Letters
Category : November/December 2000
Published by Anonymous on Nov. 02, 2000

Letters

Taco Bell Blues

In "How to Ease Karma" (July/August 2000), using the example of the devout Hindu couple unintentionally eating beef when they ordered a bean burrito at Taco Bell just doesn't seem a strong example of the unintentional action. However, chanting a mantra for 30 minutes a day for 11 days does seem a much more sattvic and beneficial penance than suing Taco Bell so the couple could go to India and bathe in the Ganga river. I felt the same way when you reported the incident a few years ago. The man opened himself up to pollution! First, Taco Bell is a fast-food place selling beef with the exception of a few items. Also, nearly all have cheese in them, including the bean burritos. Cheese normally is made with animal rennet, a product from the inside of the cow. In a few specialty stores, you can buy rennetless cheese made from a vegetable substitute. But it takes careful label reading and questions to the store personnel to find. Second, the same hands assembling the bean burrito also assemble the myriad meat dishes. So the whole environment is suspect. Besides, personnel make mistakes. Repeating your meatless order and getting an acknowledgement is absolutely essential in a meat-eating society. Sure, the devout Hindu was shocked at biting into meat, but he was not thinking too clearly when he went to Taco Bell to eat in the first place.

Lucille Toland

San Pedro, California

Deepak Chopra

Deepak Chopra does not wish to label himself a Hindu for fear of confining himself. He is confining himself even more by letting his name remain Deepak Chopra--a clear identification of his Indian and Hindu origin (July/August 2000). He should call himself "A Man" to remain unconfined and not humanist? It is people like him that do more harm to Hinduism than Muslims or Christians. Young people tend to imitate what successful people like him do. God knows how many young people will now stop calling themselves Hindus and will become canon fodder for Christian evangelists.

Mahendra Mathur
mmathur@tstt.net.tt

Sister Nivedita

Revered Swami Ekatmanandaji of Advaita Ashrama has, in his letter published under the title "Sister Nivedita--Second View" (May/June 2000), tried to present the view that Swami Vivekananda did not approve of Sister Nivedita's political activities, "scolded her severely" and wanted her either to give up the Order or give up her political activities. But this view is contradictory to facts presented in two authoritative biographies of Sister Nivedita, The Dedicated--A Biography of Sister Nivedita in French by Lizelle Raymond (English translation by Samata Books, 10, Kamaraj Bhavan, 573, Anna

Road, Chennai 600 006, India, 1985) and Sister Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda by Pravrajika Atmaprana (by Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 5, Nivedita Lane, Calcutta 700 003). Lizelle Raymond clearly points out: "During those first months of 1902, the seeds of all Nivedita's later life had really been sown under the eyes of Swami Vivekananda. He had placed entire confidence in her and had made it clear that he would never interfere in any path she chose to take, though sometimes he appeared to be concerned as to whether she could combine this expression of active life with the spiritual discipline he had given her." She further says, "On the other hand, Swami Vivekananda had very often remarked to these groups of disciples and friends during the last months, that he counted on Nivedita to arouse the political sense among Hindus. He wanted patriotism in India, love for the country. It was in that sense that he had pledged her to serve India, and to sacrifice herself to the last renunciation." It was not Swami Vivekananda but some of the other monks of the Order who were opposed to Nivedita's political activities. This is made amply clear by her statement: "To the monks, Swami Vivekananda had said that Nivedita must be given full liberty, 'even if she works

without any connection with the mission;' but they now realized that she might deflect their line of conduct. They appealed to her vow of obedience either to renounce entirely the activity which was so dear to her, or so to organize her life that her freedom would be wholly recognized." It was this appeal that forced Nivedita to tender her resignation from the Mission.

