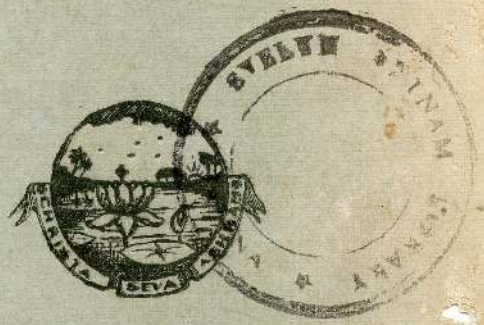
EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD.

ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR GOD.

TWENTY FIVE YEARS

OF THE



Christa Seva Ashram

JAFFNA, Ceylon.

1939 – 1964

H. C. Goodchild
August 64.

TWENTY FIVE YEARS

OF THE

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1939 — 1964

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PREFACE

In bringing out this publication on the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Ashram, the Ashram Board desires to thank all those who made this publication possible.

The person to whom greatest thanks is due is Bishop Kulandran who toiled at the task of writing a history of the Ashram, faced as he was by a lack of suitable records of events and dates. That he has succeeded so well is due to the pains he took to supplement such records as existed with information culled from the 'Morning Star' and from the memories of many whom he had to interview.

The third section of this publication is by members of the Ashram Community. In it can be found the hopes and dreams, the fears and anxieties, the praise and petitions of those who have committed themselves to the Ashram and its witness.

Greetings

"Pine Lodge,"
186, Belmont Road,
Belfast 4,
Ireland,
August 5, 1964.

Dear Mr. Selvaretnam,

It seems impossible that it is twenty-five years since we had those committees at Vembadi about the founding of the Ashram. Also, for me it is a peculiar pleasure that at the age of ninety-five I can send you this greeting on yonr Twenty-fifth Anniversary.

I remember that there was a good deal of opposition to the idea of the Ashram at that time. Many missionaries opposed it beca se they said that the Christian family was the proper unit of Christian society and the Ashram was more of a Hindu idea. Even among the Tamils there was a good deal of hesitation about the idea. I supported it because I felt that that type of Christian brotherhood was in line with the Eastern tradition and ideal, just as the family idea as the unit of religious life was truer for the West. One of the missionaries who supported me was Miss Bookwalter of Jaffna. I have also a very vivid recollection of the initiative taken by Mr. Niles (father of D. T. Niles) in the founding of the Ashram, as well as the strong support for it from the beginning by the Rev. R. C. P. Welch, the Rev. S. Kulandran, the Rev. J. A. R. Navaratnam and D. T. Niles himself.

I remember well the first Board Meeting in 1939 at the Ashram, as it was on this occasion that my son, then about five years old, got tired of waiting for his supper and persuaded the driver of my car to take him home, thinking that the car could get to Jaffna and back before the meeting was finished, — with the result that I had to walk home.

From the beginning, the Ashram life was thought of as in no sense a cloistered life but rather one of shared work and fellowship, giving an opportunity for Christian service. Anyone who was in trouble or simply wanted to get a little respite from the pressures of life could go there and find refuge. There was a great spirit of quietness and peace and inspiration at the Ashram meetings. The Ashram was also a great influence for union as it was a place where all the churches could meet and join together.

I have been glad to get your letters and reports from time to time, and have rejoiced to learn that the Ashram has been so helpful to so many and that it is now fully accepted by the churches, and that you have been able to carry on such useful Christian work from that centre. I do not know that I can give any special message except to remind you that our Master *did all things well.* Start the new period of your Ashram with the resolve to do the spade-work perfectly and leave the results to God.

With every good wish and prayers for continued blessings on the Ashram.

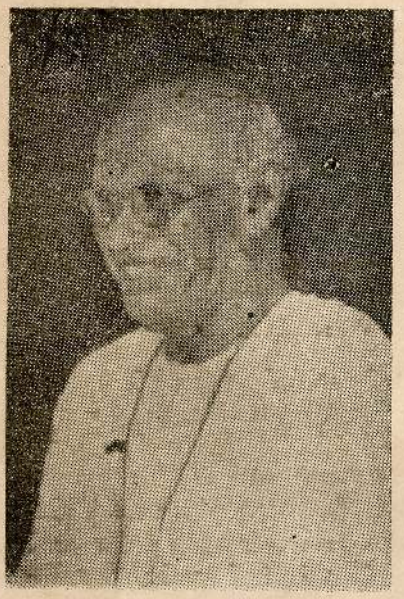
Very sincerely,
Yours,
E. Middleton Weaver.

CONTENTS

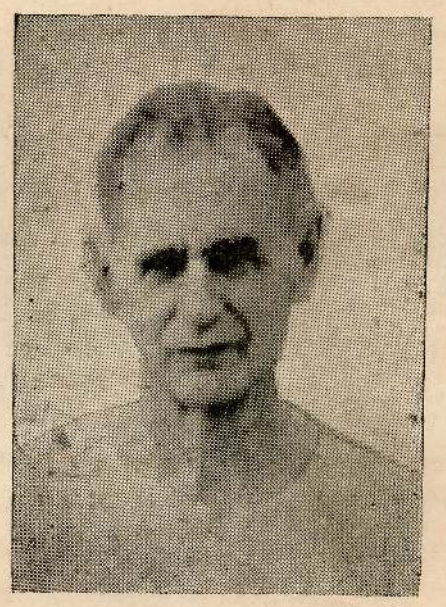
		Page
PREFACE		
GREETINGS	— *by the Reb. E. M. Weaber*	
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY	— *by the Reb. Dr. D. T. Niles*	i
A BRIEF HISTORY	— *by the Rt. Reb. Dr. S. Kulandran*	1
REFLECTIONS	— *by Members of the Ashram Community*	45
APPENDIX		58
THE ASHRAM RULE OF LIFE		62

FOUNDERS OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN AHSRAM

(Founded 7 - 3 - 1921)



DR. S. JESUDASAN



DR. ERNEST FORRESTER PATON

Christu Kula Ashram, Tirupatur, North Arcot, South India.

Introductory Essay

In the brief history which follows this introduction, reference is made to the first meeting in 1924 in Madras between Selvaretnam and Dr. Yesudasan of Tiruppattur. I was also present at this meeting, and my earliest recollection concerning the Ashram is a little prayer that Selvaretnam and I prayed together in the matriculation classroom of Jaffna Central College, soon after our return from Madras, when we presented before God the desire which we thought He had put into our minds that an Ashram should be established in Jaffna.

One of the characteristics of our time in the Church today is the revolt of youth against existing structures. When the World Student Christian Federation called together a Conference of university students in 1960 at Strassbourg to reflect on the Life and Mission of the Church, it did not itself fully realise how deep this revolt was. There was such an obvious reluctance on the part of the students to accept any of the existing structures, whether of the Church in its organizational form or of missionary societies or even of the ecumenical movement. Looking back at 1924 from the vantage ground of today, it is obvious that even at that time in our part of the world this revolt had begun. The peoples of Asia were already at the beginning of their revolt against colonialism, and the Christians of Asia were already asking questions about the forms of life of the Christian community and their rootage in the indigenous cultures of Asian lands. The ashram movement was a significant first step in the answers that the Indian Church would give.

One of the features of the social structure of the Christian community in Ceylon is the gathered nature of the community around centres of Christian activity. With the almost complete nationalisation of education, a social restructuring of the Christian community has set in. By the very simple process of government transfers, in a country

where more and more of its life is under government control, the result is achieved of scattering those who bear the name of Christ over the whole land. One has only to read church history to recognize how important this phase of scattering is. Our Lord himself, in His parable of the wheat and the tares, told us that one of the features of God's reign would be the scattering of the children of the Kingdom. It is already becoming obvious that the present structures of church life in Ceylon are quite inadequate to meet this emerging situation. A too centralised structure, not only with a too centralised authority but also with a too centralised ministry, cannot either nurture or build-up a scattered Christian community.

As one looks into the future, one sees the springing up of small communities of faith in the villages and cities of Ceylon which will be the places from which the Christian community itself is served and the country is presented with the claims of the gospel. Some of the communities will be wedged within existing ecclesiastical structures like the Community led by John Cooray in Kurunegala ; while others like the Jaffna Ashram will be outside ecclesiastical structures though closely related to the organized life of the churches.

It will not be necessary that the men and women who join these communities shall not be engaged in ordinary secular vocations. In my view, it will be more and more necessary that those engaged in ordinary secular vocations shall form fellowships that can serve as the nucleii for the Christian community at large.

It is obvious from the New Testament that the Christian community is fundamentally a pastoral community, where each member is in pastoral relation to the rest — " We are comforted together ". There are certainly those who are appointed pastors of the flock, but this gives no warrant for anyone to think that he is a 'sheep' only. What is necessary is training and teaching which all Christians must receive so that they can be pastors one to another. If then, at the heart of the Christian community in a village, there

can be a nucleus which has realised its nature as a pastoral community, that nucleus can leaven the whole meal. In order to realise the promise of this future, a complete revolution is necessary in the existing structures of the ministry of the Church. Such a revolution will never be led, perhaps will not even be allowed, by those in authority in the churches. God must raise up men and women outside the present structures who will make this promise a reality.

There is a further reflection on the present situation which is relevant at this point. As long as we are divided churches, there are at least two areas in which the vision of unity will make our present divisions unbearable. One is at the point of Holy Communion and the other is at the point of Baptism. It is impossible to pre-judge theological issues, nor is it wise to contravene rules of church discipline, but the very anomaly of a divided church demands that the Christian community is provided with "oases" where they can find the refreshment of being Christians together. During the very early years of the Ashram there was held a very difficult meeting of the Ashram Board at which my father pointed to the barbed wire around the Ashram and said, "Inside here we are Christians together". Individual consciences should never be violated, but at the Lord's table nobody must be kept out who wants to come.

The trend of theological discussion, during the last two decades, on the issue of baptism is to underline the practice of believer's baptism as normative practice for the Church. Besides, it seems to be a more appropriate practice for a Christian community which is a small minority in a missionary situation. The issue is not concerning the validity of sponsored baptism for infants. If baptism is a sacrament, then God in Christ is the primary actor; and, where God is the primary actor, it is futile to argue as to whether God can act on infants or not. Indeed questions of validity in relation to sacraments fundamentally challenge the concept of "grace alone". The issue is simply one of appropriateness. In this kind of situation with respect to convictions concern-

ing baptism, there was need in Jaffna particularly, where the Baptist Church is not at work, to have a place where baptism of believers by immersion can take place. The Ashram has rendered this service by building a baptistry in front of the chapel. During the last twenty-five years, converts from many churches have been baptised in this baptistry by the ministers of these churches.

The figure of an oasis lends itself to two further reflections. There is need for an oasis where those who find themselves wearied by the speed and pressures of life can come for quiet. The Ashram is designed for this purpose. There is the provision for people to come and stay in the Ashram whenever they want to. There is also the attempt made at the Ashram to provide, for those who need it, a "listening ministry". I have used the word "attempt" because it is in this aspect of the Ashram's life that there has been the greatest failure. It was inevitable that during the early years of the Ashram, members of the Ashram Community, and Selvaretnam in particular, were on the road a great deal, entering into the homes and lives of the people where they were. But members of an Ashram Community are not pastors at large. Should this be so, the Ashram itself would be nothing more than the hostel where they live. The whole point of an Ashram is that people come to it and that the Ashram provides for them a teaching and a listening ministry. From such a ministry will flow both a ministry of pastoral counselling and of intercessory prayer. The Ashram has been fortunate in having had in residence, at different times, the Rev. S. Selvadurai, Mr. Lewis Subramaniam and Canon. S. Somasundaram to strengthen this ministry. One prays that more of this kind of person will give time to the Ashram in this kind of service. But one cannot resist the remark that this ministry has to be the primary responsibility of the regular members of the Ashram Community themselves.

In speaking of the Ashram as an oasis, there is the thought also that it can serve as a middle ground for many

who for various reasons find themselves unable to fit gladly into the life of the established churches. First of all, there are those who desire to do Christian work more or less as freelancers. There has to be a way found to provide for these people a base of Christian fellowship which will also be for them a bridge to the parish church. Then, there are those who, while desiring to confess Jesus Christ, still remain unconvinced that they must be baptised. In the kind of society that we have at present, whether in India, Pakistan or Ceylon, baptism has become a step by which a person leaves one communal group and joins another. Baptism, instead of being a sign of community has become a sign of communality. The kinds of problems this raises bear hard on certain types of people and they need the support of Christian fellowship during their period of decision. Thirdly, there are those who for one reason or another fall out of the fellowship of the local church to which they belong. They are in need of forgiving and of being forgiven but, until that happens, there must be some way by which their spirits are nurtured and they are led to go back to full participation in the life of the local congregation to which they belong.

The Ashram cannot render the various kinds of service to which allusion has been made so far, unless it is itself a place about which certain things are true. In the preface to the Ashram Constitution and Order of Life, most of what needs to be said is said.

It reads as follows :—

> Many people tend to think of the Ashram in terms of a monastic community. In a monastic community the Order and the Institution take precedence over persons. In Hindu culture, an Ashram is however a group or community built around a person. When such a person dies the Hindu ashram ceases to exist. A Christian ashram is similarly and primarily a fellowship built around an individual person. That it grows in terms of a "congregational" fellowship, however, is what distinguishes it as Christian. When the Reverend Selvaretnam founded the Christa

Seva Ashram he brought a new mode of Christian life and witness into the life of the Church. Nothing that has happened since has changed that situation. Behind the Constitution and the disciplines of life, there stand always the founder and the men who have come to live in fellowship with him. It is this fellowship, in its vision and its life, which is determinative.

If there is a peculiar quality of the Christa Seva Ashram, it derives from the deliberate attempt to hold together in one institution and in its growing life the precedence of the vision of its founder, the regulation which is the result of a closely knit fellowship, the control which resides in the Board of Management as an expression of the mind of the Church, and the discipline of vows and of routine observances which characterise the life of a monastic community.

A further word will help to clarify an important issue. There are four areas of freedom in the Ashram. There are matters in which each member of the Ashram community is personally free to decide what he must do. There are matters in which the authority rests with the Prethama Sevak to whom the other members of the community must be obedient. Then there are those matters in which the final decision rests with the Ashram community as a whole. Finally, there are those matters which come under the control of the Board of Management. It is not always possible to demarcate in detail the four areas of freedom. They exist and interpenetrate each other. In their interpenetration they undergird the vocation of those who have joined the Ashram and give substance to their witness to the Christian life.

Great importance attaches to the disciplines of life in an Ashram community. Although a discipline may seem somewhat formal it is very necessary in an Ashram where erring human beings seek to live in community following a God-given vision. The mind of Christ is the best rule; so that the rules of discipline are framed in the hope that each individual and the fellowship as a whole will be helped to understand and imbibe the Spirit and the Mind of Christ. The function of the vows, which members of the Ashram community take from time to time, is for this purpose.

I would add only two things more. The Ashram must constantly strive to attain the ideal of being a home where people live together as a family. There is only one basis for such a life. A home is sustained by mutual acceptance and ready forgiveness. The second thing to say is that an Ashram can be best itself when it is fully dependent on the community to which it belongs and those whom it seeks to serve. The Jaffna Ashram has never had means of independent financial support. It does not even have a regular list of donors. Nor has it built up any reserve funds. It is supported by the faithful giving of a vast number most of whom are and remain anonymous. This is the source of its strength. Its very financial precariousness helps to ensure that it does not become just an established institution intent on self - preservation.

The very last building which was put up at the Ashram was its *mandapam*. When the Ashram was founded, there was in the original plan the decision to build a *madam* on the spot on which the *mandapam* has now been built. The *mandapam* is intended to be a place where the relationship between the Church and the world is to be explored through conferences, consultations, etc. The Lord of the world is the Head of the Church.

In the building of the *mandapam*, its symbolism and architecture have been controlled by this idea. On the top is the symbol of the cross over the world. The shape of the roof and the open structure of the hall raised on pillars are representative of the Sinhalese and Tamil cultures. The David star cut into the lintels, with its six points and twelve sides represents Israel which is the Church. In one corner of the back wall there is the Huguenot cross and dove which speak of the struggle of the Church within the nation. In the other corner is the figure of the sheep and beside it the shepherd's crook. This is to symbolise the theme of Christian nurture — our personal lives in God's hands.

All in all, the *mandapam* is an attempt to say in wood and stone that Jesus is Lord. It points to one of the essential functions of the Ashram which is to explicate the Lordship of Jesus Christ in such a way that the wholeness of His gospel becomes meaningful. Here lies the reason for the interest of the Ashram not only in worship and evangelism, but also in the practice of the healing ministry, the work among the Veddas as a community, and now in its present plans to set up a hostel for boys.

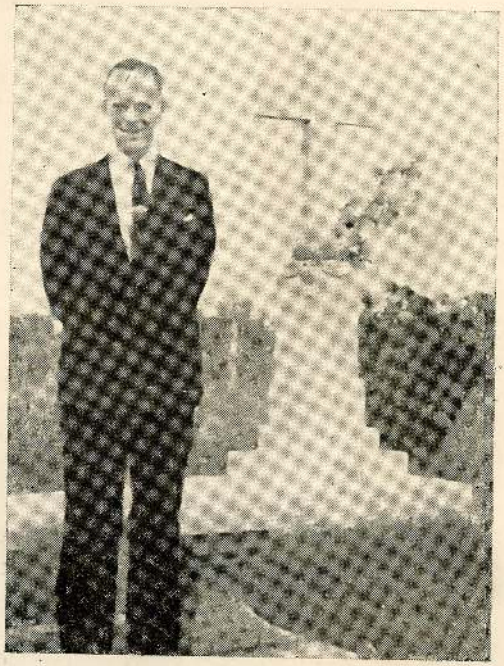
When I was asked to write an introductory essay for this twenty-fifth year publication of the Ashram, I was not quite sure what I was expected to do. What I have done is to put down on paper the ways in which I tend to reflect whenever I think of the Ashram. The Ashram has been for me an essential part of my own ministry, even as the Ashram Community is for us, as a family, an integral part of our own life and concern. It is inevitable, therefore, that this essay should range over many ideas even while it expresses my own personal commitment to the future of the Ashram movement in general and to the Jaffna Ashram in particular.

Let the last word of this essay be a reminder of the text which is inscribed over the Ashram chancel — "God so loved". Acknowledgement is here made not only of God's nature as love, not only to His deed of deeds in Jesus Christ, but also to all the many ways, big and small, in which God's love has been experienced both by those for whom the Ashram has been their home and by those for whom the Ashram has been a place of common rendezvous between themselves and God.

