The Milk Miracle
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The Milk Miracle

Tales and Reflections

It was a miracle for the masses, creating faith and brotherhood
Not only among Hindus and those naturally close to us,
But also among members of other faiths
And even those of no faith at all.

Last month we reported on the "Milk Miracle" in which Lord Ganesha accepted milk offerings from millions of Hindus at thousands of temples worldwide--Europe, America, Malaysia, Fiji, etc. The divine encounter has now ceased, and we are left to reflect upon and cognize this interaction of God and man. In a three-page special section, we offer first some striking reports from Kenya and insightful personal reflections. On the following two pages we explore the occurrence of miracles in the world religions in general and Hinduism in particular, with examples of famous ones.

By Prabha Prabhakar Bhardwaj, Kenya

It all started with a phone call from India to a relative in Nairobi that Lord Ganapati's marble statue was drinking milk. Pandit Narinder Kumar Shastri, head priest of Shree Sanatan Dharma Temple [at right, with Ganesha], recounts the experience with great emotion. According to him, an unlimited amount of milk was consumed by the two Deities in the temple. People from different religions and nationalities came and made the offering. Many nonbelievers came to test. When the offering was accepted, it changed people's thinking. The miracle had a special effect on the younger generation. Panditji believes a

new generation of staunch Hindus has been born as a result. It is extraordinary that the miracle occurred even on African soil, and it is equally remarkable that many African non-Hindus visited the temple and have become devotees. I stood inside the temple door for three hours and saw crowds coming and going. The atmosphere was charged and volatile, but peaceful. The people were mesmerized and were not prepared to leave the hall even after having made the offering. All age groups and sects within Hinduism as well as the other religions were represented.

In the private temple of Jyotin Arvind Bhai Patel [at left with his brother's wife, Minal Atul Patel] in Nairobi, the miracle began in their temple at 4:30pm on Thursday and continued till 9:30am on Sunday. He and Minal tried with a spoonful of milk, which disappeared. The spoon was kept under the trunk of Shri Ganesha and the milk was sucked up. Minal recalls hearing the sucking sound. In four days, 15,000 people belonging to all castes and nationalities--Hindus, Sikhs, Africans and Europeans--made offerings. As the result of the personal experience of one non-Hindu, the Patels have been offered free land to build a Siva temple in a shopping complex.

Naina Shah had an equally amazing experience in her own home, She has a very small, three-inch-tall wooden Deity of Ganesh in her home shrine [shown at right]. She heard about the milk miracle on Thursday evening, but paid little attention to it. Then a friend rang her up and recounted the miracle, whose news had spread all over by then. Naina decided to offer milk to her Deity, she kept a spoon of milk under the trunk and was amazed to find the milk disappear. She called the other members of her family and her two young children. She again tried, and God drank another spoon. She was in a daze and could not comprehend what she saw.

Pandit Manilal, priest of the Ram Mandir in Nairobi [above right

with temple committee member Vijay Bhagani], repeats the now-familiar experience. Two ladies came to the temple around 3 pm. They had received phone calls from India about the miracle and wanted to see if it was happening at Nairobi. First the offering was made to Ganapati, followed by Siva, Nandi and Naga Devata. It was accepted by all. Large quantities of milk were consumed by the Gods. People from all religions thronged the temple and were allowed to make offerings. Pandit Manilal believes that an avatar has been born, and only with time people shall recognize the fact. Bhagani, a businessman, said "It is a miracle. I firmly believe so because two years ago Morari Bapu had predicted that this year, there shall be a miracle and an avatar shall come to Earth. I absolutely believe this is the promised miracle."

Nileash Bhavsar, a commerce graduate and dealer of gem stones, rushed to the Ram temple on hearing of the news. He had to wait in the queue for over an hour before his turn to offer the milk came. Initially it was difficult for him to comprehend what was happening. The crowds thronged the temple, but with different motivations. Some wanted to only test, others offered milk with all the devotional sentiments. He has no doubt in his mind it was a pure miracle. Bhavsar pointed out a parallel between the limitations of human vision and intellect. He said, "When we cannot see beyond a distant point, it does not mean that nothing exists beyond that point. The limiting factor is our vision. Similarly the miracle cannot have any rationale or scientific basis because it is beyond the limitations of our human mind. Why do people look for proof? God is God, Who needs no proof."

