



POONA

Orgie oder Offenbarung?

THE LOVING GIFT THAT PENETRATES

By Spiegel reporter Wilhelm Bittorf on the Ashram in Poona and the quest for Eastern wisdom. DER SPIEGEL, 2 March

The young German woman wants to sell her Calvin Klein designer jeans and a leather belt from Ibiza, two fancy shirts, some perfumed powder, and two small bottles of lotion. She is blond with blue eyes and is sitting on the ground, three steps away from an Indian vegetable vendor, relics of her earlier existence laid out in the dust before her. She is wearing a reddish orange smock. She has a new Indian name, "Ma Deva Dasani" which means the woman who serves God. Around her neck is a wooden necklace with a medalion which has a photograph of the guru to which she has dedicated herself.

You can tell that her parents were probably the most charming mixed doubles at their tennis club at home. Also her parents obviously did what they could in raising her. They even read Doctor Spock in order to do it better. Therefore they would be at a loss to see their golden child as a fresh "Ma" sitting her on the street in the Indian city of Poona in the bright sunlight among unwashed vendors who cannot even dream about the life this young German has left behind like a no longer needed bra. She smiles and looks right through the motor rickshaws that are going by her with a lot of noise. Not even the snake charmer can arouse her interest.

What is Ma Deva Dasani, alias Ulla M. from Mannheim thinking about? She is hoping to sell her things to Indian students who are crazy about jeans if they dare to wear them at all. Does this blond Ma have to sell her things because she needs money? No, not yet, because she wants to get rid of everything that connects her to her earlier existence. "The only thing that means anything to me now is what Bhagwan wants."

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is the name of the man whose followers think of him as a divine person with cosmic powers. Ma Deva Dasani is also feverishly looking forward to the evening when Bhagwan will have a late lecture where she can participate. Then the master will appear to transmit his supernatural emanations in an "Energy Darshan" to his followers. "Darshan" means "the seeing" in Hindu. How often has this golden child from Mannheim experienced such energy ceremonies before? Twice, and both times they were unforgettable. The power of Bhagwan literally knocked her over. Did she also get diarrhea like other women did after such an energy darshan? Yes, the second time. How do you explain this? "We explain it this way; that even the body is cleansed by Bhagwan's energy. After all, we were all full of shit when we came to Bhagwan."

She gathers her smock together and leaves. The snake charmer says, "Foreigners come here to bathe in the Shakti or energy of her Bhagwan. They even pay him for it. I need a Bhagwan who gives me money."

The young people are only partially dressed and completely out of their minds. They hop around in a room with no windows. Their hair is unkempt. They hop around, fight, scream curses, and then they fall into each others arms and begin to cry, clutching each other. Other young people and many actually not so young, almost two thousand, sit on the floor in a large open hall, looking towards the podium from which their master will speak to them. They look like a human tulip field, so peaceful and colorful in their costumes in all shades of light orange to red-orange.

When the master appears, the faces change back to those of very small children who stand before a Christmas tree. The master with his Buddha-like smile. The master with his impenetrable amber eyes and his delicate and expressive hands that remind you of the feet of a bird when he twists them and holds them up. His rough but gentle voice tells his followers strange things.

"Become nobody then you will be unique.
Become a womb that I can penetrate.
You have nothing to lose but your head.
I must kill you so that you will become alive."

At the energy darshan, the master presses his thumb on the third-eye of one of his followers, just above the root of the nose. The follower begins to vibrate under the energy of the master, as if she was really plugged into an electric circuit. To loud amplified music, the pilgrims work themselves up into hysterical ecstasies of the type that only used to be seen in black churches during voodoo ceremonies.

The music stops. Screams, panting, moans - as if from a tape of a film orgy, only more real. The top woman in the middle and three sisters at her side who had also been touched by the master sink to the ground in a faint. They are carried away by the master's body guards.

