

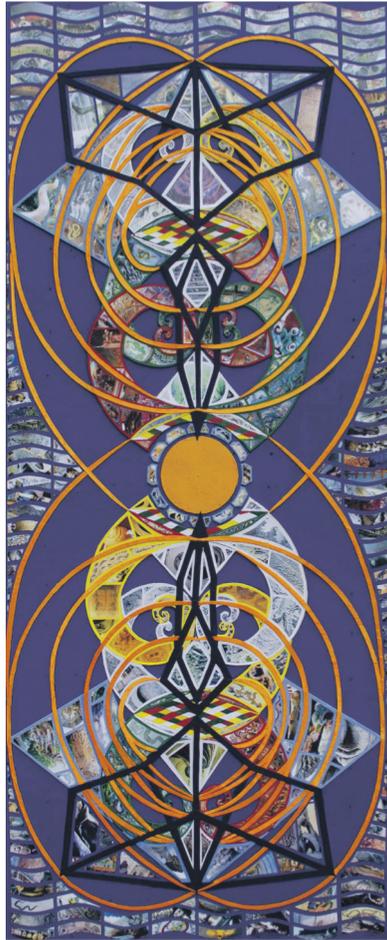


On a Journey...

Continued from previous issue...

By Susan Griffith-Jones, Exclusive

I put my knowledge of the geography of the Uttarakhand region into action as I wonder if this is where a female Swami, whose name is Maa Poornaprajna, who we've just met at the Kumbh Mela, lives. No, I'm wrong, the train must have al-



Crystal of Time, Susan's latest photo collage art piece, the Naga picture!

ready passed that place around an hour ago, as she lives on the road out from Dehra Dun to Haridwar, at Raiwala, which is in the other direction. Since Anuradha, who is one of Raj Kumari's daughters is a disciple of hers and travels to meet her frequently, we had daily interaction with Swami Maa Poornaprajna at the Kumbh. Her English is perfect, which of course makes it much easier to form a deeper connection. Even though I am not looking for anything in particular from her, I am always interested to get to know deep thinkers and would like to share further thoughts on her extensive knowledge of the Advaita Vedanta – the non dual path, which is considered by many as the pinnacle of the Hindu path and has some glaring similarities with what I've been studying over the years with the Tibetan Masters. If we're coming over in this direction, we'll make an effort to get to her Ashram next time.

We're meeting my cousin Edward and his girlfriend, Lucy at Chandigarh railway station this morning

and they'll be spending the next month or so with us at our home in Kullu-Manali. Edward and Lucy are both artists, but have come to India to expand their knowledge of Asia and not necessarily to paint, although that may happen too. I want to continue exploring the forested area around our house and the Kullu-Manali valley in general while they are with us and they want to spend time out in nature, so there's a perfect match! We've made an arrangement to meet at a certain time, but although throughout the journey our train has been promising to be late, it arrives absolutely on time! They are not there yet, so we go to check if our car is still in the general car park where we left it 9 days now, for a whopping fee of 180 rupees, the equivalent of not quite 2 pounds! We're relieved to see it's unharmed and after packing away our luggage into the boot, I return to the front steps of the station to await Edward and Lucy's arrival.

A few minutes later they appear out of an auto rickshaw and I spot them before they do me. It is always such a pleasure to meet people you know from somewhere else, especially family in a completely different environment. Just the simple fact of both parties being on neutral territory knits the bond immediately, as there's an immediate sense of complicity and freedom from customary ways enacted in the home, plus no one has anything in particular to be attached to. I've been searching around for an ATM machine, as well as a cup of coffee, but since I will not bend to drink the instant Nescafe that they're serving in the train station café, suggest that we go find a 'proper' cup before heading off towards Manali. I am going to have to drive a long way and although I've slept fairly well on the train, will need every ounce of stamina to complete the at least 10 hour long drive home today. In a little restaurant we find in a row of shops, we chatter ten to the dozen, them about their trip so far in Rajasthan, Rishikesh and now Chandigarh and me about the Kumbh, projects I've got going on at the moment and about the general state of affairs at home, India and the world at large!

I have quite a bit of work to get on with when I get home, none the least to get the second draft of the mobile game developed into its next stage, in which I need to add the Augmented Reality aspect. Its allegory to the Tibetan Book of the Dead is getting closer and closer, as Nelida and I progress into the mechanics of gameplay and it becomes clearer and clearer what we are doing here. I turn to the subject of the recent photo collage art piece I've just finished, 'Crystal of Time'

and how I'm planning to embed it into the Bosnian film that I need to make for the summer solstice conference there this year, in June. I feel that I still have a lot of time for that and will probably leave doing it until later. I've sent a picture of it to Dr Karim, who I met at the Pyramid Conference last year in Chicago and am still awaiting a reply from him as to his impressions of it. The other pressing thing is something that came up just before Christmas and is now bugging me, in the sense that I know I need to address it and find a way to push it on. Francesca, translator of the Tibetan book of the Dead with Chogyi Trungpa Rinpoche, received a handwritten letter from a film director in Los Angeles just before Christmas last year. In the letter, she was asked to become an advisor to a Virtual Reality film project related to the Tibetan Book of the Dead that he and his collaborators are proposing to produce. She wrote back to him immediately telling him sorry, but she's involved in another project, to which he instantly replied that he would like to be in touch with the people who she is involved with, ie. me, suggesting 'collaboration instead of competition'. She told me about this immediately and asked what I would like to do about it. I suggested that we explore it a little deeper and find out what they are doing, so that we could assess whether this is a serious proposal or not. This resulted in a 3-way Skype conversation between myself, Francesca and the guy in LA, in which we discussed our projects in general. We agreed that we should start talking and sharing some information, but to date I've been unable to do this. I tell Edward and Lucy that I am listening to the advice coming from around me and what I am hearing is stopping me from sharing what we have, at least at this moment. I am also unwilling to give away any detailed information about the project until I've met the director, as it's simply impossible for me to judge the situation without meeting him in the flesh and understanding what he's all about. I instinctively know that this will have to happen before we get any deeper into this so called 'collaboration'.

The journey home from Chandigarh passes easily and is fun. We talk most of the way, commenting on places we are passing, stopping to freshen up and eat, and generally getting more and more acquainted with each other. I only re-met Edward after many many years, when I went to visit his mother, my cousin Jo at her home in Scotland, in 2017. Lucy was there too, but this is the first time they are meeting Jamyang, as he was in India that time. The weather is and has been



Lucy, Susan and Edward on the way to Kullu-Manali, Himachal Pradesh, India



Lucy and Edward in the forest behind our house, Kullu-Manali valley, India



Raj Kumari's daughters serving dinner to Swami Maa Poornaprajna at Modi Camp, Kumbh Mela, Prayagraj, India

terrible in the Kullu-Manali valley and I wonder what Edward and Lucy are thinking about the place when we walk in the dark through inches of soggy mud to get to our house on arrival! In fact, I've rarely seen the path by the water channel below our house in such a state. The rain continues into the next day, so we agree that rather than caving in and staying home, we should take a little walk out into

the forest behind the house just so they can see where on earth they have landed. We take several cats with us and return soaking wet to a lovely fire that Jamyang has kept going.

To be continued...

For all previous editions of Susan's story, 'On a journey...', please go to: www.pyramidkey.com/readsusansarticleshere/.