



DHARAMSALA

February 12

(from my Indian diary)

I'm staying home — it's a non-Leo day. That's what they say. Saturday. I'm a Leo.

I've been to Dharamsala. I met a Tibetan doctor, the Dalai Lama's personal physician.

An old man, a Buddhist, a monk — already in his eighties. His Tibetan patients consider him enlightened.

Together with his disciple, he believes that doctors themselves cause 95 percent of cancer cases by taking samples and performing needle punctures for analysis. A cancerous tumour, he explained, is like an egg — as long as you don't touch it, it stays within itself. All this scraping and sampling, they believe, stimulates the disease and the growth of tumours. According to him, their round medicinal pellets can cure cancer and many other illnesses — not quickly, but gradually.

They diagnose illness by taking the pulse.

They were surprised that the Russian patients who had recently begun coming to them often brought pendulums hanging from strings and used them to "check" whether the medicine prescribed by the doctor was suitable for them.

Dharamsala is an amazing place!

Beautiful, mountains everywhere, and, most importantly, lots of Tibetan Buddhists. Tibetans and Nepalese have a different energy from Indians. There is something special about them, something pure and luminous — especially about the Buddhist monks.

They are not intrusive.

I liked the Tibetan and Nepalese women for their inner strength and for the inner freedom I could sense in them.

At least, that was the impression I had.

When you talk to them, they look you straight in the eye, openly and directly, with dignity, friendliness and confidence.

There is no affectation in these women.

There are some real beauties among them.

I don't know much about Tibetan traditions, but it seems that they do not regard women as second-class beings obliged to submit to the "crown of creation" — man. There is a Buddhist monastery here. You can meet Tibetan monks in the street. Whenever I see them, to my own surprise, I am overcome by inexplicable emotions. A wave of love overwhelms me, coming from within, from some unidentified "old source." An indescribable sense of kinship, nostalgia and joy — all at once. I want to cry, I want to close my eyes and simply stand beside them, I want our eyes to meet and to say silently: "I am one of you." Some childish desire for them to recognize me. And they did recognize me. When the old monk-healer saw me, he said: "You were Tibetan." I went to Dharamsala with an Argentinian woman whom some people around us called an "idiot" behind her back. Like me, she attended satsangs with the guru in city X. But I'm grateful to her, because I probably wouldn't have gone there on my own... She wanted to consult the Tibetan doctors. Before the trip, my travelling companion learned that for a visit to a Tibetan doctor, you had to bring a jar of your own urine. They diagnose by examining the urine and taking the pulse. She prepared carefully for the trip and, for some reason, decided to bring along a jar already filled with urine. It was a long journey, and all the way she had to look after this full jar. And she managed the task successfully until, on the final leg of the journey, we boarded a bus. We travelled at night. And then disaster struck!!! The precious substance spilled out of the jar, filling the bag with a certain liquid and seeping onto my companion's lap and clothes! I had been dozing on the bus when I noticed my fellow spiritual seeker rushing about in panic in the aisle between the seats, pressing paper tissues against her clothes. I had no idea how I could help her, so I simply watched. She was a petite Argentinian woman with long, loose hair, deep wrinkles on her face, a slender, well-proportioned, youthful figure, and silver streaks in her hair. She smoked and spoke in an unexpectedly low, slightly husky voice. Lively, with a sense of humour, very practical — unlike me — and not an idiot at all. She must have been pretty when she was young, and even now her face still bore traces of that headstrong, lively girl.

Yes, sometimes she would walk into the satsang hall, let out a loud cry (to make sure everyone noticed), and collapse, pretending to faint. Everyone would rush over to her, and she, clearly enjoying all the attention, could barely conceal her pleasure. Like some of the others, she was starved of attention, and she "won" that attention in whatever way she could. I liked watching her childish inventiveness. For a while we shared an apartment, so I had plenty of time to observe her more closely. She was a restless roommate, with the energy of a teenager and a mind constantly busy grinding and chewing over everything that found its way into it.

In Dharamsala, we found a guesthouse, left our things there, and the next morning went to see the Tibetan doctor.

We were seen almost immediately.

She was the patient; I was the observer.

My companion was very excited and talked a lot, pouncing on the Tibetan doctor as if he were a dear relative she hadn't seen in years.

She talked about everything under the sun, emotionally and with little connection to either her health or the purpose of the visit.

There was something wrong with her bones, a calcium deficiency, and the doctor asked whether she drank coffee. She said she did.

When he advised her to give up coffee, she burst into tears like a child and told him in detail how much she enjoyed her morning cup of coffee when she woke up, while her body was still lazy...

She actually burst into tears!

The old Tibetan looked at her with understanding eyes and nodded.

Then he asked her again for the name her guru had given her.

Her name meant "Tranquility."

The Tibetan doctor smiled, shook his head and repeated: "Tranquility, tranquility..."

We stayed in Dharamsala for about three days and then returned to city X.

Back in the scorching, dusty city X, I ran into several disciples in the street — fellow satsang-goers — who told me, with concern and sometimes even indignation, that the guru (himself!) had been "calling for" me during satsangs, asking where I had disappeared to, and seemed displeased by my absence.

This surprised me. Many people from Europe, America and Asia came and then went back home, to their own countries, and there had never been any such "displeasure from the enlightened one."

There were also plenty of curious visitors, former Osho followers.

They would come for a while and then leave — sometimes only temporarily, sometimes for good. No farewells, no ceremonies.

I, stuck here because I had no money (I had lost contact with my family, and after meeting this guru, commissions for my paintings had stopped coming in as well), apparently had no right to go anywhere!

Somehow, a tradition had sprung up among the guru's most devoted disciples of asking him for his blessing for everything: starting a new business, getting married, any journey, any action.

And not merely for his blessing — but for his permission!

I didn't think that a trip to Nepal for a couple of days required the guru's blessing.

Everything went perfectly well without unnecessarily attracting the attention of the "saint."

One day, a shaman looked at me and said: "Your guru needs you more than you need him."

A strange diagnosis.

I disagreed and didn't believe him, but I remembered it.