

Two Worlds, One Body: The Breast in Western and Eastern Perspectives

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Name: Dilhara Vaishnavi Dileep

Register Number: 220011028690

Research Centre and Postgraduate Department of English

Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara

Kochi – 682021

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Two Worlds, One Body: The Breast in Western and Eastern Perspectives** is a bona fide record of sincere work done by Dilhara Vaishnavi Dileep, Register Number: 220011028690, Bharata Mata College, under my supervision and guidance and that no part of this thesis has been presented for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition of this or any other university.

Project Guide:

Ms.Sreelakshmi P

Guest Faculty

Research Centre and

Postgraduate Department of English

Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara

Dr. Thara Gangadharan

Head of the Department

Research Centre and

Postgraduate Department of English

Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara

Declaration

I, hereby declare that the presented dissertation **Two Worlds, One Body: The Breast in Western and Eastern Perspectives** is based on the research that I did on under the supervision and guidance of Ms.Sreelakshmi P, Guest Faculty, Research Centre and Postgraduate Department of English, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. This is a report of my hands based on the research done on the selected topic and it is my original work and interpretations drawn therein are based on material collected by myself. It has not been previously formed basis for the award of any degree, diploma or fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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Dilhara Vaishnavi Dileep

Place: Thrikkakara

Reg.No: 220011028690

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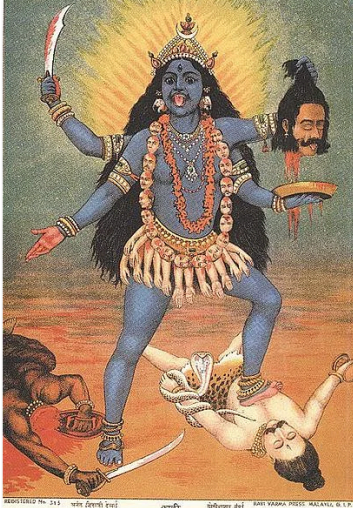
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This dissertation follows MLA 8th edition

Chapter 1

Perception Of Breasts



(Fig.1.1: Ravi Varma Raja)



(Fig.1.2:Dürer Albrecht)



(Fig.1.3:Mother Goddess)

It may be hard for an ordinary individual who is not familiar with the concept of colonialism or ancient Indian history to believe the practice of covering the upper body, especially of women, is a colonial byproduct. This surprise is a result created due to one's own cultural ignorance. The evidence is very clear from the temple's bare breasted idols (fig.1.1) to the bare breasted illustration of Adam and Eve (fig.1.2) to the sculpture from the Indus Valley civilization (fig.1.3), yet the modern day mob fails to acknowledge this fact till an AI assistant gives its thumbs up.

Breast has a very rich history of its own that can be traced from the mythical works of ancient Greek, Harappan, or Egyptian and historical anecdotes that are untitled as facts due to the historical bias that is steeped in the chronicles of Indian culture. With the help of postcolonialism and subaltern studies, much of these unrecognized data resurface in the schools of research and academics. The stories glorified as heroic and noble are being persecuted under the light of

justice and human ethics thus bringing out the hypocrisy and fouls of the worshiped deities of our time.

Within this ocean of unsurfaced truths, this dissertation attempts to uncover the unrecognized possibilities that hold the potential to be true via the medium of close reading and comparative literature on the biological organ breast of the female homosapien. How did an organ meant simply to act as a tool for nourishing its infant become the recipient of many more adjectives from a broad range of fields including history, Psychology, and Literature. The main focus will be on Literature from the Indian context.

India is credited for its rich history with the Harappan civilization being the oldest and for the *Bhavata Purana* and *Ramayana* being among the largest epics in the world. Within these works some stories that hold the breast as one of its major elements along with them the previously mentioned anecdotes about the lower cast life and documented historical events Juxtaposed with the western gods and Greek epics act as the main text for this dissertation.

“When poets speak of death, they call it the place "without breasts.”” (Yalom Before acknowledgments)said the Spanish writer Ramon Gomez De La Serna . While Indian poet Kutti Revathi real name Dr.S Revathi wrote

“Breasts are bubbles, rising
 In wet marshlands
 I watched in awe — and guarded —
 Their gradual swell and blooming
 At the edges of my youth’s season
 Saying nothing to anyone else,
 They sing along

With me alone, always:

Of Love,

Rapture,

Heartbreak

To the nurseries of my turning seasons,

They never once forgot or failed

To bring arousal

During penance, they swell, as if straining

To break free; and in the fierce tug of lust,

They soar, recalling the ecstasy of music

From the crush of embrace, they distill

The essence of love; and in the shock

Of childbirth, milk from coursing blood

Like two teardrops from an unfulfilled love

That cannot ever be wiped away,

They well up, as if in grief, and spill over” (Kutti)

about the same breast. The difference in depth and meaning is obviously due to the difference in their sexes but what created this change in cognitive reception? Breast that was a symbol of purity, motherly nourishment, and nature is a symbol of sexuality, lust, and pornography in the present day, how did this ‘epistemological transformation’ as Gayatri Spivak puts it take place? And what are the reasons behind this transformation? Is this a colonial phenomenon but if so, how did it reach a global landscape? These are the main questions that drive this research paper toward its conclusion.

New research in this question of male attraction to Breasts stated, Attraction to breasts

..is a brain organization effect that occurs in straight males when they go through puberty. Evolution has selected for this brain organization in men that makes them attracted to the breasts in a sexual context, because the outcome is that it activates the female bonding circuit, making women feel more bonded with him. It's a behavior that as a defining part of the female body, the breast has been coded with both "good" and "bad" connotations since the beginning of recorded time. Eve, we remember from Genesis, was both the honored mother of the human race and the archetypal female temptress Jews and Christians may proudly claim that she gave suck to their ancestors, but they also associate the apple of the Fall with Eve's apple like breasts-a connection made visible by innumerable works of art. males have evolved to stimulate the female's maternal bonding circuitry (Wolchover).

But while looking at ancient history it is obvious that women were always objectified by the males but in the case of fetishism, the object of fascination was different for each country which this new research *New Theory on Why Men Love Breasts* did not clarify.

Breasts are sexual ornaments-the crown jewels of femininity. Yet this sexualized view of the breast is by no means universal. In several different cultures in Africa and the South Pacific, where women have gone about with their breasts uncovered since time immemorial, the breast has not taken on the predominantly erotic meaning it has in the West. Non-Western cultures have their own fetishes-small feet in China, the nape of the neck in Japan, the buttocks in Africa and the Caribbean. In each instance, the sexually charged body part-what the French poet Mallarmé refers to as "the veiled erotic"- owes

much of its fascination to full or partial concealment...As a defining part of the female body, the breast has been coded with both "good" and "bad" connotations since the beginning of recorded time. Eve, we remember from Genesis, was both the honored mother of the human race and the archetypal female temptress. Jews and Christians may proudly claim that she gave suck to their ancestors, but they also associate the apple of the Fall with Eve's applelike breasts—a connection made visible by innumerable works of art (Yalom 3).

This could be why most of the villainous female characters were portrayed with big breasts compared to their heroic counterparts. But this prudish mentality was erased with the new wave of feminism that advocated for women to embrace their bodies and to love themselves no matter their size or shape which later took a turn as an advertisement slogan for getting breast implants and over artificial procedures by the cosmetics industry. While this is happening on one side society's norms on body image affect men too especially when he has man boobs. It occurs due to an increase in female hormones that can not be controlled by the individual yet they face shame and insults in the society and are forced to get surgeries for it. Here the connotation of not masculine is attached to the breast like this for many reasons to embody the prehistoric connotations that the breast carries.

Etymologically The English word breast derives from the Old English word *brēost* ('breast, bosom') from Proto-Germanic **breustam* (breast), from the Proto-Indo-European base *bhreus-* (to swell, to sprout). The breast spelling conforms to the Scottish and North English dialectal pronunciations. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary states that "Middle English *brēst*, [comes] from Old English *brēost*; akin to Old High German *brust*..., Old

Irish brú [belly], [and] Russian bryukho"; the first known usage of the term was before the 12th century ("Breast").

