Letters
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My Outlook Has Changed

I simply want to say thank you for putting together a comprehensive and wonderful resource for all aspiring seekers of truth. Since I began reading Hinduism Today and Dancing with Siva (by the magazine's founder), my outlook has changed so much. I am grateful to you for your wonderfully researched, insightful articles about everything an aspiring seeker like me needs to know.

Sunil Rajan

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Capital Punishment

As a lawyer, I was very impressed when I came across the article "Capital Punishment, Time to Abandon It" by Mahua Das (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2006) while surfing your website. It was a pleasure to read. My grandfather, Mr. Lekh Raj Mehta, is a Jain legal expert currently practicing in the High Court of Rajasthan. He, too, was excited to see that he was quoted in the section "How the World's Religions View Capital Punishment."

Ramit Mehta

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More on Amma, Please

Thank you from the bottom of my heart, for it is through your magazine that I found my guru, Mata Amritanandmayi Devi. I do feel that Amma should be featured in Hinduism Today once in a while. I don't have enough words to describe the beauty of your magazine. It really teaches everything about Hinduism around the world. May it live long.

Shashi Kher

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Hindu History for Children

It was immensely elating to read the issue on "Teaching Kids the Truth About India's Amazing History" (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2008). The issue elicits the richness of Hindu culture and Indian history. Thanks for putting such a wonderful issue together.

Priya Iyengar

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I would like to personally commend the editor and writers of the Apr/May/Jun, 2007, edition that disputes the Californian (and otherwise American) methods of teaching Hinduism in grade schools. As a student, I have read the textbooks and learned exactly what Hinduism Today's lesson counters. Now, as a pre-medical student, I have had some serious debates about differences in religious points of view on ethical issues in modern-day medicine. I feel that students at the collegiate level carry gross misinterpretations of cultures based on their earliest teachings from grade school. This is why I think Hinduism Today's model history lessons are so crucial in developing a young mind and providing it with facts, so that cultural perspectives of other religions do not become distorted later on at the professional level. Join me in congratulating the authors of this article not only for their initial idea, but their strong will, effort and energy spent in compiling a small, factual representation (and summary) of Hinduism.

Paarth Raj

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Inter-faith Dialogue

I read an article in Hindu Press International (Nov 23, 2008) in which Pope Benedict XVI was quoted to have said that Marcello Pera's book Why We Must Call Ourselves Christian "explained with great clarity" that "an inter-religious dialogue in the strict sense of the word is not possible" and that "a true dialogue is not possible without putting one's faith in parentheses." At least the pope is honest! All along, my own position has been that inter-faith dialogues are useless if Christians and Muslims do not accept and respect other faiths as equal and entitled to the same sovereign rights as they are. This they will not do because of their theological claim of exclusiveness, their monopoly on Truth and God. While inter-faith dialogue is thus doomed to failure, it is good for both politics and public relations. It is also good for us Hindus, because it offers an opportunity to sit at the table and proclaim our equality.

Shiva Bajpai

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Holiday Choices

My wife and I have been both of the types of parents Vidya Bhide described in her letter ("Dealing with Holidays," Jan/Feb/Mar, 2009). In our early years in the USA, we celebrated Christmas in a festive way. But on one Christmas day, when I asked my son, then 7, why he was so thrilled about Christmas while Diwali came and went without being noticed, he gave me a chilling answer: "Dad, this is America. Doesn't that mean its all about Christmas and Jesus?" This honest answer changed our family life. Within a day we registered both our kids in a Balvihar. We performed many religious related activities with them and later I became the president of that Balvihar. I am happy to say that our involvement changed the outlook of our children about Hinduism. Both our kids, now 22 and 26, look forward to a lavish gift for Diwali. We decorate our house for Diwali and put lights on all the windows. Every Diwali I also send about 50 Diwali cards to my Hindu friends and relatives. Unfortunately, they return the favor by sending me Christmas cards! I wonder why they don't think of me on Eid ul-Fitr or Rosh Hashanah? I must thank my son for giving me a timely wake-up call to change our practices at home. I hope parents will pay attention to what Vidyaji has to say, otherwise they may face major disappointments later in life.

Dilip Amin

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Cherishing Forgiveness

I saw your article about forgiveness in Hinduism ("Forgiving Others is Good for

Your Health," Nov, 1997). I did what the article said, to forgive and forget past bad experiences. It worked magically. I have burned the pages on which I wrote all my resentments and bad experiences, and as I saw the burning paper, I was relieved of the emotional pain. Thank you.

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A Fraudulent Mission

David Frawley's recent article on Christian missionaries ("A Fraudulent Mission," Oct/Nov/Dec, 2008) presents the tip of a much bigger iceberg. Islam and Christianity have always detested Hinduism and sought its demise, if not through prosyletizing and forced conversions, then through outright violence. Dictators and Marxists hate the Sanatana Dharma because they are materialists who crave total control. In spite of India's rapid development since independence, its material and scientific progress, its peaceful relationship with almost every country on the planet, its rapid economic and technological growth, its development of the world's second largest middle class, its efforts to overcome caste prejudice and injustice, as well as hunger and lack of education, its efforts to guarantee religious freedom for all who live within her borders, its commitment to democracy and freedom, Hinduism is still widely reviled by a vast, Western, asuric intelligence as being evil, backward, degenerate, primitive, anti-Christ, satanic, infidel and on and on.

