

Being Reshma: The Life Narrative of a Phoenix for the Phoenixes – An Analysis

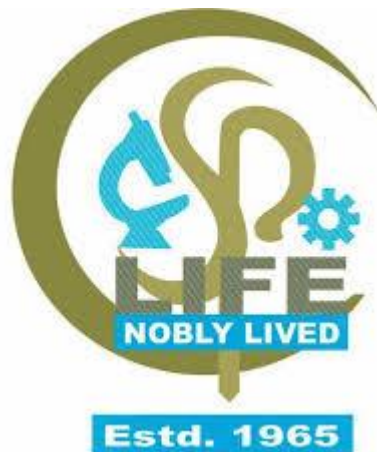
Project submitted to the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam in partial recognition  
of the requirements for the award of Degree of Bachelors of Arts in English Language  
and Literature

(Model II – Teaching)

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Sixth Semester



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2017-2020

## **Declaration**

I do hereby declare that the project **Being Reshma: The Life Narrative of a Phoenix for the Phoenixes – An Analysis** is the record of genuine research work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Salia Rex, Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of English, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery.

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### **Certificate**

This is to certify that the project work **Being Reshma: The Life Narrative of a Phoenix for the Phoenixes – An Analysis** is the record of the original work carried out by Mary Kripa Dolphy under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Salia Rex Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of English, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery.

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### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank Dr. Salia Rex, Head of the Department of English who helped and gave suggestions throughout the completion of this project. I would also like to thank other teachers of English department who gave their opinions as well.

Mary Kripa Dolphy

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## Introduction

The fact about gender based violence around the world claims that, at least one among every three women has been reported beaten, sexually abused, acid attacked, burned, undergone genital mutilation, emotional abuse, dowry related violence leading to armed conflict. Gender based violence can take place in both personal as well as in public spheres. This evil is prevailed beyond boundaries it happens in all society irrespective of social classes, with women at the risks of scape goats.

This study delves into the details of attacks on women with an intention to analyse the reasons and the impact of such violence on women with an intention of spreading awareness to people about the programs running for acid attack survivors.

Being Reshma is an autobiography written by Tania Singh. Being Reshma is a true story of a 23-year-old girl who was attacked by the deadly corrosive substance at the age of 17. In her case she, the perpetrator was not a jilted lover or some random men she rejected, according to her she was punished for not her mistake. Despite of all the odds Reshma and her family stood strong and decided to face the society. Initially it was terrific but with the support around she rose like a phoenix. Her story makes it clear that in order to rise from once own ash a phoenix should let it self-burn into ashes.

Gender based violence denotes harm inflicted upon individuals. Gender roles influence the social roles of individuals as they encompass a range of behaviors and attitudes that are generally considered acceptable based on the biological accept. In Asian countries violence against women is a major concern; especially the prevalence of marital violence varies considerably across South Asia. Violence against women (VAW), is also known as gender-based violence such violence is often addressed as hate crime (bias motivated crime) that is criminal acts that are seen to have been motivated by bias on one or more of the social

groups. “The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that “violence against women is a manifestation of historical unequal power relations between men and women”. (Violence Against Women Research Data base, UN resources). Violence against women is considered as one of the crucial social mechanism by which women are forced into disposition in society. The intention to use destructive force and power against women in terms of her mental, physical and social levels has started from ages.

Types of gender based violence include, overt physical abuse, Psychological abuse, Deprivation of resources needed for physical and psychological wellbeing in terms of health, nutrition, care and education. Families are considered to be the safe but the reality that happen within the four walls are different. Family is one of the primary sites of gender based violence happen. It is here many girls undergo physical abuses. Hence with fear and humility they remain silent.

As per the records the most heinous gender based violence includes Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) involves the partial or complete removal of external female genitalia. This practice brings no good to girls or women rather they suffer with pain leading to lethal infection. This is practiced as a ritual in thirty countries including Africa, Middle East, and Asia.

Dowry practice is another social evil that womanhood is saddled with. This practice is believed to be a social practice in South Asian countries. This customary practice is considered as the central part of many communities. Dowry practice can be considered as transfer of paternal property, gifts and money at the marriage of the daughter. Communities believe that dowry brings prosperity and security to the bride. Depending on how huge the dowry the girl is treated. Ultimately the poor families find it tough to marry off their daughters. Even after paying huge dowry they the young girls are brutally beaten, murdered, driven to suicide by blaming or they demand for more money. Apart from this if a woman



dies without giving birth to a male child, then her husband has to return the dowry to his wife's family. This is done because the ransom was the price tagged to the woman. Which reveals that society considers women as commodities and not individual being?

Another assault that women face is rape. Rape is a type of sexual assault which is very common these days. Here the sexual penetration carried out against a person without consent. This brutal act is carried out through physical force, coercion and abusive authorities. Rape by strangers is less common these days. Women who have been raped in never considered a human individual in the society. The society including their family believes that the woman is responsible and not the man. According to World Health Organization the victims of rape suffer from sexual disorder, depression, chronic pain, psychosomatic disorder, unwanted pregnancy and many more. Later they suffer traumatic stress and finally choose death. Domestic violence is also another evil that proves family and its values no longer a part of humanitarian concern. Here the violence happens between intimate or family relationships as attempt to gain or maintain power and control over others in terms of power or material possession.

