

The Designing of Gender: Women and Human Evolution

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Abstract

This paper aims at tracing the way the role of women has been designed by society in societies, and how it has begun to change with human evolution. Mary Wollstonecraft has asked very significant questions about women's lack of freedom in society and has demanded that she is given a life with equal opportunities. Art has defined beauty as something that gives pleasure to the viewer, and it is the woman who possesses this symmetry and beauty till a particular age, mainstream socio-political thought believes so. Science and technology's intervention with such perceptions, market forces, capitalistic globalization are the new areas that might bring in innovative changes in contemporary thinking, and women might not only be the only one who would be pleasing the viewer, but even men might join this process of pleasing - now as women are operating in politically powerful positions men might be required to please them - perhaps an effort to sustain the human race on earth, competing with the rest of the animals.

Keywords: gender assignment, place of women, human evolution.

Women have been considered a property of man for millennia, perhaps after man began living in groups. In human evolution, all human beings came to be considered to be equal, and hence by default, man came to be recognised as an equal to woman. Therefore, the way woman's life has been designed, as a product to please and entertain man, is slowly transforming just like other such economic and political constructions like caste hierarchy and marginalisation.

Religions and their modus operandi have controlled the lives of human beings, and new styles of human functioning are recommended by intellectuals after the development of applied

sciences. This paper aims at studying human thought at various levels to analyse the way society interpreted the role of women in civilization, and how the trend might change in future.

Periyar from Tamil Nadu was the earliest social reformer who questioned the enslavement of women in family system right from 1940s. Indian society applied the concept of *karpu* for only women, and men were indirectly permitted to practice polygamy. The woman had to be monogamous and the man is given the social permission to be free.

The religious codes and laws that expect a woman to put up with her husband in spite of him behaving like an animal in the name of *karpu* (a woman loyal to her husband and chaste always) have to change. The social situation in which a woman is forced to live with her husband without love for him should change. (Periyar 13)

Periyar came under the impact of western intelligentsia as after the eighteenth century, Europe began arguing that women have to be given equal rights and freedom to think on her own, as only freedom will give her the ability to redesign her role in society.

“And how can woman be expected to cooperate unless she knew why she ought to be virtuous? Unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good?” (Wollstonecraft 4) Will freedom strengthen the reasoning power of any marginalized human being and give him the capacity to become dutiful? This question has been taken up by political thinkers for quite some time.

Humanity has created a familial and social structure in which “females have been insulated” and “stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity” and “have been decked with artificial graces that enable them to exercise a short-lived tyranny.” Their purpose in life “is to be fair, to raise emotion instead of inspiring respect.” As this can be viewed as an “ignoble desire” because it denotes and signifies “servility in absolute monarchies” and “destroys all strength of character” in women. This role in civilization has made women play the role of “exotics” and are “reckoned beautiful flaws in nature” (Wollstonecraft 39).

Marriage became the only profitable career in the establishment of family system and material success for women in the family system, and to have a successful career a woman had to

“marry advantageously” and to reach this goal “their time is sacrificed.” They are expected to practice the art of giving pleasure to men retain their career (Wollstonecraft 66). Marriage is a full time job for women and they have to compete with fellow women constantly to retain their position in retaining monogamy, and this ambiguous position has situated them in a very different from men’s social position as men fight for intellectual recognition.

... they (women) are all rivals. Before marriage it is their business to please men; and after, with a few exceptions, they follow the same scent with all the persevering pertinacity of instinct. Even virtuous women never forget their sex in company, for they are for ever trying to make themselves agreeable. A female beauty, and a male wit, appear to be equally anxious to draw the attention of the company to themselves; and the animosity of contemporary wits is proverbial. (Wollstonecraft 210)

“Women are people with rational thinking” (Periyar 16). They have the same expectations to get social and political power. Studies are required at an inter-disciplinary level to examine the differences between man’s perception of power and woman’s perception of power. Social and political role-play could just be one of the many reasons for a development of female role in societies. The female animal might have special characteristics that may influence its thinking styles and approaches to life.

In the game of life and biological competition, the female of the species aims at achieving attractiveness and beauty to please the male counterparts. This beauty aimed by the female does not reach the height of artistic immortality, as it is biological and short lived, and hence the political power of women over men is indeed only for a certain period only if it is based on biological aspect, and it reflected on her financial power too.

