

A PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMENTARY ON
SRI AUROBINDO'S PLAY: PERSEUS THE DELIVERER

Running Head: Perseus the Deliverer

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ABSTRACT

I discuss here the symbolic significance of a contemporary play entitled Perseus the Deliverer by Sri Aurobindo, especially the relationship between Perseus and Andromeda. Andromeda represents the heart-Self, which is to say love-sweetness, power of being and wisdom, while Perseus represents spiritual discernment, force of will, understanding and knowledge. Their marriage indicates a spiritualisation of the heart-Self and portends a transformation of the ruling consciousness from one based on fear, fear of change and ego attachments to one based on enlightened reason, with influences from both the heart-Self and the spiritualised mind. There is also the suggestion of the possibility of consciousness becoming directly transparent to a marriage between the heart-Self and the spiritualised mind, a phenomenon that carries one beyond reason. The play points the way for individuation of the individual, as well as for the eventual far-reaching transformation of collective consciousness.

She puts forth a portion of herself
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And labour mid the labour of the stars.

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Introduction

In what follows, I discuss the symbolic significance of a contemporary play written by Sri Aurobindo, entitled *Perseus the Deliverer*, especially the relationship between the two hero figures, Perseus and Andromeda. Andromeda represents the heart-Self, which is to say love-sweetness, power of being and wisdom, while Perseus represents spiritual discernment, force of will, understanding and knowledge. Their marriage indicates a spiritualisation of the heart-Self and portends a transformation of the ruling consciousness from one based on fear, fear of change and ego attachments to one based on enlightened reason, with influences from both the heart-Self and the spiritualised mind. There is also the suggestion of the possibility of consciousness becoming directly transparent to a marriage between the heart-Self and the spiritualised mind, a phenomenon that carries one beyond reason. The play points the way for individuation of the individual, as well as for the eventual far-reaching transformation of collective consciousness.

The myth of Perseus is particularly relevant in that it is, according to Erich Neumann, paradigmatic of the hero myth in general and he discussed its meaning from his perspective in *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. I comment on Sri

Aurobindo's (1971a) elegant retelling of the story of Perseus, in which he liberates Andromeda from a sea-monster and from a marriage to a man without character. He first published *Perseus the Deliverer* in 1907 and later, after it had been lost for many years, revised it in 1961, adding a new ending. The value Sri Aurobindo placed on *Perseus the Deliverer* is evident in that it was the only one of his plays that he bothered to revise. The tale is written in the form of an Elizabethan romance, where its feeling-tone gives an understanding to the heart that is not accessible in a purely intellectual discussion. It is particularly important in relating to the qualities of Andromeda, the woman in captivity, who is released by Perseus. It is instructive and typical that she actively and courageously seeks her own liberation, while stimulating Perseus' heroic instincts.

Its particular significance for depth psychology is suggested by the fact that, in his *The Heroes of the Greeks*, Carl Kerényi (1974) dedicated the section on Perseus to C.G. Jung. Secondly, in Sri Aurobindo's rendition, some of the deficiencies in Neumann's thinking become apparent. For one thing, the former's account relates the story to the contemporary psyche. For another, both higher masculine and feminine principles are depicted in a spiritually differentiated way. Finally, there is reference to a transformation process that involves both the spiritual Self and the heart-self, which is very relevant to the individuation process.

There is another reason for including it despite the fact that it may seem to interrupt the intellectual flow of ideas, and that is, its compensatory value. To begin with, it brings in

direct experience of Eros-based feeling along with poetic vision to an otherwise intellectual document. From the point of view of varying freely on the nature of the Self and its unfolding, this has value. It also nicely complements the legend of Osiris, which Neumann described, regarding the nature of centroverson and the individuation process. On the one hand, archetypal dismemberment is essential to facilitate reconstitution of the personality around the Self as indicated in the myth of Osiris. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo's retelling of the Perseus legend highlights qualities of being in both Perseus and Andromeda that are in direct service to the Self and the spiritual development of personality. They indicate in other words, what individuation potentially leads to today, at least in part.

The romance is of interest not only because of its intrinsic artistic value, but because it points towards the transformative significance of the individuation process for both the contemporary individual and the collective mind. Its relevance is due to the fact that the hero myth, as depicted by Sri Aurobindo, speaks directly to present-day psycho-spiritual needs. Sri Aurobindo makes the legend of Perseus significant to the contemporary reader not only by his masterful use of language but in the importance of the underlying message itself.

