



GOD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST, SOMETHING HAPPENS, WHICH CAN ONLY

BE ATTRIBUTED TO GOD'S MYSTERIOUS WAYS

by Harsaran Bir Kaur Pandey

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I believe life has a larger purpose than we recognise, and often we are moved around like so many pieces on a chessboard. Sometimes, we do not understand this pattern, particularly when we are very close to the action. I am learning that in contrast to my earlier assumption that I controlled my life, I am only a tiny vessel, sailing in a vast ocean. Call this enormous power, God or destiny. It has so often mapped out certain

paths for me, removing all human hurdles and bringing me to the point where I was apparently meant to be.

I have always believed in prayer and follow the principles of Sikhism and the power of prayer. I believe that if we follow the key principles of praying, our prayers are always answered, and when they are not, then there is something better and more appropriate to our growth that will follow. The prin-

ciples are: i) belief that God has the power to grant your prayer; ii) knowledge that what you are asking for is just and ethical and iii) belief that your prayer will be answered. Any number of times when I have prayed from my heart, all obstacles just fall away and a complex situation dissolves.

But there have been other examples in my life when God has indeed moved in mysterious ways. One of the first jobs I had in India was in a government media organisation – lots of responsibility, a very challenging job where I worked really hard to compensate for the lack of production facilities. Salaries were low – way below even the public sector salaries. After 13 years with the organisation, our salary scales were so low that when some of us applied to related jobs in public sector organisations, we were not even called for the interviews. Public sector could only invite people one salary scale below the one advertised. I felt that given this Catch-22 situation, I might spend my entire life in a high-responsibility-low-pay job.

However, it came to pass that a colleague showed me a newspaper advertisement about a job in a UN agency and asked me to apply. I put in an application through the proper channels, and following my father's advice, I also sent directly (to the UN office) a copy of the application in advance. Mine was one among several hundred applications.

A month later, the senior clerk from my office apologetically informed me that somehow my application for the UN job sent through official channels had slipped through the back of the drawer and fallen away from sight, hence no action had been taken. The last date for the application was long past. I told him to send the file anyway so that official sanction could be sought. In fact, the official copy never ever cleared the ministry's channels. But as the UN agency already had the advance copy it was being considered. Something had stumped my chances, but mysteriously, I was still being considered for the job. This was the first step that fate had taken.

A few weeks later, on a Sunday, I returned to our flat from the studio where my husband had been working around the clock. After meeting him, for no apparent reason, I felt I needed to rush home. A little after I reached, the doorbell rang and someone's servant handed me a grubby piece of paper (without an envelope). He said that the letter had been mis-delivered to their flat, and was it mine? I looked at it and gasped. It was the letter asking me to appear for the interview for the UN job, the next day. What if I hadn't been home when the servant arrived? Would he have chucked the letter away as an unimportant piece of paper? I would

have missed the interview and would never have known I was on the short list. This was the second step that fate had taken.

I appeared for the interview and waited to hear the result. A few days later we heard that a senior person who headed a huge public sector department was sure he was getting the UN job. I hadn't told anyone about my application, a little embarrassed that others would mock at my temerity in imagining I might get a UN job, so I kept quiet about my disappointment.

So two days later when the UN agency called me, I was stunned when I was told I had got the job! It was as if one set of circumstances was putting obstacles to my getting the job, but destiny, or God meant me to have it, and things just fell into place.

That UN job was the first step to a huge change in my family's life, and there was no looking back thereafter. Life moved to a different plane – the scope of my work opened to national and later international levels, and with it came the ability to make an impact at national and international policy levels. I was able to travel to different parts of the world and sought ways to disseminate information about development and health issues to the public domain through effective communication. While the more orderly hours allowed me more time for the children and family, I had the opportunity to grow professionally, and also explore my spiritual goals.

It was years later that I learnt of the third step that fate had taken to get me that job. A colleague told me that perhaps the other person might have got the post; however, when someone in the government had tried to put pressure on his behalf, it went against his candidature. He lost his chance, and I got the job instead.

Fate's step four happened 11 years later. A senior colleague in another UN agency decided to take early retirement leaving his post vacant. Another friend in my agency (Mrs. A) brought the vacancy notice to me and told me that I must apply. I did, and I got the job. Interestingly, a little after that, Mrs. A's post was suddenly abolished. She would have normally lost her job, but because I had just moved to another agency, my post fell vacant and her job was adjusted against that vacancy. Her good turn to me brought her the vacancy when she needed it.

As I look back, I have watched with amazement as life has played itself out, mapping my path, providing opportunities and gifts, irrespective of whether I believed I deserved them or not. ☺

For nearly 40 years Harsaran Pandey has worked in communication, as a teacher, a television journalist, and as an information officer with two UN agencies, to promote development, child rights and health issues.

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