

Train up a Child Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it.



The education of a child in the East is quite different from that of a Western child. When the child is a baby, he is "salted and swaddled", the ancient rite of dedication for newborn children. A Hindu mother often says to the child, "You were salted to pray seven times a day; you were swaddled not to be crooked." These mothers truly believe the saying,

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

At the age of five, some Hindu boys are taken to the temple for dedication to God, according to their caste. The ceremony includes piercing the lobe of the ear with a hot needle; the child is now "earmarked" to serve God in the role to which his caste is assigned by tradition.

Now the boy is given to the grandfather of the family for religious training. The grandfather acts as the family priest and part of his duties are to teach the young children. Each night another grandson and I went to bed with Grandfather, one on each side, and we were taught before we went to sleep. The next morning when we woke up, about five o'clock, we were required to repeat the lesson. There was a cane on Grandfather's pillow for use in case we did not remember the lesson (I remember the cane VERY well).

This custom of teaching children in bed is mentioned in Luke 11:7, when the friend comes at midnight asking the loan of three loaves for the unexpected guest, and the man says,

Luke 11:7

Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

After the lessons, Grandfather bathed us, and as we washed, we sang a song from the Vedas which entreats God to wash away our sins while we are washing the body. Next we sat cross-legged on the carpet, said our prayers, and had breakfast.

The grandfather also accompanies the Hindu children to school, watching carefully that they do not misbehave along the way. In India, any adult may correct or punish any child in the street who is misbehaving. In fact, the parents will come and thank the person who does so.

From kindergarten through the third grade, Hindu children sit on the sand to learn their lessons. The teacher sits on a chair so that the children truly "sit at the feet" of the teacher. The purpose is to teach humility and to begin to show the child how to write the word "God" (Dev or Deva) in the sand with his finger. This is the centuries-old method of contemplation and waiting upon God. Judges and elders always used this device while praying and asking for divine guidance. In the Bible we find Jesus doing this when confronted with the case of the woman who was taken in adultery (John 8:6-8). His perfect answer, gained while waiting upon God and writing in the sand with his finger: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

Children are also taught to revere the teacher, along with the priest, as being akin to God. When the teacher comes to the home of a pupil, his feet are washed, and he is given the best chair and the best food is served him. A tray of fruit and flowers is prepared and offered to his hand as he leaves, and an envelope with a gift of money is put at his feet. The meaning of this is, the wealth of the earth is suitable to give to his hand, but filthy lucre is only fit to be laid at his feet. This custom is mentioned in Chapter 4 of The Acts, verses 34 and 35: ". . . As many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid *them* down at the apostles' feet :..."

Age twelve is another significant time for the Hindu child. At this age he is initiated into sacred rites at the temple. The priest puts a mantle over the boy's head and whispers a special prayer. Hindus believe that they are "twice born" at this time, but it is not the same type of experience which Christians have when they receive salvation. At the age of twelve, some Hindu children are so well versed in their religion that they are able to intelligently discuss it with others, and even teach others. The Bible tells of Jesus doing this.

It is at age twelve that Hindu children begin the practice of Yoga, or union with God. They fast and pray, and look within to find God. They believe that the kingdom of God is within them. Breathing exercises are used; life or prana is breathed in through one nostril and evil things are breathed out the other nostril. These techniques are designed to keep the mind from wandering during periods of prayer.

This is the sort of training which I received as a Hindu boy in India. As a religion, Hinduism is probably as good as any and better than most. After all this wonderful training, I was still not at peace with myself. I was spiritually bankrupt; I had no peace in my soul. All of my religion was outward action and my faith was pinned to works.

Jesus Christ came into the world at a time when three powerful religions were available to the worshiper: Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. If religion had been enough, God would not have sent His only begotten son to us. Jesus did not say, "I have come to give you another religion!" He said, "I am come that ye might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10). Christ is the Truth and the Life, and the truth will set us free. "Religion" never set anyone free; only Christ is able, and him crucified. God bless you.

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