Global Dharma
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Colossal Events: 30,000 Watch Ravana Blaze

On sunday, october 1st, 1995, over 30,000 people assembled at Nassau Beach Park on Long Island, New York, USA, and watched a symbolic victory over evil--the burning of the giant effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Meghanatha, as part of the grand finale of the two-day celebration of Dussehra '95. The event was organized by AWB Food Bank in aid of its hunger relief crusade. The gross collection of us$100,000 "was barely enough to offset all the expenses for this colossal event," says Varinder Bhalla, the chairman of AWB Food Bank. However, it succeeded grandly in creating awareness about the problem of world hunger and AWB Food Bank's activities. Dussehra '95 also took Hinduism's North Indian-style mela to new heights outside of India. The 50-foot tall Ravana spellbound the audience when his eyes began flashing and fuming, followed by a pyrotechnical show. In the grand finale the three huge effigies were set ablaze with 100,000 firecrackers that filled the sky and thrilled an audience that had come from as far as Toronto, Virginia and Massachusetts. "The last time I saw Dussehra celebrated was in India in 1958, and it was quite nostalgic for me to be part of this festival again," said Mr. Saini from Toronto. "I was keen for my children to have a real glimpse of India's culture, and indeed they did." Messages of appreciation for AWB Food Bank's activities and for bringing Indian culture to USA were received from President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, Senator Bob Dole and

numerous other American officials, who thanked AWB Food Bank for "giving back to the community."

KEY ISSUES: Fined Unfairly?

On november 7th, 1995, judge Rodwell of the Luton Crown Court UK found the former president of ISKCON's Bhaktivedanta Manor in Hertfordshire guilty of breach of planning notice for allowing 30,000 pilgrims to attend Janmashtami celebrations in August, 1994. ISKCON was gifted the Manor in 1973 by Beatle George Harrison. The planning agreement specified it would be developed as a monastery/teaching facility. ISKCON was ordered to pay a fine of Â£30,000 and Shri Akhandadhi Das was order to pay Â£7,184. Hindus nationwide from all temples and societies are shocked at what they consider harsh punishment being given to a non-profit religious organization for a single day of peaceful worship. Prior to the festival, the Council agreed to a "stay of execution" of their notice to ban public worship at the Manor, giving worshipers the impression they could attend without prosecution. The Council revoked the stay of execution just four days before the festival. Akhandadhi Das decided to hold the festival anyway rather that lock the gates against the inevitable pilgrims. Judge Rodwell acknowledged that the Council behaved "immorally" but said the Manor should still not have opened, even if there had been a "bloody great riot." Shri Akhandadhi is appealing the decision. He is backed by Indian leaders of Hindu temples throughout England, who view the judgement as an unwarranted discrimination against the Hindu religion in UK.

Cross-Cultural: Nritya au PliÃ©

The temple and the swan is a 71-minute exploration of two

schools of dance: Kuchipudi and ballet. "To express is the paramount urge of every living entity," the video begins. "From meaningful expression graced with beauty emerges creation. We call this dance, the joy of life." The Temple & The Swan is the concept/creation of Sujata Vinjamuri, scripted and directed by Vinay Dumale, and is a joy to watch. From the rigors of class to the fluidity of the finished choreography, it is an artful presentation performed where dance begins and belongs--amid the holy grandeur of the temple. The Temple and The Swan asks, "Is dance all over the world a manifestation of the same soul? Does ballet have a nexus with Kuchipudi?" To this reviewer, the answer was clearly no. Ballet, we learn, originated in Italy as a "spectacle for royalty," while Kuchipudi originated as a form of worship in Andhra Pradesh. The film concludes, "Dance is a universal language capable of moving human hearts and minds, empowered to raise the human soul to mystic sublimation."

Dance Academy, Sujata Vinjamuri, 13109 Mason Bend, St. Louis, Missouri 63141, USA. Ph: 314-878-2861.

Nepal: Hindu Jagaran

Dr. Jogendra Jha, secretary general of the World Hindu Federation (WHF) said recently, "As of 1995, Christian converts exceed 200,000. More than thirty massively funded organizations are working under the United Mission to Nepal. But poor Muslims are not being converted. The problem is not poverty. It's that poor, innocent Hindus in remote areas do not know even the basic principles of our religion. A Hindu Jagaran (awakening) is needed. WHF is doing what it can with limited resources: arranging for saints to go to remote areas of Nepal; organizing the massive Rath Yatra (Chariot Procession) to

awaken Hindus; repairing temples; protesting to government embassies, building up the Ved Vidyashram education center and creating a global awareness of the situation."

