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Jhuma, Basak
Faculty of Human-Environment Studies, Kyushu University

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Shame and Masochism in Women

— A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Japanese & Indian Psyche —

Jhuma Basak (*Faculty of Human-Environment Studies, Kyushu University*)

This paper attempts to examine the psychological, psychoanalytical and socio-cultural construct of masochism in society exemplifying the various perspectives of psychoanalysts across the world over the years. Whereas, shame has been a recent exploration in western psychoanalytic literature possibly due to its experiential lack of it, as opposed to the eastern counterpart. In the study of both shame and masochism, Japan has undertaken a pioneering journey resulting from her own psychological formations of these qualities in her women. A closer look at Japan's folk-tales and myths narrating the story of the 'devoted' and the 'wounded' mother/wife clearly unfolds these psychological mechanisms of shame and masochism in women. A prolonged study is conducted of the same in another context, in Indian cultural and clinical situations. And in both the countries and its women, one takes a critical view of the 'Prohibition of Don't Look' that affects society and the individual by taking a deeper look at the 'wound' inflicted upon the devoted mother (through cultural and clinical intervention).

Key Words: Shame; Masochism; Prohibition

Introduction:

The quality of shame in women in Japan, which is often referred to as the "shame culture" (Benedict 1946, Kitayama 1995) is one of the core areas of concern of this paper. It also extends its research domain to women in India. It looks at the treatment of women's identity as mothers and caregivers in these two societies and how it has affected their psychological structure. Simultaneously it examines the element of self-sacrifice in women encouraged by Eastern cultural philosophy leading to the development of moral masochistic (altruistic) feelings in women. Through the exemplification of folk tales the paper tries to focus on the shame induced in women in Japan, and masochism in women in India. While, through the example of a clinical vignette it attempts to draw attention to the plight of the woman and her working through her internal masochistic needs evolving towards the gradual freedom of herself from such bondage.

Overview:

In 1931 the pioneering psychoanalyst from Japan, Heisaku Kosawa, published a paper entitled, 'Two kinds of Guilt Feelings – the Ajase Complex'. He distinguished between repentant guilt that arose out of matricidal wish and punitive guilt from patricide. In that same paper Kosawa referred to the ancient Buddhist tale of Prince Ajase where the mother's deep forgiveness evoked a sense of acute guilt in

Ajase instead of being punished by the mother. She nursed her son while he recovered from his illness, wanting to kill his mother. Kosawa concluded that the son's repentant guilt was induced and equally shared by the devoted mother. Although Ajase did not eventually kill his mother, her deep devotion was symbolically killing her everyday. In Japanese everyday life, 'killing oneself' is like a metaphor of self-sacrifice (Kitayama, 1991). It is observed that the mother is often proud of her self-sacrificial behaviour and may cherish underlying masochistic fantasy.

In 1985, Osamu Kitayama introduced the 'Prohibition of Don't Look' as an unsaid rule exercised on the dependant person in a love situation. To put it in other words, in the situation of 'amae', he is forbidden to see the inevitable painful process of separation-individuation involved in a symbiotic relationship. Kitayama studied innumerable Japanese folk-tales and mythologies to derive at this juncture where the 'wound' of the devoted woman for the person she loved, (i.e. her husband), and her tremendous effort to hide her wound, her shame, from her husband faced irreversible consequences in being discovered in her wounded state. Some of those folk-tales are - (a) 'The Crane-Wife'; (b) 'The Snake-Wife'; (c) 'The Clam-Wife'; (d) 'The Izanagi-Izanami Myth'.

In all the above examples, the women fled away in shame of being discovered of their wound. Kitayama mentioned that there are two possible consequences of this shame,

of this fleeing away of the women in these folk tales, and that is - (i) anger, or (ii) silent retreat (1996). A possible explanation may be that the anger mixed with the hurt of being discovered, and then subsequently rejected by the husband compelled the woman to turn all her ambivalence against her own self using the process of introjection, and thus she fled. One may notice that the maternal heroines in the above examples have two aspects of reaction. One is the benevolent caregiver who tries to respond to the hero's endless demands; and the other is an injured animal who sacrificed her body, her self, to meet those demands while hiding her painful sacrifice with the Prohibition of Don't Look (1991). This then forms the culturally transmitted masochistic altruism that becomes the cultural feminine ideal in Japan.

Aim:

The contention of this paper is to –

Explore the 'shame culture' in Japan and its extension in India, thereby drawing a larger perspective of shame culture of the East.

