

Osho in America: A Moment of No-Mind Visiting an Unliberated Land

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From 1974 into 1981 an ashram or commune had been flourishing in Pune, Maharashtra state, where disciples of Mohan Chandra Rajneesh (in his last year and hereafter Osho, from the Japanese 和尚, *oshō*, a Zen master) were engaged in meditation, listening to discourses, coping with educational “devices,” and such like in their quest for spiritual understanding, awakening, or enlightenment. In April of 1981, Osho opted for the device of “silence” and refused to speak publicly for a few years, which he later explained was a trial to show his disciples – known as “sannyasins” (from *sannyāsi*, renouncer) – what could happen without Osho being physically present. For reasons that have not been clearly established, however, Osho and some of the sannyasins left Pune for the United States in June 1981, and from that August into late 1985, just after Osho was deported in November following an agreement connected to charges of violating immigration law, another commune was built and flourished in north-central Oregon. From an intercultural perspective, this commune can be seen as an enormous success and an instructional failure, the reasons for which are highlighted in this short survey. Following are sections entitled “A Brief on Osho’s Teachings” to provide insights into what Osho’s project was about, “Rancho Rajneesh and Rajneeshpuram” to draw attention to the geographical and legal hurdles faced by the commune, “Playing with the Popular Deities of America” to emphasize that significant cultural conflict did exist between the commune and American society, and “The Irony of Teaching Liberation in the Land of the Free” to argue that from a cultural perspective the commune met resistance mainly for reasons which seem rather peculiar given America’s sociopolitical propaganda and ideals.

A Brief on Osho's Teachings

Osho's teachings were seeped in Indian philosophy and spiritual exercises, although his twist on them could be iconoclastic, irreverent, and augmented by influences from Taoism and from Vajrayana and Zen Buddhism, the first being Chinese and the other two having flourished outside India. For those who like categories, perhaps the best way to think of Osho is as an independent Vajrayanist without the accouterments and establishments, and with a mission to help individuals get to the core of existence. Vajrayana employs the teachings of "tantras," texts devoted to various subjects, and both Buddhism and Hinduism have tantras and institutionalized branches known as "Tantric." As with Taoism, Tantric Buddhism and the so-called "left-hand" Tantric Hinduism are controversial because of their use of sexual activity, which fascinates certain types of individuals and revolts certain others, both generally out of ignorance. Alongside Osho's rebukes of established religions, his use of sexual yoga for spiritual purposes infuriated many people, yet it might very well have been the thing to attract thousands of disciples from such societies as Britain, Australia, and the United States that were experiencing a sexual revolution in the 1970s. It is however clear that providing a forum simply for sexual promiscuity was not the objective of Osho's teachings and communes; rather, it was spiritual liberation, enlightenment or awakening, an awareness of what one is.

"Meditation" was the path to this liberation or awareness, and Osho's promotion of meditation can be traced to his days as an itinerant lecturer in the 1960s. Having a long history in India and playing an important role in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, meditation is the part of spiritual yoga in which the individual aims to experience itself as the whole or the absolute (e.g. Brahman, the *Dào*). In Indian yoga there are four ways in which a person might work toward this goal, being through selfless work or activity (*karma*), devotion or love (*bhakti*), learning or knowledge (*jñāna*), or experimentation (*rāja*, royal), and combinations are possible. While all four routes may be detected to have been used in Osho's project, his emphasis was on getting meditators to a state of "no-mind," or in conventional terminology *samādhi*, a superconscious state which is associated with the three direct limbs of *rāja* yoga known collectively as *samyama* (*dhāranā*, concentration; *dhyāna*, contemplation, absorption, or meditation, from which the Japanese word *zen*; and *samādhi*). The body and the mind, both in the realm of matter, are obstacles to getting to this state, and given that the body is more easily neutralized, great effort has to go into

controlling the mind, the goal being to put it into a state of utter calmness, quietude, or stillness. In the process comes the understanding that the “seer,” or the thing that is observing or experiencing, is neither a body nor a mind, but a non-material entity often called a *purusha* (spirit, soul) that is itself the non-material cosmic whole and, in Osho’s teachings, usually referred to as the “witness.” Many forms of meditation were taught and used, and an important component especially for novices was a preliminary stage of “catharsis,” the use of physical exhaustion to eliminate disturbances in the mind.¹

Without going into details, this emphasis on achieving “no-mind” may be seen as putting the main thrust of *rāja yoga* at the forefront of Osho’s project, but the other three routes were also employed. The best evidence of *karma yoga*, selfless activity or work, would be the labor provided by the *sannyasins* to build and to maintain the communes in Pune (1974-81 and since 1986) and Oregon (1981-85), to conduct relations with the world outside the communes, and to promote Osho and his project, that is to engage in activities with no explicit, agreed-upon or negotiated pecuniary benefit and (in theory) no social status. *Bhakti yoga* – the path of love, devotion, and surrender – was manifested in the likes of a “*mālā*” with Osho’s portrait in its locket which the *sannyasins* wore, admonitions and appeals among them concerning devotion to Osho, ritualesque “*namaste*” greetings and sitting at Osho’s feet in “*darshan*” (a personal session with a guru), and even the exercise of restraining possessiveness in regard to sexual partners. *Jñāna yoga*, which involves knowledge acquired through rational study and analysis, would have been prevalent through Osho’s discourses that challenged listeners to whittle away at things in this world, most deceptive, eventually to arrive at the conclusion that there is nothing but Existence or Being Itself.²

Rancho Rajneesh and Rajneeshpuram

Osho and the *sannyasins* who accompanied him to the United States in June 1981 first set themselves up at an estate in Montclair, New Jersey, which became an exercise in *karma yoga* for the *sannyasins* but was not considered large enough for a new commune. Ma Anand Sheela, an Indian national who had taken over the secretarial duties of Osho’s enterprise in the last several months at Pune and was involved in acquiring the Montclair estate, eventually oversaw the purchase of the Big Muddy Ranch in north-central Oregon in July. The very high amount paid

(roughly 29 times the assessed value for tax purposes) and the speed at which the transaction took place (everything within one month)³ suggests that money was of little concern to the organization which had sprung up around Osho and that, other than having had substantial authority invested in her, Sheela was in a hurry to consummate her place in the organization with something big, tangible, and meaningful. Although the deal seems to have impressed, and in some cases even pleased, the local people, neither side apparently gave much thought to the hardships that the purchase could have led to. For the sannyasins this meant a demanding effort to transform the landscape and a rather nasty legal, political game that evolved around land use, while for the local residents it meant displacement or having to put up with a cultural challenge, on top of which came a law-enforcement headache for some of the local and regional authorities.

What would become known as Rancho Rajneesh and Rajneeshpuram, Rajneesh being Osho's family name and "puram" meaning settlement, were located in the arid part of Oregon, that is in the rainshadow of the Cascade Mountains which serve as an obstacle to the eastward movement of moist air from the northern Pacific Ocean. The physiographic differences between western Oregon, centered on the Willamette Valley, and eastern Oregon are sufficiently pronounced that they promote rather different lifestyles and condition people to look at the world in virtually antithetical ways. In an insightful regional study of North America that was completed just before Osho arrived in the United States, an American journalist acknowledged this by placing western Oregon in the "nation" of Ecotopia (the relevant meaning being "ecological utopia") and the eastern half in the Empty Quarter (in the United States, the sparsely settled mountainous and otherwise arid interior west of the Great Plains).⁴ If the Taoist philosophy that Osho was familiar with were applied to this joint natural/cultural duality, Oregon could cartographically be portrayed as a yin-yang state, and Osho's group found themselves in the "yang" (sunnier, drier, broader in temperature ranges, culturally "hard" or "conservative," masculine) side, when the "yin" (cloudier, wetter, smaller in temperature ranges, culturally "soft" or "liberal," feminine) side might have been more suitable. This error may be attributed to the hasty, not deeply considered search for real estate by Sheela and her associates because, from the perspective of cultural tolerance at least, a reasonably favorable location might have been found elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest or several other places in America.

