

## How I came to the lotus feet of the Mother...

*Monica Gulati*

One thing of which I am certain is the state of consciousness I was living in, especially from the time I got married. I married the person who I loved and deeply connected with from the first day itself. But Indian marriages come with a bonus of relatives, the immediate family and the so called responsibilities associated with Indian daughter in law.

Somehow I soon began internalising the thoughts of everyone around me. What others may be thinking of me, what would that mean, what is the implication for future, what is the image they have about me, why did one say that, why did one did not say that, what was the need of this, why was that required, it could have been said in a different way, why this, why that? Etc. etc. I did not even realise that I had started to live in the mind of people around me. I was not in my body. My body was abandoned. And my mind was cluttered with thoughts from everywhere. There was no stillness present in the mind, apart from some temporary miniscule durations.

If I look back at my state of consciousness back then, I can see that there was nothing Higher in my life that I had occupied myself with. No wonder that I was full of rubbish from everywhere. I hadn't begun consciously on a path that I can call a spiritual path or a path of sincerity.

So, in the year 2014, after delivering my second child, Anand, within a few months I was diagnosed with Cancer of the Urinary Bladder. The symptoms had been there, which I had been ignoring for a long time, until a time came that they could not be ignored anymore. When I got an ultrasound done, the Doctor observed some growths in my bladder, which did not look very nice.

Pretty soon, a surer diagnosis befell upon me, Bladder Cancer. Time stopped, all the happenings around did not matter, just this mattered. I think, it seemed that was the first time I got a taste of being with myself, being self-absorbed. As to attend to this emergent issue, all my consciousness was now suddenly bundled up, which usually remained scattered all over, in thoughts, people, situations, past, future, planning etc.

There was a knowing from within that this has been created by the concoction of my own emotions, and it has something to tell me. I don't know how that strong knowing came into being, but it was there throughout. An intense aspiration to resolve and decode cancer arose from within. I did not know of this word 'aspiration' back then, but now if I look back, it seems to have been that only, fuelling my intensity to decode and seek help in unmasking what my life wanted to tell me.

Responding to my aspiration, grace gave me all the possible help, in terms of family and mentors. With the help of a therapist, I began taking sessions in order to get in touch with my inner self, and what it was trying to tell me through cancer. I got to know how much anger was suppressed within me, in oblivion. I started looking at my life, my thoughts, my body, my being, more closely, more intimately, with sincerity, attention and honesty. It was as if, now I had to, there was no escaping this. I had to become aware of my shadows and own

them like my kids, without judging them for who they are according to social conventions and definitions. Jealousy, hatred, anger, anxiety, restlessness and their seeming opposites were present in me, all at once. The beauty was that I did not need to hide from them, or save myself from them, or ignore or neglect them anymore. It had to be a choiceless acceptance of all of them together.

Something in me felt whole, complete, after I recognised and validated my shadows. The fear of them being in me, went away. Through these sessions and experiences, I felt a strong presence, as if trying to come forward, at the heart centre. Something told me, strongly, “This is your home. You just need to be here, no matter what is going on.” I don’t know how this certitude came about? But I followed the dictates, I could not ignore them. It was a point of no return for me. As if something had been transformed irreversibly in me.

While all this was going on, in the year 2016, I got my elder one, Chinmay admitted to Lavenir pre-school run by The Gnostic Centre, Delhi. Until now, I had no idea about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I just knew that this was alternative, holistic education, which is what I wished for my children.

While the kids were in the school, I began visiting the library at the Centre, and slowly started picking up interest and fondness for the Mother’s words. In the course of 2-3 years, I did two courses on knowing one’s own self from the Centre. There, through the texts and readings I got to know of the word ‘Psychic Being.’ Something in me deeply knew that it was the psychic that I felt at the heart centre.

The beauty that I got to know through the readings was, the game had just begun. As if all until now was just a dress rehearsal for the life to begin. Slowly the intensity of the faith increased organically, no one asked me to do that, it just happened effortlessly, naturally.

I began to get in touch with and initiate the process of discovery of, the parts of my being through the talks and texts of the Mother and then slowly started sliding towards Sri Aurobindo as well. I was amazed at how much work was waiting for me. I felt as if there is no end to this huge path of discovery that I could fathom. That made life very interesting for me. Each moment, each day is a surprise, is pregnant with the potential of revealing something new, resolving the knots within me, of which I am even not aware of.

The book *Integral Healing* - a compilation of the words of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on health and healing, was something that I stumbled upon and resonated deeply with; its words struck a chord with my heart, owing to my own journey with cancer. If not for cancer, the book would have just been an intellectual burden on my head and not a lived experience.

I feel immense gratitude towards cancer which brought me to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I don’t know how on earth was I going to move in this direction. Gradually I am feeling more and more connected to their teachings and making them seep into the daily life, utilising them to understand my own contents, many hidden so far, some not so hidden, some getting revealed layer by layer. This process of exploration now is Life itself. All the external happenings just then become a way to deepen the process of this exploration. There is immense joy that I feel connecting with the fellow travelers on this path of self-exploration,

so meeting fellow travelers, seekers and having discussions and sharings with them is a major part of my present Life right now. I engage myself in running a few WhatsApp groups for fellow travelers, where we share each other's learnings and queries and discuss Kabir and other mystics there, in relation to our daily lives. There is a Kabir Circle that we run twice a week in our apartments and sing and discuss Kabir's bhajans and couplets, all in relation to our practical daily challenges in life.

It is a journey which has just started and is full of new revelations for me every day.

“All that was found must again be sought,  
Each enemy slain revives,  
Each battle for ever is fought and refought  
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one  
And the Titan kings assail,  
But I cannot rest till my task is done  
And wrought the eternal will.”

*A God's Labour (Sri Aurobindo)*

## **Living within**

If we learn to live within, we infallibly awaken to this presence within us which is our more real self, a presence profound, calm, joyous and puissant of which the world is not the master - a presence which, if it is not the Lord Himself, is the radiation of the Lord within. We are aware of it within supporting and helping the apparent and superficial self and smiling at its pleasures and pains as at the error and passion of a little child. And if we can go back into ourselves and identify ourselves, not with our superficial experience, but with that radiant penumbra of the Divine, we can live in that attitude towards the contacts of the world and, standing back in our entire consciousness from the pleasures and pains of the body, vital being and mind, possess them as experiences whose nature being superficial does not touch or impose itself on our core and real being.

*Sri Aurobindo*