

Re-Constructing the concept of 'Man and Machine' : An Ethnocentric Practice Under the Light of Gendered Values

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Abstract

Riding a motorcycle symbolises freedom, independence, power and free thinking and youth culture, which should not be restricted towards the male sex. But the 'othering' of women via technical discourse is not a recent phenomenon as the link between man and machine is not exclusive, this gendered discourse should be applied to 'feminine' or 'masculine'. The present paper deals with the social acceptance of the women in the arena of motorcycling. Women motorcyclist continues to break stereotypes. In this paper the construction of gender is seen through motorcycle which is considered a part and parcel of hegemonic masculinity. I would also attempt to observe how women riders are feminising this activity, which is socially labelled as masculine where women are constantly negotiating the meaning of gender in motorcycling activities. Masculine behaviours can be associated with ethnocentrism which mainly includes cooperation with members of the in-group, but not out-groups. Ethnocentrism in general is the widespread tendency of people to favour their own ethnic group over the other group with the notion that one's own group is superior to the latter. The paper relates the gender biasness that the masculine population holds over the motorcycling culture owing to the ethnocentric practices. It denotes a cultural narrowness in which a motorcycling group rigidly accept those of the in-group while ignoring those of the out-group. This paper also focuses on ethnocentric behaviour that can sometimes emerge from a simple local competition between individuals or motorcycling groups. Furthermore, ethnocentrism may have positive aspects in so far as it fosters a strong ego and the establishment of a sense of goodwill and trust in relationships within the in-group. It can be easily asserted that ethnocentrism gives individuals a strong sense of identity. It is an exploratory study on motorcycle riders residing in Kolkata, which include both male and female motorcycle rider.

Key words: hegemonic masculinity, doing gender, femininity, brotherhood, ethnocentrism, muscular-ethnocentric behaviour, in-group, out-group, motorcycle subculture.

Introduction

In the year 1927, in an issue of the Motor magazine, Ray W. Sherman wrote that "every time a woman learns to drive-and thousands do every year-it is a threat at yesterday's order of things." (Clarke 2007). Human world is strictly segregated by male and female. Beside the biological difference, the social construct of gender is distributed within the society and has been imbibed by people (irrespective of any gender) by the process of socialisation. In fact gender, as a social construct is not only limited to human entity but has also passed within the material aspects of culture. In past women primarily rode on the back of motorcycle driven my men, but motorcycling subculture includes a large number of women who own and ride their own motorcycle. Though women have been riding motorcycles for a very long time but the number of women motorcyclists has always been relatively small compared to that of male riders. A female motorcyclist cannot dress in lace or

frills because she won't be taking seriously. Many of these women know well and have clear ideas as to how they can express their femininity in this male dominated activity. In order to be accepted in this field women have to be 'one of the boys' or 'social men' (Kvande 1999). This clearly depicts how women embody the gender question in motorcycling. It is women always who have been considered to be more or less different from men, but not the other way, as not men from women. This reflects how masculinity is hegemonic (Connell 1995).

The most powerful organizing forces in modern life are the activities and associated interpersonal relationships that people undertake to give their lives meaning. In choosing how to spend their money and their time, people do not conform always or neatly to the ascribed analytic categories currently offered by academia (e.g., ethnicity, gender, age or social class). They take part in the creation of their own categories. The social class to some extent matter because the

higher the economic class higher the types of bikes, apart from that this community are built with like minded people without the concept of so called caste, creed or age. The motorbike was one of the main foci of interest in the lives of the group, and most of their activities were based on this interest. A large part of conversation was devoted to the motor cycle, discussing new models or comparing performance, or describing in detail how repair jobs are done. This short extract is from an official report describing a club exercise.

Objectives

Riding a motorcycle is associated with self-realization in motorcycle culture and the importance of this rite of passage becomes apparent when examining people's accounts of their experiences as motorcyclists. Questioning my identity as a motorcyclist, I realized that my own efforts at negotiating an identity as a motorcyclist, as a sociologist and as a woman were directly influenced by the stories, experiences and encounters I had shared with my two-wheeled community individuals. Firstly, I would draw light on the hegemonic masculinity and its relation to motorcycle; how riding a motorcycle becomes a part of hegemonic masculinity. Secondly, I would show how a woman feminizes the gender roles in a male dominated activity, motorcycling in this case; also how women are either challenging or confirming the gender order that already exists. Finally, this paper aims to draw attention to the sheer link between masculinity and ethnocentrism that has been created through such activity. This leads to the evolution of *masculine-ethnocentric* behaviours which can also include cooperation within members of the in-group, but not out-groups.

