

## [Hindu Megatrends](#)

Category : [October/November/December 2002](#)

Published by Anonymous on Oct. 01, 2002

### FEATURE STORY

## Hindu Megatrends

When the Queen of England visits a London temple in her stocking feet, we know times have changed. Getting respectful recognition is just one of ten major trends in Hinduism today.

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Megatrends is a term coined by futurist John Naisbitt in 1982 to name the major underlying forces, both positive and negative, that are transforming society and shaping the future. Naisbitt's best-selling book, *Megatrends*, was enormously influential at the time in helping individuals, communities and nations understand and adapt to the changing times. In 1989 HINDUISM TODAY formulated ten Hindu megatrends to help Hindus worldwide understand the complex interaction of a rapidly advancing world with our ancient Sanatana Dharma. Our editors, at the behest of the magazine's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, solicited the insights of prominent Hindu religious leaders, scholars, priests and business people. The resulting ten trends proved useful to the global Hindu community and, in retrospect, were reasonably accurate.

So much has transpired since our first exposition of Hindu megatrends thirteen years ago that an update is in order. The

1990s and the opening few years of the new millennium have seen momentous events and advances, including the development of the Internet, the fall of communism, the emergence of India as a center for information technology and the financial boom of the 90s, which increased many a Hindu fortune. There has been a dramatic increase in migration of Hindus to America and Europe not only from India and Sri Lanka, but from countries of the 19th century diaspora, including Trinidad, Suriname, Mauritius and Fiji. This migration has reached the point where Hinduism has become a significant minority faith in many Western countries. And September 11 brought to the world's sympathetic attention the unconscionable terrorism which India has suffered for more than a decade, a fact of life that will unfold in the years ahead as the issues in Kashmir are addressed.

Our editorial team formulated the original ten trends using the input of twelve Hindu leaders and our own knowledge of the Hindu world. This update is based on our own observations, the past 13 years of reports in Hinduism Today and input from several globally connected Hindus.

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## 1-From Hindu Meekness To Hindu Pride

Though Swami Vivekananda began this trend a hundred years ago, even up to recent times Hindus were afraid to identify themselves as Hindus, or as members of a particular Hindu sect. Through the effort of many people and organizations, Hindu pride and self-confidence have replaced the self-doubt and timidness instilled during centuries of foreign rule. Native

dress becomes fashionable.

## Update 2002

A greater knowledge among Hindus of our traditions continues to contribute to the trend of increasing Hindu pride, as does the building of magnificent Hindu temples, such as the Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, London, called the eighth wonder of the world by Reader's Digest. It attracts over half-a-million visitors annually and is described by Bochasanwasi Shree Akshatar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha as representing the sacred faith and beliefs of a people that date back over 8,500 years. India has seen a decline in the popularity of communist doctrine and an unprecedented rise in Hindu identity and purpose. Suddenly in India it is almost faddish to be a good Hindu, and people who were once silent about their faith now speak openly and frequently about it. Easy Internet access to clear and unbiased information on Hinduism is offsetting the generally negative presentation of our religion common in Western and Indian media and sourcebooks. On the other hand, the generation born to Hindu parents outside of India and Sri Lanka is not strongly religious. Many of these children of the diaspora in the West, like their counterparts in other religions, are following the prevailing trend away from religion.

## 2-Village Awareness to Global Awareness

Hindus have lived outside India in countries such as South Africa or Fiji for over a century, but only now are we reaching beyond a limited village worldview, achieving a global consciousness and establishing worldwide communication. Among other results of this trend, Hindus are taking a prominent place among world religions in every forum.

Update 2002

Realizing that significant populations of Hindus have decided to permanently live in Europe and North America, organizations formerly found only in India are establishing new centers in these countries to be of service to a specific lineage or to the general Hindu community. The 300,000 Tamil Hindus now settled in and around Toronto, where they have created a traditional community and added measurably to Canada's human resources, is an example of the trend. A greater global awareness also comes from families still in India having children living abroad in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere and regularly traveling to spend time with them.

The Internet, and especially e-mail, is allowing Hindus to create a global village of friendly contacts and information sharing.

A notable example of Hinduism's finding its rightful place in the world was the massive presence of Hindu spiritual leaders at the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations in New York in August, 2000. Hindu leaders are traveling and lecturing extensively, something uncommon fifty years ago.