That a "desert" site were chosen was not in itself a bad decision for locating a

commune. As its size (64,000 acres) suggests, the Big Muddy Ranch offered plenty of space for development, and communities have been created and have flourished in arid lands throughout the world. To do so requires considerable human effort since the steppes and deserts are not as bountiful as the forested areas, especially in the warmer parts of the planet, and there is usually some special reason such as establishing and maintaining trade routes (e.g. around the Taklimakan), agriculture (e.g. the steppes of Russia and Kazakstan), or refuge (e.g. the Mormons in Utah) for this effort. The main obstacle for development is a relatively low supply of surface water, yet under the surface of the ground are often sizeable quantities of water in the form of aquifers. Any potential settlement in arid country needs to know how to manipulate the supply of surface and underground water, and that done, oases can be created in areas of fertile soil. In the case of the Big Muddy Ranch, this was possible because it is located in an area of mollisols,⁵ which are the best soils for agriculture and horticulture because of their friability and high nutrient content.

What became known as “Rancho Rajneesh” began to swarm with productive labor soon after it was purchased, the sannyasins providing both the brains and the brawn. The results were impressive as the commune evolved over the next few years through perseverance, diligence, and simply doing things correctly, and by the time that Osho left the United States in November 1985, the environmental respect and the perseverance of the sannyasins was paying off. In late 1984, for instance, Osho himself noted not only that the commune had become “self-sufficient” and was producing its own food but also that the transformed landscape could give the impression of being in Kashmir rather than in eastern Oregon.⁶ Buildings had been erected, water diverted, two lakes created, fields made and cultivated, trees planted, landscaping done, and roads built, and “even those who opposed the sannyasins at every turn were forced to admit that, ecologically speaking, the work they did was superb.”⁷ These opponents were real and fell into two major categories, local residents and their sympathizers who did not appreciate the existence of an exotic religious group, and personnel in the field of law enforcement who had both minor and serious offenses, as well as suspicions, to contend with. Although in the long run it would seem inevitable that the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and possibly other federal, state, and local authorities, would have gotten involved, it was the relations of the commune with the neighboring community of Antelope and an environmental watchdog that aggravated conditions.

As soon as the sannyasins started to build their commune, they discovered the

bane of many an ambitious person in the United States, legal restrictions. In their case, zoning laws permitted farming to a certain extent but limited the number of buildings and residents on the property, and an organization known as “1000 Friends of Oregon” made it clear that they would fight to ensure that such laws were honored. Instead of intimidating the sannyasins into giving up their plans (and leaving), the threat served as an invitation for battle, at the head of which on the sannyasin side were Sheela and an American national known as Krishna Deva. A part of Rancho Rajneesh was designated in October 1981 to be incorporated as a city (Rajneeshpuram), which would provide a legal framework in which the zoning laws could be changed, but incorporation required electoral approval. Properties were therefore bought in Antelope for sannyasins to move into, and after a sufficient number had done so and registered to vote in local elections, they won a crucial vote in April 1982 that paved the way for another election in May to incorporate Rajneeshpuram, which in turn was challenged in court by the 1000 Friends. There were various other legal suits and threats of them both against and by the sannyasins as the commune was built, and along the way it appears that Sheela masterminded several nasty affairs including a couple of murder attempts, poisoning people in the county capital with salmonella, and fire-bombing a county office. Law enforcement officials had plenty to do, as did lawyers and court personnel, and it seems that a fear of the commune being heavily armed and possibly in a suicidal mode deterred authorities from raiding it.⁸

