Masters of the Universe
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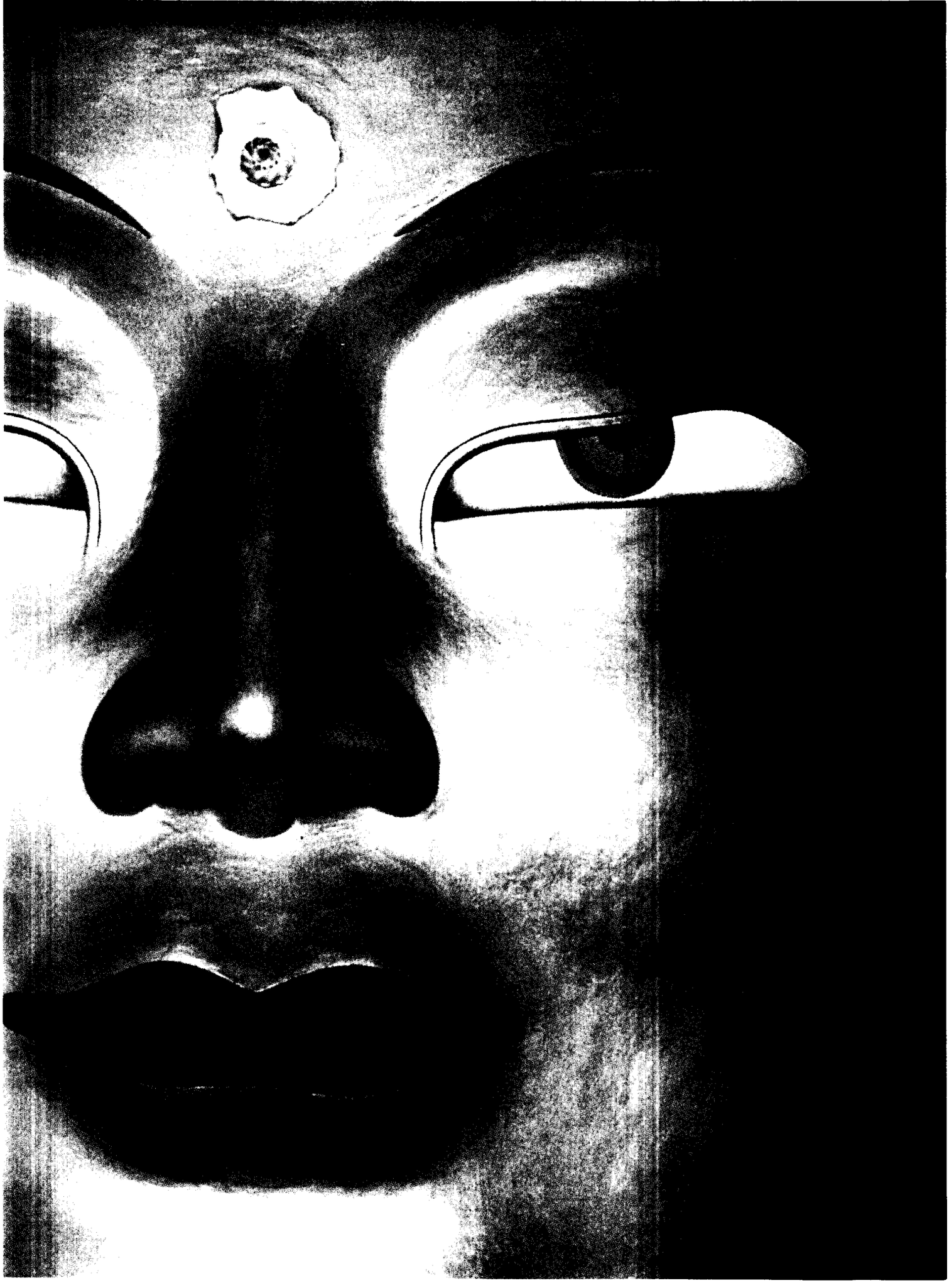
MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

Article By Pamela Weintraub

Spiritual teachers with roots in the East are helping us reevaluate our lives and renew our love for each other and the earth

Below left: Dalai Lama. Boxes (below): Hakuyu Taizan Roshi, Ram Dass. Next row, from top: Mira Alfassa, Maharajji, Swami Satchidananda, Krishnamurti, old and young. Row three: Tai Situ Rinpoche, Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Aurobindo. Fourth row: Sri Chinmoy. Far right: Ladakh's Golden Buddha.



