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Become a Benefactor: Include Hinduism Today in Your Estate Plan

Oh, my god! what a wonderful story on Motilal Banarsidass's family tradition ("Honoring a Century of Excellence in Publishing, " Apr/May/Jun, 2005). Not only was it a colorful treat for the eyes but an extraordinary delight for all who read it. Our friends and relatives, who have known us for years, are all ready for a party. Indeed, we are all indebted to the Himalayan Academy family for the interest shown and to Rajiv Malik for his meticulous efforts in putting the article together. There have been so many write-ups on Motilal Banarsidass by Indian media, but yours was par excellence. Perhaps your organization is gifted with extraordinary writing skills.

Smt. Lila Jain, N.P. Jain, J.P. Jain and all three R.P. Jains

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Rudra Veena Saved

I have received an honor from the respected Mrs. Diptiji Chaudhary, Mayor of Pune Municipal Corporation, regarding my most valuable work in Indian classical music, giving concerts and popularizing Lord Shiva Shankar's ancient instrument, mother of all stringed musical instruments, known as the Rudra Veena, throughout the world. Truly speaking, this is all due to the big efforts of Hinduism Today ("To Save a Soulful Art Form, " Jan/Feb/Mar, 2005). A good friend broadcast the article in English, and it was translated into Japanese and broadcast along with twenty minutes of our Rudra Veena music on a radio station in Tokyo, Japan, on January 20. I thank Lord Siva for giving me such an opportunity on this planet.

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Diabetes, Diet and Exercise

I was pleasantly surprised recently at a satsang following the passing of my mother to hear a pundit talking about health matters with regard to diet and exercise. As a medically trained person living in a land where diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease are rife among Indians, I wish that every opportunity were used to emphasise the basics of healthy living. This logic is absent in the eating patterns of our community. Most of our dishes are too sweet, sugar being unnecessarily added to alter the natural taste, e.g., of pumpkin; too salty; and too oily, e.g., deep-fried pakoras, phulorie, saheenas, etc. Mohanbhog and jeelabi are both sweet and fried. It is often said that a little won't hurt, but how do we measure what is little for the individual? Is there a divine rule which prevents us from offering mainly or merely fruits as prasad? Many pundits are known to me professionally on account of the complications from their diabetes, high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease and weight problems, the treatment of which is often non-curative. The limitation of complications relies on efforts at prevention, and this requires awareness, a balance between diet and exercise along with medication where necessary. A healthy mind requires a healthy body in order to fulfill its earthly purpose. Pundits occupy a position of influence which affords the ideal opportunity of emphasizing the necessity for good physical health alongside spiritual well-being. Indeed, one impacts on the other.

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What about Hindus in Sikkim?

Congratulations on producing a very good magazine. I have become interested in the social issue of religious conversion. I read the article on Nagaland ("Fighting to Preserve a Tribal Heritage, " Jan/Feb/Mar, 2005), which I was not aware of. I am from Sikkim and have also observed the trend of conversion of Lepcha tribals to Christianity. The Lepcha language and culture have become endangered. I kindly request that you cover Sikkim and generate awareness of the issues the people

here are facing so that some of the Lepcha population who have not converted will take initiatives to preserve their tradition and culture.

Tara Dhakal, Gangtok, Sikkim, India
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Why Live with Your Family?

Indian movie icon Aishwarya Rai was invited on the David Letterman Show a few days ago. He introduced her as often called one of the most beautiful women in the world, and the most famous actress known to billions of people around the world, but still unknown to Americans. Letterman asked her, "You still live with your parents. Is this common in India?" She said, "Well, we don't have to take our parents' permission to have dinner with them." Of course, the audience applauded. What I'd like to say is that she does not know that here two cultures are coming together. In the Christian culture in America, when children become 18, they usually leave and make their own life. Most of my American colleagues couldn't wait for their children to become 18 and leave. My daughter lived with me until she got married at 28, and a couple of my American friends used to ask me why I didn't ask her to move out. I used to tell them that if she moves out on her own, it would hurt my feelings. But after she got married, she moved into her own home with her husband. This is an Indian custom. Hindu philosophy is based on the Vedas, which teach holistic living--a tight family where each person does their dharma (duty). This is a group family system, which promotes joint living--rather than individualistic living--where human beings are the happiest, and has the lowest divorce rates. In the joint family system, children and grandparents are the happiest. I think every system has its good and bad points.

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About Arranged Marriage

I have read many of your articles on marriage and cannot believe how backward

and narrow-minded the entire Indian society is. One thing I would like to point out is that you repeatedly mention that arranged marriages are better than love marriages because there is a much lower rate of divorce. However, let me point out that a society that does not allow partners to meet before getting married certainly does not tolerate divorce. Having been surrounded by Hindu arranged-marriage couples my whole life, I assure you they are not divorced because of societal expectations, not because they have a happy marriage. I know someone who is married to an alcoholic, a disgusting man, and she is literally just waiting for him to die so she can be free. That sounds very stable.

Also, having seen Western couples in their 50s and 70s, I realize what a mutually respectful relationship consists of. Women in Indian culture are treated like inferior beings who just cook and clean for their demanding husbands. When they have guests, they have to serve the men and not actually sit down as an equal on the dining table.

What I found incredibly ironic is that you say that Western marriages fail because of in-laws. That is absolutely hilarious because just about every Indian woman I know has had mother-in-law problems. What is even more ironic is that I know so many arranged marriages where the parents arranged the marriage because they are close to the parents of the groom/bride, but after the marriage they have a falling out and can't stand each other. I know one girl whose parents-in-law don't even give her permission to visit her parents whenever she wants. That sounds like wholesome, traditional family values to me! Just because the Indian society is good at keeping up appearances does not mean that the household is happy.

You only need to go through the Indian matrimonial websites to see what values they deem important, for example: "Wanted 20-25-year-old female, very good looking, tall, fair/very fair, educated, from well-off family." You claim that this method of looking for a partner is superior when it is completely and utterly superficial. Given that most proposed couples only meet once or twice, there is no way they can learn about their personalities and care for each other. So what is their decision based on? Mainly, if not only, physical attraction, and money.

While I know it is impossible to change deep-set, backward, racist and sexist ideas, hopefully in time Indian society will progress and start treating women and children with more respect, give people more autonomy and allow them to experience their own life, instead of just worrying about keeping up appearances for a superficial

society. It's just sad that we are about 200 years behind the rest of the world.

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Correction

The Lord Ganesha murti for the Richmond Hill Hindu Temple was gifted by a devotee of the temple, not by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, as incorrectly stated in our Jan/Feb/Mar, 2005, issue, "Toronto, Canada: Hinduism Arrives in Style."

Forging a Glorious Future Together

We, the Hinduism Today staff in Hawaii, always feel humbled by the scope of the magazine's task. Imagine trying to represent and do justice to an endlessly vast Hindu tradition! It is a grand and ambitious mission which inspires and motivates our dedicated, worldwide team to keep doing their best, and to strive constantly for growth. We give serious thought to the future, and to establishing the means for growth--for this current issue, the next issue, next year, decades and, yes, even centuries from now.

With his remarkable far-sightedness, our magazine's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, established a Hinduism Today Production Fund (of Hindu Heritage Endowment) to provide a constant and growing source of funds to subsidize the production of the magazine far into the future. Then, his successor and current publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, established the Benefactor program, by which a supporter can significantly help this effort with a gift he will make in the future. He becomes a benefactor by making the Fund a beneficiary in his estate plan of a gift of \$5,000 or more--either in his will, in his life insurance, in a revocable living trust or charitable remainder trust.

We urge you to consider becoming a benefactor of Hinduism Today and thus share in this work and mission, now and far into the future. Please contact us for a benefactor flyer (pictured).

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