



## **An over view of the problem of Eve-Teasing**

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### **Abstract**

Eve-teasing is a widespread social evil and a complex problem. We are used to see the girls subjected to teasing from television screen to nearby street. It starts at the face of a girl much before she reaches adolescence. Eve-teasing is often known as sexual harassment. It is an act of humiliating or sexual harassment of a girl on the road or other public places like in buses, in malls, parks, shops, hospital, markets, work place, etc. "Eve teasing" is used in India to refer to a wide variety of behaviour including molestation, "flashing" or any verbal, physical sexual street harassment that falls short of rape. It's an archaic term. The "Eve" part comes from the Old Testament and describing harassment as "teasing" makes it sound almost like a mild romantic overture that should be tolerated which of course it should not.

There are many forms of eve teasing, which are power-player, intellectual seducer, mother-father, one-of-the-gang, unintentional and the eve-teaser are conducting eve teasing toward girls by these forms. Therefore, eve-teaser may be anyone, such a client, a co-worker, a teacher or professor, a student, a friend, or a stranger and eve-teasing may occur any place such as beaches, roads, cinema halls, buses and sadly even in educational institutions. It is a crime easy to commit but difficult to prove.

Violence does not need to be in physical form always, sometimes verbal violence is more painful and hurting than the physical which leaves one emotionally wrecked and psychologically disturbed. And there is where a person feels emotionally and psychologically so disturbed that one can even choose to do something as serious as suicide. As such it is the utmost responsibility of the society, parents, community stakeholders, local officials and opinion makers, teachers, political leaders and public officials to step up community vigilance and bring about positive social norms in respect to establishing the dignity and respect of girls and women in society in particular and create a safe place for women so that she can she can live and breathe free without any inhibitions.

**Keywords:** eve-teasing, sexual harassment, flashing

### **Introduction**

Eve-teasing is a widespread social evil and a complex problem. We are used to see the girls subjected to teasing from television screen to nearby street. It starts at the face of a girl much before she reaches adolescence. Eve teasing is not depends on the how the woman looks or what she has wears or where she goes even aged woman are facing such kind of teasing. Everyday every woman faces the some kind of the eve- teasing. School and college going girls and female garment worker are at top of the list of victims of eve- teasing. Adolescent girls are the main victims eve teasing. Whistling, catcalling, touching or groping, flashing, blowing kisses, stalking, sexual gesturing or unsolicited photography are all instances of eve-teasing suffered by all sorts of women. Usually the young men, especially when associated with friends are mainly responsible for eve-teasing.

Eve-teasing is often known as sexual harassment. It is an act of humiliating or sexual harassment of a girl on the road or other public places like in buses, in malls, parks, shops, hospital, markets, work place, etc. It covers a range of sexually aggressive behaviour, verbal, non-verbal and physical. It is a universal phenomenon. Many people consider the term "eve teasing" as rooting from the word "eve" which literally means early. So it is generally concluded that "eve

teasing" means "teasing girls who are at their early age of youth or at the early age of puberty". However, the fact is that the term does originate from the word "eve" but it actually refers to our first mother "Eve" from whom we, human kind came from. So "Eve Teasing" means "to tease girls, at any age, who hold the characteristics of Eve or of a mother". Therefore, it actually means teasing and dishonouring the whole "nation mother".

### **Concept of eve-teasing**

Eve teasing is a euphemism used in India for sexual harassment or molestation of women by men. The concept of eve-teasing vary among and within societies, depending on whether individuals are born and socialized as men or women in a specific socio-economic class in a society. Universal consensus exists on the key characteristics and definition of sexual harassment or eve-teasing. This is a common phenomenon in work places and education institutions and goes mostly unnoticed and unreported. Despite the existing provisions for legal protection of girls and women and the regular fight against eve teasing, it is still widely prevalent.

The United Nations Declaration on Violence against Women provides a basis for defining gender-based violence. According to Article 1 of the Declaration, violence against

women is to be understood as: “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”.

“Eve teasing” is used in India to refer to a wide variety of behaviour including molestation, “flashing” or any verbal, physical sexual street harassment that falls short of rape. It's an archaic term. The "Eve" part comes from the Old Testament and describing harassment as “teasing” makes it sound almost like a mild romantic overture that should be tolerated which of course it should not.

### Origin of the term

Many people consider the term “eve teasing” as rooting from the word “eve” which literally means early. So it is generally concluded that “eve-teasing” means teasing girls who are at their early age of youth or at the early stage of their sexual growth. However, the fact is that the term does originate from the word “eve” but it actually refers to our first mother “eve” from whom we human kind are said to come from. So “eve-teasing” means to tease girls, at any age, who hold the characteristics of eve or of a mother.