This is an exploratory study on motorcycle rider residing in Kolkata including both male and female. The research is mainly a qualitative study on 20 motorcyclists which includes 15 male motorcyclists and 5 female motorcyclists residing in different areas in Kolkata. Out of 20 respondents fifteen motorcyclists belong to different motorcycling groups such as Last Sunday Rides, Motonomads, Highway Cruisers,

Rolling Wheels, KTM Owners Group and Bengal Lady Bikers. Other five respondents out of 20 interviewed do not belong to any particular Motorcycle Club (MC). All of my respondents apart from 4 motorcyclists do not wish to participate in motorcycle events, but are definitely in good terms with the above mentioned MC. This includes purposive and snow ball sampling with face-to-face interviews with semi-structured interview schedule. The interviews were recorded while interviewing and skeletal notes were immediately noted down for the recording on a daily basis after the interview was over. It took place in quite a few sessions of two to four hours for two, three days in university and at their home or at motorcycling events held in parts of West Bengal. In the analysis part pseudo names are been used to maintain the confidentiality of respondent's identity.

I used photographs in the manner described by Hill (1991) to assist in "reliving the lived experience," and also as visual records of symbolism encountered in modes of dress, grooming, motorcycle customization, and other behaviours in those biker communities. Sample photographs are included in the text to illustrate various themes. I tried to interpret the meanings of symbols in the context of their use within the subculture.

Background of the link between Man and Machine

In the article "Machines and Masculine Subjectivity", Ulf Mellström explicates how agricultural machinery was used to reinforce patriarchal ideologies that marginalized how women did farm-work in Western countries (2004). During the turn of the nineteenth century, tools such as the harrow pulled by a horse became a symbol of masculine domination over women and nature. Using the harrow created a male domain both in the physical and discursive sense. Being the sole operators of harrows, men acquired knowledge of ploughing techniques, of how to repair the machinery and they also gained access to public space. Farming women usually performed tasks that confined them to the interior of the household and limited

their interaction with other people outdoors. The machinery they operated such as looms or butter churns, was not considered advanced or requiring a great deal of skill to use. In addition, the ability to operate these 'feminine' machines was not considered a technical skill, but was thought to be an inherent quality of being female (Mellström 2004).

However, as long as man performed the work, the ability to repair feminine machinery was a form of technical knowledge. This gendering of technology and skill elucidates the point that "gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established" (Butler 1999:7). By using gender specific forms of technology, men and women are able to constitute and sustain a sexual identity. Men's control of technology had previously been achieved by employing their superior personal capital of physical force (domination of physical space and violence) or instruments of coercion, such as economic capital, cultural or informational capital (technological discourse), and symbolic capital (men's higher status in society).

The 'othering' of women via technical discourse is not a recent phenomenon, as the link between man and machine had been established long before the first motorcycle had been invented. Yet it was not inevitable that this gendered discourse should be applied to motorcycling as well. As discursive constructs, nothing is inherently 'feminine' or 'masculine'. That the motorcycle would later be characterized as a masculine subject is a peculiarity of discourse; the machine is limited only by the laws of physics and human ability. Of course, "this is not to say that any and all gendered possibilities are open, but that the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality" (Butler 1999).

Early motorcycling culture inherited a technological and cultural legacy from bicycling.

What we simply refer to as a bicycle today was a significant advancement over previous two-wheeled designs. Appearing in the eighties and nineties, the safety bicycle offered riders a greater range of mobility previously available only to those wealthy enough to keep a horse. Still, these bicycles were impossible to ride in skirts or even divided skirts, where affluent women were expected to obey patriarchal moral authority. Bicycle producers responded by creating different models for men and women. Men's bicycles became diamond shaped (similar to present-day men's bicycles) and women's bicycle frame had permitted the rider to wear a skirt, but was also less structurally sound and required an additional ten pounds of material in order to achieve the same rigidity as men's models.

