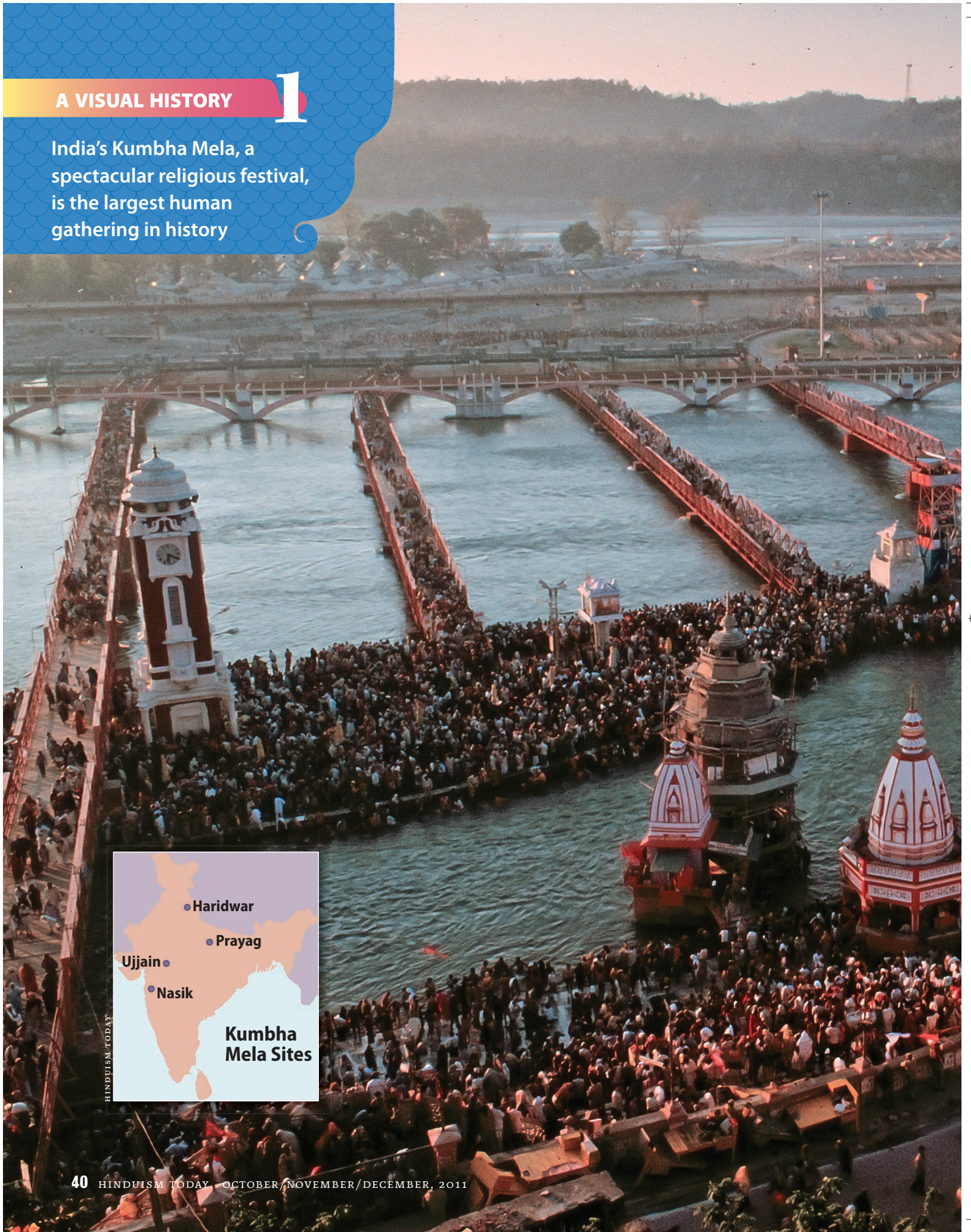


## A VISUAL HISTORY

# 1

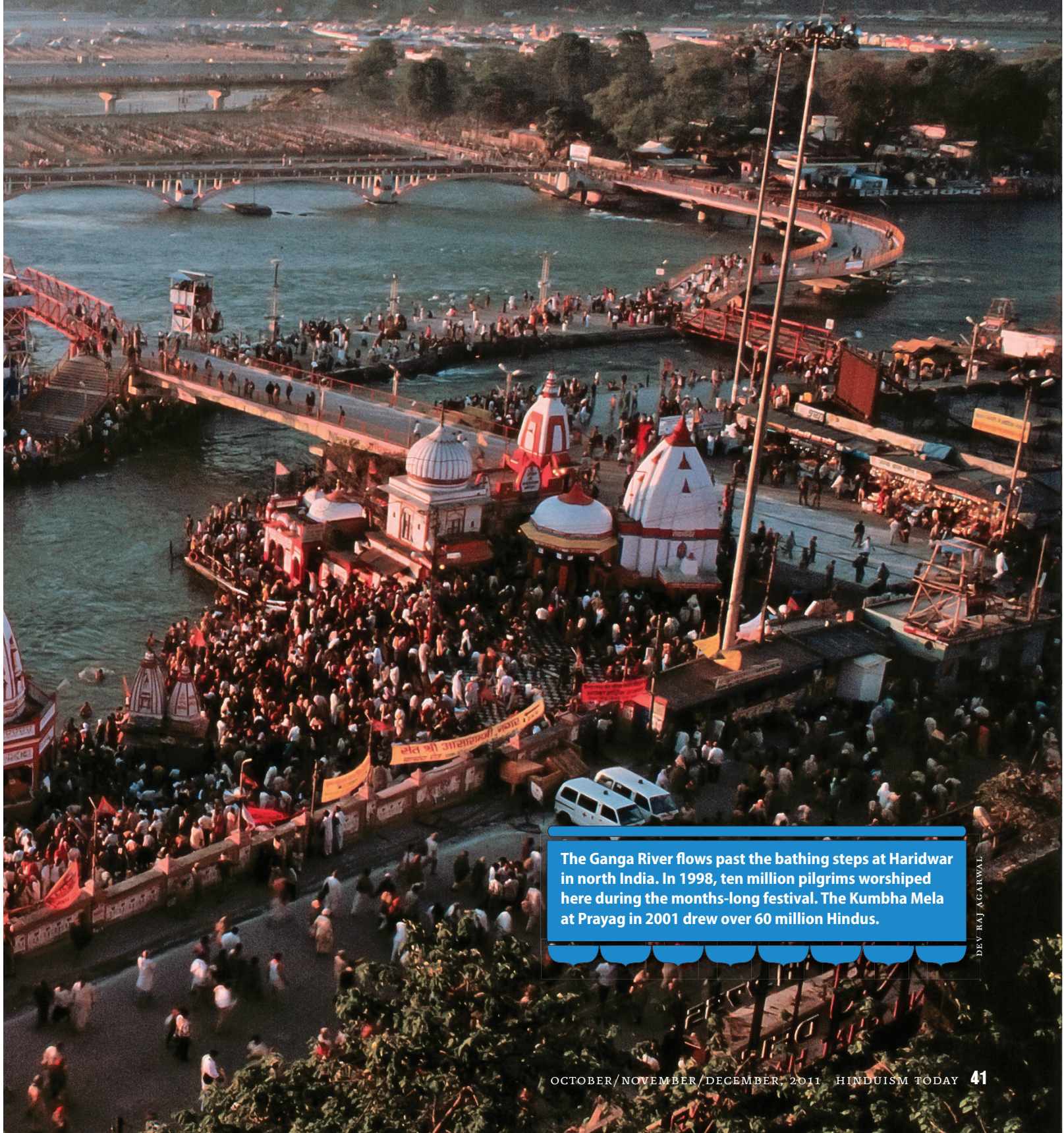
India's Kumbha Mela, a spectacular religious festival, is the largest human gathering in history



HINDUISM TODAY



This Educational Insight is a supplement to our five children's lessons on Hindu and Indian history. Each of the five sections here pictorially presents the key Hindu religious and cultural practices, customs and traditions discussed in the five lessons.



The Ganga River flows past the bathing steps at Haridwar in north India. In 1998, ten million pilgrims worshiped here during the months-long festival. The Kumbha Mela at Prayag in 2001 drew over 60 million Hindus.

DEV RAJ AGARWAL

## AN ASSEMBLY OF HOLY MEN & WOMEN

The Kumbha Mela brings together tens of thousands of Hindu holy men (*sadhus*) and women (*sadhvis*) as well as millions of devout Hindus, all traveling long distances to experience months of worship and festivities.



MELA PRESS BUREAU



MELA PRESS BUREAU

Hindu monks parade through narrow streets of Haridwar on their way to the river Ganga for a sacred, purifying bath.

Swami Avdheshanand Giri, under the umbrella, heads a monastic order of hundreds of thousands of *sadhus*.



THOMAS KELLY

Two girls hold clay oil lamps on metal trays at the 2004 Kumbha Mela in Ujjain, one of Hinduism's "Seven Sacred Cities." These lamps will be used in the worship of the Kshipra River flowing behind them. Hindus often

attend the Mela in large family groups composed of kids, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. There is something for everyone in the traditional worship and festive ceremonies.



DEV RAJ AGARWAL

During the festival, a vast tent city is set up along the river to house the sadhus. Here, devotees can meet and mingle with these holy monks, many of whom live alone in remote areas of the Himalayas.



THOMAS KELLY

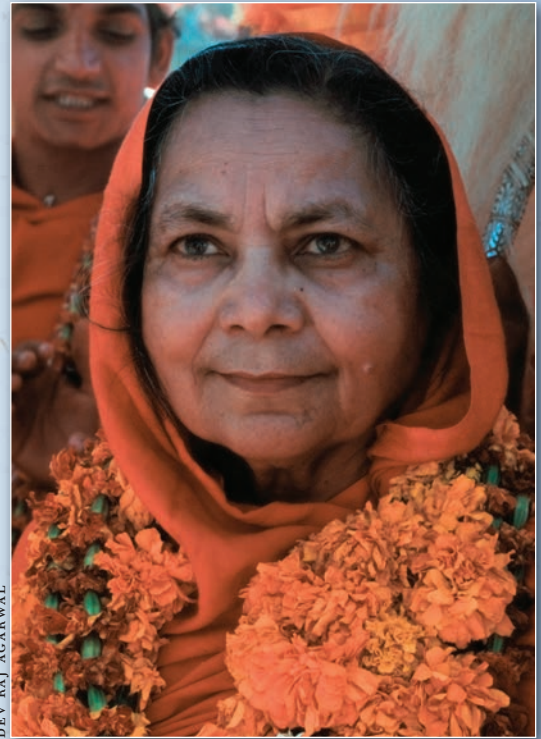
All devotees eagerly immerse themselves three times in the sacred water. They hold on to steel chains to avoid slipping into the swift-flowing river.

### A TIME TO CONSULT THE WISE

Leaders (below) gather for a summit during the 2004 Mela at Ujjain to discuss philosophy and current Hindu issues. At the 1974 Kumbha Mela, Ma Yoga Shakti (right) was named a Maha Mandaleshwar, chief religious leader, one of the first women given this high honor in modern times.



THOMAS KELLY



DEV RAJ AGARWAL

### Understanding Kumbha Mela

- 1. Explain:** Why do you think the Kumbha Mela attracts so many Hindus?
- 2. Discuss:** In religions other than Hinduism, how do children and youth participate in festivals?
- 3. Explain:** Why is bathing part of the religious ritual at the Mela? What parallels do you see in Christian baptism and Muslim washing before prayers?
- 4. Discuss:** If you were at the Kumbha Mela, what questions would you ask the Hindu leaders at one of their summits?



## A VISUAL HISTORY 2

Hindus celebrate more festivals each year than followers of any other religion. Let's visit a few of them.



**KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI:** On Lord Krishna's birthday, two teams in Mumbai compete to break pots full of red-dyed yogurt hung high above the street. They are celebrating a favorite story of Krishna's childhood. He once climbed up to steal yogurt from the pot His mother had hung high in the kitchen to keep away from the children. The scene is shown in the Suvadha banners on the lamp posts at left and right. The team in yellow is getting close to the pot and a big cash prize. Thousands of such contests are held across Mumbai during the festival.



A winning reach results in a shower of colored yogurt upon the human pyramid below.

## HERE'S A REALLY COLORFUL FESTIVAL

**HOLI** celebrates the victory of the devout child Prince Prahlada over the demoness Holika. It falls on the last full moon of February/March. It begins with bonfires in the evening and is followed the next day by the smearing of one and all with colored powders and splashing with colored water.



PHOTOS: DINODIA.COM

- 1 "You're sure we won't get in trouble for this?" Kindergarten children pick up handfuls of powder to smear on each other.
- 2 A variety of children's water guns are put to colorful use upon family and friends during Holi.

## DIWALI: THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



DINODIA.COM

This biggest festival of the year is celebrated across India and everywhere Hindus live in the world today. It is held in October-November. Oil lamps are lit and placed in and all around the home, new clothes put

on and gifts exchanged. In parts of India it also marks the beginning of the New Year. Various stories are told of its origins, all involving the victory of light over darkness, good over evil.



3 These teens are targeting each other, but any bystander, including complete strangers, could be next.



4 A temple courtyard is deluged with colored water and powders as hundreds of devotees play Holi.

### THE ELEPHANT GOD'S 10-DAY-LONG CELEBRATION

Ganesha Chaturthi is held in August/September. The boy at right has purchased a clay *murti* of Ganesha which he will paint and keep on the family home altar. In Mumbai (below) huge Deities are built, paraded through the streets and on the final day immersed in the ocean.



DINODIA.COM



FOLLOW THE HINDU MOON/USHA KRIS

### Exploring Religious Celebrations

1. **List:** Name major festivals from other religions and show what they have in common with Hindu festivals.
2. **Discuss:** Why do you think lamps, candles, fireworks and bonfires are a part of many festivals?
3. **Explain:** How does a festival such as Holi help keep people on good terms with each other?
4. **Evaluate:** Do you think the celebration of religious festivals benefits the community? Why or why not?



A VISUAL HISTORY **3**

India's dance traditions  
are living expressions of  
ancient religious stories



DINODIA.COM



**This is Pung Cholom, a dance from Manipur, in India's northeastern corner. These boys first learned to play the double-headed pung drum, then how to dance while playing it—a complex feat indeed! This is one of India's most energetic dances.**



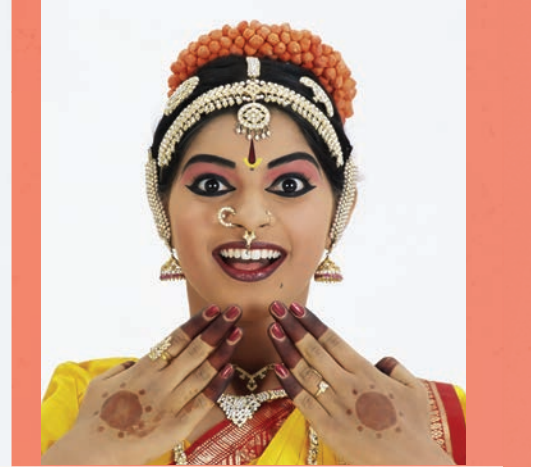
## EMOTIONS IN DANCE

Most Indian dances include the nine basic emotions: love, joy, wonder, peace, anger, courage, compassion, fear and disgust. At right a Bharata Natyam dancer demonstrates five of them.

ALL PHOTOS: DINODIA.COM



fear



wonder



DINODIA.COM

**KATHAKALI:** This dance form from Kerala is famous for its elaborate costumes and makeup, which take hours to apply. The lamp in front is always present (in the old days it helped illuminate the dance). The stools are

props used during the performance. The singer in the back is narrating the story. The dance dramas are often taken from the epic *Mahabharata*. Performances used to run all night, but are now about three hours long.



compassion



peace



disgust

### CLASSICAL AND FOLK DANCES

In 1991, the Indian Post Office released stamps commemorating four of the country's folk dances: (clockwise from top left) Valar, Kayang, Velakali and Hozagiri. (right) A 2009 Kathak performance by Chetna Noopur at Noopur Performing Art Centre, Bengaluru.



NARAYANI PEEDAM

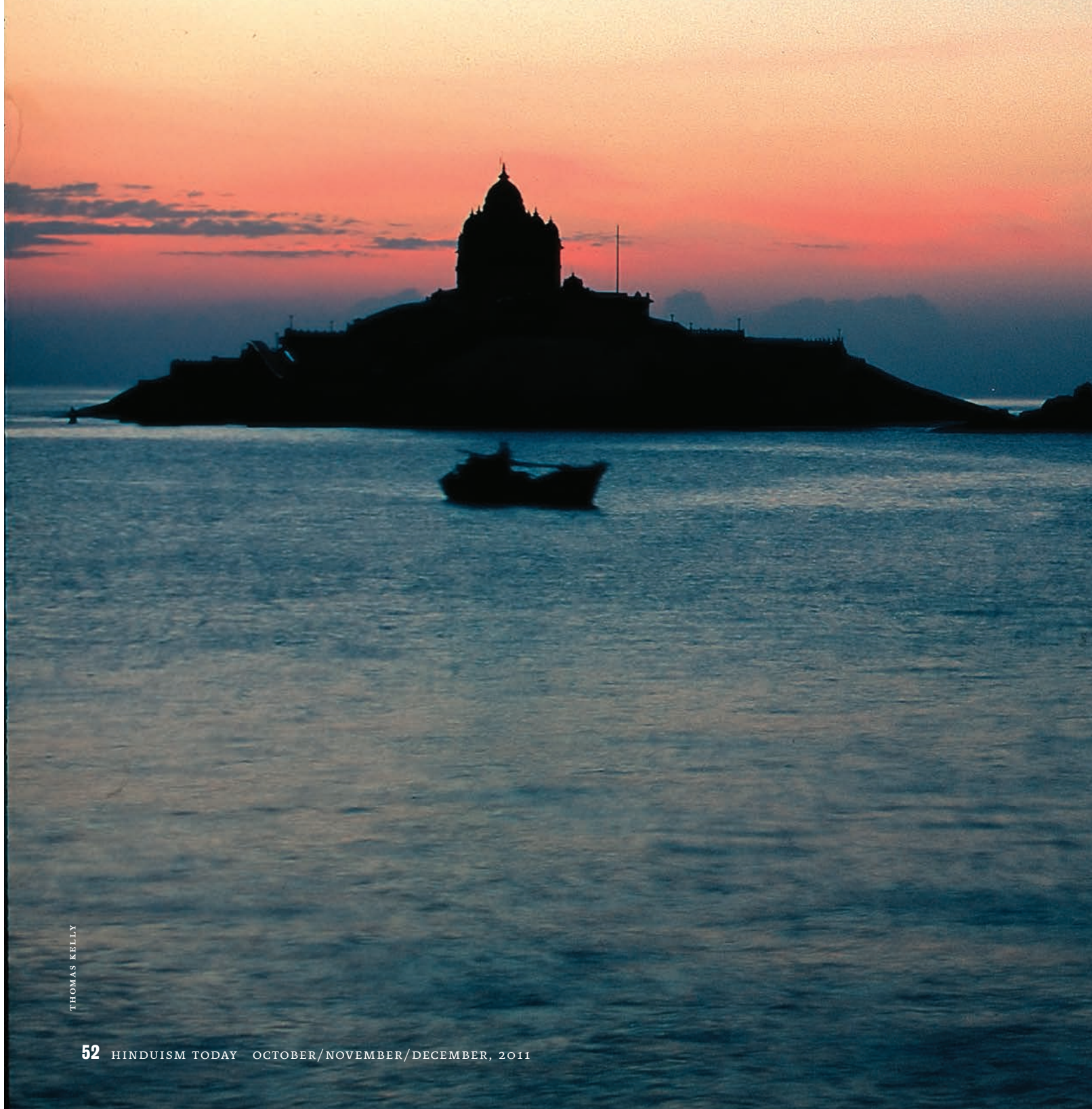
### Dance Tradition

1. **Interpret:** Why do you imagine India developed such a rich array of dance forms?
2. **Discuss:** What advantages would watching a religious dance drama have over reading the drama in a book?
3. **Explain:** How do a dancer's facial expressions

- and hand gestures help tell a story?
4. **Analyze and debate:** What role does dance play in conveying Hinduism from one generation to the next?