Beauty... or artistic beauty at any rate, is a route from the sensuous and particular to the Absolute and to freedom, from finitude to the infinite, formulations that... influenced by Schiller—strikingly recall Shaftesbury, Plotinus, and Plato. Hegel, who associates beauty and art with mind and spirit, holds with Shaftesbury that the beauty of art is higher than the beauty of nature, on the grounds that, as Hegel puts it, “the beauty of art is born of the spirit and born again” ... This idea reaches is

apogee in Benedetto Croce, who very nearly denies that nature can ever be beautiful, or at any rate asserts that the beauty of nature is a reflection of the beauty of art. “The real meaning of ‘natural beauty’ is that certain persons, things, places are, by the effect which they exert upon one, comparable with poetry, painting, sculpture, and the other arts.” (Sartwell)

Compared to this brief period of political power through beauty, men have a longer duration of political power through their intellectual achievements which might be with them till the end in most of the cases. In a knowledge economy dictated by global capitalism, women also have acquired political and financial power through their intellectual contributions. Similarly, with the advent of the camera and new social professions, men are entering into the beauty frame to acquire political and financial power. Men are also developing and expanding their horizons.

The rights of women as I perceive is to make sure that men accept that women have the same emotions like them – courage, capacity, anger and leadership. Also, for the development of human societies, both the sexes have to grow in an equal manner. Nature has given both the sexes the space to develop themselves in the same manner. (Periyar 19-20)

Business marketing strategies use people’s preference for seeing beautiful people and beautiful things to make money and create better opportunities for materialistic success. Capitalistic economy “uses beauty” as a tool “to manipulate people into buying things.” The eighteenth century French intelligentsia “associated beauty with the French aristocracy and with the Rococo style of the French royal family.” They critiqued the idea of beauty from a moral perspective. The 20th century perceived beauty as a tool for marketing and the intelligentsia perceived that “even great art appeared to be dedicated mainly to furnishing the homes of rich people, with the effect of concealing the suffering they were inflicting” (Sartwell).

Beauty came to be interpreted on Freudian terms denoting pleasure derived by looking in American movies and for achieving this purpose, women’s bodies were exposed – a direct capitalistic strategy to create a market for movies using the concept of beauty as understood by men, and exhibited by women’s bodies perfect in shape and symmetry.

“Art historians such as Linda Nochlin (1988) and Griselda Pollock (1987) brought such insights to bear on the history of painting” that thrived on showing the beautiful bodies of women exposed to male gaze. “The classical conception is that beauty consists of an arrangement of integral parts into a coherent whole, according to proportion, harmony, symmetry, and similar notions” and this western conception of beauty “is embodied in classical and neo-classical architecture, sculpture, literature, and music wherever they appear. Aristotle says in the *Poetics* that “to be beautiful, a living creature, and every whole made up of parts, must ... present a certain order in its arrangement of parts.” And in the *Metaphysics*: “The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree” (Sartwell).

Women’s beauty, symmetrical and well – ordered and well-balanced in structure, not only has helped women themselves in particular situations to promote their financial and political power, but also has been continuously used by capitalists to present it as a tool for expanding wealth and other similar exploitations by the powerful agents of high materialism. Hence, it has put them in a subservient position in socio-political sphere, which is controlled and operated by the world of men who perceived beauty as an inferior quality used by women to promote themselves though there were pleased by it.

The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing *scopophilia* in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with, likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world. (Mulvey)

Humanity exploits human or animal labour to its benefit unlike other animals. Men produce art that is beautiful and fantastic in nature. They produce beauty in a structured manner. Beauty, as an ideology, has ugliness right behind, following it like a shadow. One does not exist without the other. Where do we locate women in this structure operated by society? A woman emerges as a mainstream beautiful product, created for giving pleasure to some sections or someone. The ugly

shadow of old age and losing symmetry and order haunts her, and male philosophy and perception taunts her for her affiliation to her appearance and her obsession with her physical self, instead of core areas of thought which dominate men's consciousness. She ends up echoing male ideologies, without realizing how these work against her.

man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom...man freely confronts his product... man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty...Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labor by not considering the direct relationship between the worker and production. It is true that labor produces for the rich wonderful things – but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces – but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty – but for the worker, deformity. (Marx)

If a woman tries to imitate a good looking film star, the male gaze laughs at her, as it knows that she is taking all these extra efforts to please the male mind, acknowledging its political power and superiority. The idea that someone is taking a lot of efforts to please him, gives the male ego a sufficient uplift. The beauty of the woman has to be spontaneous, original and definitely not duplicate any other image. There is a need to fulfill the reader or audience – a woman has to present herself as an original piece of art. Ugliness is always around the corner that can mar the beauty of the woman anytime – even with a small slip. A woman is always under pressure in society to perform with her body.

