

[Growing Up Mixed Up](#)

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Published by Anonymous on Jan. 01, 2005

IN MY OPINION

Growing Up Mixed Up

Mom is Hindu. Dad is Christian. I'm too little of either and looking for more.

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Growing up in an ethnically mixed family isn't easy. My mother is Indian and Hindu. My father is Caucasian, American and Christian. The fact that they got divorced when I was a year old further complicated matters, but that is another story altogether.

When I was very young, I went to church with my father's mother but rarely worshiped at all with my mother's Hindu parents. In this way, I spent my earliest years in the casual influence of two religions, not giving either a lot of thought. Then I went to school.

When I would tell classmates that I was Indian, they would ask what tribe I was from or say, "How." I would explain that I was an Indian from India, but then I had nothing else to say. I had no idea what being a Hindu really meant. I didn't even dress like an Indian, although I wore my hair long and braided. All I knew was that we didn't eat beef and my grandparents fasted on Thursdays.

Many factors affect a child of mixed parentage during the formative years when social skills are learned and friends are made. My mother wanted to make sure I was exposed to both sides of my heritage, but because we never went to a Hindu temple, this exposure was lopsided and left me feeling confused. I didn't fit in

anywhere. My only friends were Christian. I had received a Hindu name during high school, but no one ever used it in addressing me. I never thought of changing my name legally. I just figured the ceremony was a sort of baptism into Hinduism.

After high school, I moved in with my father and his family to go to college. It was during this time that I chose to be baptized into Christianity in an effort to find some sense of identity. After a few years, Christianity just started to feel wrong--and pretending that I was white definitely felt wrong. "But I am white, aren't I?" I asked myself. "Yes, I am, " I replied. "But I am also Asian Indian."

I stopped going to church and began a serious search for true spiritual fulfillment. For a time I felt like I had found my place in Wicca which shares certain ideologies with Hinduism. Gradually, however, I realized that wasn't quite right either. So I decided to go back to my "roots " and delve more deeply into Hinduism.

Since then, I've been reading everything I can get my hands on. I have also tried contacting my Hindu relatives for further education, but geographical distance has kept us from communicating extensively.

I live in an area of Michigan where there is very little "Eastern cultural diversity, " so finding other like-minded people is almost impossible. I want to wear a salwar kameez or a sari, but there are no shops anywhere here where I can buy such things. And I don't even know how to tie a sari.

My purpose in writing this is to try to convey some sense of the difficulty I've experienced growing up without a firm spiritual and cultural background. Having gone through this, I now firmly believe that a child of mixed ethnicity needs to be raised in the religious life and culture of only one of the parents. The child needs to feel like she or he is not being bounced back and forth between two worlds, never truly belonging to either.

My husband is a very open person and supports me in my spiritual search, though he is happy not delving into spirituality at this time. I strive to learn as much as I can and to change my life accordingly. If the time comes that we decide to have a

child, we will determine which way we wish to lead that child, and we will pick only one path for his or her belief system.