Global Dharma
Category : January/February/March 2013
Published by senthil on Nov. 29, 2012

Hinduism Today

GLOBAL DHARMA

I N D I A

Indiaâ□□s Religious Youth

IN A POLL COMMISSIONED BY Hindustan Times in early August, one thousand randomly selected Indian youth of all faiths, from six major metropolitan areas, answered a variety of questions to reveal the role of religion in their lives. Overall, the poll indicated religion is a significant component.

TO THE QUESTION â□□Do you consider yourself religious?â□□ Only nine percent said â□□noâ□□ or â□□donâ□□t care,â□□ while 91% replied, â□□yesâ□□â□□32%, â□□staunchly,â□□ and 59% â□□moderately/occasionally/so-so.â□□ By comparison, a 2000 study by Barna Research Group in the US indicated 64% of US teens say they are religious.

ASKED WHETHER THEY HAD read their religious scriptures, only 15% said they had personally read them, while 22% learned mostly from their parents and 33% mostly from books, TV series and popular culture. To a related question, about the formation of their religious beliefs, 68% credited their parents (whom most considered more devout), 21% general society and 11% their own study and understanding.

THE YOUTH GOT MIXED grades for understanding and participation. Only 34% could explain â□□the religious reasons behind rituals such as fasting,â□□ and just 10% said they dress according to their religious beliefs. On the other hand, 64% visit a place of worship at least a few times a month.

THIRTY PERCENT CONSUME food according to their religious belief, while 24%

âfollow important tenets like praying as per your faith.â

THERE WAS A SHARP DISTINCTION between men and women on marrying outside their faith. Only 17% of the women said they would, compared to 32% of the men. Fully 89% would encourage their children to be religious.

THE POLL DID NOT TAKE INTO account the religion of the respondents. If it was a cross section of Indian society, the group would be about 82% Hindu, 12% Muslim, 2.5% Christian and 2% Sikh. There were significant indicators of a desire for religious harmony: 77% want religion kept out of politics, and 65% willingly take part in rituals and festivals of other religions.

Religion, a part of life: A young women meditates on a beach in India. Like many other youth in India, her religion can help her stay grounded and content in an increasingly fast-paced world.
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MADHU KHANNA, PROFESSOR, Centre for Comparative Religions and Civilizations, offered her analysis of the results to the Hindustan Times: âThe new generation is not interested in the old form of religiosity. While some may believe practitioners not knowing their beliefs is a sign of the decline of religion, it can also be viewed as an emergence of an alternate way of practicing. In our country, there are no avenues to understand the true leanings of religion. Every secular nation has a department of religious studies at universities. India has none.â

OVERALL THE POLL WAS ENCOURAGING. The vast majority of youth consider themselves religious to a significant degree, most attend places of worship and nearly all plan to encourage their children to be religious.

I N D I A

Kanwariyasâ□□ Arduous Trek

THROUGHOUT THE SACRED month of Shravan (July/August) millions pilgrimage to the Ganga to fetch Her holy waters to bless their homes and lives. The trek is traditionally done on foot, many walking hundreds of kilometers from their villages and towns. Their name comes from the pole that each carries, known as a kanwar, which holds a pot at each end to carry the water collected.

THE JOURNEY IS ARDUOUS, involving blistered feet, little food and the dangers of road accidents; each year a few are injured or killed. Even so, everyone still considers it a powerful and uplifting experience.

SAID ONE PILGRIM, â□□KANWARIYAS donâ□□t undertake this journey for penance. They perform it for two reasonsâ□□to thank God for fulfilling oneâ□□s wish, or to tell Him to let things stay as they are. Kanwariyas are mostly satisfied people.â□□

En route: Camps are set up during Shravan to shelter and feed hundreds of thousands of Kanwariyas, such as these from Delhi

U S A

California University Establishes Hindu Program

IN AN AUGUST 24 PRESS RELEASE, Claremont Lincoln University in Southern California announced that they and the Nalanda Confluence Institute had agreed to establish a graduate program in Hindu Dharma studies at Claremont. The release states, âBoth institutions share the belief that when the worldâs religious traditions work together, instead of separately, they are much better equipped to address the most urgent global issues that we face today.â

Hindu Studies signing ceremony: CLU Provost, NCI Dean Debashih Banerji, CLU president Jerry Campbell, NCI chairman Navin Doshi, and NCI president Rita Sherma
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THE PROGRAM WILL OFFER several degrees, including masterâs degrees in Hindu studies, Hindu clinical pastoral chaplaincy and Hindu theology/philosophy, as well as a degree in Hindu contemplative, yogic and consciousness studies, applied dharma, and other initiatives in partnership with Hindu spiritual institutions and community organizations.

