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Consul General for India pays respects to Mahatma Gandhi consecrated at two Jaffna Temples

India's Consul General S. Balachandran accompanied by Consul Rameshwar Bhakta paid obeisance to Mahatma Gandhi statues, adorning the temple towers (Gopurams) of Sri Vaalambika Samedha Vaitheswara Swami Sivan Temple of Valvettithurai and Sri Vallipuram Azhwar Temple at Thunnaalai, Vadamaraachi in Jaffna on August 29, 2019 as part of a series of events leading to the celebration of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, which falls on October 2, 2019.

According to an inscription found at the Vaitheswara Sivan temple, while one "India's Kaaranche-

du Eralakattaa Ranga Naaiyakulu Naaidukaar" built the tower base, one "C. Chelladurai's daughter Valiammal in 1939" built the tower (Gopuram) upon the base.

According to Vallipuram temple authorities, the Tower with Gandhi among the pantheon of Gods was consecrated in 1985. Mahatma Gandhi (October 1869 – 30 January 1948) spent four days in Jaffna, Sri Lanka North from 26-29th November 1927 having arrived in Colombo on November 13, 1927. During this period, he visited Point Pedro and Valvettithurai also.

- via cgijaffna



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Parliamentary Secretary
Gary Anandasangaree
Announces Funding for
Youth- Focused Programs



Gary Anandasangaree, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism) and Member of Parliament (Scarborough-Rouge Park), on August 21st announced funding for youth-focused programs at an event in Toronto. He made the announcement on behalf of Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism.

Tweeting about the funding Parliamentary Secretary Gary Anandasangaree stated:

"On behalf of the Hon. Pablo Rodriguez, I was delighted to announce that our government will invest \$25 Million over 3 years to support the Exchanges Canada Program (ECP).

ECP allows Canadian youth to learn more about the history, civic life and cultural diversity of Canada."

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Ontario Bringing More Midday Service on the GO Transit Lakeshore East Line

15 new trains each week to get GO riders moving

August 29, 2019 3:30 P.M.

Ministry of Transportation

AJAX - Today, Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation, joined Vijay Thanigasalam, MPP for Scarborough-Rouge Park, Rod Phillips, MPP for Ajax, Lorne Coe, MPP for Whitby, Lindsey Park, MPP for Durham, and Phil Verster, President and CEO, Metrolinx, to announce the government's plans to improve transportation across the province.

The Ontario government is adding 15 new GO train trips each week to increase midday, weekday service along the entire Lakeshore East line.

"We're delivering on our promise to expand transit in Ontario by offering more service, more trains and more choice for GO customers on the Lakeshore East line," said Minister Mulroney at an event in Ajax. "Adding more midday service between Oshawa and Union Station is part of our GO Rail Expansion program. When fully in-service, GO Rail Expansion will provide GO customers two-way, all-day GO service, with trains every 15 minutes or better between Oshawa and Union Station on the Lakeshore East line."

"These new midday trains make



Ajax more accessible and more connected to communities across the GTHA than ever before," said MPP Phillips. "Our government is committed to investing in public transit to support local businesses, good jobs and get Ontario moving again."

"All of these new and improved trips are giving people more reasons to choose transit first, which is what our GO Rail Expansion program is all about," said Phil Verster. "If you need to leave work a little earlier or you want to head into the city for an evening out, there are now more ways to do that using GO Transit."

Via news.ontario.ca

First Year Investment of Ontario's Four-Year Math Strategy Announced

Major Commitment to Math Improvement Will Promote Student Success and Teaching Excellence by Going Back to Basics

August 28, 2019 7:16 A.M.

Ministry of Education

TORONTO — Ontario's Minister of Education announced the details of the new four-year \$200-million math strategy to get back to basics and make sure students and educators have the math skills and resources to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

"As the recently-released EQAO results confirm, our students are still struggling to meet provincial math standards," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "We will never accept the status quo, we are demanding better for our kids by investing in a landmark multi-year strategy that will, from day one, help our students and educators build the confidence and knowledge to excel in math."

The government announced details of the first year of funding under the new \$200-million math strategy - beginning with an initial investment of \$55 million in the 2019-2020 school year. This investment will support critical programming and resources for students and educators alike, by focusing on teaching fundamentals.

These investments will:

- Provide funding to all school boards in the province to hire math-learning leads to coordinate and support board-level improvement efforts;
- Invest in extensive training and coaching in over 700 targeted elementary and secondary schools, providing educators with direct access to experts and evidence-based instruction to develop the knowledge and pedagogy for better equipping students to succeed in math;
- Expand online tutoring programs for students to make sure opportunities for high-quality math instruction is not limited to the classroom;
- Deliver \$6 million in support for summer learning programs to prevent learning loss;
- Ensure new teachers entering the profession have the skills to teach math, and involve math in their teaching where appropriate, through investments in professional development for educators dealing with math proficiency; and
- Contribute \$4 million to subsidize additional qualifications (AQ) math courses for teachers, which will further build skills and confidence for educators at the front of the classroom.

Via news.ontario.ca

Ontario Supporting More National and International Sport Events

Province Supporting 15 Events that will Boost Local Economies and Support Athletes

August 23, 2019 12:15 P.M.

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

HAMILTON - Ontario is bringing more national and international sport events to the province that will create jobs, boost local economies and give athletes the chance to compete right here at home.

"Ontario is the best place to be an athlete and play sports. Through the Ontario Sport Hosting Program, our government is pleased to support 15

sport events to help our athletes develop their skills and boost local tourism," said Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport at the pre-game training for Team Canada's Rugby World Cup Warm-Up Match. "It is anticipated that these events will generate a total of \$26.5 million in economic activity." Some of the events coming to Ontario in 2019-20 include:

- 2019 Canadian National Olympic Trapshooting Championships, August 26 - September 1 (Innisfil)

- 2019 ITF2 Birmingham Wheelchair Tennis Classic, September 5 - 8 (Toronto)

- 2019 Ontario Open Judo Championships, November 8 - 10 (Toronto)

- 2019 ITF World Tennis Tour J3 Ottawa, November 9 - 16 (Ottawa)

- 2020 Canadian Olympic Wrestling Trials, December 6 - 8 (Niagara Falls)

- 2020 Canada Cup Freestyle Ski, January 16 - 19 (Greater Madawaska)

- 2020 TISSOT UCI Track Cycling World Cup, and UCI Para Cycling

- Track World Championships, January 24 - February 2 (Milton)

"Applications for the program's second intake are now open, and I encourage all eligible communities and organizations to apply," said MacLeod. "World-class sporting events are a great way to showcase all that Ontario has to offer and a great opportunity to cheer on our top amateur athletes."

The Intake II application period runs from August 23 to September 30.

Via news.ontario.ca

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from the publisher's desk

PUBLISHING TEAM

Managing Editor & Publisher: Logan Velumailum, B. Sc. - editor4mj@gmail.com
 Editorial & Marketing Consultant: Siva Sivapragasam - tsivapragasam31@gmail.com
 Executive Editorial Board: Tashvir Narine - tashvir.narine@gmail.com
 Krishni Narine - krishni31@gmail.com
 K. Thirukumaran
 Graphics & Layout Design: Santosh Kumar - kasantosh@gmail.com
 Graphic Support: Suren Rasadurai
 Photo Journalists: Gnane B. Gnanendran - digitalgnane@yahoo.ca, Rudy Ruthran - rudy@ruthran.com
 Health & Care: Ayktah Grover - www.aurawellness.ca, Dr. Amal Siva, Jeavana Sriharan, Andrea Shanmugarajah, Dr. S. Sivanesan, Dr. Nuwan Fonseka, Dr. Shiyam Loganathan, Dr. Harshini Srisakanda
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Show your Commitment to International Day of Charity by Searching for a Charity to Support or Getting Involved in a Charity

By Harrish Thirukumaran

According to the United Nations (UN), charity, as with volunteerism and philanthropy, can instill forms of social bonding and contribute to the creation of inclusive and resilient societies. Furthermore, it can alleviate the worst effects of humanitarian crises, supplement public services in health care, education, housing and child protection. It assists the advancement of culture, science, sports, and the protection of cultural and natural heritage. It also promotes the rights of the marginalized and underprivileged and spreads the message of humanity in conflict situations.

These are aspects that the International Day of Charity seeks to espouse. Officially marked on September 5, it was created with the purpose of sensitizing and mobilizing people, NGOs, and stakeholders all around the world to help others through volunteer and philanthropic activities.

September 5th was selected as the date for this day because it honours the anniversary of the passing away of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for "for work undertaken in the struggle to overcome poverty and distress, which also constitute a threat to peace."

Mother Teresa, a renowned nun and missionary, was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in 1910. In 1928, she went to India, where she devoted herself to helping the destitute. In 1948, she became an Indian citizen and founded the order of Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata (Calcutta) in 1950, which became noted for its work among the poor and the dying in that city.

For over 45 years she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned and dying, while guiding the Missionaries of Charity's expansion, first in India and then in other countries, including hos-

pices and homes for the poorest and homeless. Mother Teresa's work has been recognized and acclaimed throughout the world and she has received a number of awards and distinctions, including the Nobel Peace Prize. Mother Teresa died on September 5th 1997, at 87 years of age.

It originally started out as a Hungarian civil society initiative that received support from the Hungarian parliament in 2011. It commemorated this day on September 5 in honour of Mother Teresa. By 2012, recognizing the role of charity and charitable organizations in allaying human suffering, the UN General Assembly made it international through resolution A/RES/67/105.

In the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development adopted in September 2015, it recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

It also calls for a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. It also acknowledges the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of civil society organizations and philanthropic organizations in the implementation of the new Agenda.

Looking more critically, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the Agenda are grouped into five critical areas: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. They have the potential to transform our lives and our planet by providing the framework needed for philanthropic institutions to enable all people to contribute to the betterment of our world.

To show your commitment to International Day of Charity, you can search for a charity to support or get involved with a charity to transform lives for the better.

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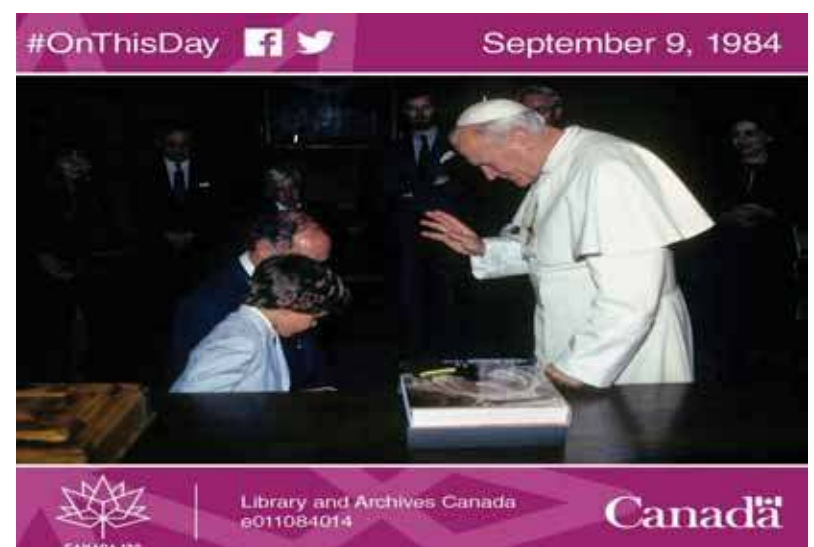
Monsoon Journal
 Wishes Teachers, Students and Parents a
 Happy and accomplishing
 new Academic Year 2019-20.

Monsoon Journal
 Wishes on the Hindu Festival
 celebrating goddesses
 September 29 - October 7
 A Happy Navaratri

Canada Historical Milestones: September 2019

September 9, 1984

Pope John Paul II visits Canada for the first time. From September 9 to 20, he is welcomed like a star by approximately 1.5 million Canadians. On September 11 in Montréal, 65,000 people at the Olympic Stadium will see the pope and hear Céline Dion sing "Une colombe."



"Those who don't believe in magic will never find it." - Roald Dahl - (September 13, 1916 - November 23, 1990) British Author

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

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Scheer to Trudeau: Stand Up and Debate

August 29, 2019
For immediate release

Toronto, ON – Today, the Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, issued the following statement on Justin Trudeau's refusal to participate in leaders' debates:

"Canadians will have a clear choice to make this October.

Between a new Conservative government that will live within its means and put more money in your pockets so you can get ahead.

"And a re-elected Liberal government under Justin Trudeau, who has spent the last four years making your life more expensive while enriching his friends and punishing his critics.

"Trudeau can't run on his record. He can't possibly defend all of his broken promises, massive deficits, tax increases, and ethics scandals.

"That's why he's dredging up divisive social issues trying to distract Canadians from his litany of failures. That's why he's running away from the



debate stage this fall.

"These debates will shape how Canadians make their decision at the ballot box. Trudeau is trying to shut them down because he's afraid to defend his record.

"By refusing to attend these debates, Trudeau wants to force their cancellation, and rob Canadians of an opportunity to see him held to account. This is wrong and it shows a lack of leadership.

"So I urge Justin Trudeau to show some courage and to show up. To defend his record and his decisions over the last four years.

"Trudeau said he would be open and accountable. By running and hiding from these debates, he is showing once again that he is not as advertised."

Via conservative.ca

Saranya Jeyakanthan has been recognized as one of the top four scholars by the Toronto District School Board. A recognition event for her was organized by Sivan Ilangko, President of the Canadian Tamil Congress at the Tamil Isai Kala Manram auditorium. Seen here are pictures taken at the event. (Picture Courtesy: Gana Arumugam)



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Prime Minister concludes productive G7 Leaders' Summit in France

August 26, 2019

Biarritz, France

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today concluded his participation at the G7 Leaders' Summit in Biarritz, France.

In discussions on the global economy with G7 leaders, Prime Minister Trudeau stressed the need for leaders to work together to build economies that work for everyone and strengthen the middle class. He underscored the importance of the rules-based international order in supporting growth and opportunities for people around the world to share in a better future.

The G7 leaders also agreed to Prime Minister Trudeau's initiative to task their Finance Ministers to report back to their leaders on the state of the global economy, so countries can take concerted action to address signs of risk and ensure stable, sustained growth for people.

G7 leaders agreed to work in partnership with African leaders to support transformation, growth, shared prosperity in Africa. The Prime Minister announced several initiatives, including funding in support of the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa initiative to help women entrepreneurs succeed by providing them with access to financing to start their own businesses.

During the Summit, leaders discussed the importance of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Canada joined the Biarritz Partnership on Gender Equality which highlighted the progress being made by Canada on policy and legislative measures needed to further address inequalities in Canada and abroad. Leaders agreed to concrete actions in response to the recommendations of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, which was launched for the first time by Canada in 2018, and continued by France in 2019.

Prime Minister Trudeau also announced \$179.2 million in investments to support quality education for women and girls living in crisis, conflict-affected and fragile states. This funding completes Canada's commitment as part of the \$3.8 billion mobilized at the G7 Summit in Charlevoix, Quebec in 2018 – the largest in history.

A key theme of the Summit was the importance of addressing climate change, biodiversity and oceans. The Prime Minister stressed the urgent need for collective action to tackle the climate crisis and protect our shared environment. He announced an important set of projects to support global climate action including continued strong support for the Green Climate Fund. He also underscored Canada's leader-



ship to safeguard our world's oceans, coasts, and coastal communities, and called on others to come together to protect these shared resources. Canada welcomed France's work to encourage coalitions on environmental issues.

During the Summit, leaders discussed the opportunities that artificial intelligence offers our economies and societies. The Prime Minister spoke about the importance of the responsible development of human-centric approaches to artificial intelligence. The Prime Minister advanced a new Global Partnership on AI, an initiative created by Canada and France, and developed in partnership with other countries

and the OECD.

The Prime Minister announced \$15 million to help fight the fires in the Amazon.

In addition to the discussion regarding the wildfires in the Amazon, the Prime Minister and his G7 counterparts also discussed efforts to address key regional and global challenges, including Russia and ongoing reform efforts in Ukraine, as well as the crisis in Venezuela. The Prime Minister thanked the Leaders for their support in advocating for the release of the detained Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig in China.

Via pm.gc.ca

Cellphone Restriction in Classrooms in Ontario to Take Effect from November 4 this Year

Ontario's Minister of Education has announced plans to move forward with restricting the use of cellphones and other personal mobile devices in classrooms beginning November 4, 2019.

The restriction applies to instructional time at school, however, exceptions will be made if cellphones are required for health and medical purposes, to support special education needs, or for educational purposes as directed by an educator.

During the consultation on education reform in fall 2018, 97 per cent of parents, students and teachers who participated said that cellphone use should be restricted in some way.

In response to this feedback, the Provincial Code of Conduct has been updated to include this restriction. It sets clear standards of behaviour and requires that all school boards ensure their own codes of conduct are up to date and consistent with requirements.

"When in class, students should be focused on their studies, not their so-

cial media," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "That's why we are restricting cellphones and other personal mobile devices in the classroom, while making sure technology is available to help students achieve success in the digital economy and modern workforce."

To ensure that parents and guardians are clear on the new guidelines, including the exceptions, the following resources are available:

- Parents' Guide to the Provincial Code of Conduct
- Cellphones and Other Personal Mobile Devices in Schools - Questions and Answers for Parents and Guardians

The restriction on cellphones and other personal mobile devices is part of the government's plan Education That Works for You, that will improve learning, enhance classrooms and empower educators to better prepare students for the realities of today's modern world.





Sri Lankan authorities must work 'vigorously' to ease simmering ethno-religious tensions, urges UN rights expert



26 August 2019
Human Rights

A United Nations human rights expert warned on Monday that Sri Lankan authorities must take urgent action to strengthen respect for freedom of religion or belief and address simmering ethno-religious tensions.

"There is a serious deficit of trust among ethno-religious communities in Sri Lanka following the deadly Easter Sunday bomb blasts and subsequent mob violence this year, and these tensions must not be ignored," Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, said while presenting a report following his 12-day mission to the country.

Noting that the Government has taken some significant initiatives to strengthen its democracy and rule of law, the expert said that many religious communities remained very concerned about their security because of incitement to hatred and violence by some religious extremists.

According to Mr. Shaheed, the main challenges to the right to freedom of religion or belief are religious and political violence, lack of accountability,

distrust of institutions and resentment against perceived majoritarian privilege.

"Failure by the State to take action to address incitement to hatred and violence will allow extremism to escalate and pose serious challenges to peacebuilding," he said, adding that "the ethno-religious tension must not be treated as mere sporadic incidents."

He further underscored that women's experiences of ethno-religious hostility including violence, displacement and stereotyping must also be effectively addressed.

"I call on the Government and all others to create an enabling environment for the exercise of fundamental freedoms, in the lead-up to elections and not to use ethno-religious tensions for electoral gain," said Mr. Shaheed.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

Via news.un.org

For want of water...



Karuna was a wealthy man
Who owned a well in the village.
He allowed all and refused none,
But bared it for depressed colleagues.

Villagers had to walk long distance;
To fetch water for daily use.
Ponni, filled water from that extent
And kept it safe for the days use.

Ponnan, her husband was taken ill,
He asked for some water to drink.
Ponni gave some water from the fill,
But it smelled foul to drink.

She went out with the bucket
To steal water from Karuna's well.
Hid in the wall behind the thicket.
Till Karuna closed his doors to sleep.

Like a victorious warrior she tip-toed,
Let the bucket into the well.
Who is there? Came Karuna's shout
Fearing her life she ran behind the wall.

Having lost her bucket and the rope
She went panting in to her house.
To her horror, Ponnan; losing all hope
Was drinking the foul smelling water.

- by Kingsley

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Around the World

Syrian Troops to Start Unilateral Cease-Fire in Idlib



By Associated Press
August 30,

Syrian civilians flee a conflict zone in Syria's rebel-held northwestern region of Idlib, where government bombardment has killed hundreds since late April, near Maar Shurin on the outskirts of Maaret al-Numan, Aug. 22, 2019.

BEIRUT - The Russian military says Syrian government forces will begin a unilateral cease-fire in the northwestern province of Idlib in the coming hours.

The Russian military reconciliation center says the cease-fire will go into effect Saturday morning at 6 a.m. (0300 GMT).

Friday's report comes as government forces have intensified their offensive over the past weeks capturing rebel-held areas in Hama province and nearby Idlib, the last major rebel stronghold in the country.

The Russian military called on the opposition to end "provocations" and engage in peaceful settlement.

Russia is a main backer of Syrian government forces.

The announcement came as hundreds of protesters in Idlib marched toward a border crossing with Turkey demanding that Ankara either open the border or demand an end to the government attack.

Via voanews.com

Canada provides electoral funding support to strengthen democracy in Ethiopia



Venezuela migrant crisis begs a 'coherent, predictable and harmonized' response: UNHCR



©UNICEF/Arcos

Nine-year-old Acnayeli (center) fled violence in Venezuela and lives now with her mother and sister in Cucuta, Colombia. (April 2019)

29 August 2019

Migrants and Refugees

There is "no end in sight" to the massive movement of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, now at around 4.3 million in number, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) shared on Thursday.

