

# Monsoon

ONE DOLLAR

# Journal

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Emil Alphonsus CA, CPA, CGA

## Ontario PC Leader visits India as the Year 2018 dawns

As the election year ushered upon, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, Patrick Brown wrapped up a successful New Year trip to India on the weekend of January 7th. The Ontario PC leader

focused on investment opportunities for Ontario, visiting the diverse places of faith there and held discussions on strengthening Canada-India ties via sports such as cricket.

The 42nd Ontario general election

is scheduled to be held on or before June 7, 2018.

Pictures marking the visit from his twitter feed - @brownbarrie, Patrick Brown, Leader of the Ontario PC Party and MPP for Simcoe North:



"Began my India trip by visiting the Harmandir Sahib, the spiritual home of Sikhs, to receive blessings for a great 2018. I have visited the holy Sikh shrine 8 times and witnessing the beauty of this place of prayer & devotion has always been blissful and humbling."



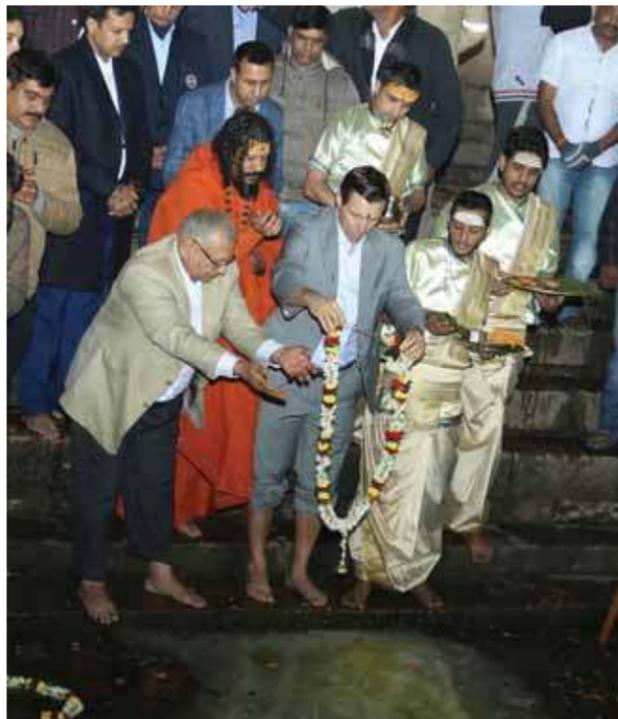
"Great sit down with former Team India Cricket Team Captain and icon, Kapil Dev. With cricket being one of the fastest growing sports in Ontario, discussed opportunities to strengthen relationship between India and Canada through sports."



"We finished a great week in India & I leave with optimism for the significant opportunity that exists in India to drive investment to Ontario & Canada. Special thanks to PCPO VP Jag Badwal & former Canada India Foundation Chairman Laj Prasher for coordinating this visit."



"Attended early morning Hindu prayer at the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Mandir in Varanasi. Every day, thousands of devotees attend this holy temple to seek spiritual peace and blessings from Lord Shiva."



"Joined in on the evening Ganga Aarti at the holy Dasaswamedh Ghat on the Ganges riverbanks. Truly grateful to receive blessings for a prosperous 2018 at one of the most sacred rivers to Hindus."

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### President Sirisena sets Reconciliation among communities as top priority for 2018

Promises to draw the sword to fight corruption and bribery  
By Siva Sivapragasam

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena has declared 2018 as a year to deeply instil reconciliation among communities and that the country should face the challenges to achieve goals.

In his New Year message, President Sirisena has stated that "the great commitment and determined courage shown by us to face those challenges and achieve our goals will take us to the level of excellence." The message said: Every passing moment adds to our knowledge and experience and at the same time, each and every moment of the future will judge our capabilities to face new emerging challenges. Accordingly, as a country we can consider the past year, as a year in which many positive expectations have been fulfilled. The economic prosperity we should gain as a country, the reconciliation which should be deeply instilled in society, human freedom and a further endorsement of the glorious image of Sri Lanka at international fora are among those priorities. Our determination and commitment towards making the new year that begins an amazing one will depend on how far we succeed in achieving these goals." The President has also told a meeting of his party members that he would draw the sword to fight bribery and corruption.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has in his new year message stressed the value of human dignity, principles of democracy and ethics. The Prime Minister stated in his message "As 2018 dawns on us we recall the victory won in restoring political and social values, in realizing a dream long cherished by the people of this country. It reminds us that we still have a task ahead – that of consolidating the true meaning of that victory."



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Premier of Ontario - Première ministre de l'Ontario

January 2018

**A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER**

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to members of the Tamil community as you commemorate Tamil Heritage Month.

The month of January has always been an important time for the Tamil community — a time of great joy that includes the harvest festival Thai Pongal. In proclaiming the month of January as Tamil Heritage Month, we join together in celebrating and sharing in the richness and vibrancy of Tamil culture.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the many ways in which Ontario's Tamil communities have helped to shape our province into the strong and vibrant place we are so fortunate to call home.

Please accept my sincere best wishes for a memorable and inspiring Tamil Heritage Month.

**Kathleen Wynne**  
Premier

## Prescription Medications Now Free for Everyone 24 and Under Ontario Delivers Biggest Expansion of Medicare in a Generation with OHIP+

More than 4,400 prescription medications are now free for children and youth age 24 and under, as the province delivers the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation for Ontario families.

**OHIP+:** Children and Youth Pharmacare launched on Jan 1, 2018, to help families and young adults in Ontario get the prescriptions they need without having to worry about the cost.

All people need to do is present their Ontario health card number along with a valid prescription at an Ontario pharmacy and medicine will be provided free of charge.

Medications covered by OHIP+ include asthma inhalers, drugs to treat

depression, anxiety, epilepsy and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, antibiotics, EpiPens (epinephrine auto-injectors), insulin, diabetes test strips, oral contraceptives, medications to treat some childhood cancers and other rare conditions, and many others. People can search Ontario's new medication coverage tool to see if their drugs are covered under OHIP+.

Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25

## Ontario's Minimum Wage is now \$14 an Hour

Increased Paid Vacations and New Personal Emergency Days Also in Effect

Starting from Jan 1, 2018, people across Ontario will see their wages rise \$14 an hour as the new general minimum wage takes effect. This change will help workers and their families who are struggling to get ahead in a changing economy.

As part of Ontario's Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017, the minimum wage will increase again to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2019, to be followed by annual increases at the rate of inflation. Other provisions of the new provincial legislation that come into effect on January 1, 2018, include:

Ensuring workers are entitled to at least three weeks' vacation after five years with the same employer, bringing Ontario's vacation time in line with the national average.

Expanding the 10 days per calendar year for personal emergency leave to employees in workplaces with fewer than 50 employees, with at least two paid days per year for employees who have been employed for at least a week

A new domestic or sexual violence leave of up to 10 individual days and up to 15 weeks of job protected leave; the first five days of leave in every calendar year would be paid

Increased family medical leave from 8 to 28 weeks per year

A new child death leave from any cause up to 104 weeks, and increased crime-related disappearance of a child leave from 52 to 104 weeks, and

Changes to make forming a union and reaching a first collective agreement easier

Supporting workers and their families is part of Ontario's plan to create

fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017 responds to the final report of the Changing Workplaces Review. It was the first-ever independent review of both the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995.

The report estimated that more than 30 per cent of Ontario workers were in precarious work in 2014. In 2016, the median hourly wage was \$13.00 for part-time workers and \$24.73 for full-time workers. Over the past 30 years, part-time work has grown to represent nearly 20 per cent of total employment.

Studies show that a higher minimum wage results in less employee turnover, which increases business productivity.

"Our plan for fair workplaces and better jobs provides a minimum wage people can actually live on and modernizes our labour laws to adapt to an ever-changing economy. Too many families struggle to get by on part-time or temporary work. Those working full-time can be living in poverty. This is unacceptable in Ontario. Our plan will help ensure everyone who works hard has the chance to reach their full potential and share in Ontario's prosperity."

- **Kevin Flynn**, Minister of Labour

through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation. Ontario is the first province to provide prescription medication coverage at no cost for children and youth age 24 years and under, helping more people afford the medications that they need to stay healthy.

OHIP+ will give young people access to more than 4,400 drug products reimbursed under the Ontario Drug Benefit program, including some of the most commonly used medications and those

available through the Exceptional Access Program, if an individual qualifies, at no cost.

"We believe in helping all families receive the medication they need, at no cost, to stay healthy and strong regardless of income. OHIP+ is a bold step toward our commitment and vision of bringing universal drug coverage to all Ontarians."

- **Dr. Eric Hoskins**, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care



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from the publisher's desk

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**Welcoming 2018!**

**Gems that exist around us...**

Contributed by Vithu Ganesanathan

January 1, 2018: While drinking my tea this morning, I took a moment to appreciate the snow in the backyard. Naturally settled from previous snow falls, it lay there unmoved; white cotton candy with glitter. It reminded me of a time I was much younger; a time these realizations were regular occurrences. It's said that children naturally have meditative qualities until the age of about 6 or 7. With the world continuously demanding more and more of our attention, this ability slowly diminishes with age.

In 2017, I embarked on a yogic journey. I dedicated an enormous amount of time to meditative-type activities – from meditation and yoga to writing, drawing and dancing. From books and regular

classes, I've learned different breathing techniques, ancient teachings of how the body's functions are improved through just the breath. It's remarkable how such a simple 5-10 minute technique can drastically improve your mood. These practices have helped me develop a new-found appreciation for the wonderful people around me.

For the first time, I noticed my dad's child-like happiness and laughter; admired my mom's social intelligence and eagerness to learn; my sister's ability to provide unconditional love as a mother; my brother's patience in understanding others and their needs.

Only when we settle the mind are we able to notice the gems that exist around us. Look within, that's where all answers lie.

Happy New Year everyone :)

**New Year's Message**

**Governor General of Canada's New Year's Message**

The Governor General of Canada - Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette

December 29, 2017,  
 OTTAWA - My favourite thing about the holiday season is to spend time with family and friends and to take time off to celebrate.

My son, Laurier, and I love being outdoors. We like to ski and to skate, to play in the snow and simply to walk and enjoy the winter scenery. This is the True North, strong and free, and there is no shortage of ways to enjoy the Canadian winter.

Whatever your interests or abilities, I encourage you stay active during the holiday season. If you are in the Ottawa region, I invite you to visit and experience the skating rink at Rideau Hall, part of our Canadian heritage for 150 years.

The arrival of a new year is also a good time to think about the people we love, to offer best wishes and to lend a hand to those in need, whether in our families or in our communities.

At this very special time let us not forget the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families. They serve our country, defend our values and do such a remarkable job, here and abroad.

Let's work together to keep our country open, tolerant, respectful and progressive. Imagine the future we want as Canadians. Be curious, ask questions, explore and dare to DREAM.

May 2018 be a year of prosperity for all. We wish you Happy New Year, Canada, from coast to coast to coast!

And to those who will be competing in the Olympic Games in Pyeong Chang: best of success and best of luck! Go Canada!

Julie Payette



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Monsoon Journal Wishes Readers, Advertisers, Well-Wishers & Friends a **Happy Thai Pongal** January 14, 2018



"Happy New Year" tweet from Toronto Raptors: The basketball team rips into 2018 with several wins

**Canada Historic Milestones: JANUARY**

On January 1, 1947, the Canadian Citizenship Act received Royal Assent, meaning Canadian citizens would no longer be considered to be British subjects. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King became the 1st Canadian citizen during the 1st citizenship ceremony in January 3, 1947.



"All my life I have had the choice between love and hate, and I have chosen love... And I'm here." - AR Rahman (b: January 6, 1967) Singer-Songwriter, Music Producer, Musician and Philanthropist

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

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# YOUR NEW RIGHTS AT WORK IN 2018

Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act now passed into Law in Ontario. Workers across Ontario worked hard to win the \$15 minimum wage, paid sick days and emergency leave for all, equal pay for equal work and fairer scheduling. These new rights will be phased in by stages in 2018 and in 2019.

Below is a list of some of your new rights at work.

As of January 1, 2018, the following new rights are in force:

- \$14 general minimum wage
  - \$13.15 minimum wage for students under 18
  - \$12.20 minimum wage for liquor servers
- 10 days of personal emergency leave for all workers, 2 of those days will be paid, and a doctor's note is not required.
- 3 weeks' paid vacation after 5 years of working at the same company.
- Domestic or sexual violence leave of up to 10 individual days of leave and up to 15 weeks of leave if the worker or the worker's child must deal with domestic or sexual violence or the threat of domestic or sexual violence. The first 5 days of leave each year will be paid.
- Temporary help agencies will



have to give workers one week's written notice or pay in lieu of notice if a longer term assignment ends early.

- Forming a union will be easier for homecare workers, building service workers, and temp agency workers. An employer must recognize a union if the majority of employees signs union cards. (A subsequent vote no longer has to take place.)
- Misclassification of employees as "independent contractors" is against the law. Employers will be responsible for proving that an individual is not an employee.

■ Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employers can no longer require that workers wear footwear with an elevated heel, except in cases

where such footwear ensures workers' safety.

### Coming this spring

As of April 1, 2018, the following new rights will come into force:

- Equal pay for equal work for casual, part-time, contract, and temporary workers doing work similar to full-time workers.
- Equal pay for equal work for temp agency workers doing work similar to permanent employees

**Coming next year** – the \$15 minimum wage and more

As of January 1, 2019, the following new rights will come into force:

- \$15 general minimum wage
  - \$14.10 minimum wage for students under 18

○ \$13.05 minimum wage for liquor servers

### Fairer Scheduling

- Workers will have the job protected right to refuse shifts if the employer gives less than 4 days' (96 hours') notice.
- Workers will have the job protected right to ask for a schedule or location change after working at a company for 3 months.
- 3 hours of pay for shift cancellation with less than 2 days' (48 hours') notice.

○ 3 hours of pay for on-call workers that are not called in or work less than 3 hours.

For contact: Email: info@15andFairness.org OR Visit: 15andFairness.org

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# Around the World

## Dressing for winter is more important than dressing to impress, says Dr. David Lowe of the Health & Wellness Centre, University of Toronto

**Jan 4:** The winter deep freeze is upon us.

Environment Canada issued an extreme cold weather warning for Toronto on Thursday, Jan 4th. Temperatures will fall rapidly this evening to lows of -20 to -25 C, or -35 to -40 C with wind chill. The extreme cold is expected to last through Saturday, or Sunday morning.

Staying warm during the cold snap is a snap if you take the right precautions. Dr. David Lowe, physician-in-chief of the University of Toronto's Health & Wellness Centre, gives his advice:

**Layer up:** To survive the trek across campus for a class, it helps to wear layer upon layer of clothing. Break out the long johns if you have them, Lowe says. And don't forget to protect your extremities. Mittens are better than gloves, Lowe added, because your fingers share warmth.

**Watch your step:** Beware icy sidewalks. Take a cleared path whenever possible, Lowe says. "You should slow down while walking, just as you would driving a car. Be aware of your surroundings, the conditions, and use handrails going up stairs," he says.

**'Tis the season for boots:** To find a pair that will keep you from falling, Lowe suggests checking the winter boot ratings by scientists from the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute. The research team, which includes U of T scientists, tested the slip resistance of 98 different boots and gave them a rating of one to three "snowflakes." Only eight per cent met a minimum standard. "You put snow tires on your car in the winter. Surely you should worry about the boots you're going to wear in the same weather,"



U of T Professor Geoff Fernie, the research director at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, told The Toronto Star in 2016.

**Choose warmth over fashion:** No one likes hat hair, but frostbitten ears are worse, Lowe warns. "It's fashionable now to wear your toque year round, so it shouldn't be such a big issue anymore," he added. "If you can wear a toque in L.A., you can do it here."

**Watch out for signs of frostbite:** With wind chill between -28 and -39 C, exposed skin can freeze in 10 to 30 minutes, according to Environment Canada. Signs of frostbite include numbness, a change in skin colour and a prickling feeling, Lowe says. Joint or muscle stiffness can indicate a deeper frostbite.

**Stay indoors:** One of the simplest ways to beat the cold is to avoid it. In this weather, it's best to go out only when necessary, Lowe says. If studying at home isn't an option, find a warm and cozy spot on campus. Hot tip: the Graham Library at Trinity College on U of T's downtown Toronto campus has three gas fireplaces.

Via: [utoronto.ca/news](http://utoronto.ca/news)

## Nearly 386,000 children will be born worldwide on New Year's Day, says UNICEF

UNICEF challenges nations around the world to make sure more newborns survive their first days of life

NEW YORK, 1 January 2018 – Approximately 386,000 babies will be born on New Year's Day, UNICEF said today. Of these, over 90 per cent will be born in less developed regions.

Kiribati's Christmas Island in the Pacific will most likely welcome 2018's first baby; the United States, its last. Globally, over half of these births are estimated to take place in nine countries:

- India — 69,070
- China — 44,760
- Nigeria — 20,210
- Pakistan — 14,910
- Indonesia — 13,370
- The United States — 11,280
- The Democratic Republic of Congo — 9,400
- Ethiopia — 9,020
- Bangladesh — 8,370

While many babies will survive, some will not make it past their first day. In 2016, an estimated 2,600 children died within the first 24 hours every day of the year. For almost 2 million newborns, their first week was also their last. In all, 2.6 million children died before the end of their first month. Among those children, more than 80 per cent died from preventable and treatable causes such as premature birth, complications during delivery, and infections like sepsis and pneumonia.

"This New Year, UNICEF's resolution is to help give every child more than an hour, more than a day, more than a month — more than survival," said Stefan Peterson, UNICEF's Chief of Health. "We call on governments and partners to join the fight to save millions of children's lives by providing proven, low-cost solutions." Over the past two decades, the world has seen unprecedented progress in child survival,



**2018's first baby – a girl – was born at 1.44 am on New Year's Day in Suva, the island capital of Fiji. – pic: UNICEF/ Chute**

halving the number of children worldwide who die before their fifth birthday to 5.6 million in 2016. But despite these advances, there has been slower progress for newborns. Babies dying in the first month account for 46 per cent of all deaths among children under five.

Next month, UNICEF will launch Every Child Alive, a global campaign to demand and deliver affordable, quality health care solutions for every mother and newborn. These include a steady supply of clean water and electricity at health facilities, the presence of a skilled health attendant during birth, disinfecting the umbilical cord, breastfeeding within the first hour after birth, and skin-to-skin contact between the mother and child.

