

[One Saivite Mission Ends and Dozens Begin in Mauritius](#)

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"Combattons la conversion par l'instruction!" (fight conversion thru religious education). Such was the motto for the Saivite mission to the beautiful island-nation of Mauritius that ended on December 27, 1983, almost a year after it had begun. Sadhaka Jothi Kathiresan, monk of Saiva Siddhanta Church, had been invited by the Saiva Siddhanta Manram of Mauritius to come for a year to teach monistic Saiva Siddhanta, and Saiva Dharma and train as many teachers as possible who could carry on the same work after his departure. Mauritius is 52% Hindu.

The mission succeeded beyond all expectations. People throughout the island requested classes and soon Sadhaka Kathiresan was teaching in some 21 localities, from Cap Malheureux in the extreme North to Souillac in the South, from Flacq in the East to Port Louis in the West. The students were most enthusiastic to learn the depth of their orthodox religion, an opportunity they had never had before. And they were even happier to discover what a great religion they had. Never had they suspected that its teachings were so deep, so broad, so universal, so scientific-or so joyous, so capable of inspiring faith, confidence, courage, patience and love. "Now we understand our Saivite religion like never before, we see its greatness. And finally we know the deeper meaning of rituals..." the testimonials went on.

The students were enjoined to start to teach themselves: "Even if you know only one thing, teach that thing to someone..." A few took up the challenge right away. Others modestly waited until they should amass a little more knowledge. Still others prayed to Lord Ganesha to remove the obstacle of shyness from their path. As time went on, more and more were teaching Saivite Hinduism. Some, encouraged by the enthusiastic response of their own students, started teaching four, five or even six classes a week. Such is the intensive pace that R. Chenganna and S.K. Moorghen set for themselves in the North and in the Beau Bassin area, respectively.

At this time, the student/teachers are holding, in all, some 80 classes (for adults or for children) throughout the island. And in some 35 koyils (temples) each Friday, when the devotees gather for weekly puja and prayers, one of the teachers gives a short talk on some aspect of Saiva Dharma.

Some of the more enthusiastic teachers are spreading the message from door to door. Others impressed with the salutary power of the Saivite teachings are visiting the needy, the troubled, those who have converted to Christianity or who are about to convert, to talk, to instruct, and to uplift. These missionaries are impressed to discover that the convertees generally still hold to the beliefs of Hinduism, and love to hear its teachings explained. "if I had known these things before, I would never have converted," said one lady to Nagalingum Chellumbrum of Long Mountain, one of the most enthusiastic of the student/missionaries.

"Now, we have the armaments we need," Chellumbrum says, "it's up to us to get to work!" He gives talks in his koyil every Friday, teaches a children's class, and has visited many Tamil homes. He has notably sought to bring back converts-and succeeded in four or five cases. In one dozen localities, students, inspired by Chellumbrum's example, have teamed up to do similar missionary work on a regular basis. One of the finest of teams is in Triolet, V. Permall, Ramen Sungaralingum, and Lomavadee Kesaven (two boys and a girl of 20, 15, and 16 years, respectively), who have started a class for children which they take turns teaching and a door-to-door teaching program.

Hindus are incredulous to find Hindu missionaries at their door-something never seen before. The vacuum had always been filled, and most willingly, by the Christians and Muslims. Vinayegum Caulee, 21, of Stanley explained, "We did not know how to present our religion before. We did not know what to say. But now we know. And we know the value of what we're saying." Rogini Shunmoogum of Port Louis, 20, adds: "The people ask us to come back; they want to hear more. And this encourages us to continue." Many are convinced that once a person has heard the teachings of Saivism, he cannot be converted anymore.

In Piton, brother R. and J. Chenganna, together with a team of 10 other students, have organized tirukuttam (satsangs) as a way of spreading the message of Saivism. These take place in various homes, once or twice a week and have drawn as many as 60 devotees. The format is to chant devotional hymns for 20 minutes, to listen to a talk by one of the student/teachers on some aspect of Saivism for 20

minutes, and to chant again for 20 minutes. This pattern is quite successful, and several other towns have initiated their own tirukuttam on the Piton model. Everyone wears vibuthi and pottu, and the men wear verthis. The ladies sit on one side and the men on the other. The chants may only be for Siva/Sakti, Muruga, or Ganesha, and the talks may only touch on subject covered in the course on Saiva Dharma. The Chengannas thus hope to keep a very pure Saivite vibration and spread a unified and consistent teaching through the country which will gradually illumine rather than confuse.

The teachers have formed a Society of Teachers or Saiva Siddhanta to chart the future of Saivite education in Mauritius. Some of their immediate goals are to compile courses and syllabi, bring the teachings to all localities, and especially to every Saivite child.

All in all, 1983 has witnessed an impressive revival of the Saivite Hindu religion in Mauritius. And it has all been sparked off by none other than the teaching themselves-the enlightened teachings of Saivism presented in their undiluted and pure form in A Catechism and Creed for Saivite Hindus. (Five thousand copies were printed in French and are being sold door to door.) Such is their power. One mission has ended, but dozens of others have begun as these young missionaries take up the challenge and carry it bravely forward.