Acid attack is a vicious crime involving the throwing a corrosive substance on the face or body Acid attack is also known as acid violence or vitriol age, it has emerged as a brutal act that shows the gravity of the ongoing atrocities and human right violation where the acid is thorn or poured on faces or other body parts of the victim. The atrocious crime of acid violence can be seen many countries; however, it is more prevalent in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Cambodia. Acid attackers generally target young girls with the intension of disfiguring the victim. "The intensity of burning depends upon what type of acid was used in crime. Generally, criminals use Hydrochloric acid, Nitric acid and Sulphuric acid to attack women". (Sinha, Acid attack on women in India). The main reason behind commission of the brutal act of acid throwing are many, namely rejection of love or marriage

proposal, refusal to pay dowry rejection of sexual advances or family disputes. Acid attacks result into severe physical, Psychological socio-economic consequences and make the life of the victim worse than death. Acid attack is a complex and multi-dimensional problem that makes it very difficult for the survivors to return. Acid attack in women is a burning issue in the present scenario. It is the most heinous form of violence against women.

India is one of the countries with the highest acid attacks in the world. “Reports as well as the Justice Verma Committee report admit that the heinous crime of acid attacks has a specific dimension in India.” (Goswami, A Review of Literature On Acid Attack in India. p2). Acid attack in India like Bangladesh, have a gender aspect in them: analyses of news reports revealed at least 72% of reported attacks is on female victim. There are 400-500 acid attacks happening in India. Among the acid attack survivor in India 85% of victims are women. The consequences of these attacks include blindness, abnormal, scarring which destroys the functionality of the face or body. Post-traumatic stress disorder rate has increased to 32.9% in India in the last five years. In addition, victims suffer excruciating pain due to their injuries. How dangerous acid attack can be? “The intensity of burning depends on the type of acid used in the crime.

It was found that none of the victims were mentally sound, all were depressed, anxious, insomniac, etc. some were anxious and depressed as they lost their vision; hence, they considered themselves as a burden on the family. 1.9% lost their job, 5.8% were ostracized by the society, 3.8% of cases lost their married life due to acid attack and 5.7% of cases attempted suicide. (Acid attack on women: A new face of gender-based violence in India. p84)

In some cases, jealousy of these perpetrators has crossed to such extent that they throw or pour acid over the genital region. These cases were also associated with the sexual assault. Physical damages are repairable but the damages which are inflicted over emotions of

the victim, completely-destroyed the hopes and dreams of her innocent mind. Acid attack is a deadly nuisance against 'her' alluring appeal.

Evolution of Indian cinema progresses parallel with the West. Violence against women has made resurgence Indian cinema. Indian cinema is known for its rich cinematic tradition and is recognized for its global commercial appeal. Indian cinema is one of the oldest world cinemas, and the largest industry in terms of its production. The new set of Indian cinema highlights the strength of acid attack survivors. Chhapaak is a Bollywood-drama. Chhapaak is based on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agrawa. The movie stars Deepika Padukone in lead role. The story develops in Delhi. The film revolves around Malathi (Deepika Padukone) who is attacked who is attacked by the corrosive substance on a street in New Delhi, in 2005. From there the story takes a complete turn to her personal as well as social sufferings that she has to face as an acid attack victim. Finally, Malathi decides to work for a foe an NGO who fights against acid attack violence. There she tries to rebuild her life and works for the upliftment of other acid attack victims. Throughout the story she only intention was no girl should undergo similar trauma as hers. The rest of the plot revolve around how she triumphs against all odds and brings her culprits in front of justice.

Another movie that has fragmented the conventional formula of Mollywood industry is the movie Uyare. The movie stars Parvathy in lead role. "Pallavi Raveendran is an aspiring pilot and is in love with Govind, who is highly possessive about her. She gets into an aviation academy with dreams to fly high". She finds it difficult to strike a balance between her passion and love. Her life and dreams come under trial when Govind takes his revenge on her by attacking her acid. The rest of the movie revolves around her survival story.

Literature has always witnessed the role of women evolving through ages. Even today most of the published writers were men and the portrayal of women in literature was without doubt biased. In the ancient world literacy was strictly limited to women. However, their

contributions were more towards folk songs and stories. During the Victorian era men dominated the land and women were treated as physically weak commodities and nothing less than house hold commodities. Speaking on the depiction of women in Indian context, it was freedom-fighters, educationist and activist. Mahadevi Verma who is a renowned poet in Hindi became the torchbearer of Hindi poetry on women issues wrote the struggles of a woman in India. More recently the contemporary popular fiction Indian writers like Chetan Bhagat and Anita Nair have showcased the new women in their book.

## Chapter-1

### Reshma: The scapegoat-A glance into her tragic life

Taniya is a CEO of a non-profit organization called Make Love Not Scars. She has her background in business management from Management University, Singapore Management University and has previously worked in a technology startup in Malaysia. She has then return to India to help rehabilitee acid attack survivors. Her organization has raised almost 2 cores of acid attack survivors through crowd funding alone and has been the only organization to win the CNBC TV-18 Indian Business Lead Award of the year. She is the co-author of the book, “Being Reshma”, a memoir of an acid attack survivor “Who Took the world by Storm”. According to Taniya Singh the most difficult part was comparing her life with Reshma and realizing how cruel the world can be to women. According to her she had a sheltered life with comfort and this journey helped her to understand that privilege come with responsibility. While Taniya was seventeen, she was worried about things like exams, future and pimple. While Reshma was worried about how she would survive. Taniya turned to her knowing the fact that it was challenging to understand what Reshma went through and hence she wanted to protect her from repeating the most horrific memories she harbored. I do want to make her go through the journey and so I turned to her. Contrary to the popular belief, change comes from the grass root, not from the top down.

