Publisher's Desk
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Our article on child abuse in Malaysia is a sad one, but important. The whole world id reevaluating how we treat women, children, the aged and infirm. Ways of behaving toward our fellow human beings that were normal and acceptable 100 years ago an no longer acceptable. We now comprehend, as never before, the tragedy of a battered mother or an abused infant. Shamefully, we do not always live up to the Hindu ideal in these areas.

What is that ideal? It is this: Never injure others. Hindu children are always treated with great respect and awe, for one does not always know who they are. They may be incarnations of a grandmother, grandfather, aunt or uncle, dearly beloved mother, sister, brother, respected father, a yogi or rishi returned to flesh to help humankind spiritually. We must ask, "Who are these souls? What is their destiny to fulfill in this life? How can I help?"

Parents love their children, or at least they should, and the principles of non-violence and not-hurtfulness - physically, mentally, emotionally - do apply in the parent-child relationship. Children must be developed physically without being hurt in the process. Children must be nurtured emotionally without being hurt in the process. We know they are sometimes mischievous and can get on one's nerves, but the religious parents who have vowed ahimsa are in truth more mature than the children and are able to handle the situation without recourse to hitting. Only in this way can we bring children from one stage of physical, emotional, mental growth to another. To hurt a child is to drive him or her into fear and develop anger and resentment at an early age. Parents are supposed to lift them

into the higher nature, not drive them into the lower nature. Obedience through fear is not a desirable obedience. Conformity through threats does not build a loving family or a strong society. To anger a child at an early age is to place him on the path of retribution toward others later in life. Striking a child may seem expedient in the confusion of the moment. It may provide a short-term solution. But never forget the long-term price that we pay.

I have been asked, "should parents never spank a child?" Of course, one should never spank children, ever. Those who are spanked are taught to later punish their children, and this is a vicious cycle. Have you ever seen an animal beat its offspring? Has there been a case where a lion beat its cub, a bird beat a chick, a cow beat its calf, a whale beat its calf? How about a dolphin, a dog, a butterfly, a cat? It is only humans who become angered by their offspring.

The wife-husband relationship is where it all begins. They are responsible for the tenor of society that follows them. An himsa couple produces the protectors of the race. It's as simple as that. Beautiful children who see a husband beating his wife or a wife scratching the husband have at that moment been given permission to do the same. Those beautiful children who see their mother and father working out their differences in mature discussion or in the shrine room through prayer at that moment are given permission to do the same in their own life. They become the elite of society, the pillars of strength at the moment of stress. They will uphold dharma and will not succumb.

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