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The ashram for single women devotees of Saiva Siddhanta Church, known as Brahmacharini Ashram, has found its permanent location at 45-38 Bowne Street, Flushing, New York. From its founding, the Church has had single women devotees living and serving under certain non-monastic vows. The first ashrams were established in California, with Brahmacharinis serving on mission in Alaska for about two years during the time of severe earthquakes there in the 1960's. In recently years the Brahmacharini Ashram enjoyed temporary status in Hawaii, first in Lahaina on the Valley Island of Maui and later on the Kona Coast of the Big Island where a Church Village community is in the process of constructing a small Muruga Temple. Then for a brief period it was in the village of Alaveddy in Sri Lanka. In March of this year three Brahmacharinis, Gayatri Ananda Devi, Shama Kumaran and Sitara Nadesan, moved to New York to establish the permanent ashram.

Following the Saiva tradition, single women who wish to devote themselves fully to religious life live together in an ashram, observing the path of silence and devotion. Their ashram is completely self-sufficient, and though they are sequestered from the monastics of the Church they are closer to family members in their community. Their self-sufficiency is made possible through working in the medical services profession, preferably as nurses.

The Brahmacharinis live under the "Solemn Aspirations," a formal pledge which outlines the ideals toward which they aspire, defines their religious disciplines and duties, and includes a Vow of Purity, known in Tamil as tirikarannasutti, which means "purity in mind, speech and body." This vow is broad in its religious ideals and includes chastity, simplicity, non-violence in thought and action, vegetarianism, cleanliness and other observances conducive to progress on the inner path. As the Holy Kural states: "Keep the mind free from impurity. This alone is the practice of virtue. All else is nothing but empty display." Brahmacharinis wear the vestments of Saiva Sadhaka - white sari while in the ashram or when worshipping in the temple.

The three Brahmacharinis have brought much energy and inspiration to New York. In just a few months they have: designed and are in the midst of completing the original illustrations for a wonderful Saivite Coloring Book for Hindu children which is to be produced in the months ahead by Siddhanta Press in Hawaii, established a regular routine for providing cut flowers and garlands for the Ganesha Temple in Flushing, and begun to teach religion classes for the Hindu School which has been organized by qualified Church families in the community. The Hindu School includes within its curriculum Language Arts, Health, Social Studies, Science, Crafts, Group Games and Religion. For one hour each day the Brahmacharinis teach Saivite Hinduism to the young children, drawing deeply on the extensive experiences they have had in Sri Lanka and India over the years. Fifteen minutes of each hour is devoted to learning devotional chants and songs. Regular attendance at the pujas for Maha Ganapati, Siva and Muruga at the Hindu Temple across the street offer a rich and important ambiance for these youth. Saivism has many exemplars of devotion and service among its women, some of them renowned such as Saint Auvvaiyar, Sarada Devi and Sellachi Amma, but most of them living in blessed anonymity, unknown to the world at large as they bring light and love to their religion.

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