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IDEA OF DEATH AND ITS IMPACT ON MIND*

AMARENDRANATH BASU

Death is a basic event of human life. This phenomenon has been impelling man to think of it since his advent on this earth. Till today there is no end to this thinking. On a thorough delineation of the manifestation of this thought we come across two aspects of it : one is empirico-rational and the other is unconscious psychological.

In our empirical reality we come to know that death annihilates an organism totally. Death makes it non-existent. A child from the start of his acquiring experience, and hence knowledge, of the objective world comes across the event of death and finds that with death an organism is annihilated or becomes non-existent. The body apparatus of the dead loses the capacity for sensation and gradually gets mutilated or is made to be destroyed. No interaction is possible with that body. The body vanishes from the world of perception. There is the end of life. Thus death means annihilation in the sense of emptiness.

But in our inner mind there is another idea of death which is otherwise. This is like the idea of prehistoric man. "In this respect", says Freud (1915), "the man of prehistoric times survives unchanged in our unconscious". In order to explore this idea it is necessary for us to examine a few instances of mythology, primitive

* Read at the scientific meeting of Indian Psychoanalytical Society, Calcutta, on 24. 3. 90.

funerary rituals and ceremonies, some features of shamanism* and dreams.

Existence of mythology is a universal phenomenon. The myths reflect the image of a people; they indicate the thought process, behaviour and belief of a community regarding the basic problems of human life of which death is one.

That mythology acts as a mirror of the unconscious of a community is proved by Freud's (1900; 1913; 1917a; 1926; 1932; 1933) investigations. This finding is one of the great products of psychoanalysis. The unconscious of man has a common universal character. Freud (1939) says: "The content of the unconscious, indeed, is in any way a collective, universal property of mankind."

Now, let us examine a few myths of several peoples.

An Indonesian myth indicates that the human being was incomplete in the beginning or was not 'human'. There was neither death nor sexuality. In a mysterious way an extraordinary girl with the power of bestowing gifts appeared. People killed her at the end of a great celebration, and as a result life came into being (Eney. Brit., Vol. 12, 1979).

An African myth suggests that a chameleon and a lizard were sent by God to the mythic ancestors with the messages through the first one that men would be immortal, and through the second one that they would die. The chameleon paused on the way, and the lizard arrived first and conveyed the message. Thereupon death entered the world of human being (Eliade, 1976).

In a Melanesian myth it is said that the first men, when they advanced in age, used to cast off their skins like snakes and thus came out rejuvenated. Once an old woman came home renewed, but her little child could not recognize her. So she, in order to pacify her child, put on her old skin again. And from then men became mortal (Eliade, 1976).

In another Indonesian myth it is found that there was easy communication between god and man in primitive times. The creator

* Shamanism: It is a form of religion the root of which lies in the primitive age. Ecstatic experience is the primary phenomenon in it. The shamans are specialists in human soul. At a time shamanism was prevalent in Eastern Europe and Russia (including Asiatic Siberia). The word Shaman is a Russian (Fungusic) term (Saman) having link with the Sanskrit term Sraman (Buddhist monk) (Eliade, 17/4).

used to let down gifts to man with the help of a rope. Once the creator let down a stone. Man refused to accept it and wanted something else. Then god lifted down a banana. Man accepted it joyfully. But the mythic ancestors heard voice saying that as they have chosen banana, their life would be like banana tree. They would continue to remain alive through their progeny. Had they chosen stone, their life would have been like stone, i. e. changeless (Eliade, 1976).

In all the above anecdotes it is found that there was a belief with the transhistorical men that their ancestors were immortal. Death was unknown to them. The phenomenon of death is of later advent. Death came in the life of man by way of accident or mistaken choice as if death was not a natural event. Thus death was reduced from "necessity to chance event" (Freud, 1915). And a chance event or mistaken choice could be corrected and averted through man's alertness. All these show a denial of death. This was a mode of compromise. The mental dread for death, was thus lessened by thinking it an accident or mistaken choice. In this way man's inherent desire for immortality was made possible to be retained.

Gradually, in the mythical age death came to be considered not as a path to annihilation, but as a way for transformation; as a passage to another mode of being which is spiritual. This idea of spiritual immortality spread forth, in later ages, in the ideas of rebirth, resurrection, transmigration of soul, life after death, and above all in the concept of Atman. All these ideas helped ancient men to preserve primitive narcissism and sense of omnipotence. We will come across various sorts of instances in this regard.

In an Indian mythological story, as recorded in the Katha Upanishad, it is said that Nachiketa, a prince, begged self-knowledge to the deity of death, Yama, because Nachiketa heard that only through the realization of self-knowledge can one attain immortality and the deity of death can give that knowledge.

The legend of Savitri and Satyavan hints at the existence of a world beyond death, and death is the door between this and that world.

The myth of Mother Goddess Durga along with her incarnation as Sati, daughter of King Daksha, and her self-sacrifice at the place of the sacrificial ceremony of her father, and then being severed into

52 pieces by the discus of Vishnu, the pieces which fell on different places, and the Mother being incarnated at those places in new Mother-forms, suggests that life continues after death; death only transforms one mode of being into another mode of being.

Similarly, the descent of Lord Vishnu in different incarnations at different times (mythical) conveys the same idea.

The Buddhist stories of the Jatakas impel people to believe in the process of rebirth, and death being the passage to rebirth.

The idea of Amrita—Nectar—is another defence against death, in favour of immortality.