This project hypothesizes that the global perception of breasts has evolved from multifaceted cultural symbols in mythological and historical contexts to more generalized and often sexualized representations. By examining narratives from both Eastern and Western traditions, we can explore this transformation. In Eastern texts, Putana's story from the Bhagavata Purana depicts breasts as symbols of nurturing and lethal power, while Surpanakha from the Ramayana reflects societal views on female desire and agency through her punishment. Nangeli's tale from A Travancore Tale highlights resistance against oppressive customs. In Western texts, Phryne the Thespian's beauty and power influence her trial's outcome, Helen of Troy's abduction underscores the consequences of objectifying beauty, and the Amazons' myth illustrates breasts as symbols of strength and independence. By analyzing these stories, the project seeks to uncover the reasons behind the global shift in the perception of breasts.

Chapter one, titled Perception of Breast, acts as an introduction chapter to familiarise with the hypothesis of this project and the main texts that are being dealt with. Chapter Two, titled Postcolonial Colonisation, is the theory chapter that details the literary theories employed to conduct the analysis, the research methodology is primarily textual analysis along with the ideas of postcolonialism by Gayatri Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha. Chapters three and four titled Bathycopian Then And Maaridam Now, are the analysis findings, and Chapter five, is the conclusion of the dissertation.

Chapter 2

Postcolonial Colonisation

Post-colonialism represents a pivotal academic framework that scrutinises the enduring repercussions of colonialism on diverse cultures and societies that still persist even in the twenty-first century. "It is from those who have suffered the sentence of history--subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement--that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking"("Postcolonial Criticism").

Post-colonialism delves into the stains of European colonial enterprises from the 15th to the 20th centuries, analysing how these hegemonic powers subjugated and reshaped non-European territories. Colonialism, as a political strategy, involved the establishment of European political authority over distant lands, while imperialism underscored the military domination aimed at solidifying sovereignty over these territories. The aftermath of these processes, known as decolonization, marks the legal and administrative independence of formerly colonised nations, even though with lingering vestiges of colonial influence across political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. Post-colonial discourse has evolved through distinct stages.

Initially, it highlighted the psychological and cultural inferiority imposed on native populations by imperial powers. This "Colonisation of the mind"(Van Der Walt et al)engendered a profound sense of subjugation among colonised peoples. Subsequently, there emerged a spirited resistance to ethnic, cultural, and political domination, culminating in movements for autonomy. This phase underscores the struggle for self-assertion and cultural preservation against colonial suppression. Finally, post-colonial theory embraced hybridity, recognizing the synthesis of indigenous and colonial cultures into unique, new forms.

Central to post-colonial discourse is Edward Said's critique of *Orientalism*, which examines how Western representations of the East perpetuated stereotypes and misconceptions. Said argued that Orientalism constructed the Orient as the binary opposite of the Occident, shaping Western identities through contrast with the Other. This discourse not only influenced academic and literary depictions but also reinforced power differentials between colonizer and colonized. He says:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon a ... distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident. Thus, a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts. concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind, destiny, and so on (Said 2).

Literature serves as a potent medium for exploring post-colonial themes. For instance, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are often analyzed through post-colonial lenses. These texts depict colonizers like Crusoe and Prospero exerting dominance over native characters like Friday and Caliban, illustrating themes of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence in colonial encounters.

In the realm of postcolonial studies, three pioneering figures stand out for their profound contributions to understanding the complex legacies of colonialism and imperialism: Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Homi Bhabha. Each scholar brought unique perspectives and insights that have shaped the academic discourse on colonialism, identity, power, and resistance.

Frantz Fanon, a prominent thinker born in 1925 in the French Antilles, emerged as a pivotal voice in the mid-20th century, addressing the profound psychological impact of

colonialism on colonized peoples. His experiences in Martinique and France, where he encountered racism firsthand, deeply influenced his perspective. Fanon's writings, particularly in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), highlight the devastating effects of colonialism's internalized values and the resulting psychological trauma experienced by those subjected to its power.

Fanon's exploration begins with the notion that colonial powers effectively disempowered colonized peoples by instilling within them a belief system that devalued their own culture and identity. This internalization of colonial values, served to marginalize and psychologically debilitate the colonized. The negative self-perception propagated by colonial education and societal structures left lasting scars on individuals and communities.

His works *Black Skin, White Masks* delves deeply into the psychological dimensions of colonialism, drawing from Fanon's dual background as a psychiatrist and a Black man who experienced racism firsthand. He articulates the profound alienation and self-hatred that arise when individuals are made to feel inferior due to the color of their skin. The chapter *The Fact of Blackness* vividly captures Fanon's personal encounters with racism in France, where he was subjected to derogatory epithets that reduced him to a mere object of ridicule and contempt.

Fanon's decision to join the Algerian rebels in their struggle against French occupation further underscores his commitment to confronting colonial oppression at both a personal and societal level. His actions were not only a rejection of the psychological chains imposed by colonialism but also a testament to his belief in the necessity of active resistance.

Moreover, Fanon's works represent a broader attempt to document and expose the psychological wounds inflicted by colonialism. His critiques, inspired by intellectuals like

Jean-Paul Sartre and Aimé Césaire, illuminate the mechanics of oppression and its enduring effects on the psyche of the oppressed.

Frantz Fanon's writings stand as a powerful testament to the psychological toll of colonialism. Through his impassioned analysis and personal experiences, Fanon sheds light on the pervasive trauma inflicted upon colonised peoples who internalised colonial values and endured systemic dehumanisation. His work continues to resonate, urging us to confront the legacy of colonialism and its profound impact on identity, culture, and human dignity.

Homi Bhabha is another prominent figure in the field of post-colonial studies, renowned for his theoretical contributions that have profoundly influenced academic discourse on cultural identity, hybridity, and colonial discourse. Bhabha introduces the concept of the 'third space',

It refers to the interstices between colliding cultures, a liminal space "which gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." In this "in-between" space, new cultural identities are formed, reformed, and constantly in a state of becoming. He critiques binary divisions between coloniser and colonised. This theoretical framework suggests that cultural identities do not conform to fixed categories but emerge through hybrid forms in the interstices of different cultural influences. Colonial encounters, according to Bhabha, catalyse the production of new cultural identities that blend indigenous and colonial elements. This notion underscores the transformative potential of cultural mixing, where identities are not merely imposed but actively negotiated and reconfigured in dynamic social contexts. ("The Third Space")

Most important of Bhabha's ideas is the concept of mimicry, which he elaborates on from Frantz Fanon's insights. Mimicry describes how colonised subjects adopt and mimic aspects of the coloniser's culture as a strategy of survival and adaptation. However, Bhabha

argues that mimicry is never a straightforward replication but involves a subtle divergence or ambivalence. Ambivalence reflects the conflicted and contested nature of identity formation in colonial and post-colonial settings, where mimicry serves both as a means of appropriation and resistance against hegemonic cultural impositions. This concept illuminates the complexities of agency and subversion among the colonized, highlighting their strategic navigation of power dynamics within asymmetric colonial relationships.

If I may adapt Samuel Weber's formulation of the marginalizing vision of castration,³ then colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power (Bhabha).

Bhabha critiques conventional representations of colonial subjects as static and homogeneous entities. He contends that stereotypes are not fixed but fluid constructs shaped through power relations and cultural negotiations. Bhabha's analysis underscores how colonial discourse constructs and perpetuates stereotypes that marginalize and homogenize diverse Indigenous identities. By unpacking the mechanisms through which stereotypes are produced and contested, Bhabha challenges dominant narratives and encourages a reevaluation of how identities are constructed and performed in colonial contexts. This critical approach opens avenues for understanding the politics of representation and the complexities of identity politics in post-colonial societies.

While Bhabha's theories have been instrumental in reshaping scholarly discourse on post-colonialism, they have also faced critiques. Some scholars argue that his emphasis on hybridity and ambiguity may obscure the material realities of colonial oppression and exploitation. Others contend that his reliance on post-structuralist concepts may limit the scope of political engagement within post-colonial studies.

Nevertheless, Bhabha's legacy lies in his innovative approach to understanding the complexities of cultural identity and representation in colonial and post-colonial contexts. His concepts continue to provoke scholarly debate and inspire new avenues of research within the fields of cultural studies, literary criticism, and post-colonial theory.

Post-colonial studies extend beyond literature to contemporary social and political contexts. Scholars like Gayatri Spivak critique how colonial discourses persist in perpetuating gender and class disparities in post-colonial societies. Spivak's question, *Can the subaltern speak?*, highlights the marginalization of voices within these societies and advocates for new vocabularies to articulate the experiences of oppressed groups.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the contemporary critics in the postcolonial realm she has made immense contributions in the field of postcolonial studies and feminist theory and along with significant intellectual contributions that have reshaped how scholars understand power, identity, and representation in global contexts. Her engagement with concepts such as the subaltern, deconstruction, feminism, and translation has sparked critical dialogue and influenced multiple disciplines, including literary theory, cultural studies, and gender studies. Spivak is considered as one of the most influential literary and cultural theorists of the late twentieth century. She is widely regarded as one of the founding figures of postcolonial theory, along with Edward W. Said and Homi K.

Spivak's seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) interrogates the representation and voicelessness of marginalized groups within colonial and postcolonial

discourses. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's concept of the subaltern, she critiques Western feminist and Marxist approaches for their tendencies to speak for or misrepresent the subaltern, thereby perpetuating their marginalisation. Spivak argues for a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in giving voice to the subaltern and challenges scholars to confront the ethical and political implications of their representations.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's intellectual contributions have left a lasting impact on various academic disciplines, inspiring critical inquiry and debate. Her theoretical insights into subalternity, deconstruction, feminism, and translation have reshaped how scholars approach the study of postcolonialism, cultural critique, and feminist theory. Spivak's work continues to provoke scholars to rethink dominant narratives, confront the complexities of representation, and advocate for social justice and equity in global contexts.

Even though Spivak is regarded as a post colonial critic she identifies herself as a “Para-disciplinary, ethical philosopher” (Spivak) though in her early career, she engaged in what might be termed "Applied deconstruction"(Spivak). Her initial acclaim stemmed from her translation and introductory remarks for Derrida's seminal work, *Of Grammatology* (1976). Subsequently, she has employed deconstructive methodologies in diverse theoretical contexts and textual examinations, encompassing feminism, Marxism, literary critique, and postcolonial studies “My position is generally a reactive one. I am viewed by Marxists as too codic, by feminists as too male-identified, by indigenous theorists as too committed to Western Theory. I am uneasily pleased about this” (Kilburn).

Her key contributions in the field of literary criticism include the idea of Ethical responsibility, Spivak's concept of responsibility, much like her view on speaking, is similar to Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of answerability. It's about more than just responding—it involves a moral commitment to create space in discourse for others to be heard. In simple terms, it means that ethics involve not just what we know, but how we relate to others. Spivak talks

about an ideal relationship that is personal and close. She calls this ethical singularity, emphasising engaging with others in ways that aren't about essential traits or urgent situations.

Another term is Margins or Outside, Spivak's work delves into the intersections where established academic boundaries dissolve and engage with political action (“outside”). She examines cultural politics from a perspective often considered marginal or outside the mainstream discourse, while simultaneously operating within the professional framework of academic hegemony. Drawing on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, she employs deconstruction to subvert dominant narratives, revealing their underlying assumptions and power dynamics.

As a woman from the third world situated within the privileged environment of the American academy, Spivak embodies this dual perspective. Her book *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993) reflects this tension, where she brings marginalized viewpoints into the academic discourse, challenging conventional hierarchies and perspectives.

Her most important contribution is her version of the term Subaltern which she borrowed from Gramsci who coined the term to address

the colonial populations who are socially, politically, and geographically excluded from the hierarchy of power of an imperial colony and from the metropolitan homeland of an empire. Antonio Gramsci coined the term *subaltern* to identify the cultural hegemony that excludes and displaces specific people and social groups from the socio-economic institutions of society, in order to deny their agency and voices in colonial politics. (“Subaltern (postcolonialism)”)

However Spivak's definition is more specific she says,

Subaltern is not just a classy word for "oppressed", for [the] Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern ... Many people want to claim [the condition of] *subalternity*. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don't need the word 'subaltern' They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern (Kilburn).

In the essay *The Burden of English* taken from *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* she talkies about the colonial inertia that is unconsciously being propelled in the academic field of english literature. She talkies about the possible alienation one will come across while they are reading a work of litrature from a non orient origin. The reader is not the “Implied reader” so the have an alienated feeling towards the text and eventually the reader who is surrounded by such a alien texts eventually have an epistomological transformation wher they are familirased with the occidental text. She compares this with the situation of Kenya from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind*.

A lot of good work on Kenyan and African languages has been done at the Department of Linguistics and African languages at the University of Nai-robi.... They... acknowledge the reality of there heing three languages for each child in Kenya, a reality which many patriotic and democratic Kenyans would now argue should be translated into social and official policy. Kiswa- hili would be the all-Kenya national and official language; the other nation- ality languages would have their

rightful places in the schools and English would remain Kenya people's language of international communication. But I am not dealing so much with the language policies as with the language practice of African writers.(Thiong'o Preface)

Post-colonialism offers a critical lens through which to examine the enduring impact of colonialism on global cultures and societies. By interrogating historical narratives, literary texts, and contemporary discourses, post-colonial theory illuminates the complexities of power dynamics, cultural hybridity, and resistance in a post-colonial world. This ongoing dialogue is essential for understanding the interplay between past injustices and present realities, fostering a deeper appreciation of diversity and the ongoing quest for social justice in a globalised world.

In essence, post-colonialism challenges us to confront the legacies of imperialism and colonialism, urging us to envision more equitable futures where all voices can be heard and valued. postcolonial perspectives enrich our understanding of colonialism's enduring impacts on gender and the female breast by examining power dynamics, cultural identities, and resistance through nuanced theoretical frameworks. By engaging with these ideas, we illuminate how the female body becomes a contested site for negotiating cultural autonomy, reclaiming agency, and challenging colonial and patriarchal impositions in a globalised world.

In addition to postcolonial theory Hegemony Is also applied the concept was formulated by the Italian Marxist Antoni Gramsci

Hegemony was a concept previously used by Marxists such as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin to indicate the political leadership of the working-class in a democratic revolution, but developed by Gramsci into an acute analysis to explain why the 'inevitable' socialist revolution predicted by orthodox Marxism had not occurred by the early 20th century("Antonio Gramsci.").

The Turin communists posed concretely the question of the 'hegemony of the proletariat': i.e. of the social basis of the proletarian dictatorship and the workers' State. The proletariat can become the leading (dirigent) and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State. In Italy, in the real class relations which exists there, this means to the extent that it succeeds in gaining the consent of the broad peasant masses (Mouffe).

In other words cultural hegemony means that the beliefs, values, and norms of the ruling class in a diverse society become the standard for everyone else. They shape the culture so their worldview seems natural and beneficial for all, even though it mainly serves their own interests. For instance in literature, cultural hegemony can be seen when certain literary works or genres favored by the elite or powerful groups are celebrated as the standard of great literature, while other works or voices from marginalized groups are overlooked or undervalued, reinforcing the dominance of the ruling class's cultural perspectives.

This study utilizes the theoretical frameworks of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Antonio Gramsci to argue that the prevailing conception of breasts was perpetuated by colonial influences. Bhabha's notion of hybridity is employed to acknowledge the existence of a third space during the colonial era, facilitating the blending of Indian and Western spheres into a new hybrid culture, exemplified by the introduction of the Western blouse into the traditional Indian saree. Gramsci's concept of hegemony is evident in the adoption of colonial culture and values by Indians, viewed as superior and embodying the "White man's burden"(Kipling) as articulated by Kipling. Finally, Spivak's idea of epistemological transformation is used to demonstrate that through processes of hegemony and hybridity, Eastern minds continue to be influenced by Western ideologies, resulting in the internalization of Western norms and values by Eastern societies.

Chapter 3

Bathycolpian Then

In 2017 news about female autonomy and freedom to expose upper body was gaining attention in social media and other public domains,

Local officials in the Venice Beach neighborhood of Los Angeles voiced support this week for allowing women to sunbathe topless, calling the move “ a serious equality issue” and citing the city’s Italian namesake as one of many European regions where toplessness is socially acceptable. But topless sunbathing is illegal in the city and county of Los Angeles, and the local disagreement is just the skin of a patchwork of nudity laws and customs that vary by state and municipality across the country.

The vast majority of states actually have laws on the books making clear that women can’t be arrested under state law solely for being topless in settings where it’s OK for men. But many local ordinances ban the practice anyway. And there’s plenty of grey area for police officers to make their own interpretations and make arrests for “public indecency” or “disorderly conduct.” (Begley).