The inflow of migrants to neighboring Latin American countries and the Caribbean is exacerbating social and economic tensions in the effort to protect the increasing number of people with vulnerabilities and those in need of international protection, the agency's Joint UNHCR-IOM (International Organization for Migration) Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, Eduardo Stein, said in a statement.

Despite dwindling resources and overwhelmed institutions, host countries, "continue to make commendable efforts to give protection and assistance and to promote the social and economic inclusion of Venezuelans in their territory," Mr. Stein said.

"However, there is little doubt that the situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants is surpassing the capacities of individual countries and of the region as a whole."

Mr. Stein expressed he is "con-

cerned that the limits on Venezuelans in accessing the territory of receiving countries may force them into making irregular journeys, leading to trafficking and smuggling, are exacerbating their vulnerabilities."

The perils migrants face trying to reach new territory have gained international attention after grim stories have surfaced such as the June tragedy in Mexico's Rio Grande, and the 30 Venezuelan migrants who vanished in an April boat accident.

"I respectfully exhort countries in the region to continue to articulate, coordinate and harmonize their policies," Mr. Stein said, encouraging countries participating in the Quito Process, a road map intended to help integrate Venezuelan migrants into their host countries, to continue to seek responsibility-sharing in the support for people on the move.

Mr. Stein also stressed the need for a collective response, saying: "It is only through a coherent, predictable and harmonized regional response that countries in the region will be able to meet the unprecedented humanitarian challenge of responding to the needs of a growing number of Venezuelan refugees and migrants."

Via news.un.org

From: Global Affairs Canada
News release

August 26, 2019 - Ottawa, Ontario - Global Affairs Canada

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada will provide \$1 million in funding to support the 2020 elections in Ethiopia. The funding will be provided through the United Nations Development Programme and will be drawn from the \$10 million Promoting and Protecting Democracy Fund, which Minister Freeland announced during the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London, United

Kingdom, in July 2019.

Canada's support for this project will help Ethiopia's electoral management body increase its capacity in areas such as voter registration and post-electoral support; put in place transparency measures, for example by establishing appropriate dispute resolution systems; and build trust with the electorate, including through voter education. The project will have a special focus on ensuring the inclusive participation in the electoral process of women, youth and ethnic groups in all regions of the country.

Via canada.ca



“Virakesari” - Then & Now

Enters 90th Year of publication as the Premier Tamil Daily in Sri Lanka

By Siva Sivapragasam

(Former Circulation/Advertising Manager “Virakesari”)

(Executive Editor, “Monsoon Journal”, A South Asian Community newspaper published in Toronto)

When Mahatma Gandhi visited Sri Lanka in the 1930s he suggested to some members of the Indian community to commence the publication of a Tamil newspaper to voice the opinions of the Indian community, especially those in the business sector and the workers in the upcountry plantation areas.

Gandhi's suggestion resulted in the commencement of the publication of the Tamil newspaper “Virakesari” in August, 1930 by Peri Subramaniam Chettiyar of Avanipatti, a village in Tamilnadu. The newspaper initially began as a modest publication with a limited circulation and as a voice of the Indian Tamils. How-



modest with a limited circulation and advertising.

It was somewhere in the 1960s that the Virakesari organization was taken over

by the Sri Lanka Trust managed by the Prime Minister of the time Mr. Dudley Senanayake, former President J.R. Jayawardene and the Managing Director of Lake House Mr. Esmond Wickremesinghe. Mr. Wickremesinghe was the Executive Director and shareholder who managed the company. When Mr. Wickremesinghe took over the management of the company, he took with him three of his trusted employees at Lake House to Virakesari. They were Mr. K. Sivapiragasam who became the Chief Editor, Mr. S. Balachandran who was appointed as the General Manager (Administration & Production) and Mr. T. Sivapragasam who was to function as the Secretary of

the Company in addition to his duties as Circulation & Advertising Manager. With a team of experienced media personnel, Mr. Wickremesinghe was able to modernize the company and infused new ideas of media techniques of the time which he did when he was the Managing Director at Lake House. In a way, it could be stated it was the beginning of the golden era for the “Virakesari” newspaper. Additional Tamil publications like Mithran (an evening daily) and Jothi (Family magazine) were commenced together with Sinhalese periodicals and an English weekly titled “Economic Times”.

The “Virakesari”, both daily and weekly, underwent an editorial upliftment during Editor Sivapiragasam's period as Editor. It became the largest selling Tamil newspaper in Sri Lanka with northern, eastern, up – country and City editions. The newspaper became a highly influential and leading Tamil opinion maker as well as a voice of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. The “Virakesari” voiced the grievances and aspirations of the Tamil people in a moderate yet effective manner. Editor Sivapiragasam himself was highly respected and regarded by the Sri Lankan governing elite too. Both circulation and advertising incomes also rose for the company. Mr. T. Sivapragasam, as the Advertising Manager was able to convince the Corporate Business world the advantages of advertising in the “Virakesari” to reach the Tamil market. For the first time, Advertisements from corporate clients like Lever Brothers, Ceylon Tobacco Company, Reckit & Colman together with leading Banks be-



Kumar Nadesan - Managing Director of Express Newspapers Ltd, Publishers of “Virakesari” and 12 other Publications. Mr. Nadesan has used modern computer and printing technology to the optimum to take the “Virakesari” to greater heights and made the “Virakesari” the premier Tamil newspaper in Sri Lanka and reached an over one million readership across the world with its print & online editions.

gan to patronize the “Virakesari” newspaper to reach the Tamil market. Mr. S. Balachandran who was the General Manager for Administration & Production took the initiative of converting the traditional and archaic rotary printing to offset printing of the newspaper and also introduced modern computer technology for typesetting. He was also responsible for streamlining certain administration procedures and changes.

The Company saw another turn of change in ownership in 1970 when for political reasons the UNP leadership decided to sell the newspaper group which was purchased by one of its former Directors Mr. R.A. Nadesan, a well-known business magnate with years of experience in the printing trade. He brought in his son-in-law Mr. R. Krishnamoorthy as the Managing Director of the Company. Mr. Krishnamoorthi was a person who was very pleasant in his mannerisms and behaviour. He strongly believed in having a personal touch with his employees. This remarkable trait in his character made him popular with them and they always looked upon him as an employer to whom they could go with a problem and seek a solution. This was true even with his relationship with his executives. Rather than summoning them to his room for meetings he will walk into their rooms in a casual manner and discuss issues like a friend of theirs. It was during Mr. Krishnamoorthy's time that the company ventured into a new field of publishing Books when a new Book Publishing Department was created and managed by Mr. Balachandran (General Manager-Administration) and Mr. T. Sivapragasam (Circulation/Advertising Manager). “Virakesari” organization was able to publish successfully nearly one hundred books mainly being novels and was able to introduce new authors to the Tamil literary field. The name of the Company too had by now changed from

Virakesari Ltd. to Express Newspapers (Cey) Ltd.

Mr. Krishnamoorthy's interest in other business ventures took him away from the Virakesari and he became more involved with those. As a result he gave up his position of Managing Director and settled down in India to further his other business interests. Mr. Krishnamoorthy was succeeded by Mr. Wenceslaus who continued as the Managing Director for quite a long period. The 1983 riots in Sri Lanka saw adverse conditions for the “Virakesari” newspaper and the company too. The distribution system almost came to a halt since most of the Tamil owned distribution outlets were burnt and transport too was affected. However, over a period of time the Company was able to regain itself and once again the newspaper reclaimed its image as the premier Tamil daily. The 1983 riots in the country caused severe damage to Editor Sivapiragasam's home and belongings and forced him to reluctantly relinquish his post as Editor and migrate to the USA where he took up a prestigious position in the Department of Welfare in Boston until his retirement and passed away later due to age related illnesses. While in USA he also wrote a very moving book titled “A Nation in Chaos” on the 1983 race riots in Sri Lanka and his own experiences. Mr. Sivapiragasam was succeeded by Mr. A. Sivanaseselvan as the Chief Editor. Mr. Sivanaseselvan came from an academic background from the University of Jaffna and was qualified in Media Relations. He was able to continue the editorial policy and contents built effectively by his predecessor Sivapiragasam.

When Mr. Wenceslaus left the Company in later years, Mr. Kumar Nadesan, former Chairman R.A. Nadesan's son and a Barrister took over and commenced functioning as the Managing Director of the company now better known as Express Newspapers (Cey) Ltd. Utilizing modern computer technology and the development of social media, Mr. Nadesan has optimized fully these developments to expand the activities of the company by expanding the number of publications and opening up the online editions to the expatriate Sri Lankan readers. Today, Express Newspapers has spread its wings with about 12 publications to its credit and has made use of the modern information technology to the maximum to go online with an e-paper, video-content, music juke-box and updated news as events take place. They have also opened many Branches in important towns. Much of this credit should go to the vibrancy and foresight of the present Managing Director Mr. Kumar Nadesan who with the help of the staff is utilizing the modern techniques of information technology to the maximum and taking the Company and the “Virakesari” newspaper to higher heights and will perhaps see the centenary issue in the years to come.



Seated in the picture are Mr. S. Balachandran (General Manager, Administration & Production), Mr. T. Sivapragasam (Circulation & Advertising Manager) and Mr. K. Sivapiragasam (Chief Editor) who contributed more than thirty years of their working life, skill and energy to lay the foundation and make the “Virakesari” what it is today - Over one million readership across the world in print and online editions.

ever, the newspaper gradually found favour with the Tamils in other areas of Sri Lanka and came to be portrayed as the voice of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Tamils in Sri Lanka considered the “Virakesari” as an independent, non-biased publication reflecting the thoughts and aspirations of the entire Tamil community in Sri Lanka. It was therefore no surprise that the newspaper enjoyed the highest circulation in Colombo, Jaffna, Batticaloa and the upcountry. The gradual increase in circulation began to have its impact on Advertising, and the business sector who wanted to reach the Tamil market started utilizing the columns of the “Virakesari” to market their products and services. The Managing Director of the time Mr. Easwara Iyer was modern in outlook and mingled with the persons of the Sri Lankan business sector and was able to convince prominent business houses to advertise in the “Virakesari”. Virakesari's role from 1930 to 1965 was



Around the World

Setback in First Legal Challenge to UK Govt's Brexit Plans

By Associated Press

August 30, 2019 09:34 AM

LONDON - The first legal challenge to prevent British Prime Minister Boris Johnson from suspending Parliament has been delayed in a Scottish court.

The Court of Session in Edinburgh refused Friday to take immediate legal action to prevent Johnson from suspending Parliament for several weeks during part of the period ahead of the Brexit deadline of Oct. 31.

Judge Raymond Doherty, however, said a full hearing on the case will be heard Tuesday, raising the prospect that the government's move could still be blocked. He said there is no need for an immediate injunction because a "substantive" hearing on the case will be heard next week.

The full hearing had originally been set for Sept. 6, but was moved up.

Law professor Nick McKerrrell at Glasgow Caledonian University said the decision to speed up the hearing may be significant because it indicates the matter is being treated with urgency.

"This is not the end of the matter," he said after the judge declined to take immediate action.

The case was brought by a cross-party group of legislators seeking to broaden the period for parliamentary debate in a bid to prevent a disorderly departure by Britain from the European Union.

Two other legal cases are in progress, one in Northern Ireland and another in London. Former Prime Minister John Major said Friday he is seeking to join the case in London to argue against suspension.

"If granted permission to intervene, I intend to seek to assist the court from the perspective of having served in Government as a minister and prime minister, and also in Parliament for many years as a Member of the House of Commons," he said.

Major is an outspoken critic of Brexit who had vowed to intervene legally if Johnson sought to prevent parliamentary debate on the issue.

The legal skirmishes are designed to prevent Johnson from substantially shortening the amount of time Parliament will be given to enact legislation that might prevent a "no deal" Brexit, that many economists believe would damage Britain's economy.

Johnson has repeatedly vowed to take Britain out of the EU bloc on Oct. 31 even if no arrangement has been reached. His predecessor, Theresa May, reached an agreement with EU leaders but Britain's Parliament repeatedly rejected the terms.

In Helsinki, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab defended his government's decision to suspend parliament and rejected suggestions that the move will prevent lawmakers from debating the country's departure from the European Union as concern mounts that a costly and damaging Brexit without any agreement is now more likely.

On Wednesday, Johnson got Queen Elizabeth II's approval to suspend parliament, a move widely criticized by his political opponents who see it as a maneuver to give them even less time to block a chaotic no-deal Brexit.

Johnson previously had refused to rule out such a move, but the timing of the decision took lawmakers — many of whom are on vacation — by surprise.

At talks with EU foreign ministers in Finland, Raab said that "the idea that this is some kind of constitutional outrage is nonsense. It's actually lawful. It's perfectly proper. There's precedent for it."

"We've been talking about nothing but Brexit. We're going to get a chance to scrutinize all aspects of Brexit between now and the end of October," he told reporters.

His counterparts expressed concern that a no-deal exit from the bloc appears more likely, but most declined to comment on the government's move, saying it is a matter for Britain to resolve.

"It's a debate that concerns the British government and parliament," said Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reyn-



Anti Brexit protestors wave their flags opposite Parliament in London, Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019.

ders. Meanwhile, he said, Britain's European partners are still waiting for new proposals to resolve the standoff over the divorce agreement, notably the so-called backstop clause which aims to avoid the return of border controls between Ireland in the EU and Britain's Northern Ireland.

"If we receive some proposals from London we will examine them, as we always do," said Reynders.

But some ministers were clearly concerned about political developments in London.

"Westminster is the mother of all parliaments, and now you have a situation where that parliament is in danger of being sidelined. It's a way of proceeding in democracy that doesn't quite conform to the rules," said Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn. Johnson has insisted he was taking the step so he could outline his domestic agenda.

"I'm worried," Asselborn said. "A no-deal is a catastrophe. It could cost thousands and thousands of jobs and needlessly create misery. I hope that political reason will prevail."

Britain has said it will step up its technical meetings with EU in an effort to secure a deal in the weeks that remain. The government said that Brexit negotiators will meet with their EU

counterparts twice a week throughout September, with the possibility of additional technical meetings. Two meetings are set for next week.

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said he thought the EU would be ready to meet five times a week if it could get the job done, but he said that London must come up with realistic proposals and not simply kick the can down the road.

"It's got to be credible. It can't simply be this notion that look, we must have the backstop removed and we'll solve this problem in the future negotiation without any credible way of doing that. That's not going to fly, and I think it's important that we're all honest about that."

British government minister Michael Gove was visiting Calais on Friday with France's customs minister to study Brexit preparations at the busy French port.

Meanwhile, France's junior minister for European affairs, Aurelie de Montchalin, said on BFM television that "given how things are going, it's probable" that Britain will leave on Oct. 31 with no plans for how to handle trade, travel and cross-border business the next morning.

Via voanews.com

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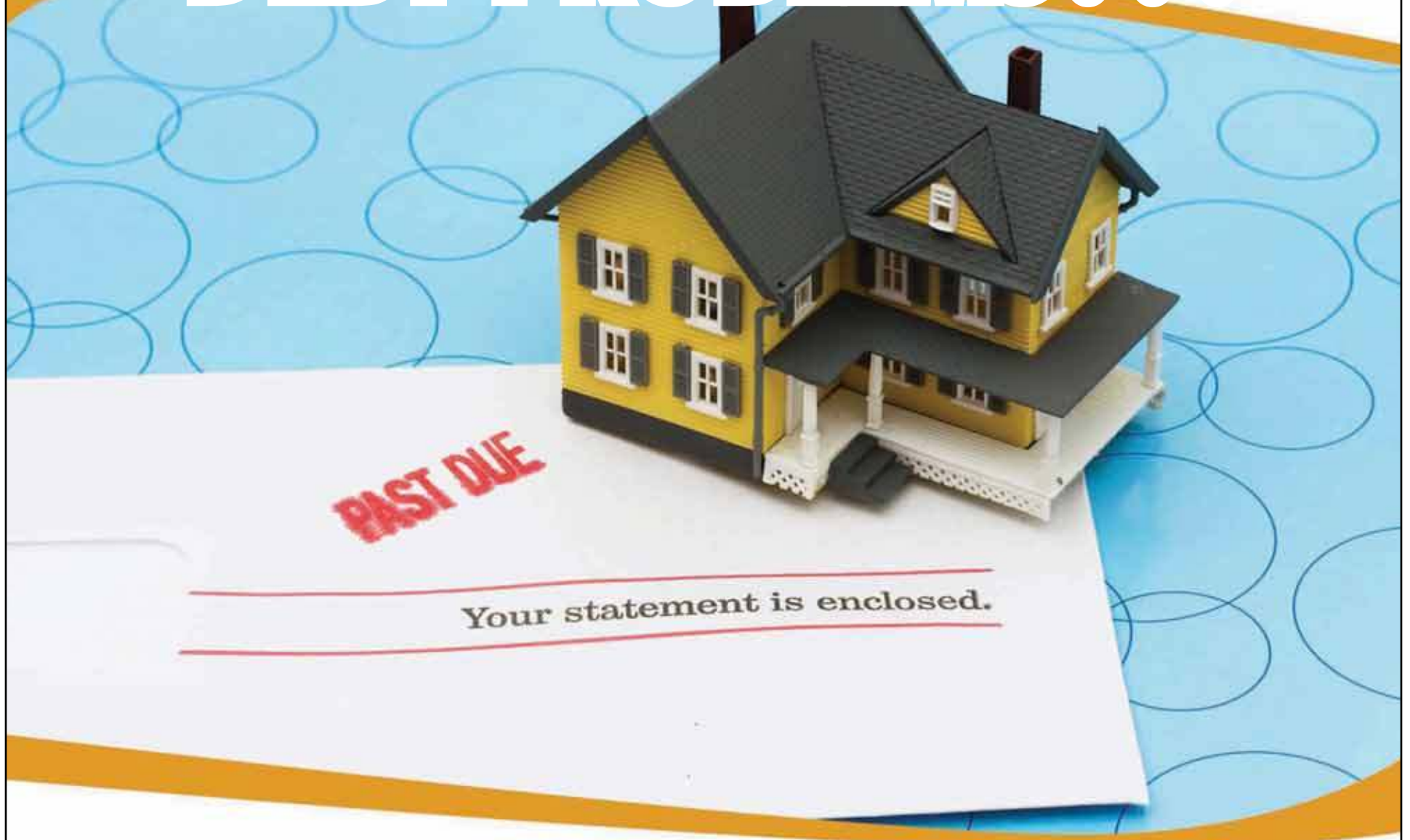
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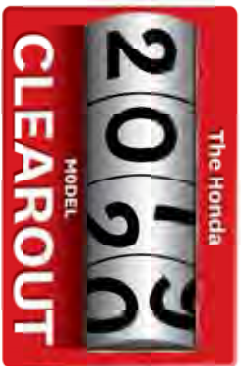
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IT'S A WIN-WIN FOR SHN AND THE ROTARY CLUB OF SCARBOROUGH!



This past August long weekend, Scarborough residents came out in droves with full appetites for the annual Scarborough Rib Fest at Thomson Memorial Park – and thanks to the Rotary Club of Scarborough, both SHN Foundation and one lucky attendee went home with much more!

The Club's annual 50/50 raffle, which supports lifesaving health care at Scarborough Health Network's hospitals and satellite sites, saw an incredible level of participation in the weeks leading up to the Rib Fest, as well as at the event itself. Over the past month, along with members of the SHN Foundation team, the Rotary Club promoted the raffle and sold tickets to patients, staff, physicians, volunteers and community members within the hospitals, while a booth was also set up at the Rib Fest itself.

This year, the total jackpot from the 50/50 raffle reached an incredible \$29,120, with Deidre Balyk being selected as the lucky winner, taking home \$14,560 (the same amount was also donated back to Scarborough Health Network).

The Foundation thanks the Rotary Club of Scarborough and others in the community for the continued support, which is helping us continue to shape the future of care in Scarborough.

Learn more about how to give back to health care in Scarborough at SupportSHN.ca.

Helping patients with dementia realize their potential

What do puzzles, therapeutic pets, and card games have in common?

Scarborough Health Network's (SHN) Annette Harris, for one!

As a Behavioural Support Ontario (BSO) Acute Care Registered Nurse, these are just some of the tools and activities Annette counts on to address responsive behaviours in patients with dementia or neurocognitive conditions.

BSO care providers have supported patients in community settings since 2010, when the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care dedicated \$40 Million of funding toward the development of an evidence and experience-based framework to enhance the availability of supports and services to persons living with responsive behaviours – but the role is quite new within an acute hospital setting, and was introduced to SHN in February 2019.

It's a Friday afternoon and Annette has been on her feet all day following SHN's Seniors Health Fair. But she is bubbling with energy and passion for this work, and her warm, compassionate personality makes it easy to see why she's a natural fit for this role.

In a nutshell, it's Annette's job to observe a person's responsive behaviour(s), work with their family and care providers to understand potential triggers for the behaviour, and develop care plans that focus on quality of care and quality of life, while teaching families and caregivers to care for their loved ones in a safe and meaningful way.

Responsive behaviours and their

triggers vary by individual: loneliness, boredom, or simply the need to use a bathroom might evoke a physical, emotional, or social response from a person struggling to communicate their needs.

"Once I understand the details of a person's life – their background, passions, careers, and hobbies – I can help problem-solve to minimize the stress of being in the hospital," says Annette.

