



The
AWAKENING TIMES

THROUGH TIME INTO LIBERATION

Be
don't try
to Become.

Osho

SEPTEMBER 2023. EDT

IMPRESSUM

The Awakening Times
Online Spiritual Magazine
September Edition, 2023

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Dear Constant Reader,

As we present to you the September issue of the Awakening Times magazine, we are filled with profound gratitude for the journey that has brought us here. It is with a sense of divine orchestration that we embarked on this special edition, dedicated to the teachings and wisdom of Osho.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to our dear friends from Viha Connection magazine, Dhanyam, and Avinasho, true devotees of Osho, who tirelessly share His wisdom with friends around the globe. It is through their selfless efforts that we were inspired to delve into Osho's teachings and honor His legacy. We firmly believe that there are no coincidences in life; instead, it is a higher purpose that has brought us together.

It is a profound honor for us to serve as instruments of light and truth and to share the insights we've gained with our cherished audience. The September issue is, without a doubt, a special tribute to Osho, featuring an original talk by Osho on Sanyasa and a plethora of inspirational articles that delve deep into the wellspring of Osho's wisdom.

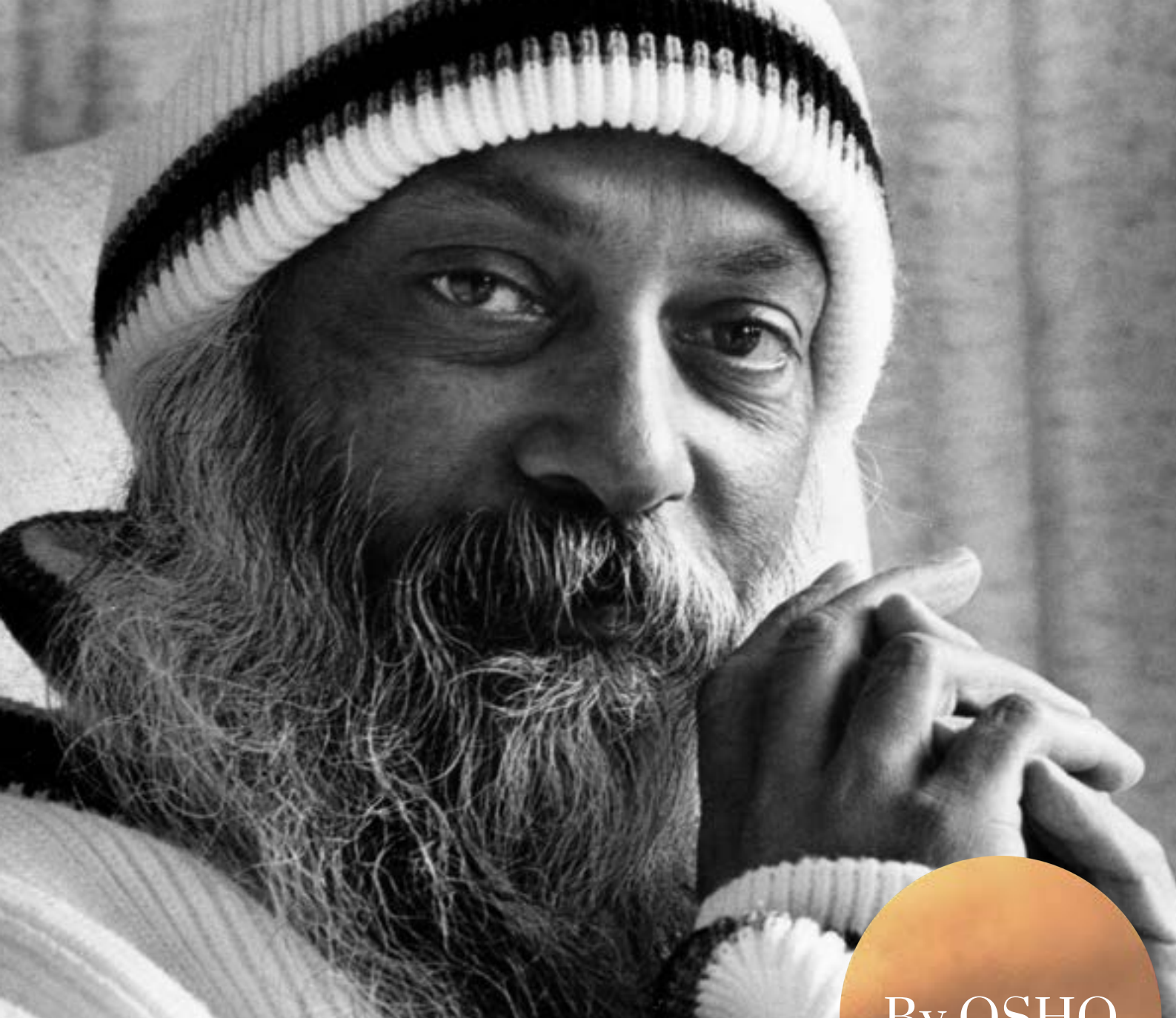
But there's more. In homage to the "Master of Masters" who often spoke about the need for spiritual luminaries in the world, we are thrilled to bring you an article about Osho, penned by the living spiritual Master, Mohanji, exclusively for this edition.

May the words and wisdom contained within this special September issue resonate deeply within your being and inspire transformation. We invite you to immerse yourselves in the profound teachings and insights of Osho and embrace the light of awareness that He has shared with the world.

With gratitude and reverence,

Lea Kosovac

The Awakening Times



By OSHO

TO BE A SANNYASIN IS TO BE A STRANGER

To be a sannyasin is to be a stranger. To be a sannyasin is to be an outsider. You do not belong anymore to the crowd; you have chosen the path of a lion, to be alone, rather than the path of a sheep, to be always in the crowd.

Now that it is happening to you, that you are beginning to love your aloneness, a fear is also arising that you may become a stranger; you may lose contact with others. Have you ever thought what you have gained from the contact with others? What is the end result of being in the crowd, except misery, anxiety, agony? What has been the contribution of the crowd to you?

Yes, it has given you greed, it has given you violence, it has given you ambitions, which are all ugly. It has given you self-hatred, it has given you a constant desiring for the future – but that is a strategy to take you away from the present.

And remember, your longing for the future is never going to be fulfilled. All fulfillment is in the present. And the only people who have attained anything worthwhile are the people who have the courage to be strangers.

There is certainly a fear in the beginning, because the more you become a stranger, the more you are condemned; the more you become a stranger, the more you feel yourself without any support. You were always supported, and you have forgotten that you can stand on your own; there is no need of any support. In fact all supports have made you crippled. If a child is supported, carried from the very beginning, he will never learn to walk on his own.

To be an outsider means you have dropped all that has been given by the past as heritage. That heritage has nothing beautiful in it; it is full of bloodshed, wars, hatred. There is not a single thing that comes to you as heritage that can be rejoiced in. If you are alert – and your aloneness is bound to make you very alert – you will be able to see that you have been carrying all kinds of garbage given to you by the older generation. There is not anything of any value, because anything of any value has to be discovered by yourself; it cannot be given to you by anyone else.



In the crowd, the idea is very strong that you can gain knowledge from others; that you can become wise from others' advice; that you can become religious by believing in others; that you can become spiritual if you are obedient to the commandments of God. But it is always others you have to look up to. You yourself are absolutely worthless; anything of value is going to happen to you only through others. This idea has been propagated, and everybody has been poisoned by this idea. That is the fear when you start moving on a small footpath, leaving the superhighway.



They say – or they used to say in the past, but it is no longer relevant – that all roads lead to Rome. But not all footpaths – every footpath moves on its own, to its own destiny. Now even the roads have revolted; they have forgotten Rome completely. It is very rarely that any old rotten road may be going to the Vatican.

The fear is natural, but it has to be dropped. To be carried away by the fear will be very unintelligent.

Secondly, experience shows that in the beginning, by being alone in your own silent spaces of the heart, you feel you are losing contact with others.

But don't you see me? Can you find a man who is more an outsider and a stranger in the whole world? Yes, I have lost contact with all kinds of idiots; now I only have contact with those who are thirsty and those who are understanding and those who want to evolve into spiritual beings. Now this commune of friends and fellow travelers has a totally different meaning than being in the crowd.

The crowd crushes your individuality, destroys your freedom, humiliates you to such a point that you start hating yourself instead of loving yourself.

The society has been dominated by a very wrong psychology. It looks logical but it is not psychological. And logic is something man-made; psychology is not something man-made.

The logic behind humiliating each individual to such a point that he cannot love himself is that if you love yourself, how are you going to love others? And the society and the family and the nation and the religion – everyone is interested in your loving others. Love your wife, love your children, love your parents, love your teachers, love everybody except yourself. It is a simple logic – that if you love yourself, you will not care much about the wife or the husband or the children or the parents or the priests.

So you can pretend: You love your children, you love your wife, you love your husband, you love your parents – but it is all pretension.

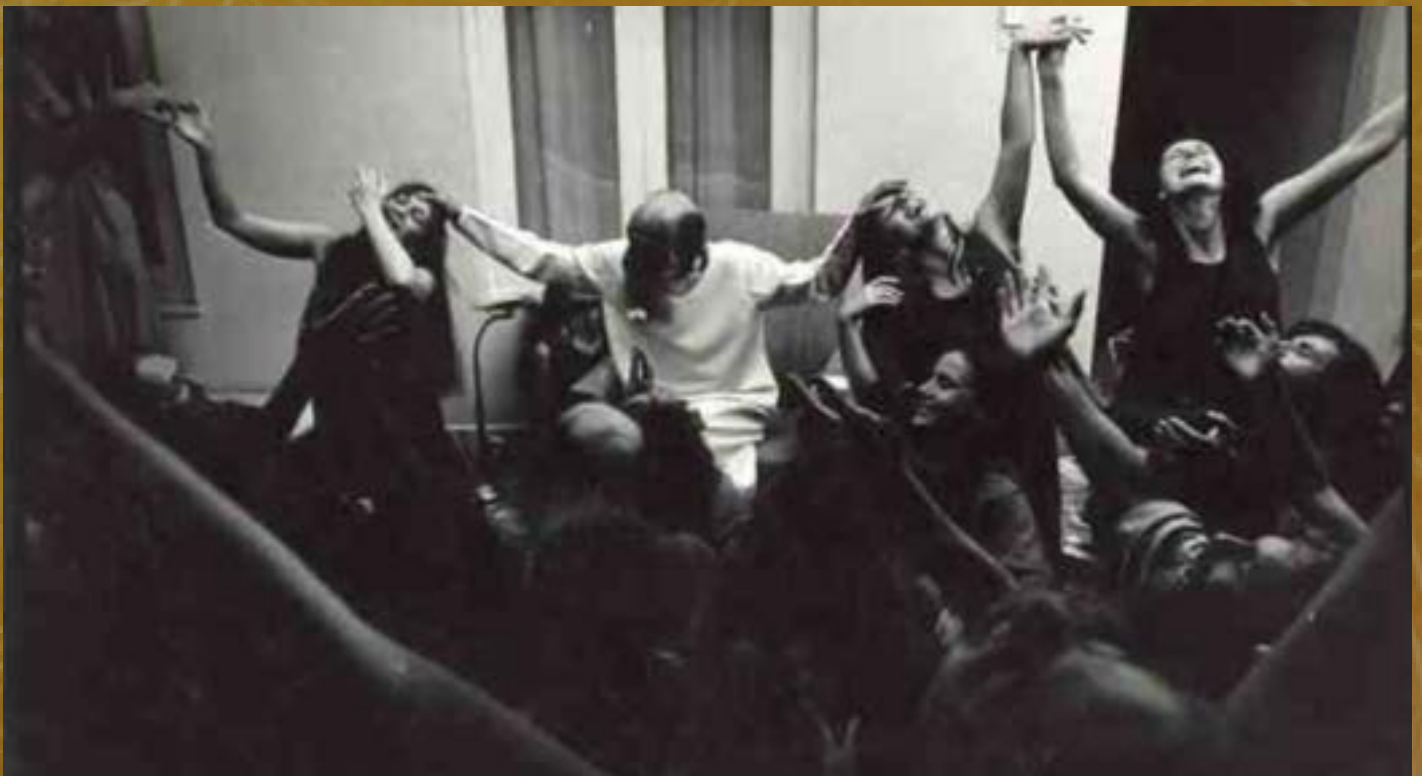
If so many people in the world were loving, where does war come from? From where is all kinds of violence continuously coming? From where is hatred arising if everybody is so loving?

