

[Letters](#)

Category : [January 1997](#)

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Letters

Media Kinships

Hinduism is like the center-of-gravity doll which regains its equilibrium howsoever it be disturbed. Wave after wave of alien invasions have come and gone upon this sacred tenet, but none of them has really succeeded in uprooting it. The Vedas, the wisdom of God, revealed to four rishis in the beginning of re-creation, were the basis of daily life and culture. As a community, we are facing problems everyday. We continue to grow large in number, but our people continue to grow farther apart. If we did not have ethnic media, we would probably be cut off from each other.

Ramesh Kalicharan, Jamaica, New York, USA

Is Sai Baba Beyond Hinduism?

You may probably well receive other, more eloquent and complete, responses to the Sai Baba article ("Sai: Hindu of Year," awards, December '96), but I believe that the article does a great disservice to the community of Sai devotees. Sai Baba does not guide a Hindu organization. He was born and lives in South India, and must lead and follow in the Hindu traditions of that area, but his teachings and organization are beyond culture and religion. Indians find it very difficult to avoid making foreign Sai Centers into extensions of the Hindu religion, making it difficult for non-Indian, non-Hindu followers of Sai Baba. The centers are not to be extensions of Hindu culture. Sai Baba repeats over and over and over again that he

does not preach one religion, and that he is not creating a religion. He often exhorts his followers to become stronger in their own beliefs and practices. He has told the Western centers to sing bhajans in their own languages. Many of us love to sing bhajans in Indian dialects, but this creates separation rather than inclusion when it comes to encompassing new followers of Sai--as does this article telling Hindus that Sai Baba leads a Hindu organization! Sai Baba is the Avatar of our age for all people of all religion.

Jim Wright, jwright@ball.com

* Hmm! Let's see. Sai Baba was born to Hindu parents, raised in a Hindu community, took a Hindu name, wears the saffron-colored vestments of a Hindu sannyasin, and when he leaves this Earth will be honored by Hindu funeral rites. He teaches the highest form of Hindu philosophy, quotes from Hindu scriptures, urges mankind to follow Sanatana Dharma and directs an overwhelmingly Hindu following to sing traditional Hindu devotional songs. You say he is an avatar, which is an exclusively Hindu theological concept found nowhere else. Other than that, I have to agree he is beyond Hinduism entirely.

Signed, the Editor.

* Mr. Wright replies:

Thanks for your thoughtful response to my diatribe. How can I possibly disagree with your points--they are all completely accurate. I suppose what I took (take) issue with is the fact that Sai Baba is all that you say in terms of Hindu culture and religion, and yet much more beyond that. The Sarva Dharma symbol is placed conspicuously on entrance gates, buildings, publications, etc. that Sai Baba presides over.

That Sarva Dharma symbol is a symbol of the unity of faiths, showing symbols of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism around its perimeter. This may be an indication that Baba is beyond Hinduism alone.

Shedding Light on a Light Festival

What makes Deepavali a unique national event and perhaps the greatest socio-religious festival of India? The popular interpretation that it marks the turn of the season, the advent of winter and the beginning of a commercial year, etc., is far too superficial to justify the majestic solemnity of the Deepavali day. It is something far more sublime and profound than just a day of light. It is actually the story of the eternal conflict between darkness (which stands for ignorance, hate, falsehood and confusion) and light (which embodies knowledge, love, truth and clarity--more of a cleanliness of heart than of house). One of its many messages is clearing away the cobwebs of confusion and purging out the inward dross with a rekindled light of hope and understanding.

Mohan Lal Gupta, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada

An Aiding Technology

Your worldwide web site provides exciting and vital information about my identity as a Hindu. Hindus are a very intimidated lot when it comes to verbal dialogue or protest with the Muslims and Christians. Hindus can't match the aggression of these people while discussing facts about our precarious existence, or why these people ought to at least apologize to us for their misdeeds. But then, why would a winner concede to a loser who is ill-informed, mentally colonized and lacks the courage to talk about his identity with confidence and pride? Ironically, internet bodes well for

Hindus, if they are willing to organize and unite themselves.
Vikas Mohan, mohan@Añre.com

Quashing Conversion in Malaysia

Christian missionaries are luring unsuspecting poor Malaysian Hindus into Christianity. Alarming numbers of Hindus are converted, and I am (as a Hindu) so concerned. Unfortunately, there is nothing concrete that I can do. A small group of us here managed to save some families from being converted. We go in and help these poor families by giving monthly rations of food and some money for their expenses. Even the Hindu Sangam of Malaysia is quite unable to check this erosion. Hindus here would spend any amount of money on ceremonial affairs, but normally turn a blind eye toward the poor, unfortunate and helpless Hindus.

K. Thuruvan, Seremban, Malaysia

In Equal Measure

My heartiest congratulations on the emergence of Hinduism Today magazine. I hope that it will attain even greater heights and become a valuable resource to Hindus of all persuasions. While I deeply respect the bent of its founder toward Saivism, it is critical that the new magazine maintain appropriate balance by devoting proper attention to Vaishnavism, Saktism and other facets of our great faith, as in fact, millions of rank and file Hindus do.

Dr. Mukunda Rao, Buckhannon, West Virginia, USA

* Agreed. That is our policy, to give a proportioned voice to every Hindu lineage. (The Editor)

They Got it All Wrong

Recently we bought a 26-acre parcel of land in Syracuse for our temple. We had a big article in the local newspaper. One reporter came to see me regarding our project. I did some research from my big collection of Hinduism Today and Grolier Encyclopedia. I was not happy about the information in the encyclopedia about our religion. They start with caste system, women being inferior to men, sati practice, etc. I want you to publish an article about these British authors' distorted image of our religion.

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