Masculine and Feminine Practice

Is this coaching the same for men and women?

It is a great question. I know that you have heard me talk already about awakening, and Empowerment Practices that can help us to live awakening in day-to-day life. We think we know a lot about these topics already, from traditions that go back thousands of years. But really we only know the masculine expression of these things.

About twelve years ago, I met a woman who had a natural affinity for conscious feminine practice. She was a deep practitioner, and she had come to recognize that she had been over-influenced by masculine traditions. She had a commitment to discovering practices that were suited to bringing forth a feminine embodiment of awakening. Once I got to know her, I was so enamored that I asked her to marry me. Please let me introduce you to my wife, Chameli Ardagh. She can tell you better than I can what feminine practice means:

Feminine practice is in the body. It is embodied. It is an exploration of embodied spirituality. It is an exploring of spirit and a relationship to spirit as form, as it appears as form. It embraces our humanity. It embraces all of our challenges and glories of our humanness. It is not a journey, or a reaching away from all of this. It is a deep dive into the body, into feelings, into form, into relationship. And through that, touching and confronting the essence, or the inside of the inside, of experience.
Many women experience relief and a sense of homecoming when they discover what we can call the feminine practices; because what they have learned to associate with spirituality often feels very restrictive for a woman. A lot of traditions teach us that we need to overcome our feelings. Family and relationships, which are often very central in a woman’s life, are looked upon as distractions to spiritual awakening or maturity. Our models of spiritual maturity do not look like most women, or behave like most women. It is a constant comparison and falling short, which has been a crime against women for so long.

In the meeting of feminine spirituality, there is a tremendous freedom to be mirrored by other women and by female archetypes of spiritual maturity, where we discover that spiritual maturity has as many faces as the stars in the sky. It is so rich and multifaceted. It gives women this kind of opportunity and assignment of not trying to fit into a ready-made mold, but to tap into how spirit takes form so radically fresh and spontaneously through each one of us.

The Most Fundamental Distinction

That which is revealed to anyone in a moment of true awakening is always the same. It is limitless consciousness, with no color, or texture, or shape; with no sound to it, with no past or future. It is empty of content, but absolutely full of love, full of presence. Obviously, that has no nationality, no culture bias, no gender. But as soon as that limitless consciousness begins to be lived, it is expressed through a human form. An Indian or a Texan, a Hindu or a Buddhist, will each express this awakening differently in their lives.

The most fundamental distinction we make between people is their gender. You notice that before anything else. But historically, for thousands of years,
almost everything that has been said about these topics has been said by men, for men.

Let’s think about it. The religion most of us grew up in was Christianity. And how many disciples did Jesus have? Twelve, right? What was the ratio of men to women? Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was a man, and to this day, all of the imams who teach Islam are men. All of Buddha’s first arahats were men, and only later did he reluctantly introduce a small order of nuns. We can go on and on. In many Eastern traditions, they go so far as to say that only a man can experience awakening.

One hundred years ago, women had to campaign to get the vote. In the 1970s, women campaigned to be able to participate in the workplace and become judges, and doctors, and lawyers, and politicians. Now there is another wave of evolution happening, of women expressing and actualizing themselves in society. In the early part of the 21st century, women are realizing that they do not need to campaign to participate in a world created by men. We are discovering feminine ecology, feminine leadership, feminine styles of finance or organization. We are also seeing the emergence of a fresh field, called feminine spirituality, and feminine spiritual practice.

**Energies not Bodies**

Before we go on, I want to make an important distinction in language. The words “male” and “female” describe attributes of a physical body. But I am using the words “masculine” and “feminine” to describe differences in energy. Instinctively, we know the difference. What is masculine energy? If we talk in stereotypes for a moment, what do men like to do on a Saturday afternoon? In most countries they like to watch team sports, such as football, which involve a team of (usually) men trying to get a ball past opponents to a goal at the other end. They try to do this through speed, stealth, and sometimes brute force.
Masculine energy is often focused on achieving goals, on the use of power, on being competitive. But also masculine energy includes being focused, being centered, and being present.

