

Girls Don't Cry



AMITAVA KAR

COULD anybody imagine Dwight Eisenhower, a five-star general in the United States Army and the 34th president of the United States cry

in public? How about John F. Kennedy? They may have had the occasional misty eye when the flag passed by, but for the most part, they kept their emotions private.

In the US, there has been a real role reversal when it comes to tears. It is now men who are often seen shedding tears in public, the usual grudging masculine tears or the occasional real spill. There are acceptable times and places for the shedding, though. Soccer fields, basketball courts or tennis courts seem to be the most suitable places. Whether red-eyed in defeat or elated with victory, American

men can now be visibly moist. Of course, that's always been somewhat true. Sportsmen who have proven their heroism on a playing field have always been given a dispensation. But nowhere is the turn to tears more noticeable than in the ranks of US male politicians. Edmund Muskie, the democratic governor of Maine, later a senator and the Secretary of State in the Carter administration was out the presidential race for weeping while defending his wife's reputation back in 1972 after a newspaper had launched a personal attack on his wife. The press shattered his image as 'calm' and 'reasoned' by reporting that he actually broke down and cried although Muskie later stated that what appeared to be tears were actually melted snowflakes.

Those days are long gone. In 1996, Bob Dole, the button-downed Republican candidate often cried on the campaign trail. When he mentioned his experience as a valiant soldier or his tough childhood in



Kansas, he choked up. How else was he going to reassure his audience that he was, indeed, one of them? And Bill Clinton to date remains a master of the quivering lip and dampened eye, all bulletproof signs of unshakable integrity. Clinton also represents a touchy-feely generation, a lot of whom occasionally gather in coliseums to celebrate Transcendence en masse while crying openly. More recently we have had John Boehner, the current Speaker of the United States House of

Representatives, a Republican from Ohio, who sobs, in the form of quivering lip and wet lashes, at times of heightened public emotions. This apparently gives Boehner and his macho persona—the Camel cigarettes, deep voice and a tough childhood that included running cases of beer in his father's bar—credibility.

It's an irony that the only politicians who can't cry in America today

are women. That's what America has come to.

On September 28, 1987, when Rep. Patricia Schroeder withdrew from the 1988 Presidential race, she burst into tears and said, "I couldn't figure out a way to run. There must be a way, but I haven't figured it out yet." She was hounded for her tears for years to come. Everyone had their say. See, we knew women were wimps, their place is in the kitchen.

Interestingly enough, a 2014 survey by the Pew Research Center finds some interesting facts about why women don't reach the upper echelons in leadership in politics and business: because they are held to higher standards and Americans aren't ready.

This is what you are up against, Hillary, now that you are 'finally', running. Men can cry and you can't.

And I'm struggling to figure out if we can call this progress.

The writer is an engineer-turned-journalist.

This is what you are up against, Hillary, now that you are 'finally', running. Men can cry and you can't.



An educator's appraisal

REBECCA HAQUE

AS a public servant working in a public university, I take umbrage at the sharp disdain and negativity displayed by a faculty member of North-South University in her OP-ED piece, titled "Wasteland", published prominently framed on the top right corner of page 7 of *The Daily Star* on Tuesday, April 14, 2015.

Given the reality of the corruption, mismanagement, logistical and transportation chaos regarding waste retrieval in this teeming megalopolis, the esteemed educator's frustration with the City Corporation's negligence and presumed apathy is understandable. Editorial decision to singularly highlight this piece is also understandable. With Dhaka City mayoral elections on the horizon, we hope the most capable man or woman will rid us, as Ms. Mahapatro writes, of "streets [that] fester with the stench of our collective waste, these open, free-flowing urinals..."

I repeat, my umbrage is with the cumulative tenor of the essay, which refracts vision and voice into a defeatist "whimper" of surrender. Ms Mahapatro certainly knows her Modernist literature,

and has chosen to present herself wearing the iconic Dadaist Edvard Munch face. I wish to point out that we are not "buried in the past". Nor are we a "dirty, dirty nation". We are a proud nation of tough, resilient people with passion and poetry in our hearts. We are makers of art and artifacts, with shining eyes, elastic minds, and nimble skills. We are growers of silk and sustaining crops; we are fisher-folk and weavers and potters and goldsmiths. We are singers and dancers and musicians and wordsmiths all—celebrating this vibrant, dynamic City.

It is true that our politicians have been the nation's bane, keeping the masses ill-fed, un-housed, and illiterate for decades. The task before us is huge, but we have made substantial progress in raising the female literacy rate, in maternal and child care, and in public health and hygiene. And, yes, my City is suffocating with a population hundred-times more than it can afford to shelter. Sadly, despite the most logical and rational solution, which is to decentralise governance from the capital City, the political leaders have still not seen the clear benefits of decentralisation. Development and modernisation of the urban infrastructure, in Jessore, Dinajpur, Rangpur,

Khulna, Bogra, Kushtia, Pabna, and in other smaller towns, will stop the continuous flow of humanity to the centre.