A VISUAL HISTORY **4**

Monuments to two saints—one ancient, one modern—proudly stand at India's southern tip



THOMAS KELLY



Two memorials stand on islands off the coast at India's southernmost point, Kanyakumari. On the opposite page is the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. In 1892, Swami Vivekananda, at the time a wandering monk, swam thousands of yards out to this island. After fasting and meditating there for three days, he had a vision of his life's

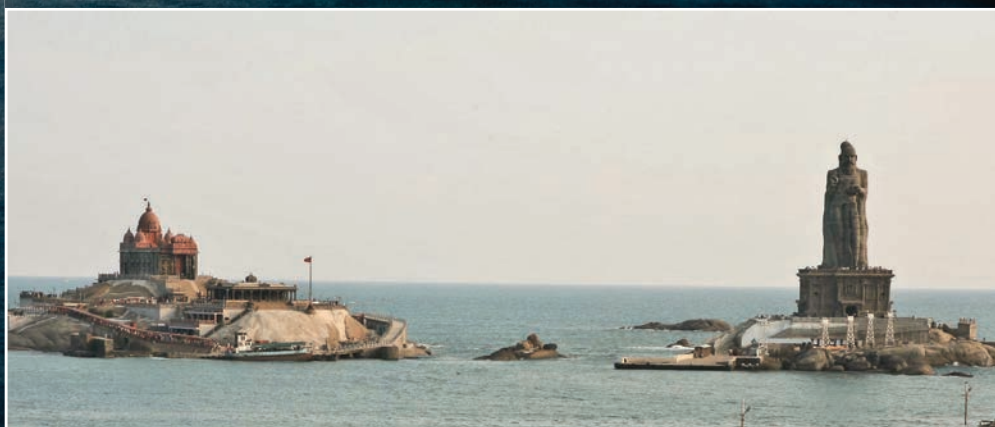
mission. He saw how to overcome the terrible impact of British colonization on Hindu self-esteem. Above is the 133-foot-tall granite statue of a saint named Tiruvalluvar. He lived 2,000 years ago and wrote the *Tirukural*, a work of 1,330 couplets about religion, friendship, vegetarianism, moral living, business, government and even war.



HINDUISM TODAY

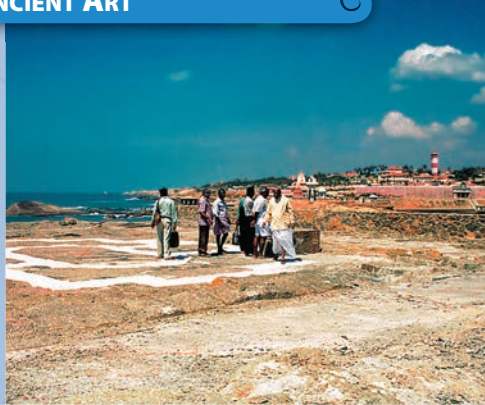
Kanyakumari

THOMAS KELLY



## THE STONE MASON'S ANCIENT ART

The Tiruvalluvar statue is made of 3,681 stones and weighs a total of 6.4 million kilos. It was built by 150 sculptors and laborers using carving techniques more than a thousand years old. They completed the work on January 1, 2000.



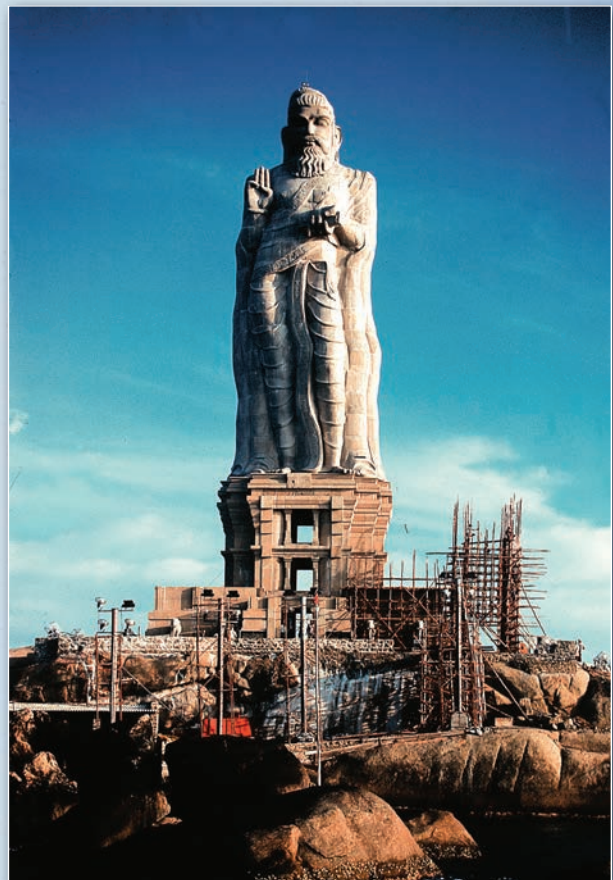
PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY

1 The chief architect lays out the statue's foundation after the granite rock of the small island has been leveled

2 Using a massive chisel, workers shape a large granite stone weighing several tons



5 Saint Tiruvalluvar's face is 19 feet high. Each stone was lifted into place with ropes and pulleys fixed to a scaffold of strong palm trees.



6 Every worker, rock and piece of equipment had to be ferried to the small island by boat. In the 1999 photo above, the grand statue was nearly finished. Its total cost: 1.4 million US dollars.



3 Blacksmiths at the worksite manually sharpen steel chisels by the hundreds every day for the stone carvers



4 A stone mason puts finishing touches on one of the saint's enormous feet

### HINDUISM'S PIONEER MONK TO THE WEST

In the early 1890s, Swami Vivekananda (right) wandered India without a penny to his name. He represented Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893, where he gave a rousing speech about the glories of India. He was later welcomed by the rich and educated of America (below) and England as an extraordinary religious figure.



RAMAKRISHNA MISSION



RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

### Honoring History's Great People

1. **List:** Name the large monuments to individuals you know of.
2. **Discuss:** What are a few reasons for building monuments to famous people?
3. **Explain:** Why do you think a poor monk from India

was able to make such a dramatic impression on people in America and England?

4. **Analyze and Comment:** Who would you choose to honor with such a monument? Why?



A VISUAL HISTORY

5

Hindu people and Hindu ideas can be found today in nearly every country of the world



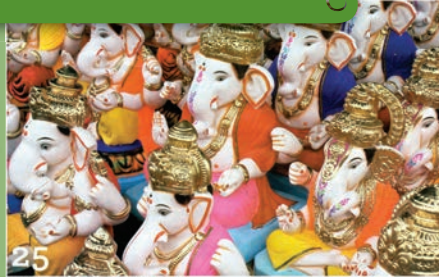


**WHERE ONE BILLION HINDUS LIVE:** Hinduism originated in the Indian subcontinent—now the modern nations of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Most of the world's Hindus live in these countries today. A thousand years ago, Hinduism spread across Southeast Asia to Vietnam and the Indonesian islands.

