

FEBRUARY 11-17, 1990

THE **ILLUSTRATED**
WEEKLY OF INDIA
LURES MAGAZINE



**WAS
RAJNEESH
MURDERED?**

**MYSTERY
SURROUNDS
THE
BHAGWAN'S
DEATH**

EDITOR & PUBLISHER
PRITISH NANDY

DEPUTY EDITOR
SAILESH KOTTARY
(ACTING EDITOR)

SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITOR
SHERNA GANDHY
ASSISTANT EDITORS
RAJU BHARATAN
PADMINI SUKUMAR
MEHER DASTOOR
SUMONA ROY

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR
RADHA RAJADHYAKSHA
SENIOR SUB-EDITOR
AARTI RAINA
SUB-EDITORS
RANJNA MATHUR
MATHANGI IYER

CHIEF OF BUREAU, SOUTH
K P SUNIL, MADRAS

CHIEF OF BUREAU, EAST
S N M ABDI, CALCUTTA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS
VENU MENON, TRIVANDRUM
S BALAKRISHNAN, BOMBAY
SENIOR CORRESPONDENTS
PAYAL SINGH, CALCUTTA
ANURADHA DUTT, NEW DELHI
CORRESPONDENTS
DIBANG, NEW DELHI
M D RITI, BANGALORE

SENIOR MANAGER, DESIGN
ARUN SAWANT

SENIOR MANAGER, PHOTO SERVICES
PALASHRANJAN BHAUMICK

ILLUSTRATORS
MILON MUKHERJEE
BAJU PARTHAN
CARICATURIST
PRABHAKAR BHATLEKAR
DESIGNERS
MILIND MOKASHI
MADAN PATIL
LAYOUT ARTIST
ZUBAIR AHMED SHAIKH

GENERAL MANAGER, RESPONSE
G KRISHNAN

SENIOR MANAGER, RESPONSE
FAWZIA MADNI

GENERAL MANAGER, CIRCULATION
RAMESH MEHTA

SENIOR MANAGER, CIRCULATION
G V NARASIMHAM

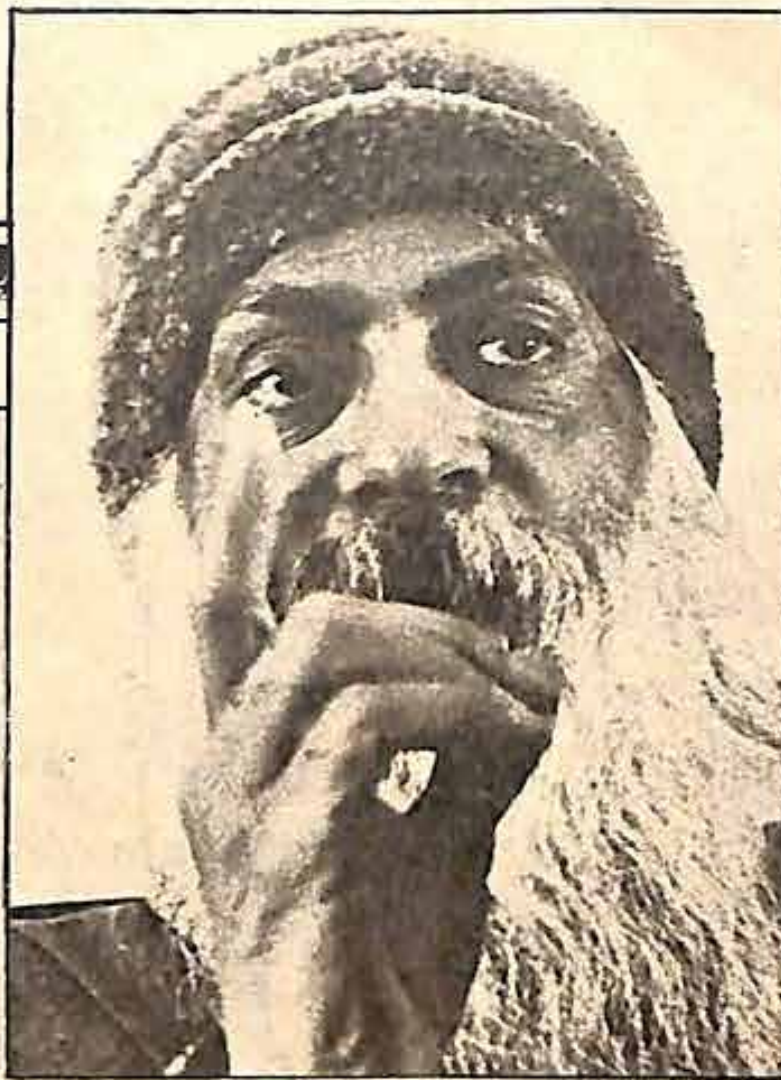
GENERAL MANAGER, PRODUCTION
PURNENDU SEN

SENIOR MANAGER, PRODUCTION
PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

MANAGER, NEWS COMPOSING
RAJA DAVID

REGISTERED OFFICE, BENNETT,
COLEMAN & CO LTD, DR D N ROAD,
BOMBAY 400 001 ● COPYRIGHT ©
1988, BENNETT, COLEMAN & CO LTD.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED WORLDWIDE.
REPRODUCTION IN ANY MANNER
WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN
PERMISSION PROHIBITED ● NO
RESPONSIBILITY IS ACCEPTED FOR
RETURNING UNSOLICITED
PUBLICATION MATERIAL ● REGD NO
MH BY SOUTH-25 ● REGISTERED AS
A NEWSPAPER IN SRI LANKA
● VOL. CXI 6

**THE TIMES OF INDIA
GROUP
OF MAGAZINES**



S K CHADHA

**10
COVER STORY
WAS RAJNEESH
MURDERED?**

The master himself believed that he had been exposed to deadly thallium poisoning in an American jail that was slowly killing him off. But there are several unanswered questions about Osho Rajneesh's death a fortnight ago that indicate a conspiracy nearer home.

S Balakrishnan reports from the Pune headquarters of the controversial godman.

**30
THE WEEKLY
INTERVIEW
AFTER THE
STORM**

S S Ray, former governor of Punjab, talks to Dibang about the 59th Amendment, the new peace initiatives and the all-party consensus on Punjab.



