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LETTERS

New High School In Nepal

I came to know about the ideals and objectives of your prestigious magazine, HINDUISM TODAY. I found it deeply dedicated to fostering cultural and spiritual thinking. We found it heart opening and believe whoever realizes its articles through the heart will become aware of the importance of spirituality to bring cultural harmony.

Here in Nepal we are also doing dedicated service through a volunteer organization called Matribhoomi Sevak Sangh. To materialize its objectives, it has established an educational institute named Hindu Vidyapeeth Nepal, an English medium high school, dedicated to maintaining and promoting Nepali spiritual, social and cultural values through education and community service and fostering the ideals of peace, tolerance and international fellowship supporting these values.

C.M. Yogi, Principal, hvpn@wlink.com.np

India's Spiritual Magnetism

Thank you for bringing such an enriching publication into existence. The "Publisher's Desk" alone supersedes the cost of the magazine. Although I don't consider myself a Hindu, I don't consider myself not one. From early childhood, I have always had an interest in Indian culture and found its beauty powerfully attractive. I would read old encyclopedias for school reports. The images of spiritual men, of hundreds of people washing themselves in a river, the pictures of women dancers, the weddings, the body decorating, the temples, idols--all of it fascinated me. The pictures promised some hidden wisdom that the people in my life were apparently not letting me in on. But to my disappointment, the words offered nothing but facts and bias. They were matter-of-fact statements, and often not pleasant. Captions that described yoga postures as "tortuous exercises" and statements like "Å massive economic, social and political problemsÅ" left me unsatisfied, to say the least. I was turned off by what I read. It seemed that the authors of these books looked down on these people. I wouldn't accept it. I

knew there was something to be glorified in what I saw. I wasn't, however, going to get it from reading those old books.

One issue that I continue to see in your magazine is that of conversion. I am always upset to hear the horrible things that religious sects are doing to each other. The Vedas are the true, eternal words. Other sects cannot destroy them. The reason why people of the West have been seeking the East is this--understanding. If India only has one thing, it is this, her very core, understanding. Every time there is a Hindu being converted to Christianity, there are ten leaving Christianity in search of something more. That something more can only be found through the Vedas.

David M. Stallings, veda@dejazzd.com

Guyana's Hindu Reality?

Many incorrect statements and distortions are presented in Anil Mahabir's article, "Hindus of South America" (Jan/Feb, 2001) in HINDUISM TODAY. The

writer portrays the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha as doing tremendous Hindu work in Guyana. In fact, the Dharmic Sabha is an arm of the Marxist People's Progressive Party (PPP), of which Reepu Daman Persaud is a minister. How can a Marxist politician be an effective Hindu leader at the same time?

In an article, "Decrying Dogma, Guyana Pandit Rallies Nation's Young" (HINDUISM TODAY, June, 1990), Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud made numerous claims about the glorious programs of the Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha. From then to now, one would expect great Hindu developments in Guyana. But this has not happened. Why? It is obvious that the Dharmic Sabha is politicking only because it is an arm of the PPP. It has never opposed the PPP on any of its numerous anti-Hindu policies in Guyana.

The writer claimed, "Pundit Reepu is highly respected in Guyana as one who has always stood for the Indians and Hindus." This statement could only be possible because Anil followed the path the politicians designed for him to follow. "There were people whom I met who did not want me to speak to others, and even went out of their way to prevent

me from doing so." It is clear that the writer was caught in an organized plan: where to go (a car and driver provided), and whom to interview (Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud, Parmanand Samlal, Dirgopal Mangal and Clinton Collymore--all members and officials of the Marxist PPP).

Assuming that Pandit Reepu has stood-up for Indians and Hindus, where are the results? Hindi is still not taught in schools; May 5th (Indian arrival day) is still not a national holiday; the rising tide of suicide among Hindus is still not on the national agenda. Moreover, in Guyana today, Hindus are leaving the country in droves, or are living in deplorable conditions! When it comes to taking a stand for the Hindus in Guyana, the PPP and the Dharmic Sabha live in a world of false dreams and denials. For example, statistics indicate that there is an increase in Hindus converted to Christianity, yet Dirgopal of the Dharmic Sabha says, "conversion is on the decrease." The writer states that Pandit Reepu wants Hindus scholars to "stay and assist in developing Hinduism" in Guyana. Ironically, he has always acted as if Hinduism in Guyana begins and ends with him. There are Hindu scholars in Guyana. But they do not follow the dictates of the party and become victims of character assassinations and smear campaigns.

