

being around a master

I had landed up at The Blue Country Resort in Panchgani a couple of days before the retreat began at some odd hour of the night, to find Gurudev awaiting my arrival in the corridor. I check into my room and run up to meet him. He asks if I have had dinner and sends me off to freshen up and rest.

This is definitely not what I had expected.

It is difficult to live around a Master, in the sense that one has to constantly be on his toes. He can catch unconsciousness as easily as red of white. And unconscious behaviour is so ingrained in our systems that one has to be aware of every little thing around. And that can be quite a task.

So I was quite hesitant at first, but I soon realized that Gurudev is far kinder and more forgiving than I have credited him to be. He seems very maternal, in the sense that he gives a feeling of being protected and taken care of. Yet he allows the space to be oneself - however unpleasant parts of one's personality may seem. And he meets many types.

"Kuch baat karni hai? Are you okay? Do you have anything to ask?" he would question whenever he had some breathing space between the multiple tasks at hand. My answer was always a negative. Not that I didn't have absurd concepts that needed clarity or curious queries to probe him with. But even the most intellectual sounding or beautifully worded question would disappear when I would face him. The mind would go blank. I would have to consciously think before I let a word out of my mouth whenever we had a conversation. But for most part, I didn't have much to say. I just enjoy listening to him and watching him. In his presence, I feel... like a lifeless block of uncarved wood. Totally incapable of doing anything. Lacking purpose. It's as if I am not there.

Yet, he would let me run him an errand once in a while. And it would always be a request.

Even though he can clearly see through people and the motives of their actions, Gurudev is equally respectful and loving to everyone from the waiters to the owners of the hotel. He is simple and honest which endears him to most people he meets - even if his appearance scares them at first.

Even the hotel complex where the retreat is being held looks happy, like it was blessed with a shower of grace. With every step he would take during his morning walk, flowers and plants would seem to radiate, as if they were waiting to tell him their secret. And why not? He's a patient listener.

Sometimes one can sense the patience in his entire being as he carefully listens to a burdened disciple. It is absolutely crystallized... solid... like it can be touched with a bare hand. That patience feels like a really wide, bottomless pit and suddenly, like a hot spring, out flows compassion through his words and subtle gestures. He enables the disciple to look at his life situation in the right perspective. And at that moment there is gratitude. Gratitude that he is part of my life.

When one is in his presence, there is a crystal clear feeling of expansiveness, like one is connected to the entire cosmos. Perhaps because he is complete in his being and his expression.

He is truly himself. And in that totality, one can discover the stillness of silence.

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