Global Dharma
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A Monthly News Digest

Krishna Bhakta to Stop the Brain Drain

A September '94 India Post article and interview by Yatindra Bhatnagar details the work of Swami Sri Vibhudhesha Teertha, Madhw-acharya of Admar Mutt, Udupi (Kar-

nataka). On a visit to California last year, swami unveiled his plans to help uplift India. Swami has set up nearly two dozen institutions in Udupi, Bangalore, Bombay, Delhi and elsewhere and is starting his biggest yet, the Poornaprajna Institute of Scientific Research outside Bangalore. He aims to stop the brain drain from India and to take the country to the highest levels of education in pure sciences. Already some schools run by his Mutt use computers and video even at the lower levels. Aged 76, the frail, gentle swami is an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna and performs elaborate puja daily. But this soft-spoken bhakta is a dynamic Indian nationalist and a serious worker. He says he has already obtained 60 acres of land and ultimately would have 400 scholars doing research in physics, chemistry, biology and mathmatics, with full facilities and help from the top men and women in the world of sciences. On his summer USA tour, he set up 18 committees of eminent NRI professionals in 18 cities to raise funds for the institute. He left a message that Indians overseas should help Bharat become stronger so that it is treated with respect and to live an exemplary life, never doing anything that would bring a bad name to Bharat and its great culture. He plans a follow up mission in the summer of 1995.

The India Post article says he feels the heritage and culture coming down from Ram and Krishna are national issues and the country, its majority population, should not be deprived of them by adopting one-sided, so-called secular policies that are

detrimental to Hindus. He supports rebuilding the Rama temple at Ayodhya and said that the symbols of 1,000 years of slavery have to be erased and the truth brought out. All the while, swami never raised his voice even once.

Congratulations, Swamji! Let's all put money into high standard Hindu education and stop sending our children to non-Hindu schools.

Guru Guides Doctor, Ever by His Side

Dr. H.L. Khanchandani is not an ordinary doctor. He translates Hindu scriptures and messages of Gita in his native Sindhi lan-

guage and publishes them in Arabic script alongside his English interpretation for worldwide distribution. Based in Bombay and Luton, a northern suburb of London, UK, Dr. Kanchandani learned a long time ago that the doctors are not the saviours of life. "If He wishes to save someone, He uses us as an instrument." He also believes in being in touch with God through the wisdom and help of gurus and swamis. The late swami, His Holiness Swami Krishnanand Saraswati Maharaj, had a special influence on him. "As I came in close contact with him, I started feeling this unusual aura surrounding him. I realized that he was a true yogi. One night, as I was lying in bed with my eyes closed, he came into my vision, closer and closer. I concentrated on him, and I saw him sitting cramped in a chair in a hall. Suddenly he started rising higher and higher 'till his head touched the ceiling. It went through the ceiling 'till it touched the sky and beyond.

"I looked down in the chair and he was still there, as a little man cramped as before. I looked beyond the horizon and I saw him rising beyond my vision. I was absolutely astonished as I had never witnessed anything like that before. He spoke to me, reassured me and showed me his original form with his usual smile on his face. I still witness that scene whenever I concentrate on him. Once our Guru Maharj-ji said to me, `You keep on following me.'" That rather puzzled me and I was not able to erase this thought from my mind for a long time. The more I thought of it the more I realized that it is not I who is following the Guru Maharaj-ji, but rather Guru Maharaj-ji is standing in front of my eyes wherever I go. I can visualize Guru Maharaj-ji everywhere in and outside my house. I can see him in all the rooms in my house simultaneously." Dr. Kanchandani comes from a very humble background but

became a very successful surgeon and businessman over the years by gaining strength from the Gita and spiritual leaders. He receives hundreds of letters from the Sindhi as well as other communities with requests for messages and advice.

by Rakesh Mathur, London

Tamil Mela a Hot Hit

Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, home of the magnificant Brihadiswarar temple and center of ancient culture, hosted the 8th International Tamil Conference. Sponsored by the International Association of Tamil Research and the Tamil Nadu government, it was not a soporific reading of papers. The elaborate mela with 1,000 delegates and observers from around the world, opened with a 3-hour parade with 50 floats. Tamil, internationally recognized as one of mankind's largest respositories of mystical and religious knowledge and literature, is struggling as a spoken language. The passionate will to preserve this living root language flowed strong. Presentors focused on contemporary issues: importing scientific terms into Tamil; throwing off the yoke of English as the government medium, resolving the gulf between spoken Tamil and written Tamil, focusing on transnational usage instead of just researching old forms, etc.

After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in Tamil Nadu two years ago, the conference also generated a highly politicized atmosphere of security against possible Lankan Tamil terrorism: two Lankans and one disgruntled Swedish professor were barred entry.