The gendering of the bicycle was soon extended beyond accommodating women's dress, as designers produced 'female' bicycles that were virtually identical to the 'male' models, but were marketed using suitably masculine and feminine names, such as the regal 'Envoy' for men and the bird like 'Fleetwing' for women. Whereas the high-wheeled bicycle had symbolized men's mobility and domination of the outdoors, manufacturers' aggressive marketing of the safety bicycle to both men and women proved more effective in attracting sales. By the turn of the nineteenth century women comprised an estimated quarter to a third of the bicycle market. This had a profound impact on traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Bicycling did more to emancipate woman than anything else in the world and that a woman on two wheels was the picture of free, untrammelled womanhood. Bicycling was even recommended as beneficial for women by 'strengthening the uterus'. However, it has been criticized by conservative critics who attacked women's bicycling as a masculinizing activity and potential threat to women's sexual purity.

The advent of machinery such as the bicycle, motorcycle and automobile forever changed the concept of transport. However, women were still subject to a masculine discourse that marginalized how they engaged in the activity of bicycling. While some feminists at the time perceived the bicycle itself as offering a transcendental solution

to women's inequality in western society. The bicycle industry's demarcated between 'male' and 'female' models suggests a naturalization of the hierarchy between masculine and feminine technical discourse. Women's access to technology and technical knowledge jeopardized men's monopoly of physical space and discursive power, but creating a technologically inferior model of bicycle for women allowed men to maintain their technical superiority.

The development of the bicycle provides a social and historical context for the genesis of the motorcycle as a masculine subject. Many bicycle manufacturers would later try their hand at motorcycle production. Yet the relationship between bicycling and motorcycling involves more than a shared technological history as the commonalities between the two activities and their respective cultural followings illustrates an emerging, masculine discourse concerning these new forms of transport.

Hegemonic Masculinity

According to Connell¹ (1995), gender can be defined as the ways in which the "reproductive arena", which includes "bodily structures and processes of human reproduction", organizes practice at all levels of social organization from identities, to symbolic rituals, to large-scale institutions. Connell (1985) distinguishes between the culturally dominant forms of masculinity which is 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'subordinated' or marginalized forms. By hegemonic he means dominant cultural ideal of masculinity that need not be practised by the majority of men. It is rather a cultural way of life or a culture code or norms they practice in their day to day activities. This hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to femininities and in relation to subordinated masculinities (Kvande 1999). According to Connell the ideal hegemonic masculinity in current societies is a heterosexual, aggressive, risk taking, independent rational man. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and to subordinate masculinities. Riding a motorcycle is indeed considered and is closely connected to hegemonic masculinity due to the heavy representation of machine and technology.

Powerful emotions and pleasure that is derived from the interaction with the machines, here motorcycle to be specific are important for the self-esteem and joy of the motorcyclists. Such emotional traits are culturally coded as masculine, and practising such emotions day to day is confirming the cultural coded norms of hegemonic masculinity.

Women motorcyclists are breaking down barriers in two ways. First, women are surpassing stereotypical gender divided identity and entering one of the most male dominated activities. Second they are challenging the male dominating patriarchal ideologies and thriving for places where men always have been the invincible entity. A female motorcyclist cannot dress in lace or frills because she won't be taking seriously. Many of these women know well and have clear ideas as to how they can express their femininity in this male dominated activity. In order to be accepted in this field women have to be 'one of the boys' or 'social men' (Kvande 1999). This depicts clearly how women embody the gender question in motorcycling. It is women always who have been considered to be more or less different from men, but not the other way, as not men from women. This reflects how masculinity is hegemonic (Connell 1995).

Women technical skill are rarely defined as technical because technology is predominantly a masculine culture expression (Wacjman 1991) In other words, the relationship between men and technology runs too deep, both historically as explained earlier and also in contemporary societies. Gender is deeply embedded as a basis for stratification not just in our personalities, our cultural role even, or institutions in all these and in complicated ways. Social structure creates a gender behaviour as it shows and focuses on "doing gender"² (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Feminizing Motorcycling : A male dominated activity

Despite long term connection to the world of motorcycling women generally are not associated with the two-wheeled subculture except in the most stereotypical roles. Iiyasova noted "although times have changed with more and more people taking up riding- including women

- one thing that has remained implicit in motorcycling is the association it has with masculinity". The motorcycle groups or "brotherhood"³ of bikers always have included in women in western societies. In traditional biker culture especially in out-law groups which as claimed to be masculine, the role of women is clearly defined: although they are equally tough as men, but they never having ridden a motorcycle. They were more considered as property to be used for sexual and servant posers, traded, and given or thrown away at bikers discretion (Thompson 1950). Even motorcycles advertisements often exploit women as sex objects and use 'biker babes' and other forms of blatant sexuality to recruit men in motorcycling subculture.

