

BIOLOGICAL SEX PATTERNS AND MODERN LIVING

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Modern living has produced stresses in sex relations, as biological needs are at variance with conditions prevailing in present day marriage. This is an important problem in marriage guidance and has to be dealt with continuously in general practice. The exposition of this psychosocial problem and how to deal with it, is the theme of this paper.

As every human is the product of the society in which he is born, a change in the communal life will be reflected in altered relationships between man and woman. The problems arising out of a change from primitive to twentieth century existence are of fundamental importance in present day marriage.

Survival of the race is always an essential problem and other needs have to be subordinated if life is to carry on. As far as we know, our instincts have not changed since primitive man developed. Apparently we are still born with fundamentally the same physical and personal characteristics as our ancestors thousands of generations ago, when the first primordial hordes organized themselves. They developed biologically necessary patterns of communal existence to satisfy instinctive feelings, attitudes, and driving forces which are still present in us.

As a basis for comparative purposes we presuppose a hypothetical primitive community whose life centres around a semi-permanent homestead with some agriculture and hunting.

With rare exceptions, it has always been expected from a woman that she looks after the children. In many settlements she had to look after the shelter and the fields close to the homes and prepare the food. Often men brought the meat and other essentials from further away and they fought the battles. In semi-nomadic existence the man might be away from the home for several days at a time probably usually in company with other male member. For varied periods they might have to accept to live completely away from their womenfolk. It had to be possible to turn most of their energy into muscle activity to achieve maximum performance. The production

of sex products had therefore to be temporarily reduced. This was easy when no stimulation occurred. One must realize that this situation only happened occasionally and only in some societies, but these privations had to be accepted as a possibility which might occur and man had to be built so that he could deal with this without feeling undue hardship. We can see this fact even now in any army where men by themselves can go on for prolonged periods without women in comparative happiness. As soon as the first female in the flesh appears, men become difficult. War in modern life is fortunately not part of our everyday living and the counterpart to primitive fighting is the activity of modern work. "Work" in the twentieth century contains all the elements of hunting, provisioning of food, and fighting. There is one fundamental difference in the everyday activities of past and present. As explained, uncivilised man might be separated from female companionship for varied periods and he might pass many a night away from home. Modern man is expected to join his family most nights. There is usually no expectation of possible prolonged separation of the sexes in normal peace time. This change of outlook can cause great difficulties in modern marriage. This problem will be further examined in its varied aspects.

In many primitive communities the females used to live in close continuous contact with each other and all shared in the bringing up of the children of the tribe. They helped each other in looking after the crops and herds in and about the village. In short, it was the custom for most of the work in the community to be done by women. As a group, man comparatively often played little and in many societies no part at all in these activities. There often was a clear cut division of work between the sexes and much was done by group activities of either men or women. The male and female groups might work completely separately or, in other societies, they worked and lived together as a large, closely knit group of families. In modern life this communal living has practically disappeared. At present women have to live very much by themselves. They have lost the security of intimate, continuous contact with each other and cannot rely on each others help as they did. Relatives live far away, a baby-sitter is a problem and sickness without assistance a terrifying thought. Until the beginning of the twentieth century a certain easing of the situation occurred from the custom that older and single female relatives used to share the marital home and the rest of the family used to live in close proximity. This help has gone, as modern family units are so scattered that husband and wife are thrown closer together than ever. As the family group of females has fallen apart, the woman has to replace the traditional living together by substituting her husband, and she is forced to live and

work in much more permanent contact with men than primitive living asked her to do. This position throws an unnatural strain on the man in the present day community by forcing him, to a certain extent, into attitudes and activities which used to be mainly the female domain. The female element in most men is not sufficiently developed to accept this new burden and they emotionally reject their role of having to act as baby's nurse and do the cooking and shopping. As a rule the woman does not like this change of role of her male protector either but both have to accept it as necessity. Naturally this new living pattern must have an effect on intersexual relationships. The pleasure a man can get out of a closer relation with his children can often more than compensate for the difficulties arising out of instinct.

