Women's Leadership in the Developing World: Learning from the Past, Envisioning the Future

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Abstract In this study, we aim to reveal women's role of leadership in the developing world. We examine this role according to different time periods, geographies, events and phenomena. Our study is carried out in a descriptive survey model. We have chosen a number of subtitles under which we examine various facets of women's leadership. These subtitles are: Asian Women: Power and Politics, African Women: Leadership in Traditional Societies, Women's Leadership in Peace Movements, Can Asian Philosophical Traditions Teach Us Something About leadership? We have concluded that leaders of tomorrow, especially women, will need to further refine their skills of networking to promote solidarity with and support for other women—especially those who are economically deprived and socially marginalized. In particular, they must take inspiration from the ancient wisdom of the East, in order to fully celebrate and honor the 'feminine' dimensions of leadership.

Keywords Leadership · Women's leadership · Women's power · Developing world · Tomorrow's leaders

1 Introduction

It has been said that Leadership is possibly "the most observed, but least understood phenomena on earth," (Burns 1978: 2). It is a subject of intense discussion in today's world, however it has from times immemorial been an essential part of the human condition. As long as humans have striven to meet collective goals, leaders have been central to the task.

Our yearning for an understanding of enlightened leadership has taken on a new urgency in an increasingly complex and rift-driven world. The twentieth century

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will go down in history as one of the bloodiest—war, terrorism, conflict, ethnic violence. From Somalia to Sarajevo, Sierra Leone to Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Burundi to Congo and more recently Afghanistan and Iraq emerge tales of man's inhumanity to man. Our hopes for peace, stability and a better life for all in a new world order remain largely unfulfilled. We may, therefore, need to approach leadership through a new lens.

Two thousand five hundred years ago Aristophanes' Greek heroine, Lysistrata, frustrated by the failure of men to bring peace between Athens and Sparta, asked the question "can women do better?" It is this very question we must once again ask. Can women succeed in creating a more humane and just world—free from the horrors of war and the anguish of economic want? Are women who give birth and nurture life, less likely to take life carelessly? With their ability to think holistically, can women provide a new and bold vision of leadership in the landscape of today? Can women, in other words, redefine leadership?

I begin with a discussion of the exercise of formal power and authority by women as heads of government. More importantly, an alternative pathway to leadership is found in the grassroots movements, especially in the environmental and peace movements. Women are playing a prominent role in such movements as informal and transformational leaders who effectively inspire and empower many others. Select examples from Asia and Africa illustrate how women are redefining leadership to incorporate greater spirituality and inclusiveness.

2 Asian Women: Power and Politics

My interest in this subject of women's leadership was stimulated by questions raised in the classroom by students and colleagues to whom Asian women were an enigma—tradition bound, socially downtrodden, and subordinate yet often exhibiting considerable power and influence in their societies.

The question that kept coming up was: How can we explain the presence of women leaders in the male dominant societies of Asia, in contrast to the virtual absence of women from top leadership positions in the West? Between 1960 and 1997, there were a total of 24 women heads of Governments of which 16 were from the developing countries (Steihm 1997: 90–91).

As a general rule, women in developing countries hold numerous high ranking offices within their governments and participate more actively in national and international decision making than women from the industrialized nations.

Was there something unique about Asian women that has enabled them to achieve positions of power and participate in leadership roles?

While I recognized that it would be rewarding to compare women's situations in Asia with patterns of feminine participation in other parts of the world, I decided to initially focus on India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and the Philippines, and later added Myanmar (Burma), and Bangladesh. In every one of these countries women have held the highest office in government starting with Sri Lanka, which attracted a

great deal of attention, when in 1960 Sirimavo Bandarnaike became the world's first woman elected head of state. In India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was Prime Minister for 15 years; in Pakistan and the Philippines Benazir Bhutto and Corazon Aquino were at the helm of the governments. I later included Bangladesh and Burma within the scope of my research because in the former, one of the poorest countries in the world, two women have come to the forefront in politics as leaders—Sheikh Hasina Wajed, leader of the Awami League, and Khaleda Zia; and in Burma—Aung San Suu Kyi, who is General Secretary of the National League for Democracy, which is the main contender for power but remains barred from political activity by the junta.

A common thread runs through the political careers of these women leaders of Asia—they achieved power as widows or daughters of powerful political leaders, in other words they inherited power. While this may explain how these women attained power, it does not sufficiently explain their tremendous courage, skills, and ability to hold on to power and their resilience in the face of challenges.

While there is no denying that these women benefited from the myths surrounding their husbands and fathers, they have proven to be leaders in their own rights—not merely carrying forward a legacy, but fashioning and articulating policies that carry their own imprint.

The subordination of women in these societies is reflected in institutions such as dowry, child marriages, arranged marriages, and a clear preference for male children. Women are an endangered species, for pre-natal gender tests are flourishing, and female foetuses are aborted. The birth of a girl is an occasion for gloom, not cheer, for bitterness, not pleasure. Patriarchal traditions and social stigmas make females the 'unwanted sex'. There are fewer women than men in these societies. China has a ratio of 108 men per 100 women, India 107, Pakistan 106 and Bangladesh 102 (U.N. World's Women: Trends and Statistics 2010, p. 3).

The value of a woman is inevitably correlated with her ability to bear children and provide a male heir. Her chastity and virginity is jealously guarded, and segregation of the sexes is the norm. These societies also demand rigid seclusion and subordination of women.

In South Asia, particularly in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, life expectancy and literacy rates for women are low and yet throughout the 1960s, India had more women in the national legislature than the U.S., the U.K. or Japan.

In 2010, more than 20 countries had a woman occupying the highest office as President or Prime Minister. Women face many challenges in achieving representation in governance. One effective way to increase their participation is the employment of mandatory quotas for women, which some countries have instituted. These include Bangladesh, Brazil, Eritrea, Finland, Germany, India, Norway, Rwanda and Tanzania. Developing countries show up prominently among the top ten nations with the highest representation of women in parliaments. In the year 2010, these included: Rwanda (56.3 %), Cuba (48.9 %), Seychelles (43.8 %), Senegal (42.7 %), South Africa (42.3 %) and Nicaragua (40.2 %). The developed nations in this top ten list include Sweden, Finland, Andorra and Iceland (U.N. Statistics on Women 2010).

My investigations suggest that in most of the Asian countries, the struggle to overthrow colonial rule and the ensuing independence movements increased the political awareness and raised the consciousness of women. Participation in freedom struggles provide women the necessary experience in politics which they later successfully employed to gain and keep power.

The clearest evidence for this comes from India, where the large numbers of women who had been confined to their homes became politically conscious and participated actively in the freedom struggle. Indian women in hundreds of thousands marched in processions, attended political sessions, and in defiance of the British courted arrest and occupied leadership roles.

