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Letters

Thank You!

How may we thank you for the Apr/May/Jun 2012 issue of Hinduism Today! A beautiful cover story on Bali, and in that Rev. Dada Vaswani's nice insert. May the Master's blessings continue to pour upon you and your work abundantly.

Naresh Singhani
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Thank you so much for your magazine. Each time I buy an issue, I read it from cover to cover. For a long time, I have been thirsty for inspiration and a spiritual way of life. At various times, I thought that I had found it in this or that, but each time, I was eventually left unsatisfied. Finally, when I came across Hinduism Today, I found what I had been looking for: something broad, not narrow--Hinduism itself, the Great Mother Faith.

Jesse Johnson
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Beautiful Bali

I am the publisher of Media Hindu, a monthly Hindu magazine here in Indonesia. Rajiv Malik's report on Hinduism in Bali is excellent, and I would like to have your permission to translate and publish the articles in my magazine so that many Hindus in Indonesia can be exposed to them.

Ngakan Putu Putra
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I wanted to tell you how much I am enjoying this edition of Hinduism Today. I have been to Bali and was blessed to have an amazing three weeks of visiting temples, seeing dance and music, seeing and participating in many different religious events, learning about Balinese Hinduism from many different local people. I witnessed and experienced many of the things that your articles cover, including funeral rites, and learned about the many rites and rituals that mark a person's passing into the next worlds. I fell in love with the Bali that is far, far away from the tourist areas, and feel that it is one of those few places on Earth that are tangibly close to Siva.

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Thank you very much for the excellent special issue on Bali (Apr/May/Jun 2012). Articles by Rajiv Malik are very informative, and the pictures are beautiful.

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Kailash Pilgrimage

"Kailash Yatra" (Jan/Feb/Mar 2012) was a welcome guide and refresher for me; I made the trek in August 2011 via Kathmandu. There have been tremendous changes since the author made the pilgrimage in 2004. Except for a short stretch of about 64 km, the roads are all paved and in excellent condition, many times better than the roads in Nepal and India. Telecommunication is excellent. The town of Saga has a decent hotel with bathroom/toilet facilities. However, other stops, including those on the parikrama path, have guest houses as described in the article. Sadly, I have to agree that even now the divinity of the place is spoiled by rubbish left behind by pilgrims.

Mogan
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Thank you for this most elaborate article. Reading it reminded me of historical events in the lives of two saints who lived in the 14th and 15th centuries in Tamil Nadu. Saint Thirunavukkarasar, well known as Appar, wanted to go on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. Due to his feeble old age he could not reach the mountain. He heard a voice instructing him to return to Tamil Nadu and have a dip in the river Thiruvaiyar. As he got out of the water, he had a vision of Siva and Parvati at Mount Kailash, which inspired his 239 verses collectively named "Potri Thiruththandagam."

Another event involves the life of the poet-saint Auvaiyar, an ardent devotee of God Ganesha. Once she performed her daily puja in a hurried manner. Ganesha asked her the reason for her hastiness. She replied that two other saints had started on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and that she wanted to join them. Ganesha encouraged her to continue the puja as usual and assured her that He would help her reach Kailash. When Auvaiyar finished her puja, Ganesha lifted her with His trunk and placed her near Mount Kailash before the other saints arrived.

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Hindu American Identity

Congratulations to Rohini Sircar for her prize-winning essay ("Beyond My Dual Identities," Jan/Feb/Mar 2012). As a graduate student at the University of Michigan, even when it was snowing heavily, I wore a sari and had kumkum on my forehead. When questioned about my attire by white and black Americans and fellow students from India, I would say, "I am proud of my roots; I do not wish to lose my identity as a Hindu woman." Whenever schools and cultural societies invited me, I spoke highly about Indian culture and Hinduism. It always shocked me to find how little educated Americans know about India.

I had the same experience that this young lady had whenever people asked me

where I was from. I always introduce myself as an American scientist of Indian origin. In a melting pot of culture, however difficult it may be, I refuse to give up my identity as a Hindu woman, while continuing to live as an American, assimilating the good of American culture.

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Marriage Reference Book

With the utmost humility, as I welcome the book Vivaha Samskara on the very relevant and important rite of passage in any Hindu's life ("Hindu Wedding," Apr/May/June 2012), I disagree with the author that there is a lack of a reference book in English. My father, Dr. Prem Sahai, wrote the book Hindu Marriage Samskara in English and Hindi with a similar purpose in mind. As a matter of fact, a special message for the book was written by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyasami, founder of Hinduism Today. I congratulate Mr. Deepak Kotwal for his much needed addition to the literary work in this field.

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Pro-Brahmin Attitude?

