

# The Fate of the Charismatic Leader's Consort

## Ma Yoga Vivek, the Intimate Companion of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh/Osho

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**ABSTRACT:** “Charisma” is essentially a relationship of great emotional intensity between a charismatic leader and the disciples, as depicted by sociologist Max Weber. This study focuses on a charismatic leader’s powerful influence on his close companion through an examination of the life of Ma Yoga Vivek, the lover, head medium, and caretaker of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh/Osho. Her role in the charisma-building processes that shaped Rajneesh’s career, and the divagations of her own spiritual status, buffeted by competing factions in Rajneesh’s inner circle, is analyzed within the framework of recent elaborations of Weberian charisma theory and studies of the dynamics of “proximal authority” and “haptic logics” (sacred touch) in the charismatic relationships involving women devotees in new religious movements. It is argued that Vivek’s peculiar passive and reflected type of charisma was dependent upon her propinquity to, and physical intimacy with Rajneesh, and this dynamic explains the dramatic rise and decline of her spiritual status and social influence within the “charismatic aristocracy” that surrounded Rajneesh/Osho.

**KEYWORDS:** Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Osho, Ma Yoga Vivek, Ma Prem Nirvano, charisma, proximity, proximal authority, mediumship, sannyasin, succession

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**B**hagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931–1990), also known as Osho, was a twentieth-century Indian philosopher and mystic. Equally well-versed in Hindu Vedanta and European philosophy, psychology, and literature, Rajneesh in his “discourses” (public lectures) held audiences spellbound for over twenty years. There have been many studies of the challenges faced by the founders of new religious movements, but very little academic work on the effects of charismatic authority on their consorts or companions. The focus of this study, therefore, is not on Rajneesh, but rather on the Englishwoman who was his intimate companion, known as Ma Yoga Vivek (Christine Woolf, 1949–1989), later called Ma Prem Nirvano, who was considered to be Rajneesh’s “girlfriend,” “medium,” and “caretaker.” This study will explore Vivek’s ambiguous relationship with Rajneesh. Her participation in the inner circle surrounding the guru and her special role in the charisma-building mechanisms that bolstered Rajneesh’s career will be analyzed within the framework of sociological theories and models of charismatic authority.<sup>1</sup>

Many memoirs of spiritual journeys with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh have been written by his disciples.<sup>2</sup> Fleeting descriptions of Vivek appear in these memoirs, from which we may construct a rough biography. To our knowledge, Ma Yoga Vivek/Ma Prem Nirvano left no records of her own biographical and spiritual journey. Why then this effort to reconstruct her life story?

Vivek was an elite member of Rajneesh’s inner circle and an intimate companion to the guru. By studying her life, we might gain insights into what Max Weber calls the “charismatic aristocracy” and how significant members of this elite group function as “central causal agents in the etiology of charisma.”<sup>3</sup> Vivek’s life offers an interesting example of what sociologist Paul Joosse calls “disciple charisma,” a state which requires a delicate balance of obsequiousness and “personal charismatic qualification.”<sup>4</sup> By examining her role in Rajneesh’s daily discourses and darshans, we begin to understand the “dramaturgical” element in the social construction of the guru’s charismatic persona.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Vivek’s story raises the issue of propinquity to the source of charisma. Since Vivek’s precarious spiritual status appeared to wax and wane in response to her level of physical proximity to her guru, I will analyze her charismatic career within the framework of two relevant studies: religious studies scholar Amanda Lucia’s exploration of “haptic logics” (the phenomena of sacred touch) and historian of religions Manon Hedenborg White’s study of “proximal authority.”<sup>6</sup>

While in the 1970s Vivek was recognized by her peers in the Rajneesh movement as exhibiting her own charismatic qualities, by the mid-1980s her spiritual status was challenged and ultimately rejected by elite members of the inner circle. Her loss of charisma raises questions about the fate of the consorts/companions of aging or dying charismatic leaders

once members of the charismatic aristocracy begin to negotiate the knotty issue of succession.<sup>7</sup>

### VIVEK AS LOVER

Chandra Mohan Jain was born in 1931 in Kuchwada, Madhya Pradesh, India. He was given the nickname Rajneesh as a child. After earning a bachelor's degree and Master's degree in philosophy, he became a professor of philosophy at Jabalpur University in 1958. He resigned his position in 1966 to give speaking tours on philosophy.<sup>8</sup> As an *acharya* (Sanskrit, *ācārya*, spiritual teacher/scholar) he initiated his first Indian disciples in 1970. In 1971 he took the name "Bhagwan."<sup>9</sup> Rajneesh began to offer *darshan* (*darśana*) to his western *neo-sannyasins* ("new renunciants").<sup>10</sup> Unlike other gurus, he set them on a spiritual path that required no vows of celibacy, poverty, or sobriety, but emphasized breaking free of their social conditioning and living life in the moment. In 1974 the Shree Rajneesh Ashram was established in Pune, Maharashtra, India, and by 1977 the Rajneesh movement had become international, with approximately 25,000 active disciples during its peak in 1981–83.<sup>11</sup>

Christine Woolf was born in England on 19 March 1949. She was 22 in 1971 when she first heard Acharya Rajneesh lecture in Hindi to a large crowd in Bombay (now Mumbai). Slender and graceful, with a childlike face and long brown hair, she resembled the famous British models of the 1960s. Entranced by Rajneesh's presence, she attended his meditation camp at Mount Abu. He initiated her as his disciple, giving her the spiritual name Ma Yoga Vivek. Vivek lived with Rajneesh from 1973 until her death in 1989. She was eighteen years his junior.<sup>12</sup>

In a discourse published in *The Path of Love*, Rajneesh recounted his interactions with Vivek in her earlier incarnation. "I had a girlfriend when I was young. Then she died. But on her deathbed she promised me she would come back. And she has come back. The name of the girlfriend was Shashi. She died in '47. . . . And now she has come as Vivek to take care of me. Vivek cannot remember it."<sup>13</sup> But Vivek remembered how, "that night as I was lying in bed, my death came back, when I died. . . ." Rajneesh told her, "Just before I died, I made him promise that he would call me back. . . . I made him promise that . . . he wouldn't go with another woman, that he wouldn't get married!" Vivek experienced flashbacks of her past life in India when, as the childish Shashi, she used to go swimming with Rajneesh, bring him chapatis and dahl, and "just plainly annoy him."<sup>14</sup> After two years of courtship, in 1973 Rajneesh invited Vivek to live with him in his quarters, where she "tenderly" helped him cope with "his worsening allergies and asthma attacks."<sup>15</sup>

In a 1971 letter to Vivek, Rajneesh expressed a rare moment of emotional vulnerability:

Beloved Vivek,

Love. I know how you will be feeling there.

Because now you are an outsider there and for that matter, everywhere. . . .

But now come back soon.

Sooner the better.

Here I am waiting and waiting and waiting for my Vivek.<sup>16</sup>

Rajneesh rarely spoke of their relationship in public, but when asked in an evening darshan, "What do you do with Vivek?" he responded:

Vivek is so close to me that she is constantly on the cross. She has to be; it is difficult. To be so close to me is arduous. The more you are close to me, the more responsibility. The more you are close to me, the more you have to transform yourself. . . . And I go on creating many situations. I have to create them because only through friction does integration happen. . . . Growth is not soft; growth is painful.

You ask me, "What do you do with Vivek?"

I am killing her slowly. That is the only way for her to get a totally new being, to be reborn. It is a cross to be with me, and hard is the task.<sup>17</sup>

In this statement, Rajneesh held Vivek up as a model of the perfect disciple who surrenders utterly to him, the guru. This message was reinforced in a public exchange between them:

[Vivek to Bhagwan],

For days now I have been on fire inside. I feel the unknown in part of me, and I am afraid to jump. Everything is cuckoo, and it's beautiful and scary at the same time.

Push me, [Bhagwan]!

On fire . . .

[Bhagwan to Vivek],

*Crazy, Baby, Crazy!* That's what I am here for, to put you on fire. And once it starts happening, nothing else is needed to be done. . . .

[He addresses his audience.]

My sannyasins *all* have to be cuckoos! They have to learn the song: the Song of Solomon, the song of love, life, laughter. . . .

