

[Readers Tell Us What They Think](#)

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Readers Tell Us What They Think

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Many wonderful encounters took place in March, but none so touching, so telling, so utterly spiritual as our meetings with, and the sudden demise of, HINDUISM TODAY'S friend and senior India correspondent, B.M. Sinha. For days we moved together, sharing a festive mela in Karnataka amid 400,000 celebrating villagers, talking in the muggy evenings about things that matter - the future of Sanatana Dharma in India, the need for deeper spirituality and his resolve to shed light on the social evils that he found so offensive, especially caste, dowry, untouchability, sati and political expediency.

On March 9th as the sun was setting, we sat under a young peepul tree near the Ganesha shrine at Kailas Ashram eleven miles outside of Bangalore. In that serene and holy place, we were Grafting plans for the future of HINDUISM TODAY, full of enthusiasm and hope for real change. Mr. Sinha was determined to have India's swamis, sants and spiritual men and women speak out more, give voice to a deeper Hinduism, one less superstitious, more rational and explicable. He rose from our woven reed mat and walked across the plain dirt compound to interview one of the ashram administrators for his next article. In a gesture that was typical, he first inquired, "Is there anything I can do to help with your work here?" Those words and that selfless impulse were to be his last, a fitting conclusion to a life lived for the benefit of others. A massive heart attack took Mr. Sinha instantly. The swamis, among them our publisher Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, hurried to him. His head was placed in my lap. We chanted "Om Namasivaya" and softly rubbed holy ash on his forehead.

Everyone was silent, but not somber. There was no anguish in anyone present, no sadness, no failure of acceptance. It was, in fact, a very pure and sacred moment. Later the spiritual head of Kailas Ashram, Sri Sri Sri Trichiswami, gave voice to our silent witness, "No mourning is needed tonight. How fortunate he was to have this

departure from physical life, here in a holy place surrounded by holy people. He went with selfless words on his lips, thinking of service. He left without sadness, without pain, without suffering, without disease. That is a good way to leave this world. He must have been a pure soul."

Mr. Sinha's wife, Subhoda, was immediately called at their home in Delhi, where they have two children, a girl 16 and a boy 14. Hearing of her husband's death, Mrs. Sinha responded with a spirituality that echoed India's days of yore. She did not weep, or lament why. Not a syllable of her loss left her lips. Instead, with a poise that resounded the dharma and that I will never forget, she quietly offered, "It is God's will that makes all things happen. He lived for others and died among those he revered. I know he attained Moksha." How great is a faith which can evoke such a perfect response to death's pitiless presence. How honored we all were to be with these two souls that night. It called to mind U.S. General George Patton's observation, "For Hindus death is the most exalted experience of life."

This idea is sometimes hard to grasp - especially for atheists facing Eternal Oblivion and for those of faiths which define death as a kind of punishment for man's sin and disobedience. According to this view, death is the ultimate sign of man's spiritual failure, a belief which understandably arouses instincts of denial and injustice. We may feel shamed, penitent, guilty and disgraced, not to mention frightened. And that's a long way from exultation.

No such thoughts attend the dying and death of a true Hindu. Of course, there is much sadness surrounding the passing of friends and family, but that is human acknowledgement of our love and attachment to life and to each other. Inside we know that death is OK, it is natural. Inside we know that the soul, even if it was less than perfect in this life, is continuing its appointed journey toward Liberation and will, in time, reach the other shore. Such knowledge is reassuring, whether the death is another's or our own. Thus, Hindus called death by a lofty name - Maha Samadhi, "the Great Superconscious State."

If we see death as the opposite of life, then life is good and death is bad. But if we see life and death not as hostile but as collaborative parts of a greater whole called samsara (the cosmic evolutionary cycle of birth-death-rebirth), then life is good and death is also good. Both are part of the Cosmic-What-Is. That being so, the pious Hindu approaches death as a meditation and a sadhana.

Mr. Sinha had worked all that afternoon on an article, his last, published on page 26. He knew that our readers hold in their hands the key to Hinduism's future and wanted to give them tools they need to succeed. He understood the importance of the reader's opinion and would have been delighted with a series of meetings held in India, Malaysia and Singapore after his passing - gatherings we hope to hold more frequently. The publisher and editor shared precious hours talking with HINDUISM TODAY readers. Readers had a chance to query and critique our paper and its policies. In fact, our publisher made the invitation, "At HINDUISM TODAY we don't object to praise. It shows us where we are doing things right, serving Sanatana Dharma well. But there is something we like more than praise. Constructive criticism. It's always easy and sometimes tempting to laud oneself. But criticism is ultimately more valuable, leading as it does to improvements, progress, betterments of all kinds. So tell us what's on your mind."

Readers proved to not be shy. They had lots to say. For one thing, they didn't like one of our ads, an admittedly far-out Swiss book purporting to reveal some outrageous things about Christianity. It received the Editors' Blunder of the Year Award from outspoken readers who found it offensive. Good point. Other readers may enjoy the cheers and jeers we got. Did we deserve them? You be the judge.

* We love the new style in full color. It really catches everyone's attention. The educational posters in the center end up on our refrigerator every month for the kids. Great improvement.

* The computer photos and art are so good, interesting and unique. We finally feel Hinduism has entered the Information Age.

* The coverage has become truly international. There are so many subjects, which is made even more remarkable by the fact that HT is researching and writing all its own stories, not acquiring them from other sources as many publications these days do. I always know HT will give a fresh perspective, something unusual I've never seen or known before.

* HT is immensely successful at reporting fairly on Hindus of every sect and lineage, without even a hint of bias against any. That's the best part of the paper for me.

* Congratulations on starting new language editions. We're waiting for HT to be available in all the major languages. (Yes, we are working on Kannada and Tamil editions).

* It's so helpful that HT includes names and addresses where readers can further pursue a story.

* Thanks for discussing courageously issues like abortion, death, suicide and difficult family matters. In our conservative culture such things are all too often ignored. We have nowhere to go to share concerns and uncertainties about these things. We need to know how our religion and scriptures look at life.

* There's just not enough in the paper for children under seven. When my child tries to participate, he finds nothing for him and goes away disappointed.

* You used to write more in depth, covering issues with a completeness I really loved. Lately most articles are too short, not enough substance. What happened?

* I don't have that much time in life to read, and I find articles are often too long. (Most readers said they want more variety, and are happier with briefer, not-too-extensive features.)

* Too much of the news you publish comes from the West. More should derive from India, Hinduism's root and source.

* Whatever happened to Karma Kat? Such a humorous approach is the perfect way to express many of Hinduism's social and religious ills. (Are you listening. Berry Geller?)

* There has not been enough on the deeper yogas lately. Your emphasis toward

just plain news is too pronounced. How about more on philosophy, on the inner teachings and practices?

* Why is there no place of honor for Ganesha on page one?

* HT is not published often enough. It should be a weekly.

* The level of language used, vocabulary and structure, is too high. Many readers for whom English is not the native language will not be able to follow or benefit.

* There is a need to include more insights into the whys and wherefores of Hinduism. Why do we wear tilaks? Why wash our feet before entering a temple? Why do we eat with our hands? The youth especially are asking us why, and we don't always know what to say to them.

* There is a need for more coverage of what Hindus have accomplished throughout history, our attainments of the past, and also what we are still accomplishing today. Hindus need to know these things in detail so we have solid reasons to be proud of our heritage.

* The number of ads can be distracting to a reader. I think you have reached the limit and suggest no more ads.

* Not enough features on culture, especially music.

* Far too much on culture, especially dance and music.

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