

Grief in the time of corona

By Anmika Salter

Yesterday, my brother and I wondered what our sister would make of all of this. We thought she'd probably respond to the crisis with her usual dramatic catastrophe: worry about our (not even that old) Dad, express deep concern for society, tell us off for meeting to walk in the park when we're from different households. She'd



L-R Jashi, Kishori and Anmika

probably also be enjoying having a break from the job she might have had by then: to lie on the sofa and do what she loved most, watching box sets and eating ice cream out the tub. Maybe she'd be baking all day, piling the Covid-pounds onto our waists, tums and bums, an explanation for the shortage of plain flour and caster sugar across the nation.

But Kishori isn't here to see the almost unbelievable events of the past 2 months, she's already struggled to breathe and died far away from her family with only strangers to hold her hand.

So I find myself in lockdown with my grief for company and a crippling amount of time to give it a long hard look in the mirror. I struggle to comprehend or engage with the news, I have to dig deep to find empathy for those who are anxious about their health, or who are worried for the wellbeing of their loved ones. I feel angry that Radio 4's Woman's Hour only now see it fit to dedicate a full episode to 'On Death and Dying'. What about all the other people who have died before this? What about all of us who are already living with life-changing grief?

I wonder if I am heartless. I recognise I'm different from other people and have to hold my tongue. I miss my sister with my whole being. I gather resentment that her birthday is overshadowed by the virus. On zoom with extended family, I silently register the missing box on the screen where Kishori should be.

While lockdown and a global health crisis makes my grief and all the ugly feelings that come with it more acute, I also know that I must find hope in order to carry on. So I find it in the sunshine that has broken through the clouds, in rainbows painted in the windows of houses on my street, in pictures of new babies shared by friends, in flowers blooming in the back garden, in walking with my brother and talking about our sister.

Only one thing is certain in life, and that's death. But it doesn't all have to be ugly, it can be beautiful too if we let it. Grief in the time of corona has taught me that I have already dealt with one catastrophe, so I sure as hell can deal with another.