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World of Relations in Feminine Psyche: Tale of Two Daughters

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ABSTRACT

Life of woman is spun with many threads of relations. Woman's relation with the mother determines her capability to initiate the feminine functions which is the natural maturation process of her psyche. The tale of two daughters is a popular folktale from Eastern India where one daughter is obedient to the Mother of Moon and the other doubted her. Both the daughters are intra-psycho aspects that give birth to variety of trajectories of feminine life: woman who weaves life blessed with earthly fertility, good marital relations, household instincts and woman who remain unconscious of the same.

The intent to study the Mother-Daughter theme rose from an Indian folkloric idea that the arrival of the Goddess is set into motion by a synchronous dream engulfing the two—Mother and Daughter-Goddess—to meet each other. This captures the essence of the womanhood—guided initiation into femininity, entangled complexities of relations, fate and accomplishments. The Mother-Daughter relation sheds light on the dynamic and the constitution of feminine psyche.

Key Words: Folktale, Mother-Daughter, Feminine psyche.

INTRODUCTION

Jung wrote, "The psyche pre-existent to consciousness (e.g., in the child) participates in the maternal psyche on one hand, while on the other hand it reaches across the daughters psyche". When we talk about the mother and daughter, we are saying that these are the two psychic states a woman's consciousness flows into and through. The folktale has been taken for interpretation from A.K. Ramanujan work Folktales from India but originally documented in a children's book of fairytales Thakumar Jhuli (literal translation Grandmother's bag)—Grandmother whose bag is full of stories and lores of distant lands, creatures of both divine or terrestrial kind. The folktale of any land is fertile for sprouting the world of symbols that takes on the fragrance of the land yet speak a universal tongue. Such is the story of two daughters—Dukhu and Sukhu.

"A man had two wives and had a daughter by each of them. Dukhu was the daughter of the elder wife and Sukhu was the daughter of the younger. The man loved his younger wife and her daughter Sukhu more than the older wife and her daughter Dukhu.

The daughters' natures were just like their mothers'. Sukhu was as lazy and ill-tempered as Dukhu was active and lovable. Furthermore, Sukhu and her mother hated the other two and treated them badly anytime they had the chance.

The man took ill, and died in spite of every kind of treatment. The younger wife inherited all his property, and she drove Dukhu and her mother out of the house. Dukhu and her mother found an empty hut outside town and occupied it. They made a living by spinning thread.

One day when Dukhu was spinning outside her hut, the wind blew hard and carried away her wad of cotton. She ran after it but couldn't catch up with it. When she began to cry in desperation, she heard a voice in the wind. Don't cry, Dukhu, come with me. I give you all the cotton you want.' So she followed the wind.

On the way, she met a cow, which spoke to her: Not so fast, Dukhu. My shed is covered with dung. Wash it clean for me, and I'll help you later' Dukhu drew water from the well and got herself a broom and washed the cowshed clean as clean could be.

The wind was waiting for her to finish. As soon as she finished, she went with the wind again. They came to a plantain tree, which stopped her and said, 'Where are you going, Dukhu? Can't you stop a minute and pull down all these creepers from my body so that I can stand up straight? It's hard to stand bent down like this all day and all night. Please.'

'I'll be glad to do that,' said Dukhu, and she tore down all the creepers that were smothering the tree. The tree said, 'You're a good girl. I will help you some other time.' 'I didn't do anything special, really,' said Dukhu and hurried on, for the wind was waiting for her.

Next she met a horse and it said, 'Where are you going, Dukhu? This saddle and bridle cut into me. I can't bend down to eat the grass. Will you please take them off for me?'

Dukhu took off the saddle and bridle. The horse was grateful and promised her a gift.

The wind said, as they moved on, 'Do you see that palace there? That's where the Mother of the Moon lives. She can give you as much cotton as you want.'

With that, he left her there.

