

## **The Eve, The Modern Media and Centuries Old Ideologies**

by

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In the modern times, it's the same Eve, whose submissiveness has reached to the extent of victimhood since the same ideological stance or collectively shared beliefs of women's secondary status is still being propagated but as maneuvered gender power relations under the guise of patriarchal ideologies.

Ideologies are "common sense assumptions" (Fairclough, p. 2, 1989) and "fundamental social cognition that reflect the basic aims, interest, and values of groups" (Dijk, p. 258, 1991). These ideologies act much like "cognitive programs or operating systems" (p. 258) and "members' resources (MR) which people have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret text—including their knowledge of language ...natural and social world, values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on" (Fairclough, p. 24, 1989).

Elaborating the concept of ideologies Van Dijk (2006) treats ideologies as socially shared beliefs which are developed by the members of a group and acquired gradually "not overnight" (p. 116) by the individuals. These ideologies "become part of the generally accepted attitudes of an entire community, as obvious beliefs or opinion, or common sense" (p. 117). The way ideologies are acquired, they are gradually disintegrated due to members' loss of faith in common ideology due to some group grievances or "other social and political conditions" (p. 117) and the whole phenomenon is termed as "the end of ideology" (p. 117). In fact, these ideologies on one hand are closely linked to power as "they serve as a means of legitimizing existing social relations and differences of power" (Fairclough, p. 2, 1989) and hegemony; and on the other hand have a strong association with language as it "is the commonest form of social behavior" (p. 2) through which individuals produce and reproduce discourse reflecting ideologies. Ideology acts as a basic framework that organizes the social cognition shared by the members of "social groups, organizations or institutions" (Van Dijk, p. 17, 1989) and mentally represents the basic social characteristics of groups and organize individuals in a group having shared "identity, tasks, goals, norms, values, position, and resources" (p. 18). This group schemata constitutes group ideology which "organizes the information as well as the social and institutional actions that define membership: who belongs to the group, and who does not; who is admitted and who is not" (p. 19). The involvement of in-group/ out-group relations and group interests assume "that ideologies show a polarizing structure between US and THEM" (Dijk, p. 139, 1995a). In other words, "ideologies may in fact be the same as the representation a group has of itself (and of the relations with relevant other groups, e.g., opponents) in the social structure" (p. 139). Moreover, this ideological underpinning does not always support the dominant groups in legitimizing their power and manufacturing consent; "dominated groups may have an ideology that effectively organizes the social representations needed for resistance and change" (p. 139).

In the perspective of current research the concept of ideologies is taken as socially shared, mental representation of experiences which compel an individual to become a part of Us, due to common identity, tasks, goals, norms, values, position, and resources and differs himself from Them- the out-group. The divide of positive Us and negative Them has been created between male and female since ages featuring predetermined and preconceived notions about what counts to be a Man and how to keep Women out of the group from the dominating assemblage by utilizing covert ideologies and winning their consent of being different from Us.

According to Van Dijk (1995b) "... ideologies require production and reproduction through public text and talk, which in our modern time—are largely generated or mediated by the mass media"(p. 28). Being instruments of socialization and sites of covert ideologies and political agendas, media reveal the underlying dynamics of ideological cultural politics that "form it and which are formed by it" (Crawford, 2000, p. 1). It can be assumed that a text producer translates his socio-cognitive representations about a social group "into the textual construction of a collective identity" and these concepts of collective identities are "constructed, negotiated and changed through discursive interaction within and between groups" (Koller, 2012, p. 20).

In other words, dominant ideologies are established and reinforced through media discourse which refers to the interaction taking place "through a broadcast platform, either spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented towards non-present reader, listener, or viewer" (Keeffe, p. 441, 2012). This definition includes print and electronic media such as newspapers, magazines, print advertisement, TV commercials, TV dramas, films, TV and radio talk shows, hoardings, billboards and the like which are broadcast for a non-present listener or viewer.

