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Catholic News of Trinidad & Tobago reports an urging to embrace Indian culture, noting how elements of Indian music, art, dance, dress, literature, cuisine and symbols have been incorporated into Catholic prayers and rituals. "We have made some progress," the paper writes, "though perhaps not enough." Hindus are still circumspect. Pandita Indrani Rampersad, who launched the Hindu Jaagan (Awake) Movement, describes Christian churches as an "external cancer weakening the Hindu body. The myriad Christian churches are targeting Hindus for conversion, destroying homes, relationships and weakening our community."

Pensions for pujaris were recommended at the first state-level conference of village priests organized by the Hindu Dharmartha Samithi. Over 7,000 pujaris attended the Tiruchirapalli event. Since pujaris have "dedicated their lives to the temples and are not equipped to take up any other vocation, pension benefits should be extended to them," reported the Organizer. Shri Sankaracharya Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamigal of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham stressed the "vital role of pujaris as messengers of peace."

Acceding to the prayers of the Hindu community of New South Wales, Australia, efforts to build the Shri Shiva Mandir in Minto are again on track. The Hindu Heritage Research Foundation (HHRF) has changed its name to Shri Shiva Mandir, Ltd., changed its constitution, had its tax-deductibility of donations restored, brought back its original priest, paid its debts and accepted the resignation of Swami Chidanand Saraswati as Patron of the former HHRF here. Swami remains associated with Shri Shiva Mandir as a spiritual advisor.

Sanskrit and Tamil do have a common linguistic history, according to Dr. S. Kalyanaraman, who contests the popular theory to the contrary. "I have demonstrated that about 4,000 of the so-called 5,000 Dravidian etyma in the

Burrow and Emeneau's dictionary have no reason to exist independently of their so-called Aryan counterpart etyma." Contact: 20/7 Warren Road, Mylapore, Madras, 600 004, INDIA.

The Indian Culture & Heritage Trust is undertaking the restoration and renovation of the Nava Tirupati, nine temples along the Tamaraparani river in Tamilnadu which form part of the 108 Divya Shetrams, or sacred shrines of Vaishnavites. Renowned V. Ganapathi Stapathi will oversee the restoration of these historically rich 13th-century temples. The \$1.5-million dollar project is hoped to be completed by 1997. Contact the trust at: Jayalakshmi Estates, 8, Haddows Road, Madras 600 006, India.

A ban which prevents women between the ages of ten and fifty from entering Kerala's famous Sabarimala shrine is now under scrutiny. Traditionalists fear menstruating women would defile the increasingly popular Ayappan shrine. The ban was upheld by Kerala's high court in 1990, but the issue is now being raised by a 42-year old district collector, K.B. Valsala Kumari, who was ordered to coordinate pilgrim services at the shrine. A special court directive allowed her to perform her government duties at the shrine, but not to enter the sanctum sanctorum. Women's groups say the practice is discriminatory.

Christian missionaries are now targeting Bastar, India's largest district of Vanvasis, luring tribals with promises of schools, hospitals, welfare and material benefits they can't get from the government of Madhya Pradesh. The recent conversion of 20,000 Vanvasis sparked complaints to the State along with warnings of action unless something is done. But Hindus are responding. Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram is organizing the reconversion of 7,000 Vanvasis back to Hinduism.

Hindus in Denver, Colorado, USA, have been offered some interesting conditions for help in forming a Temple under the auspices of the Tirupati Temple in Tamil Nadu. An Indian devotee connected with Tirupati has offered to buy the land, and the Tirupati temple board has offered materials and silpis' services worth up to \$50,000. The conditions are that the Colorado temple be dedicated to Balaji, that it have a dress code and that it serve only vegetarian meals. While some Hindus balk at the restrictions, others smile. "Now people will wear their finest dress and eat according to their tradition," said local Hindu Vel Alahan.

Population projections for the USA show that by the year 2050, America will double its current population of 260-million. As for the impact, Cornell University ecologist David Pimentel predicts "The U.S. diet will shift from a mixed plant-animal diet to a more vegetarian fare and certainly one with less choice than we now enjoy."

The Channel Swimming Association says Rihen Mehta, a 12-year-old vegetarian from Bombay, set the world record for those 13-years and under by swimming the English Channel in 11 hours and 33 minutes, besting the old mark by 2.5 hours.

Indian-American youth gangs are a disturbing new trend. Experts say the gangster lifestyle is glamorized in the media, and that violent images, coupled with intense peer pressure, influences young people regardless of race, religion or affluence. "The problem is very deep and widespread. There are Indian gangs in all major towns throughout the US," reports India West.

Poorer than India's poorest. That is how an Indian researcher described what he found while studying inner-city poverty in Britain at the Easterhouse housing estate in Glasgow, Scotland. "They really are worse off than the poorest in our village," wrote Stan Thekaekara, who runs a social development program in South India. He saw that the poorest in Britain had not worked for twenty years or more and were depressed with feelings of uselessness. In India, he says, everyone has some work at least part of the year, so they never reach that despondent state of mind.

Inspector general of police, Kiran Bedi, known for reforming the jails of New Delhi, recently attended the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., and presented a book about the reforms at Tihar jail to President and Mrs. Clinton. Bedi is known for establishing prison meditation and yoga classes, as well as money-making ventures for inmates.

India will overtake Africa as the world's worst affected AIDS region within five years, according to Monash University biology professor Roger Short. He told an Australian population conference India will become "the epicenter of AIDS" with more cases of the disease than the rest of the world combined.

Confucianism is coming back in East Asia as an alternative to Western liberalism, reports the publication Pulse. "The fifth-century philosophy, which elevates the community over the individual, not surprisingly is gaining government backing in China and Singapore," they noted.

Kashmir Today, a magazine published by Kashmir Solidarity USA, is dedicated "to bring awareness about global terrorism and its nexus with drug trafficking" and offers political analysis, news, commentary and even columns on kids, cuisine and meditation. Price for 1 Year: US\$20. Outside USA: US\$40. Contact: 1123 Broadway, Suite 305, New York, New York, 10010, USA.

A smoking ban is being considered in Delhi for government offices, schools, cinemas, courts and public transportation. In India, 337-million people use tobacco, and tobacco-related illnesses annually cost one-million lives and \$2-billion in medical treatment.

What India Mail calls "anti-Hindu ideas" being preached by Muslim fundamentalists is threatening violence on college campuses in London. Muslim and Sikh gangs battled violently recently, leaving one 18-year-old victim of the fighting to predict that "...a full scale inter-ethnic riot is now highly likely."

Hindus of Southeast Usa will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Sri Ganesha Temple of the Hindu Cultural Center of Tennessee between April 14 and 16, 1995. Scheduled activities include lectures by Dr. Karan Singh, a classical concert and rituals culminating in a 1008 kalasa abhishekam for Sri Ganesha on the morning of April 16. Phone: 615-356-7207 for details.