

About SATSANG

John David talks to Eddie Blatte January 2003 in Tiruvannamalai, India

You have been giving Satsang for about five years now? What does Satsang mean and what do you offer people who come to your Satsangs?

Well, the word sat, means truth, so Satsang, means a meeting in truth. At some point after I arrived in Australia I started working with people, initially teaching meditation and some of the healing arts that I knew. At the same time seeing that I wanted to share this simple truth that my friend had tried to show me before, that Papaji finally did show me, I wanted to share it with people.

Initially I thought that everybody would want to know it. I recall my first days in Sydney walking around and feeling that I had a bag of diamonds. I wanted to give these diamonds and I was amazed to discover that nobody wanted them. I couldn't find people to give these diamonds to. Nobody was interested in this simple truth; they were far too busy with their lives. So I got a shock. I started teaching meditation and other things and gradually students came round and I realised at some point that what I was sharing with these people was my Self, the Self. That gradually became clearer to me and that even though they weren't consciously interested in having this *truth*, they had been attracted to me.

On the night Papaji left his body, Sept 7th 1997 I was running a weekend Reiki workshop. When he left his body it was about lunchtime in Australia. I had gone for a walk alone and suddenly had this very powerful energetic happening and an internal message from Papaji that I was familiar with, telling me that I had some work to do. I was incredulous about this message and had trouble believing it even though the messages continued for two days. I didn't know that he had left his body. In a way that was the beginning of John David offering Satsang. But in another sense it had been happening naturally very gradually through the work that I was doing.

About five years ago I remember starting with a few of my meditation students. I told them that I was going to offer them something a little different. So about six people got together in somebody's apartment and I just talked about this simple truth. They were very touched. Things happened quickly. Soon there were twenty and then thirty people coming. Suddenly a building was offered for a small rent, so we could have a space for Satsangs for our community. The Satsang community painted it and made cushions and set it up as a Satsang meeting place. In three months the whole thing got started and my teaching work began.

So you started communicating the truth, as you understand it. What is this truth? What are you trying to teach people in your Satsangs?

I am just asking people to stop for a moment and become quiet and look and when they look I am asking them to see that for many years they have been saying "I". The reference of their lives has been I, so they see the world from this place of I. I am trying to show them that if they really investigate this I, they can't find it. They have the belief that there is an "I" and a relationship to a world separate from itself. Their parents and society have reinforced and passed on this belief; the whole society supports it. I try and show people that it is actually not true, that it is a wrong belief. I help people become a little quiet so that they can have a certain space where the story is not so pressing. In that space its possible to investigate for yourself and see that this belief is in fact not truth. Once that is seen clearly then everything changes for that person.

One of the traditional ways of discovering the truth of the "I" is Self-Enquiry. Which is something that Ramana Maharshi spoke of and he was of course Papaji's Guru. Can you tell us what Self-Enquiry is and step-by-step how one does it, if it is indeed something to be done?

There are certain prerequisites for Self-Enquiry. Ramana Maharshi himself said that this was the most direct way to realise the Self. However there needs to be some work, some time spent to get to know the mind and to quieten it. So whatever technique you use it is important to come to a sattvic mind, a clear and peaceful mind. This is a mind that is available to understand the truth.

Most people have such a busy mind and they are so identified with their story that there is simply no space in which Self-Enquiry can work. If you do Self-Enquiry in that busy state, you will go in a circle within the mind. Self-Enquiry doesn't work then. If you come to a sattvic state, then when you ask yourself the question, Who Am I?, you start to see that this 'I', the I that is doing things, the I, that believes things, and the I, that judges things is not true. In the beginning Self-Enquiry is a reminder to look deeper. As you start to look deeper you find that that enquiry brings you to stillness and peace (it doesn't bring you to some kind of clever answer).

Is that enquiry essentially an intellectual verbal enquiry? Or is it a deeper feeling enquiry?

It is not a mental enquiry. Initially it can be a mental enquiry and through that mental enquiry you can come to see the truth that you are not the mind, so maybe initially it works like that. But when you start doing it in a sattvic state, you find that it takes you to that place inside yourself of peacefulness. So when you find that Self-Enquiry is bringing you to peacefulness

or emptiness, you can't believe the mind anymore. You no longer believe this separate I, this separate identity. You start to realise that you are part of this oneness, which is called the Self, or God.

The experience you had in Papaji's company earlier on, you called an awakening and now you are calling a particular event the Self or the recognition of the Self. Is there a difference between an awakening and the Self and is the process progressive? In other words does someone awake first and then perhaps lose it to some extent, and then over time it becomes deeper and deeper until they realise the Self. Is that how it works?

That has not been my experience. I had done many years of preparation in achieving this quiet mind, sattvic state of the mind. At the time I came to Papaji I didn't know I had that state. Still, I was ready and I was prepared. All the work was complete. Only there was no understanding. What happened in the meeting with Papaji, in a flash, in an instant the understanding came. I call that understanding an awakening to the Self. It happened ten years ago, and the contact with the Self has never been lost. The ground of the Self has never left. That moment with Papaji was a dramatic change. Nothing fundamental has happened to that understanding, since that time, so I would call that an awakening to the Self. What has happened since that time, as I have already mentioned, many of John David,s issues, tendencies and patterns of the mind, strongly returned. But because there was no identification they could be looked at. In those last ten years, there is less and less that disturbs the contact with the ground of the Self.

Now ten years later, the radiance or clarity of the Self, is greater than it was at that time, not at the exact time of the awakening but two or three months later.

Is this increased radiance because the tendencies or vasanas have been dealt with and are not as prominent as they used to be?

I remember when I started offering Satsang, at that time I felt myself to be very quiet and clear. So at that time I felt myself ready even though I resisted if for some months after that initial message. After Satsang started there was tremendous bliss and radiance after each meeting. Then I would wake up the next day and feel myself right back in the mud with all this stuff around. I remember feeling that this can't be right and that I shouldn't be doing the meetings, that somehow it was not correct.

I was going to stop the meetings when I happened to meet Isaac, who is another spiritual teacher. I talked with him and he said, Yes, that is my experience too. He encouraged me to continue. That was four or five years ago now. That doesn't happen anymore. In these last few years, the various strong tendencies of John David,s mind have come up, and by

becoming aware of them as unreal, they have gone, they have fallen away.

If self-realisation is so simple what prevents people from realising the Self permanently?

Initially the thing that prevents people is that the majority of humanity are completely conditioned into their story and they live in a society which supports this lack of awareness. The media, their friends, families everybody conspires together. So for most people during their whole lives they never even consider that there could be some kind of alternative. In my own case, if you remember in my twenties, I had this question, so you could say that I never had a choice but to be a seeker. The question had to be answered. But it seems that most people are very content with their lives and they don't ask any questions about Truth. A very small group of people do question and become seekers, seekers for truth. This is a very tiny proportion of the people and amongst those seekers for truth, they find themselves attracted to different teachers, teachings and to different paths. Some of them find the truth, but many get lost along the way. I am of the strong opinion that a Teacher is needed to find the Truth. Why are some people drawn to such a teacher? I don't know. I can only really use the word Grace. In some people's lives, Grace is working to bring those people to a teacher. If I consider my life, I feel incredibly grateful that I was taken first to Osho, who prepared me beautifully and then to Papaji, who after only a few weeks was able to show me this simple Truth. I feel really blessed. I can't say that John David did that, because he didn't!

This is a rather contentious issue, this business of Grace. Because if Grace occurs, spontaneously without one doing anything, is there any need for a spiritual aspirant to practise, or could one just hang around until it just happens? Is there something a spiritual seeker can do to foster the Grace?

