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Letters

Reverence For All Life

I once heard Dada J.P. Vaswani say that a person could save around 7,500 lives by turning to vegetarianism. Animals do not want compassion but the humane treatment which is their right, he asserted. All health professionals tell us that meat-eating is not good for the heart or cholesterol, but we turn a deaf ear to their advice because some of us have eaten meat and it tastes good! I know certain diseases are caused from meat-eating. I know meat costs more as well. I have seen that meat-eaters are emotionally more labile. Anger, lust, jealousy and animal-like passions are more likely companions of such people; whereas people consuming vegetables, grain and fruits are calmer and at peace with themselves and others. And here I speak from my own experience. Can you tell I am trying to become a vegetarian? Not so much for health purposes, not because fruits and vegetables cost less and I am a penny pincher, and certainly not because I don't like the taste of meat. I come from a 100 percent meat-eating family. Growing up, not a single day was tolerated without a sumptuous meal of lamb and fish. Let's face it, people eat meat because they like the taste. I did. It's those taste buds which lure us towards taking life, but if you examine yourself closely and ask the heart (which by the way should rule your head), the answer will be--don't forsake principles of living and existing with nature and its bounties for a tasty, greasy bonanza. But an understanding has arisen in me where I want to respect my fellow creatures and live alongside them.

Because of man's intellect and greed, he has made these helpless animals putty in his hands. Man's ancestors may have hunted for animals, but in the modern era, we have so many foods available to nourish our bodies, and there is no need to slaughter animals even if they are bred for this purpose. I am appealing to all meat-eaters that the next time you go out for dinner or eat at home, to think in a conscious way of what you are doing when you order fried chicken or a shrimp creole off the menu.

Rita Frenchman

Hendersonville, Tennessee

Great Work

Just a short note on how well the staff of Hinduism Today and contributors to the website are doing. Reflecting on how full, rich and deep the reporting has become--even the daily web pages, www.gurudeva.org, have so much food for the spirit. It is ironic that as technology moves at light speed, the content in so much mass media has regressed in the opposite direction to so much baseness and vacuity. It's sad that so many resources are going into transmitting this food for indigestion, starving the higher mind, emotions, spirit. Please thank all the monks, and of course, Gurudeva, for continuing to feed us so well!

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Hybrid Religion

Christianity in India, previously symbolized by the cross, candles and chalice at the altar, has

given way to the traditional lamps and puja utensils of Hindu temples. Christian choirs have shifted from the Western music to carnatic and Hindustani ragas. There is a church on a hill top in the plains of Kerala, accessible throughout the year, where the devotees scale up the hill with irumudikkettu offerings on their heads, mocking the Sabarimala devotees of Lord Ayappan. This recent effort may be to solicit the wavering among the Hindus. Else, why should the church that existed in Kerala for two millennia with its conventional methods and traditional ritualistic aids kept close to heart by every Christian throughout generations choose now to Hinduize in the name of Indianization? I think it's simple. Christians see the divine refulgence that Hinduism radiates and desire to be a part of it.

A.R. Narayanan

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Religions Not The Same

One of my acquaintances in the USA, a secularist, taught his children that "All religions are the same." Recently, his

daughter came home and told her parents that she is accepting Islam and marrying a Muslim. The brahmin parents were shocked. His daughter retorted that he constantly said, "All religions are the same." If you ask someone who is Muslim or Christian if "All religions are the same," they will say, "No way!" Today, we Hindus are not slaves. We should respect all religions, but we must tell the truth that all religions are not the same. One friend of mine from India whose children went to a Christian convent school, told me, "All religions are the same." I asked her if she believed that Hinduism and Christianity are the same. She said, "Yes." So I asked her if she believed she was born a sinner and that if she were not baptized, she would go to hell and burn forever. She said "No." I asked her if she believed in Satan and other evil forces outside of God, that Jesus is the only savior and that the Bible is the only truth. She said, "No."

