

[My Small American Town](#)

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My town has no room for my temple

I'm too far removed to visit His abode,

And I've lived in the town for years!

Except those Hindus living in big cities such as New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Houston or Toronto who have ready and easy access to Hindu temples, many Hindus in North America are not blessed with the comfort of worshipping Hindu deities in a public setting. Yet I believe, because of the nature of Hinduism, many Hindus in small towns do not feel deprived of pujas, bhajans, congregations or celebrations. I consider Hinduism to be essentially a solid democratic religion, a way of life and a mode of thinking that doesn't demand of its followers any institutionalized regimentation of practice or worship. After all, festivals like Janmashtami or Deepavali may still be observed in grandiose spiritual silence without ostentatious public display.

During all my seventeen years of geographical isolation, I have never felt that I have lost touch with my religion. How did Bharata rule Ayodhya when Lord Rama was exiled? Lord Rama's sandals served the purpose. In fact, without disowning me, my faith allows me to attend the local Catholic Church Christmas Mass or socially relate to the activities of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints. Yet I am neither a Catholic nor a Mormon. Every inch I am a Hindu.

My coat closet in my home is my temple; it is my shrine. It is as resplendent in its glory and purity as the Lord Venkateswara's temple in Malibu, Southern California; it is as sacred as the temple on top of the Seven Hills in Tirupati. My closet God does not command me to have an expensive mandir. I don't even offer regularly fruits or money to my God. Moreover, I do not have to be fed with pujari wrangles and the recent political crisis of the Malibu temple.

Every morning I bow before my God's

Image - a mere picture on decrepit paper,

An image etched in bronze,

A simple artifact housed in my closet -

Utter soothing mystical expressions,

And offer my prayers.

My singing bhajans loudly would not assure that God would be immensely pleased with such a vociferous performance. I derive supreme satisfaction in my silent mediations, even if they last only a few minutes. Sometimes we tend to be oblivious to our inner selves - God is within us.

Daily I offer prayers to the images of Lord Vighneswara, Lord Venkateswara, Goddess Saraswati; yet I haven't had opportunities to observe religiously and meticulously Ganesha Chaturthi, Janmashtami, Dusseshra or Deepavali in a community setting. Have I lost touch with Hindu religions?

Instead of feeling guilty, miserable and deprived, those that are located far away from temples or congregations of Indian communities could possibly have their own inexpensive temples in their homes. "My town has no room for my temple," but there is room for my temple in my home. The home is a place that nourishes spirituality, family solidarity and ethical and moral values. I do not have to garishly demonstrate my Hindu culture and religion. Nor do I have to fear the virus of arrogance, terror, casteism, material affluence or political strife attacking me and destroying my spirit. God's immanence nourishes my being.

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