I started this article with a simple question - whether women in such male dominated activity as motorcycling, had become as Kvande (1999) calls 'one of the boys' or 'social men' though there are very limited ways of constructing

different strategies in relation to the hegemonic masculinity in motorcycling. We see a lot of variations in the strategies.

Motorcycle attire tends to be masculine in appearances. Most women riders "feminized" their appearance in prominent ways. Some wore pink leather jackets instead of the traditional black and some even wore pink leather caps. Others wore leather jackets in white, blue or black adorned with floral patterns, butterflies and other decorations such as rhine-stones or fringes that determine them as women attire. Even the helmets they wore are not solid colour as black or blue but with different floral prints. Most of them have colourful graphics, some obviously chosen to match their motorcycles. Often ponytails, long hair, or various types of visible jewellery also served to identify the rides as women (Thompson 1950). Women do not or cannot take on a predetermined set of behaviour rules in motorcycling; rather they construct and reconstruct their notions of gender role. They



femininities in this male dominated activity. However, constructing femininity is apparently important. They are constantly negotiating the meaning of gender in motorcycling activities. Social identities are repeatedly negotiated and renegotiated through historically specific situations. The same notion also applies to the women in motorcycling negotiating a variety of ways to 'do gender'. They have to negotiate whether the meaning of their gender identities should be same or different from that of the male motorcyclists. This leads them to construct

basically are the participants of a construction process.

Women also tend to hide their identity with going on a long ride. Roads today are not considered safe for them at certain point of time as late at night. They usually tend to wear balaclavas, a kind of mask which are normally used to protect one from cold, covering almost all of the head and face and leaving the only eyes open. Women generally use balaclavas inside the helmet mainly for hiding the length of the hair. According to a women respondent Raima (27,

Service): *I usually try not open the riding jacket not even my helmet or balaclava, even if it is very hot, when I need to urinate in side of roads because of my safety. I don't want any attention from passers-by. It's inviting danger.*

Women who ride also displays the symbol of machismo (as for eg. Chrome, leathers, tattoos, loud pipes etc.); however the symbols often are softened with the addition of pastel colours, floral motifs and other feminizing touches.

According to William (1950) many women rider seemed to go out way to accessorize and feminize their appearances in order to communicate unambiguous femininity and heterosexuality. Even the motorcycles the women ride hint at femininity. Although women ride large and powerful motorcycles of all makes and models, the majority of women seem to ride smaller motorcycle and less concerned about the macho image of the motorcycle than their male counterparts. Pragmatic reasons for the smaller motorcycle may be that because it weighs less, women believe in 'fits' them better and easier to control-although most riders discover that heavier bikes provide a much smoother ride and are much easier to control once moving.

Trisha (24, Student) states, *"I have a height issue, whenever I wish to buy a motorcycle I don't get much choices because of my height issue. The motorcycles are not manufactured keeping mind the notion of Indian standards height issues. Most of the motorcycles are so taller in height only the option left to be in couple of same model motorcycle that is, Bajaj Avenger either 150cc or 250cc. This irritates me a lot. I wish to change my current motorcycle to something better as I wish to upgrade. But since of my height issue I am not able to do the same."* Symbolically the smaller motorcycles seem better for women motorcyclists, and manufactures now openly aim specific models at the emerging female market. The sexism and association with hegemonic masculinity that pervades motorcycling subculture has not dissuaded women from being full participants. Even men motorcyclists also have some similar issues with buying a motorcycle as Mausum (32, Business) reports: *"Since the motorcycle I use is almost 6 years, I wish to upgrade it. I wish to buy some foreign brands as Ducati or Triumph. But those motorcycles are generally made in the foreign standard, a major height issue. I wish those brands before selling their product would Indianise those brands."*

