



## JOURNEY INTO A SILENT LAND

### **BEFORE THE BEGINNING:**

Writing about Meditation is like writing about Love. If you haven't experienced it, it sounds strange, even downright delusory. But, perhaps sometimes you trust your writer's judgement on mundane observations enough that you can give him a little leeway when he's struggling to write about the Wordless. And then, every one of us has experienced the state called "Meditation" knowingly or unknowingly. That's what gives me the courage to write about a journey that begins where words end.

### **DAY 1**

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*There may be greater miracles than this: but today, walking happened... with no desire to go anywhere!*

*No push within to go forward; no compulsion to keep moving; no fear of staying still. In silence, in ease, in utter freedom, there it was – the glorious miracle of walking.*

*With these baby steps began a journey into silence – a 21-day journey into the uncharted unknown. In the morning Gurudev showered us with orange-yellow petals to wish us luck. As the sun peeped out of its blanket of palm trees, we covered ourselves in the quilt of silence and Meditation, vowing to ourselves to live as if we were absolutely alone. A bamboo hut on an isolated Goan beach front was my landscape outside. And inside, is a whole universe waiting to be explored.*

### **DAY 2**

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*One can spend an entire lifetime – and many such lifetimes – without living this silence. Without ever partaking of food in a moment awash with the light of awareness. Or listening – really listening in a way that sound becomes one's being.*

*These days are but a gift – the grains of sand that never made it to the bottom of the hourglass; a brief blind spot in the momentary palace of illusion called Maya, an oasis in the desert of worldly life.*

*A soft silent murmur of gratitude illumines the days. Meditation comes easily – like a friend silently slipping his arm in yours. The sand envelopes your feet, the sea washes you clean, and as the thickets of thought are cleared, the sun shines ever so brightly.*

*All is at ease, all is ease, all is...*

### **DAY 3 (CHRISTMAS EVE)**

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*The whole world is breezing outside my hut,  
The breeze is breezing,  
The trees are treeing,  
The birds are flying leftside-rightside,*

*Even the sunlight is dancing on my doorstep  
The whole world is breezing outside my hut.*

*A breezy day today – within also. Thoughts turned everything topsy-turvy within seconds. Furious storms of anger (“I hate Indian classical music”), chill winds of fear (“I will never be able to meditate again”), dull currents of boredom (“I think Meditation is a waste of time”) were interspersed with Bollywood songs, imaginary conversations, and other forms of mental masturbation.*

*I realised today that my mind was always looking for “tips, tricks, and techniques” of Meditation. As if there was a short cut by which I could zoom ahead. Today, the sobering truth hit home – Meditation was simply attention moment to moment.*

*No shortcut was possible as Meditation is beyond the mind, and all the cunningness comes from the mind. To stay put in the silence beyond the mind is all there is to it. But as one very Wise Man once put it: “Easier said than done, buddy.”*

#### **DAY 4**

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##### **“WHY IS THIS BEING NOT IN A STATE OF BEING?”**

*I was lying on the beach after Meditation when this question innocently arose. The body was seemingly at rest, lying spread-eagled on the sand. But looking within, the mind was rushing at break-neck speed, busy with some extremely important business.*

*As I walked back, I wondered “Why is there not simply walking?” Looking within I saw a ball of fear and anxiety, unravelling itself in threads of thought.*

*The constant white noise of the mind can be silenced with force for a few moments, it can be silenced with focused attention for longer periods, but to truly put it at ease I see no way but to love it enough to understand its workings. To calm its fears with compassionate presence. To finally help it to understand its biggest enemy... itself.*

#### **DAY 5**

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*Haven't heard my voice for five days now. Today, I accidentally sang a few words to myself and was shocked to hear a strange male voice. It wasn't the voice I thought in! In fact, it was quite coarse and unpleasant to the ear – the voice of my thoughts was so beguilingly soft and musical, neither masculine nor feminine. I had never realised this before. Perhaps that is why so many times, smart lines sound so much better in our heads.*

*I wonder how it will be to begin talking again. Maybe, I sometimes smile to myself, I will have forgotten how to talk. Personally, I don't mind silence. But it does make practical communication difficult. Like, when you're halfway soaped through your bath and the shower trickles to a stop. Try remaining calm and equanimous then!*

