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Sacred World of Technology: Myth of Hephaestus

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ABSTRACT

The original idea behind the technological world is craft and art. Technology not just seamlessly becomes extension to overcome the physical limitations or provide assistance for mental work but amplifies our abilities to fulfill the creative endeavours. The quintessence of technology makes itself discernible in the primordial images. The objective of the paper is to study the archetypal root of the World of Technology via interpreting myth. In order to fulfill the objective, myth of Greek God Hephaestus has been selected that narrates his birth and his adventures alongside depicting his iconography. The myth has been interpreted employing archetypal amplification that is a Jungian tool which is to systematically broaden and supplement the mythological image under analysis with analogous images so as to discover and deepen the meaning. Hephaestus—the crippled god—thrown away by his mother had to forge himself into a talented metalsmith restoring him back to the heavenly abode of gods. The fall of the god into the sea is the blessing of skill to craft, artisanship and technology to the mortal world. The deformed god of technology marries goddess of beauty suggesting that man-made inventions will not just help to surpass its limitations but also seek form and aesthetic greatness. Hephaestus is brother of god of war—Ares; war-time being the opportune-time for technological advancements. Beauty and war are two fiery passions that inspire mankind to be creative. Hephaestus is the Hero-god born out of Hera's competitive nature, pleased gods with his divine talent, so is the nature of technology that tirelessly challenges its own creation, forever in quest of improving itself and to place man—despite his lameness—at the cusp of becoming divine.

Key Words: *Mythology, technology, creativity*

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the paper was to understand the primordial image underlying the Technology. The Greek god Hephaestus is associated with the word *techne* that is the root word of technology. Ebenstein (2006) explains that this word is directly associated with artifice, craft and device that is a reflection of one's subjectivity that interacts with the external objective world (Ebenstein, 2006). This objective world is governed by laws of physics and technology is the interface between man and nature.

Myth of Hephaestus

Hephaestus was not conceived by Hera out of love for her husband—Zeus, but from her sheer will to compete with his creation—Athena—the goddess of wisdom, warfare and craft. Hera, out of her anger and resentment towards Zeus bore Hephaestus, who is supposed to be her excellent son but turned out to be weak, and born crippled. Hera being ashamed of the inadequacies of the new born infant, threw him down Mt. Olympus into the sea. The afflicted newborn found refuge in the dark caves of the sea. He was taken care of by Thetis and Eurynome.

Another version of the story suggests that Hera was punished by Zeus for sending storm to kill Herakles while she puts Zeus in sleep. Hephaestus sided with Hera which angered Zeus, so he caught Hephaestus by foot and flung him out of Mt. Olympus. He kept tumbling down the mountain till sunset and landed on the island of Lemnos heavily injured in his feet. This was his new home for nine years where he learnt to craft beautiful objects out of seashells and subsequently with gold and silver, creating jewellery and other handiwork. Both Thetis and Eurynome found Hephaestus to be exceptionally talented so they asked him to make things that will please the gods living high up the mountain. To do as they said he began crafting the most beautiful golden sandals for all the gods and for Hera he build and magnificent golden throne.

Thetis and Eurynome arrived to Mt. Olympus with the gifts. They offered the sandals to Zeus and other gods and to Hera they presented the magnificent golden throne. Hera was very pleased with the gift so she sat on to appreciate its

maker causing every other god to be envious of her. But the moment she tried to rise up the fine entanglements build into the throne trapped her. She tried every move to free herself from its strong clutch but nothing worked. Defeated and embarrassed, Hera is stuck to her throne prompted Thetis and Eurynome to go to Hephaestus and request him to release his mother. But, Hephaestus is adamant and will not give in to and persuasions. So, finally Dionysus stepped in got him drunk and brought him to negotiate with Hera. Hera accepts Hephaestus as her son and let him choose a goddess to be his wife. Hephaestus frees his mother and asked Athene in marriage but she refused him. Then, Zeus offered the most beautiful of all the goddesses— Aphrodite— to Hephaestus in marriage.

Aphrodite— goddess of love, desire and beauty dwelled with Hephaestus in her palace in Lemnos, where she attracted men that supplied her husband with workers. She mated the widows of Lemnos with the men keeping the island full of life and joy. The marriage was full of passion but Hephaestus did not fathered children with her fearing that they will be crippled like him.

Aphrodite— the polyamorous goddess secretly mated with Ares— the god of war, as her smith-husband went out to his workshop. Helios— Sun god— saw them indulging in sex and reported to Hephaestus. Hephaestus, to catch the lovers in the act of sex forged chains that will swiftly trap the two. He set the chains in his bed, the device he created was so fine that it was invisible to the gods. Then he proceeded to his workshop. Hephaestus stepped out of his palace Ares entered the bed chamber with Aphrodite. As soon as they lay on bed with each other the device came to life, swung into action immediately trapping the two. Helios again reported Hephaestus so he ran back to his palace. The crafty Hephaestus urged Zeus and other gods to see Aphrodite to make love to charming and handsome Ares— war god. All the gods begin to laugh at the scene. Poseidon after witnessing this pleads to Hephaestus to free Ares from entrapment promising that he will pay a penalty for committing adultery and if Ares does not pay up then Poseidon himself will. Hephaestus couldn't refuse Poseidon and let go Ares on his way to Thrake and Aphrodite to Paphos.

