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Thai Pongal Celebrations at Lord Ganesha Temple

By: Kidambi Raj

People celebrating Pongal realize the meaning & significance of the important rituals associated with this harvest festival, the Tamil equivalent of Thanksgiving. It is held to honour the Sun, for a bountiful harvest. While the farmers rejoice thanking Sun, the rest of the society thanks the farmers on this occasion. Pongal or Thai Pongal is also called Makara Sankaranthi, since it is celebrated on the first day of Thai when the Sun enters the Makara Rasi (Capri-

cornus). This signals the end of winter and the onset of spring throughout the northern hemisphere. For the next six months, the days are longer and warmer.

Thai Pongal is celebrated on January 14th every year. The month of Thai (January) is the harvest season in the Tamil home land spanning from Tamil Nadu to Tamil Eelam.

Two MPs, two MPPs, The mayor and two Deputy Mayors of the Town of Richmond Hill and two Superintendents and the Chief of the York Region Police at the Thai Pongal event at the Richmond Hill Ganesha

Temple on January 14, 2019.

The Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple is said to be the largest Hindu Temple in North America built and run under the Agama Sastra traditions as specified in the scriptures.

Please see page 43 for details.



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Canada ranked # 1 globally for quality of life

Canada has taken the top spot in the quality of life category, according to U.S News and World Report's 2019 Best Countries Report.

Switzerland took the top spot across all categories, while Canada earned the third best spot overall. The United States took the eight spot overall for the second year in a row.

The survey was prepared by U.S. News and World Report, the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and BAV consulting.

More than 20,000 people from 65 countries took part in the survey, which ranked nations on several categories, including: Affordability, job market, economic stability, family-friendliness, income equality, and quality of life. This is the second year in a row Canada has earned top spot 1 spot in that category.

Canada also scored high for its stunning wilderness, garnering high points for being scenic.

Here are the top 25 countries in the world, according to the survey.

1. Switzerland
2. Japan
3. Canada
4. Germany
5. United Kingdom
6. Sweden
7. Australia
8. United States



9. Norway
10. France
11. Netherlands
12. New Zealand
13. Denmark
14. Finland
15. Singapore
16. China
17. Belgium
18. Italy
19. Luxembourg
20. Spain
21. Ireland
22. South Korea
23. United Arab Emirates
24. Russia
25. Portugal

This isn't the first time Canada has won a favourable distinction.

In 2017 it also was ranked the World's best travel destination and claimed three of the top spots on a World's most liveable cities list..

CTV news, Wednesday, Jan 23, 2019

Statement by the Prime Minister on Black History Month Ottawa, Ontario

- February 1, 2019

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement on Black History Month:

"Today marks the beginning of Black History Month, a time to celebrate Black culture and history, and to reflect on the significant contributions Black Canadians have made to building Canada.

"As leaders, advocates, entrepreneurs, artists, members of our armed forces, and everything in between, Black Canadians have helped shape our history and our identity as a country. Whether on the global stage or here at home, they have defended the values that make us who we are – values like freedom, justice, democracy, and equality. Their work has helped transform Canada into a more inclusive, compassionate, and prosperous country for all of us.

"This year's theme – Black Canadian Youth: Boundless, Rooted, & Proud – celebrates young Black Canadians: their power, their voices, their achievements, and their future. But it also reminds us of the inequality and barriers many continue to face, from anti-black racism and discrimination to a lack of opportunity and resources. That's unacceptable. Our diversity is our strength, and we need to do more to achieve real equality for young Canadians and everyone in our country.

"That is why we are working hard to make sure all Canadians have equal



opportunities to thrive – no matter the colour of their skin or where they come from, the language they speak or the religion they practice. Last year, we launched a new funding initiative to address the unique challenges faced by Black communities in Canada, including \$9 million over three years for community-led projects to support the needs of Black Canadian youth. In Budget 2018, we committed additional funding to develop new culturally informed approaches to improve mental health in Black Canadian communities. We will continue to take concrete action to combat anti-black racism and make sure Black communities across our country have the support they need to prosper.

"On behalf of the Government of Canada, I invite all Canadians to take part in community events for Black History Month and learn more about the important role that Black Canadians have played – and continue to play – to strengthen the country we all call home."- pm.gc.ca

Foreign Affairs Minister concludes successful meetings with public and private sector leaders at World Economic Forum

January 26, 2019

- Davos, Switzerland
- Global Affairs Canada

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs, concluded her trip to Davos, Switzerland yesterday, where she participated in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting.

In Davos, the Minister spoke about Canada's priorities at home and

abroad. She discussed the importance of creating the conditions for women to succeed and our obligation to speak out for women who face obstacles and whose rights are violated. She also highlighted why targeted measures to support the middle class and those working hard to join it—such as those Canada has introduced—reduce inequality and build fairer and more resilient societies. The Minister also

reiterated Canada's firm defence of human rights, democratic values and the rules-based international order.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Minister Freeland met with some of Canada's partners in the Lima Group, a group of countries in the Western Hemisphere committed to addressing the humanitarian, political and economic crisis in Venezuela. Following their meeting, a group of those

countries announced that they would recognize Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, as interim president of that country. In other meetings, Minister Freeland also spoke strongly in defence of the people of Ukraine, its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Minister held bilateral meetings with business leaders, including Michael Evans, President of Alibaba, and Steve Schwarzman, CEO of Blackstone, as well as Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England. - canada.ca/en/global-affairs

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from the publisher's desk

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Black History Month 2019:

The Contributions of Sri Lanka's Kaffir Community

"Today marks the beginning of Black History Month, a time to celebrate Black culture and history, and to reflect on the significant contributions Black Canadians have made to building Canada."

"As leaders, advocates, entrepreneurs, artists, members of our armed forces, and everything in between, Black Canadians have helped shape our history and our identity as a country. Whether on the global stage or here at home, they have defended the values that make us who we are – values like freedom, justice, democracy, and equality. Their work has helped transform Canada into a more inclusive, compassionate, and prosperous country for all of us." This expressed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a statement marking the start of Black History Month for February 2019.

In celebration of the significant social, cultural, economic and political contributions of Black people, this publisher's desk wants to draw attention to the contributions of Black people in the island nation of Sri Lanka. Browsing Instagram as most individuals do in today's modern age of social media, an interesting post was discovered about the small African Kaffir community in Sri Lanka by Comdu.it, a Canadian-based nonprofit organization that facilitates diaspora technical assistance and knowledge to strengthen local community-based organisations that serve vulnerable populations.

Kannan Arunasalam, a filmmaker, recently put together a mini-documentary profiling the African Kaffir community who are currently nearing extinction in Sri Lanka.

Accordingly, they are partly descended by 16th century Portuguese traders and Bantu slaves. These traders brought these slaves to work as labourers and fight against the Sinhala Kings as soldiers. As stated earlier, the numbers for this population of Afro-Sri Lankans, unfortunately, is declining, despite their story being brought into the limelight. In response, this community had undertaken efforts at cultural preservation with their song and dance



traditions: Manja. This is heavily derived from their African heritage. Sri Lankan Kaffirs were originally Bantu tribesmen in the African Great Lakes region, whom were captured and sold by Arab traders. Furthermore, their language is a creole based on their significant relationship with the Portuguese. Only 80 families in Puttalam currently speak the language, while its use has dwindled considerably among younger generations.

These troubling circumstances for one of Sri Lanka's lesser known minority communities should signal to individuals there as well as the Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada and elsewhere to collectively assist in preserving their fascinating culture. The presence of this community in the isle of serendipity that is Sri Lanka serves as a proud testament to the rich tapestry of diversity found there.

Despite Black History Month being mainly celebrated throughout North America and Western Europe, the contributions of the Black diaspora are more widespread and global in their impact when considering the Sri Lankan Kaffir community.

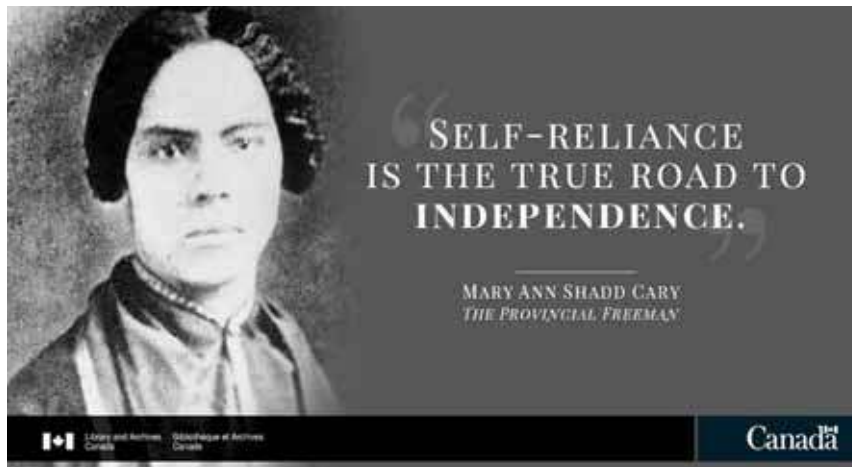
This documentary can be streamed in full at this link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo1LZ7vZK7w>

By **Harrish Thirukumaran**, Master of Public Policy Candidate, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto.

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Canada Historical Milestone: Black History Month



Mary Ann Shadd Cary (October 9, 1823 – June 5, 1893) was an American-Canadian anti-slavery activist, journalist, publisher, teacher, and lawyer; made history when she became the first Black woman in North America to start and publish a newspaper: The Provincial Freeman, first printed in 1853.

“Each person must live their life as a model for others” - Rosa Parks (Feb 4, 1913-Oct 24, 2005) - US Civil Rights Activist

Printing the Winds of Change around us All lands home, all men kin.

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“I Am and I Will”: World Cancer Day - February 4, 2019

Statement by The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health

Almost half of all Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lifetimes. On World Cancer Day, I invite all Canadians to take action to prevent cancer and to support those affected by it.

Cancer is a complex disease, and the number of new diagnoses and deaths in Canada continues to rise. Our aging and growing population is expected to increase these numbers over the coming decades. While it may seem daunting, there are simple ways we can reduce our chances of developing cancer, like being active, not smoking, reducing alcohol consumption and eating healthy foods.

In recognition of the work that needs to be done in the fight against cancer, our government is working with our partners to reduce the rates of cancer and encouraging Canadians to lead healthier lives. We continue to support the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer which has a tremendous impact through its work in prevention, early detection, treatment and support for

those living with cancer.

Yet the work doesn't stop there. Our government invests significantly in cancer research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, committing almost \$195 million in 2016-17. As partnerships are vital to advancing research, we are working with the Canadian Cancer Society and Stand Up to Cancer Canada to support a “dream team” of researchers who are tackling metastatic breast cancer, the most advanced form of breast cancer.

We are also continuing to support those battling this disease and recognize their unique challenges and needs. A report released by the Partnership, Living with Cancer: A Report on the Patient Experience plays an important role in helping us understand these. We need to see cancer not just as a disease to be treated, but an affliction touching all parts of a person's life – including those close to them.

To better understand cancer's impact, we must have a holistic view – which includes understanding the toll it takes on mental health. Better coordination of services is also essential. Many are already taking steps towards

this. The Canadian Cancer Society's programs for families are an excellent example, as is its Cancer Information Service hotline. This free service is a great resource for patients, caregivers, family & friends and medical professionals.

The theme of this year's World Cancer Day is “I Am and I Will.” As the Minister of Health, I will continue to take action and fight against cancer. I encourage you to join the movement as well. - canada.ca/en/health-canada



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Aro und the Wo rld

Young Muslims Celebrate with First Somali-American in Congress

By Mohamed Olad Hassan

Jan 4, 2019: On Thursday, the first Muslim women to serve in Congress, Democrats Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan were sworn into office, as inspired young Muslim Americans and refugees watched closely.

In the evening, a group of young Muslim men and women from Minnesota, Ohio and the Washington metropolitan area, were buzzing about the news as they gathered at an event in McLean, Virginia to celebrate Omar's journey from Somali refugee to U.S. congresswoman.

At the event, Omar told the celebrating crowd the story of her arrival in the United States from the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya 23 years ago.

Suud Olat, 28, a Somali-American, journalist and a refugee advocate, came to the U.S. five years ago as a refugee, escaping hopelessness and poverty in the same camps in Kenya where Omar spent four years before coming to America.

"In Trump era, when anti-immigrant and Muslim rhetoric is high, to witness Ilhan Omar who shares the same values and background with me, sitting in the Capitol Hill and celebrate with her was an amazing moment and inspirational for me," he said.

Kowthar Yabarow, a 24-year-old of Somali heritage who chose to wear the hijab, sees the news of Omar as a reflection of her faith, community and belonging.

"Although my parents came from Somalia to this country, I was born and raised here as a Muslim girl and to see a hijabi Muslim woman like me in Congress is a big reflection," she said.

Omer Arain, a 23-year-old Pakistani American, said, "It is very reassuring for young Muslim Americans like me that they can be in such positions of power."

Ibrahim Ismail is a father of four. Like Omar, he came to the United States as a refugee in 1996 after fleeing the conflict in Somalia. His oldest daughter is now in a training school



Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn

for new Virginia police recruits. He said the news about the two Muslim congresswomen meant something special for him. "It is an inspiration and special for me that I can show, finally, to my daughter that, there is a Muslim woman like Ilhan Omar, an immigrant and a woman of color, a Somali, who is able to stand up for Muslim values, share them with the American pub-

lic through a strong voice in the Congress," he said.

"I am so proud to see people with my value like Omar and Tlaib being leaders in this country and I am happy that my daughter will grow up in an era where to have Muslim leaders in the U.S. politics is not news but a normal," said Tahira Khanana, a 38-year-old mother of three with the Cincinnati chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

At Omar's celebration, she focused on other issues. She noted that her celebration comes at a time the federal government remains partially shut down, and her homeland, Somalia, is still affected by Trump-imposed limits on immigration.

"I came from a country under our president's immigration ban. If this was happening 23 years ago, I would not represent all of you in Congress today," she said struggling to hide her tears.

She said one of her first tasks as a representative in Congress is to fight to end the shutdown.

"I came to Washington when our federal government remains shut down over 'a silly border wall. I have to join the fight to reopen it," she said.

- via: Voice of America

-VOA News



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Sri Lanka's premier Tamil newspaper "Virakesari" enters into an agreement with India's largest circulated Tamil newspaper "Thinathanthi"



Picture shows Hari Selvanathan (Chairman - "Virakesari" - Left), Kumar Nadesan (Managing Director, "Virakesari"- Centre) and Balasubramaniam Athithan (CEO, "Thina Thanthi" Group - Right) at the signing of the agreement.

By Siva Sivapragasam

Sri Lanka's premier Tamil newspaper "Virakesari" which has a combined print and online readership of over one million has entered into a collaborative agreement with India's largest circulated Tamil newspaper "Thinathanthi" which has a daily 1.8 million readership in Tamilnadu. The agreement provides the "Virakesari" to carry an insert daily from Monday to Saturday along with its main edition free to the readers.

Up-to-date news from the sub-continent and the world will now be available through the pages of Thanthi in the Virakesari main edition. A supplement of the "Thinathanthi" is included with the "Daily Virakesari from January 24 onwards every week from Monday to Saturday. Besides news, there will also be articles of reader interest, especially on health, tourism, education and entertainment. This collaborative agreement between the two companies was entered on January 9.

Book Review

Around the World



Stroke

(Doctor Turns Patient)

Author: Dr. S P Rachagan
Publisher: Malaysian Medical Association

Reviewed by Siva Sivapragasam

The book "Stroke" is a good account by a Doctor who was struck with stroke and got back to his feet and recommenced his professional work. The author explains in simple terms medical terminology associated with stroke illness.

The contents of the book "Stroke" should be useful to laymen, patients affected by stroke, medical students and to doctors too. The book is published by the Malaysian Medical Association and can be purchased online. The author Dr. S P Rachagan refers to in his book changes a stroke stricken patient has to undergo in physical, social and emotional aspects in his life. The author men-

tions in his book the journey he went through in recovery and rehabilitation.

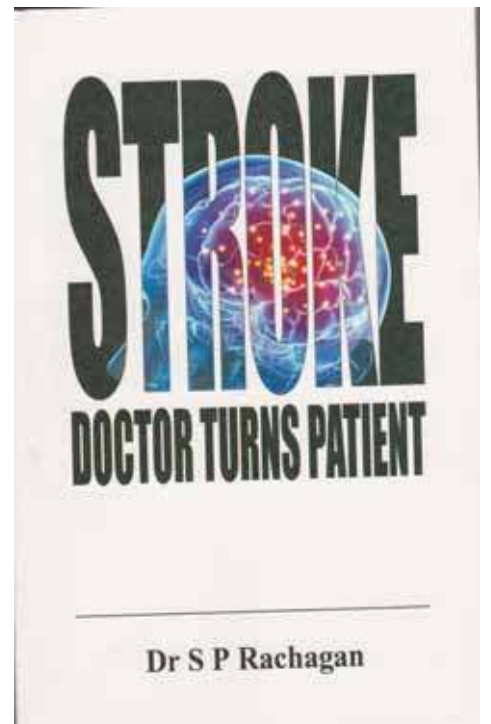
The author briefly describes the four signs for detecting stroke FAST, namely Facial drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty and Time to act. He advises that stroke victims should be given medical assistance fast and delay in getting to a hospital can adversely impact recovery of a stroke victim. Based on a WHO report, he advises that stroke can be avoided by healthy eating, exercising regularly, not smoking, controlling blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels within healthy range. The author has made the book very readable with quotes on religion and culture demonstrating the importance of maintaining dignity of Life. The

author has taken great pains to describe vividly the background to his illness and also how his treatment worked to lead a normal life.

The book is a reliable handy book for persons and patients to know all necessary details about stroke illness and therefore becomes a "good read" not only to the present generation but would be a good guide to future generations too. There is no doubt that the book will reach a wide audience. The author himself admits "Writing this book has been an emotional journey that gave me many moments of sadness and many more moments of immense joy."

An ebook version is also available in Amazon. The link is <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/B07KZPHD7N>

The Author's website is: <https://sprachagan.com/>



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BY THULASI MUTTULINGAM

HUMANS OF NORTHERN SRI LANKA

"Humans of Northern Sri Lanka" is a Facebook Community page by Thulasi Muttulingam, a journalist based in the North of Sri Lanka. To follow the updates, "Like" the page at: www.facebook.com/pages/Humans-of-Northern-Sri-Lanka

PUSHING SKELETONS BACK INTO CLOSETS

It's been declared a crime scene - the mass grave in Mannar. The biggest so far excavated in the country. Probably the first time, government didn't deliberately obfuscate the matter to come up with spurious findings on how and why the skeletons got there.

