

Guru, 15, recounts wisdom in

Reprinted from yesterday's late editions.

By Tom Fitzpatrick

Guru Maharaj Ji, dressed in all white, skipped blithely out from the wings of the Auditorium Theater stage. Applause rolled over the theater.

The chubby guru, age 15, nodded solemnly to his three mahatmas. Then he moved swiftly, almost at a skip, to the red plush throne set up in the

middle of the stage.

Someone had thrown a pie in his face in Detroit last week. Friday night, the guru's followers were taking no chances. The aisles of the theater were jammed with the guru's security men.

THE GURU MADE himself comfortable on his throne. Then he placed his two feet on a satin pillow in front of him. There were flowers on all sides

of him. The smell of incense was heavy.

There was a shimmering silver half-circle on the back curtain of the stage and shimmering silver reflectors all over the stage. Father Divine didn't have props that were any more impressive or theatrical.

Nearly 4,000 young followers of the guru had been waiting 2 hours for his appearance. Now many of them clasped their hands in front of them in prayerlike gestures as the guru began to deliver his divine message.

UNTIL NOW, there had been only one marvel. The three mahatmas had sat cross-legged for most of 2 hours. Yet, when it came time for them to arise and bow to the guru, they weren't even stiff.

"The guru has come with the

truth," the final introductory speaker had promised.

The guru put out his left hand and grabbed onto a microphone covered with flowers. The truth was on its way.

"I am here," the guru said. "I don't say I can give you money. I don't say I can give you a car. But, if you want it, I say I can give you peace."

THERE WERE a few cat-calls from the upper balcony, but the majority of the audience listened attentively.

They had no trouble hearing the guru. He speaks at the top of his voice at all times.

"You know I come into Chicago City searching for a Superman comic book," the guru said. "Nobody has it. I go to all the houses. But everywhere I go I can find no Superman comic book. Not anyplace in the city of Chicago."



Seated in red plush throne on the Auditorium Theater stage, Guru Maharaj Ji speaks to nearly 4,000 followers through flower-covered microphone. (Sun-Times Photo by Jack Lenahan)

Fitz



search for comics

"So when I can't get it I am depressed. I go to sit underneath a tree.

"AFTER A WHILE, a little kid comes up to me. He has a comic book stuffed under his shirt.

"What have you got there?" I ask him.

"He pulls out a Superman comic book.

"I got no comment to pass because the kid has got the Superman comic book that I was searching for and could not find.

"See, this is what I am trying to tell you. I should think he was crazy because he had something I was trying to find and couldn't."

The audience chuckled at the guru's wisdom. He was telling them he had true peace to offer and that people thought he was crazy, just like the little boy with the Superman comic book.

THE GURU TOLD his followers he had quit school in the ninth grade because he wasn't seeking the riches of the world. It probably was easier for him to do that because

his father, also a guru, had built up a family fortune by that time.

"Look," the guru told his followers in conclusion, "you come into this world empty-handed. You go out empty-handed. You can't even take a ring with you on your finger.

"Someone will reach into your grave and steal it from you."

One of the most interested observers of the guru's sermon was Sherman Skolnick, the independent investigator and self-styled muckraker.

Skolnick was on hand searching for Rennie Davis, the former Chicago 7 conspiracy trial defendant who is now a follower of the guru.

DAVIS DID NOT appear and Skolnick insisted that it was because Skolnick had exposed Rennie as a CIA operative.

"What about the guru?" Skolnick was asked.

Skolnick grew very serious.

"I have information that the guru is not 15 years old at all. My informants tell me he is really 28. We hope to prove that in the near future."