Advertising Is News
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We always like to hear from our readers at HINDUISM TODAY. Recently, a few letters have come in mentioning, "Wouldn't it be nice if there were not so many ads in the North American edition, just lots more news?" As most readers know, we publish five different editions each month, in several countries. The fourteen pages of news and editorials in each are identical, but the ads differ. The North American edition has fourteen pages of ads, whereas the Malaysia edition has five pages: the African and Indian Ocean editions have one and the International edition has just two pages of ads.

We have always looked at advertising in itself as a kind of "news you can use." But think about it. Where else would you find out about all the ayurvedic doctors in North America, or about the comings and goings of swamis and sadhus in your community? Or where could you see an especially fine institution to give that lump sum for a tax-exemption at the end of the year? Where else to turn for information about that conference or cultural event coming to your city next month? Or, as in one ad this month, where could you find out about the extraordinary changes in American visa laws, changes that are going to transform the ability of Hindu institutions to bring religious workers into the country?

Sadhaka Dasa, who manages the advertising desk, works very hard at cultivating and designing newsworthy advertisements. He has been a brahmachari monk for 25 years, and considers this work as his religious service. Look at our ads, they are not ordinary car or perfume ads. They all relate to dharma in one way or another. We don't accept adharmic ads that promote meat, cigarettes or liquors.

I find the ads very interesting. To me, the advertisers bring the Hinduism which is

happening today in each nation to life. They are a story unto themselves. And why do people advertise? Because they are getting good results. They are making money while at the same time serving the Hindu community. We know that in the future our Malaysia, African and Indian Ocean editions, and the European Community edition, will also have fourteen pages of ads.

But in answer to your query, we promise you one thing, a fifty-fifty proposition. If we have fourteen pages of news, we will have fourteen pages of ads and no more. If we have eighteen pages of news, we will go no higher than eighteen pages of ads. Our policy is that ad pages will never exceed news pages. Some publications occasionally run more ads than news - the January 27th issue of Newsweek has 50 ad pages out of a total of 98. This is how professional publications thrive and serve their communities.

Basically, we are in the information sharing business. Someday we may be able to send you news directly from our computer to yours, via satellite for just a few pennies. But right now we have to pay printers and imagesetters, paper companies and postal fees to get the information into your hands. We don't need to make a penny doing it, in fact all our funds go right back into the paper. Not even one person receives one rupee of salary. While we don't make anything, we also don't want to lose anything. Successfully keeping that balance has been the key to fourteen years of uninterrupted publishing of Hinduism's family newspaper.

It's the advertisers who make this possible from month to month. Without them, HINDUISM TODAY could not reach over 100,000 readers each month. Without them, we would have to charge readers three or four times more for the paper in order to meet our expenses. So, you can see, advertisers are the good guys, not the bad guys. We hope you will use their services, write for their products, shop from them whenever possible. In that way readers support the advertisers, who support the publishers, who inform the readers who do good in the world.

Ad revenue helps to support our free distribution program. It allows us to give away many free subscriptions to international religious and political leaders and theological seminaries of other faiths throughout the world. Our new international edition, for instance, printed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, reaches thousands of spiritual leaders and prominent people in 34 countries and puts HINDUISM TODAY on the desk of every leader of the Indian Parliament, the Lok Sabha - all 510 of them, every month.

Truly it is our public service, one that our staff of monks takes great joy in doing. Every monastic community serves the public in one way or another, whether it be an orphanage, a school, free meditation classes, an eye clinic or feeding the poor. Our seva, our service, is HINDUISM TODAY. It's a wonderful way to be in touch with the hundreds of institutions and thousands of spiritual men and women who are living and promoting dharma. We do pay our regional correspondents a nominal amount, and each one of them would agree that it is indeed nominal.

Thank you for sending your letters of encouragement and good advice. If this explanation about our advertising policy is not satisfactory, please write to us again.

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