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Letters

Poison Bindis

In the July, 1999, issue of Hinduism Today, there was an article on disease caused by toxic bindis. I am a victim of this phenomenon. Way back in 1967, I developed a sore spot on my forehead, where I wore a bindi. This is the time when sticking bindis were a novelty. The sore became so bad that, I had to have it treated at a hospital and wore a bandage for weeks. The net result was that I stopped wearing bindis. Soon after, our new landlord in Shillong, India, thought I was a Muslim, because he could not possibly think of a married Hindu wife without a bindi. I am very happy that this evil has been exposed and some positive action shall be taken. It is a pity that commercialism has to invade the sanctity of ritualistic devices and that we Hindu women are so weak that we do not take the trouble of using traditional kumkum which is more difficult to maintain. I strongly recommend the culprits be given adequate punishment.

Prabha Prabhakar Bhardwaj

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Reforestation

I read with great interest Dr. Bernbaum's article on the reforestation of Badrinath (Environment,

May 1999). I have just returned from a pilgrimage to the Ramana Maharishi Ashram at the base of Mount Arunachala in Tiruvanamalai, Tamil Nadu. A reforestation project was created for the area by the Annamalai Reforestation Society in 1988. I witnessed the progress they have made and was inspired by the thoughtful and inclusive approach being taken to restore and protect this most holy pilgrimage place in India. More information can be gotten from the Ashram website www.ramana-maharshi.org/forest.htm. Much work remains. I hope your publication can bring attention to these projects and inspire continuing support from throughout the world.

Barbara M. Goodbody
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Media Mania

Namaste, lovely Devaya! Reading your letter in Hinduism Today, May issue, I understand the outrage you expressed about Hindu involvement in killings of a European missionary. I felt the same way. The national and international media

spiced up the stories, and writers followed up with their views, sitting in their homes, to announce a new discovery that Hindus have changed their normal path of tolerance and have been organized to attack Christians wherever they are. Also they declared that these new Hindus are not real Hindus, but are criminals. The writers also wrote about themselves being real Hindus, and being so, they know that a real Hindu will never do this kind of act. Then I started gathering the stories from actual investigations by local reporters. It gave me a completely different outlook. There were no attacks on any one community as a target. It was a fight between communities, among brothers and relatives, between converted Christians and nonconverted Christians. The aggressiveness of converted Christians to bring their brothers and relatives into Christianity resulted in strong animosity among them.

The hateful acts of converted Christians at the Hindu Devatas incited violent reactions from their nonconverted brothers and relatives. All so-called organized attacks against Christians have been local affairs. Everybody is forgetting also that the (original) Indian Christians are getting hurt out of all this.

Dahyabhai Patel

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Non-Leather Car Seats

People For The Ethical Treatment Of Animals (PETA) wants to thank Graham Spencer for searching for a luxury car without leather seats, and we are sorry he was unsuccessful (No Veggie Car Available, Letters, May 1999).

However, not all auto dealerships are uncooperative. When one of our members leased a new BMW, with just one phone call she persuaded the dealership to replace the leather seats with vinyl.

Carla Bennett, Senior Writer
PETA, Virginia, USA

Sikh Heroes

it was good that in recent articles you have pointed out the suffering that the Hindus have born throughout history and the fraudulent means by which Christian missionaries are trying to convert vulnerable Hindus. However, you should also write

about our heroes and heroines who fought for the protection of the Hindu society, such as Chhatrapati Shivaji, Jhansi ki Rani, Guru Gobind Singh, etc. As the tri-centenary of the formation of the Khalsa is currently being celebrated, an article on Guru Gobind Singh will be particularly appropriate.

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Delinquent Parents

The article titled Delinquent Parents, by Ms. Ishani Chowdary (My Turn, May

1999), has made me feel proud and happy. Although nowadays teenagers are more likely to concentrate on their studies and modern-life activities, there are some who are willing to keep our religion and culture alive. Although teenagers' schedules are very tight, spending a little time learning our culture and religion will do them no harm. Parents must play a major role to make sure the knowledge they received from ancestors will never die with them. They must be willing to teach and explain to

their younger generations. "No time" must not be an excuse, because they must "make time." We must remember that the goal of Hindu religion is not only to make a man a better human being, but also make him realize the Ultimate Reality. So, stand up my fellow teenagers and parents, and make sure that our future generations will not be the last Hindus.

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Wake-Up Call

It makes me sad to look at the condition of India and to think about what we were and what we are now. In ancient days, we had universities where students from China, countries in the Middle East and Southern Europe used to come to learn. Now there are one billion people in India, and nearly half of us cannot

read or write, and most of us are struggling to provide the basic necessities of life for our families. Where did we go wrong? We have forgotten the meaning of all the rituals that we perform. We have depended too much on missionaries and our governments to provide schools for our children. We have sent our children to schools run by religious groups who have portrayed a very negative picture of

our way of life. We have accepted this by convincing ourselves that we are "very broad-minded" and "secular." We need to wake up, face the facts and work hard to improve ourselves, learn more, teach our children, educate people of other faiths and participate in projects to uplift our communities.

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Corrections

* The illustration of the tiger on page 40 of our June issue, Kids' Korner should be credited to the artist, Itoko Maeno, not to publisher Marsh Media.

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