Ethnocentrism

Attitudes and behaviours related to ethnocentrism are universal and it includes favouritism. Ethnocentric attitude generally views one's own values to be universal while the others are judged in reference to the former. The 'othering' of culture is definitely not a new phenomenon and it persists in all cultures. The 'other' cultural values are always considered to be inferior and contemptible. Eurocentric attitude and behaviour include cooperation and cohesive relations within the 'in group' while there is an absence of the cooperation in the 'out group'. Ethnocentrism⁴ is formed due to the group boundaries which usually define by the characteristics such as religion or physical features or geographical areas or language and ascent. Ethnocentrism also denotes *cultural narrowness* of an individual's mind for not buying foreign products that might be better or cheaper from the domestic market. This notion rejects the 'out-group' product over the 'in-group' products due to predominated notions of ethnicity.

The word ethnocentrism is derived from the Greek word 'ethnos' which means 'nation' or 'people'. The centre is an English word used for ethnicity, inter ethnic relations and similar issues where it is used commonly in circles. 'Ethnic' refers to the cultural heritage and the word 'centrism' refers to the central starting point (Kirori 2014). There are many common factors in ethnocentrism such as racism, discrimination, stereo typing, prejudice and xenophobia. Racism believes that one's biological, race, ethnic group is superior to the other members of the Other groups. Racism is thus a form of prejudice. (Kriori 2014). The negative or harmful attitude towards and outgroup can be known as prejudice which is quite harmful for both the in group and out group. Stereotype is a yardstick, that has been already set up to be an ideal image by the previous members of the in group and the out group members are being judged on the basis of the former. Many prejudice are based on stereotype too, while discrimination is a harmful behaviour that judges the out group which becomes disadvantages for them. Finally xenophobia is

this like or prejudices for people from foreign countries. These feelings largely help in formation of racial ethnic group which tries to dominate the other groups and consider them to be an inferior model. According to Kriori “ethnocentrism is often exploited to foster conflict the power of a particular group. History shows that promoting an ‘us versus them’ perspective, the political, religious and other groups, foster discrimination and conflict to benefit themselves at the expense of others” (2014). One common characteristics of ethnocentrism is the power relations that one group might have with others. It happens when one particular group are more privileged and powerful than the former one. This more privileged and powerful group uses these resources to marginalise and dominate the later. The prejudice is related to ethnocentric attitude not have any logical insight, and there is a strong belief at these prejudices are objectively made and there is no question of compromising these notion towards others. Members of such ethnocentric groups flock together in terms of some particular observable characteristics such as language, religion, accent, physical features etc. Ethnocentrism is a very special and common feature in almost in all societies or groups which portrays an example of in-group favoritism and out-group hostility. Kriori states “ethnicity great potential for shipping social cohesion as well as in forging standing of citizenship as a process involving consensus similarities and differences in ethnic group identities”(2014). Ethnocentrism also builds a strong foundation as well as strengthens the group solidarity within them which sometimes acts as a positive notion to keep up the group unity. Ethnocentrism also enhances the integration of any group identities. It promotes unity foregoing understanding of the members building consciousness between similarities and differences in the group identities. Thus I would like to see if motorcycling group forms integration and solidarity that is based on ethnocentric attitude.

Evolution of Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism implies a sense of ethnic superiority; ethnocentrism is the feeling that

one’s group has a way of values, living, and patterns of adaptation that are superior to those of other groups. It develops with the generalized scorn for members of other groups. It mainly denotes value reflecting the collective culture. Sumner (1906) first proposed this sociological notion to distinguish in-groups and out-groups and it subsequently became a major research construct in social sciences.

Motorcycle establishments appear to be, in a multiplicity of ways, highly and strongly bounded, certainly in the context of modern societies. The attitudes also include seeing one’s own standard of value as universal. Membership in an ethnic group is typically evaluated in terms of one or more observable characteristics (such as language, accent, physical features, or religion) that are regarded as indicating common descent (Sumner 1906). The behaviours associated with ethnocentrism are cooperative relations with the in-group and absence of cooperative relations with the out-group. These ethnocentric behaviour is quite common in motorcycle communities in Kolkata. Membership in the motorcycle groups are mostly evaluated in terms of few important features such as the similar brand of motorcycle, style of riding the motorcycle as the most important feature for the membership.

