

# RAJNEESH FOUNDATION

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A 14/5/1a

NEWS FROM POONA

HEAD 'EM UP, MOVE 'EM OUT!



"We are going up North!" announced a beaming Ma Anand Sheela shortly before morning Satsang on May 11, thus ending weeks of incessant speculation and gossip about where the ashram might be moving, when it would be moving and--last but certainly not least--who would be moving with it.

Never before has the ashram been so thoroughly seized by rumour as it has been over the weeks preceding her announcement: will it be America (beautiful downtown New Jersey!)...or Gujarat (Kutch or some place in the desert)...or Simla, or Nepal...? Each new day brought a new rumour and the permutations seemed as endless as our wondering minds were inventive.

Finally, on the day prior to Sheela's announcement, a 'Test Your Gossip' stall was erected near the front gate, where everyone was invited to submit their guess as to where and when the ashram might be moving. Nearly 500 people participated, and on the following morning Sheela told a packed Buddha Hall that there



were no less than eleven winners, all of whom received a copy of the last darshan diary: 'The Sound Of One Hand Clapping'.

Needless to say, none of the eleven winners got it right, but some of their suggestions were ingenious to say the least. Where would it be? One wag quipped: 'On the 36th floor of Krishna House', while another thought that Deeksha might obtain the Vatican by seducing the Pope.

In the end, nothing was actually solved--no specific site was named--but everyone seemed satisfied by the definite way in which Sheela declared: 'Up North'. After Satsang she dropped a few other hints: the commune will still be in India and the move could begin to happen in eight weeks. Nobody will be left behind--Sheela promised that she, Vidya, Arup, Asha and the Ashram's other 'leading ladies' will be the last to leave--and people are not to go looking for the site by themselves.

Secrecy as to the exact location is being maintained so that speculators in the region do not try to exploit the situation. Nobody wants a repeat of the kind of prices being charged in Poona when sannyasins want a place to stay, or a bicycle, or a new robe--or a new commune!



Sheela also told the gathering that if anybody wants a vacation this is the right time to take it; once we get to the new commune there will be no time for vacations or days off. She also said that every effort should be made to maintain the existing ashram in as loving a way as possible, so that it can be handed over to any new owner in the same beautiful condition as it has always been.

Following hard on the heels of this announcement, a whole series of colour photographs appeared on the Press Office notice board, showing Ma Yoga Laxmi bundled up in warm, bright red clothing, inspecting a beautiful piece of mountainous country with lots of fir trees, spectacular views and several buildings. Everyone was left to draw their own conclusions.

The morning Satsang with Bhagwan has been filling Buddha Hall with even bigger gatherings--if that is possible--than the discourses which preceded them. As Ma Prem Maneesha said, 'Each morning is like a celebration day!' and nobody seems to regret the passing of the spoken word for an instant.

People now assemble in the hall by 8.15 a.m., and then the instructions for the new way of greeting Bhagwan are explained. The greeting is the classically



simple and beautiful mantra used in the commune created by Gautam Buddha 2,500 years ago:

'Buddham Sharanam Gachchami, Sangham Sharanam Gachchami, Dhammam Sharanam Gachchami...I go to the feet of the Awakened One, I go to the feet of the commune of the Awakened One, I go to the feet of the ultimate truth of the Awakened One.'

At about 8.30 there is the familiar sound of gently crunching gravel and a big white Rolls ghosts around the hall, up a newly-built ramp and stops just behind the new podium.

The podium itself protrudes elegantly into the sea of red and orange people like the rounded end of a seaside pier--a pier made of white marble! It is backed by two walls--also in white marble--that taper away gracefully on either side of a sliding door. The door slides back and Bhagwan walks slowly onto the 'pier', greeting his disciples with his usual radiant namaste that sweeps the entire length of the hall.

For the next hour a fabulous variety of music--ranging from effervescent Latin American to gentle, meditative flute solos--is interspersed with periods of profound silence and readings from a selection of



texts such as the Upanishads and the works of Khalil Gibran.

At the end, the mantra is repeated and the music begins again. For a long moment Bhagwan remains in utter stillness, his eyes closed, reclining gracefully in his chair. So still, so aloof, so 'gate-gate' does he seem in that moment that each morning it is a wonder that he returns to us. But there he is! Opening his eyes and unleashing a smile that begins as a tiny focus on those directly in front of him, then expands to embrace the whole gathering. Another namaste, and he is gone.

The musicians, grouped at the back of the hall, pick up a light, playful theme as the car moves round the hall, while everyone claps and sways inside. A moment longer the musicians continue, the car disappears, the chair is carried away, and the last note fades. We take our cushions, and laughingly skip out into the brand-new day.

#### Feedback on the New Phase

How are sannyasins in Poona responding to the new phase? A test of views produced the following:



Ma Alima, who until recently was a leading member of Rajneesh Theatre Group, returned from a seven-week visit to England in time to greet Bhagwan at morning Satsang on May 1st. She said: "The first thing about the new phase is that it's very hard to find words for it--because it's beyond words! I've been trying to find the right words for days and so far...."

"But it feels to me as if something very individual has disappeared and that now we're all one big pulsating heart. It's an incredible experience. For me personally, it feels like the biggest lateral leap that I've taken so far. The centre of the new phase is Satsang--there's just very little 'head' left and it feels like Bhagwan is working on a completely different level, and it's a lot less secure! But we're ready, that's an amazing thing too. It's happening and we're ready for it."

Ma Prem Asang, who is head of the ashram's typing pool in the Bodhidharma office, beamed and said: "I love it, and I've noticed there's about 1,000 more people coming to morning Satsang than there used to be for the English discourses--that's a big increase. They're simply packed in."



"For myself I experience Satsang as a beautiful bath, a morning shower. When I come out I find that all the garbage that's been collecting in my head over the past 24 hours has simply melted away, vanished. It's like magic in Buddha Hall in the mornings...everything stops."

Swami Vedamurti, one of the ashram's many excellent musicians, said: "The new-style darshan is a tremendously beautiful experience. The first few days were just amazing, because Bhagwan's physical absence somehow made his presence, his energy, even more conspicuous; Bhagwan was more present than ever before. It seemed like he was saying to us, not only that we are now on our own, but also that we are ready to be on our own. And the fact that he stopped coming to darshan was far more of an affirmation of this, than any words could be."

Ma Prem Homa, who in 1979 was helping Ma Veetasmi run the Kalptaru centre in London, and who more recently has been co-directing the activities at Saswad, commented: "I feel more connected with Bhagwan through Satsang than I was while the discourses were happening. The connection



is very strong now, and as long as I feel that, I know anything is possible. I don't miss the words--but I do miss the jokes!"