Hypothetical Interpretation

Hephaestus is the child of the will of the mother. Parents often imagine how the children should to be like. They secretly pick profession; decide on what talents they want to see in their child. This child of the will is an image they wish had become. This image is part conscious and part unconscious and bears the unlive life of the parents (Jung cited in Jacoby, 1953; p.115). Goddess Hera who is of Amazonian spirit is class of archetypal feminine figures who are by nature competitive, professional and full of will. Amazon goddesses are warriors who have objectives and goals to conquer in life. Consequently, Hephaestus is the god of profession; he is a metal smith, craftsman, inventor of implements, he is the manifestation of the will of his mother. Like mother, like son she has ingrained in him will and competitiveness. Hera wants a son who is formidable and through him she.

Hera is competing with the husband's creation—Athene. Athene— born out of Zeus's head is the goddess of wisdom, warfare and craft. Wisdom and warfare go together. Wisdom is the intelligence and creativity required in warfare. War encourages inventive spirit, throughout history war has caused inventions and receive maximum resource allocation by majority of the countries.

Hera's resentment and anger are the negative emotions in combination with her competitiveness nature gave birth to Hephaestus who is crippled by birth. The negative emotions that embody her had a crippling effect on the child. The personality of Hephaestus is taking shape as gifted, creative god with emotionally crippled. He is the God of professions; many exceptionally talented men and women claim that they are married to their jobs and suffer social maladjustment. Our creative endeavours call for social isolation even if such creations are a gift to society only.

The other version of the story tells us that Hera and Zeus have a conflictual relation. The stormy relation between the husband and wife is the cause of disability in Hephaestus. Zeus is displacing his anger towards Hera onto her son Hephaestus.

The lame infant is thrown into the sea. The sea and the caves become the womb for Hephaestus. He is the hero in gestation. Just like Hephaestus there are other Hero gods like Moses and Krishna had to be fetched out of waters. Thetis and Eurynome took care of Hephaestus. So, Hephaestus at one end has Hera as mother who does not recognise him and on the other has these two sea goddesses who provide nurturance nourishing environment for the little god. The caves of the sea will teach him beauty, form and precision that will make him rise above his disability. Hephaestus will pick up crafting beautiful objects out of seashells that have beautiful natural structural patterns, Hephaestus is the divine engineer. Seashell symbolizes fertility, seashell jewellery is worn by women to beautify themselves and worn after marriage that commence their fertile life. This myth is highlighting the fertility of mind.

Hephaestus's fall is the blessing for the mankind. This second gestation give birth to an excellent craftsman. Nurturance of Hephaestus as an excellent craftsman for nine years symbolize maturation and development of different professions and inventions in the world.

Hephaestus with his talent seeks blessing from the gods above, he makes golden sandals for the gods just like in India we touch feet of elders to seek blessing. But for Hera he forms a throne that traps her which precisely depicts her need to assert as queen at par with her husband as well as her entanglement in competition with her husband Zeus. The gift of throne for Hera also shows how well the son knows the mother's heart, he knows her preference, he understands the mother's need for recognition. The throne of entanglement depicts Hera's emotional entanglements—resentment, anger, ambition, shame, disgust, jealous nature—that entraps her. Hephaestus is the extension of his mother, just like he is lame now the mother is also tied up. She is stuck in her conflicts. Hera was in entanglement first with the husband then with the son. The first entanglement is conflict with the husband that is full of resentment and anger; the second entanglement is difficult relation with the son that has shame and disappointment.

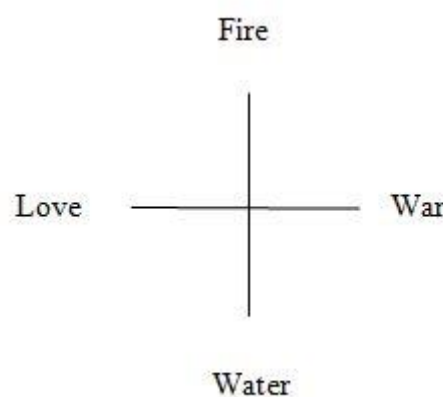
Like mother doesn't recognise the son even the son doesn't recognise the mother. When Hera is trapped Hephaestus is in the dark caves means the son doesn't know his mother. The act of entanglement is Hephaestus's way of interacting with the mother. That will lead to his own entanglement into marriage, relations. But before that Hephaestus must free himself from the conflict with mother, the emotional intensity between them must cool down that was brought forth by Dionysus—god of wine. Dionysus will help mitigate the emotional upheaval that Hephaestus is in. The moment Hephaestus releases Hera from the trap a new relation befalls on him—Marriage with Aphrodite. Aphrodite Pandemos—she is multiple woman—indicates Hephaestus's relation to multiple goddess. Her presence is the healing of the relational conflict within Hephaestus. The Mongolian shamans are known to perform ritual called chudurlukh: referring to binding of the heart. Reunion with mother brings back the lost heart and soul.