"We are now entering the era when all the world's newborns should have the opportunity to see the 22nd century," added Peterson. "Unfortunately, nearly half of the children born this year likely won't. A child born in Sweden in January 2018 is most likely to live to 2100, while a child from Somalia would be unlikely to live beyond 2075."

- [unicef.org](http://unicef.org)

## Pakistan Rejects Trump's Criticism, Says It Can't Be Blamed for 'Collective Failure'

By Ayaz Gul

ISLAMABAD — January 2, 2018: Pakistan has criticized and noted with "deep disappointment" charges contained in a New Year tweet by U.S. President Donald Trump and said Islamabad could not be held responsible for the "collective failure" in Afghanistan.

Trump tweeted Monday the United States had received "nothing but lies and deceit" in return for "foolishly" giving Pakistan more than \$33 billion in aid in the last 15 years to fight terrorism.

"They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" Trump concluded in his first tweet of 2018.

His criticism instantly provoked strong condemnation and reaction from Pakistani politicians and commentators. The foreign ministry Monday night summoned the U.S. Ambassador to protest and seek an explanation.

The Pakistani government issued a formal response Tuesday after an emergency meeting of the National Security Committee of top civilian and military leaders, with Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in the chair.

A statement issued after the meeting underscored Pakistan's significant contributions toward promoting regional and global peace and security.

"Pakistan has fought the war against terrorism primarily out of its own resources and at a great cost to its economy, and that even more importantly the huge sacrifices made by Pakistan," it said.

The statement went on to reiterate that tens of thousands of Pakistani civilians and security personnel have lost their lives and the pain of their families "could not be trivialized so heartlessly by pushing all of it behind a monetary value — and that too an imagined one."

It rejected as "completely incomprehensible" recent statements and articulation by the American leadership for contradicting "facts manifestly, struck with great insensitivities" at the trust between Pakistan and the U.S. built over generations.

Pakistan is firmly supporting and facilitating the U.S.-led international efforts in Afghanistan through "vital lines of communications" for smooth counterterrorism operations in the neighboring country, according to the statement.

Thousands of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan still rely mostly on ground and air routes through neighboring Pakistan for receiving vital supplies. Analysts still rule out a complete breakdown in relations between Islamabad and Washington.

They note that current tensions with Russia and Iran leave the Trump admin-

istration with almost no options but to rely on Pakistani supply routes to sustain the Afghan military mission. Islamabad had for months suspended the lines of communications in 2011 to protest U.S. bombings of Pakistani border posts that killed 24 soldiers.

The routes were restored only after Washington issued apologies for mistakenly hitting the Pakistani posts.

"The real challenges in Afghanistan were political infighting, massive corruption, phenomenal growth of drug production and expansion of ungoverned spaces inside Afghanistan full of sanctuaries for multiple international terrorist organizations, posing a serious and direct threat to Afghanistan, its neighbors and the entire region," read Tuesday's Pakistani statement.

"Pakistan cannot be held responsible for the collective failure in Afghanistan and that blaming allies certainly does not serve the shared objective of achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region."

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif in a tweet Tuesday questioned Trump's assertions of giving Islamabad more than \$33 billion dollars. Asif insisted that Trump "can hire a US based Audit firm on our expense to verify this figure & let the world know who is lying & deceiving."

Washington has long accused Pakistan, especially its security institutions,

of turning ignoring or covertly helping the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani terrorist network to stage cross-border attacks against Afghan and U.S.-led forces.

Islamabad denies allegations it is harboring Afghan insurgents and instead complains anti-state militants are using the neighboring country for terrorist attacks against Pakistan.

Afghanistan and rival India praised Trump for blaming Pakistan. But longtime ally China on Tuesday defended Islamabad and called on the international community to "fully acknowledge" Pakistani counterterrorism efforts.

"Pakistan has made tremendous efforts and sacrifices in combating terrorism and made outstanding contributions to the international anti-terrorism cause," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang in Beijing.

The two countries, he added, maintain an "all-weather strategic partnership" and China intends to further deepen its cooperation with Pakistan in all fields.

China is investing billions of dollars to help build a network of power plants, rail, road, and communications in Pakistan. The unprecedented planned investment of about \$60 billion under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor or CPEC has cemented economic and political ties between the two countries, who already enjoy deep military cooperation.

- (via [voanews.com](http://voanews.com) - Voice of America News)



# Treasury Bond Scam



**Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena instructs Attorney General to initiate action against those responsible for the Treasury Bond Scam**

**The President has stated in a statement issued by him that he has handed over the report of the Treasury Bonds Commission to the Attorney General to initiate action against those responsible for the bond scam.**

Sirisena, in a special statement said that the commission had recommended action against former Central Bank Governor Arjuna Mahendran, Perpetual Treasuries owner Arjuna Aloysius, former Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake and several others.

"I have already submitted this report to the Attorney General and the Commission recommends that the criminal and civil court action must be taken through the Criminal Investigations Department and the Bribery or Corruption Commission," he said, in the statement.

"The Commission also recommends changing the existing law and regulations to take civil and criminal action against the people who are responsible for the scam," the President said.

"The report stated that the Perpetual Treasuries Limited has made profits through illegal means with the involvement of Mr Arjuna Mahendran, Bank officials and some outside individuals.

## Tamil Nadu's "Superstar" Rajnikanth announces his entry into politics and will contest elections



**By Siva Sivapragasam**

Tamil Nadu's iconic cinema star Rajnikanth has made a public announcement that he will enter politics, will form new party and contest elections

He has stated that "The political climate in Tamil Nadu has made us hang our heads in shame"

The long - awaited decision by the 67 year old actor popularly referred to as "Superstar" and "Thalaivar" was made amidst frenzied cheers and celebrations by his fans across Tamil Nadu.

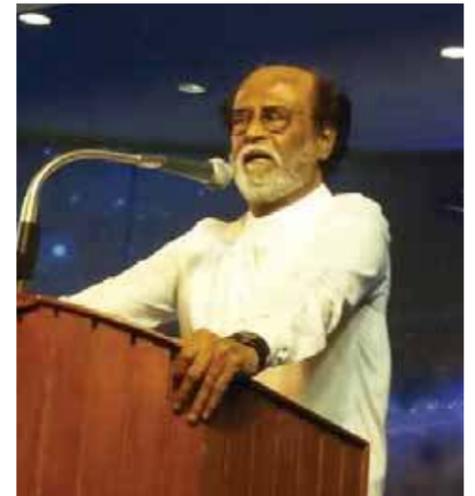
Claiming that the events in Tamil Nadu over the last year have made the state a laughingstock, he said, "If I don't make this decision now... the guilt will haunt me".

Quoting a shloka from Bhagawad Gitawhich stresses the importance of doing one's duty and leaving the result to the Lord, he said "this is the compulsion of time."

India's governing BJP party chief Amit Shah said Rajnikanth was welcome to join the party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met him during a visit to Chennai last month. There is a feeling among political circles that he may tie-up with the BJP during election time. Rajnikanth has also started a website <http://www.rajinimandram.org>

His fellow actor Kamalhaasan, in a tweet in Tamil, welcomed Rajnikanth's entry into politics

No one denies that Rajnikanth has a mass appeal through his film acting.



But compared with AIADMK founder M.G. Ramachandran and Jayalalitha, he doesn't seem to have a clearly defined ideological position or political programme. He has gone on record as saying that his politics will be "spiritual", but one is not sure what he means by that. Rajnikanth's entry into politics may have been guided by the fact that charisma has been a leading factor for success in politics in Tamil Nadu as it did with MGR and Jayalalitha. But whether the same magic would work for him too has yet to be seen at the forthcoming state elections.

Tamil Nadu politics is today in a boiling pot after the demise of former Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram, who was also a former film actress and worshipped by millions across the state as "Amma" (Mother).

(Pictures show Rajnikanth making the announcement and his fans celebrating his entry into politics)

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# Top Diplomat for USA in Sri Lanka Ambassador Atul Keshap praises TNA leader's New Year interview in tweet

Ambassador Atul Keshap in a tweet on January 3rd, praised the leader of the Tamil National Alliance R. Sampanthan for the detailed New Year interview to The Hindu newspaper saying, "An important and timely message from a leader who is crucial to the achievement of lasting national reconciliation in Sri Lanka."

**Full interview as follows, courtesy of The Hindu:**

**We can't despair, we can't abandon things, says Sri Lanka's R. Sampanthan - By Meera Srinivasan**

**JANUARY 03, 2018, Sri Lanka's senior most politician on the government's record on the political solution to the Tamil issue**

*R. Sampanthan, leader of the Opposition in Sri Lanka's Parliament, is also the country's senior most politician, having been in politics for more than six decades. In the January 2015 presidential poll, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) he leads backed the President Maithripala Sirisena-Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe combine that ousted former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Three years on, in a conversation at his Colombo residence, the Tamil leader, now 84, weighs in on the government's performance, particularly on promises made to the Tamils in the aftermath of a brutal civil war. He also reflects on the future of Tamil politics. Excerpts:*

**It is three years since Sri Lanka's national unity government came to power with the overwhelming support of ethnic and religious minorities, including**



R. Sampanthan

**the Tamils. How do you reflect on that moment and your decision to support President Sirisena?**

I have not the slightest doubt that we made the correct decision in backing Mr. Sirisena. We were sick of the Rajapaksa government which had been particularly unjust and unfair to the Tamil civilians.

President Sirisena had been involved with Tamil politics even before he stood for election. He was one of the strongest supporters of a just and reasonable solution to the Tamil question. He supported the constitutional proposals put forward by President Chandrika Bandaranaike, between 1994 and 2000. That, no doubt, influenced our decision. We were also influenced in our decision by the fact that Mr. Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe were willing to work together. For the first time, this provided an opportunity for the emergence of a multi-party consensus, particularly between the two main political parties, on the Tamil question.

I have no regrets about the decision we made, though the Tamil people, and consequently those of us

who represent them, expected greater performance from the government.

**Assessing this government's record, especially in relation to a political solution to the Tamil question and constitutional reform, what are the substantial gains made by the Tamils?**

The Constitution process commenced in 2016 to evolve a reasonable political solution to the national question and considerable work has been done.

The steering committee [appointed with 21 members under the chairmanship of the PM] met regularly for discussions and submitted an interim report, which has been debated in Parliament. After the local authority elections [in February], we expect the Constitution process to move forward more rapidly. The process has been somewhat delayed because of certain positions taken by certain political parties.

The issues that have been of concern to the Tamil civilian population are the release of [civilians'] land held by the armed forces, the question of continued detention of political detainees and missing persons. I will not say that nothing has been done. I would certainly say that much more could have been done.

Some of the lands [previously held by the military] have been released both in the north and east, after we exerted much pressure on the government. Release of land is a continuing phenomenon. It is not easy, but it is happening. Even a few days ago, 133 acres was released at Kerpapilavu in Mullaitivu. I worked very assiduously on that.

In regard to persons detained, about 40-50% of them have come out of jail. On the question of missing persons — apparently there have been about 20,000 complaints — it

is a very large number. What their families fundamentally require is some information on their missing relatives.

Some conclusion about whether that person is alive or not. There must be some solace, reparation, and some forms of assistance that will enable them to come to terms with reality and be able to pick up their lives and proceed.

The government has not yet addressed its commitments on the question of accountability adopted by the UN Human Rights Council, and co-sponsored by the Government of Sri Lanka in 2015. The Tamil civilian population is bitterly disappointed about the delay.

**The constitutional reform process that the TNA is supporting, even prioritising it over war crimes accountability mechanisms, has slowed down with the many deadlines set by the government having lapsed. The debate is mostly stuck on abolishing the executive presidency, according Buddhism the foremost place and initiating electoral reforms, and little on devolution itself. Do you feel that the coalition government is letting down the Tamil people?**

We are not able to come to any conclusion on what would eventually happen. But if there has been no serious debate on a certain matter, it can also be for the reason that there is not much disagreement on it. I will not go into the nuances of the issue now, for it is well known that the Chief Ministers of all the provinces of this country, particularly those from outside the north and east, have been very strongly supportive of extensive sharing of power between the centre and the provinces. But of course, I will hold my breath until we see the final formulations.

**Are you optimistic?**

I am not pessimistic. This country needs a political solution to embark on a journey towards genuine development and progress, based on the equality of all its people. In these circumstances, what we can do is to remain steadfast in the pursuit of these processes, towards an early and successful conclusion. We can't despair, we can't abandon things.

Those of us entrusted with the re-



Tweet by US Ambassador Atul Keshap



sponsibility have a duty to continue to repose at least a measure of trust in the process. We have to play a role that is responsible, pragmatic and oriented towards achievement of what is important for the Tamil people, rather than make a noise about everything and be a source of disruption and disturbance.

What is the alternative? Do the people want the return of the Mahinda Rajapaksa government? I am not saying that is a good enough reason for nothing to happen, but one must realise that under this government, the rule of law is maintained, we don't have the culture of impunity that prevailed earlier, and the independence of the judiciary and civilian institutions has been restored. When you take an overall picture of the situation, this is an environment conducive to the resolution of the issues pertaining to the Tamil people.

**As Leader of the official Opposition, in what ways do you think you have been able to represent the concerns of Sri Lankans of other ethnicities and in other regions?**

I have not ignored that aspect completely, but it may be that there is an expectation from some people that I could play a more constructive role. I will not disagree with that view, but at the same time, I think the most critical issue facing the country is the national question. If this country has not been able to get to where it should, it has been largely on account of this failure. I think the role that I am playing in that effort is probably not appreciated sufficiently by persons who think differently.

**The country's ethnic conflict was provoked and intensified by competing nationalisms — though arguably unequal — of the Sinhalese and Tamils. Even today, the dominant discourse of Tamil politics continues to be nationalist and ethnically polarising. How do you see Tamil na-**

**ionalist politics, often evoking the LTTE and its relevance to the post-war context? Can it speak to the apparent religious intolerance and caste discrimination within Tamil society?**

There are no doubts that there are certain fissures within Tamil society. These exist, I suppose, in every society.

The Tamil people need to come out of this sense of them being second class citizens in this country and not equal citizens. They don't have the same rights that the others in the majority community have. The war was fought for that reason. The fact that the war has ended does not mean that the conflict itself has been resolved.

While I do think that there must be a greater appreciation of the need for balance and a cautious approach to different issues, there is a basic root cause that also needs to be addressed. If the new Constitution is able to provide the Tamil people with some belief in their future, these issues can probably be better addressed at that point of time than now.

The historic Northern Provincial Council (NPC) elections of 2013 gave the TNA its first opportunity in regional government. Despite the known limitations of inadequate power devolution, in what ways has the NPC served the people of the north? There is an accusation that much of the funds allocated remains under-utilised, with the provincial administration not passing necessary statutes.

From all reports that I received and which I read perhaps the NPC could have done better. The 13th Amendment has its shortcomings, but more could have been done within its framework. Initially, the governor was being difficult, he was a military person, but since 2015 there have been new governors who are quite liberal and progressive. The NPC should have addressed issues pertaining to the people, their daily needs, in a much more constructive

way than they have done.

**Tensions within the TNA keep surfacing frequently, with some constituents accusing your party, the ITAK (Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi), of dominating the alliance. Could you comment on how the imminent local elections may impact Tamil politics and national politics?**

Local government elections are held at the lowest level of the society and it is possible that under the new Constitution there will be a list of local government functions, like a list of national functions and a list of provincial subjects. If the provisions contemplated under the new Constitution are adopted, local government institutions can become reasonably important.

At present, I see people raising national issues at the electorate. I would think that a majority of the people would be supportive of the politics of the TNA, as of now comprising the ITAK, the PLOTE (People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam) and the TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization). Only the EPRLF (Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front) has gone out. I am reasonably confident that the

people in their wisdom will appreciate the policies being pursued by the TNA.

**And nationally?**

We don't know what is going to happen. There are three main players in the south, SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party), the party of the President, the UNF (United National Front) of the Prime Minister and the SLPP (Sri Lanka People's Front) led by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. I don't think one is able to yet discern the trends. We have to wait to see how it turns out.

**Have you thought of succession plans for the TNA leadership?**

I have not been really planning anything or having any definite focus on anyone or any particular course of action. I think it must play out over a period of time, as early as possible. Let us see what happens as we go along. I cannot be there forever, we need to have someone take over. It is not easy — you have to be cautious, you have to be patient and you need not be answering everybody, that is not possible.