Jung once wrote that art "is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age" (1966, p. 82). Visionary artists and Sri Aurobindo was certainly one; in fact he was a great poet, are educators of their time. Not only do they bring to consciousness elements that would otherwise remain in the unconscious, they artistically express the timeless

archetype in such a way so as to speak to people in the contemporary idiom. Especially in periods of major cultural transition like the one we are experiencing today, they carry society forward to a new form of consciousness and living.

What seems to be particularly relevant is that the new consciousness seeking realisation is integral and based on a spiritual reality, that is to say, on a transparency to the Self (Gebser, 1989), by which I mean both a transpersonal reality and one's wholeness, including both the conscious and the unconscious. The individuation of humankind or "the real history of the world" which, as Jung noted, "seems to be the progressive incarnation of the deity" (quoted in Adler & Jaffé, 1975, p. 436), appears to be a long journey in that direction.

In this spirit, regarding his play, Perseus the Deliverer, Sri Aurobindo (1971a, p. 2) wrote that:

The stage is the human mind of all time, the subject is an incident in the passage from a semi-primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilization to a brighter intellectualism and humanism - - and the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which is its ultimate destiny to become.

By psychic being, Sri Aurobindo (1970a, pp. 233-277) meant the Self behind the heart center, what has traditionally been called in Sanskrit, the chaitya purusha and, in the play, is best represented by Andromeda, the captive and heroine. It is the aspect of the Self that is incarnated in space and time. In his epic poem, Savitri, Sri Aurobindo (1970g) circumscribed its nature and purpose as follows:

But since she knows the toil of mind and life.

As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man
Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and forget the bliss,
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And labour mid the labour of the stars. - - -

In this human portion of divinity
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time
To uplift from light to light, from power to power,
Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king.
In body weak, in its heart an invincible night
It climbs stumbling, held up by an unseen hand,
A toiling spirit in a mortal shape.

Book VII, Canto V, p.p. 526,527

Such a description wonderfully fits the trials and nature of Andromeda, a particularly conscious and loving maiden, and soul mate for the hero Perseus. By spiritual being, in contrast, Sri Aurobindo (1970, pp. 233-277) meant the part of one's nature in direct relationship with a timeless spiritual reality. It is best represented by the hero, Perseus, who is assisted by representatives from "the heavens."

Contemporary civilization can still be described as being of "a semi primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilization" (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 2). There continues to be humanistic influences from our Judeo-Christian and Greek heritage, at least through the persona. But the principal driving engine of life today is ego self-interest harnessed for the will-to-power of materialistic science and technology. Ego self-interest is inferior, based on lust, greed, and desirousness or, at best, motivated by a so-called "hierarchy of needs" from physical needs to status and ego-fulfilment needs (Goble, 1971). Moreover, the 20th century has been witness to an insurgence of dark and violent life explosions on more than one occasion.

A brighter intellectualism and humanism, a return to something like the Greece of the philosophers with its intuitive reason, still in touch with the gods, would be an advance over the constricted positivistic intellect dominating life today. Such a return would not exclude the real gains made by the positivistic mind. A civilization ruled by “the first promptings” of the psychic and spiritual beings would be one transformed, with conscious individuation in the process of becoming the guiding principle of life. Although still in the future for the collective mind, there are individuals who are beginning to follow that path.

In the late 5th century BCE, there was in ancient Greece a general concern over the nature of justice. The solution arrived at by Aeschylus (1959) in his Orestian trilogy involved the Furies or Erinyes losing much of their power and the establishment of a judicial review process. This translates into the fact that a humanizing higher will placed its stamp on life.

The older chthonic Mother cults included punishment of sons who did not avenge the slaying of their father and of sons who killed their blood mother. Justice was based on the retributive laws of fate and the fact that one learns by suffering to eventually do what is right, which is to say to achieve justice. With Aeschylus, there was an attempt to reconcile the demands of the chthonic gods and the primitive instinct for revenge with the Divine will of Zeus. What became suppressed and eventually repressed, however,

were the Erinyes and, along with them, the other pre-Olympian chthonic gods and goddesses.

Now we live in another time, and the task is different. Over the course of history, the chthonic instincts have atrophied through repression, yet return against our will via the unconscious. Individuation, today, demands that light is once again shed on deeper shadow layers of the unconscious, which result in its transformation through the Self. The legend of Perseus the Deliverer, especially as rendered by Sri Aurobindo (1971a), presents precisely this eventuality.

Commentary and Analysis

The principal plot in Sri Aurobindo's (1971a, pp. 1-201) rendition of Perseus the Deliverer involves the shipwrecked Babylonians, Smerdas and Tyranus, being captured by the Syrians who, according to custom, offer them as sacrifice to Poseidon, Lord of the Sea. Andromeda, the lovely princess of Syria releases them, eventuating her being bound to a rock on the sea shore as a sacrifice to the sea-god. She is eventually delivered by Perseus, son of the god Zeus and the mortal Danae, whom she will presently marry. This portends a new order of government and a new kingdom ruled by Perseus and Andromeda.

In addition to those already mentioned, significant characters in the play include: Cepheus and Cassiopia, king and queen of Syria and their son, Iolaus, Andromeda's brother. It also includes king Phineus of Tyre, who has a political contract with

Cepheus, which includes marriage to Andromeda. Finally, there is Polydaon, priest of Poseidon.

The play begins with a prologue where Athene declares her purpose:

Me the Omnipotent
Made from His being to lead and discipline
The immortal spirit of man, t'il it attain
To order and magnificent mastery of all his outward world
(Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, pp. 6,7).

Like Sophia, Athene is the wisdom of God and leads humankind towards His will, which is individuation or the fulfilment of the Self over space and time. She is the champion of heroes and typically guides them, as she does Perseus. In a conversation with Poseidon, Lord of the sea, she states that:

----- I come
To set my feet - - upon thy azure locks,
O shaker of the cliffs (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 7).

Athene concludes by issuing the command: "Adore thy sovereign (p. 7)." Poseidon, who is spouse of Medusa, the Terrible Mother, is himself her representative and a chthonic Terrible Father, a regressive factor that includes power drives, greed, desires, anarchy and fear of change. Athene, however, is giving warning that the Divine will is preparing to influence the deeper layers of the unconscious, symbolized by the sea, Poseidon's realm, and that her standpoint, which is to say wisdom and discipline, will prevail.

As can be expected, Poseidon is not only unimpressed, but unwilling to relinquish his sovereignty. He replies:

The anarchy of the enormous seas
Is mine, O terrible Athene- - - -. - -.
Man's feeble feet
Leave there no traces, nor his destiny
Has any hold upon the shifting waves (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a p. 7).

Indeed, history attests to the fact that humankind, both individually and collectively, is generally a rather passive, even it at times reluctant, participant in the play of forces, sometimes dark and bloodied, of which it is unconscious.

But Athens is confident that her champion, Perseus, will conquer Poseidon's chosen representative. She observes that:

He shall be confident in me and dare
The immeasurable oceans till the West
Mingles with India (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 7).

Although there is a divine fiat for change, it requires the active participation of the individual hero, who is a culture bringer. In a beautiful letter to a young man, Jung echoes this sentiment regarding the need for such an attitude. He wrote:

My principle is: Deus et homne. God needs man in order to become conscious just as he needs limitation in time and space. Let us therefore be for him limitation in time and space, an earthly tabernacle (quoted in Adler, 1975, pp. 65-66).

The West mingling with India symbolizes the interpenetration of two opposing psychological realities, one deeply inward and spiritual, India, and the other more outward, intellectual and materialistic, the West. Their intermingling implies a transformation of both psychological realities, which is the essential requirement for individuation today.

Despite her vision for the future, Athene bids strong Poseidon not to abate his

- - - savage tumults; rather [man's] march oppose.
For through the shocks of difficulty and death
Man shall attain his godhead (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 8).

Here, Sri Aurobindo cuts to a central experiential factor in the individuation process. Adversity is often the door to realisation of the Self. The individuating person is time and again thrown into what Jung called “conflicts of duty” (1970b, pp. 443) where appeal to the transcendent function, that is to say the Self, is required for creative resolution.

The prologue ends with Athene musing:

Thou wingest Perseus,
From northern snows to this fair sunny land,
Not knowing in the night what way thou wendst,
But dawn comes and over earth's far rim
The round sun rises as thyself shall rise
On Syria and thy rosy Andromeda.
A thing of light. Rejoice, thou famous hero
(Sri Aurobindo, 1971a p. 10)!

According to the myth of Perseus (Reinhold, 1972, Hamilton, 1953, Chetwynd, 1982), the hero was sent to the wintry north by Athene to cut off the head of the Gorgon, Medusa, the Terrible Mother, a regressive and destructive influence. As is typical for the hero, he receives assistance from the heavenly powers. He accomplishes the task successfully with the help of Herpe, the sword of Hermes, which is to say spiritual discernment. He travels via winged sandals, another gift from Hermes, “not knowing in the night (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 10),” which is to say by way of intuitive intelligence. He is also protected by Athene's shield, which he uses as a mirror to reflect the Gorgon,

thus avoiding petrification, [being turned to stone]. A self-reflecting consciousness, a gift from Athene, in other words, helps him to face and slay the destructive Terrible Mother.

It is perhaps noteworthy that, according to Barbara Walker (1988), the Medusa is, in fact, Metis, the mother of Athene, whom Zeus swallowed prior to her birth from his head. In this light, Medusa represents both crone-like wisdom and the goddess as destroyer of ignorance. Facing her directly can turn one to stone because of the primordial energies which she, with her serpent hair, embodies. For this reason Athene gave Perseus a reflective shield, which he looked into while severing her head.

This suggests two things necessary for conscious individuation and the attainment of wisdom. First there is the need for detachment and a self-reflective attitude and, secondly, there is the need to face such primordial energies as embodied in the Gorgon only indirectly, which is to say only at the level of one's capacity to absorb the knowledge and creative force, along with the rage and destructive energy, she contains. We all experience some of the effects of facing the Gorgon when we become immobilised as the result of consciousness becoming flooded with undifferentiated energy for various reasons. Perhaps we are the recipient of a cutting comment about an aspect of our shadow, our integrity is insulted, or we are on the receiving end of someone's anger or, perhaps, we find ourselves facing some inexplicable evil. Or, perhaps we are in a group of people and unexpectedly faced with the need to expound on a matter about which we are unsure. In such cases we can easily become petrified and stunned into silence.

According to the story Perseus' severing of the Medusa's head released Pegasus, the winged horse, which means sensuous libido and the creative spirit. Creativity, according to Jung (as reported in Gibson, Lathrop and Stern, 1986), is an essential ingredient of individuation, particularly as applied to life itself. It is worthwhile noting that the creative imagination alone may produce works of art in the broad sense of the word, but needs to influence the actual conduct of life to serve individuation, one's own for individual individuation, and/or others for collective individuation.

As becomes evident later in the play, Perseus is drawn through the law of sympathy towards Andromeda. Athene sees the drawing of a new consciousness, which includes "rosy Andromeda" becoming "a thing of light" (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 10), alluding to the fact that, in the Greek imagination, she became a star in the night sky. It also symbolizes the spiritualisation of the human heart, as becomes clear throughout the play.

Act I, Scene II begins with a Phoenician galley being crushed against a rocky shore on a stormy sea. "The angry voices of the surf" draw Perseus, who "[flies] to succour this galley shattered on the sharp-toothed rocks (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 15)." At the same time, he is overjoyed in anticipation of "mix[ing] with men and women in the corn and eat[ing] again accustomed food (p. 15)." It is significant that Perseus, Athene's champion, who is now imbued with wisdom and divine will, finds his way to be with common folk and to succour the shipwrecked. It suggests that a spiritual influence will be brought to bear on the humble aspects of life, not just the distant, cold intellect or the

grandiose vital [realm of life]. Moreover, it involves those who are unduly harmed (shipwrecked) during their voyage through life. Indeed, conscious participation in the individuation process often only begins when one feels devastated and a deep yearning in the heart calls out for spiritual nurturance and meaning.

In the play, those who survive the shipwreck are offered as blood sacrifice to the grim Poseidon. We are introduced to two such potential victims, the merchants Tyrnaus and Smerdas. Tyrnaus is a wealthy man of dignity who is not attached to his riches. Smerdas, in contrast, is cowardly and bemoans the loss of his “three thousand pieces of that wealthy stuff/full forty chests all crammed with noble gems (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 17).” Whereas Tyrnaus represents human dignity and the ability to gracefully accept what life serves up, Smerdas represents greed and attachments to worldly desires, which stand in the way of individuation.