Why is India the target of so much hatred, sabotage and violence? There is no empirical reason to justify it. There is, however, a spiritual reason, which is that, consciously or subconsciously, India's and Hinduism's enemies are well aware of the subtle and sattvic power of the Sanatana Dharma.

One other point: those persons who call themselves Hindus and who imitate the violent methods used by fanatics of other faiths in the name of defending Hinduism are as much puppets of the asuric intelligence as are Islamic jihadis, Christian

prosyletizers and the militant separatist movements which seek to break India apart. Traditionally, India has had its warrior class, the kshatriyas, and in modern times that class should be responsible for her military and police services while protecting her constitution and legal system. Hindus who take the law into their own hands and commit violence against other communities are not kshatriyas; they are simply terrorists and criminals. Hindus must be careful to not allow asuric forces to take over their own minds and hearts in order to perpetrate violence in the name of Hinduism. The asuras know that if they succeed in corrupting the consciousness of Hindus, they will win the war. What better way to put an end to the Sanatana Dharma than to destroy it from within?

Duart Maclean

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Why Terrorists Kill

When terrorists shoot or bomb innocents, they shout that they are doing this in the name of their God. One must understand that these are religions that worship God made in the image of a king. When men were brought before the king, they fell to their knees and shook with fear, hence these religions' "fear of God."

But Hinduism and Buddhism are parent/teacher faiths. A good teacher encourages his students to ask questions, be open-minded, explore new ideas, respect others' ideas and make decisions on their own. Our God does not issue commandments, laws or judgments. A Hindu's goal is not a flesh-happy heaven, but moksha, a pure enlightened state. God is our teacher and guide in this endeavor. For Hindus, one life is not enough, and so we are born again and again. Karma teaches us that we are responsible for our actions. A teacher can only point us to the right path; it is up to us to follow it. If we make mistakes, God wants us to take responsibility and work towards correcting it. We are children/devotees of God, not his subjects, slaves or servants. We should never fear God. In a parent/teacher faith there is no room for a hell, a place where God tortures defenseless people. This is a human idea that somehow holds that inflicting physical pain will make them better people. We know that is not true. King religions need hell as a place to hold bad people and disloyal

subjects. But a mother would not torture her own child, nor does a teacher beat his students. Karma and rebirth is the better way to enlightenment.

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Corrections

In Quotes & Quips (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2009), Swami Chinmayanandaji's Mahasamadhi date was incorrectly labeled as 1922. He lived from 1916 to 1992.

In "Facing Dalit Issues" (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2009), Sri Kalidoss Swamigal, who is quoted, is not a Dalit, as might be inferred, but a champion of the community.

The article "1838: South Indian Dancers Tour Europe" (Jan-Feb-Mar, 2009) was based largely upon the research of Dr. Joep Bor, Professor of Extra-European Performing Arts Studies, Leiden University, Netherlands, as collected from his published works and several personal communications. The article also drew upon the work of Ivor Guest, particularly his book Gautier on Dance. These attributions were unintentionally excluded from the article, and the author is grateful to Dr. Bor for his kind assistance in her research.

Making a Difference as a Family Project

How sharing Hinduism brings oneness of mind

When she was 10 and in sixth grade, Unnati Shukla of The Woodlands, Texas, was horrified at the way her teacher presented Hinduism. Two years later, Hinduism Today published its now famous article: "Ten Questions about Hinduism." Unnati showed it to the teacher, who had never seen anything on Hinduism produced by Hindus. She was impressed and, from that day, stopped teaching the offensive and

aberrant material.

Unnati is now 13, and she, her 16-year-old brother Hriday and their parents share one resolve: to do their utmost to bring Hinduism's golden virtues to light. And Hinduism Today is there to provide the tools for their enlightened mission. "We are blessed," Mrs. Shukla told our staff, "to have you giving us this information in print and especially digitally, where kids spend most of their time." Hriday tells of his friend Rohan, who "felt quite disconnected from everything until I'd shared many copies of the magazine with him. Then life began to look brighter. He is now an enthusiastic Hindu who feels connected, knows what he believes and who he is."

At every opportunity, the Shuklas distribute the magazine and use it to explain aspects of their faith. They teach or have organized a number of classes that over 100 youth and adults attend. They are also helping establish a temple in their locality, north of Houston, which they envision as a center of learning and teaching.

The Shuklas have donated generously to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "We will continue our support," pledges Dr. Shukla, "so the magazine becomes widespread and a dominant influence, in the way journals representing other cultures are today. We want it to be a major player among the forces that will shape upcoming generations."

Please consider donating to the Hinduism Today Production Fund so that the magazine may continue to grow in quality, in reach and impact. Contact us to receive our Production Fund e-newsletter: 808-822-3012 ext.244 * hhe@hindu.org www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving/