

# Eye teasing- a social curse



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'Eve Teasing in Bangladesh' -Causes and Remedies Introduction: Our Society is suffering from many social evils at the moment. One of the worst evils is the Eve Teasing. Now Eve teasing is one of the main threats for Bangladesh because it is destroying the social balance. Eve teasing is a euphemism used for public sexual harassment, street harassment or molestation of women by men, with Eve being a reference to the biblical Eve. It usually involves young men annoying girls or women by making sexual innuendos in public or in work places.

School and College gates or the street is the main target of the wayward young men to disturb girls and women. Eve teasing begins as an attempt to irritate a girl or catch her attention. A lewd 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 .... all these are typical examples of eve teasing. Impacts of Eve Teasing: 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 as Bangladesh has witnessed recently. Based on empirical study (2008) the Hunger Project has identified some impacts of eve teasing in the society of rural Bangladesh. These are: a) Curtailed education: Sexual harassment increases girls' drop-out rate from school.

Parents concerned about their daughter's honour or safety sometimes keep their daughters home and/or marry them off at an early age. b) Early marriage: Girls who are teased or harassed are also pushed into marriage,

before they are physically or mentally prepared. c) Hindered development: Eve teasing contributes to maintaining the low status of women. It also hinders women in participating in the formal employment sector. d)Suicidecases: Teasing the young tender-hearted girls is increasing sharply day by day. The outcome is the serial suicide of many innocent girls.

Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organization has revealed that 14 girls and women, due to repression of stalkers, opted for ultimate destiny of their lives finding no other alternatives, over the past four months. Moreover, girls and their guardians are being attacked and sometimes murdered, because they protested against it. Causes: In a male dominant society like ours, eve teasing can be viewed as a rite of passage for boys on their way to becoming men. To the society, in general, being male signifies 'powerful', while the female is always a 'second sex' or weaker one.

Our education has no moral stint, our religious exercises have become ritualistic. Electronic media, especially some movies (both Hindi and Bengali) may be blamed for propagating eve teasing. Many movies depict scenes of teasing, showing this behaviour as a way to win a woman's heart. One statistics suggests, 32% of the eve teasers are students, 35% are anti-socials while 33% are middle-aged men. So, the spectrum of eve teasers is very wide starting from teenagers to middle-aged men, either illiterate or educated. In our country, yet now there is no strict law that can effectively curb eve teasing.

Article 76 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance 1976 of the Penal Code of 1860 affirms that any acts, conducts or verbal abuses that are used to disgrace women are punishable by law. However, these provisions seem

minor compared with the crimes they commit. Sometimes, women are blamed for 'alluring' eve teasers by their 'seductive' dresses or make-ups. But the reality is, the majority girls who become the prey of eve teasers are from rural areas and they are more conservative in wearing dresses compared with their counterparts in the urban areas. Remedies: First of all we need to reduce the gender segregation in the society.

The boys should respect the opposite sex, as morality demands it, adding that they should not be unaware to the fact that they have families too. 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. Policemen must be deployed and conscious and should punish such vagabonds where necessary. " Mobile courts" are now empowered to prosecute the crime of " Eve teasing". Conviction brings a year in jail, a fine of \$70, or both. Recently, the government is planning to introduce a strict law against eve teasing.

No doubt, this is a timely step to move forward Conclusion: What we see happening today cannot be remedied by the application of law alone. What is needed most is the proactive and forceful role of the society to retrieve social and moral values which have eroded over the years. Education Ministry in Bangladesh has designated 13 June, 2010 as Eve Teasing Protection Day. To reduce this crime, we must launch a social movement against this in addition to introducing punitive legal measures. However, all the steps will be futile unless the male segment of the society change its patriarchal mindset.