

**A Talk on the Dual Origin
17 November 2013
Prepared by Maria Rocco for the
Universal Unitarian Congregation in Binghamton, NY**

Introduction

Good morning everyone! I am happy to be here with you today!

On behalf of the Agni Institute I would like to thank the Universal Unitarian Congregation of Binghamton, and particularly Vicky Gordon, your dedicated and talented Music Director, for inviting me to speak during this service. It is my great pleasure to share an intriguing perspective on gender equality with you.

During this talk I will use the words CREATIVE and RECEPTIVE; these terms refer to the two primal forces of the Universe which we, human beings, contain within ourselves in microcosm. They are also known as masculine and feminine and are equal; without the one or the other there would be no life. Inspired by the work of Helena Roerich, a Russian writer and philosopher, I will explore ways in which we can find the balance of these two forces within ourselves to make a difference in the world.

The Dual Origin: Beyond Gender Equality

“It is not possible for the bird of humanity to fly on only one wing”; these are the words of the Indian Hindu monk and philosopher Swami Vivekananda, 1863-1902, who introduced the Vedanta and Yoga to the Western World. He considered men and women to be the two wings of one bird, was also a social reformer and believed that there could be no progress in the world unless the condition of woman is improved.

Today, although the status of women has improved in some countries, humanity is still showing the symptoms of an ailing bird who flies with only one wing; every day we witness or hear about violence in schools, ruthless business practices, women being raped and armed aggression, nationally and internationally, to name just a few examples.

Regarding the importance of improving the status of women, Helena Roerich, a Russian philosopher and writer, 1879-1955, is also emphatic about it. In 1935 she said: “Who can tell where woman's rights – rights given to her by Nature – begin and where they end? The same question could be asked about man's rights. Only evolution gives the answer and points out the direction. There is no indication in Nature that woman should be restricted to her hearth! Verily, she is the Mother and Custodian of

the World. Hence, there is not a single domain of life where man could rule alone. ***It is precisely this domination of the one Element that has created the dark epoch.***"

Teachers such as Gotama Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth and Mohammad respected women although they lived at a time when women were put at a low level (Buddha lived about 2500 years ago, he was born in Nepal on the border with Northern India, Jesus 2000 in Galilee, and Mohammad about 1500 in Mecca, Arabia, now Saudi Arabia.)

About 2500 years ago, "Woman", Gotama said, "can attain the highest degree of knowledge open to man – she can become an Arhat (an Arhat is someone who has attained Nirvana). Freedom, which is beyond forms, cannot depend on sex, which belongs to the world of forms." We quote his answer to the question of the woman disciple Soma, "How can this condition which is difficult for the wise to attain be reached by a woman with her limited mind? The answer was: "When the heart is at rest, when the consciousness is unfolded, then truth is perceived. But if one will think I am a woman, or I am a man, or I am this or that, let Mara (our inner demons) be his concern". "The Gates of Immortality are open to all beings. Who has ears, let him approach, let him hearken to the Teaching and have a faith." (Source: *Foundations of Buddhism by Helena Roerich*)

In an essay entitled "Are Women Human?" Dorothy Sayers, an English Christian humanist, 1893 – 1957, said about Jesus: "They [women] had never known a man like this Man—there never has been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronized... who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unself-conscious."

Then came the Prophet Mohammad (c. 570 – 632); he also lived in a society that put women on a low level, but he respected them. They were viewed as second class citizens, an object that belonged to the man, and that disturbed the Prophet. Early in his career, Mohammad condemned female infanticide. Later revelations would give women legal rights in marriage, allow them to divorce and protect their inheritance rights. What he did for women in the context of his time was amazing. His first wife Khadija was wealthy and powerful. She was a working woman – in spite of the male dominated society – so an inspiration. She owned a caravan and Mohammad was working for her. He was 25 when he was hired, she was a widow, fifteen years older than he and she asked him to marry her. She was his best supporter and first follower when he began receiving revelations. Khadija died. The Prophet's last wife Aisha was brilliant, she questioned him. She memorized vast

amounts of prophetic “traditions” and is said to have transmitted a large number of them. (*Source PBS program: Islam: Empire of Faith*).

These Teachers were ahead of their time; they knew that the suppression of one of the elements, the feminine – or RECEPTIVE, was not only a violation of human rights but also the gravest violation of cosmic rights which resulted in the chaos we are living in today. The original teachings of Buddha, Jesus and Mohammad have gone through various interpretations throughout the ages. For example, in Christianity we find three male figures in the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, something is missing here. If we see a picture with 1/3 missing and the remaining 2/3 show a man and a boy, what would we say is missing? (pause)...The Mother, the Feminine principle has been lost throughout the centuries. Yet, in the tiny church of St. Jakobus in the hamlet of Urschalling, near Munich, Germany, there is a 14th century fresco representing the Trinity with a female figure at the center. This coincides with feminist biblical studies in which the Holy Spirit is increasingly associated with the feminine – or RECEPTIVE principle. And of course if we saw 2/3 of a picture representing a woman and a girl, wouldn't we say that the missing 1/3 is a man, a Father, the masculine principle?

For centuries men and women have been educated from the cradle to behave in a “masculine” and “feminine” way respectively: baby boys must wear blue and baby girls must wear pink. The feminine has erroneously been associated with weakness and the masculine with strength, toughness. In this era of the exploration of space, the worldwide web and globalization, the roles of women and men are changing. And today, in part thanks to the work of Carl Jung's who said that all people have a feminine side – which he called ANIMA – and a masculine side – which he called ANIMUS, there is a growing understanding that in fact, all men and all women contain both the “masculine” and “feminine” aspects within themselves. Indeed, the masculine is not present in men only, just as the feminine is not present in women only.

We all understand the urgency of reaching gender equality, especially in countries where the rights of women are still negated. Now we must also understand that there is more to gender equality than giving women their full rights. We human beings are a small universe, a microcosm; our existence is based on the Dual Origin, this polarity which pervades the whole world, beyond our planet earth, and is present in every atom: protons + and electrons -, in electricity AC – DC – evaporation and condensation, yin and yang, etc. This polarity is often referred to as CREATIVE - or masculine or active; and RECEPTIVE, or feminine, and is the basis of all existence. Without either one or the other, there simply would be no life. We human beings tend to think that we are separate from the universe, but we are an integral part of it and we play an essential role in its evolution. Within each one of us, whether we define ourselves as man, a woman, gay, lesbian, or other, there is the same polarity of the CREATIVE and

RECEPTIVE that exists in the universe; we are each made of spirit-matter, and they are one, inseparable and equal: spirit is CREATIVE, matter is RECEPTIVE. Our spirit needs our body to anchor itself, our body needs our spirit to come into being and they are one. We could think of the Oneness of the Dual Origin as a coin with one side being the head and the other the tail, yet both are made of the same metal and form the coin.

Yoga teachings divide our organs into the organs of action and the organs of perception: for example, our hands and feet, and our mouth are the organs of action whereas our ears and eyes are the organs of perception; along our spine run two nerve currents: on the right, PINGALA, positive – or masculine polarity corresponds to the left side of the brain and on the left side of the body the IDA, negative – or feminine polarity, corresponds to the right side of the brain.

Understanding that we are an inseparable part of the universe and that we all contain the CREATIVE and RECEPTIVE within ourselves, a woman can be CREATIVE and RECEPTIVE and a man can be RECEPTIVE and CREATIVE. Regardless of our gender or how we identify ourselves, we can put these two energies at work in our daily lives and learn to balance them for our own benefit, that of people in our immediate surroundings, our community, our nation, our planet and so on. For there is more to this world than what we can see with our naked eyes as has been demonstrated by many cases of NDE, Near Death Experiences, in which visions of a world beyond our known world are experienced, and these are not fantasies. When we meditate, for example, we are both CREATIVE and RECEPTIVE, because we become receptive to higher energies and through our heart we can transmit them to the space around us; these waves of energy reach those we love when we hold them in our heart. We can extend these beneficial energies to our community, to the space above us and to the planet, thus actively helping to make this world a better place. During our meditation we stimulate our right brain and develop our intuition, our capacity to be compassionate, and this is much needed in a world where toughness is revered. Our thoughts also impact on our immediate surroundings and beyond. When we send out positive thoughts, we create positivity, when we send out negative thoughts, we create negativity around us, and what we send out comes back to us.

Through meditation and paying attention to our thoughts, we can develop the thinking heart and loving mind and become balanced and compassionate human beings. The thinking heart is to feel what is going on with the other person and understand what she/he needs and be compassionate. A practical application of developing the thinking heart and loving mind can be very useful when we are in a decision-making position that involves people, in a business for example.

Throughout the day we can bring awareness to how we interact with people around us by being mindful of how much we speak or listen, by feeling empowered instead of powerless, by taking action whenever action is called for, etc.

Balancing the Creative and Receptive would lead to tolerance and compassion rather than condemnation and indifference, cooperation rather than competition, and, on a wider scale, diplomatic negotiations and conflict resolution rather than armed aggression.

And finally, as examples of people who have balanced the CREATIVE and RECEPTIVE, I would like to mention:

The women of Liberia who, by their non-violent action, ended ten years of civil war in 2003. They were thousands of women, ordinary mothers, grandmothers, aunts and daughters. Both Christian and Muslim they were armed only with white T-shirts and their courage. Their demonstrations culminated in Charles Taylor's exile and the rise of Africa's first female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

Here in our country we have Taryn Davis whose husband was killed in Iraq in 2007, she was 21; she felt lost and isolated after the funeral. She went to survivor support groups but found the gatherings too big and the military wives were much older than her. She took action by going looking for other young military wives and met with one whose husband was killed at the same time hers was. Taryn filmed their emotional encounter and was inspired by the other widow. Following the visit she went looking for other young war widows across the country and four months after the death of her husband she founded "The American Widow Project", a non-profit that connects more than 900 military widows through its website and helps young military widows find the emotional support they need. The American Widow Project was among the top 10 CNN Heroes in 2011.

Muhammad Yunus, the Bangladeshi banker, economist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, balanced the thinking heart and loving mind when he developed the concepts of microcredit to help people in developing countries – mostly women - get loans to start small businesses. Muhammad Yunus was awarded the U.S. Congressional Medal in 2010 and presented with it at a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol on 17 April 2013.

2009 CNN Hero Derrick Tabb from New Orleans started "The Roots of Music", a program to keep the young people off the street. The program provides free instruments, instruction, tutoring and food. Students have marched in Mardi Gras parades, school grades improved. Derrick Tabb himself was helped by his band teacher who helped him get back on track when he was going through a rebellious phase in junior high.

We can also become heroes in our daily life by endeavoring to balance our CREATIVE and RECEPTIVE energies. We will thus help the bird of humanity to fly with two wings and create a world where women are respected and are equally present in all walks of life, and men can feel free to express their sensitivity, for the benefit of our families, our communities, our nation and our planet.

Thank you!