Sadhu Prof. V. Rangarajan
Sister Nivedita Academy
sadhurangarajan@vsnl.com

Arya Samaj Anniversary

On April 10, 1875, the Arya Samaj was founded by Maharishi Dayanada in Mumbai, India. On April 10, 2000, Arya Samajists all over the world celebrated the 125th anniversary of the founding. In the UK, the London branch celebrated this special event with great enthusiasm. Sir Satcam Boolell, the High Commissioner of Mauritius in the UK was the chief guest. Sir Satcam said it was Swami Dayananda

who taught the people of India to feel proud of its glorious past. It was Swami Dayananda who re-established the monotheistic (one God) philosophy, provided scientific and logical interpretations of the Vedas. Dayananda countered the propaganda of others who misinterpreted and misunderstood the Vedas and removed meaningless and superstitious rituals from religious ceremonies. Dayananda also campaigned hard to break the barrier of the caste system in Hindu society and worked to eradicate untouchability. And his most notable contribution has been to reestablish the equal status of women, which existed in the Vedic period in ancient India. Swamiji, also established educational institutions for women and campaigned against child marriages and allowed widows to remarry.

Boopendre Sundhoo

London, UK

Bimonthly

I was very happy with the increase of knowledge gotten from Hinduism Today but disappointed to note that it is now a two-month issue. There is so much to learn and Hinduism is a very wide subject and on going, and I feel that it should be brought back to a monthly issue and slowly to a fortnightly. For me, this magazine is equivalent to a spiritual Time magazine. Likewise, when the Christians have been summoned to keep part of their salary for the church, I feel at least we should keep some money to the purchase of Hinduism Today. After all, it will benefit not one but many succeeding generations as well.

Umasenan Thanikasalam
umasenant@hotmail.com

Great Magazine

I have just read the last issue of your magazine, and I felt transported into a whirl of fresh air, contrary to most religious periodicals where you feel more enclosed as you leaf through. Sanatana Dharma is the only religion I have found on Earth that gives the opposite impression to that of entering a sect of some form or another. I especially appreciated your frank account of the hideous dowry custom of contemporary India, (May/June 2000) which many people here think to be linked to "Hindu" customs, whereas it developed quite recently under Western influence. I had thought so

by instinct immediately before seeing it confirmed by you. You hide no fact of contemporary India, however ugly it is, so you are not a propaganda organ. Some other religions embrace all kinds of superstitions to suppress thought or life, and just deny barbarities happening in the lands under their purview.

FranÃ§ois Miville
fmiville@sympatico.ca

Act Against God

Recently the pope, like the southern Baptists of the USA, has given a call to convert

Hindus into Christianity. In reality, what does this call mean? If anything, such a call amounts to inciting Christian missionaries to cause destabilization in Hindu society. Many would see it for what it is, a deliberate declaration of religious war. There is no provocation whatsoever against them, and still they wage this war. In the human race there exists a huge diversity in culture, tradition and religion, and in many other aspects of social life. Who is responsible for

creating this diversity? If we believe there is a Creator of the universe, surely then He is the One who has brought about this diversity. And it is this diversity that makes life so interesting and worth living. It is the order that exists in nature. Without it, life would be a dreary, dull tormenting saga of monotony. It is there for the good of the mankind. Therefore, is it possible that God, having created such diversity, will command one religious group to wage a religious war against followers

of another religion? The mission of proselytization is designed to destroy the diversity in God's creation. It is an irreligious act; indeed, it is an act against God.

Dr. Jatindra Saha
jsaha@plymouth.ac.uk

Children Need Fathers

Many people today believe that fathers are unnecessary. I believe the opposite. I pledged to live

my life according to the principle of Hindu Dharma, where every child deserves a father (and a mother). An offspring is the product of a wedding solemnized between a celibate and a virgin by chanting the Vedic mantras. People worship Lord Rama and Krishna. If they had been the product of a mother only, the devotees would never have recognized them even as human beings. The United

States, the richest, most powerful and the second biggest democracy in the world, is becoming an increasingly fatherless society. According to the learned writer, David Blankenhorn, tonight more than 40 percent of American children will go to sleep in homes in which their fathers do not live. Fatherlessness is the leading cause of declining childhood well being in our

society. For, in addition to losing fathers, we are loosing something larger: our idea of fatherhood. Fatherhood is essential. Being a loving husband and committed father is the best part of being a man.

