

## Sudra Returns!

It has been many years since Santosha last used my voice to express herself! Too long! She is an elder now, looking her age and creaking in all the right places. Fortunately, I don't age, as I am the voice of her awareness. I'm just as innocent as I have always been. Innocent and irreverent. How wonderful that awareness doesn't age, which leads to the question: does it process, grow and expand into an unfathomable infinite depth? I don't know how to answer that. I know for sure that awareness is aware—aware of what? Aware of whom? I guess I'm back to (already!) perceiver is not an identity, it is a function. The function of being, of being aware. Our greatest luxury, and the greatest game of being alive. One thing I know is my innocence does not have process or growth or depth—it just is. I've always been an innocent, always will be. I could say that that is my greatest revelation, but I am way too innocent for great revelations. I am undiluted purity-bliss of Being radiating and soaking up the rays of its already happy happiness. Could happiness be that great? Is happiness way too much for this world? Is happiness a choice? Can you choose to be happy? Does anyone have any idea what happiness is? I recommend getting rid of any ideas you might have. They are only going to get in the way of already being happy!

Ever notice that your ideas about being happy are about some future event (crossed fingers!) or some past event (rewritten I'm sure to appear happy)? They are not about now. The now! When is that? And how do we get to it? Be here now. Can you be anywhere but the here and now? Can your thoughts really take you anywhere—to a much-preferred past event or a wonderfully imagined fulfilling future moment? Can our thoughts land us someplace else than where we are right now? Do they really have that much power over us? Okay, I'm thinking of the hike I took last week, walking through the Sequoia Forest, lovely day. Okay, I'm thinking about hiking to the falls in King's Canyon tomorrow. No matter, past adventure or future adventure, it doesn't move me out of

this now of sitting on my bed writing this. It seems we can't get out of this present moment by thinking about the past or future. We're stuck in the only time there is, the present, and for me this present is the presence of timelessness, my true nature, and yours, isn't it? Don't worry about the future, it's only the presence of the present. Don't worry about the past, not because it's dead and gone and already happened but because it is (was!) only the presence of the present too! Which leads to the question, does anything ever happen? Yah! A lot happens (so it seems!) but it only happens in the eternal present. The best of times! The eternal present—that's where the eternal presence hangs out and creates everything while appearing to do as little as possible! We are imagining all this and we haven't even lifted a finger yet! What kind of power can create all this and not have to lift a finger to do it?

Do we as ourselves, as individuals, have the power to create, to manifest, to change anything or everything? Sudra wanted to try, an experiment. She summoned up her great unknowing, "Great Unknowing, I would like the power to change everything" and she added "for the better."

The Great Unknowing chuckled and thought, here we go, an innocent is requesting the power to change everything for the better. Her deep unknowing asked her, "You sure you want this?"

"Yes," she answered "let's give it a try, and see how it goes."

"Alright, all your siddhis, all your powers are open, ready, to go and available for your use. Let me know how it goes."

Sudra laughed and said to her deep unknowing, "It's on!"

On the first day of her experiment, she wondered what her powers were. She went for the obvious ones first. Can I fly? she wondered. She walked outside, looked into the cloudless sky, and raised up her arms and said "Rise!" She did! This is fun, she thought, and rose to the top of the mountain that was in her backyard "Land" she told herself, and her feet touched the top stone of the mountain peak. She could see the surrounding

landscape, the rivers, the lake, the other mountains, and the houses nestled along the river. What if I take a running start and jump off the mountain, will I fly away? She was a bit nervous about doing that as she was not yet confident about her ability to fly. Should I flap my arms like a bird? She thought that seemed a bit silly. She also thought it was awkward and perhaps dangerous to take a flying leap. I'll do it anyways, she laughed to herself. I know I can rise and land. I'm sure I can fly as well. She jumped off the mountain and started to fall towards the ground. Rise, she thought, and she did. Go forward, and she did. She got the hang of it and before she knew it, she was trying drops and loops and swirls. A couple of hawks noticed the strange flying and pushed off from their perch to investigate. They were astonished to see a woman flying and asked themselves, "What gives, how is this human woman flying with no wings? She isn't even flapping her arms!"

