

A STUDY OF THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS
SOCIO-RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS
IN SOUTH AFRICA /

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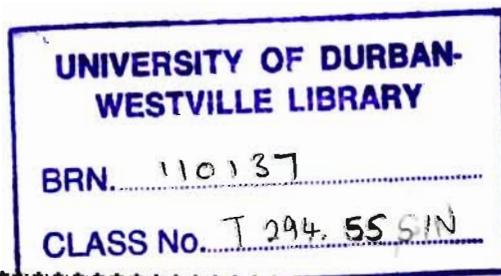
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HIS HOLINESS SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA (1887 - 1963)

Founder of the Divine Life Society



MASTER SIVANANDA

"Serve. Love. Give. Purify. Meditate. Realize"
"Be Good, Do Good"

HH SRI SWAMI SAHAJANANDA

SPIRITUAL HEAD OF THE DIVINE LIFE

SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA





Dedicated to:

HIS HOLINESS SRI SWAMI SAHAJANANDA
and the selfless sadhakas of the
Divine Life Society

ASHIRVAD, SWABHAVIKA, SHAM
AND MY PARENTS

- with Love

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE OBJECT OF STUDY : THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

After the arrival of the Indians in South Africa in the latter half of the 19th century their exposure to western society and secularism resulted in a change, to an extent, in their religious practices and social-attitudes. Confronted with his new environment the Indian sought to retain his cultural identity and religious adherence. However, this proved difficult for a variety of reasons, the foremost being the foreign western secular environment, the breakdown of the joint-family and the political and economic position of the Indian South African. The Indian community has been affected more than any other group in South Africa by the Group Areas Act. By 1970 about 37 653 Indian families had been required to move, which represented over 300 000 of the total Indian population of 624 000 at that time. Apart from these various factors the complex position of the Indian was compounded by the fact that the older South African Indian is as a rule a marginal person i.e. between the old and the new.

During the early period of Hinduism in South Africa the Hindu temple served a vital role as it became an important forum for religious expression. Religious practices which covered a wide emotional and intellectual spectrum, were in the main ritualistically orientated, emphasis was placed more on the external expression of religion than an understanding of its philosophy. From the 1940s onwards there was a shift in emphasis due to the emergence of the Neo-Hindu Movements, including the Divine Life Society. The emphasis shifts from the external expression of religion to an internal and philosophical interpretation of Hinduism.

The Divine Life Society founded by Swami Sivananda was chosen as the object of study because it is a religious movement that



is strategically important within the broader framework of contemporary Hinduism in South Africa. The Divine Life Society aims at a revival of the mind of man through its teachings. In this regard the fundamental and primary aim of the Divine Life Society as a world wide organisation is the dissemination of spiritual knowledge. To bring this knowledge is to awaken the world and to make every man and woman a selfless and dedicated worker for the upliftment of mankind. Although essentially a religious Movement, the Divine Life Society is also actively involved in establishing a better social environment. With its emphasis on the yoga of synthesis, and its personal involvement in socio-religious matters it has not alienated itself from society.

With the move of religious expression to a more philosophic understanding of religion the Divine Life Society, through the teachings of Swami Sivananda who emphasised the ancient ideals of Hinduism, attempts to modernise religious thought as well as deepen and strengthen the religious life of the Hindu in South Africa. In this regard the writer is of the view that the Divine Life Society is an expression of religious revitalization, a movement which aims to renew, revive, revitalize Hindu religion, customs, practices and society through preservation and synthesis.

1.2 AIM OF STUDY

The basic aim involved in this socio-religious study of the Divine Life Society in South Africa is as follows:

1. To determine the subordinate meaning system of the Society and how this is manifested in the structure and functioning of the Society.
2. To establish the types of persons attracted to the Society, the patterns of adherence of the devotees, their modes of worship, socio-religious and religio-cultural attitudes and activities, values, norms and religious socialization.

3. To ascertain what impact the Society has had in the religious and social spheres in South Africa.
4. To contribute to a wider understanding of religious movements in general and Hinduism in South Africa in particular.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The method of research employed in this study is that which JS Kruger (1982 : 50) describes as inside (participant) understanding together with theoretical understanding, ie. religio-scientific understanding in the full sense. This approach involves several methods of research each complementing the other. Since no single method of approach is known to be totally adequate, a combination of methods was employed thus attempting to overcome the shortfalls of any one method. The four methods of research used were:

1. Personal interviews;
2. Questionnaires;
3. Personal participation; and
4. The use of printed works.

The writer, who is a Hindu and has been involved in the teaching of Hinduism for several years, was already well acquainted with the field of study. Furthermore, as a result of prior contact with the Divine Life Society the writer's bona fides was already established at the commencement of this study.

In order to obtain an inside understanding of the Society, the writer adopted the role of participant-observer in the activities of the Divine Life Society. The writer tried to maintain enough distance in her observation to comment objectively on the Society. Complete freedom from any bias, indeed complete objectivity, in the study of religion is neither possible, nor desirable. What is possible and highly desirable is a working balance of appreciative and critical attitudes. The need to be

sensitive to the religious experiences of others by trying to identify with them must be balanced by times of detachment when a student has to pull back from what has captivated them and adopt an attitude of critical detachment.

Although the writer adopted the role of participant-observer, the devotees of the Divine Life Society regarded the writer as a member of the Society. This proved beneficial especially when interviewing devotees, since the writer had established a relationship of trust and friendship with the Spiritual Head as well as the devotees. Those interviewed did so freely and without any restraint or suspicion regarding the motives of the writer. The devotees were always willing to converse with the writer and no question was regarded as offensive. Despite the busy schedule of the Spiritual Head of the Society, Swami Sahajananda, the writer was always accommodated by him. The numerous interviews with the Spiritual Head provided the writer with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Movement.

The writer also often attended the weekly satsang of the Society as well as the numerous festivals and special gatherings eg. Children's Sports Day, Yoga Camp and the release of new publications. The writer also attended gatherings related to the social work of the Society such as the Christmas Hamper Distribution and Cultural show in Kwa Zulu. These visits contributed to an appreciative understanding of the Society as a whole, and the valuable role it is playing in the area of race relations and social work.

The writer made use of an extensive questionnaire to establish the socio-religious and socio-cultural attitudes and patterns of adherence of the devotees. With the assistance of the ashramites, the writer conducted 70 case-studies on the random sample method.

These studies were conducted at the Divine Life Society Ashram at Reservoir Hills as well as during Yoga Camps and special gatherings of devotees.

In addition to the seventy case studies the writer conducted numerous casual interviews with devotees of the Society. While information gathered from the questionnaire proved very important and useful it is an accepted fact that the questionnaire type interview has its limitations. In order to overcome the 'restraints' posed by a questionnaire the writer conducted casual interviews, and it was found that during such interviews answers were more spontaneous than those furnished in the questionnaires.

The writer also conducted several interviews with the senior devotees of the Society as well as members of the Board of Management.

Use was made of a tape-recorder to record interviews, and speeches as well as lectures delivered at the Ashram and at special gatherings.

In order to understand the belief system of the Society the writer made an extensive study of the writings of Swami Sivananda. Relevant books and documents relating to the historical, sociological, philosophical and theological aspects of the Society were also consulted and analysed.

The general approach adopted by the writer was to study the Movement as a meaningful expression of religious experience, and, within the limits of the data available and the capacity for dealing with it, to see religion as a fundamental dimension of human existence.

1.4 PROBLEMS OF STUDY

While the writer did not experience many problems relating to the study perhaps the most pressing problem was the lack of availability of written material on Hinduism in South Africa. Although in recent years research has been undertaken on Hinduism in South Africa not much information is available on the early religious practices of South African Hindus. There

is tremendous scope for both general and specific studies relating to Hinduism in South Africa.

The present study dealing specifically with the Divine Life Society in South Africa is the first comprehensive study of its nature.

The lack of availability of books on Swami Sivananda in the local libraries also hindered the study. However, this problem was overcome when the writer was accorded free access to the Divine Life Society's library which houses one of the finest collections of books on Hinduism in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2STATE OF INDIA DURING THE 19th CENTURY2.1 ABSTRACT

The history of religions is punctuated by the appearance of new sects, religions or denominations in times of transition, stress, social and religious decay. Under conditions of rapid social change, acculturation or intensive cultural contact, the traditional institutional structures of a society tends to break down. These new sects are an expression of dissatisfaction of, and discontent with, the decaying and declining trends in religious and cultural values in a given society, and a desire for revival, regeneration and restoration, that is, a need for revitalization.

"Revitalization" is a process through which classical religions and cultures are renewed, reorganised and renovated. Revitalization phenomena are world-wide. The Cargo Cults in MelanAsia, Rastafarians in Jamaica and the Kimbanguist Movement in Africa are a few examples. Society reveals a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of their members to vitalize their stagnant religion and culture by trying to recapture their past vigour and vitality through preservation and synthesis (Gyan 1980 : 1).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century Hindu Society has felt an unprecedented urge for religious revival and renewal giving rise to various forms of religious sects, cults or movements. Many new Hindu sects arose in India which are both a response and accommodation to the British Raj and an attempt was made to renew, revive, revitalize Hindu religion, customs, practices and society.

The nineteenth century saw the birth of renascent Hinduism, the product of culture contact, westernisation and acculturation.

Several religious movements emerged in that period, whose leaders "questioned, reviewed, renewed, reformed their beliefs, customs, practices, institutions and values of traditional Hinduism, giving rise to a new form of Hinduism that has been referred to as neo-Hinduism". (Gyan 1980 : 2)

The study therefore has been undertaken with the view of throwing new descriptive and interpretive light upon one of the contemporary Hindu expressions, the Divine Life Society in South Africa, within the context of the Hindu tradition out of which it originated and within which it continues to operate.

2.2 INDIA DURING THE 19th CENTURY

Politically, the modern period of India's history may be said to begin at about 1800. The history of the religion of the Hindus does not closely follow the political history of India. The political history is generally divided into three periods - the Hindu, the Muslim, and the British. In the long history of Hinduism spanning about 50 centuries (\pm 3000 BC) to the present day, the Muslim rule of India dominated for less than six centuries, (A D 1200 to 1750) with large pockets of resistance in the country throughout the time, and the British rule which operated for about a century and a half (1800 to 1947). Therefore, the division of the history of Hinduism into convenient periods must be guided more by the internal developments in the religion itself than by the external changes in the political fortunes of the Indian people (Sarma 1967 : 3).

The history of Hinduism is classified into three broad periods viz. the ancient (\pm 2000 BC - 10th Century), the mediaeval (11th Century - 18th Century) and the modern (1800 onwards). One of the characteristics of ancient Hindu thought is its indifference to history; they care more for the truth of experience than for the circumstances that gave it birth. One concedes therefore that all facts of ancient Indian History are

extremely uncertain, and that these ages are not strictly successive but overlap one another considerably. The period extending from about 2000 BC to 560 BC is generally called the Vedic period. Modern scholars divide it into:

1. the Age of the Mantras
2. Age of the Brahmanas
3. the Age of the Upanishads

during which the germinal or essential ideas in Hinduism have been formulated. The ancient period ends with the establishment of Sankaras system of Advaita philosophy and the triumphs of Hinduism over Buddhism and Jainism in the 9th century. The mediaeval period of India's history may be said to begin with the 11th century and end about the middle of the eighteenth. Its characteristics is the consolidation of Bhakti (devotion) in the theistic systems of thought of Ramanuja and Madhva, who aimed to give Bhakti a philosophical basis, and the later bhakti movements associated with the names of Ramananda, Kabir, Tulsidas, Tukaram, Sri Caitanya, Mirabai etc. The establishment of British power in Bengal in the mid 18th century marks the beginning of the Modern period in Indian History. The 19th century which witnessed the beginning of the freedom movements and the foundation of the Indian National Congress (1885) is characterized as the period of the Reform Movements in India which lead eventually to the great modern Renaissance of Hinduism (Sarma 1967 : 50-55).

The political unity of India, although never attained perfectly was always the ideal of the people throughout the centuries. The conception of the universal sovereign runs through Sanskrit literature and is emphasized in a number of inscriptions. Of the four periods which distinguish themselves as highwater marks of Indian civilization, neither the Mauryan Empire which reached its zenith under Asoka (232-173 BC) nor the Gupta Dynasty (320-450 AD) described as the Golden Age



of Hinduism, when literature, art, science and religion flourished in a degree beyond the ordinary, or the Mughal empire which reached its peak under Akbar (1555-1605 AD) attained total political unity of all India. It was only with the establishment of British rule in India in the 19th century that such political union became a reality (Sooklal 1983 : 117).

The condition of India in the 18th century was perhaps the unhappiest in the chequered history of the country. Hinduism suffered several setbacks as a result of the foreign invasions of India, namely the Huns, Sakas and more recently the Muslim invasions from the 12th century to the 16th century. They suffered on account of wars, raids, expeditions and of outbursts of religious fanaticism on the part of the conquerors, which was also accompanied by destruction of temples, monasteries and conversions. When a semblance of peace returned, the people pursued their old avocations, listened to their own teachers and clung to their old ideals. Hinduism, far from liberalising itself under the impact of Islam, became stricter in its observations of rituals and caste rules. The people became more conservative in their customs and manners as a result of this new menace to their social structure. The establishment of Muslim power in India broke up the unity of the cultural life of the country. Innumerable foreign invaders had come into India and established kingdoms but since they had no definite religion or culture of their own, they were easily assimilated and Hinduized. Even the various schools of Buddhism and Jainism were looked upon as sects of Hinduism since they shared ethical ideals, forms of worship and moulds of thought. The Muslim invaders came with a powerful and militant world religion which was alien in character and incapable of being assimilated. The encounter between Islam and Hinduism, became, after a short time, a problem of co-existence, with mutual toleration rather than the domination of one by the other. From the 13th century onwards, the life of India flows in two distinct currents, which run side by side and touch each other at a few points

but do not unite to form a single stream. (Sarma 1967 : 41-43).

During the 1740's the developments inaugurated by the British were far in the future. India was not yet aware that an age was coming to an end. In general, the economic life of India was stagnant or in decline. There was little productive expenditure because the surplus revenue in the country was absorbed by the cost of military operations. The general standard of life was falling and the cultural life of the country shared in the general malaise. The promotion of culture depended largely upon patronage and great men were too occupied with power politics and the problems of survival to have much time or means to encourage the arts. In intellectual and religious life the same conditions prevailed. No new philosophic systems or religious cults eg. bhakti movements appeared in Hinduism. Social customs such as purdah, suttee, infanticide which tended to decline in settled periods were increasingly in evidence. In India, in all departments of life there was a lack of purpose and vigour of enterprise and hope. "In Chinese phrase the signs were many that for the Mughuls in India the Mandate of Heaven was exhausted". (Smith 1967 : 454).

The coming of the Europeans to India was an event of great importance in the history of India as it ultimately resulted in the conquest of the country by the British. The Portuguese were the first European traders who settled on the soil of India during the 15th century. The Dutch, who followed the Portuguese also entered India primarily for the purpose of trade. Although initially their objective was trade and not any territorial domination or political power, this situation changed as time went on. But neither the Dutch nor the Portuguese were destined to play an important role in Indian politics in the critical days following the dissolution of the failure of the Mughul Empire. The primary reason for the failure of the Portuguese to make headway in India was because the

Portuguese attempted to combine conversion with conquest in India. As the Governor of Goa said in 1545 "they came to India with a crucifix in one hand and a sword in the other" (Majumdar 1979 : 290). The Dutch, though not to the same extent, were also actuated by missionary zeal.

During the first half of the 18th century only two of the European powers became prominent factors in Indian politics, the English and the French. Although originally they were mere trading companies, circumstances compelled them to engage in political activity and increase their military strategies. However, it was the British and not the French who were to shape the destiny of India.

The Modern period of India's history may be said to begin with the establishment of British power in Bengal in 1757 as a result of the Battle of Plassey. It was this battle, the culmination of an obstinate campaign, which determined the British mastery of Bengal. Plassey marked the beginning of the British expansion in Bengal. British supremacy was established over the whole of India after the subjugation of the Marathas and Sikhs and the Government was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown. After the Great Indian Revolt in 1857/8 peace was restored and with it gradually came a uniform system of administration, law and coinage. Order was restored, commerce was possible, the revenue was punctually collected and the courts functioned regularly. India realised once more the political unity which she had lost for many centuries (Majumdar 1978 : 615-667).

The British rule in India which lasted for about a century and a half was quite unlike the Muslim conquest. The British were the first foreign people to rule over India. While the Muslim rulers, including the Mughals, had owed allegiance to an alien creed, they had not been foreigners in the capacity of rulers in the country. They made India their home when

they became rulers there. This had also been the case with earlier invading tribes who had not only settled in India but also allowed themselves to be absorbed and assimilated in the religious field. The Muslim conquerors did not enjoy any definite superiority over the native Indians either in science and technology or in intellect and culture. Islam was a factor in the revival or resurgence of theistic devotional creeds within Hinduism, but it left unaffected other departments of the intellectual culture of the Hindus. The British came to India primarily to trade and went into politics to preserve their trade. They eschewed religion. The British attack was a glancing blow which left the vital centres of Indian life untouched. The English on whom fell the mantle of the Mughuls, at the beginning adopted a policy of religious toleration and social non-interference towards the people of India.

The British were the harbingers of the West; they were the vehicles of western influence in India, for through them new thoughts, new ideas and new ways of life came into the country. The British provided the bridge for India to pass from the medieval world of the Mughuls to the new age of science and humanism. "But man cannot live by peace alone any more than solely by bread. This 'peace' was accompanied by no cultural revival." (Smith 1967 : 575-576).

At the dawn of the 19th century India had scarcely known peace for 600 years. Her civilization and culture had been at the lowest ebb for over a hundred years. After the bhakti movement exhausted itself about the middle of the 18th century nothing noteworthy was produced in Hindu religion. The social and cultural state of the country declined with its political fortunes. Suttee, or widow burning, increased in vogue as the hand of restraining authority grew weak. Astrology, always a popular adjunct of Indian life, rose to the status of a directing force. In this dark period intellectual and cultural activities inevitably came to a standstill. Learning

was marked by a steady decline, education scarcely existed. Men of learning depended upon princely patronage and this patronage was now monopolized by soldiers and diplomatists. Architecture, like learning, could not thrive without patrons. Temples and mosques gave place to forts. Only in Oudh was the building tradition maintained, and here confusion of styles and elaboration of repetitive detail betrayed lack of inspiration. Painting, in its Mughul and Rajput forms suffered a similar eclipse and by the 19th century only survived as a living school in the foothills of the Punjab. All indigenous art languished and died owing to lack of patronage and even of appreciation and many old works of art disappeared owing to the ignorance and carelessness of the people and the rapacity of foreigners who carried them away. There was little sign during these years of new thought or of creative religious achievement. Living religion was to be met only in the quietest places. Here and behind the purdah of many devout homes much true devotion lived on, but it had nothing to offer to the turbulence of the times save abstraction and retreat. The inrush of a totally different civilization put an end to all creative work for a time and an uncritical admiration for all things western took possession of the mind of the educated classes coupled with a contempt for things of native origin. (Smith 1967 : 576-581).

For a time Hindus were thrown off their balance and began to ape English ways of life, but this stage did not last long. Already there were new forces working silently towards a great renaissance which came into full vigour in the early years of the 19th century. An important factor was the spread of English education which broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into contact with western science, literature, history, European political and social institutions, customs and manners which contributed to a widened outlook. The result of this was a great mental expansion similar to that which the European nations experienced

at the time of the revival of classical learning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Indian intelligentsia became gradually acquainted with the rich intellectual culture of the European people. This acquaintance, together with the fact of the growing political power and prestige of the Western nations, made them highly sensitive to Western opinion and Western assessment of Indian thought and culture. In the light of this new knowledge many customs in Hindu society which has encrusted their religion eg. suttee, infanticide, purdah, devotion, the caste system and prohibition of foreign travel, some of which had crept into Hindu society under the impact of centuries of Muslim rule, began to lose their tyrannical hold on the minds of the Hindus. (Sarma 1967 : 60-61)

Another factor responsible for the resurgence of Hindu religion and philosophy was the fierce attacks of the early Christian missions on Hinduism and Hindu Society. The zealous missionaries who were critical of the social and religious institutions of India were also educators. They opened schools and colleges where new secular knowledge was imparted; they were also crusaders, for they taught Christianity as the only true religion. These two forces acting in combination produced in the minds of the educated classes for a time either a thorough going scepticism or a partial leaning towards Christianity, but ultimately they served only to raise Hinduism from its sleep. The revived faith at first was cautious and timid and inclined to compromise but as it gained momentum it took the offensive (eg. Arya Samaj) and asserted its right to live as one of the civilizing influences of mankind.

To understand the new Indian awareness of their indigenous ancient civilization it is fitting to mention the labour of Orientalists like Sir William Jones, Sir Charles Wilkins, Colebrooke, Wilson, Muir, Monier Williams and Max Muller who revealed the treasures of Indian wisdom to the educated classes in Europe and India through their translation of Sanskrit texts.

The Orientalists in their study of Indology pursued two objectives, Sanskrit being the grand repository of the religion, philosophy and history of the Hindus, they turned first to the cultivation of Sanskrit studies and translation of great Sanskrit works, secondly they undertook to reconstruct the History of the Hindus. This growing interest in Oriental learning gave birth to the Asiatic Society, a great landmark in the history of Indian culture. (Sarma 1967 : 62-63).

As a result partly of these external forces but largely because of the inherent vitality of India's long spiritual tradition, there arose in the period a number of reformers, teachers, saints and scholars who have purified Hinduism by denouncing some of its later accretions, separated its essentials from its non-essentials, confirmed its ancient truths by their own experience and have even carried its message to Europe and America.

These forces were the Indian response to western ideas and innovations. Prior to 1818 there had been little response to the western challenge other than military. It was in Bengal that the larger aspects of the western spirit first became known to the Indian mind, the widespread knowledge of English provided an ideological bridge. The process had been set in motion and as it developed it determined the great transformation which is Modern India today. This organic development from within owed its origin to the group of Bengalis of whom Ram Mohun Roy was the leading figure. During the second and third decades of the century they were working out the first Indian response to western civilization as a whole. At the very time that Lord Hastings was completing the central edifice of British power in India, Ram Mohun Roy was tracing the lines of the first synthesis between East and West in India which was to transform that power by a process of internal development and finally peacefully to replace it. (Smith 1967 : 581).

The present Renaissance is a comprehensive one effecting almost all departments of national life. Religion, literature, art, science, education, politics and social arrangements have been characterized by new developments. In all these spheres have arisen great men, viz. Ram Mohun Roy, Swami Dayananda Sarasvathi, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi, Tagore etc. who would be an ornament to any progressive nation in the world.

In the following chapter we will give a brief account of the religious developments by describing the work of the leaders who have made this renaissance one of the glorious movements in the history of Hinduism.

CHAPTER 3
NEO-HINDUISM

3.1 RENASCENT HINDUISM

This chapter will mainly be concerned with the history of ideas that constituted the foundation of the New Hindu Movement, the Hindu Revival of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the 20th.

From about 1870 a great change began to make itself manifest in the Hindu spirit in India. During this period there arose many religious movements and organisations, the three most prominent being the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission which have subsequently been classified as the "Neo-Hindu" movements, incarnating this spirit of change. The new Hindu Movement was in essence a movement aiming at the resurgence of the whole of Hindu society and as such its primary concern was its spiritual awakening. This they sought to achieve by purifying their own religion by means of ideas derived from itself. The New Hindu spirit was a pervasive one; it was potent enough to outstrip the bounds of religion properly so called and to irradiate at once the fields of contemporary literature, the Fine Arts, Music, History, Education and Politics. The movements itself had a large scope - it was in fact the embodiment of a vision of the New India as it could be made (Nath 1981 : 7).

3.2 BRAHMO-SAMAJ

The herald of the coming change was Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833), the founder of the Brahma-Samaj who was the pioneer of all living advance, religious, social and educational in the Hindu community during the 19th century. He had a liberal education with a mastery over Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and English. Ram Mohun had been a great admirer of the ethical teachings of Christianity and of Jesus Christ, but the activities of the

missionaries produced a reaction in him turning him into an apologist and defender of Hinduism. Ram Mohun Roy did not apply his genius and his labour merely to the reform of Hindu society; he was equally concerned to bring about changes in the educational system and effect a purification of the Hindu religion as practised at his time. He took pains to show that he was not going against the best traditions of the country, but only brushing away some of the impurities that had gathered round them in the days of decadence. This purification was necessary for stemming the tide of the growing popularity of Christianity and large scale conversions to it (Farquhar 1977 : 29).

It was in the field of politics, public administration and education rather than in that of social reform and religion that he showed the remarkable powers of his mind. In the sphere of education Ram Mohun Roy played an important role in advocating for scientific education on western lines as against education on ancient lines. He was instrumental in forming the scheme of the Hindu College which was opened in Calcutta in 1819.

In the history of social reform in India Ram Mohun Roy's name will ever be remembered in connection with the abolition of suttee. In his agitation against suttee he examined all the Smriti texts on the subject and pointed out that not all authorities agreed in prescribing the rite and that even those jurists who recommended it laid down that it should be free and voluntary. His efforts proved fruitful for the practice of suttee was prohibited by law as from 1829. With regard to polygamy which was prevalent in his days Ram Mohun Roy showed on the authority of Hindu law-givers like Yajnavalkya that it was contrary to Hindu law, as it was only under certain specific circumstances like barrenness or incurable sickness that a Hindu was permitted to take a second wife while the first was living. (Sarma 1967 : 64)

As a religious reformer he stated that he wished to restore Hinduism to its original purity. Accordingly he took his stand on the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras as authoritative sources of Hinduism. He founded the Brahma Samaj on what he considered to be the theism of these scriptures. He condemned idol worship in strong terms stating that the Vedas did not teach idolatry although the Hindu tradition permitted idol worship to those who were incapable of raising their minds to the contemplation of the one invisible God.

Ram Mohun Roy was a practical statesman who wanted to reform some of the crying abuses of Hindu society and religion of his day. He seems to have been more anxious about the social and practical aspects of religions than about its purely spiritual aspects. He was, no doubt, a great reformer who fearlessly advocated the necessary changes which the circumstance of his age demanded. But he was also a great conservative who remained faithful to the best traditions of his country. (Devraja 1975 : 101).

The "second period" of the Brahma Samaj begins with the entry of Debendranath Tagore into the Samaj as its leader after the death of Ram Mohun Roy. The history of the Samaj during the ascendancy of this great saint shows most clearly how even individual saintliness cannot save a religious organisation which cuts itself adrift from its meanings of spiritual tradition and authority. Tagore lived a life of constant prayer and worship of God and the direct communion of the human soul with the Supreme Spirit was the most salient point in his teachings. Tagore followed Ram Mohan Roy in his belief that original Hinduism was a pure spiritual theism and shared in his enthusiasm for the Upanishads. He was responsible for that spirit of rationalism which grew apace among his followers and widened the gulf between Hinduism and Brahmoism. He realised that the Samaj needed organisation. Thus far it had been only a weekly meeting and exercised

little influence on the private life of those who attended. He accordingly started a monthly journal called the Tattvabodhini Patrika for spreading the principles of the Samaj. He also opened a school for training Brahma teachers and missionaries. He drew up what is known as the Brahma Covenant consisting of a list of vows to be taken by all those who wished to join the Samaj. It was agreed that the Vedas, the Upanishads and other ancient writings were not to be accepted as infallible guides; reason and conscience were to be the supreme authority and the teachings of the scriptures were to be accepted only in so far as they harmonised with the "light within man". Though the Vedic authority was thus rejected and a purely subjective authority known as intuition was set up in its place, Tagore was anxious to press as many of the ancient Hindu texts as possible into the service of the Brahma Samaj. He compiled a series of extracts from Hindu literature, known as Brahma Dharma, the bulk of them being from the Upanishads for use in public worship and private devotion. (Farquhar 1977 : 40-41).

Among the many young men who flocked to the meetings of the Brahma Samaj at this time was Keshub Chandra Sen who was destined to be the next leader of the Samaj. He joined the Samaj in 1857 aged 19 years and had a great influence on Tagore initially. However, all the change and reforms of Keshub's activities proved too much for the older members of the Samaj and Tagore himself was very much afraid that spiritual religion would be sacrificed to the new passion for social reform. To him the latter was of little consequence as compared with the former. He believed that however evil caste might be members of the Samaj ought not to be compelled to give it up. In spite of all his rationalism Tagore was a conservative Hindu. He felt that reforms in Hindu society should be introduced slowly and cautiously whereas Keshub, an ardent admirer of Christ, wanted the complete reform of Hindu society immediately. Thus a rupture between the two

was imminent and this took place in 1866 when Keshub founded a separate Samaj known as the Brahmo-Samaj of India (Devraja 1975 : 102).

After seceding from Tagore's society, Keshub and his followers became more Christian in their beliefs and outlook. His Samaj had no constitution of a kind, no rules and no official head. The cosmopolitan character of the new Samaj was made manifest in the collection of texts known as Shloka Sanghara, prepared for use in its services. It included passages from the scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Chinese religion. Later Keshub began working towards bringing all the religions of the world under his banner and make himself the prophet of a universal religion. He also declared that his Samaj should no longer be called the Brahmo Samaj of India but the Church of New Dispensation and it should be a consummation of all the religions of the world. His religion was a sort of conglomerate of Brahmo rationalism, Vaishnava emotionalism, Christian supernaturalism and Vedantic mysticism. However Keshub did not possess the genius to fuse them all into a consistent whole and soon after his death his church broke up into fragments (Farquhar 1977 : 43).

Unlike the subsequent Neo-Hindu movements like the Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission which had an influence throughout India the Brahmo Samaj was confined mainly to Bengal. Despite the fact that the Brahmo Samaj contributed substantially in the sphere of education, social and religious reform it failed to make an impact in Hindu society. By rejecting some of the primary doctrines of Hinduism such as karma and rebirth the Brahmo Samaj in its two principal forms, the Adi Brahmo Samaj led by Debendranath Tagore and the Brahmo Samaj of India led by Keshub Chandra Sen alienated itself from the parent Hindu society and so failed to revitalize Hindu religion. Instead it created a gulf between

the old and the new society. Furthermore, the influence of the Samaj remained largely confined to a small number of intellectuals and did not reach the masses, unlike the Ramakrishna movement which laid emphasis on taking Vedanta out of books and caves and broadcasting it among all people and teaching them to apply its truths to all departments of life (Devraja 1975 : 103).

Another weakness of the Brahmo Samaj was its absence of a standard doctrine. Unlike the Arya Samaj which had the Vedas as its source and authority the Brahmo Samaj had no religious canon which it accepts as authority.

This was one of the primary causes for the many splits in the Samaj, for each leader was free to impose his own principles according to his temperament to govern the Samaj.

Furthermore the Brahmo Samaj tried to initiate changes in Indian society at too fast a rate. They tried to eradicate traditional practices and rituals which had been embedded in Hindu society for centuries within a short space of time. The leaders of the Samaj while advocating changes were themselves reluctant to give up some of these practices which they saw as unjust.

Like Keshub Chandra Sen, Sri Ramakrishna also advocated a Universal Religion. However, unlike Keshub who tried to unite all the religions by forming one Universal Religion Sri Ramakrishna preached the harmony of religions, achieved by the firm adherence to one's own religion as well as tolerance and respect for other religions.

Though the Brahmo Samaj is almost a spent force now, it has rendered useful service to Hinduism in three ways. It popularised social reform, it prevented conversions to Christianity by creating a half-way house and it roused the

orthodox Hindus to organise themselves and work for a revival of their religion, rather weakly at first, but with greater discrimination and knowledge afterwards (Sarma 1967 : 80).

3.3 ARYA SAMAJ

The second of the major Neo-Hindu movements of this period was the Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayananda in 1875. Like many great religious leaders in India, Swami Dayananda was a sannyasin and a great Sanskrit scholar. He took his stand on the infallible authority of the Veda, believed in the doctrine of karma and rebirth and stressed the old ideals of brahmacharya and sannyasa. Far from borrowing any forms of worship from alien religions, he was as outspoken against Islam and Christianity as he was against what he considered the corruption of the pure Aryan faith in his own country. As he knew no English, his inspiration was derived entirely from indigenous sources. Moreover his appeal was addressed not to the educated few like that of the Brahmo Samaj but to the people at large (Devraja 1975 : 102).

Swami Dayananda was concerned not only with religious reform, but the sorry state of the country, social reform and organisation. He consistently sought to recall the Hindus to what he conceived to be the ancient faith. He was very concerned with the rapid inroads being made into Hinduism by Islam and Christianity and spoke out strongly against these religions, condemning their missionary activities amongst the Hindu masses.

In 1875 Swami Dayanand Saraswati published his work the "Satyarth Prakash" which unfolded and interpreted the age old wisdom of India contained in the Vedas. A brief summary of his teachings and beliefs may be analysed under the following (Sarma 1967 : 90-93):

1. His Authorities

Swami Dayananda believed that the four Vedas are the word of God. They are an authority unto themselves and are free from error. According to him, the words Puranas, Itihasas, Kalpas, and Gathas mean only Brahmanas written by great Rishis. The Vedas contain all religious truth for they constitute the eternal utterances of God. There is no polytheism in the Vedas; the many divine names which occur in them are all attributes of the one true God. The Brahmanas, the 6 Vedangas, the 6 Upangas and 4 Upavedas are of a dependent nature and are authoritative only in so far as they conform to the teachings of the Vedas.

2. His Philosophy

There is one God only, He who is called Brahman or the Paramatman, the Supreme Spirit who permeates the whole universe; who is a personification of Sat-chit-ananda, who is omniscient, formless, all pervading, unborn, infinite, almighty, just and merciful.

The immortal, eternal entity which is endowed with attraction and repulsion, with consciousness and feelings of pleasure and pain and whose capacity for knowledge is limited is called the soul.

God, the soul, and matter, Prakriti, are beginningless, as in the Yoga system of philosophy. Their attributes, characteristics and nature are eternal.) God and the soul are two distinct entities by virtue of their being different in nature and of their being possessed of dissimilar attributes and characteristics. They are, however, inseparable from each other, being related to each other as the pervader and the pervaded. Prakriti is the material cause of the universe. The purpose of

creation is the essential and natural exercise of the creative energy of the Deity. Ignorance, which is the source of sin causes the soul to be in bondage, obscures its intellectual faculties and produces pain and suffering. Salvation consists of the emancipation of the soul from pain and suffering. The Arya Samajist believes that no individual is God, nor can he become God. Man's identity is not lost in God even after release from transmigration.

3. Dharma is the practice of equitable justice together with that of truthfulness in word, deed and thought. The varna and ashrama (class and order) of an individual should be determined by his merits.
4. The means of salvation are the worship of God, the performance of righteous deeds, the acquisition of true knowledge by the practice of brahmacharya, the society of the learned and purity of thought.
5. Samskaras are those rites which contribute to the physical, mental and spiritual improvement of man. From conception to cremation, there are sixteen Samskaras and their due and proper observance is obligatory to all. Agnihotra (fire-offering), an important ritual in the Arya Samaj, is commendable because it contributes to the purification of air and vegetables and directly promotes the well-being of all sentient creatures. The performance of Yajna (Sacrifice) and the resort to Tirthas (sacred places) are lifted from the realm of ritual to that of morals, consisting of showing due respect to the wise and learned, the practise of truthfulness in speech, the acquisition of true knowledge and in the cultivation of the society of the wise.

It was in accordance with these articles of faith that the creed of the Arya Samaj was drawn up in Bombay in 1875. However in 1877 it was revised and reduced to 10 principles of which 8 are general moral principles. The remaining two assert the monotheistic faith of the Samaj and the infallibility of the Vedas.

Dr Griswold states that Dayananda Sarasvathi became fully emancipated from the authority of Brahmanism in the same way as Luther became emancipated from the authority of the church of Rome. / The watchword of Dayananda was "Back to the Vedas". He also stressed the phrase "India for the Indians" (Devraja 1975 : 102). We have the principle, both religious and political, that the religion of India as well as the sovereignty of India ought to belong to the Indian people. In order to accomplish the first end Indian religion was to be reformed and purified by a return to the Vedas. With regard to the second Dayananda seems to have taught that a return to the pure teachings of the Vedas would gradually equip the people of India for self rule and ultimately independence. Dayananda had a vision of India purged of her superstitions, filled with the fruits of science, worshipping one God, fitted for self rule, having a place in the sisterhood of nations and restored to her ancient glory. He sought to restore India to its purity as experienced during the Vedic age. All this was to be accomplished by throwing overboard the accumulated superstitions of the centuries and returning to the pure and inspired teachings of the Vedas. In this context Swami Dayananda stood with his back to the wall facing on the one hand the attacks of the Brahmanical hierarchy and on the other the assaults of Islam and Christianity.

It is regrettable that while insisting on the authority of the Vedas Dayananda has not sufficiently emphasised the importance of the Upanishads which explain and amplify what is really valuable in the Samhita. Further, he did not recognise the

authoritativeness of a scripture like the Gita, which is the essence of all the Upanishads. He could have strengthened his position greatly if he included the Gita in his canon and rightly interpreted its dynamic gospel of action so congenial to his own temper and outlook. Dayananda arbitrarily limited the extent of the Hindu religious canon and thus to a certain extent stultified himself, as the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj stultified themselves by their blatant rationalism on the right of private individual judgement at every step in going through the Hindu scriptures. But probably the very limitation of his canon added to the powerfulness of his message and served his immediate purpose of purifying Hinduism and bringing all Hindus under one banner and enabling them to ward off attacks of alien religions in India. There is no doubt that the Arya Samaj is the church militant in the bosom of Hinduism. (Devraja 1975 : 104).

Although the Arya Samaj is essentially a religious body its aims cover other aspects of life viz. social reform, education and politics. Through his teachings Swami Dayananda created an upheaval in Hindu Society and instilled a sense of self respect among the Hindus. He established Anglo-Vedic schools, colleges, gurukuls, womens tuition and sanskrit educational institutions all over the country. Subjects like Science, Mathematics, Economics and Politics were taught. He also created a feeling of patriotism in the people and made them politically conscious. He generated a new self confidence in the Hindu mind. (Sarma 1967 : 101).

However the Arya Samaj with its enthusiastic slogan "Back to the Vedas" was frankly revivalistic. In its zeal to make Hinduism appear "modern" in a narrow sense, and a worthy rival to the creeds by which it was being threatened, the Arya Samaj sacrificed all that was distinctive of Traditional Hinduism - its doctrinal variety and richness, its spirit of tolerance and synthesis, its mystic depth no less than its

intellectual metaphysical maturity.

The Arya Samaj like the Brahmo Samaj, although it succeeded in initiating certain reforms within Hinduism, did not usher in any revolutionary change in the Hindu mind. But it cannot be denied that the aggressive attitude of the Samaj gave new self - confidence to the middle class Hindus and acted as a brake on the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionaries.

In conclusion it should be noted that although the philosophy of the Arya Samaj may be inadequate, its cry of "Back to the Vedas" may do scant justice to the continuity of the Hindu spiritual tradition, and its interpretation of the Vedas may be arbitrary, there can be no denying the fact it has played and is still playing a glorious part in the regeneration of Hinduism in modern times. (Devraja 1975 : 104).

3.4 RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

While both the Brahmo and Arya Samaj were movements which preceeded the Ramakrishna Mission, their influence was very limited and their teachings did not reach out to the masses at large; with the emergence of the Ramakrishna Mission this situation was to alter drastically.

Although the Ramakrishna Mission was established by Swami Vivekananda it was his spiritual master Sri Ramakrishna who laid the foundations of the movement. Sri Ramakrishna was born in February 1836 in Kumarapukur in Bengal and from his childhood he was endowed with a deep yearning for the vision of God. After becoming the priest of the Kali temple in Dakshineswar he spent the next twelve years in search of God with an astonishing tenacity of purpose. (Rolland 1975 : 3).

Sri Ramakrishna's perseverance paid off as he was blessed with the vision of Goddess Kali and he later beheld visions of Rama, Hanuman, Krishna and Brahman. His life represents the entire orbit of Hinduism and not simply a segment of it, such as Theism or Vedism. He was a jnani as well as a bhakta. To him God was both Personal and Impersonal. Sri Ramakrishna remarked of his experience in the various paths of Hinduism:

"When I think of the Supreme Being as inactive - I call Him Brahman or Purusha, the Impersonal God - when I think of Him as active I call Him Brahma, Sakti or Prakriti, the Personal God. But the distinction between them does not mean a difference, the Personal and Impersonal are the same thing, like milk and its whiteness. It is impossible to conceive of the one without the other." (Nikhilananda 1974 : 232).

He laid equal emphasis on both the householder's life of good works and the sannyasin's life of renunciation and Yoga. He held that all religions were branches of the same tree. This was not to him a mere intellectual proposition for he demonstrated the truth of it in his own life by going through the sadhanas of Islam and Christianity as well as Hinduism. Sri Ramakrishna is a unique figure in the history of Hinduism, because, without much education or scholarship, he traversed the entire region of religious experience by his own tapas and confirmed by his own personal testimony the truths of the Hindu Scriptures. (Sarma 1967 : 127).

The life of Sri Ramakrishna is a clear illustration of the liberating power of true religion. It demonstrates the truth in India at any rate; it is not by mere social reform - though it is necessary, that social evils can be uprooted or social prejudices overcome. It is only by releasing a flood of

enlightened religious feeling that society can be cleansed and men and women made to grow to their spiritual heights. This idea was emphasized again and again by Swami Vivekananda, the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, in all schemes for the regeneration of India.

The primary teachings of Sri Ramakrishna may be summed up as follows. Firstly, he is never weary of pointing out that realization of God is the essence of religion and the end and aim of human existence. Secondly, all religions are paths that lead to the same goal. Sri Ramakrishna declares "I have practised all religions, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity and I have also followed the paths of the Hindu sects. I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps though along different paths." (Sarma 1966 : 160-161). Though both Jnana and Bhakti lead to the same goal, the latter is to be preferred especially in this iron age (Kali Yuga). Love of God should take precedence not only of knowledge, but also of good works. Social service is, no doubt, necessary and good, but it should be a part of divine service.

Sri Ramakrishna believed that every man should first get rid of his lust and greed before he thinks of helping others. Thereafter the spirit of renunciation should be cultivated. The renunciation should be internal in the case of a householder and both internal and external in the case of a sannyasin. Sri Ramakrishna disapproved of those who preached that this world is a dark, miserable place. On the contrary, he stated, that to those who cling to God in weal and woe, this world is a mansion of joy. (Devraja 1975 : 108).

It was these teachings which Swami Vivekananda, who was Ramakrishna's chief disciple and most beloved pupil, presented to the world in a manner in which it could be interpreted by all. If it be true that without Ramakrishna there would have

been no Vivekananda, it is no less true that, without Vivekananda, Ramakrishna's teachings would have remained confined to a coterie of mystics, at best giving rise to a cult of Ramakrishna rather than to a restatement of Hinduism, which to Vivekananda, was the essence of Ramakrishna's teachings.

Thus the practical religion preached by Sri Ramakrishna was made into a gigantic lever by Swami Vivekananda for lifting India out of the morass into which she had sunk.

After the death of Sri Ramakrishna in 1886, Swami Vivekananda embarked on a pilgrimage traversing the length and breadth of the motherland, understanding her problems at first hand and forming solutions for her regeneration. This pilgrimage was one of the landmarks of his life, for it was during this period that the realisation dawned upon him that the dire need of the people was food and not religion.

"Until you pacify the needs of the stomach no one will welcome your words on religion. First of all you must remove this evil of hunger and starvation and this constant thought for bare existence from those to whom you want to preach religion, otherwise lectures and such things will be of no benefit." (Devraja 1975 : 111-112).

This was the message which Swami Vivekananda was to re-iterate at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Swami Vivekananda showed both by precept and by example, that if only the ancient Vedanta were re-interpreted in the light of Sri Ramakrishna's unique experience and applied to modern life, it would enable India to solve all the problems with which she was confronted. His life is one prolonged cry for the uplift of the toiling, starving masses. His aim in India was to make the masses strong and self-reliant, realising

their importance and power. The ideal society was that which combined the spiritual culture of India and the secular culture of the West. For this purpose he established Vedanta centres in the West. He conceived the idea of bringing some of his brother disciples from India to teach in America and take some of his Western disciples with him to work in India. The Indian disciples would teach religion in America and the American disciples would teach science and organisation in the East; resulting in an interchange of ideas between East and West. (Rolland 1975 : 88-89).

While in the West Swami Vivekananda was greatly impressed by their deep concern for the welfare of their masses. He saw the painful contrast between the masses of the East and West. He was impressed with the high culture of the women of America, the freedom they enjoyed and the great respect that was accorded to them in society. Likewise he felt that the Hindus should improve the conditions of their women; hospitals and nursing homes should be built for them as well as schools and colleges for girls, and that they should treat their women with great respect in society. Vivekananda was also greatly impressed with the power of organisation he saw in the West which he urged his countrymen to adopt.

He urged that all national activities in India should be organised around the spiritual ideal, for religion formed the centre of the national life. Politics, social reform and education would be successful in India only if these pointed to a higher spiritual life. The aim of Vivekananda was to broadcast the great religious truths found in the Upanishads and the Puranas so that the masses might realise their own strength and overcome their ignorance and poverty.

One of the greatest triumphs of Vivekananda was his conversion of monks from the individualistic to the national ideal of religious life, in which public spirit and service to one's

fellowmen occupied a prominent place. The Indian monk had to come out of his narrow groove and combine the ideal of service with the ideal of renunciation and cease to think only of individual salvation. (Rolland 1975 : 146-147).

