

## COINCIDENCES.....NAH CELESTINE PROPHECY.....YEAH!

James Redfield's super bestselling spiritual book 'Celestine Prophecy' is about the startling discovery that all the mysterious, sudden, serendipitous, synchronised so-called coincidences that occur in our lives are actually destiny's truth. Allow me to indulge in some cerebral adventures and present my personal journey with my own (with due respect to the author James) life-changing 9 insights about my rendezvous with ADAPT, my most precious, adorable, loving, special family! I believe this is a special gift from Nina, my late sister in whose memory my younger brother Dhaval and myself set up our 21 year old NGO Nina Foundation. Don't miss my creativity as all insights begin with the alphabet "N" an ode to Nina's mystical ways of spiritually guiding me!



### ***Neenu Kewlani!***

Neenu's photograph in Mid-day newspaper accompanied by an article detailing her struggles to access public places in her wheelchair caught my attention in 2001.

We had recently launched Nina Foundation, our NGO and I was editing One World, sharing information amongst the spinal cord injured disabled community to live a full life and achieve their dreams.

I made some calls to friends in the media (all landline, as no mobiles existed!) and succeeded in obtaining Neenu's landline number.

I called and we exchanged pleasantries and noted her Mahim home address. Being a visiting faculty at a management institute in Bandra, spontaneously spiritually guided more likely; post one of my lectures, I bought chocolates on the way and surprised Neenu at her home. Serendipity indeed! She introduced me to the advocacy work for accessibility and the beautiful world of ADAPT.

### ***Dr. Nina Mehta!***

Neenu organised a meeting at ADAPT Bandra centre soon thereafter where the entire team was present. On seeing me immediately Vandana Garware smiled and said 'You are Nina's sister? The homeopath doctor? I was all smiles and I nodded my head vigorously -saying 'yes, yes'. There was complete bewilderment and it surprised both of us that she was referring to another Dr Nina Mehta, also a homoeopath practicing in Chembur... very much alive. Also the fact that Nina and I don't resemble at all. This serendipitous dialogue cemented my 21 year old association and complete dedication to ADAPT with my mind, heart and soul- selflessly!

### ***NJDC Convocation!***

Neenu involved me with all access related audits, visits, meetings, reports, articles and Vandana involved me with ADAPT's Job Development Centre in Chembur. She invited me in early 2002 for their convocation as their Chief Guest where for the first time I met Padma Shri Dr Mithu Alur, warm, soft spoken, extremely eloquent, articulate, with a brilliant mind and very courteous. I interacted and presented my maiden book 'Nano Thoughts on Management' that day. I humbly acknowledge that Dr Mithu Alur has been and is my mentor from whom I continue to learn about disability and our rights, by whole heartedly participating in ADAPT's several initiatives. Having common academic research interests, for a UNDP-CII-AICTE-MDI case study project as faculty, editor & Associate Dean for my college Vandana came to my rescue and suggested that I develop this case for Microsign a company in Bhavnagar, Gujarat and gave full support. We have also co-authored and published a research paper along with my student on Social Infrastructure.

### ***Nomination for NCPEDP Shell Helen Keller Award!***

Vandana Garware nominated me quietly and Dr Mithu Alur endorsed as Founder of ADAPT for this prestigious award in Dec 2002 as a Role Model in the field of disability. Dhaval and I travelled to Delhi and we had the privilege of visiting Raj Bhavan meeting, interacting with our wise & highly knowledgeable president Dr Abdul Kalam, entirely facilitated by Late Javed Abidi. I was also offered the opportunity to give an acceptance speech on behalf of all awardees (including Poonam Natarajan, whom I met for the first time) and it was a moment of joy and pride to have Dhaval, Dr S Y Bhojraj, Mr G Shanker, Nitin Goyal (all travelled specially for me from Mumbai, Chennai and Gurgaon to Delhi) applauding along with the dignitaries- one of my finest speeches completely inspired by Nina, I believe.

### ***NCPEDP nomination from India for an international Women With Disabilities Conference in Nonthaburi, Thailand in March 2003.***

ADAPT's link that was established with NCPEDP and Javed involved me both at the national and my first international conference, which was in Nonthaburi. Definitely not a mere coincidence. I had never travelled abroad before this internationally and Nina had so far accompanied me for a consulting conference in Chennai where my chief draw was personally

meeting and listening to creativity Guru and prolific author Edward de Bono. Here I courageously flew alone in the face of SARS epidemic at its peak and was exposed to the international disability sector and how completely disabled friendly Thailand was including being exposed to wheelchair accessible vehicles, hotels, educational institutions Buddha temples and more. ADAPT & NCPEDP continue to be my mentors for involving me in the national disability rights movement.

#### ***NASEOH Award nomination by ADAPT in 2004.***

My second national award and once again nominated by Vandana and Dr Mithu Alur of ADAPT. Synchronistically titled the NASEOH award to be a role model. This inspired me to spend equal time and effort in writing, speaking and involving myself in advocating not only for friends with spinal cord injury through Nina Foundation but also utilise my knowledge, connects and wisdom for all disabilities due to my Management background.

#### ***National Task Force on Education!***

Dr Mithu Alur invited and involved me for my first Government of India's Task Force on Education in 2012. It was both a wonderful and prestigious experience merging my management consulting and educational experience as well as exploring creative ways to include disability in the education sector. By participating, reading research reports and listening to other members I believe I was aghast to know how little inclusion existed and the enormous body of work and action on the ground at the national level Dr Mithu Alur and ADAPT team are responsible for. The young generation of PWDs have the opportunity in primary, secondary and post graduation degrees due to our RTE Act. Besides immeasurable dignity, confidence and the self esteem both for them and their parents, family and entire community.

#### ***NJDC job fair at ADAPT Bandra.***

In 2004-5 I was requested by Dr Mithu Alur and Vandana to get involved in your very first job fair for the disabled being organised in Bandra. I involved my management students, mentored and guided them regarding needs and requirements for working in the corporate sector and voila it was a wonderful win-win experience for ADAPT and the future leaders as students to be sensitised about diversity and inclusion at the workplace.

#### ***Newspaper photograph of Neenu, Niles, Farhan and myself auditing the BEST bus in Mumbai!***

My link and connection with ADAPT started with a newspaper (me spotting Neenu's photo in Mid-day) and permanently got sealed by this visual which was carried by Times of India a record 9 times over the years, including the front page. The advocacy efforts by ADAPT's team to make public transport and public spaces wheelchair accessible all gained momentum, visibility and push due to this 'caught unawares' photo that was widely published.

I have so many wonderful fun memories having bonded with at ADAPT family-Malini, Varsha, Rekha, Dr Sitanshu Mehta, Bhavana, Shobha, Sangeeta, Sujata, Diane, Anita Prabhu, Farhan, Zenia, Jasmina, Leena, Manju, Toshan, Bom Bahadurji, Anna, Amena, Catherine, Arundhati, Malka, Lucas, and many, many more. I look forward to making some more soon! It was a moment of prestige when Dr Mithu Alur graced our international basket ball camp at Mumbai University indoor basketball court at Kalina on 3rd Jan 2019 as our honourable chief guest. It is a milestone for me personally, where I finally got the opportunity to express my deepest gratitude and publicly acknowledge Dr Mithu Alur's exemplary leadership and being my beacon and Fount of All Knowledge in the disability sector!

Malini.....I do remember your offer to host a dancing party at Bombay Gym which somehow has not yet materialised....hope this happens in 2021 and we can all sit outdoors in the green lawns soaking in the fresh air!

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