Pandit Radha Raman Upadhyaya, tejmani@aol.com

No Such Claims Were Made!

I must point out some serious errors in the article "Yoga Goes to Goa" (Jan/Feb, 2001). Rolf's explanation of the potential benefit of practicing the advanced series of ashtanga --which is to "further cleanse the body of toxins and to develop shtira baga, or ã̃divine stamina/stability"--was displaced and I found myself quoted "...I have now cleansed my body of all toxins, and it has given me divine stamina"! Rolf or I have never made such an unlikely claim. The information about the intermediate series (nadi shodhana) was missing entirely. Briefly put, this series purifies and balances the nadi and nervous systems. Lastly, my comment regarding the development of upper-body strength for women was a minor point in a conversation about experiencing, and hopefully balancing, the feminine and

masculine polarities, within and without, on a daily basis during this practice. Please also note that Rolf's surname is properly spelled Naujokat.

Kirsten Berg, kersjeb@hotmail.com

PM Can't Call Himself Hindu?

I want to draw your attention to an article published recently on the internet by Pritish Nandy, excerpted below:

"President George W. Bush, in his inaugural address, made so many

references to God, the Bible and Christianity that even the American media sat up and noticed it. No, no one was in the least embarrassed by it. But they noticed it and some of them pointed it out, quite approvingly, for in American politics such references to religion are not seen as anything wrong. A President who flaunts his faith is no zealot; nor is he a Christian fundamentalist. He is a good, decent, God-fearing man.

Bush is not the first American President to be so openly Christian. Many before him have rooted for a good, strong Christian image. No one doubted their motives. No one disparaged them for doing so. Even

when it won them votes, no one accused them of religious bigotry or political opportunism.

Compare all this to India. Think of what Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee goes through every time he mentions the dreaded H word. While many are ready to applaud him when he talks about fresh peace initiatives in Kashmir or making friends with Pakistan, the moment he says anything about being Hindu or defends the cause of Hindutva, he is promptly accused of revealing his true colors as a khaki knickerwallah [member of the RSS, India's largest Hindu service organization, so called for their trademark khaki-colored

shorts.] The very mention of his religious antecedents, however gently, raises the hackles of the Opposition and the media. Forget President Bush; if Vajpayee were to just talk about what being a Hindu means to him, he would be flagellated as a bigot who has emerged from the closet.

My question is: Why must we deny Prime Minister Vajpayee his right to be a Hindu? Bush does not become a fundamentalist when he refers to Christianity or the Bible. No one argues that he is anti-Muslim or anti-secular simply because he flaunts his faith in public. By the same argument, when Vajpayee

speaks of Hindutva or the Ram temple, why should we brand him as a fundamentalist? He remains what he always was, a Hindu at heart, a secular leader in office."

Ian Stone, stump71@hotmail.com

From:

www.rediff.com/news/2001/feb/01nandy.htm

Powerful Message of Ahimsa

I was moved to tears by the beauty of Sringeri Math's message to the UN, appearing in your Jan/Feb, 2001 issue in an article called "Spirituality Alone Can Save Our Planet." The first paragraph gave deep validation to my own fervent prayer: "Dear Lord, please do not allow me to cause harm to another living being ever again." I thought my prayer was silly and trivial, but the Jagadguru said, "It does not matter if we cannot do good to others," and "The greatest service one can do to humanity is not to hurt anyone by thought, word or action." I feel much

better now that I know my service is important, even though I don't have enough time or energy to do great acts of karma yoga on a regular basis. And the Jagadguru's paragraph on different religions for different people was like balm to my heart.

Thank you for your valor in impartially presenting the views of Hindu leaders from many other traditions, even when they differ significantly from your own. Words cannot say how much your magazine reinforces my

identify as a Hindu and helps to expand and refine the scope of my belief system.

Sandhi J. Larsen, [sandy1@triconex.com](mailto:andy1@triconex.com)

Violence on Valentine's Day

I read with deep sadness the accounts of Hindus protesting Valentine's Day in India--Hindus committing acts

of violence. Ahimsa was forgotten. Nonviolent protest was forgotten. Decency was forgotten. One more chance for people around the world to make judgments of many people, based on the actions of a few. I send my condolences to anyone hurt during these incidents. Then again, maybe we were all hurt.