#### **DAY 6**

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*Gurudev seems to be an ordinary man. But mysterious synchronicities happen around him... miracles happen daily. Not the kind that change ash into Swiss watches, but the kind that turn a human heart towards the divine.*

*He never accepts credit for any of it. He says he does not do anything, he simply allows things to happen.*

*Today, I wrote a letter to him which I never finally gathered the courage to send:*

***Beloved Gurudev,***

*It has taken me ten years to understand that Meditation cannot be the end-result of any clever tip, trick or technique. My eyes were so hypnotised by the momentary experiences that I could not see the Source. My hands were so busy doing, I never realised that bringing them together and bowing my head could be so beautiful. I find it funny now to think that one has more faith in a dead sequence of do's & don'ts than in a living Buddha.*

*I feel thankful that it has taken me only ten years to realise this... because it could have taken more. For me, this has been the biggest blessing of the camp – to see that THE MASTER IS THE TECHNIQUE.*

*Now I understand why Ramana Maharishi prayed for “constant devotion” not for “constant Meditation”. I pray for the same. I humbly place my head at your feet. Do what you will.*

***Yours, DD***

***DAY 7***

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*Gurur Brahma*

*Gurur Vishnu*

*Gurur Devo Maheshwaraya*

*Guru Sakshat Parabrahman*

*The Master is a mystery. Not the physical embodiment – though that too is beautiful. The form is a doorway to the vast unfathomable formless mystery. Spiritual texts since time immemorial say that on this side of the door is the world we see, on the other side the mysterious unknown. In between is the patient, smiling, innocent Master.*

*Trust will take your step to the other side. I say it because for a few moments, it happened to me: The final stage of the beach meditation given by Gurudev is to walk briskly or run with eyes closed. For two days, I have been doing it in a gentlemanly sort of way. Today, the thought came over me, ‘Why not run as fast as I can? Even if I get hurt and die, at least I’ll die in Gurudev’s name.’*

*At first I could sense an almost-physical wall of fear in front of me, holding me back. I just kept running. At one point, a powerful new energy seized me. A primal energy. I was no more pushing against the fear, now I was being pulled forward faster than I could run. There was a scream in the throat. Someone else was running a mad, blind dash through my body! It scared me the first time and I stopped myself after a little distance. Then I gathered courage and began once again with my eyes closed. And once again, the unknown energy picked me up in its arms and carried me like a kite along the beach.*

*Trust. I don’t know how it works, but trust me, it does.*

## DAY 8

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*Bliss also provides a contrast against which the misery-filled workings of the mind become apparent. For me, it has become an opportunity to see my constant comparison with others – even in the quest for enlightenment. (“How come he’s having a kundalini experience and I’m not?”) As if self-realisation was an exam in which I must come first.*

*Another discovery has been what I call my intellectual arrogance. I may seem like a quiet, docile chap on the surface, but within I’m a boiling cauldron of acid. Never missing a chance to pass a snide internal remark. Ruthless with anyone who’s less than perfect-every-moment. I never realised how critical I was of others.*

*The third, which I picked up from an audio discourse of Osho, is that I spend too much time analysing life instead of living it. Living in the mind, instead of in the body...*

*It’s almost ten in the night. So now I’m going to take my chair out facing the dark ocean and silver beach and listen to the crickets and faraway crashing waves. And feel the cool night breeze... enough writing for today. I’ve spent 29 years thinking about my life. Now I want to live it.*

## DAY 9

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*‘PASSIVITY’ is Gurudev’s mantra for this camp.*

*Whatever happens within – thoughts, emotions, energy movements – remain passive. Passivity, he says, is the only path out of our mess because it does not strengthen the ‘doer’ illusion. Every other path gives you something to do in order to control or transcend a “negative” emotion. And it even works at times – the emotion temporarily subsides. But simultaneously, the ‘I’ which has done it gathers power. And that ego is the deep-rooted source of the “negative” emotion in the first place! So the ‘mother’ will give birth to more ‘children’ soon enough and the game will go on ad infinitum.*

*Passivity, as Gurudev puts it, is a fire which allows the emotion to simply burn itself out and finally burns even the ‘I’ behind the emotion. That’s as far as I understand what he says.*

## DAY 10

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*After a long day of struggling against a seemingly impossible emotional situation, came upon the following insight:*

THE INDIVIDUAL ‘I’ CANNOT SUCCEED – THE UNIVERSE CANNOT FAIL.  
A VAGUE COLLECTION OF HOPES, FEARS AND DESIRES BORN OUT OF FEAR  
AND SURVIVING IN PAIN BY ITS VERY NATURE CANNOT SUCCEED.  
BUT IT DOES NOT FAIL EITHER.  
IT SIMPLY IS AS IT IS.  
THINGS ARE AS THEY ARE.  
LET IT BE.

## DAY 11 (JANUARY 1, 2003)

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HAPPY "NOW HERE" TO ME!

*Falling deeper and deeper in love with Gurudev. He is so beautiful – sometimes innocent like a little child, sometimes magnificent like a prophet. He has been giving me a "hard time" (his words) in his talks, but he cannot hide the love in his eyes even when he's scolding. His fiery words feel like a shower of compassion and courage that washes clean the encrusted ego.*

*Sometimes in these last few days, I have been tempted to write questions to provoke his anger, but I know it is not mechanical. He might just smile at a foolish question, or hammer a seemingly intelligent one. Even he does not know, he said today, how he will respond to a question. It depends, he says, on the questioner. The answer reflects the questioner's inner need at that moment. I guess that's why his answers are always perfect.*

*At midnight, as the new year began, almost everyone was asleep. I placed my forehead at Gurudev's doorstep to thank him for his blessings in my life so far and to pray for constant devotion. I prayed to my brother for forgiveness and love. Felt so peaceful afterwards, I danced to the music of the faraway New Year parties out on the beach. A unique and unforgettable New Year's celebration... in silence.*

## DAY 12

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*Realised that I'm suffering from a bad case of an inner disease called the 'Spiritual Ego'.*

### **SYMPTOMS :**

DESIRE TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS SPIRITUALLY SUPERIOR BY OTHERS.

DEADLY SERIOUSNESS ABOUT ONE'S SEARCH FOR GOD.

CONDEMNATION OF 'ORDINARY PLEASURE-SEEKING MORTALS'.

GRAVE CONSTANTLY FOR SPIRITUAL 'EXPERIENCES' TO UPHOLD ONE'S SELF-IMAGE.

DEMAND TO NOT ONLY BE ENLIGHTENED... BUT TO BE ENLIGHTENED FIRST!

*Yes, friends, I have spotted within myself all the symptoms of this deadly disease. It has been subtly and silently growing within for many years, festering in the dark corners of my awareness. Quietly, it has grown into a monster.*

*Becoming aware of it and remaining non-serious, as Gurudev ensures that we do, is a step towards healing but there's only one real cure – the Master.*

*Only the Master can chip away at an ego patiently and precisely enough to rid one of this affliction. Whatsoever you do on your own in this regard only adds to it. ("I'm so evolved I'm beyond even the spiritual ego!") But not to fear. Regular injections of the Master's hit, the bitter pill of being temporarily ignored by him, along with his Healing Presence will get you healthy, happy and whole before you know it!*

## DAY 13

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*It is amazingly absurd, the day it strikes you, that the individual actually thinks he is smarter than the whole universe.*

*It is hilarious that we cherish really tiny personal goals which we must protect against the rest of the universe.*

*It is stupid that we spend almost all our life fighting against life.*

*Here, with Gurudev, we learn to dissolve. To learn not to do, simply allow things to happen. It is not even a learning, more like relaxing our tight grip... as the clenched fist becomes an open palm, it is available to receive.*

*For me, this letting-go is most difficult in Meditation – to let go of the goal of more intense Meditation. I catch my mind struggling to go within and of course, the harder you try, the more difficult it gets.*

*“If I am not meant to meditate today, it’s okay...” This line kept coming into my head during the sitting today. I let go of even this private goal... and realised that being still and silent was not a problem, my struggle to attain it was.*

*Coincidentally, in the evening talk, Gurudev looked directly at me and put it beautifully: ‘You only are when you are not. When you are not, God is.’*

## DAY 14

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*Went unusually deep within during the morning beach meditation. Was standing on an inner precipice and about to fall into the blank unknown below. Scary. Remained feverish afterwards throughout the day. The fever subsided whenever I thought about Gurudev. Wrote a poem.*

### A DISCIPLE

YOU COME TO THE MASTER TO KNOW GOD,  
THE DAY WILL COME WHEN YOU PRAY TO GOD TO KNOW YOUR MASTER’S HEART.

