
THE FALL OF THE LIGHT-BEARER

by

David Boadella

I joined the Rajneesh movement in April 1987 because I was attracted by its dynamic presentation of deep spiritual teachings linked to radical therapeutic methods for deepening contact with our essential energy and life. Bhagwan, the enlightened one, the light-bearer, with his luminous eyes, and his magnetic voice, was, it seemed, a channel for a high teaching that both spiritualised sex, and somaticised spirituality.

The day I received my sannyas name, I also received by the same post a letter from Dick Price, the director of the Esalen Institute, resigning from the Rajneesh movement after witnessing brutality in the encounter groups in Poona.

I decided that Dick Price was biased, and lacked, as Bhagwan told him, "objective compassion".

For three years I tried to discount the many personal stories that I learned from friends of mine returning from Poona, who reported experiences suggesting Dick Price was correct. Instead of "objective compassion", the Rajneesh movement had another face, a face of singular lack of compassion which

condoned what came to be known as "the Poona homers:- rape, disguised as therapy; violence, bone-breaking presented as good for the soul; prostitution, and drug-running encouraged by leading members of the Ashram as sources of income for Sannyasins who wished to stay at the commune.

All these examples of corruption and degeneration in a promising new movement were carefully researched and documented by me in an article called "Violence in Therapy" published in January 1980 (Energy & Character Vol 11, no.1). I chose to remain a Sannyasin for a further fifteen months so that my criticism would come from the inside. At that time, I believed Bhagwan to be dissociated from these examples of fascistic behaviour. God, I believed, could not behave like Hitler.

In April 1981, I resigned from the Rajneesh movement. I wrote Bhagwan a brief postcard which said "Dear Bhagwan, I decided to surrender. I surrender sannyas". I thanked him nevertheless for the enjoyment I had received from his presentation of the world's greatest spiritual writings.

when the Ashram in Poona collapsed later that year, and Rajneesh left India secretly, to move to America, I followed the development of his new commune at Oregon. It became clear that high teaching no longer flowed through Rajneesh. When he broke his three year vow of silence, it was first to answer some of the legal accusations against him that were later to lead to his arrest, trial and conviction for various corrupt political practices, all typically American. When Sheelah brought in the machine guns and turned the intended ecological miracle of Rajneeshpuram into what Milne in his book THE GOD THAT FALLS represent as becoming more and more a hierarchically dominated slave-camp, was Bhagwan responsible or not?

Like Nixon, like Reagan, he blamed his subordinates, and claimed he had been falsely served and misinformed. His omniscience was cracking. The movement he led was "unknowingly" to him, being directed along fascist pathways by a woman later to be sentenced for attempted murder and mass-poisoning, a paranoid lady whom Rajneesh had selected as his sole mouthpiece and executive arm, for three years.

How could this be reconciled with enlightenment?

Rajneesh was caught trying to flee the country, for a second time, on an Air Rajneesh plane. Asked by the US police where he was going, he replied that he had no idea the plane was going to Bermuda since he was not the pilot and was asleep at the time.

Bhagwan preached the unity of the opposites, and he practised the range of skills required to run both heaven and hell. His followers presented him as a Master of Paradox and Contradiction. He turned out to be the guru of crooks, and the crook of gurus.

The high teaching of tantric sexuality became distorted into a licence for orgiastic sexuality and for the splitting of heart feelings from sexual drive which is the opposite of tantra. When Aids broke out at Oregon, Rajneesh was quick to develop the idea of having a body-guard of Aids victims who could frighten away potential enemies.

All his excesses were, and still are, justified by those identified with their Master, as teaching devices beyond criticism, since Bhagwan was above ordinary men and saw the world from his enlightened plane.

Bhagwan however was fixing his extraordinary state of consciousness by ordinary means. He tranquilised his anxiety states with daily doses of valium, and according to persistent rumours, was artificially expanding his heart chakra with the new wonder-drug 'ecstasy' (or ADMA).

When enlightenment can be obtained over a chemists' counter, it ceases to be the monopoly of one man. Prominent sannyasins were pronounced to be enlightened. It looked to one sannyasin (Swami Srajan, from Gottingen, in a letter to the Rajneesh Times) more like a 'spiritual syphilis'.

When Ananda Teertha, the former director of Quaesitor (as Paul

Lowe), the leader of the encounter group, and the westerner who did more than anyone to build Rajneesh into a world figure, used his 'enlightenment', in early 1986, to give up sannyas and quietly distance himself from the Rajneesh movement, Bhagwan denounced him as a traitor, and announced that he himself had now passed "beyond enlightenment".

In his book on Dynamic Meditation, Rajneesh wrote that his path was a sword's edge: on one side lay enlightenment, on the other madness. Was Bhagwan schizophrenic, combining a visionary mysticism with a worldly ungroundedness? Did he carry the heart of a child and the mind of a philosopher in the body of a man totally ungrounded in the practical affairs of the world? It seems not. Bhagwan must be responsible for the movement he created and destroyed, for the promises he gave and broke, for the truths he taught, and the lies he told, for the compassion he preached and the ruthless misuse of human beings he often practised. These are the hallmarks not of a schizophrenic, but of a psychopathic personality, a great seducer of people, who could use high spiritual teachings and practices as a lure to bring large numbers of people into an organisation that could promote his personality cult, and a multi million dollar industry, as well as a private

army to protect his person and his wealth. People were captivated by his charisma, his great eloquence, and his sheer skill in weaving together a brilliant fabric of many colours, the alpha and omega of world religions and the A to Z of alternative therapies.

Bhagwan, the visionary one, who lit a fire of love in the hearts of his beloved disciples, and Rajneesh the political manipulator, could not be reconciled. As his power grew, it became more than his personality could handle, and it became increasingly difficult or unnecessary to listen to the voice of his essence. When he became visibly unable to get it together, his movement fell apart as dramatically as when a queen bee dies, or leaves the colony. But the public relations game was played out in a grand finale: Rajneesh was a refugee in desperate flight from country to country during 1986, after his deportation from the USA. He was refused permission to enter or stay in any of them. The Rajneesh Times presented it as a spectacular world-tour, "devised" by Bhagwan to expose the political opposition to him.

Bhagwan was a brilliant star who fell (like Lucifer, also a light-bearer) from the high teachings that voiced the power of love into a megalomaniac dream rooted in love of power.

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References

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 3. "Gurus in America", Edward Mann, **Energy & Character**, Vol 18, No. 1, April 1987.
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BROTHER

I could still play with you
and be your friend, little men
amongst the cushions, hunting Pinky the mouse
(which I trod on and you never forgave me)
making mud pies or playing grown-ups
except:
we grew up and grew away, hated,
fought for mother's love and learned different tactics
and just don't see each other anymore.

They reflect in our relationships
the messes I've made,
the security you hang onto but you know
it's washed up now, no longer working
and the children are causing quite a problem.
I can't speak
my life is a shell and a core.

Three years since Dad died
we haven't seen each other,
three different relationships for me
yours in a turmoil, what
have we taken from those two who've died
and left us both to it, our responsibilities
our joy - or just
our long separation?

Barry Wynn
