

The Rajneesh Experience: A Report

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SQUIRMING THROUGH THE SAGEBRUSH, state highway 218 snakes its way from west to east for forty-three miles from Shaniko via Antelope to Fossil in the sparsely settled North central highlands of the state of Oregon. Four miles beyond Antelope, a narrow and little used rutted dirt road ambles toward the John Day River and the scrub Juniper pastures of the Big Muddy Ranch. In the mid-1800's this had been the primary road for both stagecoach and freight wagon between The Dalles on the Columbia River and the John Day high country in the Blue Mountains of Eastern Oregon. Twenty-eight miles from Antelope, the road crossed Muddy Creek. It was here, amidst the cottonwoods, juniper, sagebrush, and jackrabbits, the early settlers built their ranchhouse, bunkhouses, barns, and corrals as headquarters for the Big Muddy Ranch.

By the 1980's the Big Muddy Ranch was a misused, abused, bankrupt, and abandoned operation. Overgrazed, eroded, and robbed of its limited natural resources, the semi-arid Big Muddy Ranch was for sale. As offered to the public, the ranch contained all of the watershed for Muddy Creek, over 100 square miles of wildly dramatic, exuberantly beautiful, volcanically formed landscape; but with little of its original value remaining as an operating cattle and sheep ranch. It also offered the remoteness, the isolation, and the idealistic setting the disciples of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh were seeking.

The asking price for the Big Muddy Ranch was \$7.5 million, but in June of 1981, when the negotiating was finished, the down payment came to \$1.5 million; and a reported total price of \$5.8 million was paid for 64,299 acres of deeded land and 17,000 acres of leased Bureau of Land

EDITOR'S NOTE: This report was written before the arrest and deportation of the Rajneesh. The editor is publishing it only as a valuable first-hand document. Publication in no way reflects support or criticism of the ideas contained therein.

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Management land. With the purchase completed, the Big Muddy Ranch ceased to exist, and Rancho Rajneesh was born. Oregon has not been the same since.

He was born Chandra Rajneesh Mohan, the son of a Digambara Jain cloth merchant, in Kutchawada, India, on December 11, 1931. On the night of March 21, 1953, unable to sleep, Rajneesh got up and went strolling in a nearby garden. While sitting under a "tremendously luminous" tree, he became enlightened and experienced a "virgin reality—uncorrupted, untouchable and unmeasurable."

Upon returning to a worldly state, he continued his preparation for the role of master by schooling himself as a student, (B.A., 1955, M.A., with honors, 1957), later as a lecturer, and finally as a professor of philosophy at Jabalpur University. For the next ten years, while at Jabalpur, he established a reputation as a revolutionary. He so enraged his academic mentors that by 1969 he was forced to resign.

Upon recommendation of his friend, Yoga Chinmaya, he took the name of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. The title Bhagwan means master or enlightened one. Traveling the length and breadth of India, he soon became known for his outspoken and unconventional views on sex as a basic life force to be shared unconditionally, on a religion composed of all religious beliefs and philosophies unified into one body of thought, on politics as the art of deception, and on the repressive Indian way of life.

By 1974 the Bhagwan, as he is still called, had established a six-acre ashram at Poona, India, and stopped traveling. In the seven years from 1974 to 1981, he spoke over 33 million words in his daily discourses and evening darshans, averaging 13,000 words per day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks each year. More than 2,500 discourses and darshans have been transcribed into over 400 books plus numerous audio cassettes and video tapes, published primarily by Rajneesh Foundation International. He is reported to have told his followers, "I have said it all."

The move to Oregon came only after an exhaustive world-wide search. The reasons were many but two were mandatory: the need for the Bhagwan to undertake major medical treatment (diabetes, asthma, and back problems) which could best be obtained in the United States, and the desire to establish a permanent headquarters for an experimental, agricultural commune and religious center to administer an organization with over 350,000 members scattered throughout the world's major nations. The result was the incorporation of the city of Rajneeshpuram on what had been the Big Muddy Ranch.

But before more than a few disciples could reside at Rajneeshpuram, some form of temporary housing had to be found. The nearest town, Antelope, shown on official maps as a ghost town, offered the simplest solution. In an effort to escape the isolation and desolation of the harsh, semi-desert climate, most of Antelope was for sale by those few souls who still lived there. When the Rajneeshees offered cash, the residents sold their town, took the money, and ran. The response from the rest of the state was outrage.

Because the Rajneeshee are mostly young, highly educated, with well-honed manual and mental skills, money, modern technology, imagination, tenacity and a willingness to work, they were able to do rapidly and effectively what most towns take years to accomplish. Fear, the child of ignorance, is the prism through which they were viewed by the few remaining locals. Because contemporary communication and transportation have ushered in an era of cultural and value confrontation of global proportions, panic, intolerance, overt prejudice, and emotional attacks have become daily fare throughout the world for the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his disciples. In Oregon alone, the litigation resulting to date will probably continue for years. Still, I will suggest that what is now happening in Oregon is a revealing window on a possible future.

To attempt to present a coherent, integrated picture of the Rajneesh movement in so short an article is not possible. What I will attempt to do instead is select one significant attribute of the teachings of the Bhagwan and use that as typical. I have selected "work as worship" for this purpose.

What, then, might one expect to see upon looking through the window the Rajneeshee are providing?

I will briefly review the ideas of Robert Maslow and Eduard Spranger and relate them to some of the Indian mystical ontology known as *advaita* (nondual or monistic mysticism) the root of Rajneesh's thought. Next I will offer some definitions of work, play, worship, meditation, celebration, and enlightenment. Finally, I will tie them all together in a brief look at a typical day in the life of a Rajneeshee.

Maslow identified five major levels of need experienced by all human beings in their search for enlightenment or fulfillment. These needs can be stated briefly as (1) the basic survival requirements of food, shelter, clothing, and comfort; (2) protection from physical harm; (3) feelings of social acceptance by members of our family, our work group, and other individuals; (4) the competitive need to excel, to better our own performance; and (5) self-realization. He further arranged these needs in a hierarchy whereby the first need tended to dominate one's activities until adequately satisfied thereby releasing surplus energy to be directed toward the second need and so on until the highest level was reached.

Spranger, during the 1920's and 1930's, created a hierarchy of commonly held human values whereby all men could be described. His intent was to identify and define six sets of values, beliefs, and desires, that motivated men to act or behave as they did including: (1) religious, (2) theoretical, (3) aesthetic, (4) social, (5) political, and (6) economic.

Since Spranger is so little known, I'll offer a brief description. He teaches that the highest value of the religious man may be called unity which is designed so as to integrate man's behavior in an effort to transcend time, space, and matter. The dominant interest of the theoretical man is the discovery of truth; he seeks only to observe and to reason. His chief aim in life is to order and systematize his knowledge. The aesthetic man sees his highest value in form and harmony, frequently confusing beauty with pure religious experience. The highest value for the social type is love of people. Thus love becomes the only suitable form of human relationship. For the political man, personal power, influence, and renown are the primary interests. The economic type of man is characteristically interested in what is useful. He is thoroughly "practical," still the prevailing stereotype of the average American business man. Spranger argued for a hierarchy of values thusly:

First, religious values because they transcend time, space and matter.

Second, theoretical values because they, too, transcend time and space through the use of idealization.

Third, but equal to theoretical, aesthetic values because they also transcend time and matter by use of the imagination.

Fourth, social values as an assertion of the value of others where power is used to actualize a religious meaning for all.

Fifth, political values as an assertion of one's own value where power is for oneself and is utilitarian.

Sixth, economical values because they are only utilitarian and only reflect back the other values to which they are, at any given moment, related.

According to Spranger, neither was a high degree of talent necessary to qualify a person for classification in any type, nor was a person to be understood by his achievements, but rather by his interests and intentions. Spranger also recognized that we are all more or less mixtures of any or even all of these otherwise conceptualized "ideal types."

In a similar manner, the Bhagwan in his writings refers to the four types of men as defined by Hindu philosophy. First there is the *Brahmin* who searches for knowledge; it becomes his very breath, his soul. They are a rare breed.

