

## Anatomy of a hippie

By Shri Dattabal

The sacred red mountain of Arunachalasm was bathing in the mist. Rapt in deep samadhi its peak was thrusting into the azure sky. Shri Raman Maharshi had unveiled life's secret at this holy place. I was one of the pilgrims, set out to visit the Maharshi's hermitage.

In the medley of dark, brown and yellow there was a white-complexioned American bhakta who looked very conspicuous. He was a half naked hippie with a loin-cloth barely covering his shame. He had become familiar with that place. His eyes radiated love and compassion. On his head was a small turban. His name was Suryabhakta. He had adopted an Indian name. Most of his time was spent in meditation, prayer and workship of the Sun.

"Have you ever taken LSD ?" I asked him rather hesitantly. We had been quite friendly, of course, by now.

"Yes... em... em... only once, you know." came a straight reply.

"What's your experience ?" I continued my

## The Messenger of Divine Love

interrogation.

He was serious, gazing at the mountain peak through a thick cloud of mist. Then slowly he began.

"It's better, I think, if I remain silent about that dreadful incident," he said. And suddenly looked in my eyes.

I could gather from his expressions that unhappy memories must have flashed to his mind.

"Many of my colleagues still take the drug", he continued, "and then for hours they look into the sun. Some have lost their vision. We expect spiritual enlightenment. What infinite energy that sun emits ! The source of inspiration to the world."

It was dawn. Sun rays had gently fallen on his transparent skin. This man, a product of intellectual society was talking like some ancient Indian Rishi. In an ecstatic mood he again continued.

"You know, all hippies do not lead a permissive life. Many of us are attracted by Indian philosophy. Indian mysticism reveals the true essence of life. May I sincerely tell you that I have attained profound peace at this place. Even hours of wandering about this lonely hill does not bore me. I have surrendered my life's reins in the hands of that Charioteer who rules the world. I am tensionless. I go where he asks me to".

## The Messenger of Divine Love

We had covered quite a few miles talking. We relaxed under the shade of a huge tree as the sun was coming up and becoming menacing. Some of us sang devotional songs. Suryabhakta gave us some American folk songs. I was surprised to notice a few marks of burns over his body.

"What scars are these?", when he stopped singing.

"They are scars of punishment," he replied. "Punishment? What for? and who imposed it so brutally?" I asked him shocked.

He could see I was perplexed. Without allowing my excitement to grow, he confessed: "I... I... punished myself. Whenever stormy passions tried to have an upper hand, I burnt myself with a cigarette or an incense stick. Sometimes, I did this several times a week."

I knew the hippies as drugaddicted and leading a impermissive life. How different was Suryabhakta's life from what I had imagined it to be. He was very close to the Indian Saints who sat on the red hot frying pan rather than surrendering to sexual passions. He was in quest of truth.

To him the glad birds on their flight across the leisurely blue sky of quiet Arunachalam was more appealing than the cars that rolled at top speed in the glittering streets of New York. He preferred black coffee

## The Messenger of Divine Love

of the Ashram to the beef and beer of a five-star, multi-storeyed Hilton Hotel. This rebellious man had renounced all the ephemeral in search of the unchanging reality. He had left his affluent nation, left his society, deserted his loving family members and sacrificed bodily comforts.

How did this mutation take place in a society, still under the spell of Freudian philosophy and under the spell of seminudity in TV and Cinema.

Enthralled, I asked, "Suryabhakta, what is your diet here?"

"Any food", he replied, "any thing that chance brings. Mainly it's rice and saram, but sometimes even the pure cold water of the brooks. For shelter, there's Sun above and mother earth below."

Sun worship, meditation, prayers and a mind searching for eternal peace had become a part and parcel of his life.

In thoughts, words and deeds he believed that the Sun was his spiritual father and the earth his mother.

A leading American scientist had described hippies as 'the outgrowths of a sick and diseased society.' But Suryabhakta's life raised in my mind many questions. The life of American philosopher Thoreau flashed past my mind. Living in the heart of thick jungles he established a new pattern of life. This man who could

## The Messenger of Divine Love

be friendly with flowers, trees and birds was also a hippie of a certain type.

'Hippism' is not a cult, its a way of life. Some habits like taking LSD, wearing psychiadylic clothing are common traits among them, but each individual is temperamentally different and his approach to life different. Though taking tea is a common thing among Socialists and Communists, nothing is common in their principles. Similarly a hippie giving a free expression to carnal instincts under the influence of LSD does it on his own responsibility. Hippies are not against a particular socioeconomic and religious culture but they are at war with all that comes in the way of their path. Some are in quest of eternal peace, some yearn for spiritual enlightenment and complete emancipation from suffering. What they are seeking is something everlasting.

Many of them are dishonest, seeking escapism from hectic work and cut-throat competition from labour and persecution of families.

Fortunately, hippies have not assigned their philosophy to any rigid framework. Their outlook is new, very plastic. Nomadic life and trance induced by LSD is not their supreme aim. Their main ambition is to attain everlasting peace.

LSD and pranayama are the various means to their end in view. Honest aspirants, like Suryabhakta, give

## The Messenger of Divine Love

up the means which have failed. Most of us see the life of hippies on the surface. Very few care to know what they are at the core ? After meeting Suryabhakta, I feel everybody should lead the life of a hippie at one stage or another. Where does man have the time to enjoy the grandeur and majesty of nature ? When will he isolate himself to contemplate on the vast treasures within himself ? If only our robotman discovers this, he will not be at war, he will prevent bloodshed.

That man, living on the isolated hills of Arunachalam, looking into the Sun, has realised this. He has surrendered his life in the safe hands of mother nature. She has accepted the hands of her son. She has revealed to him some of her secrets which have given profound peace to his mind. He has settled down in silence. His breath is in resonance with his soul. He has explored the psychic centre of life. He can now afford to sarcastically laugh at the cacophony of our civilisation.

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