

**Shirin and Artemis: A Comparative Study based on Nezami's Khosrow and Shirin**

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**Abstract:** Finding a connection between Nezami, Shirin and Jung may seem impossible; however, assessing Khosrow and Shirin, especially Shirin's character, from an Analytic Psychology perspective can yield supportive evidence that, according to Shinoda Bolen, one of Jung's students, the character of Shirin is considerably similar to Artemis', the Hellenic goddess of the moon and hunt. As part of her character, she has the ability to express herself willingly, decrying the inferiority assigned to women in a male-dominant society. Lonely and unsupported, she follows her goals as determined and loyal as she is. Therefore, there are various common grounds between Shirin and Artemis, as Shirin's character completely overlaps that of Artemis'.

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**Introduction**

Loyal to her first love, Shirin finds through her challenges that Khosrow is not her soul mate; however, loyalty, dignity and social taboos prevent her from leaving Khosrow and seeking another lover. Since this paper attempts to analyze Shirin's character from a Jungian psychology perspective, we consider the Shinoda Bolen's analyses on the Hellenic deities and relate them to the character of Shirin.

**Shirin and Artemis**

We may juxtapose the female character of Shirin in Nezami's *Khosrow and Shirin* with that of Artemis', the Hellenic goddess of moon and hunt. Although Artemis is mostly known as the goddess of hunt, she is also considered as the goddess of moon. Artemis is the symbol of women's free spirit. As an archetype, she enables women to follow goals and make choices. According to Shinoda Bolen, Artemis, the virgin goddess, symbolizes chastity and the female mentality "I can manage my own life." Although Artemis remains a virgin in Hellenic myths, Shinoda Bolen believes<sup>1</sup> that it is a rare embodiment in today's world. However, considering the fact that Artemis feels a sudden rush in the beating of her heart when seeing Orion<sup>2</sup> the hunter, perhaps we can draw more easily upon Shinoda Bolen's theory about Artemis-like women not only at

the present but also all time. By nature, a woman is not alien to love and love-making even if she is as steadfast as Artemis. This is evident in Shirin's love-making to Khosrow. Shirin possesses all the characteristics of Artemis except love and lovemaking; however, as the goddess' heartbeat rose when seeing Orion, we may not disregard love even in the case of mythical goddesses. Thus, Shirin is the embodiment of the love-making Artemis.

**Characteristics of Artemis**

Artemis is often known as being selfish, steadfast and willing to follow her goals when lacking the support of a man. In fact, she becomes irate when feeling men consider her the weaker sex and disrespect her female role and values. Likewise, she is loyal to her companions, expresses herself freely and engages in action. These characteristics can be evidently noticed in Shirin's character. To further clarify the point, the following will outline Shinoda Bolen's ideas on the Artemis' character and everywoman.

**Shinoda Bolen's Analysis of Artemis' Character**

Shinoda Bolen believes that Artemis, when an adolescent girl, has a sense of independence and exploration. She is fond of exploring the jungle and climb mount'ains. "Do not inhibit me" and "do not stick to me" are her most famous quotes. Shirin's exploring the nature could be a representation of this Artemis-linked feature. Such an Artemis girl enjoys her abilities and charms (such as Shirin when speaking of her beauty and decorum in comparison to Khosrow). Another characteristic of an Artemis girl

<sup>1</sup> Shinoda Bolen is a student and follower to Jung who attempted to apply the Jungian psychology to the characterology of Hellenic goddesses in his famous book *Goddesses in Everywoman: A New Psychology of Women*.