"This often involves being creative with the patient's preferred routines and practices, and recommending comforting techniques and tools that improve comfort, coping, and satisfaction of the patient and their family, as well as staff and physicians."

For example, Annette says music therapy brought comfort to a gentleman who was lonely, while completing math sheets was invaluable for a retired teacher who was bored. Other tools may include adult colouring, doll therapy, therapeutic pets, books, and handheld games.

Sometimes, the simplest things can make the biggest difference, and the tactics become part of a patient's care plan, written in the voice of the patient:

► "I enjoy music, especially soft rock.



a range of abilities," says Annette. "Working with our patients to help them celebrate what they can do and realize their own potential is incredible. It's heartwarming to see the transformation that occurs when people are equipped with the right tools."

Annette moved into the behavioural support role after a 31-year nursing career in surgery at Centenary hospital.

She became interested in caring for patients with dementia and neurocognitive conditions on the surgical floor, after seeing many of these patients suffering from pain or the effects of medications while in the hospital and being unable to effectively express their needs.

As a nurse educator, an Alzheimer Society of Toronto volunteer, and as a caregiver,

Annette Harris

Annette is well-equipped to improve lives through exceptional care, by sharing her expertise with staff at all SHN hospitals through education and collaboration.

For more information on Seniors' Health services at SHN visit <https://www.shn.ca/seniors-health/>.

For more information on Behavioural Support Ontario visit <http://behaviouralsupportontario.ca/>.



ENHANCED PLASTIC SURGERY SERVICES COMING TO SCARBOROUGH HEALTH NETWORK'S BIRCHMOUNT HOSPITAL

Two new world-class surgeons will provide complex reconstruction, wound care, and emergency surgery at a newly opened clinic within Scarborough Health Network.

At Scarborough Health Network (SHN), transforming your health experience isn't just a vision – it's something we strive for every day.

SHN is pleased to welcome two new subspecialist plastic surgeons to our team and announce an exciting and – yes – transformational expansion of plastic surgery services across our network, including a new clinic at Birchmount hospital.

These enhanced services will bring a higher level of plastic surgery care to all residents of Scarborough.

The new services at Birchmount hospital - including a plastic surgery clinic with dedicated operating room time, increased wound care and emergency trauma surgeries, and specialized hand and breast reconstruction surgery – will give people faster access to better services.

Patients will receive consultations, surgery, and follow-up care

all in one location. “We are focusing on advancing plastic surgery services that benefit our community,” explains Dr. Timothy Sproule, Chief of Plastic Surgery. “We are extremely excited to provide a higher level of care at our Birchmount hospital, and, with the addition of new plastic surgeon sub-specialists, raise the quality of our services for everyone in Scarborough.”

Joining SHN's plastic surgery team are Dr. Robert Strazar and Dr. Chad Wu.

With expertise in the latest microsurgical and reconstructive techniques, Dr. Robert Strazar will expand SHN's breast reconstruction program. With a medical degree from McMaster University, Dr. Strazar completed his plastic surgery residency at the University of Manitoba, followed by a fellowship at the University of Toronto in microsurgery and breast reconstruction.

“Treating breast cancer has shifted to not just surviving, but thriving. With access to innovative and microsurgical reconstruction, breast cancer and asymmetry doesn't have to hold patients back,” says Dr. Strazar.



“This will raise the quality of care our plastic surgery team will provide to patients, not just at Birchmount, but at every SHN hospital.”

Dr. Chad Wu, a quadruple board certified surgeon, completed his surgical training at the University of Pennsylvania and plastic surgery Fellowship at McGill University. He then underwent additional fellowship specialty training in hand, wrist, and microsurgery involving breast and head and neck reconstruction at Yale University.

“The minimally invasive and advanced techniques that I use in surgery will help patients return to their daily activities quicker,” notes Dr. Wu. “Expanding this area of care to the Scarborough community will help reduce wait times for patients, all while providing care closer to home.”

We welcome Dr. Wu and Dr. Strazar to our integrated and multidisciplinary plastic surgery team, and our Scarborough community.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SHN'S SPIRITUAL CARE GRADUATES!



Each year, the Spiritual Care department at Scarborough Health Network (SHN) receives three to 12 students from the School of Theology at the University of Toronto. These students are assigned to nursing units and conduct general visits and referrals from staff. They assist people in coping with their hospitalization, provide a supportive presence and facilitate a holistic approach to health care.

“Going through spiritual care

education in my first clinical pastoral education unit under the supervision of Rev. Ajith Varghese was a life changing experience. I have learned a lot about community formation, religious and cultural diversity, and myself,” explains Andrew Abdelmalek, Spiritual Care student at SHN.

Over their year placement in 2018-2019, SHN's spiritual care students provided 2160 hours of patient care throughout the hospitals. On July

24, Liz Buller, President & CEO, joined Ajith Varghese and the students at their graduation ceremony to celebrate and recognize their remarkable contributions to SHN.

“The most remarkable experience for me was attending the rounds and seeing how the whole team of care – doctors, nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and spiritual care providers, collaborate for the care of each and every patient making the medical care truly holistic and wholesome,” says Amira Ayad, Spiritual Care student at SHN. “Witnessing all the effort done behind the scenes was truly inspiring.”

Congratulations to the most recent graduates:

- Amira Ayad
- Andrew Abdelmalek
- Olfat Sakr
- Olivia McPherson
- Ross Gilmour
- Sadiyah Chauhan

The Spiritual Care department at SHN focuses on providing spiritually and culturally sensitive services for patients, families and staff. The community serviced by the hospital is richly diverse and we are committed to understanding and meeting the needs of our community. Scarborough's cultural and religious variety is one of the many reasons spiritual care students choose SHN to complete their placement.

“The goal of Spiritual Care is to assist people in drawing upon their own religious beliefs and spiritual resources as they seek to face the challenge or crisis before them, keeping the feelings of hope and purpose strong in their lives,” says Ajith Varghese, Manager Spiritual Care. “Every year we expose our students to multiple disciplines supporting people of all faiths and no faith.”

Scarborough Ontario Health Team in development



In July, Scarborough Health Network (SHN) announced that it had joined in partnership with more than 40 Scarborough health service providers to create an Ontario Health Team (OHT) for Scarborough. In May 2019, groups interested in becoming OHTs submitted self-assessment applications to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to demonstrate readiness to become a formal OHT.

The Ministry received over 150 self-assessment applications. Based on the self-assessment, interested groups have been placed into one of three categories:

1. Thirty-one (31) have been selected to move to the “Full Application” stage with applications due in October 2019;
2. Forty-one (41) have been

identified as “In Development”; and

3. The remainder (i.e. the majority of applicants) are considered “In Discovery.”

SHN is pleased to report that the Scarborough OHT has been identified as “In Development.”

Groups identified as “In Development” have access to resources to further develop their OHT and submit a full application at a later date. The Scarborough OHT feels that this is a fair reflection of where we currently stand and we are told that there is a “small difference” between the full application group and the in-development group.

We continue to be very proud of what we have accomplished and thank all of our partners for what they have brought to the table. We

have already committed to moving forward with building and designing our OHT and now we have the room to do it.

The Scarborough OHT partners have formed several working groups to design an integrated system of care for Scarborough, and expects that the OHT will move to the full application process in the near future. Building on our long history of collaboration, together, we can and will transform how care is provided for the people of Scarborough.

Learn more about OHT at www.ontario.ca/connect-edcare. For questions pertaining to the Scarborough OHT in development, please contact communications@shn.ca.



OpEd

By: Samy Appadurai

.....
 "This is gun violence which we have seen increase and sustain itself in new numbers, this is about gun culture which has been allowed to infect the city because the police and the community can't do anything about it" said by Toronto Police Association president Mike McCormack, just after 14 separate incidents of gun violence across the city of Toronto in which 17 people were injured, during the "Simcoe" long weekend of August 3-5, 2019. Rampant gun violence has penetrated both in rural and urban areas and also in developed and developing countries around the globe at a tremendous speed over the last three decades and comparatively a slight wave has entered into our cities in Canada..

Violence by firearms is not the cause for the destruction rather it is means for achieving designated goals. Therefore, we have to go beyond the

Unless and until these factors are not being dealt with accordingly gun violence will increase.

• Though most of the gun related activities, deaths and injuries are concentrated among the developing countries like Honduras, Venezuela, Colombia, Jamaica and El Salvador, according to gun policy organizations 75 percent of the world's 875 million guns are in the hands of civilians and 48 percent are in the United States of America the world's mightiest power having a GDP of around 20 trillion dollars and the highest rate of gun ownership in the world. There are more than 393 million guns in circulation in the United States which breaks down to 120.5 guns for every 100 people.

But the United States rang 11th highest in the of gun violence in the world. It has not only the highest number of civilian gun ownership but also highest number of gun related deaths per capita among developed countries

rifles followed by short guns and then hand guns. The is a fast growing number of fire arms in Canada like United States and some other developed countries and according the report commissioner of fire arms the following data reveals the rising trend.

Year	Total firearms in Canada
1999	246,143
2000	530,050
2001	1,938,338
2002	5, 829,669
2003	6, 818,073
2004	6, 984, 485

Cumulative total number of unique firearms registered in Canada

As far as the non-military import and export of firearms are concerned prior to the early 21st century the imports of firearms were greater than export in number and at the starting from the early 21st century it is vice

the year of 2004 and an almost similar trend continues.

When combined the gender and age distributions it appears that the concentration of such violent activities is targeted and also victimized among the young adult population. These activities are most likely gang related. Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders mentioned about recent firearms violence that the "street gang subculture" are responsible for the majority of violence in the city." In most of the urban areas a substantial portion of such age groups of people are either in the post-secondary institutions or after completing their courses are either underemployed, or employed or unemployed or lost a high caliber job and struggling to find a suitable job. Some may have dropped out from the educational Institutions, or want to make quick money by any easy means and access no matter if it is legal or not. Some of this crime may also be related to or influ-

Gun down the Gun Violence



gravity of violence caused by firearms and find out the root causes and work on tangible solutions. In fact, no stone should be left unturned and starting from family the smallest circle in society, to the work place, places of worship, ethnicity, government, gender, politics, business entity and so on. The injustices, segregation, favouritism unfair treatment, undue transactions, biased treatment, corruption, bribery, lack of morality, and illegal ways of accumulating wealth must be examined.

and that too having highest number of police officers. The interesting part of this that the number of guns in the United States exceeds the total population, including the children and seniors.

As far as Canada is concerned comparatively the firearm related violence and victimization is not ranked among the worst, but still there is a substantial rise in firearm possession and its related violence. Among the main three types of firearms the most popular are

versa.

The victims of homicide due to firearms are for the most part male, though population wise the female population is slightly higher than the males in Canada. It is also important to see how the number of such activities are distributed age group wise; the highest number is in the age group between 18 and 34 having the percentage of 42% followed by 35 and 54 for 22.3%, the age group of 12 and 17 accounts for 16.7% and 55 and over for 13.5% in

enced by addiction to drugs or alcohol.

Both the adult and the youth gangs have a name and code of conduct and also follow a somewhat unwritten constitution and they mostly abide by it. For example if any of the member is being arrested or charged with a crime that he has not committed but another member of his gang committed the offense, the arrested party would accept the verdict for the crime that he has not committed and under no circumstances will expose the name of the member



who actually committed the crime. "In other words, the gang member who is found guilty 'takes one for the team'. There are around five hundred gangs in operation in Canada and almost half of them are based in Ontario and one fourth is in British Columbia and a smaller number in the eastern provinces.

The core of these gangs across Canada and elsewhere often reflect the ethnic composition of the communities where they are based. The reason being is that when a gang has members of a certain group there's more likely going to be a stronger sense of trust. Furthermore, the members may also share in the same struggles as their fellow members for example they may have faced racial discrimination. There is also an added benefit in that these gangs are also known for providing a sort of Mafia style protection to members of their community at large. That being said, this does mean that those in the wider community support what the gangs are doing.

There are some gang activities that have garnered much attention in the GTA. In September 2018 there was an investigation by the police and the following comment was made regarding a mob hit. Albert Lavarone, 50, was killed by a gunman who waited in the bushes outside Sunflower Crescent in Hamilton, Ontario around 9:55 p.m. on Sept. 13, 2018. The Police investigator made this comment about organized crime. "If you look back over the last couple years there has been a number of murders, a number of bombings, a number of arsons throughout the GTA and up to as far as Montreal. It is our belief that there is something going on in the underworld. We are not sure if this particular case factors into that but is something we are alive to". [

There was another gang related cold blooded killing of Cosino Comisso, 33, believed to be a member of Ndrangheta, a mafia type of organization of Italy along with Chantelle Almedia, 26, of Toronto. Likewise, a substantial number of such activities have been taking place and in spite of those murders and illegally smuggling drugs and firearms still the murder rate in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area is low among such high calibre cities around the world. Around the world gun related deaths have an average of 1000. It includes suicide, intentional homicide, domestic violence, robbery assault and accidental firearm death as well.

Guns as a tool for self defense are primarily found in urban centres for protection from other people. As far as the Canadian North is concerned particularly during the winter, guns are used for hunting animals for their food and furs, and in this case a gun is treated as a tool.

The impact of violence by firearms is very negative in many ways. For example, it costs the United States an-

nually 229 billion dollars. It also has a serious impact on the real estate market where the gun violence is rampant, people do not purchase houses and the real estate market goes down.

The illegal activities of smuggling firearms, drugs and other commodities like cigarettes damages the local economy and also sabotages the revenue for the Government. Since they do not pay any taxes to the Government, they would be able to market their product at a cheaper rate and its adverse effects for the producers of the legal companies and other business enterprises costs a lot for them for their survival.

The direct health effect is the weakening of man power, reduced happiness and creates more stress to the extent of depression and at times it causes the disruption of family life and at times ends up in separation, or divorce. Apart from the medical expense and for the treatment, the psychological impact is very serious.

There are ups and downs in the numbers of victims of firearm violence in Canada. For example, firearm-related violent crime declined 33% from 2009 to 2013, reaching its lowest point in recent years. The downward trend had taken a "U" turn in 2013 and has gone up 42%. Between 2013 and 2017, by firearm-related violent crime. Victims of police-reported violent crime involving a firearm, by census metropolitan area, respectively in 2009, 7,305 in 2010, 5,997, in 2011, 5,707, in 2012, 5,776 in 2013, 5,126 and now the trend is more of upward as of 2014, 5,681, in 2015, 6,809 in 2016, 7,201 and in 2017, 7,660. As of Toronto metropolitan city is concerned there is a positive correlation with the national trend as of in 2009, 2,056, in 2010, 1,151, in 2011, 1,151, in 2012, 1,086, 2013, 955, 2014, 1,391 in 2015, 1,616, in 2016, 1,837, and 2017, 2,032.

It is somewhat disturbing that homicide committed by and young adults aged 15 to 24 involve firearms and it is ranked fourth in Canada and third in United States... Accidental deaths and suicides were ranked first and second, respectively, for this age group in both countries (Statistics Canada 2018a; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016).

Firearms as another means for suicide has outnumbered homicide cases particularly among teens and young adults. This is truly alarming and thus there needs to be adequate resources available to prevent such suicides from occurring.

Preventive measures

First of all, the causes for the use of firearms have to be diagnosed and then treated. In many cases the cause is more psychological than physical and measures have to be taken to prevent these individuals from acting out. It appears that in most of these cases the victims either want to take revenge or take the laws into their hands and

want to punish those who victimized them and make those people victims too. Therefore, remedial programs are needed and it has to be done at educational institutions, hospitals and health centers, clinics, places of worship, prisons, neighbourhoods, and public gatherings.

The preventive measures should play a major role in drastically reducing the violence caused by the firearms. In fact, the Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, at a Summit on Gun and Gang Violence on March 7, 2018, in Ottawa clearly mentioned:

"We cannot arrest, charge and imprison our way out of this problem." Better prevention strategies and a collaborative, multi-sectorial approach to gun and gang violence are needed, to improve the safety and security of communities. A coherent national approach is necessary because gun violence and criminal gang activity cross borders and change shape quickly."

The homicide rate in Canada is comparatively lower than the United States and many other developing countries but still higher than Australia, the United Kingdom and France. Recently within Canada the increase in the national number of homicides was largely due to the increases in both in urban areas in British Columbia and mainly rural areas coupled with urban areas among the

other western provinces such as Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta and in the eastern provinces in rural areas of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were also notably higher than those reported in urban areas. The increase in Quebec was also caused by the mass shooting that occurred at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Québec. The attack resulted in six homicides and 40 attempted murders but there is a decline in Ontario during this period also to be mentioned. Toronto, Canada's largest CMA in terms of population, reported 92 homicides in 2017, 4 fewer than the previous

Financially it is a burden for the tax payers in paying millions of dollars for handling such cases and also having projects for prevention whereas the government is facing an acute deficit in the budget and also has to borrow money and pay interest in millions and a portion of it is meant for these expenses. It also costs more for the families who got victimized by the firearms activities.

In closing gun violence impacts us all whether directly or indirectly. It costs everyone in terms of tax money, broken lives and broken hearts. It is up to all of us to stop this modern-day scourge. Our lives depend on it.

Samy Appadurai is a renowned broadcast journalist, author, educator and public speaker

THE 7TH ANNUAL Vivekananda Public Speaking Competition



The Vedanta Society of Toronto is organizing a public speaking competition to celebrate Vivekananda's legacy.

September 22, 2019 at 11:00 a.m.

Vedanta Society of Toronto, 120 Emmett Avenue, Toronto

"The man is simply a marvel of oratorical power." — William James

COMPETITION RULES AND DETAILS

The competition will consist of:

- A prepared speech for 4-5 minutes (see topics below)
- For Intermediate and Senior groups, an impromptu speech for 1.5 minutes (topics to be given during competition)

The competition is open to students in three groups:

Junior Level: Grades 6-8
Topic: My Family

Intermediate Level: Grades 9-10
Topic: Do we need discipline?

Senior Level: Grades 11-12
Topic: What is peace?

Please note:

- Speeches must have a special reference to Vivekananda's life and work
- No notes are allowed during speeches

Participants will be judged on:

- Content (60%)
- Delivery (30%)
- Language and Grammar (10%)

Awards in each category:

- First Prize: \$100
- Second Prize: \$75
- Third Prize: \$50

A light lunch will be provided for participants.

To register please contact Shukla Datta at shukladatta53@yahoo.com.

The registration fee of \$10 can be paid onsite.

For more information, please contact Shukla Datta at shukladatta53@yahoo.com



Take it or Leave it

Baby Steps

When you don't accept failure what are you left with? Hope!

So, how do I understand “hope” in my life? How do I realize hope? Very easy, very simple. There are four points—and of course, the first point is, “Know thyself; that’ll bring you peace.” “Know thyself” will bring you peace. And the other three points will improve the quality of your life, will bring you happiness.

So, again, the first point is, “Know yourself.” Second point is, “Have gratitude in your life.” Third point, “Don’t care about what other people think of you.”

So, “My God!” you know? The thing is, what you have to realize—that person isn’t thinking about you. You know what they’re thinking about? They’re thinking about what other people think about them.

Fear of failure can keep you from trying.

But once, when you were a baby learning to walk, you were free to fail

without accepting defeat

people look at me like, “Huh? Every time I fail, don’t accept failure? I, I’ve been accepting failure all my life. How can I not accept failure?”

The thing is, when you are a baby learning how to walk, you failed many, many times. Because here is a peculiar situation. You, you want to learn how

cause you don’t know how to type yet.

And it’s just up to you. So you get up—shaky, very shaky because your legs are not—the muscles aren’t built up enough to let you walk. And you get up, and you’re shaky, and you try to take the step, and you fall down. And if that was you today, you would go, “I tried. I failed? I don’t want to talk about it.”

Right? Complete shut-down. “Failure accepted”: boom! Door closed! “Don’t remind me of it. It’s a bad day. It was a terrible day. I don’t want to remember this day. I failed.”

No! Just because you wouldn’t accept failure, you saw hope. And you got up, and you tried again.

But you still didn’t.... And you failed. But you still didn’t accept failure. What you were left with—when you don’t accept failure, what are you left with? You’re left with hope!

And all this time, because you kept accepting hope and rejecting failure.... As soon as you take away “failure” from “fail,” “fail” doesn’t carry that much power anymore. But if you have “failure” coupled with “fail,” ooooh, that’s everything. That’s everything!

But you will fail, because there isn’t an instruction manual for everything in this life. There will be things happening to you and around you that you will face, that you have never come across. And whether it is in a hurry that you make those decisions, or unknowingly make those decisions, you may make a decision that is wrong and you fail....

And you fail—and it’s okay. Nothing in the world changes; nothing in the world says, “Uh-uh, uh-uh, uh-uh-uh!” No! Nothing changes; get up and move! Up to you—or stay there. Up to you.

Prem Rawat

www.timelesstoday.com



They’re not thinking about you; it’s just that you, you are caught up in this little silly game of thinking about, “Oh, what’s that person thinking about me?” They don’t care. They really could care less! But we create this whole thing.

So, anyways—and then the fourth thing: “Every time you fail, don’t accept failure.” This is about hope! And

to walk! Obviously, you can’t read. And you like your mother’s voice but don’t understand really what she’s saying....

