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## FROM THE EDITOR

The main part of this issue of Up-date contains a report on a research trip to India which was undertaken by an interdenominational group of Christian scholars, students and people involved in work with NRMs. The aim of the trip was to study various orthodox and neo-Hindu movements in their native situation, while concentrating on those which have been influential outside India and on an international scale. Apart from the six groups discussed in the report, we visited a number of other ashrams and historic sites, gathering information on yoga and Hindu philosophy, as well as engaging in dialogue and discussion with the many western disciples and "seekers" that make up India's contemporary spiritual scene.

It has taken competent scholars many years to try to untangle the intricate web of Indian religion, and still it continues to be woven, almost faster than it can be studied. Needless to say, since this report is only a summary of our observations and tentative conclusions, it must remain somewhat superficial due to its brevity. While many Indians as well as westerners are still squabbling over the differences, nuances and semantics of Hindu religiosity, we hope and believe that our conclusions are nonetheless accurate, although limited in scope.

Our friend Heinz Zeit reviews a "classic" expression of neo-Hinduism, Autobiography of a Yogi, by Paramhansa Yogananda. The book has gone through many printings in 14 languages, and deserves a hard look once again, especially in the context of this issue.

ISKCON's Dr R.T. Crowley responded to Johannes Aagaard's article on "Guruism - A Hindu Countermission" with a letter which was printed in our Dec., 1980 issue. Dr Aagaard responds in turn with his short piece, "History Comes to Life."

In our news section, "We have read..." are summaries of important court cases and other happenings. In this regard, we would like to ask our readers to forward any newsworthy items to us whenever you run across them. Thanks - and good reading.

-Mark Albrecht, editor

## A SPIRITUAL TOUR OF INDIA

This article is an edited version of the final report issued by a task force of 25 people who took part in a fact-finding study tour to India during the month of January, 1981.

The first part of the article deals with six major movements, the second with yoga and tantra and the third with theological considerations.

### I. MOVEMENTS AND GURUS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE

#### 1. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation

Perhaps the most significant coincidence of the India trip was the fact that, beginning on the 5 of November, 1980, MMY moved the power center of the TM movement back to India. He first left India on his mission to the West in 1958 ("To those people who are in the habit of accepting things quickly" as he once remarked). A former monk, born as J.N. Srivastava<sup>☒</sup> into the Kayastha caste, MMY has become a world figure in his own right. Having seduced the Beatles and a host of other celebrities, as well as some two million people worldwide into being unknowingly initiated into Vedantic Hinduism (disguised as a "scientific technique for relaxation and the fulfillment of life") the Maharishi crested in popularity in 1975 when his beatific smile graced the cover of the Time magazine.

However, he suffered his first setback in 1977, when the Spiritual Counterfeits Project of Berkeley, California successfully brought a lawsuit against the TM movement to prove that its religious nature violated the U.S. constitution, which stipulates a strict separation between church or religion and state. The Federal Court decision was appealed by TM, but was subsequently upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals, the second highest court in the nation. This cut off MMY's public subsidy in the U.S.,

<sup>☒</sup>His real name is uncertain; other sources have his civil name as Mahesh Prasad Varma

which he was receiving through federal, state and local grants. This defeat also caused a retrenchment in activities in the U.S., TM's most powerful and lucrative base. He then fled to Seelisberg, Switzerland, where he presided over his far-flung empire from the serenity of the Alps.

In recent years, however, sentiment in Switzerland has grown against TM, and officials in Canton Uri have put political and economic pressure on the movement. This, combined with mediocre success in Europe, has perhaps led to MMY's decision to shift his power base to India.

Since there has always been a reluctance on the part of India's official "Hindu power structure" to recognize the Maharishi as legitimate, (his "apostolic succession" to his master Guru Dev and the powerful Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math is in serious doubt) we may speculate that MMY has determined that the time is "now or never" to attempt his return to India as a triumphant native son, hoping to be hailed as one of the primary catalysts of the Hindu counter-mission to the West.

While TM still maintains the official party line that it is "non-religious", recent developments within the movement have shown a marked trend toward overtly Hindu expressions. The initiation of the Siddhi Program some 4-5 years ago (in which the initiates pay in the vicinity of US \$ 7,000 to attain such supernatural powers as levitation, invisibility, strength of an elephant, ability to walk through walls and "omniscience" - all classical occult powers described in ancient Hindu Tests) coincides with a resurgence of Hindu religious expression combined with Indian nationalism as exemplified by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's acquisition of a personal guru, Dharendra Brahmacharya, as well as former P.M. Desai's frequent promotion of the Hindu world view.

Furthermore, MMY's move to India seems to have political and economic ramifications. The Indian magazine Onlooker (Jan., 1981) carried a well-documented piece on TM's financial connections with Indian magnate Ram Nath Goenka and one C. Ana Rao, former chairman of the TTD, India's wealthiest religious temple trust. Goenka, a recent TM convert, seems to be the middleman in arranging a financial cooperation between TM, Bhagwan Rajneesh and Sathya Sai Baba, the latter two being among India's most contro-

versial gurus.

The Maharishi has apparently taken up residence in or near Delhi, where he has two separate operations in progress. The most visible and publicized of these is the congregation of 3,500 foreigners in Delhi's centrally located Express Building. Here the foreigners (mostly Caucasian disciples) are intensely involved in practicing and promoting the Siddhi program and extolling the virtues of Vedic science and its alleged parallels with modern scientific discoveries. TM has taken out full page ads in some Indian newspapers, e.g. the Indian Express, stressing these "facts" with a barrage of diagrams, charts and commentary. The foreigners wear the usual TM uniforms, saris for the women and conservative western dress for the men.

According to spokesman Dr. Heinrich Röeder, they are practicing levitation (behind closed doors) which he described as caused by the contraction of muscles brought about by deep meditation and yielding a hopping/bouncing effect accompanied by "overwhelming and indescribable joy." This "levitation" is performed with strap-on foam flight cushions to soften crash landings and bruised bottoms. When pressed, he said that this phenomenon was a possible side effect of kundalini arousal, adding that "twenty years ago Maharishi could not have come to India with success, but now..."

The other development near Delhi is the creation of an entire community within the township of Noida, about a one hour minicab ride from Delhi. The ashram, which reportedly contains 6,000 inhabitants, is a center where, according to Goenka, "2,000 Vedic pundits are already studying the Vedas and daily performing Vedic yagyas (rituals) to further increase sattva (orderliness) in world consciousness." (Indian Express, 2 Jan, 1981). The community consists of small houses and tent dwellings around a large hall which appeared to be a converted warehouse; this building was used as a temple. At the time our representatives arrived, the temple ceremony had begun and they were allowed entrance.

Approximately 300 people were in attendance. A Brahmin priest was chanting in Sanscrit before an altar which consisted of pictures of Maharishi himself as the centerpiece, flanked by a statue of MMY's dead master, Guru Dev. The significance of this juxtaposition appears to be quite important: never before has Maha-

rishi eclipsed Guru Dev in a puja or worship. It seems clear that this policy has been at least tacitly approved (if not directly ordered) by MMY. Surrounding Maharishi are the gods Ganesha and Parvati, along with approximately 20 other pictures of various other gods and goddesses, mostly of a Shakti orientation. Yoni-lingams, an integral part of tantra worship, were also placed around the hall.

The worshipers were repeating bija (seed) mantras, reading from the Vedas and singing in Sanskrit. Those in attendance, as well as all members of the community, were ethnic Indians; according to one Moti Lal, the brahmacharya who acted as spokesman for the group, the worshipers, and perhaps the whole colony, were Shivite Brahmins. Thus it appears that Maharishi is either "creating" a caste of Brahmins as the core group of his Indian elite, or more likely, recruiting Brahmins into TM, a tactic designed to boost the image of his movement within orthodox Hinduism.

TM's third center of activity is his oldest ashram, Shankaracharya Nagar, on the Ganges in Rishikesh. Here too, only ethnic Indians are allowed into the compound. Thus, it appears that the TM movement is practicing de facto apartheid in India. In so doing, he is maintaining a careful balancing act, using the 3,500 Caucasians in Delhi to promote the old "exoteric" claim of the non-religious nature of TM, buttressed by the "harmonization of Vedic science and modern science", while keeping the deeply Hindu reality of the movement closed to foreigners and open only to Indians, who have no difficulty accepting TM as a legitimate expression of Hindu praxis and philosophy.

The Rishikesh ashram is perhaps the most significant and mysterious of the TM centers in India. It is absolutely closed to all foreigners, who are kept out by guards at the gate. The reasons for this are apparently fourfold: 1) MMY is engaged in training a substantial number of Indian bureaucrats at the ashram (ostensibly with the tacit blessings of the government). 2) There is a rumor that the American CIA had formerly infiltrated the ashram and used it as a site for planting electronic surveillance devices, due to its strategic location near the Indo-Chinese border. This was "confirmed" by residents of the Kailash ashram across the river, who had been caught in a similar predicament.

3) We were told that the overtly religious nature of the practices at the Rishikesh center "would not be understood by Westerners". For example, each morning the Brahmin priest performs a fire ceremony to the god Agni; there was also a tantric yoni temple (representing the female sexual organ), which consisted of a white triangle-shaped building with an upward-slanting floor, and an altar and statue of either Guru Dev or Maharishi at the top. 4) MMY has expressly forbidden all foreigners from entering, and his word is obeyed as law.

The ashram itself is a virtual municipality within the city of Rishikesh. This is evidenced by the existence of a post office and a branch of the Punjab National Bank. Both may be established only by government permission, the latter requiring a substantial cash deposit. The site was also filled with activity - there are some 120 beehive shaped houses around the ashram, the surrounding forest was being cleared, there was an electronics school, a sawmill, piles of iron castings, and much construction.

Following conversations with a number of devotees, we were able to distill the following information, facts and figures:

- Meditators at the Rishikesh ashram were given a living stipend of Rs. 200/mo.
- Initiators are paid Rs. 600/mo., and are required to turn over all fees and donations received to the TM movement.
- There are supposedly 10,000 such initiators in India and 500 such smaller ashrams. The average cost of maintaining Shankaracharya TM ashram is Rs. 150,000/mo.
- The activities in Delhi and Noida have reportedly cost TM Rs. 180,000,000, which includes construction, rental, living expenses and airfare to Delhi. It is believed that there are approximately 6,000 Brahmins, 2-3,000 "other Indians" and some 3,500 foreigners attending to the TM promotional campaign in Delhi.
- The movement has seemingly given these figures concerning expenses to initiates in an effort to "prime the pump" and play upon the sympathies of disciples worldwide in order to increase donations. As one meditator put it, "Since

Maharishi has sacrificed so much of his time and money to restore India's Vedic heritage, the disciples must also be willing to sacrifice."

The TM propaganda machine has released the following statistics to meditators in order to set a standard for donations: 30% of initiates reportedly donate Rs. 10,000 - 2,000; 20% give 2,000 - 100 and the remaining 50% give varying amounts up to 100 Rs. While these figures may well be artificially inflated, they certainly do accomplish the desired effect - motivating the initiates to sacrifice all they can for the betterment of Transcendental Meditation.

### Summary and Observations

It appears that MMY's move to India is a permanent one. While he still maintains his two pseudo-scientific research universities in the West (Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa, USA, and Maharishi European Research University in Seelisberg), these institutions appear to be diminishing in both size and influence. TM's future plans for India include a Rs. 22 million Vedic University in Delhi, a university of "natural law" in Orissa, and an Ayurvedic medical school (India's ancient medical science) in Jabalpur. "It'll be", as one of Maharishi's aides says, "a synthesis of the Vedas and the computer, a unique mix of academic disciplines." Goenka echoes, "India is going to be put back on the world map of education after a few thousand years. The University will be respected just as Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard are respected." (India Today, Dec. 1-15, 1980). This proposed conglomeration of educational institutions will tentatively be called the Maharishi Institute of Creative Intelligence (MICI).

One crucial question which is largely unanswered at this point is the degree to which the Indian government has given aid and/or blessing to MMY's ambitious projects. According to the Indian Express (29 Jan. 1981), "Some of the state governments have indicated their interest in introducing Transcendental Meditation in schools to help mould the character of their children." The official imprimatur granted to the Rishikesh ashram seems also to indicate at least tacit government approval and

cooperation. But whatever the real feelings of the Gandhi government toward TM may be, it will undoubtedly be encouraged to some extent, as it represents an unprecedented flow of foreign currency into India. As the article in India Today observed, "The Indian investment plans of the Maharishi work out as the single largest inward remittance ever made by any Indian earning abroad."

Once the Indian center of TM is fully functioning, Maharishi anticipates that India will become "a lighthouse for the world." This optimism is based upon a dubious principle Maharishi has dubbed the "Global Super Radiance Effect." According to this theory, sattva (orderliness) is brought about when yoga is practiced by a large group of yogis in a particular geographical area. This concept is obliquely derived from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras - "In the vicinity of yoga, the unified wholeness of consciousness, diversifying tendencies are harmonized - unifying influence dominates society." Maharishi claims that his form of siddha yoga (i.e. bouncing around in the Express Building in Delhi) is so effective that the square root of 1% of the world's population practicing together in a large group will solve most of India's (and eventually the world's) problems within a short time.

Finally it should be noted that the attitude of the TM movement towards Christianity is quite hostile. Despite their insistence that "It doesn't matter what your religion is, because it (TM) is a completely mechanical thing in which you use an in-built mechanism of the physiology" (Indian Express, 6. Feb. 1981), TM has long seen Christianity as the enemy. Occasionally this attitude surfaces, but rarely with such venomous candor as two Delhi spokesmen expressed in the Onlooker article: "It is the undoing of Christian missionaries", said one. Another was more blunt - "This entire mission is to counter the ever-spreading demon of Christianity. We know that we will be opposed tooth and nail. But we do not mind. We have successfully checked them in the land of the Vedas."

## 2. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and The Rajneesh Foundation

"The gates of the temple are wide open  
and it is only after thousands of years  
that such an opportunity comes on this earth.  
And know well  
that they will not remain open forever.  
The opportunity can easily be lost.  
Hence my insistent call that you come to enter.  
Do you hear me? Do you see me?  
I stand at the door and knock  
And I knock because of a promise -  
Made in another life and another age."

- Rajneesh, talking about himself

Rajneesh is undoubtedly India's most controversial guru. A Jain by background, he associates himself with no particular belief system and claims to be the only perfect master, or incarnation of God, currently residing on our beleaguered planet. His followers believe that he is the distilled essence of Buddha, Jesus, Kabir, Lao Tzu, Aristotle, Krishna, Mohammed, et. al.; "He contains them all and something more... With Bhagwan, God has taken a leap into the twentieth century. What a benediction it is to be here, to be a part of and witness to God coming of age! Just listen ... in these six tiny congested acres in Poona you can hear the very heartbeat of creation ..." (Sannyas magazine, No. 6, 1980). Whatever one may think of him, Rajneesh and his sannyasins (disciples) obviously don't play any esoteric games when it comes to the question of who he is - he is simply the most perfect expression of God ever to walk on two feet. Take it or leave it.

The official summary of the Rajneesh Foundation's credo is found in Sannyas magazine:

"The Master's words are taken from his  
spontaneous unprepared morning discourses,  
based on religious texts, the questions

of disciples and visitors, and his responses at daily evening darshan, the time when more personal guidance is given to disciples, devotees and visitors. Bhagwan's initiation includes some of the outward form of the traditional Hindu sannyas - the orange robe, the new name, the mala - but his disciples are not cloistered, more freely in society, and do not repress their desires. The renunciation is not of the world, but of the ego: the inherited, conditioned character structure. Hence, neo-sannyas. Bhagwan's sannyasins are unique individuals, each with a unique relationship to the Master, learning to increase their love and awareness in their own personalized ways; sannyasins now number 90,000 worldwide. Visitors are welcome at the ashram to meditate and experience the presence of Bhagwan, whose teachings and meditation techniques encompass all ancient and modern religious attitudes and methods for work on the self, eastern and western - from Krishna to Gurdjieff, from Patanjali to Wilhelm Reich."

His official biographical sketch says that he attained enlightenment whilst sitting under a maulshree tree in an Indian garden on 21 March, 1953. Shades of Buddha. His own account of the event adequately describes his philosophy: "For many lives (reincarnations) I had been working, working upon myself, struggling, doing whatever could be done, and nothing happened. Now I understand why nothing was happening. The very effort was the barrier"... the very urge to seek was the obstacle."

This is his message - pure existential bliss. Being. The universe is O.K., if only you can see it that way. Belief systems, thought, good and evil, are all more or less useless or at least unimportant. As one of his disciples put it, "Life is not a prob-

lem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived." Or, "Heart should be the master, mind the slave." In these respects, Rajneesh's message is very similar to Werner Erhard's e.s.t., and both find their roots in Zen Buddhism. Buddha is, in fact, the personality with whom Rajneesh most closely identifies himself. His discourse area is called the Buddha Hall and the "energy field" that emanates around the ashram is hailed as the Buddha Field.

Yet, it would be far too simplistic to say that Rajneesh is only a modified Zen Buddhist. He is an eclectic philosopher who blends confusion with syncretism in a unique way. He has also incorporated scores of "new age" psychotherapy workshops into his ashram, including gestalt, centering, psychodrama, body awareness, massage, primal, satori, tao, hynotherapy, rebirthing, tantra, alchemy, "mysterium", let-go, relaxation, flow, zazen, enlightenment intensive, sahaj, rolfing, acupuncture, neo-Reichian, shiatsu, rebirthing and samadhi tank, to name only a few, and, as a final catch-all, "counselling".

Obviously, Rajneesh takes the body seriously. He says that there are three energies to be captured - body, soul, and mind - then one "knows God" or "is enlightened". Sexuality is seen as something that one must "get past" or "go through" in order to be free of sexual bondage. Consequently, many different forms of sexual contact are practiced in some workshops. While this aspect of Rajneesh's teaching has been overplayed by the sensation seeking press, causing many of his problems, it is nonetheless an indispensable part of his philosophy. Similarly, aggression is dealt with through physical means - the san-nyasins sometimes assault one another in workshops; many<sup>⊠</sup> disciples were observed wearing casts and slings over broken bones.

#### Physical and Social Structure of the Rajneesh Foundation

The ashram itself is situated in Koreagon Park, the most expensive residential area in Poona, and consists of six acres. The Foundation has also acquired other nearby properties and grand

<sup>⊠</sup>perhaps 3-5%, which seems inordinately high in relation to the general population.

homes which are used for work and living. In reality there are three ashrams, the inner one, closed to all but 1,500 residents who are advanced or long-time disciples; the outer or public area, where the public and other sannyasins may roam about, which includes the Buddha Hall, and the area outside the actual ashram, which is populated by several thousand seekers and sannyasins who are not part of the "inner circle". Those with money are able to afford some type of housing, the rest live in a shantytown of bamboo huts and pup tents.

The inner ashram is a remarkable model community. The 1,500 resident sannyasins aim at being totally self sufficient, utilizing such techniques as hydroponic gardening, botanical and ecological research, etc. They also have their own kitchens, medical facilities, press office, translation and transcription service, (Rajneesh's every word is published) jewelry shop, carpentry facility, art department, mala manufacturing center, dairy and cheese industry and much more. The inner ashram is very clean, organized and ecologically oriented. Those who live in the ashram are mostly highly skilled people with educational or technical backgrounds. Most have been sannyasins for some time, although there are persistent reports that one can buy his way into the inner ashram if he has enough money. The authority in the ashram is largely delegated by women. Rajneesh claims to be a firm believer in women's liberation and therefore the society has become more or less matriarchal. 55 out of 60 management positions are held by women.