Second is the *Kshatriya* who seeks power; who becomes a warrior.

Third is *Vaishya*, the tradesman. These people search for wealth with the same passion and commitment as those who seek power. They are few in number.

Fourth is the *Shudra*, the workman with a central life theme of work and labor. The *Shudra* desires little more than to toil, eat, sleep, reproduce, and die. Their number is legion. *Shudra* is not a derogatory term. To be any of these types is not a condemnation; all are needed in daily life, all are at one or another life stage leading eventually to enlightenment, therefore equally valuable.

Definitions are always worrisome as words are only symbols. A symbol conceals as much as it reveals and words are only ABOUT truth—they are not truth itself.

Work and its advocates are forever seeking more acceptable, more enticing definitions. No one enjoys his work if he is only a cog in a machine. E. F. Schumacher spoke to this issue when he observed, "The Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least threefold: to give a man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his ego-centeredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence. Again, the consequences that flow from this view are endless. To organize work in such a manner that it becomes meaningless, boring, stultifying, or nerve-racking for the worker would be little short of criminal; it would indicate a greater concern with goods than with people, an evil lack of compassion and a soul-destroying degree of attachment to the most primitive side of this worldly existence" ("Buddhist Economics," *Resurgence*, 275 Kings Road, Kingston, Surrey, Volume I, Number 2, January, 1968).

Keeping this in mind, a first time visitor to Rajneeshpuram is usually struck by at least two phenomena of the Rajneeshees: their appetite for work, and their obvious affection and exuberance for each other and for life. They do a lot of hugging, dancing and singing; and they work fourteen hours a day, every day. Or so it would appear.

For the Rajneeshees, work is any activity requiring effort on your part. If you have to persuade yourself to get up each morning, dress, eat, travel to your place of activity, you are working.

Air, water, and food are essential to life, and clothing and shelter are also usually required. These have been the age-old reasons for man to work. The Bhagwan in developing his commune says let's start with these essentials, add health care and transportation, and attempt to satisfy these needs with an agriculturally based commune as nearly self-supporting as possible. By pooling financial and labor resources, these basic needs may more efficiently be produced thus reducing the time and effort spent on them. Consequently the Sannyasins, (as the disciples of the Bhagwan call themselves), are liberated to pursue those higher levels of need as identified by Maslow and Hindu philosophy and to realize and authenticate one's value system as well. It is when there is little or

no effort involved in supplying these needs that work can be converted to worship. And it is through meditation that effort is overcome. Through meditation, growth and evolution are relieved of the traumas of unhappiness, the constant seeking and never finding, and the illusions that characterize so much of everyday life, the world of work.

Meditation is an attempt to eliminate effort, to play, to stop the mind in neutral. This means not thinking in the normal sense of think. It means emptying the mind of all activity, both the logical, rational, sequential, dissecting left side and the creating and intuiting right side. By emptying the mind of all thought, you clear the major obstacle that prevents you from hearing the language, the messages, of the body. Emptying the mind means taking a neutral position in the brain and turning your attention to the body and listening to what it is trying to tell you instead. The body's language is sensory; involving seeing, hearing, and most of all feeling. To meditate means stepping outside the mind and becoming an observer of what your body is telling you. If your body says Yes to your immediate activity, the odds are little effort is involved and you are playing. If your body says No to what you are currently doing, the odds are there is too much effort and you are still working.

To accomplish this emptying of the mind, the Bhagwan employs a series of meditation techniques, both ancient and innovatively contemporary. When applied to work, these techniques enable one to play and thus to convert work into worship. By playing in meditation, purpose, goals and intention are reduced or eliminated. One stops "doing" and begins "being" only.

Consequently the Rajneeshee never goes to work; he goes to worship, wherever he is, whatever he is doing. As so defined, worship is not a "doing" sort of thing, but "being"; it is strictly a here and now situation. Worship is existence of the moment, not concerned with the past or the future but only the here and now. Such worship means to enjoy what you are doing for what it is and only for what it is; not for what it might become, not for what it will produce, not for what it might accomplish at some future time or place, not for what it will cause someone else to do, say, or think, but only for the moment.

