Inner Life Thrives in Sri Lanka Despite Battlefield Conditions
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Even the best of times in lovely Sri Lanka provide little to be thankful for these days. Over three million Hindus huddle in their homes, fearing to even walk the streets, fearing that the violence that has riddled the nation for nearly two years may erupt at any moment. And recent reports (published in South India) indicating that the 14 million strong Buddhist majority may soon forceably resettle as many as 20,000 armed ex-convicts in the North where Hindus predominate offer little relief.

But the spirit of a troubled people, though perhaps hidden and somewhat subdued, is still strong. One sign comes from Alaveddy, a rural and agricultural community of over 100,000 in the Jaffna area. At the Sri Subramuniya Ashram there regular religious, music and English classes for children continue without interruption. If anything, the stalwart children and their parents have become more dedicated, more one-minded in their devotion to Saivism.

In late 1984 the Rev. Dr. S. Sanmugasundaran, Hindu Missionary Minister, arranged for qualified children of the Ashram to "have "Saiva Diksha," the traditional initiation into the Saivite Hindu path. Two priests made elaborate arrangements for the sacred rites, including a brick homa built in the Ashram's central courtyard. Twelve boys and eleven girls participated, all dressed in bright white verthis and dresses, all proudly wearing holy ash and pottu.

The initiation ceremonies were conducted with all solemnity, with resounding Sanskrit chants and hymns of the Saivite saints. The radiance on their faces revealed an inner joy experienced by all the children who had worked so hard to prepare themselves for this important step in their life.

Elsewhere in the nation, Hindus were working closely with the government in an attempts to find a permanent solution which would provide acceptable protection to the majority and minority populations alike. So far, all efforts have been thwarted by violence on both sides. If it is true that peace begins in the heart of men, then perhaps the gentle faces of Alaveddy's children portend a more serene future for Sri Lanka's diverse peoples.

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