

# Cultural globalisation and individuation

By Swati Desai

Renowned psychologist Robert Johnson visits India very often. He made a comment while comparing his experiences in India and the US. "If my car has to break down in the middle of a busy street, I would rather be in India. I will get all sorts of help from people instead of the sneers from busy commuters for the traffic jam. If I have to fall ill with a disease in a small town, I would rather be in the US where I would get precise information about my condition and access to good medical treatment no matter where I am."

What he was trying to compare was a difference in the collective psyche of the two cultures. He describes the Indian culture as more "feminine" and the American culture as more "masculine". The two terms are coined by famous psychologist Jung who uses them to describe the two aspects of our inner world. The "masculine" qualities are described as emphasising thoughts, logic, reason, precision, achievement, order and growth. The "feminine" qualities are described as emphasising intuition, emotions, moods, ability to live with chaos, dreams, fantasies, and connectedness. Most women, in Jung's nineteenth century Europe, had the feminine qualities, and men were expected to have the masculine qualities.

What does it mean by a culture being masculine versus feminine? The Indian culture, viewed as feminine, is the mothering culture, the caring culture, where the sentimentality takes precedence over logic, the connected-

ness comes before efficiency, exuberance and fun is valued naturally instead of the dry demands of the profession, and feelings are used as basis for decision making.

Comfort, harmony, and relating to people is valued over order, productivity, and personal ambition. This is a culture where if a family member becomes disabled, the relatives would take care of the children, no matter how financially difficult it is. We may not expect things to start at the given time, but we would expect our relatives to offer us a cup of tea at the cost of punctuality.

The American culture, viewed as masculine, is a culture where a decision would need to be explained by using synthesis and logic.

as the "Feeling" culture and the US as the "Thinking" culture, also Jungian terms for classifying personalities. A dominant thinking function in a person would imply that the events around them would trigger the cognitive thought processing, the logical way of discriminating whether we like or dislike something. A dominant feeling function in a person, on the other hand, would imply that the likes and dislikes are based on subjective judgment of what is important to the observer. Both are rational judgments, but based on different inner experiences.

Jung termed Individuation as the goal of psychological progress, the difficult task of integrating the conflicting aspects of personality such as feeling versus thinking, feminine versus masculine.

Individuated person would be able to use the appropriate function as per the demand of the task at hand. Important questions to ponder upon are the following. Can a culture be individuated? Should it be individuated? Perhaps that is the demand of today's world where success and harmony are both valued equally. How do we reduce the overemphasis on one type of functioning without throwing the baby out with the bathwater? Would cultural globalisation lead to "cultural individuation"?

(The author, a psychotherapist in private practice in Los Angeles and a mental health consultant to South Asian agencies, is on a visit to ISB, Hyderabad)

analysis and an observation would need to be supported by a research study or a statistical figure. If you are late by three minutes to a music concert, you would have to wait outside for a break before you can go in. If your brother is in trouble, you would not cash your provident fund to get him out.

Robert Johnson also describes India

