

The Inner Journey and the Cultured Self

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ABSTRACT

The comparative anatomy of the psyche may best be understood in fairy tales. For, in fairy tales are embodied truth that are archetypal in nature; truth that may afford one in transforming psychological wounds into sound health that maybe expressed in terms of spirituality, creativity, or a simple better adjustment to life. The Kashmiri tale of the wicked stepmother is one such tale that is a variant of the Cinderella story. This paper is an attempt to reflect on an already published paper by the same author entitled “The Soul Journey: A Kashmiri Tale” from analytical psychology perspective. The paper delineates the psychological journey of a woman, and of man-for in every man is a woman, and in every woman a man.

Keywords: Fairy tale, Individuation, Analytical psychology, Self

INTRODUCTION

The more compulsive the one-sidedness and the more untamed the libido which streams off to one side, the more daemonic it becomes...” [1].

The Kashmiri tale in the form of the Cinderella variant, as mentioned in the article “The Soul Journey: A Kashmiri Tale,” have been narrated over the centuries. Although it may only be in the later adaptation that we find the women no longer portrayed as damsels in distress, but as strong willed women who may very well do on her own. But this inherently comes with a drawback, a limitation in trying to engross oneself in the external pleasures of the world, while limiting oneself of that one true thing the heart desires- portrayed by the man.

As the woman climbs the social ladder on her own without having to marry the prince, the man plays an insignificant role in her life. Thusly, she is lopsided. There is a lacking in the soul. This drive may be externalized as a need for social validation which, in most cases, are amplified as a drive for career. This is an externalization of the inner conflict one may face in life. As society behaves more individualized, the value of being in a community and collective ideals in us is crippled by the self. In the process of modernization of the society, we become more challenging of our own life and time. As a result, mankind, in general, question the ways of the world as the collective journey is incorporated into our lived experience. With each passing, our striving as a collective conscious mass change. This collective journey of the psyche is enmeshed in the journey of the self. As we

strive to find that one true thing that may complete us as we question our existence and ask ourselves what the purpose of life is.

The paper in review here does not attempt to answer what the purpose of life is; instead, it attempts to understand the necessary elements that may be required for the self to be individualized which, in its process, may delineate meaning and purpose to the lived experience of the individuating self. So, it is that we find women nowadays are inclined to questioning the stereotypical defined roles of the society. Exemplified as a change in social status, it may in its true essence be a reaction to the change of time and growth of the collective self. Thusly, a woman who used to believe she needs a man to be complete now believes she is very well alone as long as she has the company of the externalized dream and strivings. So is true of the man who believes he is well alone. But this man that the heart so desires, regardless of the external achievement, supposedly brings in her a wholeness, a completeness that the external world is unable to bring. The absence of neglecting of this person is

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portrayed as an emptiness, an incompleteness. For, in its absence the woman becomes an externalized individual highly driven by achievement oriented goal that is, yet again, unable to eventually compensate for the emptiness within. This one-sidedness is both a drawback and an advantage, and it may amass to certain difficulties in life [1]. Though an improvement from the portrayal of women as damsels to be saved, it is nonetheless the same. An externally self-sufficient being may still be the slave of the internal deprivation that we in the modern technological world strives to fill: we may as well be the damsels unknowing of our distress, escaping in our repressed selves, or regressed ideals of chauvinism and narcissistic orientation to life, of overcompensating oneself with acknowledgement from peers and super ordinates, of seeking insurmountable attention and validation from people in social media whom we have not even met and are likely to never meet in real life, or simply being a difficult person. The paper, thus, dwells on the notion of the psychic individuality in the process of individuation as inhibited in the symbolism latent in the tale of the wicked stepmother.

Von Franz [2] contend that every fairy tale is a tale of the self, and of the individuating self. And each fairy tale is oriented to a different stage in the life of the individual. Danilewitz [3] contemplated upon the importance of fairy tale citing it as the "earliest collectively transmitted symbolic material with which the individual comes into contact." Franks and Fraenkel [4] acknowledging the healing aspects of symbols, contend that there is opportunity for self-knowledge and creative change in fairy tales, and they emphasize on the use of such in their therapy sessions in dealing with eating disorders. In the Kashmiri story narrated in the article, there's a benefit in confronting the shadow, in that it acts as the initiation for individuation. This confrontation with the shadow is an exhilarating experience as the protagonist become more and more aware of who and what she really is, of her capabilities, and more importantly, her weaknesses. Knowing and understanding the shadow through such confrontation keeps us down to earth, it reminds us of our incompleteness, of the necessity of working for our bread. There is a therapeutic value in the tales that are told from generations to generations, that remains in the psyche of individuals. In this collective story, we find the growth of the individual through separation from the ever nurturing mother, the necessary death of the self that culminates in the birth of the contra-opposite. In the symbolical death of the mother, there is a realization in the daughter that she may no longer be identical with her mother even though the positive remnants remain, in the story in the form of an animal. "Therefore the mother's death (symbolic) is the beginning of the daughter's process of individuation...." [5].

We are our own opposite, we are both the life giver and the death [6], the mother and the child, the knower and the known. We are the stranger and the friend, the trespasser and

the trespasser. This awareness of the opposites in us in the form of a shadow element may be a harbinger of suffering as we dwell in the discourse of good and evil: but it is through that suffering we may transcend [7]. In this act of transcending, we may well suffice with the awareness of the self, yet it is still a lacking. For, as the paper summarizes, there is a need in man to be social, and this societal aspect is in itself a process of maturity. Whitman [8] pertains that this actualizing of the self is proceeded in terms of parental and cultural patterns; and maturity and development may be attained through confrontation of the ego with the Self. In the same light, Stevens [7] maintains that as an individual we need culture to be a complete individual, and the society and individuals complement each other. "The ideal" Segal [9] writes, "is a balance between consciousness of the external world and consciousness of the unconscious."

CONCLUSION

The savior that one need, is thus, not to be found in the external world, but in the inner world of the self, in the contra-opposite self within one's own psyche. The psyche is in itself oriented to individuation; it seeks to be complete [10]. This is, thus, the initiation of the individuation process. This individuation process is the "fulfillment of personality" [11]. Yet, orienting oneself toward the need of the society and accommodating what is necessary of us as we become a part of the social being that is the collective. For man is a social animal. As important it is for the man to inherently be individuated, the individuation is incomplete without reverence for the social collective mass and the environment he is a part of. The knowledge of which further assist in the understanding of the self. Thusly, the first half of life is spent in relation to the external world, and the second half of life is lived in understanding one's own self [9]. This is not to say that the second half of life demeans the social aspects of life, rather it is in relation to the societal aspect that one's individuation of the Self proceed. It is when you have contributed much to the social environment around you that you develop an integration of the ego through contemplation of accomplishments in life against despair [12, 13]. Yet, redemption may be attained through the knowing of the shadow and the spirits (Anima/Animus) of the self [7].

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