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# INDIA WEST

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## THIS WEEK

# India Plans Aid Camps on LOC

### Solanki Honored For India Center

Flanked by dignitaries and university officials, Uka Solanki unveiled a banner heralding the new Yadunandan Center for India Studies at California State University at Long Beach Oct. 8.



B1

### Temple Being Built in Atlanta



Spurred by a \$5 million donation by Sri Sri Selvam Siddhar, elaborate preparations are now underway to transform a Catholic church into an authentic Hindu temple in the Atlanta suburb of Norcross for an estimated \$20 million.

B18

### Three Bollywood Diwali Releases

Three films are competing for the audience's attention this Diwali: David Dhawan's comedy *Shaadi No. 1*, and two films by Priyadarshan, *Kyon Ki...* and *Garam Masala*.



C1

### Chamber of Commerce Opens at Diwali Mela



Surrounded by members of his executive committee, Indian Cultural Center chairman Dinesh Lakhnani announced the formation of an Indian Chamber of Commerce during the sixth annual Diwali celebrations held Oct. 22 at Woodland Hills, Calif.

D1



Quake survivors wait for medical aid in Chikar in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. Weeks after the Oct. 8 7.6 magnitude earthquake, millions remain homeless and tens of thousands remain in need of medical aid, food and shelter. India will set up aid camps along the Line of Control in Kashmir, allowing Pakistani earthquake victims to cross the heavily militarized frontier to seek medical treatment and enabling divided families to visit each other. (AFP/Getty Images)

### Three camps on Kashmir border to offer Pak quake victims medical aid

NEW DELHI (AP) — India will set up aid camps along its disputed border in Kashmir, allowing Pakistani victims of this month's earthquake to cross the heavily militarized frontier to seek medical treatment and enabling divided families to visit each other.

But the proposed three Indian camps, which will provide food, drinking water and tents to the victims, will not be set up until later this month when officials of the two countries meet in Pakistan.

India initially proposed opening the camps—in Teetwal, Kaman and Chakan-da-Bagh districts—by Oct. 25, but will wait for details to be worked out because "some amount of infrastructural work has to be

[Cont. on page A14]



Narendra Jadhav (Viji Sundaram photo)

### Dalit Icon Of Hope Champions Globalization

By VIJI SUNDARAM  
India-West Staff Reporter

SAN LEANDRO, Calif. — A high-ranking official of the Reserve Bank of India is convinced that the caste system in India is "the biggest con job in the history of mankind."

He is also of the belief that the caste system was responsible for "the decay" in India's economy until the economic reforms were introduced 13 years ago.

But by the same token, "if there is one force that has the potential of breaking the back of the caste system, it is the force of globalization," he asserted.

Perhaps Narendra Jadhav, principal adviser and chief econo-

[Cont. on page A34]

### AIDS Thrives Amid Women's Oppression, Child Prostitution

By VIJI SUNDARAM  
India-West Staff Reporter

CHENNAI, Tamil Nadu — Divya, who goes by only one name, often wakes up in the middle of the night bathed in a cold sweat.

Only the reassuring presence in the adjoining room of warden Chitra Muthupandian, who is a mother figure, keeps her from screaming.

"But many nights, I cannot go back to

[Cont. on page A30]

Divya, who was rescued from a brothel in Chennai almost one year ago, says she still has trouble sleeping at night. (Viji Sundaram photo)

### Bush Panelists Urge US Focus

#### Bush's Asian American panel members urge engagement in U.S. politics

By RICHARD SPRINGER  
India-West Staff Reporter

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Indian American community is vocal and articulate concerning issues relating to India, but doesn't get energized on Medi-

[Cont. on page A28]



Joseph Meloorkaran (left) and Dr. Akshay Desai, the two Indian American appointees to the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. (Richard Springer photo)

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# AIDS Thrives on Child Trafficking, Lack of Women's Rights

[Cont. from page A1]  
sleep," she told **India-West**. "For me, nights are the worst time."

For the last seven months, Divya has been living here at the Community Health Education Society, a home for AIDS orphans in the neighborhood of Kodambakkam. She was brought here just days after she was taken out of a remand home. A judge had ordered she be sent to the home, after dismissing charges against her of running a brothel in Chennai.

When the police raided the brothel, fingers were pointed at the cowering girl, who was identified as the "madam." As she was taken away, no one had bothered to ask her if it was true.

Divya languished in jail for a whole year before her case came up for a hearing. Somehow the judge believed her story and not that of the policemen. CHES staffers brought her to the orphanage.

Divya looks a little out of place

mother, whom the girl had lived with in the small town of Neyveli in Tamilnadu. Her grandmother sold her off for Rs.65,000 (about \$1,500). Divya was barely 14 at the time. That was four years after her father had dumped her on his elderly mother and taken off. The little girl never saw him again. Until she was sold, Divya's grandmother had forced her to work as a servant in a number of houses. The calluses on her hands show for that.

Divya remembers how her mother and father, who had both worked as coolies, frequently fought over his extramarital affairs. Then one night, her father tied a rock around her mother's neck and pushed her into a well near their house, even as a traumatized Divya watched.