Richard Alpert, Ph.D., was fired from Harvard in 1963. His offense was grave: Along with his friend Timothy Leary, he had been caught not just using LSD but actually dispensing the hallucinogen to *students*. Banished from the kingdom, he set out to discover the meaning of life. His quest took him to northern India, where, in 1967, he met Neem Karoli Baba, or Maharajji.

As Alpert tells it, he was sleeping in the foothills of the Himalayas when, in the middle of the night, he suddenly "had to pee. I went outside," he recalls, "and I gazed at the stars. And I thought of my mother, who had died six months earlier of cancer of the spleen. She just went through my mind, and I went back to bed. The following day, my traveling companion told me he needed to see his guru and invited me to come along.

"The guru, Maharajji, was about seventy-eight at the time. An old man wrapped in a blanket, he was surrounded by half a dozen disciples, and his first words to me were, 'You came in a big car? You'll give it to me?' It was the fastest hustle I'd ever encountered. I was totally bewildered, and my perplexity gave Maharajji and his disciples a good laugh.

"They fed us, and we rested. Then he motioned me over to where he and his translator were sitting. He said, 'You were under the stars last night.' I said, 'Yes.' He closed his eyes and said, 'You were thinking about your mother.' I felt a kind of clammy uneasiness. He said, 'She died last year. She got very big in the stomach before she died.' Then he looked directly into my eyes and said, in English, *'Spleen.'*

"At that point my rational, analytic mind gave up. I had a ripping, violent sensation in my chest, and I started to sob. I cried for two days. At the time I didn't understand why. In retrospect I realize that by confronting the intellectual part of me, he confronted my mind and forced it to the ground, and the result was that my heart opened. He was a person who could know me intimately and also love me. So often before with people who loved me, I'd felt, *If only they could know my dark side.* He did, and it was that combination of love and knowing that made this and all my later encounters with him extraordinary."

Alpert wound up spending two years in India, studying under his guru. When he returned to the States, his name was no longer Richard Alpert, Ph.D., but rather Baba Ram Dass—*Baba* for "respected father" and *Ram Dass* for "servant of God." Ram Dass's message, expressed in his best-selling book *Be Here Now,* was clear: "We are all on the journey towards enlightenment.... We are all on the path...daily, slowly, the cloud of illusion becomes thinner and thinner...until, at last, there is light."

To some, Ram Dass's brand of illumination was laughable. His own father, a high-powered Boston lawyer, called him Baba Rum Dum. His brother called him Rammed Ass. And the *National Lampoon* invented a monthly column featuring a dazed and disoriented mystic named Baba Rum Raisin.

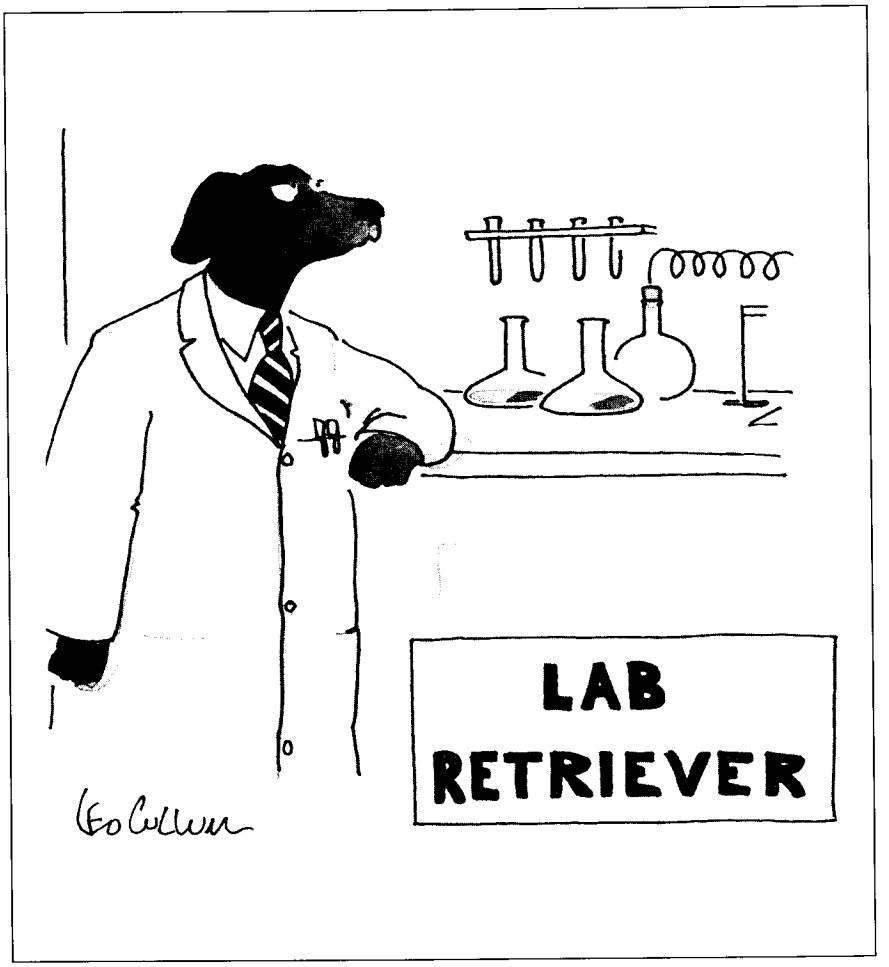
But today Ram Dass and a few other teachers, or "gurus," form the high priesthood of one of the more pervasive religious movements in the United States. These "masters," as some call them, base their teachings on the sacred philosophies of the East: Buddhism, which suggests we find true happiness by renouncing earthly desire and exploring the "true inner self"; Zen, a Buddhist sect that strives for enlightenment through altered states of consciousness and meditation; and yoga, a technique for achieving insight and balance through mental and physical exercise. Though their exact philosophies differ, the masters teach their students to shed superficial values, to feel at one with the universe, to show love and compassion, and to achieve the state of "emptiness," in which one eliminates all thought and opens up to waves of endless peace.

