

Female Genital Mutilation- An Epidemic that keeps on taking its toll

Padhmavathi.APh.D

Research Scholar in English, Sri GVG Visalakshi college for Women, Udumalpet

Dr. Sujatha Damodaran.

Associate Professor/Head, Department of English (Aided), Sri GVG Visalakshi college for Women, Udumalpet.

Abstract:

Another article on FGM even millions of pages on this cruel practice of mutilation is not enough to describe the clear violation of physical and psychological rights of girls and women's sexuality for the benefit of men. This purpose is justified in the realm of the cleansing of the female body, religious passages, family, caste etc. FGM can never be classified as a part of culture because scrapping an organ is the cruelest form of torture in the name of absurdity. In this process, the women become the commodity herself, betrayed and her trust destroyed, robbed of her health and sexual pleasure. FGM the highest form of human rights abuse is found almost everywhere not in the African community alone. Female Genital Mutilation, a serious crime must be stopped and should be considered everyone's business to hope for a future FGM free world.

Keywords: *Mutilation, scar, violation, genital organ, and tradition*

Introduction:

It is heartening to believe that nearly 140 million women across the world, have endured this cruel practice of Female Genital Mutilation. If this practice is not stopped in the coming years, more girls might lose their lives shortly. The idea that this custom applies only to African countries is seriously misinformed, but even the most advanced western countries also face the problem of eradicating FGM. This is the worst form of child abuse as the girls nowadays are mutilated in the early days of birth to avoid them remembering the harmful event in their later days. In most cases, labia and clitoris are cut or sometimes completely hacked away and the remaining flesh is stitched just leaving a small hole to urinate and for the flow of menstrual blood. This cut is re wounded whenever the mother gives birth to a baby. Traditionally the cutting is done on many girls at the same time with a shared device such as an unsterilized knife or even broken glass sometimes and recently the medical community is increasingly making mutilation a safe procedure. FGM as justified offers no health benefits rather induces lifelong pain and often results in the death of the mother and the baby. In truth, the community does not bother to think of the future pain yet to occur but rather, they explain that the consequences are determined by gods or external spirits. The victims are often the survivors of the horrifying incident. It shall take a long time to reach out to everyone regarding serious crimes like FGM but it should also be kept in mind that for every 10 seconds, FGM claims another victim's dignity in some part of the world.

Kenya

United Nations Declaration in 2012 proposed to stop FGM and almost all countries, including Kenya, deemed it illegal. Nearly 50% of the women population in Kenya have undergone Mutilation but this same country is one of the fore frontiers to eradicate Female Genital Mutilation. FGM is seen as a tag of identity, a symbol of transition from childhood to adulthood, cleansing of the female system. This is usually performed by the older women with no medical knowledge and they are given the title of specialist 'cutter.' The right is performed in the public followed by a lot of feasting and celebration of dance. In Kenya it is performed on girls aged between 12-17 where the first stage of cutting of clitoris is done in the public and in the second stage which is done under the shadow of a bush, the entire genital is hacked away just leaving a flat red flesh and later the girl's legs are bound, the wound when healed is left with a small hole for urination and menstruation, to have sex and give birth. The screams are unheard, the pain is unfelt but after the ceremony, the girl is shifted to a secluded place with a special woman as a mentor to advise them on the adulthood conduct. Even worse in the Maasai community, where the women are seen as mere objects and are not allowed to speak in front of men regarding any social issues. They are married off as soon as the initiation cut is performed and hence the dropout from school at an earlier age is very high. It is considered a shame to show the pain to the outside world, so their screams are muffled by gagging them with a rag and this mutilation does a perfect and permanent nightmare in a girl's life. Maternal mortality rates and acquiring HIV during the cut are higher as the mutilation touches a lot

on the sexual reproductive system of a woman. The government of Kenya has taken adequate measures to preach the community on the harmful cultural practices that affect the girls socially, physically, and psychologically but in most cases, the politicians advocating anti-FGM becomes an outcast or the traitor and are denied votes. Only severe punishments like prosecution and jail can help the governing body to say 'NO to FGM.'

This barbaric practice views women as just mere vessels for giving birth and this oppression in the name of cultural practice must be stopped because an organ in the body need not be corrected according to any culture. For this to be stopped, education must be used as a primary tool to help protect girls from being victims of these bad traditions. Older women must be enlightened before trying to preach to the male community because they are brainwashed to believe this taboo of cultural righthood. Mothers have incredible strength to protect their daughters from mutilation and must learn to say 'Enough'. A crime like FGM cannot wait for a gradual change to happen, it should have been stopped long earlier. Many women campaigners seek media support to build campaigns and funding's to eradicate FGM at its roots. FGM is like any other pandemics like corona or Ebola and the measure to stop a fatal disease like corona by world leaders must be followed in the case of FGM. Kenya is now using multifaceted approaches to stop FGM because they realize that FGM on women causes a major economic impact on society. The message conveyed must seek to bring a change in individual and in societal behaviors. Though some communities have started coming out of this tradition, still in many parts of Kenya and other African countries discussing FGM is considered an extreme offence or taboo. The body created by God cannot be subjected to any form of torture and the trauma brought by this practice can never be reversed. Thus, it is time the community stands up for the rights of girls to let them live in peace.