You have to love your children, your wife, your husband, your parents, your priests, elders, neighbors – there are even teachers like Jesus who say you have to love your enemies too. Just don't love yourself! This strange logic has destroyed your very roots of loving.

I say unto you: First and foremost, love yourself. And if you can love yourself, others will start getting your love very naturally, without any pretensions, very spontaneously. A man full of love soon starts overflowing. You cannot contain your love into the small space you have within you; your love is far greater than you are. Your love can fill the whole earth. A single man's love can fill the whole universe. It is so vast that you can go on sharing with everybody.

But if your very source remains closed, then all that is left is to pretend. Everybody is pretending; that's why there is so much talk about love, so much poetry, so much literature.

And if you look around, you don't find love anywhere, you never encounter it.



I want the whole universe to be a loving, rejoicing universe. But I see where humanity has failed, where its teachers, messengers of God, and saviors have taken a wrong route. They listened to logic and they forgot that logic is absolutely man-made; it has nothing to do with your nature. Nature has no obligation to fulfill logical conclusions. If your nature can be heard, it will become a simple thing to understand.



“
Love yourself so that all your loving sources become open, all blocks are removed. And if you can love yourself with all your frailties, with all your weaknesses, with all your errors you can love anybody in the world. You will have tremendous compassion and understanding, because you commit the same mistakes; the same are your errors, the same are your frailties.
”

The people who have never loved themselves have never come in contact with themselves. Yes, they are in contact with others, but it is a very strange situation: If you are not in contact with yourself, how can you be in contact with others?

Who is going to be in contact with others?
Who are you?

At that point you simply don't know. You know that you have a contact with your friend, you have a contact with your children, you have a contact with your mother – but who are you? And the same is the situation of your mother, your friend, your children – they don't know who they are. Nobody knows who he is, and everybody is in contact with everybody else.

Can you think of any greater insanity than this situation?

Once you become an outsider, settled, confirmed, you will be surprised that now authentic contacts start happening, because now you are in contact with your own being. You have such a magnetic pull that those who are seeking, those who are searching, those who are longing for something to happen in their life, those who don't want to live an empty and meaningless life will start coming in contact with you.

This contact will have some great significance. You will be fulfilling each other without destroying each other. You will be loving but not possessive. You will help but you will not enslave. You will support – but not to exploit – just out of your love, friendliness, out of your understanding; whatever happens will be right.

love, friendliness, out of your understanding; whatever happens will be right.

Of course you will not be part of the big world of retarded people whose mental age is not more than fourteen. This is enough for being a postman or a stationmaster or a president – any trivia. I don't see any difference between a stationmaster and a president of a country: Both are small flies pretending to be something great. You will not be in contact with these psychologically retarded people, but you will come in contact with real, authentic, intelligent, loving human beings who have understanding, who have compassion. And because they can love themselves, they can also love you. My experience is very different. The moment my blindness disappeared, the moment I found my own being, I could not believe how people started coming to me. I had not advertised myself in any newspaper, and suddenly, walking on the streets, somebody would stop me, feeling a little embarrassed that he is stopping an absolute stranger.

He would say, “Something in you makes me feel to be friendly with you.”

I would say, “How many friends can I manage?”

One of the friends arranged a bungalow for me. It was big enough, but soon it was continuously full of guests coming from faraway places. I told the friend, “Something has to be done because we don't have space.” I have suffered from lack of space my whole life, and I am still suffering. A few sannyasins are continuously searching for more space, because more people are coming, threatening that they are coming! I have never found myself a stranger. On the contrary, I have found people who are on the same wavelength. I have found people who are filled with the same music. Slowly, slowly people started coming from outside India, and now perhaps this is the only gathering in the world which has its brothers, its sisters, in every country.

Yet there is no church, no dogma, no belief system. What is holding all these people together?

I am not promising you any heaven or paradise, and neither am I threatening you with any hell: “If you don't believe in me, beware of eternal darkness and hellfire.” Neither am I making you afraid, nor am I making you greedy for pleasures in heaven. I am not promising you anything; in fact I am taking away all the promises that others have given to you.

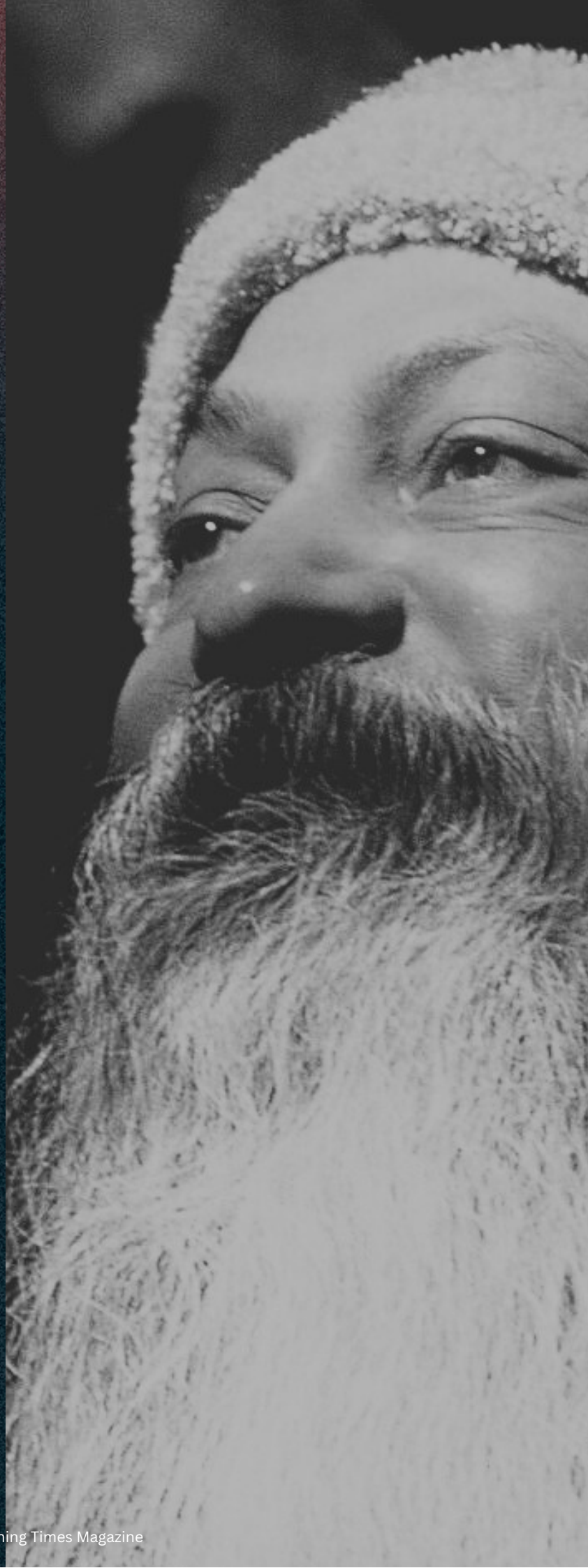
Why has this small commune of friends become an international commune? I don't feel you will remain for long a stranger or an outsider if you authentically enjoy your aloneness and the beauty that showers when you are a pure silence and nothing else, and the flowers that blossom in that spring of aloneness. You will find for the first time those people to whom you belong.

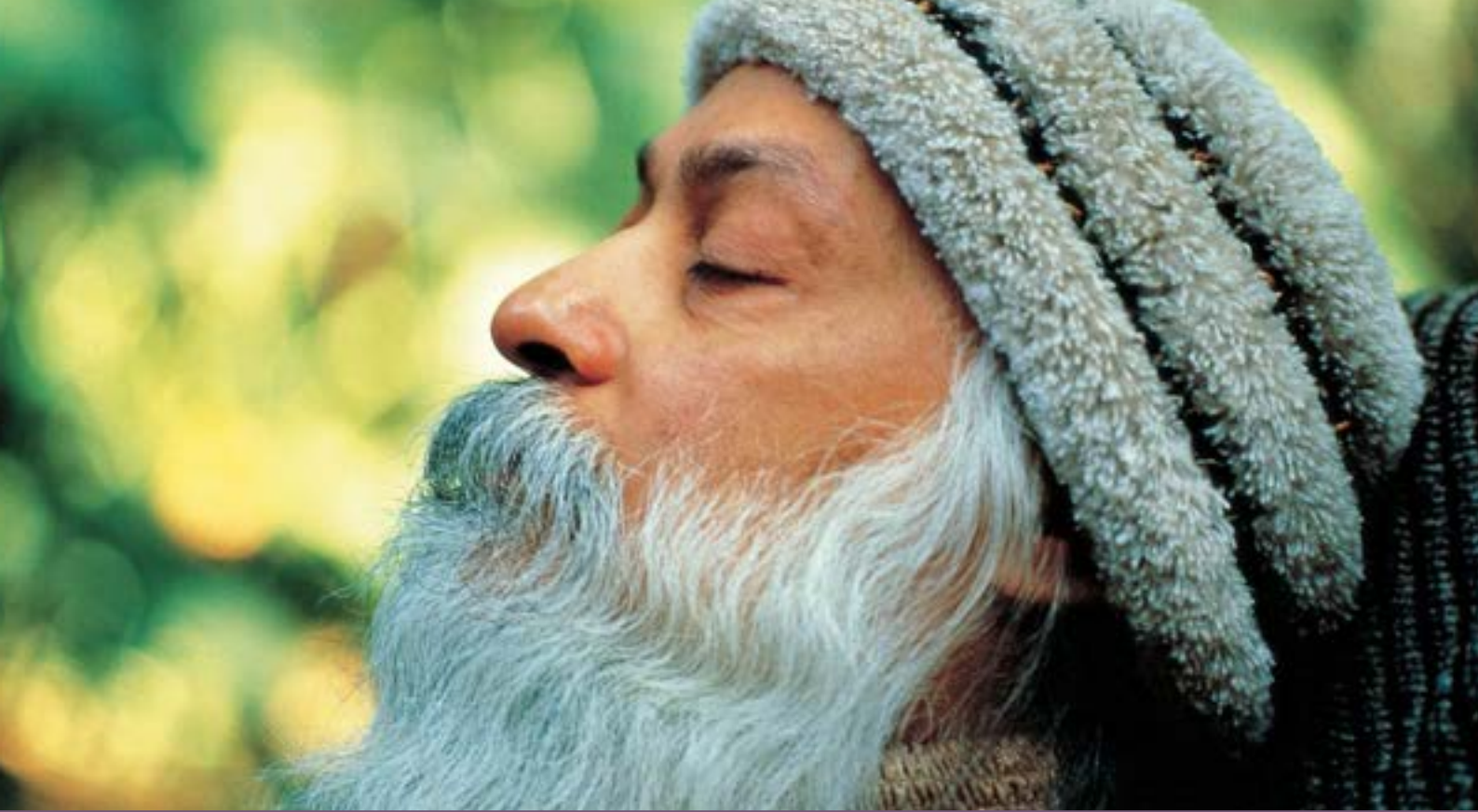
It will not take much effort on your part to search for them. It is very difficult to search, but if you simply remain in your silence, your silence will be heard more loudly than any noise. Your love will start radiating, spreading its net, pulling people without their being even fully aware of where they are going and for what. They will realize only when they have arrived and become a part of this big caravan. What is happening to you is one of the greatest things that can happen to a person.