D. T. NILES

BEGINNINGS

THE FIRST SHED



DR. W. A. VISSER 'T HOOFT

THE FIRST CHAPEL SHED

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNINGS

The Ashram and the Ashram Movement

THE word "Ashram" is derived from the Sanskrit word "shrama", which means "care". A short "a" used at the beginning of a word usually negatives its original meaning and would therefore, in this instance, mean, "lack of care"; but a long "a" indicates its intensive. The first letter in "Ashram" is a long "a", that is, it is composed of two "a"s. Therefore, the word "Ashram" is not the negative of "care" but its intensive; and in the old days often referred to spiritual efforts and acts of austerity. For this reason it was natural that in ancient India it should have been employed to denote the four stages of the life of a Brahmin, viz: that of the student, that of the householder, that of the vanaprastha or anchorite and that of the sannyasin. It possessed that meaning, if used along with names of the four stages; but if used alone, it meant a place where somebody lived a life of sacrifice and spiritual effort. Such a place was also called "gurukula". The centre of life in the Ashram was always a person. He was the Guru. He often lived there with his wife and children. Those who gathered round him were his students. The guru was also called a "Rishi" (probably derived from *drish* — see). The students customarily paid him a *guru-dakshina* (tribute to the guru); but would also help in the details of the life of the Ashram.

Names of such Rishis have come down to us from ancient times, e. g. Athri, Agastya, Kausika and Vasishta. The sacred writings of the Hindus known as the "Upanishads" were often the teachings of such Rishis, who lived in Ashrams. The term "Upanishad" is derived from the root *sad* — sit in front of; and, therefore, it means teachings given to those who sat in front of teachers. The famous Yajnavalkya of the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad was one of these teachers.

Through the ages the Ashrams have persisted as a part of the religious life of India. Year after year, crowds might flock to shrines and temples and other sacred spots; but in forests, by riversides and in

the shadow of mountains the sages have sat teaching their disciples attracting little attention; but in the life of the country as a whole, Ashrams had ceased to count. In the latter part of the last century, however, when British culture was threatening to swamp ancient Indian traditions, the possibilities of an emphasis on the Ashram were recognised by those who desired the preservation of the values that India had always stood for. Ashrams, therefore, began to be revived. Devendranath Tagore's Ashram at Shantiniketan, Bengal, founded in 1863, Aurobindo Ghose's Ashram in Pondichery, founded in 1910, Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram at Sabarmati, founded in 1915, are examples.

The twenties of this century were days of great awakening in the Christian community in India. For long, people had looked upon Christianity as an aspect of British culture. In the twenties there was a great national movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and a host of Indian leaders, like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Malavya, Mohamed Ali and Srinivasa Iyangar. These leaders were mostly Hindu or Moslem. The realisation came to Indian Christians with a sense of shame that they were being regarded as foreigners in their own country.

Therefore, a determination began increasingly to make itself felt among Christians to make it clear to everyone that though Christianity had come to India from the West, for that reason it should not be looked upon as a foreign religion. Truth was universal and not national. The Indian Christian could profess the truth as he had found it and yet remain Indian. This conviction led to a new flowering of spiritual and intellectual life among Christians, expressing itself in various ways.

The movement was led by such intellectual giants as P. Chenchiah, Manilal Parak, V. Chakkarai, G. V. Job and others. A weekly paper called "The Christian Patriot" expressed their views. The commonest question discussed in intellectual circles amongst Christians was how Christianity could be indigenised. A new translation of the Bible was under way about this time, under the guidance of the famous Missionary, L. P. Larsen, with the assistance of a very able pundit named Duraisamy Pillai; and the desire was strong that the Tamil Bible should shed its foreign idiom and look as Indian as any Indian scripture. Educated Indians felt that the official Church itself was in the hands of

foreign missionaries, who naturally would not be interested in indigenisation; and that, therefore, the task had to be undertaken by Indian Christians themselves. It might be said that for this reason the movement towards indigenisation took place largely outside the organised Church.

The Ashram was something peculiar to India and a typical expression of its religious life, and therefore, it was felt that one of the surest indications that Christianity was becoming indigenised would lie in Christian Ashrams coming into being. However, to indigenise Christianity in respect of forms, ceremonies and customs was one thing; but to produce Ashrams was another thing altogether. Ashrams demanded life-long dedication to a career of utter self-sacrifice, intense religious devotion and high thinking.

Nevertheless, one of the most curious things about the awakening in the twenties was that the Ashram Movement emerged not at the climax of that awakening, but almost at its very beginning. That is, nobody sat down and decided that the logical conclusion to an attempt at indigenisation was the Ashram movement; and that, therefore, somebody should go about stirring up people here and there to start Ashrams. Ashrams cannot come about that way. The awakening that led people to attempt the indigenisation of theology and forms, ceremonies and customs led also spontaneously to the beginning of the Ashram movement.

An Indian doctor named S. Jesudason, who had become convinced that if Christianity was to make headway in India it should shed its foreign complexion, was the pioneer of the Ashram Movement among Christians in India. After ten years spent in the service of the Government of Ceylon, while in Britain for his F. R. C. S. Examination, he came across another young doctor, a Scot, by the name of Ernest Forrester Paton, who had just finished his M. B. at Cambridge. Together they came and started the Christu Kula Ashram at Tiruppattur in North Arcot, South India, in 1921. They had five guiding principles:

1. That a life of prayer and selfless service would be a greater Christian witness than preaching.

2. That the love of Christ transcended all racial or political barriers; and that the white man should no longer dominate the Church.

3. That Ahimsa or non-violence should be a fundamental fact of life.

4. That all workers in the Ashram should be volunteers; and that while their personal needs should be met, there should be no paid workers as such.

5. That those who became members of the Ashram should give up personal property, remain unmarried and dedicate themselves entirely to building up of God's Kingdom.

In December, 1924, the Triennial Conference of the S. C. M. was held in Madras and one of the delegates from Ceylon was a student from the Senior Class of Jaffna Central College, by the name of S. Selvaretnam. There he met Dr. Jesudason, who had come as one of the principal speakers at the Conference. Dr. Jesudason made a deep impression upon the student from Jaffna.

After finishing his schooling at Jaffna Central College and spending sometime at Jaffna College, Selvaretnam went in 1927 to Serampore Theological College, near Calcutta, to work for his B. D. degree. In 1928, during the October vacation he thought he would pay a visit to Tiruppattur Ashram, the story of which he had heard four years earlier. When he went there the vision embodied by that institution gripped him with an almost irresistible force. He, therefore, wanted to short-circuit his career as a theological student and take to Ashram life immediately. However, his old classmate and friend, D. T. Niles, then an undergraduate at the University College, Colombo, pronounced strongly against his intention and Selvaretnam was persuaded to go back to Serampore and continue his studies.

The Vision Comes to Jaffna

Many years had to elapse between the moment when Selvaretnam decided to take to Ashram life and the time when he could make

a serious attempt to give expression to his decision. When he took up the matter once again, it was clear to him that the Ashram he contemplated should not be identified with any particular Church or denomination that was working in Jaffna, and that, therefore, the proper body that could sponsor the project was the Jaffna Christian Union.

The Christian Union had been founded in 1907 in succession to the Jaffna branch of the Bible Society; and was meant to co-ordinate at an un-official level the activities of the three major Protestant Churches working in Jaffna: the Anglicans, the Methodists and the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church. After a career of great vigour and usefulness it had in later years settled down to the task of running an Annual Convention in the Fort Church in Jaffna. But from 1936 onwards for some years it was enjoying a great revival which expressed itself in various ways. During these years the Rev. E. M. Weaver, Chairman of the North Ceylon District of the Methodist Church, was also Chairman of the Christian Union.

In 1937 a memorandum was submitted to the Christian Union on the desirability of an Ashram in Jaffna and defining its aims and objects and asking the Christian Union to set up a Board for running the Ashram, if it approved of the project itself. The name of the Ashram was to be "*The Christa Seva Ashram.*" Its objects were defined as follows:

1. To serve as a home for converts.
2. To experiment in indigenous methods of worship and organisation.
3. To serve as a base for special evangelists, who would be available for service in the Eastern and Northern provinces.
4. To provide an adequate Library for reference, for study and for the production of Christian Literature.
5. To serve as a place of refreshment and rest for lay and ministerial workers who wished to avail themselves of it.
6. For training those who came, and any one who might be sent there, in evangelistic work.

7. To do concentrated evangelistic and social work in and round the village where the Ashram was situated.

On Saturday, 20th November, 1937, the General Committee of the Christian Union approved of the project and decided that the Ashram should be started early in 1939. A committee of six, including Selvaretnam was appointed to draft the Constitution. The General Committee also set up a Board constituted as follows:

(a) *Ex-officio*: The Chairman of the North Ceylon District of the Methodist Church, The Vice-President of the Jaffna Missionary Association, the President of the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church and the Rev. S. Selvaretnam.

(b) *Representatives*: Three representatives from each of the major Protestant denominations working in Jaffna.

Once the project was sanctioned, the first important question to be settled was that of the site. Selvaretnam and his friends scoured the Peninsula to fix upon a suitable location. Any site that was to be chosen would have to possess living facilities and be sufficiently large to accommodate the kind of life that would go in an Ashram. Various sites, one at Puttur, one at Kankesanturai and another at Thyiddy were considered. Finally a piece of land at Maruthanamadam 50 lachams in extent, at the crossing of the Manipay - Kaithady Road and the Railway line was fixed upon. This had the advantage of quietness and comparative isolation from busy centres of life as well as comparative proximity to them and an easy accessibility by road. A grant of Rs. 1330/- from the Restarick Memorial Fund in the Methodist Church made the purchase of this site possible.

On the 9th of November, 1938, the Board set up by the J. C. U. met at Vembadi, passed the Constitution of the Board and elected its office - bearers. The Office - bearers were:

1. *President*: The Rev. R. C. P. Welch.

2. *Vice - Presidents*: The Rev. J. T. Arulanantham and Mr. W. D. Niles.

3. *Treasurer*: Mr. J. Subramaniam Lewis.

4. *Secretary:* Head of the Ashram, (ex-officio)

The Board also decided that for legal purposes, the Methodist Trust Association or the American Ceylon Mission or Jaffna College be asked to hold the Ashram land in trust. On the same date the first sod for the well was cut by Dr. I. H. Curr.

Now that the project was beginning to take shape, a thing that every wise house - holder ought to do in the tropics before he begins to put up his house (but seldom does) began to be done. An effort to plant trees was set on foot. Shade - giving trees are an amenity for a house in the tropics; but for an Ashram they are a necessity and an obligation. From ancient times trees had much to do with Ashram life. When the Rishis left civilisation and went into forests, they might have had huts in which they could sleep at night; but during the day they lived under trees. Though the old rule could no longer be enforced, an Ashram without trees was unthinkable. On 23rd November, the Rev. Ralph Barlow planted a mango tree. In December three distinguished persons on their way to the International Missionary Conference in Madras: Dr. Douglas Horton, Dr. Fredfield Goodsell and Bishop Mann of Japan also planted mango trees. More trees were also planted by Ted Oppenheim of Jaffna College and by a representative of the Uduvil Girls' School. This was only the beginning. Through the years the effort to dot the land with trees has been steadily maintained.

During the early months of **1939**, preparations went on apace for setting up the Ashram. Dr. Visser't Hooft, then General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation and now General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, was in Jaffna after attending the meeting of the International Missionary Council held at Tambaram in India; and the occasion was used by the Ashram Board to put its project on the map. On a rainy afternoon on the 9th of January, in the presence of about 250 friends, all holding umbrellas over their heads, a service was held, the Rev. R. C. P. Welch officiating, at which Dr. Visser't Hooft delivered the message based on I Corinthians, 3 : 11, "For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", and laid the corner stone of the Chapel. Corner stones for

other buildings were laid as follows: for the Library — Rev. R. C. P. Welch; for "Bethel" — Rev. S. S. Somasundaram; for "Lambert Cottage" — Miss L. G. Bookwalter; for "Shanti" — The Rev. E. M. Weaver.

The land which had been bought and on which the buildings were to be erected was at this stage found to have no possibility of a well being dug in it. An adjoining plot of land was, therefore, bought for the purpose on the 27th of March. This plot was also of the same extent as the one bought earlier. The cost was met out of small gifts (and some loans) and a substantial cheque from J. Forrester Paton of Scotland.

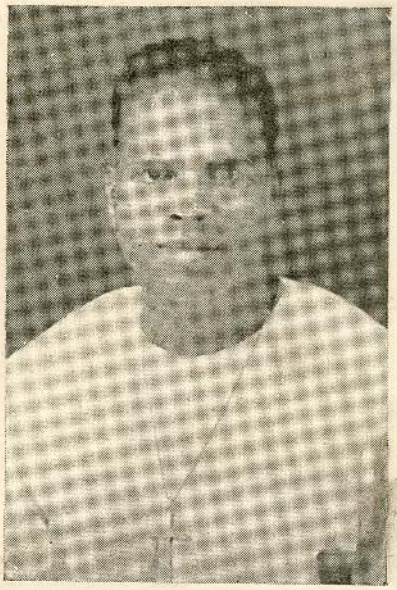
It Happens

Certain other essential steps were necessary before the Ashram came into being; and these were soon taken. A temporary residence for the Sevak was put up in April called the "Tharmar John Cottage", and Selvaretnam, E. A. Williams and J. S. Kanapathipillai came into residence in it on 1st May. In the same month another temporary shanty was put up to serve as the Chapel; and a cross of olive-wood received from the Language School of Jerusalem was put in it. This Gross still hangs over the chancel of the Chapel. The work of any institution has normally to begin and go on to some extent before the institution itself is officially opened. This kind of work was inaugurated at the Ashram on 20th May with a short service conducted by Archdeacon Deniyer at which the Rev. E. M. Weaver spoke. The first Holy Communion Service was held on 21st May. Life at the Ashram received a welcome facility when on 1st August the Ceylon Government Railway made Maruthanamadam a Railway halting place.

The official dedication of the Ashram took place on Monday 21st August, 1939. There was a whole day function beginning with a Communion Service at 5 o' clock in the morning, conducted by the Rev. S. S. Somasundaram. After breakfast there was a Thanksgiving Service conducted by the Rev. A. Ben. Kanagaratnam, at which the Rev. S. Kulandran was the preacher. About a 100 people sat down to lunch. The heat of the day was considerably reduced by the strong South West breeze that was blowing. The Dedication Service at 4-30 in the afternoon was conducted by the Rev. R. C. P. Welch. The Rev. M. S.

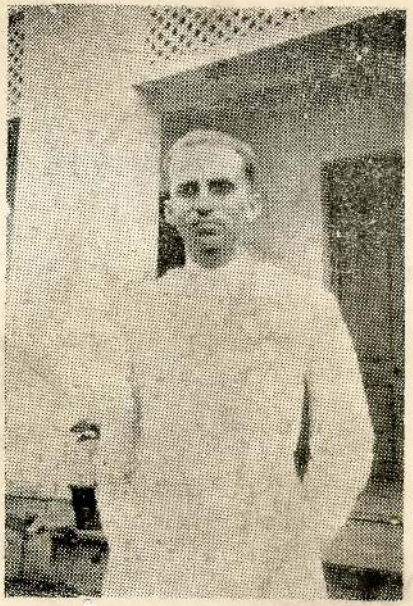
SEVAKAS

S. SELVARETNAM
(PeriAnnan)



I. T. YESUSAHAYAM
(SinnAnnan)

SAM. ALFRED



HAROLD GOODCHILD

Chinniah read the Bible lesson and Mr. Welch offered the prayer of dedication. The speakers were Dr. E. Forrester Paton, one of the founders of the Christu Kula Ashram and the Rev. J. A. R. Navaratnam. The children of Mr. C. O. Elias sang some beautiful songs. About 500 people attended the afternoon meeting. At its close "Lambert Cottage", erected in memory of Mr. J. V. Lambert of Araly, was opened by his wife. The Ashram might now be considered to have got started well and truly.

At this time in 1939 there were eight people staying at the Ashram, excluding Selvaretnam: Jeyam Mills, who was working in the Manipay Hospital, Christie Banda a Sinhalese convert, N. Alagiah from Batticaloa, S. M. Thambyah from Nallur, R. K. Thiyagarajah of Velanai, Sadasiva Iyer, a Brahmin convert from Batticaloa, S. Sellathurai from Urumpirai, a Hindu inquirer from Vaddukoddai, and a boy from Alaveddy.

Three other events took place before the end of 1939: the cottage "Shanti" in memory of John Clarence and of Mrs. R. P. Asirvatham, was opened by the Rev. Canon S. S. Somasundaram on October 4th; and in December, the renovated "Tharmar John Cottage" was blessed by the Rev. S. T. Aseervatham. The cost of "Tharmar John Cottage" was defrayed by Mr. Sam. Seevaratnam, after whose father it was named. This unpretentious cottage has always served as the residence of the head of the Ashram. A baptistry was also completed in front of the Chapel, the work having been done by Mr. V. J. Ariacuddy, the Christian Union Evangelist.

The Founder

As was pointed out at the outset, an Ashram always centres in one man; all its activities revolve round him. Pupils in ancient days selected their Rishi and went to him. It was his teaching that prevailed in the Ashram and his will that finally counted. In his lectures on "The Idea of a University", Cardinal Newman has pointed out that this is the basic idea in the concept of a University also. From what has been said already about the commencement of the Ashram project in Jaffna, it would be obvious that it did not matter who sanctioned projects, who gave moneys or opened buildings and who sat on the Board of

Management or came and went, it was the Rev. S. Selvaretnam who would be the central figure in the life of the Christa Seva Ashram. By common consent in the Ashram, he has always been called "Peria Annan" (the big brother).

Selvaretnam is the son of Mr. G. S. Subramaniam, a Catechist, first in the Methodist Church and later in the Anglican Church, and was born on 19th November, 1906. He was educated in Jaffna Central College and matriculated in 1925. For some time he was studying in the Intermediate Class of Jaffna College. He joined Serampore College in 1927 and showed great proficiency in Greek. He obtained his B. D. degree in 1931 and joined the ministry of the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church in May of that year. The Council turned down his request to work in the Islands and posted him as assistant to Rev. E. T. Williams at Vaddukoddai.

The exigencies that arise in ecclesiastical life rendered his shift to Araly necessary late in 1931. In 1935 he was posted to Navaly. He was ordained at the Vaddukoddai Church on the 5th January, 1936, when the Rev. Alden Clarke, Secretary of the American Board preached the sermon. While at Navaly he was also Secretary of the Church Council for one year (1936 — 1937). Another interim transfer shifted him to Erlalai in 1937, where he continued till the General Transfer of Workers at the end of April, 1939.