For Vivekananda "the abstract Advaita must become living - poetic in everyday life". (Sarma 1967 : 159). By his zeal and energy Swami Vivekananda made his master's ideas current in the modern world and applied them to the problems of national life in India.

The aim of the Ramakrishna Movement is to spread the gospel of Vedanta in all countries and to apply it to practical life and national problems at home in India, firstly, by elevating the masses through education, secondly, by putting an end to India's cultural isolation from the rest of the world, thirdly, by bringing Vedanta out of books and caves and broadcasting it among all people, irrespective of colour or caste, and teaching the nation to apply its truths to all departments of life.

The definitely social and humanitarian nature of the mission founded by Swami Vivekananda is obvious. Instead of opposing as do most religions, faith to reason and the stress and necessity of modern life, it was to take its place with science in the forefront. It was to co-operate with progress, material as well as spiritual and to encourage arts and industries. But its real object was the good of the masses. It also laid down that the essence of its faith was the establishment of brotherhood among the different religions since their harmony constituted the eternal religion (Rolland 1975 : 134-135).

Vivekananda was fully alive to the challenge thrown to Hinduism by Christianity and in a far more formidable way by the western enlightenment. He faced the challenge not defensively but aggressively. This is the reason why his

message strikes us as something quite different from his masters, who, of course, was never directly concerned with that challenge, and never cared to formulate an answer to it.

The mission of Sri Ramakrishna was to bring all manifestations of religion in the world to the test of the unmanifest religious experience of man and to declare their validity as well as their unity. The mission of Vivekananda was, on the other hand, to rediscover, as it were, the universal religion that lay behind the ethnic religion of the Hindus and urge them to apply it to their national life. (Sarma 1966 : 170). In this regard the Ramakrishna Mission achieved great success. It is quite evident that of all the Neo-Hindu Movements that sprang up in India during the 19th century the Ramakrishna Mission has met with the greatest success.

Both the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj failed to win support from amongst the Hindu masses. In their zeal to purify Hinduism the Brahma and Arya Samajes denounced some of the primary beliefs of Hinduism such as the concept of a Personal God in the case of the Arya Samaj and the doctrines of transmigration and rebirth in the case of the Brahma Samaj. The Hindu masses were steeped in traditional Hindu practices for centuries. The concept of a Personal God and rituals which were also denounced by the Arya Samaj were elements of their daily worship. The Ramakrishna Mission on the other hand embraced all sects of Hinduism and laid equal stress on both the personal and impersonal aspects of God. Furthermore, the rites and ceremonies were retained. Sri Ramakrishna profoundly observes that rites and ceremonies are the "husk of religion but without the husk the seed will not germinate and grow". (Sarma 1966 : 170). But rites and ceremonies, myths and legends are not religion, they are only the instruments of religion. They are the means by which religious truths are preserved and taught to the people. They are the concrete forms of abstract ideas. The Arya Samaj on the other hand

laid stress on the impersonal aspect of God only which the masses found difficulty to relate to. Further, the broad minded outlook of the Ramakrishna Mission in regard to both religious beliefs and dogmas and to modes of worship was a point in its favour and a source of its strength. The Arya Samaj on the other hand wanted to commit the Hindus to a neat and well defined set of dogmas. This was a difficult task considering the fact that Hinduism is elastic and varied in its beliefs.

The Ramakrishna Mission while realising the importance of western science and technology still represented the true Hindu spirit unlike the Brahma Samaj which incorporated elements of Christianity in its doctrines. While the Brahmos had disowned almost all the Hindu scriptures and the Arya Samaj accepted only the Vedas as being authoritative the Ramakrishna Mission stressed the importance of all the Hindu scriptures, both the Sruti and Smriti. These were some of the primary factors why the Ramakrishna Movement gained greater popularity than the other Neo-Hindu Movements in India.

How potent the New Hindu formula of uniting humanitarian service with the search for spiritual experience was, can be judged from the fact that very many respectable religious missions founded in India since Vivekananda's death have combined both these aims and have closely resembled Vivekananda's organisation in this respect. The significance of the humanitarian work performed by Vivekananda is that he raised it to the level of a sacrament.

Vivekananda was unquestionably the first great "populist" leader in modern India. He succeeded in imbibing Hinduism with a spirit of unprecedented aggressiveness. With the arrival of Vivekananda a point was reached where in the traffic of ideas started by Ram Mohun Roy as between Hinduism and other world religions, the formers place was no longer

on the receiving end of the line but on the donors. (Devraja 1975 : 112-114).

The present renaissance has reached its zenith, in the work of three great men who have achieved world-wide reputation in this generation, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.

3.5 SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) was born in Calcutta and at the age of seven was sent to England where, after completing his education in London and Cambridge returned to India when he was twenty one. He became a scholar in Greek and Latin and also learned French, German and Italian and could read Dante and Goethe in the original. Sri Aurobindo in his magnum opus, *The Life Divine*, and other works reinterpreted in impressive language the Hindu concepts of moksha, yoga and jivan-mukta (the state of the self which has realised Brahman while still in its human body). Moksha means the liberation of man from his finite human consciousness and the realization of the divine consciousness. (Sarma 1966 : 204). Sri Aurobindo calls this higher consciousness the Life Divine or the Supermind. He taught that by means of a new type of integral Yoga the higher consciousness might not only be realised but also brought down to irradiate the mind and the body of the individual. A man who succeeded in doing this would be a spiritual "superman", who would correspond exactly to the jivan-mukta described in the ancient Vedanta literature. Sri Aurobindo believed that all the political, social and economic problems which plague humanity at the present time could finally be solved only by society producing individuals of the higher type. He settled down in Pondicherry, in Southern India in 1910 and built an ashram for that purpose. He practised his Yoga and taught it for about forty years to those who came from all parts of the world to seek his help. (Whaling 1979 : 99-100).

3.6 RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is considered one of the greatest mystical poets; his position as a world-poet is now universally recognised through the English translations of some of his works. Though he once belonged to the Brahmo-Samaj his religion always transcended the limitations of this group. He drew his inspiration from the Upanishads and the Vaishnava poets of Bengal who sang about the love of Radha and Krishna. His songs in "Gitanjali" and other collections may be described as the modernised and universalised version of the old Vaishnava mystical poetry, but the nature-mysticism with which much of his work is suffused is his own. Tagore was not only a great religious poet but also a great prophet of humanity. His love for humanity is the outcome of his spirituality. Being a great mystical poet, he sings of man and nature, life and death, love and beauty, not in their apparent isolation, but in their relation to the eternal background of the infinite spirit. The suggestion of the infinite is ever present in Tagore's poetry, whether he sings of clouds or flowers, or of love or beauty. The Times Literary Supplement rightly says in its tribute to him: "Perhaps no living being was more religious, and no man of religion was more poetical than this great Indian". (Sarma 1966 : 163-164).

It is well known that the Upanishads, out of which flows the main stream of the religious philosophy of India, had their origin in the mystic teachings of Rishis, who lived in the bosom of nature, felt a kinship with all her myriad forms of life and saw the continuity of spirit in plant, animal and man. Hence they taught a religion based on the unity of all life and a system of ethics based on non-violence. Dr S Radhakrishnan, in his book on Tagore, has shown that his philosophy of life is only the ancient wisdom of India, restated to meet the needs of modern times, that his writing forms a modern commentary on the Upanishads and that the soul of ancient India is mirrored in them.

The poet, however, was not satisfied with merely restating the forest message. He wanted to live the life of the poet - prophets of old and bring up a community around him imbued with the spirit of the ashramas. It was with this aim that he established a school at Shantiniketan, surrounded himself with children and taught them to live in harmony with nature (Sarma 1967 : 176-177).

Tagore was regarded as one of the great leaders of the Renaissance of Hinduism. Tagore established his Vishvabharati - an international University, where he hoped that the culture of all the Eastern countries would be studied, with the object of revealing the Eastern mind to the world and promoting mutual understanding between East and West. Tagore's conception of this Eastern University is in accordance with his conception of what he called Greater India. He believed that in India the history of humanity was seeking to realize a specific ideal viz. that of the reconciliation of different races with different religions and civilizations in a geographical unit. Tagore points out that all the great men of modern India - Ram Mohun Roy, Ranade, Vivekananda, Bankin Chandra Chatterjee and others have done their best to bridge the gulf between the East and West and realise the ideal of harmony of races and religions. That is why, in responding to the invitation of Professor Gilbert Murray in 1934 to join in the task of healing the discords of the present political world through the international co-operation of thinkers in all countries, he wrote (Sarma 1966 : 169):

"Willingly, therefore, I harness myself in my advanced age to the arduous responsibility of creating in our educational glory of Shantiniketan a spirit of genuine international collaboration based on a definite pursuit of knowledge, a pursuit carried on in an atmosphere of friendly community life, harmonised with nature and offering freedom of individual self-expression".

This was the ideal which the poet cherished and which he sought to realise in his *Visvabharati* at Shantiniketan. In his later life he travelled all over the world, calling upon all nations to give up war and exploitation and denouncing the aggressive nationalism in the West as a crime against humanity.

3.7 MAHATMA GANDHI

The present Renaissance reached its zenith in the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) the great apostle of truth and non-violence and the architect of India's freedom. No Hindu saint or seer has ever touched the mass mind of the whole of India as Gandhi has done during his own lifetime. Within a short time he brought about a mighty upheaval in the Indian nation and released a flood of spiritual energy which transformed the lives of many people. His originality lay in his application of the principle of non-violence to national and international affairs. Non violence had occupied the highest place among the Hindu cardinal virtues from time immemorial, but it had been applied only to individual action. Gandhi extended it to communities and nations and developed a suitable technique of action for it, called satyagraha, which is non-violent defence of what one considers to be truth. His activities were mainly in the field of politics and for the first time in Indian history Gandhi raised politics to the level of religion. He states in the Introduction to his Autobiography that his aim in life was moksha or self-realization and that all his ventures in the political field were directed to that end. There was perfect harmony between Gandhi's life and teachings; in fact his whole life was an embodiment of his teachings. Gandhi believed in firm adherence to one's own religion coupled with an equal reverence towards all other religions (Sarma 1967 : 183-185).

Gandhi's message was not meant simply for Hindus in India, but for the whole of mankind. Though his activities were confined to the political sphere, he repeatedly declared that they were only a means to the realization of Truth, Moksha. According to him, Truth is god and non-violence the means of reaching it. Indian politics was only the platform from which he delivered his message, which is really universal. He once wrote:

"I believe my message to be universal, but as yet I feel that I can best deliver it through my work in my own country. If I can show visible success in India, the delivery of the message becomes complete" (Gandhi 1969 : 353).

At the beginning of the modern period, Hindu society was stagnant, fettered with numerous restrictions and customs which were looked upon as the laws of God. Now, child marriages are illegal and inter-marriage between castes is becoming frequent, suttee is abolished, women are now educated, have the franchise, and have been serving as ministers of state and ambassadors. Untouchability is prohibited by law, and the ban on foreign travel has been removed.

Hinduism, as interpreted by the leading spokesman of her renaissance, has tended to assume even more liberal attitudes in thought than those that had characterised her in earlier centuries. Due to the influence of the reformers and interpreters and partly due to the growing impact of an industrial society, the rigidities of the Hindu social system have been giving way to more flexible and progressive postures, that are being given more definite and institutional shape by state legislation.

It is obvious that the prophets of this period have, by their teachings and actions, raised the status of India among the

countries of the world. They have reasserted in emphatic terms the idea that mutual toleration is of the utmost importance in all matters affecting religious belief and practice. The leaders of the Renaissance have been able to view their religion apart from the mythological, ritualistic and sociological forms in which it was embedded. The success of Swami Vivekananda and Professor Radhakrishnan in carrying the message of Hinduism to the Western nations was due primarily to their ability to interpret the Vedanta as a religious philosophy independent of the Indian caste system or mythology or rites and ceremonies. Social reform has formed a large part of the present Renaissance, in fact the movement started with social reform. One of the tasks of the Renaissance was to adjust the teachings of Hinduism to the scientific thought and the political and social philosophies of the times. Religious truths have to be re-interpreted in terms of young scientific, political and social thoughts of the age.

All these trends are imparting to Hinduism a progressively open character, making it a true counterpart of a multiracial, multi-religious, democratic open society that the India of today aspires to be or become.

The Neo-Hindu movement has characterized a new era in the development of Hinduism, the effects of which are still being experienced today.

CHAPTER 4THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY IN INDIA

If one were to read many of the books and articles written by Western scholars who deal with modern India, one might conclude that the Hindu renaissance ends with the death of Aurobindo or Radhakrishnan, who were most certainly the intellectual giants of the post-independence period. But a visit to India provides the intelligent observer with a different picture. One becomes immediately aware that new gurus have taken the places of those who have died, and that the Hindu revival continues in full bloom. Of these Gurus one of the most famous is Swami Sivananda, the founder of the Divine Life Society (Miller 1974 : 81).

4.1 HISTORICAL

Swami Sivananda was born to high caste brahmin parents, Parvati Ammul and P.S. Vengu Iyer, as their third son, on September 8, 1887 in Pattamadai near Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. His father, a devotee of Shiva, descended from the family of Appayya Dikshitar, a sixteenth century saint-scholar whom Sivananda describes as peerless not only among his contemporaries but even among scholars of several decades before and after him.

Sivananda grew up in an atmosphere of love, piety, saintliness and strong religious sentiment. There is a proverb in Tamil "The characteristic of corn which would yield a rich harvest would be found in the sprout" (Venketesananda 1961 : 40). Sivananda in his childhood was influenced strongly by his father's devotion to Lord Shiva, for each morning he would go to the garden and fetch flowers and bael leaves for his father's worship of Shiva. He regularly participated in the family puja (prayer), devotions, kirtans, bhajans and would listen attentively to Vengu Iyer's Vedic recitations and scriptural reading.

From his childhood, Sivananda nurtured religious and spiritual tendencies and selflessness. He was compassionate and enjoyed serving sadhus, sannyasins and poor people. He rejoiced in giving and sharing with his playmates, servants and animals. Throughout Swami Sivananda's life this virtue of charity he has had in abundance and the motif of service continued to manifest itself at all times. "Though Sivananda's spiritual bent of mind must be attributed almost entirely to his previous samskaras and to the workings of the Will of God, his parents played their part indeed well in keeping that spark alive and in a way augmenting it" (Venketesananda 1961 : 46).

Sivananda was educated in a western-styled institution and so he was exposed to western ideas and western values from his school days (Gyan 1980 : 22). He attended the Rajas High School at Ettayapuram, where he excelled in his studies and won many prizes which were generally books with which he built up a small library. Acquisition of books for his own study as well as for that of others is a quality which he developed at this stage. While at college, Sivananda participated in debates and dramatics as well as in sports. He was a good athlete and a gymnast and was admired by the teachers and students.

In 1903 Sivananda passed his matriculation examination. He joined the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel College in Trichinopoly and completed the Intermediate degree course in 1905 after which he entered the Tanjore Medical Institute. Sivananda also completed the standard course in the Tamil language, the Madurai Tamil Sangham while at college and passed the examination with high grades.

Sivananda worked diligently through medical school and devoted all his attention to his studies. During his medical college days he hardly visited home. During his first year

he had free access to the operation theatres which afforded him his first opportunity of acquiring knowledge. Soon he acquired such a mastery over the subject that his professors were amazed (Venketesananda 1961 : 50). When he was half way through his course, his father died and his mother fell ill.

With hard work and determination, Sivananda completed his medical training. He constantly sought a channel to direct his energy to be of service to humanity at large, thus while he was a student he started a medical journal, AMBROSIA, the first of which was published in 1909 and remained in circulation for four years.

Through the journal, he strove to dispel people's ignorance in matters of personal hygiene and public health and stressed preventative medicine and diabetics. Health, hygiene and diet remained one of his preoccupations even after taking sannyasa.

For six years Sivananda practised medicine and edited the journal through which he passed adequate information to society. Besides Allopathic medicine, he acquired knowledge of Ayurveda and synthesized both for excellent remedies for man's physical suffering. Though the journal was conducted in the English language, Sivananda also printed articles in the Tamil language. The journal had a strange effect on its readers; they felt a significant spiritual touch in the pages of Ambrosia (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 6).

Swami Sivananda went to Madras in search of a job and joined a pharmacy. After the partnership between the owners broke up he had in him by this time "an increased feeling that I should seek other fields of serving the people directly" (Venketesananda 1961 : 57). Dr Iyengar, a medical practitioner and an old friend of Sivananda, had gone to Singapore and settled there. The young doctor sailed for Malaya at the invitation of Dr Iyengar in 1913. Belonging to an orthodox

vegetarian family he was afraid of being polluted by the non-vegetarian food on the ship, thus Sivananda carried enough home made food to last the sea voyage. He arrived in Singapore famished and tired, and went to the residence of Dr Iyengar who gave him a letter of introduction to his friend, Dr Harold Parsons. Parsons himself was in no need of an assistant so he referred Swami Sivananda to Mr A.G. Robins, the manager of a rubber estate. The Estate Hospital needed a doctor and Mr Robins appointed Sivananda as the resident doctor of the Estate Hospital.

Sivananda began his medical career in Malaya with a salary of 150 rupees and spent ten years working at the Rubber Estate Hospital. As a doctor he was conscientious, methodical, courteous, sympathetic; the sick people found him a man who cared for them, who cheered them and encouraged them. Sivananda brought faith and religion to the sick and always prayed while attending his patients. Every Friday he held a prayer service at the Hospital, at the end of which he distributed the Lord's prasada, stopping at the bedside of those who lay too ill to attend the prayer, to feed them with prasada. He was devoted to serving the sick and the suffering, and his patients admired and liked them.

Swami Sivananda practiced medicine privately in Malaya. He sought out the poor who needed his services most for he recognised the poor as the embodiment of God on earth. Other doctors charged fees for a mere consultation. Kuppaswami gave pocket money to his patients to cover their immediate expenses on discharge from hospital (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 11). Service to the poor and suffering humanity became his primary concern; at the same time, he also found time to serve and treat sadhus and sannyasas freely.

Although Sivananda remained busy with the hospital and administrative work, he found time to contribute articles on

health, hygiene and sanitation to the Malaya Tribune and other journals. He published a few books: Household Remedies, Fruits and Health, Diseases and Their Tamil Terms, Obstetric Ready Reckoner and Fourteen Lectures on Public Health.

Swami Sivananda's spiritual tendencies grew in Malaya for he found time to read books on philosophy, Hindu spirituality, Yoga and Vedanta. His interest led him to seek the company of holy persons like Hatha Yogi Krishnaji, a highly evolved soul and other Indian saints who visited the peninsula from time to time. Like Buddha, the pitiable human condition that he encountered made him unhappy. Sivananda occupied himself in relieving human suffering by serving the poor and the sick day and night with a sympathetic heart with the belief that the attitude of service would purify his heart and mind and lead him to the spiritual path (Sivananda 1974 : 76).

Service of humanity, study of spiritual literature, association with saintly souls and devotional practices at home - all these brought about a gradual metamorphosis in Sivananda's outlook of life in general; he became more introspective. At this stage in his life, a religious itinerant stayed with Swami Sivananda and sensing his interest in spiritual matters, gave him a book entitled Jiva - Brahma Aikya Vedanta rahasyam, written by Swami Sachitananda, this book "ignited the dormant spirituality in him (Sivananda). He began to study the books of Swami Rama Tirtha, Swami Vivekananda, Sankara, the Imitation of Christ, the Bible and literature of the Theosophical Society" (Krishnananda 1967 : 7). The books revived in him his religious quest, and Sivananda became regular in his daily prayers, study and practice of yoga asanas. His interest in the study of sacred scriptures like the Gita, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata and the Ramayana increased. To satisfy his inner feelings and urges, Sivananda occupied himself in singing bhajans, religious songs, doing Nama Sankirtan or taking the

name of the Lord repeatedly, Japa or repeating the Vedic texts with the help of a rosary, and doing social service.

While in Malaya Sivananda's medical profession brought him close to the suffering masses and he began to ponder on the nature of the transitory world. He reflected on questions relating to the meaning and purpose of life and existence. He became disenchanted with the pomp and slave of this life and felt that man's dependence on and attachment to this world was the cause of all suffering and despair. He sought a place where he could achieve "absolute serenity, perfect peace, and lasting happiness" (Sivananda 1974 : 22) which he felt could not be attained by accumulating wealth. Sivananda seriously began thinking of treading the path of the wise sages of India's past which would lead him into the realms of immortality. This desire grew in intensity thus he started practising Anahat Laya Yoga (concentration on mystic sounds) and Svara - Sadhana (breath-control). The cumulative effect of all this is described by Ananthanarayanan thus, "One day in 1923, the spiritual spark which Kuppuswami had nurtured all his life coalesced and burst into a burning flame. There came a light in his inner vision. Worldly desires left him. Material civilisation was impotent, it disgusted him. He spurned the world that could offer no lasting solution to suffering (Ananthanarayanan 1979 :27).

In the midst of all this inner turmoil, Sivananda felt that the call of the Divine was much more demanding and urgent. Before leaving Singapore to return to India, Sivananda distributed most of his belongings to the poor and the needy, and when he arrived at Madras, he left his remaining possessions with a friend and embarked upon a pilgrimage to Varanasi, the City of Shiva.

At Varanasi, after a bath in the holy Ganga, Sivananda visited Vishvanath Mandir and had darshan (glimpse, vision,

blessing) of Lord Shiva. He thereafter proceeded to Poona and gave away in charity whatever money he had left; he thus placed himself completely at the mercy of the Lord. Sivananda turned into a parivrajaka (a wandering mendicant) and visited Nasik, and other places of religious importance. The parivrajaka life-style, where one lives on what people give you by way of charity, helped Sivananda develop forbearance, fortitude, humility, and an unprejudiced and serene outlook in pleasure and pain.

During this parivrajaka life, M.Y. Datta, a postmaster Sivananda had met, suggested to him that he should go to Rishikesh to perform his meditation and sadhana. Sivananda arrived at Rishikesh, an important religious centre for the Hindus, on May 8, 1924. Rishikesh, where the holy Ganges begins its journey towards the plains, because of the serenity and solitude it provides has been growing and becoming a centre of ashrams and religious centres where yogis and gurus make their abode. People desiring to spend their time in spiritual retreat, meditation, concentration, and silence, or to live a life in seclusion usually come to Rishikesh. The beautiful and calm surroundings not only charge the atmosphere with holiness, divinity and spiritual blessings they also prompt the seeker to explore the nature of the self and find liberation from the bondage of karma - samsara, to attain Eternal Bliss' (Gyan 1980 : 28). Sivananda desired to attain moksha for which he had to resort to austerity and asceticism.

Austerity and asceticism have been clarified in the Hindu shastras (sacred books), since ancient times, and it is taught that the practice of tapas, austerity and asceticism or sannyasa are necessary factors in the attainment of moksha, liberation. The nature of the self is as intricate and complicated as the process of its realization and sannyasa is the means that helps in self-purification and self-cleansing.

According to Hindu ethics, man has to follow a pattern of life which includes the various stages of life, the varnashrama consisting of firstly, brahmacharya (student - celibate), grihasta (householder), vanaprasta, and sannyasa. By the time the Dharma Shastras, epics and Puranas were compiled, the ideal of sannyasa became a well established and recognised part of the Hindu religious life.

The Brihad and Mundaka Upanishad stress asceticism and sannyasa along with the knowledge of the Self as the means of liberation. "They who have ascertained the meaning of the Vedanta - knowledge, Ascetics (yati) with natures purified through the application of renunciation (sannaya - yoga), they in the Brahma - worlds at the end of time are all liberated beyond death (Mundaka UP. 3.2.6). Certain rules are laid down by the Upanishads pertaining to sannyasa, it says that an ascetic should wear orange coloured clothes, have a shaven head or tonsured head, have no possession, be pure, should not hate anyone, live on alms and be motivated to attain Brahmahood or moksha. It is evident that the Hindu Shatras both recommended and emphasize the models of asceticism and austerity for the attainment of Spiritual Truths.

Sivananda had so far avoided the life of a householder and in pursuit of spiritual goals he decided to take sannyasa. On June 1, 1924 Swami Vishwananda Saraswati agreed to initiate him into his discipleship and conduct him through the initiatory rites of sannyasa. It is recorded, "The doctor saw a Guru in the monk and the monk saw a chela (disciple) in the doctor. After a brief personal talk, Dr Kuppuswamy (Sivananda) was initiated into the sannyasa order by Swami Vishwananda. Swami Vishnudevananda ji Maharaj, the Mahant of Sri Kailas Ashram, performed the Vraja Homa (special initiation service) ceremonies. The Guru named the doctor Swami Sivananda" (Krishnananda 1967 : 9). Swami Vishwananda himself belonged to the Sringeri order of

Paramahansa instituted by Shri Sankaracharya. "The Paramahansa is a person who realises the identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul and is ordinarily viewed as Supreme discriminator, he meditates on the pure spirit and is intent on uprooting all evil actions by remaining firm in the Self" (Gyan 1980 : 30). Sivananda was naturally initiated into Paramahansa and was given the surname Sarasvati a suffix which identifies him as a member of Sankaracharya's ten orders, namely, the Sarasvati, order.

After being initiated into sannyasa, Sivananda received a copy of Sannyasa Dharma, that is, written instructions to regulate spiritual life from his Guru, Vishwananda. Donning the ochre robe Sivananda plunged into the practice of tapas, purifactory action; ascetic self-denial, austerity, penance, periodically observing silence and fasting. He spent most of his time in meditation, sadhana and service to humanity, often meditating without food, water and sleep. Sivananda followed a vigorous schedule. He would get up early in the morning, bathe in the Ganges, spend time in meditation and japa - repeating God's name on a particular mantra, serve the sick sadhus and sannyasins, study the sacred texts and prepare to write down his thoughts, ideas and experiences. The result of his writing discipline helped him to produce his early religious pamphlets such as Brahma Vidya and the Metaphysics of the Inner Man.

Being a sannyasin, Sivananda wanted to abstain from worldly activity of every sort but soon found he was powerless to resist the temptation to extend medical treatment to the sadhus and pilgrims. The deep-rooted desire to serve humanity found its expression in the form of a charitable dispensary which Swami Sivananda founded at Lakshamanjhula in 1927. Sivananda felt that by serving the sick, the poor, saints, etc, one can cultivate and expand divine virtues such as mercy, compassion, sympathy and kindness and destroy negative vices.

During the last years of his sadhanas Sivananda lived at the Swargashram on the east bank of the Ganges. Many sadhus live there but although the Ashram provided them with free accommodation and meals they were disorganised and their living conditions unsatisfactory. Sivananda, being a medical doctor believed that only a healthy physical body can have a pure and joyful spirit, organised the sadhus and formed a community, the Swargashram Sadhu Samaj and registered it with the State Government. Spiritual conferences, lectures and discourses on the Ramayana and Upanishads contributed towards their spiritual growth. "His cheerful and ebullient nature, his jokes and songs, his ceaseless service - all these singled him out in the Sadhu colony as a unique figure" (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 31).

Sometimes in 1925 Sivananda began a period of pilgrimages that continued at irregular intervals until 1938, but Rishikesh always remained his base of operations. On his first pilgrimage in 1925 he travelled south, visiting all the sacred sites along the way. He arrived at the ashram of Ramana Maharishi at the time of the guru's birthday on December 30. During his travels Swami Sivananda conducted Sankirtan and delivered lectures. In 1931 he and three other ascetics made the long and difficult trip from Amore to Mt. Kailas and returned, a trek that totalled 460 miles and took two months. In Hindu religious tradition such journeys are characteristic of many men (and women) after they have received the vows of sannyasa. Visiting religious centres and having a darshan of a particular deity not only enhances the value of the sannyasi, it also gives inner peace, joy, satisfaction and elevates the spirit.

In the nineteen thirties, Sivananda toured extensively in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Jammu, Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh, to propagate the name of the Lord, through the process of conducting Sankirtan, public or congregational devotional

singing, and giving religious discourses. Sivananda was aware of the suffering and misery of the world and was convinced that the course of man's suffering lay in this quest for physical comfort and sensual pleasure thus he had become greedy and selfish, and in order to achieve his worldly goals, man lost touch with dharma and moksha, the climax of Hindu life. These tours helped to revive the Sankirtan movement, renew faith in Hindu ideals, beliefs, practices and symbols, invigorate Hindu spirituality and also brought Sivananda closer to the people. In a letter written shortly after 1933, he notes "My time is spent in delivering thrilling lectures during the day and kirtans at night. I pump joy and power in the devotees. I roar like a lion I had a Virat Kirtan with 3 000 people" (Sivananda 1945 : 1).

In 1929, according to Swami Venkatesananda, Sivananda published "The practice of Yoga, Volume 1," the first of 340 books and pamphlets emphasizing the need of moksha, that were to follow over the next thirty-four years. He wrote in English in order to reach a wider pan-Indian audience, most of whom did not know Sanskrit.

Sivananda was critical of the modern educational system followed in the Indian schools and colleges because it does not satisfy the spiritual needs of the students. He exhorted the youth to develop good-will, co-operation, mercy, compassion, non-resistance or non-retaliation to injuries done to you, forgiveness, contentment, nobility and cosmic love (Sivananda 1945 : 1-2). This would aid the students to realise and attain the final aim of life, moksha. According to Sivananda, God has given specific laws as guidelines, and these laws help us both to enjoy life, develop the body, mind and intellect and achieve the goal of life.

On January 17, 1934, Sivananda handed over the management of the Satya Sevashram Dispensary to the authorities of

Swargashram and moved to the west bank of the River Ganges with his four dedicated and devoted disciples. They found four abandoned and dilapidated rooms and made their abode there. The Master occupied one, another was set up as a dispensary, and the remaining two were taken up by disciples. They called it "Ananda kutir - the Abode of Bliss". From the day that he set foot on the right bank of the river as an independent sannyasin, Sivananda's life of service took on an unparalleled dynamism. This party of four, under the guidance of the Spirit and the leadership of Sivananda, was destined to create history. The Ananda Kutir flourished to become a huge ashram - the Sivananda Ashram, and a new religious society - the Divine Life Society.

Swami Sivananda worked untiringly for the growth and expansion of the Divine Life Society, for the improvement of the Sivananda Ashram and for the spiritual maturity of his devotees and disciples. He divided his time between the administration of the Ashram, building construction, correspondence, writing religious articles, books and pamphlets, counselling and advising the ashram members, granting special audience to visitors, evening satsang and private study and prayers. Sivananda displayed an equal concern for the physical as well as spiritual well-being of his people; for maintaining good physical health he started a free clinic and an Ayurvedic dispensary, which works on the traditional Indian medical wisdom. Thousands of people were drawn to him and declared him their Guru because they found him a person who was approachable, lovable, venerable.

Swami Sivananda Sarasvati Maharaji, left his mortal body on July 14, 1963 after having lived for 76 years, and entered Mahasamadhi at his kutir on the banks of the Ganges. Seated in meditative posture the physical vesture of the saint was buried within the Sivananda Ashram premises according to Vedic rites. A brass vessel filled with Ganges water hangs

over the spot and an oil lamp is kept burning all through the twenty-four hours of the day. The place where Sivananda is buried is called Mahasamadhi Sthana, a memorial structure has been constructed on the spot called Samadhi Mandir, temple or shrine.

The Ashram authorities received condolence messages from all over the world, which recognised that Sivananda was engaged in the revitalization of the Hindu religion and culture. The feelings of Sivananda's disciples are best expressed in Swami Venketesananda's eulogy. "The end is perhaps shocking. But that is not the end. It is the beginning. The Builder worked outside: he was on view. He created an inside, and he entered it. Now he works inside, out of external view, but more truly and purposefully, active, therefore. Gurudev (Sivananda) has moulded us, given shape to shapeless masses, laid stone upon stone in us and built a shrine, entered it and is now busy at work in there" (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 335).

A departure will be made from a strict sequential historical development and a discussion on the institutional forms or means that Swami Sivananda created in order to accomplish the aims and goals of the Divine Life Society as dated in the Deed of Trust will be attempted.

4.2 THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY : ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As the name and fame of Swami Sivananda spread by word, spoken and written, many visitors and devotees began to visit the Sivananda Ashram to seek Swami Sivananda's darshan and advice, thus his disciples multiplied. For Swami Sivananda there was no self-will in the growth of the organisation at any time. He later remarked "I never dreamt that He (God) would ordain matters thus. I left my all, cutting off ties

finally, with a hazy idea of spending all my life in a quiet spot, absorbed in repeating the sweet name of Rama. But now, look, God has given me a 'family' which dates upon me that, whether I want it or not, it will have me for itself. Who knows? Perhaps I am born for it. As long as anyone continues to derive one iota of benefit from this self I am happy to be entirely his" (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 72).

In January 1936, after a successful, exemplary Sankirtan tour of India which culminated in Ambala where a week-long non-stop chanting of Hari-Nam (the name of God) by thousands of men, women, and children convinced Swami Sivananda that the revival and renewal of Hindu religion, culture and society is possible through an organised effort. Their response prompted him to start an institution to cater for the spiritual needs of his disciples and to make an organised effort to spiritualize the whole country. As a consequence, Sivananda with the assistance of Shri Ram Agrawal, an advocate, formed the Divine Life Trust at Ambala Court on January 13, 1936.

As a result of the excellent work done by Swami Sivananda and the performance of his disciples the Trust attracted a large number of devotees who desired to join the Trust and work under one banner. The Trust however, did not provide for a membership of more than eleven, so to enable all the sympathisers with the Divine Life cause to join, Sivananda changed the Trust into a Society : The Divine Life Society, and had it registered with the state at Lahore on April 16, 1939.

The aims and objects of the Divine Life Society are (Krishnananda 1967 : 25-26):

- I. To disseminate Spiritual Knowledge
 - (a) By publication of books, pamphlets and magazines dealing with ancient, oriental and occidental

philosophy, religion and medicine in the modern scientific manner, and their distribution on such terms as may appear expedient to the Board of Trustees;

- (b) By propagating the Name of the Lord, and by holding and arranging spiritual discourses and conferences and frequent Sankirtans or spiritual gatherings for singing and glorifying the Name of the Lord;
 - (c) By establishing training centres or societies for the practice of Yoga, for moral and spiritual Sadhanas and the revival of the true culture, to enable aspirants to achieve regeneration through worship, devotion, wisdom, right action and higher meditation, with systematic training in Asanas, Pranayama, Dharma, Dhyana and Samadhi; and
 - (d) By doing all such acts and things as may be necessary and conducive to the moral, spiritual and cultural uplift of mankind in general and to the attainment of the abovementioned objects in Bharatavarsha (India) in particular.
2. To establish and run Educational Institutions on modern lines and on right basic principles and to help deserving students by granting them refundable or non-refundable scholarships for doing research work in the various branches of existing scriptures and comparative religion, as also to train them to disseminate spiritual knowledge in the most effective manner;
 3. To help deserving orphans and destitutes by rendering them such assistance as the Society may deem proper, whether in any individual case or in any particular class of cases;

4. To establish and run Medical Organisations, hospitals or dispensaries for the treatment of diseases and dispensing medicines and performing surgical operations etc, to the poor in particular and to other public in general, on such terms and in such manner as may be deemed expedient by the Board of Trustees;
5. To take such other steps from time to time as may be necessary for effecting a quick and effective moral and spiritual generation in Bharatavarsha (India) in particular.

The above aims and objects of the Divine Life Society clearly indicate their concern for the spiritual regeneration of the Hindus and for the physical well-being of the people.

The constitution of the Divine Life Society accepts membership of anyone who will accept the philosophy or aims and objects of the Divine Life Society and is willing to participate in its programmes. The constitution recognises four types of members, Patrons, Life Members, Sympathisers and ordinary members. Both men and women, lay persons and monks are allowed to become members. Children under the age of twelve are encouraged to become members of the Divine Life Children's Section.

A nominal subscription fee is payable to the Society on registration as a member. Members of any monastic order are exempt from admission or subscription fee.

4.3 SWAMI SIVANANDA'S CONCEPT OF "DIVINE LIFE"

The doctrine of 'Divine Life' provides the theological and ideological basis for the establishment, existence and contribution of the Divine Life Society which the Swami founded. Sivananda taught that one's present birth is the occasion for

the attainment of one's ultimate goal - moksha or God realization, ie. a desire to live in the spirit or the Divine. God is the source of life and the purpose of this existence is to return to its original source - God or the Divine. To lead a 'Divine Life' means transformation of one's inner self and transcendence of the 'I' and 'Thou' dichotomy and this can be achieved only by realising the oneness of Atman and Brahman, the 'Pure Principle of Life' (Sivananda 1976 : 8). This "Divine Life" is attainable in this existence through a process of spiritual discipline: karma, bhakti, raja and jnana yoga ie. action, devotion, concentration, and meditation which frees man from the bondage of karma - samsara. Sivananda practised and preached all four yogas together so he was known as a 'synthetic yogi'. He himself said 'I practise and advocate the yoga of synthesis. I practice āhimsa, satyam and brahmacharya (Sivananda 1954 : 85).

To live a 'Divine Life' is to live a dharmic or moral, righteous life by obeying the precepts of the Hindu Shastras, by cultivating virtues such as 'kindness, generosity, humility, meekness, tolerance, compassion, love and selfless-service'. The "Twenty Spiritual Instructions" formulated by Swami Sivananda also helps as a spiritual guide to the attainment of Divine Life.

Sivananda considers 'Divine Life' as that life which gives the individual inner peace, joy and satisfaction of being with God.

The theology of Divine Life in essence is Vedantic. When the individual starts living in 'Divine Life' he sees everything as part of the Divine Brahman. "It is Brahman alone that shines as the world of variegated objects" states Swami Sivananda "Just as there is no difference between gold and the ornaments made from it, so also there is no difference between God and the Universe" (Sivananda 1973 : 7). One's

world view changes and one perceives everything as a manifestation of Brahman, the Divine Being. According to Sivananda, every individual irrespective of caste, creed and colour can pursue the object of life and attain 'Divine Life', or moksha.

Every member of the Divine Life Society aims to lead the Divine Life, live in Divine Life, light up the Divine Life everywhere. The Divine Life Society provides an umbrella under which like-minded people could come together and make their spiritual journey together.

Dissemination of spiritual knowledge was of primary concern for Sivananda. This he tried to achieve through the process of religious instructions, offered by the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, through the publication and distribution of literature written by the Swami himself on religious and spiritual matters, Divine Life literature, by organising and arranging spiritual discourses, conferences, gatherings, satsangs, sankirtan etc. The Divine Life Society both at the Headquarters and branches has been engaged in fulfilling this mission by means of various departments, known as 'Service Departments', a list of which follows (Divine Life 1980 : XLII/8, 280-285):

1. The Yoga - Vedanta Forest Academy

This Academy was founded in 1946 and formally opened in 1948 as an important wing of the Society at the Headquarters for carrying out its various spiritual activities, mainly dissemination of spiritual, cultural and religious knowledge and practical training in Yoga and Vedanta. The main object of the Academy as envisaged by Sivananda was to provide a suitable atmosphere for the natural awakening of spirituality in the hearts of seekers and aspirants and to raise as many

souls as possible to higher levels of consciousness making aspirants aware and realise the 'great destination' of all life.

To further intensify the activities of the academy a campus has been set up at the Headquarters. On 9th July 1979 Guru Purnima Day was formally inaugurated by the President of the Divine Life Society, His Holiness Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, in the newly constructed premises on the Dattatreya Hill adjoining the main Ashram. Each course conducted by the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy is for a period of three months. The syllabus adopted for the course by the Academy is a comprehensive one consisting of Philosophy, Psychology, Practice of Yoga, the Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Indian Culture. Students drawn from various walks and stages in life are trained in batches of about 30 for three months in each course. They include a few seekers from foreign countries as well. On the staff of the Academy is a group of trained dedicated and committed monk-disciples, each proficient in a particular field of Yoga.

The daily routine for the course is divided into three sessions with the early hours of the morning reserved for prayers and practical demonstration of Hatha Yoga (Asanas and Pranayama), and two lectures on different subjects in each of the forenoon and the afternoon sessions.

The afternoon session is followed by Karma Yoga and meditation. The practical classes are conducted everyday and the lectures only on five days a week, Monday to Friday, leaving the remaining two days of the week for reflection and home-study by the students. Books are provided to the students free of charge from the Book Bank of the Academy. At the end of each Course,

examinations are held and certificates are awarded to the students for successful completion of the Course'.

For the aspirants the three months course should be regarded as the basic foundation and a step forward towards the higher spiritual life. The Yoga - Vedanta Forest Academy is not merely designed to equip students academically, but to provide the requisite training, to enable them to blossom into truly humane and serviceful personalities dedicated to unselfish, co-operative and constructive social work by attaining their practical life to the Ultimate Reality. The very atmosphere of the Academy and the Ashram is such that as long as a secular man is living there he is being confronted, controlled, and converted by the sacred environment.

2. One of the main objectives with which the Divine Life Society was founded is the dissemination of spiritual knowledge by publishing and distributing books, pamphlets, magazines and journals dealing with philosophy and spirituality. This work has been entrusted to two sections of the Headquarters:

- (a) The Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press, and
- (b) The Sivananda Publication League.

- (a) The Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press

The Press was established in 1951 within the premises of the Ashram and is equipped with modern printing machines for printing and binding. It is a non-profit organisation manned by some workers who are paid while the rest are sadhakas who offer selfless service to the Press.

Two monthly journals - 'The Divine Life' in English and 'Yoga Vedant' in Hindi, are published. These two journals serve as a bond between the Headquarters and its branches and as a communication medium between the Divine Life members. They contain topics of spiritual and cultural interest and furnish the readers with instructive articles on the higher values of life which is their main aim. They contain educative and interesting articles in ancient Indian culture, philosophy and religion by Swami Sivananda, Swami Chidananda, Swami Krishnananda and other saints and scholars. The other contents of these Journals are the President's message to seekers and sadhakas, news from Headquarters and short reports on the activities of the Branches both inland and overseas. The annual number of the Divine Life carries the General Secretary's report and an audited statement of Ashram accounts.

(b) The Sivananda Publication League

This League is a sister institution of the Press and deals with the sales and distribution of literature. All new releases from the Press as well as those printed in the earlier years are kept in the Sivananda Publication League. It is also involved in the free distribution of books and pamphlets to devotees and seekers. The publication of the vast spiritual literature by the Society every year is intended as an incentive to lead the life divine, the very purpose for which the Divine Life Society was formed.

3. Divine Life Conferences and Cultural Tours

The Divine Life Society organises and arranges Spiritual

Conferences for its members and for the public. It was decided at the 30th All-India Divine Life Conference at Sivanandashram to form a permanent registered body under the name of the 'Divine Life Conference' to assist the Divine Life Society in achieving its aims and objects. "These conferences in which a number of eminent scholars, saints and philosophers participate, are valuable contributions to Gurudev's mission of Jnana-Yajna (knowledge), ethical, moral and spiritual awakening. They provide ample scope for arousing the social and spiritual awareness among the members of the public.

In 1945 Swami Sivananda founded the All-World Religious Federation at Rishikesh "to establish the much-needed unity of religions and to re-establish faith in unchanging ancient truths and to preserve ancient tradition in so far as they are not incompatible with modern conditions of life" (Venketesananda 1961 : 39).

An event of significance in the history of the Divine Life Society was the three day Parliament of Religions organised by Swamiji in 1956 and attended by many delegates who presented papers on the world's great religious traditions. Among the delegates were: N.C. Chatterjee, president of the Hindu Maha Sabha, B.L. Atreya, provost of Banaras Hindu University, Major General A.H. Sarma, a retired army doctor; H.J. Hablutzel, of the Self-Realization Fellowship, California, and Reverend John E. St. Catchpool of the Friends International Centre, Delhi.

Sivananda's speech to the delegates and audience of about 1 000 people illustrates his concern for creating an ideal community of religion: "The word community used here means a unity with variety, namely, a world-

wide association of co-operating religions whose members at once share certain common basic interest and yet endeavour to demonstrate particular values they especially esteem. Such an operation would be bipolar in operation, it would encourage both a measure of unity through universal principles and multitude of variety through adventurous experimentation. The advantages of such a community are suggested by a Bahai metaphor "A garden displaying a richly ordered variety of plants is far more enjoyable than a garden consisting of a type of flower" (D.L.S. World Parliament of Religions 1956 : 64).

At the local level Sivananda organised and promoted annual conferences which brought together all the Divine Life Societies as well as drew thousands of listeners. The conferences served as an effective means for communicating the message of Swami Sivananda and of the Divine Life Society in India and to all levels of society, as the organisers and participants spoke in vernacular languages as well as in English. These conferences are extremely well attended, for example, in 1978 the All-Oriyas Conference was attended by 30 000 Oriyas who listened attentively to speeches in Oriyas, Hindi and English for three 8 hour days.

4.4 CULTURAL TOURS

Every year a team of Swamis and sadhakas with one or two senior swami's undertake extensive tours all over the country and abroad presenting the message of 'Divine Life', and conducting Sankirtan and Satsang. (Swamiji himself, with the exception of visiting Sri Lanka during a sankirtan tour, did not travel abroad). These tours have become an annual feature of Ashram life. Sri Swami Chidanandaji, Swami Hridayananda Mataji, Swami Shankarananda, Swami Premananda,

Swami Nadabrahmananda and other Swamis conducted cultural tours outside India.

The Conferences and Cultural Tours consist of religious discourses, lectures on Yoga and Vedanta, the viability and vitality of the Hindu faith and its divine source, and on the usefulness of Yoga - asanas. People are taught bhajans, kirtans, the value of satsangs and singing the Lord's Name; they may be regarded as an organised effort aimed at the effective dissemination of knowledge (spiritual), an emphasis on dharma and the spiritual goal of God realisation (Gyan 1980 : 143).