We are also introduced to Polydaon, Poseidon’s priest, who wants sacrificial blood. He is a servant of atavism, fear of the unknown and fear of change. The hero Perseus, representing spiritual discernment and regenerative force, does not allow the sacrifice to take place. He is supported by Iolaus, son of the king and queen Syria and brother to Andromeda, with whom he becomes a fast friend. We also meet Phineus, king of Tyre, who is here to claim Andromeda as his queen, according to his contract with Cepheus. He is in league with Polydaon. In other words, he is a shadow-king and rules through fear. He is a representative of the Terrible Father, a negative spiritual force that misdirects and consolidates consciousness in the wrong direction.

Andromeda is already linked to Perseus spiritually through her brother, Iolaus, an intimate loving animus. Her connection to Perseus is essentially an inner one which, however, will eventually become realized outwardly. She observes:

I dreamed my sun had risen,
He had a face like the Olympian, Zeus
And wings upon his feet. He smiled upon me
(Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 30).

In fact, she dreamed of Perseus, who fits this description. In addition, she reveals herself as being a compassionate young woman with a mind of her own, highly aware of Eros and feeling values. She has already attained a significant degree of individuation. Accordingly, she denounces the cult of Poseidon currently sanctioned by Syrian law, noting that:

I had rather be
A beggar's daughter - -
- -than reign a queen
Doing such cruelty (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 35).

Her loving attitude portends a change in the ruling consciousness.

She has nothing but loathing for Phineus, king of Tyre, whom she is supposed to marry, thanks to a political contract between him and Cepheus, king of Syria, Andromeda's father. As the princess is highly conscious of Eros and the feeling function, she is capable of knowing deeply in her body what repulses her. she says:

But since he would have me even without my will
To foul with his beast touch, my body abhors him
(Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 37).

Whereas Perseus, the hero, represents spiritual discernment and courageous action, Andromeda is a heroine, representing the individuated heart-Self. This brings a

refinement of Eros-based feeling, which includes spiritual aspiration, sense of power of being, love, and wisdom. By Eros I mean relatedness or connectedness, both inwardly and outwardly. She is transparent to the heart's emotions and is now open to spiritual influences. In contrast, as I indicated above, Phineus is a shadow-king and represents a consciousness based on self-interest alone and fear of change.

In Act II, we are introduced to Cepheus and Cassiopia, king and queen of Syria, Andromeda's parents. Cepheus represents the ruling consciousness and Queen Cassiopia, the ruling Eros and feeling values. King Phineus of Tyre and Polydaon, Poseidon's priest, first make the demand that the son of Cepheus and Cassiopia, Iolaus, be sacrificed in place of the intended victims. Along with Perseus, he participated in their release.

This turn of events, the release of the intended victims contravening current practice and law, and Phineus' demands confuse Cepheus, who turns helplessly to the queen for counsel. Revealing herself as having greater strength than the king and relying on Eros and a woman's power, she fiercely refuses to allow her son Iolaus to be sacrificed. They eventually agree instead to give Iolaus three days to produce Perseus to be sacrificed. This serves the shadow-king's manipulative ends of both attaining a beautiful wife in Andromeda and political connection with Syria, while appeasing Poseidon. Overcome by his own shadow weakness and conventional thinking, Cepheus does not have the courage to refuse these demands.

We meet Andromeda again and are further impressed by both her strength of character and sweetness. Although barely a woman, she exhibits considerable independence of spirit, refusing to go along with her father's will, even though she loves him. In a conversation with him, Andromeda exclaims:

Father, you'll understand this once and for all--
I will not let the Babylonians die,
I will not marry Phineus (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 62).

Her father, Cepheus, replies:

'Tis policy, 'tis kingly policy
That made this needful marriage
- - - and it shall not
For your spoilt childish likings be unmade (p. 63).

But Andromeda is adamant, saying:

I will not father. If I must marry, then
I'll marry my bright sungod! and none else
In the wide world (p. 63).

In this exchange, we can better appreciate the kinds of changes that are being brought to bear on the ruling consciousness. Andromeda is a voice of compassion [not wanting to let the Babylonians die] and integrity of heart [refusing to marry the shadow-king, Phineus, despite kingly policy]. Furthermore, she is not only a loving person but, through sympathy, she draws love to herself. Thus on first hearing her name, Perseus exclaims, "Andromeda! It is a name that murmurs to the heart (p. 70)." Iolaus, her brother, adds that she is "of strength and sweetness (p. 70)."

