



# Shakti LEADERSHIP

Embracing Feminine  
and Masculine Power  
in Business

**Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia**

Foreword by Gay Hendricks and Kathlyn Hendricks,  
authors of *Conscious Loving Ever After*

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## **More Praise for *Shakti Leadership***

“Gender equality, diversity, and inclusion are finally being recognized globally as good for business and for humankind. While many companies have structured programs in place to retain and grow women leaders, there is still ignorance in understanding the ‘feminine’ qualities that both men and women need to bring to the workplace to complement the masculine qualities that are so prevalent. As an Indian, I find that our ancient wisdom offers great value to modern business and leadership. In *Shakti Leadership*, Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia tap into this wisdom, as well as wisdom from other traditions, in a profound and engaging way to offer deep insights for leadership and life for men and women everywhere.”

—**Anand Mahindra, Chairman and Managing Director, Mahindra Group**

“Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia put forward a compelling argument for restoring the natural balance of leadership. The importance of creating a new culture of corporate inclusiveness, where we utilize the true power of feminine qualities—such as cooperation, creativity, and empathy—cannot be underestimated in this imbalanced world. Business has a purpose beyond profits, and the argument for a new vision of leadership led by the principle of Shakti is both powerful and insightful for the sustainable future of business.”

—**Rakesh Sarna, Managing Director and CEO, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces**

“*Shakti Leadership* is a timely refresher that acknowledges the weave of masculinity and femininity in our human selves. This is important in an age when we need a caring kind of capitalism, where business looks beyond the narrow objective of maximizing profits and helps people lead more fulfilling lives. We now realize that, among other things, the historically patriarchal workplace has to bring in more feminine attributes—what the authors describe as the power of Shakti. This book offers organizations and professionals many useful ideas to create a humane and resilient culture, such as drawing upon their inner reserves of strength; nurturing values such as trust, accountability, and transparency; and harmonizing male and female traits to become truly visionary leaders.”

—**Anu Aga, Chairperson, Teach for India, and former Chairperson, Thermax**

“As Indians, we grow up soaked in our mythological wisdom. As Indian family-owned business leaders operating in a global economy, we are constantly looking to grow wings, without losing connection with our roots. Nilima and Raj offer us a model for leadership, built on many years of learning and synthesizing, that is as universal as it is dharmic, as timely as it is timeless. I strongly recommend this book to all men and women who aspire to leadership or are seeking to elevate their practice of this most essential human calling.”

—**Harsh Mariwala, Chairman, Marico Limited**

“*Shakti Leadership* reveals the next stage of evolution and leadership in a clear, grounded, and thorough way. Nilima and Raj do a beautiful job of articulating a spectrum of complex subjects in relatable ways. They cover what are the most important wisdom-related topics that can impact leaders who want to create

a world that works for all. What I loved most is that Nilima and Raj speak to difficult and important matters, such as patriarchy, without being too careful or subtle about their insights and without coming from a stance of blame or victimhood. This is the most clear and succinct description of feminine and masculine qualities that I have seen written in a book.”

—**Michelle Stransky, founder of WisdomWomen**

“Nilima and Raj have cocreated a book that is much needed. When we awaken to our true nature, synergize the masculine and feminine within ourselves, and discover the essence of our Shakti, we become infinitely compassionate and courageous to take responsibility for the way we live now. Leaders will find the path in this book to come together and make our organizations more conscious, leading to a peaceful, sustainable, and happier world!”

—**Anil Sachdev, founder and CEO, School of Inspired Leadership**

“I’m grateful to Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia for this insightful and timely book. Reclaiming the lost balance between masculine and feminine leadership styles is a very important part of the larger project of making the world of business more ethical—and thus more effective at creating sustainable value. It is wonderful to see the wisdom of the East being so skillfully applied to the challenges faced by modern organizations. *Shakti Leadership* is a significant contribution to the conscious capitalism movement.”

—**Steve McIntosh, author of *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution* and President, Institute for Cultural Evolution**

“This book is of vital importance! The rise of feminine power fully integrated with the healthy masculine is paramount to the development of the planet, organizations, and ourselves. Nilima and Raj’s outstanding work shows us, through their wisdom and clear writing, how we as leaders can harness this potential.”

—**Kristin Engvig, founder and CEO, WIN**

“A powerful leadership model that leverages and unites our masculine and feminine energies.”

—**Richard Barrett, founder and Chairman, Barrett Values Centre**

“*Shakti Leadership* is a bold reimagination of leadership that is both conceptually robust and immediately usable at the same time. A must-read for all those seeking to deeply understand the inner drives that make them the leaders they are and striving to create diverse cultures where each person can flourish.”

—**Shubhro Sen, Director, School of Management and Entrepreneurship, Shiv Nadar University**

“*Shakti Leadership* is first about deeply understanding who we really are and why we exist and then about using that knowledge to meaningfully connect with others to cocreate a better future. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to really wake up.”

—**Rajeev Peshawaria, CEO, The Iclif Leadership and Governance Centre, and author of *Too Many Bosses, Too Few Leaders* and *Be the Change***

Shakti  
LEADERSHIP

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**Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia**



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.  
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# Shakti Leadership

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To Shakti  
and everyone who helped me make the journey,  
especially Ganesha, Swami Sivananda,  
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Daddy, Mummy, Fr. Lancy,  
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—*Nilima*

To the extraordinary souls in the Chittasangha  
("Consciousness Collaborative"),  
for greatly deepening my understanding of  
consciousness and leadership;  
and to my mother Usha, sister Manju,  
and wife Shailini,  
who embody Shakti for me

—*Raj*

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## FOREWORD

This remarkable new book comes at a most opportune time, an evolutionary juncture in which reinventing the possibilities of leadership can play a major positive role in all our lives. *Shakti Leadership*, based on extensive research, artfully summarizes the best of perennial wisdom, while adding powerful, real-world practices to the repertoire of leaders everywhere.

At its core, Shakti is the creative force from which all structures arise. Nilima and Raj unfold its aspects in an accessible and easily assimilated style. They guide you through powerful processes for integrating the best of Shakti Leadership into your life and organization now, such as finding presence in the midst of frenetic activity and replacing competition with partnership and dynamic balance. The book embraces the most urgent and current questions that most interest both women and men.

