

The horseshoe nail

In the first meeting with Sri Sri he asked how old I was. 36. That was a good age to start with spiritual practice, according to Sri Sri. He told me to appoint a place in my house for meditating. For that, I needed a small bowl of water on the meditation spot. I should burn candles during the meditation. “Do not blow them out afterwards!”

The meditation position should be directed to the East. And I had to make sure that for every meditation I lighted a new piece of incense. “Never smell the incense you offer.”

Then, next to finding an older tantra woman, a woman I could practice tantra with – a detail – I needed to find a few other things: a nail of a horseshoe and a chain to wear around my neck. Getting the latter was easy, I was allowed to buy it. The nail, however, I was supposed to find in nature.

I didn’t ask what it was for. But it quite puzzled me, how to find it. It seemed to me like looking for a needle in a haystack. Yet, I was happy and excited: finally it would start. For 22 years I had gone to school, to be prepared for society – for nothing, except for the fact that I had met Iris at secondary school. Then, despite my serious breakdown, the social service tried to put me in a job – in vain. Then, Tiara tried her best to fit me in society – for her own interest, but anyway; school and the social service were not advancing my interest either for that matter – in vain, too. I seemed to be made for another world, a deeper world, call it ‘spiritual’ or whatever. Truth and society didn’t seem to be made of the same substance.

But finally it would start, seriously, under the guidance of a real master, who knew what he was doing, who had an overview – compare that to the school teachers who just passed on some useless information from and for the mind and their own unfelt karma together with it as a bonus, albeit transmitted in the dark. I had the intuition that this time my education wouldn’t take 22 years – for nothing.

Finally it would start and my search for a nail of a horseshoe was my first task. With good spirit I biked to a remainder of nature, a few hectares – Holland hadn’t much left – where I knew horsemen were passing. I looked for the nail. I looked and looked and looked. After some hours the hopelessness of the search had reached me. It became too dark anyway. My enthusiasm had diminished considerably by now. But I went out for a second try, this time around the village of Vries where I had grown up. There was a riding stable so my chances finding a nail were considerably increased. To further increase the chance of luck I took my mother with me, an extra pair of eyes. I was not sure if this kind of help, my mother of all people, or even any help, was acceptable but I could not in all reasonability bother my master with such details – although, it is true, he was very or rather extremely much into details, in fact; but well, important details.

My mother asked what it was for. I didn’t know. So she stopped wondering and helped searching. First we looked in the area around the riding stable but when this appeared unsuccessful I moved the area of exploration to the riding stable itself. Certainly with this move I had my doubts if this was allowed by the unwritten rules of the spiritual process. The riding ring was situated in something what in Holland could be called nature. Yet, the ring itself was not really part of nature, in which the horseshoe nail should be found according to

Sri Sri. This potential problem was solved since we were both unsuccessful in spotting even one damned little fucking rusty nail. If not on the riding stable terrain itself I could forget about finding a horse shoe nail. My enthusiasm was gone by now and I entered my first spiritual crisis.

Mastering *failing* better and better, it seemed failing happened very soon by now, I had hardly started my spiritual practice – or in fact not at all: finding the horse nail was just a preparation. In the best case, failing so soon also led to Insights coming quicker. But this was not really on my mind. It was frustrating and highly embarrassing that I failed for the very first tiny task my master had given me. Immediately I betrayed his trust in me. The first gesture of me to him was to let him down. A great beginning, and I felt bad about this.

Of course, as a good humble pupil I should just continue searching, all the more considering the great will power that I had. The thing was only that I couldn't apply this will power – and certainly not to the full extent – because, admittedly, somewhere I didn't believe in the sensibility of finding the nail and whatever symbol of something, and then in whatever way benefiting from this form, that is, being Led to the Truth by a horseshoe nail. I didn't believe in forms, I didn't believe in their power, as Sri Sri seemed to do. I was excited about the principle of having found a master I could directly communicate with and about the spiritual process that could start now, under the guidance of an experienced, trained man dedicated to getting people in touch with a deeper reality. As it appeared, I was not excited about the content of it – well, at least not about this first one. I hadn't created Myself, I couldn't create interest in a horseshoe nail – and at least not if the fuss around it cost a lot of time with not the slightest prospect of it leading to something valuable, whatever. It would have been easier to continue looking if Sri Sri had told me the purpose of the nail. But acting mysteriously without giving too much clarity was something I, as a Western raised young man, had to put up with. As for me, I didn't see anything wrong in being open and clear about things – although, it is true, I was not against getting in touch with the mysterious side of life and could even feel a genuine interest in it. If I looked at the result of the Western rational way of approaching things, I couldn't say that this had led to a beautiful humane society – if that was possible at all on this dark place Earth. Yet, I couldn't in the end imagine myself being wholly or even half satisfied with not Understanding a jota of what I was doing, but just doing it anyway because it seemed to contribute to good results in whatever way. This was just not Me. I was not into feeling good and that's it. I was not (a) Woman.

Not only looking for the damned nail, I could have done about anything to start serious spiritual practice – well, 'starting' apart from already practicing serious vipassana – even if I had no clue yet of the purpose of what I was supposed to do, apart from a small suspicion that the nail might have to do with grounding me better, via the energy of the horse who had carried the nail. If my suspicion was right, as far as I was concerned Sri Sri could have just said this. I didn't see why this knowledge would interfere in a negative way with my spiritual development. I was not a mind guy – any more. Knowledge wouldn't pin me stuck on the mind level and keep me away from the Truth, as was the 'danger' for many people not Ready for the Truth Itself.

If Sri Sri had ‘ordered’ me to find in nature a tantra woman with ten nails I had been much more inspired to continued looking and looking – that was about Life Itself, and I didn’t yet manage to find the link to Life from a horseshoe nail. But, as I suggested, if Sri Sri had asked me to find anything else, I had at least tried that as well – despite the fact that, as Man, searching was not my thing.

My mother offered to ask her woman friend who was a horse rider, if she had an old nail left. At first I refused. The nail had to be found. Later, however, forced by the circumstances, I changed my mind and widened the definition of ‘found’. I borrowed Tiara’s motto: better something than nothing, even if ‘something’ (like me) was far from perfect.