CLU IS A DIVISION OF the accredited Claremont School of Theology founded by the United Methodist Church. In recent years the School of Theology has expanded with programs that are âinterdisplinary, multicutural and multireligious.â

Ganeshaâ□□s helper: An inmate in Ahmedabad jail paints an environmentally friendly image of Lord Ganesha made from clay

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I N D I A

Prisoner-Produced Deities

AHMEDABADâ□□S SABARMATI Central Jail has hit upon a satisfying and profitable inmate activity: making eco-friendly clay Ganesha statues for sale during Ganesha Chaturti in September of each year, with the profits going to benefit the Prisonersâ□□ Welfare Fund.

P.C. THAKUR, A PRISON OFFICIAL, explained to the Times of India that they started the project after the city banned Deities made of plaster of paris for ecological reasons. Kishan Bhati, a convicted murderer from a family of deity makers, was delighted. He helped to train eight others for the task, including some Muslims who joined enthusiastically.

â□□WORK IS LIKE WORSHIP FOR US,â□□ Kailash told the Times. â□□We forget time and space when immersed in the process. It is satisfying to learn that the deities made by us will end up at peopleâ□□s houses and will be revered.â□□ The training program will be expanded next year to meet the demand for the deities.

F A M O U S V E G E T A R I A N S

CÃ©sar ChÃivez, Labor Activist

CESAR CHAVEZ (1927-1993) was a Latin American civil rights activist and cofounder of The United Farm Workers. He led a historic movement for the rights, not only of American farm workers, but also of working people in cities and towns across the nation.

CHAVEZ WAS INSPIRED BY MAHATMA GANDHI and Martin Luther King. Born to a family of migrant farm workers, Chavez directly experienced the segregation and harsh treatment of Mexican Americans working on Californiaâ□□s commercial farms. Using Gandhiâ□□s tactics of nonviolence, civil disobedience and even fasting, Chavez organized a powerful national movement in the 1950s and 60s, eventually winning significant rights for farm laborers.

IN A SPEECH TO GRAPE PICKERS in California, he echoed Gandhiâ□□s wisdom: â□□If someone commits violence against us, it is much better we not react against the violence but that we react in such a way as to get closer to our goal. People donâ□□t like to see a nonviolent movement subjected to violence, and thereâ□□s a lot of support across the country for nonviolence. Thatâ□□s the key point we have going for us. We can change the world if we can do it nonviolently.â□□

A simple truth: â□□I became a vegetarian after realizing that animals feel afraid, cold, hungry and unhappy like we do. I feel very deeply about vegetarianism and the animal kingdom.â□□
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IT IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN THAT Chavez was a vegetarian. In 1992, during his acceptance of a Lifetime Achievement Award from In Defense of Animals (IDA), he explained his view: â□□We need, in a special way, to work twice as hard to make all people understand that animals are fellow creatures, that we must protect them

and love them as we love ourselves. And thatâ□□s the basis for peace. The basis for peace is respecting all creatures. We cannot hope to have peace until we respect everyoneâ□□respect ourselves and respect animals and all living things. We know we cannot defend and be kind to animals until we stop exploiting themâ□□exploiting them in the name of science, exploiting animals in the name of sport, exploiting animals in the name of fashion, and yes, exploiting animals in the name of food.â□□

W O R L D

Indian States Equal to Entire Countries!

