

Trip provides personal encounter with Hindus

Memorizing and performing a traditional Indian dance was the task at hand, and he was struggling.

Surely he could find a detailed set of instructions in a library book to learn the steps. Better yet, perhaps a video from the media library could come to his assistance.

Or, he could turn to the sari-adorned woman next to him who was tapping him on the shoulder.

"Like this," she said, slowing down her steps. Concentrating on her bare feet, he followed her lead, speeding up bit by bit until they fell into sync with the rest of the twirling, jumping and clapping gym. The throng consisted of 600 Hindus and the 22 members of associate professor of religion Lloyd Pflueger's Hindu Tradition class.

To land in this vibrant, refreshingly three-dimensional setting, the class had taken a field trip (who says that phrase has to die with sixth-grade graduation?) to Chicago for the weekend. Here they toured temples both grand and modest, wove through markets in Little India and slept in the homes of Hindu families.

These families – along with a variety of other people the students met during the course of the weekend – helped signify a turning point in the class's understanding of the religion. Ink and paper gave way to flesh. Lecture took a backseat to experience. Shrines came to life.

There were the monks chanting in



Katie Gilbert

the Swaminarayan temple, the people praying before shrines. There was the guide who enthusiastically confirmed that an Indian not only had mastered alchemy, but also had been the first to fly an airplane (granted, it was an invisible plane) eight years before the Wright Brothers.

There was the white priest in the Hare Krishna temple whose eyes crackled with electricity as he related his habit of entering a bar and silencing it with his shouted query.

"What is the greatest thing in the world?" he'd yell. "Love! What is the greatest love? God's love!"

Hecklers only would energize him. After all, what he sought was contact with his community.

There was the woman with her sullen adolescent son in tow who approached two of the students after their zealous dancing in the gym.

"You guys are doing so well," she said. "I was just telling my son I wish he

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could embrace it like you guys have.”

The students already had read and been tested over portions of the Rig Veda, the most ancient of the sacred Hindu texts, before their trip to Chicago. But after the chants of the monks produced goose bumps on their skin, hours of dancing traditional dances left blisters on their feet, and talking to the believers face-to-face meant fostered connections, students likely will approach the Rig Veda as something different altogether – as something alive.

"Truth is one – but the wise call it by many names," the Rig Veda reads. During their trip to Chicago, students did more than memorize these names. They were introduced to them, shook their hands and introduced themselves right back.

Katie Gilbert is a senior psychology major from Lenexa, Kan.

Final thought: Readers should learn to prioritize their goals

What do you really want?

In my final column to grace the pages of the Index, I thought I would share my life philosophy with all of you. It all boils down to one statement: Do you want something badly enough? Do you want it enough to fight for it? Do you want it badly enough to work for it? Do you want it badly enough to worry about it? Do you want it badly enough to sacrifice other things for it?

In a way, it doesn't matter what "it" is. It could be anything from good grades to finding someone to settle down with, but the common denominator is having passion and a drive for your goal. Too many people complain that work is too hard, studying takes away from other activities, or they can't find just the right person to get serious with. In reality, they don't want the object of their complaining badly enough. They don't want it enough to risk being hurt or to risk failure.

That means it is often easier to hide behind excuses and rationalizations rather than admit the truth. Something is not possible because you have not made it a priority to make it so. And I am not talking about the impossible, such as running a marathon on two broken legs or planting trees that can grow money. Obviously, the world is full of natural laws, legal constructs and social norms that sometimes constrain the way we behave and the choices we have.

And so I never would expect some-



Katie Stuart

one who is permanently paralyzed to will himself or herself to walk or a cancer patient simply to follow a doctor's prescription and be guaranteed a cure. Fate has a hand in things, too, and it would be foolhardy to ignore such occurrences.

However, too often we are willing to blame our problems on things outside our control rather than analyzing our own hand in the matter. So the question must be asked of all major decisions: Do you want it badly enough? You cannot want everything with an equal intensity: Some things must take priority over the others (especially different things at different times of your life), and a lot of time an excuse is just that – an excuse. We often find it easier to complain than to do the hard work that it takes to make changes. All of us are guilty of this. I have complained about everything from ex-boyfriends to difficult professors. It is natural to vent

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feelings of frustration. But in the long run, we must question if we are constantly complaining about something in our life, what can we do to change it? Or, what are we doing to contribute to the problem? Or, why are we sticking to something in life that makes us so unhappy?

Life is a set of choices, including the choice of ranking priorities and then going after the priorities that matter most. Although some things are out of our control, it is important to work with the many things that are and go after what you want. To me, it seems to be a very positive way of looking at life. It means you shape your life into what you want instead of letting it shape you.

Now, what do you want badly enough?

Katie Stuart is a senior business administration major from Maryland Heights, Mo.

Tenants' peace of mind should be more important to landlords

If you plan to live on campus for the rest of your college life, don't bother to read this.

If you plan to move off campus soon, be sure to add another clause to your housing contract.

I have been living in this nice big house since August, and I am unhappy.

I chose the house because it is big and spacious, and my room is the size of my last two rooms combined. I was happy that I could throw my clothes and books where I pleased without having to worry about whether or not I was stepping on them on my way out to school.

It was the perfect house. It still is.

However, like most perfect houses, its reputation soon spread far and wide, and the interest it generated among other Truman students became more huge by the day. At first it was nice to know the house I lived in was on so many other students' wish lists. It was even exciting to see one particular student's eyes light up in delight when she saw even the dining-room had a closet. It was all fine until the number of calls from the landlords to show the house to prospective tenants soon trebled.

Now, don't get me wrong. I love my landlords – they are nice, helpful and very friendly. But bringing in prospective tenants to have a look at the house quickly is turning living in this dream house into a frustrating nightmare.

Several quick phone calls later, I found that a lot of other students, especially the ones who live in houses



Prajwal Sharma

that are different from most, face similar problems – polite landlords call and ask if it's OK to bring in some house hunters on so-and-so day. And you are left thinking: It is your house. Like it would make a difference if I said I preferred your not disturbing me.

See, it's annoying to have to pick up your clothes and throw them into the closet just so you can accommodate your landlord. It's even more annoying to do the dishes and remove the sign in my bathroom that says "Women" just so your landlord and his or her prospective tenants will not be judgmental. More annoying is the fact that you can't even go to sleep when you want because the landlord would have to talk in whispers and might not be able to sell the house well enough. You have to be considerate and nice when what you long for is to throw your books and clothes everywhere – the reason you rented the house in the first place.

Your life gets completely disrupted simply because some people want to

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see your house. It's unfair.

Although it is understandable that landlords are worried about their properties not getting rented the next school year, they should understand we don't relish strangers peeping to find out how big our closet is or how firm the ... is.

The solution is here, plain and simple: Landlords should try to schedule all their showings into a week or two every semester. This would prepare the tenants a long time in advance, and they at least would know surprise phone calls for house visits would be a thing of the past.

The landlords would get their houses shown, and the tenants would get their peace of mind. Both parties would be happy.

And as long as I didn't have to worry about my clothes, books and dishes on the floor, I would be one happy soul.

Prajwal Sharma is a junior communication major from Gangtok, Sikkim.

Around the Quad

This week's question: "Do you think drug offenders should receive federal financial aid?"



Megan Kennedy junior

"It depends on the situation. It's one thing if it's one conviction from 20 years ago or someone with a long-term history of drug convictions. They should be able to earn a second chance."



Abbie Heatherly sophomore

"No."



Shannon Earhart junior

"Yes. I don't think they should be refused financial aid if they are a drug offender. Everyone makes mistakes."



Lukin Murphy senior

"Absolutely. Even if someone makes a mistake, they should have the right to better themselves through education."

Columnist retracts Oct. 6 assertions

I need to issue an apology to those injured by my column Oct. 6 by retracting my statements.

I was irresponsible and unfair in printing the name of Silvia Pites, professor of Spanish, in the column in connection with the complaints of three disgruntled students who preferred not to have their names printed. These three students said their complaints were shared by other students, but I did not adequately verify their claims against Pites with other students who attended the Salamanca study abroad program last summer. Also, although these three students went on record with their complaints, I complied with their requests for anonymity. I am truly sorry for affording these students an advantage of privacy while denying such an advantage to Pites.

This behavior is clearly unbecoming of a responsible reporter, and I reprehensibly have cheapened Pites' work at Truman State University by printing accusations against her without adequately verifying their truthfulness. In doing so, my column took the form of a personal attack on the professionalism, responsibility and respectfulness of Pites, which was potentially damaging to her professional reputation.

As I made clear in my Oct. 6 column, there was never a legal investigation into the actions of Pites during the study abroad program. There were only complaints filed, and again, I failed to verify adequately these complaints or the circumstances surrounding them before printing the column.

In a letter to the editor Oct. 13, Mary Shapiro, associate professor of linguistics, shared concerns about the content of my Oct. 6 column with which she expressly disagreed.

"Anecdotal evidence is hardly conclusive, of course, a point Mr. Matthews should keep in mind," Shapiro stated. "Accountability is a fine thing for faculty, administrators, students and yes, even columnists."

Shapiro's point is well-taken, and I hope this retraction and apology shows I hold myself accountable for my remarks that were potentially damaging to Pites' reputation.

In a letter to the editor Oct. 20, senior Sarah Jones expressed her satisfaction with Pites' professional conduct during the Salamanca study abroad program in 2004.

"In my experience, Pites did an excellent job of providing [the] sort



Chris Matthews

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of learning opportunity [of adaption to other cultural norms] for the entire group," Jones stated. "I think Matthews neglected to represent the opinions of many of the students who have participated in the Salamanca study abroad program in the past."

Jones is correct in that I did not address adequately the opinions of any students involved with the study abroad program aside from the very few who had complaints. This was irresponsible, unfair and reprehensible. I retract those statements and apologize to Pites.

Pites' attorney Marvin Tofle has informed me that during our previous conversations concerning this matter documented in my Oct. 6 column, she was intentionally vague to protect the rights of the students involved and that I have mischaracterized this ambiguity as uncooperativeness and unnecessary secretiveness on behalf of Pites. Again, I understand I should have investigated this story more completely, and I apologize to Pites for these premature claims.

The essence of my apology and retraction is that I printed potentially damaging remarks about Pites' professional character without investigating the matter to the fullness it deserved. I hope my statements in this column can restore Pites' reputation to the level it was before my disparaging remarks printed Oct. 6.

Chris Matthews is a junior communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.