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Published by Anonymous on Jul. 01, 1996

Editorial

Remember, India: This Too Shall Pass

the Editor

It has been said that journalism is literature in a hurry. We at Hinduism Today understand that sentiment. During the eighteen years we have reported on sanatana dharma, we have often been compelled (OK, we chose) to rush a fast-breaking story (come on, this is a Kapaa monthly, not a New York daily) to the front page, penitently caching a reader's more reflective contribution in a cabinet.

This month we turn the tables (and empty that cabinet) to give civilized space to your poems, diaries, opinions, meditative writings and drawings for our 249,999 other readers to enjoy. This was accomplished by adding more pages than usual to your Hindu Family Newspaper. For the second year, we are publishing the Hinduism Today Annual Literary Review, which starts on page 15. We hope all bibliophiles and poets, wordsmiths and armchair philosophers enjoy this special edition. Find a big banyan tree by a bubbling brook outside your village, and spend a leisurely hour or two with these high-minded articulations, then hurry home and spend the rest of the afternoon making up the lost time.

On page one this month you will find an article on the recent elections in India. While the rest of the world was looking the other way--riveted by America's wildman unibomber, held spellbound by Bosnian bloodsheds, drooling over royal divorce in the UK and presidential marital confessions in South Africa--Hindus quietly took over India in early May. Sure, the results are already history, but they are also historical, so we cranked up our fax machine, our Internet software agents and even a few old-fashioned telephones and an auto rickshaw to collect the impressions and opinions of respected religious leaders all over India, asking them all to comment on the impact all this may have on the future of Sanatana Dharma.

We marveled to watch the story unfold here in Hawaii in the Western media that so seldom covers India. Suddenly, we were barraged by video images on CNN and print reports in Newsweek and page one of The Wall Street Journal. Tens of thousands of NROs also rejoiced that for first time in about 1,200 years avowed Hindus were fully in charge of their own country. Some told us that's good, declaring it's about time a nation that is 85% Hindu stopped catering to the Christians and Muslims. Others find it foreboding and fear the stirring of frantic fundamentalism or worse--raw retaliation. Both, of course, are right. The election is a momentous accomplishment, for which millions worked selflessly for long years, and for which hundreds of millions have suffered silently awaiting their moment of witness. It is also a monumental challenge deserving our most spiritual responses: humility and remembrance of the Vedic precept that nothing, neither the good nor the bad, neither foreign occupation nor BJP reign lasts forever. In fact, before we finished our article the BJP had resigned, and it had to be rewritten! It's one thing not to last forever, but quite another to endure for less than two weeks.

But it's not over yet, so we will all stay tuned to the daily soap-opera and cheer for the good guys--whoever they turn out to be.

This short-lived reign forces us all (yes, even India's heady new political leaders) to remember the vision of worldly transcendence found in our most sacred revealed scriptures. To catalyze the recollection, here are three relevant verses taken from that marvelous anthology, *The Vedic Experience*.

"The Man who understands both the impermanent and the permanent, holding the two in tension together, by the impermanent passes over death and by the permanent attains immortal life." *Isa Upanishad 14*.

"The foolish go after outward pleasures and walk into the snare of all-embracing death. The wise, however, discerning immortality, do not seek the permanent among things impermanent." *Katha Upanishad, IV, 2*

Permanent among the impermanent, conscious among the conscious, the One among the many, fulfiller of desires--the wise who perceive him established in themselves attain--and no others--everlasting peace. *Svetasvatara Upanishad VI, 10-1*

It is human nature to take consolation in the ephemeral nature of things, but why are those always the bad things? If we are suffering, we know it will pass and find solace in our knowing. If we are crossing a rough patch, we trudge on, trusting it will

not last forever. That's sensible.

But who is there among us who calls to mind the noneternal nature of our joys and successes? Who stops amid the ecstasy to gravely reflect, "This too shall pass"? We should, say the sages.

Today Hindus everywhere are enjoying such a moment of triumph. But in our exultation we need to accept how very transcient is the security the world offers even the most deserving among us. In this victory we will be wise to grow more and crow less, lest later it be served on a banana leaf for us to eat.

"You thank God for the good things that come to you, but you don't thank Him for the things that seem to be bad. That is where you go wrong."

Ramana Maharshi