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VEPACHEDU EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

మన సంస్కృతి

Mana Sanskriti (Our Culture)

Chief Editor: Dr. Sreenivasarao Vepachedu, Esq.

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SEMINAL CONTRIBUTION (*SHOULDN'T IT BE "OVAL¹ CONTRIBUTION?"*)

"Sexism is not merely reflected but acted out and thus reinforced in a thousand banal encounters."²

Sexism and gender bias that is prevalent and inherent in the English language that we choose to use in speaking or writing supports unfair as well as untrue attitudes toward women. The sexist English language³ often suggests an inherent male dominance and superiority in many fields of life; for example, the use of man as a generic noun or as an ending for an occupational title such as policeman, fireman, foreman, mailman, salesman, chairman, freshman, manpower etc. English textbooks teach students how to address business letters to an unknown reader: in Britain, one starts off the letter, "Dear Sirs," and in America, they write, "Gentlemen"⁴. The English language reflects the power that men have had in life in the English society where women have lower social and economic status than men.

These examples are well known, but have you ever wondered about the word "seminal?" "Seminal" is used as an adjective in the context of highly influential, original, basis for further development etc. This is one of the most sexist and chauvinistic uses of the word, and that too inaccurately, unfortunately. Every time I hear this word, I smirk autonomously, as several images flash at once in my mind, including its true meaning along with various related images of teachings of Vatsayana⁵. As one can learn from any English dictionary, the true meaning of seminal is "relating to semen⁶," which strongly influences later development (of an ovum into a baby), and is very influential, formative, groundbreaking, pioneering, original, innovative, major, important (for the formation of the baby)."

Semen is the seminal fluid containing sperm produced by gonads or testicles of a male organism such as a man. Normal human semen or seminal fluid has a volume of about 3 ml of which around 65-70% is a viscous fructose-rich fluid, about 25-30% is a white

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color secretion from the prostate glands containing enzymes, oils, fats etc., and about 20 million sperms or about 1-2.5% of the ejaculate.⁷ Only one sperm out of millions, only about 1/20,000,000th of the total ejaculate, is useful in forming zygote by uniting with the ovum, which ultimately becomes a viable baby if carried to the term by the woman.

Now consider woman's contribution in this process. A woman releases one ovum per month, which may become a zygote upon uniting with a sperm at a particular time of the month⁸. The rest of the month, that is the remaining 29 days, the sperms are wasted without any possibility of a fruitful union with an ovum in the fallopian tubes. If you do the math, it is quite evident that the most important contribution to the conception and procreation is the woman's eggs or ova, only one available once a month for a finite period of time, unlike gazillions of sperms wasted by a man.

Following ovulation, the egg is available for fertilization for only 12 to 24 hours, once the egg arrives at the *ampullar-isthmic* junction where the one successful sperm unites with the only egg. In addition, 50 percent of all fertilized eggs are lost failing implantation process. Once the embryo reaches the blastocyst stage, approximately five to six days after fertilization, it hatches out of its *zona pellucida* and begins the process of implantation in the uterus. The receptivity of the uterus and the health of the embryo are important for the implantation process³. That means about 1/2x30x20-millionth⁹ of the total "seminal fluid" is useful in producing the desired result per copulation between a male and a receptive female.

Thus, the most important contribution should be "OVAL CONTRIBUTION," not the waste "seminal contribution" left in the vagina and flushed out. Therefore, to consider "seminal" contribution is "the most important contribution or original" is only indicative of the "ignorance of the male" dominated patriarchal societies, which is continued in the English language even today, accepted by all – male and female¹⁰.

Fortunately, this male chauvinistic and sexist attribution of "greatness and originality for semen" is not seen in many other languages, e.g., in Hindi seminal is translated into "veerya- or shukr-sambandhi (related to sperm)" and "moulik or pradhamik (important,

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original, the first).” *Veerya-sambandhi* (related to sperm) is never used in the context of importance or original contribution.

America is open to change as it is trying to elect minorities and women to the highest office. Proposals for changing the sexist language, while having an increasing impact on patterns of language usage in America, have also continuously been argued against in the media and in academia during the 1970s¹¹. However, sexism continues as was clearly evident in 2008 presidential elections when a man won over a woman in the democratic primaries¹².

Therefore, it is imperative for the majority of the world population (about 6.5 billion) that does not speak English as the mother tongue to make sure that this stupid male chauvinism and sexism is not percolated into their societies and languages.

It is also imperative for all that both “men and women” are not used as commodities or chattels, by the powerful “men and women,” a business practice in the United States, where cheap labor is sought after, and women are not provided benefits and amenities that must be provided for women who make the “*OVAL CONTRIBUTION*” to the society¹³.

References and Notes:

- ¹ Oval (adjective), of, relating to, or consisting of eggs, rounded and slightly elongated outline or shape
Oval (adjective); mid-16th century: from French, or modern Latin ovalis, from Latin ovum ‘egg.’ Ovum (singular) Ova (plural)
- ² Cameron, *The Feminist Critique of Language* (1990)
- ³ Stinson, A Response to “Sexism in the English Language”, at <http://teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/viewFile/904/723>; accessed on June 29, 2015
Piercy, Sexism in the English Language, at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ659474.pdf>; accessed on June 29, 2015
Sexist Language, at <http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/style-and-usage/sexist-language.html>; accessed on June 29, 2015
He, An Analysis of Sexism in English, *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 332-335, May 2010 at: http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=7&ved=0CEsQFjAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fjoys.academypublisher.com%2Findex.php%2Fjltr%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F0103332335%2F1822&ei=g-qRVZrTOYj3yQSAo4HgDg&usg=AFQjCNE0K4liE_HTDYe0L9UvSJH47oJsUw&sig2=PqLLJcZlYO5_O4lh9RvIEA; accessed on June 29, 2015
Kleinman, Why Sexist Language Matters, at: http://www.alternet.org/story/48856/why_sexist_language_matters; accessed on June 29, 2015
- ⁴ Grant & McLarty, *Business Basics*, p. 167 (1995)
“If you are composing something very formal to someone that you don't know then "Dear Sirs," would be the correct greeting. For a more casual greeting, you might decide to use "Hello (name)", or "Hi (name)".” How to Write a Letter, <http://www.goodletterwriting.com/how-to-write-a-letter.html>; accessed on June 29, 2015

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“If you don’t know a reader’s gender, use a nonsexist salutation, such as their job title followed by the receiver’s name. It is also acceptable to use the full name in a salutation if you cannot determine gender. For example, you might write Dear Chris Harmon: if you were unsure of Chris’s gender.” Writing the Basic Business Letter, Online Writing Lab, 20WL, Purdue University; <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/>; accessed on June 29, 2015

“If you don’t know the name of the person, you would traditionally write Dear Sir. This is clearly somewhat sexist, so many people prefer Dear Sir/Madam or Dear Sir or Madam.” 1.06 How to write a formal letter , Study Guides : Writing, Centre for Academic Success, Birmingham City University, <http://library.bcu.ac.uk/learner/writingguides/1.06.htm>; accessed on June 29, 2015

⁵ *Kama Sutra* (Principles of Love/Desire) is the bible of various positions for “seminal contribution” and was written sometime between 400 BC and 200 BC, in Sanskrit written by Vātsyāyana, an Indian philosopher. (See also: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/sex/kama/>; accessed on June 29, 2015)

⁶ *Seminal* - of, relating to, or consisting of semen, a viscid whitish fluid of the male reproductive tract consisting of spermatozoa suspended in secretions of accessory glands, the prostate and Cowper’s glands; the sticky, whitish liquid containing sperm that is produced by a male’s sex organs. Middle English, from Latin, seed, semen; akin to Old High German *sāmo* seed, Latin *serere* to sow. C14; which strongly influences later development (of an ovum into a baby), and is very influential, formative, groundbreaking, pioneering, original, innovative, major, important (for the formation of the baby).

⁷ Mann, *Biochemistry of Semen*, John Wiley and Sons, pg 1-161 (1954), available at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/biochemistryofse00mann#page/64/mode/2up>; accessed on June 29, 2015

See also, Mandal, What is Semen?, available at <http://www.news-medical.net/health/What-is-Semen.aspx>; and <http://www.news-medical.net/health/Semen-Physiology.aspx>; accessed on June 29, 2015

The sperm travels through the ejaculatory ducts and mixes with fluids from the seminal vesicles, the prostate, and the bulbourethral glands. The seminal vesicles produce a viscous, fructose-rich fluid forming around 65-70% of the semen base. The white color of the semen is due to secretion from the prostate glands containing enzymes, citric acid, lipids, and acid phosphatase. This forms around 25-30% of the semen base. At each ejaculation around 200-500 million sperms are released by the testes. This forms about 2-5% of the semen composition. Apart from these, the bulbourethral glands produce a clear secretion. This helps in mobility of the sperm cells in the vagina and cervix. The glands’ secretion contribute less than 1% to the overall semen composition.

⁸ As the ovulation process occurs, millions of sperm swim upstream on a quest to fertilize an egg. See Conception: How It Works, at http://www.ucsfhealth.org/education/conception_how_it_works/; accessed on June 29, 2015

⁹ Give or take a gazillion.

¹⁰ For example, to name a few:

Leroy P. Steele Prize for Seminal Contributions to Research (<http://www.agnesscott.edu/lriddle/women/prizes.htm>);

“Not surprisingly, Dr. Blackburn has been recognized for her seminal contribution....” (<http://www.worldcancercongress.org/dr-elizabeth-blackburn>);

“We can identify where her seminal contribution is still a stimulus for deeper discussion of a set of extremely fruitful insights.” Hodgson , *Business & Economics* (2007)

“... some consider her seminal contribution to the field ...” Cicarelli, *Distinguished Women Economists* (2003) Page 179;

“Therefore, in her seminal contribution of 1959....” Iammarino, *Multinationals and Economic Geography: Location, Technology, and Innovation* (2013);

“Above all else, it undervalued her seminal contribution.” Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (2009);

“Another female British pioneer in epidemiology, who has been largely overlooked despite her seminal contribution, is Janet Lane-Olaypon.” *Epidemiology: An Introduction* (2013) pg 18;

“...in sincere appreciation of her seminal contribution to the mathematical theory of the Navier–Stokes equations ...” Birman et al., *Nonlinear Problems in Mathematical Physics and Related Topics I In Honor of Professor O. A. Ladyzhenskaya* (2012);

“... some admirers regard as her seminal contribution to Western philosophy....” Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* (2010) Pg 352;

“... her seminal contribution to American modernist sculpture....” Nevelson et al., *The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend* (2007);

“Her seminal contribution on the mechanism....” Singh, *The First Woman President of India Reinventing Leadership* (2013)

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¹¹ Blaubergs, An analysis of classic arguments against changing sexist language, Women's Studies International Quarterly. Volume 3, Issues 2-3, Pages 135-147 (1980)

Abstract: Proposals for changing sexist language, while having an increasing impact on patterns of language usage in America, have also continuously been argued against in the media and in academia during the 1970s. The proposals for eliminating the usage of masculine terms as 'generics' have received the most criticism. In this paper, the various arguments that have been presented for retaining masculine/generic usage are illustrated and analyzed. The arguments are classified as follows: (1) the 'cross-cultural' arguments; (2) the 'language is a trivial concern' arguments; (3) the 'freedom of speech/unjustified coercion' arguments; (4) the 'sexist language is not sexist' arguments; (5) the 'word-etymology' arguments; (6) the 'appeal to authority' arguments; (7) the 'change is too difficult, inconvenient, impractical or whatever' arguments; and (8) the 'it would destroy historical authenticity and literary works' arguments. The arguments have typically been overlaid with ridicule and hostility towards feminists.

¹² Hillary (female) v Barack (male): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_presidential_primaries,_2008; accessed on June 29, 2015

See also, Emancipation of Women; <http://www.abolishforeignness.org/blog/emancipation-of-women>; accessed on June 29, 2015

¹³ Women in the Workplace: If Women Don't Stand-Up For Themselves, Who Will? http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffery-tobias-halter/women-in-the-workplace-if-women-dont-stand-up-for-themselves-who-will_b_7656612.html; accessed on June 29, 2015

Breaking the Glass Ceiling in the C-Suite, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffrey-hayzlett/breaking-the-glass-ceiling_b_7572602.html; accessed on June 29, 2015

Om! Asatoma Sadgamaya, Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya, Mrityorma Amritamgamaya, Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih!

(Aum! Lead the world from wrong path to the right path, from ignorance to knowledge, from mortality to immortality, and peace!)

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