This news may come as surprising, but it is legally permissible for women to be bare-chested in the United States. In recent years, numerous contemporary feminist advocates have campaigned against the longstanding double standard that deemed female breasts as indecent. This campaign culminated in the elimination of the double standard, as reported in a 2017 article from The Times.

The prevailing double standards surrounding the prohibition and sexualization of female breasts and nipples have increasingly come under scrutiny. A significant factor hindering adherence to these standards is the enduring influence of the male gaze embedded

within our collective psyche. The portrayal and perception of female breasts are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including media representation, fashion trends, and evolving concepts of beauty and sexuality. Despite being frequently celebrated as symbols of femininity and attractiveness, discussions surrounding breasts encompass broader issues such as public breastfeeding, breast cancer awareness, and movements promoting body positivity that challenge restrictive beauty norms.

In the contemporary Western context, attitudes toward breasts are intricate. While there exists a conservative perspective that views female breasts as inherently indecent or vulgar, a parallel liberal viewpoint actively opposes these traditional notions. The advent of Information Technology has amplified liberal voices, exemplified by movements like #FreeTheNipple, which has garnered substantial support from cultural icons such as Scout Willis, daughter of actor Bruce Willis. This Western movement has even resonated in non-Western societies like India, where activist Arathy initiated the *Maaru thurakkal samaram* campaign on Facebook, translating to 'protest to bare the breasts.' Although some activists participated, the campaign was curtailed when Facebook removed Arathy's post citing company policies. Debates surrounding this issue have suggested that the exposure of female skin is a Western construct. However, this assertion merits critical examination within an academic framework.

The notion of "Aping the West" ("DHNS") is often employed to dismiss liberal ideas gaining ground in non-European societies. However, in the case of attitudes towards female breasts, this argument does not hold validity. It was Western societies themselves that first implemented censorship of the female chest, a practice rooted in the sexual connotations they began associating with this secondary sexual characteristic. Ideally, breasts should be regarded similarly to chest hair or the Adam's apple – as natural anatomical features developed at puberty.

Historically, this European perspective can be traced back to ancient times, down to ancient Greece, where cultural norms and stories such as that of Phryne the Thespian reveal prevalent attitudes towards nudity and sexuality.



(Fig.3.1:Aphrodite Rising From the Sea)

She was born in Thespieae, Boeotia, but lived at Athens, where she earned so much by her beauty and wit that she offered to rebuild the walls of Thebes, on condition that the words “destroyed by Alexander, restored by Phryne the courtesan” were inscribed upon them. At a festival of Poseidon and also at the festival at Eleusis she walked into the sea naked with her hair loose, suggesting to the painter Apelles his great picture of “Aphrodite Anadyomene” (“Aphrodite Rising From the Sea”) (fig.4), for which Phryne sat as model. She was also (according to Athenaeus) the model for the statue of the Cnidian Aphrodite by Praxiteles, whose mistress she was; copies of the statue survive in the Vatican and elsewhere. When accused of blasphemy (a capital charge), she was defended by the orator Hyperides. When it seemed as if the verdict would be unfavourable, he tore her dress and displayed her bosom, which so moved the jury that they acquitted her; another version has Phryne tear her own dress and plead with each individual juror. (“Phryne Greek courtesan”)

The legend of Phryne the Thespian, which emerged during the 4th century BC in classical Greece, concludes with an open-ended interpretation. Phryne, a renowned courtesan

and model, faced a trial for impiety, a serious charge in ancient Greece. As the story goes, her defense lawyer, the orator Hypereides, allegedly removed her clothing during her trial to reveal her beauty to the judges, ultimately leading to her acquittal. The legend suggests that the judges were so struck by her physical beauty that they acquitted her, possibly influenced by admiration akin to that of a goddess or by the allure of her sexuality.

Speculation surrounding the conclusion of Phryne's trial often revolves around whether her pardon was due to her perceived divinity-like status as a beautiful and alluring woman, or whether it was influenced by the judges' reaction to her sexual appeal. The story's open-ended nature allows for interpretations that can include subtle sexual connotations, reflecting the complex intertwining of beauty, sexuality, and societal norms in ancient Greek culture.

Helen of Troy, known in Greek mythology as Helen of Sparta, is another prominent example of a female figure from ancient Greece who was idealized for her beauty and sexuality. According to mythological accounts, Helen was considered the most beautiful woman in the world and her extraordinary attractiveness played a central role in the events of the Trojan War.

In Homer's epic poems, especially in the *Iliad*, Helen is portrayed as the epitome of female allure and desirability. Her abduction by Paris, which sparked the Trojan War, is often depicted as a consequence of her irresistible beauty that led men to compete for her favor. This portrayal positions Helen not just as a character but as a symbol of male desire and idealized femininity in ancient Greek literature.

The characterization of Helen of Troy underscores the cultural significance placed on female beauty and its association with sexuality in ancient Greek society. She represents an archetype of feminine allure that has persisted in Western literature and art, influencing perceptions of beauty and femininity across centuries.

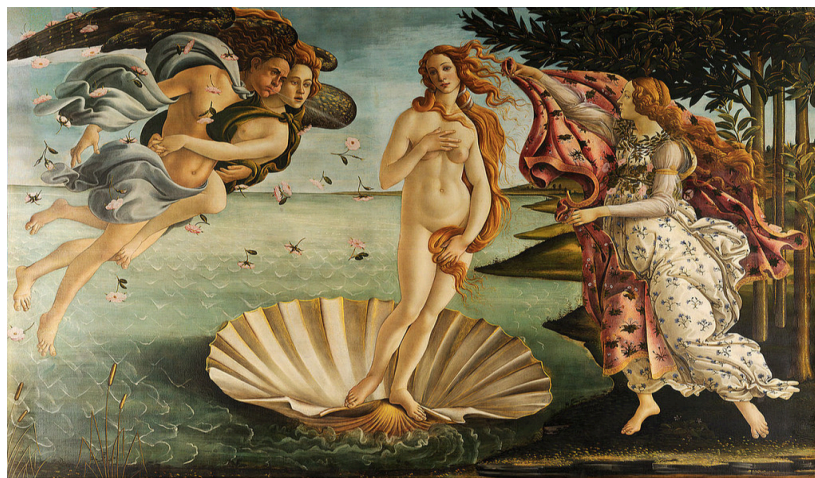


(Fig.3.2: Aphrodite and Eros)

On the other hand, from the fourth century B.C.E. onward, Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love, was regularly represented in some state of undress, with her breasts clearly outlined or exposed. Her breasts were molded to the erotic ideal of firm, slightly muscular bosoms, referred to as "applelike" in classical texts. This was the ideal associated with the legendary Helen of Troy, who, upon her return from the Trojan Wars, bared the "apples of her bosom" to her husband, Menelaus, causing him to lay aside his sword and forgive her (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 41 BCE) In the Hellenistic period, Aphrodite became something akin to a pin-up figure, an object of male desire as well as awesome worship. It is hard to say for certain whether the change in Aphrodite's image reflected changes in the status of real women, but the analogy with more modern times leads us to wonder what kind of power sex goddesses, in stone

or in flesh, really have. Think of Marilyn Monroe as the classic modern example(Yalom 18).

In ancient Greek literature and mythology, discussions and depictions of sexuality were as direct as the cultural norms of the 4th century BC allowed. Characters such as Phryne and Helen of Troy exemplify this openness, where narratives frequently intertwined beauty, desire, and sexuality without the constraints of modesty or restraint seen in later periods.



(Fig.3.3:The Birth Of Venus)

But despite this openness witnessed in the field of literature and art that produced very sensual sculptures and naked goddesses the condition of women during the time was very restricted.

In fifth-century B.C.E. Athens, women were carefully controlled by a patriarchal system, which assigned them indoor duties, excluded them from political life, and imposed head-to-foot coverage of their bodies. In the house they wore the long, shirt like "chitons" or tunics, and outdoors cloaks for warmth with veils covering their heads. Only in Sparta were females granted somewhat greater freedom

of dress. These girls wore a short tunic that ended above the knee and was slit on the side to expose the thigh. (Yalom 19)

The liberated female breast remained a legend and myth when in the real world it was draped in layers of clothing dishonored but the male genitalia was celebrated in Greek society. The female breast was credited with supernatural powers.

