

# *The Politics of Disharmony in Management of Gender Differences*

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## *Executive Summary*

Harmonious inter-generational continuities require the male and the female of the species to engage with each other through interdependence. The chronic under-representation of women in politics everywhere, long after women secured justiciable equal rights in many democracies, intrigues scholars. Political participation varies by ethnicity, age, religion, and culture but that does not account for gender. Patriarchy, discrimination, domination, and oppression are historically castigated but there can also be other reasons. This study explains that under-representation of women persists because motives and power-bases to improve their political participation are not easily mobilized due to psychological differences in how men and women acquire and exercise political influence. Strategies suiting intra-group mobilization of women for securing greater inter-group influence are different from those that suit men. Thus, what appear as 'deficits' of political skills inhibiting acquisition of political power by women are dissolvable with designed interventions. Indeed, men may appear challenged were they to compete with strategies more suited to women.

Gendered identities affect processes of inclusion, exclusion, representation, and participation of women in politics in various ways. The dynamics of disharmony in management of gender differences is traceable to different repertoires of response choices with which men and women build relationships and form groups. This study analyses gender differences in coping with anxieties and defending against anxieties and identifies sets of causal triggers that produce disharmony as outcomes arising in the form of deprivations and taboos during the process of growth and identity formation.

Coping responses to anxieties are substituted and complemented by primitive and developed defences traceable to the way men and women are cared for as babies, infants, children, and adolescence through to adulthood. The repertoire of coping responses as well as primitive and developed defences evolves differently for men and women. This is immutable in some respects, modifiable in others, through practices embedded in psychosocial aspects of gender identities, child-rearing practices, and culture. The two horns of the women's dilemma pressurize them either into behaving like men or evolving creative and innovative strategies. The latter is challenging since the required talent, planning, organization, and mobilization cannot be wished into existence by rational or emotional pleas for equal representation.

The major findings of the study are follows:

- Human dignity, equal freedom, social cohesion, and global harmony, as desirable goals, are beyond reach if social justice is sought only through demands, disputes, claims, and entitlements over substantive and procedural equality of rights.
- The pursuit of equality as a policy requires to be underpinned with deeper analysis of the sources of conscious and unconscious human behaviour (of individuals and groups) that produce inequitable outcomes.
- The restoration of gender balance in the political arena can have the greatest and most lasting impact on sustainable ways to design and govern world affairs in the pursuit of harmony.

This paper urges women and men to experiment with designing strategies that suit women and test whether such strategies redress the political under-representation of women. ♡

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### KEY WORDS

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The under-representation of women in politics long after women secured justiciable rights of political participation in many democracies intrigues scholars. Quota fatigue and resistance to affirmative action have surfaced in some parts of the world on grounds that women are already emancipated. Patriarchy, discrimination, domination, and oppression are historically castigated (Young, 1990) but there can also be other reasons for this chronic under-representation. A recent study on gender and political participation found women less likely than men to participate in campaign-oriented activities such as contacting politicians, fund-raising, and membership of political organizations despite no gender gap in electoral voter turnout (Campbell and Lovenduski, 2004). Following Deaux (1976) and Sapiro (1981), we argue that strategies suiting intra-group mobilization of women for securing greater inter-group influence can be different and that what appear as non-conscious 'deficits' of political skills inhibiting acquisition of political power by women in political life and in business corporations can be regarded as dissolvable with designed interventions. Were we to define politics broadly, women have been successful as activists in opposing military dictatorships in Brazil and environmental causes in India. Yet, majorities in formal authority have eluded women everywhere. Women constitute the majority of partisan political activists in the Democratic and Republican parties in the US but never obtained a majority in the Senate or the House of Representatives.

This paper explains why the power-base required to improve representation of women in public life is not easily mobilized due to differences between men and women in their behavioural repertoires. Undeniably, political participation varies by ethnicity, age, religion, and culture but that does not account for gender. The central question as to why women never achieved electoral majority in formal representation at the national level anywhere in the world remains unanswered. We take Hird (2003) as our point of departure and argue that gender identification and countervailing power are fragile and complex processes involving loss and reparation where psychoanalytic tools enable insights. Feminists researching gender have hushed up this line of inquiry, lest it implies that women as victims are somehow to blame for not being able to insulate themselves from discrimination out of fear that the long-term actions and power restorative strategies such an approach implies are

at odds with short-term tactical gains through quotas.

The political representation of women cannot be fitted into a frame of interests (Chodorow, 1978; Diamond and Hartsock, 1981). Challenges to bodily bounds experienced by women blur the psychological distinction between 'me' and 'not me.' A child's growth in differentiating from the mother follows different patterns in each sex with women ending up experiencing themselves relationally while men form a sense of self as separate from the world. Diamond and Hartsock (1981) wondered whether men and women have different psychological experiences in the process of growth reinforcing a gender division of labour and called for what they termed a 'systematic examination of psychological and institutional consequences of the sexual division of labour' so that consequences for disharmony in power relations could be specified and studied. This clarion call went unanswered. Twenty-five years later, we provide an explanatory framework.

The private roots of public action have experienced a resurgence of interest (Burns, Kay and Sidney, 2001). There is now a greater willingness to study interactions influencing politics based on facts rather than interpretations of feminist ideologies or politically correct prejudices. There has been a reformulation of the neo-Trivers parental investment theory based on understanding anisogamy as a genetically coded response to explain the competitive behaviour of men (Vandermassen, 2004). There is also confirmation from studies that men and women react differently to the political environment. The political implications of perpetuated gender roles were first catalogued three decades ago (Krauss, 1974). Division of labour within families are observable across cultures at the most primitive stages of family autarky (Boserup, 1970) and persist (ILO, 2003). Income and property rights in family law and asset ownership patterns are culturally reinforced notions that reflect this division of labour between the sexes at home and outside it. Dubious generalizations made about natural role specificities attributed to gender are unfounded due to the observed variety across the world regarding women's participation in economic life in pre-industrial and post-industrial societies. Such outcomes are difficult to rationalize in terms of technological determinism or as cumulative individual preferences of one or both genders and need to be understood as part of the social and behavioural processes at the individual and collective level.

From this perspective, we inquire into gender differences of how and why psychological repertoires of response patterns evolve and function. These patterns concern coping with anxieties and defending against anxieties, which are a universal and intrinsic aspect of human living, from birth through to adulthood. We first trace the features of women's participation in politics to its genesis by introducing management of gender differences as an interacting set of psychodynamic processes. We then identify the sources of gender differences in a teleological perspective of personal growth and examine the formation that invariably involves experiences of anxiety. We distinguish coping with anxiety from defending against anxiety followed up with a discussion of gender differences in how repertoires of behaviour patterns develop. Viewing cultural differences as a corollary of how child-rearing practices reinforce different ways of feeling, thinking, and acting, we examine how beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms are crystallized. Finally, we consider the implications of our analysis for women's participation in politics. We infer that politics of disharmony in management of gender differences constitutes formidable constraints to women's participation in political life anywhere but the causal chains and processes differ due to systemic differences on several dimensions such as culture. We conclude that cultural and institutional differences preclude the possibility of modelling one set of institutions or another as a better alternative because similar outcomes, different only in degree, have arisen all over the world with regard to women's participation in politics.

The notions of harmony and unity are closely related in nature. No personal experience of any kind of harmony is possible without unity that links human affective, sensory, and cognitive mechanisms. The search for unity, cooperation, and interdependence of complements/opposites are recurrent themes in all mythologies and folklore in various parts of the world. In his study of archetypes, Jung (1978) describes the unconscious desire for togetherness of day and night, birth and death, happiness and misery, good and evil, male and female as a primitive, ancient, and desirable goal to unite elements that are opposites.

In Greek mythology, Zeus and his wife Hera exemplify the ossified division rather than unity (Graves, 1992). In Finnish mythology, the Kalevala, Väinämöinen comes across as the local *Zeus* or *Yang*, going further to embrace fragments of masculinity or femininity in his

persona, ruling the world by singing and trying to solve complicated questions that arise in human interactions. In Taoist conception, this duality is conceptualized as *ying* and *yang*, in Indian philosophy as *purusha* and *prakriti*, and in Finno-Ugric and Uralic folklore as *Ukko* and *Akka*. Common to these portrayals of duality is the notion that it is in the nature of male and female to struggle for creative unity. The androgynous concept of *Ardhanarishwara* (half-male, half-female) in Hindu mythology represents divinity as the unity of male (*Shiva*) and female (*Shakti*). In the Buddhist pantheon, the concept '*krodha mahabala*' (*Khro-bo*) depicts male and female forms joined aggressively together.

The idea that women are created for love and men for work finds expression in various works of literature which inform us that men are from Mars and women are from Venus (Gray, 2002). The implication that women are to be at home for love and nurturing while men rule the country and handle the politics is a historical legacy which resonates in contemporary life by any measure of women's participation in politics anywhere. Are men and women able to solve the difficulties of cooperation and participation of women in countries where women are free to actively participate in politics as in India, the US, and some countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa? Are Finno-Ugric mythologies normatively appropriate in leaving philosophy and singing to men and electing a woman to rule the castle, organize marriages, and hold keys to the treasury? These are vexing questions because management of gender differences is a timeless theme of antiquity, modernity, and post-modernity.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES

Among humans, the brain, the mind, and the psychic consciousness modulate coping behaviour, defence mechanisms, and other forms of linguistic and non-verbal expressions of thoughts, feelings, and actions in intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group, and inter-group encounters. Harmony among males and females involves complementary responses to gender differences some of which are genetic whereas others are psychological arising from life experiences in the growth process influenced by child-rearing practices.

All human behaviour is purposive (consciously or unconsciously) and the limits of experiencing are biologically, culturally, socially, and economically determined. As a social construct, gender introduces a dimension to roles through which the management of self in

role and the politics of relatedness may be understood and interpreted. While psychological patterns of behaviour universally arise from coping behaviour as a self-level response and from defences against anxiety, there are significant differences in how men and women develop their repertoire. The two most basic drives or natural instincts underlying all human behaviour are the sexual instinct and the aggressive drive (Freud, 1926). Differences in development of aggression and sexuality are attributable to gender. The way aggression is used plays a major role in how political power is acquired, maintained, controlled, and transferred. Some feelings are more or less easily coped depending on the gender of the person experiencing them. Gendered identities do not experience the world in the same way or even carry the same picture of the world. Aggression is popularly viewed as senseless and destructive power of no use to the one exercising it nor to anyone subjected to it but it may also be understood as primitive energy to act and as energy for all actions as a power inside us not outside us. Rather, it reflects our capability to integrate the world around us in terms of how we commit our aggression to constructive or destructive goals. Whether aggressive behaviour is considered good or bad depends on moral aspects (Lagerspetz, 1998). If aggression is considered a normal part of psychosexual development, the origins of patterns of aggression we recognize in everyday life can be traced.