Above all, the authoritative as well as assertive sayings and teachings of the Gita, such as : the body is like the worn out clothes, or the weapons cannot pierce the soul, water cannot wet it and air cannot dry it up, etc. (chapter II), and different anecdotes included in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have been conveying the message of an eternal spirit—the Atman, for thousands of years and thus have implanted the belief in the immortality of soul in the mind of the Indian people.

Adam and Eve were the fallen mythical man and woman to this mortal world from the paradise; they came under mortality due to their mistaken action, not for the inevitable law of Nature. Death was disowned by putting it under the category of accidental phenomena.

In ancient Greece the festival of Eleusinian mysteries was to be celebrated in honour of goddess Demeter and her daughter. The festival included initiation into solemn rites and teaching of secrets to the initiated. The belief inculcated to the initiated through the festival rites was the doctrine of immortality of soul. Those who participated in the festival were filled with the "sweetest hopes as to this and the future world" (Berens, 1892).*

The rescue of Psyche by Eros (or Cupid or Amor) from the under-world where she was frozen into death by the trick of Aphrodite (mother of Eros) indicates a belief (in mythical time) in the exist-

* The Eleusinian mystery was introduced by the goddess Demeter at Eleusis, a town of ancient Greece. This was one of the most ancient and important festivals observed by the Greeks.

Demeter Greek goddess of corn, agriculture and family life, she is equivalent to Roman goddess Ceres.

tence of a world of the dead from where one could return rejuvenated. Psyche (means 'soul') was chosen to be represented by the butterfly in ancient Greece as in chrysalis form a butterfly undergoes a kind of death, but again comes to life (Berens, 1892).

According to the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration of souls, it was believed that after the dead persons (i. e., the souls) had lived in Elysium (i. e., paradise) for a thousand years, they were destined to animate other bodies on earth; that is they were to enter into their new career (Berens, 1892).

In Islam it is said that on the final day of judgement all the dead will have to assemble at a place where the Almighty will proclaim reward or punishment according to an individual's action in this world. In the eighteenth chapter of the Koran the legend of the Cave* speaks very eloquently of the belief in the existence of life beyond death. There the idea of resurrection is also found. Resurrection is also a Christian belief as is recorded in the Bible.

Thus it is found that all the high religions of the world induce among their followers a firm belief in the existence of life beyond death, or in immortality of soul. This belief men have been carrying since ancient times through generation after generation.

The belief in the existence of life after death is also very clearly reflected in the primitive funerary rituals. Below is the description of a burial ceremony of a young girl of the Kogi tribe of Sierra Nevada as mentioned by Eliade (1976). A priest (tribal) chose the place of grave and directed the whole affair. He declared with gestures—"Here is the ceremonial house of Death; here is the womb. I will open the house. The house is closed, and I am going to open it." Then the priest directed men to dig the grave and announced—"the house is open". In the grave a small green stones, shell-fish and a snail-shell and food were kept. Then the priest tried to raise the body giving the impression that it was very heavy. On the ninth trial he succeeded. The body was placed in the grave and the priest closed the house, i. e., filled the grave. Here the significance of lifting the corpse nine times was the return of the body to the fetal

* Cave of mountain Taraklus: Ref.:

Sura Kahaf:—Seven persons who were believers in God were kept captive in the cave by the faithless King and were dead there. But after many years they were resurrected by the grace of the Almighty.

state passing in reverse through nine months of gestation (Eliade, 1976). In the grave, i. e., in the world of dead the person would require food and sex. Hence the materials were given: The small shell symbolized spouse of the deceased (Eliade, 1976). It may be said here that the funeral ceremonies and rites as prescribed in the high religions of the present world are based on the belief in the existence of life after death; for example, in the Hindu ceremony of Shradha (oblation to the deceased) food and other articles are offered to the departed soul.

In the Megalithic period the tombs were built in likeness of the pregnant belly or womb of woman as if it was the pregnant womb of the mother of the Dead who was equivalent to the Mother Earth. The caves and caverns were considered as the natural manifestations of the womb of the Mother goddess. They were used as tombs or burial places. In Megalithic religions it was the practice that the dead would be laid down in the Earth mother's womb in the posture of a fetus, so that he could start anew from there. The idea was that the dead person sleeps in the tomb with the mother and thereby being strengthened by the powers of the Mother goddess the dead is reborn. Death was not thought to be a definitive end or annihilation. To die meant to be resurrected. Moreover the tombs were used then as shrines or temples. It is assumed by the authorities (Eliade, 1987) in the study of primitive cultures that the rituals performed in Megalithic period connected with religious initiation were like those connected with the funeral ceremony. That is, the initiatory rites were borrowed from funeral rites. The purpose of any initiation is to lift a person from a profane existence to a higher or sacred condition. Therefore, imitation or enactment of funeral rites at the time of initiation came to be a necessity. Because it was a belief that only death enabled one to cease in this earthly or physical condition in order to be reborn in a spiritual condition which was considered to be equivalent to a heavenly state. The earthly condition was taken to be profane as that is dominated by the rules of mortality, whereas the spiritual condition after death was thought to be sacred as that leads to immortality. The nostalgia for immortality or paradise got an opening for fulfilment through death. Death implied rebirth or resurrection. In all the high religions of the present world—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christia-

nity, Jainism, Islam—the ideas of rebirth or resurrection or both remain to be prevalent. Therefore, it was natural that funeral rites got percolated in religious initiation. Any initiation implies symbolic dying to a particular mode of being and an introduction to a new and higher mode of being.

The mortuary rites connected with the burial of Pharaohs in the Pyramids are instances of archaic belief that life continues in the other world after death, and death is the passage to that world. The Egyptians believed in the 'double' existence of man. After death one survived for ever.

