

[Hinduism Today in Africa](#)

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PUBLISHER'S DESK: HINDUISM TODAY IN AFRICA

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It is with the greatest joy that we welcome so many thousands of new readers in South Africa. It is due to the efforts of many good people, most recently our new editor of the Africa Edition, Mr. Mahalingum Kolapen, seen here during a visit to our Hawaii ashram in mid-August. Mahalingum, a masterful mridangam player, runs the Sangeeta Nataka Academy with his wife Satyabhama in Pretoria. He is also executive director of MBS Graphics and promoter of Indian cultural events. Mahalingum has many reasons for undertaking the Africa Edition. Most importantly, his satguru, the late Swami Sivananda Navalar, spiritual head of the Saiva Sithantha Sungum, made him promise to do it. On his deathbed, Swami commissioned Mahalingum Kolapen to carry forward the flag of Hinduism Today, now and forever. Swami Navalar, a man of rare vision, saw the need for Hinduism Today in his country. He said it would arouse the unity among Hindus living under the threat of alien religions and massive conversion efforts.

Swami Sivananda Navalar was a siddha yogi, once buried alive for three days. My first meeting with him was a sudden one. He had heard I was in Sri Lanka and sent his ambassador, Guru Subramaniam Phillips, to fetch me to South Africa. That was in 1981. He took us everywhere, and we spoke to 100,000 Hindus facing difficult pressures and feeling quite discouraged about their future. There was no doubt that Hinduism in South Africa was thumbs down.

All of this led to Mahalingum's flying around the world to our Polynesian island. During his visit, we spoke of many things, from electronic mail and optical data storage to the changes about to take place in April of '94 when South Africa's first real elections take place. He shared his vision of reaching Hindus in all of Africa, noting that of the 40 or so nations on the continent there are major Hindu

populations in South Africa (1.2 million), Tanzania (60,000), Kenya (60,000), Nigeria (30,000) and Zambia (20,000) with significant communities in Zimbabwe, Somalia and Botswana. Mahalingum wants them all to join our global family. He is a soul forging ahead on faith. His shakti comes from his siddha guru, as does that of Anil Proag of Mauritius, and Bharatbhai Gheewala of England come from theirs--Swami Krishnanand, who had many centers in Africa and Mauritius. His black swamis are serving now in these countries. Swami Krishnanand [1900-1992] gave upon his passing a divine order to Anil Proag and to Bharatbhai Gheewala to give their full energy to protect dharma, to prevail through all opposition, to never give up, and to train the youth. Bharatbhai's 17-year-old son, Kshitij, is here with us now, living at our Kauai ashram, training with us for a month to carry forward the mission of publishing the UK/European Edition in his country. He was sent by his father to learn the technical intricacies of how each issue is put together, to take this knowledge back with him to England.

Over 11 million square miles in size, Africa is the second largest continent in the world, nine times larger than India, with a population of more than 500 million people. Hinduism in Africa is unique in that it gave the world Mahatma Gandhi, who freed India after a thousand years of tyranny by invaders. Hinduism in Africa is unique because the Hindus are remarkably integrated and more institutionally organized than perhaps anywhere else in the world. Hinduism in Africa is unique because Indians have been forced by a soon-to-be-extinct regime to live only among other Hindus in almost concentration-camp like communities--a fact that, extraordinarily enough, helped to preserve Hinduism in the country. Hinduism in Africa is unique in that African Hindus are among the most wealthy and high-energy, highly educated and effective supporters of dharma anywhere in the world. Hinduism in Africa is unique in its adoption of certain Western ways of worship, pews and sermon-style Sunday morning church gatherings and congregational singing. But its greatest uniqueness is that Hinduism Today's Africa Edition will not only be a voice of the Indian Hindu community, but will also be a voice for the indigenous communities within Africa, blending two unique cultures that consider earth as mother, the energy that grows things and feeds the people and the life spirit within everything the mother principle. When we were in Moscow for the Global Forum on Human Survival, I was shown by an African priestess the singular most important act of worship she and her predecessors throughout history have performed, a sacred offering of water to the earth, which in English she calls libation. This libation is none other than the abhisheka of our own Vedic heritage. In this and so many other ways, Hinduism and African tribal religion are brothers. We look forward to opening the doors for a oneness of thought and belief between the people of Africa and the Hindu Indian community.

It is with heartfelt greetings that we welcome Mahalingum Kolapen into the center

of the Hinduism Today extended family. We ask that all Hindu institutions in Africa give him full support, as he humbly attempts to fulfill his guru's edict to spread our Hindu family newspaper throughout Africa.