Compare Japanese and Indian perspectives on masochism in women, through folk tales, cultural study and clinical situations.

Method:

The method for the research followed is a three-fold path, namely,

- 1 . Psychoanalytic Literature (Japan and Universal)
- 2 . Cultural Study (India)
- 3 . Clinical Intervention (India)

1 . Psychoanalytic Literature:

It is only in the last thirty years that shame has gradually become a major theme of exploration in the psychoanalytic literature (Lansky, 2005). As K. Okano quoted Broucek in his paper, 1994, that there seemed to have been a "cultural conspiracy to avoid discussing shame" in psychoanalytic investigation. However, after 1971, with the influential work of Kohut *The Analysis of the Self*, considerable attention was given to the study of shame in individuals and in cultures. The exception to this initial general neglect, were also, Piers and Singer, 1953. While cultural anthropological research led to works like *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* by Ruth Benedict in 1946.

Shame is an affect that wishes to remain hidden itself, as well as to hide the content of the subject that induces the affect of shame in the individual. It also refers to the danger of its likely emergence and the consequences of the affect's rising into consciousness. In 1989 Morrison very clearly distinguished, "shame generates concealment out of fear of rendering the self unacceptable," in contrast to guilt, which "invites confession and forgiveness" (p.2). We experience shame when we are exposed to ourselves or to others as unlovable, inferior, or deficient. Shame emanates conflicts with moral standards, ideals, role expectations and fears anticipated rejection and disgrace. Whereas guilt is concerned with transgression and prohibition and thus indicate subsequent retaliatory punishment. Shame is always about a flaw or a lack in the 'self' unlike guilt which is about harming the 'other'.

Okano in his paper, 'Shame and Social Phobia: A Transcultural Viewpoint', said, "Typical Japanese examples of this culturally promoted show of shame include: It is considered impolite to stare at people, especially one's elders or superiors; and it is often regarded as improper to be verbally assertive and to make one's opinion too clear and distinct in public. Generally, it is not wise to show off your competence and competitiveness to others. It is also regarded as taboo not to be in touch with one's own feelings of shame, and in the Japanese language "a man who does not know what shame is" is equivalent to a "thick-skinned" and "insensitive" person who is practically unfit for society", 1994.

While taking a look at masochism in women, Freud saw masochism as not the manifestation of a primary instinct, but that which originates from sadism and has been turned around upon the self (1919). In 1924, Freud further treated masochism in three different types, namely, (i) feminine masochism, (ii) erotogenic masochism, and (iii) moral masochism. Reich saw masochism as the hidden (much like shame which also prefers to remain hidden) inner wish of the subject to express the underlying sadism though free of guilt. This way it indirectly forced the other to love the subject. However, in 1933, Freud suggested further that social proscriptions for suppression of aggression in women merely ignited feminine tendency towards masochistic impulses.

Helen Deutsch contended that masochism was rooted in the psychobiological experiences of women's menses, defloration, childbirth and child care (1930). While in 1937 Horney expressed that human masochism finds deep satisfaction by losing the self in something greater by dissolving individuality. However, Masafumi Nakakuki pointed out that instead of losing of the self through normal masochism, it provides the individual with an altruistic aspect in relationship with others (1994) in the eastern context.

2. Cultural Study:

In India women experience shame in bodily functions like menstruation, child-birth. Menstrual taboos are something that almost all Indian women grow up with. A very strong act of Prohibition on women in India is when they are in their menstrual cycle - they are forbidden to enter any religious arena or to touch anything pious whether religious or social (it has spread from the initial religious domain to social domain). The belief is that menstruation is 'bad blood' which the female body passes, hence the female body is polluted creating fear of polluting others/things that she would touch (J. Puri, 1999). By creating such prohibitions in a woman's life in India it symbolically denies the most productive period of a woman's life and her sexuality. It symbolically proclaims the woman as 'dirty', 'filthy' who needs to be periodically cleansed. Thus, the woman grows up and lives a life feeling a deep sense of shame in being born a woman. Kitayama mentioned the "Fear of defilement" in Japanese psyche resulting in cleaning rituals in his paper, 'On the Therapist's Receptivity towards the Patient's Disclosure of Shame Experience in Japan' (1995, p.14). Mary Douglas, an anthropologist from America, remarked that "Dirt then is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate element. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the filed of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity" (1984, p. 35).

