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Diaspora

IMPURITY

Taco Bell Ballyhoo

Mukesh Rai of Ventura, California ordered a veggie "bean burrito" at a local Taco Bell Mexican fast-food restaurant. After one bite, he was shocked to find he had been given a "beef burrito"--ground beef stuffed in a tortilla. "Eating the cow, it was really a devastating experience, so much so that I had to go to a psychiatrist. I couldn't sleep," Rai said. He complained that Taco Bell didn't even refund the price difference between the beef burrito and its cheaper bean replacement. Rai has sued the company for emotional distress, medical expenses and to recover the cost of traveling to India for purification in the Ganges.

YOGA

For Everyone

My dream is to let people know that conscious breathing and yoga are basically very simple, yet profoundly powerful healing skills that can be practiced by anyone," writes Vasanthi Bhat in her new book, *The Power of Conscious Breathing in Hatha Yoga*. What sets this book apart from others on hatha yoga is Vasanthi's broad approach. Be you young or old, male or female, thin or fat, you'll find something here to easily put into practice and improve your life. Years ago Bhat herself delved into hatha yoga to overcome the results of a serious auto accident. She then began to teach others and 22 years later

has thousands of grateful students to her credit.

VASANTHI BHAT, 1196 LYNBROOK WAY, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA 95129 USA

POSTERITY

Treasure House in Danger

Mismanagement, lack of funds and a slowly crumbling building are threatening the very preservation of 650,000 ancient manuscripts housed at the Oriental Research Institute in Mysore. It was established in 1891 by the Maharaja of Mysore, Chamaraja Wodeyar, to preserve the literary treasures of his erstwhile kingdom--which included such items as a rare copy of the ancient Arthashastra. A scathing article in The Week magazine from Kerala charges that the institute cannot even keep its roof repaired, and the resulting leaks are threatening the manuscripts. Scholars complain that salaries are low and promotions nonexistent. They say the institute has difficulty even getting Sanskrit works properly proofread. In 1985 the Ford Foundation provided a \$70,000 microfilm camera to record the manuscripts, but it has never been used for lack of a trained cameraman. The constant change of directors hampers attempts at any improvement.

PRESERVATION

Oil for Keeps

One saving grace for the Oriental Institute's palm-leaf manuscripts is a remarkable oil formulation created a thousand years ago. It was made to preserve a manuscript left by the great Vaishnava saint, Ramanuja, in the town of Melkote. A local disciple eager to preserve the saint's work mixed a complex solution of oil, flowers and other plants to

soak the palm leaves. B.V. Narasimhachar, a descendant of the inventor, today supplies oil to the Institute and others in South India, charging only for the oil potpourri's ingredients. And Ramanuja's original manuscript? It lies well-preserved in Narasimhachar's shrine room.

DANCE

A Family Affair

"Vande Mantram" is the national anthem of India and means "Mother, I bow to you." It is also the name of a unique mother-daughter dance program which charmed a California audience. Four dancing mothers and their daughters participated. Amrapali Ambegaokar and daughter Anjani of Los Angeles danced Kathak; Hema Rajagopalan and daughter Kritika of Chicago, as well as Mythili Kumar and daughters Rasik and Malavika of San Francisco performed Bharata Natyam; while Ramaa Bharadvaj and daughter Sweta of Los Angeles danced Kuchipudi. The troupe has performed once so far to a sell-out crowd and may be persuaded to enthrall audiences with additional concerts.

DIVERSITY

Biggest-Ever Survey of India

Did you know that Hindus and Muslims in India share 97 percent of their cultural values? In fact, this is true with most religions in India, explaining why harmony generally prevails. There are more startling findings in the 1985-1995, ethnographic survey, possibly the world's largest, conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India. Project editor Kumar Suresh Singh says it is the "first complete survey of the human surface in the country." Diversity is the catchword: India is

home to more than 4,600 communities, which speak a whopping 325 languages and have 80,000 different cultural and ethnic identities. India's leading occupation is settled cultivation, followed by wage labor. Only 20% of Indians are vegetarians, though India has overall one of the lowest meat consumption rates in the world. Dowry is found in 1,850 communities (all Hindu, Sikh or Jain), but is almost absent among the lower castes. Divorce is permissible in 3,800 communities, and remarriage for both divorcees and widows in the same number. Smoking beedies (hand-rolled cigarettes) is the most addictive habit.

SOCIETY

Singapore Jam

Singapore is clean and orderly to the max, ...except for one area. Every week thousands of foreign workers, mostly from India and Bangladesh, converge on the city-state's tiny Little India district to shop, chat, eat and catch up with news from home. It's a colorful scene, but some locals say the throng is a menace to traffic and disturbs the peace. "They walk as if this is India," said shopper M. Prakash, complaining about their carefree attitudes. But the workers, mostly building laborers, argue simply that Singapore needs them and there is nowhere else to meet.

THE VEDAS

God's Word, Sages' Voices

May I attain to Vishnu's glorious mansion where the faithful rejoice, where, close beside the Strider, within his highest footstep springs the well of purest honey?

Rig Veda 1.154.5

I breathe out strongly like the wind while claspung unto myself
all worlds, all things that are. I tower above the earth, above
the heavens, so mighty am I in my power and splendor!

Rig Veda, Devi Sukta 10.125.8

Girded by the wind, they have donned ochre mud for a
garment. So soon as the Gods have entered within them, they
follow the wings of the wind, these silent ascetics.

Rig Veda 10.136.2

Having examined the worlds gained by deeds, the wise seeker
should become indifferent to them, for the eternal cannot be
attained by work. To know that, let him approach with humility
a Guru who is learned in the scriptures and established in the
Brahman. To such a seeker, whose mind is tranquil and senses
controlled, and who has approached him in the proper manner,
let the learned Guru impart the science of Brahman through
which the true, imperishable being is realized.

Atharva Veda, Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12-13

Within him is fire, within him is drink, within him both earth
and heaven. He is the sun which views the whole world, he is
indeed light itself--the long-haired ascetic.

Rig Veda 10.136.1

The man who realizes the atman, knowing, "I am He," what
craving or what urge could cause him to cling to the body?

Shukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.12

Know that all this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation. Do not covet what belongs to others.

Shukla Yajur Veda, Isa Upanishad 1