

WHEN WOMEN WAKE UP MOUNTAINS WILL MOVE

As I look back on my young tender days in Barcelona, a city cradled between sea and mountain, I recall my deep knowing that as women we had to tow the line. Men seemed to rule the world. All the text books said so, and at home it was clear that my dad had the last say. I saw my mother holding back so much. I saw her not speaking the truth of her heart for the sake of her security, and keeping a cold silence that was loud in my heart, but which allowed the status quo to keep going.

Now as I look back on those days of the fifties and sixties there are so many stories I could tell of how I came to believe that as a woman I was simply less important, and of where the real power lay. But, unlike my mother, because I was born during the widespread rise of feminism and the equal rights movement, and into a privileged family, I came to know I had a choice - a choice that my foremothers could not have dreamed of. They'd been kept silent and ignorant of the latent power of the feminine deep within their bodies.

First Choice: A Free and Empowered Woman

Like many of my contemporaries, I enjoyed the choice between being a quiet woman at home, undeveloped and in service of the family of man, or a woman of freedom empowered to carve her own future and to not be bound by marriage – a woman able to forge her own life as an independent free thinker. Oh yes, that felt good - and that was my choice. By the time I was 17 I had tired of a life of comforts, consumerism, glamour and soullessness and I set off to India to seek truth and freedom.

Little did I know that despite all my revolutionary ideas and zest for life, I was stepping into a big wild world ruled by the same family of man that reigned at home. I turned to Eastern spirituality to receive answers to the meaning of life, love, God and everything else. I came to realise that, yes, consciousness is great and pure. But all the holy beings were men, and the scriptures said that I was a woman because I did not have enough good Karma to be born as a man – and that if I followed all that was prescribed by these great men, who knows, in my next life I might be reborn as a man and have a better chance of glimpsing or even becoming an enlightened one.

I found inner freedom and a sense of inner equality, even if the world was still saying “you are just a woman, and you are less!” But as the years passed, and I returned to Europe, and marched on, and walked on, and sometimes crawled on – climbing more mountains, striving to be seen as an empowered woman - I became tired and weary. After searching for enlightenment, and then successfully combining motherhood and career, nothing seemed to be working. I was still a foreigner in my own land, and worst of all in my own body. It was then that I began to hear the call of the feminine. I began to look at the valleys and less at the mountains. And I began to feel my body not as an object of transcendence or indulgence, or as something to be healed, improved and ultimately cured.

I slowly began to dare to pay attention, and I learnt that if I just listened long enough, a voice of wisdom from the depth of my being would make it self known to me. I had become tired, depleted and deaf to my own body needs - and to the screaming voices of my heart. In my belief in freedom and equality I had inadvertently been colluding with the old masculine order. As a wife and mother I had been there for others and ignored my own needs and body, and above all I had perpetuated the belief that life is something that needed to be filled with doing, achieving – something to be improved, to be fixed. And over the years as a psychotherapist I have come to hear countless stories that reflect my own, stories of women who have adopted a masculine mode of empowerment, but come to find themselves exhausted, empty and confused.

I hadn't understood that my default button was to repress the feminine and to collude with the dominant way of being of our culture. But through my tears I came to touch the pain and vulnerability of all that was rejected in me, and I discovered that it did not want to be denied or improved, just related to. Perfection does not need anyone, it's only that which feels less than perfect in us, that which has been neglected and ignored, that longs for connection and relationship.

Second Choice: Opening To The Deep Feminine

I gradually learnt to open to intimacy with myself and others, to listen to my pain and that of others, to be present to my own and others' vulnerability, and I began to touch a new depth, a new unknown - the strength that my heart had been yearning for all along. This was not something to fix, this was the deep dark feminine calling me back home. I discovered a fierceness in my belly - a fierceness far deeper than our idea the feminine being only good, nurturing and soft. This was a tender fierceness that, like the ocean, could destroy to create new life. And I saw that despite all of our talk of equal human rights, every infrastructure on the planet was still pointing at the one and only judgemental male God, who was allowing little vulnerability, had next to no relationship abilities, and was very frightened of all that is earthy and human and deep, dark and feminine.

The choice I had made to be 'a free, empowered woman' had endowed me with masculine power and although I believed myself to be an equal, I had blindly embraced distorted masculine values. I too had cut off from my body, lived in my head, put everything in boxes, and subjected my feelings to a prodding, processing and repression that kept me well away from who I was as a woman. Yes, I'd been a 'female eunuch', as Germaine Greer put it back in the sixties. Now I had to walk my awakening as woman alone. No one was going to do it for me. I made another choice. I decided I was going to stand up for the feminine - not as a new goal, or something I was now going to attain, but just by being and resting in the simplicity of being unravelled, open and available to life. I felt a willingness to die to all that I'd been told I was.

Yes, I rejoiced at my outrage, and at no longer holding a dormant 'inrage' of years of repression and suffocation from for interconnectedness with the earth, with the depths of the ocean, with simply being a human woman - and trusting my feelings, my intuition, my not-knowing and knowing. I felt loved, nourished and held by the earth. How could I have known? I'd been brought up in an industrial culture where equal rights were given to me, but the deep inheritance of women's earthy, intuitive, tender fierce loving had been buried and forgotten. It was as if a mass collective slumber had descended on womankind and upon all those who carried the feminine principle. History was a trail of crushed women who'd forgotten their own Mother and the powers endowed to them.

The Great Masculine - Alone

This deep sleep in women has cost us all a great deal. The Great Masculine principle on its own, without its empowered counterpart of the Great Feminine, becomes distorted and disempowered in its posture of power-over: power-over each other, power-over natural processes, power-over the Earth. This dominance of the masculine will-to-power has left us all bereft and in a state of fragmentation and chaos. We see it in our socio-political affairs, in the world of spirituality (with its hidden agenda of perfection and transcendence), in the sciences, and ultimately in the state of Gaia and the pain the Earth is in. Yes, we are at a social, economic and ecological edge where we fear our extinction. Most of us feel ill equipped to step forward and change our lifestyles - let alone open to the feelings of isolation and collective pain just under the surface in the first world countries. Many of us feel numb and impotent as we sit in the comfort of our living rooms, watching third world disasters of starvation, people dying of aids, poverty, war and natural disasters on our TV sets.

Yes, it's not a pretty sight and yes, we are in it together - whether we like it or not. And most of us live in the delusion that the recent equality given to women means that masculine and feminine values now shape our world equally. (And I say 'recent' because it's only in the last sixty years that we have painstakingly, in some countries, gained all or most of the legal rights given to men). But equal rights are only the beginning of feminine empowerment. Today's reality still overvalues the masculine perspective, our social structures all remain grounded in a penetrative 'do something' approach, and pragmatic, technological skills are still prioritised over our embodied emotional health.

Yes, the feminine has been rising within the sciences. We see feminine values being spoken and applied to the old infrastructures. We hear a voice of change, a yearning for community and eco-values - and so much is being done among those of us who still feel alive enough to care. There are many of us who want to give our energy for the beauty of our planet, for each other, and for our children. But if we are to revive the deep feminine, if we are to descend to the heart and bosom of the feminine, we will need to find our own deep interest in her within our own hearts and bodies. That takes practice and dedication and a willingness to see through all imposed women's conditioning.

The Great Feminine and Masculine - Together

Women (and those men who carry an affinity with the feminine cosmic principle) need to radically own their connection with the deep feminine. Together and alone we need to make a second choice, deeper than equal rights – the choice to align unapologetically with the feminine presence that is present in every situation. We need to cultivate deep feminine empowerment embedded in co-created sisterhood. We need to regain trust among ourselves as women - as a necessary step if we are going to stand as equal partners with men, perhaps for the first time in recorded history, to co-create a new future beyond the planetary crisis we are all in.

We need sisterhoods in which we can come to trust and value each other, and listen to each other's hearts as they call us to return home - home to the deep feminine. Then, unapologetically at home in ourselves, we can stand next to the men and support them in connecting with the feminine, and allow the creativity of these two forces to sit side by side. This potential creativity has been a long time coming. We've been on a rather big learning curve that has given us some big heart-and-earth-aches, but this meeting holds the possibility of resolving the millennia old split between our bodies and minds, and of bringing to an end the antagonism between man and woman.

We now have the opportunity to stand side by side and serve each other - to allow power and love to stand side by side, in communion, in all of our hearts. We have the possibility of creating communities where doing and being can live as equals, where we can listen to each other as one and inseparably different, and where the vulnerable in us all can exist alongside our potency and potential. Together we can care more about the whole than the survival of our fearful conditioned gender images. Together we can become a loving force that serves the magnificence of life and the beauty of our humanity. We can become co-creators of a great gift to be passed on to future generations where men and women can live in deep equality, deep difference, dignity and love.

My sense is that we can't wait any longer. This is the time when sleeping women need to wake up and reclaim their essence, the force of the universe that has been in the shadow for so long - so that the great feminine can sit alongside the great masculine.