Letters
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INDIA THROUGH MY EYES

As a teenager born and bought up in America and currently studying in India, I find that India is a very religious place. Devoted people can go to temples anytime, anyplace, and absorb its serenity. This is a freedom we do not enjoy in America. Although many religious Indians and temples are in America, the observer may note that there is a "filter-out" effect no matter how well the parents teach the kids. To join the mainstream American society, the so-called "melting pot" concept, something must be compromised. For many, it may be their Indian origin. The multi-racial, multi-cultural environment in America tends to hammer out the edges, and one tends to "fall in line" in America. The undercurrent of caste is similar to racism we experience in America. I don't know which is worse: walking down the streets of America and having someone comment on my skin color, or walking down the streets of India and having someone, comment on my being a brahmin.

Arvind Chandrakantan, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India,
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IT'S BETTER. IT'S WORSE.

Although I am not Hindu by practice, Hinduism Today is my favorite magazine, the only one I persistently read and am not only informed but also nourished by. I am so grateful for all articles that evidence the bridging of differences between

peoples, nations, races, religions, in recognition of humanity's same needs and capacity to fulfill them, by moving beyond the barrier of the personality, through a strong spiritual focus and genuine, unbiased service to each other.
Hilece Rose, Questa, New Mexico, USA

Quel beau travail! une rÃ©incarnation dorÃ©e, rÃ©sultat dune vie passÃ©e sans doute ardue! Cest du gÃ©nie! Les photos sont ravissantes, cest une fÃªte! Nous mÃ©ritons cela! Nous voulons bien nous rÃ©incarner si cest aussi joliment!

What beautiful work! [HT magazine is] A golden reincarnation, the result of a former life well lived, no doubt. Brilliant workmanship. The photos are ravishing--a festival for the eye. We Hindus, deserved this. If we can reincarnate as handsomely, then we won't mind reincarnating at all!
Sharad J.S. SahaÃ¯, Guadeloupe, West Indies, sharad@outremer.com

Congratulations on your new format! I just saw the new magazine a few hours ago and thoroughly enjoyed going through it. It is visually quite stunning and much easier to read. I liked the variety of articles and particularly enjoyed your new additions such as "Quotes and Quips" and "Digital Dharma." I can't wait to see what your future issues have in store for us.
Shikha Malaviya, Eden Prairie, Minnesota, sakl0001@gold.tc.umn.edu

As long time readers of Hinduism Today we wanted to let you

know how we feel about the new format. First, the pictures are beautiful especially the fold-out in December. The size is also easy to hold, articles are professional, well written and informative. It is truly a fine publication, but I regret that you felt it was necessary to change the former format. We very much preferred the old newspaper format. The new format gives it less character, and it has become like a small Time magazine. Perhaps this gives the magazine more mainline status, but it is less distinguished. Also the print is harder to read, either because of the size or the glossy paper.

Bill & Teresa Weed, eastwest@snowcrest.net

Today we have received the new issue of Hinduism Today. It is wonderful. Thank you. We wish the whole editorial team good health, prosperity, much energy, divine protection and blessing to continue your beautiful service.

Abhayanand, Om Vishwa Guru Deep Hindu Mandir, Budapest, Hungary, ervin@castor.net.matav.hu

UPDATE THE DICTIONARIES

Hindus are pagans and heathens... that is, according to popular Western English dictionaries. Heathen or pagan are both defined as "1) Those who are non-Christian, non-Jewish and, more recently, non-Muslim. 2) irreligious; one who does not worship the true God; an uncultivated person." These terms blatantly label the major religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism as irreligious and uncivilized. In Europe, these words referred to the rustic and uncultured village peoples of Middle Age Germany. The synonyms of the Oxford Dictionary list heathen as synonymous with "pagan, unenlightened, barbaric, idolaters and savage," while listing the opposite as "sophisticated, urbane and cultured." I

challenged the well-known dictionaries to re-examine and correct their definitions of the words heathen and pagan. Houghton Mifflin, Random House and Oxford were thankful for the observation and said that changes are being seriously considered. Merriam-Webster insisted that the change is not necessary because "they are actually used by speakers and writers of that language. The definitions are, in fact, accurate of the words as they are actually used in English." I urge all responsible individuals to take appropriate actions to correct this persistent effrontery.
P.S. Thakur, Cranston, Rhode Island, USA

ENOUGH WITH COMPARISONS

I have come across many a comparison made between the various beliefs systems such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc., in several issues of Hinduism Today ("The DNA of Dharma," insight, December '96). I have not, however, been able to find a reason for such a study and analysis. I find this exercise to be confusing, not only for the young and newer admirers of Hinduism but also for people well versed in scripture. I contend that Hinduism, unlike the other systems of belief, could only be properly described as spirituality. No comparison or analysis is necessary.
Brahm D. Mishra, Sugarland, Texas, USA

WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

It makes me feel that it is most unfortunate to be a Hindu. Being a Hindu by birth, religion and still not being able to preach and propagate Hinduism in our own country of Bharat is ridiculous. Swami Vivekananda had said we should be proud to call ourselves Hindus. Over the years I think we Hindus have adopted hypocrisy. We believe in one thing and preach

something else, adopting and imitating others. It is most unfortunate that, the sacrifices made by our ancestors have gone a-begging. Today, we find ourselves under the clutches of our own people. It is unfortunate that in spite of having one of the oldest civilizations and cultures, we find ourselves to be a joke. We are heading into the 21th century with pessimism rather than optimism, with uncertainty rather than certainty, with only vacant dreams, no hope and no future.
Avanish Raj, avraj@indiana.edu

* Keep reading. Things look better from where we stand. (The Editor)

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