You say, "I feel a longing that brings me towards you." The same longing will be felt by many, which will bring them to you just as a longing has brought you to me. Learn from this.

I have nothing to give you. I cannot give you a direct contact with God, because as far as I am concerned there is no God, and there is no heaven and no hell. That's how I am dismantling all beliefs that the past has given to you. I want you to be without beliefs, without promises, without future, without past – just enjoying the moment in its fullness.

This is your moment, just as it is my moment. And if in our rejoicing we meet, it does not create a bondage. If in our total living of the present we find ourselves in deep love, in deep friendliness, it does not create any chains, it does not make any contracts; it has nothing to do with the next moment. This moment lived totally and intensely becomes almost equal to eternity. It is enough unto itself.





You are saying, “But a passion and desire to fall in love with someone seems to be no more there.” Once you have tasted something of higher quality, it is simply natural that things of lower quality will not attract you. If a longing has arisen in you to come close to me...now you cannot think of continuing your old passions and desires and love affairs, which you used to think were great. Now you are having the greatest love affair possible.

Such affairs will be happening more and more. You will live on a totally different plane of consciousness, and lower planes will be left far behind. But you are not a loser; you are a winner. You are growing. [...] People like Gautam Buddha or Socrates or Pythagoras or Jesus are all outsiders and strangers to their contemporaries. They are all thought to be a little off the track, a little outlandish. And because the crowd, the majority is there...and they write the history books. They don't talk about the authentic contributors; they talk about the destructive people. The whole of history is full of Adolf Hitlers, Benito Mussolinis, Joseph Stalins. Very rarely, in the footnotes, you will find something about Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Plotinus, Kabir – perhaps not even in the footnotes. And these are the real people who have lived, who have loved and who have created as much humanity, as much consciousness as is possible to a single individual.

Rejoice in being a stranger; rejoice in being an outsider. That is your way to satyam, shivam, sundram. That is the way that will bring you the truth, and the divine, and the tremendous splendor and beauty that follows on its own accord.

Satyam Shivam, Sundram, Chapter 28



Osho THE EMBODIMENT OF FREEDOM

By Mohanji

Osho, Bhagwan Rajneesh, stood as a powerful Master, and like every Master of that stature, he was ahead of his time.

When a person is liberated from within, their expressions and intensity become profoundly unpredictable.



In this light, Osho embodied freedom and liberation.

His expressions were spontaneous and highly intellectual. Beyond the intellectual aspect, he broke all boundaries. His aim was to annihilate all concepts, dogmas, and philosophical constraints. His mission was to create 100% pure beingness within individuals. I don't know how many people understood that, but his followers definitely experienced its transformative impact.

The very basics of Osho's teachings are probably not understood. It is all about venting, letting go, and internal freedom through remarkably basic methods, leading to purification and ultimately, to Liberation.

The whole idea of being complete, being complete in oneness and beingness was so powerfully portrayed by one Master: Osho.

He addressed diverse topics, yet not all his statements conformed to societal norms.

Like any liberated individual, he broke through boundaries and barriers, indifferent to societal constraints and intellectual norms of the time.

The liberated are concerned with Liberation, the path of pathlessness, and releasing bindings and blockages for a life of pure freedom.

Their boundaries diverge. Osho's were explicitly different.



Moreover, the way he dressed up and portrayed himself in the world (with the amassing of countless high end vehicles for example), although possibly guided by his followers, was none other but a statement of his liberated and detached state.

He conveyed to the world: “I have all these things, but I'm nothing, none of these, I have everything, but I don't need anything.”

He was simply living the very truth that one can possess everything while remaining unattached, the essence of complete liberation.

Osho remained unbound by people, places, time, or materials—a sign of complete Liberation.

Like many great Masters, Osho was misunderstood during his lifetime, a common occurrence. Just as with Jesus, Socrates, and others, his recognition as a great Master and the trendsetting nature of his teachings only emerged after his departure, prompting people to strive for understanding and interpretation.

Osho's philosophies were so expansive that various individuals started exploring every facet of it, resulting in the formation of various factions.

In conclusion, Osho was walking freedom—a liberated being consistently free from the constraints of people, places, time, space, and philosophies. Remembering him is very important for every seeker. Through his example, we recognize what we lack— the freedom aspect.

Then, we can strive toward that freedom. Freedom is our birthright, and it is not from the mind, but from the mind. Osho perpetually embodied that freedom.

THE LITTLE SPARROW'S DETERMINATION



By Sweety Vyas

In the Puranas, there is a beautiful story of a sparrow who lost her eggs. She had laid her eggs on the ocean shore and had gone out in search of food. Meanwhile,

the waves of the ocean carried her eggs away.

When the mother sparrow appealed to the ocean to return her eggs, it did not take her cries for help seriously. Undeterred, the mother bird vowed to dry the mighty ocean. With her tiny beak, she began to painstakingly drain out the water one drop at a time, carrying it to another location.

She continued this arduous task with unwavering determination. Everyone around her laughed at her, as it appeared to be an impossible endeavor.

News of her extraordinary effort spread, capturing the attention of higher powers.

The king of all the birds, Garuda, the mighty eagle and the mascot of Lord Vishnu, heard about the sparrow's plight. Touched by her relentless effort, he offered his help to his little sister bird. Garuda demanded that the ocean return the eggs and threatened to dry up the ocean himself if it refused. Frightened by the mighty Garuda, the ocean promptly returned the eggs. With Garuda's grace, the sparrow found happiness once again

In our own pursuits, we should be resolute in overcoming all obstacles. We must remain hopeful and never succumb to fear. Every challenge should be transformed into a stepping stone. Sometimes in our spiritual journey, it may appear that our minuscule efforts are as futile as the mother bird extracting water from the ocean one drop at a time. The task may seem monumental, but our efforts are never in vain. God observes all our endeavors and will undoubtedly assist us at the appropriate moment.

The key is to stay consistent and enthusiastic and to confront dangers fearlessly. Our success will ultimately be determined by our unwavering self-belief.

Another valuable lesson we can glean from this story is to set ambitious goals. It is said that we attain human life after passing through 8.4 million species of life, providing us with an opportunity to connect with the divine.

We should not settle for smaller, materialistic objectives but should instead aim for the ultimate and highest goal. No goal is beyond reach if we set our minds to it.

.....
As Nelson Mandela wisely stated, "It always seems impossible until it is done."
.....

Although it may at times seem overwhelming, if we persist in pursuing our goals, we will undoubtedly reach our destination.



UNVEILING THE ESSENCE OF OSHO'S COURAGE: THE JOY OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

By Cab Van Elk

How do you define courage? To me, it seems that courage is actually a silent force, yet one of the most potent in existence.

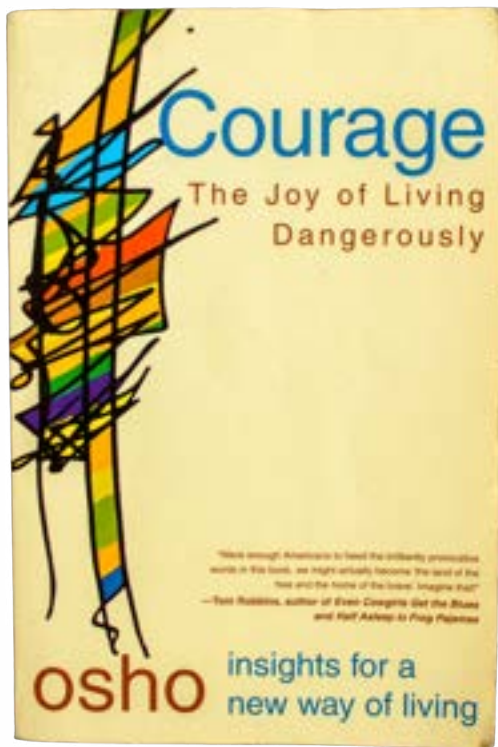
On the cover of certain versions of this book, you might find the subscript, "Insights for a New Way of Living." Yet, dear reader, I am convinced that this is one of the oldest secrets to survival that humanity knows.

How do we even begin to define courage? Courage comes down to facing up to a challenge despite the odds. For some, "the challenge" is ruling a country or wrestling a crocodile; for others, it's simply finding where their next meal will come from.

As Osho puts it, courage is "not the absence of fear," but rather the "total presence of fear, with the courage to face it."

Back in 1933, amid the haunting specter of the Great Depression, America stood on the precipice of despair, and you could cut the sense of fear out of the atmosphere with a knife.

The land of boundless opportunity had transformed into a realm of shattered dreams and desolation for many after the Roaring Twenties. Families huddled together, clutching their hopes against the relentless tides of poverty and uncertainty. Certain creative minds of the time could attest to the strife and the dust-caked grief of their day. Many turned their ideas into now-iconic pieces of art, such as John Steinbeck's "The Grapes Of Wrath" or Woody Guthrie's anthemic song "This Land Is Your Land," as a direct result of the creative courage of standing up to this strife and embracing the challenge through creative expression.