The stories of the survivors must be heard in large to understand their pain and our ignorance towards them as this type of human cruelty is very difficult to forgive as the scars stay with them forever. The culture of silence and denying rights to women must end as it is not easy for them to forget how they are made to feel on the day of the cut. By nature, intercourse between the partners enhances their emotional relationships but the absence of pleasure of sex due to FGM might create barriers in a relationship. FGM will never fade away because the survivors walk with it every day in their life. This tradition regardless of place, caste and community must be stopped immediately since it is also a form of genocide.

India

This demonic practice of Female Genital Mutilation has not practiced in faraway Africa alone but it also takes place largely in the suburbs of Mumbai, mainly in the Bohra community. For a long, it has remained taboo in the Bohra community to talk about FGM where nearly 75% of the women from the community have undergone this cut. Recently many women have endured their pain and have become a trigger and passion to help stop other girls from experiencing the same torture. On may 1st, Sudan proposed a new law making FGM a criminal offence with a jail sentence of up to 3 years. When Sudan can propose a law, India still denies bringing a law because of its reluctance to accept the presence of this practice in Indian society. FGM must be made political and it should be discussed on the national agenda. The tradition of FGM in the Bohra community, India has prevailed for decades with a common term as 'Khatna.' The reason Khatna is happening so widely is because of the notion that tradition cannot be slain rather girls can be slain at the whims of barbaric taboos. The sad truth prevailing in the idea that the clitoris is just an immoral lump of flesh for its only purpose of sexual desire. It is cruel gender violence and its secrecy in wrapped cunning and deceptive cloak on young minds and bodies. Gender reforms take a long time to get rectified even hard when it is performed in the name of tradition but still law plays an important role in the social reform. FGM roots from gender inequalities, therefore creating awareness among young boys and girls shall enable the future younger generation to have a broader outlook and a healthy relationship.

The social exclusion of many volunteers against FGM makes it hard for them to stand up for these human rights and their speeches are no matches when compared to the patriarchal control and under the code of religious conduct. FGM is not about any culture, it is about young girls irrespective of their color and caste. They must be protected from this most severe human rights abuse on the planet. Society transforms continuously on a larger scale and in a place like India, where the topic of sexuality does not have a clear voice, it might seem impossible to talk about it in public but only through education from the school level can this situation be redeemed. FGM can never be compared to male circumcision which is medically proved hygienically safe unlike this practice of cut to curb sexual desire. Eradicating FGM is good for the whole world because health organizations can spend their money and effort in curbing other diseases by nature rather than treating losing lives for this man-made disease.

The role of men in putting an end to FGM is very important. Every father needs to protect his daughter and make them strong and healthy to lead a happy life. There is a saying, 'Behind every successful man there is a woman'. Now stopping FGM should promote a saying, 'next to every man standing there is a strong woman'.

Conclusion:

“To cut off the sensitive sexual organ of a girl is directly against the honesty of nature, a distortion to her womanhood, and an abuse of her fundamental right”

- Joseph Osuigwe Chidiebere

FGM must be tackled legally and socially and the fundamental unanimity of various campaigners believe that this tradition can be broken through Education as science has no role in this cruel belief. Women take the subordinate position in many communities, the power lies among the male decree and older traditional women, who secure income and status through mutilating younger girls. Women who undergo this practice suffer damage to their bodies and their trust in leading a happy life and few women who escape the harm of FGM are put to social trial with their family relationships destroyed completely ultimately making them lose their peace of mind.

Each one of our part in erasing FGM is necessary to make FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION as a part of history alone to protect our sisters and friends to live a better future...

“An educated girl will stay healthy, save money, build a community,
empower her community, lift her country and
change the world “

Workscited:

Burrage, Hilary (2016). *FEMALE MUTILATION The truth behind the horrifying global practice of female genital mutilation*. New Holland Publishers Pty Ltd.

Thomas, Lynn (2003). *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Boyle, Elizabeth Heger (2002). *Female Genital Cutting: Cultural Conflict in the Global Community*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Thomas, Robert (1813). *The Modern Practice of Physick*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown.