

[Diaspora](#)

Category : [February 1982](#)

Published by Anonymous on Feb. 02, 1982

Diaspora

The central purpose of The New Saivite World is to serve as an international forum for religious events of contemporary Saivism and the notable activities of individual Saivites. "Profile" addresses the latter part of this purpose. In this column The New Saivite world anticipates highlighting the religious efforts, activities and observations of many Sivathondar from many walks of life, from every country where the Saiva Samayam is found.

"Profile" is launched in this issue with an in-depth look at Sri K. Gnanasoorian, a devout and energetic Saivite of London, England. A scientist by profession, author, and respected family man, he is founder and President of the London Saiva Siddhanta Center and Sarvodya Seva Ashram. One of The New Saivite World's editors interviewed Sri Gnanasoorian at Himalayan Academy, in San Francisco, during his a two-week visit to the U.S.

A major purpose of his visit to this country was to gather research for an article on Saiva Siddhanta in the West. His study may mark the first time that Saivism's spread into the modern West will be objectively surveyed - by a born Saivite who is both familiar with traditional Saivism and the social patterns of the West. From this perspective, the article will be an unprecedented milestone. The U.S. trip also provided him a cherished opportunity to pilgrimage to three of the U.S.'s well-established temples.

"My work in my religion is the result of my own search to understand the meaning of life - writing things down to get a clearer perspective and to disseminate Saiva doctrine in the Western World," commented Sri K. Gnanasoorian while talking with an informal gathering of sadhaka and lay-students of Himalayan Academy. Speaking with both humility and candor, he was describing his service within Saivism. In simple terms, he is a dedicated Saiva missionary, Sri Gnanasoorian has been highly productive in his Sivathondu, and underlying the fruition of his work is an innate humility and love of God. In a later moment of the above mentioned

discussion he intimates, "Life is a thanksgiving from the moment we think we owe a thanksgiving to God. As Saint Appar said, 'It is bliss, bliss all the time since the beginning of that inner conviction to thank God.'"

To date, Sri Gnanasoorian has published two well-acclaimed books. *A Date With Destiny* is an exposition on Saiva Siddhanta blended with the author's personal philosophy of the spiritual life. This typical blending of tradition and personal application make it a unique presentation. A second work studies the Thiruvagam of Saint Manikkavacagar. He is currently working on a book on Saiva Siddhanta for reading-age children, which he foresees as a useful preparatory study for children for Book One of The San Marga Master Course. Additionally, Sri Gnanasoorian finds time to contribute articles to the London Tamil cultural magazine, *London Murasu* and publishes the *World Saiva News Bulletin* from his center in London. Speaking out for Saivism, whether it be through writing, an informal conversation or a formal lecture, is an important part of his life. He is an inspiring speaker with a knack for explaining the obtruse in clear terms. Gnanasoorian is looking forward to attending the World Hindu Conference being held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, January 22nd to the 26th. Responding to an invitation to speak at the conference himself, he has prepared a talk on "The Central Message of Saint Manikkavacagar." In his estimation, the World Hindu Conference will be one of the major events for Hinduism in the 1980's.

Clearly seeing the need for a vehicle to disseminate Saiva publications in the London area, Gnanasoorian founded the London Saiva Siddhanta Center a little over two years ago. Departing from the West's norm of broad, all-inclusive Hindu organizations, the Center is a pioneer institution in serving the needs of Saivites as a religious body. "It serves as a liaison and fulfills a need for publications. A way to get to the hearts of people throughout the world is the printed word." A major concern Gnanasoorian addresses himself to is the need for more published works on Saiva Siddhanta. He observed "The San Marga Master Course and Inspired Talks created by Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniaswami, and the sangam of swamis at Kauai Aadheenam are becoming known among Tamil Saivites in London. But, the task of education is an impressive one." He reports there are 30,000 Tamil Saivites in England, of which 10,000 are in London. "But only one-in-one hundred has heard of the name 'Tirumular', not to mention the philosophy." He finds that in England, Vedanta philosophy has become popularized - but without Saiva Siddhanta -and feels the picture is incomplete.

As Sri Gnanasoorian explained, his own interest in Saivism began to mature only in the last 10 years. Speaking movingly of his father, who was a close devotee of

Paramaguru Siva Yogaswami (A renowned Sat Guru of the Jaffna area in Sri Lanka), he told of how much he learned from him - a deeply religious man who would quote from Saint Tirumular in the evenings after dinner. "But I did not take full advantage of that great opportunity. Now I wish I had." Today, Sri Gnanasoorian dedicates all of his books to his late father. "We learned when we were three and four years old, 'There is no mantra higher than your father's word. There is no temple higher than your mother.'" Sri Gnanasoorian was born and raised in Alaveddy, Sri Lanka, just a mile from the Sri Subramuniya Ashram. As a boy, he attended the Kumbalavalai Ganesha Temple - the central Ganesha Temple in a string of seven crossing Alaveddy. In his young manhood, he received scholarships to study chemistry at the Royal College and the University of Ceylon, and then worked in quality control at the Government Industries Department. Later, again on a scholarship, he studied management in Malaysia. Eventually residing in England, he embarked on his present career as scientist in analytical chemistry at the local government level. He and his wife have raised one son and two daughters. His son, age 23, is a civil engineer. His eldest daughter, age 22, is employed in a bank, and his youngest daughter, age 18, is presently completing college.

Alaveddy has continued to be close to his heart. While living there, he served as Chairman of the Village Council. Although now living in London, the welfare of his fellow Tamils in Sri Lanka is of particular importance. He is especially watchful of Jaffna's youth. He observed, "The reason for the success of so many Tamils from the Jaffna/Alaveddy area is because there are more schools and schoolmasters there than any other area of comparable population density, and they are backed up by so many temples. There are eight Ganesha temples in Alaveddy alone." Nor has he forgotten the temple of his boyhood. Recently he sponsored a successful benefit in London to raise funds to create a water tank at the Alaveddy Kumbalavalai Ganesha Temple. The tank is to provide free water for devotees - particularly during the annual festival time when thousands come for the Ther (temple chariot) procession.

For some years now, Gnanasoorian has been throwing his enthusiasm and support into the three temple organizations in London, now at various stages of development. Between these three temple trusts, says Sri Gnanasoorian, over 1,000 Tamil Saivite families are represented.

In asking Gnanasoorian to comment on the state of Saivism in the West, he responded that he feels that it is in its very early stages. "Gurudeva (Sivaya Subramuniyaswami of Kauai Aadheenam) has given Saiva Siddhanta a global mission, whereas before all efforts were very localized, just to provide places for

small groups to conduct worship, marriage, and so forth." He sees the concepts of karma and reincarnation gradually taking hold, especially among the younger generations, many of whom are searching. Later in the interview, Sri Gnanasoorian spoke a little on some of his personal religious insights. Regarding the ego, "We are like the little statues on the gopuram. Each is straining hard, thinking he is supporting the gopuram and not being recognized for his hard work, when actually, the gopuram is supporting him...As Gurudeva has pointed out, a melon ripens in its own time from the inside out. I believe one must discover Truth for oneself. It cannot be shown by A to B, 'this is it.' Like the daughter about to be married, who asks her mother what this marriage experience is all about, and her mother replies, 'After tomorrow, once you have gone through it, you will know. As it unfolds, you will know it all.' And, once our spiritual unfoldment comes, as it inevitably will to each one, we have nothing to speak of, for, like the salt, we are dissolved in the ocean. Glory to Lord Siva. Glory to His Great Name. Glory to Him who does not depart from my heart, even for the twinkling of an eye."