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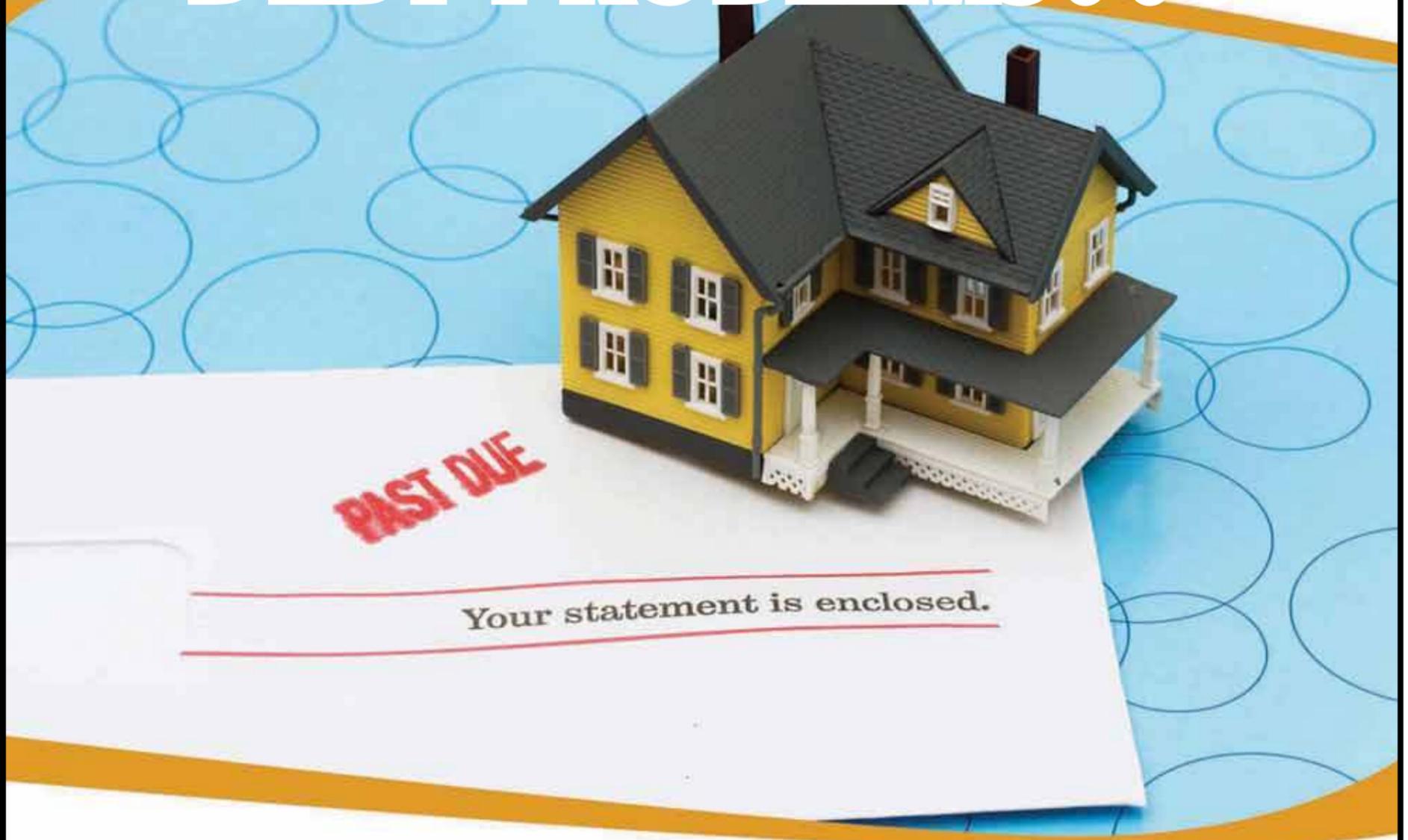
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# Thai Pongal - The Thanksgiving 'Thamilar Thirunaal' (In Gratitude for the bountiful Harvest)

By: C. Kamalaharan

Thai Pongal is a harvest festival celebrated on the first day of the month 'Thai' according to the Tamil almanac. It usually falls on the 14th or 15th of January each year. Being an important festival of the Tamils it is referred to as 'Thamilar Thirunaal.' It is also a Thanksgiving festival thanking the Sun God and the farm animals for providing bountiful harvest for the year.

Thai Pongal is of astronomical significance. The day coincides with the Sun's six month's journey northwards referred to as 'Uttaraayanam' which is considered auspicious. It also corresponds to the Sun entering the 10th house Makaram (Capricorn) from the 9th house of Dhanu (Sagittarius).

Pongal means 'spill over' of the milk mixed in water while boiling. People wait anxiously for this joyous moment and lit crackers in jubilation. In Tamil Nadu particularly in rural areas farmers shout in ecstasy 'Pongalo Pongal'. When this occurs the head of the family takes a handful of newly harvested rice and drops it into the clay pot. Following this the remaining rice is allowed to slide into the clay pot. Later the ingredients jaggery, cashew nuts, raisins, cardamom and split green grams are added to make the Pongal palatable. Milk rice is also prepared without the addition of ingredients. This milk Pongal is served with 'sambal' and a cooked mixture of vegetables known as 'sambar'.

Cooking is done in the direct view of the sun outside the house. In rural areas the square plot where cooking is done is disinfected by sprinkling a mixture of cow dung in water. Later the area is enclosed and sanctified by designing 'kolams' with rice flour around the four sides. The clay pot is gently placed on a firewood hearth set up using a tripod of three stones, bricks or concrete slabs. After the spill over and the addition of rice into the pot the rest of the cooking is done by the women folks.

A portion of the cooked rice is served (padayal) on banana leaves with short eats; 'vadai', 'murukku' 'paayasam' etc as offering to Sun God. All the members in the family take turn and circumambulate the area in piety carrying flowers. After circumambulating the area thrice they pray to the Sun God and drop the flowers on the banana leaves by the side of the hand made Ganesh statue. On request a member of the family sings 'Thevaram' and 'Puranam' (hymns in praise of the Lord). Following this 'Viputhi Prasadam' is served culminating in the ceremony. All the members in the family jointly partake the Pongal and short eats.

But nowadays due to socio-economic changes and rapid advancement in technology rural areas have been urbanized and the people are always busy with heavy work schedules. So to ease tension



Pongal is done in the kitchen using ever silver utensils replacing the earthenware. But all pray in piety in the shrine room by offering Pongal to the Lord.

In Tamil Nadu Pongal is celebrated on a grand scale. The entire Tamil Nadu becomes lively very early in the mornings during the whole Tamil month of Margazhy. The women after bathing design 'kolams' in front of their houses while the men hurry to and fro engaging in various activities. Most of them hurry towards the temple to participate in the early morning 'Pooja.' Loud speakers in all the temples blare devotional songs while 'Nagarasankirtans' and Bhajan groups go around not only awaking the people but also awaking the divinity in them. What a blissful feeling it is to be part of this spiritual exercise.

Pongal in Tamil Nadu is a four day festival. The first day of the festival known as 'Bhogi' Pongal is celebrated on the last day of the month Margazhy. On that day early in the morning people light a bonfire in front of their houses and set fire

to their discarded belongings. The houses are cleaned, decorated and kept neat to provide a festive look. While bonfire is in progress over enthusiastic youths not at all bothered about polluting the atmosphere set fire to discarded vehicle tyres and other combustible items. The whole area will be engulfed with dark, dense smoke as a result even flight in airports are cancelled due to invisibility.

On the second day the main event 'Thai Pongal' is celebrated as described earlier. The third day Pongal is known as 'Maattu Pongal'. The people venerate the cattle for providing dairy products, fertilizers and for ploughing and transportations. The cows are bathed, their horns coloured, foreheads smeared with sandal paste and 'kunkumum' and multi-coloured beads, tinkling bells and flower garlands are tied around their necks and taken around. In some villages mainly in rural areas the traditional sport 'Jallikattu' is celebrated. It is the taming of the bull by the youths witnessed by thousands of spectators who cluster around



and clamour encouraging the taming youths. In some villages bags of coins are tied to the horns. The youths vie with each other to tame the bull and grab the bag of coins. The bull seemed terrified tries to escape from the arena. This sport has been in practice for more than 2500 years. In 2014 the sport was banned by the Supreme Court following objections from animal rights activists who say it's a cruel sport tormenting a frightened animal in an arena. But the supporters of the sport say that Jallikattu is part of Tamil Nadu's socio-cultural heritage. A lot of controversies arose and mass scale protests against the court ruling erupted. Now Jallikattu is permitted under certain conditions.

The fourth day of the Pongal is known as Kaanam Pongal literally meaning 'sight seeing.' People richly attired visit relatives and friends or go on tour in bullock carts, tractors, cars and buses around the city. In the evening there will be a sea of heads at sea beaches and in parks. It's a day of festivity to spend time and be part of the entertainments outside the home.

When Thamilar Thirunaal dawns people become active and enthusiastic hoping for a bright opening in accordance to the adage, 'Thai Piranthal Vazhi Pirakum' (The dawn of Thai paves the way for a bright future). Tamils spread all over the world are hoping that the dawn of the Thamilar Thirunaal this year will usher happiness and prosperity and pave the way for them to live in peace honour and dignity wherever they are.



## A NEW YEAR'S GIFT NEARLY SIX YEARS IN THE MAKING



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While most people were counting down the last weeks of 2017 towards the New Year, new mom Libin Wei and proud dad Yuefei Yang have been counting down towards the birth of their daughter.

And little Karlie Yang definitely gave her parents a very special way to ring in the New Year, arriving at 12:58 a.m. on January 1, 2018 at a healthy 6.9 pounds – the first child for the couple and also the first baby to be born at Scarborough and Rouge Hospital (SRH).

“She’s a really amazing gift for us,” Libin said. “We have been trying to have a baby since we got married in 2012, but we wanted it to

happen naturally.” Libin’s pregnancy was a big surprise for the couple. “We had been very busy doing renovations on our new house and then travelling in the U.S. when I realized my period was late.”

An appointment with her doctor and subsequent ultrasound confirmed the happy news.

Libin complimented the “very professional team” who took care of her during her pregnancy and labour.

“Both the doctors and the nurses were very good and really patient,” adds Yuefei.

“I had high blood pressure and from 30 weeks on during my pregnancy I was at the hospital

regularly. I got to know many of the nurses,” Libin said with a smile.

“We had a lot of questions, especially during my labour and English is not our first language so a nurse was found who could speak to us in Mandarin,” she explains.

Libin and Yuefei also acknowledge the “excellent” care they received from her obstetrician Dr. Samuel Ko, as well as Dr. Carol Peng, who was on call and delivered her baby by Caesarean section.

“We’re really happy our daughter was delivered at Scarborough and Rouge Hospital,” Libin said.



By Tracy Stober

# Helping those in need

In 1857, the Sisters of St. Joseph opened the doors to the House of Providence on Power Street in downtown Toronto. At its peak, it provided accommodation for 700 elderly residents and orphans, people who were among the most vulnerable in society.

The House of Providence continued to care for orphans, widows, immigrants and the homeless until it moved to its present site in 1962 – a former farm at the corner

of Warden Avenue and St. Clair Avenue East.

What has remained constant in our 160-year history is a commitment to our six Core Values. Our staff are dedicated to providing compassionate care to all in need, and especially to those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. Today, we share one such story of a team going ‘above and beyond’ to help a young boy in need.



Providence's palliative care staff jumped in to provide extra support to a 12-year old boy in need.

**One September** afternoon, I received a phone call from one of our nurses, letting me know that a particular patient had passed away. Working in palliative care, this is not an unusual call, but for some reason, this one seemed different. I felt an urgency in the nurse's voice, something that made me run up three stair flights to the unit. Upon arrival, I saw the hearts of our staff members broken – some were crying, some were wiping away tears, some were consoling others.

As I walked into the room, I suddenly knew why there was urgency in that call. There, sitting by his mother's bed, was a 12-year-old boy. He sat staring at his mother, hardly blinking and hardly moving. I sat next to him and consoled him the best I could. I hugged him, talked with

him, asked questions and we sat in silence. I didn't know how to help. I didn't know how I could console this young boy. My heart broke and my eyes filled with tears. I felt helpless.

When I left the room, his aunt approached to say she would take him in, however she wasn't prepared. She had no supplies. I immediately spoke with our Palliative Care team and we agreed that we needed to do something. We recognized that we couldn't do this alone, so we reached out to fellow Providence staff via email, explaining the situation and asking for any donations of clothing, furniture, school supplies, etc.

Within minutes, we received two dozen emails from staff and volunteers across the organization letting us know they would bring things the next day. By the end of the

week, we had collected clothes, shoes, money, gift cards, books, paper, pens, pencils, backpacks and even a few suits for this boy to wear to his mother's funeral.

When I informed the family of the generous donations, they were stunned. They did not expect the overwhelming generosity coming from our Providence Family.

It's because of moments like these that I am so thankful to work at such an incredible organization where people truly live our Values every day. Thank you to everyone at Providence who reached out. I know this made a huge difference in that boy's life.

*Tracy Stober is the Social Worker for Providence's Palliative Care Unit.*

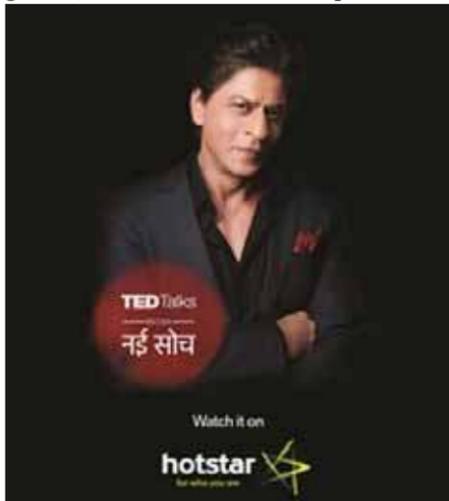
Special Feature

# Hotstar Provides the Most Original, Most Exclusive, Most Cutting-Edge Online Content in North America



(Toronto, January 3, 2018) Indian megastar SHAH RUKH KHAN hosts the first-ever collaboration between TED Talks and a major Indian network, Star India, which premiered on the on-line digital platform, Hotstar. Called TED Talks India NayiSoch, the seven-episode series showcases some of the best innovators and thinkers of Indian origin debuting their TED Talks in a language other than English (Hindi).

Host Shah Rukh Khan raves: "It is a huge honor to host this show. When two giants like Star India and TED come together, we are sure to fire up a billion



unique ideas that pack a punch. Ideas that can change lives!"

Another genre of original, cutting-edge programming that is exclusive to Hotstar is the CinePlay. In this era of constant innovation, Cineplay is a novel attempt at storytelling by combining the grammar of theatre and power of cinema. It is an innovation that presents timeless theatrical dramas as digitally-immersive experiences and is especially calibrated for all screen sizes.

CinePlays are not just live recordings of a play. Sets are created especially for each production, and much like a film, a CinePlay is shot over a span of several days. With an elaborate camera, light and production set up, CinePlays weave elements of cinema into stories from theatre to create a whole new experience for Hotstar audiences.



Some of the most popular CinePlays on Hotstar include: Dance Like a Man, Between the Lines, Bombay Talkies, Typecaste and AdheAdhure, starring the finest theatre actors of the genera-

imaginations. Bringing the power of ideas to people's living rooms across India and reaching out to, especially, the youth of our country is something that's really exciting. I want our youth to be inspired to think of new ideas...simple and

tion like Nandita Das, Saurabh Shukla, Lillete Dubey and Darshan Jariwala.

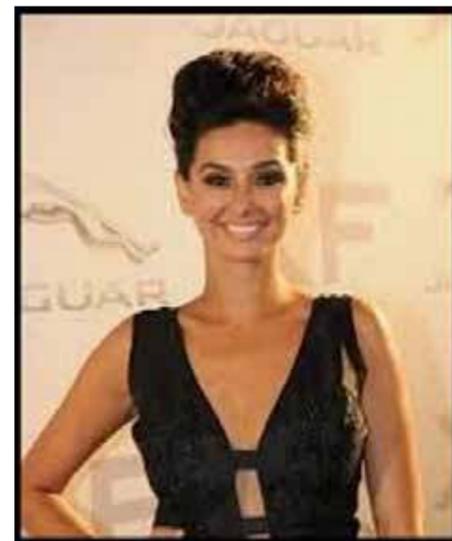
And Hotstar's exclusive content does not end there...it ranges from riveting documentaries to incredible lifestyle and travel shows:



Twist of Taste With Vikas Khanna

On Twist of Taste, join Michelin-starred chef Vikas Khanna on culinary journeys across India and America that will inspire new experiments in the kitchen!

Style & the City is a travel show that marries fashion with street style. Indian designers Rocky S, Rina Dhaka & Ashish Soni will create ensembles for their celebrity clients. The show is hosted by ShibaniDandekar.



Style & the City With Shibani Dandekar

quotes as art across his house and how he is extremely methodical when it comes to picking furniture, color and even art.



Design HQ With Asheish Shah

Design HQ: Join interior designer Asheish Shah as he decodes "how to design your own space" with the likes of Hrithik Roshan, Aditya Roy Kapoor and others. Hrithik shares how he uses

For further information please contact RekhaGaddam at rekha@ethnicity-matters.com or at 905 599 3058.

The screenshot shows the Hotstar website interface. At the top is a green navigation bar with the Hotstar logo and menu options: TV, MOVIES, SPORTS, CHANNELS, and a search icon. Below the navigation bar is a section titled 'Popular in English' with a dropdown menu for 'All Genres (337)'. The main content area displays a grid of movie thumbnails with their titles and genres:

- Tekken (Action, English, 2010)
- Soldiers of Fortune (Action, English, 2012)
- Exists (Horror, English, 2014)
- The Last Stand (Action, English, 2013)
- Escape Plan (Action, English, 2013)
- Ninja Apocalypse (Action, English, 2014)
- Fighting Fish (Thai) (Action, English, 2012)
- Lockout (Thriller, English, 2012)



BY THULASI MUTTULINGAM

# HUMANS OF NORTHERN SRI LANKA

The face Book Community page "Humans of Northern Sri Lanka" is a pictorial page by *Thulasi Muttulingam*. *Thulasi Muttulingam* is a journalist based in the North of Sri Lanka. Having grown up away from her hometown of Jaffna, it is currently her mission to research and document as much of her culture and heritage as she can. If you are similarly interested, check out more of her work at the facebook page Humans of Northern Sri Lanka: To follow the updates, "Like" the page at: [www.facebook.com/pages/Humans-of-Northern-Sri-Lanka](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Humans-of-Northern-Sri-Lanka)

## Red pottu

One of the effects of my father passing away - my mother does not wear her big red pottu anymore.

I find it extremely hard to look at her face now as I grew up knowing her only with that vermilion mark on her forehead.

Other people have said the same. They recommended putting on a sandalwood pottu (that religious people wear) if she wants to abstain from the kumkum pottu that married women wear. But she is afraid of what 'the neighbours will say.'

As soon as her husband passes away, a widow is supposed to abstain from all decor that would make her pretty; jewelry, coloured saris, kumkum pottu, flowers in her hair...

Many women no longer observe the removing of jewels (that they permanently wear such as nose stud and earrings) or the white sari only rule - but the kumkum pottu is still removed.

Some neighbourhood crones still delight in reminding her she can't stand in the front at temples, not to go out too much (for her marketing and to temples which are her only outings), not to attend weddings as she is a 'bad omen' as a widow...

These rules came into play when a culture considered a woman as nothing without a man. It also came into play to prevent a woman from using culturally approved beautifying elements to attract another man, as she was usually not allowed to marry either.

To this day, many women including elderly women who do not observe the rules such as only white sari or no jewelry are asked if they are trying to 'attract men' - as if their keeping up their own appearances is only for the sake of men - and as if that in turn were a great crime. They are called 'characterless' for refusing to subsume themselves, as if their character depended on effacing themselves from society only.

Time we tossed these good for nothing rules into the dustbin of history.

## Where is religion's solace

I don't have a problem with religion in so far as it offers solace to people.

My problem is that sometimes, in the offering of such solace, it can cross into territory that wounds others.

My mother is currently watching a movie about the Grace of the Lord of Thirupathi.