We particularly appreciate the interactive components of the book, which engage all aspects of being and doing to integrate the book's wisdom, chapter by chapter. With an enchanting melody of invitation and possibility, Raj and Nilima intuitively rebut the caveats and skepticism that conscious exploration can stir up. The central message really resounds throughout the book: "It's time for us to be bolder." At the heart of *Shakti Leadership's* message is the liberation of the creative energy curtailed by thousands of years of fearing women's power, by both men and women. You are guided through inner, relational, and structural reinvention activities that both challenge and expand your creativity and your ability to step into the unknown with confidence.

*Shakti Leadership* is written for those willing to step out of hierarchy and into new rhythms of collaboration and invention, moving together rather than against, and welcoming intuition into the boardroom and harmony into our hearts. You experience a

new understanding of presence that becomes central to unfolding a different future, and a world in which each person's creative power can flow through an integral and vital structure. In *Shakti Leadership* you'll find a series of lively dialogues that dance between logic and feeling, logos and mythos, and other dynamics that have intrigued consciousness enthusiasts for centuries. This is a book that brings many rich traditions together so that you can expand your leadership skills in core ways that will make a difference now and into the future.

*Gay Hendricks and Kathlyn Hendricks  
The Hendricks Institute  
December 2015*



# A CRISIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND LEADERSHIP

**D**o we really need another book on leadership? Bookshelves the world over are groaning under the weight of a never-ending flow of leadership books. But the stark reality remains: the way we lead isn't working nearly as well as we need it to. Our current one-sided notion of a leader's power is a root cause of a host of contemporary problems, including social breakdown, environmental degradation, epidemics of stress and depression, and corruption in business and government. Men and women alike have been conditioned to value leadership qualities traditionally considered masculine: hierarchical, individualistic, and militaristic. The consequences have been dire for too long, and we can ill afford to continue to suffer them much longer. The origin of the problem is crystal clear: societies around the world have consistently and egregiously devalued qualities and perspectives traditionally deemed feminine. For all of recorded time, the wisdom and unique perspectives of over half of humanity have been largely excluded from influencing how we live and work. How can this not lead to severe dysfunction?

Seeking to reclaim feminine power and restore the long-lost balance of masculine and feminine energies for men and women

alike, this book charts a new path based on timeless wisdom. Reaching into ancient spiritual and mythical teachings, we revive a feminine archetype of leadership: regenerative, cooperative, creative, and empathetic. In the Indian yogic tradition, these qualities are associated with Shakti: the source of creation, sustenance, and transformation that powers the cycle of life. We all need the primordial power and energy that is Shakti—creative, tireless, and restorative.

Leaders who understand and practice Shakti Leadership operate from a consciousness of life-giving caring, creativity, and sustainability to achieve self-mastery internally and be of selfless service to the world. When leaders of both sexes learn to embrace this mindset, we can restore sanity, elevate humanity, and heal the planet by evolving joyously and consciously together.

## SO MUCH HAS CHANGED

We're living at a critical time. Humanity appears poised on the precipice of a great shift in our evolution. After millennia of incremental growth as a species, we appear to have reached a mutation point where our development could take a quantum leap to a whole new level in a remarkably short amount of time.

The human journey of growth and evolution certainly did not stop when we got up on our two legs, as evolutionary charts depict. In fact, we are changing and evolving at a faster rate than ever before—by orders of magnitude.

One of the factors driving these rates is the rapid aging of many societies. Driven by a combination of sharply declining birth rates and steadily increasing life expectancy, the median age has been rising in most countries around the world. In 1989, the United States reached a demographic tipping point: it was the first year that there were more adults over the age of 40 than below it. The age of 40 is a significant threshold in human life; it marks the passage into midlife and is often accompanied by a crisis of meaning and purpose. Many people come to the realiza-



tion around this time in their life that the values and priorities that drove them in the past no longer feel personally relevant. They are consumed with questions such as, “What is the purpose of *my* life? What kind of legacy will I leave behind?” Many people come to the realization that life cannot be just about their own material success; there has to be more to it.

The year 1989 was also when we crossed another threshold: there were more women holding college degrees in the United States than men. Women now comprise nearly 60 percent of college enrollees and, on average, get higher grades than men. It is simply a matter of time before women dominate virtually every white-collar profession. This numerical rise of women will inevitably bring about a shift toward more feminine values in the workplace and in society at large. It will mark a fundamental shift in the world, as nothing like this has ever remotely existed before.

A little-known fact is that we human beings are rapidly becoming more analytically intelligent, as measured by IQ tests. Intelligence researcher James Flynn looked at IQ testing data going back for about 80 years. The data gets normalized to 100 every 10 years, so that the average IQ in society is always 100. Flynn looked at the raw data and found a startling pattern: humans are collectively becoming more intelligent at the rate of 3 to 4 percent every decade. Compounded over eight decades, this suggests that the average person today would have had an IQ of 131 and been in the top 2 percent of intelligence in the year 1935! This pace of change is unprecedented; we are simply not supposed to evolve at such a rapid rate. But we are.<sup>1</sup>

We are also on a journey of rising consciousness. The entire human journey on this planet can be seen as one of gradually waking up—both to the world around us and to our own extraordinary potential as human beings. As more of humanity has moved beyond a survival mode, we have been able to take off our blinders and see the bigger picture. Instead of just being focused on our short-term survival, we are now able to see how our actions have consequences beyond our immediate surroundings,

and how we in turn are impacted by the actions of others. Once we become aware of the consequences of our actions, we also have a finer sense of what is right and what is wrong. Things that were acceptable in the past are no longer acceptable. The pace of change has been mind-boggling. Consider the following:

- 150 years ago, slavery was legal and commonplace in many countries. The United States fought a brutal civil war to end this degrading and inhuman practice, and many other countries also outlawed slavery around that time. But if you go back in human history, you find that slavery was an integral part of every major civilization. Most people, including many slaves, saw nothing wrong with it. Today, it is hard to imagine living in such a world.
- 100 years ago, hardly any women on this planet had the right to vote. In 1893, New Zealand became the first country in which all women could vote in parliamentary elections. Women attained the right to vote in the United States in 1920. In Switzerland, women did not gain the right to vote until 1971; in 2010, Switzerland swore in its first female majority government.
- 75 years ago we still had colonialism, which can be seen as another form of slavery. India was still a British colony.
- 50 years ago, there was still legally sanctioned racial segregation in many parts of the United States.
- 30 years ago, child labor, animal abuse, and environmental degradation were still common and legal in many places.
- 22 years ago, there was still apartheid in South Africa.
- Until 2004, same-sex marriage was not allowed anywhere in the United States; as of this writing, it is legal nationwide, as well as in almost 20 other countries.

