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LETTERS

Hindu Temples of the West

Your article, "Hindu Temples of the West Adjust, Adapt, Improvise" (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2012) is very well written. It is an eye-opener for temple leaders and administrators and to help them develop better plans for the future.

HIRANYA GOWDA
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, USA

It was a wonderful surprise to receive the magazine last night! There is so much material covered. I am so very grateful to have been interviewed by you for this article on Hindu temples. The published article is extremely impressive!

RADHA KIRTANE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, USA

Dealing with Conversion

I am a Hindu and a reader of your magazine. I pride myself in my liberal views and believe in respecting all faiths. We are a Hindu family but my sister converted to the Assemblies of God 25 years ago on the coercion of her husband. They and their four children are all very devout AOG members. I treat them with the same love and respect as any of my siblings and my parents. I don't know how long they have been trying to convert my parents and siblings, but recently my father was diagnosed with liver cancer and had a kidney removed. It was then that they placed a Bible in his hands, and now I hear through their son that they are trying to get my father to church meetings. I am very upset with this action as it is a blatant disrespect to both my parents and to our religion and faith. Please advise on what best I can do to bring further understanding of the religion and to show them how they are being taken advantage of.

ANONYMOUS
KUALA LUMPUR, SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

Please consult Chapter 4 of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's book, How to Become a Hindu (himalayanacademy.com/resources/books/hbh), which discusses this issue.

Predatory Proselytism

The article by Padma Kuppa, "Predatory Proselytism" (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2012), describes the truth; and the truth must be spread. Copies of this article must be kept in every Hindu temple in India and abroad by supporters of truth for every one to read. I admire the writer's views supporting the truth.

L. ANAND
SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

Ganesha Can Unify Us

As the oldest major religion in the world, we must continue leading the way in bringing the people of the world closer together. We must be more organized and united. Although we seem to have many divisions, Ganesh seems to be a common Deity for all of us. Maybe we can be more united through Him.

RAJESH ASANI
KUCHING, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

Why No Temple Access?

Thank you for the interesting special edition on temple worship. One matter that is not dealt with, however, is the controversial issue of temple entry. As an ethnically non-Indian Hindu, I am not allowed inside many of the most significant temples, such as Lingaraj in Bhubaneswar, Jagannath in Puri, Vishvanath in Varanasi, the

inner sanctums of Meenakshi and Sundareshvar in Madurai and many, many more. I have experienced downright hostile attitudes from the temple manager when wanting to visit the Panch Krosi Mandir in Varanasi. The problem may be that some of the temples are run by private trusts or families. But it is not fair that devotion is evaluated merely on the basis of skin color. It is racism. Indians, whether non-Hindus, atheists or meat-eaters, are allowed entry without questioning, but not sincere "whites." I would like your magazine to address this problem.

MIKAEL AKTOR
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Need for Nepali Translations

There is an urgent need for translation of the basic informational texts about Hinduism into Nepali. Nepal is being bombarded by Christianity. The Hindu Bhutanese community, now spread throughout the world, is having the same issues.

ARUN CHANDRAKANTAN
DALLAS, TEXAS, USA

Hindu Chaplains

I was most elated to read the article on the lady Hindu chaplain, Pratima Dharm (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2012). Among the countries that have Hindu chaplains in their armies you have not mentioned the Netherlands. My disciple, Pandit Komal Bisseswar, from Surinam in South America, serves as a Hindu chaplain in the army of the Netherlands.

MAHAMANDELASHWAR SWAMI VEDA BHARATI
RISHIKESH, UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

Welcome to Hinduism

I am fan of HINDUISM TODAY. I appreciate your efforts to give Hindus concise advice. Due to your efforts, more and more Westerners are moving to Sanatana Dharma. I want to embrace and say welcome to all new members.

