

Meeting the Divine Mother

Taruna Nagpal

I have been seeking, seeking something for as long as I can remember. I did not know exactly what it was that I was looking for, but there was a constant pain, that I found in myself. Something that kept pricking at me, saying “this cannot be the reason why I was born”. I tried various things, changed three schools, two universities, two countries; switched professions and changed several jobs. Met someone, fell in love, fell out of love but nothing changed.

Then came along my son and since his birth, my accountability from myself increased. It was like, I have to advance, I have to know, it's even more important now so that I can show him the way. Soon, while looking for a school for him, I discovered Shikshantar, a school based on the Mother's teachings. I had not known the Mother before; I had just heard the name of Sri Aurobindo and that's about it. This was me, less than three years back.

Then one day, a close friend asked me if I would like to pursue a course, she is pursuing from the Gnostic Centre in Delhi called “The New Creation of the Self”. After refusing her thrice as nothing in the course structure made clear sense to me, I found myself enrolled in the course. It was then that I was, for the first time, formally introduced to the Mother. The course was good, the material was both intriguing and challenging but it was not until I got stuck, at the topic of the final dissertation, that I actually entered the course fully. Under the guidance of Ameeta Didi, our course facilitator, I read a lot of journals and books and finally found myself much closer to myself than I had ever been. The topic that I stumbled upon was “Lightness of Being ~ A personal guide for living freely”. Once I was finished, I did see that some light and freedom had entered in many parts of my life. I didn't know it then, but the Mother's magic had begun.

Things started changing in my life, bit by bit. The aspirations, the offering, the prayers, were now a part of most days. Though not very structured, but somewhere they had become a part of me. I often found myself praying “*Dear Mother, make me a perfect instrument of the divine*” and following it with “*I am ready*”. I did not know what this meant, what was it that I was ready for. But something in my, kept saying this repeatedly to the Universe ~ *I am ready*.

That is how, the morning of October 4, 2019, a seemingly normal day ended, with prayers, meditation, aspirations and the final I am ready. I was travelling with my family and was in Goa. I was accompanied by my mom, my husband, my 5-year-old, my sister in law, my 3-year-old niece and my brother. My brother Chaitanya, who had planned the whole trip and forced everyone to join him. We had planned trips together before, but they never worked out, but this time, my brother insisted - I am having a strong sixth sense he said, that this time, we will make it. It was our 3rd day in the city, it was a hot day, but he had heard in the weather forecast that it will rain and that got him excited. Like a kid, he was waiting for it to start raining so that we could go out and enjoy the beach. And at last it did, in the last afternoon, it started to rain. He got super excited and asked all of us to head to the beach, which was about 50 meters from our beach-house. The sea was rough, the red flags were all around, marking it as dangerous to enter water. The family was divided here, half of us in

knee deep water and half of us, about 80 meters away sitting on a log and watching the waves. I was shuffling back and forth between the two groups. After sitting on that log for some time, I decide to get back into the water, where my brother and husband were standing. I got up and suddenly I felt myself thrown back with a tremendous force. There was a complete silence, a void and then I found myself in what I can best describe as a small tunnel, and a force was pulling me, in an upward direction, away from the beach. It was like a vacuum that was sucking me in. It was really peaceful, all calm and quiet, except I was wondering all along, about what was happening? As I was being pulled, I suddenly heard my son, very close to me, saying, Mumma are you okay, Mumma open your eyes. It was a soft voice that had a lot of fear in it. As soon as I heard the fear in his voice, my upward pull stopped. Then a sensation, a question took over, it was as if I was being asked to decide whether I want to go up or go back down? I did not answer, but I did want to reassure my son that he was alright and there was nothing that he needs to be afraid of. I tried to speak and as soon as the desire to tell him this came to my mind, suddenly I found myself going back down in that tunnel, through the void and I was back in my body. When I opened my eyes, I was lying down on the beach, I found my son, crying besides me and my husband was on top of me, hitting me hard on my face and shouting at me to open my eyes. Apparently, he had been at it for about 4-5 minutes.

As soon as he saw I was conscious, he asked a few bystanders to stay with me and he ran towards the water. I realized I could not move, I did not have control over my body, neck down and I could hear a huge commotion and lots of shouts and cries saying Chetan (my brothers nick name), please get up. Apparently, Chetan was lying unconscious on the beach. Lifeguards were trying to revive him, but there was no success till now.

I could not understand, why everyone was creating a ruckus. It's just happened I thought and of course he will get up. I was then informed by the bystanders who were sitting with me, that there was a lightning strike and the lightening flash had apparently hit my brother and me.

Then finally the Ambulance arrived and my brother and I, were carried towards it. During this time, I started feeling pain in my upper body, that I realized probably meant that sensations and movements were returning, and they did. Once in the ambulance, I was able to touch my brother's leg and I held it and prayed and prayed to the Divine Mother, that please Mother, please wake him up. I was sure he will be revived; if I was sent back, I was given a choice, so would he. It was only obvious, that he will be given a choice to come back too. Meanwhile the ambulance was useless, it really did not have any life support systems and the paramedic on duty was a young girl, who was crying as she could not find a nerve to give an injection to my bother.

After about a 30 minutes ride to the only government hospital that they could take us to, we were taken out from the ambulance. After a short check up and a few injections, my brother was declared dead. Life was officially now over, for my good spirited, kind, big hearted, ever smiling 35-year-old, younger brother, who had a 3-year-old child and a pregnant wife. Did I tell you; it was his wife's birthday that day? My last conversation with

him was, him asking me what we should do this evening as he wanted it to be special for her. And I told him, just enjoy this moment, be here now and we will see what to do later.

In the hospital, everything was a bit hazy, it seemed unreal. It was like, I was there in body, I could see what just happened, but my emotions were alright, I felt no pain. It was as if I was inside the picture but was removed from it. Almost like, as if nothing was happening to me, things were happening around me. I was stuck in time and everything around me was moving too fast. I was in some new state of mind ~ there was a sense of calmness, oneness and expansion. It was like, something inside me was now wide open, my inner space had expanded, and everything seemed okay. Like there was a reason for everything and the universe is so big, and I should stop trying to reason things in dark with just a small torch, in my hand. I could not see enough, all I could do was to have faith in the process.

Between getting transferred to a different hospital which had a good cardiac monitoring facility, I was able to call my sister from the ambulance. I told her very calmly what had happened and told her to come as we need someone here. My mother and sister-in-law were a mess we had 2 kids and with me in the hospital; we needed more hands on the deck. The word also reached my friend, a devotee of the Mother, who initiated a lot of prayers in various groups that she was a part of.

Meanwhile, I was alone in the government hospital and was left lying around on a stretcher in my wet beach clothes in the Emergency because I had no attendant. After some time, I saw my family come in for their check-ups as apparently lightening had hit everyone in different measures. They were devastated, crying with disbelief at the loss. I saw their pain and the pain of other around me, but nothing stirred inside. I spent the next 24 hours in that ICU, before I was transferred to a private hospital. That night in the ICU was something I would never forget. I had no attendant; my husband was going back and forth between everyone and I was mostly alone. I was mostly at the mercy of other attendants, whenever someone had time, they helped me by moving my stretcher from one place to other as required. When finally, I was in the ICU, I got a sheet to cover myself and the warmth felt good. I was given a pill to eat and since I had no water, the water bottle of the patient next to me was taken and I was asked to take a sip. That patient had TB; I took that sip.

The irony of my life hit me then, the unthinkable had happened, my brother, my little baby is dead. I am in a hospital, drinking water from the bottle of a TB patient, life had never made less sense and yet more sense than it did at that moment. I was being shown that things were happening, just as they are supposed to happen. I, who was often referred to, as Sanitizer Didi, was now being mocked by the universe, in a loving way. Having worked in super-specialty hospital myself in the United States, I had often wondered how people survive in Indian hospitals. I had wondered once, how does one ever leave an Indian government hospital alive? I was given the answer to that question that night. I felt a strong presence of Grace all around me, I realized that then, that it wasn't quality management, excessive hygiene, smart people, that keep people safe, that was running such hospitals. The divine was here, just as much as he was anywhere. The Divine Mother was here, just like she was everywhere. Running things in perfection. I bowed down to that presence.

Around dawn the next day, my sister finally reached the hospital from Delhi. She helped me change out of the sandy, wet clothes. She helped me pee in a bed pan, a pan, shared between all patients of the ward. Grace, it was beautiful. She expected me to break down now that she was there. She had been crying since she had heard the news. Instead, she tells me that I said to her that, whatever has happened is good, it will pull us all together. It will help us walk on the right path and help us remember the reason why we took this birth. I told her to be strong as she has to be the support of everyone, while I was there in the hospital.

I also have more visions of some conversations that took place, while I was not in the body. Some images of a face-less person with whom I was fighting, telling him that I should be the one who should be called, and my brother should be sent back. And how lovingly he explained to me that, my death would not cause as many ripples as that of my brother. He showed me, just how many lives were linked to my brother, much more than, were linked to me. Just how much opportunity there is for the Grace to work, if its him, it has to be him, he said. It has to be him. I have to be the one to go back and that's the reason why I was born. And back I was.

Having been born as a third daughter in an Indian household, I had always questioned why I was born. What was the need, I was unnecessary in this family, on this earth? I married my friend whom I knew for 12 years, who, I felt, saw me, validated me, but I felt unnecessary there too, as life changes and people have priorities, they move on. But it was after that incidence that I realized why I took this birth. I needed to be here now, I needed to be here not to be a support, but to show that we don't really need a support.

My physical recovery was really fast. I gained back all the motor functions. Even the doctors were surprised to see the turnaround in my reports.

A lot has happened since then. I saw, participated and questioned a lot of traditions, practices and ceremonies. I saw around me, fear, naked pain, resentment, anger and grief. I saw how people act, react and how for everyone, who is not sensitive this is just a story. I saw the vastness inside me, telling me that it's so vast that everything can be contained in it. At any given moment, I could feel extreme emotions and yet there was something inside me that was unmoving, calm and telling me to go live through whatever it was that I needed to go through. It told me that, that I can go and experience anything on the surface now, it won't matter, as there is stillness at the centre.

I now feel the constant presence of the Divine around me. I close my eyes and it's like falling into a state of meditation. The struggles and the chaos are still here, but most of the time, they do not feel heavy anymore. I can see that everything is happening as part of a divine plan and we can, live light. We can have lighter lives. A friend, a mentor, who had gone through a life altering experience herself, held my hand through all this. She heard me, she was with me in the pain of the reality and the joy of the Grace. She got me a picture of the Mother from the Pondicherry Ashram, a picture that had so much love oozing out of the Mothers eyes. A picture that is now in my Delhi home with my parents, a picture that tells me, she is always here. She is always there with them.

Life has changed, it still seems like a dream, but its also real. There are less definitions now, the definitions that remain, have changed. There are less boundaries, less fears and more courage than I have ever experienced. It's like, the stakes of everything around me have reduced, but the stake of my responsibility to my journey has increased. Its like, my mom said the other day, death seems more real now. This planet is rightly called Mrityu-loka and the only thing certain is that I will die. But now I realize that I will not die, this body will be left here, and I will be as I am. So, wherever I am right now, it better be the best I can be, as I would be with myself for a long-long time. In sickness and in health, in life and in life after death.

Thank you, Mother, for taking me under your wings and showering my life with so much love. Immense Gratitude.

At the Lotus Feet of the Mother

Arya Kumar Chowdhury

It was 1965. I was at Dhanbad (Bihar). My eldest sister (Pronoti Das) along with her family visited us on way to Pondicherry. They lived at Kargali Colliery (Hazaribagh Dist).

On their return journey they again visited. That day first time I saw Sri Aurobindo and the Mothers photographs. She gave me a toffee as Prasad, touched by the Mother.

After some time I saw an Ad. in "Betar Barta", a fortnightly, published by All India Radio in Bengali about monthly magazine "SRINVANTU". This ad. had photographs of the Mother & Sri Aurobindo. I cut the ad. and kept in my purse. I looked for this magazine in Bihar and Bengal but failed. Finally I subscribed it. It was edited by Sri Nikhil Kanta Gupta, Nolinida's brother. This magazine brought me near the Mother. At that time I was studying in B.Sc.

I planned to attend Auroville inauguration in 1968 Feb. But my B.Sc. final exam was declared in 1st week of March' 68.

In 1970 March I reached Nagpur. Suddenly on 14.08.70 I found a Sri Aurobindo Circle very near to my residence.

In 1971 Feb, first time visited Pondicherry along with others. I stayed at Park-a-Serbo and had the Mothers darshan.

In 1972, April, I stayed for a month, visited her room as well as had Balcony darshan. In January, 1973, I visited with my mother and had Mother's darshan. In 1973 I visited in 15th of Aug and on 19th of Nov.

Since then I am visiting every year, once or twice.
