

10 Aug 83

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been asked to comment on the life and work of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and on the activities of his community at the Rajneesh Foundation in Rajneeshpuram, Oregon.

While I have not made a detailed study of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's teachings, I am acquainted with his writings and with the Eastern traditions and culture from which he comes. Without hesitation I can say that Bhagwan is a reputable representative of an ancient religious tradition which is still alive and providing both spiritual and material help to many people. While there are many so-called religious leaders who make use of this tradition (as well as of other religious traditions) to promote their own profit and aggrandizement, Bhagwan is clearly not to be numbered among these charlatans. As his writings attest, he is a scholar of many religious views (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, and Christianity.) And as his followers attest, he has not only studied the religions of the world but perceived and been able to communicate the spirit or inner essence of them all. While his roots remain in the East, he is not seeking to promote the dominance of any one religion over others.

We in the United States need to have such authentic religious leaders among us, strange though they may seem to our Western ways. In today's world, fast becoming a global village, the various nations and cultures and religions must not only live peacefully with each other; they must also be able to understand and learn from each other. Like all nations, we North Americans must open ourselves to a greater inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. Religious leaders like Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh offer us the opportunity to grow in the art of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. If Bhagwan were not able to remain in our country, it would not only be a gross contradiction of our affirmation of religious liberty; it would also be a sad loss to both Bhagwan's followers and to Americans in general.

We need not be frightened by what we do not understand. If what is foreign to us cannot be an opportunity to learn, it can at least be an opportunity to exercise our values of religious tolerance. For many Americans, one of the most foreign aspects of Bhagwan's religious way is his decision, made in May 1981 after

many years of teaching and writing, to maintain silence. This is entirely consistent with mystical traditions of both the East and the West; the mystics tell us that when one truly experiences the Ultimate Source of all reality, one realizes that no words are adequate to express the Ultimate and that one may teach more by silence than by speaking.

Although I am not a follower of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, I have learned from him and I value his presence in my country. I hope that my fellow Americans and my government will allow him to remain in our land of many cultures and many religions.

Sincerely,

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