The ideas of Paradise, Heaven, Hell, Under world, Nether-world, the world of Death, Yamalaya, Pitriloka, Brahmalo, Tartarus, Elysium, Hades etc. are found abundantly in the myths of different peoples of the world. This denotes the belief in the existence of life after death.

In the great epics of the world it is marked that the heroes could go to the world of the dead to bring back or to communicate with the dead persons of their choice.

That death did not betoken annulment or extinction of existence to the primitive men was evinced in the "carrying out Death" ceremony of the European tribes (Frazer, 1929). In summer or in spring the tribes used to destroy an effigy of Death and the transference of the shirt worn by the effigy to a tree indicated the revivification of the destroyed effigy in a new form. It was believed that Death has a vivifying or life-giving virtue. The ceremony implied the death of Death, i.e. the advent of life or continuation of life in a new form through death. In other words, it was believed that death generates life.

Even today, according to Frazer (1929), many a tribe of different countries perform the initiatory rites by enacting the phenomenon of death. That is, in initiation a boy has to enact that he is dead, and then again he is brought to life through some rituals. An Indian Brahmin boy is called twice-born after his initiation.

The belief in the continuity of life after death, or death being a passage to another mode of existence which is often considered higher and more sacred and powerful, is in a major way, the contribution of Shamanism to all the religions of the world. Shamanism as such, or the essential features of Shamanism were existent in the

religions of the primitive people of all the continents of the world, even among Eskimo people, since the palaeolithic period (Eliade, 1974). It was a universal phenomenon. And it is still extant somehow or other in all the religions of the modern world (Eliade, 1974).

The main feature of Shamanism was ecstasy. In ecstasy, it was believed, a shaman could travel in the world beyond, and make contact with superhuman beings—gods, demons, spirits of the dead, etc. His travelogue during and after ecstatic state contributed decisively to the knowledge of death. From these narratives there developed an idea of a 'funerary geography.' The unknown world of the dead assumed a form, a structure and a pattern. There we find specific description of the route to the world of the dead. It is indicated there that the world of the dead lies beyond the seven seas, or at the end of the ocean. Again it describes that one has to cross a river before one reaches the world of the dead (e.g. the Baitarani river according to Hindu belief).

Gradually the world of the dead became knowable. Thus, ultimately death was evaluated as a rite and a passage to a spiritual mode of being. The accounts of the shaman's ecstatic journey contributed to the act of spiritualizing the world of the dead. Along with this feature of Shamanism, the shamanic magico-religious techniques, such as fire tricks, rope-tricks etc., made people believe in a world where everything is possible, where laws of nature do not operate, where the dead can return to life and the living die to live again. Thus the shamanic religion impelled men to demolish the barriers between dream and reality. It stimulated and fed the imagination of mankind (Eliade, 1974). Even today a widespread belief is found that death transforms man into form of spirit. It may be soul, ghost, ethereal body or spirit. There is also a universal belief that the dead haunt their familiar surroundings and at the same time are present in a spiritual world. The funerary rites in all religions are instances in this regard. Hence, the initiatory rites in Shamanism symbolized death. As death was considered to be a passage to another mode of being, so a shaman was required to pass through death before his acquisition of shamanic powers.

From the discussion so far made, it is easily gathered that in human mind there is a firm belief since transhistoric times that death is not annihilation in the sense of emptiness. Rather, death

is taken to be a passage to a higher mode of being. And this belief has become a part of our archaic heritage. Both mythology and human unconscious serve as the store house of this heritage and they have a reciprocal influence upon each other. The existence of this heritage in the unconscious is corroborated also by the dream materials. Therefore, let us enter into the world of dream.

According to Freud (1900) dream is the royal road to the unconscious. In dream death is sometimes represented by a journey of any kind or by some other thing, not by annihilation or any negative image. The journey may be on land, on water and in sky. It may also be through a landscape, or to a distant unknown place. In our everyday language we refer to a dead person by saying "has gone away," "has passed away," "has gone to the heavenly abode," "has gone to the other world", and in similar other expressions. All these expressions imply journey or travel. Bridge, sometimes, in dream stands for both life and death, i.e. it represents transition or change in condition which can be accomplished through death. Bridge also carries the meaning of passage to the beyond, or connection between heaven and earth, which implies death (Eliade, 1974).

Below are noted two dreams dreamt by two young women.

One saw in the dream that she was travelling by train with her father and ailing mother. They got down at an unknown station. It appeared to her that her ailing mother would return from that place rejuvenated.

The second one dreamt that she went to the house of her girl school-mate who committed suicide (reality) several years ago. She saw in the dream the parents of her girl friend and other members of the family in their drawing room. The house appeared to her a different one from the reality with many round shaped labyrinth-like rooms and passages. It seemed to her (in dream) that the family would make a journey to some unknown place and would return very soon altogether along with their dead daughter.

On enquiry and through free association materials it was revealed that in both the dreams journey stood for death. It signified that travel through the passage of death would enable all the persons to start anew. With reference to the labyrinth-like rooms and passages in the second dream it may be noted here that even today in some places in Europe and America children play hopscotch which symbo-

lically means to descend into the netherworld and come back again (Eliade, 1976), Hopscotch is a game the court of which is drawn in labyrinth-like pattern. Similarly, I think, in some of our indigenous, games, such as Ekka-dokka, Hadoo-doo etc., an influence of our archetypal idea of death may be traced. Even in our common talk some significant events are expressed in terms of death, e.g., the events to fall in love, marriage etc.

