





Longing, Cooperation, Caring for the Earth

The Hidden Powers of Women BY HILARY HART

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omen are mobilizing. They're working locally and going global. They're changing how we relate to each other, to God, and to the earth. Regardless of the type of work, many are using some of the greatest undiscovered powers available to humanity—feminine powers. Powers like longing, non-hierarchical cooperation, and instinctual reverence for the body and earth.

It's not easy to recognize feminine power because we're used to identifying power by the patriarchal standards of achievement and action. But feminine powers are creative and sustaining. They are like love—the true sustainer of what is most important to us—but invisible and wordless, and rarely honored in our world-systems. They reside deep in the heart, like longing, without which we would not strive for meaning or change. And they are non-hierarchical, just as every element in the eternal web of life is equally sacred.

Feminine power destroys boundaries and unites, just as women know that “spiritual” is not separate from the earth or the way we live; it is inextricably embodied in the womb where the greatest creativity takes place, in the breast—the abundant nourisher, and in the softness of a woman's heart, which seems to take in all the sorrows of the world.

Three of the most transformative feminine powers—longing, non-hierarchical relating, and care for the earth—are just waiting to be released into our world as forces of great sustenance and transformation. Women need to honor these aspects of our hidden nature, as the world is desperate for the changes that will take place when we truly live as ourselves.

Leading the Way

In the Bay Area, a number of women are taking on this challenge. San Rafael's Devaa Haley Mitchell founded the Inspiring Women's Summit to answer the longing of women to discover who they are; Yolanda Roose, leader of a San Rafael Women's Power Wheel circle, helps awaken women to the power of non-hierarchical community; and Melinda Kramer founded Berkeley's Women's Earth Alliance, which actively supports women's instinct toward sustainability and helps restore the sanctity in the earth/human relationship.

These local women are part of a global movement bringing collective feminine values into balance with masculine values that are so exalted in our patriarchal world. They are balancing the ➡



Devaa
Haley
Mitchell



male transcendent view with a feminine body- and earth-based wisdom, offering power-sharing models of relating as alternatives to male “power over” hierarchical models. And they are honoring an esoteric reality that is the foundation of their own nature. As our collective feminine awareness emerges, visionaries and teachers are revealing that being born a woman has key features, not just on the physical level, but spiritually. These insights into women’s energetic makeup—the ways energy, attention, and life-force flow through the body and into life—are supporting what women have always known: that we are unique, and our specific gifts and responsibilities have a key role in the evolution of our shared world.

Longing

Behind all love is the need for love. Within the search for meaning is the need to find our authentic self and express it in the outer world. This hidden motivation is called yearning, or longing—and it is one of the most powerful expressions of feminine nature.

Spiritual seekers know longing as a key element in the search for Truth, inspiring us to seek what is real and live as our true selves. But for women, longing is not just alive in a formal spiritual arena. It drives much of what we do—from having children to seeking out deep friendships or meaningful work.

For too long, women’s longing has been denigrated by society. Our tears, our desperation, our daily struggles living in a world that is at odds with our nature has been called everything from “hysterics” to “codependence.” As a

force of change, longing is not to be ignored or shut away, but trusted and followed.

Devaa Haley Mitchell’s Inspiring Women’s Summit does just this. The longing to find ways to contribute meaningfully and share inspiring stories of other women doing the same was Devaa’s motivation to found the summit. This pivotal moment of finding her “dharma,” as she calls it, occurred while working as a management consultant in corporate America. “I remember getting called in to the manager’s office for my performance review,” she says. “I had high marks on things like ‘hardworking’ and ‘rapport with clients,’ but when it came to ‘analytics’ I was not as skilled as others. Then my manager told me I was not meeting expectations; analytics was the only thing that mattered.”

That’s when I realized I was in the wrong place and asked myself, “What would it mean to live my values? What would it be like to create a space where the heart and feminine aspects are valued?”

Today, Devaa (Devaa.com) honors the need to be herself as a foundation of her life. This includes having “feminine time” in the morning when she moves according to the pace of her own body, not other people’s schedules. And it extends into everything she does at the summit with her colleagues and with all the women participants. “Our intention is to become a living force of love on this planet. We hold this intention in our personal lives, in our work, and for everyone who comes through the summit—to allow our lives to be a prayer. If you’re not doing that, what are you in service to?”

Non-hierarchical Community

Staying true to longing is one form of feminine power. Another is honoring the instinct to collaborate, share, and work in a non-hierarchical way.

Hierarchy and the “top-down” method of governing, business management, and even personal relationships have marked Western society. Competition is the foundation of our economic system. But as we are coming to see, the corruption possible in this model is extreme. Our world—and the earth—have grown ill through our dominant “me first” attitude. Life is crying for us to give ourselves to genuine collaboration and to establish new models of living together.

In this, too, women hold a key. Women instinctually understand and embody ways of relating in which all parties are equally valuable. Of three children, what mother can say one is more sacred than another? As we give ourselves in love, are there winners and losers?

Women are lucky in that our years in the home, close to the needs of children, working with the spiritual potentials of love, nourishment, and sacrifice throughout the most mundane daily chores provides a training ground in how to live with an awareness of non-hierarchical relationships. As we go into the world, the challenge is to bring this awareness with us.

Circle work is one tool that can help us trust how life and the energies of life really flow. It is not top down, but round, with space for all. Circle work has been part of indigenous communities for centuries, and in recent years has been revived through the work of Christina Baldwin (*Calling the Circle*) and Jean Shinoda Bolen (*The Millionth Circle*). Today, more and more women are embracing this alternative.

