

Monsoon Journal

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HAPPY 2016 NEW YEAR

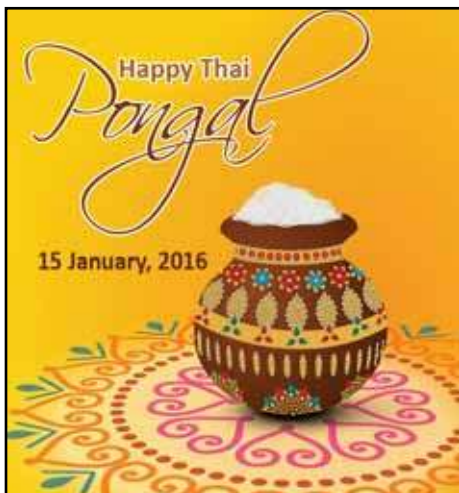
Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown poised to lead the party to a win in the 2018 election

By Thaksha Kaneshapillai & Dharsan Siriskantharajan

During the holiday season of 2015, the Monsoon Journal team members sat down with Patrick Brown, the current leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, to gain insight on the party's direction in advance of the Ontario general election in 2018. Formerly the federal Member of Parliament for the electoral riding of Barrie, the leader has received particular attention for his solution regarding the deteriorating fiscal situation in Ontario. The full text of the interview is as follows: ... Please see page 3



Dharsan Siriskantharajan, Law Student at University of Hertfordshire, Thaksha Kaneshapillai, Master of Industrial Engineering Candidate at the University of Toronto & Hon. Patrick Brown, MPP for Simcoe North, Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario



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Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown poised to lead the party to a win in the 2018 election

Contd. from page 1

Question: Could you summarize the Ontario Conservatives election platform?

I think that it is important that it's not just a few people in the backroom creating a platform. The platform that we are going to have in two years and six months in the next provincial election will be one that is created by the grassroots. It is important to have a grassroots party. And there are general themes that the Conservative will make general priorities such as health-care and education, how we treat our seniors is a priority, that government is transparent; it should be open, that we need to end the endless corruption scandals that the government is plagued with.

But in terms of the specific details of the platform, it will be constructed closer to the election and will be built by the stakeholders, and by thousands and thousands of people. And if anyone reading Monsoon Journal has any ideas on how to make Ontario stronger, more vibrant and more dynamic, please let me know, I would love to hear those suggestions. I, for one, believe that you need to listen. And too many people lecture you and they don't listen to ideas. And a good friend of mine once said, god gave you two ears and one mouth, and politicians should remember that. Don't just preach.

Question: As you already know, Ontario is now the world's most indebted sub-sovereign borrower with \$307 billion dollars worth of underperforming bonds. This province has twice the debt of California, but only a third of its population. How would a Conservative government work to reduce this burden for future generations?

That's a great question. This gov-

ernment has been mired; Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty have been plagued with scandal, which has involved waste. The auditor general has said that the energy contracts alone are 9.2 billion dollars in waste, the gas plants \$1 billion dollars, the smart meters \$2 billion, eHealth \$1 billion, Ornge \$1 billion dollars.

To be honest, we wouldn't be in this debt if it weren't for corruption and scandal. But moving beyond that, we can't simply and solely point to the Liberals incompetence, we have to talk about what we are going to do as progressive conservatives to create prosperity in Ontario, and I have outlined cutting red tape, having competitive energy prices and investing in infrastructure to get product to marketplace as ingredients on how to get Ontario back on track, so we are creating jobs.

One of many opportunities to create jobs is by resolving the skills mismatch. According to the Conference Board of Canada, we lose \$3.7 billion a year in provincial income tax for jobs that are available in Ontario that we are not filling. For example, last year we graduated 9000 teachers for 5000 teaching positions. We are graduating people for jobs that don't exist. Let's graduate people for jobs that our market actually needs, and that's something that I put a lot of emphasis on.

Question: Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk recently brought to light the Ontario Liberals expensive attempt to promote green energy in the province. The mismanagement of energy resulted in a cost of \$37 billion to Ontario electricity users between 2006 and 2014. What do you think of the Ontario Liberals plan to impose a cap and trade system in order to curb greenhouse gas emissions? What would a Conservative



government do about climate change?

Well, there is a few points in there, to start with energy, the Auditor General's report exposed the Liberals on their energy policy. They ignored the recommendations of experts, and it cost everyone more. So to break down the \$37 billion, it's a \$12,000 cost per person in this province, because of their incompetence. Thanks to Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty's incompetence, you are going to pay \$12,000 more than you should have for electricity.

We can't have that. It is absolutely unacceptable and we continue to have mass of surplus of electricity, so we are actually selling energy for less than the cost to produce. You can't even comprehend that. In terms of climate change, I'm not really a climate skeptic, I believe climate change is a real concern and that government needs to work together to combat it, but what my worry with Kathleen Wynne's plan [with regards to the carbon tax] is there are no details, it just appears to be a revenue grab.