And here you are. You have to accomplish what you have never done before. And no amount of training can be given to you. You cannot go onto your iPad, onto YouTube, and try to write in a URL “teach me how to walk,” be-



It's not an STD, reoccurring boil or in-grown hair, so what is it?

Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS) is a chronic, debilitating skin condition that affects up to 4% of Canadians

HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA (HS)

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a devastating condition affecting up to 4% of Canadians, and characterized by recurrent boils in the folds of skin, resulting in unpleasant odor and discharge.¹ You may have HS if you're between puberty and 40 years of age with painful bumps that persist for several weeks to months.

THE LONG HS JOURNEY:²



Average time for diagnosis is



Average age of diagnosis is



Average referral wait time for dermatologist is



By: **Raed Alhusayen,**

Dermatologist and President of the Canadian HS Foundation

Whether you have the condition or not, you've likely never heard of Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS). HS is a chronic and



painful - partly genetic - inflammatory skin disease that presents as pimples and boils that can erupt and bleed. It often occurs in skin fold areas of the body where skin rubs together such as under arms, breasts, groin and buttocks. While largely unknown, HS is common. At my practice, I currently see over 600 patients from across the province with HS. Until they were properly diagnosed, most lived in chronic pain and had every aspect of their life – physical and mental – impacted by the disease. Fortunately, both hope and treatment are available.

Misdiagnosis & Misunderstanding – It can take up to nine years for a person to be properly diagnosed with HS. Before proper diagnosis, HS can be mistaken as a contagious skin disorder or a sexually transmitted disease



(STD). A popular myth associated with HS is that it occurs because of lifestyle choices, such as poor hygiene or smoking. While lifestyle habits can impact the disease, HS is an autoimmune disease that requires specific treatment. It is essential to diagnose the disease early. A central issue associated with HS is psychological impact and well-being. With misdiagnosis comes significant mental health issues, chronic pain and anguish. Published studies show patients with HS die 15 years younger than the general population due to increased chances of suicide, heart disease, diabetes and cancer. HS appears to be more prevalent in Indigenous Canadians, African and Indian

populations with flare-ups likely to occur in summer months due to the heat.

Image source: Canadian HS Foundation - What is HS.

HS research has dramatically increased over the last 10 years and we have new treatment options. Education is imperative among Canadians and health care practitioners, so it can be properly diagnosed and treated.

If you've had skin pimples or boils re-occur for several months in the folded areas of your skin, you might have HS. Please know you are not alone, and there is hope and treatment options available. Stay positive and know that there are many people like you. It is

important to know that HS is not an infection. HS is not contagious. And HS cannot be transmitted to someone else. If you're experiencing any symptoms, I encourage you to request a referral to a dermatologist. They can assess your skin condition, symptoms and provide an accurate diagnosis.

If you've been diagnosed with HS, review your treatment plan and goals with your doctor. To learn more about HS, please visit: www.HSAware.ca, www.HSFoundation.ca, CanadianSkin.ca or join the conversation using #HonestWithHS.

Dr. Raed Alhusayen, MSc, MBBS, FRCPC is a dermatologist and President of the Canadian HS Foundation.



OIL AND WATER

By Kumar Punithavel

Sundaram woke up in the dark and could not fathom where he is. He was sweating, and his heart was beating fast. Though it was dark he realized that he was on his bed from the sound of regular breathing of his wife sleeping next to him.

Her regular breathing sound was soothing for the confused Sundaram who woke up suddenly sweating in the middle of the night. He slowly moved his hand towards her along the mattress. Her silky hair was comforting to him at that confused moment. He turned towards her and placed his right hand on her bare waist. In her sleep she turned towards him and buried her face in his chest and continued to sleep. The aroma of her hair was very comforting and calming to Sundaram.

People always take decisions according to circumstances. Shanthi was Sundaram's maternal uncle's daughter. Her father had four daughters and by the time youngest Shanthi's turn to get married it was delayed as marriages were arranged by the parents in their culture. Father and daughter were living alone in the house and it was an irksome worry for the father. After losing his wife in an accident when Sundaram offered to marry Shanthi, her father was very glad and arranged the marriage immediately.

Cuddling Shanthi, Sundaram started to reflect on the past. She of course oblivious of the surrounding was in deep sleep.

It was a holiday and Shanthi was cutting vegetables in the kitchen to cook lunch. Accidentally she cut her hand and it was bleeding. Worried Sundaram wanted to bandage it, but, Shanthi refused saying, "It is only a small gash I will apply polysporin ointment and plaster it", she walked alone to the bed room. Sundaram felt she refused any help from him, and was avoiding him!

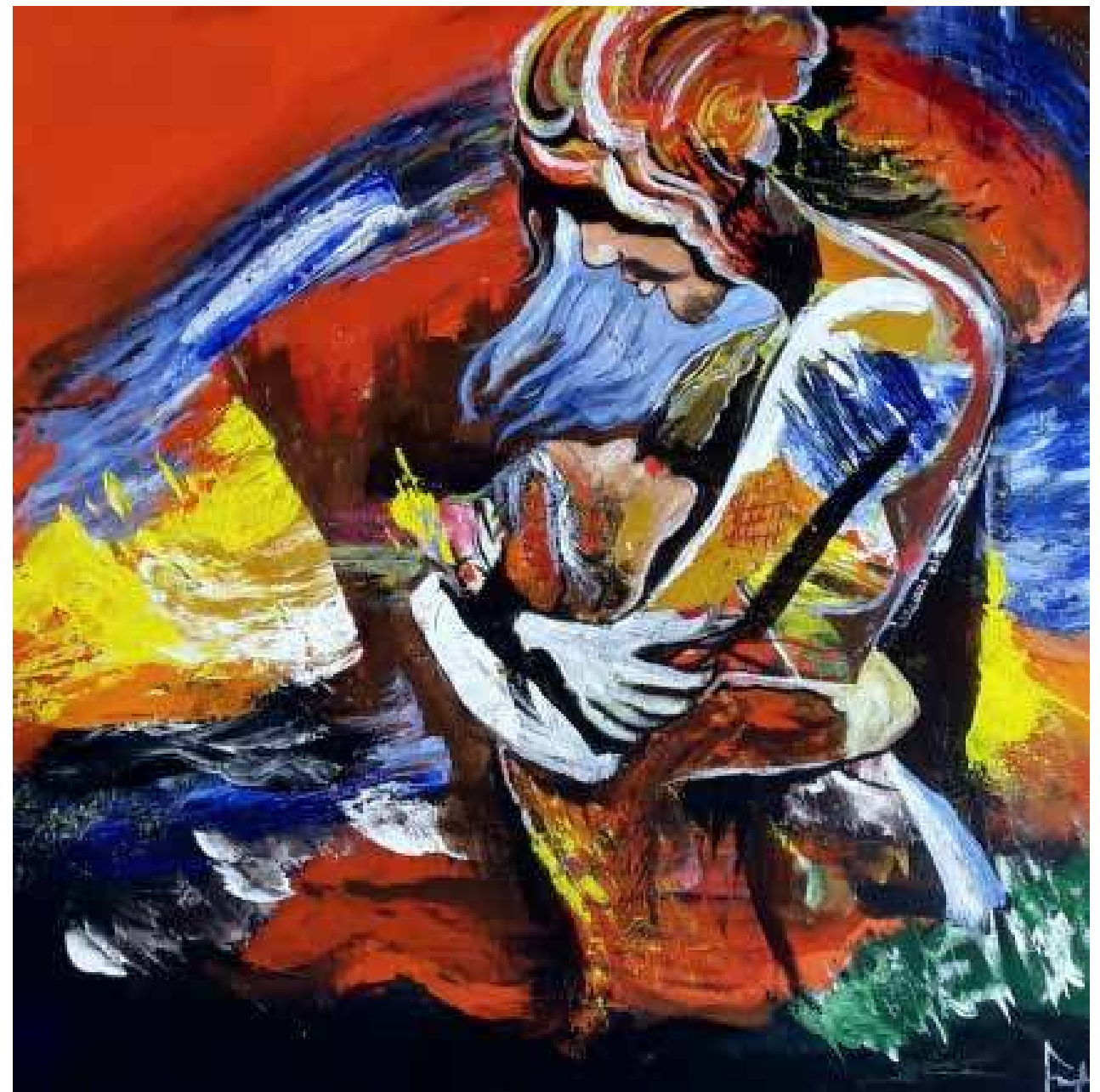
But, she never failed to satisfy all his needs emotional and physical. After all didn't she marry him for that reason? Sundaram felt there was always a very thin veil dividing them in their relationship.

It was a Friday, and Sundaram returned from work early. Fridays they ate vegetarian food, and seeing him Shanthi said, "Give me a moment I will have a quick shower and join you", and rushed to the bathroom. Sundaram entering the bedroom saw on the bed the suitcase Shanthi had brought when she came from her parents lying open. It was kept always closed with a number lock, and Sundaram never bothered to ask what was in it. Curiosity took the better of Sundaram. Persons, who normally don't make mistake, will do when tempted by opportunity.

He stared to dig into the suitcase and found nothing unusual. Only thing unusual happening was he was snooping into Shanthi's suitcase sneakily. When he was about to close it Shanthi walked out of the bathroom drying her head with a towel. Seeing Sundaram with the open bag, without showing any emotions she got on with her work. Sundaram felt very embarrassed being caught red-handed doing wrong.

Lying on the bed, when he recollected the past incidences, he started to wonder whether he was the cause of the rift. From the beginning he did not whole heartedly accept as his life partner. He started to feel he was the cause for the veil between them. At that moment another incidence came to his mind.

When Shanthi came to the house as new bride she did start life with enthusiasm. After Sundaram left for work she started to put the house in order, as it was a bachelor's for some time. After cleaning up the ground floor the whole morning, she stared clearing the second floor where there were three bed rooms and two bath rooms and a small verandah connecting them all. There was a large portrait of a woman on the wall of the corridor. Shanthi had brought it down and started dusting it. Sundaram returning from work rushed up the stairs and asked her in a harsh tone, "Why did you bring down that picture?" She



replied calmly, "it was full of dust, that is why I took it down to clean it".

Sundaram continued in the same ruthless tone, "Do you know whose picture this is?" Shanthi replied calmly, "Yes I do".

He responded "I will be very annoyed and angry if anything happens to it", for which Shanthi without a response stared at his face calmly. Her quiet stare made Sundaram loose all his confidence. He walked away mumbling. He could never forget that incidence. He realized that it was not Shanthi that kept him away, but it was he who was not ready for unification with another after the demise of his earlier wife. We are ready to say oil is refusing mix with water, but fail to note it could be water that is refusing to allow the oil to merge.

Though Shanthi continued performing her duties vigilantly, she never asked or says any on her own. Her silence was a constant irritation for Sundaram. One day he was so annoyed told her, "If you don't like living here get your things ready I will drop you at your father's home". Her simple reply was, "I don't want to go anywhere, I will stay here". Lying on his bed he recalled how he could not face the stare of her that he left the room with his head down.

At that time he was jolted by a great rumbling noise of the jet bombers flying low above on the sky. It must be the bomber flying very low he realized. Great sadness, anger and irritation came to his mind when he thought to himself his country must be one of the very few countries that bomb its own citizens. He realized that he must have woken up by a noise like this earlier too. He woke up Shanthi, who clung on to him tight and asked in a muffled voice full of fear what the noise was.


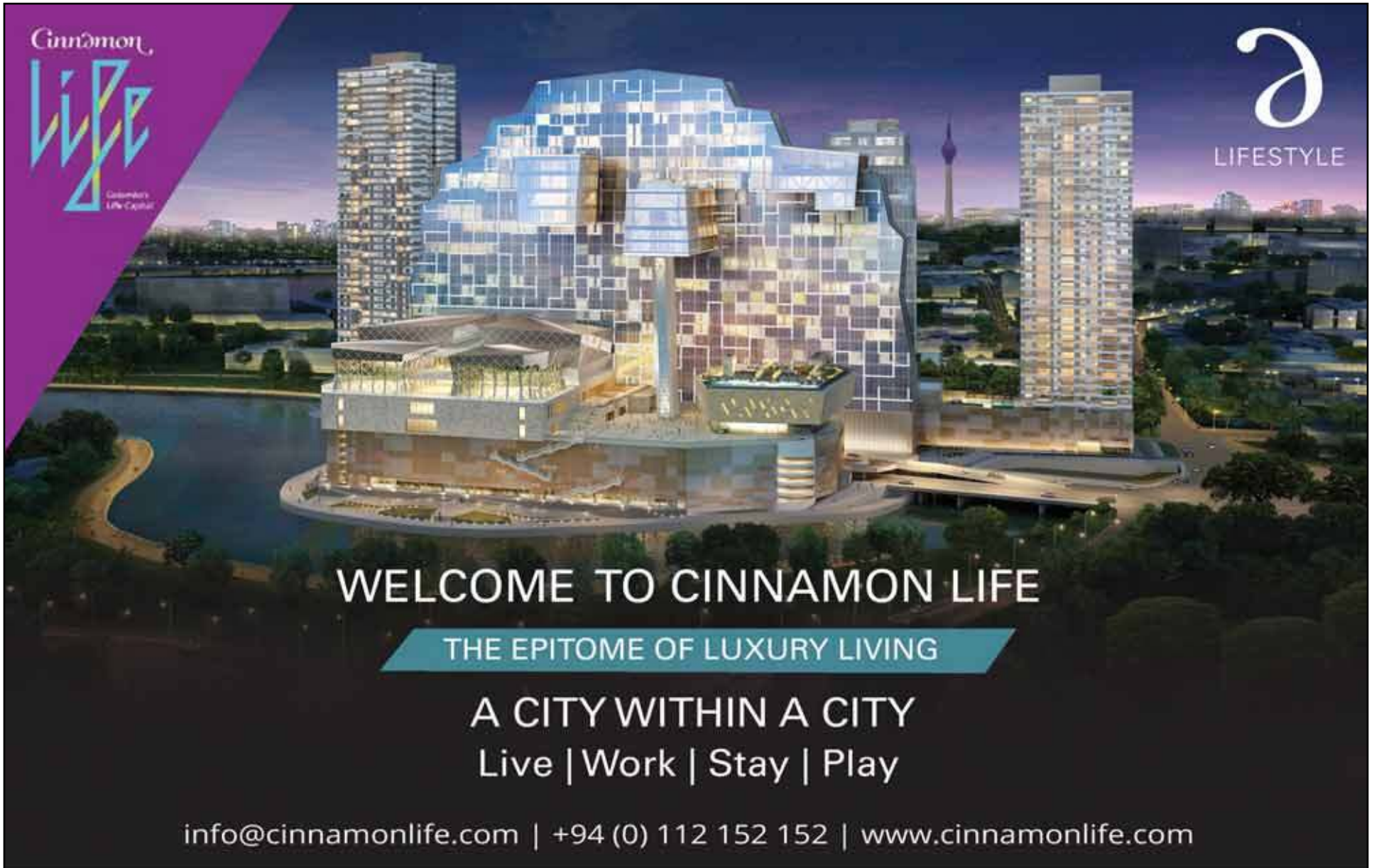

"Now they have started to terrorize the citizens and kill us" he replied, "Let's get out of here to the bunker and hide", so saying he got up from the bed to rush out of the house. At that moment a neighbouring house must have been bombed. The tremor was so great even their house quivered. They heard the loud noise of the big portrait on the corridor crashing down in the tremor. Out of fear Shanthi held on to Sundaram tight and whispered "Fortunately all this is happening when we are together".

When Sundaram said, "let's go down quickly", and tried to moved to the stairs Shanthi too moved towards the door clinging on to him. She had never hugged on to him so tight. When they stepped on the corridor Shanthi tried to go and pick up the damaged portrait, Sundaram holding on to her tightly said, "Forget about that, it is our life that is most important at this moment. Let's run out of the house to the bunker" She too without a word walked towards the stairs holding on to Sundaram tightly.

The bombing by the government not only destroyed many houses, but also shattered the wall that was between Shanthi and Sundaram. That was the day the couple had the proper honeymoon of their new life in the bunker!

One should never forget when someone says oil is refusing to mix with water; it is also true the water is refusing to accept the oil to mix.

Sundaram's guilt that he is failing his diseased wife had formed a barrier preventing him to reach out to Shanthi who had trusted and married him. On that day he realized that he was wrong to believe Shanthi was not accepting him fully. But he was ready then.

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Scarborough's favourite street festival - Tamil Fest - attracts record crowds of 250,000 with fun for the whole family and new food selections

TORONTO, ON – AUGUST 30, 2019 – Once again, the fifth annual Tamil Fest, hosted by the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), was a resounding success, building upon its past performance and maintaining its position as Scarborough's pre-eminent outdoor festival. The two-day affair, officially launched in the presence of many dignitaries, including Mayor John Tory, took place on August 24th and 25th, 2019 on Markham Road which was closed between McNicoll and Passmore Avenues. Tamil Fest attendance for 2019, at approximately 250,000 was the largest ever and a testament to how popular the festival is, with not only the Tamil community, but all other communities in the GTA. Sivan Ilanko, President of CTC in his inaugural speech welcomed all the dignitaries and guests and also thanked all the sponsors, supporters and volunteers who helped to organize this mega event.

The Greater Toronto Area lays claim to more than 250,000 residents of Tamil ancestry, the largest Tamil community outside of the Indian subcontinent and Tamil Fest allowed visitors to experience Canadian Tamil culture in all of its multi-faceted glory. The Festival however, is much more than the celebration of the Tamil community in Canada – it is also a celebration of Canada's multiculturalism as evidenced by the number of visitors from other communities enjoying the food and tapping to the wonderful music and songs provided by both local and international Tamil artistes.

As with any Tamil celebration, food was an important consideration, over 20 food vendors offered mouth-watering Tamil dishes that were prepared just for the festival. But Tamil Fest is much more than the delicious food that was served! Visitors were treated to free entertainment in the form of dance, music and songs on not one but two stages; the Red-Carpet Stage and the Main Stage. The Red-Carpet Stage featured some of the finest Tamil dancers and singers in the GTA and was the home of Tamil Fest's annual Diversity Hour featuring unique acts from Egypt, China, Korea and Mexico. The main stage concerts rocked the event on both nights, featuring amazing local bands such as Megatuners and Agni accompanied by some of the world's most famous Tamil playback singers from Northern Sri Lanka and South India. In total, over 450 artists were featured at Tamil Fest 2019 during the course of two days, most of whom from the considerable local talent pool.

The curiosity of the visitors was whetted by the Tamil history exhibit hoisted on a flatbed truck chronicling over 2000 years of Tamil history including the Chola Empire that extended to Sri Lanka and parts of Cambodia and Thailand, as well as the significance of new archaeological findings in Keezhadi, South India. TamilFest also further publicized the Toronto Tamil Chair campaign supported by CTC, an initiative to establish an academic unit to support Tamil Studies at the University of Toronto, a fitting goal for the largest Tamil community outside the Indian sub-continent. The Counting the Dead campaign by Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG) was also

a part of TamilFest. The initiative seeks to provide a more precise number of those who lost their lives, not only during the over 30 year civil war, but from communal riots and the excesses of the Sri Lankan armed forces from 1948 onwards, when Sri Lanka gained its independence from Britain. Once complete, the results of the Counting the Dead initiative will be used to memorialize the dead as well as assist in the continuing campaign of the Tamil diaspora for justice and accountability to be meted out in Sri Lanka.

The dedicated Kids' Fun Zone was popular once again, with the midway rides attracting thousands of children of all ages. This year featured lots of prizes with many of our sponsors presenting fun give-aways including numerous draws of a cash prize of \$500 by the Title Sponsor TNext Communications.

History of TamilFest and the Organizer, the Canadian Tamil Congress

The Festival is organized by the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), a not-for-profit organization, managed by a volunteer Board whose current President is Sivan Ilanko. Day to day activities are the responsibility of CTC's Executive Director, Danton Thurairajah. While the Tamil community has significantly contributed to Canada over the last 30 years and has been recognized as a model community by political leaders of all stripes, most recently in Mayor Tory's address at the 2019 TamilFest, the festival is perhaps the most high profile and visible way in which the community contributes to the socio-economic fabric of the great City of Toronto.

The Festival began as a celebration Canadian Tamil cuisine and culture. It has grown to become a celebration that showcases and highlights the very best of the Tamil community locally and internationally. While a number of the events and programs are reflective of the area's Tamil roots, the Festival programming and its audience, have grown to encompass a much broader spectrum of the Toronto community.

The Festival began in 2015 when the Canadian Tamil Congress decided to create a unique platform to showcase the numerous business achievements of the Tamil community, its mouth-watering cuisine and provide an opportunity for both local and international Tamil artistes to perform in front of a diverse Canadian audience.

In the first year, approximately 120,000 people attended the Festival. Each subsequent year the festival has grown dramatically and continually featured new exhibitions and talent. Today, the Festival, in its fifth year has grown to over 250,000 attendees from all communities who come to enjoy the food, the free entertainment and Tamil culture. Tamil Fest has quickly become one of Toronto's signature events and the largest event of its kind, east of Yonge Street, showcasing the best of what our multicultural city has to offer: music, the classical arts and amazing cuisine.