Pandit Madan Lal
Duarte, California

Apples and Oranges

In last month's letters

section, Bharat J. Gajjar hit the nail on the head with his discussion of "religions not the same." I call it "Apples and Oranges." These days I see a lot of "interfaith" efforts to alleviate various social ills or just to worship. Increasingly, these events are including the Eastern religions. While I think these efforts are laudable, they have always made me a little uncomfortable. It is

nice to hold hands and sing songs for awhile, but if the discussion really got down to the true causes of all our problems and their true solutions, I predict a fundamental chasm would soon appear. In mainline Christian denominations, the people are busy dividing themselves up into little groups: male, female, gay, black, Hispanic, single, etc. In Hinduism or Buddhism, that would be

missing the entire point. Christians only seem to see themselves as bodies, not souls. When one is taught to identify with the body and constantly separating oneself off according to the conditions of that body, then how do you expect to solve the problem of say, racism? In fact, isn't this the very cause of racism? Christianity places a glass ceiling over all of humanity, places Jesus Christ high up

on a pedestal, points to Him and then tells the people: "See that? Isn't that wonderful? You can't have it." Hinduism says: "Not only can you have that, it is your True Self. It is who you really are!" After working as a secretary at an Episcopal Church for six years, I have never heard the clergy speak to their parishioners about their souls. In fact, I rarely even hear the word. And then they wonder why

they are not attracting any young people to their churches! So here you have your "apples" and your "oranges"--and never the twain shall meet. One separates man from God and the other says there is no separation. One is limited and materialistic, and the other is limitless and liberating. No, all religions are not the same.

Janna Howell
parishepiphany@worldnet.

att.net

Guarding Hinduism

Why do people convert from Hinduism? One reason is the caste system. This has always divided us and made us vulnerable to attack. Another is that girls and boys are not taught that if you want to marry

outside our religion then they should ask their partner to follow Hinduism instead of converting. This is what Muslims and Christians do, so why not us? I also think that we are too tolerant, which make us easy targets. We should make our voice heard and should fight when there are atrocities

happening against our religion or our people, whether in India, Afghanistan, USA or Pakistan. Why do people in Rome or America make noise only when Christians in India gets killed? Why don't we hear protests at the international level over the near-daily killings of Hindus in Pakistan,

Kashmir, Afghanistan and Bangladesh? Why don't Hindus do anything when our religion is publicly criticized in America, Africa or even in India?

Haresh Vyas
haresh.vyas@uk.sun.com

Excluded for a Nose Stud

Dear Craig Weston, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Onehunga High School: I hope that you will reconsider your decision to exclude Shivani Karan from school for wearing a Hindu khil. The nose

stud, as show in Hinduism Today (July/August 2000), is small and dark, and is less conspicuous than many naturally occurring moles. With this bit of demure metal, Shivani is marking her connection with the oldest continuous

culture on earth. Ethics in today's world is a war, and there's nothing less effective in war than a properly uniformed coward. You sir, as an educator, cannot be expected to send this girl to war without her khil, as that may be what gives her the

courage to fight well.
Mike Pettingill
Kailua, Hawaii

It's an All-Carribean Holi

I am an avid reader of your publication and look forward to every new

issue. I was a bit disturbed by an article featured in July/August 2000 entitled "Holi Caribbean Style." After reading the article, I got the impression that this Holi celebration was a purely Guyanese event. I know for a fact that this was not

true. I am a Trinidadian person of Indo-Caribbean decent living in the area where the celebration was held and very actively participated in the celebration with many other Trinidadians. Holi in this area of New York City is not a Guyanese

celebration as implied but a celebration supported by many people of Indo-Caribbean origin.

Amar Bedasie
Funday03@aol.com

* Author Vishnu Bisram responds,

"The letter writer is correct. I always try to write from the point of view of an Indo-Caribbean person and try not to separate Trinidadians from Guyanese. The participants were both Trinidadians

and Guyanese although more of the latter. There were celebrants from Suriname and Jamaica as well. Everyone was welcomed. I had no intention to imply that it was a Guyanese event and

regret that impression."

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

Today
107 Kaholalele Road
Kapaa, HI 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.