The pimp sold Divya to the owner of the Pondicherry brothel. Divya became yet another victim of child trafficking in the sex trade.

Today, the timid, dusky-complexioned young woman has



children.

By the mid-1990s, a quarter or more of sex workers in such cities as New Delhi, Hyderabad,

in Tamil Nadu, 80 percent of them have never had sex with any one other than their husbands," Dr. P. Krishnamurthy, project director of the Chennai-based AIDS Prevention and Control Project-Voluntary Health Services, a U.S. Agency for International Development project, told **India-West**.

Indian women's lack of negotiating powers leaves them vul-

AIDS Control Organization, a federal agency. Nineteen percent of the men surveyed and seven percent of the women said they had had sex with non-regular partners in the last year, figures far higher than the national average.

Statistics released last May by the WHO indicates that the epidemic has stabilized in Tamil Nadu, possibly because the state

**Today, the timid, dusky-complexioned young woman has only two things to show for her years of intimacy with men who were total strangers — her HIV-positive status and her emotional scars.**

at CHES. Most of her 32 housemates are still losing their milk teeth. Divya is 19 and looks it. But like more than half of the orphanage's children, Divya has the human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS.

In the five years she was forced to work as a sex worker, first in a brothel in Pondicherry, then in one in Chennai, Divya believes she must have serviced around 3,000 men. Possibly more. She has no idea who among them gave her the deadly virus.

"Every night I had to service two to three men, and only a few of them would use a condom," Divya said in her native Tamil, her eyes staring at the tiled floor. "I could not say anything to them because I was afraid the man would beat me up."

The man she was referring to was not a client, but the pimp who bought her from her grand-

only two things to show for her years of intimacy with men who were total strangers — her HIV-positive status and her emotional scars. Divya said many of the men would come drunk and dirty to the brothel. The madam and the pimp kept the money she earned, about Rs. 300 per client, Divya believes. In exchange, they fed her and kept her well clothed. She was never allowed to go outside by herself.

On nights she would not cooperate, the pimp or the madam would inject something into her arm and send a subdued Divya to the client.

"After that I didn't know what was happening," she told **India-West**, her voice dropping to a whisper. "I would just do what I was told."

There are an estimated 3 million prostitutes in India, one-fourth of whom are minors and



CHES founder Dr. P. Manorama, who also runs programs for commercial sex workers in the slums of Chennai. (Viji Sundaram photos)

Madurai and Pune tested HIV-positive. In Mumbai, the prevalence of HIV infection among sex workers was nearly 60 percent in 2000, according to the Indian government's National AIDS Control Organization.

Divya was among the approximately 85,000 sex-workers living in Tamilnadu. She is now among the 2.5 million women in India who are HIV positive, the great majority of whom have gotten infected not from their promiscuous behavior. Most of the women who have contracted the virus have been faithful to their husbands.

"Among HIV-positive women

nerable to sexually transmitted diseases, he said. And people suffering from STDs are 10 times more vulnerable to contracting HIV than others, accounting for the rapid spread of the disease. The lesions caused by such untreated ulcerative STDs as herpes and syphilis provide an easy entry for the AIDS virus.

has taken some bold steps to curb it. The grass roots initiatives are especially remarkable.

"Today, Tamil Nadu is number one in HIV/AIDS prevention," asserted Krishnamurthy proudly. One of the reasons Tamil Nadu "is a success story" is that in this state, unlike in some others in India, there has

**"Among HIV-positive women in Tamil Nadu, 80 percent of them have never had sex with any one other than their husbands," said Dr. P. Krishnamurthy, project director of the Chennai-based AIDS Prevention and Control Project-Voluntary Health Services.**

"Poor things, I really pity the women in this country," said Dr. P. Manorama, who founded the CHES orphanage six years ago, and has organized AIDS education programs in a number of slums in Chennai, as well as among commercial sex workers. "For a few minutes of pleasure, the men leave someone suffering for the rest of their lives."

Tamilnadu was for a long time at the vanguard of the AIDS epidemic in India, but it was overtaken first by Maharashtra, and more recently by Andhra Pradesh. Today, Andhra Pradesh accounts for nearly 10 percent of all HIV-positive cases in the country. Promiscuity among men and women is the highest there, according to a survey done by ORG-MARG for the National

never been a denial of the problem, he told **India-West**.

There is also "good political support and good coordination among (non-governmental organizations)," he said.

In fact, Tamil Nadu was the first state to set up an AIDS cell back in the late 1980s, within a couple of years after the first AIDS cases in the country were detected there. Krishnamurthy served in that cell.

Women's inequality has clearly fueled the rapid spread of HIV in India and South Africa in multiple overlapping ways, say AIDS activists.

"If there is one vaccine that exists today, it is women's empowerment," observed Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the

[Cont. on page A32]





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# AIDS Thrives on Child Trafficking, Lack of Women's Rights

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United Nations Development Fund for Women. "Focusing on women is the key to reversing the AIDS crisis."

