

esalen institute

February 23, 1978

Krishna Prem
Director of Publicity
Rajneesh Ashram
17, Koregaon Park
Poona 1, India

Dear Krishna Prem,

As you probably know by now, I have rejected "sannyas" in protest of the systematic senseless violence that characterizes some of your "therapies." So have Chris, Janet, and Fred.

In what conversation I have had with you, I have appreciated your good will and good humor. I hope you can bring those qualities to what I have to say. Your role as publicity director for the ashram means that this is an issue you personally must confront. I believe you mentioned that you have never been to a group in your years at the ashram. Wise of you, but let me tell you something of my experience.

My experience in my first two weeks at the ashram in the "mediation camp" was excellent. I felt a deepening, an enrichment, an atunement. During the last two weeks, my experience was quite the opposite. I had softened and opened only to be confronted with Teertha's autocratic, coercive, life-negating style of "leadership;" a style reinforcing violence and sexual acting-out of the most unfeeling kind; a style negating soft emotion and emerging sensitivity, and manipulating group pressure to force conformity. Is this what Bhagwan is about? Nowhere is the sensitivity and respect for individual differences round in The Book of the Secrets apparent. Where is that Bhagwan?

Any decent, responsible leader knows how easy it is to protect against most injury--and not at the cost of suppressing the genuine expression of anger, sexuality or aggression--quite the opposite. Teertha actually works to suppress that expression while provoking unconnected acting-out of the most vicious kind. It is as if the worst mistakes of some inexperienced Esalen group leaders of many years ago have been systematized and given the stamp of "God." Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir and other responsible caring persons vehemently opposed such tendencies then.

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end of the "encounter" group that a woman in the so-called "primal" group had her leg broken a few days after the broken arm incident--and the day after Bhagwan gave his "Mind your own business" answer to the lady who asked "Why do you allow violence in groups?" On inquiry, many other incidents come to light--injuries physical, mental and spiritual. V.D. is not the only infection that need concern you. The infection of the "fight or fuck" form of "encounter" is far more virulent.

Right, Bhagwan! None of my business. What my (and Esalen's) business is, is to introduce people to a range of growth practices and to the availability of others not necessarily presented here. It is our business to refer people to responsible practitioners--which at this point definitely excludes the ashram. I am in the position of recommending Bhagwan's books and meditation and warning against ashram groups. I recognize that there are some responsible and proficient leaders at the ashram. If only their influence could manifest!

I have talked to others in your organization who are concerned-- but seem helpless to do anything (or are afraid to speak out) given your dictatorial social structure. I imagine many others are also concerned. Yourself? Arup? Or are most content to suppose the injuries simply help "burn karma" or whatever? Then-why-not-brass knuckles?--Rifle butts?

Procedures which make injury not only likely but inevitable have no place in human potential practice. Nor do leaders that use them.

If you change your policy or violence, if you decide whether you are running a growth center or a concentration camp please let me know. Until then I will do my best to make it clear that the ashram "therapies" and Esalen are two very different things.

Best regards to you personally,

Richard Price

Richard Price

RP:pk

esalen institute

TIME Letters
 Time & Life Building
 Rockefeller Center
 New York, NY 10020

January 21, 1978

Re: 'God Sir' at Esalen East (Jan. 16)

Rajneesh is well worth reading - in spite of the numerous contradictions Lawrence Malkin was quick to notice. He can speak brilliantly of the transformative possibility of human life. His 'meditations' I find worth practicing. However, ~~the ashram encounter' group is an abomination - authoritarian, intimidating, violent -- used to enforce conformity to an emerging orange new order rather than to facilitate growth. Broken bones are common, bruises and abrasions beyond counting. As such it owes more to the S.S. than to Esalen.~~ Until the compassion Rajneesh speaks about with such eloquence is reflected in his groups, I am content to be known as 'Richard Price' rather than as 'Geet Govind'.

Richard Price

Richard Price
 Esalen Institute
 Big Sur, California

Salen institute

July 7, 1978

Dear Rajneesh,

X | You attempt to justify the violence at the ashram by calling it "objective compassion."

BULLSHIT!

Violence is unconnected acting out with the intent to harm another rather than to contact either that other or what is really going on in oneself. And this is what characterizes your "encounter" group. You would have us believe that such action is somehow covered by your enlightened state and secret plan for a new order.

So "objective compassion"? It depends.

Ikkyu's stanzas -- yes.

Marpa's seemingly harsh treatment of Milarepa -- yes.

Jesus' sometimes "hard" statements and actions -- yes.

Brutal actions of Inquisitors done in the name of Jesus - no.

Many of your finely worded points -- quite possibly.

Brutal actions of incompetent "group leaders" resulting in serious and totally unnecessary injury? Even though done in your name -- NO.

If you yourself were directly presiding over the silly assaults and careless breaking of bones -- perhaps -- but I doubt it.

So go see for yourself. Take a few groups. You have never done! See the difference between Laura Dillon's work where something real is done with anger, fear and other emotion, and Lowe's work where it is not.

d (Further, Lowe coerces, manipulates, and ~~does not~~ manipulates into joining your order. Is what you say and what you are so shallow that such means are necessary?

ENOUGH for today!

Rich

RICHARD PRICE