Arony (43, Business) of KOG states “*we formed a group where all the members either male or female has to own KTM motorcycle. We do not entertain any other members who are not the owner of KTM. A owner might have a different motorcycle other than KTM, which is absolutely fine by us*”. While Deep (42, Business) founder of Last Sunday Ride (LSR) states : “*We are a motorcycle enthusiasts group : Where members own different brands of motorcycle both metal and non-metal. We try to accept members who are comfortable riding according to our group. We don’t differentiate between plastic and metal bike. We have bikes starting from 120cc to 1000cc all are treated equally.*” Thus the KOG is a group by similar brand of motorcycle while the later LSR is a group formed by similar style of riding.

Candidates are treated as ‘prospects’ initially for being potential members in near future. The candidates are evaluated through a tedious process. The evaluating process is mainly of three or four steps depending on that respective

motorcycle establishment's rules.

Step 1: the 'prospects' are initially preferred to just 'hang around' with the respective motorcycle club members.

Step 2: The group leader or administrator would then evaluate the candidate's style of riding, attitudes of treating the other members both young and old in critical times while on

majority of group members eventually.

The major reason for the tedious process of selecting a member is making sure that the prospects have learnt the normative ways of behaviour eventually leading to ethnocentrism. The normative culture of any motorcycle establishment demands ethnocentric attitudes. The unique ways of inducing the ethnocentric



Bajaj Dominar 400cc (non-metal) and Royal Enfield motorcycle 500cc (metal)



Royal Enfield 411cc (metal) and KTM Duke 200cc (plastic/non-metal)

short road trips.

Step 3: Prospects are then entrusted with handling some responsibilities which are quite tedious and which they have to carry around, with no questions asked. This step is sometimes skipped, depending on the particular motorcycle organisation's normative rules.

Step 4: Finally inclusion of prospects as members is based on the decisions made by the

behaviour differs from one motorcycle establishment from another. Subrata (47, Service) a member of Last Sunday Rides states, "*it very important to find out the how the person jell with the other fellow members of our group, as you can only get to understand a person deeply when he or she is out for her or his comfort zone. In rides we can very well judge people accordingly. It is highly important to understand an individual and the new potential member should also feel comfortable with our group.*"

Initially the social science research focus was on narrow or inappropriate cases of ethnocentrism, such as incidents involving neglecting human rights, racial discrimination, fascism, and cultural chauvinism. Therefore, ethnocentrism has generally been seen as negative (Booth 1979). Ethnocentrism in motorcycle establishments has been implicated not only in this motorcycle group's conflict, but also consumer choice of selecting a brand of motorcycle. To some of my respondents the choice of motorcycle takes a major role in their motorcycle career as that choice helps them to differentiate between 'us' and 'them'. The major difference can be found in the respective genre of motorcycle one is denoted as 'plastic' (or non-metal) and other as 'metal'. 'Plastic' motorcycles are motorcycle with a plastic body specially the tank, and the both rear and front mud guards made up of plastic/non-metal parts. While the 'metal' motorcycle are motorcycles with metal tank, and mostly rear and front mud guards of metal. Metal motorcycles are generally Royal Enfield make, weighing at least 180 kgs and above while the plastics are non-Royal Enfield make, that is motorcycles such as those from KTM or Bajaj or Honda or Hero weighing at least 135kgs and above.

A major conflict is centred on these two perspectives of motorcycles. The metal is the heavy one with at least 350cc (cubic capacity) and above which is considered to be superior and the other is the lighter one with at least 150cc and above which is considered to be inferior. Disagreements, fights are quite common and are easily found in groups over the same former issues. However things are much lucid nowadays with more people purchasing the 'other' category or motorcycle or non- Royal Enfield which is more cost effective according to my non- Enfield respondents. Even 180kgs or above motorcycles are quite difficult to maintain and ride it on a regular basis than the 'others'. These differences are now becoming more coherent as respondents reported of purchasing both the genre of motorcycle one (Royal Enfield) for long rides and other (non- Enfield) for daily city commuting. Rohit (38, Business) a solo rider states, *"I am out and out a Enfield guy. These plastics*

bikes definitely are not suitable for long rides, they don't sustain much. Metal can be used for years long if maintained properly and the best part is even if its not maintained properly."

