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Letters to the Editor

A Miraculous Missive

Something very curious is happening in our Arunachal work. At the most unexpected places, Sivalingams are coming up, especially where there are landslides and such calamities. It doesn't stop there. One young Christian, who was a converted tribal and was eagerly preaching Christianity, had a series of dreams in which Siva appeared and directed him to a place in the deep jungle where a Sivalinga was remaining, protected by a black cobra. For several months he ignored the dream, thinking it impossible that he, a Christian, could have these revelations from Siva. At last unable to come out of it, he went to the jungle following the guidance in the dream and saw the Linga and brought it home.

Then started another set of dreams giving him instructions where he should install it, what pujas he should do, what temple he should construct and so on. He has become a devout Sivabhakta, has built a temple and has become a vegetarian. Under guidance from his "Baba," he gives holy tirtha and prasada to people, curing them of their illnesses! This is a true story. He came to us here, and our boys are helping him to establish the temple at Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal. Making use of this new religious fervor, we are arranging a large number of Sivalinga pujas in many places where scores and hundreds are taking part. See? The Lord Himself has decided to save Hinduism!

Dr. M. Lakshmikumari, President, Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, India

Priests' Dilemma

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami has rendered a singular service to the Hindu dharma by taking up cudgels on behalf of the used, misused and abused priests of the Hindu temples of North America [December, 1994]. As one who has travelled extensively and visited all the major temples in this continent, let me report candidly what I have observed: Priests are made to sweep the floors, rake the leaves and shovel snow. Priests are asked to clean vessels and wash the clothes of the deities. Priests are sometimes required to cook the naivedyam. Managers set up one priest against the other, adopting a divide and rule policy. Priests are compelled to kow-tow to the big wigs-anything but craven obedience is visited by threats of withholding salary increments or, worse, deportation back to India or black listing so that no other temple will hire them. Priests are enrolled in an abominable espionage system-trustees use them to spy on other trustees. Priests are forced to engage in canvassing for candidates contesting elections to boards of trustees and executive committees. Priests who "play ball" and carry out the nefarious schemes of the burra sahibs are given cushy assignments-the reluctant priests are terrorized and held to a form of house arrest. Priests are forced to part with their dakshina money to swell the coffers of the temples. Priests who display the slightest spirit of independence are subjected to scurrilous propaganda and character assassination and gotten rid of.

The thousands of dollars which donors give to our temples do not issue from piety or devotion. They are the result of the tax shelters which Uncle Sam generously provides. The hundreds of gallons of milk which we pour on our vighras and down the drain produce no spiritual merit. Our ostentatious ritualism is simply a religious form of conspicuous consumption and ego satisfaction. It's little wonder that our youngsters are completely turned off by the self-styled founders, leaders and trustees of our temples.

Sharat C. Reddy, MD., New York, USA

Guru Protocol

The editorial `Tis the Season [January, 1995] is very insightful. It would be wise for all to heed its suggestions and to truly comprehend the perspective it offers. Those who are graced to follow the more non-dual Sanatana Dharma should, in wisdom, avoid binding themselves with the more dualistic notions belonging to the system of beliefs characterized by the editor as "Judeo-Christian-Western."

As the Guru is not a body or an embodied ego-entity, it is purposeless to attempt to evaluate the Guru by unenlightened concepts of action, as your editorial points out so clearly. If being with the teacher does not bring the desired enlightenment, it is the duty of the seeker to either listen to the teaching again and clarify the application of the practice or to seek other guidance, carrying respect and gratitude for whatever was learned from the former teacher.

Master Nome Ramanaprasad, Society of Abidance in Truth, Santa Cruz,
California, USA

Nothing to Fear

I am shocked and dismayed to see the criticisms on Self-Realization Fellowship and others who connect Sanatana Dharma and Christian values and principles in their teachings. It is wrong even to hint that great saints like Swami Paramahansa Yogananda "hid themselves behind the cross." [Publisher's Desk, October, 1994]. The worst thing one can do to Hinduism is to project that it has monopoly on truth. So, all those criticisms about Hindu authors and Hindu saints quoting or supporting Christian symbols or Bible verses are unwanted. Hinduism has nothing to fear.

Ed Viswanathan, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

VHP Clarification

I would like to clarify the caption in your Timeline [December, 1994] about the founding of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in 1964. It reads, "India's Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu religious nationalist movement is founded to counter secularism." However, it is and has always been the objective of the VHP to promote the true ideas and principles of Hinduism, which is so broad and secular in its outlook and approach as the long history reveals.

Nand K. Sharma, Salem, New Hampshire, USA

Class Act

Hinduism Today is a great part of my donation to class discussions. I usually carry an issue or two with me. During the study of Hinduism, it helped me very much in answering many questions that even I as a Hindu could not answer. I thoroughly enjoyed the series on temple dancers, and I also was very intrigued by the issue containing the Timeline.

Hemanth Raghu, Warner Robbins, Georgia, USA

Offering Assistance

I am a licensed clinical psychologist in practice for the past twenty-four years. I am available as a resource for consultation via phone or letters to Hindus anywhere in the world. My expertise areas are family and marital problems, alcohol and drug abuse, depression and suicidal feelings, difficulty in adjustment, anxiety, panic, phobias and parent-child conflicts. I will be happy to train community workers and temple staff during my travels abroad, upon invitation, without any charge.

Greesh Sharma, Ph.D., 346 West Trenton Avenue , Morrisville, PA 19067, USA

Looking to Learn

For the past year I have been trying to establish a study and practice group for Hinduism, yoga, Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu and other areas plus trying to locate priests, teachers and pen pals willing to offer their teaching and guidance here. I've also been trying to establish an audio-video library. I know fifty other inmates who want to study, but without teachers and materials we're unable to proceed. I would appreciate any advice or assistance. It'd be a chance for mutual growth and learning.

Phillip Taylor, 164012, J.C.C.C., P.O. Box 900, Jefferson City, MO 65102, USA

Corrections: In the January 1995 article on the St. James School of London, the "London School of Economics" should have read "The School of Economic Science." The number of students should have been listed as just under 600. The name of the Shankaracharya is His Holiness Shantananda Saraswati. And the parent mentioned as "C.V. Patel" is C.B. Patel. We regret the errors.

Pen-pal update: The Hindu pen-pal club is up and running, but it has a new address. Send your letters to Navin Raj, BLK 419, Pasir Ris Drive 6, #02-271, Singapore 1851. Navin asks all pen pals to include their interests and hobbies in their letters.