Thesis Report

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"Objectification of Men and Women"

(Breaking the sterotypes, An Awareness Campaign)

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KEYWORDS -Women objectification (Perfect Bahu بہو or a Perfect Wife), cultural diversification, cultural norms, Rishta procedures, patriarchy, gender roles, expectations vs reality, trade marriages, business marriages, finding hunts for girls/boys, marriage deals, woman show, limited liberty, freedom shunned, caged women, Equal rights, norms and values.

Objectification of women and men at the time of their marriage and them not being able to meet the 'Mr and Mrs' criteria.

ABSTRACT (1):

My research has evolved contrary to different studies that I was probing into, it initially started from how cultural diversification has evolved and pertained over different timelines and this has made us who we are today?! However I nudged a little further into the topic and decided to narrow down the vastness of the topic by restricting my study to how our culture treats women differently in comparison to men. This gender bias has existed for as long as I can remember and being a women in this society adds a certain amount of pressure on the shoulders to behave in a certain way because we will be bound to be perceived differently on the basis of our gender solely. This inadvertently leads to women objectification and that's what I want to tackle with for my thesis project.

I intend to do this by making comics of different situations and how women are treated in our society and I also

SIDE NOTES

1: Rishta process: This is a process that happens at the time of marriage of two people, and their parents look for s suitable partner for them and approach someone who knows of eligible proposals, and person who indulges in such acts is called a Rishta Aunty or Rishta uncle.

intend to incorporate shallow mindsets of people and how they expect women to run the household and take full charge of husband, house, and children along with a successful professional career. The demand for a doctor Bahu (Daughter in law) is much higher and is also met with high expectations from the girl, like managing her career along with all the household chores that puts strains on the girl much more than it does on the man. I also want to deal with different scenarios where women are objectified and judged if they are doing something that allows people to raise fingers at them, like choosing a career like modelling or acting puts women in a position where they are thought to be less of a human and someone who would not be able to run a household or make a good wife. I intend to challenge all these preconceived notions through my comics and critique the idea of such staunch narratives that are embedded so deeply in our society. Along with focusing on the objectification of women I also want to further probe into the pressures that society implies and imposes on men, this puts a great burden on the shoulders of men to be 'tough' and strong both mentally and physically, this ideology also discourages them to be sensitive and emotional so almost shunning them from showing emotions at all. I intend to study these different implications and impositions of set standards of society on both men and women, and thus want to critically analyze these hypocritical stereotypes that

shape men and women exactly how society wants to see them and behave.

Passion (1.1): I have always been intrigued by the ideation and projection of society on women, me being a woman myself has allowed me to gain firsthand experience of how women are treated publicly and privately in a different manner solely on the basis of their gender, or perhaps to put more aptly I have realized that just because women are women, society automatically expects them to behave in a certain manner and more so in public. This idea has always been mind boggling for me and as I have grown older I have come to realize that it's not only the men in this society who have set these particular standards for women and suggested their roles as house makers but the idea is equally if not more so perpetuated by women. Thus suggesting that the conditioning of both men and women have been such that expects certain things from women and some from men, however the burden of gender is fallen more bitterly on women because there are less sensitivity on the society's part in terms wrong doings when it comes to women. Also they are domesticated and subjected to fulfill roles that also involve things like upbringing their childish husbands after marriage. Also during rishta procedures there are very uncanny demands especially from women like if she is career oriented she should be able to manage both house and work without neglecting either or else it will reflect poorly on her

family along with disrupting the healthy environment of the house.

Project scope (1.2): Through my project I intend to take these notions and norms that are so deeply embedded into our society and question them in a seemingly comical manner. I want to make some caricatured characters to heighten the impact of the saturated society that we are all a part of. I also want to develop a character that supplies rishta's which is again a very common things to do in our culture and through which I will be showing what people actually ask for when looking for a rishta, however I would like to only focus on women and their struggles because the objectification is being done to this gender only in my opinion and that is my point of focus.

