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RACIO-GEOGRAPHIC MASCULINITIES: BEARD AND MOUSTACHE BEYOND POPULARITIES

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Abstract: The attributed masculinity in terms of facial hairs in popular narratives varies in accordance with the class, caste and geographic regions. Race, religion, caste and choice are the factors determining facial hairs than personal and popular interest. Though migration and cross-cultural settlements have been continuing for centuries, specific racial markers help distinguish major ethnicities from each other. The racial groups with thick and bushy facial hairs as of Middle East, South Asia, Mediterranean and Eastern Europe differ from East Asian, African and Latin American men.

The presentation of male charms regarding hair and facial hairs changes with respect to the place, culture and popularity though tall men are presented as more charming across cultures. The generalising of the 'moustache divide' in terms of Northern and Southern states of India contrasts itself with Guinness records of Sikh men with lengthy facial hairs. Associating female desirability with facial hairs though continues in South Indian movies, ratings for clean-shaven South Korean celebrities are at a hike in general. The restricted choice of growing and grooming facial hairs among religious groups and communities overpowers the popular trends and discards the country-wise or region-wise grouping of facial hair patterns.

The trends of grooming facial hairs and make over hair-cuts correspond to heart breaks, separation and come-backs among the youth as popularised in movies and series. Growing beards is associated with revolts where rebelling youth declares their fight against authoritarian oppression. The capitalist marketing strategies and commercialised beauty standards play a vital role in region-wise standardising of facial hairs. Though visibly masculine features, beards and moustaches do not determine hegemonic or hierarchic masculinity.

Keywords: *Masculinity, Facial Hairs, Race, Popular Media, Narratives*

The popularity percent of male facial hairs as politically presented in diverse genres of narratives tends to politically pattern masculinity in terms of race, region and religion. The visible masculine features such as beards and moustaches do not determine masculinity in action that the execution of dominance happens unhindered with or without facial hairs. The studies on masculinity associate performance to culture corresponding to social contexts. Personal, social, cultural and religious reasons outperform statistical research on sexual desirability as a factor deciding facial hairs of men. The micro patriarchy in personal choices impedes the racio-geographic mapping of concentration pockets of beards and moustaches.

The deliberate standardising of physical features and appearance corresponding to white male perspectives and expectations is an evident capitalist marketing strategy executed globally. The features of charm and elegance in nature reflect more in male species of the animal kingdom with manes, tusks and more feathers serving the purpose of attracting mates. The presentation of male charms regarding beard, moustache and hair changes with respect to the place, culture and popularity. The neo-capitalist industries invest in cosmetics and fairness creams targeting women, flagging overt and covert, lighter complexion as desirable.

The studies on masculinity concentrate more on actions than appearance with the exception of presenting tall men as highly attractive across cultures and narratives. The pattern of associating tall charm with power in men denigrates shorter men as weak, whereas taller women are considered villainous in contrast to shorter women being presented as cute. The juxtaposed tall man-short woman combination becomes positive and natural in the hegemonic power-play. Tom Brada states, "Each year hundreds of people around the world are opting for long, often painful surgery to extend their legs in a bid to make themselves a few inches taller. But the complex procedure isn't without risk and health experts say some are being left with long-term problems".

The continuing migration and cross-cultural settlements though impact in genetic diversities, specific racial markers help distinguish major ethnicities from each other. The possibility of generalizing facial hairiness or hairlessness country-wise or region-wise is minimal as the trends of grooming facial hairs and make over hair-cuts correspond to heart breaks, separation and comebacks among the youth. The statistical surveys and researches carried out on beards and moustaches have their focal point on sexual desirability and opposite sex attraction.

Sex-dependent physical traits represent some of the most dramatically altered and groomed characteristics: body shape can be emphasized or obscured with clothing, complexion and facial features by make-up, and hair can be styled, dyed, removed or trimmed. These practices alter, emphasize or conceal traits that have shaped individual sexual signaling in ancestral populations (Cunningham & Shamblen, 2003). Further, variation among cultures, within-

society hierarchical norms and more idiosyncratic social factors all influence patterns of grooming and dress (Barber, 1995). (Barnaby et al)

The prominent racial groups of the world, Caucasoids, Mongoloids, Negroids and Australoids have distinctive hair potential with variations in thickness. The ethnicities derived from the interbreeding, display diverse facial hair patterns corresponding to religions, caste, class and personal choices. The global pockets of narratives in general and visual media in particular adapt to regional desirability while marking the masculinity in terms of facial hairs. The sustenance of strategic propaganda of male dominant industries of modeling, acting, sports and politics in associating masculinity with or without facial hair is seasonal and inconsistent.

