

## [Diaspora](#)

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# Diaspora

## TRINIDAD/INDIA

### Hindu Leader's Indian Roots

Trinidad's Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, became one of only four Hindu heads of state in the world after his election last year. His grandparents came as indentured laborers to work on British-owned sugar plantations in Trinidad in 1908. His first-ever visit to India in January was a joyous, emotional time as the proud motherland greeted her son of distinction from the other side of the world. Panday and his wife Uma shed tears on arrival at Azamgarh, his grandmother's farming village a few miles north of Banaras in Uttar Pradesh. Thousands lined the 20-km route from his hotel to the Banaras Hindu University (Asia's largest, with 20,000 students and a favorite school among Trinidad students) to see the 64-year-old lawyer, trade unionist and cane-cutter's son who made it to the top. In his address to the students he spoke of his Gandhian-like struggles in the trade union movement when he was tear-gassed and jailed, and his commitment to harmony in Trinidad.

## CHARITY/CULTURE

### Light Work

Hindu Anath Ashram students (orphans) from Nadiad, Gujarat, gave a superb folk dance performance in Florida recently to close the Asian American Hotel Owners Association convention. The 29-member troupe included singers, musicians

and dancers. The audience was so enthralled that \$32,000 in donations was spontaneously raised for the orphanage. The India Tribune, reporting on the convention, said most of the dances were in the Raas and Garba style (of Gujarat) but also included Assamese, Rajasthani and Bengali numbers. The highlight was the "Deep Nritya" where 16 girls, each holding 12 lamps and one on their heads, turned the 208 lights into various arrangements such as the trishul (trident) and swastika (symbol of auspiciousness).

The Hindu Anath Ashram, founded in 1908, has received the patronage of great men like Mahatma Gandhi and Vallabhai Patel. The institution has raised over 250 girls and successfully arranged their marriages. Today there are 50 boys and 110 girls being brought up at the Ashram.

## SRI LANKA

### Gayatri Gets A Face Lift

Despite war in Sri Lanka, Hindu institutions that are not under siege continue to thrive as seen in the recent second Maha Kumbhabhishekam of the Lankatheesvarar Gayatri Temple in Nuwara Eliya, southern Sri Lanka. The consecration ceremonies installed a Gayatri Goddess Deity made in India of nine spiritual elements in a new temple to replace the old one. Devotees from all over the world joined founder and spiritual guide, Swami Murugesu, who propounds the power of chanting the ancient Vedic prayer called Gayatri mantra.

## THE WHITE HOUSE

### Did Yale Yoga

U.s.news & world report in January notes that President

Clinton stopped painful jogging and switched to a new workout that includes stretching, push-ups and occasional weightlifting each morning. Remarking that maintaining flexibility is the key to good health as one ages, he says, "I feel a lot better. It keeps my energy level up." It appears a number of Oval Office advisers have taken up yoga. When asked if he would follow suit, Clinton said that his wife Hilary once took him to a yoga class while they were at Yale Law School. But he has no immediate plans to resume yoga postures.

## NEW YORK

### Veggie Girls Sway Boyfriends

Courtney Centner is an English student and Animal Defense League coordinator in Buffalo, New York. While her January Vegetarian Journal article presumes a less-than-conservative lifestyle, on the positive side she details assertive veggie girls' methods in "converting all the meat-eating boys who have crushes on us. My girlfriend and I decided that we would transform any prospective beau into a vegetarian. You can practically talk your partners into it! Try not to inundate them with too much information. Add vegetarian related comments to your conversations; take them to vegetarian restaurants. If you find out he's a jerk, no harm done--just one more vegetarian in the world."

## FAMILY LIFE

### Poll Plumbs Wedded Ways

A December 1996 report in India Today surveys the state of marriage in India. It says the media--TV, magazines, newspaper columns and movies--projects a false image of liberated couples getting quickly divorced. An "India Today-Marg poll shows a traditional core at the heart of

middle-class India, where arranged marriages are still preferred and the ties of matrimony insoluble." The poll covered 616 people in the 20-35 age group; 81% said their marriages were arranged; 94% said their marriages were successful.

But India's traditional commitment to vows may be the only thing unchanged. A sweeping matrimonial transformation is underway, affecting everything from joint family structure to the intimate details of conjugal life. "There is a gnawing, growing fear amongst the young about marriages breaking up." Young would-be-weds are looking closely at long term compatibility, instead of tying the knot by forced arrangements or fleeting infatuation. Couples, with young educated wives taking the lead, are working hard at new forms of intimacy, companionship and understanding. An old ideal, the jodi or "pair," (the indissolubility of the couple like Sita-Ram, Radha-Krishna) is taking new form in the concept of marriage as partnership. More husbands say they are closer to their wives than their mothers. Extended families are breaking up as couples reject restrictions that in-laws impose on the newlyweds' relationship. Nuclear couples face new stress, and young wives lose built-in controls over husbands with violent tempers, but the drive for quality time together is making India's marriages as strong as ever.

## DEITIES AND DEVAS

### Math Angel?

When Daniel Green ran a simple mandelbrot (random image generating program), a picture appeared "complete with eyes, ears, headdress, arms and crossed legs. An Indian co-worker instantly recognized it as God Ganesh." The

"coincidence" was front-page news in Australia's Knowledge of Reality magazine, and Green says, "If I were religious, I would certainly take this as some sort of sign."

## ANIMAL RIGHTS

### Being Kind to Kine Beings

While many of her sisters roamed free in India, one young cow waited outside a slaughterhouse in Massachusetts, USA. People Weekly reported that the 1,400 pound heifer miraculously jumped the 5-foot fence and evaded capture for a month until vegetarian school teachers Meg (photo) and Lewis Randa bought her for \$1. They captured her with grain, named her Emily and let her stay on school grounds, where Meg, 40, says, she is "an ambassador of compassion for animals." Emily gets letters now saying, "Because of you, I don't eat meat anymore." Rights have been sold for a movie on the bovine's life.

## YOUTH

### Kool, Kapil!

Kapil Chadhaury, a 17-year-old Hindu youth from Springfield, Illinois, was in the limelight in a Newsweek ad sponsored by Amway and Junior Achievement. JA is a program in which local businessmen volunteer time to guide students to set up and run their own companies. They raise capital by selling stock, develop a product and, hopefully, turn a profit. Kapil became president of a mini-company which grossed US\$11,582 selling 300 Monopoly-like games in the three-week holiday season of 1995.

Kapil, when asked about challenges he faced growing up as an

American vegetarian Hindu, told HT, "Dealing with the cultural and social differences with my parents. They didn't like me watching a lot of TV."

But careful guidance has paid off. Named JA's "President of the Year" last May, Kapil started Picture Perfect, selling framed motivational sayings. His own message to Hindu youth: "Working hard can insure success. Stay focused. Get involved."