



Shakti Leadership: Embracing Feminine and Masculine Power in Business

By Nilima Bhat, Raj Sisodia

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Unlocking the Source for True Leadership

Too many people, men and women alike, have bought into a notion of leadership that exclusively emphasizes traditionally “masculine” qualities: hierarchical, militaristic, win-at-all-costs. The result has been corruption, environmental degradation, social breakdown, stress, depression, and a host of other serious problems. Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia show us a more balanced way, an archetype of leadership that is generative, cooperative, creative, inclusive, and empathetic. While these are traditionally regarded as “feminine” qualities, we all have them. In the Indian yogic tradition they're symbolized by Shakti, the source that powers all life.

Through exercises and inspirational examples, Bhat and Sisodia show how to access this infinite energy and lead with your whole self. Male or female, leaders who understand and practice Shakti Leadership act from a consciousness of life-giving caring, creativity, and sustainability to achieve self-mastery internally and be of selfless service to the world.

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Editorial Review

Review

“As transformative as it is simple, mapping out a new definition of leadership that elevates qualities and abilities traditionally considered feminine—with benefits for women and men alike.”

—**Arianna Huffington, President and Editor-in-Chief, Huffington Post Media Group**

“This book will help liberate the heroic entrepreneurial drive innate to men and women of every culture.”

—**John Mackey, cofounder and Co-CEO, Whole Foods Market**

“*Shakti Leadership* guides you through a series of powerful insights and processes for connecting yourself to the inner power at play in interpersonal situations. I highly recommend this book to anyone who intuitively feels the need for real depth in the process of organizational and personal transformation.”

—**Sally Kempton, author of *Awakening Shakti and Meditation for the Love of It***

“Gender equality, diversity, and inclusion are finally being recognized globally as good for business and for humankind. While many companies have structured programs in place to retain and grow women leaders, there is still ignorance in understanding the ‘feminine’ qualities that both men and women need to bring to the workplace to complement the masculine qualities that are so prevalent. As an Indian, I find that our ancient wisdom offers great value to modern business and leadership. In *Shakti Leadership*, Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia tap into this wisdom, as well as wisdom from other traditions, in a profound and engaging way to offer deep insights for leadership and life for men and women everywhere.”

—**Anand Mahindra, Chairman and Managing Director, Mahindra Group**

“In *Shakti Leadership*, Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia put forward a compelling argument for restoring the natural balance of leadership. The importance of creating a new culture of corporate inclusiveness, where we utilize the true power of feminine qualities—such as cooperation, creativity, and empathy—cannot be underestimated in this imbalanced world. Business has a purpose beyond profits, and the argument for a new vision of leadership led by the principle of Shakti is both powerful and insightful for the sustainable future of business. Highly recommended reading for the business fraternity.”

—**Rakesh Sarna, Managing Director and CEO, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces**

“*Shakti Leadership* is a timely refresher that acknowledges the weave of masculinity and femininity in our human selves. This is important in an age when we need a caring kind of capitalism, where business looks beyond the narrow objective of maximizing profits and helps people lead more fulfilling lives. We now realize that, among other things, the historically patriarchal workplace has to bring in more feminine attributes—what the authors describe as the power of Shakti. This book offers organizations and professionals many useful ideas to create a humane and resilient culture, such as drawing upon their inner reserves of strength; nurturing values such as trust, accountability, and transparency; and harmonizing male and female traits to become truly visionary leaders.”

—**Anu Aga, Chairperson, Teach for India, and former Chairperson, Thermax**

“As Indians, we grow up soaked in our mythological wisdom. As Indian family-owned business leaders operating in a global economy, we are constantly looking to grow wings, without losing connection with our roots. Nilima and Raj offer us a model for leadership, built on many years of learning and synthesizing, that is as universal as it is dharmic, as timely as it is timeless. I strongly recommend this book to all men and

women who aspire to leadership or are seeking to elevate their practice of this most essential human calling.”

—**Harsh Mariwala, Chairman, Marico Limited**

“*Shakti Leadership* reveals the next stage of evolution and leadership in a clear, grounded, and thorough way. Nilima and Raj do a beautiful job of articulating a spectrum of complex subjects in relatable ways. They cover what are, in my opinion, the most important wisdom-related topics that can impact leaders who want to create a world that works for all. What I loved most is that Nilima and Raj speak to difficult and important matters, such as patriarchy, without being too careful or subtle about their insights and without coming from a stance of blame or victimhood. This is the most clear and succinct description of feminine and masculine qualities that I have seen written in a book. Thank you, Nilima and Raj, for sharing your deeply personal and professional work with the world in a way that is needed today.”

—**Michelle Stransky, founder of WisdomWomen**

“Nilima and Raj have cocreated a book that is much needed. When we awaken to our true nature, synergize the masculine and feminine within ourselves, and discover the essence of our Shakti, we become infinitely compassionate and courageous to take responsibility for the way we live now. Leaders in business, government, education, and the social sectors will find the path in this book to come together and make our organizations more conscious, leading to a peaceful, sustainable, and happier world!”

