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A Monthly News Digest

Delhi Government Bans Cow Slaughter

The prestigious Washington Post, one of America's most influential newspapers, headed their April 1st wire story on the banning of cow slaughter in New Delhi, "Victory to Mother Cow." The following are excerpts from this informative report by Molly Moore:

This capital city's new Hindu government has approved a bill banning the slaughter of cows and the sale or possession of beef-the most stringent law in the country governing the protection of India's sacred cows. "The cow is very much attached to the sentiment and the cultural traditions of the people," said Sahib Singh Verma, New Delhi minister for development and education, who sponsored the bill. "We call the cow our mother. So we need to protect our mother."

Passage of the law, which imposes jail terms of up to five years and fines of up to \$300 for possession of beef, has been viewed as an example of the strict religious and cultural reforms advocated by the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won control of the New Delhi government last fall and made the protection of cows its first legislative act. The new law-a plank in last fall's BJP party platform -was viewed as an easy way to bolster the party's political credibility among Hindus, as opposed to attempting to restrict the eating habits of non-Hindus. In a nation where the majority of people revere the cow, the legislation has attracted little public opposition. It passed without a dissenting vote in the Delhi assembly, where it was greeted with shouts of "Victory to mother cow."

The new measure will allow law enforcement authorities to raid shops and homes without notice and places the burden on the accused to prove that confiscated

meat is not beef. In addition, no bail will be allowed for those charged with cow slaughter. Only embassies and official diplomatic residences are immune from the provisions, legislators said. The bill has a provision for aged or unhealthy bovines. It establishes 10 cow shelters throughout Delhi for old or sick cows whose owners cannot care for them.

Said Shastri, 46-year-old Hindu priest at Delhi's Birla Mandir, a Krishna temple: "The cow is such a generous and enduring animal that from birth to death she serves mankind ... That which serves you with its milk is your mother. That is our belief. So would you kill your own mother?"

Best Album Grammy To Hindu Guitarist

In March Indian-style guitar virtuoso Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt along with American rock guitarist Ry Cooder won the Grammy for the Best Album of the Year in the World Music category for their CD recording, *A Meeting by the River*. Bhatt, 42, is one of India's renowned musicians, playing the mohan veena, a Western guitar that he customized by adding sympathetic strings. He grew up in Jaipur, India, in a Hindu family of musicians, studying classical Hindustani style under Pandit Ravi Shankar, who now lives in California.

The recording of the Grammy-winning album wasn't done in a sophisticated sound studio, but in a church in Santa Barbara, California. The music was totally improvised, with Ry Cooder and Bhatt meeting shortly before the recording. The CD has sold over 45,000 copies with sales certain to escalate after the Grammy award.

Hinduism Today asked Bhatt for his thoughts on Hinduism. He says: "I am proud

of being a Hindu, and I think it's the best religion. I am not an activist, but I love the philosophy and the tenets of Hinduism. These are essential for life. If these are observed, one can lead a disciplined and happy life." He is currently on a 20-city concert and lecture tour of the US and Canada. He says, "My main aim is to promote Indian classical music here and to stimulate people's interest."

Bhatt isn't the first Hindu to garner a Grammy. Two years ago South Indian drummer T. Vikram won for his contribution to a global drumming anthology that took best album prize in world music. By Lavina Melwani, New York

Mahatma Gandhi And the Peanut Eater

At our request, Swami Vidyananda [see page 26] related his favorite story of Mahatma Gandhi.

People asked Gandhi, "Why do you travel third class? Gandhi replied, "Because there is no fourth class." Once he was so traveling in the third-class compartment. A man sitting beside him purchased a large bag of peanuts. He was eating and throwing the shells inside the compartment. Gandhi asked him, "Brother, why are you throwing the shells inside the compartment, why don't you throw them out the window?" The man got very angry and shouted, "Is it your father's train?" "Brother," replied Gandhi, "It is neither my father's train nor your father's train. Maybe it is everybody's father's train. The man said, "Shut up or I will throw you out of the compartment." Gandhi thought, "This man is not going to learn." So Gandhi started picking the shells up off the floor and throwing them out of the window. That man was throwing the shells inside the compartment, and Gandhi was throwing them out the window. This whole drama went on for a few hours. Just as Gandhi was getting exhausted, the man purchased some more peanuts and continued to throw the shells in the compartment. Gandhi continued without any grumble.

Then they arrived at the station where Gandhi was to disembark. A lot of people had come to receive Gandhi with flags and garlands. They looked from compartment to compartment, "Where is Gandhi? where is Gandhi?" They came to his compartment and put a lot of garlands around him, shouting, "Gandhiji, Gandhiji." Then the man who was sitting by Gandhi on the train was shocked. He prostrated at Gandhi's feet and said tearfully, "Please excuse me. I did not know that you were Gandhi." The Mahatma replied, "You have to excuse yourself. You have to take a vow that you won't do it in the future." And that man became one of Gandhi's greatest followers.

4,000 Year-Old, 2-Wheel Chariots In South Russia

During the mid-1980s eager Russian archeologists finally dug shovels into the settlement and ritual burial sites of the earliest Indo-European culture in the timber-and-grassy-plain region southeast of the Ural mountains. They found an archeological beacon that points to Ireland, Iran and India: six two-wheeled chariots and horse bones buried in graves for aristocrats. Details of the digs and samples were just recently passed to Western researchers who carbon-dated the chariot graves to 2026bce, making them the oldest known high-speed chariots. The discovery strengthens the hypothesis that the homeland for Indo-European cultures (exhibiting language and custom parallels) that blanketed Great Britain, Europe, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India was in the Ural steppelands of Russia. The oldest evidence of horse taming-dated 4000bce -also comes from south Russia. The chariot wheels were 8-12-spoked with closed hubs to keep dirt out and contain the axle pin-an advanced technology held to be first present in Mesopotamia. Harness pieces like those at the Ural graves show up in digs in southeast Europe dated prior to 2000bce. The Indo-European language families-Romance, Germanic (including English), Celtic, Greek, Latin, Baltic, Hittite, Iranian, Sanskrit-all contain similiar technical words for chariots. Meanwhile, a mid-1993 archeological dig in northwest China discovered 113 mummified bodies of horse-riding Indo-Europeans with blond hair dated to 1200bce. The find is vulcanizing the archeological world, for it points to ancient contact between Europe and China. Similar noblemen ritual burial mounds have been discovered in India and dated at 1200bce.

Trends to Watch: Genocidal Microbes Resist Antibiotics-Meat-Eating is Primary Source of Supergerms

Microbes are the nano-robots of the organic world, microscopic organisms that swarm through us and over our planet in the centillions. They are the bacteria of decay-breaking down a million tons of biomass every day-and of disease. Until the discovery of penicillin in 1928, microbes were unconquerable. Penicillin, and its antibiotic progeny, killed the bacteria of pneumonia, blood poisoning, meningitis, tuberculosis, staph and many other diseases. It was the Germ Wars of the 20th century: microbes versus antibiotics. The microbes are still winning. Researchers at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention routinely handle deadly, plague-type bacteria. But they won't experiment with staph, an ordinary bacteria that causes blood poisoning. It lives on the skin and in the nostrils of 50% of humanity. Because there are strains of staph that have only one antibiotic to counter it, the CDC scientists won't tinker with its DNA structure. A next-generation superstaph could be generated that was resistant to that one antibiotic, and if it escaped into the public would kill 10,000 every month. Microbes develop resistance to antibiotics almost as quickly as the drugs appear. The resistance acquired by one bacteria can be passed by environmental contact to other bacteria.

Ironically, quicksilver resistance has been accelerated by too many antibiotics prescribed too often to millions of people, creating optimum opportunities for supergerms to evolve. But the largest mass production engine for supergerms is the meat industry, where tens of millions of cattle, dairy cows, pigs, and chickens are routinely pumped up with antibiotics. "Antibiotics in farm animals," states Newsweek, a leading US magazine, "leave behind drug-resistant microbes in milk and meat; with every burger and shake, supermicrobes pour into your gut. There, they can transfer drug resistance to bacteria in the body, making you vulnerable to previously treatable infections."

Museum Bhakti

The Brit bhakti for Hindu objects d'art gushes again in this marvelous current showing at the British Museum entitled, "Deities and Devotion, The Arts of Hinduism." It is one of the most profuse exhibitions assembled, including not just the usual large sculpted images, but hundreds of accoutrement items that make the repertoire of ritual: water vessels, incense burners, lamps, conch shells, spoons, trays, palanquins and even chariots. Rare paintings and ancient texts on palm leaves round out this rich feast of Hindu art.

Satchdev Wins Billboard Award

G.S. Satchdev's astral, atmospheric creations on the North Indian bansuri flute is what a raga is about: luscious sound/emotion/devotion. And Western ears love it. Satchdev won the Billboard Music Award in the World Music category for his performance of raga madhu kauns on the Global Meditation CD collection. The virtuoso flautist tours often from his home in beautiful San Rafael, California. Satchdev has lived in the US since 1970, and is highly regarded in music circles.

Kyoto Karma CD-ROM Game

Slip in the CD-ROM disk *Cosmology of Kyoto* and enter an incredibly realistic computer world of the medieval capital of Japan, a city functioning in the cosmic laws of karma and reincarnation. Starting at the city gate (pictured), you enter a realm that is filled with commoners, scholars, priests, monks, royalty and shadowy beings of the netherworlds and light beings of the spiritual worlds. Your interaction dictates your karma and future incarnations. The game is based on exhaustive replication of medieval texts describing the unseen worlds, and includes a history database.