Relations with the populace of Poona have become increasingly strained. Rajneesh's iconoclasm (he delights in ridiculing all belief systems and religious doctrines) has angered many orthodox Hindus, and there has been friction between the sannyasins and the townspeople. Notices on the ashram bulletin board warn sannyasins not to venture into certain parts of Poona, and harassment and rape have occurred on a number of occasions. Two sannyasins were recently murdered, one by an Indian and one by an European. These pressures, combined with the growing population and a lack of space, have forced the community to consider moving. At present, the Foundation is considering a spot near Gujurat, south of the Punjab in northern India. They hope

to find a rural location which can accomodate at least 100,000 people and become totally self-sufficient.

### The Poona Phenomenon

Rajneesh moved to Poona, approximately 150 km southeast of Bombay, in 1974 with seven disciples. It is said that he previously taught philosophy at several universities, then settled in Bombay where he began to teach his philosophy on an informal basis. His controversial ideas and practices resulted in negative press coverage in 1972-3, which apparently prompted his move to Poona. His reputation followed him, and soon droves of European and American seekers gravitated to his ashram. Like Maharishi, Rajneesh seemed to be in the right place at the right time. His modified Indian spirituality, combined with gleanings from various and sundry mystery religions and western "pop" psychology, found a receptive audience. In seven short years, his foundation has grown into an enormously wealthy bureaucracy, with 100,000 - 200,000 sannyasins and some 200 centers worldwide. ☒

Rajneesh rarely leaves the ashram. He lives in a house some 50 meters from the Buddha Hall where he spends his time in reading and meditation, allegedly devouring 100 books per week. He is driven to the Buddha Hall precisely at 8.00 each morning in a Rolls Royce, mounts the stage and greets his disciples, then settles into a lounge chair for a one to two hour discourse. Half the talks are given in Hindi, half in English, on alternating months. Up to 3,000 people attend the morning discourse; they are strictly segregated - the sannyasins are seated in the front, the general public in the back. A group of armed samurai guards form a human wall between the two groups and also guard Bhagwan. Anyone who coughs or sneezes is ejected. All who attend must pass through four checks: 1) a sniff test. Rajneesh is allegedly a chronic asthmatic who is allergic to cosmetic soaps, perfumes, wool and other substances. Those who smell offensive must sit in the rear. 2) A body check, performed by hand. 3) Each person

☒ Like many new religious movements, the Foundation gives conflicting and/or ambiguous membership figures. Sannyas magazine (1980) claimed 90,000. We were told by their press office that the number is 200,000.

must walk through a metal detector similar to the ones used at airports. 4) A final metal detector check performed by a hand-held electronic instrument. The ostensible reason for these extraordinarily paranoid security precautions stem from a March, 1980 attack upon Rajneesh, in which an outraged Indian threw a knife at him. (He missed.) When we last visited Poona, there was a sign at the entrance to the Buddha Hall: "Shoes and minds must be left at the gate." The sign has been amended and now reads, "Bags and minds must be left at the bagcheck."

Rajneesh also gives evening darshan (presence of the master) to a select group of sannyasins and seekers. Personal initiations and advice are given in these encounters. Most of the darshan participants are live-in ashramites. These are the veterans, and do not generally take part in the morning discourse or the workshops (therapies) unless they feel the need.

#### Other Odds and Ends:

- Although Rajneesh "teaches no dogma", reincarnation is a consistent doctrine which he utilizes as a control mechanism and catch-all for explaining the human condition. He advises that we should leave beggars and other unfortunates to suffer, since they are simply working out their karma (sins of past lives).
- His approach to Christianity is standard gnostic speculation. (Jesus studied at all the occult mystery schools from Persia to Japan between the ages of 12 and 30, etc.). He says that Christianity is corrupted, but that he is the true interpreter of Jesus' life and message.
- The foundation publishes about 60 books a year, making it the largest publishing house in India. (Mostly transcriptions of Rajneesh's talks).
- There are some 5,500 individual therapies per month. We know little about the present state of the esoteric therapy groups which have caused such a stir in the past.
- The therapies are powerful and effective, and many people break in the process. The German consulate alone has about 60 cases on record of German nationals who have broken down mentally, physically, or emotionally and have had to be flown back to

Germany. The Prince of Hannover recently died of unknown causes during a karate session. No autopsy was performed on him and no charges were filed. To dispel the negative repercussions of incident, Rajneesh visited him in the hospital while the Prince was in a coma and proclaimed that he had "achieved enlightenment" in the hours before his death. The sannyasins were ecstatic about this piece of information and sang and danced around his funeral pyre in celebration, and scattered rose petals on the paths of the ashram.

- The sannyasins comprise an amazingly cosmopolitan group, representing some 40 countries, mostly the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Japan and India. The average age of sannyasins is 35 years.
- The public relations outreach has recently been expanded to include a Shakespeare drama troupe, musical groups and fashion shows. All have received positive critical acclaim in such places as Bombay and Delhi.
- Sannyasins are required to wear certain colors varying from orange to scarlet. Two years ago orange was "in", but scarlet is the current chic.
- All initiates are given malas (beaded wooden necklaces) with a framed photograph of Rajneesh dangling from the end. Sannyasins wear their malas at all times; to lose one's mala is a catastrophic event. Normally lost/stolen malas cannot be replaced.
- The Indian government under former Prime Minister Desai was antagonistic toward Rajneesh. Mrs. Gandhi seems to have softened her predecessor's hard line, but Indian immigration officials prevent sannyasins from entering India when they can identify them.
- The amazing growth rate of Rajneesh's movement indicates that he may well be one of the world's most influential gurus in the years to come. His teaching of mindless existence, couched in esoteric jargon to give it the appearance of profundity and deep wisdom, obliterates any semblance of intellectual honesty or a rational and holistic approach to religion and life. Yet, this is what many people seem to want. Of all the groups and gurus we have observed, Rajneesh is perhaps the

most symptomatic of the spiritual malaise of our times. He is a man to watch.

### 3. Ananda Marga

Ananda Marga was founded by P.R. Sarkar, a former Indian railway employee, in 1955. He is known as Ananda Murti or simply "Baba" to his devoted followers. Although Ananda Marga has seemingly waned in influence in recent years, the movement received notoriety in India and abroad during the 60's and 70's because of its militancy and rash of self-immolations (burnings) by some initiates. Sarkar was imprisoned in India on conspiracy charges in 1971 and sentenced to jail. He was recently released and reportedly makes his headquarters in Calcutta.

The elite ruling class of Ananda Marga, which Sarkar is trying to create, is to be headed by the Sadvipras, radical militant yogis of a supposedly super-human ruling class who hope to take over the world. (World domination is a recurrent theme in many new religious movements, e.g. the Unification Church, TM, Scientology, Hare Krishnas).

A.M. utilizes kundalini yoga and raja yoga; the latter is considered to be a means of controlling the dangerous side effects of kundalini yoga. Their basic text is the Ananda Sutra, written by Baba. Each acharya (teacher) and avadut (top leader) carries a dagger; human skulls are used in certain ceremonies as a means of retaliation against enemies.

Representatives of our group visited the A.M. branch in Ranchi. The local center was on the outskirts of town, in a large, run-down building with a sign saying "English Medium School", which was operated by one acharya and two teachers, none of whom spoke English. There was a room there reserved for Baba.

They then moved on to Baglata Pundag in Purulia (West Bengal); after travelling down a nearly impassable road to a remote area, an A.M.' community was discovered. There were a number of local residents making bricks for the community. Nearby was a house, supposedly belonging to Baba; the center of activity was an old ruined college, headed by a brahmacharya who was carrying on A.M.'s mission in the area. There were a few students and an or-

phanage with eight to ten children. The ashram appeared to have a loose organization, with some margiis (devotees) and some locals employed by A.M. doing agricultural work.

The principal of the college was one Swarupananda Avadut. He said that the college was started in 1964, is taught in Bengali and is recognized by the government. An interview with him revealed the following information:

- A.M. claims 3-4,000 initiations per month in India.
- Regarding the eight known self-immolations, he said that the organization "has never officially approved of this". However, it is known that at least six of the victims had visited Baba in jail before their suicides. The avadut felt that they had done this as "an expression of love toward Baba", and thus the acts have been tacitly approved. In fact, the first two suicides are celebrated annually on the dates of their occurrence. (5 March and 5 April). These are "days of remembrance" and these devotees are considered martyrs for Baba and his cause.
- When asked if A.M. had a "fighting spirit" (militant stance) Mr. Avadut replied, "only for the protection of mankind". Further elaboration on this statement was interpreted to mean that protection of mankind and protection of Baba and his philosophy were synonymous. Any deprecation or persecution of Baba is simply not tolerated.
- All suffering of the movement is simply persecution from the world. He especially complained of Indian government oppression.

A further interview with one Mr. Gosh, a former A.M. disciple who was then working with the Indian government as an accountant, revealed his assessment of the movement. He expounded the basic metaphysical theory, taken from the Samkhya philosophy, and affirmed it as valid, but said it had been perverted by A.M. through violence and hatred and lust for world domination, which led to his own disillusionment and eventual exodus from the movement.

Ananda Marga continues to be an international movement of potentially significant impact, but Sarkar's low profile since his imprisonment seems to be an inhibitive factor. Facts about his activities and whereabouts are hard to come by, and it seems that the Indian Government's successful persecution has substantially

reduced the A.M. movement as a world force to be reckoned with. However, Sarkar is still alive, and a resurgence is possible.

#### 4. Radha Soami

Some of the most fruitful and important information and contacts came out of our discussions with the four divisions of the Radha Soami Satsang, which is part of the Sant Mat tradition of northern India. Although it is a relatively young movement (founded in Agra in 1861) it has grown rapidly and is spreading to the West; out of Radha Soami have come such groups as the Divine Light Mission and Eckankar. In some respects, it may be considered a fifth Indian religion (after Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism) due to its unique philosophy and rapid growth.

#### Teachings

Needless to say, the Radha Soamis do not claim that their teachings began in 1861; rather, it was systematized and made public at that time by the first guru, Soamiji Maharaj. R.S. claims to transcend all religions in a condescending form of syncretism. In fact, they are disdainful of the term religion, and prefer to be called a "spiritual science" - known as surat shabd yoga - the yoga of the audible and visible life current, which flows out of the godhead, Anami Purush.

R.S. asserts that all true saints and mystics down through the ages have taught some form of Sant Mat philosophy, but that the first person to correctly expound the system in its fullness was Kabir, in the 16th century. In fact, however, R.S. has strikingly similar parallels with the gnostic schools of the Second and Third centuries.

The creation is seen as a series of emanations from the godhead, consisting of three grand divisions (each having six subdivisions) with two great voids (sunns) between the divisions and a form of hell (narkh) below the lowest division of creation. Each subdivision or spiritual sphere has its own god and his consort; the entire Hindu pantheon is relegated to the various divisions of creation.

The world is seen as a lower form of creation or emanation, and the bodily world and physical creation are denigrated in typical

gnostic fashion. Life is viewed within the context of yogic philosophy, i.e. the soul or spirit is trapped in the body, like a bird in a cage, and must be freed in order to return to its home in the higher regions of the godhead. R.S. has developed a sophisticated system of soul flight in which the soul is separated from the body and then passes up through the various realms after initiation.

The process of salvation is long and arduous, involving many reincarnations, and can only be finally achieved through the guidance of a Living Master.

The more disciplined forms of hatha yoga and pranayama are not practiced; they are seemingly unnecessary and representative of the lower forms of religious expression. R.S. initiates are concerned only with the sixth chakra (third eye or tishra til) and beyond. Their form of yoga is purely mental-spiritual, incorporating mantras, sounds from each sphere, and visualizations, both yantras and imaginative scenarios. Three to six hours of meditation per day is recommended.

### Organization

The biggest problem of the Radha Soami movement is its fragmentation. The oldest of the four divisions, Soamibagh, which is located in Agra, currently has no guru, which has caused somewhat of a problem. Their spokesman, Dr. Padma Sinha, expected a guru to emerge within a few years, as the presence of a living master is quite essential in R.S. The last guru died in 1949, and daily worship takes place around the bed in which he expired. Soamibagh has poured most of its energy and money into the construction of a huge temple, which is currently about half completed. When finished, (in 40-50 years) it should rival the nearby Taj Mahal in size and splendor. A trip to Soamibagh is well worth it, if only for the sake of seeing their fantastic construction in progress. Soamibagh has about 1,200 adherents who are said to live on the ashram premises, as well as others outside the ashram.

Less than a kilometer down the road and across the street is the second R.S. group, Dayalbagh, which is larger in both area and adherents (ca. 4,000). Dayalbagh, which has a living master, is less introverted than Soamibagh, and is engaged in industry, so-

cial work and communal agriculture. It appears to be largely self-supporting. Dayalbagh broke off from Soamibagh due to a dispute about the possibility of a female guru about 65 years ago.

A number of us spent several days as live-in guests at R.S. - Beas, in the Punjab. The Beas colony or branch is the largest of the four. While only about 2,000 live in and around the community, some 300,000 come to Beas from all over the world during certain festivals or holy days. The present living master, Maharaj Charan Singh, presides over an estimated world membership of 1,000,000 initiates and/or followers, many of them living in the West, where R.S. Beas has numerable centers. The large Beas colony is one of the most impressive communities in India. It is modern and clean, with a huge satsang temple, where the devotees worship in Singh's presence each day. (He does not always give a discourse; when we attended, scriptures and texts were read and sung and he only gave the final benediction. Like Rajneesh, it is his presence that is most important).

The colony is administered primarily by Indians who were formerly military officers with the British; this mentality is reflected in tight discipline and comfortable western surroundings and accommodations. (The guest houses were better than any hotel we encountered in India and the food was superb). The Beas ashram is tightly controlled. Charan Singh is regarded as the Perfect Master and only Radha Soami books published in Beas are sold. Purity of life and devotion to master and community are strictly observed at the ashram.

Although the R.S. groups seem to differ little in their basic teachings, it appears that there is not much cooperation or contact between the groups, and each one feels that their own particular expression of R.S. is purest and most correct. Further articles on Sant Mat, including a transcription of two interviews with Charan Singh, will appear in forthcoming issues of Update.

### 5. Divine Light Mission

An offshoot from the Sant Mat tradition, the DLM first achieved worldwide notoriety about 1970, with the arrival in the West of

the chubby twelve year old boy guru, the alleged "Lord of the Universe", Guru Maharaj Ji. The novelty of a rotund, adolescent Indian guru touring around Europe and America uttering profundities interspersed with pubescent giggles captured the attention of the press, and his fame grew quickly. If the old adage that "there's a sucker born every minute" is true, the sarcastic corollary "there's a seeker born every minute" was seemingly borne out by the attraction of thousands of devotees (premies) to Guru Maharaj Ji and his Divine Light Mission.

The movement, begun by Maharaj Ji's father, Sri Hans, gained momentum after the latter's death in 1966. Sri Hans' wife, Mata Ji, who appears to be the real driving force behind the DLM, proclaimed her eight year old son to be the very incarnation of God, and within four years the movement had arrived in the West, accompanied by an efficient public relations machine.

In 1973 the DLM rented the huge Houston Astrodome for "Millenium '73", which was then billed as the greatest and most significant occurrence in human history. Unfortunately, the sports arena was only about one-third filled, and despite the DLM's insistence that the cosmic event was a smashing success, it became obvious that the movement was experiencing difficulties. The press began to ridicule the guru, and his behaviour became more outrageous, which he explained as "liila" - the divine comedy. He indulged himself by living in palatial splendor, purchasing Rolls Royces and yachts, and reportedly even began drinking wine and eating meat. When he married an American airline stewardess, Mata Ji put her matriarchal foot down and dethroned her wayward son. At this point the DLM seemed to be on the verge of total collapse. Maharaj Ji retreated to a luxurious hideaway on the California coast at Malibu, still retaining a number of hard core followers. Shortly thereafter, his older brother, Satpal Ji, the former director of the public relations campaign, succeeded his fallen brother and was proclaimed the guru and perfect master.

The movement is currently attempting a comeback, and an effort has been made to forget and ignore the past. Apparently a compromise of some sort has been worked out by Mata Ji, whereby Maharaj Ji is allowed to carry on in the USA and Europe, while Satpal Ji

(official title: Satpal Ji Maharaj) has dominion over India, and presumably, the rest of the world. Hence the movement holds that God is still active and manifest in Satpal Ji; Maharaj Ji is grudgingly accepted as a master, but with a reduced role and sphere of activity. Maharaj Ji, nonetheless, is stepping up his activities; he recently attracted 6,000 at a rally in Birmingham, England.

### The Hardwar Ashram

On the outskirts of the holy city of Hardwar, on the banks of the Ganges River, the DLM has established its international headquarters, named Sri Prem Nagar Ashram. A separate division known as Manav Uttan Seva Samiti (Society for the Service of Human Uplifting) is a preaching mission which operates out of the ashram. When our representatives visited the compound, we were received with suspicion and some degree of nervousness, but finally persuaded our hosts to give us a tour. At present, the ashram is undergoing considerable construction. The center of activity is an impressive new satsang hall, which is nearly completed and will serve as the temple where Satpal Ji will preside. The interior is decorated with paintings of "all the great spiritual masters" of history, including the prominent figures from all the world's major religions.

Quotations from a variety of sacred scriptures are scattered around the ashram, painted on rocks, walls and fences. This syncretistic theme is designed to show that the culmination of all religious philosophy is distilled and manifested in Satpal Ji and the teachings of the DLM. Guru Maharaj Ji is a virtual non-person at the Hardwar ashram, and repeated probings about his relationship to the DLM were received with obvious discomfort and quick change of subject.

The population of the ashram appeared rather small, and all were Indians, but they did say that many Europeans and Americans were expected during the major festivals. They claimed to have 1,000 mahatmas (teachers) in India, teaching a modified form of raja or sahaj yoga, whereby divine knowledge and experience is supposedly imparted to the initiate. The "Knowledge" is an existential experience based on physiological responses and al-

teration of consciousness through meditation, and verified by the devotees' inner sensations, such as "tasting the divine nectar, seeing divine light, and hearing divine sounds." These experiences are then interpreted by the movement as "enlightenment", and combined with total submission to the guru, forms a psycho-spiritual bonding which keeps the devotee dependent upon the DLM and its leaders.

#### 6. Krishna Bhakti (Hare Krishnas)

Among the most visible of the new religious movements are the zealous and militant Hare Krishnas. The movement's founder, Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, set out from India in 1965 to spread his faith - a unique form of personal devotion (bhakti) to the god Krishna. Prabhupada taught that Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, was "the supreme personality of the godhead" and that chanting the Hare Krishna mantra was the most holy and efficacious of human activities, leading to union with God, or salvation.

Like Maharishi and Rajneesh, "Srila" Prabhupada stumbled into the right place at the right time. In this case, it was the beatnik-hippie milieu of Greenwich Village in New York City. One day in 1965 he began hopping about Tompkins Park in his orange robe and shaved head with Vishnuvite markings whilst chanting Hare Krishna to the accompaniment of a drum and cymbals. The young inhabitants of the Lower East Side, their brains awash with LSD, thought he was the greatest thing since sliced bread. A real Hindu holy man, all the way from India. It was all he needed, and soon Prabhupada had a collection of rag-tag disciples getting high on Krishna instead of acid.

