

[One God, One World, One Wonders](#)

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Our publisher tells the story of his meeting long ago with American millionaire Clement Stone (in the days when a million dollars was considered real money). Mr. Stone had been invited to a high school graduation ceremony to offer a businessman's insights, gained through hard experience, on how these young adults might succeed in the life that lay before them. They sat impatiently, resigned to endure the usual valedictory gruel. Instead, after an interminable silence. Stone slowly intoned, "Think. Think. Think." Pausing at length to look meaningfully into their puzzled faces, he repeated, "Think. Think. Think." Again and again, for a full ten minutes, with all the dramatic presence he could muster, this self-made man drove that one word as deeply as he could into those soft minds, then turned and left. To this day his is the only speech given that afternoon which they remember by heart.

Most of us are never really taught to think. Not formally. We pick it up here and there as best we can. If destiny smiles, we may enjoy among our elders or teachers examples of cogent cognition, of mindful mentation, and through some curious osmotic process come to deploy it a bit ourselves. The terrible truth is that good thinking (and by this I mean something less than brilliant ratiocination and something more than mere musing) is as rare as a tilak on an athiest's brow.

I say "terrible truth" because it is by thinking that humanity has gotten itself in today's predicament - thinking driven by intention and fulfilled by will. Emerson put it. "The ancestor of every action is a thought." Clearly, to improve our actions and thereby our global destiny, we must work not on action which is the symptom but on thought which is the cause. It is the venerable Hindu emphasis on the three karanas: thought, word and deed.

What catalyzed this meditation on thought was our research and work over the years on the wonderful four-page color poster that graces this month's paper - "Truth is One, Paths Are Many." As we reach out in this effort to educate people in all religions of their brothers and sisters in other faiths and on other paths (or on no particular path at all), we are hopeful that such knowledge will lead to tolerance and real understanding. But we are also painfully aware that not everyone holds our One God/One World ideal. There are those who look upon the Sanatana Dharma with disdain or worse. There are men and women in our community, and no doubt in yours, who would just as soon Hinduism would disappear, and who are working diligently at conversion strategies which might make that wish come true. Their purposive belittling of dharma makes our hearts go out to all who must daily confront that leave-your-path-and-follow-mine mind set.

Conversion is a big topic in most Hindu communities. What may surprise most Hindus is that it is also a big topic in Islamic communities, and Jewish communities, and Buddhist communities and Christian communities. Each of these value their traditional ways, their unique customs, language and belief and instinctively resist any force which would threaten the continuity. Hindus tend to look upon conversion issues as between themselves and the Semitic faiths. But people are beginning to realize that it's a matter for us all. For Hindus it is equally between ourselves and ourselves. As tiresome as the phrase may be, we must take responsibility for our own conditions. It's not just that the Christians are after the Hindus, Buddhists and animists. It's that man is after himself.

Witness the fact that Catholics and Protestant evangelicals are locked in battle in Latin America where recent conversions away from Catholicism have changed the religious landscape as radically as the slash-and-burn tactics have altered the rainforests. John Keane, of the San Francisco Archdiocese, told our editors that fundamentalists are going around "calling Catholics the whore of Babylon," Many Catholics are leaving to join the ascendant fundamentalists and new religious movements because they provide "human warmth, care and support in close-knit communities." The old thinking in the West was to civilize the savages and bring them to Christ. The old thinking in the East was to ignore or wear the white man down, send him back where he belonged. The new thinking must be inclusive and non-parochial, derived from or at least containing the ancient Vedic concept of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, a one world, a one human family.

An analogy can be found in a growing awareness about environment and the five or ten billion living species we share this little world with. The old thinking was that we, the dominant life form, could do anything with impunity - kill, clear, dump,

whatever. Now we see that by hurting others we hurt ourselves. Life without clear rivers, without green forests, without blue skies, without soaring eagles and chubby pandas is a diminished life.

It seems our species values things only when they are rare or threatened. Just look at the proliferation of animal rights and protection groups, and their environmental counterparts. We have been watching whales play near the shores of our little island all month, an annual part of their migration from Alaska and mating near our islands. When there is only a handful of whales left, we come to our senses and appreciate whales as never before, and know we would lament their loss and deprive future generations of something special. I propose in this same spirit that we embark on a new movement to protect culture, language, religion and custom in all its diversity and richness. A few existing enclaves notwithstanding, we as a race have conspired to lose virtually all of the native Hawaiian and Polynesian cultures, and that in a way remarkably akin to the decimation of the African elephant. How diminished our life will be if we allow further losses. Mankind needs to learn that diversity is a good thing, that we need not change the entire world to be like us, and in fact if we ever do we ourselves and our descendants will be reduced. The wealth of human culture and belief are no less precious than our animal friends or plant resources. How can we explain this to those who feel themselves divinely called to the task of destroying what others cherish?

One way is to make it undesirable for them, just as animal rights activists are making it painful to abuse caged laboratory creatures, or just as not so many years ago the image of slave owner shifted from gentile patriarch to inhuman tyrant. That required a catastrophic change in thinking - first for the slave, next for the man in the street and lastly, and reluctantly for the master himself. Another way is to make it financially unrewarding, as those who seek to stop animal slaughter are making it unchic, even gross, to wear a \$50,000 fur coat. Such a strategy is not yet adequately defined but promises swill results. A third way is to be more outspoken. Hindus are one-sixth of the human race. It is our work to communicate our dharma and spirituality to other religionists with patience and conviction. We can no more wait for them to come to right conclusions than slaves could wait for their master to discover his common humanity with them.

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