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## BHAGWAN SHREE RAJNEESH

### a New Man for all seasons

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by

Charles Newman

Religion is a neglected phenomenon for most people today. Our experience of the organised religions show them to be political organisations using theological language, and as such, to be hollow shams, riddled with lies and hypocrisy. Their terrible emptiness has so conditioned us that to even mention words like God, Truth, and Grace, is enough to make us yawn and turn to the other channel. If we are really pushed, then we will defend the beliefs of our parents, calling them 'our religion', but knowing them to be an embarrassing collection of superstitious nonsense utterly out of place in any modern society.

Religion has faded from our lives because it is all talk and no action: it doesn't deliver the goods, and hasn't been able to for a very long time. Organised religions have robbed us of our spiritual dimension by having debased and devalued it with their worthless slogans, centred around fear-of-hell and greed-for-heaven, for many centuries. Nietzsche told us long ago that "God is dead!" And science finally nailed His coffin shut. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh goes even further, he tells us that, "God was never alive. He is the greatest fiction that never lived".

Who is Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh? He is an enlightened master, at present living in Poona, India. He attained enlightenment on 21 March 1953 and since then has devoted his entire life to the task of bringing modern man into an experiential, harmonious relationship with existence. His influence in the world of religion, philosophy and psychology is immense, and his words and ideas are so powerfully resonant that they shake the very foundations of established power structures; political, scientific, ideological, theological or cosmological.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh has been described by Tom Robbins as "The most dangerous man since Jesus". Tom Robbins is a famous author from the U.S.A. and the man he is talking about is perhaps the most controversial, religious genius in the world today.

We have been conditioned to believe that all great religious innovators belong to the past; scriptures must be ancient, and leaders must be dead. We prefer our spiritual geniuses to be dead, the longer the better; that way they are much less threatening. A living enlightened master is a tremendously potent catalyst for change, both in ourselves and in our society, and the powers which rule us, those

entrenched guardians of the status quo, can feel his presence, and they tremble.

It is my opinion that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is a master of the same status as Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tzu or Pythagoras. His vision is to raise the consciousness of mankind beyond the barbaric, biological endgame in which civilisation finds itself today, into the next stage of human evolution; from Homo Sapiens to Homo Novus . . . the New Man.

He is the living embodiment of his vision; seeing him, being in his presence, one experiences some of the vast possibilities available to those who can bring their consciousness to the same peak. He has the courage and vision from which great changes stem. He has the mysterious quality, the charisma, which total individualisation brings. It is these qualities which attract many sincere seekers to him, and attract the opposition of the powerful. He is indeed a dangerous man; he can waken ordinary men and women to their inner richness, to immense inner resources of intelligence, clarity, and freedom, as he has done himself. The New Man is awakened man; awakened from his own unconsciousness which prevents him from seeing the depths to which our cultures have sunk.

Humankind is at a critical stage. We are facing destruction from many sides - all self-inflicted: overpopulation and starvation; ecological breakdown in the atmosphere, the soil, and the oceans; AIDS, a plague which is only now gathering its deadly momentum; nuclear stock-

piles which can kill each man, woman and child seven times over! If ever there was a time when humanity needed to change dramatically, it is surely now.

The old ways of thinking have brought us to the brink of the abyss. Homo Sapiens is looking with horror into his future. He has come to the end of the road. We have crushed and poisoned our beautiful planet with our greed and blind groping for power. Now is the time to wake up to ourselves, for a new consciousness to arise; for a new man to be born. And the man who has been showing us where we are headed and how we can change the direction is Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

All the great masters from the past were seen to be a threat to the society into which they chose to be born; Moses was a revolutionary who gave the Jewish people their freedom from slavery in Egypt; Buddha scoured the ancient traditions of Hinduism of all the superstitions and magical practices, bringing a whole, new way of consciousness to the East; Jesus came to cleanse Judaic religion from the politics and power-seeking that went on in the name of God. These masters worked to save their culture and their society. Now the problem is much greater; Mankind itself is facing a global suicide, and old methods, and old solutions cannot help. There is a need for a global change otherwise we will perish. It is shatteringly clear that unless we wake up now, there may well be no tomorrow.

Bhagwan's ways to awaken us are based on the premise that each human being is born with the innate capacity to attain to his own inner godliness, his enlightenment. He works in multi-dimensional ways to bring us in touch with our conditioning, to de-automatise us. Using a variety of meditation techniques, some traditional, some entirely orchestrated for our modern minds, he sharpens our awareness to the state wherein we can see our own barriers to understanding.

He has attracted the ablest therapists from the Human Potential movement and using their methods, with unique variations of his own, he encourages his followers to explore their inner world, to experience the incredible treasures simply waiting for the asking. Through these techniques, he gives us the experience of a whole new way of being, a new way of being alive; joyful, juicy, and loving.