A woman whose husband was due to die managed to save him by fasting for a day a week for seven weeks apparently in the Thirupathi Deity's honour.

The movie is meant to infuse faith - but I can't help thinking of the innumerable war widows (and other widows) who will be watching it in Sri Lanka today.

The rhetoric used in the movie reinforces why widows are shunned in our community.

"Women are nothing without their men."

"A truly pure, good, religious woman would not lose her husband. Her purity would save his life."

"God would definitely save a pure woman from such a fate."

Yet it is an established fact that many innocent people suffer far worse wrongs than widowhood across the world yet God does not appear to rescue them. When religious people imbibe that God would definitely rescue the pure and the deserving, they automatically infer that if they are suffering they are thereby undeserving - or even worse someone else terribly suffering is undeserving, of God's Grace.

This phenomenon we can repeatedly see in how our widows are treated in the ultimate of all victim-blamings. In the year 2017, it is disturbing to see how mainstream widow-shaming and blaming for

their husbands' deaths is, in some of our cultures.

For many of these women, their only solace oftentimes is to pray - yet in the North and East of Sri Lanka where I regularly work - I come across Hindu, Christian and Muslim women often told not to come to temple, church, or mosque - and if they do, to come in quietly at the back and slip away again - because their very appearance is inauspicious to the other worshippers.

Where is religion's solace for these already traumatised people?

## Newly opened profiles

Is this a new trend for local young women afraid of being themselves on the internet, or something more sinister?

These days I often get friend requests from newly opened profiles with male names and male profile pictures, but they are female apparently. As seen by facebook informing that 'Alex Jones' just updated 'her' profile picture, cover picture etc when I check out their timeline. No other information given.

I am used to the local Vijaydharshini opening a profile called Viji Viji on facebook (never understood why those monikers have to be double but it's a thing), uploading a picture of a Kollywood actress, and then sending me a friend request blithely believing I would immediately know who she was - but this is something new.

Ladies, is this you? Or gentlemen, is this one of your new games?

## Women's fault

Attended a forum in Jaffna where sexual harassment was actively discussed.

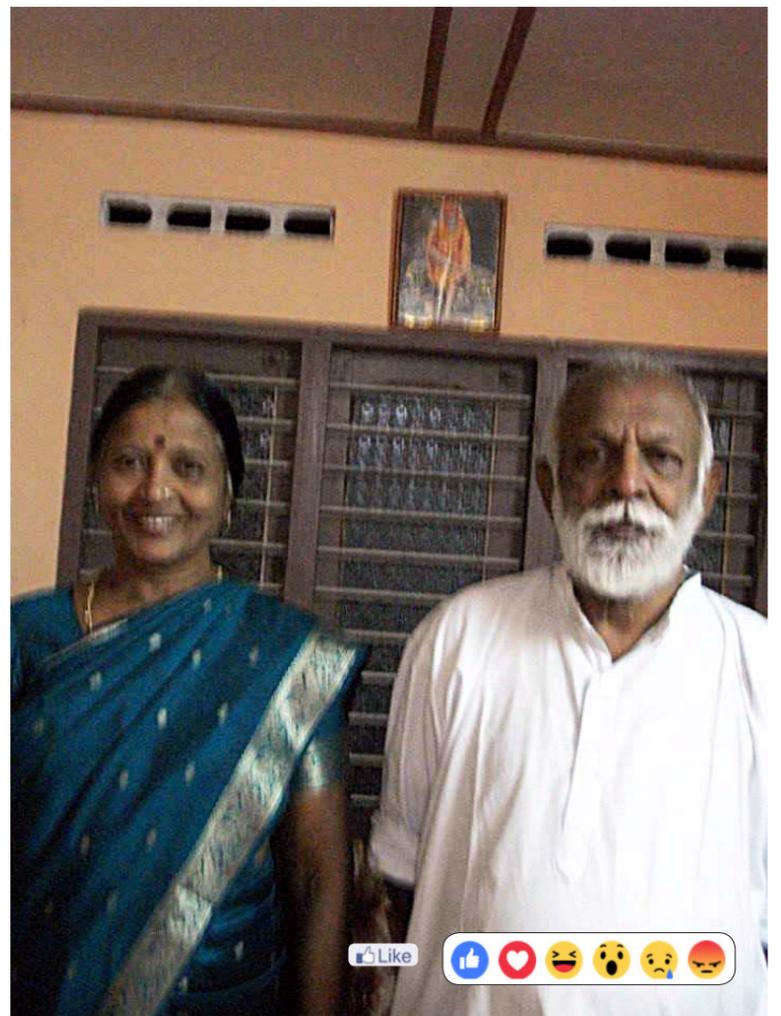
Despite the organizers trying to actively steer the topic towards addressing perpetrator responsibility, many of the participants including women, actively insisted on placing the onus of the sexual harassment they face on women themselves - they are doing 'facials' and other beauty treatments, that's why they are getting harassed, they are wearing 'culturally inappropriate' clothing, that's why they are getting harassed, they are engaging in public displays of affection with their significant others, that's why they are getting harassed...

Apparently men can't control themselves from sexually violating women if they see any of the above. So the onus is not on men, it is on women.

Sitting at the back, I couldn't help from piping up: Well, if you think Jaffna society needs to stick to policing its women alone but not the men - when you send the young men out of the district and indeed even the country as you often do - what do you expect them to do when they encounter women who take as their cultural due the exhibiting of all these? Make-up, short clothes. PDAs etc?

Two of the men snickered and said they would 'enjoy' themselves over there and come back and behave properly. Whatever that means.

According to some diaspora Sri Lankan



women I have talked to, the freshly arrived Sri Lankan men would never dare to harass 'foreign' women on those shores but do harass Sri Lankan origin women often - they take it as their due on cultural policing.

And this toxic masculinity is what we are often told is 'our culture' which can do no wrong and needs to be protected at all costs. If anything goes wrong, it is always the women's fault.

## Reviewers at book launch

Attended a book launch in Jaffna dealing with the much needed to be discussed yet oft concealed topics of sex, sexism and sexuality in our culture.

The author had invited reviewers - seemingly progressive, humanist and feminist intellectuals, activists and lay people, to share their feedback in this public forum.

Was quite disappointed to see some of the reviewers use the stage to talk about how much THEY know or have done and THEREFORE how worthless the book is. Because other people from Bharathiar to Marx to they themselves had said it / done it all already it seems.

Several intellectually dishonest statements too from these so called intellectuals - such as that Jaffna doesn't need a book like this because we have progressed beyond it.

Having been caught off-guard with the addressing of such topics long brushed under the carpet here, I guess they felt the need to dishonestly maintain they themselves have addressed it already - or if not somebody somewhere else has so it need not be repeated.

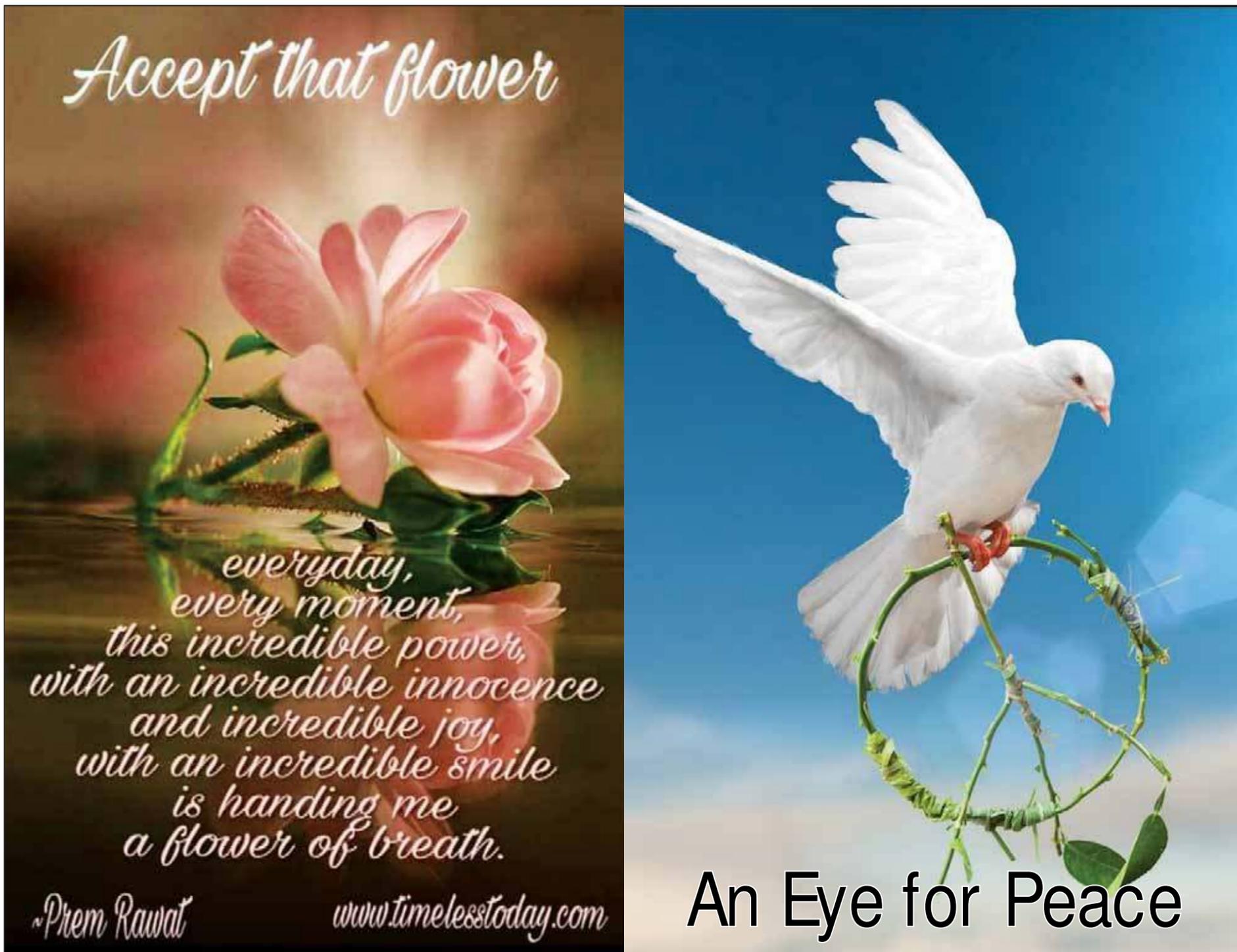
I feel almost embarrassed for them. We clearly need to grow up.

Having said that, many of the reviewers gave honest, constructive critique too. I really wish I could read the book - it appears to be fascinating - but currently there is only a Tamil edition.

Congratulations on your work Vks Meerabharathy. I do hope it reaches our masses and induces a change in how we approach these things.



WORDS OF PEACE



*Accept that flower*

*everyday,  
every moment,  
this incredible power,  
with an incredible innocence  
and incredible joy,  
with an incredible smile  
is handing me  
a flower of breath.*

*Prem Rawat*

*www.timelesstoday.com*

**An Eye for Peace**

Peace, says Prem Rawat, is everywhere. If people don't experience that, it's because we don't have the eyes to see it. "What kind of eyes do you need?" he asks. "You need the pure eyes of a child, eyes that look not with judgment, but from discovery, from feeling.

"People say, 'I feel this. I feel that.' Yes, but do you feel peace? If you do, good. If not? If not, then you need to look with the eyes of the heart."

Peace is inside of every human being already— always has been and always will be, says Mr. Rawat, who travels the world ceaselessly with his message of peace and hope. Yet people spend their time searching for it.

"How can you search for something you already have?" he asks. "It's not a search you need. You need to learn the art of observing, of experiencing what you already have. Then the question becomes, why don't you feel it? The reason people don't feel peace is that there's so much that's not real standing between us and that peace."

The world around us offers endless distractions, Mr. Rawat says, and we can get so caught up in them that we lose our focus.

"There were some pilots in America who were surfing the web on their computer," he says, "and they got so unfocused that they flew past their destination. They were on their computers! It was a flight attendant who realized that the plane was continuing past its destination. She ran up to the cockpit, and said, 'When are we landing!?' That's when the pilots realized, 'Oh, my God, what have we been doing?' That's how unfocused we have become.

"In Africa I saw a monkey sitting in the early morning sun, warming himself. He sat there, and he closed his eyes. A monkey did that. One time when I was in Egypt we were going down the Nile, and I saw big, big crocodiles on the bank of the river, completely still—their mouths a little open, just being still, being there.

"Us? No. We want to be bombarded with new impressions all the time. No focus! No focus!

"So I am going to ask you one question. You are searching for peace, right? You want peace in your life, right? But have you ever asked yourself, if that opportunity ever came in your life, would you know how to grab it? How to take it? Do you know how to focus in life? Do you know how to focus when the opportunity comes to feel peace in your life?

"Our understanding of life needs to be crystal clear. No room for confusion and doubt. Our thirst for peace needs to be obvious, not hidden. When the understanding is clear, when the thirst is obvious, then there can be fulfillment.

"I'm not here to say, 'I am a wise man. Listen to me.' No! Wisdom is a fire. It needs to be tended. You have to keep feeding it. If you stop feeding it, it will die. You won't be wise anymore. The same coals that burn red hot when there is a fire are as cold as

the grass next to them upon cooling down. Sometimes even colder.

"What I talk about is very simple, because that is its nature. But that does not mean it is not profound. It is most profound, because it is very fundamental, very basic. Without it, everything becomes nothing. With it, there is a life; there is an understanding; there is a joy. There is a realness to this life, to this existence.

"I'm talking about enjoyment— enjoyment of life, enjoyment of living, enjoyment of breathing, enjoyment of understanding, enjoyment of learning. Because these are the possibilities."

To learn more about Prem Rawat :

1 877 707 3221  
416 431 5000 Tamil  
416 264 7700 Hindi  
www.wopg.org  
www.tprf.org  
www.timelesstoday.com



# Play with Words through Poetry



**By: Janani Srikantha**

As the new year begins, I start to work on poetry with my students. Each time, these lessons are met with mixed reactions. The students are initially excited, and then doubtful of their skills as poets assuming that it is too hard to read and write.

Despite their doubts, we forge on because it's a great opportunity to grow in both our language and emotional development. Poetry allows children to relate to each other, as they can use language to describe their experiences. When reading poetry, children can relate to others' experiences, even if they are not ready to share themselves. It allows children to write about their experiences without referring to themselves, and instead using metaphors and similes. Poetry is a tool to describe feelings that others may not see or be aware of.

Poetry is also a fantastic entry into language for those who are new to English. It does not follow grammar rules, and it's possible to experiment with different words. Furthermore, to write a poem, it is not necessary to have an extensive vocabulary and words can be

strung together in various patterns. The purpose and format of poetry is comparable in all languages, and therefore children can read poems in their mother tongue and transfer the learnt skills to English.

In today's classroom, we tend to emphasize non-fiction texts, and when we want children to be creative, we ask them to write a story or read novels. However, we should not shy away from poetry as it allows for the sharing of different perspectives of emotions, and lets children be playful with language.

So, how do we begin to introduce poetry to children? From when they are very young, nursery rhymes and lullabies are akin to poetry. As students learn these childhood songs, they understand not only tone and rhythm, but also how words rhyme and how they can be written in patterns. For older children, the songs they listen to are a great entry into poetry. With my upper elementary students, I've incorporated taking apart song lyrics, and children have discussed the emotions and message the words are trying to convey. Rap is another excellent way to enter poetry, as students get a sense of how to pace their poetry and use inflection

to convey their words. While children work with lyrics, it is fun for them to begin creating a soundtrack for their life. This allows them to share their experiences from their perspective, and communicate emotions in a safe manner.

Cut-up poetry is an activity that can be done at various ages, and involves cutting the lines of the poem into parts. This allows each child to rearrange the pieces to create their own poem. In this process, students are experimenting with different patterns and understanding how changing the order of the words can adjust the emotions and meaning conveyed.

Another way to introduce poetry to children is to begin with an "I am Jam". We read 'Looking Like Me' by Walter Dean Myers as inspiration before we begin our poems. This allows children to look deeper at the different types of people they encompass, and how others see them. 'My Many Coloured Days' by Dr. Seuss is also another great book to introduce poetry to children, and they can write their own poems to share how different colours make them feel. This is an excellent activity to understand different perspectives, since we each

associate different colours in various ways based on our own experiences.

Poetry is a form of text that can be introduced at a very young age, and it has significant benefits for both language skills and social-emotional development. It is literary work that we can introduce in any language, as we build vocabulary and play with words, making learning fun.

Janani Srikantha is a certified teacher who is experienced with the Ontario curriculum and the International Baccalaureate. She provides tutoring using personalized learning plans based on students' needs.



thinkshif.edu

She is knowledgeable on integrating technology to redefine learning that is inclusive of all students. Janani has led workshops for educators and parents on topics that address different facets of education. For more information or queries on how to help your child with learning, please email [info@thinkshif.edu](mailto:info@thinkshif.edu) or visit Thinkshift Edu on Facebook.



# SADHGURU

**Sadhguru:** Every time I hear someone refer to soil as dirt, I can't come to terms with it. Particularly when I am in the United States, I hear a lot of people calling earth as dirt. Maybe it is just another word, but in our mind, "dirt" means trash – something that you don't want. I have heard it a thousand times, but something in me still cringes every time I hear this.

What you call as "my body" is just a piece of the planet – it is an accumulation of the food that you have eaten. You are just a small outcrop of this earth, nothing more nothing less. Right now you are an outcrop who prances around. After sometime you will become a small mound. So if you make the raw material into "dirt", the product is bound to be dirt.

**In India, for example in Tamil Nadu, we traditionally called soil as "thai mannu" – Mother Earth.**

In India, for example in Tamil Nadu, we traditionally called soil as "thai mannu" – Mother Earth. In this culture, we see everything as ingredients of life. This is why we bow down to food, water, air, the sky, the sun, the moon, a stone, a tree – anything! We do not see anything as a commodity, as something that you can use and throw. You cannot use and throw anything in this existence. It passes through you, it is you for a certain period of time, after that it becomes something else. You are only a relay runner, you are not the runner on the planet.

The air that you are breathing right now, the very body that you carry right now, it has been millions of bodies in the past. It has been an insect, an animal, a snake, a cow, a monkey, a human being – I am not talking about the evolutionary process – I am talking about the soil going through every form of life. So this is not a commodity. This is older than you, wiser than you, far more intelligent and capable than you, and a far bigger process than you are as a person. You are a petty little character in this whole game that is happening.

