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Charisma and Abdication: A Study of the Leadership of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

[Susan J. Palmer](#)

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Abstract

This study attempts to apply Roy Wallis' model of a charismatic leader's four responses to institutionalization to the career of Bhagwan Shree

Rajneesh, founder of a new religious movement. After outlining seven phases of Rajneesh's career which can be interpreted as different strategic responses to institutionalization, the conclusion is drawn that Wallis' model oversimplifies the relationship between charisma and institutionalization and is inadequate as a tool to explain the behavior of this particular leader. It is proposed that a fifth category, that of Abdication, be added to Wallis' four, and that a distinction between two aspects of charisma, the Performer and the Pastor, be drawn in order to understand this new category.

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