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## Letters

### Chinese Yogis Love HT

The 2011 China-India Yoga Summit was the biggest yoga event ever in China and turned out to be a great success. This summit signifies profound significance for Chinese yoga. Hinduism Today receives high compliments in this circle; the articles in it are so excellent that in our opinion they will prove to be an asset to Chinese yoga practitioners. So, we would like to translate some articles from your magazine from time to time and release them on our website and in our magazine. It is, in our opinion, a good opportunity to bring your ideas and values to Chinese yogis.

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### Monks with Macs

Thank you for taking the time to acknowledge the mahasamadhi of Steve Jobs (Hindu Press International, Oct 5, 2011). It is good that Hinduism Today is not so wrapped up in its mission and can take the time to recognize a great soul in another setting. Steve Jobs gave the world a shining example of originality. I, too, wish him well in the next stage of his development.

Peter Beacham, Ottawa  
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### Mystic Union with God

In "Four Questions People Ask About Hinduism" (Oct/Nov/Dec 2011), the following statement is made: "...and the flower of yoga, mystical union with God, is Hindu." Is it the author's intention to say that mystical union is found only within Hinduism?

While not mainstream and sometimes considered absolutely heretical, mystical union is certainly found in all three Western religions as well as, with different terminology and a different philosophical basis, in Buddhism and Taoism.

Alan Rubinstein  
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No, we are not saying that union with God is found only within Hinduism. You are right: mystical union with the Absolute is found in many traditions throughout the world.

### Animal Sacrifice in the Vedas

However the Vedas may be understood, animal sacrifice is not an acceptable practice in our times! Countless animal welfare activists are working overtime on legal battles in India, as sacrifice is actually against the current animal welfare laws there.

Eileen Weintraub, President/Founder, Help Animals India  
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### Much Ado About Christmas

Thank you for the article, "Much Ado About Christmas" (Oct/Nov/Dec 2009). My five-year-old son wanted a Christmas tree, and my wife bought a small, artificial one despite my protest. Then I told my son to call it Kalpavriksham ["wish-fulfilling"] instead of Christmas tree. The irony is that he never even looked at the box after we bought it. Time to return it.

Ravi Kiran, via hinduismtoday.com

Read about Pancha Ganapati, a five-day holiday ending on December 25, conceived of by Hinduism Today founder Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in 1995, now celebrated by Hindus around the world: [bit.ly/panchaganapati](http://bit.ly/panchaganapati)

## Eating Is Sacred

I love the article, "The Sacred Act of Eating" (Apr/May/Jun 2011). The message is practical. The joys of mindful eating are something that the pace of our hectic societies have made very alien for many. An excellent, thought-provoking reminder here!

Seraj, comment via [hinduismtoday.com](http://hinduismtoday.com)

## Vardhanti Versus Jayanti

There is a grave error in your article on the "Hindu of the Year 2011" (Oct/Nov/Dec 2011): "The 60th birthday is also called the 61st Vardhanti..." Vardhanti means death anniversary. Jayanti is birth anniversary. Thank you for your kind attention to this urgent matter. I read Hinduism Today regularly and have tremendous respect for all of you.

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Institutions, we found, use the two words variously. A spokesman at Sringeri Sharada Peetham responds: Vardhanti comes from the Sanskrit root, vridha, which lends to forms such as vardhate, meaning "to grow," "to increase." So, 61st Vardhanti (60th birthday) means the completion of 60 years and the day on which the 61st year "grows" or commences. The term Vardhanti is used when a Mahapurusha is physically present. The word Jayanti comes from the Sanskrit root ji, meaning to be victorious. It is used to glorify the birthday of an incarnation/Mahapurusha who is no longer physically present. Sri Krishna Jayanti, Sri Shankara Jayanti as well as Jayantis of previous Acharyas of Sringeri are examples of the popular usage.

Dr. Shiva Bajpai remarks that the usage of these two terms varies in different regions throughout India, as well as among various Hindu sects.

## Questions About Hinduism

I am a docent with the Friends of the Museums in Singapore, and I am a guide at the Asian Civilizations Museum. I would like to let you know that we used the booklets "Ten Questions People Ask About Hinduism" and "Visiting a Hindu Temple" during our training as museum guides and found them extremely useful. Thank you.

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Recently at the Hindu Mandir Executives' conference at Columbus, Ohio, September 23-25, 2011, I attended the lecture by your editor-in-chief on "14 Questions People Ask About Hinduism." It was impressive. Many took a copy of the booklet for themselves and one or two more for their children. Later, several of my friends and I raised more questions, among them: 1) Why do Hindus build lavish, costly temples, such as the Swaminarayan mandirs and the Sripuram golden temple? God is everywhere, and Hinduism teaches simplicity. When we enter such costly temples do we go there to worship or admire the beauty and the marvelous architecture of the temple? 2) Why do we need rituals? Nowadays temples charge Rs 10,000 to 50,000 for yagnas, and the charges for Satyanarayana puja at home by a priest are outrageous. Do we need such costly pujas for the self-satisfaction that God will protect us?

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