MONA CHOWDHURY

**42
THE WEEKLY SPECIAL
PRISONER OF GENDER**

A girl child. Hated. Abused. Killed. A burden whose arrival is a cause of sorrow. For whose protection little if ever is done in the form of serious legislation. One whose existence is limited to the four walls of her house, where she lives like a workhorse and dies like one.

In this year, declared the year of the girl child by SAARC, Bachi J Karkaria examines the status of this most deprived section of society.

**24
INTERFACE
PARTING COMPANY**

Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhriugu Kumar Phukan air their grievances against each other.

**26
GUEST COLUMN
WHO IS TO BLAME?**

Santosh Bharatiya picks out the warts in the Congress-I's image and performance.

**36
CONTROVERSY
DID CORBUSIER CREATE A
DEAD CITY?**

Satish Gujral on whether Corbusier was really as great as he was made out to be.

**38
RELIGION & POLITICS
A NEW SPIRIT**

Anuradha Dutt profiles Sadhu Mohan, the messiah of peace for Punjab.

**48
NEW FRONTIERS
WALKING TALL**

Milind Chaudhary and Naishadh Patil on the new path-breaking orthopaedic discovery, the Ilizarov technique, which is bringing hope to millions of deformed.

COVER PAINTING BY MA ANAND MEERA

FEBRUARY 11-17, 1990

**THE ILLUSTRATED
WEEKLY OF INDIA**
THE FEATURES MAGAZINE

ESTABLISHED IN 1880



Chandra Mohan Jain's long journey from the small town of Kuchwada in Madhya Pradesh to the luxurious commune in Pune as the ultimate purveyor of spiritual bliss to a quarter of a million followers worldwide, has finally ended.

On January 19, the guru of the quick fix died in his black painted ashram with only two of his confidants in attendance.

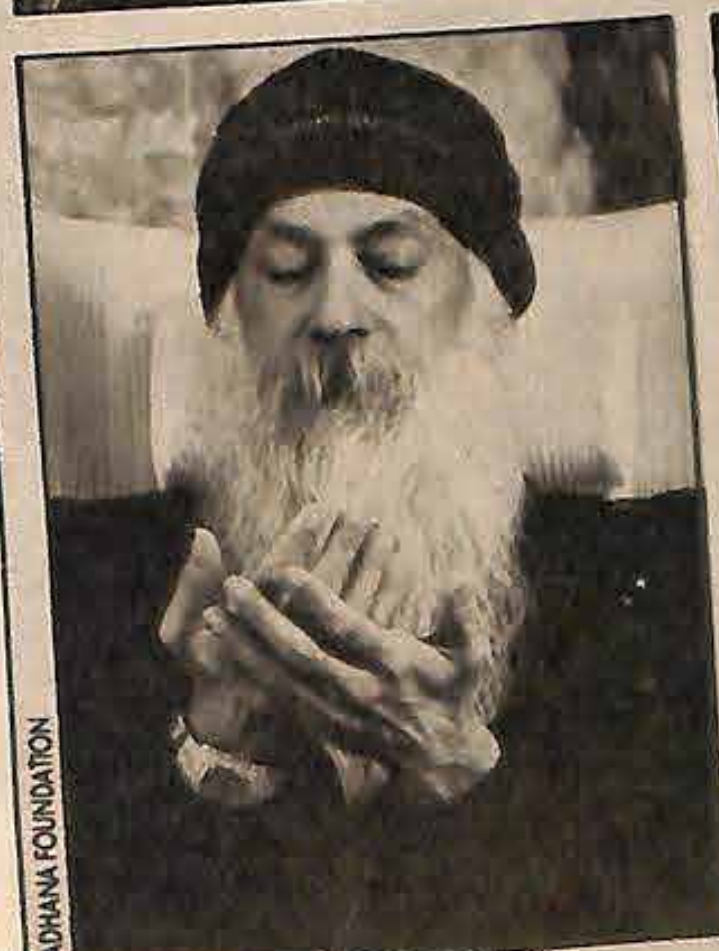
But barely had the ashes on his pyre cooled, than the godman whose teachings were as controversial as his lifestyle, became the centre of yet another controversy.

Did he die of a heart-attack as officially pronounced or was there evidence of foul play?

Rajneesh himself always claimed that the after effects of thallium, administered to him in jail in the US was slowly killing him off.

Was that simply the overheated imagination of a man obsessed with running down the government that had expelled him so ignominiously? Or was it true? Or was there a conspiracy closer to home masterminded by a powerful clique of foreign sannyasins who wished to gain control of the lucrative movement?

S Balakrishnan reports from Rajneeshdham in Pune on the last controversy the charismatic godman is likely to be involved in.



WAS RAJNEESH MURDERED?

and the intelligentsia. Why the books and cassettes in which he propounds his eclectic philosophy find a ready market. Whatever anyone said about him, what they could not do was ignore him. The master showman in him came forth every time you thought that the man had exhausted himself. There he was in the thick of yet another controversy as if saying "Hey! Here I am, your good old spiritual Rambo."

And, true to form, controversy dogs him in death as in life.

More than a fortnight after his earthly remains were confined to the flames, speculation persists about the cause of his death. There is a general consensus among the thousands of maroon-clad devotees 'celebrating' his death on January 19, 1990, at the sprawling designer ashram in Pune's exclusive Koregaon Park, that their controversial master was murdered.

The question is: By whom? And why?

Most of his disciples, who number a couple of million spread over the globe, are convinced that he was slowly poisoned by United States government officials in October 1985 and his death on the evening of January 19 was a direct result of that. As Swami Amrito, the lanky Briton who was Osho's personal physician, affirms: "The American authorities not only fed him thallium but also irradiated him while in prison. In the four years that followed, he was dying a slow but steady death, which could not be reversed. It was a sophisticated way of killing a person, but it was as cold-blooded a murder as shooting him down. American agencies have attained super-specialisation in this field."

Yet another group of devotees, while not denying the "mischief" performed in the United States, are uneasy about the events immediately surrounding their guru's death—the haste with which the body was disposed of and how almost nobody was told the master was on his death bed. Their fears may or may not be justified. But there are enough indications that the coterie responsible for running the black-painted ashram is most unwilling to encourage a dispassionate inquiry into the death.

Osho died at 5.00 pm in his super-opulent bedroom in Lao Tze House, which was his residence in the ashram complex. The air-conditioned, semi-circular bedroom, which must measure at least 2,000 square feet, has supersmooth imported marble flooring and elegant one-way glass walls. A huge circular chandelier adorns the 30-foot high roof while a waterfall with snow white swans gurgles perpetually. Only two people had access to



At first, nobody suspected foul play. Or perhaps it is more appropriate to say that the congregation of disciples was too stunned at the news to immediately ponder the cause of the death. But later, questions began being asked about the isolation in which Osho was kept during the last few days of his life unseen by all but two of his disciples. There was no way for any of the devotees to ascertain whether the two were really carrying out the orders of Osho. They have perforce to accept their orders unquestioningly.

the bedroom, especially during the last weeks of Osho's life. One was Swami Amrito, and the other, Swami Jayesh. Both were in the inner core of the 21 member Inner Circle that Rajneesh constituted on April 6, 1989. Deciding to retire from active participation in the ashram's life, he appointed the select committee to run things.

No one knows if the instructions for the formation of this inner circle were given in writing or not. For that matter, nobody knows to whom Osho gave these instructions. But Swami Jayesh, a US citizen, is the acknowledged chairperson of the inner cabal. He refused to meet mediapersons, even though speculation was growing about his conduct. He also did not reply to a questionnaire submitted by the *Weekly*. Swami Satya Vedant, a soft-spoken Indian member of the inner circle, tried to explain away the chairman's reluctance by saying that he is basically a shy and very private person who likes to be left alone.

Close to Jayesh is Swami Amrito, the 45-year-old vice-chairman of the inner circle and Osho's personal physician. He took sanyas 12 years ago. His first encounter with Osho was in Pune in 1976 and he "got easily connected" to him. A tall well-built man with long hair and a beard, his steel grey eyes avoid looking directly at you and express impatience to terminate the conversation.

The foreigner duo of Swami Jayesh and Swami Amrito forms the nuc-

leus of the inner circle and has been taking decisions in the name of Osho. There is no way for any of the devotees, including other members of the inner circle, to ascertain whether these two foreigners are really carrying out the orders of Osho or not. They have perforce to accept their orders unquestioningly.



On April 9 last year, Osho delivered his last discourse and was irregular in his darshan subsequently. He has been in great pain for the past one year and gave his last

brief darshan on January 17, according to Swami Satya Vedant, alias Vasant Joshi. There was a sudden and deep deterioration in his health on the night of January 18-19. By his own admission, Swami Amrito, who claims to be an expert in internal medicine, was the only one present in the bedroom that night. In fact, Swami Amrito shared the luxurious bed with Osho and in accordance with the latter's wishes constantly supplied him with ice-cubes. The room temperature was maintained at 11 degrees centigrade, once again on Osho's orders.

"I checked his pulse and blood pressure and found them weakening," says Amrito. "I told Osho that he should be admitted to an intensive care unit, but he would not listen. In a mysterious way he did

not want doctors and nurses playing with his body in his last moments. He knew that he was leaving his body and I had to respect his wishes."

Only late in the morning of January 19 did Swami Amrito choose to inform anybody outside the bedroom about the extremely serious condition of Osho's health and the fact of his inevitable end. And the only person to whom he confided was Swami Jayesh. No member of the inner circle was summoned so that they would be witness to the last orders of Osho. In fact, even the inner circle members knew of the death only a full 30 minutes after it took place. More surprisingly, Osho's ailing mother and four brothers, who are all his devotees and who were all residing within the ashram complex, a stone's throw away from his residence, were also not informed that he was on the verge of death. They, too, got to see his flower-bedecked body only half an hour after he died.

The family members and the mass of devotees had no option but to accept the claims of Swami Amrito and Swami Jayesh about the last moments of Osho.

The duo claimed that Osho had told them to keep his body only for 10 minutes in the Gautama the Buddha auditorium soon after his death, for the darshan of his devotees and immediately after that have it cremated at the Tulsiram ghat crematorium close to the ashram. Thus, even before the news could reach lakhs of devotees outside the ashram in Pune and other places, the body was cremated.

Ma Yog Laxmi, one of the earliest devotees of Osho, who was also his secretary and confidante for several years till he left for the Oregon ashram in the US in 1981, told the *Weekly*: "I was in Bombay when I heard the shocking news. By the time I reached Pune on the night of January 19 itself, the cremation was over. I was disappointed that I could not have a last glimpse of his body. In fact, lakhs of his followers must have been disappointed in not being given the opportunity to see his body. I am certain thousands, both from India and abroad, would have taken part in the funeral procession if they had delayed the cremation even by a night."

Swami Chaitanya Keerti, a short-statured and bearded Indian devotee, defends the action of Swami Jayesh and Swami Amrito by pointing out that when any deaths had occurred in the ashram, the bodies were cremated immediately because that was the order of Osho. "The master did not obviously want a different practice to be adopted for his funeral," he reasons.

Not everyone agrees. Some of the

devotees, who preferred to remain anonymous, observed that it would be wrong to equate Osho with his devotees. They insist that he should have been treated differently and given a send-off as befits his status.

When asked why he or Swami Jayesh did not summon any of the family members when they knew that Osho was dying, Swami Amrito said that the well-established practice was that only those whom Osho wished to see were admitted and to that extent there was precious little he could do. But after the death, the family was involved in the funeral in the sense that it led the procession and the pyre was lit by Swami Vijay Bharti, a younger brother, and the urn containing the ashes was also brought to the ashram by Swami Vijay Bharti. The family was roped in even though Osho had left behind no such instruction.

