

[Let's Strengthen Our Hindu Family](#)

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Let's Strengthen Our Hindu Family

Another swami has left his post. When we heard of the abdication of Sri Jayendra last week, our staff fell silent with sadness. Later we felt anger, disappointment, helplessness and a certain emptiness. On reflection, these feelings are probably familiar to anyone from a broken home. That's natural. Hinduism is our spiritual family, and when some of its members suffer, all of us suffer. And it's not just the recent problems in South India that bring about such deep feelings. Similar events have been happening elsewhere. Hindus need to look these difficulties in the face and find a way to regain some stability in the family.

Families, whether big or small, are the most basic human institution. They provide material security and support of member's emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs. They are sanctuaries in a tumultuous world, the transmitters of knowledge and culture and the guarantors of social orderliness. All the merits of a strong family on the microcosmic level apply equally to the macrocosm, to our immense family of 650 million Hindus. Sure, some of the family are black sheep and some are saints, but we're all family, good and bad alike.

Too many of our brothers and sisters are leaving the home these days. Consider just a partial listing of the separations reported in Hinduism Today lately: Jayendra, after 33 years, abandons his post in the middle of the night. Nityananda, Swami Muktananda's co-successor, leaves Siddha Yoga Dham. Swami Dayananda Saraswati deserts his guru, Swami Chinmayananda (who earlier in life left his guru), to start his own institution. Swami Pragyanaanda separates from the Gayatri Pariwar and forms his own mission. Kirtanananda is expelled from ISKCON.

As if that weren't enough, the Ramakrishna Mission, a worldwide order of 1400 saffron-robed monks, deserted the Sanatana Dharma enmass by asking a Calcutta court to decree their non-Hindu status. All of this happened in just the last three years! Add to that the general exodus of some of our best leaders, good souls like Swami Satchidananda, Mahesh Maharishi Yogi, Sai Baba and others who have left

the Hindu family to embrace a universalist, all-religions philosophy. Someone should have told them they didn't need to leave the Hindu family to be ecumenical, that Hinduism is in itself the perfect universal path, tolerant to a fault, encompassing the entire Creation. But no one told them, and they left the family. No wonder we're feeling a little wounded. Aren't you?

I know what you're thinking, and you're right. Self-recriminations are useless; what is needed is to take the lesson from life's experience, apply our hard-earned wisdom and go about the practical business of creating a great future for ourselves and our youth. With that in mind, some needs become obvious. We Hindus need in our relationships and institutions to rediscover old-fashioned values of loyalty, steadfastness and cooperation. We need disciples who stay with their guru through thick and thin. We need Hindu elders who stand tall and proudly proclaim their roots. We need neighbors who remain neighborly and friends who esteem the value of friendship.

Since we're making a shopping list, let's add that we need wealthy patrons who generously support their favorite groups. We need swamis who live exemplary lives and are more concerned for their followers' welfare than their own. We need lions like Vivekananda who love their faith and have the courage to defend it against all opposition. We need thoughtful men and women committed to the difficult intellectual enterprise of bringing our heritage into a technological era-people who have the wisdom to know what is baby and what is bath water. We need artists, writers and craftsmen who preserve the precious skills of our forebearers. And everywhere, in every nation, we need good examples which the youth can follow, examples who ratify our faith and don't later turn sour or turn coat.

A few Hindu elders we have talked with about the Jayendra story have basically let it be known that they're not much disturbed by it. Does it really matter? Of course, it matters. People are perplexed, lives are turned upside-down by these schisms. And it's not only the followers who are injured. Consider the anguish and disappointment of the 93-year-old Paramachariya, a kind, doe-eyed soul we met in South India several times. He gave his life to training Jayendra. He trusted and depended on Jayendra to carry forth the lineage, to hold tight to the teachings, to be loyal. The guru-disciple relationship is a deep, mystical one, with profound psychic bonds. Don't we think it matters to this venerable Hindu master that these bonds have been shattered? Sure we do, yet no one is standing up to say that Jayendra's actions are shameful and wrong. We think so. And we hereby stand up to say so.