

EVE-TEASING AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-COLONIAL
FRAMEWORK OF INDIA

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

“Eve-teasing” is the colloquial Indian term for public sexual harassment against women that includes everything from catcalling, to physical molestation and assault. Based on the analysis of interviews this thesis explores how political and cultural perceptions of women and women’s roles during colonialism, nationalism, partition, and modern times have contributed to the present existence of Eve-teasing and its repercussions on women. In the framework of history, culture, and gender studies, the paper seeks to provide possible explanations for why men Eve-tease women. The paper also discusses the effects of Eve-teasing on women’s daily lives and the ways in which women rebel against patriarchal restrictions in order to avoid becoming victims. Furthermore, this thesis attempts to make way for further research on Eve-teasing, a subject about which there is currently very limited scholarship.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Katherine Anne Montaña Good was born and raised in Fresno, California. She had a passion for South Asian Studies at a young age and dedicated her academic career to learning about the languages and cultures of South Asia. Katherine graduated with her BA in South Asian Studies from the University of California at Berkeley with an emphasis in Hindi and Urdu languages.

This thesis is dedicated to my friends and family, without whose support this would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Eve-teasing” is the colloquial Indian term for public sexual harassment against women that includes everything from catcalling, to physical molestation and assault. Although some incidents may be minor, their overall effect has a serious impact on women’s behavior, identity and lives.

My first encounter with Eve-teasing happened on my first trip to India in 2000, even before I landed in India. I was boarding a plane from Malaysia to India and rolling my carry-on luggage behind me. Suddenly a middle-aged Indian man saw me coming down the aisle and jumped out, as if he had to get something from the overhead compartment and brushed his crotch against my arm. Having had no previous experience with Eve-teasing, I thought I had gotten in his way and began apologizing to him. However my friend who was more experienced traveling in India, had an entirely different notion of what had transpired and to my dismay, he began scolding the man for what he did. It was only sometime later, after living in India, that I began to replay the incident in my head and realized that I had been a victim of Eve-teasing. Living with foreigners in Jaipur, Rajasthan, I routinely observed many Eve-teasing assaults on foreign women. At first I thought these acts were aimed only at foreigners, however as I did more research and interviewed Indian women, I began to realize that public harassment is a chronic problem in India and is commonly experienced by most women.

Modern day ideas about Eve-teasing and gender inequality seem to be greatly influenced by colonialism as well as nationalist and traditional definitions of Indian women. Using the documentary footage I filmed on Eve-teasing in India as a primary source, my thesis attempts to explore the reasons behind Eve-teasing and gender inequality in post-colonial India and its repercussions on women. I intend to examine

how political and cultural perceptions of women and women's roles during colonialism, nationalism, partition, and modern times have contributed to the existence of Eve-teasing in present-day India. Through the analysis of interviews I conducted in Delhi, Jaipur and Pushkar, in the framework of history, culture, and gender studies, I will seek to provide possible explanations for why men Eve-tease women. I will also look at the connection between nationalist visions of Indian women and how foreign women are portrayed in India, making them targets of Eve-teasing. I will also discuss the effects of Eve-teasing on women's daily lives and the ways in which women rebel against patriarchal restrictions in order to avoid becoming victims.

CHAPTER 2

THE EFFECTS OF EVE-TEASING ON WOMEN

During the course of my research I discovered that despite Indian society's ambivalence towards Eve-teasing, most Indian women find that it is a frustrating part of everyday life in the public sphere. I was often asked why I chose to focus on Eve-teasing when there are so many more vital issues pertaining to women and gender equality in India. For me, Eve-teasing is a topic worthy of analysis because it prevents women from being active participants in public aspects of Indian society and because the assaults that women face in public can affect the way in which women view themselves as members of society. Before delving into the historical analysis of Eve-teasing, I would like to offer a few initial illustrations from my interviews.

One college student from Jaipur named Upma shared her first encounter with Eve-teasing. As a young girl in grade school, a man on a bike started to follow her to school one day and offered her a ride. She was nervous and eventually ran ahead to join a group of girls from her school. She told me that the incident had affected her so much that for months after that she insisted on being accompanied to school. Upma also recalled being groped while at a festival, after which she swore she would never attend such festivals again. Both incidences show how Eve-teasing can have a negative impact on the movement and personal freedoms of a girl growing up in India. In fact, I found that many women in Jaipur went to great lengths to avoid being alone in public places.

Another college student I interviewed, named Sonal, felt that Eve-teasing is an act of power by men. She mentioned an example in which she and a friend were smoking in public when a group of young men from a neighboring Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) run school for lower castes, began staring at them and making lewd comments. When Sonal confronted them, one young man said that it was his right to

behave that way because she was out in public. Interestingly, Sonal assumed that these were low caste men and she felt that the incident was the result of low caste males trying to assert their power as men over upper caste females. I agree, but I also think that these men thought that it was their right to comment on women who were acting in a manner that is considered western.¹

One young man, whom I interviewed at a popular New Delhi hangout, told me that his sisters are always accompanied by a male relative. He said that he does not let them hang out in public places like movie theaters and shopping malls, because the girls who hang out there are bad influences on his sisters. His implication was that the women who hang out in such public places are morally loose and that such behavior is not Indian. From my interviews it was clear to see that many of the participants had preconceived ideas about what constitutes acceptable behavior for Indian women. These preconceived ideas seem to have had their historical genesis during colonialism and nationalism. A further study of ideology during these time periods is necessary to determine their effects on present-day ideas concerning women and women's roles.

Over time Eve-teasing appears to have systematically engrained in women that they are not equal to men, despite the progress that they have made in politics, education and the labor force. It prevents them from going out in public, it affects their self-esteem and it reinforces sexist ideas and stereotypes that result in continued violence and abuse against women. Therefore Eve-teasing is worthy of more serious study to help further expose the issue and prevent further abuses.

¹ In India it is often considered western behavior for women smoke, especially in public.

CHAPTER 3

THREE HISTORICAL MOMENTS IN THE GENESIS OF EVE-TEASING

Background

There is very limited scholarship on the subject of Eve-teasing compared to the amount of scholarship on colonialism and women's studies in India. Therefore in addressing the history of Eve-teasing, I have combined the views of prominent scholars in colonial and women's studies to analyze the impact of colonialism, nationalism and partition. The main authors that I have selected for the historical analysis of Eve-teasing are Ashis Nandy, Thomas and Barbara Metcalf, Padma Anagol-McGinn, and Urvashi Butalia. Nandy's *At the Edge of Psychology* provides a physiological analysis of the effects of colonialism on Indian society. Thomas and Barbara Metcalf's *A Concise History of India* provides a general background to colonial India and the nationalist movement. As one of the few studies on the subject, Padma Anagol-McGinn's "Sexual Harassment in India: A Case Study of Eve-teasing in Historical Perspective" was helpful in comparing and contrasting the authors findings with my own. Finally, Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*, provides relevant information on Indian women's experiences during the time of Partition.