In some primitive communities only the infirm and the elderly males stayed permanently in the village. Even though those men might have been the leaders of the group, they were usually not the sexually active, desirable partners. In some tribes the other healthy men had to be absent from the settlement for more prolonged periods. Therefore, in most societies, there was a sharp division of activities between the sexes. The change to modern living pattern has produced a different attitude of the woman to her male partner. The man is no longer the only leader and provider but is frequently associated with the woman in her new role as worker in jobs previously held by men only. This often leads to tension and only too often a maternal protective attitude towards her husband creeps into marriage. This position can be most unhealthy and cause much unhappiness in our contemporary families. These problems have to be fully understood by both partners and only then can guidance help. In the woman's mind the man was often a coming and going individual who, in many tribes, had little influence on everyday mother-child relationships and home problems. As a whole, women like the man's leadership in matters of importance apart from the above and emotionally prefer to be subordinated to his will. Modern living is often contradictory to this deep need as circumstances often throw much responsibility on to the wife and this leads to many stresses. The nature of the antagonistic emotions has to be explained and the knowledge that her own hidden worries are common to many others relieves in itself.

In intertribal fighting, man might lose his life easily and a great discrepancy between the number of healthy men and women could develop. Nature has to prepare for this and a possible shortage of desirable males is not conducive to a permanent one man and one woman relationship, as it soon might lead to a dying out of the tribe. This is prevented in many societies by not allowing the spinster problem to occur and gives man and woman a different attitude

towards each other. If, under these circumstances, a woman would want a man as often to be close to her, as a stimulated man wants to possess a woman, not sufficient sperma would have been available to fertilize all the females. Therefore differences in attitude to coitus had to develop and often woman has desires less frequently than man, but monogamous living has become part of our existence and, in fact, we are happier in that relationship. There is not normally a shortage of men in modern life. Even so, deep in us are still instinctive feelings in conflict with modern living. Only deep love, kindness, and understanding of the civilized human being can bridge this abyss. Great help in the family situation can be given here by the doctor and his associates.

As the discrepancy in the number of men and women in a community had to be accepted as a possibility in past times, nature had to provide for this and make sure that all the females would be fertilized.

As a woman is most likely to conceive on only a few days in her monthly cycle, she has developed marked swings in her sexual emotions at different stages of her menstrual cycle. Nearly every woman knows the violent, instinctive impulse which suddenly comes over her and, quite unexpectedly, wants to drive her into a man's arms with primitive vigour. If this feeling is not satisfied, it dies down in a matter of hours and is soon forgotten. This drive is often so intense that it might temporarily interfere with the normal daily pattern of life. In most women this impulse varies from month to month in intensity, length, and frequency. Apart from the variations in the monthly swings, there occur changes of intensity over a period of one or several years. The short and long swings of rhythm are different from one human being to another and in the same person show an unpredictable variation. Much unhappiness can be avoided if the problem and its implication are pointed out fully in marriage-guidance counselling. Otherwise fears of inadequacy, over-sensuousness, or frigidity arise. These inherited mechanisms are still a mystery and cannot be influenced markedly. They gave the primitive female the much needed rest between pregnancies. The normality of the swings must be explained, as guidance work is convincing that worry over this problem is more common than is realized.

In primitive groups, taboos often surround sexual intimacy and work in such a way that a woman would come near a man only during the days of stimulation when the greatest possibility of fertilization occurs. The woman would feed and look after the man who attracted her and her presence would stimulate him into activity. She would stay with him as long as she was in need of him. Once she was fully satisfied, she would have gone back to her usual life

with child and tribe.

