
HOW TO RATE A GURU?

by

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I think it would help if there were a set of questions that would-be disciples could ponder before signing up with a guru. Stephen Goskin, for instance, himself a small-scale guru, said that you should be able to answer 'yes' to the following three fundamental questions:

- Is what the guru offers free?
- Is it compassionate?
- Does it help people out in the here and now?

I am hoping to publish a longer list in the Journal of the Institute for Social Inventions, and would welcome suggestions. Some additional questions occur to me, and I am tickled pink at the idea of a novice interviewing the guru at the first meeting and running through a checklist such as this:

- Is the guru poor, not in control of large amounts of money and not entranced by Western high technology?
- Does the guru refrain from sexual involvement with the disciples?
- Is it easy to leave the guru and are ex-disciples treated satisfactorily? Will someone leaving out any money put in, so as to be able to re-establish a life in the outside world?
- Is free contact allowed with family and friends?

- Are the disciples allowed regular sleep, reasonable food and adequate time off?

- Is there respect for quality in the organisation's work (no ugly architecture for instance)?

- Are the guru's words in harmony with past spiritual insights, such as contained in the 'Tao Te Ching' or Huxley's 'Perennial Wisdom' anthology?

- Is the organisation non-authoritarian? Given that absolute power corrupts, are there signs that the guru's power and that of the chief henchmen and women are less than absolute - signs of democracy for instance, or of questioning and debate and thinking for oneself being welcomed?

- Is the disciple free from any pressure to proselytise for more converts?

- Is the organisation human scale with, ideally, a mere handful of apprentices, (with a maximum of say 600), rather than a multinational with branches everywhere and sheep-like devotees?

- Is an atmosphere created where it feels possible to relax and tell the truth?

Adding up the number of 'yes' answers to these 14 questions with reference to the religions and new cults that I have personally

