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Diaspora

UNITED STATES

Spirit Work

Businesses in America are becoming more and more spiritual. In a recent article in Business Week magazine, writer Michelle Conlin discussed the "growing presence of spirituality in corporate America." Huge companies like Xerox, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell and Wal-Mart have started programs to enliven their employees' spiritual life, whatever their religion. Programs include anything from American Indian "vision quests" to Army-style chaplains that bless on call. In one program, over 300 employees from Xerox participated in "vision quests" as part of the company's ^{us}\$400-million product development plan. In one quest a dozen engineers saw a lone, fading Xerox paper carton bobbing in a swamp of motor oil. They vowed to build a machine that would never end up polluting. The eventual result: the design and production of Xerox's hottest seller, the 265dc, a 97 percent recyclable machine. Another example is Indian, Kris Karla, chief executive of BioGenex. He worked to exhaustion, then took off three months to study Hindu scriptures eight hours a day. Upon his return he had a whole new outlook on his life and his business began to flourish.

ECONOMICS

National Worth

One way to compare nations is not by their Gross National Product, but their yearly budget. That's what the Multinational Monitor did in a recent issue, and they tossed in the world's large corporations, too. Guess who sits at the summit? The US with ^{us}\$1,721 billion, followed by Germany, Japan, China, Italy, UK and France. But then start the companies--Exxon-Mobil at \$182 billion, General Motors and Ford. In all, 66 out of the top 100 are companies, 34 are nations. India, with a national yearly budget of \$52 billion and a sixth of the world's population ranks 56th, between Israel and Argentina, after car makers Fiat and Nissan, and the United States Postal Service.

ENGLAND

Lalique Crystal Ganesha

Famous French glassmakers, Lalique, have created their first statue of a Hindu God, a crystal Lord Ganesha. This sleek rendition costs ^{us}\$5,250, is 7" diameter at the base, 11.5" tall and weighs 29 pounds. "Lord Ganesha has been a great

source of inspiration to explore for Lalique, which is very proud to have brought its creative talent to craft its own version. May the union between crystal--source of positive energy--and the symbol of Lord Ganesha bring good fortune to all who gain this piece of art," said GÃ©rard Tavernas, President of Lalique.

www.pegasus-telecom.demon.co.uk

ARTS

Dancing!

On July 23, 1999, 12-year-old Sharanya Mukhopadhyay became the youngest-ever dancer to perform at the prestigious Los Angeles Dance Kaleidoscope in California, a world-class,

multi-cultural show. She amazed audience and critics alike with her solo performance. "Classical Indian dance shimmered, notably in the astonishingly composed 12-year-old Sharanya Mukhopadhyay, whose filigreed fingers embodied the East Indian Odissi dance," reported the Los Angeles Times, which went on to bash other performances. After Sharanya's audition, Medha Yodh, a Kaleidoscope judge said, "It was amazing. All of us on the panel just saw her in dead silence and looked at each other. We all felt the transcendence. We actually felt like she was communicating." Sharanya told the Orange County Register, "I am expressing the stories, tales of

ancient Gods of India like Lord Vishnu, Lord Siva, Durga. I just tell them how much I love them, and how much God blesses me in my dance."

CANADA

Lanka Tradition in Canada

Dancing to the beat of a tavil drum, swaying to the tune of nagaswaram, 4,000 Saivite Hindus and others celebrated a 12-day festival to Lord Muruga starting August 13, 1999. It took place at Quebec's Tirumurugan Temple. "Our goal is to become one with the Supreme Being," said Luksmi Perapalamoorthy, a 17-year-old

student from Pierrefonds who participated in the event. Festivities included a colorful chariot procession with Lord Muruga. At one high point a helicopter flew overhead showering rose petals on the chariot-borne Lord Muruga. Many devotees performed kavadi, a form of public penance, at the festival. Others rolled on the ground. Large numbers of coconuts were shattered, sending shards flying and spraying milk into the crowd. On the 22nd, the Deity was bathed in a local pond. "We don't want to let this tradition die," said Ravi Suntharamoorthy, vice-president of the Saiva Mission of Quebec, which runs the temple.

CANADA

The History of Temples

Up until 1973, the term religion in Canada only applied to Protestant churches. That was later extended to Roman Catholics and then Judaism, but definitely did not apply to Hindus. This was understandable because the last religious amendment was made in the 1890s, when religions other than Christianity and Judaism were virtually unknown. The situation changed drastically around the 1950s when a flood of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains started settling and establishing temples and mosques all over Canada. Lacking the protection of

the Religious Institution Act, they were subject to a great deal of legal red tape and expenses that were avoided by Christian and Jewish congregations, according to Neeta Dave. That was until Veerendra Adhiya and his wife Kusum came along. They were in the midst of setting up a new temple called Bharat Bhavan Hindu Mandir and running into all sorts of legal problems. Undaunted, they successfully campaigned in 1973 to make Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism and Jainism recognized religions with a secure legal existence, especially with regard to religious property. This changed minority religions in Canada

forever, though their own temple, a converted church, eventually closed down in less than a year.

INDIA

Cyclone Hits, Temples Stay

With over 155 mph winds, the worst hurricane in decades decimated the Orissa landscape. Only its ancient temples escaped destruction. The sturdy edifices were built in the sixth to 12th centuries out of khandolite stone, sandstone, laterite stone and even bricks. Though most were in a dilapidated condition and under conservation, the structures of the shrines remained undamaged. At

some places, even the flag atop the temple was not blown off.

According to official sources, there were as many as 800 temples located throughout the hurricane devastated areas. These temples are important sites for the millions of Hindus who worship there. Even the 10th-century Parasar temple at Paradip, epicenter of the monster cyclone, withstood the impact. Only a portion of the boundary wall was damaged by large fallen tree. The rest of the area was devastated. The hurricane wiped out entire villages, killed thousands, leaving dead human and animal bodies elsewhere. Drinking water was contaminated by the decaying flesh

and toxic leakage from damaged chemical plants. Disease spread rapidly, killing even more. This was an enormous disaster that the world press, amazingly, stopped reporting on after a short time. Even now residents in the area are in desperate need. If you want to help, send a check or draft to the Prime Minister's relief fund at:

THE PRIME MINISTERS RELIEF
FUND FOR ORISSA, PRIME
MINISTER'S OFFICE, SOUTH BLOCK,
NEW DEHLI, INDIA

INDIA

Fake Basmati?

A leading brand of Indian

basmati rice has reportedly failed a gene test for authenticity. The test, conducted by the British Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, concluded that the Indian brand, Pusa No. 1, does not have the genetic characteristics of genuine basmati. The ^{us}\$418.6 million Indian basmati industry could stand to lose not only the \$23 million annually earned from Pusa exports, but also income from exports of other basmati brands.

Briefly...

Mount everest has been found to be 29,035 feet high, 7

feet higher than the height officially recognized for 45 years. It was also discovered that Everest is moving 2.4 inches every year. That's almost 4 miles every 100,000 years. A National Geographic team used hand-held global positioning indicators to make the satellite measurements.

France received an ultimatum from the European Commission demanding that it come up with plans for tighter controls

for farm animals. The commission found out that many French animals had been fed animal waste and possibly human waste--one more reason to go veggie. This comes at an embarrassing time for the French government, which has been threatened with legal action by the commission over its refusal to allow the sale of British beef because of the risk of mad cow disease.

Belated news: Fiji's new constitution, promulgated in 1998, helped abolish the racial discrimination that has ravaged the country for decades. In a deeply symbolic move, the 800,000 people of Fiji finally agreed on a name for themselves in their multiracial society--after 28 years of infighting. From now on all Fijians, including descendants of Indian, Chinese and Europeans, will be officially known as "Fiji Islanders."

US Customs has banned the sale of Indian cigarettes in America. The beedis (hand-rolled, unfiltered cigarettes) may have been made with forced child labor, thus making them illegal to import into the US. Customs said this is based on an exposé aired on the TV show "60 Minutes II."

THE VEDAS God's Word, Sages Voices

A man should think on wealth

and strive to win it by
adoration on the path of Order,
counsel himself with his own
mental insight, and grasp still
nobler vigour with his spirit.

RIG VEDA 10.31.2

A hundred uninitiated are
equal to one initiated
(Brahmachari). A hundred
initiated are equal to one
householder (Grihastha). A
hundred householders are
equal to one forest-resident. A
hundred forest-residents are

equal to one ascetic.

NARASIMHAPURVATAPANIYA UPANISHAD 5.10

In how many parts was He transformed, when they cut the Purusha in pieces? What did His mouth become? What His arms, what His thighs, what His feet? His mouth then became the Brahmana, from the arms the Rajanya was made, the Vaisya from the thighs, from the feet the Sudra came forth.

RIG VEDA 10.90.11-12

The Vedas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, sruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1,200 bce), Bible New Testament (100 ce), Koran (630 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). Four in number, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, the Vedas include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6,000 bce.

Who Is a Hindu?

"Acceptance of the Vedas with reverence; recognition of the fact that the means or ways to salvation are diverse; and the realization of the truth that the number of gods to be worshiped is large, that indeed is the distinguishing feature of the Hindu religion." B.G. Tilak's definition of what makes one a basic Hindu, as quoted by India's Supreme Court. On July 2, 1995 the Court referred to it as an "adequate and satisfactory formula."