Letters
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Ramakrishna Mission

Please accept my pranams and best wishes. I would like to thank you for the beautiful issue of a couple months ago [Aug. 1999] featuring the work of the Ramakrishna Mission. All of the sadhus were very pleased at the wonderful sentiments expressed in the articles and the sympathetic and accurate descriptions of our activities.

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Informative Abuse Article

I am so happy and impressed with the article on spouse abuse [Oct. 1999]. The article's delicate subject was expressed in an informative and dignified way, and I am sure it will benefit men and empower women. Because I come from a matriarchal state in India, I feel grateful for the coverage of this subject. Also, tackling such a subject puts Hinduism Today in a very special category amongst magazines. I am very proud of the wonderful work Subramuniyaswami and the monks are doing to educate the world in creating more spiritual, healthy ways of living.

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Devi Website

I'd like to thank you for the many fine web sites you feature on the Digital Dharma page [Oct. 1999]. It's great for a person like me who is learning all he can about Sanatana Dharma. I have always had a great love for Mother India and Her peoples. The website featuring "Devi: The Great Goddess" is fairly well done, except where they compare the Christian Trinity to the "Hindu Trinity." There is no comparison, and if I read it correctly, they imply that Hinduism models itself on Christianity. Another flaw in their museum is referring to the Aryan beginnings of Holy Mother India. One of the best books around today dealing with the Aryan myth is In Search of the Cradle of Civilization, by Georg Feurstein, Subhash Kak and David Frawley. I would recommend this masterpiece to anyone still unclear about this piece of history.

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Life After Death

In your wonderfully educational issue [Sept. 1999], I especially appreciated the

"Life After Death" article. The entire world's population is suffering in ignorance under the modern-science delusion that we are material only by nature. Regarding the article on disabled persons and how to view them, my personal take is that we are all disabled, more or less. If we look down on a disabled person, we are thinking we are this body only, which is false. Spiritually we are all disabled or we would not have descended to this place of birth and death (samsara loka), and would have remained in Vaikuntha, or the spiritual realm of the soul proper. Perhaps it is now needed to continue your subject of birth after death and transformation rites, i.e., what is there in the spiritual world? What do people do there? How many levels are there in the spiritual world? We are informed by the Vedas of the existence of the spiritual realm, and how it is many, many times bigger than this

entire material cosmic manifestation. There are numerous Sanskrit verses to substantiate all this information. It is only natural that the nature of the spiritual realm, as different from that of the astral realms, be spoken of and elucidated upon. We are all spiritual beings eternally, with personality, therefore we refer to God as the Supreme Personality, who goes on creating unlimited jivas, souls, each with individuality, which is another amazing factor of God's creativity.

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"Life After Death" was an exceptionally well explained, in-depth article. To quote, "It is painful to the astral body to have

the physical body cut or seriously disturbed within 72 hours after death." This raised a lot of questions in me. Does it mean to avoid this happening as a Hindu we should not donate organs? Please advise.

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* We are researching the subject of organ donation, as well as several other ethical questions raised by advances in modern medicine such as artificial insemination and

genetic engineering. Opinions on these subjects are welcome from our readers.

Christian Conversion

The view expressed in this article is that, 1) religious conversion is an act of violence, and 2) religions such as Christianity and Islam are aggressive religions, as they convert Hindus [India's Christian Challenge, June, 1999]. What the writer fails to

ask is, a) who are those Hindus who are being converted? and b) why are these Hindus vulnerable to being converted? Studies show that Hindus who are converted to Christianity and Islam are in the lower rung of the hierarchical caste system of the Hindu faith. These are mainly the outcastes and underprivileged. These people are treated with contempt, discriminated against and de-humanized by the brahmin castes. Those who get converted seek equality, respect and socio-economic

opportunities to better their lives. Isn't that what everyone wants? Rather than condemn other religions, the writer should consider advocating that the upper caste Hindus practice equality and respect for all, irrespective of their birth. He should start condemning the obsolete "traditional" practices of Hinduism and start preaching compassion and social reform as, "to reach out to others is the feel of God." This will prevent the flow of missionaries into India, and

stop conversions.

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Ahimsa in the Home

I read with interest your article "Spouse Abuse" in the October, 1999, issue. Spouse abuse is a complex, multifaceted problem, with economic, social, cultural and religious dimensions. It is an economic problem because too often women

do not have sufficient resources to survive on their own. It is a social dilemma because society cannot monitor and control the behavior of individuals in the privacy of their own homes. It is a cultural issue because men have dominated women for thousands of years all over the world and, therefore, they consider abusing women their prerogative. Most importantly, it is a

religious issue because our smritis (auxiliary scriptures) repeatedly emphasize that a woman must submit to her husband, who must be treated by her like a God (pati-parmeshwar). People who abuse their wives choose to turn a blind eye to the shrutis (revealed scriptures) which teach us unceasingly and unmistakably that "Nonviolence is the highest religion" (ahimsa parmo

dharmah). The shrutis also teach us that "All this is Brahman" (sarvam khalvidam brahman). The shrutis always override the smritis whenever there is a conflict between the two. The shrutis imply that there is a spark of divinity in every being and every object. Therefore, if one abuses one's spouse, one also dishonors the Divinity inside that person. This action cannot go

unpunished under the law of karma, which is a common-sense law that simply implies that "As you sow, so shall you reap!"

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