

Social Relevance of Virginity in the institution of Marriage: A Youth Perspective

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Abstract

Within the literature on sexuality, virginity is frequently treated as a social construction accompanied with moral policing. The concept is considered as fluid, as it comes with varied interpretations depending on various social constructions of different societies. Virginity is also seen within a large macro social context that includes components of broad sexual philosophy that offer to support these claims as well as prove that means and females adhere to the same sexual norms. Logical findings show that the post- modern society has accepted different framework, it is no more attached with strings of commitment. Having an intact hymen is no more a taboo.

Keywords: social construction, sexuality, norms, hymen

Introduction

“Virginity is a fictional concept
constructed by society inverted.”

-Isabella Castello

Virginity is an idea associated with the concept of purity which is used as a means to control and manipulate the bodies of women and enforce social construct of gender norms on them. In more or less every society the loss of virginity is seen as a rite of passage which ferries a woman's journey from adolescence to womanhood. Usually this transition is termed as virginity loss. Hence virginity conventionally accepted means vaginal penial intercourse. (Jessor and Jessor 1975; Solon 1996, Sprecher and Reagan 1996, Weis 1985). So the regulatory standards are in place to keep women sexuality contained within the context of heteronormativity – that is, monogamous, married relationships with only the opposite sex.

From time immemorial virginity has always been a determining element in a 'woman's worth' and as a result the bodies

are closely scrutinised. As our ancestors progressed from communal hunter gathering societies to land- owning societies, the reliance on virginity became more prominent. Holding land necessitated getting male successors so they could be no doubt about ancestry. So the remedy? To ensure a pure lineage land and eventually power make sure a bride or concubine is a 'virgin'

The Core Issue of Virginity

For centuries, across cultures virginity has been equated with goodness and virtue. Virginity has different meanings in different social context. The concept of virginity is also placed in a larger, macro social framework incorporating elements of a broad sexual ideology. Is virginity still a big issue, when it was asked to the respondents most of the (56.43%) male and female respondents were agreed that it is still a big issue in our society while 10.72% said that to some extent it is still a big issue.

32.86% said that now it is not a big issue in society.

Therefore when it was asked to the respondents that what could be the reason for the relevance of virginity in Indian society 20.24% male and female respondents said that to make sure of paternity of children while 32.85 were agreed on the issue of expression of sanctity/purity, maximum 43.33% male and female respondents agreed that it is a source of honor for families and individual.

Advancement in medical science and the issue of virginity

An intact hymen is not a sure sign of virginity. A woman's hymen can be ruptured by non-sexual activities like intense sports, dancing, sitting astride on two wheelers, etc. It is not necessary for a virgin to bleed the first time she has sex. In fact, as one goes by the statistics, only 42 per cent of women do so. With the current advances in medical technology, a plastic surgeon can quite easily reconstruct a layer of tissue to resemble the hymen (the procedure is called Hymenoplasty).

Due to advancement in medical sciences (hymen reconstruction) is virginity remains an important issue, large percentage (59.52) respondents said that it remains an important issue while 36.90 were not agree with this.

Role of virginity in happily married life

To be a virgin is actually someone who has not done the sexual activities. In India people believe that the person should not lose his or her virginity before marriage. They believe that the charm is only felt when it is not tested or done earlier. This the main reason now days that marriages are broken because there is nothing left for

doing as everything is done in earlier period. When it was asked to the respondents that is virginity is important for happily married life 54.33% male and female respondents accepted that it has a very important role in married life while 25.47% respondents were not agree with this. 17.61% respondents said that it depends on circumstances means that virginity it too important but not than person, but the partner have to understand to not repeat this mistake in future.

Virginity and gender aspect

When it was tried to find out that is there any relation between virginity and gender aspect it was found that 34.59% male respondents and 26.39% female respondents accepted that it is just about women while 29.74% male and 42.55% female respondents said that it is about men too. 19.45% male and 9.36% female respondents accepted that it is not important for women while 10.81% male and 15.31% female respondents agreed that it is not important for men

Relevance of virginity

From time immemorial a woman's virginity has been her prized possession. Throughout history one will read about cultures across the world placing a high value on a woman's virginity. But times are changing and for an increasing number of young men and women, sex is no longer the kind of taboo that it earlier used to be. And much to our older generation's charging, pre-marital sex is a definite reality of our times.

