



Godhead Hi-Jinx

STARING THE
GURU MAHARAJ JI

by Richard Elman

"Blissed out." In the corners of the eyes a squinch. The placid glossy smiling faces I saw at the Astrodome in Houston for Millenium 73 were the lovers of God, or premies of the soi disant 15 year old Perfect Master, Guru Maharaj Ji.

"A thousand years of peace for people who want peace." A certain high, and away look, lacking very much immediate sensual imprint, as if they had all risen briefly upward from some page of newsprint for a moment to be frozen above a very dull matte finish.

"We find that without having any relationship to the outside world at all," smiling Rennie Davis, a spokesman for the Guru said, "we feel this immense inexpressible joy."

One Houston woman I met used the word Gurunoid to describe that peculiar emanation that starts at the eyes outwardly, leaving the forehead sloping downward. A light dry airy floating feeling. Bells, and vibrations going off inside. All very lovely, and appropriate to the Space Center of America.

In the airport hundreds milled slowly about when we arrived, in ankle length cotton dresses, suits and ties, the three dimensional blotch buttons of the Guru's face on their bosoms and lapels were the size of Toddlehouse pancakes.

A bit like boys and girls in the locker room of the school gym on prom night. Is my hair in place? Will you fix my

corsage? They were sometimes even openly nervous and flushed as they helped pin back pinafores, and look neat and straightened out for each other. Something big for them was about to happen. Perhaps they would be receiving a waxed container of lemonade to quench their thirsts after the trip.

I... feel... like...

a... human... being... again...

(click)



Photos by John Collier

But Martian-eyed Divine Light Missionaries led them from their chartered planes into chartered busses like stick figures, and there they were again, compliant, available, sort of chummy, I suppose, but certainly not very noisy.

There was very little commotion. The general aura was silvery which is what, in fact, reformed junkies who have come under Gumragi's protection tell us about his sallow greyish-brownish baby Face cast. If you've never had that much fun, or been happy for more than a minute or two of your life, you could assume so much assertive shineyness and well-behaved demeanour among the Knowledgeable was beautiful. I was forced to seek less hostile explanations.

Premies are people who believe silence is golden and ignorance is bliss. They are willing to work for the Maharaj Ji's "Cleanliness Is Next To Godliness Janitorial Service," and other of his numerous enterprises, because they also believe money is the root of all evil.

In books and magazine publications such as *And It Is Divine* they are told, "Peace is not a bird, peace is not an apple that grows on a tree." It's not a plane either. It's Superman.

There are some six million Premies world-wide, approximately 40,000 in America, and seven Divine Light Missions in Houston alone. National Head-

Illustration by Onofrio Latona



UPI Photo

GURU DATA: I Am Curious (Maalox)

The Satguru (Perfect Master) Maharaj Ji is a plump little porkchop of self-proclaimed divinity. When the little one took human form some fifteen years ago, his dad (himself a Perfect Master and the original perpetrator of the Divine Light Mission scam) had the blueprint already laid out. "The Perfect Master," he proclaimed, "has finally come who will be able to do the fullness for which he has come. He is so great I can but prostrate myself in front of him." But Pop never did see the bountiful fruits of the salvation show he hustled into being; he prostrated himself forever when his son was eight.

The Maharaj Ji made his first Western appearance in 1971 at England's Glastonbury pop festival. He cruised up to the stage in a white Rolls Royce and harangued the crowd about peace and the one true path to salvation until a merciful stagehand cut off the power on his microphone. Considering his subsequent record, that he even appeared is something of a miracle: it seems that the perfect one has a propensity for showing up hours late and sometimes not at all, thus making him the Sly Stone of spirituality.

What he's pushing is not so different from any other Hindu-based snakeoil. Among his followers' claims: that he is God or even greater than God, that he will construct an entire city in California (to begin sometime next year) that will bring Western technology to its knees, that even Mao Tse-tung will be a

follower by 1975 (that one courtesy of Rennie Davis, member of the Chicago 7 and the closest the Guru's been able to come to a superstar convert thusfar) and that he will bury you (with love) by the end of the decade. As you might expect, only through the Maharaj Ji can you hope to escape the apocalypse. "Divine Knowledge is like money in a bank," the pint-sized prophet has been known to say. "It is *my* money. I have the checkbook. But only after I write on that check and sign it can you draw the money." Heh, heh. As might further be expected, all vices — drugs, alcohol, dirty love — are frowned upon, save those which the Guru in his infinite wisdom sees need for: Baskin-Robbins ice cream, for example.

His Divine Light Mission claims a following of four million spread pretty thin over 63 countries; 35,000 of them in North America (which is not even one-tenth the audience Mary Tyler Moore has). The organization is reported to gross over \$150,000 per month. Not bad for a non-profit organization. Among the non-profits the guru has amassed are a \$12,000 Mercedes Benz, a \$26,000 Rolls Royce Silver Cloud, a \$30,000 Cessna Cardinal single-engine plane and a \$190,000 twin-engine job, as well as enough motorcycles to fill your average aircraft hanger. Oh yes, and the Perfect Master, keeper of Knowledge and possessor of the divine light, has ulcers.

quarters is in Denver, a staff of 275, mostly counting the money, and doing PR.

