

IMAGES OF SANSKRIT IN POPULAR CULTURE

If you can't chant something nice 5/24/98

Madonna's latest album, *Ray of Light*, may be big on spirituality, but Indian purists are not happy with her handling of an ancient prayer in Sanskrit. Scholars in the Hindu holy town of Benares told an Indian news agency that Madonna's rendering of the song *Shanti Shanti* was flawed. The prayer is supposed to bring peace. But Sanskrit professor **B.N. Chaturvedi** said: "How can it bring peace to Madonna and her audiences when she pronounces *Shanti*, *Shanti* as *Shantee*, *Shantee*? It is one thing to make a mistake in ordinary conversation but another to chant it incorrectly." Scholars say the word should be pronounced with a clipped "e" sound instead of a long "e" sound. **Acharya Vageesh Shastri**, another scholar, said Madonna should come to Benares to "improve her language." Madonna



Madonna
... Hindu hoo-hah

seems to be zipping from religion to religion these days. Not long ago, she was all wrapped up in an obscure mystical offshoot of Judaism. Then we heard she was big into yoga, which apparently led to dabbling in Hinduism. But we can sympathize with her plight; we always mess up when we try to sing in Sanskrit.



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