

Higher Education

A Practical Spiritual Approach
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In 1956, when I was living in London. I asked Sant Kirpal Singh Ji about the possibility of developing a type of higher education that would stress spirituality and practicality, developing courses that would demonstrate the practical bases of religious and humanistic literature, together with the creation of courses related to man-service and land-service. I showed Master my plans for what I then termed „forest colleges,“ and Master responded with his usual magnanimity and grace. Paraphrasing the words of Victor Hugo. Master said that this was an idea „whose time was imminent.“

The concept of „forest colleges“ stayed with me over the years, but it was in Chicago in 1972 that Master brought up the subject again. My wife and I have had several hauntingly beautiful conversations with Master, and in one interview he stressed that I should make progress with „God’s workin education.“ Now that Master has left the physical plane, many initiates (and others, who were not initiated, but who consider themselves devotees of Sant Kirpal Singh) have asked themselves what direction their service will take on this level of consciousness. It is self-evident that only a Master can do the work of Master, and to infer otherwise would be the highest degree of egotism. Master gave us the paramount commandment to get within and to realize the Self and ultimately, to realize God. Nevertheless, Master constantly stressed the necessity of selfless service and the inception of Manav Kendra was one aspect of this pronouncement of Master.

We can serve others in both a physical and spiritual sense. But we can only hope to serve effectively if we developed some measure of spiritual consciousness. It is the spiritual connotation of the word „service“ that, paradoxically, can lead us into the most explicit forms of egotism. There are several signs of new „guruships“ in the air, and unfortunately it is all too easy for people to be misled by charismatic persons who claim special revelations or powers. One type of activity, however, which does NOT promote self-seeking „gurus“ although it does honor all true Masters – is that of a school or college that stresses spirituality, man-making and land service.

It may be asked, quite reasonably, „what has the creation of a new institution of higher education to do with spirituality?“ And the answer is a reasonable one: all the great Masters were teachers in the highest sense, and they all stressed the technique of man teaching mankind. Again, we are NOT „masters,“ but there has been a wonderful upsurge of spiritual „capital“ amongst the devotees of the great Master Kirpal Singh. There is much to give and much to share. Already many Satsangis have proposed the creation of schools on the primary levels for the education of Satsangi children and the children of non-Satsangis who feel the need of a spiritually oriented education. One such school, already in creation (for several years now), is the Sant Bani Ashram School, whose enrollment is doubling each year.

The proportion of non-initiates at the Sant Bani Ashram School is about half. Its principal, Kent Bicknell, serves on a board for evaluation procedures of private schools in the state of New Hampshire, and there is a lot of community interest and support for his school.*

Other schools of similar purpose – founded by Satsangis and non-Satsangis alike – are already in being or in the planning stages. However, the big question is, „What happens to the graduates of such schools?“ They have been given a practical education that is spiritually focused. Are they then turned over to the huge „fact factories“ that now represent what is ironically termed „higher education“? Master often lamented the fact that young people were being instructed by teachers and professors whose cerebral equipment may have been highly developed but whose moral and spiritual development was sadly lacking. This state of affairs is NOT improving – either in the East or the West. That there will be a new type of educational institution of higher learning in the coming New Age is testified to by many mystics and forward-looking people; this institution will be built from „grass roots“ and will get away from the mass-production, „biggest-is-best“ mentality of the present educational system.

Master needs no memorials created to their memory. Their sublime teachings and the spiritual progress of their devotees remain as their greatest memorial. Nevertheless, for a practical purpose, I propose the creation of KIRPAL FOREST UNIVERSITY, which, alternatively, could be called Kirpal International University, if its aims and purposes are adopted by and subscribed to by Satsangis and mutually-minded friends overseas. Remember, I am not proposing something that will merely memorialize the greatest Master of our time, nor am I proposing yet another religiously-focused academy. I am proposing the creation of an institute of higher learning that will transcend the national and religious boundaries of humanistic teachings and spiritual beliefs, in the light of the inspiration and guidance given by the Param Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj.

Kirpal Forest University will promote the ongoing trend towards practical spirituality, man-service and land-service in higher education. It will endeavor to demonstrate that mutual cooperation, creative altruism, goodwill and peace are viable principles in human communities. It will uphold the basic dignity and human rights of all mankind, and will promote the founding of schools and institutions of truly „higher“ learning, which will work for the common objectives outlined above. The University will demonstrate that the great Masters and Saints of all times and of all climes have stressed practical spirituality rather than sectarian religiosity. Sant Kirpal Singh Ji and all the Masters built bridges of understanding for the benefit and upliftment of all mankind. They stressed true freedom and the inherent dignity of the human individual. The University will keep the precepts of these great Masters constantly before its students and before society at large.

Students at the University will study the immense storehouse of human wisdom garnered by the Masters throughout the ages, and they will be able to derive practical teachings from this wisdom. Both faculty and students will endeavor to promote a higher concept of education in excellence and depth, based upon this storehouse of wisdom. The University will establish development centers that will simplify basic human needs, so that man-service and land-service will become practical propositions for all societies, regardless of their economic levels. Such development centers will

also answer the question concerning tuition funds and student assistance. This will be a self-supporting institution, if the ideals of land-service and the dignity of productive labor are linked to the great spiritual ideals. Most modern educational institutions are in trouble because the artificial „life-stream“ of tax money, endowments, and so forth, is drying up. A true educational institute of higher learning can become self-supporting if it does not separate the practical aspects of man-service and land-service from its higher goals.

The University will expound the universal principles of ethical living, creative living and spiritual living that can be found in the arts, sciences and humanities. It will promote a common bond of understanding throughout the world; it will demonstrate that higher consciousness can be related to human practicality; to show that man can live without bloodshed, violence and hatred; it will work constantly for the promulgation of goodwill, mutual respect and reverence for all life. It will demonstrate that these factors may be common denominators for global and national life, and that unity in diversity is thus a realizable goal.

Are such goals feasible in this imperfect world?“ Every Saint had a past, every sinner has a future,” said Sant Kirpal Singh. If we realize some (even a few) of the goals that have been outlined, we will have effected some lightening of the burdensome and oppressive atmosphere of negativity that infuses our planetary consciousness; more faces will be turned toward the Light, and more will respond to the eternal Truth given out by all the Masters. If another Beacon of Light appears upon the horizon of this suffering world, if another Param Sant walks amongst us, will his ministry be helped or hindered by the preparation of spiritual learning outlined above?

There is nothing original outlined in this article. I claim no credit for so-called „innovative“ concepts. There are already „New Age“ concepts. There are already „New Age“ colleges (good, bad and indifferent) in existence in various parts of the world today. However, if this has any part of Masters inspiration behind it – and he did evince deep interest in the subject – then we cannot fail in getting its ideals into operation. The concept can be brought into being in any country whose government does not forbid the creation of private or independent schools; but my initial concern, as a resident of the United States, is with the creation of such an institute in North America. Naturally, the University will cut across national boundaries, for it will adhere to a non-political, non-sectarian and non-national outlook, in consonance with the teachings and example of Sant Kirpal Singh and all the great Masters.

To get this concept for Kirpal Forest University under way, and initial PLANNING BOARD should be created. It is hoped that the Planning Board could be derived from the ranks of the Satsangat and those who have expressed a broad interest in the teachings of Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj. Obviously, as the University develops in area and scope, its Board of Trustees, Administration and Faculty would be open to those who are not members of the Santat, but who subscribe whole-heartedly to the teachings given out by Sant Kirpal Singh and the great Masters and to the principles outlined above.