Clearly, a lot has changed in a very short amount of time. As Abraham Lincoln said, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. As our case is new we must think anew and act anew.” We are by no means done making radical changes—there is a lot more still to come. Just as the nineteenth century was about the end of slavery and the twentieth was about the end of totalitarianism, the greatest story of the twenty-first century will undoubtedly be about the end of relegating women and feminine values to second-class status.

## REACHING THE BOILING POINT

When you heat water and the temperature rises, there comes a moment when the temperature can't go beyond 100 degrees centigrade, and any additional heat you put in becomes latent heat. The water gathers energy to break through the structure of its liquidity and becomes steam. There's a quantum change from what it was to what it is now. It takes time to reach that point, but when it comes, change happens quickly.

Humanity appears to be at that point today; we're on the cusp. Many people in diverse fields are sensing that we are at a singular moment of discontinuity. Things are poised to change in fundamental ways; we're either going to boil over and evolve or we're going to crash and self-destruct.

The “fire-under-our-@\$\$” is Shakti, the power of Nature's evolution itself.

The Mother was the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo, the famed twentieth-century Indian mystic. She said, “The only hope for the future is in a change of man's consciousness and the change is bound to come. But it is left to men to decide if they will collaborate for this change or if it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crashing circumstances. So, wake up and collaborate!”<sup>2</sup>

We are at a very important time of great change, a latent state of tremendous tension. This is being seen in our personal as well as work lives, and in what's happening with the environment, and within our social structures. We think the chaos is only in our lives, but it's everywhere, so don't take it personally! To quote from Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, there is "a fierce urgency of now."<sup>3</sup> Our crisis is a crisis of consciousness. As the expression goes, a problem cannot be solved at the level of consciousness at which it was created. We have to mobilize the forces that will evolve us to a new level.

Our crisis of consciousness is also a crisis of leadership, because ultimately it is leaders who must solve problems. They must take the initiative instead of being victims of the situation. Leaders of the old consciousness caused the problems we face today; leaders with new consciousness are needed to solve them. Most current business and leadership models are clearly inadequate; the evidence of dysfunction is everywhere. In the workplace, employee engagement levels are shockingly low around the world. In the United States, on average, only three out of ten employees are engaged in their work, five are indifferent, and two are actively hostile.<sup>4</sup> Appallingly, these are some of the highest numbers globally; worldwide, Gallup estimates that employee engagement is only 13 percent. Seven out of eight employees feel that they work for companies that do not care about them as human beings. Such unhappy employees cannot help but go home and infect their spouses and children with that unhappiness and frustration. Health care costs are soaring largely because of an epidemic of chronic illness. Most chronic illness is caused by stress, and most stress is caused by work—it's a vicious cycle.

It doesn't have to be this way. Work does not have to deplete us; in fact, it can be one of the most meaningful things in our lives. But to get there, we have to recognize that our workplaces have largely been devoid of a crucial part of what it means to be human: the feminine aspect.

## SHAKTI: THE POWER BASE FOR CONSCIOUS CAPITALISM

Recent years have brought a dawning realization that we need to rethink the foundational bases of capitalism, starting with the idea that it is solely rooted in the pursuit of narrowly construed and material self-interest. Human beings have multiple primal drives, including the need to survive and the need to care. Love and work define what it means to be human. The emerging Conscious Capitalism philosophy is about blending the two. It starts with asking the question “What is the purpose of business?” The answer: it is *not* to maximize profits but rather to uplift humanity, by meeting real needs, providing meaningful work, spreading prosperity, and enabling more of us to lead more fulfilling and more fully human lives. The second pillar is stakeholder integration. Companies should consciously create multifaceted value for customers, employees, communities, suppliers, investors, the environment, and beyond. The well-being of each stakeholder should be seen as an end in itself, not as a means to the end of making more money for shareholders.

The next pillar of Conscious Capitalism is that companies should create nurturing and life-enhancing cultures imbued with values such as trust, accountability, caring for, and transparency. Most businesses are characterized by high levels of fear and stress; conscious businesses are built on love and care.

Perhaps the most fundamental pillar of Conscious Capitalism is about reimagining leadership. Conscious leaders are fundamentally selfless. They care about people and the purpose of the enterprise ahead of their own ego or personal enrichment. They seek power *with* rather than power *over* people.

The stated purpose of Conscious Capitalism is to “elevate humanity” through the practice of business as a force for good. Its narrative is centered on the need to cultivate a new consciousness of how to lead and conduct business. For that, we are going

to need a new base of power. “Business as usual” runs on ego-based power; Conscious Capitalism runs on Shakti-based power. Shakti is power that comes from an infinite source within you that you can tap into at all times. This power is linked to everything, including money, which is what business has traditionally focused on.

Why do we consider Shakti an infinite source? Unlike the ego, which can be broken down, no one can take Shakti-based power away from you. You may feel that your power derives from your position. If you are the CEO today, you are vested with privilege and power, but if you are not CEO tomorrow, who would you be? Would people still respect you, look up to you, follow you? Can you hold your sense of self, and can you help bring about meaningful outcomes from that true source rather than from the position vested in you?

This whole game is about power; everyone wants and needs power. Without power, everything remains stagnant. Nothing can become manifest, become actualized. Shakti is the transformative power that manifests ideas into reality.

You may ask, why Shakti? Why not, for example, the Tao, which works with the core principle of *qi* (pronounced *chi*), not just as a philosophy but also its power? The compelling difference in the yogic tradition is that Shakti is not an impersonal, inanimate force; it is intelligent and conscious. You can enter into relationship with it. Once you do, it serves you, moves you, and fuels you.

Critically, Shakti also brings in the feminine dimension, which is lacking in the world and has been for a long time—if not for all time. Shakti is understood as creative and generative, and is therefore represented as feminine. Men as well as women can tap into it. In the yogic tradition, the human journey is one that seeks to end the duality between masculine and feminine, or Shiva and Shakti. It’s not about “separate but equal,” but about evolving into an integrated and synergistic combination of both.

How does Shakti fuel us? Consider the north and south poles of a horseshoe magnet. There is potential in the space between

the poles, but you can only tap into that energy when you insert a wire in that space. We exist in this duality and polarity between male and female. We may prefer our traditionally masculine or traditionally feminine leadership styles, but that means we're basically split beings, operating from half of our selves. As a result, we barely operate, because energy only flows when both polarities are leveraged.

