

Srilasree Arumuga Naavalal - Group 4

"Tamil and Saivism are my two eyes; my duty is to protect and be enriched by both of them until the very end." Srilasree Arumuga Naavalal lived by these principles. He was born on 18th December 1822 in Nallur, Eelam. His mother's name was Sivagami. His father's name was Kandar.

In ancient times, all literature was written on Ola leaves, and transferring from Ola leaves on to paper was not an easy task. Arumuga Naavalal was the foremost among the pioneers who were able to perform this rare task. He is the one who laid the foundation for the great achievement of publishing Tamil literature.

From a young age, he became well-versed in languages, including Tamil, English and Sanskrit, and worked as a teacher at the Wesleyan Methodist Mission College in Jaffna. As requested by the college principal, he translated the Bible into Tamil. Later, after witnessing the radical conversion to Christianity that took place, he gave speeches highlighting the virtues of Saivism. He made publishing, and the work of spreading Saivism, his goals for the rest of his life. He composed, edited and published more than eighty poems in various genres, books on grammar, religious books and great epics.

Tamil prose was very difficult to understand before his time. It was Arumuga Naavalal who simplified it and introduced punctuation marks similar to the English language, so that the Tamil could more easily be understood. He is credited with writing many explanatory books on grammar and Saivism, especially for those who were new to reading Tamil books. Therefore, scholars praised him as the 'Father of Tamil Prose'.

Naavalal was unparalleled as an orator in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. Many who listened to his discourses gave up the bad habit of drinking alcohol. Even those who had recently converted to Christianity returned to Saivism!

He was a scholar of Tamil literature and grammar. A scholar of scriptures and Siva agamas. A thinker who did not forget the path of Lord Siva. A writer of books. A writer of essays. A publisher. A treasure of words. A man who did not live for himself. A devotee of ascetics. A man who did good deeds without accepting any reward.

The fact that he was the first to publish the Thirukkural Parimelazhaga text, and the fact that he converted the Periapuranam verses into more accessible prose, are proof of his greatness. His compositions - Saivavinavidai and Palapadam, are considered excellent religious guidance books. The name given to him by his parents was Arumugam. The Thiruvavaduthurai Aadheenam, recognised and admired his eloquence and honored him with the title of 'Naavalal'. He attained Moksham on 5th December 1879.

Arumuga Naavalal dedicated his entire life to Tamil and Saivism, saying: "தமிழ்க்குலம் உலகப்புகழ் எய்தத் தாழாது செய்யுங்கள் தொண்டு அது ஒன்றே எனக்குத் தமிழர் செய்யும் கைம்மாறு" "Do your best to make the Tamil community famous worldwide. That is the only reward that Tamils can give me."