A 'normal' healthy adult is like the tip of an iceberg carrying imprints of development from the earlier stages—from infancy to adulthood through adolescence beneath the surface. The awareness that lies dormant or sub-liminal may also be viewed as the unconscious part of ourselves that remains beyond our awareness and cannot be willed into contact. All of us carry inside us 'receptors' which we use to recognize feelings of earlier stages of our contact with our environment and our surroundings even though these are not always in the active repertoire of our mature feelings and responses (Lorenz, 1966). Some people get us into rage without clear and understandable reason. Occasionally, we experience fear when faced with threatening behaviour even though we 'know' we are safe. After developing our repertoire of a mature world of feelings, we feel it unpleasant to move to earlier layers of development (internal regression) for reasons outside of us (Freud, 1926). Let us consider how response patterns evolve from the perspective of a baby growing into an adult.

For a baby, the most important goal is to survive and get sufficient nourishment from the surroundings since he/she cannot take care unaided. When discussing infant aggression, we speak of 'rage' through which the baby demands food and nourishment. A baby controls with rage and adults respond to the primitive rage with feelings. A baby's rage is so unpleasant that we are willing to do anything to get rid of the rage. Since the activities of a baby are located in the mouth to get food and to satisfy the greed created by hunger, it is termed 'oral aggression' (Klein, 1994). Oral aggression is a rage in general towards the whole surrounding, has a tendency to control, and delivers the message: "*If you don't give me what I need, I'll destroy you.*" This kind of rage is also evident in adult regressive behaviour in bar fights or football hooliganism where it does not matter anymore who is being hurt and why. The nuclear bomb is also a symbol of oral aggression: everything can be destroyed, including planetary life (Kahn, 1962). The dominant tendency of oral aggression is to control when loss of control triggers helplessness. When we regress to oral aggression, it is difficult to inhabit the world of developed aggression in the same moment which has a protective purpose (Lorenz, 1966). If the capacity to feel organized aggression were retained in such situations, adults could hurt babies if they are too tired to respond which would work against nurture required in nature. Now, mothers just try to get rid of the reciprocal feeling of early rage by satisfying the baby (Fairbairn, 1952).

At about the age of two, a child develops the physiological capability to control stools (Freud, 1993). Until then, the baby is like a big mouth that only eats utilizing his/her food to grow and letting the rest run through. The child develops an idea of his body as a kind of closed system. The relationship to food and to stools then changes as if the baby acquires doors to the body that close and open through which one can take in or let out. The boundaries to identity develop and a sense of separateness of identity emerges. One is no longer a part of the surrounding mass but someone who can control or who can be controlled. Patterns of human exchange begin to develop. Through this evolves a sense of gratitude for what one receives and is capable of exchange (Klein, 1958). The aggressive energy is targeted to hold, to keep inside, to resist. This means not letting go of what one has. Aggression is concentrated to defend what one has. All boundaries, borders, and territories become purposeful and they start to have a

life of their own. The child develops a lot of magical thinking which is used to confer meaning upon symbols. We begin to recognize (as children, family, group, adults, a nation, race or culture) the rituals of our own culture as good and the rituals of other cultures as bad (Lorenz, 1966). The concept of inclusion and exclusion is central to human development and has its role to play in all stages of development including this. Also, the notion and norm of categorizing persons, artefacts, and experiences into black or white, good or evil, beautiful or ugly, sublime or ridiculous, evolve. Typical to these ways of thinking is ambivalence as if one were required to resolve the conflict between the two choices that are equally palatable. When confronted with stressful situations, we, thus, acquire a tendency to land on the horns of dilemmas where there seems no other solution except, *this or that, all or nothing, now or never* (Klein, 1973). Mental life acquires a dualistic rhythm and aggression begins to follow the patterns which we describe by settings like: open-closed, tied-loose, attack-defence or fight-flight.

The aggressive energy develops a sado-masochistic pattern (Freud, 1993). For example, children pick wings of a fly to find out how it would survive. This kind of aggression is termed sado-masochistic since it is just as important to be treated meanly as it is to act meanly. Bullying and ragging in schools are a typical outcome related to such regression at this stage (Lagerspetz, 1998). Activities in this stage are dualistic like everything else that has to do with this stage of development. It is important to recognize the amount of construction and destruction from this kind of thinking and feeling. Here, aggression is not direction-less rage, as in the oral stage, but targeted, although it is still not a task-oriented action. The aim of sado-masochistic aggression is to be mean or to be treated meanly. All of us have elements from this stage of development. As mature adults, we feel unpleasant if we are being harassed but also feel unpleasant when urged to harass back. This enables us to let go interactions following sado-masochistic patterns. In such situations, we try to place ourselves above them or beyond them. Development may be regarded as harnessing of wild rapids through complicated technological systems to produce energy. Effort goes into taking the product of this energy. The 'product' achieved in this stage of development is the capability to feel grateful when we receive something good and our urge to reciprocate out of gratitude. The basis of all interactive

behaviour, i.e., the capability to give and to take, is learnt at this stage. At about four years of age, the child reaches the oedipal stage according to Freudian theory. It is at this stage that the child begins the process of falling in love with the parent of the opposite sex. This love is reached through eager rivalry with the parent of the same sex (based on envy and feelings of exclusion).

During a child's oral stage of development, the purpose of gratification is to get 'more.' Gratification in itself is not evil. A gratifying child is a good child and the mother does not need to worry that the baby will starve. The greed we come across in adults is a defect in feeling gratitude (and in sharing) and more related to the dynamics of envy, the driver of competition. Flows of greed stand in the way of a person committing to constructive purposes. In animals, there is competition for the best partners and genes (Lorenz, 1966). This raised an alternative hypothesis that selfish genes are patterned to use life forms for their own trajectories of evolutionary development (Dawkins, 1979). Envy at the oral stage is a shameful feeling full of rage that something has been stolen (Klein, 1923). However, a central purpose of human envy is to arouse creativity. When a child breaks the toy of another child, he does this not to have or envy the toy of the other child but acts out the envy of the capability of the other child to play with the toy. A primitive envy combined with aggressive powers can be the reason why it seems impossible to reach harmony and peace on earth despite material possibilities of survival for all. Envy of early developmental stages is destructive and functions in the way: *"If you have something I can't have which I also would like to have, I will make sure you don't have it either."* In the stage of oedipal development, envy reaches its competitive character and starts to function by another norm: *"If you have something that I also would like to have but don't, I'll do everything to create myself one too."* Envy need not be harboured as a feeling of an individual. Groups too feel envy towards other groups (Bion, 1948). For instance, ice-hockey games between Sweden and Finland or cricket matches between India and Pakistan reveal very strong competitive feelings between the neighbouring countries. How big a role envy plays between sexes in hindering creative unity of opposites among individuals in everyday life is also palpable between groups consisting of opposite gender although collaborations are acutely needed when so much of the world and life are yet to be discovered and thought out.

Men have a greater tendency of ambivalence than women. This has to do with the developments in the oedipal stage when, for a male, the love object is the same person as the nurturing object. However, as they grow up, males resolve this dilemma by splitting and develop two images of a woman which do not easily integrate and cannot exist simultaneously. A certain quality of detachment is needed to be able to avoid the integration of these two images. Soon, men become capable of keeping things separate (and better equipped to invoke 'splitting' as a defence) or as Jung (1975) puts it: "*It is the role of anima to lead a man into his unconscious and thus force him to deeper recollection and increased consciousness.*" Splitting is a primitive defence which, in the beginning, certainly helps identify and specify things quickly and putting feelings into one basket or another. However, as more complex processes evolve, more integrative skills are needed to understand the true nature of the whole complexity. Women mix different spheres of their lives. This makes it seem as if male thinking is more rational or more 'matter of fact.' Yet, an increasing demand for skills of synthesis or integration has arisen in today's social and political life and analytical skills are not the only skills of value. When reaching anxiety states, men regress to the ambivalence of their earlier nature. For survival, men keep relations separated using 'splitting,' whereas women are capable of integrating and 'being close.' Men keep distance whatever the matter (Hite, 1987). Women use their skills of holding and sharing when experiencing fears or anxieties. Thus, responses and reactions to anxiety states hold important clues to differences in response patterns of gendered identities.

### COPING VERSUS DEFENDING

Two alternative approaches are conventionally used to classify human response to anxiety states. The semiotic approach emphasizes meanings given to symbols (Jung, 1978) whereas the relational approach interprets meanings through inferences about intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group, and inter-group relations (Bion, 1948; Lawrence, 1979). Freud is a convenient starting point because he discovered how we offload our anxieties in human relationships while Jung made insightful contribution on archetypes and the collective unconscious. The bridge between the two approaches derives from the early work of Jung who connected the development of symbols to relationships. Claiming that neurotic pain,

such as hysteria, has a symbolic meaning, Jung (1975) interpreted dream symbols as manifestations of the mind and argued that unconscious processes in our minds produce symbols that prove to be meaningful. He attached importance to the symbolic life of our values, ethics, and search for meaning of life which lie at the core of existential dilemmas. Symbol creation has to do with the tendency to see the surrounding world in patterns. Our perception is affected by cognition. We think we see a series of horizontal lines or a pattern of horizontal lines repeating instead of seeing individual lines. This releases the capacity to think of other things meanwhile instead of requiring concentrated attention to see separate lines. This has a dark side too because patterns are illusions of our own creation and many pathologies are based on the phenomena of stereotyping experiences and objects. When experiencing chaos, we fall into helplessness and lose control. Borders and boundaries enable anxiety-avoidance that chaos creates (Menzies-Lyth, 1988). The creation of borders and boundaries, classifying things into this or that is mainly a contrived convenience in the form of a personal or a social construct and represents a coping response. A defensive reaction to the same anxiety-state may be triggered if coping responses are inadequate. Fantasizing is itself a self-level coping response that can manifest differently for males and females depending on how the value of wishes and intuition are brought into play. Magical thinking is one example of imagining extreme causalities through which we try to bind together feelings, unexpected reality, and symbols. The attempt to be in control through 'magic thinking' could turn against us. For instance, there are people who believe we can securely proceed with life if we know what to expect from the unknown by being able to read the stars or crystal balls or tarot cards since there is nothing to do if everything is already destined. Jung (1975), referring to the Chinese oracular procedure of *I Ching*, maintains that consulting an oracle is an experiment in the occult and dismisses divining techniques as archaic nonsense. Instead, he explains this in terms of 'principle of synchronicity' or more simply 'meaningful coincidence.'