The face of the most beautiful girl becomes ugly by a striking resemblance to the face of a film star on whom it was carefully modeled: Even when nature is experienced as spontaneously individuated, as if it were protected from administration, the deception is predictable. Natural beauty, in the age of its total mediatedness, is transformed into a caricature of itself; not the least of the causes for this is the awe felt for natural beauty, which imposes asceticism on its contemplation for as long as it is overlaid with images of being a commodity. Even in the past the portrayal of nature was probably only authentic as nature morte: when painting knew to read nature as the cipher of the historical, if not as that of

the transience of everything historical. The Old Testament prohibition on images has an aesthetic as well as a theological dimension. That one should make no image, which means no image of anything whatsoever, expresses at the same time that it is impossible to make such an image. Through its duplication in art, what appears in nature is robbed of its being-in-itself, in which the experience of nature is fulfilled. (Adorno 67)

The capitalistic society that has made maximum wealth out of cosmetic industry constantly mocks at women for using makeup. The ambiguity in women's roles in society has made her position fluid, at the mercy of market forces and societal forces from which she has not managed to liberate herself. "All over the world women have been enslaved in the name of marriage" (Periyar 32). The roles of women have not been clearly defined and women are expected to be wives, remain beautiful, bring forth children and so on and so on. She has to present herself in an artistic manner, and be a wife and perform her duties too. "The identification of art with beauty is inadequate" (Adorno 273). The same concept of beauty is handled by art in a clear manner as philosophers have separated one from the other, and this has not happened in the lives of women. Art has accepted realism, whereas a woman's real self and physique is not accepted as beautiful. She is enslaved in the name of marriage, and is expected to perform multiple roles.

Realism in Indian art, after western Marxism, began portraying pain and suffering and ugliness of poverty as great art. *The Santhal Family* is a "sculpture by Ramkinkar Baij from Shantiniketan that depicts the agony and suffering of the tribes" (Jain 110). In modern Indian art, ugliness of poverty has been accepted as divine, whereas, the biological beauty of women never managed to become an art. Indian Sanskrit aesthetics defined dramatic art, classifying its capacity to evoke nine types of emotions. Of these, *Shringara* is considered to be the most important evoking love and beauty. It assumes that beauty evokes love. A woman's beauty and the evoked romance and love are systematized in Indian dramatic art, that is mainstream in nature, in an indirect manner. The unwritten codes of thousands of Indian dances of tribals and other sections of society do not come under this definition. Written Sanskrit codes for dance drama or drama or dances had designed these principles for elite viewers, generally speaking. Indian hierarchical

social structure defined a section of women who excelled in this art of pleasing viewers following the principles of these theories.

It is the *rasa* of love, beauty, art and divinity, which is the very essence of life and the purpose of creation and universe. It is the peak of emotions in Indian aesthetics that defines the basis of humanity – the celebration of life, besides evocating divinity in an individual... It is referred to as the king of the sentiments (*Rasaraja*); as the lord of all sentiments (*Rasapati*); writers vie in praising it... Rudrata says “no other *rasa* is capable of producing that bliss of pleasure which the *Shringara rasa* does.” Anandavardhana quotes: “*Shringara rasa* alone is the sweetest and the most exhilarating of all *rasa*.” Bhojraja says “*Shringara* is the supreme *rasa* and it is the synonym of self and ego.” Viswanath has accredited that “*Shringara rasa* is universal and that almost all the *Sanchari Bhavas* lead to *Shringara rasa*.” (Pathloth)

Indian dramatic art defines “*Sambhoga*” or “love in union” that is “stimulated by beauty, pleasant atmosphere, romantic music, erotic fragrance, sweet and tempting words” and other similar situations. Dance presents this human experience “through graceful movements of the limbs accompanied by sweet smiles” and “*Sambhoga Shringara* is expressed” through gestures like “side glances, graceful steps and gestures” (Pathloth).

