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Wreston Charles Ankoh is a Ghanaian African, a man whose people possessed for millennia a deep spiritual tradition and cultural identity in West Africa. He is polished, highly educated and speaks brightly enunciated British English. Ankoh could be an Anglican minister, with a Reverend before his name. But Ankoh's title is Pandit and he is a Vedic priest of the Arya Samaj, the first black African to be trained in the Arya Samaj ministry. He laments the Christian/Islamic conversion of his people, and asks in an essay why the Arya Samaj teachings didn't arrive in his country sooner. Pandit Ankoh founded the Arya Vedic Mission in Accra, Ghana, in August 1986 after completing his studies in Vedic knowledge, Vedic mantras and yoga philosophy in Durban, South Africa, under the aegis of Pandit Nardev Vedaalankarji. It consisted then of five members from African families, who gathered for weekly satsangs, yagnas and philosophical study.

Out of this seeding, the Ghana Arya Vedic Mission has grown dramatically, and broadcast the Samaj's Hindu teachings across Ghana through public speaking, satsangs and literature. So successful is the movement that Ankoh is negotiating to begin a mission in neighboring Nigeria. A key to Ankoh's approach is maintaining the integrity of the Vedic rituals and chants, while allowing a reconciliation of Indian customs and traditional Ghanaian cultural practices. For marriages, the bride may dress in Ghanaian fashion. Members often keep their Ghanaian ancestral name during the namakarana (name-giving sacrament). Vegetarianism and yoga practice are taught and encouraged, and the Ghana youth excel at hatha yoga postures.

Ankoh is particularly proud that spiritual leaders of other faiths, woefully ignorant of Hindu ideals and knowledge, are now well acquainted with, at least, the Arya Samaj presentations of Hinduism. **Unending Monsoons Flood South Nepal**

While the towns and farmlands of central USA were undergoing the worst flooding of this century, the monsoons in Asia were sucking up vast amounts of moisture as they headed for the Indian landmass. When they hit, relentlessly raining down billions of gallons, rivers in India, Bangladesh and Nepal washed over their banks, melting whole villages into mud soup. Southern Nepal was awash under the titanic flood waters of the Bagmati River. Usually esteemed as a holy waterway, the monsoon-swollen river became an ominous vehicle of destruction in the hilly terrain of the south: 1,500 people killed with thousands more missing, entire villages vanished, livestock, crops, bridges, roads, hydroelectric stations and other infrastructures were scythed down by the waters. Nepalese officials are saying that, in terms of property loss, it the worst disaster in Nepalese history.

Twenty seven relief camps were established in eastern and central Nepal, housing 25,000 refugees. It is estimated 20 million Nepalese are effected by the flooding.

The Royal Nepalese Embassy in Washington, D.C. USA has established a Nepal Flood Relief account. The address and account number are: Riggs Bank, 1913 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036, Attn: Second Floor, Account Number 17182656. Longevity and Anti-Oxidents in Veg Diet

The search for longevity and the vegetarian path intersected again recently when a study done in Germany concluded that mortality from all causes among vegetarians was half that of the general population. The study tracked the health curves of 1,904 vegetarians over an eleven year period, concluding in late 1992. The vegetarians were divided into two groups: strict, who never ate meat, and: moderate, who only occasionally ate meat, poultry or fish. One of the findings between the two groups was that the strict vegetarians were less likely to have heart disease than the moderate vegetarians. Overall the vegetarian group was one-third as likely to suffer from heart disease as nonvegetarians.

Moderate vegetarianism--mainly vegetarian with occasional meat--is gaining considerable ground in the West. The Wall Street Journal reports that a consulting firm, HealthFocus, has coined the term "vegetarian aware" for these folks.

In other vegetarian pastures, Dr. John Potter, a 20-year vegetarian and director of

the Minnesota Cancer Prevention Research Unit, visited New Zealand, with its population of 25,000 Hindus. New Zealand currently has the highest incidence of bowel cancer in the world, and Potter was brought in to promote fruit and vegetable consumption among the tamasic (heavy, meat-eating) New Zealanders.

Potter does research into how cancer can be prevented by fruit and vegetable consumption. He not only states that a vegetarian-based diet reduces the risk of digestive tract cancers by half, but that a low intake of fruit and vegetables is just as risky as smoking. He notes that as early as 1933 studies in India showed less oral cancer among vegetarians. While much emphasis in the past five years has been put on increasing fiber intake through cereals, it is now known that vegetables offer the superior fiber. The basic reason why fruits and vegetables are so anti-cancer is they are rich in antioxidants which are used by cells to repair damage--often caused by meat-eating or fat-rich diets in the first place.