### 3-From East Only to Both East and West

Not only have our people moved from East to West, but our Hindu truths have found welcome homes in many corners of Western life. The civil rights movement, the health/ vegetarian movement, the ecumenical movement, the "New Age" movement and the concern for the environment are all deeply affected by Hindu thinking. Subtle Hindu ideas find their way into mainstream world thought.

## Update 2002

This trend continues as strongly as ever, seen, for example, in the common and accurate use of the word karma in movies and on television, both of which are adopting Hindu philosophy more and more. Hinduism's tolerance for a wide variety of belief is setting a needed example in a world full of intolerance. Twenty-five percent of Americans believe in reincarnation, and the percentage increases each year. This trend has also been enhanced by the ready availability of clearer and less biased presentations of Hindu belief and practice. Ayurveda has become a household word in the past 10 years. Its sophisticated understanding of the causes and treatment of disease is welcomed by many seeking an alternative to the drugs and surgery style of Western allopathic medicine. Hinduism continues to get stronger in most countries of the old diaspora—Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius, Malaysia, whereas one might have thought fifty years ago that it would decline. The communities into which they have migrated, by the hundreds of thousands, such as the Suriname Hindus to Holland and the Guyanese to New York, are

maintaining their unique Hindu identity there. Another trend is the increase of bringing Westerners into Hinduism as well as their receiving diksha, traditional initiation. One of our Chennai correspondents recently reported that in April of this year the respected elder of the Sivachariya priesthood of Chennai gave samaya diksha to an American lady, a professor at Harvard University, who adopted the name "Amba." In recent times the scientific community, especially physicists and cosmologists, has looked to Hinduism for insights and answers to the most profound inquiries. There is a broader interest in Hinduism's teachings of tolerance and nonviolence after the September 11 terrorist attacks including the need for domestic nonviolence— a home free of spousal and child abuse. This trend is highlighted by the presence of scholars like Dr. David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri) at major Hindu events, by the presence of major ashrams in Europe, by Western pujaris actively performing regular Hindu rites at the Devi temple in Rochester, New York, and by our own Saiva

Siddhanta Yoga Order, which has Hindu monks from seven nations.

## 4-From Men Only to Men and Women

Reflecting a global trend among all nations, Hindu women are rapidly becoming more involved at all levels of Hindu religion. Some are influential religious leaders; others are instrumental in running large Hindu organizations. Hindu women are joining the work force and confronting "feminist" issues from an Eastern point of view. They no longer tolerate unfair treatment, such as forced marriages, abuse by their husbands or economic disadvantage.

Update 2002

For many decades it was the male swamis



from India who were the most well-known exponents of Hinduism touring in the Western countries. However, recently it seems to be the women's turn, as Mata Amritanandamayi Devi and Karunamayi Bhagavati Sri Sri Sri Vijayeswari Devi are the ones in the headlines. Tens of thousands have attended their gatherings during world tours, and the media reception has been warm. When our founder addressed 1,200 world spiritual leaders at the UN in New York in 2000, Hinduism and the other Indian-born religions were the only ones to have their women leaders speak from that prestigious podium. The number of women priests has dramatically increased since 1989, and they've found acceptance from the general population. Based on traditions followed in Vedic times, women are being given the sacred thread ceremony, especially in and around Pune. Today it is somewhat easier for women to get justice when faced with domestic violence or dowry abuse. This is especially helped by numerous women's groups created to protect them from

violence. The media voice of women is also growing with magazines such as the outspoken Manushi, published by Madhu Kishwar. On the other side, the advent of working mothers is leaving children without the stable home life of past generations, and a small but telling increase in divorce among Hindus is adding to the instability.

## 5-Temple Decline to Temple Renovation

Ever since the last Hindu kings lost power, Hindu temples and our priesthood have deteriorated. Right now, we are rediscovering their intrinsic value and religious necessity. Not only are new temples being built in many places outside of India, old temples in India are being renovated and the problems of the

priesthood addressed. Likewise, other traditional family observances, e.g., samskaras, are being revitalized.

