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The suppression of young Chinese women's sexual freedom still exists in 2020 due to people's stress on virginity, and the neglect of women's sexual desires, all ideas inherited from the old society that could date back to 1570 BC.

Women's virginity is heavily valued in the old Chinese society where women's virginity is equivalent to their pureness and the loss of virginity meant they were tainted and impure. <sup>1</sup>"In ancient China, rape was often employed by men to acquire sexual access to desired women as a socially acceptable precedent to marriage." This value of virginity being the chastity of women during ancient times caused many women to marry their rapists due to pressure from society. They would be forced to be married to their rapist to keep their good name, and their family's name because losing your virginity to someone other than your husband was considered shameful. While we know that it is a practice in ancient China, there are no exact dates to trace back to as it's been done throughout history. Although this act of being married to their rapist rarely appears in current Chinese society, this value of virginity and pureness was passed down and still influences many young men and women. A more modern reflection of the value of women's pureness is something that many Chinese girls have experienced. When I told my mom that I am over at my boyfriend's house, she would ask me to come home early or else it is bad for my name and my boyfriend's parents would look down on me for being an easy girl. I find these reasons to be ridiculous and unacceptable because why does staying at my boyfriend's house till 11 pm harm my name? While this is not as extreme as marrying your rapist to keep a good name, there are still

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<sup>1</sup> Luo, Tsun-Yin. "'Marrying My Rapist?!': The Cultural Trauma among Chinese Rape Survivors." *Gender and Society* 14, no. 4 (2000): 581-97. Accessed April 18, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/190303](http://www.jstor.org/stable/190303).

similarities between the two. Yes my mom is not asking me to give the rest of my life to a rapist to keep a good name, she is asking me to go home early in order to keep a good name. Women's purity and good name is not something that people should value a woman with, therefore the stress on a good name and virginity is not appropriate. Since this stress on virginity and pureness still exists, even in 2020 women are still unable to seek their sexual freedom.

Women's sexual desires were heavily suppressed both in ancient Chinese society and even in modern Chinese society. Not until recently, it was seen as a misfortune to be born as a woman because in the past women are seen as more of a property of men that had to fulfill certain duties. And while men in ancient China could fulfill their sexual desires through prostitutes or concubines, women were only there to fill their desires and needs. An ancient Chinese wife would take care of the whole family, in the wealthy families she would be in charge of the maids, the money, and everything that relates to the family. They do everything for their husbands and hope for their love,<sup>2</sup> "Although Chinese men usually had only one wife, they did openly make use of courtesans and invite concubines to live permanently in the family home." While the one wife takes care of everything in the house, many wealthy men would have multiple concubines and the wife is not allowed to get jealous as,<sup>3</sup> "Women were expected to excel in four areas: fidelity, cautious speech, industriousness, and graceful manners." The wife is not allowed to get jealous over the existence of the concubines as it goes against the idea of being a good wife. As previously mentioned, many ideas that are in modern Chinese society were passed down and began in ancient times. Although having concubines is not relevant anymore, but the idea of men being allowed to have sexual desires is still relevant. While it is very common in Chinese society for guys to

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<sup>2</sup> Cartwright, Mark. "Women in Ancient China." Ancient History Encyclopedia. Last modified October 19, 2017. <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1136/>.

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talk about sexual topics, it is almost forbidden for women to talk about such topics. It is seen as shameful since women are expected to be causes when it comes to speech, and are supposed to have a graceful manner. When I talked to a young Chinese student she told me, <sup>4</sup>“I try my best to not feel ashamed when I express my sexual desires, but sometimes I still feel like it’s wrong for me to ask my boyfriend for sex.”, this idea of not expressing their sexual desires is deeply rooted in many young women’s heart. Although we know that it is our right to express our sexual desires freely, sometimes we can not help but feel ebarrassed or ashamed of expressing it. Expressing sexual desires disobey the idea of being pure and innocent, therefore it is still heavily suppressed and neglected in 2020.

While many young women now seek sexual freedom, there are many older Chinese figures who firmly believe hiding women’s sexual desires are for their own good, and for a good name. There are truly many people who still believe all women should act in a graceful manner and keep their chastity for their husbands, and if they did not save their virginity for their husbands, they are dirty and should be shamed. If women are impure if they didn’t keep their virginity for their husband, men who didn’t keep their first time are also dirty and should be shamed upon. Women are called sluts or hores if they’ve been in bed with different men, while men would be called playboys or attractive. In these words we can see that while women are dvalued when they’ve been engaged in sexual activities, men would gain value and almost praised if they’ve been in bed with many different women. There is nothing about being a virgin that should earn a girl a good name, because in the end even if the girl has lost their virginity they are still the same person. Women should not be valued by a thin layer of membrane in their vagina. This idea of earning a good name by neglecting a woman’s sexual desire is only one of the many inhumane ancient ideas that go against women’s rights and neglects women’s needs.

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<sup>4</sup> Louise Liu, interview.

Cartwright, Mark. "Women in Ancient China." Ancient History Encyclopedia. Last modified October 19, 2017. <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1136/>.

Louise Liu (Student in Vancouver, Canada), interviewed by student, Vancouver, BC, April 19 2020.

Luo, Tsun-Yin. "'Marrying My Rapist?!': The Cultural Trauma among Chinese Rape Survivors." *Gender and Society* 14, no. 4 (2000): 581-97. Accessed April 18, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/190303](http://www.jstor.org/stable/190303).