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HINDUS WILL HELP Britain celebrate the year 2000 in a very Hindu way. The London Millennium Committee is considering a Â£10 million grant to the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission in Neasdon for a center celebrating different world cultures. A Â£25 million bid by the Hinduja Foundation for a multicultural center in Petersborough is also under consideration.

VEDIC MANTRAS and sweet-smelling incense filled the air at #10 Janpath, the official New Delhi address of the Gandhis, as Priyanka Gandhi, daughter of the late Prime Minister Rajiv, was wed to Robert Vadra, a New Delhi businessman. She wore a South Indian temple sari which belonged to her grandmother, the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The two-hour ceremony was conducted in traditional Kashmiri Pandit style.

THE AMARNATH PILGRIMAGE will be holy but regulated this year. The Jammu and Kashmir state government, hoping to prevent a recurrence of last year's tragedy, when 250 pilgrims to the 16,000-foot Himalayan cave shrine died in snowstorms, has accepted the recommendations of a review committee. They will install modern weather forecasting equipment, restrict the pilgrimage period to 30 days, the ages of pilgrims to between 15 and 65 years and the number of pilgrims to a daily rate of 8,000 and a maximum of 100,000 total.

QUANTUM PHYSICISTS AND VEDANTISTS agreed at a New Delhi conference on "Yoga in Daily Life" that matter originates from consciousness--not the other way around. Dr. Amit Goswami of the University of Oregon said such a paradigm resolves the wave-particle duality. "If we take the monistic view of consciousness as the perennial philosophy of the Upanishads, the paradoxes of quantum mechanics are resolved," he said.

TIRUMALA'S famed and revered Tirupati temple for Lord Venkateswara recently set a record for a single day's hundi offerings, surpassing the half-crore rupee mark. The US\$140,000 eclipsed their old record by more than US\$40,000.

BUDDHISTS WANT HINDUS TO HAND OVER control of the Mahabodhi temple in Bihar, site of the Buddha's enlightenment. Anything less, they say, is drawing the promise of a "do or die" agitation from Buddhist monks throughout India to "emancipate" their most sacred shrine.

THE DEATH TOLL rises in Sri Lanka, even as boat loads of Tamils seek escape to India. A fishing trawler carrying 150 refugees fleeing from advancing government soldiers capsized in the Mannar sea, killing 130, mostly women and children, according to a statement from the Tamil Tigers faxed to Reuters. Sri Lanka's military denied the refugees were fleeing from troops.

ITALY IS COUNTERING illegal immigration by increasing patrols along its southern coast. One hundred and ten Sri Lankans and Pakistanis were intercepted from a Honduras-flagged ship; 20

others in dinghies had already reached the beach near the city of Reggio Calabria. Italy's southern coast and Lampedusa, an island between Sicily and North Africa, are favorite targets for would-be immigrants bound for Italian or other European cities.

IT'S "CASE CLOSED" now for the Hare Krishna community of New Vrindaban, West Virginia. Criminal racketeering charges, and a possible \$21-million in fines, were settled for \$10,000. The community was also settling with the US Government over property seized during a 1987 federal raid, which could equal that amount, so the fine "won't set us back very far," said Nityotita Swami.

"GAUTAM BUDDHA, Mahavira, Jesus Christ and Kalki?" That is how The Indian Express began a recent report on the fast growing Kalki movement. "Has God arrived? So believe five million people in India alone..." the report continues. The Kalki Yagnas Trust, headquartered near Chennai, says there are now Kalki centers worldwide. The report questions the fast growing sannyasa order, and whether youth between 15 and 25 years of age are being "lured away from bright academic and professional careers to join the trust and lead a life of renunciation." In Hindu mythology, Kalki is the tenth, and yet-to-arrive, avatar or incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

SADLY, South Asian women in the USA "are especially vulnerable to abuse due to their cultural socialization and recent immigration," writes Shamita Das Dasgupta, PhD, representative of Manavi, a community-based agency founded in 1985 in New Jersey. Dedicated to serving the needs of

battered women of Southeast Asia, the latest achievement of this pioneering outreach and counseling agency is the establishment of a transitional home and refuge to be known as Ashiana, meaning "nest." Contact: Manavi, PO Box 2131, Union, New Jersey 07083-2131 USA.

COSMIC FORECASTERS predict milder weather for the solar system over the next decade, meaning cooler Earth temperatures, fewer power surges and blackouts and less disruption of global communications. The mild forecast is based on decreased sunspot activity resulting in decreased magnetic storms, cosmic rays and disturbances in Earth's ionosphere. The sun's magnetic activity waxes and wanes in ten-year cycles. The latest, which began in September, 1996, is predicted to be the mildest in the last 50 years.

A CORRESPONDENT OF The Hindu reported the following harrowing tale to her newspaper editor. She had just applied for her child's admission in a Catholic school. The principal said her daughter would be considered if she were to bring in 10 Hindu families to be converted. "Difficult to believe, isn't it?" asked the Chennai newspaper's editor, who lamented the "total indifference of many teachers toward their young wards."

THE EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY throughout the world is not keeping pace with population increases--a pattern that will continue into the next century, reports Quadrant, the newsletter of the London-based Christian Research Association. World Christendom as a percentage of the population has decreased from 30% in 1960 to 28% in 1995

and is projected to decline to 27% by 2010, according to latest projections.

Briefly is compiled from press, TV and wire-service reports and edited by Ravi Peruman, award-winning radio journalist at KGO in San Francisco.