

EXPERIENCE FOR THE APRIL 2018 RAINBOW SGI NATIONAL MEETING IN AMSTERDAM/ by Birds WG P. C. Stavrou

A year ago I got what people call a burn out!

I started suffering from muscle and bone pain, excruciating tiredness and complete lack of energy even when I had slept for many hours or I had stayed in bed for almost the whole day.

I was like this for months.

Let me tell you what I came to know a burn out actually is:

A burn out is what you end up with after doing things you do not want to do for many many years.

It is the result of constant self-judging and chronic obsessive pleasing.

It is the result for being the person who wants to be always right and good, instead of being happy. This means that for as long as I can remember I have been violating my own boundaries to please others.

I was not even a year into my chanting practice and had almost just received my Gohonzon.

I was getting a lot of benefits: new house and my work started to expand and I was all hopeful and ready for my full potential to be revealed to me, I was ready to see my life changing, it felt it was only going to be victories from then on.

And then it was as as if the universe told me: ok now, before you do that, you need to learn how to listen to your body and respect it, how to respect your own boundaries, how to be in the present moment and be authentic and connect to others in an authentic way instead of being a pleaser. "So here is my present for your human revolution" said the universe. Here is a fantastic burn out that will put you into enough pain and desperation and misery that will eventually, if you play your cards right, teach you self respect and authenticity. And I played all my cards: I organised small personal home retreats, I started psychotherapy (again) and tried every energy healing treatment I could possible get my hands on and I kept chanting, studying and participating in SGI activities.

I could see some change and improvement, but it was slow and for a long time I did not have a clear breakthrough and I was in pain for most of the days.

And then Christmas and new year came!

(exactly the type of holidays that can really finish you off if you are a pleaser with a need to always do everything right)

Like almost every year we had visitors. Like every year everybody wants a party and it has been a few years now that I don't want parties on new year's eve any more. What is more for the last few years I have been fantasising about spending new year's eve alone, celebrating new year's

eve on my own in a more spiritual way.

I had never dared to claim this of course.

So, as always, friends were around, and they - and my partner- they all wanted to organize a dinner celebration and all I wanted was to chant while the year is changing and go to bed with a good book.

But it did not seem that I was going to be able to claim this because I felt that I would be letting everybody down. I was frustrated , exhausted, in pain and I was angry all the time.

If you ask me how I finally did it , It feels a bit like magic took place.

I am sure most of you will have experienced this with chanting. You chant about something that seems impossible to solve and then all of a sudden the situation becomes uncomplicated and solves itself easy and soft and almost on its own.....

Just a few hours before new years eve, and all of a sudden, it was decided that my partner and our friends would go to another friend's house to have their party and I could stay alone at home and have the new year's eve celebration I wanted.

AND SO I DID! I chanted in front of the Gohonzon for the whole first hour of 2018 and then went to bed with a good book.

Let me share with you what a treat it is and what a trip it is to be chanting during the change of the year! It is absolutely amazing!

This moment, was my breakthrough. After that everything was a roller-coaster. For the next few days I was getting out of my burn out steadily and fast and started making decisions I did not dare to make before: quit smoking , take my writing seriously, make arrangements to live between the countryside and the city and incorporate traveling in my life. I also took and I am still taking action upon these decisions.

My biggest and most unexpected benefit from this breakthrough came when I started realizing I was feeling constricted within my identity as a woman, and it became clear to me I could not identify as a woman any more..But I did not want to identify as a man either.

In my heart I really wanted to explore an identity without gender, it felt like true freedom for me to be agender, genderless, beyond gender..Am I worthy of freedom? Am I deserving of freedom? Can somebody like me, who does not look androgynous by nature, claim to be genderless?

Somehow this new year's eve chanting moment has been working as a permission slip for me..a permission slip to honor my own truth and follow my desires. It is also my evidence and proof that I am actually capable of being who I am at the present moment, faults and all, with my needs and

wants visible and claimed, regardless of my childhood traumas and programming, regardless of social pressure or karmic influence, even if it makes me look selfish or self absorbed or weird or confusing or unclear.

This is how I decided to assume an agender identity for myself.

I changed my first name from Polyxeni to Birds, a name that came to me through chanting and which I find best suitable to my new gender identity as well as my personality.

I am now going through the big chaotic and inspiring process of transition with no idea where it will lead me. I am also 95% free of burn out symptoms ! and I keep chanting for respect and authenticity.

Allow me finally to tell you this: I am someone who from day two :) was very convinced about the benefits of chanting and of being part of this spiritual movement and community that is the SGI. But my new year's eve experience and what came after that, has got me at a stage that all my self doubt and my anxiety about my life is turned into a certainty that I am now finding my place in this world, that my fears are turning into love, that I will most definitely become happy for the benefit of me, for the benefit of my partner, for the benefit of my family and friends, for the benefit of the world and for Kosen Rufu.

Thank you.

As a means of sharing my transition experience with you and as part of culture for this meeting I will now like to invite you all to join me for a little interactive performance.....