The Parsonage, wherever Selvaretnam was, was always a place of great jollity and noise, as all young people in the neighbourhood, both Hindu and Christian, spent more of their time there than in their own homes. Almost every meal was a public meal, there being quite a few participating. The parishioners seem often to have provided the wherewithal for such meals. Elderly ministers were more often than not quite scandalised by what they considered a lack of solemnity in his behaviour.

The place that Selvaretnam has occupied in the Christian community in Jaffna is due to the recognition, confirmed through the years, that he is a man of God. His jollity and humour, his fondness for jokes and his recital of humorous incidents even in his sermons have been an attempt to draw a veil over his inner life. Every one who knows him knows him as a man who walks with God. Life with him begins at

4 o'clock in the morning and often earlier and continues long after others have gone to bed. If anyone could testify to the occurrence of miracles in daily life, he could. Many of the incidents he could relate can only be explained on the basis of direct divine intervention. Hardly any one looking at the many buildings in the Ashram knows the story of the series of miracles that lie behind them. But in the life of those who live so much in the presence of God such interventions become so commonplace as not to be considered miraculous. In every effort Selvaretnam makes he looks upon God as a constant companion and helper; and he would never acknowledge that he has been let down.

On the other hand, Selvaretnam is a living refutation of the idea that a man of God should be inherently inefficient. Because men of God have often in the past been "other-worldly" and have seldom devoted much time to the affairs of the world, the idea has gained ground that such persons were incapable of doing anything in the world, if they tried. This theory, however, will collapse if looked at in the light of history. The Brahmin Drona of the Mahabaratha, though living in an Ashram, was a teacher of archery to the princes of the time. Neither Moses nor Joshua could by any means be considered inefficient; nor could the term be applied to Samuel. Though Elijah lived on Mount Carmel and not in Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, it is impossible to think of him as inefficient. In later times Ignatius Loyola was well known as an organiser. Therefore, there is nothing contradictory about Selvaretnam being a man of God and at the same time an extremely capable executive. Looking well ahead, planning every detail, he carries out every project he undertakes with great thoroughness and efficiency. John R. Mott said about the meetings that D. L. Moody and he organised in East Northfield late in the last century, that they organised, as if there was no such thing as prayer and prayed as if there was no such thing as organising. It may be said of Selvaretnam that he organises and prays knowing very well that he must do both.

In the character of its central figure lies the distinct role played by the Christa Seva Ashram in Jaffna. While the term "Ashrama" as was pointed out, means exertion and not mere freedom from care, people have had a habit of thinking that an Ashram is a mere refuge from the cares of the world. In the old days the exertion was often meant to take

place on the spiritual level. The character of Selvaretnam ensured that from the beginning the Christa Seva Ashram, while it would provide scope for contemplation and the development of the spiritual life, would also exert itself in the world outside. From the outset he has adopted William Carey's motto, " Expect great things from God ; Attempt great things for God ", as his own. Such a person lives in a higher world, but also very definitely in this.

A Look at the Ashram

Even as the history of the inner life of a man is seldom recorded, but only his doings, so the inner life of the Ashram by which alone it is enabled to do what it does may not provide sufficient data for any history ; but, nevertheless, it forms the basis of its existence. From the outset the Ashram has followed a certain discipline of spiritual life. The day at the Ashram begins at 5 o' clock in the morning (at the start it used to be 4-30 a. m.), when a hymn of praise sung from cottage to cottage summons everyone to worship in the Chapel. For half an hour members either kneel or squat on mats, as one of them conducts devotions. This is followed by silent reading and meditation, in or out of the Chapel till 7-00 a. m. A cup of tea is served during this period. Breakfast at the Ashram may sometimes be solid, sometimes liquid ; after it everyone betakes himself to his work. The Ashram has got to be swept and kept clean, the garden has to be tended and food has to be cooked. Those with more scholarly habits resort to reading and writing in the Library. The younger ones who have to go to school do so by various means of locomotion. At 12 noon those who are still in the Ashram gather in the Chapel for intercession ; from 6 o' clock in the evening everyone is expected to engage for half an hour in what is called Sandhya Vandanam (worship at eventide, but actually contemplation). At 6-30 all gather together for worship once again in the Chapel. The day closes with family prayer at 9-00 p. m. The times for these regular events have remained more or less the same, though the means of their announcement has altered slightly. To begin with there was only a gong which could be used for the purpose. The arrival of the big bell (mentioned later) has made a good deal of difference. It is tolled regularly as the angelus every day at 5-00 a. m. 12 noon and 6-00 p. m. To those at the Ashram the sound of the bell is the summons to a few minutes of prayer. Those in the fields outside, however, interpret it in a more worldly manner. The diet at the Ashram

is never luxurious, except on festive occasions; but whether normal or luxurious, it is always vegetarian.

Within the frame-work of this unvarying schedule (and on this diet) the various members of the Ashram and the Ashram itself have carried on their activities by which they have influenced the life of the Christian community in Jaffna. The discipline governing the private lives and conduct of the Ashram community are set forth in the rules of the Ashram Fellowship, which consist of six sections dealing with devotional life, study, work, simplicity of life, brotherhood and discipline.

A history of the Ashram will naturally consist of three kinds of events. The first would comprise the events which are associated with the natural growth of any institution. This would mean the laying of foundation stones, the dedication and opening of buildings and the planting of trees. The second would consist of the visits of distinguished Church leaders from various parts of the world. Though many come to the Ashram, the visits of some may be considered in a sense as contributing to its history. Some of these of course come not as mere visitors but as participants in important functions. The third would consist of the various activities undertaken and carried out by the Ashram in and out of the Ashram. As we go on, we shall have occasion to refer to all three types of events.

CHAPTER II.

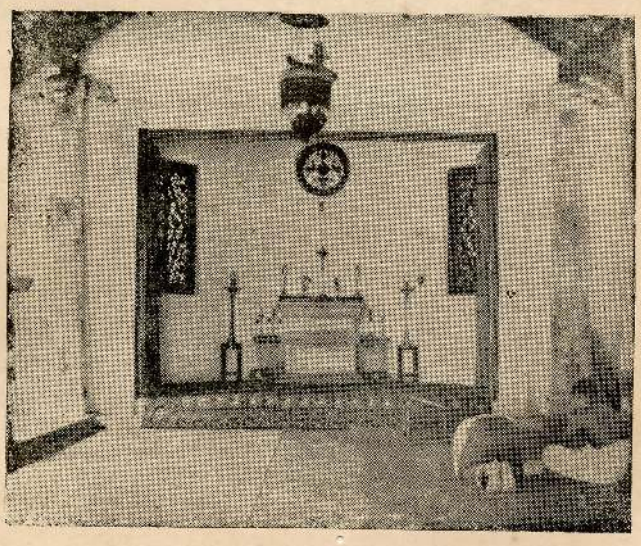
THE EARLY YEARS

Some Persons

WHEN we speak of the Ashram, it is good to remember that the Ashram consists of persons. It is, therefore, necessary from time to time to speak of the members who came in and go out. Some have stayed on through the years, others have left. But at all times it must be remembered that it is the persons who stay at the Ashram who shoulder its tasks.

An article written by the late George Olagasegaram, then a teacher at St. Thomas' College during his stay here in the Ashram in the early months of 1940, and later published in connection with the Tenth Anniversary of the Ashram, gives a good account of life in the Ashram at this period. The following persons beside Selvaretnam were residing in the Ashram about this time: (1) Kanapathipillai Selvanayagam from Batticaloa who usually performed the functions of a matron, (2) E. A. William, who was more or less the General Manager (of the things which did not come under Selvaretnam), (3) R. K. Thiyagarajah, now a headmaster in the Methodist Mission and in those days noted for his "tall stories" and who certainly shows signs of having flourished on Ashram diet, (4) N. Alagiah, now an ayurvedic physician in South India and even then possessed of a desire to try out his medical theories, since it is related that he used to put out the morning sambol on the kitchen roof to absorb ultra-violet rays, (5) K. J. Mills, who had then undergone training in Agriculture and was marking time till he went to Serampore to study Theology, (6) Henry Selvarajah, who had come from Roman Catholicism, (7) Christie Banda, who looked after the industrial side of the Ashram by operating a loom and turning out towels, bed-sheets etc. Of these K. Selvanayagam and H. Selvarajah went to Pasumalai in South India in 1940 for a two years course in Theology. Certain others also associated with the early history of the Ashram came in during the year: T. Devapalan, now in the Police Department, and Edward Shanmugam, now a Colporteur in the Bible Society, joined before the end of June. J. P. Nadarajah, now a teacher and catechist in the Anglican Church came in December.

ASHRAM ALTAR



THE SANCTUARY

Getting Set

During 1940 three distinguished persons honoured the Ashram with their visits: Dr. E. Stanley Jones (on the 23rd March) and soon after the Rev. D. G. D. Harpur, C. M. S. Secretary in Ceylon. The Rev. Augustine Ralla Ram, General Secretary of the S. C. M. was the speaker at the Anniversary meeting. Two buildings were dedicated during the year. The first was the Cottage named "Bethel" (a gift of the Church of Ceylon) which was dedicated on the 12th July by the Most Rev. Foss Westcott, the Metropolitan of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon. In his address on the occasion he declared that an Ashram ought to fulfil three purposes: fellowship in life, fellowship in work and fellowship in worship. In the Visitors' Book of the Ashram he has recorded his joy in the growth of the Ashram Movement, "which is an expression of the Christian spirit, in a truly indigenous form".

The other building was the Chapel. Its dedication was not merely the outstanding event of the year. But one of the most outstanding in the whole history of the Ashram. Work on the Chapel had begun in 1939 and the expenses had been defrayed by the Jaffna Inter-Collegiate Christian Fellowship of the S. C. M. The dedication itself took place on the 17th December, 1940. The Revds. E. M. Weaver, D. T. Niles, S. Kulandran and S. S. Selvaretnam took part in the service. The speakers were two eminent Christians from abroad. Both of them made a powerful impression on the audience. Dr. Jesudasan of the Christu Kula Ashram, Tirupattur, the founder of the Christian Ashram Movement in India, naturally spoke with authority about the aims and ideals of an Ashram. In particular he protested against the idea that an Ashram was meant for those who could do nothing else in life. The other speaker was Dr. T. Z. Koo from China, the Asia Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation and at that time one of the outstanding Christians of the world. A point that he made may still linger in the minds of those who heard him. He said that a building consisted of walls; but the purpose of walls was to enclose space. So what was important about a building was what was done inside it. On the same occasion a big new bell, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Subramaniam Lewis as a token of thanksgiving for the recovery of their son Albert, was rung for the first time. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. S. K. Bunker.

The year 1941 opened with the dedication of "Balusthan", erected by Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Handy in memory of their son Bala, who had died in an unfortunate accident. The ceremony on the 5th January was performed by Bishop Mar Theodosius of Travancore and the speaker was Mr. K. K. Chandy of the Manganam Ashram, Kottayam. The building supplied a much felt need, that of a Library. Rev. D. T. Niles was able to get down 300 volumes from U. S. A. to fill our shelves. The stock was replenished by a part of the library of the Rev. H. Peto of St. John's College, who had died the previous year, and also by books donated by the Rev. J. T. Arulanantham and Mrs. J. N. Arumugam.

About the middle of January, 1941, the Rev. E. M. Weaver relinquished his position as Chairman, North Ceylon District of the Methodist Church and soon after left for England after 52 years of service, in this country. His departure deprived the Ashram of one of its staunchest friends. As Chairman of the Jaffna Christian Union he had thrown himself whole - heartedly into the efforts to set up the Ashram. He had been on the committee which drew up the Constitution and had been one of those engaged in the quest for a proper site. He had officiated or taken part in all the initial events in setting up the Ashram. His support had meant that the Methodist Church was behind the whole enterprise. It is a source of happiness to those connected with the Ashram that he is still alive and well.

An event outside but near by the Ashram, which took place during the year will always be looked upon as a high-light in the history of the Ashram also. This was the opening of the Women's Centre about a hundred yards or so on the other side of the Railway line, which almost skirts the western boundary of the Ashram. The site consisting of seven acres had in earlier years been purchased by Mr. William Mather, the great philanthropist, and had been intended for a Home for the Aged. After his death the family had decided in favour of an Orphanage; and in 1929 such an institution named after him had been opened there. This property was handed over for running the new Centre for Women in March 1941 with the stipulation that it also should be named after him. Unlike the bare piece of land which had been purchased for the Ashram three years earlier, this site was shaded with coconut trees and contained a number of buildings both finished and unfinished.

On July, 25th, 1941, a small Chapel round which the Centre was to grow was dedicated by Canon S. Somasundaram and the Rev. S. Kulandran. The opening, which took place on November 22nd, was an elaborate affair. The Holy Communion Service in the morning was conducted by Canon S. Somasundaram. About 70 participated. At the Praise Service which followed Revd. R. C. P. Welch was the preacher. At the Public Meeting in the afternoon, Miss L. G. Bookwalter presided. The speakers were Miss Frost of Tinnelveli, South India, and the Rev. James S. Mather. Since that day there has existed the closest co-operation between the two Institutions; and each is happy that the other exists.

During the year three young men — Yesusahayam, Sinnathurai and Devapalan left for Guindy near Madras to study Theology.

Early in 1942, two stalwart friends of the Ashram passed beyond the veil: the Rev. R. C. P. Welch on 31st January and Mr. W. D. Niles on 24th May. Ever since the Ashram project was mooted, both these stalwarts had been of great help in promoting it. The one had been the President of the First Board of the Ashram and the other Vice President. Neither had ever wavered in his determination that the Ashram should be set up and become a powerful force in the community. Mr. Welch had for many years been President of the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church, and had exercised a unique influence in the churches of his denomination. Mr. W. D. Niles had retired as a judge and had always been held in high respect for his wisdom and integrity. Their association with the Ashram project had from the outset ensured that it was not going to be just a day-dream but would become an accomplished fact. Memorial windows to them and to Mr. G. S. Subramaniam, father of S. Selvaretnam, were installed in the Chapel in December. The windows had been designed by Mrs. D. T. Niles; and the speaker on the occasion of the installation was the Rev. E. K. Yesuthasan. A big cross in memory of the Rev. R. C. P. Welch was errected in front of the Chapel, since he had often suggested that there should be a Cross there.

From 1st to 5th September the Rev. D. T. Niles and Bishop Pakenham Walsh of the Christa Sishya Ashram, S. India, held a Bible Institute at the Ashram. The Rev. D. T. Niles lectured on the Old Testament and Bishop Walsh on the New. About 90 people attended. It was intended at the time to make such an Institute an annual event. This

hope did not materialise. While at the Ashram, the Bishop also held healing services. There was also a service of dedication this month for Miss Violet Mather, who was going to work at Porto Novo under the Danish Mission in South India. The speaker at the Anniversary meeting this year was the Rev. Arthur John of Chittoor, who also held a Retreat soon after. This year also the practice was followed of sending suitable young men for theological training. J. P. Nadarajah who had been at the Ashram since December, 1940 was sent to Pasumalai.

In January, **1943** a small paddy field of 10 lachams at Maravanpulam in Thenmaradchy was purchased. As the war continued, the produce of this field came in quite handy and has always been a good stand - by.

A number of events took place in 1943 bearing on the internal life of the Ashram. A special Order of Service of Holy Communion drawn up by the Rev. D. T. Niles and Selvaretnam began to be used in worship at the Ashram Chapel. This was an attempt to bring Christian worship a little nearer to indigenous methods. The Orders of Ashram Membership were also clearly defined and systematised. They were set forth at the meeting of the Ashram Board on March 12th and consisted of three stages: the Sevaka Mithran, the Sevaka Apedshakan and the Sevak. The first is the Preliminary stage and lasts normally for one year. After this the community will decide whether the person concerned is fit to proceed to the second stage. A person entering the second stage of Sevaka Apedshakan is bound by the vow of obedience. When he proceeds to the third stage he takes in addition the vows of poverty and chastity. The manner of life for each stage is prescribed. Not merely the attitude that members should take up to life in general but even their dress is prescribed.

In May this year, the Rev. H. K. Moulton of the United Theological College, Bangalore, led a Bible Institute on the Epistles of St. Paul.

Rev. Selvaretnam was admitted to the Order of Sevak on the morning of the Ashram Anniversary day — August 21. The service was conducted by the Rev. S. Kulandran, then President of the Jaffna Christian Union, assisted by the Rev. J. T. Arulanantham, the Chairman of the Ashram Board and the Rev. D. T. Niles. Dr. S. Jesudason delivered the charge to the candidate and was also the chief speaker at a Public

Meeting in the afternoon, along with Dr. J. V. Thambar. In the month of December, the Rev. Mark Sanjiva Rao and Mrs. Sanjiva Rao of the Basel Mission, South India, were in Jaffna for about three or four days and held a Seminar at the Ashram on "Types of Religious Consciousness" on the 4th.

During the year, the Ashram had the satisfaction of helping various Churches with the loan of young men who had come back after training in the Seminaries in India. Selvanayagam went out to help the Methodist Area Evangelist in Batticaloa, while Henry Selvarajah and Yesusahayam went to help the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church at Pungudutivu and Moolai respectively. Other young men proceeded from the Ashram for theological training: Stephen Karthigesu to the Theological Seminary at Vellore and K. J. Mills to Serampore College, Bengal.

Gathering Strength

The early forties, which were the early years in the history of the Ashram, were the years when the Second World War was raging. Unlike the First World War, which had largely been a European War, this one came much nearer home, and was in a truer sense a World War. The Malay Peninsula fell to the Japanese early in 1942 and the military were to be seen everywhere in Ceylon. Soldiers in jeeps were a familiar sight on the roads during this time. Not merely was our communication with the outside world interrupted badly, but even the country's contact with its sources of food supply was also badly interrupted. Life in the Ashram, however, went on without serious interference.

By now the Ashram itself was beginning to wear a new look more in keeping with ancient tradition. Even though certain sections of the campus, because of exposure to wind and weather, continued to resist all attempts of anything green from coming up, round spots where the Chapel and the Cottage provided a break, trees were beginning to assert themselves. And it was becoming possible to envisage the time when members could definitely sit under their shade, if they felt so inclined.

Life in the Ashram also had got into swing. Members took Retreats in and out of the Ashram, did evangelistic work in adjacent

villages, and helped in Conventions in churches. The Ashram itself had become a common venue for important meetings. Converts from areas where there was no church received their baptism in the Ashram. The Ashram also began issuing a periodical News-letter. The Ashram had definitely "arrived"; that is, it had found a place in the religious life of the Peninsula.