When the Pune correspondent of *The Times of India*, quoted a close relative of Osho expressing unhappiness about the way the whole

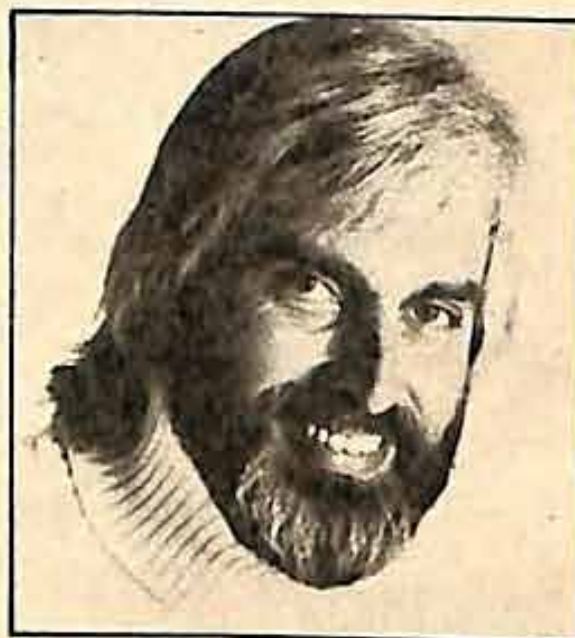
SWAMI JAYESH

Though the ashram's official position is that there is no successor, the American with Hollywood connections has manoeuvred himself into a position of pre-eminence in the management of the multi-billion empire. Though chairman of the Inner Circle, it was not Rajneesh who reportedly appointed him. A cloak of mystery surrounds him. He never speaks to the press and no photographs are available of him. Yet disciples in the commune speak of him with awe. He was the only one apart from Osho's personal physician, Amrito, who was present when the master died.

THE GANG OF SIX

Within the Inner Circle of 21, there is a secret core of six people who rule over the ashram complex. Could one of them be Rajneesh's successor?

SWAMI AMRITO



SADHANA FOUNDATION

The only one to tend Osho through his illness, it was through this lanky British doctor that the disciples got to hear of Osho's death. He told no one, not even the master's family that he was dying, and made speedy and efficient arrangements for the funeral and the samadhi. He now manages the affairs of the ashram on the lines of a secret society. Along with Swami Jayesh, his conduct will determine the future of the movement.

funeral was organised, the press office of the ashram did not react to it for a full 24 hours, though it is known for its efficiency and for flooding the media with press notes almost daily. A day later, the commune issued a denial quoting Osho's brother Swami Shailendra Saraswati. The note insisted that no member of the family had commented adversely about the events. The press note was not, however, signed by the brother. The *Times* correspondent however, insists that a close relative of Osho's had contacted him on his own and that Swami Shailendra Saraswati was not pre-

MA ANANDO

One of the overseas disciples, she is reportedly close to the Jayesh-Amrito duo. At their instance she attended to the secretarial requirements of Osho and kept a close watch on him. Her clout increased tremendously with the death—allegedly from an overdose of sleeping pills—of Ma Vivek, Osho's caretaker, only a few weeks before Osho's death. She keeps a low profile and her movements are a closely-guarded secret.

sent when the conversation took place.

The only person who had a look at the body before the other devotees was Dr Gokul Gokani, who is an ENT consulting surgeon. He is a Rajneeshite based in Pune and is the one who issued the death certificate. When the *Weekly* asked Swami Amrito why an ENT surgeon was summoned, he had no convincing reply to give. He admitted that Dr Gokani had not been treating Osho; he had been informed about the master's deteriorating health only on the morning of the 19th. "It is totally appropriate that an outside doctor is called in to certify the death," Swami Amrito maintained.

At first, nobody suspected foul play. Or perhaps it is more appropriate to say that the congregation was too stunned at the news to immediately ponder the cause of the death which was officially given as heart-attack. The police did not step into the picture since nobody suspected anything unusual. There was no question of any post-mortem being performed on the body. "Osho

MA NEELAM



ROBINSON

The wife of a prosperous businessman of Ludhiana, from whom she is reportedly separated, she is one of the few Indians in the sanctum sanctorum of decision making. She was the Indian secretary of Osho but had not seen him for many days before his death. In the scheme of things she plays second fiddle to Ma Anando. She works from an elegant office in the complex and liaises with the local authorities in Pune.

had died after more than 35 years of great work. Just for academic satisfaction you do not have his body cut up," says Swami Amrito. Dr Gokani was not available for comment. Swami Jayesh too was taking care to ensure that nobody asked him inconvenient questions while in the ashram access to the family was denied to the *Weekly* by the inner circle. The stock answer was that "We cannot ask anybody to meet you. If they want they will contact you."

It is this well-orchestrated strategy to keep everything under wraps that is giving rise to suspicion. Swami Amrito says that the last words of Osho were uttered by him while looking at Swami Jayesh. The master had said, "I leave you my dream." Swami Amrito, who shed copious tears once during the interview with the *Weekly*, flatly denied any foul play inside the ashram and rather irritably asked why the press, which had earlier ridiculed

MA PREM HASYA

After the fall of Ma Anand Sheela, it was the 51-year-old divorced wife of Hollywood producer Al Ruddy (The Godfather, Butch Cassidy...) who became president of Rajneesh's empire. Sheela had



accused her of being part of the Hollywood mafia that was engaged in drug peddling in the Oregon ashram, but Ma Hasya denied it and in turn accused Sheela of attempting to poison Devaraj whom she married in 1983.

Osho and his devotees, was all of a sudden evincing keen interest in them.

"All along we devotees were described as a bunch of brainwashed cultists who unquestioningly obeyed our master's words. Now we are being asked why we obeyed our master and completed his post-death formalities as per his directions. I find it very odd," he notes. Apart from the orders ostensibly issued by Osho regarding his funeral, Swami Amrito defends his conduct by saying: "I don't know the routine that is followed when a Buddha dies. It is not an everyday occurrence. In any case, I do not dare defy a Buddha."

Another interesting incident is the issue of a press release by the commune on the evening of January 19. Even though Osho was on his death bed and reportedly in great pain for over 20 hours prior to that, the commune thought it fit to distribute

SWAMI SATYA VEDANT



The suave and soft-spoken Gujarati academic is in charge of the Osho University and under his guidance it has bloomed.

Non-controversial and apparently unambitious, he is obedient to the new order within the commune because he would genuinely like the work there to be carried on uninterruptedly.

among the Pune press copies of a statement reportedly issued by Osho on Shirley MacLaine!