For more information visit:

www.tamilfest.ca

Photo Credit: Ninaivukal.



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Special Feature



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

PRIVILEGES OF TRAVEL

August 18, 2019: Yours truly has been making her way around Southeast Asia over the last two weeks – primarily Thailand. Everywhere I go, I am forcibly reminded about the inter-connectedness of our people – we’ve clearly been intermixing for a very, very long time. Due to the influence of Buddhism – and much else besides – there has always been a flow of traffic between Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Even so, the brown-skinned here are not particularly welcome, particularly the brown-skinned from Sri Lanka. Don’t get me wrong, I’ve met many lovely Thai people – helpful and kind. I’ve also met the other kind – ones wondering if I’m running as an illegal migrant – so curt and rude, particularly when I went to the Cambodia-Thai border, with a valid visa, and still got turned away. Sri Lankans can’t cross by land apparently. Or so they said when I actually went there; they had not put that rule anywhere in writing.

It’s a legitimate border crossing at Poipet, Cambodia which lets international cross-overs via bus, unless you are the wrong kind of passport holder – such as a Sri Lankan apparently; again, not overtly mentioned anywhere. I had to go there to find out and be treated rudely by many people in the process, including the bus driver transporting us across.

This happened just a few days ago, and I am still absorbing the impact. I don’t know if this says anything about the Cambodian community, the Thai community, or indeed my community – the Sri Lankan Tamils. We are well known here as illegal migrants using these countries as a transit point to the West. And so we are treated with hostility and suspicion, even if we have valid visas and valid travel plans that are perfectly above board and legal.

Stigmatised migrants

I am not ashamed of my community and I am not ashamed of what they are doing either – I have interviewed several people at various times, both successful migrants who made it to the other side as well as unsuccessful ones jailed for years in Bangkok and then returned.

No one puts their lives, reputations, and all their assets in Sri Lanka in jeopardy just for the heck of it – they all had/have valid reasons to migrate, and I don’t begrudge them. Since legal exits to other countries have officially been slammed in their faces, they feel the need to find all the loopholes they can exploit, leading to countries that used to give visa on arrival like Thailand retracting that facility from us, a facility enjoyed by a large portion of the rest of the world. Many countries that generally give visas on arrival do not extend that facility to Sri Lankans. Countries that do give us such visas on arrival, like Singapore, are extremely hostile when we actually arrive.

Due to this hostility exhibited to Sri Lankan passport holders across many countries, I actually prefer being able to get visas beforehand rather than on arrival. I actively tried to get a prior visa to Singapore before landing there, but that facility was not available. So when I arrived, I was treated so shabbily, I feared I was going to be turned back at the border in Malaysia from where I had crossed over. I had all my paperwork in place, but they still held me behind for three hours – by which time my bus left without me. I was the only one left behind and singled out for this special attention, and recall still with humiliation,



A very magnificent palace inside inlaid with gold, silver, and pearl from top to bottom

my interrogating officer flinging my passport in my face in contempt as if it had no value – then again, it probably didn’t.

If left to his own devices, he probably wouldn’t have let me through – he made that clear – but he eventually had to refer to a superior officer, a lady who acted surprised I had been detained at all. And just like that, I was suddenly let through. Phew. Still remember the anxiety I felt, and the relief of finally getting through.

Thus far, whether I had a valid visa or not (when I needed to get one on arrival), I am used to being hassled, having my passport checked repeatedly as if the visa stamps on them are illicit, and asked various hostile questions on what exactly I want to do in the destination country, but I’ve eventually always been let through. Last week marked an end to that string of dubious luck; I suppose it was inevitable. Cambodia, despite having given me a three-month visa, refused to let me through. I had expected to be hassled of course, but I had not expected to be rejected. I am still left reeling, and wondering if this was even legal.

Just because sections of my community are known for illegal trafficking, can Cambodia shut away all members of my community? And if they do, shouldn’t they tell us that instead of giving the visa and then rejecting us at the border?

I never even made it to the Cambodian border. I was retained on the Thai side as they negotiated furiously with the Cambodian side on whether to let me through. The answer was a no holds barred “no”.

I repeatedly asked why, but was not given a valid reason. When the bus pulled up at the Thai exit point, the bus driver pulled me aside to tell me that I was not going to make it through and so he’d likely leave without me (fortunately, they did make arrangements for me to return to Bangkok).

When I asked why then too, I was brusquely told: “How do I know why? It’s not my business to tell you why. Sri Lankans are not let through at this border,

that’s all.” Inside, the Thai officials were not as rude, but they did say they had no control in letting me through as Cambodia was refusing my entry – and they again didn’t know why. At one point (apparently conveying queries from the Cambodian side), they asked if I had \$1,000 on me.

No, I was going for three days into Cambodia just to tour the famed Angkor Wat temple complex – a long-held dream. I had already paid for my hotel and had \$220 in cash, along with \$500 at the bank which I could withdraw via an ATM. I am a budget traveller and figured this was enough for my three-day stay in Cambodia. That notion was treated with a lot

of eye rolling. I was told that I did not have enough money to get through.

Yet, I noticed my bus co-travellers – all of them white – were being let through without any trouble or demands for proof of funds. Unlike me, they didn’t even have a Cambodian visa; that would be issued to them on arrival on the other side – one more thing denied to me as a Sri Lankan, and so I had had to shell out \$30 to procure one. Not that it did me much good.

I was then arbitrarily told: “You can fly in if you want to, but can’t come in by land.”

Why? Is there some contamination if I come in by land?

us all to. Rather strange to be treated as an illegal migrant by them, unwelcome in their country.

Then again, as a Sri Lankan, I shouldn’t complain. Sri Lanka is famously hostile to populations who could potentially be migrants too. Despite being potentially migrant populations ourselves, we are certainly neither kind nor understanding towards other migrant populations.

As someone who grew up in another country (as a legal migrant, yet nevertheless treated oftentimes badly as an unwanted one) I have never had the fascination of my compatriots to settle down abroad. If being a legal tourist can be this much of a hassle, who wants to be an actual migrant? No thanks.

Due to the nature of my work though (one of the perks of journalism), I have been able to visit various countries my community hanker to migrate to still – the US, UK, Canada, and the like.

I always returned well before my visas expired, once my scheduled work was over. I have never hankered to stay over. What is always irritating though, is to have to come back to Jaffna, my hometown where I live voluntarily, to people who will inevitably snigger and ask if I got caught illegally migrating and got turned back.

I come from a milieu where people only travel in such a manner for the purpose of migration – and so if I went to one of the western countries and returned, it must mean I was forcibly returned.

Why that should invite sniggers, I have never understood. I have met many returned migrants and been horrified by the stories they’ve related – but one of the worst things they were subjected to was that they are too ashamed to come back and face their community’s sniggers – and so live in exile elsewhere in Sri Lanka to escape ignominy. People can be cruel, on any side of the border, including our own. I don’t begrudge the Thais or the Cambodians, therefore. We live in a world where prejudice is the norm.

When I get back to Jaffna soon, at least I will be returning to legitimate sneers now. All this time it was not true, but it will be



Thai Palace in Bangkok

Reject stamp

I am not sure how I feel about Cambodia anymore. I always used to feel an affinity with it, due to its civil war and what happened to its people. For that matter, Cambodians too were once known as rampant illegal migrants – such is what war reduces

this time. “Why are you back here? Were you turned back at the border?”

Why yes, yes I was.

And I am not ashamed of that. I am not ashamed of myself.

I am human and I will not allow dehumanising experiences to define me.



Altruistic Goals of Wealth



- aleteia.org

By: J.A. Rajah

***“Porul allavaraip
porulahachheyum,
Porul allathu illai porul.”***

Wealth is indispensable; it gives importance even to men of no consequence at all. Therefore acquisition of wealth is important and should not be despised. The poor are ignored by all, but the wealthy get all round praise from every one. Wealth is an unfailing lamp which dispels darkness, and with that light leading, a king may walk into any land and annex it.

Where wealth is acquired in the right way, without taint of evil in end and means, it will lead to righteousness and

genuine happiness. Wealth that is got by discarding compassion and without love, is not to be sought, but should not be spurned.

Ownerless property, customs as well as prizes and tributes acquired by a king as a result of victory are legitimate wealth of the ruler. Compassion, which is the child of love can be carefully tended and brought up only by the people of fairly prosperous wealth.

Only people owning a certain measure of wealth can share their wealth, through trusts and institutions for many deserving causes involving individuals and groups.

Philanthropists, world over excel in donations to charities and deserving causes. The position of an entrepreneur

making money, with plenty of financial backing can be compared to a person watching elephant fights from the security of a hill. That is financial security is an essential security for a person engaged in philanthropy. Such a person is free from possible reverses and risks. Wealth equips one with the sharper sword to destroy poverty with pride and confidence.

To a person, who has earned wealth faultlessly by hard work, righteousness and love or pleasures come naturally.

Another Kural pronounces the same idea when it asserts that

***“Arathan varuvathey inpam mat-
tellam puratha , puharlum illa”***

(Kural: 751-760)



Valluvar's Views



Changing Values/Life-styles of Tamilians

Some
Random
Thoughts

By: J.A. Rajah

Over the years, our values are unknowingly undergoing changes. Though most of our core values are generally maintained unadulterated, one cannot deny changes. Some may be considered inevitable and even progressive whereas some are definitely contrary to traditionally accepted norms. However, on the surface everything seems to be normal. Modern day people are more independent and essentially individualistic in their outlook though they do not fail to conform to some accepted socially conducive behavior. In several social activities like marriage, worship cultural programs people display their individualist independent patterns of behaviour instead of the compulsive need to conform to a set pattern. That is why we see a complex society around us but it never interferes in our ways of behavior or norms. That is how the world is changing unknowingly but definitely.

A. The Family System:-

The family system has undergone several changes though some of the core values are still retained. The extended family system had vanished and in its place we see the nuclear families growing up in numbers. Most couples prefer one or two children. There are some who prefer to remain single. Women are now insisting on equal rights and the incidence of divorces is now more common.

Most love marriages break up if it happens to be between individuals from different races or communities. The influence of the social media- especially films are generally felt in the behavior of young ones. The generation gap is there and it affects the lack of cooperation between age-groups. The words of elders are not taken seriously as in the olden days. People are more individualistic and prefer to have their own ways in all most all aspects of life. Even the influence of religion is waning. If one goes to temples or churches one could find mostly aged persons.

The young ones prefer to go for more interesting entertainments/past-times. There are some churches that focus on the youth and the young ones but one cannot say that their efforts are successful. Most kids come to churches when they can be in the limelight- performing in some kind of program. Otherwise only just a handful is seen participating as worshippers. In those days the extended family system helped kids to learn the family norms or values within the home itself.

Now they more influenced by their peer groups or the technological devices they happen to use. Kids are seen continually fixed to their I-phones or similar technical devices and the human contact becomes negligible. Internet and video-games degrade the values of young minds and recently the American President blamed these as the main cause accelerated violence in his country. Even elderly persons are mad about TV serials and neglect important family occasions and events. Man is becoming more and more mechanized. If you go to the libraries, you will find that all computers are occupied but only a few use the books.

A pastor was seen taking i-phone pictures while the service is in progress. Some pastors depend more on the google and social media to prepare their sermons rather than referring to the bible or their spiritual relationship with the almighty God. Cyber-phobia is affecting human behavior and activities. Social media has become a multi-headed monster that impossible to tame in the current world. There is a head of addiction, a head for misinformation through fake news, the head of physical inactivity, the heads of violent, vulgar and hate filled speech.

B. The Marriage Arrangements:

Over the years the ways of marriage has changed. Arranged marriages are on the wane.

More of the youngsters prefer to find partners on their own. However, there are marriage web-sites like the Tamil matrimony.com that help to find partners according their preferences. One cannot say that they are popular but still there are a few who resort to these on-line aids. More and more love marriages are taking place but one cannot expect them to end in successful marriages. In the modern world there are some who prefer to remain single without any permanent attachments. The tendency is now becoming universal without any particular social group acting differently.

C. Religious Activities:

Though religious institutions are active and aim at promoting their faith and beliefs, there is the tendency for the modern man to reject the influence religion in a significant manner. The Christian organizations in many parts of the world are actively engaged in propagating their faith. They are guided by the teachings of the bible and bent on taking the word to the uttermost parts of the world. Christian workers have helped in the development and progress of many under-privileged people and helped mightily in the process of development. Other religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are also active in helping their adherents.

Many Hindu temples in Jaffna areas like Innuvil, Kokuvil, Manipay and several others are able to hold well-provided festivals with financial aids of former devotees living in countries like Canada. However, on the other hand, more and more liberal ideas are emerging about the basic concepts of religion. They deny the very existence of God and do not accept its fundamental doctrines. Anyhow, religion still excels as the main organization to successfully combat human problems.

D. Sports and Past-time:-

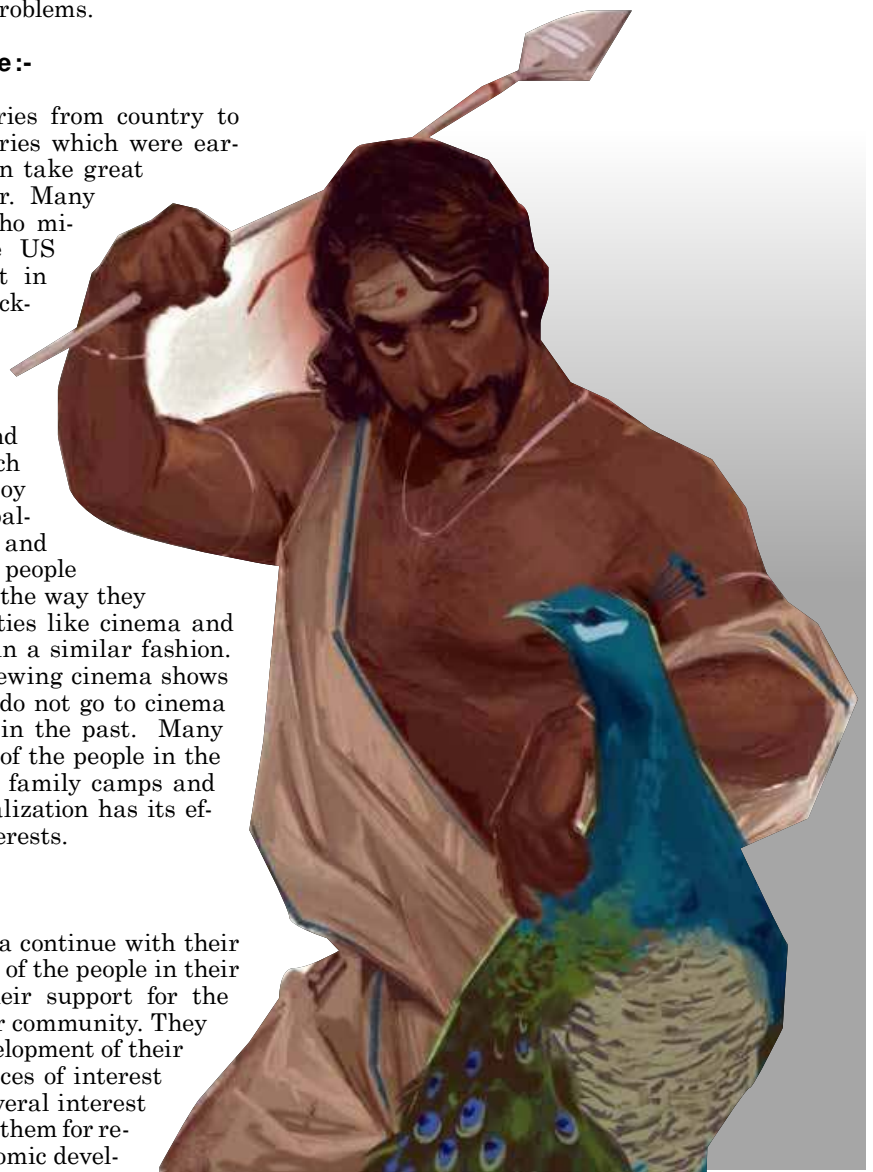
The interest in sports varies from country to country. South Asian countries which were earlier under the British domain take great interest in Cricket and Soccer. Many Indians and Sri Lankans who migrated to Canada and the US continue with their interest in sports though Base-ball, Hockey and Basket-ball are more popular in the new world. World Cricket and Football competitions are telecast throughout the world and those interested could watch these competitions and enjoy them. In these times of globalization all shades of interest and attractions are catered to and people are able to live their lives in the way they like. Other past-time activities like cinema and other interests are pursued in a similar fashion. Now there are facilities for viewing cinema shows in the homes itself. People do not go to cinema halls in large numbers like in the past. Many people adopt to the life-style of the people in the adopted lands. They go for family camps and picnics in a great way. Globalization has its effect in human values and interests.

E. Political Activities:-

Expatriates from Sri Lanka continue with their keen interest in the problems of the people in their mother land. They voice their support for the rights of the members of their community. They take keen interest in the development of their fellowmen in their former paces of interest and residence. In Canada several interest groups collect funds and send them for religious, educational and economic development of their people. Hindu temples

in areas like Inuvil, Kokuvil, Ninativu and Pungudutivu are helped by devotees to hold festivals in a grand-manner. During summer Tamil Canadians do not fail to visit their hometowns and places of interest in Sri Lanka. They take keen interest of the political rights of the Tamils and give their attention to negligence of development in their areas. Planting Buddhist statues in traditional areas, settling Sinhalese people in areas like Navatkuli are vehemently condemned by the media. Free Tamil papers financed by business adverts carry news about the happenings in Tamil areas. There are also Radio and Television networks engaged in expressing their views focusing on various political and social issues of the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

World is changing but it is not an abrupt change. The olden values and ways change gradually and people develop their own ways to adopt to changes. Even the elders are able to adjust to changing technologies and values. Though some die-hard conservationists detest changes, they learn to re-fashion themselves in their own style. Elders are able to use modern technical devices to talk to their relatives and friends in their homelands. They have got used to I-pads, tablets, face book, skype, what's up and all the facets of social media in a great way. Some Tamil elders who live in Canada are now eating hamburgers and drinking Campbell soup. Some of them even eat using fork and spoon. Ladies who are used to Kaftans and sarees are now seen in pants, skirts, tops and blouses. Some people stay away from churches, watching telecast services in their homes. Everything has to be renewed and renovated and therein lies the beauty and glory of living.



The Importance of English Education



By: Hellen Gonichie,
Senior English Teacher at RG
Education Centers

English is the main language spoken around the world and is the official international language of correspondence. For this reason alone, English has become one of the most important languages to learn for people around the world, especially children, who are at a critical stage to develop strong reading, writing and oratory skills. These skills are the stepping stones to personal and professional growth.

To read is also to think. Reading is at the heart of all studies. Reading teaches us to think critically, broaden our imagination, and absorb knowledge. The more we read, the more we are able to learn about bias, global affairs, idioms, grammatical structure, and a variety of writing structures and forms. With the advent of the digital age, we have information and news at our fingertips giving us further opportunities to read as well as opportunities to decipher critically what is false information or reports that are bias. Studying English helps us to think

critically about what we read so that we can draw our own conclusions about the information we read or presented to us as well as to ask the right questions about it. In this way we become wiser and more independent thinkers.

Further, the study of English is necessary for communicating and expressing one's thoughts, opinions and arguments in a clear and rational way to others. This is necessary for one's job, community involvement and personal growth. Speaking and writing appropriately and skillfully according to the audience helps to build one's confidence, garner respect from others, and promote one in his or her career or current aspirations.

As the world evolves, English continues to be ever more necessary and important for communicating in a variety of forms and being informed about the world. English studies opens doors and at the same time opens one's mind in the most fulfilling of ways.



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5G CAN BE HARMFUL TO HUMANS & THE ENVIRONMENT

MOBILE NETWORK & SURROUNDING CONTROVERSIES ASSOCIATED WITH ITS IMPLEMENTATION

By: Uthayan Thurairajah

In 2018, there was a lot of enthusiasm in the air when several telecommunications groups came ahead with their plan to adopt 5G for the future. But some of the recent findings related to the real-world implementation of 5G technology has not been generating the right kind of excitement. There are even halts out their signed by qualified scientists and doctors regarding the rollout of 5G technology.

Over 220 scientists from 40 different countries have appealed to the United Nations for urgent action to reduce the EMF (electromagnetic field) exposure emitting from wireless sources. The 5G experience such friction even when it is not operational. We need to know what 5G is and how it differs from the current standard - 4G. It will help us understand why there are many complications associated with 5G.

4G VERSUS 5G

The excitement continues to surround the roll-out of 5G technology across the world. While there is an encouragement of faster network speeds and conversation of new technologies same as driverless cars, there is a growing movement to stop the implementation of 5G due to concerns about the health effects on human being and others. Some scientific evidence assures that there is no reason to worry about the 5G EMF, which is well below the exposure limits known to cause harm to the human being.