By virtue of its access to the general public, in one way or the other, the media and media discourse is not considered as "private" and "off the record" (p. 441) and is treated as "manufactured"(p. 441) to convey the dominant ideologies and point of view. This discourse is manufactured by the "media elites and other elites" who have their own hidden agendas to control the majority of people firstly by creating mental models (Dijk, p. 31, 1995) or Member resources (MRs) (Fairclough, p. 24, 1989) by utilizing already shared dominant ideologies and subsequently supporting them through "discursive strategies of credibility" (Dijk, p. 31, 1995) and making it consistent and acceptable with the socially shared mental models.

In our case, the dominant Patriarchal ideologies find their expressions in portraying women as  
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"...beautiful creatures, submissive mothers of children, efficient housekeepers, cruel and deceptive vamps but nothing else through media including TV dramas and films (Tamakuwala, p. 177, 2011).

Recently, under the umbrella of Feministic movements, the daughter of the Eve has realized the traditional shackles around her and started her struggle to break open century-old confines round her demeanor. Her coming to the forefront and initiating a struggle for her rightful status of an individualized and independent human being was applauded and appreciated by many but was equally criticized by a wide majority since they considered it as a freedom movement of their colonized half and their ultimate loss of control. Consequently, the male hegemonistic ideologies find their way in gender stereotyping and maintaining centuries-old "status-quo" (Tamakuwala, p. 149, 2011) but now in sugar-coated version. The woman was again subjugated and dominated by strait-jacketing her in traditional roles of a home-maker having attributes of being sacrificing, "dependent, emotional, sentimental, anxious to please, defining the world through family relations" in contrast to their male-counterparts who are "self-centered, decisive, self-confident, seeking a place in larger world, convincing, dignified, dominant, ruthless, ambitious, unprincipled,

assertive, loyal” (p. 189). Her role as an individual in the society is recognized and she is given a place in corporate world but “new stereotypes” of her success witness her as “a popstar, a beauty queen, and a sports woman” (p. 180). However, there is an utter silence in granting her a role of an active politician, assertive businesswoman or a successful working woman and if she grows out of her stereotypical role and becomes a confident and independent working woman, she is considered as rebel.

The situation is almost the same round the globe and has entangled the people in the never-ending discussion of gender stereotyping and female marginalization in the mainstream media. Gallagher (2014) extensively researched the feminist media perspective and came to the conclusion that there is a remarkable consistency in the portrayal of women throughout the world since, “image and language of politics as mediated by television, radio and the press “supports the status quo (male as norm)” (p. 29). Gallhager (1983), states that except for few state-owned media which are working for a social change, the rest are globally involved in “media under-representation of women and women's concerns; the use of women as a commodity in advertising; an ambivalent attitude to women evident in certain stereotyped images in which women were exclusively and unalterably 'good' and 'pure' or definitely and unchangeably 'bad' and 'immoral'” (Gallagher as cited in Munshi & Birch, p. 1-2, 2000).

Tamakuwala (2011) compiles the effects of this unidimensional portrayal of women in stereotypical roles by analyzing the Indian advertisements, films and soaps. He opines that such a portrayal reinforces that a good is submissive and dependent and her place is in the confines of home, her physical beauty is her valuable asset, she spends her all intellectual energies in finding the Mr Right for herself. Inter alia, attitude towards working women is much prejudiced as it is considered that “the modern woman who asserts herself and her independence is undesirable and can never bring happiness to anybody nor find happiness herself” (p. 170).

With such a mindset in the world around and the immediate neighbourhood, Pakistani media would be no exception to this malice against women.

### **The Pakistani Eve:**

The daughter of Eve in Pakistan is no exception to this stereotypical treatment since she is very much the part of the social world. According to Malik & Kiani (2012) Pakistani media which was limited to newspapers, magazines, and state-owned radio and TV channel even a decade ago, proved to be inefficient in projecting women and their issues in a befitting manner. Women projection was limited only to “stereotypical homely roles of mother, sister, wife, and daughter. Hardly women were treated as human being irrespective of their gender” (p. 653).