Within five years, the H.K.'s became a common sight in the USA and Europe, hopping and bopping and chanting in ochre robes, shaved heads and old tennis shoes, to the methodical beat of drums and cymbals. Through aggressive salesmanship of Srila's many books, numerous solicitations for bogus charity causes and successful recruitment, the H.K. movement grew swiftly and became quite wealthy. Prabhupada died of sheer exhaustion in 1977, and the movement then underwent a momentary crisis in leadership. No single successor to the dead guru emerged. Instead, a collective leader-

ship of twelve acharyas (teachers) emerged, all Caucasian males. Since 1977, the movement has grown more militant in its avowed intent to convert the world to Krishna bhakti. Recent reports<sup>□</sup> indicate that some of the H.K.'s have been stockpiling guns and ammunition for the coming world conflict, in which they intend to emerge triumphant.

A number of us visited the H.K. center in Vrindavan, south of Delhi, known as the "American Temple". The ashram is currently undergoing renovation, and a tomb is being built for Prabhupada's remains, at the cost of Rs. 5,400,000. The community is comprised of both Indians and Caucasians, has an excellent but expensive restaurant, and is open for visitors. The main temple is being overhauled and repainted, and Prabhupada's home, where he spent his last months, has been preserved intact as a museum. No detail has been omitted - a wax statue of Srila presides over a desk next to the bed where he breathed his last. In the bathroom, there is a bedpan with a notecard attached to it, explaining that the guru has used it to dispose of his bodily wastes during his last days. In the garden in the rear, tape recordings of Prabhupada waxing eloquent on the Gita et. al., drone on and on.

A primary function of the Vrindavan ashram is to serve as an educational institution for the training of H.K.'s elite. All education, both for children and adults, is said to be Vedic, i.e. based on the Vedas, the earliest Hindu scriptures. Men are raised as Vedic scholars and taught Sanscrit as a preparation for propagating the faith. Others are trained in lower professions according to the caste structure of society. According to H.K. teaching, women are of an inferior status and their functions are primarily to serve men, produce children, prepare meals, and the like.

### Beliefs and Organization

Though they claim to worship Krishna and cultivate a personal relationship with him through chanting his name 1,728 times per day, the actual focus of attention seems to be on Radha, an emanation

<sup>□</sup> "The Krishna Question", Boston Magazine, Dec. 1980

of Krishna who serves as his consort. The gopis (romantic ti-  
tillations of Krishna) are held to be further emanations of  
Radha. Radha's romantic relationship with Krishna thus becomes  
the ideal for the devotee, and each H.K. actually worships Krish-  
na in a love relationship through identification with Radha. This  
sexual symbolism then unites the devotee with the unmanifest pu-  
rusha (pure spirit or godhead).

The organization of the Hare Krishna movement now consists of  
eleven acharyas (one was expelled some time ago, and there were  
only ten photographs around the altar in Vrindavan, thus leading  
to speculation that another of the original twelve acharyas has  
been deposed), 24 Governing Body Commissioners (GBC's) followed  
by temple presidents and temple commanders in individual areas.  
They have numerous centers worldwide, even claiming to have a  
mission in Moscow. In India there are 14 centers, with 2,500 -  
3,000 devotees. There seems to be no contact with the original  
Indian Krishna bhakti sects, which are thought to go back to the  
15th century under Caitanya Mahabrabda, or earlier, under the Alvars.

## II YOGA AND TANTRA

One of the primary aims of the Indian excursion was to do further  
research into the origins and nature of yoga. Our findings have  
confirmed many of our previous conclusions, but have also raised  
many new questions on how to synthesize the various yogic systems,  
if in the fact, there can be a real "technological" synthesis at  
all. While certain theological and philosophical presuppositions seem  
to undergird all yogic systems, the emphasis placed on technique  
and the perennial Indian question of "which yoga is the best,  
truest, or original yoga?" is still a matter of debate both by  
western and eastern scholars, not to mention the practitioners.

First of all, it should be noted that all of the six movements  
we have previously dealt with are yogic systems. Yoga is the unit-  
ing factor of Indian religion. Yoga is a sanscrit word, and rough-  
ly translated it can mean "yoking" or "union" with the godhead or  
pure spirit (purusha). In some cases, it has mainly physical con-  
notations, as in hatha yoga, while in others (gnana, raja, sahaj,  
laya) it seems to refer to "spiritual technology", more divorced  
from the body. In any case the ultimate aim is the same. This aim,

which involves the yoking process, can be compared to the word used for animal yokes, i.e. the harness placed over cattle when plowing a field. It implies a stress, strain, effort, or tension. To put it simply, yoga is work and discipline, leading toward release from the bondage of physical life.

Yoga in the West

However, yoga in the West has been promoted as a form of relaxation through exercise; hence the popularity of yoga classes at local YM-YWCAs and other civic and educational organizations. For the vast majority of gullible westerners, including many teachers of yoga, the real truth of what yoga is and what Yoga does to a person is completely hidden. Yoga is at best a meager and substitutionary form of bodily exercise. It is not aerobic (does not increase circulation of blood substantially or burn off many calories). At best, it limbers up a few joints; at worst, it can cause permanent physical damage and serious mental disorders. Jogging a few kms per day, skipping rope or riding a bicycle would have far greater physical benefits.

Let us explain. Yoga is, in fact, the art of dying. Perhaps a modern analogy would be helpful here: Armies train young men for physical combat. In the process the soldiers do reap physical benefits - they become fit and tough and alert. Yet it must be remembered that the goal of such fitness is to prepare the soldier to kill and to withstand death. Thus a temporary benefit can only be interpreted as death-oriented in the final analysis.

The medieval forms of hatha (physical yoga) which are now used in the West are largely held in disrepute in India. The vast majority of yogis and yogic systems are concerned with the more "spiritual" technology, which we shall call "spiritual or mental yoga". Prime examples are MMY and his Transcendental Meditation, a spiritual - mental form of yoga, the Radha Soami tradition and their shabd yoga, as well as the various forms of sahaj or raja yoga. In any case, whenever yoga is presented in the West, it is always advertised as healthful, life affirming and a "natural science" aimed at restoring a holistic balance to the frag-

mented human condition.

### Yoga in the East

As we have mentioned, yoga in the East is the art of dying - not only once, but over and over again. Any way you cut it, yoga is based on the ancient theory of reincarnation, the idea that each soul is reborn hundreds or thousands of times in different bodies. In each life, the soul acquires karma - scars of sin and suffering, which must be balanced or burnt away by effort. This effort is yoga. Hence yoga is a deeply religious philosophy, not a neutral technique or whimsical science. In this sense it may be viewed as a belief system, based on religious ideas and dogma concerning the nature of God, humanity and the world, although it is generally regarded as a practical technique which is related to a religious world view.

The aim of yoga, then, is to counteract "bad karma" through tireless self effort and finally obtain release from the tyranny of rebirth and suffering. Curiously and paradoxically, this release is in itself the ultimate form of death - it is the essential extinction of personal identity and existence. To use the old Indian metaphor, it is like "a drop of water becoming one with the ocean."

In the East, yogis accept this fundamentally religious presupposition. Beyond this, there is much heated debate, squabbling and mutual condescension among India's holy men concerning the best form of yoga. For the sake of brevity, we shall list the basic types of yoga found in India.

- 1) Hatha yoga - the "physical" yoga with classical poses and postures, such as standing on one's head, full lotus position, etc. It is often viewed as a crude way of arousing the kundalini, or life force.
- 2) Kriya yoga - a variation of hatha yoga. Uses mudras (various forms, postures and positions, notably the khecheri and yoni mudras), breathing techniques, and sometimes manifests in muscular spasms. Different yogis have divergent opinions on its definition, so it must be considered a somewhat ambiguous term. Various physical fetishes such as cleansing the intestin-

al tract with a long, thin cloth, pouring water through the nasal passages, etc. are sometimes part of the process.

- 3) Siddha yoga - aimed at the acquisition of supernatural psychic powers. (levitation, magical tricks and the like). Many yogis seem to operate on the presumption that this is the ultimate yoga because of the impressive phenomena allegedly produced by it, although others see it as a rude form of showmanship and a distraction from true spirituality.
- 4) Karma yoga - doing good works as a form of burning off one's karma. Similar to the Judeo-Christian concept of works-righteousness.
- 5) Laya yoga - dissolving of the mind. One of the chief aims of yoga is to reduce the functions of the rational, analytical mind, which is viewed as an impediment to spiritual growth.
- 6) Raja yoga - literally the "royal" or kingly yoga. Sometimes called sahaj yoga. It involves incorporation of one or a number of yogic disciplines (the choice is yours - whatever accommodates your disposition and posture). This yoga is usually a "head" yoga, i.e. spiritual/mental. It is also a debated term and therefore somewhat ambiguous.
- 7) Gnana yoga - (or gyan). Probably the oldest and most original. Found in the Upanishads (early scriptures) and upheld by the old schools of orthodox sannyasins. This is the gnostic yoga of deep wisdom (or more accurately, an existential enlightenment as realization based on objectless fixation) combined with tapas (austerities). It utilizes the most rigorous total approach in taming the mind, body and soul.

### Tantric Yoga

On some level, most yoga seems to have elements of tantra found in it. Tantra is a form of yoga which utilizes a systematic technique whereby the kundalini (the life force which is envisioned as a serpent power which is coiled at the bottom of the spine) is aroused by psycho-spiritual methods and travels up the six chakras or spiritual centers of the body, i.e. 1) anal/spinal, 2) genital, 3) navel, 4) heart, 5) throat and 6) third eye (middle of the forehead). The seventh is the crown chakra, which is

synonymous with liberation from the body (samadhi or moksha).

