A vulnerability assessment is like a part of ethical hacking, you can say. Basically, it's **a systematic process of identifying, analysing , and ranking security weaknesses** or vulnerabilities in an information system.

In other words, it helps us to evaluate if the system is susceptible to any known vulnerabilities, gives necessary details and assigns severity levels to those vulnerabilities, and recommends remediation / mitigation when needed.

Vulnerability Assessment can be done as **part of a penetration test** (or any **other kind of manual audit), or can be done as a complete separate job** as well. Many clients might ask you for only a vulnerability assessment service instead of a full penetration test.

The key difference between both of these is that a Penetration Test will include validation of vulnerabilities i.e., the exploitation phase as well, whereas in a vulnerability assessment, no exploitation is done.