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Beyond Sentimentality in the Mother-Son Dyad: A Psychoanalytic Reconsideration of Cultural Myths from India

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Affective and emotional experiences are inherently relational in nature. They stem from our relationships with others. These relational experiences are processed by us as we are continuously constituted through these experiences. One such relational context in which all affective and felt experiences are literally born, is that of mother and child. Winnicott proposed: "There is no such thing as a baby…..if you set out to describe a baby, you will find you are describing a baby and someone" (Winnicott, 1942, p.179). Here he asserts that life shapes us through relations with others, usually and foremost early on through relations of love and dependency with a (m)other. Early identifications with mother, or aspects of her, are the way in which the human subject and psychic reality first come into being. Melanie Klein stated that object relations are the centre of emotional life.

Nowhere, except for in psychoanalysis, are the feeling and emotional worlds of people given a primacy, attended to and understood as simultaneously personal and relational, involving body and cultural-historical-political context. Relational psychoanalysis[1], particularly, yields an understanding of the self as the locus of the passions of love and hate, envy and rage, guilt and concern. It sees the inner world constituted by "internal objects", which are amalgamation of felt affects, phantasies, stored memories, collected impressions *vis-a-vis* significant others, constructed through experience – mediated and shaped by bodily needs, anxieties, defenses and developmental capacities. These internal objects help to structure modes of relating with the self and with external others. It is in the intersubjective encounter between the child and the significant others that the child develops feelings of who it is, can and cannot be.

Klinian theory gave primacy to the mother in the child's – and thus, the adult's – mental life. Throughout the world, the mother is taken as the central figure in the life of the child. In the Hindu Indian context, the understanding of the role of mother is intertwined with the salience of feminine principle in the man-nature question as well as in traditional family and socialization processes. In agricultural societies like India, nature is seen as a mother who is bountiful and nurturing but also unpredictable, won over only through a wide variety of rites and rituals. In the Hindu Indian symbolic system, femininity is inextricably linked with prakriti (nature) and leela (activity). The maternal deities, generous and giving as well as aggressive and annihilating, occupy the ultimate authority in the Hindu Indian mind (Nandy, 1980). This maternal authority in the symbolic realm parallels the child's experience in Indian families where the mother

[1]Relational psychoanalysis refers to the clinical and theoretical sensibility that integrates a variety of psychoanalytical theories that have evolved following the promulgation of Freud's seminal ideas. This perspective includes developments within and across U.S. interpersonal psychoanalysis, the British school of object relations, self-psychology, and the currents within the contemporary Freudian Psychoanalysis.

is only true and close authority that the child has in its crucial early years. Thus, in the Indian, and more specifically Hindu worldview, the mother-son relationship is highly sentimentalized. Its central emotional expressions are those of tenderness, nurturance and protectiveness. The Kleinian split of 'good' and 'bad' breast is mirrored in the cultural imagos of 'good' and 'bad' mother that pervade the Hindu imagination.

Images of 'good' and 'bad' mother are found in all cultures, but each culture has its own specific rendering. These myths are a window into the dreads and desires that layer the affective bonds of mother(s) and son(s). The endeavor of this paper is to re-investigate the popular Hindu Indian myths as constructed by 'both' mother and son embedded in the Indian familial and cultural realms. This assumes significance because usually both theoretical and empirical work on the mother-child relationship takes a child-centric perspective, insulating it from the real conditions that form its bedrock. Psychoanalysis also tends to see mother as a 'good' or 'bad' breast from the perspective of the child, more specifically the male child, without taking the maternal subjectivity and agency into consideration. In the absence of maternal voice, the image of 'good' breast mirrors the child's desire to experience unlimited love and adoration for himself. There is then no consideration for aspects of mother's experience of affection which is inclusive of her erotic vitality that she brings into her care-giving and hatred towards the child.

