Letters
Category : October/November/December 2008
Published by dharmalingam on May. 31, 2009

Letters

Social Change

I have enjoyed reading hinduism today since it was in newspaper format. This publication is a great service provided by the swamis and reporters. The article "Social Change Through Education" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008) is an excellent piece of positive news not covered by any other publication. Education is the real treasure that we can pass on to the future generations. I would like to bring your attention to another organization doing a great job in providing education to very poor children of tribal villages of India: Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation. They have started more than 24,000 schools that teach more than 720,000 students all over India.

Arun Mehta
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
amehta91326 _@_yahoo.com

Sri Madhva's Challenge

Mr. Armstrong's account of the life and philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya ("Difference Is Real," Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008) was a valuable contribution. Madhva's challenge to the orthodoxy of his time was nothing less than a revolution, and it merits such modern explication. The strictly biographical aspects of the article, however, were lacking in one respect: they relied too much on purported supernatural acts attributed to the great guru. While I would not presume to question the truth of such accounts, I feel such emphasis does a disservice to the teachings of Madhva. His thought and theology stand on their own. It is devotion to the path of jnana yoga that gives our great teachers such prestige, not apocryphal stories about their mundane lives. Perhaps future explorations of the great philosophers will detail the intellectual processes and debating techniques they used in their times.

Goutham Ganesan
Chandler, Arizona, USA

I read with interest jeffrey armstrong's article, in which he describes in detail the interpretation of Vedanta as propounded by Madhvacharya, using the philosophy of dualism. There are at least two other interpretations of Vedanta. One is qualified non-dualism, as propounded by Ramanujacharya, and the other is non-dualism, as propounded by Shankaracharya. Dualism insists that the Lord and his devotee are two distinct entities. Qualified non-dualism claims that the devotee is a part of the whole, the Lord. Non-dualism thunders that the Lord and His devotee are non-different in that the devotee experiences himself as the whole. When man identifies with his body, dualism seems to make sense. When he identifies with his mind and intellect, instead of his body, qualified non-dualism appears to be correct. When he identifies with his soul, non-dualism is the only philosophy that makes sense. All three philosophies are correct in their own right, and they differ from each other only because of the difference in their points of reference. The three philosophies are beautifully described in the Ramayana when Hanuman, the greatest devotee of Lord Rama, explains his relationship with Him by saying, "O Lord, at moments when I am steeped in my body consciousness, I am Thy slave; when I identify with my mind and intellect, I am a part of Thee; but when I identify with my soul, my true Self, I am Thyself!" Thus, our relationship with Brahman can be explained in three different ways according to our state of self-consciousness. The three schools of thought complement, rather than compete with or contradict, each other.

Pradeep Srivastava
Detroit, Michigan, USA
pradeepscool _@_hotmail.com

HPI Is Welcome

Hindu Press International is a welcome step in the interest of Hindus all over the world. May it grow from strength to strength to unite the Hindus of the world to save themselves from the clash of civilization ensuing between the two warring monotheistic religions.

K. Parthasarathi
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
paartha65 _@_ yahoo.com

Crossing the Ocean

Responding to the article "crossing the Ocean" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008), I feel that the secret to Hinduism's purity in the non-Indian world is to remain loyal to the subtle as versus the gross body. While remaining in the subtle and having the understanding of the omnipresent light of God, one can not only escape gross influences but do a positive service to the environment in whatever country one may be found. Christian Science is sometimes called the "Vedanta of the West." I recall a story, from that tradition, of a little girl of six who went to visit her friend and was told by the friend's mother that she could not come in because the friend was sick, and so she might get sick if they came in contact. The little girl, steeped in the absolute goodness and healing power of God, was puzzled. When she came home to her mother, she asked, "Why should I get sick from my friend? Why shouldn't she get well from me instead?"

It is in the nature of the Deity to be pure, however I have found that when I am in the awareness of a gross sense of body, it is difficult to be aware of this purity. The Hindu religion has a very good understanding of the subtle body, which has been of great help to me personally. The Western religions tend to identify man with the gross body. It is this pervasive feeling of identification with the gross rather than the subtle which can be eliminated by a period of one-pointed inward awareness of the subtle qualities and divine light. The need for a retreat for anyone undergoing a great deal of outer activity is evident, because even if we are trying to do good, it seems inevitable that some of the sense of non-good which one is trying to overcome must creep in. Since the major Hindu scriptures do not prohibit travel, I would recommend that there be a period of retreat to re-establish the sense of the subtle nature and of good. The length of this period should be left to the individual's judgment.

Mary Gaskill
Chevy Chase, Maryland, USA

The Bane of Ritalin Addiction

As a small child in school, i had a speech impediment. Other children picked on me. I was very disruptive, and this stood out to the teachers. When I was in seventh grade, a school guidance counselor, trained to spot children with Attention Deficit Disorder, put her label on me and told my parents that I needed to see a child psychiatrist and be put on Ritalin. I became addicted to this horrendous drug, and that led to a life of addiction to other dangerous amphetamine drugs. Years later, while in a drug rehabilitation center, I was counseled by another therapist who

discovered that I was not, in fact, mentally ill, and that my disruptive behavior in school was a reaction to having been abused as a young child. I never recovered from having been misdiagnosed with ADD and mistreated with dangerous controlled substances like Ritalin, Adderall and Dexedrine. I am now serving a life sentence for murder, with no hope of ever being free again. Only through learning about and practicing Sanatana Dharma and the eight limbs of yoga have I turned my life from misery and pain into bliss. I beg parents, please don't let people with all those letters after their names convince you that your child has ADD or ADHD. If your child is misbehaving, talk to the child, find out what is really bothering him or her, and you will find that your child does not need poison to modify his or her behavior. All children need is a lot of love and understanding.

