

[Happy 20th Birthday, Hinduism Today!](#)

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INSIGHT

Happy 20th Birthday, Hinduism Today!

A family album of the major events we reported on

IN JANUARY 5, 1979, SATGURU SIVAYA SUBRAMUNIASWAMI, returning from a world tour, envisioned a way to unite millions of Hindus estranged by geography--by providing news of their common heritage, activities and concerns. The magazine you hold was founded that day. It started humbly, but today boasts a complex information network poised at the forefront of print technology. This month's Insight reviews key stories published over the years. But first, Indian intellectual architect Ram Swarup offers an overview.

By Ram Swarup, New Delhi

Hindu communities are found in many countries today, but with the exception of Hinduism Today, there's no journal dealing with their problems and opportunities. In this respect, this journal is unique. It reveals the international face of Hinduism. Picking up a copy, one becomes aware of Hindus not only in India but also Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, South Africa, Southeast Asia and increasingly in Europe and North America. Its pages bring them together so often under the same roof that they begin to feel and live together.

This face tended to be neglected by Hindus in India in the past. For centuries they were under great pressure and could not spare much thought for anything beyond the problem of survival. But things are changing now and there is awareness of a larger Hindu world, Hindu Vishva. The old resistances are still at work, however, and there is a strong tendency to make Hindus into purely an Indian phenomenon (though we know that not all Indians are Hindus). But Hinduism Today (HT) makes us aware of Hindus beyond India and does it in its own way, not as NRIs, but as part of a family, as brothers and sisters united in a common spiritual perception and feeling.

HT tells us of Hindus and Hinduism abroad not only at present but also in the past. It finds Hinduism an old phenomenon, not a seventeenth-century construct as some would-be orientalists would have it, but an ancient and great civilization whose influence had travelled far and wide. But in succeeding centuries, India fell on evil days. The Hindu mind and psyche began to shrink and Hindus tended to forget this side of their history. HT is helping them revive those lost memories.

As it travels back in time, it finds no Aryan invasion of India but reports of Hindu presence in Europe and the Americas. From its scholarly special articles on Plotinus and the Druids, we learn of intimate spiritual contact between India and Europe at an early date. Its recent article on old Inca and Mayan buildings reveals remarkable similarities with old Indian architecture, which points to an early, pre-Columbus contact between Hindus and the peoples of South and Central America.

The journal stands for peace among followers of all religious persuasions without being called upon to preach an artificial and indiscriminate ideology of "harmony of all religions." It avoids politics and politicians, in itself quite a relief. On the other hand, it reports what is happening in the Hindu religious world; it tells us of Hindu philosophy, doctrines, modes of worship, rites; it tells us of Hindu festivals, places of pilgrimage, of temples and educational centers that are being built by Hindu communities in different corners of the world; it tells us about the great Hindu personalities and about non-Hindu friends of Hinduism and it gives prominence to Hindu sannyasins.

HT represents a new force. While consolidating Hindus, it also projects the great ideas and ideals of Sanatana Dharma.

Ram Swarup, New Delhi, is a leading thinker and write, a spokesman for Indian spirituality. Find his works at:
www.hindu.org/publications/ramswarup/

1979: Hinduism Today is founded in Hawaii as "a bridge between East and West." The First English translation of the Hindu scripture, Tirumantiram, is published in the US by Saiva Siddhanta Church. US Hindu communities in Houston, Texas, and Malibu, California, purchase the properties for the Meenakshi and Venkateswara temples, which by 1998 rank among the most successful traditional temples outside India.

1980: Sri la Sri Arunagirinatha Sri Gnanasambanda Desikar is inaugurated as the successor and spiritual head of South India's Madurai Aadheenam. India's Chidambaram temple begins comprehensive, ^{us}\$35-million, 10-year renovation project. Swami Satchidananda's LOTUS temple is begun in Virginia.

1981: Hinduism Today adopts newspaper size. Manifestations of Siva exhibition, a stunning collection of Siva art and iconography, attracts hundreds of thousands during its US museum tour. The Sri Ganapathy Temple of London is consecrated in Wimbledon.

1982: Bali celebrates the Eka Dasa Rudra festival, held only once each century. Mauritius elects the honorable Anerood Jugnauth, a

Hindu, as Prime Minister.

1983: Riots in Colombo flare, heralding the beginning of the still active Sri Lankan civil war.

1984: Actress Shirley MacLain publicly professes her beliefs in karma, reincarnation and Hindu metaphysics, giving added credence to the New Age

movement. Nepal's King Birendra visits the US, meets president Ronald Reagan.