I challenge the Premier to make it revenue neutral. Instead, work to help industries, fight greenhouse gas growth, curb climate change. The gov-

ernment had evaded this challenge. So I want to see us tackle climate change, but in a real and tangible fashion. Climate change is important for the Conservative Party.

Question: In 2007, John Tory supported the funding of all faith-based schools in the province, which arguably led to his defeat in the election that year. If you were asked to speak on this issue, what solution would you propose?

I don't support faith based funding. I thought that was a mistake that John Tory ran on. I think he recognized that afterwards and said so. It would not be part of my platform, I have ideas on the education system and not be related to a faith based funding model. It would have more to do with skills engagement in high school, it would be about making financial literacy mandatory, and gearing education to employment, but it would not be about school based on religion.

Question: If elected, how would your government work with the Federal Liberals to ensure the prosperity of Ontario?

Well for me it doesn't matter who is in power, I'm willing to work with anyone. I don't care if it's a Green party, the Liberals, the Conservatives, anyone who is willing to benefit Ontario, I will work with. Sometimes we get too hung up on parties and politics. I think outside of the bubble of the House of Commons, outside Queens Park, the average family only really cares about results. Work together, put your differences aside, and understand that it's about moving the province forward, and moving the country forward, and I would certainly put parties and politics secondary to the best interest of the province I love.

Happy New Year, Canada!

- Governor General of Canada's New Year Message

This is such a special time of year—a time to reflect and a time to look ahead at the months to come.

2015 was quite a year for Canada.

It was the Year of Sport, and Canadians hosted two major international sporting events: the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games, and the FIFA Women's World Cup.

In other spheres, too, Canadians shone brightly last year: I think of Arthur McDonald's well-deserved Nobel Prize in Physics, an honour that made us all proud.

Towards the end of 2015, Canadians also became involved in a major international humanitarian effort to welcome Syrian refugees to our country.

I thank all of you who are showing such generosity to these newest mem-

bers of our Canadian family.

Looking ahead to 2016, my message is this: let's continue together on this bold path of compassion, inclusion, innovation and excellence.

Let's continue to demonstrate to the world what a smart and caring nation can look like in the 21st century.

Let's continue to build the Canada we want our children to live in, and our children's children!

One way we do that is through innovation, improving the way we do things socially, economically and technologically. And in 2016, I'm looking forward to presenting the first-ever Governor General's Innovation Awards to recognize excellence in innovation.

In a world of rapid and profound change, we must continually adapt and

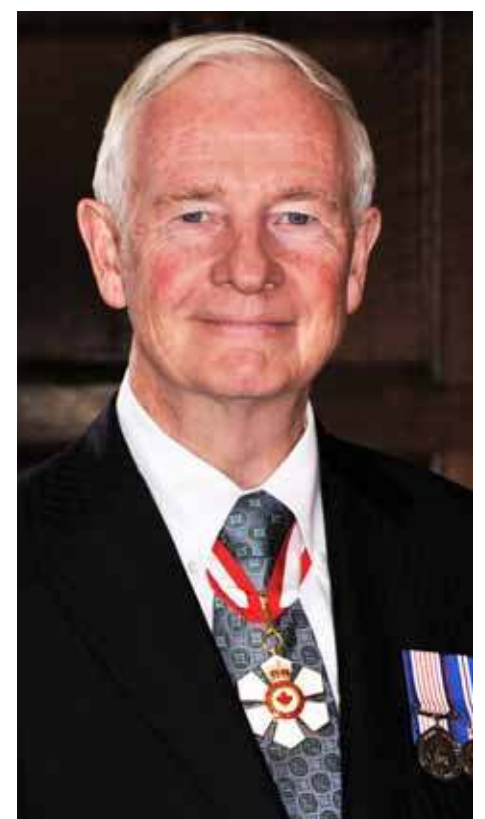
improve, and part of doing that successfully means fostering a culture of innovation and celebrating those who lead the way.

We're so fortunate to live in this great country. With each passing year, I gain a deeper appreciation of how very precious our tolerant, prosperous and beautiful country is.

Just one year from now, we'll be celebrating the 150th birthday of Confederation, so as we innovate let's remember to be collaborative and inclusive in our approach, in keeping with the best of our values.

Now, as always, we're far stronger when we work together.

Once again, happy new year! I look forward to seeing you in 2016.