From the nature of its antiquity, universality, uniformity and symbolic representation in the unconscious as manifested through dreams, the unconscious idea of death itself may be regarded as a part of our archetypal thoughts. In a circuitous way this thought is linked with the mother archetype.* We have seen a little before, that it was a universal belief in the palaeolithic age that men go to Mother Earth through the passage of Death. They used to bury the dead persons in the caves which represented the womb of the Mother Earth. They had the practice of keeping the dead bodies in fetal position. Again, according to Jung (1959) the mother archetype is represented in our dream by the symbol of paradise, under-world, the woods etc., which also sometimes in dream stand for death. Similarly, this idea of death has a vital link with the primordial idea of rebirth, which according to Jung (1959) is also an archetype. Therefore, it may be concluded that the supra-empirical idea regarding death itself becomes one of the archetypes which are found remaining stored in the human unconscious.

* Death has been ascribed as an aspect of Mother in a poem by Swami Vivekananda :

“Come, Mother, Come
For Terror is Thy name,
Death is in Thy breath,
And every shaking step,
Destroys a world for e'er.
Thou “Time”, the Hll-Destroyer
Come, O Mother Come
Who dares misery love
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destructions Dance,
To him the Mother comes.”

In human unconscious there is nothing negative ; no negation is allowed there (Freud, 1915a). Our inherent narcissism does not allow anything in the unconscious which may injure our narcissistic values. Hence in the unconscious death is transformed into something positive. Death is made a path to immortality. As a result there arises a conflict between the two ideas of death—realistic idea and unconscious idea. Here we must keep in mind that psychical reality of the idea of death is no less important than the phenomenon of death in physical reality in determining human thinking and behaviour.

To our realistic mind death is annihilation in the sense of emptiness ; but to our unconscious it is positive something ; it is a path to another mode of being or spiritual immortality. In our mind no idea, conscious or unconscious, works in isolation or independently. One idea gets conglomerated with other ideas and instinctive forces. May be one idea remains dominant at a given time. Conflict of ideas creates ambivalence. Therefore, we accept as well as deny death. Again, in case of idea of death of others, particularly of our enemy, we accept death as a part of natural law. But when the idea of death (in the sense of annihilation) arises of one's own death, or death of beloved ones, the law of nature is thrown to the ground. Our narcissism intervenes, and we deny death. Because of the love-hate attitude towards self and the beloved ones, ambivalent idea of death (i.e., annihilation as well as immortality) crops up centering round the phenomenon of death. From ambivalent attitude towards a dead person, according to Freud (1915), may arise ideas of guilt, sin and castration fear. Thus idea of death is transformed into an idea of fear in some instances. Also there arises an “unambiguous feeling of piety” from it. Hence fantasies of evil as well as good spirits are created. Moreover, the idea of death has an inner link with the ideas of animism, magic and sorcery, omnipotence, castration, intra-uterine existence, and thereby, necessarily, with Oedipus complex. And finally, the idea of death, realistic or unconscious, rouses in man a feeling of uncanny (Freud, 1919). In this way the idea of death has released in man the spirit of enquiry in various ways. Human ambivalence towards the objective world creates complexity both in conscious and unconscious ideas of death. Thus, like Oedipus complex, a death complex is created.

From the stand point of empirico-rationality death is the only

inevitable fact of life remaining hidden in the future. Then what is the use in striving for life? The fight against death is a fight between two severely disproportionate opponents—the disproportion being in the nature of a struggle between a man with nothing as weapon in hand and a group of trained soldiers equipped with up-to-date fire arms. In such a situation an ego may favour suicide, sometimes with stoic attitude, and sometimes with melancholy. Therefore, according to Albert Camus (1986), suicide is the only topic which should get the top most priority in human philosophical thinking. But, fortunately, most men do not commit suicide. As we have said earlier, man's inherent narcissism along with the resultant omnipotence impels him to throw challenge to death, in spite of his empirico-rational idea of death. Man wants to conquer death. He behaves as if death is an accident or a mistaken choice, and if he desires he can avert death. This is so, because the inner unconscious idea of death intervenes. Thus scientific pursuits are led with the motive of a revolt against death. Man arms himself with sciences and arts. The Civilization progresses.

Again, the archetypal idea of death may become active both in healthy and morbid minds, though with different manifestations.

The unconscious idea of death may contribute to the making up of mind of many a prospective suicide. It is seen that some body commits suicide, because he or she wants to meet his or her beloved, who died earlier, as soon as possible, in the other world. Some kill themselves because they want to see how others feel and suffer without them. Again, some want to satisfy their desires for revenge towards others by some spiritual means by shifting their own existence to the world of spirit through the path of death. Even a person with severe sense of guilt and consequent depression sometimes takes this course as an act of atonement for sin. His motive is to get rid of his sinful acts or thoughts through death, which to him is an act of or path for penance. All these show that death does not mean total annihilation in the sense of emptiness to many a person who kill themselves voluntarily. If, to them, death meant total annihilation, then the question of meeting the beloved in the other world, or of observing the effect of absence upon the dear and near ones, or of taking revenge by some spiritual means, or the expiation of sin would not have arisen. When the ego loses its

grounding in reality and becomes weaker, the ideas and fantasies from the conscious come to the fore. In that moment of crisis the archaic idea about death feeds the ego. The person concerned removes himself from this world to the other world and escapes from the ills of his life in the present world.

