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Diaspora

BUSINESS

Helping the Craftspeople

Rolondon Reginaldo is a basketweaver in the Philippines who depends on the Ten Thousand Villages program for his livelihood. The USA-based non-profit organization regularly purchases his baskets and sends them for sale in hundreds of stores across North America, giving him far more profit than he can make locally. In the last 30 years this innovative program has assisted more than 60,000 craftspeople in dozens of countries, including India, and helped preserve village arts.

TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES, 704 MAIN STREET, P.O. BOX 500, AKRON,
PENNSYLVANIA 17501-0500 USA

ISSUES

Getting Rid of Bribery

A bribed official in Ecuador, South America, engineered the purchase of nine trains from a French company. When they arrived, it was discovered they were too heavy to run on the country's tracks, resulting in a loss of millions of dollars. Fed up with such greed, Ecuador's vice-president called upon Transparency International, a Germany-based group dedicated to deterring bribery and graft in business and governments. Together they drafted new laws which, at least initially, have stemmed graft in Ecuador. Corruption, states TI, is usually

invisible, but its effects are dramatic, escalating costs of projects, hurting taxpayers and distorting entire economies. Of the key economic powers, only the US has outlawed companies from bribing foreign officials. Other leading powers, such as all European nations, have refused to enact similar laws. TI opens offices in countries that request help with corruption.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL, OTTO-SUHR-ALLEE 97-99, D-10585 BERLIN, GERMANY

UNITED KINGDOM

Bagpipe Boom

Gruff bagpipe players, decked out in tartan, busby and sporran, have become a familiar sight at fashionable Hindu and Sikh ceremonies across Britain," reports the UK Independent. "On Sunday we do a Hindu wedding in Leicester," said 60-year-old Willie Cochran, bagpiper leader of the Balmoral Highlanders. "It's growing all the time. We play the standard Scottish melodies, which they seem to like." Some trace the taste for bagpipes to the days of the British Raj in India when pipers played for royal weddings.

MARKETING

Mac Gandhi?

Mahatma Gandhi is one of a group of unexpected personalities featured in Apple Computer's new campaign, "Think different." Apple's ads honor the creative geniuses who have changed the world in this century, including Gandhi, Albert Einstein, civil-rights leader (and Gandhian) Martin Luther King, Beatle John Lennon, inventor Thomas Edison, and architect Frank

Lloyd Wright. The ad concept is that Apple computer users can be just as creative as these great people. Whatever the logic, Hindus are delighted to have the Mahatma's darshan, spinning wheel and all, gracing TV sets and billboards across America, especially as part of such an august assembly of the 20th century's great people.

RESTORATION

Sun Temple

The Sun Temple of Kornak was built by King Narasimhadeva of the Ganga dynasty 700 years ago. Over the centuries, the magnificent sandstone monument has suffered from structural deterioration, sand drift and vandalism. Now the World Heritage Fund has given emergency assistance to the Archeological Survey of India to help arrest damage to the upper portions. ASI restoration plans call for making the temple watertight, severely restricting areas that tourists can visit and possibly even building a replica of the original in another location. The innermost shrine has been closed for over a century.

ARTS

Rising Star of Odissa Dance

All I want to do in life is dance," says the startling prodigy of Odissa dance, Bijayini Satpathy. "I dance to satisfy my soul. In the process, if it pleases the audience, that is my reward." Indian newspapers have lavished praise upon the dancer, the foremost protégée of Protima Gauri--head of the renowned Nrityagram school of dance and the arts near Bangalore in South India. "I first saw her among a group of 30 Odissi dancers in Bhubaneswar auditioning to join our tour to the USA and Canada," relates Protima. "She was totally immersed in

the ecstasy of dance. I recognized instantly her incredible potential."

Gauri featured the young Satpathy in a Ravana/Sita performance perfected by Gauri over two decades. She was amazed when Bijayini mastered her leading role in just two weeks!

The Nrityagram school follows a traditional gurukula system of students living with their teachers. It is decidedly an exclusive school--there are just 20 students, all girls. Beyond an initial fee of Rs.500 for a three-month evaluation period, the education is entirely subsidized, plus students are encouraged to perform publically as soon as they are ready. They are also trained in lectures and demonstrations to promote the art of dance.

Bijayini will be touring California with Gauri in May and June of this year and is available for performances, lectures and workshops.

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INTERFAITH

Global Forum In Turkey

The Global Forum of spiritual and parliamentarian leader's regional meeting in Konya, Turkey, focused upon the concerns of an immediate area--Central Asia--rather than the world, as

at earlier conferences in Oxford, Moscow and Rio. More than a hundred religious, cultural, business and political leaders discussed "long-term strategies to establish a balance for economic growth and human well-being into the 21st century."