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SACRILEGE

Hindu Bar Protested

With pictures of Lord Siva and Lord Krishna sharing the walls behind the liquor bottles with pop stars and models, "Karma," Chicago's newest nightclub, is one of the first Hindu "theme bars." The American Hindu Anti-Defamation Coalition is "shocked at the misuse of sacred Hindu symbols to promote alcohol-serving establishments." They report a Lord Ganesha at the entrance, a giant Siva Nataraja on the dance floor and "a man wearing three heads that appears to represent Lord Brahma dancing erotically on a pedestal."

RUSSIA

Religious Limits Are Law

A new law passed by both Houses of Russian government and signed by President Yeltsin gives the Russian Orthodox Church protected status. Critics charge it curtails the rights of other faiths--such as Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Hinduism. The new law protects Russia's historical religions from missionary faiths, especially those whose leadership is dubbed "foreign"--such as the Roman Catholic Church--which have grown dramatically since communism fell in 1991. Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and indigenous Pagan religions are safe under the law because significant sections of the Russian populace have traditionally followed them. The new law requires a faith to be registered for 15 years before it can gain

official legal status, and it must curtail its activities in the meantime. Even though various religious groups were consulted, this is virtually the same bill that was vetoed by President Yeltsin a few months ago under heavy international pressure.

THAILAND

Rahu Rises

Twenty thousand Thais congregated for a lunar eclipse ceremony in September, attempting to gain attunement with Rahu, the being in Hindu astrology associated with the waning cycle of the moon's orbit. The eclipse was the last to be seen in Thailand this century and is blamed by many for the country's abysmal economic situation--half the banks are closed due to failed loans. That Thailand's Buddhists maintain a strong connection to Hindu tradition is attested to by the fact the world's largest statue of Rahu is located in Nakhon Pathom, where the ceremony took place. The Prime Minister's wife, Phankrua Yongchaiyudh, is a prominent believer in Rahu's impact, and would have gone to the eclipse ceremony but for a critical press.

HOLLYWOOD

Just Say No

Beverly Hills 90210 star, vegetarian and animal rights activist Jennie Garth just made an anti-burger ad for PETA--People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. "Want to make sure the meat in your fridge won't poison your family?" goes the ad designed for newspapers and magazines. "Throw it out. There's never been a better time to go vegetarian." Her character, "Kelly," on the popular TV soap is also a vegetarian. The twenty-five year old married actress adopted

vegetarianism for ethical reasons, and lives with four dogs, one cat, one canary, two goats and a chicken named Frida. Jennie's also a new mother.

HERITAGE

Ridgely Estate to RK Mission

Richard Legget, A New York businessman, was enchanted by the personality and Vedanta philosophy of Swami Vivekananda when he barnstormed America in the 1890s. The swami stayed several times at Legget's 83-acre Ridgely Estate in the beautiful New York countryside. The Ramakrishna Mission recently acquired the property and dedicated it in October as the "Vivekananda Retreat" under the guidance of Swamis Swahananda and Atmarupananda. The Manor House is for permanent residents; the Macleod House accommodates ten women and the Leggett House six men.

Vivekananda Retreat, Ridgely, PO Box 321, Stone Ridge, New York 12484-0321 USA

INDIA

90 Days of Bilva Puja in Kashi

Kashi is Siva's city of light on the Ganga River in northeast India--one of the oldest cities in India and the world. Among Kashi's many monastery pilgrim sites that sit in the city's narrow lanes, the Jangamawadi Math (monastery) is well known and frequently sought out. The Math dates back to the sixth century and is now garnering more fame and good merit by helping peace in world affairs through 90 days of ceremonies centering on the bilva leaf, sacred to God Siva. The bilva (*Aegle marmelos*) or woodapple tree, is second only to the pipal (fig) tree in significance in the very ancient Saivite sacred horticulture. The monastery began the "Koti

Bilvarchana" rites on Guru Purnima--July 20, 1997--and ended them on October 20th. On the first day, 300,000 bilva leaves were offered to a Sivalinga. Alongside the rites were two major conferences--All India Veerashiva Conference and All India Shivacharya Conference--and lectures from prominent scholars. Participants and devotees numbering in the thousands came from all corners of India.

Jangamawadimath, Varnasi, 221 001 India

SRI LANKA

Monks' Turn

Five thousand monks of the Buddhist Mahasangha of Sri Lanka recently meditated and prayed en masse in favor of Sri Lanka president Kumaratunga's peace proposals to end the country's civil war and against the report of the "Sinhala Commission" which sharply criticized her plan. The action was in response to a demonstration a few days earlier by 400 monks in support of the commission and is the strongest action to date by the powerful 35,000-strong Mahasangha advocating a peaceful, rather than a military solution to the war.

THE VEDAS

God's Word, Sages' Voices

Purified, empty, peaceful, breathless, selfless, infinite, indestructible, stable, eternal, unborn, free, he is established in his own glory. Having seen the Self who is established in His own glory, he looks upon the wheel of life as a wheel that rolls on.

Krishna Yajur Veda, Maitri Upanishad 6.28

What people call salvation is really continence. For through

contenance man is freed from ignorance. And what is known as the vow of silence, that too is really continence. For a man through continence realizes the Self and lives in quiet contemplation.

Sama Veda, Chandogya Upanishad 8.5.1

The Self resides within the lotus of the heart. Knowing this, consecrated to the Self, the sage enters daily that holy sanctuary. Absorbed in the Self, the sage is freed from identity with the body and lives in blissful consciousness.

Sama Veda, Naradapari Upanishad 1

O Lord of the home, best finder of riches for our children are you. Grant to us splendor and strength, O Master of our home.
Shukla Yajur Veda 3.39

Never may brother hate brother or sister hurt sister. United in heart and in purpose, commune sweetly together.

Atharva Veda 3.30.3

Let there be no neglect of the duties to the Gods and the fathers. Be one to whom the mother is a God. Be one to whom the father is a God. Be one to whom the teacher is a God. Be one to whom the guest is a God.

Krishna Yajur Veda, Taitiriya Upanishad 1.11.1-2

May God--who, in the mystery of His vision and power, transforms His white radiance into His many-colored creation, from whom all things come and into whom they all

return--grant us the grace of pure vision.

Krishna Yajur Veda, Svetasvatara Upanishad 4.1