Letters to the Editor
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South Africa Needs HT

I have been a Saivite Hindu since I was a child. Over the past year I have come to learn more about Saivism and Hinduism respectively, thanks to your wonderful and informative newspaper. Prior to the Mandela government, the former Nationalist rule dominated all aspects of human values, morals, etc., including those religious and spiritual, by enforcing Christian dogmas and doctrines. Now that we are truly a democratic country, I pray through the grace of Lord Siva that soon enough people of all cultural and ethnic race groups in South Africa come to learn and understand the beautiful philosophical teaching embedded in Saivism and Hinduism on the whole.

It would be great though if Hinduism Today was freely available so that many more people could have access to such a useful source of religious news and teachings. Change in religious thought will come, and I am optimistic of the future of Hinduism and the role it will play in the new South Africa.

Rajan Reddy , Dalpark, Brakpan, 1540, South Africa

Facets of Feminism

I was extremely pleased and excited to read the article on Manushi and Madhu Kishwar. [Mettlesome Manushi, May, 1995]. I have read issues of Manushi and attest to the fact that the information conveyed in the journal has tremendous value, not only for the purpose of educating others but also for promoting discussions regarding the role of women in Indian society. Although I am an enthusiastic reader of Manushi, I found that the article about Manushi painted a

negative picture of feminism. I feel that the statement in the article "facts and fairness-not a feminist agenda-empower this societal Journal (Manushi)" promoted lack of understanding regarding the diverse nature of feminism. Feminism has many facets. Feminism in its purest sense does not promote male-bashing and it is not a movement for "women-only, feminists' empowerment," as Poornima Narayanan stated.

I consider myself to be a feminist, and I agree that I have been influenced by western thought. But as an educated woman, I have also internalized the culture that I grew up in and know that diversity exists within all cultures. Just as many do not follow Hinduism in its purest sense, many also do not follow feminism in its purest sense. Feminism can be defined as a consciousness-raising movement geared towards promoting social reform and providing education and understanding to women and men regarding diverse topics such as sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, etc. That is the feminist agenda for all.

Sheetal Wadher, Rockaway, New Jersey, USA

Awesome Aums

I am so full of joy, finding Aums on the World Wide Web. Thank you for your world-enriching efforts! Hinduism Today is my default starting place on the net, and it seems every time I log in, there is something new.

Sadhunathan Nadesan, pslvax!sadhu@ucsd.edu San Diego, California, USA

No Hotel Here

I enjoyed reading both yours and Gurudeva's editorial on Ashram Hotels [April, 1995]. It was most timely and true. Part of the fault for this unfortunate belief in the minds of the public that ashrams are old-age homes, hotels, holiday homes, picnic spots and so on, lies with the ashrams themselves.

In a democratic age, the measure of success is quantity. He who gets the most votes is the best. He who has the biggest following is the greatest guru. In order to attract large numbers, one must necessarily go down to the lowest common denominator, which is on the human level, eating and sleeping. Everyone has a clean, quiet, cheap place for these two functions, and throw in a little spiritual entertainment in the way of fantasies and games, then the democratic formula for success stands fulfilled.

We are the antithesis of the modern ashram. We make it so difficult for anyone to get in our doors that we have very few disciples. But the ones we have are true to the core. That is the price we willingly pay for the freedom to do our sadhana without disturbance.

Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, India

Bangladesh Temples

Please try to establish a center of your organization in Dhaka. People will give you their temples, ashrams and land for you to run. ISKCON is taking only Krishna temples. Now they are fighting for a large land of a Siva temple in Dhaka city which is a very valuable land. They have a plan to make a large temple on that land. They will win because all fear Americans and foreigners. Your organization may run our many Siva temples, peedams and ashrams which are now having problems. ISKCON naturally is not interested in Siva temples. What is your opinion? Please let me know. If you agree, I can talk about you with our respected Hindus who can help you.

Shyamal Chandra Debnath, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Priests & Management

The appalling spectacle of wide-spread Priest Bashing [Publishers Desk, Dec. 1994]

indicates that something structural is amiss with our USA Hindu temples. It is more than good people with poor judgment serving on boards of directors. The prevalence and seriousness of the problem indicates that there are fundamental structural defects in the current western temple paradigm.

Most of the USA Hindu temples are incorporated as non-profit corporations in order to qualify for significant tax advantages. Unfortunately, the standard non-profit corporation operates within the business paradigm where the board of directors is the only authority defining the institution.

Fortunately, the West already has an excellent paradigm for our holy temples-the university paradigm. By analogy, the priests play a critical role similar to the role of the faculty in the university. In the university paradigm, the faculty is given independence over curriculum and faculty members are given a tenure system to insure independence. The university corporation, on the other hand, is governed by a board of directors which is responsible for the administrative functions. Likewise, priests can be given thematic responsibilities for the divine services and the boards can be given responsibilities for the administration of the temple.

I drafted a bylaw for the Hindu Service Society of Iowa as part of an effort to form a temple to Mother Divine in the Iowa City area. This document seeks to legally redefine the USA temple "paradigm" within the university paradigm rather than the business corporation paradigm. These bylaws are the first to my knowledge which actually acknowledges the priests as a thematic, institutional part of the temple.

Paul C. DeSantis, Esq., Attorney-at-Law, Santa Monica, California, USA

Corrections: On page 28 of the June issue the age of Priya Alahan was given incorrectly. She politely and personally informed the editors, "I'm not four, I'm six, going on seven." We apologize for the error.