

507

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION
ADMINISTRATIVE PAGE

TITLE RAJNEESH, Bhagwan Shree aka RAJNEESH, Chandra Mohan			FILE NUMBER A24 404 461
REPORT NUMBER 1	DATE 11/19/81	PLACE POO	CENTRAL OFFICE AND REGIONAL REFERENCES CO 893-C (ELC), 10/7/81; NRO IDR - BHAGWAN
CONTROL OFFICE POO	TRANSFERRED TO:	G-25 LINE 504	TYPE OF INVESTIGATION REPORTABLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General - Miscellaneous
DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH 12/11/31; India		NATIONALITY India	DATE, PLACE AND MANNER OF ENTRY 6/1/81; NYC; Temporary Visitor

- DISTRIBUTION
- 1 - CO Inv - all ex (thru NRO Inv)
 - 1 - COEXM - all ex (for information)
 - 1 - NRO Inv - all ex
 - 1 - POO 50/88 - all ex
 - 1 - File A18 473 952 (Sheela Silverman)
 - 1 - File A24 404 461 - all ex

REVIEWED AND APPROVED (SEE COMMENT)	
DATE 11/20/81	PLACE Portland, Oregon
SIGNATURE <i>[Signature]</i>	
NAME AND TITLE Charles L. Stevenson, Supervisory Crim. Inv.	
REVIEWED AND APPROVED (SEE COMMENT)	
DATE 10/20/81	PLACE Portland, Oregon
SIGNATURE <i>[Signature]</i>	
NAME AND TITLE Carl R. Houseman, Deputy District Director	

APPROVED (REGIONAL OFFICE)	DATE	NAME AND TITLE	SIGNATURE

STATUS OF INVESTIGATION: COMPLETED

Investigation based on Northern Region memo dated October 20, 1981, IDR SHREE RAJNEESH BHAGWAN, requesting appropriate inquiry into SUBJECT's alleged "nefarious" activities in order that NRO might respond to a letter from ~~_____~~ dated October 13, 1981.

COMMENT

Source P-1 is the Oregon State Police, Salem, Oregon.

The complainant in this matter [REDACTED] requested that the Service not reveal her as the source of the complaint. Accordingly, the specific information that would tend to identify [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] a native of the United States and citizen [REDACTED]. She was admitted to the United States as a fourth preference immigrant at New York, New York on [REDACTED]. The file relating to [REDACTED] does not indicate the date and manner of her loss of United States citizenship. The file shows that she was issued a British passport, [REDACTED] and travelled on the same passport. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Although the immediate investigation is completed for case file purposes, a subject file has been created at the Portland office in anticipation of continued investigation in the overall matter. That file has been assigned a number of POO 50/88 under the title RAJNFESH MEDITATION CENTER, ANTELOPE, OR.

The trip made by writer to the Antelope, Oregon "ashram" was made in company with Customs investigators. Customs officers held a warrant for MARIO PIRRI, A22 752 483, under indictment for conspiracy to import narcotics and export currency. PIRRI was believed to have had contact with the Antelope "ashram" recently. Writer was not identified as an immigration officer during the visit.

It may be of some interest that one SHANNON JO RYAN, United States citizen, has been a member of SUBJECT's group since early 1981. She is the daughter of Congressman LEO J. RYAN, who was killed at the outset of the "Jonestown Massacre" in Guyana in November 1978. When interviewed by a reporter in January 1981, SHANNON RYAN stated that SUBJECT's followers would kill themselves or others if SUBJECT asked them to do so. SHANNON RYAN was a resident of the Antelope "ashram" as of September 16, 1981 according to voter registration records.

In the opinion of writer SUBJECT and/or his closest associates are opportunistic charlatans deriving a handsome income from his "disciples". In

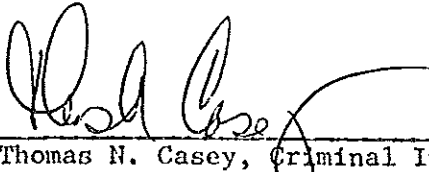
brief, SUBJECT appears to absolve his followers from the restraints of personal responsibility in exchange for substantial amounts of money. Many of the members appear to be middle-class, relatively affluent Westerners. The hierarchy of the organization seems comprised of shrewd, dedicated persons with considerable funds at their disposal. Although great efforts are made by these persons to present their group as peaceable and law abiding, writer believes that they could become very deceptive and intractable if it were to their advantage.

