

The Condemned Body

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The words 'gender' and 'sex' are closely related yet these are not synonyms. Gender is a characteristic feature whereas sex is a biological fact. One is born as male or female but not as feminine or masculine one rather metamorphose into feminine or masculine by the embellishment and enactment of the bodily flesh. Our culture is apparently marked by the supremacy of patriarchal power and one marker of this is the sexualisation of females by the males of the society regardless of their status, age and choice. Many people through their works have tried to manifest the wrong and unjust that has been done to women throughout the centuries. Feminists Sandra Gilbert, Mary Wollstonecraft, Susan Gubar, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Elaine Showalter, Luce Irigaray, Alice Walker, Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte are among the most eminent feminist scholars. G. D. Anderson, a feminist writes "feminism is not about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength." Many feminists and theorists have pinpointed and examined how women have been smothered and also how the anatomical and biological differences stem to gender indifferences that have led to sexism and discrimination. Men have always been reviewed as the "essential human subject" and women as the "inferior victims." According to Simone De Beauvoir humans have always interpreted themselves in opposition to others. While doing so men deny humanity to what he regards as his binary opposite 'women'. Aristotle looked at women as being "afflicted with natural defectiveness". Females have been labelled as half men, misbegotten male and imperfect men. The body of the female becomes an object of "public domain" and acts as public property that has to be constantly scrutinized and revaluated. The scrutinizing thus leads to moderation and modification of one's body regardless of his/her own dignity

and personality. This prevailing practice is thus known as Sexual objectification which involves activities like body embellishment, gazing, depression, harassment, commenting, violence and body shaming. Sexual objectification basically happens when the parts of a woman's body are not treated as part of her person and are reduced merely to instruments or commodities. Therefore when objectified the bodies act as the objects for pleasures and walking embodiments of men's desires. Larger part of women experience self objectification when they examine themselves from the 'other' lens or the lens of patriarchy and often adopt ways to conquer the 'unattainable beauty.' Attractive and alluring body acts as currency in the women's market and adds to their economic status. This self objectification of women very often leads to body shaming where one comes under the fancy of not being good enough. It has been widely noticed that the women feel more shame than men. Hence the female usually feel a kind of body dissatisfaction that often results in anxiety and depression. The objectification theory thus helps to illuminate the inclination towards this dissatisfaction and its aftermath.

Michael Foucault is one of the most reliable and authoritative scholars not only because of his meditations particularly on Discipline and Punish, sexuality, objectification, subjectivity of the bodies but also because of his correlation of power to individual's body and its undesirable effects as well. He was very much appreciated for his work because of his attentiveness to gender studies. Foucault does not declare the techniques and mannerism of disciplining a particular body yet his work is completely unbiased. He however in his work does not explore why power needs to train or discipline the docile bodies, the bodies that are way more docile than the male bodies. His analysis of power, sexuality, discipline and body without taking into consideration the gender issues is what is causing anxiety and distress. The bodies (female) have always been the site of exertion of power by males; a surface that has been culturally and historically subdued and suppressed by various political and economic forces. His work is considered as andocentric as he is accused of "neglect(ing) to examine the gender character of many disciplinary techniques" (McNay 1992, p.11) and of "treating the body throughout as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationships to the characteristic institution of modern life." (Bartky 1988, p. 63) . Adorning and ornamenting the body with

