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SIMPLY WELLNESS

# Cocktail for Your Soul

PUNE'S FIVE-STAR SPIRITUAL SPA, THE OSHO MEDITATION RESORT, HAS BECOME THE COOL STOPOVER FOR NIRVANA SEEKERS. BLENDING SPIRITUALITY AND SENSUALITY IT BRINGS THE RAJNEESH LEGACY TO GEN NEXT.

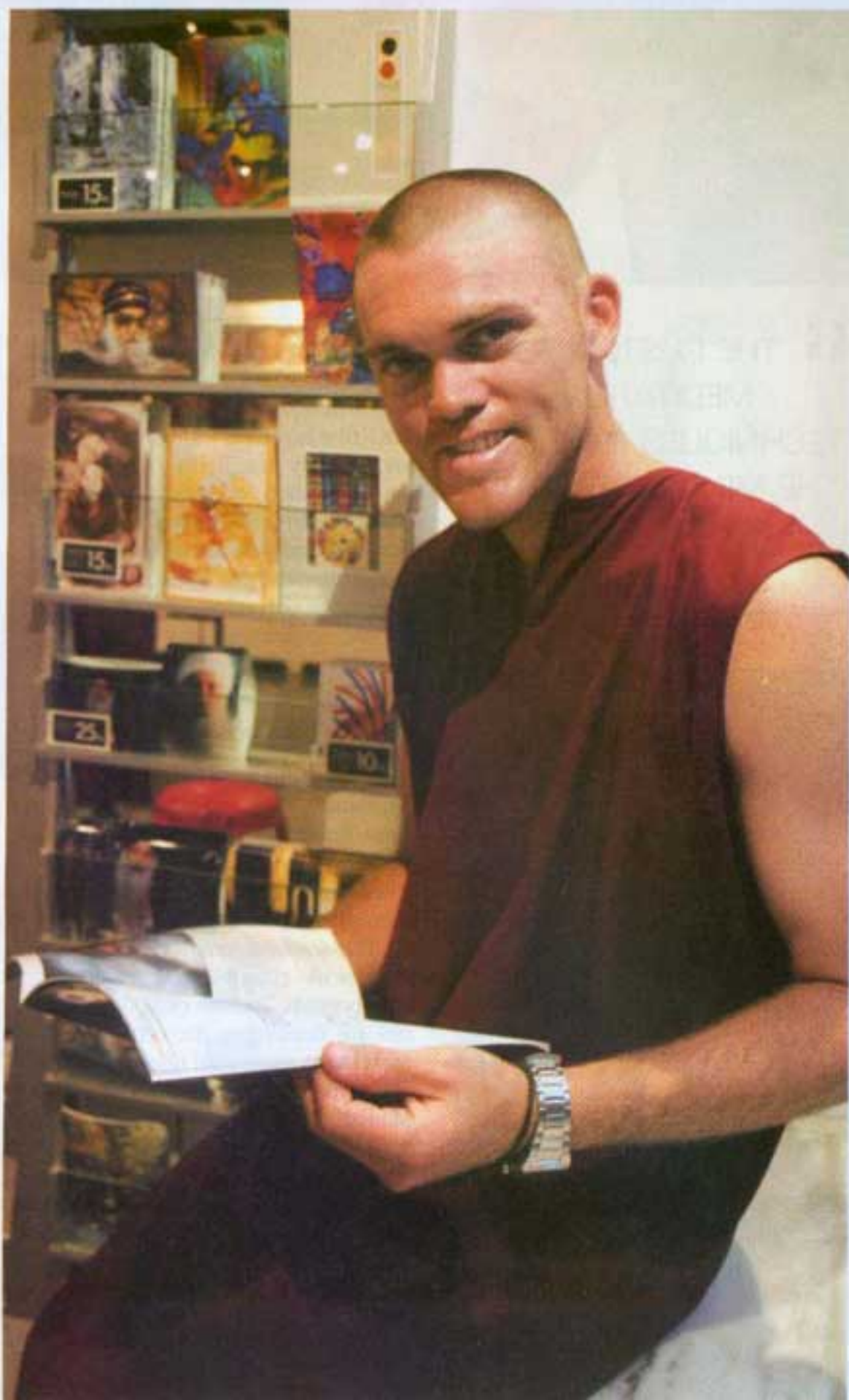
**A**s Lou Vincent, the opening batsman of the New Zealand cricket team, struggled to find form during the TVS Cup tri-series in India last month, he could do with some Zen comfort for the soul. After the ground visit at the Nehru Stadium, Pune, for the one-dayer against arch-rival Australia, Vincent rushed to the Osho Centre at 17 Koregoan Park to get the AIDS test done—mandatory for anyone

entering the commune. While the other Black Caps chilled out in the evening after an exhausting net session, Vincent donned a white robe for the brotherhood meeting at the Osho Meditation Resort (OMR), India's first five-star spiritual spa. The one run he scored against the Aussies did not improve matters on the ground but Vincent was taken by the 40-acre campus and the range of meditation techniques, including the Osho

signature Kundalini Meditation, that he ended up spending three days there. "It is a place where one instantly relaxes and feels comfortable," he says. Nearer home, Rajpal Singh, director, VLOC, Mumbai, drives down to the resort on most weekends. Says Singh: "With every visit, I discover a new side to myself." On his last trip, he took up "Being Here: the True Art of Living", a group session which promised Singh just that—how to get



People from across the world come to the Osho Resort to find answers to their existential questions



in touch with oneself.