You are [all] so fast asleep, I have to come from the back door. . . .

And with you, Vivek, I am not worried. You are on fire, your heart is stolen long before. And I am pushing you, and I am absolutely certain that the thing that you are all here for is going to happen to you.<sup>18</sup>

Vivek is mentioned in many sannyasins' accounts of their visits to the Pune ashram in the 1970s. Impressed by her natural grace and beauty, they seem to have regarded her with a blend of curiosity, awe, and envy, due to her special relationship with the guru that was believed to transcend time and mortality. In real life, however, their relationship was turbulent. Ma Anand Deeksha (Maria Grazia Mori), a top female administrator in Pune, told a confidant that once she saw Rajneesh beating Vivek, but that Vivek had defended him when Deeksha came to her aid.<sup>19</sup> Author Timothy Conway writes, "We have reports that Rajneesh was troubled by [Vivek's] increasingly severe bipolar manic-depression condition, and that he yelled at her and even badly beat Vivek on occasion."<sup>20</sup> Tim Guest, who spent his boyhood at the movement's commune in Oregon called Rajneeshpuram (1981–85), described how Rajneesh's secretary had bugging devices installed in Rajneesh's private quarters and how Guest was one of the members of the electronic eavesdropping unit who were "shocked at this glimpse into their guru's private life."

In the evenings he and Vivek argued. She shouted: "You don't love me anymore, why don't you love me? Why don't you make love to me?" The microphones picked up the sound of something thrown in the kitchen. He threw something back—a book, a shoe—and muttered: "Shut up, woman. I am trying to watch television. Always you are moaning."<sup>21</sup>

Rajneesh's personal secretary, Ma Anand Sheela (born Sheela Ambalal Patel, later known as Sheela Birnstiel), asserted in her book that Vivek "behaved as if she were married to him. . . . In her mad jealousy, she often tried to blackmail Him. She would yell and threaten to leave Him and then destroy Him by telling the world about the truth of their relationship."<sup>22</sup> Sheela's book revealed a highly sensitive secret about Vivek:

[Bhagwan] insisted that she always use contraceptives. . . . He did not believe in either marriage or in raising children.

One day, back in 1978, when we were still in Poona, she wanted to teach him a lesson because for a long time He had not shown any interest in her. She had sex with Him without using contraceptives and became pregnant. This was a very scandalous situation in India, especially for a holy man like Bhagwan. . . .

Laxmi [Ma Yoga Laxmi] very quickly organized an abortion and sterilization date for Vivek. . . . The event was . . . hushed up. Only Bhagwan, Dr Saraswati (the gynaecologist), Laxmi, and I knew what was really going on.<sup>23</sup>

Sheela accused Vivek of having base motives: "So Vivek had used her womb as a weapon against Bhagwan. . . . He threw her out of His bedroom and had no sexual contact with her anymore. Bhagwan asked her to get a boyfriend with whom she could play such manipulative games. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

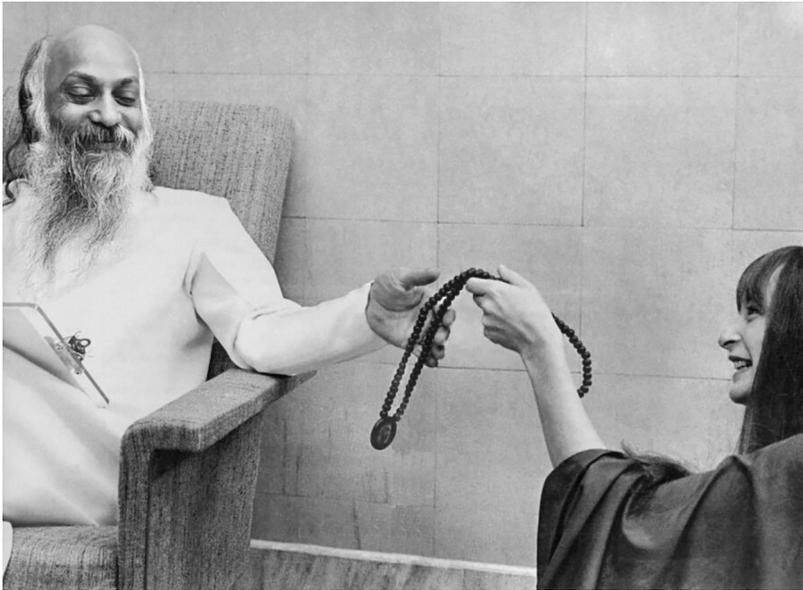
Hugh Milne (Swami Shivamurti), Rajneesh's former bodyguard, observed that by the early 1980s, "Bhagwan still had a special relationship with Vivek, but this was less close than it had once been. He used to boast that he made life the hell for her, and this was certainly true."<sup>25</sup> Milne described Vivek's distraught behavior during a photographic session:

Bhagwan seemed very ill at ease. . . . Vivek was in agony, sobbing her heart out. . . . Vivek had been his lover and constant companion for seven years, and now that relationship had changed. She still had her privileged position, but Bhagwan's attitude toward her had altered. . . . What was certain was that Vivek had taken a lover, a German group leader called Prasad. When we found out we were speechless. In taking a sannyasi lover she had become ordinary, one of the populace like the rest of us.<sup>26</sup>

But Vivek's close relationship with Rajneesh endured despite his radical views on sex, marriage, and reproduction. Rajneesh convinced Vivek to contract a sham marriage with Jaspal Singh in India for residency/immigration purposes. His ongoing sexual experiments with his female disciples were well known. Hugh Milne, interviewed by BBC Scotland, described how Rajneesh seduced his girlfriend, and how Rajneesh would have "special" darshans with female followers at 4:00 A.M.<sup>27</sup> One of Rajneesh's mediums claimed he would touch them in the dark for the purpose of "stimulating our lower chakras" and "'orchestrating' their energies" in Energy Darshans (see below).<sup>28</sup> Vivek was designated as Rajneesh's "head medium."

### VIVEK AS HEAD MEDIUM

German sociologist Max Weber used the term "charisma" (from the Greek word *khárisma*, denoting "gift of grace" or "favor") to describe a type of authority that is neither traditional nor rational/bureaucratic, but derives from outside the everyday realm. For Weber, charismatic authority is based on the extraordinary claims of an individual whose followers believe that he or she possesses divine or god-like attributes



**Photo 1.** *Vivek passing a mala to Rajneesh. Courtesy of Sannyas Wiki. Content available under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 and Fair Use.*

and is called to a divine mission.<sup>29</sup> Sociologist Lorne L. Dawson takes up Weber's observations regarding the innate precariousness of charisma, which depends heavily upon the recognition and support of followers.<sup>30</sup> Since charismatic founders of new religions in the west tend to lack social support in their local communities and the larger society, Dawson argues they must compensate by continuing to supply new proofs to followers in order to bolster their charismatic claims.<sup>31</sup>

Rajneesh used his gift of rhetoric in his mystical philosophy discourses to offer daily "proofs" of his enlightened status. Vivek played a conspicuous role in these and in the darshans at the Pune ashram: helping Rajneesh with his sandals and shawl, laughing at his jokes, and passing *malas* (beads on which to count mantra recitations) to him as he initiated new disciples. Sociologist Paul Joosse notes the importance of elite members of the charismatic aristocracy in the stage management or "careful manner in which charismatic performances can be crafted to shield the laity . . . from the more quotidian 'backstage' aspects of the leader that would be antithetical to charismatic presentation."<sup>32</sup> Vivek is an apt example of a close disciple who assists in the management of the leader's charisma.

