Letters
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Don't Believe in Mantras?

The following story which I read in The Essentials of Hinduism by Swami Bhaskarananda provides an answer to the question "Why are mantras powerful?" raised by Mr. A. Subramaniam (letters, December '96). "During a religious discourse, a Hindu saint told the assembled group that a person who chants a mantra regularly for many years develops a pure mind, which enables him to see God. At this, someone in the audience stood up and said, 'Sir, I can't believe in the efficacy of mantras. A mantra is just a word. How can it have the power to purify anyone's mind and give him God-vision?' 'What! You don't believe in the power of mantras?' exclaimed the saint, 'You're the worst fool I've ever seen in my whole life!' Since the saint had called him a fool in the presence of the entire audience, the man felt extremely humiliated. His face reddened and he started shaking with suppressed anger. Pointing out his reaction, the saint said, 'You don't believe in the power of words, but look at the power of the word 'fool'--what a strong effect it's had on you, and yet you deny the power of mantras?'"
Ashim K. Bhattacharyya, Metairie, Louisiana, USA

Understanding the Transition

I like to believe that deep within us all is the knowing that death can be a glorious experience, that it is only the process that most fear and many try to delay. One of the many good

points in this editorial ("Great Departure," editorial, January '97) that deserves the reader's closest attention is the following sentence: "Many terminal patients are under sedation, so instead of the conscious death Hindus esteem, there is a dim and drugged insensibility at the end." I wish I could convey to you how much I agree with this. At the most critical point in one's life, this practice becomes nothing more than a pain killer for the living, and the one moving on is not fully keen and able to celebrate what follows.
Bob Botik, rbotik@tab.com

Squeamish about Vegetarianism

You have published many articles on vegetarianism, but I feel that I must bring the following points to your notice. Our Hindu community is divided enough as it stands, in this present day and age. The vegetarian debate is a very touchy issue which drives our people farther apart. This is only causing damage to our community, and others, not to name names, are taking advantage of the fact that our community is divided and blind to see these facts. I would request you to keep this point in mind when publishing articles on such divisive issues.
Rahul Deolia, United kingdom, ee61rd@ee.surrey.ac.uk

Oops!

I need to point out that the photograph on the cover depicting a joint family in Kerala is reversed left to right. I fear that this might give rise to a wrong idea as to how one should wear the holy threads across their chest and also how the sari is worn in South Indian states.
Rajaraman, rajaraja@aol.com

Same Goal in Different Ways

I am the current president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America. As you mentioned in your current editorial, Hindu solidarity is the mission of your monastic order ("Chronicling Hinduism's Modern Experience," Publisher's Desk, January '97). You are trying to achieve this by information and communication. We at the VHP are trying to do the same by working at the grassroot level. Hindu unity and solidarity is the goal of VHP also. We can be complementary in this great effort. Most of us are full of zeal and enthusiasm but lack the spiritual and philosophical knowledge. Your teachings and various articles in your magazine do a wonderful job in fulfilling that deficiency.

Yash Pal Lakra, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, USA

Concerned about Children

I do not see views of children expressed in your magazine, and that has to be corrected. We have to know what exactly their views are on a regular basis. Growing up in a Western society with our Eastern value system is not easy. Unluckily, temples are not offering a lot of opportunity for children to express their views. Children are under quite a lot of peer pressure. In schools and colleges they are subjected to name calling as well as extreme anti-Eastern propaganda. Many of them find it difficult to relate their problems to their parents, since most of the parents are brought up in India in very congenial surroundings. All of us have to know all their problems and come out with proper solutions. Views of children of South Africa, United States of America, Mauritius, etc., that you have published were an eye opener to all the Hindus. I do not see Hinduism as a religion but as the true culture of India. We have to focus on children to safeguard our culture. Otherwise, we will lose our children, and they will lose

our values, and future generations of Indians will look at our culture as a relic of an ancient civilization.
Ed Viswanathan, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

Impressed

I have really been enjoying the January issue. I am glad to have read your Publisher's Desk and am so impressed with the integrity of your mission. It makes me want to be even more involved. Congratulations on what you are doing.
Stephen P. Huyler, Camden, Maine, USA

Aryan Invasion Was True? Not

I read with interest that the Aryan invasion theory was a myth according to Mr. Dinesh Agrawal (Aryan Invasion Theory, My Turn, July '96). How does he explain Rig Veda verse 1.32 which says, "Indra fighting to break down the fortresses to open the cave to free the floods imprisoned and set the seven rivers loose, while the black captives watched under guard." The world's ancient, best irrigation scheme and the cities with straight streets were destroyed. By whom? Was it not by those who did not know the value of the irrigation scheme and their culture or language--the Aryans who came from beyond Himalayas on recently domesticated horses? If, as Mr. Agrawal says, they were indigenous people, they would have known the value of the irrigation schemes and the cities. The Aryans further went to divide the people by despising black and brown people, and keeping kings, the army and the rich landowners on their side, heaping untold suffering on the ordinary masses.
K. Mailvaganam, Isaacs, Canberra, Australia

* Rig Veda verse 1.32 cited by Mr. Mailvaganam does not

contain the statement he quotes. We have not disovered any irrigation schemes. The cities and straight streets which we have discovered were not destroyed by any human hand. There is no evidence whatsoever for the destruction of Indus Valley cities by human hands.
Prof. Shiva G. Bajpai, California State University, Northridge, Califronia, USA

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

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