These are scenes and impressions from the ashram of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh; fragments of impressions of a phenomenon that doesn't stop fascinating the German public. The reader of BILD knows that Bhagwan has a "sex convent" in Poona. They know this since Eva Renzi did not know how to appreciate the therapeutic elan with which some of Bhagwan's followers jumped on her to free her of her hang-ups. The leader of the "Suddeutschen Zeitung" has been enlightened by Carl's Widmann that Bhagwan has gathered around himself a "clique of the soul", a sort of art Club Mediterranee with a touch of "bordello" and some meditation.

One of the reporters was so taken with Bhagwan that he threw himself at the feet of the blessed one and stayed with him. This is Jurg Andreas Elten from STERN, now known as Swa Satyananda or "honored true happiness". In his book on his experiences, he describes Bhagwan's ashram as a place "which Richard Wagner would never have believed possible; a combination of Venus's caves and the grail castle."

"If my old friends and colleagues could see me here, who would not feel envy? This beautiful intelligent psychology professor from America truly loves me in the most original and romantic way," writes the 53 year old drop out about his encounter with one spontaneous Bhagwan follower.

Therefore the curiosity about Poona keeps growing; the curiosity about this "cosmic mixture of college, commune, church and carnival" as the American Bernard Gunther describes it. Long lines form wherever "Ashram in Poona" film of Munich filmmaker Wolfgang Dobrowoln is shown. However there are even longer lines where one signs up at the ashram for meditation courses and therapy groups.

So great is the press of pilgrims, above all from Germany, that soon a super ashram is to be built on the Arabian Sea; an orange city where as many as ten thousand Bhagwan followers can find room. At the same time, the questions about this group grow.

One can't describe it as a youth cult unless one can describe a seventy year old as a pubescent youth. This is how old the oldest follower of the forty-nine year old Bhagwan is. Only one third of his followers are under twenty-five; the majority are between twenty-five and forty. Lately a number of people have become noticeable in Poona, namely German who used to follow the teachings of the Rudolf Steiner.

One member of the ashram is a mathematics professor who didn't find contentment in a study at the University of California at Berkeley. A lawyer from Munich who worked for eleven years for the SPD suddenly became aware at age thirty-three that she would have to die; not right away, but sometime. She discovered that the SPD didn't know anything about that and didn't know what to tell her, so she turned to Bhagwan. Another German claims

that she went to India in order not to become a "second Ulrike Meinhof at home."

A thirty-six year old doctor from Middlesex, England, however, traveled to India on her vacation with a volume of Herman Hesse under her arm and she saw proof of what the old master already said in 1914. "The whole east breeds religion like the West breeds reason and industry. Everywhere we can see the superiority of our civilization and industry, and everywhere we see that the people's of the East enjoy a goodness that we miss and that we therefore put even higher than all our superior techniques."

No, Bhagwan is not a deceiver of minors and the poor. He is also not a mail order yogi like old Maharishi and his TM which is exported just like the Japanese export their Toyotas and Mitsubishis. He is not an overfed mascot, no buttercream Buddha like the young Maharaji of the Divine Light Mission. Nor does he have much in common with the ash covered seers who sit in mountain caves, keeping silent.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh does not only stand for the marketing of the mysterious East. He also stands for the steadily growing attraction for the oriental imagination on the west. In him is concentrated not only the light of enlightenment, but also a cultural counter-movement against the West that has not only gripped Islam, but also the West. The result is that more and more westerners are seeking the lacking religion and the meaning of life in India. Are the gurus like Bhagwan conquering the West spiritually like the West once conquered India physically?

The city of Poona shows the paradox of Indian and western relations. The city lies 180 kilometers southeast of Bombay and 560 meters above sea level on the south Indian plateau. The English built the city into a garrison and villa city which the colonial masters could recuperate in the dry air from the moist heat of Bombay. Poona today has 1.1 million inhabitants and has remained an unIndian Indian city.

Poona has many industries. There is a university, several medical colleges, a psychiatric clinic, the Indian film school, and a Goethe institute, not a holy city, not a temple city, but a place where Indians pursue more western lifestyles than in most parts of India. And it is to this place that the westerners make their pilgrimage to submerge themselves in eastern wisdom.

