

# A Guru and His Wisdom of Love

CLAIMS HE WAS IN IOWA EVEN BEFORE HIS ACTUAL TRIP

By Jane Boulware

"I am a student. I am learning. This is a school."

With these words, spoken through an interpreter, a frail little man seated cross-legged on a sheet-draped overstuffed chair opened an interview.

Being interviewed was the Guru Bawa, a lesser-known Eastern mystic from Sri Lanka who was in central Iowa last weekend, principally to give lectures at Iowa State University in Ames.

Shoeless

Attending the interview and informal reception that followed were about 40 persons, sitting shoeless on the crowded living room floor of the Robert Schiers home, 2315 Pleasant St., West Des Moines.

Many were devoted followers, some having come here with him from Philadelphia, Pa. Others were from Ames or Des Moines, and one man came from Kansas.

They ranged from college students and other young adults to the middle-aged and older.

The answer to a question often asked of visiting celebrities — "Is this your first visit to Iowa?" — revealed the guru's ability to transcend the restrictions of time and space.

He had come to Iowa "five or six times before," he said, "but this is the first time I have come in my body."

A follower earlier was asked if the guru was about 75 years old, to which the follower replied, "At least twice that old."

Bawa in the interview dismissed queries about his age with a wave of the hand, saying, "Put down anything you like."

Little is known about the guru's personal life before he reportedly was "discovered" in the 1940s in the jungles of what then was Ceylon. His fol-

lowers say Bawa does not answer questions about his personal life.

His Children

To an outside observer, Bawa came through as a gentle, kind, humble teacher, patiently imparting his God-given "wisdom" to his "children."

Bawa looks on himself as a benevolent father, and all his followers as his children.

"I do not have disciples — I have children. I tell the children what I know. Everyone I see is a child to me. I can tell them what I have experienced and they can tell me what they have experienced."

At one point Bawa stated emphatically that he does not run a "business, a guru business."

His relationship with his stu-

dentized themselves to build the house of humanity within their hearts. Therefore, man has to build such a house — in love."

Nothing unusual about that. All religions teach love. What about meditation, what particular techniques of meditation does he teach his students?

There was no direct answer to this question, with Bawa demonstrating a facility for elaborate circumlocution that clothed most of his answers.

"If you are going to meditate and pray to God, you need the qualities of God... You need the love of God, you want his patience and tolerance; you need love, pure love," the guru said.

"The first step is imbibing the qualities of God — realizing God. After that, one has

ca, Bawa said, "Birds must go to the trees to get their fruit; the fruit does not go to the birds."

Much of his discourse focused on the nature of God and the need for people to seek God. But he also had some things to say about human relationships.

"We must recognize other lives in the same way we recognize our own lives, and (treat) all men as neighbors. Their hunger is your own hunger, their illness and disasters you must recognize as your own," he said.

What is God's purpose in the world?

"God might have created the world for many kinds of purposes. But if all creation exists as God's story, then we are the books in which his story has been written....

"His secret is grace... and his story is in each creation."

Does Bawa believe the Bible is the Word of God?

He responded, "I have a Bible that was given me in my heart. It is here in my heart; no one can carry this Bible away."

"Other Bibles can be changed, have been changed many times, in many new translations."

One God

There is one God, and the prophets or messengers of four major religions — Hinduism, Shintoism, Christianity and Islam — all contribute to knowledge of God, Bawa said.

He compared the four religions to parts of the human body.

Hinduism, relating to creation and energy, is that part of the body below the waist.

"We have to see what truth is in that part," he said.

Shintoism, "the religion of fire worship," he calls the religion of the stomach.

He said Christianity deals with the heart and soul and

therefore is comparable to the chest, while Islam relates to the head (eyes, nose, ear, mouth, tongue).

"These four parts make up one man. One must understand the four parts to become true man. We are one family of God," he said.

After answering questions from those who sat in on the interview, Bawa chanted some of the songs that express his teachings about the importance of finding God in this transitory world. One goes like this:

*"All this singing, all this dancing,  
All becoming slaves to one another,  
All the running and the searching,  
O Golden One (Heart)  
Is all for the sake of the one-span stomach."*

Bawa explained that no matter what games are played, what dances are performed or what trick is done, all of the actors will have to remove their costumes in the end.

The man who had come from Kansas asked for and received a special blessing or benediction from Bawa, who placed his hand on the Kansas student's head after instructing him to seek God diligently.

Robert Schiers, jr., an Iowa State University student who was host for the informal gathering, announced that buffet supper awaited all the guests.

At this point the guru excused himself to go upstairs.

Food of the non-spiritual type does not interest him, his followers say.

As he left the room, Bawa greeted many in the audience and they kissed his hand.

**GURU — (Hinduism) A preceptor giving personal religious instruction.**

— Random House Dictionary

dents, he said, is one of "dedication of one's self to one's father."

With a touch of gentle humor, he pictured himself as a parent beset with problems of caring for a multitude of children.

Shrugging off questions about his year-long tour of the United States, he said, "I have given birth to all these children, and now I must take care of them... They drag me around the country!"

Asked what is the most important precept of his teaching, Bawa said, "Love."

He elaborated: "Science has advanced tremendously. Man is searching even the skies, and now they are planning to man the planets, build houses there.

"Yet they have not organ-

got to think of prayer and meditation."

Yes, he has heard of transcendental meditation, yoga and other popular meditation techniques, he said. His opinion of them could be drawn from an analogy:

"Everything that we see has to be a teacher in itself. Some clarities can be studied even from a snake, even from an ant... But if you get too close to an animal, he may kill you."

"There are a lot of gurus in the world, for sure.

"... When wisdom comes (to a person), only God will be seen... the power of one alone will be seen. There will be nothing else there."

Asked why he does not extend his tour to countries such as those in South Ameri-