DIASPORA
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DIASPORA

USA

The Brain in Meditation

Science is moving in on religion's turf.Newsweek reports that brain imaging techniques are revealing that a region at the top rear of the brain is related to meditation. It appears to weave sensory data into a feeling of where the self ends and the rest of the world begins. But it can not sustain these distinctions when the subject is meditating. Deprived of sensory input, this "orientation area" has no choice but to "perceive the self to be as one with all of creation," says Dr. Andrew Newberg. He is one of many neurologists interested in the study of religious experience in a new scientific field called neuro-theology.

SRI LANKA

Rama's Lanka Abode

Situated 7,200 feet above sea level on Lanka's Horton Plains in Nuwara Eliya, the island's highest point, sits a little-known temple, designating the location of Rama's legendary rescue of Sita from Ravana. Lately, because of concern for conservation of natural resources and the preservation of historical monuments as well as political disagreements the government has made the actual site of the rescue legally inaccessible. However, this nearby temple, featuring some new brightly painted murtis (statues), is bringing fresh life to the story of Rama from the Indian classic, The Ramayana, and attracting more pilgrims. The road nearby is literally littered with coins offered by worshipers who stop their cars briefly to pay

homage.

NAIROBI

Diaspora Study

Prime Minister Vajpayee established the High Level Committee (HLC) on Indian Diaspora with the ambition of conducting an in-depth study of the problems and concerns, hopes and aspirations of overseas Indian communities. His hope is that India can nurture and maintain a symbiotic relationship with them. Having been instructed to submit their report by August of 2001, the HLC visited Nairobi in January, following a global itinerary.

INDIA

The Plight of The Girl Child

It's no great secret that a girl child is less wanted than a boy in many Indian families. But just how much less is revealed in shocking new studies based on ultrasound scans of pregnant women. Out of every 1,000 fetuses that are destroyed, 995 are female, according to these studies. These statistics, coupled with facts showing the number of girls per 1,000 boys declining from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001, are spuring social groups to

exclaim that India's girl killing is wrong and should stop.

NEW ZEALAND

Immigrants Unwelcome

Rani and Basant decided to shed their surnames in India because of discrimination due to caste. Such discrimination was something they thought they would be leaving behind them when they came to New Zealand, a land famous for its

fair and multicultural society. But they were wrong. According to a report in the New Zealand Herald, even though they spoke English fluently and between them had degrees in science, business administration and economics, they could not get qualified jobs. Not only that, they could not even get past initial phone interviews, where they felt they were shunned because of their accents. Their plight highlights concerns already raised by Immigration Minister Lianne Dalziel who wants to equip immigrants with better information, respect and support. The Equal Employment Opportunities Trust is also providing opportunities for

defense against discrimination.

NIGERIA

Pot n' Pot

Thanks to the second law of thermodynamics, Mohammed Bah Abba has developed an award-winning refrigerator that doesn't need electricity. It's an earthenware pot nestled inside a

larger pot, packed with a layer of damp sand inbetween. When the "pot-in-a-pot" is stored in a very dry, well-ventilated place, the water held in the pots' clay walls and sand evaporates, carrying heat with it. The inner pot therefore cools down, making a useful ice box in the northern deserts of Nigeria, where Abba lives and works. Tomatoes can last for several weeksinstead of several days, and spinach, which usually wilts within hours, can stay fresh up to twelve days. It's a lo-tech refrigerator with wide application in hot areas of the world.

USA

Catholic School Crisis

Nationally, 13.6 percent of Catholic school students in America are non-Catholic. This number, which includes a significant group of Hindus, has risen steadily from 2.7 percent 30 years ago and shows signs of increasing. In Catholic

schools, all students are required to take courses in the Catholic religion and to attend Catholic services. These religion classes are sure to confuse and confound the religious beliefs the non-Catholic children are taught at home. Yet parents ignore this devastating impact upon the child's mind in the hope of getting a "better education." Even the Catholic church is questioning why it teaches non-Catholics, especially in schools where there are no Catholic children

at all.

