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Letters

Contending Texts

I read with interest your article on "Better Discipline" [child rearing, July '98]. It is unfortunate that Manu Dharma Shastra endorses corporal punishment. This flies in the face of Sanatana Dharma's basic tenet of ahimsa [nonviolence] in words, thoughts and deeds. Anytime there is a conflict between smriti [secondary scriptures] and sruti [revealed scriptures: Vedas], the teaching of sruti takes precedence over that of smriti, for smritis are meant to elaborate on srutis without contradicting them. Therefore, ahimsa, taught in the Upanishads, part of the sruti, supercedes the references of corporal punishment in Manu Dharma Shastra, which is a smriti.

Abusing a child verbally, physically or emotionally only teaches a child that violence is an acceptable solution to problems. Thus, there is a good chance that the child will grow up to be a bullying, abusive and contankerous adult, perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Pradeep K. Srivastava
Detroit, Michigan, USA

Gold Medal for Humor

I was browsing through your (extremely impressive) site yesterday and came across the April, 1998, editorial on the

YAK competition at the Nagano Winter Olympics. I was so inspired by the achievements of these spiritual athletes that as I read, I began to experience spontaneous kriyas, consisting of bursts of bellows breathing accompanied by involuntary vocalizations of the sacred seed-syllable "Ha!" When I was through reading and had wiped my eyes, I felt purified, uplifted and thoroughly refreshed (although my stomach muscles were a bit sore). Many thanks!

Judy Stein

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Genuine Awakenings? No Way!

In 1988 we "debated" the way Kundalini should be presented "to the world." Bonnie Greenwell, Ph.D., and others who are now officers of the Kundalini Research Network, wanted to turn Kundalini into a psychological problem that they could solve rather than the mechanism responsible for illumination, etc. The psychologists are eager for clients, and as one of my colleagues told me after attending one of the KRN Conferences, "All they wanted to talk about was third-party payments," which had to do with collecting their fees from Medicare, etc. All in all, your article "Kundalini's Rise and Fall" [parapsychology, July '98] is correct. How can anyone, especially a Ph.D., make such a ridiculous statement that there are at least "1,000 genuine Kundalini awakenings?" I would wager that if one were to query every ashram in India, there wouldn't be even one hundred genuine awakenings in all of India. But in California, yes, there may be as many as 10,000. It all depends on what you mean by "genuine."

Gene Kieffer, President

The Kundalini Research Foundation, Ltd.

Stamford, Connecticut

Divine Dreams

Thank you very much, Hinduism Today, for your wonderful web site and for the education you provide. I was not born to a Hindu family, but from 13 years of age I received informal education in Vedic literature and also exposure to yoga. I did not understand how rare that is in my country. Unfortunately, there is a great ignorance in the USA concerning Hinduism. It is quite sad. Recently I had a bad dream concerning a future event which may occur to a sister, and I woke up very upset. I read several of your articles about God and the Gods of Hinduism, and I asked Lord Siva for help. I felt so blessed when I later saw Siva in a temple in a dream. The Lord gave me two nods of the head and a gold coin. I do not know what they symbolize, but I have felt much more peace and love in my heart since then. I cannot thank you enough for your openness and offering to the rest of the world. You are truly wonderful spiritual guides.

Karen Beth Champion,
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A Shower of Blessings

At the Kumbha Mela I had an unusual experience while standing in a queue for my turn to take a holy dip in the Ganges. One young sadhu came to me all of a sudden requesting me to take a holy dip on his behalf. I was very curious to know the cause of his request. Looking at my face, the sadhu felt my pulse and replied to me that taking a holy dip on his behalf would wash away his misdeeds towards common men like me.

S. Ranjan
New Delhi, India

Raging Bullies

Thank you for your very moving and informative articles on corporal punishment. Years ago I attended a yoga group whose guru behaved violently as you describe. Although I left this group, I have never been able to resolve the issue of how a shaktipat-bestowing swami could also fly into a rage and beat devotees with whatever was handy. We were told that the ways of great beings are mysterious, and that being beaten by them is a blessing. Thanks to your articles, I now have the understanding that my former guru's behavior may have had more to do with personal upbringing than the attainment of any higher state of being.

Lynda McClanahan
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Hindu Christmas in Canada?

Finding an alternative to christmas celebrations (Publisher's Desk, Dec. 97) for Hindus in Western countries certainly has value in giving children an opportunity to celebrate within the context of their own religion. However, I was born and brought up in Canada and have always celebrated Christmas with my family. I fail to see how this has made me a "diluted Hindu." For me, Christmas has great spiritual meaning, and the context being Christian has very little impact in my self definition as a Hindu. Christmas day, though it included presents and the tree, always started with prayers in our family prayer room in front of Siva, Parvati, Murugan and Pillaiyar. I continue to be a Hindu despite the lack of an organized Hindu community where I currently live. Learning and practicing our culture and religion is a valuable part of who we are and something I take very seriously, but mass migration of Hindus has necessarily meant the modification of our practice.

Kothai Kumanan
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Every non-Christian religion in the West has had to cope with the gift-giving season of Christmas--itself a practice adopted from faiths preceding Christianity. Your family evolved a Hinduized expression of Christmas. The Pancha Ganapati celebration described in Publisher's Desk [Dec. '97] goes a step further and creates a completely Hindu holiday, for there is a real danger of this celebration inadvertently nudging our children toward Christian thinking. Concerned parents have reported to us how their children became "indistinguishable from other Canadians" because the family did not maintain clearly Hindu religious practices in their home celebrations.

Letters, with writer's name, address and daytime phone number, should be sent to:

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