Ancient Indian Sanskrit written aesthetic principles aimed at giving pleasure to the viewer and has been structured as an art that has been created to excite human emotions with reference to happiness emphasizing on *Shringara* that celebrated life, while the Greek aesthetic principles recommended high seriousness evoking pity and fear. Greek definitions written before the Common Era dismissed myths and Gods appearing in epics and recommended the reality of plays that were fitted within a real time frame. Both Sanskrit and Greek principles ultimately reflected an already existing social system in which the woman’s body has been projected as an agency in art to give pleasure to the audience, in spite of the obvious differences in their definitions of art. The modern working woman has not managed to escape from this social structure of getting herself ready to please the viewer. Public opinion in any civilization, whether written or not, has always made it clear that a woman has to be pleasing to the eye. After women acquired financial and

political power, they did not adapt to the changes, rather, they did not respond to the changes in society, or they chose to ignore them as they still had the responsibility of sustaining monogamy at the familial level, keeping up the respect in their male colleagues' eyes, keeping up the same in their female colleagues' male perception and so on. Career women have now become the rich clients of market forces of cosmetic industry and social perception. Their financial power has not liberated them from the power of male gaze of men and male gaze of women. Educated women expect other women to look perfect, ordered, symmetrical and look like well-made and well-structured dolls – their attention is on human form. Their male gaze controls and operates the environment and supports the cosmetic industry as never before, defying Mary Wollstonecraft's dream of liberation and freedom. Human societies are operated by forces beyond the concept of freedom, and women want to get political, social and financial power by compelling themselves to fulfill the role given to them by social laws. More inter-disciplinary research would be required to find out why women use any new technology to maintain their traditional outlook of attempting to keep a perfect body. It might have something to do with the sustainability of the human race and fertility. The importance given to the female body could be the reflection of its ability to conceive a child, rear it well and sustain the next generation and compete with all other animals in dominating the earth. A woman's body gains significance from this biological perspective, and this can be studied to understand women's choices.

A New York woman describes the beauty pattern of a typical career woman, who spends almost “nearly a quarter of her \$60,000 income... on self preservation” (Wolf, 1990). A former editor of *Vogue* complains how “women are punished for their looks, whereas men can go far in just a grey flannel suit.” A woman corroborates that her estimated expense in beauty maintenance is almost \$8000 annually (Wolf, 1990). Therefore, cosmetics began to be seen as a mandate in the beauty regime of women. (Sharma 116)

Science and technology has not broken the existing social, perhaps, biological law and has instead succumbed to it. Along with the choice to maintain a perfect form, another social law of perceiving the fair skin as beautiful – a racial discrimination – woven into human mind and well-hidden in technological advances.

The camera does not pick up the dark skins and the latest discrimination encouraged men to add-on to their discrimination against the dark skinned woman who came to be branded as unattractive. Very few African women did emerge as top models and that was an exception. The camera has been designed with a white skin as a base model that was embedded. Roth's research used "the emblematic "Shirley" norm reference card as a central metaphor reflecting the changing state of race relations/aesthetics" and traced "the colour adjustment processes in the industries of visual representation and identifies some prototypical changes in the field" (Roth).

Until recently, due to a light-skin bias embedded in colour film stock emulsions and digital camera design, the rendering of non-Caucasian skin tones was highly deficient and required the development of compensatory practices and technology improvements to redress its shortcomings. (Roth)

The camera industry is Eurocentric and film chemistry and lab procedures and other practices assumed that the light-skin was the only colour that had to be photographed. It marginalized all the other skin tones. International colour standard was the bench mark and it was the white flesh tone of the European. The other flesh tones were considered to be deviation. White was the normal and other colours were considered abnormal. This invisible norm dictated photo technology and cameras continued to be made to capture the white skin tone only.

This, along with cross-cultural skin-colour-preference tests conducted by film manufacturers such as Kodak and Fuji, had confirmed an international preference for light complexions within the global consumer photo markets. The virtual public silence in Kodak's and Fuji's institutional discourses and professional literature on alternatives to traditional ways of colour balancing analogue prints is the most concrete evidence we have of this institutional oversight and resistance to change... Within the digital marketplace, Philips/Thomson and Ikegami were the first in the industry to risk large sums of investment capital in the recognition of a future multiracial market that will very likely expand over time as industrial globalization captures and maintains the norm in business practices. Other camera and photo companies have followed suit and are now far more conscious of the need for dynamic range in their cameras... Typically, innovation has come from the margins. (Roth)

This might explain the proliferation of makeup industry and its power over women, especially in countries in which the skin tone is darker. Multiculturalism and human perception of beauty has posed a newer challenge to women in a globalised science and technology Age. Now women have to compete with women of the west in globalised social media, and please the viewers. With more technological advancement, and with a more emphatic capitalistic society that is globalised in nature, and with a culture that has become globalised too, modern women are under more pressure to perform better with their skin tones and symmetrically designed bodies. Slowly, this has expanded to men too, as human capacity to afford the expensive cosmetic designed lives. It is probable that as women have emerged as economically powerful people, they might expect the men folk too to please society. Cosmetic industry has begun to cater to the needs of men and their body symmetry and skin tone. Economically empowered people might be willing to spend more money on their body aesthetics.

