



UNIQUE JOURNAL OF AYURVEDIC AND HERBAL MEDICINES

Available online: www.ujconline.net

Review Article

ADVENTURE OF WOMAN BODY (FROM 1750 TILL THE LAST PERIOD OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE WITH EXAMPLES)

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Received 20-12-2014; Revised 18-01-2015; Accepted 16-02-2015

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ABSTRACT

Descartes: According to Descartes who is accepted as the father of modern philosophy, body is a machine that is made of flesh and bones.

Background: Our relationship with body has been changed during the centuries and has been approached by different physical, symbolical, sociocultural codes. Today it's still being discussed under many headings. This presentation is planned to investigate the changing form of woman body that has got visual and perceptual changes from past to present.

Methods: Mural paintings, figures, clothes, objects and written sources that reached to present day give us some opinions about how the body has been visually interpreted and perceived from past to present. From archaic ages, eastern comprehension of beauty which based on being slightly fat, having some whiteness, roundness, tardiness, long hair, henna and kohl had dominated the woman figure for centuries. In the past, the valid norm of body was accepted as being slightly overweight in conjunction with the changing body form and assessment of body according to different times and cultures. It ranks among many different sources that being slightly fat had been the symbol of wealth, abundance and richness in the past. Today the valid norm of body is accepted as being thin and fit. While the postmodern process is causing passing from society of production to consumption, the body ranks as the primary object of consumption among all others. The media, communication instruments and the visual world have chosen the body, especially the woman body as the popular publicity medium through all those struggling for creating new patterns and identities.

Results: The ideal woman body is being immaculated with representing as thin, fit, purified, almost having golden ratio over face and the body.

Conclusion: Today, with growing numbers of obesity that is accepted as an illness; many women who do not have the ideal form of body according to society have problems that are affecting their life negatively because of disfavor, exposing social compulsion and many other similar reasons.

Keywords: Woman and body, women through history, woman body in the illustrations.

INTRODUCTION

1. History

We see glorification of the body in the Ancient times. Power and perfection of gods and goddesses were symbolized by excellence of their bodies. Their remains show us women were more affected by the concept of beauty and fell exposed to change at a more significant level¹. The concept of aesthetics emerged from desire, liking, creation and observation in humans, the idea that what is beautiful is both good and right is prevalent and the body has been associated with beauty from past to present. Figures of women are frequently addressed themes of beauty².

The concept of beauty was dealt with in spiritual works in a period while it was almost reduced to mathematical formulae

in another in parallel to the journey of human throughout the history. Beauty is essentially a study of the aesthetical history human and the "human body as an aesthetic object" in this historical process³.

2. Today

The female body has been the symbol of beauty in every period until today. The female body was kept under strict pressure and prevented from free expression until the years of enlightenment. However, even in prohibited periods, the female body ironically served as a source of inspiration in arts and philosophy on an imaginary basis. Today, woman is stuck between the "other body" idealized by popular culture and her own body that she is never content with⁴. Societies have demonstrated ideal size of a beautiful body in different pictures and drawings.

While the body and the score given to the body vary between periods and cultures, it can be seen that the ideal body form of the past is slightly overweight. The eastern perception of beauty based on slight overweight, light skin color, round shapes, tardiness, long hair, henna and kohl has been dominant in female figures for centuries since the ancient times⁵. Many sources indicate that overweight was a symbol of wealth, fruitfulness and richness in the past⁶. Today's body form is thin and fit⁷. While the postmodern process caused a transition from production to consumption, the body became one of the top consumption items. Media, communication tools and the visual world have selected the body as the most popular advertisement tool in efforts to create new patterns identities⁸. In their work "Female Body" published in 2010, İnceoğlu and Kar draw attention to "hidden" violence towards the female body which has been associated with the concept of "beauty" for centuries and state "the woman who internalizes the beauty norms defined by the dominant culture creates hidden violence by putting pressure on her own body"⁴.

In their articles titled "A new face, a new life"

"New Beauty Icons: Freedom or Slavery of the Human Body?" they address women being stuck between the "beautiful woman" idealized by popular culture and their own body⁴.

İnceoğlu and Kar base the situation of women applying for aesthetic operations on the concept of narcissism of Freud and the Narcissus Myth in the Greek mythology. They express "A woman who wishes to see herself beautiful in the mirror in fact wishes in her subconscious to be seen beautiful by others. Women are stuck in between, they have their own bodies, and then there is the "other" desired body"⁴.

The ideal female body is demonstrated as flawless with a thin, fit, clear body and face structure almost with the golden ratio. Today, at a time when obesity keeps snowballing and is considered as a disease, many women who do not conform to the ideal body forms of the society are faced with various challenges which affect their lives negatively for numerous reasons including not being liked and being subject to social pressure⁹.

"Women living in the mirror are increasing".

The hedonist culture is directly reflected on the female body. The object of desire on one side, the object of violence on the other... Illiterate millions on one side, those trying to get beautiful with botox at lunch break on the other... Their research into the realities at these extremities of women gradually turning into a paradox and psychological background o their efforts to always look young and beautiful in New Beauty Icons: Freedom or Slavery of Human Body? also demonstrates reasons for addiction of aesthetic operations^{2,10}. The slightly overweight female figure of the past tries to be the thin, fit and clear body now.