Hephaestus and Aphrodite lived in the island of Lemnos. Lemnos was the Island of widows. The women became widows by killing their husbands. This is a very common mythological pattern of behaviour the Amazon women they take men live with them establish sexual relations with them till they are fully satisfied, they are self-reliant women and do not remain in the bonds of relation. Killing of the husband is the fulfillment of the relation and then moving on to be single again.

Lemnos island is Hephaestus's mother that has nurtured and helped him grow as a craftsman. Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, skill, creativity and prostitution inspire men to be creative. This is where the libido that is personified by Aphrodite is transformed into the creative acts that the hero symbolise. The Island symbolise the unconscious and the people in the Island are the various trades and ideas. The act of consummation by the people in Lemnos brings joy and life in abundance. Workplace and jobs are our emotional engagement and emotional investment.

The God of crafts and professions attained proficiency in intellectual issue and skill but the god's head and heart both must function adequately. Carl Jung expresses that "What use is philosophical knowledge in the head of one who is not at heart a philosopher?" (Jung cited in Jacoby, 1953; p.56). Aphrodite take care of all the matters of heart. She is the beauty and form that an engineer seeks in his inventions. For example, automobiles are mostly addressed as feminine.

Love (Aphrodite) and War (Ares), Fire (Helios) and Water (Poseidon) forms a psychic quaternary in which the human life and Nature flows.



This quaternary structure is intrapsychic depicts the paradox that is the subjective condition of our hero Hephaestus likewise of mankind. The opposites that are depicted in this as Goddess of Love—Aphrodite and God of War—Ares in sexual union is the essence of Nature in presence of Helios—god of sun and Poseidon—God of Water. The dynamism

of attraction or love and repulsion or war is taking place within Hephaestus. His relation with the Hera (mother) is driven by both attraction and repulsion. Both are intense and passionate experience of mankind and creative endeavours of man venerate both Love and War. Familial conflicts, racism are the outer manifestation of the attraction and repulsion.

Aphrodite and Ares sexual union is *hierosgamos*, this marriage brought to life eros, harmony, dread, fear that make mankind to be fertile and prosper.

Helios in the myth is igniting and infuriating Hephaestus and Poseidon is cooling down the matter—the other pair of opposites, that is experience of love and hate in intimate relation, war and peace in international relation. But both sun and water engender life. Horse that is the symbol of libido or psychic energy is dear to both the gods. Hephaestus's craftwork, devices, smithery was taking shape because he handled heat and cold in precision.

Aphrodite the goddess of form and beauty and Hephaestus not so well-formed god is another pair of opposite that depicts the world of technology some ugly some beautiful. All works and trade from agriculture to war have sprouted from nature so is a synthesis of the opposing forces.

Humankind suffers and enjoys this *oppositorumconiunctionis*.

Rape of Athene

Once Athene went to see Hephaestus in his palace to devise some weapon. Hephaestus was alone, deserted by Aphrodite. Seeing Athene he swole up with desire to fornicate with her. He began chasing Athene but she being the virgin goddess ran fast to save herself. Hephaestus with his lame foot determined to catch her continued the chase and finally grabbed her. He tried to penetrate her just she kept resisting. In this scuffle Hephaestus ejaculated on her thigh. Athene furiously wiped off the semen with a piece of wool and threw it on earth. So it is known that from this act Erichthonios was born.

Hypothetical Interpretation

When Aphrodite—the Goddess of Beauty, Aesthetics, Order—has deserted us to be creative, then Hephaestus, the professional self in us, suffers (Hephaestus was alone in the myth).

The Goddess of wisdom goes to Hephaestus to construct some weapon.

The manner in which Hephaestus socializes with Athene is the struggle, and a very desperate and lonely one, that we undergo to work creatively and work with wisdom. Work (Hephaestus) and wisdom (Athene) hardly unite romantically, gracefully and joyfully in our daily life.

The pursuit of wisdom in-itself is a struggle with all our shortcomings till hard work pays off—Hephaestus the Lame chasing and finally grabbing Athene. Even though one works hard to attain some experience, mastery and wisdom, the struggle to be creative continues. Thus, the rape in the myth.

The Seed of Hephaestus

The 'Seed of Hephaestus' falling on the thigh of Athene is our walk and our way to live a creative life.

The 'Seed of Hephaestus' falling in the womb of earth (Gaia) is our creative potentiality. The earth presents us with the naturally resources and begets creativity in us.

The 'Seed of Hephaestus' falling on earth is our natural instinct to be constructive and creative.

Erichthonios represents the people, the earthlings who embody the characteristics of the three deities— Hephaestus, Athene and Gaia. The Serpentine ruler represent the people. All our works and creations and human beings have the potentiality of wisdom and at the same time are temporal. From the dust we rise and to the dust we shall return.

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