

10 THINGS I HAVE LEARNED

in 10 years with Gurudev

By definition, such pieces tend to be self-congratulatory - implying that the writer has actually learned at least ten 'very-significant' things and is on the high road to self-actualization. It also seems to imply something worked hard for and achieved. However, in my case, the learnings are more like realizations of having learned and discovered in hindsight. So quietly and imperceptibly did these 'learnings' happen that I did not even notice them until they were pointed out by some situation or person.

It's been almost ten years since I was initiated by Gurudev. And though the journey has not always been on level ground, my guide has never failed me. I have actually learned innumerable major and minor things along the way - from an appreciation of Sufi poetry to the finer points of gambling. No aspect of my life, sacred or profane, has been left untouched by Gurudev's light in these last ten years.

So here goes a living list that is being uncovered every day...

1. "DON'T BECOME A DOER."

To 'go with the flow' is now a New Age cliché, but living it is an art to be learned. My father still doesn't quite grasp how things can happen without a doer. I see no contradiction - waves crash, trees grow, suns change and clouds form monkey-faces - all without someone pushing buttons or manipulating levers.

In fact, life is smoother without a 'doer.' Events fall into brilliantly intricate and perfect patterns, coincidences abound and with the effortless completion of life's circles comes an absence of regret.

2. "FOLLOW YOUR FEELING."

This is the line Gurudev is likely to say when asked to make a decision on your behalf. In the beginning, it sounded like a cop out, but in time I learned that a real Master never says, "Follow me!" The first time I asked him to give me a timetable for my days, he looked at me amazed and said, "But what about your individuality and your freedom?" No one had ever said that to me before.

"Follow your feeling," doesn't literally refer to indulging your emotions. He says there are four levels of life: the physical, the mental, the emotional and the energy level. If you live in accordance with your energy, you will be in heaven wherever you go - "even in hell, you will be dancing." I don't have any practical experience of hell, but I can vouch for planet earth.

3. "WHATSOEVER IS HAPPENING, JUST BE WITH IT!"

One of the fundamental 'Gurudevisms.' And one of the simplest definitions of meditation I have ever heard. As a technique it is also an unparalleled solution to emotion upheaval.

"When you are angry or jealous or filled with hatred," he said in one retreat, "just sit quietly in your room. Don't try to escape by watching TV or listening to music. Don't even try to escape by thinking about the situation - just be with the

factuality of the emotion as it is unfolding. Don't try to shut the door on it, otherwise it will peep in through the window. Invite it in. Ask your anger, "What will you have - a cup of tea or a cold drink?"

That's the attitude. Make friends with it. Live it totally. And see what happens. It will reach a peak and then, like a spring, eject itself completely from your system. And with it, it will take away all the inner garbage and leave you fresh and innocent like a new-born baby."

4. "BASICALLY, LIFE IS HILARIOUS!"

Isn't it hilarious that we each believe that we are unique and our problems are unprecedented in the history of humanity?

Isn't it hilarious that we genuinely believe that we are smarter than the Universe; that unless we protect and pursue our tiny goals, we will be losers?

Isn't it hilarious that for all our wisdom and enlightenment, our value for a hungry lion is, in Gurudev's words: "Nothing more than brown bread?"

5. "...AND IF THE TEARS COME, DON'T HOLD BACK!"

Just as there is a storm of laughter in every retreat, there are also showers of tears; tears of joy, tears of gratitude, tears of repentance, tears of separation from our real 'Home,' tears that say everything that just cannot fit into words.

6. "PLEASURE AND PAIN ARE BOTH FORMS OF SUFFERING."

"If you don't believe me," Gurudev will say, "just take anything that gives you great pleasure. Okay, so you like to eat ice-cream? Now eat twenty ice-creams and see what will be the result. Now eat forty more ice-creams!"

In the uncomfortable laughter that follows, he says that pleasure and pain are two ends of the same continuum, "You can say that pleasure is a bearable form of pain and pain is unbearable pleasure.

The bliss that the Buddhas speak about is not an experience of constant pleasure, it is more like peace - it is no experience."

7. "THY WILL BE DONE."

This was the technique given to Gurudev by his Master, Osho. He lived it earnestly until he found that there was no other Will in Existence. To us, he passes it on as a prayer, a daily reminder to surrender our sorrows... and our joys.

8. "BE... WITHOUT MIND."

To listen without mind - to music, to birdsong, to Gurudev - is one of the most beautiful experiences of life. Something in all my years of education I had never suspected existed. To listen without mind is to hear the unsaid, and beyond it, silence.

In this moment-to-moment listening, something of the essence is nourished within.

Ditto for dancing. Gurudev says he is an ordinary person, but dancing around him is no ordinary experience. Without thoughts, dance 'steps' fall away and the body creates its own marvelous rhythms and patterns and perfections that you just watch in amazement. And sometimes, in the Sufi White Robe Brotherhood sessions,

the group energy collectively reaches such peaks as to climax in cloudbursts of laughter and tears.

Who would have imagined that this ordinary life has hidden within itself such secret miracles?

9. "THE MASTER'S LOVE... THE DISCIPLE'S FOOLISHNESS."

What it means to be a disciple is the journey of meditation itself. No code-book can list out the pointers and guidelines. You have to live and fall and learn. You have to face the intractability of your dramatic ego-mind which, time and time again, makes a fool out of you.

A Master shows you what it means to truly live by being an example and a guide. Just being near him, watching him, you take your first baby steps. And soon you grow wise enough to start advising him; you will know better than him what is the best course for you. The Master smiles, waits patiently. A hundred times you fall, a hundred times he dusts off your clothes and never once reminds you of it.

That is why it is said that there are only two things infinite in this universe, a Master's love and a disciple's foolishness.

I don't agree. I can vouch that a Master's love is more infinite than a disciple's foolishness.

10. "I AM."

These two deceptively simple words contain within them the learning of a lifetime - to say that I have learned it would be presumptuous. To remember that 'you are,' to stay with this remembrance, to dissolve into this "am-ness" is the whole journey. To know what you really are is why one comes to a Master.

The Master says you-are-not-the-body, not-the-mind, only pure consciousness... but do you have the courage to believe him?

From this perspective, ten years of being a disciple doesn't mean the years of glorious maturity, just ten years of cowardice.

11. THANK GOD FOR YOU.

I know I was supposed to write only ten, but this one is really the most important of all. While writing about what "I" have learned, I have been feeling a niggling sense of foolishness all along. The truth is, I have not really 'learned' all these things, I have been gifted all these learnings by my Master. I don't know how to thank him.

Perhaps someday, he will teach me that too...

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