Profile
Category : August 1987
Published by Anonymous on Aug. 01, 1987

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West Berlin Mission, Germany

Where: West Berlin, a State of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), though located in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). 480 sq. km., Population (1970) 2,100,000, including 20,000 Sri Lanka Tamil refugees in West Germany, about 1000 in West Berlin.

Name: Saiva Siddhanta Church West Berlin Mission.

When: Begun June 26, 1986.

Movers & Shakers: Adiyar S. Sivagnanasuntharam, P. Chelvaraja, Mrs. Puvanesam Veerakathiar.

Major Activities: Saiva Dharma Shastra Classes, children's classes, Tirukkural contests, contact with other Church members in Europe and the United Kingdom.

The West Berlin Mission serves as a communication hub for Church members spread all over Europe, as well as long-time devotees of Gurudeva, such as Amala Buschman of Germany, and temporary residents, such as Surya Sundaram of California, USA, who is serving in the United States Air Force and stationed in West Germany for two years. All Church members in Europe are considered members of this Mission and receive the Church mailings through them.

This is a small mission, but they are exerting their efforts in the right direction by keeping the children in touch with Saivism. Mrs. Veerakathiar's children's classes and the Tirukkural memorizing contests are central to this goal. Recently they celebrated Yogaswami's Maha Samadhi day.

The local members are all Sri Lanka refugees. A common problem within the Mission is the separation of families. Adiyar Sivagnanasuntharam's wife and small child are in Madras; they are unable to see each other.

Every Mission should have at least one Adiyar or "missionary" who is chosen for his good example and practice of the Saivite teachings. He is usually selected and approved by the Mission itself and is Gurudeva's "assistant pastor" for the Mission, it is the responsibility of the Adiyar to give weekly talks at the Mission meetings and to represent the Mission to the public when a speaker is required. In public the Adiyars preach the doctrine of Hindu Solidarity.

West Berlin Mission's Adiyar, Sivagnanasuntharam, gave a talk at a local Indian organization on "Reincarnation, Karma and Vegetarianism." The Mission children went along and delighted the audience with their bhajan.

This Mission is in unique circumstances. The city itself, West Berlin, is one-half of the awkward World War II division which split Germany and its capital, Berlin, into two occupied territories. Though considered one of the most likely flash points for another World War, it is a peaceful haven for these Mission members compared to the Jaffna war-zone.

The 1,000 Sri Lanka refugees in Berlin are officially classed as "Asylum Seekers." They are in the midst of constant, though half-hearted, attempts by the government to send them back to Sri Lanka. Meanwhile a number of social and relief agencies such as Amnesty International and the German Red Cross are working to prevent their deportation and provide proper care. With the situation in Sri Lanka continuing to deteriorate, deportation appears unlikely.

Overall, life in West Berlin is comfortable and safe but the future is completely

uncertain and Hindu religious facilities absent. The West Berlin Mission has a good opportunity to develop a strong Saivite presence and keep the teachings of Gurudeva and Paramaguru Siva Yogaswami alive and well in yet another nation.

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