Undoubtedly, the individual most responsible for drawing women into the political arena was Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of India's non-violent struggle for freedom. Gandhi believed that women's nature was particularly suited to the non-violent struggle, for this required not physical strength, but moral courage, spiritual determination, and self-sacrifice. The religious overtones of Gandhi's politics and propaganda were especially attractive to women, for he used religious concepts, terminology, and symbolism which allowed for an equation of political activity with an individual's religious and personal salvation. In 1930 he appointed a woman to lead the independence struggle. This politicization of Indian women took place in the 1930s, giving them a sense of dignity, self-worth, and awareness of their own potential power.

When independence came, women were granted full legal equality with men. The long and bitter struggle to recognize women's rights as citizens, which took place in the West, did not occur in India. I may point out, however, that women participated in the nationalist movement within the conventions and traditions of Indian life. In no way did they challenge male authority at home or outside. There prevailed a spirit of cooperation, not competition, with men. However, there did not come about a fundamental restructuring of society.

To some extent, the experience of other countries is also similar. Women participated in radical nationalist organizations in Sri Lanka in the early part of the twentieth century. Women in the Philippines took an active part in the insurrections against Spanish rule in the 1890s and in the guerrilla movement against the Japanese during World War II. There are similar cases in Burma.

In order to arrive at some understanding of the subject, I examined the religious traditions of these countries to determine what role these traditions might play in promoting positive images of women, to investigate the effects of independence movements, the role of caste and class, and the nature and impact of education.

My research addressed questions such as: what role, if any, do religious traditions play in promoting the images of women? Do the activities of Gods and Goddesses relate to those of humans in the context of social reality? How significant is the presence of female deities in religion? What are the meanings attached to female sexuality? What is the relationship between religious images of female sexuality and the sexuality of women?

Here again it was necessary to pose these questions, since the societies I examined comprised of India, with its predominant tradition of Hinduism,

Bangladesh and Pakistan which are Islamic, Burma and Sri Lanka which are predominantly Buddhist, and the Philippines with its Catholic tradition.

There emerged some similarities. I found that the meanings attached to female sexuality are somewhat different in traditional societies in contrast to the attitude towards sexuality in contemporary Western societies.

In traditional societies, a positive valuation is placed on sexuality; it is auspicious. This auspicious nature of female sexuality, its power to ensure the fertility of the land and people can and does translate into a more positive image of women. It is in India that one can see the clearest evidence of how religious traditions promote powerful images of women, enabling them to exercise real power.

Hindus have had a long experience with feminine supremacy in the cosmic realm. In India we encounter all-powerful female deities. They are the source of learning, wealth, fortune, wisdom, courage, and beauty. These female deities are multi-dimensional and all-powerful. The concept of the female in Hindu ideology presents an essential duality—on the one hand she is bestower of life, fertile and benevolent, on the other, she is aggressive, malevolent, and the destroyer (Wadley 1977: 13–25). The female is first of all 'Shakti'—energy/power—the energizing principle of the Universe. She is also 'Prakriti', nature—undifferentiated matter. This dual character of the Hindu female allows us to understand the rules and role models for women in India (ibid.)

The Goddess Kali, an object of fervent devotion, has come to represent for millions the highest manifestation of the divine. Thus, Hinduism provides a conception of the world in which women are both powerful and dangerous. In contrast to the typical western notion of the inherently passive woman, the Hindu conceptions of the female provides a meaningful avenue for active involvement in non-wifely roles.

Thus, an alternative avenue to attain power is through the medium of religion. This is especially the case in traditional societies like India where the divine is perceived not as an all-powerful, all-encompassing male/father deity but manifests itself in manifold forms. Recently some scholars of religion have explored this fascinating line of thought. In India, the tradition of the "guru" or religious leader is a powerful alternative to the more traditional male spiritual guide. Through a lifetime of austerity, devotion, celibacy, purity and total renunciation, a handful of women have successfully achieved positions of spiritual power, acquiring millions of devoted followers. Such women have employed "the feminine values of care, community, and connexion" (De Napoli 2013: p. 131) to successfully transcend gender roles and become powerful and respected leaders.

An analysis of the career of leading Asian women politicians indicated that while family association played a major role in their success, without a single exception, each on of them enjoyed the advantages of education, wealth, and liberal family backgrounds. Thus, socio-economic class has played a major role in providing opportunities and advantages to upper class elite women in Asia. The availability of household help meant that women of the elite class were not handicapped from remaining active after marriage. However, it is important to remember that professional women often enhance their positions at the expense of their unskilled

cohorts, which may result in a class cleavage. Their family wealth has also enabled these women leaders to avail themselves of the opportunity of higher education. Corazon Aquino as well as Benazir Bhutto and Mrs. Indira Gandhi came from affluent backgrounds, and were educated in elite schools.

In dealing with the status of women, it is also necessary to examine the role of women in economic production. In the rice growing regions of the Philippines and Burma, where women are heavily employed in planting, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting, the status of women was generally high. In Southeast Asia, women dominate the market places as small traders. Their traditional roles as holders of the purse and budget managers gave them an economic independence which could easily translate into power. Thus, control of the economic resources of the society gave women access to legitimate power and therefore authority in the domestic and public spheres.

Thus it appears that association and affiliation with men in power, the advantages of socio-economic class and caste, anti-colonial independence movements which enhanced the political awareness and consciousness of Asian women, and religious traditions provide the key to explaining why select Asian women have successfully wielded power and authority.

A study of this kind which focuses on women and politics must ask the key question: Have these women political leaders contributed anything constructive or unique? Have they provided a new feminine perspective to development and social change? In other words, do women use power differently than men?

Recent feminist theory argues that power is gendered. Women's increased political participation thus opens up the possibility that both politics and policy would change substantially. Women, it is argued, delegate or share authority while men prefer a hierarchical model of power. Preliminary examination of women political leaders in Asia unfortunately does not support this hypothesis.

3   African Women: Leadership in Traditional Societies[1]

Despite Africa's long and rich history, source materials for the study of pre-colonial Africa are scarce and frequently biased. Further, the available sources tell us little about the lives of women. Their accomplishments are overlooked, neglected or misrepresented. The basic assumption in this literature about African women is that they are backward, oppressed and marginal.

In dealing with the place of women in African societies it is essential to stress the incredible diversity of this vast continent and its long history extending back to the beginnings of humankind. African societies are not homogenous. There is cultural,

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[1]This section is based on a paper presented at the World History Association of Texas Conference, St. Edwards University, Austin, Texas by Bhatt and Sleboda, February 1997.

religious, ethnic, linguistic, and political diversity and consequently any general-izations offered concerning women must be made with extreme caution.

Traditional African societies did not make a clear distinction between the secular and the sacred, nor was there a clear separation made between activities that were political, religious, economic, and social. In societies such as these where the demarcation between the public and private realms, between religious and profane worlds are blurred, women may have greater opportunities to assert power and to shape and control their own lives and those of others in the community (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974: 23–24). Furthermore, while women in pre-colonial Africa lived under systems of patriarchy and were structurally subordinate to men, they were effective in developing numerous strategies for dealing with their exclusion from formal sources of power. They played a critical role in their economies and societies as primary producers of food and as reproducers of children.

