

He that shall humble himself shall be exalted  
Matthew 23 : 12



## **Bishop Thiagarajah elected chairperson of the National Christian Council**

# Jaffna Diocese

**T**he Rt Rev Dr Daniel S Thiagarajah was unanimously elected the chairperson of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka at the Annual General Meeting held Saturday August 8 at the Colombo Diocese Conference Hall on the basis of the recommendations made by the Nomination Committee that held its meeting the previous day.

**M**rs Manel Nanayakara and the Rev Saman Perera were elected vice chairpersons and Mr Bertal Pinto-Jayawardena, the treasurer. The outgoing chairperson was the Rev W P Ebenezer Joseph, the president of the Methodist Conference of Sri Lanka.

**T**he National Christian Council founded in 1945 inherited an ecumenical heritage of ninety years having begun as the Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon in 1914 and at that time both Pakistan and Bangladesh were part of India. In other other words, the Christian Council embraced the whole of the sub-continent even before the League of Nations was founded which was in 1919 following the Treaty of Versailles.

**W**ith the quest for independence gathering momentum in the colonized world, equally the ecumenical movement making significant manifestations in various fields, the national bodies, today's predecessors came into existence in 1935. The forerunners of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka apart from the Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon were the Christian Council of Ceylon (1922), the Ceylon Representative Council of Missions (1920) and the All Ceylon Conference (1912).

**W**hat brought these churches together and the affiliated bodies was the commitment to affirm and confess our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, and to seek together to fulfill the common calling, to the glory of the Triune God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The vision of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) is to cooperate with God in the establishment of the reign of God on earth through ecumenical encounter and witness.

**T**he National Christian Council of Sri Lanka is affiliated with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. The members of the NCCSL are the heads of the following churches: Diocese of Colombo of the Church of Ceylon, Diocese of Kurunegala of the Church of Ceylon, Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India, Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya, The Salvation Army, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Presbytery of Lanka.

**T**he Ecumenical Organizations represented in the NCCSL are the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Student Christian Movement (SCM), the Ceylon Bible Society and the Christian Literature Society.

**A**t the Annual General Meeting the following five were elected to serve in the Ex-Co for 2009-2010: Messrs M.A. Sumanthiran (Methodist Church), Israel Paulraj (Church of Ceylon - Diocese of Colombo), R. L. (Dicky) Jurainsz (Presbytery of Lanka), The Rev. C.N. Jansz (Christian Reformed Church) and Mr. C.D. Chinnakone (Church of South India - Diocese of Jaffna).

**A**long with the Officers of the NCCSL and these five elected members, the Chairpersons of various Committees viz., Commission for Justice and Peace - Ms. Vijula Arulananthan, Evangelism and Renewal - Rev. J.G. Thiagarajah, Education - Mr. Harshan Perera, Development Commission - Mr. Vijeyakulasingham, Relief & Rehabilitation - Mr. Sugun Nevins, Women's Commission - Ms. B. Neelie Fernando, Community and Life - Ms. Sarah Arumugam, Theological Commission - Rev. K. Piyadasa, Ecumenical Relations - Mr. Ransiri Fernando) and Communications - Rev. Asiri P. Perera will also serve as members. Two more members will be co-opted at the first meeting of the Executive Committee.

**Jaffna Diocese**



# “We are no more a parochial church”

*Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah*

**B**ishop Daniel Thiagarajah's stirring sermon at the third anniversary of his bishopric // My bishopric anniversary coincides with the anniversary of Christa Seva Ashram, Maruthanam where my father was at the time of its establishment in 1939. I am happy to carry the name of Sevak Selvaratnam as my middle name. I also take pride in having DT Niles' first name Daniel as my first name; he baptized me at Vannarponnai Methodist Church," said the Rt Rev Dr Daniel S Thiagarajah delivering the sermon at the Service of Thanksgiving held at the Cathedral Church, Vaddukodai Friday August 21, to commemorate the third anniversary of his consecration as a Bishop of Church of Church of South India and as the fourth head of its Jaffna Diocese.

**I**n his opening lines, he said they were all gathered together with praise and thanksgiving "to give thanks to the Lord who guided us throughout the years; to thank Him for the establishment of this great mission, American Ceylon Mission in 1816; for the inauguration of the South Indian United Church (SIUC); and for the amalgamation of everything into the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (JDCSI) in 1947. Today, we gather very specially to give thanks to the Lord for sustaining the new Bishop and the diocese for three years in a remarkable way."

