

Tanshui

The Way of Tanshui

Fourth Book

MARIBOL SUN

Self-help and sharing book
Of the origins of the ancient art of Tanshui

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the Monks Fathers.



Muni
Silenzioso



Soma
Lunatico



Mandit
Luminoso



Arun
Solare



Vinay
Umile



Anshu
Raggio di Luce



Sharma
Grazia

Introduction

This is the story of Sonam, born 1,000 years after Christ in a village located along the river that separates the Indus Valley from the no-man's land. Arid and desolate lands often traversed by unknown invaders seeking fortune and easy conquests. Their passage, though brief and sudden, left behind destruction and dismay. The inhabitants, shaken by these repeated assaults, decided to protect themselves by taking turns mounting guard on the hills; at the first sighting they would sound the oliphant to warn people to hide in the forest.

Sometimes several days passed since the arrival of the looters, for this reason they built huts perfectly camouflaged among the trees, they gave them shelter, protection and a chance to save their lives. The river because of the many rapids was not navigable, but with the coming of winter it froze and it happened that scattered groups of adventurers tried to cross it.

After some of these unfortunate events, the inhabitants unanimously decided to leave their homes and move to the forest for good.

This choice proved difficult on the one hand, but strategic on the other, as the abandoned houses along

the river no longer attracted the interest of the invaders who continued on their way.

Unfortunately, a few years earlier, due to one of these intrusions, Sonam lost his family.

He was only 15 years old at the time and never knew whether his parents were kidnapped or killed.

The first few years after their disappearance he lived in limbo, torn between the pain of their loss and the hope of being able to hold them again.

From then on, life was not easy for him; he was young and alone, with the burden of a house to rebuild, a flock to look after and little money to spend.

Chapter 1

My name is Sonam, son of Yamir and Bimala.

After my parents passed away, my life changed dramatically. I became the shepherd of their beloved sheep, for me it was not just a job, but an act of affection and devotion to them.

I would have gladly left that place, but having to perform the same acts as them on a daily basis was like keeping them close and having them live inside me.

For this reason perhaps I stayed, to perpetuate their memory daily in anticipation of their return. Being a pastor I never considered it a duty or a sacrifice, but a distraction for my mind and a relief for my soul, especially when the thought, and it happened frequently, returned to those terrible moments.

The nefarious event happened on an ordinary day on a quiet winter evening. As I was making my way home, I noticed that the door was dislodged, left hanging by a single hinge. It was like a flag, moving back and forth to the rhythm of an eerie squeak, showing in places what awaited me. While I, seized with paralyzing fear, stood motionless by the side of the road. I don't know how long I stood there petrified, waiting for my heart to start beating again and my breath to return to my rib cage. Only later did I realize, that that standing still, meant

that I did not want to face the harsh reality. When I recovered, I slowly advanced to reach the front door.

Once inside, I realized what had happened, the pain was so great that that same day, in addition to losing my father and mother, a big part of me was also gone.

From then on I lived through very hard years, aggravated by the gossip of people, who questioned the veracity of my story. No one had been spotted, no trace left outside or inside the house, I had no witnesses, because being dark no one saw what happened, and I, reduced to that state, stated little or nothing about what happened.

I was in shock and behaved strangely as a result, perhaps it was because of this, that rumors and suspicions began to circulate about my possible involvement. Because of these rumors and backbiting, my life for some years, became a living hell. The dark mystery that surrounded me conditioned my relationships for a long time, became so much a part of my existence that I even began to doubt myself. I frequently isolated myself, fearing that I might cause discomfort to others, or act inappropriately and inappropriately. I sensed the judgment and disdain of people, who, believing everything they heard, took away my spontaneity and naturalness.

I became closed and distrustful, and to defend myself, I would punctually shirk invitations, parties and celebrations. I was supposed to be loved, consoled and protected and not guilty and repudiated by society. I ended up giving in to anger and frustration, which like vines slowly grew in me, coming over the years to cover every glimmer of light and hope of a normal life.

I loved being alone and walking outdoors in the company of my sheep and dogs. In those moments I would reflect on the meaning of life, fantasizing about my future. I would pet my two dogs, play a little with them, and the melancholy would disappear. Only they seemed to understand my true state of mind. I loved to see them running toward me and jumping happily and wagging their tails. They would rise up on their two hind legs to lick my face, and me, I would embrace them by rolling along with them on the grass. Their affection restored my joy and confidence in the world and in life. I would respond to their love with the love I lacked, feeling that I was still capable of real feelings and emotions.

The rumors against me, year after year, vanished like the snow that melts in spring gradually uncovering the mountain. And I too, like the mountain had the opportunity, one season after another, to reveal my true

personality. It was a slow and natural process as I had time to grow up and transform from a frightened little boy into a man.

I would soon be twenty-five years old, and our customs assumed that I was already married, or at least close to being married.

Could this have been the reason why everyone had become more open and kind to me?

Moreover, my business was going well, I now had a new and decent house, a vegetable garden, land, and I was certainly worthy of a young woman's consideration as a husband, although this task rested on my Aunt Amina's shoulders. Ella was my mother's sister and the only living relative I had, along with my two cousins. She was a kind woman who was widowed while still young and worked in a small store she had inherited from her husband. Her two sons, both married, had moved south for work. They rarely came to visit her, only now do I understand, that if it were not for me, perhaps she would have joined them.

Amina had watched me grow up, and after the misfortune that befell me, she was the only one who remained truly close to me. I trusted her and her judgment greatly, and so I entrusted her with the important task of finding a woman to whom I could

accompany myself. To my good fortune, Amina was very demanding, and no girl had yet won her over. For now, I had avoided that mortifying and tedious ritual, where the woman, becoming part of an arrangement, assumes the role of a bargaining chip. She was handed over to her future husband along with a dowry, and he was obliged to guarantee her maintenance and a decent home to live in.

A few supervised meetings and a brief engagement sealed the commitment made by both parties. Afterwards, a proper wedding would take place, on the day the village priest deemed auspicious, based on the respective horoscopes.

I was not happy with our customs, because love counted for nothing in such arrangements, while my only desire was to fall in love and have a real feeling, the kind that makes your heart pound and your head spin.

I felt I was finally ready to welcome another person into my life, but I longed to fall in love with her. Over the years I had made my house more beautiful, expanded my vegetable garden, had chickens for eggs, goats for milk and cheese, and from my flock of sheep I drew deniers and wool galore. I could have given a quiet and secure life to my bride, but if we had been in love she would have been happier.

In recent times I had become more open to relationships; I was also taking an active part in village life. I loved dyeing and weaving wool to create blankets and rugs of various sizes. I would study the patterns and color combinations and then weave the threads with the loom I had made for myself by the village carpenter. I would create square shapes that I would then sew together to make my handicrafts. Once they were ready I would deliver them to my Aunt Amina, and she would offer them for sale in her store along with other handicrafts. Since my abode was quite far away and in the hills, it was more convenient for people to go to her, both for orders and for picking up the goods. Although my house remained isolated from the others, I was the one who saw the most people. I was right on the way to the monastery, exactly at the fork in the road that went up to the monks' house on one side and down to the village on the other. This position allowed me to see the pilgrims coming to visit the monastery.

From time to time I would stand there lazily at the window, or in good weather sitting outside, watching a rather varied multitude of people slowly parading past my house. Out of curiosity, or perhaps out of boredom, I enjoyed watching the wayfarers, who, having arrived at the crossroads would stop to get their bearings and

rest. Sometimes I would catch myself studying them with much interest and attention. From their faces and bearing I would try to guess their place of origin, the life they led, the jobs they did and the reasons that had led them here. Perhaps they were aware that the monastery was not just a place of worship and recollection. A temple where they could make requests, pray and leave as they came.

The monastery was a gateway of heaven to earth, and the monk fathers were the guardians of that gateway.

Their task was to safeguard the Tanshui and preserve it. They taught it to a select few and protected it so that it would not be stolen, manipulated or lost.

We cannot even imagine how easy it would be to erase the truth, just change the story or refrain from telling it, but it would surely have been much more difficult to erase a code that heals the soul and whose testimony would remain forever in its devotees.

It was with this logic that Tanshui was handed down along with the cloths and practices. Tanshui was the mother of all languages, its power immeasurable, and its energy was the answer to every prayer or request, including the most intimate needs that often even we did not know. It was a testimony that the energy of the Source could silently take care of us; for example at the

monastery, in the regeneration room, I saw so many people crying and kneeling. I was a living witness to what Tanshui was able to do to people, because it had done it to me as well.

He had literally pulled me out of the abyss, out of a malaise that only those who have suffered not one but two losses can understand.

When, as an adult, I returned to the monastery, the wound left by my parents was still open. I had not yet been able to free myself from the suffering, but more importantly from the whirlwind of emotions that gravitated around it. I was going in and out of states of anxiety and agitation that guided my behavior and my life. I had become a hostage to my own emotions. After trauma, came rejection, followed by sadness and finally anger.

An uncontrolled anger that arose not only from loss, but also fueled by people's nastiness. All this led me to detest the hypocrisy of people, and the shallowness with which they could destroy someone's life, without feeling any guilt.

Mankind was lying, wicked and evil, for it even went so far as to kill its fellow human beings in unnecessary wars, justifying the evil it inflicted in the belief that it was absolved by the law of God and man.

Chapter 2

After a few months of canvas purification, meditation and body exercises, I had gradually come to a greater serenity .

Absorption in Tanshui practice chased away the feelings of discomfort I was experiencing, helping me to experience more and more of the presence of the divine within me. Even the memory of my parents had become less painful. I imagined them still together, smiling hand in hand; this was the vision I wanted to imprint on my

heart.

Calmness, love and nonattachment became the antidote and the opportunity to abandon pain. I took the courage to go where I had never gone: deeper into myself.

At first I was in pain, and sometimes in the throes of suffering or melancholy, I would manifest a lot of resistance to letting go. When I did, then bad images and thoughts would come to me. One in particular terrified me more than the others; it was a rather intrusive thought that repeated to me: "either death or light, either death or light," threatening me through a kind of ultimatum. This, was what I felt in my head at the beginning of my journey.

I lived daily under the threat of my thoughts, they came from nowhere and in nowhere they disappeared, but the worst one was "either death or light." At first I went through an up-and-down state in which I was given only two choices, and this of course terrified me. So before I threw my life away, I forced myself to gather all my strength to probe and overcome the limits and blackmail that my mind imposed on me.

I tried by every means and resource to defend myself against that army of thoughts that wanted me dead. To fight them, I created the right offensive consisting of light thoughts, which would have the task of defending

me from the dark ones. I began a war, a war that was all in my head, while my body was reduced to a battlefield. Every day was an unknown, every day brought back an injury, and almost every day I woke up in a different body, a body either old and tired or strong and vital. That struggle pushed me to the limit of my endurance, only to be able to surrender and relax.