The man would then either return to the company of other males or in a polygamous society would be cared for by another woman who wanted his intimacy. One sees that in primitive society only a woman who is in need of a man and a man who wants to respond are likely to be close to each other. In modern life husband and wife live in intimate daily contact, regardless of what emotional state either might be in. Instead of a positive meeting another positive, we find that a positive and a negative, and very often even two negative partners, have to live together in a confined space contrary to the natural laws. Difficulties through physical, emotional, and work contact must inevitably arise and have continuously to be sorted out.

The living conditions of the man too have changed fundamentally. A male horde comes home after an absence from the village, during which the men have had no sexual stimulation and they are ready for an intense love life. In many primitive societies, where all the arduous jobs around the village are done by the women, work stops for the male and a fairly complete switch from muscle to sex energy occurs. During this lazy period the man can fill his physiological role to the full. In modern life there is no sharp division between the expenditure of the two types of energy and this sets many new problems.

Nature has laid down a pattern which satisfies both men and women at the right moment as this is most conducive for successful reproduction. If both partners are in the best receptive state of mind and in physical harmony, the interplay between the sexes can occur with unhurried pleasure and the nearest approach to the ideal pattern is reached. This is all very different now and much unhappiness is produced which is avoidable with proper understanding and care.

In this connection one has to study the change in foreplay which has occurred. Any mother gives her child security by holding the baby firmly and gently and giving it reassurance. The pressure of the mother's body against the child's skin produces sensations in the little one which become firmly connected with the feeling of belonging, happiness, and safety. The type of sensation, its localization and its intensity vary markedly from individual to individual. It seems to be bound up with the way the mother habitually handles and holds the youngster and the position the child finds itself in when he is fed or sleeps in the mother's lap. Different pressure points are stimulated and become permanently connected with feelings of relaxation, reassurance, and happiness. One naturally wants this feeling of belonging from the sex partner more than from anybody

else in adult life. Working up to a climax and the succeeding complete internal peace are based on this infantile pattern and if the sequence of loveplay is not fully worked up to, the richness is reduced to rudiments which produce no permanent happy relationship. Foreplay is an intense reproduction of the infant's feeling and must be fully aroused and satisfied before a complete orgasm can occur. The precoital stimulation of rubbing, pressing, and biting, together with other sensations of contact, are part of the natural prolonged love game. There should be no inhibition and this should be accepted as part of normality. It is seen in the animals surrounding mankind, who might play together for hours or even days before contact occurs. In modern marriages, foreplay is often very short, not satisfying, and, frequently, practically suppressed. For this the hurried attitude to everything in modern life is to blame, but quite apart from this there is the inability to relax and this often needs treatment before one can help. The new cultural patterns which have developed during the last centuries have gradually produced a curious inhibition of foreplay in marital life. Foreplay was and still is freer in extra-marital relations but by many people is considered unseemly in marriage. This problem is gradually becoming less serious than it was, but is still with us even in the young generation more than is generally realized. Only relaxed belonging and giving, undisturbed by the pressure of time and inhibition, will lead to full marital happiness. All must be done to overcome the guilt surrounding foreplay. Unfortunately, most modern marriage guidance counsellors seem to take little notice of this all important problem.

The discussion shows clearly that the leadership in matters of sex is commonly with the woman. It is her attitude and reaction which is frequently the prime mover stimulating the man into activity. Naturally, this relationship is often not clear cut as human beings are not machines. We are composed of the most varied male and female components and this is not the same in two people. Therefore the matter of leadership must vary, but the impetus in sexual matters is much more part of womanhood than is generally realized. In twentieth century society, it is usually an accepted conclusion that the man is practically always the primary leader. If one reflects on the foregoing discussion, one will realize that this attitude is unphysiological and therefore leads to much misunderstanding in present day marriage.