**H**e continued: "Over the last three years we have walked through rugged path and thorny places. But we always felt the protective hands of our Lord in our journey. Many obstacles came on our way but we were guided in such a way that we overcame those. Hence what can I say today?"

// I can only say with Paul: We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extra ordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in our bodies the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. II Cor. 4. 7-10.

// Or with the Psalmist, I may rejoice, "They confronted me in the day of my calamity; but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a broad place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me."

Referring to challenges along the way Bishop Thiagarajah said: "Friends, let us thank God, for He is good and His steadfast love endures forever. We had a journey for three years. Many marched forward with me. Some stumbled and retrieved, some went against and started many things against God's church and some tried to have a middle path by sitting on the wall. But many struggled through with us to stand firm in solidarity with the fourth Bishop to take the diocese into new spheres of mission

// Hitherto we were known as a Tamil church and in a way our ministry was confined to certain areas. But now we rejoice and thank God that God guided us to move into new and unknown areas to do something that was demanded of us either by the community or by the context. We are no longer a parochial church. We have the CSI presence in almost seven of the nine provinces.

// Do we not rejoice that God steered us from known to the unknown? Or from the 'comfortable compassionate work' to the 'daunting tasks' with full of challenges?"

The spirit of going out into the world could not have been more forcibly stated when Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah said: "Mission is "reaching out" to the people on the periphery or "making space" for others to find solace and comfort. Truly, we stretched ourselves to even touch the 'people affected by leprosy'; went miles and miles ahead to give meaningful existence and authentic selfhood to the 'people of Indian origin' in many estates in the Hill Country; found the 'gypsies' in a remote and unheard of village called 'Kanchirankudah' in the Amparai District, whose life patterns needed to be changed to be incorporated into the normal life; reached out to an isolated community at Ómadiyamadhu and reached out for the 'vulnerable' in the IDP camps to give them hope in the midst of adversity."

**M**aking very special reference to those stood shoulders to shoulders with him, Bishop Thiagarajah, said: "Friends, I thank God on this special day for your constant prayers and support during these three years. I thank my Saviour for those who stood by me and the diocese in all circumstances because they understood us. I thank God for those sincere and dedicated lawyers who out of sheer conviction for God's church, served the diocese without any fee to see justice prevailed and God's name glorified.

**//**I, being a student of New Testament, often find meaning in the words of Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, "for the sake of grace given unto me." Grace of God and human vocation cannot be separated. Reading this verse (15.15, dia tén charin) in Greek will reveal that when the preposition dia is followed by accusative it is translated as 'for the sake of'. This is the reason grace and vocation, for Paul, go hand in hand. It is not because of the grace given unto me, rather, it is for the sake of the grace given unto me. There is a basic difference between these two.

**//**In a way, I, as Bishop of JDCSI, do things for Him and for His people for the sake of what I am filled with, for the sake of what I am endowed with, for the sake of what I am empowered with."

**M**aking a pointed reference to the options before us, Bishop Thiagarajah said, "God's grace leads to discipleship. Discipleship reminds us that Christ is on the road with us." Quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the cost of discipleship as follows: "Only the man who follows the command of Jesus single-mindedly and unresistingly lets his yoke rest upon him, finds his burden easy and, under its gentle pressure, receives the power to persevere in the right way," Bishop Thiagarajah said: "the alternatives are not 'life without the word of Jesus will be easy' and 'life obeying Christ is hard'. Rather the options are 'without the word of Christ, we walk alone' and 'in obeying him, he is with us.'"

**M**aking a personal note of an experience Bishop Thiagarajah said: "This morning, after I finished my usual morning devotions in the early hours I started reading the scripture. I was interrupted by a message from India. It was the Archdeacon of Jaffna the Ven. S.P. Nesakumar who sent his wishes to me on this important day. Then, I wanted to go back to the Bible. The pages have already changed due to the blowing of the fan.