A story from, *Thakurmar Jhuli*, a collection of India short stories for children. It narrates the initiation of self denial and the glorification of masochism in Indian culture.

'Shukhu Aar Dukhu' (The Happy and the Sad)

A weaver had two wives. The weaver loved his older-wife and her daughter, Shukhu. The younger-wife and his daughter, Dukhu, did all the house-hold chores, cooked, cleaned, listened to all orders of the older-wife and Shukhu. They sometimes wove thread, sold that and ate with the money they earned. While Shukhu and her mother lived a life of leisure, ate all the good food and did nothing!

One day Dukhu and her mother had left the cotton and the thread in the sun to dry, when all of a sudden a strong wind came and blew it away! Dukhu started crying thinking now they had nothing to sell and eat! Her immediate concern was, what will happen to her mother! The wind took pity on her, and told her to follow it then she will get back all her cotton and thread!

She started following the wind but on her way she was stopped by the banana-tree requesting her to clear out all the wild leaves that had surrounded it. She stopped, cleared the wild leaves and continued to follow the wind again. Then a wild-tree requested her that there was too much dirt around its root, if Dukhu could clear that! Dukhu did so, and then continued to follow the wind. Then she was stopped by a horse too, Dukhu did as was requested and continued...The wind finally took her to a white, beautiful building where there was an old woman sitting and weaving thread, and with every thread magically a whole 'sari' was woven! The wind advised Dukhu to ask the old woman for cotton. Dukhu did so, the old woman told her – there was a towel in the other room, clothes in another, oil too, to take all that and go for a 'dip' in the pond, come back fresh, eat something and then she will give Dukhu the cotton! Dukhu went in to find beautiful clothes and fashionable towels, but she took the simplest, old, torn clothes and towel for herself. As soon as she dipped in the water she was turned into a most beautiful woman, adorned with gold jewellery! When she went to eat – the room was full of the most delicious food, but Dukhu just took a little from every-day rice. When she went to get cotton, the room was full of the finest cotton in huge bags – she took one small, little bag of cotton, just enough for her mother and left! Before leaving Dukhu touched the feet of the

old woman to take her blessings and left!

On her way back the horse offered a ride to Dukhu! The wild tree gave her a bag full of golden coins! The banana tree gave her one branch full of golden bananas! Dukhu's mother saw all this, and took her daughter in her arms! At night when they opened the small bag of cotton, there appeared the most handsome prince for Dukhu!

When Shukhu and her mother saw all this they were very jealous. Shukhu followed the exact way of Dukhu to get all this! But she was rude to the wind, she did not keep any of the requests of the banana tree or the wild tree or the horse! She went straight to the old woman and spoke to her very rudely and demanded all her goods and wealth! She took the most expensive clothes to wear, used the most fashionable towel, ate the best of food and ran into the pond to take her dip and get the gifts that Dukhu got! Before leaving she took the most expensive, huge bag of cotton and left without seeking the old woman's blessings! Alas! She turned into an ugly looking old woman and cried the whole night! And from the box there appeared a huge snake at night and killed Shukhu! Her mother found her daughter dead bitten by a snake in the morning, and thus killed herself!

3. Clinical Intervention:

Background of the Patient:

A woman aged 56 years (Mrs. P); by profession a teacher of physics in school; a mother of 2 grown up successful daughters; married for over 30 year; her father died suddenly by heart-attack when she was an infant; her mother brought up the entire family who was also a teacher, with five children; she was the youngest; her family was originally from Pakistan but had to come to India during the Partition.

Mrs. P's life history tells us about her growing up in a very disciplined, cultured family where education was most important. After the death of her father (when she was still an infant) the family had a period of financial crunch but the mother tried her best not to let the children and their education be affected by it. Mrs. P had deep admiration for her own mother who would teach in a school during the day, do all the house-hold chores, take care of all her children and at

night sow clothes to sell to her neighbours and school colleagues to earn extra money. Her values and principles of life were built on such lessons of her mother's sacrifice and hard life. In the course of time, Mrs. P herself turned out to be even more admirable in her self-sacrifice towards her own family after her marriage. She wanted to be a doctor but gave up her studies because her family could not afford it. After marriage she finished her Masters through correspondence course. Her days would be spent in looking after her child (the first daughter was born in the following year after her marriage), do all her house-hold chores, and at night she would study for her correspondence course after her child and husband went off to sleep. Initially they used to live in a one room apartment with hardly any space - but with her calculated savings through years their status in society moved upwards till they finally bought a spacious flat in a posh locality in the heart of the city. Eventually she found this school job where she had been teaching for 17 years.