The Indians in Poona are irritated by this. "It is crazy," says Dr. Mohan Agashe, the chief of the psychiatric section of the Sassoon hospital. "These people from the West come here because of an old magical mentality which we have tried to overcome with a lot of difficulty. Recently a student said to me, 'Why should we study western science when the westerners come to us in droves to learn how to be happy?'"

The Rajneesh Foundation has bought numerous adjoining parcels of land in the old villa section of the city since Bhagwan moved here in 1974. At that time he only had seven followers. Today, however, the swarming activity around the ashram gives the impression of a flipped out passion play in a tropical Oberammergau.

The PR man at the ashram claims over 200,000 members. The rapidly growing number of German members is already more than one-third of all "suhnyasin". This is what Bhagwan calls his followers even though "sunnyasi" means "ascetic or hermit who has conquered all desires of the flesh" in Hindu.

About four thousand westerners can be found in Poona at anytime of the year. At least a thousand of them have decided to stay there permanently and to work for the ashram. The others stay for a number of weeks, sometimes months to receive the "shakti" of the master and to bring him their "bhakti" - endless love and devotion. They have the feeling, like the Munich photo model, Sylvie Winter, of coming home and finding their real home.

But it is not a Club Med. There is only room for six hundred sunnyasin to sleep in the ashram. The majority of the followers have to find housing in the overcrowded Poona, which is often very bad. The children of comfort from west Europe and North America become the food for fleas in the shabby hotels. They also rent apartments for 300-400 Marks a month which is taking away housing from the inhabitants; and 300-400 Marks a month is usually the monthly income of an Indian doctor or engineer.

Almost all those who stay for sometime get sick. Diarrhea, ameobic dysentery, hepatitis, lice, gonorrhoea, and herpes appear periodically and are treated in the ashram clinic with shots and pills but the children of comfort from the West tolerate this with the calmness of the children of God, as Mahatma Gandhi once called the casteless and poor of India.

Most of the sunnyasins who stay for a longer time not only pay for their housing outside of the ashram but also pay for their vegetarian meals in the ashram canteen, for the doctors and for medicine. They pay as long as their money lasts. They also work six days a week, from eight to ten hours daily as kitchen help or cleaners or seamstresses for the ashram. They do not get paid for their work.

From an economic standpoint, the Rajneesh Foundation is an organization making use of unpaid labor that would have even astounded Simon Legree. The seamstresses live in the production area of the ashram to which normal Poona pilgrims have no entry. They have single or double rooms and the sewing machines stand on the veranda in front of their cells. Other than their meditations and Bhagwan's lectures in the morning, they spend the whole tropical day working. Bhagwan has called this a special form of meditation and given it nobility. They manufacture red-orange clothing, pants and shirts of different qualities that are sold in the ashram boutique in the Krishna House to new arrivals. Visitors are told that they should buy these clothes in order to adapt for the harmony.

The living conditions for the seamstresses are very poor, however, the Ma's feel chosen and privileged. They've finally achieved the honor to live in the ashram. They have a pass to the ashram canteen. They even get a little pocket money when their own money has run out. Above all, they are always near the blessed one, even if he is only seen for his morning and evening lectures, and otherwise spends all his time in his air conditioned and well guarded villa. But the followers feel his vibration wherever they are, wherever they are working and sweating.

One of the best sellers of the ashram branches makes soap and shampoo of the brand, Dharma - "right way". It flourishes thanks to Bhagwan's dislike for perfume, therefore, a visitor must constantly wash with only unscented Dharma products or else he won't be admitted to a lecture of the master. Nobody gets past the sharp nose guards who sniff the hair and neck of people entering the Buddha Hall. Whoever has the slightest trace of scent is not let past the controlling Ma's.

They also manufacture calendars and sell pictures of Bhagwan. They have brochures, the Rajneesh newsletter, records and tapes of his lectures, and meditation music.