The Union territory of New Delhi in its *Prohibition of Eve-teasing Act of 1984* defines Eve-teasing as: "When a man by words either spoken or by signs or by visible representation or by gesture does any act in public space, or signs, recites or utters any indecent words or song or ballad in any public place to the annoyance of any women..."² According to the Indian government, Eve-teasing is simply verbal harassment. However the truth is that Eve-teasing, as it is defined by Indians, often involves physical sexual harassment. In her essay, Anagol-McGinn explains, "In reality...women are subjected not only to remarks, songs and gestures laden with

² Anagol-McGinn, 220

sexual innuendo but also to actual physical molestation of the person, signified by the grabbing of breasts and buttocks, tugging women's braids, jostling against them (although this is made out to be accidental), or spitting on their faces or clothes".³ Though the range of assaults varies, one thing they have in common is that they are used by men to exert power over women.

Colonialism and Male Self-Respect

Victorian views of gender and sexuality greatly influenced new ideals of the Indian women at the turn of the century. Women were "... conceived of as bulwarks protecting what was seen as the 'uncolonized' space of the home against an outside world dominated by colonial values."⁴ The colonial atmosphere outside the home resulted in Indians creating a purely traditional and religious atmosphere inside the home. This protectionist attitude reinforced conservative views of sexuality, which I believe is one factor in the continuation of Eve-teasing.

Colonialism has had a great affect on ideas of cultural superiority and on the Indian psyche. Throughout their presence in the region, the British reinforced ideas of Indian cultural inferiority as a means of control and domination over the sub-continent. The British colonizers were "...convinced of an essential difference between British and Indian that justified indefinite control of political power by a 'superior race'"⁵. Some of the most obvious points of superiority were expressed politically, through criticizing and later banning particular traditional practices such as *sati* (widow burning), child marriage, and not allowing the re-marriage of widows. "For over 150 years, the legal abolition in 1829 of *sati*, the Hindu rite of widows committing suicide after the death of their husbands, has been considered the first

³ Anagol-McGinn, 220

⁴ Metcalf & Metcalf, 146

⁵ Metcalf and Metcalf, 93

victory of the modern world over Hindu obscurantism and primitivism.”⁶ The British felt that Indians were backwards and primitive and that through the creation of new laws intended to protect Indian women from the own cruel traditions, they were helping to “civilize” Indians.

However Metcalf and Metcalf tell us that the increase of sati practices in India around the turn of the century was in fact “...mainly a product of British colonial intrusion into Indian society; that the popularity of the rite and its abolition in response to a reform movement were two phases of Indian society’s attempt to cope with large-scale environmental and cultural changes; and that both these changes involved the invalidation and distortion of traditional attitudes to women and femininity.”⁷ The British’s political attack on Indian traditional practices only worsened the repression of women in India and in many ways helped to stunt the growth of the Indian mentality about gender roles. According to Nandy, the British actually helped to crystallize traditional concepts of women and womanhood.⁸ Therefore, the British and colonialism stunted the social growth of women and helped to freeze Indian society’s perception of traditional roles of Indian women at that particular moment in time, and, in the case of sati, they revived a dying patriarchal practice.

In direct reaction to the marginalization that Indian men felt from colonialists, they began using traditional gender roles as a psychological rebellion to British rule. “...The rite (of sati) became popular in groups made psychologically marginal by their exposure to Western impact. These groups felt the pressure to demonstrate, to others as well as to themselves, their ritual purity and allegiance to traditional high culture”.⁹ Interestingly, those men who were most affected were high caste and upwardly mobile

⁶ Nandy, *Edge*, 1

⁷ Nandy, *Edge*, 1

⁸ Nandy, *Edge*, 1

⁹ Nandy, *Edge*, 7

urban men because they were the most exposed to Western ideas through direct colonial rule.¹⁰

Nationalism, Mobility and Traditional Women's Roles

Politicization of women's roles in reaction to colonialism tied right into the patriarchal perceptions of society and was further expanded by the nationalist movements. When Gandhi spoke of the woman's role in Indian nationalism, he felt that their traditionally submissive and non-violent nature could be useful to the nationalist cause. He idealized Indian women's traditional roles because he felt that these feminine attributes were beneficial to the nationalist movement.¹¹ "He supported many traditional ideas but to a certain extent openly favoured rights for women...his support for the women's movement was not informed by a feminist perspective but from the point of view of the needs of the nationalist movement for swarajya".¹²

Even today these stereotypes of women's traditional roles remain and they continue to be harmful to the ways in which Indian society views women. Gandhi stated: "...we shall have to reimburse women with the purity, firmness, resolve, and the spirit of self-sacrifice of Sita, Damyanti and Draupadi. If only we are able to produce such women, then today's women, pure as satis, would begin to command the same respect in Hindu society as was enjoyed by their ancient prototypes."¹³ This kind of religious idealism blames, rather than elates, modern women and for their lack of purity and their unequal status in Indian society.

During nationalism women became symbols of traditional values of the country. A new ideal for Indian women was created in which they were supposed to be "...educated and 'respectable' according to the models of behavior set out by

¹⁰ Nandy, *Edge*, 8

¹¹ Talwar, 232

¹² Talwar, 232

¹³ Talwar, 231

government and missionary example; but in dramatic contrast to those models, they were meant also to be upholders of their sacred religious traditions.”¹⁴ Indian males had begun to feel that their homes, the one remaining sanctuary of tradition and culture, were under threat from colonialism and that through their women they would be able to defend themselves against this intrusion into their right to practice their traditions.

This growing sense of patriarchy that subordinated women along with the growing presence of women in the public space due to urbanization and increased mobility can be seen as a contributing factor to Eve-teasing in urban areas. Anagol-McGinn believes that Eve-teasing started in the late 19th century as a result of men’s frustration with women’s newly found mobility in society. The act of Eve-teasing was meant to tell women that that their place was in the home, not out in the public. Historically speaking, “Indian women in the nineteenth century who were sexually harassed in public places, whether unmarried married or widowed, were often women who had broken with tradition by seeking public roles.”¹⁵ At that time, if a woman was traveling alone outside the home then it was considered a rebellion against traditional gender roles.

