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Many readers have written recently to say that they love the teachings they find in our Hindu Family Newspaper as much as the news they receive each month. They (perhaps it was you?) made many suggestions for us, including stories on major temples in India, descriptions and explanations of sacred symbols so children can better understand the meanings behind things, and more. They want practical things that really help them to live better Hindu lives, with more understanding, less confusion and fewer "old wives' tales."

What that in mind, our staff has been working harder than usual this month to prepare the center section on "Death & Dying: A Hindu Point of View." We did this in response to your letters and because it is very hard to find anything about how Hindus look at and confront their own death and that of loved ones. How should we look at this all-too-human experience"? Should we fear it? What do we do during the moments that grandma is leaving her body? What mantras can we use to ease and sanctify her transition? What happens during cremation and in the months that follow? All this you will find in April's special center section. We hope it fills the need and helps Hindus everywhere to follow the ancient dharma as it relates to death.

Thinking about individuals death makes us also remember that the earth is dying in many ways, too. It will never really die, because it has many ways of adapting, including seeing that we humans are evicted if we pose too great a threat to the Whole. Many people look at the worsening human predicament - at the terrible threats of war, hunger, environmental degradation, poverty, imperfect human

rights and population explosion - as though this were a material problem to be solved by more money, more technology, more "things."

Solutions to our shared plight lie not in a more advanced technology (though this must be one component), but in a renewed spirituality. It is clear to me that peace and human well-being in the 21st century must be based not on what we have, but on who we are, on the eternal spiritual truths. For this to happen there must be a massive change of attitude, belief and practice. It is precisely in this endeavor of man's seeking to comprehend himself and his place in the universe that Hinduism has so many wonderful contributions to make. The Sanatana Dharma, once undervalued by Hindus themselves, is now emerging in international councils as the wisdom which can inform an emerging global consciousness and world peace. This is already happening, as I recently experienced in Moscow and which you read about last month.

The precepts which can do this are known to every Hindu: 1) the existence of God as an all-pervasive creative energy, 2) karma - which generally means the forces we send out through thought, word and deed returning to us, 3) the principle of reincarnation, and 4.) dharma which includes humility, simplicity, yoga's personal introspective path and ahimsa or non-injury to others. This is the essence of Sanatana Dharma, in which Hindus base their allegiance to the four Vedas as their supreme scripture.

I was asked in Russia by some young students, "What can Hinduism offer in contributing to world peace?" I explained that Hinduism can offer a unified vision of man an mature in which there is reverence, not dominion or carelessness. Mother Earth, sustainer of life, is a key Vedic idea. Respect for earth, for life in its many forms, is found in the American Indian nations, in the Hawaiian religion and the African tribes. It was lost by many in recent centuries, but now its depth is discovered again.

While the family is suffering a lot in many parts of the world, it is still very strong in Hindu society. We have to keep it that way, and teach the world by our example that it is the family that nurtures the individual and stabilizes the nation. Only by keeping a strong sense of family can humankind hope for a secure future.

Hope you enjoy this issue and that you will keep writing to us.

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