

## FACES OF LUTHERAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

### Gnanamuthu Jesudason

**Born:** June 11, 1872 in Kandy, Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka).

**Died:** November 2, 1955 in Madras (present-day Chennai), India.

**The first native Indian pastor in MELIM who represented a major shift in thinking about how Missouri Synod mission work was to be implemented.**



*G. Jesudason*

CHRIST SHOWED MERCY TO HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT GNANAMUTHU JESUDASON, the first native Indian pastor in MELIM, who represented a major shift in thinking about missions. He reached untouchable and slave castes, revolutionized the role of a native worker, and addressed ecclesiastical issues from a native perspective. Jesudason left the London Mission Society and Salvation Army and invited MELIM to join him in ministry to the completely ignored Sambavar slave caste in Travancore in 1907. Jesudason had a moderate education but was being trained by missionaries and worked as an Evangelist with a much larger role than any other native worker. Without a seminary in India, he was instructed one-on-one. Jesudason took his theological examination at the General Conference. He was approved and ordained on Mar. 13, 1921. For the majority of his career, he faithfully served the Ganesapuram congregation.

Rev. Jesudason worked with the Sambavar population. Because of the caste structure, most Sambavars had almost no education at all, making catechesis difficult. He therefore focused on the basics of sin and salvation in contrast to the religions of India. He further had to advocate for the Sambavars to the Mission Board when the board decided to shift missional strategies which would have left Sambavars behind.

Jesudason's legacy lies in how he paved the way for further native Indian pastors.

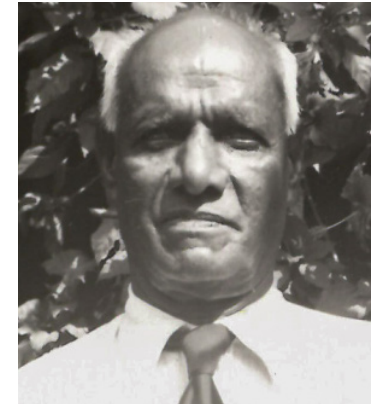
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### Gnanamuthu Jesudason

- June 11, 1872 – Jesudason was born in Kandy, Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka).
- 1896 – Hired as a Clerk of British Resident in Travancore, joined the London Mission Society and Salvation Army.
- 1901 – Married Christina Manonmani.
- 1906 – Left London Mission Society and Salvation Army in search of a mission to reach Sambavars.
- 1907 – Wrote to Rev. Henry Nau asing MELIM to start a mission in Travancore.
- 1908 – Partnered with Rev. Huebner to start the mission in South Travancore.
- 1908 – Began a Munschi training Rev. Gutknecht in Tamil.
- November 30, 1908 – Quit job with the British Resident to work full time for the mission as Evangelist.
- May 3, 1920 – Northern District Conference inquired of the Board for Mission the process to ordain native workers like Jesudason.
- February 16–22, 1921 – General Conference, after theological examination, resolved to approve Jesudason for ordination.
- March 13, 1921 – Ordained to serve Vadasery, Jattiarkolam and Puliyady congregations
- 1923 – Transferred to serve Ganesapuram.
- March 24–27, 1942 – Formal appeal on behalf of Sambavars to Mission Conference to avoid abandoning them as an exclusive mission.
- 1947 – Retired.
- November 2, 1955 – Died in Madras at the age of 83.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL IN A HEATHEN COUNTRY IS A KNOWLEDGE of sin and salvation. Every man by nature knows that he is a sinner and it is very easy to convince an Indian that he is a sinner in the sight of the Holy God. To India's credit I say that there are no agnostics or infidels or atheists in India; you will not find one throughout the length and the breadth of India....I have preached to large heathen crowds occasionally; when I explained to them the Law and concluded by saying that all have transgressed God's Law and are therefore sinners, miserable, damnable sinners, I invariably have observed many heads nodding approval, but when the Gospel narrative began, where the Law ended, the interest began to flag, people began to be shift and the audience ended in a general exodus.

—from Jesudason's *"What Should be the Minimum of Instruction ... Preparatory to Baptism ..."*

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