

Patrick Cullen

Baghwan — Cosmic Truth a Woolly Platitudes?

This essay is written in response to Rajneesh's "Therapy is a function of love" *Self & Society Journal of EAHP Vol. 1 No. 3* both because I was irritated by his blanket dismissal of all Western therapies (vis "in the west now there are so many psychotherapies but nothing is proving to be helpful) in spite of incorporating at Poona just about all the modern techniques developed in the west, and because I was appalled by the flimsiness of what was being said most of which collapses into a pile of so many cliches as soon as it is subjected to close scrutiny.

One of the most disturbing things is how little the article in question is able to add to its basic postulate 'love is healing' or 'healing happens where there is love'. This truism dressed up in the form of a sermon from the mount is the substance of the article vis "Love is the greatest therapy and the world needs therapists because the world lacks love. If people were loving. . .if society had a loving climate around it there would be no need for therapists." Or again "Everybody is born to be healthy and happy. Everybody is seeking health and happiness but somewhere something is missing and everybody becomes miserable."

This is truly enlightening stuff and almost identical with the Jehovah's Witnesses' style of diagnosing what's wrong with our society. Most of us in the field of humanistic psychology know well enough about the lack of love in the world but it doesn't really solve anything to trot out these weary platitudes. Nor do most of us need telling not to treat patients as objects. It is all very well for Bhagwan to contrast the psychotherapist/patient relationship and its shallow professional nexus with his idealized master/disciple alternative. The distinction is rather disingenuous. The fact is that in Bhagwan's case it is not possible for someone seeking guidance/help from him to have the regular individual attention over a period of years that the psychotherapist offers and which many need. To go to Poona and participate in groups and perhaps be lucky enough to gain one audience with Bhagwan is an expensive undertaking. I don't really see that by calling himself Master and by avoiding the transference relationship that develops in one to one therapy, his connection with his followers becomes any more "heart to heart" than that between therapist and patient

The impression given of the therapy that Bhagwan himself dispenses, whatever the diversity of the groups which operate under his aegis, is that of the old style Guru prescribing verbal maxims to extremely complex emotional problems, The case of the woman which he cites in the article is a classic example of this type of didactic therapy which seldom leaves the person any better able

to deal with their problem. The woman is repulsed by her husband's sexual advances but when on Bhagwan's advice, her husband leaves her alone sexually for a month, she becomes insecure. Bhagwan points out to her that although she doesn't enjoy sex, she derives some compensation from the power that her husband's desire gives her over him, - the power of possessing him. Because of the desire to possess him she feels possessed by him and consequently used by him. The diagnosis is by no means thorough nor entirely convincing but this is not my contention. Not knowing the circumstances or the people involved I can only speculate, yet Bhagwan's remedy for the problem "unlearn your possessiveness or expect to go on being used" sounds ominously like another of those pieces of advice which, however sound, the patient feels unable to act upon. Presented with such a stark either/or choice there is a tendency to stick with the status quo because the need to possess one's partner in intimate relationships is a function of deep rooted fears and insecurities which are as yet unresolved and these do not disappear with an insight supplied by someone else.

The contrast I want to draw attention to is between this type of Guru-therapy, answers to your life's riddles handed down from on high, and the patience and commitment involved in helping someone to work through their feelings of need, possessiveness and sexual fear within the therapist/patient schema of things which Bhagwan seems to have so little time for.

The journey to the point where one does not need to possess anyone to any degree, where one is, "not in search of any power over anyone" is long and complicated and isn't accomplished with one month of sexual abstinence and some wise aphorisms from a master. It is best embarked on without too many expectations of having to get there. Close sexual relationships which do not involve some elements of power, possession or jealousy are extremely rare.

The other case, or rather anecdote, he offers for discussion is that of a man who always threw his wine about in the pub annoying others and causing himself to feel bad. Psychoanalysis freed this man of his guilt but it did not teach him responsibility. There follows a short hymn to responsibility as we had earlier for non-possessiveness but with no light thrown on how a person comes to acquire this magic quality or even an attempt to define it (rather important in the case of this word). It is not enough to accuse psychoanalysis of populating the West with people lacking in responsibility unless one is offering some alternative means of going the other way. And then one would want to know what sort of responsibility he has in mind. His linking it with guilt and anti-social behaviour of the man in the pub suggests he is thinking about social responsibility - the acceptance of obligations towards others - but this is by no means clear. He seems to be making some sort of social comment but disappointingly without any reference to the conflict and divisions in society which militate against the development of such feelings of responsibility and foster the attitude that nothing really matters which Bhagwan has observed (It's not just analysts). This is a pity because there is no shortage of people ready to preach the virtues of responsibility from government ministers to priests to head-teachers and self styled guardians of the nation's conscience

like Mary Whitehouse. But what is needed is to be more specific - responsibility to who or what? How can responsibility be nurtured? (apart from exhortation) In what social conditions does it flourish or wither? And so on.

