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The Conflict of Yang and Yin: The Double Identity in Anashuya's Character in Yeats's *Anashuya and Vijaya*

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Abstract:

The concept of the primary self and antiseif, more precisely known as enantiodromia, is one of the psychological notion with which W.B. Yeats was almost obsessed. His literary work bears testimony to the fact that he was fascinated by Carl Gustav Jung's psychological theory of anima and animus. In ancient Chinese philosophy the cosmological notion of yang and yin conforms to the theory of enantiodromia, and Yeats's philosophical creeds. Yang represents the sunny side and yin stands for the shady side of nature. To attain a harmonious position an appropriate combination of these contrasting qualities is essential." *Anashuya and Vijaya*" is a dramatic poem written by Yeats which highlights the theme of double identity or conflict of yang and yin in the protagonist's character. Ostensibly the two conflicting poles of Anashuya's character can be interpreted in the light of this theory. This article is an attempt to delve deep into the character of Anashuya and unravel the conflict of yang and yin to demonstrate how it created her double identity.

Keywords: enantiodromia, yang, yin, anima, animus.

I

"*Anashuya and Vijaya*" is a lyrical poem written by W.B. Yeats in 1887, appeared in *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* in 1889. The central theme of the poem subsumes the double identity of the protagonist: one is a pious and generous priestess who implores to god for the welfare of the entire country and, the jealous other self who wishes his beloved dead if he thinks of another woman. The double identity of the lady, Anashuya is the reminiscence of the notion of the man and the mask and its ostensible influence on his literary work because Yeats himself was quite obsessed with the idea of antiseif, rather known as the mask that covers the real self and thus complicates the perception of it. Simultaneously the concept of anima and animus expounded by Carl Gustav Jung had a remarkable impact on his philosophical notions and literary works. Moreover, after a detailed study of the two plausibly contrasting poles of Anashuya's character, it can be interpreted in the light of Chinese cosmological theory of yang and yin mentioned in the *Book of Changes*. The way these two contrasting yet complementary forces work not only influences the natural changes but also determines human nature. Only by having an appropriate proportion of these two forces, one can attain balance and a harmonious position in nature and life. Therefore, while conceiving the idea of the double identity of Anashuya, Yeats must have ruminated over the concept of dual forces striving to establish its dominance inside the subconscious mind which is akin to the aforesaid notion of yang and yin.

II

At first The poem was written with the title “Jealousy “, which is quite suitable and justifies the content of the poem. The name Anashaya is perhaps taken from Indian epic “Ramayana” where Anashuya, wife of rishi Atri is a mythological character. Most probably the story is taken from Monier William’s translation of Kalidas’s *Shakuntala*, where Anashuya is Shakuntala’s friend. He mentioned it in a note dated 1925, that “the little Indian dramatic scene was meant to be the first scene of a play about a man loved by two women, who had the one soul between them, the one woman waking when the other slept, knowing but daylight as the other only night. It came to my head when I saw a man at Rosses Point carrying two salmons. ‘one man with two souls’ I said and added, ‘ O, no, two people with one soul.’ I am now once more in *A Vision* busy with that thought, the antithesis of day and of night and of moon and of sun.” (Jeffares,6). From his own statement about the poem it is obvious that he envisioned Anashaya having double personality, a bright one and another dark one.

Yeats own philosophical and psychological creed was tinged with this concept of two contrasting forces that resides in human mind often controlling personality partially or completely. Though there is no denial of the fact that Yeats was tremendously influenced by Hindu philosophy and religious tenets, the fact still remains that he deviated slightly from the concept of a unitary soul as mentioned in the Upanishads. Even he contradicted the notion of one body having one soul. Instead, he expatiated the concept of twin souls possessing one body, the self and the antiself. He indicated that the antiself, which was referred to as the mask, controls the primary self to the extent of obfuscating the self’s own perception. Virtually he remained so engrossed and obsessed with the problem of duality in human character that he attempted to rationalise that his poetic writings were somehow influenced by his antiself. He invokes his antiself, his *doppelganger*, the daimon for assistance in his poem *Ego Dominus tuus*,

Ille

By the help of an image

I call to my own opposite, summon all

That I have handled least, least looked upon (*Ego Dominus Tuus, Pg10, Per Amica Silentia Lunae*)

In his poem A Dialogue of self and soul, he differentiates the body and the soul as a separate entity, who converse with each other. According to A.E. Dyson the self mentioned in the poem is joy, life and variety incarnated, when on the other hand the soul an objective entity striving towards subjectivity. His hysteric preoccupation about dual soul resulted in the extraordinary literary work *A Vision*.

Ancient religious doctrines evinces to support Yeats idea of self and antiself like in the Hindu and Chinese philosophy as both of them establish the fact that there are two dimensions or orientations of the human mind or soul, the higher and the lower. Austrian

psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung expatiates this particular notion in his definition of anima and animus. According to Jung anima and animus are two primary anthropomorphic archetypes of the unconscious mind. Anima exposes itself in the expression of a female inner personality in the unconscious of a male mind. On the other hand animus is the expression of the male inner personality of the unconscious of a female mind. Yeats' concept that the mask or antiself controls the man often by disciplining the primary self coincides with Jungian theory of anima and animus. Enantiodromia, as he termed the concept comprises the complex idea of duality of the human soul, that confounded him almost throughout his early life. Jung elaborated the fact that there is a key to control a person's anima/animus in his book *The Invisible Partners*. The key to control one's anima/animus is to recognize its manifestation and exercise our ability to discern the anima/animus from reality. Richard Ellmann opines in *Yeats: The Man and the Mask*, that the period from 1889 to 1903 was difficult to follow because of his confused state of mind which resulted in various activities and interests during that time and "His inclination, which had begun much earlier, to pose before the world as something different from what he was, to hide his secret self, had come to a point where he saw himself divided into two parts."(Rudd,21)

