

WHO IS ME & WHO IS HE?

I was just settling down to what I thought would be a long and routine flight to Delhi when a burly gentleman taps me on my shoulder. I look up and there is a broad grin on his face. “Remember me?” he says. It takes a while to connect the young man in his late 30’s to the twenty something I had met at the ERI lab in IIM, Ahmedabad almost a decade and a half ago or the fifteen year old I taught yoga to at school! But it is very interesting to catch up with people who one felt were of high potential and to see what they have made of their lives.

So we talked of many things, work, life, marriage, children, pollution, terrorism and atomic weapons and.... My young friend, lets call him A, had become an American citizen. A talked about how much one has to review of oneself become taking the step of taking the citizenship of another country. “It is not like an Irish man or any European taking up a citizenship in the US” A said “I have had to think a lot and give up a lot of things. I really appreciate many things Indian about me and at the same time I have really struggled to own up parts of myself that when seen from a US / European perspective look very negative! But, the most difficult thing has been coming back to India after almost a dozen years. So many things have changed. Just to illustrate, I am new heading outsourcing for my company. I was walking into the plush office of a BPO in Chennai and with a shock I realized that this used to be a vacant plot and our favourite peeing place on the way to school! When I am talking to my counterpart, he reminds me of my college friends, but every time I think I understand where he comes from, he says something that really leaves me wondering if I understand at all! I think it would be easier to negotiate if I was white, but I am not and he does not seem Indian the way I understand or expect an Indian to be! So many changes inside and outside I am left wondering who is me and who is he!”

He left me with an interesting question, “may be like Krishnaji used to say it is time we thought felt and acted as human beings without any identification to divisive boundaries. May be that is the challenge of today – how to be a global citizen who can leave behind a meaningful future for the next generation”.