It is also important that worship as described here, be egoless. The Bhagwan considers ego as a major stumbling block to the religious goals of transcending time, space, and matter. Meditation is used to drop the ego, to center yourself around concepts of selflessness, towards orientation to the group as a whole, to all of mankind as opposed to the individual.

Because the playing approach to meditation is so essential to work, worship, and eventually enlightenment, let's consider the words of the Bhagwan on this subject:

To me, meditation is a play, a game; it is not a work. But to you it goes on being work; you think in terms of work.

It will be good to understand the distinction between work and play. Work is end-oriented, not enough unto itself. It must lead somewhere, to some happiness, to some goal, to some end. In itself it is meaningless. The meaning is hidden in the goal.

Play is totally different. There is no goal to it, or, it itself is the goal. Happiness is not beyond it, outside it; to be in it is to be happy. All that is there is intrinsic, internal. You play, not because of any reason, but because you enjoy it right now. It is purposeless.

That's why only children can play really; the more you grow, the less capable you become of playing, because of more and more purpose, more and more you ask why, why should I play? More and more you become end-oriented: Intrinsic value loses meaning for you. Only children can play because they don't think of the future.

Work is time; play is timelessness. Meditation must be like play, not end-oriented. You must not meditate to achieve something because then the whole point is lost. You cannot meditate at all if you are meditating for something. Meditation for meditation's sake . . . then it becomes timeless. And then the ego cannot arise.

Imagination is just a play. . . . if you simply play with imagination—not to reach anywhere, not to get anything out of it, but just a game, then it is not desire and not binding. These techniques of imagination can be helpful only if you are playing with them. If you get serious, you lose the point. . . . Even if you are playing, you can play only to reach somewhere, to get something, to win. If there is nothing in the future, you will lose interest. You will say, "Then why? Then why play at all?"

We are so much end-oriented that we turn everything into a means. This must be remembered: that meditation is the ultimate play, it is not a means to something, it is not a means to enlightenment. Enlightenment happens in it, but it is not a means to it. It is not a means to ultimate freedom. Ultimate freedom happens in it, but it is not a means. You cannot use it as a cause to effect something. . . . Don't desire anything out of it, enjoy it IN ITSELF, don't move out of it—and the consequence will be enlightenment. Remember, consequence—not effect. . . . that being deep in the play is enlightenment.

In meditation you will become a child again, playing, with no idea of the future, enjoying this very moment,

So enlightenment is never in the future, it is always in the present; and it is not a work to be done, it is a game to be played. . . .

Once you become aware that the concept of work, utility, to reach somewhere is the goal, is the bondage, it doesn't mean that you stop playing the game in the market—you go on playing. But know that this is a game. . . .

So whatsoever you want to play you can play, but forget ends. If ends are there then you have turned meditation also into a work. Just play it, and enjoy it, love it. It is beautiful in itself. There is no need for any other end to beautify it.

Because, really, utility has been forced on your mind by the society. The society says, "Be of some utility. Don't be useless." Because the society wants

you to be an economic unit, a thing, efficient, utilitarian. The society needs you to be in the market. You must have some utility, only then you are of use, otherwise you are of no use. The society goes on preaching that use is the goal of life, purpose the goal of life. This is nonsense.

I am not saying be useless. I am saying that this use is not the goal. You have to live in the society, so be useful to it, but remain capable at any moment to be useless. That capacity must be retained, otherwise you become a thing and you are not a person. When you move into solitariness, aloneness, this will become a problem. You will feel yourself useless.

Remember, use is for society. Society uses you and you use society. This is a reciprocal arrangement.

In contrast to the life-negating *sannyasin* (disciple of a Master of Eastern mystical religions) the "*neo-sannyasin*" of Rajneeshism is life-affirming. The "*neo-sannyas*" will continue to live an orderly life in society as a contributor, not an exploiter, and as a producer, not a consumer. He is still bound by Maslow's concepts of need, and must earn a living in order to survive. But he will perform his activities in the world as an act or game that he plays "for the sake of others." The *sannyasin* though is not to be serious about them. This does not mean that he is to abandon or renounce the world but rather to renounce his attachment to that world, to dwell in the world playfully.

Initiation into *sannyas* is not difficult. The Bhagwan requires surrendering to his spiritual guidance, adopting the colors of the sunrise in your clothing, wearing a *mala* (a 108-bead necklace containing a locket with Rajneesh's picture), receiving a new (Sanskrit) name, and meditating. There are no payments of dues or initiation fees. There are no requests, no pressure for donations although much of the wealth of the Rajneeshees has come from this source. Your wealth or lack of wealth is not an issue. Race, color, creed, previous religious preference, all are irrelevant.

What are relevant are the two alternative pathways to fulfillment: love and meditation. Without intending to shortchange the importance of love as a pathway, the Bhagwan places the emphasis on meditation.

In addition to the traditional mystical methods of meditation (Tantra, Yoga, Zen, Sufism, etc.), the eclectic, experimental Bhagwan has introduced several unique methods of his own. Because the Bhagwan views Western society as hyperactive, producing tension, repression and inner conflict, he begins meditation with some cathartic exercises designed to clear the unconscious minds of this negative material. Having accomplished this, he employs meditation techniques that shift to a quiet, relaxed "watching" which concentrates on and cultivates an awareness of our "inner witness." By assuming a watching position, we can assume a totally detached position regarding the content of our phenomenal

experience (thoughts, feelings, desires, sensations, etc.). A state of "no-mind" is the ultimate condition of these techniques. This is a condition where both ego and mind are dissolved, a state of liberation, enlightenment, bliss, of "pure consciousness." Since meditation techniques themselves are only preliminary, they should be approached in a relaxed, playful manner, without purpose or goals.

The necessity to dissolve mind and ego are of primary importance to Rajneesh's teaching. Regarded as illusory products of our social conditioning, mind and ego are held responsible for all the alienation, misery, fears, neuroses, aggression, etc.—all the "hell"—that we encounter in Western society. The Bhagwan insists there is no relationship between "dropping" (dissolving) and permanently destroying the mind. Instead it is intended to free the mind from the tyranny of its critical and limiting functions. He does not intend that you become "mindless" but rather that you step outside the mind, to master it, and not be caught dominated by or identified with it. But when dealing with the inner realm (the subjective world within) Rajneesh says, "Drop the mind."

In the same way, "dropping the ego" is not intended to be a total dissolution. As with mind, we must function as an ego in the outside world. "But when with yourself, go beyond ego. Live in the world with mind, but live with yourself without mind." Transcend mind and ego, but do not eliminate.

The ultimate goal is total enlightenment, permanent *samadhi* (or *nirvana*, or *modsha*), a state that has never been recorded by the mind, "because the mental mechanism itself has dissolved." This supreme state of consciousness "is an explosion of everything that has been. Now nothing remains. It is an explosion of the totality that you were: your memory, your intellect, your personality, your mind . . . There is no you; you become everything. That is the point of Brahmin, cosmic consciousness."

Love and meditation are alternate routes to the goal of spiritual fulfillment (Maslow's highest level). Meditation, as a natural consequence to awareness, becomes loving. The path of love, leading to unconditional love, becomes meditation.

The *sannyasins* of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh do not actually work; they worship. They worship in a relatively small but essential number of temples designed to provide those first level essential basic biological needs of air, water, food, clothing, and shelter. They have added to these the secondary needs of transportation and medical care. Living together in a simple communal manner in Rajneeshpuram, the disciples have gone on to the remaining levels of human needs. At the same time, it is

my opinion the majority of the disciples do not aspire much beyond the *shudras* of Indian history. In order to operate a commune efficiently, there needs to be a minimum number of 200 to 400 *sannyasins*; they consider 20,000 *sannyasins* as an outside maximum. Ideally, approximately 10,000 people are needed for an optimum operable commune.

Feeling good about your worship works. Feeling good about your worship and producing good work are connected. Everyone who experiences such a connection, when work is a joy, also experiences new flashes of intuition, new sources of energy that seem to keep on flowing. They produce more and better than at any other time in their lives and do so without feeling tired, bored, and disappointed with their work. The alternative is to commit yourself to feeling lousy in a lousy world.

Work is also an activity. For most people, to imagine its absence means you do nothing. For the Rajneeshee this is called worship. The problem with worship, and the reason it is hard for some to accomplish, is that no one can imagine it the same way. Worship is not a set of activities that people do; worship is a state of being, a sense of emotional well being, a psychological high—not unlike what one feels at play.

As a religious / agricultural / environmental communal society, certain characteristics are much in evidence at Rajneeshpuram. The *sannyasins* in the commune exhibit:

- great respect for each other;
- a fair and equitable sharing of tasks;
- a willingness to give unstintingly of themselves for the good of the group;
- full freedom of choice; each member is free to leave at any time, take all his personal possessions, and still be eligible to return if circumstances should warrant;
- freedom by the group to request that a member withdraw if he is not pulling his share of the load and is simply freeloading;
- no coercion to sign an agreement to stay forever or to contribute any possessions to the group;
- a freely selected leadership which can and does change frequently with agreement by all concerned; consequently there is no pontiff or pope even though one person may have originated the idea for the commune and set it in motion;
- an overriding desire to share and work together with a solid interest in the success of the project.

To sum up and tie together all the necessarily incomplete details

offered here, let's take a composite look at a typical day in the life of a *sannyasin* whose work is performed as worship.

At first, once you decide to become a disciple and take "*sannyas*," you will spend much time in the five different meditations offered each day, seven days a week. Arising as early as four in the morning, you may begin your day worshipping in one of the two communal kitchens, preparing breakfast for one and all. From six until seven in the morning, you may attend the first meditation session of the day, the Dynamic. As the name implies, it is a very physical meditation. Catharsis is the goal of Dynamic. This is the place to exorcise your fears, your hostility, your aggression, with special care being taken to prevent you from accidentally harming yourself or others in the process.

Breakfast by seven, then off to your first place of worship, your temple. This may be anything from raking gravel in the parking lot at Mirdad (the Chamber of Commerce and visitor's bureau) to reviewing the results of yesterday's decisions on how to best invest the financial resources of the Rajneesh Investment Trust.

From 9:30 to 10:30 *Nataraj* meditation is offered. This is a dance meditation, with eyes dosed, to further acquaint you with your own body.

Neo-Vipassana meditation is available from 11:00 to 12:00. This is a listening-watching meditation. The intent here is to step outside your mind and ego and become totally aware of what is happening around you, to stand aside and observe yourself. With eyes closed this is not easy to do and still maintain attention as the mind constantly interfere and tends to wander.

Between meditations you may worship at several different temples during the day. Most *Sannyasins* have at least two or more responsibilities to attend to each day. Not only is variety of worship thus provided, but individuals are encouraged to explore many avenues of worship until their own ideals are found. A well staffed and often active personnel department is maintained by Rajneeshpuram to aid people in moving from one temple to another in their efforts at worship and their search for self-realization and enlightenment.

The biggest "event" of the day occurs at 2:00 PM. Every day of the week the Bhagwan drives one of his many Rolls Royces over an established route through the city. Shortly before he is due, the citizenry of Rajneeshpuram start lining up along this route, singing, dancing, playing a multitude of different musical (and not so musical) instruments; they endeavor to celebrate and show appreciation to their master, the Bhagwan. This drive-by takes approximately twenty minutes and is intended only for the disciples. It usually takes until 4:00 PM for things to return to normal.

Nadabrahma meditation is available from 3:45 until 4:45 each afternoon.

The first half-hour is spent in sitting with eyes closed and humming to music. The second half-hour, without humming but with eyes closed, introduces some simple body movements intended to create feelings of expanding as well as enclosing the spirit.

The final meditation of the day is the *Kundalini*. This is also known as the shake-dance-roll meditation. The shaking part begins at 5:30 PM and lasts for twenty minutes. How you shake is up to you as long as you do so standing with your eyes closed. The second twenty minutes is then devoted to dance again alone and with your eyes closed. The final twenty minutes is spent lying on your back on the floor with your eyes closed in complete relaxation. Even for a healthy, vigorous person, the final twenty minutes is welcomed.