4.5 CORRESPONDENCE BY POST

Spiritual instructions and the work of disseminating spiritual knowledge is also carried on through correspondence. Letters are received in large numbers everyday at the Headquarters from aspirants, seekers of Truth, devotees and genuine inquirers who desire to know more about Hindu dharma and seek guidance in spiritual matters. They are answered and given proper guidance by the senior swamis who are assisted by experienced sadhakas who are adept in this regard.

The Divine Life Society, through these spiritual conferences, cultural tours and religious correspondence aims to bring about a spiritual awakening of man towards dharma and an ideal life.

4.6 THE ASHRAM HOSPITAL

Swami Sivananda always taught that selfless service to the sick and neglected is service to God, it also works as a means of self-purification. Even after entering into sannyasa he continued to make use of his medical training. He treated

the sick sadhus and pilgrims who visited Rishikesh and who stayed at the Swargashram. When he left the Ashram, Sivananda opened his own dispensary which gradually developed into the Sivananda Charitable Hospital, a symbol of Sivananda's ever present love to serve mankind; it consists of the General Hospital and the Eye Hospital section. According to Ananthanarayanan, the greatest need of the people, which the institution stepped in to satisfy was in the area of medical services. The Rishikesh Hospital was miles away and the Ashram Dispensary served not only the people of Muni-ki-Reti but also those in the many villages around. The Hospital represents the karma yoga (yoga of selfless service) aspect of the Ashram where aspirants offer their services with prema - bhava, in the spirit of love and detachment. Free medical treatment is given to patients of any sex, caste, creed and colour. The Ashram resident guests and visitors are also provided with medical relief (Krishnananda 1967 : 65). The Ashram Medical Relief Work is carried out via four channels.

1. Allopathy

This section is based on the western method of the treatment. The Hospital has an in-patient dispensary, operation theatre, X-ray screening machines, physiotherapy and a dressing room. The hospital was mainly an Eye Hospital because Swami Hridayananda Mataji was an Eye Specialist. After her departure to Europe it became a General Hospital manned by trained doctors. The sadhakas help in dispensing medicines and dressing wounds which serves as a training ground since the hospital's work is basically humanitarian.

2. Ayurvedic Medicine

Sivananda teaches that a good physique is a gift from God, and it should be maintained with the help of 'nature' cures, the Ayurvedic treatments commonly practised in

India in ancient times as well as in the present day. His interest in popularising and encouraging the ancient Indian medical practice found expression in the establishment of the 'Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Works' in 1945, which functions along with the Ashram Hospital. Great Yogi's such as Charaka, Sushruta, Vagblata, Madhava and Sarangadhara are seen as the fathers of the Ayurvedic medicines. According to Swami Chidananda, the President of the Divine Life Society, the Ayurveda offers some wonderful strength-giving and health bestowing preparations which helps in keeping a perfect balance in the body, and that these tonics and medical preparations have aided in the physical as well as the spiritual well-being of individuals.

Ayurvedic medicines are manufactured in the Ashram, mostly from Himalayan herbs, on a large scale by specialists. "The speciality is that every new medicine prepared is first offered to the Lord of the Temple and thus consecrated and made more pure and powerful" (Krishnananda 1967 : 47).

The medicinal products are partly sold on the market and also distributed to the poor and needy patients. The sales and production of the Ayurvedic medicines at the Ashram have steadily increased during the years.

3. Leprosy Relief Work

The Ashram runs a leprosy clinic at Lakshmanjhula, about two kilometres from the Ashram. Lepers living in this area survived on the alms given by pilgrims; they had no clinic. With the blessings of Sivananda, under the leadership of Swami Chidananda the Divine Life Society organised the lepers into a colony and took upon himself the responsibility of medical care. The Society offers free medicine, clothing and shelter and is

involved in rehabilitation work by providing them with better living facilities.

The healed are taught skills, weaving, carpentry, etc in a move towards self-sufficiency. Swami Sivananda himself visited the leper colony to distribute fruit, sweets and blankets.

4. Medical Relief Camps

Not satisfied with these medical facilities provided for the people, Sivananda encouraged visiting specialists, his own disciples, to conduct intensive medical relief camps. These camps are arranged with the assistance of the Ashram Hospital. The Ashram buildings were turned into hospital wards and inmates and visitors nursed the sick. Eye relief camps, dental camps and medical camps for women and children became common features of the Ashram's activities.

All these activities represent the Karma-Yoga aspect of Swami Sivananda's teaching. He said "You should always seek newer avenues of serving people, you should find out novel methods of serving the public. This is aggressive Nishkama Karma Yoga. This is my method" (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 116). Spirituality remained the basis of all activities in the Ashram.

Thus the Sivananda Ashram is engaged in publishing books on religion, religious instruction, health, yoga-lessons, manufacturing and marketing ayurvedic (indigenous) medicines, running charitable dispensaries, sponsoring and organising satsangs, sankirtans, religious conferences and campaigns.

Two types of residents live in the Ashram: the transient and the permanent. Visitors, guests and pilgrims who

stay only for a short time from the mobile community of the Ashram. The permanent residents are the sannyasins, brahmacharis and sadhakas. The management of the Ashram is in the hands of the senior swamis or sannyasins.

4.7 ASCETIC DISCIPLES

Swami Chidananda, the present President of the Divine Life Society was born as Sridhar Rao on September 24, 1916 in the affluent home of brahmin parents who lived near Mangalore, Karnataka. From his childhood he displayed a deep interest in the Hindu scriptures "religious gatherings, books, conversations" (Gyan 1980 : 155) and cherished the ideal of becoming a rishi. He was very compassionate and had a gentle personality. On the lawns of his home he built huts for lepers and attended to them personally.

In 1938 he graduated with honours from Loyola College, Madras where he had supplemented Christian subjects by reading the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita in translation and the writings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Sivananda which was most influential in determining his faith and life. He first learned of Swami Sivananda through an article that Swami Sivananda had written in the 1930's for "My Image of India", published in Madras. The lessons given by Sivananda were plain and practical, they became a 'manual' for spiritual growth to Swami Chidananda. During these days he corresponded with Sivananda and in 1943, at the age of twenty seven, he left home to join the Ashram. Soon he was delivering lectures, writing articles and one year after he had taken up residence at the Sivananda Ashram, he wrote "Light Fountain" a bhakta's portrait of his guru. In 1948, Sivananda appointed Sridhar who was then a brahmacharin, as vice-chancellor and professor of raja yoga at the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy. In the

same year he was appointed General Secretary of the Divine Life Society. On July 10, 1949, on Guru Purnima Day, Sridhar Rao was initiated into the order of Sannyasa and was called Swami Chidananda Sarasvati ("One who is in the highest consciousness of bliss") by Swami Sivananda.

In 1959, Chidananda introduced the message of 'Divine Life' to the Western world during his visits to North America, South America, Europe, Australia and South Africa. To the members of the Divine Life Society he symbolises sacrifice, love, service, and humility. After Sivananda entered Mahasamadhi on 14th July 1963, he was unanimously elected as the President of the Society and the spiritual heir of Sivananda.

Swami Chidananda has given a new direction to the tradition of 'succession'. As President of the society he could have sat on the chair of Sivananda yet he chose to remain in the service of the Guru-Sivananda. After his election Chidananda placed Sivananda's photograph and sandals at his presidential seat and then he sat on the floor touchingly saying 'The Guru is our Guru, the rest of us are his disciples' (Gyan 1980 : 157).

Swami Chidananda has continued as president of the Divine Life Society since 1963 and spends many months each year lecturing in the West.

Swami Krishnananda (previously known as Subbaraya Puthuraya) became General Secretary of the Society in 1963 and in every way he is the key administrator of the activities and functions of the Divine Life Society. Author of many books, Krishnananda is greatly respected for his scholarship within and outside the Ashram.

Other prominent ascetic disciples serving the Society include Swami Madhavananda, Premananda, Hridayananda-Sivananda, and Vishnu-Devananda. In 1957 Sivananda sent Vishnu-Devananda,

an expert in hatha yoga to North America, where he established the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Camp, north of Montreal. The organisation has now spread throughout North America, Canada, the United States, England and Europe. Swami Satchidananda and Swami Shankarananda are also some of the ascetic disciples who gathered about Swami Sivananda and who represent the inner core of the Divine Life Society. They were young, bright, talented and charismatic individuals.

The present leadership symbolises the ancient Indian ideals of brahmacharya, ahimsa, sannyasa, tapas and thus is able to provide the required inspiration for the followers of Sivananda, and members of the Society. In them people see what their spiritual preceptor, Sivananda, taught and practised, and thus they kept the spirit of revival and renewal of Hindu dharma alive.

4.8 LAY - DISCIPLES

According to Satish Chandra Gyan in Sivananda and His Ashram, the constituency from which Sivananda draws his following is basically city centred, educated, socially and economically well placed and elite. David Miller, in his article "The Divine Life Society", concludes that many members of the Divine Life Society were middle to upper-class, well educated professionals (doctors, lawyers, judges, military officers) businessmen and bureaucrats at the managerial level, with a scattering of local politicians, university professors, wealthy individuals, western intellectuals and spiritual seekers. The membership largely consists of those who can read and write English or at least can understand it. That means the lay member is predominantly a 'modernist' or 'neo-Hindu' who has been influenced by western (English) education, technology and scientific advancement (Gyan 1980 : 99).

In the beginning of the second quarter of the twentieth century, the Divine Life Society founded by Swami Sivananda, represented an organised attempt at the revival, renewal and revitalisation of Hindu religion and society in India. The Divine Life Society is sustained and directed by the philosophy and ideology of 'Divine Life', a life in the Atman, Supreme Soul, a life of service, love, meditation, righteousness and realisation. The philosophical foundation of 'Divine Life' is Vedantic, everything is seen as part of the Divine Being. According to Swami Sivananda every individual irrespective of ✓ caste, creed and colour can pursue the object of life and attain 'Divine Life'.

How potent the New Hindu formula of uniting humanitarian service with the search for spiritual experience can be seen by the preoccupation of the Divine Life Society not only with the spiritual needs of man (which is the primary aim) but also with his socio-economic upliftment. Thus the Divine Life ✓ by its personal involvement has not alienated itself from the masses.

The fundamental and primary aim of the Divine Life Society as a world-wide organisation is the dissemination of spiritual knowledge. To bring this knowledge to the world is to awaken the world and to make every man and woman a selfless and ✓ dedicated worker for the physical, mental and spiritual upliftment of mankind.

Under the leadership of Swami Sivananda, Swami Chidananda and a host of dedicated sannyasins, sadhakas and devotees. the Society has opened new branches all over Indian and abroad. According to the Handbook of the Society, there were over three hundred such branches engaged in the propagation and promotion of the message of 'Divine Life'. Most of the overseas branches are found in Britain, Kenya, France, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Fiji and South Africa.

These Divine Life Society branches are spreading and expanding the mission of their founder, Swami Sivananda, and thus have become vital instruments of creating a new mood for ✓ the renewal of religion and culture.

CHAPTER 5HINDUISM IN SOUTH AFRICA PRIOR TO THE RISE OF THE
DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY5.1 INDIAN IMMIGRATION : HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In spite of the affluent image created by South Africa's large Indian population, little is known of the drama that led to the introduction of the first Indian indentured labourers in 1860 to South Africa.

In the course of the first half of the nineteenth century a small community of British immigrants had begun to cultivate sugar-cane in the newly independent colony of Natal, South Africa. They were beset with serious labour problems from the beginning. In response to this need the Government of Natal sought for the importation of Indian labour to work the newly developed sugar plantations.

After considerable persuasion the Indian Government consented to Indian emigration, subject to certain conditions. Among them were that the Indians, after their period of indenture, shall be entitled to the vote, be free to own landed property, enjoy freedom of movement and be completely unrestricted in the choice of schools for their children (Indian Annual Settlers Issue 1980 : 9).

The first large-scale immigration of Indians into South Africa occurred in 1860 with the arrival of 342 indentured labourers on board the "Truro" which reached Durban on November 16, 1860 (Singh 1960 : 23). Although the religious and caste composition of those early settlers is of importance, the records kept by the Protector of Immigrants and the information reflected in the Ships Lists about these matters are, however, not altogether reliable (Van Loon 1979 : 13). Information about their caste, religion and home language was not officially

required and therefore not regularly entered.

The records show that the first group of immigrants were of various religious and linguistic affiliation viz., 101 Hindus, 78 Malabars, 61 Christians, 16 Muslims, 1 Rajput and 1 Marathee. Ten days later the "Belvedere" arrived on November 26. These immigrants were listed as: 69 gardeners, 61 Brahmins, 25 Chutrees or Warriors, 18 dairymen, 16 pigrearers, 14 fruit-growers, 14 potters, 11 salt-dealers, 11 porters, 9 clerks, 8 herdsmen, 7 boatmen, 6 leather-workers, 5 policemen, 5 messengers, 5 laundrymen, 4 oil-pressers, 4 ironmongers, 3 undertakers, 2 barbers, 2 hunters, 2 jewellers, a confectioner, a weaver and a dealer in enamelware (Singh 1960 : 24).

This list disproves the statement so often made that the indentured labourers were recruited from the "untouchables" who were living in semi-starvation in India (Indian Annual Settlers Issue 1980 : 52). Indians did not emigrate to South Africa to escape any specific brand of persecution, political or religious (Kuper 1974 : 9). Most of the immigrants who had embarked at Calcutta came from Bihar and the North-West Province of Agra and Oudh. Those from Madras were largely from the northern districts of the Southern Provinces including present day Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Distinct from the indentured labourers was a second, smaller stream of immigrants, termed 'passenger Indians', who entered the country under the ordinary immigration laws, and at their own expense. The majority came specifically to trade or serve in commerce.

During the period 1860 to 1866 approximately 5 500 labourers arrived in Natal, having embarked in either Calcutta or Madras. It would appear that according to records - in which caste and occupation, language and religion are often interchanged and confused one with the other - on the whole, 31% of the indentured

Indians were Sudra; 27% came from the various Scheluded castes; 21% were Vaishya, 9% Kshatriya and 2% Brahmin. Of the remaining 10%, 4% were Muslim and 3% Christian. The other 3% are impossible to identify (Van Loon 1979 : 14).

Initially immigrants completing their contracts and staying on in Natal for a further ten years were given the option of a paid return passage to India or of acquiring land to the value of the passage. Although the Indian immigrants became "free in every sense of the word" on the expiration of their period of indenture, their movements were, however, restricted to Natal and they were 'not allowed to leave the Colony without a licence' (Indian Annual Settlers Issue 1980 : 57).

Having completed their ten years of industrial residence in the Colony, the first batch of labourers returned to India in terms of the free passage arrangements. In spite of their value, they were misused by their employers who were determined to obtain the maximum measure of service possible in return for their outlay. The terms of their contract were hardly observed and the employers were guilty of improper stoppage of wages, flogging and supplying unsatisfactory rations. However the Indians, with their industrious habits and comparatively few wants did remarkably well as cultivators, they had made their impact felt on the production of sugar. From an export figure of £19 401 in 1861 it rose to £180 496 in 1871 (Indian Annual Settlers Issue 1980 : 59).

Although Section 28 of Law 14 of 1859 allowed labourers to commute their free return passage after ten years stay in the Colony for crown lands equivalent in value to the cost of the journey, only 53 Indians received these grants until the law permitting this exchange was repealed in 1891. The Indians were thus arbitrarily deprived of their legitimate dues (Indian Annual Settlers Issue 1980 : 59).

The flow of these contracted workers continued uninterrupted from 1860-1866 when for various reasons this system was suspended. Amongst the reasons for this, two may be listed:

- (a) In 1865 the American Civil War came to an end, the boom in business began to fade and the whole world felt the effects of an economic recession.
- (b) Serious complaints of mistreatment of the workers, cruelty and underpayment were beginning to circulate in India, with the result that the Indian Government was having serious misgivings about the whole system. In fact the system was terminated in 1871 by legislative Enactment.

In Natal, however, when the need for fresh labour became pressing, agitation for the re-introduction of the indentured system began once again. Although in July 1874 the indentured system was resumed the Government of India laid down strict rules regulating the living and service conditions of the immigrants.

After the expiry of the first twenty years of the indentured labour system there was in the Colony of Natal a significant Indian presence. They were made up of ex-indentured labourers who opted to remain as free men as well as of a steadily increasing number of so-called passenger Indians who were attracted primarily by the prospect of trade. The Indian population fed by these two streams increased at an accelerated pace; by 1880 it had reached 20 536 and by 1885 the figure rose to 30 159. An altogether new constituent had been introduced into the population complex of Natal. The adjustment of the pioneering European people of the Colony was to become increasingly tense and difficult with the passage of time.

The position of the Indian was altering considerably. As this process developed over the years the first shots began to be fired of anti-Indian sentiments or prejudice which was

destined to become chronic in later years. It was only in 1960, after a period marked by considerable struggle, trial and tribulation that the Indian was formally recognised as a permanent part of the South African community.

5.2 EARLY RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The major proportion of the Indian population of South Africa is constituted by the Hindus, totalling about sixty percent. Moslems, Christians, Buddhists and a small Parsee community make up the remaining forty percent.

The early Indians in this country brought with them their culture and civilization, their religion and philosophy, their language and literature, their ceremonies and festivals, in fact they transported a minute part of India to South African soil.

The Hindus respond to a common religious call - Hinduism - and after that they go their several ways to define its detail, interpret and apply its dogmas, and observe its ceremonies and rituals (Nowbath 1960 : 17). In language they branch out into four groups ie. Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Gujarati. Furthermore, the linguistic groups are distinctly defined in matters of detail in worship, religious rites, social customs, food and customs although there is considerable overlapping (Nowbath 1960 : 17).

While differences of language and religion modify the homogeneity of South African Indian Society, they do not undermine its unity. Hence, though composed of sub-groups and sub-cultures, South African Indians do constitute a single community in which members occupy the numerous positions in the occupational and social hierarchy, regardless of such differences (Meer 1969 : 63).

The early pioneers came to Natal with their religion and immediately set about establishing it in their new environment. Drawing abundantly from their ancient civilization and culture, the epic stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the spiritual experiences of the saints and sages they established a religious way of life akin to that in India.

The religious practices of the early Hindu covers a wide emotional and intellectual spectrum. It ranges from the most elementary, popular forms of traditional worship ie. worship centred around a murthi or idol (such as Shiva, Krishna, Vishnu, Muruga, Lakshmi, Saraswati or any of the well known deities of the Hindu pantheon) through various interpretations of the neo-Hindu renaissance movements, to rigidly traditional Vedic observances and refined Vedantic philosophies (Van Loon 1979 : 29).

Religious practices took the form basically of traditional orthodox, ritualistic, ceremonially orientated religion. Rituals merged from those with a limited material significance performed at home for the family or friends, to those with a great cosmic significance performed at temples for the community as a whole. A wide range of prescribed patterns of overt activity were involved in its practice. It was an important and legitimate religious style whose chief functional value was to be found in the feeling that was aroused by performance of the ritual. It was through the performance of ritual that a feeling of being linked to the Divine was generated for Hindus (Hofmeyr 1979 : 131).

In a ritual religious orientation, the significance of ritual is seen in that it gives substance to religious identity as well as linking divinity and human being. The most important context for learning religious culture was the home in which children were taught by example and through storytelling by their parents and relatives.

South African Hindus perform many rituals, privately, within the family, and publicly, usually at temples, with varying intensity, the exact form differing with the language group. Swami Sivananda lists seven classes of Hindu rituals:

sandhyopasana, prayer, performed at the meeting point of two periods of time, hence dawn, mid-day, and evening;

samskaras or rites of passage, marking the stages in the life of man from conception to death;

pujas or worship of the supreme and unique God Brahman through idols representing Vishnu, Siva and Sakti in their numerous forms;

five daily yajnas, sacrifices, to God; Man both living and dead, and the elements;

sraddha performed by relatives at a funeral;

pitrupaksha annual offerings to deceased ancestors;

navarathri, adoration of the Supreme Mother (Meer 1969 : 144)

To Swami Sivananda's list, they have added other rituals derived from the traditions of their original geographical areas of emigration.

Fundamental to Hinduism is the belief in the concept of Divinity, Brahman; God that is Saguna, with form, and ultimately Nirguna, formless, eternal, omniscient, indivisible. Because of the doctrine of ishta devata (chosen ideal indicating individual preference) which gives everyone freedom to worship with the attributes of his own choice, that there has arisen the misconception that Hinduism is either naturalism or polytheism or both (Kuper 1974 : 190). However, since believers perceive God within the limitations of their own mind, God may be spoken of by a hundred different names, but the underlying unity in all the multiplicity of imagery is a basic concept of Hinduism. The Divine Spirit is believed to be everywhere and in everything animate and inanimate. Every new possession,

every new venture, the acquisition of a new house, the starting of a new play, is invested with divinity (Meer 1969 : 144).

Hindu theologians refer their actions to a wider range of sacred writing, the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmanas, Puranas, Agamas, Smriti, the two great epics of the Mahabharatha and Ramayana, the Bhagavad Gita, various devotional liturgies and theological philosophical treatises.

Emanating from the central Puranic deities are various recognised sects of which the Vaishnavas (devotees of Vishnu), Saivites (devotees of Siva) and Saktas (devotees of Shakti) are the most widely known in South Africa. However, the distinction between them is not very clear, and the images of deities of all groups are frequently enshrined in the same temple (Kuper 1974 : 195).

One of the main rites of Hindus of all groups is the sacred fire ritual (homa or havan in Hindi, jagnam in Tamil) in which the priest chants invocations, mantras, to the elements and deities while he burns ritually prescribed ingredients such as grain and ghee, honey, sugar, flowers and water. Behind the symbols are religious values of the society; plenty, health, fertility, prosperity, universality (Kuper 1974 : 193). The aim of the havan is to link people in harmony with each other and the world around.

The most regular domestic rite is the lighting of the lamp (cherag in Hindi, kamatchi veleko in Tamil), which is usually stamped with the images of Ganesha (the Wise), or Luxmi, Goddess of Prosperity. Through the worship of the light which is a symbol for the divine light, the devotee tries by means of meditation to reach the Source, that is God residing in his own heart (Maharaj 1968 : 4).

The main traditional ceremony celebrated by all South African Hindus and the only Hindu holiday which is recognised as a public holiday in Indian schools by the Education Department, is Diwali. Diwali is both sacred to Luxmi, the Goddess of

Wealth, and honours the triumphant return of Rama and Sita from their exile (Nowbath 1960 : 19). It also marks the destruction of Narak Asura, the demon of the nether regions.

One of the distinctive features of the South African Hindu is the celebration of many festivals. Festivals may be seen as keeping nations alive and inspire and remind one of one's spiritual and cultural heritage.

During the early period of Hinduism in this country the Hindu temple served a vital role as it became an important forum for religious expression. The temple and its chief functionaries brought local Hindus together and served their religious interests most successfully. The temple came to be recognised by Hindus as a focus for their religious identity.

Many homes have small temples in the yard, consisting of a single room housed with religious images, incense, flowers, etc. Hindus have a private shrine for family worship. The Hindi and Tamil were responsible for the building of the majority of the temples when the immigrants first came to South Africa. It was realised that temples as centres of worship could play an important role in spreading religious ideas to the masses. The temple as a sanctified place of worship has been an integral part of the religious life of the Hindus from time immemorial. When the Hindus landed in this country they brought the concept of temple worship with them. At first it was a place set apart in their homes or in the yard. In the course of time these assumed greater dimension in structure and construction when local groups combined to pool their resources. By the beginning of the present century many temples were built.

The fundamental preoccupation of Hindu thought is with man's release, moksha, from a world into which he is recurringly born. The architecture of the Hindu temple symbolically represents this quest by setting out to dissolve the boundaries between man and the Divine (Michell 1977 : 61). The temple is fundamentally the house of God; that temples are places

where the gods make themselves visible is conveyed by the very terms used to designate a temple: a seat or platform of God (prasada), a house of God (devagriham), a residence of God (devalaya) or a waiting and abiding place (mandiram).

South African temples are formally dedicated to one of the three main Hindu representations of the Divine - Vishnu, Shiva or Sakti, under one of their manifestations. Larger temples, though dedicated to a particular deity, have shrines or smaller temples in their grounds for the other deities. To the Hindu, the temple is not so much a place of congregation as it is a symbol of Divine veneration.

The Hindu temple was not intentionally planned as a place of meeting and prayer for the faithful, but constructed to exalt to the glory of heaven a certain aspect of a deity (Ramdass 1968 : 2). The temple as a whole represents in symbolic and diagrammatic form a plan of the universe.

The focal point of the religious activities embraced by the Hindu temple is the direct worship of God. The Hindu term for temple is vimaha or rath (chariot) implying that it is the vehicle that transports the human to the divine. The practices of temple worship are strictly laid down in a series of texts devoted to ritual, some of which may be traced back to the Puranas and earlier.

Rituals are performed by priests on behalf of the community, so there is no need for a congregation to be present. The absence of a congregation reveals the fundamental role of the temple priests, who represent the community they serve and who are responsible for its satisfactory relationship with the Divine (Michell 1977 : 62).

In addition to daily ceremonies, private worship in the temple is undertaken by individuals who make offerings to the deity and recite prayers. Private worship may be undertaken as a result of simple devotion, or perhaps in the hope of securing

divine assistance in times of trouble, sickness, pain or danger. Vows and presentations of offerings by devotees is an important part of the activities of any Hindu temple.

The temple becomes more congregational in character during festivals, public performances of sacred song and dance to worship God, and during recitals of ancient texts and their exegesis by learned priests. The temple of Hinduism does not function as the focus of community worship as a church, for example, does. It becomes the focal point of community worship only on great religious festivals; the focus of the worshipping community is the joint or extended family which generates a sense of community (Hofmeyr 1982 : 140).

Prior to the emergence of the neo-Hindu movements such as the Divine Life Society and the Ramakrishna Centre the temple was the only institution that served to bring the worshipping community together. With the rise of the neo-Hindu movements in South Africa a new element was introduced to cater for congregational worship. This took the form of ashrams which function in a different manner from the temple. The role of the ashram and the temple will be discussed in Chapter 9 of the study.

Very little is recorded about the Indians' early religious needs and practices except, occasionally, in some reports which detail the results of investigations into the welfare of the indentured labourers. Dissatisfaction was expressed at not having their own areas in which to build their temples and at not being given holidays to celebrate their most important religious festivals. The Indians underwent many strains and stresses in adapting to the foreignness of their new environment, but struggled with courage and determination to preserve their Indian identity and religious character.

It would be meaningless to suggest that Hindus lacked the necessary initiative to organise themselves collectively into sabhas to protect and promote their common religious interests. They had come as indentured labourers, urged by the necessity of securing food and shelter. Before they could think in terms of culture and its promotion, the requirements to support life had to be secured. Even today thousands of Hindus are waging a struggle to establish a secure settled life, a condition so necessary to pursue cultural development (Lalla 1960 : 107).

It is clear, however, that the indentured Indians had quickly organised themselves into communal religious activities. They kept alive their religious consciousness by erecting temples, establishing vernacular classes and schools, by performing rituals and ceremonies, by observing festivals such as Diwali, Ram Naumi, Krishnasthmi, Navaratri, Pongal, Saraswati Puja and Kavadi, by organising processions of chariots and by the recital and reading of prose and poetry from religious literature eg. the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Gita, Thevaram, Thirukurral and Thiruvagasam. The Methodist Mission in Natal reported in 1862 that within two years of their arrival the Indians had started to celebrate their customary festivals (Van Loon 1979 : 15).

Any religious culture in a foreign context can be expected to experience certain difficulties. In spite of their attempts to keep Hinduism alive, the virtual absence of any form of central organisation, lack of leadership, secularization and westernization compounded the problems initiated by historical circumstances for the Hindu.

The arrival in South Africa of Professor Bhai Parmanand in 1905 and three years later of Swami Shankaranand followed by a galaxy of other eminent learned scholars among whom

may be mentioned Pundit Rishiram, Pundit Mehta Jaimini, Swami Adhyanand, Pundit Ganga Prasad, Swami Satya Prakash and Yogi Suddhanand Bharathi, helped to strengthen and rejuvenate the Hindu community. Professor Parmanand delivered eloquent lectures on Hindu religion and culture in all the main centres of South Africa; being an excellent orator in both English and Hindi he was able to attract thousands of followers. Though he was an ardent Arya Samajist he concerned himself with the unification of all the different linguistic and denominational groups of Hindus and to achieve this he established the Hindu Young Men's Association (HYMA) (Chotai 1960 : 83). His inspiring lectures on Hinduism fired the imagination and aroused the enthusiasm of Hindus everywhere.

The vigorous campaigns of Professor Parmanand inspired the Hindus to consolidate their foundation and to extend the scope of their activities. In a few years they were sufficiently organised to be affiliated as constituent bodies to a Hindu national organisation to promote the welfare of the Hindu community as a whole.

Throughout the country the Hindus formed Hindu Young Men's Societies, Ved Dharma Sabhas, Arya Samajes, Hindu Seva Samajes, Thirukutums, Alayams and other societies to promote the religious and spiritual needs of the different denominational groups.

In 1912 His Holiness Swami Shankaranandji, with his penetrating insight, established the South African Maha Sabha to unify all Hindus. He arrived in South Africa in 1908 and provided discourses covering many aspects of life - culture, religion, civilization, ceremonies and mother-tongue education.

In response to his personal appeal, three hundred delegates from all over the country, representing religious institutions of all denominations and sections gathered in conference on the 31st May 1912. The conference was unique because it was the first time that the Hindus were brought together to discuss common problems affecting their welfare. It was stressed that unless they co-ordinated their efforts, there was little hope for the survival of Hinduism. This need for consolidation and unity resulted in the formation of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, with the object of promoting the religious, educational, social and economic welfare and advancement of the Hindu community. The Sabha is fully representative linguistically and denominationally. Although it has the potential to wield great power in this country it should receive the fullest co-operation from all its affiliates and the community to find its rightful place. Thus the service of Swami Shankeranandji to the cause of Hinduism in South Africa is immeasurable (Chotai 1960 : 84).

Pandit Bhavani Dayal, the first colonial-born South African Indian to enter the holy order of sannyasa, sustained the work done by Swami Shankaranandji. Although he distinguished himself as a public worker he was dedicated to the dissemination of the message of the Arya Samaj, the furtherance of the Hindi languages and the emancipation of Indians from political subjection. The pundit and his wife underwent imprisonment for participating in the Satyagraha movement, launched by Gandhi. In recognition of his services in the political field he was elected the President of the Natal Indian Congress in 1938.

An interesting development during this early period was the establishment of the first Stree Arya Samaj on May 25th, 1929. Dr Bhagatram Sahagal, sponsored by the Arya Pratinidhi Samaj arrived with his wife in this country. The presence of his wife inspired the women of Durban to establish the Stree Arya Samaj.

Swami Adhyanand, a profoundly learned scholar, philosopher and a sannyasi arrived in this country in 1934 as the first representative of the Ramakrishna Mission. He performed the official opening of the Hindu Conference organised by the South African Hindu Maha Sabha in 1934. The Swami's inaugural address was presaging; he commented on the problem of proselytization, which in later years grew in proportion and sapped the vitals of the community. He stated that "the votaries of the different faiths should not add to that trouble by the mad run for proselytizing. This Conference should find out ways and means of how Hindu teachings and ideas and philosophies can be best adapted to local needs and conditions (Desai 1960 : 93).

The advent also of great dignitaries with great intellectual capacity and brilliant oratory on Indian culture and philosophy, such as Mr Sastri, Sir Sarvapali Radhakrishnan, Mrs Sarojini Naidu, and Mahatma Gandhi infused fresh and inspiring breath into the religious life of the Hindus. They helped to forge a vital spiritual link between the Hindus in South Africa and the motherland. This enabled the Hindus to shed the insecurity so easily induced in a small community dominated by the powerful impact of western civilization.

Many of the religious leaders from India who visited this country belonged to the Arya Samaj, a reform religious organisation which was established by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. The impact of the movement has been felt primarily in reformed approaches to ritualistic worship among the Gujerati and Hindi speaking peoples. The history of the movement, described sometimes as the "church militant" in the face of Christian and Islamic advances in India has been so profound as to transform the weak-kneed Hindu into a dynamic one imbued with a rejuvenated consciousness that his religion lacks nothing that foreign faiths appear to have in abundance (Naidoo 1982 : 79).

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of South Africa was formed in 1925. It has been one of the foremost Hindu movements that have emerged since the end of the first quarter of this century to enhance the progress towards radical rethinking in religious matters. During its existence the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha has engaged in various undertakings for the general upliftment of Hindus in this country. The most important of these was the periodic holding of conferences and gatherings to revitalise and energise the interest of the Hindus in their religion, language and culture. The Arya Yuvak Sabha, the Aryan Benevolent Home, Veda Dharma Sabha, and numerous Arya Samaj organisations are among the institutions of service affiliated to this Sabha.

The early years of the nineteen hundreds bore witness to the growth of many organisations dedicated to the encouragement and preservation of Hindu religion and culture, vernacular languages, construction of temples, religious institutions, Sanskrit, the propagation of literature and the educational and social upliftment of the people. Amongst them the Andhra Maha Sabha, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (1925), Kathiawad Hindu Seva Samaj (1943), Sree Sanathan Dharma Sabha (1941), Surat Hindoo Association (1907), Transvaal Hindu Seva Samaj (1932) and many others are worthy of mention. These organisations helped to promote and establish the social unity of the different linguistic sections of the Hindu community. The preservation and growth of Hinduism before the advent of the neo-Hindu movements in South Africa was owed, to a large extent, to these organisations.

Thus from as early as 1925 attempts were made to modernise approaches to religious thought and behaviour in South Africa. The stirring of the neo-Hindu movements has helped to confirm the belief that whenever the old and archaic has had to give way to the new and reformed, the community responds with

ready enthusiasm; that the resurgence of interest has been swift and the new approaches encouraged have been a source of great value to the entire Hindu community (Naidoo 1982 : 78).

5.3 HINDUISM IN A FOREIGN CONTEXT

During the period of indenture, by virtue of the conditions of the contract and the controls that were exercised over Indians it was not always possible for them to observe many of their customs and religious practices as they did in the native villages in India. They adhered, however, to as many of their former ways of life as it was possible in the new environment. In time many of the older customs were abandoned and some considerably modified in keeping with new circumstances and the adoption of western forms of life.

Any religious culture in a foreign context can be expected to experience certain difficulties. The survival of a tradition depends upon the survival of some kind of institutional structure by which it is represented. The institutional structures of Hinduism are not entirely well adapted to the South African context. Thus the problems initiated by historical circumstances have been compounded for Hindus by the foreignness of South Africa as a religious and cultural context.

The economic hardships, social disruptions and political handicaps experienced by the South African Indian community from 1920 onwards had generated a complex identity crisis. In 1891 legislation prohibiting Indians from entering or living in the Orange Free State was passed by that Republic. This was among the first of successive legislative measures which have tended to harass the Indian community. Repatriation was encouraged, and it was only in 1960 that the Indian was formally recognised as a permanent part of the South African community (Hofmeyr 1979 : 130).

During the 1920's, a process of socio-political attrition was set in motion which was designed to strip the Indians of what remained of their political rights, their freedom of movement, domicile and trading opportunities. The depression of the 1930's added to their trauma, reducing many to unemployment and destitution. The majority, faced with these adversities, threw themselves with great vigour and faith into their popular forms of worship in order to obtain solace, a sense of relevance and belonging that was so much lacking in their situation.

The conditions of Indians in South Africa might have deteriorated and their cause forgotten had it not been for the arrival of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in South Africa in 1893. He laid the foundation not only of Indian political action, but of non-white resistance in South Africa as a whole (Meer 1969 : 27). Gandhi came to fight a legal case, and stayed twenty years to improve Indian living conditions. Gandhi felt, that in the face of continued anti-Indian feeling and legislation, the only way his people could achieve anything was by forming a permanent political body to carry out sustained protest. As a result, the Natal Indian Congress was formed on May 22, 1894, with Gandhi as its first Secretary. Gandhi's greatest contribution lay in his philosophy of satyagraha or non-violent resistance to acts of injustice, and the use of moral rather than physical pressure to coerce change. Gandhi established the political and ideological orientation of the Natal Indian Congress and its associates to protect Indian rights and to promote Indian interests in South Africa generally. He accepted equality as a fundamental human right and emphasised in addition that the South African Government was bound by treaty obligations to extend equal citizenship rights to Indians (Meer 1969 : 28).

The prevailing uncertainty regarding their status could not have encouraged Indians to take root as a cultural community in South Africa.

An important effect of the foreignness of context is to be seen in the religious and cultural sacrifices which have had to be made out of pragmatic considerations. As Hindus have switched from agronomous to industrial pursuits, it has become increasingly difficult for many Hindus to uphold the ritual ceremonies that their religion involves. Neither the working time-table, nor the working calendar is entirely accommodating to their ceremonial needs (Hofmeyr 1979 : 131).

Culturally, a more serious effect may be seen in the loss of competence by Hindus of their vernacular languages. Language, amongst the Hindus is an important element in cultural identity. This loss of a sense of commitment has led to a serious erosion of Hindu culture. The effect of this loss has been to increase the inaccessibility of religious literature.

During the early years the peculiar social conditions of the immigrants, governed by factors of indenture, were largely responsible for the extent and content of vernacular education. Among the literate, particularly in the case of the Brahmins, education was a family affair where the sons were initiated into Vedic lore and the rituals and mantras necessary to the functions of a priest. In cases where the parents were illiterate, the children on the sugar estates and the collieries gathered at the home of a priest or a learned one and acquired the rudiments of reading and writing (Rambiritch 1960 : 67).

As the number of freed immigrants grew, a change in their social status became inevitable. Little Indian settlements arose away from the precincts of the strictly regulated estate or barracks life; temples became distinctive features of these communities. The temples, besides serving the needs of worship were also dharmasalas and patsalas, where the educational destiny of the youth was entrusted. The money for running most of the schools were raised from the community; no state assistance was received.

However, the absence of competent organisation were serious drawbacks in the effort to propagate knowledge of the vernacular. The will and desire to study their mother-tongue were present but the system did not lend itself to the evolution of conventional schools and not much was achieved in the first fifty years (Rambiritch 1960 : 68).

The loss of competence in language seems to have intensified a feeling on the part of many Hindus that they were losing touch with their religion and culture.

An important characteristic of Hinduism has been its extraordinary reliance on its social structures. The fact that Hinduism lacks a central and nation-wide organisation with a single head, and that it is largely dependent for its perpetuation on such social institutions as the joint family - institutions which are changing in important respects, renders it peculiarly vulnerable to the forces of secularization.

Hinduism as it came to South Africa basically involved a ritual orientation. In a ritual religious orientation, the significance of ritual is seen in that it gives substance to religious identity as well as linking divinity and human being. The most important context for learning religious culture was the home in which children were taught by example and through storytelling by their parents and relatives. Ritual obligations were learnt by imitation of the elders in the joint family, thus accompanying belief-systems were received through oral instruction. In Hinduism therefore, the focus of the worshipping community is the joint or extended family, which generates a sense of community worship. It offers support in times of stress and doubt and acts as the touchstone for religious behaviour and value (Hofmeyr 1982 : 140).

The most important structured kinship unit of South African Indian society is the patrilineal extended family known as the

kutum (Kuper 1974 : 97). It is a consequence of a deeply ingrained Hindu kinship awareness which has its origin in the Vedic ideal of the five-generation joint family unit. This kutum is a highly structured kinship entity consisting of members, all of whom feel bound to a distinct family image with its own peculiar, hereditary, social, ethical, occupational and religious dimensions (Van Loon 1979 : 17). In South African Indian life, the kutum lays the basis for group solidarity. Socialisation in the kutum emphasises the internalisation of discipline and respect for authority. Hence Hindus do not break easily with tradition; and even the educated and professional elite, whose outer forms appear completely urban and emancipated are in effect conventional and restrained by kutum norms (Meer 1969 : 71). Thus Indian family life had succeeded in maintaining many of its traditions, and thereby projected an image of greater integration than would be expected in a community exposed to secularization and westernization.

However, the joint-family has come under pressure for a variety of reasons. In South Africa Hindus have constant exposure to Western family organisation and it now seems that the nuclear family system is preferred (Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen 1981 : 27). Oosthuizen refers to it as a "democratization process" in which Hindus are seeking change through the adoption of the idea that individuals should be independent. The process has been accelerated by the fact that participation in commerce and industry demands a certain individual mobility. Material considerations make employment a top priority. Mobility is also limited by government policy (Hofmeyr 1979 : 132).

The functional implications of the break-down of the joint or extended family are extensive from a religious point of view. The break-down has also contributed considerably to the break-down of traditional instructional processes. Without their

elders to inform and motivate them, young Hindus are ignorant of both the belief and behaviours associated with typical home rituals. The joint family system was the institution which used to locate Hindus within the context of a worshipping community.

A further effect of the foreign context on Hinduism in the area of social organisation is the break-down of the caste system in South Africa. According to Kuper, in South Africa, caste in the Indian community has virtually broken down. The religious sanction behind the caste rating is disappearing. The only active principle which persists to some extent is caste endogamy, and endogamy, in some form or other (religious, social, linguistic, or class) regulates marriage in every society and in itself does not constitute caste (Kuper 1974 : 17).

In India, as a result of increased secularization and mobility, and the spread of equalitarian ideology, the caste system no longer perpetuates values traditionally considered to be an essential part of Hinduism (Srinivas 1966 : 137). The leaders of the neo-Hindu Renaissance in the 19th Century have been vociferous in their criticism against caste. In South Africa, contextual pressures have reinforced the moral pressure to do away with caste. In many contexts of social involvement caste simply does not apply. As Indians pass in increasing numbers through Western institutions and are absorbed into commerce and industry, new criteria determine social status and social relations (Hofmeyr 1979 : 132). The comprehensive government of social relations in terms of caste is increasingly less operative.

In ritually orientated religious practises the Brahmins or priestly class were primarily religious technicians. It was specifically their duty to know when, how and why the rituals were to be performed (Hofmeyr 1982 : 139). The gradual erosion of priestly authority and prestige, have brought about

a situation in which priests lack the confidence to take any initiative in religious or social reform. In India the orthodox elements in Hindu society were put continuously on the defensive ever since the early years of the nineteenth century when European missionaries began attacking Hinduism for its "many ills and shortcomings" (Srinivas 1966 : 133). While the new Hindu elite deeply resented such attacks, they were able to take a critical view of their religion. Thus began a long era of reform of Hindu society and religion, and of re-interpretation of the latter. Thus re-interpretation in India came from the new Hindu elite and not the Vaidikas or priests.

Another factor which compounded the complex identity problem with which the early South African Hindu had to contend with was Christian missionary work, especially Pentecostalism. Their sense of insecurity, created by the gradual break-down of the traditional joint-family system was compensated by a deliberately cultivated feeling of integration into a larger, spiritual family.

However, this type of spiritual metamorphosis was not the answer to the Indians real difficulties. It left the Christian Indian substantially where he was: underprivileged, politically amputated, racially and socially segregated and burdened with economic restrictions and employment curbs (Van Loon 1979 : 20).

Any human tradition is highly dependent for its future upon the youth who share its locale and inherits its environment. The South African Hindu youth finds itself more and more influenced by the secularization process which has a direct bearing on religious attitudes as has been experienced in the West for many decades. The youth find themselves confronted with the new developments in a western milieu. Influenced and even to an extent dominated by a nihilistic disposition of secularism, they question traditional attitudes. They are no longer influenced by practices that convey no intelligence

to their spiritual thinking. Loyalty to the faith of their ancestors cannot be established on purely sentimental grounds (Lalla 1968 : 2). The youth were no longer guided by the joint family in which the religious model played a vital role. The older South African is as a rule a marginal person ie. between the old and the new, in spite of his reaction against new trends (Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr 1979 : 31). The same attitude is prevalent amongst the Hindu youth.

The problem here involves not only determining whether there is a revolt against or lack of interest, it also requires that where there appears to be rejection or indifference we ascertain what it is that is being discarded or ignored. Is it the folk religion and cult, the great tradition and the philosophical-theological presuppositions inherent in it, the specifically religious acts and social customs of the broad total tradition, or the general social structures and mores possibly peripheral to religion (Ashby 1974 : 50).

As stated previously an important characteristic of Hinduism has been its extraordinary reliance on social structures. In South Africa during the 20's and 30's the institutional forms of Hinduism under pressure were its ritual system, the joint family system and the caste system. As has already been discussed, the institutional structures of Hinduism are not entirely well-adapted to the South African context. Of the three, the last in its traditional form is perhaps least essential. Irrespective of whether or not this is felt to be for the better, it is important to realise that by its erosion one of the major institutional forms by which Hindus used to identify themselves has been considerably weakened (Hofmeyr 1979 : 133).

The effect of the gradual weakening of the joint family is more serious; it located Hindus within the context of a worshipping community. It provides the lines of communication

through which Hindus could discuss and mutually reinforce their religious commitments. It also provided the contact between older and younger Hindus needed in order to ensure that the tradition could be passed on from generation to generation (Hofmeyr 1979 : 133).

Hinduism, as it came to South Africa, basically involved a ritual orientation, the significance of which was seen in that it gave substance to religious identity. With the erosion of ritual a vacuum was left in the practice of Hinduism. It became increasingly difficult for Hindus to provide a concrete point of reference for what their Hinduism involved.

The gradual erosion of the above institutional forms had serious functional consequences for Hinduism. As had happened several decades before in India, two opposing tendencies evolved within the Indian psyche viz., a desire to de-Indianise themselves and on the other hand, a wish to consolidate their besieged identity; to find their true, intrinsic Indian-ness; their authentic self-image with clearly defined priorities, standards and values from which it would be possible to determine their stance towards the challenge that faced them (Van Loon 1979 : 19).

In the face of cataclysmic changes, if Hinduism was to survive as a meaningful system, its survival depended on a radical orientation in their thinking. It also depended upon Hinduism's ability to develop institutional adaptive alternatives. During the 1940's such developments could already be seen to be taking place. A new element was introduced in the development of Hinduism in South Africa in the form of institutional organisations manifest in the religious systems offered by the neo-Hindu movements such as the Divine Life Society and the Ramakrishna Mission.

CHAPTER 6THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY IN SOUTH AFRICA6.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Within a short period of forty years, the Divine Life Society in South Africa, from its humble beginnings has grown into one of the largest and most influential neo-Hindu movements today.

In 1947, Sri V Srinivasen, a schoolmaster from Durban stumbled across Swami Sivananda's book, the 'Practice of Karma Yoga', while looking through religious literary books at the Vedic bookshop in Bond Street. He was attracted by the title of the book and purchased it. The book effected an immediate transformation in him and brought into focus the religious yearning of preceding years. A deep yearning for God-realisation was instilled after which he resigned his job and plunged into the practice of Divine Life (Anantanarayana 1979 : 158).

In 1948 this humble, simple, young and modest (almost shy) gentleman visited Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh, India (Venkatesananda 1961 : 244). During the course of the year 1949 Brother Srinivasen returned to South Africa, after which Swami Sivananda wrote to him to open a Branch of the Divine Life Society.

As Brother Srinivasen, who was later to be known as Swami Sahajananda was very nervous and shy to take up the work he did not respond to the Master's advice and kept silent.

Swami Sivananda wrote a second letter, dated 18th October 1949, with the request: "Kindly start a Branch of the Divine Life Society there. I recognise you as the Secretary."

Swami Sahajananda was apprehensive but he thought that since he was a disciple he should at least obey the Master now, so he sent the affiliation fee to register the Branch.

The Master was evidently impatient to get the Branch opened for he sent a third letter before the affiliation fee reached him, in which he commanded: "Kindly open the Branch of the Divine Life Society at once. Do some silent work". This letter was dated 11th November 1949 (Divine Life Society Report, ND : 1).

Swami Sahajananda was initially not very keen on establishing a branch of the Divine Life Society locally since his main objective was to pursue his spiritual aspiration.

The South African branch of the Divine Life Society thus took root in Durban in 1949 with one member, Swami Sahajananda who was at once the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. True to the spirit of the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh he set about disseminating knowledge about God through literature from the prolific pen of Swami Sivananda.

Swami Sahajananda commenced the publication of a quarterly journal entitled Light, Power and Wisdom. This journal was later called Path to God-realisation and is now referred to as "Divine Life." He used to finance it himself and distribute it free, often selecting names at random from the telephone directory.

Soon two other devotees joined Swami Sahajananda and the three conducted their weekly satsangs at the Vaithianatha Easparar Temple in Umgeni Road. Organised services would consist of reading selections from the Gita, singing of kirtans and discussion of religion and philosophy.

Often, when his two friends failed to turn up, Swami Sahajananda used to go to the temple all alone and conduct the service. He went through the whole procedure of singing kirtans, reading the Gita and performing the arati, even though there was no other soul present. When Swami Sivananda was informed of this he commented that if one is sincere many would join. The truth of the statement is evident today since the Divine Life

Society has a very large following from the community (Divine Life Society Report, ND : 2).

Swami Sahajananda's spirit of dedication, sincerity and humility stirred everyone he came into contact with and the mission grew with the help and support of patrons of the cause (Venkatesananda 1961 : 244). He undertook a second pilgrimage to Sivanandanagar in 1956 where he was initiated into the Holy Order of Sannyasa by Swami Sivananda and given the monastic name of Sahajananda. Filled with the spiritual power of the Master, Swami Sahajananda returned to Durban to vivify the Divine Life Society of South Africa.

The Society began to grow but was virtually homeless. Not long after the formation of the Society, Sri KG Pather offered his premises at 47 North Street at the disposal of the Society for conducting satsang. After functioning here for several years, the centre shifted to 38 First Avenue, where Sri VS Pillay provided a spacious place to accommodate the growth of the Movement.

The presentation of a small Adana printing press in 1950 enabled the establishment of a small press to print the very first publication consisting of the journal and leaflets. It was soon found necessary to purchase a small treadle machine but these were not enough to carry out the dissemination of free and cheap literature. An automatic printing machine was the solution (Hindu Heritage 1960 : 186).

This necessitated a move once again in 1956, this time through the generosity of the Shree Sanathan Dharma Sabha, which provided a place at Crabbe Street where the Society installed its first Heidelberg printing press. The spacious hall that was provided also provided accommodation for the devotees.

In a few years time the mission began to grow rapidly. Swami Sivananda's birthday was celebrated for the first time in 1950 at the temple in Umgeni Road with about 20 people attending.

The following year, the celebration which was held at the Mahatma Gandhi Hall attracted about 400 people. Nine years later the same function attracted an assembly of 3 500 made up of Indians, Whites and Blacks drawn from all parts of the country (Hindu Heritage 1960 : 185).

In 1954 the Tongaat branch was formed and from this time the Movement began to gather momentum. It was charged with the task of providing the key men in the formative years of the Divine Life Society in South Africa to co-ordinate the branches and to formulate general policy.

In November 1955 the Society purchased a two-acre site; on the advice of the Master a further three acres were purchased, at Reservoir Hills. This was made possible mainly through the magnanimity of the late Mr PM Naidoo, who donated £1 000 towards the purchase price.

The building project commenced in March 1959. People volunteered their free labour during weekends and the building was constructed. By September of the same year the ashram was ready for opening. On 9th September, a day after Swami Sivananda's birthday, the ashram was opened by Srimati Sivabakium in memory of her late husband.

The dissemination of spiritual literature, one of the most important functions of the Society, was destined to play a great part in the spiritual awakening in this country. A number of Swami Sivananda's works were out of print, others were still in the manuscript stage awaiting sponsors and those in print were not enough for free circulation. This led to the purchase of modern printing machinery costing approximately £10 000 (Hindu Heritage 1960 : 186). The machinery was housed in the Ashram in the Press which was run by selfless workers, most of the important work was done by Swami Sahajananda himself (Venkatesananda 1961 : 245).

Conscious of the value of planned discussion, the Society held

its first conference in St Aidan's Hall in 1957. Two papers, which were to have far reaching effects, were read. They were

1. "The Importance of Literature in the Divine Life Movement";
and
2. "The Need for a Divine Life Centre."

In 1958 the Society was registered with the Registrar of Companies, under the Companies Act of 1926, with limited liability, with 18 senior members constituting its Board of Governors.

In 1964 a new constitution was drawn up and adopted at a meeting held on 11 July of that year. Henceforth the Society ceased to function as a company since provision was now made for devotees to become formal members of the Society. The Board of Governors was replaced by Trustees who were appointed to administer all immovable property.

6.2 THE GURU

The Divine Life Society in South Africa is based on the ancient Upanishadic institution, the ashram, which operates on monastic lines. It is a retreat centred around a Guru whose presence, in many ways, makes the ashram.

The traditional concept of the Guru is a unique idea in the cultural treasury of India. For, it is this concept that is to a large extent responsible for the safe and unbroken perpetuation of some of the most precious aspects of India's spiritual heritage. It is the institution of Guru-Parampara (Guru-disciple lineage) that has, from generation to generation and down the centuries, closely safeguarded and handed down the living experiences of the seers of the Upanishadic age (Sivananda 1981a: 29).

Historically, the Guru has been considered both as God and as an intermediary of God. The Guru is God Himself manifesting in a personal form to guide the aspirant; the guru is verily a link between the individual and the immortal (Sivananda Gospel : 273).

The Guru is one who removes the darkness, andhkar from the heart of the disciple and leads him to the light, prakash. According to Swami Sivananda a Guru is he who has direct knowledge of Brahman through experience, he is primarily one who is 'established in God', a Brahmanishtha, as the Mundaka Upanishad (2.12) reveals.

The Guru is the door to liberation; the gateway to the transcendental Truth-consciousness. The aid of a Guru is considered an absolute necessity for every aspirant on the spiritual path. The nature of egoism is such that one will not be able to find one's own faults. The aspirant who is under the guidance of a Master has his evil qualities and defects eradicated. His association with the Guru is a fortress to guard him against the temptations and unfavourable forces of the material world. The very presence or company of a Spiritual Master is elevating, inspiring and stirring, living in his company is spiritual education (Sivananda, Gospel : 274-275).

According to Ramana Maharishi, the rationale is that 'God, Guru and Self are all the same'. He says that first a spiritual man takes God for his guru. Later, God brings him into contact with a personal guru and the man recognises him as all. As a result of serving him by the grace of the Guru, he learns to surrender himself and thus realises that the Self-God in him - is the Master (Vandana 1978 : 27).

Thus in the Hindu tradition, in all ages, is a quest for a living charismatic guru, who represents the immediacy or the indwellingness of the divine with the human sphere, and the gurus are these persons whom VA Smith characterises as the ones who 'have conspicuously modified and ramified and enriched ... the cumulative tradition in its developing course' (Smith 1964 : 143). In the study of the Divine Life Society, Swami Sivananda and Swami Sahajananda, the Spiritual Head of the South African Divine Life Society deals with the more recent phase of this development.

Hindu monastic orders are organised around the concept of a teaching tradition, sampradaya related to a famous teacher (acarya) who first enunciated the philosophical, religious system of the order. Although Hindu monastic orders are found as early as the Upanishadic times, the best-known orders were begun by: Sankara (788-820); Ramanuja (c. 1017); Nimbarka (c. 1162); Madhva (1199-1278); and Vallabha (c. 1500).

The history of Hindu monastic orders, however, is much more complex. Furthermore, a monastic who becomes recognised as a famous guru begins, as it were, a new sampradaya, however still linking himself back to his spiritual lineage, guruparampara. Swami Sivananda was initiated into the Order of Sannyasa by Swami Viswananda Saraswati and thereafter became known as Swami Sivananda Saraswati. Swami Sivananda's spiritual lineage is traced back to Sankara, the famous Avaitic (non-dualism) philosopher of the eight century AD in India.

The almost limitless flexibility of the Hindu understanding of sampradaya as a concept and as a religious institution allows for a claim to tradition, while at the same time ever adapting to new situations and times (Miller 1981; 82).

The relationship between the guru and disciple is a spiritual relationship. It is considered to be very sacred and divine. The guru will find out, through a close study of the aspirant, the latter's tastes, temperament and capacity and decide for him the most suitable path. He would then prescribe different kinds of sadhanas according to the nature, capacity and qualification of the aspirant (Sivananda 1981 : 33).

The guru in return, exacts a strict obedience - prompt, willing, without criticism or complaint. Swami Sivananda used to say that he would rather have obedience to the guru's word, guru-updeshpalan, than prostrations from his disciples (Vandana 1978 : 29).

The guru often tests the students in various ways. Some students

misunderstand him and lose their faith, hence they are not benefitted. Those who stand the test boldly come out successful in the end. The disciple should come into closer contact with the guru during his service and try and imbibe all his guru's good qualities.

According to Swami Sivananda, the grace of a guru is necessary. The spiritual vibrations of the Master are actually transferred to the mind of the disciple. Spiritual power is transmitted by the guru to a disciple whom the guru considers fit. The guru can transform the disciple by a look, a touch, a thought, a word, or by mere willing. This ability stems from the guru-disciple lineage. It is a hidden mystic science and is handed down from guru to disciple.

The power or energy that passes into the disciple is never claimed as his own by the true guru. The power is God's, not mine, Swami Chidananda mentioned to Vandana, the writer of "Gurus and ashrams". However, the disciple should not sit idle but is exhorted to perform rigid spiritual practices, to strive, purify, meditate and realise God (Sivananda, Gospel : 280).

Sitting at the feet of a God-experienced man in silence is one of the most powerful experiences one can have. The power of silence as a means of communication is a feature of Indian spirituality. The guru's silence is the loudest counsel, updesha, according to Ramana Maharishi, a realised saint and philosopher. He is one who, having discovered the source within himself, is able to let others drink of the waters of Fullness, Purnam, and Bliss, Anandam.

However exacting the obedience and discipline might be, there is always a bond of love between the true guru and his disciple, who is the guru's 'dear-one', pretha, (Katha Upanishad 1.29). The teacher-disciple (guru-shishya) relationship is based essentially on love, God is love and the goal, liberation, moksha, is found only in oneness with God (Vandana 1978 : 30).

As in traditional Hinduism where the guru is the first basic feature of ashram life, Swami Sahajananda, who is the Spiritual Head of the Divine Life Society in South Africa, is the focus and the inspiration of the ashram.

A direct disciple and initiate of Swami Sivananda, Swami Sahajananda has grown to be recognised as one of the most outstanding and dedicated disciples of his guru. It is as a result of Swami Sahajananda's untiring, selfless and dedicated service that the Society has grown from its humble beginnings when Swami Sahajananda himself was the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, to one of the largest, dynamic and most influential Hindu Movements in the country.

As Spiritual Head, Swami Sahajananda represents traditional authority, all decisions and activities of the ashram must first receive his sanction and blessings. While he is Spiritual Head, Swami Sahajananda is also directly involved in overseeing the secular duties of the ashram. Although Swami Sahajananda is deeply immersed in traditional Hinduism he is not removed from the needs and challenges that face modern Hindu Society in a western, secular environment. It is this awareness that attracts many enquiring young people who are products of the western, secular milieu to the Society.

In addition to being guru ie. spiritual preceptor who guides the devotees in the spiritual path he is totally involved in the multi-faceted activities of the ashram. While many are not aware of his programme, Swami Sahajananda follows a rigorous daily work schedule. Most of his time is spent working in the Press, a hive of activity in the Centre, where he personally undertakes all the printing involved, in addition to other work.

Although Swami Sahajananda is a strict disciplinarian, a quality necessary for both the spiritual growth of the devotees and the efficient functioning of a large organisation, his loving and gentle nature makes him easily approachable to all. His overwhelming compassion is visible in the Society's extensive

involvement in the social sphere. Swami Sahajananda has a close and loving relationship with his disciples whom he is protective towards. As one devotee explains, "In Swamiji I see real true spiritual love, love that is untainted by personal considerations. Swamiji is our Guru as well as friend and close brother." The devotees have great reverence and love for their guru of whom they speak very fondly and with great joy. Swami Sahajananda is a source of inspiration not only to devotees of Divine Life Society but also to all those who came into contact with him.

Swami Sahajananda exemplifies the ideal of perfection. He constantly extols his devotees to give practical expression to religious and philosophical concepts. Swami Sahajananda in many ways walks in his Guru's footsteps and this is seen in his giving nature. The writer, during her several visits to the ashram, witnessed the loving and charitable nature of Swami Sahajananda who always showered visitors with literature and gifts.

It is very seldom that one finds Swami Sahajananda in the forefront of the public eye. His humble and gentle nature is reflected in his preference to work silently and tirelessly at the ashram spreading the universal teachings of Swami Sivananda throughout the country through the dissemination of literature and social involvement.

Swami Sahajananda characterises the true spirit of sannyasa. His entire life is dedicated to selfless service for the welfare of humanity as a whole. His actions and life echoes the true spirit of sannyasa as reflected in the Bhagavad Gita - Sarva-bhutih hite ratah (one who delights in the welfare of all living beings).

Swami Sahajananda has given practical expression in his work and action to Swami Sivananda's yoga of synthesis since one finds in him a blend of karma, jnana and bhakti which reflects 'Divine Life', a life lived in the atman or spirit.

Swami Sahajananda's selfless spirit of total dedication to the upliftment of not only Hindu society but society as a whole has earned him and the Divine Life Society respect and admiration from the community at large as well as the many visitors from abroad who visit the ashram regularly. He is undoubtedly one of the foremost spiritual leaders whose contribution to Hinduism and race relations in South Africa is invaluable.

6.3 THE ASHRAM

The Ashram is an important institution that has existed from Upanishadic times and has served an important spiritual function in disseminating religious and philosophical ideas. Ashram life which is characterized by its simple, serene, peaceful atmosphere has been considered from ancient times in India to be a very effective means of attaining union with God. According to Swami Chidananda an ashram is a group of people who have put the effort towards God-realisation before all else. An ashram is a powerhouse of the spirit where the central concern is the attaining of the knowledge of God, Brahmavidya. Swami Abhishiktananda used to say that the real foundations of any true ashram are to be found not so much in the soil where the huts are as in the heart of the guru who lives there, and in his personal contact in the depth with the Indweller. The guru is the first basic feature of ashram life, the inspiration of the ashram (Vandana 1978 : 16).

To understand the origin of the ashram, it is necessary to understand the four stages of life or, ashramas, in ancient Indian society.

Life, which is regarded by Hinduism as a journey towards liberation, moksha, is marked by four stages, each of which has its responsibilities and obligations. The first stage of life covers the period of study, when a celibate student, brahmachari, cultivates his mind and prepares himself for future service to society. He lives with his teacher in a forest retreat and regards the latter as his spiritual father. Normally, the brahmachari would stay with his master for twelve years.

With marriage, a person enters the second stage, which is that of a householder, grihasta. Marriage is a discipline for participation in the larger life of society. Husband and wife are co-partners in their spiritual progress, and the family provides a training ground for the practice of unselfishness. A healthy householder is the foundation of a good society for, while discharging his duties he does not deviate from the path of righteousness. This stage lasted until he became a grandparent.

In the third stage, that of the forest-dwelling recluse, vanaprastha, he would live in retirement and is devoted to scriptural study and meditation on God.

During the fourth stage, a man renounces the world and embraces the monastic life, sannyasi. He is no longer bound by social laws, he devotes himself to the cultivation of God-consciousness. He remains clad in saffron as a symbol of a life of total renunciation. During the fourth stage, a disciplined life attains to its full blossoming. The sannayasa would be a constant reminder to the society of the only true Reality, the absolute transcendence of God, the supreme goal of our existence.

Through the disciplines of the four stages of life, a Hindu learns progressive non-attachment to the transitory world (Nikhilananda 1968 : 79).

A discussion of the four stages of life render it easier to understand the concept of an ashram. The word ashram is variously derived from the root 'shram', meaning intense exertion of body and mind; the ashram is considered a place of ascetic exertion.

The Divine Life Society in South Africa is based on this ancient religious institution, the ashram, where people came to experience God. Everything in the ashram way of life ie. work, prayer or devotion awakens unto an awareness of Brahman, the transcendent Absolute. Sadhana must be primary and all-important in an ashram.

While the one essential purpose of the Divine Life Society Ashram is the search for God, they have not divorced themselves from social responsibility. Swami Sahajananda's overwhelming compassion and concern for humanity and in keeping with Swami Sivananda's emphasis on selfless service to one's fellowman the Divine Life Society is engaged deeply in the social sphere. The social work in which the sadhakas are involved is viewed as a discipline in their spiritual evolution.

The atmosphere of peace, shanti, which permeates the surrounding is immediately felt by a visitor to the ashram. Peace predominates even though there is earnest striving in the search for God and service to Society in various forms. Silence at the ashram is observed as a matter of course. The Upanishads state: Now what people call the practise of silence is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only by leading such a life does one find the atman and meditate. Silence then is not so much a rule to be observed by refraining from speech, but an opportunity for growing in the sense of the Divine Presence (Vandana 1978 : 46).

The ashram at Reservoir Hills, (Headquarters) consists of a mobile and a permanent community. The mobile community is comprised of visitors and spiritual aspirants who are welcome to stay at the ashram for a limited period. Prior arrangements with the Management is a requisite for those who wish to spend some time at the ashram. Visitors and aspirants residing in the ashram are required to follow a spiritual routine which includes asanas, meditation, study, rest and karma yoga. The purpose of the stay should be utilised to enhance their spiritual life.

The permanent residents consist of the sannyasin, brahmacharis, brahmacharinis, grihastas (married individuals who are permanent residents at the ashram) and sadhakas. The sadhakas are those devotees who are totally committed to the ashram although they may not necessarily reside at the ashram. Most of their evenings and weekends and spare time are dedicated

to voluntary service in the spirit of karma yoga in assisting in the numerous undertakings of the ashram.

The Divine Life Society ashram presently has one sannayasin viz. Swami Sahajananda, a direct disciple of Swami Sivananda, who is the Spiritual Head of the Society. As is the traditional custom, the sannayasa dons ochre robes which signifies one has embraced the life of complete renunciation.

The first initiate into the holy order of sannyasa by Swami Sahajananda was Swami Atmananda, who proved to be a disciple of outstanding calibre. The Society suffered a great loss with the early demise of Swami Atmananda in a motor accident about three years ago. In paying tribute to Swami Atmananda, Swami Sahajananda stated that he had met many Swamis in his visits to the West and India, but he had yet to meet one who excelled Swami Atmananda in the spirit of obedience, self-surrender and dedication. He added that even though Swami Atmananda was brilliant in everything that he did, he was extremely humble and simple (Report, Divine Life Society, June, 1985 : 1).

Presently there are five brahmacharis and five brahmacharinis resident at the Reservoir Hills ashram. The four ashramas discussed previously represent a progressive pattern towards the attainment of moksha. However, one could begin one's ascetic life even in one's earlier stage. Brahmacharya, according to Swami Sivananda is purity in thought, word and deed. Swami Sivananda constantly emphasized the need for the practise of brahmacharya, which he considered as an essential element in continuing the journey towards moksha (Gyan 1980 : 57).

Sadhakas who are initiated into brahmacharya wear yellow garb while a uniform pattern of dressing is adhered to by the brahmacharinis who don white saris.

One of the most striking features of the Divine Life Society is its strict code of discipline which also governs the life of the

ashramites. This disciplined atmosphere is a source of the strength of the ashram because it ensures that the ashramites, who are looked upon by the public as a source of inspiration, live a lifestyle that is a credit to the sannyasa ashrama.

A daily routine is maintained at the ashram. The ashramites are involved in different forms of karma yoga. This includes working in the Press, building projects, collection of funds, literature distribution, visiting donors etc. Each of the ashramites are assigned specific duties.

The following is a daily schedule of the ashramites:

4.00 am	Rise and shower
5.00 am - 6.00 am	Meditation
6.00 am - 6.30 am	Yoga asanas
6.30 am - 7.15 am	Karma Yoga (Maintenance of ashram)
7.15 am - 7.45 am	Breakfast
7.45 am - 8.30 am	Preparation for day's work - reading
8.30 am - 5.00 pm	Allocated duties
5.00 pm	Supper
6.30 pm	Satsang (Compulsory for all)
8.00 pm	Free time (This time may be used to complete outstanding work or Swadhyaya - reading of religious literature Self-study; writing of spiritual diary; silent Japa
10.00 pm	Retire

The above daily routine which the ashramites follow allows for slight flexibility whenever the need arises. The ashramites see themselves as members of a large spiritual family hence a family atmosphere prevails. They consider themselves very fortunate to have the constant presence of their guru or spiritual preceptor to facilitate their spiritual journey.

The brahmacharyas and sadhakas occupy themselves in the sadhana of selfless service. The injunctions of Swami Sivananda

viz. serve, love, purify, meditate and realise are given practical expression in the life and action of the ashramites at the ashram where God and religion are taught and lived. The ashramites constitute the core of the ashram since all the undertakings of the ashram depends to a large extent on the dedication and devotion of the ashramites.

6.4 THE ORGANISATION OF THE SOCIETY

The Divine Life Society in South Africa exists as a self-sufficient and financially independent unit from the Headquarters at Rishikesh. However, close contact is maintained for religious and cultural purposes. The Society operates as a complete institution with formal organisation and ramifications in order to operate efficiently.

The Spiritual Head of the Society, His Holiness Sri Swami Sahajananda represents traditional authority - the Guru's word prevails. Swami Sahajananda represents supreme authority and all decisions made by the Society is sanctioned by him. According to the Indian tradition, spiritual wisdom is to be respected and the word of the guru is absolute.

In order to facilitate more efficiently the practical aspect of its aims and objectives the Board of Management was formed. The Board of Management is accountable to Swami Sahajananda who has the final say on all matters pertaining to the Society, both spiritual and secular.

The Board of Management consists of the following office bearers, viz. the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer. The Board consists of people who are senior members of the Society. The Secretary is not a member of the Board of Management but if the need arises a member of the Board may serve as secretary for meetings. The Board of Management is currently made up of nine members. This number is flexible, if there is a need to increase the members of the Board, Swami Sahajananda, at his discretion co-opts additional members to the Board. The

Board functions largely in an administrative capacity overseeing the various activities of the Society. The Board meets on a regular basis to report on the progress of the various sub-committees and departments of service which were formed to facilitate the efficient working of the numerous undertakings that the ashram is involved in. The various sub-committees and departments of service are involved in specific activities such as the School Building Department, Poor-Feeding, Hamper Distribution Committee, the Ashram Branches Sub-Committee, the Yoga Camp Committee, Clinic, Press, etc.

Swami Sahajananda personally allocates the various duties to the devotees and thereafter it is the responsibility of the Chairman of the Board of Management to ensure that the task assigned is carried out efficiently. Since all work performed by the devotees is seen as a spiritual discipline, Swami Sahajananda, to aid their spiritual growth, assigns tasks to ensure that the aspirants are constantly developing progressively in their spiritual life.

The various sub-committees and departments submit regular reports on their progress to the Board of Management who in turn communicates this to Swami Sahajananda who is constantly in touch and directly responsible for the various projects that the Society is involved in.

Administratively Swami Sahajananda as the Guru and Spiritual Head is the sole authority of the Society. However this authority is not seen in terms of a 'dictator' but rather a relationship of reverence, respect and love as characterised in the guru-disciple relationship. In the spirit of reverence for the Guru the devotees, prior to commencing any undertaking, first seek the permission of the Guru. It is felt that in seeking the Guru's permission one indirectly is asking for his blessings. It is believed that once a task receives the blessing of the Guru there is the greater likelihood of it being successfully concluded.

From the above account it can be deduced that the well structured and regulated administration and organisation of the Society accounts for the efficient functioning of the Society which is involved deeply in its multi-faceted activities.

6.5 FINANCE

The bulk of the financial source of the Divine Life Society is obtained via book sales. Swami Sivananda wrote profusely on Hindu philosophy and religion including a wide range of subjects. It is Swami Sivananda's prolific writing that is constantly published by the Society and sold to educate and communicate to the public in simple language, Hindu religion and philosophy.

However, since the main purpose of the Society is to enlighten through the dissemination of spiritual literature the books are not always sold despite them having a price. They are often left at the homes of interested persons and devotees gratis.

Considering the importance of the function of distributing literature the ashramites who are solely responsible for the sale of books are totally preoccupied with this task. This duty constitutes a full-time daily task and the ashramites are required to report to Swami Sahajananda on a daily basis.

Large projects undertaken by the Divine Life Society eg. the Sivananda Cultural Centre, are inaugurated by a launching ceremony which aims to inform the public sector and donors that the project is about to begin. At the initial function the donors make pledges of donations. Thereafter the fund-raisers inform business houses and other interested persons of a particular project to which funds may be donated. The Divine Life Society is constantly involved in a number of projects, such as building schools for the Black Community, poor-feeding, medical relief, etc., which are undertaken simultaneously thus donors have a choice to contribute to which-ever project they prefer.

The second major source of income is via donations from regular donors drawn from a core of sincere devotees who contribute to the Society on a regular basis. Outside organisations assist the Society from time to time but the largest contributions come from ardent devotees, many of whom are involved in business.

The American Embassy has assisted the Divine Life Society in the school building project in the Black community by undertaking to sponsor the building of a specific number of schools. The Embassy has also assisted in other projects undertaken by the Divine Life Society and has also donated a Kombi to the Society.

The Daily News has offered at some time financial assistance to the Society.

The funds received are administered by volunteer bookkeepers of the Society who present regular financial reports to Swami Sahajananda. The Treasurer of the Management Committee serves as the Treasurer of the Divine Life Society and he oversees the regular day to day bookkeeping done by the many devotees at the Ashram.

All donations received are utilized for the particular project that it was donated for. The Divine Life Society itself is in possession of substantial funds of its own as a result of the book sales. However, when funds have been accumulated, it is the policy of Swami Sahajananda and the Management Committee to explore projects by which the money can be utilised.

The Sivananda Technical High School and College in Kwa-Zulu is an example of one such project, which came up at an appropriate time when unemployment was high amongst the Black community.

When approached by a group of concerned people from Kwa Mashu Swami Sahajananda thought of some constructive way to assist and help alleviate the social and economic problem. The

Sivananda Technical High School and College was envisaged to provide skilled training to Blacks in the various technical fields. The funds that the Society had was therefore utilized for this project.

Swami Sahajananda's philosophy is that "anything that we have ie. liquid funds - we must not dam or else Mahaluxmi will stop giving - it must be constantly flowing - the Divine energy must be flowing at all times" (Pillay : Interview). This is the principle which Swami Sahajananda adopts.

The Divine Life Society, as an ashram, works constantly in communion with God. This attitude is characterised by Swami Sahajananda who sincerely works on the premise that God will provide. His compassionate nature prompts him to take on responsibilities before actually looking for funds.

Due to Swami Sahajananda's positive attitude the Divine Life Society has never experienced financial depravity. Swami Sahajananda states that if the Divine Life Society continues to selflessly serve, many people aware of the work done by the Society will assist without reservation.

CHAPTER 7DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY BRANCHES

The Divine Life Society with its sound organisational structure and the effective leadership of its spiritual head Swami Sahajananda has expanded rapidly since its inception. One of the main areas of growth has been the establishment of several branches and the opening of centres in many areas. These branches promote the philosophy and teachings of "Divine Life" and help in expanding the mission of Swami Sivananda.

7.1 MAIN BRANCH (RESERVOIR HILLS)

From the unitary building constructed in 1959 which housed the shrine, press and administration centre, the Divine Life Society ashram at Reservoir Hills today comprises a large complex consisting of several buildings.

The ground floor of the original building today houses the Divine Life Society Printing Press. The first floor serves as a storage area for printing paper and books, while an administration wing is now also attached to the original building which houses the library.

The Sivananda library houses one of the most comprehensive collection of books, journals, magazines and booklets on Hindu religion and philosophy in South Africa. The several thousands of books in the library spans a wide variety of subjects including religion, philosophy, arts, sciences, medicine, music, mysticism and psychology. The collection in the library also includes the Complete Works of Swami Sivananda as well as other eminent saints and scholars such as Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Sri Sri Prabhupada, Tagore, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Guru Nanak, Patanjali and several others. In addition to the extensive collection of books on Hinduism the library contains a large selection of books on Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism and Islam as well as books

on western philosophers eg. Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and others. The selection of books reflect the universalism of the teachings of Swami Sivananda as expressed in the philosophy of Divine Life.

The library serves a functional purpose in catering for self-study of the devotees. Interested persons may use the library after permission has been sought and granted by Swami Sahajananda. Swami Sivananda strongly believed that sadhakas should devote time to the study of Hindu religious literature as well as other religious writings.

The Society also has a modern sound system for recording bhajans, kirtans and discourses and duplicating them for wide distribution. Several thousand cassettes are distributed by the Society annually.

Directly opposite the administration wing is the Clinic which serves the community by offering free medical aid and advice in allopathic and homeopathic medicines. Next to the clinic is situated a large and spacious Meditation and Prayer Hall which was officially opened in 1982 built around the existing Sivananda Pillar.

The spacious Meditation Hall is designed to accommodate approximately a thousand people. The focus of the Hall is the Main shrine situated at the front of the building. The Shrine comprises of a large life size, imposing oil-painting of the founder of the Divine Life Society, Swami Sivananda, seated in the lotus posture. Flanking the painting on either side are garlanded images of Lord Krishna and Hanuman. At the base of the platform of the shrine is a lamp, jyothi swarupa, which remains constantly burning. The light signifies the all-pervading presence of the Lord. A dhoop or incense holder situated near the lamp contains incense which is lit daily providing the Hall with a fragrant spiritual aroma. Fresh flowers, which are offered daily at the shrine to God, always adorn the shrine.

A large Aum (ॐ) is strategically displayed on the wall above the shrine which also aids the devotees to meditate and contemplate on God.

The walls on either side of the shrine are adorned with photographs of saints such as Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Mother Krishnabai, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ and others. In keeping with Swami Sivananda's emphasis on the ideal of one humanity the shrine is open to all irrespective of race, gender, religion or creed.

The musical, sound and recording equipment is situated on the left when one enters the shrine. There is a well-equipped sound system comprising of four large speakers, two in the front and two at the rear of the Hall. At the back of the Hall is a large bookcase displaying publications of the Society.

The Meditation Hall remains opened throughout the day for those wishing to meditate while in the evening there is a congregational gathering for satsang. During the satsang the Spiritual Head is seated in front, to the left of the shrine. The devotees, prior to entering the shrine, remove their shoes, and assemble after prostrating, facing the shrine, the male devotees to the left and the female on the right. Devotees are seated on the carpeted floor in lotus posture.

Silence is observed in the Meditation Hall thus it provides a serene atmosphere for undisturbed meditation which is a necessary requisite for Jnana Yoga.

The massive complex also includes a block which serves as the living quarters for the women devotees while a separate building accommodates the male ashramites. The ground floor of the same building serves as the dining hall and a lounge where meetings are normally held.

A separate building which is situated behind the Meditation and Prayer Hall serves as the 'kutir' for the Spiritual Head, Swami Sahajananda.

A new addition to the complex of buildings is the Sivananda Children's Cultural Centre which overlooks the scenic Umgeni Valley. The Centre was officially opened in September 1986.

Apart from the numerous buildings there is parking facilities for over fifty cars in the ashram ground which includes a large and attractive garden.

7.1.1 Sivananda Pillar

The Sivananda Pillar, around which the Satsang Hall is built, is made of solid granite.

The 'Om' symbol is inscribed in translucent marble and illuminated at night by means of an electric cable running through the centre of the Pillar. On the four sides of the Pillar the following information is inscribed:

1. A short life - story of the Founder of the Divine Life Society, His Holiness Sri Swami Sivananda;
2. A brief account of his main teachings;
3. Sayings from the great religions, showing their uniformity (Appendix 1)
4. The Master's Universal Prayer (Appendix 2)

The Sivananda Pillar erected on the grounds of the Sivanandashram, was formally unveiled and dedicated by Dr Sam Sagor on 8 September 1974, the Birth Anniversary of Sri Swami Sivananda. Dr Sagor, who was one of the foremost disciples of the Master in this country first initiated the move to erect the pillar. He concluded the unveiling with a short discourse on the essential teaching of the Master (Divine Life, July-August, 1974 : 48).

7.1.2 Divine Life Society Crest

The Divine Life Society Crest utilises the Sanskrit "Om" and the symbols of the sun, the lotus, human hands and the ocean. The Crest appears on all Divine Life

publications. The words 'serve', 'love', 'meditate', 'realise', which is the quintessence of Swami Sivananda's teachings, appears above the Crest and 'The Divine Life Society' at the bottom of the Crest. The Society's description of its Crest illustrates the Integral Symbol of the Divine Life Society.

In the Crest, the two hands that offer a lotus symbolize the dedication of all action as humble offerings to God, which is the way of Karma Yoga, by which attachment to work is severed and duty is performed with devotion. The firm grip of the hand over the lotus symbolizes that one who is established in Karma Yoga, has within his grip the yoga of synthesis, the practice of which is called 'Divine Life.' The waves of the ocean shown in the Crest represent the sublimated emotions of the devotee, on the path of Bhakti Yoga whose affections are transfigured in the love of God. The waves of Bhakti surge from the ocean of the devotee's God-loving heart. The petals of the lotus forming the periphery of the Crest represent the path of Raja Yoga by which one gradually transcends all the psychic levels or centres, whose form is akin to that of a lotus. The Chakra or the energy-centre in the middle of the eyebrows is the main operational centre for meditation in Raja Yoga. The rising sun, with 'Om' in its centre represents the dawn of spiritual wisdom and Realisation of the Atman through the practice of Jnana Yoga. As the system of Raja Yoga combines some aspects of Bhakti and Jnana, the ocean and the rising sun are shown as enclosed within the lotus (Krishnananda 1967 : 51-52).

DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY CREST7.2 TONGAAT

The Tongaat Branch of the Divine Life Society was officially opened by Mr SR Padayachee of Umkomaas on 16 January 1954. However, prior to the official opening the Branch held its first satsang on 23 October 1953, adopting the format laid down by the main branch in Reservoir Hills. Thereafter, in addition to the Sunday satsang which was well attended a ladies satsang was held on Monday afternoons and a children's satsang on Saturday afternoons.

After the official opening the Branch grew rapidly and this necessitated the acquisition of a large venue. A plot of land was acquired and the present ashram was built over a period of six years.

The devotees worked selflessly for the fruition of this project. The Sivananda Ashram, as it was named when completed, in Tongaat was officially opened on 20 July 1980 by Mr KP Singh. Today the ashram is the centre of many spiritual and cultural activities as reflected below:

1. Regular Sunday morning satsangs and Sunday School for children are held from 9.00 am to 10.15 am.

2. Sunday evening satsang from 6 pm to 7.30 pm
3. Hindu festivals are observed and discourses delivered
4. Dancing lessons are conducted
5. Yoga asanas for ladies are conducted on Tuesdays
6. Meditation
7. Akhanda kirtans are undertaken on auspicious days
8. A Family Day Celebration is held where children enact plays and other items are presented.

Over the thirty three years of its growth the ashram has become an essential part of the devotees spiritual and cultural well-being (Interview : Pillay).

7.3 PIETERMARITZBURG - NORTHDALÉ BRANCH

The Northdale Branch of the Divine Life Society began in 1960 when satsang was held at the home of devotees. As the number of devotees increased open air satsangs were held at Alwar Square and Arunagiri Crescent on Sunday mornings. Adult satsangs were also held on the verandah of the Northdale Baby Clinic.

Swami Venkatesananda, a renowned religionist and philosopher, toured the Northdale area in 1961 and delivered lectures to the devotees.

As the number of devotees steadily grew land was acquired at the corner of Lahor and Mysore Roads and the foundation stone for the ashram was laid on 25 July 1965 by Mr Paul Bhika.

For the next three years officials and members worked tirelessly for the completion of the first phase of the ashram. The official opening of the Ashram was performed on 1 July 1968 by Swami Chidananda. Phase two of the project was officially opened on 21 October 1984.

The activities of the Branch include regular satsang, delivering of religious discourses, celebration of Hindu festivals, involvement in the poor-feeding schemes, and meditation amongst other

activities. A yoga camp is held once every three months. Members from both the Divine Life Ashrams in Pietermaritzburg jointly organise the camps.

The Sivananda Cultural Centre and the Sivananda Youth League is presently providing for the spiritual needs of the children and youth respectively.

7.3.1 Pietermaritzburg- Loop Street Branch

An inaugural meeting was held on 5 February 1956 to form a branch of the Divine Life Society in Pietermaritzburg. Satsangs were thereafter held at the outhouse premises of Sri MG Moodley in Gertrude Street.

In 1963, land that was donated by Mother Kristy Naidoo and her daughter, two ardent devotees of the Society, was utilized to build the present ashram. The foundation stone-laying ceremony was held on 26 September 1965, the guest speaker being Les Pearson of the Sivananda School of Yoga, Johannesburg.

Through the selfless work of voluntary builders and numerous donations from the general public and well-wishers the ashram was completed. Swami Chidananda, the President of the Divine Life Society in India, officially consecrated the Ashram which was officially opened by Sri AS Pillay on 7 July 1968. Swami Sahajananda named all the Ashrams in South Africa after the Master, viz. Sivananda Ashram.

The activities of the Ashram is wide and varied. The Children's Sunday School which was initially conducted by Brother Krishna Pillay has now been changed to the format adopted by the Sivananda Children's Cultural Centre for uniformity among all the branches. Fifteen dedicated teachers cater for the spiritual education of the children.

Satsangs are held every Sunday evening from 6.00 pm to 7.30 pm. Discourses on religion and philosophy are delivered which help the devotees in their spiritual and cultural education.

Cottage satsangs, memorial services and prayer for the sick are held at the homes of members and well-wishers when requested. The devotees have travelled to Howick, Richmond, New Hanover, Edendale, Plessislaer, Mount Partridge, Raisethorpe, Northdale, Newholme and Dalton to conduct these services.

The Ashram is actively involved in the Poor Feeding Scheme which supplies sandwiches to Indian, Coloured and Black Schools. This project was started in 1980 and today a total of approximately 550 children are fed daily.

Every Tuesday evening at 6.00 pm, a day that is considered auspicious for Hanuman, the devotee of Lord Rama, the Hanuman Chalisa is recited eleven times by members of the Ashram. All the major festivals are also celebrated at the Ashram. Each year on 8 September, Swami Sivananda's birthday is celebrated on a grand scale. The Ashram also conducts satsang on the 8th of every month in honour of their Master.

The devotees from the Ashram have benefitted immensely from discourses delivered by distinguished visitors to the Ashram eg. Professor N Rangarajan, Swami Venkatesananda, Swami Sahajananda, Swami Nisresananda, Swami Chidananda, Mother Hrydiananda, Swami Krishnananda, Swami Atmananda and Swami Brahmananda.

The Loop Street Branch of the Divine Life Society is fulfilling an important function by catering for the spiritual needs of the community.

7.4 CHATSWORTH

The Divine Life Society draws a large number of devotees from the Chatsworth area. The problem of transport made it

difficult for devotees to attend satsang and prayer services at the Reservoir Hills Ashram on a regular basis. In order to overcome this problem the Divine Life Society embarked on the construction of an Ashram in Chatsworth.

The Sivananda Ashram, situated at the corner of Roads 114 and 115 in Unit 1, Chatsworth, was officially opened on Sunday 13 July 1975 at 2.00 pm by Sri SC Singh and Sri R Letchmiah, senior devotees of the Society.

The Ashram which comprises a large two storey building and spacious grounds houses the Prayer and Meditation Hall on the first floor while the ground floor consists of a large kitchen and living quarters.

Like the mother institution in Reservoir Hills the Chatsworth Ashram is involved in several activities encompassing both the social and religious aspects of life.

A weekly satsang is held every Sunday at 6 pm, while the Sivananda Children's Cultural Centre satsang is held every Sunday morning at 9 am. On Fridays at 6.00 pm Gita classes are conducted to inform and educate the devotees on the religious scriptures of Hinduism. Meditation techniques and practice are also taught at the Ashram. Music lessons are conducted on Saturday evenings.

All the major festivals are celebrated at the Ashram. On the first Saturday of every month a health clinic is held, where free medical aid is rendered to the public.

The ashram is also extensively involved in the School feeding programme in the Chatsworth area. Every morning at 4 am the devotees assemble and after prayer engage themselves in the preparation of sandwiches for school children. Over 750 children are fed through their efforts everyday.

The yoga camp is also held at the Chatsworth Ashram for devotees living in the Chatsworth area.

7.5 MEREBANK

The foundation stone of the Merebank ashram was laid in 1968 by the Spiritual Head of the Divine Life Society in India, Swami Chidananda.

The Sivananda Ashram situated in 11 Gadwal Road, Merebank, comprises of a large Prayer and Meditation Hall, living quarters and a garage which is used as a storage area.

The Ashram is involved in many activities that enhances the spiritual and cultural needs of the devotees. Satsangs are held every Sunday at 6.00 pm to 7.30 pm. The spiritual education of children is catered for by the satsang and children's Sunday School which is held on Sunday mornings at 9.00 am. Asana classes are held on Mondays at 6.30 pm for female devotees and on Tuesdays at 6.30 pm for males.

The Health Clinic at the Sivananda Ashram in Merebank operates on the second and fourth Sunday of every month from 2.30 pm onwards.

In addition to the religious and cultural activities, the ashram is also extensively involved in social work in the Merebank area.

7.6 STANGER

The Society also has an active centre in Stanger. The centre consists of a spacious prayer hall which was opened in 1970. As is the case with Divine Life branches throughout the country the Stanger Branch is also involved in an active programme catering for the spiritual and cultural needs of devotees in Stanger and surrounding areas. Regular satsangs are held on Sunday mornings at 9 am. In addition to the satsangs classes are also conducted to help educate devotees on the various aspects of Hindu religion and culture.

The Ashram also observes the popular Hindu festivals and is actively involved in the distribution of spiritual literature in the area.

7.7 THE SIVANANDA PRESS

One of the distinguishing feats that has established Swami Sivananda as one of India's most significant interpreters of the Hindu tradition is that he is credited with writing an astonishing number of over 340 books and pamphlets from 1929 until 1963. Since he was schooled through the English medium most of his works are written in English.

Swami Sivananda wrote profusely on a wide range of subjects including Hindu philosophy, religion, morality, spirituality, household medicine, health, diet, hygiene and commented on the Gita, Bhagavatam, the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha, the Tantras, the yoga-sutras, yoga-vashista and the Upanishads.

Swami Sivananda felt that the modern scientific education alienated the youth from their religious practices and tradition. His great concern prompted him to communicate with the youth and the educated public through his prolific writings in which he presented the Hindu religion in simple and understandable language.

In the selfsame spirit the Divine Life Society in South Africa is extensively involved in the printing and distributing of spiritual literature. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge ie. Jnana Yajna, is the highest service that one can render to mankind especially in these troubled times of great unrest all over the world. Of the many faceted activities that the Ashram is engaged in, dissemination of spiritual knowledge is the most important, because divine knowledge alone can free one from sorrow, pain and suffering, completely (Report, Divine Life Society. 1986 : 1):.

All the spiritual literature distributed by the Society is printed at the Ashram Press. The Sivananda Press, housed at the Sivananda Ashram at Reservoir Hills operates a most modern printing plant.

The Sivananda Press which at the beginning consisted of a small hand operated Adana printing machine has grown extensively.

Today it occupies the major portion of the original building of the ashram. Two large sections of the ground floor house the type-setting, printing and binding section. The Sivananda Press has the most sophisticated printing machinery. It is estimated that the present value of the Press machinery is over two million rands.

The Press machinery which consisted previously of the Heidelberg SORS Offset and its smaller versatile companion, the Heidelberg GTO, together had catered for all the printing needs of the Society. These machines were replaced recently by two modern Millder 5C 36 models. The Divine Life Society now has a complete plant for the production of books, magazines and other spiritual literature.

The Press also has a letterpress printing machine and a machine to set type in hot metal. The Computerized Filmsetting system is the heart of the Sivananda Press. The Monophoto Ace is equipped with a Floppy Disc Drive, a Video Display Screen and a proof printer. Text matter is keyed and stored on magnetic discs which are capable of holding 300 000 characters. Editing is done by means of the video display screen.

The disc containing the edited matter is used to drive the Monophoto 400 Filmsetter. The Monophoto Filmsetter sets in Gujarati, Hindi and Sanskrit. The Martini Gang Stitcher is used for stapling magazines, the sheets of which are folded by the M B O folding machine.

Trimming of all books, magazines etc. is done by the Senator Guillotine. In addition the Press has machines for making cases for hard bound books, a hinge setting machine, a casing-in machine, 2 Kerz Gold-Blocking machines, one additional Stahl folding machine and a Brehmer Sewing Machine. The Press also has a well equipped darkroom for the printing of both monochrome and colour photographs.

The Ashram is constantly updating its machinery for the Press (HH Sri Swami Sivananda His Mission in South Africa; N/D).

The machinery is well maintained by two electronic engineers who are devotees of the ashram and offer their services voluntarily.

The spirituality pervading the ashram is also reflected in the maintenance of the machinery by Swami Sahajananda. All the machinery are kept meticulously clean and are checked on a daily basis. As one devotee stated "Swamiji looks after the machines very carefully for he sees the form of the lord in the machines." The machines have been given names of various virtues eg. obedience, sincerity, truth etc, so that the operator reflects on the virtue while involved in work.

All the work in the Sivananda Press is done by means of voluntary labour. Due to the vital importance of the dissemination of spiritual literature work in the Press is considered of prime importance and given priority. Swami Sahajananda in addition to his numerous duties as Spiritual Head works tirelessly daily in the Press and undertakes all the printing himself.

The Sivananda Press publishes and prints books of Swami Sivananda and also of other saints where permission is gained. With the growth of the Society from 1948 the Divine Life Society publishes a bi-monthly magazine, Divine Life, which includes articles on religion, philosophy, yoga, health etc, which is directed to the public in general. A special magazine published quarterly, Divine Life for Children, caters for the spiritual needs of the younger generation.

Over the years the Divine Life Society has published several thousand copies of Swami Sivananda's numerous works (See Appendix 3). In addition to publishing books and magazines, the Society often publishes leaflets, booklets, and reports to inform and educate the public on religion, philosophy and the various activities that the Society is engaged in.

For the forthcoming Centenary Celebrations of Swami Sivananda

in 1987 the Divine Life Society is concentrating its efforts mainly on the spiritual and cultural education of children. The first project in this programme was the publication of "Yoga Lessons for Children." This comprehensive series of 52 lessons, a major undertaking, is the first locally produced set of literature aimed at the younger generation.

This series of easy-to-learn yoga lessons aimed specifically at children, seeks to address the long standing need to translate into simple language the profound treasures of India's spiritual scientists - the Rishis - and to provide children with the proper insight into the basic tenets of Hindu philosophy and religion.

The lessons include information about India's spiritual heritage - the Vedas, Gita, Upanishads and the great Epics as well as the significance of the many celebrations, festivals and ceremonies. The lessons provide an excellent children's text for comparative religious studies, since yoga transcends the limitations of caste, creed and even religion.

The Department of Education and Culture has officially granted the Society permission to introduce Yoga Lessons for Children to school principals and teachers, from whom many appreciative comments have been received (See Appendix 4). To date over 9 000 subscribers have enrolled for these lessons.

The Society has also distributed free more than 200 000 copies of the booklet "Children's Companion" and "Ideal Child" containing spiritual instructions from Swami Sivananda's writing, to children in primary schools throughout South Africa.

Presently the Society is in the process of producing a revised, illustrated edition of Yoga Lessons for Children which will be released in 1987 and appear in 8 volumes of about 370 pages each. Professor V Rajarajen, director of the Sister Nivedita Academy in Madras, India, was brought to South Africa by the Society in December 1985 particularly to seek his guidance to re-edit the Yoga Lessons for Children.

The Yoga Lessons for Children as well as other literature produced by the Society is not only distributed locally but also in the western countries eg. United Kingdom, USA, Australia, Mauritius, as well as India. The Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh in the United Kingdom has been very impressed with the Yoga Lessons and introduced it at its National Camp in August 1984 (Report, Divine Life Society 1985 : 3).

In keeping with the spirit of Swami Sivananda who was peerless in his spiritual charity the Society distributes most of its literature gratis.

Of the numerous activities and projects that the Society is engaged in selflessly in the socio-religious sphere, the dissemination of spiritual knowledge through literature is considered as its most important contribution for the upliftment of Society. As one devotee explains "The most important contribution the Divine Life Society has made to the religious life of Indians in South Africa is bringing to them in a very appealing form the ideas and values that have been brought down to us by the sages of India and this could only have been done by the spreading of our literature"(Interview : Bipin).

In a very silent but dynamic and effective way over the past 30 years the Divine Life Society has been actively disseminating spiritual knowledge through its literature. The effects of this process is visible today when many young couples and families that have been joining the Ashram over the last few years have come in contact with the literature of the Divine Life Society and read about Swami Sivananda's life and developed some appreciation for spiritual life.

As explained by a devotee "A person reading the book is in direct communication with the saint and this is an effective means of religious education"(Interview : Bipin).

CHAPTER EIGHT

RELIGIO-SOCIAL ATTITUDES

The contents of chapter 8 as well as chapters 9 and 10 focus respectively on the following aspects of the Divine Life Society:

1. Religio-Social Attitudes;
2. Religio-Cultural Activities; and
3. Religio-Social Activities.

The findings of these chapters are based largely on information gained from questionnaires which provided a common format. Information was also gathered on the basis of personal interviews. The writer is confident that the findings in these chapters is a fair reflection of the attitudes of the devotees. However, this study must be seen to have yielded a data-basis which will be of continuing use in future research.

8.1 PERSONAL

Most of the respondents were drawn from Reservoir Hills, 21,4%, and Chatsworth, 21,4%. The reason for this distribution is due to the fact that the Headquarters of the Society in South Africa is based in Reservoir Hills. Furthermore the spiritual head of the Society is resident at the ashram in Reservoir Hills. In many ways his presence makes the ashram.

In Hindu spirituality the guru is the first basic feature of ashram life, the inspiration of the ashram. The magnetic personality of the Guru accounts for the large proportion of devotees from Reservoir Hills.

Chatsworth, being the largest Indian township in the country, accounts for the high percentage of devotees drawn from this area. A further contributing factor is the presence of a Sivananda Ashram in Chatsworth.

The impact of the Divine Life Society is widespread. This is attested to by the fact that a large number of devotees are drawn from as far afield as Pietermaritzburg, 14,3%, and Stanger, 10%. The impact of the Society is strong in Pietermaritzburg due to the presence of two ashrams. Likewise, an ashram in Merebank accounts for a large percentage, 11,4% of devotees drawn from this area.

A fair distribution of devotees were drawn from the other major Indian suburbs of Durban viz.: Westville, 2,9%, Isipingo, 4,3%, Newlands, 2,9%, Clare Estate, 2,9%, Asherville, 1,4% and Phoenix, 7,1%:

Table 8.1: **Age Group of Devotees**

15 - 19	10%
20 - 29	22,9%
30 - 39	35,7%
40 - 49	10%
50 - 59	12,9%
60 +	8,6%

The age group of the devotees drawn to the Society covers a wide distribution, ranging from the 15-19 years to the 60+ group as reflected in Table 8.1. Although the Table does not reflect adherence from the 0-15 years age group it must be noted that this was due to the distribution of the questionnaires to those belonging to the age group 15 years and above. The Divine Life Society has a strong following amongst children. This was evidenced by the turnout at the Sunday School and the Yoga camp for children.

The highest percentage, 35,7%, is drawn from the 30-39 years age group while 22,9% is drawn from the 20-29 year age group. The Society attracts the majority of its followers from the younger generation leaning more towards the grihasta ashrama ie. the householder.

A fair distribution of devotees, 10%, belong to the 15-19 age group. This is an interesting contrast to a study of the Hare Krishna Movement conducted by Sooklal (1986 : 77). It was noted that the Hare Krishna Movement draws its largest number of devotees, 32% from the 15-19 years age group. The primary reason forwarded for this tendency was that the younger generation is more receptive to new philosophies than the older generation Hindus.

Although statistically the percentage of devotees reflected in the 15-19 years age group is smaller ie. 10%, this situation is expected to alter in the next decade. The Divine Life Society has recently engaged in a vigorous programme aimed mainly at the education of the youth.

The Society also has a substantial following among the middle age and older generation Hindus. The traditional view of Hinduism as adhered to by the older generation is accommodated within Swami Sivananda's teachings.

The Society was established in South Africa at a relatively early period, 1949, and many of its initial devotees are still strong adherents of the Society.

The Divine Life Society is seen to draw its followers from both the younger and older generations. This is in keeping with Swami Sivananda's teachings in which he astutely synthesized the goals of traditional Hinduism and modernity in the Ashram.

Of those interviewed, 51,4%, were male and 48,6% female. It is significant that the ratio between the sexes of the respondents is more or less equal. This would contribute to a more balanced view of the devotees socio-religious attitudes.

50% of those interviewed were married, 44,3% single, 2,9% divorced and 2,9% widowed.

The majority of the devotees, 98,6%, were drawn from the Indian community, while 1,4% belong to the White community. It should be noted that the Hindu religion is mainly confined to the Indian community in South Africa. This is not surprising since Hinduism is a non-proselytizing religion. According to Swami Sivananda universality is the greatest characteristic of true religion. He maintained that all religions are but slightly varying processes for the development and consummation of a fundamental and universal impetus toward the one infinite source of all life (Divine Life 1983 : XLV/9, 280-282).

It should be noted that members of the other communities have shown increasing interest in the Divine Life Society. But their numbers are still minimal for their attitudes to have a significant bearing on the study.

A significant observation regarding the educational qualifications of the devotees was that a large percentage, 40%, were in possession of university education, 14,3% of the devotees were in possession of tertiary education, 31,3% secondary and 14,3%, primary. None of the respondents were without education.

The Divine Life Society draws its adherents from all linguistic groups in the Hindu community. The Hindi speaking devotees constituted 47,1%, Tamil, 34,3%, Telugu, 10%, Gujerati, 7,1% and other (referring to a language perhaps not catered for in the questionnaire) 1,4%. The appeal of the movement to all linguistic groups is due to the Society not adhering to a particular sectarian philosophy but preaches the universal message of Vedanta as propounded by Swami Sivananda.

Table 8.2: Occupation of Devotees

Educational	21,4%
Medical and Related	1,4%
Technical	2,9%
Legal	1,4%
Sciences	4,3%
Managerial and Clerical	10%
Salesworkers	4,3%
Transport and Communication	5,7%
Artisans	5,7%
Social Workers	4,3%
Businessman	8,6%
Housewife	10%
Student	14,3%
Retired	5,7%

The occupation of the respondents as reflected in Table 8.2 covers a large cross section of positions in society ranging from the professional, managerial and administrative spheres to housewives, artisans as well as students. An interesting observation was that almost 40% of the respondents were following professional vocations.

The constituency from which the Divine Life Society draws its following is basically educated, professional, socially and economically well placed. The membership consists largely of those in possession of higher education who have come under the influence of western ('English') education, technology and scientific advancements.

8.2 SPECIFIC AFFILIATION

It is significant that 57,1% of the respondents indicated that they had no specific affiliation (See Table 8.3)

Table 8.3: Specific Affiliation of Devotees

Saivite	7,1%
Vaishnavite	11,4%
Sakta	3%
Vedantin	21,4%
No specific affiliation	57,1%

There is an increasing tendency amongst the adherents of the neo-Hindu movements not to identify themselves in terms of traditional sectarian sub-divisions. The Divine Life Society is evidence of the emergence of a new style which transcends divisions based on sectarian, caste or linguistic difference.

The questionnaire made provision for a listing of academic Hindu sub-classifications by which the devotees could identify themselves. Of those who indicated affiliation to those sub-grouping, 21,4% were Vedantin, 11,4% Vaishnavite, 7,1% Saivite and 3% Shakta.

The reason for the large percentage of devotees who regard themselves as Vedantins is that the philosophy of the Divine Life Society, as expounded by Swami Sivananda is based on the principle of Vedanta.

According to Swami Sivananda, Vedanta is that sublime philosophy which teaches that the individual soul is identical with the Supreme Soul, Brahman. It raises the ignorant jiva to the sublime heights of Brahmanhood (Divine Life 1984 : XLVI/5, 132).

In terms of the universal philosophy of the Divine Life Society it is not surprising that a small percentage of devotees identified themselves in terms of sectarian sub-divisions. Swami Sivananda himself said, just as one identifies oneself with the different limbs of the body and feels that he includes the legs, hands,

stomach, etc., so also should he feel that all the different religious schools such as Vaishnavism, Saivism, Advaita, Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita are like the different limbs of the body of religion (Divine Life 27 : 60).

The large majority, 77,1%, of the respondents were not members of other religious movements. However, 22,9%, indicated that in addition to being members of the Divine Life Society they also belonged to other religious movements.

Of these, 10%, were members of a Hindu temple, 5,7% belonged to the Hare Krishna Movement, 2,9% the Ramakrishna Centre and 4,3% answered 'Other'.

It is not uncommon for adherents of one movement to be affiliated to other religious institutions.

Since the Divine Life Society has been in existence in the country for almost forty years it is not surprising that 20% of the respondents have been associated with the movement for over twenty years. 8,6% claim association for 15-20 years, 22,9% between 10-15 years, 20% for 5-10 years and 28,6% for 0-5 years.

A wide variety of factors was found to be responsible for acquainting people with the Society. As can be seen in Table 8.4, 30% of the respondents acquainted themselves with the Society through friends, 22,9% through literature, 20% joined as a result of family members, 15,7% joined because of parental involvement, while 11,4% joined the movement as a result of a visit to the ashram.

These statistics indicate that members of the Society play an important role in influencing others to join the movement. This is borne out by the fact that 95,7% of the respondents when asked whether they encouraged others to join the Divine Life Society replied in the affirmative.

One of the main objectives of the Divine Life Society is the dissemination of spiritual knowledge by the publication and

distribution of books, pamphlets, magazines and journals dealing with philosophy and spirituality. Swami Sivananda was a prolific writer who strongly believed in the power of the printed word in educating the masses. Therefore it is not surprising that a large number of devotees have joined the Divine Life Society as a result of reading literature distributed by the Society.

In response to the question, "which other members of your family are members of the Society", 38,5% stated that their parents were members, 8,6% answered brother, 10% sister, 20% children and 8,6% forwarded "other" as an answer. 14,3% of the respondents stated that no other members of their family were Divine Life Society members.

It is evident that the family unit as a whole in most cases is drawn to the Movement. This is interesting because the Divine Life Society seems to provide a meaning system for the youth as well as their parents. Prior to the emergence of the Divine Life Society and other neo-Hindu Movements there was little scope for the Hindu youth to express religious commitment. Religious practices were more ritualistically orientated, more emphasis was placed on the external expression of religion. When the youth, confronted with the new developments in a western milieu, questioned traditional attitudes, their parents had little understanding of the intellectual basis of the ritual and could not provide them with adequate explanations. The Divine Life Society, with its holistic approach to religion seems to be bridging the generation gap and bringing parents and youth together in meaningful worship.

Table 8.4 **How did you first acquaint yourself with the Divine Life Society?**

Parents	15,7%
Family	20%
Friends	30%
Literature	22,9%
Visit to the Ashram	11,4%

In response to the question regarding the attitudes of the devotees to other Hindu movements an overwhelming majority, 95,7%, were respectful, while 4,3% were tolerant. When questioned on the attitude of other Hindu movements towards the Divine Life Society, 82,9%, were of the view that other Hindu movements were respectful towards the Divine Life Society while 5,7% felt that these movements were tolerant towards the Society, 4,3% were indifferent and 7,1% expressed uncertainty to the question.

The feeling of respectfulness towards other organisations is very much in keeping with Swami Sivananda's philosophy. He taught that the present birth is the occasion for the attainment of one ultimate goal ie. moksha or God-realisation. To live 'Divine Life' is to live a dharmic or moral, righteous life by obeying the precepts of the Hindu Shastras. Other Hindu religious organisations, while the emphasis in philosophy may be different, still strive towards the ultimate goal of the attainment of moksha. Some Hindu movements may be ultimately monistic, eg. the Ramakrishna Movement or ultimately theistic eg. the Hare Krishna. A further interesting contrast between the neo-Hindu groups on the one hand and the Arya Samaj and Saiva Siddhanta on the other is that, while for probably all, the religious life must ultimately be monastic, the latter two groups tend to have a more explicit social orientation (Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen 1981 : 3).

Since all these organisations are striving towards the same goal they are ultimately not opposed to one another.

Table 8.5 reflects the attitudes of the devotees of the Divine Life Society to other religions. The majority of the respondents were respectful of other religions. A small minority was either tolerant, indifferent or uncertain. However, none of the respondents were unfriendly towards other religions.

Table 8.5: Attitude to other Religions

	Buddhism	Christianity	Judaism	Islam	Other
Respectful	82,9%	84,3%	84,3%	84,3%	68,6%
Tolerant	5,7%	4,3%	4,3%	7,1%	-
Unfriendly	-	-	-	-	-
Indifferent	8,6%	11,4%	8,6%	8,6%	8,6%
Uncertain	2,9%	-	2,9%	-	5,7%
Not Given	-	-	-	-	17,1%

According to Swami Sivananda universality is the greatest characteristic of true religion in its essentials. Religion is the root impulse in the heart of every human being; religious sense is one that is common to the entire mankind. At its basis religion constitutes the primal spiritual 'urge' to self-awareness of the eternal principle in man. All the religions and faiths that ever existed and exist today are but slightly varying processes for the development and consummation of this fundamental universal urge, towards the one Infinite source and origin of all life. Real religion awakens man to consciousness of the unity of all existence through the medium of a common God that pervades everywhere and indwells every being (Divine Life, 1983 : XLV/9, 281).

At different times in human history divinely inspired beings, the prophets and world teachers appeared and presented a method of inward awakening and attainment in a form peculiarly suited to the need of the people of that time. All prophets were messengers of God. They were great Yogis and realised souls who had divine intuitive perception of God. The Koran or the Zend Avesta or the Bible is as much a sacred book as the Bhagavad Gita. Ahura Mazda, Ishwar, Allah and Jahweh are different names for one God (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 420).

For Swami Sivananda real religion is one, the religion of truth and love. Truth is neither Hindu nor Muslim, Buddhist nor

Christian. Truth is one homogenous eternal substance (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 420).

He felt that when religion is perceived in the proper light, then the Christian, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Muslim and the Jew will feel themselves not as any particular religionist but as brother souls proceeding together along the path of harmony and self-culture towards greater evolution and happier existence (Divine Life, 1983 : XLV/9, 281).

Religion in essence is one, religion is one but many are its forms of practice. We should embrace all religions as our own, even as we feel that all limbs of our body are our own. This is the philosophy of the body. There should be no fights and quarrels among religious sects (Sivananda, Bliss Divine: N/D 417).

Religion without tolerance and respect for other faiths is a menace to society. The right view of religion will unfailingly make a powerful, unifying contribution towards world solidarity and peace through identity of aspiration, endeavour and ultimate fulfilment. The value of religion as a way of life is the major emphasis than religion as the upholding of certain doctrines.

The universality of religions expressed in Swami Sivananda's teaching is reflected in the attitude of respect that the devotees of the Divine Life Society express for other religions.

**Table 8.6 Reasons for Joining the Divine
Life Society**

Warmth and Friendliness of Devotees	2,9%
Philosophy of the Movement	13%
Power of the Spiritual Master	61,4%
Worship (Satsang)	15,6%
Social Work	7,1%

As reflected in Table 8.6 the primary reason forwarded by 61,4% of the devotees for joining the Movement was the power of the Spiritual Master. 15,6% were drawn to the Movement because of the satsang, 13% replied that the philosophy of the Movement most attracted them, 7,1% joined because of the social work while 2,9% were influenced by the warmth and friendliness of the devotees.

According to Swami Sivananda a Guru is absolutely necessary for every aspirant on the spiritual path. The Guru is verily a link between the individual and the immortal. He is God himself manifesting in a personal form to guide the aspirant. He inspires devotion in others and his presence purifies all (Sivananda 1980 : 273-274).

Considering the importance of the guru in the Hindu tradition it is not surprising that the majority of the devotees were drawn to the Divine Life Society because of the magnetism of the Spiritual Master.

Swami Sivananda maintains that satsang helps in a considerable manner for the attainment of moksha. It overhauls worldly samskaras and vicious thoughts and gives a new spiritual turn of mind to the worldly man. Satsang is believed to purify and illuminate; by such company there dawns the knowledge of the essential nature of one's own self and of the Divine or Supreme Self. This could be seen as the reason why satsang is important as a means of drawing many devotees to the Movement.

The philosophy of the Divine Life Society as propounded by Swami Sivananda is aimed at the revival of confidence in the Hindu Shastras, ethics, religious values, Vedanta, Yoga and ancient Hindu ideals critical to the survival and support of the Hindu religion and society. Sivananda stressed the universality of Hinduism and practical Vedanta (Gyan 1980 : 87).

The simplified manner in which Swami Sivananda conveyed the teachings of Hindu religion and philosophy has found appeal amongst many.

8.3 RELIGION AND PERSONAL LIFE

Religion is an important aspect in the daily life of the devotees. 80% of them considered religion very important while 20% considered it important. None regarded religion as not so important in their lives.

The majority, 90%, considered themselves more religious since joining the Divine Life Society, while 10% did not respond to the question.

An interesting trend was that nearly all, 97,1% of the respondents stated that they applied religious precepts in their daily life: A very small number, 2,9%, replied in the negative to this question.

Of those that applied religious precepts in their daily life 81,4% did so strictly and 18,6% very strictly.

Swami Sivananda constantly emphasized that religion is practical philosophy. The practical tenets of one's religion should be expressed in daily life; selflessness, love, purity and service are not creeds to be taught but ideals to be exemplified, demonstrated and radiated. Swami Sivananda states, "let religion create saints and Yogis rather than temples, mosques and churches" (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 421).

The overwhelming majority of respondents, 98,6%, had no objections to worshipping with members of their religion who belonged to different racial groups. 1,4% expressed indifference to this question. The universal and tolerant attitude of Hinduism may be seen to be reflected in the above response. Spiritual evolution transcends race, colour and creed. Swami Sivananda stated, the heart is divine. There is no such thing as the European heart or the non-European heart. Human nature is the same everywhere (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 238).

58,6% of the Divine Life Society devotees worshipped occasionally with members of other race groups of their religion. 21,4% did so regularly while 20% did not respond to the question.

Although the Divine Life Society draws most of its devotees from the Indian community, there is a small and regular stream of devotees drawn from other race groups. In South African Society the isolation of race groups also makes it difficult for inter-racial worship. Further, the Divine Life Society is situated in an Indian residential area which compounds the problem of other races worshipping together since it involves travelling to other residential areas.

The majority of the respondents, 68,6%, expressed disappointment when a Hindu converts to another religion. 22,8% were indifferent, while 5,7% were resentful of this phenomena. 2,9% did not respond to the question.

When a member of another religion converts to Hinduism, 61,4% of the respondents were pleased. 25,4% were indifferent, while 4,6% were disappointed. A further 8,6% did not respond to the question.

The majority of the respondents, 90%, had no objections to a Hindu leader of another race group performing ceremonies in their place of worship. The remaining 10% were indifferent to this. 80% had no objections to a leader of another Hindu religious organisation performing religious ceremonies in their place of worship. 15,7% were indifferent while the remaining 4,3% did not respond to the question.

The above attitude is not surprising since it is the policy of the Divine Life Society to invite leaders of other Hindu movements and organisations to address the congregation and partake in the satsang. Often leaders of different race groups and religious affiliation speak at functions arranged by the Society. An example of this was witnessed by the writer when the Divine Life Society celebrated the 150th birth anniversary

of Sri Ramakrishna on 18 February 1986 at the Reservoir Hills Ashram. The guest speaker was Pravrajika Atmaprana, a white sannyasin of the Ramakrishna order.

8.4 MODES OF WORSHIP (AT HOME)

In Hinduism worship at home forms the basis of religious expression.

It is therefore significant that the large majority, 81,4%, prayed daily at home. 8,6% did so on a weekly basis while the remaining 10% prayed several times a week.

Almost every Hindu home has made provision, however small or large, for a shrine. As indicated in Chapter 5 the Hindu temple is used mainly during the occasion of Hindu festivals or for individual worship. Thus it is the home shrine that is the most important focus for the worshipping family unit. In keeping with this tendency it was found that nearly all the respondents, 92,9%, stated that they had a sacred shrine. 7,1% replied that they did not have a shrine at home.

Table 8.7 reflects the images of God in the home shrines.

Table 8.7: Images of God in the home-Shrine of the Devotees

	YES	NO	NOT GIVEN
Krishna	75,7%	-	24,3%
Shiva	68,6%	-	31,4%
Rama	54,3%	-	45,7%
Hanuman	65,7%	-	34,3%
Sarasvathi	70%	-	30%
Luxmi	67,1%	-	32,9%
Durga	60%	-	40%
Vishnu	34,3%	-	65,7%
Ganesha	45,7%	-	54,3%
Kali	30%	-	70%
Other	20%	-	80%

As in popular Hinduism the devotees tended to worship God in many of His divine forms. The worship of the Divine as male and female manifestations was found to be equally popular amongst the respondents.

The deities found in most home shrines were mainly that of Krishna, 75,7%, Saraswati, 70,0%, Shiva 68,6%, Luxmi 67,1%, Hanuman 65,7% and Rama 54,3%.

Although only 34,3% indicated that an image of Vishnu was contained in the shrine it can be explained by the fact that the popular avatars (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu, namely Rama and Krishna, are worshipped rather than Vishnu Himself.

Swami Sivananda, in his writings, emphasised the importance of the Divine Mother ie. the Shakti aspect of Brahman. Shakti is the creative aspect of the Absolute, symbolised as cosmic energy. The Supreme Lord is represented as Shiva and His power is represented as his wife - Shakti, Durga or Kali. Shiva is omnipotent, impersonal, inactive, He is pure consciousness. The power or active aspect of the immanent God is Shakti. Shakti is the very possibility of the Absolute appearing as many, of God causing this universe. There is no difference between God and his Shakti just as there is no difference between fire and its burning power. Shakti is Brahman itself.

Shakti is symbolically female, but is in reality neither male nor female. It is only a force which manifests itself in various forms. The five elements and their combinations are the external manifestations of the mother. Intelligence, discrimination, psychic power and will are Her internal manifestations (Sivananda, Bliss Divine: 132-135).

Shakti is worshipped in her manifestations of Saraswati, Luxmi, Durga and Kali. The worship of Shakti in her manifestation as Saraswati and Luxmi were found to be most popular amongst the respondents.

Saraswati is Cosmic Intelligence, Cosmic Consciousness and Cosmic Knowledge. She is considered as the personification of all knowledge - arts, sciences, crafts and skills. Knowledge is the antithesis of the darkness of ignorance (Harshananda 1981 : 99).

Luxmi is the goddess of power, beauty, wealth and fortune. However Luxmi does not signify merely material wealth. All kinds of prosperity, glory, magnificence, joy, exultation or greatness come under her. (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 135).

According to Swami Sivananda, in worship, an image or a picture representing some divine form is used as an object of worship to raise in the mind of the worshipper the thought of a deity. It assists the aspirants to attain concentration, one-pointedness of mind and purity. An image represents the form of the particular deity that is invoked in it. The images of Vishnu and His Avatars, and the images of Shakti and Shiva, are the popular deities that are worshipped both in temples and in homes. There is no polytheism in Hinduism. Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and Shakti are different aspects of the One Lord (Sivananda 1981 : 119).

Thus the deities of popular Hinduism are symbols of the personal aspect of the Divine. The Hindu really feels in the shrine the presence of the deity, who is the embodiment of bliss. The Hindu religion is essentially monotheistic. Whatever deity or aspect of reality is worshipped is, to his devotee, the Supreme God, other deities being only parts of Him. Therefore, the monotheism of the Hindus does not exclude other gods; it includes them all (Nikhilananda 1968 : 162).

The majority of the respondents, 78,6%, also had an image of Swami Sivananda in their shrine. 18,6% did not have an image of Swami Sivananda in their shrine. 2,8% did not respond to the question.

The phenomenon can be explained by the close relationship of the Guru and his disciples as reflected in Chapter 6. The Guru

is one who removes the darkness from the disciple and leads him to the light, thus the highest veneration is accorded to one's Guru.

The lamp or the jyothi is one of the most popular symbols of religious expression in Hindu homes. 94,3% of the respondents indicated that they had a prayer lamp in the home shrine. Only 5,7% did not have a lamp.

The lamp denotes that the Lord is Jyothi Swarupa. He is All-Light. The devotee, in prayer, addresses God as the Self-Effulgent light of the universe, as indicated in the following prayer (Prayer Book 1980 : 172):

"O Lord! Thou art the self-effulgent light of the Universe
 Thou art the Light in the sun, moon and fire
 Remove the darkness in me by bestowing your Divine Light
 May my intellect be illumined!"

The prayer recited at home by 88,6% of the respondents was the same as recited at the Divine Life Society satsang. 11,4% indicated that this was not the case.

The singing of kirtans and bhajans during home worship was popular with 98,6% of the devotees. 1,4% did not indulge in this practice.

Furthermore, 98,6% sang kirtans and bhajans in praise of Swami Sivananda at home. The feeling of reverence that is generated by the devotees for their Spiritual Master is an important aspect of the devotional activity of the Movement.

The majority of the Divine Life Society devotees, 80%, prayed before meals, 20% of the respondents did not adhere to this practice. In the research conducted by Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr (1979 : 58) it was found that under 20% of the Hindus interviewed prayed before meals.

The Divine Life Society attaches deep philosophical importance to the act of praying before and after the taking of food. Before sitting for food the place is purified, a seat is placed and the articles of food are served. Before taking the food a little water is sprinkled while repeating some Vedic mantras at the same time. This repetition purifies the food. Then a little water is sipped. According to science as well as medicine, a little water drunk before meals is highly beneficial. Then the food is offered to the Pranas and to the Lord seated in the heart, by the repetition of mantras.

The person who takes the food offers it to the deities who dwell in the body in the form of Prana, Apana etc. He does not eat for himself. The physical body is not the eater. It is the Pancha Prana that takes the food. Thus, the taking of food can also be converted into a yogic activity or sacrifice (Prayer Book 1980 : 171).

68,6% of the devotees answered that their families pray together at home, while 31,4% stated that this was not the case. Of those who answered that the entire family did not worship together, it was found that the parents in most cases conducted daily prayers.

It is significant to note that in the research conducted by Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen (1981 : 20) it was found that the neo-Hindu groups ie. the Saiva Siddhanta Sangum, Divine Life Society, Ramakrishna Mission, Krishna Consciousness and Arya Samaj worship as families much more regularly than the rest of the community.

It was found that 37,1% prayed verbally, 30% mentally while 22,9% prayed both verbally and mentally. This tendency can be explained by the fact that variety in japa is necessary to sustain interest, avoid fatigue and counteract monotony.

At the Divine Life Society prayer is both verbal eg. at the satsang as well as mental, which is experienced during meditation and japa.

The form of the prayer of the respondents varied. 32,9% "praised God", 28,6% "thanked God", 7,1% "asked from God" while 31,4% stated that the form of the prayer was a combination of all three of the abovementioned aspects.

According to Swami Sivananda (1980 : 496-499) prayer is an invocation, a calling forth of spiritual forces ever flowing through the human heart, mind and soul. Prayer is a communion with God through single minded devotion. It is tuning the mind with God, fixing it and meditating on Him. Prayer is surrender to God completely; it represents a mystic state where the individual consciousness is absorbed in God. It is an uplifting of the soul to God, an act of love and adoration of Him, it is worship and glorification of God. It is thanksgiving to God for all His blessing. Prayer is also dependence on God for help in distress. It is giving an opportunity to comfort and protect the devotee.

Prayer should be lifelong and life should be one long prayer. Through prayer one links oneself to the inexhaustible cosmic powerhouse of energy and thus draws power, energy, light and strength from Him.

The majority of the devotees, 79,9% comprehended God in his Personal form, 8,7% in God's Impersonal form while the remaining 11,4% considered God as both Personal and Impersonal.

Table 8.8 reflects the aspects of God worshipped by those devotees who prayed to the Saguna (Personal) aspect of God.

The more well known deities of the Hindu pantheon such as Krishna, Shiva, Rama and Saraswati seem to be popular amongst most of the devotees.

Table 8.8: Aspects of God to which Devotees Pray

	YES	NO	NOT GIVEN
Krishna	52,9%	-	47,1%
Siva	52,9%	-	47,1%
Rama	45,7%	-	54,3%
Hanuman	38,6%	-	61,4%
Saraswati	52,9%	-	47,1%
Luxmi	38,6%	-	61,4%
Durga	34,3%	-	65,7%
Vishnu	34,3%	-	65,7%
Ganesha	41,4%	-	58,6%
Kali	38,6%	-	61,4%
Other	10%	-	90%

In Hinduism the nature of Brahman is seen as both transcendent and immanent ie. Impersonal and Personal. The Upanishads speak of the transcendent Brahman as devoid of qualifying attributes and of the immanent Brahman as endowed with them. The attributeless Brahman, Nirguna Brahman is the supreme or unconditioned Brahman and the other the conditioned Brahman, Saguna Brahman.

There is no real conflict between the two, for Brahman according to the Upanishads is one without a second, and can be regarded either from the phenomenal or from the transcendental point of view. One worships the conditioned Brahman in the ordinary state of consciousness, but one loses one's individuality in the experience of the unconditioned Brahman.

However, the reality of the phenomenal universe with all its limitations, and of finite living beings, need an object of prayer and worship. Obviously the unconditioned Brahman cannot be the object of such prayer or worship. Moreover, this transcendent non-dualistic position is too lofty for the average man to grasp.

The unconditioned Brahman supplies these wants by manifesting itself as the Personal God. By means of its own inscrutable power, called maya, the unconditioned Brahman becomes the conditioned Brahman, a Personal God, always ready to bestow His grace upon all who pray to Him.

According to the non-dualistic Vedanta, this conditioning of Brahman is not real, only apparent (Nikhilananda 1968 : 35-36).

Devotees, conscious of their inability to contemplate their identity with the Supreme Spirit, pursue a concrete form of worship as a spiritual discipline and cherish the hope of ultimately giving up dualistic thought. Thus they are led from the Personal God to Impersonal reality, from ritual to contemplation, from audible prayer to the experience of inner peace and silence (Nikhilananda 1968 : 163).

Swami Sivananda's religious experiences are grounded in Vedanta philosophy. He understands reality both in terms of a Personal God and Impersonal Brahman. Swami Sivananda believed in the non-dualistic Advaita Vedanta School of Philosophy as propounded by Sri Sankaracharya, he writes (Gyan 1980 : 139):

I am a strange mixture of devotion, yoga and wisdom
I am a follower of Sri Sankara. I am a Kewala-Advaita
Vedantin. I am a practical Vedantin

Furthermore, he relates his religious experiences in these words (Gyan 1980 : 139):

I have seen God myself. I have negated name and
form, and what remains is Existence - Knowledge -
Bliss and nothing else. I beheld God everywhere.
There is no veil. I am one. There is no duality.
I rest in myself. My bliss is beyond description.
The world of dreams is gone. I alone exist.

The majority of the respondents, 90%, considered God to be "within them", 10% regarded God to be "near them". None of

the devotees considered God to be far from them.

The concept of Brahman and Atman are the central edifices of Hindu philosophy. They are respectively the objective and subjective views of the reality behind the world of appearances. The eternal, impersonal Absolute which the Upanishads call Brahman is the only Ultimate Reality; the spirit in man, Atman, is identical to the Supreme Spirit, Brahman, as indicated in the famous Upanishadic sentence: "Tat Tvam asi" - Thou art that. The Atman is the eternal witness, the eternal subject, the unchangeable reality in man (Prabhavananda 1974 : 55).

Since the Divine dwells within each person in the form of the Atman, it is not surprising that the majority of the respondents considered God to be within them.

The majority of the devotees, 94,3%, stated that they discussed religion with their friends. Only 5,7% did not do so. Of those devotees who discussed religion with their friends 47,1% did so often, 40% sometimes and 2,9% rarely. 10% did not respond to the question. As mentioned earlier a large number of devotees joined the Divine Life Society after hearing about the Movement from their friends.

When questioned about how their beliefs differed from those of members of other Hindu organisations it was noted that 77,1% were of the view that there was no difference, while the remaining 22,9% did not respond to the question. This attitude may be explained by the fact that the different Hindu movements, while their approach and emphases may be different, the fundamental basic principles of Hinduism are adhered to by all the movements.

80% of the devotees regarded the teachings of the Divine Life Society more satisfying when compared to other Hindu movements. Only 2,9% did not hold this view. 11,4% were uncertain while 5,7% did not respond to the question. The simple but effective manner in which Swami Sivananda has propounded the primary

teachings of Hinduism makes it easier for the masses to understand. Swami Sivananda has written extensively on Hindu religion and philosophy. His writings cater for all ages and all temperaments, layman, students and scholars alike.

8.5 RELIGION AND FAMILY LIFE

The family unit is the most important for the dissemination of religious education in the Hindu tradition. The emphasis placed upon religious practices is one of the outstanding features of life in the Hindu community, more especially the Hindu family. The area of domestic worship is an important one because it is in the home that many of the religious and cultural traditions are transmitted from one generation to the other. Daily worship, life cycle rites, and even the traditional aspects of common religion are still vital dimensions of Hinduism in family life (Knott 1986 : 159).

The majority of the respondents, 88,6%, indicated that they discussed religion with their family. Only 11,4% did not do so.

54,3% discussed religion with their families often, 31,4% sometimes, 14,3% did not forward an answer.

The overwhelming majority, 95,7%, were of the opinion that religion helped in the well being of the family. 4,3% did not respond to the question. It is evident that religion is an important facet in the life of the devotees.

81,4% indicated that in times of family problems they sought the assistance of the ashram. 18,6% did not do so.

Most of the devotees, 80%, approach the Spiritual Master for blessings in times of sickness. 20% did not seek the help of the Head.

With the exception of one, all of those interviewed maintained that the blessings of the Spiritual Head in times of illness helped in their recovery.

Festivals is one of the popular forms of religious expression in the Hindu tradition. All Hindu festivals have a deep spiritual import or high religious significance. On these days Hindus observe fasts and offer special worship. Many of the festivals commemorate certain events in Hindu religion which symbolise the destruction of the forces of evil by those of good, while other festivals celebrate the birthdays of avatars and saints. Festivals are colourful occasions giving rise to innocent joys and merriment and offering relief from the humdrum chores of daily life. Fasting gives inner purity and the feasting which follows develops the social sense.

Table 8.9 Religious Festivals observed by the Devotees

	YES	NO	NOT GIVEN
Deepavali	100%	-	-
Sivaratri	97,1%	-	2,9%
Mariamman	21,4%	1,4%	77,2%
Pongal	31,4%	2,9%	65,6%
Kavady	27,1%	2,9%	70%
Krishna Asthree	95,7%	2,9%	1,4%
Raam Naumee	94,2%	2,9%	2,9%
Durga Pooja	62,9%	2,9%	34,2%
Nava Rathree	89,1%	2,9%	10%
Pitar Pak	74,3%	4,3%	21,4%
Guru Pooja	57,1%	4,3%	38,6%
Hanuman Jayanthi	90%	2,9%	7,1%
Other (eg. Kartigai Deepam)	12,9%	5,7%	81,4%

As can be seen in Table 8.9 the religious festival of Deepavali was celebrated by all the respondents. The more popular festivals that were observed were Sivaratri, Krishna Asthree, Ram Naumee, Nava Rathree, Pitar Pak and Hanuman Jayanthi.

It is interesting to note that the festivals which had their origin in 'village' Hinduism eg. Pongal, Kavady and Mariamman were observed to a lesser degree amongst the devotees than

those festivals associated directly with an aspect of the Divine such as Krishna Asthamee and Sivaratri.

Swami Sivananda considered festive occasions as opportunities for intense sadhana and service. He proposed to his disciples that holy enterprises should be marked by frequent celebrations to rouse popular enthusiasm. Festivals meant collective kirtans and prayers (Ananthanarayanan 1979 : 92). The major Hindu festivals eg. Diwali, Navaratree, Krishna Jayanthi, Raam Naumi, Sivaratri, Guru Purinima, amongst others, are observed at the ashram. The Divine Life Society also celebrates Swami Sivananda's birthday on 8 September each year on a grand scale and also conducts satsangs on the eighth of each month in honour of the Master.

Sivananda maintained that the ashram should set an example in observing important festivals and jayantis (Gyan 1980 : 123). This spirit is reflected in the many festive occasions celebrated at the ashram which is marked not by revelry, but by intense spiritual activity at the various Divine Life Centres.

The performance of ritual ceremonies at home is an important expression of religious commitment in a Hindu household.

Table 8.10 Religious Ceremonies performed at Home

	YES	NO	NOT GIVEN
Katha and Jhandha	48,6%	4,3%	47,1%
Nava Rathree	47,1%	4,3%	48,6%
Pithar Pak	61,4%	5,7%	32,9%
Guru Pooja	30%	7,1%	62,9%
Mariamman	20%	5,7%	74,3%
Sarasvathi Pooja	64,3%	-	35,7%
Hanuman Jayanthi	45,7%	4,3%	50%
Other (eg Gengamah Pooja)	2,9%	7,1%	90%

As reflected in Table 8.10 a variety of traditional ceremonies are performed at home. It is evident that the Pitar Pak and Saraswati pooja seem to be observed by many of the devotees.

The Pitar Pak pooja has its roots in the Vedas. According to Vedic teaching it is incumbent for a grihasta, householder, to partake in the study and teachings of the Vedas; to perform daily worship of God through appropriate rituals; gratification of the departed ancestors, Pitar Pak by offering their spirit food and drink according to scriptural injunctions; kindness to animals and hospitality to guests, the homeless and the destitute (Nikhilananda 1968 : 79).

Saraswati pooja is the devout worship of Mother Saraswati, who is divine knowledge personified, the embodiment of knowledge of the Absolute. The sound of her celestial veena awakens the notes of the sublime utterances of the Upanishads which reveal the Truth and the sacred monosyllable, Om. She bestows the knowledge of the Supreme mystic sound and then gives full knowledge of the Self, as represented by her pure, dazzling snow-white apparel. The Divine Life Society places great emphasis on the attainment of spiritual knowledge, therefore the propitiation of Saraswati, the giver of knowledge is important (Sivananda 1982 : 20).

8.6 ETHICS

Ethics, which concerns itself with the study of conduct, is derived in Hinduism from certain spiritual concepts, it forms the steel-frame foundation of the spiritual life. Hindu ethics prescribes the disciplines for a spiritual life, which are to be observed consciously or unconsciously as long as man lives.

Hindu ethics is mainly subjective or personal, its purpose being to eliminate such mental impurities as greed and egotism, for the ultimate attainment of the highest goal. Objective ethics, which deal with social ethics, has also been considered by Hindu thinkers. It is based upon the Hindu conception of

Dharma, or duty, related to a man's position in society and his stage in life (Nikhilananda 1968 : 68).

Ethics and morality, according to Swami Sivananda (1980 : 193) are the basis of spiritual life. Spirituality devoid of moral principles is deceit. When one has no ethical perfection it is not possible to practise meditation and attain the state of Samadhi successfully.

In Hinduism, Brahman or the Self is one, it is one life vibrating in all beings. By serving others one purifies one's heart; and purification of the heart leads to the descent of the Divine Light and final emancipation or liberation. This is Hindu ethics and the basic metaphysical truth that underlies all Hindu ethical codes.

The guides of right conduct are the scriptures, the examples of saints, the inner conscience and established usage (Sivananda 1980 : 194-195). For the attainment of the ultimate purpose and goal of life, moksha, Swami Sivananda evolved a methodology which consisted of a set of ethical principles whose practice was necessary for spiritual progress. This set of instructions called the Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions (See Appendix 5) are a condensed form of Hindu teachings which, when put into practice would ensure and improve one's spiritual quest and evolution. The modern Hindu finds it relevant and meaningful because the practice of these Instructions entails Divine Life in action, and reflects Swami Sivananda's efforts to revitalize Hindu culture (Gyan 1980 : 136).

Table 8.11 reflects the preference of the respondents to the different yoga systems.

Table 8.11 Yoga System considered most effective by Devotees

Bhakti	11,4%
Jnana	-
Karma	31,4%
Raja	-
All	57,2%

It is important to note that 57,2% of the devotees considered a synthesis of all four yogas as being most effective as a spiritual discipline. Of those that had a preference for a single system, 11,4% preferred Bhakti yoga and 31,4%, Karma Yoga.