clothes, makeup, jewellery is not only associated with females but men have also been reported and documented to have indulged in such practices. Female fashions seem to have changed precisely by the Victorian Era. The stereotyping of women dress codes by focussing on the sites of 'otherness' such as waists, hips, breasts, thighs that have been exaggerated by the bustles, corsets and bras. Such products are documented to have caused breathing problems, restricting mobility, causing great discomfort and leading to organ displacement. One can notice Michael Foucault's writing on the torture as he writes "mark the victim: it is intended, either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy." (Foucault 1977 p . 34). Fashion appears to have obsessed with gender and it serves to define and recapitulate the gender differentiation. The corsets very clearly explain the power of culture over the bodies of the females. There have been corsets, bras, lingerie designed in such a hi-tech manner that they claim to 'shape' and 'control' the unmanageable parts of the body. Stiletto shoes and high heels demands practice, restricts flexibility and thus leading to particular gait and posture resulting in discomfort and distortion. However the disciplining process doesn't end with body modification one has to maintain a texture and shining skin. According to Sandra lee Bartky a woman's "skin must be soft, supple, hairless and smooth; ideally it should not betray no sign of wear, experience, age or deep thought." (Bartky op. cit. , 68). Women under the threat of not being accepted by the patriarchy start following a strict beauty regime and hunt for numerous ways of beautifying their body parts by applying skin creams, lotions, removing body hair, tweezing, waxing, electrolysis despite of the pain and agony they happen to cause. Even though both the sexes are prone to ageing and ultraviolet rays it is the women who are advised to protect their skin by using various creams and skin ageing products. The numerous cosmetic industries take advantage of their fear and make funds out of it. The advertisements and media have led to the glorification of women's appearance and sexuality as a commodity. Women go for more and more terrible body treatments like electrolysis and surgery as they have become the epitome of valid and most widely accepted body. So basically the most idealized female body is one which is slim, young, shining, hairless and white. According to Beneke that women who are often considered "provoking" are thought to seduce men for rape. Studies also reveal that the fascinating and attractive rape victims are blamed for the wrong done to them as compared to less attractive ones. Women are also objectified in advertisements and media

for example in an advertisement of a beer a woman with big, large breasts wearing a short skirt and a revealing top walks into the bar ,putting the bottle under her top and slightly rolling her eyes happens to open the beer bottle. All the men are awestruck since they believe that she has opened up the bottle with her gigantic and big breasts. Women have been documented to have sexualized in almost every form of media namely television, videos, internet and lyrics. They are often displayed in seductive ways, revealing dresses and provoking postures and eager sexual expressions. Women do not realize that advertisements are nothing but dreams. They exchange their dreams wrapped properly in the exchange of capital. These advertisements present women in an enchanting and optimistic manner which is hollow in reality. This is what Bartky calls 'modernisation of patriarchal power' since the domination remains same but the methods have changed. She explores three practices that lead to the 'establishment of femininity': dieting and exercising for obtaining an 'ideal' and perfect body alignment. The various bodily movements, gestures and postures with addition to the adoration and ornamentation and the use of cosmetics that certainly make the 'recognizable feminine body'. This maintenance of the condemned body is what she calls disciplining the body but she questions who in reality is the discipliner? She promotes the idea that disciplining one's body should be 'voluntarily done' rather than 'socially imposed.' She further promotes the idea that it is only the women who have internalized this self objectification against their own bodies since it is only her who keeps checking her makeup a dozen times to see if her compact powder has not caked up and her mascara has not run away, worries that wind might spoil her hairdo, and keeps monitoring everything she eats. Hence she becomes a captive of the panopticon, a self surveilling object. Bartky uses the concept of 'docile bodies' to present women as robotic repository rather than active agents of the society. Susan Bordo in 'The Body and the reproduction of femininity discuss how the thesis of docile bodies acts as the locus for the construction of womanhood. Susan Bordo in light of anorectics and bulimics describes how women bodies are suppressed and they restrict their diets. Foucault terms this process' bio power 'which is the numerous and diverse practices of subjugating the female bodies. Muehlekkamp and Saris Baglama say that the very process of self objectification may lead to the arousal of feelings like fear, body shame and depression. During this transition from a girl to a woman, she develops a notion of disgust as she thinks her body is becoming a 'sexual object.' Their self confidence drops at

