

[News in Brief](#)

Category : [March 1995](#)

Published by Anonymous on Mar. 02, 1995

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Fiji's government will ask Parliament to repeal the nine-year-old "Sunday Observance Decree" which prevented commercial activity, sports and entertainment on Sundays. Originally imposed for security purposes, the ban was co-opted by Fiji's Methodist church into governmental protection of the Christian Sabbath. Tourist-related businesses are relieved at the news, and Hindus call lifting the Sunday ban a major step in improving interreligious relations in the island nation. Methodist church leaders are promising to fight the repeal, even though Methodist doctrine does not support a Sunday ban.

Sri Swami Premananda, who founded his center in Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu, after ethnic rioting destroyed his ashram in Sri Lanka in 1983, has been arrested for an alleged "litany of crimes" including murder, rape, pornography, misappropriation of funds and ties to Sri Lankan terrorists. Swamiji's devotees call the charges "ridiculous and outrageous," and "a well-orchestrated smear campaign." Local newspapers have already concluded Swami is guilty, though no trial has taken place. A number of area politicians were among the visitors to Swami's ashram.

The Dwarkadhish Temple has finally opened to the public in Sayreville, New Jersey, USA. Stalled for over two years by rancor, anti-Hindu graffiti, lawsuits and an eventual settlement, the temple's dedication in November was attended by Sayreville's mayor, who predicted the divided community would once again become united.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad has again been banned by the Government of India, 35 days after the first two-year ban was lifted. The original ban was imposed after the destruction of Babri Masjid [built upon the site of Lord Rama's birth] in Ayodhya by Hindu militants in 1993. The VHP has demanded the return of the Ayodhya site as well as Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi at Mathura and Kashi Vishwanath temple at

Varanasi, both of which were taken over by Muslims. The government's action came after statements by VHP Secretary General Shri Ashok Singhal that, "Nobody can prevent us from constructing temples at both sites."

A Hindu's lifespan is 120 years, the scriptures say. And now research by Thomas T. Perls, principal investigator of the New England Centenarian Study, shows "the oldest old" are often healthier, with better physical and cognitive fitness, than people twenty years younger. "Counter to prevalent theories of aging, many people in their late nineties or hundreds lead active, healthy lives. The time may have come to abandon our past perceptions of our oldest citizens."

Religion will battle the invasion of secular ideals on the airwaves of India. ISKCON, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Brahmakumari and Baha'i programming are all being produced to rekindle a more spiritual culture and society. Swami Agnivesh says Arya Samaj will produce serials "so as to awaken the society against traditional evils."

The halo of Goa's Catholic patron saint, Francis Xavier, is losing some luster. P.P. Shirodkar, Goa's archivist, said the saint "Thought of Goans as heathens and pagans. He destroyed their idols and converted children too young to have opinions of their own."

The Spiritual Encyclopedia of Hinduism project is a vital effort in vital need of support. Swami Chidananda Maharaj lauds the efforts of Sampath Bhoopalam, President of the World Hindu Federation and compiler of the Encyclopedia, saying "God must have chosen him to do the job. The entire Hindu community should support this effort." Bhoopalam states, "Misinformation, disinformation and mal-information now plague the teaching of Hinduism. It has become fashionable to copy Western views on Hinduism and ignore the original meanings. The result is that anti-Hinduism is being taught at the American universities in the name of Hinduism."

52,000 pages of Buddha's teachings are now available in Pali on CD-ROM. Compiled as a gift for the King of Thailand's 60th birthday, 80 people worked for 13-months to render the 115-volume canon onto compact disk. Advantages include cost and speed, \$12,000 in print versus \$299 on CD-ROM; and one student who

spent 4-months searching out a printed word found it in 10-seconds on the CD.

Russia's Tantra Sangha plans to establish that state's first Hindu temple in Moscow, but needs the support of Hindus everywhere to do so. "More than one thousand persons need [such an] orthodox Hindu temple," writes Swami Sadasivacharya. Contributions of money, books and articles for worship are needed. Contact: Religious Association "Tantra-Sangha," P.O. Box 70, Moscow, 103055, Russia.

Hindu history's evolution away from the century-old model of an "Aryan invasion" is becoming more mainstream. Klaus Klostermaier's A Survey of Hinduism asserts that based on "continuingly expanding finds [aerial infrared mapping of the ancient Saraswati River course and new interpretations of astronomical and geological data] there is no reason to assume that the end of the Indus civilization was brought on through an outside invasion." He suggests there was not only "a geographical overlap, but also continuity between Indus and Vedic Aryan civilizations."

Five priceless saligramas inherited from the Vijayanagar empire, including three world-record rubies weighing in at 3,600, 2,475 and 1,370 carats, will be broken and sold to raise money to help humanity's health. Bangalore attorney G. Vidyaraj, 65, who claims to be the 14th descendent of Vijayanagar emperor Krishnadevaraya, says he will establish a trust to "Start the work of helping patients suffering from terminal diseases" like cancer and AIDS. Thinking the heavy sacred objects contained gold he could melt out, Vidyaraj says he discovered they were precious stones after washing them with soap and a toothbrush.

Bridegrooms are abused, says a Letter to the Editor of India West, by their Indian-American wives and families. The anonymous writer says bridegrooms who come to America from India in arranged marriages to girls well established in the USA are pressured to succeed, or in the case of doctors, to pass the American licensing exams. If they don't pass, or don't succeed quickly enough for the "Americanized" wives, they are divorced. He writes, "I plead to Indian American women not to marry because of parent pressures, and please don't use the power of your American passport/ green card and parents' wealth to abuse the poor Indian bridegrooms."

Surya's power may soon provide cheap electricity. Advanced Research Development Incorporated of Athol in America says a wafer-thin plastic film which can be rolled out will trap the sun's solar power and convert it to electricity for one-cent per watt. The best previous estimates for mass-produced cells were seven to eight cents.

Mother's milk is still best. To prove it, over 200 hospitals in the USA have stopped giving away "discharge packs" full of free items to new mothers. The packages, which are supplied by the makers of infant-formula, are now considered an inappropriate marketing tool, and hospitals fear giving away formula may be construed as endorsing its use. Breast-fed children are much healthier than those fed with formulas, especially in less-developed regions where water is not pure.

Canada's Maha Ganapati Society of Alberta recently announced, "The material and spiritual support of the community has enabled us to establish a firmly rooted temple for Lord Ganesha." The temple is estimated to cost \$600,000, half of which has been raised. They plan to take a loan for the remainder and are soliciting donations from devotees to help pay off the loan quickly. Address: 1403-111 Street, NW, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6J 6T5.

Himsa-violence-is big business, according to the Spiritual Advisory Council. Their Outreach Newsletter states, "Supplying munitions is the world's largest business [surpassing agriculture, oil, etc]. And the US supplies over 70% of all the munitions sold to developing countries."