

Searching for Solutions: Towards implementing the feminine principle in human society

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Not long ago one of the BBC headlines stated: "UN peacekeepers failed DR Congo rape victims ". According to UN statistics, 8300 rapes were reported in the Congo in 2009 and the UN believes that countless more went unreported. Those specific mass rapes of women and female children were mainly carried out by Congolese and Rwandan rebels, though the practice of rape is as old as war itself and happens right now all over the world.

But we don't need to look to extreme scenarios such as war to see the horrendous treatment women are regularly subjected to. Another story that made the headlines lately was that of an Iranian woman, accused of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning, after having received many lashes. Women in India are still pushed into the fire, albeit it is outlawed; China's one child policy led to a male overpopulation as female children were aborted; girls being abducted and forced into marriages is not a rare occurrence in certain countries; female genital mutilation is still rife in many parts of Africa, and European men regularly use very young female sex workers that have been trafficked into Europe from all over the world. The list of such atrocities could be endless; there are innumerable well-authenticated stories. The facts are known, and yet very little seems to change.

Whatever the economic, political and religious reasons - and make no mistake our religions, from Judaism to Christianity and Islam have contributed immensely to this development - it is important to understand that the way 'half of humanity' is regarded and treated is an indicator of the low worth placed on the feminine within human societies. The implications of this are at the best destructive and, at the worst, threaten our very existence. Human kind - or better MANKIND - has lost the most basic, natural understanding that the feminine, as a principle, is as important as the masculine to create a sustainable whole. The live giving, life-

preserving, the nurturing, the emotional, the compassionate, the sharing, the deep, the yin has been systematically neglected, belittled, bashed, humiliated, mutilated, tortured, hunted and killed by the male principle that has taken over our thinking and behaving on every level in Society.

Mother Earth, the entity that has given birth to all life and that could sustain us all has been exploited to a point, where we can no longer rely on her exhausted resources. Instead of preserving principles we have almost solely adopted the masculine principle of exploitation. Instead of valuing emotions such as love and compassion and behaviours that lead to sharing, caring and living peacefully, we value success and toughness and 'possessing', which in the end boils down to valuing greed, selfishness and conquering. Instead of valuing the mothers who bring up children, hold the family together and often also have part time jobs, we admire the men who focus on their careers, become successful, earn a 'good living' and are more or less absent fathers and husbands. Instead of valuing sustainability, we value short-term profit, instead of trying to find the most caring way of rearing the animals we use to feed ourselves, we factory-farm living beings under the most gut-wrenching conditions. Instead of talking to each other and negotiating compromises, we issue threats ('women talk too much' comes to mind). Instead of searching for solutions we re-search to develop the next horrendous weapons of mass destruction.

But, I hear critics say, women are now fairly equal to men in many societies, and to a certain extent I agree. Unfortunately, this kind of equality has brought with it its own deterioration of the feminine. Looking at our cities on weekend nights we see young women behaving quite equally to men: they drink excessively; they are loud and vulgar; they are sexually pushy, and they fight physically. Or, in a word, they imitate men.

Imitation has nothing to do with equality. This becomes crystal clear when we look at what is happening in the workplace. The women we see reaching the top are tough. Many are tougher and display more masculine characters than most of their male colleagues. They show all the qualities you have to cultivate when you want to succeed in a greed-driven, highly competitive and

often cut-throat environment. They are female in their looks but function more from the animus, as Jung would put it, than from the anima. The feminine principles of caring, sharing, nurturing and life preserving are not welcomed within our economic structure, which is driven by the need to create more and more profit. In a recent conversation with a leading business coach who numbers many highly skilled female executives among her clients, she lamented how she repeatedly found that they hit a glass ceiling. They might have shed loads of intuition, creativity, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, but these were not valued by their male colleagues and bosses, nor were they allowed to achieve the sort of work/life balance that mothers require. The fact that having children might give them valuable insights and wisdom didn't enter any male equation. They would never reach board level, although their abilities included many of the qualities that business gurus believe are required for 21st century leaders. Instead, many of them were quitting their organisations in order to set up their own businesses - the only way they could be themselves.

If we think about representations of the feminine in our accepted spiritual systems, our major religions, it gets even worse. God is male, so is his son and it seems that even the Holy Spirit is male. Mohammed is certainly male, Allah, who is supposedly neither male nor female, is described with the word 'he' and the Jewish Jehova seems an archetypal male God, who we need to fear. Women, if they feature positively, have to be sexless virgins or Saints. Women are cut off from church hierarchies or, as in case of the Catholic Church, Islam and Judaism, are not even allowed to be priests or Imans or rabbis. The feminine is kept out of the religious realm and if the feminine is kept out of the religious realm, cut down to size, suppressed and belittled our spirituality develops in a one-sided way. Men, even the soft and nice guys like the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, cannot, by their very nature, represent half their flock adequately. The very sentence that the Anglican Church, that beacon of progressiveness, now 'allows' female priests gives us a frightening insight into their thinking.

There is much more to be said, but to conclude: if we want to sustain this planet and if human kind wants to evolve, rather than fall back, we need to urgently begin to redress the balance by

exploring the feminine, its characteristics, its qualities and its ways of thinking. We need to value and cultivate the qualities, which underlie behaviours that aim to preserve life, share resources, negotiate compromise, and increase love and compassion, but also the dark, the wild, the earthy qualities of the feminine and that, which can incubate the shadow with patience or, in other words, to evolve we need to manifest the feminine aspect of creation within human society at all levels.

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