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Letters

Love that Sari

"Jai" to those who wear the sari and the bindi, the hallmarks of the Hindu woman. In urban settings, especially among the younger generations, the sari is practically extinct. It has been replaced by the salwar-kameez or the western pants suit. The bindi is also fast vanishing in Indian cities, a stunning development of the past decade or so. There was a time when an Indian girl without a bindi was automatically considered a Muslim, Christian or Sikh. Now I find myself asking, "Is she Hindu?" and feeling disgust at the all-too-common sacrilege.

As for men, if they hurt when the women throw culture to the winds, they must first preserve it themselves. Otherwise, "For a Rama like you, there will only be a Sita like me!!" will be the irrefutable argument. In the streets of Delhi or New York, the dhoti, vibuthi, etc., must see the light of day.

Some argue that it is the nature of Hinduism to adapt to changing times, that only the spiritual goal is important and not the external symbols of religion. It rather seems to me that it is the nature of Hindus to compromise our culture, slave under the culture of others and justify it all with philosophy. The external symbols are our protective fences. They protect not only us but our entire community, religion and ways of life. My thanks to Hinduism Today for highlighting this point in various ways.

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I enjoyed reading the article on the sari (October/November/December, 2008). You have done a great job. You are probably not aware of the nine yard saris of the

orthodox brahmin ladies, the Iyers and Iyengars of Chennai. My mother and mother-in-law both wore these. The brahmin style is the most sensuous one. When I was at the University of Michigan, snow or sunshine, I clung to my Indian traditions and always wore a sari.

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Against the Missionaries

I applaud your magazine for the article "A Fraudulent Mission" (October/November/December, 2008) by Dr. David Frawley. I am Jewish but a regular reader of Hinduism Today. I work in the information technology sector in the US. A few years ago when my company started using many Indian contractors, missionary tracts aimed at Hindus started to show up in our break room. When I found them, I would throw them away. I was embarrassed that my Indian coworkers might come to this country and be quickly exposed to the message that many Americans disrespect their religion. I am used to seeing missionary materials because I live in the Bible Belt and Christianity is the accepted norm, but I was shocked at how quickly materials aimed specifically at Hindus showed up in our area, because my city had few Hindus prior to this point. This goes to show, I think, how well-organized the missionary industry is. Everyone who does not believe in the supremacy of one religion over another must unite and stand up together against missionaries who preach that very message. We need to do a better job teaching others about what our religions have to offer--not to proselytize, but to inform. I particularly agree with the last sentence in that article, "The world desperately needs better access to India's wealth of spiritual resources." Thank you for all your efforts.

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I was upset and shocked at the outright attack on Christianity by Dr. Frawley. As Hindus, we seem to pride ourselves in the tolerance we have for other religions, yet here was a representative attacking the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Yes, many Christians do send plenty of money and manpower to India. I agree with the statement, but not the problem. What we should be asking ourselves is, "What void

is Christianity filling for these converts that Hinduism is not?" It's a tough question for the prideful, but our holy books teach us to not be so arrogant. I believe that we all have been made with minds that think and make decisions. Far be it from me to look down on those who find happiness in another religion as I have found in Hinduism.

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These missionaries from outside India have no knowledge or respect for the diversity of India. For centuries tribals have celebrated their tribal faiths in peace in a Hindu India. Now they face the prospect of losing their small faiths to a well-financed machine. This has already happened in Africa and northeast India. If we stand by and do nothing, we will certainly lose that idea that is India, a place where persecuted people, such as the Parsees, Bohras, Jews and recently the Tibetans, have found safe refuge. They did so because of our Hindu ideals and values.

It is Hinduism that says God made man a human being, but we humans have divided ourselves into Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Once we die, we are no longer humans or animals but just souls and it is these souls, regardless of religion or faith, that ascend to Rama's heaven. All good souls, even atheists, are welcome in Rama's heaven.

Christians may have a better-funded organization, but we are not entirely helpless. I call upon good Hindus to wake up and help as much as they can. With the power of the Internet, we can now influence people with just the click of a mouse. I see a lot of Hindus discussing whether Hinduism is dvaita or advaita, whether Hinduism is polytheistic or monotheistic. These discussions are important, but what is more important is to spread the values of Hinduism. Even our own young are ignorant of the glorious values that Hinduism teaches.

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Dealing with Holidays

The influence of Christianity is a problem for Hindus living abroad. Well-educated and well-heeled Indian Hindus living in the US routinely throw elaborate Christmas parties. Their children brag about who had the biggest Christmas tree and who received the most Christmas gifts. As a mother raising a child in the US, I face this problem every Christmas. I clash with my husband on the issues of bringing a Christmas tree home, buying Christmas gifts, etc., for the sake of our children so they are not left out--left out of what? A well-educated Hindu mother once chided me when I spoke against the influence of Christmas on our children. Her reply was, "It is such an innocent, happy holiday. What's wrong if our children take part in it?" Most people fail to realize the subtle influence here. We do not take part in the Muslim or Jewish holidays, so why Easter or Christmas? Hindus should look deeply into their mind set and find out the answer themselves. If parents are not careful, our next generation will be affected by the glamour and glitter of Christianity which surrounds the celebration.

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Hinduism Today's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, developed the festival of "Pancha Ganapati" for Western Hindus to provide Hindu festivities for the children during this holiday time, from December 21 to 25. Google "Pancha Ganapati" for how your family can celebrate the Hindu way during the Christmas season.

Temple Safety

The stampede at Jodhpur has come as a shock to everyone. How could the state government be so lax when thousands attend the temple every day? They should have made secure entry and exit routes for the crowds. And this follows on earlier stampedes at other temples, also the result of lax arrangements. Now we see the usual giving out of checks to the next of kin, but the same money could have been used earlier to make the temples safe.

Tuneer Bondhopadhyay

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Responding to Missionaries

I was raised a Catholic, but never believed what the church taught. Even as a small child, I could see through the arguments that everyone needed to be baptized to go to heaven. This led to me extensively reading books concerning Buddhism and Hinduism. My three sons rejected Christianity in very short order. As a family, we have established a coping strategy to deal with proselytization attempts aimed at our children. When told they must accept Jesus, or that the Bible is the word of God, they simply respond, "I do not believe that." They are repeatedly asked if they go to church, and answer, "That's none of your business."

Now is the time for everyone to talk to their children concerning how to deal with these individuals. It is my belief that by making this a continuous topic within our home, it will make us stronger as a family and help our children to develop a similar strategy when they become parents in the future.

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Excellent Publication

I came to know about your magazine through the Internet a few weeks back. It is excellent in content and the presentation of Hindu views and way of life. I felt an inner urge to submit my thanks for the service you are rendering.

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Inter-Religious Marriage

After reading the article "Interreligious Marriage" (July/August/September, 2008)

by Dr. Dilip Amin, I would like to give my own comments. In my part of the world, Malaysia, Hindus are the third largest population group after the Malays and the Chinese. There is frequent intermarriage between Hindus, Chinese, Taoists, Sabahans, Sarawakians and Buddhists. These intermarrying couples face very few problems, religious or otherwise.

At Hindu temples in Malaysia, it is quite common to see Hindu husbands coming to pray with their "intermarried" wives, complete with Hindu attire. In Malaysia, women usually follow the religion of their husbands. Hence, the issue of conversion seldom arises. Couples believe in the concept of one God, and that all religions are good. To these intermarrying couples, love is all that matters.

I have been married to my Taoist Chinese wife for the last fifty years, and we never faced any religious problems. Our children speak fluent Chinese and Tamil and respect all religions. It looks like in Malaysia inter-marriages are here to stay, bringing forth new and better generations.

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Corrections

The photograph on page 20 of the October issue was by Amit Kumar. A photo on page 22 showing arati being performed was flipped. It incorrectly shows the pujari using his left hand for the worship, which would never be done.

The article on Christian missionaries by Dr. David Frawley was drawn from a dialogue with the Catholic archbishop of Hyderabad in 1997, not 2007 as stated

A Gift from the Heart Begets Many More One way to send blessings 'round the world

Shailesh trivedi was born in the USA in 1977, and grew up with a rare advantage. His parents lovingly taught him all the Hinduism they knew and, when he was a little tot, they subscribed to Hinduism Today! The magazine was part of the

family--a small detail of great consequence, as it happened.

There were times when young Shailesh experienced the inevitable second-generation gloomies. "I knew the basics, attended bhajan and celebrated home puja, but there were gaps," he explains. "We lived far from any Hindu community and there was too much I did not understand. It all became a big blur. I belonged neither here nor there. I felt disconnected."

Fortunately, Hinduism Today was always around and, over time, it brought in the clarity he was looking for. "Time and again, I was awed, realizing what a great culture I possessed. And the magazine was always bright, light, humorous, with nothing ponderous anywhere. It was the perfect teacher, and it transformed me. I cannot imagine my life without it." Shailesh lives in Fallbrook, California, where he owns and operates a flower farm.

Recently, he gave \$500 to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "I wanted to help bring to others what has meant so much to me. What a great cause, helping people be clear in their beliefs, know who they are and what they should do! And these treasures, more and more, Hinduism Today gives away free, resources on their website and their digital edition, for example. I find it inspiring to give so they may give more. My little gift, through their hands, becomes a great big gift to the world."

Please consider donating to the Hinduism Today Production Fund so that your magazine may continue to give, and give and give.

Contact us to receive our Production Fund e-newsletter: +1-808-822-3012 ext.244
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