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Never Converted

I attended a Catholic multi-racial school in which I was educated in the beliefs of both Jews and Christians. However, I was well educated in my religion, which I would exchange for no other. Thus I never converted. Now I am more determined than ever to help younger children realize how great and pure Hinduism is. I lecture every Sunday at our local thirukootum so that I can instill pride in our youth. They should be proud of being descendants of the oldest surviving religion to date. Hinduism Today gives me the courage and motivation I need to carry on with this service.

Prabhasini Pillay, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Timeline Responses

I would like to express my deepest appreciation for mentioning the Lithuanians in the Timeline [Dec., 1994]. Balts-Lithuanians, Latvians and Old Prussians-have always recognized their spiritual-religious ties to the Hindus. For centuries, our sacred Dainos have been called the Baltic Vedas. Vydunas, our teacher in the first half of this century, and Marija Gimbutas, the renown archeo-mythologist, expounded upon the indigenous relationship of Baltic and Hindu religions.

Even a precursory glance reveals the deep unity of our beliefs: Baltic Darna is Hindu Dharma; our Dievas is your Deva; Laima is Laxmi; Pradziapatis is Prajapati.

Our priests who used to perform fire sacrifices were Vaidilos, bearers of wisdom (vaid as in ved of the Vedas).

This year marks a sad milestone for us: a mere two centuries ago, the last Lithuanian monarch enacted a heinous display of his Christianity. He set fire to the last remaining Baltic temple in Vilnius, the capitol. The temple burned to the ground with its priests and devotees. The following year, Russia occupied the country, deposed the king and usurped the crown.

In spite of persecution by Christians and Soviets alike, adherents of the Baltic religion persisted. Early this century, we took the name of Romuva, meaning both "temple" and "place of inner peace." Today Romuva is one of the fastest growing religions in Lithuania, together with Buddhism and Hari-Krishnaism.

Audirus Dundzila, Elder, Lithuanian Ethnic Church, 6226 N. Clark St., #3C, Chicago, Illinois, 60660, USA

My family and I have practiced yoga (meditation and Sanatana Dharma) for nearly 20 years. We feel it is the best and highest way of living in order to achieve inner peace as well as contributing to greater world harmony. We have all been to India and are familiar with the incorrect history of India that is in current textbooks. Therefore, we were especially thrilled to read your excellent Timeline. This accurate update is certainly long overdue!

Carole Stuart, Litchfield, Ohio, USA

I wonder where you acquired your information when you say that Homo Sapiens Sapiens with "20th century brains" existed 100,000 years ago. About 100,000 years ago, Neanderthalensis replaced Homo Erectus as the dominant hominid. It was not until 40,000bce that modern man arrived on the scene. Your chart has pushed modern man back into the time arena occupied by Homo Erectus, a rather simple stone tool maker. I know that the Hindu view of time is vast and cosmic in its dimensions, but let's get it right!

Richard H. Pratt, Ph.D., Henderson, Nevada, USA

Editor's note: According to the 1992 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "anatomically modern Homo Sapiens" appeared in Africa 100,000 years ago. It is true for Europe that the Neanderthals were replaced by modern humans 40,000 years ago, but Africa is the place, "where modern humans appeared earlier than in any other part of the world," according to the encyclopedia.

I have read an account/review of your recent article on Indian history,

and I am shocked that you could promote such nonsense. I have in the past enjoyed Hinduism Today, but this article and the accompanying editorial are not just ridiculous, but also play into the hands of fundamentalist revisionists who are dangerous. In India today there is a strong movement amongst politically-motivated right-wingers to find historical reasons to justify acts of communal brutality and discrimination. Your article plays right into the hands of these people.

Dominik Wujastyk, Bangalore, India, dom@soochak.ncst.ernet.in

I believe that timing on the basis of inaccurately recorded/transmitted astronomical events can cause large errors. For example, it is possible to obtain very different dates for the Mahabharata war using astronomical computations. That date of Mahabharata in your Timeline, 1424 bce, is very reasonable. Ojha calculated 1471bce back in 1918 and gives a fairly convincing explanation. I think astronomical calculations should be supported by other evidence.

Y. Kumar, an80007@anon.penet.fi

Thank you for your excellent revised version of the Timeline. I realize that you are taking a bold stand given the current academic situation in this country, which is generally not very sympathetic to Hinduism, as you well know. But I think that we cannot wait for them to change, we must prod them along as you have so well

done. Prof. Klaus Klaustermeier in his most recent version of Survey of Hinduism that came out in October is also questioning the Aryan invasion of India and no longer presenting it as the primary view. So the academic establishment is at least beginning to bend.

Dr. David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri), Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

Priest Abuse

H.H. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's editorial [Dec., 1994] explores an acute problem that has been taboo to discuss. I did not realize that the harassment priests receive at my local temple occurs at other temples as well. The temple administration regularly schedules the priest for 56 hours of work each week. This includes two 12-hour weekend days without any breaks or meals at all. During every festival, the administration imposes long breakless and meal-less hours. The temple cut two priests to save on expense, but the work load remained the same. It is now physically impossible for them to care for all the deities and provide services to devotees. Compensation is a mere \$6,000 annually, equating to an hourly wage of \$2.14, well below minimum wage and therefore illegal. The administration constantly hassles and berates the priests to no end. It openly and publically tells anybody and everybody that the priests are lazy, that they complain about their workload, etc. It always threatens to fire the priests (without a ticket back to Bharat) to control them. Devotees, too, engage in "priest-bashing." I am quite amazed at the lack of simple human kindness, compassion and courtesy the temple administration exhibits toward its priests. I realize you cannot do anything to improve the situation at my temple. However, I needed to tell these incidents to someone because I could no longer keep silent. If I had shared my observations with the temple administration, I know the priests would suffer.

Name Withheld By Request

Hindus by Knowledge

The love I have for Hinduism Today words cannot express. It is a magazine of

inspiration and beauty to all Hindus and non-Hindus. What we need in South Africa and throughout the world are institutions where we as Hindus can go to learn about our religion and other religions also. We need to be Hindus by knowledge, not by definition only. We must not become sitting ducks for other people, but able to defend our religion.

Nithiyananthen Govender, Chatsworth, South Africa

My Paper

Your paper reflects on how the world is changing and how wonderful we could all make it if we all wanted to. Your magazine has become my "paper" as we are bombarded by "watchdog" news everywhere, which seems to serve the sole purpose of depressing everyone.

Christine Curchod, Montreal, Canada