

## Concerns with guru based religious orders

### What is the issue?

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Due to growing vertical religious diversity, few 'gurus' are involved in horrific exploitation of their own followers.

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### What are the forms of religious diversity in India?

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- **Diversity of religion** - The existence in society of a populace professing faith in distinct, well-demarcated Hindu, Christian, Jewish or Islamic ideals.

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- **Diversity within religion** - It is horizontal diversity a religion is internally differentiated because its core beliefs and practices are differently interpreted, especially by competing elites.

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- **Vertical diversity** - This occurs when people of the same religion engage in diverse but hierarchically arranged practices.

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### What are the characteristics of vertical diversity?

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- They are a bulwark against the homogenising practices of large, powerful, totalising religions.

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- It inherent in religiously diverse societies, possibility of both inter-religious and intra-religious domination.

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- They invent gods, identify gurus, and develop forms of worship of their own, often away from the eye of, and sometimes in tension with caste-laden Hinduism.

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- Song-based devotionalism among women of virtually all castes.  
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- Meditation-based practices of individual salvation among all.  
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### **What are the impacts of vertical diversity?**

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- Every form of diversity, including religious diversity, is entangled in power relations.  
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- The basic interests of one group are threatened by the actions of another.  
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- It involves discrimination, marginalisation, humiliation, exclusion, reproduction of hierarchy.  
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- Domination can develop between religions, within religions, and even within faith practices of the marginalised.  
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- It affects individuality and personal freedom, at times these are egalitarian, and focus on mental and physical health.  
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### **How this diversity issues can be addressed?**

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- It would be wise overlook the aspects of these organisations.  
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- Resistance of intra- and inter-religious domination must be developed.  
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- A straightforward, unbiased examination will eliminate institutionalised religious domination.  
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**Source: The Hindu**

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