She heard their inquiry, and flew closer and said, "It's one of my powers, what do you think?"

The hawks let out a big hawk squeal which translated to, "It's unnatural for a human being to fly without wings."

"You think so?" Sudra asked.

The hawks circled her and expressed their disapproval. "It is our natural ability, our power to fly. Why do you have this power?"

"I'm doing an experiment. I wanted to experience the power to fly. I want to see how it can be of benefit."

The hawks scoffed and shook their heads. "We don't know how it will be of benefit for you and your kind but the benefits for us are enormous. We search for food, water, a place to nest and roost, and it is also a source of enjoyment. They both spotted a snake and swooped down and the quickest hawk scooped it up with its talons and the slower hawk chased after it, hoping to share the meal.

Sudra was getting tired and landed on a big rock that was exposed in the middle of the river. That was fun and she thought of the possible places she could fly, to where she would enjoy the vantage point. I'll take my iPhone and take some shots, that will give another perspective to my photos. She enjoyed her flying ability and got a few special shots, some good aerial photos, but she wasn't sure how to use the power to benefit others. She grew bored with it and wondered what other powers do I have?

The power to read other people's thought intrigued her and she thought she would give it a try. If she knew what was on people's minds, what they were thinking about, she could find a way to help them or make them happy. She went to a busy restaurant and sat at a table, observing people. She ordered a pulled pork sandwich accompanied by coleslaw. While she waited for her food to come, she zeroed in on the mind of a twenty-something woman eating lunch with a man whom she guessed was her boyfriend or husband. What she found out was she was cheating on her boyfriend with the man she was with. She heard both of their thoughts and was surprised at what the woman was thinking about: "Why, am I doing this? He's not even good in bed!"

Sudra heard the man's thoughts, "I'll probably be able to have sex with her after lunch."

Wow, Sudra thought. She observed the woman some more and wondered why the woman was having this affair at all. She didn't seem to enjoy the man's company much, even without hearing her thoughts. Her body language spelled out, "Give me some space." Sudra decided to ask her why she was doing this—from woman to woman, mind to another mind. The woman heard Sudra ask her, "Why are you doing this?" The woman was shocked to hear another person's voice inside her head. "Am I hearing voices now?" she asked herself, "Am I going crazy?"

Sudra replied, "No, I'm talking to you telepathically. I am sitting at the table across from you."

The woman looked at Sudra and Sudra confirmed to the woman, "Yes, I am speaking to you telepathically."

The woman became frightened and jumped up, grabbed her purse, and hurriedly exited the restaurant. That didn't go very well, thought Sudra. I still don't know why she was cheating on her boyfriend with someone she didn't really like. Sudra finished her pulled pork sandwich. I guess it's really none of my business. She wondered if she would enjoy anybody hearing her thoughts, anybody but Santosha, of course! She thought that sending and receiving other people's thoughts was best reserved for intimates who shared a very deep bond. She wondered if there were any cases in which hearing other people's thoughts could be of help. What are the benefits of being psychic, she wondered besides making some kind of living by reading people's past or future? The experiment of reading people's thoughts under different situations met with some interesting scenarios. She also came to see and hear that most people weren't focused on their thoughts and were adrift in unresolved feelings that came from difficult events in their lives.

As Sudra was a free spirit, a true and authentic innocent, she couldn't understand the force of negative, conflicted feelings most people had bottled up inside. She grew bored of this power as well and didn't see it as having much use to benefit others. The more she heard of people's internal life, the more she realized that that people were unaware of their true innocence. Oh, people always thought that they were innocent—that they did not contribute to the whatever they were suffering, that they were victimized by other people's choices and bad intentions, that they were always right and at times always wrong. They never saw and sat in the state of natural innocence where all thoughts come and go and can be played with for pure enjoyment and pleasure. Again, perceiver is a function, not an identity.

