

Filling in the gaps

News / Updates

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The British Library in London received the missing titles to complete their catalogue of Osho's works, thanks to Neeten's efforts.



The British Library by Christoph Braun

The British Library, London – photo by Christoph Braun – commons.wikimedia.org

This August, 161 volumes of Osho's discourse books and darshan diaries were shipped to the British Library in London. They were a donation to be added to the library's collection of Osho's exquisite and priceless hardcover books from Poona One and Poona Two, all the way up to his final discourse series on Zen. The shipment had been prepared for four years together with the head of the library's South Asian Collections, with many delays due to the corona lockdown and other sensitive matters.

The volumes were taken from my personal collection of Osho memorabilia, which I had accumulated over forty years in Skagen, Denmark, in order to preserve his manuscripts, early prints, speeches, bio-books, and publications. In the 1980s, I went on a number of trips to visit my girlfriend in Cologne while also becoming a shopaholic at the Osho centre on Venloer Street. It was there that I first gasped in shock upon seeing the towering piles of Osho's vibrant book bindings, which were stacked from floor to ceiling in the centre's expansive dispatch room. How can I choose from all those titles, and where do I even begin? I was fortunate enough to work in the Research Library at the Poona Ashram in late 1989, where I gained essential knowledge about bibliographies and the publication of this Babel tower of Osho's books.

Now, many years later, I suppose it's time to let the books find a new home. Among the major European national libraries, I chose the British Library, which already possessed substantial holdings of Osho's writings as well as a rich collection covering their Indian past. The task at hand was to browse through their digital catalogue and see which Osho works they had already accessed and which gaps in their collection needed to be filled. All of this was carried out to ensure that all of Osho's books could be found in one location on the planet or ordered through the international Library Lending system.

So it was time for the books to fly to Heathrow – four boxes weighing 90 kg. Then came the phase in which my greatest anxieties surfaced. Would they breeze through customs, or would they encounter the same energy field that denied Osho in March 1986, when his admission to the UK was blocked directly at the airport and he was told to leave as quickly as possible? In Home Ministry parlance, "he was refused entry on the grounds that his exclusion was conducive to the public good."

This time, everything almost went as planned. The books passed through customs unharmed and arrived at the British Library, only to get lost in the library's corridors. They finally reached the right office in October, two months later. I can tell you that it wasn't easy to track down and determine the whereabouts of the boxes throughout this time period. Several visions flashed through my mind: were they safe and sound, or did they go through some ordeal within the library's premises?

A fitting conclusion to this chronicle would be for any reader to consider why the British Library had ceased to access Osho's writings following the meltdown of the Ranch in Oregon and his subsequent World Tour, and why the library was now more than pleased to fill this glaring vacuum in its requisition policy.

The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind...

PS. Just read in The Guardian: British Library suffering major technology outage after cyber-attack, Access to the website and services at its sites in London and Yorkshire are unavailable, the library said, as per Mabel Banfield-Nwachi on 31 October 2023, but I doubt the turmoil is caused by the presence of the newly-arrived books that might not be "conducive to the public good..."



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