The resort, upgraded at a cost of Rs 50 crore in November 2002, combines sensuality and spirituality, the trademark of Osho movement. Claimed to be the world's largest centre for meditation and personal growth, OMR blends Oriental kitsch—bamboo groves, jasmine vines and peacocks—and modern comfort, a luxurious guesthouse and an immense

“ THE RESORT IS A PLACE WHERE ONE INSTANTLY RELAXES AND FEELS COMFORTABLE. ”

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NEW ZEALAND CRICKETER

auditorium. For the participants, about 23,000 in the past one year, that approximates the gratifying bliss of paradise. Says Swami Mukesh, managing trustee, Osho International Foundation: “It is a place for experiments rather than devotion.”

Nirvana seekers flock in for therapies for body, mind and spirit. To meet this increasing demand worldwide, the resort has expanded its spiritual repertoire to include esoteric sciences, martial arts, tantra, Zen, Sufism and meditative techniques. While the nine-storey, pyramid-shaped



For model Madhu Sapre, the resort with lush green gardens and lotus ponds has an immediate soothing effect.

auditorium dominates the complex, the 60-room guesthouse would put most five-star hotels to shame. The pyramid, with its 18,000 sq ft expanse of green marble lining the soundproof meditation centre-cum-dance floor, is the platform for visitors to dance with gay abandon. The computerised acoustic system and the projectors that beam images of prisms, sunflowers and stars are modern accompaniments to enhance the mood.

For New York-based Alyssa Miller, concert coordinator for singers Deva Premal and Miten, ORM is a one-stop shop to discover the spiritual self. Says Miller: "The place not only compels you to shed your urban sensibilities but also helps you to be one with nature." Flute maestro Ronu Majumdar and percussionist Sivamani are regulars here—for them it is a sacred place that inspires creativity.

For the layman, the meditation resort still evokes curiosity. It is one of the most popular tourist sites in Maharashtra, with around two lakh people visiting the place every year. To popularise Bhagwan Rajneesh among the novices, ORM offers Wellness Getaway Specials. For Rs 250, the beginners are given a quick orientation

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—MA SADHNA, EDITOR, *OSHO TIMES*



tour, the Welcome Program. It briefs them about the various active meditation techniques and prepares them for the five-hour evening meditation. Another day trip, Being Here is a one-day workshop on the art of living (Rs 800). An introduction to group sessions and individual therapies, it caters to the demand for stress busters and alternative therapies. Visitors can also go for meditation programmes that come under many names—Dynamic, Nadabrahma and the Evening White Robe Brotherhood—or attend the special workshops on Tai-Chi, Zen archery and yoga held at the Buddha Grove. Explains Ma Sadhna, editor, *Osho Times*: "It can give a glimpse of holistic living. The customised meditation techniques can enhance the mind-body-spirit experience."

The sessions may levitate you, but the focus clearly is on increasing membership. Tourists of 100 nationalities are flocking to the centre seeking answers to existential questions. There are home-grown celebrities too. Actor Manisha Koirala, model Madhu Sapre and singers Jagjit and Chitra Singh who recently visited ORM were impressed. They felt the lush green place and its lotus ponds, Canadian



For many like Alyssa Miller, concert coordinator for the singing duo Deva Premal and Miten, OMR is a one-stop spiritual centre

swans and beatific Buddhas eased their mind-body system within hours of getting there. Tiger Lily, a socialite women's group from Pune, turned up at the centre since women participants are encouraged to get in tune with their inner selves and stamp out patriarchal patterns which had hampered their growth.

Those who get tired of intense self-discovery can plunge into the lagoon-shaped swimming pool. There are tennis courts, gyms, steam baths, saunas and Jacuzzis to rejuvenate the body. The Multiversity Plaza offers about a dozen personalised sessions for Rs 1,500 an hour. You can opt for a "Psychic Message" (allows you to look at your energy source) or a "Breath Session" (teaches inhalation-exhalation patterns to stimulate energy sources). Try "Born Again" and tap into childhood innocence by behaving like a child or go on a "Past Life Journey" with the help of a trained therapist. To balance an overdose of spiritualism, the resort offers the choicest spirits at night and plays popular music at the bar and the newly opened poolside, Zorba.

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—ALYSSA MILLER, CONCERT COORDINATOR

For some like Chetan and Ritu Kothari, a honeymoon couple, the major attractions are the night parties at plaza, the esoteric cuisine at Zorba and a celebration dance on the Pyramid floor. But the ultimate treat is Midnight in Zazen—you sit inside a glass corridor that cuts through the rock garden surrounding the Osho samadhi. It is a 45-minute meditation in complete darkness and total silence, at the end of which the instructor will knock on your head and bring you back to the Great Present.

But of course, spiritual growth has a price tag attached to it. The Special Wellness package that includes two-

night/three-day stay at the Osho guesthouse costs Rs 4,875 for one person and Rs 7,500 for a couple. It includes entry fees (Rs 80 per day), HIV test (Rs 250), the cost of maroon and white robes plus meditations in the Pyramid, health facilities, classes in the Buddha Grove, evening events and parties. Another delightful surprise is a culinary world tour. At the air-conditioned food court, you can try out a variety of cuisines with an assortment of desserts and healthy shakes cooked in the 20,000 sq ft modern kitchen. Food for the body and the mind. Osho would have smiled.

Little wonder that cricketer Vincent wants his backyard to be like the OMR, a place to recharge his body and soul. Well, to have a 40-acre spiritual spa in your yard will be asking for a little too much. But then he can relax remembering a wise Osho saying: Truth is within—seek not elsewhere. Or while the other Kiwis battle it out in Pakistan, he can take the next flight to Pune—to regain his paradise.

—SHEELA RAVAL