

## [The Photographer and the Master](#)

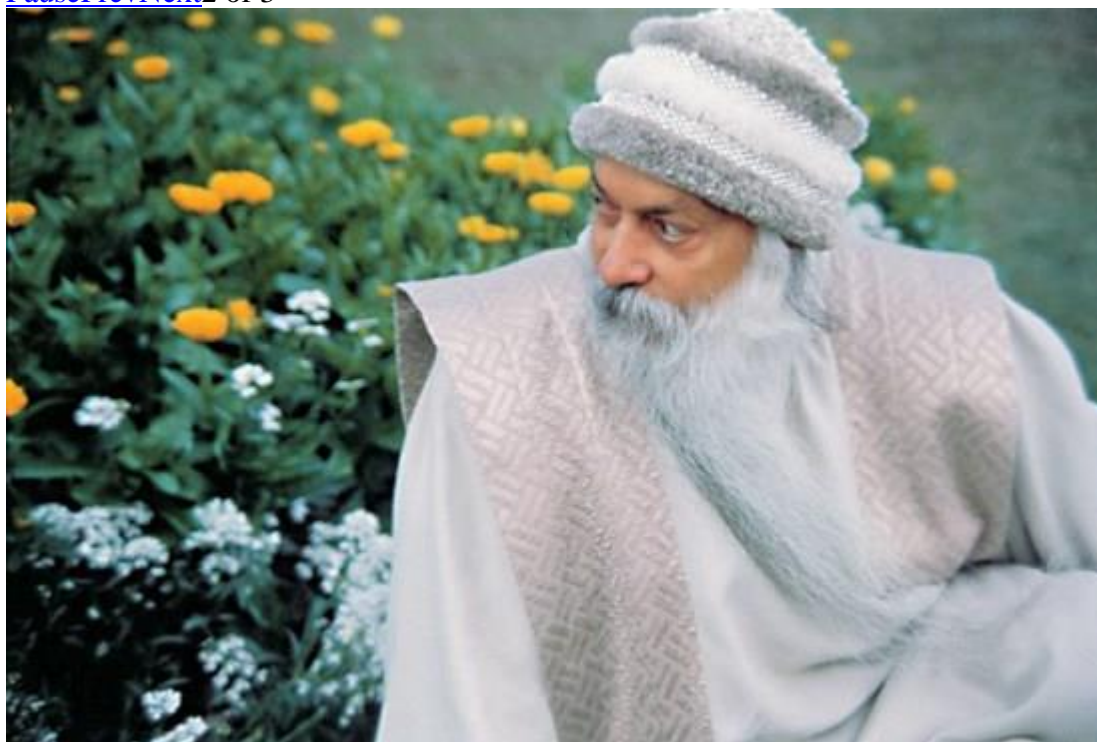
[Remembering Here&Now Osho and His Photographers](#) — 28 October 2011

*The story of how Sarjano started taking photographs of Osho – and in particular the ones with the marigolds*

When I came to Pune in the beginning of 1978, my first activity in the ashram was cooking – what else!

Even though I had been a professional photographer for more than fifteen years, all Italians in the commune had recognized me as being the guy who had been cooking at all the big gatherings around, such as Rock Festivals or any Alternative Festivals, and they had reported to Deeksha, the big Italian mama who was in charge of the kitchen, about my expertise in cooking for large amounts of people; so one day Deeksha invited me to cook for the commune.

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Meanwhile, I had started to take some private photos, like making portraits of my therapist friends when they needed their photo to advertise their group. At that time I had a great passion for a technique that we may call ‘super-impressions’, that I mastered like this: I would shoot first an

entire roll of film photographing flowers, plants, rose-buds, palm leaves, then I would rewind the film, and being careful to start from exactly the same point I began making some portraits, with the result that my pictures would show a double-image in super impression, often with an extraordinary and poetical effect, and certainly very original.

In those days I had become a very good friend of Nirvano, Osho's caretaker; so one day I proposed for her to pose for me for a nice portrait, and when she said yes, I asked her to start moving her arms and sway, as if she were dancing, and to have possibly a happy expression, if not ecstatic!

Naturally I had prepared my film in the usual way, but this time I had photographed only the sky in all possible variations: early morning, with some clouds, at sunset, and with those images of the sky as a base I made my portraits. They were in black & white, and the result was very poetical, because it was giving the viewer the feeling as if she were dancing in the sky... I then printed a few copies of the best images and presented them to Nirvano, who appreciated the gift very much.

A few days later, during his morning discourse Osho answered to a woman's question about 'levitation', because she had heard that in India there were still some fakirs which were practicing it with great results. Osho answered not to believe in all this crap, that these techniques were just miserable tricks to enchant foreigners like her, in order to get some money for the 'miracle' that they had just witnessed; he then added that Sarjano was doing much better than that, because not only would he make people levitate, but he manages even to make them fly in the highest of the skies!

I understood immediately that Nirvano must have shown him my pictures, and I started secretly hoping that one of these days the Master would call me to make some pictures of him. But this was not going to happen for many years, and I had to realize that this was his way to work on my ego, especially on my photographer-ego, which was more or less immensurable.