Mass graves are nothing new to Sri Lanka. Given our thousands of 'disappeared' people in the war years and the JVP uprisings, we all know skeletons line our earth in unmarked graves. Mourned solitarily by their friends and family who keep battling to keep their memories alive. To ensure that justice is served them eventually. So far though, it has been a losing battle. Every mass grave discovered thus far, whether they be in the North or South, never had an adequate resolution, or any fair chance at discovering what had been done to the people so callously buried in them. Commissions come and go. They release dubious reports - or not - as they please. Before that they sit in ostentatious hearings - soliciting information from devastated families of the missing from the surrounding areas - and then make a mockery of their pain, and even worse hope, that they will yet hear what happened to their missing brethren.

Voiceless ghosts Sri Lanka's multiple dead whose loved ones are still searching for them, do not seem destined for an adequate resolution, as to their fates. At least, if the State's treatment of mass graves around the country thus far is anything to go by. In Tamil, we have a saying; Mullupusanikaayasothukaimaraikurathu; burying an entire pumpkin in a plate of rice. It's a useless endeavour, but if the ruling powers call it a mound of rice, everyone else have to accept it's a mound of rice.

Interestingly this is the first time since 2015, a mass grave has been discovered in the country. Perhaps, that's why they went so far as to accept it's a crime scene, instead of making up dubious stories as usual. It remains to be seen, how this plays out. Just before regime change, in 2014 another mass grave was discovered in Mannar. But it conveniently went the way of the pumpkin in the rice.

Ninety six skeletons were unearthed rapidly, lying on top of each other in a shallow, narrow grave close to the famous Thiruketheeswaram temple of Mannar. Initial reports quoted excavating officials as noting that the skeletons were missing clothes, and had holes in their craniums consistent with injuries caused by gunshots. Yet, soon after, the then Director General of the Archeological Department, SenerathDisanayake closed the investigation by saying it is not a mass grave as the bodies had been "buried systematically". He claimed that it was a cemetery dating back to the 1930s. That has been the official government line ever since.

I was working in Mannar at the time of the former excavation. I saw the hope of the people rise, as the mass grave was discovered, that some resolution might arise as to what happened to at least a few of their missing. Only to be deflated again just like that. If a cemetery had existed there in the 1930s, it was close enough in human memory that people would know about it. No-one did, and yet, they had to accept the dubious

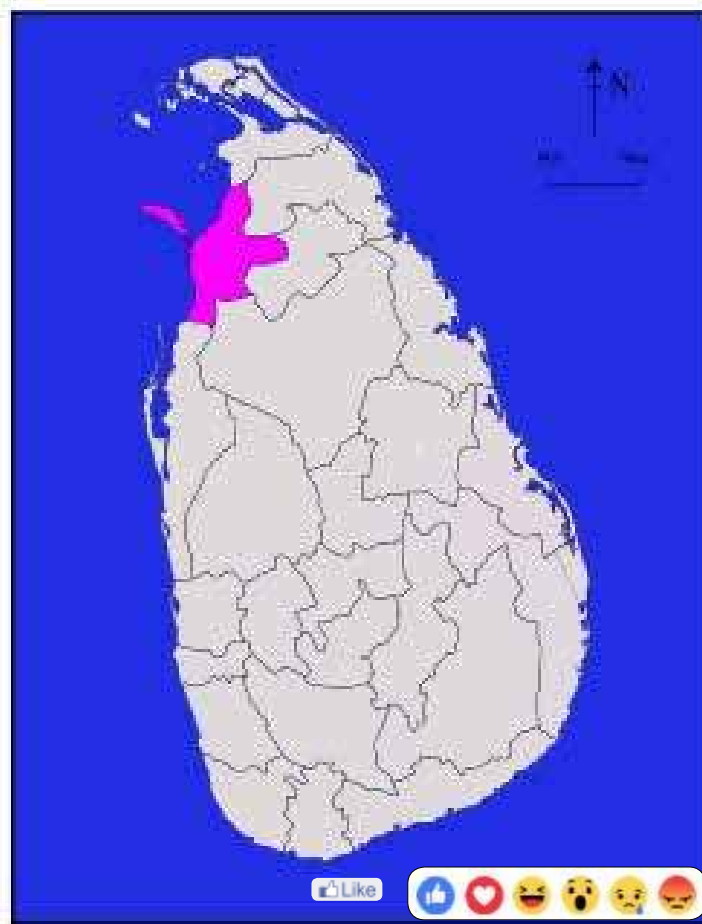
claim of the Director General of Archaeology. Being particularly close to the famed temple of Thiruketheeswaram, there were moreover detailed maps dating back several decades of that specific area - none ever indicated a cemetery.

The mass grave site was a very shallow, narrow plot about 37 meters square and five meters deep. I used to travel past it everyday on my way to work. No-one could conceive that ninety six skeletons - of men, women and children, mostly minus clothing and exhibiting holes in their craniums were buried there like sardines crammed together by their own people in an unmarked 'cemetery'. The people in the vicinity speculated on which village of missing people (entire villages were decimated in the war years) had ended up there.

Yet, state media at the time immediately went into overdrive with the 'news' - in the process making the people demanding independent investigations into the mass grave look like crazy conspiracy theorists. And just like that, ninety six skeletons closed back into the earth again. Their stories still untold. Their origin still unknown. Their relatives still uninformed.

Impunity and Immunity

Many of us living here, are aware that perpetrators are unlikely to ever be brought to justice in our lifetime. There is too much of a culture of immunity against the defence forces. Yes, the defence forces did liberate the country from the spectre of the LTTE. But in the process, does anyone believe there were no civilian casualties? Or that rogue elements in the defence forces did not exploit the powers they then had under emergency regulations to rape and kill?



Even when the earlier mass grave in Mannar was discovered, before it was hastily closed up again with that dubious claim no-one believes, the Government's initial defence appeared to be that the LTTE were the perpetrators. Yet the entire area including the Thiruketheeswaram temple had been under army control - it was not the stalking grounds of the LTTE.

That the LTTE perpetrated atrocities is not in doubt, but going on blaming them for every ill that surfaces is wearing thin. The defence forces did perpetrate some crimes, whether we like to admit it or not. Researching for this article, I was startled by the information relayed by the Wikipedia entry under 'Mannar mass grave' - it had not been updated to include news of the latest mass grave, but had some information on the 2014 one. Wikipedia is not what we are supposed to look up for research I know, but it is still the first port of call for anyone googling any information these days. The wiki entry on the Mannar mass grave takes the official government line that the grave was an old, unmarked cemetery, but somewhere in there is also this dubious statement: "According to the police, the site was used for mass burial of civilians and soldiers alike killed by the Tamil rebels during the war. Mannar and most of the northern part of Sri Lanka were under the control of the rebels for almost 30 long years. The long battle ended in May 2009 after the government forces vanquished the Tamil rebels." No, actually. That's very erroneous information. Many pockets of the North, including Mannar town, and the vicinity of the Thiruketheeswaram temple, were actually under active army control

over the last 30 years. It was not ceded to the LTTE. The famous pilgrimage site of Thiruketheeswaram temple was actually closed to the public for several years due to this. It was not accessible to common people, much less the LTTE.

Memories of the disappeared

They might be nameless skeletons in unmarked graves to many - but it's important to remember these are people who had their most basic rights to life, dignity in life, and thereafter dignity in death, taken from them. They still have grieving relations and friends, wondering where they are, and what happened to them. While working in Mannar at the time of the older mass grave being excavated, I heard multiple stories from people who wondered if it was their near and dear ones in the grave.

"Our relatives living in the adjacent village were rounded up by the army one night for questioning. They kept behind some men for further questioning and let the women and children go. The men never came home. Some of the women still wear the red kumkum, refusing to believe their menfolk are dead, despite its happening over two decades ago."

"An entire bus load of people on their way to Mannar town, men, women and children, disappeared near that area one day. Could it be them? Why would a busload of civilians be arbitrarily killed? What happened to them?" "As we were displacing from place to place, our disabled people (disabled in large numbers due to war) could not run with us. The army often helped by transporting them while the rest of us walked. Some of those disabled people however, in entire truckloads disappeared. The army would later say they had deposited them in hospitals. We checked every makeshift hospital in the area but never found them."

These and many more stories haunt the people left behind, still searching for answers. This time at least, the discovered mass grave has been declared a crime scene instead of being fobbed off as yet another cemetery. It remains to be seen what develops from that. Despite the less than stellar state of governance in the country, it is to be noted that democracy - while threatened - is yet functional and functioning. The judiciary is able to act seemingly independently. Parliament could challenge the executive president and get him to back down. The Chief of Defence Staff could be arrested eventually despite moves to transfer the investigating officer on his case. The stories of what the CDS and the navy ransom racket he was allegedly in cahoots with had done to Tamil and Muslim youths arbitrarily detained and then murdered could be published in the media, without the threat of white vans zooming around, enforcing state terror.

Many people complain about our state of governance, but bad as it is, it is perhaps the best it has ever been for democracy in this country. Checks and balances appear to be working as they should to some extent. It remains to be seen how well those checks and balances work, when inevitably those at the helm, try to serve up one more pumpkin to the people on the history of our latest, and biggest mass grave to date.



Senator Kamala Harris Jumps Into Presidential Race

By Ken Bredemeier

January 21, 2019: WASHINGTON — First-term California Senator Kamala Harris announced Monday she is seeking the Democratic Party's 2020 presidential nomination to oppose President Donald Trump, joining the crowded field of Democratic candidates seeking to end his presidency after a single term in the White House.

Harris, a daughter of immigrant parents from Jamaica and India, portrayed herself as a fighter for justice, decency and equality in announcing her candidacy in a campaign video and on ABC's Good Morning America. Monday's announcement coincided with the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, which recognizes the slain civil rights leader.

"They're the values we as Americans cherish, and they're all on the line now," Harris said in the video. "The future of our country depends on you and millions of others lifting our voices to fight for our American values."

Harris is a former attorney general

in California, the Pacific rim state that has become the center of resistance to Trump's four-year White House tenure. In Washington, Harris, two years into her six-year Senate term, has become known as a sharp questioner of Trump's key appointments to his administration.

If the 54-year-old Harris is eventually successful, she would become the first woman U.S. president, the first of Asian heritage and the second African-American.

There is no clear Democratic favorite to oppose Trump, who said he would run for a second term as soon as he was inaugurated two years ago for his first. Trump has cited the country's robust economy as a reason for his re-election, but with an often chaotic White House and voter approval ratings mired well below 50 percent he faces a daunting task to win re-election.

With Democrats sweeping to a takeover of the House of Representatives in last November's congressional elections even as Republicans picked up two seats in the Senate, a long list of Democrats



Senator Kamala Devi Harris

is lining up to seeking the party's presidential nomination in an effort to oust Trump.

Senators Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York have announced presidential exploratory committees, while Senators Cory Booker of New Jersey, Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota are also eyeing the race. Julian Castro,

former President Barack Obama's housing chief, has announced his candidacy, as has Maryland Congressman John Delaney.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who unsuccessfully sought the 2016 Democratic nomination, is considering another run, as is former Vice President Joe Biden, the No. 2 official in Obama's administration, who twice in years past has unsuccessfully sought the Democratic presidential nomination.

U.S. presidential campaigns are long drawn out affairs, with candidates announcing their intentions early, in order to raise campaign money and visit states with early party nominating elections and caucuses. The first Democratic presidential candidate debate is set for June, but the first voting is still a year away, in the rural, midwestern state of Iowa, followed soon after by contests in numerous other states. The next U.S. presidential election is on November 3, 2020.

Via: Voice of America
-VOA News

'Leaders who sanction hate speech' encourage citizens to do likewise,

UN communications chief tells Holocaust remembrance event

Jan 31, 2019: Alison Smale led the briefing, which focused on the little-known record of Albanians during the Holocaust, who took in thousands of Jews who would otherwise have ended up in the Nazi death camps.

Under the theme: "Holocaust Remembrance: Demand and Defend your Human Rights", it was one of the main events marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day throughout this week of reflection on the industrial-scale genocide of approximately six million European Jews during World War Two.

"While this occurred, there were individuals and countries that demonstrated tremendous courage to save Jews", Ms. Smale told those attending, the multimedia event.

"Rescuers made the brave choice to help in full knowledge of the grave consequences they, their families and com-

munity would face should they have been found helping Jewish people" she spelled out.

Recognizing Albania's response as an example of moral courage, Ms. Smale said that it "embodies the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

She said that the Albanian response also showed that everyone has a responsibility to defend human rights, identify strategies to protect those rights, and learn the consequences of inaction.

"Today, we witness populism, xenophobia, Neo-Nazism and hate groups on the rise, fueling anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred around the world", she explained, stressing the role of civil society in documenting hate speech and hate crimes as "critical" to

learn how to effectively address hatred, challenge its root causes and build resilient and just communities.

"Understanding the significance of historic actions taken to defend human rights – such as in Albania – is the first step towards encouraging such positive behavior among people today", Ms. Smale underscored.

The event featured video clips from the film "The Albanian Code", which shines a light on the role that the rugged and historically-rich Balkan country played to rescue Jews, interspersed with remarks and observations from Albania's UN Ambassador Besiana Kadare; Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress; and Robert Singer, Chief Executive of the World Jewish Congress. Ms. Smale thanked all three for supporting the event and for "their commitment to Holocaust remembrance."

Also taking part were Majlinda Myrto, Executive Director of the "Eye Contact Foundation", whose family is honoured as "Righteous Among the Nations" for rescuing a Jewish family during the Holocaust, along with Anna Kohen, a child of Holocaust survivors who found a safe haven in Albania; and David Estrin, Founder of the youth organization "Together We Remember".

"Learning about the history of Albania's response during the Holocaust is important because it demonstrates compassionate behavior" explained Ms. Smale.

"It reminds us that we are all responsible for each other. We all have a role to play in demanding and defending human rights," concluded the head of UN Global Communications.

- UN.org

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Boom in Artificial Intelligence patents, points to 'quantum leap' in tech: UN report

Jan 31, 2019: According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Technology Trends report, 50 per cent of all patents for AI – the replication of human intelligence by machines for use in industries such as transport and healthcare, for instance – have been published since 2013, adding up to more than 170,000 different patented ideas.

This followed on from an initial boom in AI scientific publications, which began in 2001.

WIPO Director General Francis Gurry told journalists in Geneva the surge in patenting was “striking”, noting that AI research began in the 1950s. “But there has been a quantum leap since about 2013, so we’re dealing with what is happening right now in a very fast-moving field,” he insisted.

By number, patent applications for machine learning, indicate that this is currently the dominant application of AI; think of apps that include ride-sharing services to minimize detours.

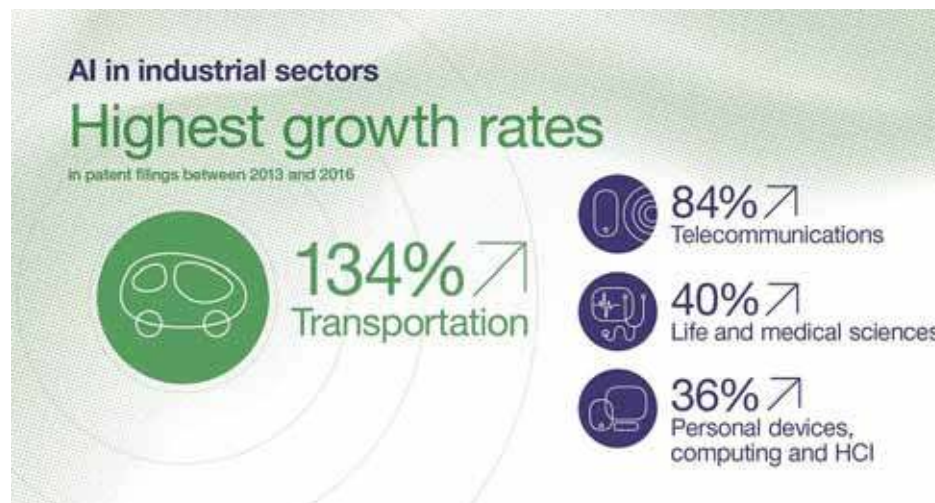
The fastest-growing AI area is “deep learning”, however, which is used in speech recognition.

This saw a 175-per cent annual increase in patent applications from 2013 to 2016, far in excess of the 33 per cent average for all patents in the same period.

The United States and China dominate the field of patent application, although only a fraction of China’s patents is filed abroad. US-based tech giant IBM leads by number of patent applications (8,290), followed by Microsoft (5,930).

Japan’s Toshiba has the next highest patent tally (5,223), ahead of South Korea’s Samsung (5,102) and Japan’s NEC Group (4,406).

China’s increasingly important role in the sector is also illustrated by the fact that Chinese organizations make up 17 of the top 20 academic players in AI pat-



Artificial intelligence patent filings: Transportation sector growing fastest



An attendee of the USA Science and Engineering Festival (2014) observes NASA's first dexterous humanoid robot Robonaut 2, at the NASA Stage. At the time R2 had recently received 1.2 meter long legs to allow mobility-via: NASA/Aubrey Gemignani

enting, as well as 10 of the top 20 in AI-related scientific publications.

In coming years, AI is set to grow with “major military and economic” uses, Mr Gurry suggested, before highlighting the importance of proposed WIPO-led discussions between Member States, on legal and ethical issues relating to intellectual property rights that have been raised by the technology.

“One would expect that the strategic focus of major geopolitical players will turn to their positioning in relation to AI,” he said.

Internet search giants have also been key to the AI revolution, the WIPO report shows, with Google (US) and Baidu (China) embracing the potential of the technology early on, just as Microsoft and Apple did before them.

“You did say that we see some of the internet giants there,” Mr Gurry said to reporters. “Why? Because of data...because of the access they have to data.”

In addition to the US and China’s large populations, the WIPO head noted the importance of State-led support for innovation in both places, which included investing in technology hubs and even training specialized patent officers.

Faced with this backing, “it’s very difficult for other countries, even those with great education, to compete with the business, engineering and investing talent” of China and the US, AI expert and CEO of Landing AI and deeplearning.ai, Andrew Ng, notes in the WIPO publication, adding that the “biggest untapped opportunities” lie outside the software industry, in areas including agriculture, healthcare and manufacturing.

Echoing those comments, the WIPO Director General noted that the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe “is not necessarily favouring the formation of major data pools. And we all know the more data, the better for machine learning for example, the results, you are going to get”.

Asked whether the world was better off because of the technology, which industry experts credit with the potential to create massive economic value, the WIPO Director General underlined the fact that the science behind it is “neutral”.

“Is it (AI) good news or bad news?” he asked. “Well, I would tend to say that all technology is somewhat neutral, and it depends on what you do with it. So, insofar as you may use AI science and techniques for developing autonomous weapons systems that are going to kill us all, is not very good news, but insofar as it’s being used to improve health indicators for diagnostics, for other purposes, it’s great news.”