Elton, who had been sent to a Nazi school named Napola, a kind of military brown shirt school, as a child, says that he hated nothing more in his whole life than that school. And yet, as Satyananda, he has returned to just the situation he had when he was in that school. He is dependent, has no rights, and no claims on the foundation to which he gave all his money and all the royalties from his books. He submits to the mood of an authority upon whom he has no influence. He has literally put himself under tutelage, and yet, he says, he has never felt so free. He seems to enjoy his situation and denies any similarity with his boyhood school Napola. Could there be a greater difference than that between the aggressiveness and coldness of that Nazi school and the love and

- friendliness of the ashram?

At the evening darshan, new arrivals are introduced to Rajneesh. They want to join the ashram. The guru asks a young German named Lothar, "How long do you want to stay here?"

Lothar says, "Five months."

Bhagwan says, "What kind of work did you do in Germany?"

Lothar says, "I am a gardener."

Bhagwan says, "Very good. I need more gardeners and farmers. How wonderful! You will help Mukta in the garden as long as you are here."

Lothar happily says yes.

The first and lasting impression that the visitors to Poona get is that of what rational intelligent people will put up with when someone awakens their faith and ties them to him. It astounds the western trained Indians in the area of Poona University.

"Never have people in India worked so hard as these people work for Rajneesh. It's a kind of voluntary bondage," says a professor who doesn't want his name used here for fear of repercussions from fanatical Bhagwan followers.

"If I were a cynic I would say that Rajneesh is India's revenge for the East India Company. Europeans and Americans serve him like our ancestors served the British, but the Indians did it under duress and did not pay for the privilege."

The nerve center of Bhagwan's "East India Company" reigns from a yellow colored chair in a cool white marble room on the ground floor of the Krishna house. A forty year old Indian woman with the build of a thirteen year old girl and the eyes of a science fiction princess. She is named after the Hindu goddess of riches and is called "Ma Yoga Lakshmi". She is the managing trustee of the Rajneesh Foundation. She is also the representative of the divine one who spends the whole day in his villa. Other than Lakshmi, only a British woman chosen by Bhagwan, by the name of "Yoga Vivek", has permission to enter.

Lakshmi has been managing the rapid rise of Bhagwan for more than ten years. Devotedly she sits at his feet whenever he shows himself. But all visible power in the ashram is hers and she rules the people of the sunnyasin, like Indira Gandhi would have liked to rule Indians during the crisis.

"To give oneself to work for Bhagwan," she explains, "is like having a constant orgasm. People constantly come to Ma Yoga Lakshmi's desk with requests while a young boy takes care of her feet under the desk. She and her assistant, Arup, a large Dutch woman, test all the new people. They check how they can use them and what the state of their finances are. They tell them which groups and which meditation courses would be good for them.

"We have experience," said Arup. "We also want to weed out people who could become a problem. We send them away." But what if someone unstable does get through and then goes over the border? "Well, then we give this person a tranquilizer and take them to the doctor."

Didn't you realize at the time that Eva Renzi could be a problem? "Eva Renzi was a gift from heaven," says Lakshmi with a triumphant mein. "All the publicity! She brought us thousands of new members. But one cannot be too sick if one seeks healing."

Lakshmi is the power who keeps all these smiling orange people in control, possibly even Bhagwan himself. Lakshmi decides who gets work and where they stay. She decides who will lose their canteen passes if they aren't doing enough work. Her spies tell her everything that happens in the ashram. She even knows that Satyananda Elten smokes in his room although it is forbidden. "If there were something like a big sister that went along with the big brother, than Lakshmi would be that," says Satyananda, "but Rajneesh does not think

this is bad or upsetting, just strange. After all he doesn't have an ego anymore that would allow him to be bothered by these things."

In the room behind Lakshmi's office, the heart of the organization is clattering away. The adding machines of the accountants are worked by young women who have fled from places like British Steel and other large industries. Here they have meaningful work.

A young German woman serves tea. She serves tea the whole day in the Krishna House. What did she do earlier? She used to serve for Lufthansa. "But my life as a stewardess seems so meaningless to me."

Ma Yoga Lakshmi makes a lot of telephone calls. She talks to banks, to the finance minister, and with other high officials in New Delhi. It isn't always easy to talk them into letting the many foreigners stay in Poona. She has to be very cunning to keep the foundation in a tax free status. She doesn't have too many problems in this area because Rajneesh was one of the largest contributors to Indira Gandhi's campaign fund in 1977.

From a hymn to Rajneesh: "I think I would die in this moment. I would leave my body in this moment if I really could understand, really could see how precious the loving gift of Bhagwan is that penetrates me."

The lecture is about to start. The 1500 people assembled in the Buddha Hall are told that now one may not cough anymore. It costs two and a half Marks to attend the lecture. This is more than the most expensive movie in Poona. It is 7:45.

A brand new Rolls Royce Silver Shadow pulls up. It is driven by Ma Yoga Lakshmi. Bhagwan is sitting, smiling in the back next to Ma Yoga Vivek. The car stops behind the podium on which Bhagwan's chair is. The bodyguard opens the door for Rajneesh who climbs to the podium and greets the crowd.

The faithful say this luxurious car is just a game. To drive it for only eighty yards from the villa to the Buddha Hall - it is a parody of man's dependence on material things. But if it's a parody, then Bhagwan is still trying to keep up with the Joneses. His first car was a Chevrolet Impala. In 1979, he had a Mercedes 8-cylinder. In India, a Rolls Royce costs over \$150,000 because of the enormous import taxes. One follower, however says, "Well, if the living Buddha can't have a Rolls Royce, then who does deserve one? We are not allowed to judge what Bhagwan does. We live in an absolute monarchy and since this absolute monarch is also a sage, there can be no democracy. And anyhow, in a democracy even the idiots are allowed to have a say."

What causes apparently rational people to have such opinions? Why do they suffer under their western rationality and their ego as under a migraine headache? Why are they so happy when they are freed from them by their guru? What does he give them?

From Herman Hesse (1927): "This religious or metaphysical need which is so old and as important as the need for food and love and shelter is fulfilled in more peaceful times by the church and philosophy. In today's times, however, the quest is for new formulation for meaningful new symbols, new meanings. Therefore the flourishing of many well attended cults, prophets, and groups. The success of the most outrageous superstitions because even the most unspiritual superficial non-thinking persons still have the ancient need to find a life's meaning."

From a hymn to Rajneesh: "You are the Sun behind the Sun; the Moon behind the Moon."

From a sober point of view, there is no difference between faith and superstition. All statements about a metaphysical sphere behind the visible and measurable things are similarly unprovable and true only for them who believe in them. The idea that Christ was resurrected and went to heaven is a concept that millions of people over many centuries have accepted as truth and still accept, but it is no more correct and also no more wrong than the convictions of a Bhagwan follower that her master is the man behind the moon and the light of the cosmos. Both theses are similarly removed from rationality and objective provability. Whether one thinks of the Pope as the representative of Christ or believes a guru is the new Buddha, both are a matter of faith. The masses devoted to John Paul II are in essence no different than those who devote themselves in Poona; only the church cults can have different opinions on this. The corpus christi procession is no wonder to an energy darshan; it is only more familiar.

Religious experiences, visions, mystical feelings, ecstatic fulfillment via supernatural power which is beyond observable reality, and also beyond theology and church ritual - this is what is happening to the pilgrims in Poona, the people on a quest in India. This is what happens to the mystics of all religions. This is what happens to drug addicts.

In the ELECTRIC KOOL-AID ACID TEST, a book about drugs and the drug subculture and new religions, the American Tom Wolfe says that what grips all these people, the mystics as well as the LSD fanatics, was the solution of the problem of human existence and loneliness. "A sudden enlightenment. All is One. Everything flows together. The "I" flows in the all - the all into the "I". In this flowing, I recognize and feel an energy that flows through me clearly and to which the surrounding world is totally blind."

The Christian mystics of the middle ages called it the "unio mystica" of the mystic union. The ecstatics of the orient called it "enlightenment". St. Augustine believed such experiences were the soul recognized the being of the creator, through a glass darkly, with the basics of faith. This is the best remedy against skepticism that comes from the head and reason. It was clear to all the mystics that skepticism stood in the way of the religious feeling. All of them developed methods to turn off reason or deaden it. This was the way to get ecstatic feelings and visionary alterations of consciousness. They fasted and castigated themselves. They danced until they fell into a trance. They took drugs and decided that their magical mystery show that they found was more real and true and meaningful than the real, but disappointing reality in which they lived.

