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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF AGGRESSION*

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[We were hoping to receive the last page along with a list of References of this paper from Prof. S. K. Mitra when then the shocking news of his sudden death on 14th June, 1993, reached us. However, since the paper is almost complete and full of significant materials, it is being published posthumously.— editor]

Aggression is commonly observed in animals and human beings, in individual as well as well as in group behaviour, it has been of interest to thinkers and social reformers since the dawn of civilization. They were primarily interested in the control of aggression from the point of view of philosophy ethics or religion. A scientific approach to the understanding and control of aggression is of recent origin. We shall concern ourselves here with one of the approaches viz. that of social psychology and we shall focus on the aggressive behaviour in groups.

Defintion of Group Aggression

Although the interest in social control of aggression is very old indeed, we do not yet have a satisfactory definition of aggression. Aggression, in common parlance, means physical assault or injury to organisms, destruction of property and other valued objects, forcible occupation of others's land etc. There are socially disapproved

* Modified version of a paper presented at an Expert Meeting on the implications of recent scientific research on the understanding of aggressiveness held at Unesco Headquarters ; Paris May 19-23, 1970

acts on which is focussed the ordinary use of the words 'aggression'. Biologically and psychologically, however, aggression covers a wider spectrum of behaviour.

Biologically, activity is necessary for the survival of the organism. Thus, hunger drives an animal to increased level of activity which subsides when the animal has got its food to eat. Psychologically, one finds that there are some men who manifest a high drive level most of the time and also that there are times when most men manifest high drive level. The question is whether to accept any high magnitude response as a manifestation of aggression. Readiness, speed and intensity of response cannot be the criterion of aggression. Thus, if in shaking hands, one individual puts forward his hand first and shakes the hand of the other individual vigorously, he may be regarded as more aggressive than the other, if readiness, speed and intensity of response be the criterion. Similarly, it is questionable whether an animal which becomes more active when driven by hunger or sex should be considered as more aggressive.

Dollard considers an act to be aggressive when the goal response is injury to an organism or its surrogate. This confines aggression to a much narrower spectrum of behaviour identified as aggressive. Buss defines aggression as "a response that delivers noxious stimuli to another organism". This is too wide a definition, as it makes any act, which is unpleasant to another, aggressive.

It seems that aggression is identified by hurt feelings and feelings of insult, injury and loss on the part of one who is aggressed upon. Any act is aggressive to the extent that it leads to such feelings on the person, who suffers, in the hands of another, who is the agent. Whether the suffering was intentional or unintentional on the part of the aggressor is not important. But suffering can be purely subjective, as in the case of the mental patient with delusions of persecution. One cannot, therefore, depend solely on hurt feelings as indicator of aggression. In that case, shaming as a technique of child training in many cultures may be considered to be aggressive. Much of animal behaviour, on the other hand, which normally is considered aggressive will not be regarded as such, as we do not know whether there are any 'hurt feelings' psychologically

however, an act of aggression can be identified by the intention of the agent and the consequence of the act to the recipient. This relativity of aggression to the social context of the act and the personal and social significance of the act seems to be something which we cannot avoid at the existing state of our knowledge of aggressive behaviour. Otherwise aggressive behaviour will be practically identical with criminal behaviour. But we know that in any society there are many acts which are not criminal but nonetheless aggressive.

A group is "a social unit (i) which consists of a number of individuals who, at a given time, stand in more or less definite interdependent status and role relationship to one another, and which explicitly or implicitly possesses a set of values or norms regulating the behaviour of individual members, at least in matters of consequence to the group". This definition of the human group from Sherif and Sherif highlights the essential characteristics viz. that a group of individuals is not a mere collocation, it has a differentiated structure and that individual behaviour is regulated by group norms.

Group aggression should be distinguished from group conflict. Loomis defines conflict as "that social action in which an actor or actors attempts, in the face of human opposition, to achieve one or more goals". Thus, conflict refers to the striving part of the activity of a group in relation to a goal, the path to which is blocked by another group. Aggression may be used by a group in conflict in order to reach its goal. Aggression in such cases is instrumental act. It is not necessary, however, as the goal can be reached by mediation, negotiation, reconciliation and such other means.

War is an extreme form of group aggression and is excluded from discussion here.

The phenomena of group aggression

There are various kinds of aggressive behaviour which may be classified as (i) verbal and (ii) physical. Much of verbal aggression is socially approved whereas physical aggression is largely

disapproved. Thus, there is organised opposition in the parliaments of many nations; there are lobbies of pressure groups and interest groups. Short of filthy language, all other verbal communication aimed at hurting the other party is socially approved.

In the matter of physical aggression, there is a difference between social approval and social tolerance. Many acts, like beating are socially disapproved but tolerated in the interests of education. The crimes are neither tolerated nor approved, though the definition of crime itself has cultural variations.

There is no clear cut pattern of group aggression. One recent study failed to find a clear pattern, in spite of the highly sophisticated techniques used in the study. Some features, however, can be broadly distinguished. First, there is a reason for aggression. The reason may be real or perceived. Sometimes the reason as perceived by a group coincides with reality, but sometimes it does not. The reason for violence is usually in terms of extremes like threatened annihilation of the group, threatened loss of the value for which the group stands, blockage of all other pathways to the group goal, etc. All this may or may not be real. In those cases where it is perceptual, much depends on the level of intra-group aggression. The studies on group cohesiveness and the role of the leader seem to indicate that with a cohesive group and a democratic leader, the autochthonous perception of threat or blocking of path has a low probability of occurrence. But when group cohesion is in danger, as when the level of intragroup hostility increases, one of the ways in which cohesion may increase is through channelisation of the mounting hostility from within the group to an out-group which, then, becomes a scapegoat. Much of political group aggression is of this kind and leaders may play a significant part in this.

