

We Are all One and Beautiful

Kunji writes about growing up in the sannyas community and how she became a fashion designer.

I was born in Berlin to my parents Omkar and Punito, who gave me the name Laura. Although they were sannyasins, they wanted to leave the decision up to me to take sannyas or not. When the Rajneesh School opened in Medina, I was two years old. Because my mom wanted to go there with me, I had to be a sannyasin – so I became Ma Anand Kunji, key to bliss.

I don't remember the time living there, but according to my parents this Kids Commune wasn't suitable for small children, as they had to share their moms and their toys. My mom told me I was pulling out my hair and freaking out, so consequently, after one year my mom left with me to return to the commune in Berlin, called Dörfchen.

It was a large commune in the middle of Berlin. We had a meditation center, a restaurant and a disco called *Far Out*. For me it was like a huge playground. I knew where the sweets were hidden, and also where in the storage room I could find a big box with condoms to play with. I sold my drawings at the reception of the meditation center, I played at the pool table and in the TV room. I ran around in the courtyard and went in the early evening to the disco to dance and play. There was always some grown-up in the commune who would swing me around.



In my memory the commune was a very cozy, abundant and adventurous place. There were always people that took care of me or played with me; it was a very safe

environment. I realize that nowadays I easily trust people; I think this is because of my experiences during the time back then.

When I was five years old my mom moved to Cologne to her new boyfriend and I stayed in the commune with my dad. My school was in the close neighborhood and there I went by the name Laura: the teachers knew that I came from the Osho commune, and were actually quite pleased because they had good experiences with kids from there.

I had a lot of 'normal' friends and don't remember having difficulties because of being a sannyasin. Of course my father and I had to answer the many questions why we have so many pictures of Santa Claus, or "is this your grandfather?"

When I was nine years old, my father had the urge to go traveling and onwards to Pune, so I moved to Cologne to live with my mom. Later, when I was a teenager my mom, her boyfriend Pralaya and I moved to a small village close to Munich. This was a very new situation for me. For the first time I was living only with my mom and Pralaya, almost like a small family, although Pralaya always insisted that we were not a family but more like a communal household.

I went to a Bavarian school in the countryside where I didn't know anybody and which was quite conservative. I wanted to be called Kunji; consequently I had to explain a lot where my name comes from and this was a first; until then I had never questioned what being a sannyasin actually meant to me.

In school I always said that I have hippy parents but I tried to tell my closer friends more about it. Young people my age did not know Osho or Bhagwan, but their parents often did. Of course they knew mainly about the Rolls Royces and the sex groups. I had the feeling that I had to defend myself a lot, but often they didn't really want to know the truth or what it actually meant to me. Although I made some friends there, it was not always easy to get to know new people; I often had the feeling they were very superficial and it took time to get close with someone.

When I heard about the Humaniversity near Amsterdam for the first time and that they offered a group for teenagers, I immediately had the feeling that I needed to go there. I did not know much about the group or the place but I knew that this was a way to get in touch with other sannyasin kids.

My mom supported me, but later she told me that she was thinking, "My daughter is doing her first group with 17, have I done something wrong?"

I was curious about the group and being in a sannyas environment again. I joined the Tan-ju group in their second week and my first session was called 'the box'. A box with mattresses is held by the other participants. You lie in the middle and freak out completely like a small child that screams and punches and hits out with its entire body, while the other people support you by cheering and shouting. It was quite a start for my first group! But I knew I had chosen to be here so I would do whatever it took. Within me I had the trust that it would be all well in the end, so I just jumped into it!

I loved it. I loved that there was so much room to express and explore myself, and the focus to build close connections to others. I felt very much at home in the Humaniversity and during this first group I made the conscious and independent decision that I wanted

to be a sannyasin. I joined the Tan-ju program several times and later, during my studies, I assisted the Tan-Ju staff.

I moved to Amsterdam to study fashion and textile design at an Art Academy and rented a room in a small sannyas community house called Mevlana. I enjoyed to be again surrounded by so many people with whom I shared interests and where I could be myself; it gave me some hold and stability in a new city. Also, I could always go to the meditation room do some meditations or just freak out and dance wildly.



My friends in the Academy were very open as well. I felt they all could easily join some active meditations without thinking them being weird. My studies were great; the school is known to be very open to different artistic approaches and this was just right for me because although I like fashion and clothing I dislike the fashion industry.

Clothing for me is more connected to the love of the human body than just to look fancy. Clothing surrounds our body, is a communicator and simply makes life more colorful. I want my work to connect people. Fashion often creates separation and judgments, “you look different than I do,” or “I am more fashionable,” etc.

One of my big fashion projects is called *Justin*. I was interested to do a more personal and intimate work that dealt with a real person, someone who might live next to you. Justin is a friend of mine who went to art school with me. His body does not fit into standard-sized clothes and his way of dressing would not be considered as being ‘fashionable’. I questioned the standard sizes and terms of being fashionable and wanted Justin to become a new standard. I observed, interviewed, drew and documented him, as well as compared his measurements with body ideals. As a result I tailored the complete collection based on his measurements. And yet the garments were designed to be adjustable and thus wearable by different body types.

Last year I made a small collection called *we are all one*. The basic idea was that we are all the same when we are born; just with time and experience we start building our identity. Thus all the outfits have the same pattern as their basic design, but become unique by adding details and using different craftsmanship.

I am moving into the direction of sustainability and fair-trade fashion. In future I would also like to join creative projects with kids and teenagers to raise some awareness for each other and nature. As a designer and sannyasin I believe in a social and ecological responsibility.

I like to work with a deeper meaning and support the good in life. My main message is that we are all the same and we are all beautiful; just what Osho said. Although I know that some sannyasin kids feel having been abandoned by their parents, I can say I am grateful that I was born into this life! To listen to an Osho discourse always cheers me up and makes me see life more playful again.

The great thing being a sannyasin and working creatively have in common is the feeling of freedom that I can be me and express myself! I think Osho's message followed me on my path of work. I might have come to this path anyway, but I see Osho's guidelines in my work and life. And this is "Faaar out!"