

## [Publisher's Desk](#)

Category : [October 1990](#)

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Subramuniaswami, Sivaya

The Rev. Sri-la-Sri Sivananda Navaler of South Africa attained samadhi on August 15th. Any eulogy will fall short of the man and his life. Still, we join our brothers and sisters in Africa in tribute to a great our brothers and sisters in Africa in tribute to a great and selfless person. We on the HINDUISM TODAY editorial staff hear many things (Some would pay a fortune to read what we don't print), but we have never heard a single derogatory comment, negative word or criticism about this great soul in all the many years we have known him.

We first met in 1982, when Swami and a large following greeted me and two of my sannyasins at two o'clock in the morning at the Durban airport with banners and flowers as we arrived from New Delhi. During the three weeks we were with him, he bridged apartheid. It had no meaning for this soul living in Siva consciousness. He accelerated and amplified our own Siva consciousness by presenting a 4-foot-Square picture of Ardhanarisvara, like those worshipped in each of his 26 South African missions. Later the holy swami visited our California center and our Nataraja temple on the Garden Island of Kauai.

Swami Sivananda Navaler single-handedly mobilized a staunch band of swamis and teachers to do door-to-door visitation and spread the knowledge of Saivism, thwarting the conversion efforts of fundamental protestant aggression. Going from center to center with him, I marveled at the size of the modern buildings, the abundance of financial and human resources under his command, though he himself lived the simplest life and never took credit for any of these accomplishments. But for the Saiva Sithantha Sungum'a vast influence in that

nation, who knows what would have happened to Hinduism? All of the Sungam families were so disciplined, renowned for their mellifluous congregational singing, the joyous and affordable Sunday weddings, a genuine ministry that served the community, consoling the sick and the disconsolate, feeding the less fortunate.

Within an unassuming Swami Sivananda Navaler, the raging fire of Siva burned intensely, and his inner attainment could be judged by the unending accomplishments used it for one purpose - to uplift and educate others. Though no longer in physical form, we know he will continue his work vigorously through his successor in the magical natha way as he did while in earth consciousness. Hinduism needs 10,000 more like him to carry the torch, to reach into the villages, homes and hearts of Hindus. His passing turns the mind to reincarnation.

Swami Sivananda Navaler knew full well that we are not the body in which we live, but the immortal soul which inhabits one body after another on the earth during its evolutionary journey. Like the caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly, physical death is a most natural transition for the soul, never to be feared. The belief in reincarnation brings a great sense of peace. Knowing that the soul evolves from life to life gives a remarkable insight into the human condition and appreciation for all souls in all stages of spiritual development. When we die, we simply step out of the physical body. Consciousness is not born, nor does it ever perish. As the weaver-saint Tiruvalluvar said over 2,000 years ago, "Death is like falling asleep, and birth is like waking from that sleep."

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