Shakti, the power that is latent in your being, gets unlocked when you become whole, flexible, and aligned with your unique purpose. Shakti is an evolutionary force, moving you toward fulfillment. The more you put yourself in accord with your purpose as a being and as a leader, the more energy starts rising up in you to move you forward. There is a beautiful reinforcing pattern there: the more you are on purpose, the more power you get to meet your purpose. It is similar to the idea of being "in flow."<sup>5</sup>

Becoming a conscious leader requires a transformational journey. You do not become a conscious leader just by getting behavioral skill training in "what leaders do." Deeper, foundational shifts are required to connect you to new and true bases of consciousness and power. The person you are is the leader you are; therefore, you have to make the journey inward to transform yourself. The "hero's journey," Joseph Campbell's masterwork, maps perfectly onto modern leadership and business. You need to push beyond your known zone. It takes hard work and you will face many obstacles along the way. It is also a dangerous journey in which you're going to have to "die" in some ways.

Human beings and the universe are evolving in a certain direction; there is a distinct trajectory that can be discerned. There is an evident purpose to this process; it is not all based on random mutations. If we can flow into that trajectory and be part of it, rather than be at cross-purposes with it, we can have access to extraordinary power. We become agents of what needs to be. If not, these infinitely powerful forces quickly cancel out our feeble efforts. How do you connect with a place that fuels you continuously? How do you become a whole person in order to be a whole

leader? How do you become a flexible person in order to be a flexible leader? These are the questions this book will answer.

## REINVENTING LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a perennial subject of analysis and discussion. While much has been achieved in transforming concepts of leadership into powerful tools for business and other societal institutions, there continues to be a need for leadership to evolve in more holistic ways. In particular, there is a need for a leadership paradigm that taps into the best aspects of the higher masculine and feminine natures that lie dormant in men and women alike.

However, women and men who are sensing and awakening to this need don't always know where to find guidance and support. That is the gap we seek to address.

The prevailing leadership paradigm, born of the patriarchy and rooted in militaristic thinking, drastically overemphasizes certain masculine values. It is primarily an *outside-in, competency-based* approach. It is still predominantly based on hierarchy, command-and-control, and using “carrots and sticks” to induce desired behaviors. This book aims to restore balance and wholeness in leaders by awakening them to powerful, innately feminine leadership capacities that lie dormant within them. We do so through an *inside-out, consciousness-based* approach that sources directly from Shakti, the primordial power and intelligence that creates, sustains, and evolves our world. Since it is the original, creative source, which bears Life, it is considered feminine. It complements the principle of awareness or consciousness, which is considered masculine (see sidebar).

### A Quick Primer on Shakti

In the yogic tradition, Shakti is the female principle of divine energy. It is understood as power—even as absolute power. Shakti enables the awakening of consciousness. It is seen as a feminine energy because it is responsible for



creation, just as mothers are responsible for giving birth. Shakti manifests as energy, power, movement, change, and nature. It is the maternal principle, symbolizing nourishment, warmth, and security. The world knows no greater love than the love of a mother, who offers her body to carry and nourish the child and sacrifices herself to raise the child. The paternal principle is Shiva, symbolizing pure consciousness. Shiva is seen as the “unchanging, unlimited, and unswayable observer.”<sup>6</sup>

Yogic philosophy refers to three forms of Shakti impacting the body, mind, and spirit:

- *Prana Shakti* is the life force of the physical body, which governs our actions, organs, and functions.
- *Chitta Shakti* is governance of our mental functions, such as intelligence, thinking, emotions, memory, desires, decision-making, planning, and so on.
- *Atma Shakti* is the “causal and creative power of consciousness.”<sup>7</sup>

At the advent of creation, our beings became split into this Shiva-Shakti duality. Each of us carries Shiva and Shakti within us as the masculine and feminine principles. We carry within us a powerful force that is striving to reunite with our complementary parts. The dissolving of this duality is the aim of yoga, a word that translates to “coming together.”

It is only when Shiva and Shakti come together that there can be any meaningful action, movement, and creation. Energy that is not informed by consciousness is disordered and chaotic. Consciousness without energy is dormant and cannot cause anything to happen.

This idea is not limited to the yogic tradition. The Gnostic mystic Simon the Magus is believed to have said, “The universal eons consist of two branches, without beginning or end, which spring from one root . . . the invisible power and the unknowable silence. One of these branches is manifested from above and is the universal consciousness ordering all things and is designated male. The other branch is female and is the producer of all things.”<sup>8</sup>

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Most leadership books focus on what leaders do, and some on how they do it. As Joseph Jaworski, author of the landmark

books *Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership* and *Source: The Inner Path of Knowledge Creation*, puts it, the key question is “from where?” From where do great leaders draw the power and wisdom to lead as well as they do? That source is Shakti. It is the source of authentic, effective, life-affirming leadership that combines the mature masculine with the mature feminine into a life-enhancing whole. Shakti Leadership is about a new way for men and women to lead and live. By coming into our full presence and aligning with the natural forces of evolution, we can tap into limitless power in pursuit of noble goals.

We believe that all leaders today—men and women—need to become whole by integrating their masculine and feminine natures. All leaders need to come into their true power and unleash their creativity and inclusive-growth abilities to help resolve the multiple crises we face on many fronts: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental.

Many women continue to approach leadership as “men in women’s clothing,” with predictably unhappy results for themselves and for the organizations they lead. Most men, equally tragically, remain disconnected from a vital aspect of their humanness—their innate feminine qualities.

A new consciousness of the feminine is urgently needed. Most men and women, socialized by the patriarchy, have overdeveloped their masculine selves and focused on achieving tasks. The time has now come for *both* men and women to awaken to the nurturing, relational, and inclusive feminine within.

This book is about leadership as it should be for everybody. It is about thinking about power in a different way. Power is the source of corruption and exploitation when it is purely ego-based, when it is not in harmony with where evolution is taking us. When we become aligned with evolutionary forces, we do not need to grasp for power and use it as an instrument of manipulation, oppression, and suppression, serving our own ego and nothing else.

Shakti Leadership is based on authentic, true power. It leads to personal fulfillment and a positive impact on the lives of others.

More than focusing on leading others, this book is first about leading yourself as a conscious capitalist or aspiring change agent. It is a comprehensive primer on how to “be the change” you want to see in your business. It is a step-by-step guide to how you can live a fuller, less conflicted, less fragmented, and more harmonious life. The book tells you what to expect on the journey you are going to have to undertake to get there.

It is also about recognizing the larger context in which you make this heroic journey. We live in a time of uncovering the magnificent commonalities and equally priceless complementarities between men and women. It is not about “the end of men and the rise of women,” the misleading title of Hanna Rosin’s important book. Rather, it is about an extraordinary union that has been many millennia in the making, toward which evolution has been pointing. It is not about a dissolution of gender identities but instead a celebration of the glorious symphony of harmonies that results when complementary forces finally start to act in concert and thus fulfill their infinite potential. It is about humanity progressing to the next stage of our evolution, one in which men and women alike operate from a place of authentic power—power exercised *with* each other rather than over each other. It is time to end the battle of the sexes and recognize that we are far more than our individual genders. It is time to become fully human.

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# SEEKING SHAKTI

*When soul-force awakens, it becomes irresistible  
and conquers the world. This power is inherent in  
every human being.*

—Mahatma Gandhi

## WHAT IS SHAKTI?

India's ancient adepts intuited and experienced the existence of a source of infinite creative power and loving intelligence. This same power and intelligence has created everything around us and within us. It is what enables our fingernails to grow and our minds to contemplate the deepest mysteries of the universe. They called that source Shakti: the generative, fiercely loving power that fuels all creation and animates consciousness. All of reality is intelligent; it is conscious. It is evolved by its own innate power—which creates, preserves, and transforms itself endlessly.

Think of an exquisite car that's been designed and built to perfection. Without the right fuel, the car is useless. Similarly, consciousness by itself is sterile, still, and inert. Shiva—the embodiment of consciousness in yogic traditions—is *shava* (corpse) without Shakti. Shakti is the power that fuels everything.

Shiva represents consciousness and Shakti represents energy. Each one needs the other. Shakti needs Shiva to ground it, otherwise it becomes chaotic; Shiva without Shakti is inert and sterile.

Shakti is understood as supremely intelligent and infinitely varied; it represents the full spectrum of energies that make up the universe. It is the fueling, dynamic power, the primordial cosmic energy that manifests this world and sustains it, from the smallest subatomic spaces to the whole cosmos. As author and spiritual teacher Sally Kempton puts it, “Shakti is the quality in life that gives life its luscious nature, its juiciness, its movement, its energy, its dynamism, love, joy, blissfulness, meaningfulness. Shakti runs our life, giving the energy that makes our heart beat and our brain have thoughts.”<sup>1</sup>

We all have available to us this infinitely powerful and intelligent source to draw upon, yet most of us try to manufacture our own meager and distorted power—or we try and extract it from others. We rely on our own egos and worldly position or other manmade constructs—constructs that we have invested with value and power but that are ultimately devoid of significance.

Advanced degrees and the trappings of success notwithstanding, if we are not rooted in our own creative power—our personal Shakti—we are merely a shell without a soul, a car without fuel; a being without its animating principle. We cannot come into any level of mastery until we become aware of and access this true power. But it must be responsibly exercised, nourished, and expressed for the fulfillment of life, rather than to serve a narrow self-interest.

## TRUE POWER VERSUS FALSE POWER

In her thought-provoking book *The Soul of Money*, Lynne Twist shares the three toxic myths of scarcity that many have come to accept as truths about money globally: that there’s not enough, that more is better, and “that’s just the way it is.”<sup>2</sup> Money is just

one embodiment of power or energy; these myths can be applied to all expressions of power.

Reflecting our uneasy relationship with the very idea, the literature on power is marked by deep and seemingly intractable disagreements over how it should be understood. Leadership is the purposeful exercise of power to achieve desired outcomes. It involves applying one's will and life force to generate results. Unfortunately, most leaders throughout history have played fear-based or force-based power games. But that kind of power requires someone to lose in order for someone else to win. As Sally Kempton says, "Ego-based power comes from the experience of your own limitation and lack. You feel that because you are separate from the source, your power is limited to what you can grasp, stand for, hold. That is essentially a weak position because your sources are finite and therefore you're very concerned with holding onto that power, and you're threatened by anyone else who seems to have power."<sup>3</sup>

What, then, is the difference between true power and false power? True power is not power *over*, but power *with*. It's the difference between competing against colleagues for personal gain versus leveraging everyone's capabilities and strengths toward common ends. When true power is exercised, no one has to lose for someone else to win.

### Shakti Leaders Speak: On True Power

Caryl Stern, CEO of U.S. Fund for UNICEF, defines power as the opportunity and ability to have an impact:

*I think for a really long time power was defined as money. For me, power is about the ability to bring about change and have impact. When I think about where am I powerful, what have I done in the world—I have helped to raise a lot of money, that's great. But I have also changed how people feel about coming to work; that's really powerful to me. I have helped my children to see that the world is bigger than themselves; that's really powerful to me. I really think that's the definition of power—being able to impact others.<sup>4</sup>*

In our world, in our lives, and in leadership, people frequently engage in ego- and fear-based power games. Such power transactions always result in win-lose dualities. They are based on the presumption that there isn't enough power to go around, that you need to extract power or steal it from those around you.

We will show you how to shift from dealing in the power of privilege—a win-lose proposition based on a power source that you can lose—to drawing from your innate, infinite power source, Shakti, which no one can take away from you. We need a radical shift from the way in which power has been gained and for the most part abused in the past, to a whole new base from which to operate: the power of presence. Unless we plug into presence and connect to the source of our true Shakti, we will continue to operate on false power.

Women especially need to learn how to operate with true power. Women who are not in touch with their wholeness and their Shakti are reduced to fighting for the scraps left over by men. One recurring theme that comes in interviews with genuinely puzzled male CEOs is, "Help me understand why I see women, more than men, work against women. Not only do they not look out for each other, but they often actively manipulate and scheme to keep each other down. That kind of behavior leads me to think women are their own worst enemies." This arises because most women are not plugged into true power; instead, they're working on a little corner of the field while the men, in the gender-based privilege of which they are largely unaware, are playing the big field. In this little corner, it is women versus women. The patriarchy has socialized and conditioned women into this to such an extent that most women don't even realize it.

*Lasting positive outcomes can only come from the exercise of true power.* Even if we think we are getting somewhere with our ego-based efforts, they disintegrate and do not endure. It is a waste of our time and energy.

Furthermore, tapped into their own unlimited source, Shakti-based leaders are able to share power with others and



encourage them to get in touch with their own power. Presence is positively contagious; simply by modeling your Shakti-based power, you give others permission and inspiration to access their own. Some honest reflection will reveal that any lasting positive outcomes you have ever had, have come from exercising Shakti (the force for greater good) rather than privilege (the force of self-interest).

Shakti is the abundant, unlimited fuel, the power of life that makes electrons move and galaxies grow and seeds sprout and trees flower. By learning to tap into that unlimited source, you can have power *with* others, rather than power *over* them.

### Reflections

- Think of a key relationship in your life. How do you exercise power in this relationship? Is it mostly power over or power with?
- Think of a person who models “power-over” leadership and someone who models “power-with” leadership. What can you learn about your own relationship with power?
- How can you watch for “power-over” dynamics and shift to “power-with” dynamics from now on?
- Notice how and when you may be giving away your power or unconsciously tend to lose it. Why do you think this happens? How can you prevent it?

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## THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE

Shakti is seen as inherently feminine and is personified in the yogic tradition in various goddesses. As the source of all things, Shakti is personified and referred to as “the Divine Mother,” who worshippers and yoga practitioners experience as a being and with whom they enter into dialogue and a conscious relationship.

All over the world, societies, cultures, religions, philosophies, art forms, and literature make reference to and draw upon feminine energy personified in the Mother Goddess. Much of physical existence is given a feminine identity, such as when we refer to Mother Nature or Mother Earth. Yet for virtually all of recorded history, the feminine has been controlled and subjugated by the masculine, which deep down secretly fears the Mother's unfathomable depth and creative power.

The essential sustaining qualities of the feminine principle are present in our personal lives as the nurturing love and support shared with loved ones. However, it is largely absent from our professional lives. "Business as usual" has overvalued traditionally masculine qualities, while denying and undervaluing feminine capacities. The prevailing business culture is hypermasculine and holds most feminine qualities in contempt. To become balanced and integrated, organizations of all kinds need to value and cultivate feminine energies and qualities within their cultures — on the part of both men and women.

### Shakti Leaders Speak: On Feminine Energy

Casey Sheahan, former CEO of Patagonia, recalls:

*At Patagonia, the workforce is 55 percent female and 45 percent male. The energy within all organizations falls into two basic places. The first is what I call male ambitious energy, the second, which I think is ultimately a more powerful force, is female creative energy. The first energy is a frictional energy, while the second is a more conscious energy that is inspired by passion and higher purpose. You know when you're in that place because the mind is intelligent and clear; it knows what the problem to be solved is and it can see its way toward solutions that work for all the stakeholders who might be affected. The other side, male/masculine ambitious energy, is characterized by greed, power, self-centricity, ego, fear, insecurity, and anger. . . . This frictional energy is what caused the problems in the global economic crisis. You saw it play out on Wall Street in the last twenty years and in many of the failed corporations that were actually*

*cheating their shareholders and the government. They were businesses that had no underlying purpose other than to bring in money. The drive of that energy is all about the individuals: their image, their status. These individuals lack connection and vision, and are incomplete as human beings. They lack something inside that prevents them from being complete, and their companies from being complete. Such businesses and organizations frequently engage in wrong actions instead of right actions.<sup>5</sup>*

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## STEPPING INTO FEMININE POWER

What we see in society today reflects the omnipresent impact of a hypermasculine culture. Author and cultural theorist Jean Kilbourne has been observing and documenting the pervasive and perverse impact the culture of exploitation and objectification has had on both men and women. She observes:

Some young women act more macho and crude in order to be more powerful. That has a lot to do with this culture's definition of power, and that power is defined as being one-up—power over somebody else rather than power being one's own ability to be effective and to make change. If that's the definition of power that girls get—and it is—and if that's what they see being rewarded, it's not surprising that they try that on themselves. Feminine values get lip service but very little respect; in fact there's a lot of contempt for them. So that's a very powerful message that girls are getting, about how they can be powerful. The only definition right now in this culture is to be more like a man.<sup>6</sup>

*Miss Representation*, a film by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, depicts how media portrayals and the objectification of women rob women of political power, making them less likely to want to be political leaders. It also makes it difficult for the women who do try. Jean Kilbourne comments, "A female political candidate has to project femininity—because otherwise she is savaged—and she also has to project strength. And if you've got a situation where strength is seen as unfeminine, it puts her in an impossible double

bind. If she's strong, she's not feminine; if she's feminine, she's weak. Girls see this all around them."<sup>7</sup>

How can women reclaim their power after being so harshly objectified for so long? Jean Kilbourne does see some cause for optimism: "I think more and more people are beginning to see that these stereotypes and definitions of power aren't getting us anywhere; in fact, they're causing a lot of harm. What it's going to take is a critical mass of people who say we've got to change this, because it is doing serious harm to us and to our children."<sup>8</sup>

The fact is that women already have a great deal of power in the world, but they don't always recognize it. If they can step into the power they already have, they can bring about rapid and wide-ranging global change.

Twenty years ago, there was only one female CEO running a Fortune 500 company; there are now twenty-two. While it is still a very low percentage, the trajectory is encouraging. There used to be only a small handful of women in the US Senate at any one time; now there are twenty. The progress is steady, but still far too slow. *Miss Representation* points out that if these changes continue at their current rate it will take something like five hundred years to finally achieve equality in Congress! Something must happen to bring about change more quickly. As Jean Kilbourne puts it, "There's all this power out there, but it hasn't been grasped or been utilized."<sup>9</sup>

## BLENDING POSITIVE FEMININE AND MASCULINE CAPACITIES

Within each of us, there is a feminine element that is both distinct from and entwined with a masculine element. There is a purpose for this: to generate the creative tension within and from which evolution can move toward its own fulfillment. We need to leverage this internal diversity in a way that allows each individual to find a unique balance of expression freely for themselves.

Traditionally feminine capacities that are gifts of tapping into Shakti include qualities such as surrender, receptivity, adaptability, intuition, creativity, beauty, flow, sensuality, nurturing, affection, sharing, gentleness, patience, vulnerability, empathy, inclusion, openness, variety/flavor, trust, and harmony.<sup>10</sup> But when taken too far, feminine qualities can manifest in undesirable ways, such as smothering, being seen as overly sentimental, needy, dependent, exploited, unfocused, irrational, weak, and manipulative. These are considered hyperfeminine or immature feminine qualities.

Likewise, positive masculine capacities include freedom, direction, logic, reason, focus, integrity, structure, stability, passion, independence, discipline, confidence, awareness, discernment, authenticity, strength, clarity, assertiveness, order, and convergence.<sup>11</sup> Hyper- or immature masculine qualities manifest as aggressive, cruel, mechanical, arrogant, insensitive, violent, power-hungry, and spiritually empty.