In Act III we are given further evidence of Andromeda's loving nature, first, the mutual love between the maiden and her servant, and then her pity towards the two

shipwrecked Babylonians she is on her way to release. In addition, when she prays for protection, she is rewarded by an ecstatic epiphany of Athene. The Goddess declares:

Stand up O daughter of Cassiopia
Wilt thou then help these men of Babylonia
My mortals whom I love (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 79)?

Andromeda responds:

I help myself,
When I help these (p. 79).

Athene then says lovingly:

To thee alone I gave
This knowledge, O virgin, O Andromeda
It reached thee through that large and noble heart
Of woman beating in a little child
But dost thou know that thy reward shall be
Betrayal and fierce hatred (p. 79)?

It becomes clear that Andromeda, with her purified heart, not only contains love, but is open to spiritual insight, wisdom, and strength and power of being. There is a deep psychological and spiritual truth to the fact that by helping others through sympathetic love, one helps oneself. Moreover, she consents to act according to Athene's will, despite the hatred to which she will be subjected. Individuation and finding one's unique path in life, ultimately a path of the heart, means going against collective norms and demands, and invites rejection and antagonism. It means following another will than that of the ego, the will of the Self.

Meanwhile, Perseus returns to Poseidon's temple. His spiritual discernment gives him the understanding that fear of the grim sea-god has more to do with a collective subjectivity than objective reality. He muses rhetorically:

Art thou not rather, lord, some murderous

And red imagination of this people,
The shadow of a soul that dreamed of blood
And took this dimness (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 85)?

In addition, he notes that:

If thou art Poseidon,
The son of Cronos, I am Cronos' grandchild,
Perseus, and in my soul Athene moves
With lightnings (p. 85).

Perhaps, in the final analysis, Perseus seems to be saying, Poseidon is both a subjective and objective reality, and subject to transformation. Since Perseus and Poseidon have the same bloodline, the hero is presumably able to relate to the dark god and subdue or influence him with the lightning rods of Athene, meaning with spiritual insight and will.

After Andromeda liberates the two Babylonians, Tyrnaus and Smerdas, she courageously confronts Poseidon all alone. Speaking directly from her heart, she challenges him as follows:

I yet pollute my soul with thy bloody nearness
To tell thee that I hate, contemn, defy thee.
I am no more than a brief living woman
Yet I am more divine than thou, for I
Can pity. I have torn thy destined prey
From thy red jaws. They say thou dost avenge
Fearfully insult. Avenge thyself, Poseidon (Sri
Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 95).

Her woman's strength so impresses Perseus, who is standing in the shadows, that he says to Iolaus, Andromeda's brother:

Thou art the mate for me, Andromeda!
Now, now I know wherefore my eager sandals
Bore me resistlessly to thee and Syria (p. 95).

Perseus recognizes his deep inner connection to Andromeda. As a spiritual being, he responds to the sincere aspirations of the human heart.

The plot develops with Phineus of Tyre and Polydaon, Poseidon's priest, questioning a captured Smerdas on who set him and the noble Tyrnaus free. The cowardly Babylonian, psychologically, our fearful, greedy shadow that compromises psychological integrity, admits it was Andromeda, the fearless, feeling and loving heart. Andromeda eventually enters the scene, and unhesitatingly reveals what happened, stating:

I am a princess.
Why should I lie? From fear? But I am not afraid (Sri
Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 110).

Unlike Smerdas, she does not compromise her integrity through fear.

This sets the stage for Poseidon to avenge himself in Act IV. Through the priest Polydaon, who becomes possessed by an occult force, the people of Syria are whipped up against the princess. As Athene warned, the formerly loving subjects turn hateful towards her [and her family] for spiting Poseidon. They pursue her full of venom and rage. Sri Aurobindo here masterfully captures the fickle nature of the mass mind, and the rapidity with which it can get caught up in an epidemic of terror, whether expressed through an individual or a group of people.

The Royal Family are pursued by the mob as there is anarchy and a complete breakdown of the ruling ethos. Not only is Polydoan possessed, but so are the people.

Andromeda's courageous defiance of Poseidon and the established sacrificial cult, the law, was the catalyst for such a defensive reaction based on fear. Likewise, the urge for individuation constellates the shadow and the possibility of this kind of negative inflation, both individually and collectively.

As an aside, it is noteworthy that the word courage is etymologically based on the word cor meaning heart. In fact the French word for heart is coeur. Andromeda, as representative of the heart-Self, proves herself to be courageous in facing Poseidon, in other words, in facing her fears and attachments. Meanwhile, at least at the beginning, King Cepheus shows a lack of courage, a result of being out of touch with the heart-Self.

Andromeda is eventually captured and chained to a cliff on the seashore as a sacrificial offering to Poseidon. Meanwhile, the hero Perseus is gearing up for action, observing that:

My grip is firm on Herpe,
Athene's aegis guards my wrist; herself
The strong, omnipotent and tranquil goddess
Governs my motions with her awful will (Sri
Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 130).

Spiritual discernment and force of will are being made ready to come to the aid of the suffering maiden, Andromeda, meaning, it is coming to the aid of the heart's plight.

Cepheus, Cassiopia, and Iolaus, Andromeda's family, are awaiting arrival of the mob, to be slain. The king wonders how his just, benevolent and merciful rule, where "I make

the people's love my throne's sure base - - -could turn to this" (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 133). In his remorse, he acknowledges that his queen, Cassiopia, often had more wisdom than he did:

Always thou saidst to me, "The people's love
Is a glimmer on quicksands in a gliding sea:
Today they are with thee, to-morrow turn elsewhere.
Wisdom, strength policy alone are sure (p. 134)."

In his idealism, Cepheus did not appreciate the nature of the unconscious and the collective shadow and take that into account in determining policy. Now he appears to know better. Ultimately, the Eros-related voice of woman proves to be not only stronger but wiser. In his suffering and bewilderment, Cepheus seems to be admitting that the ruling consciousness needs be more open to it. Likewise, in individuation, suffering through adversity often seems necessary to force a needed change in attitude or value in order to incorporate more Eros.

Act V begins with the maiden chained to a rock, confronting her own fears and death at the hands of the "iron-throated vast un pitying sea" (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 157). Yet Andromeda does not repent, declaring:

I have been true to myself and to my heart,
I have been true to the love it bore for men (p. 158).

Individuation, incarnating the Self in time and space, requires Andromeda-like courage to follow the passions of the heart-Self and dying to a thousand and one attachments.

Soon Perseus arrives to deliver Andromeda, saying he comes

In time to save thee, my Andromeda,
Sole jewel of the world. I go to meet

Thy enemy, confronting grim Poseidon (p. 162).

He subsequently slays the sea-monster and returns to release Andromeda from her chains. The human heart, it seems, needs to be chained to the rock of the Self in order to face its fears, even the fear of death, for the sake of detachment and individuation. The arrival of Perseus, who severs the chain, suggests that a deep yearning from the heart calls for spiritual discernment and strength of will, which comes to one's aid with the gift of detachment and willpower. It requires the courage and aspiration of an Andromeda "sole jewel of the world (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 162)" and an opening to the flame of the heart-Self beyond worldly desire.

By the law of synchronicity, when Andromeda is released, the people formerly possessed by a dark force once again express their love and obedience to Cepheus and Cassiopia. They, in turn, accept it gracefully. Meanwhile, one final task remains for Perseus. Phineus, king of Tyre, persists in claiming the hand of Andromeda by right of pre-contract. She refuses, and a final confrontation ensues between Phineus, with his soldiers, and Perseus, alone. The hero, as destroyer, shows them the face of the Gorgon, turning them to stone. The shadow-king and his men cannot face the wisdom brought by Perseus' presence. Nor do they have a mirror or the reflective capacity and ability to avert the destructive aspects of the released primordial energies. They do not have the wherewithal to participate in the new dispensation and are therefore destroyed. In the individuation process, attitudes and values that are not compatible with the demands of the Self meet the same end.

The play draws to a close with the coming nuptials of Perseus and Andromeda. There will be a marriage between spiritual will and wisdom and the enlightened heart. Meanwhile, king Cepheus agrees to a transformation in the ruling principle of life. He turns to Perseus, stating:

Hero, thou comest to change our world for us.
Pronounce: I give assent (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 200).

Typical of the hero, Perseus is the bringer of a new culture. He replies, calling for

A noble center of a people's worship,
To Zeus and great Athene build a temple (p. 200).