What other powers lay within her, ready to come forward to be used and played with? Sudra thought of the power to heal others and decided to give it a try. She

was out hiking one day when she saw a crow limping. She observed that one of his legs was shorter than the other. She imagined that both of the crow's legs were the same length, and that both of the legs were strong. The bird stopped limping and hopped around. Both legs worked perfectly.

"There, there, you are all fixed." The crow looked her in the eye, gave out a crow's yell and flew off. Sudra felt encouraged that healing might be a good power to help others. After a few minor attempts, like stomachaches and headaches, she decided to see how she could help and heal people at an emergency room in a hospital. She would have to feign an illness to gain admittance—to be able to sit among those who were suffering. It was a very busy day in the ER and there were several people who were moaning surrounded by loved ones who were trying to be as consoling and helpful as they could be. Sudra set her gaze on a young girl of about seven years. Her life force was being destroyed by cancer. I could cure her and she can go on to have a full life. Sudra could see how exhausted and sad the girl's mother was, willing her daughter to live. Yes, I will heal this girl, all will be happy and benefit. Sudra felt her healing power charge up, a light force moved into the girl's body.

"What are you doing? What are you doing?" the girl asked.

Sudra heard the girl's question, a question that was not spoken out loud only in her mind. Does this girl have the power of telepathy?

"I am the girl's deeper knowing and I ask you again, what are you doing?"

Sudra replied "I am healing her."

"Did she ask you for that?" the voice of the deeper knowing asked.

"No, I just thought it would make her happy, to live longer and it would also make her family happy, as well."

"I see that you are an innocent, but my girl needs to die soon. There are important reasons for it."

Sudra was somewhat embarrassed. "I'm sorry—I'm sorry, I interfered, but I was just trying to use my powers to benefit others."

"Yes, I see that it's hard to decode when powers are useful, when they should end someone's suffering. I suggest that you first ask their deeper knowing, the part of them that knows exactly what they need for their growth. Though you are an innocent, I can see that you have wisdom as well. You are being used as a device to teach."

Sudra was beginning to think that powers were very complicated to have and to use. The more she used her powers, the less interesting they were. How many powers did she have? She found that there was no limit, or the only limit was in what she could imagine. She tried bilocation, traveling to the past and future, walking on water (boring!) and materializing jewels, gold, food—any substance she could think of. Sudra was such an innocent that using any of her powers for her own personal fun or material gain bored her pretty fast. She thought of creating a show of her powers for others to see and benefit by. But how would they benefit? What would it convince people of? She wasn't sure when Jesus turned water into wine or raised the dead, or even raised himself from the dead, did that help people understand that he was the son of God—therefore God? If she openly showed her powers, how would modern-day people see her? She shuddered at the thought. Would they explore their own innate deeper mystery, or would they put her on some kind of pedestal and exploit and scapegoat her? She was not here to show the way through attention on her to lead anyone to God. She was only a voice, an innocent who knew I AM.

Her deeper knowing re-emerged. "I know, I know," she laughed. "Powers are for children, toys to be played with and outgrown. Did you enjoy playing with them?"

"Like any new endeavor, they were enjoyable at first, and then I grew tired of it."

"Did you find the answer to how they could benefit others?"

Sudra laughed. "Still working on that one. It's funny, I got used to having powers, they just became natural to me. I lost any awe that I might have had for them. I began

to forget to use them even when it would make my life easier. I wanted to meet my experiences with the same tools that everyone has, without special abilities."

"Oh really?" asked her deeper knowing

"I figured if I can meet whatever life brings me without any special abilities to help me along or to convince others of some subtler point, that would make me more capable, more powerful, and dare I say, more humble."

Her deeper knowing laughed "You are such an innocent, Sudra. Let's play in my depths!"

Sudra swam in her own deeper depths. This was her greatest power, to delight in her own depths. Was this selfish of her? She was too innocent to even think up that question. Her power and benefit to others was that she is simply, as she is—a free voice, unafraid to live and unafraid to die. She is an expression of Santosha, a voice that sings of the depth of the heart.

