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Diaspora

SINGAPORE

Taoist-Hindu Co-Temple

When Chinese Taoists first arrived in Singapore in 1820, they established temples for their faith. One, Hock Huat Keng, became unique when in the 1930s a temple to the Hindu God Siva (as Sri Veeramuth Muneeswarar) was established beside the shrine to Tua Peh Kong. Devotees worshiped together and preached that the "Gods are friends." Now the two temples have together moved to new quarters in the Yishun Industrial Estate. The small Hindu shrine was recreated right beside a new Taoist temple with delicately carved dragon pillars and an elaborately tiled roof. Taoist devotees number about 3,000, Hindus about 750. Jimmy Ng of the Taoist temple committee said, "There is no majority or minority in this temple. We worship the same Gods, and there is no difference between us."

AMERICA

Holi with Style

"Any excuse for a party" remains a motto of American college students; and now thanks to the Hindu Students Council, University of Michigan students have a new one: Holifest '98. Even participants who had never experienced Holi in India quickly grasped the subtle techniques. 1) sneak up from behind. 2) sneak up from the side. 3) attack from the front. 4) douse friends and strangers alike with colored powders or

water. "It is festivals like this that remind me of the pride I have in my Indian culture," offered sophomore Shitang Patel. More realistically, junior Anjum Gupta qualified that, "It was a great way to get out end-of-semester tension and frustration--as well as learn about Indian culture."

DISCOVERY

Rodrigues' Natural Temple

Every sixteen seconds one drop of water falls upon this Lingam, causing it to assume a reddish texture like a glowing coal," reports Raj Dayal, former commissioner of police for Mauritius. He and a few friends guided by Fatemamode FelicitÃ© had just entered the cave system known as Caverne Patate on Rodrigues, an island possession of Mauritius lying 625 km east of the small island country in the Indian Ocean. Everywhere he and his companions looked in the caves they found Hindu images--here Parvati, there Nandi the bull and there Hanuman, the monkey king. Over here was Ganesha and Karttikeya, and there Sheshnag, king of serpents. "There are everywhere various naturally created symbols and characteristic objects associated with Hindu rites, rituals and mysticism," said Dayal. Their attention was especially drawn to the Lingam-shaped stalagmite formed near the cave's entrance and automatically bathed and worshiped by the cave itself. Awed by the splendor and mystical impact of the remote sanctuary, Dayal concluded, "Exploring Caverne Patate may be the gateway for all of us to pursue the great journey within ourselves."

MUSIC AND DANCE

Carnegie Hall's Fantastic Fling

You probably were not able to attend when superstars of

Indian classical and devotional music, too many to list here, thrilled audiences at America's premiere concert hall, New York's Carnegie, on September 13, 1997. Not to worry. The Music Festival of India, a professional two-hour video archive of this rare event, will bring the exciting and sublime performances of both music and dance that occurred that night right into your home. Connect your VCR to your stereo to fully enjoy the fantastic synergy of these maestros. And only on the video will you see a brief interview with each artist. Now, you have no excuse to miss it.

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HOMECOMING

NY Hindus Dig Their Roots

Ramesh Kalicharran is a travel agent with a mission. Twice a year he escorts groups of Indo-Caribbean descent back to India. Many such tourist-cum-pilgrims are the first in their families in four generations to set foot on the soil of Bharat. It has been a century and a half since their ancestors left an embattled, famine-ridden India for a better life in the distant colony.

The reconnection to India is often automatic. "It was like my father speaking to me, a returning home, even though India is not my home," said elder pilgrim David Pherai whose father emigrated to Guyana a century ago. He and his wife renewed their marriage vows in a Hindu ceremony and took the names Nehru and Kamla.

Last year pilgrims frolicked at Holi (Phagwa) in Jaipur. Seeming to recognize their inner and outer return to the motherland, Jaipur residents embraced the group as they would close relatives. Holi is the biggest Hindu event of the year in the Caribbean, but the pilgrims had never experienced it like this! Despite the time and distance, they remained one with their Bharat homeland.

HERITAGE

Super Site

Dholavira is now a remote area in the Rann of Kutch, a giant salt marsh adjacent the Arabian Sea along the western border of India and Pakistan. But 5,000 years ago it was a major city of the Indus-Saraswati Civilization. First excavated in 1970, the city continues to dazzle archeologists. "The city planning, aesthetic architecture, hydraulic engineering and concern for water conservation, along with the funerary architecture, are just amazing. They reflect concepts found in the Rig Veda," said chief archeologist R.S. Bisht.

THE VEDAS

God's Word, Sages' Voices

I glorify him who is of wonderful radiance like the sun, who is the giver of happiness, lovely, benevolent and the one whom all welcome like a guest. He bestows vigor upon the worshipers; may He, the fire-divine, remove our sorrow and give us heroic strength and all sustaining riches.

RIG VEDA 10.122.1

The devout performers of solemn ceremonies, aspiring for chariots, are led to the doors of the chamber of the Lord.

Ladles, placed to the east, are plying the fire with melted butter at the fire sacrifice, as the mother cow licks her calf, or as rivers water the fields.

RIG VEDA 7.2.5

Words cannot describe the joy of the soul whose impurities are cleansed in deep contemplation--who is one with Atman, his own Spirit. Only those who feel this joy know what it is.

MAITRI UPANISHAD 6.34

May the forefathers of ancient days protect me in this my prayer, in this my act, in this my priestly duty, in this my performance, in this my thought, in this my purpose and desire, in this my calling on the Gods! All Hail!

ATHARVA VEDA 5.24.15

WHO IS A HINDU?

"Acceptance of the Vedas with reverence; recognition of the fact that the means or ways to salvation are diverse; and the realization of the truth that the number of Gods to be worshiped is large, that indeed is the distinguishing feature of the Hindu religion." B.G. Tilak's definition of what makes one a basic Hindu, as quoted by India's Supreme Court. On July 2, 1995, the Court referred to it as an "adequate and satisfactory formula."