Trends to Watch: Search for Sanctified Living Finds a Market

Ugly designs, toxic chemicals and disorienting magnetic fields in our world seem beyond control. Mainstream developers have little spiritual sense-"Get real! The sanctification of material existence is an oxymoron!" Wrong. Recently an American doctor, planning a new home, brought his wife to a Sthapatya Vedic designed home in Iowa. She closed her eyes and said "It's so quiet!" Vedic architecture arrives in mid-western America. [See story, pg 1.] Put a shrine room in

the north and a kitchen in the south-east to enhance such activities. It is all part of a global trend to build our homes and spaces as sacred places, in tune with cosmic order.

Books sales and consultations in the Chinese Fengshui, "the spiritual art of placement," are booming. Experts are called in to "find the dragon"-to determine the location and nature of energy fields on site. Don't put your house on the "tail." It's unstable. In Malaysia recently a film-maker's business was troubled. A Chinese seer recommended physical facility re-arrangments. After these changes business improved dramatically.

From a more scientific angle, Bau-Biology consultants show that 75% of modern home materials are toxic. It is hard to do pranayama with chronic sinusitus caused by synthetic carpet dust. House walls are full of electric wires producing radiation proven to be out of sync with the human body. Result? Hard to meditate-restless mind. But, twist paired wires once every three feet during installation to break the force fields, and voila! Santosham.

Lest one think these are mere New Age fringe disciplines, consider the new home, nestled in the mountains of Northern California, of Stephen Roulac, Managing Partner of Roulac Group, a multi-million dollar real estate finance consultancy. He brought in Fengshui, Bau-Biology, Sacred Geometry (from Europe) and Sthapatya Veda experts. He called for zero conflict or confrontation with the county planning department. He wanted a foundation of harmony at all levels. Deepak Bakshi's Sthapatya Veda analysis of the plans revealed problems with the marma points and sutra lines of force. The county planning department also returned the plans with some concerns and requests for changes. Adjustments were made and the desired sacred order of Sthapatya Veda appeared. The plans were approved.

God's Actors on a Global Mission

As told to Jahnavi Pal by Ramlila artist, Ashok Sharma, (below)

Iwas orphaned at age four. Fortunately, Swami Ramswarup Sharma took me

under his wing and taught me the Ramayana. I never went to school. A tutor came home to teach me Hindi, Sanskrit and music only with relevance to the Ramayana. I am 26 now and have been a performing artist in Ramlilas and Krishnalilas for the past 22 years. My ancestors were all Ramlila artists. It is not just a performance. I experience a new angle of the epic every time I am on stage. Our 40-member troop are all brahmins with no formal education. Each of us can enact any role in the Ramayana or Mahabharata at a minute's notice. We never have women doing female roles. You see, we are revered wherever we go; people come and touch our feet. When we are performing we practice brahmacharya. This might not be possible with women around. We are only human and women can be quite distracting when touring. I am married and have a one-year-old son. We earn US$300 to US$900 a year. Our shows are free. If tickets are sold then what is the difference between a cinema and a Ramlila? We consider it a sin, an insult to God that it's impossible to stage the whole epic. To make up for it we have a pandit sit in the wings and recite the entire Ramayana during the actual performance. We do a lot of shows at home in Vrindavan, but we have traveled all over the world. In Canada some children were so impressed by Rama and Laxman touching Vishwamitra's feet they started touching their parents' feet. The parents were so grateful for our imparting Hindu culture to their children. What really moves me is to see foreigners come to Vrindavan and accept our culture as their own. They wear the dhoti and shave their heads. In contrast, it is agony to see our children go the Western way. One day one has to return to one's roots, then why not now?

Shilpis Put Life into Livermore

The Shiva-Vishnu Temple of Livermore, California, has had five expert shilpis from Tamil Nadu carving its four new cement gopurams since June of 1994. Under the direction of master temple archetect, Muthiah Stapathi, the work is reportedly being done to perfection. "In this business you have to be uncompromising," he said. The work will cost around us$250,000. Reflecting the diverse Hindu congregation, the Smarta syncretic design features several styles, one gopuram is Orissan, another Chola, etc.-a gorgeous masala for a pluralistic America.

Chinese Sai Center Will Serve

Singapore will soon have its fifth Sai Baba Center. The US$1.5 million Moulmein Rise Center-comprising a prayer hall, guest rooms, classrooms, a library and a free specialist outpatient clinic-will be ready in the fall of '95. Tentatively named the

"Sai Center," its medical services will be available to all in need, the extent being contingent on professional volunteers. Singapore now has five registered associations of Sai Baba followers. The oldest (19 years) and largest (500 members), the Sri Sathya Sai Society, has a 75% Indian Hindu and 25% Chinese membership. Members of the other four smaller societies are almost entirely Chinese.

Thailand Hosts Rama Conference

Vishwa Sahitya Sanskriti San-sthan, Bharat, held its 11th international Ramayana conference for three days in December, '94 in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants came from 30 countries, with an Indian delegation of 25. The ornate, exquisite costumes and delicate, graceful Thai style of drama brought beauty and power to the annual conference's emphasis on promoting the characters of the Ramayana as role models of bhakti, family loyalty and adherence to dharma in a world of deteriorating values.