One such legend is the creation of the Milky Way was linked to Hera's breasts in the following tale. It was believed that mortals could become immortal if they were suckled at the breast of the queen of the goddesses. So, when Zeus wanted his son Hercules —whose mother was the mortal Alcmena —to have immortality, he had him placed quietly at Hera's breast while she was sleeping. But Hercules sucked so vigorously that she was awakened and realized he was not her own child. Indignant, she drew the breast away with such force that the milk spurted out into the heavens and created the Milky Way. (Yalom 20)

The existence of the Amazons from Greek mythology cannot be definitively proven, although their earliest mention can be traced back to Homer's *The Iliad* in the 8th century BCE. In this epic, Achilles, the hero, confronts and defeats the Amazon queen. The portrayal of Amazons in ancient Greek literature characterizes them as embodying traits considered unconventional and undesirable for women in Greek society. These qualities include their refusal to marry or bear male children, as well as their active participation in warfare, traditionally perceived as roles reserved for men. This independence and rejection of dependence on men positioned them as a contrasting and somewhat subversive representation of femininity within Greek cultural norms.



(Fig.3.4: The Real Amazons)

The Amazons' special place in the history of the breast derives from the legend that they cut off their right breast so as to have greater ease in drawing the bow. A common etymological interpretation of their name is to root it in the two Greek words *a* (without) and *mazos* (breast)....When depicted in art battling their traditional Greek enemies, Amazons were often shown with one breast bare and the other hidden under draperies. In the Greek imagination, Amazons represented the destructive forces unleashed when women abandoned their role as the nurturers of men and appropriated virile attributes instead...Wherever a fifth-century Athenian turned his gaze, "he was likely to encounter the effigy of one of his mythological ancestors, stabbing or club- bing an Amazon to death," sometimes striking her in the breast near the nip- ple. Like husbands who batter their pregnant wives, reserving their most violent blows for the swollen belly which contains the fetus, so too Greeks battered their legendary antagonists at the breast because it represented both female potency and vulnerability(Yalom 23).

This way of representation eventually shifted during the time of colonial period when the interaction with the outside non-Occident countries began.” barbarian is a term

that would represent the Other of Greek society: people from Asia Minor, Assyria, Persia, and beyond. Essentially anybody who was not Greek... Having diverged from the expectations of Greek society and believed to have been from the East, the Amazons took on the role of the 'other'. Amazons would begin to represent archers whose image was modeled after the Scythians with whom the Greeks of the Black Sea were in contact(Arcane).

From the historical depictions and literature, the unconventional female image of Amazons created a sense of horror in the male centered society. A post-colonial feminist critique of these depictions can lead to its association with gynophobia or fear of women. This can even be linked to the origin of Witches who were seen as monstrous and evil but in reality, it was only a gynophobic society's reaction to intellectual or unconventional women.

In Concerning to Amazons, we can analyze this with a psychological lence from the male and female perspectives,

From the male perspective, it can be seen as an expression of the fear of vengeance slumbering in the psyche of those who are in positions of dominance. Men fear not only that the nurturing breast will be taken away from them, but that its very absence denotes aggression. Amazons are seen as monsters, viragos, and unnatural women who have misappropriated the masculine warrior role. The missing breast creates a terrifying asymmetry: one breast is retained to nurture female offspring, the other is removed so as to facilitate violence against men...For women, however, Amazons represent what the psychiatrist Carl Jung called a "shadow self in reference to those socially unacceptable behaviors which we usually martage to keep underground. Here the shadow selfemerges to claim its place in the sun. By a willful act of breast removal, women become transformed into powerful creatures commanding fear and respect. The removal of the breast and the acquisition of

"masculine" traits suggests the mythic Amazon's desire to be bisexual, both a nurturing female and an aggressive male, with the nurturance directed exclusively to other women and the aggression directed exclusively toward men. This is indeed an unpalatable vision for men to swallow, the culmination of their worst gynophobic nightmares (Yalom 23).

Another important detail we need to note is the time during this shift in female perception as evil that was especially embodied into the breast, it was during the time when the goddesses were getting replaced by phallic gods. Maybe this digression is due to the potential fear of female Liberation that was slightly being mentioned in works like *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes.

Even when the Greeks got replaced by the Romans and Christian ideals were getting propelled the image of female breasts was confined to its function as a Nurishment but even then the sexual connotations did not disappear in the Hebrew bible it is mentioned, "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth.... Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times. Conversely, he was warned not to "embrace the bosom of a stranger" (Proverbs 5:19-20).

Another instance of sexualization in the Bible is from the Song of Songs attributed to King Solomon,

Shall I climb that palm And take hold of the boughs?
 Your breasts will be tender As clusters of grapes,
 Your breath will be sweet As the fragrance of quince,
 And your mouth will awaken All sleeping desire
 Like wine that entices The lips of new lovers(Morrison).

The sexualization of breast is clearly represented in these lines but due to the Israelites' dismissal of carnal pleasures they interpret these lines as a metaphor to represent God and the

people of Israel in their Jewish and Christian versions. But the reality is very clear from the original lines itself.

Sin is another association given to breast, Ezekiel a sixth-century prophet used breast to speak about the sins committed by Jerusalem and Samaria who she seen as civious sisters. who "Played the whore in Egypt, played the whore while they were still girls; for there they let their breasts be fondled and their virgin bosoms pressed (Ezekiel 23:3).

The sexualization of female breasts in Western culture has deep historical foundations evident in narratives such as those of the Greek myth of Phryne the Thespian, Helen of Troy, and the Amazons to the Roman Christian accounts. These tales, rooted in European cultural heritage, depict breasts as symbols of femininity, allure, and at times, peril. This perspective underscores how Western culture has historically portrayed breasts as objects of desire and beauty, shaping societal attitudes towards women's bodies.

However, it is essential to examine how similar themes are perceived in Eastern cultures to fully comprehend the breadth of attitudes towards the female body globally. This comparative analysis reveals the diversity in cultural norms and values surrounding nudity, sexuality, and gender roles across different societies.

The portrayal of breasts in Western culture as both symbols of allure and sexual objects reflects broader societal attitudes shaped by historical and mythological narratives (e.g., Helen of Troy, Aphrodite). These narratives not only objectify women but also reinforce the notion that female bodies are primarily for the male gaze, perpetuating a male-centered view where women's bodies are often defined by their sexual appeal. The legal battles and social movements around toplessness in the West underscore ongoing struggles against deeply ingrained patriarchal norms that continue to influence perceptions and laws regarding female nudity.

Historically, Western societies have often enforced double standards regarding nudity, particularly the sexualization and restriction of female breasts. This stems from a deep-seated cultural legacy where female bodies, specifically breasts, have been objectified and controlled to fit within a patriarchal framework.

In the west “Its representation has varied according to the social and cultural values of each era and each people, and just as for the Greeks the body was a source of pride, for the Jews and therefore for Christianity it was a source of shame, it was the condition of slaves and the miserable” (“History of the nude in art”).

Even though recent movements have challenged these norms, the underlying attitudes persist in various forms of legal and societal restrictions. Western hegemony and male-centeredness remain the main perpetrators of this notion but to make this statement valid we need to observe the Eastern perspective placed along the same timeline.

Chapter 4

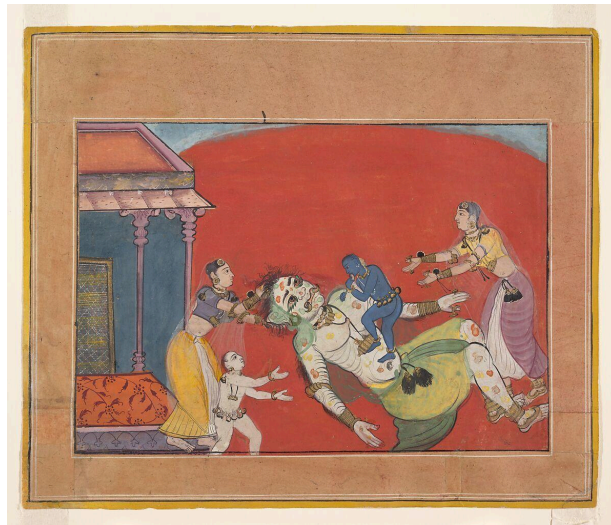
Maaridom Now

In ancient times, figures like Adam and Eve in the biblical narrative to the Australopithecus in anthropologic contexts were depicted or understood as nude. This absence of clothing normalized nudity in those societies. Today, we live in a world where clothing is ubiquitous and necessary for various practical and social reasons. The constant covering up with layers of fabric contrasts sharply with the natural state of nudity seen in ancient times. The rarity of nudity in modern times often makes it intriguing or sensual, especially due to its contrast with everyday clothed existence. The idea that nudity can evoke curiosity and interest, particularly from the male gaze, has cultural implications. Over time, nudity has transitioned from a natural state (as in ancient times) to something that can be perceived through a more sensual or sexual lens in contemporary culture. This perception is influenced by the colonial invasions of the Western world.

