

[Letters](#)

Category : [May 1998](#)

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Letters

And Proud of It!

I read your magazine from cover to cover with such zeal and fascination. The article from the Publisher's desk and the editorial in Dec., '97 issue made me question why I've been celebrating Christmas for the last 15 years when I'm proud to be a Hindu. This prompted us to have some serious family discussions and naturally led to the family gathering for prayer and satsang at our home.

Ajita Patel, Mission Viejo, California, US

Outreach Is Needed

Hinduism Today should have a correspondent in the land of Lord Jagannath and the venue of one of the four pithams (monasteries) established by Adi Sankara. Orissa has the highest demographic percentage of Hindus in India after tiny Himachal Pradesh. Your readers might want to hear regularly from this area variously known as Kalinga/Utkal/Kosal Pradesh.

Vyom Akhil, Sambalpur, Orissa, India

Useful Hints

I just wanted to praise you for providing a good source of information and news on Hinduism. I have just married into a Hindu family and am eager to learn about my new culture and religion. In Phoenix, Arizona, this can be difficult. We don't even have a temple. The article on proper conduct (Cues and

Clues, insight, Sept., '97) really helped me to enjoy my visit in India, where my husband and I were married in a Hindu wedding ceremony. His family was honored and impressed that I knew how to conduct myself in a temple and in the home. It also took away my anxiety and allowed me to enjoy my temple visits.

Amber Sukumaran, Mesa, Arizona, US

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Iran Letter Heartening

I read the beautiful letter to Hinduism Today (Letters, Mar., '98) from Iran telling about interest in Hinduism and mysticism among some Iranians. If it is authentic, it is indeed heartening that some Iranians are looking outside of their own religion for spirituality. Ram Swarup, in his seminal A Hindu View of Christianity and Islam, argues that a reawakened Hinduism can help the world rediscover its religious past. I pray that we can reach out to these seekers in Iran and encourage them.

Julie Binder Maitra, Warrentown, Virginia, US

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Analyzing the Differences

Perhaps those outside India may be more inclined to choose Buddhism over Hinduism because Buddha went to a great deal of trouble and suffering while Hinduism was in place (Dharmic Differences, insight, Feb., '98). In effect, was he saying this religion I was raised in is horrible--so I must seek out the real one? Or do we have Buddha demonizing Hinduism, which might point to his egoism--which he was not supposed to have? Hinduism Today shows distinct differences under an indistinct banner, both religions coming off as very noble, adding fodder to the question, why would Buddha seek as he

did?

Houston Fitzgerald, Huachuca City, Arizona, US,
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Hindu texts and philosophy acknowledge that the Divine may be both immanent and transcendent. However, individual Hindus are known to hold more dogmatic views. In fact, some Vaishnavas even insist that Vaishnavism is not a part of Hinduism since Hinduism admits Gods other than Vishnu. The Buddha, in teaching his guidelines for right living, described only the transcendent nature of the Divine. However, I do not know of any writing in which he denied the possibility of the immanent. The immanent was simply not relevant in his frame of reference. Consequently, followers of the Buddha, depending on what he had spoken and written for guidance, could only know of the transcendent. Some Buddhists groups have devised their own icons to represent the immanent. The nature of the human being is such that while some people need the comforting presence of the immanent Creator/Protector, others only find a transcendent Divinity to be meaningful and logical. All religions would do well to allow for this diversity in human nature and acknowledge both forms of the Divine. Mankind should be taught to rejoice in our similarities instead of battling over our differences.

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Example Begins at Home

I have just read your "women of vision" article (Publisher's Desk, Jan., '98) and I was struck by the depth of commitment and the breadth of interest and ability displayed by the women you featured. I was also struck and dismayed by the level of assimilation into the majority culture displayed by the women

who had left the homeland. Only the two ladies from India wore their bindis (also known as pottu). Your Kenya correspondent wore a sari but no bindi and the ones from the United States wore neither sari nor bindi. This perhaps would not be so surprising in a context of day-to-day life. But for Hinduism Today, could they not have found more traditional and appropriate portraits of themselves? There is nothing like a sari for combining elegance and modesty. And the bindi is required of all Hindu women except widows. Perhaps our daughters of Bharat need to be reminded of who they really are and where they have come from. They are not European Christians. They should not seek to be more like them. My wife just came into the room. She is wearing pants and a blouse. I am reminded that she has not worn a bindi for years except when we go to temple or an Indian social function. Perhaps I should start by narrowing the focus of my concerns closer to home.

Adityan, Gaithersburg, Maryland, US Adityan@aol.com

Holy Couplets for Kids

What a fantastic idea to teach Tirukural to the children through pictures with verses (The Weaver, insight, Mar., '98). Is it possible to undertake a mammoth project to take one Kural from each of the 133 or 108 Chapters (Artha & Dharma) explaining it with beautiful pictures in Hinduism Today? It can be sponsored by the readers who are interested in doing this social service. I am afraid that the children who are growing in this land who are more attracted to the Western influences may fail to incorporate our ancient wisdom.

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News for Indonesians

The Indonesian Hindus need to find more information concerning their fellow Hindu communities and activities all over the world. Hinduism Today is very useful in increasing understanding and solidarity of Hindus, especially youth in this country.

I. Nyoman Nurjaya Malang, Indonesia

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