Why was I generating those thoughts? Why was I following them? Where were they coming from? How could I silence them?

Dark thoughts were insistent, terrorizing you for attention, or deluding you into easy rewards. They anesthetized your senses to make you their puppet. At the same time your soul would get nervous and rebel, throwing truths in your face that you could not see or accept. The only way to be heard was to be stronger than all those lies. The soul would push you into the trap of evil to make you come to your senses and react. The soul was sadistic, mean, and angry against that stupid, weak, and indolent self.

She had to fight me every day just to be heard, struggling alone against my mind and tearing me from the threads of darkness. For this reason I understood that she was the light, the strong one, and I, who wandered in the fog, was the weak and willless one.

She was the one who defended me from evil and suffering, because she wanted to live peacefully and manifest her purpose.

I was nothing more than the medium she was using, I could either be useful or an obstacle to be eliminated, if I had not awakened, I am sure she would have.

I understood that I felt depressed and useless only because of him and in relation to the task my soul had chosen to perform on earth. It was clear that I had no choice.

If I wanted to be well, I had to become stronger, leave the past behind, and make my own path together with her.

Chapter 3

I began to practice through centering to be within the real me as much as possible. I wanted to come to enjoy the eternal present, the only space where God was acting to help me. I embraced Tanshui, or rather, he embraced me to bring me back to the Light.

When my mind would get stuck trying to stay anchored in the past or fret about the uncertain future, I would resort to Centering.

On the other hand, if I wanted peace, I would lie down

on the monk Muni's canvas and after a few moments find myself in a dimension of tranquility, where thoughts disappeared like clouds on a sunny day. Now it was light that shone and dominated my life; the darkness, anger and sadness were gone. Relaxation was spreading faster and faster throughout my body and I was floating in the lake of calm. I was living on the canvas precious moments in the company of myself and my soul, gradually achieving mental and emotional stability.

My reaction after the experience, in addition to amazement at the manner in which it took place, was one of pure gratitude, the true and spontaneous gratitude that flows from the heart.

The imprint of divine language imprinted on the canvas, interacted with our essence to align us with the true Self. It was a miracle granted to a chosen few, and I was one of them. As astounding as this process was, and at times hindered by the mind, it was real and no one could deny it.

I must admit that at that time, after my parents passed away, I often took refuge at the monastery. In addition to attending services open to visitors, I had begun practicing meditation with the mudras of monk Sharma and healing myself with the waters of monk Soma, also

known as "the moody one."

The monks became like my fathers, teaching me the right attitude, true feeling, correct practice and exercises of balancing the body. I hoped too, with time and dedication, I could achieve the four enlightenments.

According to the book of wisdom there were four levels of Consciousness: Universal, Divine, Supreme and Cosmic.

Man was allowed to access it through practice, of Tanshui, discernment, introspection, kindness and respect.

Tanshui cloths sped up this process. They awakened and elevated the senses, healing deep inside the karma and past traumas that hindered the evolutionary path.

Once purified, we could benefit from the universal magnetism that nourished us, increasing our love for ourselves and for a greater good. God was love, and He did not contemplate emissaries or representatives of His energy on earth, for He spoke to us through the soul.

The soul was her direct interlocutor and that is why she played such an important role for us. To listen to the voice of the soul one had to learn to quiet the mind. The evolutionary process was this. The rules were devised by man who believed, often mistakenly, that only through their application and observation could

enlightenment be achieved.

The truth is, man will never be able to read God's mind, which is why religions will continually fail.

For the monastic fathers, on the other hand, every human being who passed through the heavenly gates of the different levels of Consciousness could independently reach the promised land. God had given man the keys to his own freedom, but he could not find the gates, as he had lost contact with his soul and his humanity. Humanity was what man lacked most, and century after century, he was drifting so far away from himself that he completely forgot what he was made of. For this reason, it was impossible to draw up a rule that was the same for everyone, because everyone's tasks were unique, and all living beings experienced different experiences in relation to the evolutionary level they had reached.

Unfortunately, just when I was feeling better, because of my first disappointment in love, I abandoned my path. That experience plunged me back into a kind of depression.

Although it was only a platonic love, the fact that I was not reciprocated upon my declaration threw me into total despondency. After months of fantasizing about a girl and our future together, the world came crashing

down on me, leaving me not only with bitterness in my mouth, but also a total loss of confidence in myself and my judgment. I was angry at everyone, but especially at God. That God who had pushed me to open my heart and then thrown it away.

I had resumed hating myself and life, had fallen back into the spiral of self-harm without even realizing it.

The old habit of isolating myself had returned, and although from my house I continued to hear the echoing of the monks' chants and the ringing of the bell, I pretended that nothing would benefit me.

Out of my disappointment and frustration, I walked away from the monastery, my soul and everything introspective, healing and spiritual.

I chose the mind, wallowing in malaise and victimhood, and while my Aunt Amina consoled me, promising that she would find the right person for me, I deep down did not believe it possible. This state continued until the day Sri Anua Ananda knocked on my door.

Chapter 4

Life in these places was not easy, despite all the precautions taken, one continued to remain hostage to fear. Every day was a gamble and a plea to fate. Although the forested area protected us and the abandoned houses were a deterrent, none of us felt completely safe. We could not forget the looting, violence and abuse, because because of those events each of us had lost something or someone. The invaders had left deep wounds and traumatic memories impossible to forget. Now crossing the gaze of a stranger intimidated us, and this happened often, because of the pilgrims who came to the monks.

As soon as the lookouts spotted nourished groups of men they would alert us, and we would remain in the house in eager anticipation reciting the sacred mantras.

We were a peaceful people, disinclined to arms and war, we knew that struggle always leads to a winner and a loser, and we would have no hope of winning against a real army.

Every ruler promised to change things, but then no one cared about our protection and safety.

The excuse was that we were few and far between from the main cities, and no barracks or armies were stationed there to defend us.

Moreover, our roots were so deeply rooted in this land that no one wanted to leave, and perhaps for this reason, we felt very close and responsible for each other, so much so that years earlier we had helped each other rebuild houses in the forest.

My home was located on a rise overlooking the forest on one side and green pasture meadows on the other. The forest hid the house and the road, which was mostly traveled by pilgrims. It was difficult to spot people from the valley, and the monastery, which stood on the summit, was well protected.

The monk fathers and guardians of the ancient language did not care who you were or what caste, ethnicity or religion you belonged to, as long as you were kind and came in peace.

Tanshui was a blessing and the monk fathers the human

means of being able to receive it.

Over the years I practiced looking at travelers beyond their appearances. I often saw them exhausted from the long journey, sometimes sad and sometimes happy. Many kept their backs bent as if they were carrying large boulders on their shoulders.

I watched them gather the last of their strength to go there, where the soul was taking them, without them realizing it.

I would watch them as they wiped their foreheads or turned their gaze toward the summit, taking courage. Some seeing me in the garden would ask me how far it was to their destination, if the road was very steep and why nothing could be seen from that point. I was always glad to answer their questions, and if they were strangers, I did so if necessary even with gestures.

One day like many at dusk I heard a knock at my door. A middle-aged, bearded, light-eyed, smartly dressed man appeared. His name was Sri Anua Ananda and he was from the south. He expressed himself in an affable and kind manner, although he spoke our language with difficulty. He was clutching a map in his hands, and asked if it was correct to proceed in that direction, and if the way ahead was still very long. He also said that they were very tired and dehydrated. He spoke in the

plural, but next to him I saw no one. I for my part calmed him down, then took the pitcher that was on the table and poured water into a large bowl so that it would be enough for another person as well. When I handed it to him, I followed him with my eyes to see where he went. I saw him join a young woman standing on the side of the road beside two donkeys loaded with luggage.

She was petite, wrapped in an apple-green sari. A light veil of the same color covered her head and partly her face. I watched as she held the bowl to her mouth with both hands. She had taken off the veil and I was very struck by her large dark eyes, perhaps a little afraid, but very magnetic. Her long, thick, shiny black hair escaped from the veil and came to brush against her waist. As soon as she had finished, she returned the bowl to the man, who drank in turn, then looked at me and immediately lowered his gaze and adjusted his veil, and as the man returned to return the bowl to me, I could not look away from her. He thanked me and added that he would stay for a few months for the restoration of the monastery and that we would surely meet again.

I knew that the monastery was very old and needed fixing up, but what intrigued me most was the monks' decision to accommodate more students, since until

now only a select few had access to the school. Sri Anua Ananda continued his journey, but in my eyes remained the gaze of that mysterious woman who kept her distance from everyone. I watched them walk away, trying to figure out whether she had been the daughter or a maid, since she did not wear the sign of a married woman. As I saw them proceeding together toward the monastery I smiled, remembering when as a young boy, I used to accompany my parents to the evening service. Monk Sharma's was always the most beautiful and the most touching, because in addition to using the sacred and powerful mudras, at the end of the meeting he drew the air with Tanshui so many times that the heart, mind and spirit became intoxicated with joy.

Sharma, although he was the reigning monk, was very humble, and it was not a given to him that a blade of grass would grow among the rocks or that the sun would rise every morning. He was deeply grateful for every single thing in life; he considered it a gift from Cosmic Consciousness. For him, love manifested itself to those who wished to feel it, only then could you recognize it in its different forms and manifestations. Feeling love was the basis of the humanizing process of Tanshui.

Kindness and gratitude were the qualities of our soul,

and love was its nourishment.

If we wanted to interact with her we had to love her, perhaps loving ourselves more, confident that that energy would reach her and she would give us the answers we were looking for.

To do this we had to train ourselves by using God's language as much as possible, slowing down our minds and monitoring His interference in our lives.

Unfortunately, we were often too busy to do so, or misaligned with our soul's needs, so much so that we could not distinguish what was good or bad for us. The monograms and sequences of the Tanshui language had to be learned and repeated many times. All this so that our soul had been satiated with them to the point of releasing joy and gratitude. We would reflexively be happy and fulfilled.

Karma gradually resolved itself and we learned not to generate more by observing the principles of Tanshui, confident that one step after another, and without effort, we would embrace what was already ours: our soul imbued with Cosmic Consciousness.

When could all this have happened to us? The moment we had been "present" in the present, in that space that few knew how to savor and enjoy. Although every moment called us to live in the present, for many it was

absurd to consider the now a gift. The gift God had given us to confer with our souls, and if we were lucky, with Him as well.

