

Hindu Encyclopedia Released in USA

COLUMBIA, USA, August 30, 2013(by Susanne M. Schafer,Associated Press): A comprehensive encyclopedia of one of the world's major religions was unveiled Monday in South Carolina. The 11-volume work covers Hindu spiritual beliefs, practices and philosophy, and is the culmination of a 25-year academic effort. The encyclopedia is written in English and includes about 7,000 articles on Hinduism and its practices. The work also deals with Indian history, languages, art, music, dance, architecture, medicine and women's issues. It contains more than 1,000 illustrations and photographs. The set was previously released in India.

"The goal was to have something pretty definitive - not just about Hinduism, but about the whole South Asian tradition," said University of South Carolina professor Hal French, who met with a small group of scholars in 1987 to offer academic support for the project. "This hadn't really been attempted before," said French, 83, a distinguished professor emeritus of religious studies at the school and an associate editor. "It is a milestone of research that brought together both Eastern and Western scholarship."

French, who specializes in the religions of Asia and served as an associate editor of the encyclopedia, said a primary inspiration for the work is one of India's most revered spiritual leaders, Sri Swami Chidanand Saraswati (Muniji) who founded the India Heritage Research Foundation, which became the parent organization behind the encyclopedia effort. The encyclopedia's

volumes run from 600 to more than 700 pages. Some 3,000 copies are being issued in the first printing and will be of interest to libraries, religious institutions and those studying Indian culture around the world, French said.

All proceeds from the encyclopedia are going to a charitable organization dedicated to the environmental cleanup of rivers in India

Temple to be Undertaken by the India's Archeological Survey

INDIA, September 6, 2013 (Press Information Bureau): Following is the statement issued by Union Minister of Culture Smt. Chandresh Kumari Katoch to media persons here today:

In the Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) meeting chaired by Cabinet Secretary, it was decided that Archaeological Survey of India will undertake necessary conservation works of Sri Kedarnath Temple that was damaged due to the recent disaster in Uttarakhand. Accordingly, a composite team comprising members of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Engineering Projects India Limited (EPIL) made a visit to Kedarnath on 02-03 August to assess damages to the temple and its adjoining areas.

Preliminary report by ASI indicate that overall the temple super-structure is in fair state of conservation although portions of the temple on northern, western and eastern sides have indicated moderate impact of the severe jolt due to floods and boulder movement. The temple structure was saved primarily due to the lodging of a large boulder on its

northern side which deflected water and boulders and possibly prevented a direct impact.

ASI has dispatched its team to start the conservation of Sri Kedarnath Temple in consultation with the State Government, Kedarnath Development Authority and Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee. ASI has been advised to submit the Action Plan for Phase I by 09 September, and to begin the work only after 11 September, after the visit of CM, Uttarakhand to Kedarnath. Initially the works will include cleaning of the interior of temple, packing / consolidating loose stones and taking estampage of inscription within the temple.

Phase I of the conservation works will cost approximately Rs. 2.40 crores (US\$368,000).”

Tulsi Bead Production Gets a Technical Lift from IIT

NEW DELHI, INDIA, September 7, 2013 (The Hindu): A technical design intervention by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi has helped the rural women in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan engaged in fabrication of tulsi malas (a string of 108 beads for chanting a mantram) boost their production and earn a better livelihood by introducing advanced machinery. The IIT’s help has benefited around 2,000 women in the region.

The Rural Technology Upgradation Unit of IIT Delhi was recently contacted by Lupin Human Welfare & Research Foundation, a public service institution working in Bharatpur, for its inputs into old machines used by women for producing tulsi malas. The old machines involved a high degree of labor with an uncomfortable sitting posture, while production of the product remained low.

Tulsi mala production provides livelihood to women mainly in Kaman, Deeg, Nadbai and Kumher tehsils of Bharatpur district. The location of temple towns such as Mathura, Vrindavan, Nandgaon and Barsana near Bharatpur ensures a good demand and consumption of tulsi malas throughout the year.

Women could fabricate 30 to 40 tulsi malas with the old machines and make a profit between Rs.60- Rs.80 (US 92c to \$1.23) a day after their routine expenditure. They were facing problems of low production and physical pain while working on these machines.

Sita Ram Gupta, executive director of the Foundation, points out that the new machines are capable of enhancing the production of tulsi malas four-fold and provide a comfortable posture for operating them. With each machine, women are now able to prepare beads for 200 to 250 malas everyday and fabricate the final product into different designs

1008 Girls Bring Blessings In Nepal

KATHMANDU, NEPAL, SEPT 9, 2013 (News24): Hundreds of small girls and their parents bustled near the ancient palace of Kathmandu on Tuesday, arranging themselves in rows ahead of a mass blessing. Every September, girls aged up to 5 gather for the ceremony of Kumari Puja, or virgin worship, believed to bestow good luck on those who attend, and a long and healthy life to the girls who participate. “This year is special because it’s only once in 12 years that they have a ceremony for 1,008 girls at one time,” said Sanjeev Maharjan, whose daughter was taking part in clothes and jewelry bought for the occasion. One thousand and eight is seen as an auspicious

number by Hindus in Nepal. The event is attended by Buddhists as well as the nation's majority Hindus. "We believe young girls are representatives of the virgin goddess and worshipping them brings us many graces, while it also brings them good health."

August 17, 2013 (Open The Magazine by Aatish Taseer): HPI Note: The author is a noted writer based in UK.)

A Historical Sense—What Sanskrit Has Meant To Me

I had come to Sanskrit in search of roots, but I had not expected to have that need met so directly. I had not expected my wish for a "historical sense" to be answered with linguistic roots.

Aged twenty-seven or so, when I first began to study Sanskrit as a private student at Oxford, I knew nothing about the shared origins of Indo-European languages. Not only did I not know the example given in my textbook—that the Sanskrit *arya*, the Avestan *airya*, from which we have the modern name Iran, and the Gaelic *Eire*, all the way on the Western rim of the Indo-European belt, were all probably cognate—I don't even think I knew that word, "cognate." It means "born together": *co natus*. And *natus* from *gnascor* is cognate with the Sanskrit root *jan* from where we have *janma* and the Ancient Greek *gennaō*, "to beget." Genesis, too.

And in those early days of learning Sanskrit, the shared genesis of these languages of a common source, spoken somewhere on the Pontic steppe in the third millennium BC, a source which had decayed and of which no direct record remains, absorbed me completely. Well, almost completely. The grammar was spectacularly difficult and, in that first year, it just kept mushrooming—besides three genders, three numbers and eight cases for every noun, there were several classes of verbs, in both an active and middle voice, each with three numbers and three persons, so that in just the present system, with its moods and the imperfect, I was obliged to memorize 72 terminations for a single verb alone.

And still I found time to marvel at how the Sanskrit *vid*, from where we have *vidya*, was related to the Latin *videre*—to see—from where, in turn, we have such words as *video* and *vision*; *veda* too, of course, for as Calasso writes in *Ka*, the ancient seers, contrary to common conception, did not hear the Vedas, they saw them! Or that *kala*, Time and Death, should be derived from the Sanskrit *kal*, "to calculate or enumerate"—related to the Latin *kalendarium*, "account book," the English calendar—imparting, it seemed to me, onto that word the suggestive notion that at the end of all our calculations comes Death. Almost as if *kala* did not simply mean Time, but had built into it the idea of its passage, the count of days, as it were.

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