

[Happy Priests, Happy People](#)

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Published by Anonymous on Jun. 01, 1992

Happy Priests, Happy People

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This was my experience during a recent visit to the temples in San Antonio and Houston, Texas. It is important to memorize the scriptural slokas, but who has the time these days? Well, the priests do. They have been trained in the technical skills of purifying the atmosphere and invoking the Gods and devas into the temple or hall or even into a large tree. It is magic, one might say. Well, yes, it surely is. Hindu priestcraft has come down through the centuries since, we can conjecture, well past 6,000 BCE. It has been the same in essence. Some of the mantras done now were those chanted then.

I was asked in Texas by groups of youth, "How can God attend a puja in India and one here in Texas at the same time?" Good question! Live TV is a way we can understand how a temple works. Each monitor within the many homes picks up the signal and makes pictures of what is happening, where it is happening, at the same time it is happening. This is because the TV is tuned into the proper frequency.

I told them a temple is like live TV. The priest, through his magic if you will, slowly attunes the sanctum to the exact vibratory rate of the God he is invoking. He is a special kind of technician. Without him, just as without an engineer at the TV station, the energy remains invisible. If he is good at his work, the presence of the Deity is felt and the devotees are thrilled. It was easy for the teenagers to see how the magic works. Hindu priests are very special persons. They have to not only care for their body by being a vegetarian, bathing rituals and other purification rites, but they must take good care of their mind and emotions, too. Anger is a no for a priest, so are worry and worldly concerns.

This is because while he is performing the puja there are visualizations that he

must do to make contact with the God and devas. These are trade secrets and not taught freely to the curious. Ordinary people who are prone to anger and the lower emotions might inadvertently invoke demons or asuras. This would not be good for their families or themselves. Anarchy would come up in their homes, for those parents who fail to discipline themselves cannot set patterns for their children. The kids take over the house. This is just the kind of situation that a husky asura loves to get into. Asuras are young disembodied souls living on the astral plane close to the earth. Whereas devas are highly evolved souls living in the higher astral plane and have to be called down, so to speak, in order to make contact with humankind, with jivas or earth-embodied souls.

A Hindu priest is just like anyone else. He has needs for himself and his family. He has feelings, and he has a personality. Coming from a tradition which requires initiation, he has loyalties to his elders and to the tradition itself. In India the Agamic traditions are well understood. Priests who serve in other nations have difficulty with management. And, sorry to say, management has difficulty with the priesthood. Money should be the last consideration of a priest. This is the tradition. If he's forced to think about money all the time, then his real work suffers.

Think about it in this way. We go into a fine restaurant and order a meal. The waitperson serves it with kindness and caring. We leave a 15% tip to show our appreciation. He also receives a salary from management and other benefits such as food, medical, and so forth. But, the tips are his real income. Management knows this and wants him to keep "bringing those customers back." It makes its money from the sale of food, not off its waitpeople. When we go to the temple, we pay the temple for its services - pujas, heat, building maintenance and beauty - by leaving a generous offering in the hundi. It is also customary to give the priest a dakshina, or tip, for his services in actually performing the invocations. Good management wants its priests to be happy. They know that happy priests make for happy people.

When a restaurant is popular, its waitpeople prosper. When a temple becomes popular, its priests prosper. The unclarity between priesthood and management in some temples, however, has made for unhappy conditions on both sides. We have read something about these problems in recent issues of HINDUISM TODAY. The expectations on both sides don't match. Management looks at priests as their servants, whereas they are actually the servants of the Gods themselves. They are what makes a temple a temple. Clarity comes from having a contract right from the start, one that is translated into the social language and read by elders and sangam heads in India. Yes, we need a new Agama, a new rule book for both

management and priesthood to follow. Someone said: "Enough of this 'make it up as you go along.' We need to solve this problem." I agreed and took the liberty to speak with management of some temples we visited recently. We all thought it was a good idea. Such a contract should be in the nature of a religious agreement, not like the bring and firing syndrome in the West. Anyone who has knowledge of these traditions and would like to help, please contact me. Soon, I hope.

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