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Published by Anonymous on Apr. 02, 2004

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Good work calls for a good word. For the good work that you are doing in Hinduism Today, my hearty thanks, and the thanks of India, too. Hindus are awake today. The spell of a thousand years of subjugation has been broken. We have discovered our past. Nothing will now stop us from resuming our ancient quest for jnana, wisdom. It was the mystery of the universe that set us on our quest. The Rig Veda wonders, "Ah, what are words, and what are mortal thoughts? Who is there who truly knows and who can say whence this unfathomed world, and from what cause?" The rishis of old set out to find the answers. Their quest led to freedom of enquiry. Freedom led to diversity of thoughts. Diversity led to tolerance of views, and tolerance led to the richness of our civilization. It has no parallel in the world. The Hindu civilization is basically accommodative and assimilative. It should remain so. We celebrate inclusivity. Others celebrate exclusivity. We learned to live in peace with each other and with Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and hundreds of different sects. "All ways lead to me," says the Lord in the Gita. But others still live by the sword.

M. S. N. Menon, Delhi, India

Why Untouchability

Unemotionally, the basis of untouchability is poverty and lack of education. The Hindu temples must do their part, but it is the government's utmost duty to educate all to age 16 years, as is being done in my country, Trinidad. In ten years, India has reduced poverty from 35% to 26%. By 2010, it should be reduced again, to 15%.

Yogi Hary Pasarma, Chaguanas, Trinidad

Greatness of Kumbha Mela

Compliments on an excellent report of the Kumbha Mela held recently in India at Nashik (Jan/Mar, 2004). Your pictures are unique, and every attempt is made to depict the actual participation in this Mela. I was fortunate to participate, and without being at such a great Mela, nobody can understand the real philosophy of Hinduism. We found great enthusiasm amongst the people.

S. S. Bhatt, Hoffman Estate, Illinois

Virasaivism Separate

your magazine in a recent article included Virasaivism as one of the sub-sects (Oct/Dec, 2003). This is a commonly held misconception, but Virasaivism is a distinct religion. Basavanna, the founding father of modern Virasaivism, not only preached equality of all human being, including women, and rejected the caste system, he also did not accept the Vedas.

Sathish Vr, USA, sathish_vr2000@yahoo.com

Skewed Toward Saivism

After being a long-time subscriber to Hinduism Today, I reluctantly decided a few months back to discontinue my subscription. I have regarded and still regard as extremely important, the service you are rendering Hinduism. Not only that, over the years you have made it a publication of very high quality. My objection is that it has become Saivism Today. The coverage of news and events are so biased that one would think that Saivism is the only flavor of Hinduism!! You are not "reporting

" news and events, you are "categorizing " and "interpreting " everything from the Saivism perspective.

Cadambi Rangarajan, rangadasan@yahoo.com

We understand your point. We do present a view of Hinduism skewed toward Saivism. It's natural, one could say, for the magazine is created at a Saivite monastery and the staff are committed Saiva sannyasins, facts we publish openly in each issue. What is not obvious is this: we have tried for years to fill the gaps in our experience and knowledge by calling upon Vaishnavite, Shakta and Smarta followers, journalists, artists and academics to contribute more, but the response is not there. The truth is we would love to have more authentic art and articles from other traditions. But our wanting it to happen has not made it happen. It disappoints us as much as it annoys you. Our recent articles on the four sects, New Vrindaban, South Africa's Lord Hanuman conference, Jagannath Temple and interviews with many Vaishnava swamis at the Kumbha Mela are part of our small efforts to broaden our coverage.

Rehabilitate the Swastika

I am Jewish by birth, but personally favor the swastika's use and comeback to erase the fact that the Nazis ever used it. Why should this symbol be forever tainted by their evilness? Let's erase not the Holocaust, or its lessons, but the Nazi's hijacking of this holy symbol.

Eileen Weintraub, Seattle, Washington, USA

Promote Pancha Ganapati

I was delighted to read that Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami created the modern-day festival of Pancha Ganapati to coincide with Christmas celebrations for Hindus living in the west. The five-day celebration as drawn out by Gurudeva is just

marvelous for all Hindu diaspora adults and children, as well as for Hindus in the homeland. Please remind us each year of the festival's approach.

Jamuna Vittal, New Jersey, USA, vittalj@aol.com

Thank you. The Pancha Ganapati festival is described at:
<http://www.hinduism-today.com/archives/1995/11/1995-11-14.shtml>

Charity Begins at Home

I was very much impressed after reading "Indian Restaurant Serves Free Food During Major US Blackout " in your Jan/Mar, 2004, issue. I appreciate the owner's good gesture. It builds a spiritual bridge. Also, I've never missed to view the unique pictures which greatly enhance the last pages and never fail to read the poems by Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam.

Rajalakshmi Rajikrishnan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, neshabdham@hotmail.com

Right Giving for India

The NRI community has contributed generously, I believe, to charities in India that are actually working against Hindus. As well, there is substantial funding for Christian evangelical work from various sources. There are many fund-starved Hindu institutions of knowledge, arts, sciences and traditional knowledge systems in India. Money is needed for the upliftment of our community, society and country. As Hindus the world over acquire more wealth and prominence on the world stage, they need to be sure their efforts are not misguided and wasted or worse, fire back at them. IDRF, Ekal Vidyalaya and other venues such as your esteemed Hindu Heritage Endowment need to be publicized more for the benefit of the Hindu NRI community's charitable needs. These are not merely alternatives, but truly humanitarian charities, because human rights and humanitarianism are built into the Hindu tradition. You should cover the importance and channels of daan

dakshina, charity, for the Hindus outside of India in the near future.

Sucheta Maheshwari, USA, suchetausa@msn.com

A Question of Karma

I read with interest arvind sharma's article, "Karma and Gravity, " (Jan/Mar, 2004). It is a bit confusing when he states, "In order to reach a karma-free state, we must give up not only bad karma, but good karma as well. We must perform only that karma which is appropriate for the attainment of zero karma." This raises more questions than answers. First, if we give up both bad karma as well as good karma, what is there left to do? Second, what is a karma-free state? Third, what is zero karma? And fourth, how does one attain a karma-free state or zero karma?

Pradeep Srivastava, Detroit, USA, pradeepscool@hotmail.com

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami addressed this same issue in his book Merging with Siva. He wrote, "One does not have the experience of realizing the Self until all of his karma is in a state of resolve. This means that the action-and-reaction patterns were balanced out, one against the other, through his ability to be steadfast in his yoga, brahmacharya and previous superconscious insights which have revealed the true nature of himself. When this begins to occur in him, he actually sees that man is not man, man is the Self, God, for his karma and the forces of his dharma have begun to become transparent to him. Through the power of his realization, the karma is created and simultaneously dissolved. This occurs for the one who lives in the timeless state of consciousness. If one were to realize the Self each day, he would live his life like writing his karma on the surface of water. The intensity of the Self is so strong that action and reaction dissolve, just as the water's surface clears immediately when you remove your finger from having written upon it."

Let's Educate Ourselves

First and foremost, a big round of applause for the Hinduism Today team. Your issues keep me abreast of the latest developments and pull me out of ignorance. Your article on the four major denominations in Hinduism was excellent and timely. I confess that I never knew about Shaktism and Smartism. It reflects how far I'm lagging behind in my attempt to sail the ocean of Sanatana Dharma. However, I'm ever ready to spread my wings into deeper knowledge about Hinduism, thus my humble request is that you should unleash an issue entirely on the basics and understanding of Hinduism. Common questions like why there are many Gods in Hinduism should be answered with adequate facts. Such questions keep buzzing through my mental corridors like a recalcitrant mosquito. Hinduism provides us with a great sense of pride and belonging, but we cannot safeguard our beloved faith with ignorant Hindus.

S. Vijai Ananth, Sitiawan, Malaysia, vijai_arr@hotmail.com

Well, Vijai, this issue is for you! It was planned long before your letter arrived, but check out the list of questions and answers that form our Insight section.

Dowry Deaths

In a recent bbc program broadcast here, the issue of dowry deaths was explored in horrific detail. The figure of 25,000 dowry deaths per year was given. The causes were listed as the Indian man's view of women, old laws, corrupt police, uncaring societal attitude, lack of political will and poor social support services. Do Indian men and families really view this system of dowry as something to be admired?

When persons of Indian origin, such as myself, view such depictions of our ancestral homeland, we cannot help to be glad that my ancestors escaped these customs. I, like many Indo-Trinidadian men, value immensely the day that our wives agreed to marry us. This dowry system of India reduces the value of the woman to a mere object to be bought and sold. How can a society with such a great past, a society which has elevated the female to the Divine, such as Sita, Lakshmi and all other forms of the Devi, in the same breath treat the human female form with such distaste?

Devant Parsuram Maharaj, Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, Trinidad,
devant@tstt.net.tt

Corrections

The article "When Dowry Went Wrong in the Jan/Mar 04 issue mistakenly gives the wife of King George V as Queen Elizabeth. His wife was her grandmother, Queen Mary.

The address of Dr. Naram's clinic (Jan/Mar, 04) is CTS 563 (1 and 2), Bhadran Nagar Cross Road #2, Op. Milap Theater, Off S.V. Rd., Milad (W), Mumbai. The phone is 022 2806 5757.