

## **Chapter 7: The Kosmic Dance**

### **Moving and Dancing with the Dynamic Mandala**

People who follow predominantly either/or logic are rather static in their thinking because they are locked into one mode. They are for this and against that: therefore they defend this and argue against that. As a result they may become more and more stuck in whatever they are defending.

In contrast, people who can also follow both/and logic can easily move from one perspective to another that complements it; and from there to yet another perspective, and so on. As a result these people are not as much stuck; they move around. These people are dynamic. When the movement is spontaneous and free, it becomes a dance. Thus one can see and experience a multitude of complementary perspectives. This makes life exciting because there is always novelty. It is like a big adventure. One never knows where it will lead. Consequently, there is insecurity, but these adventurers may feel secure in this insecurity, knowing that ultimately life is not secure and predictable. Therefore, they let it unfold as they dance along.

With regard to the mandala of this book this means moving easily from one interpretation to another, from one transformation to another, thus exploring more and more novel interpretations and transformations. Since the mandala with all its interpretations and transformations can be a representation of the Kosmos, and since we are part of the Kosmos, this movement allows us to become better acquainted with the Kosmos and ourselves. Moving and dancing with the fluid mandala we enjoy life and learn about life and the world, about ourselves and the fluid Kosmos.

Moving and dancing with conceptual mandalas might feel like moving and dancing with skeletons. But dancing with organic/artistic mandalas is almost like dancing with partners made of flesh and blood; and the partners keep changing as, for example, in a circle dance where the dancers inside the outer circle move along from one partner to the next. Each mandala, like each partner, is a different experience of life and the world, ourselves and the Kosmos, and yet they all enclose the same unnamable, mysterious source.

### The Dance of Shiva

Dancing with the mandala recalls the dance of Shiva in his form of Nataraja, the cosmic dancer. Nataraja, like the mandala, has a multitude of interpretations. As Shiva he is "the lord of the universe and eternity" (Storl 2004: 136); universe as Kosmos, and eternity not as everlasting time but beyond time, hence the source, emptiness, mystery as it is represented in the empty center of the mandala of this book. Shiva's Shakti is energy that populates "the universe with countless ever changing forms and names [and mandalas]" (Storl 2004: 140).

Nataraja is the source of all movement in the Kosmos and therefore his dance is immensely dynamic and creative. But it is also destructive. Similarly, the dynamic mandala includes creation and destruction – creation of new mandalas and destruction of the mandalic form. However, even when the mandalic form has been destroyed, the mysterious source can be retained implicitly as in great art where the source usually is not indicated explicitly (Chapter 5).

Nataraja's dance can be seen as a release from illusion, the illusion of separation and permanence in the manifest world. Since it is words, referring to concepts, that create the illusion of separation and permanence, even the words/concepts *fluidity* and *dance* are transcended in what, paradoxically, we call the "Dance of Shiva". "The paradox is that when the dancer is totally in the dance, there is rest—the impossible happens, the center of the cyclone [i.e. the center of the mandala]. But that rest is not possible in any other way. When the dance is total, only then does that rest happen" (Osho 2002: 97). In other words, the total dance rests in the formless, emptiness, or infinite source of everything; it arises out of it and remains contained in it.

### The Kosmic Play

The dance of Nataraja is spontaneous. It has no script, no set steps to follow, no purpose or goal. It is pure joy, exuberance, celebration. There is no dancer who is doing the dancing. The dancer dissolves in the dance. In other words, the dancer is the dance: dancer and dance are one. This is the transcendence of the ego, the doer, the dancer. It happens through playfulness, which in India is referred to as *lila*, the cosmic play. To become *lila* we have to let go and relax into existence instead of trying to control it. Then we can partake in the cosmic play and in this play we can even transcend the mandalic structure because we can transcend any structure.

In its spontaneity, play has lightness and nonattachment. It overcomes resistance and fear. Referring to philosophical positions, Puhakka (1998: 397) wrote: "Playfulness manifests in the lightness with which the position is held." The opposite is the stubborn attachment to one's position, one's map, one's philosophy, ideology, or religion, which is so characteristic of the serious person who cannot dance and play. Puhakka (1998: 397) also noted that "emptiness [the center of the mandala] is neither playful nor purposeful. But it is also playful and purposeful. The Great Cosmic Play, the Dance of Shiva, is neither, and is both." In our Western culture we are conditioned to favor purpose over play. To overcome this conditioning that may create endless suffering and misery we have to become more playful.

