A Sourcebook for Kids of All Ages
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As we travel in the many countries where Hindus have made their homes and communities, among the big questions always asked are, "Swami, what shall we teach our children? Are there any good resources, any authentic texts for kids? Does Hinduism have anything like the catechisms used in Christian homes and schools?"

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions are mostly, "No, not yet." Why is that? Well, up until the last century all the knowledge that such books try to preserve was preserved in the old-fashioned way, in the grandmothers and grandfathers, the aunties and uncles and others of the extended family which was the way of life in India.

But that way of life is last disappearing. For that reason, other methods are needed. We have done a lot of work in HINDUISM TODAY to provide some of the tools for teachers. We have assembled from many sources, from pundits of all sects, authentic summaries of Hindu belief and published them by the hundreds of thousands in several languages. We have produced children's coloring books with subjects that introduce the youngest boys and girls to Sanatana Dharma. And we have produced the children's primer published last month, summarizing our faith from A to Z in graphic form.

All of that is good, but it is not enough. Not nearly enough. So much more is needed. I was especially moved by the repeated requests we received while traveling in Sri Lanka for a modern Hindu catechism. One of Sri Lanka's greatest reformers, Sri Arumuga Navalar (1822-1879), had crafted a catechism in his native Tamil language. It was called Saiva Vinavidai or "Questions and Answers on Saivite

Hinduism." But that was a long time ago, and though still in use, much of it had become somewhat outdated. There was also the new difficulty that not all the kids were speaking good Tamil, especially those who had migrated to other countries. Mothers and fathers wanted a new catechism, an English catechism that answered the questions their curious, bright young ones were asking and for which they found, to their embarrassment, they had few good answers. By the way, catechism is based on a Greek word katechizein, "to teach by means of question and answers."

That was many years ago, and we have been working on the project ever since. This week, it was finished - a 1,008-page sourcebook with everything a young Hindu needs to know. It is called Dancing with Siva: Hinduism's Contemporary' Catechism. It is full of our history, our beliefs, our culture, our art and philosophical concepts. It is rich in sacred quotes from the Vedas, the Agamas and other holy texts. It has so much information in it, so much of the wisdom of the Hindu path. It will do a lot to help the modern family to protect, preserve and promote the Sanatana Dharma. It even has in it a very complete comparison of Hinduism with all the other great religions on the earth, in a long section called "Truth Is One, Paths Are Many." It describes all of their wonderful, profound and uniquely different approaches to the one great Supreme we all call God.

One of the benefits of such a strong and complete summary of Hinduism is that it gives the individual soul - whether child or adult - a full understanding of those three important words which every religion talks about: God, soul and world. When you understand Pati, pasu and pasa, God, soul and world, when you understand God. Gods and guru, when you understand the soul is on a wondrous journey to moksha, then you are never alone. Aloneness is a Western concept, the prelude to despair. Psychiatrists make a lot of money off people's miseries.

When we understand the soul and that it is on a joyous journey to liberation, we are energized never in despair. When we understand the world from the Eastern perspective and the many other worlds, the Pretaloka, the Pitriloka, the Svarloka, the Maharloka, etc., there is hope for the future. We are on the path. How can we stop on the path to anger, indulge in jealousy, or to fear for a future? The Eastern perspective is that our future is inevitably unfolding up and up and up. The hard times are testing character, challenging our willpower and putting us back on the straight path to God. The first step on the spiritual path is to understand God, soul and world. We are truly secure once this is imbedded in the subconscious mind and has rooted out all erroneous concepts such as: "You only go around once, so get all the gusto you can," or "It's really hard out there" (existentialism), or "You have to

watch out for number one" (materialism), or "All extraterrestrial, psychic and subliminal experiences are simply imagination" (secular humanism).

This catechism is written by Hindus about Hinduism, but it is not only for Hindus. Any one of any faith who is seeking a deeper understanding of other ways of worshipping will benefit by knowing what Hindus really do and think.

It contains a wealth of graphics to make for easy study. There are 165 classical Rajput paintings and over 140 original illustrations depicting Hindu life, history, beliefs and symbolism. There are more than 600 verses from the vedas and other holy texts, 155 questions and answers on all dimensions of Sanatana Dharma, a 40-page timeline of India's history from 400,000 BCE to 1993. 190-page lexicon of terms, a 40-page index for easy access and cross-referencing, and a full index of all scriptural quotations. There is also a full bibliography and list of suggested reading, a 24-page, fully illustrated primer for teaching children and older youth the principles and ideals of the book.

This is such an important treatise on Hinduism that a Hindu Businessmen's Association established a generous endowment to perpetuate its distribution. Pay them $5 for postage and handling, and they will send you this highly illustrated, $19.95 sourcebook. Simply write to Publisher's Desk.

This sourcebook, released on Mahasivaratri, February 18, 1993, is a wealth of knowledge, the result of 14 years of research. We worked with several Sanskrit scholars, pundits and shastris from every sect of Hinduism to verify, solidify each concept down to the smallest diacritical mark of all the Sanskrit entries. Please do write. This is a one-time offer which will expire on Guru Purnima, in July. 1993. To receive your copy, simply send US$ 5 for the softcover book. For the hardcover book, send $10.

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