There are, however, real threats. In the process of development, societies in the east and the west find themselves threatened by man-made environment, whether it is industrial waste, accumulation of wealth in few hands, or nuclear devices. Modernisation has come to refer only to the Asian and African societies. But even an affluent society, like the U.S.A., faces the challenge of modernisation in a different sense, posed by its own technological revolution

and the drugs. Some of the basic value premises of the American culture are being questioned, as much as in some of the Asian countries, which are far from the computer technology but have been near the drugs for centuries. Urbanisation and industrialisation in traditional societies based on fold-culture and agriculture have created value conflicts, which in the Asian situation seem to have the fore bodings of a Greek tragedy, as Myrdal describes it.

The protest behaviour of students has drawn the attention of thinkers all over the world. Cutting across national boundaries a pattern of student aggression has swept through the universities. It has puzzled educators, parents and the community. One tries to understand why in affluent societies, like those of the U.S.A. in the west and of Japan in the east, the students should riot in the university campuses, break furniture and window panes, turn books, confine the teachers and even take possession of the halls. Aggressive behaviour like this is different from the race riots in the U.S.A. and the communal and language riots in India. Student aggression is described as protest behaviour because of the meaning of such acts as the students indulge in. Similarly, one should also describe language, religious or race riots as a form of protest behaviour, for those who indulge in such acts are protesting against some injustice, some value which goes counter to theirs, some loss of dignity or some such grievance or threat, imagined or real.

Behind the perceptual reason for violence lies a 'readiness'. A concept of 'threshold' is necessary to understand why some groups perceive threats readily whereas some others do not. The threshold tends to be low in those cases, where the response has been evoked previously. The nearer in time it is to the previous arousal, the greater the chances of its being aroused again. Like Skinner's pigeons, the group members are conditioned to respond to certain stimuli as threatening, by mere repetition.

A group has a goal towards which its activities are normally directed. If somehow the path to the goal is blocked, the situation is one of frustration. There are various responses to frustration, of which aggression is one. What happens presumably in a frustrating situation is that the probability of an aggressive act is

increased by the previous history of repetition of the act. If a group aggresses once, it is likely to aggress again. In the occurrence of the first act of aggression, however, there are many factors among which the channelisation of intragroup hostility to out-group is an important one. In eliciting the aggressive act the group leader today is favoured by the conditions of modern living where individuals accumulate frustration, basically from a lack of, what Maslow calls, 'self-actualization'.

What kind of aggressive act will follow an arousal or instigation depends on the pay-off functions of the various alternatives. There are various momentary factors which may tip off the scale in favour of one alternative rather than another. There are many unknowns in this and it needs systematic research.

Once the aggressive act is done, there are various ways in which it is justified, depending on history, culture, the contemporary administrative situation, the future programme of action, etc. Thus, some groups look for ideological support of violence against other groups. Political in-fighting takes this colour more often than aggression in other areas. In the case of students, for example it may not be an ideological justification of violence. Violence may be justified on grounds of inertia of a bureaucratic administration, injustice which is perceived as terrible and brooks no delay, and such other reasons. Political extremists may use ideology. In race riots, for example, violence may be justified by a militant minority group on the grounds of the leviathan of the State being too heavy to move otherwise.

Theory and research

In the last decade some significant attempts have been made in developing theories of aggression based on the empirical evidence of research. Freud had in his earlier writings thought of aggression as instinctive. He called it a manifestation of 'death instinct' in his later writings. Lorenz has made detailed and pain-striking observation of the aggressive behaviour of animals in natural settings. He too, like Freud, regards aggressive behaviour as instinctive. The universality of aggression in the animal species and its obvious survival value argue strongly in favour of an innate determinant of

aggression. Perhaps innate patterns of aggression exist, but are modifiable, as later research seems to show. In human beings, it seems that social learning affects extensively such innate patterns of behaviour, although such innate tendencies may play crucial roles in influencing socially learned behaviour.

In 1939, a group of psychologists at Yale University, Doller, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears, formulated, what has come to be known as the frustration-aggression hypothesis. It makes aggression contingent upon frustration. There is, however, no one-to-one and direct relationship between frustration and aggression. Frustration increases motivational level through the addition of conflict produced, frustration-produced or 'irrelevant' drives. Because such drives are often reduced by aggressive behaviour, the aggressive behaviour itself takes on the characteristics of a secondary reinforcer. Aggression, thus, becomes a secondary or acquired drive. It is not an innate response to frustration. The contingencies of reinforcement of alternative behaviours in a situation of frustration determine whether aggression will be linked with frustration.

That aggressive behaviour may be learned by an animal by reinforcement of aggressive behaviour itself has been demonstrated by the Harvard psychologist, Skinner. In his impressive experiments on operant conditioning of pigeons in his laboratory, Skinner taught pigeons to emit aggressive behaviour in response to specific stimuli which are otherwise innocuous.

Recently Bandura and Walters have presented a modelling theory of aggressive behaviour. Their research seems to suggest a relationship between aggressive behaviour and prior observation of aggressive behaviour of social models. As in the case of the relationship between frustration and aggression, it depends on the contingencies of reinforcement of the aggressive behaviour of the social models observed. Thus, the probability of the observer's aggressive behaviour increases, if the observed aggressive behaviour of the social model is rewarded or goes unpunished.

Major theoretical statements and reviews of aggression have been published by Bandura and Walters, Becker, Berkowitz, Buss,

Feshbach and Lorenz. The work of Sears, Whiting and Child relates the learning of aggressive behaviour human beings with patterns of childrearing. Research evidence points to two child-rearing as important for aggressive behaviour in later life. These two dimensions are (i) love-oriented vs power-assertive and (ii) restrictive vs. permissive. Love-oriented techniques include positive methods, e.g., praise and reasoning, and negative methods, e.g., showing disappointment with the child and withdrawing of love. Power-assertive techniques of child-rearing include physical punishment. It has been found that power-assertive techniques have a higher correlation with aggressive behaviour in certain ages. Restrictiveness results generally in more inhibited behaviours.