An important development about the middle of the forties was the establishment of a link between the Ashram and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Kankesanturai. The proposal to build a Chapel at the Sanatorium had originated with the Jaffna Christian Union and materialised about this time. A small Chapel subscribed for by Christians of all denominations was put up at the sea side at the Sanatorium. The Prethama Sevak of the Ashram has since then been always actively associated with the work. While the work still goes on, its regularity and intensity depend on the number of Protestant Christian patients at the Sanatorium. Services, however, continue to be held; and even when there are no Christian patients, there is no lack of a congregation, since Hindu patients usually join in.

On 16th June **1944**, I. T. Yesusahayam (born 18th July, 1918) was initiated as Sevaka Apedshakan at a service conducted by Bishop Pakenham Walsh. Yesusahayam had his theological training at the Methodist Institute in Guindy near Madras and had worked for the Church Council for a year at Moolai. Ever since that time he has been a recognised figure in the religious life of Tamil Christians in the Island. He is not merely conversant with the science of Carnatic music, but has himself composed some of the familiar songs sung in our churches. He is one of the few Christians who can do a *Katha Prasangam*, that is, preach a sermon interspersed with songs. He has always been in great demand for such sermons as well as for the more prosaic homiletic programmes of churches. Throughout the years he has been a steady and sober influence in the life of the Ashram. In the Ashram he has been called "Sinna Annan" (younger brother), a term indicating his place in the Ashram hierarchy.

In this year took place another event which, small as it was, expressed, as far as the Ashram was concerned, an aspiration and a hope. Ever since the Ashram had been founded there had been a desire

that its work should not be confined to the Northern Province, but should extend itself into the other Tamil - speaking Province. On 22nd July a piece of land quarter of an acre in extent, in the village of Kaluvankerni, 11 miles from Batticaloa, was bought at the modest price of Rs. 80/-. There had been a Veddha temple on the site and the purchase involved the acquisition of many old knives used in sacrifice. Work was not started immediately; and how it was started and how it is being continued will be related later; but a base had been secured.

Though the War had not come to an end as yet, the air was full of talk about Reconstruction, that is, what was to be done after the War about reconstructing the world on a new basis. Therefore, on Monday 28th August, Bishop Sandergren, the Lutheran Bishop of Tranquebar, held a Conference in the Ashram on " The Task of the Church in the Post War Reconstruction."

In June **1945**, Selvaretnam went on his sabbatical leave and Yesusahayam functioned in his place. According to the peculiar system that prevails at the Ashram, one who has not attained to the status of the Sevak may still function as a Prethama Sevak (Chief Sevak) and be head of the Ashram. The title therefore must be taken as conferring jurisdiction and not rank. Selvaratnam used the opportunity he got to brush up his theological knowledge at his old seminary at Serampore and visit various other Ashrams in India.

In **1946**, the Annual Convention organised by the Jaffna Christian Union which had always been held in Jaffna Town and usually at the Jaffna Fort Church was held for the first time at the Ashram. The meetings took place on September 3rd, 4th and 5th. The Ashram had been the venue of many meetings before this; but a Convention held for three consecutive days and attended by very large gatherings and involving the provision of board and lodging for those attending was of course another thing. It made a great demand on the organisational capacity of the Ashram; but the demand was met. The principal speaker, Bishop Yohanan Mar Timotheus, was delayed for one and a half days by floods in Travancore; and Revds. D. T. Niles and S. Kulandran helped out.

During this year the Ashram initiated a custom which has become one of the permanent features of its work, that of holding a *Bha-*

janai in the evening of Christmas day. The place of music in religious life is recognised all over the world; but it was in the forties that Christians in Jaffna began to realise the need to make a very serious attempt to harness Carnatic music to the service of Christianity. The Ashram has been fortunate in the matter in that by the time this realisation came to our people it also had it in its power to utilise the services of two Christian musicians of recognised standing, in the persons of Mr. and Mrs. Anandanayagam. In former times for expert rendering of musical items Jaffna Christians had to rely upon wandering minstrels from India, or Hindus from here. The service that Mr. and Mrs. Anandanayagam have been rendering to the Christian Church in the matter during the last 20 years cannot be over-estimated. Whoever else helped, they have been an invariable stand-by in the Ashram Bhajanais.

On the Ashram Anniversary day in **1947** (on August 21st) Yesusahayam was promoted to the rank of Sevak. Dr. S. Jesudason gave the charge to the candidate and the Rev. Canon S. Somasundaram preached the sermon. Revds. S. Selvaretnam, V. B. Muthuvaloe and S. Kulandran performed the ceremony of laying on of hands.

The year 1947 is a noteworthy year in the religious life of Jaffna, in that on September 27th of the year, the Church of South India came into being and what had been the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church became the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India. The Rev. S. Kulandran, who had been associated with the Ashram ever since its inception, became the first Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese; and was installed in his charge on October 10th. The relation between the Ashram and the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India has always been not merely cordial but quite intimate. Constitutionally the eatablishment of the Jaffna Diocese made a slight change necessary; in place of the President of the Jaffna Council of the South India United Church, the Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese became an ex-officio member of the Board of Management.

On May 22nd **1948** Sam Alfred (born 11th October, 1923) joined the Ashram followship as Sevaka Apedshakan. He had his early education in Hartley College, Point Pedro, and like Yesusahayam hailed from Navaly. Though not a singer of the same standing as he, Sam Alfred also is a singer of great competence. Sam did his Theological education

at Serampore and Tirumaraiyur, after joining the Ashram. In the Ashram he is called "Sam Annan". Whatever be his other qualifications, he compares very unfavourably with the other two Annans in regard to bulk. The Ashram now had three permanent members.

In 1948, Mr. C. T. Venugopal of the Indian Railways (now Additional Finance Member of the Railway Board in New Delhi) paid a visit to Jaffna with his mother. He belongs to a Brahmin family noted for its intellect. He had embraced the Christian faith late in life, chiefly due to the influence of Mr. Subramaniam Lewis. He was the chief speaker at the Anniversary day. He also spoke to many groups outside. Canon Sither also paid a visit to the Ashram during the year. Also during the year, Christie Daniel, now minister in the Methodist Church, came into residence.

In April **1949**, Selvaretnam left for Europe to function as Chaplain at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, after a spate of farewells both here and in Colombo. On the occasion of his departure a vine tree was planted between the Chapel and "Lambert Cottage". Owing to the difficulty of tending a vine tree in this country this has died out in recent years. Soon after Selvaretnam left for Europe, Sam Alfred left for India to do his theological studies; but Yesusahayam kept the Ashram and its activities going; and Retreats and Conferences continued to be held.

The Jubilee

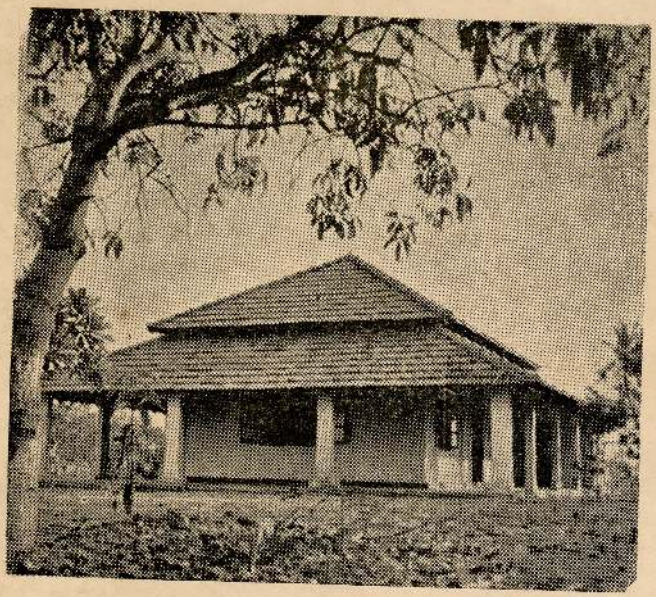
In 1949, it was ten years since the Ashram had been opened; and an opportunity had arrived for something that Jaffna Christians love dearly — that of celebrating a Jubilee. The fact that Selvaretnam was in Europe and Sam Alfred in India instead of preventing the celebration of the jubilee, provided a chance to celebrate it in three different places. Selvaretnam celebrated it in Geneva, Sam Alfred in Serampore and the friends of the Ashram in the Ashram itself; and a brochure entitled "Ten Years" was issued on the occasion. Celebrations took place on August 21st, 1949.

At the Ashram itself the celebration began with Holy Communion in the morning conducted by the Rev. A. C. Thambyrajah at which the

Rev. K. J. Mills, at one time a member of the Ashram, preached. The Public Meeting in the afternoon was noteworthy not merely for the size of the attendance, which included many friends, who had come down specially for the occasion from various parts of the Island, but also for certain very distinguished guests present. Among them were the Rt. Rev. Rollo Graham Campbell, Bishop of Colombo, the Very Rev. Yohnan Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church in Travancore (who had come to the Convention in 1946) and the Rev. George Mendis, Chairman of the Methodist Church in Ceylon. The meeting was presided over by the Rev. D. T. Niles, the most stalwart of all friends of the Ashram through the years. The speakers were Mr. K. C. Thurairatnam, the Rev. George Mendis and Metropolitan Yohanan Mar Thoma. Sevak Yesusahayam presented a Report of the activities of the Ashram ; and greetings sent by Miss Jayawardene from Uruboke Ahram, Sam Alfred from Serampore and Selvaretnam from Geneva were also read.

By the time of the Jubilee more than sixty - four persons had resided at the Ashram for more than six months. Of those, three of course continue to be permanent members. Six are definitely attached to Church work, viz : Jeyam Mills, S. Markandu, S. Karthigesu, Henry Selvarajah, Sam Thampoe and Christie Daniel ; some have passed away ; others are scattered far and wide. Wherever they be and whatever they are doing, it is hoped they are the better for having stayed at the Ashram.

On the 5th of November, 1949, a good friend of the Ashram, in the person of Rev. S. Selvadurai, passed away. He had retired after many years of service in the Methodist Church and had been living at the Ashram for sometime. He was a man of great sincerity and dedication, and as a bachelor had been able to identify himself with the Ashram whole - heartedly.



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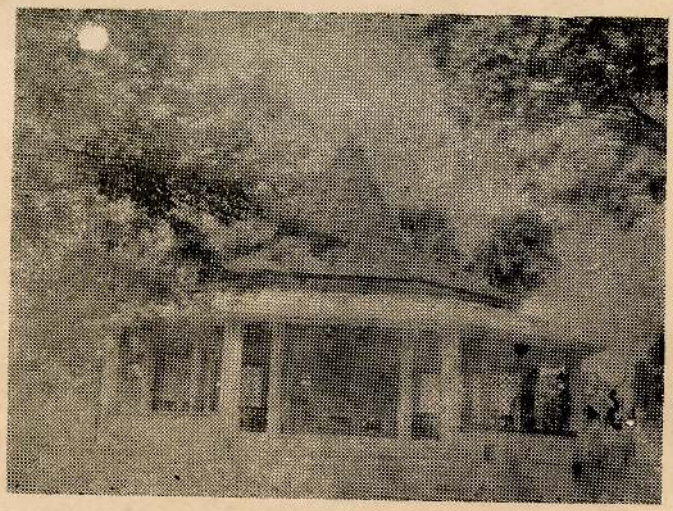


MANDAPAM

CHAPTER III.

THE MIDDLE YEARS

Going Forward

IN January, **1950**, Dr. Visser't Hooft, Secretary of the World Council of Churches, who in 1939 had laid the foundation stone for the Ashram Chapel was in Jaffna for two or three days, after attending the meetings of the Synod of the Church of South India in Madras. On Saturday, the 21st he conducted Holy Communion Service at the Ashram at 7-30 a. m. along with the Rev. D. T. Niles; and delivered the sermon in which he referred to the progress made by the Ashram since he had last been here. It is an index of the graciousness of this illustrious man that even when he visited Ceylon on a subsequent occasion some six years later he made it a point to look up the Ashram.

On February, 4th, Selvaretnam returned from Europe by the "S. S. Champolion"; and a Thanksgiving Service was held in Colombo at the Presbyterian Church, Wellawatte, by Bishop Kulandran. He arrived in Jaffna on the 6th. Here too a Thanksgiving Service was held. It was conducted by the Rev. D. T. Niles at 4 o' clock in the afternoon. A vast gathering was present. Selvaretnam thanked all those who had supported him with their prayers during his sojourn abroad. Like St. Paul, he said, he had died to the world.

The year **1951** was noted for two important events. The first of these took place early in March when Dr. Hendrik Kraemer, the famous Dutch scholar, then Director of the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in Bossey, came and stayed at the Ashram for a few days. He held an institute for three days beginning from Tuesday 8th on the theme "The Lay Apostolate". The meetings were presided over by Dr. A. A. Hoover of the Ceylon University. There was a large attendance. Amongst those who attended was Mr. Sam P. C. Fernando, who later became Minister of Justice in Mr. Bandaranaike's Government. On Friday the 9th Dr. Kraemer planted a mango tree in front of "Tharmar John Cottage", and laid the foundation stone for the Ashram Library (Nool Nilayam). On Saturday he delivered a talk on "The Relevance of Religion

to Life" at "Kala Nilayam", Vannarponnai, the citadel of Hinduism. Mr. S. Natesan, M. P., himself a great Hindu scholar, presided. The lecture was followed by a lively discussion; and as usual Dr. Kraemer came out unscathed from the dialectical thrust and parry natural in such circumstances.

As the result of a suggestion made at Dr. Kraemer's Institute, an Educational Seminar was held soon after. From this sprang a very useful result, viz: the organisation of an Association of Christian Principals and Vice-Principals. This body met regularly and had much to occupy ts mind before the Take-Over of Schools by Government in 1960. Since then its scope has been greatly restricted, though it still meets.

The other important event during the year besides the visit of Dr. Kraemer was the first Whitsuntide Festival held at the Ashram from May 29th to 31st. Some years previously, a Methodist Missionary had complained that one of the defects of Church life in Ceylon was that, though Christians here observed the holy days of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, they took no notice of Whitsun; which meant they did not realise the importance of the Holy Spirit in Christian life. The chief speaker at the Whitsun Festival was the Rev. G. B. Jackson, The Rev. D. T. Niles and Dr. Forrester Paton of Tiruppattur also took part. Since 1951 the Ashram has regularly celebrated a festival at Whitsun, getting down distinguished speakers for the occasion from far and wide. Such celebrations on a big scale have impressed on the minds of the Church here a somewhat neglected aspect of Christian life and doctrine.

A School of Prayer was held in August from the 23rd to 26th and was attended by about 50 people. It was conducted by the Revs. D. T. Niles and J. J. Ratnarajah. In December the same year, we had a visit from Canon C. S. Milford, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society.

On the evening of Easter day in **1952,** the first Easter Bhajan was held at the Ashram conducted, of course, by Mr. and Mrs. Anandanayagam. Like the Christmas Bhajan and the Whitsuntide Festival, this has continued ever since as an annual event in the life of the Ashram. The Easter Bhajan has always attracted a larger crowd than the Christmas one, since at Christmas time most people have their local celebrations both in their own churches and homes.

In December this year, the Ashram enjoyed the pleasure of a visit from Dr. and Mrs. Douglas Horton. Dr. Horton was then the Minister of Congregational Churches of the United States, by which is meant that he was the Chief Executive Officer of the denomination. He was at the time called " The Pope of Congregationalism ". His place in World Christianity during the last 25 years has been extremely high. Mrs. Horton before marriage was Miss Mildred Mac Afee and had been President of Wellesley College, Mass., one of the leading Colleges for women in the States. By the time they came, the work on the Library building, begun when Dr. Kraemer was here, had been completed. So on December, 19th, Dr. Horton declared the building open and Mrs. Horton lit the traditional lamp. The function drew a large crowd.

The idea of taking up a form of work which had proved so successful in India had been present in the mind of the Ashram for some time. Accordingly in January **1953** a Bible Correspondence Course was started. This of course required painstaking and regular work. The enterprise, however, was launched with assurance because there had come into residence one who was willing and capable of doing it in the person of Mr. J. Subramaniam Lewis. He hailed from Vaddukoddai and belonged to a respected Hindu family. During the closing years of the last century he embraced Christianity while a student at Jaffna College. Later he went to the Calcutta University, to do his B. A. and soon after joined Government Service. While in it, he caught the attention of Sir Arthur Fraser, then in Nagpur and later Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, and was soon promoted to service under the Imperial Government. He worked in the various Provinces of India and rose in the end to be Assistant Accountant General of Posts and Telegraphs. Though he was not one of the seventeen official delegates who gathered in Serampore, in December 1905 to organise the National Missionary Society of India, he was present at the meetings of the group and was associated with that movement right through his stay in India. In all the Provinces where he had worked, he had always identified himself closely with the Christian activities going on there.

Mr. Lewis retired from Government service in the early thirties and came back to Jaffna. In 1938, he became Manager of the Jaffna Co-operative Bank and worked in that capacity for ten years. In Jaffna

Town he was very active in the affairs of the Chundikuli Church and also in those of the Jaffna Y. M. C. A, and the Jaffna Christian Union, of which bodies he was President for a number of years. After he gave up his official duties he wanted to devote his whole life to the service of God. In 1953, he came into the Ashram. During his stay in the Ashram he was called "Uncle Lewis." His long experience in administrative offices, his wide contacts and his strong Christian faith made him a valuable counsellor and a source of great strength to the Ashram.

By the middle of 1953 the Ashram felt itself sufficiently strong to fulfil its long cherished desire to extend its work into the Eastern Province. On June 14th, Yesusahayam left Jaffna to take up the challenge of the enterprise. Along with him went Ariam, a capable Pharmacist, who had been staying at the Ashram for some time, The Ashram men lived for a while in the land which had been purchased earlier; but when work was started in earnest, it was felt necessary to shift from the original site to a place 8 miles inland from Valaichenai, called Vaddipodamadu, inhabited by the Veddhas, an aboriginal tribe which has a long history in Ceylon. The Veddhas are recorded as having been in Ceylon when Vijaya landed in 543 B. C. The new area consists of groups of old Veddha hamlets. People speak either Sinhalese or Tamil with an admixture of old Veddha words. On October 31st, 1953, the Rev. George Mendis, Chairman of the Methodist Church, dedicated the work at a service, graced by the presence of many friends from Batticaloa and Jaffna. This new station has been named "Jothi Nilayam" (The House of Light).

During the late months of 1953 the Ashram had the opportunity of functioning as headquarters of the Jaffna Diocese. In October, Bishop Kulandran went on leave to India for some months; and Selvaretnam was appointed to function as Commissary in his stead. The Ashram became for the time - being the Bishop's Office and the base of operations for Diocesan work. The period was hectic for every one concerned.

In **1954**, the Ashram Chapel was extended out of a gift of Mrs. Arudpiragasam in memory of late Mr. J. W. Arudpiragasam, for a long time teacher and Principal of Jaffna Central College. In June this year, the first "Camp Farthest Out" was held at the Ashram, conducted by Dr. Glenn Clark, who had come accompanied by Rev. Roland Brown and Marcia Brown. A special interest attaches to the guest speaker at the

Anniversary Meeting this year. Dr. Mason Olcott, who filled this role, is a cousin of the famous Col. H. S. Olcott, leader in the Buddhist revival movement in the eighties of the last century.

At "Jothi Nilayam" in the Eastern Province, which had been opened the previous year, Mrs Wilfred Snell offered to pay for a Chapel in memory of her husband, the late Rev. Wilfred Snell. Accordingly on July 3rd, the Bishop of Colombo laid the foundation for it and on 28th August, Bishop Kulandran dedicated the completed building.

In **1955**, the Easter Bhajan, which for three years had been held in the Ashram was shifted to the Jaffna Esplanade, to make it open to a larger audience. The new venue demanded not merely that all items should reach "concert" standard but that the instrumental accompaniment and the stage-setting should also be of a higher order. It also involved a number of other things necessary for big open-air gatherings, like the installation of lights and loudspeakers. Every effort was made to meet those requirements. Since 1955 these Bhajans are always held on the Esplanade. Mr. and Mrs. Anandanayagam are helped by a large trained choir. Many of the songs sung on the occasion have been special compositions of the late Mr. K. P. Muthiah. The musical items are interspersed at certain stages with suitable Bible readings; and in between a short speech on the meaning of Easter is sandwiched. The speaker at the first Bhajan was Canon S. Somasundaram. Year by year since 1955, the Easter Bhajan has drawn great crowds, both Christian and non-Christian.

On 19th December, Selvaretnam left for Australia to work for the World Student Christian Federation. He acted as Chaplain at the Study Chalet held at Castlereigh in New South Wales in January; and later conducted Prayer schools and University missions.

On May 5th, **1956**, Yesusahayam left for India and spent five months there, staying at the Christu Kula Ashram, Tiruppattur and at the Christu Dasa Ashram in Palghat. For the sake of helping the primitive people among whom he worked in the Eastern Province he learnt the secrets of Homeopathy, an esoteric system of Indian Medicine, which has managed to exist through the centuries along with the more progressive schools of Medicine.

Despite Yesusahayam's absence in India, work in the Eastern Province was not allowed to suffer. There was a three - week evangelistic campaign in "Jothi Nilayam" beginning on 8th Sept. conducted by two parties, one from Jaffna (which had gone there in the Gospel Van of the Evangelical Fellowship of Ceylon) and the other from Batticaloa. The Rev. G. A. Winslow, Mrs. A. C. Thambyrajah and Mr. and Mrs. Anandanayagam went from here; and from Batticaloa went Sister Malar Chinniah, Miss M. P. Dawson, Miss Barbara Atkins and other helpers. In October, the Batticaloa Central College students had a Retreat at "Jothi Nilayam".

In June 1956 there was a serious situation in the country brought about by the introduction into Parliament by Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike of the Sinhala Only Bill. At the Ashram there was a 24 hour vigil and a continuous intercession for a whole week for a just and equitable settlement of the question. In this connection printed Prayer Cards were issued in English, Sinhalese and Tamil. For the Anniversary Day in August 21st, Dr. Ernest Forrester Paton of the Christu Kula Ashram, a well tried friend of the Ashram, and Miss Lucy Burtt of the Staff of the Indian S. C. M. were the speakers. In October, Selvaretnam went to India for a Convention at Madurai, and Uncle Lewis and Jebaratnam Kathiresu held the fort here. In June this year, Dr. Wilhelm of the Evangelical Fellowship held a Bible Institute. In December, Uncle Lewis was initiated as a Sevaka Apedshakan.

By now the Ashram hostel had grown from small beginnings and was having eleven boys. This piece of work is a distinct service that the Ashram has been rendering. Those who have been in it have come from different backgrounds. Some have been converts from Hinduism; others have come from unhappy homes and certain others from distant areas; but all of them have submitted to the Ashram discipline during the year of their stay.

In June **1957** the chief speaker at the Whitsun Festival was the Rt. Rev. Lesslie Newbigin, then Bishop of the Madura - Ramnad Diocese, of the Church of South India, and now Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Bishop Newbigin, is an outstanding scholar, author and Christian statesman. He has also the great

advantage of being a fluent speaker in Tamil. Therefore, the Whitsun Festival of this year was a great event and drew large crowds.

In October the presence in Jaffna of two eminent Surgeons from Vellore: Dr. Jacob Chandy, and Dr. Paul Brand, was made use of by the Ashram to call together a Conference of all Christian Doctors in Jaffna. It met for a whole day on the 21st. At the Public Meeting in the afternoon Dr. Chandy spoke on "The Mind of Jesus" and Dr. Brand on "The Hands of Jesus," As a result of the conference a Christian Medical Fellowship was formed, membership in which is open to all Christian Doctors. It meets regularly on Hospital Sunday, which falls on the second Sunday in February.

On November 1st, the Ashram sustained a severe blow in the death of Uncle Lewis. While Sevaks and Prethama Sevaks trotted about the world, Uncle Lewis had always remained at the Ashram. He had come to be really loved and respected not merely by the Ashram community but by the public in general as well. Everybody had come to feel that here was a man who was living in the immediate presence of God. He collapsed soon after conducting worship in the morning of November 1st, and reminding everybody that it was All Saint's Day and telling them that, as far as he was concerned, he was ready to meet the Lord at any time. His passing removed from the Ashram a benign influence charged with the overtones of another world. A Thanksgiving Service in his memory was held at the Ashram on December 14th, conducted by the Ven. J. A. R. Navaratnam, assisted by Rev. Selvaretnam; Canon S. Somasundaram preached the sermon and Sam. Alfred spoke on the life and work of Uncle Lewis.

In **1958** Ashram work in the Eastern Province reached a new stage. In 1957 a piece of land 17 acres in extent had been bought at Kiran, a centre 17 miles north of Batticaloa and 10 miles from "Jothi Nilayam". On August 30th of that year, that property had been taken over and Dr. S. Jesudason had held a service of prayer over it. Work at this new station, however, commenced on the 8th of March, 1958, when the Rev. James S Mather, the Chairman of the Methodist Church held a service of dedication. A house called "Adaikala-giri" (Hill of Refuge) was also blessed on this day in memory of Uncle Lewis. It was given the name because, when it was being built it had given

shelter to several people when floods devastated that area. In the months that followed two adjacent properties were purchased; and on August 30th the foundation was laid for a Chapel.

A Crisis in the Country

During the latter part of May *1958*, the whole of Ceylon was convulsed by inter-racial riots which had broken out in Colombo and had soon spread throughout the Island. Many people were killed; homes destroyed and people forced to flee. There was much suffering in the country. In this connection the Ashram launched two projects. A relief-fund was opened by us. A gift from the World Council of Churches supplemented local gifts; and the Ashram had a substantial sum to disburse. In many cases regular monthly relief was given to those who had been affected. In the Paranthan area, groups of refugees who had fled from the North Central Province had quartered themselves at random in all available places. These people were helped both in cash and in kind. In this the assistance of Miss M. V. Hutchins, who works in near-by Kilinochi came in very handy. The other project that was launched was the arrangement for conversations between Christians of both the major races. Three such conversations were organised; one in Colombo, one in Batticaloa and the other in Jaffna. A similar dialogue was also organised between the Sinhalese and Tamil Swabasha Teachers and took place at the Ashram itself.

The Study Institute

In **1959**, the Ashram became associated with an Ecumenical project that had begun to spread over the world. The International Missionary Council had realised the necessity for an intimate study of the particular religions and the societies in the various areas of the world where the Christian Church existed. At its initiative, Study Centres had been organised in various countries. In India an organisation called "The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society" with its headquarters in Bangalore had been functioning for some time. At the Semi Annual Meeting of the Board of Management of Jaffna College held on October 11, 1958, the following decisions had been made;—

That the establishment of a Study Centre be approved; and the Rev. S. K. Bunker be asked to go ahead with the scheme. In this connection the following proposals were also accepted:

1. That the objects of the Study Centre be the same as those of the C. I. S. R. S. in India. Provision also be made for reciprocal relations with the Study Centre of the National Christian Council of Ceylon, Colombo.

2. That the Study Centre be situated at Maruthanamadam in close proximity to the Ashram and that its work be done in co-operation with the Ashram.

3. That we request the Board of Trustees of Jaffna College in Boston to release funds (from that portion of the endowment set aside for the training of Christian Workers) in support of this.

4. That the President of Jaffna College be responsible to the Board of Directors for the work of the Centre. The Centre should have its own Managing Committee of which the President of Jaffna College should be ex-officio Chairman. This Committee was to be composed and appointed as follows:

   (*a*) Three members elected by the Board of Directors of Jaffna College in addition to the President.

   (*b*) Three members elected by the Ashram, one member elected by each of the three Churches in Jaffna: The Jaffna Diocese of the C. S. I., The Methodist Church and the Church of Ceylon.

   (*c*) The Directors of the Study Centre ex-officio: (The Director and his associate if any, be appointed by the Managing Committee.)

5. That a sub-Committee of the Board of Directors composed of the President of the College, and the Rev. S. Selvaretnam be appointed to draw up a statement of the initial needs of the project to be submitted to the Board of Trustees. It will look into the capital expenditure, the current budget for the first year or two and the timing of the steps in giving effect to the project.

The Institute was inaugurated at the Ashram with a Seminar on the 2nd of April, 1959; and at a Public Meeting on that day the Rev. S. K. Bunker outlined the aims of the Institute. It was proposed to have two houses: one for the Director and another for his Associate, on a piece of land close to the Ashram; the Ashram Library was to be used for purposes of study and research. Since houses would take time to build, a house was rented near Mc Leod Hospital, Inuvil, for Mr. A. M. K. Cumaraswamy, one of the Directors. The Rev. J. T. Arulanantham, the other Director, lived in Jaffna Town. The Ashram Library was also used as the Institute Office. The shelves of the Library now began to acquire books more in keeping with the new status than the ones already in possession of the Ashram. It may be remembered that one of the aims of the Ashram when it was started was that it should serve as a place of study and research. Due, however, to lack of facilities and specially trained personnel it had not been possible to fulfil this aim to any appreciable extent so far. The coming of the Study Institute enabled the Ashram to discharge this obligation at least vicariously.

The history of the Study Institute belongs elsewhere than to a record of the doings of the Ashram itself; but the various conferences and seminars it organised has brought the Ashram into touch with visitors of high standing and enriched its life. When Mr. A. M. K. Cumaraswamy died in December, Rev. J. T. Arulanantham functioned as sole Director and continued up to September 1960, when Dr. Luther Jeyasingham took charge, Mr. D. S. Sanders Jr., was appointed Associate Director in September 1961. Early in 1963, the Directorate of the Study Institute was reconstituted; and four honorary Directors were appointed in place of one Director. There were to be four divisions: Study of Religions with the Rt. Rev. (Dr.) S. Kulandran, as Honorary Director; Study of Church and Society with the Rev. (Dr.) S. K. Bunker as Honorary Director; the

CHRISTA SEVA ASHRAM
JEBALAYAM

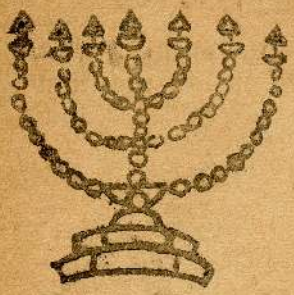
CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

The emblem of MATTHEW is a lion. He saw in Jesus the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the one whom all the prophets predicted.

The emblem of MARK is a man. This gospel is the nearest of being a report of Christ.

The emblem of LUKE is a calf. The calf is the animal for sacrifice. Jesus was the sacrifice for the whole world.

The emblem of JOHN is an eagle which can fly higher than any other bird. The most obviously theological of the Gospels.



The seven-branched candlebra of the Temple of Jerusalem.

The sanctuary lamp of the Temple of Jerusalem that burns day and night, signifying the presence of God.

A modern Lutheran symbol. The Flaming Heart out of which grows the fig.

The shepherd's crook and the sheep. Another modern Lutheran symbol, illustrating the twenty-third Psalm.

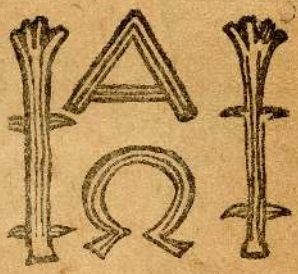
The symbol of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The lamp that signifies us — 'the people' — "Ye are the light of the world."

The fish is an early Christian symbol. The Greek word is spelt I - ch - th - u - s, the first letters of 'Jesus Christ God's Son Saviour.'

The vine leaf and grapes – a symbol of Holy Communion.

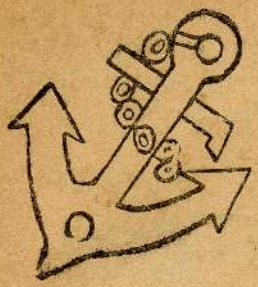
The Chalice and the descending Spirit — another symbol of Holy Communion.



The Alpha and Omega — the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This symbol signifies God who is the Beginning and the End.

A modern Lutheran symbol of the Trinity.

The open Bible.



Anchor — the traditional symbol of hope.

The symbol of the World Council of Churches The oldest of the symbols of the Church. The turbulent sea signifies the world; the small boat the Church with the Cross as its mast.

The baptismal font.

The Easter Lily.

IHS — the first three letters of the Greek spelling of 'Jesus.' Taken to signify 'In hoc signo vinces' — By this sign we conquor.

Study of the Problems of Nation Building with Dr. W. L. Jeyasingham as Honorary Director; and Bible Studies with the Rev. (Dr.) D. T. Niles as Honorary Director. Mr. D. S. Sanders Jr., was appointed Executive Secretary; and Rev. S. Selvaretnam was to function as Honorary Executive Secretary. This system is now in operation. The house for the Secretary situated on the opposite side of the road to the Ashram was opened by Dr. William C. Nelson, President of the United Church Board for World Ministries, on the 18th February, 1963. The dedication prayer was offered by the Rt. Rev. (Dr.) S. Kulandran.

Other Events

In **1959**, Harold Goodchild was initiated as Sevaka Apedshakan on April 5th, and Sam Alfred went to Bangalore in June to study Theology. Sam had good company there, as Bishop Kulandran was also staying at the Theological College writing a book.

Sam's place at the Ashram was taken by a person a somewhat more venerable than he, in fact, the most venerated figure in the Christian community of Jaffna, viz: the Rev. Canon S. Somasundaram. He had retired a few years earlier after nearly five decades of service in the Anglican Church, winding up with a long incumbancy of St. James Church, Nallur. Though already past his 80th year, he by no means considered himself as having retired from Christian work. An unbending Puritan, he had mellowed with age; and the awe he inspired at one time had given place to a loving respect amounting to veneration. He stayed on for about six months and left very unwillingly.

Mr. A. M. K. Cumaraswamy's appointment as Director of the Study Institute meant that during the day he made the Ashram his headquarters. That meant the presence on the campus of two very distinguished persons. Mr. Cumaraswamy had retired after a career of great distinction, during which among other things he had been Secretary of the Colombo Diocese and Registrar of the Ceylon University. In all respects he was very different from the Canon. His gaiety and resounding laughter provided a contrast to the austere atmosphere that surrounded the Canon.

On July 22nd this year a staunch friend of the Ashram passed beyond the veil, in the person of Mr. R. S. Edwards of Kopay. He had retired from Government service a little before the Ashram was started; and when it was started, he spent a good deal of his time in promoting its interests. From the beginning of the Ashram till 1952, he had served on its Board. He had stood down then, because he wanted to give place to a younger man. It was chiefly due to his efforts that the Cottage "Bethel" had materialised. Right to the end of his life he continued to take much interest in the affairs of the Ashram and almost invariably attended every meeting held there.

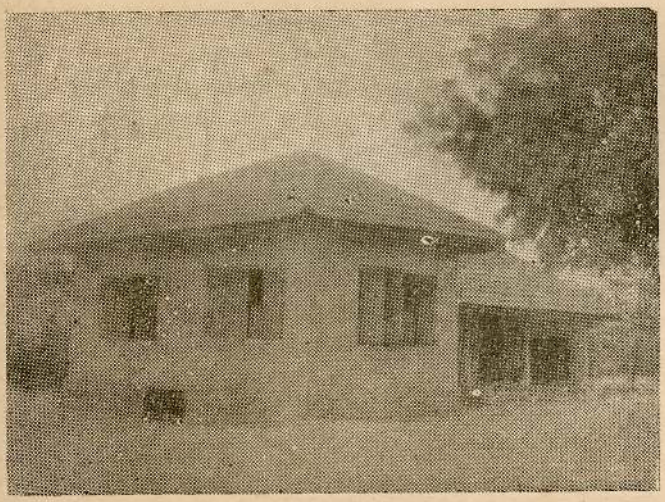
In the Eastern Province the Rt. Rev. A. Rollo Graham Campbell, Bishop of Colombo, dedicated the Chapel at Kiran on September 12th. In October, a second link with the Ecumenical Movement was forged, when the first sod for the East Asia House was cut by Mr. A. M. K. Cumaraswamy. The East Asia Christian Conference sent a contribution amounting to half the cost of this new house.

On 21st. December Mr. Cumaraswamy passed away unexpectedly due to a heart attack. With his death a great light passed out not merely from the Christian community of Jaffna but from the Christian community in Ceylon.

GUESTS

EAST ASIA HOUSE

J. SUBRAMANIAM LEWIS



SUSAN ILLAM

CHAPTER IV.

THE SIXTIES

With Confidence

BY **1960,** a new confidence came into the hearts of those who cherished the interests of the Ashram. The Ashram had come into being in 1939, and therefore, during this year it came of age. The Annual Report presented on May, 31, 1960, recalled the small procession that had walked into the shed serving as the Chapel on May 20, 1939. Hearts were therefore filled with gratitude to God for all His mercies through the years. In June this year Selvaretnam went abroad for about 6 months. He functioned as Chaplain at the Study Conference of the World Student Christian Federation at Strassbourg in July and visited other countries including Holland, where he called on Queen Wilhelmina. In America he took part in the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the American Board.

