Letters
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Indo-American Parenting

The article "Growing Up Hindu" by Tara Katir [Parenting, July 1999] has made me proud to be Hindu. Congratulations to Mr. Bhat for raising his children with Indian culture. Nowadays, many youth are ashamed to be Hindus. Parents overseas should use his book, Guide to Indo-American Parenting, which is the best guide for parents anywhere.

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Paganism

I stumbled across your magazine by accident on the Internet--just in time to see your article on European Paganism and its connection to Hinduism [Feature, July 1999]. I have recognized myself as a Pagan for over twenty-five years, but even before I knew the word and that there were others like me, I felt a great closeness to Hinduism. My house has always contained a statue of Ganesha. It is wonderful to find followers of both religions working together to strengthen their ties. May your work prosper.

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Vegetarian Airplane Meals

I work for a large software company and as part of my work I have to travel within North America and internationally, especially to various Asian countries. The preferred carrier of choice for my company is United Airlines or Northwest Airlines. I requested "Hindu vegetarian food" during one of my earlier trips and was appalled to see that they had given me meat. Fortunately, I was able to quickly identify it and did not eat the meal. I figured that there must have been an oversight by one of the airline employees who had served me meat in Hindu vegetarian food. But I found that meat is definitely part of their "Hindu meal." I am eager to ensure that the

airlines and the world get educated about this.

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Jain Spirit

On behalf of the Jain Spirit team, may I say a big "Thank You" for your beautiful promotion of our magazine, Jain Spirit, in the current issue of Hinduism Today [Diaspora, October 1999]. It is true that you gave us tremendous inspiration for this project and your guidance and detailed comments on our first issue are much appreciated. Thank you so very much, and may Hinduism Today grow from strength

to strength.

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Murugan Conference

Minister S. Thondaman has reiterated his intention that Sri Lanka will host the Second International Conference Seminar on Skanda-Murugan in July, 2000 (rather than in 2001 as we originally reported) to coincide with next year's Kathirkamam festival season. The Hon. Minister was

delighted to see the extensive coverage the first conference received in the May 1999 issue of Hinduism Today. I wish to express my thanks to the editors for so kindly devoting space to the resurgence of the worship of Skanda-Murugan as seen today here in South India and Sri Lanka and across the globe wherever there are Tamils living. In June alone two major Murugan temples opened, one in Sydney, Australia, the other in Washington, DC.

Patrick Harrigan

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Pope's Visit to India

Regarding the pope's visit to India planned for the 2000 millennium, I want to suggest that this event be made into a Santhi Yatra, a peace pilgrimage. This will bring true meaning to: "Truth is one, paths are many," a credo many of us hold dear. Please pass this

on to our Indian political leaders. In keeping with this, India should invite the Dalai Lama, Aga Khan, our Satguru, Mata Amritananmayi, Jewish Rabbis, Muslim clerics, Jain leaders and Patriachs of the Orthodox Churches for a celebration of Santhi. This will be a fitting celebration for all faiths.

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Importance of Parenting

Youth today have difficulty practicing religion because of outside influences. Parents must educate children about how to cope with this problem, but we must also remember that the decision to succumb to

negative influences is one's own individual choice. Parents can only provide their children with the best knowledge that they have, but it is the children who hold the choice to turn to religion or away from it.

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Neopaganism

I very much liked Christopher Gerard's article on Neopaganism and its revival, until I came to his discussion of how it is manifesting in America. I was very disappointed, because

it seems Mr. Gerard has never taken the time to examine Pagan spirituality in the US with the same care he exercised in studying our classical roots. He presents a stereotype of Wicca and American Neopaganism which resembles no one I

have ever encountered. And I have been a serious practitioner for over 14 years. The people I know, most of them, more closely resemble Mr. Gerard than the misleading figures he describes as typifying American Wicca. Every religion has

practitioners who embarrass the rest, and we are no exception, but a balanced presentation tries to treat a tradition fairly, rather than taking as examples the most frivolous practitioners.

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"Ethnobotany"

I read with interest the article, "India's Savior of Sacred Plants" [May 1998]. Professor S.K. Jain

has to be congratulated for his contribution to the field of Indian botany. I emphasize "Indian botany" rather than "ethnobotany." Your use of the term ethnobotany smacks of cultural bias.

Students of botany and medicinal plants in India study the similarities and differences of the various species of plants in India. Canadian botany is not "ethnobotany;" also American botany is not

"ethnobotany." I shall be suggesting to Deep Publications, New Delhi which has published Dictionary of Indian Folk Medicine and Ethnobotany to replace the term "ethnobotany" with

"Indian Botany." Similarly, it is regrettable to note that many music schools and university departments in Canada and the United States use the term "ethnomusic" for

Indian music. In fact, the music of India is more ancient than the music of the West. Western researchers believe that anything other than their own is "ethno" in nature. Social scientists--anthropol

ogists, historians, political scientists and sociologists--have coined the term ethnicity to refer to the people who are not of the main stream. That is, by and large, non-white populations. If this is

carried to extremes, American English has to referred to as "ethnoenglish" by the British; Quebec French as "ethnofrench" by the French. Researchers and the media should avoid biases in coining terms to

portray the activities and the cultural and other patterns of groups different from those of the majority or host group.

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