Letters
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Transformed

I was inspired by your article, "Sothby's Caught Smuggling" in the June edition of Hinduism Today. I have a Buddha statue that has been in my family for just over 37 years. After reading the article, I began to search from where and when it came. As it turns out, the statue is from Tibet, and was probably looted from there in 1959. It is a statue of the Bodhisattva Manjushri, teacher of wisdom and compassion, and is 600 years old. My husband and I will be taking him to the Tibetan Government in exile in Dharmasala, India.

Tamara Lea Baker, mermaid@poi.net

Why Call Our Scriptures Myth?

I have read the Bhagavad Gita and parts of the Bhagavata Purana. I am wondering why these stories are referred to as myths nowadays. I looked up the word myth in the dictionary. One of the many definitions in the Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language is "a traditional or legendary story that is concerned with deities or demigods and the creation of the world and its inhabitants." In Sanskrit the word purana is defined as history or myth. I have read in the Uddhava Gita of the Bhagavata Purana about the curse of the sages on the Yadavas and the submerging of the city of Dwaraka as a result. I have heard about recent excavations in Dwaraka which revealed the remnants of a submerged city. In other contemporary world religions the scriptural stories are not referred to as myths. For example, in Christianity the Biblical story of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is considered true even today. I do not understand this glaring anomaly in Hinduism referring to the Puranas as myths.

Haimavathi Bhat, Newark, Delaware, USA

Tell It to the Judge

I think Judge Moore should enroll in a comparative religious studies course

before he makes comments about the beliefs of others (That Old-time Religion, Church and State, July '97). The main historical figure we think about when discussing the formation of the United States is a man named Thomas Jefferson. In one of Jefferson's letters, which are detailed in a book, he corresponded with a Unitarian Universalist. Thomas Jefferson, when hearing the tenets of the Unitarian Universalist path, was delighted that he (Jefferson) had finally been able to apply a label to his own personal beliefs.

Shakti Ganapati Subramaniam, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

It is a shame that so many people are prejudiced against other peoples' beliefs when they haven't even studied the others' scriptures. And if Judge Roy Moore would speak the truth, this country wasn't founded by Christians, because Native Americans were here long before Christians were. By the constitution everyone has equal rights, so it is obvious this judge is arbitrarily interpreting the laws for his own purposes.

Philips Taylor, Mineral Point, Missouri, USA

Addresses Are Helpful!

I enjoy receiving and reading Hinduism Today. After each issue, I want to contact different people and Hindu organizations. However, the articles almost never provide the addresses and as a result it is impossible to send any contribution or extend help.

Greesh C. Sharma, Yardley, Pennsylvania, USA

Educating the Kids

Sex education is important for children not only at school but also at home. The first phase is teaching it at school and the second is one-on-one question and answer sessions at home. As a father, I myself didn't know how to handle the situation at home when my children were young. I approached my pediatrician who is an Indian and the local school physician. He said it is important that the parents should be aware of this two-step approach. He asked me to attend the session at their school on how to tackle this subject at home. Most Indians feel that our children need not learn from us, and it is enough what they have been exposed to at the school. But the reality is that children are inadequately exposed about their body differences early on in their life. Their inquisitiveness increases as they mature. Children need early preparation and adequate training because we live in the electronic world

and unwanted, harmful information abounds in the media.

Bala Subramanian, Alabama, USA aum@mindspring.com

Time to Pay Back

I just returned from three months of travel in India, on a pilgrimage to Her most Holy sites, including Arunachala, Kanchi and Bhubahaneswar. I also went to Banaras, the city of Siva, and though the spiritual vibration of the centre is still palatable--the pollution and garbage around the ghats is disgraceful. We should find some money here in the West to contribute to a fund that would be directed to clean up the garbage. It could provide jobs while making a positive contribution. I believe that the Varanasi Ghats should be recognized as a world heritage site by the United Nations. Hinduism has nurtured many the world over, and I think it would be appropriate for the "outside" world to contribute toward this good work.

Oliver Hockenhull, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada oliverh@intergate.bc.ca

Ananda Marga: No Doomsday Cult

I appreciated your article on mass suicide (The Spaceship Suicide, cults, July '97) and the false connections drawn regarding the influence of Eastern spiritual traditions upon the Heaven's Gate cult. The article correctly referred to the flimsy connections drawn in a prominent Newsweek article. I am surprised, though, that an even more overt allegation in the very same article was overlooked. Newsweek gave a "top ten doomsday cult" list, in which Ananda Marga was cited as one such cult. Ananda Margiis are the followers of Sri Sri Anandamurti, and are sincere practitioners of morality (yama and niyama), tantra yoga, and the intuitional science of the Vedas. Numerous Ananda Margiis in the USA wrote letters of protest to Newsweek for their gross inaccuracy in this matter. However, Newsweek failed to print any of the articulate and respectful letters presented to them. Not only did they offer a slander upon Ananda Marga and hence all tantric and yogic traditions, but they failed to correct themselves when presented with compelling evidence of the inaccuracy of their report.

Shravan Kumar, Washington D.C. USA proutwdc@prout.org

There was an error in the article on the Heaven's Gate Group. It says, "There are no Catholic gurus, no Protestant gurus, no Muslim gurus, no Buddhist

gurus." But of course there are Buddhist gurus. The teacher in a Vajrayana Buddhist context is considered to be a guru. Other words also used for such a person are lama and vajra master.

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