5G radiation is non-ionizing, so it doesn't damage our DNA like ionizing radiation can, such as that from the UV



or x-rays or gamma rays. Ionizing radiation indicates that there is enough energy to remove electrons from the atoms. It makes the atoms unstable. The non-ionizing radiation used by mobile phones lacks the power to unstable molecules. 5G can use the same type of frequency employed in 4G, but in the future, it can operate at higher frequencies. 5G with Higher frequencies support for faster connections and quicker response times while giving enough capacity for more users. The higher frequency 5G wave travels shorter distance. Therefore, a lot of more mobile phone base stations will be required.

Much of the public concern has centered around these two new elements – the frequencies used will be higher, and the more mobile phone base stations. Some researchers believe these two factors will lead to higher exposures. The reality of higher frequencies is different, which do not travel far, meaning exposure is not as deep as the old system. The higher frequency mm-wave is absorbed by the skin rather than more in-depth in the body. The higher number of base stations lead to higher exposures is also a misconception. A more significant amount of base stations will provide a more efficient network. It means mobile phones can operate at a reduced power, which is likely to result in reduced overall personal exposure. Researches show that the absorp-



tion and penetration of radio waves in tissue decrease as frequency increases. So 5G would have a less effect than 4G.

CHALLENGES & CONFUSIONS

Several allegations came in 5G's way, ever since companies started the rollout of 5G. Some were stating that a 5G testing site caused the death of hundreds of birds and insects in the Netherlands. Later, the news classified as a fabrication. The reason many condemning 5G arise as a result of the extremely high frequency (Millimeter-wave) uses, which lies between 20GHz to 200GHz.

Some researchers and scientists maintain that there is a lot of false information about 5G, and the electromagnetic energy associated with telecommunications. There are a sign fear and anxiety can be harmful to our health and overall well-being when there is no evidence of harm from electromagnetic energy. Without scientific evidence to back these sentiments, it is likely doing more harm than good. While anti-5G view and campaigning might be well-intentioned, some scientists indicated that it is a challenge we have to face to counteract the misinformation out there.

ENGINEERS & SCIENTISTS

Engineers need to stick to the facts based on scientific studies while conspiracy theories and propaganda abound. Scientists examine potential ionization and thermal health risks from mm-Wave signals. These are conventional risks that the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recognizes. Both effects are manageable. Ionization is not a risk at mm-Wave frequencies because a mm-Wave photon does not have the energy to remove an electron from an atom. Thermal effects were also minimal and could only occur by placing a transmitter next to your skin. Even then, the evidence is unclear, and you can easily avoid that situation by using headphones or operating your cellphone in speakerphone mode.

The electromagnetic (EM) effects outcome was not so clear. After reviewing several scientific studies, we can conclude that there could be negative impacts from electromagnetic radiation. There is evidence showing that a causal link could exist to damage DNA, affect the sweat glands, Bacteria and cells. Apart from 5G specific studies, there are many other types of research show evidence of harmful effects of low-intensity, extremely high electromagnetic radiation on animals.



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.

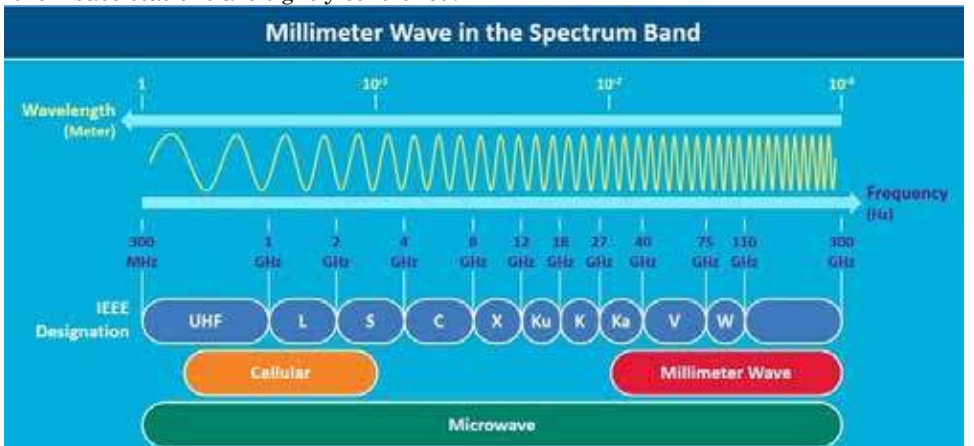
The radiation activist warns that 5G networks are massive health experiment and a global catastrophe.

RESEARCH & REGULATION



There is no proper evidence of any established health effects from the exposures related to mobile phones, despite extensive research. It has been echoed by independent global experts. The health effects occur from exposure when there is a rise in body temperature. It will only be seen at power levels far higher than those used in telecommunications, like from a microwave oven. The temperature variations associated with mobile phones are pretty small when compared with the exercise-induced temperature changes.

These standards are based on scientific evidence. How baseless fears over 5G rollout created a health scare. The misconceptions about the technology and lack of consultation with local communities may have boosted conspiracy theories. Some scientist says that smartphone is not going to boil our skin or brain or give cancer. The bottom line is that there is no physical evidence that 5G is harmful. The safety limits usually are set well below levels identified to cause harm. The technology can legally run at the safety limit; in reality, exposures are typically hundreds of times below these safety limits. The mobile phone exposures and their base stations are tightly controlled.



IS 5G SAFE FOR ALL?

The real question is, does the 5G network safe for human and the environment? There are two different views on this question. Wireless companies and government websites such as U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will lead you to believe that the radiations emitting from the 5G networks is safe.

The US Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) is making sure to deploy the 5G technology at the earliest. The agency's efforts are towards developing a legislature that will prevent local governments from restricting the implementation of 5G instead of laying out clear and practical guidelines.

5G is absolutely the future, and we are going to see blazing fast internet speeds on our mobile devices. The change in connectivity is indeed going to improve our lives, but likely at the expense of our health in the long run. This untested advanced technology is fast approaching. We can do very little to stop its broad implementation. We should understand EMFs better and protect ourselves through proper choice of products. Try limiting your EMF exposure through the restricted use of smart devices and phones. Try to avoid using 5G phones and accessories and use radiation detectors to know whether we are exposed to high levels of EMFs.

CONCLUSION:

We can also sign a petition to stop the deployment of the 5G wireless network until a proper framework and guidelines considering health hazards and environmental effects are prepared. It is important to take 'smart' decisions when adopting new technology before we make our homes, businesses, and cities 'smart'. The possible risks of continuing to deploy 5G, but those risks so far lack clear evidence of health effects.

We need more studies, which raises the fear among conspiracy theorists that we do not know about the adverse outcomes until it is too late. It is impossible to balance the risks and benefits when the risks and benefits are so unquantifiable. There are a lot of odd conspiracy theories and bad science out there. We need to talk more about the effects of EM waves on our bodies to find the fact before too late. More study and discussion are merited even though the potential risks from the deployment of 5G are examined in several types of contradicting research and articles.



MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Your retirement spending guidelines

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

How much should you spend when you're retired? Interesting question. Even if you have a high net worth, you will face uncertainty over how much you can afford to spend in retirement – especially if you are a retired business owner or professional because you may have little in the way of guaranteed pension income, thus presenting you with the challenge of determining a sustainable draw on your investments. Factors such as market variability, inflation and taxes only add to the uncertainty.

So ... whether you're already retired or soon to shut the office door for the last time, here is a six step plan to help put your retirement spending concerns to rest by determining your retirement income longevity.

Step 1 – Prepare a personal profile The level and frequency of income you

therefore your withdrawals should be lower.

- Your years in retirement – your retirement could span 40 years and, generally, a longer duration requires a more prudent withdrawal strategy.

- Your income requirements – will you need to draw on investment income every month or can you defer or decrease income to offset periodic declines in portfolio value?

Step 2 – Know your income from other sources Your retirement income will derive from sources other than your personal retirement savings such as the Canada Pension Plan/Québec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP), Old Age Security (OAS) and company pension plans. Add them all up.

Step 3 – Know your expenses Add up your expected expenses – both essential and discretionary.



David Joseph, M.A., CFP®, CLU, RRC.

Financial Consultant

david.joseph@investorsgroup.com

Phone: (905)-895-6718

Toll Free: 1-888-565-9996

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from 'other' sources and your expenses.

Step 6 – Make adjustments If your expected withdrawal rate is not sustainable, based on the projected returns from your current savings and investments, you will need to re-evaluate your registered and non-registered portfolio with the aim of improving returns – or you may need to reduce the scope of your retirement plans.

Work with your professional advisor

ing your desired lifestyle and the possibility of outliving your money, running out of funds is likely your top retirement concern. It may seem overwhelming to live without working, but if you plan well, it can be possible. It's important to determine how much you will need to save, create a budget that factors in reaching that amount of savings, and you should be able to live without this fear.



will need (and/or the withdrawal rate from your investments held within Registered Retirement Savings Plans and other income-producing investments) depends on a number of factors:

- Your investment profile – for example, if you are a conservative investor, you would expect a lower return than a more aggressive investor, and

Step 4 – Bridge the gap Calculate the gap between your income from all sources outside your personal retirement savings and your expenses.

Step 5 – Assess your withdrawal requirements Determine the amount you need to withdraw from your personal retirement savings/investments to bridge the gap between your income

to develop a personal plan that takes into account all of these factors and provides peace of mind. Very often, a high net worth individual will discover

The retirement goal for most people is to have enough money to continue their previous standard of living without working. Between saving enough, being able to spend efficiently, afford-

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Lending to the Desperate by Avaricious Micro Finance Institutions

– The Case of North & East of Sri Lanka

Arun Senathirajah
MBA (Banking Mgmt)

On March 17, 2019 Sri Lanka's Observer newspaper reported at least 170 debt-ridden rural residents committed suicide in 2018. Most of them were from the war-devastated North – (Vavuniya and Jaffna districts) and East – (Batticaloa district). Drastic loan recovery methods adopted by the Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) to recover their loans were the reasons for the despaired victims to end their lives. Sri Lanka Government's inadequate action and regulatory failure Central Bank of Sri Lanka cannot be underestimated for the calamity.

Unsecured loans promoted by the government after the decades-long civil war ended in 2009. After the war the government implemented an "Awakening North" for agriculture and business microloan programme by providing SLRs 26 million, at 12% interest rate via main banking stream. Following this several microfinance companies swarmed in to the North & East regions. The Finance Ministry estimates big MFIs have lent out 282 billion rupees, but it has no data for many smaller lenders. There is no proper regulation to prevent over-lending. Their lending products are normally self-employment/small business loans, hire-purchase and leasing. Over-lending practices by the MFIs have put many women in to hopeless debt.

Sri Lanka government's National Economic Council, reported there are around 10,000 Micro Finance Institutions (MFI) in the country, the majority of them not subject to any regulations. A Finance Ministry estimate shows about 2.9 million people (84% of them are women) obtained loans from these companies in 2017. Thrift and Credit Cooperative Societies (TCCSs), which were first established in 1911, were the pioneers in providing financial facilities to the poor. Nevertheless, it was only in the late 1980s, with the enactment of the Government's Janasaviya programme that microfinance, in its strict sense, began to be widely recognized as a way for alleviating poverty and empowering the poor. In the 1990s, the expansion of microfinance activities embraced all sectors namely governmental, non-governmental and cooperative sectors. The establishment of the National Development Trust Fund (NDTF) in 1991 as an apex lending institution was also another turning point in the microfinance sector in Sri Lanka.

Currently Cooperative Societies (e.g., TCCSs), hundreds of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs),

commercial banks (both state-owned and private) and Regional Development Banks (RDBs) and the Sanasa Development Bank (SDB) provide microfinance services. In addition, the Government's Samurdhi Savings and Credit Scheme established in 1996 is presently one of the largest social mobilization programmes in Sri Lanka, with over 32,000 village level societies and over 1000 bank branches operating island-wide. Moreover, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) is another key player, which functions as the executing agency of a number of rural credit programmes funded by various donor agencies and the Government of Sri Lanka. Despite the large number of institutions involved in providing microfinance facilities in Sri Lanka, their impact on reducing poverty or improving household welfare is not very clear.

Exorbitant rate of interest

Normal bank interest rates on loans in Sri Lanka are generally between 15 and 20%. While the Central Bank has imposed a maximum rate of 35% for microfinance loans, but there are MFIs charge unbearable rates ranging as high as 220%. When News 1st inquired from the Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy about the monitoring measures of the limit of 40% implemented on loans provided to villages, he said that the interest rates are currently capped at 35%. He also explained that in order to overcome the issue, the best solution is to make people aware of this situation and increase their financial literacy, give them insight to the interest rate caps and maintain dialogues with microfinance institutes to maintain responsible behaviour.

Coercive Recovery Methods

A report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) by Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky in January 2019 noted that various institutions "generate huge profits by putting enormous pressure on poor borrowers, and on women in particular." While some loans were for small businesses, others were to cover everyday living expenses or to reduce or pay off previous loans, Bohoslavsky reported. He noted that "collectors visit the houses of these women, sometimes on a daily basis, and that the women are exposed to psychological and physical violence by collectors." Debt collectors sometimes pressurized women for "sexual favours," he said, and that some female borrowers had even offered to sell their kidneys to repay loans. A central-bank official says his employees have talked desperate borrowers who ended their lives and aware of the illegal methods adopted by the MFIs to recover their lending.

Ineffective Sri Lanka Government's Initiatives

Sri Lankan Government has stayed away from its responsibility to provide resettlement and relief facilities to re-emerge the war affected public in the North and East. Even up to now public from these areas are protesting against the occupation of their lands and house by Sri Lankan forces. Even after ten years of war the government is reluctant to give back those lands, rather encouraging military personals to undertake economic activities in many areas in the North & East. But original residents are left still in poverty. For these public at least to restart their lives at least to survival level, then only they can think of doing their own business or be engaged in self-employment.

Granting loans to people even below the survival level and without government assistance, without adequate collateral and at usurious interest rate, pushes them further into abysmal situation rather than alleviation of their poverty. The victims are mostly women in the North and East. MFIs lend overly at their own peril.

Unprotected Clients

Since the war ended in 2009, successive Sri Lankan governments have refused to provide economic and social support for these war survivors, opening the way for predatory lenders to profit from the suffering. Colombo's devastating three-decade war against

the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam killed nearly 200,000 people and destroyed the homes and livelihoods of tens of thousands more in these areas. Currently there are about 160,000 households headed by women –most of them are war widows in the North and East provinces attempting to maintain their families without any real income.

There are cases of affected client in parts of Sri Lanka's north and east. K. Selvadi, 45 and a mother of four children, is from Kayts in Jaffna. She told World Socialist Web Site reporters that she and two other women jointly applied for a 75,000-rupee loan for fishing net. Their husbands had to sign as guarantors and the repayments are 2,000 rupees per month. Selvadi said that she faced an uphill battle to pay the interest and settle the loan because the income from fishing was insufficient.

M. Sivaranjani, 36, from Velanai, obtained three loans totalling 300,000 rupees in order to develop the family's fishing business. She pays about 10,000 rupees per month on loan repayments. "If we don't pay these instalments the debt collectors come to our home. We have to borrow from friends or relatives in order keep up the payments. Our lives have been transformed into a debt-ridden existence," she said.

Contd. on page 34...

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Lending to the desperate...

Contd. from page 33

According to Radhika Gunarathna, director of the Nelumyaya Foundation, a non-governmental organisation, told 45-year-old mother of two was on the brink of a family suicide because their bakery had gone bankrupt and were unable to repay SLRs 800,000 loan.

Most borrowers used their first loan for consumption rather than for self-employment/small business. Most of the subsequent borrowings went to service the old ones. While rural farmers are borrowing from the banks in order to pay for farm inputs, they are also taking out additional loans from micro-finance companies for basic living expenses. They frequently confront crop failure due to drought or floods. Farming communities are burdened by the rising cost of seed, pesticides and fertilizers whose prices are controlled by profiting-gouging multinational corporations. Protests by farmers demanding guaranteed prices for their produce and improved subsidies, including for fertilizer, are increasing across the island. Plantation workers are also heavily burdened by exorbitant loans because they do not receive a living wage.

Sri Lankan Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera declared that the government would write-off nearly 1,400 million rupees in capital and interest costs to more than 45,000 female borrowers. Blaming “loan sharks” for the high interest rates, Samaraweera, admitted that the government’s debt write-off “is a short-term solution to a much larger problem” but declared “it is not feasible to have multiple debt write offs of this nature.” He proclaimed the government would introduce new laws and regulations to control the so-called microfinance industry. But Minister Samaraweera’s his recent International Monetary Fund-endorsed budget, which will force the working masses into further debt, provided generous concessions to big business and finance capital. Kirubalini, 44, from Velanai, spends her entire earnings on interest repayments. “The government has said that it will write off microfinance loans but it’s done nothing. It also promised to provide low interest loans but these will still be loans. I can’t sleep properly because of these debts,” she said.

Sri Lanka Government can introduce laws to protect consumers such as Consumer Protection Laws - such as

bankruptcy and consumer to proposal laws to protect the family burden holding women and others who desperately trying to get out of poverty.

Powerful Effective Action Needed

For over a decade several attempts were made to enact legislation to regulate the unregulated institutions in the microfinance sector in Sri Lanka. Finally, the Parliament enacted the Microfinance Act, No. 6 of 2016 (the Act), which came into effect on the 15th of July 2016. The Act provides for the licensing, regulation and supervision of companies carrying on microfinance business, which are called licensed microfinance companies (LMCF’s). LMFCs would be directly regulated by the Monetary Board of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. The Act provides for the registration of Microfinance Non-Governmental organizations (MNGOs) registered under the Voluntary Social Services Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act, No. 31 of 1980 (VSSO Act), by the Registrar of Voluntary Social Service Organizations. But the reality is there are many MFIS operating in the North & East of Sri Lanka do not care about the regulatory requirement since the Central Bank supervision

is not taking enough effective action against the violating MFIs in order to put on halt of their practices.

Need for Effective Regulatory Measures & Supervision by Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL)

Expressing views on the matter, Former Director of Bank Supervision of the CBSL, Ms Joan de Silva Moonesinghe said that microfinance brings credit, savings, and other essential financial services to people who are too poor to be served by regular banks, mainly because they are unable to offer sufficient collateral. She further explained that the main motive is to expand and improve income generation activities and capacities of low-income people. Due to the lack of regulatory measures in the microfinance industry, unregulated microfinance activities have led to illegal deposit mobilization, exploitation of customers through excessive interest rates and unethical recovery methods. Bank Supervision Department of the CBSL has to constantly monitor and inspect these MFIs on their practices and meet these MFIs clients to find the real situation in order to strengthen future monitoring system and to improve compliance regulations.

Book Review

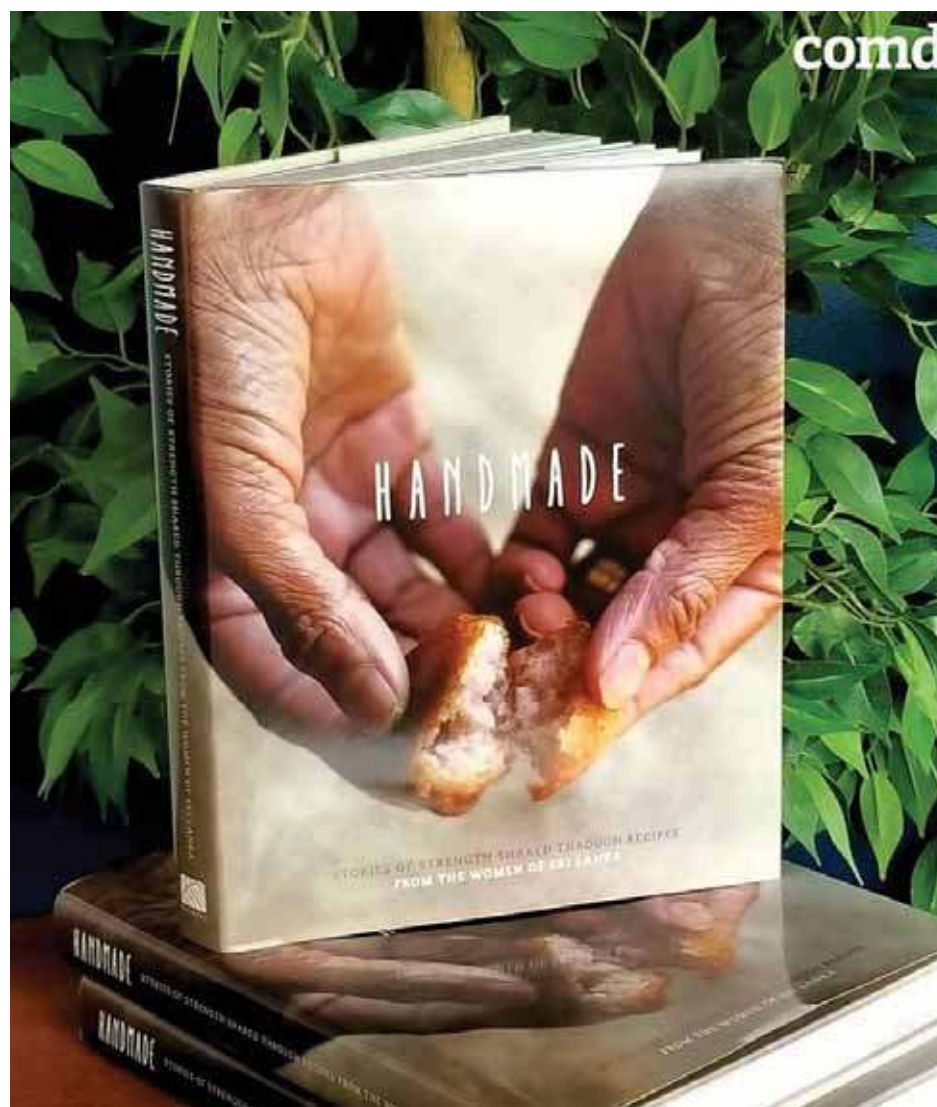
Handmade

A Cookery Book of traditional Jaffna food recipes published By Palmera.Org

Reviewed By
Siva Sivapragasam

“Handmade” is a cookery book describing the traditional food recipes of the Jaffna Tamil people and perhaps written with the Tamil Diaspora in mind with memories to be passed down to generations through food. The Tamils no doubt love their cuisine and often relish the family recipes wherever they live. The book is published by Palmera.Org and 34 women from Jaffna to Trincomalee, across Kilinochchi and Vavuniya share their stories of strength special during the days of war and aftermath, while describing the details of Tamil food recipes that celebrate a rich food tradition uniquely belonging to them. The authors of these stories have included the recipes which bear a unique food tradition. Palmera works with women featured in this book in micro-enterprises through the north and east of Sri Lanka.

