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THE ECOZOIC READER

Critical Reflection, Story and Shared Dream Experience of an Ecological Age



Artwork by Vijali Hamilton, photo by Karil Daniels

Wisdom of Women

“In these opening years of the twenty-first century, as the human community experiences a rather difficult situation in its relation with the natural world, we might reflect that a fourfold wisdom is available to guide us into the future: the wisdom of indigenous peoples, the wisdom of women, the wisdom of the classical traditions, and the wisdom of science.”

—Thomas Berry

Reclaiming the Feminine Field

By Suzanne Scurlock-Durana

Excerpted from her book about living with awareness of universal feminine support

I spent my early years in awe of my father and his wonderful capacity to think and act in a clear, rational way. He was a charismatic speaker and leader, and I believed that his strong, benevolent masculine presence was the ultimate example of how to live. My mother always deferred to his wishes, but I knew I could not emulate her, so I modeled myself after him.

Reflecting back, I did not realize there was any other way to be in the world. Unknowingly, I had rejected the feminine and how it manifests in life. To me, power had to do with one's capacity to do, direct, set goals and move forward proactively. The process and power of simply being present had never entered my mind. As I look back now, I recognize I was not the only one stricken with this kind of blindness.

Particularly in western cultures, we are taught to think in a masculine, logical and linear way. There is a greater emphasis placed on intellectual processes and less on the feminine emotional softness and fluidity. The loss of our softness and fluidity can often be seen in our rigid posture and linear movements: stiff back, tight muscles, sunken chest, and an armored heart. It may also look like an inability to play, to be spontaneous, to laugh, and to surrender to the flow of life when needed. Our emphasis on rational thinking has robbed us of the juicy fullness that life can hold for us.

In order to trust in the nurturing support of the universe around you, it helps to have some concept of the full spectrum of life energy: the feminine as well as the masculine, the yin as well as the yang. The first principle taught in my work, *Healing from the Core: Grounding and Healthy Boundaries*, is **trusting** that life's challenges will move us beyond our conceptual limitations. These limitations are things we may unconsciously consider to be reality, and they are often set in place long before we could think rationally. Thus we operate as though that's "just the way it is."

In my mid-20s, one of my unconscious limitations became clear to me. While reading Frederick Leboyer's *Birth Without Violence*, I became aware that I might have experienced trauma at the time of my birth. As I read his words about what a natural healthy birth was meant to be and looked at the photo of a newborn resting peacefully on her mother's belly, I felt unusually emotional, and I had a deep, uncomfortable sense of pressure in my chest. I felt a vague sense of being disconnected. So I made an appointment to receive some hands-on body therapy to explore and heal whatever was signaling to me from deep inside.

My mother was unconscious for my birth, and I had no contact with her until many hours later. She relates the story with great sadness, because her physician had not told her she would be "knocked out" for the delivery. When she woke up alone, without me, she felt angry and betrayed. That's all I knew about my birth before the bodywork began.

During the session, my conscious awareness of the mat I was lying on began to get fuzzy. Oddly, I smelled ether. I dimly realized I was probably releasing the ether from the delivery that had gotten into *my* system from my mother being drugged. I suddenly felt an urgency from deep within to push out through a foggy dark tunnel. Feeling trapped and frustrated, I began to push and cry, unable to muster the strength needed to complete my task. Suddenly I felt a final tugging, and I was out! I felt cool air, and I heard a voice from deep inside me say, "This time you get to do it the way you wanted to—roll over onto your mother's belly." With my eyes still closed, I rolled over and felt the soft mat like the belly of my mother cradling and protecting me for the first time.

Then an odd thing happened. Suddenly the mat felt about two miles wide, and I was on the soft, loose belly of a huge and *powerful* mother. Her vital presence surrounded me. This was different from anything I had previously defined as strength. I was initially overwhelmed by the intensity of the sensations rippling through me. All around me was this huge, palpable softness—there was nothing hard to push against or resist, and yet it felt *far more* potent than anything I had ever encountered. Her presence stretched for miles! I felt safe. I belonged there. We were totally connected.