YOU COME TO THE MASTER TO FILL YOUR LIFE WITH LAUGHTER,  
THE DAY WILL COME WHEN YOU WEEP TEARS OF BLOOD FOR HIM...

YOU COME TO THE MASTER FOR HIS BLESSINGS,  
THE DAY WILL COME WHEN EVEN HIS CURSES ARE YOUR SWEETEST SOUNDS.

YOU COME TO THE MASTER LOOKING FOR WATER,  
THE DAY WILL COME WHEN YOU PRAY FOR REAL THIRST.

YOU ASK THE MASTER TO GIVE YOU THE KEY TO ENLIGHTENMENT,  
THE DAY WILL COME WHEN YOU REALISE THAT HE IS THE KEY, THE DOOR, AND THE MYSTERY BEYOND.

YOU COME TO THE MASTER FOR MORE LIFE,  
THE DAY WILL COME WHEN YOU LONG TO DIE IN HIM.

WHEN THAT DAY DAWNS, MY FRIEND, REJOICE!  
FOR TODAY, THE MASTER HAS INITIATED YOU INTO HIS HEART.

KEEP YOUR HEAD ALWAYS AT THOSE FEET, MY BROTHER,  
FOR TODAY, GOD HAS FOUND YOU WORTHY.

## DAY 15

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*Silence finds a new depth as the last week of the silence begins. "Even if you see me outside the meditation hall," Gurudev says, "ignore me. Be completely with yourself."*

*At dusk the silence in the bamboo meditation hall is so transcendental it seems like there is no one here at all. Just a faraway hush-hush of waves. The tides of silence have washed everyone away; and this event remains a flimsy, faraway dream which perhaps never happened...*

*Time to become more and more passive. Passive to sorrow, passive to joy. Passive to the field of experience. "Whatever you experience," Gurudev reminds, "remember that it is separate from you, it cannot be you. You are beyond experience, you are the pure witnessing consciousness. Be as you are."*

*"Don't fight with your emotions. If there is sorrow, don't even try to make it go away. Sit quietly and be with it. Refuse to take credit for it. Don't call it 'my sorrow'. It is as if someone has sent you a big parcel of sorrow by mail. You not only sign the postal receipt and accept it as your own, but also carry the heavy box on your head! And then you complain that you are a big ball of bitterness. You have been piling parcel upon parcel from so many lives, what else do you expect?"*

*"First thing, stop signing the postal receipts for new parcels. And second, remain passive to whatever you have already accumulated. Be patient. It is arduous. But slowly-slowly, the miracle happens."*

## DAY 16

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*A few preliminary observations about passivity based on my personal field experience and minimal expertise:*

*True passivity – passivity as a state of being, not as an attitude of the mind – seems to be a gift (uplabdhi). Remembering it is the beginning of the journey.*

*Nothing takes you out of the state of passivity faster than fear and desire. They focus the relaxed, unfocused energy and create a 'doer' who is now heading for a goal. It's interesting to remain passive even to this desire and fear.*

*In passivity, the body moves more gracefully, actions happen more precisely, intensely and silently. Makes you wonder why 'I' am constantly jumping into the picture, trying to change, control and contort the body.*

*At its root, passivity seems to be more 'gyan' than 'dhyān'. It arises from the understanding that by their very nature the mind, emotions and body sensations are outside the essential you. Hence, no matter how hard you try, they can neither benefit you nor harm you. The best course, therefore, is to remain passive.*

*Passivity implies awareness, the more traditional word for Meditation. But passivity is a subtler and higher word as awareness implies doing, while passivity connotes being.*

*In passivity the secrets of life unfold on their own. Miracles happen.*

*And the best part is – you don't have to do a thing!*

## DAY 17

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*Dark clouds overhead. My brother, whom I love deeply, appears to be ignoring me. It hurts bitterly. It aches. I cry, sometimes for myself, sometimes for him. Every new little incident brings fresh pangs of sorrow. He seems to have love for everyone but me...*