Of course, to categorize certain characteristics as traditionally masculine or feminine is not to say any of them are innate to men or women. Sally Kempton points to the danger of pigeonholing men and women based on gender:

I have a bit of a problem with the idea that the feminine is naturally nurturing and emotional and the masculine is naturally competitive and aggressive. I actually think that both genders are nurturing in their own way and aggressive in their own way. I would say that, in an individual, Shakti is really much more about finding your personal source of the vibrant fountain of power which is moving through your unique configuration — which applies to men and women.<sup>12</sup>

Even as women rightfully fight for equal rights, opportunity, and status, it does not take away from the need to maintain this primary polarity in a healthy balance.

## Shakti Leaders Speak: On Masculine and Feminine Qualities

Former president of Southwest Airlines Colleen Barrett recalls:

*I've learned most of my lessons the hard way, because I've made mistakes. When you make them and you realize it, you're fine as long as you don't make the same mistake twice. I've learned the value of discipline; that's a masculine trait. I've also learned that even if you have to make tough decisions based on what is best for your organization as a whole, you can still keep your friendships. For example, you can terminate someone because it was the right thing to do for the company, but you can still keep your friendship with that person as long as you handle it in a positive way. I think lots of people struggle with that, male or female. Of course, your heart aches. If you ever feel good about terminating somebody, then there's something wrong with you as a leader to begin with. But I have kept close friendships with many, many people that I had to let go for one reason or another.*<sup>13</sup>

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Author and educator Judy Sorum Brown notes that “leadership is . . . holding both sides and valuing both.”<sup>14</sup> John Gerzema and Michael D’Antonio’s research for the book *The Athena Doctrine* also supports the idea that individuals recognize the value of both types of traits. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents agreed that “(whether) man or woman, you need both masculine and feminine traits to thrive in today’s world.” Gerzema and D’Antonio note that individuals who “include feminine strategies in their decision making are twice as optimistic about their future.”<sup>15</sup>

A truly conscious leader is able to call on positive masculine and feminine qualities regardless of what gender they are. They know when it is beneficial to use more masculine or feminine energy, and are sensitive to the negative aspects of each. But most leaders disown their innate feminine capacities, which are devalued, and always choose more masculine capacities because these are what are seemingly rewarded.

## TRANSITIONING FROM OLD TO NEW

Human history is one long litany of the consequences of masculine values such as conquest and domination. Many increasingly recognize that the future needs to be more feminine, rooted in nurturing and caring. How will we get there? Will it take a revolution? Author and social activist extraordinaire Lynne Twist has a beautiful way to describe the transformation process: the simultaneous “hospicing” of what needs to pass on and the “midwifing” of the new wholeness:

In the Pachamama Alliance, we call ourselves “pro-activists,” which means we’re standing for, not against. I’m standing for a vision and I know there are things in the way blocking that vision. There are structures and belief systems that have become rigid and calcified, causing people to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their humanity. They are not bad people. When we can look from the depth of our humanity and the humanity of others, we see that we’re all caught in some sort of a weird trance. If you can wake up from it, what’s waiting for you is love, compassion, forgiveness, commitment, courage and authenticity—true power, but it’s blocked by the old way of doing things. We need to hospice the death of these old structures and systems that no longer serve us. We don’t need to kill them; they’re not viable or sustainable so they’re dying a natural death anyway. If we hospice their natural death they will die more quickly and with some respect and some grace, because they were useful until they became obsolete. We need to hospice the death of those structures and systems while we midwife the birth of the new structures and systems that are so obvious to us now. Midwifing and hospicing are acts of love and witness. A midwife doesn’t give birth; a midwife witnesses and allows natural birth to take place. A hospice worker doesn’t destroy or kill; a hospice worker witnesses and allows something to die gracefully with dignity. In many ways, that’s the great work of our time, as Thomas Berry says: to transform the human presence from one that is destructive to a mutually enhancing and

nurturing presence on this planet. It's an act of love, to wake up from the trance we've been caught in and re-dream the world from a place that's more conscious, more highly evolved, more loving. Rather than a "you *or* me" paradigm, it's a "you *and* me" paradigm, where you don't have to make it at my expense and I don't have to make it at your expense. Instead, you and I can both make it at no one's expense and everyone's benefit.<sup>16</sup>

To enact those two great duties of our time requires us to cultivate presence (a deep connection to our higher/universal self) and tap into its power (Shakti) to fuel the process. Indeed, in the idea of lovingly hospicing the old and midwifing the new, Lynne is describing the ongoing work of Shakti, the evolutionary process of the universe itself that we are called to flow with and manifest as leaders.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Humanity is poised on its greatest evolutionary adventure yet, but our survival depends on our success at making this transition. Are we up to the challenge? How can we learn to source from the ground of power that is Shakti? How can we embody it and manifest from it?

## THE HEROIC JOURNEY

Finding our Shakti and coming into our own power requires us to be tested: for our capacity to bear it and our worthiness to wield it. The stages of the awakening of Shakti are best described as a "heroic journey."

The concept of the hero's journey, or the monomyth of man, is the enduring legacy of Joseph Campbell, one of the most profound thinkers of recent times. An anthropologist by training, Campbell studied the mythologies of cultures around the world. Eventually, he discovered what was common to all mythologies. From his study and understanding came his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. His work is easily recognized in many Hollywood movies because they follow the arc that he uncovered of the mythic or heroic journey. The *Star Wars* series is one well-known example.

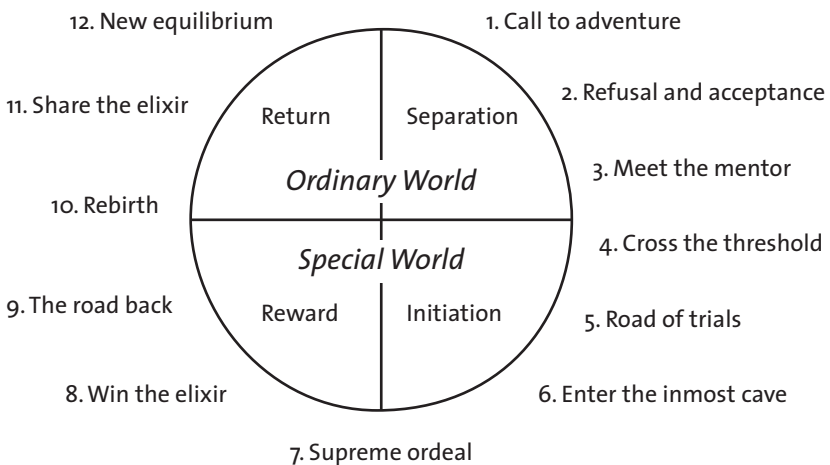


The hero's journey is about coming of age, moving from innocence to maturity and individuation. It is about the process of coming into our own power and becoming the person we are meant to be—not the person we were conditioned to be by a parent, spouse, or sibling.<sup>17</sup>

We are each the heroes and heroines of our own life story. The heroic journey is a universal one that transcends history, geography, and culture. What we learn through the journey that we think is deeply personal to us is actually completely universal. It applies equally to our personal and professional lives, because in truth there is no difference between them; the person you are is the leader you are.

