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***By: Ms. Ishita Khatri (B.A.LL.B (Hons)), B.S. Anangpuria Institute of Law,***  
***Affiliated to Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak,***  
***Email Id: [ishitakhatri552@gmail.com](mailto:ishitakhatri552@gmail.com).***



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### **ABSTRACT:**

*“Female Genital Mutilation is a social norm in many societies and a tabooed issue which stands unaddressed in the present time. The paper is not intended to hurt the sentiments of any community or spread hatred but only aims to bring into light practices which are violative of dignity and liberty of people in the name of culture and religion. The author begins by examining the underlying difference between men and women in a society and then tries to discover the background of FGM/C prevalent in some communities in India, and globally. Further, the paper touches upon causes and consequences of FGM which is followed by how FGM is violative of human rights. It also takes a closer look at Indian context, and later compares it to global scenario. In the final stage of the paper, the author intends to focus on the ongoing efforts of international organizations like WHO, UNO etc. and suggests measures to ensure eradication of FGM completely”.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The humans on Earth are identified generally as male or female, based on the sex they are assigned by birth. When these humans create a society together, they assign every gender some roles and responsibilities, which form the general norms and code of conduct of the community that are ought to be followed. Since time immemorial, males have been considered the superior sex while females have always been subordinated to them. The idea that male is the breadwinner and female is bound to look after household chores has existed since forever and due to this idea males have always been portrayed as physically strong and ‘*protector*’ and ‘*saviors*’ of the family, especially women, who are thought to be physically insufficient and weak. Protecting and safeguarding the modesty of women are symbols of pride for the family and their honor rests in these virtues. They are socially accepted members of that community only when they stand the test of rituals prescribed. Women are subject to severe practices embedded traditionally to prove their purity and devotion. One such instance is that of the



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practice of Sati<sup>1</sup>. The word ‘Sati’ derives its meaning from the Sanskrit word *asti* which means ‘she is pure or true’. The practice prevalent in ancient Hindu society was symbolic of a women’s ultimate respect to her husband, even after his demise. Sati was a sign of a ‘dutiful’ wife who succumbed herself to the burning pyre of her dead husband to accompany him to his next life or afterlife, for it was her greatest form of devotion towards her husband. Initially this was a voluntary act which later turned into a forced custom. It existed in different forms throughout the country with different meanings and reasons attached to it. For example, ‘Jauhar’ in Rajasthan, a different version of Sati, was a collective suicide by jumping into burning fire by Rajput Royal women whose husbands were defeated in war by enemy armies, for they preferred preserving their modesty and death over being captured, raped and disgraced by enemy men. Though later this custom was abolished by persistent efforts over a long period of time, especially by efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy, the pioneer women’s rights activist as it was finally accepted to be brutal, barbaric, inhuman and violative of rights of women<sup>2</sup>.

This paper, too, is centric of one such similar cultural practice carried out in various parts of this globe under different names and different modes but its essence remains same. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting<sup>3</sup> (FGM/C) or Female Circumcision is a deeply rooted cultural practice and belief in numerous African and Egyptian communities, and its practiced has spread to various other places due to immigration of people with such beliefs. In India, Dawoodi Bohra Community Muslims, who originally come from Yemen, Africa and neighbouring regions practice it.<sup>4</sup> It is the procedure comprised of partial or complete removal of lump of flesh considered “*haram ki boti*”, by midwives using unsterilized non-professional equipments. It is grossly cruel and violative of human rights posing a threat to health of young girls and women,

<sup>1</sup> Richa Jain, *The history behind sati- a banned funeral custom in India*, 2018, available at <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/india/articles/the-dark-history-behind-sati-a-banned-funeral-custom-in-india/> last accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Kanksha Raina, *how did Sati get abolished in India*, 2018, available at <https://feminismindia.com/2018/10/29/sati-history-india/>, last accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Referred Female Genital Mutilation factsheet published by WHO on 21 January, 2022, available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>.

<sup>4</sup> A documentary “A Pinch of Skin” talks about personal interviews of survivors and victims, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eouLHP3cx8E> (time stamp 13:29), last accessed on 19 April, 2022.