Results of experiments with punishment for aggression are not all clear-cut; but generally punishment is found to inhibit aggression. There appears to be an inverse relationship between the amount of aggression and the amount of punishment anticipated. Simply punishing aggression is generally a poor technique, because the inhibition of aggression remains only as long as the punishing contingencies are in force. Besides, punishment is not always strong enough to inhibit aggression, which may be generalized and displaced.

Historically, the the research on aggressive behaviour was stimulated by the shocking of the Second world war and its aftermath. The Unesco sponsored in many countries research on social tensions. The stimulation provided by the Unesco project on social tensions led to considerable research in the social psychology of opinions, prejudice, conflict resolution, etc. A decade after the Unesco project was started, very able reviews of the research were made by Jessie Bernard and T.H. Pear. As against the impressive number of studies reported by Bernard, Pear, Klineberg and Williams on group tensions, conflict and aggression covering the fifties, the sixties did not produce as much research on group aggression in social psychological terms. On the other hand, other social sciences like political science and government, sociology and history were attracted to the problem of group aggression in the sixties. It seems that Bernard's critique of the theory of social tensions acted as a brake in social psychology. One does

not find any discussion of group aggression in standard works of reference in psychology and education, like the *Hand book of Social Psychology*, *Group Dynamics* and *Hand book of Research on Teaching*.

According to Bernard, the concept of tension is vague, when it is applied to the group. Tensions are in individuals and whether motivation can explain group behaviour is questionable. The synchronous arousal of tension in the individuals of a group does not amount to group tension, but group suggestion. As a sociologist, Bernard believes that tension is not related to conflict rather than arouse it, and what is worse, the concept of tension de-emphasises real threat. Tensions theory is more appropriate for face-to-face group situations, but has little value in generating research on group aggression when the groups are caste, race, class, etc. Instead of considering aggression as an irrational drive, following the initial formulation of Freud, Bernard would rather like to believe that aggression follows the logic of the theory of games. Aggressive behaviour is an attempt to optimise some gain, real or imaginary.

In the sixties, social psychologists and educators seem to have been influenced by the technological revolution introduced by the computers. Mathematical model-building, systems theory, information theory, decision-making, etc. have received much attention. Following Klineberg's work on stereotypes and national character, there has been a loss of interest in this area, because, as Klineberg showed, these are dead-ends. The *Authoritarian Personality* produced a very large volume of research leading to major modifications in the methodology of opinion-attitude and personality studies. Neither this type of personality oriented studies nor the type of leadership studies originally conducted by Kurt Lewin have led to any understanding of group aggression.

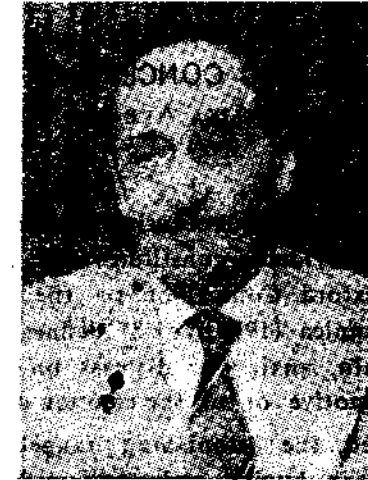
Small group research has progressed a great deal since the introduction of interaction process analysis by Bales. But, as Bernard rightly points out, such research on face-to-face interactional situations hardly contribute to our understanding of group aggression in industry, education, government and community life.

Some considerations for further research

We are passing through a crisis in human civilization. When man can go to the moon and can come back safe, even if his space craft is damaged, one wonders why we cannot transfer our mastery of natural forces to social and psychological forces. Is it in human nature that man must kill man or that man must die for man? Freud had postulated a death instinct. Others, like Pear, do not share in Freud's pessimistic view of man and society. Ethologists, like Lorenz, who have studied animal aggression, and regard it as instinctive, do not share in the same pessimism, although their studies warn us against too much optimism. Leaving aside the speculative concept of death instinct of Freud, he said something very significant about human relations. This is his concept of ambivalence. Modernisation has created further problem in this regard. If ambivalence is the normal component of all human relationships and, therefore, if every human group is internally subversive, modern urban life through its anonymity isolation, anomie and loneliness makes the individual internally explosive. Erikson sees ideological experimentation as a part of adolescent growth and ethical consolidation as an adult task. But it is in such matters that modern life has little to offer. Instead of making individual *feel* responsible for his acts, the entire fabric of urban society, and particularly, of organised work situations, is based on impersonal and formal relationships, geared to efficiency, almost like a computer. Having created the machine, man seems to be imitating his creation. But adaptation to this new type of human relationship has yet to succeed. Psychopathological behaviour in our cities seems to be on the increase. Intimacy in human relationship is becoming something available only to the lucky few, like real diamonds :

Freud had distinguished two aspects of normality, viz, the capacity to work and to love. Since his time, much work has been done on the capacity to love, from Havelock Ellis to Kinsey. But very little has been done on the capacity to work. Most adults spend three-fourths of their life-time in working and in coping with problems arising in and out of work situations. Much of group

aggression seems to be related directly or indirectly to such situations. Much of frustration today is in work, particularly in developing societies. It is, therefore, in this area that research.....



Prof. Shib Kumar Mitra, a past president of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society passed away suddenly at his residence in New Delhi on 14 June, 1993.

Prof. Mitra has had a brilliant academic career and held many important public positions. He was the Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training, Director, B. M. Institute, Ahmedabad, Head of Psychometric Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Professor and Head of the Department of Psychology, Calcutta University, Director of Research, Council for Social Development, New Delhi, and President, Indian Psychological Association, among many others.