Eve-teasing is probably the most common act of public violence against women which includes various forms of harassments like making vulgar comments, indecent proposals, unwelcome gestures with hands, legs, fingers or other organs, attempting to make physical contact etc. Any kind of verbal or non-verbal behaviour, physical conduct or display of objects or pictures and comments about a woman's looks or body can also be considered as eve-teasing. Eve teasing is a typical social crime. In fact, within the patriarchal social fabric, eve-teasing is a weapon to weaken, hurt or force women to confine to domestic affairs. It restricts women's mobility in the public sphere, which contributes to their diminishing participation in outdoor activities. Sexual harassment results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman to equality under Article 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India, her right to life and live with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution and right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business under Article 19 which includes a right to a safe environment free from sexual harassment.

### Types of eve-teasing

There are many forms of eve teasing, which are power-player, intellectual seducer, mother-father, one-of-the-gang, unintentional and the eve-teaser are conducting eve teasing toward girls by these forms. Therefore, eve-teaser may be anyone, such a client, a co-worker, a teacher or professor, a student, a friend, or a stranger and eve-teasing may occur any place such as beaches, roads, cinema halls, buses and sadly even in educational institutions. It is a crime easy to commit but difficult to prove. Eve-teasing today has become malicious, appalling and disgusting practice. The Indian Journal of Criminology and Criminalistics (January- June 1995 Edn.) has categorized eve teasing into five heads viz.:

1. Verbal eve teasing;
2. Physical eve teasing;
3. Psychological harassment;

4. Sexual harassment; and
5. Harassment through some objects.

Sexual harassment like eve-teasing of women amounts to violation of rights guaranteed under Article 14, 15 as well. In the absence of effective legislation to contain eve-teasing, normally, complaints are registered under Section 294 or Section 509 IPC.

### Causes of eve teasing

1. **Wrong Mind-set:** Mind set of people is changing day by day to look at girls and women in negative sense. Because of this negative mind-set eve teasing is increasing in daily life. Number of males thinks that women are only to fulfil the physical needs.
2. **Male dominant society:** In India, We have male dominant society where male are considered always powerful and strong while women are weak and powerless. This male dominating society pushes women to be quite on any issue related to the male. This is the reason even after facing the eve teasing women and girls are not reporting.
3. **Fun:** Now a days eve teasing becomes a part of fun especially in college going boys. Due to physical attraction sometimes male can't control himself and he indulges with eve teasing.
4. **Modernization:** It is one of the main reasons, due to modernization the pattern of girls clothe changed a lot which attracts the boys. These attractions due to modernization become a reason for eve teasing.
5. **Bad impact of electronic and social media:** Now a day electronic and social media is playing a vital role in fixing behavioural pattern. Negative attitude towards women and girls has been exposed through the movies and various television programmes which revealed in increase in eve teasing. Easy availability of internet and social media on mobile phone increased access of vulgar and even porn films which increase the greed towards sex which starts with eve teasing.
6. **Lack of security for women:** It is our prime duty to provide adequate security to women and girls. But we are unable to provide adequate security to women and girls. The lack of security during travelling at night, at work place increases the eve teasing.
7. **Absence of punishment:** Due to absence of strong punishment, law and the implementing the law in practically failed to create fear about the eve teasing. Absence of Law is a great factor of encouraging eve teasing.
8. **Degradation of social, cultural, moral values:** Loss of social, cultural and moral values resulted into the instances like eve teasing. Earlier there was boundaries of religion were very strong those became a weak and turned into uncontrolled behaviour of people in society. When a man is careless about his religion naturally he falls under some bad dealings like eve teasing.
9. **Family Control:** It's a duty of parent to impart the moral education among the children. Here now a days parents are careless about the same, which encourage boys for eve teasing.

### Impacts of eve teasing

Violence does not need to be in physical form always, sometimes verbal violence is more painful and hurting than the physical which leaves one emotionally wrecked and psychologically disturbed. And there is where a person feels emotionally and psychologically so disturbed that one can even choose to do something as serious as suicide.