This book exemplifies that, and each can understand how one can contribute towards making this world a better place. “Through this book writer truly believes that it is a true journey of millions of survivors of gender-based abuse. This book hits close to home for many, yet survivors are afraid of speaking out. By putting the face to acid violence this book tries to inspire those women who are stuck in violence and abusive relationships. This book is a true epitome on harsh realities that women face in India.” (Bisth. My Book Aims to Empower All Those Who Face Abuse: Reshma Qureshi) Being Reshma can bring about

change in once mind and society. It's true that scars however small cannot be worn out with pride. Let it be Caesarian section, most of us try to hide it. Now it's time but to react against the social odds that women face. In this present scenario acid attack is a common crime that occurs not only in India but around the globe. In December 2018, Tania Singh, CEO of Make Love Not Scars, released the book Being Reshma, which she had written about Reshma Qureshi whom she met at Make Love Not Scars foundation. According to Tania it was meeting with Reshma made her to work on her story of both suffering and survival as an acid attack victim. Both Tania and Reshma have a lot to say when it comes to society and law. This book not just carries the story of Reshma but it's an outcry for change and the need to implement the necessary laws to ban the counter sale of corrosive substance in market. So far the book has a greater acclaim among the reader not just in India but worldwide. The money earned from the sale of this book is invested for the treatment and upliftment of the acid attack victims.

Reshma Qureshi is an Indian model, vlogger and anti-acid activist. In India she is the face of Make Love Not Scars. Her foray into modeling in the United States came when she walked the catwalk for Archana Kochhar at the 2016 New York Fashion Week. Reshma Qureshi's story is a must read. Her story puts a face to those countless survivors who live with scars within the lives. Hence the book aims to empower all those who face abuse and violence in all form. Reshma Qureshi is the face of Make Love Not Scars Campaign in India. Reshma's story of suffering and survival is also a wonderful triumph of the human spirit, highlighting this young woman's remarkable determination to turn her tragedy and despair into a powerful movement for Change-Sir Richard Branson. Reshma Qureshi's strength and determination to reclaim her life and in doing so, to become a beacon of hope is truly Inspirational-John Swinney. Being Reshma is a powerful story of courage and perseverance.

Reshma Qureshi was born the youngest daughter of a taxi driver from Eastern Mumbai, India. Reshma Qureshi was youngest in the family and was her father's favorite. They lived in a two-bedroom apartment that housed all ten members of the family. She studied commerce at school. Later she left Mumbai lived with her parents in Allahabad. That day of her life can be addressed as "When it rains, it pours". She was attacked in Allahabad on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2014. Her sister Gulshan's husband was the perpetrator. Gulshan was her eldest sister. She was physically abuse him and her in-laws and they never gave her food. Reshma and her parents were outnumbered on knowing how violent Jamaluddin's family was, "My father didn't wish to put her in further harm" (Being Reshma.p.60). When her father was told of the situation, he brought Gulshan back home. She had two kids and the eldest boy Saufi was admitted to a school nearby, but one day Jamaluddin kidnapped Saufi from the school. After that incident Reshma' father filed a case on Jamaluddin. On 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014, at the age of seventeen, Qureshi was attacked with sulfuric acid by her estranged brother-in-law and two other assailants when she was travelling to the city of Allahabad for and Alim exam. The attack was not aimed at her sister because they knew that spoiling Reshma's life can be more painful for parents and family. He caught Reshma in her hair and the other two pinned down her hands down she was helpless. No one stops them from this brutality, they threw sulfuric acid on her face and body. According to her "The men rushed towards me, grabbed me. Pour acid on my face. Soon I started to burn like a live corpse. The acid ate through the skin and aimed for my bones, but I could not quell the fire in her heart" (Being Reshma.p.72).

After chaos she was taken to a private clinic, immediately her mother came. Her mother cried in horror that she could not bear her daughter's state, she then tried to hold her face in hand and rubbed her face with her dupatta, even the piece of cloth fell apart "Don't do that, it will only make the acid run deeper". Meanwhile the entire family came and along with them police officials came and drafted a FIR. By this time Reshma was weak and frail.

According to her our system of law never holds support or respect to commoners. Finally, with all pain she raged out “Stop this madness.... Stop it I am dying, I can’t see, my eyes, my eyes .... Kill me now, kill me (Being Reshma.p.84). She was ranting like a manic from then. Being a local clinic, the facilities were limited so; she was carried to a better hospital in town. From here Reshma addresses herself as “A Dead, Rotten Rodent”. She was then admitted into a government hospital in Allahabad. There things went stark, that Reshma stopped talking and she felt that her death wish returned as she could not see anything around her, for her now vision was hazy colors and shape. It was then Gulshan gave her a glass of water, Reshma tried to drink but then she realized that her labia’s were melted like hot glue. She then pushed away glass violently and pure rage swept through her and she realized that the worst kind of animal god has created is humans. From here the official treatment began, the doctor asked the nurse to remove her cloths, even though it was a procedure Reshma felt humiliated. Doctor then came to her and continued to spray isotonic saline water on her face to dilute the acid and prevent it from seeping further into layers of her skin and bones. They injected several painkillers into her body but did nothing. Once the doctor was done a sudden pain had spread all over her body. Later another doctor came to spray her mouth and throat with water and kept asking her to expand her mouth wide open. Later she was worn soft mammal suit to cover nakedness. Over 90% of burnt victims die on the spot or end up dying from infection.