This is a very difficult question. The absolute truth is that you can't do anything, Grace works. There is predestiny - in my own case perhaps I had done all kinds of stuff in my past lives and somehow, at this moment Grace had me on the list and I was guided very quickly to the right places. Having said that I would say that there are things that can be done that would put you on the playing field. Be part of a spiritual community, have a spiritual Master, he will encourage you to become quiet and look. And when you become quiet you start to see this conditioned mind. You start to see how you are so attached to my story. By being in the Satsang of a true spiritual teacher and by true I mean someone that has realised the Self you can't escape seeing. Being in the presence of a spiritual teacher of that magnitude is never comfortable, that is why few people stay with a teacher and why for example often more people come after the teacher has died than when he was alive this is a common phenomenon. So if there is sufficient honesty and if there is the predestination (the Grace) working in your support, than in a matter of time you will realise the Truth.

That brings us to another contentious issue, the necessity of the Guru. I think that all of the great Masters have indicated the necessity of the Guru. Do you feel the same way?

No doubt. Firstly, real surrender to the Teacher gives you a constant reminder that Truth is possible, that there is an alternative, another way of living. He is the constant reminder of that. When you live in society with no contact with a spiritual teacher or a spiritual community, then the whole conditioning, the whole self-hypnosis, returns and you again to focus on I. When you are in the presence of a Teacher, just being there, the focus is the Self. This constant reminder is very valuable. Secondly, the Master provides the mirror. Although we can naturally see many of the issues and tendencies, some of the difficult and profound ones often can't be seen and need a mirror. Thirdly, the Master provides this enormous fund of unconditional love. In that love you have the nourishment you need to face some of the stuff, which may be painful and difficult. So the love of the Master is very important. The Master has two more important tasks. When the fruit is ripe and ready to fall, he knows; so he can just tap the fruit at the right moment. In the Zen tradition there are many stories of how the Master does something outrageous to the student just in the right moment, and the student wakes up. The image of the Zen Master with his stick. Finally for the Master to actually confirm that the awakening has actually happened.

So how do you see yourself with your students, or with the people who spend their time with you? Do you consider yourself to be a guru, a teacher or a friend?

I see myself firstly as a friend. There is no real difference between the Teacher and the student. There is a tiny, small understanding that the Teacher has that the student doesn't have. I am most comfortable as a friend. Guru is there by itself because a friend comes because he is interested in Truth. He comes to someone who is able to show him Truth, so naturally the Guru is also there. Guru means someone who brings light to the darkness.

I have one last question, and it is another very difficult one. Can the Self be experienced? Is it an experience or is it an understanding? In other words experiences come and go but the Self never comes or goes.

If I is present then the Self cannot be and so I cannot experience the Self. However the I can disappear for a moment revealing the Self. If the mind is silent or quiet the I can disappear. Later the mind can own that experience of the self, I need to say the Self when it is experienced is still within the mind. It is the mind that is experiencing the Self. What I mean when I say, an awakening to the Self, is different because then there is a deep, inner knowing, I am the Self. In fact, there is no more an I to know the Self. There is just Self Beingness. It's just present. I think almost every human being has experienced the Self. I think that it is a common occurrence that people have experienced the Self. So for example

you are walking along in the forest, the sun is shining and a bird flies overhead and the shadow of the bird comes on a rock and you see that shadow in a moment. In that moment, the mind stops and you become aware of the heat of the sun, the smell of the pine forest and the shadow all in an instant. You find yourself totally present, and the Self is revealed. There is this sense of tremendous expansion and peace. This is the Self.

I think it is common for people to meet the Self, but it goes away sometimes quite quickly. Most people never know that they were experiencing the Self because nobody told them, "This is the Sel.". Although the experience is common it doesn't necessarily lead people to have a spiritual life. Some people have very strong meetings of the Self. They have maybe hours or even days when they can't function normally and its so powerful that it forces them to go out and find out, "What is this?"

