of Eve Teasing problem. Eve teasing is an erroneous against the honor, dignity, and self respecters. More than ever it hurts women enormously. There is a strong need for skirmishing this fast growing problem. Actually Eve teasing is not a single problem at all but collection of huge. The problem of eve teasing should not be trivialized and reduced to a law-and-order problem as it can often escalate into violent crime like rape and murder. Eve teasing is a traumatic experience which can leave cavernous psychological scars and has negative consequences for the greater community. So, legal actions should be properly implemented for overcoming this situation.

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