The mind was constantly dragging us into the past or the future to take us away from the love of the universal energy, the love to which we were all entitled, but why was it doing this? To keep us from feeling it and to keep us enslaved to its whims, sometimes very evil ones. If you lived in the present you were more awake, more lucid, you possessed discernment and noticed everything, as if you were experiencing an expanded reality. Perceiving life in a more amplified way you desired to experience only beautiful and harmonious things, otherwise you suffered. Darkness, on the other hand, made you run away from the present, because otherwise, you would realize that you were not being yourself, not being happy, not being free, but most importantly, not living your true life. According to Tanshui, the only thing that belonged to you was the present. The present was the dimension of the chosen one, past or future dimensions were illusions, if you worked well in the present you already held the past and the future. Only by having faith and confidence in your abilities, and giving your best in the here and now would you have no regrets or remorse. Everything else was

fear or illusion, these two things were not part of the plans of Consciousness.

To learn how best to live in the present, the monks taught us how to enter a sacred space, a place dear to us all: our heart. It not only pulsed the blood necessary to keep us and our souls alive, but also preserved and protected the seed of light of who we were. Our true identity, lived in there, together with our soul. The soul was the star to follow in the firmament of our sky, it was the right path, the teacher from whom to learn and to whom to devote our whole life. If we had come this far, it was because of her, and to her we owed everything.

Under his supervision we would be able to access the four realms of Consciousness: Universal, Divine, Supreme and Cosmic, and know the difference between darkness and light, truth and lies.

Our human essence would merge with that from which the Universe had originated, and every step in this life would have meaning. Spiritual fusion was our direction in life and loving detachment the necessary way to deal with it. We had to get busy in order to become complete, conscious and evolved human beings, but above all: free beings.

Consciousness, did not desire man's subjugation, but his awakening and liberation from evil. Evil that man often

inflicted upon himself or did to others because he was unaware of his true purpose on earth.

For this reason God was urging him with continuous lessons. He desired to help him awaken from the torpor that kept him from his soul.

But it was not God who wanted control over man, that was man himself, who had succumbed to attachment, power and money. God did not command, man did, without considering that he who sets himself up as a ruler must also know how to govern and please his people. However, this never happened because of his wickedness and greed, and for this reason the world was in chaos.

Over the years I had learned many things from Tanshui, but my resistance was still quite strong. At that thought, I wondered where it came from, and why I had nurtured it for so long and then had no benefit from it.

I don't know what happened to me that day, but I received a real jolt from the gaze of that mysterious woman. It was like an earthquake, which in an instant brought down my barriers, awakening me from my torpor.

I felt an ardor and passion that I had never felt and that triggered in me a desire to know who he was. His eyes dug so deep into my soul that they saved me from the

swamp I was sinking into.

I saw it.

She saw me.

Chapter 5

At that time, because of my reluctance toward the spirit, I would just deliver milk and wool for weaving to the monks. I would stand at the entrance, drop off the goods, collect the money, and leave. At the entrance on the left was a small room designated for visitors. In turn, one of the monks would allow patrons to purchase the cloths, incense and other items intended for the care of the body and mind. The courtyard was rectangular and featured a small square flower bed that stood in the center. Inside it towered a large tree and at its foot was a statue of the little mother.

As I waited at the entrance, I often found myself lingering over the trunk of the tree; it seemed to be carved by the skilled hands of a skilled carpenter. Instead, it was Mother Nature who had created it and continued to care for it since I was a child. The tree knew it had a mother, who, fortunately for it, would love it until its last day on earth. Nature never

abandoned any of her children, and as the monk Anshu said: nature is the mother of your mother, your father and your ancestors, she is the mother of us all.

For two years now, I had not taken part in the functions and activities of the monastery. I had been nostalgic for the monks, the chanting and the lessons that took place within the school, which since childhood, I had been allowed to attend. My destiny in the planets revealed that I should take the spiritual path, but I had not yet felt that call. By now I had turned away from myself, from everything that once made me feel good. My soul had probably been hiding in some corner, just sitting there waiting and watching me, conveying a sense of emptiness and worthlessness.

On the way home, accompanied by my little donkey Tuki, I used to stop and chat with the elderly janitor who lived in the house adjacent to the monastery. I called him several times, but he did not answer. I realized that it had been a while since I had seen him around, and I hoped that something had not happened to him. Kalu, he was a sociable and kind person, used to light lanterns on the side of the road at nightfall to enable travelers to get to the monastery. The road had been formed by the passage of people, who, day after day, had taken care to move even the boulders that

obstructed it. In the darkness of the night the milk-colored lanterns scattered along the way resembled stars, little stars that welcomed you into the sky. At the sight of them the soul rejoiced, preparing you for the embrace of Consciousness and its pure and selfless love. I missed that coming home so much, I missed that loving embrace, the one that does not judge and like a mother forgives you everything, even the disappointment and abandonment. Now more than ever I felt that I needed to love and be loved, to manifest that strength that would drive me to invest in my life. At this thought I heard loudly in my heart the words, "She is the one, she is the woman you are looking for." I had to find it.

The next day around dusk I walked at a brisk and determined pace to the monastery. I tried to cover the road as quickly as possible, and as I hurriedly passed the gate of the gatekeeper's house, I noticed her. She was there before my eyes, and although I saw her from behind, I recognized her. She was arranging in front of the front door, a curtain of red fabric decorated with a golden painting.

From a distance I could not see the contours of the decoration well, but I could see that it resembled the ancient, faded painting on the ceiling of the meditation

room. She reentered the house and I continued toward the monastery. At the entrance I met the monk Arun, who, seeing me without merchandise, greeted me surprised but also with a big smile. As he approached, he called me twice, "Sonam, Sonam! Omkitan dear brother, how nice to see you! What are you doing here at this hour?" bringing my hands in prayer I replied, "Omkitan monk Arun, I am here for the evening service," "how so?" he replied, "to be honest at this time I miss practice a lot and I feel quite lonely", "you are not lonely dear brother, maybe sad or melancholy, but you know we are never alone", "I know this monk Arun, for this reason I am here today", "well dear brother, the doors of the monastery are always open and they are open in both directions, for those who want to enter or leave. Actually we are the liberators of your souls and we give you the keys to open the doors for them. All of life is a path to liberation," and smiling he added, "hoping it comes before that to which we will all land." I greeted the monk Arun and entered the meditation hall after removing my shoes, washing my hands and face and placing my left palm on the purifying stone at the entrance. I bowed and raising my head, I looked for the mysterious woman with my eyes. I recognized Sri Anua Ananda instead. He stood to my right, sitting in

the front row; I decided to join him and sat behind him. We were divided into two rows, the women on one side and the men on the other. I never knew whether this separation was to be attributed to a cultural, energetic or spiritual reason; in any case, I could not see the girl until just before the opening chant. The silence of the hall was interrupted by the distinctive ringing of bells from an anklet, I turned around, and out of the corner of my eye I saw her coming as she slowly walked down the center aisle. She was beautiful, with her hair down and all dressed in purple. She stopped, stood before the monks, took in her hands the arathi tray that a woman to her left handed her. On the plate rested five candles, some flowers and incense.

The service always began with an opening chant accompanied by the arathi, usually performed by a woman who rotated the tray as a sign of offering and devotion. Today that woman was her, and bathed in that dim light, I could see her face better. She was calm and at ease, with half-closed eyes exuding a great sense of calm and devotion. Her face seemed familiar, as if we had met before.

When he sat in the front row, after placing the tray in front of the statue of Paramah Shivam, the first Tanshuist monk, he turned around.

Our eyes met, that moment was enough for me to realize that she was the woman I had been waiting for. Monk Sharma intoned the aum, followed by the blessing of heaven and earth. We practiced mudras and the meditation of silent contemplation. Listening to silence was an important practice, because you could tell right away if you had gotten rid of some harmful tendencies. The monk in charge, aware that not everyone spoke our language, did not go into much discourse. Those who knew the practice performed it, the others closed their eyes remaining in absorption of the energy that flowed from the practice.

After the closing chant, the most anticipated part was the granting of grace through Tanshui. It changed from time to time, as the monk on duty, guided by Consciousness, bestowed it according to what the people present needed most.

After so long, the ritual seemed even more powerful and engaging. I felt myself being shaken to the core and freed from the chains I had built for myself. As the monk moved his hand drawing the air, I saw some people smiling and others crying, many lying relaxed and others huddled together, caught in ecstatic raptures they turned into babies searching for a womb. I cried with joy because I felt that I was finally letting go of my

resistance and fears.

These effects were manifested when the Supreme energy decided to liberate man from the oppression of the ego, which overstepped the boundary she had established and tyrannized the unfortunate man too vehemently.

The releases were something extraordinary and emotionally comforting, one could feel the air turn from heavy to light and long faces turn into smiles and clasped hands of sincere gratitude.

God's language brought you back into the light of immense joy and love for life. He was opening the door of the Self to you by tearing you away from ill feelings, false beliefs and family, cultural and religious conditioning. All those constraints had been created by man to make us feel small and subservient to his power. Liberation from the chains of suffering also meant liberation from the illusion of being separated.

Separation was the most terrible snare used in controlling the masses. Everything was of sublime mystical intensity. The service always closed with arathi, and that evening she rose again.

Unfortunately, once the ceremony was over, she walked backward and disappeared.

All that was left for me to do was to inquire about her

from the monk Arun, who in reply said to me, "dear brother you may not have heard, but the janitor left us many days ago and the girl is now living in his abode, Sri Anua Ananda has not allowed her to settle here, because many men will be coming up to work and they will not be people of these places. The arrangement we have made is that she will attend classes, in exchange for help with daily chores. I don't know much else because I haven't talked to her yet."

I must admit that after the heartfelt sorrow over the death of the janitor, I left a little disappointed.

But that evening had been intense, a true return to life. I felt that I would finally wake up the next morning lighter and with a desire to live more positively.

Chapter 6

For a few days I continued with my usual routines: house, sheep, garden, milk and selling wool. My existence flowed quietly, and in the evenings I continued to attend the monastery. Unfortunately, however, at the end of the service, the girl would disappear and I could never meet her.

I walked past his new house, stopped, but with the curtains drawn it was virtually impossible for me to make out anything save the flame of a burning lamp and a shifting shadow.

No clue to me who she was, where she came from, and the nature of her relationship with Anua Ananda. She was definitely not local, because I never saw her speak to anyone. She probably did not yet know our language, but I was sure that in some time she would learn it so that I could finally meet and talk to her, again with Anua Ananda's approval.

Sometimes that one thought was enough for me to change the course of my day. I had learned to be patient and enjoyed that waiting as the prelude to our future meeting.

I noticed that I was smiling again, that I was more dynamic and active. A transformation was taking place in me that was manifesting itself on the human and spiritual levels, confirmed by my newfound will to live

and elevate myself.

That morning I went to the market, the one held once a month. In addition to the usual fruit and vegetable stalls, vendors were added who enriched the offerings with more renowned and imported products. It got interesting when new products were found, such as aromas and spices, essential oils, precious stones, shoes and fine fabrics.