## Update 2002

The wealth among Hindu families living in the West has increased significantly in the 90s. It is even postulated that nonresident Indians outside of India earn more money than all the people in India. As a result, generous donations are being sent to Hindu institutions in India by Hindus and non-Hindus in the West. The impact of this flow of money back to India appears to be increasing, and may be one of the most important happenings of the next few decades. Many ashrams and temples have been renovated and are expanding and building new facilities

such as the temple in Neasden, England, Tirupati temple in India and Sabarimala where 50 million make their pilgrimage each year. So many temples in Malaysia are being renovated, often with government monetary support, that there is kumbhabhishekam, rededication ceremony, every two to three months. The renovations in India are more often in private institutions than in those overseen by a state government. State governments in India are tending to invest money in those temples which are popular, while neglecting the many smaller ones. Contrary to our expectations in 1989, the problems of the Hindu priesthood continue without resolution (see sidebar page 23).

## 6-From Introverted to Extroverted

Responding to internal pressure and outside threats, Hindus creatively reach out to help and serve others. Various forms of institutionalization and ministry reflect stronger Hindu social consciousness. Our introverted village awareness has extroverted, leading to aggressive (and occasionally violent) solutions to our challenges and difficulties.

## Update 2002

The massive response of Hindu groups to the January, 2001, earthquake in Gujarat proved the strength of this trend. In that disaster, Hindu religious organizations were second only to the Indian army in providing an immediate and effective response, eclipsing the Red Cross and other large relief groups. Later they were instrumental in both consoling survivors and rebuilding towns. In the spring of 2002 we saw

shocking Hindu riots in Gujarat State. Though currently a minority, certain groups crying "we've suffered enough in meekness," are aggressively condoning the use of violence in the name of Hindu pride and protection. Even the Prime Minister of India said he was "ashamed" of his fellow Hindus. Some defend the deadly riots as a justified reaction to the horrific Godhra massacre, while others question the wisdom of any such retaliatory violence. To the dismay of many

peace-loving Hindus, friends and neighbors are increasingly crying out, "We have taken enough and will endure no more suffering in silence." This vindictive attitude is growing, as outspoken Hindu aggressors call for revenge whenever Hindus are attacked. Hopefully, Mahatma Gandhi's peaceful ways will not be forgotten.

## 7-From Limited Toolsto



# Abundant Resources

Increased literacy in India and the need to teach Hinduism in multi-religious environments in other countries all lead to the development of sophisticated teaching tools—childrens' courses, Hindu schools and universities, academies for art, dance and music, Hindu encyclopedias, Sanskrit studies and more. Talented Western scholars provide

unexpected resources with unbiased and in-depth studies of Hinduism.

Update 2002

Hinduism is benefitting immensely from the Internet. Although India's phone network is still substandard, e-mail allows us to bypass the phone and fax era and have efficient and quality

communications globally. Many Hindu leaders and institutions in India have found they are able to communicate easily via e-mail with devotees worldwide. The Ramakrishna Mission, for example, stepped into the information age when its young monks inspired it to adopt e-mail communication between its globally distributed centers. Additionally, Internet websites provide ease of access to information on Hinduism, from

on-line dictionaries to real-time videos of temple events, easily located through the major search engines. Several Hindu encyclopedias have been published and there is a burgeoning demand for Indian books, multimedia CDs and websites. There are better teaching tools, but still not enough good material for children, for whom Indian comic books remain a primary and sorely

inadequate source of information on Hinduism. A new part of this trend is the movement for Hindus to claim the scholarship of Hinduism and Indian history, rather than allow it to remain in the hands of Western scholars and universities. Just one aspect of this trend is the attempt to rid textbooks of incorrect Eurocentric interpretations of Indian history, including the discredited "Aryan

Invasion" theory, which is the source of dozens, if not hundreds, of erroneous explanations and interpretations of Hindu beliefs and customs. Archeological discoveries are revealing that Indian spawned some of the highest cultures of the ancient world. Recently universities' and schools' have started offering courses in Sanskrit, Vedic astrology and temple ritual.

Religious television channels in India are a new phenomenon. Some programs are little better than the comic books, but others are bringing India's living saints and sages right into the living room. These shows are immensely popular, as the saints are giving talks on practical Hinduism and how it applies to daily life. Presentations of gifted, charismatic preachers, such as Morari

Bapu, are now broadcast all over India. Newspapers and magazines are now running regular articles on Hindu concepts in simple, easy-to-understand ways.

## 8-From Colony to Superpower

India is emerging as the



world's newest  
superpower. This  
augments Hinduism's  
newfound strength and  
unity, just as the  
material success of  
Western countries lent  
strength and authority to  
Christianity in the past.