As psychoanalytic thinking developed, object relations theories expanded our understanding of the human identity through attention to the mother-child relationship from the work of Bion (1948), Klein (1923; 1926; 1928; 1930; 1945; 1952; 1957; 1958), Rapaport (1959), Kohut (1996), Kernberg (1984) and Kernberg (1994),

among others. We now know that human identity formation begins from proto-mental and psychic processes in the mother-child relationship. The child can imitate but also mirror the mother and there can be many possible mixtures in between. This means that we cannot predict the structure of the mind of the child by focusing only on the mother. The mirroring interaction need not produce a paranoid child but can create a masochistic child of a paranoid mother. Object relations theories expanded our knowledge of defences (Fairbairn, 1992). We call certain acts and functions of the mind 'defences' when human identity, consciously and unconsciously, organizes its 'picture-in-the-mind' about the surrounding chaotic world (with anxiety-states as triggers) into 'pictures of relatedness.' Defences may be primitive or developed and some may lie in between. Everyone uses all levels of defences. The more anxiety we face, the more primitive defences we invoke and this process lies beyond our awareness. The more a person is mentally ill, the more he/she uses primitive defences in functions of the mind and the less he/she uses developed defences.

From the 'selection' of defences a mind uses, it is possible to diagnose if the mind is in a depressive state, manic state, paranoid state, etc. For example, *control*, *omnipotence*, *splitting*, and *denial* are primitive defences whereas *projection* is a developed defence and *ambivalence* somewhere in between. In an ideal imaginary situation, we may visualize a healthy mind in a stable situation striving to function without any primitive defences. Yet, defences operate at the root of all functions of the human mind (Mathur, 1995). Splitting is a useful defence in everyday life. When we forget what happened at home while at work and *vice versa*, we split our thinking. By doing so, we create space and capacity to think issues at work without being bogged down by what happens at home. However, the formation and development of this kind of coping and defensive behaviour through stages of growth from birth onwards produces functional use of defences as well as myriad dysfunctional manifestations. Therefore, the question whether psychological patterns of coping and defending differ for males and females assumes significance.

## **COPING WITH ANXIETIES AND DEFENDING AGAINST ANXIETIES**

### **Male and Female Response Patterns and Repertoires**

Political participation involves aggressive energies to be

exercised because it is about power rather than achievement (Van Hulle and Mathur, 1994). There are a few studies that relate gender differences to the nature of aggression. Aggression is viewed in psychoanalytical studies as an instinct whereas sociological studies treat aggression as an instrument to reach goals. The distinction between aggression as an emotional expression of instinct and the notion of aggression as an instrumentality to reach goals (Berkowitz, 1993) is useful for understanding differences in aggression on the gender dimension (Lagerspetz, 1998). Empirical studies find males biologically endowed with more aggressive energy than females on a physiological basis related to hormonal life. It is an established fact that when women are artificially given androgens, they begin to behave more aggressively (Lagerspetz, 1998). In how aggression is acted out, gender differences on aggression diminish with age. While it is possible that cultural differences in aggressive behaviour may be greater than gender differences, men are more aggressive than women in all cultures (Lagerspetz, 1998). This may have something to do with the predominance of patriarchal and patrilineal systems but whether the differences in aggressive behaviour are a cause or an unintended consequence is uncertain. Matriarchy and matrilineal systems remain marginal. Anthropologists have not described any purely matriarchal society where women would have power over men except in the realm of science fiction works like *Dune* and in Kerala and North-Eastern states of India.

Significant differences between genders on how aggression is governed are observable in the exercise of primitive defences of *control*, *ambivalence*, *splitting*, and *omnipotence*. Female aggression is not expressed directly and uses covert and indirect forms such as gossiping or covens. Aggression among boys is more initiative-driven and spontaneous (already at a young age) than among girls. Girls also receive more inhibitory reactions from grown-ups whereas boys receive inhibitory reactions only from other kids. From this, it may be inferred that girls are told of the impropriety of their aggressive behaviour before they act so (Lagerspetz, 1998). It is not considered 'appropriate' for a woman to say negative things at least to a man (Hite, 1987). Women are likely to submit and hardly use aggression when dealing with men. However, women are quite capable of using aggression and their styles differ from men. Women use aggression mainly against other women when they

compete over things delivered by men or for attention of men. In some societies, women are found capable of controlling macho behaviour of men through their aggression in active and passive ways. Women tend to prefer and be capable of designing peaceful solutions and exercise peaceful living with each other, if not submissive to men (Glazer, 1992). Indirect ways in which women use aggression are often social manipulation. Women express less aggression when insulted; rather, they respond by withdrawing through sorrow and shame (Hite, 1987). When a problem arises, a male withdraws to privacy and tries to solve the problem alone. On the contrary, women start expressing and sharing their feelings and try to solve a problem through conversations. This is perceived by men as a sign of loss of control, weakness, dependency or being over-emotional. It is often associated with or followed by devaluation or diminution of the female. The greater proneness of women to feel shame and of men to feel guilt has been empirically established (Lewis, 1987).

