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Category : November 1993
Published by Anonymous on Nov. 01, 1993

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August 20, 21 and 22 marked an unprecedented event in the history of Hindu spirituality as well as in the panorama of ethnic culture here. Under the auspices of Gayatri Pariwar, the 1,008 Kundi Ashwamedha Yagna was organized at the multi-acre parking lot of Cerritos College in Norwalk, near Los Angeles. About 25,000 people performed the yagna or visited the site.

Ashwamedha yagna is a spiritual experiment performed to disseminate the divine teachings of Indian culture, which may become a burgeoning world culture in a decade, according to Gayatri Pariwar, a world-wide organization dedicated to solving the problems of life through the great science of Gayatri Mantra. The 1,008 kundi yagna is performed for purification of subtler atmosphere and restoration of ecological balance. Even the Western scientist Dr. Haffkins has noted, "Mixing ghee and sugar and burning them creates smoke which kills the germs of certain diseases and secretion takes place from some glands related to the windpipe which fills us with pleasure."

The word ashwa symbolically stands for all evil instincts and the word medh stands for uprooting those evil instincts. The actual yagna took place on the 21st and 22nd. Thousands of people thronged to the neatly set up pandals and families sat in neat rows, with a copper yagna kundi in front of each family. The yagna priests sat on the stage, decorated with huge cut-outs of deities as well as of Pariwar's founder Shriram Sharma Acharya and Mata Bhagawati Devi Sharma. The priests instructed the congregation in the yagna procedure, and chanted Vedic mantras.The atmosphere was so charged with serenity and joy that eyes welled up

and tears rolled down many a cheek. Mata Bhagavati Devi Sharma, spiritual leader of the Mathura-based Yug Nirman Yojana, had flown in especially for the yagna. She addressed the congregation and implored the people to "get rid of animal instincts and raise themselves to higher levels of behavior." She insisted on each one bringing divinity into one's own behavior.

A giant exhibit was on display adjacent to the yagna pandal. At its entrance a proclamation read, "Sa Prathama Sanskruti Vishwara," referring to the Hindu culture "that is the primary civilization, pervading the entire universe," indicating the ancient beginnings as well as the dynamic thinking of our rishis. The exhibits depicted the scientific aspects of meditation, Yagnopavit ceremony, pranayam, Indian music and its therapeutic effects and Indian dances, its postures and its effects on the human body, mind and spirit. Several seminars including "Yoga," "Women's Power and Their Role in Raising Moral Values," "Interfaith Religious Harmony" and "Youth of Today" were also held during the event.