In classical tantra, the coiled serpent at the bottom of the spine is Shakti, the female energy or goddess. She is awakened and arises slowly to the crown chakra, where she unites with the male energy or god, Shiva. A literal "cosmic orgasm" is thereby produced, according to the yogis, and the yogi then dissolves into samadhi, or bliss-consciousness. According to many yogis, physical death comes shortly (21 days) after this experience, unless you have been born a saint; in which case you become a guru.

This sexual aspect of tantra has been divided into two schools: the right hand tantrics, who use sexuality as imagery, and the left hand tantrics, who engage in ritual sexual intercourse (maituna) as part of the tantric sadhana (discipline or means of salvation). Because of the conservative attitude toward overt sexuality that dominates Indian culture, many yogis are circumspect about tantric practices and their own tantric connections. Undoubtedly, this is due to the reputation of the maituna ritual. A good example of the Indian reaction against this may be seen in rejection of Rajneesh's liberation attitude toward sexuality, which has made him an object of scorn within much of orthodox Hinduism. It actually appears that tantra is more popular in the West, at least in its overt sexual connotations, as it gives meaning and form to sex, a problem that the "post Christian" generation has struggled with.

On a more esoteric level, which is perhaps the correct approach, tantra alludes to the reconciliation of polarities, e.g. male and female, good and evil, et. al. Thus we may say that it is connected with a stabilization of the prana (life force) into a state of equilibrium. Here we see parallels with the Taoist yin-yang, the Zen Buddhist's satori, and the orthodox Buddhist's nirvana. Thus, if tantric kundalini praxis may be viewed as a reconciliation or stabilization of the life force, as perceived in creation, we might view tantra as the lowest common denominator of yogic practice.

Historically, the origin of tantra is hard to trace, though it seems to have arisen more or less simultaneously in Kashmir,

Tibet, Bengal, and Kerala. The date is uncertain, but it is definitely an A.D. phenomenon, perhaps about the sixth century. It may be viewed as an attempt to deal with human sexuality and its attendant problems by transcending physical sexuality via psycho-spiritual techniques.

Another option is to downplay the role of tantric sexual symbolism and kundalini in yoga. All yoga is at least partially kundalini yoga, but yogic schools differ as to where the process begins and what its final aim is. To some yogis, the sexual aspect of kundalini and tantra is secondary or non-existent; the kundalini power is seen as a psychic-physical energy which must be transformed into the realm of pure spirit. This process may not begin as a primordial sexual energy in the lowest chakra, but is aroused in the upper chakras, i.e. the heart, throat, or third eye. Hence it is only a partial or modified kundalini energy with the ultimate objective of absorption or bodily and psychic energy back into the realm of pure spirit, or purusha, via raja or sahaj yoga. Ultimately, it is the undoing, or devolution of God's creation by (attempted) human means. In this respect, sexuality may not be used in any way, or only act as a symbolic adjunct to the whole process of the ultimate yogic goal of the illegitimate divinization of humanity.

In any event, yoga cannot be affirmed as anything but an anti-Christian and an anti-biblical world view. It is not the fulfillment of life. It is in fact, the art of dying, both over and over again and finally and permanently in the annihilation of self and personal identity. Yoga negates the reality and goodness of God's creation by either denying it or annihilating it through a mythical absorption into the void or absolute. It creates an artificial separation between soul and body, physical and spiritual reality, and ultimately and most lethal, a denial of the reality of evil and suffering. Yoga is introverted escapism, avoiding all responsibility and concern, except for the falsely 'deified Self.

### III. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF OUR RESEARCH IN INDIA

Gathering facts is usually easier than interpreting them, as most students and scholars know. Needless to say we encountered

this difficulty during our prolonged discussion of the theological significance of Indian religions. Our task has been to evaluate an international spiritual phenomenon as it has arisen and manifested itself in India. It should be pointed out that our interest is not simply that of scholarly understanding of native Indian religions. While this is important and necessary, our main concern has been practical, since many Indian religious philosophies and teachings have spread with alarming swiftness in the West during the past 15 years. In particular, we see Hindu and Buddhist influences, as well as many aberrations of these religions, having a powerful impact in western society. (Our research has been primarily centered around variations of Hinduism, since Buddhism is now only a small minority in India, with about 5 million adherents).

Before we deal with theology, we would like to call attention to the reality of the Hindu counter-mission in the West, which may be traced back to the appearance of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Pseudo-Hindu movements such as Theosophy also arose at that time and have continued to influence western philosophy in both subtle and overt ways throughout this century, culminating in the current bouillabaise of "new age groups".<sup>⊠</sup>

Beginning in the 1950's, an increasing number of swamis and gurus from the East began arriving in the USA and Europe. Clearly, some of them were being "sent", while others, such as Maharishi, were sending themselves. This counter-mission (we call it thus, because it seems to represent a reactionary trend or attempt to counter the efforts of Christian missionaries in India) has raised the question of what sort of organization, if any, lies behind this effort to spread the Indian religions in the West. Though details are scarce, there is at least some evidence that one of the moving forces behind these Hindu efforts is old and orthodox

<sup>⊠</sup>The term New Age may be defined the philosophy espoused by a growing multitude of eclectic and syncretistic groups of recent origin, which have incorporated features of the Hindu/Buddhist world view with modern psychology, occultism and some "awareness" therapies. The best example in this report would be Rajneesh.

Order of Shankaracharyas and its ochre-robed monks, or at least a number of offshoots from this order, working independently.

At any rate, there seems to be a defined antagonism toward orthodox Christianity among these movements, but this antagonism is rarely expressed in blunt terms, at least for public consumption. Instead, the Hindu countermissions (which have parallels within Buddhism, as we have mentioned) have adopted a policy of subtle syncretism, affirming Christ as a great master or Jewish guru, but dismissing orthodox Christianity as a perversion of Jesus' original message (on the flimsiest of scholarly evidence). Again, the highly questionable idea that Jesus spent his "lost years" between 12 and 30 in India studying eastern mysticism with a variety of yogis and holy men of assorted persuasions is a frequent theme.

Traditional "eastern mysticism" is a vague concept, and admittedly an inadequate one. Our long discussion on what to call the "spiritual consensus" or common ground of Indian philosophy and religion never yielded an entirely satisfactory answer. The following definitions and terms were proposed and considered:

- Hinduism. We concluded that Hinduism as such is a semi-artificial term, which represents an attempt to put a label on a multitude of yogic and other traditions.
- Occultism. While this was acceptable to some as a philosophic definition à la Theosophy, which represents a certain world view, it was rejected because of its usual association with black magic, witchcraft, etc.
- Dualism. (The view that there are two eternally opposed principles in the universe, which always have, and always will co-exist. They are sometimes represented as centrifugal vs. centripetal force, or dark vs. light). This was unacceptable because the Judeo-Christian world view can also be interpreted as dualistic, in a certain temporary sense. (Not to be confused with Persian Dualism). See discussion of this question below. Furthermore, not all Indian traditions are dualistic.
- Monism. (The philosophy that all reality is of one basic essence, principle, or source - "All is One" - and creation is an emanation, or illusion; only a facet of the Absolute).

While this term does represent a reality within much of Indian religiosity (e.g. advaita), it is really a western term. Furthermore, it is incompatible with the strong dualistic tendencies in India.

We concluded that the problem of definition was really one of semantics and hermeneutics, and came up with the compromise term of neo-gnosticism (with reference to the above concepts) as a catch-all term which would describe the "bedrock metaphysic" of the Indian-yogic philosophy that we encountered. Many of the points of this philosophy have been detailed in the discussion on yoga; further elaboration will follow. Another alternative term which met with little or no objection was "non-Christian mysticism".

It was also agreed that there were substantial differences between Christianity and neo-gnosticism on such pivotal issues as the nature of good vs. evil; the nature of humanity; the nature and/or definition of God; the view of physical creation and the nature and means of salvation or liberation from the human condition. These points were not elaborated on in the plenary session for lack of time. It should also be noted that neo-gnosticism is not only an Indian phenomenon, or even exclusively Asian. As a philosophy it finds its roots in universal tendencies and expressions in all cultures.

The problem of semantics was also discussed - particularly the concern about how neo-gnostics are using Biblical language to confuse many nominal Christian believers. For example, the whole concept of dualism is viewed by the neo-gnostics as a balancing or reconciling of polarities, such as in tantra or advaita. Spiritual technology, i.e. various forms of yoga, are used to affect this, aiming at a unified person, or ultimately, a unified cosmos.

In contrast to this, the cross of Christ must not be viewed as a Jewish version of yin-yang, nor was Jesus a Hebrew guru who wandered about Palestine teaching vaguely esoteric concepts of "Christ-consciousness" and yoga. Biblical dualism must be viewed in other terms, e.g. historical - the present age and the one to come, in which evil will be overcome; ethical/moral -

the reality of evil and sin and God's opposition to it and judgement of it; and also relational - each person's personal relationship to God as "Other", not the inherent divinity of humanity as expressed through monism, pantheism and dualism. Many Christians do not understand these distinctions, and so the neo-gnostic gurus and philosophers have been able to make substantial inroads into the Church, causing confusion and the conversion of Christians to various forms of neo-gnosticism. Church leaders need to understand and teach these distinctions to avoid such senseless and often tragic bewilderment.

#### Reincarnation: Samsara and Karma

One of the foundations of neo-gnostic philosophy is the old idea of reincarnation, or transmigration of souls - the notion that each soul is reborn again and again, (samsara) hopefully working off past sins, misdeeds, or negative actions (karma). As we have observed, all yogic systems presuppose reincarnation, which may also be defined as a highly refined system of works-righteousness or self-salvation. It should be emphasized that Christianity has never taught or condoned the doctrine of reincarnation, since the atoning death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins renders such a concept pointless and useless.