Update 2002

The world's view of India, its national strength and rich heritage, continues to improve. India is now an acknowledged nuclear power. The new sensitivity the world has to terrorism, following recent disclosures that Pakistan is harboring terrorists while India is a victim of terrorism, has shifted world moral

support away from Pakistan and toward India. This has lead to more sympathetic and frequent Western news coverage of events in India which used to be totally ignored by the press. By extension, the Hindu faith is gaining respect in the Western press, examples being the supportive reports

on Mata

Amritanandamayi Devi in  
the New York Times and  
respectful articles about  
Satguru Sivaya  
Subramuniaswami's  
passing in the New York  
Times, the Los Angeles  
Times and the wire  
services.

9-Agricultural Era to

# Technological Era

Rapid technological advancement in Asia permanently transforms India and thus Hinduism. India's mastery of nuclear power, space and computers will bring

modern conveniences into even remote areas of India with unprecedented speed, bypassing some stages of development experienced in other parts of the world. The broadcasting of the Ramayana throughout India is

just one example of  
how this affects  
Hinduism.

Update 2002

The continuing  
increase of India's  
information

technology expertise and the global recognition of it are improving India's position in the world. The city of Bangalore alone has 1,000 software firms and 80,000 engineers. India exports <sup>us</sup>\$6.2 billion in software annually. Technology



in India is advancing at an accelerated pace due to a return of money and talent from abroad. There is a growing recognition of the need for appropriate technology, rather than energy- and resource-wasting methods. Thousands

of highly educated Hindus have returned to India, bringing with them their global technological expertise. For example, Dr. Anil Rajvanshi, engineer-inventor, left a successful career in America to return to India where he

focused on appropriate technology, developing an improved lantern and cycle rickshaw. The move from agricultural to technological is also a move out of villages into cities. Some of the consequences of

this on the family unit are that the extended family support of the village is no longer there, leaving husband, wife and children on their own as a nuclear family. The move into cities is creating a growing middle class whose knowledge of

Hinduism in some families is greater than their parents' and who in general stand apart from Hinduism's militant faction.

**10-Major Blows to**

# Fewer Setbacks

Sporadic  
abandonment of  
Hindu ideals  
causes localized  
setbacks, but  
nothing such as

we've suffered in  
the past. The  
occasional  
adoption of  
violence to  
achieve some  
ends is the most  
obvious  
compromise of our  
ideals. Other

negative trends  
include: the  
neglected  
religious  
education of  
children in the  
West (which has  
possibly caused  
the loss of an  
entire generation);



the failure to  
encompass the  
inevitable  
intermarriages  
outside Hinduism;  
and the tendency  
to give up the  
vegetarian ideal.  
External hazards

may continue  
along the lines of  
the failed attacks  
upon us by  
"anti-cult"  
movements and  
the worldwide  
confusion caused  
by non-Hindu

# Rajneesh.

# Update 2002

# The Hindu retaliatory

attacks upon  
Muslims in  
Gujarat are an  
alarming  
development,  
which brings into  
question the  
wisdom of  
provocatively

advocating the  
rebuilding of the  
Ram Temple in  
Ayodhya, which  
creates a volatile  
situation  
periodically  
erupting into  
significant

Hindu-Muslim  
clashes. For  
major setbacks,  
Kashmir can  
hardly be equaled  
it has become the  
biggest challenge  
of the last decade  
from an outside

military force,  
requiring the  
presence at the  
Pakistan border  
of nearly  
half-a-million  
Indian soldiers  
and raising the  
specter of nuclear

confrontation. Its resolution will surely be on our list of trends for the next decade, unless something unanticipated comes from the fallout of



# September 11.

A consequence of the Hindu diaspora is an increased number of Hindus marrying outside

their community,  
as subsequent  
generations  
become more  
and more  
identified with  
their new  
country.

Cross-cultural

marriages are more common among Hindu girls than boys. An unverified statistic we were given for the Houston, Texas, area is that

ninety percent of Hindu girls and fifty percent of Hindu boys marry a non-Hindu. The question then is will the non-Hindu spouse be accepted into the

Hindu community  
and be allowed to  
convert to  
Hinduism, or will  
the Hindu convert  
to the religion of  
the spouse, which  
leads to the  
Hindu

# community's disappearance into mainstream America?

In England, many  
parents get  
brides for their

sons from India,  
leaving fewer  
Hindu boys for  
the UK-born girls.  
There is,  
however, a trend  
for matches to be  
between Hindu  
boys and girls

born in the  
country. As in  
Houston, more  
girls than boys  
marry outside the  
Hindu  
community.