On November 18, 1981 Inspector JESTEN of the Portland, Oregon office advised that he had been contacted by a United States citizen of Filipino extraction shortly before. The caller, who used the name "PUYA" asked if the Service would consider sending over an officer to fingerprint someone at the ashram at Antelope. JESTEN advised that he referred her to the District Director.

Within an hour of receipt of that information, writer was advised by Dr. CLIFFORD COOPER, an authorized civil surgeon for the Service, that "PUYA" was at his office seeking to have him fly from Portland to the ashram to conduct a physical examination. According to him, PUYA was insistent that the matter be completed over the coming weekend. COOPER advised that the physical exam was to be of SUBJECT. COOPER indicated that he would be making the trip as requested.

Writer's opinion, formed before SUBJECT's request for a physical exam, is that SUBJECT will seek to remain permanently in the United States by any means possible. Writer also believes that the Service will find itself flooded with immediate relative and fiancee petitions by ashram members.

November 19, 1981




Thomas N. Casey, Criminal Investigator

POO 11/18/81
A24 404 461

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

FILE		FILE NUMBER
RAJNEESH, Bhagwan Shree aka RAJNEESH, Chandra Mohan		A24 404 461
REPORT MADE AT	DATE	BY
Portland, Oregon	11/19/81	 Thomas N. Casey, Criminal Investigator

SYNOPSIS

SUBJECT is native and citizen of India, who last entered the United States as a nonimmigrant visitor for pleasure June 1, 1981. The Service subsequently granted him an extension of stay to March 1, 1982. Meantime, SUBJECT's followers have purchased a large, isolated ranch in central Oregon for him and are seeking its incorporation as the city of Rajneeshpuram. SUBJECT and some 200 disciples, many of whom are apparent aliens, presently reside on the ranch.

SUBJECT is the focus of considerable media attention and controversy as a result of the activities conducted at the Rajneesh Meditation Center at Poona, India the past several years. A number of sources indicate that SUBJECT specializes in the "enlightenment" of Westerners at a very considerable profit to himself. Numerous allegations have been made to the effect that SUBJECT's programs include extreme emphasis on sex and have resulted in violence and injury to participants.

SUBJECT appears to have extremely large sums of money available to him. His followers are claimed to number 250,000 throughout the world, mostly from Commonwealth countries and Europe. In the past many have made "pilgrimages" to SUBJECT at his headquarters at Poona and remained for varying lengths of time. SUBJECT's followers have been alleged to have engaged in "marriages of convenience" in the past.

SUBJECT does not appear amenable to any Service action at this time.



DETAILS

SUBJECT is a native and citizen of India by birth in that country on December 11, 1931. He last entered the United States as a nonimmigrant visitor for pleasure at New York, New York on June 1, 1981. At that time he was authorized to remain in that status until October 31, 1981. On October 23, 1981 the Service office at Portland, Oregon granted him an extension of stay to March 1, 1982.

SUBJECT's activities in India, departure from there and arrival in the United States, and subsequent activities have attracted considerable media interest. An undated xerox copy of the Sunday Review section of the Times of India, attached as Exhibit "A", gives one writer's views of SUBJECT and his followers shortly after his departure from India. According to the article, continued friction between SUBJECT's "ashram" (meditation center) and local populace and authorities inspired his departure.

EX "A"

SUBJECT's arrival in Oregon was preceded by the purchase of a 64,229-acre ranch in July 1981 by his Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center, 154 Valley Road, Montclair, New Jersey. According to a report provided by Source P-1, attached as Exhibit "B", purchase arrangements were made by JOHN J. SHELFER, United States citizen, born [REDACTED] and SHEELA SILVERMAN, also known as SHELFER, and PATEL. SHEELA SILVERMAN is a native and citizen of India, born at Baroda, India [REDACTED]. She is a permanent resident alien, having acquired that status under Section 245 of the Act at Newark, New Jersey July 27, 1971. The relating file indicates that she first came to the United States in 1968 as an F-1 student and spent most of her stay in the New Jersey area. She married MARC HARRIS SILVERMAN June 20, 1969 and, pursuant to the approval of an immediate relative petition, was granted resident alien status. After adjustment she appears to have travelled extensively, primarily to India. Between September 1973 and January 1980 she applied for and received six re-entry permits to facilitate her travels. The more recent applications indicated that her mailing address abroad was 17 Koreagon Park, Poona, Maharashtra, India--the same address now given by SUBJECT as a permanent address. MARC HARRIS SILVERMAN accompanied her to Poona. According to her file, he was critically ill of cancer as of January 1980. Various newspaper articles indicate that she is now married to SHELFER, although she continues to routinely use the name SILVERMAN in public dealings.

EX "B"

According to an article in the Los Angeles Times of August 30, 1981, SUBJECT purchased the Muddy Ranch in central Oregon for \$6,000,000, of which \$1,500,000 was paid in cash. A copy of that article is attached as Exhibit "C". Source P-1 puts the total price paid at \$7,000,000 and states that the Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center in New Jersey was incorporated as a tax-exempt religious organization.

EX "C"

(INVESTIGATOR'S NOTE: Writer is quite familiar with the Muddy Ranch, having spent considerable time there over the past several years for recreation. The terrain there is primarily badlands with a little timber and relatively little arable

land near the John Day river. The nearest post office is at Antelope, Oregon, which has a population of about 40. The nearest town of any size is Madras, Oregon, where the "ashram" conducts some of its' business. Access to the ranch itself is via a gravelled county road which transits the property which itself lies within two counties, Jefferson and Wasco. The main ranch buildings are about fifteen miles from Antelope over a gravelled road, which is ordinarily passable. The road from the other direction, from Mitchell, Oregon thirty miles to the south, can be hazardous and occasionally impassable by even four wheel drive. In short, the Muddy Ranch is situated in an extremely isolated area.)

SUBJECT first appeared at the Muddy Ranch in about August 1981 according to news reports, and joined ashram personnel who had previously arrived there. The November 1981 issue of Life magazine featured a several-page article on SUBJECT and his new ranch. A copy of that article is attached as Exhibit "D".

EX "D"

On October 30, 1981 writer travelled to Muddy Ranch and spent an afternoon there in observation. A map of the general area and photos taken at that time are attached as Exhibit "E". Upon arrival it was apparent that changes had been immediately set in motion. At the old ranch boundaries a newly erected sign proclaimed entrance into "Rajneeshpuram". After travelling about eight more miles the previously existing grass airstrip was noted to have been improved. A red Piper Aztec twin engined aircraft was observed parked on the strip, bearing the registration number N1166P. While at the ranch writer observed the arrival of another aircraft, subsequently identified as a Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander, a light, twin engined, 10-place transport. The aircraft was white in color and bore registration number N555JA. To date, the Federal Aviation Administration has been able to advise only that the aircraft were recently sold but cannot provide further information. Photos of those aircraft and technical description of the type are attached as Exhibit "F".

EX "E"

EX "F"

(INVESTIGATOR'S NOTE: On November 14, 1981 SHEELA SILVERMAN advised Immigration Inspector GEORGE JESTEN of the Portland, Oregon office that the ranch owned a four-place and ten-place aircraft, which may account for those seen.)

The total number of persons observed on the ranch during the visit was approximately 90 to 100. Of those heard to speak, a substantial number did so with accents. Those heard by writer appeared to be English, Australian and Canadian.

Prior to sale of the ranch, the main buildings consisted of two older houses, a large barn, and a machine shed. Writer noted that several units of mobile housing had been moved into the main parking area, and that the barn was filled with wooden shipping crates. One corner of the barn had been converted to an "office" of sorts and bore the sign "Reception Center". The smaller of the two houses had been converted into a kitchen facility. Ashram members were observed eating outdoors, tables and chairs having been placed outside for the purpose.

All persons present were observed to be dressed in work-type clothing, which was uniformly of a maroon color. In addition, all parties appeared to be wearing "malas", wooden-beaded necklaces with a photo of SUBJECT as a pendant. With the exception of a dinner break, all persons observed were noted to be busily engaged at various tasks of moving, building and so forth.

Writer's companions inquired as to SHEELA SILVERMAN's whereabouts, to be told that she and SHELFER were at The Dalles, Oregon, some 100 miles to the north. One ISABELLE MEGRET DE SERILLY D'ETIGNY ET TEIL DE CHAPELAINE announced that she was the "press person" and proceeded to act as a liason person during writer's stay at the ranch. Writer was able to examine her passport and I-94, arrival-departure form. That, combined with conversation, established that she was a native of Chile and citizen of France, born in Chile [REDACTED]. She was admitted at New York, New York as a nonimmigrant visitor for pleasure in September 1981 and subsequently granted an extension to January 15, 1982 at Houston, Texas.

MEGRET advised that only three persons, including SHEELA SILVERMAN, had access to SUBJECT. During general conversation MEGRET indicated that no usable roster of persons on the ranch existed and that persons were ordinarily located through personal inquiry. She stated that although casual visitors might be allowed to visit for a few days, only invited persons were allowed to remain and become ashram members. She indicated that at the present time about 190 to 200 persons were on the ranch, "about 20%" of the ashram members there being aliens. According to her, members might or might not continue to use their original given names after becoming "sanyassin" (taking vows). She did state that it was the ashram's policy to comply with all laws and regulations, including those of immigration.

Writer and companions were taken on a tour of the ranch by two women who were not identified. One spoke with an English-type accent, and the other stated that she was originally from New Brunswick, Canada. In conversation they stated that a population of approximately 250 was envisioned and that SUBJECT's printing and mail order operations would be conducted from the ranch. A previously existing road up a canyon behind the ranch was noted to have been improved and a number of new roads constructed leading from it to a mobile home sites on the hills above. Siting of those units was observed to be still in process. Although writer and companions asked several times the location of SUBJECT's residence, the "guides" ignored the question.

A large metal building styled a "cafeteria" was observed under construction. It appeared quite capable of housing at least 250 persons and perhaps more. In addition, the construction of another metal warehouse type building was noted. At a rough estimate, it appeared to be about 100 feet square and two stories high. Writer was told that "books" would be contained there. Large stacks of the same type wooden crates as previously observed were adjacent to the building.

Considerable new field work appeared to have been done and crops planted. Writer was advised that about 1,000 acres had already been seeded and another 1,000 would be. One new tractor was observed.

During the driving tour of the ranch, license plates from California, New Jersey and British Columbia, Canada were observed. A number of new ranch vehicles, pickups and passenger vans, were noted about.

Writer's visit to the ranch was otherwise uneventful.

On the same date BILL DICKSON, postmaster at Antelope, Oregon and local rancher, was interviewed. DICKSON stated that while he had taken no particular notice of foreign mail as such, he had recently observed persons whom he believed to be Australian, Dutch and English passing through Antelope en route to Muddy Ranch.

BOB BROWN, Sheriff of Wasco County, The Dalles, Oregon stated on November 6, 1981 that his office had had no problems with SUBJECT or his ashram as such. BROWN did indicate that an incident involving SUBJECT had occurred on October 29, 1981, in which a local resident threatened SUBJECT. The cause of the problem was allegedly SUBJECT's striking and killing of a dog with his Rolls Royce. BROWN advised the local citizen had been arrested for menacing, posted bail, and that the matter was presently pending.

HAMLIN PERKINS, Sheriff of Jefferson County, Madras, Oregon stated on November 6, 1981 that he had been out to Muddy Ranch several times recently. He stated that he thought he had made himself somewhat unpopular there when he brought a possible housing discrepancy to the attention of the county planning director, BOB MARTIN. PERKINS stated that upon a suspicion that the housing units being brought into the ranch were not quite right, he had made inquiries into the matter. He found that the double-wide mobile home units ordered by the ashram contained seven bedrooms. PERKINS stated that the units were then required to contain only four bedrooms.

BOB MARTIN stated on the same date that Jefferson County had granted 20 permits for housing under the existing farm use zoning at the ashram. He confirmed PERKINS' statements regarding the mobile homes. MARTIN also confirmed PERKINS' belief that there were a large number of aliens on the ranch, who variously claimed to be from Germany, Australia, England, and France.