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having no medical benefits.<sup>5</sup> It is a tool for social acceptance in the community carried out for ancestral pleasing, and fear from being dejected in the society, to protect the virtues of family honor and not being a disgrace but a true and pure believer, following the commands of *His Holiness*. To write and discuss about a culturally rooted practice of firm believers of a community is not an easy task. The reason to choose such a sensitized issue is the fact that it is an unaddressed issue which demands light and attention. Just to read and research on this topic gives shivers down the spine to readers, we can't imagine the suffering of the victims subject to this practice. Apart from the academic credits, the aim and objective of this research paper is to be the voice of the silent sufferers.

When the author first read an experience of an anonymous person on social media, it gave jitters, to the author, to believe that such demonic acts really exist in our society. It further made the author inquisitive to know more about it and more importantly know what laws exist to prohibit the same. Surprisingly, no strict laws exist! It has been declared illegal; however, it's still practiced in secrecy and lot of females are at risk of being cut every year! This paper aims to create awareness about the issue, identify other similar practices that exist in the name of tradition and custom and appeal to the readers to take a stand and act to stop such abusive practices. It also urges to convey that FGM/C and other secretly carried out practices are violative of child rights, rights of women and humans altogether, and demand strict laws and harsh punishments.

In that order, in its foundational stage, it lays down discussion on the meaning of FGM/C (I), which is followed by laying emphasis upon the reasons for its practice (II). The third part of the paper discusses about the impact and consequences of the practice in physical, social, emotional and other aspects of women's life (III) which is followed by the discussion of FGM and Human Rights in fourth stage of the paper (IV). In the final part of the paper, discussion is laid down in context of laws and legislations available to curb this practice in Indian Municipal system as well as in the global backdrop (IV(A) & IV(B)).

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<sup>5</sup> Supra note 3.

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## **I. MEANING AND TYPES OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION:**

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, commonly referred as FGM/C, means all procedures that involve partial or complete removal of the *clitoritis* (the external female genitalia)<sup>6</sup> for non-medical reasons. It is symbolic of a rite of passage from childhood to womanhood, meaning that a girl who has been cut is now ready to be married off and bear with the responsibilities of being a woman, start a family and procreate children. It is also known as *khatna* in Dawoodi Bohra Community and known by names such as *khafd*<sup>7</sup> which is an Arabic word interpreted as FGM/C. The practice has been justified on pretexts of being a mode of disciplining the daughters of the community, preventing them from being involved in pre-marital sex, moderating their sexual desires, and believing that khatna has been a medium of controlling extramarital affairs on the side of women in their community.<sup>8</sup> **The various types of FGM/C as explained by World Health Organization (WHO) are;**

- ***Type 1:*** *this is the partial or total removal of the clitoral glans (the external and visible part of the clitoris, which is a sensitive part of the female genitals), and/or the prepuce/clitoral hood (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoral glans).*
- ***Type 2:*** *this is the partial or total removal of the clitoral glans and the labia minora (the inner folds of the vulva), with or without removal of the labia majora (the outer folds of skin of the vulva).*
- ***Type 3:*** *Also known as infibulation, this is the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removal of the clitoral prepuce/clitoral hood and glans.*
- ***Type 4:*** *This includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g., pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>6</sup> Meaning of FGM/C in medical terms available at <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/womensrh/female-genital-mutilation.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Article about a study that revealed the extent of FGM in India, which shows existence of FGM in India despite GOI's denial, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/mar/06/study-reveals-fgm-india-female-genital-mutilation>.

<sup>8</sup> Personal Interview of a lady from the Documentary 'A Pinch of Skin' supra note 4.

<sup>9</sup> Supra note 3.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized this traditional practice as violative of human rights and sheer discrimination on basis of sex as it exploits the females and their bodies merely on the grounds of preservation of culture and virtues. This practice has absolutely no medical benefits and is unacceptable ritual to prove the purity, virginity and right womanhood. Various International conventions and sources of International Human rights laws are violated through the practice of FGM/C, which are discussed in detail in the later section of this paper. Even after knowing the fact that it physically hurts women, poses mental distress and sometimes even kills them, ardent followers argue that culture and cultural beliefs are far more valuable than rights of women. FGM/C is a celebrated practice and is often conducted by hosting a lavish ceremony by organizing festivities of food, dance and music for the community members where all people attend and celebrate the *rite of passage*. Despite all of this discussion and research, one still wonders that what are the firm reasons and logic behind this celebrated ritual?

