

[News in Brief](#)

Category : [December 1993](#)

Published by Anonymous on Dec. 01, 1993

News in Brief

The sadbhavana yatra for Peace, Harmony & Justice, delayed by the Killari earthquake, left New Delhi October 8th to cross the length and breadth of India "spreading the message inspired by the life and work of Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba." "What use can all our industries and colleges serve if the people of the country nurture hatred against one another?" asks S.N. Subba Rao. "In the past I took young men and women from all parts of the country to spots that suffered riots and saw that the youths have tremendous potential as a soothing peace balm." 2,400 youths will ride the peace train by the end of the yatra in May.

Mangal arati performed by a hundred young boys and girls was the highlight of Janmashtami Mahotsav observances in Houston, Texas. Over 7,000 Hindus celebrated the birth of Lord Krishna at the Sam Houston Coliseum amid both heightened security and "a greater sense of belonging." As one attendee writes, "Shri Krishna's magic spell seems to be working."

Hindus in Dhaka, Bangladesh, were attacked with stones during a Janmashtami march from the city's main Dhakeswari temple. Police used tear gas and clubs to disperse the attacking crowd. One day earlier, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said Bangladesh was "an embodiment of communal harmony" as she inaugurated Janmashtami celebrations in Chittagong.

10,000 of Australia's Hindus from 34 various organizations in the Sydney area joined together to celebrate their third annual Ganesha Visarjana at the Sri Venkateshwara Temple in Helensburgh, New South Wales. "The purpose of these joint celebrations is to inculcate unity among various groups of Hindus residing in Australia," writes a member of the organizing committee.

The Saiva Manram, Inc. has acquired 1.25 acres of land upon which to construct the Sydney Murugan Temple and Tamil Cultural & Educational Centre in Australia. The foundation stone of the \$1.6 million project is expected to be laid in early 1994.

Manav Seva Mandir of Chicago has installed idols of Shri Ganesh, Shri Krishna, Radha, Surya Devta, Pawanputra Hanuman, Mata Ambe and Lord Shiva. The three day Murti Pratistha Mahotsav attracted over 15,000 devotees.

The betel battle continues in Canada, where the Department of Health and Welfare has classified betel-nut as a health hazard containing a substance linked to esophageal cancer. But paan chewers are not giving up the habit, and merchants, refusing to ignore the demands of a US\$2 million a year business, are defying restrictions on importing paan for sale or distribution. Although it can be imported for personal use, seizures of paan masala and supari are frequent.

Sri lankan Hindus of the Jaffna peninsula continue their worship and temple festivals despite civil war and army occupation of some villages. Reports say thousands attended the annual festivities at the famed Nallur and Kumbalavalai temples.

Sant shri morari bapu and 900 others enjoyed an historic 10-day recital of the Ramayana at sea aboard the Cunard Princess. Satisfying Shri Bapu's long-held desire to hold a recital for the benefit of the seas and oceans, the luxury liner stopped in six Mediterranean ports. Passengers included industrialists, philanthropists, students, spiritual leaders and scholars from all over the world. The ship's crew of 350 vowed to remain strictly vegetarian and alcohol free for the entire cruise.

The Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu continues attracting pilgrims in huge numbers. Despite heavy rains, floods, disrupted rail service and separatist unrest in the Himalayan foothill state, officials say 3,000 to 5,000 devotees per day are seeking out the goddess.

Kashmir's Hindu population is nearly gone. While comprising 15% of the population in 1941, Hindus constituted only 0.1% in 1991 according to a report from the Jammu and Kashmir National Front-International, based in Denmark. 300,000 Hindus and 100,000 Muslims have fled the valley and now live in temporary camps in Jammu division, Delhi, Chandigarh, Amritsar and elsewhere.

Raga ananda bhairavi can help reduce hypertension. Three doctors at the Raga Research Center in Madras conducted music therapy with the raga for 90 days, and report that patients showed definite reductions in blood pressure.

The first Ahimsa Environment Award will be presented in 1994 by the Institute of Jainology in cooperation with the World Wide Fund for Nature. "Jains should be leading examples of an environmentally-friendly citizen," the application form reads. "We hope to encourage this by acknowledging those businesses and community groups who are actively practicing their faith, and, in doing so, benefitting the environment and themselves." Contact: Pankaj Shah, 14 Dovedale Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 ODX, England.

Women ayurvediyas have a grand place in India's medical history, says author Neela Gupta, who writes "Accounts of Indian female physicians in 1000bce. can still be seen in books taken away to Babylonia, Armenia, China and Greece." The "Ayurvedic Upanayana" could be earned regardless of gender. The 5,000-year old Kasyap Samhita contains a chapter addressed to women, and, she adds, "skin-grafting was a popular feature at that time (800bce) and female plastic surgeons existed only in India."

An idol enshrined in one wall of the Kashi Vishwanath temple is no longer accessible to Hindus. Barricades were erected at the Gyan Vapi mosque complex on the advice of the Home Ministry as part of enhanced security measures at three Hindu shrines where mosques have been built: Kashi Vishwanath, Ayodhya and Krishnajanmasthan.

The Ganapati capitol of the world has to be Penn, a township of 25,000 in the Raigad district south of Bombay. Every year prior to Ganesh Chaturthi festivities, everyone in town suspends their regular occupation in favor of murthi-making, supplying most of India's exported Ganapati idols. At least six kala kendras, (art

centers) specializing in teaching clay modeling, are located there. Considered as important as mathematics or writing, residents believe to not know the art of Ganapati making is to invite divine wrath. Murthi-making in Penn dates back to 1730.

meat byproducts were discovered in vegetarian meals ordered by the United States Department of Defense which were designed to be "culturally correct" hunger relief meeting a wide variety of diet restrictions. Over 225,000 Humanitarian Daily Rations found to contain gelatin were intended for distribution to Muslims in war-torn Bosnia, but were diverted to less-strict Soviet Georgia when the mistake was discovered. The oversight was corrected, and 2.15 million truly vegetarian meals have now been ordered.

Hindu-Jewish links were the subject of discussion in November at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Washington, D.C. A panel of 14 eminent scholars examined ancient historical links between Judaic and Hindu civilizations, exploring "possible mutual influences, similarities in their religious codes of purity, the nature of revelation and sacred texts, mysticism and doctrines of reincarnation and scholastic philosophy," said panel organizer Nathan Katz of the University of South Florida.

Hindi alphabet software for IBM PC or compatible computers, featuring color, sound and game formats, is available for \$5.00 from MEDCOM, 3757 Helen Avenue, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 48197, USA.

Christopher Isherwood is well known for his collaboration with Swami Prabhavananda in the 1940's and 50's to produce popular early translations of the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads. Now New Zealand film producer Jane Campion, who won top honors at Cannes film fest this year, is planning a \$12 million movie based on Isherwood's book, My Guru and His Disciple. The witty book is an insightful portrait of the swami and personalities such as Greta Garbo and J. Krishnamurthi.