The journey is archetypal, meaning it displays a powerful “set pattern” that seems to be driving individuals and their experience. Though our journeys may seem very different on the surface, they're actually playing out universal patterns. There are recognizable stages and characters common to all journeys, which we will look at more closely later in the book (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1—*Stages of the Heroic Journey*



Adapted from *The Writer's Journey*, Christopher Vogler.

The heroic journey is about fulfilling one's higher purpose. It requires extraordinary effort and demands that we develop many new capacities. It is called a heroic journey because coming into our own and maturing into all that we can be takes great courage. When we journey, we cannot remain the person we were; we will arrive at journey's end as a more potent and consequential being.

The journey begins, as it must, in the ordinary world. At some point, a separation is forced upon the hero, in response to a "call to adventure." The hero initially refuses to heed the call; after all, it's usually more comfortable for a person to stay where he or she is. If you're Frodo, you want to stay in the Shire! The hero refuses the call until forced to accept it by some set of circumstances. As Elizabeth Appell put it, "The day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom." Each person has to find the willpower or passion inside themselves to accept the challenge.

When the moment to embark on the journey comes, an ally force shows up just in time: the hero meets the mentor (Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*, Dumbledore for *Harry Potter*). The mentor helps the hero cross the threshold from the ordinary world into a whole new world—the magical or the special world. The hero undergoes a slew of trials before entering the innermost cave, where he must confront a supreme ordeal. On the other side, after he overcomes the ordeal, there awaits some kind of an unexpected reward, which Campbell calls "the elixir." From there, the hero has to find his way back. There's a rebirth in the return to the ordinary world, to the place where he started. His journey is complete only when he shares the elixir with the world that he left and has now returned to. He finds a new equilibrium and is deeply transformed from the person he was when he left.

Our colleague and fellow traveler Vijay Bhat has cogently summarized the heroic journey, originally from Campbell's work and incorporating other sources such as Joseph Jaworski.<sup>18</sup> We share his synthesis here with his permission:

It begins in a familiar setting that appears idyllic and comforting on the surface but is actually a “wasteland,” where old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit and where we may be living an inauthentic life.

Change is imminent. The call to adventure comes in many ways, both subtle and explicit. We are asked to give ourselves to something larger, to become what we were meant to be.

Some who are called choose to go. Others wrestle with denial and anxiety until they can overcome their fear. We refuse the call because we are insecure about risking what we have, because we dread being separated or ostracized, and because we sense danger—we might die.

Deep down, we sense that yielding to the design of the universe and cooperating with destiny will bring great personal power and responsibility. Yet we still don’t feel ready.

As if from nowhere appears the guiding light: someone or something that shows the way, equips us and pushes us over the threshold to an unfamiliar, magical world that awaits.

We pass beyond the borders of the known into the void, a domain without maps, a place of both terror and opportunity. The perilous journey begins and we face a series of tests and trials, placed before us by fierce enemies whom we must overcome or circumvent.

If we have truly and fully committed ourselves to the journey, we are supported by invisible hands—powerful forces in the form of allies who speed us along and nurture our growth and preparedness.

On this road of trials, our commitment is frequently challenged, and we have many occasions to enjoy success and to learn from failure. Crossing many barriers, we endure the agony of rising beyond our personal limitations and growing spiritually.

Inevitably, we face a supreme ordeal, where we alone must confront our greatest fear and weakness—our shadow. It is our ultimate “break down or break through” point. If we

succeed in transcending our shadow, it yields us the elixir we seek. In the process, we die to the old and emerge fundamentally transformed.

It is not easy to leave behind the bliss and thrill of the magical world and return to the almost forgotten place from which we came. But with the quest accomplished, we triumphantly carry back the elixir to restore and rejuvenate society.

Upon returning, it can be difficult to absorb the counter-blows of reasonable queries, hard resentments, and good people at a loss to comprehend the drama that has unfolded. But by now, we have become a potent new being, capable of handling these shocks and prepared to journey forth, again and again, in service of the community.

We are each the heroes of our own lives. Many of us have already journeyed and overcome profound challenges and ordeals. Know that you can journey again; you have the capacity and the power and the courage. You can overcome obstacles and your fear. If you didn't answer the call to adventure in the past, forgive yourself. Perhaps you were scared, thought you couldn't do it, or listened to other people and went against your own instincts. Take a deep breath and realize that this, too, is a part of being the hero.

### Exercise

This exercise is about getting in touch with experiences that you may not have thought much about. Events happen and you compartmentalize them without much examination because life pushes you inexorably forward: there is always the next project or the next deadline to meet in your personal or professional life. In this way, significant episodes in your life are left unprocessed, unacknowledged, and unhonored. It is important in the journey of life to stop and remember those important times where something significant occurred. It's important to stop and feel gratitude and recognize that what you have accomplished is no small thing.

Think back to an ordeal you successfully overcame and its core stages. Ask yourself:

- What was the crisis? How were you shaken out of your comfort zone?
- Did you heed the call or refuse/resist it? Why?
- How were you tested? Who were your allies and enemies?
- What was your greatest fear? How did you overcome it?
- What new capacities did you gain? How did you mature from the experience?
- How have you shown up differently as a person since then? As a leader?
- What are you offering the world, and how has it changed for the better?

You may realize that you never framed your success stories in terms of the heroic journey. People go through many journeys but fail to recognize the transformational process they underwent. There is great value in making this conscious; once we understand how the journey tends to unfold, we can journey again and again with less fear and greater ease and effectiveness.

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The calling and capacity to embark on the hero's journey are in all of us. Many now teach from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, inspiring people to realize that they can be heroes instead of continuing as ordinary beings or far worse as victims.

Becoming a Shakti Leader requires undertaking a heroic journey. We will revisit this idea throughout the book. In this chapter, we talked a bit about what Shakti is, the need for finding a true balance between feminine and masculine capacities, and the difference between false power and true power. In the next chapter, we'll introduce the framework for Shakti Leadership, an original synthesis born out of our inner work and our work with entrepreneurs, consciousness practitioners, and business leaders.

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