Is Gaudiness Next to Godliness?
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Is Gaudiness Next to Godliness?

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You hold in your hands our first full-color edition of HINDUISM TODAY - the result of nearly 15 years of publishing this Hindu family newspaper and of much hard work and technical ordeals these past two months. In a twist of curious irony, this step forward comes in the same month that Hurricane Iniki wrought her devastation upon us in Hawaii. It was extraordinary to live through this century's most ferocious hurricane - definitely a death of the old and an opportunity for rebirth. We survived and this issue begins a new incarnation for us, a disengagement from the embodied limitations of "black and white" as we enter the subtle digital body of desktop color.

It's only natural that Sanatana Dharma's global journal should be reproduced in rich and raucous color. Hinduism, after all, is not all that black and white. Behold the temple tower, tier upon tier of brazen paramours or terrifying beings, painted with pigments to make a parrot blush. Saunter into a sari shop and count the kaleidoscopic colors that assault the senses. Check out the sacred art and posters that Hindus produce - all those uninhibited hues. Color is great, and each month we plan to give readers lots of it. Not just ho-hum reds and blues. We're talking flamboyant here: auburn and azure; cinnabar and cobalt; puce and chartreuse. Our computers can generate 16 million colors (never mind the biological fact that the human brain can distinguish only two million).

I have a theory about why Hinduism is so vivid. It's the COLOR THEORY, which stands for Colored Objects Luxuriated in Old Rain forests. Let me explain. From day one, ours was a path born in the lush subtropical jungles of India. In contrast, the Semitic faiths originated in the deserts. Like people, religions seldom escape the conditions of their birth. Desert faiths, raised in harsh, monochromatic simplicity, describe an austere monotheism. Jungle faiths, reared in wild diversity, depict a pantheon as teeming with life as any rain forest. Clerics of the one wear black and

white robes, while our swamis have the sartorial temerity to attire themselves in tangerine vestments. One resists all portrayals of the Indescribable Divine, while the other renders infinite expressions.

Why is Hinduism so colorful? Just look at the jungles with their florid flowers, iridescent insects, brilliant birds, flamboyant fishes and chromatic creatures of every kind. If ever accused of being a little gaudy, we can rightly say we got the idea from God Himself.

This month's foray into full color production is a meaningful and important one for HINDUISM TODAY. It inspires us to give readers a peek behind the scenes at the people and technology that assemble this journal each month. The paper is created entirely on the computer. In fact, that is the only reason that a small publisher like us could afford to play in the Big Color Sandbox. Until recent years, four-color process was the domain of large corporations who could rationalize spending thousands of dollars for a single color separation the size of this editorial. Today a small newspaper like HINDUISM TODAY - 150,000 readers is still small by global standards - can produce its own color photos and graphics on an Apple Macintosh computer.

The Staff: As long-term readers know, the core staff of HINDUISM TODAY is a team of sannyasins and sadhakas. Instead of running orphanages or ashrams, instead of holding seminars and conferences, we have chosen publishing as our service to the world. We publish books, translate scriptures, write pamphlets, produce sacred art and manage each month to bring out this newspaper to keep Hindus informed about the global nature and increasing presence of the world's oldest living faith. Our staff consists of over 80 men and women all over the world. The editorial staff is based in Hawaii and California, and consists of about a dozen monks. But the real backbone of the team are professional journalists and highly talented writers who do the actual reporting, interviewing, photography, taxing travel and penitent conference-going.

Regional Franchisees: The paper is assembled from all over the world in Concord, California. Once produced, it is printed and distributed regionally by a band of dedicated publishers who are responsible in their nation for seven editions in English and one in Dutch. In California we make duplicate sets of the negative film that printers use on their presses. These are sent by air courier to the franchisee, who incorporates news of his region, replaces our North American advertising with

regional ads and prints the paper, which looks exactly the same in each country, except for the ads. In this way, each month HINDUISM TODAY is printed and distributed in North America, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, Australia, UK/European and a special International Edition - all in English. A Dutch language edition is produced in the Netherlands and shipped to Suriname, Trinidad and Indonesia (where the world's largest Dutch-speaking community lives). Our next Big Step will be to print the paper in India, but the right publisher for that important breakthrough has yet to call us. Maybe you know someone who is equal to the task? If so, write me.

Our Computer Configuration: The newspaper is produced on Macintosh computers. In California and Hawaii we have thirty-two Macs networked. Some are dedicated to graphics and layout, others to type and editing and still others to subscriber's fulfillments, advertising and data base functions. All are connected by QuickMail. Using this software. I can type a note at my Mac and click a button to send it to the editors in California, England, Malaysia or Mauritius. They will receive it within hours and with a simple click of a button can respond. No letterheads. No envelopes. No trips to the post office. No waiting for time-critical information.

A number of our Mac II's are accelerated with DayStar 50MHZ PowerCaches, soon to be upgraded to the 040 chip. Our internal hard drives are supplemented with Syquest removable cartridges for sending files too big for the telephone lines. We also have Pinnacle's new 650-megabyte magnetic optical drive for large scale storage and DAT tape systems for back-up. Yes, we do back up each week - religiously.

Article Input: Correspondents contribute news and features each month from New Delhi, Hyderabad, Kathmandu, England, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Suriname, Trinidad, Argentina, Malaysia, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius and a dozen US cities. Some send in their assignments in the old-fashioned way, by mail. Others fax reports or send them electronically by MCI. When we receive files via satellite, we rejoice. No retyping the journalist's work.

Artwork and Photos: Most of the artwork - such as the 40 sacred symbols you will find in this month's color poster - is produced by our own monastic staff. Graphics start with sketches from a pressure-sensitive Wacom graphics tablet. For illustrations such as the above icons, Adobe's Streamline, Illustrator and Patterns and Textures software programs are used. Photos and photo-like images are

digitized at 200 DPI on Microtek scanners, then edited in Photoshop. No dank darkroom. No corrosive chemicals. No painstaking paste-up. Every photo, every word in the paper you hold exists only as streams of mathematical code, bits and bytes recorded on a magnetic media. Finished photos are displayed on Apple 13" monitors, color-corrected with Cachet, an electronic color editor. When complete, both art and photos are imported into Quark XPress, our primary page layout and typesetting program. On the screen, these images are scaled, cropped and positioned.

Stories: Articles are assembled in California. Unlike at a large publication, each staff writer and editor is responsible for every element of his stories - layout, art, photos, language, proofreading and final typesetting. Finished articles are faxed to the offices in Hawaii for a final proofing. Changes are faxed back the same day. Files are taken to Krishna Copy in San Francisco where the team "prints" them at 1250 LPI (lines per inch) on Linotron imagesetters on 12" by 18" sheets of negative film, one sheet for each color. The double-sized center section is output on an Optronics in Hawaii. Our printer makes plates from these films for his Goss web press. Finished papers are mailed by professional services using labels produced from our 4th Dimension data base. About 20 days later that same paper will be printed in the six other editions.

To celebrate this inaugural color issue, we will send readers free the 40 beautiful symbols presented in our ICONS poster, which you can use any way you like to spread the dharma. Just send to our Hawaii address a return, self-addressed, stamped envelope with two Macintosh formatted floppy discs (preferably filled with dharma-related art you have created).

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