Back here there was an event of great importance in the life of the Ashram. After some negotiations between the Ashram and the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India, it was decided that I. T. Yesusahayam and Sam Alfred were to receive Holy Orders. The stipulation that the Diocese laid down was that they should normally exercise the functions of the ordained ministry only in the Ashram, as long as they were in the geographical area of the Diocese. Navaly Church to which both the ordinands belonged attained to its centenary in 1960; and therefore, it was thought best that the ordination should take place at Navaly. Both were ordained Deacons on the morning of 27th August. The Church celebrated the event with great fanfare.

The year **1961** was one of great activity in the Ashram. Early in the year a regular intercessory meeting for the sick was established to take place every Friday evening. Basil Rebera (born 25-9-1935) and Kathiresu Jebaratnam (born 15-9-1934) were both initiated as Sevaka Apedshakans on January 13th, and May 21st, respectively. Basil comes from Dehiwela and is a member of the Church of Ceylon. He had had his education at St. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. Soon after his initiation he left for New Zealand for a year's Theological Study; and since he

came back, has been a potent influence in the Ashram in many departments. Jebaratnam comes from Karainagar out of a Hindu home and had his education at Mann's School, Uduvil.

The East Asia House begun in 1959, was now ready for occupation. Besides the generous gift of the East Asia Christian Conference, many others had contributed towards the cost of building it. It was opened on 18th, February by the Rev. Victor Hayward, the Research Secretary of the International Missionary Council. Photographs of Uncle Lewis, Mr. A. M. K. Cumaraswamy, Mrs. J. M. Ayadurai of Araly and Mrs. Subramaniam (Selvaretnam's mother) were hung on the walls. This house now enables the Ashram to receive visitors from abroad without any qualms, though such visitors have to confine themselves to vegetarian diet during their stay. At Kiran, in the Eastern Province " The Sadhu Sundar Singh Madam," in memory of the great Indian Christian saint, was opened on September, 9th. It is meant to serve as a library cum guest - house. At the Ashram on Saturday, 4th November, " Susan Illam " built in memory of Mrs. J. C. Handy, who had passed away the previous year, was opened. The Rev. C. N. V. Fernando of the Bible Society preached the sermon and Mrs. K. A. Kandiah, a sister of Mrs. Handy, declared the building open. " Susan Illam " is an extension of " Balusthan ", built by Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Handy in memory of their son, and opened in January, 1941.

In November 1961, the World Council of Churches had its Third Assembly in New Delhi. The event had more than one effect upon us. In the first place, it was natural that many of the delegates going to Delhi and passing through Ceylon should call at the Ashram. The visit of so many delegates within a short period impressed upon every one the worldwide nature of the Christian Church. The second effect was more intimate. Selvaretnam, who was getting ready to attend the World Council of Churches Assembly meeting, tumbled from his motor cycle between Maruthanamadam and Chunnakam and had to be in bed, first in the Hospital and later in the Ashram for some weeks. Soon after the Delhi Assembly, a Seminar was held in the Ashram from 12th to 16th December on the theme " Christ's Ministry to the World ", employing the services of some World Council leaders. They were Dr. H. H. Wolf, Director of Bossey, Dr. Josef Hromadka of Czechoslovakia and Mrs. Kathleen Bliss of England.

On 6th February, **1962**, Yesusahayam left on a tour of the Malayan Churches for six months. He visited most of the important churches in all parts of Malaya and also Christian groups in several Rubber Estates. One of the great contributions he made was to get Tamil Malayan Christians used to the high and improved standard of Carnatic music and singing now prevailing in India. His ministrations were highly appreciated everywhere; and one tangible result of it was his acquisition of thirty pounds of additional personal weight. From March 23rd to 26th a consultation organised by the East Asia Christian Conference on the various Church Union Schemes now on the anvil in South East Asia took place. Leaders from the Churches concerned attended. The Ashram acted as host and full use was made of the East Asia House opened the previous year.

The presence of so many distinguished visitors provided a suitable opportunity to have a stone laying ceremony for a new building, called "The Octagon", the first sod for which had been cut by Dr. Jesudasan previously. The ceremony took place on Saturday 24th. Each of those who laid a stone was selected for his representative capacity. The following laid the stones: Dr. D. G. Moses, one of the Chairmen of the World Council of Churches, the Rt. Rev. Lakdasa de Mel of the Church of Ceylon, Bishop Kulandran of the Church of South India, the Rev. Fred de Silva, Chairman of the Methodist Church and the Rev. W. Wickremasinghe of the Baptist Church. Representatives of the Christian Teachers' Guild and the Swabasha Teachers also laid stones. Dr. Stanley Jones represented himself.

On Monday, 9th of July the Ashram gave a party to honour an old and dear friend, Bishop Lakdasa de Mel, who had been appointed Metropolitan of the Church of India, Burma, Pakistan and Ceylon. Dr. D. T. Niles presided. The following spoke: Bishop Kulandran, Mr. C. A. W. Edwards, Dr. G. N. R. Nathaniel and Selvaretnam. There was a large gathering present.

On 28th September at the Annual Festival of the Jaffna Diocesan Council, Yesusahayam and Sam Alfred were ordained Presbyters. Harold Goodchild who had already been ordained Deacon when he joined the Ashram (after some months in the Colombo Divinity School) was ordained to the priesthood by the Bishop of Colombo at the Cathedral Church in

Colombo, on December 23rd. There are, therefore, now four ordained ministers connected with the Ashram.

"The Octagon" was completed in December; and on Christmas day was opened by the Rev. Telfer Mook, Asia Secretary of the United Church Board for World Ministries, which had contributed substantially to the building. The dedication was done by the Rt. Rev. S. Kulandran. Both the inside and outside of "The Octagon" embodies many subtle points of symbolism, which will be explained to the inquirer by Selvaretnam. "The Octagon" now serves as a common venue for conferences and meetings of all kinds.

On the 4th and 5th of January, **1963**, Dr. Walter Marshall Horton, the famous American Theologian, led a seminar on "Theology in the 20th Century". Those who attended were able to get a first hand knowledge of the various theological movements of modern times and took an intelligent part in the discussion.

On 19th June this year, the Jaffna Christian Union held a meeting and a tea party at the Ashram in honour of the Rt. Rev. Lakshman Wickremasinghe, the new Bishop of Kurunegala. Bishop Kulandran presided; and Mr. J. G. Arasaratnam and Fr. Jeevaratnam, O. M. I. of St. Patrick's College spoke. When the main communities of Ceylon have been artificially divided by politicians, functions such as these come as a welcome relief. On our Anniversary day on August 21st, Harold Goodchild, was initiated Sevak. By this time a study on the Book of Psalms, started on a small scale in 1962, had begun to attract a good deal of attention; and a group of 35 people were able to listen appreciatively week after week on Monday evenings to Dr. D. T. Niles, an expert on the subject, expounding it.

In September, the Ashram had the privilege of playing host to one of its benefactors. The Working Committee of the East Asia Christian Conference of the World Council of Churches decided to make the Ashram the venue for its meeting from the 15th to 18th. Perhaps the fact that Dr. D. T. Niles is General Secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference had something to do with the decision. About thirty delegates were present and Bishop E. C. Sobrapena of the Philipines presided It was inspiring to see representatives of the Church from all

the corners of Southern and Eastern Asia, as well as from countries beyond like Australia and New Zealand, gathered in our midst. Bishop Sobrapena preached at the Ashram Chapel on the evening of Sunday 15th.

In January **1964** the Unity Week observed by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike throughout the world, was marked at the Ashram by a pleasant function on the 25th. There was a meeting held in "The Octagon" presided over by Bishop Kulandran, at which Bishop Emilianuspillai, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Jaffna, spoke on the Vatican Council; and Dr. D. T. Niles spoke on the points at issue between the Catholics and Protestants. There was a large attendance of both Roman Catholics and Protestants. The meeting opened the eyes of many to the fact that these two divisions of the Christian Church, in spite of their differences, have still much in common.

On February 4th a meeting was held to observe the centenary of the death of Vedanayaga Sastriyar, the great Christian poet of Tamilnad. The meeting was presided over by Bishop Kulandran. The Rev. D. R. Ambalavanar and the late Mr. K. P. Muthiah spoke on the life and work of the poet; and Mr. and Mrs. Anandanayagam and their choir sang some of his lyrics. The same event was celebrated at Kiran two weeks later. On that day an extension to the Kiran Chapel and a belfry, the gift of Mrs. Pillai, in memory of Mr. Pillai, were also blessed.

In March the Ashram yielded to the request of the Bishop of Colombo to let Rev. Harold Goodchild go to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa, as Chaplain for six months. Basil Rebera too got permission to help the Christian Workers' Fellowship in Colombo for a period of two years. This meant that Sam. Alfred and I. T. Yesusahayam had to look after the work in the Eastern Province, while Selvaretnam and Jebaratnam looked after the work in the Ashram.

An Assessment

The Ashram now completes twenty-five years of existence. From small beginnings the Ashram has grown and spread its arms over two Provinces. It may be said to have established itself well and truly, and to have found a place in the Christian life of the country. It is

therefore legitimate to examine its general character in relation to similar institutions, the nature of the impact it has made on the community and its place in the Church.

The Ashram, as was pointed out at the outset, is an ancient Indian Institution. The idea of the monastery which may to some extent correspond to it is also quite old in the Roman Catholic Church. Anything like either is new in Evangelical Christianity. The Ashram, therefore in its new environment will have similarities and dissimilarities with both at various points. What are they?

The ancient Ashrams had emphasised teaching. The Guru and the Sishya lived together; the guru taught and the disciple learnt. In this matter our Ashram resembles the monastery in that the emphasis is on common worship. However, in the monastery the member becomes annonymous, while in the ancient Ashram, on the other hand, the Guru and the Sishyas remained distinct and are often mentioned by name in the Upanishads. Here our Ashram resembles its ancient Indian counterpart and not the monastery. On the other hand, both the monastery and the ancient Ashram ignored the world. The monks were often so absorbed with the cultivation of piety that they left the world alone; the ancient Ashram went much further and denied the world, often declaring its very existence to be illusory. Our Ashram however, takes a very different attitude. It identifies itself with the world on the oft repeated principle, now current in ecumenical circles, that the Incarnation was a secular event.

What has been the impact of our Ashram on the community? This impact has been made in different ways. It is their cumulative effect that has gained for the Ashram the place it now holds. In the first place, the impact has been that of the different Sevaks of the Ashram. Selvaretnam, Yesusahayam, and Sam Alfred have been trusted spiritual leaders in the life of the community. These men have gone out among people and are known and resorted to for advice in many matters. In the second place, the Ashram itself has come to be recognised during the last 25 years as a place where holy and devoted men spend their time in prayer and in thinking about how they can help others. Even people who have criticisms about the Church feel that such criticisms are

out of place in regard to the Ashram. The knowledge that there is a place where religion and service to others are the only preoccupations has been a great inspiration.

Because of such recognition common to all Christians in Jaffna, it is natural that the Ashram should have become a meeting ground of Christians of all denominations. The Jaffna Christian Union was set up more than 50 years ago to be an unofficial co-ordinating body for the various denominations. It has been sometimes active and sometimes highly inactive; but even when it was active it could be an unofficial co-ordinator only in an official or impersonal way; that is, through Committees, Conferences and Conventions. The Ashram has co-ordinated Churches in a more intimate and personal way.

However, it is not merely the individuals or the institution in itself that have made the impact but also the actual activities of the Ashram. The Ashram carries on evangelistic meetings, organises studies, conducts retreats (in and outside the Ashram) and such programmes as Whitsun Festivals, Christmas and Easter Bhajans; and Selvaretnam acts as an unofficial Chaplain in many activities, which do not come under any denomination, as at the T. B. Sanatorium and at the Government Training College at Palaly.

The ancient Indian Ashram was a purely individualistic affair. The relationship of the monastery to the Church is clearly defined in the Roman Catholic Church. Among us the Ashram movement is new; so the relationship is not defined. Since our conception is not rigidly defined as in the Roman Catholic Church, the situation gives more scope to the Ashram. No Christian movement can be outside the Church; but the Ashram does not come under any particular ecclesiastical body. However, the Ashram looks upon itself as fulfilling an essential task of the Church, which Protestantism may not carry out officially, but which must certainly be carried out.

The Future

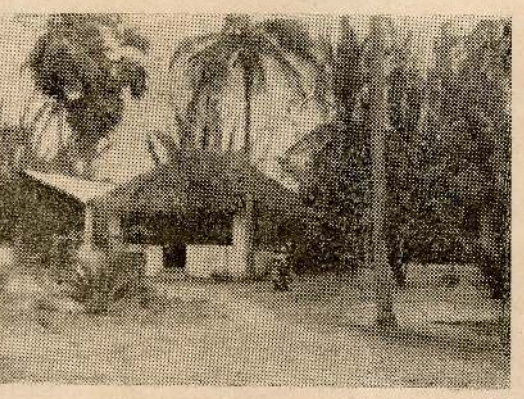
It might be said that the business of history is with the past; and that the task of speaking about the future belongs to prophecy. But prophets are few in number now-a-days. Because of that, however, the

historian is not entitled to assume the mantle of the prophet. Because he has looked at the past and recorded the things that have happened, he may not attempt to map out the things that have not happened. He may, however, look into the future, as any one who has not even looked at the past; and he may, because he has looked at the past, express a hope and a faith. The people of Israel always took courage, when they remembered what the Lord had done for them in the past.

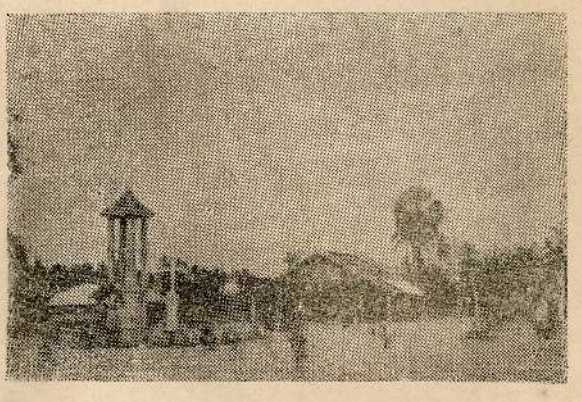
When a few people gathered together in the evening of May 20th twenty-five years ago, no one knew how things would shape, what response the enterprise would evoke from the community and how useful it would prove. Looking back over the last twenty-five years, it can be seen how the Lord has worked; how many helpers He has raised; how many miracles He has worked; and above all how He has used His servants.

Therefore, as one looks into the future, it may be permitted to express a hope and a faith that He will continue His working with us and through us, so that His name may be glorified. Our prayer is not that the Ashram should achieve what we want it to achieve but that it should, so far as it can, attempt what God wants it to attempt.

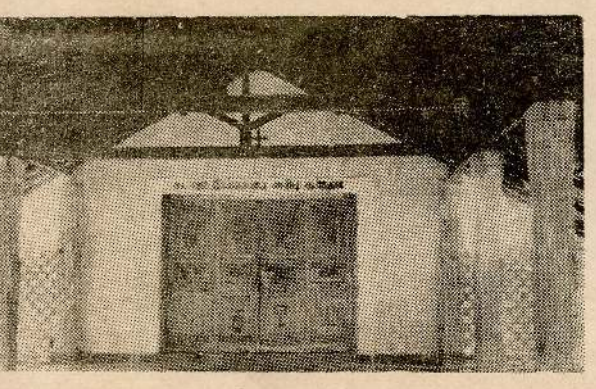
ASHRAM AT KIRAN

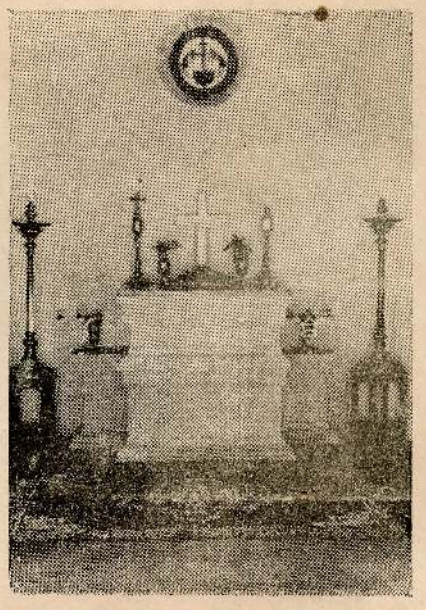


ADAIKKALA GIRI



JEBALAYAM (CHAPEL)





THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

REV. S. S. SELVARETNAM

HOW do you live? "By Faith", I once used to say. It is a long time since I have added to that, "I live by Faith in the Faithfulness of God". Yes, "The Faithfulness of God", those operative words that give meaning to life, that make life worth living, that sum up for me, my life. To live by faith in the faithfulness of God is an exciting experience, a call to adventure with God and it is to this supreme call that I wish to testify.

During the early days of the Ashram, we had someone to help us with the cooking, because our taking turns in the kitchen was not sufficient to preserve the little rations we received during the war. One fine morning the lad came to me to find what we must have for the day and to my question what was there, he answered bravely 'Nothing'. I pulled out all the resources that were available in my purse and gathered hardly enough for one man. It was to care for about ten of us. I gave him the money to buy some tapioca and boil it for lunch. 'For dinner?' he queried and I told him to pray even as I had to pray. A couple of hours later he brought in the mails and five out of the six letters had money to take care of us for two weeks, of all the ten of us. The Lord knew the previous day what I did not know even that morning and He provided. This is just one of the many experiences of that type. One night after everyone had gone to sleep, I sat and kept asking myself the question, "Will He who had provided till now, keep doing so all the time?". The question was silly, because He had never failed. Two hours had passed by and I realised how silly I was and retired after asking forgiveness for this doubt. The next morning a friend called in and told his story to Uncle Lewis who was there when I had gone out somewhere, "Last night Sir, I could not sleep till midnight. I kept rolling on my bed and something kept prompting me, 'Give some money to the Ashram'." He left behind a fifty rupee note. The Lord had to meet not merely my 'faith', but even my 'faithlessness'.

Those who had seen our small beginnings, started off with a generous gift from the Methodist Church out of the Restarick Memorial Fund to buy the first piece of land and a donation of rupees five from

Rev. H. Bullough, an old Principal of my school days, will not merely know, but see the Mighty Hand of God at work, proving true the words, 'Where He guides, He also provides'. The many buildings in the Ashram and the expansion into the Veddha Work and in the Branch Ashram and the day to day life with its needs will speak this word; but I must hasten to say also that to live by the Faithfulness of God is to live both by the 'YES' as well as the 'NO' of God. The 'Yes' is as exciting and thrilling as the 'No' of God. A very educative lesson I learned happened at some time early in the life of the Ashram when I attended a 'Harvest Festival' in South India. In the tent provided in the market place, small groups of Christians from several villages brought in their offerings, thank-offerings to God for all He had done for them. They were called 'vowed gifts', because the supplicants had promised God a thank-offering with their requests. It was a long queue and tiring experience listening to a story of a man who had promised fifty cents because his cow was ill and he had 'vowed' fifty cents and the cow had recovered and now he brought the thank-offering. This was the story in that long queue till a young man and woman with a baby in arms laid the biggest offering and my deceitful heart said, 'big bargain'. He told the story of the vow of one rupee for a child who was ill. I should have known the rest of the story, but to my question, he answered, 'My child died'. He saw how confused I was and asked me, 'Sir, if my child dies, should I not bring my thank-offering to God?' I asked for God's pardon. He knows to live by faith in the faithfulness of God, the glorious sufficiency of God.

The history of the Ashram is not a story of victories. It can be only a Chronicle of failures. It has been so in several areas of our life and work. The Faithfulness of God has been in all these circumstances and we make bold to say: 'Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory.' One of our main concerns has been to provide a home for converts and that turned out also to serve as a refuge for problem boys In this work we can be grateful to the many who came under the power of God and made good. I remember the young lad of 16 who came to me in the very early hours of the morning, having walked six miles and to tell me, "I have taken my life out of God's hands and I left home to end my life in front of a running train; I was afraid. Help me to find God." Through a long period of struggle he came through and we

are grateful to God. He leads a life of usefulness. Or the other story of another lad, even younger than the earlier one who came also almost driven away from home. Today he is in a position to help many go in the right path and is a blessing to many. But what about the many many more who never came right with God and have even got worse than when they came to us; and the many converts who stayed with us two and three years and lived in the worship life and discipline of the Ashram, but have failed to stay on with their Saviour? It is true we have often failed them; but God is a faithful God and we keep entrusting these lives into His Hands.

We lift our hearts in thanks-giving to God for the many who have shared in our life and work in several ways. But it was not as if everyone was a friend. We had our share of critics and those who opposed this work in some way or other. Several who had hoped to join us in the Ashram also fell by the way-side. As He guides us through these valleys, we know and can see His hand and His faithfulness in the 'yes' and 'no' and His sufficiency through all these things. He enables us to say we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

"Expect Great Things from God, Attempt Great Things for God," was the motto of the great Missionary, William Carey which we also took on. Earlier I have mentioned the small beginnings with a small Chapel shed and a little shed to live in; but as time has gone on we now have many buildings and can live in fairly greater comfort. It was true in other aspects too. Just two of us came in on May 1, 1939 to live there. A friend associated himself with us. The first left after an year to study in preparation to joining us, but "fell by the way side," and did not come back to us. We count now six, at the end of twenty-five years, four who have joined, taking their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and two waiting to do so in due course. But through these years of expansion in work with the taking over of work amongst the Veddhas, and the branch in the Eastern Province, it is His Hand, guiding and providing. True, we have not kept all who came, and that is why it is true, it is not our 'faithfulness,' but in spite of our 'faithlessness.' It is not a story of 25 years of our faithfulness and obedience that we can speak about — no, never! God has guided and provided in spite of it. We thank God for this group He had formed, we will trust Him for all that is to come. The 'timely' coming in of

Uncle Lewis has been mentioned in the History. We cannot thank God enough for him and his share in the story of the Ashram. Again at the right time, our beloved Canon Somasundaram who helped us out for a year. That the work needs many more is the cry that goes up daily from our hearts. God is good and He knows our needs. We have to learn to abide His time and wisdom.

The work of the Ashram is not what happens inside the premises nor our workers, those within. While we think of the many young homeless converts and unwanted ones who have gone out into the world to share in the world's life, and some in very high places too, the work of the Ashram was done by many faithful friends outside, who have prayed and supported us and had this concern in their hearts. I dare not mention any by name, but some of them who at the very outset, shared the vision, supported it in prayer day by day, and encouraged us, have now gone beyond the veil. Some of them who were original members of the first Board of Management, and who have now gone beyond, I must mention with thankfulness to God the Rev. R. C. P. Welch, Mr. W. D. Niles, Messrs. R. S. Edwards, S. T. Samuel, and Rev. J. T. Arulanantham. Rev. E. M. Weaver, the then Chairman of the North Ceylon Methodist Church was a great strength. It was in his house, we used to meet to discuss Constitution and Rule of Life and other matters concerning the Ashram, its site and so on. The following words of a great hymn found written on the wall constantly occurred to me:—

"For the drum beats of His army,
Are the heart beats of our love."

We thank God for them and for the many friends, praying friends, part of the great faithfulness of God.

Whenever I get a little time to myself, it happens during the quiet weekly mornings and the five quiet days a year, I wonder at the depths of God's care and love, at His dealing with me as He has done. through my many failures. That He could ever keep me in His Service surprises me and yet I see His faithfulness, in that He lays His strong hands upon me to bring me to the way He has planned for me. The words of the Psalmist, "For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, were true with a loving kindness and mercy with which He fills

our days, with the love that will make me say the hand of Him whose I am." Again and again I have been wayward but still in love He sought me.

Several times at Ashram Leaders' meetings in India, I have kept saying "Founders see visions, successors see buildings." There is a hard truth in that, but more important is it to say that it is a half truth and we must beware of getting hold of the wrong half. The fact is not that we see visions but visions are thrust on us. That is why Paul was able to say, 'I was not disobedient to that Heavenly vision.' The personal story of the Ashram from my side can be only that. That this crept coming upon me early in life the historian has explained. It was the strong hand of God that pursued me and guided me through ways which I could not understand at that time till much later on. Born to parents who belonged to the Anglican communion, brought up as a fully fledged Methodist, educated at Jaffna Central College, where I got to know intimately D. T. Niles, sent to Serampore College (Baptist) and finding my first task in the Congregational Church (then South India United Church and later Church of South India) where I was ordained to the Ministry, and then pushed by the Mighty Hands of God into the Ashram, is all in the faithfulness of God, for all these were to be used in this work for His glory.

It has been made out many times, both by friends and enemies, that the Ashram is a method of evangelism, a change of front. I would like to deny that very strongly. It is to me and to all who are in the Ashram Movement only a way of life, a response of love. That it incidentally breaks down barriers between us and others that makes the approach easier and able, we cannot deny. It has not strings, it has concerns and we take this opportunity of asking you for your prayers, that we remain faithful all the time and all the way.

We started out saying "Expect Great Things from God, Attempt Great Things for God." His faithfulness He has ever kept, but I have followed too often only at a distance. That is my sorrow and confession. Too often we have looked around on the ways and started sinking, but thank God His hands were near again to uphold. We said when we faltered or failed, underneath were His everlasting arms, strong and sufficient.

In Bengal, there is a musical instrument called the "Esraj," which has many strings, but the musician plays on only one steel string. The others are tuned so that for every note played on the one steel string, many vibrate and produce beautiful music. Dr. Tagore must have had that in his mind when he wrote the words:

> When all the strings of my life be tuned,
> O Master, then at the very touch of Thine,
> Will come out the music of Love.

IT IS ALL BY GRACE

REV. I. T. YESUSAHAYAM

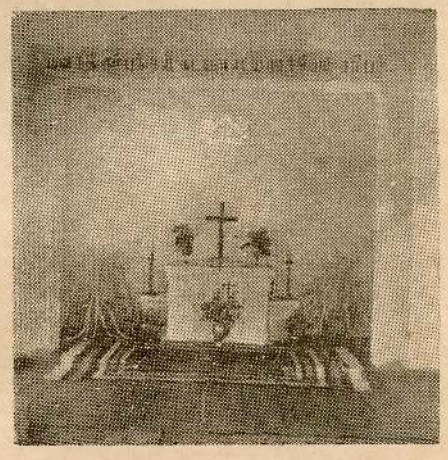
TWENTY-FIVE years of Ashram history is bound to be an inspiration to some and a disappointment to others. Everything and everyone has a history. But the history of a Christian man or a Christian community is essentially a demonstration of the strength and glory of God. It has been given to me to be closely associated with the Ashram from its beginning and to have been a member of it for twenty years.

No movement is accepted by all at its inception. This was true of the Ashram also. Some approved of it, while others disapproved. But through it all, the Grace of God has been constant.

There were times when there was not enough food at the Ashram, for many years we lacked comfortable housing, how often we were in want: but we were always blessed with happy singing, persistent prayer and ceaseless work. This is an experience which one can never forget. The ways of God are wonderful. They are also unpredictable.

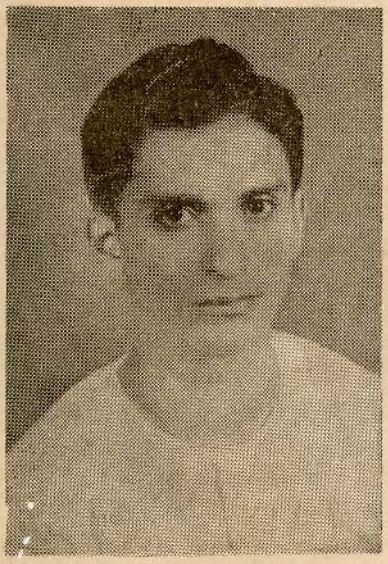
This is a good opportunity to say a word about Peria Annan Selvaretnam, both founder and the leader of the Ashram. He gets up at four o' clock in the morning and has a cold bath. He spends the next

JOTHI NILAYAM

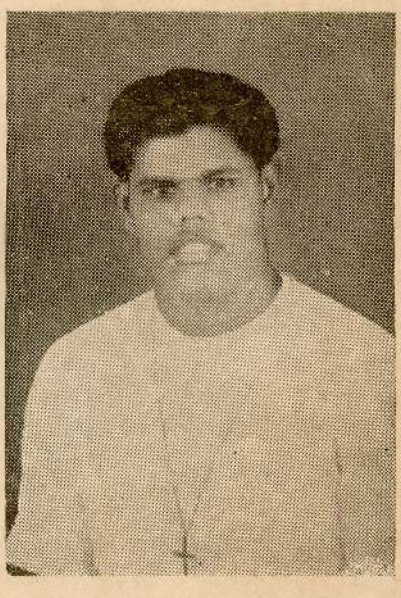


JEBALAYAM

SEVAKA MITHRANS



BASIL REBERA



KATHIRESU JEBARATNAM

hour in meditation of the word of God and prayer. At five o' clock he rings the Chapel bell, goes round the compound singing a song of praise, then goes to the Chapel to light the sanctuary lamp and waits ready for the community to gather for worship. A period of silence follows worship. From seven o' clock Peria Annan is waiting for the postman. When we wait for the postman, we wait for a letter from someone we know but Peria Annan is not expecting a letter from some particular person. He is waiting for the manifestations of God's grace as they come to him for the day, through the letters he receives. There may be a letter from a mother about a disobedient son ; there may be a letter from the principal about a student who has run away from the hostel ; there may be a letter bringing news of a husband and wife who have quarrelled ; a letter may come requesting that a particular marriage be arranged. Another letter may be a cry for help from someone in the grip of temptation or for prayer from someone who is seriously ill. There will be letters asking Peria Annan to preach somewhere. There will be also letters of gratitude to God for His gifts, bringing with them also an offering of thanksgiving. These letters are God's messages of grace. They are Peria Annan's concern. They bid him to pray ; they urge him to work. He must carry them all on his heart until something is done about each of them.

As we think of our Ashram friends, we thank God for all that He did for us through them. There was a day when we were not sure where the next meal was coming from, when an elderly farmer cultivating the neighbouring garden came to visit us with a cooked meal of tapioca. Another day it was almost noon and we were not sure from where our lunch was coming, when Mrs. Lawton arrived in a horse-carriage from Navaly with bread and fruit.

We needed a Church to worship in, we needed houses to live in, we needed a guest-house where guests could be welcomed, we needed a library, we needed a meeting hall, we needed means of transport and God provided them all. We prayed for the sick, the sad, the unreconciled, the quarrelling, and, God answered our prayers. We prayed for the workers both for the Church and the Ashram and God heard us. The words of Isaiah say better than I can say, what is in my mind, " Thou hast been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his

distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat ". As heat by the shade of a cloud so the song of the ruthless is stilled ". (Isaiah 25 : 4, 5,)

We read in the Gospels, the story of Jesus stilling the storm on the Sea of Galilee at the cry of His disciples. There were many that day who must have wondered at the suddenness with which the storm abated but only the disciples knew how and why it happened. The prayers of His children bring succour not only to them but to others. As it is written, " If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their hand ". (2 Chron. 7 ; 14).

God has given us many signs to show us that we are a people whose prayers are answered and through whom others are blessed. We have been sick, we have been broken in spirit, we have faced many dangers. There were incidents when wild animals chased us, when we have slept with snakes in the nights, when men poisoned our food ; when enemies attempted our lives ; when thieves stole our things, when floods destroyed our harvest, but through them all, and in the midst of them all, we found shelter in the arms of Christ.

As I think of the various ways of God's gracious dealings with us through all these twenty-five years, I find my heart filled with emotions which I can hardly control. " O for a thousand tongues to sing. my great Redeemer's praise ".

Some days ago, someone asked me whether the Christians of our neighbourhood give us enough support and help. I said " Yes ; they help gladly and well ". But I wondered since, whether this answer was true, As our Lord pointed out, during the period of famine, Elijah received help not from any of the women in Israel but from a widow in Sidon. There were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elijah but only Naaman the Syrian was healed. God sends help through the agents. He chooses. They are a blessing, who have been chosen to be a blessing.

God is good ; His mercy endures for ever.

THE INNER DISCIPLINE OF THE ASHRAM

REV. SAM. T. ALFRED

WHEN I write of the Inner Discipline of the Ashram, I do not merely mean the Rule of Life set out in "The Constitution and Disciplines of the Ashram" brochure, for that does not really embody the whole meaning and content of all that is implied in the phrase "The Inner Discipline of the Ashram". I am thinking of the discipline which makes the Ashram pulsate with the love of God, the discipline which moulds the Ashram into a community and which makes its members real, live instruments for God to use; the discipline born of, nurtured and sustained by, our love for God, and demanding our total response in Obedience and Service to Him.

In this article, I should like to convey to my readers some idea of what it means, and more particularly what it meant to me, to come under the Ashram discipline. It will be necessary to bear in mind that our Ashram is a Brotherhood or Community of those of us who confess with all our hearts that Jesus is the sole Lord of the world, that His Lordship is effective; of those of us who know, that whatever may happen, we are under the protection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are completely encompassed by His abounding Love. With that certainty we live together thus constituting a single fellowship, a new community born not of the flesh but of the Spirit — a community in which we all try visibly to manifest the life of our Lord in this world by disciplining ourselves to obey Him and to serve Him whom we love, for to love Him is to obey Him, to obey Him, is to serve Him.

In our fellowship in the Ashram, Obedience means two things — Obedience to God and Obedience to the Head of the Ashram or Prethama Sevak. Obedience to God is not something that one does by fits and starts; it is a continuous process ending only when death puts an end to life itself. It means a complete and total negation of Self. It is not enough for me just to be able to say I am with Christ, but my whole being must desire and long to cry out, "Not I but Christ": "Not my will but Thine, O Lord, be done". That is the sum total of obedience. In the practical day to day life in the Ashram, my obedience to God is reflected in my obedience to the Prethama Sevak. This is by no means easy, in fact,

it is very very difficult. Differences of opinion, clashes of interests, conflicts of personalities, common occurrences these in community life, have to be smoothed out. And so, here in the Ashram, we have to learn to try to control ourselves, to keep ourselves in check, in fact to rise above ourselves and conquer ourselves, not through our own unaided efforts but through our Obedience to Him who is our Lord. The visible sign of our victory over ourselves and our petty selfish interests is in our willing acceptance of, as final, the approval and decision of the Prethama Sevak. A most difficult thing to accept that I am wrong particularly at the start, but then, the more I grow in His Love and the more readily I learn to obey Him, the easier it is for me to realise my mistakes and follies, my out-bursts of temper and my non-co-operativeness. In policy matters relating to the Ashram, we pool our thoughts and resources together and arrive at some decision or other. Such decision or decisions do not become effective until finally approved by the Prethama Sevak. It is a way of doing things which is neither wholly democratic nor wholly totalitarian: there is no place in it either for diplomatic compromise or for abject servility.

There are three ways in which we discipline ourselves to obey and serve our Lord Jesus. The first way is through Worship. Each day for us, begins with early morning Worship and ends with Family Prayer at night. At early morning Worship, we dedicate ourselves anew every morning to God and ask for His guidance during the day; at night we recollect the day's events, give thanks to God for all that He has done for us, and commit ourselves as a family to God for the night. Early morning Worship involves early rising, which is not every one's cup of tea. Early rising, especially when one is not used to that sort of thing, can be difficult and irksome. It was so to me, but no longer now. Joint Bible Study, private devotional reading and study, private prayer and meditation, and quiet days demand self-examination, concentration and self-discipline — again hard and irksome for me at the out-set but as the days went by, they became for me sources of joy and strength, and more, they became for me a vital necessity. In fact, a life devoid of Worship and Study, of Meditation and Prayer would be a life without meaning.

The second way is through our training in Stewardship. We of the Ashram have to learn to be Stewards, jointly and severally, of all

that the Ashram receives and possesses. It is easy to be a Steward of other people's money and possessions but it is by no means pleasant to let other people be Stewards of your own possessions, or to renounce your right to your own possessions.

The third way is through Work, more particularly manual labour. Here again, it has been my experience that manual work is not an easy thing especially if one has done no manual work before. And then again a great deal depends on the type of manual work that one is called upon to do. However hard or heavy the work may be, I no longer find the tasks that I am called upon to do, irksome or disagreeable because I have learnt in the Ashram a great truth, that no man need be ashamed to do his own work, to do for himself and by himself what he would normally have others do for him. Another important lesson that I have learnt in the Ashram is that I am not someone free from "the daily task, the common round" as it were. In doing my routine chores I have been able, not only to identify myself with the ordinary folk around me, but also to make them realise that I am one with them, that I am one of them and that living in the Ashram I have not cut myself away from the rest of the world, but that living like them I am able to understand and appreciate every day human problems all the better for living in the Ashram.

In our Hostel we have boys of various types who live with us. Yet in a way all of them fall within the discipline of the Ashram. Some fall within the discipline with some effort. Some accept the discipline, and a few rebel against the discipline.

