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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