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**RAPE CULTURE; THE PSYCHOLOGY OF VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS**

Various aspects of rape has been discussed thoroughly all around the world. But very little has been discussed about “why” and “how". Why do men rape? How do female victims cope mentally with the aftermath of their ordeal? “Why is she coming out after a decade?” “She continued being friendly with him afterwards— she enjoyed it.” These are statements that drown the ears of survivors by family, peers, and the society. Whereas, in reality, there is no particular response among rape victims; every rape survivor reacts in their own unique way. However, every rape survivor experiences rape trauma syndrome.

Rape Trauma Syndrome(RTS), was first identified by Ann Wolbert Burgess and Lynda Lytle Holmstorm. It is seen as a cluster of emotional and behavioural responses to extreme stress experienced by the victim during the rape or the psychological impact experienced by a rape victim that includes disruption to normal physical, emotional, cognitive and interpersonal behaviour. Rape Trauma Syndrome occurs in three phases:

* Acute/ Initial phase: It lasts for a few days to a few weeks. The behaviours present in this stage include: reduced alertness, numbness, disorganized thoughts, nausea, obsession to wash or clean themselves, confusion and crying.
* The outward adjustment stage: It lasts for several months to many years after a rape. Survivors in this stage have resumed their normal lifestyle. However, they simultaneously suffer profound internal turmoil, which may be seen a variety of ways as the survivor copes with the long-term trauma of rape. Majorly, there are five coping strategies in this stage:
* Minimization- pretending ‘everything is fine’
* Dramatization- cannot stop talking about the assault
* Suppression- refuses to discuss the rape
* Explanation- analyses what happened
* Flight- moves out to a new home or city, alters appearance

Other coping mechanisms include: inability to maintain previously close relationships, moodswings, hypervigilance, flashbacks, insomnia, nightmares, panic attacks, phobias, and fear that may be associated with salient characteristics of the rapist.

* Renormalization stage: In this phase, survivors integrate the sexual assault into their lives so that rape is no longer the central phase of their lives; negative feelings such as guilt and shame become resolved and survivors no longer blame themselves for the attack.

Although, Rape Trauma Syndrome is a typical response of survivors, not all features are common to all survivors.

Furthermore, in a survey conducted, several women were reluctant to think of their assaults as rape for a number of reasons including:

* They didn't want to call the man a rapist
* They didn't want to think of similar men as potential rapists
* “Rape” is an intimidating word

Survivors are often apologetic on their assaulters' behalf. It is common for them to take on self-blame. Victims feel that they should have done something differently, and therefore feel at fault. In some cases, victims feel that there’s something naturally wrong with them, which caused them to deserve to be assaulted. Each and every victim who manifests such ideas needs a good support system that reassures them that what happened is not their fault. Unfortunately, some support systems fall short in their duties, and blame the victims. This act recedes recovery.

In addition, the feeling of shame and guilt. A study of women visiting an emerging rape clinic in Stockholm, 70% reported significant tonic immobility: a temporary and involuntary paralysis as a result of intense fear. These women hadn't passively consented. Their bodies reacted in a biological way to threat. Unfortunately, the sceptics have their own opinion. So, it's common among survivors to internalise the shame and embarrassment in anticipation of what sceptics will say.

Despite today's age, the question “why do men rape?” is still up in the air. However, there are several theories which base on power, rage and lust. They include:

* Disadvantaged men: Includes men who are motivated to rape if they have no other means of securing sex. This is also called Male theory or the Mate Deprivation theory. Data indicates that rapes are committed disproportionately by men with low socioeconomic status.
* Opportunistic rapist: Such men generally seek put friendly women. But they may shift to sexual coercion and rape if women are not open or if associated with factors like the chances of retaliation by the victim, by the victim's family, by the society are particularly low.
* High- mating effort rapist: Such rapist are more sexually aggressive and dominant. They deploy mating strategies according to environmental context and often pursue many partners with little investment. They often use coercion and rape when non-coercive tactics fail. In this aspect they are similar to opportunistic rapists.
* Partner rapist: Men are involved to rape their partners under conditions of increased “Sperm competition risk”. Sperm competition is the competition that can occur between the sperms of different males to female's egg. Between 10%-20% of women report experiencing rape in marriage. Such rapes occur when the male suspects his partner's fidelity.

Apart from the factors listed above, other factors include:

* An exaggerated sense of masculinity
* Having low opinion of women
* Having sexually aggressive friends
* Being a member of a criminal gang
* History of the rapist having been sexually abused in childhood
* Having been raised in a strong patriarchal family

Also, male socialization and sexual scripts fuel rape culture. The way males are brought up in regard to sexuality is a driving force for rape. Boys are brought up to be sexually aggressive, dominant and conquering. This may also include a form of sexual victory. Men are taught to take initiative and persist in sexual encounters while women are supposed to set the limits. In such societies, the implied message is that men should persist beyond a woman's protest of saying “No" and the woman should say “No" even if she desires sex. This is the so called “Sexual Script”. For this reason many men do not believe that the woman means “No", and they, by the virtue of sexual script, feel entitled to continue pressurising the woman and ultimately coerce her into sex. Studies have proven that young males have participated in gang rapes under peer pressure, and fear that they may be rejected if they do not participate in the rape. They are “forced" to participate in “forced sex" as a way of proving masculinity to their friends.

In conclusion, the act of rape is possibly worse that a deadly disease; it succeeds in terrorizing, dominating and humiliating its victims. Hence, laws should be made to make women approach the legal system without fear of stigma. Also, boys should be taught from a young age by parents, schools and the society to give a lady every respect she deserves. Only then can we have a society where every woman feels safe and can go about with dignity and respect.