On the other hand, and this is again a gross generalization, for the most part women prefer to watch films about relationships rather than team sports. Sometimes Chameli watches a movie like this. Every now and then I walk through the living room. Somebody is dying; there is some terrible complication in a relationship. It is all very tragic. At the end of the movie, Chameli has gone through half a box of Kleenex; her eyes are red. I say, “My God, that looked like it was awful.” Between the sobs she replies, “No, it was absolutely wonderful. It was so beautiful.” She loved the movie because it allowed her to have an unrestricted experience of feeling. That is one of the marks of feminine energy: the capacity to fully feel. The feminine, in all of us, enjoys color and texture and sensation. It is not goal-oriented, but loves to linger in sensations and feelings in the present moment.

Here is the important thing: both men and women have both masculine and feminine energy in some kind of a balance. If you look at this in biochemical terms, on average men have about thirty times more testosterone in their blood than women do. Some have more, some have less. Women do still have some, but much less. On the other hand, they have much more oxytocin and estrogen. One aspect of Awakening Coaching is to recognize and respect the natural balance of masculine and feminine energy for each person and then to support that person to use practices to restore and live that balance.

**Unconscious and Conscious Embodiment**

There is an additional level of nuance to this conversation. We are talking not only about masculine and feminine energy, but the unconscious and conscious expression of each one.
When a man is run by masculine energy without any conscious presence brought to it, without any element of awakening, he is going to be run by the more unconscious aspects of the masculine. These are the qualities that are generally least attractive to the feminine. Some examples would be destructive competitiveness, being over-analytical and controlling, using force to get what he wants, setting goals in a way that is rigid and unyielding to reality, and being aggressive or violent.

A man can also run masculine energy through his body with some choice and creative gifting. The qualities of the conscious masculine are, generally, what women most love about men. Conscious masculine energy is present, centered, focused on a goal, but in a way that is aware of reality and able to respond and flow. Conscious masculine energy is able to fully feel, but the sense of being present and grounded is always a little stronger than the feeling. Conscious masculine energy shows up fully in each situation, but always with a tinge of humor, because the man has a sense of life being something like a game, in which he participates fully, but without ever getting completely lost. Conscious masculine energy is able to take action, to be decisive, but all the time with the sense of a bigger context in which the game is appearing.

Equally, we could talk about the unconscious and conscious feminine. The unconscious feminine is emotionally dramatic, can be blaming and catty, or addicted to and getting lost in sensory experience. She can be complaining, nagging, and critical.

The conscious feminine, on the other hand, has a body that is open, a heart full of love; and that love is unconditionally forgiving and embracing. She knows how to create harmony and to bring out the best in people and in situations, because of her natural tendency to love and accept. The conscious feminine knows how to feel deeply in any situation, but without getting lost in a story of “why” and “because” and “who did what to whom.” She can feel for no reason.
I am fully aware that making these kinds of distinctions between masculine and feminine energy, and their unconscious and conscious expressions, can be deeply offensive to some people, particularly to women who have fought so hard to avoid gender stereotyping. This can seem like a step backwards. The reason we are doing this here is not to enforce gender stereotypes, but to recognize that people become happy when they relax into their natural character. An Awakening Coach needs to be sensitive that they are not imposing gender stereotypes on a client, but simply skillfully feeling into the natural balance of masculine and feminine energy, and allowing that to express itself.

When we use Embodiment Practices in this way, we are really achieving two ends. One is to restore the balance of masculine and feminine energy that is natural for that person. The other is to move from the unconscious to the conscious expression of each energetic type. Obviously, this is a huge topic, and one that can be easily misunderstood. This is the briefest skimming across the top of it.

**Practices that Work**

Having guided a client into Radical Awakening, into the recognition of that dimension that is completely beyond gender, and having done enough Radical Releasing and given enough Empowerment Practices that the qualities of the natural state start to emanate, a good Awakening Coach will be able to support the client to discover and return to a natural balance of masculine and feminine energy in their conscious expression.

Chameli explains the essence of feminine practices:

> With the emergence of feminine spirituality, we discover new tools and practices to embody that. We have been trained to rely on and live in the mental realm, and it has caused a tremendous imbalance and disembodiment. That disassociation from the body has caused a sense of split and separation: the core of all of our suffering. So the first step