

[Singapore's Master of Song](#)

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Sri Lanka's great saint, Siva Yogaswami, closed his eyes and entered the riveting stillness of samadhi as Orthuvar Rajasckaran began to sing. A young boy quickly scampered out of the room and returned moments later with a cup of water. The boy knew what to do. This had happened before. Last time, the sage sat four hours without moving. Rajasckaran sang the whole time, and his throat got very dry.

As Orthuvar Rajasckaran gave HINDUISM TODAY a quick recounting of the history of his training and teaching as one of the all-too-few Tamil orthuvars alive today, his manner relaxed into a soft gentleness when he spoke of his cherished affiliation with the renowned Saiva saint of Lanka's Jaffna Peninsula. It seemed a touch of curious spiritual fate that he should now be working for The Hindu Centre of Singapore with some students whose guru, Gurudeva Sivaya Subramuniaswami, was himself a disciple of Siva Yogaswami. But that is only part of the Rajasckaran story.

An Orthuvar is a unique and highly trained musician who specializes in singing Devarams (Tamil devotional songs composed by the Saiva Saints Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar). Orthuvar Rajasckaran started his musical training at the age of ten at Chidambaram's Annamalai University where he studied Devarams and took classes in Sangeeta (traditional Indian musical training in ragam and talam). After training here for five years, he continued his education at Dharmapuram where he studied the various rites of Siva puja for six years. At this point, he blended a career as professional musician and teacher with on-going musical training and practice. He worked for All India Radio in Madras and took temporary teaching positions in homes, schools and temples of Madras, Sri Lanka, Fiji, and most recently in Singapore working for The Hindu Centre.

Orthuvar Rajasckaran is a strict traditionalist when it comes to his music. In his Devaram classes he carefully teaches the correct Painmurai (unique and complex melodic system developed only for singing of Devarams) so often not included in

such training.

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