Irrespective of perception of women as a social member and struggles fought for their rights, beauty is still the most important criterion in perceiving women. Popular culture has made most of social values an actual object of consumption. Finally the human body, especially the female body has become a consumption item. It has reached beyond innocent efforts for beautification. It has begun to create the desire for

resembling those women marketed as a kind of an idealized icon, with violence exhibited by the woman to herself, through aesthetic operations beyond efforts with make up, cosmetics, garment and fashion. The hedonist culture is directly reflected on the female body. The body has turned into an object consumed at the market. The woman is made by the system voluntary for getting closer to the ideal size.

With all these manifestations of popular culture, the further the idealized body is, the more upset the woman gets. Actually, this begins with a disease of unhappiness. If you are not thin like a Western white woman, you are unhappy. Then, the woman isolates herself from the society. She alienates herself from friends, does not go outside, gets more introverted. She spends time and money to look like the ideal woman.

She thinks she is happy when she reaches the image she wants to be in the mirror. This is only an illusion because she uses the word mirror: She says this is for to "like myself in the mirror".The woman always defines herself from the perspective of others. She watches her body like watching an imagery body of another⁹.

The "woman", despite sharing the same world with the man, is not able to share the same social conditions and despite having the same intelligence, she is not able to enjoy the same freedom. Because she is primarily a mother and a wife to a husband. Her life belongs to everyone apart from herself. Being embraced by multiple factors and expectations to meet make it harder for the woman to think about herself and to realize her own desires³.

3. Women with pictures in the Ottoman Empire as from 1750s;

In the article "The Picture History of the Female Body" by Naci Cem Öncel;

The Symbol Woman 1789

The symbol of freedom and human rights in the French Revolution which affected the entire world is a woman. However, women had to wait until 1944 to be considered as a "man" in the political system of the equalitarian France that they became a symbol for; and until 1930 in "underdeveloped" Turkey! (Jeanne-Louise Vallain, Özgürlük, 1792.)

The Orientalist Fantasy 1814

The orientalist movement in Europe made women in the Ottoman Empire the prominent subject of painting. These imaginary sex symbols affected not only the Westerns, but also the Easterns who wanted to become Westernized. (Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, La Grande Odalisque painting)

The Transparent Veil 1850

The first photograph studio in İstanbul was established by Basil Kargapoulas. 30 thousand frames of photograph were taken with the support of Abdülhamit II. The only distinct difference from European women was the semi transparent veil. (James Robertson, Türk Kadını, 1855.)

The Price of Captivity 1856

It was prohibited to trade slaves and concubines in the Ottoman Empire (9 years before USA). The naked woman which was a symbol of freedom in the West was pictured as the symbol of captivity suddenly when it was about the East! (Jean-Léon Gérôme, Esir Pazarı, 1866).

Nude Paintings by Osman Hamdi 1881

Although the students of Osman Hamdi Bey would begin "nude" paintings in years at the Mekteb-i Sanayi-i Nefise, the Turkish woman was pictured by modern Turkish painters with covered yet distinct body lines and the face and the neck open for the time being.

Postcard Women 1885

Circulation of printed photographs and postcards began. The first picture book in Turkish in the Ottoman was published in 1887. (Turkish Women in Harem)

The First Erotic Film and Women 1895

Lumière Kardeşler began screening movies at the Paris Fair in 1895. Movie theaters arrived in the Ottoman only after a year. The first seven minute erotic film was shot in 1899! Besides, women were pictured in skin color stockings now.

Winds of Freedom and Women 1908

With proclamation of the second constitutional period, winds of freedom started to blow on the Ottoman lands. The number of postcards as well as journals, newspapers and books grew like topsy. Women were obviously the symbol of "freedom-equality-solidarity" and they did not have the right to vote!

The Story of the Lily 1910

The "free" woman had the lead role now: Especially as the sex object of popular erotic literature. While "The Story of a Lilly" was breaking sales records, it would be understood that the disguised author was Mehmet Rauf and he would be expelled from the army.

Islam and Women 1912

"Sweet Time in Bed" and other similar stories and "A Thousand Kisses" and other magazines were published. Authors like Mehmet Akif responded to this fast transformation: The ethics of Islam is the guarantee of protecting women from being abused and commoditized.

Woman In The American Dream 1914

Symbols of freedom, women called young men to take part in the World War I as if they were calling them for love. While men were fighting for the symbol of their country, they would be killed in peace of defending their honor. 17 million people lost their lives for those imaginary young women.

Screening Of The First Sexual Content Movie 1917

Sedat Simavi, at age 21, adopted the play "Pençe" by Mehmet Rauf to movie. This was the first sexual themed movie of Turkey. The lead actress was Eliza Binemeciyan. Muhsin Ertuğrul severely criticized the movie.

Leading Female Figure In the Painting of Liberty 1830

Putting a brave face! "Liberty Leads The People". Marianne, the symbol of liberty in the renowned painting by Eugène

Delacroix, with her clothes torn in the chest, leads men to victory¹¹.

CONCLUSION

While the ideal female body of the past was slightly overweight and was associated with plentifulness, today's norm is thin and fit. Time will tell the future's ideal women sizes.

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Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared