The Voice of Sophia: Feminine Wisdom Revealing Itself
By Saphira Linden

In a beautiful setting overlooking the Hudson River, a group of women from different spiritual traditions gather to meditate. Our collective breath creates a sacred chalice through which we listen to the voice of Sophia, the sacred feminine wisdom coming through at this time.

It is the Winter Solstice. Women from the same group have faithfully gathered for the past 17 years, some in person, some by phone. A deep resonance has evolved over time in images, words, and body senses. We ask to be used as a sacred vessel for insight, vision, and wisdom from the perspective of the Divine Feminine.

We were originally invited because we were teachers in our particular spiritual traditions, have written books about our orientation to the Divine Feminine and/or are mature conscious guides as writers, artists, and therapists, whose work in the world involves the integration of spirituality with the feminine voice in our time.

Observing that the Sufi Order International has often brought together clergy representing different religions in formal conferences and sometimes to worship together, we felt called to gather as women of different faiths in another way. In this annual solstice gathering, not unlike many such circles around the world, we drink tea and share our lives, our hearts’ yearnings, our spiritual work in the world, our dreams, and our current personal and planetary concerns. And then we share a spiritual practice together and begin to meditate. After a time, we share the results of our meditation.

As I approach our beautiful meeting place, I wonder what it is that brings us back together each year. Most of these women lead very public lives in their own work spheres. They are some of the busiest people I know. I wonder and then the answer comes. We are feeling called to actively participate in birthing a new vision. We are riding a wave in a new stream, which will bring the sacred feminine consciousness into full manifestation. We feel compelled to help reverse the current of a patriarchal, masculine culture of domination and distorted power. We all know that it is possible. Together with circles of emerging sacred feminine energy like ours evolving across the planet, we want to help midwife, in our own small way, a new consciousness.

Each of us, through our own spiritual practice and mature life experience, is inspired to be in service of this shifting paradigm, so that our world can come back into balance with the sacred feminine.

We come together with the intention of listening to the “Sophia” or wisdom voice coming from deep within. We come to do this in resonance with our “solstice sisters.” There is a mystery about the process. As we attune together, it is as though we become an alembic, a sacred alchemical chalice through which the Great Mother, in her many guises, can manifest: the Shekinah, the Feminine indwelling divine presence, in Judaism; Mother Mary in Christianity; Khadija and Fatima in Islam; Kali/Durga in the Hindu tradition;
Quan Yin and the different Taras in Buddhism; the voice of the Earth called Sejecho, Bri as well as Changing Woman, Spider Woman, and The White Buffalo Woman in Native American traditions, Osun in African Yorba tradition. All of these and many more are reflected as Sophia, the feminine wisdom.

With a shared intention, for some a passion, a driving force that moves us into the process, we open ourselves and listen. Images, sensations, insights come through. We know now that it is possible to receive in this way if we ask and if we listen deeply. Women in our circle who aren’t there in person, attune with us at the same time from wherever they are and enter into the same resonance. They call in and share the results of their meditation in half hour time slots. This ritual is enhanced by a beautiful atmosphere of nurturance and love; we experience a shared sacred Presence.

In 2005 (our 16th solstice), with many national disasters occurring, coupled with a deteriorating government, a senseless war, and threats of worse things to come, we asked for a wisdom voice for a dark time. In 2006, it was suggested that we begin by concentrating on the Body of the Earth as it relates to our own bodies. We always begin with an image or idea to focus on, and we open to whatever is trying to come through at the time. We are in awe as we experience how what we each receive interweaves with the images and messages of our solstice sisters.

The meditations in 2005 dealt with the darkness in the world all around us, the Kali energy of the destroyer. Intuitively we trusted that this energy would eventually lead to rebirth. We felt we needed to be receptive to the Terrible Mother, to honor her outcry. We noted that Sophia, the feminine wisdom, was sad and enraged. What would it take to create a new vision to respond to this darkness? We were reminded that destructive energy creates separation. To counter separation we should remember to think of the word “and.”

We saw a need for cultural therapy, to honor a different culture’s need to find its own developmental way, to refrain from imposing our culture’s values. On the other hand, we felt that we had to speak out so as not to become ill. As a reflection of Sophia’s voice, integrity in the way we live our lives became essential.

We felt the stirring of a rebirth, the Sophia energy alive in the unconscious knowing that it is only a matter of time before it emerges into the collective conscious. This divine feminine sensitivity will become the way of the majority.

Coming through the many expressions of the darkness of this time, we saw specks of light, from without as well as from within. We saw light meeting light, streams of light going out to the universe and back. We saw an opening to a cosmos revealing itself as a richly endowed spiritual capacity.