Religious education of children is improving in some locales around the world, Malaysia being a notable example, though in other

places the duty of passing our faith on to the children remains seriously neglected. Fortunately, the "cult" issue has declined as Indian Hindus have

established  
hundreds of  
traditional  
temples in the  
West. Also, the  
general mood of  
the non-Hindu  
population in the  
West has shifted

toward self-help  
and  
health-improvement  
interests and  
away from  
meditation, which  
is identified with  
Buddhism and  
Hinduism. The

exception is  
hatha yoga  
which, as a  
stand-alone  
practice divorced  
from religion, has  
increased in  
popularity.

For some communities language is a problem in educating youth. Hindu leaders in England noted that most youth can't understand

the lectures given  
by the priests  
because they  
only speak in  
high Hindi. This  
discourages  
youth from going  
to the temple as  
well as from

listening to  
lectures and  
learning the  
philosophy. This  
is less of a  
problem in the  
Tamil community,  
as most of their  
priests speak



# English.

One measure of  
how well the  
youth absorb  
Hindu values can  
be seen in the  
emergence of

old-folks' homes  
in England just  
for people from  
Southeast Asia.  
Aging parents are  
sent to such  
homes instead of  
living with their  
children, a break

in tradition.

Malaysian youth  
are characterized  
by at least one  
religious leader  
as more  
interested in

Western  
entertainment  
and ideas than in  
temples or  
Hinduism. He  
blames the trend  
on a lack of  
education on the  
basics of the

religion. Hindu  
leaders in  
England do see a  
religious revival  
among the youth  
in the last few  
years as a result  
of several major  
youth festivals

and Hindu youth groups. A very positive sign is the six UK-born young men who took sannyas, the lifetime vows of Hindu monasticism, in

# the BAPS Swaminarayan order of monks.

## Summary

Focusing on the megatrends of Hinduism gives us a good sense of how Hinduism will develop over the next decade. It also allows us to influence this



development by  
consciously  
taking advantage  
of the positive  
trends as well as  
focusing on  
finding and  
implementing  
solutions to the

major problems.  
We were told  
that, as an  
important part of  
each Kumbha  
Mela gathering,  
Hindu spiritual  
leaders, the  
swamis and

sadhus used to  
discuss such  
issues and  
present a  
consensus to  
guide the  
populace, but  
that this tradition  
of common

agreement,  
known as  
vyavastha, has  
waned. Perhaps it  
can be revived, or  
at least  
supplemented, by  
making such  
discussion a

central part of all  
Hindu  
symposiums and  
conferences. Your  
comments and  
suggestions on  
any of these  
trends is  
welcome. E-mail

them to  
[megatrends@hindu.org](mailto:megatrends@hindu.org).

# Nonviolence and Tolerance, Post 9/11

# Hinduism's Critical Strengths

## The trend for the western

world to draw  
on the spiritual  
practices of  
Hinduism such  
as hatha yoga  
and meditation  
has been  
significant for



many years.  
However, since  
September 11  
there is an  
increased  
interest in  
another aspect  
of Hinduism its

teachings of  
nonviolence  
and tolerance.  
One of the  
consequences  
of the  
September 11  
terrorist

attacks was  
media  
coverage  
depicting  
people in a  
number of  
countries who  
strongly hate

the United  
States, some to  
the point of  
wishing  
violence upon  
it. Watching  
these  
disturbing

reports on  
television, we  
cannot help  
but be  
impressed by  
the extent and  
seriousness of  
the problem of

prejudice.  
Attitudes of  
prejudice  
toward those  
of a different  
race, nation or  
religion can  
start simply as

distrust, can  
then deepen  
into dislike and  
further fester  
into hatred,  
which can turn  
into a  
compulsion to

inflict injury.

One measure  
of this  
strengthened  
interest in the



Hindu  
teachings of  
nonviolence is  
the work of the  
M.K. Gandhi  
Institute for  
Nonviolence  
founded by

Mahatma  
Gandhi's  
grandson, Dr.  
Arun Gandhi,  
and his wife  
Sunanda. Dr.  
Gandhi and his  
wife visited

Hawaii in  
March, 2002,  
as part of the  
Season for  
Peace and  
Nonviolence,  
and we were  
able to hear

them speak.

Dr. Gandhi

explained that

he and his wife

conceived the

idea of a

Season for

Peace and

Nonviolence as  
a way that  
every person  
can move the  
world in the  
direction of  
peace through  
daily choice

and action  
based on  
compassion.  
The Season  
was first held  
in 1998 to  
honor the 50th  
and 30th

memorial  
anniversaries  
of Mahatma  
Gandhi and Dr.  
Martin Luther  
King, Jr. Dr.  
Gandhi  
indicated that

the response  
was much  
greater than  
anticipated,  
that in fact 400  
major peace  
organizations,  
religious,



business, arts  
and learning  
institutions  
became official  
co-sponsors of  
the Season,  
which drew  
massive media

coverage,  
proclamations  
by half of all  
U.S. Governors,  
and spawned  
more than 300  
ongoing  
programs in

nonviolence in  
communities  
across the  
nation. What  
surprised Dr.  
Gandhi most  
was that  
interest in the

Season has continued, and the event has been held every year since. Another measure of the increased

interest in  
nonviolence is  
the high  
attendance at  
Dr. Gandhi's  
lectures, which  
are not free.  
Since

September 11,  
invitations to  
speak have  
increased  
significantly, to  
the point  
where he is  
regretfully

unable to fill  
many of them.  
He is just one  
of the  
hundreds of  
spokesmen  
and women  
spreading the

Hindu ideal of  
ahimsa,  
noninjury to  
others,  
whether by  
thought, word  
or deed.



There is a  
growing  
movement in  
India as well as  
in Hindu  
communities  
elsewhere  
against

corporal  
punishment of  
children. A few  
major  
institutions in  
India, including  
the  
Ramakrishna

Mission,  
Parmath  
Niketan,  
Omkaranda  
Ashram  
schools and  
Udayan Care  
orphanage,

have formally  
adopted  
policies  
banning  
physical  
punishment of  
children under  
their care.

Enforcement of  
the policy and  
education of  
teachers in  
alternative  
methods is not  
yet  
satisfactory,

but the  
momentum of  
a trend is  
there. Udayan  
Care requires  
their entire  
staff to sign a  
written

statement  
called the  
"Peaceful  
Parenting  
Pledge." This is  
a good  
example of  
nonhurtfulness

being taught,  
by example, to  
the next  
generation of  
Hindus. Such  
initiatives were  
encouraged by  
the landmark



judgment from  
the Delhi High  
Court striking  
down the  
provision for  
corporal  
punishment  
provided under

the Delhi  
School  
Education Act.  
The judge said  
it "violated the  
constitutional  
right  
guaranteeing

equality and  
protection of  
life and  
personal  
liberty." This  
precedent-setting  
ruling came  
in the wake of

a petition filed  
by the Parents  
Forum for  
Meaningful  
Education, an  
organization  
helped and  
guided by New

Delhi lawyer  
P.S. Sharda.

A Decline of  
Temple  
Priests

# Can We Reverse this Regression?

Overall, the

Hindu  
priesthood is  
in decline.  
Priests, both  
in India and  
in the West,  
are seriously

underpaid. In  
some  
temples this  
motivates  
priests to  
aggressively  
approach



devotees for  
money, often  
in a  
demanding  
and rude  
manner.  
Many

brahmins  
whose  
fathers or  
grandfathers  
were priests  
have chosen  
other

professions  
in which they  
can garner  
respect and  
earn a  
reasonable  
salary to

provide their  
family a  
decent  
standard of  
living.

The amount  
of Sanskrit  
study and  
priestly  
training  
undergone is  
much less

now than in  
the past. In  
some  
temples,  
pujas are  
being  
conducted in

local  
languages,  
such as  
Tamil, rather  
in than the  
traditional  
Sanskrit. In

some cases  
this is at the  
request of  
temple  
management  
or devotees  
and in others



because the  
priest  
received only  
a simple  
training, and  
that in the  
local

language.

Not being  
able to fully  
support

themselves  
as priests,  
some are  
taking on a  
second job,  
such as  
teaching at a

university.  
The temples  
they serve  
are  
neglected as  
a result. Our  
founder

advocated  
one solution  
to this  
decline, at  
least in the  
West:  
priest-owned

temples. A few priests have, in fact, started their own temples, including several in

Toronto,  
Canada. With  
a far greater  
say in the  
management  
of the  
temple,

these few  
priests are  
receiving the  
salary and  
the respect  
they deserve.  
In the West,



a minister or  
priest is  
regarded as  
a  
professional,  
receiving a  
salary equal

to a mid-level  
manager.

