

[MY TURN](#)

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More than any other feeling, more than any other word, more than any other idea, it is gratitude that fills my heart. We in the West can now worship the cosmic Dancer, Lord Kadavul Nataraja, in Hawaii; we can worship Absolute Reality as the Siva Lingam in New York, Texas Michigan, and in Canada; we can worship at temples throughout the nation those Mahadevas with Whom we seek communion. We have societies, peethams, academies, fellowships, churches, sangams, and more, within whose members' hearts is a genuine concern for our spiritual welfare and the future of our children. We have fine publications, such as this august journal, to uplift and inform us of our progress along the path of bringing the world's oldest religion in the technological age.

Perhaps the reader will identify with my desire to describe and bridge the sense of differentiation in the midst of oneness that I see, despite the above-mentioned blessings, which is setting the Western Hindu apart from others in the West, and brother and sister Hindus apart from the one another. For, while we Hindus in the West are experiencing the growth pains of maturing into the exemplary modern religion I know us to be in potential, there is at this time an issue of distance among us to be resolved through education, communication and interaction. And this issue of distance is not unique to the West but exists to some extent anywhere one finds Hindu populations. This distance is not physical - our technological achievements have conquered that already - it is psychic, emotional distance, like the awkwardness of the families of two newly betrothed children, or the apprehension of what the children see in the future together. It is my hope to share with the readership a glimpse of what it is to be a Saivite soul in a Western body, and to share the simple yet essential realization that Lord Siva is indeed that Master Architect of the designs in life in which each of us finds ourselves engaged, that He has lovingly presented us with a great opportunity to demonstrate, teach and learn through example the essential elements of social and religious cooperation as we strive to span the distance and build bridges one to another.

I am the son of two highly spiritual people of ultimately two different religions who divorced when I was 5[?] years old. My karma was to remain, along with my elder

sister, with our beloved amma, whose intense desire to know God was fostered through the saint-like dedication of our stepfather, who led his new family to the feet of a resplendent 32-year old Sat Guru named Subramuniya. After a childhood rich with memories of my Gurudeva, I reached puberty, easily the most critical time for any Western youth, for it is the time of the test-by-stress of the morals and ideals which will shape his adult life.

I went the way of so many of today's young people, first innocently into sports, then casually into alcohol, then irresponsibly into drugs, being easily influenced by the awesome peer-group pressure of that stage of life here in the West. I had left behind the wonderful teachings of Hinduism which my Gurudeva had given me, yet at no time did I exit the Grand Design for my life, for the dictates of karma are never wrong, merely intense at times. Eventually, and as a direct result of the continuous devotional practices of my parents, I was led once again to the gracious feet of my Gurudeva. On the day of my Master's Jayanthi in 1980, January 5th I formally entered the Saiva Samayam through the Namakarana Samskara at Kadavul Hindu temple in Hawaii. Now I am graced with a devoted wife and a beautiful son.

The problems confronting Hindu youth have been described in this publication and elsewhere time and again, so we know, some of us through experience, of the severe nature of the stress-test they face at the hands of peers and society. We have determined that education and realistic appreciation of their needs will help to avoid the "caught between two cultures" syndrome for some and effectively counter peer-group pressure for others. My Gurudeva has said that the best power is knowledge. And, clearly, strong mutual cooperation is the best way to instruct. The West, with its media-fabricated ideals, thrives around the competition for one of the following: time, money, or cerebral support. As I perceive the Design of Lord Siva, we are in competition with the attractions of the West for the time and attention of our children, and the only way to win these precious commodities is to make our religion the single most important part of our lives. For, invariably, what the parents consider essential to themselves becomes the emulated ideals of the children.

Clearly, there is an awakening in the West to Eastern thought. "The New Frontier," as described in this newspaper in its last issue, has seen the pioneers of Hinduism in the West doing their work for a hundred years in preparation for our mutual future. The distance between cultures is rapidly closing through the physical migration and spiritual transmigration of the heritage of Saivism to this country and into its mind and media. My experience with the Eastern Hindu community in this

country has been generally one of loving acceptance. The people I have met at the temple are warm, demonstrating only traditional modesty and the necessary caution in view of the many organizations which profess kinship to the Hindu religion. I have found that after my demonstrating a sincere and orthodox reverence for Saivism, such as is essential in my church, a spontaneous flow of interaction is achieved. This is the fundamental building material of the psychic bridge. Every pilgrim of the recent Odysseys to our Holy Lands can vouch for the very same outpouring of love. It transcends bodily origin and flows from heart to heart. This is the feeling to be nurtured, stockpiled, and spent on the future. It is also this feeling which reassures me that many past lives have been spent with these souls with whom I come in contact, many of whom I inwardly embrace in unexplainable emotion, and this affinity is shared by many Eastern souls in Western bodies; why then do I perceive a distance? Because despite the confidence of sincerity toward one another there is still an attitude of differences in backgrounds rather than oneness in religions, and as long as we are shy about opening our homes and our hearts to one another, despite the best of intentions, the space will not be closed.

Our situation is historically unique in the vastness of Saivism. Never has it faced in the arena of the mind the same opposition. If it were a mere religion threatening our fold, surely a Tirujnanasambandar or a Manikavasagar would come along and lead us home to Saivism. But to face and defeat a challenge from the likes of a TV set or a video gaming parlor requires an army of dedicated Saivites. This army is us, and the competition is part of the Design of God to inspire and unite His devotees at this unique time in North American and Saivite history.

It is the perspective of this Western Hindu that sincerity about our religion can best be proven by personally inspired reform. Paramahansa Yogananda, in his Autobiography of a Yogi, states that, "Utopia must spring in the private bosom before it can flower in civic virtue; inner reforms leading naturally to outer ones. A man who has reformed himself can reform thousands." The inheritance of the son is more than just the genes of the father, it is his very nature. In Saiva Siddhanta, Chariya - virtuous and moral living - is the very cornerstone of our spiritual structure, and at this time we need the traditions and practical guidance in the living of our daily lives that our scriptures and authors and sages and gurus have offered us throughout history. They all concur that our daily lives, our social intercourse, our actions and attitudes contribute to our karmic circumstances and our dharmic obligations in this life. All Hindus declare unity in God. Let us therefore give lovingly to each other that which we have to offer. The ideals of Hinduism are no longer exclusive to the East. The fact that the film "Gandhi" has received such accolades and inspired such commentary indicates that there is room in the mass mind of the West for his truly religiously inspired vision of world peace through "the power of

love and God which is Truth." I am quite convinced that we need not only cooperative interaction to protect, promote and preserve Saiva Dharma, but also penetrating understanding of each other's needs and ideals to prevent continuation of a condition in which daily more Hindu youth is becoming caught. It is on this issue that I appeal to the hearts of all Hindus to reach out to one another and manifest the ideal of "the best of the East and the best of the West."

We invite readers to submit manuscripts for MY TURN on topics relevant to Saivism, Length of copy should be 1,400-1,500 words, and be accompanied by a brief biographical sketch.