Design Statement (1.3): Design plays an imperative role in my project and compliments what I want to say in a way that is understandable by the masses, thus I want to go with a very minimalistic approach where I am designing all these characters for my comics, in an almost caricature way and in that way I intend to poke fun at society and all of the people that are part of this never dying tradition of women show casing whilst looking for rishtas. Designing will also be done in a manner that is not giving too much away and triggers some

thought in the viewer, so much so that they are compelled to think this over and over until they realize why what they think has been wrong. Also I sort of want to give this grotesque topic a comic relief because I wanted to sort of bring humor into this not so funny topic, majorly because jokes are always furthered by real instances that nag people and who can't do anything about a given situation just joke about it and its joked about so much that at one point in normalizes the initial sadness lurking in the joke and that is done in a subtle yet weird manner a lot of times. This normalizing is also something that I intend to challenge and question dark humor as something that's actually invented for funs sake or to inform people about what's happening but in the only manner that was/is 'accepted' otherwise the tongue remains tied.

Literature review (2): There has been a lot of material written on how objectification stemmed and how this hegemony is somewhat linked to the idea of patriarchy due to which women are seen as subservient to men on some/many levels. The written material I looked up is versatile and vast in nature thus I will be sharing some important facts and figures that I came across. One of the articles that gave shape to my thinking process and allowed me to delve further into the 'whys' and 'whats' is written by Artworks for Change, in their true stories project. The article suggests that media and advertising play a

2. Otherisation: This term was coined by Edward Said when a person is marginalized and treated as an exotic creature and less of a human.

huge and imperative role in how women are looked at and perpetuate the otherisation of the gender by developing the male gaze phenomenon. This is further linked to how even men are portrayed in a certain light out of which they cannot fathom to behave. For example sometimes women and girls and sometimes boys are portrayed as weak and submissive, existing mainly to satisfy the other genders need. This dehumanization makes empathy challenging for someone you do not even view as a 'real' person anymore. Now the article further suggests how objectification means treating a person as a mere commodity without any regard to their personality or dignity. Sexual objectification on the other hand represents the individual primarily as an object of sexual desire rather than as a whole person, and this plays an imperative role in gender inequality and exploitation. I am particularly intrigued by Stacy Leigh's photography where she deals with the same ideas and concepts and has portrayed them really well in her 'Little Hussies Series". Leigh is a fashion photographer and "her interest in love dolls as a subject matter began in 2005, after she saw the HBO show 'Real Sex'. The show focused on the relationships between men and inanimate, manufactured sex dolls. Her work comments on a world where real human interactions and connections are becoming increasingly rare and a woman is seen as a toy, object, and a commodity". Al Grumet is another great artist who blends digital and traditional

painting to portray the troubling consequences of our society's vices. His work 'pole dancers' Is a great example to look at when talking about such subject matters, because in pole dancers he transforms a construction site into a strip club, and thus intending to draw a connection between adult entertainment industry that perpetuates such ideologies and have a spillover effect of objectification, such as harassment in daily life and discrimination in the workplace. Grumet wittingly points out another major factor in one of his other works 'Tough Guys' in which he studies relationships and concludes that when people are treated as commodities in relationships they are often established and maintained through violence and other means of coercive control. In Tough Guys, Grumet captures the violence underlying such relationships and the veil of secrecy that often obscures it from public view. One another article that I feel that I can strongly resonate with is 'The new and the old in rishta culture', which suggests that there is a view that an arranged marriage is essentially the only form of respectable marriage. This whole idea leads to the local Aunties that feel the need to do 'matchmaking' and step in. A recent online series produced by Sadia Jabbar and titled 'Shameless Proposals' made waves for highlighting how desi parents are still okay with this objectification of their daughters in presenting them as products when a marriage proposal in being considered. Areeba Atif, owner of matchmaking