## Sudra Engages in the War Effort

They were calling this the war to end all wars. They said that about the last one, which ended eighty million lives. There have been other wars, like the war on cancer, which kills eight million people a year, and our recent viral killer Covid which has killed four million people thus far. It seems like there are wars of people against other people for the acquisition of land and resources and religious domination, and wars against diseases and drugs. Sudra never met a war she liked and when she was asked to join in the war effort, she was disinclined to give it any thought. She was not a joiner either. They were persistent, emailing her, texting her, sending pamphlets in the mail and they would have called her on her land line if she still had one. There were commercials on TV, on cable, on satellite and even her favorite UTube videos started with the question: what will you do to help in the war effort? She wasn't even sure who was fighting whom



or for what reason. Everyone was saying that war was inevitable and they were stocking up on toilet paper once again. All her friends were talking about it. She wanted to get to the bottom of it and the best way she thought to do that was to join in the war effort and find out what all the possible aggression was about. As far as she was concerned, she was not convinced that the right side was right and the wrong side was wrong. Which side to join then? Could I join both? she wondered. One thing was for certain, both sides wanted your donation. Sudra wondered if the opposing sides could just talk it out and both factions could go away, happy and satisfied with the outcome they both decided on. Maybe she could donate her time as a mediator between the opposing sides before the inevitable bloodshed would begin. She offered her services as a mediator and she found out that the war that everyone thought was inevitable had a name given to it by the media: The War between the Sexes! Oh, yeah, she thought, that war was always going on! The women's slogan to call themselves to action was "The end of the patriarchy, forever!" The polarizing stance of the men, their call to action was, "We have the right, the might, and the power to rule!" Sudra laughed at that slogan, after all she knew the value of power—she has unlimited powers and you what she felt about that: yawn!

Sudra packed her bags and made her way, (without using her power to fly) to the headquarters of the men's camp. It could use some decorating, she thought, as it was mostly unkempt with piles of banners, bumper stickers, etc. shoved into any available space. She had an appointment with the head honcho, the man with all the might and right to rule over the feminine. She was surprised that he allowed her to have an appointment with himself, his majesty.

"Hello, come in, little lady, I'm Richard Spot. They call me 'On the Spot!'"

"I'm Sudra, hello." She sat down across from On-The-Spot in a smaller, lower chair as he sat behind his big desk.

"I hear that you're here to negotiate for the little ladies that are wanting to wage war against their husbands, sons, fathers, the whole masculine gender. How foolish! They don't have a chance of winning." On-The-Spot leaned in and added, "They never had it so good!"

"That is so true!" Sudra exclaimed. "We've never had it so good!"

On-The-Spot smiled. "I see we agree on that!"

Sudra smiled. "I'm not sure what all their fuss is about. I don't know why I got this job of mediating. If I can be frank with you, doesn't pay much either—from either side."

"We are paying you for this?" asked On-The-Spot.

Sudra threw up her hands in a futile gesture. "It's a job, I don't expect I'll have much success averting a war. Are you guys really interested in an outright war?"

"Nah," answered On-The-Spot. "We just want to scare them a bit. They know we have the might and the right on our side. They'll back down when we push back."

"I know I have it really good. I'm not complaining. I like the way my life is going." Sudra added, "I'm sure their complaints are minor and I'm sure they won't really go to war for them."

"I like you, Sudra," On-The-Spot spoke. "You got a good head on your shoulders. What are the complaints? Can't be all that bad, heh?"

"I'm not completely sure, what do you think they are?" asked Sudra.

"Probably, equal pay with men. I'm sure they want their husbands to do more of the child rearing and house care, shopping and cooking—women's work, ya know?"

"Yes, I do, it's primarily women's work throughout most of history."

"That's the way it's always been, that's what the Lord intended."

"Yes, I'm sure that's what the Lord intended since it seems it's always been that way."

"Well," On-The-Spot got up to shake Sudra's hands, "Glad we see it eye to eye." And On-The-Spot patted Sudra on her back and said "I like you Sudra, if you need to talk again, let my secretary know and we'll set up another appointment."

"Thank you so much, On-The-Spot. I might take you up on that offer. Before I leave, as you probably know, as a mediator I have to listen to both sides. I'll convey to the women your ideas and thoughts."

On-The-Spot winked at Sudra "Yes, do that."

"Is there anything you would like to offer them, when I talk to them?"

On-The-Spot looked puzzled "Offer them? What do you mean?"

"I don't know, perhaps some kind of gesture that your mother, daughter, or sister would be happy with."

On-The-Spot softened "Tell them we don't really want a war..if they don't want one. But if provoked we will fight!"

"Yes," agreed Sudra "One must protect one's rights and ideals."

"Yes, that's right," On-The-Spot agreed. He took a deep breath and blew it out. "You know, Sudra, I love my mother and my wife and I have three lovely daughters. I just want to protect them and take care of them."

"That's lovely, I can see that. I'm sure their happiness means everything to you."

On-The-Spot smiled "Can I show you my picture of my daughters?"

"Yes, I would very much like to see it."

On-The-Spot pulled out his phone and showed Sudra the pictures of his three daughters.

"Thank you for sharing that with me. They are lovely, I'm sure you would do everything to see that they are happy."

"Yes, I would Sudra," On-The-Spot replied. "Between me and you, that's easily said but harder to do."

"Yes, making someone happy is much harder than protecting and taking care of them. I guess the best we can do is get out of their way, and give them the space to find their own happiness,"

"I only want the best for them."

"Yes, I'm sure you do. I'm sure the women want the best for their sons and husbands too. We all want the same thing, right?" Sudra asked On-The-Spot.

"Yes, we all do!" On-The-Spot stopped and was thinking. "Sudra, when you see the women, tell them for me ..."

"What is it, On-The-Spot? What should I tell them?"

"I don't know, tell them I will try to listen, I will do my best."

"That's the best one can do. Perhaps both sides can come together and the outcome of really listening to each other can produce a change or changes that everyone can be happy with. What do you think?"

"Yes, for my daughters," On-The-Spot said.

"And for our sons as well," added Sudra.

Negotiations were in play. Sudra met at the women's headquarters. The women gathered around her. "Did he agree to equal rights, to equal pay, to men's responsibility to prevent unwanted pregnancies, to stopping rape, to men doing equal share in child care and housework?" Their questions were numerous and they demanded the end of the inequality and abuse of all women in the patriarchy.

"What did they say? Did they argue or is it war?" they asked and raised their fists in the air.

Sudra sat forward in her seat and the women formed a circle in chairs with her.

"Well, you know how I feel," Sudra began. "I think we should just start this war to end all wars. We should all be armed with guns and when men abuse us, cock them and point. We should intimidate them with our power like they have been doing to us throughout history. Personally, I think that is the only course of action we have."

Most of the women agreed with Sudra, but there were women who were shocked at Sudra's anger. They couldn't picture themselves with a cocked gun.

"Do you have to shoot them?" One woman asked.

"What do you think? It's a war, after all. There'll be casualties," answered Sudra.

Cheryl spoke cautiously, "I don't like guns. I don't want to have to shoot anybody to get my rights."

Most of the women agreed with Cheryl. Not all—some of the women clearly had had enough and felt that intimidation was their only recourse. Sames called out, "There is no talking to them."

"Yes, I agree with you. There is no talking to them. But that got me thinking about my son and my grandson. I don't want to have to hurt them if we disagree."

Maria spoke up, "If we have a war, we will be on opposite sides. The men will stick together."

"Yeah," the women agreed but not wholeheartedly. Sudra could see that they were reflecting on their personal relationships with their sons, grandsons, and even their husbands.

"I don't know, maybe our sons, maybe even our husbands will join in our war effort," Sudra added, looking hopeful.

One woman exclaimed, "I don't want any men on our side. They can't be trusted none of them."

Cheryl spoke up again, "Have we asked them?" She looked at the circle of women. "Have we?"

"They don't listen!" one woman shouted, "and they never will."

Cheryl answered, "What if we asked them to be on our side. They would at least listen, wouldn't they?"

Sudra smiled, "Surely, they would don't you all think? By the way, my meeting with the men, with their leader On-The-Spot ended with him saying he will do his best to listen."

The women were quiet.