Despite the predominantly patriarchal nature of societies and the resultant exclusion of women from formal positions of power and authority, the African continent provides numerous examples of women exercising real powers. In patriarchies which promote the ideology of female subordination, women are at a distinct disadvantage in competing for power and prestige. However, in societies which do not make distinction between the domestic and public realms, women find different avenues by means of which they become powerful.

In dealing with the subject of women's power and involvement in political activity, it is essential to go beyond Western notions of politics as participation in electoral activity. Traditional societies often do not make a clear distinction between political activity on one hand and religious, social and economic activity. Thus women in traditional African societies asserted their power in a number of different ways. As Jean O'Barr has aptly stated, "The modes of political power utilized by African women, individually or in groups, include indirect ones, such as with-drawal, evocation of the supernatural, or manipulation, through males, as well as direct ones such as selecting leaders, holding elected or appointed office, and wielding resources for desired ends." (O'Barr 1982: 141).

The earliest civilization on the African continent—that of ancient Egypt—pro-vides us with fascinating examples of women who occupied the highest office in the kingdom, that of the Pharaoh. Queen Hatshepsut during the New Kingdom ruled over Egypt for nearly 22 years. From West Africa specifically we have documented evidence of numerous women who served as chiefs, queens and decision makers. This is particularly the case among the Akan and Ga of Ghana and the Yoruba and Igbo in Nigeria. In these areas women enjoyed high status and considerable eco-nomic independence. The high status among the Akan was partly the result of matrilineal patterns of descent and inheritance. Since descent was traced through the female line and children claimed membership in the kinship group through their mothers, women enjoyed respect and status. The Queen Mother among the Asante of Ghana was responsible for the fertility and spiritual well-being of the entire kin group and had her own court, palace and independent source of wealth.

In many parts of Africa dual-sex political systems were the norm in which women had absolute control over women's affairs. For example, among the Igbo of

eastern Nigeria, the title of Omu was granted to the woman who had total authority over all women's activities. Among the Yoruba, the Iyalode had full jurisdiction over all women. Among the Mende of Sierra Leone, women served as chiefs just like men and could achieve this status through ability and astute political skills. A striking example of this is Madam Yoko, a ruler of the Kpa Mende Confederacy who came to power in the 19th century in the region now known as Sierra Leone. Both oral traditions as well as documentary evidence testify to the fact that women in Sierra Leone enjoyed high office as lineage heads, chiefs and powerful heads of secret societies (Little 1951: The Mende 195–196). A 1914 listing of paramount chiefs in Sierra Leone indicates 15 % of Mende chiefdoms were ruled by women.

Among the Mende, women played powerful roles in society and wielded power in a number of different ways. As wives and mothers their power was derived from their ability to provide a scarce resource—children for their husband's partilineage. Mende head wives also had authority, for they organized the co-wives, clients, wards, and slaves for agriculture work. A chief's prestige, social status and economic wealth was dependent on the organizational skills and the abilities of the head wife. Moreover, a powerful secret society like the Sande could be used by astute women as a vehicle to enhance their power as well as wealth in society. The Sande had a monopoly on transforming girls into marriageable women and women officials of Sande collected fees for the initiation services. Thus a woman like Madam Yoko used her position in the Sande society to create alliances and an independent power base for herself. She also used her abilities, intelligence, skills in diplomacy, her charms and sexual powers to become a paramount chief in 1884, respected and feared both by her followers as well as the British colonial authorities, who held her in high esteem (Hoffer 1974: 173–187).

During the colonial period, contrary to generally held beliefs, women were not mere passive onlookers, but effectively utilized their collective powers and sense of solidarity to oppose unjust demands and policies of the colonial powers. Thus they mobilized female power, and employed traditional sanctions to oppose unpopular policies. Examples include the Kikuyu Women's demonstration in the 1920s in which they challenged the power and guns of the colonial British authorities in Kenya. The Aba riots in Nigeria, popularly known as the Women's War, is another case in point. The immediate provocation was the government's taxation policy which was seen as a direct affront to the women. Thousands of Igbo and Ibibio (S. E. Nigeria) women protested against colonial authority by demonstrating, destroying government buildings and harassing government agents. More than 100 women were killed or seriously wounded in these demonstrations. A third example is of the Kom in Cameroon, known as the Anlu uprising of 1958–1959. In this incident over 7000 women, dressed in men's attire, used traditional sanctions such as insults, ridicule, derisive songs and profanities and successfully seized control of tribal affairs, compelling the administration to reverse their policies. In all three of these examples, women assumed male roles and appearances and employed traditional sanctions which they adapted to the altered circumstances (Wipper 1985).

There has not been sufficient acknowledgement of the vital role African women have played in the economic sphere. It was scholars like Ester Boserup who first drew our attention in the 1970s to the predominant role of women as subsistence farmers and as primary producers of food. Boserup referred to the African continent as "the region of female farming par excellence" (Boserup 1970: 16). Virtually in every region of sub-Saharan Africa, women have traditionally been and continue today to be responsible for providing food for their families.

Further, African women have played an essential role not merely in the production but also the processing and marketing of food. In societies of West Africa such as among the Yoruba and the Ashanti, 80 % of all market trade was in the hands of women. This crucial role of women as food producers and market traders gave African women considerably greater control over wealth and an independence and status that was quite unique.

African women were also valued for their reproductive roles. In traditional African societies, it was labor not land which was the scarce commodity, and since women gave birth to children, their worth was recognized.

The imposition of colonial rule in the late nineteenth century brought fundamental changes to the pre-colonial economies and frequently proved detrimental and damaging to the interests of women. The imposition of taxes by colonial governments forced men to migrate to the administrative centers and the urban and mining areas. Large scale and long term migration left women to care for the children and the elderly, without the support of the menfolk who had earlier helped them with clearing the land and other heavy tasks. This increased their workload, while leaving them poorer.

Western concepts of private property and land ownership which gave land rights to individuals benefited men, who increasingly were granted titles to land. Women who had enjoyed greater rights and access to land under communal systems of land ownership now were further marginalized and became more dependent on their menfolk. The new economic opportunities which became available during the colonial period were largely controlled and co-opted by men. Additionally, economic policies instituted by colonial governments dramatically altered the context in which African household and kinship relations functioned.

It needs to be stated that even in the post-independence period, women still bear the brunt of feeding their families. Since they are self-employed, their work falls in the category of the informal labor force, thus, their significant contributions to the economic well-being of their families and communities is often disregarded or overlooked and not adequately rewarded.

In pre-colonial Africa, despite the prevalence of patriarchy, women were indispensable to the orderly functioning of society. They were accorded respect and given a high valuation as symbols of fertility—both of the land and the people, a symbolic role which nevertheless gave them respect and power. Female sexuality was regarded as creative, powerful and potentially dangerous. A positive valuation was placed on female sexuality and the creative powers of women. Thus, women as mothers and reproducers were essential for the survival of the family, lineage and

the community. In traditional societies children were greatly desired since they ensured the religious, spiritual and economic well-being of the family.