The masters who serve this Eastern brew are no lightweights. The Dalai Lama of Tibet, a renowned humanitarian, was just awarded the Nobel peace prize. The late Jiddu Krishnamurti, a critic of organized religion, was one of the preeminent philosophers of this century. Tai Situ Rinpoche, a leader of the Kagyad form of Tibetan Buddhism, is constantly traveling the globe, speaking out for world peace.

You may be more familiar with Shirley MacLaine and her army of crystalgazers. But it is the *masters* who form the *true* philosophical underpinnings of the burgeoning New Age. The serious seminars held weekly at Esalen in California and the Omega Institute in New York are fueled by ideas from such people as the Dalai Lama and Ram Dass. Their techniques have penetrated the corporate world, where some companies teach employees the art of inner balance and "flow." And the masters have recently altered the face of psychotherapy, where some analysts give the "transpersonal" (i.e., spiritual) experience more credence than the superego and id.

As Don Morreale, author of *Buddhist America,* puts it, "Dharma has come home. One is no longer compelled to *leave* home in search of a true teacher or a vital practice center. The Buddhist 'movement' has become a *regional* phenomenon. It is pervasive. And it is quietly transforming our North American cultures. *This* is the golden age of Buddhism. Right *here*! Right *now*!"

The roots of dharma—defined as the



law upon which all processes in the universe are based—go back 2,500 years to the southern edge of Nepal. There, legend has it, a young nobleman named Siddhartha spent his youth in luxury, shielded from the sorrows of the world. But one day he took a ride through the royal park and glimpsed the suffering of life. Vowing to find a solution, Siddhartha renounced his wealth and wandered the world. Then one day he sat down under a Bo tree, refusing to move until the mystery of human misery was solved. After 49 days he was rewarded with "the great enlightenment." He gathered disciples and, as the Buddha, spread his vision throughout Nepal, India, and the East.

You could obliterate suffering, he told his followers, by abandoning desire and becoming blissfully detached from the world. His disciples took vows against killing, stealing, and lying and lived austere, monastic lives. When they reached the pinnacle of bliss—called Nirvana—they would join up with cosmic consciousness by escaping the endless round of painful reincarnation.

By the first or second century A.D. Buddhist missionaries had brought these teachings to China, where some of the theoretical overtones were replaced by a more pragmatic philosophy based on ethical rules. The Buddha's ideas then spread to Korea and Japan, where samurai warriors used a version called Zen to help them concentrate and perform martial arts. Buddhist missionaries continued to promote the spread of dharma, adapting their philosophy to almost every Asian land.

In the nineteenth century dharma finally turned West, reaching the States in the writings of the transcendentalists, including Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Bronson Alcott. And in 1893 a Zen monk named Soyen Shaku oversaw the first American conversion to Buddhism, at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

But it wasn't until the 1920's that dharma really hit the States. Its premier emissary: Krishnamurti, whose story is almost as extraordinary as that of the Buddha himself.

In 1909 Krishnamurti was a strikingly beautiful but awkward fourteen-year-old living with his father, a low-level employee of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India. The society, a cultlike organization that mixed Buddhism and Indian Brahmanism, had been on the lookout for the new messiah for years. And when Annie Besant, then head of the organization, spied young Jiddu, she declared she'd found her man. Besant lured Krishnamurti away from his father (who spent years in fruitless lawsuits, attempting to get his son back). Taking the young man to Europe, Besant immersed him in the teachings of the society, preparing him to save the world.

