

Meenakshi Temple Gets Control Room

Source

MADURAI, INDIA, April 15, 2011 (The Hindu): A state-of-the-art control room to operate 32 Internet-Protocol Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras, which will monitor all the entrances and exits and detect suspicious movement of visitors to Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple here was commissioned on Friday.

All the cameras can be accessed and controlled through the Internet. The cameras have the platform for adding sophisticated software such as face recognition software at a later stage. Two such control rooms have been installed — one in South Adi Street which would house a database and will be under the temple's control, and another in East Chithirai Street at the outpost for police personnel. A temple official told The Hindu that all cameras had been fitted with sensors that would be capable of analyzing and detecting unusual activities, if any, of visitors. The cameras could also count the number of visitors entering and exiting the temple. They have been fitted with motion-sensors that can detect intruders even at night.

New Methods of Proselytization

Source

INDIA, April 3, 2011: Christian missionaries have adopted the latest marketing strategy to hoodwink the gullible, poor, uneducated

Hindus in Bangalore by offering plain cash prizes for those who dump the photos of Hindu Gods and replace them with photos of Jesus in their houses. And a bonus cash prize will be offered to those Hindus who wear a cross symbol secretly, revealed a recent case study conducted by Dr. M. Chidanandamurthy, noted thinker, Philosopher, researcher, columnist and a social activist from Bangalore.

According to Murthy, conversion agents identify Hindu families who are financially weak and promise to provide them with cash prizes for displaying 'some' photos. By offering money on the spot, agents manage to include a photo of Jesus in the middle of Hindu Gods. After few weeks the round two operation starts by releasing another installment of money and influencing them to place the photo of Jesus above Hindu Gods in a more visible manner. Again after few weeks, the conversion agents lands there with more money and convinces them to discard photos of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Additional money is given for embracing Christianity.

"It is a bargain and if a converted Christian is willing to wear a cross, they will be entitled to claim a bonus which will be happily given to him by agents and will also earn incentive from foreign funds used by Christian Missionaries" Murthy explained. He has charged the conversion agents with 'agenda to misuse the situation'. According to him agents play a major role during ill-health of Hindus and offer a free prayer meeting to get rid of diseases only to get them converted to Christianity.

Booking Helicopter Services To Vaishnodevi Online

Source

JAMMU, INDIA, April 29, 2011 (IBN live): To provide better services to the pilgrims visiting the cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) today launched an on-line reservation system for the yatris.

SMVDSB CEO R. K. Goyal said, "It is part of its continuing endeavors to provide improved services to the pilgrims visiting the shrine." He said that the one-way passenger fare for heli-travel between Katra and Sanjichhat has been reduced from US\$27.50 per passenger to US\$15.50. It is hoped that a larger number of senior citizens and all physically challenged yatris will now avail this facility

Uttarakhand Sets Up Separate Sanskrit Education Board

Source

DEHRA DUN, INDIA, April 28, 2011 (IBN live): The Uttarakhand government, which accorded Sanskrit the status of second official language of the state last year, has set up a separate Sanskrit education board for giving recognition to language schools.

The Uttarakhand Sanskrit Education Board will prepare the syllabus and publish books for class I to class 12 as well as hold examinations, said Dr. Vachaspati Maithani, Director of Sanskrit education. The board will also arrange for the training of Acharyas (teachers) and Pracharyas (headmasters) for the schools

The Surprising, Hidden Population Trends of Hinduism in the U.S

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US, May 1, 2011 (by David Briggs at the Huffington Post): In the 1960s and 1970s, Hinduism seemed on the path to spectacular growth in the United States as immigration laws eased and some Indian spiritual leaders were embraced by the counterculture of the 1960s.

The forecasts were half right. But the road traveled toward Hinduism in America was not that of the counterculture movement. What is propelling it into a role as one of the nation's largest minority religions is a steady stream of Indian immigrants who have built hundreds of temples across the nation, according to a new study.

In what it calls the first effort to conduct a Hindu census in the United States, the Santa Barbara, Calif.-based Institute of American Religion discovered some 1,600 temples and centers with an estimated 600,000 practicing Hindus. That number could easily be higher. [Hinduism Today magazine estimates over 2 million Hindus in the US, see the reasons behind this number here]. For better and worse, however, the latest incarnation of Hinduism in the United States has gone largely unnoticed by most Americans.

Hinduism was introduced to the United States through the 19th century translation of texts such as the Bhagavad Gita. The first Indian teacher to visit the U.S., P.C. Mozoomdar, spoke in 1830 at the home of

Ralph Waldo Emerson. Other gurus followed, but the growth of the Hindu community was cut short by the Asian Exclusion Act in 1924. The comeback began in 1965 with the new immigration law opening the U.S. to Indian immigrants, who brought with them prominent spiritual leaders.

Many Americans welcomed the gurus, but interest among non-Indians faded in the 1970s. At the same time, a growing Indian immigrant community began building temples and centers to meet its spiritual needs. In its census, the Institute of American Religion found 258 traditional Hindu temples with an estimated 268,000 adherents. The study estimated there are also 400 temples and centers from Hindu sub-traditions that have an estimated 282,000 participants and some 940 centers with an estimated 55,000 members associated with smaller movements across the country.

Yet much of this growth has occurred “almost invisibly” on the edge of the larger American religious community. Hinduism does not enter the consciousness of most Americans in their daily lives. A 2001 Research Opinion Corp. survey found 95 percent of Americans have little or no knowledge of Hindu beliefs and practices.

But that is about to change, scholars and observers say.

The encouraging news for Hindus is they have avoided much of the hostility that has challenged other large groups of religious immigrants to America, including Catholics, Jews and, more recently, Muslims. Hindus have been largely left alone to meet the internal needs of finding and maintaining spiritual homes for a growing membership. Yet as it grows, Hinduism is not expected to remain under the radar too much longer.

Hindus are gaining political sophistication through groups such as the Hindu American Foundation, and their geographical concentration holds the potential for building influential voting blocs in some regions.

Hindu leaders in the U.S. also realize there is a much greater need for outreach in a country where Hinduism is not ingrained in the culture, said Anant Rambachan, chair of the Religion Department at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn.

INDIA, May 9, 2011 (Times of India): Portals of the Badrinath temple situated in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli District reopened on Monday after remaining closed for six months. Amid a chanting of vedic hymns and shlokas, the chief priest opened the doors of the temple early this morning.

Shankaracharya, the head priest of the temple, said: “From today, the entry to the temple would be opened for everybody for a period of six months. A special date for the reopening is decided upon on the occasion of Akshay Tritiya. It is a tradition, which has been maintained since many years, and we would continue to do so.”

“We have made every possible arrangement for the convenience of the devotees on the occasion of reopening of gates of the temple Lord Badrinath,” said Anusuyya Prasad Bhatt, President, Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee.

With the opening of the portals of Badrinath, all the four shrines collectively known as Chardham have been thrown open for pilgrims. The Chardham Yatra comprising pilgrimage to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri nestling in Garhwal Himalayas started with the opening of portals of both Gangotri and Yamunotri shrines on May 6th