News in Brief
Category : October 1994
Published by Anonymous on Oct. 02, 1994

News in Brief

South African Hindus report things are "unbelievable" under the new Mandela government. "People were so scared that [we] would be plunged into utter chaos because of violence," writes Pravesh Hurdeen, "yet violence stopped and there has been so much peace. We are hoping this will continue. All you holy people must pray for us."

Taking care of one's parents is a duty in every nation, but in Mauritius it's also the law of the land. A parent (or child, for that matter) may make a civil claim for alimony in a court of law. Such alimony is based on the need of the claimant and the ability of the other party to pay. Further, employers may be ordered to deduct such payments from one's salary.

The banning of night yoga classes at Mount Roskill Grammar School in Auckland has been brought to the attention of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission. Opponents claim Hinduism is being taught in what should be secular classrooms. The yoga teacher blames the ban on discrimination by fundamentalists, whom she also charges with hypocrisy since school board meetings begin with a Christian prayer. The board's chairman says that invocation may now be reviewed.

Sri Bharati Tirtha, 36th Jagadguru of the Sarada Mutt in Sringeri, Karnataka, who urges all Hindus to proudly wear vibhuti on their foreheads, recently offered this gem regarding politics: "Spiritual heads and politicians have different needs. If a spiritual person enters politics, he will become a politician and cease to be a spiritual soul. Politicians have their own constraints, problems with which they grapple in their own way. If spiritual people turn to politics, spiritualism will be spoiled."

A Pilgrimage To Hindu Temples in North America has been published by the Council of Hindu Temples in North America. Cost is US$20 each. This informative book has pictures and information on a number of temples, but is not yet a comprehensive list. Contact: Marella L. Hanumadass, Editor & Publisher, 227 Wood Glen Lane, Oak Brook, Illinois, 60521, USA.

An 11th-century Karttikeya temple built by Kulottunga Chola is now being sought off the coast of Vashakhapattnam in Andhra Pradesh. The Vaisakheswar Temple, which some archaeologists consider the most important discovery since Dwarka and Poompuhar, is thought to have been submerged by advancing seas in the middle of the last century. A few stones have been found on the seafloor, but the original temple location is as yet unknown.

Bet you couldn't live like a caged animal! That was the challenge issued by vegan activist Rebecca Hall of southern England. She offered a $15,000 prize to be split among those willing to live like a hen in a wire cage for one week. Sixteen people accepted; four were selected. Their shared wire cage, proportional to that used for four chickens, measured 40 by 40-inches, 5-feet 3-inches tall. Three of the four were experienced agricultural or fur-farmers. Food-beans and rice-was dispensed cold every few hours. A tape recorder played human screams, to mimic the cacaphony of a hen house. The volunteers lasted just 18 hours. If only hens could chicken out like that!

Pesticide poisoning in India is now being studied by the International Labor Organization. "Up to 5 million people are poisoned each year by pesticides, 40,000 of them fatally," said Josephine Karavasil, the ILO's director for India & Bhutan. She adds, "Developing countries use 20-percent of the chemicals but suffer 99-percent of the deaths from toxic poisoning from handling of pesticides." Western countries are actively reducing pesticide use, because of its drastic consequences on the environment.

Domestic violence in the USA is so common that a recent report in Scientific American states, "In the U.S. between 22 and 35 percent of visits to emergency rooms are for injuries caused by domestic violence. Battering may be the leading cause of injury to American women." "Domestic violence" includes both wife- and child-beating.

Motilal Banarsidass, the famed publishing house located in New Delhi, has released 53 of a total of 100 volumes of the Puranas in English. These secondary scriptures comprise thousands upon thousands of pages of stories of the Gods, interspersed with philosophy, cosmology and general history. The project equals in scale the Sacred Books of the East series.

Persistence pays off in blessings. Just ask Dr. B. Bhaskara Rao, who first dedicated himself to serving Australia's Hindu community in 1971. In 1978 a temple-building committee was formed. A year later, land was acquired in Helensburg, south of Sydney. Plans were sketched in 1984. The architect's budget in 1991 was US$3 million. The entire amount was raised, and today the beautiful Shiva-Venkateswara Temple serves tens of thousands of devotees.

Ayurveda training in India is, at best, limited for foreigners, according to Claudia Welch, who writes in Ayurveda Today, "We visited upwards of 16 colleges in at least 6 states from the Himalayas to the southern tip of India. For all intent and purpose, it appears to be impossible at this point for foreigners to gain admission to the Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery program." Severe competition, reserved seats for government nominees and fear of litigation are among the reasons cited. If you do care to try, her advice is to be patient, flexible, proficient in the local language, ("Hindi is a good bet") and to have at least an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit.

A one-year Ayurveda/Yoga healing program has been funded for the People With AIDS Coalition of Long Island. Swami Sada Shiva Tirtha, founder of the Ayurvedic Holistic Center in Bayville, New York, will offer three 12-week programs including ayurvedic consultations, herbs, nutrition, hatha yoga, group meditation aromatherapy, color and music therapy and support groups.

Asian AIDS is exploding. In just the last year, World Health Organization (WHO) figures show cases of full-blown AIDS rose from 30,000 to 250,000. Worldwide, cases are up 60 percent, to about 4 million. In the same year the number of people infected with HIV jumped 3 million to 17 million. Meanwhile the Indian Health Organization (IHO) indicates 100,000 cases of full-blown AIDS, with 2 million people HIV infected, which differs greatly from the officially reported figures of 459 AIDS cases and 13,254 cases of HIV infection.

Film & video maker K. Balakrishnan Nair, once wrote to his beloved Guru the late Swami Chinmayananda, "With that divine Grace which turns the mute eloquent and the cripple to scale mountains, may you bless me Gurudev, in such a manner so that I get the right opportunity that I am thirsting for to practice the profession that I am trained in." He is seeking backers to produce state-of-the-art Hindu-themed films and videos, and has developed some excellent proposals. Contact: Chitrasuthra Film/Video Makers, B-10/503, Ashoka-Vasant Vihar, 2nd Pokharan Road, Thane (West)-400 601, Maharashtra, India.

"Sagar: South Asian Graduate Research Journal," an international scholarly magazine sponsored by the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, is available "in both electronic and hard-bound formats." Contact: Manu Bhagavan, Asian Studies, The University of Texas, F9300, Austin, Texas, 78712-1294, USA.

A "Jhandee" dispute may go to the US Supreme Court. Anirudh Boodram, originally of Guyana, had placed the Hindu prayer flag on his apartment balcony-in violation of the building's rules regarding use of the balcony. Boodram lost in the lower courts, partly because he claimed but did not substantiate that he personally was being racially discriminated against. An appeal is being considered on the basis of religious discrimination-that Christian Christmas decorations were allowed, but not his Hindu religious decoration. Contact: Onkar Sharma, 9911 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland, 20902, USA.