



STATEMENT DR060

The Rajneesh Cult

Rajneeshpuram: Another Tragedy in the Making?

In terms of media attention and exposure, we could fairly state that Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (of Transcendental Meditation) was “the guru of the ‘70s.” However, over the past few years another Indian guru, Bhagwan Shree (Sir God) Rajneesh, has gradually achieved greater notoriety, which qualifies him, at least at this point, to be considered the “guru of the ‘80s.”

Rajneesh, bald, bearded and photogenic, first attained major media exposure in the U.S. in early 1978 when *Time* magazine featured an article on the guru entitled “‘God Sir’ at Esalen East.” *Time* reported that the charismatic guru had come into vogue among certain celebrities and prominent apostles of the “human potential movement,” who were joining thousands of other spiritual seekers in making the pilgrimage to Rajneesh’s ashram (religious community/monastery) in Poona, India. Rajneesh’s appeal stemmed partly from his use of “tantric yoga” (involving nudity and free sex) in his ashram, and partly from his incorporation of a wide variety of popular “psychospiritual” therapies and techniques.

In the late ‘70s and early ‘80s Rajneesh’s acclaim continued to spread within the “new age movement” in America, Great Britain, Germany, and virtually every free-world, industrialized nation. With as many as 6,000 westerners flooding Poona at a time, the ashram population rose to 10,000 while 500 Rajneesh centers were established in 32 nations by orange garbed sannyasins* returning from Poona to their homelands. Rajneesh now has 250,000 followers, whose average age has been estimated to be as high as 35. Among those who have made the trek to Poona include the Prince and Princess of Hanover, the Marquis of Bath, actor Terence Stamp, singer Diana Ross, and Ruth Carter Stapleton.

Rajneesh’s discourses, which were delivered daily in Poona, have been transcribed into 300 books and diaries which average between \$15 and \$20 in cost. Video cassettes of each discourse range in price between \$50 and \$170. Ashram income during the last year in Poona is believed to have been between \$5 and \$7 million. As a follower stated in the film *Ashram*, a documentary on the Rajneesh cult, “The organization understood long ago what powerful energy money is.” Rajneesh, who owns two Rolls Royces and two airplanes, believes that “spirituality is the luxury and privilege of the rich.”¹

Rajneesh is a self-proclaimed spiritual rebel who thrives in the controversy that he has created, particularly in India, by his “trainings” (such as the “tantra” group, and the often violent “encounter” group) and his denunciations of respected religious and political leaders. Tal Brooke, a former devotee of the popular Indian guru Sai Baba, after visiting Poona effectively summed up the scene there:

An object of media fascination and horror, Rajneesh is known for his bizarre revelations on sex. He has constructed a vision of the New Man that repudiates all prior norms and traditions. Man, by Rajneesh’s thinking, is the hedonist-god, fully autonomous (barring the inner voice of Rajneesh), and free to carve out the cosmos in his own image. He is the sovereign pleasure seeker, self-transcender, who owes nobody anything. The family is anathema, children extraneous. And so long as the Neo-sannyasin has the money the fun ride continues. Afterward, however, he or she is usually a non-functional casualty. Homicides, rapes, mysterious disappearances, threats, fires, explosions, abandoned ashram children now begging in Poona’s streets, drug busts — all done by those amazing hybrids in red who believe they are pioneering new and daring redefinitions of the word “love.” Christians working in a Poona asylum confirm such accounts, adding the breakdown rate is so high the ashram has wielded political power to suppress reports.²

Bhagwan’s practice of readily initiating every westerner who came to him into the order of *Sannyas* infuriated many Hindu traditionalists, who uphold the ancient belief that the title of “swami” can only be conferred upon one who has spent years in preparative study and meditation. Rajneesh’s reply was that “Westerners want things quickly, so we give it to them right away.”³ Rajneesh further offended the more ascetic Hindus by his advocacy of self-indulgence and sensuality. “He urges his disciples not to deny their thoughts, feelings, and urges, but instead to experience them fully, as stepping stones on the spiritual path.”⁴

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

Bhagwan has often been open concerning his hostility toward established religions. "This is a revolution...I am burning scriptures here, uprooting traditions...unless I am shot I'll not be proved right."⁵

By early 1981 threats on Bhagwan's life were indeed being made. The ashram was now heavily guarded, and no one was allowed to enter without first being searched for weapons. Then an ashram warehouse was set on fire, and an explosion was set off near the cult's health center. When an actual attempt on Rajneesh's life was made in February, ashram officials hastened a process (which had already been initiated) of looking for a new headquarters.

Concurrent with these events, on May 1 of last year Rajneesh entered into what was termed a new and ultimate stage of his work — silence. Since 1977 Rajneesh had been announcing that he would one day stop talking, on the grounds that only through silence could his real message be communicated.

Then during the same month the U.S. Consulate in Bombay issued Bhagwan a tourist visa, which opened the door for him to stay in America for at least a year. On June 1 he secretly flew to New York with 17 of his closest disciples. His followers in Poona were cast into a state of great disorientation upon hearing the news of their master's departure, and many suicide reports were made. The Poona ashram was closed down, and a small meditation center was left in its place to accommodate Indian disciples.

Since Rajneesh left Poona his followers have spread throughout the west. "In Europe the present strategy is to establish 'Sacred Cities.' The European Newsletter, issue 8, 1981 says: 'A Sannyasin city is to be set up in each major European country.. Bhagwan has suggested that the cities should be self-supporting, alternative societies, which will be models of sannyas.' So far four cities have been planned: in England, Holland, Germany, and Italy."⁶

In America, plans were undertaken to create the ultimate sacred city, one fit for the "master" himself. On July 10 the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center of Montclair, New Jersey purchased the Big Muddy Ranch (where the John Wayne movie *Big Muddy* was filmed) for \$6 million (\$1.5 million of it in cash) from an investment company in Amarillo, Texas. The land, near Antelope, Oregon, covers more than 100 square miles. The Center also managed to lease 14,889 acres in the same area from the Bureau of Land Management.

Three hundred sannyasins from western countries soon flocked to the Big Muddy, and in September they jubilantly welcomed their master to his new home. "There is no doubt it is already the world's largest *ashram*, geographically speaking," the *Los Angeles Times* said. Expenses are reportedly running at \$1 million a month.

Not long after the Big Muddy Ranch was purchased, plans were announced to build "America's first enlightened city," to be called *Rajneeshpuram* (expression or city of Rajneesh). The Rajneesh Foundation International (headed by "Ma" Sheela Silverman, a 32-year-old Indian disciple) projected that the city would encompass roughly three square miles, support a population of 1,500 to 2,000, and be self-sufficient within three years.

On November 4 the Wasco County Commission voted two-to-one to allow an election to be held May 18 to determine if the Big Muddy property should be incorporated as a city. Since the only ones allowed to vote in such an election are those who live on the site (in this case the Rajneesh cult), the outcome was certain to be in favor of incorporation. The One Thousand Friends of Oregon, an environmentalist group, sought to have the County Commission's approval overruled by Oregon's Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA), but LUBA decided it lacked jurisdiction to take such an action. Then on May 18 no one was surprised when the disputed election resulted in 154 votes in favor of the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram, and none opposed. The One Thousand Friends are now petitioning the state Board of Appeals to reverse Wasco County's action and thus block the actual development of the city.

In the meantime, under the leadership of the pugnacious Sheela Silverman, the sannyasins have responded to this opposition to their plans with a bold attempt to take over the city of Antelope and turn its municipal powers to their use (such as providing authorization to operate a printing plant and other services needed by the growing population of sannyasins). The "Orange People" (as Rajneesh's disciples are sometimes called) now own and operate the town's only gas station, and the "Antelope Store and Cafe," whose name they've changed to "Zorba the Buddha" (the store's menu is now strictly vegetarian).

Fearing that once the sannyasins gained control of the city council they would raise taxes to facilitate the cult's operations, longtime Antelope residents called a special election April 15 to decide whether to disincorporate the town. However, Oregon law allows anyone who has resided in the state or 20 days or more to vote in a city's election the same day he or she takes up residence in the town. On April 15 the established citizenry managed to muster 42 votes for disincorporation (Antelope's official population is listed as 40), but the votes of 55 very new residents thwarted their efforts. A court challenge of the outcome is likely.

Ashram life in Oregon is different than it was in Poona. Now that Rajneesh has gone in to “silence,” he no longer conducts the twice-daily meetings with his disciples that were the focal point of life in Poona. Rajneesh does speak to Sheela Silverman and his personal nurse, however, and in this manner a chain of command has been constructed which affords the sannyasins little or no direct contact with their master. He may be seen, however, taking joyrides around the property with his nurse. *Life* reports that “he has already crashed into a cement truck,”⁷ and *New Age* magazine informs us that at an Antelope City Council meeting “Francis Dixon, a city counselor, chimed in that Bhagwan himself is a menace, driving around on their roads in his Rolls Royce at over 70 miles per hour; already, noted Dixon, he has ended up in a ditch three times.”⁸

In northeastern Oregon, as it was in Poona, the Rajneesh cult has provoked a crescendo of responses ranging from curiosity, to concern, to alarm. The unusual orange clothing worn by the sannyasins, their advocacy of a radically unrestrained (im)morality, and the numerous unconventional (and, to many people, repulsing) facets of their beliefs and lifestyle will hardly allow them to meld unobtrusively into the cultural milieu of their rural, provincial surroundings. It seems likely that the tension and hostility between those inside and those outside the ashram will continue to grow in the Antelope area, just as it did in Poona. Accompanying this may be a radical internalization in which the cult severs itself from almost all contact with the outside world, and focuses intently upon realizing its own spiritual and community aspirations.

What are these aspirations? Even the briefest exposure to Rajneesh’s teachings makes it explicitly clear that the spirituality he advocates is in every respect hostile to the Christian faith. Consider the following samplings from his discourses.

You can be a Christ: Why be a Christian?⁹

Let *me* be your death and resurrection.¹⁰

Nobody is a sinner. Even while you are in the darkest hole of your life, you are still divine: you cannot lose your divinity. I tell you, there is no need for salvation, it is within you.¹¹

...disobedience is not a sin, but a part of growth.¹²

God is neither a he nor a she...if you say he is a she, I will say he is a he and if you say he is a he, I will say he is a she...*whatever your belief is, I'm going to destroy it...*¹³ (emphasis ours)

The spirituality into which Rajneesh is leading his disciples is the self-deification of eastern mysticism, and at the same time it is a spirituality that cannot be defined, experienced, or maintained apart from the guru. As an unidentified former sannyasin describes the Poona experience: “The ashram is a convent, a temple, a therapy — the whole ashram-life is a therapy, not only the groups: every moment you are pulled and pushed, towards something you don’t know, towards the unknown, the divine — and towards Bhagwan. Each day you come nearer and nearer to him — and each day you become more and more dependent on him.”¹⁴

Because his many “therapies” have been highly acclaimed by some in the human potential movement, the majority of those who come to Rajneesh have many personal problems they hope he can resolve. Rajneesh tells them that the cause of all of their problems is their egos, and the solution to these conflicts is to surrender their egos to him. On a sign at the entrance to the meditation center in Poona read the words: “Shoes and minds are to be left here at the gate.” Rajneesh maintains that “Only those are accepted who surrender, only those are accepted who are utterly committed, who have fallen in love with me, who can trust and whose trust is *unconditional*, and *absolute* — they are accepted.”¹⁵ (emphasis ours)

The entire ashram program is designed to progressively weaken the participants’ egos until they surrender to Rajneesh. For example, one of the “therapies,” called centering, requires one to speak of himself in the third person for seven days, with the result that one begins to feel distant and separate from himself. Another training, *intensive enlightenment*, forces participants to do nothing for three days and nights but answer the question “Who am I?” The process leads one to see himself as miserable and unimportant. Soon his ego or sense of who he is begins to crumble and is replaced by a feeling of oneness with everything, and dependence upon Bhagwan.

Life reports that Iha Vander Schulenberg, a young German who had been initiated by Rajneesh in Poona, took part in “...a 10-day ordeal during which participants were hypnotized and led back to childish, even infantile states of consciousness. In this condition of extreme vulnerability, potential disciples were urged to consider devoting their lives to the Bhagwan.”¹⁶

As each ashram session further breaks down the independent ego of the sannyasin, he finally becomes the mental slave of Rajneesh. When a follower reaches this point, he views any difficult thing Rajneesh asks him to do as a test of his commitment

and fidelity to the guru. An Indian movie star who is a sannyasin said: "It's a test or surrender, and surrendering yourself to the guru means doing anything and everything he asks you to. You understand that? You stop thinking for yourself. *The guru* does the thinking for you."¹⁷

Through such absolute dependence on a human being, and surrender of the right to evaluate him critically, Rajneesh's devotees forfeit qualities that are vital to personal growth and healthy adulthood. When two young English women were caught smuggling drugs in order to afford rooms — in the ashram (this means of producing income, along with prostitution, was not uncommon among sannyasins in Poona), a psychologist called into the case told the court that "...those who left the sect were found to have regressed to the mental age of 12."¹⁸

The atmosphere of brotherhood and playfulness that prevails at the ashram, when combined with the "blissful" states of consciousness often achieved through the meditations and therapies, can lead the sannyasins to believe that their problems have been "transcended," and that they have attained the psychological and spiritual "wholeness" Rajneesh promises. However, Tal Brooke speaks for many who have visited Poona and other Rajneesh centers when he says: "I strongly sense a terrible obscene gaping wound underneath this facade — a collective lacerated psyche."¹⁹

When a group of people's psyches remain fragmented and wounded, but they believe they've been healed; when they are still very much sinners and yet they are convinced they've become pure, some disturbing, frightening possibilities emerge. This is especially the case if the people involved disavow use of their rational minds as "unspiritual" and collectively connect themselves to one "supermind," who is inevitably no more healthy nor perfected than they. Speaking of the Rajneesh cult and cult patterns in general, Joshua Baran, a former Zen Buddhist monk, observes:

In this process devotees lose their natural alarm systems which tell them when things aren't right. This is usually a gradual process. This is how it is possible for Jonestown or the many other examples we've seen — how people end up doing blind, insensitive things to one another."²⁰

With such references to Jonestown already being made, an eerie sense of irony was added to the unfolding Rajneesh story when it became known last year that Shannon Jo Ryan, daughter of the late congressman Leo Ryan, had become an active disciple of Rajneesh. In November, 1978, Leo Ryan was murdered in Jonestown, Guyana by followers of Jim Jones as he was completing an investigation of the Peoples Temple there. *Life* reports that Shannon traveled to India to offer Rajneesh money collected from her father's life insurance policy.²¹ She is now living in Oregon at Rajneeshpuram, a fact which some of the neighbors in the Antelope area find foreboding. When the subject of parallels between Rajneesh and Jim Jones was brought up, Shannon candidly acknowledged: "I've heard other people say if Bhagwan asked them to kill themselves, they would do it. If Bhagwan asked them to kill someone else, they would do it. I don't know if my trust in him is that total. *I would like it to be and I don't believe he would ever do that.*"²² (emphasis ours)

Miss Ryan's words are frequently echoed by other sannyasins. They acknowledge that the psychological structure of the cult is such that if Rajneesh were to order them to kill themselves or others they would be obligated to do so. However, they are fully assured that Rajneesh is essentially different than Jim Jones, and would never ask them to kill. Unfortunately, one cannot find a basis for this assurance in the ethical system that Rajneesh prescribes. In *The Book of the Secrets*, Volume One, Rajneesh tells his followers:

So remember this: whatsoever you are doing consciously, with alertness, fully aware, becomes meditation. Even if you kill someone consciously, while fully conscious, it is meditative. This is what Krishna was saying to Arjuna: "Do not be afraid. Do NOT be afraid! Kill, murder, fully conscious, knowing fully that no one is murdered and no one is killed....you are only destroying forms, not that which is behind the forms. *So destroy the forms.*" If Arjuna can be so meditatively aware, then there is no violence, *No one is killed, no sin is committed.*²³ (emphasis ours)

Rajneesh is clearly teaching here that since God is everything, and human beings are merely illusory forms of God, then if one, through meditation, can maintain awareness of this "truth" he may do what he wills to the "forms." To a person in that state of mind no one is really being killed, and thus no sin is committed.

In the final analysis, the only reason the sannyasins are so confident that Rajneesh will not lead them into disaster is that they have a subjective conviction that he is pure love" and therefore incapable of doing so. No doubt most of them have had little prior exposure to wiles of the many big-time and small-time cult leaders who can project an aura of love and spirituality while they mercilessly exploit their followers. Jim Jones was perceived by his followers as a loving father figure. Certainly Bhagwan is different from Jones, but it could be a fatal error to conclude that he therefore presents no danger. There is more than one way to be deceived; evil comes in many forms.

By the anti-christ, anti-human, anti-social message Rajneesh promotes, it is ominously evident that the spirit that so visibly drives him is capable of any evil thing. Needless to say, the discerning Christian fails to see the inherent goodness in Bhagwan to which his followers naively entrust their souls. And, if we consider such firsthand observations of Rajneesh's mental instability as those offered by Eckart Flother (see "Inside the Ashram," this issue), the outlook for Rajneeshpuram becomes still more precarious.

If in Rajneeshpuram we do *not* have another major cult-related tragedy in the making, it will not be because it was prevented by anything in the group's theological, ethical, or psychological structure (not to mention their physical situation — located 20 winding miles from the nearest public road in the middle of the sparsely-populated Oregon desert). It might, however, be because Christians were praying, and alerting as many sannyasins and potential sannyasins as they could to the critical differences between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the "gospel" of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

Elliot Miller

1. "Guru Brings His Ashram to Oregon," Russell Chandler and Tyler Marshall, *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1981, part 1, p. 14.
2. "Pied Piper of Poona," *Eternity*, September, 1981, p. 14.
3. "God Sir' at Esalen East," *Time*, January 16, 1978, p. 59.
4. "Om, Om on the Range: Rajneesh in America," Mark Roseland, *New Age*, January, 1982, p. 35.
5. This is a Revolution, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Videocassette, 18C236, December 28, 1980.
6. "The Master Will Not Speak Again," Jens Johansen, *New Religious Movements Up-date*, Vol. 5, Issue 3/4, December, 1981, p. 81.
7. "Shortcut to Nirvana," *Life*, October, 1981, p. 78.
8. *op. cit.*, p. 37.
9. The quote cited is the title of Videotape 18C144, September 2, 1980.
10. *Discourses on the Sufi Way*, quoted in the *Victor Valley Daily Press*, September 18, 1981, p. B3.
11. *Sannyas*, April, 1978, p. 18.
12. *Jesus, Buddha: Their Days are Finished*, Videocassette 18C321 and 18C322, March 7, 1981.
13. *He or She? On Beliefs — The Book of the Books VI*, Videocassette 18S133, April 22, 1980.
14. "No Ego, No I," *New Religious Movements Up-date*, Vol. IV, Issue 1/2, May, 1980, p. 15.
15. *Rajneesh Foundation Newsletter*, April, 1979, quoted in "No Ego. No I," *ibid.*
16. "Shortcut to Nirvana," *op. cit.*, p. 80.
17. "Shoes and Minds Are to be Left at the Gate," *New Religious Movements Up-date*, Vol. III, Issue 1/2, July, 1979, p. 60.
18. "News — Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh Sannyasins." *New Religious Movements Up-date*, Vol. IV, Issue 1/2, May, 1980, p. 20.
19. "Pied Piper of Poona," *op. cit.*, p. 14.
20. "Guru Brings His Ashram to Oregon," *op. cit.*, p. 3.
21. *op. cit.*, p. 76.
22. "Daughter of Rep. Ryan Is Follower of Indian Guru," William Endicott, *Los Angeles Times*, January 10, 1981, part 1, p. 1.
23. p. 399.

Inside the Ashram: An Interview With Eckart Flother

In San Diego last November most of our Research staff participated in the 1981 Cult Summit Conference, which was a predominantly Christian gathering of "cult watchers" to share information and get to know one another. There we met Eckart Flother, a former follower of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who gave an interesting presentation on the Indian guru. Eckart, a German citizen, is currently a student at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. In the following discussion with Forward Editor Elliot Miller, Eckart shares some valuable insight into the Rajneesh cult that he has gained through personal involvement and subsequent research.

FORWARD: Eckart, when did you join the Rajneesh community in Poona, and how long were you involved?

FLOTHER: I joined the ashram in Poona in March 1979, and was there during that month, and then from June to October of the same year.

What was it that drew you to Rajneesh?

Well, there are various reasons. First of all, after having been a very successful journalist in Germany, I felt that something was missing in my life. So I took kind of a sabbatical in order to search for some other meaning in life than just making money, or writing stories about success and failure.

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

I traveled to India and was referred to Rajneesh by various people who I knew from Europe, whose opinions I respected. I went to the ashram in Poona in order to find out what was going on there.

I found the master a very fascinating, charismatic man who gave answers to all of the questions of our lives. This was the first thing that attracted me.

Second, I found it interesting to meet spiritually-minded people who, on the average, were not dropouts, but were well-educated. These were people between the ages of 25 and 45, who created an environment of understanding, love, and charity on a pretty high level. It was a community which lived and worked together without competition. This, for me, was something totally new, an environment created by people who were trying to express a new kind of life.

Were you initiated?

Yes, I was.

What led you away from Rajneesh and to Jesus?

In July, right as I was getting more deeply involved with the ashram, I had a very extraordinary experience. On one of those hot, humid Indian nights filled with mosquitos, I was sitting in my hotel room and reading Rabi Maharaj's book, *Death of a Guru*. Suddenly I saw a brilliantly shining being standing in the hotel room, and He said to me with a mighty voice, "I want you to become my disciple." I immediately understood that Jesus had called me, yet I really didn't know what to do with it.

I went to Rajneesh and told him what had happened to me. As I was talking to him about this experience, I could feel a kind of very warm energy or light radiating from me and I saw that Rajneesh was very irritated, and even startled as he looked at me. He was unable to speak. At that moment I could see that he was not a master like Jesus Christ, as he claims. It was at this time that I decided to become a disciple of Jesus.

How is it that you came across Rabi Maharaj's book?

My brother-in-law in Germany is a pastor, and he knows Rabi Maharaj. He said, "Since you are going to India you should know something about this man. Read this book when you have the time." So I took the book with me in my bag and eventually read it in India.

I recall you mentioning in San Diego that there were 30 followers of Rajneesh who left the ashram with you. Could you describe what happened there?

First of all, I did not immediately stop wearing the special clothing worn by the sannyasins. After I realized that Rajneesh was deceiving people by claiming to be the Jesus of our day, or God incarnate, I decided that I had to find out what he is really doing and do a lot of research before I would leave. This would enable me to write a book about my experience. So I talked to the people from a new perspective.

About six weeks later, after I'd completed my research, I came in jeans and t-shirt again. Because by this time I'd become pretty well-known in the ashram, a lot of people began to talk to me on a very personal, intimate level. Suddenly I was drawn into the role of a counselor as they asked what happened to me. So I told them of my encounter with Jesus and explained to them what I had learned in the four or five weeks that followed the encounter. This caused them to start thinking and realizing what they were into. Christians in Poona provided them with places to stay, away from the ashram, and provided some with money and help so that they could go home. So, altogether there were around 30 people that left the ashram.

Could you give us a feeling for what your experience in Poona as a sannyasin was like?

I was very amazed at the time to find that being a disciple and belonging to an alternative community felt very good. It seemed as though life in the ashram had no tension. There was no competition. We were all surrounded by fellow believers and our philosophy was that life should be playful. So the whole ashram was more or less a playful environment for people who voluntarily abandoned the world.

And from my point of view today, I realize that the reality that was created in the ashram was a false reality, because it did not cope with the reality outside. It did not question why things in the world are going as they are, and it did not want to accept the

fact that to live in reality means to struggle with the issue of being human — which means, I think, to deal with joy *and* despair. What we did was, in a way, to live a “blissed-out” life in a non-reality. I would now say that this was a deception.

Such systems are fabricated, synthetic realities which do not address the real causes of our problems in the first place and therefore, in the long run, can’t succeed in drawing a solution.

Yes, I would call it a mind-created reality which is similar to a reality experienced by people who are on drugs.

What areas of ministry does the Lord seem to be leading you into, and to what extent will this involve outreach to the followers of Rajneesh?

My experience has taught me that it is very difficult for an outsider to discern between what it means to follow the Lord in a Christian lifestyle, and to follow someone like Rajneesh, who claims to be the representative of God today. So my ministry, which I am preparing for right now, will certainly lead me to help people to understand the distinction between these “new age” religions and Christianity; to discern what it means to develop a relationship with God; and how this is different from a relationship with a master, who is only human himself.

Could you give us a brief synopsis of Rajneesh’s personal history?

Rajneesh Chandra Mohan was born on the 11th of December, 1931, in a village in central India, the eldest in a family of five sisters and seven brothers. His childhood was overshadowed by the fact that his father, an unsuccessful businessman, was often on the road. The “father figure” in Rajneesh’s life was instead occupied by his grandfather, to whom he became very attached. His grandfather died when he was seven years old. This was a very traumatic experience for young Rajneesh. From then on he felt strangely attracted to the subject of death. In his 1979 diary (which is made public), it is reported that he followed after funerals as other children would follow circuses.

Rajneesh pursued his education and in 1957 obtained a Master of Arts in Philosophy. He proceeded to teach philosophy in two universities between 1957 and 1966.

In 1966, Rajneesh resigned from his service as a teacher in order to, as he puts it, concentrate on the wish of God. He felt called to work for the spiritual regeneration of humanity, which he feels is necessary in order to survive the holocaust which he is predicting and fearing.

Rajneesh then became a “master” and called himself “Acharya”* Rajneesh, and he walked and rode a donkey around India in various states in order to teach people that they have to change their lives and turn around in order to survive.

His mission wasn’t very successful, and in 1970 he was a tired and poor man who nevertheless recognized that he possessed charisma and power. In Bombay he decided to gather people around him to whom he could teach his message. As more and more disciples flocked around him, the apartment where he lived was unable to accommodate them. Thus, in 1974 he moved to Poona, 120 miles south of Bombay, rented several houses, and founded his ashram. There he changed his name from Acharya to Bhagwan (which means God), designed orange robes and a wooden bead necklace for his disciples, and started the movement we are dealing with today.

About when did European and American seekers begin coming to Rajneesh?

There were two stages. Those who weren’t Indians — Americans and Europeans — heard of him in the beginning of the ‘70s, so in Bombay he started with a handful of disciples. By the time he moved to Poona there were about 300 people around him. Then others who lived in Europe and America at that time heard about him, either by reading books or newspaper articles. Thus, the main flow from Europe and America to India took place in the mid-’70s until the end of the ‘70s.

What are the most important concepts in Bhagwan’s philosophy?

Rajneesh is a monist, which means that he understands that the world, persons, and God are all one. There is no ultimate distinction.

Since to Rajneesh God is a *process* and not a personal being, he claims that we can experience God only by being, and not by thinking or believing. So basically he would say that we have all necessary knowledge in ourselves. What we have to seek is the place where that knowledge is buried. Reality, as we understand it, is only a pointer to this knowledge and truth.

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

So he teaches that we have to forget all of our concepts and belief systems about reality, because the most important thing is to find the nucleus within this reality which *is* true. It is a monistic belief system with gnostic* elements.

Rajneesh would describe the men and women of our age as unenlightened and ignorant because they try to understand everything by their minds. The mind is extremely important in his philosophy. He claims it is leading us away from truth, and from God.

Like Gurdjieff,** he considers the unenlightened man to be like a machine who is at war with himself, a person who is living in a world of duality. By “duality” he means the common assumption that God is someone other than oneself.

Now, he says whenever we overcome this duality, happiness and bliss will appear. This is based on the Indian doctrine of *void*, which suggests that we have to empty ourselves of all our preconceived ideas, thoughts, and patterns in order to be filled with the real truth, which is the truth of the *Self*. This doctrine of void is, as we know, foundational in Zen Buddhism, which also claims that we can be enlightened only when we first are emptied.

Third, Rajneesh believes that we can reach this enlightenment, which Hindus call *samadhi*, through sex. He teaches that sex is one of the moments in a person’s life in which he is totally insulated from the outside world and able to descend to the inner-most depth of his being.

To summarize, Rajneesh teaches his disciples to leave the world, forget about their thoughts, and seek deep down for the hidden seed, which will then unfold the truth for them. He tells his disciples that they are all buddhas, or gods, and that they are only intellectually separated from this idea. They are not separated from the reality of it — they are only separated from the idea of it, because their minds are telling them that they are not gods. Rajneesh claims that he, as the master, is the gate and the mid-wife through which a person can abandon all points of reference in his mind and merge with the truth, “as a drop in the ocean.”

Now, these teachings are typical for an Indian guru. However, Rajneesh has his own special areas of emphasis. What he demands from his people includes the following: first, one must give up his past and future. He says that past and future are irrelevant because living occurs only in the here and now.

In order to do this (and this is his second command) one must become mindless. Rajneesh believes that the way our world is organized, we will not be able to survive. This is because it is founded, as he would say, on competition, hatred, envy, and materialism. He feels that in the long run this will lead to a nuclear holocaust, and only if mankind is changing in terms of the “old man” changing into a “new man,” will the race survive. The “new man” has to be a mindless man, because only the mindless man will be able to cope with the “new age.” Thus, he says that since the ego needs to be nourished by activity, and since only passivity can empty a person, a person has to abandon his ego totally.

Fourth, all purpose must be denied. He says that no purpose can be fulfilled in life because existence is nonpurposive; it is just a play.

Fifth, the family must be forsaken. Rajneesh believes that marriage is a bondage and a chain, and that the idea of the family is rotten — it has accomplished its purpose, and can consequently be abandoned. This also means that if there are children, they belong to the community.

Sixth, he says that to worship God or to believe in a God is stupidity, because there is no God as such. There is no God who exists as a person. He also says that God has never left his address. If you seek God, he says, you cannot find him. Since the guru is a gate to God, and you know his address, you just have to come to the guru. Consequently, this point would mean that we need to replace God with the guru.

The final point, which is the culmination of his philosophy, is that one must be God himself, because he has a divine spark within that he must discover. Whenever one would be bothered by guilt or sin, Rajneesh would say that he needs to realize that nobody is a sinner because, being God, we have salvation in us. We have the divine potential, and should therefore not bother ourselves about sin, but become gods ourselves.

Shankara, who developed the philosophy that Rajneesh is promoting, gave a place in his system for devotion to a personal God on the road to ultimate union. But it sounds as though Rajneesh is attacking devotion to a personal God on any level, yet it sounds as though he is encouraging devotion to himself at the same time. Is that correct? Does he encourage devotion and worship of himself?