Selection in using defences is always specific to a particular situation and based on a number of factors. Yet, it is noteworthy that the defence of control is often used to protect against anxiety and to defend against feelings of helplessness. Control is a primitive defence used more by men and less common among women where it is often an indirectly expressed defensive behaviour. Since females generally do not exercise the defence of control to the same frequency and intensity in their repertoire, they compensate by developing higher capability of coping with helplessness. This may be derived from many factors. It is likely that the relationship between a mother and an infant involves, for the mother, constant coping with helplessness and prepares them better in this mode. Control may be viewed as an extension of power but may or may not be derived from authority. Men generally exercise control in various life situations. By controlling women, men subject them to function under a level of more primitive behaviour. Being controlled feels unpleasant to all autonomous creatures. Submission to less developed ways of feeling and defending is fundamentally unpleasant (Fairbairn, 1992). When forced into regression, the human psychological structure mainly responds with unpleasant feelings of rage. If this rage is not expressed, it leads to depressions — an occurrence more common among females than males. Submission by a gender group (male or female) is, thus, no solution to the eternal struggle

of men and women to strive for creative togetherness. As the world evolves in the transition to less gender-hierarchical societies (at least normatively), the need for skills to negotiate rules, boundaries, norms, and agreements increases. In such societies, there is a greater demand for the female characteristics of not controlling together with skills at building inclusive and peaceful solutions but it also requires the management of boundary conditions that keep things separate and questions of flows across porous boundaries, linkable in myriad ways and for infinite purposes.

The psychological life of a woman may be understood from anxieties that stem from guilt of gratification. Oral gratification needs are connected to capacities to nurture and to seek nourishment, while not taking too much for oneself, for a baby to survive. Mothers worldwide nurture male babies more even where society values the sex of the babies equally. We hypothesize that males do not need to be reared to internalize the nurturing constraint and are free to be 'stars' also in family life. The behaviour of mothers, if not biological, is at least psychological and not so much social or cultural as previously believed. From a psychoanalytic perspective, it is possible to understand the narcissistic fulfilment of a woman through the capability to give birth to a male baby. This signifies reaching narcissistic fulfilment of existing in both sexes. For males, being a 'star' partly reinforces the use of the defence of omnipotence. As stated with the defence of control, omnipotence may also be viewed as a defence against anxiety created by helplessness.

The primitive defence of projective identification (used by both women and men) functions differently. Women tend to unconsciously regard a male to be 'omnipotent,' which enables a female to feel safe from her own feelings of helplessness. The omnipotent male is expected to rescue her and her children in times of crisis. It would, thus, seem that men are 'entitled' to be 'stars' admired by women and women are comfortable for men to act as stars than be stars themselves. This phenomenon has been observed in studies at home and outside (Hite, 1987). Thus, men tend to take first prizes in social life too. The emotional support, caring, sharing, consideration, etc. belong to the non-task non-work space for men and are generally taken for granted by men in families. The lack of reciprocity is exacerbated when women do not receive the same emotional support in return. This becomes stressful when women take part



in working life outside the family as do men. Women feel emotionally drained and often complain of it. We may revisit the higher incidence of depression among women from this perspective: a 'defeat' depression is born on the basis of not getting the valuation that belongs to oneself. Devaluing, diminishing, and ignoring often follows the general solution that females are to be enforced into submission through controlling. The lack of reciprocity in emotional lives in families causes shame in women. Coping with shame consumes a lot of energy and may paralyse one's entire life. The feeling of shame is created by the lack of reciprocity, basically in the mother-infant relationship, but can later be created in any situation missing the reciprocity in terms of "*You smile at them and they do not smile back at you.*" The feeling of shame is paralyzing. It needs a lot of psychological work to get back on one's feet back to normal functioning after being afflicted with shame since its origin is in the break-down of early object relations whereas guilt as a feeling develops only in the later stages of super-ego formation.

Women have to cope with lack of reciprocity in emotions throughout their lives and this triggers shame. Just as Asian cultures are very particular in protecting males from feelings of shame, European cultures have evolved welfare state institutions that protect women from the shame of depending on men and men from guilt. Shame as a feeling needs an external reference point held internally in the mind; guilt needs an internal reference point projected externally to an authority figure that may punish or forgive. Thus, the burden of negative feelings of direct shame and shame through guilt are excessively delivered to women. The tendency of men to submit women through control, devaluing, diminishing, and ignoring (except to the extent of substituting fair representation with a few 'token women') is universal across cultures (Hite, 1987). This is devastating for human dignity leading to a tremendous waste of talent and loss of energy that could be used for the good of humankind and a serious impediment to human freedom and social cohesion.

The linkage between human motivations and aggression deserves mention. In Maslow's notion of the hierarchy of needs, lower order needs require a higher modicum of expressed aggression in the existential struggle. However, differences between various thresholds (lower and higher) of needs do not imply that humans always move from lower order needs to higher

order needs nor that the transition between need thresholds is uni-directional. People motivated by higher order needs in the prime of their working lives may well be motivated by lower order needs close to or after retirement. It is noteworthy that a goal that has not been attained produces less aggression than losing the one that is already there. Males are committed to working life as part of their role obligations. These generally take precedence over their roles in social and family life. Women are more oriented to family life, nurture, and care. This creates disequilibrium in relationships when emotional life created by women is not reciprocated. Similarly, the rational life established by men is seldom reciprocated by women leading men to joke about 'women's logic' (Hite, 1987). Men are more interested in patterns of hierarchy and power and, hence, devote considerable time and energy to these issues. The male-dominated militaries reinforce insularity and hierarchy as a model readily transported to other forms of organizations.

