

[What Miracles Are Made of](#)

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What Miracles Are Made of

In this season sacred to Ganesha, we recall how this endearing God drank all the milk in London and Delhi

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Aum Ganesha! We just returned from Anchorage, Alaska, where we inaugurated the opening of the first Hindu temple in the remote winter state, a temple to Lord Ganesha in fact, at the end of our Innersearch Alaska 1999 travel-study program, the fifteenth such program that we have conducted since way back in 1967. With Ganesha in our hearts and minds, we will soon be off to celebrate His birthday at the grand opening of our Panchamukha Ganapati Mandapam and Spiritual Park on the lovely island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean near Madagascar. Lord Ganesha seems to be very popular this year! It all reminds me of the "Milk Miracle" which was exactly four years ago.

On September 21, 1995, just days after I had completed the final editing of my book, Loving Ganesha, something quite wonderful happened. Lord Ganesha began sipping milk, first in India, then in nearly every country where Hindus reside, as devotees rushed to temples and shrines to offer milk to the

elephant-faced God. It was a great spiritual experience for us in Hawaii to receive at our editorial offices the many phone calls and fax messages with positive, uplifting testimony as to His drinking milk in so many places.

It all began on September 21 when an otherwise ordinary man in New Delhi dreamed that Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed God of Wisdom, craved a little milk. Upon awakening, he rushed in the dark before dawn to the nearest temple, where a skeptical priest allowed him to offer a spoonful of milk to the small stone image. Both watched in astonishment as the milk disappeared, magically consumed by the God. Within hours, news had spread like a brush fire across India that Ganesha was accepting milk offerings. Tens of millions of people of all ages flocked to the nation's temples. The other-worldly happening brought worldly New Delhi to a standstill, and its vast stocks of milk, more than a million liters, sold out within hours.

Just as suddenly as it started in India, it stopped, in just 24 hours. But it was just beginning elsewhere, as Hindus in India called their relatives in other parts of the world. Soon our Hinduism Today offices were flooded with reports from around the world. Everywhere the story was the same. A teaspoonful of milk offered by touching it to Ganesha's trunk, tusk or mouth would disappear in a few seconds to a few minutes--not always, but with unprecedented frequency. Reuters news service quoted Anila Premji, "I held the spoon out level, and the milk just disappeared. To me it was just a miracle. It gave me a sense of feeling that there is a God, a sense of Spirit on this Earth." Not only Ganesha, but Siva, Parvati, Nandi and the Naga, Siva's snake, took milk.

The "milk miracle" may go down in history as the most important event shared by Hindus this century. It brought about an instantaneous religious revival among nearly one billion people. It is as if every Hindu who had, say, "ten pounds of devotion," suddenly now had twenty.

Naturally there were skeptics--10% of Hindus, according to our very unscientific poll, and others who moved swiftly to explain the phenomenon. "Capillary action," coupled with "mass hysteria" is the correct explanation, concluded many scientists within a few hours. Aparna Chattopadhyay of New Delhi responded to scoffers in a letter to the Hindustan Times: "I am a senior scientist of the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, New Delhi. I found my offerings of milk in a temple being mysteriously drunk by the Deities." A leading barrister in Malaysia was dumbfounded when a metal Ganesha attached to an auto dashboard absorbed six teaspoons of milk. In Nepal King Birendra made offerings to the God. In Kenya and other countries Deities in shallow trays without drains took gallons of milk.

The worldwide press coverage was nearly as amazing as the miracle itself. For days, the event dominated the news in India, where the English-language press, with its Marxist-leaning political slant, has never been a friend of Hinduism. Outside India, local and leading national papers, such as the New York Times and Washington Post in America, and the Financial Times in UK, picked up the story and reported positively on it. Reuters and Associated Press carried a dozen articles a day on "the Milk Miracle." In some countries reporters went to temples, personally offered milk and, in their report, shared their own joyful experience as fact.

Rajiv Malik, our correspondent in New Delhi, reported, "My wife offered milk twice. I could clearly see the milk disappearing in a few seconds. Many temple priests said they had dreams of Ganesha asking for milk, which they then offered in the early morning.... I have spoken to about 100 people. Ninety percent of them told me they had experienced it, and the milk had really been accepted by the Deity."

Correspondent Lavina Melwani said the miracle was happening even in cynical, hard-edged New York. Manisha Lund, a college student, went to the Hindu temple in Queens, which was a virtual stampede. When she offered milk to Lord Ganesha, she said "It was sucked up like someone was drinking it with a straw." Young people seemed to have the best luck. Pummy Singh, 14, called her mother at work and gave her the exciting news: Ganesha had taken the milk three times from her and her friends. Such was the frenzy that it was hard to gain entrance into the crowded temples, even at 2:00 in the morning.

Archana Dongre, our correspondent in Los Angeles said that at the Chatsworth temple reporters for CNN and local TV channels came, and the miracle reportedly happened for them. One reporter, Sharon Tae of Channel 5, was so excited she hugged
the temple president with tears in her eyes.

At the Edmonton, Canada, Ganesha temple, Aran Veylan, a barrister, said, "I simply can't explain what happened to the milk. It would visibly 'wick' up from the spoon to the surface of the stone of the trunk. Spoonful after spoonful was absorbed,

sometimes as quickly as one could count to three, usually in 20 seconds. At the conservative rate of two teaspoons per minute for 51.5 hours (milk was offered continuously), some 7.7 gallons of milk were taken up."

Prabha Prabhakar Bhardwaj of Kenya said, "People from different religions and nationalities came and made the offering. Many nonbelievers came to test. When the offering was accepted, it changed people's thinking. The miracle had a special effect on the younger generation."

Jay Dubashi, a columnist for New Delhi's Organiser, provided the following report. "It was a small boy who first alerted me as to what was happening. 'Come, come,' he said, 'Ganeshji is drinking milk.' We went to the nearby temple together, he and I, and the crowd was thick. A small girl, not more than three or four, was raising a spoon to the lips of Ganeshji, and as we watched in awe the milk disappeared.

"The miracle was seen not just in India, but almost all over the world, wherever Hindus congregate. And it did not take days, not even hours, probably a few minutes to spread. It shows how close the Hindu community is when it comes to things that affect its identity, even closer than the Internet. There were throngs of Hindus in temples in London and Leicester, New Jersey and Chicago, Denmark, Canada, Bangkok and Singapore. And the whole thing was breathtakingly spontaneous.

"It also revealed how close the Hindus are, not only to each

other but also, to their Gods. To us, the Gods are not something external to us, but very much a part of our being. The relationship is affectionate and intimate, as between members of a family. There is nothing in the world as close-knit as a Hindu family, and the Gods are as much a part of this family as anyone else."

Yes, the milk miracle was a wonderful example of Hindu faith and the indigenous belief that the Gods are real beings, not figments of human imagination or mere symbols of the forces of nature. And, as Mr. Dubashi quaintly queried, "If once in a while they come down and sip a little milk from our spoons, why should it be a miracle? It's the most natural thing in the world." Ganesha continued to accept milk for several days. In many temples the management stopped the offerings because it became just too much for them to sustain. This month our inquiries at temples in England, Canada and India revealed that Ganesha was not currently taking milk. Perhaps He feels one demonstration was enough,...but if you encounter any more miracles, please write and let us know!