But perhaps one of the most iconic treatises on fear from this era comes from the 32nd American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was in the process of developing his New Deal plans to bring the country back on the road to economic recovery. His often-under-quoted inaugural speech actually went like this:

"So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

Two years prior to this, just over 12,000 kilometers away in a small village in Madhya Pradesh, India, a sage child by the name of Chandra Mohan Jain was born on December 11. From a very early age, he displayed an interest in spirituality and meditation and often questioned traditional religious beliefs and practices. Any clinical psychologist who would analyze this child today would most likely find, thanks to the intervention of some medical scans, that this child, who later adopted the moniker of Osho, most likely possessed a very well-functioning amygdala.

Within the miraculously intricate folds of the grey matter situated in your skull, dear reader, sits an "almond of joy, fear, and rage." The amygdala plays a crucial role in processing and regulating various emotional and memory-related functions, as well as assisting in forming emotional connections with others on a deeper level. It is the encephalic center in a human where one could say courage is formed on a chemical level.

It is rather serendipitous (or perhaps even coincidental), dear reader, that the amygdala happens to take the shape of an almond. These delectable drupes can be found in symbolism across the world, all of which reflect on divine connections. One great example can be found in the Book of Numbers (also known as Bamidbar) in the Hebrew Bible. More specifically, it is found in Numbers 17:8.

This story is part of the account of how Aaron's authority as a priest was established through a miraculous sign involving the blossoming of his staff. Aaron was the older brother of Moses and played a vital role in the leadership and religious life of the Israelites.

Here's the passage from the Book of Numbers (17:8, NIV translation):

"The next day Moses entered the tent and saw that Aaron's staff, which represented the tribe of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed, and produced almonds."

This extraordinary sign symbolizes divine confirmation of Aaron's leadership and priestly authority. The almond tree is known for being one of the first trees to blossom in the spring, and its rapid blooming and fruiting were seen here as a sign of God's favor and selection.

The almond-shaped amygdala is closely linked to the process of fear conditioning, as it has developed essential survival mechanisms closely related to finding personal benefits in the learnings from our negative experiences. It possesses certain qualities associated with emotional intelligence, empathy, and the ability to connect with others on a deep emotional level.



Gurus often emphasize qualities such as compassion, understanding, and wisdom in their teachings, which might involve a high degree of emotional intelligence. As Osho teaches us in this enlightening book, part of embracing the challenge and possessing courage starts with simply being able to fully understand the challenge to begin with because misunderstanding can lead to great misfortunes.

As Osho says in this book, "Courage is a love affair with the unknown."

Whether this is a physical unknown, such as the depths of outer space and foreign heavenly bodies in our solar system, or the metaphorical depths of the mind and soul, back in 1967, it seemed that both would seed into a significant fruition that would shape the modern world for many. By this time, Osho had been in India for nearly a decade, teaching philosophy at a university in Jabalpur. It was here that he first met Ma Anand Sheela, upon whom he would later bestow the name "Prem," which is Sanskrit for love. Love and courage often go together, which is why during this same period, the seeds for another historic institution would develop – that of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), founded in 1969.

Some decades later, both the relationship between Osho and Ma Sheela's intentions for the controversial mission in Rajneeshpuram in Oregon, as well as the much more recent and victorious Chandrayaan-3, would both visit the dark side of the moon – so to speak, becoming not only the perfect paradox on the idea of the aforementioned lunar metaphor but also joining in relevance in one of Osho's more poignant quotes from the book we are talking about here today.

The quote from Osho in "Courage" goes:

"Listen to your being.

It is continuously giving you hints; it is a still, small voice. It does not shout at you, that is true. And if you are a little silent, you will start feeling your way.

Be the person you are."



Individuality is key to courage, as Osho shows us in this book. That's why he managed to develop distance from many of the controversies caused by those around him while managing to get his message across, something any creative mind strives for, especially those who rely on the art of storytelling.

While a remarkable achievement, Chandrayaan-3 is just another in a long line of remarkable achievements born from India, powered by the vital essence of courage to tell your story. And, as any filmmaker can tell you, dear reader, getting your story told on film is no mean feat. In fact, it takes a lot of courage and vision to be able to choreograph such a large team of individuals to form a single coherent workforce, not unlike trying to govern a small country.

Which is why it is no surprise that back in 1998, while the finishing touches were being put into Osho's posthumous book "Courage," another creative mind stood up and faced all the challenges that brought him and his massive crew to be able to complete a masterful retelling of the life of Queen Elizabeth I on the silver screen. Shekhar Kapur's film "Elizabeth" achieved several Academy Award nominations, partially thanks to the stellar work portrayed by the courageous and enigmatic actress Cate Blanchett.

The life of Elizabeth Tudor, also known as Queen Elizabeth I of England, reminds us of the lessons learned in Osho's book "Courage: The Joy of Living Dangerously" in several ways.

Queen Elizabeth I faced numerous challenges and uncertainties during her reign. She ascended to the throne in a time of political turmoil and religious conflict. Despite these uncertainties, Elizabeth displayed remarkable courage by making strategic decisions to stabilize her kingdom. Her ability to embrace the unknown and navigate through complex situations reflects the lesson from Osho's book about facing life's challenges with courage rather than succumbing to fear.

She defied societal norms and expectations of her time by remaining unmarried and retaining her independence as a monarch. She rejected pressures to marry for political alliances and demonstrated a willingness to break free from traditional conditioning. Similarly, Osho's teachings encourage individuals to break free from societal conditioning and live authentically, making their own choices rather than conforming to external expectations.

Her reign was marked by her ability to focus on the present moment and make decisions that were in the best interest of her people. She understood the importance of staying mindful of the current circumstances and adapting to changing situations. Osho's emphasis on living in the present moment resonates with Elizabeth's approach to governance as she navigated through the challenges of her era with strategic decisions.

Throughout her years in power, she faced various threats to her life and her kingdom, including assassination plots and external invasions. Despite these dangers, she maintained a strong and resolute demeanor, showing resilience in the face of fear. Osho's teachings encourage individuals to transform fear into an opportunity for growth, and Queen Elizabeth's ability to confront and overcome her fears aligns with this principle.

As Osho tells us in this book, "A certain darkness is needed to see the stars."



That's why it seems that our greatest challenges quite often become our most beloved endeavors, almost by default. If it were not for the misfortunes that had befallen the decade before, who knows whether Osho would have returned to India as he did in 1986, settling in Pune. Some of the discourses and meditation sessions that he taught during this period are still among his most popular today.

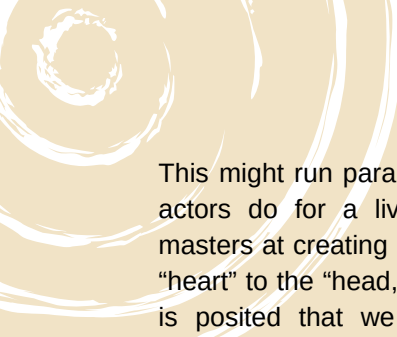
Which goes to show that the sometimes-misunderstood maxim, "Fortune favors the brave," can be applicable on many levels, just like the valuable lessons from this book. And when one thinks of the concept of bravery, there are perhaps a handful of varied archetypes that could jump to mind. One of them would be the classic Herculean cut of a figure such as the Norse god of thunder - Thor.

"Bravery" as a concept for the conduit of courage can be fickle and highly subjective; however, in "Courage:

The Joy of Living Dangerously,"

Osho tells us:

"Drop the idea of becoming someone because you are already a masterpiece. You cannot be improved. You have only to come to it, to know it, to realize it." He also notes here: "Life is not suffering; life is a challenge. It is a great journey, and the greatest journey is from the head to the heart."



This might run parallel or in clear contrast to what actors do for a living, for they are to become masters at creating a persona that travels from the “heart” to the “head,” so to speak. In psychology, it is posited that we are in a perpetual state of wearing masks for one another and for different versions of our own being, even making us all “actors” in some way. Which is why we might speak of someone as “acting brave” in a situation. Ironically, one of the bravest tales we find of Thor in Nordic mythology is one in which he dons the draperies of a woman and pretends to be someone else completely. In this tale, it is the giant Thrym who plays the villain, and he is after the covetous joy of having the goddess Freyja as his bride. This is what drives the giant to steal the god of thunder’s beloved armament, Mjöltnir, in an attempt to “blackmail” an exchange with Thor for the hand of the goddess. This is when Loki suggests that Thor disguise himself as Freyja and accompany him to Thrym’s court. Thor reluctantly agrees and dresses in bridal attire. At the court, his ravenous appetite and fierce demeanor puzzle the giants, but Loki cleverly explains it away. When the moment is right, Thor reclaims his hammer and defeats Thrym and his allies.

While not devoid of hubris, this tale inspires some notions of fearlessness (and humor) of which Osho would most certainly approve. It certainly requires some level of critical thinking, much like many of Osho’s controversial yet insightful teachings. But just like Thor’s magical gloves known as Járngreipr (meaning “iron grippers”) give him the strength to be able to wield his mighty hammer Mjöltnir, a certain computer mogul and self-confessed “hippie” known as Steve Jobs gave his company and its subsequent generations the transformational strength to create technical marvels that align with our modern needs.

Just like Thor, Steve Jobs never feared his own potential for creativity. Thor faces formidable adversaries and dangerous situations, but he confronts them head-on without succumbing to fear – much like Jobs did when he was fired from his own company. Their unwavering resolve and readiness to confront their fears illustrate the lesson from Osho’s book about transforming fear into an opportunity for growth. Both Steve Jobs and Thor’s willingness to face challenges with courage and determination can inspire us all to do the same.

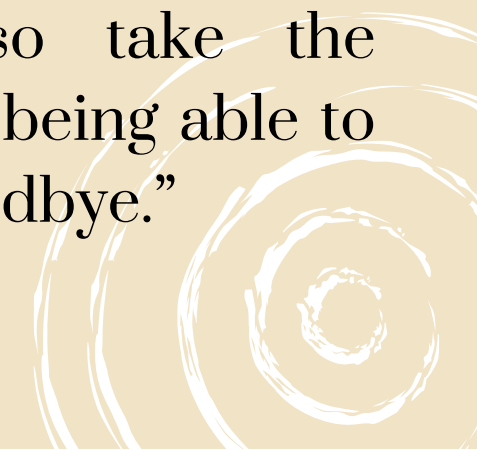
It most certainly inspired the Thespian cousin of Cate Blanchett, one Ashton Kutcher, to do the same in his role of portraying the hippie tech master in the 2013 film “Jobs.” Within the life of this enigmatic historical figure, we find elements of Osho’s teachings for one very good reason – Steve Jobs was a great lover of Osho’s discourses and would most certainly have enjoyed and drawn inspiration from today’s discussed book, “Courage.”

