US' First Lady Loves India
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Hillary Rodham Clinton's Spring Sojourn Touched Hearts and Strengthened Ties

America's First Lady was in Bharat from March 28-31 as part of a two-week South Asian tour that included visits to Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Accompanied by 14-year-old daughter Chelsea, Mrs. Clinton visited three Indian cities: Delhi, Agra and Ahmedabad. How did her visit touch the people? After the dust settled, Hinduism Today correspondent Rajiv Malik interviewed a few Delhi residents. Not without criticisms, the majority consensus indicates that Bharat and the US grew much closer together, thanks to the lovable First Lady and her delightful daughter.

Surrendar Saini, social worker and politician, chairperson of Delhi Social Welfare Advisory Board and chairman, Bharat Sevak Samaj, Delhi State: I was impressed by Mrs. Clinton's concern for the women and children. She wants them to attain a certain status which is due to them. Her focus was illiteracy and economic and political rights of women and children. She has taken upon herself the responsibility of fighting for the cause of women throughout the world. One thing is certain. She has won the hearts of the common people of India. I am happy that she has seen India at the grass-roots level, and I feel this in itself has made her mission a big success.

Sri Acharya Sudevananda, 60, Ananda Marg Sannyasin and educationalist: India's people are highly spiritual-those living in villages or an ordinary man walking on the streets. Watch them closely. You will realize that an ordinary man of this country is very simple, good-hearted and truthful. I wonder how many of such people the US First Lady could meet in this country. I am sure if she could meet such people she would be impressed by them-the spiritual masses of India. However, most of the time Mrs. Clinton was surrounded by the politicians who are clever and crafty. It is Mrs. Clinton's own judgment about our countrymen which is going to matter and which she will communicate to her husband and her enterprising countrymen.

Sonal Walia, age 17: It was nice to have Mrs. Clinton in India. I was quite thrilled to see her teenage daughter Chelsea accompanying her. As a teenager, I was very keen to know more about Chelsea, but unfortunately our media provided very little information about her. Anyway, I am happy that Mrs. Clinton and her daughter will go back and tell their countrymen their first-hand experiences about India. I am sure Chelsea will help the youth of the two nations understand each other in a better manner.

Kiran Bedi, additional commissioner, planning and implementation, Delhi Police: Mrs. Clinton's visit to India will definitely go a long way to improve relations between India and America. This visit has given her first-hand experience of what India actually looks and feels like. She got an opportunity to meet people from different walks of life, and eminent people of India got a chance to listen to her views. She has emerged as a very warm and bright person. My personal view is that she is a brilliant candidate for the US presidency. She is one better than Mr. Clinton. The US must gear up now for having a woman president. My research has revealed that her pursuit of excellence was not for the sake of competition, but that excellence has been a way of life for her. Her visit to India was extremely significant.

Trilok Singh Negi, 74, journalist and member of Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh: As a Hindu, I was delighted to see the US First Lady visit India as she got an opportunity to see the Hindu way of living at a personal level. I am sure her visit will go a long way to strengthen Indo-US relations at social and cultural levels. She stated that one of her important goals in life is to live with her husband and make her relationship with him a fruitful and everlasting one. This is very close to the Hindu ethos and it gives an important message to our women's libbers and feminists who are becoming more and more western in their outlook. I think our women must take the above words of Mrs. Clinton seriously.

Dr. K.C. Teneja, economic statician and social researcher: She came, she saw and she conquered. Yes, Mrs. Clinton did conquer, but not by her physical charm, though that too she had in abundance. She won hearts more by her intellectual charm, by her open and honest appraisal of the plight of the poor, especially women and children, both in India and the US. She honestly confessed the enormous amount of hardship which poor are confronted with at social, economic and cultural levels. She spoke from her heart and sought to bring women to the center stage of development. I am confident that her trip to India with her loving and lovable daughter Chelsea has not only helped them see India more closely, understand India and Indians more firmly, but has brought the two big sisterly nations

emotionally closer.

M.G. Trehan, 59, President, Delhi Residents Forum for Public Awareness: Truly speaking, Mrs. Clinton visited India as the wife of the American President. It was not a political visit. However, her coming here shows the goodwill of the US people towards us. I hope the two nations will become more friendly and understand each other in a better manner as a result.

Renu Malik, 30, housewife: What I liked most was that she did not turn out to be a hard-nosed First Lady-power-dressed and padded shoulders-as many Indians had expected. On the contrary, she was very down-to-earth and humane. One was really touched by her gesture of reading Silence, a poem by Anasuya Sengupta which was very meaningful and powerful. Mrs. Clinton said a few good things about India after reaching the US, which was widely covered by the western media. I am really happy that India got some favorable publicity, thanks to her. This is important because generally the western media is biased against India and their coverage of India is mostly in bad taste. I am hopeful that the benefits of her visit will be much greater in the future.