**If you want to live well...**

The whole focus of modern education and cultures is on how to use and exploit our physical environment – every creature and every substance. Nothing is being offered to enhance the way we experience life. We have learnt to use everything around us, but wellbeing has not happened. Today, in the world, we are building medical infrastructure in such a way that we seem to expect

that everyone will be seriously ill someday. There was a time when there used to be one doctor for the whole town and it was enough. Today, every street has five doctors and it is not enough. This shows how we are living.

**The earth that you walk upon has a sense of intelligence and memory. Even if you live in a concrete jungle, it is important to keep in touch with the earth.**

If we want to live well, being in reverence towards the very earth that you walk upon, towards the air that you breathe, the water that you drink, the food that you eat, the people that you come in touch with and everything else that you use, including your body and mind, will lead us to a different possibility as to how we can live.

The earth that you walk upon has a sense of intelligence and memory. Even if you live in a concrete jungle, it is important to keep in touch with the earth. Create ways for yourself to somehow do this. If your bare hands and bare feet – particularly the palms and soles – come in touch with the earth on a daily ba-



sis, it will harmonize the physiological process in your system. Try to spend at least a few minutes in the garden, barefoot, touching plants or trees, because the earth is the basis of life. This is a simple way to connect with the earth.

The time between the day of pradosham – two days before a new moon day – and new moon is particularly conducive for this experience. On these days, the moon creates a certain level of inertia, and your body and its energies are much more connected with the earth than on other days. If not every day, at least from pradosham to amavasya, if not outside, at least in the house – see if you can walk barefoot and sit on the floor, particularly cross-legged. Both bring a deep energy con-

nection and create the experience of being a part of the earth. Lying down will not give you that kind of conscious experience. One thing is we know what kind of meditation will happen when you lie down! Apart from that, how the energies function when you lie down does not support a conscious experience.

**A part of the planet**

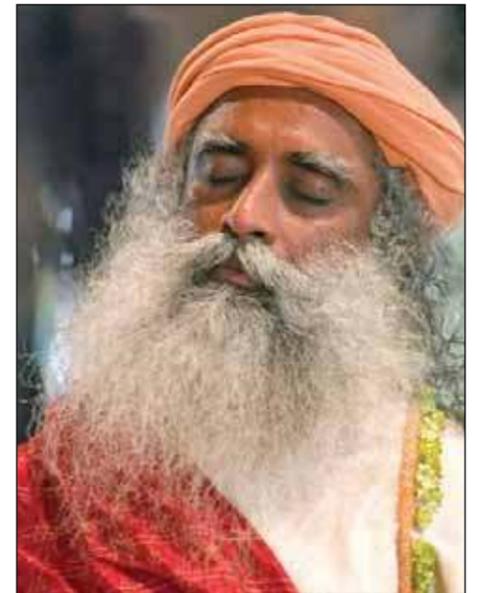
There are various other practices in this culture to connect to the earth experientially. On certain days of the year, people eat a little bit of earth, generally from a termite hill or the like, to experience this connection. A practice to bring the elements into your experience on a daily basis is the Bhuta Shuddhi that we teach.

**Whether you eat, breathe, or drink something, be aware that you are taking in a part of this planet.**

It would be best if you can be conscious of every breath you take. When you breathe air, be conscious that you are breathing a certain aspect of this planet. When you eat something, be conscious that you are eating a part of

this planet. When you drink water, be conscious that you are drinking a part of this planet. You should intellectually understand and be conscious of the connection, but that alone will not bring an experiential connection. A true experiential connection means that you experience the earth as much a part of you as you experience your little finger as a part of yourself.

Walk barefoot, sit cross-legged on the ground, do the Bhuta Shuddhi practice. Whether you eat, breathe, or drink something, be aware that you are taking in a part of this planet. Whatever you do – make it as conscious as possible. It will make a world of difference in how you experience life.



**Sadhguru Vasudev is a realized master, yogi and mystic, who has founded Isha Foundation, an international public service organization that strives for ultimate human well-being. For worldwide program information, visit [www.ishafoundation.org](http://www.ishafoundation.org)**

*Sadhguru J. Vasudev is a contemporary mystic rooted as strongly in worldly and pragmatic matters as he is in inner experience and wisdom. Named one of India's 50 most influential people, he has addressed prominent global forums on issues as diverse as socio-economic development, leadership and spirituality. He has served as delegate to the United Nations Millennium Peace Summit and the World Peace Congress and has been a special invitee to the World Economic Forum (2006-2009), the Australian Leadership Retreat (2006) and TED (2009).*

*His interviews are featured in The New York Times, BBC, Bloomberg, CNN and CNBC. He is the author of several books, the subject of four books and co-author of the Amazon Bestseller "Midnights with the Mystic". His public talks frequently draw crowds of over 300,000 people.*

*Founded by Sadhguru, Isha Foundation is a non-religious, non-profit organization with over 200 centers worldwide and over one million volunteers. Isha Foundation offers Inner Engineering Online – a practical approach for inner transformation in a fast paced world. The course designed by Sadhguru presents simple, yet powerful tools for an individual to experience life on a deeper level with more awareness, energy, and productivity. This program is an ideal opportunity for those with time and travel constraints to experience the same profound effects of the traditional Inner Engineering program, which has impacted millions of people over the past 25 years.*

To learn more, view the free Introductory Talk, or to register visit [www.InnerEngineering.com](http://www.InnerEngineering.com)

Website: [www.ishafoundation.org](http://www.ishafoundation.org)

email: [toronto@ishafoundation.org](mailto:toronto@ishafoundation.org)

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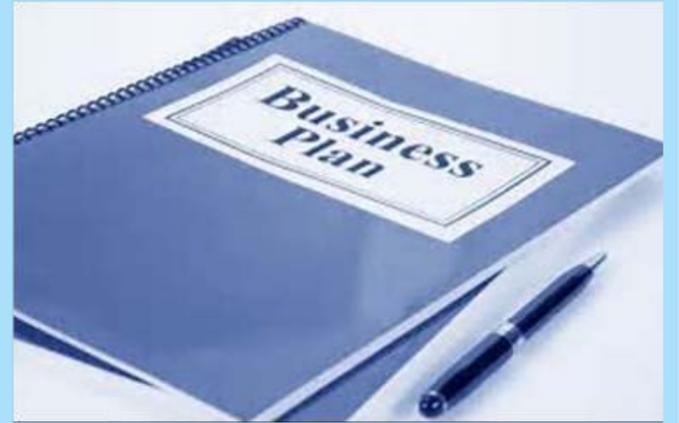
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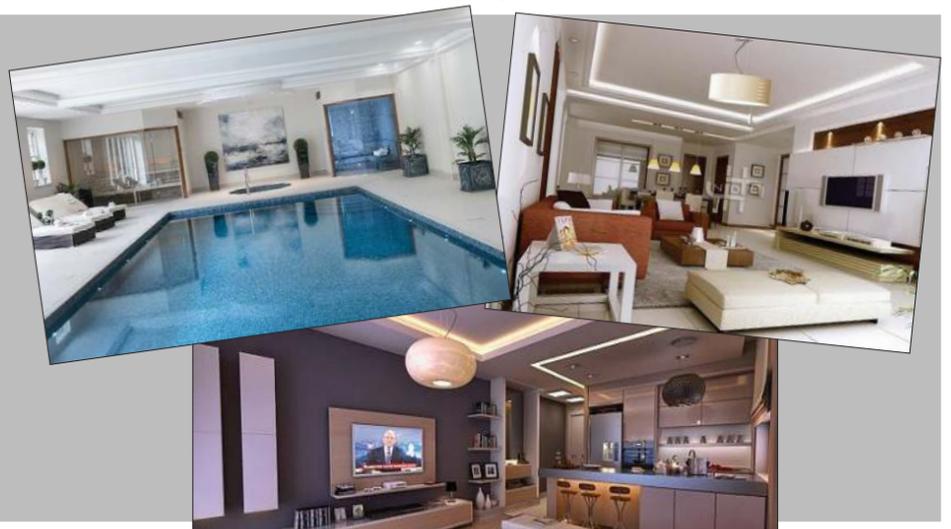
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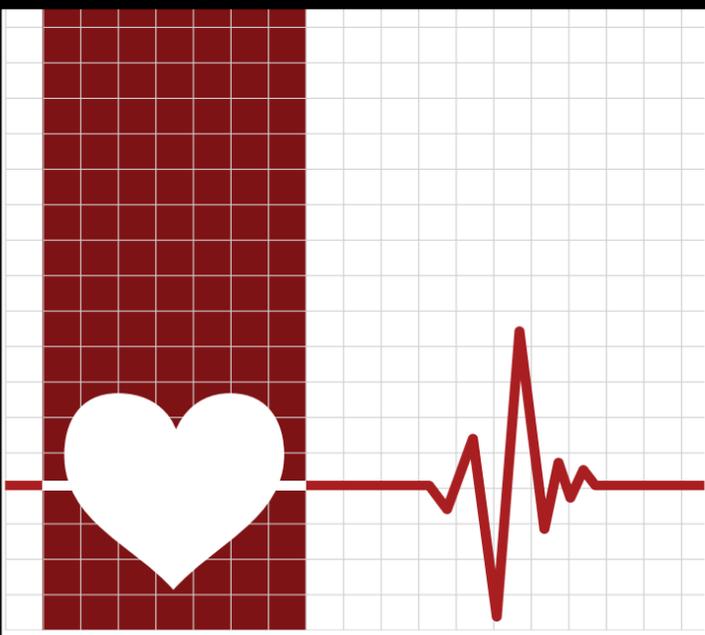
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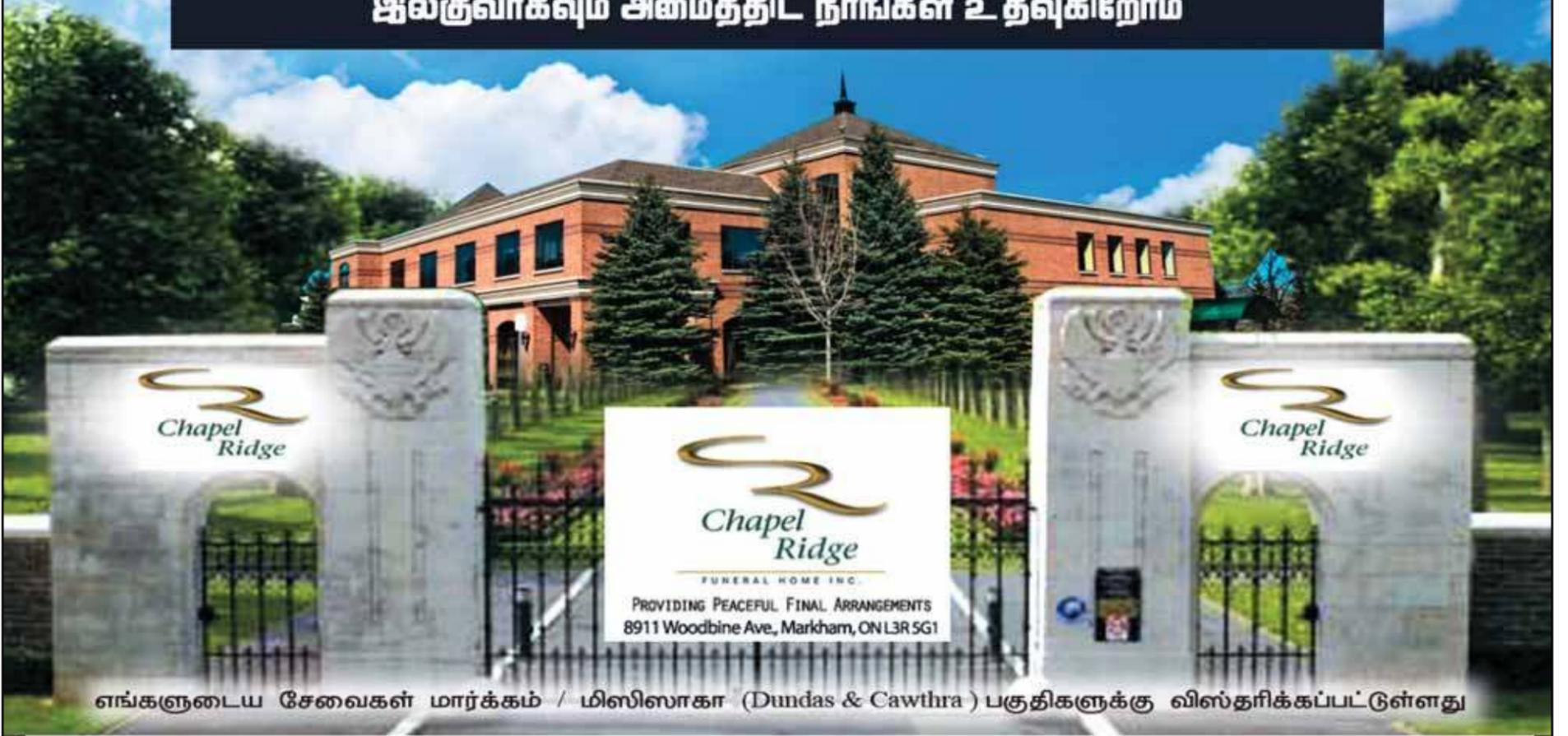
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## OBITUARY NOTICE



**Mrs. Anusuya Selvarajah-Nadesan**



Selvarajah-Nadesan, Mrs. Anusuya of "Selvayogam" of Champion Lane, Kokuvil East, Jaffna (former Attorney-at-Law and Notary Public) and Toronto, Canada passed away unexpectedly in her 66th year on January 3, 2018.

She was the dearly beloved daughter of Rasiah Selvarajah and Sivayogam "Pudhakka" Selvarajah (both predeceased), much-cherished mother of Kumaran (Tharshiga), Devayadhavan and Narayani, and ever-faithful wife of Sinnathamby Nadesalingam (O man). She is an alumna of Kokuvil Ramakrishna Mission School, J/Vembadi Girls' High School, University of Colombo's Faculty of Law, and Sri Lanka Law College. She will be dearly missed by her family, friends and everyone drawn to her irreverent personality.



**Visitation:**

**Saturday, January 6  
from 5:00 - 9:00 PM**

**Funeral rites:**

**Sunday, January 7  
from 9:00 - 11:00 AM**

**Highland Funeral Home  
3280 Sheppard Avenue East**

**Cremation thereafter at:**

**Ajax Crematorium,  
384 Finley Avenue.**

For more information, please contact:

**Kumaran: + 1 647-967-5628 | kumaran.nadesan@gmail.com**

**Deva: + 1 415-522-8248 | devanadesan@gmail.com**

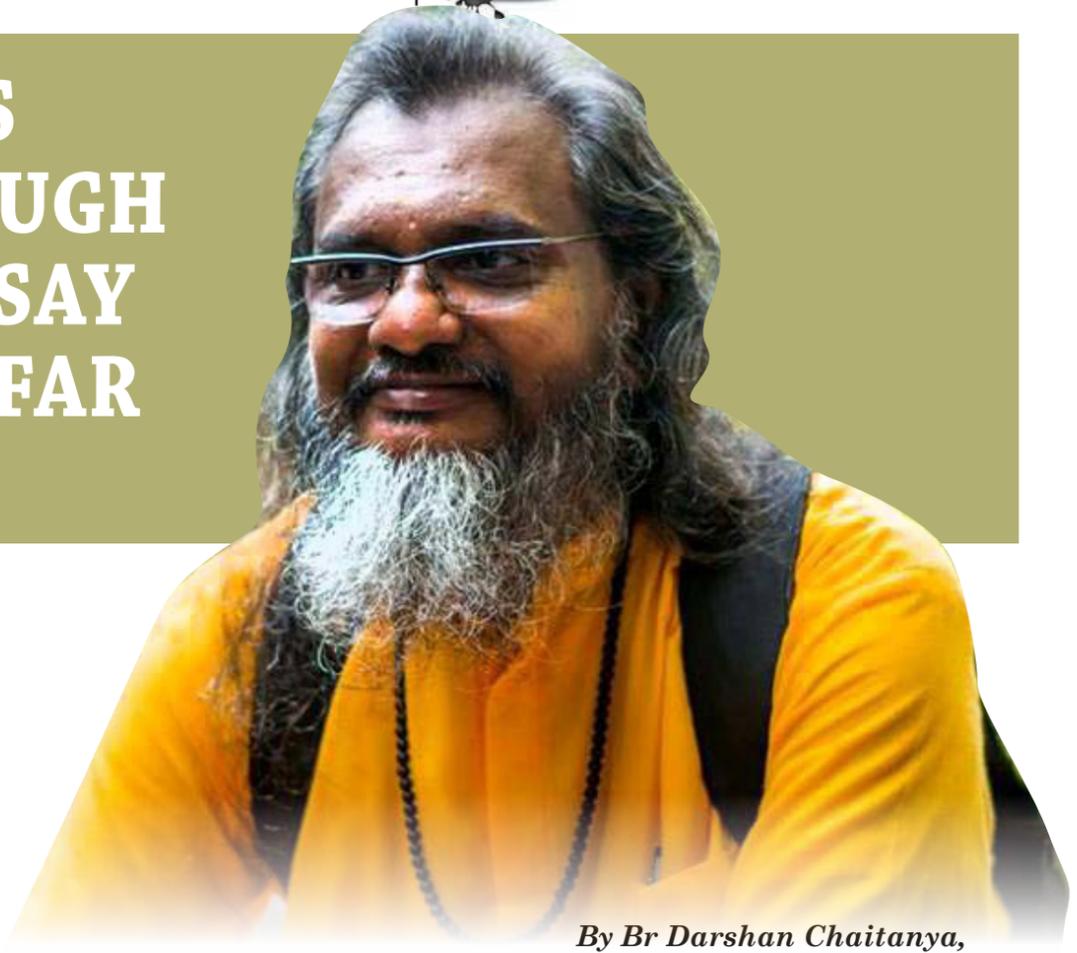
**Nara: + 1 416 720-7616 | nara.nadesan@gmail.com**

**Residence: + 1 416-840-4522**



# “TAMILS SAY WHAT IS OFFERED IS NOT ENOUGH AND THE SINHALESE SAY WHAT IS OFFERED IS FAR TOO MUCH”

Full Text of the Address by *Br Darshan Chaitanya* at Religious Coexistence Convention held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, December 2017



By *Br Darshan Chaitanya*,  
Chinmaya Mission of Sri Lanka

Venerable members of the clergy from the Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islam faiths, Your excellency the president Mr Maithripala Sirisena, Honorable Minister Mr Mano Ganesan, other Ministers, dignitaries and dear friends my humble salutations to all of you.