– UN.org

On the first day of 2019, over 395,000 babies to be born worldwide: UNICEF

Jan 1, 2019: As revelers say ‘hello’ to 2019 with great festivities, the world welcomes its newest residents. In a press release issued on the first day of the year, UNICEF said that globally, over 395,000 children are expected to be born on 1 January.

Over half of these births are estimated to take place in eight countries which include India, China, Nigeria, Indonesia, the United States and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As the clock strikes midnight, Sydney, Australia will greet an estimated 168 babies, followed by 310 in Tokyo, 605 in Beijing, 166 in Madrid, and finally, 317 in New York. The first babies were born in Fiji in the Pacific, and the US will most likely deliver its last.

UNICEF is taking the opportunity to call on nations to meet every newborn’s right to health and survival. The agency’s Deputy Executive Director, Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, asked the world to join UNICEF in “making a resolution to fulfill every right of every child, starting with the right to survive”.

As families take into their arms countless Alexan-

ders and Ayeshas, Zixuans and Zainabs, in several countries many babies will not even be named as they won’t make it past their first day, the agency warned. According to UNICEF, in 2017, about one million babies died the day they were born, and 2.5 million in just their first month of life.

Most died from preventable causes such as premature birth, complications during delivery, and infections like pneumonia, in what the agency called ‘a violation of their basic right to survival’.

“We can save millions of babies if we invest in training and equipping local health workers so that every newborn is born into a safe pair of hands”, Ms. Gornitzka added.

2019 also marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under the convention, governments committed to take measures to save every child by providing good quality health care.

Over the past three decades, the world has seen remarkable progress in child survival, cutting the



Baby girl who was born at the stroke of midnight 2019, on 1 January in Fiji. Losena was one of two mothers who gave birth between 12.00 am and 12.01 am at the Colonial war memorial hospital, Suva Fiji-UNICEF

number of children worldwide who die before their fifth birthday by more than half. But there has been slower progress for newborns. Babies dying in the first month account for 47 per cent of all deaths among children under five.

– UN.org

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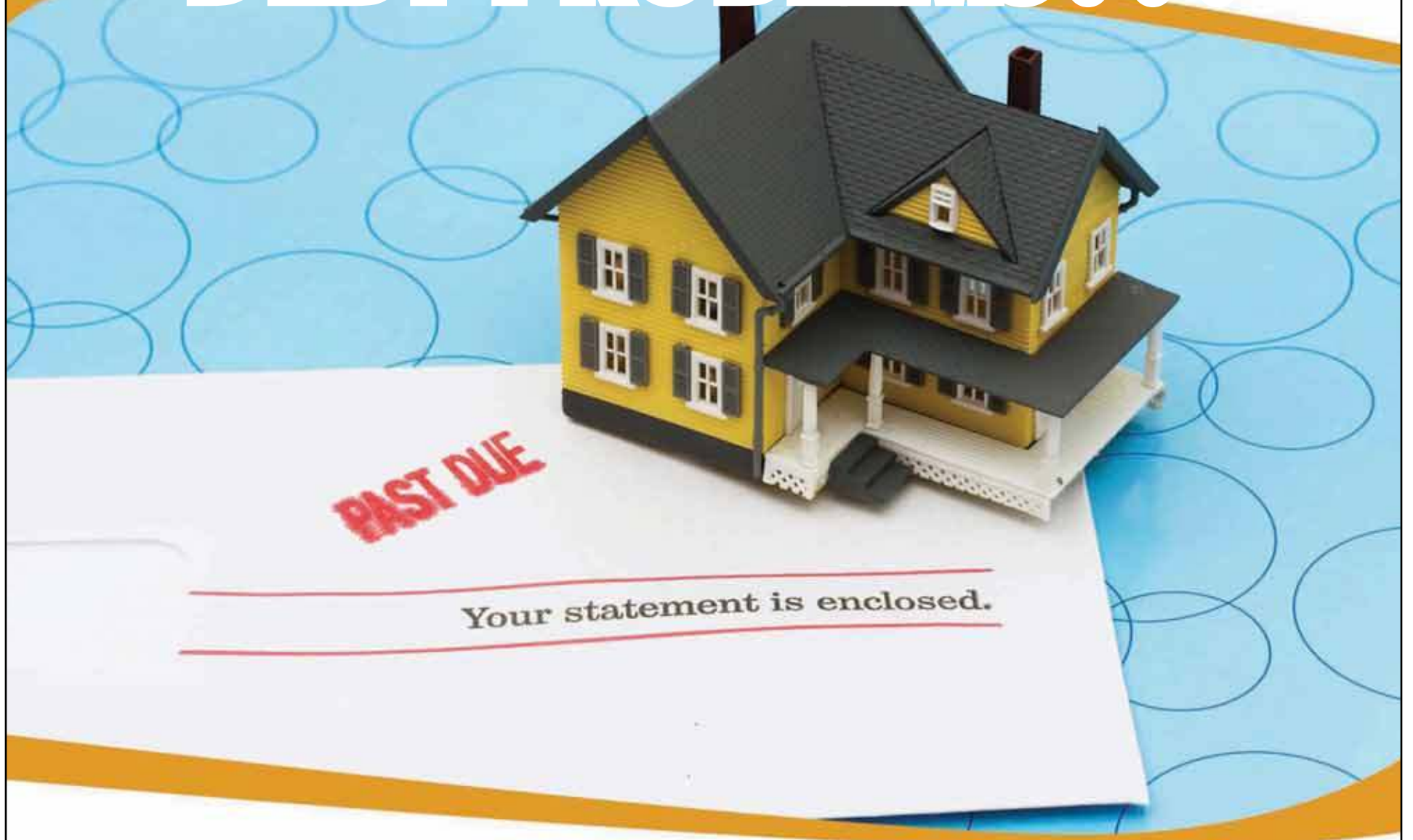
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Birth, Death and Rebirth of Jaffna's Moolai Cooperative Hospital

By Jekhan Aruliah

In the North-West corner of the Jaffna Peninsula close to the causeway to Karainagar Island is the small village of Moolai. It is a patch of land connecting the causeway to Karainagar with its famous Casuarina Beach, and Vaddukoddai with its famous school Jaffna College. Moolai would have been quite unknown but for its own famous Moolai Cooperative Hospital. A hospital founded in 1935 by returning Tamil Diaspora funded by their savings and pensions earned administering British Malaya.

This new hospital was ground-breaking in its setup as a non-profit cooperative owned by its members. The first of its kind in South Asia, it was an example that led to many more cooperative hospitals in the region. When D.S. Senanayake, who would later become the first prime minister of independent Ceylon, visited in 1939 he said "I visited the Hospital today. It is a remarkable institution and is unique in that it is the first of its kind in the Island. I am greatly impressed particularly in view of the example it sets to the possibilities of social improvement by co-operative effort. I wish it great success in the future."

The hospital started in 1935 with just one doctor and two apothecaries (pharmacists). All three were pensioners back from Malaya who gave their services free of charge. By 1949 the hospital had 59 staff, including 3 doctors and 8 apothecaries. By 1970 there were 122 paid staff including 5 doctors, 10 apothecaries and 42 nurses.

Since the end of the war in 2009 there are now 2 permanent doctors, 1 apothecary and 12 nurses. In addition specialist doctors, including eye; dermatologist; dental; cardiologist, make evening visits after their shifts at the main Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Ideally some of these specialists would be based permanently in Moolai, were sufficient funds available.

The hospital currently provides employment for a total 45 individuals making an important contribution to the local economy. And it is a beacon of the potential of high value services in an otherwise simple community.

In 1995 the hospital was wrecked and abandoned, another victim of the Sri Lankan Civil War. When I enquired the reason for its destruction I was told the hospital was not specifically targeted for attack. It just found itself calamitously close to one side's military facilities that were being bombed by the other side. (<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/10018476/1/122088.pdf>)

The fighting reached a peak intensity in 1995 resulting in the hospital being abandoned. A former Chairman of the Moolai Hospital, Mr.M. Retnasingham, said "When some of us returned to inspect the state of the hospital in 1996, we found it badly damaged by shelling and bombing. The place was also looted, and almost all the equipment and furniture were missing".

Despite the destruction, the hospital was reopened in July 1996, with the Out Patients Department functioning every day. Consultants from the main Jaffna Teaching Hospital attended when they could. (<http://moolaihospital.com/history/>)

The reconstruction of the Moolai Hospital started in earnest from 2003 and continued during the 2002-2007 ceasefire agreed between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government. In this period funds poured in from

Sri Lankan and Diaspora organizations and individuals particularly those in the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK. Invaluable financial support was also provided by the British, Dutch and the USA governments. The Sri Lankan Government too made a significant financial contribution.

As a result the hospital was able to restart Cardiology, Eye, Dental, Diabetes, Paediatric and Maternity Clinics. A clinical laboratory, an X-ray unit, operating theatre and an ambulance service were also setup.

The revival of the hospital was held up by the restart of hostilities in 2007 until the war ended in 2009 with the defeat of the LTTE. Since the end of the war, the hospital has received generous support from individuals and organizations both overseas and in Sri Lanka.

One of these donors, Dr.S. Rajasunderam a GP from Kent in the UK, conducted a review of the hospital in 2016. Here he observed that a fully functioning hospital at Moolai would offer services to up to 180,000 people, providing primary care that would remove the need for many of them to travel 10 miles to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Thus not only providing improved care locally, but also taking the pressure off the already overcrowded Teaching Hospital.

Rajasunderam commented that the sheer cost in time and money of the trip from Moolai to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital means many don't get their ailments treated at all, resulting in more severe consequences. He stated "The journey is costly as much as Rs2,000[=£10] on average, when a man's daily wage is as little as Rs1,000[=£5] daily, via poorly maintained roads, taking as long 60 to 90mins which can sometimes make the difference between life and death for many kids, and pregnant mothers eg. in labour with hardly any ante-natal care, Diabetic Ketoacidosis, which is still common due to poorly controlled Diabetes Mellitus, CHD, CVA, Head injury victims, Snake bite victims etc. Hence the need for modern ambulances, which is not available. This will no doubt be lifesaving, safer, quicker journey by ambulances with resuscitation commenced on the way".

As well as clinical services, the hospital provides geriatric care including long term residential care for 20 elders. At Rs50,000 (Rs55,000 if funded from overseas) per month for full service including meals, medical attention and rooms with ensuite bathrooms, the hospital aims to make this as accessible as possible for the local community. A new extension is now being built, funded by donations, to extend this accommodation for elders further.

A three phase plan to renovate Moolai Hospital is currently in action. Phase 1, renovating the main building as an outpatient clinic and revitalizing Gynecological, Ante-Natal and Paediatric clinics, is complete. The inauguration of Phase 1 is happening at the hospital on 19th January 2018.

The next two phases still require additional funding to reach the estimated budget of US\$1 million. Phase 2 will create a Surgical Complex, including operating theatres, pre and post operation patient areas, and an Intensive Care Unit. Phase 3 will renovate staff quarters, the parking area, and pathways in the hospital complex.

The hospital has more to do even beyond these three phases. Upgrading its Laboratory Services, providing rehabilitation and palliative care, and setting up a sub-fertility



clinic. These are all areas the State Sector, with its own pressures and funding constraints, struggles to provide.

To maximize its impact on community health, the hospital would also like to setup satellite clinics in the surrounding villages. Providing pre-emptive care, dealing with illness at an earlier stage before it becomes serious for the individual or spreads to the community.

The Moolai Hospital isn't only trying to recapture its past glory. It is looking forward to the latest technologies, and by doing so is supporting Northern enterprise. Arogya Life a software company based in Jaffna (<https://arogya.life/>), developed a hospital management system which it is installing at Moolai.i. This system is also successfully installed at the Hemas Hospitals, a leading health provider in Colombo, showing that Jaffna has the ability to compete head-to-head with IT companies in the capital city.

We Sri Lankans are very reluctant to donate our time and money unless we know they are spent well. This includes me giving my time writing this article, as I know Mr. Gnaneswaran (Chairman of the Hospital Board) who has been a personal friend since I came to Jaffna in 2015. Even if I hadn't known him the list of donors to the Hospital, including highly knowledgeable doctors' organizations, is impressive. Apart from these organizations, many individuals too have donated sums ranging from a few thousand to over a million rupees. These donors have confidence in the hospital's leadership to make donations running into millions of rupees:

Governments:

- US Aid (USA)
- British High Commission (UK)
- Embassy of The Netherlands (Holland)

- GIZ (Germany)
- International Agencies
- UNDP (United Nations)
- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Charities:
- Ratnam Foundation (UK)
- The Refugees Rehabilitation Organization Ltd
- International Medical Health Organization (USA)
- North-East Emergency Reconstruction Programme
- Medical Institute of Tamils (UK)
- Manitha Neyam Trust (International)
- Australian Medical Aid Foundation (Australia)
- Sri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple (UK)
- Medical Institute of Tamils (Canada)
- Maharajah Organization's CSR (Sri Lanka)
- Standing Committee of Tamils (UK)
- Tamil Union of Herts (UK)
- Karai Welfare Society (UK)

Moolai Cooperative Hospital has travelled a traumatic journey. From its altruistic birth in 1936 via its destruction during the Sri Lankan Civil War, it is now undergoing a rebirth. My late father, who would have been 6 years old at the time, used to tell us how his mother took them once a year by bullock cart from their home in Colombuthurai to her paddy fields in Velanai. A joyful full day trip, doubtless taking longer due to the rutty roads the bullock had to cope with. Moolai Hospital when it was founded was accessible to those within just a few miles. Nowadays, with cars buses scooters and trishaws travelling on good roads, Moolai is accessible to a much larger population from the whole Jaffna Peninsula.

As a center of excellence in the North, Moolai Hospital can provide vital health services to an underserved region of the country. It can be an example of how high quality, high value services can be provided from the North, encouraging further investment in other ventures. And it can be an incubator for the development of new top class products and services created in the North such as the Arogya.life systems.

For these and other reasons, Moolai Cooperative Hospital deserves applause and support.

The hospital is led by Dr.R. Surenthirakumar (Medical Superintendent) and Mr.M. Gnaneswaran (Chairman of the Board) in Jaffna, and by Dr.S. Rajasunderam based in the UK. Their contact details are available here:

<http://moolaihospital.com/contact-us/>

(For those who would like to help Moolai Cooperative Hospital achieve its aims, please email Dr. R. Surenthirakumar, (surenthirakumaran@gmail.com))

(The writer Jekhan Aruliah was born in Sri Lanka and moved with his family to the UK when he was two years of age. Brought up in London, he graduated from Cambridge University in 1986 with a degree in Natural Sciences. Jekhan then spent over two decades in the IT industry, for half of which he was managing offshore software development for British companies in Colombo and in Gurgaon (India). In 2015 Jekhan decided to move to Jaffna where he is now involved in social and economic projects. He can be contacted at jekhanaruliah@gmail.com)



Scarborough Health Network welcomes Toronto's first baby of 2019

“Surprised” and “excited” were the words Mohammed and Dina Al-Ameri used to describe how they felt when they learned that their new daughter Fatima was the first baby born in Toronto for 2019.

“I really wasn’t looking at the time and thought maybe she was born a few minutes after midnight, so I was shocked when the nurse told me that she was born just eight seconds into the New Year,” said Dina.

Dina’s due date was originally January 6, but she went into labour the morning of December 31.

“By the evening Dina told me she needed to go to the hospital as soon as possible. We arrived at about 10 p.m.

and Fatima was born with the New Year’s Eve fireworks. It was the best New Year’s ever,” explained Mohammed with a smile.

Fatima – who was born at a healthy 6 pounds – is Mohammed and Dina’s second child and also the second the Ajax couple has delivered at Scarborough Health Network (SHN). Their 14-month-old son Alashtar was born at the General hospital.

“The care here is the best,” said Mohammed. “The doctors and nurses do everything they can to make the experience as easy as possible for the mom.”

Dina agrees. “Dr. [Ahlam] Yanni has been my doctor for both of my pregnancies and she and all of the staff have



From left to right: big brother Alashtar, mom Dina, baby Fatima and dad Mohammed.

been amazing and very helpful.”

For Dr. Yanni, it’s the welcoming environment, as well as the top notch care, that make SHN exceptional. “We have so many patients who tell us that when they come here it feels like home and that’s exactly how comfortable we want them to be,” she explained.

While Mohammed and Dina admit that Alashtar and Fatima may well be joined by another sibling in the years to come, for now they are grateful to be starting 2019 as a happy and healthy family of four.

“We are truly blessed,” said Mohammed.

SHN Board of Directors approves plan to begin shaping the future of care in Scarborough

All three Scarborough hospitals, including emergency departments, will remain open

The Scarborough Health Network (SHN) Board of Directors unanimously approved the recommendation to integrate the Women’s and Children’s program at the Centenary and General hospitals, at their January 24 meeting.

The Birchmount hospital is not closing; this decision is limited to how SHN delivers its Women’s and Children’s services. Birchmount will remain a vibrant community hospital and SHN is committed to reinvesting in programs and services there.

“The Board made this decision based on research data and medical input from a team of people who know the program best: physicians, midwives, nurses, and patients and families,” said Maureen Adamson, Board chair.

“This decision is a short- to medium-term complement to SHN’s planning process for the future of SHN’s facilities. In our ongoing efforts to be open and

transparent we will be posting the full report and recommendations on our public website.”

SHN’s three hospitals will remain open as community hospitals until new infrastructure and plans are in place to design the future of SHN’s facilities through Master Planning.

“We will continue to have both on-site services and on-call services at Birchmount, including paediatrics and anesthesia, to support the needs of patients who come to our emergency departments,” said Dr. Dick Zoutman, Chief of Staff.

“We will also ensure all of our hospitals support each another to provide our community with exemplary care. The women and children of Scarborough will continue to receive safe and high-quality care, no matter which hospital they visit.”

Now begins a 6-12 month process to refine and re-design the Women’s and Children’s



program. SHN will create a program integration committee to plan and manage the transition process.

As always, SHN is committed to engaging with the

Scarborough community, primary care physicians, patients, and families to determine how to best serve the needs of the women and children of Scarborough.

Feedback and ideas about SHN’s clinical services review process may be shared by email: communications@shn.ca.



Canadian Tamil Congress celebrates taking the Tamil-Canadian community to greater heights with 12th annual Thai Pongal Dinner

By Harrish Thirukumaran

On Saturday, January 19, 2019, the Canadian Tamil Congress held their 12th annual Thai Pongal Dinner at the Hilton Toronto Hotel in Markham, Ontario. It celebrated the achievements as well as contributions to social, cultural, economic, and political life both in Canada and Sri Lanka this past year of 2018. The event was attended by over 1,000 guests. Emceed by Kumar Ratnam, president and co-founder of the Centre for Youth Leadership, the program began with an introductory speech by Dr. Vadivelu Santhakumar.

Dr. Santhakumar, a family physician and CTC President this past year, highlighted that the perseverance and solid community ties has become symbolic of the wider economic, social, cultural and political fabric of Canada.

