

# 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

## AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

2018 | Day 3

### REVICTIMIZING THE VICTIM | PART 1



**The ‘re’ in revictimization stands for the repeated victimization of the victim.**

In the English language, ‘re’ has no plural, therefore it also means several and not just one repetition of the original offence. In the conventional sense, it is used to denote the victim suffering from the same assault that s/he has already been through.

**What one often fails to recognise is the fact that revictimization can actually take place in forms other than repetition of the initial assault.**

A child who is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking has seen and experienced enough trauma to last a lifetime. When ‘rescued’ from such abhorrent circumstances, she expects that ‘now things would be better for me’; only to soon realise that her ordeal has not ended but has only changed forms.

Even for fully functioning adults, recounting a nightmare is painful. Imagine the plight of a child who is forced to relive her trauma every single time – when people she has never seen in her life before, expect her to narrate her brutal story – with vivid details and in a convincing manner.

### IT BEGINS LIKE THIS...

It begins when the first police officer asks her to describe what happened to her. To say that the questions posed to her are not the child-friendliest in nature would be an understatement. **Imagine this** - a male police officer looking intimidating in his uniform, asks the child, ‘*Theek se yaad karke bata kya hua tere saath*’, can we blame the child for being hesitant and nervous?

### THEN...

She begins to narrate the happenings only to be constantly interrupted with questions. She somehow manages to finish her story coherently, and then the police officer brings in a diary, begins to act like he is now writing things down, and says, “*Accha abhi jo bola wohi phir se theek tarah se bataa. Ye sab ab writing mein note karana hoga. Kuch bhi chhutna nahin chahiye....*”

Contd...



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This scenario which begins at the police station is repeated every time the case reaches a different authority. Be it at the hospital, where the doctor asks her “*Kitne time se sab kaam chalu hai?*”, or when she is placed in a Child Care Institution and the Probation Officer asks her, “*Mujhe nahin pata tera case kya hai, toh tuhi bata tujhe idhar kyun daala hai?*”

The victim is **revictimized** by **every police officer** she comes in contact with - from the woman constable, the Investigation Officer, the **service providers**, every **caretaker**, **duty bearer** and by **every other person** who believes that they are entitled to hear the story straight from the victim.

“ **What they forget is that they are not entitled to revictimize the child by making her relive her trauma again and again.** ”

Revictimization is not only limited to repeated narrations, but its element is present in all those not-so-secret whispers, animated discussions pertaining to the case in her presence, that utter disregard for basic sensitivity while questioning her, and denying her the empathetic treatment she rightfully deserves.

This violence in the form of constant revictimization blocks the child’s healing process.

**WHAT IT SHOULD BE >** Healing and recovery on the part of the victim demands forgetting the sharp and hurting details of the traumatizing experience.

**WHAT IT IS >** Investigation and prosecution, on the other hand, demand the victim to narrate the incidence in vivid details and in a convincing manner.

Prosecution being a long drawn and procrastinated process forces the victim to be able to remember and recall such details for a very long time.



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