Diaspora
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# Diaspora

## MEDIA

### New Yorker Touts Ganesha

Check out the June issue of The New Yorker, the Big Apple's most famous high-brow, long-winded literary magazine. There He is: Ganesha, Lord of Categories, right on the cover. The issue is dedicated to profiles and excerpts of Indian writers who have gained an international reputation, including Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, G.V. Desani, Kiran Desai and others.

## NEPAL

### Women's Rights Meeting

Nepalese Hindu women sought to bring women's issues into focus through informal but potent meetings held in May in Kathmandu, according to Hinduism Today correspondent Dr. Hari Bansh Jha. Activist and attorney Gita Sangraula took a lead in the discussions. They noted that the rising number of registered NGOs (non-governmental organization) at local districts (over 10,000) has gone a long way to reduce exploitation. But child labor for carpet, garment, soap, chocolate and other industries remains a reality. Dowry murders is a yet uncovered problem, and sex tourism (people coming in from other countries for sex with minors) is a new one. A campaign is mounting to educate women, bring legal services to the grass roots population, train police (who are sometimes offenders) in women's issues and open doors for

female representation in the administration. Asmita magazine pledged to support the campaign with strong investigative reports on women's issues.

USA

Tall Tamil Poet

The 133-foot tall stone statue of Saint Tiruvalluvar, designed by famed Hindu architect, Ganapathy Sthapathy, is to commence assembly in September. Dressed granite stones are now moving toward Kanya Kumari, where the statue is scheduled to be finished in 1999. It will be on "Minor Rock," in the ocean next to the famed Vivekananda Memorial.

EDUCATION

Islam, USA

Hindu leaders, priests, educators, writers and businesspeople can learn something from their Muslim counterparts in America who are surprisingly successful at explaining and promoting the faith of Islam to the American media and in the school systems. Hinduism Today acquired a selection of catalogs, brochures and handbooks from the "Council on Islamic Education" in California. Here at your fingertips are rich and comprehensive resource oases: quick guides to all aspects of Islam, easy summations of philosophy and history, full school course developments for kindergarten through 12th grade, 10-step guides for teachers, teacher note series, conferences scheduled every year to review media and educational programs, connections into university and website resources, funding opportunities and more. These are freely available to all teachers teaching Islam in public and private schools. It is an admirable effort in an uphill battle to improve the country's understanding of Islam, and Hindus would do

well to copy the materials' comprehensive approach to educators and the media.

Council on Islamic Education 9300 Gardenia Street, #B-3 Fountain Valley California, 92728-0186, USA

DISCOVERIES

Rocky Ganesha Found in USA

Arizona, USA, could be one of the great, untapped pilgrimage sites for Hindus. The American explorer who first walked up to the awesome Grand Canyon named two of its cliff buttes as "Siva Temple" and "Vishnu Temple." In 1997, 150 years later, Dr. Baskaran Pillai, unofficially named an elephantine-looking outcrop of beautiful red rocks near Sedona, Arizona, as "Ganesha Rock." Sedona is renowned among spiritual seekers as a powerful mystical locale. Millions visit it every year. Ganesha Rock may become a power point of good fortune. Dr. Pillai, teacher of the siddha tradition, is holding a Ganesha Chaturti homa/puja and meditations at the site.

MAURITIUS

North + South

Anew Hindu cultural Center called "Hindu House" has been opened for all, regardless of caste, religious sect, language or philosophy. It is a refreshing and healing approach for Mauritius, which, though a tiny island nation, has historically been deeply divided within itself between North and South Indian allegiances. In a smart move the new center is focusing on youth. President M. Veerandra Ramdhun says, "It is a time when the Hindu community, especially young people, find themselves in total confusion about questions on caste and subcaste." The center is offering an anti-drug program,

perceiving that alcohol abuse and recreational drug use is rising like a suddenly active volcano among Mauritian youth. The Center is planning classes based on the Mahabharata and Ramayana and hopes to create a higher educational bridge with a major university in India.

YOUTH

LA Girls Take on Ankle Bells

It sounds like Tom Cruise in "Mission Impossible:" take 25 teenage American I-want-to-be-a-star girls from Los Angeles County High School for the Arts and teach them bharata natyam. Renowned dancer Ramaa Bharadwaj leaped to the challenge. Dance department head Don Bondy said, "The rhythm of Indian classical dance is so spectacular, poetic, haunting, its costuming so exotic, you get caught up in it. Foreign dance is an intensive way to open their minds." The girls were gifted, but initially held to a "What is this?" funny-faced--even mildly hostile--attitude that made Bharadwaj wonder if she was wasting her time. But after they reluctantly performed a teacher-honoring Vijaya Dasami dance puja for all the department's teachers, interest rose. Bharadwaj kept massaging the girls' interests and moods, introducing them to new muscle patterns with yoga. The girls got hooked and advanced to perform a four-minute thillana at the Cal State Playhouse (above). After that, the two main trouble makers earlier in the class, now teary-eyed, begged Bharadwaj to return and teach next year.

THE VEDAS

## God's Word, Sages' Voices

Within him is fire, within him is drink, within him both earth and heaven. He is the sun which views the whole world, he is

indeed light itself--the long-haired ascetic.
Rig Veda 10.136.1

Let him approach with humility a guru who is learned in the scriptures and established in Brahman. To such a seeker, whose mind is tranquil and senses controlled, and who has approached him in the proper manner, let the learned guru impart the science of Brahman, through which the true, Imperishable Being is realized.
Atharva Veda, Mundaka upanishad 1.2.12-13

Having transcended the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds, they go about as mendicants. For the desire for sons is the desire for wealth, and the desire for wealth is the desire for worlds. All these are nothing but desires. He, the Atman, is not this, not this.
Shukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.22

Having realized with mind and heart, having become wise, you will no longer move on the path of death. Therefore, they call renunciation the ardor surpassing all others.
Krishna Yajur Veda, Mahanarayana Upanishad 537-8

He follows the track of all the spirits, of nymphs and the deer of the forest. Understanding their thoughts, bubbling with ecstasies, their appealing friend is he--the long-haired ascetic
Rig Veda 10.136.6

One who conquers greed and anger, worldly attachment and

senses' lust, who lays aside duality, I-consciousness, free from expectation, from wife and child, who makes the inaccessible accessible, strives only for teacher's respect and gain, who, stepping through the three gates, becomes the Hamsa dwelling in the three worlds.
Atharva Veda, Tejobindu Upanishad. 3-4.