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Letters

Thank You

I was blessed to come across the name of your magazine while Sri Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma was delivering a spiritual lecture on television. I am honored to know of the great, focused efforts of your organization. Please accept my hearty wishes for making efforts to glorify Hindu Dharma.

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The Two Madhvacharyas

I read with fascination the feature about India's great Hindu heritage sites ("World Heritage Sites," Jul/Aug/Sep 2011). These are just the tip of the incredible iceberg that is Hindu architecture and culture. I am delighted to have visited five of these eight sites and intend to see them all. I would like to point out a small error in the section on Hampi. The kulaguru of the Vijayanagara kingdom was Sri Vidyaranya, the twelfth Acharya of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham (1380-1386), whose purvashrama name was Madhava. While also known as Madhavacharya, he is much more commonly known as Sri Vidyaranya. The confusion arises since the dvaita philosopher Sri Madhvacharya was a contemporary. Moreover, the Sringeri Peetham is not a Vaishnava order, as was stated in the article, but follows the Smarta Sampradaya. In fact, the center of worship for the Sringeri jagadgurus is the crystal Lingam of Lord Chandramouliswara (Shiva).

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Hinduism and Homosexuality

After reading both articles ("Guyana's Hindus Face Gay Quandry" and "Beware of Alien Morals," Apr/May/Jun 2011), I want to say that I particularly agree with a couple statements. The first one was made by Pandit Rajin Balgobind: "Everyone, including homosexual people, should lead disciplined lives that fulfill dharma, contribute to the well being of their society and do no harm to anyone." The article continues, "In Balgobind's opinion, sexual orientation falls into the category of kama (pleasure), one of the four goals of life, called purusharthas." The second statement was made by an anonymous man: "Many negative stereotypes of gay and lesbian people lead to prejudices."

Personally, I believe that, regardless of one's sexual orientation, in order to achieve Self Realization one has to renounce physical and worldly pleasures (which include all sexual activities), and that Self Realization will lead to moksha; if someone is not able to renounce the physical and worldly pleasures, it doesn't mean he/she is a bad person, but it will definitely keep that person from Self Realization in this life. Being a good or bad person, a good or bad Hindu, is not a matter of sexual orientation; I think a good Hindu is that one who is after service, wisdom, Self Realization and moksha. Respect, tolerance and wisdom are key values a good Hindu must possess and put in practice all the time.

Renato Yamil Crespo
Mexico
via Facebook

The Hindu Dharma has a wonderful opportunity to show the world its true enlightened thinking. Other faiths are bound by the black and white dicta of their scriptures. For some, no matter how much they want to be open and affirming, they are held back by verses they believe come straight from the lips of God. The Dharma, when expressed from its summit, allows for many instruments of knowledge to define Truth; including our scriptures, of course, but also the words of our modern day saints and sages, science and our own personal experiences and sense of reason. It is my understanding that much of contemporary Hinduism's less than progressive attitude towards homosexuality stems from the dismal legacy of Muslim and British rule over 800 years. I have read accounts of greater tolerance and appreciation in ancient times. We must reclaim this.

As an actor I have had the gift of many more friendships in the gay community than perhaps most straight people are afforded. Yes, I've seen plenty of examples

of what I consider adharmic activity (promiscuity, hedonism, etc.), just as I've seen among the heterosexual community. But I've also seen long-term, loving, monogamous relationships that are inspirational.

One problem with this conversation is that we concentrate too much on the "sex" in homosexual. A committed, loving relationship between two people is so much more than the relatively short time they are actually engaged in sexual activity.

Fred Stella
Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA
via Facebook

How to Make Natural Sindoor?

It is difficult it is to find instructions on making natural sindoor at home. There is virtually no information online, no recipes or instructions. The only firm recipe that I could find involves slaked lime (calcium hydroxide), which, if handled improperly, can be very dangerous. There are no instructions available on how to create purely herbal sindoor. Some flowers are listed, but amounts and methods are never mentioned. Judging from the number of requests for specific instructions on online forums, I am sure that other readers would find the information as helpful as I would.

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Christian Evangelism

I want to bring to everyone's attention a blog post by Nithin Sridhar in which he quotes from a paper entitled "Christian Witness to Hindus" published in 1980 by the Lausanne Movement, listing some of the methods to be implemented to convert Hindus. He begins with an excerpt from the paper: "1) We should enunciate theology in Indian categories so that the Hindu can understand the gospel. 2) We must develop a truly Christian world view consistent with the Indian context. 3) While presenting the gospel, we must be aware of the fact that the Hindu understands the doctrine of God, man, sin and salvation in a way entirely different

from the biblical doctrine. 4) Communicate the gospel through indigenous methods such as bhajans, drama, dialogue, discourse, Indian music, festival processions, etc."

Sridhar explains, "Christian missionaries have adopted Hindu ways of life, Hindu religious symbols, architecture, worship forms, and even declare themselves as swamis. A Catholic priest who calls himself swami instantly attains the status and authority of a holy man in Hindu society, which he can use to convert individuals. By using Sanskrit terminology in his sermons, he implies a close relationship of Hindu theology to Catholic theology, a relationship which does not really exist. Such missionaries speak authoritatively on Hindu scriptures and argue that their [Christian] teachings are consonant with everything Hindu, but add a finishing touch, a 'fullness' to the traditional faith.

"Swami Jayendra, Sankaracharya of Kanchi Matham, made a valid point at the 'Interfaith Dialogue' with Cardinal Jean-Louis Pierre Tauran, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, and others, in Mumbai on 12 July 2009. In a statement released to the media, he said: 'The Church in India must stop forthwith the use of Hindu religious words, phrases and symbols like Veda, Agama, rishi, ashram, Om and other such in what is referred to as "inculturation" tactics, but which are only intended to deceive the vulnerable sections of our people who are the intended targets for religious conversion.'" Sridhar concludes, "Christianity has always followed a policy of 'inculturation.' It adopted Pagan elements in Christianized form to pave the way for transition from Paganism to Christianity in Europe. Pagan gods became Christian saints, and Pagan festivals became Christian festivals. In this process of inculturation, the Christian Church suborned old forms to its new message, making sure that the [Greek and Roman] Pagan foundation was submerged under Christian doctrine." Please read more of Sridhar's article, "Inculturation: Fooling the Hindu Masses," at <http://bit.ly/inculturation>

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Catholic Murtis in Temples

I am very saddened to see a Catholic nun's murti in the Shree Sanatan Hindu Mandir in Wembley, UK ("New Temple's Unusual Icon," Global Dharma, Oct/Nov/Dec

2010). The management should take a very bold step to remove it. Otherwise, I would advise Hindus to boycott that temple. It is a shame that Hindus don't stand up for their religion. This is a tactical process to convert Hindus to Christianity. After 100 years or so a stamp will be issued by the UK government showing Hindus worshipping Catholic icons, implying that they have converted to Catholicism. It has happen before with an image of Mary carrying baby Krishna.

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Why Were Animals Sacrificed?

I am a Hindu and have been vegetarian my whole life, as I was born into the tradition, and I believe it is not right to kill another animal. I have recently taken up study of the Veda and have discovered there are sacrifices of animals prescribed. How would you account for this?

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It is a controversial subject, and we invite our readers to comment.

Blood Attracts Asuras

You cite Hindu scriptures as teaching that blood attracts asuras, low-minded spirits, in "Women Barge their Way into Temple Sanctum" (Hindu Press International, April 14, 2011). Could you give a specific reference?

Dr. Anantanand Rambachan
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According to Agama scholar Dr. Sabharathnam Sivachariyar, the Amsumat Agama's chapter on expiatory rites directs: "Devotees or priests should desist from entering the temple if their bodies have been wounded or blood is oozing out of their bodies. There are good forces (saumya saktayah) and evil forces (dussaktayah), being invisible to humans, pervading around. The blood is highly instantaneous in attracting such evil forces, asuras, rakshasas. The presence of such evil forces would nullify the benefits of puja, fire rituals, mantra japa and expiatory rites."

Life's Richest Opportunity: Giving Even better: giving via endowments

Hindu heritage endowment (hhe) has a treasure to share with you and the world today: its newly redesigned website at www.hheonline.org

It has already proved helpful to donors, potential donors and people curious to know more about endowments, estate planning and planned giving.

The site will remind you of Hinduism Today for its simplicity, clarity, relevance and inspiration. It gives quick, trenchant overviews, illustrating ways of giving with numerous examples and personal accounts. It contains an Estate Planning Toolkit and shows you how to set up an endowment for your favorite charity anywhere in the world--the whole made amazingly easy by HHE, with no fees involved. The website is a marvelous tool for shaping one's legacy, which can bring satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment and joy.

In 2006, Mrunal and Padmaja Patel of Texas purchased a life insurance policy and named the Hinduism Today Production Fund (one of HHE's 83 funds) as one of its beneficiaries. "Hinduism Today changed our lives," explains Dr. Patel. "We wanted to do something significant in return. It has been fulfilling for our family, proving that what you give will come back to you abundantly in one way or another."

If you would like to support Hinduism Today and give yourself and your family a measure of fulfillment in the process, please consider donating to the Hinduism Today Production Fund with an immediate gift or by including the fund in your estate plan. Read about the fund at www.hheonline.org/productionfund Subscribe

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1-808-634-5407 or email hhe _@_ hindu.org.