SOUTH AFRICA

Air Powered

Perhaps this vehicle's odd shape isn't the exact look of the future, but its technology certainly brings new hope to

our choking planet. It costs just us$10,000 and can travel 120 miles for 30 cents. Introduced in Johannesburg, South Africa, and promoted as being simple, economic and clean, the e.Volution's piston engine is powered by the release of compressed air which is stored in tanks, very similar to scuba diving tanks, attached to the underside of the car. The technology was actually developed as a means to move Formula One racing cars without starting

their engines. The car can go ten hours at 50 miles an hour per charge and has an onboard compressor. Just plug into an outlet and go go go.

USA

A Yoga for Sore Wrists

No, the carpal tunnel doesn't go under a free way. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is a painful and disabling wrist disorder, resulting from excessive and unrelieved repetition of movements that in themselves appear to be innocuous, such as typing on a computer keyboard. It is

characterized by numbness, tingling and pain in the base of the thumb and the first three fingers. Its various treatments include surgery. And now there is something new to try: yoga. According to results from a 1999 study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association,

people with CTS randomly assigned to a group that used eleven yoga postures designed for strengthening , stretching and balancing each joint in the upper body, along with relaxation twice weekly for eight weeks, improved in grip strength and pain reduction more than a

control group. "The bottom line is that yoga-based exercise represents an alternative way of handling this problem with virtually no side effects," said Warren A. Katz, chief of rheumatology at Presbyterian Medical Center in Philadelphia.

USA

Child Yogis

Very young kids might think its a game of make-believe pretending to be

sleeping doggies, lions and snakes. But mom-and-dad baby boomers throughout the US are getting serious about yoga for kids. Yoga training organizations aimed at children and adults who teach children, like YogaKids in Indiana, are springing up all over the country and are

being well received. Enthusiasts assert that yoga can even help children with behavioral difficulties like attention-deficit disorder. Yoga asanas, physical postures, are also used by physical therapists to assist children with Down's Syndrome. Yoga has proven to aid

development of self esteem in severely disabled children.

USA

Delhi, USA

Sri Danvir Hardlal Hunji recently built a Hindu temple in Yuba City, just a three-hour drive from Delhi not Delhi, India, but California. Delhi got its name 100 years ago when a large Indian community lived there, which gradually married into the

surrounding Mexican population and was fully assimilated.

BRIEFLY...

Scientists in India are angry with a recent decision by the government's University Grants Commission to "rejuvenate the science of Vedic astrology inIndia" by starting departments of Vedic astrology in Indian universities. As

reported in The Hindu , leading scientists are objecting that astrology does not conform to the established practices of science and therefore should not be treated as a valid course of study in a university curriculum.

The Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) has agreed to support the country's Ministry of Education in its attempts to replace corporal punishment with alternative discipline in schools, even though that

TTUTA previously wanted to maintain corporal punishment as a last option.

Agama Saurabha is a new international monthly magazine, published in Chennai, India, by the

Patanjali-Tirumular Mahayoga Mandiram, an "international center for the advanced study of siddha, yoga and agamic sciences." It was released in January 2001. More information can be obtained on Agama from Dr. S.P.

Sabharathnam, 167/17, Jawahar Colony, 4th Avenue, Anna Nagar, Chennai 600 040.

Maestro Ravi Shankar was bestowed an honorary knighthood in recognition of his

services to music. The legendary musician's wife Sukanya and daughter Anoushka were present for the award ceremony held at the British Embassyin Delhi.

Negative thinking can be devastating. According to an article published in Religion Watch, mounting evidence indicates some relgious beliefs can prolong or induce illness. A recent study of 595 men and women aged 55 and

older, showed a 20 percent increase during a two-year, follow-up period in the patients' "risk of mortality," all due to three beliefs: feeling alienated from God, feeling unloved by God and blaming the devil. Researchers speculate that such

"negative religious coping" may depress the immune system while increasing anxiety and depression.