<sup>2</sup> Orion

is abandoning marriage at young age or having relationships with the opposite sex (depicted through verses on the dignity and virginity of Shirin). An Artemis girl finds love in men with aesthetic, musical and innovative senses (although not a primary reason in Shirin's love to Khosrow but perhaps one determining factor in its continuation as Khosrow values all beauties, musicians, singers, artists, banquets, etc.). Although an Artemis girl would love an aesthetically competent man, her sense of competitiveness sometimes brings about the end of a relationship (such as when Shirin draws a comparison between herself and Khosrow). Such characteristics would endure until midlife or old age when an Artemis girl's agility and youth are still alive and at their peaks, making her able to think and act like a young person as well as develop good relationships with the young. We may notice these characteristics towards the end of the story where Siroes, Khosrow's son, develops a liking to Shirin, her stepmother. An Artemis girl would take an aggressive stance towards a betraying former lover (for instance, when Shirin finds about Khosrow's marriage to Maryam, we can evidently see a change in her conduct towards Khosrow although she does not completely lose her passion towards him). Likewise, an Artemis girl infuriates when facing a man who has an inferior attitude towards women (as seen in Shirin's conduct in different parts of the story). Therefore, based on such features, Artemis is an inaccessible woman—a runaway deer which, if ever seen, would suddenly disappear (just as when Khosrow unintentionally sees Shirin's bare body in the spring and she suddenly disappears). Artemis is merciless but loyal, and has the ability to express herself freely while raging at improper conduct (Shinoda Bolen, 2007, pp. 65-100).

### **Comparison of Shirin and Artemis *Steadfastness and Cruelty***

We learn about Shirin's steadfastness in both her descriptions and behaviors. Jung justifies the female steadfastness as, whenever 'I' experiences a vague feeling of moral failure, it takes an even more defensive and strong stance. In fact, Jung's judgment can justify Shirin's steadfastness. We encounter Shirin's resoluteness after falling in love with Khosrow which creates a vicious circle aggravating her feelings of inferiority (Jung, 2007, 26). We may relate this characteristic to her innocence and dignity—the same steadfastness which makes her inaccessible to other lovers. She is resolute, proud, beautiful, inaccessible, and noble. She strongly resists Khosrow's appeals and does not surrender.

Shirin's soliloquies are other indications for her steadfastness. She reprimands herself and sighs in loneliness but is not prepared to bear Khosrow's

infidelity. She tolerates hardships and suppresses her passion but does not surrender. When Khosrow demands a secret love affair, she strongly counters this request as she deems compliance disgraceful. Shirin complains about her love and all the hardships she has undergone for being loyal to Khosrow, and swears he will never take her hand but in marriage. There are times when Shirin's steadfastness accompanies cruelty. According to Shinoda Bolen, Artemis, the goddess of moon and hunt, is also characterized with cruelty. These two characteristics are sometimes found in close association in Shirin. Perhaps it is possible to find the true feeling of someone in expressing hatred towards some events which are essentially soothing to her senses; however, the social traditions may oblige one to keep silence.

After Khosrow sought the marriage of Shekar in Isfahan, Shirin, according to Jungian psychology, became even more steadfast and cruel. Feeling humiliated, Shirin naturally becomes aggressive and cruel (Jung, Ion, 2004, 26). Even Khosrow's consistent apologies and tears cannot soften her broken heart—the same feeling Jung mentions. She sighs and cries in loneliness but never loses her proud and inaccessible Artemis self.

### **Loyalty**

Another considerable point about Shirin is her loyalty. This archetype, Artemis, is specifically known for loyalty—a characteristic which is considerably witnessed throughout the story. We may find instances of loyalty in both Shirin's words and actions—a point which seemingly Nezami doubts. Despite Shirin's passionate loyalty, Nezami complains about women's infidelity. When Shirin sees a riding young man approaching her while bathing in the spring, in an internal conflict between her mind and heart, she takes side with her mind; hence staying loyal to a man, Khosrow, she has only seen her portrait.

Khosrow's marriage to Maryam is the point when we can see Shirin's hatred at its peak. She finds herself in an emotional collapse—the same failure Jung considers as the reason behind female cruelty. However, despite Khosrow's infidelity, Shirin is loyal. She neither forsakes her love nor accepts disgrace; she waits, though in pain, for a resolution. She speaks with hatred of her loyalty and Khosrow's betrayal. She expected Khosrow's loyalty in return for hers; however, it seems that Khosrow is alien to love. For him, love is a fleeting infatuation as he chooses another one in the face of Shirin's pride and inaccessibility. Shirin, however, finds herself bound with loyalty. The archetype "Shirin" finds her disloyal lover an enemy. We may learn about Shirin's

loyalty not only through her own words but also through the conflicts between her behavior and Khosrow's. Unfaithful Khosrow attempts to defeat Shirin by finding intimacy with other attractive women, and, at this point, we learn of Khosrow's absolute disloyalty. However, despite Shirin's aggressive stance towards Khosrow in face-to-face settings, she bursts to tears in her loneliness; hence another indication for her loyalty. She complains about her worldly confinement, and detests her entrapment in such a crushing situation.

Shirin's love path, contrary to Khosrow's, leads but to one destination, the only love she grew and stayed loyal to throughout the story. However, despite her avid and unchanging devotion, she complains about her whereabouts. In prime loyalty, she complains about her lover's infidelity as he disgracefully seeks love in other women.

### **Resentment over Inappropriate Conduct**

Another distinguishing characteristic of Artemis is resentment over inappropriate conduct. Shirin bristles at Shapour's inappropriate request that she have intimacy with Khosrow. According to Jung, anger or aggressive behavior from a calm and compassionate person, such as a lover, is a result of many conflicting forces in his/her morale. Although human beings are mostly keen on justifying their behaviors in association with external stimuli, we need to consider the fact that no behavior can be actualized unless it is a part of our internal worlds, which, of course, compliance with wisdom can help control such behaviors (Jung, 2007, 15). Although Jung's idea concerns the negative sides of anger and aggressive behavior, perhaps the reason behind our resentments over inappropriate conduct, likewise, has an internal reason. That is, one has accepted a set of principles based on life experiences or collective beliefs whose sanctity might be breached in interactions with the society; hence making one furious in the conflict between beliefs and actions. Thus, wisdom is the only resort in creating a balance between one's principles and observed actions.

Shirin becomes furious when faced with Shapour's disgraceful request. Likewise, she finds Khosrow's marriage to Shekar extremely disgraceful and opposed to love commitments; therefore, she expresses herself angrily on the issue throughout the story.

### **Following the Goal in an Aggressive Unsupported Manner**

Another characteristic of Shirin, which considerably matches Artemis', is following her goal, though not at all costs, in a forceful and unsupported manner. To reach her goal, Shirin is prepared to

deceive Mahin Banu, but is also careful not to degrade her dignity. She uses a trick and deceives her to exit the castle; she is not bound with others' support and is ready to act alone to reach her goals.

### **Assuming an Equal Disposition against Men**

We learn from Shirin's speech and actions that she detests being considered an inferior sex. For instance, she bristles when asked by Shapour to engage in a secret love affair with Khosrow. She considers herself equal to Khosrow and never accepts to engage in a degrading relationship with him; it is inexcusable for him to blatantly ask for this disgraceful request. At the same time, we learn that Shirin cries in her solitude and scolds herself for hurting Khosrow's feelings.

### **Ability to Express Self**

Concerning her aggressive character, it is not unlikely for Shirin to be able to express herself freely. When asked by Khosrow to compare living a happy or respectable life, she dramatically juxtaposes the two. Shirin deems Khosrow's apparent happiness through fervent love-making unreal and absurd and expresses herself aggressively in his face. She also criticizes her own qualities in the same aggressive manner.

### **Conclusion**

The present article attempted to suggest that Nezami's female character, Shirin, in *Khosrow and Shirin*, shares many qualities with the Hellenic goddess of moon and hunt, Artemis. Accordingly, Shirin, like Artemis, is characterized by her freedom, aggression, self esteem, wisdom, responsiveness, dignity, perseverance in protecting her pride, being aware of her beauty and loyalty, rejection of inferior views, courage in countering her lover's threats, self-determination, overcoming fleeting infatuations, intolerance of disloyalty, loyalty, and reaching out for goals in an honest respectable way.

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