It is a pleasure to be here on the occasion of this Convention on Religious Coexistence which augurs well for the future of our nation.

It is about time the issue of Religious Coexistence is taken up seriously in order to ensure that the country doesn't plunge in to another round of chaos.

Sri Lanka is diverse in terms of religion and race. But diversity doesn't necessarily have to lead to disunity. There can be unity in diversity. We can treasure, respect and celebrate our differences while maintaining our unity under the common 'Sri Lankan' identity.

The purpose of languages is communication and exchange of ideas to create a better understanding among people which is essential for peaceful and happy coexistence in a society. Religions are there to show us how to live happily through love and service towards the fellow human beings. Therefore, it is sad, shameful, stupid and suicidal to divide people on the lines of language and religion and destroy the peace and harmony.

Religions are meant to lift us up. If we use the religions to create divisions and suffering then it will be contradictory to the very purpose of the religions.

We as religious leaders have a greater responsibility in this regard. We shouldn't divide the people – be it practicing the religion or spreading the religion. Let us not divide the people in the name of religion and then ask them to be united in the name of national unity.

Let all of us have only one identity – Sri Lankan identity. The religion is what we practice and language is what we speak.

Though religion and language may contribute to our identity, we should not forget that we are Sri Lankans first and only by sustaining the Sri Lankan identity we can sustain our identities with regard to our religions and languages.

We have to respect others' religions & languages as we expect them to respect ours. This respect is not something demanded but given. Only by mutual giving of this respect coexistence is possible. And respect can be sustained only through love. All the four religions teach us to love the fellow human beings. They don't teach us to love some and hate the others. If we claim we are religious we have

no choice but to love others regardless of their religion or language.

I would like to quote a section of Chinmaya Mission pledge here: “We stand as one family bound to each other with love & respect” – we Sri Lankans have to stand as one family bound to each other with love and respect.

Let us respect the uniqueness and sensitivities of each and learn to accommodate them.

Buddhist as majority have their sensitivities and the other faiths as minorities have their sensitivities too. Let us try to be sensitive and understand these issues and learn to tolerate them and accept them as we would do in a family. Let the Buddhists come out of their circle and be magnanimous and protect the other faiths. Let the other faiths too should come out of their circle and learn to coexist and take the responsibility of protecting Buddhism. We can't talk about coexistence and equality while thinking that we are different or we are superior.

Buddhism enjoys a special status in our country by way of our constitution where the government is obliged to protect it. But our constitution doesn't say that the other religions are lesser or they need lesser protection. Let us respect the special status enjoyed by Buddhism and try to understand the purpose behind it and try to be sensitive to that.

But let us not forget that it is only meant for the protection of Buddhism and not to discriminate against other faiths. But as citizens of this country let us not forget that we are all Sri Lankans and we are equal.

Let us not seek our existence at the expense of others by threatening their existence. We are aware that religious conversions by some sections of the minority faiths is a sensitive issue which have to be suitably addressed in the interest of national unity.

Similarly dominating attitude of some sections of ma-

jority faith too is an issue which needs to be suitably addressed.

Addressing these two specific issues will pave the way for religious coexistence in our country.

Finally let me take the current political scenario where efforts are being made towards national reconciliation by way of constitution making. If you observe carefully whenever a proposal is made, Tamils say what is offered is not enough and the Sinhalese say what is offered is far too much.

Let us be honest, will this attitude ever help us reach a solution? It is this attitude since our independence which has worsened the situation taking us through 30+ years of war.

Why not we change the attitude and let every Tamil say I will never let what happened to my Sinhala brothers and sisters in the past happen again. And let every Sinhalese say I will never let what happened to my Tamil brothers and sisters in the past happen again. Only this attitude which is fostered through mutual love and respect can enable national reconciliation. If everyone instead of demanding their own rights, perform their duties towards ensuring others' rights then we can mutually sustain everyone's rights leading to peaceful coexistence without any bitterness or loss.

Let us learn to think as Us Sri Lankans instead as Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or Muslim. Let there be no mistake - Only by being a better Sri Lankan one can be a better Buddhist or a better Hindu or a better Christians or a better Muslim.

Here, I would like to quote another part of Chinmaya Mission pledge “We believe that the service of our country Is the service of the Lord of lords and devotion to the people Is the devotion to the Supreme Self”.

Friends, let us be very clear, we can't and we shouldn't divorce the religion or the language from the country. Let us take pride in our Sri Lankan identity and rally round for the sake of reconciliation, coexistence, peace, harmony and prosperity of our motherland.

We as religious leaders have to be convinced about this and then convince our people about this. Only we can do this. It is our duty, it is our responsibility.

This is what the nation demands and this is what the nation deserves. Therefore, let me end this address by quoting the Chinmaya Mission pledge again – “we know our responsibilities. Let the Lord give us the ability and courage to fulfill them”

*Thank you.*





# KIND WORDS



- theodysseyonline.com

**By: JJ Aputharajah**

The speech of enlightened men will be both pleasant and kind. It will have no trace of disloyalty. The Bible reinforces the same idea when it says: 'Pleasant words are as honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healthy to the bones'. The kindly word and loving smile accompanying a spontaneous gift, make the gift even more valuable. Gift becomes a virtue when it is given spontaneously, with cheerful countenance and kind words. Distressing poverty will not affect a man who pleases everyone by his kind words.

A man who invests in kindness will definitely have his rewards. If one seeks always to good by pleasant speech, virtues will flourish and sins will disappear.

Soft words are productive and good. Pleasant words from a well-mannered man will do good to others and generate blessings. Kind words, free from petty-mindedness will grant blessings in this world and the next. The Bible asserts the same view when it says - 'The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life; but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.' There is no need for a man to use unkind words, when he knows that soft words bring joy and happiness.

Nannneri proclaims, "In sollalanri iru neer viyanulagam, vansollalenrum mahilathey". Using rough words instead of kind ones, is like going in for raw fruits, when ripe ones are available.

*"Aniya Ulavaka Innatha Kgoral,  
Kani iruppa kaai kavarthattu".*



Valluvar's Views

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Newcomers face a lot of challenges in landing their first job in Canada or entering in their professional field. CICS offers a wide range of programs that can help you be competitive and succeed in the job search. These programs are tailored to meet newcomers' needs whether they are looking for employment or building up their careers. Activities in January 2018 are as below:

### 1. "Resume Critique One-on-One"

Is your resume an effective job search tool?  
Just bring in your resume and  
we will work together to take it to the next level.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Permanent Residents and Convention refugees only

**DATE AND TIME:** *January 8, 15, 22 and 29, 2018. 9:30am-4:30pm*

*\*Appointments needed to secure service time.*

**LOCATION:** CICS Immigrant Resource Centre, 2330 Midland Ave.  
(At Emblem Court South of Sheppard & North of Hwy 401), Scarborough

**ENQUIRY & REGISTRATION:** 416-292-7510 x 0, or  
email: [settlement@cicscanada.com](mailto:settlement@cicscanada.com)

Seats are limited. Please register early.

New Immigrants are requested to bring PR card or landing documents for attendance.

### 2. "Cashier Training Workshop"

Are you planning to work in the retail industry? Want to learn how to use the cash register? Come and join us and learn how to process sales, discounts and returned items. We will role-play scenarios and practice your customer service skills.

Add this experience to your resume.

**DATE AND TIME:** *January 22, 2018 (Monday) 2:00pm-4:30pm*

**LOCATION:** CICS Immigrant Resource Centre, 2330 Midland Ave.  
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**ENQUIRY & REGISTRATION:** 416-292-7510 x 0, or  
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Seats are limited. Please register early.

New Immigrants are requested to bring PR card or landing documents for attendance.

### 3. "Job Readiness Clinic"

You might have attended several workshops on resume writing and interview skills, but still feel stuck and don't know where to start? Come join this two days "Get it done" event. Let's share, learn and work together!

**DAY 1:** Workshop on effective resume writing

*January 25, 2018 (Thursday) 10am-3pm*

- Work on your own resume
- How to transform your resume from boring to eye-catching
- How to handle weaknesses and liabilities in your work history

**DAY 2:** Workshop on successful interview skills

*January 26, 2018 (Friday) 10am-3pm*

- Work on your own answers to interview questions
- How to develop self-introduction and learn essentials to make a good impression
- Mock interviews that give you specific feedback and strategies

**ELIGIBILITY:** Permanent Residents and Convention refugees only

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# NEW INVENTION IS LIGHT-BASED MICROPROCESSOR

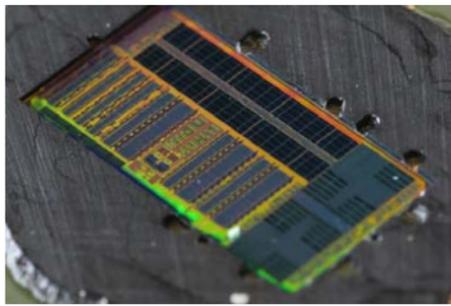
A New Light-Based Memory Chip Will Change the Fundamentals of Computing

By: *Uthayan Thurairajah*

The researchers from the University of California, University of Colorado, and MIT have created a new microprocessor that uses light to move data at high-speed instead of electricity. This light-based processor uses very little energy but much more powerful. The scientist believes that the new microprocessor provides faster and more robust network hardware. In modern microprocessors, the amount of electricity needed to power the speed and volume of data transfers has become a limiting factor.

## Light-based memory Chip

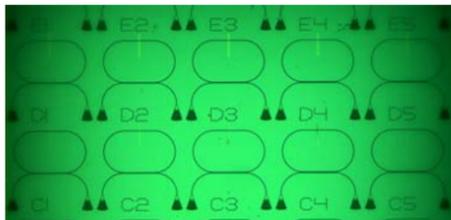
The new microprocessor employs photonics to send information inside the chip as light rather than electricity. It significantly decreases the energy required to execute data transfers from place to place. Light can be sent over longer lengths than electricity using the same power because of voltage drop. With a light-based microprocessor, many data streams can be transferred over the same



communication with data encoded in various bright colors.

The infrared light can be densely packed on a chip to enable large bandwidths. The bandwidth density of 300 gigabits (GB) per second per square millimeter (mm<sup>2</sup>), about 10 to 50 times higher than an electric based microprocessor. The processor created measures 3mm x 6mm and incorporated both traditional electronic circuitry and 850 optical I/O components.

Electrons are quick, but they are not fast enough — in fact, they are holding back the speed of modern computing. Now, a team has developed the world's first light-based chip that can store data



permanently and create a new age of computing.

Our computers come with multi-core processors where tasks are completed on separate processors rather than biting more in one chip. The transmission of data between the memory chips cannot keep up. The speed between memory and processor are slower than the rates at which faster silicon can bite through the information - a problem is known as the Von Neumann bottleneck.

## Exchanging electrons for photons

Swapping out electrons for photons of light is the new way of doing computing. If the electrical interconnects can be replaced with optical, the information can be sent at the speed of light between memory and processor. There would be no delay in transmission keeping up with the computation.

It is not a new idea nor for that matter a particularly useful one in isolation: just replacing the interconnect with something light-based still leaves the task of switching between electrons and photons at either end, to interact with the processor and memory. In fact, doing so is so inefficient that it destroys the gains made by going optical in between.

The researchers have been trying to use a computer architecture can run on photons alone, with the memory and processor operating with light rather than electricity. The international team of researchers has finally cracked at least part of the problem: they have created the light-based memory chip that can store data indefinitely.

The scientists have tried to create this kind of photonic memory before, but it requires power to store data. The data was lost when the power was turned off. The fast internal storage, like your SSD, needs to be able to keep hold of information even without power.

The scientists developed new kind of memory uses what is known as a phase-change material as the basis of its storage. It uses an alloy of germanium-antimony-tellurium known as GST — the same stuff that is used in rewritable CDs and DVDs.

The substance can be forced to allow an amorphous nature, same as glass, or a crystalline state, same as metal, by using electrical or optical pulses. These two categories have very different physical and properties. We can store information.

## A tiny optical chip

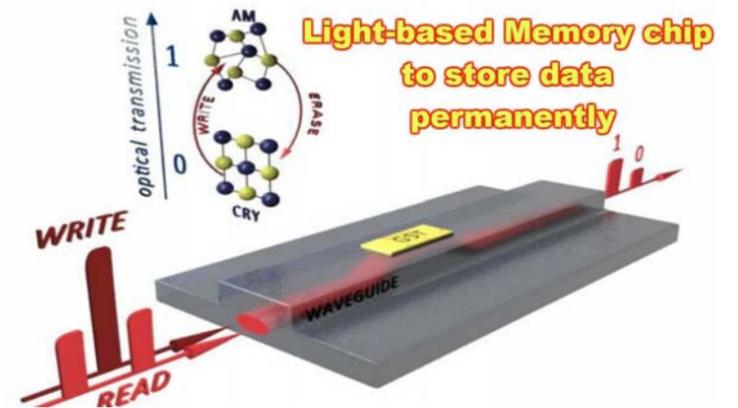
A small piece of GST (which appears yellow), one-micron square, sits on top of a silicon nitride ridge, known as a waveguide (which look pink). The waveguide is a kind of miniature fiber optic cable that can carry light. Pulses of a laser can be sent down where they can interact with the GST and then continue out to the other end.

The GST phase-change substance, highlighted in yellow, sits on top of the silicon nitride waveguide, highlighted in red. When the team fires high-intensity pulses of light below the waveguide, they can alter the nature of the GST.

A very intense pulsation can be used to melt and immediately freeze the GST, causing it to allow an amorphous (like glass) structure. By sending a slightly lower intensity pulsation down the waveguide, the temperature raised above the crystallization limit but below the melting point.

A light with a lower intensity is sent into the waveguide, a little of light flows out into the GST. The team can measure the differences in incredible accuracy, which allows them to tell if the GST is crystalline or amorphous. By writing with strong pulses and reading with weak pulsations, the researchers can easily replicate the 1s or 0s you'd find in standard memory.

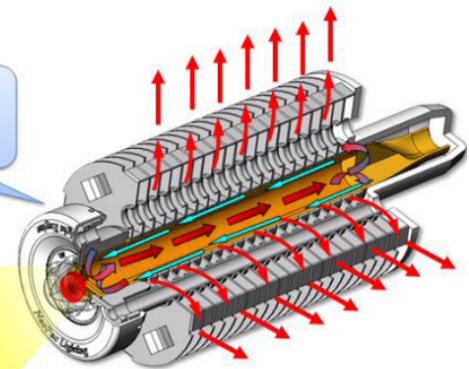
This material has been examined for 50 years, and it may stay in the same position for decades. The new memory device schematic is shown its structure and



the propagation of light through it.

The team sent many wavelengths of light into the waveguide at the same time. This technique is called wavelength multiplexing. We can use a single pulse to write and read to the memory at the same time. Based on the experiment, two wavelengths do not interact with each other. The two operations do not interfere each other.

Heat can be effectively pumped away from LED junctions to the ambient.



Hundreds of different wavelengths of light can be sent in a single pulse. The team could read and write thousands of bits at the same time. It is providing virtually infinite bandwidth.

That multi-state ability has opened up a completely complex system of computing. The researchers can describe a 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7, quadrupling the number of data that can be saved in a single bit instead of the usual 0 or 1. The researchers have plans that could make even better use of the extra capacity by performing computational operations in memory instead of at the processor.

Everyone is close into thinking that all processing has to be a von Neuman process, referring to the way calculations are typically performed by the processor, while data is passed back and forth to the memory. It is a field of research in its relatively early stages, but this kind of chip could eventually end



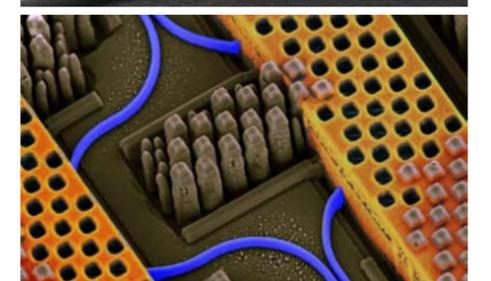
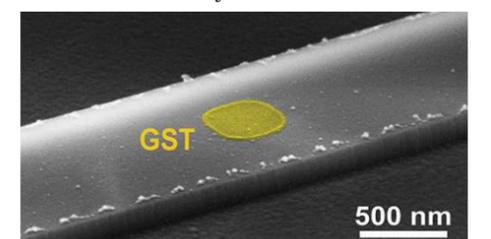
up doing some of the processor's work for it.

First, the device needs to shorten a little. A single bit occupying a square micron sound small, but it is large by silicon chips standards. The team has already been able to decrease the size. The rest of the architecture required to make purely optical computing. There is no point having optical-memory without an

optical interconnect. The next thing on the research group's list is the optoelectrical interconnects, which is expected to link the memory and the processor. Surely, they can make it.

It is a milestone. It is

the first processor that can use light to communicate with the external world. There is no other processor has photonic I/O in the chip. The optical circuitry and electronic circuitry can be combined into



a single chip. The researchers have anticipated that the new technology can be integrated into current manufacturing processes smoothly. It can scaled up for commercial production with minimal disruption.



**Uthayan Thurairajah**, Ph.D., RSE, LC, P.Eng., 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.

Monsoon Journal regrets for the error by inserting wrong article in the Dec 2017 issue, the Title and the pictures were correctly inserted. The article is correctly inserted in this Jan 2018 issue



# GOD IS LIGHT AND LIGHT IS GOD

## Biophotons in the Brain Indicates that Our Consciousness is Directly Linked to Light

By: Uthayan Thurairajah

Scientists discovered that neurons in mammalian brains were capable of producing weak electromagnetic flows of light. All living cells of animals, human beings, and plants emit biophotons. We cannot see in our eyes but can be measured by specific equipment. The photons surprisingly appear within the visible spectrum. They range from near infrared through violet, or between 200 and 1,300 nanometers.

Scientists have an exciting doubt that our brain's neurons might be able to communicate through the light. Scientists believe that human brain might have optical communication channels, but they have no idea what could be communicated.