3. STRA is a Facebook page that goes by these initials and its full form is 'Skip the rishta aunty'.

Facebook page skip the rishta aunty (STRA). According to Atif, the page is a small step towards shattering the drawing room rishta culture and revolutionizing the social norms. "We live in a society where marriages that originate outside of drawing rooms are looked down upon, and there are hardly any options available for young people. Their only choice is to succumb to institutions that do not work well anymore with the changing structures of modern society." Contrary to this I was also looking at artists working on the same parameters and ideologies or perhaps artists responding to such diversification in terms of treatment in relation with men and women if more aptly put. Naming a few of the artists that really intrigued and inspired me are Shehzil Malik, PakistaniMarthaStewart and Bibi Hajra amongst many other. Their perception on rigid stereotypes and how they plan to combat them through the message conveyed in their artworks is something that greatly shaped my work and gave me a whole new perspective on the idea of breaking stereotypes. Interestingly these artists do not refrain themselves to only 'objectification' but also cater to other scathing point of views about women and people in general, some of the examples would be their commenting art on the obecession with 'gora rang' (white complexion) in Pakistani society. Also Shehzil Malik also goes to the length of working on 'women empowerment' and quite interestingly she made a women riding a motorbike and the poster of that

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particular artwork was pasted under the sherpao bridge only to be torn into pieces by men and the public. This whole incident inculcated a new sense in me and exposed to a new dimension that I previously very conveniently assumed to be something that probably is exaggerated. Thus this was a good eye opener to many that the idea of women being independent and empowered is something completely alien to our society and the public has gotten used-to to the idea of domestication of women so much so that now they feel the need to even remove any visuals that may perpetuate the independence and freedom of women.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (2.1): Objectification is a notion central to feminist theory. Broadly speaking it can be defined in many ways and some of which involve seeing and/or treating a person, as a mere commodity and an object. Nothing more nothing less. However I will further delve into what sexual objectification means in the feminist theory. It involves objectification occurring in the sexual realm. A very prominent person who has worked tirelessly in the same regime is Martha Nussbaum (1995, 257) and she has conclusively identified seven features that are involved in the idea of treating a person as a mere object:

1. *instrumentality*: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;

2. *denial of autonomy*: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;

3. *inertness*: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;

4. *fungibility*: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;

5. *violability*: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;

6. *ownership*: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);

7. *Denial of subjectivity*: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.

Rae Langton (2009, 228–229) has added three more features to Nussbaum's list:

8. *reduction to body*: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;

9. *reduction to appearance*: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;

10. *Silencing*: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak.

The majority of the thinkers discussing and probing into the terminology that involve 'objectification' have taken it to be a morally problematic phenomenon. Moreover, feminists like Sandra Bartky and Susan Bordo have conclusively argued that women are objectified through being excessively preoccupied with their appearance. However I do feel that where women have been reduced to looks only and that puts them in a position of difficulty in coping with these ideologies, men also go through the same but on a different parameter, because men on the other hand have a huge burden on their shoulders to be 'tough' in terms of strength of body and mind both, this does not allow them to even channel their emotional side and sensitive side fully and freely. Feminist theory encompasses a range of diverse ideas, all of which originate with the following beliefs: number one being that the society that we live in id patriarchal, and is structured by and favoring men, traditional ways of thinking support the subordination of women and the neglect of trivialization of issues particularly affecting women; and lastly this patriarchal system should be overthrown and replaced with a system that stresses

equality for both sexes. Which in retrospect works against both the genders, majorly because women and men are expected to behave in a certain way only because they happen to be men and women biologically. This biological difference shapes both the genders differently, women are treated as subservient people and men are expected to be career oriented and successful as soon as they grow up.

4. IR theory is an international relations theory that aims to provide a conceptual framework upon which international relations can be analyzed.

