

# Begin With The Doubts & Honor Your Heart (Your Inner Teacher)

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*Excerpt from PARAMPARĀ, OR THE YOGIC TOWER, Yoni Shakti, chapter 10, page 271*

Imagine for a moment that you are a young woman, a yoginī, climbing up a steep spiral staircase inside a beautiful wide round tower.

The stone steps are narrow and old but the tower and the stairs are secure. Every step is well worn by the countless feet that have ascended this way before you. Something drew you here and you are not quite sure what, but the pull was strong and now you feel powerfully compelled to ascend the tower. It is a beautiful structure, ancient and elegant; you are happy to have found it. You are heading determinedly for the light open space at the top.

The steps are built into the outer wall of the tower, and in the center of their spiral, there is an open stairwell. At ground level, where you have entered the tower, this circular space is stuffed with rubbish. It smells bad. There are rusting buggies and the internal workings of broken washing machines, and all kinds of domestic detritus. Even, if you dare to look a little closer, there are used sanitary towels and tampons, dirty underwear and stained sheets screwed up and rotting.

There is no handrail to grasp on the inner edge of the steps and you have a fear of falling back down to the bottom of the stairs, or into the stinking heap in the centre of the stairwell, and so you press your back against the stone walls

of the tower for support and focus intently upon ascending sideways, one step at a time. You are hoping that if you get up high enough you will reach the top of the heap and the smell will be less bad, but for the moment it provides a powerful olfactory incentive to speed your ascent.

After a few crabwise steps with your back to the wall, you begin to feel something sticking sharply in your shoulder blades. And so, fearful of falling back down the stairs or into the smelly void of the stairwell's rubbish, you turn slowly to face the wall. There hangs a portrait of a benevolent old yogi, smiling kindly and pointing the way up the next turn of the stair. Grateful for the reassurance and happy to have some guidance, you follow where he points, keeping your gaze on the walls of the tower where you are glad to see hanging many portraits of other wise yogis, all teachers of wisdom, and all pointing the way up the spiral stair towards the brilliant sunlight that is shining down the stairs from the top of the tower.

As you ascend you begin to notice the signs of others who have climbed the stairs: the notes they have carved into the wall, little guidebooks they have deposited on the stairs. Reading these notes and guidebooks you realize that some are very helpful, warning you of pitfalls on the steps ahead, or suggesting that you pause to admire a particularly beautiful fossil trapped in the stone of the tower walls. In fact, you are quite astonished to discover that the guidebooks cover almost every aspect of your experience in the tower, describing precisely your feelings and struggles. It as if the texts had been written especially for you. But then again, some of this guidance is so esoteric as to be totally mystifying. It makes no sense and offers no help, so you simply ignore it and continue to follow the smiling and pointing faces of the old yogis.

Fortuitously, morsels of tasty food appear on the steps above you whenever you feel hungry, and fresh water pours freely

from spouts in the walls whenever you feel thirsty. It is as if, having entered the tower, that the very edifice itself, and all the gurus who reside within and the seekers who have passed before, are conspiring to support your efforts to ascend. Even the mystifying esoteric nonsense does not dampen your enthusiasm or deplete your energies.

Periodically, as and when you feel the need for a brief rest, you come across a window in the tower wall, and you admire the beautiful views of the wooded countryside below. These pauses to take in the views are very welcome, and the land below looks increasingly beautiful the higher up you go.

The journey goes on. This is a fairy-tale imaginary, and so you need not be alarmed to know that you have by now spent several weeks or dream years inside this tower. At a certain point, you pause to look up towards the bright light shining down from the top of the tower, and it is only then you begin to realize what a long and arduous journey you have ahead. You sit down on the steps and recognize that you are extremely tired already. It is then that you begin to feel the familiar cold dull ache of a menstrual cramp, and you know that you cannot continue right now. You are beginning to feel a little bit alone, sat there on the stairs by yourself in the tower with only the old yogis on the walls for company.

You are also feeling as if you had let the side down. After all, these helpful yogis and the people who had passed this way before had really done their very best to offer all the guidance and encouragement and sustenance you might need to get to the top of the tower. And it is then that you sense they might not really understand how you feel right now, as you sense your womb's blood getting ready to flow, and you feel so tired and irritable. 'What is to be done?' You sense no answers are likely to be forthcoming from the yogis on the walls. 'Come to think of it', you reflect, looking back, 'None of the guidebooks said anything about what to do in case of a menstrual emergency'.

In fact, now you think about it, you've been in this tower for weeks or years and you have only very rarely found any mention of menstruation in all the guidance that you have read. This now begins to strike you as a little strange. 'Some of those yogis in the portraits were women', you think, 'and all that I ever read about menstruation was how to adapt the poses and/or what breathing practice to avoid. In fact, I am sure some of the guides told me that I should not even be allowed in the tower if I was menstruating'. Those were some of the ones you had ignored. You begin to have doubts. 'But perhaps I really should not even be in here at all?' you wonder. And then you feel very alone and deeply confused. To make it worse, the smell from the rotting garbage in the center of the stairwell is now worse than ever.

You rest against the walls of the tower and decide that it is probably best to try and overcome the tiredness and the pain and keep climbing. After all, most of the guides had stated that diligence and perseverance in practice would be rewarded. Perhaps there would be some sanitary towels at the top of the tower, thoughtfully provided in case of menstrual emergency. You doubt it.