We Are So Close To God

By Jay Dubashi, New Delhi

It was a small boy who first alerted me as to what was

happening. "Come, come," he said, "Ganeshji is drinking milk." We went to the nearby temple together, he and I, and the crowd was thick. A small girl, not more than three or four, was raising a spoon to the lips of Ganeshji, and as we watched in awe the milk disappeared. "What did I tell you?" said the small boy. There was nothing to argue. A miracle is a miracle. Even if it was not a miracle, it is still a miracle in the eyes of those who see it. There are too many things in this world which cannot be explained by the simple theories of physics or chemistry, for the theories themselves are changing with the times.

But it is not milk that interests me. The miracle was seen not just in India, but almost all over the world, wherever Hindus congregate. And it did not take days, not even hours, probably a few minutes to spread. It shows how close the Hindu community is when it comes to things that affect its identity, even closer than the Internet. There were throngs of Hindus in temples in London and Leicester, New Jersey and Chicago, Denmark, Canada, Bangkok and Singapore. And the whole thing was breath-takingly spontaneous.

It also revealed how close the Hindus are, not only to each other but also, to their Gods. This is something nobody but a Hindu understands. To us, the Gods are not something external to us, but very much a part of our being. The relationship is affectionate and intimate, as between members of a family. There is nothing in the world as close-knit as a Hindu family, and the Gods are as much a part of this family as anyone else.

When I grew up as a small boy in Goa, we had, of course, temples and maths, but what we liked best was the time when Ganeshji came home for the Ganesha Visarjana festival. In our village the idols were made by a local man, who also doubled as a pujari in the local temple. We used to have made a

serious-looking idol as befits a family of teachers and officials, but somehow we never thought of Ganeshji as a serious person. How can anybody be serious if He chooses a small mouse to carry His plump weight?

But we never asked such questions. It was enough that He was in our house for a few days, and we treated Him like a king. He wore the finest silks and ate the finest food. He was bathed in enough milk and honey to wash a grown elephant and his family.

We kept Him in the house only for a day or so, and then it was time to take Him to the river for immersion. That was the hardest time for all of us, particularly for my uncle, whose job it was to prepare Him for immersion. We children went to the river, shouting all the way, but overtaken by grief at the impending departure. After a brief puja on the bank of the river, the idol was slowly let into the swirling waters as we all wept, including my uncle, a grown man who actually ran the district.

Our Gods do not ask for votes or for money. All they want is your love and affection, for that is the only bond between a Hindu and his God, like the bond between a father and son, or between brothers.

If you are not a Hindu, you will never understand this. In no other religion is there such a deep and lasting bond between Gods and men as there is among Hindus. For we are, after all, descended from the Gods, and from the mountains and rivers where They stand guard and watch our holy land. And, if once in a while, they come down and sip a little milk from our spoons, why should it be a miracle? It's the most natural thing in the world.

Jay Dubashi is a regular columnist for New Delhi's Organiser, in which this article first appeared.

Sidebar: My Luckiest Day

By Colonel P. C. Bhardwaj

It has taken many, many births for millions of us to witness and participate in such a miracle. I was one of the many lucky ones whom God gave the opportunity to feed Him. This miracle was needed to instill faith in people that the temple images do have powers, and to worship them is one path to reach Him.

lt is said that when Lord Krishna was born, milk from the cows of Brij Bhoomi had started flowing out on its own. Many of us laughed at the story. Now when murtis of Lord Ganesha and Lord Siva made of stones, marble and metal and of all sizes took milk all over the world, one cannot doubt the story of Krishna. I believe the Lord once again has come to Earth in a human body to help all human beings in eradicating evil from this earth.

I am an engineer of long standing. The theory that capillary action caused the suction of hundreds of pints of milk by Deities of stone and metal as small as twelve by six inches is not possible. Most of the Deities are carved out of solid stone or cast of metal. Lord Ganesha's trunk takes a bend and makes a twist at the tip. Its tip only has a small hole, the rest is solid mass. This tip is not capable of holding even one spoonful of milk. In some of the murtis, the trunk falls straight and the tip does not have a hole. It sucked hundred of pints of milk in a few hours. No milk was seen flowing out of the body, and no mist was formed around the murtis. What shall we call it, other than Godly miracle?

Col. Bhardwaj (at left, with his wife, Hinduism Today correspondent Prabha) is a retired army officer with a degree in electrical and mechanical engineering as well as postgraduate diplomas in automotive engineering, armament

and industrial management.

As one not knowing that a golden treasure lies buried beneath his feet may walk over it again and again yet never find it--so all beings live every moment in the city of Brahman yet never find Him, because of the veil of illusion by which He is concealed.--Sama Veda, Chandogya Upanishad 8.3.2