

A Light in Disguise: The Inner Presence

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After the birth of my second child, Anand, in 2014 I was diagnosed with Bladder cancer. I was only 32 then. As grace would have it, somehow there was a great surety inside me that I have created the recipe for cancer and it is possible to look into it, understand it and heal it. I began some dedicated inner work. I mean what else I could do? I had no other option left! I had to now be honest to myself. If not now, then when?

You take up the spiritual path only when you feel you cannot do otherwise.

The Mother (CWM 14:29)

I slowly realised that all knowledge before that phase of my life was bookish knowledge, there was just a feeling or rather a burden of knowing however there was no real knowing in it. As I began some guided meditations with the help of my mentor/therapist, I realised there was so much inside me, jealousy, hatred, resentment, anger, limited beliefs and all the negativity that I can think of.

As Kabir says,

*Buraa jo dekhian main chala, Bura na milya koy
Jo man khoja aapna, mujhse bura na koy.*

(I searched here and there to find the bad in everything, I did not find anything bad anywhere, I looked inside my own self, and there, I could not find anyone worse than me)

Only now, it slowly dawned upon, why is it said that the other is a mirror? I have all that I see outside and blame or criticize. Indeed all the resolutions that needed to be done, all the unwinding of the knots, was inside me, and not outside. Inside was a chaos, entangled parts of being not distinguishable from each other!

At first it scared me. But slowly I let them be. There was now beginning to form a demarcation that I could let them be, and still be at peace. I could detach them from me, as 'not me' and therefore with this discernment, move on.

The interesting thing was, that I was wholly unaware of these contents within me before being struck with this huge giant in form of Cancer. It was as if my home had become a garbage bin which had allowed all unwanted guests who had started residing permanently in me, my being and I had no idea what ruckus they threw all around. All this garbage and a lot of chaos in my being was there due to lack of discernment.

Gradually through the inner work, going deeper into looking at my contents, I got the feel of a presence within me. I still cannot express it in words well, but after an intense surety of the presence being there, I somehow knew that this was the way. Who told me? No one! Yet this surety was too innate to be ignored. I could not imagine a life now without being aware of this presence within; it was as if the 'I' had found an anchor, a home and need not indulge in unnecessary struggles.

Imagine, having spent close to 30 years without that presence, I now just could not imagine life without the presence! I felt the presence very intensely at the heart level. There was a knowing that I should now take a back seat and let the presence take decisions to move on. And I did, or so I believe.

*Ek saadhe sab sadhe, Sab saadhe sab jaaye,
Rahiman moolhin seenchibo, phoolye phale aghaay.*

(Master the One, rest all with organise itself. If you try to master everything, you will be left with nothing. Says Rahim, only nurture the roots of a plant, it will give you fruits and leaves and flowers to your contentment.)

The One anchor, the strong solidity that was found as a by product of the illness, was that centre around which everything could now start to organise itself and integrate. The mind started to obey, the emotions started to obey and the physical at least begin to move forward in the direction of the driver. It appears almost effortless, just due to the presence of discernment. Discernment being there, no matter whether it is a bit difficult to implement, one moves ahead in a direction best suited for evolution and for progress.

Leap of faith:

I underwent two back to back surgeries in 2015 and a bit of treatment in 2016. This presence made possible for me a leap of faith, which otherwise I could have never imagined going through the surgeries cheerfully with a flame lit in my heart that every external happening is nothing more than a learning. The inner presence broke my thresholds, my limiting beliefs about hospitals and other things, and my previously held images about myself; it pushed me into a zone of living without definitions and labels on myself and others.

There was a clarity and discernment of not to think the thoughts that roam around floating here and there, everywhere. And now, Thoughts do arise about this and that, but now there is a surety that the thought flow is something separate from me. There is a strong knowing that I have the full right to choose, with my so called free will, to allow that thought flow inside my being or reject it. It was not before I found that inner anchor that I was able to keep the thought flow separate from me. As the inner presence made it self present, discernment was a by product of it. At the moment, garbage is felt floating outside, sometimes it may even visit for a moment, but it is not able to make my being its home. I have stopped entertaining them and making stories in my head, thereby polluting the mental environment. What I feel grateful about is that if not for this push, I would have never gotten a feel of this inner anchor, my true home.

The road is long and miles and miles to cover, but at least the journey has begun.

In the words of Kabir,

*Dheere Dheere Re Mana, Dheere Sab Kucch Hoye
Mali Seenche So Ghara, Ritu Aaye Phal Hoye*

(Gradually O Mind, things happen in their time. No matter gardener may pour hundreds of pots full of water on a plant, when the right weather is there, the fruit appears.)

It appeared to me as if I was thrust into Integral Yoga, without me even knowing it. It

became possible only due to cancer. Mother has warned us, not to take the things on their face value. In her own words:

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our superficial understanding. (CWM 9:34)

If cancer was taken on its face value, it had all the power to threaten me and instill fear in me. But behind the disguise of Cancer stood my life, waiting to be lived. From the beginning itself it was shown to me that cancer was nothing but a signal from the deepest being, a signal from the Universe to pay heed to something. One is born in this material existence and then very quickly one forgets the purpose of being born. Nature/Universe then gives us several reminders to get back to doing what we were supposed to be doing in this birth, Only if we pay attention to these signals in disguise.

Aspiration, Rejection and Surrender:

The Mother has also talked about Aspiration, Rejection and Surrender as important and indispensable steps of Integral Yoga. It was not before Cancer that I could even in the tiniest of bits understand what is meant by Rejection and Aspiration and I could not even fathom what Surrender is and surrender to whom? Slowly as I got in touch with that inner presence, Rejection and discernment were organic by products of an Aspiration that started mounting. I can say that there was no True Aspiration in me before the intense feeling of the presence within. It was only due to the inner presence that the Aspiration was aflame.

The Mother has clarified on what is Aspiration-

For the moment let us briefly state that a veritable aspiration represents the pure and sacred flame of the psychic fire rising from the depths of consciousness. But this fire envelopes our heart and mind and body too and then mounts upward with an unwavering orientation. Under its vivifying influence all the different parts of our being start aspiring in their characteristic fashions. (J.K. Mukherjee, *The Practice of Integral Yoga*: 37)

(I was introduced to Dynamic meditation by the Mother when I did the online course - New Creation of the Self, facilitated by Ameeta Didi, Gnostic Centre, Palam Vihar, Delhi. When I made Dynamic meditation a daily practice, I started feeling a lightness in my being, a certain Joy to progress. I sit daily, and scan inwardly the status of my being, the mental and the vital and the physical. Whatever comes up from either of these or all of these is offered in that sacred flame rising from the heart and going upwards as an Aahuti. All the praises, concerns, plans, ideas, obstacles, thoughts, issues, are put in the sacred fire as soon as they are noticed. The process has kept something alive within along with a certain lightness of being.)

Also, without cancer, there was no aspiration, there was no idea of what is this thing called the Divine? And appropriately enough, it has organically occurred to me that cancer

is the biggest gift I have got, which helped me to at least realise the importance of human life, before it was too late.

Maanush janam amol re, (human birth is precious)

Tu maati mein naa ghol re (do not waste it by scattering it around in mud)

But this urge to surrender, to consecrate, to bow down was not there before I was brought down on my knees. In the words of Mother herself: “Why should the sadhaka feel at all any urge to surrender himself to the Divine unless the fire of aspiration burns out the resistance and recalcitrance of his lower human nature?” (J.K. Mukherjee, *The Practice of Integral Yoga*: 38)

So, in me as well, there was no urge to surrender, and no idea of Divine or of Aspiration. In one of my meditations I was shown that lower nature in the form of ego is like a hard shell one has covered herself with. Because of the hard shell that we enclose ourselves in, there is no penetration possible of the Divine Grace present omnipotently; there is no seepage of the Divine grace into the being.

Kabir says,

aisa aisa kivad hivade par jadiya

Guru bina tala kaun khole?

Tharo raag hriday me bahar kyon atake?

(You have locked your heart inside so many doors, without a true guru who would open the doors of the locked heart? Your Ram is in your heart, why do you wander outside?)

Speaking on the essentiality of Aspiration, Sri Aurobindo says-

We can, simply by a sincere aspiration, open a sealed door in us and find... that Something which will change the whole significance of life, reply to all our questions, solve all our problems and lead us to the perfection we aspire for without knowing it, to that Reality which alone can satisfy us and give us lasting joy, equilibrium, strength, life. (CWM 9:374)

In our usual lives we are anchored outside, on our spouses, on our jobs, on money, on kids, on parents, on property etc. The inner anchor has the power to lead one to that Reality which alone is full of contentment, joy and poise and solidity.

Mother at another occasion says-

An aspiration is “an inner enthusiasm towards the New, the Unknown, the Perfection.” It is “a yearning, a longing for the contact with the Divine Force, divine Harmony, divine Love.” An aspiration is “an inner flame, a need for the light... A luminous enthusiasm that seizes the whole being... An unquenchable thirst, an elan, a luminous drive towards all that is high, all that is noble, all that is divine.” It is “a courage with a taste for the supreme adventure, the adventure of consciousness.” Aspiration is a “silently mounting column of fire that carries in its tip what one wants to be, one wants to have, one wants to do.” Finally, an aspiration is “a purifying Will, an evermounting drive.” (J.K. Mukherjee, *The Practice of Integral Yoga*: 43)

There is this strong solidity which arose naturally - about staying on this path, surrendering

more and more and intense knowing that this is the right path. With this, new paths open up, new people connect and new possibilities arise in concurrence with the Swadharma.

You no longer live like a little machine, hardly half-conscious. You want to feel truly, to act truly, to know truly... (CWM 9: 374)

The starting-point: to want it, truly want it, to need it. (CWM 9: 375)

My wanting/yearning could not initiated, if not for the heavy meteor thrown at my face, before which I was totally unaware of the fire within, a want to evolve within.

So, along with the initiation of an aspirational fire, discernment (rejection) came into light and surrender got connected along with these two. A strong sense of a presence of something all knowing, all pervasive, to whom to surrender each atom of this being. It is a tumultuous and long road, but there is a certain innate Ananda on this way. Ananda that was missing from my life before cancer, a joy which is independent of the external happenings. With this feeling of a joy and a continuously deepening process of surrender, life can be lived, life has a meaning, an aim. The Mother has very clearly said- “An aimless life is a miserable life” (CWM 12:3). So was my life, full of misery in oblivion, until I found myself being blessed with a purpose.

Connecting the Dots:

Now, It was only when I was opened to the vastness of the philosophy of Mother and Sri Aurobindo did I realise that this inner presence is none other than the Psychic. Somehow dots connected. Something told me that the inner presence I have been jolted awake to, is the Psychic only, else how could this fire arise? How could this tail of a dog try now to straighten up? How is this magic possible? It must be something powerful and wise that has done this impossible thing!

In the words of Sri Aurobindo-

It is the Psychic that gives the true aspiration—if the vital is purified and subjected to the psychic, then the vital gives intensity—but if it is unpurified it brings in a rajasic intensity with impatience and reactions of depression and disappointment. As for the calm and equality needed, it must come down from above through the mind. (CWSA 29:60)

I see a lot of stuff to be transformed in my being. Vital, Physical, Mental; yet there is also a strong hope, the hope is linked tightly with the presence of the Psychic- which is the source of True Aspiration. Vital does try and make a show whenever it can, but then thanks to the noose of Cancer hanging over my head, vital gets subjected to the Psychic force only. I feel that in my thirties now life has just begun.