You are just beginning to gather your energies to stand when you hear a rustling from far away, down at the bottom of the tower, and you are not very sure whether to be afraid or relieved. You can hear voices too, women's voices. They sound loud and old, but it is hard to make out what they are saying.

So you wait, to see what happens next.

And then you notice that the heap of stinking rubbish is beginning to shift and sink. At first, this seems unimaginable, since it is so high and so huge, but you watch carefully and notice it happen again. You can still hear the old women's voices, and begin to make out what they are saying. 'Give us a hand love!' They are calling up the stairs. 'We'll clear from the bottom and you chuck it out from the

top.'

You are astounded. Here you are, nearly at the top of the yogic tower of ascension and some old crone is shouting at you to clear the rubbish out the window. You had carefully managed to avoid even touching just one of those bags on your way up, and having got this far without getting your hands dirty you are not now inclined to start grabbing armfuls of garbage. So you ignore the calls of the old women below.

Instead, you pause on the stairs, feeling the cramps in your belly and beginning to feel very sorry for yourself. You watch the smelly heap of rubbish shifting, and little by little it starts to descend. 'What are they doing? What am I doing?' You withdraw your awareness from the tower and the rubbish behind you, and, separating your senses from your surroundings, you surrender to the dragging sensation just hours before the blood begins to flow.

You slip effortlessly into a state of deep meditative awareness and stay there. You are not sure how long you remain in this state before the sound of the women's voices grows louder and more insistent, and you awaken with a profoundly renewed understanding of the nature of your situation. The light dawns. Literally, a light seems to be shining right inside the very top of your head. And you have, for the first time since you entered the tower, absolutely clear conviction, based not on any external guidance, nor anything you have read in the books, but on a profound sense of knowing that comes from deep within yourself.

You now understand what the old women are asking you to do. You heave up a bulging sack of rubbish and throw it out of the window. Down below, at the bottom of the tower, you hear an appreciative yell of thanks: 'About time too.' Looking out of the window you see that in a clearing in the woods, a vast team of older women are sorting through the rubbish: one has cut away turf and started a fire to burn what can safely be

burnt, and the others are creating neat heaps of materials for recycling. They look up and gesture for you to send more rubbish down, and so you set to work.

By the time your blood is about to begin flowing, the whole heap of rubbish has been cleared from the tower, and outside the old women have created a remarkably organized collection of items, ready for recycling and re-use.

At the very bottom of the tower, in the foot of the stairwell that was once piled high with stinking rubbish, is now a pure clear circular space of bare earth. In exhaustion and relief you run all the way down the steps, lay your body down on the earth and gaze directly up at the sunlight streaming through the opening at the top of the tower. As you surrender to the feeling of the earth beneath and feel the soft breeze across your cheek and the warmth of the sun shining on your belly, you know that your blood is beginning to flow and you feel it sinking directly into the earth beneath. At that moment, in a powerful surge of energy, as if you were being borne up by the the earth herself, you are carried straight up through the center of the staircase, higher and higher, far swifter than ever you could have climbed. Passing all of the friendly yogis on your ascent, you come to rest in a state of exalted connection and heightened awareness in mid-air at the very top of the tower, bathed in light.

You rest in that state.

Not sure for how long you have been there, you awaken to more everyday consciousness by acknowledging a quiet but insistent voice inside your head. 'So there is a direct route I could have taken to get up here. Why did no one tell me?'

Sitting up, and looking about you, you find yourself once again at the side of the tower, next to the walls. The bleeding has stopped. You look over the parapet. Below there remains no sign of the impressive cleanup job done by the old

women in the woodland. The stairwell is clear and free from rubbish. The air smells sweet, and you slowly descend the steps of the tower, mindful not to disturb the neatly placed guidebooks and notes for aspiring ascenders, and respectfully greeting all the friendly yogis on the way down. At the bottom of the tower, in the clear space of bare earth, you notice the faint imprint of a human form and a dark circle at the center where your blood had soaked into the ground. Looking a little closer you become aware of a complex network of triangular forms, some pointing upwards and some pointing downwards. The network of interconnecting triangles fills a circle about the size of the human body shape imprinted in the earth. The triangles criss-cross the figure, with a central downward-pointing triangle at the level of the pubic bones. The structure of this network shines in fine lines of sunlight.

You begin to track the lines of light with your fingers, and one by one discover forty-three triangles mapped on and around the body print in the earth. You recognize Sri Yantra: the geometric embodiment of unified consciousness and energy together. Her perfection and beauty takes your breath away, and you are drawn to sit in meditation over the center point. Here you re-experience the clarity of focus and illumined awareness that you had encountered at the top of the tower, but this time you are seated on the earth, hearing the birds, feeling the breeze and the warmth of the sun: fully conscious of all around you.

As you leave the woodland tower, you know that you now carry within yourself the clarity and direction of your own deep inner teacher. Within your heart, you feel the presence of this guide and hear the words 'With great respect and love, I honor my heart, my inner teacher'.

Welcome home.

*Sip a little more:*

*Get Mad, Say No & Turn Your Tears Into  
Wild Woman Flames*

She's in  
the clouds,  
heavy and dark,  
waiting to  
fall like rain.

Christy Ann Martine

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