The film chemistry that creates color balance was not originally designed with yellow, brown, and reddish skin tones in mind, and such hues wouldn't even be considered until the 1970s. For Concordia University professor Lorna Roth's 2009 research on the equity of image technologies, she spoke with Earl Kage, the former head of the Color Photo Studio at Kodak Park during the 1960s and 1970s and former Manager of Kodak Research studios. Kage shared with Roth that, at the time, companies that sold furniture and chocolate raised concerns with Kodak because "they were having a good deal of difficulty" in differentiating wood grains, and the film was failing to distinguish "the subtle variations" between dark, bittersweet, and milk chocolates in photographs. The subsequent inclusion of darker skin tones on Kodak's color film wasn't necessarily a consideration at all — rather, the by-product of solving an advertising dilemma. (Mcnab)

Commerce and types of businesses and newly created industries have transformed human notions quite naturally. Families have accepted cosmetically designed lives as an integral part of their lives. Beauty is slowly undergoing a change as a concept that once was applied only to women as long as they were dependent on men for materialistic benefits. When the tables are turned, ideologies too get transformed. When women have emerged as economic superiors, aesthetics of bodies also have begun to change. Like caste and class are on one side strengthened consciously

and on the other side have lost their edge in food habits, culture, life styles and art, beauty as a concept has begun to expand to all sexes. Racism affects men and women and colourism also affects them both, and now ecommerce is transforming lives across the world.

The time is not far away when the beauty segment for men will emerge from the shadows of the female beauty range, the average male is now interested to take greater care. The age of information is already drawing in the younger generation who are more inclined toward self-care and grooming, this is evident in the greater growth of intimate hygiene products. Herbal and natural skin care products are another segment that is seeing a rapid expansion. E-commerce is likely to drive the growth of the segment in India where higher disposable incomes and greater affordability of the products is likely to drive the growth in the coming few years. With increasing acceptability, the growth of sales in other distribution channels like pharmacies and convenience stores is set to increase further. (Sakuja)

Earlier, men viewed women as other species and wrote on them based on what they saw or what they chose to see. Human opinions and views came to be accepted as truth, but these two thousand years of writing expanded to millions of people, both men and women, have brought in changes. History has taken two millennia to include women in education and till then intellectuals have constantly analysed their roles in civilization. Women intellectuals are changing knowledge patterns and more enquiries are conducted in much ignored areas. In another thousand years, if woman intelligentsia is still around in mainstream academic and research, human perceptions might undergo major innovative changes, and these innovations can come from any part of the world.

Wherefore women are more compassionate and more readily made to weep, more jealous and querulous, more fond of railing, and more contentious. The female also is more subject to depression of spirits and despair than the male. She is also more shameless and false, more readily deceived, and more mindful of injury, more watchful, more idle, and on the whole less excitable than the male. On the contrary, the male is more ready to help, and, as it has been said, more brave than the female; and even in the malacia, if the sepia is struck with a trident, the male comes to help the female, but the female makes her escape if the male is struck. (Aristotle)

Serious discussions have taken place amidst Greek male intelligentsia as to the types of education to be extended to women. Greek philosophy tried to locate the role of women in city states; its quest was to find out if women can be treated on par with men so that they can serve the country like men. Education shifted completely in its structure from Aristotle's times and the universities all over the world have brought forth thousands of intelligent women scholars to the mainstream. A new profession called nursing, an innovative idea in the history of world, brought women to the war field who served the wounded soldiers.