The alleged statement by Osho warned the West about the harmful effect of the 'inner workout' exercise being propagated by the celebrated Hollywood actress. According to the statement, Osho was responding to questions from his American disciples about the dangers of visualisation exercises that work with the body's seven energy centres, known in India as "chakras". In Shirley MacLaine's "inner workout" video the centres are said to be located at the sex organs, belly, solar plexus, heart, throat, forehead, and crown. It went on to quote Osho as advising Shirley MacLaine that she should put a warning on her video tapes as is done in the case of cigarette packs.

Swami Amrito holds firm to his belief that it was thallium poisoning

and irradiation that finally took its toll on Osho's life. According to him, thallium, which is a tasteless compound commonly used in rat poison, was given in controlled doses to Osho while he languished in an Oklahoma jail in the mid eighties on charges of violating immigration laws. The poison was allegedly mixed with food which was forcibly fed into the mystic's mouth. The breakfast given to him in prison was a strange-tasting concoction and its contents adversely affected the functioning of the thyroid gland, asserts Amrito. A portable radioactive device was used to irradiate him, probably at night, because he often adopted a pose as if trying to ward off something entering his right ear and shoulder.

Says Amrito: "Oklahoma city is completely controlled by the giant Kerr-Mcgee corporate conglomerate which produces plutonium and other radioactive substances. Karen Silkwood, the activist who dared to expose the unethical practices of this superpower organisation was killed under mysterious circumstances in a car accident while she was on her way to the *New York Times* office to hand over certain damaging documents.

"The powerful conservative Christian establishment of America with which the big corporations have close links, had never taken kindly to Osho because they felt threatened by his radical teachings. They wanted to harass and even eliminate him so that their pet beliefs and their dominance may continue."

Amrito claims that the US authorities had placed Osho under surveillance and had even infiltrated the Oregon commune and the Pune ashram in a bid to monitor their activities before eliminating Osho. "Osho was the worst nightmare for the conservative US administration. It could not reconcile itself to the fact that a non-white, non-Catholic, third world citizen was storming the strongest and mightiest Christian establishment in the world. Osho's teachings blasted the central tenets of that society. In four years Osho achieved something that would have taken four centuries for others. Osho could have helped achieve the real US dream minus its nonsense. In fact, it is a tribute to his followers that he lived as long as he did despite the most vicious efforts to remove him from the world. What the American administration did is most shameful."

According to Sue Appleton, who has authored a very interesting book on the poisoning of Osho in America, the spiritual superstar found that soon after his release from the jail in the United States, his left eye started twitching in spasms and

his eyesight began to decline rapidly forcing him to virtually abandon reading books, which was his passion. By March 1986 he also had problems maintaining his balance while standing and he began to lose control over his leg muscles. He also suffered from stomach ailments. On September 15, 1987, he developed an ear infection and an ENT specialist, Dr Mohan Jog, diagnosed it as a mild condition which would heal in a

The Oregon commune which was like an armed fortress was dismantled after federal authorities hauled



week. It took 47 days to heal. There was also considerable hair loss.

It was becoming increasingly clear that his immunity system was becoming less efficient. Dr John Wally was despatched from Pune to London with samples of his blood, urine and hair and x-rays of his shoulder and arm joints which were painful. A series of tests was conducted in the JSPS Laboratory, in London's famed Harley Street. The patient's name was given as David Washington so as to avoid any prejudice in the tests. Incidentally, David Washington was the name under which Rajneesh was registered in jail by US officials.

Dr Colin Mackintosh, a leading London radiologist, concluded that

Rajneesh in on immigration law violations and subsequently expelled him from the United States. It was the end of the great American dream for the powerful godman. The adverse publicity this won him made other nations cagey about offering their hospitality.

THE LAST TESTAMENT

Osho's final words as told to his personal physician Swami Amrito.

As you know, over these last few days, Osho's body has been becoming noticeably weaker.

What you may not know is that He has also been in considerable pain. By the night of the 18th, the pain in His legs was so severe that He was not able even to come and stand on the podium with us.

Over that night He became weaker and weaker. Every movement of the body was obviously agonising. Yesterday morning I noticed that His pulse was also weak and slightly irregular. I said I thought He was dying. He nodded. I asked Him if we could call in the cardiologists and prepare for cardiac resuscitation. He said, "No, just let me go. Existence decides its timing."

I was helping Him to the bathroom when He said, "And you put wall-to-wall carpet in here, just like this bath mat." Then He insisted on walking over to His chair. He sat down and made arrangements for the few items that He has in His room. "Who should this go to?" He said, pointing to His small stereo. "It is audio? Nirupa would like it?" He asked. Nirupa has cleaned His room for so many years.

And then He went carefully around the room and left instructions for every item. "Those you take out," He said, pointing to the dehumidifiers which he had found too noisy recently. "And always make

sure one air-conditioner is on," He continued.

It was incredible. Very simply, in a very matter-of-fact and precise way, He looked at everything. He was so relaxed, as if He were going for the weekend.

He sat on the bed and I asked what we should do for His samadhi. "You just put my ashes in Chuang Tzu, under the bed. And then people can come in and meditate there," He said.

"And what about this room?" I asked.

"This would be good for the samadhi?" He asked.

"No," I said, "Chuang Tzu will be beautiful."

I said we would like to keep His present bedroom as it is. "So you make it nice," He said. And then He said he would like it marbled.

"And what about the celebration?" I asked.

"Just take me to Buddha Hall for 10 minutes," He said, "and then take me to the burning ghats—and put my hat and socks on me before you take my body."

I asked Him what I should say to you all. He said to tell you that since His days in the marshal's cell in Charlotte, North Carolina, in America, His body has been deteriorating. He said that in Oklahoma jail they poisoned Him with thallium and exposed Him to radiation, which we only came to know when the medical experts were consulted. He said

Osho's symptoms could be due to cancer, exposure to radiation or thallium poisoning. Large doses of thallium can be fatal, but when administered in small doses it can destroy the person gradually by debilitating his nervous system. Writes Appleton: 'Unfortunately, the test for thallium will only show its presence in quantities of more than one microgram per litre of fluid. So the test in Bhagwan's case, made two years after his symptoms began and therefore long after the poison had left his body, could not provide any positive evidence.' But the medical literature was clear and all the diagnostic indications of thallium poisoning, including hair loss, bone pain, disturbance of motor coordin-

ation, lack of resistance to diseases, weakness of ocular muscles, were present in the case of Osho.

