Religion Makes You Happy!
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Religion Makes You Happy!

It was July 2. The children's summer camp was just winding up at the remote monastery on Hawaii's Garden Island, the day after the 35 participants and counselors had just visited the mystic "Blue Room" a luminous lake beneath a mountain on Kauai. The next morning, Hinduism Today recorded the following interview with Manon Mardemootoo of Beau Bassin, Mauritius, one of 3 ministers (Amachar) of the worldwide Saiva Siddhanta Church. Manon, 48, a successful attorney, was on pilgrimage with his wife, Selvon, to the U.S., England and France.

Q: How has your life changed since you became a Hindu minister?

A: I feel that Hinduism is a tool for a lot of achievements. It helps one to be more blissful, more in harmony with everybody, starting with their own family, parents, neighbors, public at large. It helps you to be more efficient because religion as we are learning it now helps us to control our senses, be more sharp-minded, to focus the mind easily. Efficiency has increased, and we have time to do everything and a lot of time still remaining. We are in a position as a professional to deal with the public every day, especially with people having problems. Meeting them and working with them has given us a chance to inspire confidence. The benefits are immediate. A lot of happiness and good results have come since we have begun practicing Saivism as we know it today.

Q: How have the Church's teachings affected the Hindu community in Mauritius?

A: In Mauritius all devotees are devotees of Siva as well. But they are liberal, in the sense that they also pray to Krishna and Rama. Since Gurudeva [Sivaya Subramuniyaswami] came, we came to understand that there are various paths all leading to truth, but we have to choose one path to reach the goal sooner and to be aware of the pitfalls. Since then, we have been trying to follow the Saivite path.

There is a lot of joy that we have reaped in the short time we have been with Gurudeva. But this isn't meant for Tamils only. This is meant for all devotees who pray to Siva and who hold that Siva is the Supreme God. And I think we have to start somewhere, & gradually we will have more Hindi-speaking members as well.

Q: What other Hindu leaders or groups are doing significant work in Mauritius?

A: We have in Mauritius the Ramakrishna Mission, the Chinmaya Mission and the Hare Rama Hare Krishna group and others all doing good work and having the aim to enlighten people, to teach religion. But Gurudeva's creating missions around Mauritius with the specific purpose to teach, to hold classes, to teach songs, to have song competitions, weekly meetings and maintain all the various councils and agencies to provide for all the needs of the congregation, I feel, is helping a lot more.

Q: So that is a unique factor?

A: Definitely so. The whole family is involved and there is a continuity. There are other swamis coming and giving lectures or staying for a few weeks but with no follow up of their work. What Gurudeva is done is really significant in that he has left behind trained teachers among the community. These teachers are holding regular classes around Mauritius to explain the mechanism of religion, the benefits of religion - immediate benefits because we have the feeling of well-being straightaway.

But as Gurudeva has said, "We can walk step by step on our own, but with the help of a guru we can fly like a bird." Some people brush this idea aside but don't realize what they lose. What they would lose with the guru, in fact, is their own ignorance.

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