Until she came to the orphanage and began counseling, Divya believed that men had a right to

ating powers," asserted Chennai-based AIDS activist 31-year-old P. Kausalya.

Her own personal experience and anger against her truck driver husband for hiding his HIV-positive status at the time of their arranged marriage made



Gates Foundation, through the Indian Network of Positive People.

A native of Namakkal, a district in Tamilnadu best known today for having the highest concentration of HIV-positive people in the country, Kausalya was forcibly married off 10 years ago to Kalaivannan, who was five years her senior.

At the time of her marriage, only her husband, his dad and the family doctor knew of the groom's HIV-positive status.

"He had been advised by the doctor not to marry," Kausalya said, a fact she would find out

only a few months after the nuptials.

A few weeks into her marriage, Kausalya, like her husband, began falling sick frequently. They were both diagnosed as HIV-positive.

"I was devastated," Kausalya said. "I saw a bleak future. My dreams of becoming a nurse and having children disappeared in an instant."

"At the time, I knew very little about reproductive health, even though I had taken a basic education in nursing in plus two (12<sup>th</sup> grade)," Kausalya, who left her husband in anger shortly after finding out he had infected her, told *India-West*. "All I knew was that if you are promiscuous, you'll get AIDS."

Kausalya never went back to Kalaivannan or to her grandmother, who had raised her and forced her into the short-lived marriage. Instead, "I thoroughly

educated myself about the disease," she said.

In the months following, Kausalya would find herself at death's door as she battled one "opportunistic infection" after another — cryptococcal meningitis, a brain infection which causes severe headaches and which is triggered by a weakened immune system, among them.

Her immune system cell count level dropped so low that she was quickly put on anti-retroviral drugs at the Chennai-based YRG Care Center where she checked herself in a barely conscious condition.

Once started on the expensive ARV therapy, HIV-positive patients have to continue it for the rest of their lives. Depending on the kind of drugs in the therapy, it could cost a patient upwards

**"Today, Tamil Nadu is number one in HIV/AIDS prevention," asserted Krishnamurthy proudly. One of the reasons Tamil Nadu "is a success story" is that in this state, unlike in some others in India, there has never been a denial of the problem.**

demand sex and women had to unquestioningly comply — a belief commonly held by most women in India, even by those who are educated.

"Girls should be told about their reproductive rights, only then will they have any negoti-

her realize this, she said.

His infecting her drove her to set up the Positive Women's Network, a national support group for women living with HIV/AIDS. PWN is supported by UNIFEM, the American Jewish Foundation, as well as the



AIDS orphans at CHES where Divya now lives. More than half of them are HIV-positive.

**"Poor things, I really pity the women in this country," said Dr. P. Manorama, who founded the CHES orphanage six years ago. "For a few minutes of pleasure, the men leave someone suffering for the rest of their lives."**

of Rs.800 a month, something out of reach for those living below the poverty line. Kausalya has grown resistant to first-line treatment and is now on an alternative drug "cocktail" which, she said, is costing her round Rs. 9,500 a month.

Her activism on the AIDS front has taken her to different parts of the world more than 20 times. She has shared the dais with the likes of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. She is currently on a number of international HIV committees, including the Global Coalition for Women with HIV.

"I have learned to be bold, thanks to my virus," she said, adding: "I have so much more to accomplish."

Divya's ambitions are a lot more modest, perhaps because there she has yet to distance herself from her grisly past. She says she always wanted to learn

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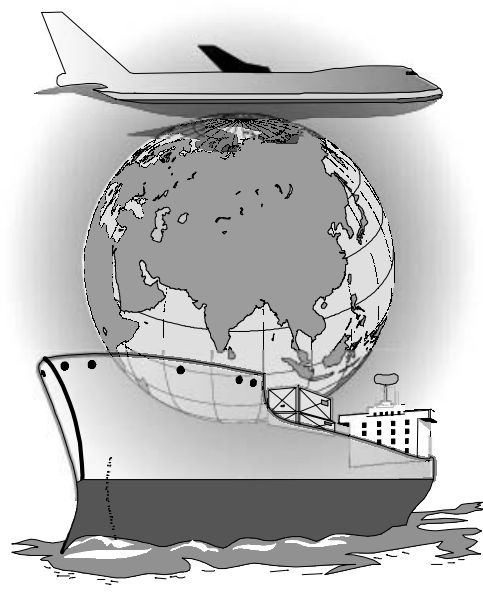
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**Until she came to the orphanage and began counseling, Divya believed that men had a right to demand sex and women had to unquestioningly comply — a belief commonly held by most women in India, even by those who are educated.**

tailoring, have a little shop of her own and feel independent. She hopes that will happen some day.

But for now, "I am quite happy just being here and feeling safe," she said.

(This is the fourth in the series on "Women and AIDS" by *India-West* staff reporter Viji Sundaram, who was in India earlier this year on a fellowship from the Henry J.Kaser Family Foundation in Menlo Park, Calif.

Next week: How migrant workers spread AIDS.)