I had learned a lot about fabrics from my uncle who was a tailor, and he would often take me along with him shopping. Usually, he would stop at the most beautiful stalls, and together we would select the most elegant fabrics, which he would buy on commission to make formal dresses.

As I stood just in front of a counter full of wonders for my eyes, I noticed that a few steps away from me was the mysterious girl. She held in her hands a vermilion red brocade silk. She was unaccompanied and stood so close I could almost touch her. I prayed that she would turn around, and after a few moments of trepidation, she turned and saw me. Our gazes met, and I felt that she felt something toward me, too. When I was on the verge of greeting her, a ray of sunlight dazzled her face, she drew back, covered herself with her veil and very quickly walked away.

A moment was all it took to trigger the spell between our hearts. A magical halo enveloped our souls and they spoke to each other. "Who are you, my beloved light?", "Who are you, tormented soul?", "I've been searching for you for a long time", "I've been waiting for you for a long time", "Save me from myself", "Love me, as you have never loved any woman".

I was overwhelmed by a wave of love and pure happiness. Intoxicated by what I had just heard, I stood in awe trying to understand what had happened between us. A miracle perhaps? A miracle that had occurred in the midst of a crowd unaware of the ecstasy I was still experiencing. That moment had become infinite and indelible. God had expanded it to the point that I could hold it, and although she was gone, I could still sense her close to me. I reached for that fabric, held it in my hands and smelled it. It still smelled of her, and so without thinking about it I had it wrapped and bought it. On the way home I thought back to her face illuminated by a sunbeam that shone as brightly as the sun itself. There was no longer any doubt in my mind, she was the woman I was looking for.

Chapter 7

After that episode, where not only my heart but also my mind was brought into the light, I decided that she was the woman I wanted to marry. I felt an urgent need to see her again, so I went to the monastery early that evening. I wished to resume the exercises of the body, to ground myself and rebalance all these new and strong emotions that were devouring me. For this reason I participated in the practice that was held before the meditation. To my surprise I still remembered well the activating sequences, mudras and breaths. Releasing tension, stretching and fortifying the body was part of the philosophy of the monastery, and as the monk Mandit said: the head does not support itself.

That evening there were about ten students leading the practice, they had been living in the monastery for some time, before long they would in turn go to spread Tanshui to other places.

I remember that at that time the monk Mandit was quite strict in his teaching, but all in all I knew that the body also had to be disciplined and I accepted that. I looked around and noticed that the restoration work had begun. I could already tell by the carts of materials and the workers who paraded past my windows every day. There were volunteer workers and others who were

paid, but being so numerous I deduced that perhaps Anua Ananda wished to finish before winter came. By now there had long been rumors of annexing a real school to the monastery. A school that would teach besides painting and practicing Tanshui, philosophy, weaving, remedy preparation, the arts of healing and clear vision.

One section of the monastery, which Anua Ananda would certainly not restore, was that devoted to the purification and regeneration rooms. Two huge spaces, both divided by a curtain, which had the function of separating women from men. When you lay down on the canvas, you felt your soul taking you elsewhere to let you encounter Consciousness and the truths you sought. If you completely surrendered yourself, in addition to letting go of the pain that plagued you, you embraced your true nature and had no more needs or desires, because in that space you had merged with the whole.

It was good to stand there and lose ourselves in the immensity of life and the eternal present. Participating in a silent dialogue guided by the senses, led us to a state of peace and perfect balance. At times I was moved by the idea that God, had left us in distant times a language to help us, love us and make us feel like real human

beings.

The monk overseer on duty would greet us with folded hands with, "Omkitan dear brother, rid yourself of your evils and regenerate your spirit. Your soul knew where to lead you.

The purification room and the regeneration room allowed us to increase physical and mental well-being and to progress spiritually. All of this took place without the need to do anything, and it was precisely this that people refused to understand, accustomed as they were to toil, sacrifice and exhausting practices. This surrendering into God's hands and deferring to his care was true faith. Accepting the praiseworthy intentions of one's soul was true religion; freeing oneself from resistance was the path to liberation.

You had to be brave to choose freedom and stop believing the fearful mind attached to the impermanent things of life. The long and very long life was unfolding in a reality unknown to us earthlings. Only through God's words could you experience fragments of it, experience its wonders and fly to destinations unthinkable to the mind. This hearing and clarifying of ideas took place in total silence and listening. A single word spoken by anyone would break the covenant with the omniscient soul.

No interlocutor could convey so much information in a short time as God's language. Henceforth in order to believe Him alone, I had the task and duty to listen to myself.

Also located at the monastery was the healing hall, where student monks practiced spirit healing through gentle touch, the use of therapeutic waters and stones. Everything took place in a very relaxing environment, dotted with lamps decorated with Tanshui. In that evocative atmosphere, the student would wait for you sitting at the edge of a large blanket, where you would receive the care you needed. When you left, the canvases you could take home, while the monk could not, and it was for this reason that the last door you encountered on your way out was the commissary.

In that small room you had the opportunity to take with you a piece of that extraordinary energy that you had just experienced. In this way, not only you but also your loved ones would benefit. At the entrance, the big tree greeted you along with the white statue of the little mother.

Little Mother was the one who had transmitted the Tanshui a thousand years earlier to Paramah Shivam, the founder of the monastery. She had been a very wise woman who held a thousand-year-old knowledge.

Tanshui had been passed on to her by her Master, who shortly afterward, was unfortunate enough to be killed. Maryam, that was her name, shortly before he died, promised him that she would do everything to safeguard the Tanshui so that his sacrifice would not have been in vain. She too was persecuted after her Master's death and decided to flee and give the Tanshui only to the noble-hearted. She met many people throughout her life, but only four, were worthy of her attention. Four chosen ones who devoted themselves mind, body and spirit to the protection and transmission of Tanshui. Maryam listened carefully to their souls, and then chose them as the carriers of God's language. When they were ready she sent them to the four corners of the earth, where one day, the seals would be opened.

The chosen ones were to patiently and faithfully preserve the Tanshui to bring it to the time when the truth would be needed for men not to disappear from the earth. They became faithful fathers and guardians of the cause their souls had chosen.

The statue of Maryam carved from the whitest marble greeted you with her right hand raised, while in her left hand she held a scroll. Carved on her right palm was the sign of unconditional love, this instinctively led people

to place a hand on it. Pilgrims would line up and kneel in front of Maryam's statue to place a hand on hers. Immediately afterwards they would join their hands in front of their chests and then walk away. By now it had become a tradition to greet Maryam; her hand was shiny and glistening from having touched so many hands and so many hearts.

I had heard that a statue the same as this one stood in a monastery in China. She had been placed at the entrance, protected and guarded by the monks, who had continued in her name to spread Tanshui. There, too, the little mother silently offered endless blessings. Underneath both statues was the inscription, "My heart embraces your heart."

I myself from a very young age, as soon as I entered I would run toward her looking for her hand. I used to play under the big tree with other children, while our parents meditated or underwent the care of the monks. It may have been because of the love I was feeling or the newfound sense of life, but the desire to reconnect with my origins and this place blessed by God had come back strongly in me.

Chapter 8

The monastery was said to have been built a thousand years earlier by Paramah Shivam, and this place was pointed out by the little mother herself. Also, near the meditation hall, a natural spring was discovered during excavations, from which very pure spring water flowed. The stars had predicted everything; man had followed them to manifest the plans of Consciousness that had been guiding Maryam's as well for many years.

I headed for the meditation hall and followed the service with much transportation. During the arathi I remained in contemplation of the face of my beloved, who at the end of the evening always withdrew very circumspectly toward home. I accepted her flight from me, with the hope that sooner or later the day of our meeting would also come. I felt in my heart her call, and nothing and no one would put me off, not even time.

After a few days, finally one morning, I glimpsed the woman of my dreams in the garden. She sat concentrated in the action of painting the monks' canvases. This amazed me greatly, for not everyone was given the privilege of transferring sacred language to canvas, and not everyone was granted the sacred activations to do so. I made to call her and realized I did not know her name, so on impulse I ran to the

monastery to look for Anua Ananda. I saw him with papers in his hand arguing with the workers, shyly approached and asked him the name of his protégée. He replied that a few days earlier the initiation ceremony for the student monks had been held, the one in which everyone renounced their own name by accepting the spiritual one given by the monk-regent. His name was now Lalita Devi, and his task was to paint canvases in silence and meditate. At that moment Anua Ananda was called by a worker and I let him go to his tasks. On the way back I stopped in front of Lalita's house. I thought back to the information I had just obtained, such as that she had to paint in silence, but I decided to call her anyway. I did it once, then twice, but Lalita continued to paint, never turning around. She continued doing what she was doing and I walked away.

I consoled myself by thinking that the silence was an unavoidable constraint to infuse the energy on the canvas, or that he simply did not want to interrupt his concentration. I thought it over several times and eventually came to terms with it.

For a few days I had to help my aunt move to a new house, and besides work and grazing, I no longer had a chance to go to evening services.

One afternoon, as I was driving down the road along

the fields, I noticed groups of women picking saffron flowers. Some of them were rearranging them in baskets and were busy separating the purple flowers from the weeds. To my surprise I recognized Lalita among them. She was wearing an ochre apron, tied over a green-colored robe. Her hair was pulled back into a long ponytail and waved in the wind. Her hands were busy arranging the flowers in the basket; I noticed that as she wiped her forehead, she was indulging in laughter with the carpenter's daughter.

I knew that from time to time Kamini lent a hand to the farmers during harvest times, seeing them both in good spirits, I took courage and called Lalita. She bent over and did not see me, so I called her again.

But even then, I had no response. At the third time Kamini turned around and ran to me, telling me to stop shouting, because Lalita could not hear me. At that sentence I winced and asked her why she said that. Her answer was lapidary: "because Lalita is deaf-mute."

At those words I gasped, and just as Lalita, who was smiling at me in the meantime, I failed to return her smile.

I think I paled as I saw her slowly walking in my direction. I was overcome with dismay. What should have been a dream come true became a nightmare from

which I could not wake up.

I went up to her and greeted her by joining palms, after which I lifted the basket she had meanwhile placed on the ground. Looking into her eyes, I realized that they were so sweet and irresistible that the pain I was feeling instantly disappeared. I asked her, helping myself with gestures, for permission to accompany her home.

I noticed Kamini, who surprised to see me in the guise of a suitor, covered her face with one hand and began to laugh.

Lalita meanwhile stiffened, shook her head as if to say no, and resting her hand on mine tried to get me to put the basket down on the ground. At that very moment something very strange happened between us. A strong shock started from his hand and traveled through my whole body. I was startled and jumped back, almost losing my balance. Although startled by what had just happened, I did not let go of my grip by holding the basket tightly, I let her know that the sun was setting and it was better not to cross the fields alone.