"It is our pleasure to see the next generation of Tamil Canadians now taking us to greater heights in Canada and across the globe," stated Santhakumar. Two noteworthy events that were spearheaded by the CTC include a documentary reception for Mathangi Arulpragasam or MIA and a vigil held for victims of the alleged serial killer, including Kirushna Kanagaratnam and Skandaraj Navaratnam. Another hugely significant achievement for the organization was its ability to secure an agreement with Tamil Chair Inc. and the University of Toronto Scarborough to establish a Tamil Studies chair there.

Canadian politicians in attendance included Rod Philips, Ontario Minister of the Environment and Member of Provincial Parliament for Ajax, Salma Zahid, Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Southwest, Michael Thompson, Toronto City Councillor for Scarborough Centre, and Juanita Nathan, York Region District School Board

Trustee for Ward 7.

Apart from a series of speeches and greetings made by politicians and other guests reflecting on its work, the event was graced with a few musical and dance performances. One performance that struck out particularly in contrast to previous Pongal events was a traditional Tamil dance performance rendered by Iswarya Prabakar.

The event also presented some awards to distinguished guests in proud recognition of their unique contributions to the Tamil community in Canada. The Leaders for Change Award is awarded to individuals who have showcased efforts to work towards that change that have been beneficial to the lives of others. The recipient of this award was D. Imman, an Indian film composer and singer in the Tamil and South Indian language film industry. "I sincerely thank the Canadian Tamil Congress for its impeccable work, from human rights advocacy, advancement of Tamil studies, to the preservation of the Tamil culture and heritage."

"I wholeheartedly thank the Tamil Chair for having me come on board to compose the Tamil Anthem for the upcoming Tamil Chair in the University of Toronto." Stated D. Imman. In this sense, he expressed the importance of learning the Tamil language at home as well as the his hope to have talent of Sri Lankan Tamil descent featured on his next album.

Despite Thai Pongal being centered on a sweet rice dish, it was not served to the guests at the event; maybe it was not readily available at the venue. In light of this, an ideal substitute could be rice pudding itself. After all, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, too, has remarked that the signature Pongal dish enjoyed by millions of Tamils in Canada and elsewhere comes close to it.





Special Feature

South Indian film celebrity lends support to Tamil Chair initiative of U of T Scarborough Campus

“The one thing that unifies all of us right here is because we are all Tamil and for that I feel very proud,” D. Imman

As a volunteer teacher, Tharscika Ramaneeakaran remembers a student telling her why she wanted to learn Tamil — she could not understand her grandparents.

“The Tamil language is a medium for me to inspire,” says Ramaneeakaran, a third-year Biochemistry student and culture director of U of T Scarborough’s Tamil Student’s Association.

Tamil is the oldest of the world’s seven classical languages and is spoken by more than 80 million people around the world. But after 3,000 years, many physical copies of its rich literature and history are now gone, leaving only “bits and pieces.”

Ramaneeakaran says this is why having a chair in Tamil studies at U of T Scarborough is so important.

“By having a Tamil chair to do proper research, it’s not just that we can connect with our own culture and language. We can tell the world, we can share it.”

Ramaneeakaran was one of several performers at the first Tamil Heritage Month celebration hosted at U of T Scarborough. The event celebrated the Tamil community and was a fundraiser for an initiative to bring a full-time chair in Tamil studies to U of T Scarborough.

The event was created in collaboration with Tamil Chair Inc. and the Canadian Tamil Congress, the two non-profit organizations that teamed up to pledge \$3 million in 2018 toward creating the chair. The funds will support the chair’s work to research Tamil language, history and culture and develop an academic program for Tamil studies.

“During this special time, we want to recognize the many contributions Tamil-Canadians have made in our society,” U of T Scarborough Principal Wisdom Tettey told the audience. “It is with the unwavering support of this community that the University of Toronto Scarborough is able to strengthen and be a leader in Tamil studies.”

The night began and ended with dances by Niro Dance Creations, a Scarborough dance school that specializes in classical Indian dance. Their closing dance was a new routine to a new tune — an original theme song donated for the Tamil chair initiative by D. Imman, a famous film composer, music director and singer in the Tamil film industry.

“The one thing that unifies all of us



A new dance closed the first Tamil Heritage Month celebration at U of T Scarborough, choreographed to composer D. Imman’s new theme song for the Tamil chair initiative.



U of T Scarborough student Tharscika Ramaneeakaran was one of 18 performers that sang, acted and narrated an epic story at the Tamil Heritage Month celebration.



Composer D. Imman was recognized by multiple institutions for his pro-bono work creating a theme song for the Tamil chair initiative.

right here is because we are all Tamil and for that I feel very proud,” Imman told the audience in Tamil. The night also marked the appointment of

Imman as a Canadian ambassador of Tamil Chair Inc.

Imman’s contribution earned him recognition from U of T Scarborough,



who was presented a plaque by Principal Tettey. He was also recognized by Councillor Jennifer McKelvie of Ward 25 (Scarborough—Rouge Park), representing the city of Toronto, as well as a separate recognition from the federal government, by MPP Vijay Thanigasalam, one of the first Tamil MPPs in Canada.

In the night’s feature event, a traditional Tamil performance art form was used to tell an epic tale. The performance was a Villuppaattu, or bow-song, an ancient storytelling form in which a massive bow strung with bells is struck to create music, accompanying songs and narration as the story is told.

The songs, music and narration were all written by Shanmuganathan Ramaneeakaran, caretaker at U of T’s Hart House and University College. Eighteen performers illustrated parts of The Legend of Ponnivala, the oral folk epic (which is estimated to be at least 500 years old) from South India. U of T faculty member Brenda Beck first brought the tale to Canada and the U.S. in the late 1960s.

“I hope this will be the first chair and the first university that will expand to give value and importance to the folk traditions of Tamil culture,” says Beck, who was also selling various copies of The Legend of Ponnivala at the event, proceeds of which went to the Tamil chair.

As of 2016, January is officially Tamil Heritage Month across Canada. The four-day Tamil harvest festival, Thai Pongal, was also celebrated last week. The festival is a show of appreciation to the Sun God and commemorates the sun’s journey north, as the Earth spins on its axis in orbit.

As of Jan 21st, the efforts by Tamil Chair Inc. and Canadian Tamil Congress have raised \$790,000 in pledges and donations for the Tamil Chair initiative.

To learn more about the Tamil chair initiative, and to donate, visit

**www.torontotamilchair.ca
Wednesday, January 23, 2019
Alexa Battler**



Golden Memories of Sister Rina Rasiah

by Raymond Rajabalan

Not everyone has the opportunity to be blessed as a great family that is privileged to offer its three siblings to serve the Lord. Now recollecting the past memories after five decades, I belatedly realize how fortunate I was to have lived next to the residence of Late Mr. Rasiah who was a dedicated teacher in the island of Kays for more than four decades and who was uniquely blessed to have three of his children chosen to serve the Lord.

Since I left my birth place of Kays in my early twenties to begin my higher studies at the University of Peradeniya, I gradually lost contact with most of my school mates. Thus during the course of time, I lost all contact with sister Rina and her siblings too. However by sheer coincidence, it so happened that in the very same year of my gaining admission to the university in 1968, just as I was about to begin my degree program completely unaware to myself, by the will of Lord Rina Rasiah had begun the noble profession of serving the Lord as a nun of the order of Holy Cross Menzingen. Thus began her



service of dedication and sacrifice that has continued uninterrupted for half a century amidst a variety of trying circumstances resulting from the horrors of three decades of civil war.

It so happened that I did not have the opportunity of meeting any one of Mr. Rasiah's children for the next few years. However within a short while I was elated to meet sister Rina's elder brother Louis Rasiah whom my friends and myself affectionately used to call Varatharaja. That was around 1970 and I never had the chance to be in touch with him until I was able to establish contact with him once again a few years ago through a mutual friend who also resides in France. Meanwhile I also once had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Rasiah's eldest son Julius who was ordained a priest at a later stage of his life by his school mate Emeritus Bishop of Trinco-Batticaloa Rt. Rev. Dr. Kingsley Swampillai.

However I had completely lost touch with Sister Rina until I met her by chance while I was teaching at Colombo St. Peter's College. One day, when I happened to pass a nun along the college corridor on a bright sunny morning at first was unable to recognize her until she introduced herself. While I was pleasantly surprised to meet sis-



ter Rina after many years now transformed as a divine looking nun, I was quite concerned to note her limping and I was sorry to hear from her that it was due to an accident involving a motor vehicle. It was a very brief chat and since I left Sri Lanka the very same year once again I lost all further contact with that angelic looking nun.

Though I knew nothing of the whereabouts of Sister Rina until very recently, I happened to learn that that her younger brother Rev. Fr. Jeyaraja Rasiah was serving as a Provincial superior in Sri Lanka & Pakistan and previously Director of East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI), Manila, Philippines. It was a great news since I had not heard much about him after his ordination.

Meanwhile, just recently I came to know from her elder brother Louis through an article written by him in Daily Mirror newspaper of Sri Lanka dated Jan 14, 2019 that Sister Rina had just completed 50 years of service

to the Lord. However I was devastated to hear that her health has deteriorated severely after half a century of selfless service including caring for the victims of the recent civil war in the island nation.

Sister Rina willingly chose to carry the Cross for the Lord. Like a candle she has been constantly burning herself for several decades shedding light to brighten the lives of hundreds of war victims, not caring for her own health.

As an average human being, it was very painful for me to learn about her present state of health yet I am confident that the Lord in HIS infinite wisdom will guide and protect her for the rest of her life.

This article is written to mark the completion of 50 years of Sister Rina's service to the Lord.

The author of the article was a former neighbour of Sister Rasiah nearly 50 years ago.



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Take it or Leave it



People say, “World peace: not possible! Why? Because there’s so much greed.” So, one day I was thinking about that—“Greed, greed. Yeah, greed. There’s a lot of greed in this world.” And then I said “Well there must be an antidote to greed.” And I found it; it’s called “appreciation.”

Greedy people can never appreciate. They can’t! As soon as they start appreciating, you know what happens? You, the human, kicks in. And you know what your nature is? By the way, do you know what your nature is? When you like something—there’s a song playing on the radio that you like—“yeeeh” goes the volume.

You want to share it! You want to share.

Cooking in the kitchen—and you’re cooking something, and it’s good. What happens!? All the protocols go out. “Taste this. Taste this.” What!? No fork. No knife? No washing of the hands? No plate; no this; no that? “No, here, taste—taste, taste this.” This is the human being!

You are putting on that dress, and you look beautiful in that. And what do you want to do!? Show it. Show it.

Appreciation kills greed. In all the greed in the world—it’s there, but they don’t appreciate, because they’re only on one track: “More. More. More. More. More. More.” If

they start appreciating it—if they actually start enjoying what they have—they’ll go, “Wow, this is good! Let me share this!” Because that’s human nature—and you are a human being.

The journey to the self, then, is truly a journey to you. It’s called, “Come home. Come home!” And you will see the world change for you, because, remember, you have to make peace with the world. The world isn’t going to make peace with you. You have to make peace with the world.

Prem Rawat

VALENTINE'S DAY

Raymond Rajabalan

Valentine's Day, also called Saint Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine, is celebrated annually on February 14. Originating as a Western Christian feast honoring one or two early saints named Valentinus, Valentine's Day is recognized as a significant cultural, religious, and commercial celebration of romance and romantic love in many regions around the world, although it is not a public holiday in any country.

Martyrdom stories

Associated with various Valentines connected to February 14 are presented in martyrologies, including a written account of Saint Valentine of Rome imprisonment for performing weddings for soldiers, who were forbidden to marry and for ministering to Christians persecuted under the Roman Empire. According to legend, during his imprisonment Saint Valentine restored sight to Julia, the blind daughter of his judge, and before his execution he wrote her a letter signed "Your Valentine" as a farewell.

Association of Valentine's day with romantic love

The day first became associated with romantic love within the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer, an English poet, in the 14th century, when the tradition of courtly love flourished. In 18th-century England, it evolved into an occasion in which lovers expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering confectionery, and sending greeting cards.

Valentine's Day symbols that are used today include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. Since the 19th century, handwritten valentines have given way to mass-produced greeting cards. In Europe, Saint Valentine's Keys are given to lovers "as a romantic symbol and an invitation to unlock the giver's heart", as well as to children, in order to ward off epilepsy.

Saint Valentine's Day is an official feast day in the Anglican Communion and the Lutheran Church.

Many parts of the Eastern Orthodox Church also celebrate Saint Valentine's Day, albeit on July 6 and July 30, the former date in honour of the Roman presbyter Saint Valentine, and the latter date in honour of Hieromartyr Valentine, the Bishop of Interamna (modern Terni).

History of Various Valentines

Numerous early Christian martyrs were named Valentine. The Valentines honored on February 14 are **Valentine of Rome** and **Valentine of Terni**.

Valentine of Rome

Valentine of Rome was a priest in Rome who was martyred in 269 and was added to the calendar of saints by Pope Galesius in 496 and was buried on the Via Flaminia. The relics of Saint Valentine were kept in the Church and Catacombs of San Valentino in Rome, which "remained an important pilgrim site throughout the Middle Ages until the relics of St. Valentine were transferred to the church of Santa Prassede during the pontificate of Nicholas IV". The flower-

crowned skull of Saint Valentine is exhibited in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome. Other relics are found at Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin, Ireland.

Valentine of Terni became bishop of Interamna and is said to have been martyred during the persecution under Emperor Aurelian in 273. He is buried on the Via Flaminia, but in a different location from Valentine of Rome. His relics are at the Basilica of Saint Valentine in Terni (Basilica di San Valentino).

Third saint named Valeniine

The Catholic Encyclopedia also speaks of a third saint named Valentine who was mentioned in early martyrologies under date of February 14. He was martyred in Africa with a number of companions, but nothing more is known about him. Saint Valentine's head was preserved in the abbey of New Minster, Winchester, and venerated.

Celebration of valentine's day in various Christian denominations

February 14 is celebrated as St. Valentine's Day in various Christian denominations; it has, for example, the rank of 'commemoration' in the calendar of saints in the Anglican Communion. In addition, the feast day of Saint Valentine is also given in the calendar of saints of the Lutheran Church. However, in the 1969 revision of the Roman Catholic Calendar of Saints, the feast day of Saint Valentine on February 14 was removed from the General Roman Calendar and relegated to particular calendars for the following reason: "Though the memorial of Saint Valentine is ancient, it is left to particular calendars, since, apart from his name, nothing is known of Saint Valentine except that he was buried on the Via Flaminia on February 14."

The feast day is still celebrated in Balzan (Malta) where relics of the saint are claimed to be found, and also throughout the world by Traditionalist Catholics who follow the older, pre-Second Vatican Council calendar.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, St. Valentine is recognized on July 6, in which Saint Valentine, the Roman presbyter, is honoured; in addition, the Eastern Orthodox Church observes the feast of Hieromartyr Valentine, Bishop of Interamna, on July 30.

Legends

J.C. Cooper, in The Dictionary of Christianity, writes that Saint Valentine was "a priest of Rome who was imprisoned for succouring persecuted Christians." Contemporary records of Saint Valentine were most probably destroyed during this Diocletianic Persecution in the early 4th century. In the 5th or 6th century, a work called Passio Marii et Marthae published a story of martyrdom for Saint Valentine of Rome, perhaps by borrowing tortures that happened to other saints, as was usual in the literature of that period. The same events are also found in Bede's Martyrology, which was compiled in the 8th century. It states that Saint Valentine was persecuted as a Christian and interrogated by Roman Emperor Claudius



II in person. Claudius was impressed by Valentine and had a discussion with him, attempting to get him to convert to Roman paganism in order to save his life. Valentine refused and tried to convert Claudius to Christianity instead. Because of this, he was executed. Before his execution, he is reported to have performed a miracle by healing Julia, the blind daughter of his jailer Asterius. The jailer's daughter and his forty-six member household (family members and servants) came to believe in Jesus and were baptized.

A later Passio repeated the legend, adding that Pope Julius I built a church over his sepulchre. The legend was picked up as fact by later martyrologies, starting by Bede's martyrology in the 8th century. It was repeated in the 13th century, in The Golden Legend.

There is an additional embellishment to The Golden Legend, which according to Henry Ansgar Kelly, Emeritus Professor of English of University of California, added centuries later, and widely repeated. On the evening before Valentine was to be executed, he is supposed to have written the first "valentine" card himself, addressed to Julia, the daughter of his jailer Asterius, who was no longer blind, signing as "Your Valentine." The expression "From your Valentine" was later adopted by modern Valentine letters. This legend has been published by both American Greetings and The History Channel.

John Foxe, an English historian, as well as the Order of Carmelites, state that Saint Valentine was buried in the Church of Praxedes in Rome, located near the cemetery of Saint Hippolytus. This order says that according to legend, "Julia (daughter of jailor Asterius) herself planted a pink-blossomed almond tree near his grave. Today, the almond tree remains a symbol of abiding love and friendship."

Another embellishment suggests that Saint Valentine performed clandestine Christian weddings for soldiers who were forbidden to marry. The Roman Emperor Claudius II supposedly forbade this in order to grow his army, believing that married men did not make for good soldiers.

According to legend, in order "to remind these men of their vows and God's love, Saint Valentine is said to have cut hearts from parchment", giving them to these soldiers and persecuted Christians, a possible origin of the widespread use of hearts on St. Valentine's Day.

Saint Valentine supposedly wore a purple amethyst ring, customarily worn on the hands of Christian bishops with an image of engraved in it, a recognizable symbol associated with love that was legal under the Roman

Empire; Roman soldiers would recognize the ring and ask him to perform marriage for them. Probably due to the association with Saint Valentine, amethyst has become the birthstone of February, which is thought to attract love.

Chaucer's love birds

Jack B. Oruch writes that the first recorded association of Valentine's Day with romantic love is in Parliament of Fowles (1382) by Geoffrey Chaucer.

Chaucer wrote:

"For this was on seynt Volantynys day
Whan euery bryd comyth there to chese his make".

["For this was on St. Valentine's Day, when every bird cometh there to choose his mate."]

This poem was written to honor the first anniversary of the engagement of King Richard II of England to Anne of Bohemia

Valentine poetry

Valentine's Day is mentioned ruefully by Ophelia in William Shakespeare's Hamlet (1600–1601):

"To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,
And dupp'd the chamber-door;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more."

—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5

Roses are red

The verse "Roses are red" echoes conventions traceable as far back as Edmund Spenser's epic *The Faerie Queene* (1590):

"She bath'd with roses red, and violets blew,
And all the sweetest flowres, that in the forrest grew."