Concepts (2.3): From the outset and on a broader perspective, feminist theory has challenged women's near and almost complete absence from traditional IR theory and practice. This absence, however, is visibly stark in both women's marginalization from decision-making and in the convenient assumption that the reality of women\s day-to-day lives is not impacted by or important and integral to international relations. Beyond this, the contributions of feminsts to IR can be understood through their deconstruction of preconceived notions about both the genders. This involves deconstruction of both perspectives, such as socially constructed identities and as a powerful organizing logic. This means recognizing and acknowledging this ideologies and then further challenging assumptions about masculine and feminine gender roles that tend to dictate what both women and men should or can do in global politics and what counts as an integral and important in considerations of international relations. These assumptions in

turn shape the process of global politics and the impact that these ideologies and set standards have on men and women's lives and affect their day-t-day quality of life. Rather than suggesting that the traditional IR was gender-neutral – that is, that gender and IR were two different spheres in a different dimension that did not have a link with one another and this also does not impact on each other. Feminist theory has evidently shown that the traditional IR is in fact gender-blind. Feminist scholarship therefore takes both women and gender seriously – and in doing so it challenges IR's foundational concepts and assumptions.

Research Questions (2.3): My research questions challenge the concepts and implications that these pre conceived notions have on men and women. This involves questioning the basis of ground realties that are so deeply embedded in our society and tend to add a certain amount of pressure on the shoulders of both men and women to behave in a certain way solely on the basis of their gender. Furthermore I intend to question the culture that perpetuates such ideological frameworks and why in core essence different implications are imposed on men and women differently and why these genders are treated and or objectified differently. Another question that forms the basis of my entire thesis is challenging the fundamental core ideologies that lead to men and women not being able to meet the set

standard or perhaps fail to qualify the 'Mr and Mrs' criteria if more aptly put. Also I want to question the habits of Pakistani people to be control freaks and control other peoples thinking as well as lives, which in my opinion destroy the will to work towards healthy and sound relationships. For once if letting people live freely by their own choice becomes a norm. Marriages would last longer and people would work towards having a healthy instead of a compromising relationship. Another question that I want to lay emphasis on is how dowry is widely considered as pathetic and has been condemned on the basis of putting too much pressure on the girls' family however little has been said or done for the boy and his family, and how they are broadly judged on their financial status because that sounds as pathetic as asking for dowry. It's about time that we voice out these concerns also and speak about these filthy standards as much as well.

Research Questions Explained (2.4): Further delving into my research questions one can see how I intend to challenge these ideas that majorly revolve around both gender and have certain expectations for each. Breaking these stereotypes and deconstructing these fragmented realities is something that I am looking into; perhaps looking at both sides of the story and focusing equally and laying emphasis on each side undisputedly. Physical appearance and financial status are inevitably rotational. Not only women but majority of the men

in our society also face unbiased judgments and crucial criticisms in order to be considered 'marriageable'. Also I intend to lay emphasis on objectification that men have to face at the time of marriage and how people expect them to be everything except a good human being, and how they are measured on the basis of their finances and judged upon their processions in terms of money and property along with a highly paid job. Our society in my opinion needs to learn how to respect a person for who they are. Picking flaws ad being choosy about who to find suitable partner for your children is just a premium level of spoon feeding. In looking at violence against both these genders one can easily identify with these discriminatory behavioral patterns with men and women. It is this possible to see a continuum of gendered violence that does not reflect neat and distinct categories of peace, stability and so on. Many societies are thought of as predominantly peaceful or stable despite high levels of violence and discrimination against a particular portion of the population sometimes targeting men and sometimes women. It also presents a very different image of violence and insecurity to that viewed through the security agendas of states, which is characteristic of traditional viewpoints of the society. Through my questions I intend to make people culturally aware of these otherwise redundant norms, and I feel it's time that we start looking at them as 'flawed' customs in order for us to break free from

them and move towards a more rational approach when it comes to getting your children married.