Prayer times, quiet times are all observed by the boys also. They too worship with us and participate in the day to day life of the Ashram. A good number are school-going children whose lives are closely watched by their school-mates and their teachers. Their ups and downs are a matter of great concern to us. Some find it difficult to adjust themselves into the life of the Ashram, because of our discipline. We have had boys who were a great problem to us, but we thank God that when they step out into the world, the discipline and the life in the Ashram had been a source of strength and encouragement to them in their day to day life.

A few years ago, I had to bail out a boy at the request of a friend of mine. This boy was handed over by the Magistrate to be under the direct supervision of the Ashram. When he came close to the Ashram gates, he was reluctant to come in but with a certain amount of persuasion he came in. Within a few minutes he was a bit surprised by the way he was dealt with. There was no guard by his side to watch over him, he was just asked to mix up with the rest of the boys and be like one of them. This really made him to feel that something was wrong with him. After the case was over, he was asked to live with us under our direct supervision. This boy who had no scruples in life, started to take a new turn. He gave up all his evil habits, and began to lead a new life which really surprised his old pals. Within a short period he accepted Jesus as his Saviour and was baptised with the name Jeyaseelan. This lad had been working with a hundred workmen. One day he got electrocuted and died on the spot. Incidentally this was the first funeral in the Ashram. His fellow-workmen and his superiors, who attended the funeral service, all bore testimony to his life His fellow-workmen said, "We saw a difference in his life after this boy had become a Christian. He refused to go back to any of his old evil habits." And that funeral service was a real service of witness to the Master whom he had accepted as his Saviour. This is one of the many incidents that we had in our work among the boys, in the Ashram. A few who had been in the Ashram had accepted the call to be members of the Ashram.

Another group of people called volunteers also spend a good number of years with us. They too come under the same inner discipline of the Ashram. These volunteers come to test their life's vocation. As a result of their staying here, some have gone into the Church Ministry, some into secular life, and some into the Ashram life.

The Inner Discipline of the Ashram through its insistence and the value it places on Obedience, through its emphasis on the simple, almost austere life, through its training in Stewardship, through its accent on the dignity of human labour, and above all, through its denial of the concept of 'I and Mine,' had moulded, and will continue to mould, man complete, and in the image of God.

A WEEK-END AT THE ASHRAM

BALA GUNASEGARAM

Saturday evening 6 p. m. — The bell tolls the signal for prayer. The boys come in singly into the Chapel from different parts of the compound. Some have been at the well filling the tub, or washing clothes, while others have been at the mirror patting their hair into place. Then the Sevaks come in, all so different from one another, but called to serve God as a family. The people seat themselves on mats. The visitor seated on the concrete bench outside is struck by the simplicity of the scene. The peace and quietness of the place steals upon him. He experiences an unexplicable inner happiness and knows that the factors of time and place, the wind whistling through the tall trees, the music from the Chapel are all a part of his happiness.

Saturday evening 7 p. m. — Dinner gong. A sudden rush of feet. Noise of tin plates scraping against the concrete floor. Peri Annan bustling across from his hut with a parcel tucked under his arm. Is it special food or vaddai for all of us? (usually it's both). Grace. Here we go, a simple, sometimes not so wholesome meal. Nonetheless the meals are part of the "magic" of the place!

Saturday evening 9 p. m. — Family gathering at the Prethama Sevak's hut. A time for talking, for joking, for settling quarrels, for planning the next day's work. It is also a time of realisation. Realisation of God's love as reflected in the Sevak's attitude towards a brother's sin. There is indeed much to learn at these gatherings. The meeting closes with a prayer; the prayer closes with the words:

> "Bless the Lord O my soul,
> Bless the Lord O my soul
> And forget not all his benefits",

We seek our night's rest with a thankful heart and a quiet mind.

Sunday morning 5 a. m. — Have you ever had the experience of being awakened by birds twittering outside your window? Sunday morning at the Ashram is a loftier experience. A Sevak's voice (thank God, they

all sing well) approaching and receding from your window, re-approaching and re-receding is an experience in itself. Anyway it's a jolly fine way of being awakened in the morning.

Sunday 6 a. m. to 6 p. m. — Morning prayers, Breakfast, Quiet-time, Noon - Intercessions, Lunch, Siesta, Private Discussion depending on the availability of Sevaks. Evening Prayers. The end of a week-end, of drawing apart, of renewal, of being strengthened to go forth into the world. May God bless the Ashram and its work.

APPENDIX

THIS appendix to the History of the Ashram is primarily intended not only to supplement the information, concerning the development of the Ashram work in the Eastern Province but also to bring a personal testimony.

I must begin with the mention of two names, Selvaretnam and Niles who as students at Jaffna Central College were joined together as friends and as Christian leaders among their fellow students. They were leaders in evangelistic work at Allaipiddy, Mankumban, Mandaitivu and several other places. After their college education and their theological training in India, both became pastors in their respective places. Mr. Niles was distinguished by his ability as a scholar, as an interpreter of the Bible and a preacher. Selvaretnam was distinguished by his piety, his faith and his service. But, even though they went their several ways, they remained together as friends in a common service to the one Lord.

It is often said that the school - day friendships end at the school gates but in the case of these two, it has not been so. Mr. Niles is a married man, while Selvaretnam has chosen celibacy; but they belong together in one service. They have sought through the years to obey the great commission to preach the Gospel to every nation.

During the 18th, 19th and the early part of the 20th century, the Christian religion spread from the West to the East. During the latter half of the 20th century, it was inevitable that with the birth of new nations in Asia, the Christian religion should put on an Asian dress. Drs. Yesudason and Paton who founded the Tiruppattur Ashram nearly fifty years ago showed that the Ashram Movement was part of this dress. Today, there are more than thirty Ashrams in India and Ceylon.

The Jaffna Ashram began on the 21st of August, 1939. Selvaretnam, its founder was a minister of the South India United Church. The land for the Ashram was purchased for it by the Methodist Church. The first guest - house of the Ashram was built for it by the Anglican Church. The Ashram belongs to the Churches.

In a brief history, the Rt. Rev. Dr. S. Kulandran, a very close friend of the Ashram throughout its life has sketched how the Ashram developed. This appendix refers particularly to the development of the work in the Eastern Province. The Ashram work in the Eastern Province was begun in April 1953 from the Methodist Parsonage at Kaluvankerni. The worker stationed at Kaluvankerni at that time was S. S. Karthigesu who had lived and worked at the Ashram for many years. The Ashram then moved to a new base — Vathipoddamadu — twenty - five miles from Kaluvankerni. Many villages in and around this place were regularly visited and served. Sevak Yesusahayam took charge of this work along with Ariaratnam in September 1953. There were many friends who helped to procure the land and establish the work at Vathipoddamadu. They must be remembered here with gratitude. They are: Mr. C. Thevarajan, Mr. C. T. R. Singham, Dr. G. Luther, Mr. E. Soundrarajan and the following residents of the place — Nagamany Podiyar and Manikkam Podiyar.

For two months, we lived in a little hut surrounded by thorns, frogs, rats and snakes, but God kept us. We dug a well and the hut was dedicated on October 31st, by the Chairman of the Methodist Church, Rev. S. G. Mendis. At this service, the place was named Jothi Nilayam.

Harold Goodchild, Basil Rebera and Sebaretnam Kathiresu have served at Jothi Nilayam from time to time. As the community which we served was a scattered one, a good part of our work consisted of visita-

tion - evangelism. Many also came to the Ashram for prayer and medical help when they were ill. Many of those who came were Muslims. Our medical ability was small but God gave healing to many in a wonderful way. We cultivated paddy land and here Brother Samuel who was an inmate of the Ashram has been of great help.

In June 1955, the Bishop of Colombo laid the foundation stone for a Chapel. The Chapel was to be a gift by Mrs. Wilfred Snell in memory of her husband. The Bishop in Jaffna of the Church of South India blessed the Chapel on the 28th of August. Dr. Forrester Paton of Tiruppattur was the Chief Speaker at this function.

It was soon obvious that if the work in the Eastern Province was to progress the Ashram should have a base in a more accessible place. This came to fulfilment in 1956, when with the help of Dr. Karthigesu we were able to buy 17½ acres of land at Kiran. The work at Kiran was dedicated by Dr. S. Yesudason. The well was dug in 1957 amidst opposition from many in the neighbourhood. The well, a gift of the Christians at Kallar. The foundation for the first house at Kiran was laid by Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Kunchukuddy who were the first Christians baptised at Kiran. The Rev. Ramanathan of the Anglican Church at Batticaloa blessed this house on the 8th of March, 1958. The house was named "Adaikkala Giri." This was because when the heavy floods came in December 1957, about fifty people found shelter in this building.

We experienced this shelter in a wonderful way again during the communal riots in May 1958. During this period, the people of the area were badly handled by the Army and on one night at three o'clock in the morning, the Army fired sixty rounds into the Ashram compound. It was a miracle that Goodchild, Kathiresu and Sundararaj who were sleeping in "Addaikkala Giri", escaped unhurt. The people of the place who had fled into the surrounding forest came back and gave God thanks for the lives that were saved.

On the 30th August, 1958, work was begun on the Church at Kiran. The foundation stone was laid by Mr. Arasoe Walton, the Magistrate. I want to quote here a part of his speech. He said:- " When Sinn Annan Yesusahayam came and asked me to lay the foundation stone

for this Chapel, I refused because I did not feel worthy to do it. Later on, it was the memory of an incident which made me write and accept. Last May, there was a murder committed in this village and I came to hold an inquest. At about 11 p, m., I was walking along this road with a friend, with a mind in turmoil, seeking to puzzle out the facts about the murder. I saw the little sanctuary lamp in the hut that served as the Chapel and I came in to pray and to find peace. I lay this foundation stone in order that this Chapel may be a place where many will find peace." The Chapel was dedicated in September 1959 by the Bishop of Colombo.

In October 1959, at a function held for the purpose, the following foundation stones were laid:- Mrs. A. A. Buell for the kitchen, and Mrs. Ponnammah Karthigesu, Mr. A. Arumugam and Mrs. S. A. Thambirajah for the Sadhu Sunder Singh Madam. The kitchen was opened on the 1st of January, 1961, by Mrs. Ratnasingham and the Sadhu Sunder Singh Madam was opened by Mrs. S. A. Selvanayagam in September 1961. In 1963, in memory of Mr. Moses Pillai, his wife and children gifted the Ashram with a bell and tower.

This short story is about the past. What the future holds we do not know, but it is in God's hands. What God has begun, He will continue to do.

I. T. YESUSAHAYAM.

THE ASHRAM FELLOWSHIP

There will be an Ashram Fellowship composed of members, men and women, who accept the following Rule of Life. A Retreat for members of the Fellowship will be held at the Ashram once a year.

1. **Devotional Life :**

Members of the Fellowship :

(*a*) will set apart time in the morning for Bible reading, meditation and private prayer. Part of this time shall be used in praying for other members of the Ashram Fellowship, It is suggested that about six a. m. would be a suitable time to remember each other in prayer.

(*b*) will set apart time regularly for family prayer.

(*c*) will set apart time at the close of each day for recollection of the day's events, thanksgiving, confession and committing oneself and others to God for the night.

(*d*) will be regular in their attendance at corporate worship on Sundays, and at the Lord's Table.

2. **Study :**

Members will undertake some definite systematic study of the Bible. An attempt must be made to read at least one serious book a month.

3. **Work :**

Every member must undertake some manual labour each day which, besides having its own advantages, helps to identify the members with the humble and lowly of the country.

4. **Simplicity of Living :**

Members will recognise that they are stewards of all that that they receive and possess. In keeping with the circumstances of their work they shall prepare a budget of their income and expenses including

what must be set apart for dependents. The rest they must pledge to the service of God and their neighbours. They will avoid all luxury, unwholesome amusements and thoughtless expenditure of money.

5. **Brotherhood:**

Members will recognise in every man the 'brother for whom Christ died'. They shall ignore all barriers of race or caste or social status, and shall treat all men equally. They shall promote peace and unity among different peoples and in the Church. They will live at peace at home and with their neighbours. They shall not resort lightly to litigation.

6. **Discipline:**

(*a*) One aspect of Christian fellowship which must be fostered is fellowship across denominational lines. It must be the concern of every member to seek opportunity to increase this fellowship.

(*b*) Serious attention must be paid to the personal discipline of the body, mind and soul. The Rule itself is a means of self-discipline and care must be taken to observe it on all points.

(*c*) Certain practices of regular discipline will be found to be important. These are — regular giving towards the work of the Church, an annual thanksgiving in some special form for special mercies received in the course of one's life.

(*d*) It is expected that members of the Fellowship will participate in the life of and events in the Ashram.

(Statement drawn up at an open conference of 'friends' of the Ashram, and received by the Board of Management at the meeting held on the Fourteenth of March, 1962.)

Those intending to join this Fellowship will give their names to one of the Ashram Members.

THE ASHRAM COMMUNITY

There will be two Orders in the Ashram Community.

1. **The First Order :**

Stages :

(i) Sevaka Mithran

(ii) Sevaka Apedshakan

(iii) Sevak

(i) Sevaka Mithran :

A person shall have been a member of the Ashram Fellowship before he is considered for joining the Ashram Community. Before he can be admitted as a Sevaka Mithran he must have spent at least a period of three consecutive months in the Ashram. He must be a bachelor. If he believes that he can fit into the life of the Ashram Community he will express his desire to become a Sevaka Mithran to the Prethama Sevak. The Prethama Sevak will admit him to the Community at a normal Service of Prayer on any day at the Ashram. The Sevaka Mithran shall follow a Rule of Life prepared for him by the Prethama Sevak. A Sevaka Mithran will receive free board and lodging, but will provide his own clothes and his other expenses.

(ii) Sevaka Apedshakan :

It will be the responsibility of the Prethama Sevak, in fellowship with the Members of the Community, to suggest that one who is a Sevaka Mithran proceed to the second stage and become a Sevaka Apedshakan. Nobody below eighteen years of age can be admitted as a Sevaka Apedshakan. The vow by which the Sevaka Apedshakan is bound is the vow of obedience. The Service of Dedication of a Sevaka Apedshakan will be held as a public Service in the Ashram Chapel.

The dress of the Sevaka Apedshakan will be a white cassock and a white girdle. When wearing ordinary dress he will wear a silver

cross on a saffron string. He will receive board and lodging and other necessities of life at the discretion of the Prethama Sevak.

During this stage the Sevaka Apedshakan will test his life's vocation with the idea of joining the Ashram as a Sevak. If he feels sure of his vocation he will signify the same to the Prethama Sevak. The Prethama Sevak, in fellowship with the Members of the Community, will recommend him for acceptance by the Board and for induction as a Sevak.

(iii) Sevak :

A Sevak will take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience By poverty is meant a life of simplicity. To help every one to maintain this vow equally every Sevak is expected to resign all private income and property. By chastity is meant continuance in the unmarried state. Celibacy is placed as an ideal not because it is superior to the married life, but because the Ashram life is a vocation to which God calls some persons. By obedience is meant essentially to live in obedience to the will and plan of God. In the brotherhood, it means also obedience to the Prethama Sevak. These vows are intended as life vows, but at the end of every seven years' period a person may be released from his vows by the Ashram Community if he so desires. The Service of Dedi. cation of a Sevak will be held as a public Service in the Ashram Chapel.

The dress of a Sevak will be a white or saffron cassock, a saffron girdle and silver cross on a saffron string. The girdle will carry three knots to signify the three vows that have been taken.

Each Sevaka Apedshakan will devote at least two hours and each Sevak at least three hours each day for worship, devotional study and prayer. This time may be divided into three periods — morning, noon and evening. Each Sevaka Apedshakan and each Sevak will normally devote at least two hours each day for general reading and two hours for manual labour. He will devote at least half a day each week as a quiet day, using the time for devotional reading, prayer, and waiting upon God. He will devote at least one day every month for the same purpose, and two days every six months. A Sevak will devote, in addition, five days

every year for the same purpose. During these periods of quiet the rule of silence will be observed. Each Sevak will fast once a week.

This Rule of Life can be altered or modified at the discretion of the Prethama Sevak. Should it happen that the Members of the Community come to feel that one of their number should leave, then suitable action shall be taken by the Prethama Sevak.

Members of the First Order will meet for retreat once a year.

2. The Second Order

Stages:

(i) Ashrama Sahotharan

(ii) Ashrama Thondan

The Second Order is composed of persons who desire to be members of the Ashram Community, but who do not live in the Ashram.

(i) Ashrama Sahotharan

A person shall have been a member of the Ashram Fellowship before he is considered for joining the Ashram Community. Before he can be admitted as an Ashrama Sahotharan he must have spent at least a period of six weeks — not necessarily consecutive — in the Ashram. He must be a bechelor or a widower. If he believes that he can fit into the life of the Ashram Community he will express his desire to become an Ashrama Sahotharan to the Prethama Sevak. The decision to admit a person to this stage in the Second Order must be taken by the Prethama Sevak in fellowship with the Members of the Ashram Community. The vows by which an Ashrama Sahotharan is bound are the vows of openness to the Prethama Sevak and loyalty to the Ashram Community. The Service of Dedication of an Ashrama Sahotharan will be held as a public Service in the Church in which the person concerned normally worships. The badge of the Ashrama Sahotharan will be a wooden cross on a white string. An Ashrama Sahotharan will spend at least six weeks in the Ashram every year.

(ii) **Ashrama Thondan :**

After at least one year as an Ashrama Sahotharan a person may signify to the Prethama Sevak his desire to become an Ashrama Thondan. The Prethama Sevak, in fellowship with the Members of the Community, will recommend him for acceptance by the Board. In addition to the vows taken as an Ashrama Sahotharan, an Ashrama Thondan will take the vows of chasity and obedience. By chastity is meant for a bachelor — celibacy; and for a widower — the decision not to marry again. By obedience is meant essentially to live in obedience to the will and plan of God. In the Ashram Community, obedience for an Ashrama Thondan means also the willingness to seek the guidance of the Prethama Sevak in his major decisions with respect to occupation, income and expenditure, and demands on his time. The Service of Dedication of an Ashrama Thondan will be held as a public Service in the Ashram Chapel. The dress of the Ashrama Thondan will be a white cassock, a white girdle and a wooden cross on a white string An Ashrama Thondan will spend at least two months in the Ashram every year.

The Ashram Community will meet together at least for a whole week annually for the purpose of spiritual retreat, consultation and conference.

(Statement drawn up by the Members of the Ashram and received by the Board of Management at the meeting held on the Fourteenth of March, 1962.)