Reincarnation has many faces in the East as well as in the West. While it is a commonly held neo-gnostic doctrine, there is an extraordinary amount of speculation about the mechanism and details of rebirth. Thus, it can be comfortably reinterpreted and accommodated to the teachings of any guru or new age group. In the West it is often viewed as a positive idea - a great adventure and a wonderful experience of the human condition in all its imagined glories. Needless to say, this is a rather naive view of both reincarnation and human nature. Asians recognize reincarnation for what it is, an eternal wheel of drudgery, chaos and suffering. Reincarnation is therefore viewed as negative reality in India; an undesirable state of affairs from which all people should seek release.

Its popularity as a seemingly credible answer to the question of life after death in the West can be traced to a number of probable causes:

1) The failure of the political idealism of the 60's has turned many in the direction of spiritual self-fulfilment. While a large number have turned to Christianity, many have also been attracted to the evolutionary optimism of reincarnation and neo-gnostic thought. 2) The idea of reincarnation is thought to be compatible with contemporary scientific theories on evolution. Thus there is presumed to be a scientific basis for the spiritual theory of rebirth. 3) Reincarnation and karma seem to provide a convenient, if somewhat unsatisfactory explanation for the status quo, while simultaneously encouraging moral and ethical procrastination as part of dharma (the inevitability of what must be; e.g. "it is the dharma of fire to burn").

While there has been considerable quasi-scientific and pseudo-scientific data in recent years concerning the alleged memories of past lives, complete with some supposedly "documented" historical proofs, it must be stated flatly that reincarnation can be neither proved nor disproved via empirical means. Thus, our real task is to evaluate its consequences, in terms of theology, philosophy, ethics and personal relationships.

### Reality or Maya?

Our theological evaluation closed with a discussion of the nature of reality and some observations on "eastern" vs. "western" thought. The neo-gnostic idea of maya (the world as an illusion or a creation of the mind - sometimes known in the West as Berkeleyanism)<sup>1</sup> is a fundamental building block of neo-gnostic thought. This idea cannot be blended very well, if at all, with Judeo-Christian thought or Aristotle, yet there has been an attempted synthesis by the neo-gnostic missions in the West.

This synthesis has seemingly been brought about by necessity. The profusion of ideas, philosophies and religions which are available to the average westener in his or her 20's is a bewildering smorgasbord or ideological cafeteria from which it is extremely difficult to choose. Thus, many people will be attracted by any system that offers an escape from the barrage of choices

1) No relation to the famed California city which goes by the same name, although it has come to be ironically appropriate! It is attributed to British philosopher George Berkeley.

confronting them. This is where many of the established cults enter in, with their easy answers to life's difficult questions (i.e. we're right and everyone else is wrong). Many people are relieved to find an authoritarian and charismatic figure to make the choices for them. This syndrome is undoubtedly one of the large factors contributing the rise of new religious movements, and the authoritarian cults in particular.

But perhaps the dominant approach is that of the previously mentioned synthesis, syncretism, or "holism", used by most of the gurus and new age groups. Here we find an attempt to blend eastern and western philosophy into a monolithic affirmation of life. The world is seen as both real and unreal, physical and spiritual, although the old gnostic separation between the phenomenal and the ephemeral are maintained. Here we also find Judeo-Christian theological terms and concepts ripped out of context and used to support neo-gnostic views: God is spoken of in personal terms (on the exoteric or "public" level); atonement becomes "at-one-ment", referring to a monistic reconciliation of all things; and karmic fate takes on the nuances of personal choice and responsibility.

All in all, it can get quite confusing, at least on the surface. Yet, we cannot throw up our hands in existential abandonment or bewilderment. There must be a concerted effort on the part of the Church to recapture and reemphasize the depths and riches of Christian spirituality and heritage that has lain somewhat neglected and has driven many to the neo-gnostic camp looking for answers.

-Compiled by Mark Albrecht and edited by other tour members

## BOOK REVIEW:

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PARAMHANSA

Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramhansa Yogananda

(London: Rider & Co., 1969; available in 14 languages)

About a quarter of a century after Swami Vivekananda brought the "Hindu Renaissance" to the West in the 1890's, Paramhansa Yogananda arrived in Boston. Sent by his guru to spread the teachings of kriya yoga, Yogananda proved himself a man fit for the job, charming audiences throughout the U.S.A. with his soothing syncretistic message that Hinduism and Christianity were really the same after all.

Yogananda claims to have personally initiated over 100,000 westerners into his form of kriya yoga in the 32 years that he carried on his mission in the United States. When he died in 1952, his Self Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles had grown into a large organization which has in turn given birth to a number of other groups and gurus over the last three decades; he is one of the true "apostles" of western neo-Hinduism. Although this autobiography was first published in 1950, it has become a classic - almost required reading for every western seeker, and in the context of this issue of Up-date, the time has come to review it again.

Written in the last years of his life, Autobiography of a Yogi is a polished and melodramatic account of a life which has more supernatural twists and turns than Alice in Wonderland. The author's life is portrayed as a constant and continual flow of overwhelming paranormal events - conversations with Kali and Jesus, control over natural forces, meeting ageless gurus in materialized castles in the Himalayas, etc., etc. - myriads of things which are so unbelievable that the reader has to ask if Yogananda is serious or if he is writing a spoof. Whether he has made these events up out of the thin air of imagination or whether his yogic practices had conditioned his mind to accept his every fantasy as fact, is anyone's guess. Probably

the only truly supernatural feat recorded in the book is the fact that Yogananda drove his old Ford across America, through Europe to India and back again in 1935. Where he ever found spare parts is a true mystery, which he never explains in the book. Perhaps he was able to materialize them.

The guru's message, repeated over and over again, is a familiar one: "All religions say the same thing - namely that we're all God, if only we will stop to realize it. This realization can be accomplished in many ways, but my technique is the best and the fastest."

Kriya yoga is interpreted in various ways by different yogis and scholars. To Yogananda it meant "to rise above the duality of creation and perceive the unity of the Creator as man's highest goal." This perception is based totally on inner personal experience, as in all yogic systems - "It calms the dualistic turmoil by divine inner certainty." As in all forms of yoga, Yogananda's idea of salvation is liberation from the agony of reincarnation and suffering. He dismisses the staggering problem of evil and suffering by stating that "this cyclic pattern (reincarnation) assumes a certain anguishing monotony; after man has gone through a few thousand human births, he begins then to cast a hopeful eye beyond the compulsions of maya (illusion)." He goes on to say that the average person or soul needs one million "normal, disease-free" years to evolve to cosmic consciousness (salvation or liberation). This equals 20,000 lives if we use an average of 50 years per life; yet Yogananda claims that his kriya yoga can do this in three years(!) His method seems to be a form of kundalini yoga, as he speaks of "the regenerative effects of the spine," but otherwise does not divulge his esoteric practices. Presumably it costs more to obtain them than the price of his book.

Needless to say, Yogananda insists that all the great spiritual leaders of history have practiced some form of kriya. He says that this was especially true of Jesus, and even Paul, who "knew kriya yoga, or a technique very similar." Yogananda, who frequently wore a crucifix, was a true adept when it came to gnostic interpretation of Christian scripture. His book is

heavily sprinkled with quotes from the Bible, tailored to disarm his culturally Christian audience. Barely a chapter goes by without a dissertation on "Jesus, the kriya guru."

Quoting the Bible is something that Hindus have only begun to do in the last century, and people like Yogananda have refined it to an art. Apart from severing his quotations from their immediate context, he frequently adds explanatory notes.

Examples: "St. John testified 'But as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' (even to them who are established in Christ Consciousness.)" - John 1:12. Or, "So shall my word (creative Aum vibration) be that which goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void..." - Isaiah 55:11-12.

Yogananda of course presupposes that all people are essentially God and that they have simply forgotten their first estate. Through his yoga techniques they can again realize their true Divinity. Such a notion is not found anywhere in the Bible, which consistently underscores the eternal and radical difference between God and his creation, and salvation is accomplished through forgiveness of sin and faith in Jesus Christ; self effort through yogic manipulation is of no consequence in the Judeo-Christian scriptures.

Nonetheless, the author is so brazen as to claim that Jesus appeared to him to aid him with his yogic commentary on the New Testament: "I implored Christ to guide me in divining the true meaning of his words, many of which have been grievously misunderstood for twenty centuries. One night while I was engaged in silent prayer, my room became filled with opal-blue light. I beheld the radiant form of the blessed Lord Jesus. A young man, he seemed to be of about twenty-five, with a sparse beard and moustache. His long black hair, parted in the middle, was haloed by shimmering gold...After a few moments, he spoke to me in beautiful words of reassurance." Yogananda does not divulge these personal words, and that is the end of the narrative. Indeed, in the context of all the other gods, apparitions, disembodied gurus and ghosts that he speaks

to on a more-or-less daily basis, the "appearance" of Jesus is simply another confirmation of his world view. Nonetheless, many of his gullible and theologically naive western readers probably take it for granted that it really was Jesus, come to give his blessings to Yogananda's spurious interpretation of the New Testament, and religion in general. Sadly, nothing could be further from the truth.

When he is not promoting his eccentric view of Christianity, the guru promotes his own understanding of basic Indian metaphysics. In typical fashion, he stratifies life into two artificially separate categories, relegating the world and nature to the realm of illusion (maya) - "Newton's law of motion is a law of maya<sup>⊠</sup>...nature herself is maya." Like many Indians, he is a film buff and frequently uses a celluloid analogy. "Just as motion picture images appear to be real, but are only combinations of light and shade, so is the universal variety a delusive seeming."

Consequently, life is just a big movie for Yogananda - it is the "cosmic motion picture as real and unreal as the theatre news reel...a play within a play...creation is light and shadow both, else no picture is possible. The good and evil of maya must ever alternate in supremacy."

This last statement is very significant, for it is one of the few times that he lets down his guard and the despairing reality of his time-worn philosophy is shown for what it is: evil is an eternal and cyclic reality from which no one ever escapes. Not even the guru.