Steve Jobs was an innovative thinker who had a strong vision for Apple, and he was courageous enough to commit to his journey of pushing the boundaries of technology and challenging corporate conventions. He embraced creativity by revolutionizing industries like personal computing, music distribution, and mobile technology. Osho’s teachings emphasize the importance of embracing the unknown and taking risks. Steve Jobs embodied this by venturing into uncharted territories and encouraging his teams to think differently, even when faced with uncertainty.

Jobs was also known for his focus and intensity. He was deeply committed to his projects and often displayed an unwavering attention to detail. Osho’s emphasis on mindfulness and living in the present moment resonates with Jobs’ ability to immerse himself fully in his work, channeling his energy and attention into each endeavor.

There can be no doubt that the level of commitment and focus displayed by characters both real or mythical – whether it be Thor demonstrating a commitment to his duty and the well-being of his realm or Steve Jobs relinquishing his life’s achievement in order to pursue the diligence of his own convictions – that there are aligning ideals with Osho’s most powerful aspect of courage yet – also discussed in this book:

The fact that courage
can also take the
form of being able to
say “goodbye.”



If viewed through this lens, it might seem almost cynical of an ancient nation to come to the conclusions that, because they have had to tragically say “goodbye” to loved ones because they wandered too close to the Nile river and got consumed by a crocodile, that that very creature should gain reverence for its symbolic strength and protection. Yet the ancient Egyptian god Sobek was precisely this, dear reader.

And the Egyptians were not alone in their consideration, as we find that in many strong, ancient civilizations from the frost-tinged Nordic tales to the Chinese and even the Native Americans, the belief was also held that the “alligator god” is a symbol of strength, protection, and bravery. The alligator's powerful presence and ability to thrive in diverse environments parallel the themes of fearlessness and adaptability. Something ancient civilizations strove for as much as we do today, in order to survive.

In Australian Aboriginal mythology, for instance, we find the saltwater crocodile, which is often revered as a powerful and dangerous creature. It symbolizes both danger and respect for the natural world. The crocodile's prowess in its environment reflects qualities of survival, adaptability, and the courage to thrive in challenging circumstances.

Yet, in “Courage,” Osho also reminds us: “Don't be against fear. Don't be afraid of fear. The fear is there. Tremble with it, tremble with it! Existentially it is very valuable.”

That's because with fear comes respect. While one American “Steve” in our modern history was famously cast asunder as a pariah, yet managed to rise to the top again – there is another Australian “Steve” in our modern history who never seemed to be able to fail or show any sense of fear at all. Until the fateful day had to have the courage to accept his own fate and say “goodbye” to all of us.

One thing everyone can agree on is that Steve Irwin, the beloved “Crocodile Hunter,” had a deep love and respect for all creatures in nature. His passion for wildlife conservation and his ability to connect with animals showcased his willingness to live on the edge and embrace the unknown. Osho's lessons in Courage emphasize embracing life's uncertainties and approaching challenges with a fearless heart. Steve Irwin's approach to wildlife conservation and education resonates with Osho's teachings, as he fearlessly approached dangerous situations and educated the public about the natural world.



Many of us wish we could have a personal Steve Irwin to “wrestle the crocodiles” of our daily strife, but through reading a valuable book such as Osho's “Courage: The Joy Of Living Dangerously,” we might just turn that oh-so-ephemeral force known as “Courage” into something concrete and tangible after all.

In the end, it seems that defining courage might be possible, if highly subjective – but that defining it is not the point. The point might be to allow it to flow through you, much like you allow every other sense of existence to do. To allow yourself access to it, unabridged by your own confinements of comprehension of how it might be currently transpiring within you. Because as Osho teaches us – courage comes in many forms.

I highly recommend taking the first “brave” step to getting a copy of this book in your hands and consuming its content, dear reader. There is a rich connection with courage that your ancestors have given you, that wishes you to do so.

UNTOLD STORIES FROM THE ECUADORIAN ANDES

By Maja Otović

After a two-hour drive through the mesmerizing Ecuadorian mountain slopes, we stop at a small mud house in the middle of nowhere. At first, it seems like nobody's there as you can only hear the wind blowing and the dogs barking, but soon we are greeted by a gentle smile of an elderly lady in a bent posture. Her tenderness and vulnerability are exposed through her bare feet, shabby clothes, and the air of loneliness that surrounds her. Like so many other elderly women left to themselves high up in the mountains, she too has lost all of her family members. The immigration rate is very high in this part of the world. Also, some of these women were never married, or they even watched as alcoholism was taking away all of their children one by one. However, their smile tells a different story. It transmits the deep connection these people have with Pachamama, providing them not only with food but also comfort, healing, and joy.

She asks us to leave the food donations in her bedroom. It is not the first time that we are asked to leave the rations in the room rather than in the kitchen. We are puzzled by it, but we accept her nodding as the right thing to do. Before leaving, I remain outside for a second to soak up a million-dollar view from the cliff. Stunning! As I walk to the truck, I notice that a neighbor has already paid a visit to our lady. The odor of alcohol is overwhelming, and he can barely stand upright. I can hear her explaining to him that we have only given her one small bag of rice and nothing else. He is too drunk to question it, and the donations are safe under her bed for the time being.





We move on as we have another 25 houses to visit, and they are quite scattered. The people we meet are usually over 80, with visual or some other disability, and often alone. They are so happy to receive us, to have someone to talk to, to be hugged after a long time. On one of the next stops, our volunteer fixes the radio that was this lady's only companion. She is so thrilled she asks him to stay longer with her and rejoin us later, maybe even move in with her as she has some extra space. One of the regular requests we receive on our deliveries is to bring them a husband or a grandchild next time. The sense of humor of these people demonstrates the strength of their spirit.

Theodelinda is also smiling. She has only words of joy to spread, and yet our eyes are filled with tears. We are struggling to breathe in the dim room as we watch this tiny woman that's unable to move from her bed. Her both legs and one arm are paralyzed. She lives alone. We suppress crying our hearts out and embrace her cheerful tone in which she takes us on a journey through her youth. She's afraid that if she stops talking that we would leave, so she won't even make a short break to catch enough air. Finally, we find an opportunity to direct her attention to the special present we have for her: a wheelchair.

Poor Theodelinda, her face is no longer lit up; instead, fear is written all over it. She's begging us to take it away from her. The kind neighbor that cooks for her daily jumps in to explain to us that she's afraid she'd be taken somewhere for good in that chair. Apparently, she sat in wheelchairs before when visiting a doctor, scared of probably many things in that strange setting, especially of never again returning to her land. These people have merged with that soil, with those bird songs, with open skies, and with those dark cramped rooms.

We don't always cry on our visits to the rural zones. We once danced! Oh, what a party it was! People from another province came, and they brought lots of food and a stereo with them. It was a religious holiday that had to be celebrated in Evita's house. Evita, as the only living representative of her family, was the holder of a sacred painting of Jesus, and that meant that she was also the host of the religious celebration related to it. I had never seen her so happy. She was so joyous to see many people dancing and having fun that she even agreed to put on the new sweater we got for her. Almost one hundred-year-old Evita that can barely see was once again experiencing the fun-filled atmosphere in her home like in the good old days. She has no one now, and her neighbor and some dogs are her only companions. When we come for a visit, she always tries to make sure we don't leave empty-handed. She insists we should take some corn with us, which is the only thing she has, as she knows very well that the indigenous principle of reciprocity should be respected at all times. She is the true guardian of traditional values. Through her spirit, and of many others' like her, humanity is gifted with a beacon of humility, child-like innocence, and resilience. So we should take good care of them while they're still here among us.

ACT Ecuador can deliver donations to the rural communities on a regular basis thanks to the consistent support by ACT Foundation USA for food supplies, as well as a couple of our friends that provide us with additional help. We are often remembered by the elderly that we visit frequently and mostly so by the warm socks that they value so highly. Another 80+ year-old lady is showing us how she's still wearing the socks we gave her last time. Neighbor's doggies also have a good memory. Even though we fed them just once several months back, they are running up to us drooling. The life of domestic animals is not easy in the countryside, and we sometimes can't resist setting free a dog that we find tightly chained with no shelter nor food. And we always promise them we'll bring even more dog food next time.



In just a few years we can see how the condition of these people has sometimes drastically changed for the worse. We are welcomed by a woman whom we've met several times. Only this time she can't stand up on her feet, but is kneeling down. She's hungry and weak. In her house, there's no running water nor electricity, and she's around 85. So, we start cooking for her hoping some conversation and the company would cheer her up. And it worked. She gained back the appetite and is now looking forward to the cooked meal. We have to hurry up as we still have some houses left to go to, and it is slowly getting dark.

There she is. The smile is gone from her face and there's no more spark in her eyes. She greets us in a friendly manner, but her usual enthusiasm is missing. She allows us to hug her, so that's a bit of relief. It's hard to find the right words, yet there's the need to break the lingering sorrowful silence. So we start talking about the weather and the colorful clothes that we brought to her, and such. We don't talk about what neither one of us can digest. She probably doesn't even know the meaning of the word "rape".

She is one of the several 80-85 year-old women that were sexually abused by one young man who also stole their modest monthly financial help. Nobody believed it till one of them got a medical confirmation. Most of them don't even understand what happened to them. Just the sadness and an aching left shoulder speak on their behalf. Cause they cannot, and nobody else wants to. Life is not easy, especially for the women, far up on the mountain tops, but somehow they gather this herculean strength to endure.

There are not many men up there who get to live to over 80. But our completely blind friend is one such example. Perhaps it is his blindness from an early childhood that taught him how to withstand life's challenges. He can still take care of his animals and the crops, and he's usually in a good mood. Just by slightly touching the bag he can immediately tell what type of foods we brought him. He bids us goodbye in the usual manner: "Que Dios les bendiga", or "God bless you". Our apparently empty sacks now carry loads of blessings and good wishes from all of the people we've visited and that we need to deliver now to all of those who have taken some part in these acts of kindness.



It's almost sunset. Time for us to go back. Feeling so blessed, so grateful for another opportunity to meet maybe the last highlanders of the Andes. With their passing away, their entire world will be gone. Who will teach us about humility and oneness with nature then? Who will show us that the human spirit is greater than any misery? The Lights of the Andes, may you shine bright for some more time.

LIKE WAVES FROM AN OCEAN OF LIGHT PART 3: WHERE ONLY THE MAD CAN ENTER

By Jack Barrat

How can you establish a relationship with Him through doctrines?

You will have to go within. Only those who are mad can enter, not the intelligent; they are left out.

For your intelligence, your cunningness is not genuine.

It has always been true that lunatics have attained and the wise have lagged behind.

