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Letters

Dress Code for Temple Goers

I am a Malaysian of Chinese origin, and I am very interested in Indian/Hindu culture, especially on the aspect of dress and costume. There is, of course, a significant Indian minority in Malaysia, and I have many Indian/Hindu friends. One of the best gifts I have got from an Indian friend was when he taught me how to wear the dhoti, what they call here a veshti for men. The sad thing is that not many men wear the veshti nowadays in Malaysia, not even in the temples, except for the priest. Many of my friends say that wearing a veshti is uncomfortable since they are more used to trousers. I have to say that there is nothing really uncomfortable about the veshti, one can get used to it after a while, but the tribal style where the cloth goes under the legs to be tucked behind takes a bit of getting used to. Some of my friends whose origins are from Kerala say that some temples there enforce traditional clothing on men when they go there. Do you think there should be a dress code for all who enter temples?

James Chong, Perak, Malaysia

acchong@pc.jaring.my

A Big Barrier--Social Divisions

Coming from a country like Malaysia, one inevitably notices that the Hindus here are made up of many different groups identified with different Indian states, languages or castes. We have the Telegus, Malayalees, Gounders, Chettiyars,

Mudaliars, etc., etc., and the list never seems to end. What astonishes me most is the fact that as people of a common religion, just Hindus, we instead look at each other through the eyes of "he or she is not one of my kind," and this has created and clouded the progress of the Hindus in this country. Each temple or Hindu organisation is identified as "a Ceylonese temple" or "a Chettiyar temple," etc. The worst part is when a boy and a girl of two different groups fall in love and decide to get married, the opposition is so strong that often the couple decide to part and save their family the shame of marrying out. This is unbelievable. Hindus and yet not Hindus. What is the problem here? Identifying yourself with a special language or caste group rather than being proud that you are a Hindu, this is the problem. It stunts the progress of the Hindu community in terms of education, economic and social welfare. Certain groups are found to only contribute and help their own kind and are proud of it. If only we didn't belong to a Nair, a Pillai, a Menon, a Gounder, a Chettiyar social caste group or whatever else and just belonged to the Hindus, we might find ourselves conquering mountains and leaping over the tallest buildings. If only we could realize we are all actually brothers and sisters, and it doesn't matter what we speak or how we speak but that we are all of one kind. If only? Would you be willing to teach your child that every Hindu is a Hindu and not a member of some language or caste group? If only we could break these barriers created by our forefathers and still practiced by many! If only we could change ourselves first! Then I think Hindus all over the world still have a chance. No Hindu should be greater or lesser than another, and no Hindu should eye himself as the greatest and look down on his neighbor. After all, dear Ganesha, I wonder what You are and what language You speak?.

Krishnakumari Nallakumar

kumari@frim.gov.my

Sadhu Bathing Order

In your Kumbha Mela timeline it is mentioned [insight, pg 34, Sep. '98]: "ca 1780: British establish the order for royal bathing by the monastic groups (the same order is followed today)." It is my impression that it was (Thorle) Madhavrao Peshwa, the Maratha Prime Minister, who established this order (prior to 1780?) after fights broke out at the Nashik Kumbha Mela and not the British. The British East India Company had just won the Battle of Plassey (1757) and would hardly be in a position to dictate religious rules in 1780. The British Crown seized power of India in 1857 after the National Uprising. It was then that major reforms, changes, and degradations in Hindu religion started taking place.

Amol Joshi

ahjoshi@hotmail.com

Ten Years to Worldwide Reiki

I'm surprised no one has responded to the "Reiki" article (HT January 1998). For many years, I have believed that hatha yoga and meditation are the keys to achieve Self Realization. This is true, however, Reiki is not just for healing--it is a path to Enlightenment. When you put your hands on any part of the body, the flow of healing energy begins. Remove the hands and the energy stops! This is a simple but powerful technique. Your readers should consider adding Reiki to their daily routine. Within the next ten years, I believe Reiki will spread rapidly throughout the entire world.

Marc Edwards

marced@asan.com

Remembering Krishnanandji

It is appropriate that the cover of the August issue should carry the photograph of President Nelson Mandela at a Hindu center at Durban on Dipavali celebrations. Also, Swami Ghananandji's warm and reverential tribute to Swami Krishnanandji [minister's message, Aug. '98] as "Swami of Africa" will bring happy memories, satisfaction and gratitude to thousands of people whose lives were touched by Swami Krishnanandji. I met him in 1981 and today memories come flooding to my mind of his deep spirituality, compassion and true greatness. It is right and proper that Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Krishnanandji who made history in and for Africa are remembered together. Swami Ghananandji and his message are a compliment to Africa.

Nautam Raval, Harrow, United Kingdom

Don't Dismiss Ancient Tamil

The possibility that an ancient Dravidian tongue could be the language of the Harappans should not be discredited [language , May '98]. The letter "+" also represented "K" in ancient Tamil. The Rig Veda mentions dark complexioned residents. Pure Tamil words are traceable in ancient Sanskrit texts. Tamil was older or contemporary with Sanskrit and perhaps its culture and ceremonies were the cornerstone of Hinduism.

Thavaraja Sundhar Sundram, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conspiracy Behind a Name?

I have often wondered why, in English, Christianity is the only religion referred to with the suffix "-ity." Every other religion is referred to as an "-ism," Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, etc. The suffix "-ity" suggests a state of being, as in gravity, agility, volatility. It suggests a quality inherent to the

subject--the way religion is supposed to be. The suffix "-ism" suggests a preconceived set of thoughts to which one agrees or does not without it being inherent to one's nature as in communism, capitalism, dadaism, minimalism, etc. It is not hard to imagine that people who first coined the term did not feel comfortable calling other's religion a religion. But now that we are free to call ourselves anything, we should call ourselves "Hinduity" and let people know that we have caught on to their conspiracy.

Shruti and abhijit T. Shukla

ashuklas@bellatlantic.net

Letters, with writer's name, address and daytime phone number, should be sent to:

Letters, Hinduism Today

107 Kaholalele Road

Kapaa, HI 96746-9304 USA

or faxed to: (808) 822-4351

or e-mailed to: letters@HinduismToday.kauai.hi.us

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