

A Paradox of Human Mate Preferences and Natural Selection

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ABSTRACT Though both sexes need one another but rarely they have exactly the same priorities for mate selection. Females have been selected with a variety of traits. Theory suggests that one choose mate with characters showing of high genotype and phenotypic quality. Therefore, attraction to a beautiful individual is a sexual adaptation for choosing good reality mates.

INTRODUCTION

The genetical and cultural adaptations are not alternatives but mutually exclusive. Human genes and human culture are connected by a circular feed back relationship in that human genes stimulate the development of culture and this development stimulate genetic changes for the further development of culture. Theory suggest that sexually reproducing organisms should choose mates of high genotypic and phenotypic quality. Attraction to beautiful individuals may therefore, be an adaptation for choosing high quality mates. The primary factors responsible for the evolution of mating preferences is still remain controversial to the human sociobiologist (Buss, 1985).

The traditional attention has focused on the possibilities of human mate selection preferences listed as males provide resources to female or offspring, costs of searching males, disease transmission, males differ in sperm fertility, invariant standards of beauty in human, ethnic background, facial attractiveness, physical features, good genes, social system, group selection and phenotypic plasticity and cultural transmission.

However, in this present context we synthesize our current understanding of recent human adaptionist hypothesis on human mate selection of preferences.

ANALYSIS

Sociobiological approaches to human behaviour have a interesting insights. Because, the central role of reproduction and sexual behaviour in Darwin's theory (Darwin, 1871) is a excellent

area for fruitful socio-biological study (Thronhill and Palmer, 2000). Psychologist suggests that the sexual attractiveness of woman's might be depend on the cues of reproductive potential. It has been proposed that the determination of physical attractiveness is the ratio between her waist and hip measurements (WHR) and a female of WHR 0.7 is treated to be optimally attractive (Singh, 1993). The simple generalization emerging from the theoretical studies is that natural selection presumably favours a curvaceous body shape in women, which is indicative of the most fertile body shape. Because, the waist-hip ratio (WHR) is the result of a fat distribution that maximise reproductive potential which increase the average fitness of females (Kirkpatrick and Ryan, 1991). Therefore, the sexual attractiveness of a female might be depended on reproductive potentiality. Some western study (Manning *et al.*, 1999) suggested that the hip and waist circumference of mothers were significantly and positively correlated with number of sons ($r=0.16$, $p < 0.05$; 0.17 , $p < 0.05$ respectively) but not to the number of daughters ($r=0.02$ and 0.07 respectively) whereas, WHR was positively but not significantly related to the proportion of sons ($r=0.10$). Therefore, thick waists and high WHR women might be expected to show the preference for mate selection that societies got prize sons over daughters. However, Yu and Shepard (1998) have challenged this hypothesis. They studied on a culturally isolated tribe of Peruvian Indian Population by using different set of figures of female who varied in apparent body mass index (BMI) and WHR. Their results indicate the preference of this tribe for a tubular body shape rather than the curvaceous body shape. Several studies (Singh, 1993; Yu and Shepard, 1998 and

Symons, 1979) showed that male preference for woman with a low waist-hip ratio (WHR) is significantly higher.

It has been found that in the affluent family, healthy female have more fat deposition on the buttocks and hips than on the waist (Singh, 1993) and which leads to a low WHR. However, female with high WHR suffers from a variety of health disorders like infertility, diabetes, blood pressure, heart disease etc. Therefore, the WHR is to be treated as an indicator for good health and fertility in females. Whereas, male preference for the low WHR female is to be considered as an example of sexually selected adaptation for the assessment of mate quality (Symons, 1979).

In this context, the Darwin's theory (1871) is that "It is certainly not true that there is a mind of man any universal standard of beauty with respect to the human mind". Darwinian theory posits that the beauty is a particular mechanism of evolution, namely to refer to the differential reproduction of heritable variation. The explanation goes by the name of 'natural selection'.

A phenotypic transmission is a biological plausible mode of non-genetic inheritance. An organism's genome is the hard-wired program. The whole phenotype of the organism is the result of environmental input through sexual reproduction to this program. Therefore, phenotypic transmission is any parentally induced environmental modification which has the effect of increasing parent-offspring similarity. Thus, culture clearly can serve to increase parent-offspring similarity with certain traits. Therefore, culture may lead to evolutionary dynamics by specifying a successful adaptation (Low, 1979). A sexual maturity including clothing, jewelry, teeth form, well-kept hair, make up and body weight may convey the interest in attracting a partner (Cunningham et al., 1995).

Cunningham and Barbee (1991) have demonstrated that the men with positive moods were more attracted than men in neutral or depressed moods to women with high sexual maturity. Men in a negative mood, by contrast, preferred women with less sexually mature. However, Indian males may respond less positively than others to women with high expressive and sexual maturity because of Indian cultural value of sexual immaturity, modesty and inexpressiveness in the public appearance (Martin, 1964).

The certain studies (Perrett et al., 1994; Cunningham et al., 1995 and Lott, 1979) postulated that natural selection could have influenced for physical and facial attraction which are related to sexuality and reproduction. Therefore, attractive facial features, cuteness and physical appearance were significantly associated with the mate's selection preferences (Goldstein, 1979).

CONCLUSION

However, in Indian context, the skin colour is one of the most significant variable influencing attractiveness. Generally, males preferred women with lighter skin colour, as a result of significant association between fair skin and a youthful appearance beyond the social and cultural factors partiality towards the fair skin colour. Therefore, the cultural socialization has a powerful influence on the selection of female mate on the basis of physical attractiveness which differ substantially across the cultures. It should be noted Darwinian natural selection is based on random variation, so that the possibility cannot be excluded that a specific attractiveness is less desirable to an individual or culture. In conclusion, the preference of males specially in Asian Subcontinent for sexually immature, submissive and less expressive feature woman reflect male dominance and power on social status. The question of Asian Male dominance to submissive woman still remains open for additional research.

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