Krishnamurti, who eventually settled in Ojai, California, spent 18 years as a messiah in training. He *seemed* to swallow the society's claims whole. But in 1929, at a mass meeting of the Theosophical Society, he shocked his flock by abdicating claim to the throne. "I do not want followers," he declared. "The moment you follow someone, you cease to follow Truth.... Truth is in everyone. No man from outside yourself can make you free."

Renouncing not just Theosophy but organized religion as a whole, Krishnamurti advised people to be their own gurus and seek enlightenment within themselves. He held yearly talks on his philosophy at an oak grove outside Ojai and regularly corresponded with Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley, and George Bernard Shaw.

For the next few decades Krishnamurti and a few other Eastern philosophers mingled with intellectuals in the West. But it wasn't until the Sixties, with the advent of the drug culture, that their ideas truly took hold. As Marilyn Ferguson, publisher of the *Brain/Mind Bulletin* and author of *The Aquarian Conspiracy,* says, "The psychedelic movement of the Sixties led a lot of people to religious exploration. Eastern descriptions made sense to a great many people because they paralleled the transcendental experiences they had had with psychedelic drugs."

Finally, in the Seventies and Eighties, with the rise of cosmology and neuroscience, people were able to see the similarity between the laws of dharma and those of the physical world. Says Diana Alstad, who is currently writing a book on spiritual movements in the United States, "Eastern ideas are simply more sophisticated than Western religions in light of the science and technology of today. In fact," she adds, "the Western religions seem childish. It's harder for scientifically sophisticated people to believe in God—in the Father, the Son, and the Virgin Mary—than it is for them to believe in the principle of cosmic consciousness."

By the late Eighties the teachings of the masters had spread across the land. Today, with hundreds of spiritual centers and literally thousands of teachers, there seems to be a master for every personality type and taste.

Though Eastern philosophies in many ways complement science, some Americans look to their masters for a touch of the sublime. Take Sam Spanier, an upstate New York artist who believes his guides—the Indian yoga expert Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual partner Mira Alfassa (also known as The Mother)—may actually have the power to heal.

"This woman called me in great distress," Spanier explains. "She told me

CONTINUED ON PAGE 86

MASTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

that her husband was in the hospital dying. He was in and out of consciousness. Nonetheless, whenever his eyes were open and he was slightly conscious, he called for me.

"I said, 'He calls for me? That seems very strange; we only met once.'

"She said, 'I know, that's what's so remarkable. He'll open his eyes and say, "Sammy!" '

"I said, 'I'm not a healer, and I don't have any special qualities, and I don't know what I would be able to do.'

"Nonetheless I went. When I was alone with him in the hospital room, I sat down and took his right hand in mine. I bowed my head and I called to The Divine Mother, and I said, 'Mother Dear, if at all this child can be helped, please bring your presence to help this child.' I opened my eyes, and there on the other side of the bed was The Mother, manifest—completely! And she said to me, 'Tell him he will be well.' I can't express that more deeply. She was there!

"I turned back to this man in great happiness. 'Arthur,' I said, 'you will be well! You will be well!' With this, he opened his eyes and he said, 'Sammy!' I turned back to The Mother—she had disappeared. Then I left.

"Half an hour later, the doctor came up to the man's wife and he said, 'Madam, there's been a slight change.' We stayed another hour, and again, the doctor came and he said, 'Well, it's quite remarkable, but there's some improvement.' That man not only improved, he lived. He lives to this day."

