Rabbit's Out/Dragon's In
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Retrospectives are the common fare of editorial columns as one year ends and another begins. After resisting this national pastime for nine years, we finally succumb and provide a brief look at the year just gone. We write it in this March issue so that those among our readers who live in far lands and who must endure the preposterously ponderous pace of international postal portage will have these musing in hand by April 12th when the Hindu New Year - this one is 5090-is celebrated in communities around the globe.

First a few considerations. In China, 1988 is the Year of the Dragon, replacing the Rabbit of 1987. The Rabbit is out; the Dragon is in. You're a "Dragon" if you were born in 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964 or 1976. The Chinese consider those born in the Year of the Dragon as vivacious, energetic and generally in good spirits. They are also excitable, intelligent, gifted, soft-hearted and honest. Being perfectionists. Dragons are cautioned by Chinese sages not to criticize or make undue demands on themselves or others. Joan of Arc was a Dragon. So was Sigmund Freud. I know what your asking yourself: "I wonder what Hinduism Today is? A Snake? A Tiger? A Rat?" Truth to tell, we have been called all that, and more. But, your paper, born amid humble circumstances in 1979, is a Ram - like Mark Twain and Michelangelo. Of Rams it is said they are "charming, elegant and artistic, with very strong beliefs and the ability to make money and to alienate people, but only at first." Hmmm!

Nineteen hundred eighty-eight is the second year in the Hindu 60-year cycle. The year is called Vibhava, and is associated astrologically with abundance and prosperity. The world money markets will no doubt be pleased to hear that. We hope this proves a materially and spiritually rewarding year for you, too.

Major Changes in 1987: Last year was definitely one of change for Hinduism Today. A brief listing will suffice to see how true this is:

* After 9 years of being a quarterly and bi-monthly, HT began publishing every month. That may seem a small change to you, but in the world of publishing it is consummately consequential.

* We won a national contest for our innovative work with the Macintosh Desktop Publishing system, winning $500 and a full-page description of our newspaper in two major computer magazines - MacWorld and Mac User.

* Another honor unexpectedly came our way when Apple Computer called to ask if they could send a video crew from their Cupertino Headquarters to video tape the paper and staff. Seems they were fascinated with the way we are using their "empowerment tools" (translation: computers) to enlighten the world.

* We moved our Subscription and Advertising Offices from San Francisco to Concord, California, expanding our modest marketing facilities.

* We added a third color to our regular print run, creating more dynamic graphics.

* We introduced new features, including Publisher's Desk, Hindu Press International, My Turn (the guest editorial returned by popular demand). The Hindu Church, Leximania, (our first word-puzzle contest), and more.

* We upgraded our Macintosh software, allowing the staff to offer computer-generated illustrations, maps, scanned photos and graphic images.

* We welcomed new correspondents in Nepal, India and Fiji. And we acquired our first Mac D's, for unbridled workstation horsepower in the future.

A Year of Articles and Features: Despite the added burdens which a monthly production placed on the staff, we managed to bring our readers, a number of

major features published nowhere else. Among them:

* A three-part series on Mark Twain's remarkable travels and experiences in India.

* Two major articles on Transcendental Meditation.

* We were the first in the US to report fully on the abdication of Shri Jayendra, and then on his surprising return to the Kamakoti Peetham.

* Several features on the rising fortunes of Shirley MacLaine and the New Age, focusing on the Hindu understanding of this phenomenon.

* Several articles on education-how high schools and colleges impact on Hindus, both pro and con.

* Jyotisha: the science of Hindu astrology.

* Hinduism in remote, little-heard-of places like Fiji, the Andaman Islands, Kashmir, the Caribbean, Trinidad & Tobago, Hawaii, China, Kenya, Arabia and elsewhere.

* A series on AIDS and yoga.

* Profiles on Hindu leaders including Swami Prakashananda, Swami Ganapathi Satchidananda, Swami Premananda's tribulations, Swami Sivananda's birth centenary, Swami Pragyanand's break with his mission, Satya Sai Baba, Swami Prem Paramahansa, Ram Das' service-oriented organization, Mataji Amritanandaya's US tour, Swami Dayananda's new Vedanta center in Pennsylvania, the never-ending adventures of Bhagawan Shree Rajneesh,

Nityananda's comeback after the SYDA fallout, Swami Chinmayananda's illustrious mission, Swami Kirtanananda and the stormy ISKCON karma, Mahesh Maharishi's court cases and media blitz, Srimati Gayatri Devi and her American Vedanta institution, Sant Keshavadas' many accomplishments, Swami Satchidananda and his Lotus Shrine in Virginia and Swami Radha of Vancouver.

Special Center Sections: The staff put great creative energy into the monthly center sections, producing information-filled posters designed to share basic Hindu teachings in a graphically professional way. Insight features for last year included:

* A Review of World Religions: History and Doctrine

* Yamas and Niyamas: Do's and Don'ts of Hindu Culture

* Hatha Yoga: A Simplified Way to Prepare for Meditation

* Karma and Reincarnation: An Inspired Talk

* Hinduism From A to Z: A Primer for Children

* Dharma and Realization

* San Marga-The Straight Path to God in Hawaii

* A Beginner's Guide to Visiting a Hindu Temple

* The Human Aura: Its Colors and Their Meanings

* Food For Thought: Hindu Diet as Sattva, Rajas & Tamas

* Nine Beliefs of Hinduism: A Common Ground

Back to the Future: Whew! With your support and God's Good Grace, we hope to continue upgrading our service to Hindu Dharma in the year ahead. Enjoy a happy and profoundly rewarding 5090, everyone!