



The *tao* of tattoo

WHILE WRITH-
ING UNDER THE
EXCRUCIATING
PAIN OF THE
TATTOO NEE-
DLE, THE WRITER
DISCOVERS THE
ESSENTIAL
ONENESS OF
FAITHS!

by
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You can encounter spirituality at random corners and mostly when you are least expecting it. I met 'it' recently at a tattoo studio.

My husband, Som, was getting a tattoo done, finally having convinced me that tattoos were cool, not scary.

Once he was through, the attention turned on me. I finally decided to give in. In retrospect, I think I should have known better, at least when I heard a woman screaming her head off from the next room (she was getting one done right after Som).

Soothing background music lulled me into a false sense of calm. Until, I saw the drill and needle! I grasped my friend's hand, who had come along with us (with my nails, I later realised, when I saw the deep marks on her skin) and did not release it until my ordeal was over. As soon as the needle touched my skin, I knew I had made a wrong decision. Overwhelming pain shot up through my arm and right up to my head, rewiring my nerve cells, so that the only emotion, feeling, and thought in my mind was one of extreme pain. Once started, the drilling could not be stopped, unless of course, to wipe the blood off my hand or dip the needle in colour.

Soon the pain elevated me to a state of numbness and then unfolded a uniquely spiritual experience that I will cherish forever. We Hindus have approximately 33 crore gods and goddesses and during this experience I called on all of them for strength and also invented a few deities of my own. Casting aside all barriers of religion, faith, culture, and upbringing for the first time, I invoked the help of Christ, Allah, and Wahe Guru as well. In my frame of mind, superficial man-made differences of faith simply ceased to exist and a profound realisation struck me with such force that the pain seemed inconsequential. I realised that when we humans are undergoing an extreme situation and when all other doors close, faith, and surrender to one Supreme Being is all that matters! No distinction is possible and that is when one realises the folly of differentiating others based on their caste, creed, colour, and religion.

As the tattoo artist continued his torture, my mind conjured up a further image – that of Christ being crucified! I tried to imagine the amount of pain he must have gone through for the sake of mankind, while here I was undergoing a little pain simply to create a statement through a tattoo. It is then that I had yet another realisation. We humans exaggerate our misery and like to believe that no one can be undergoing a worse situation than ours! Reality could not be further removed. We are sad because we have no shoes and only when we see a man without feet do we realise the limitation of our thinking and understanding.

After 45 minutes, the artist stepped back with a smile. The deed was done! I finally dared to glance at my right forearm (yes, I had not even looked once when the design was being etched). There it was, a beautiful pink lotus with bright red and yellow flames leaping from it and the word 'Enlightenment' written in black and bold kanji script. I couldn't have picked a more appropriate symbol!

