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Published by Anonymous on Jul. 01, 2006

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You can help us reach millions of new readers

The letter "In need of Hindu reform " (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2006) truly depicts the sad situation of Hindus in Malaysia. Large numbers of Hindus have become Christians overnight. Even aged parents are dragged by their converted children into Christianity. They celebrate Pongal in churches and say Pongal is a nonreligious festival. They send pamphlets of Christian teachings to families in bereavement. Even the sick are not spared--they say if you convert to Christianity you will get a ticket to heaven, otherwise you are stuck in purgatory for eternity. The Christians say Jesus will cure you; the vulnerable Hindu converts, only to die in a week or a month. Like a savior, the Christian group marches into the home and takes charge of the funeral of the convert. It is sad, disgusting and frustrating to see the Hindu community being exploited and degraded. I feel ignorance is the root cause of this conversion. Ninety percent of Hindus know nothing of Hinduism except temple worship and some rituals. Many Hindus do now know the contents of the Vedas, the purusharthas, nitya karmas, yamas and niyamas. A properly organized teaching is not readily available for Hindus in this country, and Christian groups are taking advantage. I would suggest the Hindu Sangam of Malaysia send a directive to all registered temples to teach Hinduism to all devotees. Secondly, train teachers to teach Hindu children using a standardized syllabus. The Saivites, Shaktas, Vaishnavas and the Smartas should come under one flag to discuss this topic and bring out a concrete plan. Otherwise, the Hindus are going to be diminished in this century.

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Tamil Nadu Temples

I am an Indian South African. I did a pilgrimage tour of most of the temples in South India and was disappointed to experience some of the priests demanding to see the money before performing a prayer or arati. Some of the temples charged a miserable pittance as a form of donation to the temple. I have also visited temples in Europe. Some do charge a levy (significantly more), and others require donations before entering. They are not shy. I suggest these charges be increased to maintain the historic buildings, setting fixed rates for pujas (locals v. tourists/pilgrims) and giving a portion of the income to the priest. I would also like to know why Hindus are not taught to donate a portion of their salary to the temple. Most of the young professionals of my age group have sufficient funds to donate, but we were never taught to donate to the temple. Is there nothing in the scriptures that says this? In Islam and Christianity it is traditional to give one-tenth of one's income to the mosque or church.

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Hinduism Today founder Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami teaches about the Sanatana Dharma's tradition of dashamamsha, or tithing, voluntarily giving one-tenth of one's gross income to a religious organization, in his book Living with Siva, Chapter 6, Lesson 38, available on the web at <http://www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/books>

Milk Miracle Not Enough?

There are people who believe that for God to exist there should be miracles and that His/Her presence should be personally felt. For such skeptics, what other evidence could be needed in recent times than the milk miracle ("1995 Milk Miracle Video Online, " Hindu Press International, Mar. 19, 2006)? Those who claim that this was no miracle and "plain science " and that statues would gulp milk or any other liquid anyway have no answer to why statues suddenly stopped gulping milk after that miracle day. If such a similar miracle had taken place amongst Christians, it would have been publicized in no time by its adherents as proof of Christianity's supremacy. But in our country, where people suffer a tremendous inferiority complex, no one stood up to say that this event proves that Hinduism is superior. Nay, the media cancelled out the experiences of millions of devotees, participants and eye-witnesses to this historic event by issuing vague, silly, nonsensical

explanations. Scientists were suddenly saying that what all of us witnessed with our own eyes should not be considered the truth, that what the scientists speculated should be considered as fact. What happened to the "seeing is believing " theory?

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Born for Balaji

Thank you for beautifully presenting my views in Hinduism Today ("Born for Balaji, " Apr/May/Jun, 2006). The magazine is wonderful; my blessings are with you. You are doing good work in service of Hindu Dharma. I will pray to Lord Balaji that your correspondent, Rajiv Malik, visits Tirupati again. I also liked your cover story on Balaji in the Jan/Feb/Mar, 2006, issue.

A.V. Ramana Dikshitulu, Chief Priest
Tirupati, India

Hindus' Low Self-Esteem

I found the letter "Hindu Names Mispronounced " (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2005) very disappointing. It is incredible that Hindus have such a low esteem of themselves that they will use any excuse to justify decisions that they know are wrong. The author instructs us that because Americans cannot pronounce her name correctly, she elected to give her son a Western name. This has to go down as a very silly excuse. There is nothing in Hindu culture that says you cannot give names of your choosing. Every parent has the right to do so. You can name a child anything you like, as long as you do it for the right reason. If you do select a Western name, then do so because you like it, because it has meaning to you, but don't blame the culture. In the UK we also have our share of Hindus who use every excuse to entertain their low esteem of their own culture. They blame anything and everyone but themselves for their own shallow understanding of what it is to be a Hindu. One has to be proud of one's heritage. Be true to yourself and the world will yield.

