

[Nintendo Can Be A Religious Learning Toy](#)

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I beg to differ with your publisher, H.H. Subramaniaswami, when he characterizes Nintendo as an asuric device. We have the super Nintendo at home, and I have found Super Mario Brothers an invaluable aid to explaining many philosophical concepts to my young daughter and also in helping her picture many incidents from our scriptures and epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata. The game has stunning graphics and a compelling story line and therefore it has a very powerful impact. With a little care this impact can be made a very beneficent one. Here are some of the many valuable lessons that can be learned from this "toy:" 1) Mario is beset by dozens of enemies from the wimps and the womps to Koopas and Boo-buddies. Even so are we assaulted by dozens of undesirable influence and pernicious thoughts which appear as if from nowhere and lay us low. Like Mario's enemies, they, too, are multi-colored in appearance and varied in nature. Eternal vigilance is necessary to guard against these. 2) When Mario receives a star, his body twinkles and he becomes invulnerable for a time. Enemies are brushed off and he makes rapid progress. Some boards cannot be cleared without this "boon." Even so does taking the name of the Lord, and being aware of His presence, protect us and cloak us with invulnerability. This effect, too, wears off and must be renewed by constantly "practicing the Presence." 3) When Mario tries to run from the big boo-buddy, it chases him; but when he turns to confront it, it goes to sleep and can be bypassed. Even so do our problems become more threatening when we try to run from them. They can be easily handled if we meet them courageously and face them down. 4) When Mario receives a feather, he becomes super Mario and has many new powers such as the ability to fly. Even so was Hanuman, taking the name of Lord Rama, able to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. Both Mario and Hanuman meet many strange enemies. 5) Events on one board have an inexplicable effect on those of another. For example, when Mario throws the switch in the Green Switch Palace a staircase opens up in Donut Plains 1. When he negotiates the Red Switch Palace, a secret way opens up to the Star World via Vanilla Dome 1. Even so do our actions and the thoughts have real repercussions elsewhere. By controlling the former, we can influence the latter. 6) Many boards are almost impossible to negotiate until Mario discovers the "secret" pipe, tunnel or other shortcut. Then they become almost ridiculously easy. Even so can the Grace

of God help us blast through the most insurmountable obstacles when we learn to tap into it. 7) Mario returns to the secret world to gain extra lives and to power up. Even so do meditation and reflection enable us to "charge up our batteries" depleted by the world outside. 8) Mario liberates Yoshi who then helps him in many ways in his quest. Rama empowered Sugreeva who then helped him with his quest also in many ways.

There are literally scores of examples and parallels that we have discovered. The time my daughter and I spend playing Nintendo together is a precious one and it has brought us closer together. Though it springs from an alien culture, Nintendo has been very helpful in illustrating and reinforcing our own spiritual heritage. We live in a foreign and sometimes hostile environment.

Most immigrants like my wife and myself already had a bedrock value system before we came to this country. Our children, born and bred here, do not have this advantage. Powerful cultural influences like Nintendo cannot be kept away from them. Let us learn to use the intensity of these influences for our own purposes even as the judo master uses the momentum of his opponent to unseat him.

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