As indicated previously, the permanent residents of Rajneeshpuram have more than one place of worship, a temple they attend each day which begins the day somewhere around seven or seven-thirty in the morning. With the daily schedule outlined above, most temples are open and operating, even if only intermittently until seven or seven-thirty in the evening, every day of the week, often without regard to the arbitrary divisions of the calendar or the clock. Dinner each evening is from seven until nine.

Contrary to appearances, this does not make for a strenuous day. Worship is paced to your own velocity, your own body rhythms. While worship is monitored and directed, it is done not through the traditional superior-subordinate relationship but rather as a shared recognition that what is being done contributes to the well being of all.

What makes these forms of worship so powerful is the singleness of mind and purpose of all concerned. The approximately 3,000 permanent residents of the city have a common set of values which they are permitted to express in satisfying a common set of needs. By sharing their resources of time and energy they are able, with an extremely small investment, to provide the first level of needs; air, water, food, clothing, shelter, transportation and health care.

The importance of meditation is by far the most powerful influence in the daily lives of the Rajneeshee. As such, a major facility in Rajneeshpuram is the Rajneesh International Meditation University (RIMU). In addition to being responsible for the daily schedule of meditation listed above, RIMU also offers, on short notice usually, various one day events. Individual sessions may be arranged in every technique of meditation from personal counseling to *Samadhi* Tank sessions. Major workshops lasting up to seven days are offered on a regular schedule and include the following:

- *Sensitivity Workshops*

"To become more sensitive is to become available to right knowledge."

- *Body and Breath Workshops*
"Know the body and know how those energies can be transformed. . . ."
- *Clearing Workshops*
"Never repress . . . let expression be one of the most fundamental rules of your life. . . ."
- *Intuitive Science Workshops*
"Intuition . . . simply reaches to the conclusion without any process."
- *Meditation Workshops*
"Meditation simply means your body, your mind, and your soul are functioning . . . as one."

The ultimate in Meditation is the Extended Workshop. These are scheduled on a regular basis also and run anywhere from two to as much as fifteen weeks. They tend to be greatly extended courses of the regular workshops listed above. They are also more specialized than the regular workshops. The University has an experienced staff of about twenty-five and provides complete residency for those attending. Today, most of those attending RIMU are *sannyasins* living in communes or Ashrams scattered around the world.

There seems to be little question that applying meditative techniques to work is going to affect your response and influence your ability to transcend work to the level of worship. It is beneficial that worship be perceived as only the first step along the path toward eventual enlightenment. In turn it is critical that you understand that the value of enlightenment comes not through some new experience but rather in the cleansing of the ego. You will recognize enlightenment as any experience that expands your consciousness beyond its present limits.

In their search for enlightenment, the Rajneeshees use meditation as a form of worship to transcend work. To understand enlightenment it is necessary to understand that reality is reality—period. Reality does not change. It is doubtful that anyone will ever know the ultimate of reality. What is, is; what I am, I am. It is your perception of reality, your personal truth that changes as your consciousness and your concept of reality changes. The difference before and after enlightenment then is not in reality—it is in you, in what is true for you. Hence, truth can wear many faces. Meher Baba, the founder of Sufism Reoriented gets at this perhaps a little better: "the infinite Truth which is at the heart of Reality . . . does not suffer any limitation even if the entire universe is dissolved." It is your consciousness that is limited and when that consciousness is transcended (enlightened) by meditation (for the Rajneeshee), then you perceive your work differently and therefore relate to it in a new way, as worship. Since so much of the human being's

identity has always been contained in his work, when his sense of work changes his identity also changes. With work as worship you experience the cosmos as unified and intimately one with your own essential being. Rather than experience yourself as a separate, isolated physical being apart from all the rest of existence you can eventually attain or experience the cosmos as unified and intimately one with your own essential being.

