

## [Gracious Guru](#)

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GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP

## Gracious Guru

As satguru, I am in exclusive intimate spiritual communion with each of my devotees. I am at the center of each seeker's life, beating in each heart, aware in each thought, good, bad or indifferent. I keep the threads of every devotee's karma. I am the spiritual voice of dharma in their lives. To those seeking to understand our subtle tradition, it must be openly stated that the satguru is the keeper of all the intertwined threads, the repository of all intimate knowledge, the knower of the continuities of all his followers' karmas and dharmas, the confidant of each one's secret heart, the listener to their most painful confessions in sealed confidentiality, the giver of their mind-quieting penances, or prayaschittas, the interpreter of their transcendental, light-filled breakthroughs, visions and dreams, the guardian of the future of each sishya." So said Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in the 1995 edition of Saiva Dharma Sastras, The Book of Discipline of Saiva Siddhanta Church.

Gurudeva began teaching and picking up these inner threads of devotees' karmas in California in 1957. He quickly cognized the need for an external structure with which to manage and nurture a growing congregation. So, over many years he developed Saiva Siddhanta Church, the first Hindu institution in the world to embrace and mold the Western church structure into a strong religious organization with an ethnically diverse international congregation. Its headquarters is at a traditional South Indian style monastery-temple complex in the Hawaiian islands known as Kauai Aadheenam, or Kauai's Hindu monastery. According to Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Gurudeva's successor and disciple of 37 years, "Gurudeva always did the same thing. From 1957 to his mahasamadhi, his core teachings didn't change, his organizational concepts didn't change, the essence of what he was trying to do did not change. What did change were the people."

As a spiritual leader committed to teaching an Eastern religion in the West, Gurudeva always

responded to the people who came forward, which evolved through the decades into a deeply sincere group of Saivite Hindu devotees. "In the 1950s Gurudeva was working with people who had been studying metaphysics and whose background was Christian. In the '60s the group changed. It became young people, some with Christian backgrounds and some with no religious upbringing, exposed to the concepts of the '60s," said Bodhinatha. "The people in the '50s didn't understand expanded consciousness. People in the '60s knew about it, by reading about it or by personal experience. The whole mentality became one more of inner experience and meditation." Gurudeva's teaching of Eastern concepts was like nectar, and many discovered their spiritual identity in Hinduism.

Beginning in late 1969 and continuing through the '70s, Gurudeva traveled extensively throughout Asia, frequenting India and Sri Lanka to expose his devotees to Hindu culture. While visiting Jaffna on a voyage in 1972, Gurudeva met Sri Sita Ram Shastri, a leader

among priests and a renowned mystical pundit of the island nation. Gurudeva told him that he wanted his Western devotees, the truly sincere ones, to become Hindus. Shastri told Gurudeva that it was fine to do. It is within the sastras. But it would take three generations before this lineage is fully established. Gurudeva took that prediction seriously. He kept it in mind over the next 29 years as he carefully guided the lives of his first group of householder devotees who had converted to Saivism. The third generation to which Shastri referred is now being born in several of these families.

The core of Gurudeva's Church, the monastic ministers, were the first to enter Hinduism. "Those who were brought up in other religions had to go through a severance process. Some ran into religious conflicts and didn't continue," explained Bodhinatha, who supervised the process. In the late '70s and early '80s Gurudeva and

his monastics guided the householders through the same process who wished to continue under the stricter guidelines he had established.

As Western devotees entered Hinduism in the 1980s, born Hindus from Asia started coming forward. If they were Vaishnavas, they, too, had to formally convert to Saivism and take on a Saivite name. This marked a significant permanent change in the makeup of the congregation. Says Bodhinatha: "We went from teaching yoga to Christians to teaching Saivism to Hindus; from a group based in California to a global group with members on every major continent."

Though students and members came and went through the years, Gurudeva's message did not change. Bodhinatha said,

"He started talking about the Self; he ended talking about the Self. He started with knowledge about the monastic path and the family path; he ended with that knowledge."

Gurudeva's vision of a Hindu church never wavered either. He recognized the advantages of the church paradigm as an organized social structure, not to mention the legal and financial freedoms and protections granted in the US. So, with the help of San Francisco attorney Alvin Buchignani, on February 12, 1962, Saiva Siddhanta Church became the first Hindu institution to be granted church tax exempt status by the US Internal Revenue Service.

Gurudeva made his objectives very clear: "We urge members and other devotees to 'Know thy Self' through self-inquiry,

meditation, traditional temple worship, scriptural study, guru bhakti and selfless service. We strive to bring members, devout sishyas of the parampara, into a pure, ethical life and guide them toward enlightenment and a direct consciousness of the Divine within."

Membership in Saiva Siddhanta Church is no trivial association. Students are required to study the teachings for several years to become intimately familiar with the mystical monistic-theistic philosophy. They must adjust their lives to traditional disciplines, adhere to a strict vegetarian diet, tithe on their income and follow the character-building yamas and niyamas, 20 Vedic restraints and observances.

Paramacharya Palaniswami quips, "The only thing harder than becoming a member of the Church is remaining a member." Indeed, Gurudeva required each to

requalify and rededicate himself or herself annually during the Guru Purnima festival in July. And he continually raised the standards, prescribing new sadhanas to goad members onward, never, ever allowing them to let down.

Gurudeva recognized a balance between meditation, or internalized worship, and external worship of the Gods as necessary for consistent spiritual unfoldment. He encouraged his followers, and all Hindus, to fulfill the five traditional obligations: daily worship in the home shrine, attending a temple once a week, pilgrimaging to a far-off temple annually, celebrating festivals and observing the essential samskaras, rites of passage. Samskaras sanctify crucial events in life: from name-giving to first feeding, beginning of education



to marriage, entrance into elderly life to funeral. Gurudeva dusted off and breathed new life into samskaras, many of which had been all but left aside in cosmopolitan Hindu society.

He had searched for years for just the right place to establish the ashram that would become world headquarters for a complex Hindu ministry. Having considered locations in Asia and Europe, he landed on the Garden Island of Kauai in December, 1968. This, he felt certain, was the ideal place, situated half way between East and West. In January, 1970, he returned to Kauai and purchased the 1927 Japanese-designed island home turned resort and its surrounding acreage where he and his students had sojourned in '68.

"Kauai Aadheenam is a traditional, male cloistered Hindu monastery," Gurudeva wrote in 1995. "This is the site of the Kailasa Pitham, the seat of spiritual authority for this ancient guru lineage, formerly located in northern Sri Lanka. Here we protect the purity of the faith and decide matters of education, publication, innovation, theology and Church law. Here young men are prepared to eventually take holy orders of sannyasa."

Kauai's Hindu Monastery is a full-featured religious sanctuary replete with sacred forests, paths and ponds and two temples: the Kadavul Nataraja Temple founded in 1973, and the San Marga Iraivan Temple conceived in 1975, a traditional, all-granite, Chola

style, Agamic Siva temple which will be the crown jewel of the Aadheenam.

Carving on Iraivan Temple began in 1990 when Gurudeva chipped the first stone. Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami of Sri Adichunchanagiri Mahasamsthana Mutt in Bangalore, India, generously provided 11 acres outside the city where hereditary temple architects and site manager Jiva Rajasankara from Malaysia built homes and worksheds and dug wells, creating a village where 100 men and their families could carve this elaborate white granite edifice in the traditional way—by hand.

Ten years later, on May 31, 2001, chief

temple architect Sri V. Ganapati Sthapati and priest Sri Kandaswamy Gurukkal of Ontario, Canada, presided over the ceremonial placement of the first stone on the giant concrete foundation at Kauai Aadheenam [photo above]. Gurudeva declared at the event, "The vision of the Iraivan Temple as a place of pilgrimage for devotees of Siva throughout the world is becoming clearer and clearer and clearer as the days go on. It is a temple of boon-giving, a life-giving temple, a wish-fulfilling temple. Temples such as Iraivan are built on the sacrifice, sadhana and tapas of the people that are allowed to participate. Six thousand devotees of Siva from thirty to forty countries have contributed and sacrificed to bring Iraivan Temple to this stage of completion, and it is now being placed upon the foundation." San Marga

Iraivan Temple is now manifesting as the fulfillment of one of Gurudeva's most profound mystical visions.