As already established from the previous chapter about the colonial mentality on nudity and especially about the double standard towards bare-chested men and women. The Western notions of breast culture are mostly inclining towards sexualised and vulgar connotations. Now if we think about the Orient nations we get a completely different perspective on breasts but the restrictions and male dominant cultural norms still prevailed.

The story of Putana from the *Bhaktivedanta* purports of the Tenth Canto, Sixth Chapter, of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The story is about the demon Putana sent to kill infant Krishna, she appears before the infant as a wetnurse and breastfeeds him with poison induced milk but lord Krishna is aware of her true identity and sucked on her breast hard that he sucked out even her blood from this pane she transforms into her demonic form and runs out into the village and dies (fig.4.1). Her body is then cut and burned by the villagers. According

to Hindu beliefs, this is an act of purification and because of breastfeeding lord Krishna she attained moksha and was sent to heaven like Krishna's foster mother Yeshodha.



(Fig.4.1: The Death of The Demoness Putana)

The Garga Samhita (a work on the life of Krishna) and the Brahma Vaivarta Purana further tell of the previous birth of Purana as Ratnamala, the daughter of demon king Bali. When she saw Vamana, the previous avatar of Krishna as a dwarf, she felt a desire to have him as her son and suckle him. She soon changed her mind and decided to kill Vamana, after he overpowered her father and acquired his possessions. Krishna knew her desires and allowed her to fulfill both of them by suckling hard and attempting to take his life (*The Bhagavata Purana. 3.*).

In mythological narrative, the breast not only acts as a tool to kill but also leads her to attain moksha and heaven. The connotations attributed to the organ are not sexual or vulgar. It's powerful as well as godly. This a contrast to the Ezekiel story in the Bible where the breast is considered Sinful.

Another famous Character from an ancient Indian epic is Surpanakha from Ramayana. She is the princess of Lanka and the sister of Ravana. According to this myth, the Rakshasi Surpanakha comes across lord Ram who was exiled into the forest for 14 years. Surpanakha is attracted to lord Ram and approaches him asking to accept her as his wife but

Rama says he is 'Ekapatvrata' meaning he is loyal to his only wife. And asks her to approach his brother but he also disagrees and mocks Surpanakha this angers her that she curses Sita and tries to attack her. Lakshmi came to protect Sita, he cut off Surpanakha's nose. But in Kampan's Ramayana, it's mentioned as:

Laksmana, who did not witness the previous day's exchange, pushes her down and cuts off her nose, ears, and nipples. As Surpanakha lies writhing in pain, crying out to her brothers to take revenge, Rama appears and asks who she is. She says that she is the same woman who appeared the day before, but "when a woman has lost her nipples, her ears with their earrings, her nose like a vine, . . . isn't her beauty destroyed?" (Kampan)



(Fig.4.2: Lakshman mutilating Shurpanakha)

According to this version of the Epic, the position of the breast is a woman's source of pride and is considered something of sacred status. It is also seen as some form of vulnerability and something that needs to be protected. This is a contrast to the Amazon version which considered breasts as a burden and chose to remove it on their own accord. When the story continues Surpanakha does not yield to Rama's assessment of her breast she

Surpanakha still does not give up, saying that if she were to tell her brother what had happened he would destroy Rama and his race, but that she will save him from this fate if he accepts her. She argues that a strong woman like herself, who could protect him in battle, is better than the delicate Sita. She also accuses Rama of having her nose cut off to make her undesirable to other suitors but offers to create it again, if he wishes (*Many Ramayanas*).

This episode sheds light on two things, one the way the male gaze considered female breasts during ancient times, and two despite this male centered society's normal a character like Surpanakha fought against advocating for her desires.

The plight of the lower caste is undocumented as they did not have any source to gain education or any opportunity to record it. The stories about their lives are often shared orally and due to this lack of proper documentation, these possible truths are regarded as fables or myths by the present world. Among these fables, the story of Nangeli a lower caste woman came to the attention of the twenty-first century critics.

Orijit Sen depicts this 19th century tale in his graphic story *A Travancore Tale*.

According to this fable, “Nangeli was a lower caste (Ezhava) woman from Cherthala, a place in Travancore, in the southern part of Kerala, who chopped off her breasts in protest against the caste system that demanded “breast tax” from the lower caste women. “

... and without waiting for his tax assessment, she made the payment.



(Fig.4.3: *A Travancore Tale*)

In order to understand this story's true intensity we need to associate it with the caste system that prevailed in India and in this case in Kerala. During the 19th century, women were not allowed to cover their breasts in Kerala this was the case for both the upper caste and lower caste women but for the lower cast women there was a special tax that was collected it was called *mulakkaram* but this had nothing to do with depriving lower caste women to cover there breast.

J. Devika, a historian at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, agrees.

“Men and women, both were expected to leave their chests open. The upper cloth was a mark of the upper caste.” Lower castes had to pay to be entitled to their entire bodies, not only a part of it. But what was *mulakkaram*? What was its quantum? Which transgressions invited its application? “We don’t have a lot of records. But it was a normal tax. It was levied on the *patita jaati* workers,” says Devika. Patita were the fallen women of the lowest castes like Ezhava, adds Devika. The interesting point is that similar taxes were levied on lower caste men, too: the head tax and the moustache tax, *talakkaram* and *meeshakkaram* respectively; the nomenclature chosen for the male gender. If that is so, where does the folklore about women cutting up their breasts in order to demand the right to cover them up, originate from? “The gesture of chopping off the breasts was the refusal of the brahminical *swarga* on earth, bestowed to Brahmins by Parasurama, and for which the lower castes had to pay a tax. These women were not struggling for feminine modesty. They were asserting their right to their bodies, freeing it from this order even though that meant mutilating it,” Devika adds (Gautam).

Kanippayur Sankaran Namboodiri was a famous author and also made immense contributions in unpacking kerala society and its ancient traditions he notes,

those days... there was no custom among women to cover their breasts. From the time that I can remember Kerala women had not even seen rowka [an upper garment for women the first of its kind to appear in Kerala and no longer in use] or blouse... Women covering their breasts in the presence of respectable gentlemen was considered immodest - an act of disrespect towards them. In his reminiscences of early childhood, K.P.S. Menon (b. 1898) notes:

The Nairs had no reason to shun the mention of breasts, for there they were for all to see. Women in Malabar wore just a loin-cloth Farid generally left the upper portion of their body uncovered. If by chance a woman had cloth over her shoulders, she would remove it at the sight of a respectable person lest she should seem impertinently overdressed.

Elsewhere, Menon has this to say: 'Ordinarily, our women as well as men wore nothing but a loin cloth. As soon as we crossed the Western Ghats into Kerala, Macqueen, my Collector in Trichinapoly... noticed the women's dress or undress - and exclaimed: "The scenery is getting distinctly picturesque." This custom was required of everybody, irrespective of rank and wealth, to secure easy recognition of the person's caste. 'Nobody those days even thought against this custom that was observed as universally honoured(Nandakumar).

It was only in 1859 that women of the lower cast attained freedom to cover their upper body, to attain this right a huge chain of events that parallel with freedom struggle took place.

The Marumarakkal Samaram (protest to cover the upper body) or the Channar Lahala (Channar Revolt) began in the early 19th century. Women of the lower caste were forced to uncover their breasts and if they disregarded this practice, they were made to pay a 'breast tax'. Women from the Channar caste (which included the Nadars and Ezhavas) protested to cover their breasts, a right that was astonishingly

given only to upper caste (Nair) Hindu women in Travancore. Clothing had become a marker of a woman's social standing(Menon).

