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Diaspora

ENGLAND

Curry at McDonald's?

The hottest food for the British in the 90s is spicy Indian and Pakistani fare. So much so that fast food restaurants--McDonald's, Burger King, Wimpy and other hamburger outlets--have started offering their own versions of Indian curry meals, such as "McChicken Korma Naan" and "Lamb McSpicy," sold by McDonalds. All the fast food chains have reported marked success with their curries, even though mildly flavored compared with the standard Indian restaurant cuisine. London is already home to 9,000 Indian restaurants--four times the number of burger places.

EDUCATION

Ganesha Gets Expelled

Judge Charles Brient ruled in May that the Bedford Central School District in New York had violated the First Amendment religious rights of three Catholic families by having their children make paper images of Lord Ganesha in school. Brient also called Fox Lane High School's Earth Day celebrations "truly bizzare," and judged that a creed students listened to--"The Mother of us all is Earth. The Father is the Sun"--constituted religious worship of the Earth. The judge also ordered a stop to the making of "worry dolls," brightly painted dolls which are supposed to dispel everyday anxieties when left under a pillow. The worry dolls, he said, were "a rank

example of teaching superstition to children of a young and impressionable age." But the judge allowed another dozen activities protested in the law suit, saying the district may continue yoga lessons, cemetery visits and drug counselling. While the case has received wide attention, legal experts said that the activities struck down by the ruling were too esoteric for the ruling to have far-reaching implications.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Women Plan Their Future

Over 2,000 women of different religions gathered for the first national "Hindu Women's Conference" sponsored by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha of Trinidad, held on June 20 at the Lakhshmi Girls' Hindu college. "A large number of attendees were young women and teens," observed Hinduism Today correspondent, Anil Mahabhir, one of a small number of men who attended the conference. Expected publicity for the event evaporated when Guyanese President Janet Jagan could not attend as planned. Rajnie Ramlakhan, head of the Sabha's women's wing, presented a proposed "Millennium Charter." She urged the Sabha to "provide a forum for Hindu women to discuss and address their concerns in order to foster unity, strength, spirituality and understanding with the family structure and for themselves as an organization." Her goals included recognition "that women are different but equal and have a vital contribution to make towards society;" promotion of the "lifestyle, health practices, nutritional choices and needs of Hindu women;" and "to encourage Hindu women to participate in society without fear of reprisal and without the pressure to abandon Hindu dharma." Lunch, dinner and refreshments were all provided free by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha.

CAMBODIA

Stolen Temple Artifacts

Thai customs agents recently arrested three Thais and seized 29 wooden crates of Cambodian artifacts, a sign of Thailand's renewed battle against smuggling. The seized art objects included several tons of stone Buddhist and Hindu sculptures worth millions of dollars. Smugglers frequently bring artifacts from Cambodia to Thailand where they are sold to foreign tourists in Bangkok antique shops. Thai police also confiscated an intricately carved ancient temple wall made from sandstone. Thai officials confirmed that the wall was smuggled from a temple in northwestern Cambodia. As part of the crackdown, the Deputy Education Minister said that inspectors would conduct surprise checks, and shops with stolen artifacts would be immediately shut down.

NEW ZEALAND

Maori Magic

Indian dance blessed the opening of a Maori center, called a marae, part of the growing phenomenon of joint celebrations of native peoples and Hindus. A marae is a religious, cultural and community center for the Maori natives of New Zealand. More than 1,000 people witnessed the April ceremony at Manukau Institute of Technology. A large concentration of Maori live near the new ^{us}\$2.7 million center.

KOSOVO

Gypsy Exodus

Though they all have homes nearby, hundreds of Gypsies are camping out along a muddy stream,

chased into the open by returning ethnic Albanians who accuse them of collaborating with the Serbs. The Roma, as they prefer to be called, came to Europe from India a thousand years ago and are little-known casualties of the Balkan conflict. Roma language, beliefs and customs still reflect their Hindu origins. Facing retribution, untold thousands of Kosovo's Gypsy minority have fled Kosovo since the end of the NATO bombardment. Djakovica's Gypsies tried to stay but said that they now feel pressured to go. Many of the 400 camped along the stream say their homes had been destroyed in the past week. Home, for now, is a makeshift camp secured by Italian soldiers. Conditions are squalid. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has given them tents, though most of their shelters consist of lean-tos of blue plastic sheeting. The Gypsies' recent experience has fueled their hostility. They shout curses at passing busses carrying ethnic Albanians. Attacked by people once their neighbors, they neither want to return home, nor be repatriated elsewhere in Kosovo, or elsewhere in Yugoslavia. The UNHCR is negotiating to get them out of the country.

USA

Alaska Temple

Forty-two pilgrims sailed 1,500 miles with Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami to open the first Hindu temple in Alaska. The spiritual journey, which redefined the "death by buffet" cruise ship experience, included intensive daily meditation classes along with the mandatory glacier-watching. Enroute to Vancouver, the ship's embarkation point, Gurudeva stopped in Seattle to bless the arrival of the 1,700-pound statue of Lord Ganesha destined for Washington's new temple. At the end of the seven-day voyage, Gurudeva and the pilgrims were honored guests at the opening of Anchorage's new Shri Ganesh Mandir. Native Alaskan Indian chiefs, called Pipe Carriers, joined the rites, honoring the Anchorage Hindu community with song, chants and a sacred drum, symbolizing a growing kinship between the Indians, East and West.

PUBLICATIONS

Jains Get The Spirit

Inspired in part by Hinduism Today, the new magazine Jain Spirit has sent its first copies out to the international Jain community. This four-color,

high-quality 72-page glossy magazine showcases the Jain religion. Its noble purpose is "advancing Jainism into the future." Atul K. Shah, executive editor, said Jain Spirit works to "celebrate its great wisdom and beauty by portraying the very best of Jain art, history, culture and philosophy." The first impressive issue includes articles on nonviolence, youth problems and solutions, Jain education, humor, scriptures, music, art, websites, worship, pilgrimage, ecology, history and more. Sound familiar?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT JAIN SPIRIT,
237 PRESTON ROAD, WEMBLEY, MIDDLESEX HA9
8PE ENGLAND. TEL: 020-8385 0005. IN USA
WRITE: 10 SOUTH WOODSIDE AVE, WELLESLEY,
MA 02482 USA. TEL 1-888-JAINISM.

WEBSITE: www.JAINSPIRIT.ORG

THE VEDAS God's Word, Sages Voices

Some go into a womb for the embodiment of a corporeal being, others go into a

stationary thing, according to their deeds (karma), according to their knowledge.

Krishna Yajur Veda, Katha Upanishad
5.7

This universe is a tree eternally existing, its root aloft, its branches spread below. The pure root of the tree is Brahman, the immortal, in whom the three worlds have their being, whom none can transcend, who is verily the Self.

Krishna Yajur Veda, Katha Upanishad
6.1

The spirit of man has two dwellings: this world and the world beyond. There is also a third dwelling-place: the land of sleep and dreams. Resting in this borderland, the Spirit of man can behold his dwelling in this world and in the other world afar,

and wandering in this borderland he beholds behind him the sorrows of this world and in front of him he sees the joys of the beyond.

Shukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.9

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."