

**From the Editor**

Namasté,

In 1630 early Puritan and Massachusetts Bay Colony governor John Winthrop gave a sermon in which he described the founding of the American colonies as building a City upon a Hill: “ee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us.” While the United States has largely taken this image as an ideal, building a shining example of freedom and perfection for the world to see, the reality has often been different. Even the archetypal New England city of Winthrop’s vision, was one based largely on rigidity and religious intolerance. Like most colonizing peoples, assimilated American immigrants, from the Puritans forward, have become increasingly protective of “their land” especially as attitudes move across the generations. It is perhaps the more tenuous and hard fought the claim, the more obsessive the need to protect it is. The reaction to the attempt by a band of mostly Western followers (sannyasins) of the Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh to establish a permanent city-commune in the Oregonian desert is a marked example of this xenophobia and defensive myopia.

The U.S. stands as a superb experiment of modern democratic ideals. In practice, however, the depth of religious tolerance often has managed to extend only to small innocuous (unthreatening) religious groups. The larger the group, the less difference from the founding Puritan notions is tolerated. Even major faiths, such as Catholicism and Buddhism, had to acclimate the existing populations over generations. When the sannyasins came to Oregon they came up against this distrust—a misgiving that had recently been sharpened by the events at Jonestown just a few years earlier. Through a course of successive small events, the increasingly gruff and later corrupt management of the commune went head to head with the 40-or-so local residents and, later, world public opinion. The United States government at the highest levels took a disturbingly active role in the eventual collusion against the sannyasins’ City upon a Hill, Rajneeshpuram. Since the dissolution of the Oregon commune, Rajneesh and his merry band have been all but forgotten by those outside of Oregon. It is now merely an element in the colorful local history of the place.

Now that his 15 minutes are long over and almost twenty years have passed since the dénouement of the commune, perhaps Osho the philosopher will re-emerge as the revolutionary thinker that he was. It is with this in mind, and with the hope that from this



distance we may begin the process of objectively evaluating the experiment of Rajneeshpuram, that I have collected the material that makes up a large portion of this issue. It is my hope that I have included enough information in my article about the commune, to provide background and display the negative, and illegal (on all parties), aspects of the story. The rest of the material that we selected provides insight, mini-windows, past-present-future, onto the people rather than the process. Some look back, some look in and some look forward. I have chosen to begin the section with two articles by individuals who grew up within the neo-sannyas movement. The “kids” more than anything else are the true achievement, and litmus test, of the movement.

In a similar vein are the two pieces by Trebor Healey and Lawrence Schimel. Both speak of the visitor in a foreign land and the mistrust/misconceptions that this generates.

This original theme for this issue was to have been a look at various attempts to build intentional communities, diverse “Cities upon a Hill.” As it progressed the theme naturally developed into a more focused look at modern permutations of the ancient Indian renunciate tradition of *sannyas*. The first section looks at permutations on traditional Hindu sannyas: a Westerner goes to the great Hindu pilgrimage of the Maha Khumba Mela and a Frenchman becomes a Shiva lover in India and founds his own ashram. The second section focuses on “neo-sannyas” the initiatory movement founded by the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (later known as Osho). The third section offers material on Orisha Consciousness, a modern movement of the Americas that blends the traditional Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria with devotional Hinduism to develop a next-phase postmodern faith that is both progressive and traditional. The fifth section examines the Indian tantrik sect of the Adi-Natha, a practice at a crossroads between ancient practice and the new realities of spiritual practice in a modern world.

I hope that you enjoy this issue and that it brings Ashé (divine energy) into your life and onto your Path.

Love light laughter,  
Sven