The four main paths to God realisation are Karma Yoga (the path of selfless service), Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion), Raja Yoga (the path of mystical union), and Jnana Yoga (the path of knowledge). Karma Yoga is suitable for a person of active temperament, Bhakti Yoga for one of devotional temperament, Raja Yoga for one of mystical temperament and Jnana Yoga for one of rational and philosophical temperament.

According to Swami Sivananda some people maintain that the practice of Karma Yoga, Bhakti or Jnana Yoga alone is the way to God-realisation.

However one-sided development is not commendable. Religion must educate and develop the whole man - his heart, intellect and hand. Only then will he reach perfection. The yoga of synthesis alone will bring about integral development. Action, emotion and intelligence should work in perfect harmony or unison. The ideal of Hinduism is to become harmonious and balanced in all directions. This can be achieved by the practice of the yoga of synthesis (Sivananda, *Bliss Divine* : 568-569).

The yoga of synthesis expounded by Swami Sivananda is an echo of the yoga systems as taught in the Bhagavad-Gita. In the Gita the yoga systems are sometimes treated separately and their characteristics pointed out. But in actual spiritual life they are inseparable. They are only the different aspects of a single process of discipline leading to a well balanced spiritual life (Sarma 1966 : 114).

The majority of the devotees, 82,9%, stated that being a member of the Divine Life Society influenced the path of yoga they choose. 14,3% were not influenced by the Society in making a choice. 2,9% did not respond to the question.

68,6% of the devotees indicated that they fasted during the course of the week. 27,1% replied in the negative to this question. 4,3% did not forward an answer. In most cases the word fasting connotes abstaining from meat dishes, thus the high percentage, 27,1% of those who replied in the negative could be vegetarians. This is confirmed by the fact that when questioned on whether they refrained from meat dishes when attending the ashram, 35,7% indicated that the question was not applicable.

58,6% refrained from eating meat dishes when they attended the ashram while 5,7% did not answer the question.

Swami Sivananda maintained that fasting is highly beneficial. Fasting will overhaul the system thoroughly, give rest to the stomach and the intestines and eliminate uric acid.

Tuesday seems to be the day most favoured by many of the devotees, 34,3%, to observe a strict fast. Many devotees also observe fasts on Sundays, Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays.

The position of diet, health and vegetarianism in one's spiritual evolution is elaborated at some length by Swami Sivananda. A diet that is wholly conducive to the practice of yoga and spiritual progress is called yogic diet.

The Chandogya Upanishad states "By the purity of food one becomes purified in his inner nature; by the purification of his inner nature he verily gets memory of the Self and by the attainment of the memory of the Self, all ties and attachments are severed (Divine Life 1984: XLVI/9, 303).

Diet is of three kinds - Sattwic, Rajasic and Tamasic. In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna states (Chapter 17 : 8-11):

"The food which is dear to each is threefold. The foods which increase vitality, vigour and energy, which bestow joy and which are delicious or bland, substantial and agreeable are dear to the Sattwic,

the pure. The passionate people desire Rajasic, foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning and which produce pain, grief and disease. The foods which are stale, tasteless, putrid is dear to the tamasic."

Food plays an important part in meditation. Different foods produce different effects on different compartments of the brain. For purpose of meditation, the food should be light, nutritious and sattwic.

Vegetarian diet has been acclaimed to be most conducive to spiritual and psychic advancement (Divine Life, 1984 : XLVI/9, 305).

Man is essentially an ever-perfect, ever-pure and ever-free Spirit in his true inner-nature. The human birth is given as an opportunity and a means to attain this sublime knowledge of his inner spiritual nature and to regain his divinity. In this process all gross and animalistic tendencies have to be totally eliminated from the human personality. Non-vegetarian diet, which is gross by its very nature, is a great hindrance to this process. Pure sattwic diet is a great help towards the refinement of human nature (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 555).

Table 8.12 reflects the familiarity of the devotees to the concepts of artha, kama, dharma and moksha.

Table 8.12 Familiarity with the concept of Purusharthas

	YES	NO	NOT GIVEN
Artha	51,4%	30%	18,6%
Kama	70%	20%	10%
Dharma	92,2%	2,9%	4,9%
Moksha	94,3%	5,7%	-

Most of the devotees knew the meaning of the term moksha, 94,3%, dharma, 92,2%, kama, 70%, and artha, 51,4%.

The affirmative attitude of Hinduism towards life has been emphasized by its recognition of four legitimate and basic desires: dharma or righteousness, artha or wealth, kama or sense pleasure and moksha or freedom and communion with God or the Infinite. Of these, the first three belong to the realm of worldly values, pravritti; the fourth is called the supreme value, nivritti. The fulfilment of the first three paves the way for moksha. Enjoyment, if properly guided can be transformed into spiritual experience (Nikhilananda 1968 : 81).

Artha takes note of the economic and political life of man. The earning of money is no doubt a part and parcel of life itself but it must be earned according to dharma, which should be the guiding principle of artha. This meant that truthfulness, honesty, virtue and morality should be the foundation upon which the economic superstructure of society should be raised (Siddhantalanka 1969 : 255).

Kama or the enjoyment of sense pleasure covers a vast area - from the enjoyment of conjugal love, without which creation cannot be maintained, to the appreciation of art, music or poetry. The cultivation of aesthetic sensitivity, if not pursued according to dharma, degenerates into sensuality. Wealth and sense pleasure, which are only means to an end, are valuable insofar as their enjoyment creates a genuine yearning for spiritual freedom in the mind of the enjoyer (Nikhilananda 1968 : 81).

The key to the individual and social ethics of Hinduism is the conception of dharma, whose full implications cannot be conveyed by such English words as religion, duty or righteousness. Derived from a root which means to support, the word signifies the law of inner growth by which a person is supported in his present state of evolution and is shown the way to future development. A person's dharma is not imposed by society or decreed by an arbitrary God, but is something with which he

is born as a result of his actions in previous lives. Dharma determines a man's proper attitude towards the outer world and governs his mental and physical reactions in a given situation, it is his code of honour.

According to Swami Sivananda dharma means duty. Dharma means virtuous action that elevates a man or woman to the status of Divinity and bestows on him or her the final beatitude of life, which is liberation from the rounds of birth and death (Sivananda 1981 : 10).

Moksha is spiritual realization. Man, who is essentially spirit, cannot be permanently satisfied with worldly experiences. Hindu Dharma exemplifies that man does not live by bread alone nor by his work, capital, ambition or power or relations to external nature. He lives or must live by his life of spirit. Moksha is self-emancipation, the fulfilment of the spirit in us is the heart of the eternal. This is what gives ultimate satisfaction, and all other activities are directed to the realisation of this end (Radhakrishnan 1971 : 58).

Swami Sivananda maintains that moksha is the final goal of man, the merging of the self in the Absolute. Thus the most important purpose of the ashram is to prepare man for the experience of God and all activities are seen as a sadhana to discipline man in his spiritual evolution.

The majority, 67,2%, of the devotees considered it very important to attain moksha, 25,7% considered it important while 7,1% did not respond to the question.

72,9% of the respondents indicated that they did not believe in the caste system as a social institution while 25,7% believed in the system. 1,4% did not respond to the question.

Inter-caste marriages were favoured by 67,2% while 27,1% disapproved of such marriages. 5,7% did not forward an answer.

The majority of the devotees, 78,6%, approved of inter-language marriages within the community. Only 15,7% disapproved of this practice while the remaining 5,7% did not respond to the question.

Swami Sivananda maintains that the division of caste ie. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra is according to guna and karma. The gunas are the three qualities viz. Sattwa, Rajas, Tamas or purity, passion and inertia. These three qualities are found in man in varying proportions. Those in whom the Sattwic quality dominates are called Brahmins, those in whom the Sattwic - cum - Rajasic quality is all powerful are called Kshatriya, those in whom the Rajasic - cum - Tamasic quality holds its sway are called Vaishyas, and those in whom the Tamasic quality are all embracing are called Sudras.

Rishis studied human nature and deemed it necessary to allocate different kinds of duties to different classes of people, according to their aptitude, capacity or quality. The Brahmins were in charge of spiritual and intellectual affairs, the work of political administration and defence was given to the Kshatriya. The Vaishya were entrusted with the duty of supplying food for the nation and administering its economic welfare, the Sudras did the menial work.

This social edifice is built on the law of spiritual economics. It has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. Each class contributes its best to the common-weal or world solidarity (Sivananda 1981 : 39-41).

According to Swami Sivananda at the present moment the caste system is in name only. He maintained that the caste system was flawless but the defect came from man himself when the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras fell from their ideals and neglected their respective duties. What called for the spirit of co-operation resulted in jealousy and hatred giving rise to sectarianism in the name of the caste system.

Swami Sivananda re-educated the people by impressing upon

them the need to destroy the sectarian spirit. Instead they should develop a new, understanding heart of love and devotion, with a spirit of co-operation, sacrifice and service.

In devotion, one's caste, culture, physical appearance, birth, possessions and occupation do not matter. He who has dedicated his all at the Feet of the Lord and who constantly remembers the Lord, succeeds in attaining God-consciousness, no matter whether he is a Brahmin or a labourer, educated or uneducated, high-born or low-born, good looking or ugly, wealthy or poor.

Discrimination among devotees on the grounds of caste has been declared an offence in Hindu scriptures.

In the Adhyatma Ramayana Sri Rama states:

"Sex, birth, reputation and status do not confer any title to My worship, only devotion, adhikara or fitness, competence do."

A saint rises above the three gunas. He has Para-vidya or the highest knowledge through direct God realisation. He does not belong to any one caste or community but to the whole of humanity. That is the reason why there is no distinction of caste amongst the saints (Sivananda 1981 : 124-125).

The majority of the respondents, 97,1%, believed in the law of karma while the remaining 2,9% did not respond to the question.

According to the doctrine of karma men are born with a blueprint of character mainly prepared by their actions in previous lives. The principle of karma deals with the material or the context in which each individual is born. While it regards the past as determined, it allows that the future is only conditioned. The spiritual element in man allows him freedom within the limits of his nature. The Bhagavad Gita asks us to raise the self by the Self. We can use the material with which we are endowed to promote our ideal. The theory of karma allows man the freedom to use the material in the light of his knowledge.

There is thus scope for genuine rational freedom, while indeterminism and chance lead to a false fatalism (Radhakrishnan 1971 : 54).

Karma is the sum total of our acts, both in the present life and in the preceding births; it means the law of causation, not only action but also the result of an action. Every right or wrong action brings about its own reward or punishment in accordance with the law of retribution. The law of causation, the law of action and re-action, the law of compensation and the law of retribution - all these operate together.

Man has a threefold nature; he consists of feeling, knowing and willing. These three fashion his karma. Desire produces karma which produces its fruit such as pain or pleasure, thus one has to take birth after birth, re-incarnation, to reap the fruit of one's karma.

Karma is of three kinds viz. the accumulated works, the works that fructify, and the current works. The accumulated karma have accrued to a person from the past. Part of it is seen in one's character, tendencies, aptitudes, capacities, inclinations and desires. The fructifying karma is that portion of the past karma which is responsible for the present body. The karma of current works is that karma which is now being made for the future.

Swami Sivananda believed that destiny is one's own creation, created by one's thoughts and actions. By self-effort, austerities, concentration and meditation one can shape one's character by cultivating sublime thoughts.

Within the law of karma there is scope for Divine Grace which comes through penitence, austerity and devotion. Penitence does not alter the law of karma. It is an act that has to bear fruit like any other act. What one has to reap cannot be altered by the individual but its recurrence can certainly be checked by self-effort (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 277-281).

The Hindu sages realized the necessity of consciously moulding the character of individuals, they utilized the system of samskaras for this purpose. The term samskara means religious purificatory rites and ceremonies for sanctifying the body and mind of an individual, so that he may become a fully-fledged member of the community.

The sixteen basic samskaras cover the full span of life; from the very moment that a being is conceived throughout life until death. The samskaras were a guide that directed the life of an individual according to his growth. A Hindu was required to live a full life of discipline and his energies flowed into a well guarded and purposive channel (Panday 1982 : 32).

While the more popular samskaras are still observed, many have fallen into disuse today as a result of unfamiliarity with the samskaras and the manner in which they are performed.

Table 8.13 Samskaras observed by the Devotees

	YES	NO	NOT GIVEN
Birth Ceremony	71,4%	2,9%	25,7%
Naming Ceremony	60%	2,9%	37,1%
Removal of Hair	60%	-	40%
Appearance of Teeth	11,4%	4,3%	84,3%
Ear-piercing	12,9%	4,3%	82,8%
Investure of Sacred Thread	15,7%	4,3%	80%
Marriage	95,7%	-	4,3%
Death	97,2%	1,4%	1,4%
Other	4,3%	4,3%	91,4%

As reflected in Table 8.13 it was noted that the birth ceremony, 71,4%, the naming ceremony, 60%, removal of hair 60%, marriage 95,7% and death ceremony 97,2% were the samskaras that were still performed by the majority of the respondents especially those related to the major rites de passage such as birth, marriage and death.

CHAPTER 9RELIGIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The Divine Life Society as a religious institution is rendering spiritual and cultural service with a view to spreading the salient features of Hindu religion and culture which proclaims that man is essentially divine and the aim of human life is to realize this great Truth.

The Divine Life Society lays emphasis on all aspects of life and is fulfilling a valuable service in catering for the religious and cultural upliftment of society through its various departments of service such as the satsang, Sadhana camp and Children's Cultural Centre.

9.1 THE SATSANG

The satsang held at the ashram can be seen as a meaningful facet of religious expression because 88,6% considered it very important to attend. The remaining 11,4% considered it important.

The satsang is the most important religious activity of the society. It is a time when devotees, the ashramites and the laity come together as a worshipping community. A factor that makes the satsang more meaningful to the devotees is the presence of the Spiritual head at the satsang.

The satsang is attended by 50% of the respondents on a weekly basis, 20% attended several times a week, 8,6% attended daily, 2,8% several times a month, 8,6% attended monthly and 10% attended sometimes.

It is interesting to note that 80% of the devotees found the satsang more meaningful than home worship. 14,3% did not consider this as true while 5,7% did not respond to the question.

The reasons forwarded by four of the respondents demonstrated the reasons for the above attitude:

- (a) The presence of Swamiji instils an inner calm and peace
- (b) Satsang is more powerful than individual worship. Praying and chanting of sacred mantras together, in a group,

brings about tremendous spiritual vibrations, peace and bliss.

- (c) The peaceful and sanctified atmosphere in the ashram and the devotional atmosphere make it easier to further the aims of God realisation.
- (d) Satsang helps to create spiritual vibrations not only in the persons present but also for the peace of the world.

The majority of the respondents, 82,9%, indicated that other members of their family also attended the satsang. 12,9% stated that they were not accompanied by other members of their families while 4,3% did not respond to the question. As indicated earlier the Divine Life Society seems to attract the family unit as a whole to the Movement.

Of those interviewed, with the exception of 1,4%, all expressed satisfaction with the nature and contents of the satsang.

The following reasons were forwarded by the respondent who felt that the contents of the satsang could be reviewed;

1. There should be more participation from the general congregation in the singing of kirtans.
2. Youth should be invited to deliver talks.
3. Excerpts from the works of Swami Sivananda and other saints, which are read during satsang, should be done on a more selective basis.

Table 9.1: Aspects of the Satsang which are most meaningful to devotees

Meditation	5,7%
Lecture (discourse)	12,9%
Reading of Literature	4,3%
Kirtans	34,2%
All	42,9%

Table 9.1 reflects the aspects of the satsang which were considered to be most meaningful to the devotees. It is interesting to note that a large number of devotees, 42,9%, considered all aspects of the satsang to be meaningful. The singing of Kirtans seem to be one of the more popular aspects of the satsang with 34,2% regarding it as the most meaningful in the satsang.

5,7% considered meditation the most meaningful aspect, 12,9% the lecture, and 4,3% the reading of literature.

Table 9.2: Reasons for attending the Satsang

To pray	81,4%
To get help from God	18,6%
For the sake of duty	-
For the sake of tradition	-

As indicated in Table 9.2 the primary reason forwarded by the majority of the respondents, 81,4%, for attending the satsang was to pray. The remaining 18,6% stated that they attended "to get help from God". None of those interviewed stated that they attended the satsang either for the sake of duty or the sake of tradition.

It is evident that prayer "for its own sake" forms the motivating factor for attending the satsang. Worship is performed more for the purpose of spiritual upliftment than material benefit.

The singing of kirtans and bhajans was considered by the overwhelming majority, 98,6%, to be an important aid to the spiritual life. 1,4% did not respond to the question.

62,9% of the respondents considered it important that the kirtans and bhajans are sung in Sanskrit or the mother-tongue. This was not considered to be absolutely necessary by 37,1%.

Although the majority of the kirtans are rendered in Sanskrit and Indian languages, kirtans are also rendered in the English medium at the satsang. Swami Sivananda himself composed many kirtans in the English language.

Most of the devotees, 82,9%, stated that they understood the meaning of the kirtans sung at the satsang, whereas 17,1% replied in the negative to this question.

The Divine Life Society has printed a Prayer Book containing the popular kirtans and bhajans that are sung at the satsang. The translations of the kirtans are provided in the Prayer Book for the understanding of the devotees.

It is also evident that the singing of the kirtans and bhajans is also sung at home and not restricted only to the ashram. With the exception of 2,9% all of the respondents sang kirtans at home.

It is interesting to note that the mental thoughts of the devotees during the satsang varies with the rendering of the kirtans and the Sivananda Mantra. During the singing of the kirtans 47,2% reflected on God in the form of their chosen deity, 11,4% think of God, 35,7% meditate on Swami Sivananda while 5,7% did not respond to the question. During the chanting of the Sivananda Mantra, 67,2% thought about Swami Sivananda, 27,1% concentrated on their ishtadevata or chosen deity, while 5,7% reflected on God.

The importance and meaningfulness attached to the singing of kirtans can be explained by the fact that kirtan is believed to be a very effective method of devotion and is a potent method of realising God.

Kirtan involves singing God's name with feeling, love and devotion. The harmonious vibrations produced by the singing of the names of God helps the devotees to control their minds easily by producing a benign influence on their minds. Kirtan

elevates the mind at once from its old ruts and grooves to magnanimous heights of divine splendour (Sivananda in Pictures, N/D : 29).

Swami Sivananda believed very strongly in the effectiveness of sankirtan ie. people joining together and singing God's name collectively in a common place to an accompaniment of musical instruments such as harmonium, violin etc. According to Swami Sivananda one can realise God through Kirtan alone. In this present age, the Kali Yuga, union with God or God realisation can be easily attained through japa and kirtan by the singing of God's names.

The mantra is an equally effective means to attain God-realisation. A mantra is so called because it is achieved by the mental process. The root "man" in the word comes from the first syllable of that word, meaning "to think", and "tra" from "tra", meaning "to protect" or "free" from the bondage of samsara or the phenomenal world. By the combination of "man" and "tra" comes mantra, which calls forth the four aims of being, namely Dharma, wealth (artha), enjoyment (kama) and liberation (moksha) (Sivananda 1985 : 23).

A mantra is Divinity. It is divine power manifesting in a sound body. The mantra itself is the Deity. The aspirant should try his best to realize his unity with the mantra of the Divinity, and to the extent that he does, so the Mantra-power or the Mantra Shakti supplements his worship-power (sadhana-shakti).

A mantra accelerates and generates creative force. Spiritual life needs harmony in all parts of our being. The whole being must be at perfect ease and in tune with the Divine. Then only the spiritual truth can be realised. Mantra produces harmony. A mantra has the power of releasing the cosmic and the supra-cosmic consciousness. It bestows on the spiritual aspirant illumination, freedom, supreme peace, eternal bliss and immortality. A mantra, when constantly repeated awakens the consciousness,

The japa of a mantra can bring the aspirant realisation of his highest goal even though he has no knowledge of the meaning of the mantra (Sivananda 1985 : 23-25).

9.1.1 Format of the Satsang

Satsang is held everyday of the week at the Ashram. From Monday to Saturday the satsang is held from 6-7 pm. and is attended mainly by ashramites and close devotees. The main satsang which is held on Sunday from 6-8 pm. has the largest attendance with approximately three hundred devotees attending every week.

The format of the satsang broadly includes prayer, kirtan, bhajans, religious discourses, reading from scripture, taped music, discourses of saints and sages, meditation, chanting and public lectures.

The satsang normally begins with the repetition of the Om mantra thrice by the entire congregation. Om represents the mystic sound of Brahman. The sacred syllable represents the impersonal Absolute as well as the personal aspect of God. The repetition of Om with meditation on its meaning is prescribed as an effective spiritual practice.

This is followed by the chanting of the Guru Mantra in order to invoke the Gurus grace (See Appendix 6).

Thereafter the Universal Prayer is read to the congregation (See Appendix 2). In keeping with the application of the universalism taught by Swami Sivananda this prayer is rendered for those in the congregation who may not belong to the Hindu faith.

Kirtans and bhajans are sung with devotees leading the congregation in song to the accompaniment of music. The kirtans and bhajans are usually sung by the devotees but on special occasions the satsang committee may invite someone from the community to render devotional songs and music.

Approximately ten to fifteen minutes is devoted to reading from the scriptures. In most cases excerpts are read from Swami Sivanandas numerous writings that impart teachings which have pertinence for the devotees. The passages read are normally chosen by Swami Sahajananda; at Swami Sahajananda's discretion excerpts from other Scriptures may also be read.

This is followed either by taped music which aids relaxation of the mind or taped cassettes consisting of spiritual discourses by saints and sages eg. Swami Sivananda, Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai.

These discourses, which include discussion on aspects of Hindu philosophy and religion provide educative norms through which the devotees mould their daily life by emulating these teachings and experiences.

Thereafter a public lecture on some aspect of Hindu religion and philosophy is normally delivered by one of the senior devotees of the Divine Life Society.

Usually kirtans are sung after the lecture and this is followed by meditation. Swami Sivananda teaches that a good and virtuous life merely prepares the mind to be a fit instrument for concentration and meditation which are considered to eventually lead one to the realisation of the Self.

Meditation is keeping up an unceasing flow of God consciousness. All worldly thoughts are shut out from the mind; it is filled and saturated with divine thoughts, divine glory and the Divine Presence. By subjugating the senses and withdrawing the mind from objects the mind will become calm, one-pointed, pure and subtle. With the help of this trained instrument, the disciplined mind, one should contemplate on that One Infinite Self. In profound and continued meditation thinking ceases.

There is only one idea of "I am Brahman". When this idea also is given up, the Superconscious state ensues, where mental modification ceases to exist and the non-dual consciousness is experienced. Just as salt melts in water, so also the pure mind melts in silence in Brahman, its substratum. The yogi then enjoys uninterrupted peace, supreme bliss and eternal joy.

Regular meditation opens the avenues of intuitional knowledge, makes the mind calm and steady, develops strong and pure thoughts, awakens an ecstatic feeling and brings the student of yoga in contact with the Supreme Spirit.

Those who have removed the impurities of the mind through the repetition of the Name of the Lord, through charity, selfless service and Pranayama are greatly aided in their meditation through the development of divine or pure qualities (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 344-351).

The satsang culminates with the chanting of the Gurudev mantra followed by the singing of the Hanuman Chalisa, which occupies a central theme in all the prayer of the Divine Life Society. The reason forwarded for this was that Mother Krishnabai, a realised soul of Anandashram in India communicated with Swami Sahajananda and asked him to include the Hanuman Chalisa in the Divine Life Society prayer. It is believed to be extremely powerful in warding off negative vibrations and ill-luck.

Thereafter the Maha-Mrityunjaya Mantra is chanted three or more times (See Appendix 7). The Hanuman Chalisa and the Maha-Mrityunjaya Mantra are chanted for the health, long life, peace and prosperity of those in distress and the world at large (Prayer Book, 1980 : 153).

A short period of silent meditation follows the Maha-Mrityunjaya Mantra after which the Arathi and Shanti Paat are recited. Thereafter the congregation leaves the shrine in silence, first taking arathi and then partaking of the prasad that is provided.

Prasad is the sacred offering of the Lord. The devotee offers sweet rice, fruit, curd, milk and other such articles. After offering them to the Lord they are shared among the devotees present. The benefits of the prasad have the power to change the outlook of a person entirely; it destroys sin and pain. To the faithless it brings very little benefit (Prayer Book, 1980 : 173).

Newly published literature or articles are often distributed to the devotees after the satsang.

Swami Sivananda constantly extolled students to seek the company of holy men and listen to their conversation; the beginner on the spiritual path will strengthen his own aspiration by communion with others who share them.

Satsang is believed to help a long way in the attainment of moksha. Satsang with a sage purifies and illuminates man for by such company there dawns the knowledge of the Divine or Supreme Self. Faith in God and in the scriptures, attachment and devotion to God is developed through regular attendance of satsang. The power of satsang or association with the wise is described in detail in the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana and other holy Scriptures.

Since satsang is seen as a means to lead man to bliss and liberation householders are advised to keep company with righteous and good men because by their company and service, dispassion is nurtured and a yearning for the Lord is instilled.

Through constant satsang one will gradually realise its incalculable benefits and utilise it profitably in the realisation of the self (Sivananda 1980 : 606-611).

9.2 THE GURU

A striking statistical finding was that 100% of the respondents considered it important to have a guru to aid their spiritual growth.

Swami Sivananda, in his numerous writings has emphasised the need for a spiritual preceptor to guide aspirants in their spiritual evolution. The spiritual path is rugged and precipitous. It is enveloped in darkness. The guidance of a Guru who has already trodden the path is imperatively necessary. He will be able to throw light on the path and remove obstacles (Sivananda 1981 : 31).

The role of the Guru in Hindu religion has been of vital importance from the Upanishadic period. It is phenomenal that in today's scientific and critical age, the guru is a present day reality and not merely an institution of the past. The feeling of reverence and veneration accorded to one's spiritual preceptor is reflected in the attitudes of the devotees as follows:

A. Feelings towards Swami Sivananda

1. "Guru is God. He is the link between the individual soul and God, Jiva-atman and Param-Atman. Only through the divine Grace of the Guru can one be united with the Supreme Being. Sri Swami Sivananda is one's Father, Mother, Friend and Guru who showers His love, blessing and grace on all. One feels His Divine Presence."
2. "Although I haven't seen Swami Sivananda I see him when I see Swami Sahajananda. There is no doubt that His subtle form is forever present here."
3. "Swami Sivananda is a Great Master, a God-realised

soul, who has done a great deal for the upliftment of the Hindu religion."

4. "I feel he is Param Guru and that I can leave my whole life at his feet and let him do what he will with it. I feel He is here with me always."

B. Feelings towards Swami Chidananda

1. "He is a spiritual luminary who is dedicated to the spiritual upliftment of all mankind."
2. "I feel that Swami Sivananda is working through Him and that He should be equally adored, respected and worshipped."

C. Feelings towards Swami Sahajananda

1. "I feel that Swamiji is Gurudev Sivananda. I think Swamiji is one of our greatest living saints on earth who radiates love and an inner light. He has given me an opportunity to perform real Karma Yoga."
2. "Swami Sahajananda is 'power'. Everything that happens in the ashram is through His grace. There is nothing that He is not aware of. His high standard of discipline must be admired."
3. "I feel a great respect and gratitude towards Swamiji. In South Africa He has brought the Divine Life Society to the forefront of the Community. As Spiritual Head of the Society He has excelled Himself."

The devotees saw Swami Sivananda as God-man, one who has attained Self-realisation and is working through Swami Sahajananda in guiding the devotees along the path of God-realisation.

Swami Sivananda is seen as more than a Param Guru, He is seen as a loving father, mother, friend who protects and guides the devotees in their quest for perfection.

An interesting observation was that although most of the devotees did not meet Swami Sivananda in person they stated that they felt his presence constantly.

All the devotees expressed deep reverence and respect for Swami Sahajananda and saw him as an embodiment of Swami Sivananda, one who is leading them from darkness to light for he is established in God.

9.3 SADHANA (YOGA) CAMP

In its endeavour to constantly find new methods to accelerate the spiritual development of devotees, the Divine Life Society inaugurated the monthly Sadhana (Yoga) Camp in January 1983. The yoga camp caters for the devotees who seek to "speed up" their sadhana by following the six precepts laid down by Swami Sivananda namely, serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise. The integral philosophy of Swami Sivananda forms the basis of the teaching given during the yoga camp. Swami Sivananda believed that religion must educate and develop the whole man - his heart, intellect and hand, only then will he reach perfection. Integral development is brought about by the yoga of synthesis.

For Swami Sivananda, sadhana is spiritual movement that is consciously systematized. The object of sadhana is to release life from the limitations to which it is bound. One's interest in sadhana should be cultivated by constantly keeping company with the holy, by studying religious books, by prayer, repetition of the Lord's Name and meditation.

It is the very nature of life, mind and prakriti to be constantly in motion. When there is the idea in the mind that the highest goal is yet to be achieved, one will always move towards it. Stern self-discipline to aid moral purity is absolutely essential. Sadhana should be regular continuous, unbroken and earnest if the aspirant wants to attain self-realisation.

Every bit of sadhana done is recorded without fail in the hidden consciousness. No sadhana is ever performed in vain. Every bit of it is credited immediately towards one's evolution (Sivananda, Bliss Divine : 422-428).

The Sadhana Camp is held on a monthly basis at the Reservoir Hills and Pietermaritzburg branches of the Divine Life Society. On average, the attendance at the Reservoir Hills Sadhana Camp is between 200-220 people. Each devotee is required to pay a registration fee of R15,00. A concession is granted when more than one member of the family or if the whole family attends. The idea is to encourage family groups to attend. The early exposure of children to a pure and holy atmosphere will no doubt benefit them in later life. The registration fee paid is utilized to cover the basic cost of the camp while the excess funds are used in the poor - feeding schemes of the Society. Hence the payment fee is seen as an expression of sadhana in that the aspirants are given a chance to exercise charity.

The Sadhana camp follows a fixed programme every month with slight variations when the need arises eg. changes in the contents of certain aspects of the lectures. The Camp is held over a weekend beginning on Saturday at 3.00 pm and ends on Sunday at 3.00 pm. Devotees have the choice to stay overnight and the majority choose to do so.

The format of the Sadhana Camp is as follows:

Saturday

3.00 pm	-	4.00 pm	Registration
4.00 pm	-	6.00 pm	<u>Satsang</u> and Opening Lecture
6.00 pm	-	7.00 pm	Supper
7.00 pm	-	8.30 pm	<u>Sadhana</u> and <u>Satsang</u> (open to public)
8.30 pm	-	9.45 pm	Participants either watch a video with a religious theme or engage in meditation and chanting followed by listening to meditative music.

9.45

Rest

Sunday

4.00 am	-	5.00 am	Rise and Shower
5.00 am	-	5.15 am	Chanting
5.15 am	-	6.00 am	Meditation
6.00 am	-	7.00 am	Yoga Asanas
7.00 am	-	8.30 am	Breakfast and Relaxation
8.30 am	-	10.00 am	Two lectures followed by chanting and meditation
10.00 am	-	10.15 am	Break
10.15 am	-	11.00 am	Participants have a choice of one of three activities
			a) Scriptural Studies
			b) Karma Yoga
			c) Group discussion relating to experiences of the Sadhana Camp
11.00 am	-	12.00 noon	Cultural Programme
12 noon	-	1.00 pm	Lunch
1.00 pm	-	2.00 pm	Question and answer session
2.00 pm	-	3.00 pm	Tea, session ends.

The lectures at the Sadhana Camp are delivered by senior devotees of the Divine Life Society. In most cases a certain theme is chosen and pursued over several camps (See Appendix 8). However, Swami Sahajananda may, whenever the need arises, stipulate a certain topic to be discussed at the Sadhana Camp.

The organisation of the Yoga camp is governed by a Yoga Camp Committee consisting of eight persons. The Head of the Committee delegates duties and responsibilities to each of the members to ensure the efficient running of the Yoga Camp.

The aspirants who attend the Yoga camps are basically sadhakas who have committed themselves in varying measures to a spiritual

way of life. The participants can be broadly divided into two groups viz. sadhakas who are already acquainted with the discipline of religious life and are seriously committed, as well as those aspirants in general who are interested in doing sadhana.

In attending the yoga camp the aspirants benefit by coming into contact with the Spiritual Master whose very presence is considered to be spiritually elevating. By listening to lectures they develop a keener understanding of religious and philosophical precepts which become more meaningful in their lives. Their attendance at satsang, involvement in Karma Yoga, chanting, meditation and Yoga asanas help to cultivate in them a spiritual consciousness that is a prerequisite for the attainment of God-realization.

The Yoga Camp serves to expose devotees to the vast scope of Swami Sivananda's teachings, thus encouraging integral yoga to be given practical expression in their daily life. The Camp offers the devotees an opportunity to experience the spiritual way of life. Swami Sahajananda stresses that the camp helps perfect skills through worshipfully performed actions. The Hatha Yoga class provides an excellent opportunity to acquire first hand instruction in asana techniques. Pressure point therapy and naturo-pathic medication are also taught at the yoga camp. The yoga camp's cultural programme encourages expression of the other aspects of Swami Sivananda's teaching in the form of plays, poetry reading, dance, musical presentation etc. (Interview : Pillay).

The monthly Sadhana Camp is now being housed in the Sivananda Cultural Centre since its recent completion. The Sivananda Cultural Centre which overlooks the Umgeni River provides a picturesque setting for the creation of a retreat atmosphere. It is hoped that this new environment with its natural setting which is conducive to sadhana will attract more aspirants to the Yoga Camp in the future. Thus the format of the Sadhana Camp is also being reviewed to accommodate the envisaged changes.

Of those interviewed 55,8% attended the Yoga Camp monthly, 10% several times a year, 17,1% sometimes while 17,1% did not respond to the question.

As can be seen in Table 9.3 all aspects of the yoga camp were found to be rewarding to the devotees.

Table 9.3: Aspects of the Yoga Camp which Devotees find most rewarding

	YES	NO	NOT GIVEN
Satsang	88,7%	-	11,3%
Meditation	84,3%	-	15,7%
Chanting	77,1%	-	22,9%
Hatha Yoga	80%	-	20%
Lecture	84,3%	-	15,7%
Music	85,7%	-	14,3%
Karma Yoga	91,4%	-	8,6%

9.4 TEMPLE AND ASHRAM

In terms of the antiquity of its tradition, the presence of Hinduism in South Africa is a new phenomenon. The persistence of a religion in an alien milieu involves a process of adaptation, selection and modification to exist as a socially meaningful tradition in a new location.

In the early period of Hinduism in South Africa it was primarily by means of the temple that local Hindus had organised and maintained their religion. It is true that traditional Hindu puja (prayer) is very much family orientated and does not include the obligation for congregation. The temple is not so much a place of congregation as it is a symbol of Divine Veneration; it is fundamentally the house of God. Many Hindus make infrequent use of the temple, worshipping sometimes on an individual basis or with one's family or when the help of the pundit is required. The temple becomes more congregational

in character during festivals and other special occasions.

In South Africa the temple has acquired a new significance because it has become an important centre and meeting place for an ethnic and religious minority. It was the temple and its chief functionaries which brought local Hindus together and served their interests, to an extent. It was the temple which both presents the religion of the Hindu population to outsiders and is recognised by Hindus as a focus for their religious identity.

Therefore the temple helped to express and enforce a separate religious and cultural identity and it has thus acquired a new function for which there was little need in India (King 1984 : 6).

An ashram is based on monastic lines, it is a retreat or hermitage centred around a Guru, a God-realised man or woman. An ashram is before all else a place where people come to experience God. The ashram is spiritualised by the presence of the living Guru who leads people towards the Absolute, in many ways his presence makes the ashram (See Chapter 6).

The ashram, incorporating a shrine-cum-prayer hall caters for regular congregational worship. It incorporates the educative aspect of the temple. However, the imparting of religious knowledge at the ashram is intensified for the whole of man's life in this spiritual environment is a preparation for the experience of God (Krishnananda 1979 : 20).

Many of the respondents indicated that they found the discourses delivered at the ashram during satsang very beneficial. The regular discourses helped to dispel ignorance and misunderstandings that may have existed about the teachings of Hinduism. It helped to clarify and enlighten the devotees on the various aspects of Hindu religion. This is an important function that is fulfilled by educating the Hindus, since ignorance still exists amongst many in the community who are unaware of the

primary concepts and doctrines of the Hindu religion. It is evident that the discourses delivered are playing an important role in education since the majority of the respondents when questioned were found to have a high degree of familiarity with most of the doctrines and concepts of Hinduism.

A recent development in Hinduism has been the construction of prayer halls to many of the existing temples in the country. This is to facilitate the need for congregational worship.

In traditional Hinduism both the ashram and the temple have their respective roles to fulfil which are not diagonally opposed to one another.

Swami Sivananda himself mentioned, "visit a temple or place of worship at least once a week and arrange to hold kirtan or discourses" and "I will say that you should frequently visit all temples." (Sivananda, Gospel : 56).

55,7% of the respondents were of the view that a difference exists between an ashram and a temple. 30% maintained that there is no difference while 14,3% were uncertain.

Those who maintained that a difference existed between a temple and an ashram forwarded the following reasons:

1. "A temple is a place to worship. An ashram is an institution that promotes a spiritual way of life."
2. "The traditional temple allows for individual worship whilst the ashram allows for group worship."
3. "Ashrams are places of prayer and meditation, and renders social services to the community. It embraces all sections of people for common prayer and meditation."
4. "Ashrams are training grounds for spiritual aspirants."

Most of the devotees, 51,4%, attended the temple during festivals, 10% indicated that they did so often, 17,1% seldom, 18,6% rarely

and 2,9% did not respond to the question.

Since the research itself is one that involves a study of an institution that centres around an ashram it is not surprising that the majority, 70%, preferred attending the ashram. 27,1% indicated that they had no preference while 2,9% did not respond.

The reasons forwarded by those who preferred attending the ashram is reflected in the following answers:

1. "The atmosphere is excellent for stilling the mind, kirtans are soul stirring. Swamiji's presence has an overpowering spiritual effect."
2. "The ashram affords an opportunity to serve the Guru and engage in karma yoga."
3. "An ashram is a place of discipline. It provides a common place of meditation, prayer and enlightening discourses."
4. "The ashram way of life is the surest way to spiritual fulfilment. The presence of an enlightened teacher in an ashram is a spiritual gift to true seekers."

The presence of a spiritually enlightened preceptor and the importance connected with the position of the guru in Hindu spirituality as a necessity, to many, for the attainment of moksha can be seen as a reason which makes the ashram more preferable to earnest seekers.

9.5 SIVANANDA CHILDREN'S CULTURAL CENTRE

The concept of introducing a Children's Cultural Centre was initiated in May 1983 by Swami Sahajananda who approached a senior devotee of the Society to investigate and motivate the possibility of inaugurating such a Centre. The need for such a Centre arose out of the concern expressed by members of the society having attended a conference where the "erosion of Hinduism due to ignorance was highlighted" (Interview : Singh).

The Sivananda Children's Cultural Centre, as this Centre is known, which incorporates the Children's Sunday School was officially inaugurated on Guru Purinima Day in August 1983 by Swami Sahajananda. The direction of the affairs of the Cultural Centre was delegated to a Committee consisting of Srimati Swaroop Singh (Principal), Professor Poobalan Pillay, Sri Bala Nadasen, Sri Bipin Kapitan Sri Rajan Reddy, Srimati Gananayogee Reddy, Sri Gopala Govindasamy, Sri SK Reddy and Swami Sahajananda (Report, Divine Life Society, July 1984 : 2).

Although the first of the Children's Cultural Centre study was started at the Headquarters in Reservoir Hills, today there are eighteen branches of the Sivananda Children's Cultural Centre. These branches function in the following areas:

Pietermaritzburg	:	2 branches		
Phoenix	:	4	-	1 regional head
Shallcross	:	2		1 regional head
Marianhill	:	1		
Umzinto	:	1		1 regional head
Park Rynie	:	1		
Richmond	:	1	Estcourt	: 1
Merebank	:	1	Chatsworth	: 1
Tongaat	:	1	Stanger	: 1
Umkomaas	:	1		

The governing body co-ordinating the affairs of the branches consists of a Chairperson and Secretary. Each of the branches (unless otherwise indicated as above) consists of a Head and Treasurer. The Regional Head is accountable to the Principal of the Committee who in turn communicates with Swami Sahajananda who, as Spiritual Head, has the final say on all issues relating to the Sunday School.

The Reservoir Hills Ashram has an enrollment of 250 pupils. The children are divided into three class groupings according to their ages. The three age levels are:

3	-	6	years	:	pre-primary
7	-	10	years	:	junior primary
11	-	14	years	:	senior primary

The teachers of the Sunday School are drawn from the community, they are not necessarily teachers by profession. Currently, those involved in teaching cover a wide spectrum of professions such as lecturers, housewives, students, doctors, etc. An important criteria for those who are prepared to volunteer their services as teachers is commitment and dedication to the programme.

Each teacher is required to offer his or her services once a month since the system works on a rotation basis. Thus three teachers are present every week, one for each age group.

Since most of the people involved in the Sunday School are not by profession teachers, workshops are held on a regular basis to assist the teacher in familiarizing them with teaching techniques and methodology as well as the teachings of Swami Sivananda. Professor Rangarajen from the Sister Nivedita Academy in Madras ran a workshop for the teachers of the Centre in February 1986.

The subject matter taught at the Sunday School is based on a syllabus compiled by senior devotees under the guidance of Swami Sahajananda. The teachings are drawn mainly from the writings of Swami Sivananda although the writings of other saints and philosophers are also utilized.

The Sunday School which is held every Sunday from 9.00 to 10.15 am follows a set format. The session begins with a rendering of the universal prayer followed by the singing of two kirtans. The next twenty five minutes is devoted to teaching. Thereafter the children are involved in a spiritual discipline likhit japa, ie. the writing of a chosen mantra in a note-book. This exercise helps to aid the child's concentration and also has spiritual benefit. This is followed by meditation

and chanting. The session ends with the rendering of the Hanuman Chalisa.

Swami Sahajananda stressed that the teachings of the Sunday School be an incorporation of Swami Sivananda's integral yoga, which seeks to educate and develop the whole man - mind, body and soul.

In addition to formal education the children are taught to apply the tenets of their learning in their daily life. Emphasis is placed not only on theoretical learning but practical application. The activities of the Sunday School also incorporates selfless service in the social sphere. In this regard the children are involved in reaching out to the community through feeding schemes. During the course of 1985 children from various institutions for the underprivileged were fed by the children of the Sunday School. To inculcate responsibility in the children they are involved in the purchasing and preparation of the meals as well as the feeding.

The cultural needs of the students are also catered for in the form of music and drama lessons. Often plays with a religious theme are enacted by the children and teachers.

A Family Day is held bi-annually to elicit parental involvement in the activities of the Sunday School.

In keeping with Swami Sivananda's philosophy emphasizing the all-round development of the mind, body and soul, the Sunday School inaugurated an annual sports meeting, the first of which was held on 9 December 1984. All the branches participated in this event. The physical training of the child is a matter of great importance. A strong, pure, healthy body is necessary for the full expression of the developing soul within (Sivananda 1981b: 17).

In July 1983 a Children's Sadhana Camp was held at the Reservoir Hills Ashram and was attended by 250 children. An

important development arising out of the numerous questions asked by the children at the Camp formed the germ of an idea, which later led to the publication of the Yoga Lessons for Children.

Swami Sivananda stated that childhood is the most impressionable period. Just as a twig can be bent in any way you like so also can a child be moulded in any manner. Impressions formed at an early age form deep roots in one's nature. It is therefore the most conducive period to create religious impressions in the minds of children (Sivananda 1981 : 17-18).

Swami Sahajananda also holds the view that the child is most elastic and very easily moulded. Hence the Sunday School aims to help the growing child acquire and cultivate spiritual qualities and to create religious impressions in their minds. Swami Sahajananda believes that in the process of educating the child, the child will in turn reach out to the parents and transmit their religious impressions.

For the forthcoming Centenary Celebrations of Swami Sivananda (1987), the Divine Life Society is concentrating its efforts mainly on the spiritual and cultural education of children. The publication of the Yoga Lessons for Children is the first project in this programme. The second major project was the construction of the Sivananda Childrens Cultural Centre at the Reservoir Hills Ashram.

The construction of the Cultural Centre which overlooks the scenic Umgeni Valley is now complete. The complex consists of the following (Report, Divine Life Society, July 1984 : 1):

- (a) An auditorium with seating accommodation for 300. This will be used to train children in Sanskrit, classical dancing, music, singing and other arts.
- (b) A gymnasium for boys and another for girls, where instructions will be given in yoga asanas, health and general body building.

- (c) A Children's Library and Resource Centre, which will be used by children and teachers
- (d) An office and quarters for a resident aspirant.

The Centre will also be made available to teachers of other religious institutions involved in training children, and who wish to make use of its facilities to enhance their knowledge.

It is evident that most of the devotees, 68,6%, who have children send them to the Sunday School. The majority of the children, 88,6%, read literature published by the Divine Life Society. Most of the parents are of the opinion that there is a difference in their children's outlook to life after joining the Divine Life Society. The sound spiritual education which the children receive at the Sunday School is attributed to a positive change in the child's outlook to life.

After the age of 14 the child can continue his religious and spiritual inclination by joining the Sivananda Youth League. Swami Sivananda states that there is a great need for the imparting of ethical idealism to the youth of the present day. Youth is the most precious treasure of the nation. Students are an important asset to the country for they are the guides of the nation of tomorrow, as well as the potential leaders in all the different fields of national life.

