Diaspora
Category : August 1997
Published by Anonymous on Aug. 01, 1997

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HOT SPOTS

Muslims Defer Buddha's Blast

The Buddhist world was outraged by a recent threat by a commander of Taleban, the extremist Islamic militia, to blow up Afghanistan's 1,600-year-old statue of the Buddha, the world's tallest at 180ft. He said he would destroy it "because Islam forbids statues." International pressure led the Taleban to retract the threat, who relented because it is not "actively worshiped."

FESTIVALS

Mega Mela

From February 1 to April 24, 1998, the 20th century's last Kumbha Mela will take place in Haridwar, India. An estimated five-million souls will come to bathe in the Ganga. Crowds taking sacred dips will peak on February 25, Mahasivaratri; the new moon day, March 28; and the final day, April 24, when the Sun moves into Aries. The festival, put on by the government of India, is known as "the world's largest act of faith." Many fear disaster. Rapid transfer of experienced officers has vaporized the expertise needed to manage the enormous conclave. With only months left, the nearly US$30-million lies unspent that was allocated for building roads, bridges, sanitation, etc., to facilitate the event, and pilgrims may face unsafe conditions.

MODERN SAGES

Seven Million Birds of Peace

March 29th Indian-born spiritual leader and creative giant, Sri Chinmoy, reached his monumental goal of drawing and painting seven million birds of peace. Beginning in December, 1991, in Malta, Sri Chinmoy averaged 1.33 million birds a year for over five years, while maintaining a rigorous schedule of travel, athletics and spiritual mission work. He says, "America's message to the four corners of the globe is freedom. Real freedom has to be founded upon inner peace. Without inner peace, there can be no freedom--inner or outer. Birds fly in the firmament of freedom. They bring us the special message of freedom, which can be found only in the peaceful heart-home of humanity. Birds flying remind us of our soul's infinite freedom. My soul, your soul and everybody's soul has come from heaven. When we think of these birds, we feel a yearning to go back to our source." He drew his final million peace birds in a creative marathon of five and a half days.

USA

Touring Jewels

Two young dance artistes, Garani (15) and Divani (14) Nadaraja from California, will begin a world tour in June to help fund raising for the Iraivan Siva temple of Hawaii. The girls completed their Arangetram (graduation performance) last August, and also received the title Nritya Mani (Dance Jewels) from their teacher, famed Mythili Kumar. The duo has already performed professionally for the Abhinaya dance company. International audiences from UK to Australia, can expect a class act.

ARTS/THEATER

US Kids Meet Hanuman

San Diego's Asian Story Theater presented the play Hanuman and the Monkey King to 10,000 Californians in April. In the theater's first integration of a Hindu theme, acclaimed bharata natyam dancer Ramaa Bharadvaj played Hanuman in a harmonious face-to-face with Kung Fu master Andy Lowe as the Chinese Buddhist Monkey King. It was a innovative cross-cultural strategem for dharma by founder/director, Kent Brisby, who takes "seriously the issues facing today's children, such as the rising outbreak of gangs ... to bring the kids a message, not only about peaceful coexistence, but developing a real understanding for another culture."

INDIA

Sights on Krishna's Birthplace

Mathura, on the banks of the river Yamuna in Uttar Pradesh, is one of India's holiest towns. Inhabited for millenia, it was pillaged by Mahmud of Ghazna, in 1017 and sacked four more times between 1500 and 1757. Around 1656 a mosque was built right on the site of the Kesavadeva temple, the birthspot of Lord Krishna. In 1964 the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple was built next to it. In 1992 Hindus destroyed a similar mosque built at the birthplace of Rama in Ayodhya. The subsequent bloodbath of riots cast a pall over the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's agenda to "liberate" Hindu holy sites. In 1995 they conducted a yatra [pilgrimage/march] on Mathura. The government, fearing riots, barricaded the temple-mosque complex and put it under security forces. The demonstration concluded without mishap. Then on March 12, 1997, the VHP staged another march on Mathura "to create awareness for the removal of barricades and withdrawal of forces from the Sri Krishna Janmasthan." Again public reaction was one of alarm. The protest, which was joined by 200 of Mathura's monks,

ended peacefully.

VEGETARIANISM

Pure Chelsea

At President Clinton's 50th birthday party last September, gymnast Kerri Shrug sat next to the president's daughter, 16-year-old Chelsea Clinton, and learned she is a vegetarian.

When People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) heard the story, they created an advertisement with the young White House face on the top, saying: "This Clinton's health care plan really works." The ever-bold activist PETA debuted the ad in flyers distributed at the World Beef Expo. The White House would not officially affirm Chelsea's choice, but insider's confirmed that indeed, she is a veggie.

THE VEDAS

God's Word, Sages' Voices

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, Mandukya Upanishad 1.2.12-13

Yes, may the man who within his home pleases you all his days with songs and with offerings receive a rich reward, be loaded with your gifts! To him be happiness! This is our prayer.

Rig Veda 4.4.7

The ten abstinences are nonviolence, truth, nonstealing, chastity, kindness, rectitude, forgiveness, endurance, temperance in food and purity.

Shukla Yajur Veda, Trishikhi BRahmana Upanishad 32-33

They say of a man who speaks the truth, "He speaks the dharma," or of a man who speaks the dharma, "he speaks the truth." Verily, both these are the same thing.

Shukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.14

The hands are alike but in their work they differ. So also, two cows, offspring of a single mother, may yet give differing yields of milk. Even twins are not the same in strength, or kinsmen in bounty.

Rig Veda 10.117.9.

In vain the foolish man accumulates food. I tell you, truly, it will be his downfall! He gathers to himself neither friend nor comrade. Alone he eats; alone he sits in sin. The ploughshare cleaving the soil helps satisfy hunger. The traveler, using his legs, achieves his goal. The priest who speaks surpasses the one who is silent. The friend who gives is better than the miser.

Rig Veda 10.117.6-7