Zia, A. (2007) supports gender misrepresentation in Pakistani media. She holds that women are stereotyped as male-dependent, housewives, perfect cooks or tailors, home makers, physically beautiful and pleasing and their individuality and intellectual qualities are mentioned nowhere. “Their abilities as equal partners in developments are lost between cooking oils and fairness creams” (p. 5). Zia further adds that women seem to be responsible for parenting and home-making while men shoulder the responsibility for generating income and managing financial affairs and decision-making in home.

Women's troubled relationships with the communications media-their lack of access, control, under-representation and marginalization “have been part of UNESCO's inquiries for a number of years now” (Munshi & Birch, p.1-, 2000). In 1998, UNDP Islamabad conducted a research to analyze the role of women in Pakistani dramas and it was found that women are treated as subordinate, submissive and desirable objects and their roles as exemplified through media make

them believe that their real place is the confines of home where they are the family-makers. Conversely, the working women are portrayed as headstrong, dominating, lacking any interest in home-making or relation-keeping and her material success isolates her from her immediate surroundings of her relations and society.

According to a research report (2009) (*Uks*— Research, Resource and Publication Centre on Women and Media) now media has given an increased exposure to women and women issue but media still portrays women as a victim or an object having perfect body, flawless skin, silky long hair, sparkling teeth and perfect personality (p. XIII). Such a portrayal doesn't earn a respectable place for a woman either at work place or in society and negatively affects her and the society. The report further finds "The portrayal of women in media is biased and prejudiced...they are often portrayed as sex objects, beauty objects, as docile homemakers, and as victims... the working class and minorities receive even less attention"(p. XIV).

Aslam & Roshan (2010) find that the Pakistani media depicts a distorted image of a woman who is "devalued, inferior and economically and emotionally dependent" (p. 133). The projection of working women is limited and if at all they get any representation on media, they are depicted in traditional working women role such as nurse, receptionist or secretary; while men are shown working in highly prestigious fields (p. 134).

Zia, A. (2007) depicts a similar tendency in media and opines that despite modernity in media, men are still appearing in "roles with a higher status, e.g. as experts and authorities, while women appear principally in lower-status roles as e.g. victims and passers-by... media mostly depict women as sex objects, in domestic roles, or in less active postures than men"(p. 15). Women seem to be responsible for parenting and home-making while men shoulder the responsibility for generating income and managing financial affairs and decision-making in home.

However, a changing trend in Pakistani media especially in dramas and telefilms is making its appearance as far as the role of women is concerned. Malik & Kiani (2012) observed that the electronic media boom, due to arrival of multiple media channels, has played its part in reviving the role of women, "Though traditional trends are continuously followed but media does try to portray diversified image and role of women in the modern society. (p. 653).

Likewise Qaiser & Jabeen (2008) surveyed a whole range of dramas telecast on PTV since 1970s to determine whether these dramas portray women stereotypically or depict them in connection with the society of prevalent conditions. They, in particular, observed that much of the initial PTV dramas were authored by Fatima Suraiya Bajjia and Haseena Moeen such as *Kiran Kahani*, *Uncle Urfi*, *Parchaiyaan*, *Rohi*, *Shehzori*, *Bandish*, *Shama* and *Aagahi*; and almost all the plays brought forward woman life and woman issues. The same trends were prominent in later decades where male playwrights depicted similar women issues of combined families, forced marriages and exchanged marriages etc. However, the researchers have felt that in established conservative mentality imbedded in Pakistani society, a woman going beyond her conventional role jeopardies "both her femininity and humanity simultaneously...[and] PTV has comprehensively brought forth the feminist issues in a positive way" (p. 217).

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