Briefly . . .
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INDIAN RAGAS AREN'T just for music lovers. For many disabled people, music is the easiest, pain-free cure, according to Mr. Sanjay Prabhakar, a master's degree holder in music from Delhi University. Sanjay runs a special school in Delhi where the mentally retarded, deaf and dumb are treated through music. "I sing Indian ragas to the students. Continuous sound and vibration attract attention of the children, and they acknowledge the tunes." Sanjay uses different ragas depending on the ailment.

HATHA YOGA APPEARS IN UNUSUAL places. Business Week Enterprise says, "Entertaining clients in the 90s is less predictable and more personal," giving an example of a marketing consultant who takes her clients to yoga class. Other unlikely hot spots for teaching yoga are inner-city neighborhoods and shelters, according to Yoga Journal. The Los Angeles Times says, "Invented 5,000 years ago by Hindus" yoga is the rage, from corporations to movie studios. USA Weekend adds, "It is winning converts--from construction workers to Madonna--who want strength and less stress."

FIFTY CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN ISRAEL said April 1, 1998, they would refrain from conducting aggressive missionary campaigns aimed at Jews. The statement is intended to avert the threat of legislation that would outlaw mailing, possibly

even possession of, Christian missionary materials. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, Muslims who give up their faith could face three years in prison or a fine of up to US$1,300 under a proposed law.

GOD SIVA AS NATARAJA ("Lord of Dance") gets His name attached to many objects d'art. One is a sculpture by Jon Hudson titled "Shiva/Shiwana," installed near the world's most powerful radio telescope, the Very Large Array (VLA) in New Mexico. The VLA is a collection of 27 telescopes divided equally into three "arms." Hudson's reasoning is that "Shiva is the Hindu God who embraced the universe with many arms." The sculpture's three arms reflect the symmetry of the VLA.

"PRAYERS TO OTHER GODS on the rise," runs a headline in the New Zealand Herald. Waves of migrants and changing attitudes in Western society are creating a landscape vastly different from that sculpted by early Christian missionaries. The Herald reported on computer technician Ganesh, who daily worships various Deities at home. There are 25,500 Hindus in New Zealand,

out of a two million population. Recently, Prime Minister Jenny Shipley proposed that school education no longer be secular, but have more religion and ethics.

GRAB A SLEEPING BAG, JAPA MALA and your spirits--you're invited to Hindu Heritage Summer Camp 1998 in New York. Have great fun while studying puja, Sanskrit, philosophy, Deities and their symbols, meditation and ayurveda. All campers get to try their hand at Indian musical instruments and bharata natyam/folk dances. Special forest hikes included. For details, write: Devi Parvati, 60 E Squire DR, Apt. 8, Rochester, New York 14623, USA. Ph.: 716-424-6946.

AT THIS YEAR'S KUMBHA MELA in Haridwar, India, Naga sadhus announced on January 15 the formation of a "union" to protect rights over camping space at Sagar Island, where they congregate during the mela. "Sadhus, too, have a right to earn their living," said Suddhananda Giri Maharaj, union spokesman. Naga sadhus have traditionally camped near the Kapil Muni temple, where they garner many donations from pilgrims.

But in recent years, they've been gradually edged out by other sadhus and vendors.

YET ANOTHER HINDU TEMPLE IN FIJI was set on fire, the Sri Gangaman Temple in Sigatoka. Pundit Harish Sharma says on April 1, 1998, a shed erected for the temple's week long Ram Navami festival was burned. Temple president Subrail Narayan said, "We are shocked at this level of sacrilege. People should know that by burning the temple, they still cannot erase the religion. Why can't they respect our religion as we respect theirs?" Police are investigating.

GANESHA AS "VIGNESWARA," Remover of Obstacles, receives unusual offerings at Bull Temple Road in Bangalore. Apart from traditional coconuts, flowers, etc., students preparing for school tests place exam tickets (a paper giving your authorization number to sit for the exam) at His feet! The ritual lasts all day: tickets are entrusted to the priest, who places them on the Deity while chanting Sanskrit verses. Once the archana is done, tickets are returned to students with red powder and jasmine flowers.

THE WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR VEDIC STUDIES is having its second conference, titled "New Perspectives on Vedic & Ancient Indian Civilization" at the University of California, Los Angeles, August 7?9, 1998. For further information, contact Dr. Shiva Bajpai, 670 Wildomar ST, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272, USA. Phone: 818-677-3551.

NATIONAL GUIDELINES for Hindu temples will be drafted to prevent friction between Hindus and Muslims. Malaysia's Public Works minister, Dato Seri Samy Vellu, says he will meet with 200 Hindu leaders to set up a systematic approach to temple building. The announcement follows a March riot when 3,000 Muslims stormed a Hindu temple, saying too much bell-ringing disrupted Muslim prayers. The temple has since been moved. "With proper organization skills and fixed times for prayers and celebrations, there will be no problems," said Vellu.

BEFORE BUYING AYURVEDIC products, check the ingredients. For example, today's mass-market Chyavanprash is a cheap substitute for the

ancient prescription, claims Down to Earth magazine, yet it is one-third of India's total ayurvedic sales (US$220 million). India's Botanical Research Institute recently compared the new with the original chyavanprash.They found that the honey content in commercial samples was significantly lower (or replaced with sugar).The amla fruit (plant shown above), a major source of Vitamin C, was also deficient in modern recipes.

BRAZILIAN SHAMANS TXUCARRAMAE and Mantii smiled on March 31, 1998. After a severe drought causing the largest fires in the Amazon's history, claiming more than 600,000 hectares, rain began to pour a day after a dance was held in the Yanomami Indian reservation where members of several Indian tribes asked the Gods for rain.