IN THE LAST 10 YEARS INDIAâ□□S POPULATION HAS INCREASED by 181 million people, reaching a total population of 1.21 billion as of 2011. At right we reproduce a fascinating population chart that is circulating on the Internet. It compares the population of Indiaâ□□s 15 largest states with that of entire countries. The population of all those countries (shown in red on the map above) taken together doesnâ□□t equal Indiaâ□□s.

AS DIVERSE AS THESE 15 NATIONS ARE, SO TOO ARE EACH OF these 15 Indian states. We might consider why a country like Germany, with a population smaller than any of the five most populous Indian states, takes up such a large amount of mental real estate on the world stage, and especially in our education systems. Ask an average Western student about Germany and youâ□□ll learn of its medieval and recent history, its aggression in the First and Second World Wars, its engineers and beer, and you might even hear a few words of Deutsch. Ask that same student about the far more populous Indian state of Bihar and youâ□□ll get a blank stare, or at best a mention of its tiger population. But Bihar, home of the Maurya Empire and birthplace of Buddhism, surely deserves at least adequate reference in the teaching of world history.

Indian State	Population	Country	Po

UTTAR PRADESH	166,052,859	PAKISTAN	176,745,364
MAHARASHTRA	112,372,972	PHILLIPPINES	92,337,852
BIHAR	103,804,637	GERMANY	81,799,600
WEST BENGAL	91,347,736	ETHIOPIA	84,320,987
ANDHRA PRADESH	84,655,533	IRAN	75,149,669
TAMIL NADU	72,138,958	UK	62,262,000
MADHYA PRADESH	72,597,565	ITALY	60,813,326
RAJASTHAN	68,621,012	FRANCE	65,350,000
KARNATAKA	61,130,704	SOUTH AFRICA	48,810,427
GUJARAT	60,383,628	SPAIN	47,190,493
ORISSA	41,947,358	ARGENTINA	41,281,631
KERALA	33,387,677	CANADA	34,928,000
JHARKHAND	32,966,238	SAUDI ARABIA	28,376,355
ASSAM	31,169,272	NORTH KOREA	24,554,000
PUNJAB	27,704,236	GHANA	24,233,431
HARYANA	25,353,081	AUSTRALIA	22,737,609

Immense India: The latest census shows India now makes up over 17% of the worldâ□□s population, with 1.21 billion people. Its population is still growing.

BRIEFLY...

AIR-POLLUTING HAMBURGERS were the subject of a recent study by the University of California Riverside. Researchers took a close look at the broiled burgers found in fast-food restaurants and found that the grease and smoke from their cooking emits a huge amount of particulates into the air. Bill Welch, a principal engineer, stated, â□□For comparison, an 18-wheeler diesel engine truck would have to drive 143 miles on the freeway to put out the same mass of particulates as a single charbroiled hamburger patty.â□□

AN OFFENSIVE TELEVISION SHOW in Indonesia has recently been canceled after protests from Hindus in Bali. The show, entitled â□□Nine Saints,â□□ portrayed the men who were said to have brought Islam to Java. Hindus complained that it was a negative and historically inaccurate portrayal of the Hindu Majapahit Kingdom, which ultimately fled to Bali.

171 HINDU PILGRIMS FROM PAKISTAN now in India have requested refugee status, complaining they lived in miserable conditions and faced increasing extremism, such as forced conversion, extortion and kidnapping. The Samenath Lok Sangathan, a Hindu welfare organization, is working with the government to provide them a formal immigration path.

MAORI-INDIAN MARRIAGES in New Zealand have resulted in about 2,600 people of mixed descent. A bicultural gathering scheduled for early October will offer this group a chance to attend workshops on vegetarian cooking, Hindu art, Maori traditional tattoos (removable ink) and yoga. Women attending will have a chance to learn sari draping.

NEW LAW PROTECTS SIKHS AND Muslims against bias in the workplace. The Los Angeles Times reports that California employers will have to face new restrictions against giving Sikh and Muslim employees only back-room jobs. Governor Jerry Brown stated the bill makes it clear such discrimination is unacceptable.

A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY Education World places Chinmaya International Residential School at Coimbatore as No. 1 among all boarding schools in the state of Tamil Nadu and No. 9 across all India, an extraordinary distinction.

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