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Diaspora

CAMBODIA

Gods Allowed Reentry

Cambodia reopened the Khmer Mountaintop Preah Vihear temple August 1 to symbolize the end of its civil war. "Peace and stability have prevailed. The temple is now open for visitors," said Colonel Va Xuen, commander of Cambodian troops deployed to guard the stone edifice. The Khmer Rouge held the Hindu temple, built in the 15th century at the height of the old Khmer civilization, until its soldiers in the area defected to the government in March, 1998. "We've cleared landmines to prepare for visitors," Xuen said. The temple, near the Thai border, was a popular tourist site until it was closed in the early 1960s when Thailand and Cambodia disputed its ownership. The dispute is considered history now, and Cambodia promises to spend \$1 million restoring the neglected temple.

KENYA

Celebrating a Poet's Birth

Rabindranath Tagore is best known throughout the world as the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1913. The Ma Sharda School of Music in Nairobi celebrated his 137th birth anniversary in May, 1998, with a joyous rendering of selections from Rabindrasangeet, Tagore's over 2,500 songs, performed at the Indian High Commission. Led by their dedicated teacher and foremost exponent of Rabindrasangeet

in Kenya, Mrs. Rajashree Mukherjee, the youth thrilled audiences with Tagore's invocations to God in different ragas, songs that express every mood of life, from change of seasons to love and patriotism.

EDUCATION

Luscious Kids' Literature

It's not easy to find accurate religious books for your kids that are also a feast for the eyes and in multiple languages. Enter Ramonas Publishers and their glossy, new, fabulously printed Brindhavanam series--"illustrated religious storybooks for Hindu children." A beautiful color painting or photo splashes fully across every page, magnetizing a child's eyes. Their first offering, Little Lord Ganesha and the Wondrous Mango, is impressive. In this book, original illustrations (see right) by famous Mylapore (Chennai) painter Maniam Selvan are the backdrop to a cute story teaching respect for parents in the form of a race between Lord Ganesha and His brother Kartikkeya to circle the world. The book is also available in French, German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Malay, Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati and other Indian languages. Future books in the series focus on the nature of Gods and Goddesses, saints and temples.

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MEMORIALS

Standing Tall

He's a legend now, having stunned the 1893 Parliament of Religions with his eloquence. To honor Swami Vivekananda as

the first man to bring Hinduism to America, a ten-foot bronze statue was unveiled August 13 at the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago. "Our original plan was to put the statue in a city park in Chicago, but apparently there's no precedent for honoring a religious leader in that way," said Barbara Horton of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, which raised money for the monument. Swami Atmasthananda, the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Mission, performed the dedication. The image is modeled after a photograph of Swami taken in Chicago after his appearance at the Parliament of Religions.

SOCIETY

The "Girl Child Decade"

Plights of girls worldwide, especially in India, are highlighted ever more frequently today, as shown by People & the Planet magazine's latest issue, "The Girl Child." The articles explore the ever-growing imbalance of girls and boys in India as a result of sex-selected abortion, infanticide and neglect. New surveys put mortality in the 0-4 age group 43 percent higher for girls than for boys, with another upswing in the 15-19 age group. Girls commonly toil from dawn to dusk in fields (or in industries) while boys get educated in school--India was home to 197 million illiterate women in 1991. Visit People & the Planet's website to read all the major articles:

www.oneworld.org/patp/.

ADVERTISING

One with All

Ford is driving Hindu philosophy into the mass mind. Their hip ad below appeared in Newsweek and Time. It reads, "Josh put a new twist on an old philosophy. To be one with everything, he says, you've gotta have one of everything. That's why he

also has the new Ford Ranger. So he can seek wisdom on a mountaintop. Take off in hot pursuit of enlightenment. And connect with Mother Earth. He says it gives him inner peace." Cool!

USA

Grain by Grain

Five thousand visitors streamed through Washington D.C.'s Arthur Sackler Gallery over one August weekend--more than double the usual attendance--to witness two Tibetan monks from India, Tsering Wangchuk and Dhonden Gyatso, painstakingly constructing a "mandala of the Healing Buddha" out of colored marble sand. The demonstration (praised by the Washington Post) accompanied the just-opened "Buddha's Art of Healing" exhibit, featuring the only existing paintings from a Tibet medical atlas. The Sackler was also home in 1997 to an excellent Hindu puja exhibit.

THE VEDAS

God's Word, Sages' Voices

By their words the inspired sages impart manifold forms to that Supreme Self, which is the One.

Rig Veda 10.114.5

The man who sees, who breathes, who hears words spoken, obtains his nourishment through me alone. Unrecognizing me, he yet dwells in me. Listen, you who know! What I say is worthy of belief.

Rig Veda, Devi Sukta 10.125.4

This atman is the Lord of all beings, the King of all beings. Just as the spokes are fixed in the hub and the rim of a chariot wheel, in the same way all these beings, all the Gods, all the worlds, all life breaths, all these selves, are fixed in the atman.

Shukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.5.15

I breathe out strongly like the wind while clasping unto myself all worlds, all things that are. I tower above the earth, above the heavens, so mighty am I in my power and splendor

Rig Veda, Devi Sukta 10.125.8

The All-Powerful Divinity dwells as the living individual in all living things. Hence the wise bows before a horse, a man of low birth, a cow, or an ass.

Yajnavalkya Upanishad 7

The Vedas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, sruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (2,000 bce), Bible New Testament (200 ce), Koran (600 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). Four in number, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, the Vedas include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6,000 bce

Who Is a Hindu?

"Acceptance of the Vedas with reverence; recognition of the fact that the means or ways to salvation are diverse; and the realization of the truth that the number of gods to be worshiped is large, that indeed is the distinguishing feature of the Hindu religion." B.G. Tilak's definition of what makes one a basic Hindu, as quoted by India's Supreme Court. On July 2,

1995, the Court referred to it as an "adequate and satisfactory formula."