Another painful experience that she presents is the removal burnt skin. Nurses would check her wounds with a sharp tool to measure the depth of contaminated skin and slowly daze at dead skin, pulling off whatever they could with tweezers and forceps, to that wet dressing is applied and left to dry so, whole lot of dead skin will come out next day. The process was lengthy and painful. Sometimes a tug of the tweezers was making her whole-body jerk with agony and its pain would shoot up wild, to survive this she clenches her teeth



ridge or bite the sides of her tongue. Her parents waited anxiously every for the doctor to come and check her dressing and ask routine questions to ensure there is no infection. Even doctor too had a lot of questions: do you have fever? Are there any white discharges coming from your wounds or foul smell?

The blood and excretion from my forehead would continuously drip into her dress which made right eye moist hence they religiously medicated it with some eye drops. Now at this point Reshma realized the physical torture she is been through, she says she want a deep sleep, but there was commotion all around. Apparently, the cartilage of her forehead became exposed, all her skin had fallen off and the bloody inside of forehead were staring back at them. This was the extreme and harsh reality of physical torture. “Soft tissues burn range in severity from minor skin reddening to serious life- threatening injuries that require multiple surgeries and months of physical therapy”. (Deanna, Security Disability Benefits)

After several months of treatment, they left back home. She still had difficulty in eating and she still had nasogastric tube installed of nose and the nurse has taught her mother to administer medicines through milk and fruit juices. Doctor advised that let her sleep throughout the journey hence I was administered heavy sedatives. The journey to the railway station was a nightmare according to her. Her family had surrounded her to create a safety circle and guided her in arms, she was completely exhausted, in tears and breathing heavily and she thought she will faint. Throughout the journey her mother administered her medicines.

One of the nurses Soni has informed Reshma’s about some danger. That is apparently Two I long black abaayas had approached the nurse in both the general ward and the ICU, enquiring about a Reshma Qureshi. The nurse became suspicious because under the abaayas it was men and not women and the nurse tried to block the path, but they grabbed the nurse and slapped her. The nurse informed this because they resembled Jamaluddin’s nephew.

Reshma and her family were very sure that they came to kill Reshma for filing FIR against Jamaluddin. While these men roamed free, Reshma and her family is still in danger. So, the only way they can get out of this is by creating a national media outcry. From then her story was all over the news and every daily for weeks, until the police the police were pressured to take swifter action. Later her brother-in-law and the assailants were arrested after the attack. She felt suicidal for a short period of time as she was left scarred on her face and arms; she lost her right eye completely. After healing she became the voice of those how are been assaulted. The book can be considered as a significant achievement.

## Chapter-2

### Reshma: The sufferer-An analysis of her traumatic life

A central theme of contemporary literary trauma theory asserts that trauma creates the speechless fright that divide or destroys identity. However, a discursive dependence upon a single a psychological theory of trauma produce homogenous interpretation of the divorce representation the trauma novel and the interplay that occurs between language, experience memory an place, novels represents this description between the self and other by carefully describes the pace of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural history embedded in the landscape that define the characters identity the meaning of trauma experience. There is and underlining connection to those that enjoy literature. Every writer writes above painful past, it's more broadly a part of psychology and concealing the actual part in English. Its connection to English is more due to the fact writers, poets and others how has painful childhood past. "Trauma theory" denotes vibrant past, inter disciplinary past, of western scholarships since the 1980s through cross-fertilization between phycology and humanities. (Shraddha. What is "trauma theory" in English literature)

The pain interferes with their daily lives. Studies have shown reduced memory bias in trauma-exposed participants that has been associated with the presence of post-traumatic stress disorders. Studies have also shown that a good functioning reward system is positively related to post-traumatic growth and negatively related to post-traumatic stress. Works had been done on the experience and the effects of post-traumatic stress and the factors promoting post-traumatic growth among the female acid attack survivors in India. In some cases, the

victim loses their ability to listen, making them forever deaf. When the acid enters windpipe and food pipe it leads to fatal diseases like mouth ulcer. Many deaths have been reported after acid attacks, if the burns are very deep the face becomes scarred and ugly and the skin becomes sagging. Permanent marks are left over on the face and body of the victim wherever acid is thrown. After the burns are treated, the victim needs sessions of plastic surgery to look better. These sessions of surgery need huge amount of money that can cost up to 10-15 lakhs. Here NGOs can play a great role by helping these poor victims. It is not possible for every victim to afford such costly treatments. The reality in many a time is “Her” compensation that is promised to her only remains in paper. Those who survive the acid attack face several social, physical, mental tortures. The women at this point lose her self- confidence and self-respect. Even the children and women fear the ugly faces of the victim and keep distance. The pain they go through is impossible to imagine. The victims cannot socialize people. Hence in-short the victims of acid attack lose her right to live. In addition to all these the expenses of her treatments shatter her economically on the other hand the criminals enjoy free life on bail or relieved after a small imprisonment.

According to Reshma they could have poured a flask of hot water, and then it could have lasted only for a fraction of seconds. They treated her like animal, pushed her to the ground and poured an offensive liquid on her face and chest. Those moments were strange, terrific, unnatural and inhumane, she screamed wild in pain as she was on fire. The pain shivered her spine. The first she noticed was her niqab melting off her face, then the smell of burning flesh and she crawled in dirt like a rabid animal. “Acid is a corrosive substance that can even burn through metal and I only made up of flesh and bones.” (Being Rehma.p.76). According to her the initial sensation was that of drowning ice as her mind was in such a delirium. The acid began to eat her face, the pain shot through her body. The acid was eating through the layers of skin and they aimed at her bones. “Even the slightest stir of air from

people passing by caused me unimaginable pain.” (What makes her so special? An acid attack survivor writes how a callous media system failed her). Her vision turned foggy. On the narrow street stood several people but none tried to stop the attackers.