Youth is also the period of one's life where the moulding of one's nature and the development of the character and personality take place.

The life of the student should be founded on certain worthy principles. Inspiring ideals, a code of moral conduct and a proper programme of life based upon noble principles are indispensable for the achievement of an all-round perfection of the body, mind and soul (Sivananda 1981 : 1-3).

1985 was declared the International Year of the Youth. Recognising the important role that the youth have to play in

the community Swami Sahajananda, incorporating the ideals of his spiritual master, recommended that the Youth League be formed comprising the youth of the Divine Life Society branches.

Swami Sahajananda maintains that "the youth should be given freedom in order to inspire them and vigorously commit themselves to practical sadhana." He also suggested that youth members from other religious organisations should be invited to participate in common programmes (Report, Divine Life Society, January 1985 : 1).

The numerous activities of the Sivananda Youth League includes selfless service to the needy and poor, organising cultural programmes, seminars, conducting satsang and group studies to acquaint themselves with religion and philosophy. During January 1986 the Youth Camp organised a major religio-cultural programme in Phoenix.

Although the Youth League is still in its embryonic stages it displays the potential to grow into an important forum for the youth who through creative and progressive work, can mould their thought to make the community prosperous both materially and spiritually.

9.6 LITERATURE

Dissemination of spiritual knowledge in the form of printed literature was for Swami Sivananda one of the most important means of transmitting religion to the people. This Jnana Dana or "gift of knowledge" possesses a characteristic which other gifts failed to have."

Swami Sivananda emphasised that study of religious books swadhyaya is important for a householder - sadhaka as well as other aspirants. They provide for him a constant reminder of the goal of life, they fan the embers of his Shraddha and keep the fire of spirituality constantly alive (Venketesananda 1961 : 102).

The emphasis placed by the Divine Life Society on the reading of religious literature is reflected by the fact that 65,7% of the devotees stated that they read religious literature frequently. 30% read religious literature occasionally, 2,9% rarely and 1,4% did not respond to the question.

The Gospel of Swami Sivananda was read most often by 50% of the devotees. 32,9% read the Bhagavad Gita, 11,4% read Bliss Divine, 4,3% read the Gospel as well as the Gita while 1,4% read the Vedas most often.

The Gospel is favoured by most of the devotees since it expounds the main teachings of Hinduism and contains the essence of Swami Sivananda's philosophy and teachings.

It was interesting to note that 21,4% of the respondents read literature of other Hindu organisations frequently, 34,3% occasionally, 40% rarely and 4,3% did not answer the question. Literature published by most of the Hindu religious organisations in the main deal with expositions of the primary teachings of Hindu religion and philosophy and is of common interest to all Hindus. The open-minded spirit that pervades the Hindu religion does not prevent the devotees of one movement from reading literature published by another movement.

One of the reasons for 40% of the devotees indicating that they rarely read literature of other Hindu organisations is probably due to the fact that literature of the various organisations is not easily available. Further Swami Sivananda's writings covers the entire orbit of Hindu religion therefore the devotees see no need for any further reading.

The writing of Swami Sivananda was regarded as easier to understand by 91,4% of the devotees. 5,7% did not consider this the case while 2,9% did not respond to the question.

Swami Sivananda is widely renowned for the simple manner in which he has conveyed the teachings of Hinduism, often

simplifying abstract philosophical concepts so that they could be easily understood by the masses. This fact is attested to by Gauri Prasad, a former eminent judge of the High Court of India (Divine Life 25 : 8):

"Swamiji (Sivananda) you have explained everything in these books in a language that is unrivalled for its simple grandeur. You explain in a few simple words what others take great pains to present in their bombastic language in long, elaborate, philosophical theses. Even a layman or a college student can just pick up your book and get all his problems solved. I think that it is because of your personal realisation of the Supreme Truth that this direct simplicity characterises your books."

The role of the Divine Life Society in educating the community through the distribution of literature was considered by 98,6% of the respondents as being an important facet of the Society's contribution to society. 1,4% did not forward an answer.

For the Divine Life Society, dissemination of spiritual knowledge jnana yajna, is the highest service that one can render to mankind especially in these troubled times of great unrest all over the world.

37,1% of the devotees indicated that the book "Gospel of Swami Sivananda" has the greatest impression on them; 22,9% were most impressed by "Man to Godman"; 21,4% "Bliss Divine", 4,3% "Yoga Lesson for Children", 4,3% "Science of Yoga" and 10% did not respond to the question.

9.7 WOMEN

Spiritual values constitute the pivot on which the edifice of life is built, be it a man's or woman's. Swami Sivananda considered it imperative that the ideal of womanhood should be basically spiritual.

Sthree, a Sanskrit word which means 'woman', is considered to be a manifestation of Shakti, the energy or power of God; it is she who guides and controls the destiny of men and nations.

The Hindu concept describes man and woman as representing the Purusha and Shakti, they are one - inseparable and indivisible. Women is in no way inferior to man in any respect. In the sphere of human endeavour for the uplift of mankind whether it was religious, social or political women have efficiently shared the burden along with the men. Swami Sivananda emphasizes that a woman should seek to prove herself a worthy partner of man, assisting him in all possible ways. Both have equal parts to play in the drama of life. Both have to exert for their perfection and attainment of life's supreme goal - God realisation.

Women have to play a very important role in the religious field and in training children (Sivananda 1981c: 17-29).

The inspiring force of the home is the woman. The home is the origin and beginning of every form of social organisation. Therefore, the home forms the training ground for the building of character in children. Good habits, right conduct and the formation of character are created in children spontaneously in a well-regulated home under the personal influence of the mother.

Women are considered the bedrock to sustain religion and national strength and prosperity. They can utilize their talents and abilities in making the home a cradle of culture, character, personal ability and religious revival.

Married life, if lived in a perfect, ideal manner, is no bar to the attainment of God-realisation. Women infuse the religious spirit in the males through their daily conduct and practical life. Chastity, purity, simplicity and service, the ideals of womanhood, when followed, preserve the eternal dharma.

Thus the mother is considered as the backbone of the nation, she has to play a sacred and fundamental part in the drama of the world. What is needed is moral culture, knowledge of the Self, regeneration of the lower nature, good behaviour, refined manners, discipline of the senses, control of the mind and the cultivation of sublime virtues. The Hindu women's ideal of freedom should have a religious and spiritual significance (Swami Sivananda 1981c : 40-51).

The devotees of the Divine Life Society are content with the role of woman in the Society. This is supported by the fact that 98,6% of those interviewed expressed satisfaction with the role of women in the Society. Only one did not respond to the question.

CHAPTER 10RELIGIO-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES10.1 SOCIAL - WORK

The Divine Life Society, while it is first and foremost a religious institution, is deeply involved in a vigorous programme in the social sphere, directed to the social upliftment of the community regardless of distinction of race, colour or creed.

The deep involvement of the Divine Life Society in social service is in keeping with Swami Sivananda's strong emphasis on selfless service to one's fellowman. According to Swami Venkatesananda (1961 : 88) one of the strongest aspects of Swami Sivananda's creed and philosophy of life can be expressed as "give, give, give". To him the word represents the quintessence of Vedanta.

This supreme, life-giving and life-transforming message has been given by Gurudev during every lecture that he has delivered throughout India, throughout the world by his soul-elevating writing, and above all, by his own divine life and radiant example (Venkatesananda 1961 : 88).

Swami Sahajananda is keeping the flame burning through his indomitable spirit of selfless service in the social sphere. Another reason for the involvement of the Divine Life Society in social work is attributed to Swami Sahajananda's overwhelming compassion and willingness to render assistance to those in need. However, Swami Sahajananda points out that the Divine Life Society is not a social institution but a spiritual institution whose duty it is to train sadhakas and spiritual aspirants. Despite the Society's involvement in social work this is not the ultimate objective of the Society. Social work is seen as a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Social work is the means to develop the sadhaka to achieve purity, compassion and spiritual virtues and attributes. Service should not be stripped of selflessness, but be performed

with the pure spirit of karma yoga ie. selfless service. All activity must be viewed as worship and must be accompanied by the correct bhav, attitude.

Thus the social work which the sadhakas are involved in is viewed as a discipline in their spiritual evolution. It is with this attitude that the Divine Life devotees are trained. They are taught to see the Divine manifested in all their actions. This spirit is expressed in the words of Swami Sahajananda, who stated:

"Everytime you lay a brick see Gurudev in
that brick,
If it falls feel the pain that Gurudev feels."

The social work activities of the Divine Life Society are wide and varied; it incorporates building of schools and clinics, poor-feeding schemes, Mobile Health Services, distribution of food hampers, feeding of school children, self-help projects and prayer services for prisoners.

10.2 BLACK EDUCATION

One of the spheres in which the Divine Life Society is rendering valuable service to the community is the building of schools for the Black Community in the Natal Kwa Zulu area. Sociological studies carried out in the Kwa Mashu area revealed that one of the acute problems faced by the residents is the lack of proper educational facilities (Schlemmer 1978 : 45).

These inadequacies in Black educational facilities was brought to the attention of Swami Sahajananda who initiated a school building project. The project was started when the Society built its first school in Mahlabatini in 1974 viz., the Ekudubekeni Secondary School, consisting of six classrooms, laboratory, office, staff-room and store room. There is a tremendous desire amongst the Black community to educate their children.

The school building project that was started in 1974 has been an on-going activity ever since. By the end of 1985 the Society had built over 50 schools in the area (See Appendix 9). In addition to the numerous schools already built, the Divine Life Society also undertook construction of additional classrooms and other facilities to existing schools.

Building schools in the way the Divine Life Society does by purchasing and supplying all the materials and engaging a qualified builder entails hard work but it keeps costs down. Most of the free labour is supplied by the devotees of the Society. Normally a five-classroom school costs the Society in the region of R20 000 which is about one-third the normal cost.

The blocks for the schools are manufactured by the Abalindi Welfare Society at Inanda. To facilitate the transporting of sand for block-making the Divine Life Society has donated a tractor to the Abalindi Welfare Society.

Another major project recently undertaken by the Divine Life Society is the construction of a large complex to train Blacks in skills so that they may earn a livelihood. This complex housing an art and crafts centre is being developed on a five and a half acre site at Empangeni where Black women can learn sewing and other handicrafts. Certificates will be given to women who complete the courses. The complex will comprise of classrooms, recreation rooms, offices and storerooms. Initially only courses in sewing will be offered by the school, however, later skills like basket-making, pottery, etc. will be taught. The success of this project will encourage the opening of similar training centres in other areas. The project will be supervised by Divine Life Society devotees in Empangeni. The school will be run by the Kwa Zulu Government Education Department. The land and buildings once completed will belong to the Kwa Zulu Government.

The funds for the Black education projects are derived mainly from the disposal of the Society's spiritual literature and from

donations from the public. Since support comes from all sections of the Indian community the Divine Life Society makes it clear that the schools are built in the name of the Indian community and not in the name of the Divine Life Society, except two clinics and one school named after Swami Sivananda by the Kwa Zulu Government. In keeping with this policy the plaque installed in the schools have the Aum sign, the Cross, and the Crescent on it. (Appendix 10).

The Divine Life Society is also engaged, at its premises, in manufacturing and distributing of school furniture to schools in need of such equipment. The Society has invested in a complete set of machinery for desk-building purposes. While the machining of the timber is conducted at the Reservoir Hills Ashram the assembly is done at the Chatsworth Ashram. All the components of the desks and chairs, everything from the bending of the steel tubing to its welding and final spray-painting is done by the members of the Society. The Pietermaritzburg Ashram is also closely involved in this project by assisting with the welding. Meranti hardwood is used to make the desks more durable. The project, which has turned out to be very successful, is due to the efforts of the members of the Society who provide their labour during weekends and evenings gratis. Since the Society does not have to pay for labour it is able to produce the desks and chairs at minimal cost.

The Society encourages the School Committees to get the community to take an active role in the building of the schools. The rationale behind this is to illicit community involvement in the project. The Society feels that by closely associating themselves and working with Blacks that they can encourage members of the Black community to dedicate themselves to serving those in need. It is felt that the spirit of service has been awakened in many who have since dedicated their lives to the service of their community. It is interesting to note that during the recent Inanda riots (August 1985) none of the schools built by the Divine Life Society were interfered with, while the Government schools were destroyed.

The most ambitious project that the Divine Life Society has embarked on in catering for the needs of Black education is the construction of the Sivananda Technical College and High School at Kwa Mashu. The project arose out of the acute need for technical education since there was a tremendous shortage of trained personnel among the Black community to occupy industrial positions. The project was inaugurated on Sunday 8 September 1985, an auspicious day, marking the birthday of Swami Sivananda. The College will be dedicated to Swami Sivananda in commemoration of his forthcoming birth centenary in 1987.

The Sivananda Technical College will be the first and largest of its kind in Kwa Mashu. It will cater for both high school as well as technical education. When completed it will provide training for students in most technical disciplines such as motor mechanics, carpentry, metal work and electronics, enabling them to qualify with a matriculation certificate. The project is expected to incur a cost of R2 000 000; this sum does not include labour costs which will be provided free by Divine Life Society devotees.

At the inauguration of the Technical College, Dr FT Mdlalose, representing the Kwa Zulu Government stated (Report, Divine Life Society, September 1985 : 2).

"In a world torn by unrest, violence and selfishness, Swami Sivananda's Gospel of neighbourly love and service is the only way to bring about peace, harmony and goodwill."

He also expressed the gratitude of the Kwa Zulu Government for the services rendered by the Divine Life Society to the Black community.

10.3 MEDICAL - RELIEF

The activities of the Divine Life Society in its efforts to serve have not been restricted only to the educational field but the

health needs of the Black community is also catered for. Since the beginning of the involvement of the Society in its work twelve years ago in this sphere, 4 clinics and 4 dormitories for crippled Black children have been built.

The first project was the construction of buildings for the Abalindi Welfare Society. This consisted of two dormitories for male and female cripple and blind inmates as well as a dining hall. Presently 4 more dormitories are under construction. Members of the Divine Life Society donated six head of cattle which provides all the milk for the institution. Every month the Society donates a sum of two hundred rands for providing food for the inmates.

The Ohlange Institute which houses the Sivananda Clinic and nurses quarters was built by the Divine Life Society to cater for thousands of poor Blacks in the Inanda area. Medical service is provided for family planning, immunisation, ante-natal care and basic outpatient treatment. Emergency service is provided on a 24-hour basis. Overnight patients can also be accommodated. Presently the clinic treats more than five thousand patients every month. The Society also donated an ambulance to the Clinic during May 1985.

To commemorate the birth centenary of Swami Sivananda the Society has built a massive clinic known as the Sivananda Centenary Clinic at Umzinyati in Inanda. It comprises a large maternity ward, X-ray unit, baby's ward and outpatient section. The Society also provided an ambulance for the clinic. The Clinic was officially opened in September 1986 and is now fully operational.

The Esidumbini Clinic which is under construction is scheduled to open shortly. This Clinic which is situated in Upper Tongaat will include a large ward, casualty section, patient's waiting room and a dispensary.

A Mobile Health Clinic which travels to very poor Indian and African areas and provides health services is also operated by

the Divine Life Society. The work of the clinic is undertaken by a team of dedicated Indian, Black and White devotees.

When the projects undertaken by the Society have been completed, they are officially handed over to the Kwa Zulu Government whose responsibility it then becomes to staff, administer and maintain these buildings.

The positive impression created by the Divine Life Society for working selflessly for the social upliftment of the Black community has led to further requests by the community for their continued assistance. This sentiment is echoed in the address of the Mayor of Kwa Mashu, Mrs EG Africa, who drew attention to the great deal of suffering that her people were presently undergoing. She said she was greatly moved by the attitude of the Divine Life Society, "which had decided to continue its work in spite of the recent disturbances in Kwa Mashu and Inanda (Report, Divine Life Society, September 1985 : 2).

The Divine Life Society provides free medical assistance to the community at the Sivananda Clinic which is based at the Headquarters in Reservoir Hills. The Clinic which was opened on 3 September 1961 is actively engaged in providing medical relief to thousands of needy patients.

The Clinic provides two types of treatments viz. allopathic and homeopathic. The allopathic section of the clinic is based on the western method of medical treatment while the homeopathic (ayurvedic) treatment is based on 'nature' cures as practised in India since ancient times. The homeopathic clinic run on Thursdays does not only incorporate homeopathy but includes other natural treatments such as naturopathy and other systems of healing. The clinic has various equipment used for physiotherapy and other treatments. The tablets and medicines issued to the patients are produced at the ashram by qualified devotees.

The allopathic clinic which functions on Saturdays is staffed by medical doctors from the community who offer their services on

a voluntary basis. The Clinic which is opened to the public treats more than 200 patients a month. The medicines provided by the ashram is distributed free of charge.

Swami Sivananda always taught that selfless service to the sick and neglected is service to God, it is also a means of self-purification. Even after entering the order of sannyasa, he continued to make use of his medical training. He believed that one of the best forms of charity is giving medicine to the sick (Sivananda, Gospel : 76). The service he rendered to the sadhus and poor was utterly selfless, compassionate, intensely dynamic and untiring. Through these actions he felt he was serving the Lord Himself (Venkatesananda 1961 : 174).

In the self same spirit of the Master, the Divine Life Society is rendering invaluable service in providing medical aid to the poor, sick and needy.

10.4 POOR - FEEDING

In the wake of economic recession and unemployment another important area in which the Divine Life Society is providing valuable service to the poor is through the distribution of food hampers to the Black and Indian community.

In providing food hampers to the Black community the Divine Life Society liaises closely with Reverend Arthur Sibisi of the Abalindi Welfare Society, an institution that caters for the welfare of the aged and needy. All cases are scrutinised by the Welfare Society who identify those people most in need of assistance.

The Divine Life Society distributes between 250-300 food hampers three times a year in Abalindi and Lamontville. In 1984 alone the Society distributed 1 250 food hampers to poor Black families at a cost of more than R30 000. Apart from the usual distribution of food hampers the Divine Life Society also provides assistance whenever requested, eg. in May 1985 they distributed food hampers to 50 Black families affected by the disastrous fire at Umbumbulu.

As a result of the present climate of economic depression and unemployment in the country the Divine Life Society provides relief by distribution of food hampers to Indian families in Phoenix. The Society works closely with the Phoenix Child Welfare in identifying those families in need of assistance.

As most of the families catered for in Phoenix were those where the bread winners were unemployed, the Society decided to provide food hampers every month. Presently about 75 families have been "adopted" and receive hampers monthly. A devotee adopting a family bears the cost of the monthly hamper and also visits his adopted family and has satsang in the home, so that members of that family will feel that they are loved and cared for (Report, Divine Life Society, September 85 : 3).

The hampers are distributed from four central venues in Phoenix. It is personally carried by the devotees to the homes of the recipients. This procedure is in keeping with Swami Sivananda's injunction that "when service is rendered it must be taken to its ultimate" (Interview : Pillay).

Normally a satsang is rendered at the home of the recipient. In view of the fact that the Divine Life Society renders assistance to all people in need, irrespective of race or religion, when the recipient is a non-Hindu, the Universal Prayer is recited. The purpose of the prayer is not intended to propagate Hinduism but to help alleviate the difficulties faced by the family as well as to teach them to pray for their own welfare and well being.

The non-propagatory stance of the Divine Life Society can be seen by the fact that the religious needs of the Black families receiving food hampers are catered for by their own minister.

In addition to the usual distribution of food hampers the Society also distributes hampers on auspicious days eg. the day marking the death anniversary of Swami Atmananda, the only initiate into the order of sannyasa by Swami Sahajananda,

annadana is given. Other occasions on which hampers may be distributed may include Guru Purnima and Christmas among others.

The Divine Life Society is involved in an intensive school feeding programme in the Indian, Black and Coloured communities. Swami Sahajananda's compassionate nature was aroused when he heard of children starving and fainting with hunger at schools. This prompted Swami Sahajananda to launch a daily feeding scheme which has now been in operation for the past five years.

The Abalindi Welfare Society prepares meals on behalf of the Divine Life Society for about 1000 Black children in the Inanda area.

The Divine Life Ashram in Loop Street, Pietermaritzburg provides lunch for 550 Indian, Black and Coloured school children daily.

In Phoenix, the Branch of the Divine Life Society, under the supervision of a member of the management committee also provides sandwiches for school children on a daily basis.

The Divine Life ashrams in Chatsworth, Shallcross and Merebank have taken the task of providing lunch for about 1050 children daily. For the past five years the stallholders at the Indian Fresh Produce Market have been providing vegetables free of charge for this purpose.

All these projects undertaken by the Divine Life Society, although social in nature is also accompanied by the spiritual bhav, attitude, of karma yoga. This example of the spiritual attitude adopted by the devotees in their multi-faceted activities can be seen in the manner in which the meals are prepared at the Ashram.

Acting under Swami Sahajananda's directive, great emphasis is placed on cleanliness in preparation of the meals. While

preparing the sandwiches early in the morning at Brahmamurhurta (4 am), an auspicious part of the morning, the devotees constantly chant the Maha Mantra, hence the devotees while performing karma yoga are also engaged in Japa. While involved in charitable activity the devotee should not become egotistic and take personal credit for the work, rather it should be performed with a spirit of selflessness and detachment and be seen as an offering of worship.

In order to assist the feeding scheme project financially the Divine Life Society prints Diwali cards. The funds that accrue from the sales of the cards are utilized for the feeding scheme.

The Divine Life Society is also engaged in the collection and distribution of clothing for needy Indian and Black families and toys for Black children.

A most vital and useful service is being rendered by a senior devotee of the Society who conducts regular satsang for Hindu prisoners as well as offering advice and guidance to them.

The Divine Life Society in providing assistance on the social sphere does not distinguish in terms of race or creed. Assistance is rendered to all those in need of help and those who approach the Society for assistance. The devotees should perform their actions in conformity with the principles of Karma Yoga, which for Swami Sivananda is a spontaneous expression of man's spiritual nature, for he sees the one Self in all. The Karma Yogi attains wisdom and devotion when his actions are wholly selfless. Religion must educate and develop the whole man - his heart, intellect and hand. The yoga of synthesis alone will bring about integral development (Sivananda 1980 : 724).

All acts of service in which the Divine Life Society is involved is conducted in a spirit of selflessness and it is not the intention of the Society to propagate Hinduism and gain converts. Hinduism is by nature a non-proselytizing religion. This is reflected in the words of Reverend Sibisi who stated that his

involvement with the Divine Life Society has made him a better Christian.

Swami Sivananda saw charity as the disposition to think favourably of others and to do good to them. Charity is universal love, liberality and benevolence. That which is given to relieve the needy is charity; every good act is charity. The cultivation of a generous nature will help to destroy sins, propagate peace and happiness, develop a broad outlook and a new wider vision in a devotee.

For Swami Sivananda "give, give, give" is the secret of Divine Life, it is the secret of abundance. The Bhagavad Gita states: "Sacrifice, charity and austerity are the purifiers of the intelligent."

Charity should be spontaneous and unrestrained, one should not advertise one's charity and charitable nature. That charity which advertises itself ceases to be charity (Sivananda, Gospel: 74-77).

In this sense the Divine Life Society works in the spirit of their Master, Swami Sivananda. All those who have had the opportunity of having his Darshan and satsang even for a few minutes have greatly eulogised his generosity and large heartedness (Venkatesananda 1961 : 74).

Despite the tremendous amount of work being done by the Divine Life Society in the social sphere the Society has never sought public recognition for their selfless activity. Few people in the community are aware of the exact extent of the deep involvement of the Divine Life Society in assisting the needy in the community. Although the writer was aware of the Society's activity in the social arena it was only after the research and investigation began that the true depth of the Society's involvement in social work was realised.

In December 1985 at a function at the Jubilee Hall in Inanda

organised by the Society for the distribution of 250 Christmas hampers at which the writer was present, Pastor Ndlovo expressed the appreciation of the people to the Divine Life Society for the assistance the Society provides "and not wanting anything in return."

In his speech he stated that "the Divine Life Society has been sent by God to the community and that God is using the Divine Life Society as a medium to assist them."

The spirit of the Divine Life Society's extensive involvement in social work in the community is expressed in the words of Sri Kisson Singh, a long-standing devotee of the Divine Life Society at a function held on 8 September 1985, marking the inauguration of the Sivananda Technical College when he stated (Report, Divine Life Society, September 1985 : 1):

"Swami Sivananda has made a significant contribution to the progress of South Africa, because it was through his inspiration and teaching that the Divine Life Society was able to engage in its multifarious activities in serving the people of this country."

Most of the devotees, 85,8%, are actively engaged in assisting in the social work of the Society. 7,1% replied in the negative while an equal percentage did not respond to the question.

The form of assistance varied: 30% rendered assistance in the form of cash donations, 5,8% donated clothing and other items, 27% rendered personal service, 37,2% contributed donations as well as rendered personal service.

The reason for the high percentage of devotees rendering assistance is that all work is seen as a spiritual sadhana, service is viewed as an act of worship.

The involvement of the Divine Life Society in Black education

was viewed positively by the respondents; 65,7% stated that they were pleased while 34,3% were happy. None expressed indifference or disappointment.

When questioned as to whether the Society should first concentrate its efforts in assisting the Hindu community before assisting others, 64,3% felt this should not be the case; 7,1% were in favour of the Society assisting the Hindu community first; 12,9% expressed indifference, while the remaining 15,7% indicated that the question did not apply.

The Divine Life Society renders assistance on the basis of need; it is felt that since the Black community is the poorest therefore they are most in need of help. In 1974 the Divine Life Society donated its ashram building sites in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Dalton, Howick and Isipingo to other institutions with the express purpose of directing all its funds for the welfare of the Black community, since the need here was greatest.

Swami Sivananda always taught that religion is only practical if God can be seen in all names and forms, and serve him as such. It is through his inspiration that the Divine Life Society has taken up this work (Interview : Swami Sahajananda).

10.5 GENERAL¹

It is of interest to note that the majority, 81,4%, of the respondents were of the view that the Divine Life Society should not become more involved in the politics of the country. 15,7% maintained that the Society should take a more active role in politics; 2,9% did not respond to the question.

The emphasis of the Divine Life Society is on the spiritual evolution of man, more so than the material. Real freedom is not merely political or economic, though political and economic freedom are essential for the welfare of the people. Real freedom is lordship over oneself. It is the freedom of the Self (Sivananda 1980 : 250-251).

1. General and Summary of Findings following hereafter pertains to Chapters 8, 9 and 10 jointly.

95,7% of the respondents believed in maintaining their ethnic identity while the remaining 4,3% did not offer an answer. All of those who wanted to maintain their ethnic identity wanted to do so voluntarily and not through legislation.

The idea that Hinduism should be given recognition by the Government was supported by 92,9% of the respondents while 7,1% did not respond to the question.

Nearly all of those who were interviewed, 94,3% were of the opinion that more people are joining the Divine Life Society. The answers forwarded by some of the respondents as indicated below reflects the reasons why they support the opinion that the Divine Life Society is attracting more people to the Movement.

1. "The growth of the Cultural Centre and children's activities."
2. "Attendances at the Satsang and Yoga Camp are rising."
3. "An increasing number of people come to the Ashram seeking spiritual advice."
4. "There is an increasing demand for literature published by the Divine Life Society from the community."
5. "The teaching of the Divine Life Society is universal and embodies all sections of the people."

It is evident that the Divine Life Society is playing a major role in educating their devotees in spiritual and religious matters. 62,8% indicated that they received their religious education through the Divine Life Society, 2,9% from their parents, 7,1% were self-taught, 24,3% through the ashram as well as their parents, while 2,9% forwarded "other" as an answer.

10.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Divine Life Society of South Africa is based on the ancient religious institution viz. the ashram, where people come to experience God. Everything in the ashram way of life, ie work, prayer, devotion, relationship with fellow aspirants

and visitors leads to this experience. Every act is touched with the spiritual brush which awakens one to an awareness of Brahman, the transcendent Absolute.

While the main, essential purpose of the Divine Life Society Ashram is the search for God, they have not divorced themselves from social responsibility. Rather the ashram has accomplished in action, the maxim that 'service to man, is worship of God.'

The Divine Life Society's deep involvement in the social sphere is widely diversified. The social work activities of the Society incorporates buildings of schools and clinics, poor-feeding schemes, self-help projects, hamper distribution, feeding of school children, free-medical aid - homeopathic as well as allopathic and prayer service for prisoners.

It was discovered that the Society directs great effort to the social, medical and educational needs of the Black community. The universalism expressed in Swami Sivananda's teachings is reflected in the social work of the Society which extends not only to the Hindu community but to all racial and religious groups.

The Society renders aid on the basis of need. Since the Black community is economically the most wanting, the Society aims to alleviate this inadequacy by rendering social, medical and educational aid.

The extensive involvement of the Society in social work must be seen within the context of its religio-philosophical teachings. All social work is performed in a spirit of selfless service ie. karma yoga.

Social work is seen as a discipline to aid the spiritual evolution of the devotees. The Society is essentially a spiritual institution which trains sadhakas and spiritual aspirants to attain spiritual virtues.

The constituency from which the Divine Life Society draws its following is basically educated, professional, socially and economically well-placed. A substantial number of devotees were in possession of higher education. The Society attracts devotees from all linguistic groups. Although the Society draws devotees from all age groups it seems to attract the majority of its followers from the younger generation leaning more towards the grihasta ashrama ie. the householder.

The teachings of the Divine Life Society proved attractive to the youth as well as their parents which is evidenced by the fact that the family unit as a whole is drawn to the Society.

The philosophy and teachings of the Divine Life Society is expressed in the daily life of the devotees, all of whom considered religion to be a very important facet of their lives. This is in keeping with Swami Sivananda's teaching that the practical tenets of one's religion viz. selflessness, love, purity and service should be expressed in daily life.

It was noted that the devotees were well versed in the doctrines and teachings of Hinduism. This is largely due to the emphasis placed on the study of religious literature, swadhyaya, and the regular discourses on Hindu philosophy and religion delivered at the satsang.

The satsang is one of the most important forums for religious expression at the ashram. Devotees, ashramites and the laity are drawn together as a worshipping community. The discourses delivered at the satsang fulfils an important function in educating the devotees on the various aspects of religion and philosophy.

The presence of the Guru, who occupies the central position in the ashram, was an important factor in drawing devotees to the Society. All the devotees expressed deep reverence and respect for Swami Sahajananda, the spiritual Head of the Society. They viewed the Guru as one who is leading them from darkness to light since he is established in God.

The Divine Life Society aims at the development of the whole man, his heart, intellect and hand. In this regard the emphasis is placed on the yoga of synthesis as expounded by Swami Sivananda as a means to God-realisation ie. moksha.

Swami Sivananda, through his teaching, infused faith in the Hindu Dharma Shastras, revived the authority of the Vedas, renewed interest in the Hindu ideals of ahimsa, non-violence, brahmacharya, celibacy, sannyasa, renunciation, vivified the teachings and practice of Yoga and Vedanta philosophy and reaffirmed the pursuit of moksha as the ultimate and the ideal goal of life.

Swami Sivananda, a follower of Sankara's Advaita Vedanta philosophy believed, as stated in the Upanishads that man is essentially-divine and the main purpose of his existence is to regain his divinity. Hinduism as a spiritual discipline aims at the liberation of man from karma-samsara, transmigration from the cycle of birth and death. Moksha, is the central concern of Hinduism, and Swami Sivananda repeatedly made it the main theme of his teachings, writings and preaching. Swami Sivananda's yoga of synthesis ie. karma, bhakti, jnana and raja practiced together could work progressively towards moksha.

For Swami Sivananda, religion was important because through a meaningful way it leads to the fulfillment of man's desire for spiritual liberation. Hindu values and ideals should become part of the Hindu way of life. Swadhyaya, the study of Hindu scriptures was essential to every Hindu to help cultivate positive qualities and keep one's mind focussed on the ideal of life. Swami Sivananda, through an examination of the Hindu scriptures believed that the teaching and practice of the Vedas, Upanishads and Dharma Shastras could answer the problems faced by modern man (Gyan 1980 : 43-47).

CHAPTER 11**CONCLUSION**

The Divine Life Society has been part of the South African context for the past forty years. Within this short timespan it has grown into one of the largest and most influential Hindu Movements in the country. The Divine Life Society that was founded in 1948 by Swami Sahajananda, the Spiritual Head of the Society, was inspired by Swami Sivananda the founder of the Divine Life Society in India. The Divine Life Society in India emerged as part of the Hindu Renaissance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as an attempt at the revival and renewal ie. revitalization of traditional Hindu religion and society by means of protection, preservation, accommodation and synthesis.

During the 1940s the Divine Life Society, under the astute leadership of Swami Sahajananda had been attempting a similar revival and renewal of Hindu religion and society through the medium of the ashram institution.

The Divine Life Society appeared on the South African scene at a time when the Hindu community was faced with several challenges, amongst them, that of secularization, westernization and the in-roads being made into Hinduism by Christian missionaries. The need for organised religious and cultural activity was urgently required during this period. The Divine Life Society, like other neo-Hindu movements that arose in South Africa at this time, had a vital role to fulfil. The preservation and growth of Hinduism before the advent of these movements was owed to many organisations which helped to promote and establish the social unity of the different linguistic sections of the community. What the older and long established Hindu denominational groups failed to achieve jointly in the many years of their existence, the Divine Life Society has achieved in a comparatively short period of existence.

The advent of the ashram institution introduced a new and much needed element of organised orientation of religion. Religious



practices up to the decades of the forties which covered a wide emotional and philosophical spectrum, were in the main of a traditional, ritualistic and ceremonially orientated nature. Although it will not be strictly correct to conceive of religion without its formal, ceremonial, symbolic and ritual aspects, the Divine Life Society seeks to direct the focus of the devotee to the essential core of Hinduism; its fundamentals and its philosophy. It has paved the way for a re-orientation of the Hindu mind from the formal to the fundamental aspects of religion.

One of the reasons that compounded the problems that confronted Hinduism in a foreign context was the lack of central organisation. The fact that Hinduism lacks a central and nationwide organisation and that it is largely dependent for its perpetuation on such social institutions as the joint-family institutions which are changing in important respects, renders it particularly vulnerable to the forces of secularization and westernization. The breakdown of the joint family system, which in Hinduism is the focus of the worshipping community, and the preference of the younger generation for the nuclear family unit had serious implications for the preservation of Hinduism in South Africa. The institutional structures of Hinduism are not entirely well adapted to the South African context because of its extraordinary reliance on social structures.

Prior to the emergence of the neo-Hindu Movements there was no regular congregational worship in the community. The only occasion that necessitated congregational worship was the celebration of major festivals at the temple, which was also utilized mainly on a private basis. The Divine Life Society was one of the first Movements which introduced a new element viz. an organised institutional structure, the ashram, for the diffusion of religious ideas in the life of Hindus in South Africa. Henceforth the institutionalized nature of Hinduism as encompassed by the ashram fulfilled the need for regular congregational worship.

The Divine Life Society with its sound organisational structure is better equipped to deal with the challenges of adaption necessary in a foreign context. The Society has fulfilled an important role in

substituting the function fulfilled previously by the joint family. It provides the devotees with a sense of community and belonging with its emphasis on regular congregational worship. It also served to intensify a sense of identity amongst its adherents in that devotees took pride in seeing themselves as members of an organised religious institution.

One of the reasons for the appeal of the Divine Life Society was the manner in which the teachings of Hinduism was re-interpreted by Swami Sivananda and presented to the masses in simple but effective language. The philosophy of the Divine Life Society did not encompass any new teachings but is rather a restatement of Hinduism with a shift in emphasis from ritualism to the fundamental belief system of the religion. However, the teachings of the Divine Life Society did not exclude ritualism, which is a natural corollary to religious life, but sought to draw the devotee to an understanding of the core of Hinduism; religion in the Divine Life Society is expressed in terms of a belief system rather than mere ritual orientation.

Swami Sivananda infused faith in the Hindu Dharma Shastras, revived the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads, renewed interest in Hindu ideals eg. ahimsa non-violence, brahmacharya, celibacy, sannyasa, vivified the teachings and practice of Yoga and the Vedanta philosophy and re-affirmed the pursuit of moksha as the ultimate goal of life. Swami Sivananda believed that Hindu values and ideals should become part of the Hindu way of life.

The Divine Life Society is sustained and directed by the philosophy and ideology of 'Divine Life', a life in the Atman, Supreme Self, a life of service, love, meditation, righteousness and realisation. The philosophical foundation of Divine Life is Vedantic, everything is seen as part of the Divine Being. According to Swami Sivananda every individual, irrespective of caste, creed and colour can pursue the object of life and attain 'Divine Life'.) The hermeneutical key necessary for the understanding of the philosophy and attainment of Divine Life is the yoga of synthesis. Divine Life is obtainable in this existence through a process of spiritual discipline, the yoga of

synthesis. Karma, bhakti, raja and jnana ie. action, devotion, concentration and meditation practised together can free man from the bondage of karma-samsara.

To live Divine Life is to live a dharmic or moral and righteous life by obeying the precepts of the Hindu Shastras, by cultivating virtues such as kindness, generosity, humility, tolerance, compassion, love and selfless-service. One of the attractive features of the teachings of the Divine Life Society which appeals to all was that Swami Sivananda has developed a clear, rational and logical methodology enunciating the cultivating of ethical principles whose practice is necessary for the attainment of moksha. The Twenty Spiritual Instructions formulated by Swami Sivananda provide a spiritual guide to the attainment of Divine Life (Gyan 1980 : 34). The Divine Life Society functions actively as dynamic centres of spirituality where the lives of the sadhakas are dedicated to the service of humanity, to learn and put into practice the yoga of synthesis. The Society has as its aim the awakening of humanity to the true purpose of life, enlightening them on the various means and methods of attaining the goal of life, and inspiring them to strive for its attainment (Sivananda in Pictures : 16).

The Divine Life Society is seen to draw its followers from the younger and older generations. This is in keeping with Swami Sivananda's teachings in which he astutely synthesized the goals of traditional Hinduism and modernity in the ashram. The appeal of the movement also to all linguistic groups is due to the Society not adhering to a particular sectarian philosophy but preaches the universal message of Vedanta as expounded by Swami Sivananda.

The Society draws its adherents from a wide cross-section of society, however in the main the constituency from which the Divine Life Society draws its largest following is basically educated, professional, socially and economically well-placed and have come under the influence of western values. Swami Sivananda's contact with western values and norms made him aware of the challenges facing the modern Hindu of the present age and he addressed himself to formulating answers to these challenges. This he achieved by

revitalizing and regenerating an interest of the Hindus in their ancient and sacred scriptures, religion and culture. The Divine Life Society is evidence of the emergence of a new style which transcends divisions based on sectarian, caste or linguistic differences. This is evidenced by the fact that the Society was found to be appealing to all linguistic groups.

One of the reasons why the Divine Life Society is expanding in South Africa is the well structured and regulated administration and organisation of the Society. This accounts for the efficient functioning of the Society which is involved deeply in its multi-faceted activities. The steady source of income from regular donors, well wishers and devotees, as well as the sales of books has placed the Society on a sound financial footing. It is as a result of its strong financial position that the Movement is able to undertake its numerous multi-faceted activities.

One of the greatest contributions that the Divine Life Society is rendering towards the revitalization of Hinduism in South Africa is the education of the masses through the dissemination of spiritual literature.

Dissemination of spiritual knowledge in the form of printed literature was for Swami Sivananda one of the most important means of transmitting religion to the people. This jnana dana, gift of knowledge possesses a characteristic which other gifts fail to have. Swami Sivananda felt that modern scientific education alienated the youth from their religious practices and tradition. His great concern prompted him to communicate with the youth and public through his prolific writings in which he presented the Hindu religion in simple and understandable language. Swami Sivananda is widely renowned for the simple manner in which he has conveyed the teachings of Hinduism, often simplifying abstract philosophical concepts so that they could be easily understood by the masses. The Divine Life Society in South Africa is extensively involved in the printing and distributing of spiritual literature. Of the numerous activities that the ashram is involved in the socio-religious sphere, the active dissemination of spiritual knowledge through literature is given

priority, because it is believed that divine knowledge alone can free one from sorrow, pain and suffering completely.

The Sivananda Press with its multi-million rand plant housing the most modern updated machinery and facilities was established for the specific purpose to facilitate the widespread and effective means of transmitting religious literature to the masses. The effects of this process of the active dissemination of spiritual knowledge is visible by the fact that a significant number of devotees who have joined the Divine Life Society did so as a result of reading literature distributed by the Society.

Prior to the emergence of the Divine Life Society one of the difficulties experienced culturally, was seen in the loss of competence by Hindus of their vernacular languages. Language amongst the Hindus is an important element in cultural identity; this loss of a sense of community has led to an erosion of Hindu culture. The effect of this loss has been to increase the inaccessibility of religious literature. Divine Life Society literature is printed in the medium of English and makes available to the public the primary teachings and scriptures of Hinduism thus overcoming the linguistic problem.

The functional implications of the breakdown of the joint family system which served as the forum for religious education, whereby religious teachings was passed through an oral tradition from elders to the younger generation through a process of osmosis contributed considerably to the breakdown of traditional instructional processes. The younger generation, without their elders to inform and motivate them lost touch with the belief system of their religion. The Divine Life Society through its regular satsangs which caters both for spiritual expression as well as religious education seeks to overcome the vacuum created by the breakdown of the joint family system.

How potent the neo-Hindu formula of uniting humanitarian service with the search for spiritual experience was, can be seen by the extensive involvement of the Divine Life Society in the social sphere, where both these aims were combined. The Divine Life Society as an expression of neo-Hinduism as founded in the nineteenth century

has been emphasizing humanistic ideologies encompassing the key concept of humanism ie. the centrality of man as an object of care and concern. However, despite all the emphasis that the Divine Life Society in South Africa places on the service of man, the ethical ideal of service remained but an adjunct to his spiritual quest, the attainment of moksha.

The Divine Life Society in South Africa is deeply involved in working selflessly in the social sphere. The multi-faceted social activities spans a wide range of activities including the building of schools and clinics, poor-feeding schemes, mobile health services, distribution of food hampers, feeding of school children, self-help projects, free medical aid and prayer services for prisoners. The programme of social work that the Divine Life Society is involved in, is directed to the upliftment of the community in general.

The most important facet towards which the Society's social involvement is directed is in the field of Black educational needs and health facilities. Sociological studies undertaken in the Kwa Mashu area revealed inadequacies in Black educational and health facilities. When this was brought to the attention of Swami Sahajananda his overwhelming compassionate nature prompted him to initiate a school building project. This project, which started in 1974 with the building of the first school in Mahlabatini has continued its activity and by 1986 has completed over fifty five schools in the area as well as other Black areas in Natal eg. Plessislaer near Maritzburg. In addition to the numerous schools already built, the Society also constructs additional classrooms and other facilities to existing schools. The Society also manufactures and distributes school furniture to schools in need of such equipment.

The most important contribution to Black education by the Divine Life Society is the construction of the Sivananda Technical College and High School in Kwa Mashu. This is being built to accommodate the shortage of trained Black personnel to occupy industrial positions by providing them with technical education. The project, the first and largest of its kind in Natal estimated to cost in the region of R2 000 000 will cater for high school as well as technical education.

The Divine Life Society in the spirit of Swami Sivananda who taught that selfless service to the sick is service to God, has also catered for the health needs of the Black community by building four large clinics, constructed dormitories for crippled Black children, operates mobile health clinics in remote areas and runs ambulance services to the clinic.

Free medical assistance to the community is provided at the Sivananda Clinic at the Headquarters as well as other branches on specific days. The Clinic which provides medical relief to thousands of needy patients provides both allopathic and homeopathic treatments.

Economic recession and unemployment created immense hardship in the community and the Society provides valuable service to the affected families through the distribution of food hampers to the Black and Indian communities every month. In addition to the monthly contribution the Society distributes over 300 food hampers quarterly eg. in 1984 alone the Society distributed 1250 food hampers at a cost of more than R30 000. The Society also assists wherever there is a disaster and whenever requested. In addition the Society distributes hampers on auspicious days like Guru Purnima and Christmas amongst others.

The Divine Life Society is involved in an extensive school feeding programme in the Indian, Black and Coloured communities where over 2 500 children are provided with sandwiches on a daily basis for the last five years. Distribution and collection of toys and clothing for needy Indian, Black and Coloured children also forms part of the Divine Life Society's involvement in social work.

Swami Sahajananda, true to Swami Sivananda's strong emphasis on selfless service, karma yoga, to one's fellowmen as well as his own compassionate nature is responsible for the deep involvement of the Society in the social sphere. In providing assistance in the social sphere the Society does not distinguish in terms of race, colour or creed. The creed of the Divine Life is given practical expression in the social work undertaken by the Society, viz. religion must educate and develop the whole man - his heart, intellect and

hand. The yoga of synthesis alone will bring about integral development (Sivananda 1980 : 724). However it is constantly emphasised that the Divine Life Society is not a social institution but a spiritual institution where the main purpose is to train sadhakas to attain moksha; social involvements help develop in the sadhaka purity, compassion, and spiritual values necessary for spiritual evolution.

The selfless spirit of dedication in which the Divine Life Society performs its activities is also seen in that it is not the intention of the Society to propagate Hinduism and gain converts since Hinduism by nature is a non proselytising religion.

The Divine Life Society perhaps more than any other group in the Indian community is actively involved in fostering healthier race and intergroup relationships between the Black and Indian communities. The feeling among critics is that Hinduism has divorced itself from the political conditions that prevail in our complex society. The Divine Life Society has exploded this myth through its involvement in an intensive social programme directed specifically to those most in need of social and medical help. The Society is giving practical expression to humanistic ideologies by providing spiritual and social service to all irrespective of race, caste, colour or creed.