Socrates: Then, if women are to have the same duties as men, they must have the same nurture and education? ...The education which was assigned to the men was music and gymnastics... Then women must be taught music and gymnastic and also the art of war, which they must practice like the men?... I should rather expect that several of our proposals, if they are carried out, being unusual, may appear ridiculous...Yes, and a ridiculous thing of all will be the sight of women naked in the gym, exercising with the men, especially when they are no longer young; they certainly will not be a vision of beauty, any more than the enthusiastic old men who in spite of wrinkles and ugliness continue to frequent the gymnasia... First, then, whether the question is to be put in jest or in earnest, let us come to an understanding about the nature of woman: Is she capable of sharing either wholly or partially in the actions of men, or not at all? And is the art of war one of those arts in which she can or cannot share? That will be the best way of commencing the inquiry, and will probably lead to the fairest conclusion." (Plato. Republic V. 1080)

The body of the woman is an object that gives pleasure only when it is youthful, and even the philosophers are not able to think differently from the existing social thought. The woman has absorbed this perception of men - who have established their materialistic power over them - which she notices in their eyes when they evaluate her in all negotiations with each other. Her beauty and symmetry are weighed and ranked by default and the cosmetic industry has boomed because of this behavioural and thinking pattern. After women have established their materialistic power, social perception will change, as social structures are swept away by economical changes. Woman, who is marginalized now, might come up with ideas to get materialistic power. Established routine thoughts, written down or not, will change and transform triggered by economic necessities. New

businesses are established as the world economic order changes, and new social orders will be created. Society is more fluid than it appears to our perception, and colliding and blending take place all the time. There is an increase in infertility clinics, and soon women might develop a female gaze and might expect their men to have style and grace apart from masculinity and body power. Mankind keeps transforming, adapting silently and understanding these shifts would involve holistic researches, involving economics, political philosophy, biology and even science and technology.

Contrary to Marxist assumptions, the market does not commodify every aspect of human life... items proscribed at one point in time can later become routine commodities. Zelizer (1978) traces the case of life insurance, which early nineteenth-century Americans saw as sacrilege, or at best gambling, but which by the late 1800s had established itself as a breadwinner's obligation. She notes that the insurance industry, to achieve this transformation, made use of religious language and secured the support of clergy who urged on their flocks the necessity of providing for family after death, making this a sacred duty. This personal connection seemed indispensable in attaching ritual and symbolic significance to this otherwise rather bloodless commodity ... the socially marginal may at times be best placed to break away from established practice, as they are not involved in dense, cohesive social networks of strong ties that create a high level of consensus on such practice... studies indicate that the lower an innovation's champion in a corporate hierarchy, the more radical the innovation... innovation means breaking away from established routines. (Granovetter 44, 45, 46)

The socially marginalised child brides in India did not go through the tonsuring of their heads after their husband's death. It is quite common to notice in villages widows remarrying, or one-woman leaving husband for another and vice versa from time immemorial. The higher a family's political and financial power was, the stricter the rules were applied for women from such environment. Similarly, the thousands of rules and regulations applied to certain sections of Indian women were not extended to the marginalised women, ironically. India has witnessed different types of women oppression in the name of religion, high quality, superiority and other cultural codes, and untouchability, and these areas require extensive sociological research.

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The Designing of Gender: Women and Human Evolution

Globalization has quietly transformed familial behavioural patterns though it is not much discussed in mainstream discourses that present tradition as superior to contemporary reality that has let in intellectual women in mainstream political and financial discourses and negotiations. In families, women have silently done away with customs or have adapted them to suit the current situation - systems that are socially complex to practice. The marginalised women have other types of oppression and constantly strive to overcome them just like their men folk.

“In general life, society, law and religion women have to enjoy the comforts and rights enjoyed by men. Only then women will become happy and achieve their desires” (Periyar 44). In both mainstream and the peripherals, women have to be given equal treatment as human beings, and this would be the next level of human evolution. Women have been enslaved by society so that she takes care of the domestic sphere and lets men live their lives in society, and women have not been treated as fellow human beings. Twentieth century witnessed colonialism in India that became favourable to Indian women of the mainstream and marginalized cultures, as these women otherwise, would not have studied and entered knowledge economy with more confidence.

In India, colonial negotiations with European Enlightenment philosophy produced thinkers and reformers like Periyar who changed the lives of women in the southern parts of India. “Men are not branded as prostitutes in society...Prostitution is a career for women only...Men are proud to get pleasure from these so called inferior women....Men involved with such women are respected by society” (Periyar 46).

