

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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SCHOOL OF RELIGION  
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July 19, 1983

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I have been asked to write a note in connection with Bhagwan Rajneesh's hearing with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Without in any way personally endorsing Rajneesh and his movement, I would like to make the point, as a professor of Eastern religions, that the concept of the "silent teacher" is one that is well established and accepted in India.

It has roots in the muni or "silent sage" found in Hinduism's ancient scriptures, the Vedas, where the idea of silence together with asceticism or meditation as having power to control even the gods is also presented. It is expressed also in the image of the great deity Shiva, representing the Absolute, in the form of Dakshini-murti, the silent teacher, found in many temples, especially in the South of India. Here, the deity is seen surrounded by students, but his mouth is conspicuously closed. The idea, of course, is that a truly great spiritual teacher teaches without having to rely on words, but just by what he is and by the spiritual energy that radiates from him.

In modern times, we have had Meher Baba, who maintained a vow of silence from 1925 until his death in 1969, but who was nonetheless the center of a still-existing religious movement both in India and the West. The great modern Hindu saint Ramana Maharshi (1879-1951), while not entirely silent, was recognized as one able to give both silent teaching and silent initiation. I enclose a couple of pages from a standard life, Arthus Osborne, Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge (Bombay, 1970), which illustrates how this is experienced and also gives evidence that it is an accepted aspect of Hinduism.

I hope this is of some help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert S. Ellwood", is written over the typed name.

Robert S. Ellwood  
Bashford Professor of Oriental Studies  
School of Religion

EXHIBIT "A-83"

