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Letters

Karma Explained

Hare Krishna! My praise goes to Arvind Sharma for his wonderful explanation of the law of karma. [My Turn, September 1999] Explanations such as his are why I was so attracted to the philosophy and practice of Vaishnavism. Like all of "Hinduism," its basis is nonsectarian and highly scientific in terms of the understanding of the soul and the qualities of human personality.

Madhusudan Das

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I appreciated Arvind Sharma's comments. However I felt it could have said more. We cannot know, nor is it our business or to our advantage to try and decide what is "good" karma or "bad" karma for another. Perhaps one who seems to have a very difficult life materially and physically may in fact have a very rich life spiritually. Because our perspective is so very limited from this realm of existence, we can so easily come to the wrong conclusion from appearances.

Jeri Becker,

Frontera, California, US

The fallacy committed by the Sharma-Hoddle team has nothing to do with theological error. What is wrong is the notion that the physical condition of disabled people is evidence of a diminished life, a punishment, a bad effect in need of sinful cause. It isn't. The life of a disabled person is not lived on a lower plane than that of a nondisabled colleague. Consequently it requires no explanation in terms of karma or anything else. For the disabled, life may be less convenient, confronted by greater challenges, such as the insensitivity of ex-coach Hoddle, but that is his karma, not theirs. The disabled are not seeking charity from their fellow citizens; they are challenging the community as a whole to transcend its superficial understanding as to what constitutes a meaningful life. They are offering character, skills, hearts and minds. If what they can do is obscured by what they cannot do, the community is deprived of great contributions and everyone is poorer.

Tony Stone
Oakland, New Jersey, US

Proud to Be a Hindu

I would like to thank your magazine. It is wonderful. I have read a lot of other magazines, but none could give me confidence in myself. I am proud to be a Hindu. Your articles [July, 1999], "Quotes and Quips," "Life, the Great Experience" and the 33 contemporary dharmic principles were really great. I read it all four times.

Vasagi
Singapore

Mistaken Circumcision

The National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Center produced a documentary film showing newborn males being circumcised. The screams and wails are heart-wrenching--it goes right through your soul. I believe that if hospitals showed this film to parents of newborns, very few would consent to a circumcision. [Diaspora, August 1999] If I were the judge, the Punnas would receive the \$950,000.

Wanda Magleby
Saint George, Utah, US

More than one hindu baby has been circumcised without parental consent in the US. Also, intact boys are at risk for damages at the hands of the American doctors who did not learn the proper care of an intact boy. [Diaspora, August 1999]

Marilyn Milos, RN

Executive Director

Circumcision Information Resource Center

San Anselmo, California, US

Conversion Problem

Dear promoters of Hinduism Today, do you really have to publish articles that glorify forced conversion ("Tough Talking Raja") of Christians into Hindus [June 1996]? When an organization seeks to glory in such activities, are they any better than the Muslim or Christian crusader of the past or present? I am deeply disappointed that modern Hindus are ignoring Gandhiji's practice of ahimsa (nonviolence). For the love of God and humanity, why don't you condemn all practices that seek for one human being to convert to another religion. Religious conversions should be a matter of conscience and permitted to take place freely at the individual's own will, not brought about by force.

Kishor Modha

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Who's to Blame?

After reading the letter "Neglecting our own culture" by Navin Soomair, and the article titled "Delinquent Parents" by Ishani Chowdhury, [My Turn, May 1999] I stopped to think. It seems as if the parents are blaming the children and the children are blaming the parents over this perceived loss of Hindu culture and religious practice. I believe the truth is that neither is to blame. Children will automatically become a part of the culture in which they are raised. Chinese-Americans, Mexican-Americans and other groups have noted this same decline in culture. Most of the third or fourth generation of children know very little if any of the language, customs and

culture of their heritage. As children become acculturated, they will want to dress, talk and act like their peers. After all, a child's worst fear is to be different. Although their children will never be as "Indian" as if they were raised in India, parents should live exemplary lives, teaching children their values and heritage. They shouldn't get discouraged if their teaching seems to fall on deaf ears. When children mature they will re-examine who they are, and will look for deeper meaning in life. A time will likely come when they will explore their glorious Indian heritage and come to revere what you have taught them.

Julie Gottfried
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Jain Identity

I read the declaration by Mr. Modi as to his belief that Jains do not want to be considered as Hindus [Diaspora, July 1999]. Which Jains is he talking about? Those who worship Lakshmi on Diwali or who do Ganesha puja on their holy drasars? The Jains who have a Hanuman shrine at the entrance of Satrunjay Parvat? I am a Jain as well. If Mr. Mody is the judge, decreeing what Jains are and are not, then I will be more than willing to consider myself a different kind of Jain. I am Jain, but Hindu.

Chirag M. Mehta

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Eyes Wide Shut

I went with my family to see the movie "Eyes Wide Shut." They use a popular stanza from the Bhagavad Gita (4.8) as background music for a sexy, immoral segment. I am not concerned about the people who just see and forget about it. I am concerned about the impact on the young Hindu generation who watch and start making fun of that stanza, which throttles our own values, culture and decency.

Ramakrishna Rao

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Correction

* The article "Is Pilgrimage Too Dangerous?" September, 1999, was reprinted with the kind permission of India Currents magazine, in which it originally appeared. We apologize for the omission of the credit line.

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