Letters
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A little is a lot when it comes from the heart

Thank you for publishing such an attractive and informative magazine! I am a teacher at Peachtree Charter Middle School in Atlanta, GA, and I only have the Oct/Nov/Dec, 2007, issue; consequently, I missed the history for sixth graders segment that everyone is raving about (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2007).

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Thai Pusam in Malaysia

The coverage of thai pusam in Malaysia ("Malaysia's Festive Jewel, " Jul/Aug/Sep, 2007) is a very well reported piece of news. The festival where over a million people of all faiths congregate at Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur, is the largest gathering in Malaysia. Hindus, Sikhs and even Christians, and some from other faiths, make it their annual pilgrimage to worship Lord Murugan and to receive His blessings. Lord Murugan is a powerful God. He blesses everyone who goes to Him for help. Now even Hindus from overseas are coming by to pay their respects to Lord Murugan in His Batu Caves abode. Kavadi bearers are coming from Australia, India, Singapore, Indonesia and even Great Britain. Indeed, Batu Caves Murugan is getting more and more popular. Congratulations to Rajiv Malik and the Hinduism Today team for a great story.

K. Thuruvan
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Hinduism Today Digital Edition

I don't think I can find the right words to express the gratitude, admiration and joy that all this beauty and wisdom is being offered free of charge for the world to uplift ourselves. You are doing a great service. In a world where media offers mostly violence, aggression and anxiety, Hinduism Today Digital Edition http:/www.hinduismtoday.com/digitalis a clear, open window through which we can see the world in a new--ancient, rather--way: as the harmonious creation of Siva's Shakti.

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More Than "A Way of Life"

It became hip and fashionable among some Hindus a few decades ago to say that Hinduism is just a way of life and not a religion. And this has been parroted by many without thinking ever since. Unfortunately, religions that do not wish Hinduism well have used this to its detriment by saying: "So, Hinduism is a way of life. This means you Hindus don't have a religion. Your religion then can be our religion. Why don't you adopt ours as your own? You may keep your way of life." It is thus important for Hindus to insist that Hinduism is a religion, philosophy and way of life all rolled into one. These three are not mutually exclusive categories. A tradition can be all three at once as in the case of Taoism (Dao-de Jiao as the Chinese call it) in China and Shintoism (Kami-no-michi as the Japanese call it) in Japan. Usually, nationally-based religions tend to be all three at once, as opposed to the missionary religions. Why are some Hindus hesitant to call Hinduism a religion when it has all the elements that characterize a religion? Let's check each of these characteristics: Deities, piety and worship, scriptures, doctrines, sacred space (sanctified places of worship and pilgrimage), sacred time (feasts and fasts), sacred persons (priests and monastics), liturgy and prayer, sacraments (sanctification of the important stages of life), miracles and mysticism, rituals, code of ethics, contemplative practices, humanism and a concept of salvation. Hinduism has them all. Over and above these is the culture. It is this cultural component that makes Hinduism more than a religion. It also becomes a way of life. One does not exclude the other. Hindus should celebrate their faith as all three (religion, philosophy and way of life) rolled into one as Taoists and Shintoists have done in China and Japan respectively over the

centuries.

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Temples in Lahore

I want to share with all of you the pathetic condition of Hindu temples in Lahore. Lahore is a historical city and has a sound multi-religious and cultural history. There are lots of temples and gurudwaras in this city, and all non-Muslim religious places are under the custody of the Evacuee Property Trust Board. But there are so many black sheep who sell these temples to the land mafia for commercial interests because they are located in what are now the city's main commercial areas.

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India's Great Need

Hinduism Today is the only journal in the world of its type with the right mix of objectives and use of the modern idiom to educate, inform about and illustrate the greatness of our heritage. The photographs and other production features put the journal in the grade of National Geographic. The subjects chosen for presentation and the articles show a high standard of editorial excellence. The greatest need for all that Hinduism Today seeks to explain and convey is, in my view, in India. The vast Hindu mass in India is little educated in our heritage and, worse, has the least self-esteem. We badly lack the use of the modern idiom. There is not a single journal in the country which offers the right mix of cultural teachings, Hindu viewpoint on contemporary controversies in a scholarly format and information of interest to families, youth and children. Hindu religious journals largely deal with ethics, age-old rituals or exposition of our scriptures in a daunting and discouraging format and language. Hindu society in the country is under sophisticated aggression

of massive proportions from proselytizers and evangelists. Badly short-sighted Hindu politicians have fragmented Hindu society so much that there is no Hindu power or influence as such in the country; but there is strong Christian power and Muslim power.

R. Venkatanarayanan
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Maya-Hindu Connection

I was reading an article entitled "My Turn: Maya-Hindu Connection" in the Nov, 1995, issue. I was surprised to see it written, "The Mayan culture flourished in Mesoamerica during the early Christian era, before being completely wiped out by the Spanish conquest, "when, in fact, I lived in a Maya community last year. Statements like this continue to create stereotypes that indigenous peoples are non-existent or below a ruling class. This is incorrect information and poor language to publish.

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Nigerian Hinduism

The indian community in nigeria brought Hinduism with them, and they are trying to propagate the faith here, but due to insistent slogans by Nigerian Christians the faith is not growing like it is in Ghana. I feel with time the consciousness will certainly grow due to the enlightenment that is present in the world today.

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Caribbean Hindu Radio

In your Oct/Nov/Dec, 2006, issue ("Briefly") you stated that SDMS Radio (Trinidad) is the "first radio facility promoting Hinduism in the Caribbean." I would like to point out that there are at least six other all-Indian radio stations in Trinidad. These stations all carry Hindu religious programming on a daily basis from 4-6 am as well as 7-9 pm most evenings. There are also Hindu programs at other times as well. Mention must also be made of Akash Vani 106.5, which has Hindu religious programming ninety percent of the day. Therefore, Radio Jagriti (SDMS) is not the first station to promote Hinduism in the Caribbean.

Lynda-Ann Ramlal
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Understanding Being a Hindu

I am an avid reader of the daily master Course lesson (http:/www.himalayanacademy.com/study/mc). I must thank Hinduism Today for making all ways possible to ensure Hindus everywhere in the world are able to understand and appreciate being a Hindu. Although I do not live in India, my interest in the religion is sparked by publications from Hinduism Today.

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Confronting Domestic Violence

It is quite symbolic that Navaratri happened during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. In his message, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer revealed the following: "Because domestic violence typically occurs in the 'sanctity' of a home, many of us may not realize the extent of the problem. Domestic violence is a

pattern of coercive behavior which may include a combination of physical, sexual, economic, emotional and/or psychological abuse by an intimate or family member. It crosses all ethnic, racial, socioeconomic and sexual orientation lines. Approximately two million women are physically or sexually assaulted or stalked by their partner each year in the United States. About one-third of all female murder victims are killed by their current or former partners. Almost one-half of reported domestic violence assaults result in serious injury. While women account for only 39% of hospital emergency room visits for violence-related injuries, women constitute 84% of the persons treated for injuries inflicted by intimate partners. Approximately one in four college-age women will experience some form of relationship violence. Between 70 and 75 percent of the children of abused mothers are the victims of domestic abuse as well. And, as unsettling as these statistics are, they do not even take into account the millions of children who suffer the trauma of witnessing this abuse in their own homes."

There were two major Hindu conferences this October. Looking at their agendas, neither dealt with domestic abuse or any social problems. Pandit Rajin Balgobin at his yagna for Navaratri at the Milan Mandir and then at the yagna at the Maha Lakshmi Mandir in New York City, spoke at great length about the issues of domestic violence, respect for women, protecting our children and alcohol abuse, among other social problems. He was rather forthright and it was very heartening to see this young pujari fearlessly attacking topics that many Hindus ignore. No one boycotted his yagna, no one sucked their teeth and walked out as he spoke, no one heckled him--he had a packed audience each night.

Domestic violence affects everyone, and we cannot continue to hide our heads in the sand and pretend it does not exist or that by ignoring it the problem will disappear. As we continue to refuse to address this situation, we are only driving away our own. There are so many examples of people in our community who are supposed to give people faith and encourage them to remain within the Hindu fold but drive away them away instead.

As we reflect on the meanings of Navaratri and Deepavali, we should think about the reasons why we were given so many opportunities to honor the Supreme as Devi/Ma/Shakti. My prayer is that every mandir be a place where victims can seek shelter and that there be personnel and funds available to help them. Counseling is also important for both the victims and their abusers. Every pujari, acharya and swami must make it their duty to get the necessary training to properly counsel their followers. Let us put the Hindu family first.

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How $1/day Grows Hinduism's Future

Prof. narayana rao is a scientist on a spiritual mission. He is a world-renowned teacher of engineering electromagnetics who immigrated from India to the US in 1958. He has a dream: that one day his grandchildren may enjoy the same precious Hindu tradition he inherited from his forebearers.

In 2003, Dr. Rao was deeply moved while visiting the home of Hinduism Today, Kauai's Hindu Monastery in Hawaii. "This is Kailash of the West, " he thought, "and my vision and fondest hopes have meshed with Hinduism Today. It is the medium for the generations!" He had found a worthy vehicle for his dream. To lend support, he gave $9,132 to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of the Hindu Heritage Endowment. He decided on this exact amount so that earnings would straightaway provide the magazine $1 a day to meet production expenses. "Only $1 a day, yes, but forever!" he points out. "And with compounding interest, it will grow endlessly. Little, consistent increments make for great power, power for the long haul. I believe that a little bit done by a great many is what has kept Hinduism intact through the millennia. And the same will propel Hinduism Today, too."

Please consider donating a humble amount (or a sizeable one, if you prefer) to the Hinduism Today Production Fund. Contact us and ask for the Hinduism Today Production Fund flyer.

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