Diaspora
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SOUTH AFRICA

Buddha, Most Merciful

South africans were blessed when the dalai lama paid them a rare visit in August. Guest of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, the political head of the Tibetan government in exile and spiritual head of millions of Buddhists addressed capacity audiences in Durban, Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg. Young Africans were enthused. One 20-year-old Christian, David Pascolo, said, "I find Eastern influences very interesting and am sure to be spiritually enriched by the Dalai Lama's talk." Representatives from the Hindu, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Parsee faiths joined the Dalai Lama at the University of Durban-Westville's Hindu Center. He emphasized the nonviolence of the Gandhian philosophy and voiced his aversion to conversion. "To me Buddhism is best, but that does not mean that Buddhism is best for everyone. It is better to follow your own religion rather than changing to a new one. No one has the right to impose a religion on another."

REINCARNATION

Riding a Jaguar

What value does western civilization place on a Hindu theological concept? Well, on October 3, Jaguar Corporation spent us$300,000 for a single day's advertisement with this lead line: "Reincarnation occurs when an old soul enters a new

body." Their eight-page pitch in the Wall Street Journal was designed by Ogilvy and Mather, one of the world's six top advertising agencies, with annual sales of over 7.6 billion dollars. Targeting the millions in America and others the world over who are aware of reincarnation, their creative design team followed an old Hindu tradition. Gods and theological concepts often "ride" symbolically on animals. In this case, rebirth "rode" man's most elegant piece of hot rod engineering, the revolutionary new $70,000 Jaguar XK8 sports car.

VEGETARIANISM

Holy Goat In Hawaii

In Hawaii, my neighbors raise goats for food. I once ate goat, thirty-five years ago. I've long since become a vegetarian and asked forgiveness. That conversion brought spiritual renewal. I wear a golden Om around my neck, proud to never again eat animals. I feed the goats with leftovers. They love me now. I was stunned to find one female marked with a reverse white image of the same Om I wear. In my source book of names I found--Mahesvari, Great Lady, and Viveka and named her Mahesvari Viveka.

Mary Deal, Hawaii

DANCE

Sacred Paths

Singapore's March dance production, "Sacred Journey," hit a highwater mark in the new Hindu classical dance trend to "break out of overworked legends and jaded routines" such as Krishna and the cowherd girls. Producer Mrs. Radhika Srinivasan brought together Singapore's talented Bharata Natyam dancer, Priya Arun, Malaysia's Odissi dancer, Ajit B.

Dasa, and renowned new Delhi-based vocalist and composer O.S. Arun on a uniquely Singaporean set designed as a Hindu/Buddhist mandala. With English narration, even non-Hindus were entranced by the portrayal of a dance student's fall from purity into the egoistic entanglements of performing arts and back to the spiritual path at the center of the mandala, "strong enough to be humble and wise enough to surrender."

MODERN ALCHEMY

Herbal Hoax?

Ramar Pillai, claims to have discovered a "petrol" producing herb. In September demonstrations in Tamil Nadu, he produced and burned the fuel for government officials. Other hydro-carbon producing plants have not yet been commercially viable, so when Ramar projected 10,000 litres a day at 5 rupees each, Indian officials prepared to fund a plant. But, to their chagrin he failed to produce fuel under controlled conditions in October. One experiment revealed a mass increase from 1138 grams to 1422 grams as well as sulphur, lead and oleofins in the final product--proof, said some scientists, that Ramar had surrepitiously introduced petrochemicals.

ARTS

A Rajput Jewel

Living short of the distinction he deserves, talented Rajput artist, Mahaveer Swami, perpetuates the precious, fading tradition of Rajasthani miniature painting. Several of his exquisite works grace Naveen Patnaik's (and Jackie Onassis') delightful book on Ayurvedic plants, The Garden of Life. Since 1988 Mahaveer has taught a handful of aspiring artists at his

250-year-old Bikaner studio on the edge of the Thar Desert. "I can't keep my secret inside," he explains.

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NEW AGE

Hot New Zine

A 1996 entry into the New Age scene is touted as "India's First Body-Mind-Spirit Magazine." Life Positive, Your Guide to Positive Growth may well take a lead over similar magazines from the USA and Europe. The new "zine" has it all--outstanding design and a rich mix of articles. Its power heralds India's burgeoning New Age movement, deriving from a local 5,000-year-old metaphysical culture.

Similar zines often struggle with unresolved editorial conflicts of interest between existentialism, Asian roots and attempts to paste a New Age lifestyle onto a Christian-Judeo philosophy. Secure in India's ancient wisdom and tolerance, Life Positive brings together Aurobindo, Rajnesh, Reiki, Silva mind control, Hazbat Imayat Khan and Paramahansa Yogananda. In an typical issue, we find a one-page an article on a Tamil tribal mid-wife followed by a feature on a US guru of positive thinking, Wayne W. Dyer, and the "new rishis on the block," like Guru Rishi Prabhakar. Alongside ever-popular cancer-cure stories, ads on how to quit smoking and modern techniques on contentment, one finds selections from ancient tradition. It is a life positive indeed!

Subscribe at: S-487 Greater Kailash I, New Delhi, 110 048, India.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

"Femicide"

A September article in The Hindu by R.P. Ravindra explains the use of amniocentesis and ultrasound for sex-selective abortion of girls. Despite new laws regulating prenatal diagnostics, he reports, not one Indian medical association stands against the practice. The sex ratio in some Indian states has dropped to 890 females per 1,000 males. Ravindra warns, "China, leading India in sex-selective abortions, faces a catastrophe. By the year 2000, 70 million Chinese men will be single. The result? Atrocities, forced marriages, prostitution and social turmoil." A deeper tragedy is the psychic damage to women and children. After one mother aborted two of their would-be sisters, three daughters committed suicide in despair when their "wanted" brother was later born. Law enforcement is accruing a foreboding karma. Beware.

HEALTH

Mad Cow Karma

The "mad cow disease," wreaked on the bovine species who were fed ground sheep and cattle carcasses, continues to provoke global concern. In October the Swiss government declined the World Hindu Federation's offer to shelter in Nepal 230,000 Swiss cows due to be slaughtered. The Swiss cited the impossibility of airlifting so many cows and the need to contain the disease. Also in October, independent UK scientists accused their government of concealing the figures for infected animals entering the food chain. Dr. Dealler, who has been studying the disease since 1988, says that on average every British adult has eaten 50 meals made from infected cattle tissue. In the US an alert is on, as the practice of feeding dead cows and sheep to cows continues. The USDA says 7,500

US sheep have scrapie, the likely source of mad cow disease.

COOL

Head South?

On July 27, Dr. Larry Payne, a California yoga teacher, completed a twelve-minute headstand at the North Pole. "After 5,000 years, yoga finally made it to the top of the world," says Larry, who prayed for world peace during his asana. He had been invited by the World President's Organization to teach yoga aboard the Russian nuclear icebreaker, Yamal. Because of the lurching movements of the boat as it crashed through heavy pack ice, several new poses were invented for stability, such as the "Walrus Wall Hang."