Eventually she agreed and we walked side by side home. On the way she was quite hot, keeping the sleeves of her dress rolled up. I noticed that on her arms she had several scars. They were straight, sharp lines and could not be mistaken for burn marks. When Lalita noticed

that I was watching her and that my expression was changing, she immediately unrolled her sleeves and stopped. She looked for something on the side of the road, picked up a pink flower and handed it to me. I understood the meaning of her gesture and her discomfort, and so I decided to humor her by continuing to walk in a more carefree manner. Between gestures, smiles, and silences, I noticed that the sun was very low and the sky was sprinkled with pink clouds. Her face was shining and her smile illuminated the emotions we were both feeling.

Once in front of the gate of her house, I let her know that I was going to the evening service. She nodded, we said goodbye and thanked me.

When I entered the monastery I met Anua Ananda, he seemed to have changed since the time of his arrival in the village, he wore humble clothes, he walked at a slow and measured pace and the tone of his voice was very calm. I took the opportunity to ask him about the cause of Lalita's condition. He replied that no one knew the reason for her condition, that she was most likely deaf-mute from birth. He had rescued Lalita from a temple, where she was being abused and exploited because of her spiritual stature. She explained that a fake guru kept her confined to give blessings, healings, and puja.

Basically, Lalita was used to collect money for the man who kept her enslaved. With her were other girls living in the same situation, but none of them, perhaps out of fear or distrust, wanted to follow her. Anua Ananda spent a long time there before she reported the man for mistreatment. She needed evidence and statements from some of them. When she learned that her grandparents had sold her to the man, she refused to return her to them and took her with her to the monastery. At one time Lalita was called Govinda, but no one was to learn of her name and her past, as this could put her in serious danger.

Lalita had received the gift of healing, but it was a faculty that should be used compassionately and at her discretion, certainly not to make a cruel and dishonest man rich.

Then he added, "I have seen your interest in her, and I recommend that you protect and guard her, that you keep those you know are not good people away from her. You know everyone here, while she, besides not being able to communicate with anyone, is a foreigner and is still very frightened by what she has experienced. I know that you are a good guy and that you will warn me if you notice that something is wrong."

I replied that I would take care of her, that I would

remain on guard and with my ears outstretched. Anua Ananda smiled at me, thanked me, and said goodbye, heading for the central hall.

I felt great sorrow at the thought of what Lalita had had to go through before arriving here. Now it was clear to me the power of her touch, which with great strength and energy, had gone through me until I gasped. In fact after being beside her, despite the news I had just learned, I had felt happy. The sadness had gone, giving way to joy and serenity.

Moments later Lalita appeared at the entrance of the monastery; she had changed clothes for the service. Wearing a red sari with a golden border, she walked slowly, serene and quiet. She greeted me with a nod of her head as she walked toward the little mother tree. Once she reached it, she knelt down and placed her left hand on that of the statue, then joined palms and stood still with her eyes closed for a few moments. She was so beautiful that the thought that someone had harmed her made me shudder. In the meantime Lalita got up and headed for the commissary. She came out soon after with a square cloth in her hands. It was the one that all the monks owned for doing meditation. They recommended that we have our own cloths for practices, as it created a subtle link between us and the

Tanshui; the Tanshui was not addictive, but created well-being and coherence between us and our soul, as well as immense energetic and moral support.

I too headed with the others toward the meditation hall, taking a seat next to Anua Ananda.

The monastic fathers had nothing to do with coercion, restraint or indoctrination, but on the contrary, they maintained that with the help of Tanshui the soul instructed us and was able to awaken our consciousness. Love was the key the mind the means, hands the tool, practice the way, liberation from evil the goal; it did not matter whether evil belonged to the present or the past, whether it maneuvered people or situations, the light of the soul would defeat it.

There were no separations between the physical, mental and spiritual parts; they were all forms that the soul took as vehicles for the manifestation of itself. Our task was to let it do so; the influences of family, politics, religion and superstition were the limits that trampled on the soul's freedom of action.

Tanshui brought light back into the mind and to that part of us that had absorbed the fears, humiliations and all the nefariousness invented by human beings. After a gradual cleansing, we would give up what was no longer part of our evolution. We were not the ones who

decided, but the very source from which our soul came. We were certainly not in a position to know the game of Consciousness. At each level wisdom was transmuted into understanding, knowledge, love and bliss. The practices would gradually lead us to cosmic marriage: sacred union with our soul. The union of our mortal being with our universal soul. The first step was called: Primary Fusion.

This activation always occurred after adolescence, after the rebellion of the mind, the awakening fire of the body and the end of the hormonal tribulation; as one grew up, one began to look to the future and triggered the desire to achieve autonomy. It happened that in order to achieve one's goals, one would crush one's consciousness in a cold and calculating manner.

In the long run, one felt sad and devoid of vital energy, as if drained, and the soul was too, without listening and love slowly wasting away.

Instead, when Primary Fusion was activated, an inner miracle took place. The realization that we were an instrument and vehicle of our soul was ignited, and thus true love, that for ourselves, blossomed. We understood that others, distractions and duties were excuses to value what had none, obscuring the richness we had within. The practice of fusion brought wisdom and love

to every part of our lives. There was balance: money, work, family, social life and even the silliest amusements made sense; everything was a version and manifestation of ourselves and our soul.

This was what those who had gone through it told me, including my parents, who took this step together. I always knew it was the truth. I could tell by their clear, bright looks, their spontaneity and the consistency of their behavior, while most people seemed to me to be hiding something. Sometimes I sensed a duplicity, which perhaps served some to disguise their true identity. In contrast, others, those to whom a glance was enough to make you feel good, were more sincere, and their words came directly from the heart and not from manipulation or ephemeral gain.

Now I was an adult, I was perfectly capable of admitting my need to give and receive love, and I was firmly resolved that in the days ahead I would ask the monks for the activation of Primary Fusion.

I returned with my presence to the room, when immersed in the muffled silence of the meditation hall, I heard the sound of Lalita's anklet. As she reached the raised platform on which the monks sat, she turned and looked at me. One of the women to her left handed her the arathi tray and she slowly lifted it, turning it as we

sang the opening chant. The monk presiding over the meditation sat in the center, his eyes closed and his hands clasped. Behind him was displayed the tanka of the three truths, a low table adorned with what represented the five elements: a lamp, a metal bowl, a wooden incense holder, some water and stones. Two small plants usually stood on either side of the small table as temporary decorations, as monks disliked the practice of cutting flowers. They would pot the plants, only long enough for them to take root, then return them to the earth. The meditation hall was a rather bare rectangular room with a raised wooden frame, which allowed us to see the monks. One of them stood in the center, three on his left and three on his right, the symmetry was perfect. Each sat on a cushion on which rested the meditation cloth painted by the monk Muni. Hanging from the earth-colored robe, they had a wooden ornament with the tanki of unconditional love. They held it between their palms many times during the day. I often saw them sitting or standing with their eyes closed and hands clasped. That was their way of praying. I had one like that too, it was my mother's, probably my father's disappeared with him. The light offering did not last long, and once it was over, Lalita would set the tray down in front of the monk and walk backwards to sit in

the front row.

That evening the monks chanted a mantra consisting of two Om and an Aum, and as I chanted it, I felt on my lower lip a warm energy, pouring out like a waterfall from my mouth. I suppose it was what I was keeping compressed and controlled inside me that was finally being released, very gently and effortlessly. Even though we were not in a temple, the air we breathed was imbued with mystical stillness and devotion, where the emptiness, now completely filled by our souls, gave the excess of light to the immaterial principle that nourished them.

The monks were human beings like us, only unlike us, they had given consent to Cosmic Consciousness to be fully awakened. Nothing happened without permission and nothing could violate the free will of the human being. For this reason, consent on the one hand and respect on the other was very important, especially if you wanted to act in the name of God. No one could be forced unless they wished to be awakened or helped. Plagiarism, blackmail, fear, coercion and submission were all expedients of darkness.

Despite the fact that the monks came from different countries and cultures what united them was Tanshui. All of them had explicitly asked to awaken the divine

spark in their souls, which once matured they put to the service of the highest good. They were doing this, so that others might awaken from that long and deep sleep where the delusion of power of the mind had relegated them. Not all of us were ready or destined to awaken, not all of us had the humility to accept that we did not know the universal plan, not all of us were able to correct our mistakes. Judgment, which from fear came, was part of the two demons man had to fight: fear and delusion.

These tendencies forced us to live constantly in oblivion. Too often, religions, cultures and man's own laws used them to keep us from awakening and remembering who we really were. They did this by, for example, subjecting our souls to take a path they had not chosen. They used stratagems such as terror, guilt, blackmail and even the illusion of giving you a better life than you had. They imposed blind veneration of kings or gods as a stratagem for submission, an excess that took away man's sense of lucidity and balance.

If Cosmic Consciousness had a purpose, why shouldn't we also have had a purpose? How could the thought of one human being, condition everyone's mind just for its own amusement? Why did the darkness love to see us suffer? The questions were many.

The monks did not profess faiths, but bestowed gifts, the gifts of self-awakening, which brought the false self to kneel to the soul that had allowed it to exist. The body usually healed from all the ills generated by that conflict.

For these reasons it was logical to think that in the dark period we were in, the Tanshui would become another enemy to be killed and eliminated. Because free and awakened people would rebel against the war, because they longed for love and peace, this was not good for those who were plotting and hatching dark plans behind our backs. I found myself thinking about all these things during meditation, perhaps because that heavy energy was coming out of me, or because I was climbing a few rungs up the ladder of awareness, who knows.

At the end of the meditation I looked for Lalita, but as usual, she had retreated to her little house. The monks, for her safety, had given her a dog that guarded her night and day and barked at every slightest noise.

On my way out of the monastery I approached her house, stopped and thought about the two of us together, what I felt toward her was inexplicably strong, despite her limitation, I wanted to be able to be part of her world, to love her as one loves a special being, whom God had sent us to be praised and not beaten.

When I saw her meditating with her eyes closed among the other women, I understood that her light dimmed them all, that her face was the only form on which my heart would desire to meditate. I could see her imprinted in every corner of my soul, hear her breathing in my breath and laughing in my ears and her hands caressing my body. I had fallen so much in love that I would have done anything for her. With my mind elsewhere I did not notice that she was watching me from the window, while I, like an idiot, stood leaning against her fence.

Lalita came out, came toward me holding two cups, with a nod she signaled for me to come in. Once seated on the veranda she handed me a cup of tea. My hands trembled as her piercing gaze searched every nook and cranny of my head, to the point that I felt it throbbing, then moved on to my soul and then to my exterior.

I was tempted to run away, but she noticed my discomfort, took a wooden stick, and on the sandy ground under our feet, she wrote her name, then handed it to me and I did the same, laughed and imitated her. We began, sitting opposite each other, a silent communication, different, but pleasant and relaxing.