In San Rafael, Yolanda Roose (womenspowerwheel.com/home-2/about/circle-holders/), mother and elementary school teacher, answers this call through leading a local woman’s circle associated with a growing movement—Women’s Power Wheel—designed to help women identify and learn to trust and use their power. In her circle, a ceremonial element allows women to share from the heart with no authority present, and no dialogue or rational discourse. Space is given for each woman to contribute and be heard.

“There’s no particular philosophy or personality imposed in circle,” explains Yolanda, “so everyone is uninhibited and can touch into what’s real. It’s a space to find what’s authentic.”

And often what’s authentic for women is a deep sense of connection to others. As each woman takes her time to express herself, a sense of allowing and softness becomes more

and more present. The heart opens, and women sense this natural reality of community—not through psychological processing, but through the soul's intimacy and wonder.

Women's Power Wheel is an intimate and ceremonial space created to help women sense and trust who they are so they can carry their vision forward into the world.

Caring for the Earth

For so many women, our longing to be ourselves and our instinct toward non-hierarchical community are converging in an upswell of passion for caring for the earth and all its inhabitants, whom women often instinctively know belong in our circle.

"For generations, it has been our charge as women to nurture the conditions that will allow our children and future generations to thrive," says Melinda Kramer, founder of the Berkeley-based Women's Earth Alliance (WomensEarthAlliance.org), an international organization providing support, resources, and networking to women addressing local environmental challenges around the world. "Women fiercely protect and heal that which is in harm. This is what we do. Throughout time and across cultures, women have become natural defenders of safe and just environmental conditions."

Melinda created WEA in part as a space to harness and focus the energy of these women and their ideas, a way to "build a powerbase, share best practices, amplify their voices, and model the solutions on the global stage."

Why focus on women? Melinda explains: "There is a unique power to the way women articulate and address today's environmental challenges. It's illustrated well in the words of a friend and mentor of mine, who said, 'I am not an environmentalist. I am a mother. I have a heart, a conscience, an investment in my children's future, and a community behind me.'"

Esoteric Underpinnings

Longing, non-hierarchical relating, and caring for the earth are not experiences isolated to women, of course—feminine power exists in men as well. Yet these attitudes have a particular affinity and resonance to women, as they are grounded in our physical bodies and our roles in creating and sustaining life. They are alive within our energetic makeup—how women create and nourish spiritually, how we bring light and love into the world and into the body of the earth.

We all have a part to play as universal feminine energy rises into consciousness. But women—being women—are the greatest vehicles of feminine power. As our world mindset slowly

accepts feminine values and powers that honor the body, as well as transcendent spirit, we will naturally be compelled to honor the mystery of a gendered body. As we look with curiosity, intelligence, and awe at the human body and the earth body, we begin to notice that not all "body" is the same. In healing, when we need the spirit embedded in the yucca root, we do not make due with a chamomile plant.

So too, at this time of great global change and healing, we cannot ignore the gifts of our gendered bodies. The body holds tremendous mysteries that our patriarchal transcendent views have failed to notice.

Supporting this emerging understanding are a growing number of spiritual teachers and healers who see and know how spiritual energies flow uniquely through women's bodies. Their insights support our common sense recognition that an imbalanced patriarchal world largely created by men needs women for transformation.

In many of these revelations, it is women's connection with the earth that is prominent.

"Women have a special body," says Dr. Guan Cheng Sun, qigong practitioner, researcher, and founder of Seattle's Institute of Qigong and Internal Alternative Medicine, who has spent over 30 years working with energy and observing how energy and healing take place in both men and women. "Women are connected to the earth," he says. This connection—in the heart specifically—allows women to communicate with and heal the earth. "How naturally and easily women connect to the land and can recognize the spirits of the land, and nourish and give it love. Women exchange energy more easily with nature than men do, and this allows nature and the earth to be restored."

This restoration of the earth is a theme in the Sufi teachings of Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee of Point Reyes as well. "A certain spiritual work needs to be done by women that has to do with healing the earth," he has said. This work has to do with women's role in the birth process, which facilitates a soul entering into the material world. Women's chakras contain a "magical substance ... that connects spirit and matter together."

The healing of the earth does not require formal spiritual practice. Rather, when a woman is true to herself she is naturally a vehicle for light to enter the earth. "One does not 'work with' this substance," Vaughan-Lee explains. "But sometimes a woman needs to be reconnected to this energy in herself, particularly in the West, where women can become cut off from their essential nature."

There is no collective plan for reconnecting with our nature, because all the step-by-step instructions have been written by men for a patriarchal world. But there are signs and there are hints—and these have to do with the cries of our longing and the messages we hear from the earth. And they have to do with how we instinctively live what is in our hearts and our bodies in community, how women share with life around us.

For many women the challenge is to take how we live in private—in our lives as mothers and lovers—into the world so often at odds with us. Sometimes, reminders are all we need. As we go through our day, we remember that the most important things—love, peace, true joy—have no hierarchy but are part of a web of life in which all parts are equally valuable.

Reconnecting with ourselves often means spending time in nature, where our bodies are always in communion with the earth. Planting a garden or praying over food can bring this connection more and more into consciousness.

Today, one of the greatest tools of change is consumer choice—a dollar to a farm-stand that grows organic vegetables is a vehicle for transformation, just as is a dollar withheld from an exploitive corporation. But these transactions have more power when we infuse them with wisdom, when the dollar to the farmer is given in full consciousness and with reverence. Our wisdom in small actions reverberates through the web of life. Women used to know and trust this, and we still can. Small shifts—in every woman—can change the world. 🌱

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