

**The World Is Imperfect, and So Are We**

*Autumn Sun Pardee*

Going to school on the Ranch was a major relief from the monotony of the Christian mentality of public school. Instead of starting the morning with the pledge of allegiance, *“I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,”* we were doing yoga and singing songs. Instead of a focus on how to become productive workers for the society, the idea was to create a more balanced being, who could then give back to the community from a healthier place. In place of history lessons, we pulled tarot cards out of the Rajneesh Tarot deck. And at one point, the school replaced the classroom altogether and gave us a “school without walls.”



There were great ideas that, in a utopian environment, should have been a revolution in the way that we raise our young. But somehow we ended up with some kids who, after living in the commune their whole lives, couldn’t read or write. The ideas are beautiful: Let the children lead the direction of the class. Give them the freedom to express their own interests. Don’t teach them anything; just steward them toward their own learning process. When done right, I think this is the most effective way to raise a healthy, balanced, free-thinking, creative, conscious adult.

So why did the Ranch fail to do that? Unfortunately, we were, at the same time, being brought up to believe that the outside world was of no real importance. The laws that governed “society” didn’t apply to us; how could they? We were isolated in the heavenly place where love and freedom were abundant, and we were only able to experience the outside world through the self-centered veil of sannyasin conditioning: “We’re better than them.” It wasn’t written in the doctrine, but that’s what we were learning. What the Ranch failed to create was a balanced, sustainable world for its children to live in.

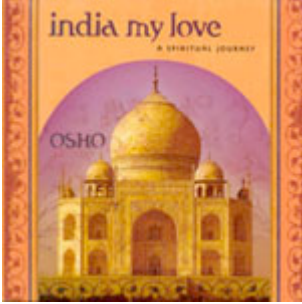
I think we needed more of an understanding that the young kids still needed the love and attention of their parents and that the teenagers, while still having freedom,



needed structure, healthy discipline, and a voice to be heard and welcomed within the community. I've talked to so many kids who felt abandoned, ignored, and in the way at the Ranch. Too many parents were all too eager to throw in the towel of responsibility and overindulge in the act of personal healing.

So, on schooling, the old man's ideas were right on the money. The most beautiful way to raise a child is to let them lead the way, and, if you're lucky, you'll be the one who is doing the learning. What was missing on the Ranch, in my view, was a balanced community to reflect the potential of the children and an awareness of the outside world. Yes, let the child lead the way and give them the freedom to show you where they want to go, but also give them the structure of knowing what tools they will need to deal with the world beyond what they already know. In this case, let them in on the secret: The world is imperfect and so are we. We must all remember that no responsibility to keep our feet on the earth for the well-being of our kids.

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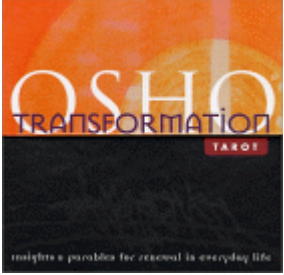
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