



The Dance of Shakti

*Reflections from Jeanette LoCurto,
who just spent a month at Sonoma Ashram*

Dear Friends,

It's been a year since I visited Sonoma Ashram, although through my daily practice I've never felt separated from this Oasis of Stillness and my beloved Babaji. I know it's clichéd to say I feel as if I have come home, but I am sure we all share that sense of welcome when we set foot on this sacred soil.

The ashram is at once so familiar and so different. Babaji calls it "The Dance of Shakti." I see this expression of Divine creativity in many physical changes, large and small. There's the expanded deck that radiates from the house into the gardens providing a cheery spot to sit with Babaji, eat dinner or share chai after Sunday *satsang*. There's the new hallway that separates the public spaces from the sleeping rooms and keeps us all from tromping through the kitchen day and night.



I see Shakti in the gardens, where she moves with ease to the rhythm of the season, creating abundance overflowing. Every day she offers me a fresh crop of bounty to marvel at, respectfully pick and later consume with gratitude.



If you stay on your toes, you can see The Dance of Shakti at work right before your eyes. One day Baba decided that the gate—yes, THAT gate, the one in every brochure and video of the ashram (and in this letter, too), the big red one that frames the entry to the garden—had to go. And within an hour, it was gone.

After the literal dust cleared, we understood what Babaji had envisioned all along: Our view was unlimited now, our access to the gardens, unfettered. It's all about removing obstacles and limits, he told us later, seeing beyond what we've become accustomed to. Nothing was wrong with that gate, he said, but it was time for a new perspective, thanking what was there for serving us, then moving on without regret.

That of course is the beauty of being at the ashram: There's a lesson in everything. A story about the gate becomes a story not about the gate but a teaching on nonattachment and the opportunity to shift that Dance of Shakti into our hearts and minds.



The Dance of Shakti, I've come to realize, is a partners' dance. Shakti extends a hand in invitation to flow in grace with the Divinity inside me.

That I've come here after a tumultuous year of personal change is an understatement. That I've come here seeking spiritual/physical/mental/emotional and energetic renewal is undeniable. The goddess Shakti reminds me that I have the power to transform myself. That the answers I am longing for are right inside me. She will help me find my footing. Take it slow if you need to at first, she seems to tell me, you'll get the steps eventually.



In *satsang*, Babaji says Shakti's mission is to stir up change inside us. She will guide us to see more clearly and deeply, all the while ensuring we never lose contact with the mystery, the great unknown. For me, that's a core conundrum of *Aghor*: Finding balance in that space that's neither yes nor no, simple nor complicated, understood nor impenetrable.

Baba and I have been meeting several mornings a week to work on a new edition of his book, "Oasis of Stillness." Just sitting with him is a joy and a privilege. I learn so much being in his presence, soaking up his essence.

We just reviewed Sarkar Baba's discourses. In one of them, he reminds us of the *Aghor* path to spiritual strength: "By repeating your mantra, by meditation and by contemplation, the vibrations coming out of your body change and your voice gets charged with the Shakti that unfolds many things in your life."

In another teaching, he describes Shakti as "the secret force permeating all creation." He says we have unlimited Shakti within us, born of the Divine Mother, the source of leading a joyous life. He says, "The Shakti we worship is not on the outside, it lies within us waiting for us to embrace it."

Shall we accept Shakti's invitation and dance?

Namasté,
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Sonoma Ashram
August 25, 2011

