

2 August 1983

TO WHOM IT MY CONCERN:

I had never seen or spoken with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh when I made a decision to become his disciple. It was a very wrenching decision for me, taking me away from my past, separating me from my patterns and habitual way of seeing life, and exposing me to the judgments of my family, colleagues, and friends. Why would one who was successful in the world's terms, accepted, and even a leader within the Jewish community, take such an apparently injudicious step?

Years ago I read a book by Bhagwan and was touched and impressed, but passively. It did not occur to me to find out more than was written. But his message and the tone stayed with me. When a dear friend went to India to be with Bhagwan, I stiffened my back. Each letter from him increased my resistance and sharpened my judgments. It had been okay for me to be impressed in an academic way, to be engaged intellectually, and to be inspired passively. But I experienced an emotional upheaval merely in reaction to my friend's commitment to Bhagwan. More than unsettling, it felt unsafe for me, a plunge into the frightening world of rejection by mainstream society (which judges differences harshly) and the world of insecurity--letting each minute speak for itself, not knowing or being able to predict my responses and therefore, my life.

For I knew, even from my brief exposure, that genuine response to life was Bhagwan's message. Being...without the padding of preconceived ideas, without the expectations of parents and friends, without the safety of aligning myself with even my own history. His message was and still is to take off all the masks, to let go of all the images we hide behind and to allow ourselves to be in life as is a child or a flower.

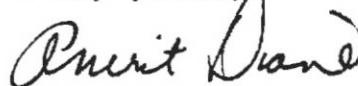
Full of fear and resistance, I continued reading Bhagwan's words in his books. Then, I was invited to be a guest at a class being taught and attended predominantly by Bhagwan's disciples. I was overwhelmed. That night his words shifted from the realm of the mind, of an academic understanding, to real experience. I was met with love that night. Not that I was singled out and given any personal message at all. It was merely that the environment of that house was suffused with love. There were no demands or requests in the love. There was nothing for me to do so say. In fact, no one remotely mentioned that I should or could become a disciple. (There were quite a few non-sannyasins there.) Among those people, I felt love as I had never experienced it before. Acceptance of self and life's gifts, a fullness that was unmistakable. And I realized how often what society calls love is need, that when there is need or conditions, then there is nothing really to give, and thus no love. Love is fullness, a spilling over onto others.

It took three more months for me to take the step to become a disciple because that step meant then and still means

a commitment to myself, to my inner life that sometimes must necessarily run counter to prevailing notions and traditions. Awareness of self is a prerequisite to awareness and sensitivity of others. This is not easy in a society which proffers momentary pleasure as its guiding principle, escape to every manner of diversion rather than sitting with the stillness which allows us to hear and see who we are. In that stillness is the truth. Different for everyone. So, as Bhagwan teaches us, truth does not have a capital T because there is no external measure, no teaching, no doctrine. Only by allowing ourselves to hear our own silence, will we know our own truth. Then there is no need, no desperation. Knowing our own inner voice, our own strength, our own source is to know God, for then we are not defending ourselves against life, not resisting what life has to offer, but open to its gifts. Open and full, we are capable of love as we have never known it before.

Bhagwan has taught me the most crucial lessons of my life, and all the while he has been in silence.

Truly yours,



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