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GURU-NY



Who is Guru Maharaj Ji? Is it possible that you don't know?...Anyway, if you haven't heard that name before, the chances are that you are immune to the glossy Madison Avenue type promotion, corny, simplistic slogans, and the evangelism of sincere, if slightly naive worshippers.

A little more than a month ago, I spent the better part of a day and night trying to gain some insight into the cult of Guru Maharaj Ji. The hor'douvres to my mystical voyage of discovery were served on a Thursday afternoon in a lecture theatre in Marshal Tory. I listened to a succession of speakers giving testimonial to the inner peace and contentment they said they had found at the "lotus" feet of Guru Maharaj Ji.

"knowledge"

All of the speakers professed to having been given "knowledge". They said that this "knowledge" brings order to a chaotic existence and that this order could only be found in complete faith and submission to Guru Maharaj Ji. All well and good, but what they didn't say intrigued me more. They didn't say what this "knowledge" was, nor did they elaborate on the nature of their Guru.

Thursday evening: the scene: Centennial Library. My reason for being there: I had been assigned by the *Gateway* to do an in-depth report on Guru Maharaj Ji and his followers in Edmonton. Also I personally wanted to gain some understanding of the dynamics of what appeared to me to be blind faith.

My date's reason for being there: I promised her that she would be party to an Indian feast. Not quite knowing what she was getting into, she agreed to come, vigorously stating that she hoped we would eat first and learn later. This was at 7:00 p.m.

show begins

Inside the library's beautiful theatre the show began. A clean cut young man sang a couple of songs that following Guru Maharaj Ji was the true path to peace. On the stage was a white draped chair with a glossy portrait of the Guru enthroned on top. The chair was surrounded by blood-red carnations. The contrast was very dramatic.

From the movie I learned the following:

Guru Maharaj Ji says, "Receiver what I have to give you before you try to understand what I am."

Guru Maharaj Ji is fifteen years old.

Guru Maharaj Ji is proclaimed to be (by his followers) the "Perfect Master" and all that one must do to experience his "perfect" mastery is to spiritually kiss his "lotus feet" (if he is conveniently near you and unshod, you *should* actually plant one on his delicate toes) and cease to question, cease to apply any powers of logic learned in previous experience, and cease to relate to the world around you in an active way.

At this point my date became rather offended and remarked, "Are they serious?" I diplomatically yawned and continued my observations.

chauffered

Guru Maharaj Ji is chauffeured around at various times in a Cadillac, a Rolls Royce, a Lincoln Continental, and a white jeep with a red carnation on the dashboard!

Guru Maharaj Ji owns what must be the world's largest private collection of gold watches.

Guru Maharaj Ji has a bank manager's taste in suits.

Guru Maharaj Ji is rather pudgy and has a falsetto voice.

The film mercifully ended and the big moment of the evening came.

Mahatma Rajeshwar, described as a "close disciple of the world famous 15 year old Perfect Master"...etc., had come to the Centennial Library to "reveal the direct inner experience of God, to all sincere seekers."

The Mahatma is a man of about forty with similar taste in suits as his "Master". The Mahatma also has a tendency toward the redundant. He spent close to an hour and a half reiterating everything already said by the film and previous speakers.

bored

At this point I was becoming intensely bored. My date began to snore. I poked her in the ribs and gave her an admonishing look. I felt like giggling.

Suffice to say, Mahatma Rajeshwar failed to reveal any "direct inner experience of God." After the program we attended a "feast" at the Divine Light Information Center. The food wasn't ready and we had to wait several hours for something more substantial than promises of spiritual redemption.

The most important bits of information gained during the wait for something to eat were the following:

Mahatma Rajeshwar sits in chairs while the disciples sit on the floor.

Mahatma Rajeshwar gives orders as firmly as any drill sergeant in the paratroopers.

Mahatma Rajeshwar does not like pointed questions.

perfect peace

On November 8-10 Guru Maharaj Ji is going to reveal his "perfect plan for peace" to a desperate world. The occasion is called "Millenium '73". Guru Maharaj Ji has kindly invited the world's leaders to attend. He is going to speak from a "candy apple, tangerine flaked," super neon-plastic podium (with apologies to Tom Wolfe) only slightly smaller than a 747.

The big show will take place at that outstanding example of nouveau gauche architecture, the Houston Astrodome! The Houston Oiler football team has graciously consented to relinquish their home for this auspicious occasion.

Guru Maharaj Ji is now being proclaimed as the "physical embodiment" of God by his followers.

Finally the food was served in the wee hours of the morning. My date had left me in disgust, ungraciously commenting that I must be some kind of masochist. The food was too hot for my westernized palate. Maybe she's right.