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Afghanistan

British Army Gurkha Bhakti

Our Hindu Gurkha brothers in Afghanistan set an example for the whole Hindu diaspora with their tent temple in Lakshar Gah, Afghanistan. Members of the 2nd Battalion of the British Royal Gurkha Rifles, originally from Nepal, set up the temple on their second tour, the only one of its kind among Gurkha units. The soldiers perform an arati every morning, with occasional visits by Hindu and Buddhist chaplains. "This is the Goddess Durga," says Lance Corporal Prithvi, pointing to the temple's main Deity. "She represents power. At this moment we pray to Her because we think She gives us power to defeat evil forces."

Sri Lanka

Murugan Still Strong in Lanka

When ethnic civil war broke out in Sri Lanka in 1983, the government put a moratorium on Hindu festivals in the capital city of Colombo as a security precaution. In 2009 it lifted the ban, and in 2010 the Vel Festival was celebrated for the first time in 26 years. It was celebrated again in 2011, much to the joy of Tamil Hindus, who have suffered profoundly during the conflict. The Vel procession in Colombo has special significance as it is conducted with participation of the head of state. Muruga's Vel goes from one temple to another, stopping along the way to bless the president and the whole country.

UK

Ganesha Moksha in England

The popular festival of Ganesha Visarjana continues to grow worldwide as more and more Hindus gather each year to immerse their beloved Elephant-Faced Deity into the water. It is a powerful moment, a magical metaphor for liberation into the Oneness of Being. One of the biggest events outside of India is held annually 64 kilometers east of London in the popular resort borough, Southend-on-Sea. Feasting and garbha dances fill the day with joyful celebration.

India

Little Sisters Capture Army

India's raksha bandha custom is spreading all over the world. Literally it means "protective binding." The simple ceremony involves a sister tying a rakhi (woven cord) on her brother's wrist. This symbolizes the sister's love and prayers for his well-being, and his lifelong vow to protect her. Over time the custom has broadened to include young women tying a rakhi on the wrist of other males with whom they have a brotherly relationship. In a world where war is perpetrated by men, often at the expense of innocent women and children, Raksha Bandha carries a powerful message about the way men should conduct themselves: protecting the innocent, the helpless, the vulnerable.

USA

US Mission Preys on India

If you think concern about Christian missionary aggression is paranoid exaggeration take a look at "Mission India," based in Michigan, USA (missionindia.org). One of many similar efforts, it is a sophisticated, multi-million-dollar operation aimed at India and her children. Slick videos contrast a dark picture of India's illiteracy, social injustice, poverty and suffering with a vision of a happy Christianized nation: "God is mobilizing His people in India, using their passion for Jesus to change lives and transform an entire nation."

The business has three products: for us\$1 you can pay for Bibles that will be used to form Children's Bible Clubs: "Many children in Children's Bible Clubs make a decision to follow Jesus. And these children are bringing their parents to Christ! Every year new churches grow out of Children's Bible Clubs."

For \$30 you cover the cost of materials and training for Adult Literacy Classes: "Illiteracy is an epidemic in India. Bible-based Adult Literacy Classes are bringing hope of a brighter future to India's poor." For the record, since independence, the acceleration of literacy in India is unparalleled in history. Today 82 percent of Indians between the ages of 15 and 24 are literate. For us\$2,500 you can "launch a Church Planter on a lifetime of mission work,... providing Indian believers with training and materials to effectively reach their nation for Christ." For insights into the psychology of such invasive campaigns, read "Fraudulent Mission," by David Frawley (bit.ly/fraud-x).

HEALTH

Herbivores Rarely Get Alzheimer's

"I'm Rudy Tanzi, a professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School at Massachusetts General Hospital. What is the one thing that we know from epidemiology studies that reduces the risk of Alzheimer's? It is exercise, movement. Keep moving, keep blood flow going to the brain. This is the best thing you can do. And there is healthy diet. I happen to know that in the animal kingdom, if you look at which animals get Alzheimer's pathology, it begins with carnivores. All such mammals, tigers, lions, bears, etc., that get old enough will get plaques and tangles in their brain. Herbivores don't. Donkeys, giraffes, hippopotamuses--they don't get Alzheimer's pathology. In the animal kingdom, at least, we see this link between eating animal products, animal fats and the inevitability of Alzheimer's pathology. I am a vegetarian. I'm hoping for the best.

"And it is going to get worse because we are living longer and longer. If we cannot treat this disease at its roots and stop it, this is a tsunami coming. By 2015, Alzheimer's will single-handedly begin to collapse Medicare and Medicaid. That's how prevalent it is. So, we need to do something fast."

Dr. Rudolph Tanzi on CNN.

See the entire interview: bit.ly/alz-vegy

Celebrities

Bill Clinton: "I'm a Vegan."

In 2004 former president Bill Clinton, underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery in 2004. He made moderate changes to his diet and lifestyle, but in 2010, at age 64, his clogged veins required stent surgery. At that point, instead of just managing his heart disease, he made a decision to work on actually reversing it. Inspired by leading doctors in the field, including Dr. Dean Ornish, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Dr. John Campbell, President Clinton researched 25 years of evidence showing that 82 percent of those who switched to a plant based diet were able to reverse their heart disease. In a CNN interview (youtu.be/R3ied_AD4iE) he explains his decision and tells how he lost 24 pounds in preparation for the wedding of his daughter Chelsea. He says, "I decided to join this group and put myself into the experiment." It was a

big change for a man who loved cheeseburgers, chicken, pork, pizza and cigars. He hopes his new diet will lead to self-clearing arteries and a long life that will include enjoying his grand children.

President Clinton's decision is a big hit with vegan and vegetarian advocates. Just Google "Clinton Vegan" for an adventure in the celebrity vegan health world.

Nutrition Trends

Plant-Based Diet Gains Ground in USA

Since 1917, when the us issued its first official food guide, meat and dairy have been prominent components of recommended food groups. In the 1956 nutrition guide, they took prime place as two of four food groups, along with fruits and vegetables and grain products. The guide was strongly influenced by pressure from the food manufacturing industry, which began in the late 1800s. In 1977, when fat/cholesterol was officially deemed the bad-health culprit, new Dietary Goals for Americans called for less fat and increased carbohydrates, again with a lot of input from the processed food giants. Between then and 1992, heated debates over the dietary causes of the heart disease, along with on-going lobbying by the dairy, meat and processed cereal grain producers, led the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to adopt Sweden's food pyramid as its official guide. That guide still did not reflect scientific research. Sweden, in fact, has a higher heart disease death rate than the US. Fruit and vegetables were minimized, making up a third or less of recommended consumption. This model for nutrition was promoted all over the world.

Then vegetarians and vegans entered the fray with their own pyramids, pushing for a higher percentage of fruit and vegetables in our diets. The Internet opens up a whole new world of greater choice paralysis. Look up "food pyramid," and you find 300,000 images.

In 2010 the USDA revised its pyramid again with the food industry still hard at work to secure a prominent place for their products. Milk, cheese, meat, fish, eggs, bread, cereal, rice and pasta still won a two-thirds share. Meanwhile, the epidemic of heart disease, obesity, diabetes and other diseases widely acknowledged to have roots in our diet, continues unabated.

In a surprise move in early 2011, advocates for a more balanced, healthier diet, with support from Michelle Obama, replaced the food pyramid with a simpler model: the ChooseMyPlate icon. Vegetarians may take note that the words meat, fish, eggs do not appear. Fruits and vegetables take up 50 percent of the real estate, with dairy set apart as a side dish. Sweets or desserts of any kind are not included, sending an important messages about the proper place of sugar in our diet: no place at all.

Briefly

A religious school holidays debate is heating up across America. Secularists lean to the view that the state cannot teach or support any form of religion. This has led some states to remove all religious holidays form their annual calendar. Other school districts have added more holidays to reflect their multi-ethnic base, and still others are sticking to holidays for only the Abrahamic majority community.

The California-based Institute of American Religion released in April what it calls the first every census of Hindus in America. It discovered some 1,600 temples and centers with an estimated 600,000 practicing Hindus. The growth of Hinduism in American is attributed to quiet, steady advancement of the Indian Hindu immigrant community. That number could easily rise up to the estimated 1.2 million who self-identify as Hindus in national studies by adding in the mostly Indian Americans who limit their involvement to private spiritual practices or celebrations of semi-secularized holy days such as Diwali. Westerners who openly declare themselves Hindus form a small fraction of the number.