

Chavakachcheri Church



By Our Jaffna Correspondent
Thaya Rajkumar (B.com Jaffna university)

Key producer market town celebrates a unique founding event

The Chavakachcheri Church of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (JDCSI) began its life as a wayside chapel during a time the only form of transport available was the bullock cart and what today is the A9 Highway, the Kandy Road was a mere track used mostly by farmers to bring their products to the second largest producers market on the peninsula, the largest being Chunnakam.

The rich landowners of that time used palanquins borne by a particular caste group to go from place to place but the rest walked great distances or traveled by the bullock carts.



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Chavakacheri got its name from its very brief historical connection through invasion during the 13th century. It was called Javakakotte, a Javanese Fort and later Chavakacheri, a Javanese settlement. Once this foreign control was overthrown, it developed into a rich agricultural area and a township developed as a major market surrounded by several satellite farm villages. They produced what this town had become famous for such as jak, mango, naval, eacham and pala fruits, coconuts and a wide variety of Palmyra products including mats and baskets. Paddy fields bloomed and flourished and produced high quality rice during the rainy season in the entire region.



Following the founding of several English schools and vernacular Tamil schools in Tellipallai, Vaddukoddai, Uduvil and Uduppiddy by the American Mission, an English School, the Driberg College, and several Tamil Schools were also founded in Chavakacheri by 1834 followed by nearby Usan a hamlet in Mirusuvil and later Nunavil, the three American Mission churches in the Thenmaradchy division. All these developed long before the A9 Highway was built linking Jaffna directly to Kandy and via Anuradhapura to Colombo. Until then the forms of transport between Colombo and Jaffna were palanquins, donkey backs and considerable walking in various places and all these through rich and luscious jungle country.

Jaffna Diocese

Jaffna Diocese

When the Chavakacheri chapel was founded it was another 70 years before the railway was built linking Jaffna with the rest of the country with Chavakacheri as one of the main railway stations. In other words the development of missionary work in Thenmaradchy went along with how this town prospered as a vital market town helped by a transport system that developed from scratch and an education service spearheaded by the missionaries.

On Saturday 10 April the Chavakacheri Church celebrated the 175th year of its founding appropriately as deserving of its unique tradition and equally as part of the family of the Jaffna Diocese as one of its main churches.

It has had its fair number of tragedies and the worst was how it was affected very badly during the civil war with the town where the church is situated badly mauled by aerial bombing. On December 30, 1993, the wife of the presbyter the Rev E N Lawrence was killed in an attack by the Sri Lanka Air Force that had believed that an LTTE brigade led by Colonel Kittu was holed up in the town.

Chavakacheri was also the home town of some of the leaders of the JDCSI and its predecessors such as the Saravanamutu, Yesuthason, Thiravianayagam, Hitchcock, John, Hunt, Eliezer, Sabapathipillai, Rajaratnam, Nalliah, Kandiah, Colporteur Chelliah and Subramaniam families. The last mission station of the Rev K S and Margery Jeyasingam was Chavakacheri and the Rev A C and Arul Thambirajah also served there before moving to Navajeevanam in Paranthan.

The founding of the Drieberg College also encouraged the local community to launch two major school ventures, the Chavakacheri Hindu Ladies College and Sangathanai Hindu College underlining the importance the Tamil community placed on education.

The anniversary event was conducted along with the celebration of Eucharist by the Bishop of the JDCSI, the Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah assisted by the presbyter of the church, the Rev K J W Devasagayam and the Rev E N Lawrence to whom this church has a very special meaning treasuring in beloved remembrance his wife who was killed by aerial bombing in the precincts.





It was also significant that the former JDCSI bishop, the Rt Rev Dr Subramaniam Jebanesan participated in it and the sermon was delivered by his brother, the Rev S N Sugunanandan who had specially traveled from Australia to attend this event. Soon after the service the Rev Mr. Sugunanandan unveiled the new name board of the church. A public function followed the service at which two books were released. The first one was "My Story" (En Kathai) by the Rt Rev Dr S Jebanesan and the other, the "History of Chavakcheri Church" from 1951 to 2010 which also has a first part from 1834 to 1951 written by the late father of Bishop Jebanesan and Rev Sugunanandan, the late Rev N Subramaniam.



The first copies of the books were received by the Reverends S N Sugunanandan, Inthradas Rajkumar, E N Lawrence and G Nadarajah Vice Principal of Jaffna College and Mrs Shiranee Mills Principal of Uduvil Girls College, Mrs Vimala Jebanesan, Messrs S R Jesupalan, Edward Arunthavaseelan, Army and Police Officers, Superintendent of Electrical Services, the Grama Sevaka and several members of the public. A review of Bishop Jebanesan's "My Story" was given by Mr J C Jeyaseelan, the Assistant Librarian of Jaffna College.

The function came to an end with a fellowship lunch at which over 200 people participated.

Melbourne**Edward Vejeyaratnam**

A bright idea with a great deal of generosity and concern for children in need and their families sparked off the beginning of a relationship of a Diaspora family in Melbourne, Australia with the work we are doing among the IDP families in the Wannu. This is an opportunity for every Diaspora family, wherever they are to turn their attention and interests towards the reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation of the devastated people of this region. The terror they suffered and the price they paid are horrendous and it is reported 100,000 children and young people are traumatized.

Edward Vejeyaratnam and his wife Nilani nee Tamyppappah approached our Melbourne friend Christy Thiagarajah and proposed they would love to celebrate a key event in their lives in a manner that will give them the greatest satisfaction and joy. It was Edward's 50th birthday and instead of having a "Happy Birthday" run of the mill party in their home Down Under, they thought it would be better to treat people in need especially children on that occasion.

Christy welcomed the suggestion and wished more people could do that and even more, as individual families and groups of several become involved in the enormous task in our hands to rehabilitate the people of the Wannu and also in other areas affected by the terrible civil war that lasted 30 years. Consequent to this and at the specific request of Edward and Nilani, his 50th birthday was celebrated at Kilinochchi Sunday April 21, soon after the morning service. The nature of the lunch that was served for 150 displaced people of whom nearly 50 were children was of the special kind with no bounds on whatever it was costing topped with delicious dessert too; only what the children loved best was served. If there were such factors as vibrations, the happy feelings of the children and their parents would have certainly conveyed rhythmic best wishes to Edward and Nilani and their dear ones, the vast distance in between immaterial.

While recording our gratitude to Edward, we wish him well with good health and a lot of joy and equally to his family. Edward is the son of Ariathan and a grandson of Post Master Suppiah of Chunnakam.

Sydney**Excellence honoured**

by Lyndal Irons :
New South Wales Synod of the Uniting Church



Around 400 people gathered in the Red Gum Function Centre, Wentworthville, to celebrate the ministry of the Rev. John Jegasothy on March 20.

Guests included the Rev. Niall Reid, Moderator of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT; Dr Mano Mohan, Chairperson, Australian Medical Aid Foundation; and Jorge Aroche, Executive Director of STARTTS (Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors).

The organising committee included many former refugees who have been helped by Mr Jegasothy and others admiring of his service to displaced people in Sri Lanka (1981 to 1986) and the asylum seekers and refugees who have come to Australia in the past 15 years. Dorothy MacIntyre, long-term friend and team leader of the celebration's organising committee, said she chose to help with Mr Jegasothy's work despite having plenty of her own because of his simple, unadulterated focus on service and his love of the Tamil people.

Dr Mahan said a common reaction for troubled Tamil youths finding their feet in Australia was a feeling of obligation to repay Mr Jegasothy's kindness with service to their new country.

"In the Rev. John Jegasothy I see a shepherd, a man who lives by his word," he said.

Speeches were interspersed with drama, dance and songs from Tamil culture and experience.

Mr Jegasothy will continue his ministry to the Tamil people in conjunction with his new placement at Rose Bay/Vauluse Uniting Church.

Toronto's Tamil Church bids farewell to Rev Isaac Selvaratnam

By Jesudason Atputharajah

A decade ago one of the popular pastors in Sri Lanka who was serving the Anglican Church but hailing from Jaffna's Church of South India traditions from his birth alighted on the Canadian scene to serve as minister of the Tamil Christian Church of Canada (TCCC) in Toronto. His wife followed him later.

Younger brother of the late Chinnannai, Sevak Yesusagayam, the Rev Isaac Selvaratnam with his spontaneous charm, smiling face and warmth emanating without doubt from deep down his heart became an instant success with his congregation who are from various traditions in Sri Lanka but united as one church in Canada.

The Rev Selvaratnam was an appropriate choice for this congregation and without wasting any time, he began to organize himself and his work to meet the various needs of his people both spiritual and their general welfare as new immigrants. He also introduced among his parishioners and others who needed a person of his gifts and commitment the TV and Home Ministry as well as regular Bible studies and the reach out programme for the neighbouring municipality of Brampton.

His sermons, short, crisp and focused sharply to the point were exceptional. Packed with witty anecdotes suitable to the occasion with healthy mischievous grins and short pauses, he would deliver his messages with facile and simplistic ease and make them register in our minds firmly. He gives a lot of fuel for thought and meditation through his sermons.

He is a very talented communicator who may have had many a career option and



it is said had he chosen the film world, India's famous comedian Nagesh may have taken second place to him. Fortunately, he took the right decision to serve God with his great talents.

The Rev Selvaratnam has now retired from his work with the TCCC and at his recent farewell function at the Milliken Methodist Church at Scarborough he talked about the need for a meditation centre and may very well pursue the suggestion made to him by his late colleague, the Rev Bobby Mather. With his ashram connections, he would be the ideal person to head such a project and bring it to realization.

The farewell function was also a welcome event to the new pastor of the TCCC, the Rev Samuel Vinson from the Methodist Church of Singapore. Many members of the TCCC spoke at the farewell and welcome function hailing the event as a landmark for the kind of maturity that this Tamil church has achieved during the decade the Rev Isaac Selvaratnam guided and shepherded them with his deep commitment to his faith, ability to connect easily with people, and impress on his parishioners that to be a good human being one must express his or talents with ease, wisdom and wit that permeates joy among all.

A fellowship lunch followed in the Parish Hall.

You have served the Lord faithfully

Jaffna Diocese

A classic of our times

Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah

AN INEXPRESSIBLE GRIEF:

The Rev John Bottomley's AN INEXPRESSIBLE GRIEF: The loss of voice to lament the grief and trauma of war-torn Sri Lanka" published by the Creative Ministries Network, St Kilda, Australia is certainly a classic of our times.

Rev. Bottomley is the chairperson of the Sri Lanka Partnership Project Committee which operates from Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. He participated as our guest at the 62nd Anniversary Festival of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (JDCSI) on the 2nd November 2009.



During his stay here, he conducted two workshops with our pastors and this report is an account of them which is unique in many ways. They express without an iota of doubt how the Reverend Bottomley must have wrestled with himself to understand the issues that contributed, as he has precisely said, to the inexpressible grief of the first line of leaders of the community at the very eye of the horrendous civil conflagration who had to face the grief and trauma of the people who had become innocent victims of a long drawn-out war.

The participants were our pastors who braved themselves remarkably to the demands that were made on them.

The first workshop quite appropriately focused on the ministries of our pastors where pastoral care is pivotal and fundamental to their calling. The second workshop went further and deeper on the challenges that demanded responding to the grief and trauma that totally overwhelmed the ministers, congregations and the community rendering them utterly at a loss.

There is no doubt the Rev. Bottomley has done a great deal of prior-preparation for these two workshops during his short stay among us and his compassionate nature to respond to the terrible nightmares the participant pastors faced, to some even in their own personal lives, is clearly evident.

It almost appeared that he had demanded God in his meditations to guide him to the crux of the matter and give him the strength and wisdom to use these two workshops to counsel our pastors to understand and appreciate that "when such challenges take us past our human limits, the God of mercy comes to give voice to the deep murmuring of our hearts," and the Rev. Bottomley was quite confident of it.

We are grateful for this intensely committed study based on the terrible experiences our pastors have undergone which they spontaneously shared at the workshops.

True to the way it was handled and the commitment of the Rev. Bottomley to assist and inspire our ministers, and indeed our community in its entirety, the report is not just about the painful realities only of what we all had to face, especially our pastors in their various parishes but also it energizes us with hope with the assurances in the scriptures of God's providential grace.

These two workshops, I must emphasize, were themselves an exceptional ministry the Rev. John Bottomley had come forward to share with our pastors and it becomes a document of great strength and inspiration to the community.

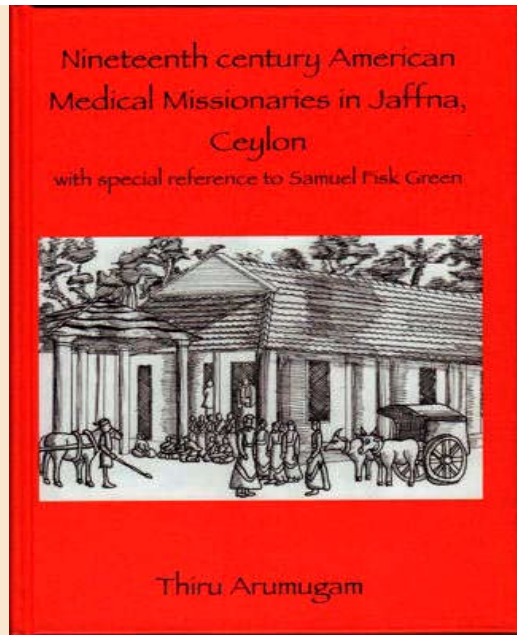
Thiru Arumugam's Nineteenth Century American Medical Missionaries in Jaffna, Ceylon

Bishop Thiagarajah highly recommends Thiru Arumugam's book

Reacting to Thiru Arumugam's Nineteenth century American Medical Missionaries in Jaffna, Ceylon, a highly delighted head of the JDCSI, the Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah said this colossal work was only possible for an author with a dedicated commitment especially to bring together so much information interwoven with the spirit of the mission. "I am marveled at the extent of the highly concentrated research that has gone into this work," he said.

"I consider this book as a priceless gift to generations to come of the Tamil community in particular reflecting the foundational factors that have helped it over the decades not only to have settled and stable life in Sri Lanka but in various parts of the world too. This is the kind of educational revolution that the early missionaries sparked with their unequivocal passion and zeal for service that in the first place inspired them to travel to strange lands to preach the gospel," observed Bishop Thiagarajah.

Author Thiru Arumugam, Bishop Thiagarajah said had a good understanding of how the American Ceylon Mission developed its work in Sri Lanka and in the process became a truly indigenous organization firstly as the South India United Church and later, the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India following the historic church union, and during the years of this transformation developed a fraternal relationship with the mission organization in the United States which itself had gone through various changes.



The author himself, Thiru Arumugam addressing the audience at the Thiru's book launch



First copy to Professor Indrapala.
He was Professor of History at Jaffna University

Bishop Thiagarajah has recommended that all libraries in Sri Lanka, the public, universities and the schools must have copies of this book and also suggested that public libraries in countries with considerable population of Sri Lankans should have this book in their reference collections.

He also expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India for Thiru Arumugam's contribution to the community and hoped it would be translated in Tamil and Sinhalese too.

A brief review by Victor Karunairajan in grateful appreciation for recording for posterity our indebtedness to missionaries with absolute dedication

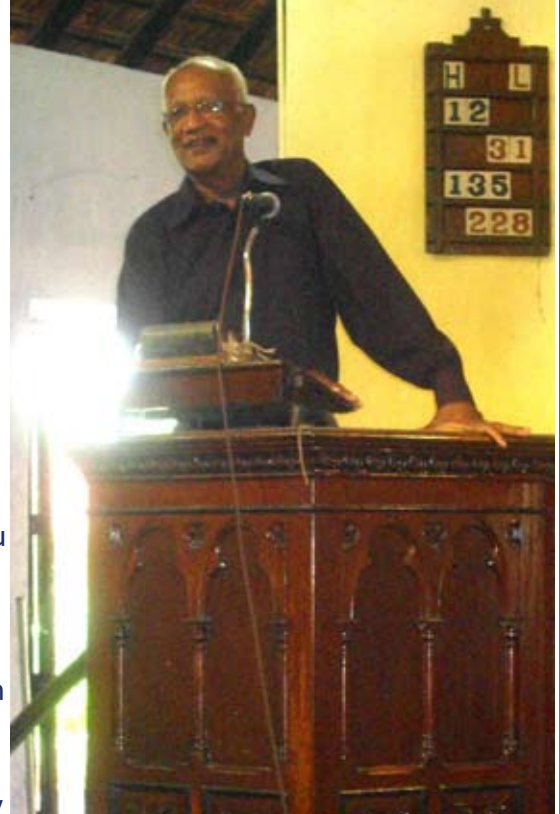
Retired Engineer Thiru Arumugam like his late father S Arumugam an engineer too, is a Hindu who has now made Australia his home. Following his father who made an excellent research-based study on Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka which was published some years ago, Thiru Arumugam has done the same as a unique testimony to the dedicated commitment of the 19th century medical missionaries specially focusing on the enormous contribution Dr Samuel Fisk Green made to medical science and service in Sri Lanka.

His late father's exceptional study on the Hindu Temples, quite a few jungle shrines he discovered in the Wannu, gave flesh and bones to what have been treated as legends with their meanings hardly understood. Near Chulipuram and in the vicinity of Victoria College in the Valigamam West is the "Kaakam Kothi Pillaiyar Temple" and how it got its name was a mystery for a long time. The truth evidently was that the Portuguese soldiers on the rampage of destruction of all Hindu Temples attracted the attraction of crows that were after their meat and bread that must have caught their noses. Watching how they can flock like in Alfred Hitchcock's terror movie, "The Birds" they must have fled for their lives and the temple escaped destruction.

Likewise the Mariamman Temple off Moolai Road in Vaddukodai got its name because the Portuguese soldiers were told that the female deity Amman was Mother Mary. His book is a must for those who wish to understand the historical origins and significance of the Hindu Temples and how they were ravaged by the Portuguese. His cyclone related interpretation that saved the temple at Nagercoil is great reading.

As much as his late father's contribution to our community, Thiru Arumugam's gift to us and for posterity is extraordinarily noteworthy and most remarkable. No other writer has recorded so many details about our early missionaries and what they had to overcome to realize their visions and commitment; even more the tremendous goodwill they mutually shared with the native people.

In recording the work of Dr Samuel Green who worked two terms in Sri Lanka but was denied the third for no known reasons, Thiru Arumugam has shown how this great medical officer dedicated himself to the science of medicine by using his expertise in western medicine to draw on our traditional medical knowledge and practice through the ages and bonded them in promoting them during his time. He not only translated medical books and pamphlets from English to Tamil but also from Tamil to English and examples of these are published in his book; I suspect for the first time ever by any author.



His immensity of the research and his integrity as an author recording such a historic book for posterity is seen in the extensive references he has made at the end of each chapter. The book is richly illustrated and added also is a select bibliographical list that can be very useful information to future writers as well as those who will want both, the Green Memorial Hospital and the McLeod Hospital brought back to its pristine glory and inspire a community that is struggling to re-awake after the enormous devastation of the horrendous civil war.



First copy to Samuel Arnold, a Manipay resident who has written a book on American Missionaries. Dr Green's hospital in Jaffna was at Manipay

It is also hoped that this contribution will inspire especially the medical persons, doctors and nurses, who were sponsored by the South India United Church and its successor, the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India to return to where they offered their commitment in the first place. In this respect too Thiru Arumugam's book could not have been timelier.

He has no doubt, as could be seen in his book, that the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India is the spontaneous and legitimate successor to the American Ceylon Mission and behooves the latter, especially at this time, to help rebuild the fine traditions sown on compatible grounds by the early missionaries and the rich bond that was established with the Hindu community.

We gratefully acknowledge the work of Thiru Arumugam, a unique gift to posterity.

Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia
**Fragrantly she blossomed;
 her life fruitfully planted**

Uduvil Girls school's oldest student

11 / 11 / 1907 - 05 / 04 / 2010

by Jayantha



Ruth Lee

Ruth Lee, beloved mother of Tan Sri Navaratnam of Malaysia and a loyal alumna of Uduvil Girls College which she held very close to her heart forever reminiscing her schooldays, her teachers and friends said her final "Amen" Monday April 5 in Malaysia having accounted creditably a useful, warm and compassionate life of four score and ten years. At the time of her death, she was the school's oldest student.

When she reconnected with her school, she felt a new lease of life and was most pleased. Uduvil was ingrained firmly in her heart. She leaves behind a lovely family both in Malaysia and Australia, friends in other countries and especially in Sri Lanka cherished by her children and grandchildren and their families with several great grand children to take pride in the life of a grand old lady.

When sweetness gathers fragrance, blooms, fruits, seeds and raises new plants God's creations express their bliss in no small way. We are grateful for the lives of people like Ruth Lee.



Canada

Frank seevaratnam
Canada

The CROSS IN THE POCKET

I carry a Cross in my pocket
A simple reminder to me
Of the fact that I am a Christian
No matter where I may be

This little Cross is no magic
Nor is it a good luck charm
It isn't meant to protect me
From every physical harm.

It's not for identification
For all the world to see
It's simply an understanding
Between my Saviour and me

When I put my hand in my pocket
To bring out a coin or key
The Cross is there to remind me
Of the price He paid for me

It reminds me, too, to be thankful
For my blessings day by day
And to strive to serve Him better
In all that I do and say

So I carry a Cross in my pocket
Reminding no one but me
That Jesus Christ is Lord of my life
If only I'll let Him be.

In This Resurrection Season



May the Christ who walks on wounded feet walk with you on the road.

May the Christ who serves with wounded hands stretch out your hands to serve.

May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart open your hearts to love.

May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,
and may everyone you meet

see the face of Christ in you. Amen

(An old Celtic prayer)

Canada

My Memories...

DR. PETER C. KULANAYAGAM

By Jesudason Atputharajah

Peter Kulanayagam who breathed his last on the 26th of March in Croydon, U.K was man highly charged with humane values. He passed out as a doctor from the Ceylon Medical College and then moved to the U.K. He also served at Ghana on a contract. Though born a Hindu, he got married to a Christian-the daughter of the late Rev. Welch of Uduvil. In 1960, he experienced a miraculous conversion to Christianity while following a course in chest diseases at Cardiff.

Even while practicing in Srilanka, he exhibited his respect for principles and human values. Hwe testified in a murder case where an eight year old girl had killed her call-girl mother. Being the family doctoir, he underlines the need for parents to set the right example. "Consistency, predictability and trust should prevail in parent-child relationship", he asserted. If the parents do not set the right standards, they cannot prevent them from becoming criminals. In the U.K, he had served as a prison doctor, helping and counselling prisoners to 'get back on track'. The doctor used to say that his religious life helped him to do his vocation successfully. He was a man who believed in prayer and he never ceased to pray until he dropped dead. In an account of his conversion he says, 'It was in the Easter season of 1960 that I had a personal experience meeting Jesus, the Risen Lord' in the role of a gardener....God moves in and around us in a mysterious way. God came to my help when I was in a distressed state of mind. On April second 1960, I surrendered my life to Jesus and accepted him as my Lord and my God." Ever since his conversion the doctor had grown up in faith and devotion to the Lord's

work. He was associated with the work of the Ashram at Maruthanamadam and he was a regular visitor th the Thirupattur Ashram at Tamil Nadu, India. He was also a supporter of the Navajeevanam-the rural development Christian project started by Sister Elizabeth Baker and Rev. A.C Thambirajah. His home in the U.K was used as the headquarters of the Navajeevanam.

In the U.K, Kulanayagam spent his retirement at his home at Scrublands, Croydon with his family. He was a regular churchman and spent his time taking his grandchildren to the nursery and then the school. He was also a devoted husband who looked after his wife who became sick after her trip to Srilanka. Kulam was a man of prayer and he looked for divine guidance at all times. He always used to say that his prayer life gave him confidence and also to remain happy and contented at all times. Age or semi-disabilty did not prevent him from doing good. He had travelled to London in the bus and the sub-way to help a friend's son who had problems with the immigration at the ripe old age of 85.

His funeral was held at the Baptist Church at Wimbledon Park Road, London on the sixth of April and there were his relatives and friends to grace the occasion. May God grant His eternal peace to Kulam who rejoiced in the blessings that the Almighty had bestowed upon him in his earthly abode.

Jaffna Diocese