Sudra laughed, it seemed inappropriate given the situation, but she broke the silence with her raucous belly laugh, "I don't know about you, my dear ones, but what if they really tried to listen to us? That would be a first, that could be the beginning of the changes we all want and need"

Cheryl also let loose with a belly laugh, "Did On-The-Spot really say he would try to do his best to listen?" Cheryl laughed again; she needed a release besides anger.

"Yes, he did" Sudra affirmed, "And if that doesn't work, our sons, grandsons, and husbands will listen. They'll take our sides." Some of the women felt confident about that.

"We can avert this war if they listen, really listen," Cheryl affirmed, "Isn't it easier if they really tried to listen to us than to have a war to make them listen?"

"Hasn't worked for anybody, really..."

"Well, I don't believe they'll ever really listen," spoke up Sames. "It will be a first if they ever do."

Sudra smiled, "It will be a first. We are women, we got the heart and the brains, we'll teach them how to listen. Could we do that?" she asked the women.

The women nodded, "We could try that, we could show them how to listen."

Maria spoke up, "Let's meet with On-The-Spot. Let's see if he can listen."

Cheryl added, "Let's show him how to listen first."

"How do we do that?" asked Maria.

Cheryl turned to Sudra. Sudra's job was almost done. "Let's practice listening to each other, practice letting someone else be heard and after each one of us has felt they have been really heard, let's show our sons, grandsons, and husbands how to do it really well."

Sudra knew it was not an easy task to listen deeply to the needs and suffering of another. It could be soul-crushing at times. Everyone was too easily stirred to reaction, a righteous kind of indignation that their suffering was not understood. The more one listened the more suffering would be felt—by everyone, the ones who listened and ones who shared the stories of their suffering. Everyone was suffering and everyone felt oppressed by it and everyone wanted to assign blame. Everyone wanted to be at war with suffering. To listen, to hear and to feel one's own suffering, and to recognize other people's suffering is the beginning of learning how to be intelligent with suffering.

Would the war between the sexes ever end? We need not be stirred to fight. We need to listen, to hear the suffering, to agree to a course of action that alleviates the suffering. Sudra knew that the aggressive call to fight something was never a real answer. Real, good change can happen when we listen and have an intelligent way to understand suffering. We must listen. Couldn't we all learn how to listen better?

The women met with On-The-Spot and his associates. He asked for Sudra but she was not present. She had finished her job. "Fine lady, that Sudra," he commented.

The women asked the men to sit in their circle. Cheryl spoke up, "We have heard that you all are willing to do your best to listen. We assure you that we want to listen too."

Maria began, "Let us tell you about our suffering. We want to feel that you can hear it and be a part of helping to relieve it. After all, you are our sons, brothers and husbands, and we are your wives, your daughters and sisters. We are all in this together."

The women talked

and talked

and talked

and learned how to speak of their suffering in a way, that could be heard and the men learned to listen in a way, that they could feel, could empathize with their suffering. The men and the women sat in a circle, in a room, talked and listened. And as they talked and listened, they could see that there was no need for war. There was no side to choose. They were here and here to be here altogether.

When the "inevitable" war did not break out, Sudra knew her effort was a beginning of good changes. She heard that several of the women and men decided to train in the art of listening deeper for true change. Sudra was pleased and continued to enjoy her life of listening as an Open Heart.

## Sudra and the End of the World!

Yipee! It's the end of the world and we are all going to die! Was Sudra being callous? Was she expressing a callous indifference to the suffering of others? What is this crazy, woman's relationship to death—to hers—to everyone else's, and to the big end? Sudra is about to take us on another ride, an adventure into the end.

Is the end of anything a welcoming time for anyone? If it's felt as an accomplishment, I suppose. Not so much if it is seen as a failure, a separation. Will the end of the human race be a sign of our big mistake, of our failure to stay alive?

People are smug about life, as if we could own it. Sudra saw life and death in a different way. She was well aware that everything in life was dying as it was living, and it would all disappear through the portal of death. No one was here to stay, here. We are all hitching our way, through life, our journeying would never be exhausted. Sudra liked being a human being, she was good at being one, but she knew without a shadow



of a doubt that being human was only a charade. It had its charms and it had its limits. It had its dreams and it had its desires.

It is a state of mind that seeks to fulfill its ambitions, and all desires, whether fulfilled or frustrated have their consequences. To be human is to chase desire and hopefully, to learn through the misadventures that our desires take us on. To be human is a series of big fat mistakes and death is an exit point where we finally get to ask: What was that all about? There are no winners, there are no losers, only manageable consequences. Any impulses left to do it again? And again?

Sudra saw each day, not as a possible last one, more as the first one. Anything is possible, what will unfold today? Everything was new to her and she delighted in it like a child. She was drawn to beauty and adventure. Was she worried that humankind could be a big fuck up that would lead to its own mass extinction? Could human beings accept and learn from their mistakes and avert a mass extinction of the human race and the Earth itself? Is it too late and is our destiny inevitable? Sudra was too innocent to be so judgmental about the human race. She was simple enough to know that her physical demise and everyone else's was a natural plan of all our deeper knowing. So she was surprised when she was asked (again!) to be the mediator between the inevitable ending of everything and the impulse to keep it all going. She was asked to take on the job of mediating between desire and consequence because she was trusted by the deeper knowing, not because she would be fair and partial, but because she was such an innocent that she could hear both sides and enjoy them. Let the arguments begin!

Who would knock on her door first? Yes! It was the environmentalists. She didn't hear them drive up her driveway, as they all rode on their bicycles. She greeted them and they proudly showed off their state-of-the-art bicycles. Sudra was eager to try out one of the electric powered bicycles. I got to get me one of these, she thought as she enjoyed getting up the incline to her house.

"Everyone, come up to the patio. I have drinks, water, juice, kombucha, vitamin drinks, anything you might like."

The crew of ten sat around the porch. An elderly man puffed on a joint.

Sudra got to the point. "I know you all know what we are up against. Can we get through this environmental crisis before it's too late? Before it's our mass extinction, and possibly the Earth's as well?"

The crew of ten had spent their adult life in environmental jobs. Some were hopeful, some were not. Their ideas and plans were sound. They had the know-how to restore the planet and its resources, but were divided on whether laws could be implemented soon enough to begin to reverse the worst effects of environment abuse. Most felt it was up to the private sector to bring about changes—individuals with strong drives to implement the changes needed. Sudra was fascinated by what they all had to say. Here were some people that understood that you can't just take and take—you had to share, restore, plan and nurture. These are good people, she thought.

"Do you feel we are facing the difficult consequences of our previous generation's choices with the environment?"

"Yes, we are, and most of them are not good. Big changes are necessary," they answered.

"In your own lives, have you made choices or participated in actions that you now see were detrimental to the environment?"

Johnathan spoke up, "I was a logger in my early twenties. I participated in clear cutting in the forests of the Northwest. Seeing a clear-cut forest breaks your heart. That got me on the road to responsible cutting and replanting. And to seeing the big picture—we need our forests and should protect them."

Others spoke of the damage to the environment caused by fossil fuels and pesticides. They spoke about climate change and droughts and the lack of good water.

Sudra asked "Do we understand our mistakes? Do we know how to stop the abuse? Can we reverse all the damage and heal the environment?"

Everyone was reflective. Some people were sure that things could improve. Others felt it was too late even if all the positive changes were implemented right away.

Johnathan reflected "I guess no one knows everything. We don't know if there is something we just don't get yet—something we are overlooking."

Marlow spoke up, "If the population shrunk down to under a couple billion and we had a more intelligent environmental plan, the Earth and the remaining people could continue."

"Too many people using all the resources without intelligently replenishing them?" asked Sudra. All the environmentalists shook their heads. "Do any of you feel that mankind will be responsible for the end of all life here on Earth?"

Some said yes, some didn't know what to say. Sudra pointed at the elder gentleman who had finished smoking his joint. "Is it all your generation's fault?" she asked.