The first Indian women, who began to imitate Western behavior and dress, were publicly humiliated in what can be viewed as an early form of Eve-teasing. Anagol-McGinn, looking at the case of a female doctor from Bombay during the 1860’s-70’s, noted that it was men’s professional jealousy and their distaste for the westernization of Indian women, that made professional women like Anandibai Joshee the targets of acts of Eve-teasing such as spitting, verbal harassment and obscene gestures. “The message of these Eve-teasers was not just to ‘get off the streets’ but to

¹⁴ Metcalf, 146

¹⁵ Anagol McGinn, 230

remain at home and be an obedient, good and submissive wife”.¹⁶ Though these days it is a lot more common to see women traveling independently throughout the city than it was in the late nineteenth century, I still found that many Indian women believe that Eve-teasing exists because men feel that traditionally, women do not belong in the public space.

Padma Anagol-McGinn also presents a different idea on the source of Eve-teasing. She believes that it is closely linked to the carnival mentality present during festivals like *Holi*, in which sexual restrictions are temporarily lifted and interactions and flirtation between men and women is accepted. She claims that Eve-teasing has its roots in “the rites and rituals of certain Hindu carnivals which can be traced to Indian antiquity.”¹⁷ She believes that carnivals such as Holi existed as a “‘valve’ to let off steam in an otherwise sexually repressed society”¹⁸ and that in contemporary India, Eve-teasers have approached city life with traditional Hindu carnival-like attitudes found in Holi. “...The changing nature of Indian carnivals and its participants has blurred distinctions between purely carnival behavior and that of the Eve-teasers. This lack of clarity often leads to unsympathetic and unresponsive crowds who simply witness sexual harassment on the streets, buses or trains”.¹⁹

Within the urban context, women are no longer protected from unwanted harassment, as they might be in a village setting. In small villages, women are protected through familiarity with the people around them. If a strange man harasses a woman on a bus or train in a city like Delhi, he will probably never encounter her relatives or the repercussions that would follow in a village setting. In the urban setting men no longer fear the consequences of their actions such as revenge from a

¹⁶ Anagol-McGinn, 228

¹⁷ Anagol-McGinn, 221

¹⁸ Anagol-McGinn, 221

¹⁹ Anagol-McGinn, 230

woman's relatives, leaving urban women with little social protection from unwanted advances. "Carnival behavior in cities allows men to force women to acknowledge their presence in unpleasant ways, and anonymity adds to a woman's insecurity."²⁰ I agree with Anagol-McGinn's point that urbanization during colonialism contributed to the increase of Eve-teasing in modern-day Indian cities."²¹

The nationalist ideology appears to have had a deep impact on the Indian psyche and broad appeal in the cities. During the late 19th century women's movements were also embracing the nationalist ideology even though in many ways it subordinated women and was seemingly responsible for early forms of reactionary Eve-teasing in the cities. For these women's movements it appears that nationalism and nationalist ideas always came first. "Indian middle class nationalist women did not attack gender discrimination in a way which would make a dent in male domination and patriarchy. Instead they confined themselves to reformist issues, and laid greater stress on opposition to widower's remarrying, child marriages, support for widow remarriage, women's education and greater participation in the national movement."²² The women's movement that happened in India therefore did not question the state of male patriarchy, because it did not want to question tradition, a major thread that held together various factions in the nationalist movement. "Rather, the attempt was to improve the condition of women *within* the frame of patriarchy."²³ Nationalism had a major affect on this attempt to work within the framework of patriarchy, because it put the burden of upholding the nation's traditions on women. Women then felt compelled to support many of the cultural traditions, even if that meant giving up some changes which would improve women's conditions in India.

²⁰ Anagol-McGinn, 222

²¹ Anagol-McGinn, 230

²² Talwar, 230

²³ Talwar, 205

According to Uma Nehru, a progressive Indian feminist during the turn of the century, “The women of India meanwhile are far from any meaningful role in safeguarding the country’s honour, because they are obliged to save their own honour from predatory men”.²⁴ Nehru was aware of the difference in forces behind feminist women’s movements in India and the west. She understood that the women’s movement in the west was greatly motivated by the fact that during World War I, women were forced out of their domestic roles and into the work force in order to support their countries while most of the men were at war. Indian society, on the other hand, lacked a similar kind of motivation to give women an equal role in society. The bulk of the support for the Indian women’s movement came from urban middle class Indians, most of whom were unexposed to western feminist thought and didn’t want western values imposed on them. Uma Nehru remained unpopular because her brand of feminism was “...not in accord with the material conditions of Indian society, the needs of the nationalist movement and the general level of popular consciousness.”²⁵ The average Indian women was not prepared to make such drastic changes to her traditional life style that more progressive feminists like Uma Nehru were suggesting. This is one explanation for why today many feminist and women’s rights issues in Indian society remain unresolved.

Partition and Violence

If nationalism portrayed women as naturally non-violent, domestic and vulnerable beings, then the tragic events of partition only served to further reinforce these ideas about women. Women’s low status in society and the importance of their modesty and chastity made them a perfect target for disgracing the enemy. According to Jeffery and Jeffery, in Indian society, “...women are key to the *izzat* (honor) of their

²⁴ Talwar, 227

²⁵ Talwar, 230

families, and casting slurs on another man's womenfolk or subjecting them to sexual harassment are means through which males compete for dominance."²⁶ During partition, it is well known and documented that there were massive assaults on women of all religions. In many cases rape of women was used as a weapon by men of one religion against men of the opposing religion.

At a time when women were being kidnapped, raped and violated in the name of religion and country, some families during Partition took preemptive measures to protect their honor by organizing the suicides of their own women. Ideas of protecting family honor were so venerated during Partition that there are examples of entire villages and families of women in the Punjab who chose and in some cases were forced to commit suicide rather than risk what their religious enemies might do to them. When looking at the history of partition from the women's point of view, it seems that it has had major effects on the Indian psyche, particularly in the north-western regions of India. I do not think it is any coincidence that to this day these areas are considered the worst regions for sexual harassment against women.

In Punjab, the issue of retaining the honor of the family's women was so important that some men preferred that all of the women commit suicide, rather than dishonoring the family by being raped by men of the opposing religion. This illustrates how by the time of partition, nationalists ideals of associating woman's chastity with family and community honor had already become part of people's mindset.

Urvashi Butalia found that during Partition some men "assisted" in their female relative's suicides, feeling that it was their duty to protect the family honor in this manner. A man named Mangal Singh and his brother were treated like heroes in modern-day India, nearly 20 years after partition, for the bravery they showed in killing seventeen family members (women and children) in the name of family honor.

