

Exploitation, Abuse and Objectification of Women in the Name of Tradition and its Psychological Consequences

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Abstract: This paper presents an overview on exploitation, abuse and objectification of women in the name of tradition and its psychological consequences.

Keywords: abuse, dependency, emotional trauma, exploitation, mental instability, patriarchy.

1. Introduction

Tradition is 'The continuing pattern of statements, beliefs, legends and customs that have been passed on from generation to generation by practice or word of mouth.'

Culture. Tradition. Values. Morals.

All these terms essentially refer to the long-lost rituals and tasks followed by people who belong to different backgrounds, different countries and diverse cultures. Traditions are practiced and are passed on, every culture, religion, state has a set of traditions that they follow, because of being passed on. For centuries that have passed people have understood and followed tradition regardless of how callous, harsh and inhuman they might be, in the name of tradition women have been demeaned, downgraded and disrespected that has been extremely consequential for them. Their mental health, psychological well-being and their daily lives have been disrupted. This paper will give you a conceptual and in-depth understanding of such traditions, that have been banned yet are followed in various parts of the world, to preserve the belief system and continue the folklore that has been a pattern and been passed on for generations.

Usually, women were the victim of these traditions because of patriarchy leading the society. Men were praised, rewarded and served, the opposite gender (male) has always been seen as the superior gender and women have consistently been the ones who provide for them. Several such traditions exist, mainly followed in parts of Asia such as China, India, Nepal and Japan, are some to name among the rest.

A custom, which has several stories that falls as the pretext of it, the Golden Lotus, feet binding of juvenile girls, is a veiled custom followed in the early years of China. The engagement rates of this tradition started reducing in the 1911's and died out completely in the 1930's. Girls between ages 5 years - 7 years, had their feet tied. A number of stages and steps had to be

followed, the entire process of feet binding was a painful and brutal procedure. Female infants have soft skin, brittle bones and small feet, which made it easier to implement the procedure. Initially, the feet of infant girls were soaked in a mixture of hot water, herbs and animal blood to soften the bones. The bones were massaged while they prepared the bandages. Followed by this, the toes were curled and broken with immense pressure and were moulded into a cone like shape. The feet were kept tied for 10-12 years, sometimes more in order for the feet to take the desired shape.

There are several answers as to why this tradition was practised, two major reasons were: small feet in China were signified as elegant and highly erotic. A 3-inch foot was known as the golden lotus and a four-inch foot was known as silver lotus. Chinese history proclaimed that small feet were lucky and it made the girl look highly elegant and sophisticated. Since the feet were not only considered elegant but also signified as erotic. It was arousing for men, in the Qing dynasty love manuals were prescribed, which had 48 different ways of fondling with a woman's feet. The men worshipped the woman's feet, and had a foot fetish, of sorts, the binding took place to keep the feet small and easy to 'play' with, it gave men sexual satisfaction.

It was also doubtlessly a means to increase the hold and strength of patriarchy and give some superiority to the patriarchal society, to make sure that the women remained incorrupt and pure. These women were confined to their homes, it was hard for them to move around and they needed support for mobility. Another reason that foot binding was practised was because, the men were afraid that the women would run away or leave the house after marriage, hence to restrict their mobility and keep them in the four walled house and to prevent them from leaving they thought binding of feet was a good method. Upper caste women who refused to bind their feet were labeled as lower caste and abandoned. Women from lower caste who refused were sold off to slavery. This tradition was banned around 1911-12, often inspectors came for inspection to see if any girl had bound feet, they were fooled by people, as they found women wearing big shoes in the house. Not realizing that these women have bound feet but have been made to wear

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big shoes to hide it.

Women in India, for the longest time have been taught to serve men and god. In any culture, from any background, the patriarchy has overpowered the community entirely. In southern India a custom known as 'devadasi' was followed. Parents presented their teenage daughters to the gods, as the name suggests 'dev'-god, 'dasi'-slave. The girl was a slave to the gods, the god's servant per se. She used to offer prayers, and serve the gods. She was essentially the individual who took care of the rituals, ceremonies and every other custom that had to be conducted and took care of the deity and pleased him day and night. Her being in the limelight and taking care of the gods and their needs per se, made the girl a public figure, where she was signified as the goddess. The public worshiped her and gave her the status, respect and value equivalent of a goddess. This tradition was kept valid for a year, the girl chosen was the devadasi for one year and the priests would look for the next candidate once the one year of the current devadasi was nearing an end. This custom continued for a year, the girl was given the attention and treatment of a goddess, she was given the respect and value. Although, once her tenure ended, she was just another girl in the neighborhood.

This girl, who was offered by her parents to serve at the temple, who merely thought that their daughter would do good by prayers and serving the god and religion, after a year she is homeless and aimless. She cannot go back home since her parents presented her to the temple. In that one year, her social life, academic life and familial bonding is at a stage where she cannot revive it neither can she begin again. The only option she has left is to continue to work in the temple as a helper and live her life in the ashram of the temple. After that one year of being treated like a goddess, she is treated like a slave. She is expected to work there, clean and mop the floors, wash and dry the material needed for ceremonies and fulfill the sexual needs and desires of the priests.

She was disrespected, objectified and treated like a sexual object by the priests and other workers in the temple. This custom has been banned for years now, due to the cruel and disgraceful treatment towards the girl. The parents never realize that at a tender age of 13-14 years, where she should ideally be studying, attending school, socializing, bonding with friends and figuring out her future, she is given off to a temple to serve the gods. That one-year costs her entire life. Although, legally this custom is banned, however several small towns and villages still follow this custom and have a strong and high hold and regard about it.

Similarly, Nepal has a tradition known as kumari. This particular custom is conducted with a three-year-old girl, who is supposed to become the kumari. There is a set of criteria that needs to match the 3-year-old child, in order for her to be selected as the kumari. The criteria as such involves having a body like a banyan tree, black eyes, dainty hands and feet, clear and soft voice, elegant features etc., these factors were to be considered. The girl was supposed to stay at the Kumari Palace at all times, no education was provided, she wasn't permitted to stay with family, although they could come and meet her during

the day. There is a list of rules that a kumari has to follow, a three-year-old child. She is supposed to wear the colour red at all times, she is expected to carry out the ceremonial duties and customs and behave like a goddess. The public prays to her as a goddess, gives her respect and regard. Her tenure as a kumari lasts till she goes through her first menstrual cycle, at the age of 13-14 years.

A child who was taken away at the age of 3, away from parents, basic education and a simple livelihood, is merely placed back in the world. To fend for herself, without any kind of education or social understanding of the society since she has been treated as a goddess and has had limited exposure. After the teenage girl hits puberty not only is she supposed to fend for herself without education, societal norms etc but she is not supposed to get married either.

These traditions are followed even today, in the smallest of towns, farthest of villages, where they are hidden and are secretly practiced in order to not get caught. Although, the hardships the girl has to face once the tradition is over, is psychologically traumatic. An individual is made accustomed to a routine and lifestyle for the first 10-12 years of her life, during the most important years of her life that include development of motor skills, social skills and self-awareness.

A Closer Look: Chinese Foot Binding, Deva-Dasi in India and the Kumari Tradition in Nepal.

Evans, Ross and Holmon (1993) after research stated that foot binding in China was not only for the physical appearance and sexual pleasure of the foot, but also to restrain and restrict women in the confines of the village. Women with bound feet could not walk for more than a few kilometers and were constrained to sitting at home. It also gave the men a sense of authority towards women, as after marriage they got the assurance that the women cannot run away, indulge in extra marital affairs and escape from physical abuse from their unsatisfied husbands. Their diminished mobility ensured that they did not interact much with other villagers or anyone from outside the community, which kept them more conservative, which increased their willingness to obey the husband.

Holmon (1993) also found out that mothers who did not bind the feet of their daughters were shunned from the community, the daughters were disrespected and treated as an outcast and the probability of getting married were as good as zero.

These factors, if considered together, can have a serious effect on the development and cognition of the individual. Being forced to practice a custom that is physically traumatic and lays down parameters such as being shunned by the community if not practiced, can leave a mental scar. This herd mentality in China was encouraged by this tradition in order for the men in the Chinese culture to retain their power and authority. Psychologically, one would be traumatized, since staying in confined and limited areas at all times, not being able to interact and communicate with people raises issues such as suppressive behavior, social anxiety etc.

The feet binding tradition initially began when the emperor in the 12th century stated that the dancers and artisans in his courtroom would bind their feet and present themselves, as small and petite feet enhance the daintiness and fragility of a

woman. Eventually this custom spread and the wealthy families also began binding the feet of their daughters, to maintain their status, reputation and name in the community.

These consequences led to women following the custom but their mental health was highly affected. Many of them suffered from depression and social anxiety because they were restricted to stay in the confines of their homes, they were not allowed to meet anyone outside the family or even go out of the house. Majorly because their feet were bound therefore mobility was restricted. The simple act of restricting social contact was barbaric itself.

Mental cognitions, the way the mind was developed of the female was very restrained and closed, due to the restrictions they were often alone, were unaware of the world outside their homes and had difficulty making any kind of conversation which left them deprived of any social contact and connection leading them into chronic depression. Developmental age of a child is between the age of 4-12 years, where they learn the basic motor skills, communication skills and increase their learning and grasping ability.

In the kumari tradition, the child from the second of becoming a kumari, is not allowed to touch her feet on the ground, which means she is carried around on the back of either parent. Guardian or someone from the temple. She needs to be present in all rituals and ceremonies and shows her presence in public rarely. In the kumari temple she walks barefoot and stays put in one room with no light and only a lantern or candle light, which can be extremely scary from a child's point of view.

Since she is not allowed to walk till her kumari tenure is over, it becomes tough for her to learn how to walk and at the age of 13-15 years she is taught the art of walking on her own. She is given minimal or no education which makes it difficult for her to begin schooling and is instead given basic education at home, once she is back home.

These women, be it in China, India, Nepal or any other country, where customs are practiced that victimize women, in the process also objectify them. In the midst of patriarchy being the thumb rule in most Asian and Southeast Asian countries, women tend to follow these customs not because they want to but because they have to because the society may shun them if they don't or are forced to. There is a sense of isolation that looms in with these customs and women are meant to stay in, not communicate or go out, not socialize, or even do as they please in their own homes.

2. Women and their Mental Health

Women and their mental health highly depend on how women are treated, what their environment is like and how much social support they receive from those around them. In multiple papers it has been shown that social support is paramount in women's life. It is important for them to have sufficient support from family members and friends around them to maintain and cope with their mental health, since women are more emotional in nature.

Kalpna Srivastava (2012) in her paper about women and mental health: psychosocial perspective, mentions that social support impacts a woman's mental health in a drastic way.

Healthy social support given to a woman has shown stable and good mental health, less or no partner violence, whereas, lack of social support towards a woman shows increased partner violence in terms of sexual, physical and mental violence. Increased levels of emotional support can also help reduce acts of violence, and consequences that may have adverse effects on mental and physical health.

A. *Social Support and Psychosocial Consequences*

In the kumari custom in Nepal, the child from the age of 2-4, once she becomes a kumari is kept in isolation, in a small dark room, with just a candle light. There is no one to talk to her, sit with her, play with her, nothing. She gets food and water and can walk around the kumari palace every now and then. The social isolation that she experiences is equivalent to gaining no social support, especially without any family members around. The mental health of the child will be drastically affected. As mentioned above, social support is of paramount importance in a woman's life to maintain mental stability and health, similarly, a child needs an exponential amount of social and emotional support for a stable growth mentally and physically. Parent child bonding and support is what helps the child learn and grow in a certain way. The parents are the ones who build a foundation for the child to grow in terms of teaching morals and values, understanding family bonds and teaching the child to read, write, walk and speak. The tenure of a kumari is between the age of 2-13 years, amidst which children are ideally supposed to spend time with family, make friendships, socialize and play games, which also help in developing a character and a certain personality of the child.

All of this which is null and void for kumari, the child goddess, who is supposed to stay in the kumari palace, away from her parents, does not get basic education, there is no one to socialize or talk to her and she stays in isolation during that tenure.

This inturn definitely affects her mental health because since childhood she receives no social and emotional support and tends to live in isolation without any social connection. The psychosocial consequences she may suffer from would essentially include social anxiety, depression, abandonment issues, trust issues, a tainted mental stability that leads to under-developed skills, and the foundation of grasping and learning abilities are unstable.

These issues may also have adverse effects once the child's tenure as a kumari is over. Since she has not been able to develop any solid skills in the developing years, she has also not been taught how to walk, because as a kumari she was carried around everywhere she went. So, she essentially lacks the ability to walk and has to be taught once she is back home.

In the initial years of this tradition, a myth said that the kumaris once completed their tenure were not allowed to get married, which means they were supposed to stay home for the rest of their lives and were condemned from having a husband and family. Although, now the myth is not practiced and followed as rigorously as before. These issues that a kumari faces become severe after she is at home with her parents since they have to teach her everything from the very basics.

Therefore, her development occurs awfully late in life, further harming her mental health. For instance, her self-esteem and self-concept may stoop very low, which may affect her confidence and personality factors as well.

B. Self-Concept, Image and Under-Development

Chinese foot binding custom which began in the 12th century and even after being banned is still practiced in small villages in China. Social and emotional support, as clarified earlier, is important for healthy mental stability and is one thing that Chinese women never received in the community. As the foot of young Chinese children were bound, studies and reports have mentioned that it was practiced for multiple reasons, some major reasons were: (1) to obtain dainty and petite feet which was essentially the symbol of chastity and purity, (2) small feet in China were considered to be erotic and sexually pleasing for men (3) the men wanted to ensure that women after marriage did not run away, indulge in extra marital affairs and socialize too much and finally, (4) small feet for women was a status symbol in China, men who got married to women with small feet were considered to be lucky and successful and were held at a high regard and respect in the community.

Since the feet were bound, the women could not walk and their mobility was restricted, they were meant to stay home and could not even stand for long durations of time, therefore affecting their social skills, their inability to move leads them into social isolation and social distancing, resulting in social anxiety and depression. When people have routines and are busy working through the day, this young individual has no one to talk to and nothing to do. No emotional and social support that she can rely on for development of social skills, emotional growth and understanding the community.

Her knowledge and awareness of the community is also next to zero since she has had no exposure and experience of the outside world and due to restricted mobility she does not go out that often. Therefore, resulting in lack of social skills, an under-developed self-esteem, self-concept and a negatively built identity. Furthermore, lack of social and emotional support usually leads to severe anxiety and depression that lasts till the later stage in life.

Another reason given to foot binding was so that the husbands of these women are stress free about their wives not being able to travel, run away or engage in extramarital affairs, which to a certain extent can be labeled as violence. The reason for making the women go through so much pain and agony is for them to stay put in the four walled house and not socialize or go out. This is known as domestic abuse, in one perspective.

Coker et al (2003), wrote in his paper that women who receive appropriate and significant social and emotional support tend to have healthy mental stability, a healthy relationship with their partner as well as reduced mental, sexual and physical violence in the relationship, hence, leading to a more stable life and mental health.

C. Exploitation, Abuse and Trauma

Deva-dasi, the custom in India where a young girl is offered to the temple by her parents as a gift to the gods. She is prayed

and worshiped for one year, where people from different communities come and worship her, give her offerings and consider her as divine. Although this stops after her one-year tenure is over, she goes back to her life of being an ordinary girl. A helpless ordinary girl who cannot go home and is not accepted by the society therefore start working in the temple, cleaning, sweeping, serving those who come to pray and she also becomes a sex-slave to the priests in the temple, as they claim to have given her a place to live and food to eat and she shall please them as they want - which is sexual satisfaction. Like the previous two customs spoken about, this custom has similar consequences and psychological effects towards the girl. She is given the respect and consideration for one year and then treated like as a begotten sex-slave with no regard and respect.

Once she is offered to the temple by her parents, she has no right to education, to get married, to socialize and to speak for herself. Her life is not hers anymore. This female individual encounter ridicule, disrespect and is treated like an inferior, to which the consequences are vastly severe, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, paranoia, abandonment issues and problems that involve creation of suicidal ideation, mental instability and trust issues as well.

Campbell and Soeken (1989), also stated in one of their studies that women with less or no emotional and social support suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), suicidal thoughts, depression and severe anxiety. Srivastava writes in her paper that due to no social and emotional support; women suffer from relentless violence. She claims in her paper that 14-20% women encounter rape at some point in their lives and 25-34% chances are that an adult woman has faced some kind of a sexually abusive environment in their childhood.

Deva-dasi women, who end up becoming a sex-slave to the priests at the temple and are consistently degraded experience changes in cognitions as well. Due to the continuous battering and negative images and statements passed on by the priests it impacts the individual with severe self-image issues. Coker et al. (2003) mentions the battering syndrome in his research paper, that entails that woman who experience consistent sexual, physical and mental abuse, much like a dev-dasi in this case, tend to have a negative opinion about themselves.

Battering essentially refers to consistent and similar acts of violence inflicted upon a woman, where she eventually becomes susceptible to future harm and creates a pessimistic and unfavorable self-image for herself. The constant negative images, statements and claims passed on and taking into the consideration and pain and suffering inflicted on her sexually and otherwise, leads to development of a negative self-image, entrapment in the relationship and modification of thoughts, behaviours and cognitions, where she feels like she deserves the negativity, pain and suffering, claims Coker et al (2003).

He defines battering to be a process where one individual in the relationship is vulnerable, powerless and entrapped, whereas the other individual practises power, brutality and authority over the other, through a pattern of physical, sexual and psychological force and abuse.

A study conducted by Campbell and Lewandowski (1997)

about battering and its consequences proved that battering, results in a series of long-term disorders involving severe headaches, a sequence of neurological damage which refers to a combination of motor deficits of grade III-IV that include blindness, severe hearing impairment, behaviour issues and cognitive problems.

Campbell and Alford (1989) reported that 40-45% of battered women are forced into unprotected sex and 67% of them experience severe damages such as vaginal and anal tear and bleeding, bladder infection, STDs etc, similar claims were reported by Hamberg *et al.* (1993) in a similar study. The whole point of including a section for battering in this paper is because girls who become dev-dasis for a year end up getting battered for the rest of their lives and experience such physical and mental trauma for the rest of their livelihoods.

Childhood violence is a variable in all three customs in one perspective or another, be it psychological violence, sexual or physical violence. Violence inflicted on any individual during their childhood tends to scar the individual for life. The trauma experienced as a child retains in the subconscious mind of the individual even in adulthood which leads to the formation of false and negative images of oneself. The individual eventually thinks that they are helpless and the learned helplessness syndrome kicks in.

The children who were offered to the temples as dev-dasi were around the age of 11-12 years old, as written above, they went through a certain amount of abuse by the priests in the temple as well as the society since they were shunned from the society, not being accepted as a part of the community and were mistreated by the priests. They got a small quarter to live in or sometimes had to sleep in the outdoor area of the temple quarters, they got insufficient food or leftover food, negative remarks and statements were passed on to them and were sex-slaves to the priests. This is clearly a case of child sexual abuse, since they had no where else to go and were tormented daily. They were essentially the victims of pedophilia as well, considering that these girls were all minors and were compelled to stay at the temple.

3. Previous Studies and the Impact on Women

In a paper about Women who experienced Sexual Abuse as a Child by Bagley (1990), suggested that most women who experienced sexual abuse as a child have severe tendencies to commit suicide, inflict self-harm and injury, engage in eating disorders which inadvertently led to a distorted body image and indulging in drugs and alcohol due to low self-esteem, self-blame and guilt.

Based on the works of Brown *et al.* (1982), Bagley and Young (1990) developed a model on children who encounter separation from parents at a young age and go through sexual abuse tend to experience suicidal ideation and creation, suicidal attempts, self-motivated harm, self-victimization. Due to them being preys of sexual victimization their self-esteem is also diminished. Bagley (1989) stated that reduced self-esteem is not directly connected to suicidal thoughts and depressive symptoms, in this case the girls who have become sex-slaves, are highly vulnerable to stress and chances are that their mental

health responds to the stress through depression.

Begley and Young (1999) also state that due to the vulnerability the female cannot cope with the stressors that she encounters although, social and emotional support may help contain the depression and for it to not reach a severe stage. Although, due to self-esteem chances are high that she lacks social skills as well, which essentially means that it is unlikely for the individual to go and ask for help and support or even have a stable support system for her to confide in. therefore, resulting in severe depression. Gibson and Hartshorne (1996) confirmed in one their studies that childhood sexual abuse in women, have severe consequences, furthermore, due to these tormenting experiences in the past they intentionally keep themselves socially isolated and do not seek help or get any support emotionally and socially.

Campbell *et al.* (1996), discussed in his paper on mental health of women and children, that battering and consistent abuse can have longer and significantly severe implications on women and children. He found that women tend to be in a depressive state and experience symptoms of depression as well. Therefore, women who have experienced battering at an early age do not only suffer from negative self-image and modified self-cognitions and abuse, they also experience immense physical illness and injuries, which persist throughout their adult life

The statistical report of women experiencing violence and abuse in the name of tradition or culture is high in every manner. Communities and societies are often seen using tradition to inflict violence on women. A paper by Unaiz and Hassan (2006) on Culture and Mental Health of women in Southeast Asia, mentions numerous such customs that victimize women, inflicting violence, pain and abuse of some kind. There have been studies carried out in Pakistan which show that due to customs that have to be followed, women are often found in a depressive state, 25.5% due to marital conflicts, 13% conflict with in-laws, 14% lack of meaningful job, these conflicts arise due to domestic violence administered by the husband and in-laws towards the female leading to suicidal thoughts and ideation, out of which many lead to suicides as well.

Gleason (1995) reported a wide array of statistics on women who get battered in their daily lives tend to experience several psychological issues. Gleason (1995) claims in his study that women experience certain emotional consequences as a result of battering and mental abuse. The results show occurrence of these following psychological problems: 67% of women experience depression or depressive symptoms, 40% of them suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and anxiety, furthermore, 20-25% of these women are at life risk due to suicidal ideation.

A few other factors that may play a vital role in such violence may be external and environmental factors such as women coming from low socio-economic backgrounds. Chinese foot binding was a custom practiced by women from all socio-economic backgrounds, although, if one carefully observes, the rich and wealthy women had a line of servants and help who could help her walk, serve her and fulfill her every whim.

Although, women who came from low socio-economic backgrounds suffered from both sides. They were forced to follow this practice and bind the feet of their young girls, to continue to be socially accepted in the community. In the fear of her daughter not being accepted in the society, not finding a suitable husband, or for that matter not finding a man who would get married to a woman with straight and normal feet. As mentioned earlier, bound feet were signified as pure and chaste in the Chinese communities back then. Whereas, many mothers either did not tie the feet or tied the feet with reduced force and tightness. The reason for the reduced force was so that if needed in the future she could work and earn some wages for the survival of the family, as mobility was restricted with tightly bound feet. Holoman in his paper stated that many families from low socio-economic backgrounds tend to bind the feet of their daughter so that they uplift their social status in the society. Furthermore, the women who refused to bind their daughters' feet due to their low social background and to fulfill the financial needs at home, were shunned from the society and were claimed as socially unacceptable and they were ridiculed by other women.

In both situations, women experience some kind of trauma and mental violence. If their feet are bound it is physical violence being inflicted upon them, with a series of psychological implications such as social isolation, lack of emotional and social support and cases of reduced self-image, self-esteem and negative self-image. If the women don't bind the feet of their daughter, they are shunned from society, face ridicule and enormous amounts of degradation and furthermore, inculcate a negative self-image and blame on themselves.

A paper by Lily Mary Veronica Chan (1970), on Chinese Foot binding and its Psycho-social implications, it states that small, petite feet in China are considered pure, chaste, elegant and sexually erotic for men to fondle and play with. Also, Chinese men get sexually aroused by small feet, they liked to fondle and play with the feet sexually, some even drank wine for pleasure through the curve made on the feet by the binds. They had a book that listed multiple different ways to play with the feet of women as well. These factors lead to a clear objectification of women. Chinese women have been objectified as sexual material for the pleasure of men, to be more specific their feet have been objectified as sexual objects, that men desire and get pleasure by foot play. Objectification of women also has severe implications, especially when combined with physical abuse and infliction on pain and suffering.

Objectification of women implies that a woman's body is being set aside as a sexual object, as something that is taken pleasure out of, objectification can be done by just staring and evaluating a woman's body and also goes to an extent of physical pleasure and touch. Beneke (1982), Brownmiller (1975) and Pollitt (1985) did a study on objectification of women and found similar results that stated that sexual objectification is an integral part that more often than not leads to sexual violence. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), in their study on Objectification Theory Towards Understanding Women's lived Experiences and Mental Health, state that a culture that objectifies the female body tends to put the woman

in a situation with a consistent series of anxiety prone experiences. Which means that a woman who has been sexually objectified, will always be anxious and be alert due to possible case of sexual violence. The Chinese women, who are objectified sexually by foot binding, often tend to fear the men due to the sexual activities that are encouraged. Since these women cannot run due to their restricted mobility.

Women who are sexually objectified are also proven to experience depressive episodes, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) described these episodes in three theories, of which women in China are prone to the second and third theory. The second theory states that women experience depressive episodes due to the lack of power and an inferior social status, which is the case is most Asian and south-east Asian countries, however, back then was extremely imminent in China. Women were put through several situations where they did not have the power to make decisions or voice their opinions, their point of view was considered insignificant and irrelevant.

Women experience discrimination in all aspects of life, in one way or another, Chinese women specifically faced discrimination by experiencing restrictions from their husbands, family members and due to societal norms. Mentioned earlier in the paper, Seligman's Learned Helplessness theory, Nolen-Hoeksema (1993) states that, this theory essentially justifies the powerlessness and lack of authority women face can result in depression, lack of motivation. Therefore, Chinese women never argue or go against what the male members of the community say, due to the oppression of females and their opinions.

Gilligan (1989) and Jack (1991) state in their study that women tend to formulate their traits and characteristics in order to maintain their relationships and have healthy bonds and social interactions. They are expected to behave, react and think in a certain way. Due to this, women more often than not, suppress their feelings and emotions and do not act upon what they think or feel. They develop a habit of censoring their ideologies and cognitions so that there are no disruptions or interferences in their valued relations with others, resulting in restrained initiatives. This brings up the third theory of why objectified women tend to experience depressive episodes; this refers to how women inculcate particular traits and habits to keep their relationships and environment in peace and contentment.

In reference to the Chinese women, they do not have an option to bind or not bind their feet because when the process takes place, they are children. However, when they grow up, they do not open the bandages because they feel like they have a certain responsibility to fulfill towards her family, like finding a suitable husband, maintaining a social status in the society. If the girl is from a lower socio-economic background, then she is even more fearful of not following this custom, in the fear of getting shunned from the society and being ridiculed, whereas, if she continues to practice and her feet turn out to be small and dainty, her family's social status becomes higher.

This modification and alteration of desire and emotions in women to cater for others and suppression of behaviour, thoughts and feelings often result in depression. Jack (1991)

stated in one of his studies that women often claim to try to be who others want them to be rather than who they really are. Which shows that when women have the tendency to please others and have a healthy relationship, which often causes internal frustration and fatigue, which leads to loss of self-image and a failed self-concept, resulting in depression and anxiety, in addition to PTSD as well claim Koss, Bailey, Yuan, Herrera, & Lichter, (2003).

A major factor of women behaving and thinking like this is the environment that has been created around them. Bakan (1966) described in his paper that men have traditional roles of being successful, achieving, powerful, assertive and dominant, in their lens, women are mere objects, sexual objects. Worell and Remer (2003) stated that men think of women as their property, as if they own their wives/partners. Similarly, Bem (1993) wrote in his paper that women tend to have a more emotional and nurturing side to them, their traditional roles involve, care-giving, being an emotional support to the family, being responsible for fulfilling the requirements and desires of the family and serving and pleasing the man sexually, which automatically falls under the category of being submissive, shy, timid, which increases the chances of sexual objectification.

Social isolation is essentially experienced by a 4-year-old girl child as a kumari, for a span of 9-10 years when her brain and body is in the major process of development, she is separated from her parents, gets no education and has no friends. Hartberg and Hegna (2014) state that social isolation can lead to depressive symptoms, because isolation is often mistaken for loneliness, even though the two are very different states of mind, they are indirectly linked to being in a depressive state, says Halvorson.

The physiological reasons for the implications of social isolation inadvertently mean that when the brain senses that there is no support for the mind and body to lean on and experience stressors and tackle them, the brain automatically produces hormones that protect the body and mind from those stressors. Although, the brain cannot be doing this extensively for long periods of time, hence forcing us to socialize. However, if this cry for help is ignored by the individual, she tends to experience depressive episodes.

Social interaction for a child is extremely important. More than a bond with parents, children at this age need to bond, communicate and interact with friends and children their own age for learning social normal, development of thought process, behaviors and social support, claim Lau, Chan, Lau in their paper.

Lacy, Kumari and Bartley state that Children who experience social isolation in their childhood for long durations, tend to not only experience depressive episodes, but due to no social support and interaction, they become psychologically distressed as an adult and may not even attain academic recognition and knowledge to their full potential. Some more than others may even as an adult be a part of the less benefitted social group.

Makinodan, Rosen, Ito and Corfas write in their paper that social isolation causes cognitive deteriorations, which negatively impacts the development of the brain, particularly

the prefrontal cortex, which is majorly responsible for making decisions, planning and other cognitive functions. Which may eventually lead to impairment in speech and communication due to an under-developed prefrontal cortex.

Therefore, the kumari tradition that involves a young girl, as young as 3 or 4 years, experiences social isolation for ten years of her life and then goes back to being ordinary. Which is also a culture shock for her because a change in environment also tends to disorient an individual psychologically and it takes time to condition yourself to an atmosphere. Even though she gets to go back to her parents at the age of 13-14 years, her brain is not completely developed and equipped to learn, grasp and follow, as compared to a normal child that age. She will have issues in interacting with people, societal norms will be a whole new arena for her since she never had to follow any rules and norms that were made for the communities. As an adult she would experience innumerable problems in terms of social interactions, bonding and making friends, understanding her thoughts, making decisions and implementing her thoughts into actions.

4. Conclusion

This paper essentially entails information and references to the victimization, objectification, torment, abuse and exploitation that women face in the name of tradition and culture, in the present day taking into consideration the history of the above variables in women's lives. Dating back to the 12th century, from Chinese foot binding, to the kumari custom in Nepal and deva-dasi tradition in India, to name a few, women have been the object of vulnerability, abuse, depression and innumerable psychological implications. I have concluded this paper by stating facts that have been studied about women and the physical, psychological and sexual abuse and violence they have experienced, often blaming it on culture and customs that have been practised for centuries and are still followed in rural villages, small towns and cities, due to environmental, social and traditional factors.

Although this paper only outlines the implications and impact on women in three customs, in asian countries, there are several traditions and customs practiced that victimize women which lead to severe psychological consequences. To name a few practises that have not been mentioned above but are followed widely till date are, Female Genital Mutilation, which is circumcision of the female genitals through a surgical procedure. This is usually conducted in south-east Asian countries like India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, in order for the female to not get pregnant. The birth of a girl-child is significantly considered to be bad luck, hence families tend to celebrate extensively when boys are born into the family, as they think that a boy in the family would bring prosperity, success, wealth and status. In order to ensure that the woman does not bring another girl child into the world, this surgical process is performed on her. Furthermore, the woman if conceived a girl child goes through ridicule, shame, discrimination and sometimes even torture, inflicted by the in-laws and husband, at times even the society. Women often experience reduced self-esteem, and become helpless resulting

in severe cases of depression and even suicidal ideation.

Early marriage and dowry is another major issue, especially in India and Africa, where girls are married off at an early age, as early as 11, 12, 13 years, usually occurring in lower income backgrounds. Families tend to marry their daughters off at such a young age to men who are at least 20+ years, because of two major reasons, first being virginity and second being dowry. Girls at such a young age more often than not, have no sexual contact at all, which makes them a virgin. Being a virgin in some cultures, especially in low socio-economic communities is considered to be pure and chaste, an untouched property which helps the family get the best husband they can as it ups the family status, which brings up the second factor, dowry. The better the husband, the more money the girl's family will get.

Child marriage is very common in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh where they child loses her childhood, this essentially hinders the child's growth physically and psychologically as well. She is forced to maintain a relationship with her husband and in-laws, is separated from her parents and is supposed to maintain a physical and sexual relationship with her husband who is years older to her, even though she may not be completely physically developed and equipped to engage in any sexual activity. Without having anyone as her social and emotional support, she experiences an enormous amount of stress and pressure.

There are several other customs followed all around the globe that hinder the growth of a young girl, that physically and sexually abuse the girl and inflict pain and suffering. These practices alter every aspect of the female's life; educational, personal, social, interpersonal, physical, physiological, developmental; every perspective of the girl's life if modified and changed, without her opinion, which causes implications and long-lasting effects, that continue in adulthood. Resulting in disruptions, hindrances and a depressive life overall. All these issues result in psychological trauma and consequences that last long enough to ruin the female's life, sometimes even last a lifetime.

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