

The roaring Angels

My father who was in the Indian Civil Service had a talent for music.

He sang.

He had also many many interests, shikar was the thing of the gentleman of the day, tiger shooting, deer shooting, duck shooting, all that was very much, the thing which gentlemen did over the week- end.

I was always the one who wanted to go with him. Even sit in the macchan which is a little platform in the heart of the jungle and wait for the tiger to come and kill the lamb and many of these interesting episodes , I shared, and many of Christmas, we spent in the forest, the forest called the Therrai forests which are in the Uttar Pradesh at the foot of the hills which had many many man-eating tigers and a lot of wild life. So, we used to spend and spend nights in the jungle with the campfire with the roaring of lions and tigers.

My name is Arunda Sunderlal, sometimes I am very curt with people, I have been told. So, I am trying not to be. So, I know that, that is a fault I have, but otherwise, I really cannot think of anything terrible or horrible about myself. I believe in one God. For me, it is the one God which I believe in,

Faith is something that is not seen. Faith is something that, it just is a belief that is within you and your, like a child's faith in the parent. This is like our faith in our father who is our God.

So, it is something that just is and happens rather than it is your faith that makes you believe and you know just there is a God who has made the heaven and earth and has made all people. So, it is nothing that we need proved. It just comes from within us

Basically, it has to come from childhood, you know.

All religions have the human voice chanting or singing to spiritually awaken us, voice has been considered through the ages as one which is most divine, heavenly that can take us nearer to God, voice as compared to all other instruments is the most expressive. It can portray any emotion of the human spirit and it is something which is extra. You may get the sound of a Stradivarius or best Steinway piano, but that is coming from wood and iron and of course something is lacking if as compared to that of the human voice because that has the warmth of the human being which you do not find in any other musical instrument.

I had a fairly developed voice, I had a contralto voice even from my childhood, even when I was 10 and 11, and I was in a boarding school up in the hills in Punjab in a place in Simla. The school was Oakland House and they had some excellent teachers and the music teacher was from England, Mrs. Fischer, and I used to look forward to the singing classes in the afternoon and after last period, we were able to do piano which my parents encouraged my sister, Anitha, and I to do
We had a very happy childhood.

My father had a very large collection of records, and those days, they were the 78s, but he had all the symphonies, concertos, amongst which were songs by some of the great singers of that time, I had a fascination for listening more to the singers and ultimately, father bought us a little HMV turntable and I had it in my room. I used to spend hours listening to these great singers and always thought I wish I could sing like that and when I did come to Auckland House and we had these regular singing classes, the teacher did comment on my voice and I was always asked to be the soloist.

Singing is something you want to do, which comes from within you, and you long to hear the human voice singing in melody with accompaniment basically, I would say, and you lose yourself when you are singing actually, and the other thing is music is sharing with interacting with other human beings and giving something of yourself to them. So, that gives back a lot of joy,

But, you know, in those days we did what our parents wanted us to do. Because my mother always wanted one child to be a doctor, automatically this stuck in my head that the eldest must be a doctor. So, this singing, even there, I continued little bit, not much.

I got married at a very early age, I do not know, It was 20, I do not know if it is young or old, because in India, even 13 and 14 year olds are forced into marriage.

I think it is very cruel on the girl child and we have always sympathised for these evils of dowry and child marriages. Even, young boys are forced into marriage. They do not know what they are going into and girls at 14 or 15 become mothers. They have no childhood left. They are burdened from beginning to end with responsibility, children, and they become forced labour.

Later on, I was singing in the church choir, but suddenly we heard that the ninth symphony was going to be presented in Bombay which of course is the centre of western music at that time in India. So, I was chosen to be the Alto soloist and there is a famous choir there called the Karan Jogi choir. They were to be the choir and there is a Bombay Chamber Orchestra. So, the singer's husband who was a well-known conductor was to conduct them, but we had to go there for an audition for our voices and I was very scared because I had no training, I did not even know the German words . Somehow, I managed and through all the nervousness and all that, all the three of us that appeared, the contralto myself and tenor and base from the city of Bombay. There were of course experienced singers, Indians, but experienced and they had been singing. I was the only one who had hardly sung formerly. So, you can imagine how nervous I was.

Later, of course, the ninth symphony took place. It was a huge musical event in Bombay in the whole country with 60 singers, 4 soloists, and then 60 members of the orchestra. So, that is something which I can think of as the highlight of my musical and it was right in the beginning when I did not even know how to sing.

I have started with the help of many many friends and supporters to start the Bangalore School of Music Well, I have to confess I gave up all my involvement in social welfare work because each organisation that I was with, we of course have committees and I am very embarrassed to confess that there was a lot of politics involved and those people who want to do good unfortunately are pulled down by the majority that are just there for their own.

We know that politicians have through ages let you down, that is the common person, and promises are not kept and cartoons are galore about politicians and they just do not seem to change. They are only for self and family, and I am not talking of the odd good politician committed to doing things for the constituency or the people for whom they have been elected to do good and for the upliftment of the people, but for the majority of politicians, they are so desperate to get voted in that they are willing to do anything, anything, I stress, I am not going into details, to get the seat of power and once they are in power, they have to ensure that they continue in power, so they are again willing to do anything to keep that power going to be in that seat and they forget who elected them, they forget who has voted them in, and this cycle goes on.

The music school started in my home as you know with 3 students, who were my daughter, my nephew, and niece . I was very scared that nobody else would join. Now nearly 200 students joined.

I have a goal and I am going forward hopefully with support from likeminded people, ordinary people, like myself.

We helping the individual child, to grow in another dimension. It is more of the soul and spirit and it is more to balance and give them peace of mind and new spirituality through music that they can reach to a higher level in the midst of all the terrible things happening around them.

Development and progress are supposed to help the human being, but what is happening is the opposite is taking place. And terrible, terrible things are happening.

We have to give something to our children, even young people who are so disillusioned, who feel they have nothing much to look for, is to give them something which can sustain them not as physical food or clothes or housing, but something which will give them real strength and something beautiful..

There is definitely a link between music and spirituality because, I mean, the very first music was that of the angels.

The world, the earth, is the songs of the angels, and there is a sound even in Indian music which is heard and unheard, and that is many people who are spiritual hear music that normally will not be picked up the ordinary human beings, because of the noise and pollution and then you have to be concentrated and your mind has to be absolutely focused on linking your thoughts to the higher being God, and music is a way of expressing our joy, hope, and fears and praising God. It is all factors that we need to continue living. Without hope where are we? If we do not hope for a better tomorrow despite what is happening today, I mean, we would just be vegetables, we would just be cabbages.