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Thank You for the Puja

I have been reading Hinduism Today for the last eleven years after being introduced to it by my father. Born into a family that built and manages a Ganesh temple in Malaysia, I was naturally inclined to learn more about my religion, and one of the many ways is through Hinduism Today. The latest magazine introduced a simple method to worship Lord Ganesh ("Home Puja, " Apr/May/Jun, 2006) step by step with Romanized Sanskrit. It is great because in this modern age some priests or brahmins are still reluctant to teach such knowledge to others, claiming ownership. Because of this ignorance much knowledge of this great religion has disappeared together with the teachers who have decided that others should not know more than they do--sad, but true.

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Jai New Mandir in Delhi!

I have received, to my utter delight, the latest issue of Hinduism Today, and as usual find the write-ups and color photographs most interesting and so appealing. It is a privilege to receive the world's best magazine on Hindu Dharma with universal coverage and an attractive layout. My salutations to the editors at Himalayan Academy in Hawaii for continuing to produce such an excellent magazine. I must also say that the special report by Rajiv Malik on the new Swaminarayan Akshardham mandir along the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi is superb ("Pride of India, " Apr/May/Jun, 2006). The two-page spread of this sublime beauty in pink sandstone is just stunning. This picture-feature has so inspired me that I have decided to visit Delhi this year to have darshan of this new temple in the Indian metropolis.

Krishan Dutt
London, United Kingdom

A Job Well Done

I read your magazine regularly, and I find it very interesting. I would like to congratulate you for your consistent, professional publications. The views of some saints are very interesting, and it shows they are well aware of what's happenings around the world. Your organization is doing a magnificent job in carrying out your mission. It's time similar organizations follow your footsteps. Once again, congratulations on a job well done.

Prem Chand
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Acharya Sabha Conference

Mother Maya sends love and wants you to know that we are all so very touched by the wonderful coverage in Hinduism Today on Sri Pujya Swami Dayananda's Acharya Sabha Conference 2005 ("To Be a United Voice for Hinduism, " Apr/May/Jun, 2006). The sadhakas here are especially thankful for the magnificent darshana photo of Pujya Swamiji that you provided.

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Portrayal of Christianity

The book "God against the Gods " ("what if Rome's Pagan Religion Had Prevailed?" Jan/Feb/Mar, 2006) appears to present its subject in a very one-sided and partly incorrect way. Unfortunately, the review does not point out any of these flaws, but shows Christianity as a cruel, intolerant religion. There are undoubtedly ugly faces of Christianity, but the excerpts from the book quoted in the review conceal and distort facts to such an extent that Christianity appears as a mere monster, which it is not, whereas polytheistic religions appear as all-tolerant, which they may not be either. One could expect a good book review to take an objective and, if necessary, critical position, which unfortunately did not happen in this case.

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Treatment of Divine Imagery

I read with great interest the stories on Hindu reactions to unauthorized printings of paintings of Gods and Goddesses on shoes, handbags and billboards ("Whisky Maker Apologizes for Billboard, " Hindu Press International, Feb. 17, 2006). The reactions are somewhat justified and seem to serve the purpose of ahimsa, being nonviolent, unlike our Islamic neighbors. However, I would like to pose this question: The Hindu community is virtually besieged with the printing of Gods and Goddesses, by Hindus, on many different items, e.g. incense boxes, flags, cloth, towels, calendars, toys, etc. Many of these originate in India and are brought to the West for consumption. We don't seem to assign the same level of respect to these items as we did to the Paris-made shoes, which invariably end up in washing machines or are disposed of unceremoniously in garbage bins. There is a significant level of tolerable hypocrisy in our own Hindu communities and a great outcry when others attempt to utilize the public paintings in similar fashion. Why?

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Correction

The land for the New Delhi Akshardham temple was purchased from the government, not donated to BAPS by the government, as incorrectly stated in our Apr/May/Jun, 2006, issue, "Pride of India."

Soon, a Multilingual Digital Edition

In just 2 months, some 2,000 souls living in an amazing 70 countries have subscribed to our new-born digital edition! And most happily, India tallies in as a strong number two, right after the US! We could not be happier. Imagine the numbers in 5, 20 years. Imagine further our digital edition translated into 50 of the world's languages, including all major Indian languages. Today, Hindus (and others eager to know Hinduism) are living in virtually every country. English is expanding fast; but, worldwide, the proportion of Hindus growing up with another language as their mother tongue is also rising. We want to reach them all, and our wondrous new tool will help us realize the dream. A digital edition easily solves the many difficulties of translating a print edition. It allows us, for example, to proceed by degrees, one language, one article or even one summary of an article at a time. Our publisher and editors are already searching for professional translators and planning to hire a great many in the years to come. The only limit to their numbers will--of course--be financial, and you can be most helpful here. The Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of the Hindu Heritage Endowment, will provide future editors with grants to produce ever finer print and digital editions with translations. Please consider becoming a Benefactor of Hinduism Today by making the Fund a beneficiary in your estate plan of a gift of \$5,000 or more--in your will, in your life insurance, in a revocable living trust or charitable remainder trust. You can tag your donation to support translation projects. Contact us and ask for the Hinduism Today Production Fund flyer.

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