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## Until the World Laughs with God

Nathan Schneider ([bio](#))

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Comedian Mike Meyers  
offends as Guru Pitka

Mike Myers's guru character has been in the works for years. "Guru Pitka" was part of an [early draft](#) for the script of his 1999 *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. At that early stage, Pitka had already made some major spiritual discoveries, including "NOWHERE = NOW HERE" and "When you 'assume,' you make an 'ass' out of 'u' and 'me.'" Rather than the present bearded Maharishi look, [photos from \*Vanity Fair\*](#) in 1999 show Myers dolled up, long-tongued and painted red, like a monster-diet. According to [an interview](#) on a fan website that advertises itself as "100% real," Myers seems to have dropped the scene because of concern for controversy. "Guru Pitka was in some people eyes, racially disturbing," he explains. "It was a funny part, but it offended many Indians and I do not want a negative thing around Austin Powers."

In the decade since, Myers continued trying Pitka out in secret appearances at comedy clubs in New York. Rumors flew around the blogosphere. By 2006, he had adopted "Mariska Hargitay" as his solemn, faux-Sanskrit greeting, raising a chuckle for fans of the *Law & Order* actress. But not, to echo Myers's onetime concern, for "many Indians."

By March of this year, the internet lit up with protests. Word got out that Paramount bought into the idea and Guru Pitka was soon to have a movie of his own. Leading the charge was Rajan Zed, a Punjabi priest who rose to prominence as an organizer for the Hindu community in Reno, Nevada. In 2007, he became the first Hindu to deliver the opening prayers on the floor of the U.S. Senate, an historic moment interrupted by Christian hecklers. When he learned about the upcoming movie, Zed began circulating press releases condemning it in the name of his brand-new organization, the Universal Society of Hinduism. *The Love Guru*, he contended, "appears to be lampooning Hinduism and Hindus and using Hindu terms frivolously."

Early on, Zed was joined by other Hindu groups, including the right-wing Hindu Janjagruti Samiti ("Uniting Hindus globally") and the Spiritual Science Research Foundation ("Bridging the known and unknown worlds"). "It will hurt the religious sentiments of millions of Hindus

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