In response to Sai Ravikumar's letter (Apr/May/June 2012), caste seems to be overestimated in our society. Certainly, it exists, but one should ponder upon the degree to which it was practiced. Consider the Mahabharata, in which Karna was promoted to the kshatriya caste, and the Periya Puranam, which includes stories of saints who came from non-brahmin castes. We should blame the English for using and manipulating caste into what is a cancer in today's society. For 200 years they defiled our view of our religion with propaganda and such abuses, making us look at our religion as evil instead of what it really is, the faith that is the most compassionate toward all beings.

Balasubramaniam Ponnusamy

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Gay Marriage in Minnesota

Thank you very much for the article by Anant Rambachan about a Hindu view on the Marriage Amendment in Minnesota ([here](#)). Of course, it isn't an official Hindu statement on the issue, and I'm sure some Hindus have different opinions on the matter, but the more I learn about Hinduism, the more appreciative I am of its inherent tolerance. What a beautiful religion!

David Burris
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Differences in Vedic Chanting

I have always been amazed by the differences in the way Vedic mantras are chanted in North India and South India. We do know North Indian brahmins to be Pancha Gauda and South Indian to be Pancha Dravida. However, I do not understand why would there would be a difference in the ways mantras are chanted. Is it just the mere geographical barrier of Vindhya ranges which resulted in varied practices?

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Tirupati's Wealth

Whenever donations to Tirupati are mentioned, I request that you note they are used by the government "to balance its budgets" and are given freely to non-Hindu causes, including Christian churches. Indian government officers sit on the board of this and other Hindu temples, while the revenue, properties, schools, etc., of other religions are left alone.

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Animal Sacrifice

I read with interest your article, "The Reality of Animal Sacrifice" (Apr/May/Jun 2012). According to the Bhagavad Gita, God resides in every creature (refer to verses 2.30, 6.31, 10.20, 13.18). Thus, killing an animal is no different than murdering a fellow human being, deemed a heinous crime in every civilized society. "Ahimsa parmo dharmah," "nonviolence is the supreme way," is a prime doctrine of Hinduism.

Pradeep Srivastava
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Thank you for the article on Goan temples (Oct/Nov/Dec 2011). My ancestry is from Goa, and my father was disciplined about leading the entire family on annual pilgrimage to our kuladevata (Shakti) temple. The serenity and power of the temples we spent time in, including the Shantadurga and Mangeshi temples, is hard to describe. What always struck me was that just setting foot in Goa felt special every single time. The opportunity to communicate with the Deity and seek Her guidance for all important decisions in his life was something my father cherished and looked forward to during these pilgrimages. The first significant step in the process of getting prasad is to seek the grace or permission from the Deity to proceed with asking for Her guidance. Being able to do so typically implies that the devotee is observing dharma. In my personal experience, there have sometimes been delays in receiving this permission. Often it was something as simple as one of the family members' not offering to the Deity what She asked for in a dream. No sooner than the dream was recalled, forgiveness sought and the offering made did the Deity immediately allow for seeking Her guidance. Such experiences provide a glimpse into the mystical communication that goes on to this day and deeply impress upon observers the importance of adhering to dharma as well as placing God in the center of our life.

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Correction

In "The Reality of Animal Sacrifice" (Apr/May/Jun 2012), the word not was unintentionally omitted in Dr. S.P. Sabharathnam Sivachariyar's statement that the Vedic verses mentioning animal sacrifice should not be interpreted literally.

Blending Spirituality with Activism How you can help enlist great souls for a great cause

In 2003, Mihir Meghani and a band of dynamic young Hindus decided the time had come. "The problem was evident and the solution clear," explains Mihir, who was born in Philadelphia in 1972. "American Hindus needed a strong, credible and effective voice--one that makers of public opinion and policy would hear and respect." To that end, the young visionaries founded the Hindu American Foundation (HAF). Today, ten years on, HAF has established itself well, championed several Hindu causes and accomplished its mission of becoming a powerful Hindu voice.

"Hinduism Today has facilitated much of our work," explains Mihir, "mostly by creating respect for Hinduism. Its grasp of contemporary issues and knack for sharing Hindu knowledge and wisdom in clear, modern language have given us tools to work with. And the magazine's monastic staff is a model for us, one of spirituality blended with activism. They don't just retreat, they're ever finding new ways to serve and uplift everyone, sharing the fruit of their meditations. That is a powerful message in itself that we use and build on."

Mihir and his wife Tanvi live in Fremont, California. He is a physician and she is a jewelry designer. They have given generously to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "We want to see that day come when the magazine expands, is translated into hundreds of languages, impacts millions and enlists ever more brilliant souls as workers for this great Hindu renaissance."

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

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