

Embracing the Boundless

By Christine Smith



Everything is the fruit of receptivity.
Traditional Buddhist teaching

The wisdom that finds expression in women reveals itself most naturally through the experience of receptivity.

We are informed by this wisdom, shaped by its clarity and its truth, as we open to it. We find it to be as deep and generous as it is precise and exacting. And we find it speaks to us through both the feminine and the masculine modes of our being.

The capacity to be receptive, along with the desire that opens one to receive, is a defining gesture of feminine consciousness.

Here, we explore the experience of the feminine and the value for us all through its receptivity.



Feminine consciousness is a way of experience known through the cycle of opening, receiving, nurturing and bringing forth and is often marked by meeting the 'luminous darkness' through a depth of the not-yet-known wherever that depth is encountered. Its movement comes through being opened by an "attentive desire"; its rhythm, both circular and evolving, which delivers all in season.

Its way of being comes from the breath and flesh of the moment. Its value is in its devotion to all of life as an expression of Divine Love.

Feminine consciousness desires communion, and that desire in its fullest sense, encompasses a willingness to be revealed through both that to which we are drawn and the desire itself.

The knowing of feminine consciousness comes through experience, felt and sensed. The faith that lives through this way of perception lives as resonant truth to the clarity and purpose of Love.

Feminine consciousness, while the primary mode of experience for women, is not expressed through the lives and hearts of women alone. It is not the sole domain of women. Men also live through various expressions of feminine consciousness just as women experience certain aspects of masculine consciousness in themselves.

Neither the feminine nor the masculine mode of consciousness is itself the source of wisdom but both open us to experience essential to our recognition of wisdom. In their ways of experience and perception, these

ways of being and knowing provide the lens through which Divine Wisdom is revealed and realized in all hearts.



All the beauty you can see will deliver you
but first you must come truly seeking....
and you must know how to receive all that is given.

Mira

These few lines from one of India's most beloved women poet mystics reflect much of what lives at the heart of feminine consciousness and its way of sensing, perceiving and expressing Divine Wisdom.

The beauty Mira speaks of is not just in surface appearance. She is telling us of the radiant truth which shines from, and through, the heart of the Divine into this world and awakens in us a depth of recognition as it calls us into its own depth. Coming to know beauty through depth is one of the most compelling ways we realize Divine Wisdom. The journey of this experience in each of us brings Wisdom into a tapestry of expression as the Divine and its Love reveal itself through our lives.

If the truth of beauty as a living expression of the Divine and the Love from which it springs is what is sought, we are shown how we must approach. It requires desire and faithfulness to truly experience the Presence of the Divine and all that it offers. Initially we may be drawn through what appears to be our own desire. As we are faithful to that call and we find ourselves willing to be shaped through our response, we discover that what moves and calls us is the power, the passion, and the Love that is the Divine.

The other essential requirement, Mira tells us, is that we "must know how to receive all that is given." How often in our search, when we seek to possess knowledge as protection, a kind of safety in certainty, does our focus become only what will be gained as outcome. Even imagining we will be changed somehow by the fulfillment of our desire, when we come in this way, we are often not aware of what is required of us to receive.

When we find ourselves faced with what seems to be the 'cost' of our desire, how often do we take it as a personal affront and misunderstand that it is not a matter of what we are allowed to have or can simply be given

because of our goodness. Rather it is whether we know how to truly receive all that is already and always given so freely.

It seems we are asked to come with some awareness of what it means in this human life to embody our capacity to receive the fullness of continuous Divine offering. Rather than searching for our worthiness and goodness to be rewarded, it is how we bring who we are to what is offered and our willingness to be transformed in that exchange that yields what we are seeking . . . to know union with the heart of the Divine.

Often when we are new in our search, we come looking to be given a sense of worth rather than to be ‘altered’ into knowing the beauty and truth of God’s Wisdom and Love. To be ‘delivered’ asks us to come with a sense of being through which we can recognize and receive from the Beingness of God which is God’s very nature. It seems we learn how to receive what is given by coming in recognition of what we already are. Our beingness is certainly affirmed and grown into depth and fullness through the Love we find in this Wisdom but perhaps only as we come bringing the vessel of our creatureliness to receive that which continually creates us.