I finally had my first opportunity years later at the Ranch in Oregon, which I visited at least once a year as a reporter for some illustrious Italian magazines. On a particular day I decided to take some pictures of my Master while he was driving his Rolls, and had placed myself in a crowded and narrow corner, where his car would certainly have to slow down, giving me the time to take at least a couple of shots. I had positioned myself a few meters ahead of everybody else and was there waiting, crouched like a paparazzo!

As soon as Osho saw me, he stopped his car in front of me, pulled the glass down and said smiling: "So, Sarjano, are you ready for this picture?" – and he just about positioned himself for the occasion!

In that moment I was as usual completely overwhelmed by that ancient wave of love that simply melted me every time I was near him, and I saw my hand tossing the camera into the air, while my head was reclining almost inside through the car window. Osho patted my head, saying gently: "Good Sarjano, good... but now do you want to take this picture or not?"

Then, addressing the people around, he said: "Is there anyone who can collect his camera and place it in his hands, so that he can make this photo?"

Standing behind me was Silvia, my old companion and mother of my only son; she was practically in tears seeing all the attention that our Master was giving to her former man, so she went to collect my camera from the ground a few meters away and placed it in my hands. I looked again at Osho who was still there smiling and waiting for my click, and I said just two words: "I CAN'T!" – and threw my costly camera in the air again; and that's how I blew my first opportunity!

I had to wait until Osho returned to India, to Kulu Manali at the end of 1985 before having my first real chance, and finally in Kulu I managed to shoot all those pictures that you have certainly seen everywhere: like him walking by the river, or sitting on a bench near the water, and this signaled finally the beginning of a new career: the photographer of the Master!

Perhaps the best pictures that I took of Osho were made in Kathmandu, where I went with the most famous Italian TV anchorman, a guy called Enzo Biago, to help him with an interview that he wanted to have with Osho. After this guy had completed his interview and left for Italy, I decided to stay in Kathmandu a little longer, because I had plenty of money that I had been paid by the Italian TV for my services, and I could even afford to pay 150 bucks a night for a room just opposite of Osho's quarters!

I was particularly enchanted by the garden of our hotel, full of green plants and flowers in a multitude of colors, so one day I sent him a message saying that I wanted to photograph him in the garden, amongst all those beautiful flowers. Nirvano came the same day to tell me that it was okay with Osho, and that the next morning I could have my photo-session with him anywhere in the garden; being the perfect caretaker that she was, she then suggested to me to buy a couple of small nice carpets, because it wouldn't be nice to place him on the grass like a vagabond!

I went to town to buy the carpets, and even some colorful small pillows, but only after I had told her that the idea was a little weird, because it would be much more 'natural' if I could photograph him just sitting on the grass, but she insisted on those carpets, and she got them...

When I went to my appointment in the garden with all the pillows in my hands and the carpets over my shoulder, Osho asked me what I had brought all this stuff for, and I told him that this was Nirvano's desire, so that he can have something to sit on, and didn't have to sit directly on the grass, to which Osho replied: "It is much better if I sit simply on the grass, it will be much more natural!"

Hearing this I looked at Nirvano with that Neapolitan expression that can be translated in words as "Tie!" – and finally I could get to my session, with the result that (hopefully) everybody has seen by now...

When Osho finally returned to Pune in the beginning of 1987, I became one of his favorite photographers and I was always called when there was a photo session. In those days Osho wanted to be photographed more than ever – I guess he wanted to leave us some more good shots before leaving his body – because I never had the impression, common even amongst his sannyasins, that Osho liked to be photographed! I think more simply that he knew how important and how powerful a photo can be, and he knew also that a picture of him could function as a 'call' more than any book; hence he wanted more and more pictures, to the point that he wanted to dedicate a full week, with one session a day for this purpose.

Veena had arranged for a cache of beautiful costumes to be sewn up for the occasion; consequently the first day he was dressed up like a Zen Master, the next day like Gurdjieff, then the next day as a classical Indian wearing a lungi and showing his bare chest, then like a rich Arab with a shiny turban on his head, and so on...

I think that he liked me for this job because I was extremely accurate and incredibly quick. For example, when I was going to him for a session, if he would start asking me some question about my life – not to worry, he never asked me anything about my spiritual growth or about my meditation, but always some trivia of the kind: “What a beautiful shirt you have Sarjano! Where do you always find these kind of things? I want to ask to your tailor if he can make something like this for me too...” I would tell him abruptly: “I’m sorry, but I have no time! I have to finish my work quickly, so just take your position and we can get this finished in 15 minutes!” Osho would usually crack up with laughter, yet always oblige and get in pose, like a professional model.

One thing that I want to tell you is that in all the sessions I had with Osho, there has never been a discarded picture, because they were all good!

You have to know that when a professional like me takes a picture of a great star like Jimmy Hendrix or Frank Zappa, he ends up in choosing at the most, but really at most, five or six pictures out of a film of 36 shoots, while the rest has to be discarded because the model was weak in that moment, or had closed his eyes, or was looking somewhere else, but with Osho this has never happened even once, and all his photos were just perfect, all of them, and believe me, from a professional point of view this is nothing short of a miracle!

And yes, I have been always immensely grateful not only to have had the opportunity to photograph him so often, but even more for the repeated chance to see him in his ordinariness, in his daily life, to the point that my greatest desire was at that time that every sannyasin would have one day the chance to see him like this, ordinary in his ordinariness.

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