But, fortunately, with most people the urge to live overcomes the urge to die. Man's unconscious desire is to have an eternal life a nostalgia for immortality. Death is not annihilation to him, it is a passage to immortality. With this belief in mind, and nevertheless his empirical knowledge that his future is doomed to death, man has been challenging his inevitable fate. In all his scientific, philosophical, literary, artistic and religious pursuits man denies death. The medical science rises in revolt against death. Pure science searches for a oneness in which everything might be preserved. Search for eternal truth means the search for immortality. Science fiction imagines to achieve physical immortality. Religion and philosophy speak of spiritual immortality. The most secular philosophy of modern age, the existentialism, describes death as "the hiding place where Being retreats into a mountain stronghold" ('Heidegger': from Eliade's (1976) book). Modern man, in spite of his vanity for being non-religious, non-superstitious and possessing scientific and objective attitudes, does not lag behind in sharing with the primitive man the belief in immortality. Mikhail Gorbachev (1967), a spokesman of a materialistic philosophy and way of living proclaims at the International Forum for Nuclear-Free World for the survival of Humanity: "For centuries men have sought immortality. It is difficult to accept the fact that we are all mortal." According to Albert Camus (1986), belief in immortality is a necessity for joyful living. Freud urges us to view death realistically, but at the same time advises to give more prominence to the unconscious attitude towards it: though it is an illusion, yet it would make our life more tolerable. "To tolerate life remains, after all, the first duty of all living beings. Illusion becomes valueless if it makes this harder for us," says Freud (1975).

Do we not find an assurance, and consequent hope, for a life beyond death, though on a spiritual level, in the poet's message?—

"He who gives away his all
is never vanquished."—Tagore

(Translation—N. C. Chakraborty)

(Nhisese pran ye karibe dan
kshay nai tar kshay nai i—Bengali version in Roman script.)

Again, another poet, Wordsworth, conveys the same note :

"Our birth is but a sleep and a
forgetting :

The soul that rises with us, our life's
star,

Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar :

.....

From God, who is our home."

We have seen through our discussion that narcissism is the soil where grows the idea of immortality. We have nothing to be ashamed of that. The lotus which endeavours for the light of the sun is rooted in the mud deep beneath the water. From the soil of the self-love grows the all-love which strives to encompass the whole universe, "There is nothing higher than identifying the universe with the self," Sankara (in Vivekachudamani). This is the culmination of our narcissism. This is self-love, but this is extended self-love, because in it the self is identified with the universe. Immortality is achieved through this identification. The more there is identification with the universe, the more we realise immortality. By this identification death is conquered ; in this identification with the universe, with the eternal one, there is no death. Therefore, the poet Tagore sings :

"The farther I transport myself with my
whole being into the infinite,
the more I realise that there is
neither sorrow, nor separation,
nor even death."

"But when I turn away from you
and think only of myself, Death
becomes all the more frightful
and sorrows depressing."

(Translation : N. C. Chakraborty).

Tomar asime pranaman laye yeta dure
ami dhai—

Kothao dhukha, koihao mrittu, kothao
bicched nai"

Mrittu se dhare mrittur rup, dhukka
hay he dhukher kep

Toma hate yabe haiye bimukh
apaner pane cai")

(Original Bengali version in Roman script).

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THE IMPACT OF DISTURBED CONJUGAL RELATIONSHIP : A CASE REPORT

BY NILANJANA SANYAL

Family is the primary social unit, the major implications of which to its members are established in terms of 'interpersonal relationships.' The infrastructure of personality of a growing child is very much embedded in the interfamilial relationship patterns. This has been brought into the focus by Freud (1911) and later on re-emphasised by Sullivan (1974). Regarding the negative consequences Flugel (1934) had laid down his concept that lack of parental love and affection result in a lasting injury in the child's mind. The initial family experiences shape his basic behaviour patterns.

From mental health point of view what is felt essential is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, affectionate, close and continuous relationship with the parents, specially with the mother. Such a social affair is expected to pave the way for positive identification with the objects of external world and form the basis of proper object relations for the child. The reverse situation calls forth struggle on the part of the child, where he has to encounter the negative consequences of 'parental deprivation.' Such deprivations may be 'physical' or 'psychological' in nature.

In the perspective of personality development and in the attainment of its integrity, the harmful effects of these deprivations may vary in their degrees. Bowlby's (1964) research in the field has revealed that partial deprivations brings in its current, acute anxiety,

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excessive need for love, powerful feelings of revenge which may ultimately cluster in the feelings of guilt and depression.

Moreover Prugh and Harlow (1962) in agreement with the views of Bakwin (1942) and Glaser and Eisenberg (1956) came forward with the opinion that disruptions and distortions in the parent-child relationship may have a devastating effects upon emotional development as the more gross maternal deprivations. In order to emphasise the psychological parental deprivations, they also spoke about 'masked' or 'covert' deprivation of an almost "complete" nature that is evident in numerous apparently intact families giving rise to clinical pictures in children as equivalent to pathological intensity derived from overt deprivations. In another study Spitz (1951) had corroborated the similar findings.

Phenomenologically, in dealing with the problem of emotional inadequacy of children resulting from 'masked' parental deprivation, Prugh and Harlow (1962) have tried to classify the problems under two broad categories of (a) distorted relatedness, and (b) insufficient relatedness. Both these varieties have focussed that one of the most significant causal factors of parental deprivation is the disturbed interpersonal relations between the two parents. Amid the emotional distance between the spouses the child faces extreme confusion, insecurity, anxiety, poor understandibility, guilt which may give rise to withdrawal or reactive tendencies in later years. The impact of such disturbed relationship between the spouses on the child's personality will be elaborated here in the context of psychoanalytic case materials gathered from a patient.

The patient, Miss 'M' is a Hindu girl, 19 years old. Her main complaints when she came up for psychoanalytical treatment were irritability along with depression, extreme anxiety regarding the results of the just finished under-graduate Examination, occasional headache and palpitation and an obsessional mental attachment to a boy two years junior to her.

Family background

The father of the patient is an Engineer of high position in an establishment and is financially well established. Her mother is also from a rich family who are settled outside West Bengal. Patient's mother is a good looking woman who used to suffer from continuous

ill health owing to asthma. The patient lived in a joint family set up till 4 years of her age, after which the joint family broke up. Her mother was not accepted as a likable personality in the father's family and similarly her father was not liked by the members of her mother's family.

Early life

From her early childhood, the patient was of a Timid character. She always had a feeling of loneliness, even when the parents or the other family members were around her. She was good at her studies and used to sing well. Upto class VI she used to mix with the peers at school happily. She was in a co-education school. While she was in class VI, once she tried to push a boy with her stretched leg to pull him down for fun, the boy got extremely angry and talked rudely to her. Just after that incident she became very serious and never in future tried to make fun with anybody. She had the habit of reading story books and enjoyed her mother's story-telling sessions thoroughly. Her mother was a voracious reader and used to read all types of books. At the age of three years for the first time, she experienced the separation from her mother who left for her father's place owing to a misunderstanding with the father and she was left with her grandmother. According to her, the father was always good to her (the patient) and tried to give her whatever she wanted to have. In her childhood days she was also very much fond of her maternal uncles. She was a quiet type of child and never tried to communicate with anybody on her own. She had a habit of sitting quietly and observing objects of nature for a long span of time. She was always very choosy about her friends and had only two intimate friends. Though she studied in co-education system through out, yet she never liked the company of the boys and always felt more close to the girls. When she came up for psychoanalytical treatment she had an irritable temper which was always followed by depressive spells, she had extreme anxiety regarding the outcome of her last examination. She appeared in one of the examinations of the undergraduate course and was continuing further with her studies.

Analytic Working Out

The patient had undergone 71 sittings. While narrating her life history she mainly concentrated on three features: (a) her feeling of loneliness all through her life: (b) her parents were not in good terms with each other and (c) her tremendous fascination for a younger boy who was the son of a very well known football player of Calcutta.

During her first several sittings, the patient complained about the irritable and erratic nature of her father whom she disliked to a great extent. According to her, the father was always displeased with her mother, who inspite of her other short comings was always at his service. The father always exhibited utter annoyance to her mother's ill-health but never cared for her in that perspective. The patient could recall the incidents of going out on tours with her parents during her childhood, where the mother fell sick and the father got extremely agitated over that. Moreover she found her father always to be highly domineering and shouting type, ultimately the parent developed a cat and dog relationship between themselves. According to the patient the father has an extramarital relationship with another married woman who had a son and whom he used to visit regularly. He had established a condition with his wife that whatever that was required for his family, he would do, but he must maintain the relationship with that lady. Apparently patient's mother seemed to tolerate this. The patient reported to have seen her father in the best moods whenever he had an appointment with the lady. He used to sing by himself, chat nicely with his daughters and brought good food stuff for the family. The patient could also recall her father's selection of toys and play materials, mostly expensive ones, for the lady's son. She always resented her father's attitude and came out with the feeling that she detested her father thoroughly.

Other than this affair, the patient always found her father to be extra cautious and attentive to their maid servant, to whom he was always polite and affectionate. The maid servant was a young girl of 25 years who seemed to be extra-ordinarily demanding of her father. The girl also had good looks. The patient found that when her mother used to get sick, the father promptly got irri-

tated and did not bother about it as long as it was possible for him. But when this maid-servant had an operation, he used to visit her everyday, brought her back from the hospital in his own car, gave her expensive sarees as gifts etc. Even the patient's uncles and aunts visited this maid-servant at the hospital. Besides, off and on when this maid-servant had fever, patient's mother had to look after her, though she never had the power to order or dictate her in household activities. Patient's father also used to express special interest towards other young girls in the locality and sometimes towards her friends.

Inspite of the negative picture the patient pointed about her father; she reported that she had a fascination for him in her childhood days. She experienced her father's warmth whenever the mother was absent from the family. Although she disliked her father's ill temper and negative mode of relationship with her mother, yet in her adolescence she could think of her father to be a very honest man in his service life, who had good habits of not drinking at home or not behaving indecently in front of others. She always felt a tinge of blind support from the father's end, specially when the patient was in odds with her mother. She found her father to be very much dictating who used to decide about every small thing at home, such as, which dress she should buy, when she should buy her pair of shoes, where they should go, what they should eat, why the mother is wearing her sarees etc. He had a habit of imposing his wishes onto others. He was critical about the daughter's appearance and about her academic performances.

Regarding her mother the patient said that she was a very good looking woman who could easily entice people around her. Apparently she bore a tolerant personality and never used to shout at anyone. She had great affections for her (the patient) for whom she used to care a lot. She tried to give maximum attention to her daughter, but due to her ill health and also due to her unhealthy relationship with the husband, she used to drift to other affairs sometimes. Though the patient seemed to perceive the mother to be caring about her, yet in her early and late childhood days she seemed to have extreme negative feelings towards her from time to time. To account for this negative feelings, her memories revealed her early traumatic experiences regarding the mother, whom

she saw on several occasions to be sexually involved with people, either belonging to their family, for example, with her cousin brother or with people from neighbourhood or with the doctors associated with her maternal grandfather's family. On every occasion, she felt terrible anxiety and insecurity as if others were taking away the mother from her and at the same time she had an upsurge of anger which prompted her to talk about the incidents to her father. The father, on hearing these, rebuked the mother like anything, but the mother never scolded or had beaten her for this. Instead she always tried to console the child indirectly, without referring to these incidents. She used to tell stories to her daughter or took her out and tried to make her feel happy and secured. When the patient grew up she could analyse her mother's behaviour and thought that the mother was basically a nice person but owing to her father's sheer negligence towards her she developed these malpractices. The patient tried to rationalise the situation that because her mother was too good looking, she couldn't help but draw other men's attention towards her.