A woman in Sydney was in a supermarket one day buying her groceries. Suddenly she felt herself expanding and becoming as large as the supermarket. She was quite distraught about this. She was feeling incredibly peaceful and in a way ecstatic, but in a way she felt so different she couldn't find herself anymore. The old Self, the story she couldn't find her story anymore. So she was very disturbed and upset and basically wanted to get back to normal. She was brought to have a meeting with me and I could immediately recognise that she was experiencing the Self. She was the Self. We talked together and I tried to encourage her to just accept it as it was. But within a week, her desire to be normal and to be the story was so strong that the conditioned self came back. That was a longer meeting with the Self. In fact, it can completely change one's life. Being the Self doesn't fit one's old story; so it forces one to start to find out, What was this? Did I go crazy? Do I need a mental hospital? Do I need a spiritual Teacher?

Can that experience be recaptured in anyway?

You can't get that experience back or look for that experience, but in order to understand that experience it can lead you to find a Master. Or in that moment a Master comes. In the case of this woman, she became my student. For one or two years, she associated with me and then continued with other teachers. In her case it didn't just stop. It was a radical change in her life.

AWAKENING

Was that in Lucknow, India?

Yes. I was still with my Russian lady. We had been together for about two years. She and I went travelling in the North of India. By then our relationship was a bit rocky, but we were both interested to go and see this Master. We went in about April 1992. It was incredibly hot weather and we didn't know how to find the Master. We got onto a bicycle rickshaw and told the man to go to a certain area of Lucknow. He went on for what seemed like forever, and when we couldn't stand it anymore and were hot and sweating and he was half dead with his cycling, I said, "Stop, we can't look anymore, so stop!"

And then there was this incredible moment. As I got off the rickshaw my eyes met the name on the gate of the house and it said, "Poonja." I thought, "Wow!" "This must be the place!" One second later, as I was looking at the house, Poonjaji himself was walking down towards the gate, and I was walking towards him on the other side of the gate. We just met totally naturally at the gate. Before I could get my breath, or collect my wits, because it was all happening so suddenly, he was saying to me, "Where are you staying? Where are your bags? What can I do, to help you?" So we had this beautiful meeting, which was completely unexpected and spontaneous. So I settled in and went everyday to his Satsangs.

Can you describe the sort of relationship that you had with Papaji? What's the essence of the time you spent with him?

There was an enormous availability. Osho had been the Grandmaster, but rather far away. I never had a personal talk with him in the fifteen years I was with him. I had some personal meetings but they were always at a distance. But suddenly Poonjaji was very available. It was very personal. I remember after being there for just a few days, going to his house on a Sunday and having lunch in his living room with maybe ten other people. He was sitting there and was tremendously, almost shockingly available. Shocking, because his immediacy confronted me, "Why am I here?" I had to really look and question, "What am I doing here?"

In the first three weeks, I formally sat with him in Satsang daily and three times asked him a question. In those days you wrote the question in a letter and gave it in before Satsang and then he would open up the letter and you would go and sit with him. So I had three beautiful meetings. On the occasion of the third meeting, something, which is hard to describe, happened. You could say that I saw with amazing clarity the thing that I hadn't been able to see with my friend, and which I never understood till that moment. In the fifteen or twenty years of spiritual searching, I had never seen this. In that third meeting, Papaji showed me with great finality, it was like the end of the road, "Who I was."

At the same time as that understanding happened, an enormous energetic phenomenon took place. I can remember sitting in front of him and suddenly not being able to open my eyes. It was physically impossible to open my eyes. When I looked inside there was just

whiteness and I couldn't find this person called John David. He had been replaced by whiteness, blankness. It went on for quite a long time. At some point I opened my eyes and Papaji started to ask me some simple questions, which later I understood was his way of bringing me back out of this phenomenon into the room again. In a very sensitive way he got me to sit next to him and gave me some water to drink and reassured me, if you like, brought me back to earth again. When I looked inside it was like I had disappeared into this enormous space and I had the sense of myself spiralling down into a void, into emptiness. The Self had revealed itself and it was seen that this was my true nature, which had always been known.

