

a sojourn of a lifetime

Is it possible in a world running amok, madly after one thing or another, at a faster and faster pace, to have a sense of peace and an inner serenity? In a crazy scramble to acquire pleasure and joy through increasingly outward behavior, is it possible to attain inner bliss? Is it worthwhile to even explore the inner self?

The answer is surprisingly... Yes... and in the definitive.

As a participant in Gurudev's recently concluded 10 day retreat in the hill station of Panchgani, I felt a curtain raise from my darkened existence. Yes! Those long lost, unfelt, sensitive, innocent feelings that had always flowed as an undercurrent, sprung at last to my humble acknowledgement.

But how... exactly how on earth had I succumbed to such an oblivious life before? I feel amazed to find myself covered with layers of prejudices, illogical beliefs and a conditioned mindset that forgets the truth of the reality of 'now' and dwells always in the imagination of the past or the future - doomed forever to lead a shackled life, without even a slight hint of realization.

In fact, this state of affairs could have continued with me forever, with all my travails limited to the tangible aspects of existence, but for Gurudev who conducted the retreat and gave me the ultimate quest of "What I am."

Perhaps, this is such a question that would evoke all kinds of remarks and responses in the contemporary world; but the true seeker, I am sure, if given the kind of insights that were revealed to me in this retreat, would find this question reason enough to embark upon the journey to his inner world.

This is where everything else, as perceived by our sensory apparatus starts losing its relevance and the inner atmosphere begins broadening its limitless horizons in the quest of the eternal.

The retreat provided us with a three star environment where basic necessities were more than taken care of. The peaceful, healthy atmosphere of Panchgani, the sumptuous food and our down to earth lifestyle made us all quickly drop our guards and mingle smoothly with each other. Tight scheduling, discipline, group-based programmes and uniform dress-codes proved to be great levelers of sorts and a sense of community orientation gradually soaked in.

Programmes like gibberish gave ample opportunities to vent anxieties and emotional distortions, some overt and others buried too deep to have been realized. This actually gave way to simplicity of the thought process and a cleansing of the mind and heart.

But the true foundation of camp lay deep in music - music in all forms - at times soul stirring, at others heart wrenching, but nonetheless always absolutely nourishing to the body, mind and soul. Be it sunrise or sunset, music set the tone and rhythm for our journey into the realms of spirituality.

As the retreat progressed an uninhibited, expressive lifestyle flowed. The only thing that was to be done was... nothing! To just witness the flow; to witness the tricks of the mind; to witness the nuances of the heart; to become involved in non-involvement. And hidden within each apparent paradox one found subtle insights to pave ones way.

It was all about experiencing; sudden glimpses of the subtle that always existed as a vast spread of the ocean; seeing through the clouds that in turn were gossamers rising out of the ocean... or was it ocean at all?

The facilitation was to allow a spontaneous being in the present, feeling it, sinking in it, staying in it, without any interference from any quarter.

Meditation along with hymns being played in the background, or done in silence brought about a sense of purity in the entire being, not to mention the healing touch it rendered to the entire persona, energizing it with a sense of positivity. A complete harmonization of systems could actually be felt as if a symphony was being played, with us as the participants reaching gradually to a crescendo!

And all the time Gurudev always had sufficient time to help us and guide us through the various levels of understanding. In his illuminating company, I found myself weeping with gratitude and love. Throughout my sojourn, I felt his words echoing in silence, answering my naïve questions as if prodding me further and further, deeper and deeper in my quest.

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