PRABHAT CHAUHAN
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, USA

Visiting a Hindu Temple

I read with interest your article, "Visiting a Hindu Temple" (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2012). Regarding the "Why Are Temples Needed?" segment, I want to add that while temples can help us experience Divinity through a murti, it is not the only way to experience Divinity. People who have faith in Advaita Vedanta, or pure nondualism, as exemplified by Shankaracharya, conceive Brahman to be the Impersonal God, the Absolute. Shankaracharya does not deny the existence of the Personal God, known as Ishwara, but declares Ishwara to be equally as unreal as the universe and the individuality of the soul. In truth, the only Reality is the Absolute, and man is that Absolute. This Absolute can be realized through shravana (reading the scriptures), nanana (reflection on what one has read), and nidhidhyasana (meditation on what one has learned, so as to assimilate and internalize the scriptural knowledge). Too often, temple going becomes a mindless ritual, a means to socialize, a means to make business dealings or a means to find a life partner.

PRADEEP SRIVASTAVA
DETROIT, MICHIGAN, USA

A Gradual Change

Rev. Victor M. Parachin in his submission on "USA, Barely a Christian Nation" came to the conclusion that America has been undergoing a gradual spiritual change to embrace Eastern philosophies (Jul/Aug/Sept, 2011). He ended his letter by saying, "As more Americans discover the openness of the Eastern spiritual paths, it is a number which will continue to grow."

The main reason for the gradual shift to Eastern spiritual paths by Western people is not simply due to narrowness and divisive teachings of Abrahamic religions, it is

because modern man is not satisfied with believing in something for the sake of belief. With the availability of a huge amount of advanced knowledge about the universe, modern man is far more intelligent and inquisitive than those who lived in the medieval world.

Today many followers of Abrahamic religions are asking questions of their validity. Some teachings, such as the origin of the universe, are now coming under scrutiny. "Belief for the sake of belief" is unlikely to survive long. It will be replaced by the quest for the truth. The most important point of Rev. Parachin's submission is the use of the word embrace, indicating that the silent spiritual change taking place in the USA is a natural process rather than one induced by preaching, propaganda and proselytizing. It is from within. It is a call that leads man to seek the truth of why things are what they are, rather than have a belief that is naturally an impediment to the advancement of knowledge and unravelling the mysteries of the universe.

DR. JATINDRA SAHA
PLYMOUTH, ENGLAND, UK

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We Reconnected with Our Core Beliefs

How you can help spread Hinduism's treasures

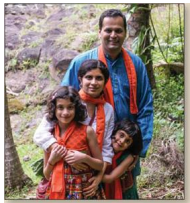
MY WIFE AND I DO SIMILAR WORK, explains Dr. Jagdish Ragade of Portland, Oregon, USA. My specialty is Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychiatry while Namrata is an advisor and consultant to other doctors. Basically, our jobs are to find solutions and help others do the same.

A year ago, when we found HINDUISM TODAY, immediately our lives were enhanced. At work, I find myself banking more confidently on the inner in ways I would hardly have dared do previously. I can go for solutions on a bigger scale. And it generally works out.

HINDUISM TODAY helped us to reconnect with our core beliefs, Namrata adds. Once your understanding and faith deepen, you can really help others. People around you begin to understand and have faith, too. This has proved true in our work and at home also, where the inspiration of one becomes that of the others. Our daughters Anusha, 9, and Shreya, 6, appreciate our new shrine room as much as we do. It feels so good in there, they say. I am amazed at how much they understand. We have become enthusiastic vegetarians and, once a month, all four of us go out into the street with our pots and pans and feed the homeless people.

Jagdish and Namrata have donated generously to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "We like to think that our gifts will help the magazine to continue providing those liberating perspectives that are inspiring us and our children," Jagdish explains. "We imagine a future where HINDUISM TODAY is financially strong and able to share Hinduism's spiritual treasures with a great many people. And, as inspired people tend to inspire others, the effect should be a wonder to behold. We consider contributing to the magazine's future a most worthy cause."

If you share the Ragade's vision and their enthusiasm for spirituality, please donate now or in your estate plan to the Hinduism Today Production Fund at: www.hheonline.org/donate/pf Read about the fund at hheonline.org/productionfund Subscribe to the Production Fund e-news-letter at: www.himalayanacademy.com/email-news Or chat with us: 1-808-634-5407 or hhe@hindu.org



Coming together: We are more confident now, knowing we can answer the children's questions.

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