Yet, unlike Ms Mahapatro, I do not see my city as she sees it: "a city without sense or senses". Unlike the Western graduate, I do not have the privilege of the clean cocoon of a distant affluent private University. Nor do I cross the threshold of expatriate clubs and societies. I choose not to avert my eyes or hold my nose at the *Fleurs du mal*. Like so many of my ilk, I choose involvement, not detachment. I choose to wage battle with nihilism; I choose to fully commit my being to the people of my city and my nation. I choose to get my hands dirty to clear the garbage of the mind and body. I choose to lift the skirt of my sari a centimetre over my ankle as I walk the mud and sludge to my domain among the rich and the poor.

I have a living, throbbing relationship with this city, as ugly and as godly as any relationship on earth. I wish to cement this relationship (allow me to misquote T.S. Eliot) not 'with a whimper' of alienation, but 'with a bang' of delight.

The writer is faculty member at University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

From first lady to first woman PRESIDENT!

ABDUL MATIN

SHE has finally announced her candidacy for the president of the United States of America. In a short video message in her campaign website, she said on Sunday, "I'm running for president." It is easy to guess who she is. She is none other than Hillary Clinton, a former first lady, a former senator and a former secretary of state. She added, "Everyday Americans need a champion, and I want to be that champion, so you can do more than just get by. You can get ahead, and stay ahead... Americans have fought their way back from tough economic times. But the deck is still stacked in favour of those at the top."

She tried once in 2008 also but finally yielded in favour of her opponent in the race, Barack Obama. Having served as secretary of state for four years under President Obama, she declined a second term. It was a wise decision. It gave her ample time to do her homework well this time. She released her memoir, "Hard Choices," in June, 2014 and subtly set her candidature in motion. Hillary criss-crossed the country signing copies of her memoir in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C and also appeared on TV interviews. She also campaigned for the Democratic candidates for the 2014 election to the Congress, though the outcome of the election was not very encouraging for the Democrats. National TV channels took the launching of her book seriously and debated her prospects in 2016.

She is the first Democrat to announce the candidacy and has already been endorsed by President Obama. "She was a formidable candidate in 2008. She was a great supporter of mine in the general election. She was an outstanding secretary of state. She is my friend." Obama said this at a regional summit in Panama and added, "I think she would be an excellent president." She is sure to get one more important endorsement from her husband and former President Bill Clinton, considered to be the most popular living former president.

Complimenting Hillary, Bill Clinton once told voters before his election as president of the US for his first term that they would get two at the White House for the price of one. With two major important endorsements and no other serious candidates in the race, Hillary Clinton can be sure to get her party's nomination.

What are her prospects? Senators Ted Cruz from Texas and Rand Paul from Kentucky are already in the race for the Republican nomination. Ex-Florida governor Jeb Bush and Senator Marco Rubio from Florida, both Republican, are also likely to run. As far as personal credentials are concerned, the Republican candidates are no match for Hillary Clinton. Her opponents tried to discredit Hillary by raising questions first about her income from paid lectures and later about the use of her private email account for official purpose while she was the secretary of state but apparently failed. The Americans hardly pay any attention to such issues which do not affect them directly.

The issues the US voters are likely to consider are her personal credentials, the US economy and to some extent the performance of President Barack Obama. The US unemployment rate in March was 5.5%, down from 5.7% in October, 2014. The quarterly GDP growth rate has been positive and substantial since the beginning of 2012, except for the first quarter of 2014. President Obama took a few important policy decisions, including one on immigration which may help Hillary to get the popular support of ethnic communities like the Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans and the mixed races. The normalisation of relations with Cuba and Iran may also have a positive impact on the election.

Last but not the least, there is the issue of gender. If Hillary is nominated, she will be the first woman candidate to run for the White House. The gender issue may, therefore, be an important factor. The turnout of women voters was higher than that of male voters in the 2008 US presidential elections and many of them may like to see a woman president at the White House in 2017.

From all considerations, the prospect of the Clintons returning to the White House by exchanging their roles looks very bright indeed. The Democrats presented the first Catholic president John F. Kennedy, and the first president of colour Barack Obama. Why shouldn't they present the first woman president and create history once again?

The writer is a retired nuclear engineer.

STAR WEEKEND

in other news...

With a fresh new format, new writers and a new perspective, the *Star Weekend* has an array of articles for your reading pleasure. This week our spotlight highlights the economic consequences of the constant country-wide hartals, which started in January of this year, and how it is negatively affecting businesses all around the nation. Our last instalment on life in the Geneva Camps talks about the lack of healthcare provided to the camp-dwellers. There is an article recognising the first Bangladeshi selected as one of the 100 Most Talented Global HR Leaders at the 23rd World HRD Congress. Don't forget your copy of *Star Weekend*, tomorrow, Friday!

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Yesterday's answer

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CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

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