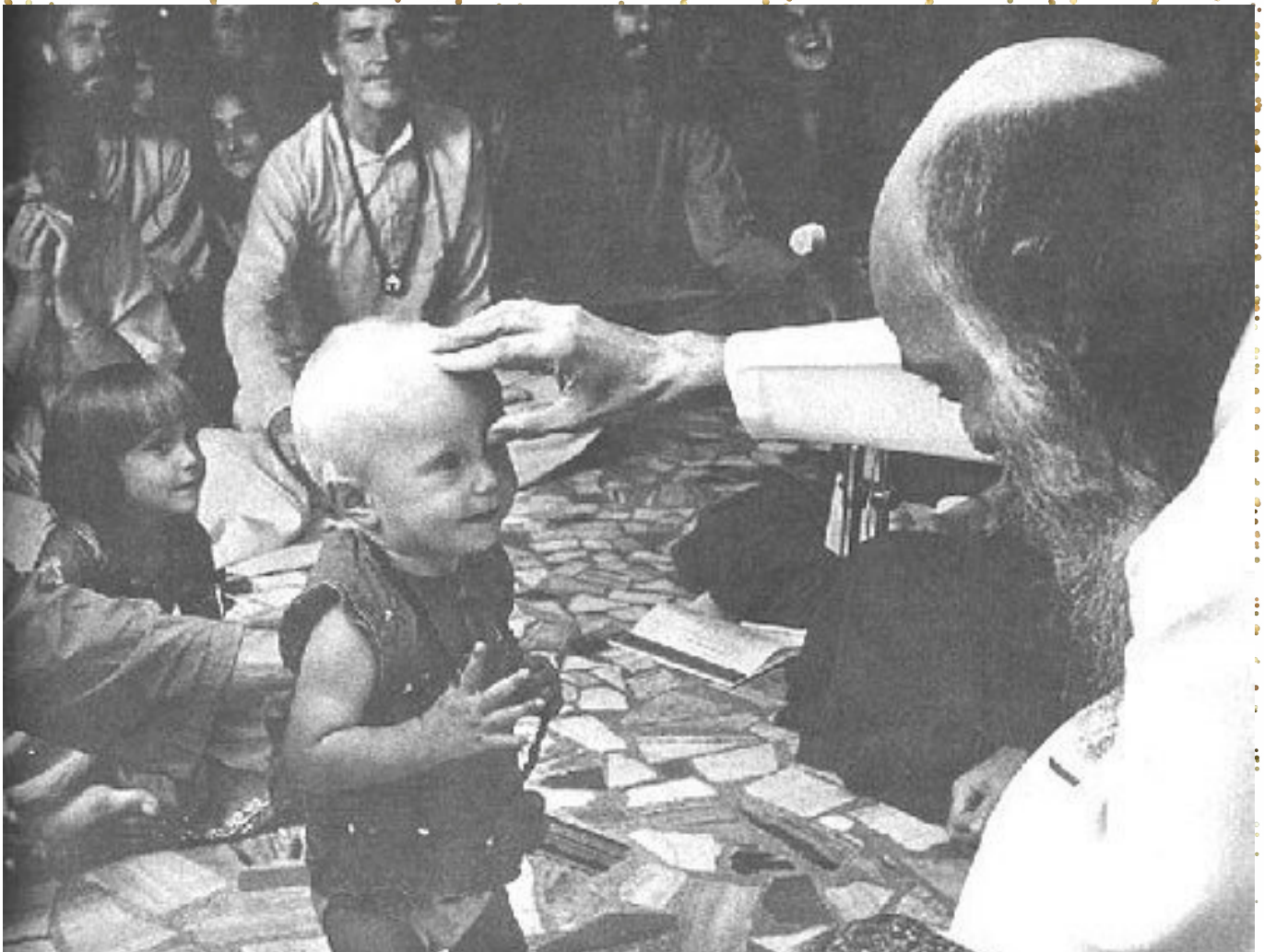
—Osho

How can a real saint squander generous donations to buy 93 Rolls Royces? How can a real saint happily receive copious amounts of luxurious gifts whilst there are other unfortunate beings starving in the world? To answer these questions we should first understand what a 'real saint' is. A real saint, a siddha or avadhuta, is somebody who has dissolved their conceptual mind. The root of the conceptual mind is the feeling of 'I' as it refers to an individual discrete identity.

Through the process of gradually weakening his entire framework of dense, self-centered thinking, the proto-saint eventually reaches the point where their sense of an individual, personal 'I' collapses. When this sense of self-identity collapses, a vast, wide-open space is revealed as the all-pervasive, unobstructed identity of himself and all beings. When there is no 'I,' there is also no 'you,' 'we,' or 'they.' The real identity that we discover is clearly perceived to be the only identity—the essential inner identity of everything that exists. Once we have become established in this perception, then we begin the process of complete dissolution, whereby we resolve all stray flows of thought into this space of self-less, thought-free openness. From this point of consolidation into divisionless space, our awareness then expands to become multidimensional, cosmic, and infinite. Thus, what we call the 'real saint' is the one who has completed this process and has become totally re-established in the substratum energy of existence. The real saint is not defined by what they do but who they are.

In the world of ignorance, of increasingly dense levels of shallowness, hypocrisy, and superficiality, beings are measured and judged by what they do. In the world of the fake, even a monster will be praised for engaging in an apparently charitable act—even if it was funded through violence and exploitation. In that world, the world of mainstream media, politics, and whatever else, we are judged on how we appear and not what we actually are. In that world, we can forget about the essence of existence because even the essence of who we are as individuals is something that is endlessly obscured and distorted. This is not the world of spirituality. This world, the world that is so prevalent on this earth today as a manifestation of the prevalent lower frequency consciousness, is a world where all possible natural, harmonious principles are reversed. In all scriptures that speak about hellish realms, such realms are described as hot, as basically burning. With the climate disasters that we see around us today, it is clear to see that this world is also morphing into a kind of hellish realm. This is the realm that ignorant, confused beings created for themselves through their violent, foolish actions.





The activity of the foolish is to live in such a way where you bury yourself a foot deeper every day, where you ceaselessly behave in such a way that causes your own soul to be fractured into increasingly more diminutive divisions. The work of the foolish and ignorant is ultimately akin to licking honey from a razor blade, and then, when the blood is drawn, to carry on licking in order to savor the sweetness of the honey at the expense of one's own lifeblood. This is an uncomfortable world for real saints to live in.

In these times, the real saints that emerge are often the mightiest. In the same way that a military unit would only send their finest soldier to lead a highly dangerous, risky mission, so too do the higher realms of existence still send forth the greatest souls to rescue beings who wish to raise themselves and carve for themselves a pleasant, harmonious existence on this burning earth before they become totally liberated from the need for karmic incarnation here. One characteristic of the fake world that has set this earth on fire is its cunningness. The great master, Osho, uses this word 'cunning' a lot to describe the activity of ignorance. To be cunning means to try and fabricate and manipulate life and others around us to conform to our limited desires and fears. If we want to manipulate, then we must be accustomed to the practice of lying, of obfuscating, of being one way but appearing another way.

However, in spiritual terms, the problem with these practices is that the more we cover and obscure, the further we stray from the natural space of existence that is totally naked, uncovered, spotless, and unobscured. In order to connect with this sphere, the sphere of reality as it is, we have to be vulnerable, simple, and childlike.

When children act like children, we call them as they are—as children. Depending on whether we have any light left in us, we will either laugh and smile at the wild, illogical, and beautifully playful behavior of children, or if we have hardened hearts, we will sneer a sneer that actually masks our own misery and rigidity. Such rigidity is actually a mask for fear. It is a mask that covers our own fear of being naked. The wildness of children is actually incredibly powerful because such behavior often manifests without the interference of fearful conceptual thinking. Any type of action that occurs without the medium of the conditioned mind is always powerful—it has an impact and it is also capable of putting a smile on the faces of those who are sensitive. Such is also the behavior of real saints.

When adults act like children, that is, in a playful and illogical way, we sometimes label them as crazy, mad, or eccentric. These are the words that we use when we see something that we do not understand, when we see something that we cannot box or tightly reify. What is an enlightened being? Internally he is ancientness itself—he is the primordial self of all beings. However, in expression, he can be as loose, carefree, playful, vulnerable, and innocent as a child. This vulnerability, this softness is a manifestation of wisdom. Why? Because the wise being understands that appearances are, in themselves, illusory.

Just as a gold ring, when it is smelted down and made into a necklace, doesn't cease to be gold, so too does this vast world-appearance never leave its essence—which is nameless, indescribable, and totally free and unconfined. The real saint dwells in that nameless space that is forever unaffected by the swirl of appearances. It is unaffected because there is no division within it; there is nothing to be affected by anything else. To perceive this and be established in it is supremely blissful. It is this bliss that gives the being, who may physically be even over the age of 100, a totally childlike demeanor and approach to life. Such a being need not be cunning because they know that there is nothing to achieve in this world and there is nothing to run away from.





When something comes to such a being, they accept it. When something leaves such a being, they let it go. Whether the real saint appears to live in luxury, or whether they appear to live in poverty, they neither chase appearances nor run away from them. You cannot judge the inner state of such a being by looking at their external life circumstances. Perfectly free beings, who are basically established in a state of absolute omnipotence, will often hide their inner state and power by appearing to be outwardly ignorant. This helps to keep immature, power-hungry seekers away.

Those who have the subtlety to feel their inner silence will come closer and will be granted the gifts that emerge spontaneously from the depths of that silence.

Spirituality is a path to the real. Lord Dattatreya's teaching in this age is to 'Be You,' to be totally natural on an individual level first so that we can begin to gradually relax into reality on deeper levels. This path cannot be walked with cunning. This path cannot be walked with an intelligence that thinks it already knows the way. This path must be walked with vulnerability, simplicity, openness, love, and humor.

This world, this life, is a dream. It is foolish to grasp at dreams as if they are real. Grasping is suffering itself. Let us loosen our grip. Let us loosen our control and cunning. When these things are loosened then we discover that we are looseness ourselves—we are the eternally untied knot. It cannot be tied because it has no parts. It is a mass of light-space. It is reality. It is perfection.

It is known only by the beautifully innocent. It is known only by the child-like ones. Great masters like Osho have known, understood, and lived this. It is visible in his eyes and in his words. Let us not imitate such beings though. Let us establish ourselves in the essence and then see how it manifests through our uniqueness. Each of us, like a flower, is totally unique, irreplaceable, and inimitable. May we sincere beings embrace and unify these two strands of all-pervasive beingness and beautiful God-given uniqueness.

Osho, *The True Name*, Volume 1, 175.



BALANCING ACT: INSIGHTS FROM OSHO'S TEACHINGS AND PROF. BRKOVIĆ ON ECOLOGY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND OUR SHARED FUTURE

By Isidora Bugarski, EBC Balkans

"The environment is a reflection of ourselves." In pondering the often-debated dichotomy between science and spirituality, one finds that at their core, there may be more common ground than initially perceived. Professor Duško Brković, a Ph.D. biologist, suggests that the essence of these two seemingly divergent paths may, in fact, converge.

The words of the revered sage, Osho, shed light on the intersection of humanity, nature, environment, and ecology: "Religion's crimes are many, innumerable, but the worst crime is that it has placed man at the center of existence. It has given the idea to the whole of humanity that the whole existence is for your use: you are God's greatest creation. And a man-oriented vision of existence is bound to create catastrophes in nature. It is bound to destroy the ecological balance; it is bound to give man the strange idea of an ego."

From the perspective of science, Professor Duško Brković, working at the Faculty of Agriculture in Čačak with a specialization in Applied Biology and a Ph.D. from the Faculty of Biology in Belgrade in Plant Ecology and Geography, provides diverse insights into this subject. His perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things, emphasizing that drawing closer to nature brings us closer not only to the environment but also to our fellow human beings and ourselves.

The pressing question emerges: Can humans be the architects of their own civilization's demise? When we scrutinize the global landscape, we may find cause for concern within our own species. Often, it seems that we

underestimate the profound implications of our Latin name, Homo Sapiens, where Sapiens signifies "sensible." Recent events, such as the pandemic and resulting lockdowns, have unveiled humanity's impact on the natural world. While evolution spans eons, our own presence on this planet is but a brief moment. The speed at which nature can rejuvenate itself when left undisturbed is striking, yet human intervention continues to escalate, amplifying the destructive forces we wield.

Many of us may feel insignificant in the face of such monumental global issues, yet is it possible for individuals to effect change? The adage "Think globally, act locally" has been echoed time and again. Every ecological action, no matter how small, holds significance. An act as seemingly inconsequential as discarding a small piece of paper, when multiplied by eight billion people, paints a sobering picture. So, what of more substantial actions? Every positive ecological endeavor, every act of activism, resonates not only with the environment but also with the individual.


Thus, we embark on a journey that explores the evolution of human consciousness, as Osho contemplates, "Every development and every evolutionary step in mankind's life has been opposed in the beginning as against nature." Is a return to nature the answer, or is it more complex?

Professor Brković parallels this to the gradual evolution of ecological awareness, which lags behind the rapid pace of technological advancement.

Economics and ecology share a prefix, but their true natures diverge. "Eco" signifies home, habitat, and house, yet in practice, economics and ecology often clash. Ecology demands investments that do not yield immediate returns, whereas economics prioritizes rapid profit, sometimes at the expense of the environment. At the heart of this issue lies personal gain and profit, with a mere 1% of the global population often dictating the fate of the rest.

In today's world, concealed beneath convenient labels, many substances detrimental to living beings lurk. Natural resources, such as wood, provide benefits when harvested sustainably. Yet, the urge for quick profit drives the wholesale destruction of forests, an illogical act from a global perspective. Our capacity to decimate vital ecosystems, like the Amazon rainforest, reflects a dire civilizational challenge—our collective lack of awareness





The solution, Professor Brković argues, begins at the grassroots level, ideally in kindergarten, but more crucially within the family unit. Children emulate their parents, and it is the responsibility of adults to set eco-conscious examples. Encounters with nature, facilitated by regular trips, kindle a love for the environment and an inherent need for its preservation. This holds particular significance for urban-dwelling children who may lack personal exposure to the natural world.

The 21st century has witnessed a burgeoning awakening among many individuals, as they adapt their lifestyles to align with their natural surroundings. Sustainability is the key, as urban life, while challenging to maintain without environmental impact, can strike a balance by utilizing resources without depletion, ensuring a viable future for generations to come.

As the debate between quality and quantity rages on, Professor Brković suggests a compromise. While conventional agricultural practices may be necessary to feed the masses, a conscious effort to prioritize organic foods whenever possible promotes both personal health and ecological well-being. Moreover, the preservation of heirloom plant species, naturally resistant to pests, safeguards quality and sustains agricultural diversity.

In conclusion, nature thrives without human intervention, while humans cannot survive without nature. Critical considerations encompass where we reside, how we coexist with our surroundings, and how we steward our environment. The momentary halt we experienced a few years ago should serve as a call to reconnect consciously with nature—to express gratitude for its provisions, take only what is necessary, and return what we can, all while respecting the sanctity of other forms of life. A balanced, nature-aligned mindset, in harmony with ancient principles, is our most promising path forward. The challenges of ecology and environmental protection know no borders, and as such, a unified global effort is needed to preserve our shared home.

JOURNEY INTO THE MYSTICAL: MY ENCOUNTER WITH NAGA SADHUS AND KHECARI MUDRA

Shail Rao-Rane
Yoga Therapist / Research Fellow

Flashback: A stoned and soul-searching ride spanning four states that culminated in a ceremony initiating me and a friend into a Naga community at the foot of the Himalayan Range in Gangotri. Time has done little to fade my memories of the 2013 journey.

Commonly covered in shades of saffron, their firm faces marked with religious ash and emitting an unmatched detachment from their surroundings, sadhus or sannyasis have been a part of the Indian subcontinent for approximately as long as Hinduism has. These Sadhu ascetics maintain a unique stance in Indian civilization. They are deeply revered and looked up to for guidance and blessings.

Naga Sadhus, recognized for their divinity, execute severe penances by pushing their bodies beyond the verge and stay naked with ash smudged on them as a fraction of their pursuits to attain spiritual growth, always an allure for common people. The belief of these Sadhus is not modern; rather, it dates back thousands of years. It traces its legacy from currencies and symbols of Mohenjo-Daro, where Naga Sadhus were portrayed respecting Lord Shiva in PashupatiNath mode. Naga Sadhus dwell in Akharas or the Himalayas and generally journey through civilization during the Mahakumbh carnival in India to take part in the sacred dip.





An insightful week with the Naga community still lingers as one of my craziest travel experiences. After all, it's not routine to chill out with the dreaded ash-smeared holy men, let alone eat and sleep with them for days together. That I had dumped my casual wear for saffron clothes to be and feel like one of them might have helped too.

The way I learned Khecari mudra from Mahant Nomi Giri, Ganga Baug, Gangotri, was to fold the tongue backward and rest the tip of the tongue against the soft part of the palate. That is how nearly all present-day yoga instructors teach Khecari, and it is challenging enough for most beginners. When I first tried it, it felt awkward, and I was unable to do it because my tongue would not reach back far enough.

Mahant Nomi Giri claims that the folded tongue stimulates pressure points in the back of the palate. He writes that the mudra has extensive health benefits and that the saliva produced during Khecari can remove the feeling of hunger and thirst. As for myself, though I found the raja yoga form of the mudra pleasant, I never could feel any significant impact on my mental state or my energy. But I knew many other methods that had an apparent influence. That Khecari would be the most potent mudra was not coherent with my own experience. But I accepted that I might not be subtle enough to perceive its benefits. I still need some questions answered; still have some loose ends to be tied up although I sometimes wonder if it may just be better not to meddle with things I don't really understand.

Khecari Mudra & The Supreme Reality

Khecari mudra is an "essential hatha yoga mudra", very well-documented in the traditional texts, and yet currently seldom known in its advanced form.

Khechari (Kha Or Khe in Sanskrit) means space or the supreme reality, i.e., the Brahman.

Khechari Mudra helps the practitioner move into the blissful infinite consciousness of the supreme reality. It is considered to be the king of all gestures and enables yogis to reach higher states of consciousness.

Khecari Mudra can be practiced in conjunction with other yoga practices like Ujjayi Pranayama, Shambhavi Mudra, and other meditation techniques. It can be practiced with pranayama and Sambhavi Mudra by gazing at the eyebrow center, symbolizing the turning of the mind inwards.

It is said that when practitioners enter deeper states of meditation, Khechari prevents the air from coming out of the lungs, thus allowing for oxygen retention in the lungs.

Khecari mudra as described in the Sanskrit yoga texts Swatmarama, the author of the 14th-century Sanskrit text Hatha Yoga Pradipika, recommends achieving Khecari by gradually cutting off the frenulum linguae using a sharp blade. He writes that it will take six months to sever the frenulum linguae entirely.

The Anatomy of Khecari Mudra

Khecari Mudra consists of turning the tongue backward, placing its inferior part against the palate, and pulling the tip backward and upwards as if wanting to enter the nasal fossae. The mudra stimulates pressure points in the back of the palate and has extensive health benefits.

The raja yoga and the hatha yoga forms of Khecari Mudra differ in their approach to the frenulum linguae. In the raja yoga form, practitioners do not cut the frenulum linguae, while in the hatha yoga form, it is gradually cut to achieve advanced stages of the mudra.



Hatha Yoga Form of Kechari Mudra with cutting frenulum linguae (Stage three and four)

Taking a sharp, smooth, and clean instrument, of the shape of a cactus leaf, the frenulum of the tongue should be cut a little at a time. Then rock salt and yellow myrobalan (both powdered) should be rubbed in. At the end of six months, the frenulum of the tongue will be completely cut.

As the practice evolves, the tongue will reach further forward, and practitioners can eventually insert it into their nostrils, one at a time.

The Nectar of Immortality

In hatha yoga texts, it is said that there is a cosmic fluid called amrit, the nectar of immortality, which drips from the head down through the body and is consumed in manipura chakra. Khecari mudra stimulates its flow, and practitioners may experience it as a sweet taste in the mouth during deep meditation.

For further insights into this mudra, it is recommended to read Yogi Paramahansa Yogananda's book "Essence of Kriya Yoga," which explores powerful meditation techniques as part of the science of Kriya Yoga.

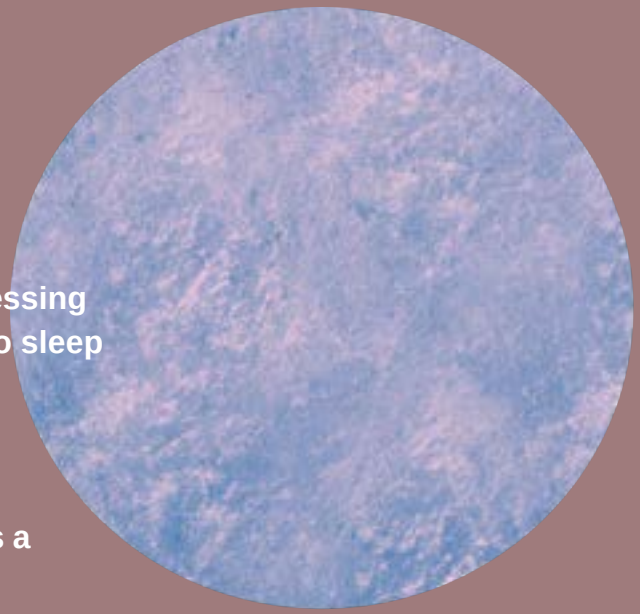
STAŠA'S REMINDER FOR BETTER SLEEP

By Staša Mišić

Bad sleep can have various negative impacts on your physical and mental well-being. Several factors can contribute to bad sleep or poor sleep quality. These factors can vary from person to person, but here are some common causes of bad sleep:

- Stress and anxiety
- Depression
- Poor sleep hygiene - irregular sleep schedules, consuming caffeine or heavy meals close to bedtime, and using electronic devices before sleep.
- Environmental factors - noise, light, an uncomfortable mattress or pillow, and an unsuitable sleep environment.
- Medical conditions
- Medications
- Substance use - alcohol, nicotine, certain drugs, caffeine, and stimulant use.
- Shift work and jet lag - irregular work schedules, especially those involving night shifts.
- Age - older adults might experience more fragmented sleep and wake up more frequently during the night.
- Screen time - the blue light emitted by screens on electronic devices can suppress the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate sleep.
- Inconsistent sleep patterns - staying up very late on weekends and then trying to return to a regular schedule during the week.
- Digestive issues - eating heavy or spicy foods before bed.
- Lack of physical activity - a sedentary lifestyle can negatively impact sleep. Regular exercise can help promote better sleep, but intense exercise close to bedtime can have the opposite effect.
- Excessive napping





Yoga can help improve sleep in several ways by addressing both physical and mental factors that can contribute to sleep difficulties. Benefits of yoga that can improve sleep:

- Stress reduction
- Quiets the mind, reduces racing thoughts, and creates a sense of calm, making it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- Physical relaxation – can translate into a more relaxed state of mind conducive to sleep.
- Stimulates parasympathetic nervous system
- Improves circulation – which can have a calming effect on the body and mind.
- Enhances respiratory function - proper breathing can reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, leading to better sleep.
- Hormonal balance - which is often elevated in those with chronic stress.
- Body awareness – can help you notice physical tensions or discomfort that might be interfering with your sleep.
- Promotes overall health - when your body is healthier overall, it's better equipped to handle stress and support better sleep.

