LETTERS
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Guidebook to Hindu Way of Life

The 32-page insert on the Hindu way of life based on Gurudeva's Living with Siva should be a required reading for every Hindu (Nov/Dec, 2001). I wish that I had it when I was growing up or raising my children.

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Earthquake Coverage

Thank you for the July/August 2001 issue of HINDUISM TODAY. The article "To Rebuild

Kutch," which includes BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's earthquake relief work, is wonderfully written. The photograph on the cover is also exceptional.

Sadhu DivyamurtidasShree Swaminarayan Mandir, Kolkata navarat@bgl.vsnl.net.in

Strength in Hindu Faith

During this difficult time of terrorist attacks it is so easy to witness the differences between individuals. Everybody's internal nature comes out during the most difficult times. That's when our inner being becomes our outer being. Being a part of the Hindu faith has never meant as much to me until now. Many of my young friends are

questioning their faith and God's presence. Others are going out in hateful rages, while others sit fearful in their homes. But despite the many losses and sad occurrences, I feel as strong and secure as ever. I'm not scared, nor fearful of the future. I am more confident than ever of God's presence. I've always had a strong, solid Hindu foundation. Now I know, more than ever, why religion and taking Hinduism into account in my every decision is so important. Without God, I stand alone. But with God, I stand strong, confident and secure in all my endeavors.

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Conversion/Reconversion

The letters and opinions on conversion and reconversion ("My Opinion," Nov/Dec, 2001), stimulate me to share my own experiences. I was born into a typical, middle-class, Protestant family in Western America. Even at six years old, it seemed that I must have landed among crazy people. Perhaps as a result of reincarnation (although as an Advaitist, I prefer to think of it as a result of clear seeing), I could not understand how these people came up with their religion. They started with the idea of one God and then made the

completely unwarranted jump to the idea that God was somehow separate from creation and that each person has a soul separate from God. They seemed to start out OK but then immediately covered themselves up with veil after veil of illusion until they felt comfortably separated from the truth. It seemed wrong to me as a child, it seems wrong to me as an adult. One merely has to drop the Christian dogma, and the dharma reveals itself unsullied. It is not so much a matter of conversion or reconversion, but of reversion to the truth. How easy is that?

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Courage Claim To Be a Hindu!

Many Hindus do say "no" to conversion. (Letters "Who said No to Conversion," "Yes, Conversion is Possible," Jul/Aug, 2001). Someone approaching a temple or any other Hindu organization in the United States will likely be offered sympathy and understanding, but little else. I know of one

temple that performed a Namakarana Samskara [name-giving] on the understanding that it in no way implied conversion. Hindu reactions range from acceptance to disbelief to refusal. There are many reasons why Indian Hindus might feel antipathy toward converts. Whether these reasons are justified or not is unimportant. They are issues for Indian Hindus to resolve by themselves, among themselves. American converts have not had the historical experiences of

Indians. In a spirit of love, they should be extremely sensitive to the feelings of Indian Hindus. At the same time, for the serious person who would be Hindu, the pull of Hinduism is irresistible. A path for converts and for Indian Hindus must be developed that is founded on mutual love and mutual respect. At one time the world was divided into entities that were separated by geographical boundaries, which have been significantly eroded and continue to dissolve. In such a closely interconnected world, no one can predict or

place rules upon where Siva, for example, might cause His devotees to be born. Long ago, Tiru Satchthanantham Pillai wrote, "There is no question of race, color or language. It is clearly stated by Saint Sundarar that Saiva Saints may be found in other lands and other times." All persons who want to be Hindu and have the resolve and courage should claim that they are Hindu and that they were born Hindu, as is proven simply by the facts of their life. In this context, conversion of Hinduism is really re-conversion.

Shaktyanand (J. William Curtis)
Seattle, Washington

Restoration Success Story

We are striving to preserve important monuments which are not protected by the state or central governments ("Meet God's Arbitrator" Sep/Oct, 2001). This preservation activity has attracted the state government of Karnataka, which now meets 50% of the

restoration cost and allows our Dharmothana Trust to do the restoration work. Some state-government protected monuments were also restored and handed over to the local devotees to manage.

D. Veerendra Heggade,Director, S. D. N. Dharmothana Trust, Bangalore

More For Our Youth

I very much enjoyed reading the story "Heaven and Hell" (Sep/Oct, 2001). Stories like these are very helpful in explaining our philosophy to young children. I wish there were books which talked about our heritage and philosophy illustrated by stories like this for kindergarten and pre-kindergarten kids! Do you have plans for projects for that age group?

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*At www.himalayanacademy.com/books/ online_books.html you will find items for youth, and more are in the works.

More On the Role of Women

Congratulations for your excellent publication. I am Hindu born and live in Bali. I would like to suggest more articles on the role of Hindu women in the Hindu religion.

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Abuse Cripples Children

I was deeply touched by the wisdom and compassion of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's article, "The Dreadful Curse of Verbal Abuse" (Jul/Aug, 2001). I was verbally abused by a cruel supervisor. Her

bitterness contaminated the entire social work department I worked in. Verbal abuse can cage a soul! I feel even more compassion for children. They cannot leave their parents, and they cannot argue back. Verbal abuse destroys. It kills the child's heart and spirit. Self-esteem is sacrificed. The child

becomes an emotional cripple. Children need our loving words to be strong in a world so desperate for positive people!

Wendy Schuljan Coram, New York

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