Then I asked her if she believed that animals and plants have no soul, that you are not a part of God, and that it is blasphemous to say that you are part and parcel of God. She said, "No" again. These are just a few of the differences. Christians do not accept karma or reincarnation. It is important that everyone respects all religions. But we must truthfully say that all religions are not the same.

Bharat J. Gajjar

Hockessin, Delaware

Hoddle's Karma

I read with interest your article on Glenn Hoddle [May, 1999]. You are certainly right in saying that in their response the press or establishment did not seriously consider Hoddle's views as "religious." This is, of course, a disgrace

and should not have been the case. However, there is some background which was omitted in your article. Hoddle is not a Hindu. He has called himself a Christian in the past. His belief system as a whole is not, as far as I know, part of any organized religion. It may almost be described as "personal opinion." Hoddle is perfectly entitled to hold whichever opinion he chooses. Those outside of England should also understand that it is absolutely no exaggeration to state that the manager of the England soccer team is a public figure with a profile more or less equivalent to that of the Prime Minister. When in such an influential position as that of England manager, surely he should have considered the fact that the entire country, not just a close circle of sympathizers, would be listening to his comments.

Richard Walley
Colchester, UK

Today's Youth

I am constantly in touch with Hindu youth, many of whom have a science background and therefore have a rational sort of outlook, questioning both belief and practice. Even the others without a scientific background are keen to understand things in a rational way, and many happenings and developments in modern life shake up their traditional references which focus on the ritualistic and do not provide answers to their queries. Their other compatriots--I live in Mauritius, I am sure you know we are multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious--get straight answers from their religious-spiritual leaders. From what I read in yours and other publications, it seems to me that the confusion, especially amongst Hindu youths, persists. We must attempt to address this problem in a systematic, logical manner. We must provide a

framework which indicates where the pieces fit of the jigsaw puzzle of multifarious Gods and Goddesses, a surfeit of religious texts and scriptures, and rituals which may not seem to have any coherence.

Dr. N. Gopee

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Great Upliftment

I have been reading your magazine for a year. It really lifted my thoughts about our religion. I was blindly following the rituals in fear of suffering the unknown. Now I am getting to know the real meaning of all this. I know that I am not alone in this fear. Thank you for the enlightenment. I now feel that I

have a duty to be done and realize that every soul has a purpose in life. I humbly suggest you to start a question-and-answer page in your highly revered magazine.

Arul Namashiv

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*Our publisher has a dynamic question and answers program on our daily website. Listen to his recorded responses every day at www.gurudeva.org and also submit your own queries to questions@hindu.org.

Bangladesh

You deserve our gratitude

for Ishani Chowdhury's article [Feb. 2000]. The situation with Hindus, along with Buddhists and Christians, of Bangladesh is more complicated than one article could explain. We are at fault for our inaction as well. A few points need mentioning: According to the Bangladesh census, the number of Hindus who have fled to India will certainly surpass 40 million (not 10 million as you write). By 1981 there were over 28.8 million Bangladeshi Hindus in India. This figure is a lot more 20 years later. With second-

and third-generation Bangladeshis that number is easily over 50 million strong in India. You show a picture of the Kantajir Mandir. In 1994 the old Radha-Krishna murti was pilfered. During my 1998 visit I found a new murti. It was installed in 1997 by local Hindus. Incidentally, the 14th century murti of the Goddess of Dhaka [Durga] at the Dhakeswari Mandir in Dhaka was destroyed during the 1991 pogrom along with the entire temple complex. The Enemy Property Act [1965] and

restriction on hiring are economic terrors to Hindus. This racist act allows confiscation of Hindu property without any notice and compensation. In 1989 Bangla Land Minister Sunil Gupta told me that just between 1984-1989 700,000 acres of land was confiscated from Hindus. [South Asia Forum Quarterly, Fall 1989; 7], plus thousands of homes, ponds, shops, etc. Leaders Mujibur Rahman, General Ershad, and now, Prime Minister Hashina Wazed have all promised to