Apart from the US authorities, it is believed in the Pune commune that Ma Anand Sheela, the renegade secretary of Osho, who absconded with substantial amounts of the Oregon community's funds, and plunged it into chaos, also could have helped in his alleged poisoning. Appleton's book, whose copyright is held by a Rajneesh outfit, Neo Sannyas International, details Ma Anand Sheela's alleged role in weakening her erstwhile master. It is alleged that Ma Anand Sheela who was subsequently 'exposed' by Osho himself, had a schoolgirl's crush on him and was upset when he ignored her sexual

they had poisoned Him in such a way that would leave no proof. "My crippled body is the work of the Christian fundamentalists in the United States government," He said. He said that He

6

We sat on the bed and he gave us his final words. "Never speak of me in the past tense. My presence here will be many times greater without the burden of my tortured body. Remind my people that they will feel much more—they will know immediately..." At one point I was holding His hand and I started to cry. He looked at me, almost sternly. "No, no," He said, "that is not the way." I immediately stopped and He just smiled beautifully.

9

had kept His pain to Himself, but living in this body has become a hell.

He lay down and rested again. I went and told Jayesh what was happening and that Osho was obviously leaving His body. When Osho called again, I told

Him Jayesh was here and He said for Jayesh to come in. We sat on the bed and He gave us His final words.

"Never speak of me in the past tense," He said. "My presence here will be many times greater without the burden of my tortured body. Remind my people that they will feel much more—they will know immediately."

At one point I was holding His hand and I started to cry. He looked at me, almost sternly. "No, no," He said, "that is not the way." I immediately stopped and He just smiled beautifully.

Osho then spoke to Jayesh and talked about how He wanted the expansion of the work to continue. He said that now that He was leaving his body, many more people would come, many more people's interest would show, and His work would expand incredibly beyond our ideas.

Then He said, "I leave you my dream."

Then He whispered so quietly that Jayesh had to put his ear very close to Him, and Osho said, "And remember, Anando is my messenger." Then He paused, and said, "No, Anando will be my medium."

At that point Jayesh moved to one side, and Osho said to me, "Medium will be the right word?"

I hadn't heard what had preceded it, so I didn't understand. "Meeting?" I said.

"No," He replied, "For Anando, medium—she will be my medium." He lay back quietly and we sat with Him while I held His pulse. Slowly it faded. When I could hardly feel it, I said, "Osho, I think this is it." He just nodded gently, and closed His eyes for the last time.

advances. She had somehow manipulated things and removed Ma Yog Laxmi as Osho's secretary and acquired vast powers.



An Indian, Ma Anand Sheela was later jealous of the attention that Ma Vivek, Osho's foreign caretaker received from the master. She sought her revenge by attempting to poison Osho with the alleged connivance of US government authorities. Sheela's plan was thwarted by, among others, Ma Vivek herself. Which puts the blame of the alleged

thallium poisoning at the doorstep of the then US administration.

The episode relating to Ma Anand Sheela itself is the best example of the mysterious and crass way of functioning of those close to Osho. A Gujarati from Baroda, Sheela Ambalal Patel was accused of trying to kill by slow poison three persons close to Osho, including Ma Vivek, his physician and dentist, apart from allegedly poisoning two officials hostile to the Oregon commune—the district attorney of Jefferson county and the judge of the Wasco county. She was also accused by the Oregon commune inmates and by Osho himself of attempting to poison the water supply of the nearby town of The Dalles, the headquarters of

O

sho was convinced that Ma Anand Sheela had been poisoning him at the Oregon ashram at the behest of the United States authorities. The indulgence shown by the authorities in commuting her sentence only

Wasco county and of salmonella poisoning which affected over 700 persons.

Osho feared that Ma Anand Sheela would have killed him because she stood to gain financially in a big way. She had secretly monitored Osho's activities and even that of visitors to the 63,000-acre Oregon commune with the help of an elaborate electronic eavesdropping network. Even Osho's telephonic conversations were tapped with the help of at least 36 voice-activated tape recorders and she had allegedly set up a clandestine laboratory where the techniques of slow poisoning were tried on mice. A number of books with titles like *How to Kill People*, *Techniques of Harassment* and *How to Get Even With Your Neighbours* were found there.

The Rajneesh movement thus has a history of unsavoury scandals involving poisoning. What added a new dimension to the whole episode was the kid-glove treatment that the US authorities meted out to Ma



RAJNEESH FOUNDATION

confirmed these suspicions. Sheela had been accused of attempting to poison several other people in the commune too. Was the tradition of slow poisoning continued even after Osho returned to Pune? That is the question that rankles in the minds of thoughtful devotees.

Anand Sheela. She had in 1986 spent only 29 months in jail in California while under normal circumstances she would have received a 40-year prison term for the kind of crimes she was convicted of. The US authorities were more than lenient towards her when they reached a 'plea-bargain' settlement with her under which she pleaded guilty to the charges. She was let off of with a comparatively light punishment in return.

The indulgence shown by the US towards a known enemy of Osho, who allegedly entertained murderous intentions towards her master, is certainly a talking point among Rajneeshites even now. Was the tradition of slow-poisoning con-



tinued even after Osho returned to the Pune commune? That is the question that rankles in the minds of his thinking devotees.

Apart from his no-holds-barred attacks on Christianity, the Pope, and the Vatican, Osho had angered the US by the brazenness with which he went about the job of conducting his spiritual subversion. The liberal sexual mores advocated by him at that time were frowned upon even in the sexually liberated US society.

But more than that it was the way the Oregon commune threatened to spread at an ever-increasing pace that alarmed the authorities and citizens. What Osho had done was to set up a brand new township with the local population being reduced to a miserable minority. The commune had its own police force, internal government, system of justice, production centres which looked after the industrial and agricultural needs of the community, and an elaborate infrastructure for sufi dancing, dynamic meditation and other forms of therapy. Osho himself lived in an opulent palace guarded round the clock by well-trained guards armed with the rapid-fire Israeli Uzi automatic guns and with Bell helicopters armed with machine guns hovering over the commune to protect against any pre-emptive strike by the local authorities or the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Rajneesh's lifestyle too was reminiscent of a potentate of old rather than a spiritual leader in the old rishi mould. Apart from several custom-built Mercedes, he had at his disposal at least 93 Roll Royce cars. He is reported to have spent 2.5 million dollars a month buying himself expensive limousines, diamonds, precious stones and cosmetics to prevent him from ageing. The humble

Ma Yog Laxmi, one of Rajneesh's earliest devotees was upset at not being able to see her guru. "I was in Bombay when I heard the shocking news. By the time I got to Pune on the night of the 19th, the cremation was over. Thousands of devotees from India and abroad would have come for the cremation if it had been delayed by even one night."

professor had come a long way and it was not a way most people associated with spiritual salvation.

From this seat of luxury he issued his diatribes against the US government and the sins of Christianity. He derided Christian gods and accused them of repressing their followers spiritually and sexually. He openly pointed out that while most Christian gods were unmarried and by implication repressed, and consequently placed similar restrictions on their followers. Hindu gods were in many an instance polygamous and had a healthy attitude towards

sex. He charged the Vatican of being influenced by the Mafia and ridiculed the papacy for allegedly misleading millions of Christians by insisted they live lives of repression and hypocrisy. He was clearly asking for trouble, the strong democratic and liberal character of American society notwithstanding.

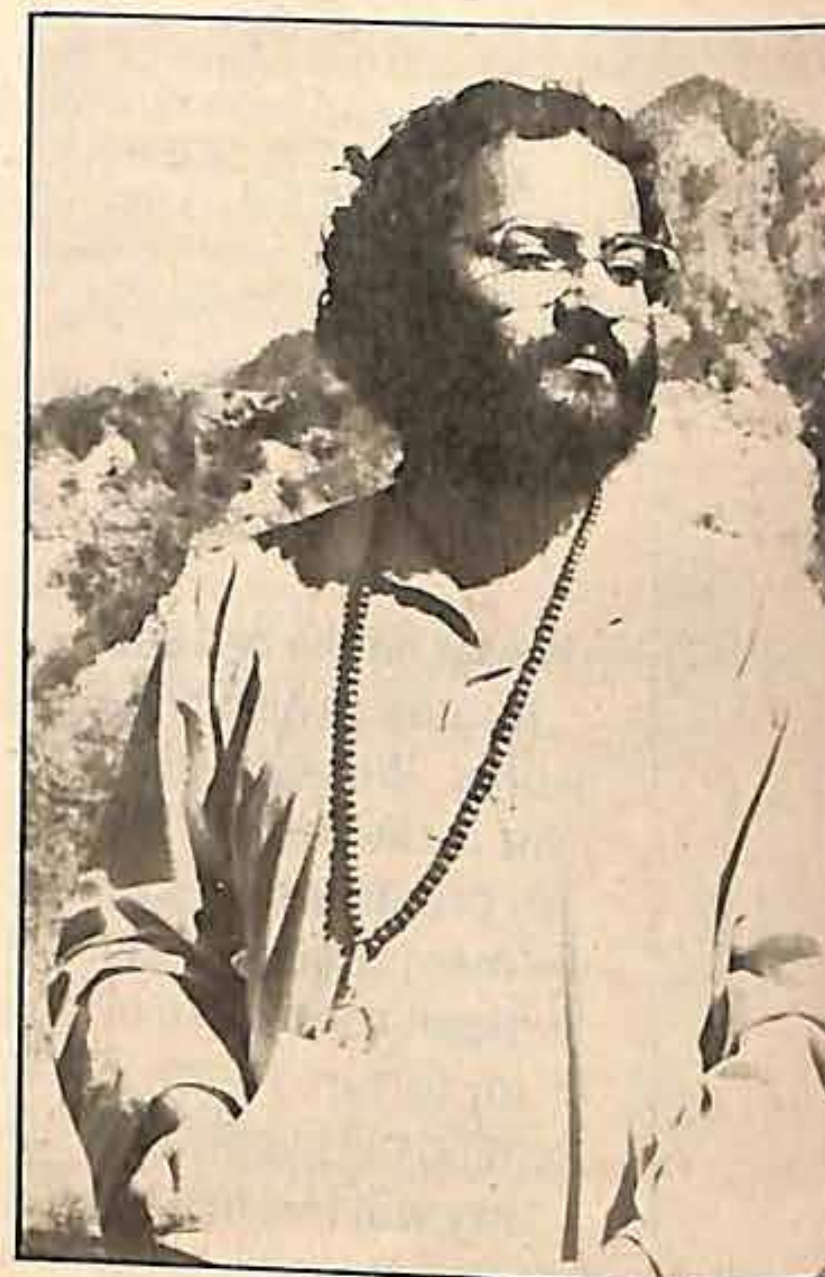
One theory being proffered by a section of his disciples is that the Christian establishment of the US did not stop its crush Rajneesh campaign by merely deporting him, but pursued him to his Pune ashram. Ma Neelam had in an Hindi edition of the *Osho Times* openly talked of the nefarious CIA being after her master. The penetration of the Pune commune cannot be ruled out because Osho became even more vehement in denouncing the Christian establishment and the US administration after his retreat to India. Given the nature of the commune and its style of functioning it would not have been difficult for a smart operator to penetrate the circle close to Osho. The bonafides of the foreign inmates were hardly checked by the Intelligence Bureau or by the special branch of the Maharashtra CID and this made matters easier for shady characters to operate in the commune. Even now the same indulgent attitude continues.

Ma Yog Laxmi told the *Weekly* that Osho was too much involved in his spiritual activities to be able to devote time and energy to the mundane aspects of the commune or to be bothered about the intentions of those around him.



A few days before Osho's death, another death took place in the Pune ashram which caused a frisson of suspicion—that of Ma Vivek. Ma Neelam, a member of the inner circle who hails from Punjab, said Ma Vivek had died of an overdose of sleeping pills. The mystery surrounding Ma Vivek's death is yet to be cleared. According to certain sources, Ma Vivek was close to Swami Jayesh and the two often travelled to Bombay together.

