

## **New Discoveries from Jabalpur: Osho's First Forays in Publishing**

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**This is a full version, as the article had to be downsized due to lack of space.**

When Osho's booklets began appearing from the printing presses in Jabalpur in the mid-50s, this was by no means his first meeting with the world of publishing. His lifelong book-loving affair had begun way back in the days of his boyhood, and it lasted until his approval of the latest newsletter, only six days before he passed away. In his lifespan on this planet he was constantly collecting books for his library, and his reading was as extensive as the later publishing of his works. Here we will present a few hidden treasures from Jabalpur, but before that, we have to acknowledge his very first publications.

Age thirteen, Rajneesh Mohan Chandra in 1944-45 issued a yearly handwritten magazine called 'Prayas' (Effort). Titles and some pages were printed in toy press with rubber letters, and all articles were written by himself. Some in his own name, some under pseudonym, and still others in the names of his classmates and friends. The second issue contained drawings, jokes, poetry and a folk song on the sixteenth-century warrior queen Rani Durgawati, not to mention letters only to be read when reflected in a mirror.

Preserved is also the inventory of books from his first library 1943-50. This too is handwritten, and contains 1106 entries according to title, author, price and subject. So here we have one founding stone for his book collecting later to flourish in the libraries of his residences in Jabalpur and Woodlands. Arriving in Pune, Lao Tzu House was over the years totally transformed into a corridor-library, ranking it among the largest private libraries worldwide.

Osho's next magazine publication appeared in Jabalpur during 1953, co-edited by his friends Hari Krishna Tripathi and Baijanth Sharma. It was now printed, and from the content you saw articles on Kahil Gibran and Gandhism, finishing with letters to the editor, all written and answered by Osho. The name of the magazine was 'Mukul' (Flower in Bud).

Soon his studies and messages were to be printed in small leaflets from 1955 onwards. These days in Jabalpur, Osho gave talks and occasionally presided at the yearly cross-religious conferences - Sarva Dharma Sammelan. 'Taaran Vani' (Sayings of Saint Taaran) was here his first published discourse, later in the early 60s to be followed by booklets on meditation and more on the life and philosophy of Saint Taran Taran. 'Patha ke Pradipa' was on 24 pages, with Osho's photo on the cover and published by the Digambara sect of Jainism. When Osho was speaking, it was distributed in the audience, and in 1969 a new and larger edition in book form and containing more short teachings was published from Chatarpur under the same title.

To convey the extent of his reading over the years is quite a challenge. But let us look at a few hints that may indicate the nature of the numerous books Osho was diving into from early childhood until 1981. In his boyhood, Gadarwara became his native town, and here already booksellers collected books for Osho, while he himself was ploughing through the stacks of the public library - Sarvajanic Pustkalya. As a teenager he had

read all 3.000 books in the library, and when in 1951 he left for college in Jabalpur, the vast academic libraries here now had to quench his thirst for knowledge.

The library most intensively used by Osho in Jabalpur was Rani Durgawati University Library, where 50-100 books passed over his still-preserved reading desk on a weekly basis. In the Mahakoshal Mahavidyalaya Library the original ledger is still preserved, providing us a rare glimpse into the wide range of his reading. On the page for July/August 1958 Rajneesh took out, for example, *Studies in Dying Cultures*, *An Experiment in Time*, *In the House of Meditation*, *Confucius: The Man and the Mystery*, and *Attack upon Christendom* by Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish existentialist philosopher.

Out of Jabalpur, Acharya Rajneesh now travelled far and wide conducting meditation camps all over India, following his first camp held in 1964 in Ranakpur, Rajasthan. Lectures from this camp were to become his first substantial book in Hindi 'Sadhana Path' published in Bombay in December 1964 (translated 'The Path of Self-Realization' Delhi 1966), followed by 'Kranti Beej' in January 1965. From its founding in 1964-65, the Jeevan Jagruti Kendra (Life Awakening Movement) was publishing his books and organizing his tours throughout India, soon to be complemented in this by Lala Sundarlal Jain from Motilal Banarsidass. And two magazines now began to disseminate the essence of his teachings, 'Youti Shikka' (Lamplight. Bombay 1966-74) and 'Yukrand' (Youth Revolution. Jabalpur 1969-75).

The nameplate from his door in Jabalpur is still around, used at the several places he stayed during his years in Jabalpur. I'm not aware of the circumstances around it's origin, but who else but Osho could have designed the script and the full moon on top?

That Osho's discourses were spontaneous and presented in a most fluent and poetic Hindi, we know from experience. But in his days in Jabalpur he was carefully writing manuscripts for his talks, like his numerous handwritten letters. When preparing his lectures and articles, he was at that time occasionally using his 1960-Olympia typewriter with its Hindi keyboard. Or his manuscripts were passed on to his secretary Arvind Jain, who did the typing and prepared his manuscripts for publication. The most recent collection is of letters to Kranti in Kabeer's beautifully designed 'Osho Letters' (Ahmedabad 2001), and written together with Kranti a book by his secretary is forthcoming. His writing of manuscripts finally ended in 1968, and from then on only brief notes on sutras, jokes and the like were to be found on his clipboard. Now all publishing had to be based on transcriptions from his live lectures.

So where do all these rarities take us? To me at least, they raise a few questions. We know too well, that the legacy of Osho is not to be confined to a museum, an archive or a library. But where to keep for the future the numerous objects still surviving to this day?

What will happen to the 5-6 extensive book collections in India, now with old sannyasins, but bound to be relocated and possibly split up or lost in days to come? How and where are we to secure his letters and early manuscripts? Shared between several libraries in India and the West, or better concentrated in one library for thorough studies? Can we organize a complete digitalization of his early stuff, including magazines?

The questions are here and now, but the answers may be delayed too long to act properly upon the present challenge.