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THE PSYCHOANALYTIC CONCEPT OF AGGRESSION

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Behaviour directed towards causing physical or psychological harm to another individual constitutes the core of aggression, according to the Oxford Companion to the Mind (1987). The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1979, Vol 8) defines aggression as "an action that inflicts pain, anxiety or distress on another, and in the service of a hostile motive or of the emotion of anger."

However defined, the astonishing range and diversity of aggressive behaviour in human and non-human species has been the subject of scrutiny by thinkers in as many diverse fields. There has been neither consensus nor unanimity of opinion on what lies at the root of aggressive behaviour. Aggression has been variously classified: on the basis of the age and social milieu of the aggressor; the motivation specific to the context; the kind of violence committed; the hormonal condition of the aggressor, and so on. While some researchers have regarded aggression as dependent solely on emotional factors, others have demonstrated in animal experiments that aggression can be caused by pain or fear. With the realisation that pinpointing any one factor as the cause of aggression is far too simplistic, modern research takes into account a variety of factors "internal and external to individual, past and contemporaneous, that affect the incidence of aggression."

The word aggression implies hostility, evil intent; in the mind's eye the aggressor is bad, attacking his victim for personal gain. The aggressor arouses our dislike and contempt, the

aggressed our sympathy and fellow-feeling. For this reason, from the time mankind evolved, aggression has been consistently sought to be denied, hidden, disregarded, rationalised, overcome. All religions decry aggression, preach the value of peace and pacifism. Yet, more wars have been fought in the name of religion than for any other reason. Most human beings profess to follow one religion or another, yet the incidence of aggressive behaviour has not decreased. The increasing military build-up in so-called civilised countries, the pressure on poorer nations to follow suit and the ever-present danger of nuclear warfare are evidence that while we talk of love and peace, it is the aggressive drive that is dominant and continues to rule our lives.

The singular contribution of psychoanalysis is that it was the first science to conceptualise aggression as an intrinsic part of our psychic part of our psychic structure and hence something to be accepted and not run away from. While other theorists tended to look on aggression as an aberration and sought ways of combating it in check, Sigmund Freud firmly included aggressive behaviour within Freud the psychosexual framework of the human being.

Freud continuously modified his views on the aggressive or destructive instinct. In his first theoretical formulation, ("Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," SE 7, 1905), aggressive impulses were considered as derivatives of a drive for sexual mastery, a view which remained unchanged for a decade. While tracing the roots of sadism, Freud held that the sexuality of most males contained an element of aggressiveness, a desire to subjugate. He traced the biological significance of this to a need to overcome the resistance of the sexual object by means other than wooing." Thus, sadism corresponds, he said, "to an aggressive component of the sexual instinct which has become independent and exaggerated and, by displacement, has usurped the leading position."

Nevertheless, in 1909 he wrote, "I cannot bring myself to assume the existence of a special aggressive instinct alongside of self-preservation and of sex, and on an equal footing with them" (SE 10) In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (SE 14, 1915), he traced the origin of instincts to sources of stimulation within the

organism which appear as a constant force and from which there is no escape. One of the four vicissitudes of sexual instincts as described by Freud is reversal into its opposite, as when love is transformed into hate. He assumed that the drive for mastery was, in conjunction with other drives, serving self-preservation, part of the self-preservative instinct.

It was only in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" SE 18 1920, that he posited the death instinct, which allowed for the emergence of a truly independent aggressive instinct. In order to give Eros the status of a true instinct by ascribing to it a conservative nature, Freud wrote (The Ego and the Id", 1923) that the task of the death instinct is to lead organic life back to an inanimate state, and that Eros, by bringing about a more and more far-reaching combination of the particulars into which living substance is dispersed, aims at complicating life and at the same time, of course, at preserving it. Acting in this way, both the instincts would be conservative in the strictest sense of the word, since both would be endeavouring to reestablish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life. The emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of the striving towards death, and life itself would be a conflict and compromise between these two trends."

And in "Outline of Psychoanalysis" (SE 23, posthumously published in 1940), Freud's conceptualisation of aggression was complete. He posited two basic instincts—Eros (love) and the destructive (death) instinct—as constantly operating in every living creature. He said, "The aim of the first is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them thus—to bind together; the aim of the second is to undo connections and so destroy things—the final aim is to lead what's living into inorganic state." Freud held that these instincts could replace one another, work against each other or combine with each other or even change their aim (through displacement). The outward diversion of the death instinct as a destructive one manifests itself as aggression, both against others. Freud held that this diversion was essential for the preservation of the individuals.

For Freud, "the dominating tendency of mental life, and perhaps of nervous life in general, is the effort to reduce, to keep constant, or to remove internal tension due to stimuli (the nirvana principle)—a tendency which finds expression in the pleasure principle; and our recognition of that fact is one of our strongest reasons for believing in the death instinct" (Beyond the Pleasure Principle, SE 18). He envisaged life as basically "a conflict and compromise" between the life and death instincts: while Eros strives to combine and preserve with love, the death instinct leads organic life back to an inanimate state. Freud described both these instincts as conservative since both establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergency of life" ("The Two Classes of Instincts," SE 19). The concept of the need to accommodate Freud's new conviction of the power of human aggression and, second, by the need to stick to the dualistic concept of instincts. As Freud said, "Only by concurrent or mutually opposing action of the two primal-instincts Eros and death instinct—never by one or other alone can we explain the rich multiplicity of the phenomena of life ..." ("Analysis Terminable and Interminable," SE 23).

In the above work, Freud also introduced the concept of the element of "free aggressiveness." He implied that aggression, the tendency to conflict, was floating, ready to attach itself to any instinct whenever it chose to do so, irrespective of the quantity of libido available to it. This concept of free-floating aggression came in handy to account for the bipolarity in object-relations, for the coexistence of love and hate for one and the same object, among other mental phenomena.

