



HOW DOES RESPECTING & CONNECTING WITH THE WOMB IMPACT OUR RELATIONSHIPS?

From The Womb Awareness Forum

(February 2010, Melbourne)

Firstly let me say thank you to WAW for inviting me to participate in this forum tonight. Congratulations on a marvellous week, bringing us together and **bringing deeper awareness** to our wombs, individually and collectively! I am truly honoured to be included in this group of awesome women here to address this question. I have met each of these women if not in person, via communication, and I honour their work and contributions to our world.

I would like to answer this question, which I must say is a great question, the right question we could say, using a few meanings or **perspectives of womb** and from my shamanic craftswoman heart and mind.

Every Woman Is Her Own Shaman

As a **Shamanic Craftswoman** my perspective goes beyond the seen realm, beyond the obvious information available to our five physical senses and across and into the other realms. These other realms are the realms of the shaman, but also the realms that each of us know as our inner worlds. To paraphrase and extend on some words from my dear teacher Jeannine Parvati Baker, to her phrase: **every woman is her own midwife**, I shall add, and **every woman is her own shaman**. The realms the Shamanic Craftswoman works within are not her exclusive domain, they are accessible by everyone, and for those awake to this, these realms are accessed often.

So as a Shamanic Craftswoman, I honour the inner, outer, and other realms and find much information there to guide me, support me and inform me. Residing in these realms I see, hear and feel Goddess, **the divine feminine**, the Goddess of many names and faces, and for me it is She who speaks. And 'to each her own', as they say. As a Shamanic Craftswoman I know that there are **many ways and roads** and they all end up at the same place.

Three Perspectives Of The Womb

So, now that I have identified who I am and what language I speak, I would like to answer this question seeing the womb from three perspectives - as the individual womb, the physical and literal; as the collective womb known as the feminine; and as a big picture metaphor, the womb-at-large, otherwise known as Mother Earth, and also to answer the question from the physical, the energetic and the spiritual, or soul journey perspectives.

Connecting to and respecting the womb means connecting to and respecting the feminine, the deep dark untouchable places of **inner wisdom, feminine power, intuition**, and it means **consciously living the cycles** and honouring the wisdom of the cycles - birth, grow, decay, death and rebirth.

Instead of connecting to and respecting the womb, we as a culture have tried to **control her** and her functions. We've drugged her, cut her, burned her, removed her, speed her up, slowed her down and driven her to states of utter exhaustion. And we have done all this to the individual woman, to women as a group, to the Feminine essence of humanity and to the Earth.

And since **we are all connected**, we are all one, these actions effect and wounds us all. We see all this loud and clear as the signs and symptoms of the wounded feminine. And it shows up in **the way we treat the Earth, and the problems of our culture.**

We are getting there though, look at us, we're asking and answering this question. And as they say *'Awareness is Curative'*

I contemplated this question in the summer as I tended my gardens. Weeding, planting seeds, mulching, composting.

As I weeded out the grass that was growing through my herbs and vegetables, planted new seeds, mulched the growing plants to preserve the moisture in the soil, and put compost around them to increase the nutrients available to the growing plants, I saw all at once what we as a culture and what the majority of women don't do for our internal gardens, our wombs.

So there's **how we treat our own wombs**, our place within which and from where we **grow new life, new ideas**, our own **self confidence** and **self esteem**. And then our cultures and communities are the wombs in which we live, gestate, and birth from to grow to all we are. And, then there is the Earth, Herself the womb within which we all live. These wombs of ours need caring for, tending to and honouring, connecting to and respecting.

It's such a big question, with so many things to be included in the answer. In my process of answering this, I made a table to fill in and name all the myriad of ways to address the issues raised by this question, from seeing the womb from the three perspectives of individual, collective and the Earth as womb, and I decided then on the most significant pieces that I wanted to share with you all tonight.

How does respecting and connecting with the womb impact our relationship with SELF?

As the **owner, operator** and **wo-manager** of a womb, I know from my own experiences through my life, that how I respected or connected or both with my own womb, seriously impacted on my health, my wellness, my experience of my menstrual cycle and my sexual self. I, personally, have not encountered abuse by others, nor any healing crisis in the territory of my womb, but I have over the years subjected her, my womb that is, to varying degrees of ignorance, control and mistrust. And at other times I have treated her with the utmost respect and worshipped her, been in awe of her abilities and her central role in my life. And of course there's been no surprises there, that **when I honour and respect her** and all she represents, my life and wellbeing is uncomplicated by her attempts to get my attention.

