

THE NEW SHANKARACHARYA

This is an account of our formal introduction in 1964 to the new Shankaracharya whom we already knew, and who was lately installed at a ceremony in Benares on 28th February 1980:

Lucknow, Wednesday 2nd September 1964

official introduction to Shri Vishnudevanand Swami, next in line of succession
for Shankaracharya and now closely understudying His Holiness.

The occasion was a family anniversary in a suite of rooms at our hotel and the guest of honour was the Swami. When we arrived he was seated on the couch eating his meal. Around him on the floor were the family, and children flitted in and out. We were given cakes and fruit drinks.

We at once recognized each other, both from the Ram Nagar Ashram on the Ganges four years previously and also at Allahabad where he came to many of the talks and appears in one of our photographs. He explained that there were originally four candidates for succession to Guru Deva, the present Shankaracharya was chosen and the other two had dropped out.

He already knew a good deal about our School in London and wanted to know more. When asked where we could reach him, what was his address, he replied, 'My address is wherever Jagad Guru is.'

He could not often be present with the Shankaracharya on official occasions as he was usually deputising for him somewhere else.

He is very tall and yet squarely built, black hair and beard; has the quiet controlled movements and the quiet non-assertive voice we should now expect, was always self-contained and yet natural and didn't speak any more than was necessary. People kissed his feet and treated him with the greatest respect; he wore the orange robes and carried the banner of the appointed Teacher. There are two others also to be seen frequently with the Shankaracharya besides those in the yellow dhoti of the disciple.

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