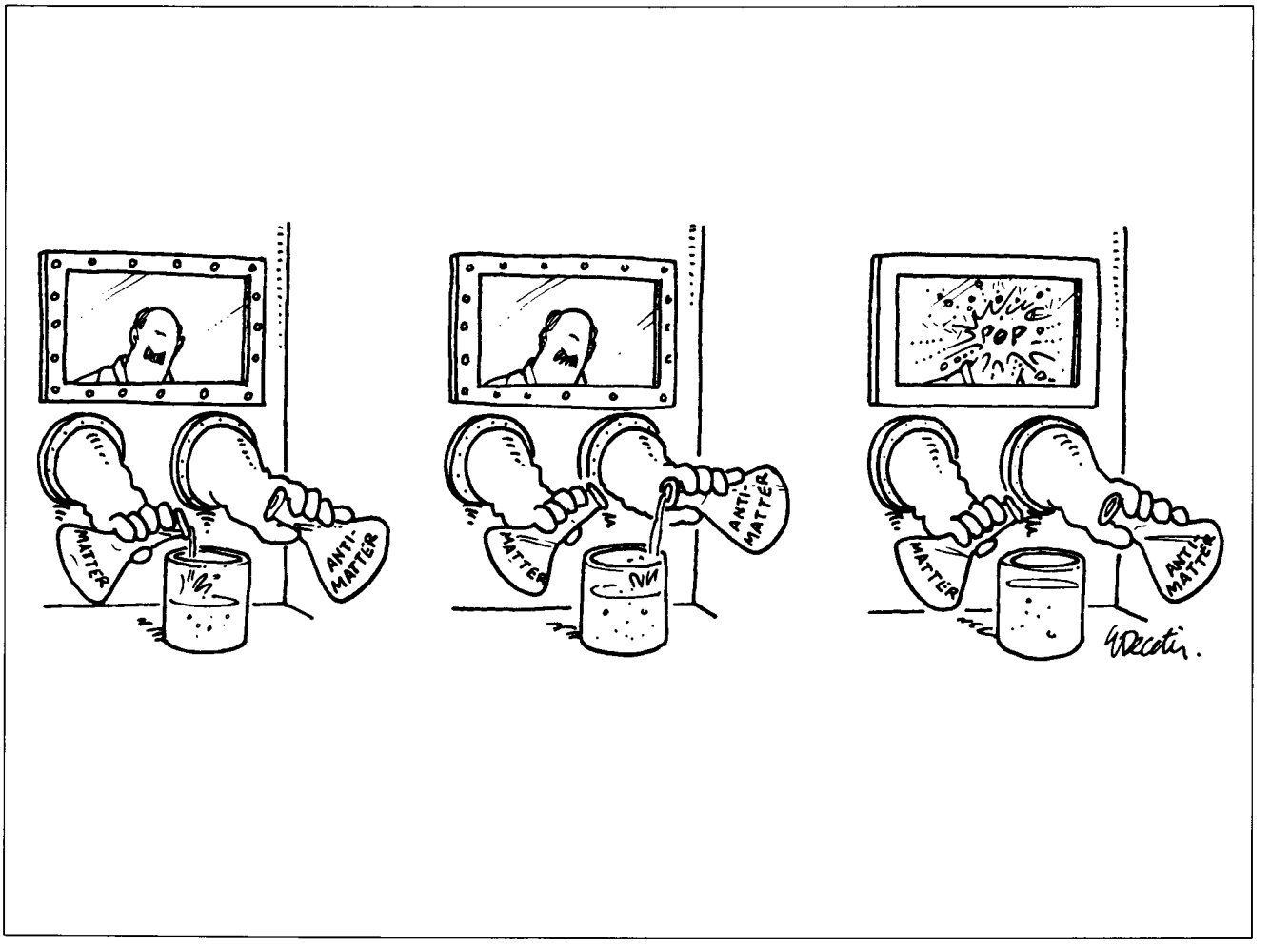
Other masters seem a bit more human to disciples. They are perceived not as wizards or gods but rather as parents, sometimes loving and sometimes stern. Take the experience of Visnu Jayson, manager of the Integral Yoga Uptown Teaching Center in New York. The center is headed by Swami Satchidananda, who also directs the Satchidananda Ashram Yogaville Virginia in Buckingham, Virginia, and is considered one of the foremost Yogis in the West.

Sometimes the parent/guru needs only a few words to convey the pertinent message, as Jayson recalls. "The day we laid the cornerstone for a shrine at Satchidananda's ashram in Virginia, disciples came from around the world with treasures, which were to be put in the earth to form a foundation—soil from holy places like the Wailing Wall, gems and jewels, even a moon rock. A large hole had been dug in the ground for the ceremony, and Swami Satchidananda was squatting beside it.

"I was filled with self-importance, watching everybody watching me, the first in line, as I picked up the biggest rock I could find and threw it in the hole. As I walked away, I looked at Swami Satchidananda. He said quietly, 'Too much getting is going on here.' I was supposed to be contributing by giving, and instead I was feeding my ego."

Sri Daya Mata (Faye Wright) had a similar experience when her parentlike guru put her in her place. Her master: Paramahansa Yogananda, who came from India during the Twenties to introduce the Kriya form of yoga, in which practitioners focus by slowing down bodily functions.

