

The Hidden Secret: Woman Silence over Rape: A Study Based on a Movie Named Hush! Girls Don't Scream

Faezeh Shojaei¹, PhD Scholar

Department of Linguistics (K.I.K.S), University of Mysore, Mysore-India

Mohammad Gholamnia Roshan², PhD in English Literature

Osmania University, Hyderabad-India

Abstract: Rape is what it is and gets riched in its effect as it is not considered a 'crime' but a matter of great shame for women. Rape is supposed to not only physically hurt the woman but also is considered as an act that damages her 'honor' and that of her family or community. Since such factors of **honor and shame** continue to be attached to women's bodies, rape or any assaults against women will not stop. This paper is a report on the situation of women in the Third World. The work of **Pouran Derakhshandeh**; a movie named **Hush! Girls don't scream**, has represented that women are sentenced to tolerate such conditions which are interpreted for them by the community. In other words, extremely the women of the Third World have survived without a voice with which to speak their complaint. In fact they are the second sex. They have endured silence. As our society (Iran or any other Third World Society) is a moral society; evaluating the hidden subjects are never noted as vital, and instead of speaking, silence dominates and in some occasions, women have been obsessed by communities for speaking openly. But in Western societies, many of the victims prefer to talk about their problems before their hate and disgust pile up, even if the significance of the incidents are greater there in compare with Iran. Like Ms. Opera who is a victim of a father raping his daughter. Today we realize that women have restricted themselves with the wrong cultural and social attitudes which have been injected to their mind from childhood by family and community. This paper is an effort to remove that mistake.

Keywords: Rape, Woman Silence, honor and shame, female Pedophilia

An Overview of the Movie

Derkhshandeh has been making movies over the past four decades. Born in Kermanshah in western Iran in 1951, Derkhshandeh is taking the issues of woman through the cinema screen. She has made 12 feature-length **films**, and dozens of documentaries. Derkhshandeh says movies made by women for women studies issues related to women. This leading female director in Iran is not afraid of undertaking strict issues on the big screen. Pouran Derakhshandeh's movie, Hush! Girls Don't Scream! won Best Film at the Fajr International Film Festival. The story involves in the arguable subject of female pedophilia. It deals with intensely related and often ignored horror which dawns upon societies universally. She attracts our sharp focus on how the structure of a community steeped on conservatism and religious ideology might paralyze the rights and silence the scream for help from a vandalized section of such society. And regardless of the geographic, economic, religious or cultural divides, there appears to be a worrisome unanimity in the ways that these kinds of societies usually mismanage such incidents. It is really some sort of travesty that in the mode of chastity, honor and results of more potty excuses; almost all communities becomes a blind eye to this kind of inhuman violations even as they silence the desperate

screams of woman victims by playing a helpless, dumb and deaf viewers. As a result, we have a skewed cultural system that encourages the delinquents by mutilating their woman victims irrecoverably once and for all.

Shirin (played by Tanaz Tabatabayi) killed the building security guard who was raping a little girl one hour before her marriage ceremony. Shirin has a background of psychotherapy and ran away from her ceremony, and now she has broken the long wall of silence and revealed horrifying truth about the rape story in her childhood. Shirin stated that she committed her crime to save another little girl from being abused. This could be a solution to her defense, a claim that the murder was justified. But the court doesn't allow this crime to be so much as mentioned unless the other girl's parents agree to file a complaint. The second victim's father strictly rejects to do, for saving his **family's** "honor," because of what people in the bazaar might whisper behind his back. This is a summary of the movie, *Hush! Girls don't Scream...* The main message of the movie is that, as the people of a society believe that the subject of rape causes dishonor and it should be hidden, the level of such crimes will be increased. Enraging, deeply affective and lingering on long after the viewing, this movie makes a pitched scream to families and women around the world to wake up and take note of a ruinous silence in our societies!

As for the women, we should consider their position, their presence, not to their gender. A woman is not a tool; she is a human being with an excellent attitude. Men and women are equal. Sexuality is worthless. God has created all human beings equal. He hasn't created anything as a feminine way of thought or masculine way of thought. God has set up wisdom inside human beings, and it is the human thought that matters. Therefore, we should not believe in such separation between man and women and must value human beings and their dignity. It is probably not strange to anyone that, when a woman is raped in some areas of third world countries, it's considered her fault and she may be punished (even killed for it). It's probably not much less surprising that a girl who is harassed brings dishonor to her family, so that the family would cover it up rather than report it (Derakhshandeh, 2013).