The child-centered image of 'bad' breast mirrors the child's dread of being destroyed by maternal wrath and of being controlled to fulfill the mother's desires. However, a consideration from the mother's perspective makes one wonder – what makes the mother aggressive? Why is she driven to control her offspring to fulfill her needs? This leads us to look critically at the social-cultural position of the mother in a patriarchal culture. The limited sphere of influence and agency accorded to her makes the child her only source of comfort and succor. Another line of thinking makes one ponder – Is it the child's own insatiable need and envy of the 'bountiful' mother which morphs her into threatening, withholding and controlling figure? The paper makes an attempt to go beyond the highly sentimentalized characterization of mother-son relationship, which prompts lack of acknowledgement and denial of expression of deep experiences of desire, destruction, survival of destruction unfolding in the encounters between mothers and son. I delve into questions such as: What is the scope of mother's sensuality in this relationship? Is sensuality to be experienced solely as devouring maternal sexuality? How to conceive maternal hate *vis-à-vis* the child? Is it necessarily damaging to the child's psychic development? The aim of the paper is to explore a fuller range of emotional interchanges that occur in the dyad beyond matrix of love and control. It draws out the implications of wholesome maternal subjectivity inclusive of her sexuality, passions and hatred on the son's emotional development.

The relationship between mother and son cannot be understood without considering the particular cultural context in which it is embedded. Relational psychoanalysis stresses on how fantasies of good and bad mothers, fears and desires are framed by the cultural injunctions on: What does it means to be a woman? What does it mean to be a mother, especially, the mother of a son? The cultural system of meanings around the mother-son relationship constructs the interpersonal and intrapsychic experiences of mothers and sons. The paper begins by focusing on the cultural

importance and discursive construction of the mother-son relationship in the Indian scenario. It moves onto reinvestigating the imagos of 'good' and 'bad' mother, exemplified in popular cultural myths of Yashoda- Gopal, Krishna – Putana, Parvati – Skanda and Urvasi – Arjuna in the Indian context from the subjective-agentic position of both mother(s) and son(s). In doing so, the paper opens possibilities of engaging with potent yet unspoken emotional realities of maternal eroticism and maternal hatred as the foundation of creative and fulfilling bond between mothers and sons. It concludes by providing a compelling ground to acknowledge a range of emotional subjectivities infusing the mother-child dyad which aid the healthy differentiation between mother(s) and child(ren).

Cultural context of affective relationship between mothers and sons

To the extent that we accept that cultural ideas pervade and circumscribe the identity of individual women, we need to be mindful of the hegemonic cultural frames within which the Indian women (diverse and uniquely placed) are embedded. In large sections of Indian society (traditional and modern, divided by caste, class, regional, ethnic differences), motherhood is a privileged role which confers upon a woman a purpose and identity which nothing else in her culture can. It is the identity of mother which promises the woman the attention of her husband, the care of the mother-in-law and respect for her parents in the husband's family as she is the one who will give an "heir" to the family. It is a role which maternal women in her own family also upheld and prepared her for. Even if it is something that is foreseen or felt as confining, isolating and interfering with her other needs, she is mentored to see it as a deliverance from the insecurity, doubt and shame of infertility, as a fulfillment of her needs of intimacy manifested in advice such as: 'the child will love you unconditionally, it will be your savior, it will be yours forever.'

Needless to say, such emotional benefits accrue maximally from the birth of son.[2] In cultural traditions, the mother of son is accorded a higher status than the mother of a daughter. A pregnant woman is often given the blessing: 'May you be blessed with prosperity and sons' by the elders. The son is instrumental in performing various kinds of economic, ritual and religious actions that provide security and salvation to his parents. Thus, both in the real world and in cultural imagination (myths and folklore), the mother of son is thus confirmed by the culture as a renewer of the race and a kind of respect and consideration is extended to her which none of the other roles ever accorded to her. It provides a strong impetus to the woman to organize her future life around the core of motherliness, feel grateful for the gift of the son, and be emotionally ready for a poignantly high emotional investment in the boy. For the boy, too, mother is the only person in relation to whom, he experiences his whole self, as the father is usually a distant and an aloof person. As he grows up and identifies with his father, he encounters a man who is more of his mother's son rather than his wife's husband.

[2] It is important to note that there is a noticeable absence in the Indian, more specifically, the Hindu worldview, of the myths of mother-daughter relationship. This marks the obliteration of the mother-daughter relationship in the set-up.

A delectable blend of Erotica and Affection in the 'Good Mother's' Love

In the Yashoda-Gopal legend, we meet the reciprocal cultural images of devoted mother and ideal son. Lord Krishna, the reincarnation of Vishnu, the Preserver of the Hindu Trinity of Gods, is said to have been born in order to rid the earth of the tyranny and oppression of King Kamsa. To escape being murdered by his maternal uncle Kansa, Krishna, the eighth son of Devaki and Vasudeva, was taken to his foster parents, Yashoda and Nand at Gokul. Yashoda is depicted in this legend as an epitome of devoted mother to Bal Gopal, the child version of Lord Krishna. The many stories of Yashoda and Bal Gopal are cultural ideals of indulgent, affectionate mothering in the Indian context. Yashoda took utter delight in her child. She relished his endearing presence in her life and livens up at the very thought of her son. As an infant, he was constantly held, cuddled, crooned and talked to. He was picked up and comforted at the slightest whimper or sign of distress and fed on demand. Even while occupied with other household work, she would always be available to respond to her son's insistent demands and curious questions. Fond as he was of milk, curds and butter, Yashoda sought to satisfy his insatiable appetite with glee.

Often worried and angered by the boy's mischievousness, Yashoda was seen to ultimately forgive Gopal, following his entreaties, amidst a flow of hugs and kisses. Even when gopis (female cowherds) complained about him for breaking their pots of milk and butter or stealing their clothes while they took bath in the river, they were fascinated with his beauty. A flood of affection, joy and pride would rise in Yashoda's heart as she saw their admiration for her son. In these stories, one comes across reluctant attempts, forced by others' nagging, by Yashoda to restrain Gopal, to which the boy would yield, causing significant heartache to the mother, prompting her to free him soon enough. Thus, one doesn't come across the theme of controlling love in this legend of mother-son. In her love for her son, one senses a readiness to follow the inclination and individuality of the child. There are flows of holding the child, letting him go, inviting him to come back and so on in the seamless experience of fusion and separation. The counterpart of Yashoda, Bal Gopal, is perceived as the ideal son. He is mischievous, irresponsible and intrusive in a delightful, almost thrilling, manner. In his adolescent form, he is amorous in his unrestrained dalliance with village gopis, voracious in his 'oral' hunger for milk, curd and butter and amoral in his attitude towards satisfying his desires. He personifies freedom, spontaneity and instinctual exhilaration. One can't help but wonder what inner resource of the mother aids the flowering of such an uninhibited, passionate son? Or what impact does such a willfully desirous child has on the mother? Does it not lead her to get in touch with her own sensual desires through tending to the physical needs of the child, in adoring his beauty, in being sought out by him? In feeling through the legend of mother Yashoda and baby Gopal, one senses deeply erotic currents that animate the affectionate intimacy enjoyed by Yashoda and Gopal.

Affection is usually perceived as devoid of erotica. Phrased largely in the language of care and responsibility, much less is spoken of the erotic bond between the mother and the child. Psychoanalysis, too, underscores the erotic-sexual dimension of the maternal care. However, it is important to remind oneself that the nursing couple is engaged in the first, primal act of intercourse, with breast-feeding sexually stimulating for infants of both sexes, as well as for the mother (Elise, 2001). The breasts do not

solely feed but provide sensuous delight and genital stimulation to both mother and child. They are not the singular Good (or Bad) psychoanalytic Breast, but form an erotic link between mother and infant that extends to the sensual involvement of the entire body. "We have only to think of the riveting passion brought to bear on what is likely the first sexual connection between two adults: kissing — an homage to maternal eroticism, though with few people having this link consciously, or comfortably, in mind" (Elise, 2015, p.22). The baby is certainly an erotic being for the mother. Novelist Barbara Kingsolver (1998) captures this experience: "A mother's body remembers her babies — the folds of soft flesh, the softly furred scalp against her nose. Each child has its own entreaties to body and soul" (p. 381). The child also has sensual fascination with the mother's bodily presence. Her eyes, face, swirling hair, the aromatic scent of her flesh, her milk makes the child feel a sense of awe and wondrous appreciation. In these developmental beginnings, the relation with the mother provides a sensuous matrix, a birthplace of meanings. Her sensual care maps each child's sexual body, giving life to erotic delights and desires. Do we not see here a glimpse of Yashoda's sensual care giving rise to baby Gopal's life of desires? Ideally, these early erotic components then gather "steam" in the more complex, triangular oedipal configuration where various erotic strands intricately intertwine, extending into oedipal desire for the mother.

Within the mother-child dyad, erotic desire circulates as a vital force of life. The mother's erotic capacity rests on an internalization of this erotic vitality from her own mother (and father). A mother, much like Yashoda, uses her vibrancy and erotic enjoyment of the child in mothering the child. The encounter with the mother as an erotic being brings into being the child's erotic self both in the specifically sexual and in the most general sense: vitality in living, a curious and creative engagement with life — eros, rather than functional adaptation to life. Crucial to our humanity is our inheritance of maternal eroticism — a generational transmission of tantalizing tenderness and fierce passions in an embodied relationship with mother, with self, and with the world. This lusty experience of being in the world extends beyond the maternal orbit and beyond the purely sexual to a more general joie de vivre, a passion for life in its ups and downs. Here, is a link between creativity and erotic. Elise (2015) underscores this link:

> Consider painters, writers, musicians, who are up at all hours of the night with their efforts (like a new lover, and the new mother), an excitement stirred that can only be described as erotic, an investment that holds, over time, even when a project frustrates, stalls, perplexes — one's libidinal energy seeing it through in the face of obstacles, sticking with it, sacrifice, transformation, and transcendence…One is willing to forego the gratification of immediate "orgasm" for a longer range, possibly more subtle, yet likely multiple climax — standing by one's project rather than just coming and going. One is willing to suffer in the service of the creative goal — a kind of sacrifice not as masochistic subjugation, but as an investment raised up from within oneself and extended outward. (p.26)

Let us take a pause here to reflect. Does this example of an erotic investment of one's libidinal energy in a project that 'frustrates, stalls, perplexes', of suffering for a creative commitment raised from within and extending forward, not remind us of inexhaustible patience and generosity that underlie good enough mothering? Indeed, in the absence of maternal desire, the mother is not able to engage with her child and neglects or abandons him or her and in this sense is so 'other' to her child as to be

unrecognizable. The maternal 'erotic investment that holds' and supports the growth of the child also lays down the foundation for the child to live life with passion. Good mothering sees the coming together of affectionate and sensual currents in the relationship between the mother and son/child fostering healthy emotional development in the latter.

When discussing the good mother, it is important to remind us that a 'real' (not mythical) good mother is a "good enough" mother, a phrase coined by Winnicott. She need not be, in fact, must not be, a perfect mother, if there is anything like that in reality. She is an ordinary devoted mother who follows the lead of her child's readiness to graduate from a state of absolute dependence to relative dependence by matching her erotic-affectionate care with it. Initially, when the infant is absolutely dependent on the mother, she shows a high degree of adaptation to the child's needs, both bodily and ego. Any failure or impingement of adaptation causes a reaction in the infant and the reaction breaks up the going-on-being of the infant.

Gradually, she adapts less and less completely according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failures. This provides the much needed experience of disillusionment necessary to make the maternal object separate (and not fused), real (and not fantasized) and human (and not magical) and for the development of ambivalence (good and bad together constitute a whole) [Winnicott, 1960]. In light of this, it is imperative and healthy for the mother to gradually separate from the child; to rely on her eroticism to invest in the child and also to propel her in directions of desire other than the child, supporting her child's unfolding as well her as her own. Both her development and that of her child require that her erotic nature also take her elsewhere: into other lively, passionate, creative investments, whether those be with her lover, with artistic pursuits, or in meaningful work and other projects.

Hateful and Destructive: Emotional Constructions of Bad Mother

The split part of the fantasy/myth of good breast/mother is bad breast/mother. The bad mother imago has two elements. One is of an aggressive destructive mother and the other is of a sexually devouring mother. The former stems from mother's hate for the child and the latter stems from a situation where the mother treats the child as an object of satisfaction in the sense of being her possession, a hostage child who remains passive and captivated in her desire and who, as a result, is at risk of not being able to establish and stabilize his or her own desire. Let us first talk of maternal hate and destruction.

The myth of Putana and Krishna highlights the fear of malevolent mother. According to legend, Kamsa, informed of the prophecy that the eight child of his cousin's would one day kill him, confined his cousin Devaki and her husband Vasudeva in the prison and killed all their offsprings as soon as they were born. But Krishna was rescued and was taken to his foster parents, Yashoda and Nand, in another part of the kingdom. When Kamsa came to know about infant Krishna's escape, he ordered the demoness Putana to search for the baby and kill him. She transformed herself into a beautiful woman, smeared poison on her nipples and finally came to the house where Krishna lived. Pretending an upsurge of maternal love, she took the infant-God, Krishna, from Yashoda's lap and gave him her nipples to suckle. Krishna sucked so hard that he not only drank all the milk, but also sucked her life away. Putana shrieked and fell to her

death, revealing her original demonic form. When Yashoda understood what had just happened, she rushed to give her healthy nipples to his son, and rock him to sleep. The legend concludes that Putana attained moksha, in spite of being a demoness, because she had acted as a mother, even if, a malevolent one to the infant-God.

In this cultural myth the contrast between Yashoda, the benevolent mother, and Putana, the malevolent mother is striking. The former is a life-affirming, fear-dispelling presence; the latter is a murderous, fearful presence. The image of poisoned breast intended to kill the child is vividly symbolic of a mother's hatred and rage towards the child. Like, maternal eroticism, maternal hatred is also a highly uncomfortable emotional phenomenon to talk about. However, it is very much an experience of mothering and when in awareness (which is possible only when culture will stop prohibiting this experience), can it be dealt with optimal benefits for both mother and child. Winnicott's (1949) statement of maternal hate stand us in good stead here: "the mother hates the baby even before the child hates the mother" (p.69). It is instructive to note that he acknowledges the presence of hate in both mother and child.

Talking of maternal hate, why does the mother hate the child? Winnicott provides twenty reasons for it. They are: " the baby is a danger to her body in pregnancy and at birth; the baby is an interference with her private life, a challenge to [her] preoccupation; the baby hurts her nipples by suckling, which is at first a chewing activity; the baby is ruthless, treats her as scum, an unpaid servant, a slave; she has to love him, excretions and all; the baby shows disillusionment about her; his excited love is cupboard love so that having got what he wants he throws her away like an orange peel; he does not know at all what she does or what she sacrifices for him, especially he cannot allow for her hate; he is suspicious, refuses her good food, and makes her doubt herself, but eats well with his aunt; after an awful morning with him she goes out, and he smiles at a stranger, who says: 'Isn't he sweet!'; if she fails him at the start she knows he will pay her out for ever; he excites her but frustrates—she mustn't eat him or trade in sex with him" (Winnicott, pp.72-73). Who can contest these reasons? The child's absolute dependence, ruthless 'use', erratic emotional behaviours undoubtedly, can frustrate and infuriate any 'good enough' mother. No amount of prior physical and emotional preparation can help a woman endure these experiences without a trace of malice and disdain at the 'wickedness' and 'ruthlessness' of the child. Of course, everyone knows that the child is not doing it intentionally, but still!

To the above mentioned charges, one can add one more for maternal hate. When the son grows up and tries to individuate from the mother, she may resent it. Having spent a large part of her youth tending to his needs, she may be emotionally unwilling to let him go. The image of the 'contaminated love' of the mother in 'poisoned breast' also can allude to her rage at being betrayed by the son, her need to keep him dependent on her, as he is also the psycho-social guarantor of her identity (Kakar, 1978). A 'good enough' mother should be able to tolerate hating her child without doing anything about it. Affection, in other words, is an ability to withstand the anger, frustration and hatred for being used by the child ruthlessly, without destroying the child. Maternal love is inclusive of the experience of hatred. Winnicott (1949) states, "The most remarkable thing about a mother is her ability to be hurt so much by her child and to hate so much

without paying the child out, and her ability to wait for rewards that may or may not come at a later date" (p. 72)[3].

Roszika Parkar (1996) argues that when hate is incorporated into an ambivalent whole with love, rather than being split off, it helps mothers to think about what their child needs in a realistic way. Denial of hatred by the mother is unhelpful for the child as well. In an environment, where the mother is unable to hate the child fully, because it is prohibited or because of fear of what she may do due to it, the child is also impeded in his capacity to tolerate the full extent of his hatred. He needs hate to hate. Winnicottian statement on maternal hatred is important to consider from the point of view of emotional development of the child. Exclusive focus on maternal love, thereby sentimentalizing it, does far more harm to the emotional lives of mothers and children than good.

Now comes the question: Why does the child hate the mother? Klein (1957) opines that the child's hate and destruction stems from frustration by the breast which is bound to enter into the infant's earliest relation to it, because even a happy feeding situation cannot altogether replace the pre-natal unity with the mother. Together with happy experiences, unavoidable grievances like weaning, reinforce the conflict between love and hate in the child. Klein writes of child's envy of the mother. The infant's feelings seem to be that when the breast deprives him, it becomes bad because it keeps the milk, love, and care associated with the good breast all to itself. He hates and envies what he feels to be the mean, grudging and poisoned breast. It is perhaps more understandable that the satisfactory breast is also envied. The very ease with which the milk comes—though the infant feels gratified by it—also gives rise to envy because this gift seems something so unattainable. The envious impulse is to spoil the goodness of the breast by putting bad excrements and bad parts of the self into the mother, and first of all in her breast, in order to destroy her. This way of understanding gives us a reason to speculate that this imago of aggressive, destructive mother is a projection of child's own envious hate of the mother so that she is transformed into a hostile and threatening figure. The 'poisoned' breast can represent weaning experience when the child experiences the loss of the familiar protection and nurturing of the maternal presence, vitiating her love and creating a rage projected onto the mother: 'It is not me who wants to kill the mother for frustrating me, but she who wants to destroy me for my voracious need for her.' What we see here is the Indian boy's struggle to individuate from the mother.

Seductive and Sexually Devouring : Emotional Imago of Bad Mother

The theme of the controlling mother is especially prominent in another image of the Bad mother which is that of the mother as a treacherous, lustful seductress with an insatiable, contaminating sexuality. Quite a popular imagery in Indian folklore, legends and case histories of Indian men, it is important to first understand the social context of female sexuality in India, to understand its importance in the male psyche. In the Indian context,

[3] In the Putana myth, it is instructive to note that the destruction of the bad mother is followed by her redemption. The child's anger at the mother is followed by a need to repair the severance and restore the nurturing mother.

it is in the sphere of unsatisfied erotic needs, a seductive restlessness, more than that of rage and hostility, that the possibility of disturbance in the mother-son relationship lay (Kakar, 1978).

This is because female sexuality is severely curtailed in Indian society. De-emphasis on conjugality prevents many women from finding the satisfaction of emotional and even psychosexual needs in marriage. Here, the mother's role is privileged. It accords a woman status and a clearly defined role in the society. But maternity demands an ever greater renunciation of a woman's erotic impulses and exclusive devotion to her child's welfare. Such psychosocial conditions may predispose her to seek the erotic satisfaction from her son. She can perceive the son as a savior and to nurture him with gratitude, reverence as well as affection and care. Under such conditions, the child can become the object of her own unfulfilled desires and wishes, however, antithetical they may be to his own. He may feel confused, helpless and inadequate in meeting her desires, frightened by her intimations and demands and unable, even unwilling, to get away. In his fantasy, such a possessive mother emerges as a sexually devouring image.

One such illustration of sexual dread of the mother is the myth of Skanda, the son of Shiva and Parvati. When Skanda killed Taraka (a demon who had been terrorizing the gods), his mother Parvati rewarded him by telling him to amuse himself as he pleased. He misused the boon by making love to the wives of the gods, and the gods could not stop it. They complained to Parvati about the misdemeanor of Skanda. Parvati decided that she would take the form of whatever woman Skanda was about to seduce. So whosoever Skanda summoned for love making, in each of them, he saw his mother's reflection. Then Skanda was filled with shame and thought, "the universe is filled with my mother" and became passionless.

Another representation of the collective male fantasy of the child's encounter with the sexual mother can be seen in the mythical meeting of Arjuna, a hero of the epic Mahabharata, with the apsara (heavenly damsel) Urvasi. Arjuna is enthralled by her beauty and waits in anticipation to meet her. But when the moment arrives, he is overwhelmed by her erotic beauty and her frank and direct desire for him. He turns bashful and pleads with her not to entertain such feelings towards him as he treats her as a superior to himself. Urvasi, nonetheless, persists in her demands. Arjuna expresses the helplessness of the child who desires the mother's love and care but is instead held hostage to her sexual desires. He implores her to return as he looks upon her as his mother and seeks to be protected like a son. Urvasi is incensed at being spurned and disregarded. She turns her rage onto Arjuna and curses him that he will have to pass his time amongst females, and as a dancer and scorned as a eunuch.

Both these cultural myths highlight a male fantasy of maternal sexuality which, if not moderated, can create disturbances in the sexual functioning and intimate relations of men. While the excesses of maternal needs, beyond the child's capacity to fulfill them, contribute to this fantasy, we should not ignore the possibility of the defense of projective identification[4] at play here, whereby the child wants to control the mother for

[4] Projective identification is a defense mechanism elucidated by Melanie Klein, an object relational theorist. According to it, the other is not merely a screen to project one's disavowed

his own use and pleasure but the awareness dawns on him: 'I and my (m)other are not alone in the world, that the (m)other has its own object,' which is not the baby and which Green (1986) calls the 'other of the object', in other words the third element which the father symbolizes. From now on, the baby will not only have to bother about his own sexual impulses, but also to wonder and to fantasize about the secret relationships of the two partners, which do exclude him in order to enjoy mutually their intimate pleasurable relationship. This ushers in dread of the sexual mother.

The son's dread of the aggressive and sexual mother is thus, a two way street. It is partly due to the unfulfilled neediness of the woman who is in the thrall of an all-encompassing role of the mother and seeks satisfaction exclusively from the son. It is also due to the son's ambivalent needs to have the mother for his own use and pleasure but also strives to separate and individuate from the maternal-feminine (Kakar, 1978). The dilemma of the Indian son with respect to his mother is: how to enjoy his mother's love and support without crippling his own budding individuality? This dilemma is coupled with the modern Indian woman's dilemma: how to reconcile the pains and pleasures of motherhood with the other loves of her life? Benjamin (1995) suggests a path out of this zero sum game in which each feels in the other's power, each feels other to be abuser-seducer, each perceives other as 'doing to me'. The way out is not to see the duo as fused but to focus on the intersubjective space between mother and child present in the earliest exchange of gestures between them which allows for conflict of interests, ambivalence, and play with omnipotence fantasies.

It is discussed above, how mother's erotic passions besides child rearing and her tolerance for the hatred she feels for the child are helpful in recognizing the mother as a 'separate' being. Infant researchers like Fonagy and Target (1996) state that recognition of the (m)other as a separate centre of subjectivity js central to child's sense of being recognized as oneself, because after all, it takes 'one' to recognize the 'one'. The idea is not to suppress the fantasy that the (m)other could meet our wishes perfectly, but to acknowledge it as a fantasy and tolerate its distance from reality. This leads to mourning because the ideal is relinquished. It inaugurates acceptance of imperfection, all the misses in our reach for the other, and to endure and sometimes relish the other's outside existence. It is through such intersubjective process that the mother-son dynamics can transform from object-subject, oppression-domination relationship to subject-subject relationship.

Love and Beyond…..

> A mother is only brought unlimited satisfaction by her relation to a son; this is altogether the most perfect, the most free from ambivalence of all human relationships. —Sigmund Freud, "Femininity" (1933, p.133)

The paper revolves around disputing such claims of emotional relationship shared by mothers and sons, which are widespread in our everyday as well as social scientific

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parts, but is also manipulated/induced to become the very embodiment of that projection, to evoke the thoughts or feelings provoked, to control other's mind or body. As a form of interpersonal communication, due to projective identification, the recipient gets caught into the fantasy of the other person and unconsciously plays out the part projected onto itself.

discourses. By unraveling the cultural myths of 'good' and 'bad' mother, this essay highlights how these imagos are products of unconscious manoeuvres of splitting and projective identification that emerge in our earliest emotional relationship with the maternal person. Good and bad are kept apart (split) to protect the infant (and the infant that is present in us at all stages of our lives) from the threat to its psychological survival of the possibility that the good and bad breast/ mother is one and the same. Love and hate are separable - by splitting - but at the cost of acknowledging reality.

