love is born

the feminine and masculine

in sacred partnership

MARION WOODMAN
is interviewed by
SAPHEIRA LINDEN

Sophia: For this issue of Caduceus on the Birth of the Self, we'd like to know how you define the Inner Marriage.

Marion: For me the inner marriage is the union of soul and spirit, and out of that union comes a new consciousness. I see the feminine in the inner marriage as the soul, and I see the soul as the eternal part of us that lies in our body while we're on earth. Through sight, smell, taste and touch, all the energies of our body, the body is continually relating, interacting with the outer world. I see the soul as the lunar energy. I see the spirit as that disembodied solar energy that can come flying in to meet soul, and impregnate soul. Nureyev died recently and I can't help thinking of the inner marriage that must have existed in him, and must have also existed in Margot Fonteyn, for when these two danced together they danced as one being, in perfect balance. They were inspired by the third, by the god. When that happens you are a dancer, then you are danced. If you are a writer, you are written. Your instrument may be beautifully prepared, but the spirit has to come in if there is going to be a great dance. It's going to be inspired. Once that happens you have opened yourself to another dimension of reality. And you can never close down to be what you were before, nor would you ever want to. To cut, every time soul opens to spirit in that way there is a new experience of reality; so that your consciousness of your own potential, and your consciousness of the transpersonal is reborn. And it's out of that continual meeting of soul and spirit that the ego learns how to relate to the inner god. And that's where the new consciousness is coming from. It shifts you out of this narrow little dimension that you call T, into a larger reality.

What is the relevance of the inner marriage and birth of Self at this time when there is so much conflict in the world, in Beirut, in Ethiopia, in Somalia and elsewhere?

I think that in an era when chaos seems to be coming into our culture at a terrifying rate, when everything appears to be collapsing, then the inner marriage is crucial, and perhaps this very chaos is helping us see this.

How?

Because the war is now in our home through television. People are starving and dying in our living room. This is forcing an awakening. The planet is now one country—almost one village and we are no longer blind to what is happening. We see the old patriarchal games of judge and blame and war and killing each other, and know that the fear and drive for power which has propelled this in the preceding millennia is either going to have to be transformed or we are going to destroy ourselves.
ourselves. We realize we don't know how to be citizens of this one village - we have no idea how to get on with our brothers and sisters around the planet.

So we are no longer separate, and share in the conflict and suffering?

Yes, but what is going on is so horrific, it may take huge suffering to break our hearts open. People don't usually change their habits until the very last moment - when they're on their knees, up against the wall. When people have heart attacks, that changes them, addiction sometimes changes, when it's almost too late. May be we have to go to those limits as a planet, before we can open to this change. For in the main people are deadened by fear, by grief, by rage, by alcohol, maintaining consumer or patriarchal values which deny them their own reality. Yet they are terrified of moving away from this. To go with the new is to be frightened, but alive to stay with the old is to die in security.

As individuals we must do the best we can, opening to the new, not knowing where we're going but day by day following the light which is coming through the darkness. Often we need a guide to help us stay with this. The darkness is just too terrifying.

Do you feel that the heartache and suffering we see about us and experience can be an instrument or catalyst for our change?

Yes, we can relate the outer situation to the inner. I think most people are still projecting their own anger, blame, guilt, rage, jealousy, envy onto other people, and particularly onto those with whom they are intimately connected, especially onto the other sex. Until we recognize this, we can't begin to change. Many people think, 'Well, this inner marriage sounds OK, but what I really want is a satisfying outer relationship.' But without the inner marriage there is no genuine intimacy, no creativity, no deep religious experience.

How are people trying to experience this?

People who are working toward consciousness are trying very hard to recognize both the masculine energy in themselves and the feminine energy in themselves. They recognize this has nothing to do with gender, that we all (female and male) have both energies. You can call them yin-yang, Shiva-Shakti, whatever your words are, but these energies have to be honoured, and find a balance, a union, an inner marriage. Often people who are committed to their dream processes find the potential for an inner marriage: the beloved who comes and says, 'I have loved you all your life,' and the dreamer recognizes the Beloved. In my experience each and every such meeting is unique. There is no such thing as a standard way to find one's own uniqueness.

Would you say that the purpose of love relationships is to be reunited with the divine Beloved?

I don't like to use the word 'purpose,' because I think that love 'happens' to us. I don't think you can make a love relationship happen. I think that love is a gift, but in that gift, yes, we do experience the Beloved, the inner beloved, the Divine. And even in the suffering of love, we experience the Divine. Often people are faced with unrequited love. Yet if they have experienced their full capacity to love, that is part of the gift. And the suffering that comes from unrequited love can break the heart open to another dimension.

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Saying a little more about holding the personal love and the impersonal love at the same time, that it goes from personal to impersonal...

Well, I think you can hold them both at the same time, Sophia. Because the deeper impersonal love is rooted in your own body, every cell resonates with love. It is so simple that it is hard to explain. It is recognizing my own husband, seeing him just as he is without my archetypal projections onto him, seeing him in the simplicity of his old black housecoat and his two spirally little legs, and the greatness of his search, and the greatness of his commitment to God in that search.

Putting those two together is an incredible paradox. You know, the frailty of the human being and the immensity of the human being. That is what I find magnificent. There is a recognition that we're human beings in this vast pool of destiny. And as simple as we are, this divine experience can just move through our bodies, not as an ideal, but as a cellular reality. And that's when we recognize the divinity of the human being.

That is very inspiring. Are there other experiences you might mention?

Yes, alone writing. Struggling along with my creaky pen, trying to write what I feel and think. And then suddenly I feel this other energy moving in, and the pen begins to move very quickly, and when I finish writing what has come through, I read it over, and I realize that a greater presence than I have been guiding it.

I've had that experience...

Or dancing, when I'm dancing with a good dancer or all by myself, when I've given my energy over to what I call Sophia, then I just feel that other energy moving so that the very cells of my body are carrying a lightness. The density of my body shifts to a different vibration. That also happens sometimes when I'm speaking. I feel that there is a different vibration in my body. It moves me to a different level of consciousness. I see this as inner marriage: in each union soul opens to spirit. It can happen with another human being, in conversation, it can happen alone, it can happen in sensory. It can happen in many situations. Particularly, it happens with creativity.

Can you define inspiration? At one level, it means to breathe in, and what else?

Breathe into. If you think of breath as the primordial, as the Greeks called it, you'll get the very life force in the breath, and so the inspiration is the breathing in of the spirit by the soul. For me, this is a body experience, as well as a mental and spiritual experience. The tragedy of our culture is that people have shut down their bodies so drastically. They don't even know they're shut down. They don't experience the breath going deep, deep into the resonators of their body. I mean, our body is a resonator. And if the breath is really moving in the depth of our resonator, all the feeling is flowing. But people often dream that they're in winter, or walking through ice, or glass, and they don't realize that the dream is telling them that their body is not resonating. So they're not feeling, but they don't know it. For me that is one of the great tragedies of the technological world.

So the soul breathes in the spirit. Are we talking about a cosmic celebration - the breaths coming to the earth?

I think that would be spirit meeting soul. In the macrocosm, that would be heaven meeting earth, in the microcosm would be the spirit joining with the soul.

Is it that same connection for man as for woman?

I think the soul is in man is feminine (as it is in woman), because the soul is the receiver. A poet, a male poet, for example, has to receive spirit. Beethoven, as a musician, Nureyev as a dancer, Michelangelo as a sculptor, all these men opened to spirit, as does the feminine artist. As humankind we are the receivers of this other energy, if our container is prepared. If the container is unconscious, it cannot receive.

How can we learn to prepare our container?

It's a lifetime process. We can very slowly, and we just keep working on it every day. And I believe that the container becomes more and more refined. In dreams it can appear as a vase, a bowl, a purse, any exquisite, or even simple basket or bowl. It is the human body. But it is also the soul that lives in the body. I think the people who work with Tai Chi are working on this. People working in yoga providing they are trying to go into the body and not go out. Feldenkrais, Riki, or meditating, for me the answer is concentration. If you put your total energy into holding that center place, if that is working on building the inner container.

That center place. Are you putting the emphasis on the particular area...
of the body or the psyche?

I can't think of another word but God. If you are working on your heart, you might be breathing into the heart. Whichever area you are working on opening, you can bring into the life-spirit. Sometimes something happens in the process, if you're lucky, that comes through you. Something very different from what you were focusing on, different and bigger happens. A lot of what I'm talking about is the ego surrendering to that higher power, or deeper power. Some people fly out of their

Oh, I certainly think so. I think you can talk about things, even work spiritually in concentration, but when you feel it actually happens in the depth of your body, you know. It is no longer I believe, but I know.

And that little tiny veil that makes the difference between relief and knowing, is taken away when you've experienced it in your gut.

Can we also describe this process in terms of beings of the angelic planes desiring to be incarnated on the earth?

In terms of everything I've been saying, we are talking about spirit igniting body, the sacredness of matter that can receive spirit. And I think that is true in the individual human body, and I think that's truth in the body of the earth. And we're either going to recognize the sacredness of matter, or we're not going to have it. It's going to be all over. So I think we're at this crucial point of recognizing the sacredness of matter, and the matter itself opening to spirit. And there is the inner marriage again. And there is again is the birth of the new consciousness. The pivotal point now is whether we can learn quickly enough how to recognize matter in ourselves, in fellow human beings, in the earth itself, whether we can see God's plan for all of us.

Whether we can love....

Love is born. And if you don't live in your human body, and know the pain of being an eternal being in a human body, you don't know what it is to love the divinity that is in a human being. It is love that binds us as one soul on this one planet. We are all part of one system: the planet, the trees, the animals, the vegetables, the human being, the angels, we are all part of one system. And the only thing that is going to make us realize that, or bring that system into reality, is the suffering that can crack our hearts open to love. And that is the birth of the new consciousness.

Can you relate to what Hazrat Inayat Khan called 'the message of our time', which he describes as the 'awakening of humanity, the consciousness of the divinity in every human being'?  

Oh yes, that is what I've been talking about; the singing of the blackbird on the wire outside my window, the snow on the evergreen, a baby's tiny hand, the divine order within everything, of which I am a part.

So the birth of the self....

If the tyrants in Bosnia, Somalia, Iraq, the tyrants in every country in the world, were as vulnerable as I am, paradoxically, strong enough to recognize the divinity in themselves, would they want to annihilate the divinity in others? If we recognized the divinity in trees, in water, would we mindlessly go on destroying our life source? Often, we are the key that releases us into the joy of divinity. For me, out of the union of the soul and spirit comes the birth of the new consciousness.

Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, or however you call it. Within each one of us, I think it is the spark of God. The new consciousness recognizes that spark in all living things. It is like a great orchestra, in which we're all bringing our instruments into tune with the divine conductor. We're still a long way from being in harmony.

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