Concept of Rape

Rape is the criminal offense of compelling someone to have sex with one by violence (Hornby, 2006). It is the crime of vigorously having sex with someone despite the person's desire (Chiedu, 2012). According to Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002), rape is an act of sexual violence that consists of intercourse without satisfaction or against someone being willing to involve in the act. These definitions as mentioned even though they seem to grab the popular concept of rape are not in themselves pervasive. It is stated that rape could even occur "Without the use of force" (Ayonrinde, 1984, p.36).

Thus, it is meant, that if for example an adult of any age intentionally deceives a child of a younger age for either marriage or sex with a tempting gift and the child after collecting same willingly give in for it with the adult, it is also said to be raped. This form of rape is considered as "A sex crime done by pathological men who were not able to control their own sexual desires" (<http://www.wikipediaencyclopaedia.com-anti-rape>).

By the above description, rape could basically be interpreted as having an illegal sexual intercourse with a person with or without the use of force in order to get sexual satisfaction. It is

similarly claimed that in any case whatsoever, when the rule of love is dishonored in any love making, whether it is within marriage, it is equally an unhealthy behavior equal to rape (Litchfield and Litchfield, 2012).

Social Stigma; the main reason for Women's Silence

The **societal stigma** attached with having been subject to sexual along with other kinds of gender-based assault is very strong in some areas of third world countries particularly in Muslim societies. Traditional, cultural and religious norms restrict women and girls from speaking openly regarding personal and private matters such as sexual violence and other kinds of violence against women. There seems to be a culture of silence about rape in such societies. The social stigma related to rape all over the world forces female victims to conceal rape assaults to protect themselves from shame and public embarrassment. Even parents of the raped victims usually are not comfortable to come out freely to report these kinds of events. Based on Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002), whenever a woman is raped and it turns into public notice, "She and her family are "ostracized" due to the dishonor associated with rape".

Feminist activists and researchers have always been considering the dynamics that prevent women from talking about their experiences. These kinds of studies highlight the sociopolitical nature of voice and silence. In this regard, feminist sociologist Shulamit Reinharz explains voice as "having the ability, the means, and the right to express oneself, one's mind, and one's will. If an individual does not have these abilities, means, or rights, he or she is silent" (Reinharz, 1994, p. 180). This conceptualization illustrates social strength structures that distinct some voices while eliminating others. As metaphors for privilege and oppression, to speak and be noticed is to have power above one's life. To be silenced is to have that power rejected. So silence is the symbol of weakness in our society. Thus, it is not unexpected that rape survivors usually keep silence about their experiences (George, Winfeld, & Blazer, 1992; Koss, 1985; McAuslan, 1998). Feminist researchers have always discussed that rape acts a dynamic function of strengthening women's weakness and "keeping women in their place" (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975; MacKinnon, 1987). Therefore, how can we expect women to break the silence about the event used to increase weakness? surprisingly, many women do achieve the strength to break this silence and speak out. Almost two-thirds of all rape survivors reveal the assault to at least one person (Golding, Siegel, Sorenson, Burnam, & Stein, 1989; Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003; Ullman & Filipas, 2001; Ullman, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). But, the results of speaking out are not always positive. So many researches have recorded negative social reactions from important persons and community systems. Negative social reactions from informal support providers contain both clearly negative reactions such as faulting or suspecting victims (Davis, Brickman, & Baker, 1991; Golding et al., 1989; Ullman, 2000) as well as well-intentioned support attempts that are nevertheless experienced as negative (e.g., encouraging secrecy, patronizing behavior) (Herbert & Dunkel-Schetter, 1992; Sudderth, 1998). Anywhere from one-quarter to three-quarters of survivors receive negative social reactions from at least one member of their informal support network (Campbell, Ahrens, Wasco, Sefl, & Barnes, 2001; Golding et al., 1989; McAuslan, 1998; Filipas & Ullman, 2001).

When rape survivors are subjected to victim-faulting acts or attitudes, the experience may feel like a “second assault” or a “second rape”, a phenomenon known as “secondary victimization” (Campbell, 1998; Madigan & Gamble, 1991; Martin & Powell, 1994; Williams, 1984). In many examples, these reactions are obvious as system personnel explicitly consider survivors responsible for the assault, suspect the honesty of survivors’ stories, or reduce the seriousness of the crime (Madigan & Gamble, 1991). To speak openly about the assault may therefore have harmful result for rape survivors as they are exposed to more harm at the hands of the most of people they refer for help. Thus, negative reactions can act a silencing function. Women who break the silence at the beginning and speak out about the assault may quickly revise this decision and prefer to stop speaking. Negative reactions like being faulted, being rejected to help or being told to stop reporting the assault may effectively quash rape survivors’ voices, giving them silent and weakness. Social stigma and family pressure can contribute to the shame experienced by woman victims of rape and sexual violence which in some cases can cause self-murder.

Challenge between Honor and Consequences of Rape

The subject of rape is both a physical and also a mental problem. It similarly has physiological, psychological, behavioral and social effects on the raped woman. According to Obasi (2007), “Rape leaves painful memories and lifelong consequences on the victim” (p.34). It causes stable harms for its victims. Rape similarly devalues as well as violates a woman victim. It has been observed that rape extremely hurts women. As Olufemi Kayode stated “Like stabbing a heart and leaving the knife there” (Odeh, 2013, p.20). In their opinion, Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002) believe that “If virginity is what makes women honorable, rape is an easy weapon to permanently damage them” (p.2). This means that a girl who has been so strict sexually as yet to maintain her invaluable virginity could miss that credit at once, without haggling as an outcome of rape. In Inuwa Sani’s idea, a Child Psychologist, the lesion that comes from this bitter experience is better to be imagined than explained. Alhassan (2013) implies the consequences in that way:

In the months following a rape, victims often have symptoms of depression or traumatic stress. They are more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs to control their symptoms. Nearly one-third have thoughts of suicide, and approximately 17 percent actually attempt suicide. Thirty percent of victims will go on to develop major depressive or post-traumatic stress disorders in their lifetime, long-time negative effects on sexuality and inability to form or maintain trusting relationships are common (p.3).

In addition, rape could have direct effect on the family in several modes. This occurs if the rapist or the raped contracts sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and AIDS, gonorrhoea, and syphilis among others that may evermore hurt their genital system, so rendering them infertility or leading to untimely death (Ferguson, 1998). Another fact is that rape may cause undesirable pregnancy, miscarriage, quitting babies or other kinds of child abuse and suicide (Nzeakor, 2002; Wasike, 1999).

Discussion

In contrast to other crimes like robbery and violation, rape woman victims must assert not only that the crime did really happen, but also they had no role in its incidence, so the case should not be the reason of shame and dishonor (Burt, 1980; Pollard, 1992; Ward, 1995). But, for most victims, no matter what they did or how they act, they are probably to be faulted for bringing shame and dishonor for their families. For some victims, this fault may be so hurting that they are effectively silenced by the negative responses they receive. Unfortunately, when rape victims are silenced by negative responses, their experiences and attitudes are covered and our ability to recognize the reasons and results of rape would be unclear. Therefore these silences prevent our strength to involve in social alteration. The primary stage in uncovering these hidden secrets may be to realize what the reason of victims' silence is.

It is found that rape victims are silenced because of negative attitudes such as blaming, shame, dishonoring, and uneven responses. However, particular responses seemed to be more usual from different family and society members. For instance, being faulted, receiving heartless responses, and experiencing ineffectual divulgence were especially common among victims who refer to family and formal community systems (especially the legal and medical systems). In fact, the victims concealed many of the cultural stories about rape that confirm shame and dishonor are the consequences of this event. Since support providers are not able to response these messages, the victims prefer to censor themselves and try to be silent about an experience which seems to be shameful and harms the honor (Jack, 1991).

Rape is an extremely affective and passionately debated action. It has been eroticized, criminalized, covered and revealed, disputed and condemned; and more importantly it presents no signs of compromise or termination. A few people concur on truly what it is, why it happens, and why it keeps happening. For women, it can be frightened as well as unimaginable, deeply known yet beyond explanation; it is an everlasting nightmare for women that have been raped which usually remains hidden secret. The silence of women's about rape is related with the shame and dishonor usually attached to the victim of this crime. Although, recently women, especially feminists, writing increasingly about and from a distinct woman's viewpoint on countless subjects (consist of rape), the credibility of women's opinions, interests, and indignations has and will continue to strengthen.

There are a small number broadly accepted comprehension of rape and the reason of its presence in society, which are indicated in the writings of Susan Brownmiller, Katie Roiphe, and Robin Warshaw. Based on Brownmiller, whose strong work *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* issued the springboard for further studies, rape "is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear" (Brownmiller, 15). This fear may remain in victim's long life and cause so many emotional and physical harms for her. Do we value women so little that we reject to believe them when they raise their voices against their own misery for being "raped"?

Conclusion

In some occasions, women have been oppressed by peoples around them for speaking out, **it's because they have a feeling of bringing dishonor for themselves and their families.** There are

some murders in the world named “chain murders”. Almost all of these murders will be discovered by police and the murderers and criminals will be punished. Why? Because there is a corpse, there is a track and clue of that crime and criminals, but what will happen to the murder of spirit? What’s the punishment of spirit murders of such women, like Shirin in the movie “Hush! Girls don’t scream”? Even with the punishment of such criminals can anybody compensate the consequences of the event? Unfortunately it takes years to discover such crimes. How it may occur, there are hundreds of rapes in such societies and even one woman doesn’t have the power to speak out and complain about that? What’s the reason? Because women are sacrificed for honor. Families cover up the crimes and in fact they become partner in such crimes, because they want to protect their honor. This matter causes that a woman, who is sexual harassed, tolerates humiliation, insult and hate and carries these pains on her shoulders in long life and tries to hide the event.

The problem is rooted in usual principle that has been murmured in all women’s ears from childhood to adolescence that Hush! Be silent, be quiet, girls don’t scream, girls don’t speak loudly. In fact, the reason of this problem is that women are not given freedom of expression to talk about private and taboo subjects and they should be discipline to maintain their honor and chastity. But there should be a right meaning and understanding of women honor, shame and chastity. By all the consequences from the rape incident which have been mentioned earlier, it’s impossible that people ignore the victim herself and sacrifice the life and future of a woman for their honor. Reactions of families to subject of rape vary most of the time even between husband and wife. While some families would like to seek compensation for sexual harassment on their girls, others are embarrassed because of the social stigma attached to it. However the matter, Litchfield and Litchfield (2012), emphasize that parents commonly have the following responsibilities to their little girls:

- Passing enough time to sit with their girls to give definite description about honor, shame and freedom of expression about their social vulnerability and courage them to talk openly about any private and taboo things which hurt them.
- To always discover the emotional needs of their girls by ensuring that they experience a lot of parental affection in the form of verbal affirmation, quality time spent with them, physical affection, and helping them to be engaged in safe productive activities.
- Making a long-lasting and safe open relationship with their girls.
- Being very conscious and intimately observing their child girls and any sign of vulnerability and violation.

Families play the most important role in changing these cultural and social attitudes regarding girls and women. They shouldn’t create situations in which girls can’t talk to them freely and speak out about the incidents occurred. As many families think that by reporting such crimes, they and their children will be faulted and they will lose their honor, so they prefer silence rather than exposing the matter. We wish to see the day when people can let their dreams come true

without the closed and boarded views, and that there will be no woman to have a hidden secret to be hurt in society.

References

- Alhassan, A. et al. (2013), "Child Rape: Who Speaks for the Victims?" Retrieved on July 4, 2013 from: <http://www.hopefornigeriaonline.com/child-rape-who-speaks-for-the-vivtims>.
- Ayonrinde, A. (1984). *Sex and the Teenager*, Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited.
- Brigneti, P. and Egbonimali, S. (2002). "Rape in Nigeria: Theory & Reality". Retrieved from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/aug/20/qanda.islam> on July 4, 2013.
- Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against our will: Men, women, and rape*. New York, NY: Fawcett Columbine.
- Burt, M. (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38, 217–230.
- Campbell, R., & Bybee, D. (1997). Emergency medical services for rape victims: Detecting the cracks in service delivery. *Women's Health: Research on Gender, Behavior, and Policy*, 3, 75–101.
- Campbell, R. (1998). The community response to rape: Victims' experiences with the legal, medical, and mental health systems. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26, 355–379.
- Campbell, Sefl, Wasco, & Ahrens (2004). Doing community research without a community. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 33, 253–261.
- Chiedu, A. (2012). "Rape of Nigerians and Country: What Shall We Do?" Retrieved from: <http://nigeriavillagesquare.com/guest-articles/rape-of-nigerians-and-country-what-shall-we-do.html> on July 4, 2013.
- Davis, R. C., Brickman, E., & Baker, T. (1991). Supportive and unsupportive responses of others to rape victims: Effects of concurrent victim adjustment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 19, 443–451.
- Derakhshandeh, P. (Director). (2013). *Hush! Girls don't scream: The Movie* [Drama]. Iran: Khormehr Film-making Company and Farabi Film Foundation
- Filipas, H. H., & Ullman, S. E. (2001). Social reactions to sexual assault victims from various support sources. *Violence & Victims*, 16(6), 673–692.
- Fisher, B. S., Daigle, L. E., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2003). Reporting sexual victimization to the police and others: Results from a national-level study of college women. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 30(1), 6–38.