However, ethnocentrism may have positive side as it fosters a strong ego and the establishment of a sense of goodwill and trust in relationships within the in-group (Hooghe, Reeskens, Stolle & Trappers 2006). Respondents maintain a strong we-feeling in between the group as it helps them to plan and decide the welfare of the respective groups. Riding together makes a group firm and it helps them to deal with other minor difficulties with ease. One of the response when asked about the how comfortable they are within the group. Suanjan (28, HR) a member of Motonomads, a motorcycling group in Kolkata states, *"We are bunch of patronizing all likeminded people and like-minded fraternity we definitely gel well and there are always a lot of issues because its 10 boys you know so issues are normal but then we gel as well as we share the same kind of thoughts and that is the reason we are all together."*

Developing 'Muscular-Ethnocentric' Behaviour

Ethnocentrism is a nearly universal syndrome of attitudes and behaviours. Behaviour associated with ethnocentrism includes cooperation with members of the in-group, but not out-groups. We show that ethnocentric behaviour can emerge from a simple evolutionary model of local competition between individuals (Hammond 2013)

It could be argued that motorcycling activities represent one of the major sites where direct links between hegemonic masculinities and men's bodies are devised. Indeed, it is the disciplining and control of the body and exposure to risk and sheer physicality that distinguishes many features of motorcycle rider from others. As masculinity continues to be identified with physicality, there are strong reasons for continuing to view such kind of lifestyle as an important site in the shaping and making of masculinities. However, this should not be amplified. There are several other activities where the links between physicality and masculinity may be stressed such as people working in military or in modern times, more leisure oriented society, other sports

which are a major area linking embodiment with masculinities. Therefore the link largely establishes a definite behaviour which has in-built hegemonic masculine traits which finally results in 'masculine-ethnocentric behaviour' in men within these motorcycling establishments.

Furthermore, recent scholars have suggested that love and concern for one's own country and people do not necessarily imply antagonistic, and dislike for, other countries and people (Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller, & Melewar 2001). One can also imply the cooperation of the most motorcycle groups in motorcycle events like 'Wheels United' (WU) while organising it. Some events are one day events while a few are overnights. These motorcycle events are the heart of the communities also because it gives platform and brings together people from all backgrounds of various communities, different groups and ages and one will encounter versatile activities. Sayak (29, Business) responded when asked about the positive points about these events: *"There is no end to learning as we get to learn from lot of people and these events bring communities together. We get to learn the ways one have ridden to some unconventional places and the hurdles they have overcome. On such events you forget everything and participate wholeheartedly or half-heartedly and the brotherhood comes out."*

Events like WU, biggest motorcycle gathering of eastern India are the place of breeding grounds of 'muscular-ethnocentric' behaviours. A rally is organized with an amazing strength of 1200-1500 motorcycle riders riding 40-50kms (depending on the destination selected every year) together, till the event ground of WU. Rallies generally feature various motorcycle games and skill competition and concerts by well-known rock bands. Games such as carrying same genre of motorcycle from point A to point B, riding a motorcycle in a particular formation of '8' without putting one's foot down, slow race, drinking a bottle of beer in stipulated time etc. All these demand immense muscular strength which eventually generates muscular ethnocentrism among the participants as well as the onlookers. Moreover the concept of 'Men ride bullet (Royal Enfield) while boys ride plastic (non-metal)' are generated by the advertisement

agency are quite common which eventually leads to *hegemonic masculine ethnocentrism*.

Seniority of motorcycle riders never comes through age but through the way or places they have visited or the bike they have ridden to such places. Experienced motorcycle riders generally portray masculine traits by narrating their stories of overcoming the hurdles. Members of motorcycle groups nevertheless narrate the same, portraying such dominant muscular ethnocentrism. This behaviour is essential to reinforce their identity; serves to bond members eventually distinguishing themselves from the other groups. Even the female riders are also not left out from this brotherhood, where their feminine traits are been always compared or related to masculinity. Certain 'muscular-ethnocentric' behaviour is always considered to be the yardstick of this muscular motorcycling subculture. Experienced women riders are always considered to be 'brothers' and are often referred as the same. Despite increasing number of women riders, today motorcycle subculture is still a male-dominated and somewhat macho domain. Usually I ask women at rallies about their notion of what they think of the male dominated and such sexist environment that dominates such events, a typical response by Mouha (34, Service) of Bengal Lady Bikers: *"It is no big deal; I have seen and dealt with a lot worse. I have met the most interesting and nicest people on motorcycles. Maybe it's like everything else in this world, you got to take the bad with the good and it's really worth it."*

Nevertheless some women are offended or perhaps those most offended no longer participate. And to some the benefits of motorcycling outweigh the drawbacks.

