

Akulina Vasilievna Vinokurov: Family and Love Give Women Strength

Akulina Vasilievna Vinokurov is from Srednekolymsk in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). She is the mother of three children and the grandmother of five.



Akulina Vasilievna Vinokurov described her parents' marriage as a love story that has lasted a lifetime. "It was interesting to know the beginning of it,"

she said. "They used to write each other for three years. Each of them has a bag of letters that was sent by each other. When they would meet each other in person, they were so shy they wouldn't even hug each other. But after three years, they decided to marry."

Akulina was the first and only child for five years before being joined by seven other brothers and sisters. "I was the first and most beloved child in the family. I was the eldest daughter in my family and most important thing for me was that I tried never to hurt my parents."

"My grandparents lived together for some 50 years and they had a very happy life and a lot of children. My great-grandmother survived being alone in the tundra and there was a big wind storm, but she survived. And after that she married and she had six children and she was very happy."

"In our family our mothers and grandmothers used to be the heads of the family. Our fathers used to hunt and provide food for the family and they had the same status. They were the head of the family too."

"We really love our children and we were brought up in a family that had a lot of children. We used to take care of them. My mother is 81 years old now and still she likes to see her great grandchildren. We are all like that. When we see these little children and they smile, and everything becomes beautiful again."

Akulina said she has three brothers: one is the head of the Emergency Ministry, another a policeman in a village and the third works in the administration of the

region. "My sisters are all doctors or medical workers. I have three children of my own. My son works in one of the shops with cars, one of my daughters works as a policeman and the other daughter is a student studying economics. And I have two granddaughters and three grandsons."

The most difficult experience in Akulina's life was the loss of her third child, who died at the age of 19 months. "It was a very difficult moment. He was placed in a hospital and was there for 30 days but nobody could save him. When he died it was the most difficult moment for the whole family. For two years I suffered a lot. I think the most important thing in that period is our family stayed together and we supported each other. And I worked a lot from the morning till the night and it was healing."

"We always visit his grave every year, and it has been 19 years since he died. Every year we go there. Now I have a grandson and his name is Damir, but sometimes I call him by the name of my son. It is very interesting how you react to that after all these years and you still remember everything."

For Akulina, family is the most important thing in life. "The couple should understand each other and support each other at all times. And the most important thing is love. If you have this feeling and you are loved, women get strength from this. And it is very important that people understand each other and love each other very much in all situations."

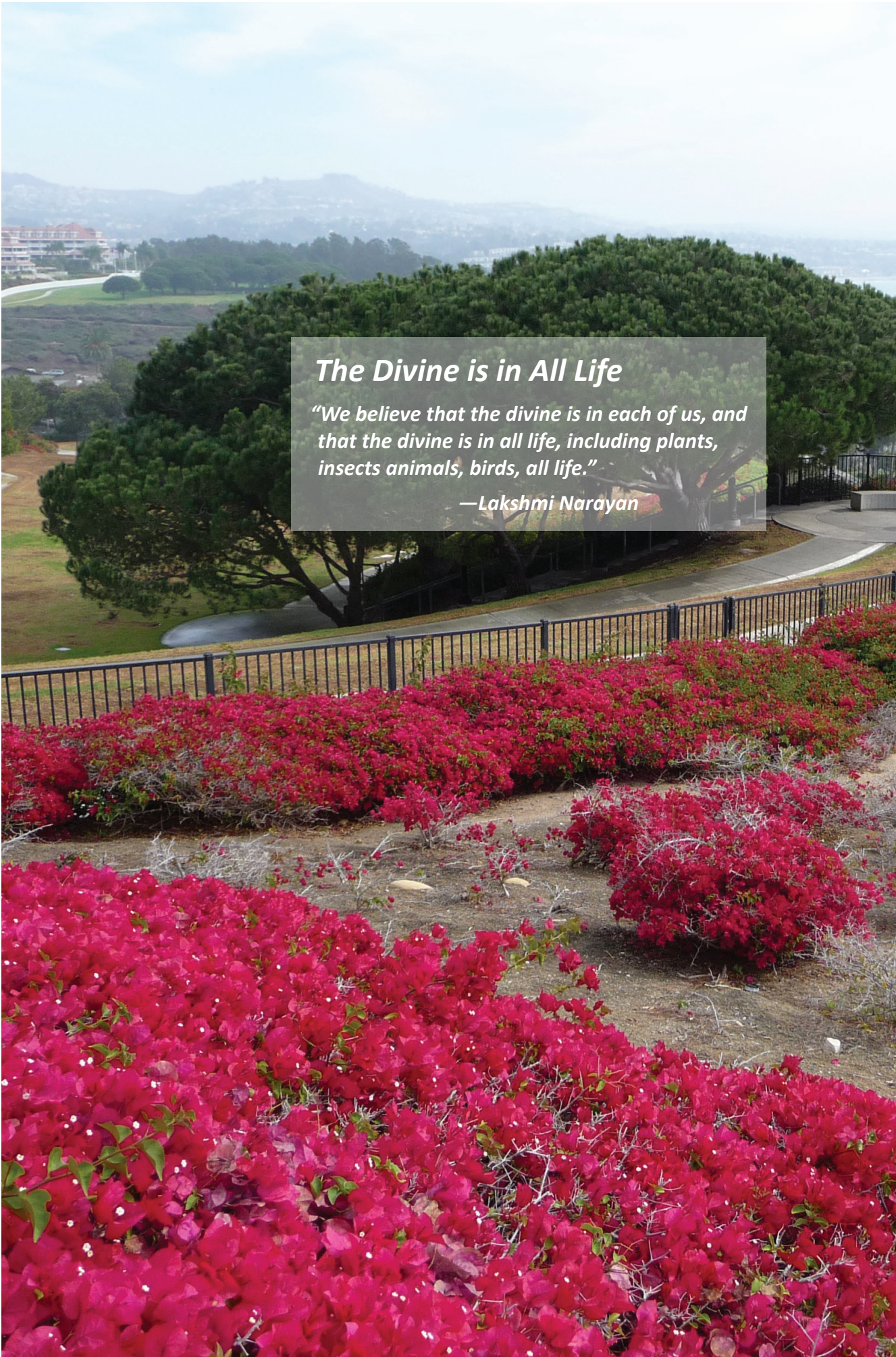
Akulina's happiness and sense of accomplishment also comes from her family relationships. "I am happy because I met a wonderful person and he is my husband. We never quarrel or argue. It is really wonderful to have this kind of family life when you both feel happy. And of course I am proud of my children when they achieve some heights in their own life. I am very proud of them too."

The Sakha culture of hard work and respect is an important tradition to pass on, Akulina said. "I advise my daughters to be industrious, to respect other people, to love other people and to love and respect Mother Nature. And it is important for them to learn to be able to forgive other people's mistakes and not to focus on other people's mistakes, but to be able to forgive them and to love them."

"I hope that they will stay in touch with nature and I hope that they will understand how important every moment is in their life, so that their days will be full of meaning. I wish them to meet their beloved husbands, to marry wonderful men and to have happy family lives so they will live to the moment to have their own grandchildren. I wish them to be happy too."

Akulina said she also wants her daughters to remember their family life growing up and learn from the mistakes of others. “They should try to avoid the kind of mistakes we made in our lives, and move forward.”

“I think we come here to become mothers and grandmothers, have good accomplishments in our lives, beautiful family lives and to build our families with good works.”



The Divine is in All Life

“We believe that the divine is in each of us, and that the divine is in all life, including plants, insects animals, birds, all life.”

—Lakshmi Narayan