For over 30 years he shaped the ministry and character of his dynamic monastic order and family congregation and guided Hindu groups worldwide from his seat of authority as guru mahasannidhanam of Kauai's Hindu Monastery, his tropical island home. The wholeness of the Aadheenam as it exists now registers as an incredible, indelible experience in the minds of visitors from all over the world. One pilgrim remarked, "Gurudeva has preserved the pure Jaffna Tamil culture and all of its refinements here."

# MONASTIC ORDER

## His Living Legacy

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Twenty-three monks, strong and united

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For four decades Sivaya Subramuniaswami carefully trained, strictly tested and lovingly molded a small,

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tight-knit group of men into an effective, orthodox yet joyous monastic order. The Saiva Siddhanta Yoga Order is of the Natha Sampradaya, an ancient tradition of Saiva yoga mysticism that began in the Himalayas and migrated south to Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. It is based on striving for Self Realization and service to Siva, guided by a mystical understanding and practice of brahmacharya, celibacy and transmutation of the sexual forces. Personal sadhana and the service of bringing Saivism into the modern age by disseminating

the deep, inner teachings of Saiva Siddhanta have always remained the foremost work of this group of disciplined monks. They follow strict vows, own nothing, sleep on the floor, work very hard, live a cloistered life, don't visit family or former friends and perform worship, yoga and meditation sadhanas for at least two hours each day.

Because they live the simple life of the renunciate, it didn't matter that the Order grew from very modest beginnings. As Paramacharya Palaniswami, a



disciple of Gurudeva since 1966 said, "In the early days monks couldn't eat three meals a day, couldn't buy new clothes when old clothes wore out, couldn't pay electric bills and phone bills on time. Gurudeva had to use all of his considerable skills to bring us into having the present-day resources and self-sufficiency that we have. And he worked really hard at it."

From an old house in San Francisco to a 458-acre monastery on the paradisiacal island of Kauai, world-renouncing

aspirants continued to come forward and dedicate themselves to the search for the Self and service of Siva under Gurudeva's large, graceful umbrella. But why? Palaniswami explained, "They've reached a maturity in their own searching in their spiritual life, in their quest for Truth, their quest for God."

"Each one has his own story," continued Palaniswami. "That story might be that he started at a young age searching through the many paths, trying to reduce them to the one that felt right to

him, felt like his dharma. Another, perhaps, had an inner experience and wondered what that experience meant. Someone else might have gone to India and been adopted by the Gods, transformed in a temple and given inward directions. Others might have just met Gurudeva and seen in him the light and the wisdom and the profundity of the Self and wished to experience and taste that beautiful illumination that he wore so gracefully in his being. This is an order of great discipline and striving, so everyone who comes here comes with that kind of

spiritual intensity, spiritual eagerness, and a search for God."

The mix of ethnicities is as diverse as the ways in which Gurudeva's mathavasis chose to leave the world and live as Siva's men. Though it began in San Francisco in the 1950s and 60s with American Hindu converts and adoptives, in the 1980s born Hindu aspirants from Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Malaysia began to join the Order, balancing Gurudeva's monasteries with a rich blend of cultural

backgrounds.

This diversity has proven to be a great asset to the Order, one which helps them fulfill the myriad projects that are part of their greater mission. And theirs is no ordinary, social mission. "Gurudeva felt that there are enough Hindu institutions in the world dedicated to the noble enterprises of social and humanitarian relief. He saw that very few are fully dedicated to the profound enterprise of spiritual, personal transformation of people. To him the highest

calling is spreading knowledge of the Self, service to Siva and sacred work, rather than secular work. Building the temples, translating the scriptures and promoting knowledge of the highest form was the highest work to do, and he wanted his monks to do that work."