Meanwhile, in the US, the Agricultural Department released new safe-handling labeling requirements for all raw meat products. The labels warn of illness from bacteria if the meat is not cooked properly. The US government action came after serious outbreaks of tainted meat-related illness. The new labeling was forced in part by Beyond Beef, a non-profit action group, working for a radical reduction of the global beef industry and meat-eating. "View Points" Puts the Fstop On Art and Culture in Mauritius

A new glossy color magazine out of Mauritius is focusing on the island's polyglot arts, culture and leisure pursuits. The Indian Ocean island is 50% Hindu in population, and just became a republic last year. View Points is produced by the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Leisure and Reform Institutions as a graphic showcase of the island's internationally admired harmony among races and ethnic groups. The Ministry itself is newly founded--a little over one year old--but under the youngblood direction of its youthful minister, Mookhesswur Choonee, has begun to put Mauritius on the world cultural map with unique events like the World Urdu Conference and World Chinese Conference.

The first issue of View Points spreads out like a salad bar of items in English and French, including a quaint piece on slavery abolition, a profile of the Mauritius Institute, a photo roundup of visiting troupes and artists to the island, an essay on a

criminal sentencing seminar (the Ministry covers prisons too), an announcement of a pilot project to promote Hindu folk music, agendas from the Islamic, British and Chinese Cultural Centers, the launching of a Sanskrit Sloka cassette, films being shot in Mauritius and a bicycle rally to some of Mauritius' national monuments.

Trends: AIDS is Fast Becoming The World's Most Baffling Blight

The trends we usually ponder may soon appear trivial compared to other impact-ors looming on the global horizon: ecological deterioration, proliferation of atomic weapons, the rise of terrorism, AIDS etc. Of these, many experts now see AIDS as the most ominous of all, the gravest threat to human welfare--and survival. The very conservative Scientific American magazine (Sep '93) asks, "Will we survive [AIDS]?" and answers that we quite bluntly might not. The scope of the epidemic has been grossly underestimated, the article states, and by the year 2000 as many as 100 million people may be infected with the HIV (which leads to AIDS and certain death). And it will grow appallingly worse unless a cure is found, and soon. But, the article goes on, prospects for a cure or vaccine remain dim because HIV mutates constantly.

More pessimistic sources say that HIV may be transmitted by casual--not only sexual--contact, that the number of infected people doubles each year and that many more people are infected than is known because 1) HIV can lie undetected inside an individual for years, and 2) the public is being "protected" from existing knowledge.

Many are taking it upon themselves to educate and protect themselves. Others are using yoga to keep the mind strong and positive in preparation for more trying times ahead, or to prolong life once infected. And there are service organizations such as Human Services Alliance (USA) who help people to die a dignified death.

Readers are invited to share information and ideas with Trends, Hinduism Today, 1819 2nd St, Concord, CA 94519 USA. Russia: Psyching Out Inward Path

Moscow, Russia, is quickly becoming a hothouse of spiritual growth. A recent story

in National Geographic dwelled on the Russians' bear-hug embracing of New Age and Asian teachings. Now, an English magazine out of Moscow--Inward Path--is importing new wisdom into Russia and exporting Russian gnosis to the world. Articles cover the spectrum of parapsychology (Russia leads the world in psychic research), yoga, human potential, Asian philosophy, Russian Orthodox Christianity and even living close to nature Russian style--lots of cold lake and stream bathing.

Facing a Prostitution Plague

Nepal is renowned for its warm religiousness and cool Himalayan scenic vistas. But a little-known trend is threatening Nepal's innocence. Nepal is second only to Thailand in its number of prostitutes in relation to the general population, and Nepal supplies large percentages of prostitutes to India: 200,000 total. Most of the girls begin in the early teens, many as young as 11. Nepal has largely turned a blind eye to the blight, but a recent seminar dedicated to the subject openly examined the sociological problem and its sexually transmitted disease dimension, including AIDS.

Guru's Body Finally Burnt

When 73-year-old Balak Brahmachari checked into a nursing home and died on May 5th, his followers were so faithful he would reanimate the body's life forces they put the corpse on slabs of ice in a chilled room in his Calcutta ashram. The body remained there for two months--slowly shrinking--with communist state authorities turning up the burners for a cremation (required by law within 24 hours of death) while devotees insisted he would live again. Finally, on June 29th, 5,000 police surrounded the ashram, cut the power, and charged against hundreds of brick-throwing, trident-wielding Balak devotees. The body was seized and cremated on June 30th.