

Tsunami in paradise - December 26, 2004

It is a peaceful Sunday morning at Golden Buddha Beach, the eco resort at Koh Phra Tong, my magic paradise island off the west coast of Thailand. After having read the Japji and done my yoga on the beach, I went for a swim in the very peaceful sea and then had breakfast with friends, new and old, at the clubhouse. All of a sudden a heavy detonation-like sound cuts through the silence. What on earth was that? We all run down to the beach. A big wave had broken. On the horizon, we watch the next wave building up. We are like hypnotized. "We have to climb up the hill!" shouts Michel, a German who has built his dream house on the island. Only a few follow his advice. Most of us stay on the beach and watch the 2nd wave break, some even jokingly saying "oh, finally a surfing wave at our beach". But the moment it breaks we can see the huge waves building up behind it. Then, finally, the survival mechanisms of the body start to work and the only message going to every cell of your body is "Run for your life!". That's what I do. I run towards the other bay, about 120 metres away, still thinking that the water will not reach that far. Big mistake. I run with the water nagging at my heels. Thank God there is this beautiful strong tree right on my way. Without knowing how, I climb it and sit at about 3 metres height, holding on to the tree with all my strength, since the wave is already there, running over me like a bulldozer. The water is dragging at me, I need all my strength to cling on to the tree and not been washed into the sea. Water all around me. I look above me – my head is about half a metre underneath the water, wooden parts and other debris floating above me. When will I be able to breathe again? Suddenly, something comes from underneath and pushes me up the tree which I am still holding on to. What was it? The next wave? The hand of God? Doesn't matter, it was a blessing anyhow. Now I sit at about 6 metres high in the tree, with my head above the water and start to chant Aad Gureh Namee to calm down my mind. There is water everywhere, a roof, a fridge and other debris come swimming by, luckily not hitting me. Where are all the others? Oh Lord, if this is just the beginning of the end of Kali Yuga and things will become even worse, I am not sure anymore whether I will be able to and if I want to be the lighthouse Yogi Bhajan wants us to be. Slowly, the water is withdrawing. When it seems save, me and the 3 others sitting in the same tree, we somehow get and slip down the tree. Soaking wet, barefoot and under shock, I climb up "Monkey Hill",

where to my surprise there are about 80 of the 113 people who were at the resort that day. Thank God! Some are completely dry, have no scratch and even their belongings, others are severely injured, some are still missing at that point. We will have to spend the rest of the day and the whole night on Monkey Hill. There are rumors of a second wave, twice as big as the first, to come. Will our hill be high enough? I am under deep shock, cannot do anything. Everything is happening like in slow motion. My whole system is shut down. Some people are able to coordinate things and get water bottles, foodstuffs and anything else that could be useful up the hill. I admire Lucy, her husband is missing and still she is helping the injured, organizing the headcount. Where does she get her strength from? I start to judge myself, why am I not able to do anything, take care of and serve the others, as a yoga teacher and spiritual being, I should be able to do it. But there is just no way to do it. My system and my mind just don't function anymore like usual. Complete surrender, that's one of my lessons. Lucy's sons keep a huge campfire burning on the beach all night, hoping for their father to see it and find his way back to the beach. But he will not see it anymore. Lisa, with whom I worked in the sea turtle protection project 3 years ago already and who came back this time to write her thesis, is dead. Her body was found near where the clubhouse used to be. We had met on the beach every morning. I chant a silent Akal for her. The atmosphere up on the hill is very calm, caring, there is an attitude of solidarity, there is sangat, nobody only thinks of himself, everybody looks after the other one first. What a blessing. It will be a long night. Thousands of thoughts and pictures running through my mind. Now, that the body gets to rest, you finally feel the pain. I used to love the sound of the ocean. But that night, I felt like putting my hands over my ears. I just cannot stand the sound anymore, it is too frightening. The full moon is shining down onto our small community of destiny all night, as if she wanted to soothe and comfort us with her soft silver light. At dawn, we go down the hill. What we find and see down there is distressing. Nothing is left of our paradise resort, where we had been celebrating such a wonderful and happy Christmas eve all together just the night before. The Thai Navy comes with helicopters for the injured and speed boats for all the others and brings us back to the mainland. Slowly we become aware of the magnitude of this disaster and feel even more grateful to be alive. Those who need to are brought to a hospital first, then we are all gathered at a Buddhist temple. We are given water, food, clothes. The

true compassion and heartfelt warmth of the Thai people is overwhelming and healing. "When you reach out to touch, give a Master's touch", says Yogi Bhajan. That's exactly what these wonderful people do, they touch and heal you with their true compassion. I am so grateful to the Thai people for that. I stay one more night with some of the group, it is important to keep talking and sharing the things everybody has gone through. Then one more day in Bangkok and back home to Germany. The first week I wake up nearly every morning with my heart beating fast, coming out of a nightmare with tons of water. My system is still completely blocked, I have no energy at all. I have no strength to do yoga, but I read my Japji and chant the Sadhana mantras. And all of a sudden I understand on a cellular level why Yogi Bhajan gave them for this time of transition and the dark phase of the planet. They are healing, protecting and open your heart. Slowly I start to do yoga again. The powerful gong meditations with Nanak Dev Singh bring healing, cleanse my aura from shock and trauma and energize my whole system again. I am so grateful for this wonderful instrument of Kundalini Yoga in these difficult times! "It has all been part of the training" says Shiv Charan. Yes, that's right. I have been blessed in this experience with my life. Now I know that I cannot do anything else but BE the lighthouse Yogi Bhajan talks about. It is my duty. All of us who have been blessed to receive these timeless and invaluable teachings of Kundalini Yoga and to experience the strength of Sangat, we have to go out there, spread them and put these instruments at people's disposal, so that we and many others are much better prepared for the rough times to come. "Oh Nanak, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Lord, and many others are saved along with them!"

Bibi Nanki Kaur, Germany
www.bibinanaki.yoga
nanaki@snafu.de