Letters
Category : October 1998
Published by Anonymous on Oct. 01, 1998

Letters

All Religions Are Not the Same

The October 1997 Minister's Message by Swami Dayananda Saraswati stimulated much discussion. He sent a devotee's query, with his response, to share with our readers.

Dear Swami Dayanandaji: We enjoyed your article in Hinduism Today. Your statement, "all religions do not have the same goals," gave rise to some questions and doubts. Many raised the belief that all religions are equally valid. We assumed that this meant that the ultimate goal is the same. One scholar here says that all religions have produced great saints and liberated, self-realized souls. I would greatly appreciate it if you would clear our confusion.

Professor R. Ranga Rao
Illinois, USA

Dr. Rao, as I made clear in the article published in Hinduism Today, all forms of prayer are valid. But each religion has its own concept of moksa, which is what we call the goal. The Veda says that you are the whole and that you are already free and you have to know that. Your being away from the whole is by wrong thinking. Now, if some religions say that you are different from God, the whole, that you are limited, and with the blessings of God you have to redeem yourself from your sin and go to heaven, how can there be identity of

goals--unless you interpret the whole thing differently? To interpret all this to fit into the Vedic vision of moksa [liberation from rebirth] is to have the Vedic knowledge in the first place. It is very clear that we are away from the whole by thought, so when some religious theologies advocate thoughts that separate us from the whole, we cannot say that all religions lead to the same goal.

Christianity has not produced another Christ. If anyone claims to be another Christ, the theology cannot allow such a claim, because Christ is the only son of God. So too, Islam has not produced another Mohammed. He was the latest and the last prophet. By saying so, it cannot produce another prophet. But there were always spiritual persons in all traditions who transcended their theologies and talked about the truth. But they were not produced by those religions. They grew out of them. You can not grow out of Vedanta to realize that you are the whole. In fact, you understand Vedanta to realize that you are the whole.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Pennsylvania, USA

Your Editorial Bombed

To compare the Indian Government's actions to "gorilla dust" [Editorial, August. '98] is as self-deceptive as it is dangerous. Since when is one gorilla able to wipe out millions of other gorillas at the flick of a switch? We are not talking about relatively harmless international political posturing here, but the flagrant usage of the most hideous weapons of mass-destruction. I say this as a Western European who has been drawn increasingly close to Hinduism in the past year,

only to have been sent spiritual reeling by the explosions in the deserts of Rajasthan which were the decisions of a government which claims to be the political face of that most consumately life-respecting, life-affirming faith, Sanatana Dharma.

Dr. J. J. Gordon
Berlin, Germany

The August, 1998, Editorial proclaiming "India's nuclear threat mere gorilla dust" was the height of irresponsibility. To gloat over the CIA's alleged failure at forecasting, while ignoring the permanent change in risk of holocaust to citizens of all nations strikes me as superficial and unworthy of Hinduism Today's usually high editorial standards.

Prof. Robert Manis
Community College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

* Any right-thinking human being will deplore escalation of such devastating arms, and we do, too. Our purpose in the editorial was not to say the obvious, though we perhaps should have. It was to acknowledge and celebrate India's newfound strength--not of bombs but of rediscovered self-worth and lost self-loathing caused by centuries of cruel tyranny from outside. Bharat's real, profound and only enduring strength lies in her spiritual heart, in her assertion of ahimsa and her native devotion. We will rejoice with you when Pakistan and India disown weapons of mass destruction forever, hopefully in the bargain bringing other nations to do the same. The editor.

God, Not Deva; Atma, Not I

I appreciate your comparative look at the two great traditions [Feb. '98, Insight on Buddhism and Hinduism], which is necessary to identify their common grounds and differences and to establish a meaningful rapprochement. The disappearance of Buddhism from India was a major loss, since Buddhism provides an ethical and philosophical complement as well as a corrective to Hinduism in its non-casteist orientation and in its focus on universal compassion.

I take issue with some imprecise statements made by the Honorable Yihua that obfuscate the real issues and misrepresent the differences. Her confused use of the term deva in the sense of "God," is disturbing. Early Buddhism is atheistic, while Hinduism's fundamental postulate is Brahman (not deva), the Divine Reality, GOD, both Absolute and personal. But devas are deities with specific functions. It is those deities, such as Indra, who are referred to as paying homage to the Buddha [not Brahman].

The other confusion is made between Self and self. She surprisingly called it [Atman or Self] "the center I" and "abiding by its own deeds." But karmas pertain to the psychophysical integuments of Atman, which, accompanied by the karmic or psychic body, is simply reembodied. It is to be ultimately freed from karmic bondage and reincarnation. Vedanta posits a unitary principle of transpersonal consciousness Atman as the basis of all conscious and fluctuating experiences. Buddhism denies Atman (anatta), which is the real point of difference. Both fully coincide in their notion of self or "I and mine" as the source of suffering, that one must eventually extinguish.

Professor Mahesh Mehta
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

Praises from Australia

We are very proud of Hinduism Today --a storehouse of spiritual and general knowledge. I carry a copy of it wherever I go for people to enjoy its valuable contents. It's so attractive externally as well as internally. Wishing you all at Hinduism Today radiant health, success, peace of mind, joy, wealth and longevity. Long live Hinduism Today. It's by your sincere efforts that all are blessed with this wonderful magazine.

Nageswari Nadarajah
Epping, N.S.W., Australia

Send your Soil to Lalithambiga

Lalithambiga Trust is constructing a temple for universal mother, Lalithambiga, symbolic of the unification of all humanity. The trustees appeal to you to send 100 grams of the soil of your nation, clearly marked, and to ask your friends in other countries to send their soil also to:

Shri Lalithambiga Trust
11, Sivakami Nagar, SBI. P.O.
Coimbatore, 641 007, Tamil Nadu, India

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@HinduismToday.kauai.hi.us

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in

electronic versions of Hinduism Today.