Ma Vivek was a Britisher whose real name was Christine Woolf. She was a longtime female companion of Osho since 1973 and was believed to be a reincarnation of his childhood sweetheart. Her body was also cremated swiftly as per the directions of the inner circle and Osho himself was believed to have been extremely saddened by her death and had even feared a similar fate for himself, according to sources having links in the Koregaon Park com-



When a Pune-based journalist quoted a member of the family expressing dissatisfaction at the way the funeral was organised, the usually efficient ashram press office did not reply immediately. A day later it issued a denial by Osho's brother Swami Shailendra in a press note though the note was unsigned.

munne.

Some devotees are asking why the last moments of Osho were not video-taped, specially considering the fact that most of his utterances were on tape. Swami Amrito notes that only the discourses were video-taped and most certainly there were no cameras inside his house. "In any event, I cannot expect to bring in the video recording crew when the Buddha wanted to leave his body as quietly as a bird taking wing. He had turned down my suggestion for heart resuscitation, so where is the question of his last moments being

filmed? It is ridiculous."

There is also talk of a secret group of devotees performing black magic on Osho. A regular ashram visitor who declined to be named, said Osho himself had expressed his fears that somebody was practising black magic on him. The thallium and irradiation could have weakened and affected Osho's nervous system. But it seems unlikely that it could have caused his death at a relatively early age. He did suffer from asthma and diabetes, but except in severe cases, these can hardly be classified as fatal diseases. The immediate cause, it is alleged, is something else, and the coterie managing the affairs of the commune have by their conduct created more suspicion than normally would have been the case.

Whatever the real cause of Osho's death, the fact remains that a coterie in which foreigners are in an overwhelming majority has steadily gained control of the Osho empire, with Swami Jayesh and Swami Amrito providing the nucleus even as Osho's health was beginning to decline steadily. The 21 members of this coterie are Swami Jayesh, Swami Amrito, Swami Anando, Swami Amitabh, Ma Anasha, Ma Avirbhava, Swami Chitten, Swami Devageet, Ma Garimo, Ma Hasya, Swami Jayantibhai, Ma Kaveesha, Ma Yoga Mukta, Ma Neelam, Swami Plotinus, Swami Prasad, Swami Satya Vedant, Swami Tathaghat, Ma Turiya, Swami Yogi, and Ma Zareen. The five Indians are Swami Jayantibhai, Ma Neelam, Swami Satya Vedant, Swami Tathaghat and Ma Zareen, while the rest are all foreigners. The chairman, Swami Jayesh, vice-chairman, Swami Amrito, and the secretary, Ma Anando, are all foreigners. The death of Osho, who was effectively an Indian at heart despite his remarkably eclectic approach to the problem of human existence, has resulted in his empire being taken over by a bunch of foreigners with hardly any claim or even pretence to deep insight into philosophy or spirituality. There is a deliberate effort to deflect questions about the financial and legal aspects of the commune.

According to an unsigned note circulated in the commune, on April 6 last year, 'Osho gave instructions for the setting up of a committee to be called "The Inner Circle". The aim of the committee, he said, was to reach unanimous decisions about the continued functioning and expansion of the commune and his work. "I am tired," he said "and I want to retire."' The circular claimed that 'Over the next few months Osho kept close watch on the workings of the committee, giving guidance where necessary, and adding a few new members. Eventually, he finalised

the committee at 21 members, who he said had been chosen to represent the commune's departments. He stressed that the inner workings of the committee were to remain a secret. He also said that the committee is not to be involved in spiritual considerations, but should look to the mundane work, the practical problems of the commune. The inner circle is not a club to discuss philosophy. It is a pragmatic and practical way to decide things. Osho left instructions that as any member died a new member was to be chosen unanimously by the remaining members.'

It is not at all clear to whom Osho gave these so-called instructions. The family of Osho finds no representation. This, Ma Neelam explains, is because Osho treated all his devotees equally. But, it is not clear how a group of foreigners can control vast finances in India without government approval. As the circular makes clear, the practical aspects of the running of the commune, which includes its funds, are to be looked after by the inner circle.

In fact, Osho's death has resulted in a financial windfall for his empire. According to a statement issued by Swami Chaitanya Keerti three days after the death, sales of his books, audio and video tapes are skyrocketing all over the world. Thousands of advance orders have been received for tapes of his last journey which are now being edited in Pune. Thousands of devotees have already poured into Pune to have darshan of his marble samadhi and many more are expected in the days to come from India and abroad.

The activities of the commune continue as before. The only difference is that instead of Osho, it is his video tapes which are delivering the sermons through a large screen that rolls down automatically in Gautama the Buddha Hall. His chair is placed on the stage as his devotees go about the motions of dynamic meditation, sufi dancing etc, with renewed vigour. It will be a tragedy if the teachings of this brilliant performer, who practised the Marxian dictum that the aim of philosophy is not to merely interpret the world but to change it, are not propagated systematically.

For, charlatan or genius, the obscure professor from a small university in Madhya Pradesh succeeded in putting himself on the international map. Of all the neo-spiritual movements spawned in the past 20 years, his was undoubtedly the most widely recognised. And the one that has survived the most successfully despite the scandals that have from time to time surrounded it.

When Osho left the United States, his disciples believe he was already suffering from thallium poisoning administered during his brief stint in a US jail. He had trouble controlling his leg muscles, his eyesight was impaired and a ear infection took a long time in healing.

Where does the future of the movement lie now? Will there be an actual successor to Osho or some clever manoeuvring behind the scenes by members of the inner circle? Can a movement built largely on the powerful personality of one man do without him? The inner circle of 21 members can ensure that the day to day functioning of the commune is smooth. But who has the spiritual authority to introduce new techniques of self realisation, and persuade the sannyasins that they will work, as Rajneesh frequently did to keep the movement from flagging? The answer will doubtless emerge in the weeks ahead as the sannyasins come to terms with their predicament. It will then be interesting to see if the power struggles so common among the uninitiated in the outside world arise within the tranquil environs of the garden of Eden.