Now one can say, of course, that it is relatively easy to be playful when everything is going well. But when our whole way of thinking and being is challenged, when we suffer, when we are sick, when we are in excruciating pain, how can we be playful in such situations? As long as we experience all this negativity in isolation and identify we it, there does not seem to be a way out of it. But if we can see beyond our separate existence, if we can take a larger, more inclusive stance, if we can see it in a kosmic perspective, then it might be possible to see even this negativity as an expression of lila, the kosmic play because the negative is not possible without the positive, neither in a kosmic nor an individual dimension: the individual is a microkosm that in some sense seems to be a mirror of the macrokosm.

Obviously it is not easy in our culture to deal with negativity in this way. And many people may simply break when they are identified and overwhelmed with negativity. However, some may be able to go beyond it spontaneously, and for many others the practice of meditation can be of great help because through meditation we can gain a wider perspective, we can go beyond identification with the ego or little self and eventually feel one with the kosmic Self.

There are many ways to meditate. Just sitting as in Soto Zen or Mindfulness Meditation are wonderful ways of meditation, but they are not always easy for the beginner. According to Osho (2000: 153), dancing and laughing are two natural, easily approachable doors to meditation, to the realm of no-mind and ultimate oneness. Of course, it has to be total dancing and laughing. Not just dancing that is directed by the mind, but dancing that is so total that the dancer becomes the dance. And not just a crippling laughing that still allows thinking at the same time. Other natural and easily approachable doors to meditation include toning, chanting, singing, and listening to or playing music in such a way that one flows with the sound or music and dissolves in it.

### **The Kosmic Joke**

Jokes are also relevant to transcendence. Why? When we tell a joke, it begins and develops in a logical manner, but then, at the punch line, suddenly something totally unexpected happens that cuts through the logic and thus transcends it. This cutting through and transcendence liberates us from the strictures of logic and the thinking mind, and as a result we feel relaxed, free, and joyous: we burst out into laughter, which in itself is also liberating because since we cannot really laugh and think at the same time, laughter also transports us into the transcendent realm of no-mind, spirit, or whatever you want to call it.

Since life and reality ultimately are deeper than logic and the thinking mind, jokes may give us a momentary glimpse of the deeper, translogical, transmental dimensions of reality. Most people are not aware of this deeper significance of jokes. They think that they feel so good because the joke was so funny. And that is correct. But the joke also transported them into a higher or deeper realm, physiologically, emotionally, and spiritually.

When we are too serious for too long, we tend to become tense because, after all, we want to guard and protect our seriousness. This tension may lead to inner and outer conflict and ultimately to aggression and war. Jokes break through this facade of seriousness and as they elicit laughter, the physical, emotional and mental tensions are released, which creates a feeling of well-being, relaxation, and transcendence.

Although jokes can have this freeing effect, most of the time this effect is only temporary. But looking at life and the Kosmos as a kosmic joke can be liberating in a deeper way. In this sense, Maneesha asked Osho "is enlightenment something like getting the punchline to the ultimate joke?" And Osho said: "Right, Maneesha. It IS the punchline of the ultimate joke" (Osho 1999: 653).

### **Conclusions**

Transforming the mandala and changing interpretations implies that we move from one transformation and interpretation to another. When this movement is spontaneous and free, it becomes a dance. Since the mandala can represent the Kosmos, this dance can be kosmic. It recalls the dance of Shiva in his form of Nataraja, which is immensely dynamic and creative. But it is also destructive. Similarly, the dynamic mandala includes creation and destruction: creation of many new mandalas and destruction of the mandalic form. However, even after the destruction of the mandalic form, the

mysterious source can be retained implicitly as in great art where the source usually is not indicated explicitly as in a mandala.

Nataraja, the kosmic dancer, releases the illusion of separation and permanence in the manifest world. His dance is lila, the kosmic play—pure spontaneity, lightness, freedom, and joy.

Freedom can also be glimpsed through jokes in as much as at the punch line they transcend the strictures of logic and the thinking mind and thus can help to relax into the lightness and laughter of no-mind and emptiness (in the Buddhist sense). Looking at life and the Kosmos as a kosmic joke may be liberating in a deeper sense.

Humor, laughter, and dance can become a form of meditation and, like other forms of meditation, can create awareness of the formless, the infinite, or emptiness, which is represented in the center of the mandala. They may even help to re-member One Taste, the Nondual (see Wilber 2001b, Chapter 13).