

## **Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Osho)**

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh was born Chandra Mohan on December 11 1931 in Kuchwada, a village in the province of Madhya Pradesh (Gordon 21). He was the eldest of eleven children, and as a result of the death of his parents, he was raised by his grandparents (Urban 171). During his youth, Rajneesh suffered from both smallpox and asthma, which nearly resulted in his death (Gordon 22). When Rajneesh was five, his younger sister died (Gordon 22). This affected Rajneesh greatly causing him to refuse to eat as well as dress as a Jain monk and carry a begging bowl (Gordon 22). Rajneesh was described as a spoiled child by some, and as gifted by others (Gordon 22). Rajneesh's grandfather slowly died of a stroke when Rajneesh was seven (Gordon 22). As a result of his grandfather's death, Rajneesh attempted to protect himself from being hurt again by a death by becoming distant from others (Gordon 22). Rajneesh described his grandfather's death as "the death to all attachments" (Gordon 22). During his teen years, Rajneesh's girlfriend Sashi died, which affected him greatly (Gordon 23). Rajneesh would mock religion even though he searched through Christian, Buddhist, and Jain scriptures (Gordon 23). When he was nineteen years old, Rajneesh went to college in Jabalpur (Gordon 24). While at college he would frequently challenge his professors and began to, according to himself, run sixteen miles day and would lay on the floor for days at a time (Gordon 24). This resulted in Rajneesh being taken to an Ayurvedic physician known as a Vaidiya, who believed that his symptoms were resultant of "divine intoxication" (Gordon 24). Rajneesh suffered from depression and anorexia while he was at college and once attempted suicide (Urban 171). While in university, it was proclaimed by Rajneesh that on March 21, 1953 that he became enlightened (Gordon 24).

Rajneesh received his M.A. in philosophy in 1957 and taught at Raipur Sanskrit College and the University of Jabalpur (Gordon 25). He studied the work of George Gurdjieff and Peter Ouspensky (Gordon 25). Rajneesh continued to teach philosophy for nine years before he decided to leave the University of Jabalpur in 1967 in order to teach spiritual life (Urban 172). He took on a few disciples and the group met in an apartment in Bombay (Gordon 30). In Bombay, Rajneesh would comment upon scriptures from many different religions, and used these scriptures in order to reinvigorate people's belief in these religions (Gordon 30-31). He became very controversial in India because of his teachings (Urban 172). For instance, he referred to Mahatma Gandhi as a masochist, a chauvinist and a pervert. (Urban 172). Rajneesh was introduced to westerners as a "sex guru" who was not against drugs (Gordon 38). This brought crowds of hippies to see him (Gordon 38). In 1971, Rajneesh began to refer to himself as Bhagwan, which means "the Blessed One" (Gordon 38), and in 1974, he created an ashram in Poona (Gordon 42).

Rajneesh's ashram in Poona was created after he had sent many of his followers to work on a farm in Bapuji, with which his godfather was associated (Gordon 42). Rajneesh also sent some of his followers to work on another farm in Kailash, which Rajneesh's family owned (Gordon 42). The ashram in Poona raised revenue largely from Westerners travelling to be with Rajneesh (Gordon 43). This money was used to purchase a large home in a wealthy neighborhood in Poona for Rajneesh to live in instead of his apartment in Bombay (Gordon 43). In 1981 the search for a new location for Rajneesh's commune had become a major concern, and the search ultimately lead Rajneesh to the United States of America (Gordon 93). As Rajneesh's health was deteriorating, his secretary Sheela, who had recently become responsible for finding a new location for the commune, had chosen America because of Rajneesh's health (Gordon 93).

The Indian government forced Rajneesh and his followers from his ashram and out of India by removing the tax-exempt status of the Rajneesh Foundation, and attempted to collect about four million dollars in income tax as well as taxes on sales, imports, exports, and property (Gordon 94). This debt and the rumored impending arrest of Rajneesh for "inciting religious rioting" also influenced the move of Rajneesh's ashram to the United States (Gordon 94). Rajneesh prepared for the move by sending followers to the United States to find large portions of land that could serve as the location for the new commune (Gordon 94).

When Rajneesh went to the United States he spent some time in a mansion in New Jersey (Urban 172). Soon after, Rajneeshpuram, meaning Rajneesh's town, was established with the purchase of a sixty-four thousand acre ranch in Oregon (Urban 172). The purpose of this new commune in the United States was to transform the Earth, as opposed to the goal of the commune in Poona, which was to transform individuals through meditation and other techniques (Gordon 99). This commune in Oregon was used by the members, known as *sannyasins*, to use work as meditation and as the *sannyasins* worked together they would be productive and be in harmony both with each other and with nature (Gordon 99). Though it was originally meant only to be a communal farm, Rajneeshpuram was gradually becoming a city of its own (Gordon 100). In the fall of 1982, the local government of the nearby town of Antelope was taken over by the *sannyasins* through them holding all but one seat on the city council (Gordon 123). In 1983, the *sannyasins* had total control over the school in Antelope, causing a large number of Antelope residents to take their children out of that school and send them to school in the town of Madras, which was about forty-five minutes away (Gordon 125). The *sannyasin* led town government would not reimburse the Antelope residents the cost of busing their children to school in Madras (Gordon 125). At the peak of Rajneesh's popularity, he claimed around twenty-five thousand

followers in the United States, India and Europe (Urban 172). The Rajneeshpuram, under the control of Rajneesh's secretary Sheela, adopted a rigid hierarchy, as seen in the Rajneeshpuram's Peace Force (Urban 172). The Peace Force had colored armbands to distinguish the different levels in the hierarchy (Urban 172). As time went on, Rajneeshpuram began to start lawsuits against a number of different people on the basis of discrimination (Carter 229). The defendants in these lawsuits included, the Attorney Generals of the United States and the state of Oregon, the United States Secretary of State, the Director of Immigration and Naturalization Services, and the Governor of Oregon (Carter 229). These lawsuits were seen as an attempt to put off the anticipated arrest of Rajneesh (Carter 229). Eventually Rajneeshpuram came under federal investigation, which found a vast network of phone taps and hidden recording devices all over the commune (Carter 231). By October 23 1985 there was enough evidence collected to justify charges of "conspiring to fraud the United States and with ordering others to make false statements to the Immigration and Naturalization Service in order to hide sham marriages" (Carter 231). Rajneesh and several associates were arrested while making an attempt to leave the country, though charges related to this were not pursued (Carter 233). Rajneesh was charged with conspiracy and making false statements, to which he pleaded guilty and received a "\$400,000 fine and a ten-year suspended sentence, "allowed" to depart from the country voluntarily, and was placed on probation for five years" (Carter 237).

Upon his return to India, Rajneesh took on the name of Osho, as he felt that it were better than referring to himself as Bhagwan (Urban 181). In 1990, after having been back in India for only a few years, Osho died (Urban 182). After his death the popularity of his books experienced an increase (Urban 182). The commune that Rajneesh had established in Poona still functions as a resort for spiritual meditation, though it now operates under the name the "Osho Commune

International" (Urban 182). "Osho Commune International" uses Rajneesh's idea of a "religionless religion" and combines it with a number of other "generic New Age ideals" in order to market these ideas to the world (Urban 182).

### Bibliography

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### Related Topics

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Ouspensky, Peter

Rajneeshpuram

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<http://www.osho.com>

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