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Subjects and Method

Personal profile of the respondents

Total number of respondents were 420. Out of 185 were male and 235 were female. 89.19% male were of 20-25 age group while 10.81% respondents were of 25-30 age group. 89.36% female were

between 25.30 age group while 10.64 were between 25-30 age group. Regarding educational status of the respondents out of 420 respondents 74.04% respondents were graduate while 19.29% were post graduate and 6.67 were pursuing professional courses.

Method

The fieldwork was conducted in Lucknow. In- depth interview and semi-structured questions were administered. The enrolled respondents were asked questions on issues of sexuality and virginity

Discussion

Table 1: Personal profile of the respondents

Criteria	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Age						
20-25	165	89.19	210	89.36	375	89.29
25-30	20	10.81	25	10.64	45	10.71
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100
Educational status						
Graduation	136	73.51	175	74.46	311	74.04
Post graduation	37	20.00	44	18.73	81	19.29
Others (Professional Courses)	12	6.49	16	6.81	28	6.67
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

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II

Table 2 : Respondent's views on having partners

Do you have any partners	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Yes	69	37.29	92	39.15	161	38.33
No	116	62.71	143	60.85	259	61.67
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

Out of total respondents 38.33% male and female respondents accepted that they have partner while 61.67 said that they don't have any partner.

When it was asked to the respondents that how much they trust their partners 50.96%

male and female respondents accepted that they totally trust their partner. The percentage of female was less than male. 32.62% said that they trust but not so much while 13.80% had not any trust on their partners.

Table 3: Views regarding trust on their partners

Views regarding trust on their partners	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Totally	98	52.98	116	49.37	214	50.96
Not so much	65	35.13	72	30.63	137	32.62
No trust	20	10.81	38	16.17	58	13.80
Others	2	1.08	9	3.83	11	2.62
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Table 4 : Relevance of institution of marriage

What is the relevance of institution of marriage in today's society	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Companionship	50	60.24	33	39.76	83	100
Social pressure	44	45.36	53	54.64	97	100
Sexual satisfaction	12	38.71	19	61.29	31	100
To please parents	22	45.83	26	54.17	48	100
Security	19	36.53	33	63.46	52	100
Stability	58	55.76	46	44.23	104	100
Parenthood	26	59.09	18	40.91	44	100
Independent life	41	42.26	56	57.74	97	100
Others	7	50.00	7	50.00	14	100

Marriage is one of the important and basic institutions in any society. When the relevance of marriage in today's society was asked to the respondents out of 83 responses 60.24% male and 39.76 answered in the sense of companionship, out of 97 responses 45.36% male and 54.64% female said that social pressures are behind marriage while out of 31

respondents 38.71% male and 61.29 agreed for sexual satisfaction. Out of 48 responses 45.83% male and 54.17% answered that marriage is for the sake of pleasure of parents. Maximum male respondents 63.46% had views that marriage is important for security while maximum female respondent 60.24 agreed that companionship is important in marriage.

III

Changing Profile of Marriage

Table 5: Changing Profile of marriage in contemporary society

Has the profile of marriage changed in society	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Yes	158	85.40	161	68.51	319	75.95
No	20	10.81	22	9.36	42	10.00
To some extent	5	2.71	48	20.42	53	12.62
Others	2	1.08	4	1.71	6	1.43
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

When the question regarding changing profile of marriage in contemporary society was asked to the respondents 75.95 male and female respondents agreed that it has changed while 10% did not agree, 12.62% said that it has changed but to some extent. Of course now things are changing. Sex between unmarried couples is on the rise

and many Indian metros are seeing men and women opting to live-in together without the bond of holy matrimony. Even amongst those who are open to sex before marriage attitudes vary- from those who see it an expression of true and undying love to others who view it as a recreational activity between two consenting adults.

Table 6: Process of socialization and its impact on the shaping views on marriage

Does your upbringing shape your views on marriage	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Yes	82	44.32	117	49.78	199	47.38
No	68	36.76	78	33.19	146	34.77
To some extent	35	18.92	40	17.03	75	17.85
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

The process of socialization has a very important role in shaping the views of the people of the society. When it was asked to the respondents that had the way of socialization shapes their views on marriage 47.38% male and female respondents agreed on the issue while 34.77% not accepted the role of socialization in shaping their views on marriage. 17.85% respondents accepted that socialization has role but to some extent in shaping their views.

