

Excerpts from *Benjaya's Gifts*

By Carmella and Mhaletta B'Hahn



On 31st October I was late for work and rushed downstairs to the front door. The newspaper was spread out on the mat in front of me. There face upwards was the birth picture. There was an incredible impact. Incredible! It was the same sensation as when I saw the first image of the Earth photographed from the moon: the miracle, the whole sense of an expansion of consciousness, a new frame of reference, a higher perspective of life. This was not just the personal story of Abel and Carmella any more than the journey to the moon was just an incident in the life of an astronaut. It was an archetypal experience.

Tony Devany

Carmella (During her pregnancy)

We [Camella and Abel] read many books on the subject of birth, one of which contained some educative chapters on waterbirth, which was at that time almost unheard of in Britain. It was entitled "Ideal Birth" by Sondra Ray, and it was Abel who became inspired by the water idea and asked me if I would consider giving birth in water. My initial response was "No way!" It seemed like an added complication that I could well do without considering that the home birth we wanted would be severely frowned upon for a first baby, however, I still wanted to read the book.

I was about four months pregnant and I had felt only the barest movements from the baby but whilst I was reading those chapters about waterbirth I felt strong stirrings inside my womb. I put the book down and the stirrings stopped. I picked it up again to read and low and behold the flurries of movement returned. It was uncanny. Was the baby trying to tell me something? I decided to do a test and so I sat cross-legged on the bed quietly for a few minutes and then asked the being within my womb, "If you want a waterbirth please give me a very definite kick". The response was immediate ~ a forceful kick on my left side caused me to jump so

high that I recall nearly falling off the bed. What choice did I have but to put all my energies towards researching the feasibility of creating a waterbirth for this assertive being?

Mhaletta, Carmella's mother (after his death)

I had become increasingly aware that someone within our family circle was preparing for the journey we call death, yet consciously I did not know who that person would be or in what circumstances it would occur. While I didn't dwell on it, sometimes I would hear myself saying that we were expecting to be working more closely with holistic death at some future time to balance our holistic birth courses, adding that whilst I had had some varied experiences of death, I felt it would come closer to teach us more of its whole and holy nature...

Life pulsates in this family ~ who would our "teacher" be? Afterwards I could see that many signs and symbols had been there preceding Benjaya's death if only I could have "read" them. As it was, I thought no more of the possibility of Benjaya's death than that of any other family member. Nothing that I or anyone else might have thought or done would have changed the eventual outcome. Of that I am certain.

Carmella (after his death)

From the first moment of hearing about Benjaya's exit in water I have believed that it was no accident but a perfectly orchestrated finale. When a leaf falls from the tree before it's old and wrinkled we see it as a natural event ~ some leaves must fall first. When a child leaves this world, it is more often as not seen as "a waste", something dreadfully wrong. This is the stance that drains me because I believe with all my being that the opposite is true. Gut wrenchingly painful it may be to lose a child, but does that make it wrong and the life wasted? Do we only lovingly parent our children so that they may live to the age we expect them to? Or, might a five-year-old have lived five precious fulfilling years and have no need of living more?

I think it is important to start looking at how we face death NOW. I want to beg people not to say to me, "You must be feeling this...or that", but to ask me how I do feel. Misreading my reality and making negative suggestions as to how I must be makes uncomfortable dialogue, which is sad given that the opposite is intended. I've spent a lot of time saying: "No, actually I don't feel like that". It takes a lot less energy to agree, "Yes life is bloody awful!" People are well meaning and often don't know what to say to the bereaved... all that is needed to gain rapport is something simple like, "I'm sorry about your son".

I want to encourage those whose natural instinct is to avoid looking at death to do as Beauty did in the fairy tale Beauty and the Beast. She was frightened but she dared to look the beast in the face and to be open to who he really was, rather than what he looked like or what others said about him. And when she gave herself the chance to understand his true nature he turned into a handsome prince, they fell in love.