Religion is also suggestion. Religious experience, the exaltation of faith, the metaphysical drunkenness are still the most effective magic that mankind has to raise himself from his fear and his past and his helplessness, or as it is said in the New Testament, "to overcome the world."

From an introductory lecture on the course, "Enlightenment Intensive" from the Rajneesh ashram: "You are not what you are. You are a virginal peak of the Himalaya. Not the son, not the daughter of your parents; not the husband or your wife; not the wife of your husband. Forget everything that you were."

Sixteen male and female members are sitting paired off on a veranda across from one another, silent, and are staring hypnotically into each other's eyes. Then one orders the other, "Tell me who you are!" No answer. "Tell me who you are!" Silence. A gong sounds. This continues on and on for a long time. "Tell me who you are!" In the Enlightenment Intensive they continue this game for eighteen hours, from awakening to an exhausted falling asleep. For three whole days the participants do nothing else than ask themselves this question about their identity and not find an answer. Silence is followed by confession, and curses of mother and father, and hysterical attacks of crying. Rolls of toilet paper are found everywhere in the room. This is not only because of the constant diarrhea of the members but also because of the tears that need to be wiped. For westerners who do not cry much cry all the more here.

"The ego is the source of all pain," says Bhagwan. "The ego is a prisoner who holds you prisoner and makes you suffer. If you give up your ego, you will be free and nothing will ever hurt you again."

The dissolution of the ego is the main goal of all the exercises in Bhagwan's ashram. Every morning at six the sunnyasin go to the Buddha Hall for Dynamic Meditation. Many go with their eyes tied (?). All of them have not eaten. What happens then comes from Rajteesh's instructions.

Phase I - For ten minutes, breathe deeply but short, chaotically through the nose. Move your shoulder rhythmically up and down. Forget everything and become breathing. Phase II - Ten minutes of catharsis. Let yourself go. Go crazy. Scream. Cry. Hop. Shake yourself. Dance. Laugh. Cooperate completely with the energy and let everything out that wants to come out. Phase III - Hop up and down with your hands held over your head for ten minutes and yell - "HOO HOO HOO". Let the sounds hammer on your sex centers. Give it all you've got. Exhaust yourself. Phase IV - Stop. Don't move for fifteen minutes. Take stock of your inner energy. Phase V - Fifteen minutes of dancing, singing, and joyful behavior.

The impression one gets from looking at this group is that of a disco in a mad house that a crazy psychiatrist has pumped full of laughing gas and itching powder. With few exceptions, the meditation ordered by Bhagwan have the same effect as that of an epidemic of St. Vitus' dance. Constantly one is stimulated to breathless activity before there is a quiet period where the sunnyasin can feel the mysterious energy.

Bhagwan feels that westerners are not adapted to passive Indian meditation where a yogi holds his breath, slows his heart beat in order to concentrate. Westerners, however, are full of unexperienced need for motion. One member says, "Bhagwan knows exactly how it is with us. He knows that westerners come to him as corpses laden with aggression from a completely dead world."

Before George Deuter, now known as Chaitanya Hari, came to India in 1973, he had experimented with drugs just like most of the sunnyasin. Bhagwan was very amused about the stories about LSD. He said that that was "exactly how life in a world was that did not have a living religion and without a living guru. In such a world, the spiritual quest is always started with hallucinogenic poisons just like primitive peoples. From a spiritual point of view, westerners are exactly as naive as the wild people in the bush. Therefore it is so easy for the guru to remove the relics of a flat and unphilosophical western upbringing from his followers."

"How very comfortable it is to sit after the morning's dynamic meditation and to feel assured that the visible world in truth is only a strip tease dancer. Yes, just a strip tease dancer. She seduced us with her many clothes and hidden charms, but still could not fulfill our hopes. It is interesting to watch the strip tease of life swinging around its clothes as long as one can see through the illusion and game and not take it seriously."

