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Diaspora

SUPERNATURAL

Pakistan Gets Its Turn

Nearly three years after a spectacular event inspired Hindus worldwide, hundreds of Pakistani Hindus rushed to the coal mining town of Machh at the end of March, 1998, upon hearing the town's Shankar Bhagwan (God Siva) temple murti (icon) was drinking milk. The temple announced the murti had consumed over 50 kg of milk by April 1. All milk in the town was purchased by April 2. "This is a holy sign that our wishes and dreams will come true," said Jai Krishan, a government employee from Quetta, over 500 km away. Local Muslim residents also scurried to the temple to witness the miracle. The town administration expressed fear that the old temple building would collapse due to the mad rush. According to the Indian Express, this is Pakistan's first reported Hindu miracle.

INDIA

Spirit Behind The Politics

The Bharatiya Janata Party couldn't resist. India's new Hindu-led government had to get blessings from the spiritual leaders who maintain India's inner stability. So, on March 6, 1998, shortly after their narrow election victory, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Lalkrishna Advani (BJP's chief), Keshubhai Patel (Chief Minister of Gujarat) and several other top pols pilgrimaged from Delhi to Gandhinagar, Gujarat, to meet with H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj at his Bochasanwasi

Akshardham temple complex. Swami urged his guests to "Keep almighty God with you all the time, in all your actions, and He will guide you towards a successful government." Pramukh Swami is a leader of the Swaminarayan sect, a worldwide family congregation and one of Hinduism's largest monastic orders, with over 600 monks, known as "saints." He is also the founder of a stunning marble temple in Neasdon, United Kingdom.

ANIMALS

Cruelty to Elephants

What if you were chained, taken to a beach and forced to dance for seven hours while intoxicated with beer? British and Japanese tourists to India who witnessed an elephant put through this spectacle in the state of Kerala didn't think he liked it, either, charging the Tourist Department with brutality. Foreign animal-lover tourists are part of a growing concern over cruelty in the name of cultural promotion. The dances (and another abusive event modeled after elephant parades at the Trichur Pooram festival), are the showpiece of Kerala's tourism festivals. Activists feel tourists should only be exposed to traditional activities.

HATHA YOGA

Farm Hands

Grab your mat and "play" yoga with a Rastafarian rooster and a straw-hatted cow uttering udderly silly lines in "E.I.E.I. Yoga" (us\$14.95, Mystic Fire Video). We showed this to children (those over nine called it corny) who delighted in watching Yogi Oki Doki, aka Max Thomas, perform handstands one minute, then toe-tapping song and dance routines, to the accompaniment of blue grass music. The approach may

confound purists, but Thomas tries to keep it fun while teaching hatha yoga to kids. With a continuous emphasis on breathing, Oki Doki guides you through twenty classic poses with names like Broccoli (" tree" pose) and Twisting Pea Vine (" eagle").

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www.levity.com/mysticfire/index.htm

AUSTRALIA

Groundbreaking Puja in Perth

Australia's newest addition to religious pluralism took root in the Western coastal capital of Perth on April 10, 1998. Special guest Paramacharya Bodhinatha from Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii, and 800 Hindus converged on a small tent to witness the foundation stone-laying ceremony for a new, Agamic-styled temple. Since 1990, the group has worshiped in a temporary hall also used for cultural activities. The new temple, building on solidarity, is designed with shrines to five main Deities: Devi, Siva, Ganesha, Vishnu and Subramanya. Total cost, including adjacent facilities, is likely to exceed US\$970,000.

HINDU TEMPLE ASSOCIATION OF W.A., PO BOX 53, WILLETTON, WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6955, PHONE/FAX: 618-9387-1418

EXERCISE

Fatuously Fat

The witty new issue of Colors magazine is about human obesity. It explores many factors such as unhealthiness of fatty foods, sneaky marketing strategies and lack of exercise due to

effort-saving inventions. For example, Colors reports 73 percent of Indian women devote two hours a day preparing roti, a flat bread. But now Easy Roti (advertised below) promises no rolling and 50 rotis an hour. It's one of many appliances permeating India.

RACE

Toward Parity!

Elite is the image of Britain's Household Cavalry, for centuries the monarch's personal guard. And so are white faces. Ethnic minorities, mainly descendants of immigrants from India and other former colonies, make up nearly seven percent of Britain's 56 million populace. But they're only one percent of the military. In 1996 a British commission found the Cavalry guilty of "institutionalized racism" The army unit pledged progress, but the first two blacks recruited so far quit due to racial abuse. In March, 1998, officers were ordered to recruit 200 black or Asian soldiers within 2 1/2 years.