Many *Shudras* are attracted to the teachings of the Bhagwan. So are many *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, and *Vaishya*. All seem to have one thing in common; they all have well developed spiritual value systems as well as strong needs for self-realization. Almost universally the residents of Rajneeshpuram tell of seeking something that was missing in their lives at the time they first encountered the philosophy of the Bhagwan. It was their recognition that they had found that missing element that caused them to become *sannyasins*.

Of secondary importance in Spranger's value system are social, economic, and theoretical values. In effect, all of Spranger's categories are well represented by identifiable groups within the commune. Because they seem to have in common a dominant value system (spiritual) as well as fully developed values in other areas, they have become a formidable force to deal with in the state of Oregon. Confrontation has been their primary method of challenging, often successfully, almost every social, political and economic institution now in existence in Oregon.

There are too many *sannyasins* who are highly intelligent, well educated, recognized in their particular professions for their achievements as well as their ability to accumulate significant wealth, to be ignored when they apply their energies to some particular task or goal. Although their numbers in Oregon may be comparatively small, they become extremely effective when they move in unison in a single direction. So far, those opposed to their presence in Oregon have been unable to unify their efforts, agree on a purpose, cooperate on a set of goals or muster this kind of concentrated power.

Enlightenment, as defined by the Rajneeshes, is liberation. But is it all that simple? Apparently not, otherwise why are there not more people pursuing it in an effort to escape dull and demeaning work?

To transcend work is no simple undertaking. No matter how secure one may feel at any given moment, man's interminable necessity to work in order just to survive is not easy to rationalize, suppress, overcome, or transcend. Man has always had to work just to remain alive, and remaining alive is a mighty incentive to work.

By transcending this comprehension of work, the Rajneesh releases or realigns his energies to more vigorously court the elusive reality of enlightenment.

Thus in pursuit of self-realization, of the cosmic consciousness, of human potential, of samadhi, of enlightenment, of whatever term you choose, the path of meditation has been chosen by the Rajneeshee. As a spiritual quest, enlightenment is simply seeing the Divine in all things, great or small, ordinary or extraordinary and then expressing that insight as worship in one's work. When enlightenment is one's state, or one's path, everything is blissful, including doing the laundry, driving truck, washing dishes, harvesting vegetables, milking cows, cleaning streets, writing songs, or painting houses, because one constantly beholds the Divine as the world-process of one's life.

With enlightenment as your goal, it doesn't matter whether you are a commoner or a king, a *Brahmin* or a *Shudra*; what does matter is that you act in loving service to the world, the world including none other than your true self.

Finding your true self means that:

First you go toward the light,
Next you're in the light,
Then you *are* the light.

Afterword

I must disclaim enlightenment. I have sought diligently to be as accurate as possible in my research and in my interpretation of what I have found. No matter how discriminating my deliberations may have been, I guarantee that you can find at least two errors in what I have presented here.

I also disclaim being either a supporter or detractor of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his teachings. That he and his followers have been abused and severely discriminated against by the citizens of Oregon as well as by public officials at all levels, I do not question. That they have brought some of this persecution upon themselves is also admitted. The iconoclastic attitude of the Bhagwan and his recently departed secretary Ma Anand Sheela would not endear them to anyone no matter how liberal and accepting they might be. Even as a world proclaimed master, the Bhagwan is still a human being. As such he is subject to all the human quirks of personality and flaws of character. He is subject to being dogmatic about bad dogma and suffering from skewed metaphysics. These eccentricities should not be mistaken for divine wisdom.

What is important is whether the Rajneeshees continue to dwell in Oregon and whether the issues can be resolved to the mutual benefit of all parties concerned.

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Finally, there were two other sources used extensively for this article: For the past three years I have developed a large clippings file of every magazine, newspaper, and special report I could acquire or otherwise copy. I have visited Rajneeshpuram on three occasions. The first two trips were for one day only, hence were intended mostly for orientation and familiarization. The third trip was for five days and involved participating as much as possible in the daily meditations and several short courses at the Rajneesh International Meditation University. I was at liberty to talk to many of the residents of Rajneeshpuram on each of these visits but most fruitfully on the last one.