Society created ‘pleasure giving’ as a profession and did not look down on the men who went seeking for pleasure; instead, it blamed women for giving pleasure to men. Beauty, hailed as a ‘pleasure giving’ phenomenon, was condemned when women used it to give pleasure for a payment. Now, women acquire financial power through formal education, and now women have to think seriously to stay on in social power and become succumbed to the trigger of male gaze that will encourage women to get back to their earlier powerless situation. “Prostitution and *karpu* are words created to enslave women” (Periyar 47). The former will enslave the inferior placed women – women who can be bought – and the latter will enslave family women. Indian society

enslaved women of both types. The former had a career and was paid. The latter took up the unpaid job of rearing children, house management and planning and operating household economics.

“Cunning men have created social practices for their convenience as they wished; these practices will bring forth unnecessary problems to the world in general; will enslave women and block the development of human intelligence” (Periyar 50). Ethics and codes have been designed by street smart people who did not hesitate to enslave fellow human beings for their benefits. This human selfishness is behind age-old social and political codes. When we think of equality and freedom as demanded by Mary Wollstonecraft, we also have to think of Periyar’s views on men and their strategies to enslave women. If we extend Periyar’s ideas a little, we might perceive how racial slavery also was designed by human selfishness for material success. Any slavery, thus, becomes an operating tool for an economic benefit. In globalised societies, women are now entering into careers and businesses, because their families have realized the economic potential of women’s education. Periyar’s arguments are relevant and reasonable to understand the way mankind viewed women as agencies that would serve men both inside the house and outside the house.

Devadasi (women who serve men in society physically in the name of God) system has been institutionalized as a profession. Other professions employ tools like ‘lies’ to succeed, and still command respect. By women who have taken up the job of devadasi, just another profession, are not respected....If this system is blocking the empowerment of women, we have to throw it away in a bold manner and go ahead, and this is the duty of honest and hardworking people. (Periyar 52)

This is human contradiction – one of the ways in which human mind is constructed. It devises methods and it is not able to treat all methods in the same manner. Women doubly enslaved in society in their socially acknowledged age-old professions as well as their unpaid jobs at home. Women empowerment will stay on or be removed depending on the way economics, science and technology and other socio-political ideologies will direct human thought all the time trying to sustain human existence on earth which is the mightiest force from which no ideology can escape.

In India, untouchability and enslavement of women are evils that have to be rectified immediately. These two practices prove that Indians do not have freedom for themselves and behave like slaves. Still, we believe such practices will die in course of time (Periyar 65-66).

Perhaps, thousand or more years of extensive story constructions by writers, who could write and then spread it through lectures and other media, have built in Indian minds the sensibility that caste is real. These stories justified untouchability and the inferiority of women subtly. Caste hierarchy and female suppression have engraved themselves in India and the following are their faces:

1. Horoscopes that describe human beings and classify the features of women suitable for marriage and so on, and these are now part of upper and middle class cultures.
2. Temple architecture that permits only the few selected ones inside.
3. Banning of inter-clan marriages
4. Mainstream oppression of its women in the name of rituals that expect a woman to be a non-entity.
5. Colonial celebration, contestation and finally its acceptance of caste as a system and a social reality.
6. German academia's celebration Sanskrit's philosophy of life that reinforced caste hierarchy and racial superiority.

When caste is accepted by educated people, by default the educated woman is accepted as an inferior species. Even if she holds very high positions in wealth, career and knowledge, if she is a widow, she will not be permitted to be part of social and religious rituals, just like an untouchable.

It is a tragic thing that women from middle and upper classes do not have property rights and the dowry they bring to their husband's family is operated by the men of the family. Ironically, the women who are marginalized as *devadasis* have property rights. These poor women have more independence than the women from higher classes. Women have to defend themselves and not wait for men to solve their problems (Periyar 69).

It is quite ironical that women from the mainstream classes support caste system that is controlled by the religious system, not realizing that they have been victimized by their classes, or perhaps, they do not really mind their inferior role authenticated by their religious leaders or they have chosen to self-deceive themselves. They do not seem to mind their oppression in family system or in their minuscule domestic sphere, as perhaps they feel that the same religious systems give them the facility to command power over a larger section of men and women in general society, and are looked up as superior beings belonging to higher castes.

Indian society in the last thousand years has solidified caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy so effectively that now people find it very difficult to operate equality, brought in by the colonizer, and great writing efforts are continuously taken to prove western ideologies like egalitarianism and inclusion are wrong, though used as a social front for maintaining political imagery and posing to be presented across the world in a globalised economy that demands that we fall in line with the rest of the world ideologically. It operates between the past and future, wanting to keep a powerful patriarchy and a powerful elite social order controlling and dictating to women, tribes and other inferior people and make use of globalised commerce, science and technology and become a developed nation that is hierarchical. It is planning to operate democracy in a hierarchical model.