She was brought for therapy by her elder daughter (who was herself in analysis with a colleague of mine) with symptoms of constant crying and feeling unloved by everyone in her family. In the initial sessions she refused to talk at all since she believed there was nothing wrong with her - besides, if she was feeling unloved by her family why should she talk to an 'outsider' (i.e the therapist), she should rather talk to her family. As she gradually started to open up, she even mentioned that her daughter brought her for therapy so that she and her family could continue to disregard her (Mrs. P's) agony and lead their individual happy lives. Nobody cared for her pain.

Analytic Process & Treatment:

The psychotherapeutic treatment started with classical analysis, on the couch, with three sessions a week. She was in analysis for 2 ½ years, showing considerable improvement before she decided to discontinue her treatment (saying that since she was much better than before, there was no more need for her to continue her treatment; besides, now she felt she could take good care of her own self.)

Excerpt from the 36th Session (3 months; Mrs. P – patient; A – analyst):

Mrs. P: I feel that all my sacrifices for my family has been futile.

A: What makes you feel like that?

Mrs. P: What do you mean by asking that? After all these months if you still have to ask me that question then what kind of an analyst are you? Don't you know, can't you see that my two daughters are completely selfish, only cares about their career, their friends, parties...For all these years I have cooked for them, learnt special dishes to cook for them, saved every penny possible so that they can have a comfortable life style and not suffer like me, sat every evening with them when they were in school to do their homework, made them study...Their father did not do any of this! He only earned money, and came back home and watched TV! It was me who sacrificed my own joys to bring joy into their life. And now they have no time to listen to my pain - they send me to a professional therapist who is paid to listen to me!

A: Perhaps you would like your daughters to make the same sacrifices for you as you once made for them.

Mrs. P: Isn't that expected from your own child? I did that for my mother, why will they not do for me? I remember in my childhood I used to come back from school, while other children would go to play outside I would finish up the kitchen work, wash dishes, so that when my mother came back home from school she will have less work to do. And my daughters, they just treat their home like a hotel! They leave their dishes in the sink as if their servant mother is there to wash their dirt!

Excerpt from the 144th session (1 year):

A: You seem to be very quiet today...

Mrs. P: Yes...I feel sad.....I wonder why I had to deny myself for so long... Its true that all I did was for my family, and I have no regrets for that. But now when I am nearing 60 I feel there is hardly any time left for me to do all that I once wanted to do. My daughters have their own life now...my family seems to be doing quite okay even if I don't cook everyday or keep the house spic and span...The other day I was quite amused to see that my elder daughter was dusting the rooms because she was expecting some of her colleagues to visit the house...Maybe I should have left them on their own a long time back, then they

probably would have taken more responsibility of the house...I wonder where did I go wrong.....

Excerpt from the 216th session (1 ½ years):

Mrs. P: I have a piece of good news to share with you! I have finally joined an acting course in an amateur theatre company! I have always wanted to do this – I would really like to be on-stage! The first and the last time was in my high school! I remember how much I loved it – the whole preparation, excitement! And my teachers had also praised me so highly! I feel so happy that I am being able to do some of the things that I have always longed for!

Countertransference:

In the initial stages with Mrs. P. I was often very irritated with her constant emphasis on her being right and always perfect. As if she was a strict headmistress in session, with her being the teacher and me the student. Somewhere perhaps it made me feel like a child within the therapeutic set-up (she was much older than me in age too). So, I had to go into an introspective speculation to free my ego from Mrs. P's overpowering super-ego/personality. Once this was possible, I often felt sad for Mrs. P, identifying with her tremendous self sacrifice and devotion towards her family and children. Undoubtedly it reminded me of my own mother (who had also lost her father in her early childhood). However, it was very satisfactory to find the gradual change in Mrs. P's life, and how she actively chose a happy life for herself. In the process the rest of the family was also free to be themselves, and that gradually helped the family to find their peace and togetherness with each other.

Treatment Implications:

The immediate treatment implication was to free the patient of her ailing symptom of constant crying and feeling unloved. Hence, more emphasis was laid on building therapeutic rapport as she felt isolated from her immediate family due to her own imaginations. While in the long-run, the intention was to go into depth psychology so that the inherent masochistic quality in her personality could be dealt with. This was very important as this created further expectations and complications with her immediate family. As she started feeling free of her own masochistic demands on herself and on others, and the initial harsh super-

ego was being tuned into a more flexible benign one, she started actively participating in seeking happiness for her life. This way her object relationship started improving.