Ferguson, E.C. (1998). *Ten Steps to Overcome Sexual Temptations*, Onitsha: Adson Educational Publishers.

George, L., Winfeld, I., & Blazer, D. (1992). Sociocultural factors in sexual assault: Comparison of two representative samples of women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48, 105–125.

Golding, J. M., Siegel, J. M., Sorenson, S. B., Burnam, M. A., & Stein, J. A. (1989). Social support sources following sexual assault. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 17, 92–107.

Hornby, A.S. (2006). *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 7th Edition, New York: Oxford University Press.

<http://www.wikipediaencyclopedia.com-anti-rape-movement>, “Anti-rape Movement”. Retrieved on July 4, 2013.

Jack, D. C. (1991). *Silencing the self: women and depression*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Koss, M. (1985). The hidden rape victim: Personality, attitudinal, and situational characteristics. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 9, 193–212.

Litchfield, B. and Litchfield, N. (2012). *How to Talk to your Child about Sex*, Benin City: Religious Broadcasting Publishing Company.

MacKinnon, C. (1987). *Feminism unmodified: Discourses on life and law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Madigan, L., & Gamble, N. (1991). *The second rape: Society's continued betrayal of the victim*. New York: Lexington Books.

Martin, P., & Powell, R. (1994). Accounting for the “second assault”: Legal organizations framing of rape victims. *Law and Social Inquiry*, 19, 853–890.

McAuslan, P. (1998). *After sexual assault: The relationship between women's disclosure, the reactions of others, and health*. Dissertation manuscript. Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

National Victim Center (1992). *Sexual assault in American: A report to the nation*. Arlington, VA: Author.

Nzeakor, H.O. (2002). “Corruption in Institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria” in Ugwu, C.O.T. (ed.), *Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspective*, Enugu: Chuka Educational Publishers, Pp. 283-297.

Obasi, F.A. (2007). *Sexual Perversion in the Adolescents: Causes, Consequences and Cures*, Jos: Jos University Press Ltd.

Odeh, N. (2013), “Siege of Child Rapists” in the News 06 May, 2013, Pp.14-20.

- Pollard, P. (1992). Judgments about victims and attackers in depicted rapes: A review. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 31, 307–326.
- Reinharz, S. (1994). Toward an ethnography of “voice” and “silence”. In E. Trickett, & R. Watts (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 178–200). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Roiphe, K. (1993). *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism*. Little, Brown and Company, 74.
- Ullman, S. E. (1996a). Do social reactions to sexual assault victims vary by support provider? *Violence and Victims*, 11, 143–156.
- Ullman, S. E. (1996b). Social reactions, coping strategies, and self-blame attributions in adjustment to sexual assault. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 505–526.
- Ullman, S. E. (1996c). Correlates and consequences of adult sexual assault disclosure. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 11(4), 554–571.
- Ullman, S. E., & Filipas, H. H. (2001). Correlates of formal and informal support seeking in sexual assaults victims. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 16(10), 1028–1047.
- Ward, C. (1995). *Attitudes toward rape: Feminist and social psychological perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.
- Warshaw, R. (1988). *I Never Called It Rape: The Ms. Report on Recognizing, Fighting, and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape*, Harper and Row, 21.
- Wasike, A.N. (1999) “Child Abuse and Neglect: An African Moral Question”, in Mugambi, J.N.K. and Wasike, A.N. (Ed.). *Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity: A Challenge to African Christianity*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers. Pp. 153-169.
- Williams, J. (1984). Secondary victimization: Confronting public attitudes about rape. *Victimology*, 9, 66–81.