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Diaspora

PORTUGAL

Karma Marches Back

Four hundred years ago, Hindu temples in St. Francis Xavier's homeland would have been unthinkable. Indeed, he and his armies were destroying hundreds of them in Goa, India (see ht, Oct. '97). Times have changed. In a peaceful retribution on November 4, 1998, 3,000 members of the Comunidade Hindu de Portugal proudly inaugurated a huge temple in Lisbon to Radha-Krishna, Siva and Rama. Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio blessed the event. The new complex is a cultural hub for the Comunidade, which has grown from five families in 1982 to 8,000 today. Like many European nations, Portugal is adjusting to immigrants from its former colonies. In 1974, after the Portuguese Revolution, the African colony of Mozambique became an independent nation. Between 1977 and 1980, much of its large Hindu community emigrated to Portugal and joined with immigrants from other former Portuguese territories to preserve their Indian heritage.

COMUNIDADE HINDU DE PORTUGAL, QUINTA DA PIEDADE, LOTES I/P 2625,
POVOA DE SANTA IRIA, PORTUGAL

NEW ZEALAND

Colorful New Faces

A fledgling Hindu community added its voice to a multicultural

landscape in October, 1998, with a festival of song, dance and drama. More than 500 Telegu speakers gathered in Auckland to mark the official registration of the New Zealand Telegu Association. There are an estimated 500 to 600 Telegu families in Auckland itself, many who migrated from India in the past four years. Association secretary Dr. Srinivas Kasha said the reasons for the rapid migration were unclear, but for him, New Zealand offered a safe, peaceful and healthy environment. The Association will make the government aware of their difficulties in registering with professional bodies and finding suitable jobs. They also plan to bring cultural performers from Andhra Pradesh and present radio programs in Telegu.

USA

Financial Guru

You're gainfully employed but are \$30,000 in debt. If your financial consultant is Suze Orman, don't expect dismal lectures. Stop wallowing in solitary shame. Figure out what childhood memory led to self-defeating money habits. Repeat a mantra like, "I have more money than I'll ever need." So goes, according to a recent Newsweek

article, the wisdom of the "hottest guru on the financial-help circuit." Now a regular on Oprah Winfrey's "Change Your Life" show, Orman's emotionally correct financial advice has catapulted her best seller, *The 9 Steps to Financial Freedom*, to sales of 1.7 million copies. She attributes her success to having turned to "Eastern religions" and learning that "money isn't everything" when she lost her financial planning business in 1987. Newsweek forgot to include that Orman is apparently big on Lord Ganesha.

INDONESIA

The Comment

It wasn't exactly a demonstration of diplomacy. In October, 1998, Am Saefuddin, Muslim cabinet minister in Indonesia's government, publicly stated, according to newspapers in Jakarta, that popular opposition-faction leader Megawati Sukarnoputri "should not be elected president of predominantly Muslim Indonesia, because she is a Hindu." Balinese ears perked up at the remark. Outraged, over 100,000 Hindus on the tiny, tourist-infested island (see ht, Aug. '98) staged a peaceful protest. They accused Saefuddin of insulting their religion and demanded his resignation. Some Hindus threatened to stage a mass strike unless President Habibie fired Saefuddin. He's still there. Megawati is widely regarded as a potential president of Indonesia.

CHINA

To Death Do We Smoke

Tobacco smoking has become one of the deadliest health hazards in history, and China is suffering badly from its effects, said the director-general of the World Health Organization in November, 1998. Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland said 3.5 million people worldwide would die from tobacco smoking in 1998. That figure is expected to triple to ten million into the next century, with possibly two million deaths within China alone, she said in a speech at Beijing's Qinghua University. "China's share of this tragedy may be huge." If current smoking patterns persist in China--where two-thirds of men begin smoking before age 25--tobacco will eventually kill 100 million of the 300 million males now under 30, according to a study published in the British Medical Journal. Smoking already claims more than 2,000 lives in China every day. The study's findings show that if present trends continue, that figure will soar to 8,000 by 2050. Similarly grim statistics are cited for

India, where, as in China, tobacco companies furiously promote their products, having lost many customers in the West.

AFGHANISTAN

Yellow Mark

Under a rigid new social code imposed by the Taliban Islamic militia in August, 1998, fifty Hindu families living in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar are required to wear a yellow piece of cloth on their shirts to distinguish them as Hindus. After Kandahar was conquered by the Taliban four years ago, Hindus were frequently intercepted by the religious police for not having beards, as the hardline Islamic regime had banned beard trimming. The new code aims to avoid confusion. Sikhs, who keep beards and wear turbans, escape any Taliban action because they also wear a steel bangle as part of an insignia of their faith. A Taliban official said there is no restriction on non-Muslim minorities' performing of their religious duties: "Hindus and Sikhs live freely here, but of course they have to abide by the laws of the land." Hindu community elder S.L. Birwani feels minorities should adjust to the law. "Like other Afghan girls, our women wear veils and cannot go to school," he said.

THE VEDAS

God's Word, Sages' Voices

To Rudra Lord of sacrifice, of hymns and balmy medicines, we pray for joy and health and strength.

He shines in splendor like the Sun, refulgent as bright gold is He, the good, the best among the Gods.

RIG VEDA, 43.4-5

I have known, beyond all darkness, that great Person of golden effulgence.

Only by knowing him does one conquer death.

There is no other way of escaping the wheel of birth, death and rebirth.

KRISHA YAJUR VEDA, SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD 3.8

Now, that golden Person who is seen within the sun has a golden beard and golden hair.

He is exceedingly brilliant, all, even to the fingernail tips.

His eyes are even as a Kapyasa lotus-flower.

His name is High. He is raised high above all evils. Verily, he who knows this rises high above all evils.

SAMA VEDA, CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD 1.6.6-7

Verily, the immortal Brahman is everywhere; in front and behind, to the north and the south, above and below; verily, Brahman alone is this great universe.

ATHARVA VEDA, MUNDAKA UPANISHAD 2.2.11

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."