



Gender Free Kundalini!

Q: I attended a Kundalini-based workshop around gender the other day that left me with a few questions I didn't feel comfortable asking the Teacher. A few comments put me off, and I was hoping you could clarify the Kundalini perspective.

The Teacher stated that men are supposed to be

more steady and women fluctuate in their lunar cycle every 2 ½ days. He said men fluctuate every 2.5 minutes but it's not the same as the lunar cycle. He expressed very gender-normative beliefs including that in same gender relationships one person takes on more of the masculine and the other more of the feminine energy, though it can fluctuate. I found this a little rigid and simply incongruent with the friends and family I know in the LGBTQ community. In fact, I had students express feeling very put off by his comments, especially when he insisted that your gender is your physical form (there's such a wider spectrum than that in our community.)

He said when men and women work outside their gender roles it's exhausting; commenting that women can be the bread winners but it wears them out faster so it's not good for them. (?!). He stated that all women have the capacity to give birth in that their arc line which is "16 times stronger and has more fibers including 9 rays to a man's 7" even if they can't physically give birth. When a student questioned on behalf of women who physically cannot give birth, he simply stated but they still have the energetic capacity, and didn't elaborate.

He completely glossed over trans and non-binary people in a rather brusque, "That's a whole other story," comment that left a sour

taste in my mouth. Some of my students (who are gay) attended a different Kundalini yoga tantra workshop of a similar nature and felt rather put off and excluded by the phrasing that one partner takes on more feminine and the other more masculine energies. It almost sounded like she implied that gender confusion is a mix-up in energy which felt very narrow-minded and her implications bordered on being able to "fix" trans or even gay people with energy work. (?! so not cool!)

I get the whole cosmic dance of duality, and the fact that we are all a swirling mix of both. But can you help me understand what those Teachers were getting at here? Or is this just another example of more Piscean rigid thinking that's non-inclusive of the whole spectrum of human experience?

Please forgive the novella, but I'm so curious about your thoughts. What do you think about all this? How can I create a more inclusive environment for my wide variety of students? Whenever there's an exercise or mudra that asks the women to do one thing and the men to do another, I offer the variation to choose your preference. Any other thoughts, comments, suggestions?

A: Thanks for your very relevant question. Much of what the Teachers you referenced implied might be forgiven as simply semantically awkward but we do believe that a deeper look at some of the statements you reference would be helpful for all concerned.

Many of Yogi Bajan's earlier students are working hard to be as "correct" as possible in carrying on his teachings. Commendable, but in being true to what Yogi Bajan ostensibly taught 30-40 yrs. ago they're not accounting for the fact that Yogi Bajan was not a fixed star. Part of his greatness was the ability to take in new information and stay relevant to the people he was serving. Based on our experience of him we are confident that he would have continued to modernize his thinking. All of us teachers and aspiring humans have to be careful about settling for a set of pre-packaged ideas instead of speaking from our own experience, truth and heart.

There is definitely a bit of cognitive dissonance when someone, from the vantage of 2018, wades through Yogi Bajan's teachings on the matter of gender. We have come across many of Yogi Bajan's teachings that made us say "Oh no, do you believe he said that!" Yogi Bajan came up in a conservative cultural milieu and many of his teachings reflect

somewhat dated information. In reality, Yogi Bajan was deeply loving, accepting, and supportive of all his students and if you look through his teachings you will see that he was transitioning and amending some of his earlier thoughts on gender issues and sexual orientation.

Yogi Bajan did believe that the concept of polarities is a universal constant and that masculine and feminine qualities inform each other to keep the Universe in balance. In terms of our individual makeup and psyche, everyone contains all of the gender qualities. The ones we choose to express reflect what we need to do to find balance, wholeness, and redemption.

The very concept of Creation is based on the law of polarity. The Universe started off as 0, non-being, and needed being to fill that lonely void. In that sense God represents the masculine, pure potential. Creation, considered feminine is the Goddess that brings the equation to fruition. So does that mean that masculine / feminine is where it's at and that this dynamic informs everything? The answer is yes and no. In the macro-cosmic sense yes. In the micro-cosmic sense (that's us) no.

The truly wise person honors nuance and gradation over generalization. Everyone's expression of gender is unique and every relationship has its own dynamic. Everyone must navigate for themselves the interplay between their personality, style, wounding, gifts, and soul. How we navigate and elevate those prompts determines the trajectory of our lives.

We actually agree that in relationships each person does resonate more with masculine or feminine qualities but that this is fluid and can change every day. In successful relationships both parties honor each other's rhythms and energy. The concept of masculine / feminine is not a strictly either/or proposition. These universal constants blend seamlessly into one another in an eternal dance of beauty, joy, creativity, and power.

Sat Nam means true you and Kundalini Yoga is all about being ourselves. We are all unique and how great is that? Our bodies are ultimately just vehicles that we drive through this life. Biologically speaking, the tasks our bodies were designed for are becoming somewhat less relevant. Many aspects of gender choices revolve around the decision to not be dictated to by an archaic biological construct. Not letting oneself be dictated to solely by biological imperatives is a very high spiritual attainment.

Students should never hesitate to speak to their Teacher if something doesn't ring true to them. What it means to be an authentic Teacher is to remain teachable. In the Aquarian Age we are all teachers to each other. Much better for a student to speak their (gracefully) when they feel mis-information is present than to throw the baby out with the bathwater! The baby (the Teachings) is amazing and it's our job as Teachers and students to keep them that way! It's everyone's responsibility to look into their hearts and speak their own truth and not merely parrot outdated concepts. Things don't resonate now unless they ring true. Don't you just love the Aquarian Age?

Your question about making your class more accessible to everyone is an important one. For example, in Kundalini Yoga the standard reason for men using a certain hand position and women reversing it is that 'Men/women are the same, but mirror images of one another.' We would suggest that students who don't want to identify as one pole of a strictly binary model practice the form of the mudra that comes most naturally.

Re: "...women can be the bread winners but it wears them out faster so it's not good for them. (?!). He stated that women have the capacity to give birth in that their arc line which is "16 times stronger and has more fibers including 9 rays to a man's 7."

That's a very old school notion. Working outside the home wears men out too! Obviously it sounds a bit patronizing to women and can definitely go out with that bathwater. Making sweeping statements about any category of people is a dangerous and harmful practice. Everyone can do or be anything if they are inspired and if Spirit is present.

We feel Teachers have to be careful about making statements like "a woman's arc line is 16 times stronger and has more fibers including 9 rays to a man's 7." Unless we have verified that for ourselves with direct observation it comes off as pseudo-science and/or pseudo-yoga. The arc line is a human halo and it relates to the beaming power of the mind. It's our life radar. What makes an arc line strong is not our gender but our fierce focus and prayerful attitude.

We know that the teachers you referenced conveyed that information with the best of intentions so let's give them the benefit of the doubt. We're all in school and eventually we'll all take the courses we need to and assimilate the information we need to graduate. We want everyone

to do Kundalini Yoga and we want to create a welcoming environment so that all who come feel welcomed and celebrated.