The shift we anticipate is so deep, so fundamental; it requires a birth of something new through constant attunement or sensitive awareness, vigilance, and bravery. We felt profound love and wonder as witnesses to the universe expressing a new state of human consciousness. These seeds we believe will grow through a feminine consciousness of cooperation and love.
As each woman’s meditation images were reviewed again, we discovered that most of us had some similar image or sense of the way out of the morass. It would be through love and compassion, in different ways:

“The feminine intention is more powerful than the dark morass – (it is) fueled by love, by a quiet passion.”

“We need to be willing to have the Terrible Mother’s power manifest (and) be grateful for her. And then there is a lot about love, loving everywhere and all the time.”

“Learning to love more effectively, precisely, attentively, generously, deeply – even what is hard (to love). To all things that live, (to) become more devoted. Love what lives, all processes of life. This takes willingness and wildness. Love and Live.”

“Where’s the feminine? How can we give up territory with love and compassion instead of fighting? This opens up a vaster possibility.”

“Withholding love (forgetting appreciation) creates dissonance.”

“Religious leaders speak of love while killing and hurting.”

“Need to tolerate the mystery of the new birth that’s happening. Absolute love and wonder – the universe expressing an actual new state.”

“We need to realize, in other words, know in our own experience, the luminosity and openness, the wisdom and compassion, the awakened being that is inseparable from every single molecule in all that is. This allows us to look into the face of suffering, of aggression, of selfishness, to see and feel the constructed nature of our suffering, and spontaneously manifest compassion for all beings, including ourselves.”

In the 2006 Solstice Meditation, the images shifted to an emphasis on manifestation in the world. Meditating in front of a large statue of Avalokiteshvara, the many-headed, many-armed god of compassion, we felt a need to take clear and direct action, to “manifest, manifest, manifest through love, generosity, and beauty,” as our hostess expressed it.

Many had related imagery. “There is a major shift where for years we’ve worked on individual consciousness and now we need to move that up to what does it mean to apply everything we know from (becoming) individualized, to the world and the collective.”

“We have become person/planet.”

One received a question: “If we, this group, really put our energies together in the next two months and were told that we had to make a difference in the world collectively, what would we do?

Another spoke about the need to get clear about what it is we want to bring into being and then form that image and hold it and send out that thought form into the world.

What should that image be? What would the world look like if it could be according to our desire and design? There were many answers that question:

* a world of cooperation and mutual respect
* a balancing of the earth’s energies and the individual feminine and masculine…in cooperation
* remembrance that our sorrow, our ignorance and despair have hidden within those expressions wondrous wisdom and opportunity
* the worst has already happened…we’re now in the darkness before the light…
there has already been a shift
A Buddhist teaching was shared that is also a Sufi teaching, that in order to envision
something into manifestation, it is important to be specific, that each one of us has to
have our own specific vision. The more precise and articulated it is, the more it can
come into being. And sometimes that is very hard work.

Out of our collective processing, we decided to take action, to meditate together on the
full moon of each month. We asked what our collective intention might be, given the
power of very specific individual intentions that have been realized over the years, in part
through our work together. The result was a collective vision:

Arms reaching out, - women's arms reaching out to other women and men, and
other groups of women and men. This network of arms became a kind of Indra's
net*, and at each clasping of hands, - each knot in the net - there was a drop of
water, a liquid crystal refracting all the colors, - a fluid image of a face reflecting
light out to all the other faces, each of which is God.

(* We learned that Indra's net is described in a 2nd century Buddhist sutra. At each nodal
point in the network of Indra there is a pearl or jewel that is a hologram, a totality. To
look into one jewel is to look into reality itself.)

We made a commitment to meditate on this vision on every full moon, and just as we
decided this, the clock struck 6:00, so we decided to let 6:00 (am or pm) be a focus time
for joining our prayers/meditations. For many of us, the full moon seemed an unusual
time for this kind of activity, but we felt strongly that it was useful for us to follow the
guidance we were given.

In the next year, 2008, the full moons are as follows:
January 22, February 21, March 21, April 20, May 20, June 18, July
18, August 16, September 15, October 14, November 13, December 12.

We invite you, our readers, to join us in this meditation and to welcome others to do the
same. Step by step, we can each do our part to transform suffering and ignorance into
compassion, love, and new realization, and to choose in what ways we can each
contribute to visualizing and creating a better world.

The Solstice Sisters: Palden Alioto, Tsonltrim Allione, Jennifer Barker, Hadiya Ellen
Burstyn, Emily Devine, Davine Devalle, Riane Eisler, Jean Houston, Eve Ilsen, Taj
Inayat, Saphira Linden, Susan McTigue, Alice O’Howell, Nancy Roof, Betty
Rothenberger, Peggy Rubin, Marion Woodman, Dhyani Ywahoo