

Osho and the Sad Tale of Celebration



Life is a moment to celebrate, to enjoy. Make it fun, a celebration, and then you will enter the temple. The temple is not for the long-faced, it has never been for them. Look at life – do you see sadness anywhere? Have you ever seen a tree depressed? Have you seen a bird anxiety-ridden? Have you seen an animal neurotic? No, life is not like that, not at all. Only man has gone wrong somewhere, and he has gone wrong somewhere because he thinks himself to be very wise, very clever. Your cleverness is your disease. Don't be too wise. Always remember to stop; don't go to the extreme. A little foolishness and a little wisdom is good, and the right combination makes you a buddha.

— *I Celebrate Myself*

Rajneesh, who called himself 'Bhagavan' (god) and changed his name to Osho at the end of his life, was a great speaker and storyteller. He started out as a professor of philosophy and scholar of spirituality, and probably read all the books in the world on the subject of enlightenment. A rebel at heart, he challenged the dishonesty of the Indian traditions of sexual repression, hypocrisy, and phony spirituality. His charisma and oratory skills attracted a great number of Western seekers who were particularly drawn to his ideas about emotional release, celebration of life, and sexual freedom and indulgence. His personal role model was Gurdjieff, and like Gurdjieff, he was considered a very controversial and provocative figure.



It is difficult to comment on Osho's teaching, because he did not really have one. He created a kind of cult out of his own persona, while generating the deception that he had no ego and was not intending to make anyone dependent on him as a master. He did not have a teaching – he had a philosophy of life. It was this philosophy that, for many, became a substitute for a true inner path.

Regardless of the nature of his legacy, Osho was undeniably a spiritual genius on some level, and his contribution to humanity cannot be ignored. With his spiritual techniques, which included dynamic meditations to induce emotional catharsis, he helped many people free themselves from years of repression and excessive self-control. He invented ingenious therapies and created an original concept of life based on laughter, celebration, and the affirmation of existence. And yet despite his high intelligence and his countless volumes of commentaries on the subject of spirituality, he did not manage to create a path to enlightenment of his own. His followers were lost when they came to him and lost when they left.

Osho is well-known for his extraordinarily skillful and poetic interpretations of the teachings of others. He commented on virtually every teacher or master there has been, both known and obscure. At the start of his career, his commentaries were mostly very positive, but later on they became increasingly antagonistic. For instance, in the beginning he spoke of Jesus as an awakened being, but later on he called him an average healer. Similarly, he deeply admired Buddha initially, but later called him a sexually repressed monk who followed an anti-life philosophy. He had the right to change his mind, and on many occasions his later insights were right on the mark. However, while there is nothing inherently wrong with him saying such things, he lost at least half of his followers as a result. People do not like it when a spiritual teacher criticizes other teachings, because it upsets their sentimental concept of spirituality in which all teachings and teachers must be pure and true.

It is difficult to reach a clear conclusion about Osho, as his was not a black and white case. Krishnamurti called him a “criminal” and described Rajneeshpuram as “a concentration camp under the dictatorship of enlightenment.” Osho's teaching helped many people, but failed almost as many. He used the word ‘enlightenment’ as a device to promote his authoritarian reign without any intention of helping anyone else become self-realized. Only he could be realized, while his followers were meant to worship him from their lower levels of development. Still, his followers did not really seem to mind, as long as they could celebrate and have lots of sex and fun.



Osho did not know how to teach meditation, and gave people very basic vipassana-like methods, such as looking at the mind and being a ‘watcher on the hill’.

Meditation means to watch the movement of thoughts in the mind. Just be an observer, as if you are standing by the side of the road watching the traffic – no judgment, no evaluation, no condemnation, no appreciation – just pure observation. As you become more and more accustomed to observation, a strange phenomenon starts happening. If you are ten percent aware, that much energy has moved from the mind process to the observer; now the mind has only ninety percent energy available. A moment comes... you have fifty percent of energy. And your energy goes on growing as mind goes on losing its energy. The traffic becomes less and less and less, and you become more and more and more. Your witnessing self goes on increasing in integrity, expanding; it becomes stronger and stronger. And the mind goes on becoming weaker and weaker: ninety percent observer and ten percent mind, ninety-nine percent observer and only one percent mind. One hundred percent observer and the mind disappears, the road is empty; the screen of the mind becomes completely empty, nothing moves. There is only the observer.”

—*Secret of Disciplehood*

This is a very inaccurate description of the meditation process. Osho confuses the witness with the observer, attention with consciousness, and the absence of thoughts, or empty mind, with enlightenment. He paints a dreadful picture of meditation in which, at its culmination, only the observer remains. It is difficult to imagine anything more depressing than being left with nothing but the observer; it would be better to remain lost in the mind. Osho entirely fails to see the fact that one does not transcend the mind by making the observer more powerful, but rather by awakening its inner subjectivity of conscious me. One cannot understand meditation without understanding the multilayered nature of consciousness. It is curious that most people use the term ‘observer’ without understanding what it actually means – and Osho was no exception. He justified his unsophisticated approach to meditation, and adherence to dynamic ones, by saying that Western seekers are too emotionally confused and repressed to be able to meditate. But the question is, who isn’t? Are Indian or other Eastern seekers more balanced and mature? Not really.



Osho's dynamic meditation methods and various therapeutic techniques were obviously very positive, and they helped many people experience a moderate level of improvement. But there are also big limitations to such approaches. They cannot bring true transformation or help one to enter real meditation. Certainly, if one jumps up and down for an hour (as in his dynamic meditation) and then sits down, one will experience a level of quiet, but this is merely the quietness of being exhausted, not of coming closer to oneself. These techniques can be used to release repressed energies and suspend the ordinary mind, but they cannot make one more conscious. Osho was telling his sannyasins that they were all Buddhas, the coming new men. Unfortunately, they were Buddhas who had not realized their pure nature – Buddhas of fantasy.

The real seeker of truth never seeks truth. On the contrary, he tries to clean himself of all that is untrue, inauthentic, insincere – and when his heart is ready, purified, the guest comes. You cannot find the guest, you cannot go after him. He comes to you; you just have to be prepared. You have to be in a right attitude.

— *Osho's Life – An Anthology of Osho's Life From His Own Books, Osho World*

People like to listen to this kind of guidance, as it all sounds very pleasant. The problem is that, other than producing emotional elevation and spiritual ease or relaxation, it does not help anyone. It is the kind of poetic banality that prevents seekers from entering the path in a real way and taking responsibility for their own evolution. This passage resembles Krishnamurti's phrase that meditation is like a breeze entering one's open window. But waiting for either guest or breeze is just a way of avoiding working to find the host inside.

Osho's talks and books are filled with words of amazing beauty. One can almost live and breathe these words, especially the parts about love, which no one tires of hearing. It may all bring consolation, but it will not bring transformation of any kind. In this sense, beauty becomes a lie, as in the following passage:

This is what enlightenment is all about – a deep understanding that there is no problem. Then, with no problem to solve, what will you do? Immediately you start living. You will eat, you will sleep, you will love, you will work, you will have a chit-chat, you will sing, you will dance – what else is there to do?



— *Ancient Music in the Pines, Talk #2*

Is this really what enlightenment is about: to understand that there is no problem? The problem with this is that there *is* a problem. The problem of ignorance is real, not imaginary. An even deeper problem is that no one knows how to solve it, so they surrender to someone who claims to have the solution. There is a kind of a twisted irony if this teacher of enlightenment's solution is to say there is no problem.

The concept of celebration was the bread and butter of Osho's philosophy of life. This concept would have great value if we did not live in the dimension of suffering, where people are simply unhappy. They are not unhappy because they just don't know how to have fun, but because they are lost, depressed, wounded, and locked in spiritual ignorance. How can one celebrate if one is not well, if one is simply unconscious and disconnected from one's pure nature? If one forces oneself to celebrate even though one lives in pain, this is not real; it is a pretense. Then one begins to live a lie, and this lie becomes one's philosophy, a bogus affirmation of life. Celebration in the state of ignorance is no more than self-deception, and insincere laughter is a hysterical response to one's own dishonesty. Forcing oneself to celebrate even though one is deeply unhappy is in fact spiritually harmful, because our soul uses our suffering as her main motivation for entering the path and seeking freedom through the realization of our pure nature. Life is indeed a celebration of bliss and beauty, but only for one who has reached a state of true peace and freedom.

It is difficult to determine what Osho's own realization was because he continued evolving throughout his life. It is also quite likely he did not fully understand it himself. His original awakening was triggered by various tantric practices. He did not share much of what really happened because he preferred to inflate his extraordinary awakening out of proportion and conjure up yet another of his amazing stories. Attaining enlightenment can make a great story, especially when taken out of the context of our ordinary life. Osho's mind was very dynamic, and he was constantly exploring and learning. At the end, he opened more to Zen energy, both in himself and in others, partly for the purpose of grounding his followers and activating the energy of being.

Another reason why it is difficult to determine the level of Osho's realization is the relativity of the term itself. He was certainly in a deep state, but this does not mean that he was complete. His mind was confused, and in spite of having many good qualities, it seems that he was not completely sane. The question-mark over his sanity could have its roots in imbalances caused by awakened kundalini



energy, combined with the madness of teaching thousands of euphoric and unconscious seekers. An excessive use of Valium and laughing gas also took its toll. By wanting to be a world teacher, Osho lost his way and became caught in the trap of his own net of illusion. Although he was called the “master of masters” by his followers, he simplified enlightenment into a series of poetic generalizations. While his generalizations on enlightenment could be grasped by the average follower, they made it impossible for any of them to actually reach it.

Osho, like Krishnamurti, was a teacher whose function was not so much to work with individuals but to inspire and provoke the masses. Osho certainly made a difference, and he did inspire numerous seekers in their spiritual quests. His discourses included many profound and insightful commentaries on various teachings and scriptures. In this way, they were highly educational. His main role was to open a great number of people to spirituality and to introduce them to the basic concepts of meditation and therapy. His voice helped a lot of people to become free of sexual and emotional repression and to get in touch with their basic inner silence. His greatest legacies were his inspiring talks, which can awaken seekers’ enthusiasm to explore the world of enlightenment. His ashram was a unique place of beauty and a safe environment for many to begin their healing and adventure with dance and meditation. And yet, in the end, he left those who truly sought clarity on the great matter of awakening empty-handed.

Blessings,

Anadi

For a full glossary of terminology please visit our website www.anaditeaching.com/glossary