Studies find aggressive women to have a better self-esteem and higher longevity although female aggression is looked down upon in all cultures (Lagerspetz, 1998). According to Lagerspetz, childhood aggressiveness is a poor predictor of future anti-social behaviour in girls compared to boys. In fact, aggressiveness in girls leads to the opposite development in many cases. Aggressive girls with high self-esteem go into academic education more than others. They are associated with positive qualifications of personality and are popular among friends even though they tend to dominate others. Their mothers are found to have a higher education than mothers of passive, non-aggressive girls.

Women as well as men have a need to relate to and join larger social contexts in civic and political life. Males give more attention to power games than females in social, personal, and family lives. Women form dyads naturally while men coalesce into groups and relate through groups (Baumeister and Sommer, 1997). Power gives a person the possibility to control other people in a way that is pleasant and favourable to oneself in different ways. Power is social and cannot be exercised in isolation. Dominating roles have been a way males try to reach satisfying human relationships. Men compete for status whereas women try to acquire power by aligning with, joining or submitting to the dominating men with power thus attempting to gain power indirectly (Baumeister and Sommer, 1997).

Men and women feel insulted and angry at different thresholds and about different kinds of things. How do we explain this? Defence mechanisms in the psychological repertoire are particularly revealing. Men have difficulties in coping with feelings of helplessness and respond with control, belittling, and emotional withdrawal from interactive spaces. Here, belittling arises from two sources: on the one hand, it is a form of denial and, on the other, an expression of the defence of omnipotence. Men start to take rational actions and behave aggressively. In the case of women, instead of aggressive behaviour and revenge, they try to find peaceful solutions and demonstrate better skills which may be associated with suffering discomfort that is not necessarily masochistic (Hite, 1987). Reaction patterns to attacks, thus, lead to diametrically opposed behaviour — men spurt into action and women get paralysed.

## GENDER AND CULTURE

The problem of women's under-representation in politics is ubiquitous. Differences are merely a matter of degree. Scholars studying the situation in Scandinavian countries, for example, have not been able to relate high education and employment of women or their financial independence to lower probability of gender discrimination in politics. It is, therefore, pertinent to examine the issues from the perspective of cultural imports in the balance of aggression and sexuality in these societies. In Scandinavian countries, at least for the last century (about five generations), aggression is a taboo. There is less aggressive behaviour in all spheres of life including politics which opened opportunities of better competitive possibilities for women. However, the proportion of women's representation in politics did not reach its demographic representation as a gender.

With a view to explore gender differences cross-culturally, within and across two distinct cultures, it is possible to construct indicators of attitudes conditioned by the way in which norms, beliefs, values, and behaviour are reinforced for the same gender as well as on the gender difference dimension. Indicators can be postulated for a range of primitive and developed defences, with reference to aggression, and envy based on our working hypotheses developed in this paper. This would reveal how aggression and envy are coped with or defended against in the course of development of the psychological repertoires of men and women in different cultures and enable us to identify predictable outcomes

for human freedom, gender equity, and social harmony. It would be important also to bear in mind and study whether political processes and issues vary at different thresholds of women's participation in politics. We may visualize the world as an arena where each gender may wish to have as big a slice of a cake as the other one. Yet, the nature of the political arena in terms of its objectives, tasks and roles, and also the reality of differences between men and women need to be carefully considered. Not only are the genders biologically different, our working hypotheses also show up differences in response patterns based on how interactive repertoires evolve. Therefore, it would be of less value, *per se*, for women to participate in politics merely as a matter of equal rights or formal equality if the emergent processes, issues, and outcomes are no different. However, Taylor-Robinson and Heath (2003) provide empirical evidence that women legislators in advanced industrialized countries as well as in less developed countries not only place higher legislative priority on women's rights than men but also have different policy priorities.

The different priority ordering of love and work causes lack of reciprocity in all cultures (Hite, 1987). Since women are more capable of expressing feelings, they provide emotional anchorage in family life. Contact with emotions is essential for living. In families, women offer an exchange of emotions which are not possible for men to attain with other men (Hite, 1987). The statistics of divorces in Scandinavia indicate that the majority of divorces are initiated by women. Thus, it overturns the whole idea of female dependency. In fact, the phenomenon is seen as just the opposite — men having far greater difficulty in initiating and carrying out disengagement from a relationship than women.

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The preponderance of women in non-governmental organizations and activist groups suggests that women join political life as a countervailing force of activists to stop destructive drainage of female energies in whole societies. Women love, care, and nurture but experience exploitation and lack of reciprocity. This leads to feelings of shame and to continuous questioning of oneself and one's psychological structures. The linkage between the psychoanalytic processes contributing to psychodynamics of shame and humiliation and the capacity to cope with narcissistic injuries and failures in self-esteem in political life is well established (Steinberg, 1991). Both

men and women face this but women have greater difficulty handling this. Women need to continuously defend against feelings of being rejected. Mental energies of women go into defending and coping with negative feelings and they have difficulties in succeeding partly because they seldom get credit and support for their emotional life.

