

The poem "**Compassion**", (published in the collection of Miller Williams' poems, "**The Ways We Touch: Poems**") has these profound lines:

*Have compassion for everyone you meet,  
even if they don't want it. What seems conceit,  
bad manners, or cynicism is always a sign  
of things no ears have heard, no eyes have seen.  
You do not know what wars are going on  
down there where the spirit meets the bone.*

In a section of the "**Mahabharata**" (translated by Bibek Debroy) titled "**Markandeya Samasya Parva**", we read an illuminating conversation between a meat seller and a Brahmin (who, owing to his conceit, is asked by a lady to learn from the meat seller). Speaking about dharma, the meat seller says: "*The virtuous are those who are compassionate towards everything.*"



Painting by Pooja Bhatt

In **“Einstein and the Rabbi: Searching for the Soul”**, a moving book inspired by correspondence between Albert Einstein and a grieving Rabbi, Naomi Levy introduces us to the Hebrew word “husa” — *“a word that appears repeatedly in Jewish prayers.”*

*“What is husa? What does it mean?”*, the Rabbi Naomi asks. She answers: *“It’s not pity, not mercy....Husa is the special kind of love that an artist has for his or her own creation, even when it’s imperfect. That’s the key to husa. It’s a compassion for something that’s flawed. Husa involves the absence of judgement. That’s why Jews turn to God and ask for husa in their prayers: “The soul is Yours, the body is Your creation, husa, have compassion for Your work.””*

And what the person in such prayer hears is *“a voice of compassion that says: Try again, it’s okay, pick yourself up.”*

Peace ☐

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