Letters
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Hinduism in Bali

I would like to convey to Mr. Rajiv Malik and all the Swamis of Hinduism Today my sincere and deepest thanks for presenting such nice articles, which touch the soul and often point us in positive directions. I loved reading about Hindu schools in Bali ("Bali, Land of Offerings," Apr/May/Jun 2012), and I asked myself why in Mauritius, with a population that is more than 50% Hindu, do we not have a school, primary and secondary, to promote Hinduism--in all senses: cultural, economic, social, spiritual and intellectual. We are suffering from its absence as our youth are being drowned in Western culture by all media. All your hard work is really appreciated.

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The revival of Hinduism in Indonesia is a great story. Such a revival should occur in Afghanistan and Pakistan. All of non-Arab Asia is the great Hindu world, from Iran to Indonesia, Mongolia to Australia, including all the "stans" of Central Asia and the Buddhist Far-East of China, Japan and Korea.

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Mr. Rajiv Malik has been kind enough to courier me the Apr/May/Jun 2012 edition of Hinduism Today, carrying the article on Bali and many more. The magazine on the whole is beautiful, well made, carrying a treasure of information on various subjects on Hinduism. It takes us on a virtual trip to Bali through a journey of words and rich visual images. It is the home away from home for Hindus. Written through

the eyes of Rajiv Malik, giving a highly personalized 12-day account of his experiences that definitely endears the land to the reader, it offers deep insight into the sights, sounds, cultures, colors, lifestyles, beliefs and what keeps the people of Bali going.

The magazine carries varied articles, including those that provide spiritual learning, imparting knowledge to the uninitiated as well as enhancing the knowledge of those who are learned. Words of wisdom from the spiritual gurus are conveyed through their quotes. There is an account of the traditions and customs of the Hindu wedding ceremony, how the tradition has been kept intact, replete with its ancient sanctity.

Bali's tradition and historicity is brought to life through the description of its art and dances. The issue is an eye-opener for the world as it lends a peek into this hidden beauty. In a world torn with political strife and religious intolerance, Bali stands out as an example of unity and peace, where its people live in utter harmony and with respect for each other. The issue has presented a holistic view of Bali--historically, geographically, culturally and spiritually. It is a must-read for every travel enthusiast and a true gem as a collector's edition, a true collector's treasure trove, priceless to those who know its value.

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Siva's Five Powers

The Jul/Aug/Sep 2012 edition is really wonderful, especially "Siva's Five Powers" and "Which Yoga Should I Follow" by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami. The information on the 15th World Sanskrit Conference was extremely useful. At the Sri Siva Vishnu Temple in Maryland, we have been teaching Sanskrit for a few years, and now some of the students have started teaching in their homes and other places. The article on the Supreme Court ruling is a must-read for all temples and Hindu organizations in the US. Thank you so much for publishing these varied, informative articles as part of Hinduism Today, and please continue this service for years to come.

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I am still vibrating to the tone of "Siva's Five Powers." Amazing is all I can say. Thank you for such a magical, mystical, meditative experience. Now I am dreaming of Pieter's paintings on the walls and ceiling of my shrine room!

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Gay Marriage

I read with interest the article, "One Hindu's Take on Gay Marriage" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2012). Same-sex marriage is a social and legal issue, not a religious issue, in the context of the Minnesota state constitutional amendment the author is referring to. Therefore, all the Hinduism-based arguments that he uses to support gay marriage are irrelevant. Of course, homosexuals must be acknowledged and treated with fairness, respect, honor and dignity. But I don't see any reason to redefine marriage, which has always been defined in all the societies of the world for thousands of years as "the formal union of a man and a woman, typically recognized by law, by which they become husband and wife."

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Embracing Hinduism, My Way

Apoorva Murthy's "Embracing Hinduism My Way" (Jul/Aug/Sep 2012) put on paper the feeling I myself harbor. The constant questioning and the reluctance to accept certain beliefs that she speaks of define my own relationship with Hinduism, and I, too, am working to overcome these unnecessary approaches in my own way. My generation, the students just beginning college and getting a taste of the real world, will benefit greatly from the realization that skepticism when it comes to Hinduism is unwarranted.

