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We want to call our loyal readers' attention to the center section of HINDUISM TODAY this issue, where you will see over eighty Hindu religious leaders - spiritual men and women - honored. These eminent personalities have from time to time over the past three years been in touch with HINDUISM TODAY as writers, advisors, collaborators and inspirers. Many we call upon regularly for resource information and insight. In the case of others, we acknowledge their good works that may have gone unnoticed in the past.

For the most part, a Hindu religious leader is person who has been initiated and is a living representative of a traditional lineage. Others are elected by the people, having awakened the power within themselves to transmit the teachings, uplift, counsel and console their followers. Still others contribute through their eloquence in high-minded discourse, or in writing books for the masses to enjoy.

All of the Hindu religious leaders in this issue work outside of India, though for some India may be home base. All, as far as we know, are full-time, having no other occupation or interest. They head up institutions, some with large following, some with a handful of close disciples. Among them are represented all the four Hindu sects, both liberal and orthodox. They all have one thing in common - the Vedas, our Hindu bible (excuse the word). In whatever context they speak, the voice of the Vedas is heard woven within their wisdom. In whatever counseling they give, they draw from the deep well of Hindu culture. In their varied philosophical stands is revealed the various verses of that most ancient of human scriptures.

Yes, these are a few of the many thousands of Hindu religious leaders throughout the world spreading the truths of the Sanatana Dharma. Most of them have surrendered a personal life and live only to serve and awaken others to the depths they have experienced. The sum of their sadhana would be as impossible to measure as the heavenly mountain Meru. The depth of their divine wisdom would be as inconceivable to probe as the ocean of samsara. Countries have national treasures. These are Hinduism's international treasures. All we need is ten thousand more like them.

It is important that newcomers into the Hindu faith, the young people especially, realize that in ancient times as well as today the family unit is complete only when it includes an ordained spiritual mentor, a guru or pundit. It is to him or her that the family goes when karmas are heavy, when difficulties and confusions are encountered on the path and the proper course is unclear. Their firmness and their clarity are stabilizing influence in the family's year-to-year life. For most, but not all Hindus a family temple is also a necessity, as is a collection of sacred writings or scripture, often the teachings of contemporary masters.

We encourage all of our readers to rush forward and receive these good souls with enthusiasm when they come to your community, showing the proper protocol. Garland them with flowers. Lay gifts at their feet in humble obeisance.

There are tens of thousands of such people in India. We don't have space enough to include them, even though they are the mainstay and powerhouse and source of all this. Yes, mother India is the fountainhead of spirituality, the home of the sadhus, the holy ones. These leaders from outside India draw on this strength. Many return to India periodically for sustenance and rejuvenation. We can see that through these leaders' eighty-five pairs of arms, mother India is reaching out to the world.

Sadly, one name had to be removed from the list. Swami Nisreyasananda, the senior-most monk of the Ramakrishna Order and spiritual head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Zimbabwe, Africa, entered mahasamadhi this week. he passed away at the age of 92 in Capetown, south Africa, on November 23rd after suffering a stroke.

Swami, a fine example of matured Hindu spirituality, touched the lives of many, many thousands during his almost 75 years of missionary work. He preferred the practical to the theoretical, and much of his emphasis was in helping ordinary people resolve ordinary problems. One of his devotees wrote to HINDUISM TODAY to say, "Swami Nisreyasananda was always humble. People of all religions sought his guidance. In keeping with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, he gently stoked the fire of divinity latent in all beings. He exemplified the rishis of ancient India in leading a life of compassion, wisdom and austerity."

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