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FOREWORD

The Journey of the Heart

A story of a disciple with a living Master by Ma Yoga Laxmi

'The Journey of the Heart' is Ma Yoga Laxmi's story of growing up in a wealthy family in India and leading a seemingly normal average life until the totally unimaginable happened. It was a sudden turnaround. In the early sixties, she met the greatest spiritual master of her times Osho, formerly known to his disciples as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. With this the urge to seek and a quest in life surfaced and the mundane and meaningless dropped. She began to ask herself 'who am I'? It was a clarion call from an unknown dimension and she began the inner journey. She was perhaps never the same again.

During the early adult years Mahatma Gandhi influenced Laxmi. Gandhi and the other leaders of the freedom movement visited her country house in Kutch, Gujarat. Involved with the independence movement her father worshipped him and pursued his philosophy of simplicity. Convinced that Indians needed to promote an indigenous industry and shun imported cloth, Laxmi also took to weaving *khadi* hand spun cotton for her clothes. Until one day Osho explained that if people who could afford do not buy good quality Indian mill made cloth hundreds of workers would be jobless, as production would be terminated. Moreover time used to spin could be utilized in realizing oneself. She got the point. Gandhi was pushed back into the past. Thus began her 'Journey of the Heart'.

In her very first meeting with the Master she had deep and intense experiences of meditation. Instantly she knew that she had been in search of this master. He exuded peace and his presence made her serene yet alive. But at most times she had difficulty to express the experience in words.

Osho travelled all over India on invitation in late 1960's and lectured on religion and life. Laxmi's family met him one after the other and were immediately fascinated. Later the family invited him to stay at their home during his visits to Mumbai earlier known as Bombay. He was frequently in Mumbai and she diligently used these opportunities to know him closely.

In 1969 a few friends invited Osho to come and live in Mumbai. This was an important step in his work. Once settled at one place he saved time and energy and could meet many more people. In addition he was saved of the hardships of travelling in India. He now began to lecture in English. Soon Hindi books and a bi monthly English magazine entitled 'Sannyas' were published. Disciples and volunteers managed all the activities. The numbers increased in multiples as the presence of an Enlightened Master is a rare gift of existence and the sheer presence transforms seekers. The organization made arrangements for the influx of seekers from the west and later from all over the world. Now he travelled only to conduct meditation camps. In the Nargol Meditation Camp, Gujarat, western India, Laxmi had a deep experience of meditation. On her own she changed to wearing only orange, a colour worn by hermits in India and became Osho's first neo sannyasin.

In 1970 he held a meditation camp in Manali, in the Himalayas. Nearly fifty people including Laxmi attended this camp. It was here that he formally initiated his first group of neo sannyasins. It was not long before the news of this enlightened Buddha spread worldwide, mostly by word of mouth at first. Within a decade he had a million disciples. Laxmi met all the visitors and neo sannyasins who came to see him first as she handled his appointments for the day. It may not be untrue to state later she had become one of his intimate disciples. Before long, she also became his secretary, his personal assistant, and the office manager. The development of Jeevan Jagruti Kendra Trust and later the Shree Rajneesh Ashram is chiefly owed to her organizing and

mobilizing the rather scarce resources in those times optimally.

However it was not long before Osho outgrew the Bombay apartment. He gave up lecturing to people and gave discourses only to his disciples. To meet the growth Laxmi set out to find facilities for an ashram- a commune where a large number of sannyasins could live, meditate and be creative. Many were keen to do so.

Laxmi found an ideal facility for a new ashram in a suburb of Poona, now known as Pune. This was a three-hour drive from Mumbai. The trust purchased a property and Osho moved to Shree Shree Rajneesh Ashram, Pune on 21st March 1974. Later adjoining properties were purchased or leased to cater to the ever-growing requirement in the ashram. Many creative projects were launched and soon the ashram became a hub of mediation and creativity. About two hundred sannyasins lived in the ashram. Thousands of sannyasins lived around the ashram in the township of Pune. Meditations and *darshans* were held every day as more and more seekers thronged this 'Buddha field'.

The Shree Rajneesh Ashram later known as Osho Commune International was a unique experiment in modern day commune life under the auspices of a living Buddha. For her to be in charge of its inception and development was an incredible experience.

Laxmi was petite, short, and fair. A round face, high cheekbones, she had a pleasant appearance. Simple and well dressed she was very conscious of hygiene. Her eyes would shine and face lit up with a smile whenever Osho and his work were mentioned. She often waved her left hand while speaking to reinforce her point. Her diminutive appearance was no match to the calm yet passionate and eternal energy in her. She had a small body but was a giant in terms of courage and guts.

Sharp in work she took risks and inherited the acumen for business from her father. Dynamic she was a firm decision-maker. An asset for the ashram she was not even a graduate. Within a few years she was running an international spiritual organization with the blessings of an enlightened Master. The organization became large and stable with the world's best professionals who contributed because of their love for their Master. She often said that the expansion of work was "His" (Osho's) benediction and grace. Perhaps it was also her deep-rooted trust in the master and commitment to his work. The disciples and visitors were fond of her and looked up to her qualities of organization, leadership and commitment and loved her surrender, meditative-ness and dedication.

A large eater until a schoolmate called her fat in school she began to eat meagre quantities of food. And worked tirelessly for an average of fourteen hours per day. A vegetarian who had not travelled overseas (until 1981), she organized international cuisines on the menu in the restaurants of the ashram soon.

At a certain point of her journey she dropped her identification with 'I' and referred to herself in third person in speech- as 'Laxmi' rather than as 'I'. Since then it was natural that she never used the expression 'I' in her day-to-day conversations, and in this book when she tells her story. She talks about herself and her experiences in the third person with only an occasional use of the first person plural ('we').

Like in the eastern philosophy, Osho said every seven years bring a total change in a person. The physical body regenerates itself into a totally new set of cells and the inner spirit also grows to a new level of being. In this book she describes her story in terms of seven-year cycles and how each cycle introduced a change in her life.

As regards her childhood and family in the Chapter entitled 'Recollections' she narrates how she was raised in a typical Indian style joint family with eleven brothers, sisters and cousins. The joint family is a fascinating contrast to the nuclear family in the west. Her family belonged to the wealthy upper class Jain caste; and she and the other children had the best of everything in their childhood.

'The Journey of the Heart' is Laxmi's story of the spiritual journey of an intimate disciple of an enlightened Buddha. It ends with the story of the Pune Commune, 1981. In the same year she resigned as the Director of Rajneesh Foundation, and the commune was relocated to Antelope, Oregon, USA. She lived independently in Woodstock, New York for some time. Later she returned to India in 1986. She led a retired and quiet life in New Delhi, Mumbai and visited Osho Commune International occasionally. She breathed her last in the family home in Mumbai.

- A fellow traveller

"You cannot be adventurous when you are unhappy. Adventure needs a subtle happiness in you. Then you can leave the known...only with a dancing heart...happy, blissful, positive...can take you into the uncharted".

Osho: The Book Of Secrets III, 1976



An English Jewish midwife delivered a pretty baby girl at home at 0830 hrs on February 12 1933 in Bombay (India) now known as Mumbai. The newborn was administered a drop of brandy mixed with honey by the midwife. Spiritual enlightened masters have said time and over again that the spirit is eternal and continues to exist. It never ceases to exist. This spirit was now gifted a new physical body. This beautiful new body came to be known as Laxmi.

Laxmi was born in haste narrates Mataji, her mother Srimati Kuruwa . So much so Mataji did not have enough notice to reach her bedroom. Mataji was forced to deliver the baby standing. Laxmi was born on carpeted floor. Traditional midwives confirm that mothers to be who are relaxed deliver in ease and painlessly, even while standing. Folklore confirms Buddha's mother delivered him into this world standing.

After delivery Mataji lay on the floor. Generally in India immediately post birth heated stoves are lit below the bed of the mother. However Mataji caught a chill, as it is over half hour later that she reached her bed. There was no time to light any stove and provide the much-desired warmth to the body. This led to a severe pain in her leg. Often at night she would groan and scream in pain, while neighbors wondered if they should report about wife beating to the local police.

Seeing her in acute pain Laxmi's father called a doctor. He recommended that the leg be amputated as nil circulation of blood caused unbearable pain. Or else she would die. This shocked the family. The family vaid, ayurved and natural doctor cum healer was summoned. Treatment ensued. Mataji was advised to stay off food for nine days. She cleared her bowels on the ninth day, following which she was served one-fourth cup of soup cooked in water, cardamom and sugar. This liquid diet continued for seven days. Then a few moong, whole green beans were added to the soup. A few days later she began regular meals with the family. The vaid cured her leg. Amputation was not required. Doctors who practiced modern medicine were surprised that Mataji's leg was cured, including the one who recommended amputation.

An ancient and traditional knowledge ayurved medicine was passed on to the following generation orally. There was virtually no documentation of the results of medicines administered to patients or of knowledge. For lack of documented results, therefore modern medicine does not recognize it as a scientific school of medicine. For ages, people in India have relied on ayurved because modern medicine did not exist. They trusted the ayurved system. Like in modern medicine, in ayurved too, dosage and strength of medicine depends on symptoms of a diseased patient.

Many a *vaid*, in India heal people with their magic potions. These are derived from medicinal plants and herbs. Some of these are dried, boiled or cooked for days. The extract of the boiled syrup is then converted into oil like substance. This one particularly used venom of snakes for treatment. Unlike modern practitioners they do not need any examination and scanning of the body. These practitioners trust their sense of reading

patient's pulse.

Many years before Laxmi was born, the family was introduced to this *vaid*. He cured Laxmi's uncle who suffered from a fatal appendicitis. A doctor called especially flown in from Germany said, "The appendix is ready to burst and is fatal with or without surgery. The patient will not live in either case". On the contrary the *vaid* asked for a needle, an empty bottle and a bottle of honey. He administered honey with the needle repeatedly for three days to the patient and cured uncle.

This successful and renowned *vaid* had cured many patients, and a vast medical experience. He had one son who was to inherit unbounded knowledge. A student under his tutelage the son once fell sick with typhoid and was given a special remedy. The *vaid* left home because of a medical emergency in his wife's care. However he warned his wife not to feed him. In case their son was very thirsty he could only be given water that was treated with gold. The sick boy began wailing once his father went out of the house. He pleaded for food. Unfortunately the mother gave in to the boy's mournful requests for just a handful of puffed rice. Just as he ate the puffed rice he was very sick.

The *void* returned home to see that his son was very sick. He checked his son's pulse. Immediately he knew that he had had eaten in his absence. He asked his wife why she fed the child when he had instructed her not to feed him at all except with water. The *void* said his son would not live as intake of puffed rice contradicted the remedy. Although his wife regretted and was remorse the boy never recovered. He died.

The *void* did not teach his grandson *ayurved*. The legacy would terminate with him. He stated that his son's death was a message of nature that knowledge must not be passed on to next generation. However he prepared general medicines for his grandson so that he could make a living by merchandising. Although during his practice he compiled information in Sanskrit but could not publish it. Thus all his knowledge and experience faded away after his demise.

Hindus worldwide worship Goddess *Laxmi*, Goddess of wealth. Goddess *Laxmi* is the wife of Lord Vishnu. For *Laxmi*'s father, the day of her birth was extraordinary as he earned a lot of money on that day; therefore he christened the new born *Laxmi*.

Laxmi had six cousins, three brothers and three sisters elder to her. Prior to *Laxmi*'s birth both her father and uncle (her father's brother) had lost three wives each. These children were born of the fourth wedlock. *Laxmi*'s father and her uncle were over thirty years old and mature when they became fathers. At thirty plus, parenting was a new experience for *Laxmi*'s father and uncle. *Mataji* and aunt (uncles' wife) were sisters.

Rich and in an expanding business the families lived a life of opulence. In a large house in a posh area in Mumbai, the families lived altogether as a joint family. While father and *Mataji* shared a room so did uncle and aunt. The children too had a playroom. They worshipped Lord Mahavir the Jain *Tirthankara*. However *Laxmi*'s father said that his great grandfather also worshipped the Hindu Lord Krishna. There were pictures of both Krishna and Mahavir at home. Therefore as for religion, the family was flexible and non ritualistic.

Surrounded by *gopis*, milkmaids the images of Lord Krishna evoked excitement, joy and playfulness in *Laxmi*. As a child *Laxmi* was fascinated with Krishna and loved to read his stories. *Laxmi* would often spend hours gazing at Krishna's' portraits and statues. *Laxmi* was not so fascinated by Mahavir as he lacks color.

Laxmi's parents were both good looking, were loved and respected in the community. *Laxmi*'s father was an active social worker and involved in several welfare projects. As a trustee of a rich Jain temple, he also organized to build a large housing complex for lower income group. A sporty person especially fond of playing cricket many came to him for advice. After work each day at home with a pint of alcohol, he would play with all the children. *Mataji* looked after the home and children.

The family celebrated *Shivratri*, a festival dedicated to Hindu god Lord Shiva. On this day Hindus consume *bhong*, derived from poppy seeds. A strong homemade drink it makes people high. Blended with cardamom, pistachio, saffron, nutmeg and dry rose flower petals it is added to milk. *Bhaiyaji*, a tribesman from north India made this drink each year in the Kuruwa household. But *Laxmi* did not get a kick. *Laxmi* told *bhaiyaji* that his drink was not a success.

Accepting the challenge and determined to knock *Laxmi* out totally, he struck a copper coin several times on stone and added it to the drink. Least expecting that the recipe had had a rustic and original touch this time; *Laxmi* gulped a glassful as usual. This time it clicked. *Laxmi* was on an instant high. *Laxmi* laughed for sometime, followed by intense crying. This entertained the children in the family and they teased her. They chased her. Soon *Laxmi* rushed out of her room and chased them all over the house. Put to bed perforce by *Mataji* *Laxmi* recovered from the influence of *bhong* after three days.

Laxmi had a beautiful and playful childhood. The family was up at seven in the morning and was served tea. By eight the children were out on bullock carts and horses in the agriculture fields. This was followed by a swim in the family pool, which all of them loved. Meanwhile by two in the afternoon lunch was carted from home through the fields on bullock carts. Lunch was served on poolside. The children were naughty and did not step out of the pool easily. They would overstay in water and playfully ask that food be served to them in the pool. As there were no gas stoves near the pool, food was heated on kerosene stoves near poolside. This would mean reheating food repeatedly as the children were reluctant to step out of the pool.

Uncle inculcated book reading habit in the children. Encouraged to read the children would go with uncle to bookshops. They selected books both in English and regional Indian language, Gujarati. Laxmi particularly liked to read adventure and mythical stories.

Laxmi feels living in a way a joint family is a pressure, but on the whole it is the best type of family life. It has its joys and pains. Laxmi felt that it was like a big encounter group. Family members constantly encountered each other. Day in and day relating with the family worked like a therapy.

There were always children, children, children and an equal number of adults at home. To each child there was one adult as a caretaker. However the adult was not as a watcher but more like a friend. He or she would sit nearby and occasionally came over to check if the child needed any assistance. It was not an imposition therefore beautiful. Laxmi had a few cousins, and brothers and sisters until her early childhood; the younger cousins were born later. Growing up in the midst of these children was like being mirrors to each other. The maximum age difference between any two children was two years, thus Laxmi was never lonely.

The family house was well built and well maintained. Special care was taken to provide a hygienic environment for the children. The kitchen was particularly clean and away from the living room. The children's room was away too, so that guests were not disturbed with their daylong mischief.

Each night cotton mattresses were rolled out for the children at home on first floor as beds. Made of fine quality cotton bed linen was always clean. To comfort the children perfume was sprayed in this room at bedtime. Later the windows would be opened for fresh fragrance emitted by *champa* and *rat ki rani* creepers. This fragrance wafted through out the night from these creepers to fill the bedrooms and the home with natural fragrance and freshness.

The children grew up very fond of each other and a sense of belonging. They wore loose fitting nightclothes made of very fine cotton at night. It felt gentle and light like silk. During the day they played with best and latest toys. A pet dog would play with the children. All the children were fond of him. One day while repair and construction was going on at home a wooden slab fell and he died instantly under it. The children missed him and did not get any sleep during the night. They missed the dog for several days.

Laxmi was fond of eating imported Kit Kat. Kit Kat is a sweet, the wrapper of which carried a photo of Laxmi's favorite Hollywood actress Shirley Temple. Laxmi's older brother tricked her out of a lot of her pocket money. Each time he borrowed money he assured her that he would return the money. He never did. However he bought her Kit Kat because he knew of her weakness for the picture of Shirley.

Well trained the cooks at home made delicious food, including a sweet dish called *salampak* made of pearl powder and nuts. Each morning in the winters the family ate a small cube of it with saffron base milk, especially the children. They were not allowed to step out of the house to play if they did not eat the regular dose. Regular supplies of luscious rich mangoes, sweet papayas, ripe bananas, *jamun*, a typical purple colored Indian fruit of the monsoons, and coconut came in from the orchard in the suburbs owned by the family. Dairy products came in from a dairy owned by the family. Two Indian workers tended to the cows and buffalos in the dairy farm.

Close knit the family ate dinner at the dining table. Often they would share a dish. During these meals the family sat altogether and shared the day with each other, many a difference were sorted out. With meaningful and communication full of compassion the family huddled and loved each other. This ongoing communication resulted in everyone speaking his or her mind. Problems were resolved nearly the same day

as a result the past was never overbearing. This understanding further united the family.

Folk singers often came to stay at the family farmhouse in Kutch, Gujarat in western India. The family farmhouse was always charged with music. These singers sang ballads and stories of kings and queens, of enlightened masters *Buddha*, *Mahavir* and *Krishna*. They sang ragas, composition of notes of Indian classical music. Some of the ragas are a thousand years old. A raga is marked for singing at specific hours during day and night. A few ragas are sung only during special events in a lifetime. Raga *Malhar* is said to have invoked rain god *Indra* to shower rain. Raga *Bhupali* is sung early morning, while Raga *Malkaush* is sung at night.

Laxmi organized her day meticulously. A good time manager and well-trained cook, she could get a meal ready for unexpected guests too, in minimum time. Also while cleaning too Laxmi kept track of time. At school Laxmi learnt to play harmonium, an Indian piano, which was later used for kirtan. Before Osho gave a discourse kirtan and *bhajans*, Indian devotional music, was sung. Many years later the harmonium was lost during discourse from the stage. With that ended the relationship with that harmonium.

EXPOSURE TO GANDHI'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE

“You have experienced something of God... God flashed like lightening, but you could not catch hold of his face, you could not figure it out, how he looks, and he was gone. It was so fast and sudden”.

Osho: Walk Without Feet, Fly Without Wings and Think Without Mind, 1979

Laxmi grew up amidst the freedom struggle in India. Gandhi emancipated women. Several changes were introduced for women. Modern and progressive in his outlook Gandhi said men and women are equal. He encouraged literacy for women. At home Laxmi's Uncle held orthodox views on women. He planned to send the boys to school while the girls would be tutored at home.

Seven years old Laxmi was hurt that she would not attend school like her brothers. Laxmi told her uncle that she wanted to go to school with her brothers. He replied sternly, “You will be tutored at home and will learn what your brothers learn at school, but you cannot go to school. It is out of question. Girls have to be trained to take care of the house and family and children. The boys are special because they have to go out into the world and earn money. For this reason education at school is necessary for the boys. I do not want any argument. This is how it is, so go away and don't waste my time”.

Laxmi was angry. “Is God partial to boys?” asked Laxmi before leaving the room. Turning away Laxmi told her uncle that she would not eat and talk to anyone until she was permitted to go to school with the boys.

This was Laxmi's first major confrontation with uncle. Laxmi went to her room and locked the door behind her. This was Laxmi's first rebellion. Laxmi had learnt to fast in protest and fearlessly ask for her rights from the peer Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the nation.

Laxmi's father respected his elder brother and managed the business without any interference at home and with the upbringing of the children. Uncle had an additional charge of home affairs and upbringing of the children. He was also in charge of the schooling of all boys. However Laxmi's father told uncle to review his decision regarding Laxmi attending school or else to leave her alone. Uncle was bitter about this as this was the first instance his younger brother overruled his decision.

Meanwhile Laxmi did not relent and in anger was unaware of the pangs of hunger and thirst. Though later when Laxmi felt the pangs of hunger and thirst she determined not to unlock the door. Waiting for someone to appear at the door fatigued Laxmi fell asleep. Aunty was very loving, soft spoken and she knocked at Laxmi's door at ten in the night. Touched with tears in her eyes, Laxmi said she would open the door provided uncle permitted her to attend school.

Just then uncle was ascending the staircase and he overheard the conversation. He asked Laxmi to see him in his room. Both Laxmi and her aunt went to his room. Still livid he surrendered the responsibility of Laxmi's upbringing to her father. He added Laxmi's father wished to send her to school he would not interfere. However he burst out and told Laxmi that she was stubborn and she must never see him again for anything. This shocked the family. Nevertheless Laxmi joined school. The first instance of Laxmi's father exercising his independent mind, this took the two brothers apart.

Barely a ten minutes walk from home Laxmi attended a public English medium school along with her brothers

and male cousins. The staff of this school was trained at Rabindra Nath Tagore's Shantiniketan School. Tagore, the acclaimed poet and Nobel Prize winner loved music. In his vision a child's interest was prime and he believed a child must not be forced to perform. The staff coached the students on the guidelines of Tagore and imparted his teachings regularly to the students. The male teachers wore *kurtas*, a long shirt and pajamas. Once in a while the principal wore *salvar*, a north Indian style pant also worn by Nehru. Inspired by Tagore the male teachers donned beard and long tresses of hair like him. Himself a seeker the principal would say "ame" which means "we". If at all he did say "I " he would immediately correct himself and say "ame".

Laxmi has a distinct memory of her first day at school. Her stomach churned because she had made it to school in spite of uncle's ire. Confident, Laxmi received a good welcome to the class. There were over seven hundred children attending school. Some were playing while the others were jumping. A feverish excitement prevailed. After school hours Uncle came to pick up the children. En route home he asked all the boys as to how their day had been. However he did not inquire of Laxmi. Exuberant, excited Laxmi bubbling with joy narrated her stories even though no one asked her. Uncle merely smiled. He had stopped relating with her and did not hold any conversation with her. The ice did not break till he died. If there was any communication at all it was always initiated by Laxmi. He did not make any effort either.

School was like second home as children had the freedom and spent several hours at school.

Each day school began with a prayer. The students sat on floor laden with mats in the assembly hall and were trained not to step on these mats with their shoes on. This was a test of their awareness. In the middle of the day the school bell would chime musically. This was an invitation for all present to observe silence and pray for two minutes each day in the assembly hall.

Once Laxmi inadvertently stepped on the mat in the assembly hall with her shoes on. Promptly the principal asked her to sit on the mat and clean it. Laxmi obeyed, cleaned and later sat on the mat. A few days later the principal stepped on the mat. Laxmi went up to him requesting him to sit down on the mat. At first he ignored Laxmi. However on Laxmi's insistence he sat on the mat. Many were amazed with Laxmi's boldness. Since that day both students and staff were cautious not to step on mats. Each one tried to remain aware.

A good eater Laxmi put on weight until once a schoolmate called her fat and overweight. To this Laxmi reacted sharply and told her to shut up, yet she felt the bulging belly. Soon Laxmi realized that she needed to eat with more awareness and less greed. Laxmi followed her awareness and shaped up her body. Later in her life Laxmi heard Osho say that body has its own clock and if one attuned oneself to it, the body is in harmony.

Tagore breathed his last when Laxmi was rather young. Deeply influenced at school, she imbibed many values, including those of responsibility and truth. Laxmi was grateful to her teacher, principal and above all Tagore. Secular in school there were no dictates on how and who to worship. The students came from all religious and political backgrounds. Laxmi credits this openness to Tagore although Laxmi learnt of the significance of these values after her meeting with Osho. The students were groomed with humility and kindness. They were coached to greet people as per the Indian tradition with both palms folded together like in prayer. This is called *namaskar* and in India it denotes -I honor the light in you. The students recited a prayer from the holy Hindu book the Upanishad read "Lord, lead us to Truth from untruth". Moreover the motto at school was '*Satya mev Jayate*' which means truth always wins. Many a renowned musician, dancer, writer and poets were invited to reinforce the idea of truth in children. Also they performed in school.

Amongst the many habits Laxmi noticed that she would rationalize many a time when things did not work out her way. The effort was to blame the other and or circumstances for any and every issue and never take the responsibility. In this context Laxmi was reminded of a story especially liked a story Osho narrated more than once in discourses. The story is about the fox and grapes suspended from a creeper. Having failed to reach the bunch of grapes in spite of jumping several times, the fox turned away to leave in disappointment. Just then a rabbit that watched the fox walk away called out to the fox. "What happened can't you reach the grapes?" "They are sour," replied the fox and walked away.

Bold Laxmi made an impression on her teaches too. A sporty child Laxmi was introduced to swimming along

with the other students. The instructor asked students to jump into the pool. Gripped with fear none did. Feeling the water with her hands Laxmi jumped and swam spontaneously and fearlessly.

Laxmi's favorite game was *hootutu* also known as *kabadi*. A simple team game it needs no expensive gadgets and can be played in an open field. Two teams of twenty players each assemble on either side of the field to play the game. The centerline divides the field into two equal areas, one for each of the teams. Each player must approach the center repeating *hootututtutu*...in a single breath. Inhaling is not permitted. The mantra should be audible while the player approaches the center continuously chanting *hooottuttututu*. If caught near the centerline in this process by a rival player he/she must free himself/ herself, continuously chanting *hooottuttuuuttu* even if it means breathlessness. Untouched the player must return to his /her side of the field. Or else the player is declared out. All the players get a chance to play. The team with fewer players declared out wins at the end.

As a player Laxmi recalls doing physical exercises that helped deep breathing. Many years later Laxmi realized why as a child she was fond of the game hootutu. Laxmi realized the significance of deep breathing after meeting Osho. "Hoo" is vital as it hits the navel center each time we chant it. Hootutu has the potential to lead one to meditation because of the importance laid on deep breathing.



Laxmi loved to experiment in the laboratory cleaning salt, sugar and working with mercury and aluminum foil. A repair mechanic suggested that Laxmi get learning sets and learn how to repair radios at home. Soon Laxmi repaired iron, clock and typewriters nearly mechanical household goods.

Laxmi had had an unusual experience in a merry-go-round once in her childhood. Laxmi saw the merry-go-round go round and round. It was an adventure. On the face of it was just a merry-go-round that turned round and round at the navel center. However deep inside all seemed to come to have come to stand still. The thought process had suddenly stopped. Laxmi felt she had entered into a timeless zone. With an intense vibration at the navel center Laxmi was very fearful. Years later Laxmi had a similar experience while meditating at Nargol, Gujarat. However the experience this time at Nargol was one of ecstasy.

Back at home Laxmi's father was influenced by the freedom fighters, in particular with ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. More so with Gandhi's charisma. Laxmi's father met leading leaders, including Gandhi, Sri Vallabhai Patel, Sri Morarji bhai, Acharya Kripalani whenever required. Stating that he had a family to rear Laxmi's father he offered to help the freedom struggle with funds. During his stay at the Kurwa family house in Kutch, Gujarat, Gandhi gained nearly three pound weight and stated in his diary that he would like to revisit it. But a fanatic Hindu assassinated him in the following year.

Laxmi shared a beautiful relationship with her father. Enamored she embraced his values and practices. None else in the family cared about these details. Laxmi's father offered prayers to the picture of Mahatma Gandhi each morning. Laxmi imitated him and during these moments of silence. Laxmi had yet another glimpse of timelessness, of a brief look into eternity. This silence refreshed her. Laxmi shared this joy with Mataji confirmed a prayer from the heart gets an ear from the gods. Many years later Osho said to be present in a moment transports one into a timeless zone. Like a brief look into eternity and then one returns. He said this brief experience refreshes one.

In accordance with the Mahatma's endeavor to provide employment and means to make a living to millions of jobless Indians, Laxmi's father always wore white hand spun khadi topi, cotton cap and clothes. Khadi was a symbol of nationalists during the freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi. Yet he adorned it on his head only in the presence of Gandhi, and en route office. He would take it off just as he reached the office. In league with her father Laxmi from late childhood always wore white except to school and for a celebration of her brother's wedding. This was until she met Osho.

Many years later when Laxmi met Osho she realized Osho differed from Gandhi in many ways. Also Osho drew Laxmi's attention to this issue. He told Laxmi as a young man, like millions of others, he was fascinated with India seeking freedom from the British. This was because Indians wanted to be free in their own country. However Gandhi was for the freedom of the mind, while Osho was for inner freedom. He focused on freedom of self, from the dictates and clutches of mind games and conditioning of the mind. Osho talked about the intrinsic real freedom.

There was a sharp contrast between Laxmi's father and his brother. While uncle lived an aristocratic life father lived a plain life. Laxmi's father fasted once or twice in a month and lived frugally. He was loving, soft-spoken, social, moderate, progressive modern in his outlook and more involved in the business.

Laxmi was influenced by the tenets of Hinduism at a tender age. She had read Hindus in India attribute spiritual reasons to covering of the head. It is a way of protecting sahasrhar, seventh chakra (psychic center). Located at the top center of the head it is referred to as the lotus with thousand petals in body sciences of yoga. For centuries Brahmins wear chotis, a tuft of hair in the center of the back of the head. Sikhs too tuck their hair under a turban. For the same reason, Laxmi wore a scarf on her head for several years, until her arrival in USA. Isabel, Laxmi's assistant in Pune, once told Osho that Laxmi looked beautiful even without the scarf and requested him to ask Laxmi to drop the scarf. Osho asked her to stop wearing the scarf. Laxmi complied.

During her childhood Laxmi along with the children in the family got small pox. Hit by a severe bout Laxmi was very sad as at the end she lost her long and beautiful hair. In addition Laxmi's skin lost its luster and was densely spotted with chick-pea marks. Only ten years old, Laxmi was sensitive about her physical appearance. Her friends and staff at school did not accept this change in her physical appearance. Laxmi's friends and teachers, because of the changed appearance, rejected Laxmi. Ignored and neglected, Laxmi felt she was no longer beautiful. Lonely Laxmi was uncomfortable at school and felt like an outsider.

Much to her relief during vacations the family *vaid* treated her. With regular application of chickpea powder, milk and almond drops followed by a shower and two hours of swimming Laxmi's face recovered its luster. The cascading hair and spotless skin were restored. School reopened. The love and affection of her teachers and friends was restored. Laxmi could not understand this. Confused, Laxmi felt except for the intelligent people most were governed by the physical appearance of a person.

Barely ten, Laxmi first learnt of the death of her three- year old cousin owing to pneumonia. Laxmi did not understand death and saw her in her dreams. Sad, she felt a vacuum. Further Laxmi was shocked that her body was buried. Anxious what would happen to her cousin if it rained and ants would bite her in the grave, she persistently asked questions of her parents for a long time. Gradually the family explained to her that when a body died and was cremated as per the Hindu rites, it turned into dust. Therefore it did not matter if ants attacked the body or it rained because once dead a body was bereft of any feelings. All said and done death remained a mystery for Laxmi.

Coupled, these two incidents of superficial friendships, physical appearance and death shattered Laxmi. In moments of pain Laxmi was influenced by the story of Buddha who left comforts of palace in search of truth. Laxmi wanted to emulate Gautama the Buddha.

Laxmi planned to leave home and family in search of truth. Laxmi wrote to her cousin that she would leave home at midnight forbidding her to inform her family. However she slept through the night. In her dream Laxmi saw Lord Krishna laugh. Krishna told her that the inner search knows no physical boundaries. It happens in all circumstances and everywhere. There was no need to run away from physical or mental spaces. Moreover Buddha did return home after twelve years.

The next morning Laxmi was worried that her cousin would inform her father. A week later Laxmi's father asked when she would leave home in search of truth. Laxmi had tears in her eyes. Hugging father Laxmi said she would never leave him and go away. Laxmi narrated how in her dream Lord Krishna told her to be content with life. Laxmi's father laughed. Confident, Laxmi was not a coward he advised her that truth led to ease where as lies caused misery in life. With this episode the desire to renounce and be a *sadhvi*, feminine hermit dropped from Laxmi's plans and itinerary in life. Ironically years later Laxmi rolled into Osho's neo sannyas and was among the first few sannyasins.

As a child Laxmi did not pursue religion with rituals. Visits to the temple with the family were an appreciation of architecture, cool feel of marble, exotic statues draped in colorful satin and brocade, *prasad*, sweets offered to the gods, and fragrance of incense.

A REBELLIOUS SCHOOL GOER

“All cultures, particularly India in the old days, have completely destroyed the phenomenon of love. They had arranged marriages for their children so that there would be no possibility in love, because love leads to misery....

“But love never creates misery: It is you who poison it. Love is the deepest ecstasy that nature allows you. But you destroy it....In India the possibility of love was completely closed. Then only a mediocre life will be there. No misery, no happiness: just a pulling on somehow. And this is what marriage has been in the past”.

Osho: The Alpha And The Omega Volume I, 1976”

Gandhi laid down his life for the freedom in early 1900. Laxmi's father respected Gandhi for his pursuit of truth and courage. He was a major influence on Laxmi. Naturally Laxmi imbibed values Gandhi pursued. Laxmi's father loved her for this. Laxmi accompanied her father to a meeting at Bombay grounds to pass a resolution of the Quit India Movement. Leaders of the freedom movement, including Gandhi sat at the dais. Though well organized people pushed to get a glimpse of the national leaders. Laxmi held on to her father's hand through out the meeting.

Meanwhile Gandhi made an appeal for fund collection and began giving out autographs for five rupees each. All of a sudden the British had arrived on the scene in an attempt to disperse the meeting. Gunshots filled the air. Police on horseback shot into the air. Just then Laxmi tore lose from her father's grip and ran toward Gandhi who was signing to collect maximum funds for the freedom struggle. In the midst of chaos, surprisingly Laxmi managed to reach Gandhi and gave him a five rupee note she had had held on her body through the meeting. Excited to see Gandhi she thanked him for a pat on the head. The crowd whisked Laxmi away. However Laxmi's father managed to escort her back home. Excited with the fervor of this evening Laxmi also wanted to join the freedom fighters.

Barely seven years old Laxmi was enamored with Gandhi and began to wear *khadi*. And only white. To school she had to wear a red or a khaki belt. Through out the country there was a feverish pitch to fight for independence. In August 1947 the British were compelled to grant independence to India. The people of just independent India celebrated. Buildings were lit for three days. People on streets distributed sweets, hugged each other, shared their joy and congratulated each other. The people were all united and belonged to an independent nation.

Laxmi grew up in/with innocence. As sex was a taboo at home therefore not discussed Laxmi grew up ignorant until she was fourteen. Laxmi had no clue about puberty and the changes that emerge in the body with it. One day at school Laxmi informed her brother that she bled in her knickers even though she had not hurt herself. Shocked with her innocence he informed Mataji who had failed to educate her on the subject. Laxmi was sent back home from school. However later in the evening Laxmi's father comforted her. He said that this was a monthly feature and suggested she accept it and relaxes. However Laxmi was repulsed with the menstrual cycle month after month as it restricted playing and jumping.

Laxmi's cousin was married when she was barely fourteen. Unlike uncle Laxmi's father did not force her into a marriage soon after puberty even though matrimonial offers began pouring in for Laxmi from the wealthiest families of the community. Education not a must among girls there were hardly any educated girls in the community. Laxmi has this advantage. Even though Laxmi's elder sister was prettier than Laxmi however she did not get as much attention from prospective alliances. In this respect uncle was delighted that Laxmi

received cream matrimonial offers rare among girls and suggested that the offers be explored. However Laxmi was upset and asked her father why she had to leave the family who she loved so much. If she were forced into it Laxmi would conclude that her father did not love her and therefore could think of sending her away. This softened father and he agreed that he would pursue her if and when she was keen on it. He said, "For now we drop the matter. I will inform the families that Laxmi is interested to pursue further education. Should they like to wait they could". This surprised Laxmi's family and the families who proposed a liaison, however father was determined to pursue Gandhi's ideals to educate women and to not hurt Laxmi.

Laxmi finished school and studied liberal arts in college. However prior to examination Laxmi's aunt died of tuberculosis. Her youngest child was only two years old. The responsibility of the children was now Mataji's. Soon Mataji contracted tuberculosis and was operated upon. Laxmi perforce began to share housekeeping with Mataji missed classes in college several times. Education took a backseat. Inadequate attendance at college forced Laxmi to withdraw from examination. Soon Laxmi was fully involved with the family and housekeeping and rendered these responsibilities well. This pleased uncle as Laxmi was finally shaping up as girl as he desired.

Laxmi was at home through out the day. In her pursuit of new horizons Laxmi joined a women's organization, *Bhagini Samaj*. This organization served the poor and deprived women. This phase was ego fulfilling for Laxmi as several people observed that even though Laxmi belonged to a rich family she was unpretentious and served the needy and poor. Badminton, swimming and dress designing classes filled the rest of the day's time for Laxmi.

During grocery shopping for the family in the bazaar once Laxmi spotted a portrait of Krishna. A prized collection Laxmi framed it in glass and hung it at home. However an uncanny feeling constantly nagged Laxmi that if damaged it would bring ill luck to the family. Indeed a few weeks later young cousin broke the glass frame. Laxmi was anxious with what would follow. A few days later Laxmi's father fell sick. Medical reports confirmed he had had throat cancer. Laxmi felt it was owing to the broken glass frame. In order to look after him day and night Laxmi discontinued social work.

Meanwhile Laxmi's father was positive through out the terminal illness. He asked Laxmi to consider marriage, as he was sure that after his death she would find it difficult to pull along his brother as the head of the family. To comfort him Laxmi agreed to meet a young bachelor who had returned to India after completion of education overseas. The suitor sat silent through out the meeting gazing at the floor. At the end of it Laxmi laughed and rejected the proposal.

A week later father passed away.

However a few years later Osho shattered many a myths for Laxmi. He cleared several foggy perceptions including a broken glass brings ill luck and serving the needy was holy. Laxmi learnt form Osho that while the former was sheer negative state of mind. The latter only boosted the ego of the person who indulged in it.

Laxmi missed her father for a long time, as he was her friend and guide. For several days Laxmi stayed alone in his room. Laxmi cried, talked to him at night as though he were living. Laxmi cleaned the room, arranged beds, ironed his clothes in attempt to relate with him and feel his presence. For several days Mataji felt that Laxmi was in an unconscious state of mind.

As customary in India all the relatives sat in large circle and Mataji a red sari with a black border and glass bangles and a *tika*, a red dot on her forehead. The bangles were crushed, *tika* erased and changed into a white sari. All this denoted that she was to lead a colorless life devoid of interest.

Hindus believe the etheric body of the dead person lives for twelve days post death. Relatives meet again after twelve days when they believe the etheric body fades away. A month later the astral body departs and the family dines altogether. A sweet dish is included in the menu and widow served foremost. During these gatherings people share their grief. This is repeated six months hence and again after a year.

Life had to go on despite Laxmi's loss. A few years later there were weddings in the family. During one wedding uncle tried to arrange a meeting with a handsome young suitor. During the meeting Laxmi asked him to define the qualities of a good life partner. "Educated, good looking, healthy and wealthy woman", promptly came the reply. "What if the lady is disfigured owing to a severe bout of small pox and loses health", asked Laxmi. For a moment he was angry. "If a mere possibility of bad looks makes you angry, it means there is no love in this relationship," advised Laxmi to the suitor. Feeling insulted he left abruptly.

However this did not deter uncle. He threatened Laxmi with suicide with a revolver if Laxmi did not concede. Shocked at first Laxmi regained balance in a few seconds. Certain that he would not kill himself Laxmi asserted, "Go ahead. Shoot your self. If you are destined to go like this how can you escape from it". Infuriated uncle put the revolver away and asked Laxmi to leave the room.

There was relief for a few months until Laxmi's cousin invited her over one day. She announced that a party was hosted in Laxmi's honor at the club. She requested Laxmi to dress in a sari. Surprised Laxmi said that a western dress would be easy for dance. Out came the secret from the bag. A young bachelor was in the invitee list. Outraged at uncle's and the cousins' scheme Laxmi voiced her dislike to such schemes. An apology was rendered to and Laxmi was requested to be spirited during the party. At dinner and dance Laxmi crossed her eyes each time she spoke or had contact with the young man. Moreover Laxmi confirmed to him that she was being treated for bad eyes. Next day the proposal was called off by the young man and Laxmi was free.

Uncle departed. Hence Mataji assumed the role of the key figure of the family. Hence Mataji assumed the role of the key figure of the family.

Laxmi was still naïve about sex and reproduction and believed stories about arrival of a new baby as a gift of god. During an emergency at home Laxmi had had to assist in a delivery at home. Shocked to witness a birth Laxmi thanked god that she was not into it. An irony while there was an addition to the family there was a deduction too.

Laxmi learnt how to hold sessions with spirits on a planchette. Laxmi was overwhelmed with the findings, including that of Gandhi's assassination and her cousin's death. During a session a spirit warned that if neglected the cousin would be dead. An imbalanced young man and a father of a two children he was not constant with work. He would enter the house climbing a drainpipe; turn violent with the family and domestic help. Put on sedatives many a time he was subjected to insulin shocks and hospitalized under constant medical care. In a moment when he was alone he dropped the mattress through the balcony and jumped to land on it in order to escape. He landed on the ground instead. A few days later he was dead. With this, Laxmi regularly held sessions, often alone and undisturbed in the bathroom. Until one day during a session Laxmi's body dropped close to the bathtub and was hit on the forehead. Laxmi passed out for sometime. This frightened and hence Laxmi stayed clear of the psychic realms of the spirits. With this ended a journey into the psychic world.

THE MASTER'S CALL

“When you are able to surrender, the teacher will come... You become vacant, you become empty. Then the spiritual force rushes toward you and fills you...becomes responsible for you. This is what is meant by initiation...”

Osho: I Am The Gate, 1972

“ In your late twenties, you will meet someone who will usher light in your life. Your chances of a marriage are bleak,” said Laxmi’s cousin, a professional astrologer to her during her mid twenties. A few years passed by. Twenty eight- years old, Laxmi was involved with the upbringing and development of the nine young children in the family. These were her brothers’ children. Laxmi looked after their schooling and recreation at home.

The children went to a school run by an accomplished English lady. Laxmi was in touch with her many years’ later and gifted Osho’s books to the school. She recommended these books to the senior students as she appreciated the books.

In addition Laxmi was Secretary of the All India Women’s Congress Mahilla Vibhai, Bombay and a Jain women welfare organization. Several members of these groups included wives of members of the Indian parliament and socially progressive and literate women. Many a time dignitaries were guests of these groups. Loved by most co-workers Laxmi was being groomed for a political career.

Social work had become the focus of her life. Laxmi worked with a group of distressed women who prepared food items to make an income. With Laxmi’s contribution the organization made profits and the income increased multifold. Wages were doubled in a month. Enthused the workers continued the effort and within twelve months the workshop was renovated. Refrigerators, ovens were added and air conditioners were installed in the workshop. This was a good experience for Laxmi as she realized that currency in circulation further generated income. Production increased and round the clock supervision was needed. Owing to commitments to the family, Laxmi decided to hand over charge to new appointee and render a resignation. Popular for ushering in multifold growth, Laxmi’s resignation was opposed by the workers. They wanted her to stay and threatened to go on strike if Laxmi resigned. However Laxmi convinced them that she had to honor her commitment to the family and handed over charge.

Meanwhile Laxmi’s brother dated a young Parse lady and desired to marry her. The family opposed it, as Parses are a different religious group. The Hindus consider Parse a sub culture group as they had origins in Iran. Laxmi was proud and cherished the social status of the family and was opposed to the wedlock and the impending insult. Looking back, Laxmi forgot her own rebelliousness and ensuing resentment towards the elders who opposed her dreams in her life till so far. This led to a controversy of the out of caste marriage.

However a great change was in the offing for Laxmi. A clarion call, loud and clear was round the corner. Laxmi’s life was never going to be the same. The Congress Mahila Vibhai invited Acharya Rajneesh as a guest and lead speaker on the silver jubilee meeting. Laxmi envisioned a bare feet, customarily attired Jain monk with a begging bowl, with a mask on the mouth covered in order to not suck in any tiny living beings, and a broom to clean the place before sitting down. Much to her surprise Acharya Rajneesh wore a white khadi *lungi* (an ankle length cloth tied below torso) and a silk *chaddar*, shawl around his shoulders. He was unlike a Jain monk. He walked in gracefully casting a spell. On his way to the dais he passed by Laxmi. Frozen and in deep silence, Laxmi forgot to welcome the guest. In complete awe Laxmi couldn’t take her eyes off him. An

extraordinary experience Laxmi sat still listening intently. Deep down there was a strange recognition as though she had known him earlier. There was a familiarity Laxmi could not explain. An inner voice seemed to acknowledge that Laxmi had known him forever. Each cell and pore of the body rang out in agreement with this feeling. He was no stranger. However Laxmi was short of words to express the experience.

As he began to speak Laxmi sensed a deep throbbing at her navel center and was carried away into another realm. His command over Hindi and lucidity was enthralling/enchanting like a song from the spheres was flowing. Eyes closed Laxmi melted with the melody of this divine music. Immobilized with awe, she did not get up to thank him at the end of his speech. Laxmi was mesmerized. The President who noticed this got up and gave the vote of thanks. When the President' sharp vote of thanks fell on Laxmi's ears, her eyes opened.

Later the President expressed disbelief of Laxmi's unusual inertia. Laxmi said, " Love has happened for the first time. It is springtime. There is music all around. It is difficult to explain the feeling ". Confused she asked, "Love for the *sadhu*?" Laxmi acknowledged love for him and said, "Yes. It is love for him, his eyes, and his purity. Oh God, Acharya Rajneesh, where can one meet him?"

Whacking her on the cheek she said, " You are hypnotized, he is certainly not a person to be in love with". "A person. There is no person. It is the sound, the music, and the magic of the human being who was here. He is the man of the earth," Laxmi's replied.

Shocked with Laxmi's overwhelming response the president was worried. She decided to escort Laxmi home. At home she narrated the evening's events to Mataji. Assured that he was an unbelievable Jain monk, a good orator and no ordinary man, Mataji heard Laxmi's ecstatic experience. The President did not yield the contact address of Osho to Laxmi. All she said was that he lived in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh in central India. Laxmi did not know how to reach Acharya Rajneesh.

Osho noticed that Laxmi wore *khadi*, hand woven cotton. He asked her why she wore *khadi*. Laxmi replied proudly. Laxmi said that Gandhi, Father of the nation was loved and respected by the family. Gandhi taught the Indians to weave cloth, and as a Gandhian one should devote one self to the nation. That is why she wore *khadi*. Osho suggested that they discuss Gandhi and the issue of *khadi* during another visit. He then turned to talk to other guests in the room.

Laxmi continued to feel Osho's touch for long. The fragrance of his presence lingered on for days after Osho departed from Mumbai. It seemed fresh. To Laxmi it seemed her cousin's forecast was true. The light finally shone in her life.

Two months later it so happened Mataji went to visit a relative. Later in the day she accompanied the relative to hear a Jain monk speak on religion. The monk turned out to be Acharya Rajneesh in later years known as Osho. Mataji was overwhelmed by his presence, sound and expression. "You have a discerning eye. He is indeed a remarkable and pure man. His lecture reaches the heart immediately," she said to Laxmi foremost on returning home. Excited Laxmi requested her to find out the contact address of Osho. Contact was made. However Osho had departed by train to Jabalpur in the afternoon. Disappointed she could not meet Osho, Laxmi was glad that she could now share Osho with Mataji. For several days Osho was the subject of conversation between the two.

There were a series of surprises for Laxmi. One after the other the Kuruwa family got to meet Osho. Next it was Laxmi's maternal uncles' turn to hear Osho. Uncle was a regular and compulsive gambler. Once his friend suggested that he accompany him to a discourse by an unconventional and revolutionary Jain *sadhu*. These discourses would appeal to him as the *sadhu* did not condemn any habits including gambling, drinking liquor and visiting brothels. Uncle brushed aside this in disbelief. Knowing his weakness for gambling the

friend seduced Uncle into accompanying him to the lecture of Acharya Rajneesh despite the initial doubt. Uncle was trapped. He fell for the bait. He was promised ten thousand rupees provided he sat through the entire discourse. If he failed he need only pay one rupee to his friend.

On that day Osho in his lecture spoke on the issue of gambling and the problems related with it. To Uncle it seemed as though Osho was addressing his problem issues. This co-incidence surprised him. At the end he was refreshed and transformed. Uncle thanked his friend and offered twenty thousand rupees as a gift.

Uncle convinced Laxmi's older brother to go for Osho's next talk. On return Laxmi's brother said, "Laxmi, this is the man for you and us." Ecstatic he wanted to meet him in person. A few days later uncle brought home a proposal to host Osho's visit to Matheran, Maharashtra at the Kuruwa home. He informed the family that the trustees of Jeevan Jagruti Kendra (*Centre of Life Awakening*) were in search of a good accommodation for Osho at Matheran. Soon the family house was offered to put up Osho during his visits to Matheran.

Special arrangements were made for Osho's stay at the house. The cook was given special instructions for Osho's meals which comprised of fruits, cracked wheat, lentils, *dal*, a bean or bean soup dish, boiled vegetables, salad without chilly and spices. Seven members of the family left for Matheran for the meditation camp. They met Osho at Neral, a train station two hours away from Matheran. Accompanied by Osho they proceeded to Matheran for the meditation camp.

During the meditation camp the meditators attended discourses in the morning and sat in silence during evening for five days in Osho's presence. In the afternoon the meditators sat in silence with their eyes closed around Osho. During this hour they were encouraged to express their feelings. While some cried, the others laughed. After this hour was over they sat closer around while Osho touched the third eye center on the forehead of the meditators in turn. Each would then move to accommodate the other.

At the end of the camp Osho told Mataji that he had had good food and a comfortable stay. He added that this was indeed the first time that everything was taken care of so well. Grateful, Mataji invited Osho to stay with the family during his visit to Mumbai. Mataji knew Osho was fond of open spaces therefore she added that there were no fields in Mumbai. Osho confirmed that he would visit the family en route the station in the evening. He added he would stay with them on his next visit.

Laxmi did not go to Matheran and stayed in Mumbai as caretaker of a child who had high fever.

Within a week all the children had recovered and were fine. Laxmi was excited to learn Osho was to be their guest in the evening and would stay for dinner. It was a beautiful day. Laxmi was full of laughter and joy. She spent the day preparing for his arrival. She cooked for him as the cook was still in Matheran.

Osho arrived with the trustees of Jeevan Jagruti Kendra. Laxmi brought a glass of fresh juice for Osho and was introduced to him by Mataji. Osho asked her to sit besides him. He held her hand as he drank the juice. Laxmi took the glass from Osho when he had finished the juice. Seated next to Osho Laxmi's body vibrated as if hit by an electric current. Laxmi sat still. Meanwhile someone took the glass away from Laxmi. Osho thanked her for the juice. "It was sweet and given with a lot of love," he said. Blessing her head he added, "I shall stay here when I am in Mumbai, and you should take care of me".

MASTER AND DISCIPLE

Life is just an overflowing energy without any purpose, and to me Sannyas is to lead life purposelessly. Live life as a play and not as a work...If you can take this whole life just as a dream, a dream act, then you are a sannyasin...Renunciation is not leaving the world, but changing the attitude...The moment you are a sannyasin or a sannyasin you are totally at freedom”.

Osho: I Am The Gate, 1972



The same evening Osho left for Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, Central India also his home state, by train. Laxmi continued to feel his presence and fragrance in his absence. Laxmi's family teased her for days on end. They joked that she had had rejected so many young suitors and finally fallen in love with a *Bawaji*, aged hermit. In India, *bawaji* or *sadhus* are associated with an orthodox viewpoint, long, unclean and ruffled beard and hair; faded robes and a begging bowl. Osho was different. He was an untraditional sadhu. In fact people were surprised when they first saw him. Those who had heard about him were in disbelief. He was neat, clean, immaculate, able bodied and had a unique charm. Even though with his appearance Laxmi's family revised their image of a *sadhu*, the joke about her love for Osho continued till much later.

Meanwhile the All India Women's Congress, Mumbai was to hold an annual gathering. Laxmi requested the Congress that Osho be invited to speak. They happily agreed. Laxmi took on the role of the chief organizer and took Mataji's help. A large public hall was arranged. Osho arrived and women from different walks of life including the members of the All India Women's Congress attended

the talk.

Osho spoke on the three dimensions of love. He said the physical, the first wrung is demanding and full of expectations and lust, is known to average people. The second is sharing. The third manifests as prayer, is bare of demands, and enhances spontaneity and sharing one's possessions. Even though Meera was born nearly five thousand years after the likely life span of Krishna, her love for him is an example of prayerful love. A queen of a small state in the present day of Rajasthan, west India, so intense was her devotion for Krishna that she faced family's wrath with a smile and gratitude. It is said she finally disappeared into mother earth as a realized being.

Laxmi heard Osho with an intensity. However seeking recognition for success of the event soon after the talk was over Laxmi got up and thanked Osho on behalf of the Congress. She thanked the audience. Later Laxmi drove Osho to her home. They covered the distance in silence. At home in the guest room Osho removed his *chaddar*, and took a shower. Taking a glass of juice from Laxmi he asked what she thought of the lecture. Laxmi said her perception of love was transformed and she now saw its different dimensions. After this brief conversation Osho went to meet visitors who awaited him in the living room.

This new perspective of love was an eye opener for Laxmi. Around the same time Laxmi's younger brother informed the family that he was in love with a Parsi girl. He wished to marry her. This was the family's first exposure to matrimony outside the Gujarati community therefore there was an initial resistance.

In India till late, marriages were planned and coordinated by the family. It also involved matching horoscopes

of the partners. The maxim is that two people make an ideal couple if maximum number of qualities matched. In total there are thirty-six qualities. However in this case no one cared to match horoscopes as the entire Kuruwa family opposed the marriage. They viewed it as a risk to their status in their community. They feared that they would become a joke and be isolated by the community leaders.

The family did not know how to resolve the issue and decided to seek Osho's guidance in this matter. With regard to this issue Osho said that astrology is a science, however it works generally for people because of their faith in it. Osho helped the family drop the rigid stand to the marriage. He explained that it was because of their pride and fear of losing an imaginary social status. The family saw reason and reconciled. At a simple wedding in a court the couple were declared man and wife. A few trustees of Jeevan Jagruti Kendra attended a party thrown after the wedding.

Laxmi recalls how an astrologer once looked at Osho's palm. He faced a challenge. He offered to read Osho's palm for a thousand rupees. Osho said he would consider the fees provided he was correct. As the astrologer saw many well to do people present, he assumed Osho was a wealthy man. He said many pleasantries. Soon he asked for payment, Osho smiled and said, "You do not know that I am a poor man with no income. How can I pay your fees? Moreover how can I trust predictions made by you?" Ashamed and in anger he left without fee.

Six weeks later Osho returned to Mumbai for three days. Overjoyed Laxmi ran around offering tea and snacks to visitors. During this period Osho spoke extempore. His discourses were fired with radicalism, combat and powerful. His oration was lucid, full of poetry and spontaneous and the command on Hindi language unparalleled and remarkable. He spoke on love, sex to super consciousness, education, woman the social structure of the society.

One night Laxmi's brother asked Osho, "What do you enjoy most in life?" Osho replied, "Everything that is beautiful". Osho's responses to abstract questions were brief, simple and enriching.

The next morning at seven when Laxmi served milk and biscuits to Osho began conversation on Gandhi's idealism.

He asked, "Is weaving one's own cloth a good idea?" Laxmi replied in affirmation.

"What is the average life span of Indians?", asked Osho. Laxmi replied, "Thirty years".

"What is average number of hours one spends on mundane affairs in routine?" How many hours is one left with for other matters? Should one spend time in weaving for oneself? Instead should one ensure employment to millions who work in mills manufacturing cloth? If middle class people do not buy cloth then hundreds of workers will be laid off in mills. And their families would starve". He added that Gandhi's idealism would lead to poverty. *Khadi* is good and cool to wear but there is no need for all of us to weave it. Let the poor get employment in mills and industries. This would generate more money. Weaving *khadi* is good work in villages that do not have electricity as it provides work to people. But in cities industry should be allowed to flourish.

Further he added, "I am not trying to convert you. If this appeals to you only then you may stop weaving. In the time saved you work on your growth. Be more aware and meditative. Sit in silence, watching sunrise, listen to the birds twittering, and enjoy the fragrance of flowers. These will enrich you and you will feel more energetic. In the moment of death social work, family, friends will not be of any help. Only your awareness and meditation will be your light".

In no time weaving khadi appeared foolish to Laxmi. Laxmi realized that her friends boosted her ego and praised her for her simplicity. They said even though Laxmi belonged to a rich family she led a simple life. This was the reason why she clung to her image. In reality she wore khadi to sustain that image. Moreover Laxmi felt Gandhi recommended weaving to encourage Indian industry as people bought cloth from Britain. Now India had several cloth mills and weaving in cities was therefore redundant. Laxmi ordered new dresses in white and in color of mill made fabric. Gradually Laxmi renounced Gandhi's idealism from her daily life.

Next evening Osho noticed the change of fabric from khadi to terrycloth. He smiled.

Laxmi asked if he would like new clothes, as cotton appeared wrinkled during travel. He agreed. Soon Osho had new *chaddars* and *lungis*.

Laxmi recalls Osho's sensitivity. He always carried two pillows, linen and a blanket during journeys. Osho used oil in his hair and it rubbed on the linen, especially pillow covers were oily. However as cotton wool is recycled, Laxmi decided to redo Osho's pillows. The used cotton wool in the pillows was indeed soft it had absorbed oil. However Laxmi decided to retain old cotton. Six new pillows stuffed with new cotton wool were

ordered. That night Osho's bed had new pillows. Next morning Osho told her that the pillows were good, however the cotton was fresh and the old cotton pillows may be disposed off. This sensitivity amazed Laxmi.

Osho's pull to Laxmi was magnet like and irresistible. As days passed by the pull seemed to strengthen and Laxmi began to accompany Osho for the lecture tours outside Mumbai. In the early days accommodation provided for Osho by during tours was inadequate. The rich were miserly. Most accommodations were not up to the mark. Many a time, Laxmi would guide people. Initially the organizers were unaware of Osho's delicate and sensitive body. More so as Osho suffered from diabetes and getting the right diet during tours was a problem. In India a guest is equated to god and it is a custom to offer sweets to a guest. Many a times he ate sweets as a mark of respect to the host. Moreover visitors wanted to see him at odd hours. Or a host would insist to share the room with him.

Harassed by these incessant problems Laxmi asked Osho how he felt about these issues. He smiled and said, "Laxmi be aware to not be too sharp while dealing with people". Thus it was natural that someone had had to take on the role of putting an end to poor facilities and regulate standards. Laxmi took it upon herself. Laxmi recalls regardless of prior confirmations by organizers Osho had to put up with inadequate facilities. However over a period of time people became sensitive to requirements of Osho's personal care. At the same time Laxmi was buffer with the well-intentioned public.

On one occasion Laxmi had requested for an air-conditioned room for Osho in Baroda prior to the visit. The hosts confirmed it. On arrival Laxmi learnt the room had a water cooler and no air-conditioner. Humidity of the cooler had adverse effects on Osho's body. It escalated asthma. Laxmi requested a change to an air-conditioned room. The hosts failed to appreciate this stating air-conditioned rooms were costly. Laxmi advised the host to honor their word. This made no impact on the hosts therefore Laxmi paid the difference amount. Osho was moved to a more comfortable room.

Amongst the many incidents of negligence of people to the sensitivity of Osho Laxmi recalls in the year 1967 Osho was traveling on train when a lady known to Laxmi's family was also on board. She asked Osho how to awaken the *kundalini*. Osho suggested that she attend meditation camps. Not satisfied, she urged to him to teach her a technique. On her persistence he repeated that she attend a camp. She did not relent and pushed Osho to demonstrate realization through Kundalini. He told her that she would have to undress so that he could see her spinal cord. This shocked the lady and on return to Mumbai she complained to Laxmi's father. Thinking this to be gross behavior the family was shocked. Considering this risk to the virtue, the family decided not to put up Osho as a guest at home in Mumbai. This was conveyed to the trustees.

Laxmi was away to Kutch and learnt of this on arrival in Mumbai. Disappointed Laxmi was determined to continue with personal care of Osho. The family opposed this. Laxmi talked to Osho. He suggested she should continue work and serve him outside the limits of home and not worry about what had happened.

A fortnight long meditation camp was on the anvil in Kashmir. Laxmi coaxed her maternal uncle to accompany her. Sixty people attended the camp. Here Osho spoke on Mahavir. Both Laxmi and uncle were overwhelmed with the perspective Osho provided on Mahavir. It was a fresh journey with Mahavir. It was a new experience with Mahavir. Uncle was transformed. He apologized to Osho and Laxmi for the misunderstanding. Laxmi was delighted. On his return to Mumbai uncle explained the issue to the family and regretted for the uncalled for short-term decision to not host Osho at home in Mumbai.

In the ensuing months three camps were scheduled at Nargol, Maharashtra. A beautiful place, Nargol is a sand beach and trees that are look alike of pines. Osho suggested all those present be silent for five days. Laxmi was in silence for three days. However in a moment of unawareness after three days she broke her silence. No sooner did Laxmi speak she was silent. Instantly there was a glimpse of awareness after the intense silence. The experience was overwhelming.

At Nargol Camp II Osho introduced Dynamic Meditation to the meditators, a technique developed by him. He introduced several other meditation techniques too. Later he began to speak. He questioned as to why all of us were there. Providing a clue he said, "One could begin by asking oneself: Who am I?" The urge to search overpowered Laxmi. Each time she questioned herself something seemed to hit her at the navel center.



The first experiment with Dynamic was in a school compound, located near a beach some time ago. It comprised of four stages. For the first stage Osho asked meditators to sit down. However later at Nargol, Osho suggested meditators stand during the first three stages of the meditation. Osho explained that in the standing posture it was easy to breathe vigorously and one would not be hurt if one dropped down on sand. In order to keep the mind from fluttering it was essential to keep the eyes closed. Also he stated that energy is released when the eyes are open. This leads to loss of energy when the eyes remain open aimlessly. If one applies the technique of dynamic meditation in totality one would certainly an upsurge of tremendous energy. This according to Osho should be channeled to meditate. Dynamic meditation was revised many times. Initially Osho led this meditation however later Osho stopped leading. Recorded music was played and a fifth stage added.

The first stage is deep, vigorous breathing for fifteen minutes. In the second one has to cooperate with the body by expressing the repressed feelings in open into the sky. Be it crying, shouting, hitting or jumping it should be allowed free expression. Or else one should consciously start the process of de conditioning. In the third one should repeatedly ask oneself, "Who am I?" Over a period of time Osho changed this query to the sound *hoon*. This is accompanied with constant jumping. Later *hoon* became *hoo*. The navel center and sex center are very close to each other. Therefore Osho said the sound should be so vigorous that it hammers the navel center. As a result energy in the sex center is also affected. Osho explained that the sex center is the seat of the kundalini force. During this stage energy that usually flows toward sex center is directed upwards to the third eye center. In addition human mind governs the sex center and inner centers do not function totally. Constant hammering of *hoo* in this meditation activates dormant centers and releases trapped energy. This energy too travels upwards to third eye center.

In the fourth stage one sits or stands still in silence to pray. It is easier to pray as the body and mind are exhausted. However the body should be relaxed to pray. A discomforted body retreats attention from awareness/ consciousness to mind which in turn becomes conscious of the body. In this process one tends to drift away from awareness/ consciousness.

Yet another change was made to this technique. A fifth stage was added during which one celebrated. Therefore each stage lasted twelve minutes instead of fifteen. While earlier Osho led this mediation with instructions as and when needed, later people meditated with recorded music.

At Nargol, one night in bed Laxmi constantly asked herself, " Who am I? ". Laxmi let go her body as she breathed vigorously. Hyper-ventilating as if she were a pump she breathed vigorously but effortlessly. This was followed by intense and non-stop loud belly laughter. This woke up Laxmi's maternal uncle. Anxious, he began to cry. Osho who was asleep in a room nearby woke up. He came to Laxmi, placed his beautiful hand on her forehead and softly echoed in her ear, " Come back Laxmi". Feeling his touch and hearing the melodious sound Laxmi returned. Gradually Laxmi opened her eyes to see Osho smile at her. In a few minutes, Osho reassured uncle that Laxmi was fine and asked him to retire to bed.

The next morning Laxmi was up at six as usual. After a shower Laxmi prepared for Osho's bath. Laxmi then gave tea to Osho who said, "All of us are mad, the difference is only of degrees of insanity. Laxmi experienced an awakening of the inner meditative energy last night and we must cooperate with the reactions during the camp as these are part of meditation".

Once again at night Laxmi experienced vigorous breathing and intense laughter. Osho said that it would have been a good idea to record this meditative process on video.



The next morning Laxmi woke up joyous and felt the body was light. Laxmi was acutely aware of each movement of her body. Her feet felt light as though floating. It was a mystery. The night silk dress felt heavy. Burdened with its weight Laxmi did not want to wear it any more. Wishing to wear light clothes Laxmi explained to uncle that the experience was beyond words and body was lightweight. Informing him that no innerwear was required during meditation, Laxmi requested uncle to spare a dhoti. This upset him. He asked her to pack up as they were going home because he could not understand why she wanted to undress and couldn't wear her dress any longer.

“ What are you going to do with my dhoti? Do you wish to drop clothes and be naked during the camp?” he roared.

Laxmi persisted. “ If you do not give the dhoti you would be the first to see the naked body. Laxmi is dead and this is the beginning of a new life. Laxmi is grateful to parents and uncle, however there was no attachment. Life is like a lotus flower, rooted in mud, yet far above it ”.

Uncle looked into Laxmi's eyes and out of sheer helplessness agreed to loan Laxmi a dhoti.

After a shower, wrapped in a dhoti, Laxmi offered tea to Osho. He smiled. Later Osho asked uncle to get lungi and kurta for Laxmi from the bazaar. Laxmi felt yet another change. Less thirsty and hungry, work was a joy for Laxmi. It was a joy to meditate and especially serve Osho.

Laxmi did not eat for three days and yet she worked joyously. A camper informed Osho that Laxmi was not eating in the past three days. At lunch when Laxmi served food to Osho he insisted she too ate. Laxmi began with salad. Noticing that Laxmi was keeping away from spicy food Osho especially called for boiled and non-spicy food for her.

Deeply touched with this gesture, Laxmi recalled how two years ago at home in Mumbai Laxmi had insisted a dish of peas served to Osho was non spicy. This despite Osho said thrice that the dish was spicy. Instantly Laxmi went to the kitchen, checked with the cook and found out a small green chilly had been pounded and added to the dish. Laxmi returned and apologized to Osho. He laughed and said that she could now eat the rest of the dish. However he added, “ Now drop the matter”, and requested that meals be cooked without chilly.

Now at Nargol Laxmi realized that a true master answers queries implicitly and indirectly. A master helps a disciple to experience and does not encourage acquired knowledge. It amazed Laxmi how Osho knew that she did not wish to eat spicy food.

Smiling he said, “ Who knows, some day you will be as sensitive”.

Laxmi realized that intense meditation had led to automatic and voluntary renunciation of spices. Laxmi now wished to eat mild and fresh food. Tears rolling down her eyes, Laxmi fell at Osho’s feet and said, “Let the world say what it will, you are my *satguru*, my Master, my Bhagwan ”.

Osho asked Laxmi to eat a slice of tomato from his meal. Just as Laxmi did she had an unusual and heightened experience of awareness of taste.

Osho left for Jabalpur via Mumbai the same afternoon. Laxmi returned home. Relaxed with her eyes closed she voluntarily confined to her room for the next few days. At meal times Laxmi would join the family however she would leave the table without eating, as the food was spicy. Mataji noticed this and talked with her. Relating the incident at Nargol to Mataji, Laxmi was assured of non-spicy food at home. During this week Laxmi drank tea three times, a glass of milk and lost twenty pounds. During sleep Laxmi was conscious and aware as though someone within her awake. As regards the body Laxmi felt fresh, light and strong.

Now Laxmi began to watch her body and mind with intensity. The body seemed to be in constant dance while music rang in her ears. For three weeks Laxmi visualized colors whenever she closed her eyes in meditation. The colors were blue, yellow, red, orange and black. Laxmi desired to wear only the colors she visualized and requested Mataji to provide her with *kurta* and *lungi* in thin material. Mataji mumbled that Laxmi was a crazy child, however she had new clothes made for Laxmi.

A few days in this process Laxmi informed Mataji that she would now wear only dark orange and asked for five pairs of *lungi* and *kurta*. Laxmi declared that she did not need rest of the clothes so these could be given away. The switch to orange was spontaneous although Laxmi was not aware what the color dark orange denoted in India until Mataji warned her. She said that it demanded a lifelong commitment, a resolute to non-withdraw and that no exit option was available. “This is the color of renunciation and sannyas”, she said.

Laxmi trusted her inner voice. Laughing aloud she said, “The future is unknown, however at present it feels good to wear orange clothes.’

Gradually Laxmi withdrew from all social activities and work. She remained happily confined to her room. Perhaps a month later, clad in orange she went to receive Osho at Mumbai railway station. A large crowd had gathered to receive him. Noticing Laxmi because of the striking color he called her and enquired, “ What does the change of color mean?”

Laxmi responded that it happened spontaneously.

Osho said, “Beautiful. It is very good. This marks the beginning of the ‘neo sannyas’ and you are the first sannyasin. Now I will begin giving sannyas to people who wish to be initiated”. Further he explained neo sannyas would be life affirmative unlike the life negative traditional sannyas. Now people need not renounce and quit family, home and occupation. Instead people should turn their homes into temples with their love and laughter.

A few negative and jealous minds did not appreciate Laxmi's new clothes and felt that this would be a hindrance in Osho's work. However Laxmi had Osho's approval.

WITH RAJNEESH IN MUMBAI



It was proposed that Osho be invited to live in Mumbai. Osho's reply was simple. He would be fine in any place, however people would need to be aware that no one was obliged to him. He said that the invitation stemmed from people's love for him, however he would not accept any interference in his work. He warned that the message was to help people to be aware. Osho quoted the example of the lady on a train who wished to learn *kundalini*, awakening technique. Further he said when a doctor examines a patient do patients do not decline examination. Similarly as a doctor of the spiritual world he would have to do the needful. As regards funds Osho said that it was up to the trustees to take care of the needs of Osho's work. The trust could publish books, charge entry fee to visitors for lectures, charge for food and lodging. Osho was not in need of money for personal expenses. The trustees agreed to these proposals and Osho accepted their invitation to live in Mumbai.

With this decision Laxmi was overjoyed. She was reminded Osho often said that a guru comes to be with disciples once they have matured. Laxmi saw things falling into place, as more and more people were eager to be initiated and wanted to work for Osho.

An apartment was rented out on fourth floor in CCI Building, Marine drive. Many people came to visit Osho. Invariably the lift would malfunction owing to overload. In the afternoons Osho would take a nap while Laxmi would return home to eat and shower and returned in the evening. One afternoon Laxmi stood outside CCI Building with a friend, waiting to be driven home. Two ladies, who passed by noticed Laxmi's orange clothes, bowed to her and inquired who she was. Promptly Laxmi's friend replied, "She is Ma Yoga Laxmi and has come to see Acharya Rajneesh who lives here". He happened to know them. Just as he finished making this statement he retreated and went in to see Osho again. Laxmi informed him the driver had arrived. Moreover Osho would be asleep. However he was persistent.

He told Osho that he was surprised why he had referred to Laxmi, whom he had known for long as Ma Yoga Laxmi. Sitting up in bed Osho took a fresh sheet of paper and wrote 'Ma Yoga Laxmi, Secretary to Acharya Rajneesh'. Handing the sheet over to Laxmi Osho explained to Laxmi that with the death of a person the identity dies too. Similarly with a new birth a person gets a new name. "Laxmi you are reborn. A changed name will help you to disconnect with the life you have lived so far and commence a new life When I initiate people each male will have a prefix 'swami' and each woman's name will have prefix 'ma' to her name. Ma means mother. It denotes feminine attributes including warmth, love, soft and care. While swami is one who is a master of the self, one who has conquered the unconscious".

Meanwhile Laxmi was keen to wear a mala with Osho's locket in her neck. A few days later someone suggested that a mala with a locket of Osho's picture be introduced. Osho approved it. This too amazed Laxmi.

Shortly after this 26th September 1970 marked the beginning of a new era. At a meditation camp at Manali, Himachal Pradesh, Osho initiated twelve people, including Laxmi, a western and a Japanese woman. Manali is a beautiful hill resort enveloped by tall mountains. Laxmi liked these lush green mountains scantily populated with sparse residential houses. High peaks stood firm at a distance. The more distant virgin peaks were clad in snow. There was a feeling of vastness and expanse in these mountains. Deep gorges and canyons seemed to have bottomless depths.

Neo sannyasins were advised to wear loose clothes particularly during meditation. The twelve neo-sannyasins were given new names written on a letterhead each personally by Osho. Asked to wear a mala, with a locket of Osho's picture, the sannyasins were explained its significance. They were told like beads of the mala strung in one thread, similarly all the paths of spirituality led to one absolute and ultimate truth. Therefore it was meaningless to argue with someone on the credibility of any single path. Osho's picture in the locket was a constant reminder that he was faceless, a non-entity, a commoner, a nobody.

At Manali there were over fifty people and the gathering was intimate. Leading Dynamic Meditation Osho said that all must put in their utmost to enable transformation to take place. Each sannyasin and friend worked hard and meditation was an intense experience. It was an experience of timelessness. This was followed by discourse in the morning and evening. Osho spoke on Lord Krishna, a Hindu god at Manali. After the morning meditation Osho would return to his room. Generally some disciples would sit around Osho while he talked spontaneously

Laxmi felt indeed fortunate to be present with the master in the mountains. It was an extraordinary camp. Rarely had man been alone with a master, meditating and working on self-transformation in the Himalayas. For thousands of years' man had fought wars, was involved with mundane activities and there was no opportunity for the growth human consciousness. However there were several such small islands of timelessness amidst mundane human existence in Indian civilization.

Meanwhile in Mumbai several people were being initiated. Initially there two options available for sannyas. There were *sadhus* initiated who wore white and continued living as householders. In some cases people were initiated temporarily for a few months in order to enable them to adjust to a new lifestyle. Sannyasins were initiated for long-term. Later the title sadhu and temporary sannyas were dropped. Only sannyas was offered and all became sannyasins.

Osho would leave Mumbai limits for outstation meditation camps. More and more curious people from all over the world thronged meditation camps. In Mumbai Osho's apartment seemed to swell with people all the time. As a result the residents of the building complained of overcrowding and expenses of elevator shot up because of frequent use.

In the beginning of 1970 Osho moved to a beautiful and spacious three-room apartment in a residential complex known as Woodlands on Peddar Road, Mumbai. An elite address in Mumbai the building was twenty-seven storeyed. Osho lived was on the first floor overlooking a beautiful front garden. Visitors used the staircase and there was no problem of overuse of elevator. Osho was personally involved in the selection of this flat. He was shown a flat on the twenty-first floor that had a terrace adequate to hold two hundred people. However Osho suggested that meditators must relate with nature and being above tree level at that height would result in distancing from nature. He added that the effect of living on heights away from nature was unknown. In the beginning the setup was small scale. There was also a car for Osho's comfort.

One afternoon a disciple who is now a self-acclaimed guru, requested Osho to accompany her for a picnic about two-hour drive from Woodlands. Interested to start an ashram in Mumbai, she said her husband who was well connected would help in acquisition of land. Not happy with this arrangement, Laxmi requested Osho to take his cousin along, as the hostess did not want Laxmi to join them. Osho however said he would be fine and would return in the evening.

In the afternoon she arrived in a Mercedes and Osho left along with her. Laxmi had an uncanny feeling through the afternoon that made her uneasy. A meeting followed by discourse was scheduled as usual for evening. However as Osho did not arrive at eight the meeting had to be cancelled. Worried Laxmi asked the trustees to notify local police to search for the vehicle. After a long wait for an hour at nine a few trustees

volunteered to go on a search. In vain. They had no clue of the vehicle.

An hour later Osho returned to Woodlands. All those present in the apartment jumped as he arrived. He was his usual calm and smiling. Unruffled he informed that the car met with an accident and was wrecked. However all the passengers and the driver were safe.

Osho departed to rest in his room where Laxmi checked him for bruises. To Laxmi's surprise he had not one scratch and was unhurt.

The next morning Laxmi requested Osho to not to travel in others' vehicles. Laxmi said the trust would soon purchase one more car. A big white Chevrolet Impala was bought and painted orange. Osho accompanied the trustees for a test ride on the first day. He asked Laxmi to drive. Short in height Laxmi sat on cushions at the wheel and looked indeed tiny. Osho sat in the front seat while four friends sat in the rear. He asked Laxmi to speed up and go on the highway. Suddenly the car was zooming at 120 kilometers per hour speed. At this point Osho asked Laxmi to change seats with her. Laxmi stopped and sat in the navigator's seat. Osho drove at 140 to 150 kilometers per hour. It was fun until he applied brakes suddenly and friends seated behind were caught unawares. Due to the abrupt jerk they hit their heads against the car. At this point Laxmi apprised Osho that the car had power brakes and needed gentle application especially when speeding. All the passengers laughed and Laxmi resumed driving.

Laxmi's family was fond of cars and had several imported cars at home. Barely nine years old Laxmi first practiced driving around the garage owned by her brother. Laxmi was fond of cars.

Neo Sannyas drive took shape rather casually. Even though the scales around Osho were small, basic facilities existed. Public lectures were arranged in open grounds and halls. Thousands of people came to hear Osho. For the first two years Osho lectured in Hindi. After the lecture ended sannyasins would sing and dance in *kirtan*.

By this time a few westerners had come to stay with Osho. Meditation camps were a major attraction for overseas visitors. Keeping this in view Osho began conducting a ten day camp once in three months in the mountains. Most were held in Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Not as far away as Kashmir, Mt Abu despite its not as high peaks is exquisite and only two-hour drive from base. As more and more overseas visitors and sannyasins came Osho began to hold meditation camps in English. Frequently he spoke on the *Upanishads*, a holy book of the Hindus.

Several people wondered about the need of a disciple for a Master. Osho explained that unless a disciple surrenders to the master he/she finds it difficult to realize his or her energy. Sannyasins around Osho had an advantage. They lived with Master and experienced the Master work to awaken their energy. Also the master transmitted energy to them. This transmission process is called *shaktipat*. Uncommunicable in words, Osho rarely spoke of it as it is an experience. He gave a taste of oneness to his sannyasins. This came to be known as communing/communion.

Laxmi stayed back in Mumbai when Osho was out in the mountains conducting camps. She would paint, clean and organize his books that were several thousand in number. Osho read about thirty books in a month as though he had a scanner in his eyes and speed-read ability. He often quoted from these books. So much so a single reading and Osho had memorized it all.

On arrival from the hills Osho would find the apartment clean and with a new look. People visited the apartment from early morning to late in the night. It was now a public place. Some came to meet him; others came for information, while some came to buy books. Until now all English titles were translations of Hindi discourses.

A day in the life of Osho was no different apparently as he valued time and worked as per schedule. However he lived each moment in its totality, each moment as a new moment, as a fresh experience in totality. People around him too had to manage time meticulously. Osho was up at six thirty each morning. Invariably there were several people waiting for his *darshan* and talk. Often he would call these people to his room for a spontaneous talk. This delighted them all. To the new initiates Osho explained the significance of meditation and orange color.

Many a strange incident happened at Woodlands as traditional and fascists opposed Osho's' neo sannyas. One day a young man charged into the apartment. He picked up a paperweight from Laxmi's desktop and hurled it at her. Merely escaping Laxmi's head it hit a glass cabinet. There was a loud explosion as glass crashed with splinters falling all over the room. In fury just as he charged towards Osho's room, Laxmi leaped at him. By now the cook and attendant working inside the kitchen came in after hearing the loud explosion. They overpowered the attacker.

To cool him, Laxmi offered water to him, even though he continued to rage in anger. After some time he explained he was upset, as his wife had been initiated a day before. He feared that she would renounce the family and quit home. He dreaded the thought of losing her. Although his wife tried to explain to him that she would not quit, instead since she had had heard Osho, she wanted to try out neo sannyas living joyously with the family at home. However it was in vain. Scared that his wife in the course of time would begin to love Osho more, as he believed Osho hypnotized people and had ruined many homes he therefore wanted to hit Osho.

Listening to his story Laxmi roared into laughter. Continuing to laugh she explained the concept of neo sannyas stating that Osho wanted to make temples of homes, and not ruin them. He was advised to read Osho and drop misconceptions. Released with a warning to not to repeat violent behavior or else he would be handed over to police. With one quick glance at the well-built attendant he left immediately.

Yet another mishap occurred when Osho spoke on *Geeta*, a holy book of the Hindus wherein Lord Krishna speaks to *Arjuna* on complexities of duality of life. A regular to discourses he would often shout while Osho spoke and raised several objections. The police had warned him about his unruly behavior earlier. One day before discourse started he hid behind a pillar as Osho walked towards the hall to address the gathering. He leaped just as Osho arrived and could get hold of only Osho's *chaddar*. Osho stood chest bare calmly watching him. BY now he was noticed by a few people and was caught.

With this the trustees focused on the need of security around Osho. A bodyguard was hired who went out with him virtually everywhere. He guarded main gates while Osho was in the apartment.

Several years passed by with this routine. Each day unfurled its bag of surprises. For Laxmi it was sheer joy to work for Osho. Laxmi would bet at the front desk by eight to organize meetings for Osho and seeing visitors. The busiest hours were eight to eleven in the morning and three in the afternoon to eleven in the night. In the beginning Laxmi was his secretary, driver, cleaner, assistant and certainly a disciple. It was a one-woman show.

Osho's cousin sister took personal care of him. In the event Osho's cousin was away to Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh Laxmi stayed at Woodlands whenever. During her stay Laxmi would serve Osho's meals and sleep in his room. Laxmi stayed in Woodlands on one such night.

The next morning Laxmi was joyous. She witnessed Laxmi's activities through the day. Laxmi getting up, eating, talking and so on. This witnessing lasted through the day. The identity with I was broken. I did not overtake/overpower Laxmi. It was indeed fun to see Laxmi engrossed in activities in the third person. Recalling Osho narrate the story of Swami Ramteerth who witnessed a break with identity and referred to himself in third person and never as self, Laxmi laughed to herself.

Since he was twenty-one years, women looked after Osho's personal care with feminine gentleness. In this regard Osho had a story to tell. Before he turned twenty-one he would meditate sitting under a tree. One day prior to enlightenment he felt his body fell from a treetop. He wondered how was it that his body had fallen whereas he physically sat atop the tree. He had an out of body experience. Meanwhile two women passing by spotted the body on ground. In order to help, they touched the body on the ground. Instantly Osho says he returned to his body. The feeling of having fallen on ground disappeared. Also the feeling of having gone beyond the body disappeared. He realized that feminine touch is potent to reestablish contact with one's body. Since this experience he felt different with his body and had women as his caretakers. He said, "An enlightened being is aware of the body and is yet disconnected with/from the body. Though he moves his/her physical form and uses it. An enlightened being maintains a delicate balance of being in the body and yet out of it. However to a not so aware naked eye it appears that the enlightened being lives in the visible physical body like the others".

At the physical level by and by a number of sannyasins became involved with Osho's work. At five thirty in the morning Dynamic Meditation was led by a sannyain at a friends house in Mumbai. Later, meditators gathered on Chowpatty Beach in the open. Osho stopped public speaking and gave discourses only for his disciples and devotees in the living room at Woodlands. On the average there were close to a hundred people always comfortably seated. The settings were intimate and relaxed.



As time passed by sannyasins became involved with an experiment on a farm owned by an Indian woman. She offered a large farm in Baroda for Osho's work. Although it was hot and not conducive for air conditioning, about sixty overseas sannyasins worked on the farm. They enjoyed this experiment. Osho narrated in a public lecture that this farm owner revealed she was his mother in a past life.

By this time thousands were visiting Osho. Neo sannyas movement now gathered momentum and grew rapidly. Publishing had grown multifold. For months he spoke regularly in English on the hundred and eight techniques of meditation of Lord Shiva. Shiva is one of the Hindu Gods of Trinity amongst Vishnu and Brahma. These meditations are

known as *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra*. These discourses were published in English entitled 'The Book Of Secrets'. In addition other English discourses were transcribed and published in 'Sannyas' a bi monthly magazine, edited by sannyasins.

Facilities for sannyasins improved and were enhanced. However Laxmi was perpetually hard pressed for money. She worked with the same resolute as St Theresa who started out to build a cathedral, and succeeded owing to sheer faith. Similarly Osho's work was carried out on a shoestring budget. Laxmi believed that with the Master's grace and trust of a disciple, milestones can be achieved.

RAJNEESH ASRAM IN PUNE

“The creative person is one who brings... something from God into the world...who becomes a hollow bamboo and allows god to flow through him.... And creativity is from the creator. Creativity is not of you or from you. You disappear, then the creativity is...when the creator takes possession of you”.

Osho: Walk Without Feet, Fly Without Wings And Think Without Mind, 1979

By early 1974 many people from the east and west were coming to Osho. More came from the west. It was apparent that many wanted to dedicate time and services to his work. Thus there was a need for a larger ashram or commune where many more people could meditate, work and live.

Moreover the climate of Mumbai was not as friendly to Osho and had adverse effect on his body. He would often get asthmatic attacks. One evening he asked Laxmi to look for a larger place elsewhere. After dinner Laxmi got out of Woodlands and drove to Khandala and Lonavala, about an hour and a half from Mumbai, en route Poona. These places had heavy rainfall in monsoons therefore hunting Laxmi drove further to Poona. Laxmi checked into a luxury hotel and called a real estate agent.

The next morning amongst the properties visited and examined, Laxmi visited a mansion called Himalaya, in Koregaon Park. Built on one and a half acres of land the property included a large house and vast gardens. It drew Laxmi's attention but she was informed so far it had not been offered for sale. Laxmi returned to the site later and persuaded the watchman to show her the house. He took her around the house in a garden. While Laxmi was touring around the house in the garden a fruit dropped from an almond tree at Laxmi's feet. Considering this as an omen and a gift of nature, Laxmi requested the guard to let her have the fruit. The watchman smiled as Laxmi picked up the almond. Touched with the name of the house, as many a sadhu and hermit worship the gods in the mountains and caves of Himalayas. Taking both these as ominous signals Laxmi returned to Mumbai.

Laxmi narrated her visit to the beautiful mansion Himalaya, to Osho and showed him the almond. Osho approved of beginning negotiations with the owner of the building. The owner was contacted. Laxmi found out the owner was a former maharaja who had attended Osho's meditation camps at Mt Abu. Soon a deal was struck with him.

It was decided that we would move to Himalaya in Poona on the 21st of March after celebrating Osho's Enlightenment Day at Woodlands in Mumbai. Hundreds of people came to bid farewell to Osho and as expected there was not enough room for all in the apartment. Impossible to accommodate a large number of people it was decided that each would get a brief *darshan* with Osho one by one. No one was allowed to halt during *darshan*.

In the afternoon Osho, five friends, Laxmi and a hundred people started for Poona. Some traveled by road in fifteen cars in a procession while others came by train. A large number of friends stayed back in Mumbai.

Three hours later the party reached Poona. People were taken around the beautiful house. There were five large and five small rooms, a dining, a living room, a pantry and kitchen. There were rooms for the servants also. The bedrooms on the first floor had large balconies. Osho chose a large room on the ground floor as his bedroom.

Osho appeared in *darshan* for all the visitors. Celebrations went on up to midnight. Laxmi went for a shower after all the visitors left. As yet she had not chosen a room for herself. In fact it did not even strike her until after the shower. All the rooms were full of unpacked luggage except Osho's bedroom. Feeling the best place was a large open balcony of the living room Laxmi spread a blanket on the floor and lay down. Laxmi gazed in to the vast stretch of garden and at the night sky. It was dark, silent and peaceful. Spotting the almond tree Laxmi had a desire to go to it. Laxmi got up, walked to it and sat under it. Soon Laxmi was transported to a timeless zone. There was no almond tree. Only silence prevailed. Laxmi does not remember how long she sat there. On rediscovering herself Laxmi's body was refreshed, weightless and light as though floating in air. Joyous she went up to the balcony and relaxed on her blanket. In no time she was asleep.

In the morning Laxmi got up fresh with the experience. Grateful to Osho for the experience of timelessness, Laxmi was in a no thought, a no mind state. Laxmi recalled Jesus said: Be like a child. Feel a tremendous energy, a tremendous joy a tremendous rejoicing. With more of these glimpses, these experiences Laxmi felt centered and trust in Osho consolidated. At this time Laxmi had completed forty-one years and felt that she was due to start a new seven- year cycle. Now she was living even closer to Osho. Day in and day out, in the same house, unlike in Mumbai where returned home daily. Laxmi witnessed these miracles happen one after the other.

Osho renamed the house Lao Tsu House. Several changes were made to the layout. The dining hall and pantry were covered and converted to bedrooms to accommodate resident sannyasins. A small patio was extended with additional pillars and a roof was erected over it. This became Chuang Tsu Auditorium. In the early days in Pune Osho gave discourses in this auditorium and sannyasins sat cross-legged on the floor.

Osho was very fond of trees -especially big trees. He preferred natural growth of trees and shrubs. He liked them to grow tall without pruning. A female sannyasin was made in charge of gardening. Soon the garden blossomed into an exquisite mini forest with Osho's guidelines and her care.

Back in Mumbai the trustees who supported Osho's living expenses earlier in Woodlands were distanced from Osho now. It was difficult for people in business to drive to Poona often. They did not like this. Therefore they withdrew support and asked Laxmi to take care of all the activities from Poona and seek financial support from elsewhere. However later they reconciled and continued support.

Always hard pressed for money to maintain the ashram, Laxmi borrowed seven thousand Indian rupees from a bookseller, in Poona who was known to her family. The trust was renamed Rajneesh Foundation and the trustees of Jeevan Jagruti Kendra were dropped. New trustees were elected and Laxmi was appointed Managing Trustee of Rajneesh Foundation. The trustees decided all activities would be executed at Pune, including book sales. The first floor apartment in Woodlands was sold and an adjoining house in Poona purchased. This house was called Krishna House. All the money raised from sale of real estate went into the purchase of real estate. Once again there was no money to support the ashram.

For long term support to the ashram it was decided to raise funds by publishing Osho's lectures in English entitled *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra*, *The Book Of Secrets Vol I*. As time passed English language publications of Osho proved a goldmine for the ashram. With this began an earnest search for a good printer who would be compatible with the terms and conditions. Laxmi was on a hunt for a printer and spotted Sangam Press in the Yellow Pages. *Sangam* in Hindi means meeting/merging. Laxmi called the manager over for a meeting to the ashram.

Laxmi discussed the project with the printer in detail. She apprised him of the terms. He would invest in the

project in order to earn profits in a few months. No advance, and payment would be made after three months, along with interest. A sharp young man he had heard Osho's discourses and was aware of the potential of publishing Osho's maiden book in English, both inland and overseas. Based on his acumen he agreed to commence work on the manuscript of Vigyan Bhairav Tantra. Certain he would make profits and not only recover his investment he grabbed the project.

During this meeting Laxmi's shortcomings and inexperience in offset printing and publishing surfaced. Prior to this all the books in the ashram were hand set and printed on small machines. Seeing it as a handicap Laxmi jumped into it in totality. Not only had Laxmi overlooked the needs of printing she was totally unaware of the need of paper. However not exhibiting her inexperience Laxmi requested the printer to proceed with composition of manuscript and informed him the required paper would reach the printing press on schedule.

As soon as the manager left the office Laxmi picked up the Yellow Pages and hunted for a paper merchant. She invited Ram Bhai Patel and Company for a meeting to the ashram. Ram is a sacred name in India and the protagonist of the holy book Ramayana. A shrewd businessman Ram turned out to be a Gujarati. Laxmi and he hit off well in the first meeting. Laxmi offered the project on same terms. He too agreed to provide paper without any advances. This was Laxmi's first exposure to details of paper and printing. In the due course of time she gathered requisite information. Thus started the era of publishing in English language at the ashram.

Within two months the first book in English entitled Vigyan Bhairav Tantra, The Book of Secrets was published. In six weeks there were substantial sales in India and abroad. A quick recovery Laxmi invited the printer and paper merchant to her office and paid their dues earlier than scheduled. They were delighted. Laxmi struck a second deal to print two more books with them, on her terms. The terms were credit for six months, and no interest. They agreed and work on the manuscripts commenced.



Meanwhile more and more people came from all over the world. To cater to international needs English discourses became a regular feature. Osho delivered discourses in Hindi and English every alternate month. Audio recording equipment in the ashram was upgraded. New equipment was brought as gifts to the trust by fellow sannyasins. Sales of books and audios increased in the overseas market. With more and more sales overseas more people came in from the different parts of the world, including Germany, Italy, England, Holland, USA, Africa and Japan. This further led to increased sales.

To meet the needs of growing number of visitors per day two adjoining properties to Himalaya were purchased. And by and by this six- acre land became a great international magnetic center of meditation. The media focused on this hub. It seemed Osho constantly outgrew his space and there was need to constantly expand.

A major change occurred with this expansion. While Laxmi would see Osho all through the day in Mumbai, however in Poona she could see him as schedule permitted. Each morning Laxmi briefed Osho on the visitors list for the day and sought guidance to run the ashram. Though Laxmi could meet him if required during the day however she had to find a slot. It had to be regulated. Later when overloaded with work Laxmi saw him for an hour each in the morning and at night after *darshan*. For Laxmi these were precious hours and it was a joy to be in his presence.

Laxmi spent the day in the office with people who loved Osho, administrators and visitors. When in station in Poona she would certainly go for Osho *darshan* in the evening. Later for work Laxmi stayed out of Pune for long spells of time and there were long periods of absence away from Osho. However this did not affect Laxmi. In fact Laxmi understood that Osho did not want to make any individuals dependent on him. He was persona of freedom and self/individual growth. He represented freedom. He suggested non-clinging to any kind of crutches, including a guru. This independence promotes a seeker's growth and helps a seeker to get rooted and become more centered. Laxmi felt his presence even in Osho's absence. Away from him she felt a formless presence of Osho. An energy phenomenon Laxmi felt this happens, as his vision is clear while ours is misty. As a master Osho would suggest solutions to people who came with queries on varied subjects, and the onus to pursue was always on the person. This curtailed dependence. It was a joy to be in Osho's presence as one evolved regularly.

In the beginning about thirty people attended Osho's discourses in Pune.

One day Osho said to Laxmi, "More and more people will be coming and you have to arrange to accommodate them". Laxmi suggested the patio be expanded.

"It is a good idea to expand the patio, provided it be expanded," said Osho. "However I would like an open hall, preferably from where the tress and sky could be seen. I do not want it closed".

When the group of five sannyasins, Osho and Laxmi moved in Lao Tsu House first there were just a few trees. These were low in height and appeared more like bushes. Osho instructed that the trust plant as many

trees as possible especially the fast growing ones. He said he wanted the trees to dance with the winds and touch Lao Tsu House.

Within a few months they were healthy, tall, dense and blossoming. Over a period of time the trees around Lao Tsu House grew like a forest and one could only catch glimpses of the sky while sitting in the auditorium. Surrounded by nature, meditators sat in silence listening to Osho while the sound of birds chirping, cuckoo calling and flying from one branch to another filled the air. Many a butterfly and other insects visited these gardens enhancing the experience of meditators.

Anxious with this sudden proliferation Laxmi once asked Osho that roots of certain trees were known to weaken and damage the foundations of the building. Osho's responded, "It would take years before roots can harm the foundations. Who knows after fifty years what will happen and who will be here". His dictum was: just plant trees.

The construction of Chuang Tsu Auditorium was a miracle. Construction was on. One afternoon a large cement slab of roof collapsed. Incredible. No one was hurt although there were several Indian workers working to construct the auditorium. Moreover many small children played around this site as their mothers toiled to complete the auditorium. By the grace of existence just before it gave way, an Indian worker sensed a rumbling vibration. Alert to sounds he shouted out to others to rush out. Familiar with such wreckagees the Indian construction workers ran to safety immediately. The slab collapsed within seconds. The roof was rebuilt quickly and the auditorium was ready for use within three months.

Lao Tsu House looked more and more beautiful in a few months. The dense gardens added to the beauty of the ashram. Similarly many other changes were executed to enhance the beauty of the place both inside and outside the house. In addition practical aspects were not overlooked. To enlarge a bedroom on the ground floor a balcony was covered. There was a large open area in the rear of Krishna House known as Radha Hall that faced Lao Tsu House. Even though Krishna House had been added to meet the growing needs of the ashram there was a regular paucity of space.

One day Laxmi addressed the issue of booming number of visitors to Osho. Laxmi said, "Now more people are coming. They want to live and work in the ashram so we should extend the second house and make rooms to accommodate more people".

Osho said," Build more rooms and also build another meditation hall".

Chuang Tsu auditorium was reserved exclusively for Osho's discourses. However during festivals Osho gave *darshan* to his lovers in the Chuang Tsu Auditorium. All meditations including *kirtan* were conducted in Radha Hall.

Known for constant growth and evolution Osho always liked to see the ashram blossoming and expanding. In no time both Chuang Tsu auditorium and Radha Hall proved small to accommodate the overflowing turnover of visitors to the ashram, especially during the period Osho delivered discourses in English. Eventually a large hall was built to hold a minimum of seven thousand people. It was called Buddha Hall.

Yet more properties were taken over and altered to meet the ashram's needs. These properties were all renamed associated with a mystic. From Lao Tsu, Krishna, Radha, Buddha and so on. One was called Jesus House to accommodate new arrivals and new volunteers. A large dinning hall could accommodate hundreds of people.

The ex owners of these properties marveled to see the properties transformed. Indian architects and labor worked under the supervision of sannyasins from all over the world. These sannyasins had the expertise to design, construct buildings and decorate interiors with a wide-ranging and amazing material. They executed their creativity along with hard work put in by Indian architects and Indian labor. Design and quality were unmatched.

Several beautiful wooden structures came up as alternates to permanent structures as per Indian by- laws. Sannyasins created several temporary structures to house a university and meditation workshops. Several hydroponics gardens came up with small ponds. Soon fish filled the ponds. Organic farming started to suffice the needs of the kitchen. A beautiful Zen path that wound its way around the gardens was constructed. Many wooden and stone paths, small bridges came up in the gardens. In one corner of Jesus house, ashes of a sannyasin that Osho said was enlightened prior to death were immersed in a container lodged in a marble grave. In Lao Tsu House a beautiful fountain added bonanza to the garden outside Osho's room. With a mere press of a button the fountain would spring into several colors. Keeping in view the constraints of technology in India this was a major achievement, no short of a miracle in such a short span of time.

THE GATES OF PARADISE

The front gates to the ashram, known as the 'gateless gate' opened into Krishna House, were spectacular. Osho personally guided an Indian architect to design these. He loved Osho. His trust in Osho was immense as he said, "This is Osho's work and we must put our total energy into it and it will sure happen". Ready in a phenomenal period of just two months the gates were made of Burma teak an inexpensive wood. Fifteen feet in height, the gates were inlaid with marble, granite, bronze and brass. These matched in quality and design with the handiwork as good as what was made centuries ago by maharajas. Two nearly circular cabins were built inside of the gate, one on each side. These had glass doors and windows and marble empanelled the walls and floor. Most people liked the gates, however a few disapproved of such an expensive structure.

Osho personally designed an emblem and suggested it be set in marble. It consisted of a dot in a triangle in a nine-sided shape set in a circle. The circle held it all together. The dot symbolized oneness. The triangle symbolized *satyam shivam sundaram or Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh* that is the creator, the preserver and the destroyer respectively, according to Hindu mythology. The nine-sided shape was symbolic of nine planets. This logo also symbolized the inner journey. This symbol decorated the top center of the gate. Thus emerged a symbol for the ashram that was later adapted to all stationery and gift items.

Generally work commenced even before a plan was completed on paper. On the same note everyone involved trusted funds would be arranged prior to even allocation of funds. More often funds were committed or arranged after projects were underway. By and large projects were given shape and turned into reality on sheer element of trust. There was no uncertainty and the time gap between each project conceived and executed was minimal. For instance Laxmi gave her vision of the gate to the architect who appeared with sketches a few days later. Content with the sketches and that he was in tune with her concept, Laxmi asked him to commence work. Laxmi said, "Do the measurements later. For now let the digging start". Nevertheless there was no compromise on design and quality with respect to work.

In the process of expansion several properties near the ashram were rented. There were office areas for accounts, meetings, video and audio departments, press and publication departments, libraries etc on premises. A medical center met the needs of sannyasins on premises. Modern X-ray machines and equipment constituted the center run by an international fraternity of qualified medical practitioners. There was sauna too. Hygiene was a top priority. Vrindavan, a restaurant on premises at first fed five hundred people, later the capacity was enhanced to feed people a hundred times over. Vegetarian and egg less it served nutritious and sumptuous food in different cuisines. The bakery turned out sumptuous breads, croissants, cakes and cheese that drew many Indian families from distances to buy from here. Nutrition was an important consideration. Many sannyasins contributed by introducing varied cuisines. The kitchen was truly international and catered to every ones' tastes.

For the children of sannyasin couples there was a school known as 'no school'. It was run as per Osho's guidelines. Older children had the option to work in the ashram. They learnt skills in carpentry, pottery and weaving. In addition they were trained in performing arts including music dance and theatre. Under the aegis of a University a variety of meditative programs and therapies were designed to educate and train therapists. The focus was to incorporate meditation to therapy and applied modern psychology. Osho devised several group therapies as many psychotherapists from the west came to live in the ashram. Soon there were over eighty different group mediations and therapies to choose from. These were very popular with overseas visitors.

Improvisation was a regular feature to accommodate new activities. A mala shop came up in the garage and Osho's car was moved to the patio. Malas in rosewood were made on a lathe machine in the ashram

workshop in order to sustain quality. A picture of Osho was sandwiched in between two pieces of wood to make a locket. These were made in the ashram. This led to woodwork. Elegant ebony and rosewood cabinets were made for Osho's room. Soon office furniture followed and no good workshop in India could match the design and quality.

As more and more people came in several creative activities flourished in the ashram. Most departments were independent and complete in themselves. Sannyasins conceived, designed and executed jobs independently. Photography was completely in house. The studio had a darkroom for processing and developing. Later a rich photo library evolved. Books, magazines, publications and stationary were designed in house. A silk- screen print unit churned out a lot of commendable quality work. Several national awards were coveted as more and more books were published. String and wind instruments like mandolin, guitars and flutes were made in house. As Osho was allergic to perfumes scent free cosmetics were made. There were pottery, ceramic, weaving, jewelry, small rosewood inlay, hand woven shawls, bags and capes etc, candle-making studios that turned out readily salable goods. A boutique on premises sold all the articles made here.

There were close to two hundred fifty resident sannyasins living in the ashram. Sannyasins who started to live in the ashram earlier occupied spacious rooms and were privileged to have other facilities vis a vis the later residents. As time passed by the rooms had to be subdivided into two to accommodate more residents. As both earlier and later sannyasins wanted to live in close quarters with/to their guru the earlier residents did not object moving into half sized rooms. Many of them continue to be residents even today. There was complete harmony in the international gathering, even though most people did not speak a common language.

One day a few sannyasins came to Laxmi's office and related their experience of a night before. They had playfully acted out Shakespearean plays particularly 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and had had great fun. A selected audience paid for the unscheduled performance and appreciated the amateur attempt to stage Shakespeare's play. Laxmi inspired them to start a theatre group and share it with public. "You will enjoy this creativity tremendously if you put in your total energy". The group liked the idea. It matured into a well-knit theatre group.

In a month's time a team of director, producer, actors and actresses, choreographers, costume designers, make up artists and a stage manager put up a show in a Mumbai theatre. Rave reviews ensued. The group also performed at Taj Hotel, a deluxe hotel of the leading Taj Group in Delhi. The children theatre group was international and just as charming as the adults. They staged a play 'Peter Pan' in Mumbai and were cheered through the entire performance by the audience.

These shows were accompanied with exhibitions that were put up in the halls of the theatres. Seven vans hauled all the goods to Mumbai and then further to Delhi. Resident sannyasins those visiting Pune from all over the world worked through the night to put up the exhibition. The next day they exhibited their skills, demonstrated and expressed their creativity and gratitude for their Master. Weavers weaved, cobblers worked with leather, designers designing jewelry; batik and fashion; potters making pottery, ventriloquist acted etc. Their success and joy was a flowering of their meditation. Funds were not a consideration. The entourage was managed successfully owing to their trust and surrender to their guru, their Master. The ashram received requests to extend dates of the magnificent exhibition, however that was not possible.



In the winters leading group of hotels, the Taj invited this team again to put up X'mas shows in Mumbai and Delhi. Given first class hospitality in these hotels sannyasins put up a fashion exhibition. They played live music during these shows. This was a window of the talent of sannyasins on display beyond the frontiers of the ashram.

As regards festivals within the ashram three celebrations were held each year in the ashram. Thousands of people came to celebrate and get Osho's blessings. The three days that were celebrated marked: Osho's birthday on 11th December, Osho's enlightenment Day on 21st March and Mahaparinirvana Day on 8th September, the day Osho's father Dadda ji became enlightened and departed from this world

A day at the ashram in Poona proceeded like this: Dynamic Meditation began at six in the morning. A live morning discourse by Osho from eight to ten was the highlight of the day. Usually after this visitors would go to *Vrindaban* restaurant for breakfast while resident sannyasins began work. After a gap of an hour each through the day there were meditations in the Buddha Hall. These were regular, round the year and free of charge, Meditation groups were held as per schedule. Sannyasins usually required advance registrations and paid for them. These group workshops were intense.

Amongst the meditations Sufi Dancing was very popular. During this hour meditators danced to live music. It offered a good opportunity to people to meet new arrivals as people danced in a circle, and at times with a partner. This hour provided people to realize the areas they needed to work on and their energy. Amongst group meditations primal scream, encounter and rebirthing were popular. Besides Tai Chi, Zen, Yoga, Vipassana and martial arts were offered too.

Visitors streamed into the office through the day to half past five in the evening. They came to see the ashram or spend a day/s at the ashram. Sannyasins stayed for evening *darshan* with Osho. A few people got appointments to be in the front rows during this hour. Osho answered any queries of around ten sannyasins during this meeting. The other sannyasins sat in silence in communion with the Master. Later the number increased to hundred and people were signed up only for silent *darshan*. Now Osho stopped answering personal questions during this hour. Sannyasins just sat near him at his feet drinking the divine nectar.



Later *darshan* was redesigned and live music was played during the hour. It was renamed energy darshan. During this hour Osho transmitted energy as a master to his disciples. Known as *Shaktipath*, it is an old tradition in the east. Like love that is an experience, and beauty that is felt, yet inexplicable in words, so also was the experience of energy *darshan* for Laxmi. For Laxmi these hours of *darshan* were hours of bliss as she experienced an energy sitting still at his feet in silence. A feeling of bliss persisted and there was no fatigue in the body. It was a blissful experience of sharing energy each evening. For sannyasins it was a rare and an intense experience of very deep silence. It seemed Osho designed *darshan* so that sannyasins could experience the deep inner silence.

In human terms Osho is like a normal human being. His need for food, sleep, bathing, exercise and talking are like ours. However as an enlightened Buddha he lives in the present moment, enjoys every moment undeterred by monotony of a routine, fresh like morning dew and non-fatigued. Calm, silent and a soothing energy he is remarkably consistent. Composed and unwavering Laxmi saw he was consistently calm, never excited. If at all he used anger as a tool with awareness, a witness to life.



A day in Osho's life was like this: In a few minutes after rising from bed at six thirty in the morning he had tea. He took the same kind of tea, always in the same cup, provided the cup was intact and not broken or changed. At seven he would go into the bath for exactly thirty minutes. At seven thirty he had yet another cup of tea with an apple. At dot eight am he would be in Buddha Hall. He spoke for nearly ninety minutes and concluded the discourse on the dot. He was back in his room by ten. For a few years, as long as the body permitted he had plain soda and a mouth freshener at ten in the morning.

Lunch was served at half past eleven. It comprised a vegetable, a lentil *dal*, green salad, rice and *roti*. He ate peas, tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage, onion and a few varieties of *dals*, including *toor dal*. He ate *dals* regularly. It is possible the cooks were bored of cooking limited vegetables and *dals*, however Osho never tired of it. He ate with complete awareness and once he had eaten, no tastes lingered. As long as he was eating he relished it, once eaten he had moved ahead. Each time he ate the same dish it was relished afresh. There was no past involved. It was a new dish and a new taste each time.

He lived in the present moment, from moment to moment. He was the master of his mind. In fact he used mind only when required. For the rest of the time he was in no-mind state, meditating. Many a times when Laxmi visited him he would be sitting in his chair, with his eyes closed. Just relaxing. This was deeply nourishing for him. He said, "For me to talk is arduous. The sooner it happens that many of you are able to understand me in my silence, the better it would be".

In the beginning in Pune Osho would go to the garden in Lao Tsu House, to relax or for a photo session. This had to be stopped owing to allergy to dust or pollen; Osho was confined to an air-conditioned room. He rarely went out in to the garden. Hence photo sessions were held in the room. Therefore he saw only his personal assistant and personal secretary in Pune. The others would meet him during discourse hours, *darshan* and photo sessions. For the rest of the day he sat in his room alone.

On the contrary in Mumbai he stepped out of his room more often: for discourses, or to occasionally visit a bookshop. In addition Osho went out to conduct meditation and group mediations in the hills once in three months for ten days. He exercised with a bull worker and had sauna bath. Also in Mumbai Osho read a lot, nearly thirty books each month. As a result he had an incredible library that everyone marveled. In Pune he stopped reading and instead would listen to audiotapes of classical, instrumental or *bhajans*, devotional music.

Osho had had a large family: five brothers and five sisters. He initiated his parents, a few members of his family and their children. His parents and youngest brother lived in a small house in the ashram. Most of the other family members came for extended visits to the ashram each year. Osho's father popularly known as Dadda ji in the ashram had gangrene in one leg and was unable to walk with ease. He began to keep poor

health since 1979.

To make movement easy for Dadda ji it was decided to purchase a car for him. Laxmi woke up on 14th September 1979 in the morning all geared up to travel to Mumbai in order to purchase a car. It was a pleasant day however she felt different. Not knowing what was in store she shelved the thought. Along with a few sannyasins Laxmi departed for Mumbai. During the journey an uncanny feeling persisted. However Laxmi said to the others that it was a beautiful day. Unaware of the unease in Laxmi they laughed it out stating that each day was beautiful.

In Mumbai they hunted for a spacious car owing to Dadda ji's bad leg. He needed more leg space. Naturally a foreign car was the answer. Unable to find one the team started the journey back to Pune. En route Laxmi recalled that a family friend dealt in second hand imported cars and stopped by to check on him. Luckily he had a big foreign car for sale. Laxmi had a test ride in a Cheverlot, 1986 model. Laxmi liked the car and paid a booking amount. It was confirmed the dealer would dispatch the Cheverlot post registration to the ashram in a couple of days.

Laxmi and fellow sannyasins started their journey back to Pune. On arrival in Koregaon Park, Pune they saw several sannyasins singing and dancing on the roads. Unaware of what happened, as there had been no communication, during the day with the ashram Laxmi stopped the car. Sannyasins apprised Laxmi and co-travelers that Dadda ji had departed. Osho said Dadda ji had attained Buddha-hood and sannyasins should celebrate his death.

Dadda ji's body was brought from the hospital to the ashram and laid in Buddha Hall where sannyasins gathered to pay respect. His body appeared very beautiful and his death affected everyone. Osho came to Buddha Hall and gently touched Dadda ji's forehead. Later the body decked up in flowers was carried in a procession by sannyasins to the funeral ground ceremoniously. Initial sadness gave way to the joy of Dadda ji's attainment to Buddha hood. Sannyasins sang bhajans and danced all their way. The body was cremated. The celebrations were serene and touched all the sannyasins. Silence pervaded the ashram.

Back in the ashram after the cremation Laxmi showered immediately and went to see Osho in his room even though it was late. She felt emptiness in the room. It was not tragic nevertheless she felt a vacuum. Osho opened his eyes and said, "Laxmi Dadda ji left the body as a Buddha. That was beautiful. Now he will never be born again. His death was a very beautiful experience".

"People become Buddhas just before leaving their body, when are you going to have living Buddhas?" Laxmi asked Osho. Osho was silent almost as if he was not present. A part of him was away. Laxmi left Osho's room in silence. Unable to comprehend how Osho felt about this, Laxmi could not resist sharing the issue with Osho.

Next morning once again Laxmi asked Osho the same question. He nodded and said, "Yes, if you are vulnerable and open you can feel when a Buddha has happened. Everything around the person changes and becomes very beautiful".

Osho pierced Victorian attitude of Indians and got a lot of flak in return. He did not compromise with truth to nurture people's illusions. He spoke on subjects like sex, relationship, greed etc closeted and barred by traditional gurus. Local Indians resisted this and generated dislike for Osho. Religious fundamentalists too hated Osho. On the other hand people from all over the world who had either read or heard him loved him. So much so that many overseas and inland visitors who came to meet him stayed on in India dedicated to him and his work.

There were many a miracles constantly happening within the ashram. A celebration was planned to inaugurate a new fountain in Krishna House Gardens. Sannyasins who build it were apprehensive of its operation as there had been no time to test run. Unsure if water would flow, they wanted to be saved of embarrassment. However Laxmi suggested all should trust the Master trust the Master and celebrate the inaugural of the fountain.

An announcement of its opening was made; the fountain was started amidst several hundred people including sannyasins. Water sprouted out nearly forty feet high and all those present cheered. Just then water suddenly stopped flowing. Nevertheless it exhibited Laxmi's trust in the Master and existence and it was a beautiful experience for all members of the team. It further strengthened the teams' trust. The fountain was fixed later.

In yet another miracle Laxmi had a near death experience. Late one evening in 1976, Laxmi drove back alone to Poona from Mumbai in a Mercedes that replaced the Cheverlot Impala. Laxmi drove since the year 1953 and had had no tickets issued for traffic rule violations. Laxmi traveled many a time between Mumbai and Pune alone in two hours and thirty minutes. En route Laxmi would put on Osho's audio discourse.

This time Laxmi was only half- hour drive away from Pune when the car suddenly skid. A loud noise followed. A car from behind whizzed off with its occupants laughing like maniacs. Soon Laxmi was going downhill in the Mercedes. This happened so fast that there was no time to think. Laxmi switched off the engine and the audio player. Resting her head with her arms on the steering wheel Laxmi shut her eyes as the car rolled down. The body became relaxed and calm. Soon the car stopped moving and was still. There was silence all around. Laxmi opened her eyes to see that the car was a wreck except for her seat and the door on her side. The windshield glass on her side was intact. Lifting her head Laxmi took out a tin of biscuits and opened the door. Sitting on a rock close to the car Laxmi thanked the sturdy body of Mercedes' that had indeed saved her.

Laxmi was reminded of a story Osho once narrated of Marpa, a Tibetan Buddhist guru. Marpa exhibited rare trust in his guru. He would obey all orders with joy. To test the unflinching faith in his guru directed him to jump off a cliff. Marpa jumped. His co-disciples rushed to the bottom expecting to find him dead. To their shock Marpa sat there laughing. Marpa thanked his guru and expressed his gratitude for considering him worthy of a test of trust. While rolling down in the Mercedes, Laxmi too trusted the Master would take care of her.

With a suitcase in her hand, Laxmi started her way uphill. Once atop the hill Laxmi looked down at the wrecked car. She had a vision. The wrecked car disappeared. Instead there were elephants, horses, chariots and soldiers in ancient battle costumes. A king who wore a crown watched the battling soldiers. Arrows and spears were strewn around. Shields and swords clattered. Krishna, the blue Hindu God and Arjuna, the Pandava who fought his cousins Kauravas for his legitimate right of kingdom appeared on scene. This was Mahabharat, the great Indian epic war. Laxmi was not there. It was pure witnessing.

Just then a car passed by. A little ahead it stopped and reversed. Someone came out and asked,

“ Ma Laxmi, what are you doing here”?

With this sound Laxmi returned to the scene of the car accident. The vision was no more. Pointing to the wrecked car Laxmi asked this friend if he saw anything. Seeing the wreckage, he asked Laxmi if she was fine. He offered to drive her to the nearest police station to lodge a report. Taking Laxmi's bag, he led her to his vehicle and they drove off. A report of deliberate hit and run was lodged. Laxmi later called the ashram

from the police post and sannyasins came to pick her up.

At the ashram she narrated the accident and vision of Mahabharata as she looked down into the valley to Osho. He said that if the head is hit in a certain way the person sees glimpses of the previous lives and she may have traveled into her past. He added, "Life is a mystery".

While creativity was the buzzword at the ashram and a lot was happening, at the same time there were traces of human negativity as well. At eleven each night after Laxmi finished reading letters to Osho she went to her office. A few sannyasins met here and were delegated assignments for the next day.

One night in 1975 there was a total breakdown of local electricity services. There were a few moments of complete darkness while Laxmi walked to the office at eleven. In darkness someone pushed Laxmi into the bushes and tried to strangle her. This happened like a flash. Laxmi kept her cool and watched the neck being strangled. She had an out of body experience. A feeling that if indeed this was the way her body had to go then it rather go. Witnessing an increasing pressure on her neck but no pain. Suddenly the attacker released her neck and bit her nose. Just as he released pressure on the neck Laxmi let out a scream. 'Osho, Osho'. A sannyasin passing by flashed a light and saw a stranger biting Laxmi. The stranger was grabbed.

Laxmi was back in the body soon after this incident. The nose bled and was swollen but Laxmi was not agitated or hurt. Undisturbed and silent she requested the rescuer not to hit the attacker, because he had provided an out of body experience to her. Laxmi said, "What happened within is far more beautiful than what happened to Laxmi's body outside".

A doctor attended on Laxmi. Osho was informed. He said he wanted to see Laxmi. However as Laxmi was not in distress a message was sent to Osho that he rests.

Sannyasins explained later why the assaulter was angry. He visited the ashram earlier and disagreed with Osho's views. His request to meet Osho earlier was not granted by Laxmi as she sensed his anger. Instead Laxmi had advised him to meditate. In his second attempt to meet Osho too he failed. He began to feel that Laxmi blocked a meeting with Osho. Hurt he decided to harm Laxmi. Therefore he attacked her. Perhaps he had planned to hurt Osho too. However during the assault he realized that Laxmi would become famous if he strangulated her to death, and people would worship her. Therefore in order to disfigure her he bit her nose.

Retired to her room Laxmi witnessed Osho's grace and thanked him. Her trust was awarded and she was blessed within a few hours. At two in the morning, a colleague who worked in the accounts department came to Laxmi's room. He complained he could not sleep due to anxiety. He wanted to remind Laxmi that a moneylender was due to visit. He would come to collect money the next day. Laxmi had no plans to be in office the next morning with a bandaged nose but noticing the anxiety of the sannyasin Laxmi told him to retire to bed. Laxmi assured him she would be in office the next morning.

This was yet another trial Osho put her through. Within two hours at four am Laxmi heard the phone ring in sleep. It was a friend. He said that he had a dream that Laxmi needed funds. As he had spare funds for the next three months he would loan it interest free. Laxmi admitted that funds were needed; yet it was up to him to spare the same. He agreed to send the packet before eleven the next morning.

Osho wound up the discourse at ten the next morning. A packet was delivered to Laxmi's colleague and he was unaware it contained money. Meanwhile the moneylender arrived and was seated in the office. Nervous, the colleague came to Laxmi and informed the moneylender had arrived. Laxmi had not been unable to share news of interest free loan with her colleague. Sensing his exasperation Laxmi said she would see the moneylender immediately. While rushing out he handed over the packet to Laxmi. As Laxmi did not wish to

keep the moneylender waiting she suggested he open it while she saw the moneylender. To his disbelief he counted the currency. It was exact amount due to the moneylender. The colleagues' face lit up. He laughed. "Magic," he exclaimed. Laxmi said, "See his grace. That is all there is".

During the month Osho gave discourses in English each morning on the average there were three thousand people present in the Buddha Hall. A few hundred resided in the ashram while the rest found accommodation near the ashram. Thousands loved him. At the same time many hated him. Yet he was never ignored.



During the course of a morning discourse a Hindu Indian threw a dagger at Osho. It whizzed overhead and landed on the ground a few feet away from Osho. No one was hurt. Women sannyasins were heard sobbing. The assaulter was caught and handed over to the local police authorities. He was tried by the local judiciary and acquitted. The judgment was biased. The argument was that if the weapon was thrown how was it possible that Osho continued with the discourse. How was that there was no shouting, screaming and no one got up to hit the man. The judge could not fathom how a three thousand strong gathering was unaffected by an attack on Osho. He did not understand Osho silenced the little noise that was a result of the assault, and continued with the discourse. There were audio recordings of the assault on Osho. Osho was interrupted during the discourse and requested his sannyasins and devotees to stay calm and to keep sitting. He then re continued the discourse. However the judge did not accept that as evidence. He could not believe that all those present sat unstirred in meditation with their master. It is strange that as an Indian he failed to appreciate the beauty and grace of all the meditators present because of his bias towards Osho's views on spirituality. It is strange that the land that was the birthplace of so many mystics of eastern spirituality had no impression on the judge.

The police had been tipped of the likelihood of an assault on Osho. They arrived on scene just as discourse began. However as the discourse had begun, Laxmi could not be informed of the potential threat. It may have been averted provided the police arrived prior to the beginning of the discourse. Therefore as police was present on the site of crime it was a state case vs the assaulter. Owing to this the trust could not hire a lawyer of choice for defense. An irony. The state lost even though custodians of law and order were present at the time of assault. The judgment was an outcome of religious prejudice and a blow to the caretakers of law and order.

Hence strict security was enforced in the ashram. A metal detector was installed and people were frisked daily. Osho now had a bodyguard all the time and was accompanied round the clock, except when he was in his room.

FLIGHT TO THE WEST

Meanwhile overseas sannyasins particularly western were repeatedly falling sick with amoebic dysentery, hepatitis, jaundice and problems as a consequence of poor hygiene in India. Osho did not keep well either. He had a severe back problem. It was felt it was time for the ashram be moved to a healthier climate in India. A hunt for land, more acceptable to Osho's body began.

Laxmi traveled to and forth Pune, Mumbai, Gujarat and New Delhi. There were a few properties in the Himalayas and Gujarat that were adequate. However the Indian government did not approve of an ashram close to sensitive and high security risk areas. As there were many overseas sannyasins, proximity of the Himalayas to China and Gujarat bordering on Pakistani territories respectively, the Indian government did not grant permit for an ashram in these states. However the Indian government did not spell this in so many words but dilly-dallied the issue for a long period. Unaware of this dilly-dally Laxmi stayed out of ashram for long spells in Mumbai, Gujarat and in Delhi for four months at a stretch in 1981, awaiting a decision.

Meanwhile back in Pune, owing to ill health Osho stopped discourses for the first time. He even stopped initiating neo sannyasins. In the spring of 1981, he announced that the last phase of his work had begun and it would be intense, concentrated and full of silence.

In search of a place for Osho Ashram, Laxmi first went to Kutch, Gujarat as she was familiar with the area. For Laxmi it was interesting to return to Gujarat as her childhood memories were refreshed. She had spent a beautiful childhood here. Accompanied by two or at least one sannyasin, Laxmi would drive by road each day. If there were two sannyasins each one would drive for five hours at a stretch to be relieved by the other in turn. They would set out full of energy for the day at four each morning. Laxmi particularly liked Wakaner Palace, a place in Morbi and Rajpipla near Kutch. A farm on about 20,000 acres with several lakes on the property and trees over 100 years old the palace was on sale. Negotiations commenced. It involved the owner, local community and state government. The consent of the local community was integral. Unlike in the west, bureaucracy in India worked at snail pace. Nothing seemed to move ahead.

Laxmi learnt much later since it was too close to the western border the government disapproved of the ashram in the vicinity. The government was concerned foreign agents would gain entry into the country in the guise of sannyasins easily. Being an international organization it was difficult to warrant this. Moreover the trust had no choice but to respect government policies. Later Laxmi learnt there was a possibility of nuclear testing in the zone. Glad as the project would have bombed, Laxmi went upcountry.

A frantic search began in the north, particularly near the Himalayas. Osho had had said many a time that he

loved to be in the Himalayas because of their spectacular beauty. Laxmi came across several palaces. As the Indian maharajas were no longer rich palaces could not be maintained owing to exorbitant costs. Neglected for want of money they were in ruins now. However as soon as the owners learnt that Rajneesh Foundation was keen on their property prices shot up. There was a misnomer that the Foundation has loads and loads of wealth. This was not true. In fact Osho said currency must move regularly and not stagnate. Although there was a perpetual fund crunch the trust did not stop work at any stage. Even on this basis the ashram derived joy from work round the year. Barely was money received the trust disposed it off in minutes to meet expenses. Currency was always mobile. Moolah was barely seen and seemed to vanish in no time, but it generated a lot of creativity of sannyasins and non-sannyasin workers. Nevertheless the misnomer that the Foundation was fabulously rich persisted.



Laxmi saw several properties in Dehradun on the foothills in Uttar Pradesh, Mussorie about 7000 feet above sea level also in Uttar Pradesh, and Shimla the British colonial summer capital in Himachal Pradesh.

A property that Laxmi particularly liked was Chail Palace near Shimla. A holiday resort of the ex Maharaja of Patiala, Punjab in yesteryears, it was now a state hotel. It had a capacity of accommodation for a thousand persons. The palace had an interesting story interwoven. The grandfather or the great grandfather of the Maharaja fell in love with the daughter of a British Viceroy. She too loved him. Both came to Shimla to be together. The viceroy got to know of it. He picked up his daughter immediately and sent her away to Europe. In the memory of his lost love the Maharaja built Chail Palace to get an overview of his ladyloves' former residence in Shimla.

During the search Laxmi learnt a lot about weather, local culture, food, common diseases, water conditions of local areas in India. Also Laxmi met several sannyasins and sadhus and people from various spiritual groups. They wore orange lungis around the torso and tied their hair in a bun atop the head. Most were either middle aged or and aged sadhus. Hindus according to Brahminical way of life believe sannyas is the last phase of life known as *van prasthya*, (retire to jungles) during which one renounces family and lives in isolation in forests. As per this school of thought the first three phases of life are *Bal avasthya*, *yauvan* and *grih asthya*, childhood, youth and family respectively. It is believed one graduates from the first to the last phase. Osho talked about this ideal structure of Hindu life. He said several thousand years ago an average life span was a hundred years therefore Hindus divided it into four phases, each comprising twenty-five years. However life span has reduced. He does not divide life into structures, instead Osho emphasizes on living and experiencing life with awareness in the world without renouncing family, physical and material life.

Laxmi especially recalls meeting a group of nearly thirty people taking a holy dip in a natural sulphur rich water spring near Dehradun. These traditional sannyasins were life negative people who failed to appreciate the life affirmative spiritual path of Osho. These people believed *moksha*, nirvana is attained by chanting mantras and renunciation of physical and material life. As soon as they learnt that Laxmi and her friends were disciples of Osho communication was deliberately terminated. Laxmi tried to talk to them but in vain.

Traveling through north India, Laxmi and her friends passed through jungles and forests. They saw many animals, including wild pigs, elephants and alligators in rivers, and trained elephants carry logs of wood. Laxmi revisited Manali, Himachal Pradesh where Osho first initiated sannyasins. To her shock Laxmi saw that the virgin hills were had less green cover and was congested with concrete and tourists especially from the west.

This search lasted for a year and a half interspersed with long absences from Pune from the latter half of 1979 to early 1980. It was primarily denial by government for reasons of security that Laxmi did not succeed. The government of Himachal Pradesh was keen to allot land to the trust for an ashram as it would be a major foreign exchange earner for the state. A lobby comprising of senior bureaucrats and politicians evinced special interest in the project. During this period Osho's health was downslide. It was decided that if the state government did not meet a certain deadline Osho would leave for the USA. The state government skipped the deadline and it was certain by early 1981 that a commune in the Himalayas was not possible. It was arranged that Osho leave India for America. In May 1981 Osho was in America.

Laxmi arrived in America and realized overseas sannyasins forfeited comfort to stay in India to be with their spiritual Master, Osho. While the east had had its chance to taste Osho, now it was a chance for the west to taste buddhahood.

In 1984 she received an intimation by mail requesting she attend a meeting for proper identification with the Immigration Office of New York City at 10.30 am on Friday, March 30, 1984. Laxmi arrived at the Immigration and Naturalization Service office with a friend on time. At 10.40 am, a man called the name 'Kuruwa' authoritatively. Laxmi got up and he signaled that he be followed. Laxmi's friend waited in the office for her to finish with the appointment.

Laxmi was led into a cubicle and asked to sit down rather in a harsh tone. Laxmi sat on a chair facing a desk on which the man sat down. "Your visa has been denied and you have to leave the country or you will be deported", he said handing Laxmi the denial papers in anger.

Laxmi explained that she had received the letter for the ongoing meeting only two days earlier in the afternoon on 28th March and therefore could not arrange for her lawyer to be present. Even before Laxmi had finished speaking he shouted that Laxmi had to leave the country. Taking the papers in her hand, Laxmi got up to leave.

" Sit down", he shouted.

Laxmi sat down again while he fumbled with papers atop the desk without looking up.

He shouted, "Get up and follow me". No sooner had he finished speaking he was out.

Yet another man appeared and followed Laxmi to a cubicle occupied by a middle-aged man. The mid aged man did not greet Laxmi. In a rather stern tone he asked Laxmi to sit down. "Your visa has been denied, but if you cooperate the status of the visa could be change".

Thrilled Laxmi shoved the papers on his table saying, " Please change it". He did not touch the papers and told Laxmi that Immigration Service wanted to know more about Rajneeshpuram. He added, "Soon a few people in the top ranks of Rajneeshpuram would be arrested. Although Osho would not be implicated however later he too could be arrested".

Laxmi told him that she did not understand what he said. The informer looked at Laxmi and in a clear authoritative voice repeated his stand. Once again he looked at Laxmi.

After a pause Laxmi replied, "We crucified Jesus, and again a person like Jesus, a beautiful flower has bloomed, and is blooming, may be crushed. History repeats itself and if nature wants it, then who are we to go against it".

In an attempt to lure Laxmi with power he offered to hand over authority to Laxmi and the others after key people in power in Rajneeshpuram, including Sheela, Arup, Vidya and others were arrested.

" It is not for power and politics we are with Osho. We are here for our Master, who has shown us a realm of life beyond mind. Now please allow Laxmi to call the lawyer", said Laxmi.

In anger he said, " I am John Feher and have especially flown in from Portland, Oregon.

It seems that to you nothing matters".

Laxmi asked him for a contact number. Handing over a telephone number 503 221 2186 he offered she could make a collect call in case of a change of mind.

Once again Laxmi requested him to let her call her lawyer. There was a silence as Laxmi looked straight into his eyes constantly. He could no longer look into her eyes.

After a while Laxmi asked, "What is this? You do not allow Laxmi to call the lawyer, nor do you make a clear statement? Are you expecting somebody?"

Gazing he nodded. In silence again he fumbled with the papers for some time. Laxmi closed her eyes and could hear his fingers thumping the table.

"Get up". Walk", ordered a voice. Laxmi opened her eyes and saw the man who had spoken with her in the other room stood behind her. Mr Feher led Laxmi while the other man chased Laxmi. Taking the rear exit to the elevator they brushed aside Laxmi's request to inform the friend, who waited for her outside. Denied of her legitimate right they shouted at her to follow their instructions.

Laxmi stood still in protest and said "No". While one of these men pushed her into the elevator the other pressed her wrist hard enough to cause a shooting pain in her back.

There were a few other people in the elevator who were witness to all this. " You have no right to handle Laxmi physically. Laxmi has no weapon, nor any intention to fight. You have denied Laxmi the right to call her lawyer and to inform a friend who waits outside. This is illegal", said Laxmi.

A rude reply followed, " Nothing is illegal." Pressure on Laxmi wrist was increased resulting in acute pain.

Probably Laxmi was taken to the twelfth floor and made to walk from one end of the floor into a large room. A chair was kicked and Laxmi asked to sit down facing an un-occupied desk and wall. Laxmi sat down. The men walked into a cubicle in the room while a few typewriters clicked in the rear end of the room. Laxmi sat down with her eyes closed, feeling Osho's locket in the mala. In an attempt to make a communion with her Master, Laxmi held the locket close to her ear for a message and presses it on the forehead. People who watched this laughed and made fun of her.

It was now half past twelve and Laxmi overheard conversation about a bail amount from the cubicle. While one voice said five thousand another repeated three and a half thousand dollars. This alerted Laxmi. Since it was a Friday banks would close at four in the afternoon to reopen on Monday. Failure to pay for bail in a few hours would mean arrest and imprisonment until Monday.

Laxmi opened her eyes and got up and walked to the cubicle. A very mechanical and authoritative voice called out, "Laxmi". Looking around for who had called out aloud, Laxmi spotted no one as the clatter of typewriters continued.

In a loud, clear and confident voice with Laxmi asked, "Who will attend to Laxmi? How long does Laxmi have to be here as there is an appointment to keep with a doctor at two thirty and later with friends"?

Mr Feher appeared immediately from the cubicle and told Laxmi that she would not be able to keep any appointments. He added she would be at the Immigration Service no matter what time it was.

Laxmi replied, "Look one is not childish, maybe childlike; but you are deliberately delaying and passing time. But remember time is passing us all. One is aware that being a Friday, if money is not arranged in time, you may put Laxmi in jail for the weekend. That is the reason why you are denying Laxmi the right to call a lawyer and or inform the friend who waits outside".

Ignoring Laxmi's reply he shouted that she must wait, as she would soon be sent to Brooklyn. And he left.

Soon another person paced up and down room pretending to be working. Laxmi said she needed to use the ladies' room.

"Oh, really", someone said in sarcasm. The others grinned with him. Laxmi sat in silence for a few minutes. Once again Laxmi informed the people present of her need. A typist replied that it was being arranged.

A few minutes later someone walked to where Laxmi was seated and said rudely, "Walk". Led down the staircase into a cell, the man locked the door behind her Laxmi. A few minutes passed by after Laxmi had used the washroom before he opened the door and asked her to follow. Led into an office he signaled Laxmi to be seated, kicking a chair in her direction.

It was perhaps close to one in the afternoon. Laxmi walked across the room to where typists clicked on typewriters and asked if she could call her lawyer. He signaled her to come and sit where he sat.

He asked, "What is your name"?

Laxmi asked if she could call her lawyer.

"Are you Indian"? asked he.

Laxmi repeated her request. The investigator informed Laxmi that she had been arrested and could not leave.

Laxmi persisted. She asked, "How about informing the friend outside? How about clothes and jacket for Brooklyn Prison"?

"All has been arranged. What is your friend's name"? asked he.

"Nadamo, please arrange to get jacket as Laxmi is cold", requested Laxmi.

“ No”. On second thoughts he said, “Keep your wallet here on the desk and it may be possible”, he replied.

Laxmi opened the wallet, examined it and tucked in Mr Feher’s slip deeper in a pocket.

The investigator glanced at the wallet and cheekily asked, “Oh you have credit cards too”?

Laxmi took out a credit card for a free battery and displayed it for him. “It is half past one and you have not allowed one to call the lawyer. This is not right”, said Laxmi.

“Is it so? A tough one”, remarked he to the other investigator.

Laxmi insisted she be allowed to call a lawyer.

At forty past one he pulled a telephone over, pushed it towards Laxmi rudely and said, “ Go ahead”.

Laxmi asked to be allowed to meet Nadamo to get the lawyer’s phone number. “No”, he shouted.

After much argument Laxmi called telephone inquiry service for the number. At fifteen to two Laxmi managed to call a lawyer. She spoke Hindi and requested him to call a New York lawyer and her friends for money. The lawyer gave Laxmi a number of a New York lawyer and assured her he would call him immediately. He then asked to speak with the investigator. Laxmi tailed the conversation. She knew from the other end the Indian lawyer was verifying the status and amount of the bail bond. The investigator said it was undecided. However relenting he said it was approximately three and a half thousand dollars.

Laxmi was allowed to see Nadamo briefly, but was forced to leave the wallet at the desk. Nadamo accompanied Laxmi back to the office and was allowed in. Taking the jacket from him, Laxmi briefed him and asked to arrange for a bond. The officer asked Laxmi to follow him and led her into a cell with a dirty toilet and a row of chairs.

It may have been half past two; sitting in the cell Laxmi began to laugh. Someone glanced through the crossbar glass window in the steel door of a locked cell. Half an hour later the investigator or prosecutor came, unlocked the door and asked Laxmi to follow him. Laxmi was led into another room which had a camera installed in the center. Handing Laxmi a piece of plastic that had a few numbers on it, he asked she hold it under the chin. To Laxmi 's surprise there was no film. He searched in vain. Yet another miracle.

Next he gave Laxmi instructions to sign a sheet. It stated that she had been allowed to call her lawyer. Laxmi refused to sign the statement saying that she had not been allowed to call her lawyer until several hours lapsed since her arrival. Irritated he grabbed the form and angrily scribbled, " refused to sign" on the form. Laxmi argued it was not true.

In a rage he led Laxmi out to yet another room for fingerprints. Laxmi had a delicate skin and requested for a solution to clean her hands. There was none in the room. He gave her a used and wet Kleenex tissue to wipe her hands from her desk. He then led Laxmi back into the cell. It was well past half past three and he asked if she wanted lunch. Laxmi asked for tea. Informing her no special requests were permitted Laxmi took only apple juice as eggs, cheese and spicy food was out of Laxmi's meal list. Several people smoked and Laxmi was nauseated.

At four he came, unlocked the cell and asked Laxmi to follow him. Having entered a room he nastily asked her to sit down. In a few minutes a New York lawyer arrived. He informed Laxmi that the bail amount was paid and she would soon be free. The lawyer discussed the bail with the investigator. Laxmi was led to an upper floor where friends were waiting with money. The investigator was not as discourteous now as he had been all through the day. After a brief meeting Laxmi was locked up in the cell again. At half past four the cell door was finally unlocked and Laxmi was free.

"Investigators are surprised money for the bail bond was arranged. In spite of resistance to permit use of washroom, to make phone calls to the lawyer and meet Nadamo to get phone numbers of friends, nevertheless with the master's grace Laxmi is free" Laxmi said thankfully.