Then in the 19th century, Hindus were taken as workers to European colonies such as Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, Reunion, Mauritius and South Africa. In modern times, Hindus have migrated to most countries of the world. Once settled, they have built temples for public worship to strengthen their religious life and express their faith.

## IN OUR WORLD

Hindu philosophy teaches a deep tolerance and all-encompassing respect for other faiths. This attitude has a natural appeal in today's world, where people seek to live in peace with one another.



### WE ARE ALL HINDUS NOW

NEWSWEEK

BY LISA MILLER  
America is not a Christian nation. We are, it is true, a nation founded by Christians, and according to a 2008 survey, 78 percent of us continue to identify as Christian (well, that's the lowest percentage in American history). Of course, we are not a Hindu-or-Muslim, or Jewish, or Wiccan-nation, either. A million-plus Hindus live in the

way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me." Americans are no longer buying it. According to a 2008 Pew Forum survey, 64 percent of us believe that "many religions can lead to eternal life"—including 37 percent of white evangelicals, the group most likely to believe that salvation is theirs alone. Also, the number of people who seek spiritual truth

ally believe that bodies and souls are sacred, that together they comprise the "self," and that at the end of time they will be reunited in the Resurrection. You need both, in other words, and you need them forever. Hindus believe no such thing. At death, the body burns in a pyre, while the spirit—where identity resides—reunites. In reincarnation, central to Hinduism,



ZUMA WIRE WORLD PHOTOS

GLOBAL FORUM

Lisa Miller's 2009 *Newsweek* article detailed America's shift to Hindu ideals, such as respect for all religions.

The Hindu practice of yoga is common in Western schools and many public centers for exercise, health and relaxation.

## SIX KEY HINDU IDEAS FOR TODAY



### 1. Respect for all religions

"Truth is One, Sages describe It variously."  
*Rigveda, 1.164.46*



### 4. Reverence for the environment

"The Earth is our mother, we are all Her children."  
*Atharva Veda 12:1:12*



### 2. The presence of God in everyone and everything

"God is, in truth, the whole universe: what was, what is and what beyond shall ever be. He is in all."  
*Krishna Yajur Veda, Shvetashvatara Upanishad 3.15-16*



### 5. Karma, the result of our actions, returns to us

"Whatever deed he does, that he will reap."  
*Shukla Yajur Veda Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5*



ART: S. RAJAM

### 3. Ahimsa, doing no harm

"You must not use your God-given body for killing God's creatures, whether they are human, animal or whatever."  
*Yajur Veda 12.32*



### 6. Life's purpose is God Realization

"Lead me from unreality to reality. Lead me from darkness to light. Lead me from death to immortality."  
*Sukla Yajur Veda Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.3.28*



Delegates from 60 nations at the 1988 Global Forum in Oxford, England, discussed the future of our planet. The contributions of the Eastern religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, were given equal importance with those of the West.

### YOUR MAJESTY AND MR. PRESIDENT, MEET HINDUISM

In 2002, England's Queen Elizabeth II was greeted by the priests of Highgate Hill Murugan Temple in London in the first-ever royal visit of a monarch to a Hindu temple. (right) In 2010, Barack Obama became the first US president to personally celebrate Diwali in the White House.



### Examining Hinduism Today

1. **Discuss:** What is important about a political leader visiting a religious place or celebrating a religious festival?
2. **Discuss:** What is the difference between respecting another religion and tolerating it?
3. **Explore:** How do other religions express the concepts in our list of six key Hindu ideas? Which ideas would be acceptable to people with no religion?
4. **Analyze and Defend:** What role do you think religion should play in today's world?