

[Hindu Megatrends](#)

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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.

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 ^{us}\$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.

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-generation
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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