"When I first came to his ashram as a young woman, I was very sensitive and shy," Wright, now president of the Self-Realization Fellowship, Yogananda's headquarters and teaching center in Los Angeles, explains. "One evening he had a group of devotees come to his sitting room, where he talked informally about spiritual matters. As he talked I noticed that he was folding up a newspaper into a dunce cap, and when he finished, he looked at me and said, 'Come here.' I shook my head no. I didn't mind his meddling, his driving and disciplining me to help me change, but to make fun of me in front of others wasn't right. I didn't give him that permission. He



coaxed me several times, and the more he coaxed me, the more determined I became that he was not going to put that hat on my head. Finally, after everyone's laughter quieted down, he dismissed the others and asked me to remain behind.

"So I sat down, and he said: 'Why are you so sensitive? Does it matter whether you are made fun of? Of what value are the opinions of others?' I realized he was trying to teach me that my sensitivity was something I had to overcome, because it would affect any success I might have in life. I apologized and told him he could put the cap on my head now, but he said, 'No. I just want you to learn and remember, never be affected by how people treat you, never be affected by their criticism and unkindness. Learn to be strong.' I replied that I'd never admired tough people, but he said: 'Don't misunderstand me. I mean be strong as steel inwardly, so that nothing can touch you. It doesn't matter what people think of us; what matters is how we look at ourselves and how God thinks of us.' "

Some masters choose to reject the parental role. Instead, they teach disciples techniques through which they may find the answers themselves. This is just what computer programmer Ben Spector found upon encountering the Indian-born Sri Chinmoy, a New York City guru. "The minute I saw him I felt this inner peace and I thought he would be a good person to answer all my outer problems," Spector explains. "So I asked him, 'I'm in law school; I don't really like it. Should I stay in law school? Or should I go into computer science or statistics? Or should I become a teacher? Should I stay in Montreal or move somewhere else? Should I continue trying to save the world, or should I settle down?' I mean, I had all these questions, and after the meeting I just walked straight up to him and asked him like twenty questions right away. He looked at me, smiled, and said, 'Meditate, meditate, meditate. And all the answers will come from meditation.' "

Renowned British physicist/philosopher David Bohm learned to look inward with a *specific* meditative technique during a dialogue he had with Krishnamurti shortly before the great man's death. Bohm was particularly moved because, as it turns out, Krishnamurti's Eastern perspective corresponded with physical laws. Bohm explains: "In quantum physics, the observer and the observed cannot be separated. Therefore, a person measuring the results of an experiment is actually influencing the outcome. In physics, you can get around this by removing yourself and relying on an instrument to do the observing.

"Better get rid of the body."

"But how do you get around this problem when trying to understand your own emotions? How do you come to terms with anger, say, or violence, when simply by observing such emotions you alter them?

"Krishnamurti said that if we want to bring order to our emotions, we won't do it by thinking. Instead, we must acknowledge that we *are* the anger, that we *are* the violence. If we can stay with this perception long enough, the whole structure of thought and feeling will collapse like a house of cards. We will no longer sense the thinking part of the mind as a separate entity that can comprehend—and perhaps control—the emotional part. Instead, we will see the emergence of a different kind of mind, in which thought and feeling—the observer and the observed—are one."

This practical, essentially scientific bent is also embodied by Gejong Tenzin Gyatsho, the fourteenth Dalai Lama and winner of last year's Nobel peace prize. The Dalai Lama is the "supreme teacher" of Tibetan Buddhism and the leader in exile of the people of Tibet.

Born one of sixteen children in a farming family in eastern Tibet, the Dalai Lama was just two and a half when Tibetan monks identified him as the reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama, who had died a few years before. On February 22, 1940—at age four—he was enthroned and installed in the 1,000-room Potala Palace in Lhasa. In 1959 he fled into exile following a failed uprising against Chinese troops.

Ever since, the Dalai Lama has worked to free 6 million Tibetans from Communist Chinese rule. But if he succeeds, he says, he may not advocate continuing the line of Tibet's god-kings, of which he is the latest. "I'm trying to develop the democratic practice," he says, and has even suggested that he himself might step down from political power and be replaced by a popularly elected prime minister.

The Dalai Lama's desire to demystify himself was recently illustrated by Robert Thurman, the Jey Tsong-kha-pa professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist studies at Columbia University and a former Buddhist monk. "Legions of people swear they have experienced manifestations of the Dalai Lama," Thurman explains, "but he says he doesn't know anything about it, so he doesn't make any claims.

"In one example, he described some Tibetan who had been coming to see him and missed his appointment. Then that Tibetan had to go to Nepal and do business. When he came back to the Dalai Lama, he was so grateful that the Dalai Lama had given him just the right advice.

"His Holiness didn't know what he was talking about and said, 'Well, what do you mean?' And the man said, 'The

night after the time when I couldn't meet you, you visited me in my dream and told me to go to Nepal. "You'll see me when you come back," you told me. "But now just go and make sure you get there on time." '

"His Holiness said, 'Boy, it's very lucky you didn't meet me because if you'd come and asked me this question, I probably would not have given you such good advice. So I guess I'm more efficient in the dream than I am in real life.' He denied consciously doing anything, being an active manipulating agent in any way, but he didn't deny that the dream had some validity for the man. The Dalai Lama joked and said, 'It would really lighten my schedule if people would simply lie down and consult me in their dreams.' "

This pragmatic view keeps the Dalai Lama in touch with the world. One of his current missions: forging a link between traditional Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and modern science and concerns. In April 1988, for instance, he participated in the Global Survival Conference, held at Oxford's Christ Church College in England. Along with Mother Teresa, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Carl Sagan, and Yevgeny Velikhov (Gorbachev's chief adviser on disarmament), the Dalai Lama discussed ecological breakdown, the threat of nuclear war, and the importance of the human mind. "Our mother planet," he told the group, "is telling us, 'My dear children, behave in a more harmonious way. Please take more care of me.' "

At a second conference held recently in Newport Beach, California, he met with neuroscientists to discuss the roots of compassion, the causes of child abuse, and the connection between ancient notions of consciousness and Western theories of the brain. The Dalai Lama filled scientists in on Tibetan meditation and dreaming techniques. And he was eager to learn from *them*. "If there's good, strong evidence from science that such and such is the case, and this is contrary to Buddhism," he said, "then we will change."

Ram Dass has become a bit of an activist as well. In his latest incarnation, he is a cofounder of the Seva Foundation, a Chelsea, Michigan-based group that funds charitable causes worldwide. Seva (Sanskrit for "service") has thus far helped fight blindness in India and Nepal, sponsored reforestation projects in South America, and funded health education programs for American Indians. Ram Dass, who also teaches volunteers to help AIDS patients, says, "My intention is to enter places that exacerbate suffering. In the Sixties I began to learn how to be. In the Eighties I learned how to express that being in doing."

A similar call to action has gripped thirty-five-year-old Tai Situ Rinpoche. "You can't just pray for peace," Tai says. "It won't grow like the trees or fall like rain. To have peace on Earth people must act to create it."

It is this philosophy that inspired Tai's Pilgrimage for Active Peace, undertaken last year to overcome conflict and unite the cultures and religions of the world. According to Dhondup Namgyal Khorko, a board member of Tai's U.S.-based Palpung Foundation, the master's global—and technically sophisticated—approach was particularly effective in communicating his ideas. "When Tai came to America in 1985," says Khorko, "he was already talking about modern electronics and communications satellites. And once he initiated his peace mission he hired Daniel Edelman, a big public relations firm, to handle his account. Since one of his philosophies is to communicate to as many people as possible, he thinks public relations is a wonderful thing. 'If you count yourself, the number is always one,' he once told me, 'but if you count others, the number is infinity.' "

"If you're hungry, then you're interested in food. If you're lost in a spiritual wasteland, then you may find yourself interested in a master."

The number of Americans following Eastern masters and philosophies may not be infinite, but according to some estimates, there are 3 million Buddhists in this country. Why the powerful trend?

William George Roll, a Danish professor of psychology and psychic research at West Georgia College, says part of the reason is America's frontier mentality. "You can't explore the land anymore," he says, "but you *can* explore the spiritual landscape. There is an openness in the American psyche. We all came here to find new opportunities and openings for ourselves."

Adds Marilyn Ferguson, "There's been an awakening of the American unconscious. The attraction to the spiritual indicates we're willing to admit we don't understand certain things."

The rise of the masters may also be a reaction to technology. "There's got to be something more in life than the newest invention or technique," says H. Newton Malony, a professor in the graduate school of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. "People are seeking some meaning that goes beyond secular survival. Many find the late twentieth century so unbearable that they continue to find appeal in these groups."

Joel Kramer, a onetime spiritual teacher now at odds with some aspects of Eastern philosophy, says the masters hold sway partly because people feel lost. "Our traditional support systems—family, religion, community—have fragmented," he says, "and people find themselves awash. When human beings are awash, they will grab on to something that gives them a sense of belonging. Our society has pushed materialism to the limit, and people are jaded. If you're hungry, then you're interested in food. If you're lost in a spiritual wasteland, you may find yourself interested in a spiritual master or group."