In traditional societies the rites of passage represent the transition from one stage of life to another, and therefore puberty, initiation and marriage are important landmarks in the life both of the individual and the community. In women's initiation rituals and ceremonies such as those found among the Sande or the Kikuyu, women were both participants and leaders, and many women of ability used these to exercise real power in the community. These societies also effectively served as a training ground for women's leadership and a means of educating women and imparting the knowledge, values and skills necessary for them in their societies.

The basis of women's associations in pre-colonial Africa included kinship, sex, age and commonly shared interests. On the African continent, there appears to be a long tradition of female support groups which pre-date colonial rule. Traditionally, women engaged in cooperative efforts and organized themselves for common ends. They responded to threats or injustices through collective action and often used traditional sanctions to impose their will.

When discussing religion in traditional African societies, it is necessary to understand that the notion of religion in its Western sense does not accurately describe the African views of the sacred and spiritual. Unlike in the modern world, religion in traditional African societies enters into every sphere of life and is not an isolated institution. The universe is a "religious arena" in which nature is filled with religious significance (Obiego 1984: 108). In most African societies, no distinction is recognized between the sacred and the secular, nor between the human and spirit worlds; the dichotomies between the sacred and the profane and spiritual and material are invalidated.

In most societies, the complementarity of male and female is emphasized, as it is believed in many creation myths that the union of the sky (male) and the earth (female) was responsible for the creation of all life. Because women possess life-giving abilities, they are often associated with the earth and its generative powers, which explains the presence of powerful earth-mother goddesses in many African societies. In addition to the prevalence of powerful goddesses in traditional African religions, there exists a great deal of feminine imagery in many African myths, specifically in creation stories.

In many African societies, women were able to exercise power and leadership through religious roles, as ritual specialists. Because of women's ability to create life (which is perceived as divine and mysterious), they are often associated with the spirit world, and are considered sacred merely by the fact that they are women. As a result of their procreative abilities, women are believed to possess an innately sacred nature.

As ritual specialists, women are able to act as mediums, priestesses, healers, diviners, members of spirit possession cults and secret women's societies, witches, shrine caretakers, and wives of deities or spirits. These roles often overlap, as is the case in some societies where women who are mediums are also priestesses, healers, and diviners. Because of the strong taboos associated with menstruating women in most societies, however, many of these roles are open only to menopausal women,

who have passed childbearing age. These elder women are considered to be "like men" because they are no longer able to give birth, nor do they menstruate.

One of the roles that is most often played by women is that of the medium. Mediums are those persons who serve as intermediaries between the divine and human realms and bring important messages from the spirit world to the human community. There are numerous examples of women acting as spirit mediums throughout the African continent. In East Africa, spirit medium cults centered on legendary heroes known as Cwezi, spirits of former kings or legendary heroes, and these were dominated by women. In these cults, women had the opportunity to rise above their generally subordinate status through their roles as mediums (Berger 1976: 158). In Burundi, Mukakiranga, wife and medium of the spirit Kiranga, played a major role in the great national ceremony and annual spiritual renewal of the Rundi kingdom (Hackett 1994: 76). As mediums, women often were able to attain significant status within their societies and to step out of their prescribed roles. Some women mediums practically achieved the power and status of queens.

The existence of powerful female deities is very common in traditional African religions. God is spoken of in strictly female terms among the Ijo of the Niger Delta. Clearly her role as the creator and primordial mother is emphasized.

In many traditional African societies, the divinities and spirits have priests and priestesses dedicated to their worship. The role of priestess is a means through which women are able to exercise power through religion in their societies. In Yoruba religious practice, women tend to predominate as officials in cults devoted to female deities or deities with both male and female aspects.

As diviners, women seek "to interpret the mysteries of life, to convey the messages of the gods, to give guidance in daily affairs and to settle disputes, to uncover the past and to look into the future" and also have the "skill of penetrating the universe of signs" (quoted in Mbon 1987: 11–12). As messengers who link the human and spirit worlds and as representatives of deities, diviners are indispensable in the context of traditional African societies, and are consulted at all crucial occasions and before making important decisions. Through a mystical death-resurrection experience, that is, through their contact with the spiritual world of the dead, these women acquire the ability to convey to humans the messages of the spirits.

Above are only some examples of the ritual roles that women carry out in traditional African religions. Clearly, although most women may be barred from positions of political authority, they are able to obtain and exercise tremendous power and influence from their roles as ritual specialists. Additionally, as the realms of politics and religion are inextricably interconnected in traditional African societies, women's religious roles allow them to wield power in the political realm. In addition, the existence of powerful mother goddesses in many African societies evidences the respect that women receive for their procreative abilities and fertility, both of the land and of the people. As a result of their close association with the earth, the generative powers of nature, and their links to the ancestors, women are the link between nature and culture, between the spirit world and the living community. In this capacity, women in traditional Africa are indispensable to the perpetuation and well being of their societies.

4 Women's Leadership in Grassroots Movements in the Developing World

Women leaders and their exercise of political power as heads of states indicated that family connections, birth, educational attainments and socio-economic status are all contributing factors in achieving formal political power. However, there are different pathways to leadership. Social and environmental movements all over the world are providing new opportunities for women to create their own spaces for political participation and the exercise of power. Their social activism and involvement in so-called "grass roots movements" enable women to learn new political skills, to discover their own latent powers and challenge the stereotypes of women as 'docile', 'politically passive', and 'apolitical'. These grass roots movements, many of which are led by women offer a new vision of women's power and leadership. They differ dramatically from traditional forms of leadership in that: (a) such movements tend to be ideologically and structurally far more democratic and less hierarchical. They tend to be more inclusive and allow for many voices to be heard; (b) in such movements there is an intersection of religion and politics and consequently spirituality is interwoven with passionate environmental beliefs, and a commitment to social justice and, thus, women's spiritual and intuitive connection to nature is also recognized; and (c) such movements and alternative forms of organizing often succeed in challenging traditional gender roles and established male hierarchies, and lastly, (d) grassroots movements provide avenues for self-expression and self-discovery.

A number of these grassroots movements arose as resistance to and struggle against the degradation and depletion of natural resources—land, water, and trees—resources which sustain millions of women. Women, especially in the developing world, experience environmental problems primarily as livelihood crises. Out of sheer desperation and the imperatives of survival, ordinary women are contesting the dominant discourses of development. In Kenya, Wangari Mathaai spearheaded the Greenbelt Movement which aimed at preventing the deforestation by launching a popular movement to plant trees which sustain rural women. To date over 75 million trees have been planted in Africa. In Huanca Bamba in Peru and Cuenca in Ecuador, for over ten years, poor women in the mountainous regions have waged opposition to mining companies who want to extract copper, silver, gold and zinc from the mountains. These women are responding to environmental concerns but also frame their activism in spiritual terms. They invoke the indigenous deity of the earth—'Pachamama' or mother earth and reaffirm their belief in the mountains as sacred sites in Andean cosmology.