Some of the Problems Encountered During Therapy:

One of the major difficulties in this therapy was the repeated need in the patient to intellectualize every interaction and try and get into a rhetorical argument with the analyst. This was quite obvious considering the teaching background that Mrs. P came from. To her the whole world was almost like a student, and she was the best teacher. This was often the case in the therapeutic set-up too. There was a long and deep period of depression during the middle part of the therapy when the patient often felt suicidal due to feeling worthless as a mother, often finding life empty and meaningless.

Results of the Research:

If it is possible to make a generalized observation from the above single case-study, then one may conclude that the results of the research were, -

Often masochism is induced in the Indian woman as a 'moral value' or 'cultural quality' by society, the result of which may at times lead to clinical manifestation if taken to extreme limits.

Masochism is a particular quality expected out of gender defined roles by Indian society on women as mothers.

Desires of self-satisfactions are encouraged to be suppressed by family, society, culture, the outburst of which in the clinical set-up may often bring about deep shame within the person. Thus, they preferred to keep such desires 'hidden'. And yet internally suffered with this conflict between desire and duty.

The initial resistance to therapy in the session is primarily due to the unwillingness to the disclosure of this 'hidden' self. Anything that was an assertion of the self was Prohibited.

Discussion:

One of the chief reasons for the development of such masochistic personalities may be the childhood traumatic loss of a loved object, and a life-long yearning for that love which

turns unconsciously into self-reproach by introjection of the object as persecutory. However, in the eastern context (Japan and India), masochism is often related to an altruistic level in its relation with others. Though it may at times affect the individual woman in society who may suffer particularly for this culturally driven quality of the Prohibition inflicted and encouraged on the mother. A virtual quality like 'devotion' may turn itself into a pathological trait. During therapy such individuals may often experience deep shame in being revealed – hence dealing with the therapeutic situation needs to be very delicate and time consuming.

Conclusion:

It is perhaps necessary to empathize with such women who come for therapy with masochistic needs and their need to remain hidden due to their shame of being revealed, because it takes a significant amount of courage for these women to even seek therapy when the whole cultural intonation of the society in general is in favour of such moral masochistic values in the woman/the mother. It is only now, with the gradual change of time, that women are very slowly coming out of their 'hidden' shame and initiating themselves in the process of claiming themselves, their desires. Hence the clinical situation witnesses such women more now than before.

Post Script:

However, it is only a very limited perspective of shame and masochism in women in this single endeavour. This effort opens up the possibility of further research and study in this area of shame and masochism in women in Japan and India. It may be an interesting area to study the influence of globalization on such women of Japan and India – what may be their new role definition in society; are they free from the initial Prohibitions; does it create more gap in generations; does shame and masochism get substituted by guilt for their newly gained moral freedom; ...It is possibly an endless journey, and this study is just a mere attempt to understand the 'wounded' mother, and appreciate her devotion that in the first place creates this wound.

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付 録

和文タイトル

女性の恥とマゾヒズム：日本とインドにおける心的世界（サイケ）の精神分析的探索

ジューマ・バサック

(九州大学大学院 人間環境学研究院外国人研究員)

和文要約

本論文の試みは、長年に渡って世界中の精神分析家が多様な見方を示してきた、社会におけるマゾヒズムの心理学的・精神分析的・社会文化的構造を検討することである。その一方で、東洋の研究と対照的な形で、最近の西洋の精神分析の研究では恥が調査対象となっている。これはおそらく西洋における恥経験の不足によるものである。日本における女性の恥とマゾヒズムの心理学的構造のために、日本ではその分野において先駆的な研究が行われている。「献身的」であり「傷ついている」母親や妻が語られている日本の昔話や神話を詳細に検討することによって、女性における恥とマゾヒズムの心理学的メカニズムは明らかにされている。インドでは、文化的・臨床的状况において同様の研究が別の文脈で行われている。これらの国とそこにおける女性の両方において、「見るなの禁止」という重要な視点をとることになり、その視点は、献身的な母親へもたらされた「傷つき」についての（文化と臨床像を通した）深い気づきから、社会と個人とに影響を与えるものなのである。

キーワード：恥、マゾヒズム、禁止