Global Dharma
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Delhi

Yoga Takes Center Stage!

On October 3, 2010, the xix commonwealth gamesopened in New Delhi. Hindus were especially proud to have the ancient tradition of yoga represented as one of the longest of the dance presentations during the opening ceremonies at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. About 825 students from Swami Ramdev's Patanjali Yogapeeth performed coordinated postures. The seven-minute display of strength and flexibility by lithe, young yogis and yoginis was awesome. Vedic mantras played on the sound system as the group shifted formations depicting the seven chakras. The final scene was done in ice blue dark lighting with the yogis wearing lights on their heads, swirling to depict the serpent kundalini at the base of the spine. Then a human figure, formed by laser lights, sitting in lotus posture rose from below center stage, followed by the seven chakras rising up as if to depict the kundalini rising to the top of the head. The stadium was flooded with pride and joy as 130,000 cheered.

See: http://bit.ly/19cwgames

India

Inter-ReligiousMarriagesNot Binding?

A divorce case brought by a Hindu man and a Christian woman who claimed to have converted to Hinduism resulted in a Delhi high court decision, December 30, 2010, that questions the validity of any Indian inter-religious marriage. In India there are separate marriage laws for Hindus, Christians and Muslims which only apply to couples of the same faith. In this case, the judge, Justice Kailash Bambhir, said "a bare declaration that he is a Hindu by a person born in another faith is not sufficient to convert him to Hinduism" and that facts and/or documentation would be required to convince the court that conversion had taken place. On the issue of formal conversion see: www.gurudeva.org/hbh

Australia

Sanskrit Success Story

On October 30, 2010, the Sydney Sanskrit School held a successful Samskrutotsavam (Sanskrit festival) with children putting on skits and plays, speaking only Sanskrit.

The school was started in 2006 by Dr. Meena Srinivasan, who holds a PhD in Sanskrit and has been teaching Sanskrit for over 25 years. It is a registered nonprofit organization recognized under the NSW Government Department of Education's Community Language Scheme. Three teachers teach thirty students in weekly two-hour classes. Some students won the Minister's Community Language awards in 2007.

Caribbean

Ma Ganga Goes to Trinidad

Ma ganga worship is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. Though She is located in Mother India, Her waters flow wherever She is worshipped. Ma Ganga is not just a physical river; She is a powerful presence which flows on the outside and also inside our own hearts. Ma Ganga's descent upon the earth to purify mankind is celebrated during the auspicious month of Kartik. The festival, known as Kartik Snan, was brought to Trinidad by East Indian immigrants more that one hundred and fifty years ago and continues to be celebrated annually.

In November 2010, I observed the rites at the scenic fishing village of Cedros in the beautiful southwest peninsula of Trinidad and Tobago. Devotees gathered early in the morning under tents at the beach, prepared an altar and sang bhajans. Punditji performed havan and puja. Jhandis, or sacred flags, were erected to celebrate Her glory and the victory of positive over negative. Devotees made offerings to the water and then took a purifying snan, or bath, in the ocean. The atmosphere created by the humility and devotion of everyone gathered, from the very old to the very young, was truly uplifting and inspiring.

Report by Dr. P. Bahadursingh

The Hindu Front

US ChristiansTarget Hindu Refugees

Hindu temples, leadersand community organizers in the US should be alert to aggressive Christian missions working hard to convert recent Nepalese and Bhutanese refugees now residing in the US. Hindus need to take action and reach out to these families.

The South Baptist Convention is one of the richest and most powerful evangelical Christian organizations in the world. Their North American Mission Board web site (http:www.//bit.ly/eUDb3L) has an article detailing the history and opportunities for ministry among the Nepali and Bhutanese refugees who started to come to the US in 2008. The article focuses on the work of Rev. Samuel Cho, senior pastor of both The Nepal Baptist Church of Baltimore and The Bhutan Baptist Church, which he established with the help of converted refugees. Rev. Cho works in the Baltimore area as well as on foreign missions.

He planted his first Korean Church in Baltimore in 1999. At the time, he and his wife Young frequented a Korean restaurant where they met a Nepali waitress, Nina Shrestha, and her husband. The Chos became friends with the Hindu couple and eventually converted them. The friendship was pivotal, as it sparked an interest for Cho in the Nepali people. A primary tool for conversion is the offering of medical fairs, which provide not only free medical services, but also Bibles and "the message."

Books

How Churchill Starved India

The November 2010 release of Madhusree Mukerjee's book, Churchill's Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India During World War II, has readers reeling. Between 1939 and 1945, the British used India's entire output of timber, woolen textiles and leather goods, as well as three quarters of its steel and cement, for defense. But few know the full story. To prevent Japanese invasion, the British confiscated all forms of transport on the coast of Bengal. Economies were crashing. Without boats for trade, with rice prices beyond reach, Bengalis began to starve. The British hoarded rice not only for the war effort. They blocked even humanitarian wheat shipments from other countries. Mukerjee writes, "Churchill valued India so much, and hated Indian nationalists so much, that he wanted to starve them to death." Over three million died.

Mortuary Technology

By Water Instead of by Fire

Burial after death takes up precious land and requires plot maintenance. More and more people are opting for cremation. In Japan, the cremation rate is 99.85 percent. The US rate rose to about 35 percent in 2010. In India most corpses are cremated, but lacking sufficient fuel, the burning is often partial, leaving unburned remains that are a serious pollution issue.

Cremation saves land but has its own drawbacks, starting with high fuel or energy consumption. Zoning laws may prevent release of smoke in densely populated areas. European laws require costly filtering of gases to remove toxic metal vapor from teeth fillings.

Now, bodies can be disposed by an even greener method--resomation, a process invented by Scotsman Sandy Sullivan. Think of it as dissolution by water. The corpse is immersed in 100 gallons of water mixed with potassium hydroxide, which is raised to a temperature of 180* C (350* F). In three hours the body is dissolved into basic elements, leaving only soft bones and a brown fluid. Not one iota of DNA remains.

The resomation liquid is simply drained into the public sewage system, which some considering this option may find undignified. Advocates point out that the course of the remains is not so different in cremation. They go up into the atmosphere, returning to the earth during rains. In both processes, the remains return to the earth. In both processes only the powdered bones are given to relatives as ashes.

Resomation has a much lower carbon footprint (CO_2) than cremation, requires seven times less energy, and no metals are incinerated. Resomation fluid is relatively benign, but is highly alkaline (pH 10.5-11.5). It has not presented any problems for waste treatment facilities. Pragmatists point out that it may be a good fertilizer element; plus resomation provides the option of recycling jewelry and prosthetic limbs, which are destroyed by cremation. While many Hindus may be more at home with cremation, resomation may meet the traditional requirement of bodily disposition within 24 hours of death.

See: www.resomation.com

Patent Wars

Stealing India's Herbal Lore

In June of 2010, us giantmanufacturer of household goods, Colgate, was granted a US patent for what it claims is a groundbreaking "red herbal dentifrice." Colgate is the world's largest toothpaste producer and is looking to step into India's multibillion-dollar Indian oral hygiene market.

The problem is that the ingredients--including clove oil, camphor, black pepper and spearmint--date back to antiquity on the subcontinent.

India's increasingly vocal activists allege that the patent is the latest act of biopiracy--whereby Western corporations plunder and attempt to own techniques, plants or genes that have been used in emerging world for centuries. Colgate's formulation claims novel elements such as the abrasive material but arrogates India's traditional botanicals.

The Association of Manufacturers of Ayurvedic Medicines, an Indian body that promotes traditional remedies, is demanding that the Indian government take legal action against Colgate. Devender Triguna, Association president, challenges, "This toothpowder's ingredients have been used by the common Indian man for thousands of years. So how can it be patented?"

The dispute is likely to become a test case for who owns India's folk medicines--a repository potentially worth billions. India is one of 17 nations to form the Group of Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries, an alliance that has accused richer countries of tapping the emerging world's resources for medicines and cosmetics without paying royalties. India is in the process of creating 34 million web pages to document its ancient medicinal techniques in order to block claims by foreign profiteers.

See: US Patent 7736629

Briefly

More youth give up meat. In a 2010 online Harris Interactive poll commissioned by the Vegetarian Resource Group (VRG) of 1,258 US youth ages 8 to 18, three percent said they have never eaten meat, poultry or fish/seafood. VRG writes: "We would estimate about 1.4 million youth in the United States are vegetarian, while about three million never eat meat.

The Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Rural Industrialization has taken steps to harness solar power to run spinning wheels, reducing hand labor and producing a more uniform yard at a faster rate. The technology will produce 100% green khadi silk, cotton or wool.

Hundreds of Pakistani Hindu families in the Balochistan area are trying to migrate to India in the wake of deteriorating local law and order. Meanwhile in India, more than 400 Pakistani refugees are still awaiting citizenship, some for over 18 years.

On January 4, 2011, a federal appeals court ruled that the 43-foot cross on California's Mount Soledad is unconstitutional. The decision reverses a lower court but does not determine what will happen to the cross, since it is a prominent feature that was erected in 1913.