4.1 Medha Patkar and the Narmada Bachao Andolan

In 1985, Medha Patkar was a relatively unknown social activist and researcher who came to the Narmada river valley in India to study the impact of the construction of

a mega dam—known as the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the river Narmada. This river flows through three Indian states—Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The multi-billion dollar project was to be funded by the Indian government with massive financial aid from the World Bank and other international donors. The proponents of the project promoted it arguing that when completed, the Project would bring economic prosperity and agricultural development to the regions providing electricity and pure drinking water to over forty million people. However, Patkar and her growing number of followers were dismayed and horrified that little consideration had been given to the impact of the dam on the more than one million people directly affected including those displaced and dispossessed of their lands and homes. From this outrage against injustice towards the weak and voiceless, emerged and evolved the activism and leadership of Patkar who became the face of a growing grassroots and environmental movement which gained a large following nationally and internationally. Patkar has led the movement for over three decades now—organizing, protesting and resisting. Along with her followers, she endured intimidation, police brutality, jail terms and hunger fasts. As a leader, Patkar embodied the qualities of a 'transformative leader' who inspires countless others to join the movement to achieve a common goal. They have been effective in drawing attention of the international community and environmentalists of the necessity to review the environmental impact of the Dam. After engaging in an independent comprehensive review, and the release of a detailed report, the World Bank withdrew its financial support of the Project in March 1993. Consequently, the Government of India also established a high level panel to review the impact of the Dam.

While the Narmada Bachao Andolan did not succeed in preventing the construction of the dam, Patkar's grass root movement has a created a political discourse centered on the injustices against poor, indigenous and displaced populations. It has demonstrated that a popular grass roots movement can become a powerful political and social force. Initially, this movement appeared to lack formal organization and structure, but it proved remarkably effective in mobilizing hundreds and thousands of people.

4.2 The Chipko Movement

One of the most acclaimed, eco-feminist movements is known as "Chipko" which literally means 'hugging the trees'. This movement originated in the Himalayan foothills of India and represents grass roots activism and organizing by women to oppose the cutting of trees by logging companies. In the 1970s, the government had auctioned off a large tract of the forest to the Simon Company, a sporting goods manufacturer. Women in these regions have for centuries depended on the forest for firewood for fuel and other needs of daily survival. When the loggers came with their bulldozers, they encountered hundreds of women and children each encircling and hugging a tree to prevent it from being cut. These illiterate peasant women realized their own power and soon the movement spread to other villages. They

endured intimidation and threats of violence, but prevailed. In the long run, women's empowerment also had consequences for a rethinking of gender and power relationships.

The above examples embody leadership which is 'transformative', as it enables and empowers marginalized peoples to bring about meaningful change. The 'Chaos Theory' may provide valuable insights to understand how people's movements evolve into effective agents of change. Since the 1970s there has been considerable discussion and scholarly focus on the Chaos Theory and how it relates to the understanding and discourse on leadership. Until that time 'chaos' was defined and perceived as 'disorder', 'randomness', and 'confusion'; however, drawing heavily from physics and the laws of nature, a number of scholars have suggested that chaos is the organizing principle in the Universe (Burns 1978: 42–56). Similarly, what appears as random and lacking order often represents creative forces out of which emerges a new order and change which can transform individuals and societies. Burns goes on to state that "the function of leadership is to identify a desired reality and facilitate the necessary transformation of the group as it moves forward." (Ibid.). A leader must be able to articulate a new vision; he or she serves as a catalyst who is capable of recognizing the needs and aspirations of their followers and enable them to realize their goals, thereby empowering them. This approach moves away from the traditional top-down leadership style and instead makes the leader a mere facilitator. Thus, a leader must have the attributes of flexibility, adaptability and be able to inspire and articulate a collective vision so the followers move from self interest to the larger interests of the group, an identification with the common good. As Brafman states, "When you give people freedom, you get chaos, but you also get incredible creativity…Because everyone tries to contribute to the community you get a great variety of expression…" (quoted in Ofulla 2013, p. 438).

5   Women's Leadership in Peace Movements

Traditionally men are identified with war and soldiering while women are associated with peace and mothering. War has generally been viewed as a male pastime. It is men who make war, men who participate in killing and being killed and men who negotiate peace (Peach 1994). Women have been excluded from involvement in decisions pertaining to both war and peace. It is nevertheless true that women are the ones who are most deeply affected by war and often its worst victims. Women and children suffer disproportionately in times of war and armed conflict as victims of violence and rape, as mothers and widows who have lost their sons and husbands, as refugees displaced from their homes and communities, struggling to make a living and rebuilding their shattered lives. It is estimated between 1990 and 1999, the world witnessed 118-armed conflicts in the course of which more than six million people were killed (Smith 2004, p. 2).

At such a time, it is necessary to employ a gendered perspective on war and peace and to incorporate new and fresh ways of dealing with peace and conflict

resolution. As we look back at the events of the last half a century, it is evident that in contemporary civil wars and conflicts, violence was not limited to the battle-fields, but rather extended to the homes, villages and communities, affecting and disrupting the lives of people—especially women and children. Thus, it becomes imperative to ask how women and children are affected by violent conflict. Furthermore, in such situations peace cannot be imposed from above, but rather, the burden of peacemaking and peacekeeping must be shared by the larger community, which includes women, who can play a crucial role in the effort. By and large, it is the men who sit at the peace table, who are vested with formal responsibility for conflict resolution. However, recent evidence from conflict areas suggests that women play a vital role in making and keeping peace, in shaping civil society and promoting democratic tendencies. It is crucial that the voices of women be heard at the peace table, that their contributions and efforts be recognized.

From the beginning of time, all over the world, women have been active in resisting war and militarization and striving to rebuild their homes and communities which have been torn asunder and ravaged by war and violence.

In this section, I examine the peacekeeping efforts of women in selected countries of Asia and Africa—specifically India, Rwanda and Japan and their efforts to oppose militarization and promote sustainable peace. I begin with the premise that when we talk of peace—we mean not merely the absence of war. "Peace….is not only a state, but also a culture that needs to be developed in time. A culture of peace includes the concept of human rights, democracy, social justice, protection for the weak, solidarity and, last but not least, gender equality." (Debra Yatim quoted in Budianta 2000, p. 5).

It should also be stressed that women by virtue of their biological roles do not have an innate propensity for peace. The mere fact that they are the creators of life, mothers who bring forth life and nurture it, does not in itself imply that women have always championed and defended peace. Women's response to war and conflict is neither homogenous nor uniform. As Manchanda points out, their responses are shifting, contextual, sporadic, and most often spontaneous (Manchanda 2001).

An analysis of women leaders in formal position of power who have occupied the highest office in their countries suggests that they had little or no impact in promoting the cause of peace. It is at the local levels that women have been most effective in peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts.