Conclusion

Because gender practice involves bodies but is not biologically determined, the gender practice being learned may actually be hostile to bodies and physical well-being. Young men in rich countries such as the United States and Australia, enacting their fresh-minted masculinities on the roads, die in appalling numbers in traffic accidents, at a rate four times higher than young women. A large number of adolescent girls and young women go in for dieting, in an attempt to

maintain their heterosexual attractiveness, and for a certain percentage this escalates into life threatening anorexia. In poorer countries, the circumstances are different but the stakes are also very high. For instance, in the Palestinian confrontation with Israeli occupation, the intifada, most of the direct resistance has been carried out by very young men and boys. As Julie Peteet (1994) shows in a terrifying ethnography, being beaten or arrested by the Israeli army and police became a kind of rite of passage into masculinity for Palestinian youth, and, of course, some of them were killed.

Embodied learners encounter the gender regimes of the institutions they come in contact with. The socialization model was right about the importance of the family, the school and the media in children's lives, but failed to recognize the internal complexity of these institutions.

Conflicting models and messages abound. In a school, the teachers present a range of different patterns of masculinity and femininity to the children, simply as a result of the diversity in their own lives. The children are likely to pick up some of the gender politics among their elders. For instance Australian boys learn to insult each other as 'poofters' (fags). Their elders, in turn, may be divided about gender issues in their treatment of the children. Even in a two-parent family, there is room for argument about how to bring up a girl or a boy. To add to complexity, the same experience may be interpreted in different ways. For instance a boy growing up in a situation of domestic violence, where his father often bashes his mother, may incorporate violence towards women into his own repertoire of masculinity. Many do. But the boy may also react against it out of terror, or may side with his mother and reach for a totally different relationship with women in his own life.

Motorcycling values inherited a technological and cultural legacy from bicycling which is historically and socially embedded in the design of it. As a material creation of a masculine discourse, the symbolic qualifications that later marked the motorcycle as a hegemonic masculine subject, was established during the late nineteenth century. Ethnocentric behaviour can emerge from a simple local competition between

individuals or motorcycling groups. Ethnocentrism may have positive aspects in so far as it fosters a strong ego and the establishment of a sense of goodwill and trust in relationships within the in-group. It can be easily asserted that ethnocentrism gives individuals a strong sense of identity.

It can be aptly remarked that women motorcyclist are constantly challenging muscular-ethnocentrism. Motorcycle as an entity has always been associated with male folks and whenever a woman has tried to break this gender construct this has been regarded as a deviant behaviour on the part of the woman and has been judged by the society as an intrusion into the strict sphere of the patriarch. In order to stop this questioning of gender construction by the female folk, the patriarchal society has always taken resort to mocking, demoralising even going to the verge of isolation.

End notes:

1. Raewyn Connell is an Australian sociologist. She gained prominence as an intellectual of the Australian New Left. She is currently Professor Emerita at the University of Sydney and known for the concept of hegemonic masculinity and her book, *Southern Theory*.
2. Doing gender means creating difference between women and men, differences that are not natural, essential or biological. Once the difference has been conducted, they are used to reinforce the "essentialness" of gender.
3. A term generated through the motorcycling clubs where each and every member looks out for the other member of the biking fraternity. The women motorcyclists are not excluded from the brotherhood but since it is a male dominated sport, with very little women thus sisterhood never came into the notion. But nowadays women are encouraged into riding therefore sisterhood are also used but very less.
4. Sumner propounded the concept of ethnocentrism. Despite a widespread belief that the first usage of the concept was in 1906 by the sociologist William G. Sumner, its origin is not straightforward. The concept was probably introduced by the sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz in several books published in the second half of the nineteenth century. Gumplowicz saw ethnocentrism as a similar concept to geocentrism (a belief that the Earth is the center of the universe) and anthropocentrism (a belief that humans are the center of the Earth) but focused on one's own ethnic group, with the assumption that it is better than any other. (more readings: Rechtsstaat

und Socialisums by L. Gumplowicz, 1881).

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