It's important to note that while yoga can be a valuable tool for improving sleep, individual results may vary. For better results, a consistent yoga routine is crucial, especially if done in the evening, as it can signal to your body that it's time to wind down and prepare for sleep.

It's also not a quick fix; consistent practice over time is more likely to yield positive effects. If you have chronic sleep issues or other underlying health concerns, it's a good idea to consult a healthcare professional for guidance. Here are some yoga poses and practices that can help you achieve better sleep:



- Uttansana
- Balasana
- Janu Sirsasana
- Viparitakarni
- Halasana
- Pranayama (breathing exercises) - deep breathing exercises or alternate nostril breathing can help calm the mind and prepare the body for sleep.





HAR HAR MAHADEV OMKAR PARKIRAMA

By - Sathya Shivakumar Global Member HSTD

Omkareshwar derives its name from Om -The primordial sound and Lord Shiva as the source of Om.

Situated about three hours' drive from Indore, Omkareshwar and Mahakaaleshwar hold significant religious importance. After visiting Mahakaal in Ujjain, we arrived at Omkareshwar in the evening. As we strolled along the bridge, we witnessed the mesmerizing sunset over the Narmada River. The streets were lined with vendors selling large papads, leaving us wondering who would consume it all. It was quite a surprise as we turned around to find our father feeding the papads to the cows. A Panda(priest), offered to guide us for a darshan of the main deity at Omkareshwar. We passed through the bustling market and ascended the steps leading to the shrine. The air resounded with the chiming of bells, and a massive crowd chanted in unison, "Har Har Mahadev!" While we waited outside, we absorbed the vibrant atmosphere during the Arathi. After the Arathi we were let in for the darshan. Stepping into the inner chamber, we pressed our heads against the glass enclosure that housed the Shiva linga. In that moment, a sudden sense of surrender engulfed us, and our thoughts echoed, "Shiva, you are our ultimate refuge!" Those precious moments spent inside the sanctum were a reward for enduring the wait and the crowd. Upon returning to our hotel room, we shared our experiences, knowing another interesting aspect awaited us - "The Omkar Parikrama!"—an opportunity for reflection and a genuine connection with the Omkareshwar pilgrimage.

Omkareshwar Parikrama refers to the sacred act of circumambulation around Omkar island. The following morning, we embarked on the Omkar Parikrama—an 8 km walk around the Mandhata hill, which, along with the river, forms the shape of Om. Excitement filled the air as Radha and I decided to undertake the parikrama together, supporting each other while capturing our dance videos.

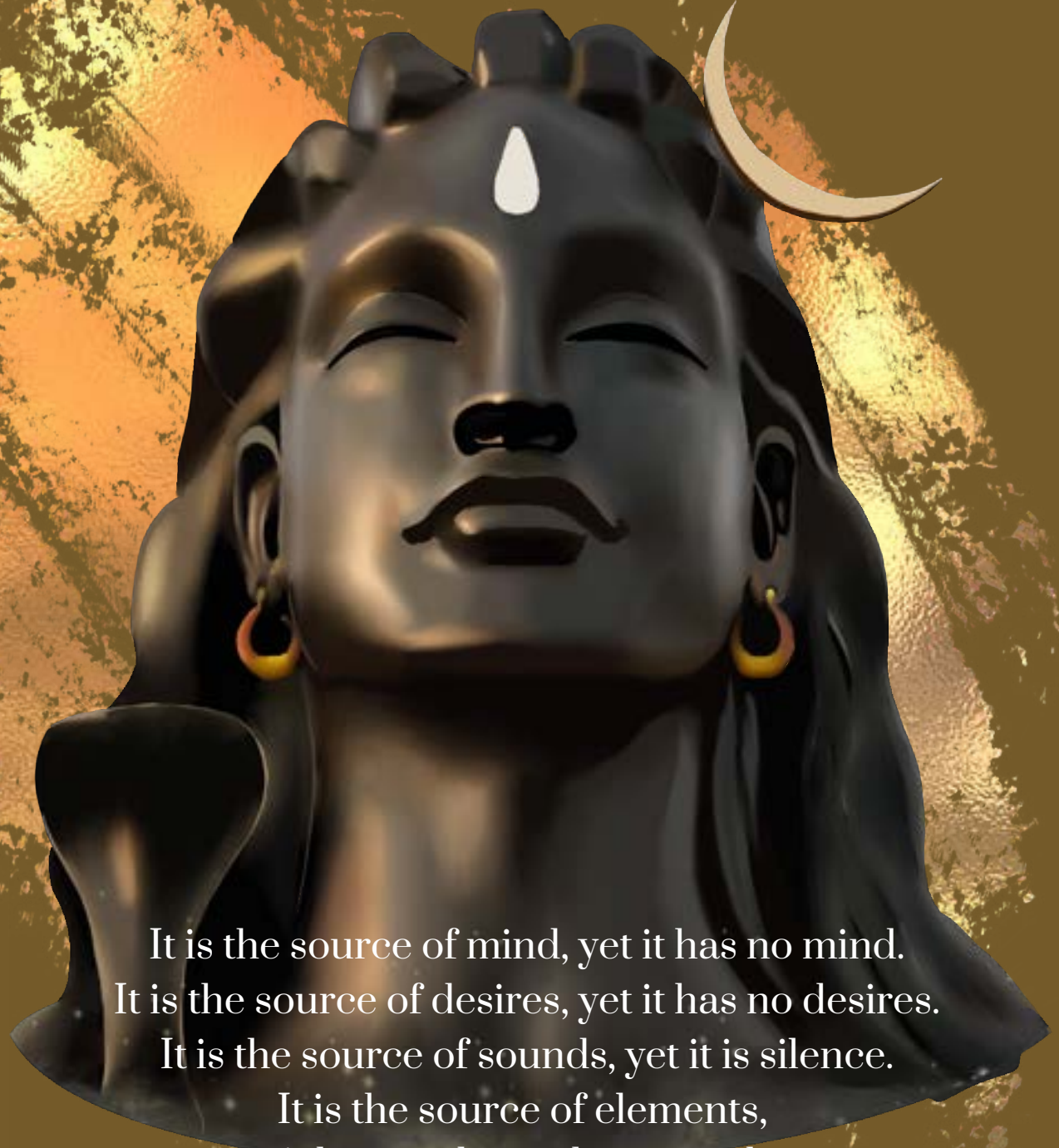


Our parents chose to accompany each other on the journey, while the children and others opted for the boat parikrama. We were to be the “soul mates” for the parikrama.

Omkar holds a special significance in the life of Sri Adi Shankara. It was here that he found his Guru, Govinda Bhagavath Pada. Leaving Kaladi in search of his Guru, Adi Shankara arrived at Omkar and discovered Govinda Bhagavath Pada, deeply absorbed in Samadhi. The Guru inquired about the person standing before the cave, and in a spontaneous flow of verses, Adi Shankara explained that he was not any of the material identification and indeed the “self”!

We were fortunate to encounter a joyful gypsy named Rani, who graciously volunteered to lead us to the starting point of the Parikrama. There were two routes available—a short parikrama around the temple itself and another one through the village. Surprisingly, even some locals were unaware of these routes. During our exploration, our mother called and informed us about the Gita Parikrama and the cave of Govinda Bhagawad pada. However, our attempts to inquire about them proved futile as no one seemed to be aware of their existence. Determined to find answers, we approached a pandit with our queries. Interestingly, his name happened to be Govinda. We expressed our desire to locate the Govinda Bhagwat pada cave and requested him to accompany us throughout the entire parikrama. Although initially hesitant due to his usual role of guiding people solely to the temple, he eventually agreed to join us on this unique journey.

Our adventurous parikrama began with a visit to the Kedareshwar Temple. Tranquility filled the air. The sacred Shiva Linga was ensconced in the inner chamber. Our gaze was drawn to a magnificent statue of Lord Shiva inside the temple, evoking the words of Mohanji and deepening our connection to the divine essence of Lord Shiva within our hearts.



It is the source of mind, yet it has no mind.
It is the source of desires, yet it has no desires.
It is the source of sounds, yet it is silence.

It is the source of elements,
yet it has no dependency on them.

It is the source of time, yet it is timeless.

It is all space, yet it is unfathomable space-less space,
complete and full, beyond fullness.

It is the soul of the fire, water, air, earth, space, suns and
galaxies, yet it is independent from all of it.

It never gives or takes.

It is never born or has death.

It is expansion, bliss and beauty.

It is unexplainable.

It is Shiva

~ MOHANJI

After cherishing a few precious moments at the shrine, our journey continued. The path of the parikrama unfolded before us, adorned with picturesque landscapes of flowing rivers, majestic hill sides, and the lively presence of birds, monkeys, and squirrels. Suddenly, a melodious voice reached our ears, resonating deeply within our hearts. As we approached the source, we discovered a young boy immersed in reading verses from the Ramayana. Completely absorbed in his recitation, he seemed oblivious to the world around him. Touched by his devotion, we offered a humble dakshina as a token of appreciation and gratitude before continuing on our way.

There were numerous shrines along the way - Hanuman, Devi Mandir and the enchanting Radha Krishna Kutir, to name a few. Our eyes were captivated by a baby Krishna swaying on a swing outside a cottage, beckoning our attention. It felt like the perfect setting to offer a sacred hymn to Lord Sri Krishna, the eternal protector of the universe. The tranquil ambience of the village resonated deeply with us, and we were touched by the warm hospitality of a village woman who graciously invited us to record our song in her humble abode. Her joy at having a dancer choose her cottage as the ideal location for this divine offering melted our hearts and deepened our connection to the spiritual essence of the place.