Dukhu walked towards the palace. It seemed deserted. She felt afraid and lonely. She stood there in front of it for a while and then decided to go in. Timidly, step by step, she walked through the rooms. Not a mouse stirring, not a living soul anywhere. Suddenly she heard a noise behind a closed door. She went up to it and knocked softly. A voice said, 'Come in.'

Dukhu pushed the door open and saw an old lady working at a wheel. She was luminous as if the moon was specially shining on her.

Dukhu bowed to her, touched her feet and said, 'Granny, the wind blew away all my cotton. If I don't spin, my mother and I will starve. Will you give me some cotton?'

'I'll give you something better than cotton,' said the old Mother of the Moon, if you are deserving. Do you see that pond out there? Go to that pond and dip in it twice. Only twice, not three times, remember.

So Dukhu walked out of the palace and went to the pond and took a dip. When she rose out of the water, she had been changed into someone very beautiful. When she took a second dip, she was covered with silks, pearls, and gems: Her sari was muslin, and she had gold necklaces so heavy that they weighed her down. She couldn't believe what was happening to her. When she ran back to the palace, the old woman said, 'Child, I know you are hungry. Go to the next room, I've food there for you.'

The next room had food of every kind, the best rice, the finest curries, sweets beyond her dreams. After eating her fill, she went back to the old woman, who said, 'I want to give you something more, and showed her three caskets, each bigger than the next 'Choose one,' she said. Dukhu chose the smallest one and said goodbye to the old woman and left the palace.

As she retraced her steps, she met the horse, the plantain tree. The horse gave her a young colt of the finest pakshiraj breed; the and the cow. Each wanted to give her a gift to take home with her. er gave her a bunch of plantains yellow as gold and a pot full of old gold coins called mohurs; and the cow gave her a tawny calf whose udders would never be dry.

Dukhu thanked them all for their wonderful gifts, seated herself on the colt with the pot of gold and the plantains, and found her way home, with the calf walking close behind her.

Her mother, meanwhile, had made herself sick with anxiety, not knowing where Dukhu had gone and when she would come back. She was beside herself with joy when she heard Dukhu's voice call out, 'Mother, where are you? Look what I've got! When the mother had recovered from her shock of joy, she couldn't believe her eyes. The muslins, the jewels, the gold coins the plantains, the horse, and the calf-she looked at every one of them over and over. She was speechless.

After a while she found her voice and asked her daughter how she came by all these fabulous things. Dukhu told her the whole story about the wind, the cow, the tree, the horse, and the old Mother of the Moon, and ended by saying, 'That's not all. Here's something else she has given me: this casket!'

She then showed her mother the casket. They thought it would be full of more jewels, pearls, gold, and silver. But when they slowly opened it, out of it stepped a most handsome young man dressed like a prince. 'I've been sent here to marry you,' he said to Dukhu, without wasting an extra word.

Soon a date was fixed, kith and kin were invited, and a great gala wedding was celebrated. The only people who did not come to the wedding were Sukhu and her mother.

Now, Dukhu's mother was a good woman. Though she had suddenly come into wealth and status, it hadn't gone to her head. She still wanted to be friends with Sukhu and her mother. So she offered Sukhu some ornaments, as they now had heaps of them. But Sukhu's mother was offended. She put her fist to her cheek and hissed, 'Why should Sukhu take your leftovers? She's not going begging for jewels! If God had wanted to give my daughter jewels, he would have kept her father alive. My Sukhu is lovely as she is. She needs no ornaments. Only girls who are ugly as owls need fine saris and necklaces to make them look good.'

But she didn't forget to make discreet inquiries to find out how Dukhu had come by her great good fortune. Once she learned where Dukhu had gone and how she found the Mother of the Moon she said to herself, 'I'll show her! She is trying to rub her good luck in my face, I'll make my Sukhu a hundred times richer.'

Then she brought Sukhu a spinning-wheel and made her spin in the outer yard where the wind was blowing. 'Listen to me carefully, Sukhu, my dear, she said. The wind will blow away your wad of cotton. Then don't forget to howl and wail till the wind asks you to follow it. Be courteous to anyone you meet on the way. Go wherever the wind takes you till you meet the Mother of the Moon. I'll do exactly as you say, Mother,' said Sukhu and began to spin. Soon, as expected, a big wind swept away all her cotton, and she began to howl and cry as if someone in the house had died.

'Don't cry, Sukhu, just for a wad of cotton. Come with me. I'll get you all the cotton you want,' said the wind.

Sukhu then followed the wind, just as Dukhu had done earlier. She too met the cow, who asked her to clean its shed. But she tossed her head and said, 'Clean your stinking shed? Me? Fat chance! I'm on my way to see the Mother of the Moon.' When she met the tree, she said, 'I've better things to do than take your creepers down. I'm in a hurry. I'm going to meet the Mother of the Moon.'

She was just as insulting to the horse. You stupid nag, who do you think I am? Your groom's daughter or something?

They said nothing, but they were hurt. They bided their time. It was a long way to the palace, and Sukhu was sick and tired of walking. She arrived at the palace in a foul mood. Forgetting her mother's instructions, she burst into the old woman's room and screamed. The wind has blown away all my cotton. You'd better give me some at once or else I'll break things! And don't take too long about it.'

The old woman didn't raise her voice. She said to the young woman quite gently, 'Don't be impatient. I'll give you something far better than cotton. But you must do as I say. Do you see that pond through the window? Go out there and take two dips in it. Only two dips, no more, or you'll be sorry.'

Sukhu ran to the pond and jumped into it. And it made her a beauty. She dived into it a second time, and she came up covered with silks and jewels. She was beside herself with joy and couldn't stop looking at herself in the water. Then she thought, 'If I take one more dip, I'm sure I'll get much more than Dukhu did. The old woman doesn't want me to have more than she gave Dukhu. That's why she asked me not to take more than two dips. But I'm going to do it. And dip she did, a third time. But when she rose from the water, she was grief-stricken to see that her jewels and finery were gone, her nose had grown long as an elephant's trunk, and her body was covered with blisters and boils.

She ran to the Mother of the Moon, white with rage, shaking her head and fists at her. 'Look what you've done to me!' she screamed.

The old woman looked at her from top to toe and said, "You didn't listen to me. You dipped in the pond more than twice, and this is what you get for not listening to me. You've yourself to thank for the mess you're in... But I've one more thing to offer you. Then she showed her the three caskets, each one bigger than the next, and asked the young woman to choose one for herself. Sukhu had eyes only for the largest of them and chose it.

Meanwhile her mother was impatiently pacing to and fro in her yard, worrying about her girl not coming home. "When is she going to be back and when can I feast my eyes on all the jewels?" she cried. Suddenly she heard her daughter's voice from behind the bushes: "Mother!"

The mother ran out to greet her but nearly died of shock when she saw what she saw. Her daughter's nose was as long as an elephant's trunk. Her body was covered with boils, not jewels. What's happened to you? Sukhu, what's happened to you? Why? What did you do?' she cried in despair.

But Sukhu showed her the casket. The old crone asked me to choose, and I chose the biggest of them!

The mother thought, The old woman must be playing tricks. She has some surprise waiting here. She's going to make up for the way she treated my Sukhu.' Anxiously, with beating hearts, they opened the casket, and out came a long black snake, hissing angrily. It pounced on Sukhu and swallowed her whole, as a python swallows a goat. Her mother went raving mad and died soon after'(Ramanujan, 1991; pp. 71-77).

HYPOTHETICAL INTERPRETATION

The tale is predominantly talking about the journey of the feminine soul that discovers the essential psychological function to further itself into attainment of maturity; live life resourcefully and fruitfully. All the family members described are the intra-psychic aspect of the feminine psyche. The man who is the husband and the father is the inner masculine aspect that represents dynamisms or yang. Yang is the active, creative principle; it is also associated with Time which translates as if in the woman's life death of the man symbolize stopping of Time. This is giving us a picture of the fact that the psyche has come to a static death like state. Also, father symbolize law and authority that at the very beginning has died which will initiate the possibility for constellation of the inner instinctive unconscious contents. Every stage of human life is governed by laws that might become insufficient or redundant for the next stage of life. The experience of psychic-stagnation is often followed by renewal of spirit. Here, the girl is being initiated into womanhood. Initiation into next phase of life requires a renewal of the consciousness that in primitive societies were enacted in the 'rites of passage' wherein the novice undergoes ritual of death and rebirth. Today's time rituals of initiation are not ceremonially celebrated by the community still the glimpse of symbols depicting initiation can be seen in dream data.

Dukhu and the mother occupied an empty hut. 'Empty hut' is the symbol of the womb. Here, the womb in its most basic meaning is the generative organ that is where creation takes place. According to Jung (1967), the 'womb' is also a powerful psychological experience which every Hero seeks for in order to become renewed. This is where every hero is directed so as to initiate mystery of rebirth (Jung, 1967; p.272). The emptiness of the hut psychologically means meaninglessness and requires deliverance. In feminine context, the hut is associated with myriad of aspects of feminine life such as, body. In primitive societies, every month a young girl/ woman was send to menstrual hut to shed blood and come out renewed and fertile. In this tale, hut is where the young girl is experiencing the very special and intimate relation with the mother. Here, the mother is not just the personal mother but through her she is connected to the long line of mothers and every possible symbol that participates in the Mother-Image—Mother as the archetypal experience. The experience of the Mother includes not just earthly fertility but also fertility in terms of industriousness, be well connected—matrix of relation etc. These are the essential conditions required so as to fulfill the Eros function in a diversified and efficacious manner.

Inside the hut the girl begins the work of spinning, which is again a very feminine work. Judaism speaks about "Heavenly loom" that weaves the future or destiny of an entire race. Similarly, the loom weaves the path of life its destiny. Just like nowadays while sitting of study desk adolescents daydream of future one can imagine in earlier times loom was the place for imagining about ones life and future.

In ancient Greece girls were known to be given to Temple of Athena, where they learnt to weave peplos. Goddess Athena was associated with the directing young girls into female adult social life. In her festival, Pausanias noted, young girls were brought into service of Athena and then passed them to Goddess Aphrodite to socialize them not just to Athenian communal life but also sexual life.

In the European folktale of Golden Spinning Wheel talks about the psychological significance of dismemberment and subsequent restoration of the spinning wheel and the female body. The fairytale suggest that a lazy girl cannot spin so it is required to develop good habits, routine ('time-table'), virtues to strengthen the feminine ego. But too much of following the routine then necessitates the dismemberment of the body that has spun the entire life. So, after fulfillment of the 'spinning duty' i.e. the earthly and biological duties of the feminine body, familial and communal roles, comes the time to meet the hermit and transcend and give a new meaning to life; yet again weaving but this time something that has cultural and spiritual value.

One of the meaning of Tantra means 'the warp' that is associated with 'tan' meaning "to stretch" the thread on loom in connection to the body (which is can tan). This stretching is the practice (sadhana) or making of the body of the adept by sacrificing maladaptive tendencies of the body (White, 1996; p.1).

The rotating motion of the act of spinning finds its association with the clock, time, cycle of seasons hence the three goddesses of fate—Moirais are shown spinning. They are the three daughters of Chronos and Ananke who announce fate of all creatures. Here the tale is speaking of the fate of the feminine psyche—her life path. Different aspects of feminine psyche such as, fertility time (pregnancy, menstruation) is bound and sex drive has a time factor tied to it. The spindle spinning the hints towards the idea of gravity, being drawn, bringer of order into the chaotic wool or cotton; these are also the qualities of time and fate and can be linked to feminine body and instincts. There is a big reason image of spinning is connected to body and fate, because Moirais bind people to the clothes suggesting lack of freedom that relates with the natural rhythms of body, as interpreted by Nilsson (Neumann, 2015 ; p.230)

The act of Wind carrying the cotton wad is the harbinger of new consciousness that makes her 'spirited'. Death of the Father has been compensated by another masculine symbol i.e. the Wind. In Greek mythology, Anemoi were the winds responsible for bringing the change in season. This suggests that naturally the feminine psyche has been assisted into bringing change in her pattern of life signaling possibility of growing out of childhood and embracing a matured adult life. Also, Incubus was powerful demon depicted as spirit of Night as well as Storm who would try to engage young girls into sexual union in sleep associated with nightmares. The maiden in the tale belongs to an age when physically she is equipped to take on sexual relation. So in the tale we can see the hints for preparing her psychological for the same.

In Norse mythology Odin —All Father—was known as the berserk wind. He was depicted as chasing Frigg for which she was called the 'wind-bride': the goddess of Marital relation, motherhood, seer of destiny etc (Jung, 1967; p. 278). The young maiden Dukhu is also spirited to take on the pursuits of marital relation and motherhood in the image of Goddess Frigg. This can be seen by the fact that the three creatures: Cow, Plantain tree and Horse, who tested her various virtues, collectively form the plethora of symbols involved in Hindu traditional Marriage and peaceful domestic life. The symbol of Cow is mother. She is seen as the Great Mother of the Hindu ethnicity or race suggesting the woman to be fertile and fruitful for the race. Though, Cow as a primordial mother image that can be traced in Egyptian Mythology—Goddess Hathor—who is the Sky goddess of fertility and love. In the tale she asked the girl to clean the cow shed is also metaphorical way of asking the maiden to groom herself, take interest in hygiene and beauty and be wary of the diseases.

In the Assamese people, when a girl has her first menstrual flow is married to a plantain tree which marks the beginning of her sexual and fertile life. In Bengal, on the last day of Charak festival, men throw Bananas (symbolizing the male reproductive organ) on woman, so that the community yields and grows economically, thriving agricultural fields and growth in native population. Caring for the household banana orchard used to be one of the most common jobs rural life should be able to perform.

The third creature was horse, Jung has called it a "priapic animal" and its function was to give a nudge to the woman to be sexually active (Jung, 1967; p.278).

Yet another way to understand the depth of these symbols one has to consider that these animals are the protective spirits around feminine instinctual life. Feminine life is supposed to stay in touch with the natural world. The instinctual life of woman, for its preservation, must nurture the bond with the flora and fauna of the land, which keeps her in touch with the ancestral mother.

After the encounter with the three the maiden finally reaches the realm of the Mother of Moon. In order to appreciate the image of Mother of Moon one has to consider other folktales associated with her. In another folktale, the path to visit Mother of Moon is described to be passing through a river, then cave, desert and then mountain then wind carries the adventurer to the Moon.

In the oral versions, the mother of moon is often replaced by Goddess Kali because of her association with Moon, feminine sexuality, graveyard and death. She is known to give marital blessings since in India, to this day, all marriages take place at night under the watch of Old Lady of the Moon. This is speculated to be one of the reminiscences of matriarchy.

The menstrual cycle brings together Moon-Spinning-Femininity suggesting the bodily aspect of life of a woman is just like the Moirais first spin the thread of life, then it is measured and cut; fruits of the body and experience of pleasure and pain will also be well measured. All of this will fulfill in the love (physical, emotional and mental) relation woman will make.

Mother of Moon is also the controller of Winds which has mediating and connecting quality; and serpents. In Greek Mythology, Eros is depicted as the winged serpent. Jung says that the "connective quality of Eros" in woman "is the expression of [her] true nature" (Jung, 1978; p.14). Woman's life is defined by Eros —the relation making factor—be it outer relations in the world in the first half of life or forging intra-psychoic unity in the second half. In the first half of life woman Eros has a binding quality, for instance the woman will make outer love relations in form of marriage alliances or

having lovers, but Eros in woman also has liberating capacity which is the air element and cause of mystical and spiritual experience.