Kramer, coauthor with Alstad of *The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power,* sees "incredible danger" in the rising tide of Eastern religions in the West. One major complaint is the position of authority often granted a guru. For instance, he notes, disciples blindly following a leader may lose their critical faculties, finding themselves in situations that are dangerous at best. "Some of the more radical groups," Kramer says, "stockpile weapons, and a disciple could find himself using them. Then there's the case of the big-time guru who had AIDS and homosexual relationships with his disciples. He passed the AIDS virus on to them.

"Gurus," Kramer adds, "are interested in power. And there's no one more powerful than the person saving your soul. But the unequal nature of the relationship between guru and disciple may cripple the disciple's psyche. And the relationship is equally destructive to the guru; there's no way he can't end up totally isolated from other human beings. With no equality in the relationship, it's simply got to be limited."

Alstad adds that the "hidden authority" intrinsic to the master–disciple relationship "can easily become a power manipulation under the guise of love. Disciples may ultimately become so cynical they can't open up to other people or establish a sense of trust."

Kramer and Alstad also say that Eastern philosophies, "like all religions, tend to be renunciative." That is, they emphasize enlightenment through *detachment* from the world. "Detachment can reduce conflict," Alstad says, "but it can also engender more callousness. It will not help the species survive."

While others concede these pitfalls, they believe they can be overcome. Roll, for instance, admits that the masters "*seem* to belie our democratic tradition. But," he says, "in a certain way, perhaps separateness is our problem. We have become so separate that we forget we are all connected to the phys-

ical environment, the social environment, and each other. We need to feel connected to solve problems such as the destruction of the environment, poverty, and drugs."

Not all masters are autocrats, Roll adds. Some are merely teachers. "If you place yourself completely at the disposal of a guru, you have problems," he says. "But if your master is simply your teacher, then once you have been taught, you can go your own way. Buddhism has always contended that if you know yourself, you know the world."

And Rick Fields, author of *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America,* agrees that despite the dangers, the American brand of Buddhism is essentially good. "There's danger in getting married," he says, "but people still do it. There's danger in anything worthwhile. The important thing is that students proceed slowly, that they sit down by themselves and look into their own minds. More and more, people are understanding that the point is not to follow somebody but to explore your inner self. The spiritual journey is ultimately personal, and you must make it on your own."

"A good master," concludes Don Morreale, "is one who constantly throws you back on your own devices and says, 'You figure it out yourself.' "

That's the lesson John Daido Loori learned from Hakuyu Taizan Roshi, head of the Los Angeles Zen Center, on the day they met. "Maezumi Roshi was staying down the hall from me at the Naropa Institute," Loori explains, "so I went to his room to pay my respects. We talked for about half an hour, and I left. Later that evening there was a knock on my door. When I opened it, two of his monks were standing there with a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken, and they invited me to join Maezumi Roshi for some fried chicken and sake. The evening turned into a party, people came and went, but he kept me sitting next to him the whole time. And every so often he'd lean over and whisper, 'Daido, tell me.' I'd look at him and say, 'Tell you what?' And he'd look off the other way. A short time later, he'd tap me on the shoulder again, lean close, and say, 'Daido, ask me.' 'Ask you what?' I'd reply, and he'd turn away.

"He did this several times, so I figured, 'Okay, this is dharma combat,' and when he said, 'Daido, tell me,' I picked up a glass, drank deeply, and went, 'Ahhhhhh!' He looked at me, held his nose between his fingers, and turned away. This exchange continued from five in the afternoon until three in the morning. Finally, all the guests had left, the monks had gone to sleep, and I got up and started cleaning the apartment. He said, 'It's okay. We'll do it tomorrow.' Well, it's not at all like a Zen teacher, especially a Japanese Zen teacher, to leave a mess and go to bed, but he insisted and shoved me out the door.

"About an hour later, there was a gentle knock on my door. It was Roshi. He'd changed his clothes to more formal robes, and he said, 'Come with me.' The playfulness was gone; this was a command. So we went back to his apartment. And it was spotless. He'd cleaned it, washed every dish, bathed himself, shaved his head, and set a table with four bowls and the other implements for the tea ceremony. He invited me to join him. I asked who the other places were for. He said one was for Yasatani Roshi, one of his teachers; the other was for Soen Roshi, my teacher at the time. Then he prepared the tea according to the Zen ceremony and served it. As I touched the tea to my lips I started crying. I didn't feel sad, but there were tears flowing from my eyes into the tea. I glanced at Roshi, and he was crying, too. I was flabbergasted and tried ineffectually to express my gratitude, but he covered my mouth with his hand and showed me the door." ∞

Reported by Jane Bosveld, Jeff Goldberg, Shari Rudavsky