

## In the memory of Jeevam Joseph

By

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At Last year's "Mike's Night", St. Michele's college OBA - North America honored our beloved Music legend of Batticaloa, Jeevam Joseph. According to the proverb "He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor". Late, Mr. Jeevam Joseph found life, prosperity and honor in this world. We are proud that we honored him, when he was with us in this world. His life journey is an example for the generations to come.

Jeevam Joseph was born in Batticaloa, Amirthakali. He had his early education at Kottamunai Maha Vidalayam and continued his studies at St. Michael's College, Batticaloa. He was influenced by his father Joseph Konamalai, a musical enthusiast who taught him how to play violin and harmonium at home. Mother Margret Joseph was a good singer and all his three brothers were talented singers and instrumentalists. Once he mentioned, whenever his elder brother late Dr. Ganapragasam, who was in our school band brings his clarinet and trumpet to practice at home, he would learn both instruments along with his brother. Therefore it's no doubt that he, not only was born into a musical family but music was in his blood since birth. In 1960's he and his brothers got together and formed a musical band called "Jeeva Ganam" which became the first Tamil band in Batticaloa. Apart from music, his contributions towards our Batticaloa stage dramas in the early 1960's were countless. He composed, played, performed in many musical dramas that caught the eyes of so many and heaped numerous awards including a national "Sakithiya Award" and he was the first to compose western music for "Nattu Koothu" in the history of Sri Lanka.

He marked so many milestones in our community; there is one that no one can erase. It's the song he composed "Meen magal padukiral ... vavi makal padukiral" the Batticaloa's anthem still rocking all over Batticaloa city and around the world on you tube. He also introduced multiple artists to the musical world like Vanaja Srinivasan, Nilamathi Pitchaiappa, Mahendran, Sujeeva, and Kohila Thevanayagam.

Once "Kaviger" Kasi Ananthan questioned him, why don't you go to India and study music? The question triggered him to go to India for further studies. Not only he did he study music at Annamalai University in India, he graduated with first class in 1971 and gained the name "Sangeetha Pooshanam". He was the first to achieve that honor in the history of Eastern province. He was multi-talented no doubt about it, but he was also talented enough to play more than 25 instruments. Once he played 16 instruments and he was named as "Pallissai Kurisil".

Jeevam Joseph soon after his higher studies became a music teacher at the Vantharu moolai Maha Vidalayam and thereafter at the Eravur Aligar Maha Vidalayam. In 1974 he started teaching at St. Michael's College, then became the school's Vice Principal and retired in 1977. In the history of St. Michael's College Western Band, his name cannot be forgotten. He stood like a pillar in making the school band well known in the country and made us one of the best by rewarding us with district and national awards. He created the first Tamil cultural band in the history of Sri Lanka. The secretary of Ministry of Education recognized him with a special merit award for this memorable contribution. As a dedicated Christian he composed and produced so many Christian songs. He has coached and mentored St. Sebastian Christian Band and Church Choirs.

He was also a great sculptor. He created the school founder Rev. Fr. Bonnel statue at the entrance of the college and also the "Thiruvalluvar" statue in the city of Batticaloa. In 1998, Government of Srilanka awarded "Kala Booshanam" award to honor his service to the country.

Sometimes, I think that if he was born in India he would have been a successful Music Director. We were fortunate that he was born in Batticaloa and provided his guidance and leadership to all of us who came in contact with him.

Now that Late Jeevam Joseph has filled up the measure of his years, now that the leaf has fallen to the ground as all leaves must fall, let us guard his memory as a precious inheritance, let us teach our children the story of his life, let us try to imitate his virtues, and endeavor as he did to leave the world freer, nobler, and better than we found it.