Usha Bailey,
GardzLaFoi@aol.com

The Northeast Report

I want to thank you for Renu Malhotra's illuminating article "The Northeast," (Nov/Dec, 2000) about the complex socio-economic situation of Northeast India. Geographic isolation, differences of language, tribe, religious beliefs, British colonizing practices and the current

federal, state and local laws have made life complicated. All the states, even districts, have always been ethnically diverse, and there have been many changes in self identification. A few points need mentioning. Although since the 1947 Partition there has been great migration of Hindu Bengali refugees from Bangladesh, Bengali and tribal Tripuris have always lived and

intermarried in Tripura since time immemorial. For long periods of time the Raja of Tripura ruled over much of eastern Bengal [now Bangladesh]. Raja Dharma Manikya [1431-1462] of Tripura was the first to adopt Bengali as the state language, long before Bengal proper adopted it. After the ghastly 1964 anti-Hindu Hazrat Bal Danga pogrom in Bangladesh [East Pakistan]

a large-scale influx of Hindu-refugees made the locals, tribal and non-tribal a minority. Tribals were no more known as Bengali tribes. Many of the Bengali last names, e.g., Deb-Burman, Debnath, Tripura, Reang are of Tripura origin. Now a small group of Christians have been murdering Hindu non-Christian tribals and Bengalis on a regular basis, and are planning to

introduce Roman alphabet
for Kakbarak language
replacing
Eastern/Bengali/Assamese/
Manipuri characters.

Sabyasachi G. Dastidar,
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Beyond the Wedding
Tradition?

Women in India are very fast following the Western system of marrying a man of their choice. They believe that arranged marriages are mismatched and are fixed under pressure, where a woman is always the sufferer. Now more and more women and men without any fear of caste, creed, color and religion are approaching

the court for marriage under the Special Marriage Act of 1954, thereby saving time, money and hassling. This system has definitely given a deathblow to the dreams of the greedy and dowry-seeking parents of grooms. If this system proves successful, there will be no bride-burning deaths in future, and many innocent/precious

lives of the newly wed brides will be saved. Nationally, in 1997 a total of more than 3,000 weddings were registered under this legal system. [These] "love marriages" of today in India [i.e. unblessed by parents or Vedic rites, could be equated with] what Manu Smriti refers to as a gandharva vivah--where a man and a woman live

together willingly to fulfil
their passions without
any marriage ceremony.

Pandit Madan Lal,
madangupta50@hotmail.com

Corrections

Apologies to all for the missing line at the end of the article on indigenous Canadians seeking reparations for child abuse from Christian churches (page 33, Mar/Apr, 2001). Many readers were justifiably irritated, feeling they missed out on a major closing. The article

ended with one
additional four-word
line:

"Convincing natives still
embittered by what
they endured in
residential schools to
go along with the
scheme may prove to
be an even greater

challenge.

The caption for the page 52 photo for the Vedic math article (Mar/Apr, 2001) misidentified the two gentlemen. It is really R. P. Jain of the Motilal Banarsidass Publishing in the center and Dr.

N. K. Jain Chowdhry,
University of Nagpur,
on the right.

There is a new URL for
the Chinmaya Mission
of Southern California:
[www.chinmaya.org/ce
nters/la/](http://www.chinmaya.org/centers/la/).

The correct URL for the Yoga Research and Education Center is: www.yrec.org and not the one published in the page 81, classified ad of the Mar/Apr, 2001 issue.

The e-mail address for

Manushi magazine is:
manushi@nda.vsnl.net.in and the postal
address is: Manushi,
C/174 Lajpat Nagar 1,
New Delhi, 110024
India. This is a
correction to those
details printed on
page 59 of the article
"Manu and the Brits"
(Jan/Feb, 2001).

The correct phone numbers for Mystic Fire Video ("Ammachi's Video" Mar/Apr, 2001) are
USA: 1-800-292-9001;
International:
1-212-941-0999. The number we printed was for their fax: 212-941-1443.

Letters with writer's name, address and daytime phone number, should be sent to:

Letters, Hinduism
Today

107 Kaholalele Road

Kapaa, Hawaii,
96746-9304 USA

or faxed to: 808.
822.4351

or e-mailed to:

letters@hindu.org

Letters may be edited
for space and clarity
and may appear in

electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.