NEWS IN BRIEF
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THE SWASTIKA, HINDUISM'Shoary solar symbol of good-fortune, is facing a ban in Brazil, but not without opposition. "While we appreciate the sentiment against racism, discrimination and fanaticism that the neo-Nazis represent, outlawing the ancient swastika is obviously not the way to do it," writes Dada Prasidananda of the Ananda Marga Office for South America, which is now developing a book in Portuguese on the history and significance of the swastika.

"NONRESIDENT INDIANSnumber about 10 million, with an astonishing combined income of US$340 billion, equivalent to the whole of the income of India's 900 million people," said Megatrendsauthor John Naisbett. That works out to $34,000 for every man, woman and child. He was speaking at The State of the World Forum in San Francisco, California, convened by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. "As economic reforms settle into place, these emigres are working with entrepreneurs in India, and will become a powerful force in India's ever-so-promising economic development," Naisbett added.

HIS HOLINESS SHRI JAYENDRASaraswati, 69th Pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, celebrated his 60th birthday with puja, yagna, abhishekamand annadhaanam(the non-stop feeding of

devotees). Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Smt. Jayalalitha attended, as well as the former president of India, Sri R. Venkataraman. He noted, "But for Smt. Jayalalitha's personal interest, there would not be such a resurgence of the spirit of Deity worship in this part of the country, where the concerted derision and anti-God fulminations of the so-called rationalists have played havoc with three generations of Hindus in the land of the Nayamnars."

IDOLS FROM BANGLADESH'S54,000 Hindu temples are being systematically stolen and sold abroad by Islamic vandals, alleges the Organizer, which also reports Bangladeshi political leaders are sharing in the profits. The Organizeris calling on human rights organizations to investigate.

THE ENTIRE BUDDHIST CANON, all 52,000 pages, is now available on CD-ROM in the Pali language, with Chinese and Sanskrit versions in development. "Now one disk contains the important information of all the canons combined. A word reference that would have taken decades to locate can be completed in as little as 30-seconds," says the CD-ROM's creator, professor Lewis Lancaster. Contact: American Academy of Religion, Scholars Press, P.O. Box 15399, Atlanta, Georgia, 30333, USA.

THE TERRORIST TOLLon temples during the unrest in Jammu-Kashmir is becoming clear: 31 temples damaged through July, 1995; as many as 97 temples burned or damaged since 1992. The figures were given in a report to India's parliament.

DO YOU AVOID MEATBUT WALKon cowskin? Vegetarians who abhor wearing leather now have a source for quality alternatives. Aesop, Inc., The Leather Alternative, offers everything from shoes and boots to belts and briefcases. Contact: P.O. Box 315, North Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02140-0003, USA.

THOUSANDS OF COWSare reportedly being smuggled from Nepal for slaughter in Bangladesh and India. Under Nepalese law, "punishment for killing a cow is as much as killing a person. Therefore, allowing the cows for smuggling is as serious in nature as allowing the citizens to be butchered," writes correspondent Mina Thapa.

THE SECOND COLLAPSEof Red Machhindranath's chariot is being seen by many as a bad omen for Nepal. The Bjotojatra festival honoring the rain-god of agricultural prosperity, also known as Karunamaya and Avilokiteswara, (worshiped equally by Hindus and Buddhists) began last month as the 50-foot-tall chariot proceeded from His temple at Bungamati. One person was killed and several others injured in the first collapse. Days later, the chariot broke down again. Some blame poor quality construction materials; others see more disturbing signs. A similar mishap in 1990 preceded nationwide political turmoil.

THE REVEREND MOTHERGayatri Devi, head of Ananda Ashram in Southern California, attained Mahasamadhi at the age of 88 on September 8th, 1995. For fifty-five years she had continued the American work of Swami Paramananda, the youngest direct disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She was the first Indian-born woman to teach Vedanta in America.

Contemplative and shy by nature, she functioned as a mother of a large family, welcoming all without formal membership. Staying mostly at home secluded from the eye of the world, she nevertheless found herself often in the public light, sharing Vedanta on several continents.

SHRI BALASAHEB DESHPANDE, founder and President of the Akhil Bharatiya Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, passed from this world on April 21, 1995, at the age of 82. Balasaheb is remembered as an exemplar "of seva, bhakti and mukti." His organization is credited for having "returned self-respect to our vanvasis [India's tribal people]" and for protecting them from exploitation and coercion.

GOD IS NOW GENDERLESSin Oxford University Press' new "inclusive language version" of the Christian Bible.Rewritten to avoid what editors call a "blatantly andro-centric and patriarchal character," God is no longer referred to as "He" or "Father," but as "Father-Mother." "Kingdom" is now "dominion," "Son of Man" is now "the Human One," and gone also are references to God's right hand (lest left-handed people be offended).

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OFHindu Studieshas been launched as a forum to provide "for the presentation of research studies on Hindu societies and cultures..." The journal, to be published four times yearly, welcomes contributions. Contact: Editorial Secretary, Center for the Study of Hindu Thought, International Institute of India Studies, 1270 St. Jean, St. Hayacinthe, Quebec, J2S 8M2, CANADA.

VEDIC SLOKAS CAN HEALthe body. Thus the focus on perfect pronunciation for the young boys learning Yajur Vedaat Swami Sreemanarayana's Veda Vishwa Vidhyalayam in Vijaywada, India. "The Vedasmention a number of diseases and effective treatment for complaints like jaundice and urinary obstructions..." says Swami. He states that surgery is not needed for a kidney stone--a certain sloka will remove it--but the mantra is medicinal only if chanted correctly. "Unless the Vedasare recited with the proper intonation and unless the right sounds are produced, their power is lost," advises Swami.

AIDS IN INDIA IS EXPLODINGexponentially--spread by heterosexual contact and infected blood supplies. In 1992, the Indian Health Organization found 86% of commercial blood donors were HIV-positive. South and Southwest Asia will surpass Africa in the number of new infections this year, says the World Health Organization, which forecasts one million AIDS cases in India by the year 2000 and five million HIV-positive people.

INDIA'S INTERNET GATEWAYis now open. The government-owned Overseas Communications Corporation and MCI Communications are now offering 250 hours of access for $160 per month (commercial users will pay much more) in New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Nationwide service is expected soon. Until now, few outside of government or university groups could access cyberspace.

8,000 HINDUS WITNESSEDLord Krishna expound the Bhagavad Gita at Kurukshetra this past Janmashtami. The sacred battle scene was a recreation staged inside a Houston, Texas,

convention center. Hundreds of costumed children represented Krishna, Arjuna and the Kauravas and Pandavas.

GUJARAT'S AYURVEDIChospital in Bharuch is expanding, thanks to a government grant of four-acres of land. The A.T. Shah Ayurvedic Sarvajanik Hospital now has plans for a new 150-bed facility and Ayurvedic Medical College. The current 54-beds and panchakarma facility treats up to 19,000 people per year with remarkable success. Kiran Vyas of Paris had been diagnosed by doctors in France, England and the USA as having an incurable skin disease. After he was cured at Bharuch, France sent a team of 19 doctors to investigate and learn.