Zoning laws can be changed and public-interest organizations can be persuaded that a particular project would be beneficial, or at least need not be detrimental, hence something else must have been behind the legal gamesmanship and brutal politics that surrounded the commune. Part of this “something else” was Sheela’s ambition and aggressiveness which were manifested in her dictatorial approach to internal commune affairs and her dealings with people outside it, and she has generally been considered “the” reason for the commune’s problems. In a sense, though, this is a convenience for those who would prefer to pin the blame on an identified “evil” person and then skip over everything else, notably the fact that there was hostility toward Osho and the sannyasins. As the section with some insights into Osho’s teachings suggests, his teachings as well as the appearance and activities of the sannyasins were likely to feel odd to most Americans, so for the culturally “conservative,” the religiously intolerant, and the defenders of propriety or “established” morality Osho and gang must have revived a meaning in life, while

for the mischievous they offered opportunities for all sorts of fun. Opposition in Antelope began almost immediately after the Big Muddy Ranch was bought, “sex” being the issue and a printed advertisement and excerpt from a book being the evidence, but it appears that the original sentiment in other communities was relaxed. As more sannyasins moved in and the commune grew, it is however likely that the tolerance would have waned, even if there had not been the conflicts which started with the issue of zoning. Literature with Osho’s teachings would have become available, making controversial passages on religion and human behavior liable to be circulated, and this surely would have ignited Christian “fundamentalists” as a starter. The “different” appearance and commune-based lifestyle of the sannyasins and Osho would have eventually triggered mischief-makers into playing games and trying to irritate the sannyasins, as they did with the likes of gesturing from vehicles, using traffic signs related to the commune as shooting targets, and wearing T-shirts with a picture of Osho viewed from the sights of a rifle.

Playing with the Popular Deities of America

Although Osho was in “silence” for most of the time that he was in the United States, the sannyasins understood what his project was all about and his teachings to date were available in books and oral recordings. Added to this were the long-haired sannyasins wearing red clothes and mālās and the conspicuous access to material wealth that the commune enjoyed, while information about the communal lives of the sannyasins eventually circulated. For people looking for something on which to base criticisms and even intellectual fights, there was therefore no dearth of evidence, and it would seem that Osho was demonized by American opponents for three interrelated reasons: being at crossed swords with Christianity, wounding the pride of the common people, and ridiculing attachment to material wealth, that is for making fun of an almost sacred American cultural trinity of God, the Individual Self, and Money.⁹

The first of these reasons would seem to be obvious for anybody familiar with Osho’s teachings. By using certain “left-hand” Tantric devices and espousing views akin to those in purely philosophical Taoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism which make it clear that there cannot be such a thing as a god which creates, maintains, and destroys – hence no “Yahweh,” “Jehovah,” or (to most Americans) “God” – Osho was automatically an enemy of Christian “fundamentalists” and anybody else who would

have wanted to defend Christianity seriously. Typically intimidating, even vitriolic, in their propaganda and uncompromising in their religious beliefs, “conservative” Protestants or Christian “fundamentalists” in America were at the time experiencing a period of renewed confidence that had brought the “Moral Majority” and the “televangelists” into the national spotlight, as well as a politically conservative sympathizer into the presidency of the United States, so Osho must have appeared as a gift from “Heaven” for any who sought a real-world “Satan” or “Antichrist.” For Osho there was not only no God but also no sin, which is a key element in the teachings of Christianity and an important theme for Christian preachers in the American West, where “sin” has long been as common as rocks in the desert. The power structure being as it was, and the majority of local minds having been conditioned by Christian philosophy (regardless of how strongly adhered to), the Christians might have received a bit more sympathy and support than they ordinarily would have, but the fact that Osho earned their condemnation does insinuate that they felt threatened, the 1970s having been a time when philosophical and behavioral challenges to conventional forms of Christianity took root in American society. Osho must have been perceived as an instrument to push those challenges further toward their logical conclusion.

Pride is a cultivated trait in American society, especially in the rural West where much has been achieved through demanding physical labor and “what have you done?” is an important question. Into this ego-oriented culture stepped a man whose teachings are designed to eradicate the ego and to demonstrate that whatever is done is insignificant, neither of which brings much comfort to people who have been struggling through life. Osho was also an intelligent, erudite foreigner, a few shades darker in skin pigmentation than most in the mainstream society of north-central Oregon, and he dressed in beautiful robes and a wool hat, pretty much did things his own way, and had a sizeable following that visibly swelled into the thousands at festival time. Added to this was the fact that the sannyasins – many also foreign and (itself a cause for trouble in such rural outposts) bright – bought local properties, won legal and political battles, and made very good use out of “barren” land that had previously been considered economically marginal, all of which arguably exposed comparative weaknesses on the part of the neighboring residents and their sympathizers, as well as demonstrated that an “alternative” lifestyle was viable. The idea that foreigners who were motivated by the teachings of an exotic, permissive “guru” could have transformed an arid chunk of real estate into a self-sufficient