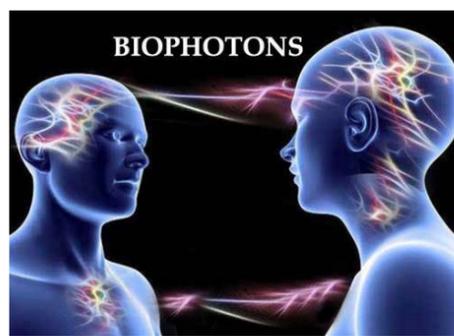
### BIOPHOTONS & SPIRIT



Scientists claim that if there is an optical communication happening, the Biophotons our brains produce might be affected by the significant mess, meaning there can be an active connection between these photons, our consciousness. This possibly what many cultures and religions refer to as Spirit.

In a couple of experiments, scientist discovered that human brains could convey more than a billion Biophotons per second while rat brains could pass one Biophoton per neuron a minute. It could be possible that the more light one can produce may more conscious.

### BIOPHOTONS & RELIGION

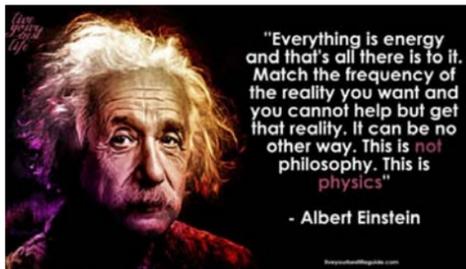


There is a correlation between Biophotons, light, and consciousness. It can have huge implications that there is more to light than we are aware. Many texts and religions, since the dawn of human civilization, have reported of saints, and enlightened individuals have shining circles around their heads.

From Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece to teachings of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and others, divine individuals represented with a bright circular glow around the head.

They were described as enlightened by shining circle. It was a result of the higher consciousness. Therefore, it has a higher frequency and production of Biophotons.

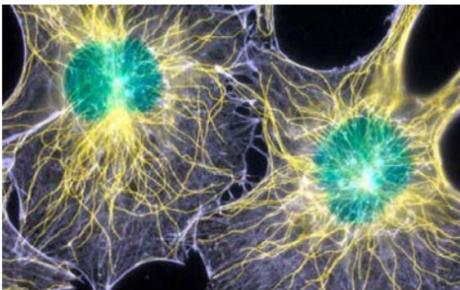
There may be a relationship between Biophotons and consciousness. That is why these individuals can produce a higher level of Biophotons with stronger intensity because of their enlightenment. Even the word wisdom suggests that this higher knowledge has something to do with light.



### BIOPHOTONS & NEURON

Scientists wanted to know whether or not there an infrastructure over which light could travel from one place to another in the brain. Axons are the fibers that carry a neuron electrical signal outward. Myelinated axons are covered in myelin, a fatty substance that electrically insulates the axon.

Biophotons can move away from the neuron or back up near the hill. The Scientist modeled axons and performed calculations on how light behave as the fibers bent, gained or lost thickness in their biophoton-absorbing myelin coating, or how they function when crossing



each other. The Scientist concluded that light conduction across myelinated axons is possible.

The axons could pass between 50% and 95% of the light they receive over a distance of 2 mm. The length of a human brain's axons, the percentage depending on bending, sheath thickness. The researchers conclude that this tool appears to be adequate to facilitate delivery of a large number of bits, or even admit the creation of quantum confusion. The scientists are interested in specific interactions between photons and nuclear circuits — the way nuclei turn allows different chemical effects — and how that affects things like magnetoreception in animals.

### EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD

There is some distance between the biophotons and nuclear spins. The scientists wonder if there's confusion. The atomic spins interfacing with several axons must communicate coherently.

The involvement of synaptic junctions between individual axons may provide such a proximity mechanism. The most

impressive connections that our brains can generate light that gives our consciousness and spirit but not included in our bodies.

Quantum complexity says that two entangled photons behave if one of the photons is affected and the other photon anywhere in The Universe without any delay. There is a world that exists within the light. The photons can act as portals that enable communication between two worlds no matter where you are.

Our spirit and consciousness may interact with our bodies through these biophotons. The more light we generate, we stimulate more and complete the wholeness of our awareness.

Light is just one combined substance that scattered throughout the world and affected by each light particle. Asking questions and shooting such abstract theory may guide closer to the conclusion of what awareness is and what are the secrets that hide inside the light.

### ODD ROLE OF BIOPHOTONS

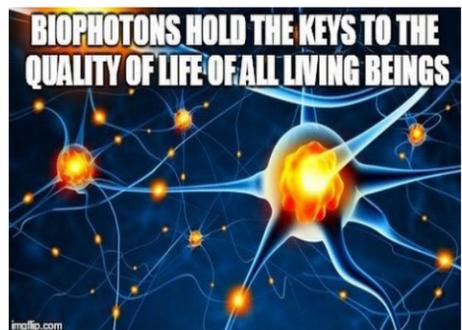
Various work suggests that neurons release and even carry photons. Do biophotons assist in synchronizing the brain? A growing body of proof shows that photons play a significant role in the functioning of cells. The confirmation comes from switching the lights off and calculating the cells production of photons.

It turns out, much to many people's surprise, that many cells, perhaps even most, emit light as they work. Many cells use light to communicate. The bacteria, plants and even kidney cells interact in this way. The neurons release light, which does not mean that neurons can receive it or process it. The light plays a critical role in neuronal function.

The neurons contain many light-sensitive particles, such as porphyrin rings, flavin, pyridinic rings, aromatic amino acids and lipid chromophores. The mitochondria, the machines inside cells which produce energy, contain several prominent chromophores.

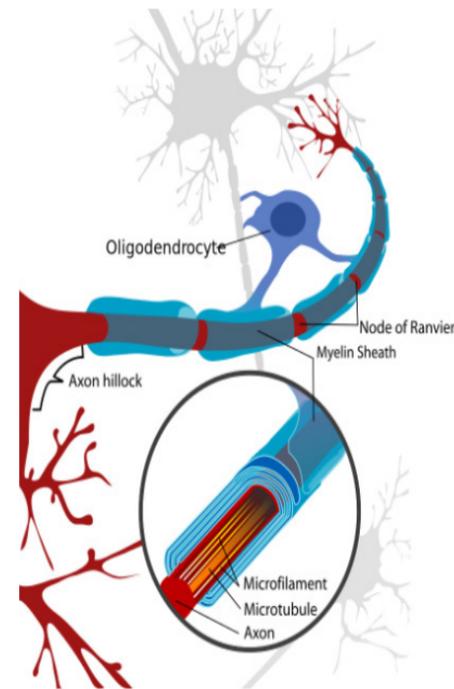
Microtubules are providing structural support and creating highways to move like optical fibers. The light routed by microtubules can help to coordinate activities in different parts of the brain. It is reliable that electrical activity in the brain is synchronized but it hard to explain.

Microtubules play a pivotal role in the functioning of the brain. Consciousness is a miracle of quantum mechanics and microtubules were the factor.



### BIOPHOTONS & CANCER CELLS

Healthy cells and cancer cells of the same can be separated by typical differ-



ences in biophoton emission. Biophysicists in the world are exploring the many exciting applications which range across such diverse fields as non-invasive early medical diagnosis, cancer research, chemical and electromagnetic contamination testing, cell communication, food and water quality testing, and various applications in biotechnology.

The Biophoton is stored in the cells of the organism. A dynamic web of light regularly released and absorbed by the DNA may join cells and tissues within the body and serve as the organism's central communication network.



### BIOPHOTONS & ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

The discovery of biophoton emission also lends scientific support to some alternative ways of healing based on theories of homeostasis (self-regulation of the organism), such as various physical treatments, homeopathy, and acupuncture.

The "chi" energy flowing in our bodies' carriers which controls our body functions may be related to biophoton field. The "prana" of Indian Yoga physiology may be a similar regulating energy force that has a basis in weak, coherent electromagnetic biofields.

The biophotonics is one of the fastest moving and exciting fields in science today. In this kind of rapidly driving environment, thinking like this can sometimes trigger a revolution.



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



MANAGING YOUR MONEY

# What motivates you to contribute to your RRSP or TFSA?

How do you contribute to your registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) and your tax-free savings account (TFSA)? Do you make regular contributions through the year? Do you contribute when a friend or family member nudges you? Do you remember to do so when your professional advisor reminds you? Or do you want to make up for last year when you forgot to invest in or top up your RRSP or TFSA?

It really doesn't matter what motivates you to contribute to your RRSP or TFSA – what matters is that you do make regular contributions. Here's why:

Investment experts agree: An RRSP is the best retirement savings strategy for most Canadians. Your contributions and all the investment earnings that accumulate in your plan are tax exempt until you start using the money in retirement. Add in the fact that your contributions can be used to reduce taxes and the magic of compounding that enhances RRSP growth over time and it's easy to see why a registered plan makes such good financial sense. To get the most in immediate tax savings and long-term growth from your RRSP, always make your maximum contribution each year. For 2016 the maximum RRSP contribution is \$25,370 (How much you can contribute can be found on your most recent notice of assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency.) The RRSP contribution deadline for the 2016 tax year is March 1, 2017. If you have any unused contribution room left over from previous years, fill it up as quickly as possible for maximum long-term tax-deferred growth and additional tax savings. Your RRSP contribution tax deduction can be carried forward to future tax years, which can be useful if you expect a jump in income in the next few years.

Preparing for retirement should start early with a savings strategy that will make it possible for you to accumulate the most wealth for use (and enjoyment!) through all your retirement years. The



best retirement savings strategy for most Canadians is a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) because your contributions and all the income that accumulates in your plan are tax deferred until you start using that money in retirement.

Young people who are starting a career and working toward major financial goals such as paying off student debt or buying a home often put contributing to an RRSP on the backburner in the hope that they'll be able to catch up later. The truth is a small amount invested earlier in your life has a greater financial impact than more money invested later on.

**TFSA's are an excellent and flexible way to save**

Every Canadian over the age of 18 is eligible to save in a TFSA and the investments held within the TFSA grow on a tax-free basis. TFSA withdrawals can be made at any time for any reason – and the withdrawn money is tax-free. Almost anyone can benefit from a TFSA- but if you have one, be careful because there is one not-well-understood re-contribution rule that could cost you an unexpected tax hit. That mistake: Making a withdrawal from your TFSA and replacing the money too early (Provided that you have been max-

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ing out the contribution every year).

With a TFSA, there is no tax deduction for your contributions but all TFSA investment earnings are totally tax-free and will not trigger clawbacks on federal tax credits or benefits programs (such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement, Old Age Security, Age Credit, GST Credit, or Canada Child Benefit). The current annual maximum TFSA contribution is \$5,500 plus the full amount of any previous year withdrawals. If you don't use all your contribution room right away, it accumulates year after year – fill it up any time you want. By the way, your TFSA contributions do not affect your RRSP contribution room.

There's no doubt that regular contributions to a RRSP and TFSA are vital to your financial future. Your professional advisor can help you get the most from a RRSP, a TFSA and every other element of your overall financial plan.

So where does this leave us? Generally speaking, a TFSA may be better suited for shorter-term goals, such as an emergency fund or saving for a major purchase, since there is no tax on withdrawals and these plan withdrawals are added back into your TFSA contribution room the following year. However, for long-term objectives, RRSPs are generally the vehicle of choice since there are strong incentives to keep your money invested, in the form

of taxes and lost contribution room on the withdrawals from an RRSP. The TFSA can also be a powerful retirement savings tool. However due to the ease with which TFSA savings can be accessed (no taxes on withdrawals or loss of contribution room) only a disciplined investor who can resist the temptation to dip into their savings prior to retirement will fully benefit from its potential as a source of retirement income. Remember, there is no one-size-fits all solution. In fact, there is a multitude of variables that must be taken into consideration. In many cases, the TFSA should be used as a complementary product, along with your RRSPs, as they both have their own advantages. Your personal savings strategy needs to take into account your unique circumstances as well as your short and long-term objectives.

There's no doubt that regular contributions to a RRSP and TFSA are vital to your financial future. Your professional advisor can help you get the most from a RRSP, a TFSA and every other element of your overall financial plan.

**Disclaimer:**

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

## PARENTAL SPONSORSHIP LOTTERY TO RE- OPEN ON JANUARY 2<sup>ND</sup>

In January 2017, the government changed the system that they accept parental and grand-parental sponsorships for permanent residence in Canada. In the past, the eligible sponsors could have submitted their applications directly to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. They were accepted on a first come first serve basis until the annual cap was reached. In 2017 this system was replaced with a lottery system. Interested Sponsors had to send in an "Expression of Interest to Sponsor" electronically. Entries were selected randomly, and invitations were sent out by the government in the Spring requesting the selected sponsors to submit completed application packages on behalf of their parents and grand-parents. However, after the first round of invitations, another round of invitations were also sent in the Fall as the government had not received a sufficient number of completed applica-

tions through the invitations sent out in the Spring.

I believe that the government did not receive sufficient complete applications from the 10,000 random invitations they sent out in the Spring because some selected sponsors did not meet the eligibility test. While the government does not stop anybody from sending in an "interest to sponsor" form, if the sponsor does not meet the financial test over the 3 most recent tax years, they cannot proceed with a full application even if their entry is selected by the government. Therefore, there is simply no point in entering the selection pool unless the potential sponsor strictly meets the financial test. Otherwise, not only do they clog the system, but they also take away an opportunity for an eligible sponsor's entry to be selected. While everybody likes to try to sponsor their parents for permanent residence in Canada, I would ask that they be mindful

about meeting the eligibility criteria before sending in an entry.

The lottery pool will re-open on January 2, 2018. Potential sponsors must complete and send in an "Interest to Sponsor" form between the period January 2nd and February 1st electronically. The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship says "Family reunification is a priority for the Government of Canada. On January 2, I invite those who are eligible to sponsor to express their interest to bring their parents and grandparents to Canada. Helping more people reunite with their parents and



grandparents in Canada demonstrates the government's commitment to keeping families together, leading to successful integration and stronger ties to Canada".

If anyone has questions about eligibility or need assistance in sending in their "interest to sponsor" forms, the Nova Immigration team would be happy to help.

We wish our readers a happy and a prosperous New Year 2018!

**by Shani Hanwella**

Registered Canadian Immigration Consultant

Former Visa Officer, Canadian High Commission, Colombo, Sri Lanka

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# அமரர் திருச்செந்தூரன் சிறுகதை கவிதைப் போட்டி முடிவுகள்!

தாய்விட்டு இதழும் மலைநாட்டு எழுத்தாளர் மன்றமும் இணைந்து நடத்திய அமரர் எஸ். திருச்செந்தூரன் நினைவுச் சிறுகதை, கவிதைப் போட்டிகளுக்கான பரிசளிப்பு நவம்பர் 26, 2017 ஞாயிற்றுக்கிழமை அட்டன் நகரசபை மண்டபத்தில் நடைபெற்றது. இந்தப் போட்டிகளில் வெற்றி பெற்றோர் பற்றிய விவரங்களும் அன்று நடைபெற்ற நிகழ்விலிருந்து சில நிழற்படங்களும் இங்கு தரப்படுகின்றன.

## சிறுகதை

முதல் பரிசு: 'றப்பர் ஜோக்கு' - ஆர். ராஜீவ்காந்தி, ஹாலி-எலை.  
இரண்டாம் பரிசு: 'வெளிநாட்டு வசந்தம்' - பா. ரிசாந்தன், லுணுகலை.  
மூன்றாம் பரிசு: 'ஒரு தீபம் எரிய...' - நா. ஜெயபாலன், பிபிலை.

## ஆறுதல் பரிசுகள்

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'ஏமாற்றம்' - அ. கனகராஜ், அக்கரப்பத்தனை.  
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'சலங்கையின் ஒலி' - ரா. அரவிந்தராஜ், இதல்கல்ஹின்னை.  
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## கவிதை

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- கி. குலசேகரன், அப்புத்தளை.  
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## ஆறுதல் பரிசுகள்:

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'மனிதமும் மலையகமும்' - பதியத்தலாவை பாறாக், பதியத்தலாவை.  
'மலையகத்தின் ஒரு துளி' - செல்வராஜ் செல்வரேகா, பண்டாரவளை.  
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'விழித்தெழு' - மு. சுதர்சன் குண்டசாவை.





# CTHA Joins in Celebration of Karthikai Vilakkidu

Karthikai Vilakkidu is a festival of light that is celebrated to ward off evil forces/ darkness and usher in happiness and prosperity/ light. Although, the civil war in Sri Lanka ended 8 years ago, there are still many villages in the eastern and northern provinces living in "darkness". One such village is Pavakodichchenai, which CTHA has adopted. CTHA is building a community center so that the village can prosper. Symbolically, on Karthikai Vilakkidu, CTHA together with Humanitarian Hands of Batticaloa, organized an event where 1000



lamps were lit in Batticaloa. This event raised awareness amongst the people that help is needed in many other villages, as well as to fundraise for more funds which is needed to finish the community center in Pavakodichchenai. The event was beautifully lit with many lamps at the school compound located in the town of Batticaloa. Many students and youths attended the event and made it successful by lighting the lamps. A few students also graced the location with their musical talents. It was very nice to see many youngsters gather for this awareness event. Simultaneously, the people of Pavakodichchenai also lit many lamps surrounding the building site, and also celebrated the making of Pongal (Sticky Sweet Rice) together at the building site. A huge thank you to all those who purchased a ticket to support this event! We were able to successfully light 1000 lamps :) *Seen here are some photos from the event.*





# 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 a seasoned homemaker who loves making traditional dishes for her friends and family. Follow us on Instagram: @ninjaeatsfood and @tamil\_food

*Eat more, learn more!*

Sisters Niranjini Thirunesan and Rajini Nathan are both food enthusiasts from England.

Niranjini, who lives in London, has a degree in Human Biology and is a trained chef. She makes it her business to know everything about what she eats, from nutritional value to source producers. Follow

her food obsession on Instagram @ninjaeatsfood.

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

## VEGAN PAYASAM

It's 2018 and amidst the numerous things going wrong in the world, there is an infinite number of equally good and exciting things happening. One of them is the rise of Veganism. Veganuary as January is being referred to in some circles is indicative that being vegan is not only currently very trendy, many have seen the health benefits of changing into a more mindful lifestyle. Now whilst samayal santhai is not permanently going down this route (you try explaining to your Tamil Amma that you can't eat dairy anymore!!!), we thought it would be fun to give you a recipe to try and see for yourselves.