## To My Dear Monastics

Excerpts from Gurudeva's  
Letter of Introduction to

# His Sannyasins' Vows

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In Holy Orders of Sannyasa, Gurudeva enjoined his monastics as follows: The first part of your life was lived for yourself; the second part will be

lived in the service of others, for the benefit of your religion. You have been tried and tested through years of training and challenges and proved yourself worthy to wear the kavi, the orange robes, and to fulfill the illustrious Saiva sannyasa



dharma.

The sannyasin harkens  
close to Siva and  
releases the past to an  
outer death.

Remembering the past  
and living in memories  
brings it into the  
present. Sannyasins

never indulge in recollections of the forgotten person they have released. The present and the future—there is no security for the sannyasin in either. Like writing upon the waters, the experiences of the sannyasin leave no

mark, no samskara to generate new karmas for an unsought-for future. He walks into the future, on into the varied vrittis of the mind, letting go of the past, letting what is be and being himself in its midst, moving on into an ever more dynamic service, an

ever more profound knowing. Be thou bold, sannyasin young. Be thou bold, sannyasin old. Let the past melt and merge its images into the sacred river within. Let the present be like the images written upon the water's calm surface. The future holds no

glamour. The past holds no attachment, no return to unfinished experience. Even upon the dawn of the day walk into your destiny with the courage born of knowing that the ancient Saivite scriptures proclaim your sannyasin's life great above all other

greatness.

Let your life as a sannyasin be a joyful one, strict but not restrictive, for this is not the path of martyrdom or mortification. It is the fulfillment of all prior

experiential patterns,  
the most natural  
path— the Straight  
Path to God, the San  
Marga— for those  
content and ripened  
souls. Leave all regret  
behind, all guilt and  
guile; others will  
preserve all that you  
proudly renounce. Let  
even the hardships

ahead be faced  
cheerfully.

Never fail to take  
refuge in your God,  
your guru and your  
Great Oath. Be the  
noble soul you came  
to this Earth to be, and  
lift humanity by your



example. Know it with a certainty beyond question that this is life's most grand and glorious path, and the singular path for those seeking God Realization, that mystic treasure reserved for the renunciate. True renunciation must be

complete  
renunciation; it must  
be unconditional.  
There is no room on  
the upper reaches of  
San Marga for mental  
manipulations, for  
play-pretend  
renunciation or  
half-measure sadhana.  
Let your renunciation  
be complete. Resolve

that it will be a perfect giving-up, a thorough letting-go. Let go of the rope. Be the unencumbered soul that you are. Be the free spirit, unfettered and fearless, soaring above the clamor of dissension and difference. All that you need will be provided.

If there is any residue of attachment, sever it without mercy. Cast it off altogether. Let this be no partial renunciation, subject to future wants, to future patterns of worldliness. Give all to God Siva, and never take it back.

# All in a Day's Work

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A balanced life" was Gurudeva's description of his daily routine. He faithfully led the

monks' daily  
two-hour  
meditation and  
worship from  
5:30-7:30 AM. He  
spent several  
hours each  
morning guiding  
the lives of his  
Church members

through personal communication—by telephone for many years, until the mid 1990s when he relied mostly on e-mail. Every afternoon was spent personally editing

his books, the legacy of teaching he knew would last far into the future. In the photos (print edition only) here we see Gurudeva: 1) blessing a new calf born in the



monastery's  
pastures; 2)  
speaking on the  
phone with a  
devotee; 3)  
greeting the Vivek  
Dixit family, one of  
hundreds of  
families worldwide  
who consider

Kauai's Hindu  
Monastery a place  
of pilgrimage and  
spiritual authority,  
visiting often to  
receive the guru  
mahasannidhanam  
's darshan and to  
seek his advice; 4)  
giving mantra

initiation to  
Vasanthi  
Kunaseelan of  
Klang, Malaysia.  
Gurudeva was  
exceptionally  
creative,  
spontaneous and  
ever available,  
ready to respond

to the needs of devotees as well as those of the wider Hindu world with new projects and publications that kept his team of two dozen monastics "on their toes, a little

off balance."