On the last page, he exults, "The blessed role of kriya yoga in the East and West has hardly more than just begun. May all men come to know that there exists a definite, scientific technique of Self realization for the overcoming of all human misery." May all men come to know that there is no definite, scientific technique for overcoming human misery. Even if there were, this variety of kriya yoga would not be it.

-Heinz Zeit

<sup>⊠</sup>Judging from his descriptions, Newton's law of "illusionary motion" did not apply to his faithful old Ford, which seems to have been quite real.

## HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

Dr Crowley's letter to Update (Dec., 1980, p. 16) is fascinating and important. In it history comes to life: Vishnu turns against Shiva as he has done down through the centuries. The eternal struggle between the two principles goes on.

Especially interesting (in the context of the article on which Dr Crowley comments) is the attack upon the great Shankaracharya and his sort of monistic and anti-personalist teaching. This is the decisive point on which the old antagonism between Vishnu and Shiva turns. And it is the point on which we as Christian theologians might feel much closer to the Vishnu tradition and therefore to Hare Krishna. Though God is beyond our human possibilities, he is also personal and closer to us than we are to ourselves.

But then - how can a guru escape his humanity? Why can Hare Krishnas forget the true transcendence of God when it comes to the worship of Prabhupada? This is the major point which must be dealt with in this dialogue. For us the guru worship makes all the true insights which are found in ISKCON untrue and opens the door to manipulation and misuse of other human beings. Any person who pretends or aspires to be more than human becomes less than human. And that includes gurus - all gurus - both within the Shiva tradition and the Vishnu tradition.

Another point of importance is Dr Crowley's use of the word tantra. He uses the word in another way than it is used in Acyutananda Swami's article (reprinted by permission from Back to Godhead.) Dr Crowley knows well - since he is a scholar in Hindu studies - that tantra is more than Shiva tantra and Shakti tantra. It is also Vishnu tantra, as the other article proves.

Dr Crowley, in an interesting dialogue in my office, once referred to the excellent book by Edward C. Dimock Jr. from Chicago: The Place of the Hidden Moon, Erotic Mysticism in the Vaisnava-Sahajiya Cult of Bengal (1966). According to Dr Crowley himself, this book tells the story of the background and creative milieu from which ISKCON came to life. But the tantric nature of that tradition is quite obvious. How then can he make such a clear-

cut distinction between the "tantrists" and the real believers? It somehow does not fit.

Dr Crowley describes ISKCON as a group in which sex is preserved only for specific times of procreation, not for pleasure. But this is so far away from the erotic mysticism of the Vaisnava-Sahajiya tradition that the tradition thereby seems to be broken. What is the explanation?

Furthermore, Dr Crowley's comments on the "lost years" of Christ, and the "illusion" of his crucifixion are far below his normal level of argument. These ideas are without any basis and belong to the area of fertile imagination.

More important are Dr Crowley's statements about the coming "Hinduized" Christianity and the rebirth of gnosticism. He asks, "Wouldn't the 'Hinduization' of Christianity mean that we've come full circle at last?" I have no doubt that he is right. Such a sort of Christianity would mean that we have returned to the beginning, at least in one sense: we are going to have the same sort of struggles as the battle between the young church and her gnostic surroundings. At that time the same syncretistic synthesis was put forward in various forms of "gnostic Christianity." The same happens today, only the true Christian church has learned from the experience and hopefully grown wiser over the years.

-Johannes Aagaard

## WE HAVE READ...

### MOON LOSES A BIG ONE

The longest and costliest libel suit in British legal history came to an end on March 31st, when a jury ruled against the Unification Church and ordered them to pay costs of £750,000 (\$1.6 million). The suit stemmed from an article written in 1978 by the London Daily Mail, in which the newspaper called the church "an evil cult which breaks up families and brain-washes people."

The head of the British Moonies, Dennis Orme, sued the Daily Mail for libel; the case, which could have ruined the newspaper if they had lost, took six months to resolve. More than 100 witnesses testified, many of them family members of the Moonies.

In the end, the jury decided that the Daily Mail was justified in its statements, and even attached a rider to the verdict, saying that the Unification Church's tax free status should be investigated "on the grounds that it is a political organization." 140 members of Parliament agreed several days later.

The story revolved around two sisters, Judy and Jane Salter, of Coulson, England, who joined the church in San Francisco. Orme charged that the story was inaccurate, distorted and defamatory. The sisters testified for the Unification Church, but their father testified for the Daily Mail. The judge commented that one of the saddest aspects of the case was the way in which the Salter family had been broken up.

After the verdict, the church attempted to shrug off the loss, saying "It's the age-old story of religion. You attack it, you make it stronger." The Daily Mail editorialized after the victory, saying that the the Moonies offer some things which are lacking in modern society - "discipline, celibacy, the advantage of owning no possessions and the comfort of a close community life. But no one seeing the brainwashed and conditioned youngsters - zealots and helots - working without self-thought for the greater glory of their luxury-loving saviour, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, could possibly believe there was any good in this monstrous organization. The ruthless exploitation of such tal-

lented young people is criminally wasteful." The church has about 900 members in Britain.

In the United States, the Immigration and Naturalization Service said that it had arrested 13 Unification Church members in Baltimore in April for overstaying their tourist visas, and will deport them. Many of the 13, who come from 11 different countries, had been in the U.S. for years. A government spokesman said that the tactic of gaining entrance to the U.S. as tourists and then melting into the general population was commonly used by church members. He said that since 1973 more than 1,000 other Moonies had been arrested for visa violations.

#### MORE SCIENTOLOGISTS SENTENCED TO JAIL IN U.S.

Two of Scientology's top leaders were sentenced to two to six years in jail for master-minding the burglary of documents from U.S. government offices. The third-ranking leader in the hierarchy of Scientology and her assistant were extradited from England and convicted on nine counts of aiding and abetting burglary. Nine other Scientologists, including Mary Sue Hubbard, the wife of Scientology's leader, Ron Hubbard, were convicted in an earlier trial. Thus, all eleven of the original defendants were found guilty for conspiracy and/or burglary of government property.

#### CANADIAN COURT RULES ON "LEGAL HARASSMENT"

A Canadian judge has ordered the Church of Scientology to pay the legal expenses of seven defendants - all former members - against whom the church brought suit for "defamation" in 1976. The judge dismissed the suit when Scientology refused to post \$45,000 as security against court costs. He accused Scientology of abusing the legal process and ordered them to pay \$60,000 to the defendants to cover their expenses. The decision bears importance since it sets a precedent against such tactics of legal harassment by wealthy NRMs, which are quite frequent.

#### 3HO FILES SUIT IN THE U.S.

The Sikh Dharma brotherhood (Happy, Healthy, Holy Organization, or 3HO) filed suit in the U.S. in March, claiming discrimination

against them.

The case stems from a dispute about a course that was being taught by them in Arizona, where the 3HO received a government grant to teach yoga, breathing exercises and nutrition in the public schools. Shortly after the program was started, it was halted by officials, who were afraid that the Sikhs were actually teaching and promoting their religious beliefs. Officials cited the 1977 decision against TM in New Jersey as a precedent which forbade the use of government money to teach yoga or meditation, since they are a form of religious practice. Religion and state are strictly separated in the U.S. according to the Constitution.

3HO filed suit against the local school board, claiming that they were not teaching religion at all and that they were being discriminated against because of their Indian-style dress and turbans. They also claimed violation of their rights to freedom of speech and expression and for loss of reputation. However, in a letter to the advisory board of the sponsoring agency, the Pima County Health Department, they seemed to contradict themselves, claiming that the real problem was that they were being stopped from exercising freedom of religion by being dropped from the program.

#### RYAN'S DAUGHTER BECOMES A FOLLOWER OF RAJNEESH

The 28 year old daughter of Leo Ryan, the U.S. congressman killed at Jonestown, has become a follower of Bhagwan Rajneesh in Poona, India. Shannon Jo Ryan told the Los Angeles Times that she does not think that there are any parallels between Jones' group (The People's Temple) and the Rajneesh Foundation. However, she added the following ironic statement: "I've heard other people say that 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, but I don't believe he would ever do that."

After the Jonestown tragedy, U.S. consular officials in India were ordered to visit Rajneesh's ashram in Poona, as well as

other influential gurus to assess the possibility of a similar occurrence. A U.S. official in Bombay concluded that "I don't think we have any Jim Jones here, but if one of these guys (gurus) suddenly turned sour, his followers would do just about anything he asked. That's the unsettling thing."

#### RAJNEESH STOPS TALKING; REPORTED TO BE ILL

Bhagwan Rajneesh gave his last public lecture on 24 March, then lapsed into "a new and ultimate stage of his work" - silence. Everyone, including his disciples, were taken by surprise when it was announced the following morning that Rajneesh has discontinued his series of daily discourses, which he had given in Poona every day for the last seven years.

Also discontinued were his evening darshan sessions, in which he would normally initiate disciples. This function will be taken over by Ma Yoga Laxmi, Rajneesh's secretary and managing trustee of the Rajneesh Foundation, and two other top disciples. The guru will still be available for one hour periods of silent meditation, which were scheduled to begin on the 1st of May.

The Foundation issued a "historical declaration" elaborating Rajneesh's supposed reasons for the stoppage. Swami Krishna Prem, the Foundation's press officer, said that "over the past few years, Bhagwan had said many times that truth can never be expressed in words, and that his verbal discourses were simply a method of preparing his disciples for silence."

The real reason may be that the 49 year old Rajneesh is said to be seriously ill. The Times of India reported on 20 April that "It was learned that Acharya Rajneesh was suffering from a serious ailment and had been undergoing medical treatment." The type of illness is not known.

The Times also reported that the Rajneesh theatre groups which had been performing Shakespeare and other plays over the last two years, would also observe silence by shutting down. A press statement from the ashram said that since the new phase of Rajneesh's work was to be silent, the community of sannyasins at the ashram would also be "going inwards."

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