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Hinduism in Early Russia

Referring to your article "Hinduism in Early Russia" (Jul/Aug/Sep 2012), the name "Russia" is only about 300 years old. The czar Peter the Great changed the name of his kingdom of Moscowia (the city of Moscow is less than 900 years old) to Russia after conquering the medieval polity of Kievan Rus. The claim that the town of Starya Maina is 1,700 years old thus puts it beyond the histories of Rus and Russia. Of note is that Kievan Rus had as its symbol the trident of Siva, and almost all languages of Europe are Indo-European, though historical records do not connect India and Europe.

Valentine Bereza
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Government-Run Temples

With reference to the article "Protest Against Move to Convert Temple Hall" (Hindu Press International, May 4, 2012), please note that not only Hindu temples, but the administration of several Jain temples have been taken over by bureaucratic state governments. I agree that other than Hindu and Jain temples, other faiths' places of worship are free to manage themselves, even though they may also engage in questionable administration practices--but the governments don't dare disturb!

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Holst's Hindu Studies

Fellow readers might be interested in a review in The New York Times of May 11, 2012, by Zachary Woolfe of a performance of the opera "Savitri," written by the

early 20th century British composer Gustav Holst. Holst is best known for his symphonic suite "The Planets," which reflects his long and deep study of astrology. But Holst was also very interested in Hinduism. He secured university tutoring to study Sanskrit and made a number of Sanskrit-to-English translations. Besides "Savitri," which is based on a story from the Mahabharata, he wrote another opera, "Sita," based on the Ramayana, wrote choral settings for verses he translated from the Rig Veda and produced two pieces based on the works of Kalidas. The review of "Savitri" may be accessed at bit.ly/holst-savitri.

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Transferring of Temple Lands

Referring to the story "State Restores 468 Acres of Temple Land" (Hindu Press International, May 24, 2012), I thought it would interest readers to know that transfers of temple land to private individuals has also happened at Puthur Siva Temple in Perintalmanna, Mallapuram District, Kerala. This ancient Siva temple was so rich once upon a time. You must go there to see how powerful it is.

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Kuttuvilakkus Come in Pairs

Recently I bought What Is Hinduism? and and have been looking through the pictures in the book. I would like to express an opinion regarding the painting on page 182, in the chapter "The Home Shrine." There is only one kuttuvilakku (standing oil lamp) in the shrine. Traditionally two kuttuvilakkus are placed by a shrine on all auspicious occasions. In Sri Lanka, one lamp is only placed near the head of the deceased at a funeral.

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Dropped Murti

Last pradosha in the Ramalingeshwara Temple in Bangsar, Malaysia, an arrogant priest dropped a Siva statue and it broke in two in front of a crowd of about 200 people. Looking afraid, the priest quickly tied a string around the murti, covered it with flowers and proceeded with the prayers. Were his actions appropriate?

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Putting First Things First

How to discover who we are and what really matters

In 1980, Subhash Choudhary arrived from India and soon found himself in a US high school. The sense of dislocation drove him to ponder the great questions: "Who am I? What does it mean to be a Hindu?..." Three years later, he found Hinduism Today: "One of the best things that ever happened to me," he explains. "Here were my answers and a wealth of understanding. I still read the magazine today. It helps keep clarity of mind and gives the strength to recognize the right thing to do."

By 2003, Subhash had become a Vice President at Xerox. Everything was going well except that he worked long hours away from home. "I began to ache at seeing my boys growing up without me, and I feared I would lose them." After much introspection and many family meetings, it all became clear and Subhash made his decision. He turned his back on the bright career and turned to what really mattered: "my family and my faith--my passion."

Today, he works reasonable hours as a consultant and spends his spare time sharing his inspiration with his boys and teaching and promoting Hinduism at every opportunity. With copies of Hinduism Today ever in his briefcase, Subhash is ready to share with youngsters, parents, teachers and whoever shows interest.

Over the last 13 years, Mr. and Mrs. Choudhary have donated regularly to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment.

And they have included the fund in their estate plan. "We cannot say enough good things about Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, who had the vision to launch the magazine that would answer our greatest needs so perfectly. We want it to continue to grow and give Hindus everywhere knowledge of their heritage, and the knowledge of who they are--and show Hinduism to the whole world as the remarkable model of sustainability and continuity that it is. We do not know of a greater or purer cause, and feel privileged to be a small part of it."

If you share the Choudharys' vision and enthusiasm for our great common cause, please donate--now or in your estate plan--to the Hinduism Today Production Fund at: www.hheonline.org/donate/pf

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