The Tamils of the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka have learnt and developed a unique cuisine over the years from their elders and these recipes deserve to be known to the present generation and to generations to come. The book attempts to achieve this through the hundreds of recipes and will certainly earn the appreciation of those who use this book as a handy guide to know about the cuisine and food recipes of the Jaffna Tamils.



The contents of the book are the stories of strength shared by women through recipes.

The book also provides a glossary

of ingredients used in the recipes and almost all these items are available in Sri Lankan, Indian or Asian stores in major cities around the world. Many

dry ingredients described in the book can be purchased online from Palmera.Org

The beautiful pictures illustrated in the book have been provided by Tharindu Amunugama, Patrick Orchard, Abarna Suthanthiraraj, Fabio Galassi, Suja Samivel, Emily- May (Front Cover), Styilani Trikili and Shelly Morris. The concept for the book was provided by Abarna Suthanthiraraj, Recipes by Nesa Eliezer, stories written by Anjali Roberts and edited by Jessica Perini. The publication was co-ordinated by Sivanjana Kathiravel and designed by Shruti and Frank Thiruchelvam, Pink Tank Creative.

“Handmade” is a book produced by Palmera, a grassroots, non-profit organization of social innovators and professionals who believe in working with communities to create positive changes in society. Palmera is funded by “Handmade” and invites people to invest through generous donations to make their mission successful.

The book is available to customers through orders online channeled to www.palmera.org.

The profits received from the sales of the book “Handmade” will go to support the rural entrepreneurs with whom Palmera works.



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Monsoon Kitchen



GENIE SISTERS SAMAYAL SANTHAI



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 the founder of Tamilfood and teaches individual and group cooking classes in Toronto and abroad. Follow us on Instagram: @ninjeatsfood and @tamil_food Facebook: /tamilfoodclasses Eat more, learn more!

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 @ninjeatsfood.

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.



Ellurundai

Ingredients:

- ✓ 250g of sesame seeds (ellu)
- ✓ 250g of jaggery (vellum)
- ✓ 4-5 tbsp of water (thanneer)
- ✓ ½ tsp cardamom powder (elakkai podi)
- ✓ 2 tbsp ghee (nei)
- ✓ 1 tsp ground flax seeds (optional)

Method:

In a pan, dry roast the sesame seeds until they are golden in colour. Set aside to cool. In a separate pan heat the jaggery with the water and bring to boil. This process is called “paagu edutthal” in Tamil. The jaggery is ready for this dish if it forms a small ball when a drop of it is put into a cup of water. Once the paagu is ready, add the cardamom powder and the sesame seeds to the mixture and on a low flame bring everything together. Another option at this stage is to add ground flax seeds to the mix for extra health benefits. Finally add 1 tbsp of ghee and mix well. Let it cool slightly, but whilst still warm add the remaining ghee to your hands and start making round balls. It doesn't take long to cool, and then this tasty and nutritious snack is ready to enjoy.

Try making this recipe this month and hashtag #monsoonjournal on Instagram.

Send us your pics, comments and feedback. Spread the love (and recipe!) :)

It's wedding season and that includes Niranjini's wedding too! In two months the last sibling in our family will be married; so for the next couple of months we're going to delight you with wedding dishes. Ellurundai which is made from jaggery and sesame seeds is, in some Tamil families, served when the last person in a generation gets married. So if that is your family this wedding season, here's the recipe:

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Special Feature

BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES OF NALLUR TEMPLE



Nallur Kandaswamy Temple 10th day Festival on August 15, 2019
– Picture by Thuraisamy Muraleekaran

By Thiru K. Thirukumaran

The Nallur Kandaswamy temple is the Murugan abode that inducted me to faith. Their annual July-August festivities apart which I have been only a couple of times, being amidst the benevolence of Lord Murugan for me came from trips there annually during April school holidays with maternal grandparents, brother, sisters and parents through the late seventies in my early teens.

My mother, an only child to her parents, has been to the devout environs of Nallur Kandaswamy temple perhaps soon after she was born in the year 1934. My grandparents marked Amma's birthday on her birth star Parani, in the Tamil month Siththirai or April with a journey to Nallur Murugan from our ancestral home in Kalvayal, Chavakachcheri. This would be accompanied by partaking in special rituals such as abhishekam, a sanctified shower to the lord with pious paraphernalia consisting of milk, yoghurt, ghee, honey, fruits, rose water and turmeric at the temple. Special archanas chanting praise of Murugan would also be carried out for Amma and her family as beneficiaries. We engaged in this tradition through the early nineties until my parents left Sri Lanka. On those many years none of us in the

family were able to go, the day was still solemnized amidst personal absentia at the temple.

In those days, the anticipation of going there would cast in me a sense of spectacle that awaits at the Nallur temple.

This will commence when I start thinking of wearing the tiny fuchsia colored vetti, the traditional silk cloth that grandmother, we called Ammamma, had for me at the Kalvayal home. The excitement of the coming journey in the hired car to Nallur will criss-cross all the pristine landscapes and views I will see from the charming ride; looking to the road trip along the way enchanted well ahead of the days prior to hitting the trail.

Ammamma throughout nourished me with all the splendor, supernatural qualities and spiritual stories that surround Lord Murugan at all the spending time during our school breaks. They would curate in me a cute sense of everlasting joy that is associated with Murugan through today.

Ammamma being a teacher would indulge us in historical aspects of Nallur and so forth. She had a sense of humor in retelling a religious story or two such as Murugan interacting with elderly lady legend Auvaiyar or a folk tale by adding snippets of comedy in them.

Passing the Kaithady - Navatkuli

area one time prompted grandma to engage in pure Tamil word play that she said someone referred Kaithady as "Kara-thandam" meaning hand cane and Navatkuli as "Sambu-Kundam" meaning an urn full of purple cherries, an urn that is used at temples to hold and raise fires for ritualistic purposes.

Though they are towns far south of Nallur, the entire enroute to the temple beams the antiquity these places would have held amongst ancestors in making long pilgrimages as a centerpiece in their lives and breaking journey in-between for resting.

The blue and white Canadian locomotive engine passing the Navatkuli lagoon on the black bridge would be simply divine. I always yearned to be on that train crossing the lagoon as we would disembark journey from Colombo Fort one station prior at Chavakachcheri. The hue and the mega siren of the engine would only resemble the peacocks and their melodic screams waiting at the Nallur temple.

Arriving at the temple courtyard for those infrequent visitors or devotees amidst the tolls from the bell tower and aroma of camphor, flowers and sandalwood would be to see what architectural or artifact novelties that has taken place at this famous bastion of the lord of beauty symbolizing youthfulness and valor. There would be plentiful year after year. Of that I remember the wood panel and red tile roof giving way to a concrete façade with an arch featuring sculptures; beneath there the decorative cement insets and brackets vividly painted. This design for the deity is widely seen in many temples in the North nowadays. The foyer outside of the main shrine where devotees sit to perform the rituals guided by the priest also underwent a noticeable change one time. It glistened newly with colorful curves and glass chandeliers hanging from the celestial high ceiling.

Crossing the street and going to the separate parley of Palani or Thandayuthapani Murugan and the in house water tank to dip our feet would be alluring in its own merits. Pan-chamirtham served here to devotees consisted of abhishekam utilized fruits to the ever-healing Palani Murugan such as mango, jak fruit, banana, grapes and pomegranate which is a sweet reminiscence that lingered eternally. The Murugan devotional songs by T.M.Soundararajan playing at nearby eateries and boutiques can be sometimes heard here. The place of piety and songs amalgamate the reign, kindness and wisdom of the loincloth wearing sage, the almighty Palani Murugan right here.

At the end of the ritualistic visit, we would go home with heavenly delicious Murugan prasadam of several varieties of rice including tamarind, yoghurt, black pepper and sweet pongal and other edible goodies like urad dhal doughnuts – vadai and steamed mung bean dumplings. My flare for temple food there, and dining at temple cafeterias here in USA where they are a source of revenue for temple upkeep I will say took foundation at Nallur, just like my faith.

I primarily visited the annual festival time only a couple of times due to shun-



Writer's Ammamma – Grandmother
Mrs Visaladchy Murugesu – picture from the 1940s

ning the throng of devotees. The entrepreneurial stalls ranging from locally produced palmyrah leaf made household goods, to aromatic Anna coffee and proverb placard distributing Milk White Soap stalls and in-shell roasted peanuts and popcorn to colored cotton candy to edible bush growing berry like fruit called eechcham palam and sticky palai palam sellers, free lemonade stands to quench thirst sequin and bangle sellers all in rolling aesthetic presence during the annual festival.

They seem similar to some of the summertime county fairs in the USA that I see now. I do gather the god's grandeur of the annual gala nowadays by gluing to videos on social media. I have been to Nallur only once since 1983, in the year 2004.

My paternal grandfather, Appappa, Sinnathamby Sangarapillai - a theologian or as "Purana asiriyar" a teacher of Hindu religious scriptures travelled to Nallur Kanadaswamy Kovil during the July-August annual festival through his octogenarian years. When nobody wanted to accompany him from his Madduvil-North home for same crowds avoiding reason, being an ardent devotee, Appappa would have left home to Nallur during the wee hours of the morning. He would tell me Murugan stood herald all his life.

Besides adhering to faith, in following the path of temple going and rituals therein, this is what I take most; that they are places imprinted by our ancestors for hundreds of years. In our lives these days, we may not be able to go to a house or place where ancestors lived or went about their business in devoted spirits. But stepping into a temple can help live that feeling, a link that stays the mortal life deeply connected throughout.

(A shorter version of these memories appeared in the Echo Magazine of Ceylon Today on August 25, 2019 published from Colombo, Sri Lanka)

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The Question of the Valley

By Shajei Haider,

Teacher at South Orange-Maplewood District, New Jersey, USA

What is Freedom? The ever-so-profound question that has been puzzling the people of Kashmir for generations. Though the question of freedom in Kashmir has been prevalent since the partition of British-Controlled India, the question has now been revoked.

Since August 5th, the international media has been covering the atrocities in the Kashmir Valley. There has been an Internet blackout. Phone services have been cut off. There have been mass blindings via pellets, the first of its kind the world has ever seen. There has been detainment of thousands of Kashmiri locals and political leaders, all in the name of creating a united India. While Hindu Nationalists rejoice, the sorrow of the Kashmiri people cannot be heard. In fact, the people of the Kashmir Valley cannot contact the people of the adjacent village, yet alone the international community. The Indian press labels some of these actions as "precautions" and depicts the Kashmir transition from being a special autonomous state into a union territory as "peaceful". Meanwhile, others in the international community have condemned the Indian forces as violators of human rights. But one question seems to be eluding the center stage: what is freedom to the Kashmiri people? Why is the cry for azadi being silenced?

Kashmir has always had a compli-

cated yet enchanting tale. With lush green mountains capped with snowy summits, colorful rangeen meadows, and crystal-clear lakes, it remains one of the jewels of the world. With an ample amount of water and resources, it is attractive to both India and Pakistan. The recent removal of article 370 of the Indian constitution has put focus on the Kashmir question. The people have been crying for freedom for decades. Separatist movements often are depicted as terrorist organizations and silenced. While there has been militant activity backed by Pakistan since the late 1980's, there have also been grand assemblies of nonviolent protests that call for freedom. The nonviolent protests are often met with aggressive actions by the Indian army. The call for freedom, only for it to be fallen on deaf ears, has defeated the Kashmiri people. What was once a valley known for creating articulate poems has transformed into a prison filled with despair.

And it's because freedom is being denied. Kashmir does not have a spokesperson for true freedom. Pakistan and India both claim the right for Kashmir. Kashmir is heavily Muslim populated, a quality that favors Pakistan, but was temporarily acceded to India. Both nations agreed that the conflict of Kashmir was a bilateral issue. The issue with this is all the power in dictating the status of Kashmir is in the power of these two nations. Neither nation is a perfect fit for Kashmir. This inherent-



ly silences the voice of Kashmir. Both nations failed to do what is needed: to give what the people of Kashmir want. The situation has gotten so dire due to decades of incompetence. We all have failed to hear the thunderous cry for freedom that echoes within the valley of the Himalayas. It is all but a whisper, lost in the world.

While the international community reported on the blatant human rights violations in the valley, a task difficult for Kashmiri organizations due to the blackout, it also has failed to bring true justice to the region. What the Kashmiri Muslims are lamenting for is freedom. Human rights violations are not new to the valley of Kashmir, nor is it the underlying issue. Human rights violations are a symptom of what is the real issue: captivity. If Self-Determination is the underlying theme of the Declaration of Human Rights of the

United Nations, then the international community has failed to maintain the values it claims to hold dear. Kashmir has not forgotten its independent roots. For decades, the Kashmiri people have been marginalized in various avenues. Their elections were rigged, disappearances of the youth were commonplace, and their autonomous state was all but a fantasy. The recent detentions of freedom fighters are nothing new to the people of Kashmir. Rather, it is a reminder to why freedom is a necessity. What is freedom? Is it the power to speak on a significant issue without the fear of facing castigation? Is it the absence of a foreign and unwanted power? Or is it the state of not being enslaved? In any case, the people of Kashmir are not free, and have been begging for liberty for decades. There is no justice without freedom and there is no peace without liberty.

It's my govt's responsibility to help J&K people get new wings: PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Asserting that he did not have any personal agenda and was accomplishing the task entrusted to him by people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, August 15th said it was the government's responsibility to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of people of Jammu and Kashmir and help them get new wings.

Addressing the nation on 73rd Independence Day from the ramparts of the Red Fort, he said India is now one nation with one constitution after both houses of Parliament passed the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A with a two-third majority.

He said his government is not shying away from taking big decisions and said the scrapping of Article 35A and provisions of Article 370 were some such steps that have never been taken in the last 70 years.

He touted, within 10 weeks of returning back to power, his government took key decisions to fulfil aspirations of people and cited the scrapping of special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir and the new law on triple talaq as its resolve.

"It has been under ten weeks since

the new government was formed but several path-breaking decisions have been taken. This includes decisions for Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, the end of Triple Talaq, steps for the welfare of farmers and traders," he said.

"The work that did not happen in 70 years, that task of removing Article 370 and 35A was accomplished in 70 days and both the houses of Parliament passed it with two-third majority," he noted, adding that the spirit of "one nation, one constitution" has finally become a reality and India is proud of that.

"It is our responsibility to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of people of Jammu and Kashmir and help provide them new wings," he noted.

Now even the ordinary citizen of Jammu and Kashmir can directly ask the government, he said.

Modi said his government has dedicated itself on all fronts in the service of countrymen and asserted it neither nurses problems nor festers them.

The prime minister said previous governments made efforts in the past 70 years to deal with the Kashmir issue, but they did not bear the desired

results and noted that "a new approach was needed".

While some in political corridors kept saying about removing Article 370 and 35-A, he said, they did not have the courage to take the bold step his government has taken.

"Those who advocate Article 370, the country is asking them if Article 370/35A was so important and life changing then why did they not make it permanent in the Constitution. Despite having majority governments, why did you allow it to remain temporary. You did not have the conviction or strength to bring reform," he said.

"We think differently and it is 'India First' for us. Politics comes and goes but steps in the interest of the nation are paramount," he said.

"I have no personal agenda," he said, noting he has only come to accomplish the task entrusted to him by the people of the country.

The prime minister said the previous arrangement in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh encouraged corruption, nepotism and there was injustice when it came to the issue of rights of women, children, Dalits, tribal communities.



He also said the dreams of sanitation workers in the state have remained unfulfilled, "How can we accept such a situation?"

Talking about the other major steps taken by his government, he said, if in this country, the practice of Sati can be banned, why could it not raise a voice against triple talaq.

He said five years ago when his government came to power, people wondered if the country would change for the good, but people now say "yes, my country can change".

- via PTI - Press Trust of India



DEVELOPMENT IS VITAL IN TODAY'S FAST MOVING WORLD

But it should not damage the infrastructure and the social fabric



Motorbikes along with Bicycles

wasn't a single place I could identify as the ones I roamed about during my early years. Feeling sad and dispirited I returned home.

In my native place even now after several decades the general set up remains the same. Development had taken place without any drastic changes. The footpaths had become lanes, the lanes had become roads and the main roads had been widened and reconstructed as two ways.

In dwellings too there are remarkable changes; the thatched houses had been replaced by concrete houses and the thatched fences had been replaced by parapet walls. The bullock cart a one time transporting vehicle of the farmers had been replaced by the landmaster, tractor and mini lorry.

The bicycle the common man's traditional vehicle is being gradually replaced by the engine powered scooters and motorcycles. The A 40 cars one time pride of Jaffna had faded into obscurity. Now the roads are flooded by all the latest cars.

The telephone once considered a luxury was in the possession of a few well-to-do families. Now it has become a necessity in the fast moving world. With the advent of the computers the usage of phones has stepped up. The hand phone in particular has become

C. Kamalaharan

After the lapse of seventy years I recently revisited Malaysia hoping to see the neighbourhood where I joyfully spent my childhood, meet my former peers and visit the places I had been. On arrival there I was thoroughly disappointed to see the entire region in disorder. In the name of development the infrastructure had been remodelled and the social fabric completely destroyed. There



The A40 Car



The two ways widened road and parapet walls



a boon. Everyone young and old, rich and poor, healthy and invalid, businessman and vendor has a phone. What more the hand phone can also be used as digital camera.

During the forties and fifties well sweeps were used for irrigating the farms. It was a real backbreaking job for the farmers. With the advent of the electric motors irrigating the farms had become considerably easier. Even at homes pipe borne water is supplied through electric motors.

Those days during weddings the whole house becomes a hive of activity; erection of 'pandals' (sheds), shopping, marketing, transporting, preparing food and so on. All these activities were time consuming and labourious. With the construction of Kalyana Mandapams (wedding halls) in almost every village guests have only to attend the wedding in the halls, bless the couple, have meal and depart.

Developments had taken place without changing the demographics of the place. Agricultural farms are still flourishing and the farmers are busy engaging in cultivation. The greenery of the place still exists; the cluster of palmyra and coconut palms, the different varieties of mango trees, the jak fruit tree and the dense foliage.

My native place is a good example of how development should be. The infrastructure remains the same. The social fabric too remains unchanged. Anyone visiting the place after years of prolong stay in foreign countries will not find it difficult to visit any nook and corner of it as long as his memory doesn't fail. Only urgent and essential developments to better the quality of life had taken place.



The Thatched House



Vegetable farm



Electric Motor



The Thatched Fence



The Well Sweep



The Jackfruit tree

Compiled by Kidambi Raj

VARALAKSHMI VRATHAM

What is Varalakshmi Vratam?

It is one of the most auspicious festival that is celebrated in honour of Goddess Lakshmi. Varalakshmi (**Vara** means boon and **Lakshmi** means Goddess of wealth) is one of the forms of Goddess Mahalakshmi. She is the consort of Lord Vishnu and is the one who grants boons. It is an important pooja performed by many women in all the southern state, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh in India and by Tamilians in Sri Lanka. It is celebrated on the second Friday or the Friday before the day of full moon (Poornima) in the month of Shravana (July-August).

Significance and importance of performing Vara Lakshmi Vrata:

It is performed by married women (Sumangalis) for the wellbeing of their family members, especially the husband, to get progeny etc. The eight forces or energies are recognized and they are known as **Sri** (Wealth), **Bhu** (Earth), **Saraswathi** (Wisdom), **Preethi** (Love), **Keerthi** (Fame), **Shanthe** (Peace), **Santhushthi** (Contentment) and **Pushti** (Strength). It is believed that worshipping Goddess Varalakshmi on this day is equivalent to worshipping Ashtalakshmi.

Vishnu is called **Ashtalakshmi Pathi**, which is equivalent to saying that he is the asylum for the eight Lakshmis or forces. In fact, Lord Vishnu representing the preservative aspect of the universe, radiates these forces from Him. These forces are personified and worshipped as Lakshmis, since abstract forces is beyond the comprehension of the ordinary people. As health, wealth and prosperity depend upon the rhythmic play of these forces, the worship of Goddess Lakshmi is said to obtain these three.