An ancient Chinese book, mostly known as the *Yi jing* or *I ching*, also known as the *Zhou Yi* constructed the basis of Chinese occult sciences. The book is obscure and difficult to decipher. As a result of its opaqueness it provides enough opportunities for various interpretations and predictions about the metaphysics of changes and the working order underlying the entire universe. Chinese cosmological thinking promotes the concept that the reality consists of the relationship between opposites and these opposite forces play suggestive roles in the development of the cosmos. Yang and yin are opposing but forces of positive and negative which through their interplay controls and makes things happen. Yang implies the sunny side and yin stands for the darker side of nature. Semantically yin means something negative, passive, covert, female, concealed, hidden, treacherous, shaded, sinister. Quite contrarily yang symbolises positive, active, male, bright, open, overt, belonging to this world. Moreover the book of changes illumines the fact that five natural elements, naming, fire, water, earth, metal, and wood are dynamic forces that by their generative and destructive capacity constructs the structure of the world. A different combination of these elements is represented schematically through eight trigrams and their combination in sixty four hexagrams. Each hexagram is followed by the opposite one. Through these symbolic structures the future can be predicted as well as past can be explained. Evidently mundane world is subject to change but *Yi jing* focuses on maintaining harmony and balance in nature. It also vindicates the fact that everything in existence involves its own negation because it is supposed to be the natural process of sequence. This is a never ending process in rotation. This is no exception to human nature. So the *Book of changes* advises to be nonchalant to success and failure as they are inextricably entangled and inevitably follow each other.

The protagonist of the dramatic poem *Anashuya and Vijaya*, Anashuya is a young priestess of an ancient Hindu temple, apparently innocuous and pious who offers prayer to God for the welfare of her land and every living creature in it. Behind the mask of a virtuous

priestess there resides a ferociously jealous lover who wishes his beloved dead for an imagined infidelity on his part. She has a bipolar character each having glaringly contrasting aspects. But the most amazing fact is that both the contradictory characters appear simultaneously. It is not that one is asleep when the other is active, but both of them wide awake all the time and seem to be conversing simultaneously. The two characters brilliant and dark are equally contending with each other perpetually for final existence but no one prevails eventually. The character of a pious lady implies the influence of yang, the sunny side and the jealous lover implicates the inherent darker side of human existence, yin. In the very beginning Anashaya like a virtuous priestess importunes the deities to do everything propitious for the welfare of the land. She prays for his lovers safety who must be wandering about the jungle. Immediately after this prayer she also wishes that if he loves any other woman, the panther may end him.

‘And if he love another,

May panther send him.-Hear, and load our king

With wisdom hour by hour.-May we two stand,

When we are dead ,beyond the setting sun,

A little from the other shades apart,

With mingling hair, and play upon one lute.(*Anashuya and Vijaya,6-10,Crossways,p.4*)

Alongside the expression of deep love for her beloved concomitantly she displays the abhorrence she is capable of if she realises that she is betrayed. This abrupt contradiction of Anashuya’s character leaves the reader in a bewildered state ,as they wonder how can a seemingly innocuous lady convert herself into a ferocious one. The dual disposition of Anashaya should be explained by considering the impact of yang and yin on human nature. The influence of yang transmutes human soul in a generous one, when yin degrades by aggravating its condition infusing and exciting the negative feelings. Anashuya has uncompromising love for Vijaya but she is vexed by the thought of an imagined infidelity on his part. When he utters the name of Amrita her suspicious nature divulges itself more vividly. She demands to know Amrita’s true identity. But as soon as he informs that Amrita is his mother’s name she regains her composure. After being relieved her other self disappears leaving the generous loving soul to predominate. She sings to her heart’s content regaling Vijaya’s mind with her mellifluous voice. The seemingly complacent lover Anashuya assumes the other self only when Vijaya repeats the name Amrita. The jealous self was lurking behind the veil of a loving woman. It is invigorated when kindled by the sheer name of a woman. It is only intimidated when Vijaya swears that he would never love the girl whom he once loved. Eventually the pure loving soul prevails but the poem ends with offering a glimpse of the other soul ambushed behind it, as she prays,

‘Trouble his sleeping; give him dreams of me.’(*Anashuya and Vijaya,Crossways,p.7*)

III

In conclusion, the darker side is never vanquished but tarnished temporarily by the bright side. It always resides inside her mind waiting to be aroused by some stimulant. The protagonist's psyche is simultaneously influenced by the progenitor of positive impulses, yang and negative impulses caused by yin. Jung mentioned in his book *The Invisible Partners* that the key to control anima/animus is to recognize its manifestation. Yeats followed that Jungian concept (whether consciously or not is a matter of conjecture) and adroitly left a clue in the poem for the readers by the manifestation of two different Anashuya. Both of them are opposite in nature. The stimulant which causes abrupt conversion of innocent Anashuya into ferocious one has been clearly indicated. In her case, suspicion of infidelity is the primal cause that triggers the transformation of her temperament. There is a perpetual conflict between yang, and yin inside the protagonist's mind. If the forces contend evenly a harmonious position is attained and balance is regained. When the balance is maintained properly, the divine avatar of Anashuya appears. If the balance is disturbed by stimulant previously mentioned, the jealous lover reveals itself.

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