Medium of Presentation (3.1): For my presentation I decided to make digital illustrations with a rather comical style and approach in order for my message to be conveyed to a wider range of audience without being a hindrance for them in terms of understanding and too thick for basic understanding. Also I wanted most of these illustrations to be bright and eye-catching so my color palette is vibrant and out there, also my character development also has the same language. Moreover I wanted my characters to be half face-less to avoid any similarities with anyone and because if this reason I also made them almost caricature like. I also wanted my message to reach the outside world and wanted people to see it and interact with it in their own headspace, and for this I chose Instagram for my social platform through which I reach this wider set of audience. Interestingly a lot of people came forward and left their remarks and comments under my posts which was my main purpose, for people to at least ponder upon these things if not fully understand them. If my illustrations and intagram posts stir up some kind of thought in my audience the purpose if fulfilled.

Pre-Production and Production (3.2): The process of making these illustrations was very challenging in terms of their style and everything, because I wanted them to be close to realty but

still unreal in shape and size so that no one in particular is inadvertently targeted. One another thing that I found challenging was men objectification, because a lot has been said and written about women objectification but for men this area has been left untapped to some extent. All the more in our society where rishtas are considered unethical on so many level for women but little thought has been given to how this entire process puts a man in an equally difficult position to be eligible enough and financially sound to get married. Another challenge that I faced was writing captions for my instagram page because when making illustrations I wanted them to be on a light note and easily understood but it was hard to manage same lightness in words, I did not want grim and stark captions and not too funny, so striking a balance between get my message conveyed and satire was challenging.
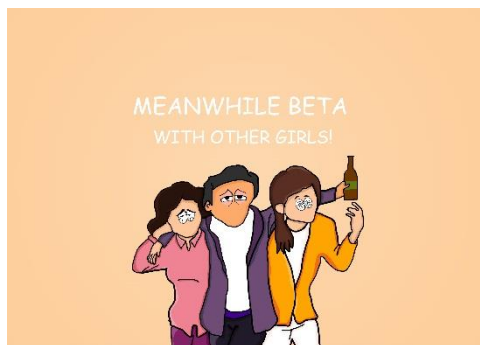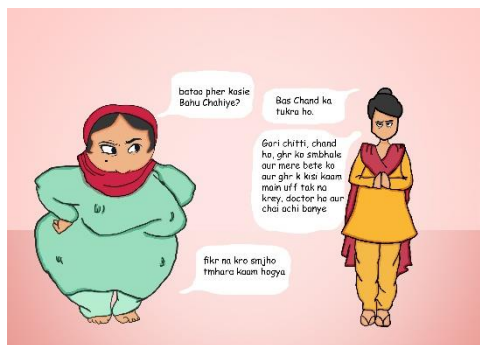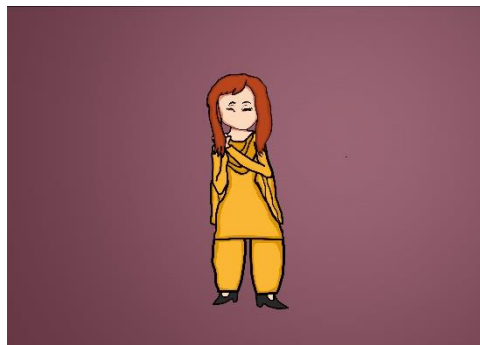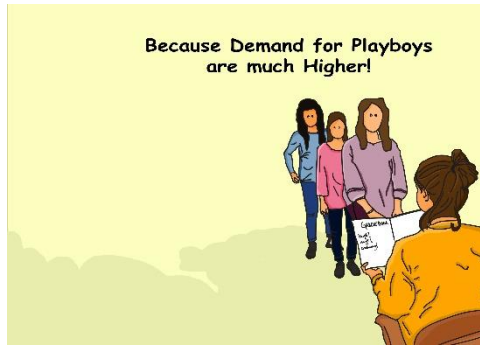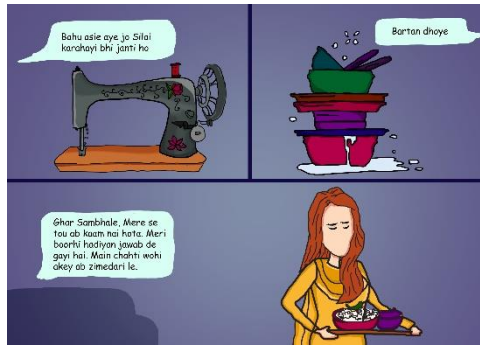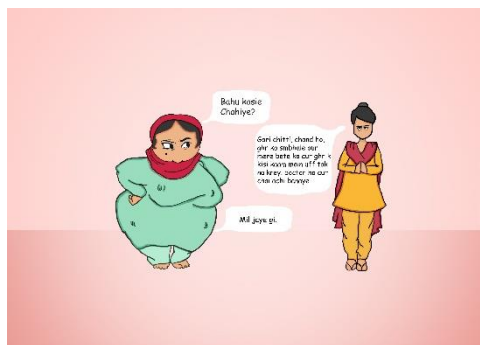