Each day he gives daily discourses morning and evening, spontaneously dealing with both personal questions and world problems. He always supports and reinforces the essential while clearly outlining the inessential in our search. His way is that of the rebel, the individual, the intelligent enquirer who refuses to accept other people's answers, and who pursues his own enquiry until his personal experience shows him the irrefutable truth.

Speaking personally, Bhagwan has shown me that the quality of religiousness has nothing to do with the established pathways known as "religions". He has shown me that

the process of self-discovery can be delicious, filled with laughter and delight. For Bhagwan, seriousness is a dis-ease which can so easily put out the tiny spark of awakening which barely penetrates the darkness of our unknowing. He has no time for life-negative attitudes and the long faces that accompany them. His is the way of reverence-for-life, an enjoyment of all that life has to offer, with gratitude to existence for the sheer joy that it brings. That is a hint of Bhagwan's religiousness. And that joy is not a false or forced thing, it bubbles up spontaneously when life becomes full to overflowing. Perhaps that is another reason why traditional religions oppose him; Bhagwan has made the "vale of tears" approach seem neurotically unnecessary. Who needs the guilt of centuries laid on your back for an original sin which doesn't seem such a big deal anyway? His whole message is to dissolve your guilt; it is only a priest's device to stoke up your repressions while feeding your greed for those white-hot temptations which will be satiated beyond your wildest dreams in some after-life.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is an enlightened master; his whole being is his message. Simply being in his presence can evoke another, higher level of consciousness in you if you are available to him. He has done it for many. He has done it for me. But he does not, indeed cannot, do anything against your will. He is the well; if your thirst is enough, then you will drink.

There are many, who for reasons of their own, want to destroy or minimise Bhagwan's work; some are

disaffected followers, disappointed that their expectations were not met; some are world-weary cynics who believe that the wasteland they have created of their own lives are a tribute to their intelligence; others are the anonymous, but powerful, vested interests who recognise Bhagwan's work as a threat to their ambition and manipulation. All of these add up to an organised attempt to promote endarkenment rather than enlightenment. As if our world was not dark enough already!

Hugh Milne is an example of the classic disaffected follower. He has written a bitter and dishonest book. He is an ex-disciple clearly floundering and lost, peddling his salacious stories to the highest bidder. Using his book as a standpoint to try and understand the phenomenon we know as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is like trying to gather information about Great Britain using the revelations of Kim Philby, or Burgess and Maclean. That Milne has an axe to grind is obvious, but how far he is willing to bend the truth and distort matters of public record in order to justify his view, needs careful consideration before taking what he says as anything more than petulant gossip.

When Bhagwan was in America, his secretary, Ma Anand Sheela and a small number of her friends, misused the trust placed in them by Bhagwan and became involved in criminal activity. It is a matter of record that when Bhagwan came to know of Sheela's criminal acts, he denounced her and invited in the police agencies, telling all sannyasins to cooperate fully. He knew well that the governmental agencies wanted

to destroy the commune - it was apparent to everyone through their pattern of continual bureaucratic harassment and delaying tactics. (See Dell Murphy's book, *The Rajneesh Story*, Linwood Press.

Each day, Bhagwan held a press conference open to any journalist who wanted to come, and they came from all over the world. This is scarcely the action of a man with something to hide. The government agencies did use the opportunity to break up the commune. After they repeatedly refused to interview Bhagwan for his evidence, it became clear that their actions were politically motivated. This was confirmed at the time of Sheela's trial in a statement given by U.S. assistant attorney Turner in answer to a question by journalists as to why Bhagwan was not put in jail in place of Sheela.

Turner gave three objectives behind the actions of the governmental agencies, and the order he gave them is as revealing as their substance; he stated that:

1. The main objective was to destroy the commune at Rajneeshpuram, which would be best achieved by removing Bhagwan from America.
2. The second objective was to avoid making Bhagwan a martyr.
3. There was no evidence (!) found against the Bhagwan despite exhaustive enquiries by police agencies on the two continents where he had lived, namely India and America.

These words simply mean that Bhagwan is innocent of any crimes.

Despite Sheila giving evidence, and her close associates corroborating her story, even though she had secretly taped her conversations with Bhagwan and made them all available to the police as part of her plea bargaining, there was still no evidence that Bhagwan had any part in their crimes.

Despite the overwhelming fact of Bhagwan's innocence, there seems to be an ugly, undercover attempt to denigrate his tremendous reputation throughout the world. The method is largely through the circulation of untrue and distorted facts about him and his work. Many disaffected followers speak of being approached by secret agents to help smear Bhagwan with lurid tales of their lives as sannyasins. Most have not stooped so low, but for reasons best known to himself, Milne lent himself and his "first-hand" experiences to this twentieth century equivalent of the crucifixion.

