

The following are questions submitted to Osel by Thane Burnett of the Toronto Sun, June 4, 2009

Q Your life story is very unusual in Western terms, so isn't it always going to be difficult to talk about it in public, without it being somehow sensationalized or even misunderstood?

A **It depends on how the people interpret it. Like when the writer writes what he wants to communicate without knowing what the reader will understand. Likewise, many a time the reader understands what he seems fit, without knowing exactly what the writer meant. That will happen always in everyday life. Each of us is an individual with a whole universe inside us. It is normal that each of us see things differently from others. We are all unique.**

Q Will any bad experience stop you from talking openly with the media, about your life, or is it part of the price of mass communication, and reaching those who need it the most?

A **Until now there has been very few media that really expressed accurately, and without just focusing on negative parts to sensationalize. It will not stop me from expressing my true nature.**

Q Do you have any regrets about being chosen for your role? Would you have rather been just an ordinary little boy, left to grow up as that?

A **Its a hard question. And it should be seen from all angles. We have to speak of destiny. There is a lot of controversy with that, at least from my part. They say coincidence does not exist. And then the question arises whether we have a choice? Do we? At least step by step we see that we do. But in a bigger radius, lets say where you are born or what you're going to go through. Many times its a bigger question that it ponders on. We can speak of karma, the law of cause and effect. We have to answer our actions. Some day or other. So I guess when it comes to that, I must have created the causes to live this life like this. I don't have any regrets for now. Although its hard when the media badly interpret the facts.**

Q Given the course you're now on, is it your hope you'll be able to have an even greater impact on people, or at least a better sense of purpose for yourself? Maybe this is deeper than it should be, but is it really about finding new ways to connect with the West?

A **Right now I'm still forming the bases to start with. For now I'm just a tool in life.**

Q What's the one thing people don't understand, or get right, about your life and the path you're now on?

A Before there was much more expectation of me to be a certain way. There was only one path I could follow. Right now there are many, and I'm walking all over. People have been very flexible, and I'm grateful.

Q What's your greatest hope for your own future?

A To live life to its fullest extent. Always have a centre force in the "ups and downs". And to find a purpose that can help awaken us all.
I could go on and on, but I'll stop there. Thanks, its been wonderful.

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Maclean's OnCampus: What is your response to the media reports claiming you've renounced your religion and calling?

O: It's not true. A newspaper found out about an original interview [I did], and they said we're going to do an article on you, whether you want to or not. They didn't have much information. But I agreed, which I regret a lot. They changed everything. I said so many positive things they didn't put, they blew things up and exaggerated facts, and it bugged me, because they were really nice at the beginning, saying it would be good for my image.

But is it fair to say you aren't directly involved with your religion as one might expect?

O: I'm actually really involved with them and in contact a lot, we do have brainstorming...It's not like I'm a renegade at heart, or a runaway.

Your relationship with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition [the organization Osel is slated to lead] and how you deal with your responsibilities is different, though.

O: You could say that. But I'm still treading on my own path, I'm chilling out. I'm working really hard to accomplish things...I'm working on a masters degree on documentaries, afterwards maybe next year I'll do some course on cooking, become a cook, and then maybe I'll start doing something there, you know. But I'm taking it slow.

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What do you make of all this attention?

O: I'm trying to live a really normal life, the friends I have know the stories but they don't make a big deal of it, I'm really chill with it. I don't have people saying I'm so disappointed in you, because the people I'm around don't really recognize me, so it's cool. I hope it doesn't change.

Let's talk about your time in Canada. To be clear, after years of studying in monasteries, you decided you needed a western education?

O: I left, and decided I needed a different education, because while I had the philosophy down, I really didn't know much about the outside world.

What did you know about Canada before coming here?

O: Nothing basically. Two years before, I had been to Vancouver for a few days, but I had no idea about anything.

What was your general reaction to your first few days in school?

O: It was quite an adventure. No one knew me, so I could build up my personality, and create my own person, from zero, and that was great for me, because I could start over.

Was that your idea all along?

O: They had trained me so well in my mission to learn Buddhist philosophy in order to help people, and I made it my mission. But when I came to Canada, I realized I had to find myself first, because I really didn't know myself

So being just a normal student was a bit of a shock?

O: Yeah.

Were there any particular moments where it clicked and you were able to "find yourself", as you put it?

O: Getting to the rugby team was really thrilling, having positive teamwork that I really got a lot of. Just being together with people, working towards a goal, cracking jokes. Apart from that, passing my exams.

A couple of teachers knew about your background, but the vast majority didn't. Was it ever difficult to ask for help given that secrecy?

O: I didn't really worry about it. If they don't know, it's better, because they're more free to help me as a normal student.

Did you ever tell any friends or teachers during your time in Canada?

O: A couple of close friends found, but I didn't tell them...I really don't remember how it came out...but the good thing is they didn't make a big deal out of it.

Was it a case of relishing the anonymity?

O: Yeah. I don't remember a lot of details, but I remember a birthday party, we were at some house, and people were like "the way to pronounce your name is too complicated, we're gonna call you Oz", that was an amazing moment for me, because, 'Wow, they're actually giving me a unique name.'