Always staying at the center of it all, one of Gurudeva's most unusual, recognizable qualities as a world religious leader was that he was always

available,  
personally  
greeting and  
counseling  
thousands of  
Hindu visitors to  
his Aadheenam,  
speaking  
intimately with  
them about their

lives, personal  
aspirations and  
concerns.

**FAMILY**  
**COMMUNITY**

# A Worldwide Congregation

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A dedicated band  
of devotees  
further his



mission, starting  
in their homes

An international  
group of men,  
women and  
children, the  
members of

Saiva Siddhanta  
Church, strive for  
personal,  
spiritual  
transformation  
and steadfastly  
fulfill the  
objectives of the  
Church while

living and  
working in the  
world, tithing on  
their income to  
support the  
Church,  
conclaving in  
local mission  
groups and

gathering in  
homes to  
worship and  
perform karma  
yoga. Gurudeva  
summarized the  
path of these  
tried and tested  
souls in Living

with Siva,  
Hinduism's  
Contemporary  
Culture: "If both  
husband and  
wife are on the  
spiritual path,  
the householder  
family will

progress  
beautifully and  
deeply. Their  
love for one  
another and their  
offspring  
maintains family  
harmony.  
However, the

nature of their  
sadhana and  
unfoldment of  
the spirit is  
different from  
that of the  
sannyasin. The  
struggle to  
maintain the

responsibilities of  
the home and  
children while  
simultaneously  
observing the  
contemplative  
way, in itself,  
provides  
strength and



balance, and  
slowly matures  
innate wisdom  
through the  
years."

It is this balance

that Gurudeva  
taught his  
householder  
devotees to  
accomplish in his  
conversations  
with them, and  
in Living with  
Siva where he

addressed every  
issue that arises  
on the family  
path, from the  
most spiritually  
subtle to the  
most mundane.

Kulapati Deva  
Seyon, who lives  
near the  
monastery on  
Kauai (only  
single men under  
vows live inside  
the monastery),  
had this to say:

"Gurudeva brought the true and ultimate meaning of gotra, or family lineage, to his initiated devotees, whom he saw as his

family lineage.  
While Gurudeva  
was the supreme  
monastic, he was  
never at a loss in  
advising on the  
business, social  
or intimate,  
personal

problems of his  
initiated families,  
down to the  
smallest detail.  
He knew every  
family sishya on  
a deep, personal  
level their hopes  
and dreams,

fears and  
shortcomings  
and never tired  
of guiding,  
helping and  
serving his  
congregation."



This fortunate congregation is truly global and diverse, with members in the US, Europe and over 70 percent in Asia mostly Mauritius and

Malaysia, as well as Singapore and India. Though stretched across the globe, they are no less connected than if they lived in a single village.

Take, for  
example, the  
cross-national  
marriage that  
brought together  
the Deva Seyon  
family of Kauai  
and the  
Manogaran

Mardemootoo  
family of  
Mauritius. In  
1991, Kavita,  
Deva's daughter,  
married  
Sivakumaren,  
Manogaran'sson.  
Though half a

world away, the  
two families  
merged like milk  
poured into  
milk. Deva  
recalls,  
"Gurudeva's  
constant  
blessings and

loving care for  
the needs of our  
family led us to  
love and trust  
those who also  
loved him. His  
international  
global spiritual  
family became

our family as we shared the same goals and priorities in life. In amalgamating our two families, all the big issues regarding the future of our

children were  
already settled,  
as we shared  
the same  
kulaguru."

Gurudeva



required his  
Church  
members to live  
strictly by the  
traditional and  
time-tested  
protocols of  
Tamil Saivite  
culture, which

he detailed in  
his 365  
Nandinatha  
Sutras of Living  
with Siva.  
Association with  
orthodox  
Saivites of India  
and Sri Lanka

allows  
Westerners to  
absorb the  
subtleties and  
depths of this  
refined protocol.  
Gurudeva also  
required a home  
life of ahimsa,

tolerating  
neither abuse of  
a spouse nor  
corporal  
punishment of  
children.