²⁶ Jeffery and Jeffery, 123

During Butalia's interview with Mangal Singh, he "...insisted that the women and children had 'offered' themselves up for death because death was preferable to what would almost certainly have happened: conversion and rape".²⁷ He was worried that if the women remained alive, they would have dishonored the family. He stated that, "The real fear was one of dishonour. If they had been caught by the Muslims, our honour, their honour would have been sacrificed, lost. It's a question of one's honour...if you have pride you do not fear".²⁸ If these women wanted to maintain their family's honor, they were expected to uphold the Indian tradition of women as self-sacrificing by sacrificing their own lives.

Partition marks a turning point in the history of the newly independent nations of India and Pakistan and in the women's history of these nations. I feel that the atrocities committed during partition had lasting effects on the way in which women are treated and perceived in the modern-day public space. The experiences of women during Partition only further encouraged an environment of fear outside of the home and possibly stunted women's cultural and political growth immediately following independence. This environment of a fear of rape, abduction, and assault against women still exists in the public space today at a milder level.

²⁷ Butalia, 154

²⁸ Butalia, 155

CHAPTER 4

POST-COLONIAL INTERPRETATIONS OF EVE-TEASING

Social Psychology of Indian Men

One particular anti-Eve-teasing campaign created by the Indian police in Delhi blamed men for not coming to the defense of women. The campaign featured the image of a man Eve-teasing a woman at a bus stop while five other men looked away and ignored it. Certainly the Delhi police should be commended for their efforts to create more awareness about Eve-teasing. However, the overall message of the advertising campaign is questionable. The advertisement stated that “‘There are no *men* in this picture...Or this would not happen.’” The advertisement then went on to state that it is every man’s responsibility to step in and protect Indian women from being Eve-teased.²⁹ The advertisement clearly reinforces the existing stereotypes about Indian women being helpless and men taking on the protective patriarchal role. The campaign only provides a temporary solution to a much bigger social problem. It seems paradoxical to me that the same machismo which the Delhi police are calling upon in which men are expected to protect women, is the very same machismo which teaches men that they have power over women and rights over their bodies. This sense of entitlement and power is a major force behind Eve-teasing. The problem with Eve-teasing is not that there are not enough macho heroes to punish the Eve-teasers, as the campaign advertisement suggests, but that men and women are raised in a patriarchal society where male dominance is reinforced both in and out of the home.

In order to understand why some men Eve-tease, we need to look at where a male gets his ideas about women. According to Nandy, in traditional Indian society, a woman’s status is established through her sons. “...the redefinition of womanhood in present-day India has required a redefinition of the concept of man and of public

²⁹ Gupto

functioning... To make the issues of emancipation of woman and equality of sexes primary, one needs a culture in which conjugality is central to male-female relationships. One seeks emancipation from and equality with one's husband and peers, not with one's son."³⁰ Many women in Indian society are still dependent on their sons to bring them respect from their in-laws and the community. A perfect example of this is the main subject of a BBC documentary short film entitled "Apani Marzi" ("By One's Own Will").³¹ Having been married twice, an Indian woman says that she was over worked and abused by her in-laws during both marriages. It took two bad arranged marriages by family members to make her realize that she was better off taking control of her own life. Her last husband abandoned her immediately after her fifth daughter was born because he felt that female children were a burden. This is still a very common belief in Indian society, partly because of the continuation of the practice of dowry under which a woman's family is responsible for giving a dowry to the husband's family.

It is ironic that women are revered as goddesses in India and yet in fact women are far from a being treated as equals with men, let alone venerated. As Nagaswami explains, "...the growing male child does not learn to respect members of his mother's gender. But, it is because of this deification that the boy finds it easy to slip into the patriarchal mode, for he does not relate to his mother as a woman, as a person, as a human being, but as a helpless and martyred dependent who needs to be venerated and cared for".³² In this perspective, mothers are very much separated in the minds of Eve-teasers, from the women on the street. These men do not think of strange women in public as mothers, daughters and sisters, just as they do not view their own mothers as sexual beings.

³⁰ Nandy, 41

³¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-QiKTMAm7Q>

³² Nagaswami

In an interview with a woman named Neelam, she revealed that her most disturbing experience of Eve-teasing involved a young boy. While she was standing in line at a local shop a young boy from her neighborhood began teasing her by singing a very sexually suggestive song. She felt that the boy was very aware that what he was singing was offensive to her and she suspected that he was influenced his parents' views on her unconventional lifestyle. At the time Neelam's husband worked in a different city and she and her daughter lived alone in an apartment, without other family members. Neelam's living circumstances were untraditional for a middle-aged Indian woman living in Jaipur. This example confirms Anagol-McGinn's theory that men harass women who step outside of accepted societal norms. What is even more revealing in this case of Eve-teasing is that even young boys are aware that they have the power to insult an older woman in a sexual manner. Obviously a solution to ending Eve-teasing must involve the socialization and education of Indian children.

Social segregation of the sexes in India is a common practice which I believe has a major influence on the mindset of Eve-teasers. "Schools are generally 'boys' or 'girls' schools. Colleges are also gender-specific. Co-education is generally not encouraged. Even in co-education colleges, girls and boys are generally given separate seats".³³ Though this author is referring to the situation in the state of Kerala, the educational system is similar across the country. As a result of this segregation it is easier for boys to think of women outside of the home as mere objects.

The separation of young people is further hampered in less cosmopolitan cities like Jaipur which have very few social outlets for young people of the opposite sex to mingle. The few bars and clubs that exist in such cities are targeted towards those who are older, married and/or wealthy. This lack of social outlets leads some men to

³³Ajitha, 276

become obsessive about women, which can later lead to violence if affections are not returned or the relationship does not work out. In the case of one resident of Jaipur, Anita, a boy she had been dating became possessive of her. Once she dumped him, he began writing letters to her using his own blood as ink. Things got progressively worse, to the point where he wrote a threatening message on her front door in blood. The ordeal only ended once she had a group of her male friends threaten to harm him. According to Anita part of the problem was this boy's lack of dating experience, as dating is relatively uncommon in many parts of India, especially among lower and middle class Indians, who tend to discourage so-called "love marriages" and encourage arranged marriages.

