

The Eternal Problem of an Established Spiritual Authority

During the 30th November presentation, Guru Dev's Message focused on the problems caused by effective teachers being seen by their disciples as infallible spiritual authorities. Although Guru Dev, as Maharishi always referred to his teacher Brahmanand Saraswati, did serve as the Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math in India until his physical death in 1953, he only reluctantly accepted that position after years of persuasion.

Guru Dev asked that it be made clear that his reluctance was caused by his concern that the spiritual authority created by his successful efforts to share his wisdom would become too attractive to less generous-minded personalities.

As Guru Dev said: "I would never tell you to just believe whatever I say. That is because if you simply believe whatever I say, you will get in the habit of believing the words of any Shankaracharya. Then, even if someone unfit assumes that position, you will also believe whatever he has to say."

The members of The Movement recognize that this is an inherent problem when establishing any human institution which requires that decision-making authority be given to a relatively small number of individuals, such as governmental, business and educational institutions. In those cases it is always crucial to keep a watchful eye to prevent the institution from being hijacked for personal gain.

However, in the case of an institution designed to spread spiritual wisdom, that inherent problem becomes a fatal problem. Sharing spiritual wisdom is, in essence, sharing the knowledge someone developed about how to pursue happiness and personal freedom more effectively. But since free will gives each individual mind a sovereign right to pursue happiness in whatever way it chooses, any institution designed to dictate a path to happiness will always remain problematic at its core.

Since those who seek power over other minds find leading such institutions to be one of the most attractive sources of such power that exists, and since the fundamental human desire to be happy so often develops into an emotional need, many people fall for any kind of spiritual guidance from anyone willing to offer it. That is why the creation of an institution to share new spiritual wisdom often results in taking one step forward, followed quickly by three steps backward.

For these reasons, and especially given the ease of disseminating spiritual wisdom in the information age, the members of The Movement have unanimously decided to replace their use of the master-disciple relationship with friendship, and to avoid, in the future, the creation of institutions designed to share such wisdom, relying instead on non-institutional methods.

There is hope, which Guru Dev shares, that this will work much better.

And no one in The Movement is going to miss "ashram politics" for even one second.