## **II. REASONS WHY FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS PRACTICED:**

*“When men are oppressed, it's a tragedy.*

*When women are oppressed, it's tradition.” - Letty Cottin Pogrebin*

As stated earlier with its meaning that FGM/C is practiced for non-medical reasons, one discovers the fact that it is a culturally rooted practice. Children learn the culture from their family and surroundings and carry forward it into their generations. Elders of the African and Kenyan communities, where it is highly prevalent, and also of Dawoodi Bohra Community, support its continuance. Illiteracy, poverty, lack of resources, information, awareness also forms few reasons for its existence, because the people do not understand the consequences and impact of it. The participants are young, naïve and unaware of their rights, thus are not able to retaliate and obediently follow their elders' instructions. To save their family's honor, not to be name called and be disgrace and shame for the family, and from the fear of being rejected by the society few girls voluntarily sign up for FGM/C, believing it to be just a “pinch of skin”, while some do it willfully because they are encouraged and lured to receive gifts (sweets,



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clothes), cash and other benefits from parents.<sup>10</sup> In many countries it exists because it has received sanction of religion and culture, and it is rationalized by given due significance in communities’ ancestral practices, which are viciously deep rooted as they form essential part of future prospects for marriage.<sup>11</sup> In regard of religion, no religion permits or favors such evil practices. There is no evidence to be found to exist in any of the religious texts prescribing any such practice, that causes hurt, therefore, it is not validated by any religion. However, strict followers give religious justification, that it is essential to maintain gender identity and also to be a true follower, to be able to read pious texts and so on.<sup>12</sup>

It is their undaunting faith which argues that when the sexual urges of women are moderated, many sins are reduced in the society, that it is a medium to create a bond of satisfaction between husband and wife, which if not controlled may turn women into prostitutes.<sup>13</sup> It is quite clear that FGM/C is a social and cultural convention backed by the idea of femininity, modesty, a part of raising a girl and preparing her for adulthood and for ensuring premarital virginity, marital fidelity.<sup>14</sup> The modes and description of carrying out this barbaric practice makes it difficult to imagine the pain and suffering of a young female, and wonder how traumatic it must be to go through something so extreme. Many survivors gained awareness and gathered courage to speak out their experiences after years of being cut, Areefa Johari, a Bohra journalist founded *Sahiyo*, a platform where women anonymously spoke their heart out. Women recalled their experiences stating *they cried with unbearable pain, feared going to toilet to pee as it would hurt in the worst way*.<sup>15</sup> Areefa Johari, when she spoke publicly about her suffering,

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<sup>10</sup> Scenario of communities in Kenya described in <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/oct/21/kenyan-efforts-to-end-fgm-suffer-blow-with-victims-paraded-in-open-defiance>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/oct/21/kenyan-efforts-to-end-fgm-suffer-blow-with-victims-paraded-in-open-defiance>.

<sup>11</sup> Arush Mittal, *Criminalization of the practice of FGM in Sudan: A Ray of Hope*, CCLSNLUJ, 2020, available at <https://criminallawstudiesnluj.wordpress.com/2020/07/27/criminalization-of-the-practice-of-fgm-in-sudan-a-ray-of-hope/>.

<sup>12</sup> Karhu Rose Kerubo, *Female Genital Mutilation- Effects on Women and Young Girls-* (2010).

<sup>13</sup> Supra note 4.

<sup>14</sup> Supra note 3- Cultural and social factors for performing FGM elucidated by WHO.

<sup>15</sup> Article about a study that revealed the extent of FGM in India available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/mar/06/study-reveals-fgm-india-female-genital-mutilation>.

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described her experience to be felt like a sexual assault as a child. She said, “*it was a part of me, a part of my womanhood*”<sup>16</sup> that was cut when I was just 7 years old. After reading all the personal accounts of women recorded during the survey and research one figures out the adverse implication of the complicated custom.

### **III. THE CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION:**

The consequences of FGM/C can be both immediate as well as long term. Varying from difficulty in sitting, sleeping, walking, peeing, to severe pain, excessive bleeding/haemorrhage, infections due to use of unsterilized tools and equipment, they extend to even shock and death of girls! The consequences can be categorized as physical, psychological, social, and sexual. From difficulties in sexual intercourse, child bearing, delivering a child to death of child right after being born, trauma, nightmares and embarrassment in visiting a doctor, thus depriving oneself from medical help, its impact is endless.<sup>17</sup> The injurious and nasty consequences are a sign that point out that various rights and liberties are violated. The FGM/C curtails the rights of children and young women, exploits their bodies and health, suppresses their liberty and desires and stands in between their human rights.