I think we all know that our bodies speak to us through our symptoms, to get our attention, to change things about our lives or lifestyles that are creating imbalances. So on the physical level, if we individually respect and connect to our wombs, as women, then we will hear what she has to tell us through every aspect of our experience of our menstrual cycle, through our experience of pregnancy and childbirth, and our experience of perimenopause. **She will tell us what we need to know.** Of course you can't view the womb in isolation, she is part of our whole being and may speak for herself or for all parts. And she may well speak on behalf of her **ancestors** and the **collective feminine** as well.

Let's call it womb-speak.

Listening to Womb-speak

We know that through the sometimes painful sensations, we experience during our menstrual cycle and during childbirth our wombs beckon us into another state of consciousness, she acts as a **portal** to an **altered state of consciousness**. Our wombs are a **threshold to our subconscious**, our **unconscious** and the **collective unconscious** – otherwise known as the other realms. The womb is the doorway to and home of the divine feminine, the Goddess, our inner Goddess. And in the pain is the invitation to go within, to hear what is to be heard to see what is to be seen and to feel what is to be felt. The only way to escape this invitation is to ignore it, drug it, numb it, and belittle it.

There has been lots written on the deeper meaning of the symptoms and pathology associated with the menstrual cycle, childbirth and perimenopause and the healing starts when the individual begins the **exploration**, the forensic archaeology of their **inner world** and the relatedness to their **physical outer world** experience. There's no right or wrong answers either, there is simply self discovery leading to choice and then self mastery.

Our collective wombs, women as a whole, are telling us through their womb speak that they will not be controlled, driven, drugged and numbed **without consequence**. We see this in the common stories on infertility and pathology and in our birth statistics. The womb will not cooperate with disrespect for her processes, be that the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and childbirth or perimenopause. We know that when we interfere with the process we see problems develop.

Reclaiming Feminine Power

I see and hear womb-speak too in the women for whom I am midwife and from the stories of the women who come to my “*Moonsong*” and “*Pregnancy The Inner Journey*” Workshops. The focus of these workshops is ‘**reclaiming feminine power** through reconnection with the women’s mysteries’, and so often a woman’s connection or reconnection to her feminine power is remade through a shamanic journey to her womb.

Journeying is like a cross between a self guided meditation and an awake dream. One either purposefully goes to a particular place, in this case the womb, or may arrive at other places known as the different **realms of our consciousness** and encounter **archetypal energies** and may receive information and **guidance**.

During pregnancy in a drum journey, a woman can meet with her baby inside and may have a blissful connecting experience. She may ask questions, seek guidance and or simply be reminded of the perfection of the process. Journeying to the womb when not pregnant holds the opportunity to be with one’s inner wisdom, inner knowing, or **inner Goddess**. She maybe consulted on anything and is always a source of right and perfectly timed wisdom.

From an energetic and spiritual perspective, I see the womb as the interface, the plane between the worlds, the border, the landing strip as it were, the **gateway for souls entering the earth plane**. And so it is a portal to the other realms. How we care for the portal will determine and effect how we land and take off. It will determine the efficacy, safety and clarity of the trip. And that trip maybe seen quite simply as the expression of our experience of life. We know also that how a baby is actually born impacts its whole life, we know that how a woman gives birth impacts her life as a mother. So caring for this process of birth for both the baby and the mother will have a huge effect and healing impact for generations to come.

Our Creative Process

Our womb also represents our **creativity**. She is the physical representation of the energy of the second chakra. This chakra is associated with birth, birth of babies, but also **metaphorical birth** of new aspects of ourselves, projects and ideas. When this chakra is healthy, we are tapped into higher creative energy, when it is congested we may experience a block in our creative powers and a sense of dryness or emptiness.

We can attend to the energetic aspect of our wombs in our daily meditations and by **bringing awareness** to ourselves in the **creative process**. How am I birthing this new idea, this new way of being. Bringing consciousness to our second chakra, and of course our first, we can do simple balancing techniques to address what needs to be addressed and seek further help if so required. Lots has been written on the chakras, how to **recognise blockages, and move them**. Again the healing and balancing happens once the owner of the chakra pays attention.