Emotional support is rarely a factor for the professional success of a woman. Belittling and devaluation go on also in working, social, and political lives. The surrounding males are more easily able to control the women because the male way of thinking also resonates in the system. The female mental structures are such that they have difficulty taking into consideration the separatedness within large integrated systems in grappling with solutions to the problems of human life. At the same time, men are more capable of holding things separate which leads to working with less effort and apparently getting results in a less energy consuming way. Women, by nature, admire men and make them 'stars.' Men have it easier also because women hang on to their nature of continuing to love when faced with difficulties. The influence space in politics is claimed by aggressive energies with which women are less endowed than men. Claiming space is an unusual behaviour for a woman. When a woman uses aggression, even successfully, it is considered improper and unacceptable and repeatedly leads to feelings of shame and having to cope with them. Feminine outcomes are seldom easily delivered to the public at large due to their complexity. Formulating female thinking into slogans or titles needed in political life is also deeply antithetical to the integrative nature of a female. In homosocial interactions, the psychological nature of males leads them into comfort derived from groups containing members of their own sex. In contrast, women seek comfort in the company of a best female friend as a dyad. From this, we may also infer how differently men and women make interpersonal linkages inside and outside groups which affect coalition formation in business life and political life. Men enjoy various 'group games' from early childhood where strategic outcomes of bonded groups depend on skills and prowess and on rationally calculable solutions. It is open to speculation whether the true nature of politics is akin to such 'games' where task groups are more effective than personal networks of dyads without a common defined task. An alternative hypothesis would be whether this has turned out to be so because of the

greater influence of participating men through gender-normed group behaviour. Thus, it can be easily seen that women are less capable of playing social and political games the same way and seek dyadic relationships. Women remain blind to the diversity of forms that masculine aggression can take. They concentrate on caring and nurturing and remain inexperienced with the various mores of male group aggression used in practical sports such as moose hunting and also useful in psychological warfare to fight women in politics. Unfamiliarity with unconscious aggression-driven male group behaviour with conscious strategic goals in political power games seems to be the reason why female politicians are vulnerable when attacked and often unable to defend themselves from being ousted.

The problem of creative collaboration between the genders is an unsolved challenge. The outcome of submission by one sex in the unresolved struggle for creative unity does not give satisfaction to men and produces depression and frustration among females. An important question that arises is whether and how men could be willing to create space for female ways of solving the problems of interaction in human living. Women are quite capable of sharing their problems, feelings, and emotional life with another woman where the real resources of support to women in politics tend to be located.

## CONCLUSIONS

The chronic under-representation of women in politics is a manifestation of disharmony in the management of gender differences. Whenever explanatory hypotheses about under-representation of women in any arena are examined for patterns and subjected to scrutiny for causal triggers, there are always passionate arguments and counterarguments that get unleashed. We are not saying that women are necessarily disadvantaged to be under-represented in politics for all times because they are women. What we are saying is that the strategies that would suit women better would be different from strategies that suit men. Indeed, it would be men who would appear challenged if they had to compete with strategies that suit women more than men. We are conscious that this paper offers food for thought to both sides of the nature-nurture debate, the stereotypical right brain-left brain debate, and the affirmative action quota-fighters-anti-reservationists debate. The aim of this paper would be fulfilled if women and men begin to examine and experiment with designing strategies that suit women

better and test whether these strategies redress the political under-representation of women. In this paper, we have merely hinted at what these strategies could be as it is beyond the scope of this paper to go into the details of the strategies.

Coping responses to anxieties are invariably substituted and complemented by primitive and developed defences traceable to the way men and women are cared for as babies, infants, children, and adolescence through to adulthood. We analysed how the repertoire of coping responses as well as primitive and developed defences evolves differently for men and women. We showed how it is immutable in some respects, and modifiable in others, through practices embedded in psychosocial aspects of gender identities, child-rearing practices, and culture. Pateman (1989) refers to the two horns of the women's dilemma, viz., that to be full citizens, society demands that they behave like men or alternatively they must evolve creative and innovative practices through uncharted paths and in new forms to create space within the realms of the possible. The former is an impossibility and the latter is challenging since it would need considerable talent, planning, organization, and mobilization, and cannot be wished into existence by rational or

emotional pleas for equal representation. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the politics of disharmony in the management of gender differences better with attention to the powerful triggers of psychological and social response patterns.

Discrimination against women in the world of work occurs in many roles including the business and the political arena is not an exception. Reverse discrimination against men is also noticeable in some roles in recent times. If human dignity, individual freedom, social cohesion, and global harmony are desirable goals, they may lie beyond reach if social justice is sought only through demands, disputes, claims, and entitlements over substantive and procedural equality of rights. The pursuit of equality as a policy is better underpinned through deeper and rigorous analysis of the sources of conscious and unconscious dynamics of human behaviour (of individuals and groups) that produce unsatisfactory and inequitable outcomes. Politics is sometimes described as the art of the possible. Perhaps, for this reason alone, the political arena is the one where the restoration of gender balance may have the greatest and the most lasting impact on the sustainable ways we can design and govern ourselves in our pursuit of harmony. ♡

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