The most disturbing consequence, that happens to be tumor as a result to improper urination and discharge of menstrual blood is deemed to be a baby being born out of illicit relationship of the girl or her being possessed by black magic.<sup>18</sup> Many girls drop out of school and education due to toll on their health, yet it is a tabooed practice that exists and not many are willing to talk about it as it may alert the fundamentalists and people are afraid of the backlash from the community which might follow. “*I was 5 years old when my mom took me to a dark, closed*

<sup>16</sup> Areefa’s statement at a conference organized by Singaporean Feminist Organization together with WADI and Aware available at <https://sahiyo.com/2016/01/> written by Hannah Wettig (January 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Supra note 9 and 12.

<sup>18</sup> Documentary- The Cut: Exploring FGM | Al Jazeera Correspondent (Researched and shot by Fatma Naib, who went on a personal journey - from Somaliland and Kenya to Sweden - to explore the traditions and controversies inherent to FGM.) available on YouTube.

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*apartment like building and asked me to lay down on a wooden bed in dim light. I was scared and worried. I could not understand anything and soon after an old lady came up with some blade. I started crying but my mom didn't listen to my pleadings and they held my hands and legs and suddenly I felt unbearable pricking pain between my legs. I cannot describe how horrific experience it was, but they say it's a part of womanhood.” Told an anonymous victim in a survey by Sahiyo.<sup>19</sup>*

*Another 18-year-old lady from Somaliland shared her fears and told to an interviewer in The Cut- a documentary on FGM/C, how worried she has been throughout her pregnancy. She recalls days when she lost her friends because of FGM and its after effects and was fearful about her own self and her unborn baby at the time of her delivery.*

***After much analysis, the consequences of FGM can be better understood by grouping them into four heads as here under.***

- i. The practice causes so much **physical and emotional damage** that the victims are scarred for life. Psychologically, in the short term they have difficulties in sitting, sleeping, going to the washroom to pee, to nightmares, trauma, name calling, pain and fear in the long term.*
- ii. The short-term **physical consequences** include excessive bleeding, fainting, fever, infections such as HIV/AIDS, tetanus whereas in the long run it results in abnormal growths, recurring urinary tract infections, damage to other organs surrounding the clitoris, and pregnancy problems such as infertility and still born babies.*
- iii. FGM as a cultural practice exist to moderate the sexual urge of women but instead it causes **serious implications of sexual lives of women** with consequences such as painful sexual intercourse, delayed sexual arousal, lack of sexual desire, etc.*

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid note 15 & 16.

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- iv. Lastly, the consequences can be seen in social scenario where females face embarrassment while visiting the doctor, depriving themselves of medical attention, feeling isolated or rejected from society, divorce and family breakdowns, etc.<sup>20</sup>

#### **IV. HOW FGM/C PRACTICE IS DETRIMENTAL TO HUMAN RIGHTS?**

Human rights are the inalienable rights that a being poses simply by the virtue of being human. They are inherent to all human beings regardless of race, caste, class, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status.<sup>21</sup> Human rights are the basic dignity and liberty that every human being is entitled to. They are not guaranteed by any person/king/ruler but protected by the State through Local and International Law. They come into enforcement right after the birth of a human and exist till his death. The Female Genital Mutilation clearly stands against the human rights as the health, reproductive and sexual rights of girls are violated. *Every woman should enjoy her life to the fullest potential, said Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.*

But FGM is a hindrance in the women’s liberty as it’s abusive and exploitative and has been recognized so by multiple International and regional organizations<sup>22</sup>. All humans have a right to be free from all forms of violence, face no discrimination on the basis of sex, have the right to life and physical integrity, the right to health, right to seek and receive proper medical aid, the rights of children to be protected from all forms of abuse and harsh practices, the right of free expression (inclusive of liberty to express sexual identity and desires), the reproductive rights of women, the right to education and so on, but FGM/C stand in between all of them, so much so that girls are deprived of basic necessities sometimes. For instance, they are not allowed to have fluids after one week of being cut so that they have lesser urge to urinate. By

<sup>20</sup> Supra note 12.

