

THE DIVINE LIGHT Mission (DLM)

His name is called Balyogeshwar Param Sans Satgurudev Sri Sant Ji Maharaj - not exactly a regular household name for us Westerners. He is known as Maharaj Ji. His followers call him the "perfect Master" and the "Lord of the universe". He was born on December 10, 1957 in Handwar near the border of Nepal. At the tender age of three Maharaj Ji talked already to his family about spiritual matters. When he was six years old he started with public speaking. When he was eight his whole world changed. His father, a famous guru, died. Who would be his successor? The young son heard a voice saying that he was the one. So at his father's funeral he told the mourning crowd: "Why are you weeping? The perfect Master died. Maharaj Ji is here, amongst you." Under the care of his Mother, Rajeshwari Devi (also known as Mataji), the boy's cult grew to a few million followers by 1971, the year he started with his international mission. He went to England, the U.S. and Canada. In the U.S. his followers heralded his advent with a press release stating: "He is coming in the clouds with great power and glory, and his silver steed will drift down at 4 p.m. at Los Angeles International Airport, TWA flight 761." In 1972 Maharaj Ji visited Japan, South Africa and Switzerland. By 1974 there were DLM centers in 32 countries and the number of devotees were estimated at 5 million. In England alone the DLM gained 10,000 converts within the time span of a few years.

The Maharaj Ji demands a stringent lifestyle from his devotees, while he lives in a state of extreme wealth. He drives around in a \$50,000 Rolls Royce, maintains luxurious homes in Denver, Col. and Malibu, Cal. His DLM controls a movie company, a theater chain, a publishing house and a commercial airline. In 1974 the teenage guru married his secretary a twenty-four year old former airline hostess Marilyn Lois Johnson. This was also the year when the Maharaj Ji had a fall-out with his mother, who used to kiss his "locus feet" whenever in his presence. She began to denounce her son because of his materialistic way of life, drinking alcoholic beverages and eating meat, practices forbidden to a Hindu guru, while his father had dedicated himself to the cause of India's poor. In 1975 his mother, in India, officially excommunicated her son: "Therefore, with a heavy heart", wrote Shri Mataji, "I alone with eight million followers in India devoted to this mission denounce him and his activities and remove him from the Mission as he has fallen from the spiritual path." This action caused loss of membership, but by 1976 the movement in the U.S. and Europe had weathered the storm.

Who are attracted to the DLM? - Recruits are not only ex-hippies, but also students, musicians, artists, lawyers or teachers - well educated people. The DLM disciples are called premies (loved ones). They are enthusiastic recruits and are active in seeking to draw their contacts into hearing the satsangs (holy discourses), which form the "main events" in DLM evangelism. These satsangs are informal religious instruction, evangelistic sermons, trying to convince people that the Maharaj Ji is the answer to all their needs, the god they must come to know. The one who leads a satsang is a Mahatma, one of Maharaj Ji's closest disciples. Literature is also used. A magazine *Divine Times* is published as well as booklets such as *Meditations: The Missing Peace*, and *People Who Look for Peace Get It*. One of its films is entitled Who is guru Maharaj

Ji? DLM also holds periodically large "Guru Puja" (Guru worship) festivals around the world to attract large crowds of premies and prospective converts. Only about four percent of the DLM members are engaged in full-time service for their cult, although many live in ashrams hold regular jobs turning most, if not all of their money over to the organization. Work must also be performed for the Guru, soliciting money or traveling to other cities or even other countries, in order to be with the Maharaj Ji. The lives of the premies must be devoid of drugs, sex, tobacco, and alcohol. And as their mark of devotion, they wear their hair short and shave their beards. Ashram living is greatly encouraged, as this keeps people centered on the guru and makes them absolutely dependent upon the DLM for their every need.

The DLM is not just one of a multitude of Hindu sects. It is not innocent. Mind control is its aim. Critical thought is discouraged. Your mind must be surrender to the Maharaj Ji, who said: "so whatever extra you have got give it to me. And the extra thing you have got is your mind. Give it to me. It won't trouble me: Just give it." One girl reports: "Having been initiated...I was now ripe for further manipulation... I was asked one day whether I would die for the Guru Maharaj Ji, and when I replied that I would, I was told I was making progress quickly. In fact, if the Guru had instructed me to murder my mother at that time, I would have done so without hesitation, confident that I was doing her a favour. It was about this time that I began to loose my possessions. Some things I gave to the guru of my own free will, because the other devotees made me feel guilty if I didn't, but other things were taken away and sold without my consent."

The DLM talks about God. But its god is the impersonal Hindu concept of god, the pure self-existent energy, Man has the seed of divinity within his inner being. Know this divine light within and you have discovered "pearl of great price". "God", teaches the Maharaj Ji, "is an omniscient power that is hidden in the secret recesses of all living things. How can one come to know God? Only the Maharaj Ji has the key that can bring his premies in touch with the source of all of life. He said: "the test of a true master is the knowledge he gives. I will give the whole world knowledge. This is what I am trying to do." This is quite the statement!

Maharaj Ji also claims to be the incarnation of God for this age. This is a strange claim, considering that he doesn't believe in an infinite personal God. How can an impersonal being become incarnate, God-in-the-flesh? Though out history there have been human beings who have become incarnations of God called avaters, such as Vishna, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Jesus. Each avatar is a Christ, the Perfect master. Today's perfect Master is the Maharaj Ji who said about himself: "God is great, but Guru is greater than God, because if you go to Guru, Guru will show you God,"

Maharaj Ji replaces Jesus. The Bible is even used to prove this claim. Jesus said in John 9:5: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Look, DLM says, this shows that Jesus was the Light only as long as He was here, Jesus was the Perfect Master of his time. He helped to get people to get in touch with their divinity within. But today we need a living Perfect Master too - Juru Maharaj Ji!

How do you achieve salvation? Salvation is the state in –which the Soul, attains unity and tranquility by regular meditation. Premies meditate (this act of meditation is called Darshan) daily on the Word or Name of god - the latter is supposed to bring an awareness internal vibration. The Maharaj Ji is needed to get you in contact with the . God within you. He alone can give you direct experience. And if you get everything right, you can reach a "bliss out" which is the ultimate experience for the DLM people.

What is the highest existence on earth? Human life. This was given so that one can experience the oneness with God, which is the goal of the soul. If you don't get "enlightened" during your human life, you're certain to be reborn as some kind of animal. "Better people do come back as higher or more attractive animals. This doctrine of reincarnation is typical of Hinduism.

DLM proclaims that the purpose of human life is to merge with the divine within. By opening the "third-eye" of inner awareness one can attain realization. The Christian life must be dedicated to God's glory. He seeks not first his own personal bliss but the kingdom of God Matt. 6:33. Guru Maharaj Ji is arrogant in his claims and lives a life of luxury at the expense of his followers. How different from our Lord who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant." (Phil. 2:7)