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Table 7: Respondent's expectations from their partners

What are your expectations from your partners	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Companionship	51	44.74	63	55.26	114	100
Physical attraction	39	58.21	28	41.79	67	100
Financially sound	12	23.07	40	76.92	52	100
Professional status	29	37.66	48	62.33	77	100
Sharing of responsibility	39	43.82	50	56.17	89	100
Virginity	132	66.33	67	33.67	199	100
Giving space	32	53.33	28	46.67	60	100
Others	9	52.95	8	47.05	17	100

What were the respondents expectation from their partners, when it was asked out of 114 respondents 44.74 male and 55.26% female agreed on companionship, out of 67 responses 58.21% male and 41.79 female recommended physical attraction, in 52 responses 23.07% male and 76.92 female agreed that partner should have financially sound. preferences regarding professional

status out of 77 responses 37.66 male and 62.33 female agreed on this while out of 89 responses 43.82% male and 56.17% female said that partner should be responsible There were 199 responses on the question of virginity out of which 66.33% male and 33.67 female agreed that their partner must be virgin.

IV

The Core Issue of Virginity

Table 8: Virginity as an issue in society

Is virginity still a big issue in society	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Yes	102	55.13	135	57.45	237	56.43
No	60	32.44	68	28.94	138	32.86
To some extent	20	10.81	25	10.64	45	10.72
Others	3	1.62	7	2.97	10	2.39
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For centuries, across cultures virginity has been equated with goodness and virtue. Virginity has different meanings in different social context. The concept of virginity is also placed in a larger, macro social framework incorporating elements of a broad sexual ideology. Is virginity still a big

issue, when it was asked to the respondents most of the (56.43%) male and female respondents were agreed that it is still a big issue in our society while 10.72% said that to some extent it is still a big issue. 32.86% said that now it is not a big issue in society.

Table 9: Advancement in medical science and the issue of virginity

With the development and advancement in medical sciences (hymen reconstruction) is virginity remains an important issue?	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Yes	110	59.46	140	59.58	250	59.52
No	70	37.84	85	36.17	155	36.90
Others	5	2.70	10	4.25	15	3.58
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

An intact hymen is not a sure sign of virginity. A woman's hymen can be ruptured by non-sexual activities like intense sports, dancing, sitting astride on two wheelers, etc. It is not necessary for a virgin to bleed the first time she has sex. In fact, as one goes by the statistics, only 42 per cent of women do so. With the current advances in medical technology, a plastic surgeon can quite easily reconstruct a layer of tissue to

resemble the hymen (the procedure is called Hymenoplasty).

Due to advancement in medical sciences (hymen reconstruction) is virginity remains an important issue, large percentage (59.52) respondents said that it remains an important issue while 36.90 were not agree with this.

Table 10: Role of virginity in happily married life

Is virginity important for happily married life?	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Yes	95	51.35	134	57.02	229	54.53
No	58	31.35	49	20.85	107	25.47
Depends on circumstances	27	14.59	47	20.00	74	17.61
Others	5	2.71	5	2.13	10	2.39
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

To be a virgin is actually someone who has not done the sexual activities. In India people believe that the person should not lose his or her virginity before marriage. They believe that the charm is only felt when it is not tested or done earlier. This the main reason now days that marriages are broken because there is nothing left for doing as everything is done in earlier period. When it was asked to the

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Table 11: Virginity and gender aspect

Virginity in marriage is	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Just about women	64	34.59	62	26.39	126	30.00
About men too	55	29.74	100	42.55	155	36.91
Not important for women	36	19.45	22	9.36	58	13.81
Not important for men	20	10.81	36	15.31	56	13.33
Others	10	5.40	15	6.39	25	5.95
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

When it was tried to find out that is there any relation between virginity and gender aspect it was found that 34.59% male respondents and 26.39% female respondents accepted that it is just about women while 29.74% male and 42.55%

female respondents said that it is about men too. 19.45% male and 9.36% female respondents accepted that it is not important for women while 10.81% male and 15.31% female respondents agreed that it is not important for men

Table 12: Relevance of virginity

Reason for relevance of virginity in Indian society	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
make sure of paternity of children	50	27.02	35	14.89	85	20.24
expression of sanctity/purity	56	30.28	82	34.89	138	32.85
a source of honour for families and individual	74	40.00	108	45.96	182	43.33
Others	5	2.70	10	4.26	15	3.58
Total	185	100	235	100	420	100

Conclusion

The study reveals that the construct of sexual purity and virginity should not be guided by social and cultural norms. Because if imposed the outcomes of this construction is both harmful for men and women.

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