The modern cliché Valentine's Day poem can be found in the collection of English nursery rhymes Gammer-Gurton's Garland (1784):

**The rose is red, the violet's blue,
The honey's sweet, and so are you.
Thou art my love and I am thine;
I drew thee to my Valentine:
The lot was cast and then I drew,
And Fortune said it shou'd be you**



Special Feature

70th Republic Day of India Celebrations in Toronto

The Republic Day of India was jointly celebrated by Rajasthan Association of North America (Canada) –RANA, Arya Samaj Markham (ASM) and Sanatan Mandir Cultural Centre at the Vedic Cultural Centre on Sunday January 27, 2019.

There was an overwhelming response by the community as many people attended this auspicious celebration. Mrs. Swati Singhal President for RANA welcomed the Indian community and congratulated them on this historic day. Government officials from all 3 levels also attended the event and

stressed the importance of celebrating such significant moments in our history.

The cultural program began with a puja and Havan followed by a group performance of all the artists singing the Canadian and Indian National Anthem. Artist Director Sanji Piranthapan presented a classical and semi classical dance. RANA ladies choreographed and performed a beautiful folk ghoomar dance. ASM displayed a variety of colourful performances representing the various states of India by Sunday School kids, devotional songs

by seniors, and patriotic dances by the youth and ladies. Sanatan Mandir presented a folk garba performance.

Panwar Music & Dance presented a special Vande Mataram performance during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Toronto; music was composed by Guru Hemant ji and dance was choreographed by Vashali Panwar. Masters of ceremony Seema Khanna and Neera Chakravorty kept the audience engaged throughout the entire event.

Mr. Amar Erry President of Arya Samaj Markham thanked the won-

derful team of organizers, performers, volunteers, and supporters for making this community event a grand success. This joint community event ended with delicious rishi langar.

Contact for further information:

Neera Chakravorty, Director

(Kids, Youth and Summer Camp Coordinator)

Vedic Cultural Centre

- Arya Samaj Markham

4345-14th Ave, Markham,

ON L3R-0J2

Cell: 647-290-8802;

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Century 21 Innovative Realty Inc. Celebrates 9th Annual Innovative Gala Award & Appreciation Ceremony

By Siva Sivapragasam

Century 21 Innovative Realty Inc, a well-known name in Real Estate services, celebrated its 9th Annual Innovative Gala & Appreciation Ceremony at the Brighton Convention Centre. The Gala was a celebration of successful completion of nine years in Business Achievement of Grand Centurion Office Award & Chairman's Circle Office Award. The event was well-attended by their agents, well - wishers and friends.

Century 21 Innovative Realty, Brokerage serves the Greater Toronto Area residential/commercial market since 2010. With the highest quality of services provided by well trained real estate professionals using latest innovative technology, the company has earned recognition and reputation. The President of the company is Mr. Sameem Mohamed. Seen here are pictures taken at the Event





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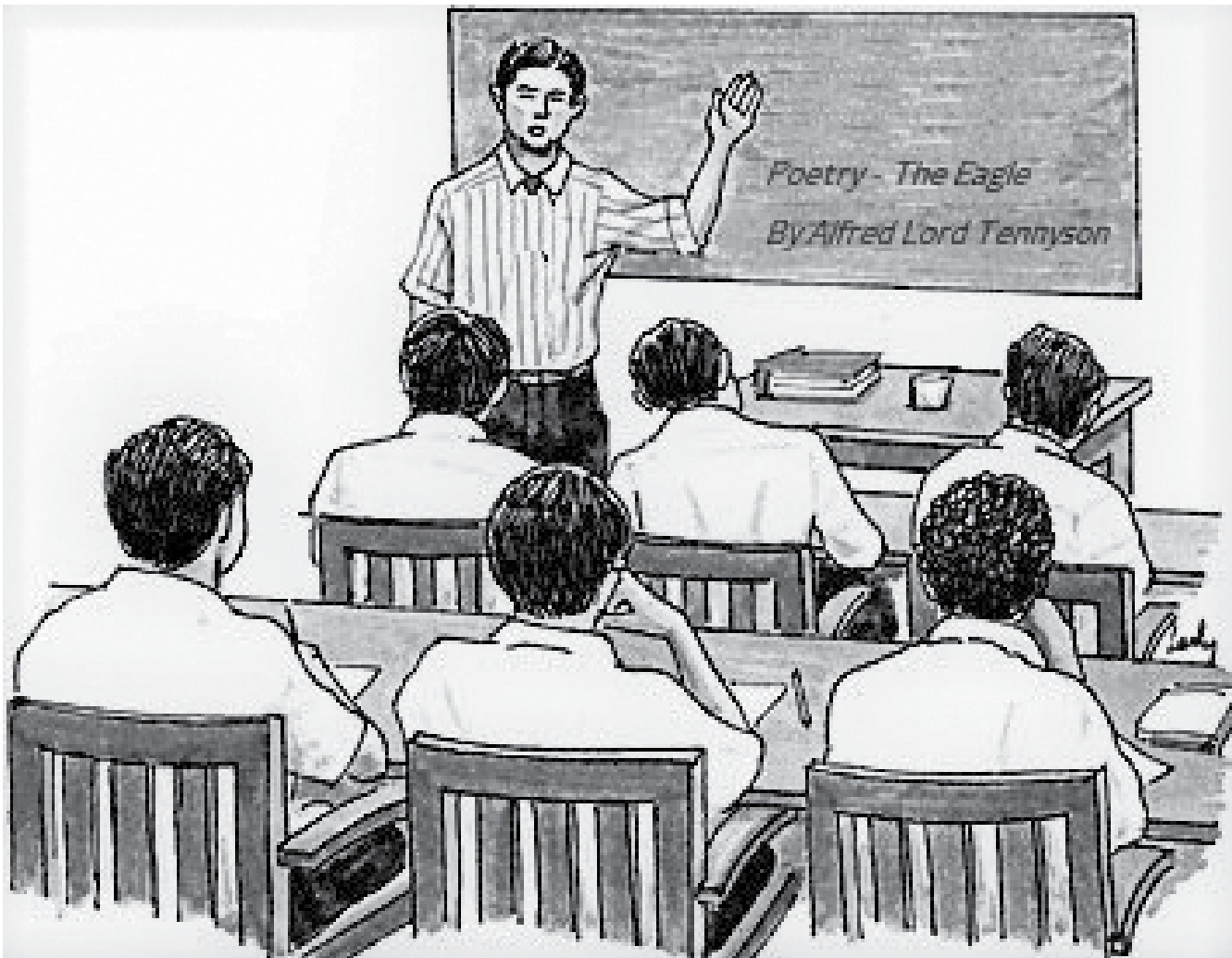
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A TASTE OF LITERATURE

(FOR BEGINNERS OF ENGLISH)



C. Kamalaharan

“Good morning Sir,” the students bubbling with enthusiasm greeted me as I stepped into the classroom. I too reciprocated with my usual smile and began the day’s work. “Well students what did we study yesterday?”

“Adjectives Sir,” all of them replied in unison. “Now children, look around the classroom and write sentences using adjectives for the things you see.” Having completed the task I requested the students to read the sentences; “Kumar, read your sentence?”

“Roy is wearing a checked shirt.” “Good, now Ravi what’s your sentence?” Just then seeing a chubby boy passing by Ravi read, “He is a chubby boy.” All of them laughed. Ranjith continued, “This is an interesting lesson.” “Good boys, now you know what adjectives are.” “Today we’ll go further and study comparison of adjectives.” “What is comparison of adjectives Sir,” asked Suresh. “Adjectives are used to compare nouns which describe persons, places and things.” The three different forms of adjectives are the positive the comparative and the superlative. The positive form describes one noun. The comparative form compares two nouns and the superlative form compares more than two nouns. Most comparative forms of adjectives are formed by adding *er* to the positive form. Most superlative forms of adjectives are formed by adding *est* to the positive form.

“Now three of you come forward and stand according to your heights.” Jeevan, Nathan and Jaleel stood according to their heights in ascending order. “Now look here boys Jeevan is tall, Nathan is taller than Jeevan and Jaleel is the tallest among the three of you.”

“If an adjective has more than one syllable the word more or less is placed in front of the comparative form.

eg: Oranges are more cheaper than apples.”

“If an adjective has three or more syllables the word most or least is placed in front of the superlative form.

Eg: The rose is the most beautiful flower of all the other flowers.”

“Write the comparative and superlative forms of the following words: cold, hard and small.” All the students wrote correctly.

“Now boys can anyone of you tell the comparative and superlative of good?” All remained silent and all of a sudden Ruban raised his hand confidentially. ‘O.K Ruban you tell.’ “Good gooder and goodest. The whole class burst out laughing. “Look here boys,” said I. Some adjectives have irregular comparative and superlative forms:

Eg: good, better, best
little, less, least
much, more, most

“Rajan, can you tell the comparative and superlative of ill?” Rajan thought deeply for awhile but couldn’t find an answer. I repeated, “ill, i – l – l.” “Can anyone among you tell?” Ramesh raised his hand. “O.K Ramesh you tell.” Ramesh told “ill, very ill, dead.” Once again a lengthy laugh. I said, “Ramesh, you should only compare the quality and must not change the overall meaning.” “Yes Sir, then what is the comparative and superlative of ill Sir?” “Ill, worse, worst.”

While they were writing the bell rang and as I was about to leave the class the boys reminded me, “Sir today its double period.” “Oh!” said I and as I was about to begin the next lesson the boys interrupted and said, “How about literature you promised to teach us.” “Literature is not that easy,” said I. “Sir, you take literature lessons for the A division students, why not for us.” “They are brilliant students who have been selected under the placement test; they are able to grasp whatever I teach.” “We too can understand and grasp whatever you teach, teach us a simple poem for the start Sir.” I didn’t want to disappoint them and said, “O.K I’ll teach you a simple small poem.” “Thank you Sir.”

The poem I taught was ‘The Eagle’ by Alfred Lord Tennyson.

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring’d with the azure world, he stands.
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from the mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

I presented them the situation in the poem; the eagle perches on a high mountain cliff from where he watches the waves of the deep blue sea below in search of prey. In a split second like lightening and thunder he falls down and rises with a fish in its claws. “Literature is easy Sir,” the boys said. “Its not so students. I haven’t come to the literature part of it. You have to see how the words are arranged. Look at the words in the first line; clasps crag and crooked. All the words begin with the same letter or sound. The arrangement of these words is known as alliteration.” “Sir, we have alliterations in Tamil also.” “Now look at the last word in each sentence; hands lands and stands. All these are rhyme words. We have rhyme words in Tamil also.” “Good, you have also to delve deep into the study of the poem and bring forth your appreciation of the poem. The hands are crooked because they are twisted, uneven and bent. The eagle is close to the sun because it is perched on a high mountain. The sea is wrinkled because of the lashing waves. Azure world means a clear sky. And the most important thing to note is that the poet enables us to see the sea through the eyes of the eagle.

“O.K children, now answer these questions orally. Where is the eagle perched?” “On a cliff.” “Good.” “What is seen below?” “The deep sea.” “Very good.” “What is the eagle on the lookout for.” “Fish.” “Excellent.” “O.K boys the last line says, like a thunderbolt he falls. Who falls?” “Alfred Lord Tennyson.”!!! The bell rang and I quietly slipped out of the class.



The Making of a Prosperous Nation



pixabay.com

By: Jesudason John Atputharajah

***“Piniyinmai, chelvamvilaivin-pamaamam,
Ani enbananaditkuivaiynthu’***

The five ornaments of a prosperous nation are unfailing health, wealth, rich harvests, popular pleasures and security. With free health coverage, ensured monetary help for the needy, oil and other natural resources, entertainment facilities and excellent military and police services Canada appears to be a country that has unconsciously followed the formula pronounced by this Kural two thousand years ago. Yes, a country will be prosperous if it has an unfailing harvest and is the abode of wise men as well as worthy men of wealth.

Valluvar further goes on to assert that a country that is admired for its abundant

production, consequent wealth, plentiful harvests, unaffected by diseases and pests shall be considered really prosperous. A great nation is one that bears may unexpected burdens with fortitude and still regularly pays the needed taxes to the government. A great country will be free from famines and epidemics and protects itself from harassment by its foes. A prosperous nation will not have warring sects, destruction and internal strife; there will be no murderous offences that disturb the peace of the government. If a country is to lead the nations, it must not be laid waste by enemies and does not lose its basic essence of prosperity in adverse circumstances.

The natural resources of the country-

the waters of the surface of the land, the rains that fall from the sky, the mountains, rivers and forts-all cumulatively make up a prosperous country. A prosperous land is one which gives abundant produce, without much effort, but not so good is land where people have to earn their living by the sweat of their brow. Even with all the economic factors and other attributes a country cannot prosper without a good government.

Puranaanooru (MosiKeethanar) reiterates the same idea when it asserts that a good government is more important than economic prosperity in the lines: “NellumUyiranre, neerumuyiranre, mannanuyirthemalathalaiulagam”.

“NellumUyiranre, neerumuyiranre, mannanuyirthemalathalaiulagam”.

(Kural: 731-740)



Valluvar's Views



The Ethnic Problem in Sri Lanka

'THE GREASY POLE PHENOMENA'

By: Jesudason John Aputharajah

A. The Riddle:

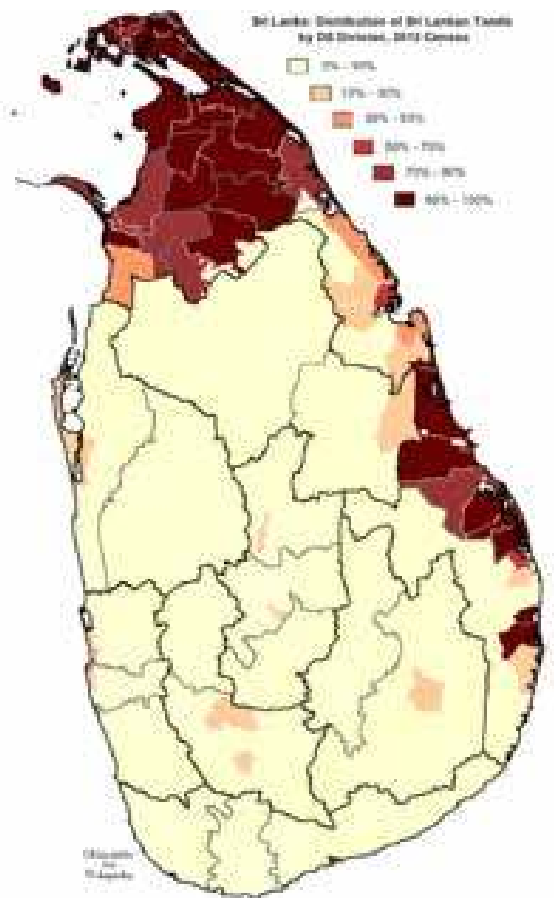
After more than seven decades of independence, Sri Lanka is still struggling with the ethnic problem. In spite of civil wars, political upheavals and heavy loss of lives racial and to some extent religious differences, still continue to hamper national integration and solidarity. The major political parties vie with each other and hunt for political advantages using the ethnic issues. Several pacts have been formed with the minority parties assuring effective solution to the language and ethnic issues but all of them failed. None of the major political leaders had the statesman-like approach to solve the problem. When one major party tried to do something progressively, the opposition party raised hew and cry and fought tooth and nail to gain political mileage. When a political pact was formed between Bandaranaike and Chelvanayagam, Jayawardene organized the Kelaniya march to put an end to it. Similar scenarios led to the rise of terrorism among the Tamil militant groups which led to a civil

the UNP and the SLFP, they could help to formulate a new constitution which could provide with the right kind of backing to achieve their ends. It was Chandrika Bandaranaike who helped the UNP to get the support of the SLFP by helping to form a new government by making an SLFPier Maitripala Srisena to become the president in 2015 defeating Mahinda Rajapakse. Even after four and a half years of flip-flopping, they were unable to achieve anything. Giving concessions to the Tamils is politically detrimental to both the major parties. That is why they keep on dilly-dallying without doing anything solid to put an end to the ethnic problems. As years go by new problems go on adding up and make it almost impossible to find a lasting solution.

C. The Puzzle:

After the end of the civil war in 2009, new problems came up. The increasing presence of army personnel in Tamil areas is a continual headache to the people. Some army men have taken

racialism and religion are utilised in order to install Sinhala hegemony in predominantly Tamil areas. Any party trying to help the Tamils are branded as traitors and made unpopular amongst the Sinhalese. Only a national minded resolute leader can put an end to these issues. A new constitution-however useful it may be to put an end to the ethnic problem will have to be supported by a two-thirds majority in the parliament. This is a very difficult goal to see the light of day. Chandrika Bandaranaike encouraged by her father's idea of the B-C Pact has been trying to do something towards this end. However, even she will not be able to progress easily without winning over the minds of the Sinhala majority. Even after seven decades of independence, Sri Lankan political leaders have not found a solution to this ever magnifying problem. The Sinhala leaders operate mainly with the next election in mind and therefore unable to achieve anything for the real progress of Sri Lanka.



According to the 2012 census there were 2,270,924 Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka, 11.2% of the population. Sri Lankan Tamils constitute an overwhelming majority of the population in the Northern Province and are the largest ethnic group in the Eastern Province. They are minority in other provinces. 70% of Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka live in the Northern and Eastern provinces.
- via: Wikipedia



The first parliament building

war that took the lives of many. The Indian Peace Keeping Force that came into the country brought in more harm than good strengthening the hands of the extremist Tamil group-the LTTE which was able to gain control over areas which had Tamil citizens in large numbers. They even proclaimed the name Tamil Eelam, which gave a new impetus to the Tamil cause.

B. The Muddle.

The Tamil minorities have tried all sorts of methods to fight for their rights in Sri Lanka. It has been like trying to climb the greasy pole. Now recently they thought that with the help of both

over the lands belonging to the Tamils and started cultivation on a large scale. They were seen selling their products in Colombo markets like Wellawatte. Now the government is also starting Sinhala settlements which were formerly strongholds of the Tamils. Mullaitivu, Killinochchi, Trincomalee, Mannar, Navatkuli, Kandarodai are some of the areas where Sinhala settlements are brought in. Furthermore, there have been attempts to plant vihares in essentially predominant Tamil areas. They plant Buddhist statues and then settle Sinhala families around it and then claim that they were Sinhala areas right from early times. These are some of the pre-planned attempts by the Sinhala government to erase the traditional Tamil areas. The issues of



Residents of Keppapilavu plan to continue their protest, which has been ongoing for more than 700 days, until all their lands that are being used as the Security Forces Headquarters Mullaitivu are released back to them - pics via: @Vikalpvoices

GLOBAL WARMING



Omkar Ganeshan



This world is what we have in common. Hi, my name is Omkar Ganeshan, and I am not just worried, but scared for the future of my mother, Earth. We all hear everyday in the news about global warming, natural disasters, and pollution and its impact, yet most of us go on in our lives, pretending life is normal. Perhaps it is because the job seems too big to tackle, or maybe because it seems beyond us. I connected our situation to the tale of the hummingbird. When the forest catches on fire, all the animals run away except for the little hummingbird. The little hummingbird kept filling its beak with water from a nearby pond and throwing the few drops on the fire. When the other animals noted that this bird was making very little impact on the growing fire, the little hummingbird said, "I am doing what I can".

Dear friends, I firmly believe that this is how we should tackle the problem of our mother earth crumbling in front of us. Doing what we can, closer to home every day, will make the biggest difference. There are many things one can do, but I am going to suggest the simplest – reducing litter in Toronto.

There are approximately 9400 street litter and recycling bins across Toronto, and 10,000 garbage and recycling bins in city parks. Help keep Toronto clean and beautiful by using these bins. It is also important to put your waste in the proper place in public places. It's just as important to recycle! Wrong placement of items, such as coffee cups, dog waste, food waste, and black plastics in public recycling bins is ruining perfectly good recyclables, sending them to

landfill. The top litter items in Toronto are gum, paper towels and napkins, and cigarette butts. Many people do not see gum as litter and toss it on our streets, causing them to look dirty and uncared for. Used gum and wrapping belongs in the garbage. Paper towels and napkins are the most common large litter items found on Toronto streets. If these items are soiled, put them in the green bin, otherwise, put them in the garbage. In a four-week blitz in 2017, these items were found: 319 tires, 2026 old posters, 544 abandoned bikes, 99 white metals discarded appliances, and 49 abandoned shopping carts. Cigarette butts make up a large part of Toronto's litter and can take up to 12 years to break down. The street litter and recycling bins have a special receptacle designated for cigarette butt disposal. Never put cigarette butts in garden planters because this can quickly lead to fires! Cigarettes are also causing global warming. Polar bears are dying because of this.

Let's make a pact today. We can't clean the world overnight, but we can change our actions. Together, let's recycle, compost, and discard garbage correctly. This will reduce the amount of things that are being sent to the landfill. Let's give the respect that Mother Nature deserves by reusing, reducing, and recycling. Let's do what we can.

Plastic bags are flying around Toronto like helium balloons released in the air. Why? Because people don't seem to care for the animals in the water that are eating these bags, or for the birds that are getting tangled in them.



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HEALTH BENEFITS OF INFRARED SAUNA THERAPY FOR NATURAL PAIN RELIEF

Take Control of Our Pain with the Powerful Healing of Infrared Saunas

By: Uthayan Thurairajah

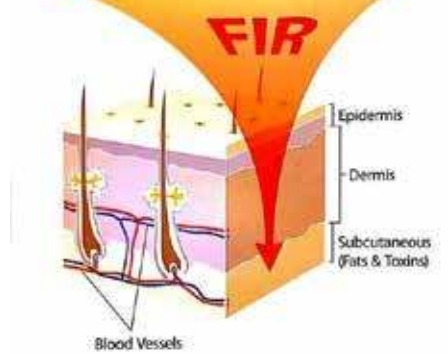
Infrared sauna therapy is a natural pain relief therapy which has pain relief properties. You can throw the pain pills and step into an infrared healing shelter to relieve tension, stress and rest muscles. Infrared sauna heat serves by infiltrating muscles, joints, and tissues by increasing the blood circulation and rushing the oxygen movement. Infrared heat reduces muscle contractions and helps the body heal itself naturally by reducing soreness on nerve endings.

Doctors recommend infrared saunas because of proven relief from chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, arthritis, sports injury, and other chronic pain situations. Infrared wavelengths enter the body to create heat, which builds profound therapeutic benefits. They increase blood flow to the muscles, delivering more concentrated oxygen, which produces more energy to heal. – Dr. Jeffrey Spencer, University of Southern California.

Studies on Sauna



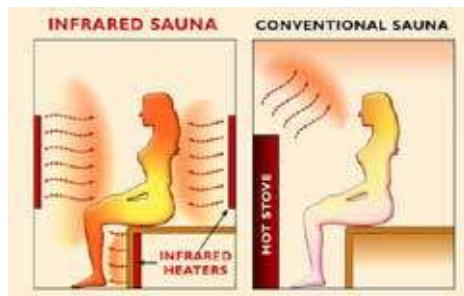
Let FIR get under your skin



A study carried out at the Auburn University in 2013, compared the stretching in an Infrared sauna compared to a training room environment. The Participants completed a series of stretches in random order sessions. The results showed that acute flexibility increased up to 3 times in the sauna. The increased benefit in the range of motion includes joint mobility, less friction in the joints, enabling of joint function to diminish stiffness and joint relaxation.

A recent Japanese study revealed that chronic pain patients experienced a notable reduction in pain levels after the infrared sauna therapy. Pain rates decreased and remained low throughout the observation period. The scientists ended that infrared heat therapy is useful for chronic pain healing.

A NASA study done by Dr. Whelan with near-infrared heat determined that LED technology allows for deep penetration of tissue and increased cell growth from the inside. Research conducted by the Department of Dermatology and Institute of Medical Research showed that use of near-infrared heat therapy helped the production of white blood cells to alleviate inflammation and reduce swelling, two primary factors in easing bodily pain.



Personal Pain Relief

Infrared saunas are effective in pain management for many different ailments. We can see some of the conditions in which infrared sauna has been used for pain relief. The Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) can cause severe pain in the leg. This is due to reduced blood flow and oxygen to the legs, which can get worse with walking.

Japanese researchers were discovered that an infrared sauna therapy for fifteen (15) minutes a day lowers the pain and patients were able to walk twice as far without pain. People with Arthritis and Ankylosing Spondylitis suffer from pain found infrared therapy without adverse outcomes. An infrared sauna helps with natural pain relief during treatment, and even months after ending the pain was lower. Infrared sauna therapy works for the pain that can not be seen. Physical pain is given more credit in our society than the pain caused by emotion. In the same study of chronic pain patients had a statistically lower anger level compared to those not in the sauna group.

Chronic pain management

One of the primary uses for far-infrared therapy is to assist in pain management. Far-infrared penetrates 1-2 inches deep into the body's soft tissue. It makes a great source of relief for symptoms like arthritis pain to backaches. This specific type of heat expands our blood vessels and increases circulation, without increasing blood pressure. Our blood circulation improves, more oxygen can reach tissues and nerves, helping to reduce pain and speed up the healing process as it has a direct effect on both free-nerve endings and peripheral nerves.

On a daily basis, our muscles become stiff due to everyday activities and stress. Far infrared heat will relax them and help them regain their elasticity. This method of sauna pain management is specifically effective as it reduces your bodies suffering from injuries and chronic pain while consistently improving the mobility of the joints/muscles in question. Whether we are dealing with muscle soreness from swelling, are elderly or younger and athletic, this technique can help loosen sore muscles and joints.

Furthermore, this deep penetrating heat used in sauna pain management not only stimulates blood circulation and dilates your blood vessels; it breaks down our body's lactic acid deposits, too! Lactic acid tends to form deposits in our muscles, which lead to cramps, secondary spasms, tightening, and fatigue in our body. Infrared

Sauna Chronic Pain Study

A study in Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics tested 46 patients with chronic pain using a variety of treatment modalities, with and without far-infrared sauna. The study found a decrease in overall pain, pain behavior, and self-rating depression in both groups of patients, but a more significant drop was found in the sauna group. Two years after the infrared sauna treatment, more of the patients in the sauna group had returned to work pain free than those without sauna treatment.

Health Benefits of Infrared Sauna

If we are a victim of sore, aching muscles, we will experience painful inflammation and swelling. The National Institutes of Health indicates that one in four Americans suffers from prolonged and acute forms of pain. Pain strikes more people than diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. It is a leading cause of disability.

Treatment programs may be difficult to implement due to the diverse nature of many pain conditions. Finding a solution that provides relief can be time-consuming, costly and frustrating. When a pain medication and therapy does not give a release, options for pain control become poor. The infrared sauna therapy easier to deal with chronic and acute pain.

The idea of thermic therapy is centuries old. The clinical studies have recently shown how valuable the sauna therapy is. One study reports that the pain reduced who underwent thermal sauna therapy.

Another study stated that "All patients experienced a significant reduction in pain by about half" after one sauna therapy.

Saunas are useful in treating chronic pain conditions, such as arthritis, fibromyalgia, and CFS. Sauna therapy is also a safe and healthy way to relieve acute pain due to tissues and muscle injuries, inflammation and swelling, and limited joint mobility.

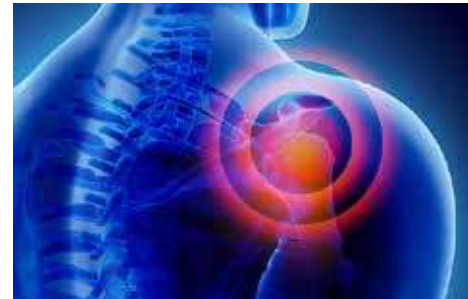
Weight Loss: expert says relax, rest in the infrared sauna.

We can lose up to 10 pounds in 30 days with regular use. The Far infrared heat can burn more than 600 calories in a 30-minute session.

Detoxification: Far infrared sauna therapy is one of the reliable and most effective detoxification systems for discharging harmful toxins, chemical residues, and heavy metals from the body.

Pain Relief: Real, lasting pain relief for nerve damage, arthritis, joint pain, muscle pain, carpal tunnel, and fibromyalgia. Infrared heat penetrates directly to the source of your pain to heal naturally.

Fibromyalgia: Sufferers complain hurt all over during a flare-up. That is because FMS attacks the tendons, muscles and fibrous tissues of the body. Medical professionals recommend far infrared sauna therapy offers a promising treatment.

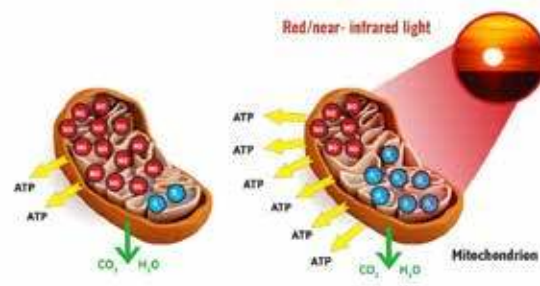


Stress Relief: Relax in sauna reduce tension and melt away the buildup of daily stress and the strain. We can feel the glow of deep penetrating infrared heat as it soothes and heals our body and sleep like a baby.

Cardiovascular Exercise: Medical studies demonstrate sauna lower the blood pressure, improved blood circulation and metabolism. Sauna session is a real passive cardio exercise – without the workout.

Skin Care: Organic skin care renew elasticin-collagen tissues while crow's feet, forehead lines, stretch marks, wrinkles, scars, age spots, and varicose veins fade away. We look younger while cleansing our body.

Immune System: Sauna is a bullet Proof our Immune System. Enhanced production of white blood cells and toxin removal by sweating joins to enhance protection against chronic infections, germs, flu, sinus, allergy symptoms, and bacteria. The body also produces specific heat shock proteins.

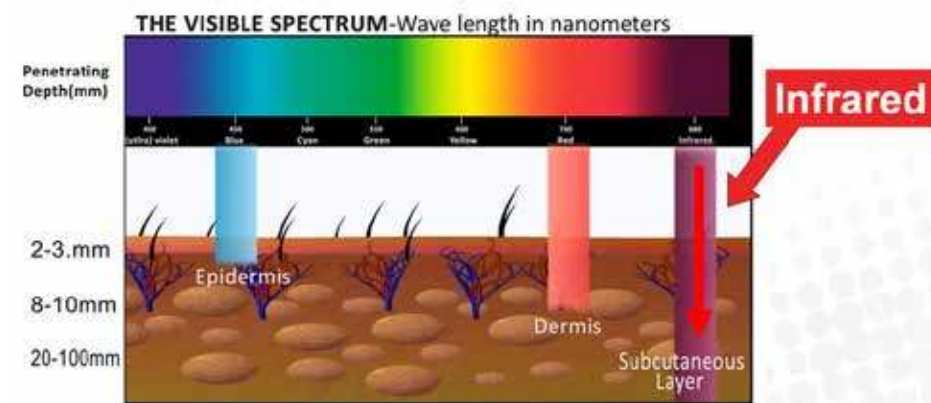


Cancer Therapy: The far infrared therapy has been used as a cancer therapy worldwide for over 20 years. Infrared saunas heat to increase the generation of white blood cells, killer T-cells, and interferon. All of them have been shown to fight cancer cell growth.

Healing Power: Sauna reduces the healing time for damaged muscles, tissues, tendons, nerve endings, and ligaments, and improve blood circulation and vasodilation. Nitric oxide and healing oxygen sent to the distressed areas, while eliminating lactic acid and toxins. Enhanced cell renewal will give more stamina, mental clarity, and energy.

The main distinction between an infrared sauna and the regular ones you see at the gym is that infrared saunas use infrared lamps to heat your body from the inside out, and traditional saunas heat the air. It makes us a little happier to know that dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins (that's where the acronym DOSE comes from) are all released during an infrared sauna session, from the infrared lights and just knowing we are doing something right.

"The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease." - Thomas Edison 1902. Consult a licensed doctor for medical advice. All of the information contained in this article is for information purposes only. Results of using our products vary on an individual basis and no immediate permanent or guaranteed solutions can be provided.



Uthayan Thurairajah, Ph.D., RSE, LC, P.Eng., FEC, is a Project Manager at WSP with over twenty years of experience in Electrical Engineering and Lighting field, and he also holds a Lecturer position at Ryerson University & professor at Centennial. Uthayan is a member of several Canadian and international professional association including Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) and Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR). He has worked on multi-disciplinary lighting and electrical projects for various clients. He researches the subject of light and lighting and taken part in several projects. He also has extensive research experience in the value of lighting design in the mental, emotional, and social well-being of a person. He is a frequent presenter and author of lighting design & health. He is passionate about integrating science and health into the lighting design.



MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Why the RRSP may be our most important Tax planning tool

David Joseph, M.A.(Economics), CFP®, CLU, RRC.

Most people know the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) as the must-use retirement savings account. But did you know that the RRSP is a powerful tax planning tool, too? With the February deadline for RRSP contributions fast approaching, now is a goodtime to look at the RRSP from a tax planning perspective.

When you contribute to an RRSP, that money is tax exempted for as long as you keep it in the plan and, even better, your contributions will reduce your overall tax burden each year.

A spousal RRSP is another potential tax-planning tool for higher income Canadians. These accounts are in one spouse's name-often a lower income earner- but the other, higher earning spouse, can contribute and receive the tax deduction on his or her taxes. This will reduce the contribution room of

of strategies to consider that can help accelerate your plan using assets you have readily available and key tax planning benefits.

If you have made less than your maximum annual RRSP contribution in the past, a lump sum contribution could allow you to catch up. You are allowed to make up for unused contribution room that you have accumulated from past years-which can also generate a significant tax refund.

It may be to your benefit to move money you currently have in savings accounts or other investments into your RRSP sooner than later. Moving these dollars into your RRSP will not only result in a reduction of your annual tax bill-but it also allows you to maximize growth inside your RRSP.

You can also withdraw from a Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) to make

up a regular payment plan-usually an automatic withdrawal from your bank account-in an amount you can afford. A regular PAC becomes part of your budget as a monthly cash outflow that you probably won't miss and removes the temptation to spend those available dollars for personal consumption.

In many cases, borrowing to take full advantage of RRSP contribution room makes sense. Maximizing your

accumulate the most wealth for use (and enjoyment!) through all your retirement years. The best retirement savings strategy for most Canadians is a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) because your contributions and all the income that accumulates in your plan are tax deferred until you start using that money in retirement. Add in the fact that your contributions can be used to reduce taxes and the magic of compounding that enhances RRSP growth over time, and it's easy to see why a registered plan makes such good financial sense. When retirement time rolls around, your RRSP may be a significant source of your retirement income.

Year after year, many Canadians leave a key financial opportunity on the table by not contributing the maximum allowable amount into their RRSP. People come up with many excuses for not contributing an RRSP. Often we hear comment that "What is the point of putting money into RRSP if when you take the money out you have to pay tax on it?" When you contribute to RRSP, you get a tax deduction and for many of you, you receive a tax refund. If you did something constructive with the tax refund like paying down debts, then the fact that you have to pay tax on your RRSP withdrawals becomes irrelevant. By having the benefit of deferring that tax, you end up with significant more money in your retirement savings.

Disclaimer:

This report specifically written and published as a general source of information only, and is not intended as a solicitation to buy or sell specific investments or insurance, nor is it intended to provide investment advice. For more information on this topic, and / or to arrange a free educational seminar, please contact me.



the higher earning spouse, but when the RRSPs are accessed in retirement, there will be two smaller incomes instead of one big income so the couple will save on taxes.

And while you may have every good intention of matching or increasing your contribution from last year-it can be difficult and stressful to come up with a significant amount of cash in short order. I can show you a number

your RRSP contribution. Any withdrawals from your TFSA are Tax-free and are added to the available TFSA contribution room the following year. The tax refund can be used as TFSA contribution the following year.

A Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC) program is a great strategy for getting the maximum amount of money into your RRSP eligible investments. When you PAC, you are simply setting

RRSP contribution now offers immediate tax savings this year and tax-deferred potential growth for many years to come. This strategy works best when the interest rate is low enough and you repay the loan as quickly as possible, preferably in one year or two at the most.

Preparing for retirement should start early with a savings strategy that will make it possible for you to accu-



4 Tips to Recover from Christmas Debt

From the recent studies, it has been identified that most of the people get into debt after the Christmas vacation. That's mainly because they don't pay special attention towards their finances when enjoying the holiday season. Hence, they have to experience a variety of negative consequences in the month of January. To overcome such consequences, you should have a clear understanding on how to recover from Christmas debt. Here are 4 useful tips that you can follow to overcome your debts.

1. Return all stuff that you didn't use

During the Christmas season, we do shop and purchase a lot of items. But you only use a handful number of items out of them. After the Christmas, you can take a walk around your home and see how many items you have used out of the items that were purchased while you were engaged with Christmas shopping.

The worst thing about Christmas shopping is that we rarely pay attention towards the value of the products when purchasing them. As a result, we run into financial difficulties after Christmas. This can be used to get rid of Christmas debt as well. All you must do is to gather all the unused items and return them. When you do it, you will figure out that there is a possibility for you to save a considerable amount of money.

It doesn't matter whether you made the original payment with your credit card or with cash. The refund that you get will provide you with an excellent financial assistance, especially when you are trying to overcome Christmas debt. The vendors will not hesitate when purchasing these items as well, because they will still be able to sell them and get a decent profit.

2. Combine all your balances

One of the biggest challenges that people face after the Christmas season is to settle their credit card debts. We often use multiple credit cards. Calculating how much credit we must pay in every single card can bring us a lot of headache as well. However, you can think about combining all the credit card balances to make your life easy. This can provide an excellent assistance to you when settling the debts. When you make such debt payments,



you will also get a secure feeling at the end of the month.

You can look at the available options and figure out a way on how to combine the balances on your credit cards. Then you will be able to figure out what your true expenses are. You can also shop around for some low interest balance transfer cards available in the market. They can provide a great help to you, when you are following a plan to overcome Christmas debt.

3. Keep an eye on the debt recovery process

When you settle your debt, you should also keep an eye on the debt recovery process. In fact, you are encouraged to create milestones along with your payment plan. Then you will be able to focus only on one milestone at a time. This will help you to make sure that you don't face any issues or unwanted stress by looking at the big picture. You just focus on the milestones and they can provide an excellent assistance to you with recovering your debts.

Depending on the total debt amount, you can give a gold star on the calendar

to signify each milestone. Then you can work accordingly to achieve the milestone in a timely manner. It is also better if you can make other people a part of this progress. You can work along with your friends and family members, who face a similar situation to overcome the Christmas debts. Then you will be able to share some of the money saving ideas and stay motivated. You can also share your experiences with them.

When you are working according to such a plan, you will be able to overcome the pain of paying Christmas debt. Hence, you can enjoy the maximum Christmas joy as well.

4. Get in touch with the creditors

Most of the people who try to overcome their Christmas debts forget this step. But it is one of the most important steps, which you need to follow to end up with positive results in overcoming Christmas debt. You will be able to discuss with your creditors and negotiate on a convenient plan on how to settle your debts. Then you will be able to settle the debts while creating

the least impact on your credit history as well. Moreover, you will not get any stress while you follow such a plan to settle all your Christmas debts.

All the credit card companies are looking forward to getting their money at the end of the day. Therefore, you can assure that you will be able to help the company get back their money and you can craft a plan on how to do it. If you can get their involvement, you can come up with a plan, where both parties are happy. Then you will be able to stick to that plan and make sure that you don't run into any financial difficulties when trying to settle your debts. You should also focus on your debts that are tagged with a higher interest rate. Settling them within a short period of time can provide relief to you with debt recovery.

In case of you have credit or debt issues visit www.gtacredit.com or call 416-489-2000 today.

Please see page 2 for GTA Credit Ad with more details and contact information.



Tamil Heritage month celebrations at the Thamil Isai Kala Manram by the Senior Tamils' Centre of Ontario and Thamil Isai Kala Manram

Tamil Heritage Month celebrations were held at the Thamil Isai Kala Manram on the 19 of Jan 2019. The event's objective was to celebrate the richness of the Tamil language and literature, the traditions, arts and culture of Tamils around the world and to educate Canadians of all backgrounds about the language, traditions and history of the Tamil people. With a view to showcase and share the above, an exhibition and a cultural event was organized jointly by The Senior Tamils' Centre of Ontario and Thamil Isai Kala Manram. The event was graced by Honorable Dr. Raymond Cho provincial minister for seniors, Honorable Gary Ananthasangaree parliamentary assistant for Heritage and Multiculturalism, MPP for Scarborough-Rouge Park Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam, School Trustees Mr. Parthi Kandavel Scarborough-Southwest and Ms. Anu Sriskantharajah Scarborough Rouge-Park. Mr. Neethan Shan one of the founder father's of Tamil Heritage month movement in Canada was also present. Rev. Professor. J. Chandrakanthan was the Guest speaker.





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GENIE SISTERS

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Sisters Niranjini Thirunesan and Rajini Nathan are both food enthusiasts from England. Niranjini, who lives in London, has a degree in Human Biology and is a trained chef. She makes it her business to know everything about what she eats, from nutritional value to source producers. Follow her food obsession on Instagram @ninjaeatsfood.

Rajini, lives in Toronto and has a background in psychology. Her speciality is in Tamil food from around the world, catch up on her meal ideas on Instagram @tamil_food.

Welcome to our recipe corner! We sisters will entice you with recipes that we have fallen in love with and teach you a little Tamil along the way, as all the ingredients will have their Tamil names. Both of us love to cook and we have developed very different styles. Niranjini has a very refined palate and cooks more contemporary world cuisine with an Asian touch. Rajini is a seasoned homemaker who loves making traditional dishes for her friends and family. Follow us on Instagram: @ninjaeatsfood and @tamil_food

Eat more, learn more!

Vetthilarasam



I think we can all agree that it's cold in Toronto, so here is a recipe to help beat those winter colds and coughs using vetthila (betle nut leaf) which is an excellent source of antioxidants, reduces gastric pain and can help with respiratory problems, amongst other health benefits.

Ingredients:

- ✓ 3 betel nut leaves- trim the stems and tips (vetthila)
- ✓ ½ cup of thick tamarind water (pulithanni)
- ✓ 1 tomato- crushed (thakkaali)
- ✓ 1 tsp cumin seeds (seeragam)
- ✓ 1 tsp black pepper seeds (milagu)
- ✓ 4 cloves of garlic (poondu)
- ✓ Pinch of asafoetida (perungaayam)
- ✓ 1 tsp ghee/coconut oil (nei/ theingaiennai)
- ✓ ½ tsp mustard seeds (kadugu)
- ✓ 5 curry leaves (karivepilai)
- ✓ Salt to taste (uppu)

Method:

In a pan add the tamarind water and the tomato on a medium flame. Either in a grinder or mortar and pestle grind the cumin seeds, black pepper, vetthila and garlic. Add this mixture to the pan along with the asafoetida and salt. Cook on a medium flame and do not let the mixture boil. This should take no more than 15-20 mins.

In a separate pan add the ghee/oil, mustard seeds (let them pop) and finally the curry leaves. Add this tempered mixture to the rasam just after switching off the flame.

If you do make this recipe please tag #monsoonjournal and do send us a pic too. Spread the love (and recipe!):)

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UK based IBC Tamil announces Canadian market entry at special Markham Convention Centre media event

By **Harrish Thirukumaran**

On January 12, 2019, IBC Tamil, a mass media company offering 24-hour television, radio and online services to Tamil audiences living all around the globe, hosted a press conference at the Markham Convention Centre. For the London, England-based IBC Tamil, this presser related to the company's decision to launch operations in Toronto, Ontario. The event was attended by over 1,000 guests and were welcomed by a series of Tamil musical performances. One of these performances included the melodic vocals of Anusha S. This company has a following of millions with its creative content that includes online news articles and television programming.

Three managers from the company answered questions from members in the audience about the launch event and other facts regarding the company's performance.

The company plans to have a launch event at the Scotiabank Arena in downtown Toronto on Saturday,

June 29th 2019. It will be presented by Tekno Media and powered by Ideal Developments, a multi-faceted company that develops residential and commercial real estate throughout the Greater Toronto Area and abroad.

As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and countless other Canadian politicians have remarked about immigrants and ethnic communities, the presence of this company in Canada too will usher in many economic development benefits for Toronto. These include tourism as well as another opportunity to showcase the social, cultural, and economic contributions of Tamil-Canadians.

Distinguished guests at the event included singer, Luksimi Sivanewaralingam and Gary Anandasangaree, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Rouge Park.

All in all, the presser was a success.

IBC Tamil representatives stated that their venture will help further the presence and integration of the Tamil community not only in Toronto, but across Canada as well.



Baskaran Kandiah (Karan) is the co-founder and Director of Lebara Group, a European telecoms company with operations in six countries. He is also the Chairman of London Tamil Media, the holding company of IBC Tamil, a popular Tamil TV channel based out of London, UK





ST.JAMES KAYTS-CANADA ASSOCIATION STAGE A MEMORABLE EVENT IN SCARBOROUGH

By: Raymond Rajabalan



REV. DR. LAWRENCE JOHN SALDAHA

It was a pleasant December evening with the usual fun filled Christmas atmosphere. Even though the weather was a bit cold it did not dampen the enthusiasm of the nearly 200 residents from the town of Kayts who thronged at the New Jasmine party hall in the city of Markham on Dec 26th to celebrate a memorable community event. The scintillating music being played in the gaily decorated hall accompanied by ripples of laughter of the gaily dressed kids who packed the party hall provided the right recipe for a great evening.

The events of the day began with the traditional lighting of the lamp followed by singing of the Canadian National Anthem and a song in praise of Tami language. Then the opening prayers were said by Rev. Fr. Charles Collins, the parish priest of Toronto followed by the singing of a hymn in honour of Saint James.

The main event soon began with the singing of Christmas Carol by adult members as well as the youngsters. Soon after a talented youth from this great community played the Octopad Drum with great dexterity to the amazement of the awestruck audience. It was followed by several co-ordinated dance programs staged by several talented youths of this well knit community.

The long awaited arrival of Santa was the next event. The energetic kids who surrounded him and began dancing in circles were showered with bags of candy and a variety of gifts.

Meanwhile specially invited religious dignitary **Emeritus Archbishop of Lahore, Pakistan Rt. Rev. Dr. Lawrence John Saldaha** arrived and after being given a rousing welcome accompanied by several rounds of applause, was garlanded he and escorted up to the gaily decorated centre stage.

The next event was the release of a book to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Canada-Kayts St James parishioners Association. An overall review of the contents of the book was done very effectively by Quintus Thuraiingham, the Master of ceremony for the event. He praised the organizing committee for taking a great interest in producing a 140 page Souvenir packed with a plethora of valuable information. The book review was followed by several speakers who described their past experiences associated with the 300 year old historical church of Kayts St. James.

The next item on the agenda of this part of this event, congratulatory speeches were delivered by Rt. Rev. Dr. Paul Rohan (University of Jaffna), Rev. Fr. Stanistan, David Thomas and R.N. Logendralingam (Chief Editor - Uthayan Newspaper). All of them praised the



A TRADITIONAL WELCOME TO ARCHBISHOP



SANTA AND KIDS



DANCE EVENT



ADRIAN ENGLEBERT



FR. CHARLES



KULENDRAN NAVARATNAM



RAYMOND RAJABALAN



LOGENDRA LINGAM



QUINTUS



DEROSHAN



JAMES NAVARATNAM



SANTA

organising committee for producing an excellent souvenir about the historical St. James church located in the island of Kayts in North Sri Lanka.

The distribution of copies of the souvenir to the special guests and the general public followed. Then several members of the St. James Kayts Canada Association who had provided great

service for its growth during the past 25 years were honoured with special awards and garlanded with golden shawls.

A sumptuous dinner was then served while simultaneously several youths from the audience began dancing to express their contentment in having staged a great event. It was obvious

that the great success of the event was due to the united effort of the devoted members of this united Catholic community.

Undoubtedly it was a very well planned event effectively co-ordinated to perfection and it could very well serve as a model for staging similar community events in the future.



COMMITTEE



Humanitarian Projects by Vanni

Implementation of an organic farming program as the most profitable and sustainable option for the farmers in the target group. Farmers needed to be trained and certified. Those farmers who have the willingness and patience to stay with it are expected to do well. The income is expected to triple compared to conventional methods

One of the Organic Farmer Perumal

His name is Perumal. About 60 Years old. Wife and children. He is a farmer, a good one.

He was our best supplier of organic papayas. We worked with him for about 15 months to have his land certified and help him grow premium priced organic fruit. Diligent person. But, he is no longer a dependable source for the market we promised his papaya to. He tends to sell to whoever shows up and makes the best deal! We actually like that kind of!

We respect that he went his own way and decides for himself what is best for him and his family. We stay in touch with him, with the understanding that he will call his own shots!

Behind him in the photo are the other organic vegetables he grows, and we find markets for.



Two of the organic farmers



This lady farmer is Kamaleswari. She works the field with the help of her son. Her husband has a job, digging wells.

Farmer Gregory brings his production to the Center for shipping to the markets by train. We are helping his son acquire more skills in computer technology.



Teaching organic methods at a farmer's homestead

The person wearing glasses is from the certifying organization. He is talking to the farmer about the requirements for getting and staying certified.



Training about increase in production

A meeting at the "Center" (That is what we call our workplace. It is short for Via Village Entrepreneur Center) with the villagers explaining the economics of organic farming. Higher selling prices, reduced costs since no commercial chemical products are used, and a slightly lower yield, all combine to produce a profit about three times that of conventional farming. The farmers are skeptical, but they listen politely! When they see the first sale, they begin to believe.

In case you are wondering, the slide subtitles are in English...but in class, we talk through the economics in Tamil, the local language.

We have had many gatherings of the villagers at the Center, whether financial training conducted by our Banker or small business activity with 12 people producing silk scarves.



A building constructed two years ago for base of operations.

The building was designed by one of our US supporters and a local architect.

It is 'passively cooled' and needs no air conditioning or ceiling fans, the ventilation design makes such equipment redundant.

It is surrounded by our model/reaching organic farm.

Our workplace, sanctuary, hideout

The "Center". In the foreground is a model organic mini-farm we use for teaching, training, experimenting with different crops. Drip-irrigation is being installed to conserve precious water.





Aid in Sri Lanka

Almost time to Harvest

The model farm, lush and green, close to harvest. The guy you see is the caretaker, security guard, model farm worker, tea and coffee provider, Mr. Gopal.



There are other ways to increase income, not just farming



Sivarogini came to us, seeking support to expand her fledgling business. She buys fresh fish directly from the fishermen and sells in villages surrounding her home. We worked with her to put a business plan together, identify funding needs, and took her to our banking contacts to obtain a loan. We will work with her for the next several months to help her build up the business.

University interns



The two young people are Diluxshana and Yugaraj. They are two, final year university students who have paid internships with us, starting about two months ago. They are business majors. They will help the small business owners with market research, business plans and pricing. They will also help us mentor the owners in the first few months of starting a business or expansion. The setting here is the Center's open office area. Thanks to the building design, even the hottest days are pleasant inside. Occasionally we may use a portable fan.

Some Villagers need a different solution



However talented and willing, there are some village people who, because of circumstances beyond their control, are restricted from benefiting from our normal method of assistance. This lady is Komavarshini. She is deaf and mute, as are her husband and two of her three children. The husband suffered a recent work-related accident and is unable to work outside the home. Limited opportunities. Komavarshini herself is needed at home to attend to her children. We have known her for a few years. She is bright, hardworking and kind.

After a lot of discussion, we gave her the funds to purchase two goats to raise and breed in her yard. She can handle this and receive a decent income to contribute to the family income.

The staff who manage the project



Our management in Vavuniya.

On the left is Anuradha. Has an advanced agriculture degree and is passionate about organic produce. Small business entrepreneur.

Siva, the operations manager. Formerly with a global non-profit organization. Great rapport with the villagers.

They recruited final-year business students from a nearby university as interns to help them with the market research, business plans, monitoring operations. So refreshing to experience the open-minded approach of the interns.

To minimize the villages' reliance on rainfall, we must accelerate our program to grow small businesses independent from farming.

The 4-year drought and its effect on this farming community has been significant. We do not see a

sustainable future in large-scale, conventional farming

We have talked to many of the villagers about diversifying into other businesses

For those who are willing, we have a mentoring and business development program tailored to individual needs

These are small businesses, we help them expand or start from scratch

We must help them overcome years of over-borrowing, high-interest loans, loan defaults and crippling debt, disqualifying many of them from conventional financing.

We are currently working on twelve business plans

Last year, 15 villagers who worked with us are now borrowing directly from the bank. They have become "bankable"!

The visit from the National Council of Exporters

An audio-visual presentation by the business people, with villagers listening.



New markets for the villagers for all their products, farming or otherwise



We invited a delegation of export companies to visit the Center and talk to the villagers about opportunities for selling to other countries.

A visit from the Rotary Organization

A visit from Rotary International Executive, Jennifer, and Colombo Rotary President, Kumudu. They are at one of the farms. The Rotary Club of Colombo is our sponsor in Sri Lanka.



Vanni Aid USA was founded about 5 years ago by Mr. Sanchayan Chutta Ratnathicam, Professional Management Executive based in California. In Toronto, anyone wish to support this project can contact Mr. S. Senthivel, Community worker and retired business entrepreneur at 1-416-707-1236.

THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA

Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple

Compiled by **Kidambi Raj**

VAIKUNTA EKADASI

December 18, 2018

What is Vaikunta Ekadasi?

It is the Ekadasi that occurs in the Tamil month of Margazhi (December-January), and is called as Vaikunta Ekadasi. One has to observe vratha on all Ekadasis, but observing vratha on Vaikunta Ekadasi bestows liberation from cycles of births and deaths.

Significance of fasting on Ekadasi:

The fast that is observed on Ekadasi is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is observed on the 11th day of the waning and waxing phase of the moon according to the traditional Hindu calendar. This is one of the most popular vratha observed in Hinduism. Lord Krishna advised Arjuna on the procedure to be followed during this day. Padma Purana says: "In the three worlds, there is no kind of fasting which is even comparable to the Ekadasi fasting. Even if one performs this fast without a proper attitude, he achieves the Supreme Abode. If one fasts on Ekadasi day, with full devotion, what happens to him by the mercy of the Supreme Lord, I cannot say (the merit he achieves cannot be described)."

The story behind Ekadasi:

The austerity is associated with much deeper aspects. This is explained in the Padma Puranam (the second amongst the eighteen puranas), which tells us about the beginnings of Ekadasi with this legend.

During the Krita Yuga, also termed the golden age, an asura called Muran harassed both devas and mortals. Unable to bear his tyranny, the devas sought refuge in Shiva. He directed them to approach Vishnu. Vishnu agreed to help the devas and went out to battle with Muran. During the long battle, which lasted one thousand celestial years, Vishnu needed to rest for a while. He entered a beautiful cave called Himavati in Badarikashrama to sleep in. Muran wanted to strike Vishnu while he was sleeping. However, Shakti – Vishnu's female energy – emerged out of his body and assumed the form of a beautiful damsel who fought Muran and vanquished him. When Vishnu woke up, he was very pleased and named this maiden as Ekadasi and granted her a boon. The maiden said, "O Lord, if You are pleased with me and wish to give me a boon, then give me the power to save people from the greatest sins if they fast on this day". Vishnu granted her the boon and declared that people worshipping her would reach Vaikunta. Thus, was born the first Ekadasi. Sages and devout people have been since, observing the ekadasi vrata regularly. Here, the demon Muran represents the tamasic and rajasic qualities in us. The import of the ekadasi vrata is that one can conquer rajasic and tamasic tendencies in us through fasting. This helps us reach our ultimate destination, Vaikuntha, which is the place or stage of no 'kuntitha' or dullness, stupidity and misery. It is also said that the cave where Sri Vishnu took rest is Badri Kashramam. Vadhari means dates (Elandhai) in Sanskrit. And as the years passed on, Vadhari became known as Badri.

Science behind Ekadasi:

Hinduism, as we all know, is more than a Religion. It is a Way of Life. In Hinduism, Science and Spirituality are inter-twined. Observance of Ekadasi is a true example of that. The special feature of Ekadasi, as most people know it, is a fast, abstinence from diet. This is how it is understood. The significance of this particular observance is not merely constituted of a fast, physically, though it is also an essential element; it has other deeper aspects. The sun is set to influence the centre of our personality; hence the sun is called *Atmakaraka*. He is the soul-influencer of the human body. In the Rig-veda, the sun is identified with the soul of the universe as well as the soul of the individual. The different limbs of our body and different parts of our system are supposed to be influenced by different planets. The sun is capable of influencing the entire being. He is, thus, the *Atmakaraka*. *Karaka* is doer, manipulator, director. If there is no sun, we know what difference it makes for us; our digestion becomes sluggish on days when there is no sun. So, important is the sun.