5.1   Japan

Japanese women have generally been perceived as feminine, docile, obedient, passive and apolitical. Their primary role is understood to be that of mother and wife and subsequently they are relegated to the domestic realm. Despite this pre-vailing image, women in Japan have played a vital part in opposing war, milita-rization and nuclearisation, not only since World War II but as early as the late 19th century., Meiji policies led to the awakening of political consciousness and

awareness among women. The growing spirit of nationalism inspired by the slogan 'jingo ni ochi nai' (Japan should be second to none) led to militarization and imperialism in the first few decades of the 20th century, culminating in the Japanese invasion of China and the Second World War.

There were a number of Japanese women who opposed war and militarization in the Meiji period. They came from socialist, anarchist, labor and Christian movements. They protested and defied the Peace Regulations of 1887, which banned mass meetings and the Public Peace Police Law of 1900 which prohibited women, minors and members of the armed forces from engaging in political activity. Women were active in socialist groups such as Heiminsha (Consumers' Society) and labor organizations. Until recently, most of the writings of women's political activities in the first few decades of the 20th century focused on the Seitosha (the Bluestocking Society). There also exist studies and profiles of individual Seito members such as Hiratsuka Raicho and Yosano Akiko.

Japanese women did not succeed in attaining full political rights until after the Second World War. Consequently, they were not able to effectively participate in shaping policies despite the efforts of Socialist, Anarchist and Marxist women who endeavored to bring about the repeal of Public Peace Police Law.

In January 1929, the Proletarian Women's League was established as a result of merger of several women's organizations. This organization under the leadership of Sakai Magara opposed and criticized Japan's imperialism and attempted to mobilize women to oppose Japan's aggressive encroachment into China. They opposed militarism in the following statement:

> War is not a matter of individual likes and dislike. It is something forced on us by the ruling class. For this reason it is no use saying to our husbands, brothers and children 'do not give up your life for the Emperor.' We must say to the promoters of war: 'Do not wage war! Do not kill proletarians for the sake of your own profits!! (Quoted in Mackie 2003, p. 100).

Several feminist leaders spoke up against Japanese control of Manchuria. These included Ichikawa Fusae who supported the pacifist view that international conflicts should be resolved through diplomatic, not military means. Ichikawa linked pacifism with maternal instincts and women's peace loving nature—a viewpoint disputed vehemently by radical feminists like Yamakawa Kikue.

Radical women like Hiratsuka Raicho and Takamure Itsue criticized women's groups for their failure to oppose Japan's imperialism. Anarchists like Yagi Akiko, however, employed a far more radical stand when she described Manchukuo (Manchuria) as a slave state which had merely replaced one invader with another. She appealed for a more concerted opposition to Japan's imperialism. It appears that while a handful of women raised their voices against militarism and imperialism of Japan in the pre-war years, they had little impact due to the repressive power of the Meiji state and the constraints placed on women's political participation. Radical women like Kanno Suga and Sakai Magara were imprisoned for their activities and the former became the first woman to be executed for treason in modern Japan.

The bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima and the ensuing devastation and suffering provided another opportunity for women to protest and organize against

war and nuclearisation. The occupation of Japan and the New Constitution which granted women equality and reaffirmed Japan's commitment to peace provided new opportunities for women's activism. The years from the end of World War II to the present have witnessed numerous examples of women's opposition to war and militarism and their participation in social movements. Motherhood, which is frequently the site for the subjugation and oppression of women, was appropriated and transformed by Japanese women to become an instrument of liberation. Various women's organizations such as the Federation of Housewives (Shufuren), along with the League of Women Voters, labor unions and communist-backed New Japan Women's Association have championed the cause of peace, along with their struggle to oppose pollution and high prices.

Individual women leaders like Kato Shidzue, a prominent activist, social reformer and women's rights advocate who served as a member of the upper house in the Diet expressed the sentiment of the many Japanese women when she stated that Japanese women would never vote for the militarists. She reiterated their support for the permanent abolishment of war. In 1954 the Bikini incident led to the mobilization of women against nuclear power. Peasant women in the Kitafuji area—the site of a U.S. base, organized the Shibokusa Mothers' Group to demand an end to U.S. military presence. During the decades of the 60s when the testing of nuclear bombs became a contentious issue in Japanese politics—women once again joined the ranks of those who opposed U.S. presence and nuclear tests. Housewives in Suginami district of Tokyo and elsewhere campaigned to end the use of nuclear weapons. 200,000 signatures were collected in the "No More Hiroshima" protests. Women like Kobayashi Hiro of Nagasaki also demanded compensation and support for the 'Hibakusha,' the victims of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Japanese women also took their anti-nuclear campaign beyond Japan, and participated in the 1955 International Congress of Mothers where Hiratsuka Raicho called for the solidarity of women in her slogan "Mothers of the World—Let's join hands." The 1970s saw the birth of a large number of women's groups—"uman ribu" (women's lib) who championed specific issues and made their voices heard in the political arena.

It is evident that these various peace movements in Japan in the 20th century have grown our of their wartime experiences. Women's participation and activism in these movements emerged and evolved from their perception of their roles as housewives and mothers responsible for the health and well-being of their families and communities. A number of Japanese women emerged as leaders in the anti-war movements.

5.2   India

India has been the battleground for violence and ethnic conflict that has intensified since the partition of India in 1947 and the birth of Pakistan and India.

The politicization of Indian women took place during India's struggle for Independence against British rule. Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance—"Satyagraha" was ideally suited to appeal to women. Gandhi's unique contribution was to take the symbol of motherhood (often the site for domination and oppression of women) and to exalt and elevate it and transform it into a powerful instrument for the liberation of countless women. Skillfully employing feminine imagery, he helped Indian women reconcile the private and public domains and mobilized them for political activity and action. Consequently, women in India gained political awareness and experience in the decades prior to independence. It was a woman—Sarojini Naidu, who was selected by Gandhi to lead India's freedom struggle. She was also his spokesperson in South Africa against the white-dominated government.

Since 1948 when a fundamentalist Hindu fanatic assassinated Gandhi, Hindu-Muslim conflicts have erupted periodically resulting in unprecedented violence, brutal killings and religious animosity, the most recent examples of which are the Hindu-Muslim riots in Gujarat in the last decade and a half. Gujarat, which was the birthplace of Gandhi, has become the battleground for religious conflict. The lives of thousands of Muslims and Hindus have been disrupted and destroyed in these conflicts. Countless men, women and children have been murdered brutally and many more have been displaced. This has weakened the democratic and secular base of India. What roles did women play in this conflict? Did women participate in peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts? Was Gandhi's message of peace and religious unity completely forgotten?

I went to Gujarat seeking some answers and explanations for this and also to identify and document some of the efforts made by women to promote peace and communal harmony. While it cannot be disputed that women along with men participated in the ethnic violence during these riots, in the aftermath of the riots, women's organizations are playing a vital role as peace builders and peacekeepers. One such organization is Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG). Like many other organizations, their philosophy is based on the premise that the best hope for undermining the Hindu-Muslim tensions and ethnic violence is not at the interstate or governmental level but at the 'people to people' level. They believe strongly that communal harmony can be best achieved by promoting extended interface and communication between ordinary citizens. The peace building activities of AWAG have focused on bringing Hindu and Muslim women together—most of whom are survivors of the riots—to see the commonality of their lives and to help them realize that they are victims of male dominance and patriarchy. AWAG sponsors workshops for these women called 'manavta bachao shibir' (workshops to save humanity) where they are encouraged to give expressions to their feelings, emotions, fears and concerns. Participants increasingly become aware of the shared interests and common concerns such as safety of their children and families, inability to leave their homes in times of riots, loss of income and means of livelihood, gender-based violence, scarcity of basic needs of survival and disruption of their daily lives. The next phase of the workshops is to provide practical training in how to prevent riots and counter the ideology of hate. AWAG also provides

opportunities for income generation during times of riots and psychological counseling to riot victims. Once some measure of trust and confidence has been developed, these women are encouraged to send their adolescent daughters to participate in workshops and social activities thereby breaking the barriers of religious separateness and promoting empowerment of young women. These efforts strive to create a new generation of women leaders who can combat inter-religious violent conflicts.

There are other innovative strategies that have emerged to promote sustainable peace. One such group is Women Shanti Sena (literally women's peace force). This organization requires its members to undergo a week's rigorous training in peace, democracy, non-violence and conflict resolution. Its membership is growing and comprises women from villages, many of whom are illiterate and poor. The goal of this organization was to create 50,000 actively trained peace warriors by 2005 (see Off Our Backs, March 2003).

Elsewhere in India, women are using the medium of street theatre and music to convey their ideas of peace, communal harmony and opposition to armed conflict, militarization and nuclear power. These are particularly effective tools to communicate with an audience which is largely uneducated and illiterate.

5.3   Rwanda

Rwanda, one of the poorest nations in the world experienced one of the most devastating and brutal civil war for a period of four years in the early 1990s followed by a genocide of nearly a million people. This ethnic conflict between the Tutsis and the Hutus ravaged the country economically and displaced millions. Women and children suffered the most as victims of rape, violence and displacement. However, in the after-math of the civil war, it is the women who have played a leading role in the reconstruction and rebuilding of the social fabric of the society. In the post-conflict society, women shouldered the primary burden of economic and physical reconstruction. They constituted 57 % of the adult working population and produced 70 % of the country's agricultural output (Hamilton 2000: 1). Rwandan women were at the forefront of peace negotiations and peace building activities. Women's active participation in the rebuilding of their nation is reflected in the fact that since the election of 2008, Rwanda is the first nation in the world to have a majority of women in the legislature. This went from 18 % of women before the conflict to 56 % in 2008. This remarkable achievement was made possible by the 2003 Rwandan constitution which mandated a quota of 30 % reserved seats for women in the legislature as well as a commitment to enforce the Security Council Resolution 1325 which called for women's active involvement in post-conflict reconstruction.

Other more recent examples of women leaders who have championed the cause of peace include Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia who successfully contested the Presidential election in Liberia in 2006 on a platform to bring peace, social justice, economic progress and gender equality.

In Iran, Shirin Ebadi, a relentless champion for justice and the rule of law emerged as an advocate for democracy, human rights and women's equality. For her life-long efforts, Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace in 2003.

All these women leaders have addressed issues of oppression and injustice. They have fiercely defended their own autonomy and resisted being coopted by the ruling party. Theirs has been a quest not to gain personal power but rather to promote social justice and build democratic institutions. Thus, when it comes to the subject of women and war, it is essential to recognize the complexity and contradictions inherent in many of our assumptions (Elshtain et al. 1987). We need to move beyond the prevailing and popular notion that women by virtue of their biological makeup have an innate and natural propensity for peace. The association of masculinity with war and femininity with peace is also misleading and often inaccurate. From the dawn of human civilization, women have been ardent defenders of peace as well as proud and patriotic workers who have sent their sons to war.

As in the case of Japanese women and movements like 'Women in Black', or the 'Madres de Plaza de Mayo', women in their role as mothers have transformed motherhood into an instrument of liberation and protest against injustice. Their effective group organization and resolute persistence in demanding answers concerning the 'disappeared' has spread to other countries.

Cross-cultural studies of women and war suggest that women suffer disproportionately in times of war and political instability. They are most often the victims of rape, assault and violence. War creates millions of grieving widows and sorrowful mothers. Beyond the physical violence and emotional trauma, the majority of the refugees are also women. It is also true that war and nuclearisation inevitably results in a shift in armament and weaponry. Fewer resources are available for food, education, healthcare and the eradication of poverty. The development of nuclear weapons and military power often has been achieved by increased social and economic costs borne mainly by women, children and the poor. Furthermore, the valorization of ideologies and policies which promote military power results in the valorization of ideologies that justify and perpetuate the domination and subjugation of women.

Women, therefore, must take the lead in opposing war and championing peace, for war is detrimental to their best interests and the survival of their children and families. Research on women, war and peace must go beyond the metaphor of the sorrowful and grieving mother and wife—the victims of war, and instead see them as powerful agents of change and keepers of peace. As Kofi Annan, the former secretary general of the U.N. stated—"For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and in the societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls." (cited in Universal Federation International 2013 speech by Akpan U)

6 Can Asian Philosophical Traditions Teach Us Something About Leadership?

In this section, I propose to examine a few select philosophical traditions from the East to determine if they can enrich our understanding of Leadership. These ancient traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Hinduism are still prevalent in China and India. Do they have any relevance in the 21st century? Can they contribute something meaningful to our contemporary ideals of Leadership?

Confucianism and Taoism

Confucianism and Taoism represent two strands in Chinese philosophic tradition. Both of these ancient systems have something to offer and contribute to our understanding of Leadership, especially as it pertains to the Chaos Theory and its application to leadership.

Confucius was a philosopher, sage and teacher who was born more than 2500 years ago. His teachings represent the fundamental body of thought which has shaped Chinese civilization for over 2500 years. Confucius lived in an age of warfare, conflict and political instability and his teachings were primarily directed towards creating a stable state and society characterized by morality, harmony, ethical conduct and the emphasis on humanism. According to Confucius, the only constant in the world is "change" itself, an idea not unlike that found in the chaos theory. In this world of change, diversity and complexity, the leader is called upon to provide harmony and stability. This is best achieved by establishing a government based on moral example. If the leader is moral, virtuous and ethical, the subjects will follow suit. This applies both to the state and the family. According to Confucius, leaders must be like the 'wind' and the followers like 'grass'. The grass will always bend in the wind. Another important aspect of Confucian teaching is the emphasis on "humanism" and relationality. Confucius recognized society as comprising of a web of human relationships. Thus, the individual exists only in the context of society—the family, community and the state. Within such a structure, order and harmony are preserved by conforming to humaneness (what the Chinese call 'jen') and 'li' or proper etiquette and behavior.