Bhagwan left America after his lawyers advised him that his life was at risk if he stayed to face the charges ranged against him by the immigration department. Just one hour before being finally released, after a twelve day ordeal in prisons and chains, a bomb was discovered in the Portland maximum security jail where he was being kept. Everybody was evacuated, except Bhagwan, who was kept inside.

Even after he left America, the same politicians who wanted him removed, presumably threatened various governments to prevent Bhagwan from being allowed to stay in their countries. He was arrested and thrown out of Crete in February

86, after Greek Orthodox archbishops threatened to dynamite the house he was staying. In Switzerland, his 7-day visa was cancelled on arrival, having been declared "persona non grata because of immigration offences in the U.S.A.". In Sweden, he was met by armed police and told that he "is a threat to national security". In England, Bhagwan was not even allowed to stay overnight in the first-class lounge while the pilots of his jet rested. Instead, he and his companions were locked up overnight in a dirty cell crowded with African and Asian refugees. They flew to Ireland where they were allowed to stay for a few days before police came and asked them to leave the country. Canada refused permission even for Bhagwan's plane to be refuelled on its flight to Antigua.

Meanwhile Antigua withdrew its permission for him to go there. Holland refused to allow him even a tourist visa. Germany had already passed a "preventive decree" not allow Bhagwan to enter their country. In Italy, his application for a tourist visa was kept on file for one year before they refused on the grounds that his application was out of date and needed to be renewed. Uruguay invited him with an offer of possible permanent residence. But pressure was applied in the form of telexes containing "secret diplomatic information" from "anonymous sources" mentioning "Rumours of drug smuggling and prostitution". The same misinformation had preceded Bhagwan in all the countries he had named as his destination.

On May 14, 1986, the government of Uruguay wanted to announce at a press conference that Bhagwan had been granted permanent residence there. That night, Sanguinetti, the president of Uruguay, received a call from Washington D.C. telling him that current U.S. loans of \$6 billion will be called in, and no future loans given if the offer or residence was made. Bhagwan had to leave Uruguay on June 18. The very next day, Sanguinetti and Ronald Reagan announced from Washington, a new loan to Uruguay of \$150 million. Bhagwan flew to Jamaica on a ten-day visa; while his plane was still on the landing strip, a U.S. military jet landed and two civilians were seen to emerge carrying diplomatic bags. The next morning, the visas of the people in Bhagwan's party were cancelled. Bhagwan is now in Poona, India, after having amply demonstrated the rights of the individual to travel freely.

A modern Nostradamus scholar, John Hogue, has an intriguing reference to Bhagwan in his fast-selling book. (Nostradamus and the Millennium, published by Doubleday, U.S.A.). After accurately predicting the current trend to annihilation, Nostradamus has predicted that a new religious consciousness would arise and flower before the end of this century, which, if it leads to a change of world consciousness, would bring one thousand years of peace in this planet. He called it "The Age of Truth", where science and religion would merge into a higher consciousness.

The leader of this new religiousness, according to Nostradamus, would be

a "Man from Asia who will also be at home in Europe". "A teacher who will travel widely in his desire to infuriate". A man who will shake up the established order and be outlawed. He would be charged with destroying the established religions, using ornate speeches'. And all other religions would unite against him and his 'red ones'. Finally, his name will be associated with the moon, and his religion associated with birds.

Hogue discusses ten candidates for this role of new religious leader: Swami Paramahansa Yogananda, Meher Baba, Swami Prabhupada, L. Ron Hubbard, J. Krishnamurti, Swami Satya Sai Baba, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Da Free John, and Swami Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Of them all, he notes, only "Rajneesh seems to match all the clues". He draws a chart to simplify the case:

He was born and raised in India, where he is currently living. He has travelled extensively in the West where most of his followers, who wear red, live. The symbol of his religiousness is two flying birds and his name means 'full moon'.

He certainly seems to have the desire to infuriate, how else to describe his admittedly ornate speeches which vehemently attack not only the established religions, but all vested interests. He has been outlawed, literally, from twenty-two countries in the Western world, and is frequently spoken against by other religious leaders (Shankaracharya Swarcopanand Saraswati's recent press statement that 'Rajneesh posed a kind of danger to

society that was unprecedented in India's history').

Dell Murphy summarizes in this way, "people all over the world are trying to silence the Bhagwan, but if they silence him, what will they gain? You can destroy a man more easily than destroy an idea. And you can deny the truth, or hide it, or turn your back on it, but you cannot destroy it".

Speaking personally, I have found Bhagwan to be a lighthouse in a

world full of storms and darkness. It is easy to follow the fleet, but for some of us, there is a need to know who we are, where we are going, and whether this vast human flotilla is not just sailing on a voyage of futility. Being with Bhagwan, I have felt my soul take flight on the journey it has been seeking for eternity. I can only give him my gratitude for showing me a new life full of laughter, delight and overflowing juiciness.

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*Charles Newman is known as Devageet and has been Bhagwan's dentist for many years.*

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