It is generally accepted in the field of Energetic Medicine that **physical symptoms arise** from an original situation occurring on the more **subtle energetic level**. Sometimes these situations are directly related in a cause and effect way to our individual actions right here right now and sometimes they come from effects of causes larger than our own actions, ones we may have little influence over.

And we know our thoughts and feelings effect us physically, so therefore respecting and connecting with our creativity, our womb energy, what ever shape or form our special creativity takes will effect us physically as well.

So how we treat our wombs, will effect our creativity in all aspects of our lives.

One of the simplest and most straight forward ways to do this is to listen to **what we are telling ourselves**. It seems that with the subject of creativity, that many of us have got some pretty derogatory internal stories going on, about how lacking in creativity we are, how we can't draw, sing, dance or creatively express ourselves in any acceptable way.

Just getting a grip on that poisonous self talk is enough to **change the energy** and therefore **change the matter** it creates.

Connecting With The Divine Feminine

So, respecting and connecting with our own individual wombs in all the ways possible can connect us with the **divine feminine**, with the **Goddess**, within and without and in Her realm of creativity.

And the ways to do this are simple.

- *Start by noticing what's going on, chart your cycle and all the changes you feel each day. Everyday is a different cocktail of hormones and so a different you. That's normal. Cyclical.*
- *Use cloth pads and collect your blood and return it to the Earth with prayers, as you pour your blood on a plant or the Earth speak what it is you want to let go of and speak what you want to bring new into your life.*
- *Honour and celebrate rites of passage, its never too late to honour your menarche!*
- *Gather in a women's circle and share the experiences of your cycle.*
- *Give birth trusting your body and trusting the birth process.*
- *Understand the fears you have around giving birth and track down the belief beneath the fear, you may find you don't even actually believe it.*
- *Negotiate perimenopause with the understanding of the deep inner journey it is, it is a labour and will result in the birth of a new you. Everything that has been swept under the metaphoric carpet in your life will be exposed, its just the way it is, it's a cleansing and purification.*

How does respecting & connecting with the womb impact our relationship with OUR PARTNERS?

Well when we remember the saying "Do as I say not as I do" then we will know that often the **root cause** for relationship issues is **the way we treat ourselves** not how others treat us. If we treat ourselves with

disrespect then it stands to reason that that's ok.

Our partners come to us from their mother's, their sisters and their previous relationships and how each of those women has been with her cycle will influence his or her understanding of what it means to have a cycle, let's call it the **wombdance**. And then on top of those experiences is the information past to us via the media. For men, the experience of the wombdance is unknown and **unknowable**.

The shared understanding of the impact of a woman's cycle is crucial to a healthy relationship. The single most influential thing on a woman's energy levels, her mood, her libido, her emotional availability, her everything, is her cycle, the dance of her womb. **Sharing the wisdom of our cycles** with our partners is what is required if we want the support we need. Simple.

How does respecting & connecting with the womb impact our relationship with COMMUNITY?

By connecting to and with and respecting and honouring our wombs we create community and culture. When we respect and connect with our wombs, we honour our cycles and we **consciously create ceremony and ritual** to do so. When we do this together **we create community and culture**. At menarche we welcome our daughters to womanhood, celebrating and honouring them, ready, willing and able to be the support they need as they **transition into womanhood**. We teach them what we have learned and we guide our daughters with women's wisdom. When we consciously create rites of passage for our daughters at menarche, for our mothers at childbirth and for our wise women at menopause, we inevitably create community and culture or society.

So if we do it consciously we gather likeminded folk and **co-create an evolution** from the dominant culture's dismissive-ness of feminine power. And in so doing we participated in the **healing of the wounded feminine**. When these rites of passage happen unconsciously, without consciousness at all, without honouring the transformation, then they simply **reinforce the current dominant culture** of disrespect for the feminine and wound her further.

The birthing practises of a culture reflect their attitudes to the feminine. If the collective womb, the feminine were honoured then the self would feel the ramifications of this in the way the feminine would be accepted, and acknowledge for what it is rather than what it is not. This of course would impact on everything.

How does respecting and connecting with the womb impact our relationship with THE EARTH?

I see the Earth as the womb-at-large. She, is the biggest picture of womb. Womb is a metaphor for Her and She is a metaphor for womb.

When you look after yourself you will be more likely to look after other, whether that be other folk, animals etc and or the Earth.

And quite simply when an individual woman honours her womb, through for example using cloth pads and returning her blood to the Earth, the Earth isn't impacted negatively by unnecessary waste and is instead **fed by her process** rather than polluted. And the womb-at-large, **the Earth speaks of this in her response** to the excesses of our polluting her or by **the way the garden grows** when she receives her daughter's blood.

When we know and live by the divine laws - *'all is one'* and *'as within, so without'*, then we know that what impacts one impacts all and we know that what's going on on the inside impacts, reflects, influences what's going on on the outside and visa versa. The Earth is our mother, we know that, and we know we've come just about far enough, some say we are even past the point of no return, others say, there's still time, but the point of the matter is that the treatment we've been giving the Earth, as a species, is **from a place of no connection and no respect**. And this isn't very different to how we've been collectively treating our own wombs and the collective womb that is women, and the feminine. We know the negative effects the dominant mainstream patriarchal culture has had, and continues to have, on the feminine and on the functions of her womb. She as an individual is oppressed, her womb functions are suppressed, not trusted, undermined and over ruled and over taken.

And nowhere else do we see this more clearly reflected in the way that humanity as a whole, not everyone, but enough to have a problematic effect, **treats the earth**. She is raped and pillaged constantly. We have fouled her waterways and her skies, we have cut or burned down her forests, we have sterilised her soil, we have lessened life on Earth. And what we are doing collectively to address this, to stop this ...At least we are communicating.

The state of the earth, the womb-at-large, is serving a necessary process in the evolution of humanity, Her humanity, and our many cultures. The situation is bringing us together across the planet, to **form one community**, to see and **address the needs of the whole**, rather than individual parts. This had to happen and one could say that She, the Great Mother Earth, the Goddess, has orchestrated this Herself. So all is as it should be. We are getting there.

The Way of The Cycle, The Path To Wholeness

During the final detailing of my answer to this question last weekend, I was in my bedroom on my computer, looking out at the garden I'd been weeding earlier and saw the grass taking hold again. Seeing the life bursting forth even against my wishes for its right placement, and I was struck by how this spoke of this subject. **Life will prevail**, it will always find a way. Our wombs will continue to be the teachers they are to us, even if we ignore them. For a few decades in our lives, over and over our wombs will take us through the cycle that is in fact the greatest teacher of all. To me, anyway, **the wisdom of the cycles**, the lessons within the way of the cycle, **hold the map**, the answers or more importantly the questions to help us in any situation.

As I wrote this, I was **midwifing** a beautiful woman, in 'early labour' we might say. Its her second baby coming. Her membranes have been ruptured for a day and a half, it looks like a hindwater leak, so that's less of an issue than the forewaters, she's been up all night with irregular contractions and she's frustrated, scared, upset and tired. And then as it always does, it comes down to her realising what she needs **to let go of to move on**. This is often the hardest question, the most avoided one and the most relevant one. Just like our wombs teach us, just like relationships teach us, just like the Earth with her seasons teaches us, to move to the next phase of the cycle, something needs to die. We need to let go of something or other in order for the new to have room to be, in order for the rebirth to occur.

Her dilemma is where to give birth, should she stay at home or should she go to hospital. And the letting go she needs to do is about how she'll judge herself for her decision. She went within to her womb to be with her baby and her baby said "be where ever you need to be". She decides, which in itself is actually one of the biggest parts for her, to go to hospital for the birth and within minutes the labour established with strong regular contractions and the baby was born three hours later in a birth pool in the hospital. It's the **self judgement** that can hold us stuck, on repeat, in the **'same old same old' pattern**. And then in our wombs we can find the next piece, in this case the simple 'whatever you need' reply, called her to be honest to and with herself, always the way forward.

So by respecting and connecting with our wombs, our collective womb and the womb at large, we might just hear, see, feel, and know what we need to know, whatever is the next step forward, individually and collectively on our **path to wholeness**, on our journey through life.

Our individual wombs will speak to us, the collective womb, the feminine will speak to us, and the Earth will speak to us. And all we need to do to hear and start the conversation is to **respect and connect** with the womb.

Blessed Be