## DAY 18

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*Another cloudy day. Rage, betrayal, sorrow, fear, hopelessness... all the ingredients of a Bollywood blockbuster were buffeting me today too. At times, remaining passive, they seemed to subside and there were lucid sunlit moments but still the dark clouds hung around horizon threateningly.*

*"Don't hate your anger and your fear," Gurudev said in his afternoon talk, "because your desire to get rid of them will bind you to them even more strongly. Simply remain passive, unafraid. I don't even say watch them carefully because to remain passive in the waking state is to be aware. Neither for nor against. Not turning your back, not running to hug it."*

*As I watch the pathetic little flame of my consciousness being battered from all sides, I am astonished at the dark side of the ego within me... the murderous rage, the cold viciousness, the melodramatic despair, the mighty arrogance.*

*I see why I am part of a world which glorifies love, peace and harmony yet kills over plots of land. I am part of this world. I am responsible for my world.*

## DAY 19

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*Last night, as I watched the last wispy clouds dying away, the object of my affection came and kissed me on the forehead with a big chuckle. I smiled and continued watching within: nothing had really changed, yet the entire climate of my being had become positive. What is that switch within us that changes position from sadness to happiness? Or is it simply acceptance – the way we interpret an event – that makes it so? Could the secret of happiness really be that simple?*

*Two unusual discoveries of the last few days. One, when I'm in Gurudev's presence and especially when he laughs – all my inner clouds fly away. It sounds corny but it's true. I look for my problems but I can't find them! As if in those moments my little raft is towed along with his silent, stately steamship. From high on the deck of his ship, the waves don't look so scary.*

*Second, and this is even more strange for me, when I say his name my mind falls silent and begins its journey inward to Meditation. I don't know how else to say this, but I know I'm not doing it. All I do is watch it and say: "Wow! Pretty darn neat, dude!"*

## DAY 20

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*The Wheel has turned. The circle is complete. From bliss to misery to bliss. Thanks to an insight Gurudev shared yesterday afternoon, was blissed out during the beach meditation. The universe felt like it was madly in love with me, everything was part of my singing, dancing silence. I dashed off a letter to Gurudev saying, "I feel blessed."*



*A few ecstatic hours later, even before Gurudev had read the letter, the same insight seemed to have lost its juice – it no longer worked! The Wheel had turned once again. Never again will I claim ownership for a spiritual experience.*

*Tomorrow is the final day of the silence. Then back to smiling at people and saying good-morning. Beneath the words though, I hope this silence will go on resonating. Below the noise of my life back home, I pray this love affair will remain alive:*

*“In the timeless Heart, may He remain in eternity. May He remain... the light inside the light. May He remain... the sound within the sound. May he remain... the Source of all creation. I bow down to Him, the Master who was never born and will never die.*

*...THY WILL BE DONE.”*

## **DAY 21**

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*I had planned to leave this final day's diary entry blank – to symbolise the silence that has descended here. The silence which has almost become my identity. But then it struck me that there is more to Gurudev's silence than mere blankness...*

*The song for the final evening's celebration was Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's “Iss Karam Ka Karoon Shukr Kaise Aada”... How can I repay this gift, he sang, this grace which my Master has showered upon me. And this was how we all felt. Some expressed it in the laughing ecstasy of dance which happens when you dance around him, some in tears at his feet. It was raining love all evening.*

*As the song ended and we sat for Meditation with tear-drenched faces, there it was again: that magical, crystal-clear silence. That's when I realised that there is more to Gurudev's silence than mere blankness. No, it is a silence filled with laughter, glistening with tears and dancing with gratitude. It is a silence throbbing with a living Heart.*

### **AFTER THE END:**

On the flight back home, I read the newspaper for the first time in 40 days. Another mishap in Gujarat, Sonia Gandhi was preparing for polls... nothing had changed. I had missed nothing in silence. And gained priceless glimpses of eternity. My company, which had been reluctant to grant me leave, had deposited a sizeable incentive in my bank account!

I don't know how this works but trust me, it does.

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