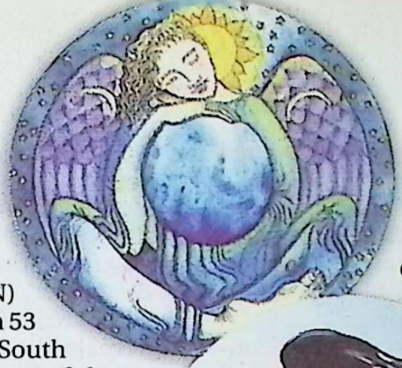


There is nothing unique about this story. Like any other case of domestic violence in Bangladesh, brutal attacks on this poor girl were hidden behind the dark shades.

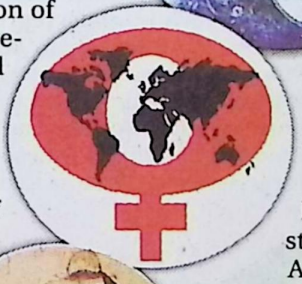
According to a United Nations (UN) report, from 2001 to 2007 there have been 53 percent of domestic violence cases in South Asian countries, while it is stated that most of the cases were unreported. Focusing on Bangladesh itself, last year a total of 454 women and girls were reported as victims of rape. Among them 202 were women and 252 young girls. Of them, 68 women and 30 girls were killed after being raped and one woman committed suicide. Numbers continue to increase over the years of such cases, but little changes are apparent in today's society.



Which is why, UN, along with several other organizations, governments and women's groups around the world, have chosen a significant theme for this year's International Women's Day (IWD) that will reflect the underlining conception of this ongoing global issue. This year's theme is "Women and Men United to End Violence against Women and Girls".



IWD, a day that symbolizes the notion of economic, political and social achievements for women's rights, was marked during 20th century when the industrialized world was experiencing great turbulence and crisis. At that time, IWD was aimed to promote women's rights and in 1909 the Socialist Party of America held the first National Women's Day. A year after, in the second International Conference of Working Women, Clara Zetkin (Leader of the 'Women's Office" for the Social Democratic Party in Germany) proposed the idea of IWD as an event to be held on the same day every year around the world where women would press their demands and concerns. Later, several countries including Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland followed this day to signify women's solidarity.





Today, IWD has taken a global dimension as the day is celebrated all around the world, in some countries it is a national holiday, where women rallies run across streets in support for women's rights. But how far has it been able to accomplish its mission? Yes, women are taking part in presidential and parliamentary elections to vote for the right candidate and they have managed to work in esteemed organizations, nevertheless cases of domestic violence, rape, and sexual assaults are on the rise.

The existence of organizations and helping hands to protect women have relatively increased over the years, such as Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC), a non-profit organization and a coalition of 15 NGOs working in Bangladesh for prevention of trafficking in children and women and their sexual exploitation or Naripokkho, one of the leading women activist groups to stop violence against women. Yet, abuse against women still continues in the society.

Almost every now and then national dailies and local dailies reveal rape incidents, and reports state that over the past few years the numbers have relatively remained the same. For instance last month, there were several cases of gruesome attacks on innocent girls. Five year old Sheuly's murder was one of them. Sheuly was strangled to death after she was raped by a neighbouring youth.