

## Integration: The Gift of 21st Century Female Leadership

The call to corporate leadership is generally a tough one for women to make. Over and above the many roles that women traditionally find themselves in, new challenges, demands and expectations within the corporate environment often leave women with a sense of confusion, split loyalty and more often than not, in an existential crisis where meaning and purpose is many times perceived as being lost. This is especially the case, when in quiet moments of honest reflection or after another grueling day of thankless exceeded effort and self-sacrifice, a woman finds herself in a place of turmoil and exhaustion. Split somewhere between wanting the pace, the glitz, adrenalin rush, financially and ego rewarding corporate rollercoaster and the deep, almost archetypal need to just be the fundamental, vulnerable and pure woman she is – the one who wants to nurture, care, create, be intimate and connected in a real way to all that she actually holds dear – irrespective of how outdated or in contrast to our modern 21st century mentality, her values may be perceived to be. This split essentially lies at the core of each of us – irrespective of how blatantly we try to block it out.

Several life coach strategies and self-help literature advocate that the solution of this confusion lies in finding the preverbal balance. The problem however is that this balance all too often seems to get disturbed, leaving us catching ourselves back at the one or other extreme, promising ourselves to get the balance back 'later' or 'sometime soon' – and seldom doing it.

Jung's concept of balance centered more round the striving towards integration and the accommodation of opposites – which is symbolically depicted in the cyclical wholeness of the mandala. Jung's striving for balance is captured more in a genre of a journey towards self awareness, integration and individuation than in the depiction of a destination or some place of having arrived.

In the spirit of this philosophy, Mandala Consulting endeavours to assist leaders, and especially female leaders, in their striving towards meaning and integration – which ultimately provides more sustainability in dealing with life in general.

Understanding one's innate characteristics and personality typology and developing and enhancing one's emotional intelligence skill set, along with gaining insight into the interplay between the conscious light side of these and the more unconscious shadow or flip side, fundamentally underlies the process of the journey of integration we embark on.

The joy of journey primarily is that it is inclusive, accommodative and permissive of all life experiences – encompassing and integrating them and focusing on the value and meaning of each one, good or bad. Interpreted against the backdrop of one's own unique value system, purpose and meaning along with enhancing one's individual skill set through journey, a more purpose-driven and soulfully integrated space is created. Given the demands and complexity leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are called to deal with – having some sort of constant solid integrated space to return to, is what we have seen separates successful leaders from those who ultimately lose their sense of self, soul and direction.