<sup>21</sup> United Nation’s definition on Human Rights.

<sup>22</sup> Sources of International Human Rights Law on FGM, 2011, available at <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/645-sources-of-international-human-rights-law-on-female-genital-mutilation.html>, last accessed on 19 April 2022.



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chance if any girl contacts infection due to unprofessional traditional cutter process, they are made to sit on hot charcoal making it even worse!<sup>23</sup>

***To name a few conventions that recognize the practice and continuance of FGM/C as inhumane and derogatory are;***

- *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, (Article 1)*
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (Article 1 and 3)*
- *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1976, (Preamble, Article 3 and 12)*
- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966, (Preamble and Article 2, 7, 9(1), 17 and 24)*
- *The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), (Article 19)*
- *Apart from these popular conventions, there are other declarations and regional conventions too, for example The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Charter) (1990), Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) (The Maputo Protocol, The Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of FGM, 2003, so on and so forth.*

#### **IV.I FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION PRACTICE IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT:**

Taking a closer dig at the municipal laws of various nations, starting with India, it is astonishing to note that no specific legislation exists to curb FGM/C. It is so because in the Indian context, the government is in denial of the FGM/C practice in India as there is no government data to support such claim. Only a small private survey<sup>24</sup> and study reveals that the Muslim Dawoodi Bohra Community follows this tradition that to in secrecy. The silent research by Sahiyo forum

<sup>23</sup> Supra note 12.

<sup>24</sup> Survey by Sahiyo, supra note 16.

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Email Id: [ishitakhatri552@gmail.com](mailto:ishitakhatri552@gmail.com).***

was done in 2015 where people submitted anonymous responses that are not conclusive enough to establish official data and so the practice is condemned only through the general provisions such as that of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Section 319-338, hurt and grievous hurt) and The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

**Case laws in the Indian Context:**

The Supreme Court, in *Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan*<sup>25</sup>, acknowledged the fact that the courts must consider and actively apply international conventions and instruments to give best effect to actions of state to prevent discrimination and violation of human rights.

Later, in the *Childline India Foundation vs. Alan John Waters (2011)*<sup>26</sup>, it was held that “Constitution envisages a happy and healthy childhood for children free from abuses and exploitations.”. Still, there is no specific and strict legislation in this regard in Indian Municipal law.

The Supreme Court gave similar interpretations in *Shirur-Mutt*<sup>27</sup> case 1954 and subsequent *judgements*, that provisions like the religious freedoms under fundamental rights of Indian Constitution, condemn all such Religious Practices whether Essential or not which are in contradiction to public order, health and morality and do not grant them any protection or safeguard.

Furthermore, the Indian Constitution, under Article 21<sup>28</sup> r/w Article 51A(e) renounces all practices derogatory to women’s dignity and do not extend any protection to extraneous religious/traditional practices which are violative of human rights, dignity, social equality etc.<sup>29</sup> Though FGM/C is unfavorable practice which calls for it being criminalized the courts have not explicitly given any orders nor there exists a specific prohibitive legislation/statute. In a

<sup>25</sup> (1997) 6 SCC 241, AIR 1997 SC 3011.

<sup>26</sup> (2011) 6 SCC 261.

<sup>27</sup> AIR 1954 SC 282.

<sup>28</sup> Right to life and liberty under Indian Constitution.

<sup>29</sup> Abhiraj Das and Nihal Deo, *Female Genital Mutilation: When Will India Take Concrete Steps?*, 2020, available at <https://criminallawstudiesnluj.wordpress.com/2020/06/01/female-genital-mutilation-when-will-india-take-concrete-steps/> last accessed on 19 April 2022.

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*Public Interest Litigation, filed in 2017, by a Delhi-based lawyer, Sunita Tiwari, seeking ban on FGM/C as its violative of Article 14 (Right to Equality), Article 21(Right to Life), freedom of expression, and also child exploitation, The Court expressed unavailability of any official data or study to support that claim, though the petition was received, accepted and response was sought from states where this practice is allegedly carried out. Apparently, its existing in states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Kerala, stated by individual research. Despite this all, there is a long way for FGM/C to be recognized in India and be legally prohibited and punishable.*

The PIL, which is stated earlier was disposed of with other similar, without passing any interim order. India, is the world’s largest democracy and has recognized rights and freedoms of its people in the widest way possible. It is a party and member to many international treaties and convention which protect human rights, rights of women and rights of children. These include Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, United Nations Convention of Rights of Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) 1979, etc. Knowing that the practice of FGM/C is outlawed in many countries and that, Human Rights conventions condemn that, India should also come up with legislations and laws in this regard, which are specific to FGM/C.

#### **IV.II POSITION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**

##### **GLOBALLY- STEPS AND INITIATIVES IN ACTION:**

United Nations and WHO and UNICEF, particularly, have analyzed statistics of this practice globally and provided that 200 million girls and women worldwide are victims to this and more than 30 million girls are at risk, every year, to be cut, while exact numbers still remain unknown.<sup>30</sup> In countries where the entire clans practice this tradition, like Africa, Somalia, Kenya and neighboring regions, statistics depict to be as high as 125 million survivors. India alone estimates to have 20 lakh girls and women being victim to FGM/C and equally high

<sup>30</sup> Data available at <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/>.

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numbers to be at risk. Keeping in view these alarming statistics, global as well as regional efforts are required to stop this brutal tradition and show zero tolerance to such cultural beliefs. Australia’s first ground breaking prosecution of November 2015, that attracted global attention which punished a retired nurse and mother of minor daughters who illegally carried out FGM/C, prompted several survivors to collectively speak up against it. It rose a wave and the conversation about its existence gained momentum. Following this, regional and global efforts could be seen emerging in regard to this. On one hand when countries like UK, US, Australia have declared FGM/C illegal in all forms, unless a medically operated procedure duly performed by doctors and for health benefits only, Sudan upholding the unconstitutionality of FGM/C in 2020, came as a ray of hope for many other countries to recognize, prohibit and penalize such practices.<sup>31</sup> Also, that travelling to other countries to get FGM/C performed is also deemed illegal and punishable.

Equally important efforts and stringent steps are being taken up by groups and organizations talking about FGM/C on International platforms such as at the Singapore Conference or at the United Nations Human Right Commission meetings. The World Leaders, at their panel discussion of UNHRC<sup>32</sup>, have taken an oath to completely curb FGM/C and make their countries 100% free from it, at discussed various suggestions as a part of their plan of action.

These suggestion list from starting an ideological revolution to employment of more financial resources to create awareness and hold campaigns and investments in regional programs. Predicting the dangerous future (by the end of 2030) if the issue is not answered now, they have determined themselves to adopt more comprehensive approaches via strict commitment and accountability. In words of Michelle Bachelet, “*the silence must be broken, the voices must be heard, the realities must be known and all must act united against the dreadful practice.*” This conversation should continue! With all these ideas at the center, the United Nations is on a mission to completely eradicate FGM by 2030. UN General Assembly, since

<sup>31</sup> Supra note 29.

<sup>32</sup> Reference from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2021/07/female-genital-mutilation-can-be-stopped-says-hc>.



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2012, is observing 6<sup>th</sup> February as International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, with an aim to amplify and direct efforts on elimination of this practice.

### **V. WAY FORWARD:**

At one stance we celebrate empowerment of women, and on the other side, this harsh reality also exists. We need to stop the generalization of this culture which is oppressive and abusive, and for that, Education alone is not the sole solution to this problem because people as educated and qualified as a doctor, perform and validate such practices. It is evident that the practice is socially deep rooted and it's an ideologically struggle because woman who are the victims themselves, support its continuance and are determined to follow what their culture says without questioning it. Besides all the efforts that we take up, we also need to make sure that more and more information is provided to people, the information is made people friendly, that is to say, published in multiple local languages so that it reaches out to the maximum audience.

More research is motivated and other abusive practices that exist in the name of culture, tradition, or religion are identified and condemned. By this means, the aim is not to spread hate, invalidate and curb cultures, disgrace any community or hurt anyone's sentiments but only to be the voice of the exploited and harassed and to shed light to oppression and misconceptions of cultural believes to the extent that they are erased from the society. Its high time that we fulfil the dearth of specialized legislations in the countries which have inadequacy of much needed provisions. Mobilization of public opinion will definitely be a game changer in addressing the practices that are patently against human rights and public policy. For a progressive future, changing the attitude of people will be the central approach in this battle and it is equally important to implement the International Conventions and Treaties that the emerging world leaders devise. Woman in itself is a complete identity and there should be no tests to prove that!

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