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Letters to the Editor

Hindu Revival

I just came back from my month in India, refreshed after pilgrimages to Sabarimala (in pouring rain) and to Guruvayur. I was pleasantly surprised during my visit to Kerala to see that a large number of Hindu temples have either been refurbished or new ones built. There seems to be a revival of interest in Hinduism there. In the past, it was depressing to see, at every visit, plenty more Muslim and Christian places of worship coming up, but no Hindu ones. I was also fortunate to visit my family's ancestral temple, which I was delighted to find is in good shape with daily pujas.

I had a very positive time in India-there seems to be a mood of optimism in the air about the prospects of the country in general. It was hard to come away from the abode of Swami Ayyappan. It was very beautiful, in the midst of the cloud forests of the Western Ghats; and because it was not in season, it was not crowded and I could have darshan to my heart's content.

Rajeev Srinivasan, Stanford, California, USA

New Dawn

Hinduism Today is a new dawn to Hindus, by which many international matters regarding Hinduism are known by everybody. The multi-language editions will stop the people from being converted into Christianity, Islam and other religions due to

false news of Hinduism. Moreover, this magazine will increase the awareness of the middle class and lower class people of India, who think that Hinduism is not growing and that Christianity dominates.

V.C. Govindarajan, Pondicherry, India

Spiritual Work

We wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you for the esteemed spiritual work being done on Hinduism. We gladly read Hinduism Today, wherein we are surprised to learn several messages about our own mother religion. By the grace of God Siva, your work may increase tremendously and the fame of our Sanatana Dharma may spread all over the world.

Dhanalakshmi, Bhavani, India

Decrying Caste

I was disappointed that you saw fit to run the debate on the merits and demerits of caste between K.V. Bapa Rao and Mr. Rajeev Srinivasan. Caste is an unmitigated evil that should not even be given the respect of a debate in a sacred magazine like yours. Consider, even the little occupational flexibility that caste had lasted only until about the 4th century ad. Until then, people could change castes about as easily as they chose to change occupations. As long as the flexibility existed, India remained a strong, though still divided, society.

Students of history will note that as soon as caste became rigid, India succumbed. The first foreign invasion after that time-by the Arabs 250 years later-destroyed our independence. Instead of integrating Islam with Hinduism, we started to lose our own most oppressed people to that religion. When Christianity came along, the bleeding continued.

While the principle of the caste system might have been laudable long ago, its implementation has been so personified by evil that it must be condemned and abolished from our society, as well as our hearts and souls.

S. Raja Gopalan, Yonkers, New York, USA, CompuServe: 73310,1001

Defending Caste

I noted Sri Raja Gopalan's response to the debate on caste. I completely disagree that caste is so evil that it should not even be debated. Aside from the issue of intellectual freedom, understanding of Indian society will never be complete without an honest understanding of what the caste system is, and what makes it endure despite all our fervent denunciations.

It must be noted that persons (mostly men) of true ability almost always got their share of power even under the caste system. There is little merit, though, in Sri Gopalan's assertion (which incidentally propagates a popular modern-day myth) that, had it not been for the exclusive nature of caste, the assault of monotheistic (and in themselves rigidly exclusivist) Islam and Christianity could have been blunted, ending in the absorption of those religions into Hinduism. The logical flaw in this fond notion is that it puts the cart before the horse. It is indeed true that the upwardly-mobile members of the lower castes flocked to the conquering religions as a means of short-circuiting the obstacles to their progress. But Islam and Christianity did not come to represent upward mobility 'till they had in fact already conquered and dominated the Hindu State!

K.V. Bapa Rao, Los Angeles, California, USA, baparao@acsc.com

Yoga Exploiters

Congratulations for blasting those who claimed that yoga has nothing to do with Hinduism [June, 1994]. Our religion is losing many of its precious assets, such

as yoga, due to some irresponsible people who have been exploiting yoga for commercial purposes.

Mr. Paran, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Spiritual High-Point

I have attended many religious ceremonies of many religious traditions. The recent kumbhabhishekam of the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago was the most moving and beautiful I have ever attended and represents the high-point of my spiritual life to date. My deepest appreciation to Hinduism Today for being a channel of expression in this world to allow for my experience. You help not only those that are Hindu by birth. Keep up the excellent work.

Michail Wisniewski, Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Best of Hinduism

It was with great interest that I read about Mr. Mahalingam Kolapen and his wife Satyabhama of Pretoria, South Africa. I'm glad that he has convinced you to start the South Africa edition of Hinduism Today. The million-plus Indian community will really welcome this great publication, which promotes and encourages the best in Hinduism today.

Mac Lakhani, Sacramento, California, USA

Mistaken Map

We want to draw your attention to page 14 of your July, 1994 issue. The upper portion of Jammu and Kashmir in the map of India has not been shown in full. This is a serious mistake.

Vishwanath, New Delhi, India

Violation of Ahimsa

I was deeply saddened and concerned about the incident concerning ISKCON's Bhaktivedanta Manor in England [August, 1994]. In my opinion, ISKCON should have abided with the decision set by the Letchmore Heath officials. Instead, the actions taken by the Manor devotees violated the Hindu tradition with reference to ahimsa, nonviolence.

Bernard Konowitz, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

No Ads in Temples

I just came back from a tour of South India, visiting temples in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In the temples in Tamil Nadu, commercial advertisements were put up, so it is really a business-house rather than a place of worship. This should stop. Can one see advertisements in a mosque or a church?

Kumar Varma, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corrections

In our September, 1994 article on the Hopi Indians, the first five long sentences

of the quote of Thomas Banyaca, beginning with "Before the White man..." were the words of elder ceremonial chief Dan Evahema. We apologize for the error.

Editor's note: We have received many requests for a pen-pal column. Unfortunately, we are unable to incorporate such a feature in Hinduism Today. If any of our readers would be willing and able to run an independent Hindu pen-pal club (ideally encompassing e-mail too), please send your proposal to the Hawaiian editorial office (address below). If approved, we will announce it in future issues.