

Self-Love and Self-Compassion can Change the World

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“Women play a sacred role that is both historical and related with the blood lineage. We carry the future of humanity in our wombs; we give birth to and nurture humankind's potential. If the role of mothers is ignored, where will the hope and future prospects for humanity come from?” – Hak Ja Han, 2002

“To be a clear mirror that reflects this age, each woman first needs to be clear and pure within herself. Each needs to find the indomitable power within that is necessary to overcome self-centeredness.” – Mother of Peace (2020)

When I ponder the words on the sacred role of women and mothers by Dr. Hak Ja Han, I am struck by two points: women hold the key to unlocking humankind's full potential, and sadly, women continue to be largely undervalued and ignored for their efforts.

How are we to navigate such complexities and systemic challenges that undermine the role and value of women? First of all, this is not a problem that solely women ought to bear. This is a humankind issue, since half of the world is being affected. Even so, Mother Han explains that it is women who can set the example– “create the environment” so to speak– that can change the way we have been operating until now. I love the phrase Mother Han uses to highlight the importance of women in becoming a beacon of truth for all when she calls women to be, “a clear mirror that reflects this age.”

What does it mean to be a clear mirror for others? What is reflected back to humanity when women become “clear and pure within” and when we find the “indominable power” to “overcome self-centeredness”? I believe she is speaking to an essential posture we need to embody within, and that is: radical self- love and self- compassion.

I love the idea of something being “radical.” In essence, when we use the word “radical,” it speaks to a concept that goes beyond the logical; rather the word “radical” speaks to something that is felt within, at the core of one's being, and bestowed for reasons other than our own notions of what is deserved. When I think of radical self- love, the 1992 hit song, “Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover,” by Sophie B. Hawkins, comes to mind. Despite what some might believe about the song's meaning, it's actually a love song sung to herself– a song about longing to see one's inner star shine brightly and boldly, freed from any

preconceived and limiting notions of oneself. Ironically, the song came forth from a place of deep failure and insecurity around what her future would look like. In an interview with *American Songwriter*, Hawkins shared about the failure that ultimately resulted in her classic:

“[the lyrics were] so strong because I was at a point of so much loss, but with the potential to break out of my chains. That’s why I think loss is so important and failure is so important... Because actually you’re only failing at being who you really aren’t. Then you get to say, ‘Who could I be?’ And that’s ‘Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover.’ The feeling and the sensuality and the depth of the story is my life story.” – Beviglia, Jim, *American Songwriter*, “Behind the Song: Sophie B. Hawkins, ‘Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover.’ (March 8, 2021)

I want to speak to the notion of compassion and compassion of the self. Truly we cannot practice love nor compassion towards ourselves or others if we have not experienced it in our core. I want to offer an uplifting reason for self-compassion by examining the quality of compassion, which God notes as one of His/Her attributes in Exodus 34:6-7. It turns out that the Hebrew word for *compassion* shares the same root as the Hebrew word for *womb*, and the context in which this word is used in the Bible suggests a God who is deeply moved by an emotional impulse to respond— as a mother would to her child, born of her womb. Throughout the biblical account, we see a God who is moved, time and time again, to respond to the cries of His/Her children. God responds to those both in good moral standing, along with those who are sinners. In the book of Isaiah, God offers comfort to Israel during a time of difficulty by comparing Him/Herself to a nursing mother. You can find out more about the Hebrew word for compassion, as it relates to the word ‘womb,’ from the Bible Project. May this example of God’s unwavering compassion and radical love serve to encourage and inspire you to hold such a deep and reverent love and compassion for yourself. This is one of the most important things we can do to truly change the world.

Why? Because when we come from a place of self-love and self-compassion, we can more easily hold compassion and grace for others, extending forgiveness and love freely and generously. Love has the power to transform any situation where there is animosity, fear, and hurt. How powerful it can be when women stand with a wealth of love to give, because they’ve experienced it first from within? This is how women can stand as “clear mirrors” for the world, and one way that I believe beautiful change is possible.

In HerTribe, we are creating spaces where women can experience and practice radical self-love and compassion. If you would like to learn more and join one of our uplifting communities, check out HerTribe here: www.wfwp.us/hertribe