Letters to the Editor
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Yoga-Sweet Fruit From Dharma's Tree

Temple Decay

For several decades, I had lived for the day when I would be able to visit Pasupatinatha Temple in Katmandu, Nepal [see HT July, 1993]. The day dawned on 22nd December, 1993. Instead of joy and fulfillment, it turned out to be very disappointing. The place has become very commercial, with a long alley of shops selling offerings. Overly enthusiastic vendors swarm the pilgrims. Next, the grounds and buildings are totally neglected. There is dirt and garbage all over. Half-starved children are roaming around. Some seemingly undesirable characters were sprawled and asleep near the temple in broad daylight. The whole atmosphere was far from holy. The state of some of the other temples, like that of sleeping Narayan, was similar.

This is an appeal to the concerned authorities to improve the overall environments of the temple and also to maintain the physical structures and improve the procedures so that the devotees who have traveled from afar to have peaceful darshan can pray in comfort. In my opinion, there is a problem with the temple's maintenance system, so urgent action should be taken.

Prabha Prabhakar Bhardwaj, Nairobi, Kenya

One in a Million

"The Hindu perspective with real life voices" [Pub. Desk, April, 1994} was the best piece of literature I have ever read. It was so satisfying. It was so soul-searching, and it was so exhaustive.

Then I read about India's praise [Editorial, April, 1994]. I felt that: 1) I am a very lucky man to be born in the Hindu religion; 2) I am very, very lucky to be born in India; 3) That I am in the West for the time being, squaring my accounts of past lives, but my mind and soul are still Hindu and Indian.

Hinduism Today is a one in a million magazine and only people who are lucky and destined to read it will read it!

Tarsem Lal Aggarwal, Harlan, Kentucky, USA

Temple Dancers

Your coverage on Devadasis [August, September, December, 1993 and January, 1994] was really informative for talented new dancers. Devadasis were those who dedicated their lives to their dance not for money but only because it was a medium through which they could worship God. Dance, especially classical Indian dance, was given by Lord Shiva (Tandava) and by Goddess Parvati (Lasya). Devadasis performed this dance for God, but their dance was appreciated by people too. People used to come to the temple for puja and also saw the dance. Because they appreciated the dance, this does not mean that it should be done for their entertainment.

Dancers should continue to maintain the dignity of dance by keeping it a medium for worshiping-they should not commercialize it. Dancers should have the temple as the stage for their dance.

Bhadra Sinha , New Delhi, India

Divided on Deepavali

Clarification is needed on the issue of Deepavali. There is a very small group opposing its celebration and claiming a Saivite directive. Our locals are uncommitted and in the dark. This leads to division of the community, destroys Tamil unity and leaves children confused. For example, we have the International Movement from Malaysia who combine Tamil new year with Valluvar and Pongal and reduce this to his birthday-3000 years are lost in the process. Please throw some light on this.

Dr. M.S. Padayachee, Natal, South Africa

Sai Baba Influenced Indra

I came across an article on Indra Devi [December, 1993]. I regret to note in her biographical coverage, no mention has been made of her encounter with Sri Sathya Sai Baba of India, whom she has been with on several occasions in the later part of her life. I thought she had the greatest impact on her yoga work after this encounter.

U. Madhvanath, Williamsville, New York, USA

Cast out Caste and Dowry

Your paper suggests arranged marriages should be preferred, perhaps not knowing that arranged marriages perpetuate the caste and dowry system. These two evils bedevilling the ethnic Indian Hindu social order rely on arranged marriages for their survival. Love marriages tear down the caste system and dowry giving. Reformist minded Hindus everywhere are committed to eradicate these perversions, and we feel nothing is too sacred to be sacrificed to resist caste and dowry and all its downline abuses including bride burning and child abuse. Caste and dowry are a human rights abuse as well as wife abuse and create a

heavy-handed, male-dominant, tyrannical, patriarchal society. Your advocating arranged marriages could be considered if you had in the same breath proposed positive measures to remove caste and dowry giving. It is incumbent upon the youth to demand spouses of different castes and refuse the noose of dowry.

Kulasingam Ratnasingam , Bandar Sunway, Malaysia

An Era of Renaissance

It's a matter of great satisfaction that such a very useful forum [Hinduism Today] has been functioning for the last sixteen years-bringing together the Hindus spread all over the world to communicate with each other on matters relating to this great religion and spiritualism. I hope that this will usher in an era of renaissance in Hinduism worldwide. It's highly gratifying to note that basic tenets of Hinduism have percolated down to the grass-root levels in the Western world, which has certainly opened its eyes and ears to the spiritual teachings and moral principles of our saints and sages who had dedicated their lives for the good of mankind.

I am amazed by the clarity of understanding and appreciation of a complex Hindu tradition such as Devadasis shown by Prof. Teresa Hubel [January, 1994]. I am yet to find such a positive, sensible and illuminating approach from a co-religionist.

You have given important information on what Hindus are trying to do in many corners of the world. Accomplishing such a hazardous task is certainly a wonderful show of immense dedication, sincerity of purpose and total commitment to what you believe in.

Rishi K. Agarwal, Orissa, India

Looking for a Friend

Hinduism Today is very interesting, inspiring and informative. Many of our friends here are reading it and deriving much benefit from it. We express our profound appreciation and admiration for the noble task you are doing. I am 24, Guyanese and love my religion. I go to the Hindu Damracab Saba Mandir. Please put my name in your newspaper, for I want a friend from India.

Seerojanie Singh, 59 Johanna Cecilia, Essequibo Coast, Guyana

Save the Whales

Your article on the Human Devastation of Second Most Intelligent Species [April, 1994] not only horrified me, but left me with a terrible feeling of helplessness. I strongly urge all who feel compelled to do something about it-write, call and voice your objection. We can make a difference if only we act. Now.

Shivani Yogendra Kumar, Waialua, Hawaii, USA

Editor's note: For those who wish to comment on the Acoustic Thermography of Global Ocean Climate underwater project's effects on marine mammals, here are some addresses and phone numbers (USA):

- Marine Mammal Commission, 1625, I St., NW, Washington, DC 20006. Phone: 202-653-6237.

- Office of Research and Environmental Information, Phone: 301-713-2367.

- Office of Habitat Protection, Phone: 301-713-2322.

Western Hinduism

I am wondering if you have noticed a phenomenon that seems to be occurring here in America. The dharma seems to be taking hold not so much as an expression of Indian culture, but as a unique, sort of home-grown form all its own. It is definitely Hindu in its perspective and trappings, but reformed in a somewhat less Catholic, almost Episcopalian manner. There is a deep interest in daily dhyana, but rather less in daily puja. A readiness to go on pilgrimages, but not necessarily by ever going to India. A love of the Vedas and the Upanishads but less so the Ramayana and Gita. An acceptance of the four stages of life, but absolutely no acceptance of the caste system. A fundamental belief in the rightness of ahimsa, but no interest at all in the sensual prudery enforced on India by the Victorian conquerors. A reverence for all the saints and gurus but with less feeling of the need for dependence on them. I am sure this will offend some, but to me it is deeply exciting. Western Hinduism will be the saving of the West.

Don Dhyan Beggs, Belmont, California, USA

Corrections

On page 9 of our April, 1994 issue, the address for the book Hinduism Simplified should have read: G. Choudhary, 485 Ram's Way NW, Tucker, GA 30084.