**Workshop 9:**

**Application of Jungian Psychoanalytic Theory to the Analysis of *Cinderella***

In this analysis of *Cinderella*, as recorded by Charles Perrault, I will assume that the whole story describes a state of immature feminine psyche. All the images in the story will be seen as aspects of a feminine. Based on Jungian literary criticism, the central character, Cinderella, is viewed as real while the other characters (stepmother, stepsister, father, fairy Godmother, the Prince, etc. ) are seen as symbolic representations of the various aspects of the heroine’s unconscious self. These characters all stand for parts of the unconscious which the heroine will eventually access.

We come to know that after the death of the heroine’s mother, her father took in another wife who had a daughter. The stepmother and stepsister were the proudest and the haughtiest that were ever seen. They did not like Cinderella, nor did they tolerate her good nature. The initial part of the story shows Cinderella’s way of life after her father’s death. The introduction presents obvious facts known to Cinderella. For her, this represents the conscious. The main contrast between the conscious and the unconscious is represented by the known and the unknown situations.

By the death of the father, there is a threesome in the story- the stepmother, stepsister and Cinderella. This indicates an incomplete cycle. Only when we reach number four will the cycle be complete. Cinderella, the stepmother, the stepsister and, eventually, the Prince is one example of a quaternary. At the start of the story, Cinderella or the female psyche is far from complete. She is very innocent, naive and immature. This immature female psyche lacks a caring mother figure within. In the first part of the story, we learn that the father took in another wife and he was completely dominated by her.

We notice that this is the only time Cinderella’s father is mentioned in the story. He is an indolent father because he fails to save his daughter from the torturing hands of his wife. The father is an “absent-one” in Cinderella’s life. Yet, he does a great contribution to the whole story. The female psyche starts out with an almost non-existent father figure or Animus and, at this stage, the mother is dead. This state of the psyche is tragic. It lacks a caring mother image and a father who cannot stand up for her. ‘Doing nothing’ is the most expressive form of violence.

The father does not offer any guidance in his daughter’s life. He does not even attempt to control the raging forces within her, personified as the cruel stepmother. He does nothing against the Shadow within the female psyche. In other words, the father represents a weak Animus in the psyche. As mentioned before, after the death of the father, a women-threesome is formed. The stepmother is a total negative character. She represents the negative power of the psyche. The stepsister, although being a passive character in the tale, also is connected with the mother and intensifies her negative power.

Cinderella is the only positive power of the psyche in the threesome. From the beginning of the story, we notice that the Shadow is dominant in the female psyche. It has a control over the Animus and is, at the same time, trying to overthrow the Ego, which is young and under-developed. The stepmother, representing the Shadow archetype, is jealous of the young girl for her beauty, kindness and good nature. Thus, she is an active wrecker. The woman-threesome represents the principals of the woman’s psyche, the essential self of women. Every woman is born with this essential self.

Cinderella, the positive character in the threesome, is the real essence of the woman’s self. According to Jung, the features of the dark side of the woman’s soul are expressed by instability, anger or hatred. The beginning of the story shows an unbalanced psyche. There is a dominance of the Shadow and a lack of the Animus in this psyche. The Animus is the man’s power of the psyche; it is a masculine principle that appears in the woman’s psyche. Typical attributes of the Animus are, for example, rationality, power, action or reasonableness.

The Animus and the Self complement each other. Finally, in the harmonized psyche, they are integrated into one another, thereby achieving individuation. Cinderella is passive in the beginning of the story. She suffers a lot but does not protest against the atrocities towards her. She simply waits for her destiny to get better. At this stage, the Self, the essence of the woman’s psyche, is suppressed under the dominance of the Shadow in the unconscious. Also, in the stage Cinderella does not have any friends. She is not sharing her grief with anyone until the fairy Godmother appears.

The fairy Godmother appears when Cinderella was alone in the house, her stepmother and stepsister having left for the royal party at the king’s palace. The Godmother is the only friend Cinderella has, who compensates her love, friendship and the feeling of loneliness. Jung describes the fairy as the “soul-mate” and “the incarnation of inspiration and spiritual fulfillments”. The fairy Godmother comes to Cinderella from some unknown place. This symbolizes the unconscious. Now, Cinderella shares all her sorrows, wishes and grieves with her, and, finally, finds relief in a friend.

This relief was very essential for her existence. The fairy Godmother from her unconscious is her own thought, her desire and hope for the change of the current situation. Talking with the fairy, Cinderella pursues her hope for a better life. Here, the Ego is trying to find a way for its integration with the Animus, in the absence of the Shadow. The Shadow finds Cinderella as a threat and hence, does not allow her to attend the royal party. Our heroine is left alone at home when, for the first time, she speaks out her wish. Thus, at this stage, there is a first glimmer of awareness on the part of Cinderella.

She is considered a threat by the Shadow figure in her psyche. The Ego is restricted in freedom. It is ‘alienated from normal life’ (Jung). It continues to ‘hide’ in the house and is forced to retreat from the normal life it wishes to live. The appearance of the Godmother meant the revelation of Cinderella’s wishes. Later, the fairy disappears. This means that her hopes are revealed and must be suppressed. It must be hidden deep in the unconscious. Hence the fairy god mother disappears, never to return in the story, but her magic and magical powers do not disappear completely.

It remains with Cinderella till she wears the glass slippers and turns into beautiful Princess. Cinderella is blessed by the fairy Godmother. She is enchanted, gets new, beautiful dress, jewels, and a pair of glass slippers. This magic symbolizes her taking on a social mask. She presents herself the way she wants to be seen by other people. Here, the archetype of Persona has come to the fore. The Persona is the character we assume and that which we relate to others. It includes our social roles, the kind of clothes we choose to wear and our individual styles of expressing ourselves.

Jung explains that Persona is important to achieve psychological maturity. The moment of the Cinderella’s decision to attend the royal party indicates the rise of Animus in the psyche. She uses the magical powers enchanted upon her and this stands for the rebirth of Animus, the man’s psyche in her mind. Even though she stays a passive victim under the pressure of the external circumstances, on the level of conscious, Cinderella struggles with it. She is aware of her desires and the power to reach them. This awareness of the inner power is the first sight of the Animus.

The Animus principle represents straightness, rationality, power and action (Jung). Cinderella is warned by her godmother to return from the party “before the clock strikes 12”. During the party, as soon as the clock strikes 12, Cinderella runs away from the palace. Jungian scholars interpret this as the test of the power of the Animus in Cinderella. She does not have any experience with the way the Animus behaves as she has never been exposed to it. She has never tried to be straight or follow her aims, rather submitting to the negative forces, without protest.

She wants to listen to the Animus, but she is afraid of the people’s reaction to her new attitude to life (her Persona). Although she believes that she deserves to be there, she runs away, frightened that she would be recognized. Thus, the twelve-O-clock striking and Cinderella’s run away can be interpreted as the female psyche’s defense mechanism. She is, once again, trying to hide herself and escape from the risk of exposing her true self. On her way home, Cinderella loses her glass slippers. A psychological explanation is that “a slipper or a shoe symbolizes the person’s attitude to the particular situation”.

Here, Cinderella loses her attitude to the man’s principle (Animus) and retires into the unconscious, again suppressed. She failed the test of power, and is not able to encourage herself to fulfill her true desires. At this point, new characters appear in the story- the king’s men who go around the country to find the Princess. This represents a link that is important for the further movement of the story. After Cinderella left her slippers behind, the king’s men found it and brought it to the Prince. The Prince “proclaimed, by sound of trumpet, that he would marry her whose foot the slipper would just fit” (Perrault).

He employed few men to find out the Princess. Thus, they began to try it on every young lady in the country and, eventually, find Cinderella. These men, who are employed by the Prince, may represent the part of Cinderella’s mind, which has an impact on her self-evaluation. She is trying to regain her strength. She concludes that she wants to raise her social status. This implies that she is taking a positive attitude towards the newly-found Animus in her psyche. She is trying to integrate with it. When the Prince’s proclamation is made, the stepsister “burst out laughing and began to banter her”.

She tried to stop Cinderella from trying the glass slippers. This implies that the Shadow and the Anima (the female power) are still more dominant in the psyche. Cinderella does not try the slipper on outright. The woman’s principle in her discourages her from trying to change her attitude towards life. These are the defense mechanisms in her psyche. It symbolizes her doubts- whether she would be accepted in this new attitude; whether she would be hurt again. The men were ordered to let everyone try the glass slippers. Hence, Cinderella was obliged to try it.

In a sense, she was taking her slippers back. The decision to try the slippers symbolizes the rise of the Animus. As it was mentioned before, a shoe (or slipper) represents the attitude towards life. Cinderella took her shoe back which means that she was again overtaken by the attitude of the Animus. Cinderella has to become conscious of her power first, to change her terrible circumstances. When she realizes her powers, the Shadow loses its dominance in her psyche and the Animus takes over the power. This was the final test of the power of the Animus and she succeeds.

The moment Cinderella wears the shoes, she is transformed into a beautiful Princess. This symbolizes the moment of victory of the Animus. Our heroine has taken the attitude to the Animus principle. She has accepted the Animus in the unconscious and is accepted by the society, too. By transforming into a Princess, Cinderella intensifies her new life attitude. Also, the Prince and his men symbolize protection so that the Shadow does not once again dominate the psyche. The story ends with Cinderella’s union with the Prince. The Prince represents the Animus.

Thus, finally, the Ego is united with the Animus to form the true self. The evil characters in the story are not mentioned again. This indicates the death of the negative power in the psyche. The female psyche is now completely developed and, therefore, the process of individuation is complete.