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USA

Parents Settle Court Case

The California parents for the Equalization of Educational Materials (CAPEEM), an organization of Hindu-American parents, sued the California State Board of Education to challenge the Board's 2005 textbook adoption procedure. Its 2006 lawsuit charged that "the textbooks indoctrinate children with Abrahamic religions ... while treating Hinduism in a derogatory manner. The board failed to provide equal opportunities and equal representation to every religion and culture." CAPEEM alleged that instead of properly considering the Hindus' protests during the adoption procedure, the Board solicited the advice of hostile academics who carried political and ideological bias against Hinduism and India. In June, 2009, CAPEEM settled out of court, saying, "Believing that our points had been clearly understood by the defendants, we opted not to prolong the litigation." The State paid CAPEEM US\$175,000 to cover legal expenses, but made no commitments regarding future textbook changes. For the full report go to <http://bit.ly/iRg2U>

Spain

Lakshmi Displayed in Burger Ad

"The snack that is sacred" reads Burger King's spanish advertisement portraying Goddess Lakshmi seated behind a meat sandwich and two pastries. In July the Hindu American Foundation and its supporters wrote to the company, citing the ad as offensive to Hindus.

"Burger King Corporation values and respects all of its guests as well as the communities we serve...[the advertisement] was not intended to offend anyone," stated Denise Wilson, a Senior Communications Analyst for Burger King in a written press statement."Out of respect for the Hindu community, the in-store advertisement has been removed from the restaurants." It was Burger King's third marketing blunder this year after having to remove an overtly sexual ad in Singapore and an ad in Europe that used the Mexican flag.

UK

UK Chaplain Rallies Hindu Armed Forces

In April, 2009, U.K. armedforces chaplain Lieutenant Colonel Acharya Krishan Kant Attri organized a conference of Hindu soldiers. He says, "I minister to the Hindus of all three branches, Army, Navy and Air Force. But servicemen in the different branches hardly ever meet. Hindu soldiers are scattered all over the country and some are serving abroad. This conference brought us together to share feelings and experiences. I also invited Muslim, Sikhs and Christians to find our common ground and discuss common issues.

"The conference allowed soldiers to get to know one another, learn something new and renew our view of how Hindus work together and how Hindus greet, treat and welcome people from other faiths."

"We want soldiers to understand the nature of their duty. Some people think that soldiers are killing machines, which is wrong. Soldiers are trying to protect innocent people from cruel enemies as our holy Gita guides us."

In attendance were ranking officers and chaplains from a wide range of communities, including the highest ranking Gurkha Majors. Speakers included Armed Forces Chaplaincy Heads, Major General Rutledge, Lord King of West Bromwich. Speakers encouraged delegates by elucidating the value and role of the armed forces.

Assistant Chaplain General Rev. Peter Eagles gave a brief history of the multi-faith chaplaincy, noting that in the last four years chaplains for all major faiths had been accepted. He explained that the chaplain's role is to meet the needs of people from different faiths, providing appropriate spiritual guidance, while drawing strength from one another.

The UK military chaplaincy is a pre-eminent model of interfaith leadership, showing us with real action how to get along in a multi-faith society.

New Zealand

NextGeneration Dynamism

The Hindu Youth foundation organized the first New Zealand Hindu Youth Conference at the Hindu Heritage Centre, Auckland on May 2, 2009. Its theme was "Living in Modern New Zealand with Traditional Values." Invited guests and dignitaries included Swami Vigyanan, Maori elder Haare Williams, six members of parliament and other adult Hindu community leaders and elders who all offered encouragement to the 130 delegates.

Conference coordinator Ms. Pritika Sharma described the conference as a first step to building a stronger and more dynamic youth network based on principles of the Hindu civilization.

Speeches given by youth leaders Meena Lakshmanan, Nikita Sharma and Deepal Singh were well received. Meena said youth are the life force, strength and wealth of a nation. "When you study the nature of a young mind, you will discover a born rebel, born revolutionary or born reformer, sometimes all rolled into one!" While citing statistics showing the success of the country's Hindu youth in academics and business, Nitika encouraged attendees to be confident, comfortable and proud of their cultural heritage. Deepal Singh discussed the stages of integration for new arrivals to the burgeoning community: fear of the unknown, excitement of being in a new world, homesickness, adjusting, then participating and entering into the shared culture. Other workshop topics were: bullying, mental health, the well-being of Hindu youth, youth leadership, and the integration of Hindu and New Zealand cultures.

USA

Regulating Yoga Trainers

A New York Times report in July, 2009, says that US state governments are referencing online voluntary registries of yoga teachers to target yoga instructors who certify others to teach yoga. Such instructors are, in many states, being required to be licensed by the state, with all the concomitant government fees, inspections and paperwork.

In April, New York State sent letters to about 80 schools warning them to suspend teacher training programs immediately or risk fines up to \$50,000. But NY yogis

joined in opposition, and the state has, for now, backed down. In other states, regulators were not moved. In March, Michigan gave schools a week to be certified by the state or cease operations. Virginia's cumbersome licensing rules include a \$2,500 fee--a big hit for studios that are often little more than one-room storefronts with a handful of students.

Practitioners are split. Some are adamant that government should stay out of yoga affairs. Others cite the not uncommon injuries sustained by students of poorly trained teachers, saying that regulation will be a good thing.

India

Gays Are Now Legal

In India The indian penal code (ipc) was drafted in 1860 by Lord Macaulay as a part of the effort to regulate and control Britain's Indian subjects. Section 377 of that code was devised to criminalise and prevent homosexual associations. It was an offense punishable by imprisonment for ten years or life and also liable to fines. Today, the law is rarely enforced. There have been no convictions in twenty years. Still, in modern India, most members of all religious communities, including Hindus, hold puritanical views of sexuality. These attitudes in concert with the law have made India's gay community one of the most abused, marginalized and AIDS-vulnerable gay minorities in the world.

In an historic judgment on July 2, 2009, with the country openly polarized for and against the law, the High Court of Delhi revised Section 377 to decriminalize same-sex relations between consenting adults in India. The law continues to apply to sex involving minors and coercive sex. The jubilation of India's gay community resounded across the globe, alongside protests against the ruling by Indian conservatives.

The case was led by the Naz Foundation India Trust, which filed a public interest suit in the Delhi High Court in 2001, seeking legalization of same sex relations between consenting adults based on the need to control the AIDS epidemic. After years of debate, and with many senior leaders still opposed, the High Court made its ruling, saying in part, "If there is one constitutional tenet that can be said to be the underlying theme of the Indian Constitution, it is that of 'inclusiveness.' Where society can display inclusiveness and understanding, such persons can be assured of a life of dignity and non-discrimination."

Hawaii

Stone Temple Gold-Leafed

In June, 2009, the all hand-carved stone Iraivan Temple on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, had its tower tops gilded with 23.75-karat gold. The capstones of the central sanctum, main entry tower and three smaller side towers all now shine with an other-worldly sparkle in the tropical sun. Visitors are awestruck, saying that it is simply not possible to do justice to the sight with a photograph.

Of course, putting gold on Hindu temple towers is nothing new, but what is unique about Iraivan is that instead of covering the stone work with gold on a thick layer of copper plating, which obscures the intricate carving, the stone itself was gilded using the gold leaf process. This not only reduces the amount of gold required, but results in a spectacular finish.

The US's foremost gilders, the world-renowned Gilder's Studio, were contracted for the job (see www.gilders.com) Prior to coming to Hawaii, they conducted extensive tests on white granite specimens from the temple in order to determine the precise chemical requirements to ensure super bonding of the gold leaf to the stone. The Maryland-based team spent a month in Hawaii on the job. They meticulously pressure washed the towers, applied several priming coats, then "sizing" (sticky varnish) and finally the gold leaf. Lord Siva's home in Hawaii now beams with a darshan of supernatural divine brightness, blessing and uplifting all who come.

UK

Massive UK Study Shows Meat is Risky

A 12-year study published in the July British Journal of Cancer suggests that vegetarians are generally less likely than meat eaters to develop cancer, though this does not apply to all forms of the disease.

The study followed 61,566 British men and women of three categories: meat-eaters, those who eat fish but not meat, and those who eat neither meat nor fish. Vegetarians were approximately half as likely as meat-eaters to develop cancers of the lymph or the blood, about one-third as likely to develop stomach cancers, and 75% less likely to develop multiple myeloma, a relatively rare cancer of the bone marrow.

Vegetarians also got notably fewer cases of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and cancers of the stomach or bladder. Fish eaters fell somewhere between those two groups. But cancer of the bowel, one of the most common forms, did not show this reduction for vegetarians.

Professor Tim Key, the lead author, cautions that it is impossible to draw strong conclusions from this single study. Researchers stress that more studies are needed and that people should continue to eat a healthy, balanced diet high in fibre, fruit and vegetables and low in saturated fat, salt and red and processed meat (savvy Hindus will pass on the red meat.)

Briefly

Elephants are needed for U.S. Hindu weddings. A retired Texas circus elephant is rented out by its owner for weddings as far away as New Jersey, New York and the DC area and has even crossed the border into Canada to lead a procession.

the Lost Coast Brewery had printed Lord Ganesha's image on the label of their Indica Pale Ale beer, depicting Him holding one bottle of beer in one of his four hands and another in his trunk. After receiving complaints from around the globe, they promptly removed it and apologized.

"In search of shelter: Mapping the Effects of Climate Change on Human Migration and Displacement" a recent report released in Bonn, Germany, says ongoing melting of the glaciers will devastate heavily irrigated farmlands of Asia by increasing floods and decreasing long-term water supplies. The glacier-fed basins of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Irawaddy, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow rivers now support over 1.4 billion people in India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and neighboring countries. The report warns that changes in the rivers and livelihoods dependent on them could bring profound economic, cultural and demographic impacts.

sanskrit studies are rising among urban youth and techies who are increasingly interested in the ancient language. They are attracted by Sanskrit's highly logical

grammatical structure. It also opens doors to classics like the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita and Sanskrit texts on ayurveda and yoga. For students of ethics, leadership and strategy, there is nothing like reading the Arthashastra in the original. And, for Hindus, it's all about claiming one's heritage.

The Hindu word Karma has always been the most popular Sanskrit addition to the English language. Now it has incarnated in the automobile world as an electric hybrid, the Fisker Karma, touted as good karma since it gets 100 miles per gallon and gives you a cleaner conscience. "Look at my car, Ma. It's a Karma!"