—**Anil Sachdev, founder and CEO, School of Inspired Leadership**

“I’m grateful to Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia for this insightful and timely book. Reclaiming the lost balance between masculine and feminine leadership styles is a very important part of the larger project of making the world of business more ethical—and thus more effective at creating sustainable value. It is wonderful to see the wisdom of the East being so skillfully applied to the challenges faced by modern organizations. *Shakti Leadership* is a significant contribution to the conscious capitalism movement.”

—**Steve McIntosh, author of *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution* and President, Institute for Cultural Evolution**

“This book is of vital importance! The rise of feminine power fully integrated with the healthy masculine is paramount to the development of the planet, organizations, and ourselves. Nilima and Raj’s outstanding work shows us, through their wisdom and clear writing, how we as leaders can harness this potential.”

—**Kristin Engvig, founder and CEO, WIN**

“A powerful leadership model that leverages and unites our masculine and feminine energies.”

—**Richard Barrett, founder and Chairman, Barrett Values Centre**

“*Shakti Leadership* is a bold reimagination of leadership that is both conceptually robust and immediately usable at the same time. A must-read for all those seeking to deeply understand the inner drives that make them the leaders they are and striving to create diverse cultures where each person can flourish.”

—**Shubhro Sen, Director, School of Management and Entrepreneurship, Shiv Nadar University**

“In today’s 24/7 wired world, we are more connected with technology than with other humans or our own inner self. *Shakti Leadership* is first about deeply understanding who we really are and why we exist and then about using that knowledge to meaningfully connect with others to cocreate a better future. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to really wake up.”

—**Rajeev Peshawaria, CEO, The Iclif Leadership and Governance Centre, and author of *Too Many Bosses, Too Few Leaders and Be the Change***

As global populations age, Bhat and Sisodia suggest that the world is reaching a point of major

transformation. Simultaneously, women are gaining in numbers in white-collar professions, headed toward becoming the majority in the near future. This escalating shift in evolution is rattling the foundations of one-sided patriarchal leadership, moving us toward a crisis point. These authors believe that in order not to implode, both men and women must begin to embrace a leadership style which utilizes competency-based (masculine) and consciousness-based (feminine) leadership skills in equal balance. Laced with insights from successful women (and men), it also has suggested exercises, such as *Dialogue with the Higher Self*, to help readers access the transformative power of Shakti within themselves. Commonsense and cutting-edge perspective make this one a sure-fire winner. Consider displaying it with Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.

- **Anna Jedrzewski, *Retailing Insight***

About the Author

Nilima Bhat is the founder-director of the leadership consulting firm Roots & Wings and the integrative medicine practice Sampurnah ("wholeness"). She speaks and consults globally on organizational culture, women in leadership, self-awareness, and wellness and is the coauthor of *My Cancer Is Me*.

Raj Sisodia is the F. W. Olin Distinguished Professor of Global Business and Whole Foods Market Research Scholar in Conscious Capitalism at Babson College. He is also cofounder and cochairman of Conscious Capitalism, Inc., and the coauthor of the bestselling book *Conscious Capitalism*.

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Prologue

A CRISIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND LEADERSHIP

Do we really need another book on leadership? Bookshelves the world over are groaning under the weight of a neverending flow of leadership books. But the stark reality remains: the way we lead isn't working nearly as well as we need it to. Our current one-sided notion of a leader's power is a root cause of a host of contemporary problems, including social breakdown, environmental degradation, epidemics of stress and depression, and corruption in business and government. Men and women alike have been conditioned to value leadership qualities traditionally considered masculine: hierarchical, individualistic, and militaristic. The consequences have been dire for too long, and we can ill afford to continue to suffer them much longer. The origin of the problem is crystal clear: societies around the world have consistently and egregiously devalued qualities and perspectives traditionally deemed feminine. For all of recorded time, the wisdom and unique perspectives of over half of humanity have been largely excluded from influencing how we live and work. How can this not lead to severe dysfunction?

Seeking to reclaim feminine power and restore the long-lost balance of masculine and feminine energies for men and women alike, this book charts a new path based on timeless wisdom. Reaching into ancient spiritual and mythical teachings, we revive a feminine archetype of leadership: regenerative, cooperative, creative, and empathetic. In the Indian yogic tradition, these qualities are associated with Shakti: the source of creation, sustenance, and transformation that powers the cycle of life. We all need the primordial power and energy that is Shakti—creative, tireless, and restorative.

Leaders who understand and practice Shakti Leadership operate from a consciousness of life-giving caring, creativity, and sustainability to achieve self-mastery internally and be of selfless service to the world. When leaders of both sexes learn to embrace this mindset, we can restore sanity, elevate humanity, and heal the planet by evolving joyously and consciously together.

SO MUCH HAS CHANGED

We're living at a critical time. Humanity appears poised on the precipice of a great shift in our evolution. After millennia of incremental growth as a species, we appear to have reached a mutation point where our development could take a quantum leap to a whole new level in a remarkably short amount of time.

The human journey of growth and evolution certainly did not stop when we got up on our two legs, as evolutionary charts depict. In fact, we are changing and evolving at a faster rate than ever before—by orders of magnitude.

One of the factors driving these rates is the rapid aging of many societies. Driven by a combination of sharply declining birth rates and steadily increasing life expectancy, the median age has been rising in most countries around the world. In 1989, the United States reached a demographic tipping point: it was the first year that there were more adults over the age of 40 than below it. The age of 40 is a significant threshold in human life; it marks the passage into midlife and is often accompanied by a crisis of meaning and purpose. Many people come to the realization around this time in their life that the values and priorities that drove them in the past no longer feel personally relevant. They are consumed with questions such as, “What is the purpose of my life? What kind of legacy will I leave behind?” Many people come to the realization that life cannot be just about their own material success; there has to be more to it.

The year 1989 was also when we crossed another threshold: there were more women holding college degrees in the United States than men. Women now comprise nearly 60 percent of college enrollees and, on average, get higher grades than men. It is simply a matter of time before women dominate virtually every white-collar profession. This numerical rise of women will inevitably bring about a shift toward more feminine values in the workplace and in society at large. It will mark a fundamental shift in the world, as nothing like this has ever remotely existed before.

A little-known fact is that we human beings are rapidly becoming more analytically intelligent, as measured by IQ tests. Intelligence researcher James Flynn looked at IQ testing data going back for about 80 years. The data gets normalized to 100 every 10 years, so that the average IQ in society is always 100. Flynn looked at the raw data and found a startling pattern: humans are collectively becoming more intelligent at the rate of 3 to 4 percent every decade. Compounded over eight decades, this suggests that the average person today would have had an IQ of 131 and been in the top 2 percent of intelligence in the year 1935! This pace of change is unprecedented; we are simply not supposed to evolve at such a rapid rate. But we are.¹

We are also on a journey of rising consciousness. The entire human journey on this planet can be seen as one of gradually waking up—both to the world around us and to our own extraordinary potential as human beings. As more of humanity has moved beyond a survival mode, we have been able to take off our blinders and see the bigger picture. Instead of just being focused on our short-term survival, we are now able to see how our actions have consequences beyond our immediate surroundings, and how we in turn are impacted by the actions of others. Once we become aware of the consequences of our actions, we also have a firmer sense of what is right and what is wrong. Things that were acceptable in the past are no longer acceptable. The pace of change has been mind-boggling. Consider the following:

- 150 years ago, slavery was legal and commonplace in many countries. The United States fought a brutal civil war to end this degrading and inhuman practice, and many other countries also outlawed slavery around that time. But if you go back in human history, you find that slavery was an integral part of every major civilization. Most people, including many slaves, saw nothing wrong with it. Today, it is hard to imagine living in such a world.
- 100 years ago, hardly any women on this planet had the right to vote. In 1893, New Zealand became the

first country in which all women could vote in parliamentary elections. Women attained the right to vote in the United States in 1920. In Switzerland, women did not gain the right to vote until 1971; in 2010, Switzerland swore in its first female majority government.

- 75 years ago we still had colonialism, which can be seen as another form of slavery. India was still a British colony.
- 50 years ago, there was still legally sanctioned racial segregation in many parts of the United States. • 30 years ago, child labor, animal abuse, and environmental degradation were still common and legal in many places.
- 22 years ago, there was still apartheid in South Africa.
- Until 2004, same-sex marriage was not allowed anywhere in the United States; as of this writing, it is legal nationwide, as well as in almost 20 other countries.

Clearly, a lot has changed in a very short amount of time. As Abraham Lincoln said, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. As our case is new we must think anew and act anew.” We are by no means done making radical changes—there is a lot more still to come. Just as the nineteenth century was about the end of slavery and the twentieth was about the end of totalitarianism, the greatest story of the twenty-first century will undoubtedly be about the end of relegating women and feminine values to second-class status.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Charles English:

Do you have favorite book? When you have, what is your favorite's book? E-book is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each book has different aim or goal; it means that e-book has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They may be reading whatever they consider because their hobby is actually reading a book. Why not the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, man feel need book if they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will require this Shakti Leadership: Embracing Feminine and Masculine Power in Business.

Bobby Miller:

Reading can called brain hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book especially book entitled Shakti Leadership: Embracing Feminine and Masculine Power in Business the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unfamiliar for but surely can become your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a reserve then become one web form conclusion and explanation which maybe you never get prior to. The Shakti Leadership: Embracing Feminine and Masculine Power in Business giving you yet another experience more than blown away your thoughts but also giving you useful details for your better life in this era. So now let us explain to you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will probably be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary wasting spare time activity?

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