

## [News in Brief](#)

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Toronto's Vedic Cultural Society of the Arya Samaj has been named to receive US\$740,000 in funding under the province's Jobs Ontario program. The money will be used in construction of a \$3-million multi-purpose community center. The award is Canada's largest government funding to date for an Indian religious-cultural organization.

Deciphering the secrets of the ancient Indus Valley requires analyzing the Rig Veda, according to German author Richter Ushanas. He claims to have decoded nearly a third of the 3,500 seals unearthed by archaeologists. Assuming an Indus Valley influence on the scripture, he notes a striking parallel between translations of the motifs found on Indus seals and verses in the Rig Veda. His method uses Brahmi and Sumerian script to string together loose meanings of the seals. He then finds a nearly identical Vedic verse and works back to a more accurate meaning of the inscriptions.

Swami Shivapadananda, head of the Ramakrishna Mission in South Africa, attained Mahasamadhi September 30th in Durban. Swami, in his late sixties, died due to complications following surgery. More than 50,000 are expected to attend the cremation ceremonies. The South African-born swami oversaw the expansion of the RK Mission to 26 centers and vast programs of social work, mobile clinics, free hospitals and schools, much of it among the black African community. No successor has been announced.

An appeal is delaying temple construction in Norwalk, California, east of Los Angeles. Proposed in 1991, the International Swaminarayan Sanstha Organization finally won approval from the city's Planning Department in June, 1994, after making major concessions. [See Hinduism Today October, 1994.] The appeal was filed on behalf of residents living near the site who fear increases in traffic and

reduction in property values. Over a thousand residents in the immediate vicinity, however, have signed petitions supporting the temple project.

Vishweshathirtha Swamiji, priest of the Udupi Pejawar Temple in Karnataka state, urged Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to halt construction of a nuclear power plant at Kaiga after one of its domes collapsed during construction. The PM reportedly agreed to a review. "A great tragedy would have struck had the dome collapsed after the plant reached criticality," said Swamiji.

If Hindu youth need a higher standard, Krishna Gidwani has set it. "This honor is a most fitting tribute to your outstanding academic accomplishments," writes U.S. President Bill Clinton in a note acknowledging Krishna's being named a U.S. Presidential Scholar by The White House. (141 are named out of 2.5 million applicants) Growing up in Europe, (Krishna's parents are stationed in Germany) the physicist-to-be was also valedictorian of his high school, is a member of Mensa, has won \$14,000 in scholarships, was President of the Human Rights Commission at the Hague International Model United Nations, is a published poet, cross-country athlete and much more.

"Sai baba is becoming famous and it seems he is having great influence on the Japanese people," writes Kenji Oyama to the fundamentalist Christian publication Spiritual Counterfeit Project. The letter to the editor is not meant to laud Sai Baba's accomplishments, but rather to show the Christian reader's alarm: "I see him on TV, in magazines and in all kinds of media these days. I think it's because of the New Age movement. Spiritual warfare is going on right now."

Ancient, natural contraception techniques are being revisited by modern family planning researchers. Among them: eating green papayas, as Sri Lankan women do, and using seeds of the plant Queen Anne's Lace, both of which inhibit or disable progesterone, which is needed to prepare the uterus for a fertilized ovum. The seeds are chewed by Rajasthani women, and were crushed and mixed with water in ancient Greece. "Many tried and tested methods are being looked at, such as chewing betel nuts and neem leaves in India," says researcher Frances Perrow.

Tea was introduced to China from India, not the other way around. Arup Kumar Dutta, in his book *Cha Garam*, cites references to tea's Indian origins in Chinese and

Japanese tales on Bodhidharma, as well as a tenth-century Assamese treatise on medicine mentioning shamapatra, which he says derives from shamapani. He further notes the leaves used to heal Lakshmana's wounds in the Ramayana, saying "Sanskrit scholars opine that the sanjavani plant may well have been wild tea bush."

Parents who abuse children might be helped by mandatory parenting classes. So finds a 3-year research project in the Netherlands involving 35 families. "The study appears to show that parental abuse can result from inadequate child-rearing know-how, as well as psychological or emotional causes," said child specialist Ko Rink of Groningen University. The classes halted abuse and neglect so effectively that authorities allowed 24 children to remain with their parents, which Rink says is less costly than the alternative-taking children away from abusive parents. The training included such basics as getting the family on a regular schedule, instructions in proper diet and clothes, as well as how to solve problems.

Australian Devotees are struggling to prevent the auction of the half-finished, underground Sri Vishwanatha Temple near Sydney, New South Wales. A group came forward at a September 25th meeting with a proposal to pay the recent judgment of US\$337,500 in favor of the contractor against the Hindu Heritage Research Foundation, which owns the temple. If the group can meet an October 6th deadline for the first payment of \$185,000, they can avoid a court-ordered auction of the temple property. Swami Chidanand Saraswati (Muniji) of Parmath Niketan, India, has resigned as patron of the HHRF in Australia.

If earthquakes, fires, floods, wars or other calamities happen/ happened between September 23 and November 22, 1994, they aren't/weren't without warning. Noting Mars' transit through Cancer and Saturn's retrograde motion through Aquarius, Jyotish Pandit Parashar of California, writes "this combination can cause some calamities."

Israeli immigration reformers, fearing a huge influx of Indians, are now advocating amending the Law of Return, which guarantees instant citizenship to any applicant with one Jewish grandparent. Sixty Indians allowed in as tourists have been granted citizenship, but only after undergoing religious conversion under the strict direction of rabbis. After word got out, the Israeli embassy in Delhi was swamped. Others in Ethiopia, Burma, even Peru, are also claiming Jewish roots. Reformers want to change the Law of Return before Israel feels obliged "to take in

half of the Third World." Opponents say tinkering with the law would amount to racism.

Kuwait has rejected a boycott of Hindus, as well as a ban on more Hindus entering the emirate. The recent proposal was in retaliation of the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. "Those carrying out terrorist acts against Moslems are a small group, and it is not correct to generalize this on all Hindus," said Kuwait's Cabinet Affairs Minister. He also feared further damage to Kuwait's already bleak human rights record.

Compuserve Information Service is a giant database of information accessible with a computer over a telephone. At the request of Hinduism Today, they have just added a "Hinduism" section to their Religion Forum. Hinduism Today in electronic form is posted here each month. Subscribers can exchange messages and information on Hinduism.

The hare krishna temple in Watford, England, though surrounded by controversy and opposition from neighbors, it not going to be the cause of a trade war between India and Britain. "That is purely some journalist's imagination," said Environment Minister Kamal Nath after returning to New Delhi from London. He says he did urge the British government to resolve the temple controversy, but did not even obliquely threaten a trade war.