Centerspread Poster Section
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## World Hindu Conference, South Africa

Editors note: Only subscribers to Hinduism Today today can feast their vision on the photo essay in this month's center section. The text here is thin because the printed page is thick with telling photos. We have included the photo captions here, for whatever information they contain. If you want to see what you're missing, subscribe today.

Like a giant air-balloon chariot, the World Hindu Conference alighted in Durban and transported twenty-thousand apartheid-weary souls heavenward for four days of spiritual healing, Hindu empowering and ahimsa envisioning.

It was an expansive mood, a festive, buoyant, friendly weekend in higher consciousness, a time for renewing the faith, rekindling personal Hindu ideals and charting a sensible, collective future. Those noble minds entrusted to speak echoed a clear message that Hindus need to step into the next millennia with a new identity--sisters and brothers of the Earth family first and Hindus second. That is the enlightened, neighborly way on a small planet. 3,000-year-old Vedic verses like Vasudeva Kutumbakam, "The whole world is one family," rang out from the lips of delegates from 40 lands who joined South African Hindus to celebrate a resurgent future of the

faith in their de-segregated, democratic nation.

Swamis young and old, youth in every hue and excuse of dress, the aged, the inspired and mostly the inspiration-hungry climbed on board. The ride had something for everyone. For many, just the darshan of tranquil souls like Swami Sahajananda was enough. Others needed, and got, an activist "Wake up, you sleepy Hindus!" call from parliamentarian/sannyasini Uma Bharati. For some, the dazzling cultural artists and vegetarian food was the amrita. But most agreed it was world-respected statesman President Mandela who inspired everyone when he told the 20,000-plus crowd how much Hinduism and Mahatma Gandhi meant to him.

The event itself was its own fulfillment. It was a national rite of passage for Hindus out of South Africa's dismal past and an affirmation of their faith in its future. It was a special time of joy and blessings, to remember and be nourished by for a long time.

Sants, Savants & Dignitaries

Orange was everywhere from salmon pinks to terracotta reds, adorning nearly 40 swamis who graced the event. "They were just wonderful," said school teacher Mahendra Maharaj. Other noble minds were present, too. It was a sangam, a confluence of souls offering sagely notes to sound a stronger chord of Hindu harmony. Photos left to right, then downward: Right, Swami Sahajananda, Swami Premananda, Swami

Nirmalananda. Below left, dancers greet President Mandela; Swami Krishna Naidoo; Dr. Mahesh Mehta; Sannyasini Uma Bharati; Swami Shivanandi Adikalaar; Swami Nirmalananda. Second below: Acharya Giriraj Kishor; Pandit Umanath; Swami Rangarajan; Swami Siddhayogananda. Third below: Dadi Prakashini; Swami Brahmananda Saraswati; Swami Pranavananda; Swami Agnivesh; Swami Amalananda. Fourth below: Swami Premananda; Swami Purananananda; Swami Upadhyaya and Sadhu Kabirpanthi.

People, Performers & Parade

Never before have I seen such grace, poise, color and brilliant artistry. It was an extraordinary cultural show," said Rishana Govender, 24, herself a classical musician. From the diva soloists to the delegate paraders and swami speakers, ear, heart and mind were satiated. India's greatest were there, but so were South Africa's. Everyone shined--from India's acclaimed santoor player Pundit Shivkumar Sharma to South Africa's Kathak maestro Dr. Vinod Hasal. Clockwise from right: cultural dance; Tamil Nadu's Pithikuli Murugadas embraced by South African President Nelson Mandela; women's wing paraders; paraders; Nepal's delegation; caps of all kinds; USA parade delegation; inaugural homa; Kathak dancer; singer Sashika Moonith; Pandit Shivkumar Sharma and Dr. Vinod Hasal.