

Rape – psychological and clinical aspects

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The word rape has been derived from the Latin word 'rapere' which means to seize, steal or carry away. Abduction of women and marriage by force have been documented in history and are as old as mankind itself. Rape has however acquired a the status of a criminal act as marriage evolved into a socially sanctioned institution. Rape is often experienced by a woman as an act of extreme humiliation whereby a universe of emptiness and ontological terror is created in her mind. It is violation of both her body space and mental space.

There are certain myths regarding rape that need to be clarified -

- (1) **Rape is a sexual act** – rape is not infact a sexual act but rather is pseudo-sexual act. It is a sexual act fro non sexual needs. It is an act by one on another for the manifestation of dominance and expression of hostility where sex occupies a secondary position.
- (2) **Rape is an act of impulse** – most rapes are often premeditated and carefully planned though not all may be so. Most studies have found when surveying criminal records that only 16-20% of rapes are ones which have occurred spontaneously.
- (3) **Rape occurs only among strangers** – it is very often seen that in many cases the rapists know their subject prior to the rape. Often rapists are close friends and even members of the family including distant relatives.
- (4) **The victim was in some way party to the offence** – it is often felt that the victim was asking for the rape, provoked it or was seductive or provocative. Victims may be women that are elderly, children, fully clad and even rape of nuns has been reported. Very often an innocent victim is the one that is raped.
- (5) **If she really wanted the woman could prevent rape** – the fact is that most of time rape occurs through intimidation with a weapon, threat of harm or injury and even via brute force. Different motives operate in different offenders and they may use different ways to make the victim submit to them.
- (6) **Women make false allegations** – it is often felt that women make false allegations to take revenge on the accused. In fact many women that are raped by men they know do not report to the police as they do not wish to be questioned about the rape and do not wish to see themselves as rape victims. In

fact cases of sexual assault and rape are grossly under reported as per official records.

The types of Rape –

- (1) **The Adult Rape** – this is the rape of a young woman that the assailant likes due to proximity or certain special characteristics. It is not uncommon to find that the victim has been spurning the love attempts of the assailant which continue to the fateful day when the assailant takes full advantage of the prevailing circumstances either in the hope of succeeding in his amorous exploits by forcing the victim to comply and rape being a punishment for non compliance.
- (2) **The Child Rape** – this may vary from an infant to an older girl that attends primary school to a much older girl in her teens. The minor girl may be forced into the situations by being threatened or being promised certain benefits. The girl due to ignorance gives in to the assailant. Children that pursue attention seeking behaviour, use their eyes and limbs and freely touch any stranger unknown to them often the ones that are involved.
- (3) **The College Girl Rape** – this is often seen in a teenager that may proceed into a sexually compromising situation either after being drugged or may be raped by her partner while she does not comply for the completion of the sexual act with a partner that cannot control himself at this juncture.
- (4) **The Retarded Girl Rape** – very often mentally retarded girls who are ignorant and keep quiet are the victims and very often for days no one knows about the incident until an accidental pregnancy is detected.
- (5) **War Rapes** – these are situations where rape is used as a method of exercising control over a defeated nation. Rape in warfare is a planned strategy as well as an impulse motivated act geared towards the complete demoralization of the defeated side as a part of the intended act to crush any semblance of national spirit or pride.
- (6) **Gang rape** – when more than two assailants are involved in raping a single victim then the phenomenon is termed a gang rape.

The Profile of the Rapist –

- (1) **The Power Rapist** – here for the rapist rape is a means by which he reassures himself of his sexual adequacy and manhood. The rape is pre-meditated and preceded by an obsessional fantasy of victim resistance which he finds highly desirable. Such a rapist shows little skills in negotiating inter personal relationships and sexual as well as non sexual areas of his life. The victims usually lie in his own age group.
- (2) **The Anger Rapist** – here the anger rapist expresses his anger, rage, contempt using typical brutality. His aim to vent his rage against women and to retaliate the perceived wrongs and rejections that he suffered against the hands of women. These rapists often find no sexual satisfaction in rape and anger is the sole motive.

- (3) **The Sadistic Rapist** – here both sexuality and aggression become fused into a single experience called sadism. The offender finds maltreatment of his victim intensely gratifying and may subject the victim to abusive acts like biting and burning certain specific body parts or sexual areas.
- (4) **The Child Rapist** – this is often seen in rapists that have a feeling of inferiority and a child is selected for the act as there shall be less resistance as well as physical and psychological threat from the victim to the assailant. The rapist may be one who is sexually immature and may feel inadequate in the presence of an adult.
- (5) **The Alcoholic Rapist** – here rape is committed by a rapist that is under the influence of alcohol and controls are lost and consciences are quelled like wise. These are people that often get strong sexual urges under the influence of alcohol and if no outlet is provided they resort to rape to fulfill their urge.
- (6) **The Mentally Ill Rapist** – here rapists commit rape as part of abnormal mental process where can hardly be held responsible for the rape when it occurs. They are often very aggressive and brutal and may even resort to murder after the rape. Certain brain tumors in the temporal lobes of the brain may cause an intense sexual urge that may cause an individual to seek satisfaction via rape though these cases are extremely rare.

Motivational Factors that Underlie Rape –

- (1) A pent of sexual urge that has sought expression from time to time but was frustrated and finally reached expression via rape.
- (2) Sadistic tendencies that have a deep seated basis and the desire to make victims suffer with rape being one of the ways.
- (3) Hatred against women with a pleasure in their suffering.
- (4) The aggressive criminal who has no real reason but rather just wishes to cause suffering to others.

Today forcible sexual assault has become a critical issue in our society and human service providers are being asked day in and day out to address themselves to this serious social problem. Psychiatrists, psychologists, criminologists, social workers, crisis counselors, judges, attorneys, law enforcers, police officers, teachers, nurses and anyone concerned with the issue of rape has to wake up and come together to end this vexing problem. As individuals we strive hard in our own ways to help victims of rape but working together we can surely make a difference.