Even tho covering the upper body was considered immodest women of the upper cast did have the freedom to cover it with some fabric,

In nineteenth century Kerala, any upper cloth to cover the breasts was practically unknown among women as a manner of dressing. The Nambudiri women who had to follow strictly the ghosha system, used only a thin, white cloth across the shoulders, more like a shawl, and that too, when they went out. Even the Nair women of social and economic status who could use an upper cloth when they went out, in imitation of Nambudiri women, were required to be uncovered above the waist in the presence of Brahmin or other respectable gentlemen. And this, irrespective of the family status and honor of the women. 'In the presence of persons of rank and position, and the royal family, ancient custom required the women of Nairs and low castes to uncover the bosoms and upper parts of their bodies(Nandakumar).

Tho the freedom was not fully given nair women did get the opportunity to cover their breasts in limited situations but this was not the case for lower caste women, they were not allowed to cover their breasts even with their hair so after the colonial invasion an spread of Christianity gained soil in Kerala the diwan allowed them to cover their upper body if they converted to Christianity.

On protests by Nadar women, the diwan of Travancore, Colonel Munro passed an order that allowed only women that converted to Christianity to wear the upper cloth. Even after such an order was issued, members of the Nair community in Kerala refused to let the women wear upper cloth. The order was later amended to say that Nadar women who converted to Christianity were allowed to wear a jacket (blouse) to distinguish them from what Nair women wore(Menon).

It was after ten years after Munro's order the upper caste Nair men started attacking the lower caste women for wearing the same clothes as upper cast women this was invaded by the British but the violence resurfaced and finally in 1859 the bill was passed allowing all Nair women to wear the cloths of there choice.

This shows that the contrasting perceptions of breasts in Western and Indian cultures reveal profound differences shaped by historical, cultural, and religious contexts. Western traditions, influenced by Judeo-Christian narratives and scientific perspectives, often depict breasts through a lens of modesty, sin, or sexual allure. This portrayal traces back to stories such as Adam and Eve's fall from grace and the emphasis on covering nudity in contemporary society, which underscores a shift from ancient acceptance of natural nudity to a contemporary fascination with concealed bodies.

Conversely, Indian cultural narratives, exemplified by stories from Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Bhagavatam, portray breasts in multifaceted roles beyond mere sexual or sensual attributes. In these narratives, breasts symbolize strength, sacrifice, and divine nurture, as evidenced by figures like Putana and Surpanakha. The stories highlight breasts as sources of power, spiritual significance, and sometimes vulnerability, challenging Western notions by emphasizing their sacred and symbolic dimensions rather than solely sexual connotations.

Furthermore, the historical context of Kerala in the 19th century illuminates the intersection of caste, gender, and clothing norms. The imposition of breast taxes and restrictions on lower caste women's attire underscores how breasts were not just symbols of femininity but also subjects of societal control and inequality. The eventual protests and reforms, culminating in the Channar Revolt and subsequent legislative changes, reflect a complex struggle for autonomy and dignity among marginalized communities.

Now dwell into the aspects of Colonel gaze about the Orient East is seen as the “other” They are mystified and exoticized we can observe that from the account mentioned by K.P.S Menons's about British officers Macqueen who leered on the Indian female breast and it was they who introduced the upper garment to the Eastern society that was oblivious to this, it is true women did not have a choice on the matter but the fact that sexual connotations placed across the breast came into being from the Western coast. This gaze not only reinforced stereotypes but also justified colonial superiority and the imposition of Western standards of decency and modesty.

The introduction of Christianity and its association of sin with breasts also molded the docile mind of the Eastern countries The upper caste women who did not see the need to cover their breasts were also influenced by the British costumes it was the some time in British, women used to lace their chest with corsets and dress themselves to cover from the neck to toe tip. while in Europe the British prime minister was trying to normalize neck exposure the invaders of the same country were educating the colonized land about covering up.“ Showing so much neck was considered utterly scandalizing. And it finally took the guts of Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to fashion this style and make it acceptable”(Unpeeling the History).

The main occupation of the East India Company was to collect raw materials from India at low prices and convert them into products that were sold at a higher price in the same Indian market. The blouse that was introduced into Indian traditional attire Saree was one example of cultural imposition. It was not limited to the clothes but this also imposed the colonial standards of modesty and propriety into the colonized minds.

It was the British who brought the blouse to the sari in India, along with their own ideas of European propriety. The blouse has easily been Britain's most powerful export to India, one that has outlived the influence of the crown. With its different

sleeve structures and necklines, the blouse under the sari made colonial British and Indian fashions even resemble each other at some point (Chatterji).

Jnanadanandini Debi the wife of Satyendranath Tagore was not allowed to enter into a British club because she didn't wear any blouse, later Debi was one of the Indian icons that advocated for blouse and propelled this idea.

We can consider this half-forced action took place as a reaction towards the British but controlled by them as well. This act of wearing the upper cloth marked by the British was an act of Colonel mimicry where they diopther this mode of conduct that was seen as more “civilized”. This blending of the saree with the blouse demonstrates how cultural elements from different backgrounds can merge to create a new, unique style that honors both traditional and modern influences. The hybrid attire retains the essence of Indian heritage while incorporating elements of Western fashion, illustrating the concept of cultural hybridity. Debi’s advocacy for the blouse can be seen as both a response to colonial pressures and a form of agency in adopting and adapting to new cultural norms imposed by the British. This adaptation reflects both the subjugation and agency of colonized peoples in negotiating cultural identity under colonial rule.

This hybridity can be seen in Ravivarma's paintings, his portraits depict nair women with covered upper bodies (fig.4.4) and (fig.4.5) but the period that these belonged to upper clothing was a foreign idea. This shows how inclination towards British ideas.



(Fig.4.4: Ravi Varma Raja)



(Fig.4.5: Ravi Varma Raja)

Some Ravi Varma scholar understand this influence,

Ravi Varma too could not risk his Nair beauties being considered immodest, that is to say, to be against custom, by making them look 'impertinently over dressed'. Nor did he, by choice, paint exotic Indian counter- parts of Venus by taking an outside view of the 'picturesques ness' of the local hue - that was well within the artistic rationale of his 'realism' with which he has never fully identified Ravi Varma could disengage his female figures from the equation and equivocation between modesty and morality which was an ideologically masculine construct, by assigning them a different space and this space was that of an emerging cosmopolitanism(Nandakumar).

Western Cultural hegemony can also be analyzed from the underlying structures that initiated this notion that assumed breasts as an object of male desire and beauty. This idea is completely rejected in the Eastern society's account of Putana and Surpanakha whose stories did not inflict any such meanings or association to their breast. But another investing analogy

can be observed. how these women were considered as Rakshasis, meaning they were the opposite of godly so the association of bodily autonomy and self assertion for what one desire these aspects are seen as the qualities of someone who is understandable in that cultural context.

Spivak argues that the subalterns, those marginalized by colonialism and hegemonic structures, are often silenced or misrepresented by dominant Western narratives. In the context of Putana and other indigenous women whose stories are intertwined with colonial encounters, Spivak's critique prompts us to question whose voices are being heard and whose perspectives are being privileged in colonial accounts. dominant cultures often impose their knowledge systems and norms onto marginalized groups, thereby perpetuating violence through erasure or misrepresentation of their experiences.

The best example to show women's bodies as a place to exert power for men is the incident from India Pakistan partition, In terms of violence, reports show that in addition to rape, “tattoos were inscribed on women’s bodies, they were paraded naked in sacred spaces such as temples, mosques and gurudwaras and their breasts were cut off.” The act of severing a woman’s breasts symbolically destroyed their role as a potential nurturer. It also removed their femininity, the physical manifestation of their motherhood, and their potential to bear children. By destroying the womb of the women, they were also destroying the possibility of future progeny for that community so they would not have a new generation to continue the traditions. Men committing these violent acts were sending this radical political message (Aswani).

Western norms and patriarchal structures have imposed a sexualized gaze on female bodies, including breasts, shaping societal attitudes and laws. representations of female breasts in Western history and mythology have often been framed within narratives of sexuality and desirability, as seen in stories like those of Phryne and Helen of Troy. These

narratives reinforce a particular view of women's bodies that aligns with patriarchal norms, marginalizing alternative interpretations or representations. Spivak's concept of colonialism as a form of epistemic violence can be extended to the colonial-era imposition of Western values and norms regarding nudity and sexuality onto colonized societies. This imposition has influenced how non-Western cultures view and regulate female bodies, including breasts, reflecting a broader pattern of cultural hegemony. The movements against breast-related taboos and double standards, such as the #FreeTheNipple campaign, exemplify Spivak's idea of subaltern agency and resistance. These movements challenge dominant narratives and norms surrounding female breasts, advocating for women's right to their own bodies and self-representation.