**//**I was awe-struck to see what was open before me. The verses have been already highlighted by me, perhaps some time ago. Why should these come to my attention today? Believe me! These are the words. They are from Psalm 20: "Now I thank that the LORD will help his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand. Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the LORD our God. They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright. Give victory to the king, O LORD; answer us when we call" (verses 6-9)"

**L**ooking at the year ahead, the Bishop asked: "What shall we say then as we go into another year with me as the Bishop? I will truly say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done."

**//**As I go into the fourth year of my bishopric, I thank my living Saviour for the mighty ways by which He guided me throughout the last three years against all odds. I clearly see the work of the Holy Spirit. I experience afresh how God supports and enhances His anointed. With all these new experience I humbly say, as Bonhoeffer said in his Sanctorem Communio, "Three great possibilities for acting positively for one another are disclosed in the communion of saints; renunciatory, active work for our neighbour; prayers of intercession; and lastly, the mutual granting of forgiveness of sins in God's name."

**C**oncluding his thanksgiving sermon and God's leadership of the church, Bishop Thiagarajah thanking God committed himself thus: "In prayer I receive; in serving I give; in being forgiven I am renewed; and in forgiving others I express the nature of Christ. I look to the hills. From where will my help come from? My help come from the LORD who made heaven and earth. Thanks be to God, my Creator. AMEN."

Raised in Jaffna – Reflections

## A night out experience for Chinnannai

*By Victor Karunairajan*

When one travels from north Sri Lanka to Kandy via Polgahawela Junction taking the Yal Devi that leaves Kankasanturai just after midday, arrival in a connecting train from Colombo at the hill station would be midnight.

Chinannai, the lovable singing saint from the Christa Seva Ashram in Maruthanamadam, who had friends in every nook and corner of the island and even beyond, normally took this train whenever he had to go to the University of Peredeniya. Apart from friends there, he also had a relative, a dean.

But as is typical of Chinannai he never caused any inconvenience to anybody, even to his relative by expecting to be met at the Kandy station or reaching any doorstep at an ungodly hour. Dedicated to a frugal lifestyle and willing to adjust to circumstances beyond most mortals, Chinannai found a place to pass the night in supine slumber and in exceptional company. He had found the chapel in the town's graveyard quite apt to meet his nocturnal needs. On one such occasion there happened to be a child-kidnapping scare in the hill town. The police were on the lookout for the loathsome culprit; their nightly vigils were most intense. Unfortunately for the ashram padre, a past midnight patrol of police posse passing by the graveyard noticed a saffron-robed man preparing himself to sleep on a concrete slab near the entrance to the chapel.

The excited police duo, known as costhas in slang dialect, alerted nearby night patrols and together they swooped on Chinannai who spoke no Sinhalese and arrested him as the 'billo' (childnapper). The costhas hardly spoke Tamil and virtually no English. Despite protests, he was taken to the Kandy Police Station where the Officer in Charge (OIC) was able to communicate with him in some English.

But he did not believe his story. When Chinannai said he knew a number of lecturers and even a dean at the university hardly three miles away, the police concluded he was not only a kidnapper but also an all-crazed-up-cuckoo.

Amidst this harrowing situation, Chinannai's typical smile never deserted him. Haughty and confident they thought they had grabbed the degraded demon of the dark, and pitiless to the feelings of the evening's victim, the police began to ridicule him as a stark staring screwball. Chinannai insisted they telephone his dean relative and gave them the telephone number; by now it was an hour past midnight. Making cynical remarks and jabbing the simple saffron-clad priest with verbal jeers in his insensitive 'Singlish', the OIC dialed the number. When it was answered, he stood up all attention and profuse salutations and said very apologetically that he was sorry to disturb him at such a time with his terrible dilemma.

When the dean asked him why and what was it about, the OIC said: "Sir, this Tamil guy here says he, your relative sir, but sir, he sleeping in Kandy cemetery. I think sir, this guy catching children. Kidnapping sir; we charge him for it sir."

The shocked dean asked the OIC for a description of the suspect and the moment he said he was dressed in saffron, grins and looked a crackpot, the dean told him he would be in the station in five minutes. He said nothing more.

The five minutes looked like five days for the town's policemen.. As for Chinannai he sat on a stool and happily but softly hummed a hymn of praise.

When the dean arrived he took the OIC aside for two minutes and when they got back to the duty room, the officer went on his knees and paid obeisance to this wonderful man from Jaffna; his staff followed suit. He was none other than the inimitable Sevak Yesusagayam who was affectionately Chinannai to everybody who knew him and the Christa Seva Ashram community.

Nirvana can be attained in strange circumstances even in a Sri Lankan Police Station and the enlightened one could be a Tamil; ask the Kandy Police. When he said goodbye to them Chinannai thanked the OIC for calling the dean on the telephone and the costhas for doing their job and wished they would soon catch the real culprit of the hill capital. One wonders whether they ever did!

As they left the police station, a couple of walls away, Rajah the lead elephant of the Sacred Temple of the Tooth, awakened from his sleep gave a low trumpet. The policemen thought it was a good omen for a new day. Kandy's prestigious status as a centre of Buddhist culture is all about awakening to the truth; that morning to the policemen at Kandy, Chinannai was perhaps a Bodhisavattva who came among them.

# Veeramamunivar

By

*Kandiah George Suhirtharatnasingam  
Melbourne Australia 2009*

**N**obili, who was known as “good teacher”, was followed by Father Beschi who was popularly known among scholars as Veeramamunivar. Both of them were Italians and scholars in the Italian and Latin languages. After arriving in Tamil Nadu, Beschi learned Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil and was very proficient in all three languages. His erudition excelled in the Tamil language. He acquired excellence in Tamil prose as well as in verse. Besides these, he studied the Hindustan and Parsee languages. He lived a hermit life and rendered great service to Tamil throughout his life.

**H**e changed his name to Veeramamunivar and lived like a Tamil in name, language, dress and culture, and showed himself a Tamil in all aspects of his life.

**H**e analysed the Tamil language and its script and found that the script was very complicated and wished to simplify it. His simplified version of the script was accepted by all and is in use even today.

**I**t was Veeramamunivar who compiled the first Tamil Dictionary. In ancient times there were “Nihandukal” (versified gloss of synonyms and meanings of words) in the Tamil language. A person who had memorised the ‘Nihandu’ only could give the meanings of difficult words. But it is the dictionary, which could easily give the meanings of words to all.



Veeramamunivar Statue at Marina Beach, Chennai

**T**he composition of the dictionary was the practice of the Europeans. The dictionary compiled by Veeramamunivar was called ‘Sathura-akaraathy’ (Square-dictionary). This is the first dictionary in Tamil.

**T**he prose version started by Nobili and the dictionary compiled by Veeramamunivar were important contributions, which brought significance and importance to Tamil.

**V**eeramamunivar is the author of the following poetical books which illustrate his thoughts in sweet and lucid words: Thembavani, Thirukaavaloor Kalambakam, Adaikalai Maalai, Kalivenpa and Annai Alunkal Anthaathy. The novels he wrote are: Vethiar Olukam, Vetha Vilakam, Pethamaruthal, Gnanam Unarthal, Thiruchabai Kanitham, Vaaman Kathai and Paramanantha Kuru Kathai. His book “Thon Nool Vilakam” is in pure Tamil grammar and explains clearly the five-fold grammar of the Tamil language. His book titled ‘Kodunthamil Ilakanam’ in Latin, is helpful for the Europeans to learn Tamil.

**T**he poems in his books Thembavani and Thirukaavaloor Kalampakam illustrate his scholarship and command of the Tamil language. Thembavani is an epic consisting of three main divisions, thirty-six chapters and three thousand six hundred and fifteen songs. This is a rare book containing great truths written in beautiful language. It is adopting the epic style of ‘Seevakasinthamani’, embracing the deep meanings of ‘Thirukural’ and the poetical sweetness and talent of Kamban.



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The poetical preface to this book written in sweet and meaningful words in praise of God is marvellous. Those who read the excellent books of Veeramamunivar can only wonder and praise how a European priest could have obtained such erudition and excellence to nurture the Tamil language and literature. He is worthy of being included with the renowned poets like Kamban and Ilango Adigal. One of the great Tamil scholars who studied the great epic 'Thembavani' and enjoyed its deep teachings remarked: "Those who read 'Thembavani' or heard it read would have felt God's word, given up worldly desires and evil habits and tasted heavenly bliss." Poet Yogi Suthananda Bharathiar, in one of his poems, has praised Veeramamunivar for the valuable contributions he rendered to Tamil and gave him equal status with Akathiar. In this poem, Bharathiar has mentioned that Veeramamunivar had given spicy aroma to Tamil.

Well known scholar and religious dignitary Thaninayagam has described 'Thembavani' as a reservoir of western and eastern scholastic cultures. Ellieser, who studied 'Thembavani' thoroughly, translated many of its poems to English so that the rest of the world may know its truths and beauty of expression.

Veeramamunivar who studied thoroughly and appreciated the type and style of poems known as 'Pirapanthangal' (one of the 100 kinds of poetic composition) wished to introduce them into Christian songs. He also wished to infuse life to Tamil. Due to this intense desire, he wrote another rare book titled 'Thirukaavalur Kalampakam'.

This pirapantham was sung in praise of the 'Adaikala Matha' of the Thirukaavaloor temple. 'Pirapantham' is a collection of one hundred poems depicting eighteen types of musical tunes in 'Anthathy' (a poem in which the last part of a stanza becomes the beginning part of the next) versions in Tamil. Even poets who compose epics will not venture to write 'pirapantham'. It is amazing that Veeramamunivar, a foreigner who had not spoken Tamil before arriving in Tamil Nadu, is the author of a beautiful and meaningful 'pirapantham'.

As we read this book we shall realize the ardent love and devotion he had for the mother (Mary) particularly from the spirit raising devotional songs he had composed in her name. "Shall I not shine like the moon and be an instrument that reflects the sanctity of the God Mother? Shall I not be born like the bee that sucks honey from the tresses, which resemble a fragrant flower garland, of this mother? Shall I not be. Shall I not be the soft, green grass of the Thirukaavaloor Park." This is the substance of one of the songs in this book. We can visualise and rejoice in the beautiful mixture of godliness and Tamil in these songs.

It is God's most precious gift that a European who came to Tamil Nadu at a time when there was no facility to learn Tamil, except by reading and writing on 'ola' manuscripts, was able to attain such distinction in Tamil, and was instrumental for its growth.

## Shanti was an epitome of peace and joy



Thursday July 2, 2009 Vaddukoddai paid an incredible tribute to one of its beloved daughters, Shantakumari Vigna Rajah nee Rajadurai, when she said her final amen and departed into glory. The Cathedral Church of the JDCSI where the service in celebration of her life and gratitude was held before the committal rites at the family memorial grounds was packed to capacity and many people who had traveled great distances to pay their tribute to her had to stand outside

A very popular student at Jaffna College where she was a role model student leader, she took to the committed profession of teaching and became a popular lecturer in the English Language Department of the University of Jaffna. Her marriage to RT Vigna Rajah who became a Judge of the High Court and the way they served the two great professions together through a very difficult period in the history of Sri Lanka when they could have opted for overseas pastures has been a mark of their commitment to the community.

People who attended her funeral in their hundreds came from all walks of life from the professionals, politicians, security services, university friends and colleagues and to those from various sectors of the Jaffna community who felt that here was a lady who has served her people well and was deserving of their tribute. In his tribute to her, the Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, recognized her humility and her leadership and her unshaken faith in her Creator. The entire service, spontaneously arranged bore the mark of Shanti's love for her fellow beings.

**We offer our heartfelt feelings of gratitude for her life, equally the sense of pain of her loss to her husband, children and their families and all her dear and near ones.**

**The pain will soon be departed and the joy she gave and shared will become a source of great strength and inspiration**

## Unique outreach mission in Akkaraipattu Special ministry conducted among Gypsies

We are pleased to receive reports from our Rev R S Uthayana Sharma and his wife Thamichelvi about their mission in the Akkaraipattu region where a church was established nine months ago at Aalayadivembu that serves 47 families with Sunday worship services and other activities.

This remarkable couple are themselves a great witness to the grace and love of God. Having been a strong non-believer in the Christian faith, today he carries God's ministry amidst challenging circumstances. Despite his background as his name itself indicates, he is carrying out the ministry supported most ably by his wife in a very needy place that demands intense commitment.

Apart from Sunday morning services, Sunday School ministries for children and young people are conducted in Kannahi puram (11 families), Vinayagapuram (6 families), and Sri Vallipuram, Kanchirankudah (47 families).



**Daniel Pakkiam**  
**Batticaloa**  
**News Correspondent**



**Rev.R.S.Sharma conducting the Sunday morning congregational worship**

The Sri Vallipuram ministry is conducted among the gypsy community that is unique in many ways. There are 76 families in this community and 47 of them became involved with the work of this ministry, participating in the worship services and also the activities of the Day Care provided to children on a special centre built by the JDCSI under the leadership of the Rev Sharma and his wife.

They are very talented group especially in community singing and speak three languages Tamil, Sinhalese and Telugu; perhaps their ancestry goes back to Andhra Pradesh in India or may have come to Sri Lanka along with the plantation workers.

**Sunday School ministries are conducted regularly and more than 45 kids take part actively in the expression of their faith in singing and praying.**



**The JDCSI mission has sponsored a day care center that is managed by two teachers. There are 36 Early Childhood Education children in this centre and 11 have already been upgraded to attend normal schools in the area. Rev Sharma indicated to us that these are new areas of work and we have to keep on assessing the need situations among these people and also counter problems like alcohol usage, street begging as if it's a traditional profession and also fortune telling.**

**This work though challenging is exiting in the sense, we work towards bring new hope to people enmeshed in certain evil and beliefs that have kept this community at the bottom of the social order, and worse, socially discriminated as well.**



## A parable of a hamlet called Paradesagamam

By Christy Richards from New York

**In Paradesagamam all citizens are bonded as one family; no child needs to fear any adult for in this community all children are special and all adults without any exception are the trustees of their wellbeing**

The Sinhalese call it Paradesagama ending with a vowel; the Tamils prefer a consonantal end for most of their proper nouns. But whether it ends in a vowel or a consonant it does not matter and that is not the point of this little story.

Paradesagamam is a little hamlet of some forty to fifty families situated somewhere in a traditional agricultural region. The people of this hamlet enjoy an idyllic life, each citizen and every family healthily interdependent on each other and carry out their communal duties and obligations as law-abiding citizens.

The head of this community is a chieftain and he faithfully carries out his duties.

Every morning when the first streaks of the sun's rays appear on the distant horizon, the birds of the air wake up from their slumber with their dawn chorus. They are followed by the moos and bleats of the livestock and the unique and peculiar sounds of other living beings. Finally, the human beings, the guardians of the earth so to say, stir up from their night's good rest. Another day has begun.

Once the morning's ritual from the physical to the spiritual completed, the farmers collect their implements and working animals and are soon on their way to the farms and fields. The others have their own duties and responsibilities and in the homes, the mothers tend their babies, the elders have their usual routine and by the time the sun is on the free archway in the heavens all life is active.

This is Paradesagamam because the people are good citizens, they work hard, they tend their lands, feed their livestock, take care of their children and elders and live a life of a community whose goals are its well being based on moral, ethical and spiritual values that are held high and in great veneration.

This story is a very simple one without any complexities, the needs of the people are minimal but they have a high degree of integrity and are led by a good chieftain. The land is managed and cultivated well, the environment is clean and nature life is plenty in the surrounds.

This place is heavenly and that's why it is called the Village of the Heavens, Paradesagamam. The important factor here is that the people lead a highly moral, ethical and spiritual life appreciative of the community's leadership and are helping each other in an interdependent activity.

The citizens are bonded as one family; no child needs to fear any adult for in this community all children are special and all adults without any exception are the trustees of their wellbeing.

What is important to note here is that God has blessed us abundantly and has showered us with facilities and opportunities to give our best towards the wellbeing of our community. He is the chieftain presiding over our needs and wellbeing and it is for us to praise him and be grateful. The best way to express this is to be good citizens, respect and honour our fellow human beings and all of God's creations and let moral, ethical and spiritual values impact our lives and guide us on our life's journey.



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## A community-spirited physician fired with dreams for Wannai

### A cyberspace interview of Dr T Gangatharan by Victor Karunairajan



I knew Dr Thiagarajah Gangatharan as a genial, friendly and a highly patients motivated physician when he was working at the Moolai Co-operative Hospital. He was a colleague and friend of Dr Soma Satkunarajah, both eventually ended up in Australia. They were too good for the community to loose but did they have a choice? That was the tragedy of our times but we see some fresh hopes on the horizon now and who better than Dr Gangatharan to interpret that to the JDCSI Newsletter.

Dr Gangatharan while he worked at the Moolai Co-operative Hospital for six years and later as Medical Superintendent of the Green Memorial Hospital for three years was known as the doctor with the magic touch. Not only he was known as an expert in diagnosis, many physical complaints and other afflictions seemed to have disappeared with his mere touch and many patients swore by it.

His magic touch was not confined to nerves and heartbeats only; he was an ace in playing the bamboo flute and was a specialist in Carnatic music. He said, music inspired him so much that he could identify even the slightest fault in the rhythm in the heartbeats. Perhaps, they had a tala range of their own that he was able to combine both in his diagnosis as well as playing pieces from the vast array of ragas and talas of Carnatic music.

Following his popular private practice in Jaffna after Moolai and Manipay, Dr Gangatharan and his family were among the thousands who were forced to march from various parts of Jaffna to Mullaithivu, November 1995. Fortunately, he had already established himself in the Wannai where he had been one of the middle class families who took to farming in the 1960s while practicing their professions as well. This was in a township called Wattapalai with hardly any medical facilities and the most the people could count there were the visiting Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPS).

He first worked in Mullaithivu and his wing where he handled many maternity cases quite a few of them Caesarean cases, was known as the Gangatharan Ward, an expression fo tribute to his work and his gracious and pleasant relationship with the patients.

“The people of Wannai need a great deal of sympathy, support and the best of medical help not just for physical ailments but a lot more fir the horrendous emotional trauma they have suffered, expressed Dr Gangatharan and added that places like Wattapallai are very much short in medical personnel, medical needs and support services.

Just about every region in the Wannai needs long time medical medical services provided through regular health clinics and what is even more important is an effectively sustained agricultural development supported by both formal and non-formal educational programmes.

“This is also the time for us especially those who have established ourselves well in countries like the US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan and Australia plan various kinds of volunteer services sharing their expertise with their people. Doctors and agriculturists are in great need.” The good doctor wants young and even young people to opt freely to help their folks in Sri Lanka. The Gangatharans have four children of whom two are in Sri Lanka and the others overseas.



## Prescription for the development of the Wannu

Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah writes to Professor Sathananthan



A recent meeting of Bishop Thiagarajah and Professor Sathananthan

Apropos the interests shown by Professor Sathananthan of Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah discussed with him a prescription for some aspects of development of the Wannu. Thanking the professor for his very positive interests in helping the people of the Wannu, Bishop Thiagarajah said the need situation stares in our face and several factors have to be brought together to realize it.

"As for ourselves, Bishop Thiagarajah said, "we have a School of Agriculture and a Technical Institute which comes under the Jaffna College complex, our educational partners with whom we have a unique partnership relationship.

"We have two farms, one in Varany and the other in the Wannu, the latter naturally needs to be brought back to its old state and then primed and prepared for what it could do in this war-devastated region. We have plans to train rural social workers who will become catalysts in development at the grass roots. What we really need to develop is a socio-economic task force consisting of various kinds of developers and educators – State, Cooperative, Private and individual so that even the people of the Wannu could be active participants in this development.."

Commenting on the development of livestock and responding particularly to what Professor Sathananthan had raised, Bishop Thiagarajah said: "The Wannu needs cattle, goats and chicken along with it supportive infrastructures that will help to develop breeds that are most suited for Sri Lanka, and equally supportive projects like stud centres, hatcheries and fodder plants ideal to be grown in various ways like boundary markers, road shades, backyard plants and vegetables and fruit trees.

"In fact what we are looking at is a complex interdependent system of livestock, fodder, companiate planting, reforestation, grazing lands and industrial activities including bio-digesters, compost systems, green manuring, appropriate agricultural implements manufacturing, milk and eggs collecting centres, and meat-processing and pasteurizing plants needed to support this complex industry."

According to Bishop Thiagarajah this will open up many employment opportunities as well.

Writing to Professor Sathananthan Bishop Thiagarajah emphasized, "I sincerely hope that my sharing of these views has been helpful and we can also help with some exploratory meetings and seminars to bring various minds together to seek a consensus of action. It will also be encouraging if groups interested in such action programmes among the Diaspora in the various countries will take the initiative to form action teams to help us at the need point in Sri Lanka.