puberty and they start realizing that their body belongs to others and not to them. Girls easily become target of sexual assault, harassment and they are very often restricted and guarded by parents and teachers. The second phase of life of a woman is basically menopausal phase where she equates the idea of becoming old to becoming unattractive. For her ageing is synonymous and equivalent to the idea of being less beautiful and inferior and it procreates the psychological trauma. Ageing therefore influences a woman's health. The old, aged, unattractive women hardly are the part of magazines and media. Even though the process of ageing is unstoppable and inevitable they are made to believe the fact that their dread skin can be again beautified and reversed by the use of various cosmetics. In sum women are instructed to sustain a body with regards to the social norms. A magazine study of European Journal of Social Psychology reveals that the human brain interprets male body as a complete package but a female body is seen in fragments. Author Sarah Gervais says that sexual objectification don't happen only to porn stars or actors, women in the real existing world have been reduced to mere subjects today and scrutinizing one's body is humiliating enough. Sony advertisement juxtaposes a woman's breasts to a game with four sensitive areas front and back. The tagline is 'touch both sides for added enjoyment.' The body does not have a face only a torso. Another advertisement of Mercedes Benz features four pair of women's breasts and Terry Richardson shot for Tom's Ford 2007 for the men that incorporate an image of a naked model with shining bright body, spreading her legs wide open. In order to cover the vagina of the model the bottle has been placed right there strategically and nail painted with crimson red over her belly. "The thing is, you can't show male nudity in our culture as you show female nudity. We are very comfortable as culture exploiting women but not men."-Tom Ford. Therefore the prevalence of the representation of women in such advertisements eventually leads to the normalization of objectification and perpetuation of the stereotypes. According to Martha Nussbaum there is a female perspective also to the objectification theory. They regard themselves as mere tools or instruments, fungible, violable.

The Second Sex almost an autobiographical work by Simon de Beauvoir in which she seems to present the repercussions and the consequences of being a woman. Beauvoir in her text Myths elaborates that women are always subsidiary and subordinate to men. She cites the

example of Eve who is said to have emerged out of Adam's ribs. The treatment of women's body as earth and men as plough well noted as fecundity myth. The femme fatale where women are criticized for the seduction of man. Freud's dark continent myth permits the men to disregard a women's needs and also to avoid what they have to say. Virgin Mary glorified yet in service of god, the myths of the wicked mother and the fear of stepmothers. Beauvoir says that these myths define the emergence of woman as she is the reflection of Eve and Virgin Mary both holding the responsibility of man's redemption and deterioration. This myth represents women according to the patriarchal needs. She then describes how male sexuality is absolute and universal whereas the economically dependent is a mystery. Beauvoir finally puts forth the idea that the only work of a woman is to serve as bodily flesh and as soon as she rejects the roles assigned to her she becomes a highly monstrous woman. She is an inspiration for critics like Judith Butler and Kate Millet. Beauvoir claims that her work "myth" was intentionally intended to raise in women a naturalness of their fate. We have numerous examples of women raising their voice and declaring that men and women are equal. For example Jane Eyre thinks that "women feel just as men feel" and manifests the idea that men and women are not different at all.

Therefore one can easily account the psychological repercussion of the customary practice of objectifying women. One can also witness the ways women treat their bodies and also see other women as objects to be ornamented and scrutinized. The objectification theory presents the idea of inspection of female body with psychology of women. This objectification is thus responsible for women's mental health risks and reshaping their lives and body. Hence Foucault's 'docile bodies' become malleable and contestable sites for power and discipline. Bartky thus says that a good face with makeup might not act as entry but it surely acts as badge of acceptance in most of professional and social affairs. This paper therefore correlates Frederickson and Robert's objectification theory to Sandra's essays 'Foucault, Femininity and the modernization of the patriarchal power. The understanding that for whom and why women have been adorning their bodies becomes almost strenuous if one does not comprehend that from the beginning they have been living in a patriarchal society that has obligatory and mandatory heterosexuality as one of its basic foundation. This objectification has become rampant today. The theory thus explains that human distinctiveness only existed

for women and exists till today. One should have authority over one's body. The more we challenge the traditional gender divisions the less they become. The objectification should become a matter of choice rather than done out of fear or desire of acceptance. The contemporary world of beauty and charm has led to destruction of women physically and psychologically. Therefore the society can change but it needs continuous struggle and involvement at different levels in order to attain utopia.

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