

Osho's First Book From His First Camp.

Back in the 1960s Osho was talking to constantly changing crowds of listeners. This made him bored and tiresome as again and again he had to start from ABC with listeners who seemed occupied with other more mundane matters than their personal growth: smoking their beedis and chit-chatting with their fellow listeners. The urge evolved to work with the same gathering of meditators over a few days to create a sacred space for them to experiment with their being and where they could actively do something and not just sit in an assembly of passive listeners. So from 1962 until 1974, when Osho moves to Poona, he organizes meditation camps, usually four times a year, each with a duration from three to ten days. During these camps he gives several daily discourses and leads various meditations, including a variety of exercises in being silent. Recordings from his discourses at these early meditation camps were among his first published books.

Ranakpur Meditation Camp became a landmark in Osho's work because for the first time his discourses and meditations were recorded and published in a book *Sadhana-Path* which was widely acclaimed in India. Osho later says that this book contains his whole teaching, which has never altered. The audio-recording of his speeches began at Ranakpur, and he was with this new technology entering a new level for the spreading of his message as during the 1960s the importance of recording and documenting the words of Acharya Rajneesh was slowly to be recognized. The book is now in print with the English title *The Perfect Way*.

A few years before the well-known camp in Ranakpur 1964, Osho had arranged two earlier meditation camps in Jabalpur itself, the first one arranged at *Khandari Water Works* in 1962 and the second one at *The Agricultural Institute* in 1963 when he was living in Napier Town, Jabalpur. The first camp was arranged in the open on the insistence of his friends and with *Kaksi Bhai Menandiwala* as its secretary, a Gujarati Jain and very close friend of Rajneesh. At this first camp no sleeping arrangements were made for the participants in the camp, so everyone had to find his own lodging outside the camp site.

In 1964 the news went that a third meditation camp was to be held for five days from June 3rd 1964 at *Shree Muchala Mahavir Ji Campus* in *Ranakpur*, 60 km north of *Udaipur* in *Rajasthan* and tucked away in a remote valley of the *Aravalli* range. Ranakpur was his choice for this camp due to its magnificent sub-tropical scenery and the sacredness of the place, with the *Adinath* temple complex built in honour of the Jain *Tirthankaras* and one of the most important pilgrimage places of Jainism. The temple itself is of enchanting beauty with its ornamented marble columns and brimming white exterior which changes its appearance during the day contrasting the lush green of the surrounding forest. Even though this camp was mainly organized by *Shree Kothari Ji*, former minister of the Rajastani Government, and at the request of Rajneesh's friends in Rajasthan, the attendants for the camp reached about sixty men and women. Some of them had known him for years and were coming from Rajneesh's 'homely' locations far away, Gadarwara, Jabalpur and Sagar in Madhya Pradesh.

In the evening of June 3rd Acharya Rajneesh inaugurated the Ranakpur meditation camp and addressed the listeners in his welcome speech:

"I see man engulfed in deep darkness. He has become like a house whose lamp has been snuffed out on a dark night. Something in him has been extinguished. But a lamp that has been extinguished can be relit.

I see as well that man has lost all direction. He has become like a boat that has lost its way on the high seas. He has forgotten where he wants to go and what he wants to be. But the memory of what has been forgotten can be re-awakened in him.

Although there is darkness there is no cause for despair. The deeper the darkness, the closer the dawn. In the offing I see a spiritual regeneration for the whole world. A new man is about to be born and we are in the throes of his birth. But this regeneration needs the cooperation of each of us. It is to happen through us and through us alone. We cannot afford to be mere spectators. We must all prepare for this rebirth within ourselves."

In his welcome speech Osho also gave the participants three guidelines:

"The first maxim is: live in the present. Only the present is real and alive. And if the truth is to be known it can be known only through the present.

The second maxim is: live naturally. Just as actors in a play remove their costumes and makeup and put them aside after the performance, in these five days you must remove your false masks and live in it.

The third maxim is: live alone. Inside, do not allow things to crowd in on you. And the same is true for the outside - live by yourself as if you are all alone at this camp. You don't have to maintain relations with anyone else."

The meditations practised at the camp were all silent meditations, sitting calmly watching your breath in *Vipassana* meditation in the morning hour before the sermon, or relaxing your body in the evening into *Shawasan* (Posture of the Dead) following the evening discourse. To some of the fifty to sixty participants Rajneesh was a well-known figure, but to many listeners this camp was their first meeting with Acharya Rajneesh. Devotees from other states in India than Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan had not even been informed of the meditation camp in Ranakpur, and in a final announcement when the camp came to an end, an all-India meditation camp was heralded with its place and dates to be announced later on. In Osho's own words the meditation camp and the silent meditations practised there in Ranakpur are mentioned in a letter from 1964 printed in *A Cup of Tea*:

"My respects to you.

Your letters were received.

I have been away, so I could not reply at once.

I have just got back from a camp at Ranakpur.

It was just for friends from Rajasthan,
that's why you weren't informed.

It lasted five days and about sixty people participated.

It was a wonderful success

and it was obvious that much happened.

Encouraged by the results

the organizers are planning a camp on an all-India basis.

You must come to that.

I am glad to hear your meditation is progressing.
You have only to be silent.
To be silent is everything.
Silence does not mean absence of speech,
it means absence of thoughts.
When the mind quietens down it becomes linked to the infinite.
Don't do anything,
just sit and watch the flow of thoughts,
just watch.
This *just watching* dissolves thought by itself.
The awakening of witnessing
brings freedom from the modifications of the mind.
With thoughts finished,
consciousness *is*.
This is *samadhi*.

Love to all friends."

So Rajneesh's first publication for a wider audience in Hindi was *Sadhana Path* containing lectures from his camp in *Ranakpur* 3.6. - 8.6.1964. Arvind Kumar Jain as his secretary typed *Sadhana Path* from the handwritten paper manuscript in Hindi, and Osho made the proofreading himself and he also corrected from the typesetting later on. The booklet on 152 pages was published by Jivan Jagriti Sangh, Bombay, in December 1964. This series of ten discourses later became his first publication in English as *The Path of Self-Realization* (1966), also with an alternate title as *Path to Self Realisation* (1971), and finally titled *The Perfect Way* (1979).

Among the early publications rewritten and improved by Krishna Prem in Poona 1977 we find a new translation of *The Perfect Way* due to the somewhat inadequate first translation into English by *T.V. Parameswar Iyer*. In the introduction to his rewriting of the first English edition, Krishna Prem writes in May 1977:

"Wake up! You are not who you think you are! This is the call of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. It is the daily morning reveille at his Ashram in Poona; it is the call he has been making for over twenty years.

"The Perfect Way" is early-Rajneesh, 1964. Thirteen years ago. The discourses and question-and-answer sessions in this volume came out of his first testing of a new idea, the meditation camp. He envisaged an intensive programme lasting several days and allowing seekers to dive totally into an atmosphere of meditation. That initial camp was held in early June in a quiet spot in the hills of Rajasthan, and Bhagwan has used the camp format ever since. At the Rajneesh Foundation Ashram in Poona one ten-days camp is held every month...But no matter how hard they resisted the Truth or how hard or how subtly we resist it now Bhagwan kept on and keeps on calling. 15.000 words a day. 105.000 words a week. 5.500.000 words a year."

In her Introduction to the paperback edition from Rajneeshpuram July 1984 *Ma Deva Sarito* writes:

"It is June 3, 1964, and a group of people have gathered in a secluded retreat in the hills of Rajasthan, India. Few, if any can imagine they are participating in an event which will prove to be the first seed of a revolutionary experiment in the flowering of

human consciousness - one which will eventually transform the lives of hundreds of thousands of people over the world...This book is page after page of blue sky."

And on the cover notes for the Motilal Banarsidass edition in 1979 we can read: "These discourses are the outcome of Shree Rajneesh's first testing of a new idea, the meditation camp, envisaging an intensive programme lasting several days, which enabled the seekers to dive totally into an atmosphere of meditation...He shocks, seduces, stuns, soothes, spans, spins spicy and sensational stories and sends his disciples spiralling into incredible spaces - and incredible growth. *The Perfect Way* is among the clearest, cleanest and most concise collections of Bhagwan's words."

The Perfect Way is without any doubt among Osho's core publications from Jabalpur, and it presents the essence of his early message to be elaborated upon in his numerous discourses in years to come. It is in the same league as *I Am the Gate* (1972) from Bombay and his opening English discourse series from Poona *My Way. The Way of the White Clouds* (1976).