He wouldn't necessarily say, "Worship me," yet the whole ashram movement is certainly a devotion to him. He accomplishes things in a very subtle manner. His way of getting people to attend to him is by guiding their minds into a state of total disorientation, where after some time they feel they need him so desperately that they would rather worship him than try to cope with life without him. So he would not *ask* for personal devotion, but in effect what he is doing secures exactly that.

Do you feel that he has a psychological need for this kind of attention and devotion?

Yes, definitely. He speaks very often of people who suffered from psychological deficiencies like his. He suffered from feelings of inferiority throughout his life, and talks very often about people like Adolf Hitler, Alexander the Great, and Joseph Stalin, who had similar problems. They coped with this complex as he does by an attitude of superiority.

Does he recognize that he himself has these kinds of characteristics?

Most probably not. When he talks about these people, he makes fun of them because he feels that they were not very successful in their missions. He feels that he has included a spiritual dimension that they did not attain, that his approach is the ultimate approach, and that therefore all of the power trips they were into can therefore be abandoned. Basically, what he is doing is the same thing on a different level, which makes it more difficult for people to see.

Do you believe that he has consciously designed his program in such a way as to evoke psychological dependency upon him from his followers?

Yes, I would say so. For example, he uses an old Zen saying, "If you meet Buddha on the way, kill him." I understand this to mean that a disciple chooses a master for a period of time in order to grow, and when he becomes mature he should part from him. If this former disciple should meet the master later on, it would be better to kill him before the master could speak. Rajneesh always says, "Before you would start talking to me, I would have killed you already." So he is setting up a situation where there is no way to make it spiritually without him.

And a basic factor which needs to be understood about Rajneesh is that, unlike other masters, he has not yet settled upon a final way to help people find enlightenment. It has yet to be discovered. He has not yet mapped out how people can be guided to enlightenment, so he needs his followers for purposes of experimentation. He has to make his people dependent on him because he needs them, not just to satisfy his egoistic needs, but to experiment, to develop what he calls "the Psychology of the Buddha"; a way which helps people to become enlightened like a manual helps them to repair a car.

Does he feel that he is the singularly most important guru on the earth? Does he have a sense of mission to bring enlightenment to this age?

Yes. He feels that there have been many attempts in history to discover how the process of enlightenment can be readily effected. He very often quotes Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. He feels that these two were on the edge of figuring out how this can be performed. Now, they had a falling out, and didn't finish their work. He feels that he is Gurdjieff and Ouspensky in one. He believes that he is the Buddha of our time — the only living master who will be able to guide people to enlightenment — and that this enlightenment will be the only way humanity can survive the holocaust.

Does he consider himself an avatar, an incarnation of God?

Yes, he considers himself an incarnation of God in the role of Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mahavira* and others.

What is his attitude toward other popular swamis or gurus such as Sri Sri and Muktananda and Sai Baba?

He considers them to be unsuccessful imitations of a true master. They try to do their job, but he certainly thinks that he is the only one who has the real, true mission. He makes fun of both of them.

What is his view of Jesus and the Bible?

He claims to respect and love Jesus, because he feels that Jesus had a very important mission on earth which, unfortunately, nobody understood. He draws parallels between his life and that of Jesus because he feels that besides his 250,000 followers, the world is not really appreciating and understanding him.

His view of the Bible is very different. He selects certain parables and sayings of Jesus and of the Bible to quote in his teachings. But he is using them to support a gnostic, or Hinduistic, eastern world view. When quoting Jesus, he most frequently quotes the pseudo-gospel of Thomas, which has gnostic overtones.

You have mentioned that Bhagwan disowns his own teachings and says, “Don’t hold me to what I said yesterday because I might contradict myself today.”

Yes, he believes that words as well as thoughts cannot describe reality or truth, and thus we should not stick to words. So he tells his disciples not to cling to his words, but rather to use them as a device for growth. His followers, as you can imagine, are sometimes very irritated by hearing a particular version of a story one day, and the next day a contradiction of it.

But basically, he feels that to be a growing person one must not cling to any words, for the state of a growing human being necessitates not knowing where one is at or who one is. One of the basic illustrations he uses is that one has to be like a cloud in the sky, being thrown back and forth by the wind. Then one has a chance to grow. As long as one would cling to any theory, system, thoughts, or words, he would stop growing, and would hinder himself from discovering life.

The problem with that is that all along they are clinging to the assumption that the monistic world view is the correct belief, and they are applying their entire lives to pursuing the implications of that belief.

Yes. This is what he thinks and believes and he is, therefore, very limited.

Bhagwan constantly talks about love. Can you give us an idea of what this word means to him, and what love turns out to mean experientially among the sannyasins?

I would almost say that love is the second most frequently used word in the ashram. His teachings, his newsletters, everything starts and ends with the word “love.” Yet, it’s just an empty word. It is used in order to pretend something is there which is not. There is an element of caring within the ashram; people care for each other because they fulfill the need of community for each other. But one of the points of my criticism is that I never really found that people cared in a deep sense. It’s very superficial. So “love” is used as a label to cover up a superficiality which shows that the whole system is profane rather than loving.

Everybody is really very hedonistic in that they are seeking their own fulfillment, and part of that fulfillment is to be in a caring atmosphere. But as far as having a commitment to each other to a point of self-sacrifice, that is probably quite lacking there.

Right. Rajneesh would even instruct his followers when they would have a choice between a situation where they could help each other, or a situation in which they could do something for themselves, that they should choose themselves.

An example of this would be when women became pregnant (which, of course, happens very often in the ashram). They are advised to either abort, or if they are among Rajneesh’s closer disciples, to get sterilized. The rationale he offers for this is that all the energy you have is needed for your personal growth, so you should not share your energy with even a child or your partner. It should all be used for yourself.

Have you seen any examples of sannyasins being “blissed-out” to the extent of being completely incapable of showing a proper concern when someone else is suffering or being in any way injured or abused?

Yes. I had various experiences myself and, I have to admit, was in a state of being “blissed-out,” too. Let me give you a few cases as examples.

The ashram was guarded very heavily by strong Germans, and very often I saw that beggars or Indian people came to the ashram in order to get help, food, or alms. They were always kicked out in a very rough manner. Nobody would feel bad about it. On the contrary, most people felt it was justified because they were not “selected” or “elected.” Bhagwan even states that only rich people can be enlightened.

Second, I once observed one of the group leaders take a Canadian woman who was mourning over the death of her parents and force her to have sexual intercourse with him in front of the group. Nobody reacted as though this was something unusual. On the contrary, especially after the group leader told her all she needed was sex, people were very satisfied with it.

But more serious are cases of violence and rape which occurred very often in the ashram. I was a witness of an event where a girl was raped, and I tried to intervene with two Swiss people. We were rejected by the group leader because he said it was not our business, and in any case, she needed it.

In general, the blissed-out state is the common state in the ashram. It seems as if these people are always floating two feet above the ground.

So you would view the attainment of this bliss as being a sort of dehumanizing, desensitizing process?

Definitely. I would say it is dehumanizing in two ways.

First of all, a person fails to properly experience what is going on in his environment and is not sensitive to react as a human being should.

Additionally, it is dehumanizing in the sense of how it affects a person's life. He is somewhat like a puppet, almost an apathetic creature who is just trying to satisfy his basic needs while the rest of his energy is being used to glorify the master.

It seems like the end result of Bhagwan's instruction to "leave your minds at the gate" is that he ends up becoming the effective mind of the entire ashram. It is he who is doing the thinking. He is taking that function — that necessary capacity of humanness — away from the sannyasins.

Yes. He is the super-mind, the one who knows. He always stated this very clearly when he used to lecture every morning for 1½ hours. He would say to his disciples, "Whatever you do is wrong." This leads people to the point where they want to give up thinking, because it is too much to always be wrong. But on the other hand, he tells them, "Whenever you let me enter your lives, I will do the work which is needed." So he asks these people to give up, to surrender totally to his mind, that the work of enlightenment can be done.

So despite the intellectual attractiveness of what he has put together, and the fact that many thinkers are drawn to him, we are apparently dealing with a cult situation with grave potential for devastation because people are handing their minds over to someone who, as you have described, has definite schizophrenic tendencies.

I know psychiatrists who have diagnosed in Rajneesh a paranoid, schizophrenic psychological condition which can be traced back to his childhood and his behavior ever since.

An interesting point concerning these intellectuals that are drawn to him is that I think most of them have also had some traumatic experiences, and thus cannot bridge the gap between their vocational and emotional lives. They may have schizoid tendencies themselves.

Rajneesh, by his therapies, is helping them to make contact with themselves in ways that would be too painful on their own. Also, Rajneesh's entertaining way of teaching and lecturing appeals to many intellectuals.

The big potential for a disastrous development lies firmly in the fact that he needs to have more and more followers in order to feed his ego.

Second, he has promised his disciples to fulfill his mission, so he feels committed. And since he is ailing and becoming more and more sick, he feels pressured to go on and accomplish his mission.

Third, I would think that as the pressure from the outside is increasing, he will create a "closed shop" situation in Oregon where he will try to perform what he has promised. I fear that this will end in disaster.

Could you describe what his physical problems are?

The Rajneesh Meditation Center in Montclair, New Jersey, published a state ment that "he is suffering from severe allergic and digestive disorders, which include asthma and diabetes complicated with the dislocation of two lumbar discs."

Is it true that since January of 1979, Rajneesh has forbidden all violence in the therapies?

I have a copy of the press release that says that violence is forbidden. This was a reaction to complaints from the outside by parents and others.

Yet, violence did not cease within the groups. On the contrary, the only thing that really was changed was that in the well-known encounter group, people did not fight without protective covering. They now were to have boxing gloves, cushion-covered sticks, and so forth. The idea was to diminish the effects of fighting, but the fighting itself didn't stop at all.

So to your knowledge, is the fighting continuing to this day?

I don't know what is happening today I only have reports from people who are attending courses in America. There is not as much violence going on in terms of beating each other, but the general tendency in the group is to act out suppressed emotions and feelings which can sometimes only be expressed by becoming violent, or by using violent sexual means. This *is* going on, and I would say that only some patterns have changed, but not the basic philosophy which is behind it.

Why are people attracted to Rajneesh?

Well, besides his teachings that are attracting some people who have not found answers to their questions in our society and conventional belief systems, I think the major attraction is for people who are suffering from various emotional disturbances. After spending hundreds or thousands of dollars on various therapies without being cured, they find that the therapy techniques combined with eastern meditation techniques that Rajneesh is using are very effective.

Besides this, most of his group leaders are psychic. Even if somebody does not intend to join Rajneesh at first, things can quickly change if he is told in workshops what his basic problems are so that within one or two days, he is seemingly resolving problems he has suffered from for years. This is very convincing for the person, and also for the onlookers.

Now, what these people do not realize is that this instant opening of a person leads to an injury which has two effects.

First of all, it is true that the problem that the person is suffering from is being hit or reached, but it is not being worked through. As a result, the person is opened and is now extremely vulnerable to the influence of Rajneesh. They are open for surrender to him.

Second, by this opening process, a lot of people regress to a childhood state where they stay and cannot come back anymore. This may lead to a blissful state of being, but not to the cure of a neurotic psychological structure or an emotional problem. As this blissful state of being is one of the goals of the movement, the process is considered a success.

I would say that the attraction is that people who have tried to change a certain pattern of their lives for years are totally changed, sometimes within a weekend workshop, and they feel that this cannot happen in normal society. What they assume is that some magic or spiritual power has done this job and, of course, Rajneesh claims the credit for it.

So the eclectic techniques, the charisma of Rajneesh, the philosophy, and no doubt the sexual activity and the nudity, all contribute to the popularity of Rajneesh. Would there be any other things that come to your mind?

We didn't talk very much about the sexual activity. Rajneesh is in favor of liberated sex.

Rajneesh teaches that enlightenment can be reached when the channel between the sex center and the crown chakra,* which is on top of the head, is opened. Then the energy called *kundalini* can flow freely through and enlighten the person. Now, whatever helps to free this channel from any emotional or mental blocks is being used. So liberated sex is one of the tools being used to open this channel.

Another tool is hyperventilation, in order to create an energy push up the channel, and a third tool is the deprivation tank. As a fourth tool, there were plans to have people dive down into the ocean. The idea was to make them dive 30 or 40 feet without any oxygen and provide the oxygen to them down on the bottom of the ocean. By so doing, they would have had to go through a fearful near-death situation in order to become enlightened.

Basically, he believes that enlightenment can be accomplished by this kind of physical change, by opening this channel from the sex center to the crown chakra.

