

[A Tribute To the Late Founder Of Lanka's Nallai Aadheenam](#)

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Manicavasagar, Siva C. When Sri La Sri Swaminatha Thesiga Gnanasambanda Paramacharya Swamigal, affectionately known as Thambiran Swamigal, shed his mortal coils on the 10th of April, 1981, and attained Maha Samadhi, the Hindu world of Sri Lanka lost one of the towering personalities who personified all the graces inherent in the perennial philosophy of Sanatana Dharma.

Thambiran Swamigal was the only Head of a Hindu aadheenam indigenous to this island. He founded the only organization for the Hindus in Sri Lanka which resembles the Asgiriya and Malwatte Chapters of the Buddhists of this country. The Nallur Gnanasambanda Aadheenam, which he founded and sustained by dint of hard work was accepted by the traditional Hindu aadheenams of India as their only counterpart in Sri Lanka.

Thambiran Swamigal made it his life's task to establish this aadheenam for the Hindus of Sri Lanka. His success in this undertaking is a tribute to his sense of vision, his immense perseverance against insuperable odds and his organizational genius. The saga of the endeavors of the late Swami to set up this aadheenam, the travails the Swami underwent, the sacrifices which he cheerfully made can only be written in tears and recalled in anguish. It is a tragedy that even the Hindus of Sri Lanka - the vast majority of them - are not aware of the tremendous hardships and agonies the Swamiji underwent in order to accomplish this great work.

It is also a tribute to the late Swami that, with deep prescience of mind, he set his house in order well ahead of his passing away. He trained his heir-apparent so well that when the Swami passed away the lay dignitaries were able to witness the anointing and succession ceremony of the Swami's chief disciple, Somasundara Thambiran Swamigal, to the Aadheenam's throne to become the second Head of the Aadheenam. It was in keeping with aadheenam tradition which is not different from the concept of "The King is dead. Long Live the King!" that this successor was

installed - on the 19th of April, 1981, within 15 days of the passing away of the great man.

Swamiji was born a Brahmin under the sacred shadow of the Sivan Temple at Vannarponnai. After completing his education at the Hindu College, Jaffna, Swamiji started his life of service at the early age of 18. During his early days he did not betray any signs of the greatness that was to evolve around his person. But, at some point of time the Divine Hand touched him, and this transformed his entire personality.

Swamiji always had one talent (probably inherited from his grandfather, the famous Vidwan Brahmasiri Ganesha Iyer) which endeared him to all and sundry, and that was the talent to burst forth in musical discourses. He was in the line of the famous propagandists who adopted musical discourse as the medium to spread their religious message. The giving of religious discourses with musical accompaniment, with harmonium, violin, flute and cymbals has a hoary tradition in the Tamil world. In this way the spiritual message was administered in easy doses.

Swamiji always had a tremendous personality. And physically he resembled a statue carved in granite. When he decked himself in all his glory - with large rudraksha bead garlands' round his clean-shaven head, with gold-embossed rudraksha garlands covering his chest and with silk and shawl - he sometimes resembled the late Arumuga Navalar, and especially when the Holy Ash paste glistened on his forehead, upper limbs and torso. He possessed a sonorous voice and musical accomplishments of a very high order. He had a great fund of parables, anecdotes, stories and songs at his command. He had a prodigious memory and the faculty of instant recall. He used to intersperse his discourses with timely jokes, and people just loved to listen to him and sat entranced for hours lapping up the stories of the saints and the sages.

With the earnings he derived by giving these discourses the swami set about the audacious task of establishing and running an aadheenam in Sri Lanka. In India the aadheenams evolved over the centuries, and with copious assistance from kings and prince. But here, the Swami wanted to establish an aadheenam within a matter of a decade and without much assistance.

Swami, at some period of his activities as Mani Iyer, underwent a dimensional change. Though in the world, he ceased to be of the world. He developed spiritual traits which went to make him a living saint. He became a fountain of boundless compassion. By a curious mental process, he identified himself with the Hindu saints of old. Just a week before his passing away, he was undergoing severe stomach pains which reminded him of the suffering of the 7th century Saint Appar. He started marching to the tune of an invisible drummer. He chose to walk away from the beaten track and on the path trod by the saints of old. He lived in God. NAMASMARNAM was his breath of life. He perceived all happenings as part and parcel of a divine play. Even the agonies of his body were welcomed as divine dispensation. The constant need to work did not embitter him. He perceived the divine hand in all these and was content to labor without reward or recompense. We see the chaos that is all around us. He was able to perceive the mosaic in which even this "chaos" had a place.