Payasam which is a traditional Tamil sweet dish made for most special occasions, has here been given a makeover. In this recipe we have used sago, which is ecologically stable to cultivate in comparison to tapioca (keeping with our mindful living theme) and also note that there is a difference between the words milk and vegan milk, which is often referred to as "drink". Try it and let us know what you think.



### Ingredients: cup size used (1 cup, 1/4 pint)

- 1 cup sago pearls ■ 3 cups vegan milk drink (we used coconut and rice drink, but any works well - the thicker, the better!) ■ Pinch of saffron ■ 5-6 crushed cardamom pods ■ 1 tsp vanilla essence ■ ½ - 1 cup of unrefined cane sugar (or any sugar alternative) - add ■ sugar according to your taste ■ ½ cup of cashew nuts, raisins and/or golden sultanas ■ 2 tps vegan margarine/vegetable oil ■ Pinch of salt ■ Optional - 1 capful of rose water

### Method

Wash the sago pearls in water very well, until the water runs clear. Some varieties may need to be soaked for ½ an hour. Cook the pearls in water until they appear translucent. The pearls must be fully cooked before you move on to the next step. Be sure to continually stir the pearls, so they do not stick to the bottom of the pan. Once cooked, add the milk drink, cardamom pods, saffron, vanilla essence and stir well for 10 minutes. Add the sugar/sugar alternative and stir for 5 minutes. Switch off the cooker and if you wish to, add the rose water.

In a separate small frying pan, melt the margarine and fry the cashew nuts and raisins/golden sultanas. Add a pinch of salt and add this to the cooked payasam. Stir until all is combined well and serve warm.

Do hashtag #monsoonjournal on Instagram and send us your pics, comments and feedback. Spread the love (and recipe!)



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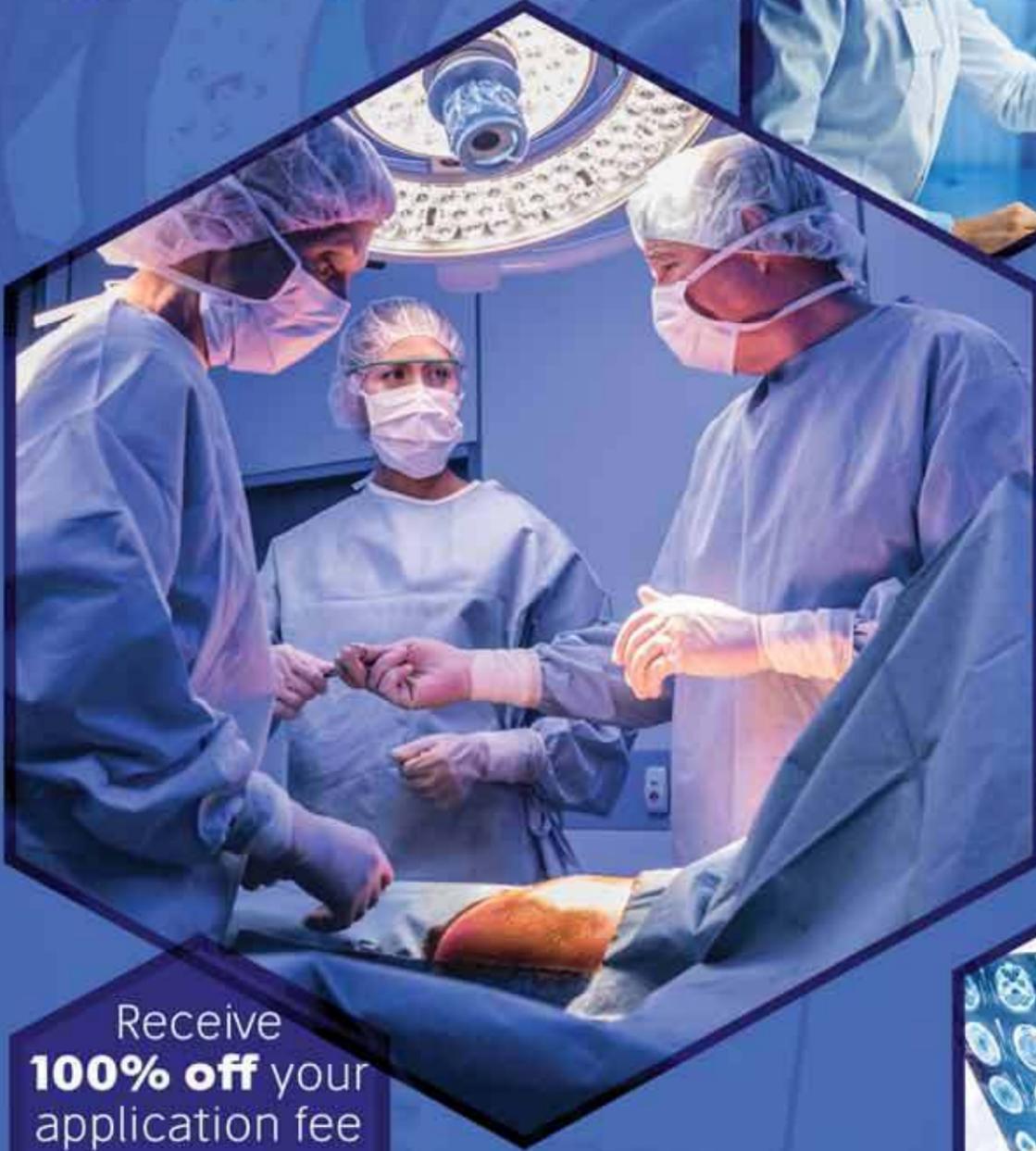
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# Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada (SAAC) Chartered Gala 2017

Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> annual dinner dance on Saturday December 02, 2017 at the Scarborough Convention Centre in Scarborough with a packed audience of around 375 guests. Gary Anandasangaree MP for Scarborough-Rouge Park was the chief guest and he honoured Founder members and past presidents.

Some of the photos taken at the event can be seen here





# Tamil Cultural & Academic Society of Durham (TCASD) celebrates Christmas

Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham merrily celebrated TCASD Christmas Gathering on Friday, Dec 22nd 2017 at Ajax Community Centre with their members and guests. It was a house full event with many activities that children and youth enthusiastically participated and made the evening a memorable one. Delicious snacks and food was served with love. TCASD-TYLP [Tamil Youth Leadership Program] debate was one of the interesting programs for the evening. Children spoke well and received awards for their best performances.

Some of the photos from the event can be seen here.





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By **Kidambi Raj**  
Member, Board of Trustees

**NEWLY GRADUATED YORK REGION POLICE OFFICERS  
VISIT THE TEMPLE ON AUGUST 29, 2017**

York Region Police Officers and civilians of various ethnic origin working at various Police Stations in the region visit the Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple once a year as part of the Places of Worship Tour. They are given a tour of the temple and also given a very short talk on the Basics of Hinduism. The main purpose of the annual visit is to sensitize

them to multicultural mosaic of the Province.

This year, the York Region Police decided to bring their newly graduated Police Officers to visit our Ganesha Temple as their first place of worship, tour and get the Blessings of all the Deities. The picture below shows the newly graduated York Region Police Officers with the Priests.



DECEMBER 29, 2017  
**VAIKUNTA EKADASI**

**What is Vaikunta Ekadasi?**

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

**Significance of fasting on Ekadasi:**

The fast that is observed on Ekadasi is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is observed on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the waning and waxing phase of the moon according to the traditional Hindu calendar. This is one of the most popular vratha observed in Hinduism. Lord Krishna advised Arjuna on the procedure to be followed during this day. This is referenced in the Bhavisyottara Purana. He tells Arjuna to begin the *ekadasi vratha* in the autumn season with Utpanna or Utpaati Ekadasi that takes place during the waning phase of the moon in November-December. Ekadasi is the name of the Goddess that arose from Lord Vishnu to defeat the demon Mura. Pleased with her divine actions, Lord Vishnu blessed her so that anyone who observes the ekadasi fast will be freed of their sins and will attain moksha. Some people eat only one meal on Dasami, the day before Ekadasi.

**Observance of Vaikunta Ekadasi:**

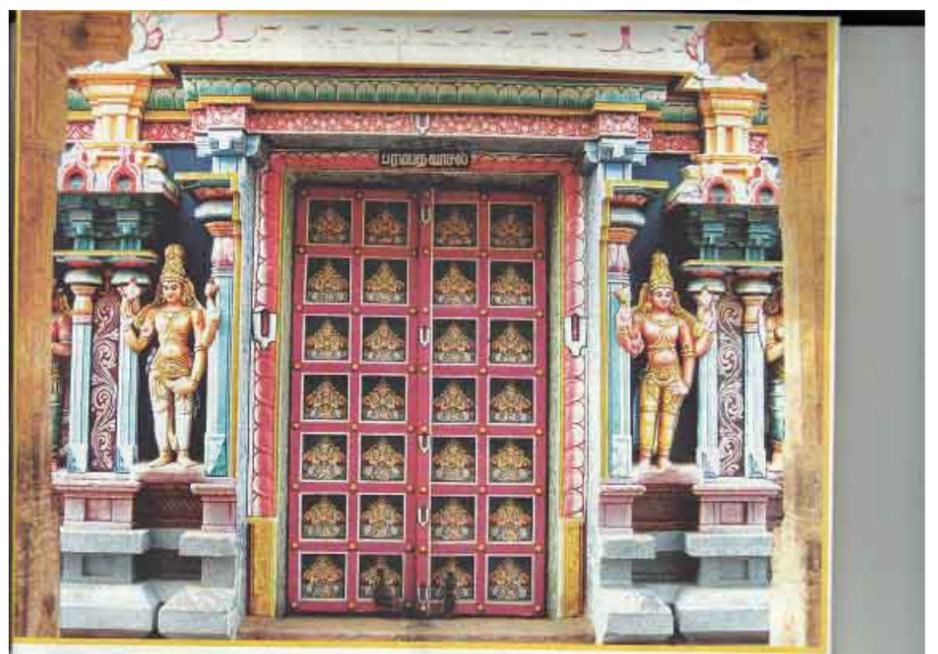
For the Ekadasi Puja, you have to have a Picture or an Idol of Lord Vishnu, Fruits, Bananas, Tulsi and other normal puja items. To observe Ekadasi, one should wake up early in the morning, take bath and offer prayers and then perform a simple puja to Lord Vishnu at home by lighting a lamp and offer fruits and tulsi leaves. Then pray or meditate

for few minutes. If there is a Vishnu temple nearby visit the temple and be a part of the morning pujas and rituals. A complete fasting on this day is the main aspect of observing ekadasi vratha. Fasting specially on Ekadasi is considered the holiest of religious observance in Vaishnavism. They are strictly prohibited from taking rice. That night picture or idol of Lord Vishnu, people keep vigil the whole night and visit the temple of Vishnu, mostly in the wee hours of the morning.

**Swargavaasal or Gate to Sri Vaikuntam:**

Planet Mercury, presided over by Lord Vishnu, will be in the 9th House from the Moon, activating this planet to shower enhanced blessings of fortune. Worshipping Lord Vishnu in the form of Vaikuntanathar is auspicious to get your boons granted. He is the protector of the universe. According to the Vishnu Purana, fasting on Vaikuntha Ekadashi is equivalent to fasting on the remaining 23 Ekadasis of the (Hindu) year. However, according to Vaishnava tradition fasting is mandatory on all Ekadasi of both Shukla paksha and Krishna paksha. Fasting on Ekadasi is considered holier than any other religious observance.

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



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

**Srirangam Ranganathaswamy Temple or Bhoologa Vaikuntam:**

Every Vaishnavite Temples celebrate Vaikunta Ekadasi, by setting up Portal to replicate the gate to Heaven. But the one at Srirangam temple is known as the *"Bhoologa*

*"Vaikuntam"* or *"Paradise on Earth"* where people can gain liberation from the cycle of birth and death. In Srirangam stands true especially during the 21-day annual Sri Vaikunta Ekadasi festival. This festival falls in 2 parts. The pagal pathu and Irapathu. In between them on the 11<sup>th</sup> day is Sri Vaikunta Ekadasi is observed with unmatched spiritual fervor. The final goal of all the religious activities by a Vaishnavite is the attainment of moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death and Vaikunta Ekadasi offers insight into it.

# A Spritual Centre - SAI ILLAM Chavakachcheri, Sri Lanka

SAI ILLAM in Chavakachcheri has completed three years of spiritual service in its permanent building since its opening on December 27, 2014

As part of this anniversary celebration, we express our sincere thanks to all of our devotees who encouraged and supported the development and service of this centre. May our gracious Guru Sai Baba and Shiridi Baba be with you always, guide and guard everyone for a healthy, wealthy and prosperous life.

When Sai illam first opened, we began with bajans every Thursday from 4pm to 5pm, along with offering of prasadam at the end. Since then we

also started Balavigas class every Sunday. On Poya days noon time we have a small pooja followed by bajans and maha prasadam is distributed. The local volunteers also pack food and take to the market and distribute to those unable to walk. They also help school children with money for books and immediate expenses. All these services are made possible by our foreign devotees.

There is a proverb in Tamil "Thanathill Seerandathu Annathanam". It means the best form of donation is giving food to the needy people.

In October 2017, the local volun-

teers packed uncooked food and distributed to people suffering from poverty in interior places.

Sai illam is very grateful for your donations. The Centre could not have done all this without our foreign devotees' generosity.

It is also inspiring to note the work of a young devotee in Chavakachcheri who did the interlocking seen in the picture with her own money around the center. On Dec 10, 2017, Northern Province Sai members got together and had a year end "Gayathri Mantra Sathana" at this center. People from all over attended. The program ran from 8AM

to 1:30PM with Maha Prasadam. A lot of good vibrations filled the center.

When your family or friends are going to Jaffna, please make a point to suggest a visit to this Sai illam. It is behind the old police station road in Chavakachcheri. If they need more details or wish to stay overnight, please feel free to call any of these numbers for more guidance.

Rajadurai (Canada): 905 887 8585  
Sritharan (Colombo): 011 94 775141120

Jothy (Chava to stay): 011 94 77045817

Nantha (Chava):011 94 771605121





# Tamil Christmas celebration brings joy to the community

Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region celebrated its annual Christmas celebration on the 16th of December at the Christ Lutheran Church Hall in Waterloo. A large number of members and their family attended the event. Addressing the gathering, the President

Mr. Ragu Sivaramakrishnan emphasized the role of the association as a catalyst that unites the cultural, social and religious diversity among the Tamil community in the Waterloo region and City of Guelph. He invited everyone for Thai Pongal celebrations on the 14th of January in Waterloo.

The event ended up with Magic Show, Musical Chairs, Games, dinner and the arrival of Santa Claus.

*Some of the photos taken at the event can be seen here. Some of the photos taken at the event can be seen here*





# 16th Annual Youth Festival by DTA

Durham Tamil Association's 16th annual youth festival was held at the J. Clarke auditorium on Saturday December the 2nd. The event started off with mingling session and vendor exhibit booths followed by the lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries. All age groups from 3-16 were part of the night's program. It was an evening packed with lots of talent and rousing performances. These performances were possible only with the help of our volunteer teachers - Delany Ravi, Sujatha Sathiabil, Sunitha Joseph, Suhasini Kumaran, Ajantha-Satkunam, PalanisamySanmugam, SuweithaaKalaichelvan, Piraveen-Pathmanathan, ThiviyaMohanaraj, MathumithaBaskaran, Sveta Manorathan and ThanushThanahanthan.

The program included Bharatanatyam, Kollywood style dances and Kids bands. All the performers in the show worked incredibly hard to give the audience a night to remember. Many dance schools were represented in the program. We were also privileged to have drama and a fashion show at this year's festival that was joyful and entertaining for the audience.

DTA's 16th Annual Christmas party was also held on December 17th at the East shore community centre, Pickering. Over 200 members (Volunteers, Parents, along with their children) participated in the festivities. The evening started off with a children's carol service organized by DTA youth volunteers followed by arts and crafts that depicted the Christmas themes.

It was great to see all the parents having a good time with their children and spending quality time enjoying the festive mood. There was lots of food and drinks that were served to the guests throughout the evening. Many thanks to our sponsors that allowed us to host this event free of charge for our valued members. The highlight of the evening was the arrival of Santa Claus, he brought a load of presents so that every child at the event received a gift. Everyone who attended this event had great time with lots of laughter and great conversations. As this is the season of giving back to the community, our members have generously donated non-perishable food items for Joanne's House Durham Youth Housing and support service for homeless youth.

These events wouldn't have been possible without the tireless efforts of the executive committee, sub committee, the parents, friends, Volunteers and most of all, our sponsors. A special vote of thanks goes to our event sponsor: Nava Law, Ivedha, Kabish and Associates, Computek College, SubanSinnadurai - CIBC Mortgage Specialist, KGN Medical Centre, PrashathGnane - RBC mortgage specialist, Century 21 - SanjeevanRatnavadivel, RE/MAX, Nishanthan Law Office, KYK Shutters, Cyber Security Services, New Spice Land, KC Dental, The Insurance House, MeenaSakthivel -Century 21, Hanthan and UthaManickavasagar from Century 21, RG Printing and Eleganto R4K for the photographs.





## An Appeal for Help for the Needy Karuna Nilaiyam - Kilinochchi

Karuna Nilaiyam is a women's Institute which serves women of all ages. Muriel Hutchins fondly called Vellaipaarti by the residents of Kilinochchi founded the nilaiyam to care for distressed women. The residents now include mentally affected women, distressed women, Needy school going Children and school leavers.

KN provides food and lodging for the residents. It also conducts nursery classes for the children of the area, computer, sewing, and English classes for resident girls and for girls of the area. Bright children are sent to Chundikuli Girls College for higher studies.

KN also has a grape farm, poultry and dairy to provide training and create income. KN also runs a medical clinic for women and children of the area. Much of the donations go towards food. Friends of KN in Canada with Monsoon Journal of Canada have come together with a plan to subsidize the food expenses to enable KN to do more training and teaching to promote independent living.

The following well wishers have contributed C\$125 towards meals for a day program for Dec-Jan period. Fifteen others have chosen other months. They celebrate their Birthdays, Anniversaries and Memory of their departed ones- Friends of Karuna Nilaiyam appeals to well wishers to join this effort to continue this program. You may choose a month and date to help in this program.

Friends of Karuna Nilaiyam Kilinochchi,  
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