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Palani, Bhavani Families of Saiva Siddhanta Church living near the Lord Ganesha Temple of Flushing, New York, have demonstrated what unity of purpose and vision can accomplish. Deeply concerned a few years ago about the influences their children were being exposed to in public schools, they consulted with Gurudeva and soon established their own school, with accredited courses taught by the parents themselves, many of whom are trained teachers. In an open house on June 13th, all families and many Tamil Saivite guests celebrated the graduations of the children and enjoyed their theatrical presentations.

Over forty-five Saivite community members and guests attended and were greeted by Kumar Param, age 8, and seated by Shanmuga Haran and Satya Palani, both age six. The program began as principal Deva Katir introduced the seven children enrolled in the school and asked each to answer from memory several profound questions from Saiva Dharma: A Catechism for Saivite Hinduism. It was a marvel and inspiration to hear their young voices uttering such deep truths. "Music Times is Here Today" was the opening number for the musical presentation in which the children performed a variety of selections from around the world, under the direction of their teacher, Bhavani Param. The final piece was a tranquil song to Lord Ganesha called "Vigneshvarigita." Next the children went behind the scenes and donned their handmade puppets for a puppet show entitled. "The bravery of Ganesha." Mrs. Surina Devam narrated, while each child was transformed in the golden moment of speaking his or her lines portraying Lord Ganesha's victory over the wicked asura, Sundura. The parents and guests were then entertained by a lively square dance called "Buffalo Gal," accompanied by Surina Devam on the harmonium and Mrs. Tara Katir as one of the dancers.

The program concluded with certificates of academic completion signed and presented to each student by the principal. The proud graduates from the five grades were: Sundari Devam, 5th grade; Kavita Ceyon, 4th grade; Amala Katir, 3rd grade; Kumar Param, 2nd grade; Kumari Ceyon, 2nd grade; Shanmuga Haran, 1st grade and Satya Palani, 1st grade. Each child worked very hard this year, fulfilling

challenges of the demanding course, and their happy faces reflected their accomplishments.

After the program, parents and guests were invited to explore the school rooms, and two teachers were on hand to answer questions. Ramya Kumara, the school's talented art teacher, displayed some of the drawings and paintings done through the year. Following the parental investigation of the schoolwork, the girls of the school served refreshments, bringing the memorable occasion to a close.

Other Activities of the Dharmasala...During each week, the United Saivite Women make garlands for Lord Muruga's Abishekam and take turns preparing and serving sweets to the hard-working Stapathi and his crew, who have beautified the New York temple so much. The ladies also alternate as teachers in the children's school and pool their efforts each week to clean Himalayan Academy East, a residential building owned by the Church which now serves as a school building, a satsang hall and lodging for visiting swamis and guests.

Special thanks go to Amala Seyon who has been doing an excellent job of tutoring Amala Katir, Kavita Seyon, and Sundari Devam in their San Marga Master Course studies as they prepare to become Preparatory Members of the Church.

Nandi and Surina Devam have enthusiastically taken over the care of the flower garden of Himalayan Academy East begun by monastics of the Church in the summer of 1979. "Tons of flowers, gorgeous roses and marigolds," remarked staunch grihastra community member Deva Seyon, are coming from the garden. They are being used for puja at the home altars, and to make garlands for Lord Muruga at the nearby temple. Even one of the temple priests comes over occasionally to ask if he can pick some for his pujas.

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