An understanding rumble moves through the listeners. Here it is again. The great Indian turn around that fascinates westerners so. The turn around that claims that things of reality are only illusions. They only exist in our experience. What we think of as being awake is sleep and dreams that we have to wake up from. Only one thing counts; only one thing is truly real - the invisible inner light behind the illusions - the True Self. According to Hindu teachings, there is something in mankind and in all living things that has nothing to do with the conscious "I", that is unchanging, eternal and complete. Three

meditation, one can get in contact with this true eternal self and grow beyond life.

Eagerly Bhagwan's followers listen when he exposes reality as madness, as a cloud, or as a theatre of fools. Europeans who take reality seriously feel relieved, yes, even freed by the chutpah of the guru, who can push aside everything that bothers people with great ease, and who only acknowledges that which is dreamed, feelings, and the positive. Why get upset over this fleeting world?

From Ma Prem Gayan, formerly Sylvie Winter: "When you notice that energy is flowing between you and another person, then there is almost nothing that can stop you from being with that person. And when the energy is not flowing anymore (and that can be a few weeks, hours, years), then you part again. There are no complications here. Contact and separation are much quicker and more intensive than outside. There are no games of hide and seek. No ~~tricks~~ ~~tricks~~. No lawyers. No fights over communal property."

Western man, who is skeptical and irreligious, can only experience high feelings, if at all, through sex. Only in a state of being in love can he let his own "I" go. Only in erotic ecstasy can such a person be gripped by a supernatural inner strength and let his own self go and flow into another person. A skeptic can conclude that other ecstatic conditions like religious enthusiasm are just aberrations of sexual and erotic rapture.

This conclusion comes very close to the mark when you look at the young female followers who are penetrated by the emanations of the master at the energy darshan and actually have a type of orgasm or simulate one while Bhagwan is rubbing the root of their nose in a masturbatory way. This is what is well expressed by a plastic American expression - "headfuck".

These are the same kinds of feelings that Franz Mesmer aroused in society women around 1800 in Europe when he approached them with his "animal magnetism" to heal them of their nervous ills. There is not a single female follower who does not happily confess that she is in love with Bhagwan, but yet not one of them would express the desire to sleep with the divine person. Is he taboo even though he awakens such erotic feelings in his followers? This is not a question that can even be asked, because all of them are convinced that Bhagwan who, after all is already half out of his body, has gone into a different dimension which has no more concern with the flesh, not even in his relationship to the Englishwoman ~~Niveky~~ ~~Niveky~~. This could be the truth or it could be wishful thinking on the part of the Ma's who have discovered their ideal father in Bhagwan.

But the guru is neither a sex maniac nor is the ashram a "sex cloister". The ~~ashramites~~ ~~ashramites~~ give the impression more of a permanent pajama party for late teenagers where very little happens beyond necking. According to Bhagwan's teachings, sexuality is only the beginning, the very lowest form of cosmic energy. This lowest form is the highest that unenlightened person can reach, but such a person cannot understand that lust only gives a hint of the continuous high that is promised by following Bhagwan's way.

"Become one with your body and your desire," Bhagwan says, "But go through your desire as through your body."

A serious sunnyasin strives for the condition where his true self is in direct communication with the cosmic consciousness without the complications of the lower part of the body and the needed partner. Long term members have left sexuality behind them. George Bentel, who is 35, says, "the meditation becomes deeper and sex just stops. It is as if you have no appetite for caviar anymore. Caviar just simply doesn't interest you."

anymore." There is a hierarchy among the membership. The chosen ones live celibate, however the people may still indulge in sex. In fact, the people should indulge in sex. For an unenlightened person, sex is still the main PR item of the ashram. Sex with a different name under a foreign sky on hard Indian beds; sex between those without egos, between those who carry energy, who let their energy flow without problems between one another, between people who are born again and then remain children for ever.

Their goal without a goal in sex as in everything else is to have complete emptiness in both mind and heart, an emptiness that is filled only with one thing: with Bhagwan Shree Rajgush, "the Sun behind the Sun - the Moon behind the Moon."

END OF FIRST ARTICLE