

By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA



Of Big Daddies, Sugar Daddies, and Just Daddies
Of all kinds of 'Daddies' are in the news. I want to state here that I had a loving and caring father, who has been with me through all the times that I have endured. This caring did not mean pampering and he did not fail to reprimand when it was called for. I wouldn't have exchanged him for anything in the world. He was a father who taught me the value of hard work and not to yield to any pressures. He would recount anecdotes with such gusto that even when he repeated them, one still listened as if to new stories. He wasn't tall, dark and handsome. He didn't flaunt his hairy chest. He and my mother cooked jointly. Not that he was without his faults, but this is an attempt to highlight certain positive traits that are not usually attributed to men.

I even had a situation where I was supporting students gheraoing Government officers over some social justice issue, and he was also gheraoed as part of that, and he very politely told me that he did not take it personally, and that he felt the students were correct in what they were doing. There wasn't that I - or We-know-what-is-right-and-everybody-else-is-a-dim-wit, who doesn't know what is best for them.

But one doesn't find that kind of approach today. I am, in fact, appalled at what I see. In current governance scenarios, be it in politics or in the judiciary, we are projecting notions of manhood or leadership where men believe they know all, that their 56 inch chests -whether they have them or not - are for flaunting and are passports to power, that a narcissistic personality is in, that decisiveness is about taking instant decisions according to one's own whims and fancies without consulting others. This is the imagery of manhood being normalized in today's world, from the smallest unit of governance, that is the family, to the father figure in governance through the executive or the judiciary at the national level.

Big Daddy politics is writ large on the Indian firmament. Some even boldly name themselves so. In so doing, they reaffirm a stereotype of the masculine as one who takes risks, among other things, when gambling. What they do not tell you is that this kind of 'no-limits' risk-taking is nothing to honour. It comes at the cost of the family, where there is no food on the table, and constant knocking at the family's doors for return of monies borrowed to make up for monies lost in gambling. Surely such risk-taking is not a virtue?

This happens not only at the level of family but also within country groupings such as SAARC or BRICS. India, for instance, wants to take control of South Asian and BRICS countries. It chooses not to understand the simple logic that growing collectively is safer for everyone and does not meet with resistance from those countries which India wants to lord over. It also does not seem to understand that lording over others also means summoning of resources, which are scant as it is for its own people, to flaunt protection to countries that are otherwise

vulnerable.



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In Goa today, we have a politics embedded in casinos, gaming, sugar-daddying, and machismo. So risk-taking, complemented by mafiosi-type bouncer protection, as exemplified by casinos, is in. You can dream your dreams while the gaming machines are purportedly manipulated.

The world also has sugar daddies, who, from their vantage position of politico-economic power, ensure provisions to poorer folks, or to folks who want to 'keep up with the Joneses', in exchange of sexual favours among other things. Some sugar daddies are open about it while others hide behind an aura of sainthood. But there are many of these around. And again, this is normalized in this there-are-people-who-are-in-need-and-there-are-others-providing culture, which does not respect a rights culture where the people who do not enjoy basic rights are entitled to State benefits.

We also have machismo at play, with women or sometimes even men becoming the targets of attack by some men. These men claim to be thumping their chests for the Goanness they are protecting - a so-called Goanness which seeks to annihilate anything that does not fit into their book of life. So an LGBT woman or a woman riding a big motorcycle 'excites' them to overpower and violate. Similarly, somebody who does not comply is also an object of their overpowering agenda.

And then we also have a politics, which allows, to use Fukuyama's analogy 'small frogs in large ponds, to move to smaller ponds in which they will loom larger'. This is about awarding all the cronies little contracts as an acknowledgement of the 'political' work of canvassing and dispensing done by them. These Daddies, are given corporation positions, or significant contract positions and they play Daddy of the small pond that they have been given the opportunity to lord over.

Do we need these Big Daddies and Sugar Daddies? Or do we need plain Daddies and Mummies, not to mention just men, women, transgenders, children, and others, who will dream a different world, where justice and equity enable all of us to live harmoniously in peace?

We must remember that if we let this kind of 'Daddying' take full hold, either by normalizing it, or by imagining that it is just between the gamblers and the casinos, or between the sugar daddies and those who are called 'sugar babies', or between machistas and unconventional people, we will be doing so at our own peril. For this will mean bringing back of the days when protector gangs ruled and 'settled' disputes, instead of the courts and the Constitution of India.

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