Entire clans  
of priests,  
such as the  
Sivachariyas  
of South

India, are  
exploring  
ways to open  
their own  
temples in  
the West.  
They know

that fine  
temples  
require  
skilled,  
knowledgeable,  
dedicated  
priests to run

them well  
and that  
well-run  
temples  
benefit and  
uplift entire  
communities.

The solution  
is much more  
complicated  
in India,  
where nearly  
all the  
temples are

run by the  
state  
governments  
. The temple  
manager is a  
government  
employee,

who may not  
even be  
religious.  
This  
unfortunate  
situation  
would have



to be  
changed by a  
shift in  
governmenta  
l policy. One  
hopeful trend  
is the

emergence  
of new  
schools,  
pathasalas,  
for priests in  
certain areas  
and a

general  
increase in  
support for  
established  
schools.

Another is  
that priests

at some  
small local  
temples in  
India are  
actually  
gaining  
respect and

being better  
taken care of  
by their  
community.  
On the other  
hand,  
complaints

continue  
about greedy  
priests at  
large  
temples and  
famous  
pilgrimage

sites.

Youth  
Religious  
Education

# How Kids Carry on the Faith

# Passing on



Hindu  
traditions to  
the younger  
generation  
has always  
been a duty

of parents.  
However,  
that duty is  
more  
difficult to  
fulfill in

today's  
world.

Television,  
the Internet  
and  
computer

games fill  
hours of  
many  
children's  
daily life,  
significantly

influencing  
their  
values,  
beliefs and  
attitudes.  
Some

children are  
growing up  
in  
communitie  
s where  
Hindus are

a small  
minority,  
and these  
children  
tend to take  
on the

interests of  
their  
non-Hindu  
peers.  
Parents are  
also faced



with an  
unprecedented  
number  
of questions  
about  
Hinduism.

The  
younger  
generation,  
especially  
those  
educated in

a Western  
style  
school, are  
taught to  
question  
and

challenge,  
"Why do we  
do this?"

Many of  
their  
parents

were raised  
in the  
Eastern  
education  
system in  
which

questions  
are  
discouraged  
. Therefore,  
when asked  
why this

and why  
that by  
their  
children,  
parents find  
themselves

ill-equipped  
to provide  
the  
answers.  
They never  
asked the



questions of  
their  
parents, so  
they simply  
do not  
know.

Clearly  
there is a  
heightened  
need to not  
only teach  
children the

basics of  
Hinduism  
but to do so  
in a  
practical  
way,

showing  
how their  
religion can  
benefit  
their life,  
bringing

greater  
peace of  
mind,  
harmony,  
self-control  
and

success.

There is a  
wide

disparity  
between  
what  
various  
Hindu  
institutions

offer to  
children.

Have you  
ever visited  
a Hindu  
temple and



found the  
adults  
inside  
attending  
puja while  
their

children are  
running  
around  
outside  
playing? In  
such a

situation,  
the children  
are  
obviously  
not learning  
much about

Hinduism.  
They have  
been  
brought to  
the temple  
by their

parents.  
When they  
are adults,  
how many  
will choose  
to attend?

Many  
temples  
were built  
by devout  
first-genera  
tion Indian

immigrants.  
Will the  
third  
generation,  
born in  
America,

still be  
devout  
Hindus?  
That is the  
question  
and the



challenge.  
On the  
positive  
side, there  
is a  
significant

growth in  
the number  
of Hindu  
summer  
camps  
worldwide,

which must  
be having a  
good  
influence.  
Wise  
temple

managers  
have even  
given  
serious  
responsibilit  
ies, such as

festival  
organizing,  
to their  
youth  
groups, and  
youth have

responded  
well to  
these  
grown-up  
challenges,  
becoming

more  
interested  
in Hinduism  
and  
engaged in  
the temple

as a result.  
Another  
positive  
sign was  
seen in  
March,



2002, when  
the Tamil  
Nadu state  
government  
began  
Sunday

spiritual  
classes in  
63 Hindu  
shrines in  
which  
children are

being  
taught  
sacred  
songs by  
the temple  
singers, and

scriptures  
by the  
priests.

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