

More German than the Germans

by Swami Chaitanya Keerti

I remember my childhood home in the small town of Panipat. We lived on a street where mostly untouchables lived. Mahatma Gandhi has a special name for them—harijans—which means the people of God. Though the other members of my family hated the untouchables and took a bath each time they came in contact with them, I did not follow this ugly system. My best friend Ramesh, a harijan, lived in the same street. I would often go to his house and enjoy meals with him. I sometimes even slept in his house. But each time when I came home, my family would not touch me, because I had been to a harijan house, and they would take a bath if I touched them. I continued with this lifestyle and had fun. This became a solid base for me to be able to live with people of all nations, colors, and races—without ideas of superiority or inferiority.

I also enjoyed the company of Sikhs and Muslims in my small town, ate in their houses, and visited their places of worship. I read the Christian literature that was freely distributed, but could not find any church in our small town. The real revolution and crystallization happened after I found and read some of Osho's books.

I went to Osho at the age of 21 and was initiated into His neo—sannyas. Osho accepted me the very first day—to be precise, the day was September 4, 1971—and with a new name and a new life, I joined His movement. My first multicultural exposure was Osho's Kirtan group, which began traveling to various cities of India the day after my sannyas initiation. There were people from different parts of India—Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Bengal, and other states—and there were people from the West also. I was equally comfortable with the Western friends, as I was able to communicate with them in English. They also seemed very comfortable.

Then in 1974 Osho established His ashram in Pune, and I was asked to edit the Hindi edition of the *Rajneesh Foundation Newsletter*, starting with the first issue on Osho's birthday, December 11. Swami Anand Teertha, who was British, was the editor for the English edition. Osho would call us together and give instructions about this publication.

My first girlfriend was Australian. Later I had more girlfriends from Germany than from any other country—as there always were more Germans in the ashram.

Even today I have a German wife. I had Canadian, French—Canadian, Dutch,



and Japanese girlfriends. This multicultural love life has enriched me tremendously, and I am at ease with, just natural with, people from various cultural backgrounds. I can call myself a global citizen. My first girlfriend from Australia was very loving, and she expressed that she was surrendered to me. I was too naïve and innocent to realize that I was carrying the conditioning of Indian husband-wife relationships. Coming from that background, I asked her, “Could you give me a glass of water?” This was not in the ashram, but at her room somewhere outside. She gave me a reply that shook my Indian conditioning. She said, “Don't you have hands to get the water for yourself?” I was surprised that a moment before she had been saying that she was surrendered to me and then the next moment she would not serve me a glass of water. But soon I realized that surrender in love did not include serving like an Indian wife—I was expecting to be served like an Indian husband. This was a good lesson for me, and I became more alert to my future love relationships with Western women.

I have lived about five years in the West—mainly the US, the UK, and Europe. I have lived mostly in the communes and centers—Oregon in the US, Medina in England. In between, I've spent about two decades in the Osho Commune International in Pune, where I have been able to interact with people from several countries.

I worked in the Ashram's Press Office for more than a decade, and the Press Office always had people from various countries. It was really fun working with them, as I was always there, while others came and went, floating!

And there were also difficulties and challenges of working with people of other cultures, but they are not greater than the challenges of working with people of the same culture. In the Press Office, we had people from English-speaking countries—America, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, etc.—because we needed proper English for the press releases. I am bad with grammar and word choice in English, as I did not have an education in English. Another Indian, Swami Satya Vedant, was proficient in English and a significant contributor to the Press Office. But we preferred to have Australian Krishna Prem, British Subhuti, and American Veeten write the press releases in British and American English, although we were mostly working in India or from India. And our press releases were often praised and published verbatim, without any editing, in the Indian media. Germans were not good with the English language, but Abhijat and Manasvi, both Germans, always saw to it that the press releases were presented in a neat way, so that they looked good! And the Press Office needed passion, dedication, and devotion, and I think I had those in abundance. (Am I boasting, like Indians do?) I made sure Osho made a splash in the media—this way or that way.



Everybody contributed in his or her own particular way, and the end result was really amazing!

We have not always appreciated the benefits of this cooperation, and stereotypes have come up that divide us. One has been the idea that Indians are dirty and so cannot be responsible for maintaining the ashram, The statement that Indians won't take care of the ashram usually comes up in reference to how the Pune ashram was kept during the Ranch years. But most of the Indians who were in Pune at that time hadn't been with Osho long. Osho wanted the longtime sannyasins with Him in Oregon, It may be true in general terms that many Indians aren't clean by Western standards (though there are many very clean Indians), but Indians living with Osho for such a long time may behave more in the German manner than even the Germans themselves. I know that Vairagya, who was my roommate for a year or so, was very, very particular about cleanliness and aesthetics, while another Indian friend of ours, who had been in the commune for the same amount of time, continued to keep his room untidy. That was the reason none of us wanted to visit his room,

I found it really exciting to work with people of other cultures in my life with Osho, and I am actually more comfortable in a global environment. This has been part of my evolution in the time spent around Osho. I was happy to see some participants from the US and England in a recent camp at Oshodham in New Delhi.

I conclude the story of my multicultural experience with what Osho says about becoming a sannyasin:

ÒBecoming a sannyasin is a simple gesture that you are ready to become free. Free from nationality: The sannyasin will not think of himself as an Indian or a German or an Italian. Even if he has to carry a passport, he will not think deep down in his consciousness that he is an Italian. He is simply universal. A sannyasin will not think of himself as a Christian or a Hindu or a MohammedanÑalthough there is no need to go on telling people about it, because I don't want you to create unnecessary troubles for yourselves. As it is, you have enough troubles. But deep down you will know, 'I am now just a human being.' You will transcend all barriers of nation, race, color, religion, And basically, fundamentally, you will drop your upbringing, and you will become innocent again and you will start exploring life. Philosophia Perennis, Vol. 1, Chapter 10.

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