The popular narratives such as movies generalise the region-wise pattern of beards and moustache as natural. Paul Little observes that there is a decline in the trend of moustache-masculinity as only heroes of 70s and 80s of showbiz keep up with facial hairs. The Hollywood celebrities of 90s preferred clean shave corresponding to the characters they played. The millennial and post-millennial actors Leonardo de Caprio, Johnny Depp, Chris Evans and Ryan Gosling appear with beards and moustache in public as well, shattering the popular generalisation that Hollywood celebrities never advocate facial hairs.

A north-south moustache division has always existed in the Hindi and South Indian film industries. Even 40 years ago, a young Rajendra Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan or Shammi Kapoor never wore a moustache. But Tamil film star Shivaji Ganesan as well as Karnataka's Rajkumar did. In fact, moustaches in Hindi films were worn mostly by villains, rarely by heroes (Kala).

In India, the generalising of facial hairiness of men of south and facial hairlessness of men of North as visibly celebrated in Movies, tele-serials and Series proves wrong corresponding to different castes, communities and states. Even when Bollywood heroes do not have moustache, men of Northern states like Kashmir, Punjab and Haryana are renowned for lengthy beards and moustaches. According to Sikh community spread widely across North India, cutting, shaving, plucking or trimming of head or facial hair are not allowed for men. The Muslim theological texts narrated by the scholars, array different opinions on trimming beard and moustaches.

While the beard trend started in London around 2010, with older celebrities making beard to look presentable while aging. The full beard trend was brought in by Ranveer Singh in his look in movies like "Gunday". Other Indian celebrities like Virat Kohli and Shahid Kapoor also played a role in promoting beard styling. Cricketer Virat Kohli's sharp cut beard popularized the trend among young men (GQ India, (2017)). As they experience the transformation of puberty, many young men may feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in cultivating their facial hair as a symbol of their maturation (Rout et al 171).

In the article, “India Moutsaches ‘face the chop’”, BBC reviews the book *Hair India: A Guide to the Bizarre Beards and Magnificent Moustaches of Hindustan* (2008) displaying India's extravagant beards and moustaches and reports that particularly lengthy moustaches and beards are disappearing from the country. The men with beards are given reverence in the country in light of religious and spiritual terms.

Hallyu refers to the phenomenon of Korean popular culture which came into vogue in Southeast Asia and mainland China in late 1990s. Especially, hallyu is very popular among young people enchanted with Korean music (K-pop), dramas (K-drama), movies, fashion, food, and beauty in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Vietnam, etc. This cultural phenomenon has been closely connected with multi-layered transnational movements of people, information and capital flows in East Asia (Rae 154).

The Korean wave known as hallyu has been outperforming western popular media narratives markedly since the release of the album “Gangnam Style” by Park Jae Sang known as PSY. The clean-shaven group of men in dramas and music bands has gained mature status and masculinity without facial hairs. The researchers attribute the current trend of facial hairlessness to west-influenced modernisation as well as prioritising Christianity to Confucian practices. The Korean men with facial hairs are misjudged as unclean, ugly and irresponsible in employment sectors.

The Joseon Dynasty — Korea’s last feudal era before modernization — was governed by Confucian values, which viewed one's bodily features as being inherited from their parents. A phrase from the era suggests: Filial piety starts with not harming the body and hair given by one's parents. Jang Suk-man, a historian at the Korea Institute for Religion and Culture, wrote that Joseon people treated hair grown from the scalp and facial hair as “objects to preserve” in his academic journal. Yet, the modernization reform in 1895 rendered beards a vestige of the past. Beard shaving was one of the key modernization initiatives (Jung).

The popular series produced in East Asian countries such as Korea, China, Taiwan, Thailand and Japan while creating period dramas based on history present only aged characters as possessing lengthy beards and moustaches. As long straight hairs are characteristic of Mongoloids, men and women used to have long hairs on head. The depiction of mythical and historic heroes without facial hairs does not align with the sense and style of the past as it is diverted purposefully for appeasing the modern audience who favour clean-shaven men.

Refined facial hair was, therefore, a key means by which men could convey their social status in Joseon society. In addition, they lived by Confucian morals, which forbade damaging any part of the body that was given by their parents. Thus they could not cut or shave their beards, moustaches, or whiskers, but had to let them grow. To demonstrate their dignity they had to

wear their beards, moustaches and whiskers long, and further groomed them beautifully. Such male grooming was intended to represent their ranks and social status (Yang & Hyun 598).

The domain of modesty comprise clean-shaven to trimmed moustaches and beards in all societies as artists and rule-breakers have long beards and hairs as their identities. Kien observes, “It's rare to see anyone with facial hair in Seoul, except for the odd rebellious college student or musician” (1). Growing beards is associated with revolts where rebelling youth declares their fight against authoritarian oppression. The lyrics “*njangal thaadi valarthum, meesha valarthum, muttolam muttattam mudiyum valarthum*” (we will grow beards, moustaches and knee-length hairs) came out in Kerala in 2017 in protest of fascism executed through state police.

The female preference for men with or without facial hairs corresponds to economic and cultural aspects of concerned societies. The research on female preferences associated with male facial hair should be conducted in closer contexts that variations wider in boarder social and cultural sectors (Jach et al 7). The preferences are not domineering enough to threaten relationship opportunities of men with or without beards and moustaches. The decline of marriage as an institution has not remarkably affected the percentage of people getting married or in cohabiting relationships that statistics mark around 70 % of women in any of the sexual partnerships (Herre et al). The data proves that female preferences are either unaddressed by the opposite sex or subsided by themselves.

While many quite basic questions concerning men's beard growth, grooming and women's preferences for men's facial hair remain, for now, unanswered, it may be instructive to learn from the study of androgen-dependent facial shape. A more masculine face, characterized by a larger brow-ridge, narrower eyes and a more robust midface, reflects sexual maturity, testosterone levels (Gangestad and Eaton, 2013, Scott et al., 2013), physical strength (Sell et al., 2009) and perceived formidability (Geniole et al., 2015, Puts, 2010, Sell et al., 2014). All of which suggests greater willingness among masculine looking men to engage in intra-sexual competition to attract mates (Puts, 2010, Scott et al., 2013) (Barnaby et al).

The female desirability regarding charms and male efforts to presenting themselves attractive happens for specific species as biological phenomena. In humans, attractiveness of male facial masculinity is strongest in cultures where urban development is higher and social group sizes are larger (Scott et al., 2014)(Barnaby et al). The selection of partners whether by self or arranged by families are domineeringly determined by Caste, Class and religion than physical attractions among societies. The varying preferences of women cannot be considered as determiners of facial hairs.

Women's preferences for beards also vary, so that beards are judged to be attractive in some studies (Dixson et al., 2016b, Dixson and Rantala, 2016, Janif et al., 2014, Pellegrini, 1973, Reed and Blunk, 1990), but not others (Dixson and Brooks, 2013, Dixson et al., 2013, Dixson

and Vasey, 2012, Geniole and McCormick, 2015, Muscarella and Cunningham, 1996). However, beards consistently enhance ratings of men's age, masculinity, and social dominance (Dixson and Vasey, 2012, Muscarella and Cunningham, 1996, Neave and Shields, 2008, Saxton et al., 2016, Sherlock et al., 2016). Compared to clean-shaven men, bearded men report feeling more masculine (Wood, 1986), endorse male-typical gender roles in heterosexual relationships (Oldmeadow and Dixson, 2016a, Oldmeadow and Dixson, 2016b), and have higher levels of serum testosterone (Knussman & Christiansen, 1988), which may predict social dominance (van Honk, Bos, & Terburg, 2014) (Barnaby et al).

The normalising of beards to elder citizens in a way of acknowledging respect and power is seen in diverse societies. The boys in their teenages yearn for beard and moustache for the sake of mature masculine looks but decide on personal styles by late 20s. "It is also evident from the study that the perception of male and female youngsters varies significantly. They perceive facial hair in different ways. Similarly, we have enough proof that mean perception of rural and urban youngsters also vary significantly (Rout et al 176)". The European modeled systems of administration as in uniform-practicing services like army, navy, air force and police force forbid growing beards as is followed in once-colonised countries as well.

Even though patterns in grooming fluctuate with prevailing fashions, there is some evidence that beards become more fashionable during conflict (Robinson, 1976), at times of economic hardship (Robinson, 1976) and under male-biased sex ratios (Barber, 2001). These are exactly the conditions that elevate male-male competition for status and mates, consistent with evidence that beards represent a 'performance of masculinity' (Wood, 1986) and that they enhance perceived social dominance (Dixson et al., 2016, Dixson and Vasey, 2012, Muscarella and Cunningham, 1996, Neave and Shields, 2008). (Barnaby et al)

The major eastern and western religions and philosophies advocate growing of facial hairs except for some sects of Buddhism. The narratives on Christianity ranging from that of Jesus to Santa Claus spotlight beards respectively. Wilhelmsson posts, "...that since the beard is created by God and esteemed in Scripture as a sign of gender distinction and manly maturity, it is indisputably right for Christian men to follow the biblical example and wear their God-given beards, whatever the view of the surrounding culture and fashion trends may be". The pattern of modesty set by modernity in embracing fashion trends in terms of clothing has conveniently made men let loose from religious tenets on growing facial hairs as well. The beards get wrongly associated with extremism inculcating fear factor among modernity-embraced sectors. The cultural intolerance results in lesser visibility of beards in urban areas.

The post millennial inclusivity discourses and gendered performances tend to detect, direct and diversify prospects of masculinities in terms of visible popularities. The less percent of studies on facial hair pattern of men of Asian and African communities than the gush of studies on that of Europeans problematise the tagline 'hair is political'. The undermining of female preferences and sexual desirability has to be critically analysed using theoretic tools of feminism. The unlearning of attributed masculine responsibilities for bearded men as neither cultural nor hormonal nullifies the associated unscientific hegemonies.

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