Would you describe that event as an awakening?

Yes. That meeting marked a total change in my life. It was as if instantaneously the identification with John David and the story of John David was completely cut. In fact John David completely disappeared for some days or weeks (I can't remember). But from one instantaneous moment to the next, there was an enormous shift, which I can only describe as an awakening to the Self.

After your experience you continued in Papaji's company for about five years? So where others had similar awakening experiences and left, you decided to stay in his company?

When I look back, I can't remember. But I think there wasn't a question of leaving. In my personal case there just simply wasn't a question of leaving. I was there and there was no question of leaving.

For the next month many spiritual and energetic phenomena happened and I was just present. Then the heat of change became less and I could function in a more everyday, ordinary way. So there was some kind of contact with John David again. At that point I decided I would rent a house and settle down and bring my things from Pune. There was so much love for this Master and the Community it wasn't possible to leave in my case.

Eventually Papaji left his body. Was that when you left India?

No, it was not like that. Earlier he had asked me to run a guesthouse and to look after his guests, so I opened quite a large guesthouse, furnished it and became host to people visiting the community and Papaji. I did that year by year and during that time I established a deep internal connection with Papaji.

I didn't spend or have the interest to spend a lot of physical time in his presence, but there was a very strong internal dialogue going on. During that period all of John David came back. All of his issues, and vasanas (tendencies of the mind) came back to be looked at. I found that they could be looked at dispassionately as I wasn't attached to them or to this John David guy anymore. It was very easy to look at different stuff about John David's mind. So with Papaji's help through an internal dialogue, that period of running the guesthouse was also a time of cleaning the mind. After about four years there was the message to leave but I resisted it strongly. John David didn't want to leave. I had become rather comfortable. There was this big bubble of love that was rather hard to leave. Eventually I left as things

conspired to make it clear that I should leave. So I packed up the house. I had the choice of going to Australia, where I had never been, or back to England. I couldn't decide but ended up going to Australia. I have lived there for five years until the end of 2001.

LIFE HISTORY

Perhaps we could begin by you describing your early life in England and how you became interested in spirituality.

I was born in December 1944 in Bangor, North Wales, United Kingdom. The first year of my life, which of course I don't remember was spent with my mother in a small cottage on a vast, sandy beach. At that time World War II was coming to an end, and my father, who was a doctor in the British army, was in Germany. I didn't have any contact with my father in the first year of my life but I had a close contact with my mother, who I remember as a very soft person. The photographs at that time show me as a cute, blonde, curly haired baby and my mother as a very lovely looking woman. I remember that this was a very happy time for me, at the same time there seems to be some kind of awareness of the dangerous war situation. My father returned after I was about one year old, and photographs show him as a young, he was in his early 30's, smiling, typical middle-class doctor.

Shortly after that we moved as a family to Ipswich, which is a small town about a hundred kilometers northeast of London, a kind of farming town. We had a house on the edge of the town in the countryside and shortly after we moved there, my brother and sister were born, and later on another brother who was always the "young brother." So I have two brothers and a sister. We lived together in that house for about fifteen years and I went through both my childhood and teenage years there.

It was a very typical middleclass house. I was growing up in the 50's. Materially things were quite simple, but as I look back at that time there is always a happy memory. My childhood was a mixture of the influence of my mother, who was a housewife and encouraged play and gave us a lot of freedom and space to play, and the influence of my father. My father was working and away from the house in the day time. He was an authority figure and rather intellectual. At meal-times he often seemed far away in his thoughts. Our family was close knit and we used to sit down together and have formal meals with one another. I remember having quite a few friends in that area and because we were in the countryside we were able to go and play and make adventures outside.

So I guess when we get to the 60's that would be the time that you went to University? Was that in London?

Yes, when I was twenty years old I left the family and moved to London and studied Civil Engineering. That choice was arbitrary; I really had no idea what I wanted to do. I became a chartered Civil and Structural Engineer but at that moment, I started to get some sense of what my true interests were and what I wanted to do.

I was about twenty-three years old. I realized that Engineering was far too mechanical and technological for me. So I got a job in a firm that was a mixture of engineers and architects. It's a well-known firm who designed the Sydney Opera House structure and the Pompidou Centre in Paris. It was a big exciting international company. I started working there about 1967. The work was challenging and interesting but even from the first days I realized that it wasn't for me. I had a big shock when I went to the first meetings of the Chartered Engineers and I was looking around the room and realized that I was in the wrong place. I didn't feel any sense of connection with these people.

Did you feel that there was something missing that you had to find?

Ever since the end of my teenage years I'd had a very strong question. I remember when I was a teenager that very often in the late evenings I would end up sitting with my father, and we would have long conversations and debates together, far into the night about the world and life and philosophy. I remember those debates as an exploration of life. I was very much into understanding life and people. Out of all of that talking I was left with a question. It was a very strong question, which gradually increased during my early twenties, but I didn't know what the question was, and I had no idea what the answer might be. The question seemed to be about not really fitting in, not feeling "this is my life and what I want to be." So when I became an engineer and realised that I didn't want that profession, I went through a few years of chaos and confusion while I was looking desperately for somewhere where I would fit in.

So that eventually led you to leave your work and to go overseas and travel?

What happened was that finally, after several whiskies, I resigned my job and went back to university to study architecture. I went back as a mature student; I was older than most of the other students. I went to a beautiful architecture school. It was an independent school and attracted interesting teachers from around the world. The curriculum was not just about architecture but many other subjects related to architecture and human civilization and culture.

I graduated from that college as an architect, and with a longing to explore myself and my relationship with life "What is life and what is it all about?"

That question was becoming very strong. When I finished college, I felt that I was in a rut as far as my daily life in London was concerned. I had met some Japanese architects and they were very encouraging, in asking me to come to Japan. On the spur of the moment I decided to go to Japan for three months. I went to Japan and got a job in an architect's office in Tokyo and immediately went into an enormous cultural shock. I had to confront my yuppie, middle-class English upbringing, very traditional, formal and staid and stiff.

In those days I had gold-rimmed glasses, a goatee beard and wore a white suit. I had a yuppie image, which actually went down quite well with the Japanese. They were very welcoming to me. I met lots of interesting people. But this internal question became even stronger. I went into a "dark night of the soul". It wasn't just a night; it went on for several years.

I found myself staying in Japan; I kept postponing leaving Japan, partly because I was intrigued by the different culture, but it was mainly because I was engrossed in an internal dialogue which was provoked by being in an alien culture. So it was very good that I was in Japan. Although I had many friends I was alone. I met a Japanese woman (a fashion designer) who later became my wife.

Did she have something to do with your next step on the spiritual path and finding a teacher?

Not really no.

So how did that come about?

That came about in quite an amazing way. Although I was about twenty-eight years old I still had no idea about the spiritual life. I was beginning with acupuncture and shiatsu, so I was moving in a spiritual direction, but not consciously. Suddenly existence took over. I had arranged to meet an architect, to speak about Japanese architecture. He was a very interesting man. He was German and a Professor at M.I.T. in Boston, America, and was living in Kyoto with his Japanese wife. I was introduced to him as he was an expert in Japanese architecture and I made an appointment and went to see him.

That night we almost didn't talk anything about architecture. He and his wife made a beautiful dinner. One of his students, a Chinese woman was also present and we all sat down to dinner in their traditional Japanese house. They started to talk about their spiritual teacher, somebody called Rajneesh. They started to talk about tantra, yoga and meditation. And all this was completely new to me. I must have had some interest because we talked through the whole night. It was only when the light came up at dawn that it was suggested

that it might be time to sleep!

The conversation that night was the big turning point of my life. In a way it completely changed my life, although I didn't really understand the significance. When they played me a tape the next morning of their spiritual teacher, Rajneesh, I wasn't really interested. I told them, "I am sorry it was a very nice night, but I don't think that this is really for me". I remember walking out of the house and they said, "You are absolutely ready for this".

Then existence totally stepped in. It was amazing really. I had arranged to take Yoshiko, who became my wife, to England to visit my parents and friends at Christmas. After we had done that we went to Paris for a week on holiday. The plane back to Japan didn't arrive because of some kind of technical problem, and the airline put us in a hotel for the night. The next morning we got a new ticket and got on the plane, which was Air India. We were flying back to Tokyo via Delhi. As we were approaching Delhi, I suddenly said to Yoshiko, "Well, why don't we get out in Delhi for a few days and see India?" We decided on the spur of the moment to do that. The next morning I went to the airline office to confirm our flight and amazingly they told me that we had regular tickets, (not cut rate ones) so if we wanted we could fly throughout India at no extra cost. So I said to my future wife, "Well why don't we have our honeymoon now? Because we can go all over India and look at all these places and then go back to Japan a few weeks later." We agreed to do that and went to all these interesting places and had a lovely time.

At some point we got to Bombay and we realised that we were quite close to the Ashram of this German professor I had met in Kyoto. Spontaneously we decided to visit the Ashram. We took the train to Pune and came to the Rajneesh Ashram. As I walked through the gate, which was called 'The gateless gate', I immediately felt at home. It was incredible. I had always felt that I never fitted in, but suddenly I felt that this was my place, that I was home. The feeling was emotional, powerful and strong and it was without any reason. It was as if the question I'd had for about ten years, was suddenly answered. It was an amazing experience.

We went to the morning discourses and heard Rajneesh who became Osho speaking and took part in some of the Ashram's workshops and meditations. What was just going to be a couple of days, turned into two weeks. By this time I lost all my work in Japan ^ because Japanese companies don't like you to turn up about a month late! I knew that would happen but somehow I threw everything to the wind because the moment was so powerful. Despite myself, I just had to stay there.

That was the big shift in my life.

Did you developed a relationship with Osho and became his devotee?

Not at that time. It was like a beginning. I still had a lot of questions because I was a mindy person. We went back to Japan and both decided that we would stay in Japan for a year and earn money, and then we would go back to that Ashram on our way back to England where we were going to set up our new married life.

We got married and her family gave her some money, which was exactly the same amount that I earned during that year. So we both had money and we travelled from Japan, through China and Asia. We went on a very beautiful journey and ended up at the Pune Ashram. We found a nice place to live and settled down. But we were clearly on our way back to England to start a new life.

What was it about Osho that attracted you to return? Was it the man or his Teaching?

I think that it was a mixture. There was a tremendous feeling of excitement, love, craziness, wonder and beauty at that time in that Ashram. It was 1976 and early days for that Ashram. Osho himself was quite young and his talks were very dynamic. He was talking about things that I had never really thought about and he was challenging all my beliefs. He was pointing strongly to another direction, another possibility. He himself represented the possibility of an internal transformation, which would radically change me and my relationship to the world. And that was very attractive.

So there was something dissatisfying about the way you were living?

Although my family life had been a happy one, when I left home and went into the wider world, it was a world I couldn,t easily relate with or didn't particularly want to relate with. And here in this Ashram I found all the ingredients that seemed to be the answer to my dilemma.

How long were you with Osho altogether? Did you stay as a devotee?

After a few months I became a sannyasin, which meant that I was initiated directly by Osho and given a new name and a mala to wear. I settled down with meditation at the Ashram and being part of the community. I was already an artist, so my closest friends were painters. There was a painting group. Yoshiko also stayed. There was some resistance from her because she felt my energy moving away from her. It was almost like I had another lover, but my other lover was actually the man called the Master. She became resistant to the situation and would have been happy if we had left. But a couple of months after me, she also became a sannyasin and settled down. We stayed something like a year together and then she met a man and left and went back to Europe with him. I decided to stay at the Ashram. I

stayed another six months. I was there for a total of about one and a half years and would have stayed longer but Osho himself left and flew to America. At that time I had no choice so I went back to England.

Eventually Osho died. At that time you wanted, or needed to find another Guru?

I spent six months with the Osho community in Oregon, U.S.A. After that I spent another year in an Osho Centre in California. Then when he came back to India the second time, I went and joined the Ashram in Pune again and was there for about three years. I had no thought of looking for another Master. There was no question of that. I was totally focused on Osho.

I was doing some intense bodywork in those days and previously I had been editing some of Osho's books. I had also been a painter and an architect and in fact worked in the Ashram Architecture Department. So I had done various jobs in the Ashram and was a part of the community there. Suddenly Osho left his body. It was not totally unexpected as he had been ill for a year, but when it actually happened it was a shock. I think I remained there for another year after he left his body and it was an intense and beautiful time and a lot was happening. I still had no idea to look for another Master.

I met a Russian woman in the Ashram, who was a psychology student from Moscow University, and we became lovers. She wanted the bodywork that I was doing to be introduced to her Psychology Department in Moscow. She invited me to go to Russia. The person who had developed this particular type of bodywork encouraged me to go. I went to the Soviet Union about fourteen years ago and nothing worked out as planned. It was shortly before the Soviet Union collapsed and changed into Russia. It was a very interesting time as the whole communist way of life was crumbling and wasn't working anymore. People had very little food and goods weren't available in the shops. Few people were working. There was nothing much happening in the normal way of things. The country was teetering on the brink of collapse. The people had been really starved of contact with Western people and with spiritual things.

I became a sort of travelling Guru through a series of amazing accidents. I didn't have any plans to do that but every weekend I found myself teaching meditation workshops and the healing arts that I knew and giving long talks. Up to a hundred people would turn up, seemingly coming from nowhere. Totally illegally I travelled throughout the Soviet Union. I travelled from Lithuania in the West all the way to Tashkent in the East. I travelled enormous distances very cheaply in the trains. There was a little group of people who travelled with me. It was a wonderful six-month period. I got a taste of sharing truth with other people, and I liked it very much.

Was something still drawing you back to India?

I left the Soviet Union with the woman who had become my lover, translator and friend and we moved to England. By that time I had been separated for the last five years from Yoshiko, although we were still friends. The idea was that my Russian friend and I would set up a life in England together. But had some feeling that the spiritual journey wasn't complete. The feeling was different from the one I'd had inside before. There was a sense of incompleteness. I found myself not ready to settle down in England and felt the pull to go back to India. I was still not looking for a Master. I was interested in getting that last bit of the jigsaw and I didn't know that I would need another Master to do that, so I went back to the same Ashram in Pune.

Osho had been gone for about a year by then, and I settled down and continued my own internal search. I got to a nice state, felt inner peace, was at ease with meditation and felt a strong internal focus. So in a way I wasn't really dissatisfied, it was sort of 'okay'. I probably could have continued in that way, but suddenly it was like the wind of existence blew in and I heard about another Teacher. The name of the Teacher was Poonjaji. I had read an interview with this man and I also saw a video. But the real clincher was that I started noticing people who had come back from visiting this Poonjaji. I saw an amazing transformation in these people. There was a glow and internal smile from them that touched me. The feeling was a different from the one I'd had inside before. He tried to show me that if I could see that and let it go, then I was free. He was excited by his realisation and understanding. This was very unexpected and exciting because I had thought of enlightenment as far away and unattainable, and suddenly this close friend was telling me with a lot of excitement, that it was attainable right now. All I had to do was see this simple truth, which I didn't quite see. He tried to explain it to me but I didn't quite get it. But he gave me the final push to go and see Papaji.