1985: HT adds spot color and starts publishing every two months. Indira Gandhi assassinated in India, Hindu-Sikh tensions flare. Ex-Jain cult guru Bhagawan

Shree Rajneesh is arrested on US immigration fraud charges and deported. Nine-hundred Hindu leaders meet in Udupi to discuss the future of the religion and current events.

1986: HT goes digital

with Macintosh computers. The LOTUS Temple at Swami Satchidananda's Integral Yoga Institute, Virginia, is inaugurated.

Controversy rocks the Siddha Yoga Dham movement as co-successor Swami Nityananda abdicates.

1987: HT publishes monthly, adds new features, more color. A New Jersey Hindu man is murdered by prejudiced "Dot Busters," causing deep reflection within Hindu communities abroad. Andhra Pradesh

passes a bill ending hereditary rights of Tirupati's temple priests, a 10-year court struggle begins.

1988: Nine just-invented Mac

Its enhance
Hinduism Today's
publishing
network. Oxford
hosts the first
Global Forum on
Human Survival
with strong Hindu
participation.
Bangladesh

declares Islam the
state religion.

Thousands attend
the largest
Ganesha Visarjana
festival outside
India, in San
Francisco,
California.

1989: England
hosts the Bharat
Hindu Sammelan,
the largest-ever
Hindu gathering
outside of India,
100,000 visit.
Hindus flee
Bangladesh

claiming
persecution by
Muslim
fundamentalists.
The Kumbha Mela
festival held at
Haridwar is
recorded as the
largest single

assembly of
humanity ever, at
45 million.

1990: Hindus
flee Kashmir,
giving up hope

of an end to
violence in their
homeland.

Moscow hosts

the second

Global Forum on

Human Survival.

Swami

Paramananda

Bharati leads all participants in chanting "Om" together in the Kremlin. Nepal becomes a democracy and remains the world's only

Hindu nation.

1991: Germany
celebrates a
year-long
Festival of

India, and the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha holds a Festival of India in Edison, New Jersey, which

introduces
Hinduism to
hundreds of
thousands. US
Restaurant
Association
urges members
to offer

vegetarian
menus.

1992: Full
color explodes
on the

Hinduism
Today
desktop.
Militant Hindu
fanatics storm
and raze the
Babri Masjid in
Ayodhya,

causing
widespread
riots
throughout
India which
leave
thousands
dead. Brazil

hosts the
Parliamentary
Earth Summit
in Rio. Hindus
offer Vedic
insights into
the
environment.

1993: Hindu,
Sikh and Jain
spiritual
leaders are a
prevalent
force at the
centenary

Parliament of
the World's
Religions in
Chicago. The
VHP of
America
presents the

Global Vision 2000 conference in honor of Swami Vivekananda; 10,000

attend.

1994: HT
(and the
Vedas)

published
electronically
on the Web.
Nelson
Mandela
becomes
president of

South Africa.
He publicly
hails
Mahatma
Gandhi's
nonviolent
example. Fiji

Hindus
inaugurate
their largest
new Agamic
temple in
Nadi.
Sankarachar

ya of Kanchi,
Sri
Chandrasekh
arendra
Saraswati,
attains his
mahasamad

hi, at 99.

1995: HT

acquires

blazing-fast

(they were
then) 9500
Macintoshes
. Lord
Ganesha
drinks milk

around the
world in the
most
miraculous
religious
event of the

century.
India's
Supreme
Court
declares the
Ramakrishn

a Mission
officially
and legally
"Hindu"
after nearly
15 years of

effort by the
RK mission
to gain
non-Hindu
status.

1996: Newspaper transforms into Hinduism Today

international
magazine.
New
journalists
and

photograph
ers come
forward.
India's
Supreme
Court

concludes
its 10-year
case and
terminates
Tirupati
temple's

hereditary priests.

1997:

Pandurang
Shastri
Athavale
wins the us
\$1.21-milli
on

Templeton
Prize for
Progress in
Religion.
Tragic fire
tears

through festive kumbhabhi shekam rites at the Tanjavur

temple in
South
India; over
39 die and
hundreds
are injured.

1998: HT
pioneers
direct
computer-
to-plate
printing

process.
Network
upgrades
to Power
Macintosh
G3

computers . The Kumbha Mela in Haridwar draws 25

million
faithful.
Severe
methods
of child
discipline

within
Hindu
household
s and
public
schools

worldwide
are
revealed.
Children
speak out.