



Dreams of My Disabled Life #1
(2008) Artwork by
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Beyond the Liminal Vantage

Binary is a departure from the conditioned acceptability to brave our choices

WE often think of the world through binaries. It is either one end or the other. If it is not right, then it has to be left. If it is not the sun, then it is the moon. Day-night, sweet-sour, hard-soft, we allude to judgements despite not living on either side easily.

There is hardly anything concrete to shape the world into binaries. Nature is multipolar. There are modes of communication that amplify through colours, palettes, smells, tastes and weather. Our senses react to variations. Diversities and multiple angles with and without axes make for an encircling life.

Binary is also the demonstration of our limitations that we are unable to explore beyond the liminal vantage. Binary is a departure from the conditioned acceptability to brave our choices.

I was also bought into the idea of working through binaries. Either do this or that, do not mess with too much. Why bother with the endless possibilities the world offers? Limit your choices and you can find it easy to live. During shopping experiences, in particular, I get overwhelmed. I know that I need a particular item to buy. I have a budget and then I explore. Yet I get jammed into the traffic of too many items to purchase. The consumerism of the salaried classes makes binary a defiance.

When the choices are offered as multiple, our options to pick are expendable. Our analytical minds as well as tests to assess our ability are explored in multiple choice questions and not in binarism.

If we live in the world of limited possibilities, life becomes

disciplined, and we follow the path. If the path is productive it helps in self-growth, if it is destructive we gain notoriety.

But wisdom doesn't come in hardened binaries. It does not consider the edges of the mind to produce a palpable warning of possibilities. Wisdom asks us to penetrate into our vulnerabilities and explore the self through the reflection of changing waterscapes working through arrested thoughts.

Binaries are presented through the biological division of reproduction. Yet, the choices of bodies to claim a specific category remain open-ended. We've one autonomous body, or both, or a mix of it, or somewhere in between. The biological division is betrayed by the complexity of biology wherein bodily parts intermix in human bodies—estrogen and testosterone determining. Masculine and feminine energy flow through us, complementing gender binaries.

Two Genders

The obvious twosome accepted division is that of gender. The gender of the child is described by their genitalia. However, I have come across a couple who is not trying to impose the hardened binary on their child.

An Indian parent couple, Neela and Nitin, are bringing up their child in Boston without a binary identity of gender. The parents treat the child, Akira—a name that represents an undefined identity of the gender—as a non-binary and do not want to enforce gender. When I saw Akira for the first time, I was also confused about Akira's gender identity, but Nitin was aware to point out the non-binary gender-neutral identity.

The parents made sure the child was given adequate freedom to choose for themselves. They read stories with non-gendered epithets and also gave Akira both gendered clothes. Akira grew up embracing both identities and kept experiencing the twosomeness of both worlds.

Neela said gender was not the most important thing for them. They wanted Akira to experience the world without their imposed gender norms which were growing to be an insignificant medium of expression as Akira was growing. The teachers at school accepted and welcomed Akira. However, those things mattered when it came to defining toilet usage.

In the liberal circles that Neela and Nitin operated in, it was valued. Their friends considered this, but ended up giving a gender identity to their offspring once the child was born. Akira, Neela and Nitin are part of the new experiment wherein the child is not assigned gender at birth. They see how the child is experiencing standards of beauty and valour neatly attributed through the binaries of gender. Pink is cute because it is a girl. Blue is strong because it is a boy. Akira is now seven and is comfortable with the male identity, but also prefers "they" as a preferred pronoun.

Some may call it woke parenting; some would deny the child's agency as that of an indoctrinated confused being. One wonders how to co-opt gender identity to suit a narrative that is linear and acceptable to everyone.

Once we have a gender decided by elders and later disowned by the child when their consciousness seeps in, the problem arises that co-mingles gender with society, sexuality and family.

Hyped Usurpation of Transgender

Transgender is a topic that keeps getting bated by many. Recently, it became the central topic of the US election campaign. Presidential candidate Donald Trump's advertisement—"Kamala is for they/them, President Trump is for you"—had a ring on it. In the swing states that generally have an undecided populace, this advertisement made an impact. When transgender wasn't even an issue, it was made to appear as a central topic, forget the war in Palestine, Ukraine, breathtaking inflation, rising costs of housing, taxation and the everyday experiences of the working class. These burning issues appeared to be sidelined by an issue that doesn't concern even a fraction of the population.

This harmless population group is invited to the democratic experimentation of freedom and rights, even though the same country would banish their existence. Therefore, we notice the limits of what freedom of expression and livelihood mean in the footnotes of the hierarchy of equality.

The progressives have lost the plot. They can wind up their charade and show their true face. Without a material action plan concerning families and people who work for their bread, this virtue-signalling, TikTok-driven politics have shown them the true face of their own doing.

At a recent US Senate hearing—concerning the rights of athletes and the gender divide aiming to gun the transgender participation—National Collegiate Athletic Association President Charlie Baker was grilled about transgender rights. Of the 530,000 student-athletes, less than 10 were transgender, said Baker. Yet, this negligible number became a topic of national crisis.

While it is the prerogative of society to decide how they assimilate the people they deem unworthy of inclusion, India has a living history of how certain bodies born out of a womb were declared as unseeable and untouchable.

The binarism that we have erected as an edifice of society is witnessing its challenges. A queer professional in the US told me that he does not agree with transgender people competing in a category of their transitioned gender. Women of various ideologies have echoed their discomfort in allowing female transgenders to access female-only toilets. However, the gender-neutral toilet makes for a superb compromise. A senior journalist from India who was visiting Harvard was unsure if the bathroom at the Kennedy School was meant for her. She quipped to me, a stranger, that she hesitates to enter the space fearing a guy holding his penis in his hand might emerge. She perhaps didn't know it was a single-use bathroom.

We ought to examine how our inhibitions towards assimilation can cost us a bandwagon of credibility only to be regretted later. Being oblivious to one's gender identity is a trend in our current society. In Nanded, many queer folks who inhabited a male body did not conform to the manly notions of masculinity. They lived their life with full expressions of their femininity. They were adored by men and women. Yet they were seen with disgust. They lived fully by defying what was expected of them. [Q](#)

(Views expressed are personal)