The kind of free sex promoted by Rajneesh is invariably going to result in a lot of psychological damage. Did you see evidence of this in Poona — people who were psychologically injured as a result?

Well, I found that people who came from the normal structure of family life felt very strange. I found especially that vulnerable, sensitive women very often seemed lost. The feeling I got talking to them after they had attended certain workshops was that they had lost a certain innocence, the innocence of the soul, and they seemed to look like injured creatures who had lost a part of their essence.

This was the general pattern, I found, of people who were not emotionally strong enough to cope with the events of the ashram. They fell into an apathetic state of sadness, a state of not really knowing where they were anymore. The psychological impact of living this kind of life made people look and act as if they had lost part of their identities.

Does Bhagwan encourage the development of “siddhis” or psychic powers? Does he manifest them himself?

He has courses in hypnotherapy and parapsychology. He offers a lot of courses in different meditation techniques which should help people develop these powers because he considers the psychic realm to be the ultimate realm which we can reach as human beings. He certainly has psychic powers himself, because when he initiated people he was amazingly clear. He knew very much about their characters, their shortcomings, and their personality patterns. When he initiated them and explained their new Indian names to them, he would normally “read” the person and tell him how his new name would help him to overcome his shortcomings. He normally had not seen the person before, so he has psychic powers.

In your San Diego lecture you stated that Rajneesh is a drug. Could you describe for our readers what you mean by this?

I think Rajneesh is serving the same purpose as a drug. A drug helps a person to escape from the reality he is living in, and Rajneesh is doing exactly this. He helps them to leave the life situations where they have to confront their own realities, struggle with them, make up their minds, and so on. He helps them to “snap out,” to leave their reality, and he creates exactly the same blissed-out and non-real state a drug would normally create. This is the reason why I consider him a drug.

His meditation techniques and the other techniques I described are producing energy rushes which have effects that are similar to those of drugs. They are taking energy away from the nervous system, giving the people a certain high, and this creates (without taking drugs) a blissful state similar to being on a “trip.” And this happens without going through the “down” felt afterwards by people who take drugs. The only down they feel is that they get more tired, and they need extra sleep, but they don't have any withdrawals.

Also, with respect to comparing ashram life to the drug experience, there's the element of psychological dependency in order to cope with and face life.

This is very noticeable. People who have been initiated by him feel that by the initiation he has opened the “third eye” in them, and that his energy, which is considered to be the cosmic, psychic energy, has rushed through them. However, after six months or so, they need a new energy rush from the master. So it's a dependency not only in terms of his being the teacher and master who is needed in order to grow, but his energy is also needed to survive. So in terms of what people feel, he is a drug.

In the film *Ashram*, they had a scene of an “energy darshan” where he would apply his thumb and forefingers to the initiates' foreheads, and they would be “zapped” with the “energy” and go into all kinds of ecstasy. Apparently, he is the channel through which this energy is transmitted. So if they need a revitalization of this energy, they are dependent on him for it, or at least on someone who he has empowered to act as his representative.

That is correct.

In line with this thought, Wolfgang Dobrowolny, who produced *Ashram*, has said: “It's very easy to get into a movement, and it's very difficult to get out.” Would you comment on how this is true with the Rajneesh cult?

There are two factors, one of which is psychological. Psychologically, it is very difficult for somebody who has been inside the ashram to go back into reality, because reality is hard to face afterwards. People have lost their sense for reality and they have lost their defense mechanisms.

But second, somebody who wanted to leave voluntarily would have to have the insight to leave, Rajneesh would normally try to keep him, not necessarily by physical force, but by seducing him, either through girls, or offering him all kinds of positions

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

within the ashram. Yet, when somebody really wants to leave, he or she can go. The problem is that the person normally runs into difficulties because he would have to learn to cope with reality again.

In seeking to communicate with sannyasins from the Christian stand point, there is the obvious difficulty of their not wanting to use their minds, not wanting to think objectively about what they are experiencing. The more they have progressed within the movement, the more difficult this becomes. Are there any means of approaching them in which one can get them to think critically about what they are experiencing, and to look objectively at what Rajneesh is doing to them and to others?

I found by working with people who wanted to get out that any logical or rational argument does not help at first.

The approach that I have found useful is to create an emotional situation, such as helping them to recall a childhood situation in the family, or a situation where they felt they needed privacy (which they don't have in the ashram), or a situation where they helped others. I have advised parents and friends to recreate a situation where they showed charity to others. Reliving this normally creates an emotional outburst, a flashback of a previous experience, which is called "snapping back."

After this I have found that I can talk to them on a rational level again, and most of them shake their heads as if to say, "I must have been in a long, long dream."

So one has to first create a situation where they can feel something very deeply that they felt before joining the movement, in order to help them to go back and become whole again. Then let them ask questions, because normally they say, "Where am I? What was happening?" and they have many questions. Then one can come with a message.

The best approach is not to criticize at first what Rajneesh was doing, but to go through the differences between his teaching and that of Jesus Christ point-by-point and show the ways in which the teachings of both cope with reality. In this way one can help people make up their minds by themselves, and not impose a certain belief system on them.

So you find criticizing Rajneesh or coming against his philosophy in a direct manner is not effective?

Not in the first attempt, because one has to realize that Rajneesh was, in effect, the foundation of their lives, and his belief system was their structure of reference. So if one starts stripping his foundation off of them, it could be considered dangerous, and no sannyasin would be likely to go for it.

To criticize Rajneesh and his system can be left to the man or woman who comes out, because he or she will find out sooner or later what has happened. If this critical attitude is not appearing two or three weeks after the person has left the movement, it will be important to initiate criticism, but not at first.

What are the needs of an individual coming out of involvement with this cult?

It is very important that the family and friends create a very strong and loving support system. It is important that somebody who has been with Rajneesh not only feels supported, loved, and wanted by family and friends, but *needed* as well. They need to feel that they have not only been missing something, but that they've been *missed*.

A second important point I've found is that one of the reasons why people leave their families and join Rajneesh is because their parents and friends very often pretended that everything was all right, and nobody had a problem. So parents, family members, and friends must share their problems in dealing with life, and their struggles in coping with reality, to show that they are human too. It is important that somebody who comes out realizes that to be human means to be imperfect. It means to have problems and not always know how to resolve them.

Above all, not only the sannyasins but also their families and friends must realize that our problems can only be ultimately resolved through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He has the answers that we so often lack.