Dale Burke
Bismarck, North Dakota, USA

In his talk at the 2006 TED Conference in Monterey, California, Sir Ken Robinson recounted a thought-provoking story from the 1930s about Gillian Lynne, who as a child was brought to a doctor because she couldn't sit still. If it had been decades later, she would likely have been labeled with ADHD and put on medication to calm her down. Instead, the doctor told her parents to take her to dance school. She became one of the most celebrated dancers and choreographers of the twentieth century. Hear his inspiring and humorous talk at www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/66(story of Gillian Lynne begins at 15:08).

Pursue Dharmic Activities

There is a beautiful verse in the third chapter of the Bhagavad Gita which says, "It is better to do one's own duty, svadharma, though we may not be successful, than to do the duty of another, paradharma. It is better to die doing svadharma, for paradharma is filled with fear." How apt this is in today's world. Parents push their children into what they consider is best for them. If a father is in business, he may push his children into the business, assuming that it would be profitable and comfortable for them. Youngsters themselves may be dazzled with a lucrative career, such as IT, which gives them high pay at a young age, and pursue it without considering whether they have the aptitude for that job. Additionally, society gives preference to careers like medicine and engineering and exhibits prejudice against other careers, declaring them less demanding or profitable. Whatever may be the reason to pursue an activity which does not appeal to one's interests, it may be disastrous in the long run. However successful one might be in the paradharmic activity, ultimately frustration sets in. A person might be earning huge amounts of money, may have a high position, but in the end he will lose interest and become

disappointed. There have been countless cases where people with lucrative careers have quit their jobs to pursue something else, such as working for the underprivileged. The reason is obvious. Working against one's basic nature creates mental agitations. It is a crime to take up a path out of pressure, because, though you may be successful, sooner or later stress creeps in. So, it becomes our bounden duty and responsibility to identify our interests and pursue them. Initially we may not be successful, but at least we will have the peace of mind and satisfaction in having pursued what we want. Perfection is achieved through svadharmic activity. Listening to M.S. Subbulakshmi reciting devotional songs, even foreigners were moved--such was the passion and devotion in her songs, that it crossed all barriers of language. M.S. Subbulakshmi had a passion to sing and obviously she loved it. Such is the power of an activity filled with passion that an observer himself will be moved and the work will then assume the form of worship.

Usha Hariprasad
Bangalore, Karnataka, India
usha_hariprasad _@_ yahoo.com

Yoga Renamed Is Still Hindu

I appreciate the article "yoga renamed Is Still Hindu" (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2006). It is very informative and useful in terms of dealing with this subject with Christians. There is one statement in the article, however, that is untrue. While the quote from Cardinal Poupard is correct, the 2003 document, "A Christian Reflection on the 'New Age,'" says no such thing as to permit Catholics to practice the New Age or yoga, as your article suggests. The document may be found here:
www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pon ... _20030203_new-age_en.html

Brother Ignatius Mary, OLSM, L.Th.
Ottumwa, Iowa, USA
office _@_ saint-mike.org

Corrections

Shana Dressler is Jewish, not Christian, as misstated in "Discovering Ganesh" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008).

It was incorrectly reported in "Social Change Through Education" (Jul/Aug/Sep, 2008) that the Kolam Charitable Foundation pays volunteers $25 per day. Volunteers actually pay $25 per day for room and board when working at the Foundation's school.

Building Proud, Self-confident Youth

Help us inspire them today and in the future

It took years of knowing modest Vijay Pallod for us to gradually discover the many good works he has been involved in. He has spent his life espousing or initiating worthy causes, such as disaster relief and working with youth, "finding ways to inspire them to be good Hindus." To this end, he has tirelessly set up summer camps and seminars for them, offered counseling and provided guidance with their service projects, to name a few of his activities.

Vijay, a financial controller in Houston, Texas, came from India to the US in 1980--and, oh yes, he has been reading Hinduism Today for 20 years. "The magazine has done much for me personally, for my family and my work," he explains. "It has kept me motivated to remain high-minded, disciplined and less externalized. It has helped me raise my children. While they were young, I read articles to them, and their mother and I have gained so much knowledge and insight from Hinduism Today that we could all along give good answers to their questions, and those of the youth we work with, too. It has made a great difference--and made us all proud of our faith, and who we are."

Vijay has generously supported Hinduism Today over the years and recently gave $1,000 to the Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "I wanted to help," he said, "so the magazine can continue giving youth the tools they need to grow up proud and self-confident."

If you feel inspired to support Hindu youth now and in the future, please consider donating to the Hinduism Today Production Fund. Contact us to receive our Production Fund e-newsletter: 808-822-3012 ext.244hhe@hindu.org www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving/