

Feeling Truth Take Shape

Her name was Satya. Truth. And she was blind. I came to believe that she was a diviner of sorts, not of the future, but of the present. I found and placed objects in her hands and watched in amazement as she felt and turned, felt and turned. I gasped with glee when she correctly identified them every time. It soon became my new favorite game – a living riddle, an animated puzzle. Her superior skills of perceptivity were to me, a young child born with a cleft palate requiring painful surgeries and laborious speech therapy, the necessary reassurance that all setbacks could be overcome.

At first, my parents made mild pleas to me to stop pestering our guest with found objects. But when these went unheeded, they yanked me aside and sent me to my room. As I sat alone on my bed, I felt and turned, felt and turned but I couldn't figure out what I had done wrong.

Like my parents, Satya and her husband had left India to make a new life in England as healers to people who didn't look or sound like them. However, my parents did not stay in England. Their journey took them further west, to the U.S. For years they felt and turned, felt and turned, the shape of their old lives lost somewhere between their homeland and the land they would come to call home.

As a teenager, we paid them a visit at their suburban home in England. I was embarrassed at my own memories of how I had behaved towards Satya and hoped she didn't remember, or, if she did, she forgave it all as the innocent antics of a child. Theirs was a serene and orderly home seemingly so far away from the chaotic car accident that had robbed her of her vision. Her husband, a devout, spiritual Hindu, led my sister and I into their prayer room and taught us some mantras, gave us our own *Bhagavad Gita*, and gently implored us to read it, think on it, and pray.

After dinner, at his suggestion, my sister and I took a walk around their bucolic neighborhood. As we made our way back to their house, a car accelerated and pulled up alongside us. The back window rolled down and a few white teenage boys stuck out their faces and shouted, "go home Pakis!" "Go home birds?" I pondered perplexed, remembering only that *paki* meant bird in Bengali. Stunned, I felt and turned, felt and turned. As they spat out the phrase two more times and sped off, I finally felt truth take shape.