

Tea in the Samovar

A couple of years ago, a friend was emailing me spiritual quotes by 'Osho'. I had no idea who or what this was (a brand of tarot cards?) and somehow it seemed too creamy dictatorial and contradictory for me to ingest so I asked her to kindly stop sending me these little 'diatribes'. Now, I am here in Pune, India, and it only clicked yesterday that the Osho in quotes and the Osho who established the Osho Multiversity and the Osho Commune International are the same being. Oh...

I came to India to study at the Ramamani Memorial Iyengar Yoga Institute. Word gets out about where to eat, where to drink coffee and most importantly where to relax poolside on the weekends or in the afternoons. Apparently there is this fabulous pool at Osho, in Koreagon Park, a lush oasis on the other side of town. Just 20 minutes away in a rickshaw and 30 rupees (equivalent to 75 cents). The only things you have to do to get in and get a pass to the pool are wear maroon robes, maroon swim suits, take an AIDS test and pay \$20 to attend a 6 hour mandatory orientation.

If one goes to the German Bakery here and has chai and apple strudel or that 'safe' washed salad, you can see the Europeans smoking, sipping something in their maroon smocks. You know Osho is nearby. It sets the stage for what is inside the 'compound', now called a resort. And so last Sunday, while my friend Carolyn was back up at the mountain spa receiving ayurvedic treatments, I coughed the rupees for 'participation day' at Osho. I wasn't sure I wanted to even go through all this, taking myself away from yoga practice, dharma practice, just for a few hours at the pool, but I can say it was worth every rupee, not because I am now over at Osho and have given up everything else (which is not the case, don't worry), but because it is so splendidly an art piece in the making for my somewhat skeptical eyes (please pardon me in advance if you are into Osho the Bhagavan...I don't mean any harm). When I entered Osho last Sunday morn, I felt like I was entering 'Logan's Run', the movie (from 1973) where everyone has these diamond shaped implants in their palms and when they start blinking red, at the age of 30, you must expire.

I approached the Osho resort gates, tall dark black granite, encapsulating 40 acres of cultivated beautiful foliage and flora. Waterfalls. A large line of Indian men already waiting for the 9 a.m. visitor's tour. I proceeded past them to the Welcome Center for my AIDS test. The technician saw my Buddha necklace and we expressed mutual admiration for the Dalai Lama ("he's my teacher too," the technician whispered.) Smiling...oy. What am I doing here, really? I borrowed a maroon dress from one of the employees and then quickly had to catch up with the induction group, already at the 'plaza', next to Buddha hall and the bookshop, which all looks like a cross between the entrance at Busch Gardens (for those of us who remember them in LA - SF Valley) and some pyramidal landing deck. We gathered in front of a computer to look at the website. Our leaders were a red-head smoker voiced British woman in her fifties and a skinny bearded and tattooed French Canadian guy, who winked at each other frequently and seemed a bit jaded with the whole schtick of leading introductory tours of Osho, or so I assumed. Participants for that day included a very tall elder Sikh who looked like a grey lion, hair

down, beard uncovered, an Indian man with his father, a female Gujrati devotee, and 3 Italians. The Sikh and Italians had individual translators so we had 3 people constantly talking over each other, again all in maroon.

Dorky is a word that comes to mind for me. But what was to come would even feel dorkier. After being presented with a multitude of multi-iversity trainings, and meditations on the bulletin boards we could attend with titles like 'Awakening to Love', 'Born Again', 'Beyond Family', 'Co-dependency and the Art of Relating', 'Diving into the Center', 'Humaniversity', to 'Primal painting', for extra fees, we followed our leaders past the Gibberish room, the Osho packing dept., the Cyber Center, the Cappucino Cafe to the residential area, where over 200 people live and work, those who have come like our leaders, to spend months or years helping run things. The French Canadian (FC) guy had given up his job in Montreal 2 years ago to play bass for the evening gatherings here; the British woman (B) has been coming back for the past 15 years, for many months at a time. We passed 'Naropa' and 'Tilopa' named buildings, black granite facades with black triangular placards, why black? Mystery, the void, darkness.

So you must be wondering who Osho is...I still don't completely know. Perhaps you know more. I do know he is no longer. Now the resort is run by 3 lawyers from the West. Not much was told to us about Osho the Bhagavan. But those of us who recall the happenings in Oregon in the 70s with Rajneesh and the eventual dismantling of the compound there...yep, same guy. He changed his name, they changed the color of the robes (from orange), he started advocating brahmacharya (correct sexual conduct), and got into Buddhism. That's all I know except that I also am now familiar with his voice, and I see a man smiling from the OSHO bookstore, wearing a sparkling knitted skull cap, white long beard, a vest/costume from the 'Star Wars' trilogy, looking like the Liberace of spirituality.

Oh yeah, back to dorky. So it's 9:30 am and we're led up stairs in the residential area to a practice room where Madonna is booming, 'Ray of Light' steaming up the walls, and we're asked to start dancing. Let it all be free, no a/c, some stinky b.o., wafting through the room. Ah well. I started giggling, looking down at my maroon fabric, and then reluctantly became a whirling der-jew-ish. My anti-social mind went 'ew' but I felt like I had a mission, to get to the pool, and to tell a funny story, if nothing else. Sweat broke, we stopped and then we sat down in a semi-circle and were introduced to various meditation techniques, all trademarked by the way. We started partnering..."you are now the papaya and she is the guava". For 'Chaotic breathing', you shake your head, exhale without structures, rhythm, control. Eyes are closed. The 'Guava' watches. Then she gets to imitate you. Then you explode, scream, hold nothing back while jumping around. Eyes closed. I peeked. Was the Sikh screaming too? He was actually smiling and being hardly audible. FC looked like he was at a soccer match and B looked blissful. Then came 'hoo-ing'. You raise your hands to the ceiling, keep arms overhead and jump up and down, shouting 'hoo, hoo'...landing on your heels so that the "sound hammers deeply into your sex center". Then comes the freeze portion, noticing, witnessing what is happening (to your sex center?). Then more Madonna. This whole thing is called 'Osho Dynamic Meditation' and it happens daily at like 6am at the resort. Rules were given. B

told us where the smoking areas were, repeatedly. You could be in silence by wearing a 'silence tag'. And hugging was not mandatory anymore. You make a sign with your arms of 'no thanks' if you see someone coming towards you with widespread wingspan arms ready to plunge at you. It's perfectly okay to bow, dip, or run the other direction, they said.

Then came the mask exercise. To see how we wear our personality, culture, conditions. Also trademarked. So out came the wigs and Halloween masks. FC decided we should all take on the mannerisms of the British and so we were to meet and greet each other reservedly, with the utmost fake politeness. I looked like Porky the Pig with gray hair, saying 'hello' guardedly to 'Casper the Friendly Ghost', and other 'cats'. Then as if in the finale of 'Chorus Line', we gathered at the full length mirror and on a count of 3, unveiled our true selves in silence, taking off our masks to stare, gaze and gawk at our wondrous own countenances. Oh gosh, getting old, I look like my mother, lift the cheeks, there 'me' again, now can we break into song?

For lunch, we disbanded and I ran into another Iyengar yoga student from Australia who's been lulled by the loosey goosey ness of Osho. We ate together in the gardens, off black plastic trays with triangular and diamond shaped plates. I wolfed down the organic spread and tried to talk with James but his eyes wandered constantly, to pleasant female beings strolling around, "it's been a long time", he said and laughed. "Me too..." uh...Oh there's the pool; gotta finish my food. We were to be in the 'practice room' right after lunch. Music thumping again. Oh no. I was ready for supine digestive yoga poses, not dancing. "You're always stretching" said FC to me, referring to my inclination to get into twists and Uttanasana at any free moment. I just wanted a bolster and strap. The thought of flailing my arms again at full stomach made me a bit cranky. But again...it's all about the pool. So now it was time for 'kundalini' meditation™. Wearing a maroon eye mask, we were told to shake, shake, shake. Then dance, then lie down, then sit in meditation. We then did Gibberish, where you speak in another made up language, and get your 'garbage' out, but you must be so loud as to hear anyone else's garbage. Wait, am I not at some experimental voice class at Cal Arts right now??? (JOKE!!!).

FC and B spoke to us about the need to free ourselves of conditions, that Osho is a place to come to and let go of your 'stuff', stuff that inhibits, that makes you suffer. So you can deeply experience the energies of your life, so you can touch silence, find 'eternity, the deathlessness'. Even Vipassana (meditation from the Theravadan Buddhist tradition) is taught here. James had signed up for a 3 week Vipassana course but it's not anything like what I've done. The first week, they laugh, the second they cry and then the third, they sit in concentration. Then I heard Osho's voice, smooth, slippery, calculated. FC & B were introducing 'white robe', a nightly gathering where you change into white robe, freshly scrubbed, and go with everyone else into this large tent for closed eyes dancing, 3 shouts of 'OSHO, OSHO, OSHO', gibberish, falling down 'like a bag of rice', drumbeats, then a video of Osho is shown.

"My speaking is one of my devices for meditation. Speaking has never been used this way before...I speak not to give you a message but to stop your mind functioning." So

when I heard Osho talk of tea coming out of the SSSSSsssss-aaaaaaa-mmmm - ovar, my mind didn't stop functioning, it started rolling its internal eyes. Hanging onto the 's', I moved back to my torso and spine. Breath. I just couldn't claim that this was 'excellent'. It's okay, I thought, good for some but not for me. Osho's efforts weren't resonating with me. I only hoped it was helping others, to be free of suffering in some way, even if temporary and happier. I cannot judge. I just wondered where it all leads here, what about the ethics, mutual responsibility, what happens after we dump the garbage...landfills? Gestalt is important...I'm just hoping kindness and patience and generosity also arise...otherwise, as Geshe Gyeltsen laughs, 'we are flying on airplanes with holes in them, no good, not safe...can't get to the other shore'. Birds need two wings to fly.

FC caught me several times when he asked for feedback about the meditations. "How was it?" he stared at me. Fine. "Always fine, eh?" he seemed irritated with me. I can't qualify it. I hear Ruth, one of my teachers, talking about 'My' meditation. We want it to be so precious that we try to shut out what we 'think' disturbs us. Impossible. But many try. It comes, it goes. Fine. Still see the effort, still keep sitting. Not just for you but for all living beings.

Finally, the afternoon portion was ending. FC asked if we had any questions. An Italian gal asked what is meant by 'energy'. FC replied that it's just felt, like when you're sexually aroused, it's very apparent what energy is and where it is coming from. I noticed his slumped groin, wide open sitting posture. Hmm. There's that and the energy that fluctuates in the morning and evening. Is it the mind? No, he says. Why is there an AIDS test? To insure all guests are healthy and free of disease at the resort. Apparently Osho was said to have seen into the future and predicted AIDS. And, he wanted to protect his community from it.

I went to the pool in a borrowed maroon suit, a bit too small. I met another fellow Iyengar yogi there. We swam in the dark granite kidney shaped lagoon. Nice. Refreshing. I was very close to staying for 'white robe', after melting into the water. Sounds were coming from Buddha Hall. FC was now rehearsing on his bass. Maybe they need a singer? I could do long melodious tones??? Cells tingling, skin clean. It's in my skin now. There.

Days later, I have yet to go back. I have purchased the maroon dress but no suit yet. I preferred to go home today after lunch with Carolyn instead of to the pool. To study the Diamond Cutter sutra, think about emptiness. Tomorrow I have a 7 a.m. yoga class with Prashant. It's always an incredible effort it takes to get this tamasic body out of bed and move out of the dullness. Whether it's 'hoo-ing' or doing downward facing dog, I suppose we need to hoo the dullness out. But the Iyengar yogashala is where I belong, grounding, seriously. More demanding, less wispy for my limbs, awakening shakti with awareness, through every single limb, bone, joint, nerve, nadi...I'm inside alot these days, within my shins, knees, groins, torso, feeling the strands of my abdominal walls. I see the unevenness of my shoulders and how if I turn my head to the right, left, shoulders are affected in different ways. I see my laziness, when I don't want to adjust myself, but I do

it anyway. I feel the walls of the rib cage when air presses against them, how this affects the jaw, throat, frontal brain. I catch a visual of Joshua Tree, Dhamma Dena zendo. I hear “stay close to the ground, don’t go far away from your heart. It’s the simple things that tell the reason we are here, it’s the simple things keeping us whole.” The Iyengars are working hard, Ruth Denison is working hard, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is working hard, Geshe Gyeltsen, even Osho...They just want us to get it. Mind is a tough cookie. It wants happy hour(s) but there’s work in paying for those ‘drinks’.

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