**The consequences of eve teasing can be summarized as below**

- 1. Suicide:** The victims of eve teasing in many cases, being unable to bear with the psychological scars left by the eve-teasers, commit suicide to escape the anguish. Most of them never report to their parents about eve-teasing. Feeling of shame, guilt, fear of over control by family members, etc., forbid them to hide about the incident of eve-teasing from their parents/guardian. When the victims do not get any support from the family and realise that there is no scope to rescue from this situation then most of them resort to suicides. Besides, even though most of them are aware of the existing laws, most of them fear that they might not get justice. Further, if the teasers happen to belong from affluent class, they might threaten and revile the victim's family with dire consequences. So, finding no other alternative the victims commit suicide.
- 2. Drop out:** One of the reason behind the drop out of girls from school is eve teasing. This happens mostly in rural area. However, different studies suggest that drop-out rate among girl increases with the increase of age. It's very natural that parents worried about the safety of the girls when they feels that their girl's safety is under threat by eve-teaser, they make alternative thinking and prefer to stop education of their girls and confine them inside the home.
- 3. Early Marriage:** Eve teasing forces the parents to do early marriage of girls. They have fear for their social status. Instead of opposing to eve teasing they want to run away from the problem. So they choose option of early marriage of girls. As we know that early marriage is invitation of all physical, mental and health problems. Neither can she take care of herself, nor to her children and family. Due to early pregnancy mothers and child mortality rate is high level.
- 4. Mental Stress:** Most of the girls under the fear of the eve teaser, suffer from various types of mental stress and trauma. It affects the victim so badly that it confers number of problems like tension, fear, anxiety, sadness, etc. Most of the victims suffer from broken sleep and found it difficult to sleep due to repetition of flashes of incident of eve-teasing along with problem of light headedness and unsatisfactory sleep. In other words it effect physic of victim that abuser cannot imagine. Sometimes her parents and other family members also become upset and suffer from various mental shocks. When confronted with instances of harassment, women's overt reactions that may range from moving away to confronting the harasser are mediated by a variety of considerations. The physical effect can be backache, headache, irregular periods, injury during harassment and injury during self defence, etc. Although women would rather confront the harassers than ignore them, it is most

strongly the fear of retaliation and the concern that their reaction may be misinterpreted as an invitation that inhibits women from taking action. In such circumstances, confrontation may lead to further harassment. However, the choice to remain silent and ignore harassers is also a difficult one for women, as silence is also seen to perpetuate the culture of harassment. Women's responses to eve teasing are more of endurance than of resistance for the fear of double victimization.

- 5. Family Trouble:** Sometimes, eve teasing may bring new and unbelievable family trouble. A girl under the umbrella of eve teasing when discloses the matter to the family members, a troublesome misunderstanding may arise in the family. Parents might blame the victim unknowingly rather than the teaser. There may be some troubles regarding marriage proposals of the girls. The family blames the girl as soon as the proposal is negated.
- 6. Killing and Oppression:** Given the very nature of street harassment, the fact that it carries dangers of further harm, such as rape and acid attacks and the sheer dismissal of the issue at various fronts, women report feeling a variety of negative emotions in response to it including anger and fear. 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.
- 7. Psychological impact:** Eve teasing results into increase in disorder like anxiety, schizophrenia, and depression. Many Sometimes they do not get support from family due to mistrust. All these causes and frustration leads many girls towards committing suicide. Eve teasing causes different unpleasant situations to women at individual and social level.

**Eradication of eve teasing**

Eve teasing not only hurts a girl's dignity but also curbs her freedom to live. It becomes even more difficult for a girl to face society, which has always been male-dominated. Hence, stern laws should be implemented to curb this social evil completely. The ways to eradicate eve teasing are discussed below:

- 1. Family Education:** Family is the first institution of learning for a human being. If a man achieves proper values, ethics, education, etc. from his family he can not engage himself with such crimes like eve teasing once he steps out of the house. Psychologists and sociologists feel that this behaviour stems from deeper, gender stereotypes that we all grow up with. Social discrimination against women is extensively accountable for the ill treatment to women in the eyes of men due to lack of adequate presence of learning of morals, values to the children at family, socially and schooling level respectively. We need to inculcate the notion that girls are different but equal to men. Interaction between the two genders shouldn't be curbed and the whole idea of looking at boys being superior to girls must be brought down. If these values are encouraged in schools and colleges, it will address the issue, at least to some extent. It's good that there are

legislations to fight such instances, but unless the culture changes, no legislation can bring out a larger change.