But the gifts demonstrated by the leader at the outset of a career are insufficient as lasting proof of charisma, according to Dawson. The

leader must be seen to be achieving “new successes” and proofs of charisma must be ongoing and various.<sup>33</sup> In addition to using his gift of rhetoric, Rajneesh exhibited charisma through touch. His transmissions of *shakti* (*sakti*, spiritual power) were legendary. Rajneesh's dentist, Swami Devageet (Charles Harvey Newman), wrote: “whenever I have been close to him in darshan my body does strange things. My legs tremble, and once I became cross-eyed. . . . A queue of thousands waited for his blessing, many unable to move away after touching [his] feet. A team of ‘lifters’ kept the long line moving.”<sup>34</sup>

Hugh Milne revealed that “the guru could not stand people touching him or kissing his feet. . . . He found it distasteful.”<sup>35</sup> In his book Milne claimed, “For years [Bhagwan] had not allowed anyone except Vivek to touch him in any way. From 1974 to 1976 he did not touch anyone at all in darshan.” Therefore, Milne was surprised when in 1979 Rajneesh announced a new experiment with “Energy Darshan” when “many of the female sannyasins were now ready to become vessels for his energy. . . . Ten or twelve chosen women would come to darshan every night” and as “mediums” they “would be able to transfer his energy to the whole commune and eventually to the world outside.”<sup>36</sup>

Energy Darshan involved a chain of women surrounding Rajneesh, linked to him by touch. They would extend out into the audience, so that ashram visitors and sannyasins, instead of touching the guru's feet or body directly, could receive Bhagwan's *shakti*, believed to be transmitted and amplified through his mediums. Rajneesh appointed Vivek as his head medium in a form of ecstatic trance, as described by Ma Deva Aneesha (L. Dillon):

Another phase of Osho's work . . . [in 1979–81] . . . involved rather esoteric energy work, in which there were female energy mediums, dancing and swaying to the beat of energetic music. The lights were flashed on and off like a strobe while Osho touched the 3rd Eye of mediums and “guest” [*sic*] as the energy rose upwards, creating ecstatic states of inner awareness and bliss.<sup>37</sup>

Rajneesh instructed his mediums, “Vivek will be your chief, so you have to listen to her, to whatsoever instructions she gives to you. I have been working on her for seven years; now she is ready. So . . . surrender to her. . . .”<sup>38</sup> Photographs of these Energy Darshans depict Vivek, her head thrown back, eyes shut, long hair flowing as she transmitted Bhagwan's powerful, blissful “energy” to others.<sup>39</sup>

Joose refers to the select few under charismatic authority who use “their special skills to convey an aura of extraordinariness from the leader to the wider charismatic laity.”<sup>40</sup> Vivek's mediumship fits this description. But it appears that Rajneesh discouraged Vivek and others from exhibiting any independent spiritual gifts. Sheela reported,



**Photo 2.** *Vivek helping as a medium. 1979. Courtesy of Sannyas Wiki. Content available under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 and Fair Use.*

“Bhagwan . . . detested letters describing a strong energy that sannyasins had felt near Vivek during discourses.”<sup>41</sup> Joose points out that elite disciples should not “become a focal point of charismatic devotion in their own right,” lest they blur “the indispensable and initially delicate social distinction at the heart of charismatic appeal, namely, the leader’s status as being ‘set apart.’”<sup>42</sup>

### VIVEK AS CARETAKER

It is noteworthy that not once, in any of his books on sex, Tantra, and super-consciousness, did Rajneesh mention Vivek, his lover. A sole reference to his “caretaker” appears in his ghostwritten book, *Autobiography of a Spiritually Incorrect Mystic*.<sup>43</sup> Vivek’s romantic role as Rajneesh’s reincarnated sweetheart gradually morphed into the mundane role of caretaker. Rajneesh’s health began to decline in his fifties. By 1978 their sexual relationship had ended and by the time they relocated to Oregon, where Ma Anand Sheela was overseeing the construction of the movement’s holy city, Rajneeshpuram, Vivek was routinely referred to by Rajneesh as “my caretaker.” Vivek may be seen in the Rajneeshpuram photographs and videos, walking beside her guru, or seated in one of his ninety-three Rolls Royces during daily drive-bys along Samadhi Drive

where she would hand out small birthday gifts to his disciples to commemorate the date they took *sannyas* (renunciation) with Rajneesh.

As caretaker, Vivek wielded the authority to make decisions regarding Rajneesh's well-being. She described that on one occasion, "he was coughing all night, he had such a bad cold, and he wanted to go to lecture. . . . And I said, 'You know, if you go and speak in that state you're going to make yourself much worse.'" When he insisted on going, "I realized I had to do something about this . . . and . . . yes, I locked him in."<sup>44</sup>

In her role as caretaker, Vivek's charisma was based on her daily ministrations in caring for the guru's body. In Rajneeshpuram's work-as-worship ethic this was regarded as a meditation. According to Ma Yoga Sudha (Leida Yuson) who interviewed Vivek in 1978:

Vivek breathes Bhagwan, so you will find him very present here. She has been a sannyasin for seven years now, and her "work" in the ashram is to take care of Bhagwan—cooking, medicines, messages, his library. . . . She is one of two people who has direct access to Bhagwan at any time; the other is Ma Yoga Laxmi. The Master/disciple relationship here is very spiritually intimate.<sup>45</sup>

Rajneesh, along with Vivek and other members of his inner circle, left the United States for India in November 1985 under stressful circumstances (see below). After the Indian government made it clear that Rajneesh and his sannyasins were not welcome, Rajneesh and his entourage embarked on a "World Tour" in 1986, beginning with Nepal. They traveled to Crete where Rajneesh was arrested and deported from Greece. Rajneesh, with Vivek and other close sannyasins, traveled to Uruguay, Portugal and other countries, where they were refused permission to stay.<sup>46</sup> At the end of July 1986, Rajneesh returned to Bombay, and in January 1987 he returned to the ashram in Pune.<sup>47</sup> This period with Rajneesh in the ashram is called "Pune 2" by sannyasins.

In the Pune 2 phase, Vivek, now addressed as Ma Prem Nirvano, was no longer Rajneesh's main caretaker. This role was assumed by Ma Deva Anando (Susan Heffley), an Australian modern dancer and trained lawyer. Timothy Conway writes: "[Vivek] had fallen from Rajneesh's grace some years earlier due to mood swings apparently due to a bipolar manic-depression condition. By 1986 she had been replaced in her major role as Rajneesh's personal caretaker by Ma Anando."<sup>48</sup> Ma Prem Shunyo (Sandy Pengelly), who assisted in caring for Rajneesh/Osho, wrote, "Anando was down-to-earth and playful with Him. . . . [H]er understanding of Indian politics was impressive; and she knew all the names, all the parties. She and Osho chatted away like two old friends. . . ."<sup>49</sup> But Vivek/Nirvano continued to care for Rajneesh sporadically and, as late as December 1988, she assisted his physician, Swami

Prem Amrito (Dr. George Alexander Wynne-Aubrey Meredith, a.k.a. Dr. John Andrews, earlier known as Swami Devaraj), in taking care of him, as Rajneesh had become very ill.<sup>50</sup> According to Shunyo, “During this time we took care of Osho as a team. It was no longer a job for one person, because of his weakness and ill health.”<sup>51</sup>

After returning to Pune, Nirvano traveled frequently and worked with her fellow sannyasins in the inner circle, including Jayesh who became her lover (see below). By 1989, she would travel weekly to Bombay and stay overnight.<sup>52</sup> According to Shunyo,

[Nirvano] went away many times during these three years, but each time she returned Osho welcomed her back and immediately gave her the choice of whether she wanted to be His caretaker, or whether she wanted to just relax and do nothing. There was never a question about her freedom to do anything whatsoever she liked in the *ashram*. It was an exception He made for her that applied to no one else.<sup>53</sup>

## VIVEK AND THE CHALLENGES OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Rajneesh’s charismatic aristocracy was characterized by internal power struggles. By 1981 the core group at Rajneeshpuram had split into the three factions, identified by journalist Win McCormack as the custodians, the administrators, and the therapists.<sup>54</sup> The custodians were the close companions of Rajneesh who lived with him in his residence, called Lao Tzu House. These included Vivek, Devageet, and Swami Devaraj (Dr. George Meredith, now known as Swami Prem Amrito), who was Rajneesh’s personal physician. They were imbued with a kind of charisma-by-osmosis simply by living in close proximity to Rajneesh. Conspicuous at the evening darshans, the custodians were flamboyant in exhibiting ecstatic states as they meditated at Bhagwan’s feet.<sup>55</sup>

The administrators, under Ma Anand Sheela, managed the commune’s complex business structure. These were the (mostly female) accountants, lawyers, and medical staff who met at Jesus Grove (Sheela’s quarters). These women, dubbed the “Ma-archy,”<sup>56</sup> ran the commune efficiently, which included demoting, relocating, and ejecting internal dissidents. Sheela and her aides were not particularly meditative and did not attend the evening darshans or celebrations. According to former sannyasin Kate Strelley, “Sheela wanted nothing to do with the occult side of things. . . . She would even say, ‘I don’t believe in all this spiritual bullshit,’ as she would call it.”<sup>57</sup> According to Ma Shanti Bhadra (Jane Stork), Sheela was “the master’s voice . . . I revered her . . . she would become my substitute master.”<sup>58</sup>

Third, there were the (predominantly male) therapists. They specialized in psychotherapeutic practices drawn from the human potential

movement and humanistic psychology. When Rajneesh took a vow of silence in April 1981, which lasted until 30 October 1984, head therapist Swami Anand Teertha (Paul Lowe) then presided over the initiations of new disciples and the Energy Darshans.<sup>59</sup> Several of these therapists, like Teertha and Swami Anand Somendra (Michael Barnett) were exhibiting charismatic qualities in their therapy groups. Rumors abounded that they were enlightened masters in their own right. Sheela observed that when Rajneesh emerged from his vow of silence, he became irked by the therapists' pretensions: "He told me to let everybody know that in His commune nobody had any special position anymore. Only He was to be special. . . . *He* was the master, not the Teerthas or the Somendras of the commune. . . ." <sup>60</sup>

Having quelled the therapists, Rajneesh proceeded to shake Sheela's pedestal. Sheela described how in 1984 he called a meeting of fifty to sixty sannyasins together, where he suddenly declared twenty-one of them "enlightened beings" who would comprise the "inner circle" that would lead the sannyasin community after his death.<sup>61</sup> Next, Rajneesh began to issue lists of "enlightened" sannyasins during his evening discourses. These lists were constantly being revised, dropping some names and adding others. Sven Davisson, editor of *Ashé! Journal of Experimental Spirituality*, writes, "these lists were interesting more for the people that they excluded rather than included. Sheela and her group were conspicuously absent. It's my feeling, that Rajneesh was using these lists as a means of destabilizing Sheela's power."<sup>62</sup>

During the Rajneeshpuram period there was tension between the custodians living with Rajneesh in Lao Tzu House and the administrators living with Sheela in Jesus Grove.<sup>63</sup> The power of the custodians resided in their physical proximity to Rajneesh. According to Swami Prem Geet (Yogesh Thakkar), "No one could touch Osho without [Vivek's] permission. Even if [Rajneesh's physician] wanted to give him an injection, he had to go through her." Vivek, in her October 1985 testimony to the Wasco County Grand Jury, claimed that Sheela had been extremely jealous of her proximity to Rajneesh and had tried to have her removed from the Lao Tzu House by "spiking her tea with drugs that made her extremely sick."<sup>64</sup>

After Rajneesh emerged from his vow of silence, he started giving discourses to small groups of sannyasins.<sup>65</sup> During his discourses, Rajneesh repeated some of the sannyasins' complaints about Sheela's use of her authority. These lectures by Rajneesh were videotaped and shown to the larger community of sannyasins at Rajneeshpuram at the end of their twelve-hour workdays. In her book, Satya Bharti Franklin (Jill Franklin, Ma Satya Bharti) described the night when a video was suppressed. In the talk recorded on the videotape, Rajneesh spoke out against Sheela's management of the commune, saying she had transformed paradise into a "concentration camp." He also outlined his new

vision for the commune where no one person would have absolute power. The showing of the videotape was canceled on the pretext that it was damaged. Franklin noted: "I was convinced that it had been deliberately destroyed. . . . Bhagwan had apparently said that night . . . he'd destroy the concentration camp Sheela had created. It was hardly a promise she could afford to have made public."<sup>66</sup>

Beginning in August 1984, Ma Anand Sheela and her assistants orchestrated the poisoning of two visiting county officials, and the poisoning of around 750 people by Salmonella placed on salad bars in a restaurant and on grocery items in The Dalles, the Wasco County seat.<sup>67</sup> After Sheela's surveillance device picked up a conversation between Rajneesh and Devaraj, his physician, about how drugs could be used for euthanasia, Sheela decided that Rajneesh's custodians were threatening his life.<sup>68</sup> While Sheela believed that the root canals and excessive tooth extraction procedures performed by Rajneesh's dentist Devageet also harmed Rajneesh, no murder plots targeting Devageet were carried out.<sup>69</sup>

Journalist Les Zaitz describes how Sheela assigned Ma Anand Ava (Ava Avalos) and Ma Anand Su (Susan Hagan) the task of killing Vivek as she slept in her room in Lao Tzu House. The would-be assassins "set out late one night" carrying "an ether-soaked rag to render her unconscious." The plan was for Ava to inject Vivek with "a lethal combination of potassium and adrenalin." However, they were unable to unlock Vivek's rear door. Unbeknownst to them, Vivek had secretly had all the locks in Lao Tzu House changed. The next target was Rajneesh's physician, Devaraj. During the 6 July 1985 Master's Day festival, Ma Shanti Bhadra, following Sheela's orders, embraced Devaraj from behind while jabbing him in the buttock with a syringe containing adrenalin. Devaraj was flown to a nearby hospital where he was treated and survived.<sup>70</sup>

On 16 September 1985, Rajneesh held a press conference at Rajneeshpuram where he announced that Sheela had defected with nine accomplices (whom he referred to as her "gang of fascists") after attempting to poison his doctor and caretaker. He charged that Sheela and her assistants had poisoned the townsfolk of The Dalles with Salmonella, and he had also learned of plans to poison the county's water supply. He complained that Sheela had been recording conversations in his residence and on his telephone by means of hidden surveillance devices.<sup>71</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation agents moved in to investigate these alleged crimes. Rajneesh was arrested, detained, and forced to leave the United States after pleading no contest to two charges of immigration fraud.<sup>72</sup>

After Rajneesh and his entourage returned to India from their World Tour, they reopened the old ashram in Pune in 1987. On 7 January 1989, Rajneesh renounced the title Bhagwan and by September 1989 had also

“dropped the name Rajneesh.” According to Shunyo, “We asked that we might call Him Osho . . . a common form of address used in Japan for a Zen master.”<sup>73</sup> The names of his sannyasins were also changed, including Vivek who was given the name Ma Prem Nirvano.

### THE “UNTIMELY DEATH” OF VIVEK/NIRVANO

By 1989 Osho's death was generally understood as imminent. On 6 April 1989, Osho set up what was termed an “inner circle” consisting of twenty-one sannyasins whose function was to oversee the continuation of Osho's work and to manage the Osho Commune International after his death. Osho chose as chairman a Canadian sannyasin (initiated in 1984), Swami Anand Jayesh (Michael O'Byrne), and he chose his British physician Swami Prem Amrito (formerly known as Swami Devaraj) as vice-chairman. Ma Deva Anando (Osho's new caretaker) was appointed secretary of the inner circle.<sup>74</sup> Nirvano was one of the inner circle members, but she would die eight months later.

As preparations for Osho's impending death were underway, Nirvano may have felt anxious. Whereas in the first period in the ashram, which sannyasins call “Pune 1,” Vivek and Rajneesh “each had a room, balcony and bathroom connected by a passage” and he ate meals on her balcony,<sup>75</sup> in the second period in the ashram, known as Pune 2, Nirvano was staying in a different house than Osho “because it was felt that she was no longer able to take care of Osho in the way that he needed. . . .”<sup>76</sup> Vivek/Nirvano died suddenly on 9 December 1989 at age forty. Police records state that she was unconscious when she was brought to the Wadia Hospital (two kilometers from Pune) at 6:15 A.M. By 6:20 P.M. she was declared dead. The police record lists the cause of her death as “accidental,” but on the death certificate it states, “opinion reserved.”<sup>77</sup>

Whether Nirvano's death was caused by accident, suicide, or murder is still being debated by sannyasins and former sannyasins. Shunyo wrote: “On December 9th, I was in the laundry room when Anando came and told me that Nirvano had died from an accidental overdose of sleeping pills.”<sup>78</sup> A conflicting story appears in the book by investigative reporter Abhay Vaidya, who claims that senior members of the commune were discreetly told, “Nirvano had committed suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills as she had been suffering from depression.”<sup>79</sup> That she had a history of suicide attempts is affirmed in an FBI report on an interview with Swami Krishna Deva (David Berry Knapp) dated 15 November 1985.<sup>80</sup> He told the FBI that “Vivek had apparently attempted to commit suicide on at least two occasions while at Rajneeshpuram.”<sup>81</sup> Author Timothy Conway

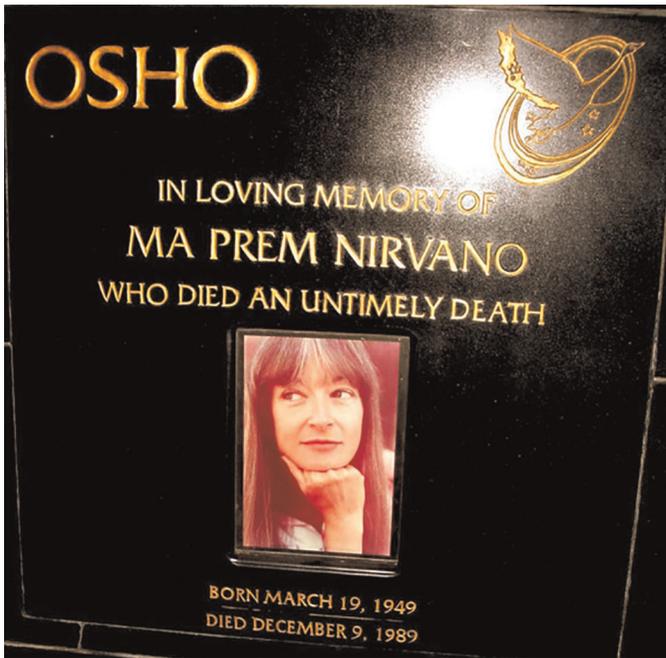
concludes, “Pointedly, Vivek decided to kill herself immediately before Rajneesh’s birthday celebration” on 11 December 1989, because she anticipated her guru’s impending death. “Rajneesh had threatened suicide at the Oregon commune several times, hanging his death over the heads of his disciples as a threat unless they obeyed his orders. On his last day on earth, Rajneesh is reported to have said “Let me go. My body has become a hell for me.”<sup>82</sup>

Vivek/Nirvano’s death occurred two days before Osho’s fifty-eighth birthday celebration and five weeks before he “left his body” on 19 January 1990. Impassioned debates on the mystery and meaning of their deaths can be found in sannyasins’ published memoirs and on the blogs of loyal disciples as well as ex-sannyasins. The question of Nirvano’s mental state around her time of death is often raised. Shunyo declared that Nirvano, her friend since the 1970s, “was a wise woman, and she was in tune with Osho like nobody else.” Nevertheless, Nirvano experienced periods of deep depression during which she would isolate herself.

As a child her parents took her to Switzerland to hospitals, because she refused to eat. In the last few years that I knew her she had a hormonal or chemical imbalance and was treated with medicine for this. Nothing worked though. Earlier in 1989 she visited a psychiatric hospital in England for treatment, but did not stay for more than two days. She said that the doctors were more insane than her. . . .<sup>83</sup>

Another friend, Ma Prem Veena (Rosemary L. Schlegel, known as Veena Schlegel), blamed Ma Anand Sheela for Vivek’s depression: “Sheela . . . was at first massively jealous of Nirvano and this turned to obsessive hatred. Nirvano bore the brunt of all this negativity directed towards her and, with her stress about taking care of Osho properly, her health started to weaken.” Veena reported that Nirvano had confided in her that she suffered from extreme “PMT” (premenstrual tension) and “hormonal disorder,” which was misdiagnosed as schizophrenia by “one of the commune doctors” who “started giving her lithium, a terrible drug to which she reacted badly.”<sup>84</sup>

Journalist Abhay Vaidya raises questions about Vivek’s death. Was her body really found in a Bombay hotel, as some ashram leaders claimed? Or had she been found dead *inside* the ashram and hastily smuggled out, as Swami Tathagat (Goncalves de Oliveira), the ashram’s “In-Charge,” and Swami Prem Geet, the gatekeeper, reported? Vaidya writes that “many in the Commune were shocked that Nirvano was cremated hurriedly the same night,” because a public celebration was the custom whenever a sannyasin died.<sup>85</sup> In her book, Shunyo stated that Osho termed Nirvano’s death “untimely,” and had instructed that “only a few of her friends” attend her



**Photo 3.** Memorial plaque for Ma Prem Nirvano at one of the Pune resort pyramids. Courtesy of Sannyas Wiki. Content available under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 and Fair Use.

cremation ceremony. About forty people were present when the ambulance arrived bringing her body.<sup>86</sup> When asked by a sannyasin named Shantam Prem if he sensed foul play, Tathagat replied, “Surely because of Nirvano’s death, these people got complete access to Osho. She was a hindrance to their plan.”<sup>87</sup> Vaidya reports, “there is intense speculation among his followers even today that she might have been eliminated to get her out of the way for the grand finale of Osho’s elimination itself, 41 days later.”<sup>88</sup>

When the time came, only Jayesh and Amrito were at Osho’s deathbed. Even Anando, his current caretaker, was absent. Jayesh and Amrito were later criticized for excluding Osho’s mother, as well as his Indian doctor, from the dying Osho’s bedside.<sup>89</sup> On 19 January 1990, Osho “left His body” at 5:00 P.M. By 7:00 P.M. the same evening the news was announced by Amrito to the sannyasins gathered for meditation. Osho’s body, decorated with flowers, was brought in and displayed for a farewell darshan for ten to fifteen minutes. Then it was transported in a funeral procession to the burning ghats for cremation.<sup>90</sup> After the cremation, Amrito read out a statement in Buddha Hall that listed Osho’s dying wishes. Osho had named Anando as his “medium” through whom He would communicate from the beyond.<sup>91</sup> He had said to

Jayesh, “I leave you my dream.”<sup>92</sup> Vaidya notes, “with this, Jayesh became the unchallenged custodian, leader and commander of the Osho movement after the master’s death.”<sup>93</sup>

After Vivek/Nirvano’s death, her role in the Rajneesh/Osho movement was downplayed, but she was not forgotten by sannyasins. Tathagat told journalist Vaidya that the group of “top sannyasins” who attended Nirvano’s cremation included “her boyfriend Jayesh, Anando, Amrito [her former lover], and [her friend] Shunyo, who fainted. . . .”<sup>94</sup> In an essay published in *Sannyasnews* on 4 December 2015, Shantam Prem expressed his “feeling” that “these two gentlemen [Jayesh and Amrito] have hidden the full facts around Nirvano’s death, and did not even ask Osho’s opinion as to what to do with her body and celebration.”<sup>95</sup>

The death of Nirvano prompted a lively debate among sannyasins and former sannyasins over the question of enlightenment; whether she—or indeed any of Rajneesh/Osho’s disciples—were (or ever had been) “enlightened.” Since the whole point of taking sannyas with Rajneesh was to achieve the personal goal of enlightenment, this became an important issue during the period of Osho’s decline and following his death. Several argued that if Nirvano had indeed suffered from bipolar disorder or depression and this drove her to commit suicide, then she could not have been truly enlightened. Ex-sannyasin Aditya Choudhary noted, Vivek “represents a sannyasin who is willing to leave everything and give herself 100% to the master. . . . Having sacrificed her youth for Osho, her family, her way of life and besides being very close to Osho (his girlfriend!!), what happened to her. . . . [M]illions of people put their trust with [Osho] by becoming [sannyasins] but not even one [is a] claimant to enlightenment!!!”<sup>96</sup>

### **“HAPTIC LOGICS” AND “PROXIMAL AUTHORITY”: PERSPECTIVES ON VIVEK’S WANING CHARISMA**

Vivek/Nirvano’s personal charisma and social status in the Osho Commune—indeed her very happiness—was utterly dependent on her physical proximity to Rajneesh, her guru, lover, and long-term companion. The phenomena and *modus operandi* of sacred touching and of physical proximity in communities that form around charismatic leaders have been explored by religious studies scholars Amanda Lucia and Manon Hedenborg White. It is useful to examine Vivek’s changing spiritual and social status over eighteen years in Rajneesh’s charismatic aristocracy within the framework of Lucia’s concept of “haptic logics” and Hedenborg White’s model of “proximal authority.”

Lucia explores the “disciplinary logics of physicality” that “govern guru communities and reinforce the sanctification of proximity to the guru.”<sup>97</sup> In the case of Hindu gurus such as Swami Muktananda (1908–1982), devotees believe that the “guru has the power to transmit his or her *śakti* at will, and this penetration can effect powerful mental and physiological transformations in the disciple.”<sup>98</sup> Haptic logics thus “govern guru communities and reinforce the sanctification of proximity to the guru.”<sup>99</sup> Devotees seek out physical contact with the guru in order to receive his charismatic power, “transferred to, ingested by, and circulated among devotees.”<sup>100</sup> Lucia explains that the social hierarchy of the guru community is based on “ladders of proximity”: “The closer one is in proximity to the guru, the more institutional power one has and vice versa. . . .”<sup>101</sup>

Manon Hedenborg White explores a similar dynamic in her case study of the relationship between British occultist Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and his consort, Leah Hirsig (1883–1975), who for a while was Crowley’s “Scarlet Woman.” Hedenborg White calls this dynamic “proximal authority” and defines it as “authority ascribed to or enacted by a person based on their real or perceived relational closeness to a leader.”<sup>102</sup> Referring to Weber’s characterization of charismatic authority as an “emotional form of communal relationship,” she suggests that “the particular importance of affect in the construction of charisma may render proximal authority more likely to arise from closeness to a charismatic leader,” for instance in the case of a charismatic leader’s lover.<sup>103</sup> Hedenborg White’s scrutiny of the subtle mechanisms through which relational closeness enables—and yet limits—proximal charismatic authority, enables us to better understand the changing and precarious positions inhabited by charismatic leaders’ consorts, such as Ma Yoga Vivek/Ma Prem Nirvano.

We may discern four stages in Vivek’s charismatic career, each defined by her level of proximity and physical intimacy with Rajneesh/Osho. Between 1973 and 1981 she lived with Rajneesh in the Pune ashram (Pune 1) as his reincarnated girlfriend and consort, widely respected by the sannyasins as a worthy receptacle for Bhagwan’s divine energy. Although their sexual relationship came to an end in 1978, after Vivek became pregnant and Rajneesh insisted that she have an abortion, undergo sterilization, and find other lovers, her charisma reached its peak when Rajneesh appointed her head medium to serve as a conduit for his *śakti* in the Energy Darshans (1979–81). In the Rajneeshpuram phase (1981–85), Vivek’s role was redefined. No longer Rajneesh’s lover or girlfriend, she became his caretaker, but she still enjoyed a close proximity to him as part of his household in Lao Tzu House. Vivek accompanied the guru on his Rolls Royce drive-bys and to the evening gatherings. Since Rajneesh lived in seclusion during his silent phase, from 1981 to 1984, only showing himself during the nightly celebrations,

Vivek served an important function as a go-between for sannyasins jostling for a meeting with the guru.

Why did Vivek and Rajneesh become distant in his final years? There appear to be three interconnected reasons. First, they became estranged as lovers, partly due to Rajneesh's reaction to her pregnancy, but also because his health was declining. By the late 1970s he was suffering from diabetes, asthma, heart problems, and back pains. In 1981 he was diagnosed with a herniated disc.<sup>104</sup> Second, his dependence on his personal physician, Devaraj/Amrito intensified, whose access to the guru's physical presence eclipsed Vivek's. Third, Rajneesh's increasing reliance on Valium and nitrous oxide might have replaced the comforts and pleasure that Vivek could provide. In 1985 Sheela complained on CBS *60 Minutes* that Rajneesh took sixty milligrams of Valium a day.<sup>105</sup> His consumption of Valium was facilitated by his physician, and he was also addicted to nitrous oxide. His dentist Devageet reveals that Osho first tried nitrous oxide in 1981 and thereafter insisted that it be used *daily* in connection with dental procedures—and that Osho dictated three books while sitting in his dental chair under the influence of laughing gas.<sup>106</sup>

There is an oddly passive quality to Vivek's charisma which seems to reflect Rajneesh's radical philosophy of sexuality. "My own vision is that the coming age will be the age of woman," he declared, urging women to become the "pillars of my temple," where they might cast off their shackles, explore their sexuality as orgasmic meditation, and become "female Buddhas." Perhaps Vivek was conforming to her guru's ideal of woman as a hollow, egoless receptacle waiting to be filled with "His" energy?<sup>107</sup>

Christopher Calder (Swami Krishna Christ), an early sannyasin and vocal apostate, claimed that Vivek was once enlightened but later "lost it," that her high state of consciousness relied on physical proximity to Rajneesh. He described the earlier Vivek as "the most radiant woman I have ever known. Vivek was a glowing student of meditation, but her only meditation method was being with Rajneesh and absorbing his tremendous energy."<sup>108</sup> Vivek's meek, graceful demeanor was interpreted by her peers as expressing a high spiritual state. This state, it appears, had no inherent sustainability, for it was utterly dependent on the haptic logics of her physical proximity to the guru.

## CONCLUSION

Sociologist Roy Wallis, in his elaboration of Max Weber's model of the charismatic aristocracy consisting of elite disciples who surround the prophet and bolster the charismatic persona, insists that charisma is a "social construction arising from the advancement and acceptance of

a charismatic claim.”<sup>109</sup> Weber has explained that this elite group (“subject to charismatic authority”) is “based on an emotional form of communal relationship” and that “[t]he administrative staff of a charismatic leader is . . . chosen in terms of the charismatic qualities of its members.”<sup>110</sup> This aptly describes Vivek’s life with Rajneesh and her role in his inner circle. But Wallis suggests there might be fierce competition below the surface of these emotionally ruled communes. Those elite disciples who live in closest proximity to the charismatic leader “may inspire affection for others close to the leader while they are in ‘good standing,’” but their fellows will likely exhibit a “‘readiness to . . . attack them when they fall from favour,’ so as to advance [their] own standing.”<sup>111</sup>

There are cases of charismatic wives and consorts who have succeeded their deceased husbands in leading new religious movements and even founding their own movements, such as Elizabeth Claire Prophet of the Church Universal and Triumphant, and Hak Ja Han the “True Mother” of the Unification movement. A charismatic spouse may even arrange to expel her partner to take over leadership of the group, as did Mary Ann MacLean, co-founder of The Process Church of the Final Judgment.<sup>112</sup> In contrast to these female charismatic leaders, Vivek seemed to lack ambition and leadership qualities. She appears to have been dedicated to her passive role: the ongoing task of reflecting Rajneesh’s brilliance, facilitating his work as a performing mystic, and caring for his ailing body. Thus, she never overtly developed her intellectual interests or public speaking abilities. She made no effort to craft a leadership role in the movement.

Due to her proximity to Rajneesh, Vivek was in a potentially powerful position to assert her own charisma. She might have refused the abortion and fled to England to deliver Rajneesh’s baby, then reappeared at the Pune ashram years later with a brilliant child who would inherit his/her father’s mantle. Or, she might have revived her role as Rajneesh’s reincarnated childhood sweetheart, Shashi, and begun to channel Osho’s messages from the spirit world. Or, she might have teamed up with one of the “enlightened” therapists as his head medium and toured the international Osho networks, offering new Energy Darshans, and possibly spearheading a schism.

Glimpses of Vivek’s charisma may still be found in the *Sannyasnews* published online. On 5 December 2015, Swami Samarpan (probably Ishverlal N. Shah) commented on Vivek’s death. Referring to the Hindu concept of *līlā* (pronounced leela), the “play” of divine consciousness in the cycle of rebirth, he wrote: “It was not an untimely death. She left just in time to prepare the way for Osho, who was soon to follow. Where could she go, if this is *leela*, and death is a fiction?”<sup>113</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press 1947/1922), 358–91; Roy Wallis, “The Social Construction of Charisma,” *Social Compass* 29, no. 1 (February 1982): 25–39; Lorne L. Dawson, “Crises of Charismatic Legitimacy and Violent Behavior in New Religious Movements,” in *Cults, Religion and Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 80–101; Paul Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples: Theorizing the Charismatic Aristocracy,” *Sociological Theory* 35, no. 4 (2017): 334–58.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Milne, *Bhagwan: The God That Failed* (London: Saint Martin’s Press, 1987); George Meredith, *Bhagwan: The Most Godless and Yet the Most Godly Man* (Bombay: Rebel Publishing House, 1987); Kate Strelley, *The Ultimate Game: The Rise and Fall of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987); Ma Prem Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993); Rosemary Hamilton, *Hellbent for Enlightenment: Unmasking Sex, Power, and Death with a Notorious Master* (Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 1998); Veena Schlegel, *Glimpses of My Master: Insights into the Life and Work of the Enlightened Mystic, Osho* (N.p.: Veena Schlegel, 2015); Satya Bharti Franklin, *The Promise of Paradise: A Woman’s Intimate Story of the Perils of Life with Rajneesh* (New York: Station Hill Press, 1992); Swami Devageet, *Osho: The First Buddha in a Dental Chair* (Boulder, CO: Sammasati Publishing, 2013); Rashid Maxwell, *The Only Life: Osho, Laxmi and a Journey of the Heart* (Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2017); Ma Anand Sheela, *Don’t Kill Him! The Story of My Life with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* (New Delhi: FingerPrint!, 2012); Deva Peter Haykus with Avalon Haykus and Marv Viramo Lincoln, *93 Rolls-Royces: How an Osho Disciple Painted Wondrous Works of Art on the World’s Most Outrageous Collection of Cars* (N.p.: Infinite Rainbow, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples,” 334–58.

<sup>4</sup> Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples,” 337.

<sup>5</sup> Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples,” 336, 352.

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Lucia, “Guru Sex: Charisma, Proxemic Desire, and the Haptic Logics of the Guru-Disciple Relationship,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 86, no. 4 (December 2018): 953–88; Manon Hedenborg White, “Proximal Authority: The Changing Role of Leah Hirsig in Aleister Crowley’s Thelema, 1919–1930,” *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 21 (2021): 69–93.

<sup>7</sup> See Timothy Miller, ed., *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Hugh B. Urban, *Zorba the Buddha: Sex, Spirituality, and Capitalism in the Global Osho Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 29–33.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Calder, “Osho, Bhagwan Rajneesh, and the Lost Truth,” 1998, <http://meditation-handbook.50webs.com/osho2.html>. “Bhagwan” is a Hindi word for God, derived from the Sanskrit title or epithet applied to a god considered supreme, *bhagavān* (“blessed one,” “fortunate one,” “lord”).

<sup>10</sup> In Hinduism, *darshan* traditionally refers to “seeing” the deity and being seen by the deity embodied in a *murti* (image) or in the guru. This exchange of sight conveys blessings to the devotee. In the Rajneesh movement, “taking *samyas*”

(traditionally an initiation in which the person takes a vow of renunciation) occurred within the context of the evening *darshan* gathering to see the master, hear him speak, and meditate. In the initiation, Rajneesh would touch the “third eye” to awaken the disciple, who then received a Hindu name and a mala bearing the guru’s photograph. The sannyasin vowed to wear red, renounce meat, and to meditate daily.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis F. Carter, “The ‘New Renunciates’ of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh: Observations and Identification of Problems of Interpreting New Religious Movements,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (June 1987): 148–72; Lewis F. Carter, *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshpuram: The Role of Shared Values in the Creation of a Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 54, 59–60, 84, 96–97.

<sup>12</sup> Ma Yoga Sudha, “Interview with Ma Yoga Vivek,” 17 December 1978, [https://www.satrakshita.com/interview\\_with\\_vivek.htm](https://www.satrakshita.com/interview_with_vivek.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Abhay Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* (New Delhi: Om Books International, 2017), 113.

<sup>14</sup> Sudha, “Interview with Ma Yoga Vivek.”

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Calder, “The Enigmatic ‘Bhagwan,’ Osho Rajneesh,” 2007, <https://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/rajneesh.html>.

<sup>16</sup> “Love Letter to Vivek,” 1971, *OshoNews*, <https://www.oshonews.com/2018/05/30/love-letter-to-vivek/>.

<sup>17</sup> Osho, *Bauls: The Dancing Mystics* (New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books, 2004), 52.

<sup>18</sup> Osho, “My Sannyasins All Have to Be Cuckoos!” *OshoNews*, <https://www.oshonews.com/2018/05/30/my-sannyasins-all-have-to-be-cuckoos/>, accessed 4 January 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Franklin, *Promise of Paradise*, 324.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy Conway, “The Enigmatic Bhagwan, Osho Rajneesh,” 2007, <http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/rajneesh.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Tim Guest, *My Life in Orange: Growing Up with the Guru* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2005), 254.

<sup>22</sup> Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 199.

<sup>23</sup> Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 251.

<sup>24</sup> Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 252.

<sup>25</sup> Milne, *Bhagwan*, 166.

<sup>26</sup> Milne, *Bhagwan*, 158–59.

<sup>27</sup> Myles Bonnar and Steven Brocklehurst, “The Scot Who Was the Sex Guru’s Bodyguard,” *BBC Scotland News*, 3 June 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-44300915>.

<sup>28</sup> James S. Gordon, *The Golden Guru: The Strange Journey of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* (Lexington, MA: Stephen Greene Press, 1987), 79–80.

<sup>29</sup> Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 358–59.

<sup>30</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, trans. Guenther Ross and Claus Wittich, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 241–44; Dawson, “Crises of Charismatic Legitimacy,” 87.

- <sup>31</sup> Dawson, “Crises of Charismatic Legitimacy,” 84.
- <sup>32</sup> Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples,” 336.
- <sup>33</sup> Dawson, “Crises of Charismatic Legitimacy,” 85–91.
- <sup>34</sup> Devageet, *Osho*, 41.
- <sup>35</sup> Bonnar and Brocklehurst, “The Scot Who Was the Sex Guru’s Bodyguard.”
- <sup>36</sup> Milne, *Bhagwan*, 176.
- <sup>37</sup> Aneesha Dillon, “The Alchemy of Celebration,” Osho Pulsation, <https://www.oshopulsation.com/article—the-alchemy-of-celebration.html>, accessed 4 January 2021. See also, Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 40–41; Urban, *Zorba the Buddha*, 68.
- <sup>38</sup> Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *Won’t You Join the Dance? Initiation Talks between Master and Disciples* (Poona: Rajneesh Foundation International, 1983), 276; see also the description of Vivek’s role in the Energy Darshans in Milne, *Bhagwan*, 176.
- <sup>39</sup> “Energy Darshans,” Sannyas Wiki, [http://www.sannyas.wiki/index.php?title=Energy\\_Darshans](http://www.sannyas.wiki/index.php?title=Energy_Darshans), accessed 4 January 2021.
- <sup>40</sup> Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples,” 337.
- <sup>41</sup> Sheela, *Don’t Kill Him!* 259.
- <sup>42</sup> Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples,” 337.
- <sup>43</sup> Osho, *Autobiography of a Spiritually Incorrect Mystic* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 150.
- <sup>44</sup> Sudha, “Interview with Ma Yoga Vivek.”
- <sup>45</sup> Sudha, “Interview with Ma Yoga Vivek.”
- <sup>46</sup> Gordon, *Golden Guru*, 212–23.
- <sup>47</sup> “Osho Biography,” Osho World, <https://oshoworld.com/biography/>, accessed 11 February 2021; Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 195–96.
- <sup>48</sup> Conway, “The Enigmatic Bhagwan.”
- <sup>49</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 202.
- <sup>50</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 198, 220.
- <sup>51</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 203.
- <sup>52</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 231.
- <sup>53</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 202.
- <sup>54</sup> Win McCormack, “Bhagwan’s Sexism: Rajneesh’s Dirty Work Was Usually Left to Women,” *The New Republic*, 12 April 2018, <https://newrepublic.com/article/147871/bhagwans-sexism>.
- <sup>55</sup> See *Bhagwan: The Way of the Heart* (Rajneeshpuram, OR: Rajneesh Foundation International, 1984), VHS, 30 mins.
- <sup>56</sup> Kirk Braun, *Rajneeshpuram: The Unwelcome Society* (West Linn, OR: Scout Creek Press, 1984).
- <sup>57</sup> Strelley, *Ultimate Game*, 288–89.
- <sup>58</sup> Jane Stork, *Breaking the Spell: My Life as a Rajneeshee and the Long Journey Back to Freedom* (Sydney: Pan MacMillan, 2011), 113.
- <sup>59</sup> Sheela, *Don’t Kill Him!* 260, 353.

- <sup>60</sup> Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 259.
- <sup>61</sup> Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 208.
- <sup>62</sup> Sven Davisson, "The Rise and Fall of Rajneeshpuram," *Ashé Journal* 2 (2003), <http://ashejournal.com/2015/03/15/ashe-journal-vol-2-issue-2-2003/>.
- <sup>63</sup> Davisson, "The Rise and Fall of Rajneeshpuram."
- <sup>64</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 114-15.
- <sup>65</sup> Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 260.
- <sup>66</sup> Franklin, *Promise of Paradise*, 265.
- <sup>67</sup> Urban, *Zorba the Buddha*, 129-30.
- <sup>68</sup> Stork, *Breaking the Spell*, 140-41; Les Zaitz, "Rajneeshes' Utopian Dreams Collapse as Talks Turn to Murder," *The Oregonian*, Part 5, posted 14 April 2011, updated 10 January 2019, [https://www.oregonlive.com/rajneesh/2011/04/part\\_five\\_utopian\\_dreams\\_die\\_i.html](https://www.oregonlive.com/rajneesh/2011/04/part_five_utopian_dreams_die_i.html).
- <sup>69</sup> Jane Stork explains why Sheela considered Devageet to be dangerously incompetent and predicted that he might kill Bhagwan in *Breaking the Spell*, 138-40. Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 25-28, describes Sheela's concerns about the medications being given to Rajneesh.
- <sup>70</sup> Zaitz, "Rajneeshes' Utopian Dreams Collapse." See also Stork, *Breaking the Spell*, 147, 153-54.
- <sup>71</sup> Rogers Worthington, untitled story, *Chicago Tribune*, 22 September 1985, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1985-09-22-8503040241-story.html>.
- <sup>72</sup> Marion Goldman, "Osho/Rajneesh Movement," *World Religions and Spirituality Project*, 2 January 2015, <https://wrldrels.org/2016/10/08/oshorajneesh/>.
- <sup>73</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 221. Devageet offers a different explanation: "Osho explains that His Name is derived from William James' word, 'oceanic,' which means dissolving into the ocean." See Devageet, *Osho*, 271.
- <sup>74</sup> Urban, *Zorba the Buddha*, 143; Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 218-19.
- <sup>75</sup> Schlegel, *Glimpses of My Master*, 125-28; "Keeping Osho on Planet Earth" [transcript of interview with Veena Schlegel, podcast 60], Love Osho, 26 January 2020, <https://loveosho.com/blog-1/keeping-osho-on-planet-earth>.
- <sup>76</sup> "Keeping Osho on Planet Earth."
- <sup>77</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 105-06.
- <sup>78</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 231.
- <sup>79</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 107. Sheela, *Don't Kill Him!* 27-28, stated that in Rajneeshpuram, Vivek was given morphine as a sleeping aid and also pentothal (sodium thiopental). Rajneesh told Sheela that Vivek was given the illegal drug Ecstasy, "It makes Vivek happy and keeps her quiet. . . . Then she troubles me less. . . ." Sheela reported that she had heard that Vivek had attempted to commit suicide many times "using sleeping pills." Rajneesh told Sheela that he considered these incidents to be "fake attempts at suicide" and that people who "use the suicide threat as blackmail" never carry through with it because, "They are cowards." Vaidya cites Antar Navjot (Mary Blight) describing how she saw Nirvano in an intoxicated state on 10 May 1989 in the Pune ashram. "She

appeared to be on heavy tranquilizers or some other strong drug.” See Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 117.

<sup>80</sup> He had been the mayor of Rajneeshpuram from 1982 to 1985.

<sup>81</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, report on interview with David Berry Knapp, 15 November 1985, 35, available at <http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/73831/02-krishna-deva-fbi-statement.pdf>.

<sup>82</sup> Conway, “The Enigmatic Bhagwan.”

<sup>83</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 244.

<sup>84</sup> “Veena Talks of Vivek, Her Friend,” *Sannyasnews*, <http://sannyasnews.org/now/archives/7769>, posted on 5 May 2018.

<sup>85</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 106–09, quotation on 107.

<sup>86</sup> Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 245.

<sup>87</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 118.

<sup>88</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 115.

<sup>89</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 119–31, 171.

<sup>90</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 119–20.

<sup>91</sup> Oddly, not once has Anando performed the role of Osho’s medium by channeling messages from him beyond the grave.

<sup>92</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 122–24.

<sup>93</sup> Abhay Vaidya, “Why Is Jayesh Missing from Osho’s Wild Wild Country?” *Hindustan Times*, updated 29 April, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/pune-news/why-is-jayesh-missing-from-osho-s-wild-wild-country/story-AG1TCjRdSeu12K2Of25agP.html>.

<sup>94</sup> Vaidya, *Who Killed Osho?* 110. See also Shunyo, *Diamond Days with Osho*, 245–46, about her experience of the cremation. Amrito had written about his intense, lyrical love affair with Vivek in his memoir. See Meredith, *Bhagwan*, 102–05.

<sup>95</sup> “Vivek’s Death at 40, and How Was It Untimely?” *Sannyasnews*, 4 December 2015, <http://sannyasnews.org/now/archives/5566>.

<sup>96</sup> Aditya Choudhary, “Vivek & Osho: Don’t Let Your Vivek Die!” *Speaking Tree*, 21 February 2012, <https://www.speakingtree.in/blog/vivek-osho-dont-let-your-vivek-die>.

<sup>97</sup> Lucia, “Guru Sex,” 955.

<sup>98</sup> Lucia, “Guru Sex,” 970.

<sup>99</sup> Lucia, “Guru Sex,” 955.

<sup>100</sup> Lucia, “Guru Sex,” 960.

<sup>101</sup> Lucia, “Guru Sex,” 971.

<sup>102</sup> Hedenborg White, “Proximal Authority,” 69.

<sup>103</sup> Hedenborg White, “Proximal Authority,” 72.

<sup>104</sup> Gordon, *Golden Guru*, 93–94.

<sup>105</sup> CBS *60 Minutes*, “Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and His Assistant Sheila Have a Parting of the Ways!” 1985, YouTube, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_oVOlmmI8Rs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oVOlmmI8Rs).

<sup>106</sup> Devageet explains in his memoir how, when nitrous oxide is mixed with oxygen, it becomes “laughing gas.” See Devageet, *Osho*, 169.

<sup>107</sup> Susan J. Palmer, *Moon Sisters, Krishna Mothers, Rajneesh Lovers: Women's Roles in New Religions* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 48–52; quotations on 49, 52; meditation as orgasm on 48–49.

<sup>108</sup> Christopher Calder, “Osho, Bhawan Rajneesh, and the Lost Truth,” *Meditation Handbook*, <http://meditation-handbook.50webs.com/oshos2.html>, accessed 12 January 2021.

<sup>109</sup> Wallis, “Social Construction of Charisma,” 26, 33.

<sup>110</sup> Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 360.

<sup>111</sup> Hedenborg White, “Proximal Authority,” 71, quoting Wallis, “Social Construction of Charisma,” 38.

<sup>112</sup> Christian Giudice, “‘I, Jehovah’: Mary Ann de Grimston and The Process Church of the Final Judgment,” in *Female Leaders in New Religious Movements*, ed. Inga Bårdsen Tøllefsen and Christian Giudice (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 121–40.

<sup>113</sup> Samarpan, comment dated 5 December 2015, on “Vivek’s Death at 40, and How Was It Untimely?”