Thanks to cooperation between New Delhi's Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Shri Kunkaran Das-Ganga Devi Chaudhary Academy in Kathmandu, India's world renowned Shri Ram Bharatiya Kala Kendra recently thrilled a Nepalese audience at the Royal Nepal Academy. Her Majesty Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah encouraged the artists and audience with her attendance.
By Hari Bansh Jha, Nepal

Environment: Losing our Soil

The international food policy Research Institute estimates that nearly 2 billion of the world's 8.7 billion hectares of cropland, pastures and forests used in agriculture have been degraded by erosion, pollution and deforestation. This will not likely affect food security global, but the regional and local impact could be severe. Damaged regions include northeast India, Bangladesh, Burma and Africa.

Communications: India Network

Indo-link's "news from india" Internet Web site says that as of August 15, 1995, project ERNET had linked 600 institutions with 50,000 Internet users in eight cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Madras, Hyderabad, Calcutta, Pune, Bangalore and Ahmedabad. The project hopes to extend this to 100 cities by March, 1996. Bangalore's Microland had announced partnerships and agreements with Sun Microsystems and Netscape Communications Corporation, making Microland the

first to bring Web technology products to India. Meanwhile, to encourage use and understanding of "the net," the Indian government is giving free internet access and laptops to some members of parliament.

Pilgrimage: Dharma Resorts

Anyone who has gone by train to Rameswaran probably enjoyed talking with a big family of Gujaratis and on the way to Kashi made friends with a Tamil family. With millions of northerners going south and southerners going north, a successful new venture, Sterling Resorts, Madras, is cashing in on India's internal religious tourism. Their new hotel chain called Heritage India is unique. These hotels, located near various remote Hindu holy sites, are designed in the traditional style of the area. Trees are planted and efforts made to reverse tourism's environmental degradation. Where feasible Sterling contributes to the maintenance of the temples and religious sites their guests have come to see. The service is tops. Their market is upscale. Their management is based on Vedanta. Managing director, R. Subramanian (above) says, "There is no dichotomy between Vedanta and business. Everybody is equal. As a boss I am not superior to my subordinates--we only perform different functions in the organizations. I respect people and they respect me. It is the most powerful way to energize people. I try to eliminate interpersonal conflicts. This is the perfect management concept. I believe it is going to make us one of the strongest business groups in the country." If Sterling succeeds, it will mark a new era where big business integrates Hindu values for success and the development of a better society for all.

Trends: Hindu Girls Are Marrying "Outside" Boys

Second generation indian hindu girls in america are marrying more non-Indian boys. Manika Dhingra, a college student writing for India Post says: "Women are tired of being taken for granted. They want more. Indian women have learned they don't have to shoulder the double burden of a career and housework while the man watches TV. Many white men are willing to even feed the baby and change his diapers. Most Indian men will think you are crazy if you ask them to do this. American men are more sensitive to women's issues. Many learned to cook and help with the baby from their mothers." Also few girls are willing to leave America to live in India, and men in India are unlikely to move to America. The girls are left stranded. Marriage arrangements are deferred or badly handled by parents who don't let their daughters get to know prospective grooms. The girls, growing older, end up shopping on their own, fueled by hormones and the liberal values learned in college. Indian parents are becoming more accomodating--if the boy is a wealthy professional. Unfortunately, most girls who marry "outside" drop their Hindu traditions.

Global Health Watch--AIDS: A Time for Chastity and Fidelity

AIDS has killed nearly 5 million people since the late 1970's. Early controversies over predicted death rates based on HIV infections versus diagnoses of full-blown AIDS have receded unresolved. Medical speculation aside, people are dying, and the epidemic progresses with no cure in sight. A red-alert stands. The following few estimates as of mid-1995, are taken from electronic on-line services and the World Health Organization. They are given as full-blown cases (w/AIDS); and infections (w/HIV) through June 1995. Death after HIV infection varies from ten years to as soon as six-months after the onset of full-blown AIDS. Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of U.N.

AIDS, says that the epidemic appears to have peaked in Northern Europe, where new infections are equal to or less than the number of deaths. The US has the most of any developed nation and 100,000 of its cases are among homeless persons. AIDS continues to expand in Africa where death rates are highest. Uganda is the worst hit country in the world. Close to 30% of its population may die of AIDS. Though just starting in Bharat, India could take the lead, where it is spread primarily through prostitution. By the year 2000 the global total of HIV infected persons is expected to reach 40 million, 5 million of whom may live in India.

	w/AIDS	w/HIV
Global	4.5 million	8.5 million
Africa	420,000	8.5 million
Uganda	300,000	3 million
India	2,000 (just starting)	1.6 million
USA	400,000	750,000
Brazil	66,000	500,000

Relativity Watch--1992 USA mortalities: heart diseases, 925,079 (42.5 percent of all deaths); cancer, 521,100; accidents, 86,300; AIDS, 33,500.