

Open Letter to the Inner Circle

Dear members of the Inner Circle,

recent developments around the issue of the OSHO Trademark are impelling me – Ramateertha – to write this letter.

I am aware of different possibilities and ways to look at this issue. Still, with this letter I do want to bring up and expose some of the important aspects that I feel that need to be shared and made public at this point.

The attempt to regard Oshos name as a trademark started to become an issue in ca. 1997/8 about 7 years after Osho left the body. It was proclaimed as a protective measure against the misuse of the name Osho.

Repeatedly from 1998 it was said that Osho wanted a trademark that would protect his name. If that was true, why there was no mentioning of it before and – if Osho really would have wanted this – would he not have taken care of this issue while he was in the body?

But, on the contrary, while he was in the body he opposed any kind of organisation that would create a legal bond amongst Sannyasins in any form whatsoever. He was particularly clear about the centers: they should be independent – at the most spiritually affiliated. He made it totally clear, that he was against any centrally organised form of structure that would allow sannyasins to control or dominate other sannyasins. Centers should be free in their legal structure but also in their use of Osho's name as a reference to his teachings and visions. They definitely should not be bound by a franchise contract which controls them in every aspect of their work.

Osho Quotes:

“The world headquarters will be publishing my books, will be releasing my tapes, will be doing every kind of work. But it has no domination over anybody. All communes of the world are independent. All centers are absolutely free. They are under nobody's guidance. My Sannaysins are directly related to me“.

The Last Testament, Vol 6; Chapter #12

“... because the whole effort of Anand Sheela and her gang was to create a very centered hierarchy; so everything gets directed from above ... Seeing this I had to come out of silence, because it was absolutely against my work. I want a deconcentrated world of sannyasins. They should be given a clear-cut direction, understanding. Their responsibility should not be taken away. They remain responsible. They remain free. They remain their own masters“.

Light on the Path, Lecture 28; Question # 2

“We have suffered too much because of disciples getting related directly to each other, creating religions, sects, cults, and then fighting. They cannot do anything else. At least with me, remember it: you are not related to each other in any way at all. Just a liquid friendliness, not a solid friendship, is enough – and far more beautiful, and without any possibility of harming humanity in the future“.

Beyond enlightenment, Lecture # 2;

In total contrast to these public statements from Osho, Osho International Foundation with its legal base in Zürich registered trademarks in the US and in Europe. Vatayana from Global Connections who says that she is acting as an agent for OIF, has been pressuring centers to sign the so called ‘Letter of Understanding’ because of those registered trademarks. If someone did not want to sign they were threatened with legal action and asked to stop using the name Osho for their center.

I was shocked to read the testimonies of Vatayana (Ursula Hoess) and Pramod (Klaus Steg) that were made in the US trial over the Osho trademark. They testify, that they have been visiting Osho Centers in order to police(!), supervise(!), monitor(!) or inspect(!) the licensees’ use of the term Osho:

Vatayana: “Corresponding with and monitoring Osho centers is part of the daily work that Osho Global Connection routinely undertakes for OIF”.

Vatayana, after looking at a document, sent to an Osho Center: “This was part of our efforts to police licensed centers to ensure their compliance with OIF requirements“.

Vatayanas answer to the question whether she had personally inspected any of the licensed Osho Centers in the United States: “Yes“.

To the question whether there were any other officers or employees of OIF who inspected Osho Centers she comes up with 4 more names of Sannyasins.

In a declaration from Vatayana from 2004 she addresses the court in the US writing: OIF (Zürich) monitors Osho Centers without its licensees’ knowledge (!) by conducting Internet searches (!) to confirm the licensees are not engaging in unapproved (!) activities, and by communicating directly with its licensees customers when those customers visit the Osho Commune.

In my understanding this kind of action it is an insult to Osho and his vision. What could have been an act of love or friendship, an act of sharing a certain understanding has been turned into an act of control and power.

The so called Osho Centerhandbook is turned into a legal paper as part of a franchise contract, that gives the rules and conditions of how a center should be organised and threatens with sanctions, namely that if you do not comply with those rules you will be forced to give up the name Osho – apart from the fact, that the name can be taken away from the licensee at any time without any reason!

How different sounds Osho, when he said to me in 1985 in Kulu Manali in an interview which I did for the German Osho Times:

“I don’t want any structure, because all structures create a certain kind of slavery ... An independent and free mind is always a problem, because he thinks. He may not agree with you. But freedom is more valuable than any functional, practical gains. Everything can be sacrificed to freedom. Freedom cannot be sacrificed to anything. So now there will be no more structures. Each commune should try to live intelligently, rather than following a certain structure unintelligently ... I am for individuality, I am for freedom, I am for the beauty of a chaos.“

I do not deny that the Centerhandbook can be of help for people who want to run a center. It can give directions. But it should be advisory, an aid and definitely not be part of a franchise contract or

a license that makes people dependent and takes away their freedom.

I am writing this letter because I urge the Inner Circle to oppose Osho International Foundation Zürich absurd attempts to trademark the name Osho and instead to respect the freedom of Oshos people to share their love for their Master and His vision.

The name Osho stands for this amazing Master and his teachings and his vision. It can not be separated: here the person and there the teaching. And it is not possible to monopolize the name Osho. It does not qualify to be a trademark because it is the name of Osho as a person and stands as description for the content of his teachings and visions.

The ® some people would like to add to “Osho” is deceptive if it is understood in the usual way. You may give the symbol a new meaning letting it stand for “®eligion” – a “Trademark Religion” - as that is what these people try to achieve: establish a new authority and make religion out of a vision. But then such a new understanding should be openly admitted and explained. To pretend against this, that Osho’s name is a trademark – the name of the man who has always been an advocate for total freedom without religion and whose teachings and visions are spread out by many independent people, centers and entities using his name to refer to his teachings and visions – is as intelligent as someone who does not want the death penalty saying: “I will shoot everybody who is for the death penalty!”

Cologne, Sept. 1st, 2010
Ramateertha