World's First Saivite Catechism and Creed Published in English
Category : October 1981
Published by Anonymous on Oct. 01, 1981

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"Saiva Dharma; A Catechism and Creed for Saivite Hinduism" Released and Available to the Millions of Saivites the World Over

After years of intensive research and meditation, the Saiva Swami Sangam of Saiva Siddhanta Church, under the aegis of Sat Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, has brought forth a catechism and creed for Saivite Hinduism. In the last century a similar effort was made in the Tamil language to present the basics of the world's oldest religion in simple question and answer form, but this new publication, SaivaDharma: A Catechism and Creed for Saivite Hinduism is the first of its kind in English.

These first two lessons of The San Marga Master Course - the 40-page Catechism and the 32-page Creed - were released on the auspicious occasion of the installation of the 16-ton black granite Nandi at Kadavul Hindu Temple early this year. During the intervening weeks, hundreds of Saivites around the world have enjoyed the study of their religion, clearly and concisely worded and beautifully illustrated.

Historically, catechisms, creeds and affirmations of faith have developed when a religion is transmitted from one culture to another. Until then, the religious beliefs are fully contained in the culture and taught as a natural part of growing up. But when a religion migrates to another culture, as when an Indian Hindu family moves to Africa or North America where other faiths predominate, the importance of clearly stated and understood beliefs arises. In any religion a catechism is designed to teach, through the use of questions and answers, to the youth the fundamental views held by the religion. A creed, on the other hand, serves as a more concise summary of religious beliefs, sometimes called "articles of faith." Both seek to protect and transmit the religion to the next generation by maintaining the continuity and identity of the original, verbally expressed doctrines.

In introducing the Catechism and Creed Gurudeva Sivaya Subramuniyaswami proclaimed, "Saiva Dharma: A Catechism and Creed was created to give a great strength, a fortitude of mental power to Saivites all over the world, a generative force competent to master and reform the truant youth, the alien-influenced, gone-astray devotee. And it is well able to develop religionists and foster the proverbial madman. Let them preach. Let than give forth the Saiva Dharma. All spread forth the Saiva Dharma to the burning fires of youth as fruit and flowers and sacred wood are offered into the holy homa fire. Go forth and preach Saiva Dharma: A Catechism and Creed to all who will hear. Let them be the judge to accept or reject; and in their next life those who reject to accept and preach. The truly saintly will come forth from chaos to fulfill the prophecies of yore, and God-Realization will become manifest in the hearts of many because of your doing well. You are the missionary. Take up the holy Vel. It shall make your intellect sharp, your wisdom broad and your love deep."

The Catechism and Creed are the result of a serious need. For many years Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, has received questions from devotees asking about our religion who were unable to find a definitive summary of it that would provide practical religious direction. "There are so many questions left unanswered," they would say. "Please, where can my family find a systematic understanding. Help us to understand and give us something to teach to our children who are learning the ways of alien belief." It is in response to these needs that the new publications have been created.

Saiva Dharma: A Catechism and Creed for Saivite Hinduism faces squarely the spiritual questions shared by all souls. For example, Krishna Kumar, of Kuala Lumpur, in a recent letter to Saiva Siddhanta Church asked, "What is the purpose of God to create us?" The following answer is provided in the Creed:

"Often we are asked, 'Why did Lord Siva create souls?' It is His very nature to create souls as it is the nature of your mind to create thoughts. Your thoughts have form, shape and color in the psychic ethers; and you love your thoughts, you hate your thoughts. Once created, they evoke fear in you; yet they are only thoughts. Our thoughts go through an evolution of karma until they cycle back to us and merge into our finite substance and give energy to new thoughts. This energy is shakti power. Though forever existent and uncreated, Lord Siva ever comes out of Pure Consciousness as the first manifest form. His very nature to create form, nurse it through its evolution back to His infinite Self. Such is the nature of our Father/Mother, God."

The philosophical basis for Saiva Dharma: A Catechism and Creed for Saivite Hinduism, is Saint Tirumular's Vedic/Agamic Saiva Siddhanta theology, which encompasses both Vedanta and Siddhanta. The spiritual authority rests in the Siva Yogaswami Guru Paramparai of Sri Lanka. Its advice is standard knowledge among Saivite communities throughout the world, though that knowledge is usually part of an oral and not a written tradition.

There is no attempt in the Catechism and Creed to cover the intricacies of philosophy and practice, or to make comparisons between Siddhanta and Vedanta or to offer yoga techniques or advice for personal unfoldment on the path. The Catechism and Creed are a simple summary and guideline. They are not scripture, though they do not conflict with scripture, and strictly follow orthodox tenets. In this regard, it should be noted that the Catechism is titled "A Catechism" and not "The Catechism," and the Creed is titled "A Creed" and not "The Creed." These two lessons of the San Marga Master Course stand alone, complete and covering the essentials, but requiring classes and study to reveal the intricacies behind their broad statements. We quote our Gurudeva's words below, in introducing the Catechism and Creed:

"We encourage the broad, broad use of these first two lessons. We believe that religion, God's law, will work for us as well as we serve it in solving the problems, healing the wounds, giving solace to others in these times of stress and strain as man adjusts to his inventions in an age of population explosion, an age of famine and great fortune. Saivism holds answers for mankind in a technological age. All that you need to know, already know, is here, presented in an organized way, ready for you to study, memorize and teach to all who will listen.

"In teaching Saiva Dharma: A Catechism and Creed for Saivite Hinduism, children are the most receptive because without hesitation they love Lord Ganesha, understand Lord Muruga and revere above all Lord Siva, our Absolute God. Little children are souls in their pure state. They are not impulsive, lustful, instinctive beings. They do not hold hatred and connive for revenge, nor are they intellectually astute. Can they reason out religion or have a philosophical discourse? No. Can they refute astute arguments or answer philosophical cliches in the proper way? No. They are the simple believers on the path, the San Marga of personal unfoldment. Their understanding and conscience must be developed by you. You must be relaxed, lenient, forgiving of their errors and strong in your advice."

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