What Freud also showed clearly was the part played by aggression in the genesis of certain mental illnesses:

Obsessional neurosis: What was initially held to be "transferred self-reproaches" for childhood sexual pleasures, was, with the introduction of the concept of narcissism, conceived of as fear of the ego ideal or superego. The powerful urge to aggress on the parents is transformed into a fear of their aggression, represented internally by the superego. Thus, the fear of touching, so characteristic of this neurosis, was seen to be the

projection of unconscious hostile wishes ("Totem and Taboo," SE 13). The large quantum of aggression and the corresponding fear of a punishing superego create this peculiar situation in which aggressive thoughts constantly prevail but with no corresponding affect, thus bypassing punishment.

Phobias: The child's ambivalent feelings towards the loved object, usually the father in the case of the male child, results in the repression of both hostile and tender loving impulses and instead arouses fear for an object quite unconnected with the original object of both love and hate. The hostile impulse when repressed changes into the opposite—the father becomes the aggressor/castrator. It is the fear of impending castration which makes the child give up his own aggressive desires and instead fear an object from whom/which he can protect himself and thus ward off castration.

Melancholia: Freud showed in "Mourning and Melancholia" (SE 14) how, in melancholic states, the object that has apparently been abandoned is soon reinstated in the subject's ego where it becomes the victim of sadistic assaults. The melancholic attacks not only himself but also what he has introjected into the self. Aggression is directed inwards where, entrenched in the superego, it attacks the ego for every misdemeanour. Karl Abraham held that the melancholic, because of his ambivalence, cannot reinstate the lost loved person. A depressive has internalised his unconscious hatred for his loved objects and is then persecuted by them cruelly from within. The fear that he has destroyed with his hate the objects who he also loves and the subsequent despair account for the occurrence of depression. The fear of death, a common occurrence in melancholia, means that the ego gives itself up because it feels itself hated and persecuted by the superego instead of being loved.

The insidious links that aggression has with sexual perversions were also highlighted by Freud. Thus:

Persecutory paranoia: The subject's strong homosexual attachment is internally resisted and transforms itself into a state in which the desired object becomes the persecutor towards whom the subject is very aggressive.

Masochism/sadism: It is a classic example of the fusion of the two instincts: Eros and aggressiveness. When the aggressive instinct is diverted to external objects, a portion of it attaches itself to the sexual instinct and the sadist can get sexual pleasure only when he hurts his loved object. The portion of the destructive instinct which remains inside and links up libidinally with the sexual instinct gives rise to the masochistic element—when the subject seems driven to self-destruction and constantly seeks situations in which he can be passive and fulfil his feminine desires. The moral masochist, according to Freud, seeks suffering and punishment even to the point of destroying himself because he has not met the demands of his superego. The superego of the masochist is necessarily harsh and compounded by the subject's own aggressiveness. The unconscious need for punishment again fulfils the masochistic wish to suffer and occurs when aggression is internalised and taken over by the superego ("New Introductory Lectures", SE 22, Lecture 32).

Freud said, "The total picture made up of the phenomena of masochism, negative therapeutic reaction and sense of guilt in so many neurotics, shows that mental events are not exclusively governed by the desire for pleasure. These phenomena are unmistakable indications of the presence of the instinct of aggression or of destruction according to its aim and which we trace back to the original death instinct of living matter" ("Analysis Terminable and Interminable," SE 23). Freud traced the need to be ill or to suffer to two sources: a) the unconscious sense of guilt arising out of an especially harsh and cruel superego and b) when the self-preservative instinct is actually reversed and the only aim is to injure and destroy one self. "Excessive quantities of the destructive instinct are directed inwards" making the need to suffer strong enough to demolish any desire to get well.

Homosexuality: Freud traced the roots of this perversion to hostile, jealous impulses against rivals (usually the brothers) for the mother's love. The subject's own powerlessness makes him repress his aggressive impulses and the hated object is transformed into the first homosexual love object ("Group Psychology, SE 18). The subject identifies with the mother in order to please the father and thus ward off his hostility.

Erich Fromm has drawn our attention to the *necrophilic character* who is passionately attracted to all that is dead and decayed, who destroys for the sake of destruction. He held that the roots of necrophilia lay in malignant incestuousness, a pathological phenomenon that occurs when certain conditions inhibit the development of benign incestuous bonds.

Freud was able to conceptualise various manifestations of aggression within analysis and outside. Thus, a *negative attitude* to work or studies or to people implies a certain stubborn wish to spoil things, which can ultimately be traced to the destructive instinct. Similarly, the *negative transference* in analysis, while a good indicator of the quantum of aggression which can then be worked through, can link up with other resistances and work to destroy not just the good that may have been achieved but of ten the treatment as well. Within psychoanalysis, the prevalence of negative therapeutic reaction in patients, when they would rather stay ill than recover, can again be traced to the masochistic need to suffer and to internalise aggression.

The myriad expressions of resistance from the beginning to the very end of psychoanalytic treatment has slowly brought about the perception of therapeutic psychoanalysis as primarily the analysis of resistances. The realisation that it is our destructive instinct that we resist far more than our erotic desire has made the thorough analysis of aggressiveness the focal point of any successful analysis.

Success, as Freud showed in "Those Wrecked by Success," can be as much a cause of illness as failure. He traced the forces of conscience and sense of guilt to the Oedipus Complex, to the child's relationship with his father and mother. His love for one parent can arouse hostility for the other. This creates feelings of guilt which can be assuaged only with punishment, in this case a refusal to acknowledge or accept success.

The significance that Freud attached to the concept of aggression was reiterated by psychoanalysts who came after him. The most important of these was Melanie Klein who especially emphasised the part played by destructive impulses in the constant interaction of love and hate. She and the school of psychoanalytic

thought she founded—held that only when the aggression was heeded and accepted would the love feelings develop "in connection with the aggressive impulses and in spite of them" ("Love, Guilt and Reparation").

With the mother—specifically, the mother's breast—as the first object of love and desire and the first source of gratification and sexual pleasure, Melanie Klein held that the breast soon became a source of frustration arousing anger, as what the child wants is unlimited gratification. The welling up of aggressive phantasies tantamount to death wishes for the very person who he also desires creates painful feelings which can only be ameliorated with omnipotent phantasies which restore the loved object.

The constant interplay of love and hate and the child's early aggression stimulates the desire to give back to his mother the good things he had robbed her of in phantasy. His aggression turns him against his mother but it also drives him to "re-create her and to find her again in whatever he undertakes." The harshness of our internal figures (superego) was largely the result of our own aggression towards our parents but primarily the outcome of the hatred within ourselves. What was unbearable was projected on to other people and seen as their hatred which made internal and external figures so frightening.

Only when the child can bring both good and bad aspects of the mother together and thus neutralise the bad, tormenting side can the child begin to feel loved and secure and thus strong enough to detach himself from his primary objects. At times, owing to his excessive anxiety derived from aggressiveness, the libido cannot move forward to new sources of gratification and this reinforces the fixation to an earlier stage of libidinal organisation. The constant introjection of good and bad figures and the quantity in which they are projected and introjected are what decide whether the child will feel loved and secure or if he will be frightened of and full of guilt about his anger.

D. W. Winnicott spoke of a hate that is objective in "Hate in the Countertransference" (International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 30 : 69-74). He emphasised the need for analysts to be always aware

of their own fear and hate in order to be able to keep them latent and within control. Holding that the mother hates her baby from the moment it is born, Winnicott stressed the need for her to tolerate her hate without doing anything about it. "If, for fear of what she may do, she can't hate appropriately when hurt by her child, she must fall back on masochism," he said.

Erich Fromm distinguished between two entirely different kinds of aggression ("The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness," 1974). The one which man shares with all animals is a phylogenetically programmed impulse to attack (or to flee) when vital interests are threatened. This defensive benign aggression operates in the service of survival of the individual and species and is biologically adaptive. The other malignant aggression is biologically non-adaptive, is characteristic only of man, is not a defence against a threat nor is it phylogenetically programmed. "Its main manifestations—killing and cruelty—are pleasurable without needing any other purpose."

Here he differed from Karl Lorenz, the ethologist, who argued that man's aggressive behaviour arose from a phylogenetically programmed innate instinct, that violence stems from our animal nature, from an ungovernable drive for aggression and the best we can do is understand the law of evolution which accounts for this drive.

Fromm's quarrel with Lorenz was that Lorenz's sole emphasis on biological factors beyond our control left no room for social and political circumstances of our own making which, he held, were responsible for the drift towards violence and war. While both Lorenz and Freud held that man is driven by an innate force to destroy, Freud's destructive drive was opposed by an equally powerful Eros. For Lorenz, love itself was the product of the aggressive instinct. Fromm differed from Freud in believing that destructiveness and cruelty are not instinctual drives but "passions rooted in the total existence of man."

Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein contrast sexual impulses with aggressive ("Notes on the Theory of Aggression," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, Vol III-IV, 1949). The energy of sexual

impulses was designated as the energy of aggressive impulses as aggression or the aggressive drive. While the full discharge of aggressive energy could endanger the object, the full discharge of libido, however dangerous, does not threaten the existence of the object itself. They held that self-preservation was a regular ego function and not a manifestation of an instinct or an ego drive.

Hartmann, etc., particularly emphasised that the sublimation of aggression was a pre-condition for the formation of a permanent object relation. In assigning to the ego the primary role in handling aggression, Hartmann, etc., held that it was the ego which helped modify aggression by directing it to substitute objects by restriction and by sublimation. Internalised aggression helped form the superego. The ego's capacity to neutralise large quantities of aggression is what gives it strength. Alternatively they warned. "the internalisation of non-neutralised, aggressive energy in the ego may be the hallmark of weak, or eventually of a masochistic ego."

To get back to Freud, the main theme of his views on aggression was "the irremediable antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restrictions of civilisation" ("The Ego and the Id," SE 19). It is a blow to our narcissism to accept as true that we are not meek, gentle creatures who do not want to harm others but, on the contrary, creatures endowed with a powerful aggressiveness and an equally powerful desire to use this aggressive energy to hurt others.

For Freud it was the existence of this inclination to aggression which constantly threatened civilisation and society. Being civilised was linked with curbing one's aggressive instinct and its manifestations. We have to accept as true that aggression is an indestructible feature of human nature and that man must be able to sacrifice some of his aggressiveness in order to live in a community and feel secure. Thus, renunciation is the key to civilisation. That this is mostly unpleasurable is evident from the general discontent all around. Nevertheless, mankind has more or less realised that, for the preservation of the species, our destructiveness has to be channelised into relatively harmless arenas or sublimated. The

submissive or appeasing attitude is as affective an inhibitor of aggression among humans as it is among animals and birds.

Perhaps the first use of the atomic bomb in World War II drove home the extent and scope of man's inhumanity to man. The subsequent use of chemicals in warfare in Vietnam and Kurdistan and the world wide expenditure on defence and arms build up make it clear that our aggressive instinct is constantly seeking fulfilment, however cleverly disguised as self-defence. The pacifist and anti-nuclear movements have not had the impact they might have had, once again confirming that unneutralised aggression requires very little incentive to reach the point of self-destruction.

