

[News in Brief](#)

Category : [January 1996](#)

Published by Anonymous on Jan. 02, 1996

News in Brief

Ravi Peruman, Concord, California, USA

RECYCLING HAS BECOME good business. Raw materials have rocketed in value. Used cardboard fetches five times the price it did four-years ago; aluminum cans have doubled in value; scrap glass is up 80%, while plastics have risen in value as much as 260%. Aluminum can collections by Swaminarayan youth helped fund their magnificent Mandir in London. Similarly, youth of the Rajaraja Chola Gurukulam in California are fund-raising for Hawaii's Iraivan Temple by recycling glass, cans and other metals.

SKIPPING STONES, a multicultural children's magazine, invites nominations from Hindus for ten 1996 "Youth Honor Awards," recognizing "creative writing, artistic abilities, creativity and community service." Student groups and youth age 16 and under are eligible. This year's theme is "Envisioning the World in the Year 2025." Contact: Arun Toke, P.O. Box 3939, Eugene, Oregon, 97403-0939 USA.

A VEGETARIAN'S BIGGEST threat may be transgenetic splicing, the genetic-engineering of produce to develop a longer shelf-life (i.e. splicing the genes of a fish into a tomato, or the genes of a chicken into potatoes). The new General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) concession allows such produce to be marketed unlabeled. Consumers may never know what they

are really eating. Some point to a hidden agenda by the USA to create worldwide markets for its genetically-engineered produce. A molecular biologist at Maharishi International University in Iowa recently refused and returned a US\$614,000 research grant because of the "sinister and unethical" nature of genetic engineering.

FEEDING THE POOR of New Delhi is how Varinder Bhalla honors his mother. In 1990 the New York-based engineer fasted in honor of the first anniversary of his mother's death and decided to feed 1,000 people when he was next in India. That same day he heard of a US organization that collects surplus food from luxury hotels and distributes it to the poor. Bhalla successfully transplanted the idea to Delhi, establishing the Agya Wanti Bhalla Food Bank, which now feeds over 2,000 people each day. His target is to increase the number to 15,000.

HARE KRISHNAS ARE considered a threat in the mostly Muslim central-Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. So concluded a meeting in Tashkent between Muslim and Russian Orthodox religious leaders. Islam and Christianity each "draw strength from the rebirth of the other," said Tarek Mitri of the World Council of Churches, but it is feared Hare Krishnas and other religious groups new to the region will undermine that strength. It was considered highly blasphemous when the Krishnas danced and chanted in the courtyard of an 11th-century mosque. They were removed by police.

GURUDEV SIDDHA PEETH, the academically-acclaimed educational arm of Swami Muktananda's SYDA Foundation, now guided by Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, plans to establish the Gurudev Siddha Peeth Indological Research Centre near Vijreshwari, 45-miles from Bombay. The Centre's campus will include a library and teaching facilities. Its goals are, "To contribute to the preservation of time-old Indian

traditions--both spiritual and academic--which are the patrimony of humankind," and, "the dissemination of this wealth of knowledge to the public at large--through courses, accessible translations, dissertations, etc."

THE SRI DURKAI AMMAN KOYILOf Montreal, Quebec, celebrated its Maha Kumbhabhishekam during five days of rites in September, with daily mandalabishekam continuing another 45 days. Sixteen priests participated in the temple's grand Agamic consecration and dedication.

BHUMI PUJAFOR THE HINDUTemple of Kern County was auspiciously celebrated during Navaratri by over 300 Hindus in Bakersfield, California. The rites sanctified the ground and appeased the Gods and planets. "The construction phase of the Temple will commence any time," said Board of Directors President Kamalnath Iyer.

FIJI'S ATTORNEY-GENERALsays his nation should review its laws banning ethnic Fijians from practicing indigenous religious rites such as ancestor worship and other applied beliefs now labeled as witchcraft. "The provisions of constitutional freedom to worship need to be considered to allow for this," he said. He pointed out that Fijian Hindus worship their ancestors, so why should not the now-Christian ethnic Fijians continue their own similar ancient practices?

