

[News In Brief](#)

Category : [February 1996](#)

Published by Anonymous on Feb. 02, 1996

News In Brief

BOMBAY BECAME MUMBAI, officially, through a government cabinet decision on November 21st, 1995, thus restoring the city's ethnic name from the Westernized Bombay. Also, a UN report says that Mumbai "will emerge as the second largest city in the world by the year 2015, with a population of 27.4 million, after Tokyo with 27.7 million."

THE SHIRDI SAI BABA TEMPLE in Chanderghat Hyderabad was officially declared a universalist, non-Hindu temple. The New Delhi Supreme Court dismissed an appeal of the Commissioner for Endowments who wanted the temple declared as Hindu. The Court noted that Baba's philosophy was neither exclusively Hindu nor Muslim or Christian. The Endowment Commission controls Hindu temple administration and finances. Places of worship of other religions are free of such control.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, there's a way! For the past six years, a widow, Mrs. Suraj Mal Duggar, has been nourished solely on chena pani, whey water. Living a devoted life with her son in Bihar, she was initiated as a Jain sadhikain 1979. Recently, a Jain sect in Rajasthan gave her bhagawati diksha--initiation into the inner order under Gandhipati Acharya Tulsi Jain. At age 75, despite (or due to) her liquid diet of whey, she is

robust, performs a round of daily duties, meditates 9-16 hours a day and gets well without medicine if she ever falls ill.

CALCUTTA'S ARCHITECTS are consulting the Vastu Shastras for building design. "Industrialists and business men are increasingly demanding that their factories, offices and even homes be built according to the norms laid down in Vastu Shastras, the form of architecture enshrined in the Hindu scriptures." says Ambar Mukherjee in the Calcutta Telegraph.

TOTALLY TREE-FREE PAPER may end up saving the world's forests. Vision Paper, a US company, is successfully marketing a good quality paper made from "the extracted and pulped cellulose of plants and crops other than trees." The company claims that the tree-free fiber, called kenaf, is chlorine and acid free, will provide a sustainable fiber supply, create jobs and have less environmental impact than paper made from trees." e-mail: kenafman@aol.com.

THE SANSKRIT REVIVAL has a new US player in the Speak Sanskrit movement." The Nov-Dec. issue of Samskrita Bharati says, "Speak Sanskrit classes are being conducted in 14 major US cities. Sri Krishna Shastry, the man behind the movement has motivated us all and laid down the basic foundation to integrate Sanskrit into our daily lives." For information contact: Venkatesh Murthy, 4433 Othello Drive, Fremont, California 94555, USA. Tel: 510-797-5601.
<http://rbhatnagar.csm.us.edu:8080/sanskrit.html>

CHRISTIANS PROTESTED "Shiva's Dance of Creation,"

performed at the opening ceremony of an Asian-Christian conference in June, 1995, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, according to Express News Service. Sri Lankan Anglicans protesting the dance have drawn up a resolution to perform a repentance service, remove the responsible clergy, ban any future Hindu dance at Anglican Churches, withdraw from the national Christian council and stage a fast to death if these demands are not met.

SIXTY VIETNAM HINDU temples are in need of restoration, according to Mumbai-based photographer, Benoy Behl, who photographed them in April, 1995. The Cham people, 16,000 in Vietnam, still worship Shiva and Parvati. The oldest temple, a 7th century Shiva temple in Popham, resembles the Mahabalipuram shore temples of the same period.

SRI SWAMI PRAGYANANDA celebrated his 50th birthday in his Delhi temple ashram, Sai Pragya Dham, on September 3rd, 1995. Early morning kirtana, processions, pujas, a yagna and a mass feeding marked the day. Free meals were given to 8,000 poor from 12 noon to 11:00pm.

THE VEDIC DHARMA SAMAJ is organizing a vegetarian essay contest with cash prizes. It is open to all who love the life in others. For details contact: Vedic Dharma Samaj, 9999 Palm Street, Bellflower, California 90706, USA. Tel: 818-281-3094.

THE GREEN POLICE may be the wave of the future, reports the November, 1995, issue of Vegetarian Times. Forty officers in Brooklyn, New York were trained to combat environmental

crime. They identify and write summonses for environmental infractions ranging from idling cars to dangerous chemical dumping. Says officer Kay Kurlanchik, who spearheaded the effort, "The community is very, very pleased with the program," which has improved community/police relations and fostered cooperation with government agencies. If you find a barrel of toxic waste, someone dumping oil down the drain or someone who just doesn't "give a hoot," call the police!

VEGETARIAN YOUTH have an uplifting vehicle for their concerns, promoting "compassionate, ecologically sound living." It's the new How On Earth! (HOE!) published by youth ages 13-24 from the Vegetarian Education Network, Pennsylvania, USA. Their promotional flyer says, "Youth who care about life on earth get HOE! a quarterly newsletter that covers a variety of environmental, animal and global issues. HOE! recognizes that a vegetarian diet is an essential component of compassionate, sustainable living." Jai HOE! Victory to our kindly youth! e-mail: HowOnEarth@aol.com

WOMEN'S LEGAL RIGHTS are under close scrutiny in Delhi. Indian women lament that equal rights under the law are far from achieved. Currently, a women cannot act as the natural guardian of her children, even with the consent of her husband, unless the husband is absent or incompetent. So, in broken marriages, women have to fight for custody, and even then the father retains full control over all property and investments in the name of the children. When the laws were set in 1956, marriage was deemed indissoluble, so the laws encompass only wives, widows and daughters, not single women or divorcees.

INDIA'S RELATIVE HINDU population dropped by 0.68% according to a 1995 Census Commissioner's report based on 1991 census data. In 1981 Hindus comprised 83.08% of India and only 82.41% in 1991--a result of a higher growth rate among other communities. Muslims were especially strong, with a growth rate of 32.76%, nearly 9% higher than the national rate of 23.79. The Hindu growth rate, on the other hand, is only 22.78 %. Most alarming is the uncontrolled national growth. At the current rate, India's population will reach a crushing 2 billion by the year 2000.

UP TO 50 MILLION FEMALES females are missing from India's population--another statistic gleaned from the 1991 census analysis released in 1995. In contrast to the world ratio of 105 women to every 100 men, there are only 93 women for every 100 men in India. In the state of Bihar, an estimated 160,000 female infants are killed each year. Despite media exposes on the horrors involved, female infanticide continues unabated, fueled by the high cost of weddings and dowry and now aided by ultra-sound and amniocentesis which detect female foetuses.

LIBERTY MAGAZINE reports that the US's Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a Nevada State prisoner, Donovan Stoner, a member of ISKCON, did not have his free exercise rights violated when the prison denied him vegetarian meals. According to the court, prisoners have the right to food that accords with the dietary laws of their religion, but that right is limited in order to achieve legitimate correctional goals or to maintain prison security.

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES are being sold by the hundreds in the UK and being made over into Hindu temples, mandiras and Sikh gurudwaras, reports Paul Murphy of Religion News Service . Methodism is waning at a fast rate. Today, only 7,000 Methodist churches remain out of 14,200 in 1932. Many UK Christians have expressed concern over this trend in Church conversions.

ILLICIT SUBSTANCE ABUSE by India's women is on the rise. Shalini Kathuria reported in the India Post, "The number of not only working women but also housewives misusing sedatives and alcohol is alarming. The intensity of the problem is unknown, as the use by women is largely a secret and is thus neglected by researchers." A primary concern is the effect on the families.