Despite the divisive laws of our country that isolate groups from one another the Divine Life Society through its programmes of inter cultural activities and social service has initiated a move to unite society as a whole and create a better environment for all built on understanding and mutual love and trust.

The healthy relationship the Society has fostered with the Black community in Natal is reflected in the appreciative words of Dr OD Dhlomo, Minister of Education, of the Kwa Zulu Government, speaking at the inauguration of the Sivananda Technical High School and College:

"I particularly wish to thank Swamiji for his abiding philanthropy and concern for his under-privileged fellowmen. We admire your

humility, Swamiji; you are an outstanding man of God who always has very little to say and quite a lot to do. You are a living example of the saying of the Lord: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'. When the names of those patriots who laid the foundations for sound race relations in Kwa Zulu are recalled by future historians, you Swamiji, and the Divine Life Society will not be forgotten."

The Divine Life Society in South Africa is based on the ancient religious institution, the ashram, that has existed from the Upanishadic period and has served an important spiritual function in disseminating religious and philosophical ideas. The successful existence of the Divine Life Society Ashram based on the Upanishadic ideal in this present day and age lends credence to the belief that the traditional structures of Hinduism has the ability to adapt to suit the demanding needs of the modern secular environment without losing its distinctive essence. The Divine Life Society Ashram does not exist in isolation from the main stream of society. On the contrary, although primarily a religious institution, it is actively involved in establishing a better social environment and operates in a functionalistic manner in addressing the challenges confronting the enquiring spirit characterizing modern western secular society. The social, emotional and psychological stress caused by acculturation, culture contact, westernization and secularization has been minimised, to an extent, by the ashram institution which emphasises and gives practical expression to Hindu values and ideals.

The ashram which operates on monastic lines centres around a guru whose presence in many ways makes the ashram. The traditional concept of the guru is a unique idea in Hinduism for it is this concept that is to a large extent responsible for the perpetuation of Hindu religion and philosophy from the Upanishadic ages to the present day. It is this institution of Guru-parampara (guru-disciple lineage) that has already safeguarded and handed down the living experiences of the seers of the Upanishadic age.

The primary reason for the Divine Life Society ashram developing into one of the foremost Hindu religious institutions in South Africa is due to the dynamic, charismatic and selfless spirit encompassed

by the Spiritual Head Swami Sahajananda. It is because of his astute leadership qualities both as spiritual preceptor of the devotees as well as overseeing the multi-faceted activities in which the ashram is constantly involved that the Society is rapidly gaining momentum. Swami Sahajananda typifies the true ideal of sannyasa by his deep involvement in working for the spiritual and social upliftment of society. This spirit is characteristic of the ideal of sannyasa as expounded by the leaders of renascent Hinduism. One of the greatest triumphs of Swami Vivekananda, one of the foremost interpreters of Hinduism in the modern era, was his conversion of monks from the individualistic to the national ideal of religious life, in which public spirit and service to one's fellowmen occupied a prominent place. The selfsame spirit was echoed by Swami Sivananda in his life and work and today is epitomised by one of his foremost disciples, Swami Sahajananda.

An important form that serves as a link with the outside community and serves to enhance the spiritual life of devotees is the monthly sadhana camp held at the ashram. The intense discipline which the devotees follow for the duration of the two day camp serves to speed up the sadhana of those sadhakas who have committed themselves to a spiritual way of life. Attendance of the sadhana camp, like the satsang, also engenders a spirit of community and belonging among the devotees. Furthermore, the Divine Life Society is unique in that it holds sadhana camps on a regular basis (every month) to infuse the lives of those devotees seeking a medium for regular spiritual sadhana.

The Divine Life Society is aware of the scientific spirit of the modern, educated Hindu youth who, animated by the spirit of enquiry, demands a functionalistic rational religion devoid of practices without a philosophical basis. Their trained faculties are brought to bear on religious beliefs and practices.

The religious programmes planned and conducted by the Divine Life Society appeals to the emotion and the intellect of the critical educated youth. With the emphasis of the Society on the essentials,

the study of yoga and the cardinal principles of Hinduism, practice and training in meditation and concentration, the singing of bhajans and kirtans, regular classes and discussions, social service, yoga camps and education through publication of literature, has thrown into sharper focus the soul and spirit of Hinduism and paved the way for a re-orientation of the thoughtful Hindu mind from the formal to the fundamental aspects of religion. Furthermore, the simplified, rational and logical manner in which Swami Sivananda has presented Hindu religion and philosophy is easily comprehended.

The Divine Life Society feels that the youth as the future leaders of the country, have an important role to fulfil in society. In recognition of the belief that the life of the student should be founded on worthy principles and inspiring ideals, the Divine Life Society has established the Sivananda Youth League which displays the potential to grow into an important forum for creative and progressive thought and activity.

In more recent times the challenges and problems experienced by Hinduism in South Africa has come under the scrutiny of the Divine Life Society whose response to the situation was a concerted drive to initiate religious education in the Hindu community from childhood. Prior to this drive a spiritual vacuum existed for there was no organised institution to cater for the spiritual education of the child.

Swami Sivananda stated that childhood is the most impressionable period for impressions formed at an early age form deep roots in one's nature. It is therefore the most conducive period to create religious impressions in the mind of children (Sivananda 1981 : 17). The Sivananda Children's Cultural Centre aims to help the growing child through the theoretical and practical teachings of Swami Sivananda's integral yoga to acquire and cultivate spiritual qualities and to create religious impressions in their minds. It is also significant that for the forthcoming Centenary Celebrations of Swami Sivananda in 1987 the main focus of the Society's numerous activities is directed to the spiritual education of children. The publication of the comprehensive Yoga Lessons for Children, one of the most ambitious projects undertaken by the Society, and the

opening of the Sivananda's Children's Cultural Centre are examples of the Society's deep concern for inculcating religious ideals in the growing child. The disintegration of certain social institutions like the joint family on which Hinduism was dependent to a large extent for its perpetuation placed the Hindu child at a disadvantage in matters of religious instruction. The Divine Life Society, including other neo-Hindu movements like the Ramakrishna Mission are paving the way, in providing an important and much needed forum for the religious education of the child and this augurs well for the future of Hinduism in South Africa.

The young Hindu has discovered that the missing factor of the twentieth century material civilization responsible for confusion and chaos is not just any religion but a universal religion with wide catholicity and toleration. The emphasis upon universalism within Hinduism itself as expounded in the Vedanta standard and the rejection of personal barriers to religious or spiritual attainment gives the teachings of Swami Sivananda and the work of his followers the dynamism and broad appeal they possess. The implication of this vision is an identification with all beings at the most profound level. It is an identity that transcends all relative differences of ethnicity, culture and nationality. From the Vedantic perspective, the attainment of spiritual freedom involves the gain of a knowledge revealing the essential unity of all life. Spiritual freedom, moksha, is synonymous with the overcoming of narrow selfish interest. In terms of human relationships, the moral consequences of the Advaita vision can only be that 'I treat all beings as I would treat myself.' The general obligation of each human being is to consider the interest and welfare of every other human being as his or her own. Love for life in all its diversity and variety is the spontaneous attitude of this Advaita outlook of unity and identity as expounded by Swami Sivananda and reflected in the work and teachings of the Divine Life Society in South Africa.

The Divine Life Society is playing a central role in the development of contemporary Hinduism as a reviver of Hindu religion as a viable way of life and providing an appealing locus of allegiance to contemporary Hinduism. The Society has given a new self-esteem and

prestige to Hinduism in South Africa. Its highly organised and structured programme of activities has taken the message of Hinduism to the larger society mainly through the extensive distribution of spiritual literature. Furthermore, the Society has given practical expression to its philosophy of integral yoga by its deep humanitarian involvement in the social sphere. The emphasis on selfless service is highlighted, in a situation where personal gain takes precedence – this has a refreshing influence on all those who come in contact with the devotees of this Society.

The Divine Life Society has permeated Hindu society to a large extent. However, its sphere of influence in infusing the masses with a clear and philosophical understanding of their religion can be expanded even further by reaching out to the masses directly. The absence of trained Hindu religious teachers is a problem that needs to be addressed urgently by the Hindu community. The Hindu community at large confronted with the complex societal demands characterised by the scientific age of enquiry seeks guidance and direction from the leading religious institutions. The future direction of Hinduism in South Africa is being shaped by institutions such as the Divine Life Society which has within its fabric mobile adaptive alternatives which seek re-orientation of Hinduism from the formal to the fundamental philosophy.

The Divine Life Society is entering a crucial phase in its history in South Africa. For the forthcoming Centenary Year marking the 100th Anniversary of Swami Sivananda the Divine Life Society is embarking on numerous community projects directed mainly at the community at large. The Society is presently looking seriously at ways and means of addressing the areas which need greater attention in attempting to bring about a spiritual renaissance in Hinduism in South Africa.

It is significant that during the Centenary Year (1987) the Society will be embarking on a country-wide tour specifically to carry the message of the Divine Life Society to the homes of all Hindus throughout the country. It is hoped that projects of this nature will become a regular feature of the Society's activities. While thus far the Divine Life Society by and large operated from the numerous

branches it has been realised that religion has to be taken directly to the masses. Apart from its extensive literature distribution, tours and personal visits to the community, it is opening up new channels of communication that will bring the Movement in direct contact with the larger community in a meaningful and functionalistic manner.

The many community orientated projects that have been undertaken in recent years by the Divine Life Society in infusing the lives of the larger community meaningfully will have marked implications for the future direction of Hinduism in South Africa.

Swami Sivananda rightly predicted that the Divine Life Society in South Africa, under the leadership of his ardent disciple Swami Sahajananda would grow into one of the largest and most productive Divine Life Centres in the world. This prediction has proved true largely due to the efficacious personality of Swami Sahajananda and the belief that their Guru, Swami Sivananda, lives both in the lives of his devotees and through his mission and numerous writings.

The living presence of the Guru has sustained the Movement from the very outset and it is evident that the strong faith placed by the Divine Life Society in their Guru is going to continue to sustain the Movement and be its main source of inspiration for growth in the future. In the same way Swami Sivananda himself was always sustained and supported by the vision and voice of God which he narrates thus (Gyan 1980 : 43):

"I heard a Voice from within, 'Siva wake up, and fill the cup of your life with this nectar; Share it with all. I shall give you strength, energy, power and wisdom.' I obeyed His command. He did fill the cup! And I share it with all."

SUMMARY

The following is a brief summary of the study:

Chapter One deals with the object and aim of study, the methodology employed in the research as well as the problems encountered by the writer.

Chapter Two examines the historical, political and socio-religious conditions prevalent in India during the 19th century. Attention is also given to the challenges posed to Indian religion, culture and society by centuries of foreign rule under the Muslims (Mughals) and later the British. The Hindu response to this situation which paved the way for the Hindu Renaissance of the modern period is also reflected.

Chapter Three is mainly concerned with the history of ideas that constituted the foundation of the neo-Hindu Movement, the Hindu revival of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. Particular attention is focussed on the more prominent movements and individuals who shaped the evolution of ideas that constituted the Hindu Renaissance viz., the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo.

Chapter Four examines the early life of Swami Sivananda, the founder of the Divine Life Society. Attention is focussed on the development of the Society in India, its aims and objectives, departments of service, activities and the growth and sphere of its influence. The concept of the Divine Life which provides the theological and ideological basis of the Society is outlined.

Chapter Five provides a historical account of Hinduism in South Africa from the time of the arrival of Indians in this country in 1860 to the emergence of the Divine Life Society in South Africa in 1948. Attention is given to the challenges posed to Hinduism in a foreign context viz. westernization, secularization and the breakdown of the joint family system, the effects it had on the institutional structures of Hinduism and the ability of the religion to develop institutional adaptive alternatives.

Chapter Six traces the history of the Divine Life Society in South Africa since its inception. The role of the guru and the ancient Upanishadic institution, the ashram, as it functions today and upon which the Divine Life Society in South Africa is based is examined. The role and influence of the Spiritual Head, Swami Sahajananda as well as the life-style of the ashramites is outlined. The administrative and financial operation of the Movement is also included in this chapter.

Chapter Seven examines firstly the main branch of the Society in Reservoir Hills as well as its activities and amenities. Further attention is given to the numerous branches of the Society in the country together with an outline of their historical development and current activities. The history, functions and importance of the Sivananda Press is discussed.

Chapter Eight focusses on the religio-social attitudes of the Divine Life Society devotees, the findings of which are based on a comprehensive questionnaire and interviews conducted with devotees. The personal details of those interviewed together with their specific affiliation, the role of religion in their personal life and the modes of worship at home are analysed.

Chapter Nine deals with the religio-cultural activities of the Divine Life Society. Information in this chapter is also based on the questionnaire and personal interviews. This chapter analyses the numerous religio-cultural activities of the Society within the framework of the philosophical and religious teaching of Swami Sivananda within which they operate.

Chapter Ten looks at the religio-social activities of the Divine Life Society with special emphasis on its involvement in the Black community in the social sphere. The Society's deep involvement in this sphere is multifaceted; it includes school building projects, medical relief, construction of clinics, poor-feeding schemes and hamper distribution amongst others. Attitudes of the devotees of the Society to its involvement in the social sphere is also reflected. The contribution of the Divine Life Society to better race relations in this country is also examined.

Chapter Eleven reflects the conclusions arrived at from the study

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APPENDIX 1THE SIVANANDA PILLAR:RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

- Hinduism** : Know the Self and be free.
- Christianity** : The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.
- Islam** : There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah.
- Buddhism** : For the whole world there is the law; all is impermanent.
- Jainism** : Non-injury is verily the only religion.
- Zoroastrianism** : Purity of thought, word and deed is the essence of religion.
- Judaism** : I am that I am
- Taoism** : He who has overcome himself is mighty.
- Confucianism** : Blame yourself as you would blame others; excuse others as you would excuse yourself.
- Sikhism** : There is but one God and His Name is Truth; wonderful is the Guru.
- Sufism** : I am that Real.
- Shintoism** : See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.
- Divine Life Society**: All religions are one. They teach the Divine Life. Love all, serve all. Practise Ahimsa, Brahmacharya and Satyam. Be selfless. Seek the Immortal.
- Heart of Religion**: God is love. The only true religion is the religion of love or the religion of the heart. Feel for others as you feel for yourself.

This universal religion will bring world-peace and happiness.

— Sivananda

APPENDIX 2UNIVERSAL PRAYER

O adorable Lord of mercy and love,
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee!
Thou art omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient;
Thou art Satchidananda;
Thou art the Indweller of all beings.
Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, devotion and wisdom.
Grant us inner spiritual strength to resist temptations
And to control the mind.
Free us from egoism, lust, greed, anger and hatred.
Fill our hearts with divine virtues.
Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms;
Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms;
Let us ever remember Thee;
Let us ever sing Thy glories;
Let Thy Name be ever on our lips;
Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.
Om Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

— Sri Swami Sivananda

APPENDIX 3

Some of the books of Swami Sivananda Published by the
Sivananda Press in Reservoir Hills

Bhagavad Gita (Commentary)
Sivananda's Gospel of Divine Life
In the Vision of God
In Quest of God
From Man to God-Man
Guru's Grace
Bliss Divine
Science of Yoga
Religious Education
Kingly Science, Kingly Secret
Prayer Book
Yoga Lessons for Children
Sthree Dharma - Ideal Womanhood
Inspiring Stories
All about Hinduism
Hindu Fasts and Festivals
Saints and Sages

APPENDIX 4TOPICS FOR YOGA LESSONS FOR CHILDREN

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. History of India | 27. Pranayama |
| 2. Hinduism - Ancient | 28. Japa Yoga - Mantras |
| 3. Hinduism - Contemporary | 29. Prayer & Satsang |
| 4. Hindu Scriptures - Overview | 30. Reincarnation |
| 5. Ramayana | 31. Raja Yoga |
| 6. Mahabharata | 32. How to Develop Memory |
| 7. Gita - First 6 Chapters | 33. How to Develop Will-Power |
| 8. Gita - Second 6 Chapters | 34. Concentration |
| 9. Gita - Third 6 Chapters | 35. Thought-Power |
| 10. Hindu Deities | 36. Mind & Its Mysteries |
| 11. Hindu Symbols - Idol Worship | 37. Self-Surrender |
| 12. Hindu Fasts & Festivals | 38. Brahmacharya |
| 13. Introduction to Yoga | 39. Kundalini Yoga |
| 14. Guru & Disciple | 40. Siva & Shakti |
| 15. Ethical Teachings | 41. Thirukurral |
| 16. Hatha Yoga | 42. Guru-Gita |
| 17. Health, Diet & Fasting | 43. Rishis-Veda Vyasa, Janaka, etc. |
| 18. Law of Karma | 44. Dhyana Yoga - Introduction |
| 19. The Three Gunas | 45. Dhyana Yoga Practice |
| 20. Karma Yoga | 46. Spiritual Diary |
| 21. Saints & Sages - Ancient | 47. Spiritual Experience |
| 22. Saints & Sages - Modern | 48. God Vision |
| 23. Hindu Religious Movements | 49. Siddhis & Miracles |
| 24. Avataras | 50. Vedanta |
| 25. Bhakti Yoga | 51. Swami Sivananda's Divine Life |
| 26. Bhagavata | 52. Swami Sivananda's Integral Yoga |

APPENDIX 5SWAMI SIVANANDA'S 20 SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Get up at 4 am daily and do Japa and meditation.
2. Sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana for Japa and meditation.
3. Take pure vegetarian food. Do not overload the stomach.
4. Do regular charity of one-tenth of your income.
5. Study one chapter of the **Bhagavad Gita** daily.
6. Preserve the Veerya (vital force). Practise moderation.
7. Give up smoking, drugs, intoxicating drinks and Rajasic food.
8. Fast on Ekadasi days or take milk and fruits only.
9. Observe silence for two hours daily and also during meals.
10. Speak the truth at any cost; speak a little and speak sweetly.
11. Reduce your wants; lead a happy, contented life.
12. Never hurt the feelings of others. Be kind to all.
13. Reflect over the mistakes you make. Practise self-analysis.
14. Do not depend upon servants. Be self-reliant.
15. Think of God as soon as you wake up and when you go to bed.
16. Always have a Japa Mala or rosary around your neck or in your pocket.
17. Adhere to the motto - **Simple living and high thinking.**
18. Serve holy men, devotees and saints. Serve the poor, the sick and suffering.
19. Have a separate meditation room. Keep it pure and under lock and key.
20. Keep a daily **Spiritual Diary**. Stick to your routine.

These twenty instructions contain the essence of Yoga and Vedanta. Follow them strictly. Do not give leniency to the mind. You will attain supreme happiness.

APPENDIX 6GURU MANTRA

Om.....Om.....Om
 Om Sri Sadguru Paramatmane Namah
 Om Sri Sadguru Bhagawan Sivanandaye Namah.

Gurur Brahmaa Gurur Vishnuh Gurur Devo Maheshvarah
 Guruh Saakshaath Para-Brahmaa Tasmai Shri Gurave Namah.

Dhyaanamoolam Guror Murtih
 Poojaamoolam Guroh Padam
 Mantramoolam Guror Vaakyam
 Mokshamoolam Guroh Kripaa
 Mokshamoolam Sivananda Kripaa.

Jaya Ganesha Jaya Ganesha Jaya Ganesha Pahimaam
 Sri Ganesha Sri Ganesha Sri Ganesha Rakshamaam
 Jaya Saraswati Jaya Saraswati Jaya Saraswati Pahimaam
 Sri Saraswati Sri Saraswati Sri Saraswati Rakshamaam
 Jaya Sri Durga Jaya Sri Durga Jaya Sri Durga Pahimaam
 Jaya Sri Durga Jaya Sri Durga Jaya Sri Durga Rakshamaam
 Jaya Sri Kali Jaya Sri Kali Jaya Sri Kali Pahimaam
 Jaya Sri Kali Jaya Sri Kali Jaya Sri Kali Rakshamaam
 Jaya Sri Lakshmi Jaya Sri Lakshmi Jaya Sri Lakshmi Pahimaam
 Jaya Sri Lakshmi Jaya Sri Lakshmi Jaya Sri Lakshmi Rakshamaam
 Saravanabhava Saravanabhava Saravanabhava Pahimaam
 Subramanya Subramanya Subramanya Rakshamaam
 Dattatreya Dattatreya Dattatreya Pahimaam
 Datta Guru Datta Guru Datta Guru Rakshamaam
 Sivananda Sivananda Sivananda Pahimaam
 Sivananda Sivananda Sivananda Rakshamaam.

Jaya Guru Siva Guru Hari Guru Ram
 Jagat Guru Param Guru Sadguru Shyam
 Adi Guru Adwaita Guru Ananda Guru Om
 Chid Guru Chidghana Guru Chinmaya Guru Om.

Jaya Siya Ram Jaya Jaya Siya Ram
 Jaya Radheshyam Jaya Jaya Radheshyam
 Jaya Hanuman Jaya Jaya Hanuman.

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
 Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
 Sivananda Sivananda Sadguru Natha Sivananda.

Jaya Gurudev Dayanidhi Deenan Hithakaari
 Jaya Jaya Mohavinashaka Bhaubandhana Haari
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jaya Dev Gurudev
 Brahma Vishnu Sadasiva Guru Murthi Dhaari
 Veda Purana Bakaanath Guru Mahima Bhaari
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jaya Dev Gurudev
 Jap Thap Tiruth Sanyam Dhaan Vidith Dheenai
 Guru Beena Gyan Na Howe Koti Jathan Keenai
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jaya Dev Gurudev
 Maya Moha Nadi Jal Jeeva Bahai Saari

Naam Jahaaj Beetaakar Guru Palme Thaarai
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jay Dev Gurudev
 Kaam Krodh Madh Mathsar Chor Badai Bhaari
 Gyan Kadag De Karme Guru Sub Sunhaarai
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jaya Dev Gurudev
 Nana Panth Jagath Me Nij Nij Goon Gaawe
 Sab Kaa Saar Bathakar Guru Maarag Laawe
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jaya Dev Gurudev
 Guru Charnaamrith Nirmal Sub Paathaka Haarai
 Bachan Soonath Tham Nashai Sub Sunshai Taarai
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jaya Dev Gurudev
 Thun Mun Dhun Sub Arpan Guru Charanan Kijai
 Sivananda Param Padh Moksha Gathi Lijai
 Jaya Dev Gurudev Jaya Dev Gurudev.

Meaning:

Glory to Guru-God! Storehouse of compassion, rendering service to people in distress.

Hail! hail! Destroyer of delusion, one who breaks worldly ties.

The image of the Guru represents Brahma, Vishnu and Sadasiva.

Reciting the Vedas and Puranas, the Guru is filled with majesty.

Japa, practising austerities, visiting holy places, observing restraint, giving alms are different religious practices-

But without a Guru there can be no knowledge: one who makes a false, useless effort.

The whole existence glides in the waters of the river of illusion and delusion.

The Name of the Guru is the ship, sailing in which, one is exempt from transmigration instantly.

Lust, anger, arrogance and jealousy are very elusive thieves.

Guru destroys all Karma with the sword of knowledge.

Different religious orders in the world sing the virtue of Self-knowledge.

Showing the truth of all different orders the Guru brings one to the path.

At the pure divine feet of the Guru all sins are overthrown.

Listening to the words of the Guru, darkness is destroyed: all doubts are destroyed.

Sacrifice the body, mind, wealth - everything - at the feet of the Guru.

APPENDIX 7

MAHA-MRITYUNJAYA MANTRA

Om Trayambakam Yajaamahe Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam
Uurvaarukamiva Bandhanaan Mrityor Mukshiya Maamritaat.

"We worship the Three-Eyed One (Lord Shiva), who is fragrant and who nourishes well all beings. May He liberate us from death for the sake of immortality, even as the cucumber is severed from its bondage (to the creeper)!"

APPENDIX 8PROPOSED YOGA CAMP TALKS FOR PERIODOCTOBER 1985 TO SEPTEMBER 1986

OCT	Concentration	Introduction to Sadhana	Ahimsa	Grace
NOV	Role of Guru	Importance of Sadhana	Anger and Fear	Mind to God and Hands to Work
DEC	Self Surrender	Foundations of Sadhana	Love	Remembrance of God
JAN 1986	Law of Karma	Types of Sadhana	Truth	Pure and Impure Mind
FEB	Reincarnation	Sadhana as outlined in the Scriptures	Science	Equal Vision
MAR	Upanishads, an overview	Sadhana in Sivananda Sutras	God	
APR	Katha Upanishads	Stages in Sadhana	Islam and Christianity	
MAY	Katha Upanishads (continued)	Sadhana for the conquest of our lower nature	Sincerity	
JUN	Chandogya Upanishad	Obstacles to Progress in Yoga	Prayer	
JUL	Chandogya Upanishad (continued)	Yoga Sadhana	Vegetarianism	
AUG	Viveka-Chudamani	Courses of Practical Sadhana	Service	
SEPT	Viveka-Chudamani (continued)	Questions and Answers on Sadhana	Death	

APPENDIX 9SCHOOLS AND CLINICS BUILT BY THE DIVINE
LIFE SOCIETY FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY

1. Ekudubekeni Secondary School, Mahlabatini: 6 classrooms, laboratory, library, office, staff room and store-room.
2. Sivananda Junior School, Mahlabatini: 5 classrooms, staff room, office and store-room.
3. Macanya B C Secondary School, Upper Tongaat: 8 classrooms, staff room, store-room and office.
4. Umgada B C School, Umlazi: 5 classrooms, staff room, store-room and office.
5. Mshwasi B C School, Illovo: 5 classrooms, staff room, store-room and office.
6. Inhlakanipho Secondary School, Kwa Mashu: 3 classrooms, typing room and store-room.
7. Lay Ecumenical Centre, Plessislaer: 3 rondavel type classrooms
8. Mshwati Memorial B C School, Upper Tongaat: 3 classrooms and office.
9. Isinkontshe B C School, Umlazi: 5 classrooms, staff room, office and store-room.
10. Mqawe High School, Inanda: Library and laboratory.
11. Empushini B C School, Umbumbulu: 5 classrooms, staff room, office and store-room.
12. Shayamoya Primary School, Umkomaas: 3 classrooms, store-room and office.
13. Amoti B C School, Inanda: 5 classrooms, staff room, office and store-room.
14. Amoti Junior Secondary School, Inanda: 5 classrooms, staff room, office and store-room.
15. Plessislaer Bantu Community School, Pietermaritzburg: 6 classrooms.
16. Sivananda Clinic, Inanda: Clinic and Nurses' Quarters.
17. Ekudubekeni Secondary School, Mahlabatini: addition of 5 classrooms to existing school.
18. Sivananda Junior School, Mahlabatini: addition of 5 classrooms to existing school.
19. Kwamadalla Primary School, Elandskop: 9 classrooms, office and renovation of existing two classrooms.
20. Abalindi Welfare Society, Inanda: Dining hall for cripple and blind inmates.
21. Intshisekelo Junior Secondary School, Inanda: 5 classrooms to existing school.
22. Nombika Secondary School, Idwedwe: 5 classrooms, office and staff room.

23. Vulingundo School, Eshowe: 5 classrooms.
24. Mandlakyise Community Lower Primary, Ohlange Institute: 8 classrooms.
25. Abalindi Welfare Society: 2 dormitories for male and female cripples and blind inmates.
26. Tailors Halt School, Pietermaritzburg: 4 classrooms.
27. M V Unulu School, Pietermaritzburg: 8 classrooms.
28. Kwajessop B C School, Indwedwe: 5 classrooms and office, store-room and staff room.
29. Ceremony B C School, Eshowe: 5 classrooms, office, store-room, staff room and toilets.
30. Mashiyamahle Junior Secondary School, Indwedwe: 5 classrooms
31. Wozamoya Secondary School, Hammarsdale: 5 classrooms, office, store-room, staff room, library, laboratory and toilet.
32. Hloniphani Junior School, Tongaat: 5 classrooms, office, staff room, toilets.
33. Ingqungqulu Secondary School, Hillcrest: 5 classrooms, library, office, staff room, store-room.
34. Odidini Bantu Secondary School, Umbumbulu: 10 classrooms.
35. Endakane High School, Ladysmith: 6 classrooms.
36. Mshiyana High School, Ndwedwe: 5 classrooms, office, store-room, staff room, toilets.
37. Nkosinathi Junior Secondary School, Inanda: 10 classrooms, office, staff room, store-room, toilets.
38. Sivananda Centenary Clinic, Umzinyati
39. Kwabozothini Secondary School, Inanda: 6 classrooms, laboratory and library.
40. Lihlithemba Secondary School, Indedwe: 10 classrooms, toilets.
41. Amazibu B C School, Umbumbulu: 6 classrooms.
42. Mgoqozi H P School, Umbumbulu: 4 classrooms.
43. Mqolombeni B C School, Mid Illovo: 3 classrooms.
44. Ndlandlama Combined School, Umbumbulu: 5 classrooms.
45. Amatikwe L P School, Inanda: 4 classrooms.
46. Phutumani L P School, Kwa Mashu: 6 classrooms.
47. Enkwambase B C School, Tongaat: 5 classrooms, office, etc.
48. Mcetshwa L P School, Inanda: 4 classrooms, office, etc.
49. Sikhwama J S School, Isipingo: 6 classrooms.
50. Mashiyamahle School, Ndwedwe: Laboratory and library.
51. Emolweni L P School, Hillcrest: 5 classrooms.
52. Kwagwegwe L P School, Umbumbulu. 5 classrooms.
53. Mganiwakhe School, Umgababa: 4 classrooms.
54. Nombika High School: Addition of laboratory and library.
55. Sisebenzile Secondary School, Ndwedwe: 3 classrooms.

APPENDIX 10

PLAQUE INSTALLED AT SCHOOLS BUILT BY THE DIVINE
LIFE SOCIETY FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY



QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY DEVOTEES

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Address

2. Age Group

0-14	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Sex

Male	Female
1	2

4. Marital Status

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed
1	2	3	4

5. Population Group

Indian	White	Black	Coloured
1	2	3	4

6. Education

None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	University
1	2	3	4	5

Indicate Occupation below:

Professional	Educational eg. teacher, lecturer	01
	Medical and Related eg. doctor, nurse	02
	Technical eg. in laboratory, electronics	03
	Legal eg. attorney	04
	Other eg. engineer, scientist	05
Managerial and Clerical Workers eg. clerk, company director, accountant		06
Salesworker eg. shop-assistant, insurance salesman		07
Transport and Communication Workers eg. bus driver, postman, telephone operator, taxi-driver, stoker		08
Service, Sport and Recreational Work eg. chefs, waiters, hairdressers, police etc		09
Mining and Quarry Workers		10
Artisans and Semi-Skilled Workers eg. painters, plumbers, motor mechanics, supervisors, foreman		11
Labourers (except farm labourers)		12
Farmers, farm labourers		13
Social Workers		14
Businessman (self-employed)		15
Housewife		16
Student		17
Unemployed, seeking employment, unfit for work, retired		18

7. Language Group

Gujarati	Hindi	Tamil	Telugu	Other
1	2	3	4	5

B. 1. Specific Affiliation

Saivite	1
Vaishnavite	2
Sakta	3
Vedantin	4
Other	5
No Specific Affiliation	6

2. In addition to the Divine Life Society (DLS) are you a member of any other religious movement or organisation?

Yes	No
1	2

3. If yes, please specify

N/A	1
Ramakrishna Centre	2
Hare Krishna	3
Saiva Siddhanta Sangum	4
Sai Baba	5
Radha Soami	6
Divine Light Mission	7
Hindu Temple	8
Other	9

4. Are you still a member of that movement?

N/A	Yes	No
0	1	2

5. If No, why did you leave that movement?

N/A	01
Its incapacity to develop an experience of God	02
Its incapacity to give a larger meaning of Life	03
Its incapacity to develop a close meaningful fellowship	04
Its incapacity to give security	05
Its religious teachings	06
Its hypocrisy	07
Its racism	08
The caste system	09
Other	10

6. How long have you been a member of the DLS?

0 - 5	5 - 10	10 - 15	15 - 20	20+
1	2	3	4	5

7. How did you first acquaint yourself with DLS?

Through:

Parent	1
Family	2
Friends	3
Literature	4
Visit to the Ashram	5
Other	6

8. Which other members of your family belong to DLS?

Parents	1
Brother	2
Sister	3
Children	4
None	5
Other	6

9. What most attracted you to the movement?

Sound of the Mantra	1
Warmth and Friendliness of devotees	2
Philosophy of the Movement	3
Power of the Spiritual Master	4
Opulence of the Ashram	5
Worship (Satsang)	6
Social Work of the Movement	7
Other	8

10. Do you encourage others to join the DLS?

Yes	No
1	2

11. What is your attitude towards other Hindu Religious Organisations?

Respectful	Tolerant	Unfriendly	Indifferent	Uncertain
1	2	3	4	5

12. How do you feel the DLS is regarded by other Hindu movements/organisations?

Respectful	Tolerant	Unfriendly	Indifferent	Uncertain
1	2	3	4	5

13. What is your attitude to people of other religions?
Please specify by allocating the following ratings to the Religions listed below.

N/A	Respectful	Tolerant	Unfriendly	Indifferent	Uncertain
1	2	3	4	5	6

Buddhism	Christianity	Judaism	Islam	Other

C. RELIGION AND PERSONAL LIFE

1. How important is religion in your daily life?

N/A	Very Important	Important	Not so Important
1	2	3	4

2. Do you consider yourself "more religious" since joining the DLS?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

3. Do you apply the religious precepts and teachings heard during the Satsang in your daily life?

Yes	No
1	2

4. If yes, how strictly do you do so?

N/A	Very Strictly	Strictly	Indifferent
1	2	3	4

5. Do you object to worshipping with members of your religion but who belong to another race?
Allocate the following ratings to the race groups listed below:

N/A	Yes	No	Uncertain	Indifferent
1	2	3	4	5

Indian	White	Black	Coloured
1	2	3	4

6. Do you ever worship with members of other race groups of your religion?

N/A	Regularly	Occasionally	Never
1	2	3	4

7. Do you object to people of other races of your religion worshipping in your place of worship?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

8. How do you react when a member of your religion converts to another religion?

N/A	Disappointed	Indifferent	Resentful	Hostile	Pleased
1	2	3	4	5	6

9. How do you react when a member of another religion converts to yours?

N/A	Disappointed	Indifferent	Resentful	Hostile	Pleased
1	2	3	4	5	6

10. Would you have any objections if a leader of your religion, but of another race group, performed religious ceremonies in your place of worship?

N/A	Yes	No	Indifferent
1	2	3	4

11. Would you have any objections if a leader of another Hindu religious organisation performed religious ceremonies in your place of worship?

N/A	Yes	No	Uncertain	Indifferent
1	2	3	4	5

12. Would you have any objections if a leader of another religion performed religious ceremonies in your place of worship?

N/A	Yes	No	Uncertain	Indifferent
1	2	3	4	5

D. THE SATSANG

1. How important do you think it is to attend the Satsang at the Ashram?

Very Important	Important	Not So Important
1	2	3

2. How often do you attend the Satsang?

Daily	1
Several times a week	2
Weekly	3
Several times a month	4
Monthly	5
Sometimes	6

3. Do you consider the Satsang more meaningful than home worship?

Yes	No
1	2

4. If yes, could you explain?

5. Do other members of your family also attend the Satsang?

Yes	No
1	2

6. Are you pleased with the nature and contents of the Satsang?

Yes	No
1	2

7. If no, could you explain.

8. Which aspects of the Satsang are most meaningful to you?

Kirtans	1
Meditation	2
Lecture (Discourse)	3
Reading of literature	4
Music	5

9. Are there any elements of the Satsang that you dislike?

Yes	No
1	2

10. If yes, please specify.

11. Do you think the singing of kirtans/bhajans aids your spiritual life?

Yes	No
1	2

12. For what reason(s) do you attend the Satsang?

To Pray	1
To get help from God	2
For the sake of duty	3
For the sake of Tradition	4
Other	5

13. Do you think it is important that the Bhajans/Kirtans are sung in the mother tongue?

Yes	No
1	2

14. Do you understand the meaning of the Kirtans/Bhajans sung?

Yes	No
1	2

15. Do you also sing the Kirtans/Bhajans at home?

Yes	No
1	2

16. During the singing of the Kirtans/Bhajans what do you normally think of?

God in the form of your chosen deity	1
God	2
Swami Sivananda	3
Nothingness	4
Other (please specify)	5

17. During the chanting of the Sivananda mantra towards the end of the Satsang what do you normally think of?

God in the form of your chosen deity	1
God	2
Swami Sivananda	3
Nothingness	4
Other (please specify)	5

18. Could you describe your feelings towards Swami Sivananda?

19. Could you describe your feelings towards Swami Chidananda?

20. Could you describe your feelings towards Swami Sahajananda?

21. Do you consider it important to have a Guru to aid your spiritual growth?

Yes	No
1	2

22. Do you attend the DLS monthly yoga camp?

Yes	No
1	2

23. Please state your reasons for attending?

24. How often do you attend the yoga camp?

Monthly	Several Times a Year	Sometimes
1	2	3

25. Which aspects of the yoga camp do you find most rewarding?

Satsang	1
Meditation	2
Chanting	3
Yoga Exercises	4
Lecture (discourse)	5
Music	6
Karma Yoga	7
Other (please specify)	8

26. Do you think the DLS caters for all aspects of your spiritual needs?

Yes	No
1	2

27. If no, please specify.

28. Do you assist in the social work of the DLS?

Yes	No
1	2

29. If yes, please indicate form of assistance.

Donation (cash)	1
Donation (clothes, food, building material etc)	2
Personal service	3
Other	4

30. What is your attitude to the DLS involvement in the assistance with African education?

Pleased	Happy	Indifferent	Disappointed	Uncertain
1	2	3	4	5

31. Do you think the DLS should firstly concentrate its efforts for the social upliftment of the Hindu community before assisting others?

N/A	Yes	No	Indifferent
1	2	3	4

32. Do you think there is a difference between the traditional temple and the Ashram?

Yes	No	Uncertain
1	2	3

33. If yes, could you explain.

34. How often do you visit the temple?

Often	Seldom	During Festivals	Rarely	Never
1	2	3	4	5

35. Which do you prefer?

Temple	Ashram	No Preference
1	2	3

36. Why?

37. Do your children attend the Sunday services for children held at the DLS?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

38. Do your children read literature published by the DLS?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

39. Do your children belong to the DLS children's club?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

40. Is there a difference in your child's outlook to life since joining the DLS?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

41. Please explain.

42. Apart from attending the Sunday service of the DLS do your children attend the services of other Hindu organisations?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

43. Has joining the DLS made you a better person?

Yes	No
1	2

44. Please explain

45. What personal experiences have come to you in your contact with the Movement?

46. How would you describe your spiritual development within the Movement?

47. What are your hopes for the future growth of the Movement in South Africa?

Very Optimistic	Optimistic	Not so Optimistic	Uncertain
1	2	3	4

48. What are your hopes for the future growth of the Movement worldwide?

Very Optimistic	Optimistic	Not so Optimistic	Uncertain
1	2	3	4

49. Are you satisfied with the role of women in the Movement?

Yes	No
1	2

50. If no, please explain.

E. RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

1. How often do you read Hindu Religious Literature?

Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
1	2	3	4

2. Which religious scripture do you read most often?

Vedas	Gita	Kural	Gospel of Swami Sivananda	Other
1	2	3	4	5

3. How often do you read literature published by other Hindu Organisations?

Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
1	2	3	4

4. Was your first contact with the DLS made by reading books/literature distributed by the Society?

Yes	No
1	2

5. Are the writings of Swami Sivananda easier to comprehend generally when compared to the writings of other Hindu Saints?

Yes	No
1	2

6. Do you think that the DLS is playing an important role in educating the Hindu community via its literature distribution?

Yes	No
1	2

7. Which book or literature published by the DLS has made the greatest impression on you?

F. MODES OF WORSHIP

1. How often do you pray at home?

Daily	Weekly	Several Times a Week
1	2	3

2. Do you have a sacred shrine at home?

Yes	No
1	2

3. Which image(s) of God do you have in this shrine?

N/A	1
Krishna	2
Shiva	3
Rama	4
Hanuman	5
Sarasvathi	6
Luxmi	7
Durga	8
Vishnu	9
Ganesha	10
Kali	11
Other (please specify)	12

4. Do you also have the image of Swami Sivananda in your shrine?

Yes	No
1	2

5. Do you have a lamp in your shrine?

Yes	No
1	2

6. Is the prayer you recite at home the same as the prayer recited at the DLS Satsang?

Yes	No
1	2

7. Do you sing Kirtans/Bhajans at home?

Yes	No
1	2

8. Do you sing Kirtans/Bhajans in praise of Swami Sivananda at home?

Yes	No
1	2

9. Do you pray before meals?

Yes	No
1	2

10. Does the family pray together at home?

Yes	No
1	2

11. If No, who performs the prayers at home?

N/A	1
Parent	2
Brother	3
Sister	4
Children	5
Husband	6
Wife	7
Grandparents	8

12. Do you pray

Verbally	Mentally
1	2

13. What form does the prayer take?

Thanking God	Praising God	Asking from God
1	2	3

14. How do you comprehend God?

Personal	Impersonal
1	2

15. If personal, to which aspect of God do you pray?

N/A	1
Krishna	2
Shiva	3
Rama	4
Hanuman	5
Sarasvathi	6
Luxmi	7
Durga	8
Vishnu	9
Ganesha	10
Kali	11
Other (please specify)	12

16. Would you consider God

Near to You	Far from You	Within You	Don't Know
1	2	3	4

17. Are you happy to be a Hindu?

Yes	No
1	2

18. Would you have preferred to have been born into any other faith?

Yes	No
1	2

19. If yes, which?

Buddhism	Christianity	Islam	Judaism	Other
1	2	3	4	5

20. Do you discuss religion with your family?

Yes	No
1	2

21. If yes, how often?

Often	Sometimes	Rarely
1	2	3

22. Do you discuss religion with your friends?

Yes	No
1	2

23. If yes, how often?

Often	Sometimes	Rarely
1	2	3

24. How do you think your beliefs differ from those of members of other Hindu organisations?

25. Do you regard the teachings of the DLS more satisfying when compared to other Hindu movements?

Yes	No	Don't Know
1	2	3

26. Is there any particular Hindu religious movement which you think is doing a disservice to the propagation of Hinduism in South Africa?

Yes	No	Don't Know
1	2	3

27. If yes, please specify?

G. RELIGION AND FAMILY LIFE

1. Are there members of your family belonging to another Hindu Movement?

Yes	No
1	2

2. If yes, which?

Ramakrishna Centre	1
Hare Krishna	2
Saiva Siddhanta Sangum	3
Divine Light Mission	4
Radha Soami	5
Hindu Temple	6
Other	7

3. Does religion help in the well-being of your family?

Yes	No
1	2

4. In times of family problems do you seek the assistance of the DLS?

Yes	No
1	2

5. In times of sickness in your family do you approach Swamiji for blessings?

Yes	No
1	2

6. Do you think this helps in recovering from illness?

Yes	No
1	2



7. Which of the religious festivals do you observe?

Deepavali	1
Sivaratri	2
Mariamman	3
Pongal	4
Kavady	5
Krishna Asthree	6
Raam Naumee	7
Durga Puja	8
Nava Rathree	9
Pithar Pak	10
Guru Poojei	11
Hanuman Jayanti	12
Other	13

8. Which of the religious festivals listed do you consider most important?

9. Which religious ceremonies do you perform at home?

Katha and Jhanda	1
Nava Rathree	2
Pithar Pak	3
Guru Poojei	4
Mariamman	5
Saraswathi Pooja	6
Hanuman Jayanti	7
Other	8

H. ETHICS

1. Which of the yoga systems do you consider most effective?

Bhakti	Jnana	Karma	Raja	All
1	2	3	4	5

2. Has being a member of the DLS influenced the path you chose above?

Yes	No
1	2

3. If yes, in what way?

4. Do you observe a strict fast or special diet on any day of the week?

Yes	No
1	2

5. If yes, indicate which day

Sunday	1
Monday	2
Tuesday	3
Wednesday	4
Thursday	5
Friday	6
Saturday	7

6. Do you refrain from meat dishes on the day of attending the Ashram?

N/A	Yes	No
1	2	3

7. Do you know what the following words mean?

Artha		Kama		Dharma		Moksha	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2

8. How important is it for you to attain Moksha?

Very Important	Important	Little Importance	Uncertain
1	2	3	4

9. Do you believe in the caste system?

Yes	No
1	2

10. Do you approve of inter-language marriages (eg. Hindi/Tamil)

Yes	No
1	2

11. Do you approve of inter-caste marriages?

Yes	No
1	2

12. Do you believe in the law of karma?

Yes	No
1	2

13. Which of the Samskaras do you observe?

Birth ceremony	1
Naming ceremony	2
Removal of child's hair	3
Appearance of teeth	4
Ear piercing	5
Investure of sacred thread	6
Marriage	7
Death	8
Other	9

I. GENERAL

1. Has being a member of the DLS influenced your attitude to other races in any way?

Yes	No
1	2

2. If yes, please explain

3. Do you believe the government should give recognition to Hinduism in any way?

Yes	No
1	2

4. If yes, please explain

5. Do you believe in maintaining your ethnic identity?

Yes	No
1	2

6. If yes, how should it be maintained?

Voluntarily	Through legislation
1	2

7. Do you think the DLS should become more involved in political issues in this country?

Yes	No
1	2

8. Do you think that more people are joining the DLS?

Yes	No
1	2

9. If yes, why do you think so?

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