While Confucianism can contribute to leadership theory, it nonetheless reinforced and perpetuated the patriarchal tradition of ancient China and privileged traditional masculine values. More significant and relevant are the ideas in Taoism, which represents the mystical tradition in China. Taoism is said to have been founded by a man named Lao Tzu in approximately 604BC (Lao-Tzu 1985). Little is known about this legendary figure, except his teachings contained in the text Tao Te Ching which remains the basic text of Taoist thought. The word 'tao' literally stands for the "way" or path, the way to ultimate reality, the underlying principle governing the Universe. The Tao is incomprehensible, and can neither be perceived nor conceived.

Taoism employs a holistic approach in its approach to the origin and order of the Universe. Taoism stipulates that all things emanate from nothing (the void). A central concept in Taoism is "wu-wei"—a concept that translates as 'non-action',

but which implies pure effectiveness. Applying this concept to leadership, Taoists contend that the ideal ruler/leader rules without being known to rule. As Huston Smith states "Without lifting a finger overtly the ruler who was adept in 'stillness' could order whole people into his mystical—moral power." (Smith 1991: 103). This Taoist text states:

> The sage relies on action-less activity;
>
> Puts himself in the background; but is always to the fore.
>
> Remains outside; but is always there.
>
> Is it not just because he does not strive
>
> For any personal end
>
> That all his personal ends are fulfilled?
>
> (Tao Te Ching 1891; Waley 1994)

Taoists use a number of metaphors to explain the Tao—such as water, the empty vessel, the womb, the uncarved block of wood; however the natural phenomenon they believe bears the most resemblance to Tao was 'water'. Taoists never tire of invoking the symbolism of water which adapts itself to its surroundings and seeks out the lowest places. They point out repeatedly that water supports all kinds of objects and carries them effortlessly and state:

> The supreme good is like water
>
> Which nourishes all things without trying to.
>
> It is content with the low places that people disdain.
>
> Thus, it is like the Tao

According to Taoism, like water, the leader must be yielding. Because the water does not push, the group does not resent or resist.

6.1   Yin and Yang

Another principle of Taoism is the concept of 'Yin' and 'Yang'. The 'Yin' stands for the female, the 'passive', 'dark', 'moon' while 'Yang' is identified with the 'male', 'sun', 'light', and 'active' forces. What is unique about this Taoist concept is the underlying assumption that these two opposite principles or forces make up the universe, however they complement and balance one another "each invades the other's hemisphere and takes up abode in the deepest recess of its partner's domain. And in the end both find themselves resolved by the circle that surrounds them, the Tao is its eternal wholeness". (Smith: 113)

Thus, leadership theories can draw from the wisdom of Taoist philosophy which emphasizes that neither Yin nor Yang can exist without one another. Similarly, an effective leader must acquire and incorporate qualities associated with both male

and female—gentleness with firmness, activity with quietude, nurturing with discipline. These qualities that appear opposite are not in fact oppositional. The 'masculine' and the 'feminine' must be integrated and incorporated by the true leader.

6.2 Ardhanarishvara (Half Male/Half Female) in Hindu Cosmology

In the ancient Hindu cosmology, Ardhanarishvara occupies a unique place. A composite androgynous form of the Hindu god Shiva and his consort, Parvati (also known as 'Devi', 'Shakti' and 'Uma'), Ardhanarishvara is depicted in iconography as half male and half female. The earliest images of this deity appear as early as the first century of the common era, and remains a popular object of worship among the Hindus, especially in the South. Countless images of this deity are found in India and it remains a popular iconographic form. In what way can scholars of Leadership theories draw from these unique images and the world view it represents? Does an iconographic image of the supreme God as half male/half female bear any relevance to our exploration of leadership? I would like to suggest that this is an avenue worth exploring. In the second decade of the 21st century as we search for new visions of Leadership in a complex, diverse and rapidly changing world, the half male/half female divinity represents a synthesis of masculine and feminine energies of the universe.

The ancient Hindu conception of the Universe consists of two principles or forces known as 'Purusha' (male) and 'Prakriti' (female). The former is identified with matter and the latter with nature. One cannot exist without the other. They are inseparable and together they represent the creative force in the Universe.The composite form conveys the union of opposites, from which all things emanate. Inherent and implicit in this worldview is the idea that every individual is comprised of male and female characteristics and qualities, thus, "the idea of … Ardhanarishvara is to locate the man in the woman as also the woman in the man to create perfect homogeneity…" (quoted in Chakravarti, 1986, p. 43).

7 Conclusion

It is important to go beyond the conventional definitions of 'power' and 'politics' and search for a more nuanced view of how women negotiate power in the context of patriarchal structures. We need to recognize that leadership qualities are not innate or inherent; no one is born a leader. Leadership is a process, qualities that can be learned, nurtured, taught and applied to everyday life situations—so everyone has the potential to become a leader. A more participatory, collaborative and ethical

mode of leadership will be required. Leaders in this changing world must confront new challenges. In a constantly evolving world, they will be called upon to be change agents, catalysts, creative thinkers and visionaries. Tomorrow's leaders will need to be more aware of the interconnectedness and interdependency of our global world. The recent explosion in information technology and the relative ease of communication makes it easier to engage in cross-border, trans-national organizing. Leaders of tomorrow, especially women, will need to further refine their skills of networking to promote solidarity with and support for other women—especially those who are economically deprived and socially marginalized.

True leadership must entail power not for personal ends or to achieve one's own ambitions, but to uplift, enhance and promote the well-being of the community. Leaders must serve as advocates and champions of the dispossessed, the marginalized, and the voiceless. They must strive to build a society based on the ideals of social justice, compassion, equality and peace for all.

An essential responsibility of all leaders is to 'mentor' others, to empower them to discover their own self-worth and achieve their dreams. In the ultimate analysis, success of leaders cannot be measured by fame, nor wealth, nor material accumulations. Their effectiveness will depend on whether they have done their share to make this a better world, to alleviate poverty and hunger, inequality and discrimination. Examples of women's leadership serve as models for us—in which ordinary women have accomplished extraordinary things. As leaders, we must place greater emphasis on "meditation" (listening from within) and on "mediation" (listening from without) (Boulding 1996: 3).

Taking inspiration from the ancient wisdom of the East, we need to celebrate and honor the 'feminine' dimensions of leadership. This entails not a rejection of masculine traits, but instead a synthesis and reconciliation of the two. We need to provide a new and bold vision of leadership. Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland and a human rights activist put it very eloquently when she said:

"As women lead, they are changing leadership, as they organize, they are changing organization…. When women lead and articulate their purposes, it seems to me, they work together, not as individuals but with a sense of community…. Women have fresh and imaginative skills of dialogue and are setting a more open, flexible, and compassionate style of leadership." (Speech at Global Forum of Women, Dublin, July 1992)

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