

SENECAH, SUSAN.
Susan Senecah Collection on the
Rajneesh Movement, 1980-1990, 2020

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Senecah, Susan.
Title: Susan Senecah Collection on the Rajneesh Movement, 1980-1990, 2020
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 485
Extent: 1.4 cubic feet (4 boxes)
Abstract: This collection contains materials gathered by Susan Senecah to record her sister, Linda's, involvement in the Rajneeshpuram. This includes correspondence from Linda "Devika" Thompson to her family, music and books by the Bhagwan (also known as Osho), newspaper clippings and magazine articles, and copies of The Rajneesh Times newspaper.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Source

Gift from Susan Senecah, August 2022

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Susan Senecah Collection on the Rajneesh Movement, MSS 485, Archives and Manuscript Dept., Pitts Theology Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by Emily Corbin, November 2022.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

The Rajneesh movement includes people inspired by the Indian mystic Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931–1990), also known as Osho. In 1953 Rajneesh experienced a spiritual awakening and by 1966 he resigned from his university job and began supporting himself through lectures, meditation camps, and individual meetings. Rajneesh began traveling throughout India, becoming known as a vocal critic of the orthodoxy of mainstream religions as well as of mainstream political ideologies and of Mahatma Gandhi. After setting up various sannyasins in India, he founded an ashram in Poona (Pune) India in 1974 where his movement began to grow. By the late 1970s the Rajneesh's ashram began to slow in India due to government tensions and he left the country due to unpaid taxes.

By 1981 the Rajneesh movement relocated to Big Muddy Ranch in Wasco County, Oregon. The ranch became known as Rajneeshpuram. It was to be a worldwide movement, rooted in the affirmation of life, playful, joyful and based on science rather than belief and dogma. It would not rely on ideology and philosophy, but on practices, techniques and methods aiming to offer every individual the chance to discover and choose their own proper religious path; the intent was to lead people to an essential, universal religiousness. Rajneesh believed in creating small communities with a communal way of life. Rajneesh discouraged marriage and having children within the community. The members of Rajneeshpuram created a successful and profitable business enterprise that included both spiritual and secular businesses worldwide. In Oregon, the movement's large international community caused tensions in the local community for its attempts to take over the nearby town of Antelope and later the county seat of The Dalles.

At the peak of these tensions, a circle of leading members of the Rajneeshpuram Oregon commune was arrested for crimes including an attempted assassination plot to murder U.S. Attorney Charles H. Turner as part of the United State's first recorded bio-terror attack calculated to influence the outcome of a local election in their favour, which ultimately failed. This bio-terror event involved using salmonella bacteria to infect salad products in local restaurants and shops, which poisoned several hundred people. The Rajneesh's right hand Ma Anand Sheela and other members of his close supporters were found guilty of the attack. The Bhagwan, as Rajneesh was then called, was deported from the United States in 1985 on separate immigration-related charges in accordance with an Alford plea bargain. After his deportation, 21 countries denied him entry. The movement's headquarters eventually returned to Poona (present-day Pune), India. The Oregon commune was destroyed in September 1985. Rajneesh, or Osho, as he was known in his final years, died in Pune in 1990.

Scope and Content Note

This collection was gathered by Susan Senecah to represent her sister, Linda's experience following the Bhagwan, also known as Osho, in the Rajneeshpuram in Oregon. During her time with the Bhagwan Linda took the name Devika, then Devika Leela, and finally legally changed her name to Daya. Senecah provides background into Linda's troubled life which led to involvement in the ritual of "Rebirthing". This is a process in which someone sits in a pool of water and re-lives their individual experience of being born. Through this experience Linda became involved with the teachings of Osho, or as he was known at the time, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Linda moved to Pune, India to become involved with his work for some time and then

followed him back to Big Muddy Ranch in Eastern Oregon. Big Muddy Ranch became known as the Rajneeshpuram where all followers resided. Eventually the Rajneeshpuram disbanded when the Bhagwan was accused of tax issues and his followers were accused of trying to poison the water in Oregon. Following this, Linda moved to India and married a man named Sagar whom she had met at the Rajneeshpuram. Shortly after, Linda left Sagar to move to the Greek Islands and then back to Pune India to follow the Bhagwan. Linda soon experienced a schizophrenic episode and was eventually brought back to the United States by the U.S. State Department.

This collection contains materials gathered by Susan Senecah to record her sister, Linda's, involvement in the Rajneeshpuram. This includes correspondence from Linda "Devika" Thompson to her family, the Bhagwan's, also known as Osho, music and books, newspaper clippings and magazine articles, and copies of The Rajneesh Times newspaper.

These materials are meant to be viewed through four specific categories. 1) Representation of the Bhagwan's own words and music on cassette and in books of collections of his discourses. 2) A collection of newspaper clippings and magazine articles that chronicle the external perspective on the evolution of the Rajneeshpuram, Oregon and its decline set against the external contemporary political social contexts. 3) A collection of The Rajneesh Times, the internal newspaper produced by the Oregon commune Rajneeshpuram and read mostly by Rajneeshees. 4) A Collection of Linda (Devika) Thompson's letters as she joined the Bhagwan first as a devotee in Pune, India; then as a Rajneeshee or sannyasin through the entire life of the commune ranch of Rajneeshpuram, Oregon; followed by their travels as she strategized to join the Bhagwan as he tried to find a country that would admit him after the fall of Rajneeshpuram; and finally, again as a devotee at the Bhagwan's last ashram back in Pune, India.

This collection includes audiovisual materials in the form of cassettes and some slides. These are all placed in Box 4 and listed at the end of the finding aid.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Collection guide, 2020
1	2	Afternoon Despatch and Courier, Rajneesh's Ashram where you open your heart to existence, 1987
1	3	Beyond Words, bulletin, undated
1	4	Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh on basic human rights, book, 1987
1	5	Elastic rhetorical vision of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh: a celebration of ambiguity, Susan Senecah, 1987
1	6	Elastic rhetorical vision of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh: a celebration of ambiguity, notes, Susan Senecah, 1988
1	7	Genesis of an explosion, part 1-3, newspaper, 1987
1	8	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, 1982
1	9	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, 1983
1	10	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, 1984
1	11	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, 1985
1	12	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, 1986
1	13	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, 1987 (1 of 2)
2	1	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, 1987 (2 of 2)
2	2	Linda Devika Thompson, letters to family, Pune, India, 1988
2	3	Linda Devika Thompson, wedding to Sagar, photos, 1988
2	4	New Yorker magazine, two part investigation, 1986
2	5	News clippings, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, 1982 -1990
2	6	Orange Juice publication, 1982 April
2	7	Oregonian newspaper, investigative series, 1985
2	8	Osho Now!, pamphlet, undated
3	1	Rajneesh Bible, volume1, book, 1985
3	2	Rajneesh Foundation International Newsletter, volume 1, number 24, 1983 March
3	3	Rajneesh Publication Inc., books, audio, video, pamphlet, 1986
3	4	Rajneesh Times, newspaper clippings, 1982-1987 (1 of 2)
3	5	Rajneesh Times, newspaper clippings, 1982-1987 (2 of 2)
3	6	Rajneesh Times, Ma Prem Isabel, letter, 1982
3	7	What Price Paradise, radio documentary, transcription, circa 1980
4	1	Audiocassette, Bhagwan interview, 1985 November 25
4	2	Audiocassette, Bhagwan interview, 1985 November 25
4	3	Audiocassette, Bhagwan interview, India, part 3, 1985 November 25
4	4	Audiocassette, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Nadabrahma, 1980
4	5	Audiocassette, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Nataraj, 1980

- 4 6 Audiocassette, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the Rajneesh Bible, volume 8, number 21, part 1, 1985 September 28
 - 4 7 Audiocassette, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the Rajneesh Bible, volume 8, number 21, part 3, 1985 September 28
 - 4 8 Audiocassette, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the razor's edge, 1987 October 3
 - 4 9 Audiocassette, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the razor's edge, undated
 - 4 10 Audiocassette, Devika, volume 4, number 9, undated
 - 4 11 Audiocassette, Good Morning America, Bhagwan Rajneesh, undated
 - 4 12 Audiocassette, Good Morning America, Bhagwan Rajneesh, Devika, undated
 - 4 13 Audiocassette, the Raj-Bible, 9, number 14, undated
 - 4 14 Audiocassette, Raj-Bible, number 9, number 7, undated
 - 4 15 Audiocassette, the Raj-Bible, number 14, undated
 - 4 16 Audiocassette, Rajneesh Bible, last discourse, USA, volume 9, number 17, undated
 - 4 17 Audiocassette, Rajneesh Bible, volume 4, number 9, part 1 of 2, undated
 - 4 18 Audiocassette, Rajneeshpuram, documentary, 1986 November 27
 - 4 19 Audiocassette, the Rajneesh Upanishad, number 32, 1986 September 20
 - 4 20 Audiocassette, Rajneesh Upanishad, number 32 ending, 1986 September 20
 - 4 21 Audiocassette, Rajneesh Upanishad, number 58, 1986 October 16
 - 4 22 Audiocassette, the prophet, 6 and 7, undated
 - 4 23 Audiocassette, the spirit rebellious, number 32, 1987 February 28
 - 4 24 Audiocassette, volume 4, number 28, 1 of 2, undated
 - 4 25 Audiocassette, volume 4, number 28, 2 of 2, undated
 - 4 26 Audiocassette, volume 5, number 20, 23, side 3 and 4, undated
 - 4 27 Audiocassette, volume 5, part 1 of 2, number 23, undated
 - 4 28 Slides, undated
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