In her childhood she had to pass with concern and anxiety through the critical periods of her mother's illness. She used to pray to God constantly for her mother's life. From her early days she had a tremendous sense of possessiveness regarding her mother. To her the mother was more cultured than her father in every respect.

Along with these pictures of her parents she ventilated her jealousies, insecurities and anxieties. First of all she reported extreme jealousy regarding the incidents when the parents used to go out together leaving her at home with someone. She used to feel insecure till they returned and during their staying out she used to have anxieties that they would meet with an accident. Even in these anxieties she had the fear of losing the mother and was not bothered about the father. When the father used to go out alone, she never felt these anxieties. Moreover, only once in her life she saw her parents lying down side by side when she experienced a high amount of tension and felt as if she was going to have a black out. Though she did not like her father's undue aggressiveness towards her mother, yet when she became a little grown up she seemed to enjoy the rift between them, because in that situation she had an opportunity to have her each parent separately. That

she had deep indignation against her father is expressed in the following dream. In a relevant dream she narrated that they went on a tour—the father brought a maid-servant to help the family—the maid-servant was standing near the father—she was pregnant.

Furthermore, in her association regarding her memories about her parents she expressed that the percepts of bare bodies were utterly unpleasant to her. She commented that she could never tolerate her father's sight when he was without his vest. In the same context she further reported her displeasure about seeing half naked bodies of poor people like labourers or rickshaw pullers, taking bath in roadside taps in their locality. To her these were signs of savage life.

In her latter free associations also while depicting her cravings for someone she loved, she reported the same feeling of ugliness regarding bodily sex. She was of opinion that love and sex were something mental and that can never have physical basis. But with gradual progress in analysis later on she reported a dream that she was changing her dress being totally naked, an aged man with spectacles was watching her through a hole in the window - she ran near her mother.

Regarding the female body also she revealed her distaste. She couldn't like her friends wearing trousers like boys or wearing transparent dresses or sarees. In this context she recalled sending her mother changing her stuff during one of her monthly periods. Later on she could associate her utter dislikings for the sounds of washing clothes, specially by the mother which seemed to her the attempts of cleaning the body dirt from the clothes.

All her life she was doubtful about the conjugal bonds between her parents. She used to have frequent dreams about watching a second marriage where the bride seemed to resemble her mother. She was also extremely superstitious. To overcome her tensions being aroused from parental fightings which resulted in headache in her case, she used to believe in the efficacy of lucky dresses, lucky sights etc. Moreover to get rid of these tensions in an infantile way she was attracted towards witchcrafts. She had an unrealistic feeling that if she could arrange for all the materials like tiger's nail, cat's blood etc. which are required for practicing witchcraft she could control her parents, specially the father and

could move them in her desired ways. Moreover she had extreme anxieties regarding her academic performance. She always feared that it would not be upto the expectation of the father who would constantly nag her about it and would make her life miserable. Hence she had leanings towards superstitions once more. Her over-punctuality and over sensitivity in respect of cowdung and other dirt on the street revealed her obsessive trends in the personality. Her rigid super ego as indicated by her strong dislikings towards lying was also connected with these features of her personality.

The patient in her adolescence developed soft emotions towards a boy of her locality. This boy though never spoke to her, came to know about her likings towards him through other friends. He used to look at her sometimes which flared her imaginations about him. She used to fantasise a lot about him. In reality he was a son of a very well known football player whom the patient admired a lot. His fame drew her towards them. Sometimes she used to have fantasies about the boy's father also, but she could not bear any thought regarding the existence of the boy's mother. In her fantasy she used to enjoy the boy's company, but in real life whenever she came across him, she had a feeling of terror inside her, she had higher rate of palpitations, she used to sweat profusely and felt like running away from his sight. She also mentioned that sometimes after seeing him from a close proximity, she started having her periods. On the other hand, she used to feel insecure about him all the time and almost had an obsessional wish to have him as her husband. Later on the boy got admitted to her college, where if she could see any girl talking to him, immediately she had the fear of losing him for ever and felt like crying openly. Once she had seen a beautiful girl of their college passing by the lane of the boy's residence, she had fit of tension and felt utterly helpless. On the other hand she reported her jealousies also about this boy. The first cause of jealousy was having such a well known father, and then their earthly possessions like money, important awards the father received, their own house and even their newly painted car. She used to ask her friends to introduce her to the boy, but till the end of her analytical sessions her wish remained unfulfilled.