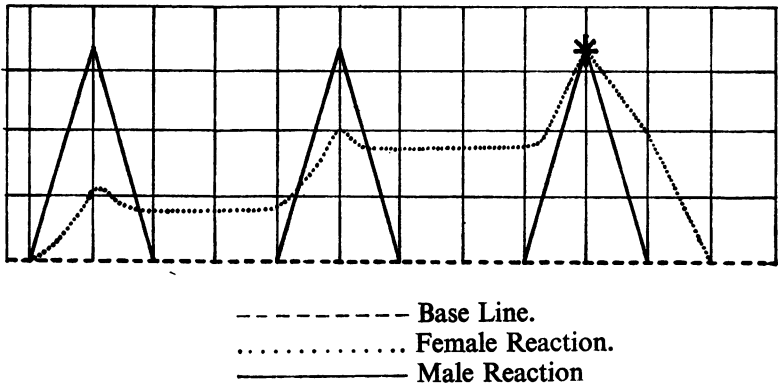
Originally, man's relationship with women was primarily an act of possession which might or might not have been associated with love. For the primitive male the act is without much consequence and with procreation his responsibility might end. The coital act is

here not usually connected with the thought of children. In a primitive female too, intimacy is on the whole not premeditated and consciously not brought into relationship with possible conception. The modern civilized woman always connects child and coitus, even after an unpremeditated act, as a matter of course, and in her thoughts sexual intimacy is always bound up with the fundamental experience of motherhood. In modern life the man is responsible for the child to a great extent. The civilized husband has the relationship between coitus and child very much on his mind. This leads to many inhibitions and fears which the practitioner has to relieve.

Naturally, the female emotional needs are very changeable. They are subordinated to the days on which maximum fertilization can be expected. This swing of feeling differs not only from day to day and cycle to cycle, but there are marked variations over the years. Periods of high sexual tension vary from years of great activity to times of comparative peace. The long swings give the woman the much needed rest between successive pregnancies and the shorter variations make for interest in the sex act, as it can never be the same twice. Unfortunately the problems of swing are usually not explained properly in guidance and much avoidable fear and resentment has to be worked through often at a stage when it might already have lead to fixed, irreversible marriage breakdowns.

The female orgasm varies greatly in intensity and frequency. A happy climax might be achieved on the first contact, but in the same woman on other days many contacts over prolonged hours might be necessary before full satisfaction is experienced. Under uncomplicated conditions an orgasm is a normal conclusion, because a woman likes to approach a man only when she is in a receptive mood. Modern living drives husband and wife together regardless of the state of the woman's feeling and often leads to dire results. The switch from muscular to sexual energy is much more complete in an outdoor-living, healthy, and relaxed person who is physically capable of satisfying a woman again and again until she is fully relaxed. The modern woman still has the same primitive instincts as always but the present city-dwelling male is tired and preoccupied when he comes home from work. Both types of energy have to be used in a very short space of time and no full relaxation or complete switch occurs as a rule. There is no more prolonged regular separation from female contact either through absence or taboo. One or two intimate contacts might tire him and this only too often leaves his wife tense and irritable. The man goes to sleep exhaustedly, the unsatisfied wife either feels guilty that she still wants her tired husband and gradually over the years replaces this with deep resentment against the unsatisfactory partner or the man feels

inadequate because he sees his wife unhappy. Endless variations of misery spring from this problem. Usually the partners are unaware of the underlying problems and the resentment and arguments ensuing out of the dissatisfaction are focused on completely unconnected problems. The greatest danger is not the problem itself, but the complete lack of understanding of many family arguments and the fact that they are often rooted in sexual maladjustment. Explanation can restore many unhappy situations.



The above diagram is used to explain to marriage partners the change from the instinctive primitive pattern to the difficulties of modern living. It is necessary to understand the short duration and comparative flexibility of the male climax and the complicated slowly rising and comparatively slowly declining female curve which might extend over one or a group of male orgasms. Stress has to be laid on the continuous variations even in the same couple. It has to be pointed out that it is normal for a twentieth century woman not to be able to reach a climax regularly. Both partners must know that without full penetration vaginal and clitoral orgasm can be achieved by the use of the finger, the collapsed penis and the pubic hair. Most women do not object to this, when the normality is explained. The relaxed relationship ensuing makes it often possible for the man to achieve full penetration at the time of the final female climax. The primitive pattern leading to a happy conclusion can be reproduced to a great extent in this way in the tired contemporary man.

Deep in modern man is still the primitive impulse of fighting, the need to provide and to propagate. Too great a preoccupation with sex in the archaic days would have prevented the male from fulfilling the other needs. Even in modern days a man experiences after

sexual exhaustion a need to switch back to a release of muscle energy and he longs instinctively for full activity away from female companionship. Every man knows the sudden lack of interest in his wife, once he feels that she is relaxed, happy, and has sexually worn him out. How often does a man find that his mind wanders when he is in contact with the woman he is deeply fond of and he feels guilty about it. He cannot understand himself if he does not know the root from which his inattention springs. If a husband gets into this state of mind, it is essential for him to get right away from his wife until he feels that he can bear to be near her again. The full impact of this feeling is often not realized because civilized man tries to suppress emotions which will bring him in conflict with adjustments made with his acquired higher faculties. He will try to seek the company of other men. Primitive male group activities have changed nowadays into the sports club, the lodge, the hotel, and endless other groups where men are by themselves. The natural female reaction to this behaviour in her husband is to tie him still closer to herself, because she is frightened to lose him. If she understands the normality of this male irritability, she can co-operate. She is even often the first to realize his restlessness. She should then take the active step herself and send him away under some kind of pretext. This will solve many misunderstandings.

In between the various swings man has the need to rest. This lazing of the male at home is accepted by many societies and in our age has been transformed into activities like quiet reading, writing, working in the carpenter shop under the house or fiddling with the car. These interests often irritate women who feel that the man should spend the time with them, but quiet periods are an absolute necessity to most men and if not respected lead to much marital friction.

Most women too have the desperate need to get away from their children and household chores, husbands, and problems. Men and women are now so closely cooped up together in the little suburban house, the little flat, and even at work, that it is more important than ever for both partners to get temporary solace. In primitive setting, one woman would take over from another and there was no problem. In our modern home the man will have to do his wife's work at least for short periods of time, even though most men have no natural inclination to do so. A woman cannot carry on without respite any more than a man and her balanced mood is one of the pillars of family life. A man rarely has such fine feelings that he himself recognizes the needs of his wife without prompting. It is essential that the woman herself shows her wants and needs on her own accord. In an otherwise successful marriage it is even more

likely that partners hide their needs from each other, because they fear upsets. Often the first sign of tension is an argument and it needs a great deal of understanding from both sides to prevent these situations. If the man shows signs of wanting to get away from his wife, she might interpret this as not being wanted any more. To her it might seem a sign of neglect and she fears a decline of marital happiness. Gradually, the hidden anxiety mounts up and shows itself in tension and hostility. This might be purely a wrong interpretation of natural reactions and here sensible prevention, through good guidance, is essential. In the best marriages positive and negative periods must clash at times and it is only by deep love and full understanding of educated minds that these situations can be overcome. There must be give and take of affection and no outsider can ever help.

After years of married life most women feel only one or two, rarely more, intense sexual impulses in the average cycle. There are many days when the man might have no attraction for her at all. In some women the swings go so far that they do not like to be touched or kissed in any way during that time even though they are still deeply fond of their husbands. In between, there is a period of days when a woman can stand intercourse but will not get full satisfaction. At times the partners might feel the need to sleep apart for a few days and positive repulsion during the negative stage is not unknown. Even the most understanding modern man finds this situation difficult to accept. He feels hurt even though he knows he should not be. His primitive pride is injured. Under uncivilized conditions man does not have to face this problem often as usually only positive seeks positive. In primitive life there is, as a whole, no contact when there is no need. Rape is the exception but is always an act of intense aggression and as a rule would not occur inside any society, but only away from the family hearth.

In the modern marriage, the partners are together most nights. The physical presence of his wife stimulates man into action regardless of what his wife's feelings are. There are frequent occasions when no active emotions are aroused in the woman. This is very upsetting to the man if the normality of her behaviour is not fully understood. In this way the fear of wrong mating creeps easily into marriage. The woman might blame her partner for not being able to give her full satisfaction and might fear that she is frigid. She either pretends and is unhappy or she shows her feelings and her husband fears that he cannot give her the full happiness she needs.

Man and woman have to learn early in married life to talk freely with each other about their problems. This is probably the safest way to counteract the changing influence of modern life or biological

patterns. It is so much easier to work out a new problem than to wait until wrong attitudes and emotions have developed and then try to reverse them.

Nature somehow seems to have the need for swings in emotional relationships in the same way as in physical contact. This stimulation springing from the endless variations of attitudes and emotions of both partners and their continuing interaction is the surest way to happiness and must not be hampered by our present day patterns of culture. Modern man has the faculties of reasoning, loving in its widest sense, deep understanding, and the faculty to forgive and deeply enjoy. Those are our most important assets in overcoming the controversy between nature and twentieth century.

Instead of more separate living of male and female groups with varied intermittent contact modern man has developed the small biological family to replace the bigger family groups. This new institution has to be intergrated into society which still has to deal with all the primitive impulses of the individual. We know how much a neighbourhood can be upset by only one unhappy couple. We will always have to look for the biological instinctive roots and examine how and why they have to be moulded by our present society. In the end we come back to the original thesis that male and female relationships stem to a great extent out of the need of the community. Modern family life has lead to an enrichment for both partners and therefore indirectly for society as a whole. Moral, religious, and psychological factors, the knowledge of profound friendship and the enjoyment of common pleasure have developed as a wonderful substitute for interpersonal conflicts, and ties happy married life to society. The family unit is the basis of our modern living. Everything depends on its stability. Any idea of breaking up this foundation, will lead to collapse. This danger looms in the application of some new philosophies current amongst the young. This must be counteracted by all possible means if we want to achieve even more marital happiness.

The multiple problems elaborated show the tremendous gulf between the instinctive pattern and the stresses of present day living. In a discussion like this some kind of generalization is unavoidable. For instance, some lucky women are always ready and achieve full satisfaction each time. Some modern men are extremely potent and would not know that there might be a problem. Here we are concerned with the endless multitude who are unhappy unnecessarily and who can be helped with proper insight and guidance. This is one of the most important medical problems at present and one of the least recognized, and so often it is badly treated. Psychosexual difficulties are usually discussed at present on an analytical basis. This is of

tremendous importance, but can throw light on the problem only of the individual. The analytical approach by the Jungian school certainly takes into account the atavistic roots of the problem, but again it looks at it from the point of view of the individual person and not as a problem of a group. Pavlov's approach is closer. He investigates the reflex action in relationship to situations, but does not pay attention to the instincts in their reaction to social evolution. The psychosocial approach is not in conflict with the above mentioned theories but constitutes a valuable addition. It is hoped that the ideas put forward here will stimulate further research in this field.

From the therapist's point of view, all preventative and therapeutic approaches ought to be used in the combination which suits the individual problems best. Psychology, religion, and help by sympathetic listeners are all necessary. Some of the suggested primitive patterns might be disputed as nobody has definite proof of the past, but experience has shown that full explanation of their problems to the marriage partners is clearer when one contrasts biological needs with the problems of modern society. The possible solution can be brought home much more easily.

To summarize, one hopes to have shown how important the biological instincts are as a basis for understanding of present day marital difficulties. It is hoped that the psychosocial approach can be a valuable help to prevent and rectify marital problems. It is supplementary and in no way contrary to other present day methods of therapy.

“The generality of physicians cannot recognize their simple drugs but trust ignorant apothecaries who, as the physicians themselves know, aim only at deceiving them. And they do deceive them in many ways. One is the price of drugs by which patients are burdened. . . .”

Roger Bacon—*On the Errors of Physicians*. Translated by Withington, E. T.