Delinquent Parents
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MY TURN

Delinquent Parents

Wake up! My children may be the last Hindus

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India's unparalled beauty, its snow-capped Himalayan peaks and the unspoiled sandy beaches of Lakshadweep attract thousands of smiling strangers each year. Here Sri Krishna uttered the immortal message of Bhagavad Gita to Arjun, and countless yogis spread it across lands as distant as Java and Saudi Arabia. Our forefathers built wondrous works of sacred architecture and developed the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. From India arose the decimal system, polo, chess, astrology, ayurveda and surgery. However, as the centuries passed, our treasures were looted. Our ancient and thriving cities were pillaged and burned to the ground and our people left crippled with horror.

Yet, India has survived it all and now stands as a free country on the threshold of the twenty-first century, facing the challenges of being the world's largest democracy. However, while India thrusts forward as one the globe's most rapidly developing countries, we seem to flee from our past. For some, being Indian is more a vice than a virtue. The mere thought of

being called "Indian" seems to shroud us with shame and fear of association with "backward" kinsman. We run to escape, raising our children in this atmosphere of contempt for our motherland.

And the result of this is my generation, Generation X, described as clouded in a haze of drugs and violence, addicted to the computer keyboard and the Internet. But I see it as one wherein our history, loyalty and pride are in danger of being lost forever. We are the least in touch with our motherland, but not at all ashamed of this. We pride ourselves on being called ABCD's (American-Born Confused Desis). We enter prestigious Ivy League colleges, chasing after the dream of six-figure salaries and networking with the corporate elite, while ignoring our community and the plight of our people and our motherland. At college, I see other students of the same ethnicity, Chinese, Black Africans, bonding closely, while my countrymen are scattered in fragments. We are proud of our non-Indian friends, not catching even a glimpse of those who are of our own descent. Though our culture is richly adorned with festivals and traditions, Indian clubs know nothing but hosting parties. But when it comes to joining Hindu organizations, we simply walk the other way, sometimes laughing as we pass by. A sparse group of parents go to temple, while my peers are at home. Why so? "Oh, they have to study. The temple is always there. Maybe they will come next week." Unfortunately, that week never comes. These are the same peers that scoff at Indian culture and festivals and have a shallow conception of Indian history. Asked why, they reply, "My parents never explained it to me. If they don't think it's important, why should I? Join the Hindu Students Council? Isn't that a religious organization? Why do, we need that? Sorry, but I have better things to do and I don't want to be

called a fanatic!" These temples could eventually become nothing but exhibitions, with vacant halls hosting Deities and one senior priest left to carry out the last strand of culture that links us with our motherland.

Our parents raise us with 1600 SAT scores, not the values of the Vedas. They delight in grasping anything American and letting go of everything Indian. They have forsaken the responsibility of handing over our rich and ancient heritage to grasp one that is merely a few hundred years old. Our festivals have become only social gatherings, not a time of remembrance or prayer. My generation is left with only a few wispy statements of a country and tradition that have become alien to us. If this trend continues, my generation may be the last one that can pass on the legacy of our forefathers, for not only the next, but also ultimately the world. The vision of a vibrant and united community may be lost forever.

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