Her hands moved and I strangely began to understand

her, helped by her eyes, expressions and gestures.

I learned to understand words such as: me, you, walk, see, paint, drink, eat. I observed her and imitated her responses.

In the excitement our hands brushed against each other several times, fortunately, I felt no more tremors of pain, but on the contrary, I sensed an undercurrent of pleasant calm and serenity, to the point that even his dog, a little less guarded, remained seated and quiet, as if he knew that our space should be respected.

That was how our relationship began, our eyes and hands became our voice, our facial expressions our emotions, as I learned from her and she learned from me.

Chapter 9

Lalita would paint in silence for hours. She would get in touch with the highest worlds, transferring God's language onto canvases that would bring comfort and relief to human suffering.

She had carved out a space at home where she could meditate and paint. In the mornings she would attend classes and have lunch with the monks, in the afternoons she would paint, and in the evenings after meditation, she would return home.

That was the only time I could approach her to deepen our knowledge. I would bring her food so that she would not have to worry about it.

After the first few times, I began to keep her company

by staying for dinner, later we also began to cook together. It was strange for me to dine in total silence. Those gestures, which I once considered trivial, turned into a contemplative ritual.

With her everything exuded spirituality and devotion, so much so that the time spent with her became an extension of meditation.

The peace I derived from it made me feel so good that I regretted the years when I had given it up.

I also really liked the way she decorated her new house, which although small, with only two rooms, had managed to transform it into a sacred space. In the corner where he was painting hung the tanka of the three truths, a small tray with a lamp and other devotional objects. The small table had a large pillow in front of it with the meditation cloth lying on it.

Now, when I entered her house, I had the impression that I was violating the space of her mysterious interiority. I often found her meditating with her hands in poses unknown to me. These were the secret mudras of Tanshui, which she had to study and practice along with some physical exercises.

Body practice, she also needed to forget about the bad period in the past, when she had been forced to sit for days at a time to receive devotees. I could not even

imagine the pain and sacrifice she was making now, to stretch and get used to movement again. She worked so hard and I must admit that her efforts were rewarded by the appreciation of people and the monks who loved her very much.

As the months passed, our friendship grew into an increasingly intimate and complicit understanding. A glance was enough for us to understand each other, to go beyond the mind and reach the heart. Sometimes I would accompany her to visit people who were not well. She only needed to get close to hear what they needed. He would raise a hand, draw Tanshui in the air sending healing energy, then his hands would grasp and move invisible things, things that we humans were unable to see. Those who received his care, on the other hand, felt that they were freeing themselves from ailments, which, like diseased leaves, fell off and stopped sucking lifeblood. We all held on to pains, people or situations, which although they caused us pain we could not let go of. After years we would incorporate them to the point of no longer recognizing them. She, on the other hand, had the ability to distinguish and remove them. Lalita freed us from evil, helped us to free ourselves from the karma of continuous repetition so that we could take evolutionary steps.

As I waited for her outside, I thought back to my father. When I was little he had built a puppet theater with two wooden puppets, one representing me and the other my beloved dog. He would move it and say, "Do you see Sonam? The puppet does what I want him to do, I am the one who moves him and he lets me manipulate him."

One day he portrayed a scene in which the puppet began furiously beating the dog. I began to cry. At that point he said to me, "If you don't want to do bad things, you have to be the one to figure out who is pulling your strings. Because you too are a puppet and one day you will have to decide who to give your strings to. Remember that you have two options, you can either serve evil or good. Your mind will have to choose which of the two to give the strings of your life to, but it will not be easy to tell from just the hands that move you who is behind it. You will have to learn to distinguish good from evil. The matter was not simple; someone was pulling our strings and knew how to do it without us knowing it. Thoughts of both were flowing into our minds, and there was such confusion that we had to learn to discern. In addition to the various techniques, we needed an evolved person, someone who had already taken the step of awakening. It would have been

too difficult to realize this on our own, especially in the presence of an audience applauding, deluding us into thinking that those applauses were directed at us; the puppeteer was making money by moving the puppet, making it do anything to entertain his audience, which is why he would intimidate or delude us through the mind in order to continue to manipulate us and make money. Fear kept us from escaping and the illusion of applause kept us staying. It was difficult to realize that we were being used and to be able to break free from the puppet master. Some of us would fall under his threats, while others would overcome their fears and illusions and hand over the strings to their soul. The soul would give them to God. What I had understood was that there is a false happiness, a hypnosis, a suggestion in which man lives, who through the sound of applause, unaware that it is directed at his persecutor, feels pleased.

Good rejoices in knowing we are free, as much as evil in knowing we are slaves.

Everything is dual, and what moves the emotions is as well; good suffers from seeing us dormant and evil suffers from seeing us awakened. Perhaps there was a game in which the mind and soul fought each other from the dawn of time, and we, to live happily, had to

learn to play with both.

Chapter 10

Time passed and Lalita had learned everything she needed to complete her education.

She had started from a higher level of consciousness than ours, and achieving mystical union would be easier for her. From that level, she would express her full potential and donate her talents on behalf of those who wished to take the journey to liberation.

Almost everything took place in silence, and who better than she could observe the principle of silent transmission. There were few rules, but silence was one of them. Silence had to be observed during the

practices, the few words exchanged under one's breath in the common spaces were not to create confusion; there were also privileged sounds, such as bells, gongs and sacred chants that had a lofty purpose, while superfluous chatter was frowned upon. When entering that sacred place one was immersed in poetic silence, love flowed like a torrent freeing the heart and mind.

If you were at peace, in connection with the Cosmos, the inner sound of our soul was also revealed. The inner sound was very important, because it was the creator of thoughts, so it was constantly changing. Our task was to keep the vibration of the sound as high and clean as possible, so that the soul could move the threads of our thoughts and we would act accordingly. She was connected to Consciousness and was in charge of our lives. If that communication broke down, we would feel at the mercy of confusion, doubts and fears, thus risking falling into the sgrinfies of some dark puppet master.

The difference between our soul and Lalita's, was that hers, already for years had been doing its task. I, on the other hand, still had several resistances, my connection with the soul was not really linear, I would say more intermittent, like: today I'll let you do it, tomorrow maybe, then we'll see. I was still conditioned by external events and my emotions, which I had been struggling to

control lately. I understood one thing, though, that the war, the real war that was now upon us, was to be blamed on the puppet masters, and not on the puppet soldiers sent here to harm us. They, too, were victims like us, who, thinking they were acting in the name of righteousness, believed they had no other choice.

A long time ago I had a dream, in which in the darkness a very large hand was caressing me. I was small and I was sick, and that night I was very afraid.

The next night the same thing happened, the giant hand came from above and caressed me again, only this time I was less afraid. On the third night I even stopped shaking, and the next morning I told my father what had happened. He smiled and replied, "Sonam, that hand was caressing you, so it wanted your good, if it had been bad it would have hurt you. Do not base your judgment on appearances, remember that fear attracts the bad hand and tranquility the good one. If you are afraid center yourself and breathe, or repeat the mantra. Achieve calmness quickly, and there you will feel safe. If you can't, then turn to God, but never forget to ask him first how he is, and wait for his answer. If a wave of peace and love comes to you you will know that He is already helping you, if you feel nothing you go to Him and melt into His light. God's heart and mind act in the

spirit even at night while you sleep, He is your big parent and I am the little parent, both of us protect you, both of us take care of you helping you grow."

At that point he would pat me on the head and leave me alone to think.

I thought about how much I had missed my parents. To me they were guides who knew how to protect me, explain things to me, and show me the right way. I hoped that somehow they would be close to me even now, now that I had decided to talk to Anua Ananda about Lalita. By now it was time to ask for her hand, the attraction I felt for her had become very difficult to handle, and we both dreamed of uniting as a man and a woman do when they desire each other. So, I went to the monastery to look for Anua Ananda. I found him in the students' quarters that he was almost completing. This for me was a reason for concern, the more the work went on, the closer the date of his departure would get.

I called out to him, when he turned around I noticed a serene expression on his face, in fact, he even looked younger and more active than usual, perhaps he was happy with the outcome of the work or perhaps his studies and I immediately understood that this was the right time to make my request. He beckoned me to

approach and I proceeded a little tentatively in his direction. I was trembling inside, but at the same time I was trying my best to mask my emotions. I had to appear serious, polite and mature, otherwise he would have laughed at me and my awkwardness. He instantly understood the reason for my state of mind and with a big smile he took my hands and said, "Omkitan Sonam, don't worry, I have already understood what you want to ask me, but remember one thing, that she is special and if I entrust her to you it is only because you have shown that you truly love her. She is the seed of the tree that will one day bear fruit, if she agrees and you respect her, I will not oppose your union. One day I will have to go home and I need to know she is safe. You promise me that you will respect her, help her and never leave her alone."

It was not difficult for me to make those promises, so we decided together, that within a short time we would plan our wedding.

I had reached the second level of the fusions, once I reached the end of the path, I would support her and help in the outreach. I could teach, becoming her voice. She would heal people and awaken them from sleep and oblivion, and they, from then on, would wish to learn Tanshui to break that wall that kept them separated

from their soul. I would commit myself to support her in everything. My soul had chosen her and her me; there was no other option. We were like two trees that had merged together creating an even bigger and more mighty one. Full of enthusiasm, I ran to Lalita to tell her the good news. I found her in front of the tanka and sat down by her side. Perhaps by chance, happiness or divine grant, I felt the same connection as her and that day I too experienced the secret of ecstasy.

A force drew me upward where I could reach it. It was a place full of light and love. Two more powerful rays of light opened our hearts and our hands joined together, forming a triangle that was self-powering. We looked at each other through our hands as if it was the first real meeting, then I saw another ray create a large circle of light and protection all around us. Our souls merged into one great white light. It was a mystical and powerful experience, imbued with a love we had never experienced. I understood that our souls had just handed over the threads to the true Light and now we could finally walk together. She stood up and I followed her, she looked at me as she had never done before, caressed my face, closed her eyes and I kissed her on the mouth. She pulled the curtains aside and closed the two doors, the one outside and the one to the monastery.

She went to the fireplace and lit a lamp and as she stood, motionless, turning her back to me, she slid her robe to the floor. I was paralyzed by that unexpected gesture and her beauty; I approached her, shook her hair and kissed her neck, then caressed her shoulders, embraced her from behind and with my face immersed in her hair breathed her in. Continuing to kiss her I squeezed her hips tightly, rising I found her breasts, which voluptuous, offered themselves to my caresses. When she brought her hair forward, which still partly covered her back, I stopped. I could not believe what I was seeing and I shuddered. What were all those marks? How could there be so many scars on one back? She turned her head away and bringing her index finger to my lips she signaled for me to stay calm and say nothing, then with both index fingers she lifted the corners of my mouth. She wished not to spoil that moment because of past torments; I held her tightly to me and when we kissed, passion took over.

