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Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

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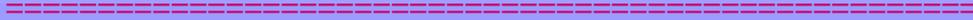
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Epiphanies and Identities

Raji Narasimhan, M.Phil.



It can't be denied, this feeling of a "uniqueness" that we all possess. "Individuality" some may call it... But does it really exist? Are we all unique... like the snowflakes, or the thumbprint? This is a question that often arises in my mind. Am I really special? Or are we all simply existing; like raindrops that fall, believing that we make a difference, that we make the seed sprout. There are these moments that open out, and they mostly present themselves along with life altering change; for instance- the death of a parent... The world stands still so you can observe every moment that passes you by. The overwhelming feeling caught me unawares, twice.

The death of my mother was hard on the 19 years old that I was: confused and scared. These feelings began long before her death, just when she was diagnosed with cancer, but the news of her death brought finality into a very agitated mind. The world finally collapsed - for me. Time made no sense...existence was suspended. I don't remember how long this lasted, but sense broke through and then this moment of realization hit. The world had not changed, not one bit, there was laughter, there were tears, there was gossip, there were fears; just not in my world. I was an outsider, looking into the world, as I knew it. How could I not see that the

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world appears different to each seeing mind? When my roof got torn out from above me, only I could experience the helplessness, only I could breathe the dense air of the night with no dawn. We are different yet we are all the same. The very same night presents itself to many people at different points in life. So it would not be outrageous to assume that these moments that question the very existence, presents itself to everyone. My mother's death taught me that the world moves on. Nothing is too important for the world to pause on its axis. The perception of uniqueness takes a break during these moments of epiphany - *I am as important as a rock on a mountain, a pebble on a riverbed, a leaf on a tree, a grain of sand on a beach* ...

The second moment that taught me was right after the birth of my daughter. Every woman knows the exhaustion and exhilaration that follows childbirth! The moment caught me on our drive out of the hospital. I saw the people of my city, it seemed, for the first time... the man with the big moustache standing near a juice shop, the cop with a big belly beckoning the oncoming traffic, the lady haggling with the fruit-vendor with her hair threatening to escape its clasp, the man on the cycle balancing a large water can; but I saw them differently. The difference was that they were all born the same way; someone loved them very much. There was meaning in every life. The world was a beautiful place. Even a thief or a murderer was once loved and lovable. This taught me that no one is entirely good or bad. We project what a situation demands of us. Personality is not defined or static. It is the Janus in every man. We are a complex combination of all that is good and bad.

The feeling of realization is exhilarating, so much so that I can now experience the feeling on demand. At any given time, to step out of myself and take on the eyes of a non-existent third person, to look at my life. This comes handy when I face a troubling situation - to view this as just another problem, for just another person- to lay down the heavy tag of identity and assume a lighter and aloof imagination which is better equipped to deal with the situation and understand that 'this too shall pass away'. Works for me - every time. It is in these moments that the enigma of personality or the conundrum of identity is brought to the notice of a person. Every trying experience is an opportunity to learn, to watch for the light at the end of the tunnel. This hope that we strive for, or should strive for, is ever present during these moments of epiphany.

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