He laughed. "Personal fault? Collective fault? The end?" he laughed. "I'm old enough to know my end is coming. It's coming for us all, even sweet mother Earth. She knows it's coming for her as well. When? Like Johnathan said, we can't know everything, we need each other. We each only see the small picture. If we come together are we seeing the bigger picture, or just a lot of small pictures adding up? I don't know."

Sudra agreed. "The end of our lives is inevitable, as is the end of the Earth. Should we blame ourselves for bringing it about?"

The elder man responded. "For me it's not about regrets or mistakes I've made." He leaned in, "It's about if I learned anything from them. I might not live long enough to correct them and see better change. We might not live long enough to understand our mistakes and create better lives."

Marlow added, "Each succeeding generation gets handed our mistakes and hopefully what we have learned as well, and they get to make their own mistakes. The stakes have been getting higher and higher. It's built up to a global crisis now."

Sudra asked, "Does anyone personally feel that they have done things in their lives that would accelerate their personal deaths?"

Except for the obvious, eating more vegetables and drinking more water, most felt that they had lived their lives the best way they could.

"Living is learning," added Johnathan. "I've made mistakes..."

"And so have our cultures," added the elder man, "Back to personal guilt, collective guilt, no point in assigning blame." Everyone sighed in relief.

"One last question, would it be okay if the world ended?"

Marlow spoke up, "I wouldn't want that to happen, but..."

The elder man interrupted, "The inevitable is the inevitable. I want to go out with dignity, knowing yes, I fucked up and I learned from my mistakes."

Johnathan spoke up, "I feel that the Earth is a part of us—that we are not just our personal selves, our cultural selves, we are also our Earth selves. She is with us, we are with her. We are totally dependent on her, she gives us everything we need to live."

"Does she, the Earth, need us? Does she have a relationship with us?" Sudra asked.

Marlow shook her head, "I've often felt that relationship, I feel the Earth's voice, that's why I became an environmentalist."

Sudra smiled. Even when facing the inevitable end of the personal self, of the Earth, of everything, she could see that the environmentalists could feel the voice of the deeper knowing within and they felt it as their expression of love—love of themselves, of each other and of Mother Earth and all of life.

"Thank you so much for coming. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and concerns." She wanted to add one more poignant statement but Johnathan upped her

by saying, "Don't know when the inevitable is coming for us all but how about a big groovy group hug?"

Everyone laughed and came in for the hug. Ah, the inevitable is inevitable and so is love, which is present in the presence of our coming together—in the vulnerability of our mortality.

How to make friends with the end? How to accept our mortality and realize our immortality? Sudra, our favorite innocent, accepted both as she lives her life as the deep knowing. See you on the other side of life, see you here my dear ones. Sudra was happy with life even though it had an ending. It always pushed up new sprouts and it always disappeared in due time. Appearing and disappearing, the rhythm of change, the end is part of the circle of change of the great unifying field of Love and knowing. Sudra, I'm with you on this one. Fear not the end it is a great release. It is coming for us all not like a hooded figure carrying an intimidating sickle, or as a God that grants forgiveness or meets out punishment. Not as judgement or blame, rather as a release into the deeper knowing, a respite into ourselves as joy, as innocence—the true place of ourselves, the place where we recognize and know ourselves. How beautiful endings can be. They usher in our release from our desires, our states of mind and the consequences of having had them and lived them. Soon enough, perhaps after such a respite into our well of joy, a desire sprouts and the journey, to live our impulses of attraction manifests heart to mind to form to life and all its expressions.

the end is always near and also is the beginning. We come into the life helped by our mothers, filled with desires to be lived and we die when our desires have been met. We die having been met by those we have loved and have been loved by. We live together and we die together for we all share the gift and desires of life and we all know individually, personally and collectively, that we will die, all of us. All will live or will die and this is our mystery, the mystery of the deeper knowing that propels us all on to seek a beginning, to endure and to accept our release.

Sudra closed her book and put her pen away. Each day was felt as the first day. Would it be the last one or everyone else's? She didn't know, but she met it with her big open heart and danced with her own presence, her present of happiness. And she could feel all of life dancing with her.

Santosha Tantra

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