The Saivite  
Sastras,  
revealed to  
Gurudeva in  
1973, explain  
that "The guru  
worked with the  
families in the  
same way he

worked with a  
single  
monastery."

Deva Seyon  
elaborated on  
that relationship  
between the  
monastery and  
family homes:

"The monastery  
and the families  
of Saiva  
Siddhanta  
Church work  
closely together  
on many levels  
in fulfilling  
Gurudeva's

directives both  
within the  
Church missions  
and with the  
public at large.  
The families  
learn by  
watching the  
monks— their



attitudes, their  
commitment,  
their selfless  
service." This  
relationship is  
born out of the  
love of striving  
through daily  
religious

disciplines such  
as meditation  
and scriptural  
study that  
Gurudeva  
nurtured in all of  
his devotees.

The families of  
the Church forge  
frontiers in  
passing on the  
traditions of our  
Hindu religion  
by worshiping  
daily together in  
the home

shrine, wearing  
Hindu clothing,  
raising children  
nonviolently,  
holding daily  
family meetings  
and spending an  
evening  
together at

home at least  
once a week.  
Groups of  
families in each  
area collaborate  
and help each  
other live a  
meaningful  
Hindu lifestyle in

many ways,  
such as home  
schooling their  
children  
together,  
hosting pilgrims  
and special  
guests and  
going on

pilgrimage  
together to  
temples in South  
India and to the  
Aadheenam in  
Kauai.

Kulapati  
Mardemootoo  
eloquently  
summarized  
Gurudeva's  
impact on the  
lives of  
householder  
devotees.



"Gurudeva has exposed us to a way of life conducive to peace, love and harmony in and outside the home. He has given us the

tools to be  
peacemakers, to  
shine as  
examples of  
good family  
people and  
elders who have  
been endowed  
with wisdom,

able to stand as  
respected  
leaders even in  
the most  
difficult times.  
He has taught  
us by his own  
life how to be  
strong in our

beliefs and  
values and  
succeed in life  
by planning  
carefully and  
living fully in the  
present. If we  
now enjoy daily  
the wonderful

experiences of  
extended and  
joint families,  
and we know  
how to protect  
and keep our  
culture and  
religion alive  
and prosperous,

it is all thanks to  
our satguru."

A Sampling of  
Sutras on  
Family Life

# Guiding and Nurturing Children

## Those who live with Siva

personally  
guide their  
children's  
spiritual and  
secular  
education.  
They teach  
and model



respect, share  
what happens  
each day,  
have fun  
together and  
shower love  
and hugs upon  
them. Aum.

(14)

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# Restraint With Other Women

Siva's married  
men, in the  
workplace and  
in the world,  
hold a  
courteous  
aloofness  
toward all

women,  
whether  
young, older,  
single,  
married,  
divorced or  
widowed. They  
reserve their

affections for  
wife and  
family. Aum.  
(87)

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# Holding a Daily Vigil

Worshipers of  
Siva perform a  
one-hour daily

vigil, ideally  
before sunrise,  
in a clean,  
quiet place,  
after bathing  
and donning  
fresh clothing  
and holy ash.

This vigil is  
optional on  
weekends and  
when traveling  
or ill. Aum.  
(21)



# The Purpose of Marriage

Siva's  
followers look  
upon their

marriage as a  
spiritual  
partnership for  
the purpose of  
uplifting each  
other and  
bringing  
through higher

souls. It is a  
union not only  
of a man and  
woman, but of  
two entire  
families. Aum.  
(116)

# The Wife's Dharma

Each of Siva's  
married  
women

followers  
strives to fulfill  
female  
dharma,  
perpetuating  
the race,  
family and the  
faith through

remaining in  
the home to  
nurture, guide  
and  
strengthen her  
dear husband  
and children.  
Aum. (132)

# Teaching and Modeling Good Conduct

Siva's  
followers love

their children,  
govern them  
in a kind but  
firm way and  
model the five  
family  
practices:  
proper



conduct, home  
worship,  
religious  
discussion,  
continuous  
self-study and  
following a  
preceptor.

# Aum. (139)