In a BBC Urdu documentary, entitled "*Mardangi Tere Kai Roop*" ("The Many Forms of Manhood"), one young man states that in "higher" societies (i.e. the upper classes), men and women have more social interaction, meaning that there is more acceptance in these parts of society about sex and sexuality. However in the lower classes, he felt that there is still a strong sense of *pardah*, or separation of men and women.³⁴ There is much truth to what he is saying, but even more importantly he, a young middle class boy, believes that the upper classes are experiencing unrestricted social interactions between men and women. This could possibly be one reason that a frustrated man would harass women in the streets, because he feels he is missing out on the lifestyle of the upper classes which is often associated with a more 'western' lifestyle. I agree with this young man that there is much less dating in the lower classes than in the upper classes. I also believe that this lack of a dating culture as a result of traditional social segregation of the genders, affects some men's behavior towards women in public spaces.

³⁴ Though this documentary was based in Pakistan, I felt the interviews of the young boys were very relevant to the situation in India.

Globalization, the Media and Exposure to Western Lifestyles

The earliest post-independence usage of the word Eve-teasing to describe public sexual harassment that I found was in a 1960 publication of Time Magazine. The article confirms that even in the 1960's a major cause of Eve-teasing was resentment of women's newly found presence in the public space of the university. The article states that "'Eve-teasing' is not, apparently, just the oafish high spirits or ill will of a handful of male students but is rather a symptom of the strong resentment which many students feel against women in the universities".³⁵ Despite the forty-seven years that have passed since that article was written, universities are still a major site of Eve-teasing.

In recent years another influence on Eve-teasing has been globalization. Increased exchange and exposure to various global goods, services and people has resulted in a liberalization of the Indian economy.³⁶ Before the early 1990's Indians had restrictions on economic imports. Afterwards, India began opening its markets to the influence of foreign products and methods of advertising all over the country. "Never before-or so it would appear- have our public spaces been so inundated with sexual images – on posters and billboards, in the cinema and on TV, in glossy magazines, and especially in that hoary middle class institution, the daily newspaper, which has visibly taken on the characteristics of a tabloid"³⁷ Most Indians would agree that this liberalization has greatly increased the number of sexual images present in the media and in the public space. John also links this liberalized sexuality to an economy of desire and violence³⁸. This shows a connection between globalization

³⁵ *Time Magazine*, 12 Sept. 1960.

³⁶ John, 368

³⁷ John, 368

³⁸ John, 369

and a liberalized Indian economy with the continued existence and possible increase of Eve-teasing and public sexual harassment in India.

One reason for the increase in globalization has been television. In 1959 the Indian government introduced the first state-run television station called Doordarshan. The government's purpose in creating this station was a nationalist project to help create a modern Indian state. However, it was only in the 1980's that news and entertainment became a regular feature on the station. Consequently the channel started drawing more nationwide viewership and gained more political significance.³⁹ Then in the late 1980's to early 1990's, as India began to experience a large increase in the number of transmitters and televisions purchased, the government began to realize the potential not only in creating a vision of the ideal Indian middle class family, but also in advertising targeted at the newly expanding middle class and those below who aspired to become middle class.⁴⁰ The Indian middle class became the target market for Doordarshan and later for satellite companies like ZeeTV.⁴¹

As a result of the media expansion in cable and satellite television stations and the internet, Indians have become increasingly exposed to western lifestyles through these forms of media. Exposure to cable television, not only means an increase in the amount of Indian programming viewed, but it also means an increase in the number of Indians viewing western influenced channels like the "Fashion Channel," a cable television channel dedicated to fashion and runway shows. In India where most women dress modestly (covering chest, legs, arms, etc.), the Fashion Channel can be compared to pornography, often reveling more than any Indian "A-film" (the equivalent of Rated R or NC-17 films in the US) ever would. I believe that this exposure causes friction with traditional views on sexuality. As part of my research I

³⁹ Mankekar, 5

⁴⁰ Mankekar, 5

⁴¹ Mankekar, 9

watched the Fashion Channel in India in order to get a sense of what Indians are exposed to when viewing it. I found that nearly every segment showed half-naked western fashion models walking down the runway to the beat of heart-pounding techno music. These women, mostly non-Indian, were usually scantily clad and often, their clothing exposed their breasts. This is in great contrast with Bollywood films, which until recently have been unable to show even so much as a kiss, let alone nudity. These images of foreign women on the Fashion Channel only confirm to Indians, that Western women are immoral and immodest. The problem with the Fashion channel being shown in India is not the lack of censorship, but that the channel gives Indians misconceptions about foreigners. Since sex is a taboo subject in many South Asian societies, their middle class youth often rely on television, films, magazines and their peers to educate them on the issue.

While one might be tempted to say that censorship of exposure to sexual content on television is the solution, past attempts made by certain conservative political groups like the BJP to censor sexual images in public spaces have been unsuccessful. As Mary E. John stated in her essay, “Globalisation, Sexuality and the Visual Field”, “... [The BJP] members have been so busy discovering nudity and sexual degradation in public places, that it would not be inaccurate to say that they are producing a pornographic vision where it did not exist before.”⁴² Society’s focus on “protecting” its citizens from sexual images seems to have the opposite effect. Censorship does not seem to be the answer because, as John pointed out, drawing attention to sexual images actually has the reverse affect of making people think more, rather than less, about sex. Therefore, I do not believe the sexual images themselves which are present in major cities in India are the source of Eve-teasing and sexual harassment, but rather that overexposure to sexuality within a sexually oppressive

⁴² John, 372

society leads to the subjectivity of women by repressed men, who act out their frustrations in the form of Eve-teasing.

Another major influence in confirming, if not formulating, gender roles in Indian society is the Indian film industry. Bollywood is one of the largest industries involved in the creation of visual culture in India. “The Indian film industry produces about 800 feature films annually-the highest in the world”.⁴³ Hindi films are widely viewed and extremely popular in Indian culture. “It is estimated that every week approximately 90-100 million Indian viewers go to the cinema halls to watch films”.⁴⁴ This medium of visual culture leads to the subjectivity of women in India through the portrayal of heroines as objects to be gazed at by men. For women, these films create a dual ideal: to be beautiful and desired and yet chaste and unobtainable.

The roles of female characters in Bollywood films are particularly alarming. “...Popular films in India too often portray women in stereotypical roles of subordination – accepting sexual violence as a normal part of relationships with men”.⁴⁵ These stereotypes may have an influence on women, especially young women and how they relate to the men in their lives. If they grow up in a household where men are abusive, or if they face sexual harassment on the streets, then watching these films only confirms that this is normal and acceptable behavior in Indian society. “The repeated glamorization of Eve-teasing in films as macho manifestation of a tough-acting, college student hero, who initially upsets the heroine but finally wins her attention has fostered a climate supportive of such acts in real life”.⁴⁶ Most of the Indian women I interviewed were surprised that I even bothered to ask why men Eve-tease women. To them it was just a regular part of their everyday lives that was not

⁴³ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 328

⁴⁴ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 328

⁴⁵ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 328

⁴⁶ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 328

worthy of analysis and they did not even question why it happens. This lack of concern that is seemingly reinforced by popular media is alarming. Even though women may have grown accustomed to mild forms of Eve-teasing as portrayed in the media, it is exactly this apathy or acceptance that leads to far harsher and more insulting forms of Eve-teasing.

When women watch these images of “heroes” who force women to acknowledge them through acts which resemble Eve-teasing, it must have a subconscious influence on women. In a study done on sexual violence in Hindi films, the researchers found that “the most common form of sexual violence depicted was Eve-teasing (57% of sexually violent scenes, N-25)”.⁴⁷ And what was even more shocking from their study was that “Heroes (67.8%) were more likely than villains (32.2%) to be the primary perpetrator in sexually violent scenes”.⁴⁸ But there was a distinct difference between the sexual violence enacted by the hero versus the villain. The majority of the “major” sexually violent acts (i.e. rape) were done by villains, while the majority of the “moderate” acts of sexual violence (i.e. Eve-teasing) were done by heroes. Bollywood films therefore perpetuate Eve-teasing by showing that heroes who Eve-tease ultimately win over the hearts of their heroines. Films such as *Biwi No. 1* and *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* “...show the hero Eve-teasing women by singing lewd songs, making sexual remarks, and touching the heroine in sexual ways despite knowing that the heroine does not like these acts”.⁴⁹ These are exactly the kinds of scenes which send the wrong message to both boys and girls about sexuality and Eve-teasing.

While both Bollywood films and television have a role in confirming Indians’ pre-existing notions of gender roles, it cannot be said to drastically alter any pre-

⁴⁷ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 332

⁴⁸ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 333

⁴⁹ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 333

existing social norms. The Indian media is merely reflecting Indian society's preconceived notions of women, especially western women. Through the discourses presented during colonialism, nationalism and finally through the post-independence period of nation building, the average Indian already has preexisting notions of western women and the ways in which their cultural values differ. When Indians see images of western women parading naked down a runway on the Fashion Channel, this only confirms their preconceived notions that western women are immoral and sexually promiscuous.

As early as the nineteenth century, Indians felt that western women were morally and culturally inferior to Indian women. "Nineteenth-century discourse on educated women's sexuality held that learning made a woman independent and morally loose, like white women, and therefore dangerous".⁵⁰ I believe that these ideas of foreign women still hold true today and are in many ways worse than they were before, as a result of exposure to foreign media. Most of the people I interviewed in India agreed that foreign women seem to receive a significant amount of Eve-teasing. I interviewed several foreign women who had lived and traveled in India and all of them had experienced varying degrees of Eve-teasing. Most of these women came to the consensus that foreign women are viewed as being promiscuous while Indian women are still seen as chaste upholders of Indian tradition.

As the middle class expands in India, so does the number of cable and satellite subscribers. A very small percentage of India's population are not Indian and there is limited contact with foreign tourists, especially in less touristy cities. Indians therefore have even less of an opportunity to meet and get to know any real westerners and so for many, what they see on television about western culture is often assumed to be

⁵⁰ Anagol-McGinn, 228

true, just as many westerners maintain stereotypes about Indian culture from the limited images to which they are exposed.

The media reinforces ideas of good and bad women which has a direct effect on the way that Indian men view foreign women. From my own experiences and from the visual media that I saw in films, magazines and billboards, it is evident that foreign women are portrayed as ‘bad’ women. Whenever I passed billboards of “A-films” and soft-pornography films, the images were always of western women or East-Asian women. Similarly, I observed that foreign women are seen in daily newspapers in advertisements and articles dressed in provocative clothing. In these newspapers, foreign women are also more likely to be dressed in revealing western clothing than Indian women. Foreign women receive a great deal of Eve-teasing because in addition to standing out physically from Indians and being outsiders to Indian culture and language, the Indian media portrays foreign women as being morally loose.

Though Bollywood has only a hand full of non-Indian actors, those that exist tell us a lot about stereotypes of western women. One example is the portrayal of a western woman in a 2002 film entitled *Dum*⁵¹. The film features Yana Gupta, a Czech actress and model in the “masala” (spicy) dance scene to the song “Babuji Zara Dhere Chalo”. During the scene she dances in a very provocative manner, dressed in revealing clothing and seems to enjoy the attention given to her from the group of Indian men who have swarmed around her. She also pours a bottle of wine down her leg for the villain of the film to drink. This is a significant example of the sexualization of western women by having them behave in a manner that would be unimaginable and controversial if it had been preformed by an Indian woman.

⁵¹ *Dum*, 2003

Another example is the portrayal of the character Sameer's European girlfriend in the immensely popular 2001 film, *Dil Chahata Hai*⁵². One particular scene is revealing because we see her invite Sameer into her hotel room with the suggested motivation of having sex. In the next scene we hear moaning sounds which for a second, shock and yet confirm Indian audiences' ideas about western women being "easy". Then as the camera pans over the empty bed and onto the floor we see Sameer all alone, gagged and bound in his boxers. His girlfriend turns out to be a con-artist who, with the help of another Indian man, robs Sameer. The scene is clearly used for comic relief, and as a way to end Sameer's relationship with a foreign woman and set him up for a relationship with a proper Indian girl. Yet, it is significant because the scene plays on existing Indian stereotypes about western women as promiscuous and also as untrustworthy and unfaithful.

Women's Accountability, Fear and Victimhood

Much of the attention given to Eve-teasing in Indian media and in Indian society focuses on the woman's responsibility through the way she dresses, what methods she uses to defend herself, and how she should respond to unwanted advances. By focusing on the woman's responsibility to prevent Eve-teasing, they diminish the man's responsibility and more importantly society's overall responsibility to stop Eve-teasing at its roots. By agreeing to dress in modest Indian clothing as opposed to western clothing, women are agreeing with and reinforcing the idea that to act outside these social norms is to ask for harassment which makes it more difficult for those women who do attempt to defy social restrictions on their clothing.

In one example from last February, Farah Khanum, a female student from Aligarh Muslim University, was warned by the student union to stop wearing western

⁵² *Dil Chahata Hai*, 2001

clothing and to start wearing a duppata⁵³. She refused and was continually harassed by several men at the university. When she went to the university to file a complaint, they discouraged her from doing so, and accused her of trying to start trouble.⁵⁴ The idea of western clothing represents immodest and immoral behavior is so ingrained in Indian culture, that even those resources which were intended to assist women in fighting for their rights have failed many women like Farah Khanum.

In another recent example from 2005, when a 17-year-old college girl was raped by a policeman in Mumbai, a powerful political party, the Shiv Sena, despite condemning the rape, commented on the case by stating that “women should not wear revealing clothes and mingle with men.”⁵⁵ From both of these contemporary examples, it is obvious that a large proportion of Indian society still believes that a woman’s modesty in dress and behavior has a great effect on whether or not she is sexually harassed and even raped.

Rather than dealing with the root cause of Eve-teasing, Indian society seems to focus on temporary solutions which involve making women responsible for what happens to them outside of the home. While teaching women to dress modestly, to stay indoors after dark, to learn self-defense and to ignore Eve-teasers may all seem like practical solutions, they are ineffective solutions to lessening or ending Eve-teasing. Such actions put the responsibility of stopping Eve-teasing solely on women. Meanwhile, it is the mindset of Indian society that needs to see dramatic changes in order to put an end to Eve-teasing.

Men are not the only ones at fault for the current situation of Eve-teasing. Patriarchy is partially the result of woman’s acceptances and adherence to patriarchal guidelines and restrictions. This influence often comes from senior women like

⁵³ A scarf used to cover the chest and sometimes the head.

⁵⁴ <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2991/context/ourdailylives>

⁵⁵ <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2991/context/ourdailylives>

mother-in-laws. "...It is [the mother-in-law's] obligation to see to it that her daughter-in-law maintains the rules and niceties of the kind of *purdah* that is proper to the family's status, wealth, and aspirations".⁵⁶ Women are influenced not only by the men in their lives, but also by the higher ranking women in their lives.

The high rate of female infanticide in South Asia is just one example in which senior women help to reinforce patriarchal restrictions on younger women. Nandy uses the example of female infanticide to describe how women are responsible for reinforcing the learned patriarchal dominance of men and inferiority of women. So while men may be blamed for encouraging female infanticide by putting pressure on women to bear only boys, ultimately it is the woman who neglects and ultimately kills (if not aborts) the girl child. While other women, such as the mother in-law, encourage these acts, "...this indirect female infanticide...is mainly a function of maternal neglect, a weird expression of woman's hostility toward womanhood and also, symbolically, toward her own self".⁵⁷ Women are therefore participants in and often reinforce the patriarchal system.

In order to change the current situation of women, women have to desire change for themselves. Nandy believes that to change the patriarchal state of Indian society, women must redefine themselves by "...deemphasizing some aspects of her role in her family and society and emphasizing others, so that she may widen her identity without breaking totally from its cultural definition... [and by] transcending the partial identity imposed by motherhood and winning a new respect for conjugality".⁵⁸

From the interviews I conducted I deduced that a large portion of Indian women have become accustomed to the way they were treated in the public sphere and

⁵⁶ Mandelbaum, 8

⁵⁷ Nandy, *Exiled*, 34

⁵⁸ Nandy, *Edge*, 42

in fact have internalized their roles in society. Even though Eve-teasing is not taken perceived as a serious crime in India, it "...plays a serious role in conditioning a girl's mind into accepting the superiority of the male sex by making her feel that she's just an object to be commented upon, [and] that menfolk have a right to make any comments about her body..."⁵⁹ Women are often taught that fighting back or making a scene will only give the Eve-teaser the response and attention that he is seeking. This teaches women that Eve-teasing is their fault because they have attracted a man's attention. Since women feel that they are at fault for Eve-teasing, it is understandable why so few women ever bother to report such incidents.

In a survey conducted on college women in New Delhi, 90% said that they had experienced sexual harassment and yet only 1 in 10,000 women ever bother to report such cases of Eve-teasing to the police.⁶⁰ "The primary reasons why women abstain from reporting incidents of sexual violence are the unwieldy medicolegal process, concerns about continued violence, and fear of stigmatization".⁶¹ Women cannot even trust that the government will act appropriately when they make a complaint against an Eve-teaser.

A recent article in the *Hindustan Times* noted an increase in Eve-teasing in a neighborhood where Railway Protection Force constables have been stationed and were living in portable barracks. As a direct result, "'Most of our women members have confined themselves to their homes out of fear,' said one of the senior residents of the colony. He said the girls were even scared to stand outside their houses, as the 'miscreants' might 'target' them any moment. The situation is so severe that some of the girls have given up their evening engagements, including tuitions".⁶² It is ironic

⁵⁹ Ajitha, 277

⁶⁰ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 327

⁶¹ Ramasubramanian and Oliver, 328

⁶² *Hindustan Times*, 23 Aug. 2005

that the very men who are stationed in the colony to protect its residents are in fact causing more harm by inflicting terror on the very residents they are hired to protect.

In another article on Eve-teasing, “The police were initially hesitant to register a case following pressure from some groups in support of the detained person. A police officer even attempted to persuade the victim to withdraw the complaint”.⁶³ Apparently once a victim gathers up the courage to report an incidence of Eve-teasing to the police, there is no guarantee that the police will act in accordance with the law. With so many forces working against women, it is no wonder there is such an enormous gap between the number of Eve-teasing incidences that take place in New Delhi, and the number of these incidences that are actually reported. If a woman reports an Eve-teaser she has to worry about the possibility of retaliation from the Eve-teaser or his family and friends.

Nandy makes an interesting opinion about Indian women’s participation in their own victimization. “...Theirs is not what Rollo May would call a case of ‘authentic innocence’ but that of ‘pseudo-innocence’. This innocence leads one to participate in a structurally violent system because of the unawareness of one’s power to intervene in the real world and because of the indirect psychological benefits of being a victim”.⁶⁴ In India (as in most patriarchal societies) many women seem to take pride in their structured roles under patriarchy. They greatly value motherhood and traditional marriage, and more importantly, following society’s rules by obeying their husbands and parents.

One American graduate student whom I interviewed, named Melia, made an interesting observation about how many Indian women seem to take pride in being the ‘weaker’ sex. Having traveled throughout India, Melia began to notice a pattern

⁶³ *The Hindu*, 19 Apr. 2001

⁶⁴ Nandy, *Edge* 43

among women, especially young brides traveling with their husbands. She noticed that on long distance bus rides it is common to see a young woman throw up or even just start heaving regardless of the bumpiness of the ride. It was almost as if these women were making themselves sick because they felt it was “feminine”. One possible explanation for this behavior is that these women want to prove to their husbands that they are not accustomed to traveling. According to Mandelbaum, some Indian women take pride in their close confines.⁶⁵ Ursula Sharma mentions a Hindu woman of a village in Himachal Pradesh who told her that she hardly ever stirred beyond her four walls. ‘Later I realized that it had been said in a spirit of pride. She did not need to stir beyond her four walls’.⁶⁶ Therefore it would make sense why some young brides would want to act in a manner which proves that they honorable women who have never left the safety of their homes. Such behavior perpetuates stereotypes of women as the weaker sex and in the long run makes it difficult for other women to make significant strides towards eliminating Eve-teasing.