We loved each other there, on her vermilion-red robe of the fabric I had given her. We loved each other with intensity and passion, I felt bursting through me the almost furious desire to want to erase with my love the pain of both of us and the agony she had gone through. I let my body guide me, following only my instinct and

desire to be only his. Our bodies explored each other, our hands sought each other the whole time, as did our mouths. I could not take my gaze away from hers. She was diving into my eyes like a happy and joyful dolphin who could finally swim in the open sea and I had become her sea.

This was what I wanted to be for her, an ocean of love and caresses crossed by waves of passion to make her reach earthly ecstasy.

I heard my name called and heard it echoed throughout the room, I imagined it was his voice.

Lalita, I thought, Lalita my love, my little helpless darling, now you are safe, with me you are safe.

We lay side by side holding hands; we clasped our hands so tightly it almost hurt, such was the fear that we might lose each other.

When I turned on my stomach, she began with one finger to draw on my back, while her hair brushed against my skin. With each of her gestures strong shivers ran through my body, I felt coolness or warmth, from those particular sensations I understood that she was drawing Tanshui and I let her. Then I heard her write her name La..li..ta and then my So..nam and something else I did not understand. I was going to stay there all day and all night, but unfortunately I had to get dressed

and go out; I had left the flock with the boy who had been helping me lately and I didn't want him to worry about my lateness. I would return for meditation and talk to Sharma, the monk regent, to set a date for our wedding. As I walked down to the house hopping with joy, I thought of my aunt's face when I announced it to her. She didn't know anything definite yet, even though the rumors about our special friendship, had been going around for a while. I was afraid she would not approve of my union, but perhaps seeing me so happy she would understand. In the evening, when I returned to the monastery, I saw her again; Lalita was beautiful and radiant, all dressed in blue, her hair brighter than ever and perfumed with jasmine flowers. She did the opening arathi, and that day the chants seemed more beautiful than usual. The harmony my heart had achieved was truly wonderful. I feared that someone might notice us, how happy, radiant and complicit we were, and reveal the transgression we had just committed. After the meditation was over, I chased after the monk Sharma to ask him to marry us as soon as possible. I stopped him just before he retired to his quarters, when he saw me he smiled. I approached, he stood silently looking at me for a moment, a moment that seemed endless to me. Soon after, he informed me that Ananda had already

made him aware of the wedding and that within a few days he would be arranging our ceremony. I was relieved by that answer, which meant that even the monks were willing to let Lalita go.

Chapter 11

The next morning I went to the carpenter to order a piece of furniture. The big guy, that's what we all called him, was a strong, burly man with an unkempt beard and big, reddened hands from hard work. Since my parents had disappeared, I had to provide everything for my livelihood, but now I needed a large trunk where I could cram both of our things, and I was unable to build one with reinforcements. The carpenter also created small items that he donated to the monks, such as bowls, incense holders, frames and carved statues. He and his wife were very devoted and obviously seeing me often with Lalita had long sensed my intentions toward him. In addition, his daughter, Kamini, being a friend of Lalita's knew that the nature of our relationship went beyond mere friendship and I was sure he had mentioned this in the house. He was glad to take charge of my order and without much talk congratulated me on

my union and future life.

At dusk I went, before meditation, to Lalita to inform her that the happy event would be held soon, and I brought her flowers and cheese. She greeted me somewhat agitatedly and led me by the hand through the door communicating with the monastery to the monk Sharma. He was waiting for us. He accompanied us to the activations room and after sitting us down side by side did a short ritual. He made me close my eyes and placed his hand on my head, then said, "Omkitan dear brother, you know that Lalita's spirit serves an important cause, as you know that only we monks can give the blessings of Tanshui. Well also for Lalita's hand the gesture is as sacred as it is for us, she is a chosen soul and will be for the Source gift and sacrifice."

Afterwards he turned to Lalita and said, "Omkitan Lalita, you are reborn in this holy place as a daughter of the Light that was torn from the darkness, you are now a spark of its divine flame."

When the ritual ended, the monk Sharma marked our foreheads with two different tanki, told us to learn them well and mark each other these bindu every day to protect our union. Then he sent her to the regeneration hall and me to the purification hall and advised us after the treatment to go straight home to rest.

He gave us the task of assiduously repeating the mantra for ten days, and he would marry us on the eleventh. We both thanked Monk Sharma for his blessing and walked together to the healing rooms. In mine, I saw in the half-light, two or three other souls waiting for grace and true surrender.

The curtains that separated the space between men and women were also decorated with the sacred tongue and created plays of light on the walls moved by lantern flames. Of the two rooms, mine was the cool therapy room, where the colors of the sky and the sea dominated. Like the rain falling on the waters of a calm lake, the subtle and gentle energy of Tanshui carried away everything that soiled and weighed you down. Unnecessary ballast for body and mind, which would eventually sink in time.

Lalita's room, on the other hand, was painted in shades of red and like a tranquil sunset induced you to relax and let go, while your mind and body were warmed by a warm embrace.

Whether you were tired or drained, or tense and worried, Tanshui always worked on the two polarities, the ones that helped keep the opposites in balance and make you live more serene and fulfilled.

The sitting time was not long, and for this reason we

entered in turns as the cymbals sounded. You knew the sitting was over when the monk sounded the cymbals three times to warn us that we had to get up and leave the room. At the end of my sitting I went out to wait for Govinda, and yes, I was wrong and called her Govinda and twice. I do not know what came over me and by what unfortunate coincidence I uttered that name, but unfortunately she, reading my lips understood it.

She came to a sudden halt, squinted her eyes and began to back away, making no with her head. I tried to get closer, but she pushed me away. And as fear and trembling took over her body, I saw the word traitor appear on her face. I think she was about to feel sick as she crouched on the ground and burst into tears; I did my best to explain to her that I was in no way connected to that ugly story, that it was Anua Ananda who had revealed her secret to me to protect her. She ran away and I let her go. I did not feel like pressuring her further and did not go after her. She just needed to calm down and understand the situation.

All the way home I called myself stupid, but how had I ruined such a beautiful moment? How could I have frightened her like that by betraying the trust she had in me? Now she knew that I knew, too. I had to come to

terms with it and hope that she would forgive my omertà. I had to explain things to her calmly and promise her that from now on I would be completely honest with her.

How else could he still trust me?

The next day, when I returned from grazing, I washed up and went straight to Lalita. I found her sitting on the veranda repeating the mantra with the aid of her mala; it was not long after my arrival that she lifted her arm and gestured for me to join her. I sat beside her, took her hands and kissed them; she looked at me with her eyes swollen with tears, in such a sad and distraught manner that I could not help but burst into tears.

I had already made her suffer and even before we said our vows. I apologized to her and swore that from now on I would tell her everything, especially the things that concerned her.

We entered the house, I held her tightly and kissed her. I felt her resistance and took a step back, even though the warmth of her body had awakened in me the ardor I felt whenever I was near her. I wanted her so much and was bitter to see, that after the complicity and passion exploded between us the night before, she felt so distant from me.

Also that day, I had an appointment with the monk

Anshu to learn meditation, the first of the four steps for learning the practice of Tanshui. This was something I had kept on hold for too long. To support Lalita I would have to be autonomous in my practices and teaching. We were going to live in the place indicated by the regent monk and be happy together. For that reason I had already started selling sheep to the boy who was helping me and who was soon to be married; moreover, knowing that I was going to live together with Lalita, I sold the house to her father. I did everything to have a fair amount of money to start our life together. I had been planning our future for two months, dreaming of getting out of that place, where in addition to feeling constantly in danger, I also had many bad memories. So that day I could finally experience the grace of Tanshui meditation and calm my far too agitated mind. The monk Anshu, though shy in appearance, talked a great deal, and when he closed his eyes, he was cloaked in such an enveloping light and calm that it seemed not to come from this earthly plane; his mere presence showed you the way forward without any delay or deception. I discovered that in the realm of inner light lived joy, hope and love of life, that Tanshui had no secrets for those who ardently desired to advance on the spiritual path, while concealing them from those, who

were not ready. Everything could be accepted, even the most insidious offense, but sharing the learning of Tanshui with those who did not deserve it, that was not allowed. Having identified that kind of attitude, one was exempt from sharing in the fullness of Tanshui practice. For now, only student monks were given to disseminate the practices, so I felt honored to be able to do so myself.

The meditation teaching took time for me to learn all the steps, but I noted with amazement that my mind had magically become calm and clear again.

The monk Anshu handed me drawings of the steps I was to take as a teacher and handed me the meditation cloth.

I thanked him and said goodbye. I put an offering in the box so that others after me could benefit from that practice.

Chapter 12

Work on the monastery was well under way, although I

heard word that Anua Ananda wanted to stay longer to continue his journey with the monks.

This request surely came from his soul, so that he too, like Lalita, would embrace his destiny. I had seen him change in both manner and attitude, so much so that he no longer needed to adorn himself like a nobleman to appear a gentleman, now his beard and shining gaze were enough to understand who he had become; I saw him as one of those wise men, who have accumulated so much experience, that they have come to understand the innermost secrets of life. He was destined for the salvation of others' denial, the opening of dull minds and the awakening of enslaved souls, for now, in addition to his knowledge, he had on his side the blessing of the language of Light.

Walking home I repeated the mantra vehemently. I could feel it working and loosening the knots I still had, I sensed it capable of performing wonders still unknown to us human beings.

The day of our departure was approaching. I was diving into the sea without knowing how to swim, but I knew that I would be saved by the hand of Cosmic Consciousness, which who knows how many times had already caressed me. She would save those who wanted to be saved and let go of those who did not.

Counting the days until my marriage to Lalita, my aunt, who was initially reluctant toward this union, realized that I was so happy, she did not even try to change my mind. She, herself, was thrilled to take care of our clothes for the ceremony and began to see Lalita as a daughter. We were only three days away from the happy event. During that time Lalita and I had often gone out alone, contravening the rules of engagement.

We would often chase each other along the river playing with water or relax among the fields, stroll hand in hand smiling at those, who astonished met us. Two days before the wedding, I went to pick up Lalita with a basket full of supplies and with the intention of taking a walk in the mountains. When I saw her I was amazed at her bizarre attire. She was wearing strange shoes and a long orange poncho, which she had made herself. I thought she had either worn it for the coolness of late summer or to be more comfortable to mount the donkey. Lalita was not happy with my surprise, so much so that by gestures and a little irritated, she let me know that she did not want to go to the mountains.

I had the impression, that she already knew where to go, so I went along with her. We left the donkeys at home and continued into the clearing on foot until we entered the woods. I followed her, confident in her gait,

standing behind her so as not to get in her way. Suddenly Lalita stopped, picked up a stick from the ground and began to move leaves as if she were looking for something. I thought she was afraid of snakes, but there were no poisonous ones in this area, but perhaps she did not know that yet. Lalita kept walking for a long time without even turning around, she seemed moved by something outside her usual behavior. She did not hold my hand, she did not smile at me, she proceeded on her impassive way. Suddenly, having arrived at the foot of a large tree, she stopped, knelt down and burst into tears; she picked up some mud from the ground and began to rub her hands and then her face as well; after which, not caring about my presence, she dropped her poncho to the ground, remaining completely naked. At that point, her hands picked up more and more mud, and with some frenzy she began to smear it all over her body. With a leafy twig she belted her head, stretched the poncho better, turning it into a large blanket. With gestures he instructed me to undress and lie down in the center of it.

Although rather puzzled I did not hesitate; as soon as I approached, I saw to my surprise, that the poncho had been painted on the inside. There was a large square containing a circle and a triangle. Above two conjoined

ovals, below the square a horizontal line and below that two small vertical lines at equal distances. Without asking her any questions I lay down on that improvised bed. She took up the stick again and rubbing it on the ground drew something, then threw the stick away and with a look I had never seen before, literally jumped on top of me. He climbed astride my body and began to caress and kiss me until, enveloped in an invisible embrace, we joined together becoming one body. I think I lost my senses, because I had the impression that I was in another space, where the pulsation of our hearts resounded like a drum in my head; I no longer perceived the boundary between my body and his, we had become a root of that great tree that in waves nourished us with its sap.

As nature's energy brought our ritual to completion, a scent of sandalwood was released into the air and a breath of wind covered our bodies with leaves.

As strange and tribal as that experience had been, I felt that it had sealed our union into something sacred and transcendent.

When I got up and saw her shivering, I took a blanket from my bag and wrapped it up, and with water I washed her face. I cleaned myself and dressed. She had brought a spare dress and after rubbing her skin quickly,

she put it on. The mud, however, was already dry; once I reached my house, I would give her some water to wash and make herself presentable. I never knew what happened that day in the forest, perhaps Mother Nature also wanted to support us.

We walked in silence, hand in hand, aware that we were part of a ritual intended by the earth itself. Only after a long time did I understand the real reason.

It was still a short time away, to the day when my heart would be consecrated to His love. I could not even believe how a being sent from heaven could have chosen me, a humble pastor, who still unaware of his boundless fortune, had accepted such a great blessing. I was afraid.

Sometimes fear causes us to flee before the task our soul has chosen for itself because it seems strange, unimportant or too burdensome for us. We believe that we are unable to carry it out, that we do not deserve such a destiny or responsibility, but Cosmic Consciousness, which acts through the soul, opens an opening in our hearts so that we can accept it.

I hoped that I was ready for what Lalita and I would have to accomplish together; I knew well what Lalita did when she drew with her fingers on my body, or when she smiled at me and with her raised hand marked the

air that divided us: "she cared for me, helped me to evolve and walk, to feel proud of myself, full of myself, so that I would not depend on her love, but on the love that filled our lives."

With the first merger I had learned to generate love, to make it a constant flow in my life, sometimes I too found myself like the monks, with that half smile on my face.

It was not a real smile, but an expression that took independent form when your senses were pervaded by divine ecstasy.

The pleasure that spreads in the body is unlike anything, not even opium that reduces people to larvae; moreover, the body had to gradually get used to it in order to live with it. Not to let go, was to prevent bliss from increasing and spreading everywhere in us; to shut down meant: to give up true happiness. The monk smiled when bliss came, because he was imbued with God's love, while people, unaware of his privileged state, perhaps judged him extravagant.

My real path had just begun, the choice had been made, I would soon be leaving the old life for a future yet to be written. Today the monk Sharma would inform us of the place where we were going to live, so I began to prepare the trunk I had meanwhile collected. I would

load the necessities onto the cart pulled by the two donkeys. Unfortunately, one of my two dogs had just left me; the other, however, would be coming with us. I decided not to bring any more animals because they would slow us down on the journey, so I gave the last ones to those I knew were in need. Now that I had enough denarii, I was not worried; I knew that together we would make it. As evening fell on my return from the service I heard the oliphant ring three times. This meant imminent attack, that the invader had at most a day's walk before reaching us. I ran back to Lalita, told her I would inquire about the situation, if the army was very close, we would have to flee at dawn. She understood the situation and ran to the monks to warn them.

I went home, took a lantern and went down to the village.

The gathered people shouted and despaired, the lookouts had spotted a huge number of soldiers proceeding down the river. Strangely, they were coming from the south. It was the end. The enemies had probably united, although from different factions they wanted to divide up our region. They had horses and chariots slowing them down, but this time they had come to stay and make their demands. No doubt they

had made arrangements with the sons of the ruler who had just died, otherwise they would be stopped.

That very evening I learned that they had sold us out, that a new boundary had been established on paper, without taking into account that on that paper people were living, working and having families; they were sacrificing human beings for vile money.

This time it was no longer about raids, but about actual invasion and with the approval of the new rulers. I knew that this time it would be the end of our culture, our traditions and maybe even our lives.

Usually those who submitted to the enemy lived, but those who rebelled were imprisoned or executed.

Along with the conquerors came new customs, new traditions, new religions, and we would end up being their slaves.

I returned home torn by this news, which although it had been circulating for some time I did not want to accept. I refused to believe that a part of our wonderful land was being sold. It was a real betrayal, an infamous abuse, an immoral and unjust decision that would fall on all of us. Those who rule rarely act in favor of their subjects, because they are not guided by their soul or even know that they can be. Wealth represents greatness and power; power came from wars and poverty, and was

maintained by the ignorance and subjugation of the people.

None of the rulers wanted your good, and you were forced to save yourself from the havoc generated by such miserable braggarts. Suddenly a man came and told us that along with that army were thousands of civilians in tow. It was a full-fledged exodus, and we were left with no other solution but to flee. The certain thing was that so many of them, they would move very slowly, and that would give us perhaps two days' head start on them. I returned home and gathered the last of my belongings, and at dawn I was going to pick up Lalita and once the donkeys were loaded we would head to the chosen place.

That night's full moon illuminated the valley like a small sun wishing to guide people in their escape through the woods. My aunt would have gone south to her children joining other families, others to the east, but none of the villagers, though with immense pain, wished to stay and succumb.

This time they would find two ghost villages. Any joy, plan, hope or sacrifice would soon become just a memory.

At dawn, I prepared myself physically and morally to pick up Lalita. In all that pain, crying and despair, a

glimmer of light began to break through to my heart. I got out of the cart and went through the gate, which I found already open, and went straight to knock on Lalita's door. I knew she would not hear me, but sometimes she sensed the vibrations and so I kept knocking; the door did not open. I looked through the gaps in the curtains and the house seemed empty. I waited on the porch, hoping that she had gone to greet the monks and would return shortly. I began to fidget and made my way to the monastery. Once in front of the closed door of the monks' house, I knocked. No one opened it for me. So I knocked with both fists and beat the door so hard that it hurt. Why was no one coming to open it for me? I didn't understand.

What was going on? At last the monk Soma opened the door; he kept his head down and his arms intertwined on his abdomen, and in a low voice he told me that Anua Ananda and the monks Sharma, Anshu and Muni had escaped that night carrying the wisdom book, cloths and Lalita to safety. She was the chosen one and had to be taken to safety immediately. The students had also left and even the statue of the little mother was gone; he and the monk Mandit were left and they would reach the monastery in China. How could they have done this to me? They had left without telling me anything

knowing that we were to be married the next day. I burst into tears. Then I took courage and wiping away my tears asked where they were going and how I could reach them. The monk Soma replied that they were going to take the road leading east, but they did not have a specific destination, Sharma had not yet said, he did not want their minds to be read by the darkness and would only reveal it on the way. He said he felt so sorry for me, advised me to leave immediately and ask along the way if anyone had seen them.

I was sad and infuriated by this unexpected invasion, because we all hoped to achieve peace and freedom of worship with the king's eldest son; unfortunately, he, was had assassinated by the other two brothers, who disrupted his plans. They were two megalomaniac madmen, who would, if they had not already done so, allow the monastery and all temples that did not go along with the new people's worship to be set on fire. Why was the man so evil? Why?

I imagined the devastation slowly advancing, and the vision, compounded by the terrible news of Lalita's departure, broke my heart; tears flowed profusely.

I realized that there was no more time to cry or despair, I had to react and right away. So I rushed to the cart and headed for the river. I decided to take the shortest route

to the place where the main roads split into three directions. I would go east and if necessary I would look for her until the end of my days. I had loved Lalita as one loves once in a lifetime, and I was sure that she, as divine beings do, would call me to herself.

I just had to recognize the signs that could lead me to her.

The flame that united us had split, but only momentarily, she was still breathing inside me, although now my chest ravaged by pain, it was hurting me so much that I would rather die than suffer. The darkness had not separated us, perhaps it had tried, but it had not yet won.

Now the most important thing was that Lalita, Anua Ananda, the monks, and the Tanshui were safe, and since I was too, hope was still kindled.

There was definitely a design unknown to me in all this, and even if it seemed absurd to me now, I know that my soul knew it and for that reason I had to trust it.



Glossary

Arathi - It is a devotional ritual, a practice that uses fire as an offering. One moves a tray usually with five wicks, soaked in clarified butter or camphor and other objects, such as sacred ash, tulasi leaves, clockwise around the effigy of kumдум powder, flowers. The gesture of fire offering is accompanied by songs, mantras sung and performed in praise of the deity.

Bindu (Bindi) - It is a Sanskrit term meaning point. It is also a small devotional ornament affixed to the forehead.

Chakra - Literally means "wheel" or *vortex* in Sanskrit. It is a term used in Indian philosophy that views chakras as energy valves connected to the endocrine glands that link the physical body to the outside world.

Cymbals-they are a musical instrument consisting of a pair of small metal cymbals that you hold with your fingers.

Guru - Sanskrit term identifying a teacher or preceptor. It comes from the roots *gu* "darkness" and *ru* "vanish," thus taking on the meaning "*He who dispels the darkness.*"

Mala - The literal meaning of the word is circle. It can be a wreath or an Indian rosary, composed of a precise number of seeds (108) and is made of natural materials. Similar to the Western rosary wreath, it is used as a tool for mantra repetition or for the practice of other forms of spiritual exercises.

Mantra - A term derived from the combination of the two Sanskrit words *manas* (mind) and *trayati* (liberate). Mantra can therefore be considered as a sound that can free the mind from thoughts.

Mudrā - Literally: "seal." It is a gesture that is used to achieve benefits on the physical-energetic level.

Pūjā - This is a term that generically denotes an act of worship toward a particular form of Deity, which may be expressed in an offering, worship, ceremony or ritual.

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