Legends related to Varalakshmi Pooja:

There are few legends related to Varalakshmi Vratas and here are three.

According to Hindu mythology, the importance of Varalakshmi Pooja is said to be mentioned in the Skanda Purana. It is believed that the importance of Varalakshmi Pooja was narrated to Goddess Parvathi by Lord Siva himself. Goddess Parvathi wanted to know about a vrata that is highly beneficial to woman, which will help her lead a happy and prosperous life on earth. Lord Siva then mentioned about the Varalakshmi Vratam.

Another one is about the story of Shyamabala. King Bathrasiravas and Queen Surachandrika had a daughter named Shyamabala. She was married to a prince of the neighboring kingdom. Once when Shyamabala was in her parent's palace, she saw her mother, Queen Surachandrika, driving away an old lady. The old lady had asked the queen to perform Varalakshmi Pooja, but the queen did not like a beggar advising her regarding a Pooja and therefore drove her out. The kind-hearted Shyamabala invited the old lady and listened to the greatness of Varalakshmi Vrata. When she returned to her country, she performed the Vrata as directed by the old lady. Soon her kingdom started prospering and the prince was appreciated for his good governance. However, her parents had to undergo numerous troubles and there was suffering all around. The King and the Queen lost all their wealth and people started revolting against their rule. Hearing about the suffering in her parent's kingdom, Shyamabala sent pots of gold, but the moment Queen Surachandrika set her eyes on them, they turned to ashes. Upon hearing this incident, Shyamabala realized that all this is the result of her mother driving out the old woman from the palace. She realized that the old

woman was Goddess Lakshmi in disguise. Shyamabala asked her mother to ask forgiveness to Goddess Lakshmi and perform Varalakshmi Vrata. She did so and was able to attain the previous glory.

There lived a woman named Charumathi in town called Kundinyapura in Maharashtra. That prosperous town was home to Charumathi and her husband. Very much impressed by her devotion to her family, Goddess Mahalakshmi appeared in her dream and asked her to worship Varalakshmi and seek to fulfill her wishes. Charumathi explained her dream to her family and they encouraged her to perform the Pooja. She invited many other women in her village and they all joined in performing the pooja in the traditional way and offered many sweets to the Goddess Varalakshmi. Charumathi recited the following Lakshmi sloka with other women with utmost faith and devotion.

Lakshmeem Ksheerasamudra

Rajatanayaam Sri Rangadhameswareem

Daseebhootha Samastha Devavanitham

Lokaika Deepangkuraam

1

Sri Manmanda Kataaksha Labhdha Vibhava

Brahmendra Gangaadharaam

Twaam Trailokya Kutumbhineem

Sarasijam Vande Mukundapriyaam.

2

**Maathar Namaami Kamalae
Kamalaayathaakshi**

**SriVishnu Hrutka Kamalavaasini
Viswamaathahaa**

Ksheerothajae Kamalakomala Garbhagowri

**Lakshmi Praseethatham Namathaam
Saranyae**

3

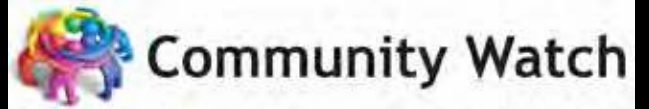
Then Charumathi offered thambulam to the brahmin priests and distributed the Vrata prasadam to guests and relatives and led a happy life. Since then, Hindu women perform this Vrata with utmost faith and trust to this day.

May Goddess Lakshmi's Blessings be with you all !!!



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Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple



Compiled by *Kidambi Raj*

VI LAKKU POOJAI

Significance of Vilakku Pooja:

The word **Vilakku** literally means lamp in Tamil. Vilakku Pooja is a special Vrata for women during the Tamil month of Aadi. The month of **Aadi** is considered very auspicious to connect oneself to this Divine Power. This pooja is an important ritual dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi and is performed on a Friday in the month of Aadi (July-August). The lamp has its own special place in Hinduism. It is a form and a symbol of **Tej** (Absolute fire principle). Lamp leads from darkness to light. It burns only to give message of peace and light to people. That is its greatness.

Kutthu Vilakku, it is said, truly represents the seven principal chakras or energy centres in the human body. These **chakras** influence practically every aspect of human being including physical body, mind and intellect. Just as there are seven Chakras in the human body, there are paths for the flow of vital energy or Chetana. These are called **Nadis** or channels. According to Siddhas there are 72,000 such nadis in a human body.

The three principal Nadis are **Chandra Nadi** (Moon Channel), **Surya Nadi** (Sun Channel) and **Sushmna Nadi** (the Central Space) remains dormant. But Sushmna is the most significant aspect of human

physiology. Only when energy enters into Sushumna, life really begins.

When the Chandra Nadi is active the person perceives coolness. The activation of Surya Nadi imparts energy to the person and The Sushmna Nadi is activated when the person starts progressing spiritually.

The structure of Kutthu Vilakku used during pooja is a symbolic representation of the above concept. The Stem of the lamp represents the Sushmna Nadi and the seven chakras on them. The five faces of the lamp (pancha mugas) represent the five senses.

Importance of lighting the lamp for functions:

Great importance is given for lighting lamp in Hinduism. The implied meaning of lighting a ceremonious lamp just awakens the Glow of the soul (Atmajyoti) within oneself. The serene aura around the lamp represents the Light of the soul, while the predominant light represents the radiance of the soul. When a function is started by lighting the lamp, the respective Deity principle is invoked and a prayer is offered for the waves of the Deity to be present at that venue. This activates the Sankalpa (commitment) power and the task gets accomplished. The movement of the light particles



emitted by the flame of the lamp the non-materialized waves of action of the God from the Universe get converted into predominant shakti of God and it helps in the formation of a protective sheath and prevents negative energies from entering the area. Thus, the desired task is accomplished with Divine blessings and without any obstruction.

Benefits of Lamp Pooja:

Lighting lamps in numbers of 108 or 1,008 on Fridays and on auspicious days like full moon day or Amavasai day in temples provide great benefits for the worshippers as it is equal to Yagna. Though doing Lamp Pooja on Aadi Amavasai is good, doing lamp pooja of full moon or amavasai day in every Tamil month, has its own varied benefits as given below:

Lamp pooja on Chitra pournami or amavasai will give abundance of all species of food grains,

Lamp pooja on Vaikasi pournami or amavasai will give money,

Lamp pooja on Aani pournami or amavasai will remove obstacles in marriage,

Lamp pooja on Aadi pournami or amavasai will extend one's life period,

Lamp pooja on Aavani pournami or amavasai will give children,

Lamp pooja on Purattasi pournami or amavasai will increase number of cows in the house,

Lamp pooja on Aippasi pournami or amavasai will remove all diseases,

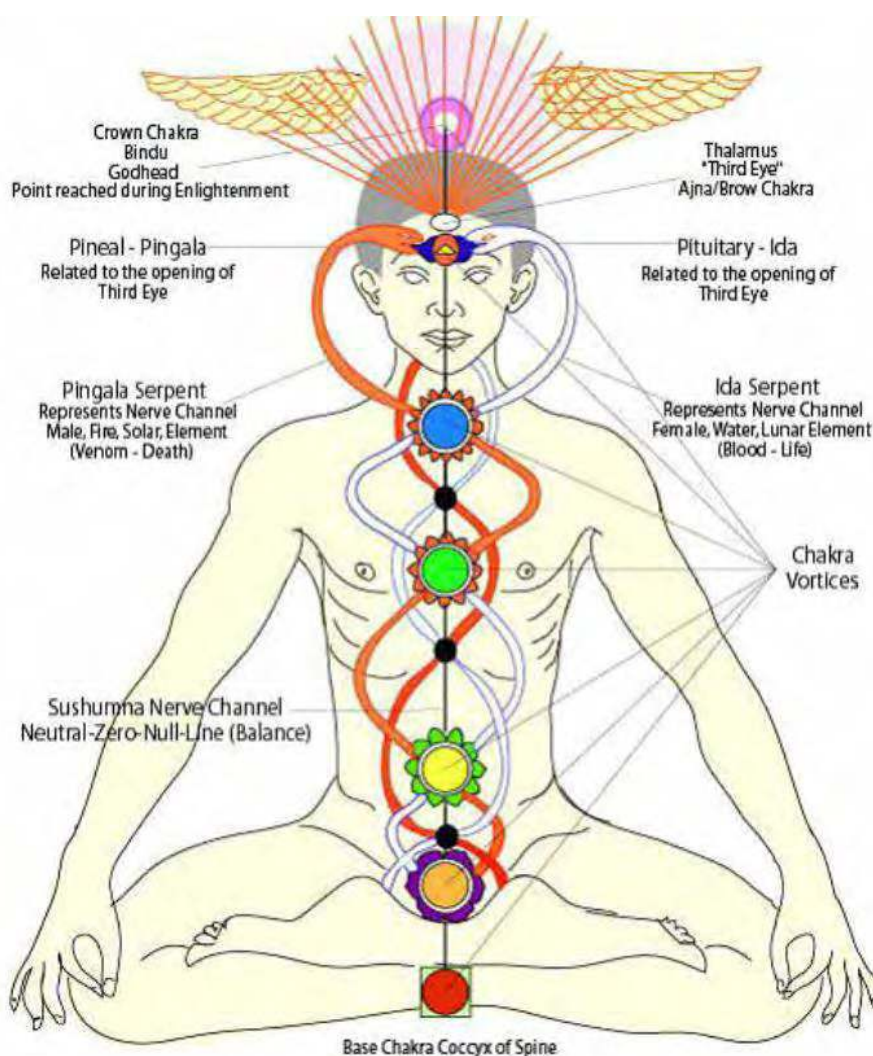
Lamp pooja on Karthigai pournami or amavasai will provide mukthi,

Lamp pooja on Margazhi pournami or amavasai will provide good health,

Lamp pooja on Thai pournami or amavasai will provide victory,

Lamp pooja on Maasi pournami or amavasai will remove all sorrows and Lamp pooja on Panguni pournami or amavasai will help think on the way of dharma.

Now you know the significance and power of Lighting a Lamp in Pooja !!!





DTA – Sandbank Relation Trip

DTA seniors enjoyed themselves throughout the trip and DTA is pleased that the seniors are participating in trips and events and thanked the organizers and the attendees.



SAND BANK RELAXATION TRIP



SAND BANK RELAXATION TRIP



SAND BANK RELAXATION TRIP



SAND BANK RELAXATION TRIP



SAND BANK RELAXATION TRIP



SAND BANK RELAXATION TRIP



SAND BANK RELAXATION TRIP



Durham Tamil Association (DTA) organizes Mental Health seminar titled “New Beginnings – Our Journey to Mental Wellness”

DTA organized a mental health and wellness seminar titled “New Beginnings: Our Journey to Mental Wellness”. It was a huge success and the DTA thanked the professionals from the CMHA (Byra Dineshkumar, Marina Machado, and Kishany Subramaniam) for their very informative presentation on the Bounce Back program which is run by the CMHA, and how it can help people who suffer from depression and anxiety on the road to recovery.

DTA also extended their gratitude

to Dr. Senthuran Gunaratnam for his very engaging seminar on mental wellness, and how those in need can be guided to seek help from professionals.

DTA also thanked the volunteers Ganes Sinnappu, and Gnanamurthy Manickavasagar who made fresh Kothuroti that everyone enjoyed. A special thank you was also extended to DTA Vice President Hanthan Manickavasagar for organizing this event. The event was graciously sponsored by Petro Canada - RAJS Team and DTA thanked them for their support.



Family Fun Day

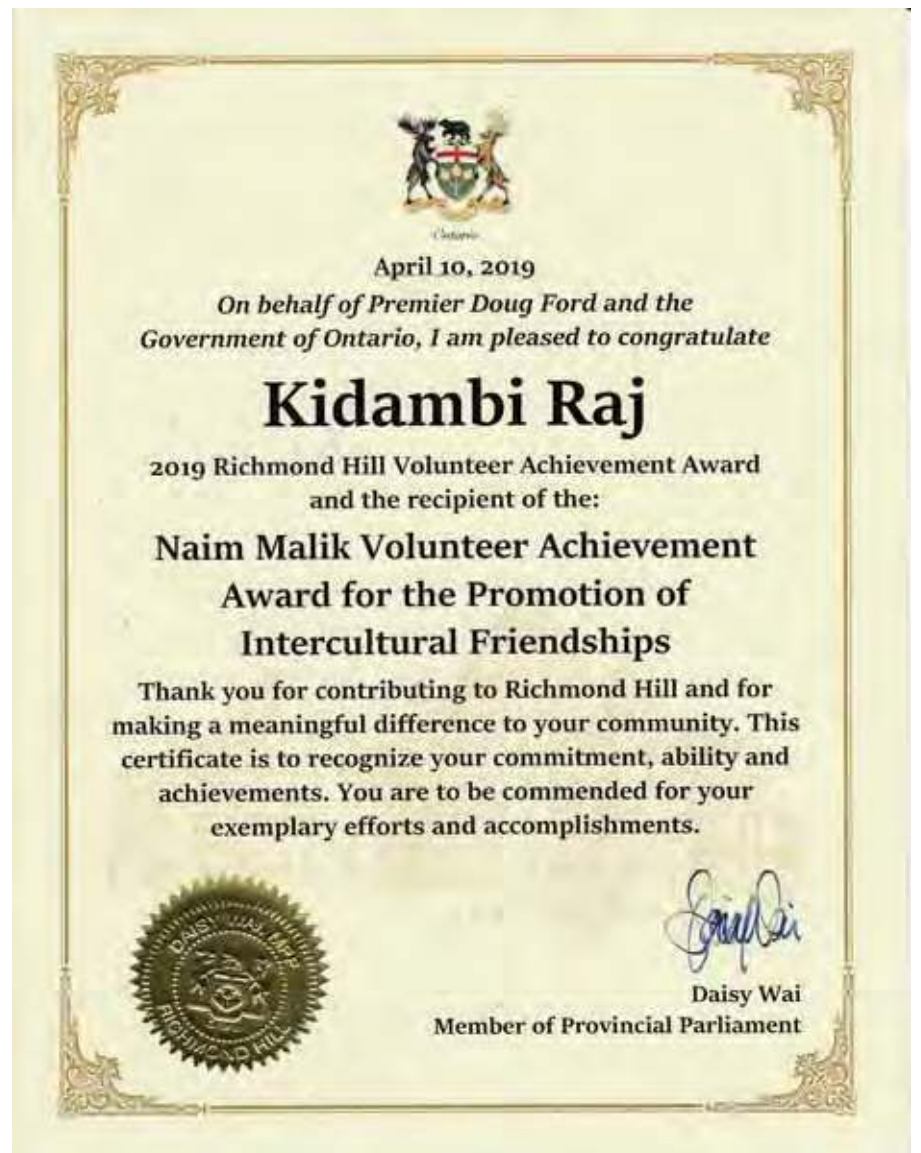
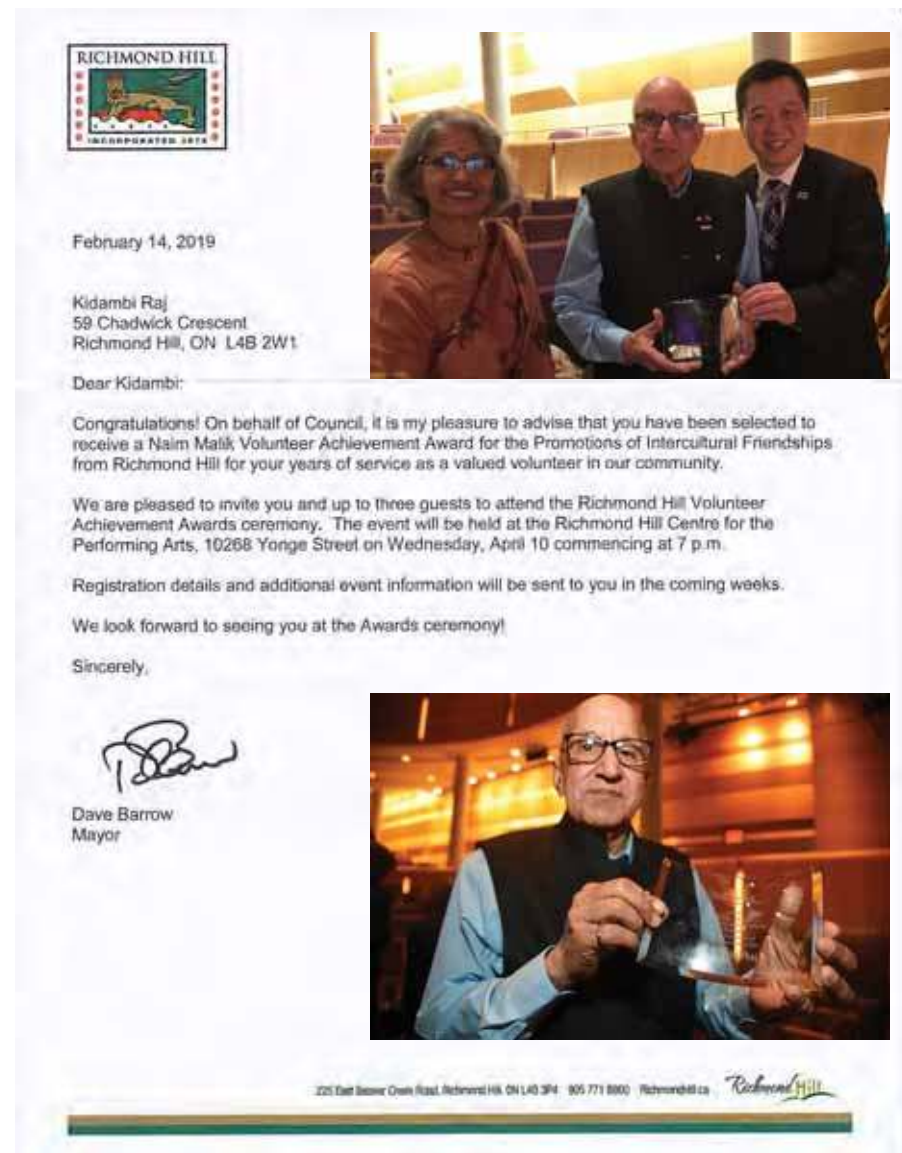
Ajax/Pickering hospital Fundraising event named “Family Fun Day” was also another event organized by DTA and Durham Tamil Association was proud to have these selfless volunteers.

(Contributed by Marnet Pathusha)





Kidambi Raj receives 2019 Richmond Hill Volunteer Achievement Award and the recipient of the Naim Malik Volunteer Achievement Award for the Promotion of Intercultural Friendships



Aachi Kitchen presents food event on September 13th at Markham Convention Centre

Chef Ramana and Team meet Media to explain details of the Event

Proceeds of the event to be donated to the SAAAC Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC).

New Aachi Kitchen Sales Outlet in Ajax soon

By Siva Sivapragasam

Well-known and well recognized Chef Ramana and his team will present their Aachi Kitchen extravagant food event on September 13th at the Markham Convention Centre, Scarborough on September 13th. As a prelude to the event Ramana and team met media personnel recently to explain details of the event and the concept behind the Aachi Kitchen and the emergence of stronger flavoured ethnic foods as an important and authentic cuisine in Canada.

There is a growing engagement in ethnic foods in Canada. Consumers are more educated about the food they're eating and they're seeking out stronger flavour profiles. Durham region is Ontario's fastest growing city, very ethnically diverse, the core of Ontario's cultural mosaic, with a truly unique culture that has been shaped by the many waves of immigrants over time. These immigrants have now put their

stamp on Canadian culture and today and above all else the people want a story along with their food.

Aachi Kitchen also has many stories to share with their consumers. Their uniquely positioned Aachi Kitchen brand will share special authentic cuisine straight from the various regions of South Asia, where the chefs have learned their recipes from the Aachies - the mothers and grandmothers of our families. In Canada, as their seasons change, the consumer instinct for an altered life style, elevates their desire for not only comfort in their lives but also in their foods. This is when spices such as cardamom, cinnamon, turmeric, chillies, coriander, cummin, ginger and pepper conjure up memories of baked, roasted, sautéed vegetables, Tandoori & Naan from a clay oven to the stove top. The Aachi Kitchen will celebrate the rich flavours of super foods throughout the seasons. The richness and depth of these flavours will satisfy the need for indulgence with



just a touch of luxury.

Aachi Kitchen will proudly showcase its brand to the public on the 13th of September 2019 at the prestigious Markham Convention Center. The audience will have the opportunity to taste some unique authentic recipes from the kitchens of South Asia. The Aachi Kitchen team will engage Aachies, the true heroes of family cooking, in this food presentation, reflecting the atmosphere of our rich family

traditions. The proceeds of the event will be donated to the SAAAC Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC).

Aachi Kitchen will soon open a sales outlet in Ajax to cater to the needs of the Durham area which is now becoming an important residential complex for members of the South Asian community. For more information regarding the tickets to the show and info please call Danesh Raj (647-406-0573) or Jeya Saam (416-262-1400).

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