Fanon's critique of colonialism underscores its role in imposing hierarchical structures that devalue and subjugate colonized peoples, thereby reshaping cultural identities. Colonial influences, particularly Western norms regarding nudity and sexuality, have historically imposed new standards on non-Western societies, impacting perceptions of the female body. For instance, discussions on the sexualization of breasts and legal regulations, such as breast taxes in Kerala, reveal struggles for agency and resistance against patriarchal and colonial oppression. Fanon's analysis of gender and power dynamics within colonial contexts resonates with these struggles, highlighting how regulations on the female body become sites of social and political contestation.

Moreover, Fanon's psychoanalytic approach to identity formation in colonial subjects parallels contemporary debates on the cultural attitudes towards breasts. The sexualization, censorship, and liberation of the breast reflect societal anxieties and desires, echoing Fanon's arguments on the psychological impacts of colonialism. The Amazons' mythological gesture of cutting off one breast as a symbol of rejecting male dominance serves as a potent metaphor that aligns with Fanon's critique of colonial constructions of femininity and masculinity

.Decolonization, as advocated by Fanon, emerges as a transformative process aimed at reclaiming cultural identity and agency. Movements like #FreeTheNipple underscore this call for cultural transformation and resistance against colonial legacies. Such movements challenge Western hegemony over norms of sexuality and gender, advocating for diverse cultural expressions and understandings of the female body.

Similarly, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism provides a complementary framework by examining how Western representations of the "Orient" Said argues that Western discourse constructs the East as a feminized "Other," reinforcing notions of exoticism and sexualized imagery that permeate representations of non-Western women. This theoretical lens is particularly relevant in discussions about the portrayal and regulation of the female breast, where Orientalist tropes have historically shaped Western perceptions of nudity and sexuality.

During colonial times, Western ideas regarding nudity and the sexualization of the female body were imposed on Eastern societies like India. The imposition of Victorian morality and Christian values during colonial rule significantly influenced perceptions of nudity and sexuality in India and continues to impact cultural attitudes today. The colonial encounter led to the stigmatization of traditional practices that were more liberal regarding nudity and bodily expression.

In contemporary India, remnants of these colonial influences persist. While movements for women's rights and body positivity have gained traction globally, including in India, there remains a dichotomy between traditional cultural values and modern influences. The struggle for gender equality intersects with cultural conservatism, influenced in part by colonial legacies that perpetuate notions of shame and immodesty regarding the female body.

The example of Arathy's campaign in India, echoing Western movements like #FreeTheNipple, illustrates the ongoing global dialogue and adaptation of Western ideas concerning gender and nudity. Despite resistance and reinterpretation within local contexts, the historical imprint of Western colonialism continues to hold the narrative that decides the meaning of women's bodies.

The only commonality between the Western and Eastern cultures is that power reaming with means in both cases now and then women's body autonomy is absent. But there a small signs of change like The Los Angeles case and the Kerala High Court verdict, “ The depiction of a woman's naked body should not be regarded as sexual or obscene always” (Benny).

In this sense, we can now see that both countries are at the same starting line for the same goal.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

According to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, all species undergo changes over time and share a common ancestor through natural selection. This concept of common ancestry extends beyond anthropology, influencing fields such as etymology, where tracing words back to their roots reveals their historical influence, and structuralism, which seeks to understand complex systems by examining their fundamental components. Given this framework, one might question how European colonizers departed from this established order.

Darwin posited that humans evolved from apes, a process spanning from *Australopithecus* to *Homo Erectus* and eventually to *Homo Sapiens*, occurring over millennia. From this perspective, modern humans first emerged in Africa and subsequently dispersed globally. When considering the earliest signs of civilization, Mesopotamia stands out prominently. The world's four oldest civilizations- Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Indus Valley, and Chinese collectively represent a fraction of what is often referred to as Oriental nations.

In light of this historical context, how did a group of Western powers, driven by the impulse to "discover" new worlds, assert their prototype status? Can they be considered central or represent a binary opposition to the "Other"? These questions are crucial in post-colonial discourse, where scholars such as Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak have critiqued and sought to dismantle colonial narratives.

The European notion of discovery and dominance over new territories is scrutinized as a construct that perpetuates power dynamics rooted in colonial ideologies. These critiques challenge the credibility of Western claims to a prototype status and call into question their historical and moral authority in shaping global narratives.

The epistemological transfer of Western ideals regarding breasts during colonial times continues to resonate in contemporary discourse, perpetuating enduring cultural hegemony and gendered norms globally. Colonial encounters imposed Western notions of modesty and sexuality onto non-Western societies, shaping attitudes toward women's bodies and reinforcing hierarchies of power. Today, the persistence of these ideas in global media, legal frameworks, and cultural representations underscores the need for decolonial efforts to challenge dominant narratives and reclaim diverse expressions of femininity. Understanding this historical legacy is essential for navigating ongoing debates on gender, sexuality, and cultural identity in a post-colonial world, advocating for pluralistic perspectives that honor autonomy and agency over women's bodies across all cultural contexts.

In the inaugural chapter of this study, an extensive exploration is undertaken into the pervasive unconscious hegemonic perceptions surrounding breasts globally, proposing a hypothesis that traces its origin back to the colonial incursions of the eighteenth century.

The subsequent chapter introduces the theoretical frameworks employed to substantiate this hypothesis, primarily focusing on postcolonialism. As articulated by Homi Bhabha, It is from those who have suffered the sentence of history--subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement--that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. This chapter delves into critical theories advocated by key figures in post-colonial criticism. Edward Said's seminal work, "Orientalism," and its foundational arguments are expounded upon, illuminating the discourse on Western perceptions of the East. Franz Fanon's analysis of the psychological impacts of colonization on the colonized psyche is also examined, alongside Homi Bhabha's theories of colonial mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence. Furthermore, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's contributions to feminist and subaltern studies within postcolonial discourse are delineated.

Moving to the third chapter, an analysis of Western historical narratives concerning breasts is conducted. Three prominent narratives are selected: Phryne the Thespian from ancient Greek culture, illustrating ancient Greek attitudes towards the naked body; the account of Helen of Troy, whose display of her breasts was pivotal in her husband's forgiveness; and the story of Amazons, which sheds light on societal norms and the roles prescribed to women, with deviations from these norms being depicted as monstrous and malevolent. Additionally, the biblical portrayal of breasts as symbols of sin is examined. Within Eastern narratives presented in this chapter, the story of Putana imbues breasts with connotations of divine liberation, while Surpanakha's narrative portrays breasts as symbols of vulnerability and beauty, primarily from male perspectives. The legend of Nangeli underscores breasts as instruments of revolt and emancipation.

This comparative analysis between Western and Eastern narratives culminates in a conclusion aligning with the theory that it was Western influences that propagated the sexualization of breasts, a legacy that persists in contemporary societal norms. The research highlighted in the introduction chapter, which seeks to elucidate the reasons behind male attraction to female breasts, is critiqued for its exclusive focus on European perspectives without encompassing the diverse cultural viewpoints in today's globalized world.

In the concluding fifth chapter, the findings of the analysis through the lens of postcolonial criticism are synthesized, accompanied by a comprehensive discussion of the scope and limitations of this research endeavor.

The research has explored the frameworks and cultural attitudes surrounding female breast in Western societies and contrasted it with east. It delves into historical perspectives, legislative changes, and contemporary debates influenced by feminist movements. while examining historical and mythological narratives from ancient Greece to modern Western

literature, analyzing how these narratives shape societal perceptions of female breasts as symbols of beauty, sexuality, and power. It compares Western attitudes with non-Western perspectives, highlighting the diversity in cultural norms and values regarding nudity, gender roles, and sexualization. The research investigates the role of media representation and feminist activism, such as the #FreeTheNipple movement, in challenging traditional norms and advocating for gender equality in public nudity laws.

However, the research is limited due to its primarily focusing on selected Eastern and Western narratives and may not capture the full diversity of global cultural perspectives on breasts. Interpretations of mythological and historical texts are subjective and may vary based on different scholarly interpretations and translations. The availability and reliability of historical sources may vary, potentially impacting the depth and accuracy of the analysis. The study also relies on translated texts, which may introduce nuances and interpretations not present in the original languages. Moreover, there is a lack of inclusion of the Lgbtqia+ community and other genders.

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