Contextualized thus, Indian women have the responsibility of not only getting equality for themselves in domestic sphere, but also give equality to others in public sphere. Society will observe how women are operating their political power, and this might direct the future position of women in Indian society as well as in general. If women want to claim equality with her superiors (as per social perception), and superiority over her inferiors (again as per social perception), her ideological grounding will come under the critical scanner, and might shape public and scholarly opinion which might redirect social structures to adapt to her new self. Society has perceived certain sections as superior and certain other sections as inferiors and women have to keep in mind that they too are perceived as inferiors by society. Women have to operate their power keeping the power of human perception, its ability to create stories, repeat them and reinforce them continuously and finally make them appear as truth. Her war and contestation would not only be with the male perception but also with female perception.

Innovations will gradually appear, from the minds of women themselves to tackle this intricately designed complexity. Educated and empowered women have to balance patriarchy on one side and untouchability on the other side. This situation is a contemporary site for human evolution, and we have to observe the way humanity evolves accommodating equality with meritocracy. Are all people equal? Are men and women equal? These are contemporary questions to be pondered upon seriously. One or two thousand years have created systems reflecting human perceptions, and the next millennium might change human perceptions completely, bringing newer systems of thought. Ideologies are fluid in state, and hence, systems too are fluid. Our vision has to scan thousands of years, and we will be able to see the ever-changing quality of structures that are man-made. Stories mimic each other and merge across geographical locations; languages mimic each other and merge and re-create themselves; ideologies and any culture too go through the same through migrations and travel, and also merge across the globe and innovation and recreation are permanent processes.

It is said by researchers that “worldwide over 260 million people suffer from discrimination based on caste” and it “affects some 20–25 percent of the world’s population.” The “intersecting nature of identities (caste, class, gender, religion) that give poverty in India its distinctive social face means that ultimately caste cannot be independently examined.” India’s “capital wealth” is “largely in the hands of the upper castes, and the lowest castes participate in the economy primarily as wage laborers.” Statistics tell us that in “India the caste into which a person is born remains among the most important determinants of life opportunity.” Politically and legally reservations are arranged but everyone knows “the role of caste in the informal structures of the economy.” Still “more of those who remain in poverty are Dalits and Adivasis, especially women among them” and thus one might surmise that “caste is not an archaic ritual system but a dynamic aspect of modern economies” (Mosse).

Just as patriarchy has been established with significant economic advantages, caste also gives economic benefits to the middle classes and upper classes. Hence, changing these systems would only be the result of another economic system which might bring forth changes in the existing system. Caste and patriarchy are surely economic systems introduced by human thought as a self-centred and natural development in a survival mode, and in the process of human growth these systems might be replaced by newer systems, if humanity arrives at newer and more

sophisticated better economic systems. Meanwhile, newer approaches are necessary to understand human behavior towards body beauty and symmetry and its deeper resonances with the survival of the species.

Physical attractiveness has been associated with mating behavior, but its role in reproductive success of contemporary humans has received surprisingly little attention. In the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (1244 women, 997 men born between 1937 and 1940) we examined whether attractiveness assessed from photographs taken at age ~18 predicted the number of biological children at age 53–56. In women, attractiveness predicted higher reproductive success in a nonlinear fashion, so that attractive (second highest quartile) women had 16% and very attractive (highest quartile) women 6% more children than their less attractive counterparts. In men, there was a threshold effect so that men in the lowest attractiveness quartile had 13% fewer children than others who did not differ from each other in the average number of children. These associations were partly but not completely accounted for by attractive participants' increased marriage probability. A linear regression analysis indicated relatively weak directional selection gradient for attractiveness ($\beta=0.06$ in women, $\beta=0.07$ in men). These findings indicate that physical attractiveness may be associated with reproductive success in humans living in industrialized settings. (Jokela)

Holistic and interdisciplinary approaches would be required to study human evolving and women empowerment which is also caught in caste intertwining in India. Future researches in this field would have to be inter-disciplinary, involving scholarship from multiple disciplines too if required to understand the complexity behind societal designing of roles of different types of human beings. In India, all this research would intertwine caste too, as that is the way Indian society has structured human socio-political and psychological lives.

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