Acid burns are traitorous companions. They hurt and burn an individual in a manner that makes you give up on your will to live. Like an abusive relationship all believe that attack wasn't bad. “Apart from the fact that I was in pain, my eyesight was compromised and my skin was covered in blisters, we took consolation in the fact that I wasn't scared beyond recognizable.” (Being Reshma.p.96). If the acid enters the eyes of the victim, she loses her eyesight. I did not notice it at the time, but silent tears kept pouring out of my eyes. “My eyes had swollen shut; my face was blistering with boils” (Being Reshma.p.83). Ugly, disconnected thoughts began to invade her mind that is “My own sister's husband has attacked me with acid.” He had wanted to attack my sister, his own wife. Could we trust anyone in this world? I had to suffer the pain alone and then I die alone as well. “May be my family would leave me stranded in this horror and simply walk away, maybe I have been enough of burden already “(Being Reshma.p.116).” She once screamed at her family saying Abba and your decision has ruined my life, I am paying for your stupid decision because you could not find a decent husband for your daughter” (Being Reshma.p.116). Words are dangerous, and very powerful indeed. Scars caused by words create lesions that sometimes don't heal in an entire lifetime.

She was admitted in an isolated ward and its bathroom did not have any mirrors either, during these isolated days she never bathed, it is the nurse who gave her sponge baths. Now Reshma explains her body's stench. That is her skin was emitting a horrible acrid odor and her burnt hair had a terrible smell as burning hair has a distinctive stench that clings for weeks. According to her visitors came with their nose and mouth closed as she smelt Ammonia, charred meat .... That remained her current stage of her life. By the end of the week her skin

erupting into painful blisters and her left eye began to shrivel into itself, she lost her ability to blink or open her eye wide, from this I knew that she left eye's vision was completely lost. But one-day doctor announced that Reshma is permanently blind in her left eye and the reason is, each day the blood that constantly dripping into her eyes had become infected and that spoiled her eyes.

She then remembers her mid-teens. She was more like a tomboy but in her fifteens, she began to embrace her feminine side even fall in love with it. She loved putting makeup and buying pretty jewelry. She then recollects her good old days when she was sweet sixteen. Like any other girl she loved going to local beauty parlor and get threading done for the first time, then half of her eyebrows had been sliced off and then screaming at Nargis her elder sister for recommending such a stupid place. She was so embarrassed that I decided I would be fully veiled in niqab and abaaya, from head to toe her eyebrow grow normal.

However, just a year later she was with no hair, and eyebrows. This thought plagued her in despair and she began blaming herself and her destiny. According to her Jamaluddin knew that she was very concern with her beauty and realized it would be the ultimate act of 'revenge. In between these mental tortures she is saddled with physical pain and trauma, here she explains about her surgery. Here she explains her skin grafting that is they take some skin from region like groin region, the most suitable skin to adapt face. "She said NO.... can you imagine the pain? She won't be able to walk." (Being Reshma.p.132) suddenly a deep sorrow settled over her chest and came down that she had no future. "I was haunted with the thoughts like, rest of my life will be in hospital, what exactly would my life be like, no one would marry me, I won't be able to complete my education, I would never get a job, I am supposed to remain behind closed doors, this was the first time that I jealousy for the regular girls, I haven't seen any mountains or snow in my life..... For her the whole future was an endless black ocean. She then investigates her own body and face and wonder how bad I really

looked. Why had no one shown me a mirror yet” (Being Reshma.p.132). Reshma saw herself for the first time since the attack. She knew her face was damaged, but this face in mirror wasn't mine was her response in shock, she felt like a strange creature, all the features are melted off like a melted candle/then she focused on her jaws, teeth, cheeks were coarse and hard, nose had exposed cartilage she added that she looked scary.

There was a breaking point ever since the acid attack she harbored a million of traumatic thoughts. Now she only wanted to be alone but even then, people around talked about her attack and she was the victim and they still continue to make relive my dark, scary path. I was trying hard to fight and forget.

## Chapter-3

### Reshma: The Fighter-A reading of her victorious life

This young lady Ria Sharma was in the process getting paper works done for her NGO registration. She had no idea Make Love Not Scars, all she tried to do back then was help the case that came her way in whatever capacity she could. Ria wrote to individual donors and set up crowdfunding website based in California. She regularly made updates in social media that made more people aware about Make Love Not Scars. Post-acid attack entitled. According to her Reshma needed surgeries before anything else and Ria was busy arranging it. Finally, on 8 October Ria fixed an appointment for Reshma with Dr Jain in his clinic. Being a surgeon, his skills were supposed to be extraordinary and he had awarded some of India's highest civilian award. Reshma's pre-attack and post-attack photographs were attached. She has just realized what exactly is on the campaign page along with the story, in India funds were raised through door-to-door calls and donation boxes were placed in pulpits. However, the rise of crowd funding was slowly levelling, and it is a playing field for those new to the nonprofit field with no network and resources. To Reshma she made it clear that she run less than a hand full of crowd funding, but within a short period foundation could collect handful of donations online. The first appointment of Reshma with doctor changed her life in many ways, Reshma's perspectives of life changed in many ways as she walked in through the clinical doors Reshma's mother talked to a girl, who was also an acid attack survivor but one thing that Reshma noticed was her concept of life and the way she handled it. For Reshma life was never the same after the attack, for her life is lifeless but for the girl life was live alone with joy and sorrow. Here Reshma compares herself and that strange girl



that is her wounds were terrible than hers, her nose had been like Reshma's fist, she talked to people cracked jokes was ready to open her life to anyone.

Another individual who influenced Reshma was Laila, she too is an acid attack survivor who looked ugly and scary according to Reshma, but it is unacceptable for an acid attack survivor to address another acid attack survivor that way says Reshma. Dr Jain asked Reshma to move close to the disk and said that Lila has underwent nearly 45 surgeries. From here Reshma compared her face with Laila her nose was completely burnt off and that's why it was big after reconstruction, her entire face has grafted, and she lost both her ears. In fact, Reshma felt her life is still normal and she had a good support system in the form of family, Ria Sharma. On 14 October Reshma was Admitted in the hospital a private donor was ready to help her. On the surgical bed Reshma laid lonely and scared Dr Jain arrived with his medical team. As he interred all were silent, his entire team walked behind him, and he side today we will fix the upper eye lid of your right eye, upper lip, nasolabial region and tee columellate. Gradually she started coming out as an enlightened individual. Few days after Ria and Reshma met at the clinic. Reshma discovered that shared a beautiful bond. Two years later Reshma another woman and it is with this woman she shared her memoir. Tania who came to Make Love Not Scars is the current CEO of this Make Love Not Scars. With these two ladies my life turned triumph. "I believe change is gradual that one never notices it when it creeps into our own life. Reshma being an eighteen-year-old girl had her view about this world that is according to her in another country, he biggest worry would be passing her exam and not being attacked with acid, rape or killed" (Being Reshma.p.170-171). When she gets better, she would like the whole world to know her story. On hearing this Ria convinced her to give small interviews in printed media as well to some local television channel. Reshma agreed with Ria because she too wanted to channel her anger towards making positive change after meeting Rai and other acid attack survivors, she discovered the

numerous possibilities, she said is to every opportunity that allowed her voice to be heard. She looked forward to life. Every time when she saw her name in the papers or watch a clip in television interview, she was filled with sense of pride, sense of purpose and nothing else in life. No education, no career, no husband, no children, barely a face. To the world her voice was newfound convictions.

One day Reshma received a phone call from Ria it was a surprise for her that is the huge advertising company Ogilvy and Mather, want to do pro bon campaign for Make Love Not Scars. That moment she realized Ria's words were coming true the whole world is going to know her and about acid attacks. For her this was her chance. Make Love Not Scars had just been registered, no one has heard about it. Between 2012 and 2014, India had witnessed a staggering 250% increase in the reported number of acid attacks. On 19 July 2013, the supreme court of India directed all states and union territories to regulate the open sale of acid, as it was shocking to witness such arise in acid attack despite the regulation. The first title of the campaign was #Beauty is brave. The official hash tag was to be #the beauty tips and five videos were launched. Next Make Love Not Scare focused more on vision rather than our ideals the campaign was thus titled #End acid sale and the official hash tag would be #Beauty tips by Reshma. Things were falling into place and they released the following videos: Beauty tips for Reshma: how to get a perfect red lip, how to apply eyeliner, how to get rid of dark spots. She concludes by saying "See.... how easy to get rid off dark spots? As easy as scaring some ones face with acid. Just open the bottle and throw. This is the reason why, everyday a girl becomes a victim of an acid attack and help enforce the ban and open sale of acid. (How to get rid of dark spots naturally, Brave Love Make Love Not Scars0:35-0:57). At this point she realizes that she had left home with the purpose of getting education and today she leaves home to impart education. The wheels were turning within a few months her role in life changed altogether. On for shoot. A member of the Ogilvy and Mather team

had found a perfect studio for the shoot, upstairs in the room with no windows were background was pink which added a feminine look. One might expect that the image of acid attack survivors should be a violation of social media community guideline. According to Reshma our face is our reality and nothing angers her more than when people say it is too much an emotional burden, she says such people are weak and perpetrators of the system that compels us to cover our scars implying that we should with the injustice of our situation, while the perpetrators go scot free. Finally, on 4 September videos were launched, the entire crew and Reshma was waiting for results, they kept their fingers crossed, by midnight, all the excited chatter died down and fatigue from having tirelessly worked over the past few days made them all sleep in exhilaration. The videos went viral and trending on twitter and Facebook, over 1 million people viewed the video on YouTube alone. Indians, Americans, Russians, Australians, Europeans watched and shared our videos worldwide. During the first five days of the social media campaign, our website crashed a total of six times. This followed Reshma to a chain of interviews both online and offline and her entire family stayed throughout, all excited and happy to see their beloved in this state, for her she felt she is a blessed soul.

By the end of September 2015, the entire world has listened to them and # End acid sale triggered global conversation. September 2015 changed her destiny forever, both Reshma and Ria had triumphed against the odds together. She made her marks as an anti-acid-sale activist after their humble launch and the insane success of the #End acid sale campaign. Then she agreed to all the interviews which came to her, showed up for every photoshoot and spoke to every activist, government officials, and non-profit partner Make Love Not Scars worked with it. On 25 January 2016, a globally recognized channel reached out and expressed their intention to shoot a short film on her life and Make Love Not Scars. So, finally in February the director and producer flew in from London. But Dr Jain was not ready

to leave her for shoot that is according to him Reshma needed more surgeries and not films. The reason for this decision was that the crew did not agreed to his plan of shooting Reshma's live surgery. Meanwhile, the producer had gone back into Dr Jains room. She waited at the doors and could hear Dr Jain shouting at the producer telling" surgery was important for her more than film". The fact that troubled Reshma was her doctor had put his own career before her health outraged her. From then he never picker her phones call or responded to her phone calls. She concludes this with confidence. While my journey has had and well continued to have dark moments, I am thankful that it has, for the most part, been beautiful, honest and victorious. She told Rai that she wishes not to have more surgeries for some time and wish to focus more on Make Love Not Scars. Between April 2016 and September 2016, an important collaboration started to take place between Make Love Not Scars, FTL Moda and Reshma. "After the attack, Reshma teamed with Make Love Not Scars and created informational videos describing India's problem with acid attack on how they affect life of victims. The videos were noticed by FTL Moda, a fashion production company hired disabilities to appear in several fall/winter 2015 shows." (Elle Dube, Teen acid attack survivor will walk in New York fashion Week)

