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Rajneesh

Continued from Page 1



Rajneesh follower Sunshine guides visitors around the ranch.

"For us it's like building a shrine to a master. The object is to build a city where we can live his teachings every day."

The master is 51-year-old Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Bhagwan means "the blessed one." Shree, in a strict sense, is "sir", the object of religious veneration. Rajneesh is the man's given name. It means "the full moon," or "the master of night."

He attracted thousands of people to Poona, India in the 1970s, where he lectured every morning, one month in English, the next in Hindi. His discourses fill hundreds of books, cassette and video tapes that earn the Rajneesh Foundation Inc. an estimated \$70,000 in monthly sales.

Rajneesh no longer speaks in public. His teachings draw from other "enlightened masters" like Christ and Buddha and Lao-Tze. He talks about how genuine love makes life flower, about man being born free and perfect, about the new "self-disclosing, fulfilled" man.

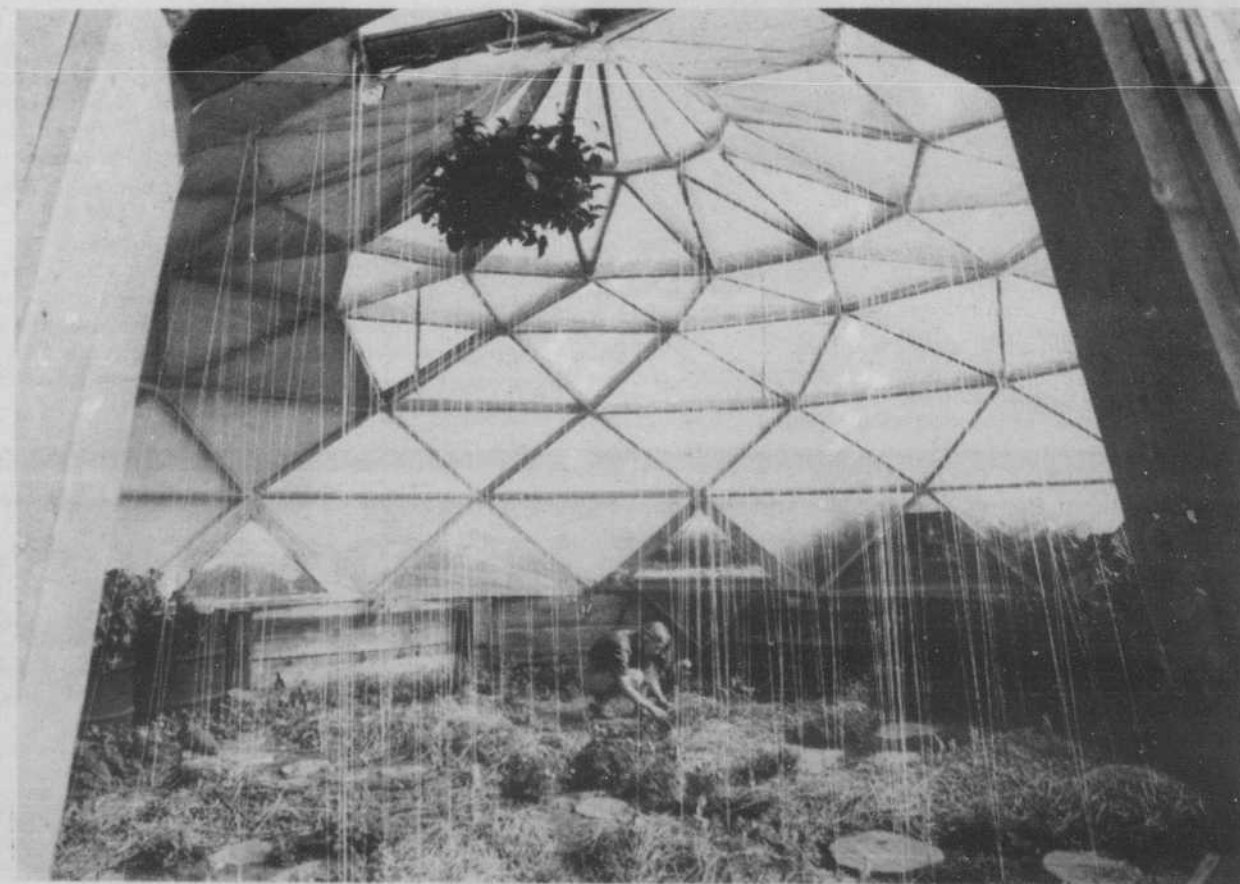
He has predicted a nuclear war in the 1990s; his message, and the work of his followers, are tinged by urgency.

