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Letters to the Editor

Strength and Faith

All over the world Hinduism is being attacked by other religious institutions. Your Hinduism Today will surely help to face the battle against Hinduism with strength and faith in our great dharma-our eternal dharma. May God, Parasiva, fill your hearts with greater and greater joy and blessedness as you render your seva-worship to the children of Sanatana Dharma.

Dayani Devi, Temple of Universal Truth, Nestor Village, Trinidad

Devout or Not?

I regard Hinduism as a civilization which respects freedom of choice and encourages rational inquiry in matters relating to the spirit. Thus, in saying that, "I am not a devout Hindu," I am only an example of that freedom of choice that Hinduism grants me in matters of ritual and practice. I want our young people to stop being defensive vis-a-vis dogmatic belief systems. Ours is an infinitely greater heritage. Its future may yet be greater than its past. By getting this across, we can bring more people into the fold.

N.S. Rajaram, Ottawa, Canada

Hindu-Christian Relations

We are sending you a copy of the latest issue of Ecumenical News Service containing an article on Fiji. This is our way of insisting that good relations between Hindus and Christians are necessary for a good, just and peaceful society.

Hans Ucko, General Secretariat, Office on Inter-Religious Relations, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland

In Plain Sight

Subhash Kak's letter [Nov., 1994] names Self-Realization Fellowship as an example of organizations that "hide behind symbols such as the cross." Considering that the use of symbols doesn't in any way, in itself, imply hiding behind them, it is a mistake to suggest that using the symbol of the cross-or, for that matter, expressing devotion to Jesus-necessarily indicates that one has formally embraced the Christian religion. I write this letter not as a representative of SRF, but as a disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda, and out of simple fairness to SRF.

The indigenous name for Hinduism is Sanatana Dharma, "The eternal religion." That which is eternal is, by very definition, beyond both time and space: it embraces truth everywhere and not only the truths expressed in a particular body of belief.

If we limit our understanding of Hinduism to rituals and formal traditions, we separate Hinduism from other religions. In this act of separation, however, we contradict one of Hinduism's cardinal tenets, which is: Seek unity in diversity.

Self-Realization Fellowship does express its solidarity with Christianity. It expresses it with all religions, as Paramhansa Yogananda did. Indeed, every great teacher from India has done likewise, from Swamis Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha to present times. Sanatana Dharma, at its most exalted level, is that truth which forms

the basis of all religions. By emphasizing the manifestation of that eternal truth in Christianity, the cause of Sanatana Dharma can only be served, never diluted.

The need nowadays is to show that the religions of the world are essentially one; that their underlying oneness is not exclusive to a few, that it is eternally present in all of them, and also infinitely beyond them all.

Sri Kriyananda, Spiritual Director, Ananda Church of Self-Realization, Nevada City, California, USA

Subhash Kak Replies

The best analogy to understand the spirit of Sanatana Dharma is that of science. Indeed, Sanatana Dharma can be viewed as the science of consciousness. The trouble with the slogan that all religions are essentially the same is that it weakens our ability to make fine distinctions. In science, all theories, including those now known to be wrong, may have been steps in the search for truth, but clearly some, such as the sun moves around the earth, are now mere historical curiosities. It is appropriate for a college to teach the history of science but to teach the theory of the sun going around the earth to be as true as that of the earth going around the sun would not constitute good education.

Sri Kriyananda acknowledges that to limit the transcendent, which is beyond space, time and name, by symbols is to lose some of the meaning. But since symbols are all we can use, it is essential not to use such symbols that might, in the popular mind, represent a conception different from that of "eternal truth."

Subash Kak, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Even Likes the Ads

Your paper is succeeding immensely in filling the need for religious information minus the overburden of trivial discourses that is normally available in other publications. Coming from a non-Hindi speaking background, I faced much difficulty in finding informative texts written in English until Hinduism Today come into my life. Now, I even look forward to the ads.

Naidoo Veerapen, Ozone Park, New York, USA

Wine of the Mystic

We would like to express our gratitude for the wonderful article on Wine of the Mystic [Oct., 1994]. Your comments about the book, and about our guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, and his society, Self-Realization Fellowship, are very much appreciated. Just for your information, we thought you would want to be aware of the fact that SRF's copyright on Autobiography of a Yogi has not expired, as was implied in the sidebar.

Brahmachari Terence, SRF, Los Angeles, California, USA

Aum Namah Sivaya

In the centerspread articles, Hinduism Today has started ending many of the paragraphs with "Aum Namah Sivaya," whether or not the article has anything to do with Lord Siva. Mighty is the power of the Lord Siva's mantra, for sure, and great is the depth of Saivite thought. However, if all articles in Hinduism Today have the mantra after every paragraph, then its power is being wasted, and when thrown where not desired, it is like throwing money at monkeys that know not its value.

Raja Bhatt, Wilmington, North Carolina, USA, CompuServe: 71450,201

Teach Your Children!

Printing about Hinduism is not enough. Protecting Hinduism means teaching the meaning of Hindu life. You must protect your family and your children from the attacks of other religions. It is the utmost job of a mother and a father to teach their children about Hinduism.

Krishan Bagga, Flushing, New York, USA

Unhappy Birthday?

Hindus celebrate birthdays, and we do it in a very special and spiritual way; however, not all celebrate in this way. Doing it in the Western way seems to some to bring greater joy and fun. But let me share with you one disgusting experience.

I was invited to one of my relatives house in Kuala Lumpur to grace the occasion of a two-year-old's birthday. There was a big cake and in the middle were stuck two candles. I asked my relative if the two candles were to be lighted and then blown off at the end of the "Happy Birthday" song. I was told, "Yes." I reminded him that as Hindus we never blow off any light but rather light up a light for a light is the source of life. However, my advice fell on deaf ears and the candle was after all blown off by the two-year-old, after which meat and liquor was served.

It is time that Hindus were taught the proper Hindu way to celebrate birthdays. I shall be most happy if Hinduism Today will take it as its responsibility to teach and advise Hindus the world over on the proper way to celebrate a Hindu birthday.

K. Thuruvaan, Seremban, Malaysia

Corrections

In Video Reviews [November, 1994] the correct price for "India and the Infinite" is \$39.95.

Editor's note: If you send us your letters via e-mail (which we welcome), please also include your postal, i.e. "snail-mail," address. Thank you.