Growing Anti- Eve-teasing Movements & Possible Solutions

In recent years, as a response to the troubles that women have with Eve-teasing, there have been several efforts on the part of the Indian government and private companies to create women-friendly modes of transportation. In Mumbai, a woman has invented a women-only taxi cab company called “Forsche”.^{67 68} Similarly in 2002, the city of Delhi created women-only buses in an effort to curb Eve-teasing. However, due to the limited hours of availability of such women-only modes of transportation, there is speculation as to how long they will last. These

⁶⁵ Mandelbaum, 7

⁶⁶ Mandelbaum, 7

⁶⁷ Pronounced: “For She”

⁶⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6623211.stm>

forms of segregated transportation only help women to avoiding Eve-teasing and are not effective solutions.

In Japan (another country in which public sexual harassment is a common problem), I found that similar measures had been taken to create all female transportation options for women. In Tokyo, women's only carriages were created in the subways as a direct result of the recent rise in public sexual harassment complaints on Japanese subways. It seems that many Japanese women found that the existence of such separate carriages only creates more problems for women. If for some reason a woman was unable to board the women's section of the train, or if they chose not to be segregated, some women found that harassment was actually worse than before, because men thought these women wanted to be harassed.⁶⁹

Several Indian women with whom I spoke noticed a recent rise in the number of self-defense courses offered for women. These days it is becoming more and more common for average Indian women to take self-defense classes. In 2003, I interviewed the Delhi Women's Police Commissioner. When I asked her why it is important for Indian women to take self-defense courses, she told me that "It sharpens their reflexes and it gives them practice to be violent... generally we have never taught our girls and women at home to be active as far as defending yourself is concerned. We have never told them to beat up somebody, to use your body or anything to save yourself, we just want them to be silent spectators, silent victims so therefore this training program... makes them confident ...and it also prepares them to activate their body in such a way that they are able to give an adequate and proper answer to the person who is misbehaving with them".⁷⁰

⁶⁹ < http://allgirlarmy.org/blog/laura/2006/07/women_separated_on_the_japanese_subway>

⁷⁰ Good

The police commissioner also showed me one of the self-defense courses that the Delhi Women's Police Commission offers. What I found very interesting was that despite the fact that the idea of women taking self-defense courses may have come from the western feminist thought, these Indian women still managed to put a uniquely Indian feminist twist on self-defense training. The students demonstrated several self-defense moves, many of which involved the usage of *dupattas* to choke or trip the attacker. I'm not sure how practical those particular moves would actually be in a real situation, but it certainly made me feel as though some South Asian women have taken many concepts of feminism and made it their own.

Additionally I discovered that there were many other tactics of self-defense that women had taught themselves. "Rummage the purses of our women, and you will find chilly powder, blades and knives."⁷¹ On the one hand, such acts of self-empowerment are a sign of progress in the women's movement in India. Yet upon further inspection, it is obvious that these means of self-defense are signs that women cannot depend on the Indian government to protect them. Women feel the need to take the law into their own hands by taking self-defense courses and carrying weapons, rather than dealing with the real issue of why Indian society accepts Eve-teasing as a social norm.

Along with the recent increase in awareness about Eve-teasing through self-defense courses, other anti-Eve-teasing movements have emerged, such as the Blank Noise Project, a campaign created by a group of young Indian female students in an effort to draw public attention to Eve-teasing through their public demonstrations, a blog and community art. The founder of the project, Jasmeen Pathija felt a need to address the issue of Eve-teasing because she felt that Indian women have become overly accustomed to being victims of Eve-teasing, so much so that they are apathetic

⁷¹ Fredrick

to its effects. The project started with an art exhibition in which women from all over India were called upon to donate a piece of clothing in which they were Eve-teased. These clothing items, a mix of western and Indian clothing, were then displayed in a gallery in order to disprove the common misperception that only women who wear western (i.e. provocative) clothing are Eve-teased. Since then the Blank Noise Project has staged several anti-Eve-teasing protests across the country. In the words of one Blank Noise Project member, these protests are about "...our right to occupy public spaces without being molested, abused, threatened, humiliated, [or] harassed."⁷² I feel that these are basic rights that all humans should expect from civil societies when occupying public space.

⁷² <<http://blanknoiseproject.blogspot.com/>>

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I have found Eve-teasing to be a complex issue influenced by many different cultural, global, modern and historical events. Many of the major moments in Indian history, including colonialism, nationalism and partition have contributed to the current state of Eve-teasing in Post-Colonial India. Unrealistic ideas of Indian women both historically and in the modern Indian media have greatly influenced modern-day gender definitions. Additionally the socialization of both men and women in India has had a major influence on both men's behavior in the public space and women's responses to this behavior. Gender segregation results in sexual frustration in a modern India that on the one hand is exposed to western lifestyles through media, advertising and commerce, and on the other hand is restricted by tradition with very few social outlets for Indian youth. Western women's portrayal in India as immoral is partly the result of stereotypes resulting from colonialism, nationalism and the programming that is viewed by Indians via cable and satellite television.

As we have seen, there are limits to what the Indian government can do to end Eve-teasing. Ultimately Eve-teasing is a product of Indian society and despite an increase in women's involvement in non-traditional roles, a change in social perceptions towards women in Indian culture, through education and the Indian media, is in order to put a stop to Eve-teasing. Women themselves play an active role in maintaining patriarchal roles and restrictions and should be given equal responsibility for altering the patriarchal society in which they live. Only when Indian women stop internalizing gender stereotypes and stop accepting patriarchal restrictions on their lives, will they be able to eradicate Eve-teasing.

Eve-teasing is a complex social issue that requires the active participation of Indian women and men in order to find a solution. It has been over 5 years since I

first started researching about Eve-teasing. Since then I have discovered a slow but steady increase in awareness about Eve-teasing. The future of Eve-teasing ultimately depends on the extent to which Indians are willing to modernize certain aspects of their lives, including the equality of women in Indian society and also on how much women demand these changes. I am hopeful that Anti-Eve-teasing projects like Blank Noise are just the beginning of what is to come from current and future generations of Indian women, who refuse to tolerate Eve-teasing and all of the problems it creates in their daily lives.

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