VEDANTA IN AMERICANhistory begins with Swami Vivekananda, and is linked through him to Ridgely Manor in Stone Ridge, New York, where he stayed for ten weeks in 1899. The two-year-old Sri Sarada Society, named after the saintly wife of Sri Ramakrishna, is seeking to purchase the Manor. It plans to establish a monastery at the site reflecting the women's monastic tradition of the Sri Sarada Math at Dakshineswar, India, and providing an educational and retreat center for Vedantists. Contributions are invited. Contact: P.O.

Box 254, Selkirk, New York, 12158, USA.

MOTHER THERESA INSTIGATED the closing of more than 20,000 Christian schools across India in November, 1995. She launched the campaign in Delhi. The "strike" is intended to put pressure on the government to meet demands that her low-caste (Dalit) followers--Christian converts from Hinduism--be given government jobs. "Up to 80 percent of India's 25-million Christians are Dalit," reports ENI Bulletin. Ironically, these converts had hoped to shed their caste identity, but they were never accepted as equals by high-caste converts. They continue to face the same discrimination as Hindu Dalits, perhaps more so now as government jobs reserved for Dalits are not open to low-caste Christians. Authorities rejected the demands, citing that since Christians do not recognize caste, they cannot make caste-based demands. "The very basis of her religion professes a casteless society," maintained BJP spokeswoman Sushma Swaraj.

NEPAL'S ANTI-PROSELYTISM laws are being strictly enforced. Recently, eleven evangelical Christians were sentenced to prison for two years. One Nepali and ten refugees from Bhutan were arrested in September, 1994, for trying to convert Hindus in Eastern Nepal. The law seeks to protect everyone's practice of religion by prohibiting proselytism.

THE BHAGAVAD GITA in its entirety in English is now available on-line, thanks to Dr. Ramananda Prasad of the American Gita Society. His objectives include placing the Gitain hotel and motel rooms all over the world, as well as to inspire satsang groups to form worldwide. A Gitacorrespondence course is also offered free on-line. Contact: gitaprasad@aol.com; or [ftp.eskimocom:/u/j/jai/Geeta](ftp://eskimocom:/u/j/jai/Geeta)

IMMIGRANT INDIANS ARE 0.3% of the US population. But according to a trade organization, Indian families, most of

them Patels, control 12,500 hotel/motel rooms, with a total market value of \$26 billion. One analyst expects the Patels to control a full 50% of US hotel and motel assets by the year 2000. "It's hard work, but worth it," said one Patel.

AMERICA'S FOUNDING FATHERS were not Christian, nor did they intend their new republic to favor Christianity. Mark Meyer writes of founding father Thomas Jefferson in Liberty magazine, "He was not trying to establish a Christian nation. His goal was to lay an enduring foundation for the rights of the individual based on reason, not Biblical revelation." In Free Inquiry, Steven Morris cites Article XI of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, signed with Tripoli during George Washington's administration, "the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion."

HRIDAY GANGA, "the sacred river of love," is a hardbound collection of 51 Gujarati love poems by Premormi (born Ramesh Patel). Sporting glossy photos and drawings, a real peacock feather on the cover and a rudraksha-bead bookmark, Hriday Gangais an outpouring of love in eight languages: Hindi, French, German, Esperanto, English, Marathi, Spanish, and Russian. The Burma-born author found success as an artist and entrepreneur in the UK while pioneering Indian dance and theatre in London.

Contact: Shree International Publications, 126 Royal College Road, London, N.W.I.OTA., England

They labor hard and gather flowers and carry water pure. They adore the Lord in unflinching piety and at His shining Feet lay flowers and stand and pray, and unto the rain-laden clouds forever prosperous shall they be.-- Tirumantiram 1839