

MEDITATION 14



A RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY stands in a dangerous position, full of traps. It is in the nature of the spiritual life to think in hierarchies of authority, to imagine meaning in terms of truth, and to invest one person or group of persons with extraordinary influence. Religious leaders require unusual wisdom not to become intoxicated with power and lord it over their followers.

Religious authorities need our own self-governance in spiritual matters. If we "subjects" are making intelligent decisions and educating ourselves, then the leader can offer focus, direction, and structure. But the moment we give too much power to our leaders, we become the victims and they the tormentors. The religious spirit, which needs vibrant external structures, succumbs to empty institutional forms, and rules replace wisdom.