2. **Both the victim of this social evil and offender need to be counselled:** To make eve-teasing a non-bailable offence is a positive sign from the government. It is an offence that mostly happens on college campus and locally as well, but we see that society is unwary about it. We have to consider the victim of eve-teasing as well as the offender for counselling. A victim of eve-teasing can experience traumatic stress disorder, guilt and anger against the opposite sex, which can later interfere in building relationships with men. In the worst case scenario, if the victim is repeatedly targeted, it could lead to suicidal tendencies. In case of offenders, eve-teasing must be seen as an early sign among youngsters, which is identified as an anti-social behaviour. It has been observed that boys in the age group of 13-15 start getting involved in the eve-teasing practice in schools. The act must be addressed at an early stage by parents and schools otherwise there is a high chance of these boys getting into anti-social activities, aggressive behaviour, addiction to substances and have relationship problems.
3. **Victims must come forward and register a complaint:** Right now, the situation is such that eve-teasers have no fear of the law as they know it is a bailable offence and one can get out within an hour's time. Making it non-bailable will surely discourage over 90% of these offenders, fearing the stringent law. Today, many girls who have fallen prey to this ugly practice of eve-teasing are forced by their parents to leave their college or education. There are many examples of eve-teasing taking an ugly turn wherein the victimised girls have become mentally disturbed to such an extent that they have committed suicide. The law has to be stringent to curb eve-teasing especially among youngsters. However, the police too should act promptly on such cases. Even the victimised girls must come forward and register a complaint so that police action can be taken.
4. **Giving stringent punishment to the offender:** Offender must be kept under the ambit of law. Stringent law is needed to instil fear among offenders. If offender remains unpunished, crimes spread quickly in the society. However, having such laws alone won't decrease these crimes. We also have to change the outlook of men towards women otherwise such crimes will keep on happening. On the other hand, the police and lawyers must also take cases of eve-teasing more seriously, i.e., along with bringing this new law for eve-teasing, the state should also strengthen and train the police machinery and judiciary to deal with such an offence.
5. **Role of Media:** Further, media should not portray men as powerful and women as powerless, vulnerable and in a position to be exploited; and it should not project women as sex objects and (especially cinema) should not portray eve-teasing as something harmless. Media should raise slogans against this evil and should make people aware about the seriousness of this issue. Religious and moral values should be imbibed so that the factors, which cause moral degeneration, are counterbalanced by moral values provided by religion.

6. **Implementation of Regulations:** At the legal level, strict implementation of regulations prohibiting overloading on buses and maintenance of separate seats reserved in buses for women would be very effective measure for protecting them from physical assault; police should perform their duty honestly and special police forces should be employed for such offences which would take on spot action and more importantly would serve the purpose of putting constraints to potential offenders. The government should take 'zero' tolerance policy against the tide of eve teasing. Whosoever is found guilty must be punished. There must and also can be a provision of filing a complaint online for women victim on the website of the State police and a shortest possible response time must be achieved. Some States in India like Punjab has already launched a provision for online filing of complaints and women issues are handled by a dedicated wing under the IGP rank officer.

The government and non-government organizations as well as the common people of the country should be aware of eve teasing. The government should create more employment opportunities in the country. The government should also make effective laws and stress on its enforcement to remove eve teasing. The necessity of a proper legislation to curb eve-teasing is of extreme importance and effective mechanism to monitor and follow up such acts is of utmost importance. Non-government organizations should organize different programs related to raise awareness about eve teasing, like seminars, symposium, training, counselling etc. Additional safety measures in public transport such as recruitment of women drivers, conductors, close cameras in public transport becomes the need of the hour.

### Conclusion

Women's mental health cannot be considered in isolation from social, political and economic issues. There are sufficient reasons for in current social arrangements today in India which causes enormous stress and surfeit of depression experienced by women and the stress caused by eve teasing is no less or less in magnitude than other horrendous crimes against women. It is the worst form of trespass to person possible. It is done intentionally to hurt a woman physically, emotionally and spiritually. It is also done to wrongfully gain the attention of the woman. Women's multifaceted life as a mother, daughter, wife, employee and other roles in society produces unique potential of stress related effects. Although there are certain laws dealing with eve teasing, namely, Section 294 -IPC, Section 354 -IPC, Section 509 – IPC, there are no stringent laws to deal with the offence. Further, the various categories of the offence doesn't give women the confidence that she would be given remedy if she approaches the police authorities, or that she would not face further social stigma.

The punishment for eve teasing has to be seen in terms of the effect that it has upon women and how it impacts them physically, psychologically and socially. The concept of community policing can work wonders by associating NGO's, University and general public from different walks of life for collaboration with the law and order and police for prevention

of crime against women and their safety. As such it is the utmost responsibility of the society, parents, community stakeholders, local officials and opinion makers — teachers, political leaders and public officials to step up community vigilance and bring about positive social norms in respect to establishing the dignity and respect of girls and women in society in particular and create a safe place for women so that she can live and breathe free without any inhibitions. Thereby, the society will be taintless, the women will be independent and secure and the real national development will be confirmed by equal participation of men and women.

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