So is there the possibility of man becoming less cruel to man and even to himself? At the end of his letter to Einstein ("Why War" SE 22), Freud saw the process of civilisation as a factor leading to a lasting, as it were, a 'constitutional, organic' repression of instincts. However, the state of the world today shows no evidence of this; the urge to destroy seems to have the same intensity in civilised man as in primitive man. Freud was honest enough to refrain from believing he had found an acceptable solution to the problems posed by our destructive urges. For any organic change to occur in mankind by which the aggressive instinct is far more muted will take several generations, if it is at all realisable.

Meanwhile, the only hope we can entertain is that we increasingly accept our destructive instinct just as we do Eros. It is a fact that the instinct to destroy is as powerful as the urge to preserve and unite, that the two instincts do not necessarily work against each other (as in the sexual act), that the aggressive instinct can be neutralised to be beneficial. It is only an intrapsychic recognition of this fact that will enable us to be less frightened by our destructive urges and thus lead less tormented lives.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EYE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

SHIBANI BERA

Broadly, speaking, we receive our impression of the external world mainly through the channel of vision. Vision supersedes all the other senses in this respect. Practically it encompasses the infinite. Through it we get the idea of remote as well as the minute details of the proximity. Many performances like painting, dancing etc are appreciated through eyes. Aesthetic sense develops mainly on the basis of vision. Vision also plays a major role in exhibitionism. When we describe an attractive individual, we chiefly emphasize on his visible elements.

We can therefore imagine the charismatic power of eye to communicate as well as to influence others. Many emotions are also communicated non-verbally through eyes. We refer to kind truthful eyes, expressions of fright in eyes etc while conveying our emotions. Love is also expressed in different ways through eyes, eg, love glance, insinuating look, side glance etc. The idea of eye being a transmitter of emotion has been found since ancient time. The desire to fascinate or charm others by look was a common phenomenon because of the power of inducing harm through eye came to be used as defence against harm.

In the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol 5, it is said, "There does not appear however, at present, or so far as recorded in the past, to be any sort of belief in the power of the eye to produce any good or desirable influence upon the person or thing upon which

it may rest except that doubtful one known as 'love'. From the earliest time eye per se has been supposed to work only evil, and to have a wholly maleficent effect. "The Hebrew word expressing envy signifies also 'evil eye'. Therefore, when it was said that Saul eyed David, it meant that Saul envied David.

Belief, in slow death from being 'looked over' prevailed in England. Sight of evil object was also believed to induce harm to the onlooker. In Greek legend we find that Medusa, one of the three gorgons turned beholders into stone (Berens, 1892, Colignon, 1890).

In legends, wrath is being expressed through eyes. Durbasha Muni's wrathful eyes are well known. Bhasmalochan, a relative of Ravana of the Ramayana, could destroy the onlookers by his eyes. Shiva burnt Kama Deva with the fire emanating from his third eye.

Again, in a contrary way, the benign eyes of Lord Vishnu have been compared with lotus. Hence, he was called 'Padmapalasha Lochan' the lotus eyed. His consort Lakshmi is called Padmakshi-the lotus eyed goddess. (Padma Purana).

In Ramayana, we find that Rama, while worshipping goddess Durga, one lotus fell short. Rama, whose eyes were known as 'Padmalochan' tried to replace one lotus by one of his eyes. (Ramayana of Kirtibas).

Everything that was ridiculous and obscene was supposed to be inimical to the influence of fascination by the oddness of the sight. Obscenity creates curiosity. Ideas related to sex were vehemently rejected as it was prohibited by religious dictum. Sex was considered obscene. Sex organ or sexual part of the body came to be used as protection against the evil look of the eye. Therefore, amulets of phallic symbol or phallic objects having phallic character have been used world wide to combat with the influence of evil eye or harm. Next to phallic symbols or things having sex quality or character, eyes came to be used as amulets because they also symbolised female genital organ.

Freud (1920) refers to the story by Francois Rabelais of sixteenth century where it is found that "The Devil took to flight when the women showed him her vulva." This indicates that the female sex

organ acts as amulet or protective shield against any evil. Like the phallus, its obscenity is its power.

Havlock Ellis (1936) mentions about the magical property of sex being transferred to the eye. Thus eye, representing sex came to be used as amulets.

According to the sympathetic magic, eye acted as a defense against the influence of evil eye. Among the ancient Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Italians and Russians representation of eye was found to be used as protective amulet. Hercules, in nude, used large eye painted on each breast and on each thigh to protect himself from malignant glance of the enemy. While out on a sea voyage Italian sailors used eye symbol against adverse winds. In all these cases eye assumed the role of amulet. Thus it is found that eye has different connotations both sexual and aggression. (Eyes act as the medium of expression of both the sexual and aggressive emotions). In the following case, these are vividly manifested in the fantasies of the patient. (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol 5).

A 26 years old female came to psychoanalytical treatment for her difficulty in staring at others. Her ailments persisted over last two years and intensified to such a degree that she consulted a psychiatrist who referred her to me for psychoanalysis.

She had two brothers, one six years and another four years younger than herself. Her father was a very firm disciplinarian and his word was law in the house. His rule was despotic and she scarcely dared to violet it. Her mother was rather passive and afraid of going against him. Under this atmosphere she grew into a rigid and obstinate child. She recalled the savage beatings meted out by her father and his scornful eyes gazing at her. Much against her will he would force her to study even during the holidays.

Her present symptom started early in her college days while she was attending the class of a young professor, she suddenly felt uneasiness in looking at his eyes. Since then, it so happened that whenever she glanced at anyone, she was taken away by a wierd feeling of sexuality. She was convinced that others were suspecting her to sexy and seductive. Sexual thoughts gradually crowded in her

mind and she felt utterly disturbed. Day by day these thoughts appeared to her as unmanageable and she began to avoid company of others.

She defensively portrayed herself as ugly and unattractive due to the preoccupation of these thoughts which she considered as inauspicious. She had good reputation in school and college for her amiable nature. Feelings of depression increased as she could not ward off these thoughts.

It gradually became evident from her free association that the root of her obsessive thought lied in her oedipus desire, her sexual object being her father. The eyes were the site of coitus. This created severe guilt, satisfying her need for punishment in a masochistic way, i.e. destroying the eyes which stood for sex organ.

She narrated, "during my childhood I observed parental intercourse and became so excited and curious that whenever I got chance I viewed them through a hole in the door. Incidentally, I was caught and felt tremendously ashamed and guilty."

She sometimes said, "I am deriving pleasure by inserting a needle into my eyes and extracting all the nerves and blood out of it." Needles symbolized male sex organ that satisfied her need for punishment in a masochistic way. Once she said, "whenever I stare at anyone, I could visualize the primal scene that I viewed in my childhood and become excited." In Greek legends we find that Oedipus blinded his eyes with the hairpin of his mother-wife when he came to know his identity. The whole action stands for castration.

She imagined her eyes to be filled with watery substance as she stared at others. She equated this fluid with the vaginal discharge. She sometimes mentioned about the poisonous fluid flowing through her eyes. She imagined sexual involvement after secretion of this fluid. In ancient Egypt, eyes were believed to possess special power, e.g. fluid discharged from eyes attracted and overpowered the enemy. Secreting eyes are meant to attract males destroying their masculinity, i.e. to castrate them (vagina dentate). In this case, she could only control her partner by secretion of such fluid. She wanted to enjoy sex violently as she was haunted by it. This was vividly depicted in her dreams. Two dreams culled from analysis are as follows :—

Dream I

I am entrapped in a lion's cage which is devoid of bars. I am trying to escape fast but the lion is chasing me. I am helpless. My parents are watching.

Dream II

A House in a jungle. It is fenced all around. A lion is approaching. I am trying to escape by a horse cart but the lion jumps over the hood of the cart and sits on it.

It was revealed from her association that the lion signified powerful male figure who overpowered her, and her wish to be seduced by a strong male.

She also considered eyes to be the organ for incorporation. In the transference relationship, she would express not only her desire to be incorporated but also her own longing to incorporate the therapist. She imagined herself as father and performing sex with the therapist. She converted the therapist's eyes into fiery reddish and wished enter into them. She again desired to be penetrated by the therapist.

Sexual ideas were so repulsive to her that she found them unmanageable she could only reason that emotional expressions have an easy access through eye. She mentioned about romanticism, seduction and getting lost in love—all being conveyed through eyes. The desire to tempt others by her charm was accelerated in her. In this way eyes represented a symbol of power to her. She said, "I am respectable woman and everyone is adoring me. I am enormous like goddess, Durga. I am surrounded by small reddish eyes that are staring at me. I am rubbing my mouth against someone's face who resembles my father. My gaze is fixed. Two needles are protruding from his sexy eyes and penetrating my eyes. We are engaged in sexual activity. Again I am changing into mother and possessing father solely. I am feeling sorry for her and consoling her."

Her pleasure is experienced when her narcissistic needs are satisfied. Her Oedipal wishes are operative in the above associations through the eyes.

She reminisced the frightful days of her childhood at her village home where she heard of wild cat like animal wandering about at night with its fiery eyes. She fantasized enchanting men by her look and then destroying them. Thus eyes conveyed an ambivalent attitude both erotic and destructive.

Discussion In the present paper I have delineated a parallelism between mythology and the symptom of an obsessive patient in respect of the symbol of eye. In some myths we find that eye represents both erotic and aggressive feelings. The patient under my consideration manifested the same emotions through her eyes. Moreover we find that in myth eye symbolises genital organ, particularly female sex organ. (as is evidenced in Freud's (1920) narration of the story by Francois Rebelias). The patient also selected her eyes as the seat of coitus, i.e. to her, her own eyes stood for her sex organ. In this selection her early life experiences contributed a lot. In her oedipus phase the patient developed a negative attitude towards her father which had impact on her oedipus attachment.

At this time she had experience of her father's scornful eyes. Regarding fearful eyes she had also recalled an animal's eyes which she encountered in her childhood. The patient's instinctual disposition and her story innate libidinal drive mingled with her life experience and selected her eyes as the medium of both erotic and aggressive emotions. Further, one point regarding symptom formation, we required to consider. The employment of the eyes by the patient as the substitute of sex organ as well as the medium of expression of both erotic and hostile feelings were made on the fantasy level. Whether found in reality or not matters little, because the psychical (fantasy) reality is not less than the material (Freud 1934). But a question may be asked where from comes the material of the fantasy of eye as sex organ? The answer to this question is found in the words of Freud (1934) "K believe that these primal phantasies (as I should like to name these and certainly some other also are a phylogenetic possession. In them the individual wherever his own experience has become insufficient stretches out beyond it to the experience of past ages" In the present case, the substitus

tion of sex organ by eye has got an echo in the myths of different countries. In the prehistoric past, somehow, eye was associated with sex. The patient selected her eye as the representation of her sexual organ and this phantasy was stimulated by her early life experiences.

In this connection we must remember another aspect of vision. According to Havelock E Ellis (1929) "we instinctively and unconsciously translate visual energy into energy pressure. In admiring strength we are really admiring the tactile quality has been made visible. When a woman admires the strength of a man by glancing at his stature, she feels his body pressure through her vision. Similarly, a man can also feel the soft touch of his beloved woman at the mere sight of her. Therefore in this case the patient also had strong feeling of touch through her eyes. So she become very much perturbed when in the class room she felt shame to look at her teacher. Through her eyes she could feel the touch of the male teacher. Gradually her eyes become the representation of her sex organ through which the most intense touch sensation of the opposite sex was carried to her body. Dye became charged with most intense erotic emotion.

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