Letters
Category : October/November/December 2006
Published by Anonymous on Oct. 01, 2006

Letters

Letters

Introduce them to our digital edition

I am not exaggerating when I say I am extremely delighted at the service that your magazine renders to the Hindu community. I have always felt that the only chink in our religion's armor is the lack of a proper medium to convey the beautiful teachings of Sanatana Dharma. However, your magazine has so far managed to quench the thirst for knowledge among many Hindus.

S. Vijai Ananth
Uniten, Kajang, Malaysia
vijaiananth@yahoo.com

Conversion in Malaysia

I agree very much with Sivam Mane ("Conversion in Malaysia, " Letters, Jul/Aug/Sep 2006). We are aware of the increase in conversions and the Christians' relentless pursuit. I remember the same tenacity and ferocity used in the early 80s. Mr. Sivam struck the nail right on target when he wrote that there has been no properly organized teaching available for Hindus in this country. The Muslims have agama ("religion ") schools and classes for their kids as part of their curriculum. The Christians have Sunday school or Bible class to look forward to. For the Hindus, we don't have a systematic curriculum or syllabus from which to teach our children. A handful of Hindu organizations have been providing teachings, but this isn't sufficient to glue together ill-informed and ill-equipped Hindus to appreciate and practice their own religion better. A well-rounded Hindu religious knowledge is very important in order for Hindus to survive in this challenging and tempting world. Hindu religion, touching on all denominations and other religious subjects, should

be taught to Hindu children during the class hours usually set aside for the moral subjects designated for non-Muslim students.

Ravichandran Ceyon
Kulai, Johor, Malaysia
raviceyon@gmail.com

I noticed an article "Hindu Festivals Are Declining" ("Briefly, " Apr/May/Jun, 2006), and sadly this has happened in a district in India, home of our beloved religion. But I'm not surprised that the rationale behind why the decline has occurred is that 70 percent of the tribals of that area have converted to Christianity. But how could this happen? I live in a peaceful country with many religions, mainly Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. We face a similar dilemma: to preserve the following and the teachings of Hinduism. The fact remains that most of us are concerned with our personal issues and are not concerned about society on the whole. A large number of Hindus convert due to numerous reasons. Poverty is one, for some religious organizations provide three meals a day for families who convert. Abused, abandoned and orphaned children are often targeted. Lack of understanding of the religion, partly because of a lack of sermons in Hindu temples, is another. In my opinion we should: 1) donate to organizations that help very poor Hindu families; 2) assist at ashrams and welfare houses for abused, abandoned and orphaned children so that these children are brought up Hindu; 3) encourage family members and friends to attend temple pujas every week and set a good example by doing the same; 4) promote great Hindu literature such as Hinduism Today and share them with those who can't afford to purchase them.

Anbu Kandasamy
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
anbu@oricap.net

Yoga Comes from Hinduism

A few months back i picked up your magazine for the first time at a bookstore. There was an article in it about yoga ("Yoga Renamed Is Still Hindu, " Jan/Feb/Mar, 2006) in which the author expressed fear that it would be long forgotten as a religious practice of the Hindus and would become thought of more as a Christian

concept. Recently, I stumbled upon a discussion of yoga in which someone wanted to know that if they practiced yoga, were they going against their own religion. I told them about the article because I felt the opinion of a Hindu on the subject was important. Everyone disregarded what I had to say. They claim that yoga is not a part of a religion and in fact exists only for those who seek enlightenment. Not knowing much about yoga's history except for what I read in your magazine, I had no real argument to set forth. What I'd like to know is, is yoga based in the Hindu faith, and how do Hindus view its being used as a spiritual and physical practice by non-Hindus?

Katie Marciano
Bloomington, Minnesota, USA
KatieMarciano@aol.com

Yes, as Mr. Tiwari states in his article, yoga did originate within Hinduism. You will find that opinions among Hindus about non-Hindus' practicing yoga vary greatly. While practicing hatha yoga (the physical postures) alone may not lead one away from a non-Hindu path, meditation and other advanced yogic practices intend to lead to attainments within Hinduism that are neither sought after nor believed in by most other faiths. It would be up to the judgment of an authority within the religion in question whether the particular practice of yoga is heretical or not. The Catholic Church has taken an official theological stance against yoga.

Loss of Culture

As you know, Nepal has now been declared a secular state. We are worried that peaceful people like us in Nepal do not have a place. We feel that this country will be raped culturally like India was and is continuously. I hope your genuine cause can help free us from Western tyranny.

Naresh Rimal
Lalitpur, Nepal
naresh@seepwater.org

Knowledge of the Soul

In his publisher's desk ("How our Soul Matures, "Jul/Aug/Sep, 2006), Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami offers readers the most comprehensive, and yet easy to understand, description of the soul and its chakras I have ever seen or taught.

Derwin Lackey
Walkertown, NC, USA
dlackey@purposeful.org

The Swastika Stigma

I read about the discovery of a swastika fountain in Maasmechelen, Belgium, by users of Google Earth. The mayor is upset and has decided the fountain should be rebuilt in a different form. The architect is upset and claims the swastika has been used as a religious symbol by Hindus and ancient Greeks. I always thought there was a difference between the Nazi symbol and the original swastika, but I later found out that Hinduism has both clockwise and counterclockwise swastikas. Now I am confused. Is there a difference in the shapes? I feel unfortunate for the swastika, which has a rich cultural background yet seems now to live in the shadows or be destroyed.

P. Shankar
Netherlands
prewien@shankar.nl

Refer to "The Auspicious Swastika" in our April/May/June 2005 issue.

Assessing the Aryan Myth

I read with interest Rajiv Malhotra's op-ed piece ("Assessing the Aryan Myth, " Apr/May/Jun, 2006). While I laud his intentions, I found his article to be uninformed and misleading. It gives the impression that there is still a serious debate about the Aryan invasion over fundamentals, when both history and science have demolished it. What we have is no longer an academic debate but a battle of polemics and propaganda that has lately degenerated into political lobbying, as witnessed in the California school controversy. There are no shortcuts. We must take the bull by the horns and argue from facts and fundamentals. There is no reason for timidity when the facts are on our side. Appeasement will forever condemn us to be engaged in a nonexistent debate on their terms that will go on forever. Finally, I totally disagree with his stance: "We don't know." We do know a great deal. The truth needs only to be propagated, not diverted by conceding the ground to our adversaries.

N.S. Rajaram
Bangalore, India
nsrajaram@vsnl.com

Mr. Malhotra's article was really too short to include the context of his strategy, which is to cast doubt on the Aryan invasion theory rather than try now to outright disprove it. This is a political strategy, not a scientific argument, for the specific situation of school textbooks.

Tenth World Saiva Conference

Thank you very much for the very informative article on the Tenth World Saiva Conference that took place in Sydney, Australia, this year. It will give adequate publicity in the Hindu community the world over.

Shan A. Shanmugavadivel
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
drashan@hotmail.com

About Arranged Marriage

I read with interest Ms. Vijayshree's letter ("About Arranged Marriage, " Jul/Aug/Sep, 2005). She has raised many valid points, but there are deeper issues behind all this. The bottom line, in my view, is that a system that combines the best of arranged marriages and the marriages of the West may be the best path. Both systems have their pros and cons. Some issues that need to be kept in mind when judging the two systems--all general statements--are: Indians who commit to an arranged marriage usually have a different set of expectations from the marriage than the Western type. Westerners typically enter into marriage with certain expectations of each other, and when two people after marriage go in different directions and evolve, they also sometimes fall away from each other matrimonially. An Indian arranged couple would tend to adjust to the changed personalities better. Indians who commit to an arranged marriage usually bring a less selfish approach to married life, one of giving rather than receiving. At least, that is the ideal we are taught and many of us strive to practice. When dating, it is not always the case that one finds his or her "soulmate." Oftentimes the attraction is physical first, intellectual next, then perhaps social, and important traits such as spiritual compatibility, which are needed for the union of two souls--marriage at the deeper levels--are not even considered. Marriages of two people from relatively similar social backgrounds (arranged marriages tend to be that way) have a better chance of survival, since there are fewer potential causes of conflict. In arranged marriages, families and communities are united. That adds to the glue, and when the going gets rough later, that glue can help the couple stay together until the storm passes. Most marital storms, like all storms, do pass. A typical Western couple may walk off from the marriage more easily because of the lack of such glue and because they find fewer reasons for staying committed.

In spite of all the great benefits I have enumerated, too many times arranged marriages are fixed by the parents based more or less on selfish, superficial interests such as material prosperity, skin color and job, that have very little to do with the stability of marriage. If you have parents like that, my advice is to elope; you will do much better! But take your time, at least six months. Try to get to know each other, pray for divine guidance and try to get the blessings of your parents and elders. All the advantages of the Indian system can be built into a Western type of marriage. Conversely, just because two are married according to the Indian system, it doesn't at all imply that they have less work to do to realize a happy married life. Abuses of the system by many do not warrant abandonment of the core values inherent in both systems.

Damodaran Nambiar
dr_nambiar@yahoo.com

A Surefire Way to Reach the Young

Do you remember the great riddle--how shall we ever get the young interested in Hinduism? To this complex question, we propose a simple answer: introduce them to Hinduism Today's digital edition! It is a hit among young ones we have spoken with, and they have convinced us that it is sure to captivate a great many more of their generation, being in their medium of choice, easily accessible, free of charge and abundant with rich media (videos, audio, slide shows, etc.) "We spend much more time at our computers than reading magazines, " said one youth. "Give a kid a URL, and he's going to check it out, you can be sure, even if he's skeptical at first."

This clued us in: to get the youth interested in Hinduism, simply give them this URL: http:/www.HinduismToday.com/digital

Or better, bring the digital edition up on your screen, call your young one over and show him or her an instance of cool stuff. He will note, at the very least, that Hinduism does speak his language, is attractive, up-to-date and relevant to his life. Do the same at temples, summer camps, classes, events and gatherings--showing the digital edition, then sharing the URL. Thus will you solve the riddle and help countless youth stay connected to their magnificent dharma.

You can also significantly bolster the youth of the near and far future through the Hinduism Today Production Fund, a part of the Hindu Heritage Endowment that will provide support for the digital edition, its rich media, and for the acquisition of new technologies as they appear. Please consider becoming a Benefactor of Hinduism Today by making the Fund a beneficiary in your estate plan of a gift of $5,000 or more--in your living trust or charitable remainder trust and tagging your donation for the digital edition. Contact us and ask for the Hinduism Today Production Fund flyer.

http:/www.hinduismtoday.org
http:/www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving
hhe@hindu.org"808-822-3012, ext 244