It can indeed be mystifying when we are met with something we do not understand and did not expect . . . something we perhaps don’t yet know how to value. The disappointment and sorrow in the lack of fulfillment and in the ‘missed’ union can feel overwhelming. However, these experiences can also open in us, mysteriously, a heart-felt and embodied willingness to go further in our search, deeper into life. This is why we are advised to come with the whole of our being to this journey and why such persistence and faithfulness are so vital to ‘truly seeking.’

“I will be safe but not in the way
I intended . . . Love, if I allow it,
will keep me awake, feeding on salt,
the mineral of skin.”

Jane Hilberry
“*The Mineral of Skin*” from *Body Painting*



For several years now, I have facilitated year-long groups exploring receptivity as the central experience of feminine consciousness in the path of Divine Love. In our retreats this exploration unfolds through contemplative dialogue, meditation, poetry, story and various forms of creative expression. My experience with these groups has revealed again and again the richness and the complexity that is the receptive.

To appreciate receptivity means bringing ourselves through direct experience to its depth. At its heart,

receptivity is about learning to live through being shaped by Love, seasoned and ‘ripened until we are real,’ as Rilke says, into realizing Divine Wisdom within our own hearts. I would like to share some of the qualities and capacities that describe the experience of receptivity through the feminine mode of consciousness and hope these reflections may seed your own contemplation of receptivity.

Mystery and Depth

. . . to meet the powerful and arousing experience of the
unknown
through direct experience with no expectation or
demand
for understanding or control
. . . opening through **inwardness** and **patience** to the
fluid stillness
of what is just beginning to become with a willingness
to simply “**be**” and to be informed through that
numinous Presence, as we **nurture** what it intends
and how it will take shape.

Paradox and Restraint

. . . to be opened through a heart informed by
experience
and inner awareness as the rhythm of life reveals
itself beyond how things appear or have always been
. . . to **embrace “both/and”** rather than aligning to
“either/or”
. . . rather than knowing through analysis, the **freedom**
to trust,
through our experience with Love, what is shown to be
true
even when that Truth seems to demand more of us
than we think ourselves to be.

Permeability and Vulnerability

. . . to allow the unknown to touch us, often opening
to life
we have tried to refuse
. . . to “**be**” **vulnerable** rather than to “**feel**” vulnerable
. . . a willing **lack of defensiveness** that allows an
openness
for us to **be acted upon** by the natural forces so
we realize their power, not to be made less,
but so we might realize the value of being moved
and shaped while sometimes feeling incomplete, unful-
filled
and unable to rise to our ideal of perfection
. . . the deep **intimacy of beingness**,
open to an **exchange of being**.

Devotion and Reverence

- . . . seeing things as they are, a willingness to love and live freely within the bounds of natural law while also embodying a reverence for life
- . . . from a **depth of feeling**, faithfully willing to shelter, nourish and sustain with one's own being, a **respect and fidelity to this human existence**
- . . . valuing and living life in obedient **response to Love**.

Relatedness and Spaciousness

- . . . the desire to **flow into communion**, to **merge**
- . . . the desire to bring finite space to the infinity of spaciousness
- . . . the desire to bring the reality of **body and Earth** to the **eternally generative movement of Creative Love** by emptying to receive **through the heart**
- . . . a way of knowing Divine Wisdom by **embracing the boundless**.



Somewhere along the way we begin to see that wisdom may have little to do with what we know. It is perhaps more a deep appreciation and a humble gratitude for all we do not know but as well, something that is written into our curious and listening hearts through all we sense, feel and experience. Wisdom then becomes the fruit of what we realize through the informing of our hearts as we willingly open ourselves in this journey of Love.

Ultimately, wisdom comes in knowing that we always have and always will belong to Love. Through the experience of feminine consciousness this means opening ourselves to receive the gift of this Truth and respond through the life we are so generously given, even as the gift remains unfathomable and our part unknown.

When I come to you,
it is with all of my life.

I come to you with the
whole of my being.



Lalla

For over 30 years, Christine Smith has worked as a therapist, teacher and facilitator with individuals and groups to support the integration of spiritual awareness and psychological insight. From her own experience of meditation and spiritual practice as well as extended solitary retreat, she has taught meditation and led numerous meditation retreats. Currently, she is creating several meditation CDs and leading contemplative retreats. These retreats explore not only the call that brings healers to their work but the vision that often informs that call as they discover what it means to engage the Wisdom of Health in their lives and work. Christine can be contacted at beingaware@core.com.