

OSHO LAO TZU LIBRARY

The Library, Reading and Publishing of an Indian Bookman and Mystic

Pierre Evald

THIS PAPER is an explorative study of what is probably the world's largest private library, belonging to the Indian intellectual and mystic Osho. His reading from early childhood and later as Assistant Professor of Philosophy in Jabalpur is outlined as well as the publishing since the 1960s of his numerous discourses in print, audio, video and on the internet. Osho will be dealt with as the greatest bookman of India and the most voracious reader worldwide in the twentieth century. Only his bookish merits are described, while the ideology of his mystery school and its religio-political implications will have to be found elsewhere.

INTRODUCTION

In the national Indian parliament in New Delhi, two of the nation's great sons have been honoured in a unique way. Not unexpectedly, a complete set of Mahatma Gandhi's books is placed in the library of the parliament (relocated in 2001), but we may come to a halt when asked to guess the name of the other author held in the special collections of the library. Formerly he was known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, and in 1989 this Indian mystic and intellectual changed his name to Osho.¹

The following presentation of Osho's private library, his reading and media publishing is mainly descriptive and will hopefully point out areas for future research. It is based on taped interviews with Osho's librarians in Lao Tzu library, supplemented by information collected from others in India, Japan and the United States. A major source of information on his book collecting has been the large number of biographies and documentaries on Osho, written



**Plate 3: Osho in Osho Lao Tzu library, Pwna
(Copyright the Osho International Foundation)**

by scholars and critics as well as followers (see the bibliography at the end of this article). Scientific journals, magazines and newspapers have been searched for articles from 1970 onwards, and information on the subject in the Hindi press has been translated into English. Not unexpectedly each of these written accounts has its limitations and advantages.

A field survey took place in Poona during the rainy season of 1989, when the author was volunteering in Osho Research library, and further investigations have been made during five recent visits to Lao Tzu library between 1998 and 2001. Research experience reinforces caveats about the researcher's social relationship to the group and the topics being studied.² As for the Hindi part of Osho's work, interviews were conducted in Poona, Bombay, Delhi and Jabalpur with Indians who have been collecting Osho's books since the 1950s. A series of photographs which illustrate this paper and document his library and publications is also available on the internet.³

OSHO LAO TZU LIBRARY

The state of Maharashtra Bombay (Mumbai) has for centuries been the first port of call and the gateway to India. For many westerners the coastline of Bombay was their first glimpse of the vast Indian continent, and through Bombay goods, people and ideas have been exchanged between east and west. Climbing up the Deccan plateau from Bombay, the road takes its turns before it enters the city of Poona (Pune). Situated at an altitude of 1,800 feet, the city was a somewhat cooler resort, where Bombay high society moved in April and May to get away from the stifling heat of the pre-monsoon. In the pleasant greenery of Koregaon Park outside the city centre, with its wide and tree-lined roads designed by the British in 1922 and close to the Mutha river, Osho's commune has had its expanding premises since 1974.

Here Osho Lao Tzu library houses the collection of the Indian mystic and professor Osho (1931–1990). The house used to belong to a Maharaja, but now it is little more than a shell around the growing library, with fully packed shelves along all the corridors



Plate 4: Interior of the central room, Ramakrishna, at Osho Lao Tzu library (Copyright Osho International Foundation)

(the collection is largely housed as a 'corridor-library'). Outside, the jungle garden overlooks waterfalls and marble rocks in the wild scenery. In a corner a door still leads to Osho's private study and in the former Chuang Tzu auditorium a Samadhi has been constructed for the ashes of Osho.

The collection dates back to the time when Osho was still a student. Living in his father's house he was destined to start his own collection to supplement his extensive use of public libraries. From his early years he wanted the whole house full of books, and a similar process seems to have taken place in Lao Tzu house. Each section of the library has been given a name: Ramakrishna, Kabir Balcony, Sanai Corridor, Rabia Corridor, Vimalkirti Wing, Devat-eertha Wing and Maitreya Wing.

According to official statistics the Lao Tzu library contains about 100,000 volumes, but on my estimate there are fewer than 80,000. Earlier figures for the growth of the bookstock are: 1974 20,000 volumes; 1977 33,000 volumes; and by 1981 50,000 volumes. Osho's tastes were eclectic, ranging from philosophy and religion to psychology, literature, history, the arts, politics and poetry. Accordingly the collection is mostly English non-fiction but also includes books in Hindi, adding up to two kilometres of shelves. Valuable parts are the four copies of all Osho's published discourses in Hindi as well as in English, translations thereof, darshan diaries published and unpublished, theses, and full sets of international Rajneesh/Osho magazines. There are also numerous biographies and secondary works on Osho or mentioning him.

All the books have been read and often signed and dated by Osho, except for about 10,000 titles which were accessioned after 1986. From his early Poona phase (1974-1981) it is still remembered how whole trolleys with books were taken into his room:

Bhagwan was said to read ten to fifteen books a day in those early Poona years; the library in his house was certainly immense. It was a large, marble-tiled room which was lined with glass-fronted bookshelves and opened out onto a beautiful balcony. When the library had first been set up, it was with the books that Bhagwan had collected as a student and later as a Professor - in the region of twenty thousand. (Forman 1987)

Some 3,500 books contain various styles of his signature in colour or as part of a painting, and a full-page painting by Osho is found inside the cover in some 900 books.⁴ These special books with amazing paintings and coloured signatures are kept in the library's best-protected central hall Ramakrishna and are definitely the high-lights of the library.

In Lao Tzu house each day new books were brought from the library to Osho's private study. Following eastern tradition his reading never took place in the library itself, but in his study in Lao Tzu. It constituted the major part of his daily schedule in Bombay and Poona until 1981, when his eyes were so weak that he had to stop reading:

Actually Osho stopped reading around 1980. Often I heard Him say, that He is a lazy man, and He could read more than 200 books a week in His reading days. But the moment it stopped, it stopped completely. He left it to his secretary to inform Him of the latest world news, and in the library, when we started to buy new books [1987–1989], we could make a synopsis of the most interesting ones, and give it to His secretary.⁵

Figures for his total reading over the years are uncertain, but must be in the region of 150,000–200,000 books, based on 5,000–10,000 books each year between the 1950s and 1980. A kind of speed-reading had been developed which allowed him not only to remember what he read with a photographic memory, but also to underline and add special coloured dots in the margin in his dialogue with the text.

INTERIOR DESIGN AND LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY

As a book connoisseur, Osho gave specific instructions throughout his life for the style and character of the library's interior design and for various techniques to be used. Among other features the books are arranged on the shelves according to size and colour. Two books of the same size or colour are not to be placed next to each other, so the effect is that of waves going up and down, adding a lighter impression of the packed shelves than is usually seen in

libraries (see Colour Plate 4). As this shelving system also separates individual volumes within series, for practical use certain modifications have been made to the basic principle.

His priorities for the library were aesthetics combined with cleanliness. This general aesthetic approach also influenced his choice of materials and colours to create a lightness that is rare for a library. In early days Ramakrishna was arranged more like a study, with wooden shelves and cupboard doors in cream, a colour used throughout the whole corridor-library. Following the redesigning of Lao Tzu house in 1987, the library expanded and Ramakrishna was rearranged into a more spacious main hall of the library; all the wooden shelves and cupboards were now painted in metallic silver or replaced by aluminium and glass. In order to create reflections and a more spacious interior, mirrors were placed behind the books on shelves now made of glass throughout the library. Of all the libraries I have observed worldwide, including China and Japan, public and academic, none comes close to the beauty and lightness of Osho Lao Tzu library in India.

During the 1970s the book-drying procedure following the rainy season continued the old tradition from his father's house, now taking place on the flat roof of Lao Tzu house. This was of importance as no smell was permitted to be in the books due to Osho's allergy. On the roof we now find equipment for the disinfection of library books, and the whole Lao Tzu house, including all library facilities, has been air-conditioned and humidity control provided for all rooms containing books.

Cataloguing of library books started from scratch in 1987 as the handwritten files and card catalogues from the Bombay and early Poona phases, made by his first librarian Lalita, were no longer in existence. Two databases were constructed and information retrieval made possible using title, author, year of publication or subject category as search terms. The books are entered in the database under 400 subject main- and sub-categories in a thesaurus designed to suit the specific needs of the library, the classification system being modified and improved over time. Books in Hindi are presently in the classification system, but not in the databases.

In the database the location of a specific book is identified by name of room, shelf-section clockwise from corners and an ABCD identification of the shelves within a section. Supplemented by the librarian's general feeling for information retrieval, the system is working well, but as most books were read by Osho upon their arrival at the library, the daily retrievals have been quite limited over the years.

The acquisition of books was based on Osho's requirements, supplemented by those of his librarians. From 1967 he was going through *Books in Print* and his marginal notes are found in the volumes. Books were ordered several hundred at a time from Bowker, later using the CD-rom version of *Books in Print* for selection. After Osho stopped reading in 1981, the acquisition of books continued until 1989 only, while the accessioning of new editions and translations of his own books is still ongoing, with one new volume being added every day.

Solid works of reference are lined up on the airy glass shelves, where one finds two full editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (14th edition 1968, and 15th edition 1974), *The Oxford English Dictionary* (12 volumes), the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (16 volumes) and for selection, as mentioned, *Books in Print* (1967–1989). *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (30 volumes) are also included. According to some interviewees, even encyclopedias were read by Osho. They were certainly signed and referred to.

Having read a book Osho signed it with a colour signature (see note 4), sometimes adding a painting or some comments or drawing at the end. The shift from old to new signatures was a continuous process, and we see a gradual change of his signature from a more simple style in the beginning to elaborate calligraphic signatures coloured with felt pen. Old signatures are occasionally coloured. The latest signature is from 20 December 1987, over four pages in a Japanese book.

Old signatures had dates in Hindi, moving from the front to the back of the book. Most books in the library are signed with dates in Hindi in Hindi books and in English in English books. In the second half of 1998 all Osho's signature paintings were removed

from their books to be digitized and sent to London for scanning. Three sets of slides of the paintings had already been made, so that the books did not have to be opened to see the paintings.

On 27 November 1989, not long before he passed away in January 1990, Osho sent a message to the librarian on the future use of the library's treasures. He stipulated that everything should be locked away and only made available to those writing on Osho; permissions should be rarely granted with only three books taken from the shelves at a time.

Today Lao Tzu library is basically a protected archive of Osho's creation being used for copyright, publication and research purposes with complete sets of his publications in English and Hindi. By no means is the library open to the general public, as its use is strictly limited to disciples for their publication and research work. Only one or two non-disciples, *in casu* American scholars, have been allowed to perform research within Osho Lao Tzu library.

Present research projects in the collections of the library are the history of the signatures and missing acquisition dates; also a need remains to register thoroughly all the dot-books in the collection. The Hindi part of the collection is apt for further research, including sutras, the *Ghita*, the *Upanishad*, Tagore, poetry and even the year-books of the Indian National Science Academy Awards.

The co-dependency of access to a physical library and spiritual development is of an intriguing nature. In Norbulinka in Lhasa a physical combination of library and meditation room is found in the private quarters of the thirteenth and fourteenth Dalai Lamas. The meditation room of the thirteenth Lama is placed on the second floor above his library in Tuzin Palace, and the meditation room of his successor adjoins his library room on the secluded top of the New Summer Palace. In Lao Tzu house no specific meditation room was needed as the resident's enlightenment made this arrangement unnecessary. An enlightened state of consciousness does not require a specific setting for meditation, and the library compasses, as we have seen, most of the interior space in the mansion.

Osho's ashes are now kept in the new Samadhi, which is entered through Vimalkirti wing and the Dentist's Room. Here several daily

meditations are attended by disciples, passing silently through the outer parts of Lao Tzu library on their way to the Samadhi, an inner sanctuary located in the library with its distinguished books filled with his presence and energy on every inch of the corridors. Also located in the campus is the Osho Cybercafé and Research Library, open for commune workers and any spiritual seeker looking for quotes or references on specific subjects.⁶ But outside the gates it cannot be denied that Osho's books with their unorthodox views have been widely banned, for example by the Theosophical Society and not unexpectedly also by the Vatican. As a result of inconsistency in library selection policies and intellectual freedom some of the primary sources mentioned in this article may be difficult to locate in national and academic libraries. The largest public collections of Osho's books reside at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in the Netherlands, followed by the Library of Congress in the United States and the Deutsche Bibliothek in Germany.

EARLY READING, BOOK COLLECTING AND PUBLICATIONS

The eldest of eleven children of a Jaina cloth merchant, Osho was born on 11 December 1931 in Kuchwada, a small village in the state of Madhya Pradesh, central India. Stories of his early years describe him as independent and rebellious, questioning all social, religious and philosophical beliefs.

He had a late start at school, at the age of eight in 1940. From the beginning of grade one he could read Hindi, and from grade five, when the teaching of English started, he could also read the language right away, while others were still at ABC-level. In the fifth grade in 1944, at the age of twelve, Rajneesh edited his first publication, a handwritten magazine *Prayas* (*Effort*), with titles and some pages printed on a toy press with rubber letters. All the articles were written by him, some in his own name (Rajneesh Mohan Chandra or 'RMC'), some under a pseudonym. The coloured magazine contained drawings, jokes and poetry, for example a folk song on the sixteenth-century warrior queen Rani Durgawati.

Gadarwara became his native town where he moved after the death of his grandfather. It was a town of 20,000 inhabitants about sixty miles from Jabalpur, offering a primary school, a high school and a public library. He was the youngest member to join the public library, and all 3,000 books there were read by Osho when he was a teenager. Part of his own student book collection in Gadarwara, mostly books in Hindi, was donated to the public library when in 1951 he left for college in Jabalpur. His English books were moved with him to Jabalpur, where his reading of non-fiction in English was increasing over time.

During his years at high school in Gadarwara his room was full of books, covering all the walls. The floor too was packed, just leaving enough space for the bed which was standing in his library. In the beginning second-hand books were bought because they were cheaper, and in Gadarwara booksellers collected books for Osho at his request. A unique handwritten inventory from Osho's first library shows 1,106 entries from the period 1943-1950. All the books are entered according to number, title, author, price and subject.

His passionate search made him explore books on every possible subject. Often he read all night, which occasionally gave him a headache, but he would apply a pain-killing balm to his forehead and continue reading. Then at dawn he would go to the river and take a swim. Although as a young boy he played games such as field hockey, soccer and volleyball, he was more interested in reading. Many of the books at the Gadarwara Public Library still have cards that show only Rajneesh's signature. The books ranged from politics and philosophy to science, religion to detective novels. Not only did he himself read widely, but he insisted that his friends also read something other than the usual textbooks. The Indian Nobel Prize winner in literature, Rabindranath Tagore, was one of his favourite authors. Because of his extraordinary reading habits, Osho rarely attended school. Not only that, he was branded a communist, for he read extensively in Marx and Engels and other communist literature, and was threatened with expulsion from school. With the help of his friends, he built a small library that contained mostly communist literature, and believing socialism to be the answer to the economic plight of India, Rajneesh leaned toward socialism and remained an atheist. (Vasant 1982, p. 42)

The seven-year period from his fourteenth to his twenty-first year was his search, during which he experienced intense reading on all

subjects and also experimented with meditation techniques, which finally led to his enlightenment at 2 a.m. on 21 March 1953. He was now twenty-one and majoring in philosophy at D. N. Jain College in Jabalpur. His second magazine publication, the printed *Mukul* (*Flower in the Bud*), was published in Jabalpur during 1953. Among the contents we find 'On Kahlil Gibran', 'My Thoughts' (on destroying the old to create the new), 'On Gandhism', 'Life Death and Nature', jokes, poems and letters to the editor, all written by the editor himself, including the advertisements.

In the early 1950s Osho wrote stories for Hindi newspapers, and to make money during his student days also worked as an assistant editor, writing and translating for the Jabalpur-based Hindi paper *Nav-Bharat*. On Sundays in Jabalpur he went to Gurandi Market to buy second-hand books, but later on when he became an Assistant Professor in Jabalpur, he is said only to have bought new books. At Thieves Market in Jabalpur he got *The Book of Mirdad* by Mikhail Naimy, a stolen book. The police interfered and took him to the owner, a retired Professor of Literature. Having explained his desperate need to own the book, Osho was presented with the copy by the Professor who even offered to support Osho during his studies.

Talking about P. D. Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* in *Books I have Loved* (1985), Osho reveals how this essential book came into his possession. It was bought in 1954 while he was a university student and the copy, which is still in Lao Tzu library, contains prolific underlining in red and blue pencil. Even though the cost of the book was his whole month's salary, Osho was determined to have the brand new copy, and accordingly he had to leave his rented room. He is said to have read the book with immense happiness under the sky, in the light of a street lamp.

TEACHING CAREER

Osho graduated in 1955 with a B.A. in philosophy, with honours, from D. N. Jain College in Jabalpur and was soon invited by Professor S. S. Roy to do his postgraduate studies at Sagar University. Here he

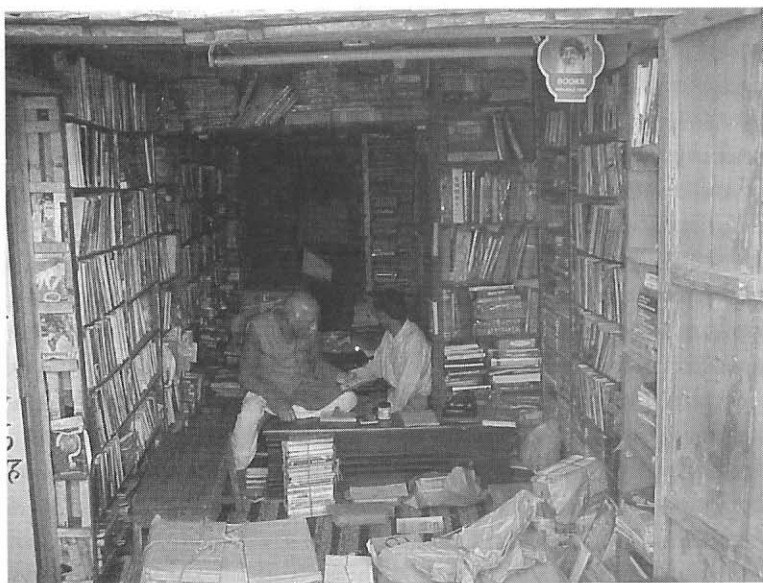
got his master's degree in philosophy in 1957, and all the time was immersing himself in the vast collection of the university library and enjoying the pleasant natural setting around Sagar. Rather than attending classes, he spent most of his time reading in the library, and even on holidays when the library was closed, he could be found reading on the library lawn or wandering alone amid nature.

Osho was enrolled as a Lecturer of Philosophy from September 1957 at the Mahakoshal Mahavidyalaya (Arts College) in Jabalpur, a government college affiliated to Jabalpur University from where he later resigned as Assistant Professor in 1967, thus bringing his academic career to an end. When teaching he would sit cross-legged on a table dressed in his lungi, the traditional Indian dress he wore beautifully and naturally. The library most intensively used by Osho in Jabalpur was Rani Durgawati University Library, where 50–100 books passed over his still-preserved desk on a weekly basis. Ram Chandra Naik, university librarian between 1962 and 1996, assisted him and also helped him organize his private library in Jabalpur.

Osho also frequented the Mahakoshal Mahavidyalaya Library, where the ledger records the taking out of library books and thus provides a glimpse into the wide range of his reading during these days. On the page for July/August 1958 Osho, with the signature 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.

Small pamphlets by Osho – among them *Taaran-Vani* (*Sayings of Saint Taaran*), his first published discourse in Hindi – were published in Jabalpur from 1955 for the yearly cross-religious Sarva Dharma Sammelan (All Religion Conferences), where he gave talks and occasionally presided.

Always travelling by train, second class, provided during the 1950s and 1960s a silent space for reading. On his travels Osho visited bookshops in other cities wherever he stayed. In Jabalpur his favourite bookshop for Hindi books was Sushma Sahitya Mandir, on the first floor in Jawaharganj Market, still with the same owner, S. M. Jain, and the same interior as in the 1950s (see page 84).



The interior of Sushma Sahitya Mandir Bookshop,
Jawaharganj Market, Jabalpur

Rajneesh travelled far and wide conducting meditation camps all over India, following the first camp held in 1964 in Ranakpur, Rajasthan. Lectures from this camp were to become his first substantial book in Hindi, *Sadhana Path* (*The Path of Self-Realization*, 1966). The first booklet to be published with Osho's words in English was *Philosophy of Non-Violence* (1968), a 33-page pamphlet dealing with courage as a pre-requisite for the spiritual life, all for a mere 3 Rupia. To publish his books and organize his tours throughout India, the Jeevan Jagruti Kendra (Life Awakening Movement) was founded in 1965, later to be renamed the Rajneesh Foundation in 1975, following the move to Poona.

Throughout his travels, Rajneesh spoke to vast audiences consisting of 50,000 people and to small groups huddled in smoke-filled rooms. He began to address these gatherings in the open-air maidans of India's major cities, and four times a year he conducted intense

ten-day meditation camps. From the mid-1960s two periodicals, the quarterly *Youti Shikka* (*Lamplight*) in Bombay (June 1966–June 1974) and *Yukrand* (*Youth Revolution*), a monthly published in Jabalpur (June 1969–May 1975), began to disseminate the essence of his teachings. During this period he was known as Acharya Rajneesh.

BOMBAY YEARS

In 1971, almost four years after his resignation from Jabalpur University, Osho decided to leave Jabalpur and find his own space in Bombay. He arrived at Woodlands, where he had an apartment on the first floor with a huge drawing-room-cum-library, all walls soon to be furnished with glass-fronted bookcases. On the end walls, with windows towards the street and the rear of the building, high shelves up to the very ceiling also gave room for his collection. This living room was sometimes used for lectures and celebrations, and he soon began regular evening discourses with fifty-odd people about spiritual matters. The first intense and powerful dialogue in Woodlands, with questions and answers on deeply esoteric matters like kundalini, shaktipat and levels of consciousness, was edited and translated from Hindi in *The Mystic Experience* (1977). The first discourse series in English to be held at Woodlands in 1971 was *I am the Gate* (published in 1975).

Lecturing in his mother-tongue he was speaking the most flowing Hindi, ranging from Veda-like poetry and songs to the slang of the village dialogue. For early western disciples to be in his presence and listen to the flow of sounds in Hindi was reportedly enough, but as more and more overseas visitors and disciples came by, lectures were alternated in Hindi and English. Discourses from this time taught westerners to treasure the holy texts of India such as the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali in ten volumes and the *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra*, a five-volume commentary on 112 meditative aphorisms published in *The Book of Secrets* (1974–1975). The library and its range of literature is remembered by Kushwant Singh in his foreword to *Life's Mysteries*:

I arrived at Woodlands at the appointed time and was shown into a large, airy room lined with books. I was told to wait a few minutes for the Acharya. I went round the bookshelves. Most of the collection was in English; a few in Sanskrit and Hindi. I was baffled by the range of subjects: religion, theology, philosophy, history, literature, biographies, autobiographies down to books on humour and crime. It occurred to me that I had not seen books in ashrams I had visited. Some had libraries meant for the use of disciples but most consisted of books on religious subjects or tracts summarizing sermons of their gurus. Other gurus read very little beyond Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, the Upanishads and the epics, and rarely bothered to read books on Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam. Rajneesh had. Consequently while others had only their religions or what they vaguely learnt at second hand, Rajneesh had studied them from original sources and evolved an eclectic faith of his own. (Osho 1995, p. vii)

Whenever changing his location the opportunity was taken to weed and minimize his growing collection. During his years in Jabalpur the public library in Gadarwara was supplied with English non-fiction. When he left for Bombay, as his library was packed into boxes by his brothers to be sent to Woodlands, all the English books were taken with him while spare copies and some older material in Hindi were donated to the University Library in Jabalpur.

Reading in Woodlands took place in Osho's study, a small private room also holding his bed. Here his favourite chair was found in a corner and also a small bookcase with the books and magazines he was working at. During his years in Bombay, July 1970 to March 1974, he had close encounters with seekers, and in the small study individuals were received for darshan with their master, and here also people were initiated into sannyas. Seekers from the west now came in scores with their different backgrounds in culture and family life, and for the development of Osho's method and understanding of the western mind his reading had to be comprehensive. He was then mostly studying philosophy and psychology, to widen his understanding as an essential background for his new dialogue with westerners.

He might order books from catalogues, but more often he went to bookshops himself purchasing books for his collection. Among his favourite bookshops in Bombay were Strand and the smaller

and more intimate New Old Book Depot. He also went to Chor Bazaar and to Thieves Market for second-hand books, and is said to have brought home whole libraries from Thieves Market. He was still buying second-hand books when necessary, if a title was out of print or rare. Later in Poona his favourite bookshop was Manneys Booksellers at Moledina Road, Poona's largest bookstore until Crossword was opened near the railway station.

When reading he had a pencil in his hand, holding the pencil parallel with two fingers. His marginal notes were in Hindi until his fifth grade at school; from then on notes were in English. He was reading at high speed but still able to make notes and collect quotations while reading. In addition to the small red and blue dots that Osho placed in the margins to note significant passages he also used symbols in the margins of the sutras he was to lecture on – an upward pointing triangle, downward pointing triangle, circle, dot within a circle, square (solid and empty), an upward and a downward pointing triangle together, etc.

At Woodlands his librarian Karuna replaced the cataloguing in ledgers by two drawers with cards, the shelving of the labelled books being alphabetical according to title. The entire Osho library, card catalogue and ledgers were all taken to Poona in March 1974.

In *Books I have loved* (1985) Osho tells the story of his lifelong book-loving affair. The book is dedicated to the memory of Alan Watts and his effort to bridge the gap between eastern and western thinking and spirituality. Books mentioned here by Osho include a number of the principal religious texts, alternating with western and eastern authors, among them Walt Whitman, Lewis Carroll, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Book of Mirdad*, Lao Tzu, Kahlil Gibran, D. T. Suzuki, Hermann Hesse, Jean Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Samuel Beckett, Karl Marx, Turgenev, Herbert Marcuse and Aristotle.

PUBLISHING

Osho's own experience and his extensive reading in Lao Tzu library formed the cornerstones for his lifelong transmission of ancient

spiritual traditions. For years he would give a ninety-minute discourse every morning, alternating every month in the 1970s between Hindi and English. These discourses offered insights into all major spiritual paths, including Yoga, Zen, Taoism, Tantra and Sufism. He also spoke on Gautam Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tzu and other mystics. So Osho is by no means an author in the usual sense, as he never wrote a book himself. All his published books (some 600 titles) are transcriptions of his talks. Some 7,000 of his discourses are also being made available on digital audio tape, and 1,700 on digital video tape. The Hindi discourses from meditation camps in the 1960s, and from Bombay between 1970 and 1974 in English or Hindi, were published as pamphlets and are now collectors' items.

Soon secondary books also began to appear: *Lord of the Full Moon* (1980) offers an intimate insight into the life around a spiritual master and in *The Sound of Running Water* (1980) we have an authoritative photobiography of the first Poona phase, although it can be found only in few academic libraries worldwide. If a biography can be made of Osho, *The Awakened One: the Life and Work of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* (1982) is the most informative source, later supplemented by his life-story compiled from his own lectures, *Autobiography of a Spiritually Incorrect Mystic* (2000).

In 1981 Osho developed a degenerative back condition, and in March, after giving daily discourses for nearly fifteen years, he began a period of silence. On the advice of his doctors he travelled to the United States and settled in the desert-like highlands of Oregon. On 30 October 1984 he ended his period of self-imposed silence, and started speaking to small groups who gathered at his residence. *The Rajneesh Bible* paperback series (1985) from Oregon published questions from disciples and answers from Osho, but it is thought-provoking that during his stay in the United States and the following world tour, no sutras from other religions were ever commented upon by Osho. Max Brecher in his *Passage to America* (1993) has produced an in-depth account of the treatment of Osho during his imprisonment for immigration fraud in the United States. It was no wonder that Osho's challenging of the American way of life made him an unwelcome visitor, and in the autumn of

1985 he was forced to leave and embark on a world tour.⁷ During this Osho was deported or denied entry in twenty-one democratic countries in Europe, and on other continents due to diplomatic pressure from the United States.

The move to Poona in early January 1987 described the latest phase of his work, the creation of a mystery school. In this phase the first year was very intense, with morning and evening discourses each day, ending with the publishing in March 1988 of *Om Shanti Shanti Shanti*. From then on only evening discourses were held in Buddha Hall on a daily basis, until this was partly interrupted by the decline in Osho's health from October 1988 until his last discourse on 10 April 1989, which completed *The Zen Manifesto* (1989). Early in 1990 he grew weaker, and on 19 January he left his body.

During 1988 and 1989 first editions signed by Osho were sold at auctions in Poona at prices of around \$6,000–\$7,000. A top sale to an American businessman in October 1989 of 500,100 Rupia (equivalent to more than \$30,000) for a copy of *The Zen Manifesto* (1989) was a world record sum for a book signed by a living author.

DESIGN AND EDITING

As we have seen, Osho loved books since he was a student. Later he took an intimate personal interest in each of his own publications, involving himself in every phase of the production, into his last days; he was still giving instructions for revamps of some of his older works on the day he left his body. He was not fond of paperbacks, so much effort was put into the production of exquisite hard-bound editions, Osho proposing the pricing policy. Dust-jacket design and cover artwork were made from his suggestions, and also the logo for Rebel Publishing was designed by him. The time formerly used for reading in early Poona was from 1981 spent on the design of his books.

Quite an amount of human resources has been invested in the recording, transcribing and editing of Osho's discourses, darshans and press conferences and the process of transforming and editing the spoken words to the printed text has turned out to be a delicate

matter. The editing has in recent years seen a questionable loosening up of the guidelines laid out by Osho. He was always very concerned that his words were preserved as they were spoken, and often he talked about the misfortunes that befell people like Jesus, whose teachings have been recorded and filtered through the misunderstandings of his followers so many times that we really have very little way of knowing what he actually said. For years the job of the editors has been to work with transcriptions of tapes to create books. Osho's instructions were to 'make it good English, but don't change anything.'

OSHO'S PUBLISHERS AND THE NEW MEDIA

On 1 January 1992, Osho Verlag in Cologne became the main distributor outside India of Rebel books printed in Germany, and together with the Sadhana Foundation also of books printed in India. The upheavals following Osho's arrest and deportation from the United States in 1985 made it evident that Osho's followers would have to translate and publish books and other media themselves, as the doors to the publishing houses had effectively been slammed. In 1993 a kind of breakthrough after the silencing in the media came in England, when two small publishing houses, Element Books and Boxtree, accepted Osho's discourses for commercial production. Two years later, in 1995, the decade-long wall of silence in the U.S.A. was finally breached when St Martin's Press in New York launched Osho with 100,000 copies of the 'Osho Zen Tarot Cards', with attached anecdotes and excerpts from his discourses.

A full discourse series was published early in 1998 by St Martin's as *The Book of Secrets*. It has a half-height jacket and, for the first time, the publisher features Osho's picture on the cover, a rather unthinkable choice just a few years ago. Today the Osho International Foundation receives statements from publishers that more than two million books, audiotapes and videos are sold each year.⁸

Attentively Osho followed the development in new communication technologies, and until his final days he was stressing that his communes should have the latest technology. Before the intro-

duction of the internet, a computer network made it possible to connect by telecommunication with Poona and to receive news on a global level within one or two days. 'The Quest' and 'The Books' were early projects, from 1991, of the Rajneesh Broadcasting Corporation in the Netherlands. The Quest is a database containing all the questions that Osho has been asked, while The Books is an integrated database of his published books. There is now an Osho website at www.osho.com, listing all his books in print, with a book ordering facility for virtual shoppers.⁹ The site also offers links to full-length discourses in audio and video format. Presently 227 titles are available in *The Complete Osho Archive*, making it the web's biggest library of a single author. In 2000 audio excerpts from discourses were made available for downloading in MP3 format, and e-books were made available from Barnes and Noble in the same year. One more biography of Osho was published electronically in 2000, with a selection of texts more in accordance with the 'Hindi Canon', as *Osho's Life: an Anthology of Osho's Life from His Own Books*.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Considering the great scope for interpretation and distortion of the sayings and anecdotes of Buddha, Jesus and other founders, the case of Osho is quite different. It may be the first time that all the literature and spoken words of a mystic and master have been recorded and preserved for everyone to refer to.

His achievements make him an intellectual giant, although this view is at present not shared in the west. In 1989 Osho said that he wanted us to read his books to understand his philosophy. These were his last words, and by reading them we would gain a greater understanding of what is happening to us. With the message to his librarian in Lao Tzu library mentioned earlier, there is solid evidence that the legacy of his books was of highest concern to him until his last breath. Osho has made it clear that his teachings speak for themselves and that whatever interpretation is made is to be made by the individual, and not by any intermediary or priest.

This article has focused on Osho the reader, his library and the publishing of his works, and not on ideology. Whether we have been talking about an enlightened master or not is up to each individual to decide. The sixteenth Karmapa Rigpe Dorje (1924–1981), head of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, said ‘He is the greatest living incarnation after Buddha in India. He is a living Buddha.’ For readers of more esoteric material, John Hogue’s 1987 book on the predictions of Nostradamus features Osho as the only individual who satisfies the prophet’s enigmatic criteria for the major religious figures of our times, and is accordingly identified as the religious leader anticipated by this French seer.

NOTES

1. Osho was formerly known as Acharya Rajneesh (1966–1971) and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1971–1988). In 1988 he played with a number of name changes until he finally felt at ease with Osho. The name has been used historically in the Far East, meaning The Blessed One on Whom the Sky Showers Flowers, and Osho also recognized the other connotation deriving from William James’s word ‘oceanic’, dissolving into the ocean. The name Osho is mostly used in this paper.
2. The writer has since 1975 been doing research in library science as Assistant Professor at the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Denmark (www.db.dk/pe). He has been committed as a devotee of Osho since 1981. Without this connection to the movement the insight and observations presented in this paper would not have been possible. The potential disadvantages associated with this perspective naturally have to be kept in mind throughout the paper, as the identity of the participant-observer influences what is available to be seen as well as how that may be interpreted.
3. See www2.db.dk/pe/osho/gallery.htm. All photographs are from: *Osho: Early Prints and Manuscripts* by Pierre Evald (unpublished).
4. Special books in Ramakrishna with signatures and paintings are identified with the following library codes in the database of Osho Lao Tzu library: OS (Old Signature), ‘Rajneesh’ or ‘Rajneesh Chandra Mohan’ etc., or a three-part hieroglyphic style signature with colour inside; NS

(New Signature), a regular signature with colour inside (many of these signatures are exhibited around the commune as silkscreen prints from Gatasansa, Japan); PA (Painting), signature with colour outside (often a full page painting done on the endpaper(s) of the book); LS (Latest Signature), signatures from 1988 onwards (after the world tour), on new books only; and LP (Latest Painting), airbrush paintings done in 1988 (after the world tour). As of 9 May 1994 there were 844 recorded Old Signatures, 1,487 New Signatures, 645 Paintings, 180 Latest Signatures and 13 Latest Paintings. For further notes on these signatures see page 78.

5. From an unpublished paper by Kavisho, submitted in 1999 to Osho Times International. Kavisho was Osho's librarian in the late Poona phase, 1987–1998.

6. Reference lists in the research library include: *First Editions* (2 pages), *Early Editions and Miscellaneous* (2 pages), *Early Compilations* (5 pages), *Inventory List Books: Discourse Series* (8 pages), *Inventory List of Translated Books of/on Osho* (8 pages), *Listing of Title Changes* (1 page), *Topics: Book Title and Chapter* (23 pages), *Highly Recommended Discourses* (27 pages), *Listing of Discourse Series in Chronological Order* (4 pages), *Darshan Diary Names Restored* (21 pages), and *Listing of Darshan Diaries in Chronological Order* (2 pages).

7. Brecher (1993) and Bernstein (1996) are reviewed by the present author in 'Two Tales, One Story: a Review of Strategic Alliances and Spirituality' in Ma Chetan Unmani and Swami Chaitanya Keerti (editors), *Allah to Zen* (Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books, 2000, pp. 165–175, also at www2.db.dk/pe/twotales.htm).

8. Osho now has the biggest publishers in Italy (Mondadori) and Spain (Grupa Planeta), one of the top four in Brazil (Ediouro), the second in Germany (Heyne) and one of the top ten in America (St Martin's Press). In Japan the publishing of books, especially on Zen, has been booming since the Zen Institute published their first series by Osho in 1989, thus bringing these new interpretations of Zen back to its country of origin. Including compilations, about 300 English and 300 Hindi titles have been published. Sales figures for 2001 are close to two million copies with translations in forty-six languages. Currently Korean, Chinese, Russian and Spanish are fast expanding languages. Over the years around twenty million copies have been sold. In India, Osho's books are published in twelve languages by thirty-six publishers, and 400 audio titles are published by six leading audio-publishers. About sixty titles in Hindi

are by now translated into English, with more in process. A complete archive of Osho's discourses in English includes 3,050 recorded on nearly 7,000 audiotapes (8,000 hours), and 1,700 videotaped discourses (2,500 hours) beginning in 1977. The earliest known video footage of Osho was taken in Bombay in 1972.

9. Other sites with bibliographical data include www.oshoworld.com and www.sannyas.org. The Poona database *English Osho Books* is the most complete bibliographical source of all international editions in English.

10. The biography is free to download in Zip format (size approximately 2MB). There are 1,500 pages of Osho's words in chronological order, including many quotations and references on his library, books and reading. It can be found on the www.oshoworld.com website.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Amitabh 1982) 'Shree Rajneesh Ashram: a Provocative Community' by Prem Amitabh, Sw, in *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 22:1, Winter 1982, pp. 19-42.

(Asha 1980) *The Sound of Running Water: a Photobiography of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his Work 1974-1978* edited by Prem Asha, Ma. Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1980.

(Bernstein 1996) *His Holiness, John Paul II, and the Hidden History of Our Time* by Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi. New York: Doubleday, 1996.

(Brecher 1993) *A Passage to America* by Max Brecher. Bombay: Book Quest Publications, 1993.

(Carter 1987) 'The "New Renunciates" of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh: Observations and Identification of Problems of Interpreting New Religious Movements' by Lewis F. Carter, in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 26:2, 1987, pp. 148-172.

(Divya 1980) *Lord of the Full Moon: Life with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh*

by Prem Divya, Ma. Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1980.

(Evald 2001) 'India's Greatest Bookman' by Pierre Evald, in *LOGOS: the Journal of the World Book Community*, 12:1, 2001, pp 49-51.

(Forman 1987) *Bhagwan: the Buddha for the Future* by Juliet Forman. Cologne: Rebel Publishing House, 1987.

(Gussner 1993) 'The Work of Osho Rajneesh: a Thematic Overview' by Robert Erwin Gussner, in *The Rajneesh Papers: Studies in a New Religious Movement* edited by Susan J. Palmer and Arvind Sharma. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993.

(Hogue 1987) *Nostradamus and the Millennium Predictions of the Future* by John Hogue. London: Bloomsbury, 1987.

(Latkin 1987) 'Who Lives in Utopia? A Brief Report on the Rajneesh-puram Research Project' by Carl A. Latkin *et al.*, in *Sociological Analysis*, 48:1, 1987, pp. 73-81.

(Osho 1991) *The Rising Moon 1968-1975* by Osho. Cologne: Rebel Distribution, 1991. Videogram (all formats, 34 minutes).

(Osho 1995) *Life's Mysteries: an Introduction to the Teachings of Osho* by Osho. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

(Osho 1998) *The Book of Secrets: the Science of Meditation: a Contemporary Approach to 112 Meditations Described in the Vigyan Bhairav Tantra* by Osho. New York: St Martin's, 1998.

(Osho 2000) *The Book of Wisdom: the Heart of Tibetan Buddhism* by Osho. Boston: Element, 2000.

(Osho Rajneesh 1989) *The Zen Manifesto: Freedom from Oneself* by Osho Rajneesh. Cologne: Rebel Publishing House, 1989.

(Palmer 1988) 'Charisma and Abdication: a Study of the Leadership of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh' by Susan Palmer, in *Sociological Analysis*, 49:2, 1988, pp. 119-135.

(Prasad 1978) *Rajneesh, the Mystic of Feeling: a Study in Rajneesh's Religion of Experience* by Ram Chandra Prasad. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978. (First edition: Delhi, 1970.)

(Rajneesh 1975) *I am the Gate* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1975.

(Rajneesh 1975.2) *My Way: the Way of the White Clouds* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1975.

(Rajneesh 1976) *Hammer on the Rock: a Darshan Diary* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1976.

(Rajneesh 1977) *The Mystic Experience* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977. (Originally published in Hindi, 1971.)

(Rajneesh 1979) *The Perfect Way* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979. (First published in English as *The Path of Self-Realization*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966. Originally published in Hindi, 1965.)

(Rajneesh 1983) *The Book of Wisdom* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. 2 volumes. Oregon: Rajneesh Foundation International, 1983–1984.

(Rajneesh 1985) *Books I Have Loved* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Oregon: Rajneesh Foundation International, 1985. (Second edition 1998.)

(Rajneesh 1988) *Meditation: the First and Last Freedom* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Cologne: Rebel Publishing, 1988.

(Sarito 2000) *Autobiography of a Spiritually Incorrect Mystic* edited by Sarito Carol Neiman. New York: St Martin's Press, 2000.

(Vasant 1982) *The Awakened One: the Life and Work of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* by Vasant Joshi. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

(Vora 1970) *Rajneesh – a Glimpse* by V. Vora. Bombay: Jeevan Jagruti Kendra, 1970. ('Don't Read' series.)