Through the myths, the writing also brings to light the real set of emotions within which the dyad operates, specifically the unacknowledged aspects of maternal subjectivity such as mother's erotic feelings and maternal hatred which counters the sentimental discourse of loving mother as the only 'natural' reality. The theory of mother-child relationship is based largely on the idea of connection and relation and that is the reason why attitudes and feelings of love, affection, dependency and protectiveness are exclusively assumed to characterize the dyad. Less emphasis is paid to the processes of differentiation and autonomy which are equally germane to the developmental processes unfolding in the relationship. A closer attention to the individuating processes critical for both mother and child reveals the positive and creative potential of maternal eroticism and hatred for the psychic development of both partners of the dyad.

Kristeva (2014) states that the mother-infant dyad relies on circulating eroticism within their pairing — a force of life, a pulsing that brings them together and sends them apart. The parental sexual couple must also be kept in view: maternal eroticism is not solely in relation to the child, for the child, but an aspect of a woman as a sexual being in fullness. Freud (1905) tells us that this sexual contact between mother and infant serves the purpose of "rousing her child's sexual instinct and preparing for its later intensity" (p. 223). Stevens and Price (1996) suggest:

> It could be that a primary function of breast-feeding is that, in addition to providing nourishment, it ensures regular and intimate physical contact in conditions of deep satisfaction and contentment to both parties . . . and that the manner in which physical contact is expressed and experienced during early life may decisively influence an adult's ability to enjoy sexuality within the intimacy of a close relationship. (p. 44)

The erotic satisfaction that both mother and child receive in this reciprocal relationship enables them both to let go and move on. Satiation, or the right amount of stimulation, promotes growth and the ability to separate. Because unmet needs can create a maturational fixation, the satisfaction of a need frees both the mother and the baby to move on to the next phase.

Similarly, maternal hate inclusive of ordinary emotions of dislike, irritation, anger and rejection is integral for the child to feel fully human. Phillips summarises: "if [the child] is not hated, if what is unacceptable about him is not acknowledged, then his love and loveableness will not feel fully real to him." (1988, p. 89) Hate as a realistic acknowledgement of unacceptable aspects of the child enables both mother and child to acknowledge the imperfect reality of each other and act accordingly. It helps them to separate (without the father's intervention). Maternal hate is also important for

recognition, a concept developed by Benjamin (1984), which she understands as 'being known as oneself'. She traces recognition back to the initial mother-baby relationship:

> In order to become human beings, we have to receive recognition from the first people who care for us. In our society it is usually the mother who bestows recognition. She responds to our communications, our acts, and our gestures so that we feel they are meaningful. Her recognition makes us feel that vital connection to another being as necessary to human survival as food. (Benjamin, 1984, p.293)

The need for recognition conflicts with the need of the infant to control the mother to defend itself from the anxiety of dependency. If the baby controls her, it cannot experience true recognition from her, because she can only practice recognition from a position of independence. In Benjamin's argument, it is in the child's interest, as well as the mother's, that the mother is a subject; that is a person in her own right, differentiated psychologically from the person of her child, capable of recognizing the differences between her own wishes and desires and those of her child(ren) (Hollway,2001)

Bansal (2012) found that coexisting alongside the centrality of the nurturing attachment to the mother in the emotional world of young Indian males were conflictual emotions of being overregulated, disappointed with maternal love and pressurized for achievement. There were times when they yearned to feel free of the maternal ambit to have their own "adventures". The mothers too were sensed as being individuals in their own right, oppressed in some ways and independent in others; at times as father's wife and at times as a woman with her own ambitions. Acknowledgement of dynamics of recognition and reciprocity helps to position the mother-son dyad not exclusively within the discourse of 'all loving' mothering, but within the very real set of relations, infused variously by feelings of love, hate, obligation, envy and guilt, among others.

There is an urgent need to get away from sentimentality of love - the misweighing of emotions, the idealization and simplification that infuse the discursive productions of maternal relationship with sons.

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