In a flash I realized that I had mistakenly believed that the focused thrust of male energy defined power for me. It was the *only* model I knew. I could not remember ever feeling this wide diffuse kind of energy emanating from *anyone*, male or female, in my life. Even the successful *women* I knew used left-brained masculine energy to exercise control in their worlds.

The gently exquisite waves of sensation continued to roll through me. I felt my heart open and overflow with the immensity of this experience. The tears streamed down my face. Then I felt a deep laugh rolling up from my belly—at the foolishness of my misperception all these years. How could I have missed something so huge? I began to laugh and then cry some more. It was a divine dance from tears to laughter and back again.

I have no idea how long it all lasted. When the waves of sensation finally slowed and faded away, I felt

my body in a whole new way. Never again would I think there was only one way to experience energy and power. What I now call my perceptual lens had been permanently expanded. This experience has had ramifications in every area of my life, and will, I am sure, continue to inform me for the rest of my life.

I began in that moment to trust the other half of my known universe. I hadn't known until then that I was virtually blind to the profound strength of the feminine face of power, the feminine energy field. As I began to search out this life force, I learned that I could trust what happened as I opened my arms to receive each new encounter. *I learned that the universe holds me in an embrace at every moment.*

One of the areas that feminine power embodies is the juiciness and connectedness to all of life at a pleasurable, feeling level. It recognizes the power of the bond between a nursing mother and child, the power of love making with your beloved, the power of a long hug with someone else whose heart is open and warm. It recognizes that surrender to the feminine is not something you do at the end of a war that you lose. It is the act of releasing yourself into a larger flow of life force, which actually takes you to a place of *more* power, more connectedness, not less.

Even though I had this incredible opening, it would be years before I could really call it my own. For example, even after this wonderful epiphany, in the delivery of my firstborn, I was all pumped to “do” the delivery. I had prepared, exercised, planned, and I was ready. I pushed, breathed and did everything I knew to *do*. What I forgot was that delivering a baby is a process of ultimate surrender to the life forces at work. The preparation and practice was important. But I needed, when the moment arrived, to be able to surrender to my body's process, to the deep fluid world of birthing. I had not a clue. It took forty-two painful and exhausting hours.

By the time I was ready to deliver my second child, I had already flirted with the idea that I could let go when the time came. I spent time sinking into positions, like squatting, that would help my body release and surrender more easily. When labor began in my second delivery, I met my fears and held them in my heart. I went into a deep place of surrender that carried me through the pain. It was a three-hour initiation into the deep feminine. When my son was born, he and I went into a long period of deep peaceful ecstasy as I held him in my arms, and we gazed into each other's eyes.



Photo by Liz Holland

That initiation has opened the door for me to be able to recognize the feminine in many more places in my world. It has been there all along, and I had been missing it. As a bodyworker, I can now easily slip into deep connection energetically with my clients and friends, and I can feel the warmth of the heart of a grocery checker and sink into it more easily.

The best part about this capacity is that it does not require any action on my part. It simply requires that I surrender to it and ride the wave of connection, which can sometimes feel wet and juicy, out to its natural end point. With the grocery checker, that means sharing a momentary, warm smile. With a child, it means holding them until they want to get up and play. With my beloved it means a long embrace.

My experience of the feminine field in that bodywork session, being reborn with the nurturing principle guiding me, has led me to develop an entire curriculum for helping others discover this way of knowing themselves and the world. I share this work in the hopes that both men and women can access not only the masculine, rational model, but also derive power and meaning from the feminine sense of nurturing fluidity and connectivity present in every moment.

Suzanne Scurlock-Durana, C.M.T. C.S.T.-D., creator of the audio series, *Healing From the Core: A Journey Home to Ourselves*, has been teaching and mentoring in the area of conscious awareness and its relationship to the healing process for over twenty years. She developed the *Healing from the Core* curriculum, along with the complementary audio series, based on her years of experience helping fellow healthcare practitioners hold a healing space for themselves as well as developing their own therapeutic presence for clients and patients. Since 1986 she has been an instructor of CranioSacral Therapy and SomatoEmotional Release training with the Upledger Institute, nationally and internationally. She can be reached at www.healingfromthecore.com.