TV Staffers Briefed About Hinduism
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Peruman, Ravi Hindu though has changed my life," the young, smiling, vegetarian broadcaster said, "I noticed there has been no press about Hinduism, so this was my way of giving something back, by sharing Hinduism with my colleagues and hopefully by them sharing it with their viewers and listeners." This profound perspective, so vital to the future of Hinduism in America, is that of Noreen Cooper, Community, Affairs Director for KQED-TV, Channel 9, the Public Broadcasting Service affiliate in San Francisco, California.

On august 11, KQED hosted the quarterly Ascertainment Meeting of the Northern California Broadcasters Association, a gathering designed to bring together broadcasters and the public they serve. Cooper, who practices yoga and meditates for an hour each day, knew right away she wanted someone from the Hindu community to express the viewpoint and concerns of this growing yet under-represented group.

After a few phone calls to test the waters of Hindu organizations in the Bay Area, she was directed to me (a radio newsman in the Bay Area) for the job of speaking about the Hindu community. In turn, I enlisted the aid of two other Hindu family men, Nathan Peruman and Shan Nanthakumar. The three came to the ascertainment meeting well scripted with facts and well armed with press kits.

Shan Nanthakumar addressed the issue of being a practicing Hindu in a American corporate "good old boys network" (a group of close-knit executive who run a company). He experienced one at his company job in Texas shortly after arriving from Sri Lanka. "As a Hindu I don't drink, I don't eat meat, and Friday is my holy day. Their forum for making points in the corporate environment was a barbecue and beer bust on a Friday afternoon. It wasn't easy to handle."

This writer had two major aims. The first was to show that Hinduism is a gentle, compassionate and enlightened religion of 700 million souls. It's definitely not to stereotypical image portrayed on TV of flower-toting, pan-handling cultists, skin and bone ascetics that all look like Gandhi, or the goat-slaughtering heathens some Christian TV shows would have people believe. The second was to ask for unbiased and educated coverage of one of the world's great and beautiful religions.

One concept of interest was that of arranged marriages. Shan Nanthakumar shared his experience in Sri Lanka of being paired with his wife and married within days of their meeting. He said that he couldn't love her more and they now have to beautiful children.

"Three broadcasters made a special effort after the presentation to tell me they liked what they heard," said Nathan Peruman, who took pictures and notes during the presentation. "Their interest when beyond just a broadcaster's assignment to find out what the issues are, it was on a personal level."

With this kind of interest being shown by bright young broadcasters, look for more and better coverage of Hinduism to be forthcoming from the public broadcasting stations.

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