

Reading a book by Krishna Prem is like taking a drive in the countryside without Google Maps. You don't know where you're headed, but if you're not concerned about reaching anywhere in particular then you're in for an enjoyable ride.

"KP" as he is universally known, has an easy, humorous style of writing that seduces you, the reader, to slip into the passenger seat. You lean back and relax while he cruises through a colorful territory of meditation, romance, Osho stories, jokes and parables, plus spiritual gossip from the good old days of Pune in the Seventies and Rajneeshpuram in the Eighties.

One endearing feature of KP is that he doesn't care about switching subjects in mid-chapter, so you never have time to get bored. Although you may be worried by the austere title of his new book, *Aloneness: A Love Story*, you can rest assured that you're not going to find yourself driving down a long, lonely highway through an emotional desert. KP confesses to his readers that he has been a reluctant convert to aloneness. It was a transformation triggered by his girlfriend of 17 years, who one day suddenly announced she had found a new lover.

When KP burst into tears at her news, she softened and said, "I can't leave you if you are crying." By way of reply, he shook his head and told her, "No, I am so happy you are in love with your new friend. I am only crying because I don't know how to be alone."

So, as you can see, there is plenty of heart-tugging passion in among the snippets of philosophy, meditative musings, and encounters with inner emptiness, as well as intriguing personal anecdotes about his meetings with Osho.

This brings me to a unique aspect of KP's book: the way he quotes Osho. He's not concerned with accuracy and sometimes you get the feeling Osho simply couldn't have said things the way KP has recalled them. But this doesn't tarnish KP's integrity, because he is quoting from the perspective of how it felt to him at the time, coloring the mystic's words with his own personal feelings.

As a result, Osho gets to sound a bit like KP, while KP gets to sound a bit like Osho. It's a fascinating approach and as long as we remember that a true and verbatim record of Osho's words is always available online for serious research, we can forgive the author for his free-and-easy attitude.

A newly-released Netflix documentary titled *Searching for Sheela* is putting Osho's former secretary back in the spotlight. So, it's appropriate that KP's book contains an intriguing tale about his working relationship with Sheela on the Oregon Ranch.

Having founded Geetam Meditation Center in California a few years earlier, KP was in possession of a long list of American contacts, people who'd felt drawn to Osho and visited Geetam to participate in meditations, groups and trainings.

As the Ranch grew and became a political force in Oregon, more Americans were urgently needed, so KP was given a room in Rajneeshpuram's newly-built hotel, plus a free phone line, with instructions from Sheela to call his American contacts and invite them to come and live on the Ranch.

KP was delighted because he disliked the hard physical work he'd been previously given. By contrast, this job seemed like a cushy number. But there was a problem: whoever he contacted and invited, invariably said: "I don't want to live with Sheela."

Trying to sidestep this thorny issue, KP decided to sympathize with his contacts, saying things like, "Hey I know how you feel. I don't like Sheela either, but I'm inviting you to come and live with Osho, not his secretary."

The only problem with this strategy was that, unbeknown to KP, Sheela had bugged his room and was listening to his conversations! Needless to say, he was soon out of a job and free to do his own thing in the big, bad world.

On a deeper level, KP takes time to reflect on the eternal polarity of love and aloneness, and the struggle we all have to somehow balance the two in a way that gives our lives meaning, happiness and fulfillment:

"When I look at what makes me the happiest in this lifetime, it is when I am alone, but I know that on Tuesday I am going to see my beloved, on Thursday we are going to the movies. Oftentimes, I feel better when I am alone, knowing that I am in love, rather than when I am alone and on the hunt."

People who love KP will surely love this book, while people who are being introduced to him for the first time are likely to find it insightful and entertaining.