The rest of the article is a mixture of well-worn axioms on how to be a good therapist (or better still a good sannyasin) vis - don't be holier than thou, be a good listener, and attacks on psychotherapists as opposed to Masters. Therapists are depicted as cold Uncaring professionals with too many problems of their own ("The Psychotherapist has problems almost the same as you. He may be of some help to you but he has not been much help to himself"). This in contrast to the master "who has no problems, he can help you tremendously because he can see you through and through - you become transparent before him." This seems to conflict with the advice offered later to Buddhagosha. "Don't look from a tower. . . . more knowledgeable (than your patients). . . look as a human being as helpless as the other, in the same boat, in the same plight." Perhaps this means sharing some of the patient's problems.

There is also a strange passage on women. I quote, "Because the husband looks at you sexually that means that he looks at you as a means towards a certain satisfaction. You feel that you are being used. Almost all women feel that they are being used and that is their problem. . . . Now every woman suffers because in the first place she wants to possess. When she wants to possess she is possessed; when she is possessed she feels "I am being used.", then she feels that power is disappearing. So a woman always remains in a suffering state, and it is the same for men."

Without the last seven words it would appear that Bhagwan is risking saying something about the psychology of woman, though the last sentence throws this into doubt. If there wasn't doubt enough already because the rest is infuriatingly vague. He starts off with a particular instance of a woman feeling used sexually by her husband. He goes straight from there to the generalisation "almost all woman feel they are being used and that is their problem." Does he mean that all woman feel they are being used by men for sex or is it a more general feeling of being used he is now talking about, and can one really raise such issues without any recourse to explanation? Let us assume that he is not so pessimistic or reactionary as to believe that this is part of the biological fact of being female (though one has one's doubts) in which case some references to the social oppression of woman might be useful. Perhaps if he is right that "every woman in the first place wants to possess" this could be made sense of as a means by which they attempt to redress the balance of power in their relationships with men. But Bhagwan slips away from such thorny political questions and then lets the whole thing evaporate all together with his "and it is the same with men". Was he really saying anything at all? The over-riding impression is that this was another piece of woolly sermonising which along with the rest of the article as a whole offers precious little that is original stimulating or even sharply argued.

The question remains as to why so many people are drawn to be followers of such a "Master" instead of following Bhagwan's own example ". . . I have

never been a disciple. I was a wanderer. . . being with many groups, schools, methods but never belonging to anybody. . . I was a guest at most, an overnight stay." Could it be that the need to turn oneself into a disciple at the feet of a guru is little different from any other form of religion or fanatical devotion? If the fears and doubts, the feelings of anxiety and meaninglessness which make life problematic for so many are linked to the deep-rooted unresolved needs of the infant's the attraction of religion becomes clearer. If I find in a God or a Master the all wise, all loving all forgiving parent I never had, perhaps I feel less tormented. The problem is that to keep these feelings at bay depends on an act of faith which may at any time be undermined. The therapist whilst accepting the transference of these idealized hopes from the patient, also takes all the negative transference as well. He/she is in turns both good mother, bad mother, good father and bad father. He does not set himself up as a Master with a crystal ball and all the suggestions of miracles this conjures up. Continually the patient is thrown back on him/herself and the relationship is always a finite one which at some point is to be phased out; and this is its strength. If Bhagwan offered the same advice to his disciples as was so useful to him i.e. "Don't be a disciple" he would be a less successful guru but a better therapist.

Donald Ellison

Treating Levitation with Levity but Gravitation with Gravity

In the September issue of *Self & Society*, Kevin Fleisch writes (p.92) about various methods of assessing the attainments of participants in certain training courses at Salford College, where he is on the staff. I was particularly struck by the exacting requirements prescribed for "meditative/levitational attainments"; a pass requires levitation to a height of two feet off the ground, a credit requiring levitation to a height of one metre.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, "levitate" means "to rise and float in the air". Let us assume that among the more leaden aspirants to the heights of a pass in the qualifying course for what might be called a "certified levitator" at this college should it not call itself the Salford College of **Higher** Education? one inept student only got one foot off the ground. Do not misunderstand me, I mean levitated his entire body to a height of only twelve inches. He would not obtain a pass, but he could console himself with the thought that he had convincingly demonstrated, in T.H.Huxley's words, "the awkward fact that ruins the most beautiful theory". He might only have risen twelve inches, but he would have blown the theory of gravitational physics sky high, and made fools of both Newton and Einstein