

[Briefly . . .](#)

Category : [August 1997](#)

Published by Anonymous on Aug. 02, 1997

Briefly . . .

DISTANCE CAN'T DAMPEN DEVOTION. Devotees of Lord Ayyappa recently recreated the final part of the arduous annual Sabarimalai pilgrimage by climbing a replica of the famous Kerala shrine's 18 steps, lovingly erected at the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Malibu, California. The celebratory puja and feast was sponsored by the Organization of Hindu Malayalees.

A TEARY-EYED NELSON MANDELA described the gathering of 40,000 children at the Hare Krishna's Food for Life "Festival for the Children of the Rainbow Nation" as "the happiest day of my life." South Africa's President told the huge crowd at Kings Park soccer stadium in Durban that his "batteries" had been renewed by their energy. Krishna's devotees proudly boast they are providing a million meals a year to the hungry of Natal. The event included youth performances and bharata natyam dancing.

THIEVES HAVE STOLEN an historic 200-year-old Sivalingam from a family temple in the village of Mulaipattan, in Bangladesh's Bhola district. Originally installed by the Zaminder of Daulakhan, and a regional favorite for Sivaratri worship, the nearly 250-pound lingam was recently moved to a new shrine. The midnight raid is believed to be the work of international smugglers suspected in thousands of similar

thefts.

DEVOTION DISSOLVES EVEN THE ICE between nations. "More than 450 Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan visited the Laxmi Narayan Temple--better known as Birla Mandir ... on a month's tour of holy places," reports The Hindu, covering a cultural exchange pilgrimage "organized only for religious purposes" by the Shadani Darbar and allowed under a 1983 Indo-Pakistani agreement. The Samjhauta Express now brings "Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan in April and takes the Hindu pilgrims from India to Pakistan in October." Pilgrims report application and visa formalities being cleared by the Indian Consulate "in a record time."

NEPAL'S "HINDU RELIGION, Culture Preservation Committee" comprising 17 members, has been established by Jagadguru Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati "with an objective of publicizing, preserving and promoting Hindu religion in Nepal," reports the RSS. The Committee will assist in developing education and health programs.

ECO-FRIENDLY(TM) GREETING CARDS really are. Designed to save trees and create jobs in India, the cards are produced from 100% cotton waste--no trees. Stated on each card's backside is how 100,000 Eco-Friendly greeting cards "can save 696 Bamboos or 415 Eucalyptus trees!" And by quantifying what a tree living 50 years generates in oxygen, or provides in erosion, soil and air pollution control, while providing bird and animal shelter and producing flowers, fruit and timber, the card concludes "so when one tree falls or is felled, the country loses something worth more than US\$89,000."

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, UNIVERSE," reads an item in The Indian Express. "Another year has passed in the life of the universe as it turns 1,955,885,098 years old on Tuesday (last April 8th), according to the Vedic calendar. Humanity has endured 5,097 years of the much maligned Kali Yuga, which is supposed to run for 432,000 years." Whew, only 426,903 years to go.

WE HEAR IRAQ'S SADDAM Hussain wants to clone himself, and that he's setting up a lab now to do it. It seems he's not alone. "Indeed, in less than two weeks from the date of the Roslin Institute's announcement in Nature (about cloning Dolly the sheep), Valiant Ventures in the Bahamas announced that it will build a laboratory to clone people willing to pay," reports Scientific American.

SEEMS DEVOTION SUSTAINS both spirit and body. Jain sadhvi Mohan Mala, 57, reportedly fasted from June 20, 1996, to April 6, 1997--a world record 291 days. The fast for "self-purification" baffled physicians who examined the nun. "This is completely unheard of in medical history," said Dr. S.K. Wangnoo of New Delhi. Taking only cups of hot water, the nun lost over 60 pounds. Devotees also report miracles amid her meditations such as rose petals and saffron powder arranging themselves into a swastika pattern during the nine-month fast.

RECONVERSION OF TRIBAL Christians back to Hinduism continues in Madhya Pradesh. The Deccan Herald reports a "much-trumpeted 'Ghar Vapsi' (homecoming) campaign ... could attract barely 200 converts." Its organizer, Raja Sabha member Dilip Singh Judeo, retorted to Hinduism Today, "These press people are quite biased--1,200 people were converted

back to Hinduism. The BJP and VHP has collected so much money for the building of the Ayodhya Rama temple, but nothing has happened. Here we are converting people back, and still people are finding fault."

TELEVISION ATTRACTS huge audiences, and India's Doordarshan is planning to capitalize on divine popularity. Successful high-budget productions have already included serials on the Mahabharata, Hanuman, Buddha and the Bible. In production are "Om Namah Shivaya," "Shri Ganesha," Shiva Puranam, The Vedas, Geeta Rashaya.

AMRITSAR'S GOLDEN TEMPLE of Sikhism is becoming even more golden--just in time for its 300th anniversary in 1999. First ornamented with 12-layer gold-plated copper sheets in 1830, the temple's top domes are now receiving 24-layer leaves, adding up to an estimated 15-quintals of gold--52,800-ounces, worth around \$18 million. The new gold leaf is expected to last another 300 years.

BILLIONS ARE POURING into US Christian coffers--especially from outside the US. International Bulletin of Missionary Research reports "income of global foreign missions" at \$10.9 billion. It also counts nearly 300 million Christians now in Asia, and expects a nearly 74% increase by 2025. Yet in the USA itself, weekly attendance at churches, synagogues and "other places of worship" is at 38%--the lowest US level in 60 years, according to the Princeton Religion Research Center.

Briefly is compiled from press, TV and wire-service reports and

edited by Ravi Peruman, award-winning radio journalist at KGO
in San Francisco.