commune and were likely to use it as a home base for their worldwide operations seems to have drawn out local insecurities, which might ultimately be traced to the common desire in the American West to know that one, and what one has learned, is “right.” Osho and friends, while being capable of charity and compassion, could not play up to this, and to the philosophically cosmopolitan sannyasins the rustic, cultural traits of the local people could hardly have inspired the respect that the latter group would have wanted.

For most Americans, money is the true god, and the famous slogan “in God we trust” on American monetary notes and coins might effectively be replaced by “in this monetary instrument we trust.” Gods being symbols of forces or qualities that are worshipped or desired, and imaginary devices that inspire people into action, money had evolved into the symbol of real and potential material wealth and a social, economic, and political lubricant in the United States. Osho ridiculed this deity in at least two ways, one being what might be considered a flaunting of material wealth and the other being its limited, minor role in getting things done among the sannyasins. Although loads of money had come Osho’s way since he set himself up as a guru, and some of the sannyasins would have served as accountants and otherwise appreciated the conventional uses of money, Osho seems to have been uninterested in it and was not attached to anything material. The vast amounts of money that became available over two decades could be attributed to the likes of donations from wealthy sannyasins, sales of books and recordings, and entrance fees to lectures, and in the United States such income was invested into the commune (capital expenditures, covering the basic needs of the sannyasin work force) and its legal affairs, as well as into an ostentatious collection of ninety three Rolls Royces. Parodying the evangelical Christian axiom that “Jesus saves,” and as if to cultivate the image of “the rich man’s guru,” “Moses earns, Jesus saves, Bhagwan [Osho] spends” became a popular motto inside the commune in Oregon,¹⁰ and the Rolls Royces in particular fascinated people outside it. Given that it was rather common for Americans to have to work hard to buy and to maintain a very much cheaper used car, this conspicuous display of wealth from a man who was for the most part of his American sojourn in “silence,” and who was not involved in productive labor according to conventional interpretations, must have reminded many Americans that Money can be a god that is not always on their side. Later, Osho could argue that the Rolls Royces were a practical joke to arouse the envy of the wealthiest nation on the planet and to demonstrate that most people, while showing little or no interest

in spiritual well-being, would take notice of symbols of material wealth.

The Irony of Teaching Liberation in the Land of the Free

Over twenty years have passed since when the commune in Oregon was a flourishing, yet controversial enterprise that tested the spirit and determination of Osho's sannyasins, the patience and tolerance of neighboring residents and other concerned people, and the credibility of the United States Constitution and American law-enforcement machines, all with mixed results. Any of these could offer a good theme for a lengthy, detailed study, but they have only been treated cursorily in this "bigger-picture" survey and there is ample literature available for interested readers. Still, and without delving into the details, it is worth pointing out that Osho's American experiment ran into serious trouble for several reasons which seem ironic.

Perhaps the most important reason for the difficulties faced by the commune was the animosity that can be traced to the gamesmanship of Sheela and her associates, although it would be unfair to say that they started the trouble. Because residents of Antelope and the 1000 Friends of Oregon took an adversarial position as soon as they had learned what the sannyasins intended to do with the Big Muddy Ranch, it is not surprising that the leadership of the commune hardened in its "external" relations. In a sense, Sheela and her accomplices succeeded in playing such great American games as finding useful legal loopholes and transmogrifying money into small-scale political clout, but their means which could be brash, intimidating, or even criminal must have escalated passions against the commune. Sheela's hand in the external relations of the commune was of course strengthened by the authoritarian regime which she had established within it, ironic in that a communal dictatorship, although voluntary (and some sannyasins did leave), was emerging in a country which values individuality and freedom from political tyranny. After Osho was provoked into putting a stop to this development, he admonished the sannyasins for not having acted responsibly by letting a dictatorship evolve, and suggested that sannyasins in the know cooperate with authorities to clear up the legal mess which had been created, but by then the die had firmly been cast against the commune.

That the commune was a commune was in itself an invitation for trouble in the United States, which had been the leading antagonist of communism since the end of the Second World War. Had Rancho Rajneesh have had the luxury of another few years of existence after Sheela's departure, it most likely would have evolved

into a reasonably self-sufficient, ecologically compatible experiment in communism akin to what such writers as the anarchist Peter Kropotkin had envisioned on either side of the turn of the twentieth century. The irony is that for such an enterprise in anarcho-communism to succeed, a rather strong spirit of human equality is required, and this might have wreaked havoc with the practiced version of “equality” in mainstream American society. Evidence to suggest that Rancho Rajneesh could have become such a commune might be found in Osho’s teachings, the experience of the commune in Pune before and after the American experiment, and the fact that the serious sannyasins participated voluntarily and had rationalized or even experienced that their apparently discrete existences were an illusion that hid Existence or Being Itself, that is the ultimate commune.

Whereas conventional Hinduism is far from “democratic” in the sense that it demonstrates that one “life” is not equal to others, notably through the stations in life (the castes) and the concept of having to work through accumulated karma (non-material residue from actions) from lives past and present, the original teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha who lived approximately 2500 years ago, Osho offered a “spiritual” revolution in India before he went to the United States. The irony is that Osho’s egalitarianism did not endear him to either of these countries, for whom “democracy” and (although weaker) “equality” are key political ideals, yet it is quite probable that he would have earned considerable respect, at the cost of disciples though, in both if he would have chosen to promote the likes of the Hindu caste system or its highly flexible approach to deities. In regard to the United States, which was a leading center for science in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as a proponent of freedom of conscience, it is amusing to think that a teacher who focused on the last three limbs of *rāja* (= experimental) yoga, with meditation to lead to an inner awareness and rather secular, scientific conclusions, should be hounded out of the country with Christian “fundamentalists” at the forefront of the charge. As with the historical Buddha (and even more recent thinkers such as Kropotkin), Osho understood that institutionalized religions are apparatuses of power, and that they inherently rely on inequalities and hierarchies of privilege, hence his presence must have worried the Christian “fundamentalists” and their sympathizers.

Although the word “Zen” (from *dhyāna*, meditation) was in popular circulation in the United States by 1980, it as well as such “Eastern” religions or ways of life as Hinduism, (other forms of) Buddhism, and Taoism were not exactly understood or

appreciated by “ordinary” and even “educated” Americans. The likes of Hindu and Buddhist vocabulary, the attire of “Eastern” teachers, and their paraphernalia would have appeared very strange to most Americans at that time, let alone to the rustic and elderly residents of north-central Oregon. Hearsay of a “pacifist” “guru” from “India,” who dressed in fancy “robes” and whose “disciples” wore “red” clothes, had “necklaces” with “beads,” and appeared unkempt with “long hair,” would have been enough to stir up the ant pile, and it is very likely that many residents came to fear that they would be taken over by a strange “cult.” The irony is that in a country which values freedoms of speech, expression, religion, and association, and in which information is rather easy to come by, ignorance and rumors (notably about trafficking in narcotics, stockpiling weapons, and suicidal intent) appear to have gotten the better part of the popular imagination. Even absent the 1000 Friends of Oregon and the misdeeds of Sheela and her associates, and keeping in mind that many people in the United States have felt uncomfortable with the proselytizing of Christian organizations, it is reasonable to assume that local residents would have tried to keep their distance from Osho’s group, which was even more “different.” Given the chance, as the evolving political and legal situation did, it is not surprising that pressure would have been applied to make an exotic religious group disappear.

