

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

UNIVERSITY PARK

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007

After July 1, 1982, please use zip code 90089-0355



SCHOOL OF RELIGION
328 Taper Hall of Humanities
(213) 743-2631

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 cursive script, appearing to read "Robert S. Ellwood".

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

EXHIBIT "A-83"

Or perhaps the confirmation that I myself received was even more explicit. After some weeks at the Ashram I perceived that Sri Bhagavan really was a Guru giving initiation and guidance. I wrote to inform friends in Europe of this and, before sending the letter, I showed it to Sri Bhagavan and asked whether to send it. He approved of it and, handing it back, said, "Yes, send it."

To be a Guru is to give initiation and *spadesa*. The two are inseparable, for there is no *spadesa* without the initial act of initiation and no point in initiation unless it is to be followed up with *spadesa*. The question, therefore, sometimes took the form of whether Sri Bhagavan gave initiation or *spadesa*.

When asked whether he gave initiation Sri Bhagavan always avoided a direct answer. Had the answer been 'no' he would most certainly have said 'no'; but had he said 'yes' the defence against unwarranted demands for initiation would have been down and it would have become necessary to accept some and reject others by a decision that would have appeared arbitrary instead of letting their own understanding or lack of understanding make the decision. His most usual form of reply was that given to Major Chadwick, "There are three modes of initiation, by touch, by look and by silence." This was the practice usual to Sri Bhagavan of making an impersonal doctrinal utterance in which, however, the answer to the specific question was to be found. The statement is well known, the three modes of initiation—according to the Hindus—being typified by the bird, which needs to sit on its eggs in order to hatch them, the fish, which needs only to look at them, and the tortoise, which needs only to think of them. Initiation by look or by silence has become very rare in this age; it is the *mauna-diksha* of Arunachala, of Dakshinamurthi, and is the mode of initiation, particularly appropriate to the direct path of Self-enquiry which Sri Bhagavan taught. It was, therefore, doubly suitable, both inherently and as affording a convenient camouflage.

The initiation by look was a very real thing. Sri Bhagavan would turn to the devotee, his eyes fixed upon him with blazing intentness. The luminosity, the power of his eyes pierced into one, breaking down the thought-process. Sometimes it was as though an electric current was passing through one, sometimes

a vast peace, a flood of light. One devotee has described it: "Suddenly Bhagavan turned his luminous, transparent eyes on me. Before that I could not stand his gaze for long. Now I looked straight back into those terrible, wonderful eyes, how long I could not tell. They held me in a sort of vibration distinctly audible to me." Always it was followed by the feeling, the indubitable conviction, that one had been taken up by Sri Bhagavan, that henceforth he was in charge, he was guiding. Those who knew would perceive when such an initiation took place, but it would usually be inconspicuous; it might happen during the chanting of the Vedas, when few would be watching, or the devotee might feel a sudden impulse to go to Sri Bhagavan before daybreak or at some time when few or none would be present. The initiation by silence was equally real. It entered into those who turned to Sri Bhagavan in their hearts without being able to go bodily to Tiruvannamalai. Sometimes it was given in a dream, as with Natesa Mudaliar.

No Master was more categorical than Sri Bhagavan about his guidance and protection once a devotee had been taken up and the silent initiation given. He assured Sivaprakasam Pillai in the exposition that was later published as *Who am I?* "He that has won the Grace of the Guru shall undoubtedly be saved and never forsaken, just as the prey that has fallen into the tiger's jaws will never be allowed to escape."

A Dutch devotee, L. Hartz, being able to stay only a short time, and perhaps fearing that his determination might weaken when he left, asked for an assurance and was told, "Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you."

Two other devotees, a Czech diplomat and a Muslim professor, struck by the unusual force and directness of the assurance, asked whether it applied only to Hartz or to all the devotees and were told, "To all."

On another occasion, a devotee grew despondent at seeing no progress in himself and said, "I am afraid if I continue like this I shall go to hell." And Sri Bhagavan replied, "If you do Bhagavan will go after you and bring you back."

Even the circumstances of the devotee's life are shaped by the Guru so as to promote his *radhasa* (spiritual progress). One devotee was told, "The Master is both within and without, so he