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More Gibberish

It's been a couple of years since Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh was jettisoned out of Oregon into a round-the-world search for a new home. Now, he's lodged comfortably at Rajneeshdham, his old ashram in Poona, India - a location he once flagrantly spurned but now embraces as a last refuge. At the ashram, his non-Indian devotees continue to have trouble getting Indian visas, and there are recurring accusations by local police that "certain persons involved in illegal activities are lodged there" (despite the ashram's well-publicized stance against drugs and other illegal activities). Although for a while it seemed circumstances were forcing the controversial guru to change his ways, recent events show his notoriously litigious program re-emerging full tilt. Even the ex-Jain's deteriorating health has not suppressed his seemingly never-ending promenade of adventures in a rebellious spirit. And there appears to be no lack of enthusiastic response - both pro and con.

The "no-mind" meditation headlines the Bhagwan's most recent list of provocative innovations. Rajneesh says it originated with a Sufi mystic named Jabbar. This meditation consists of "one hour of gibberish, absolute rubbish, any language or mixture, nothing that makes sense, as if mad," followed by one hour of absolute silence. Rajneesh asserts that by this technique the mind eventually becomes empty and, therefore, peaceful.

Another recent Rajneesh cognitive innovation is called the "mystic rose" meditation. This meditation consists of laughing three hours daily for one week, crying equal time the next week and concluding the near-month experience with a week of vipassana - watching the breath - mixed with dancing. Mankind, says Rajneesh, requires a rigorous routine like the mystic rose meditation to "cut through the two major layers of psychological scar tissue, laughter and tears, by thoroughly expressing them," so that true meditation may take place. Rajneesh

contends that the Mystic Rose meditation could take over the world.

At least one law suit filed against Rajneesh has managed to gain general public attention. Dr. Michael Strzempa-Depre, a self-styled spiritual teacher from Munich, Germany, is accusing Bhagwan of calling him a fraud (Rajneesh Times, May, 1988: "Another Fraud - Michael of Munich") after he allegedly tried to develop a following in the West as Rajneesh's Western representative and co-guru. Now, as the facts of the case begin to indicate that Strzempa-Depre has at least a few loopholes in his story, Rajneesh's official response to his followers is, "I don't know any such person. Anybody pretending that he is [knowing] me is not only fooling others, he is fooling himself, and I warn my sannyasins to avoid such fakes."

Rajneesh is a Jain from Kuchwada, Madhya Pradesh, born December 11, 1931. His followers claim that he is suffering from slow poison administered to him by enemies. Although the poison theory is questionable, the fact that he has enemies is no secret. Even Rajneesh's closest devotees concede - almost pridefully - that Bhagwan's "plainly unlimited contempt for established religions and institutions is admired, loathed, adored and detested" and that his books are "all full of anger, hatred, venom."

Although reactions to Rajneesh may range from worship to contempt, the Bhagwan is - as M. V. Kamath writes in The Book Review (New Delhi, 1988) - "certainly in no immediate danger of being forgotten."