Swami Chinmayananda's US Visit
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In 1979 His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda came to the United States on a tour of the fledgling temple societies that were then embarking upon a long-term effort to build multi-million dollar citadels to the Sanatana Dharma. He saw much that inspired him during that visit, and a few things that dismayed him, too. In summary of his visit, he publically chided the recent Hindu immigrants from India by saying in a speech on "Retaining Indian Moral Values in the United States:" "At the altars of personal profit and success, we have every right to seek our fields of work, fulfillment and achievement. But what right have we to create a bastard generation out of our children, who are innocent?" The words "bastard generation" provoked some controversy, but they were cause for deep thought, too. Swami had observed the loss of culture in children being raised in the West, and saw rightly that this threatened the future of Hinduism in America.

Letters of shock, contempt and even personal abuse of the venerable Vedantin flooded in, challenging, "How dare he make such a remark? Why does he come here from India to criticize us?"

Swami and I met in Madras. He seemed pensive and was headed to an ashram in Dharmasala, he said, for seclusion and solitude. After minds cooled, more letters came to the editors desk, this time inquiring, "How could we have treated our swami that way?" "As much as we hate to say it, he was right." Swami Chinmayananda returned to America and encouraged the moms and dads to follow the path of dharma and correct their errant youth. Swamiji stirred quite a lot of soul-searching among families in the West, for this was the first time they had been

confronted with the reality of how their children were being raised.

In the aftermath of that experience, many changes took place in homes throughout North America. The lesson that was learned is that children respond well to correction, discipline, talking and explaining, and being treated like intelligent beings. Many parents these days are afraid of their children and dance around them as if they are things to be avoided. They bribe them with toys and sweets, bow before their every whim and appoint them, by default, the head of the house. Truly, children these days like to be told what to do and to have explained to them the reasons why.

The "Obey me because I said so" stance will not work anymore for the Western-educated child. Rather, "Obey me because this is what our family needs and wants you to do, because we want you to remain a member of this family, and these are the reasons why." This even a truant kid will accept, because he still needs to eat, he still wants a roof over his head, clothes to wear and in the future, maybe a paid-for education. Less obstinate children will do it because they love their family and know how to fit in when they are urged to and given clear directions and expectations. Yes, there are children in the Western world who do not throw temper tantrums at home, who are still nice to their elders and show appreciation for all that their parents have done for them.

Who are the mentors in the home, the kids or the parents? Children raised on bribery or raised in fear are truly the bastard generation because they will bribe others, subjugate others in fear of their wrath and unruly ways. Through Swami Chinmayananda's efforts and the efforts of twenty or thirty other swamis, numerous temples have come up in North America, and the generation he once criticized is now worshiping and assisting in the management of the temples that he nurtured into existence ten or fifteen years ago.

If you are ambivalent and insecure, your children will not listen to you. This may be embarrassing but none the less true. It is not necessary to let your children go headlong into Western ways. It is not necessary, or even helpful, to leave them alone to find their own values in life from the streets, from peers, from people more confused than they are. What is most helpful is for you to share with them the Eternal Path, with all of its values, all of its insight into humanness and Divinity. What is most helpful is for you to spend lots of time with children. Many parents these days minimize the hours they spend with kids, and don't even have

conversations anymore. Just hello and good bye and why did you get a C on your report card? Kids need more. More of you. More of your time. More direction and guidance. Don't be afraid to give it to them. Teach them traditional values at an early age. Don't be afraid that they will be different than the other children. They are already different. They are Hindus, inheritors of India's fountainhead of mystery and Truth.

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