One day when Reshma returned home, she saw Kate aunty and Rai on the couch. They asked her to sit next to her. Then Rai on her laptop typed of something on Google, Reshma felt as if the ladies were playing a prank on her as they sometime do. Then a bunch of images popped, she saw beautiful, stunning aerial shots of skyscrapers, she shook her head, but nothing came to her mind. According to her she did not really know about the world outside her home. Then they repeated her to guess again but poor Reshma could not make it. Finally, Ria explained "Get this there is a big fashion show that take place in New York, the place I just showed you. So.... In September, she continued, her voice raising an octave higher with every word spoken, 'you will be going to America and walking on this

show (Being Reshma 203). On hearing this her heart raced for minute, she could not believe Ria's words. She was excited and disbelief coursed through her veins and hid her face in hands. Finally, Reshma flew to New York and she was supposed to be there till 12<sup>th</sup> September, her big day was so close than she could imagine. She never walked the runway before, a choreographer guided her down the ramp and taught me how to place her, when to stop and turn and when to stop and pause for good photographs. Finally, it was her turn. choreographer her a green light to move. She took a deep breath, remembered why she was here and stepped up one the ramp. #Take beauty back "this was not Qureshi's first time standing up as a survivor of acid attack". The next morning, she woke up to find her face splashed across New York Times and New York Post. Her debut at the New York Fashion week made headlines across the world and was reported in prominent dailies like Buzz feed, India Today, Elle and many more. Once again, she has triggered the government so law could be amended and enforced; she spoke to the masses and demanded acceptance be treated just like everyone else.

Now all she did after her attack was survive and that made all difference. According to her "if she had succeeded in killing herself, then none would be holding this book in your hands. She would have never walked The New York Fashion Week and Make Love Not Scars would probably be going in another direction altogether. "I will tell my story because it makes a difference (Being Reshma 222). The extraordinary story of an acid-attack survivor, who took the world by storm.

## CONCLUSION

Reshma waited for long time to share her story within the world. For her the greatest wish was that it lends courage to those who suffer like her. All though this book chronicles the journey of one acid attack survivor, Reshma Qureshi. It also acknowledges each and every survivor who has been through and acid attack. As they say, “A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths are a statistic”. There are thousands of survivors being attacked with acid every year. Some survive, while many get succumb to this gruesome crime. Each of us should strive hard to prevent people from being inflicted with this terrible pain. Reshma your courage in narrating such an incredible story is truly inspiring. For Reshma journey was not hers alone. She never believed in destiny, but now the world gave her comfort. She had lost all her faith in this world after her attack. She only wanted to die and blame world for its violence. But now this same world led here towards people who made it their life’s work to help her. There are women who have suffered fates much worse than hers. So, live to tell a tale, while many have succumbed to their destined deaths, she has now made it her live work to speak up for those who can’t because, she would not want her worse enemy to suffer the way she did.

This book inspires ever individual to change once own community, because her story is not hers alone, it’s for millions of people who are frightening oppression several incidents in the book are heart breaking and jolt one out of the comfortable bliss of ignorance and shelter existence the incidents of violence, that her sisters experienced at the hands of her in-laws preceding the actual attack. Reshma describes her own feeling upon seeing the condition of her 2-year-old niece Riza. When she is told about her mother’s illness and the way she narrates it, was a heart breaking one, the incident where she narrates the story of a fellow

patient who had been beaten senseless by her family for conceiving girl child was another example of the heights of depravity. The book is an extremely personal narrative of Reshma's growing up years. The conventional tone helps keep it light and friendly. It was true bliss as it gathered the outcome of her interaction with Taniya Singh, co-writer of this book. Both went well with tone conventional on subject that are tragic.

Several laws and schemes ,such as restriction on sales of acid ,harsher punishment for the perpetrator and free access to health care facilities to acid attack victims have been laid by our law makers ;however ,the main focus should be restricted to prevention several measures ,such as NGOs , electronic , print and social media campaigns should be adapted to change the orthodox socio-culture norms which are justifying the violence against women .Laws have been made to relieve the victims with financial help in the form of compensation .Uttar Pradesh government came ahead named Rani Lakshmi Bai Mahila Samman Kosh Yojana which help the victims by not only giving the compensation but also provide free treatment without cost limits. These schemes also offers compensation to the dependence of the victims who died .So now laws made schemes .So ,what remains ?What we have to do ,the strengthening of the implementation on demands the role of each one of us if we see over the counter sale of acid .We should complain to the authorities and authorities need to take strict action .prevention is better than cure .Physical damage are repairable but the damages ,which are inflicted over emotions of the victim, completely destroy her identity and self esteem

Make Scars Not Love is an Indian non-profit organization based in new Delhi. The organization works with acid attack survivors and was found by Ria Sharma. It assists with a complete rehabilitation of acid attack survivors with financial, legal, and educational helps. As of November 6, 2016 the organization has helped approximately 70 survivors across India. On August 30 , 2015 , Make Love Not Scars released a series of beauty tutorials calling for a complete ban over the counter sale of acid . one of the most successful

campaigns orchestrated by Make Love Not Scars was #End Acid Sale, which encouraged people to lobby the India government to ban the open sale of acid through stronger implementation of Poisons Act. (The Acid Attack survivor who refused to hide. Art and Culture). This campaign #End Acid Sale was in collaboration with the creative agency Ogilvy and Mather [is a New York city based British advertising agency]. The face of the campaign is the acid attack survivors Reshma Qureshi and she is seen given beauty tips through a series of tutorials on applying lipsticks, foundation, eyeliner and how to get rid of dark spots. The campaign #End Acid Sale went viral and went extensively in India and international news. It was being a journey that Make Love Not Scars is the most recognized entity supporting acid attack victims over the world. Today Tania Singh, the CEO of Make Love Not Scars is the reason for this book. Mae Love Not Scars, an organization like no other, with all love and gratitude.

Initially, it might seem that her dream is no more. Reshma Banoo Qureshi tries to get make over as an attempt to cover her scar. Later she highlighted it simply as girls like getting make overs. Reshma is seen smiling in the video throughout her makeup and claim that the one she did would make her look prettier than Katrina Kaif. Just like any young girl. Reshma Qureshi is fond of certain products such as mehndi, nail polish but her ultimate goal is to work as an NGO and help traumatized victims. She's is adorned with pretty clothes and jewelry. What really hit once mind is her message to the world: The young girl say that life is meant to be lived no matter what and beauty (make over) is not judged by face value.

Being Reshma also give a subtle idea about Indian society according to her world is meant violence and not harmony. Being a woman in her community is considered a sin. According to her in our society evilness prevailed that drag women into mere scape goats. Here she explains an anecdote: There was a woman who came to talk about a friend whose husband beat her -she refused to cut hair short after in-laws complained she was using too



much shampoo. After she would wash the dishes her in-laws would check how much soap she had used. She had no parents or siblings. This young woman was immediately abandoned (Being Reshma.p.56). According to Reshma that many women had no power over their own lives and that the only succor they had was derived from listening to stories from other women in similar state of misery. For them it was like finding comfort in their despair, and the more and the more stories they shared, the more courage they found in each other as sisters. In, India the capital New Delhi, is infamously known as the rape capital. After 16 December 2012, the entire world learned about a twenty-three-year old woman who was brutally gang-raped in a moving bus while returning home from the multiplex. Jyothi Singh, a physiotherapist, boarded the bus with a male friend. There were six other men, including the driver. All drunk. During the course of night, they beat her friend and knocked him unconscious; they took turns to rape her. The nation called her Nirbhaya, the fearless people erupted with rage at the crippled governance of our nation. A war must be waged. A much-needed war for women, for one half of our population. According to the national Crime Bureau all states in India are equally vulnerable to women crime. The only thing that comes out from the Nirbhaya episode is that women have come forward to report crime against them because they are more aware of their rights. But we still have a long way and need to do lot in the field of police reforms, law reforms, strict punishments, rape crises centers and public transport security. On the other hand, she also represents the harsh reality that how a family should give up their basic comfort to marry off their beloved daughters.

Role of media in stopping acid attack is crucial, media can play a very vital role in curbing acid attack. They show every bit off of the story were women has been a victim of an acid attack. Similarly, the media should cover exclusive and high light of the punishment given to the criminals and that fear in minds will keep them away from executing such plans. We receive so much information through different media. The coverage focuses on

describing the acid attacks and their aftermath in detail. These stories are often covered in a sensational way focusing on the altered appearance of the person subjected to corrosive power of acid. While acid attacks are often the result of violence against women. Women are made to feel responsible for having suffered an acid attack because they did not prevent the violence which occurred in an abusive relationship. This type of coverage can focus on describing exemptional results of acid attack. Several facial disfigurements is considered a disability under the Equality Act 2010.

Child marriage is a complex subject under Indian law. It was defined by the Child Marriage Restrain act in 1929, later the definition of child marriage was last updated by India with it's the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006. Girls who marry earlier in life are less likely to be informed about reproductive issue and because of this pregnancy related deaths increased. Another major issue is infant health; infant born mothers under the age of 18 are 60%are more likely to die in their first year. If not dead, then young girls are more likely to experience domestic violence in their marriage.

The first and the foremost thing that the Indian society needs to change its mentality towards judging women. For years, our society has been habituated of cutting wings of women. Today, the women are being progressive and she is strong enough to deny a proposal which she thinks is not good for her. This denial or rejection is taken as aggression of modern women bt some men and they develop a maniac attitude to take revenge just to satisfy them. Through the number of acid attacks have risen these recent times, women cannot sit at home due to fear of such attack. She should avoid meeting any such person alone who she thinks can harm her. Basically, she should be her own helper and should follow safety norms in her life if not society blame her and not the accused. An accurate estimate of the gender ratio of victims a perpetrator is so difficult to establish because many acid attack are not reported or recorded by authorities. According to study in The Lancet, there are no reliable statistics on

prevalence of acid attack in India. A 2007 literature review 24 studies in 13 countries over the past 40 years, covering 771 acid attack cases. According to Acid Survivors Trust International, 80% of acid attacks are one woman, in some region assaults perpetrated on female victims by males by the mentality. It is said that If I cannot have you no one shall. As in 2013, the three nations with the most noted incidence in acid Attacks-Bangladesh, India and Cambodia-were ranked 75<sup>th</sup>, 101<sup>st</sup> and 104<sup>th</sup>, respectively out of 136 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index, a scale that measures opportunities between men and women. Now focus should be on social change because we believe only laws cannot stop this crime because these offences are mainly linked to the victim's friend or relative. Hence ideas and concepts should change from family. It is through that one can gain lost humanity and fraternity

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