The moon is supposed to influence the mind. The mind is also made up of material substance. The mind is not spiritual but material. It is the subtle portion of the material substance of our food. The subtle essence of the food, not only directly taken through the mouth but through all senses, contribute to the make up of the mind or the mind-stuff. Mind is a material in a subtle sense, like a mirror which is made of earth-material only, though it shines. Only mirror is able to reflect



the light, and not the brick, though it is also made of earth material. Mind is material in this sense. It is very, very subtle and is made up of everything that we take. So, matter influences matter. Planets are not spiritual bodies, and yet they influence the mind. The mind's presiding deity is *moon*. Ekadasi is particularly relevant to this relation of moon and mind. When you go deep into the study of astronomy will find that we have nothing in our body except some planetary influences!.

Due to the Orbital path combination of the Sun, Moon and Earth, the air pressure on the Earth varies to a greater extent, both on the New moon day and the Full moon day. This can be observed when we go to the sea on these days, where tidal waves are very high and rough. On both the days, the earth pressure is at its maximum, thus leading to imbalance in the thought process. It takes about 3-4 days before the food we eat reach our brain. Now during Ekadasi, which falls on the 11th day (4 days before the No Moon/Full Moon days), if we fast/eat less, the chances of brain indulging in extreme activity due to high pressure imbalance becomes minimum. Another reason for observing fast on this day is since the atmospheric pressure is low on the 11th day; it is the best time to cleanse the bowel system.

Fasting on Ekadasi or at least not consuming cereals and pulses, helps to flush out the toxins from our body making our body stronger. After fasting on Ekadasi, on the next day, one should get up early and eat before sunrise by partaking fruits and herbs. *Nellikai* and *Agatti Keerai* act as toning agents on our digestive tract while *Sundaikkai* removes the toxic remains completely. Apart from all these, there is a necessity to give the physiological system some rest once a while. It may be over-worked due to a little over-eating or indiscriminate diet. These irregularities unconsciously done during the fourteen days get rectified in one day. Thus, the observance of Ekadasi has many advantages – physical, astral, spiritual and because this day has connection with the relation of the mind with its abode together with the moon, you feel mysteriously helped in your meditation and contemplation. Mysteriously because you cannot know this consciously. But you can feel this yourself by observing it. In India everything is interpreted spiritually. Every river is a deity. Every mountain is god. Everything is holy, dedicated to the Divine. Everywhere is God. The idea behind all this is that we have to feel the presence of God in everything and everywhere; in space and time, in everything, there is God. Thus the very objects become embodiments of God. This is India's religious sidelight, which is profoundly meaningful in life.

Swargavaasal or Gate to Sri Vaikuntam:

Planet Mercury, presided over by Lord Vishnu, will be in the 9th House from the Moon, activating this planet to shower enhanced blessings of fortune. Worshipping Lord Vishnu in the form of Vaikuntanathar is auspicious to get your boons granted. He is the protector of the universe. According to the Vishnu Purana, fasting on Vaikuntha Ekadashi is equivalent

to fasting on the remaining 23 Ekadasis of the (Hindu) year. However, according to Vaishnava tradition fasting is mandatory on all Ekadasi of both Shukla paksha and Krishna paksha. Fasting on Ekadasi is considered holier than any other religious observation.

Vishnu opened the gate of Vaikuntam (his abode) for two demons in spite of their being against him. They also asked for the boon that whoever listens to their story and sees the image of Vishnu coming out of the door (called Dwar), called Vaikunth Dwar, will reach Vaikunth as well. Temples all over India make a door kind of structure on this day for devotees to walk through. According to Padma Purana, the female energy of Vishnu slayed the demon Muran and protects the 'Devas'. This happened on the eleventh day of lunar month

during the sun's journey in the Dhanurraasi or Dhanu Rashi. Impressed by the act, Vishnu names her as 'Ekadasi' and gives her the boon that those who worship 'Ekadashi' on the day of her victory over Muran would reach 'Vaikunta' (His abode).

Srirangam Ranganathaswamy Temple or Bhooloka Vaikuntam:

Srirangam is the foremost of the eight self-manifested shrines (SwayamVyakta Kshetras) of Lord Vishnu. It is also considered the first, foremost and the most important of the 108 Vaishnava Divyasthalams. This temple is also known as Thiruvavanga Tirupati, Periyakoil, Bhooloka Vaikuntam, Bhooloka Mandapam. The temple is enormous in size. The temple complex is 156 acres in extent. It has seven prakaras or enclosures. These enclosures are formed by thick and huge rampart walls which run around the sanctum. There are 21 magnificent towers in all prakaras providing a unique sight to any visitor, this temple lies on an islet formed by the twin rivers Cauvery and Coleroon.

Every Vaishnavite Temples celebrate Vaikunta Ekadasi, by setting up Portal to replicate the gate to Heaven. But the one at Srirangam temple is known as the "Bhooloka Vaikuntam" or "Paradise on Earth" where people can gain liberation from the cycle of birth and death. In Srirangam stands true especially during the 21-day annual Sri Vaikunta Ekadasi festival. This festival falls in 2 parts. The pagal pathu and Irapathu. In between them on the 11th day is Sri Vaikunta Ekadasi is observed with unmatched spiritual fervor. The final goal of all the religious activities by a Vaishnavite is the attainment of moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death and Vaikunta Ekadasi offers insight into it.





Compiled by Kidambi Raj

THAI PONGAL

JANUARY 14, 2019



Meaning & Significance:

People celebrating Pongal realize the meaning & significance of the important rituals associated with this harvest festival, the Tamil equivalent of Thanksgiving. It is held to honour the Sun, for a bountiful harvest. While the farmers rejoice thanking Sun, the rest of the society thanks the farmers on this occasion. Pongal or Thai Pongal is also called Makara Sankranti, since it is celebrated on the first day of Thai when the Sun enters the Makara Rasi (Capricornus). This signals the end of winter and the onset of spring throughout the northern hemisphere. For the next six months, the days are longer and warmer.

When is it celebrated:

Thai Pongal is celebrated on January 14th every year. The month of Thai (January) is the harvest season in the Tamil home land spanning from Tamil Nadu to Tamil Eelam.

The Celebration:

There is much excitement and preparation. New clothes are made or bought. The homes and yards are cleaned days ahead. Family members jointly draw the kolam (a decoration laid on the floor). Rice flour, plain and coloured are used draw the kolam. The Pongal is set up in the direct view of the Sun (East). Traditionally the kolam is laid in the front or sides of the house. The climax is

the spillover of the Pongal during cooking. The spillover of milk is a propitious symbol of abundance. All gathered around rejoice and shout "Pngalo Pongal".

The period is referred to as Uttarayan Punyakalam and is considered auspicious. Legend has it that the Devas wake up after a six-month long slumber during this period. And so it is believed that those pass away during Uttarayana attain salvation. In fact, Bheeshma is believed to have waited for the dawn of Uttarayana before he gave up his life.

Pongal is a four-day affair. The first day, *Bhogi*, is celebrated on the last day of the month of Margazhi. On this day, people decorate their homes. New vessels are bought and old and unwanted things burnt.

The second day is *Perum Pongal*, the most important. It is also called Surya Pongal because people worship Surya, the Sun God and his consorts, Chaya and Samgnya.

The third day is *Mattu Pongal*, celebrated to glorify cattle that help farmers in some myriad ways. On this day, the cows are bathed and decorated with vermilion and garlands and fed.

The Tamils also remember the poet Tiruvalluvar, who was born on

this day. The last day is *Kaanum Pongal*. It is that part of the festival when families used to gather on the riverbanks and have a sumptuous meal.

This year, for the Thai Pongal several politicians from all levels joined the devotees at our temple. The list of Special Guests who came included Hon. Leona Aleslev, MP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, Hon. Bob Saroya, MP for Markham-Unionville, Hon. Michael Parsa, MPP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, Hon. Daisy Wai, MPP for Richmond Hill, His Worship Dave Barrow, Mayor of the Town of Richmond Hill, Mr. Joe DiPaola, Deputy Mayor of the Town of Richmond Hill, Mr. Carmine Perrelli, Deputy Mayor of the Town of Richmond Hill, Mr. Eric Joliffe, Chief of the York Region Police, Mr. Ricky Veerappan, Supdt. of Diversity, Unity & Inclusion Bureau of York Region Police and Supdt. Russ Bellman Commander of Dist. 2 of York Region Police. Hon. Doug Ford, the Premier of the Province of Ontario, who was supposed to come had to cancel the trip, since he had to go to Detroit for talks with General Motors regarding the Oshawa GM Plant. See some pictures taken on that day.

Join us in thanking the Sun and the farmers!!!





Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham celebrates Tamil Heritage Month 2019



Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham hosted their 10th year Tamil Heritage Month celebration as a grand event at Pickering Town centre on January 19th 2019. This is the 6th year that TCASD was able to stage this beautiful Tamil Heritage program for the main stream to view and witness the rich culture of Tamils. In October 2016, Motion M-24 was passed in the House of Commons in Ottawa which designated January as Tamil Heritage Month.

The motion serves to “recognize the contributions that Tamil-Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of Tamil language and culture, and the importance of educating and reflecting upon Tamil heritage for future generations by declaring January, every year, Tamil Heritage Month”.

The children and youth had a great opportunity to showcase the Tamil culture and the richness of the Tamil language. TCASD began the event with the welcome procession with live Mela and Nadeswaram that reverberated throughout the entire mall.

TCASD executive members, give their heartfelt thank you to the Dignitaries and Community leaders who graced the occasion:

- Town of Ajax MP Hon. Mark Holland
- City of Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan
- City of Pickering Councillors Kevin Ashe and Maurice Brenner
- Town of Whitby Regional Councillor Steve Yamada
- Councillor Maleeha Shahid
- Town of Ajax Regional councillor Marilyn Crawford, Councillor Sterling Lee,
- Hon. MP Jennifer O'Conner's office constituency Manager Ashton Ross
- Hon. MP Mark Holland's office



Community outreach Manager Dev Ramkallie

- Toronto District School Board Trustees Parthi Kandavel and Anu Srisankandarajah
- Community Leader and founder of Tamil Heritage month Neethan Shan
- Tamil Heritage month chair Mohan Remisier

The speeches in Tamil by young children were one of the highlight. Dr. Vara Mahadevan delivered an excellent speech on Tholkappier and Tholkappiam, which are a work on the grammar of the Tamil language and the earliest extant work of Tamil literature. Silambattam was one of the programs that attracted the shoppers at the mall. The TCASD's THM event was coordinated by Abiramie Shanmuganathan with the support of the TCASD's Executive team members. Emcee of the event was Anushalini Atupthrasa, who was excellent and did her job with a pretty smile. Our youth team Krish, Jason, Cavina, Meena, Kabilan, Abira and Athursh were very supportive at the event.

TCASD appreciated the wonderful support from the Pickering Town Centre management to stage the event smooth and successfully, and applauded Erika Power who was the great support team player during this celebration.

Tamil Heritage Month Celebrations - Stouffville

The words of the ancient Tamil poet Kaniyan Pungundranar, “To us all towns are one, all persons our kin”, embody the concepts promulgated by the United Nations and the foundational principles of modern-day globalization. This was evident at the Heritage Month Celebrations that took place on 25 June 2019 at the District Secondary School, Stouffville. The event featured traditional dance and music followed by speeches of dignitaries who attended the celebrations.

The chief guest of the event was Professor Sivamainthan Vithiananthan, MD, FACS, FASMBBS, FICS from the USA. He is the son of Professor of Tamil and the first vice – chancellor of the University of Jaffna, Dr. S. Vithiananthan. Professor Sivamainthan has volunteered

his services during the Tsunami relief efforts in Sri Lanka and has actively participated in the promotion of Tamil on a global stage. In his speech, he mentioned the need for an academic institution to promote research and studies in Tamil and expressed his ardent support for the proposed Tamil Chair in the University of Toronto, Scarborough Campus. He and his family and friends donated and pledged a total of \$20,500 for the Tamil Chair and this was followed by other donors in the amount of around \$5,000 on that day.

The organizers of the event thanked the audience and urged them to donate online by visiting www.torontotamil-chair.ca and clicking the donate button.



TCASD also sincerely thanked all parents, participants, well-wishers and members who give their continuous support to TCASD, every year to stage the Tamil Heritage month celebration one of the memorable and unique event of the year!

Tamils began migrating to Canada as early as the 1950s, which accelerated after the anti-Tamil pogrom in July 1983. Since that time, Tamil Canadians have overcome tremendous obstacles after their arrival and have made significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of Canada. Tamil Heritage Month will be an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the inspirational role that Tamil Canadians have played and continue to play in communities across Canada.

The Tamil Canadian community holds an important place in the continual development of Canada as a whole by showcasing events. With the recognition of Tamil Heritage Month in Canada, the community will continue to flourish and share its values that help in the preservation and growth of the Canadian identity.

tity.

TCASD extends its thanks to everyone for this blessed day that TCASD family was able to celebrate with continuous support and passion of many individuals.

TCASD raises Tamil Heritage Month Flag at the City of Pickering

TCASD raised the official THM flag on 18th of January 2019, at the City of Pickering with the presence of City of Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan, councillors Dave Pickles, Kevin Ashe, Shahin Butt, Maurice Brenner, TCASD executive members, President Vasa Nathan, Assistant Secretary Abiramie Shanmuganathan, Assistant Treasurer Sutha Thiru, Director Tom Thiru, Youth Coordinator Abira Vaithilingam, TCASD Senior Wing head Rajesh Muttiah, TCASD parents and children. This is the 4th year of Tamil Heritage month flag raising ceremony of Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham. TCASD sincerely appreciates City of Pickering for their continuous support for the Tamil Heritage month Flag raising ceremony. This is one of the proudest moments in the history of Durham Tamils.



TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH - PONGAL CELEBRATION IN WATERLOO



Waterloo, Ontario: Tamil Heritage Month is an annual celebration held in the month of January. Various activities take place during this month, major being Thai Pongal (Tamil Thanksgiving).

Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region celebrated its Pongal celebration on the 20th of January at Christ Lutheran Hall in Waterloo. About 200 members and their families attended this colourful event.

Milk, Rice was boiled and kids had a chance to add Sakkarai (Sugar) into the clay pot. Community members thanked the sun god for making plants grow and cattle for producing milk and help till the soil. Dennis Loyola, the Secretary of the association welcomed the guests and introduced the President Mr. Ragu Sivaramakrishnan to the public.

A large number of children including Waterloo-Cambridge Tamil language school children were on hand to witness the ceremony along with their teacher Mrs. Kunamalar. "This is the only way our children, who are born in Canada, could witness the actual ceremony. I will thank the Tamil cultural association be part of the community and to preserve our culture." Students of Sri Abiramy Dance performed folk dance and Students of Lawanya's students performed a fusion dance.

There was Karnatic music and game show too.

For the Tamil community in the Waterloo region, Brantford and Guelph, the ceremony is a way of passing their tradition and culture to their children. The day ended with a community get together and traditional sit down Pongal meal.



Bat Shooting

Early morning, may be around 4 am, someone shouted "Aiyah Ayiah Help me, help me, the police is taking me to the station". My father got up took the flash light and proceeded to the gate. So I also got up and went after him. We saw our neighbor Thurai with both hands tied up behind by a towel, with two policeman. As soon as he saw my father he shouted "they are taking me to the station help me". One of the policemen started to talk in Sinhalese as he knew my father well before. Father asked Thurai to tell the person who was with him, who ran away with a gun. Thurai replied in Tamil and said that he will tell him later. Since he refused to divulge the name of the other person, the police had no alternative but to take him to the police station for further inquiries. Father told the policemen not to beat him and that he will come with the Lawyer in the morning. So they went away with him.

After they left, we went back in and as it was the usual routine my mother started preparing tea for everyone. After nearly half an hour somebody shouted from our gate " Annai (older brother), Annai "Father went to see and found Sittampalam, a friend of

his standing there. So he brought him home. He told my father that they were waiting near the fence of the house of the Priest, to shoot at bats, which came to eat the olive fruits in his garden. This house was located about a stone throw from our house on a small lane. While these two were waiting to shoot at the bats, which were on the olive trees, the policemen had passed by on their normal rounds. They flashed the light on them, when these two were crouching near the fence. Sittampalam ran with the gun along another small lane, which branched off from that lane, jumped over the temple wall and hid in one corner of the temple, as he was very familiar with the area. Thurai who was a slow runner got caught to the policemen.

Father asked him the reason for running away on seeing the police. Sitta told him that the gun he had, had no license and was afraid that he may be charged and the gun confiscated. Furthermore Thurai had a piece of Lux soap to have a bath at the temple well after the shooting. This made the incident more difficult as the Police told my father that morning, thieves usually went with a soap to get an im-



print of the door lock before going in to steal, to make duplicate key. Police men thought that they were waiting to steal the house nearby. Father scolded him for their stupidity and said that he will go to the police station later. Sitta left our home.

Those days, there was a common belief that people with Asthma were cured if they eat bat's meat. So during the fruiting season of olive trees, many bats visited there to eat the fruits and men shot at them and took them home

for their meat.

As my father was getting ready to go to the police station, Thurai came home. He told him that he was asked to wait for the Inspector of police at the station. He arrived in the morning. Inspector was a Tamil man and Thurai told him the details of what had happened. He chided him for their stupidity and warned him to get the license for the gun.

==== Thuraiyuraan =====

HAPPY
Valentine's
- DAY -

An adorable Pedagogue, a Venerable Principal, An honored Parliamentarian

Prince Casinader:

Was a teacher under Somanader.
Rose as the head of the same institution
(Central College, Batticaloa)
With much respect and reputation.

A Pedagogue, strict and stern in nature,
Thoughtfully visualized pupil's future
And taught, making every lesson interesting,
So that there was no need of repeating.

Thousands men in diverse life walks
Love and honor the mentor and take
Pride that they were pupils fortunate,
Gratitude and reverence, hearts vibrate.

Even in fleeting politics, we saw proudly
Your best decorum and the gentility;
Very few had in the highest legislature.
To the house of the day; an exemplary gesture.

We are heartbroken to hear your demise
Ninety three, you thought would suffice.
We beseech Our Lord grant you life eternal,
In the Land of never return.

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A Past Pupil



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Application forms and regulations can be obtained from CTCC's website (www.ctcc.ca). Kindly forward applications to CTCC's email address or it can also be mailed to the official mailing address.

Closing date to receive applications is February 22nd, 2019 before 5.00 p.m.

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