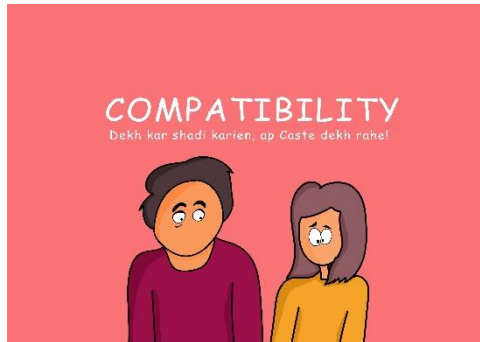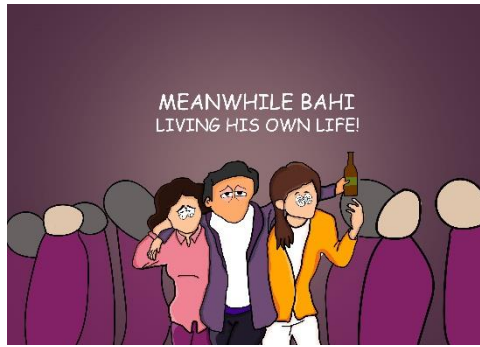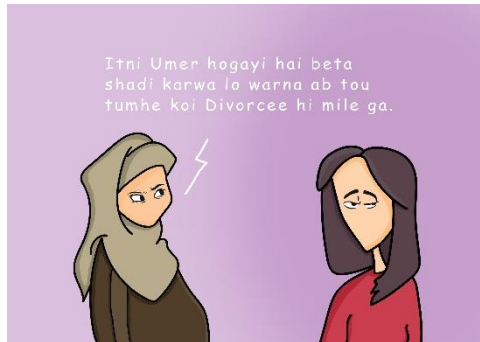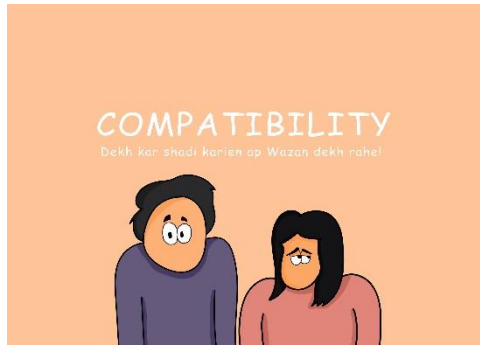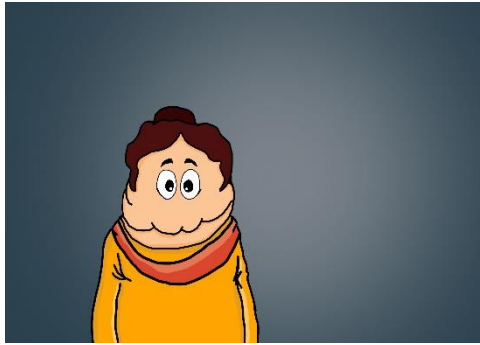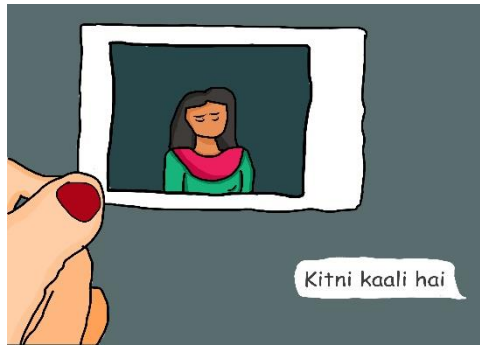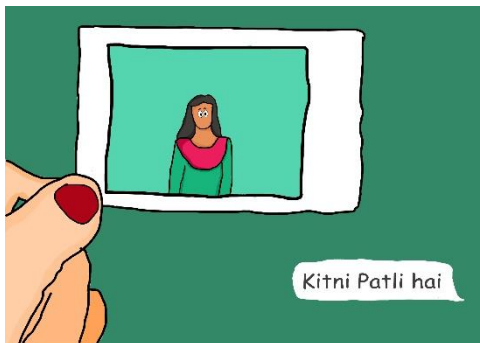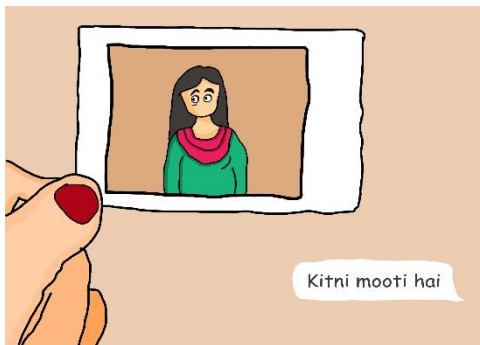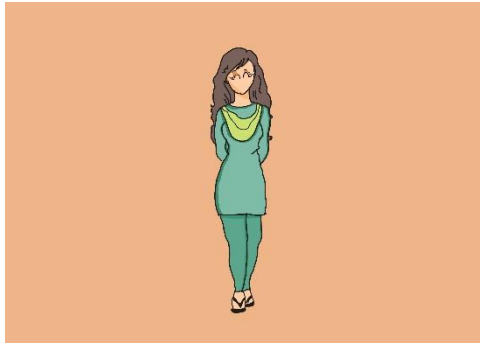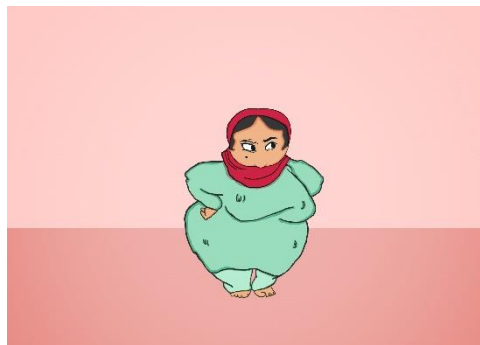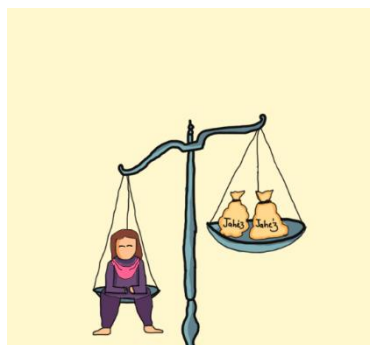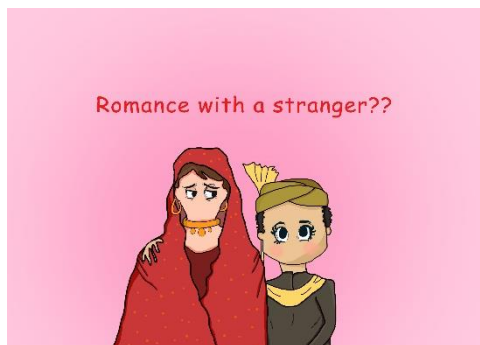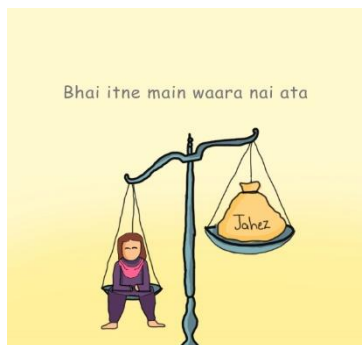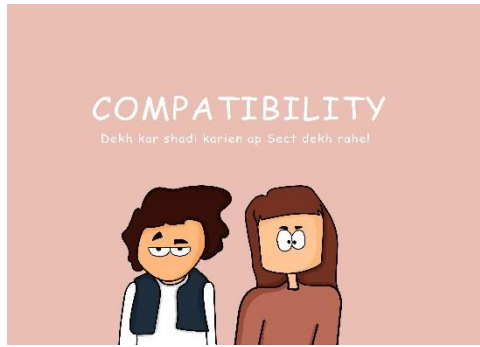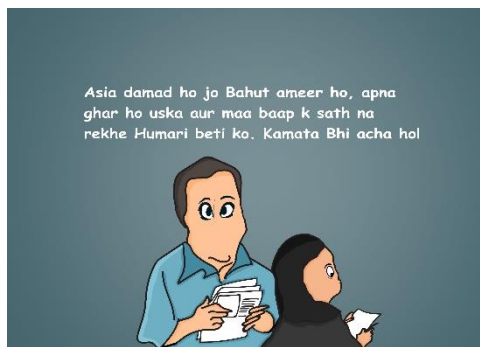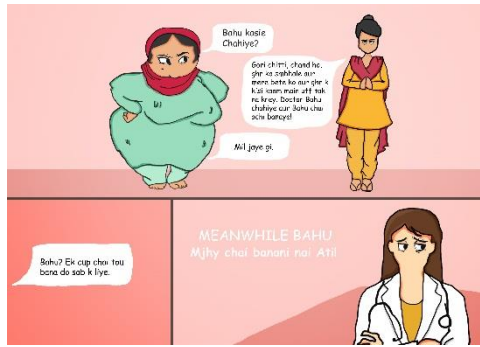
Conclusion (4): I have learned a lot of things during the process of this thesis, and absorbed a lot many details that usually people tend to overlook. Analyzing both sides of the story gave me a broader and more real perspective on the matter and thus made things clearer for me. I particularly enjoyed what people also learnt through my journey and shared with me over my intsagram page, people had different things to say, a lot of them could relate and a lot of them felt the need to voice out their own personal experiences and it felt great to provide them with such a platform where they can voice out their feelings and openly condemn such norms. I would like to share some of the comments that touched me personally also; "If the guy has good character then that would make the girl rich (not in terms of money).One should not set a condition for the guy to be rich because rich people have a lot of issues as

well. Guy should have a decent financial standing just to have food on the table, and a house for his wife and kids to live in, job, and good in character, what else should one need" "Live and let live.. Our Desi society always have something to say in everything, if graduated then this person does not have a job, why isn't this person getting married, the age is going by, If engaged then when is the wedding, okay where are your kids, Are these people humans even? Why go with other peoples timelines we should be in control of our lives and not listen to anyone. Listen from one ear and take it out from another in such cases." "The biggest problem in solving this issue is our parents' consent, because in most of the cases even if the bride and groom agree on having a simple marriage no dowry etc. The parents on both sides, still brand a lavishing wedding on society's pressure."

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