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While visiting Kauai Aadheenam in Hawaii after two-months in London, Rev. Dr. Sanmugasundaran, a highly respected Hindu Missionary Minister of Saiva Siddhanta Church serving at the Sri Lanka Branch shared some of his observation's in an interview with the editors.

New Saivite World: Rev. Dr. Shan, can you share with our readers your observations on the state of Hinduism in London during your two-month sojourn there?

Rev. Dr. Sanmugasundaran: One positive step forward that Hinduism has witnessed in recent years not only in Britain but even in several other parts of the West is the establishment of new temples. When I was in London, I had the opportunity of visiting a new Murugan temple which had been consecrated on the 12th of February. This temple has which had been consecrated and is joint effort of about four hundred Hindu families. The day on which I visited the temple was a Friday and there was a fairly large gathering present. It was a very happy sight to see so many devotees witnessing the puja on a cold winter evening. One notable feature that I observed in the temple was the absence of children among the devotees. I enquired from one of the elders why they did not bring the children along and his reply was that the children had no knowledge whatsoever about Hindu temples and matters connected therewith and that therefore they may not enjoy a visit. This reply startled me. I pointed out that that was perhaps the very reason why the children should have been brought. They will begin to interest themselves in what they see and will want to know the why and wherefore of the different aspects of the temple. Through such knowledge their religious interest will be aroused and soon they will learn to practice it in their day to day lives.

Q: Were you able to talk personally with any of the children?

I had been visiting the homes of about twenty Saivite Tamil families, each of whom had about two three children between the ages of three and ten. From most of the children I enquired whether they worshipped God every day and, if so, whom they worshipped. The majority of the children did not understand my question and out of those who did seem to understand many said they worshipped Jesus Christ - at school. Some said it was Sai Baba and only two they worshipped Muruga. I discussed this with the elders and asked whether the children were not given religious training at home. "There was no time or facility for it," was the amazing reply they gave me. It transpired that most of the parents went out work early in the morning and returned late in the evening. The children were away at school or under the care of a baby minder most of the day. They therefore figured out that the most convenient thing they could neglect was their duty towards their children's religious education. Such neglect may appear harmless now, but when the children grow up, the chances are that they may create problems to themselves, to their parents and even to the society and to the state. This is the type of "generation gap" that has been decried by our Gurudeva. By their indifference and carefree attitude, these parents are doing the greatest disservice to their children and to their religion. Raised up in absolute ignorance of their children and to their culture, these children are exposed to the danger of becoming easy victims of Christian conversion.

Q: What else deeply impressed you about life of the Hindus in London?

One more unfortunate discovery made by me was that almost all the Saivites in London have become one hundred percent meat-eaters without exception. They do not make any distinction between the type of meat they eat and no day in the week is exempted. Back in Sri Lanka or India, even hardened meat-eaters stick to vegetarian diet on Fridays, the day traditionally set apart for religious observances, but in London all that has been forgotten. Vegetables are available in plenty and various types of vegetarian food are easily available, but regrettably, our people have strayed away from their obligations.

However, one redeeming feature against all these unhappy situations is that new temples are coming. Already two temples are functioning and more and more devotees are said to be going there regularly. One other temple is under construction and is expected to be consecrated in June this year. Another is being planned in the eastern area, which means almost all the outskirts of London will be well represented. Temples have always been the centers of worship and spiritual progress. Let us hope that through the new temples will come the practice, the preservation and promotion of religion by the Hindus living in the respective areas.

Q: Could you comment on your visit to Kauai Aadheenam and the work that you will be doing during the coming years?

I have just been reappointed as a Missionary Minister of the Saiva Siddhanta Church and our Gurudeva has afforded me ample opportunity to serve. During my ten-day stay at the Aadheenam, many matters relating to the Church Branch in Sri Lanka, the Alaveddy Ashram, the up and coming Pasupatiswara Temple, Sri Subramuniya Kotam at Kopay and the Refugee Relief Campaign in Sri Lanka were discussed at length and far-reaching decisions have been taken. Gurudeva has given me the proper directions to execute these decisions and the swamis have extended their full cooperation in my work ahead. I am therefore happy to state that I will be fully occupied with all the varied and onerous duties that have been placed on my shoulders. My main target will be the completion of the Pasupatiswara Temple before the Maha Sivaratri of 1985.

Q: What do you feel the reaction was to your talk to the Sri Lankan and Indian Hindus in the San Francisco Bay area?

A: On Saturday the Tamils in the area congregated in Tirumular Hall. They were very interested to hear about violence done in Sri Lanka and our relief work there. They have had no first-hand information about what is happening and what is needed there. Now they appear more and more convinced that they should concentrate on relief and rehabilitation work. A few thought that they should help the terrorists and now they have changed their opinion. There was a lot of argument on both sides, but finally the consensus was that they should really concentrate on reconstruction and rehabilitation, which was felt more urgent.

Q: What are your observations on the way that the American Hindus, the converts and adoptives to Saivism, are progressing in their religious life.

A: I have met quite a few of them and they are taking their religion quite seriously and are taking a very keen interest in teaching it to their children. They love Saivism; they love Siva Yogaswami and they love Gurudeva. They have progressed considerably since I last saw them, and they are well on their path. On Sunday afternoon the Palani Swami Temple was full up with devotees and the Ganesha pujas was performed very beautifully by Yogi Kriya. I think the temple, now that it

is open to the public, is serving many people in and around San Francisco.

I was also highly impressed by the children's class. The children start their daily program with Ganesha puja. And a little boy of about 8 to 10 conducted puja in a methodical manner, performing every detail. I think they are setting a fine example here, and even in Sri Lanka I don't think we find this type of training given to the young boys. And Muni Nalluran is training the boys in various Saivite plays. He has already had one play put on, the Kanappa Nayanar, and more are on the way, I understand. Children are very interested in the classes and I hope all the born Hindus, the Indians and Sri Lankans in the area, will be coming to these classes beginning next month so that many more children will be learning more about their religion.

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