MARTIN was of the opinion that while SUBJECT and his followers tend to obey the law, they are equally willing to test it. When asked if he had any other comments of interest, MARTIN advised that he had been given a copy of an Indian newspaper, which among other things, alleged that SUBJECT's group espoused marriages of convenience "for citizenship purposes". He forwarded a xerox copy of the Times of India previously mentioned as Exhibit "A".

DOROTHY BROWN, Planning Director for Wasco County, advised on November 6, 1981 that her agency had granted housing permits for 34 units, each of which was supposed to contain three bedrooms. She stated that she expected more such permit requests, but none would be issued without further justification. She advised that the next logical move on the part of the ashram would be to seek incorporation as a city, and that she understood an attorney in Portland, Oregon had been engaged for that purpose. BROWN stated that she

had been out to the ranch about two weeks previously and believed that "over half" of the persons she encountered were aliens. She was told at that time that the ashram population was about 120 persons.

BRENT LAKE, Field Representative for the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission of Bend, Oregon, was contacted on November 10, 1981. He stated that he was familiar with the ashram project, having been there several times and spoken with "a fair number" of the persons there. He estimated that as high as 75% of those people spoke with an accent.

LAKE stated that 53 housing units are all that will be authorized under the present land use classification and that incorporation as a city offers the only possibility for an increased on-site population. He advised that much of the preliminary work toward incorporation had already been accomplished in Wasco County. Upon petition of the "residents" of the ashram, the Wasco County Court granted its approval for the holding of an election on May 18, 1982 for the purpose of determining whether the ashram should incorporate as a city, to be named Rajneeshpuram (Expression of Rajneesh). LAKE stated that some opposition has crystalized in the form of a group calling itself "1,000 Friends of Oregon", but that any pertinent land use issues raised can be expected to be resolved in advance of the scheduled election.

LAKE stated that his understanding was that the ashram seeks to engage in "commercial activity", which would not now be allowed under the present land use classification. These activities would include, but not necessarily be limited to, printing, mail order sales, repair shops, a general store, grocery and "temporary accommodations" for short term visitors. A maximum population of from 1,500 to 2,000 persons through 1995 is projected by the ashram.

LAKE believes that the administration of the ashram and important decision making is conducted by SHEELA SILVERMAN, with SUBJECT presumably remaining aloof from mundane day to day matters. JOHN SHELFER was characterized as filling a subordinate role in the financial arena. LAKE stated that callers are routinely referred to ISABELLE MEGRET in SHEELA SILVERMAN's absence.

KAREN LE BRETON, Wasco County Clerk, advised on November 10, 1981 that voter registration had been conducted at the ashram and 42 registration cards submitted. She agreed to send xerox copies of those cards to the Portland office, which were received November 12, 1981. She stated that her understanding was that the present population of the ashram was about 160 persons.

RICK CANTRELL, Wasco County Judge, was contacted on November 12, 1981 concerning his knowledge of SUBJECT and the ashram's projects. He stated that he had been on the three-member commission which granted permission for the incorporation issue to be placed on the ballot. He stated that he was "very impressed" with the ashram project, and that it was his observation that the ashram was eager to comply with pertinent laws and regulations. He offered that he saw no danger to anyone from the ashram and that opposition to it was from "small people" who felt envious and threatened. CANTRELL stated that he understood that tax exemption on religious grounds was not being sought by the ashram. CANTRELL also stated that he believed that he had observed numbers of aliens, possibly from England, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany and France, involved with the ashram.

EXHIBITS

- EX "A" - Undated xerox copy of article in Times of India written about June 1981 regarding SUBJECT and his activities.
- EX "B" - Report concerning SUBJECT's purchase of large, isolated ranch in central Oregon in July 1981.
- EX "C" - Xerox copy of article concerning SUBJECT from Los Angeles Times of August 30, 1981.
- EX "D" - Copy of article concerning SUBJECT from November 1981 issue of Life magazine.
- EX "E" - Map of area of ranch, photos of ranch taken October 30, 1981.
- EX "F" - Photos of aircraft frequenting SUBJECT's ranch, taken October 30, 1981.