In Rennie Davis' introduction to the writings of Gumraji we are told He is "the power of Creation." That makes some sense to me since the word *premie*, in medical slang, also stands for a premature baby.

In interviews the taking in of knowledge by the *premie* from the Boy God is depicted as a blinding white light that seems to split the mind in twain. The only other times I have heard similar metaphors used was by very angry young people to describe what it was like when they smashed the head of their pet cat against a wall.

The prevailing look I saw in the Astrodome and elsewhere was an emanation of rage. Of not being able to care very much for anybody except *Bub-bileh*, and He only because He remained so distant.

Guru Maharaj Ji, why did you choose us?

So whom should I choose? Donkeys? What is the relationship of God and Man after death?

Die and see.

Is it possible to have total self-satisfaction in this lifetime?

Maybe in five seconds, maybe in five months, maybe in five years, maybe in five births. Or maybe in one fifth of a second.

The Perfect Maybe sat on his throne beneath a large white paper cut out of a tear drop with his mother on a smaller throne at his feet under a mylar mirror of panels that could flash on the audience similar to the one used by the Rolling Stones during their 1972 tour of America.

The loved ones sat on red carpeted portions of the infield and outfield, silent, stolid, as fragile-seeming as bits of glass, with little pieces of white space between them like the words in a long iambic pentameter poem in blank verses.

Scoreboards flashed spiritual messages in orange and yellow such as "Happiness is not in the material world. It is the property of God."

Some little bits of matter belonging to the *premie*s turned cartwheels behind the main lump of their parents.

Nobody seemed bored by sermons



that were boring to me.

The faces of certain hostile human children who had finally opened their hearts to somebody without their parents' permission, and being uncertain still whether or not they had done the right thing didn't want their feelings hurt by questions from any intruders. Such as the press.

The Maharaj Ji had brought some grey-suited English toughs with him to act surly as ushers. He had made his first big hit in England, and after playing Flushing Queens last summer, was just now finishing a seven city tour of the States.

There was very little touching going on. Each premie was a distinct pod.

There was a full dress pageant of the life of Christ.

Pep squad leaders dressed in 50s costumes delivered harangues and got everybody up on their feet for *Arti*.

After chanting and singing in Hindi and English some people did look a little livelier.

At night there were light shows and the Guru came down through a red velvet chute to sermonize on his throne, flanked by two large TV screens on which His image appeared grey and mottled. He said, "Peace is inside of us all," told a fairy tale about a swan and some little owls, and advised the kids to get their mummies and daddies and religions out of their heads and join His.

The Maharaj Ji's orchestra Blue Acquarius, led by his big brother, Bholi Ji, and composed of formerly professional musicians of some accomplishment and repute who were now all playing for love, performed "Rock Me Maharaj Ji," as if the beguine were beginning all over again.

"To accomplish peace in this world is not hard. It's not impossible."

At a press conference for the orchestra, held as a buffet vegetarian dinner, representatives of the premie press were planted at the tables of the media like shakers of sesame salt.

All profit to Maharaj Ji and Stax Records who have made a deal encompassing Divine and Copyright.

The smiling premies kept saying, "It's a different feeling. You'll like it."

When Erik Mercury of Stax performed for the premies separated by three hundred feet of stage and equipment his band Soul Rush and his chorus really started cooking and the Knowledgeable departed in very large numbers from the hall. Out to lunch at four in the afternoon.

Erik Mercury's people distributed little yellow buttons that said "Love is taking over." You could get all you wanted of these buttons free of charge.

This proves America is still the sort of basically free country in which you always get what you have paid for. 🍌



Photos by John Collier

"They smile in your face..."

Pat Haley, a reporter from Detroit's *Fifth Estate*, gathered national headlines last August by welcoming the Maharaj Ji's smiling face to Detroit with a whipped cream pie (see photo sequence). A week later Haley was hospitalized in serious condition, and the Guru was still smiling.

Following the pie caper, Haley was approached by two men — 55 year old Juteswar Misra and 25 year old Richard Fletcher — who suckered him with the story that they were prepared to finger their former master as a charlatan. Taken to the reporter's apartment, they assaulted him blindsided and left him lying in a pool of blood. Haley suffered numerous head lacerations and contusions, and will henceforth carry a little reminder of the incident: a plastic plate

covering the section of his skull that was shattered.

The license plate of the car the two assailants escaped in was traced to the Divine Light Mission, where the Guru made assurances that the two divine zombies were not acting on his behalf and had been turned over to local authorities in Denver. A felony warrant for the two still stands in Detroit, though no extradition proceedings have been initiated. But as of this writing, both are still functioning members of the guru's army. Misra, in fact, is a mahatma — one of the select few empowered to give Knowledge (the process by which a normal human being is transformed into a follower of Maharaj Ji) — and is right now carrying on his high-level proselytizing in Europe. 🍌