Discussion

The patient from her very early age could feel that her parents were not in good terms with each other. She used to feel insecure at their quarrelsome and negative attitudes to each other. Moreover the father used to spend most of his time in his occupational engagements and also was involved with a lady and her family. This created a gap between the patient and the father. The mother also displayed a 'masked' presence to her; though she used to look after her in daily course of activities, yet never bothered to know what the patient wanted to have. She also used to remain engaged in her emotional affairs from time to time, during which she exhibited her indifference towards the sentiments of her child. Besides owing to misunderstandings with her husband, she sometimes used to leave the house and go to her father's place. Such incidents evoked insecurity feeling in the patient. Both the parents tried to compensate their mental absence from the patient by providing her as much physical comforts as it was practicable in terms of good food, good clothing, best schooling and college studies together with lots and lots of fanciful objects of their choice. They never knew what she was craving for, rather tried to impose their likes and choices on her. The situation in respect of the present case may be designated following Prugh and Harlow (1962), as 'masked deprivation'. That is, to the child, though the parents were physically present, yet their presence were 'masked' with psychological absence. Hence, the child had to undergo the experience of deprivation. As a result the formative period of the ego structure of the patient had to pass through a disturbed state. The ego became weak,

In the similar perspective, the patient suffered from lack of identification and poor object relation because of her inability to identify with the parents owing to the negative models presented by them. As a result she always used to feel lonely, irritable, deprived and anxious over trifle things. She had extreme anxiety regarding her academic performances. This was an indication of her lack of self confidence and also a fear of being rejected further by the parents. She could never make good friends, had distorted self-image (she used to consider herself as ugly) and always had the apprehension that everybody would reject her as she was not the possessor of good

qualities. These attitudes had prompted her to withdraw from other people and to get more involved with studies and outside books. Her extreme cautiousness regarding punctuality to return home or to come to the analyst was also a sign of insecurity to be rejected by the parents. There was another angle to have this urge of coming back home quickly and in time and that was to find whether everything was alright at home, that is, the parents were not fighting or the mother was not involved with anybody. She was very much apprehensive of her parents' behaviour.

At this juncture a few instances of transference from her analytical sessions seem to be worth mentioning. In a number of sessions her free association revealed her strong jealousies towards the other patients of the analyst who attended analytical sessions prior to her session or after the session. On seeing them she felt shared regarding the analyst and demanded more of her time. Moreover her associations brought out her likings for the physical features of her analyst which she did not like in others, but in case of her analyst which she thought were the marks of confidence of a reliable and dependable personality who can provide security to people, specially to her. Furthermore in a latter session she reported a dream where she dreamt that she was falling down somewhere, but had been helped by someone. Her free associations on this dream exposed her newly achieved feelings that people are there to help her—specially she felt secured near her analyst whom she conceived as a very helpful person.

As the history of her childhood days have revealed that she did not have a balanced and stable home, it was found that she could not interact with outside people or peers properly. The apprehending tendencies in her was the reflection of poor object relation and reality assessment. She could never have a stable parental figure and feared that she would lose them, specially the mother. The mother figure was also not very protective in the sense that she used to indulge in extramarital sex affairs which the blooming mind of the patient could not tolerate. She developed inferiority complex along with distorted self-image from this. She thought she was ugly and that is why nobody, even her parents were not that affectionate to her and they catered to other peoples' wishes. She had an extreme craving for others' attention and love.

Though the patient seemed to have partial identification with the mother, yet that was also not free of conflicts and complexes. She felt extreme jealousy about her mother's look and her power of drawing people, particularly the men towards her. Here she suffered directly from oedipus complex which she couldn't dissolve through positive identification with the mother. Her disproportionate jealousy was extended to other spheres also where she couldn't tolerate her lively girl friends among other boys, or she couldn't bear the significance of her desired companion's (that boy of her choice) fate of being the son of a well known man. She was also jealous about the boy whose mother was the mistress to her father and to whom her father used to give many valuable gifts. Her inability to share anything with anybody was also the resultant effect of poor object relation and insecurity to lose her own standing.

One of the reasons for the craving for the boy was to get his father. Her fantasies regarding the father of the boy directly depicted her wish to have a consistent affectionate father with whom she might feel secured. The fantasies regarding the father of the boy indicate her unresolved oedipal wishes. In this connection her dreams of self exposure which I have mentioned earlier, may be taken into consideration. In the dream an aged person was looking at her. This is also a mark of her oedipal wishes. Her reactions like having headaches after witnessing parental confrontations or having palpitation after seeing the boy can be interpreted as signs of anxiety which seemed to be a constant feature of her mind.

Thus on the whole the present case study has revealed the negative impacts of disturbed interpersonal relations between the parents. Owing to the lack of exposure of a happy parental relationship, the patient always suffered from distorted ego development that had prompted her poor object relations. The world seemed to her mostly hostile and she frequently encountered fits of apprehension and insecurity in the flow of her life. Moreover due to absence of ideal conjugal parental image, she could not develop either of masculine or feminine identification.

The patient could not have a balanced and healthy parental model for identification which is very much required for the development of a healthy super-ego. So she developed a harsh and rigid super-ego which is evident in her behavioural orientations, for

example, in her attitude to be extremely punctual, conservative in manners and dresses, rigid about her choices and decisions etc. That the lack of healthy and balanced parental model made the patients' ego weak and feeble is evident from the fact that she in her daily life depended upon lucky dress, lucky sights, witchcraft and such other things for her safety and security. She could not depend upon her own sense of reality and judgement. Such dependence on magic is a sign of her weak ego.

Hence the present discussion indicates that in a family environment, parents serve as a model to the child. Initially the child tries to imitate their behaviour patterns and tries to follow the norm set by them. Thereby parental identification becomes the primary mechanism of object relation. As parental identification refers to the internalisation of personality characteristics of one's own parents, the positive emotional relation between the spouses help the child in such identification while the reverse vitiates the whole mechanism. The social state of reciprocal relationships between the parents is expected to create the 'emotional climate' in the family set up which would exert more beneficial effects for healthy emotional development and better personality integrity. The unhealthy relationship between the spouses contributes in a major way to the factor of parental deprivation which causes distorted ego development of a child. In this context the question of parental counselling may be raised—whether it is tenable or not in psychoanalysis? If tenable, in which cases and how that should be decided?

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