A final, yet pervasive reason for the troubles faced by the commune in Oregon has to be local and other external reactions to Osho’s teachings concerning human sexuality, which basically revolved around yin-yang relationships and sexual activity as a device, notably, to get a glimpse of or to experience “no-mind.” Done properly, such sexual yoga requires a fair amount of time, control of the breath, body, and mind, and (in a spiritual sense) observing or being aware of what happens at a certain time, meaning that it is not a means simply to release passions, act out fantasies, relieve oneself of biological urges, or serve as a means of power and possession as apparently is the case with a lot of human sexual intercourse. The problem would have been that Osho’s detractors were not aware of this, or did not have the desire, capacity, or ability to appreciate or to learn about Tantric practices, hence the tendency to view the commune in base, readily understandable sexual terms. For serious Christians, the sannyasins were “sinners” mired in bestiality, while less indoctrinated, yet “morally” concerned people might have rationalized that the sannyasins were at least not good models. Still, for some of these and certainly for the less “moral” who might have (incorrectly) interpreted the commune to be an exercise in “free sex,” the element of envy cannot be discounted; it takes no great

stretch of the imagination, for example, to realize how frustrated some of the “tough,” “redneck” men would have been at the thought of the pacifist male sannyasins, and not themselves, having had access to the women in the commune. The irony of all this is that by 1981, the sexual “revolution” had spread significantly throughout the United States, which was becoming increasingly informed about and tolerant of forms of sexual behavior and the contexts in which it might be played out. Osho and his sannyasins, alas, seem to have ended up in a pocket of “reaction.”

Notes

1. Recommended as an introduction to the four spiritual yogas is Vivekananda, *The Yogas and Other Works*, [ed.] Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1996). Rāja yoga is also called Patañjala yoga, after its second-century B.C. systematizer Patañjali. For insights into the diverse forms of meditation taught by Osho, see Osho, *Meditation: The First and Last Freedom*, comp. Swami Deva Wadud (Pune: The Rebel Publishing House, 1992?).
2. A useful reference to provide an “inside” account of what might be called karma yoga is Hugh Milne, *Bhagwan: The God That Failed*, ed. Liz Hodgkinson (London: Sphere Books, 1987), while an interesting reference that is oriented toward a lengthy “bhakti” experience with Osho is Ma Prem Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho: The New Diamond Sutra* (Pune: The Rebel Publishing House, 1992?). For a useful introduction to the role of jñāna yoga, see Osho, *Autobiography of a Spiritually Incorrect Mystic*, ed. Sarito Carol Neiman (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2001), which could be supplemented by numerous other books compiled from his discourses. The *Autobiography* is not a conscious attempt at writing a self-history, but a posthumous selection from oral statements which Osho had made on various occasions about himself and his experiences.
3. See, for example, Max Brecher, *A Passage to America* (Mumbai: Book Quest Publishers, 1993), 70-72.
4. Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (New York: Avon Books, 1982).
5. See, for example, Philip L. Jackson and A. Jon Kimerling (eds.), *Atlas of the Pacific Northwest* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 88-91.
6. Osho, *Autobiography*, 249-50.
7. Brecher, *Passage to America*, 384.
8. Details for this paragraph may be found in Brecher, *Passage to America*.
9. Details concerning what is written in this section may be found in such works as Brecher, *Passage to America*, Shunyo, *Diamond Days*, Milne, *Bhagwan*, and Osho, *Autobiography*.

10. Noted in Osho, *God Is Dead: Now Zen Is the Only Living Truth* (Köln, Germany, and Portland, Oregon: The Rebel Publishing House, 1989?), 215.

Also: This article is a condensed version of one which was prepared a couple of years ago and eventually summarized orally at a GORABS (Geography of Religions and Belief Systems) session during the annual conference of the Association of American Geographers held in Denver, 2005. The opening quotation for the original version includes a warning to scholars from Osho – “I am leaving something really terrible for scholars; they will not be able to make any sense out of it. They will go nuts – and they deserve it, they should go nuts!” (Osho, *Autobiography*, 171) – and in appreciation of the spirit and purpose of Osho’s project, this article has avoided being pedantic and using the scholarly equivalent of sound bites. Details concerning what is written or alluded to here may be found in the books referred to in the Notes, which refer to and contain information about others “by” Osho (written versions of his discourses) and about his project. The volume of original literature and oral recordings is enormous, and many books are available in different languages, including Japanese.