nullify the act. By Bangladeshi estimates the Pakistani army and Bengali Muslims killed three million people in 1971; 90% to 95% of them were Hindus [2.7 million]. This sad fact is fast fading. President Yahya Khan gave orders to kill and cleanse Hindus and secularists. Gen. Tikka Khan, Rao Farman Ali and others joined in that genocide. It is ironic that no group--Hindu, Muslim, Pakistani, Indian, US, progressive, conservative, secular, human rights--has ever asked for their

prosecution, except for Bangla
secular Muslims and minorities.
No one has been convicted of
this crime. Many of these
killers still serve in high
positions in Pakistan and
Bangladesh and visit the West
regularly. This is in stark
contrast to the pursuit of "war
criminals" in the Balkans.
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Thank You

I wish to take this

opportunity to thank you for your generous contribution of material [1,000 "Four Facts" and "Nine Beliefs of Hinduism" pamphlets and a few copies of Hinduism Today] for our recent "Spirit Matters" forum for the crew of the USS Carl Vinson [An American aircraft carrier with 5,500 personnel]. Your donation of materials describing the essence of your faith group was made available to our sailors and

their families. It helped them gain an appreciation for the tenets of your faith and how they can contact you if they want further information. On behalf of the crewmembers of the USS Carl Vinson, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your support

B. F. Kelly, CDR, CHC, USN
Command Chaplain
USS Carl Vinson

Apology

I would like to apologize to all Hindus for the ignorant, bigoted activities of the Southern Baptists ["Divali, Festival of light, Circle of Darkness," Jan. 2000]. Thousands of Americans of Nordic ancestry, including myself, are attempting to rediscover our own spiritual heritage, to relearn the wisdom of the Icelandic Edda [a 13th century

collection of Pagan poetry]. We strongly support our spiritual kinsmen, the Hindus, and your desire to restore the spiritual wisdom of the Vedas. The forced conversion of our Northern European Pagan tribes to Christianity was a terrifying experience and a historical tragedy for our people, as were the Muslim conquests of India. Now that we are experiencing a modest Neo-Pagan renaissance in

Europe and North America, certain Judeo-Christian sects are reacting with hysteria. Please accept our humble apologies for their hateful words and know that Hindus should not turn in fear at the sight of a white, Western face. Hail Thor and Indra, many of us are on your side.

John Robinson

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The Best Yet!

The May/June issue of Hinduism Today was one of your best yet! As a non-Hindu reader with an abiding respect for Eastern traditions, I really appreciated the fascinating Publisher's Desk [Forcefields and Psychic Protection] from this issue. Your blend of topics--including sati,

Lord Ganesha, dowries
and common questions
put to Hindus--was both
enlightening and
thought-provoking.
Thanks for giving the
world your unique
perspective on an
amazing religion.
Mark Hawthorne

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Where's the Beef?

Frankly speaking--and I need not at all be apologetic or penitent--your esteemed magazine very astonishingly contains absolutely nothing substantitive or of significance within its otherwise sheeny and glossy

covers, dazzling the very eyes, which would enthuse and earnestly invite and fascinate a serious and scholarly-bent mind to ponder and reflect deeply and that too a recondite and subtle subject as Hinduism--so vast and expansive--which

ironically your
publication loudly
professes and
proclaims to have but,
indeed, does not.

D.N. Raina

New Delhi, India

Correction

*In December 1999's

Digital Dharma titled Vedic Architecture, it was stated that "Deepak Bakshi, a senior architect for the huge Swaminarayan temple in Naesden, England." This is incorrect. Deepak Bakshi was project architect and worked for Gajjar Associates

during 1981-1985.
During this period he worked on conceptual design and planning permission for Swaminarayan temple in Naesden, England.

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