Sri Lanka Ashram Threatened
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Originally sent to Sri Lanka to restore peace, the 30,000-man Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) has now threatened to destroy one of the largest Hindu Church Ashrams in the northern area of the island. It is the Sri Subramuniya Ashram, founded in 1949 by His Holiness, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Saiva Siddhanta Church, USA, and publisher of the Hinduism Today newspaper.

Over one year ago, the ashram was forcibly seized by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ellam (LTTE) and used as a barracks and prison. They were chased out in October by the IPKF in a helicopter rocket bomb attack. Fortunately, all 30 bombs missed the building.

The attack and the threat were previously heard by Hinduism Today as rumors in the American Tamil community. The rumors were confirmed in a letter from ashram neighbor K. Sivasubramiam, whose house was destroyed by bombs. "Very often the Indian Army comes to the ashram in search of LTTE Tamil militants, but the LTTE have vacated and fled," he wrote. "Now the IPKF is threatening to demolish the ashram so the LTTE cannot return."

Saiva Siddhanta Church headquarters in Hawaii has registered protests with the American Embassy in Colombo, the Indian and Sri Lankan Embassies in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. State Department. All promised to pursue the matter. Additionally, press releases were sent to 13 Hindu watchdog organizations around the world.

The American Embassy responded immediately with a telex: "We have raised your concerns with the Indian High Commission here. They will be in touch with Indian military authorities and attempt to get specific information about the condition of the ashram. On January 8 we spoke to an Assistant Government Agent from the

Jaffna peninsula who had just arrived in Colombo. To the best of the AGA's knowledge, the ashram remains safe."

Managed by a village committee of elders, the ashram has served the community for the past twenty years by providing religious education and spoken English for some 400 children as well as numerous religious and cultural activities for adults, in particular, the Ashram distributed hundreds of thousands of rupees for the Tamil refugees of the disturbances.

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