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Letters

Beyond the Facts

I would like to offer my deepest admiration to the writer of the article "Hindu of the Year" [tribute, December 1997]. Sri Chinmoy's myriad activities and interests are not easily condensed into two pages. The sweep from meditation to, say, weightlifting, is so vast and so astonishing that one can easily become overwhelmed. To start with, there is sheer weight of facts--seven million bird drawings, 13,000 songs and so on. Guru's abundance in every field presents a challenge to the Western mind. But you have presented everything with such loving understanding and intuitive oneness. You have seen beyond the facts to Guru's fundamental aim of making spirituality accessible to all, no matter what their walk of life or background. I would like to congratulate you on what I feel must be one of the best articles ever written about his life.

Vidagdha Bennet, Jamaica, New York, USA

I was not only delighted about the honor you conferred upon Sri Chinmoy, but astonished about so many small details you gave about the Sri Chinmoy Centre life and Guru's own activities, and, above all, about your capacity to present everything in an interesting and well-understood manner. Some of us disciples are writing about our master, including me, but hardly anyone ever has written about him in such a delightful, readable and yet reverential way.

Jyotisman Dam, Kuessaberg, Germany

Rakhi for the Sisters

We are back in India, after 17 years' stay in Kenya, for Deepavali and Bhaya Dhooj festivities. On Bhaya Dhooj day, I accompanied my husband to his sister's houses and missed more than ever before not having a brother of my own. When I saw this ritual of tying a thread on the wrist as a symbol of protection between my husband and one of his sisters, I felt an internal trauma. Having worked with gender issues for over a decade, I came up with a solution, to start the concept of "Didi Dhooj." I am going to celebrate this in the future as I got favorable responses from my sister and friends. When we women of the world are asking for equality in all other aspects in life, why not in Hindu rituals?

Praba Prabhakar Bhardwaj, New Delhi, India

Your Defense is Absurd

I think your defense of "Womanly Protocol" [letters, December 1997] makes very little sense. True, such conduct was the norm which ancient society preserved, but it is meaningless today. The last sentence in particular verges on the border of absurdity. Women have to walk behind men because they "are more capable of living the higher ideal." There is much that is good in Hinduism, but there is also much that is rotten and should not be defended. Admittedly, philosophical and spiritual parts of Hinduism are truly unique, but some of the social codes are obsolete.

Sharma, sharma@tir.com

Asked and Answered

I enjoyed reading the article "making it Relevant for Smart Young Souls," [editorial, October, 1997]. Hindu children are

confused in the two cultures; they feel that they do not fit in any of them. Peer pressure in the Western culture will make them depressed. Since most Hindu parents cannot answer their questions such as, "Do you worship cows and idols?" does Hinduism Today have any plan of action or recommend a book which will answer these type of questions? We would like to preserve our heritage of Hinduism.

Harshad Kapadia, Houston, Texas, USA

* Visit our Worldwide Web site. There you will find answers for the nine basic questions--including yours--about Hinduism.

<http://hinduismtoday.kauai.hi.us/ashram/>

HimalayanAcademy/Publications/JnanaDana/9QuestionsAndAnswers.html

A Rightful Request

This is a letter sent to the attorney general of Trinidad & Tobago, with a copy to Hinduism Today ["Legal Inequity," law and order, December 1997].

I am writing to you in connection with the continued existence in Trinidad & Tobago's statute law of certain laws discriminatory toward your country's Hindu religious community. It has been brought to our attention that there continue in force statutes, mostly of British colonial vintage, which either favor the Christian religion over other religious communities and traditions or disfavor other religious bodies to the advantage of Christianity. Such statutes include, we are informed, the following among others: The legislation governing blasphemous libel, which protects only the Christian religion from "any contemptuous, reviling, scurrilous or

ludicrous portrayal" of God, Jesus Christ, the Bible or the formularies of the Church of England. The legislation making illegal the search or seizure of a Christian Church by the country's law enforcement or military authorities without a judicial warrant, leaving Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and other non-Christian houses of worship liable to such treatment. The foregoing are but illustrations of what appears to be a discriminatory pattern of legislation that continues to be in force in your country. While at one time such legislation might conceivably have been judged to be an understandable, while surely not a commendable, use of state power (viz., when Trinidad & Tobago had yet to achieve their independence, and whilst dependent possessions of a power with an establishment State Church) certainly the Trinidad & Tobago of 1997, with a cosmopolitan, educated multi-religious and multi-ethnic community and with decades of independence behind it, no longer needs or wishes to be embarrassed by the continued existence of such legally-mandated inequality.

It is our understanding that the Constitution of Trinidad & Tobago specifically guarantees freedom of religious expression and provides for the peaceful co-existence and equality of all religious traditions without discrimination. It is further our understanding that your country is a party signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and to the American Convention on Human Rights. Both of these international treaties, to which Trinidad & Tobago has voluntarily become subject, require their signatories to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion and to refrain themselves from practicing such discrimination. Under both treaties, states-parties may be held legally accountable for their actions and omissions constituting breaches of the international human rights normative standards the treaties

provide for. It is our fervent hope that your government lives up to its legal and moral obligations as a responsible member of the community of nations and immediately rescinds the regressive and oppressive legislation at hand.

William A. Curson, The Magnus F. Hirschfeld, Centre For Human Rights Crosswicks House, 270 Claremont Avenue, Montclair, New Jersey, 07042 USA

Corrections

The correct street address for Galaxy Publications and Recordings is 351 Victoria Avenue, Westmount Quebec H3Z 2N1 Canada ["To Goddess, With Love", December, 1997]

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Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of Hinduism Today.