

Rajneeshpuram, OR 97148
July 22, 1983

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN :

As a former professor of English literature in Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California and as a published poet (Black Sparrow Press, City Lights, Other Voices and Denman Island Rag and Bone) I can verify that the spiritual master Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, is a man of exceptional ability in the Arts.

Bhagwan's spontaneous, verbal discourses given daily for over ten years stand with the finest philosophical treatises or literary commentaries, and will one day be regarded as works of genius. These discourses probed the deepest levels of the human psyche and gave fresh insight into the sources of religious consciousness; from Lao-Tzu to Gautam the Buddha, Jesus to Zarathustra, the Hassids to Zen Haiku poets. Many of the works of the western literary giants; Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Samuel Beckett, Hemingway, Nikos Kazantzakis, Walt Whitman, Rainer Maria Rilke etc. etc. were discussed during this period; Bhagwan with ever-present wit, compassion and clarity helping us all to more deeply understand and be moved by art as a dynamic, alive, source of transformation.

The ultimate flowering of those discourses was into silence, the present stage of his work as a master, a heart to heart communion with his disciples; a blossoming from form into presence, teacher into the teaching, poet into the poem itself. This is the goal of the artist; to become one with his art; the writer to be so immersed in the story that the reader cannot feel the separation, the poet to become so empty that the poem appears to have written itself. This is the "hidden love affair" or in poetic terms the Muse that guides and nurtures the artist from within. It is the well-spring or trust from which all great art is born regardless of social conditions, approval or recognition from the outside. Within this context Bhagwan's present day silence is not silent at all, simply non-verbal. His presence a merging with a source of energy that continues to inspire and reach those with hearts open enough to feel, eyes clear enough to see, a man in full radiance with the current of life itself.

In the Zen Haiku tradition, which produced and continues to produce some of the world's finest poetry, many works were left unsigned. Thousands of poems, written by disciples in the presence of a silent master or sage were left in the monasteries, like leaves in the wind. Historians went crazy searching for the authors to such gems, but none were found. However gems are gems! What difference does it make who wrote them? The poem remains long after the poet disappears. The spirit lingers in the art long after the artist is forgotten. Similarly, Bhagwan's presence has not only continued but deepened without the words. It is a silent phenomenon - the Master/Disciple relationship. After so many years of speaking it is only natural that the master becomes quiet, that the disciple grows more sensitive and the relationship moves to a deeper level.

I am a present day disciple of Bhagwan, living and working in Rajneeshpuram, feeling that presence every moment and every day and never miss my Master's words or long for him to speak. He is without doubt one of the finest poets I have ever heard and yet without words, his poetry has expanded in my heart to become one with all I see, made my life so magical that the only poem left is gratitude, sheer gratitude for this life showering its blessings every day

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- the stars and moon and sky - the quick rising of a storm beyond the mesa and a hawk's sudden flashing of wings in the screeching wind, or the river at midnight, glowing like a beacon in the silver moon.

In short, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is a man of exceptional ability in the Arts, a spiritual master on an equal level of Buddha or Jesus of Lao-Tzu and his presence in this country at this time is truly the gift of gifts.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Donovan

Michael L. Donovan, B.A., M.A. English
(Swami Sudhiro)