There are many similar fairytales which highlight the obedience and industriousness in part of one girl whereas the other struggle or punished for not possessing the qualities: The Golden Spinning Wheel, Diamonds and Toads and Two caskets. The girl who is punished shows rejection domestic household duties or rejects her instinctual and earthly nature is punished either by getting swallowed up, death by burning, producing toads from mouth etc.. Carl Jung writes, “The woman who fights against the father still has a possibility of instinctive feminine existence because she rejects only what is alien to her. But when she fights against the mother she may, at the risk of injury to her instincts, attain to greater consciousness, because in repudiating the mother she repudiates all that is obscure, instinctive, ambiguous, and unconscious in her own nature”(Jung, 2012; p. 37). The girl who rebels against most likely have tendency to get driven by a negative mother complex.

The girl is asked to take two dips in a Lake. Taking a dive into water is seen as purifying or cleansing ritual or repentance. The idea is to come back to ones pure form but, in the girl’s case it is transformative she being the blessed one is clothed and bejeweled by the Mother of Moon., who is as glorious as the original image of Goddess Lakshmi. The girl received the three gifts that are the signs of her own inner resourcefulness. The prototypical image of married woman in India is of Goddess Lakshmi. All the gifts she has received from various creatures make her more and more close to the image of Lakshmi attributed to prosperity, wealth and fertility.

The folktale began with the symbol of empty hut but in the end the casket which again symbol of mother or womb gives birth to a youthful man. The entire drama of initiation into womanhood culminates into a union or marriage. The symbol of marriage is indicative of transformation in consciousness or birth of a new consciousness in the feminine psyche; whatever was looming in the unconscious has fruited as experience that is now treasured by the psyche,

Mother of Moon as a punishment for the greed the other girl’s nose like elephant. Smell is associated with instinct and intuition. The disfigurement of face is indicative of problems at social and communal front. The elongation of nose is indicative of phallic symbol. Witch were known to have long crooked nose. Then elongated nose metaphorically says increased sensitivity to everything of earth. Nose can detect a potential sexual partner.

In the end the young girl is swallowed up by the black snake suggesting the ego of the girl being consumed by the instinctive psyche. In the Tantric tradition Kundalini is the Goddess as the black serpent symbolizing the psychic energy that sleeps; it has the power to unite with the opposite (yoga). Kundalini which has the potential to reach the highest consciousness though the serpent symbol is also unconsciousness and sexuality. In unconsciousness the experiences of sexuality has a quality of all consuming and the thoughts being fully eaten up by desirousness giving Eros function a salacious quality.

Death symbolizes ‘giving in’, killing of the mother here is to consummate the function. It is the girl’s surrender to the instinctual consciousness. Death represents union. Death of the mother is the psychic acceptance of the fate of the body; it is assimilation of the new function that alleviates her laziness, ill-tempered behaviour. This mother represented the negative stubborn side of the girl that would have developed into a stubborn neurosis resulting in difficulties with earthly functions like sexuality, motherhood, maintaining healthy relations in the world. So, this inner psychic structure which had to be overcome and won over or rather should be left to die out.

CONCLUSION

Individuation of the feminine psyche calls for participation in the ‘maternal consciousness’ that acquaints her to the essence of the feminine life that from one side reaches the ancestral, bodily and earthly depths. This maternal consciousness ties her to the world of plants, animals and the terrains suggesting that the individual soul is not without roots rather has gracefully grown from the collective unconscious. This very thread also extends and goes to the daughter psyche. The daughter remains in gestation in the maternal consciousness and matures in the hidden depth of life. It can be allegorized that spinning is the mother and weaving is the daughter. Mother and daughter are two distinct yet connected intra-psychic experience of a woman. Carl Jung writes, “...a woman lives earlier as mother and later as daughter”(Jacobi, 1953; p.288). Birth of the daughter within woman is the beginning of the journey of the soul.

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