

ST★R WOMAN

The wily serpent lives

The snake beguiled the first woman but advertising men have been beguiling women ever since

by A.R. Nagori

'It all began in the Garden of Eden', says Prof Berger, a researcher of Social Science at California State University. God had told Adam and his woman not to taste of the tree of life, but the wily serpent talked her into it.

And the serpent said unto the woman, "thou shalt not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, she took the fruit, did eat and also gave unto her husband; and he did eat.

As a result of this act, Adam and his wife discovered they were naked, hid themselves from God and were ultimately thrown out of the Garden.

And the Lord said unto the woman, "what is it thou hast done?" and the woman said, "the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

Consequences

There were further consequences; snakes were made to slither on their bellies; women would henceforth bring forth their children "in sorrow" and be ruled by their husbands. The impact on the consciousness of man of these first few pages of Bible has been remarkable, if you think about it, for here in a very condensed form, we find the basic myth which has played a major part in the shaping of our

societies and the development of many of our institutions and attitudes.

According to Prof. Arthur Asa, 'the Woman's Lib movement in the West, is, in large measure, an attempt to overthrow God's punishment for having "tempted" man.'

In the light of this religious historical context, modern scientific and secular thoughts have come as a blow to that 'sacredness' of women's role as housewives where women had been convinced that raising children earned them the love of God; thus in a sense, women were making the best of what they now consider a "raw" deal — they believed in the job they had to do. When the sacred quality of the housewife's task is doubted and ultimately cast-off, then other relationships are looked upon rationally and logically, and not as somehow "ordained" by divine command. In such cases, the institutions of society and attitudes of males, and through complicity, some females, are revealed as sexist. There are many sexist institutions in society, from the family itself to our modern universities. The sexist attitude has also been strengthened by the modern advertising machinery.

Advertising

A kind of spurious worship — woman as the goddess of beauty — has been trumpeted, so that women will not remember that, for the most part, they are treated like drudges. It is a classic case of mystification: we idealise woman as the incarnation of divine beauty, love and goodness, but we treat our women in scornful

and dehumanising ways.

The snake beguiled the first woman but advertising men have been beguiling women ever since. The snake, the villain, the most subtle creature of the field, is the prototype of the advertising man.

Germaine Greer in her book "The Female Eunuch" writes, "...Every survey has shown that the image of an attractive woman is an effective advertising gimmick. She may sit astride the mudguard of a new car, or step into it ablaze with jewels; she may lie at a man's feet stroking his new socks; she may hold the petrol pump in a challenging pose, or dance in slow motion in all the glory of a new shampoo; her image sells. The gynolatry of our civilization is written large upon its face; upon hoardings, cinema screens, television, newspapers, magazines, tins, packets or bottles, all reigning deity the female fetish." Greer sees this idol as an unreal doll... a perfect creation whose perfection signifies that she is not human but rather an idealisation, an abstraction, a fantasy. They ask how can this be called exploitation when we put woman on a pedestal and worship her? The answer is, of course, while a woman may be on a pedestal, all women are not.

Apart from the sociological point of view mentioned above, psychologists found women's data indicated a hopeless "will to fail". Girls get dumber and dumber as they get older and older. A girl child matures early, levels off fast and then regresses. Thousands of females who are positively brilliant in grade schools become merely bright in high school, simply very good in



college and almost mediocre in graduate schools. At least, this was observed in the last 75 years in USA. According to psychologists, women seem to be dominated by a profound 'wish to fail.'

Disturbing

Dr Martina Honer, an experimental psychologist working at the University of Michigan, was as puzzled as

the man in her department by the irregular and disturbing results that came exclusively from female subjects.

All sorts of data based on information given by men was successfully fed into the carefully worked out test model but when it came to the women, the model went crazy. Nothing meshed, no two sets of women came up with some kind of results. In addition, the women tested out abnor-

mally high on anxiety. Bewildered and disoriented, the psychologists reluctantly dismissed the women's data as indicating a hopeless "will to fail", impossible to cope with in achievement-motivation work. Dr Horner, however, sensed that this was not an adequate explanation for what she felt was going on with the women; she stumbled, ultimately, on the idea that the women involved were not exhibiting a will to fail, but rather an active, anxious desire to avoid success. Some deep receptivity towards this retrogressive complex has been developing in a female's personality almost from the time of birth. Once this crust of discouragement is broken, a deep well of social conditions is discovered underneath. She goes into a tailspin of anxiety as she struggles to reverse her appetite for human fulfilment.

TAIL-PIECE: It is not just the interpretation of religious books and theory of original sin that crushed women, but I personally hold Plato and Aristotle as the worst criminals in the so-called 'glorious civilisation' where women and slaves were not entitled to have a say in the state's affairs. The crimes of these enemies of humanity were perpetuated by our forefathers in another 'great civilisation'. Following 'great traditions', our 'reformers', 'philosopher-thinkers', and ideologues in the sub-continent vehemently opposed women's emancipation, created obstacles in opening of girls' schools or reading of books, periodicals or any thing of information other than books on 'how-to-become-good-slaves'. The recent ban on women's sports and throwing of acid on our daughters, is just a follow-up, a minor leap-back-ward for the realisation of our lost 'golden tradition'. Surely our women need 'protection' and preservation as any other property requires under lock, barrel and guns; for women are bracketed as Zan, Zaiver, Zameen, hence their looking after, under 'Chaddar and Chardeevari' as any other moveable property, in any feudal society.

Paintings by the author.