Rajneesh inspires a variety of reactions, all impassioned. "I fell in love with this man," says Ma Anand Sheela, president of Rajneesh Foundation Inc. and the Bhagwan's personal secretary. "I fall in love with him every day again."

"He's very eccentric but I don't think you can classify him as a Jim Jones wacko," says John Stewart of Antelope. "He's very brilliant. And supposedly very ruthless. He's out there making quantum leaps in his thinking. He's not just growing organic carrots by the river."

"Bhagwan has nothing to do with the ranch," Sunshine says. "His concern is with our spiritual lives."

"I feel Bhagwan as someone who, every thought, every action, everything comes from that central core of energy," says Swami Navan, who lives at the Rajneesh Eugene center. "I meditate and the thoughts stop, and I don't



Members of the community share in the farming labor as well as more industrial work.

experience myself as body or emotions, but as energy. At those moments, I feel my connection with him."

"I think that the old duffer actually believes he is God," Don Smith says. "If you surround yourself with people you've told you're God, and they believe it, then eventually you're going to believe it too."

"He's not a messiah," says Swami Vedant, whose path led from India to a professorship at Berkeley to Rajneesh. "He's a simple ordinary man who has some vision. He has put us in touch with ourselves."

Every afternoon the Bhagwan takes one of his Rolls Royces for a spin. The sannyasins gather in Jesus Grove — a section of the incorporated town — and watch him pass.

They wear sunrise colors, the most prevalent one burgundy, and the mala, a necklace with a Bhagwan medallion, a gift from him to each sannyasin.

A lead car turns into view, gravel crackling under its wheels. The Bhagwan follows, today in a yellowish Silver Spur with smoked glass. He wears a white robe and a turban and drives slowly past the arc of his followers. He looks ahead and has his hand up on the window side of his face. The sannyasins, hands clasped together in a gesture of communion, begin to laugh. Laughter passes among them; the experience unites them. People hug and kiss and stroll back to work.

"They are turning away from the predominately material concerns of our society and trying to pursue more inner or spiritual matters," Dr. Kim says. In a few minutes the sounds of heavy machinery — earthmovers and rockcrushers, tractors and chain saws — echo in the canyons.

Sunshine says the movement, which depends on contributions for its financial base, has spent \$32 million in 15 months on the ranch. She says the ecotopia should have 2,800 residents by 1995.

"Up on this hill will be the lodge," she says. "This whole valley will be the civic center. That 10-acre ridge is for the hospital. This will be a light industrial area. This area is zoned for 100 homes."

"If their religious beliefs continue to appeal to human needs," Dr. Kim says, "they have a good chance of surviving and growing."



"Sannyasins" gather at Jesus Grove daily, waiting for Rajneesh's Rolls Royce to pass by, hoping to catch a glimpse of their master.

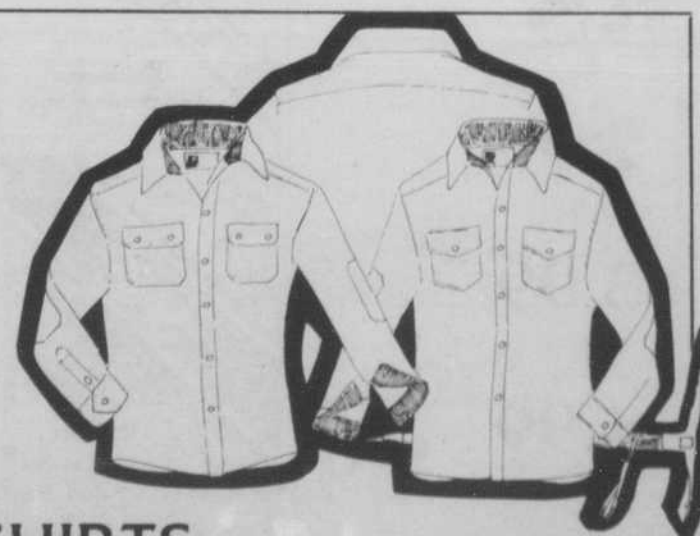


Workers pause to take a "hug break" as they work to "build a shrine to the master."

Photos by Bob Baker

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The sale will be on FRIDAY, Oct. 22 from 12-6 and SATURDAY, Oct. 23 from 9-5 at the Scene Shot, 991 Willamette ON-THE-MALL.