

[Interview with G. Subramaniam](#)

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G. Subramuniam has been serving his fellow Hindus daily for 16 years. He is affectionately known throughout Malaysia as "Devaram Maniam," since he sings and teaches the hymns of Saivite Saints. He, Sundar (who interviewed him), and N.V. Ramam now conduct a class on Saivite Hinduism in their town of Sungei Petani. In three month's time, it grew from 15 to 68 students.

Q: Please tell us what you do, Devaram Maniam.

A: I give classes in devaram singing to young Hindus and train the best to take part in our annual nation-wide Thirumurai contest. I teach at 7 estates at any given time, from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. almost daily. I've trained about 600 fine singers since I began.

Q: How did you get started?

A: My father was very religious and first taught me devarams. I followed in his footsteps. Then I had two fine devaram gurus, the venerable Veeraya Thevar and Velu, both highly devoted Hindus. With their blessings I eventually became a national youth champion three times, in the years 1973, 1974 and 1975. I must mention the Malaysia Hindu Sangam who sponsor these contests and helped me tremendously in getting my work going. Now it is my turn to serve them as their regional secretary for the state of Kedah.

Q: Where do your finances come from?

A: All expenses are borne by myself and my neighbor and dedicated supporter, Mr. Shanta Kumar. He was actually born a Christian, but his heart is 100% Saivite.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

A: No stopping now. Like so many in our town, I was blessed to attend Sadhaka Kathiresan's classes. So now, I can also preach Saivism wherever I go. I am already starting to visit Saivites who are leaning toward other faiths and telling them of the greatness of their own religion. I am going to publish some of these teachings, which have given me the confidence and strength to continue my ministry. Armed with them, I can stop any Saivite I meet from converting. I am also going to use them to promote Hindu solidarity among all the sects and movements, starting with publishing some articles in the Malaysian Hindu Sangam Newsletter.

Q: Married people tend to fear missionary work thinking it will create problems in their family life. What is your advice?

A: Problems will arise no matter what you do on this earth. No one can avoid them. But remember that missionary work is one of the best ways for married people to accomplish their social dharma. It brings a lot of good things to married life - peace of mind, greater understanding, satisfaction of knowing you are good examples to the children which gives them a good start in being good citizens and religious people. Also it guarantees that the religion will still exist for them when they grow up. It's well worth the sacrifice.

Q: How do you stand in the Indian community as a result of your activities?

A: I've earned the nicknames "Devaram Maniam" and "Moral Maniam." That shows me what people think of me, and I am grateful. Even though my date of birth falls on the number 8 which is supposed to forecast failure, I have been spared. I am convinced this is a reward I have received from Lord Siva for performing my social dharma.