This will lead to:

A light of reason and calm celestial force
And a wise tranquil government of life,
Order and beauty and harmonious thoughts
And, ruling the waves of impulse, high-throned will (p.
200).

He counsels to “adore and what you adore attempt to be” (Sri Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 200). Moreover, he observes that Poseidon, lord of the sea, is now a “bright compassionate God” (p. 200) who has “withdrawn from his own darkness and is now his new great self at an Olympian height” (p. 200). In the individuation process, it is essential to confront the chthonic shadow as did Andromeda. This results in a transformation of consciousness, including the integration of shadow qualities. There is a consequent gain in strength along with the emergence of a compassionate guiding figure, the transformed Poseidon, for the journey through the sea of life.

Psychologically, this indicates the need to penetrate through the shadow complex to its archetypal core, which can be done by devoting oneself to the ideals symbolized by

Zeus and Athene. Individuation then leads to enlightened reason, one in harmony with spirit, life and the instincts. In addition, according to Sri Aurobindo, there is indicated here “the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being that it is “humankind’s ultimate destiny to become (1971a, p. 2).” Transformation ultimately comes through attraction to the opposites deep within, to Andromeda and her love-sweetness; power of being and wisdom of the heart, and to Perseus with his discerning spirit, force of will and knowledge. The marriage of Perseus and Andromeda represents the distant goal of individuation. Individuation, that is to say, potentially leads to a marriage between the heart-Self and the spiritualized mind, one that is transformed through infusions from the Self, perhaps better said, Grace and what Christians refer to as the Holy Spirit.

The onus for change, however, is first on individuals and then on humankind. Thus, in words reminiscent of those referred to earlier by C.G. Jung, Perseus informs the king that:

All alters in a world that is the same.
Man must change who is a soul of Time
His gods too change and live in larger light (Sri
Aurobindo, 1971a, p. 201).

We are, according to Jung, living in “the right moment for a metamorphosis of the Gods, of the fundamental principles and symbols (1970b, p. 304).”

I have commented on a contemporary rendition of Perseus the Deliverer by Sri Aurobindo, especially regarding the hero’s relationship to the heroine and captive maiden, Andromeda. From a psychological perspective, the play is about the

transformation in consciousness from one based on fear and fear of change and ego attachments of all kinds, to a new dispensation. The new consciousness, which involves a transformation of chthonic shadow qualities, is based on enlightened reason, one encouraging harmony between instincts, life and spirit. There are also the beginnings of a consciousness organized through direct promptings from the heart-Self, best represented by the being of Andromeda, as well as the spiritualized mind, represented by Perseus. Read symbolically, the play is indicative of the need for individuation of the individual psyche as well as the long-term underlying changes taking place collectively today.

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Collected Plays and Stories comprises all Sri Aurobindo's original dramatic works and works of prose fiction. The material, which occupies two volumes, is divided by type into three parts: complete plays, incomplete and fragmentary plays, and stories, complete, incomplete and fragmentary. The earliest of the pieces collected here was written in 1891, the latest in 1915. Only one of them, *Perseus the Deliverer*, was published during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime. The rest have been reproduced from his manuscripts.

4. CONTENTS.

PLAYS.

In *Perseus the Deliverer*, Aurobindo connects masculinity with nationalism to revive the lost spirit of the countrymen. He strongly connects 'India' with 'mother' and appeals to the sons of the country to deliver their 'motherland' from the shackles of the colonizers. Aurobindo intertwined religion with nationalism and regarded it as a divine act. This change in the colonial ordering of Indian social system is recorded in this play. Traditional Brahminical hegemonic masculinity is shown under crisis under the impact of the new order of the day in which Kshatriyahood was gaining increasing importance.

Introduction.

Aurobindo Akroyd Ghosh, known more as Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), a sage, creative writer and a patriot, was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. In *Perseus the Deliverer*, Aurobindo connects masculinity with nationalism to revive the lost spirit of the countrymen. He strongly connects 'India' with 'mother' and appeals to the sons of the country to deliver their 'motherland' from the shackles of the colonizers. Aurobindo intertwined religion with nationalism and regarded it as a divine act. In pre-colonial social ordering of India, 'kshatriyahood' or militant masculinity had a limited space. Under the impact of the British (and Victorian masculinity), Aurobindo, like other nationalists (M M Dutt and