



# Lying with the Heavenly Woman

*Understanding and Integrating the Feminine  
Archetypes in Men's Lives*

ROBERT A. JOHNSON

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## *Contents*

Introduction: Femininity in a Man's Life	1
The Feminine Elements	15
Contamination of the Feminine Elements	69
Conclusion	97



INTRODUCTION:

*Femininity in a Man's Life*





*T*he relationship of man to woman and to his own femininity has been regulated throughout most of history by law, custom, convention. Only recently has man gained the capacity for personal decisions in these matters, a very great step in evolution. This freedom is as new as our modern world and brings some demands on consciousness that have never been experienced before.

The paths that were stable and reliable for primitive man and in most of the world even today are now for modern man paths of uncertainty and offer so many choices that we are bewildered. In earlier times a man married under his parents' direction, lived a household life that was almost completely stereotyped, and rarely, if ever, inquired into the concept of freedom in these matters. You may as well ask a man in any of the traditional societies to exercise freedom

in his relationship to gravity as to expect freedom in his marriage. I have never known a traditional Hindu to question whether his marriage was fulfilling to him or even if he was happy in it. Such questions rarely arise in traditional societies. Evolution waited for our own times to introduce freedom into relationship. Since he has grasped the white-hot stuff of freedom, modern man must have an equally powerful grasp of consciousness if he is to avoid the pitfalls that are so common in our relationships today.

A man facing the heady prospect of freedom in the realm of relationship to feminine elements in the world—both inside and outside himself—must have some specific information and gain an extraordinary degree of differentiation if he is to avoid the pitfalls that characterize our time. As we shall see in an African tale of the double anima, the heavenly woman figures as a heavenly vision that can overpower a young man, who becomes like Tristan entering the Grail Castle too soon. In this story an informed and clear differentiation between the light anima and the earthy, human anima makes all the difference. It is this quest for absolute clarity in meeting these vital feminine elements that is our subject.

*Few men understand how important femininity is in their lives, both inner and outer. Almost all of a man's sense of*

value, worth, safety, joy, contentment, belongingness, and happiness derive from his inner feminine nature. If God created male and female and gave them equal power (I like to translate the critical word *rib* as “side” or “half” in the Genesis story of the creation of Eve), the delicate and subtle half that is the province of femininity is as powerful as the masculine province. Men, in their arrogance, generally think it is their strength, possessions, and dominations that bring them happiness. But it is not so. Happiness is feminine in a man, a feeling quality, and generally mysterious to him.

Without good masculinity, a man is weak, ineffective, and useless; but it is femininity that inspires his strength, meaning, and value. He is likely to look both inward and outward for this elusive quality, and we will find both inner and outer femininity in our search. Inner aspects of femininity in a man are difficult for him to comprehend since we live in a culture not well equipped to examine such things; the outer aspects—his mother, wife, sister, daughter—are easier to identify.

*Our Western patriarchal culture has been built on a model that has produced one of the most advanced civilizations ever to exist. Our science, high material standard of living, greatly expanded capacities of travel and communication, the great*

vista of the twentieth century—all these have been won at the cost of disregard for another faculty, that of feeling. There is little room for the feeling function in a society that worships rationality and abstraction as deeply as we do. Coolness and objectivity are absolutely required for the scientific pursuit. The term *abstract* comes from the Greek *ab*, “to move away from,” and *strahere*, “to stand.” We must stand at least a little apart from any subject to make an abstract relationship to it. And that standing apart instantly wounds the feeling function. Put more simply, one cannot accomplish disciplined tasks if one listens to the feeling function. The cool world of abstraction has no place for the warm world of feeling. Every woman suffers this lack of feeling from her man—both inner and outer—and is mostly inarticulate in her complaint of the one-sidedness of modern life. Men become feeling-barren when they school themselves in the modern arts of abstraction and rationality.

Sanskrit, that feeling-rich language that is the basis of most East Indian tongues, has ninety-six terms for love. Ancient Persian has eighty. Greek has three. And we have only one. The Eskimo language has thirty words for snow since snow is such a vital element in their lives. If we had thirty words for relationship, we would be better equipped to observe that important dimension of our lives.

Certainly this is prime evidence that feeling and relationship are the inferior functions in our society. Lack of language for any subject means lack of interest in that area. We build wonderful Boeing 747s and atomic generators, but we build very poor marriages and relationships. We stand in severe danger that our Brave New World of mechanical marvels may be overturned by the poor quality of the feeling function that has accompanied it.

*One can tell at a glance from the feminine figures in a man's dreams what relationship he has to happiness and a sense of well-being in his life. If the women in his dreams are happy and relate well to him, he will be happy. If they are ill or weak or angry, he will have little or no sense of well-being. I know of no other single element that has so much to do with a man's happiness.*

Dr. Jung once analyzed for his students a series of dreams of a very gifted man. One dream was that a woman came into the room, put her hands to her head, moaned, and left. "Now he will catch it!" observed Dr. Jung. If a man's inner woman disapproves and walks out on him, things will go badly in his feeling life and his sense of worth. In the Mahabharata, the great Hindu epic poem, there is a terrible moment when the king has slighted the Shakti (an embodiment

of the feminine principle of the universe); her reply is to close the seven portals of her body, compress her breath, and shoot out of the top of her head, returning to the formless universe from which she came. All the male elements of the whole kingdom are bereft at the loss of the feminine principle and are in a state of mourning. Sad is the man whose Shakti has left him because he has offended her.

*It also follows that good contact with the interior woman will make it much easier to be on good terms with the exterior women of one's life. Finally we must admit that we are talking about femininity in its profound aspect, which cannot be divided into interior and exterior aspects. But until we earn the right to this unity, we had best make careful differentiation of the inner and outer. Goethe, in his masterpiece *Faust*, ends the great drama with the words "The Eternal Feminine leads us on." This is the view of a mature man who had earned the right to a unified view of femininity. This maturity cost Goethe a lifetime of highly conscious inner work. *Faust* is the best guide we have in Western literature for this work. This account of a great soul journey can best be read as Goethe's autobiography; in it he outlines the steps he followed to come to terms with the actual women in his*



story and with his interior feminine nature. This is modern man laid out in contemporary language for our guidance. We may be grateful for Goethe's instruction in this art.

It is immediately obvious that femininity is the color and delight and animation of a man's life. Without femininity a man is poverty-stricken and without life. *She* is life. Though there are many, many forms of relating to that life-giving principle, they all have their basis in femininity.

A Persian myth tells this story in a touching manner: In the beginning God made a beam of light that went streaking through space in its free, unencumbered way. It was perfect mobility and delight. God also made a clod of earth and set it, immobile, in space, where it was in perfect joy at its changeless feminine way. This went on for many eons before the inevitable happened. The beam of light ran into the clod of earth and became embedded in it. The beam of light cried out in dismay at its imprisonment and the clod of earth gasped in terror at the quickening that had occurred in its serene life. But both were irrevocably committed to this new life. The offspring of this union was the melon, which embodied both the material element of life and the ethereal beam of light that transfused it. All of creation, say the Persians, came from this melon.