His Excellency the Right Honourable
David Johnston

from the publisher's desk

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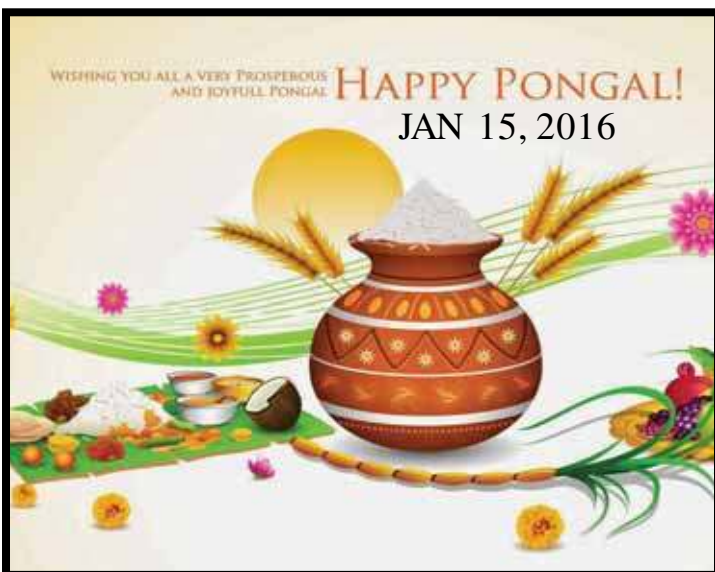
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Thai Pongal

the charming festival of Thanksgiving



“Dawn of the Month of Thai, gives birth to the way” the renowned Tamil proverb has been in the centerpiece of Tamil heritage eternally. Tamil month of ‘Thai’, falling on January 14th/15th is Pongal day, the Tamil Thanksgiving Day celebrating sun, rain, farm cattle and ushering in pureness and prosperity.

In the traditional Tamil habitats of Sri Lanka, even as a traditional livelihood of farming declined over a generation or two ago, the time of the year Thai Pongal falls and the traditions associated with its celebration still makes it an ideal time to take stock of sentiments.

One key aspect of it is that how important “Pongal Santhai” (Pongal market) became prominent when farmers’ markets, particularly in the Jaffna peninsula, used to convene on alternate days etc. When the market convened for the final time before Thai Pongal, the jubilant crowds and their spending habits would be the gauges on how well other sectors and the general spirit of the people would be too for the upcoming year.

Everything depended on a bountiful harvest. This aspect of gauging our sentiments at this time of the year still exists in our tradition, regardless of farming is no longer a way of life for many people.

A “harvest festival” is also celebrated in almost all parts of India and Nepal on this day in a variety of cultural forms known as “Makar Sankranti” etc.

In the olden days, the main traditional Thai Pongal is an outdoor festival of cooking the sweet rice. It involves all members, both female and male and consisting of tender to ripe ages of the household in the preparation of Pongal. As farming trend declined among the populace and migration to urban areas increased out of Sri Lanka – North and East, cooking the traditional Pongal moved inside the homes.

Thai Pongal is a now a tradition much looked forward to by Tamils all over the globe, even in the milieu of winter and deep freeze and making outdoor cooking not possible yet again! The paraphernalia related to Pongal is now trending globally across Tamil communities, such as the observance of month long related festivities. However the ground that is holding all this is the hallmark sweet rice – known as the Pongal.

It is said that Pongal is perhaps the only festival to be named after a dish.

Greeting on Pongal day saying “Pongal ‘o Pongal” signifies the abundance of milk-froth spillover, from the crock or clay pot and other vessels that are used to make the sweet rice – Pongal, as a sign of prosperity and happiness.

Monsoon Journal joins in the celebrations, Wishing “Happy Thai Pongal” and a “Bountiful” year of health and wealth ahead.

Pongalo ‘O Pongal – Happy Thai Pongal to all

Contributed by: By Thiru K. Thirukumaran

“While we are postponing, life speeds by” - Seneca (4 BC - 65 AD) Roman Stoic philosopher

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

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Canada Supports Sri Lanka's Peace-Building Efforts

17 December 2015: The Canadian Government continues to support efforts to rid the country of landmines in villages ravaged by years of Sri Lankan civil war. An effort with an end in sight.

The Government is providing CAD\$850,000 in 2015-2016 to nongovernmental organization Mines Advisory Group (MAG) to keep thousands of men, women and children safe from the mines and unexploded bombs that continue to litter the land six years after the end of the country's long conflict.

Speaking from a minefield in the northern district of Mannar today,

These deadly remnants of war prevent farmers from being able to use their land, restrict access to water sources, and hinder resettlement plans for thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were forced to flee during periods of prolonged fighting.

With continued international support, MAG anticipates that the entire country can be free from the impact of mines by 2020. Speaking today, MAG Sri Lanka Country Director Alistair Moir said: "Sri Lanka remains a country where MAG removes a staggering amount of landmines. Each one that is removed brings greater safety and



High Commissioner of Canada to Sri Lanka and Maldives, H.E. Shelley Whiting [fifth from right] with a MAG demining team in Mannar District, and Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mangala Samaraweera [third from left]. - Photo: Rishikeshan Pangushan / Illuminate Artist

the High Commissioner of Canada to Sri Lanka and Maldives, H.E. Shelley Whiting said: "The demining activities that we had the honour of seeing today underscored for me the critical importance of demining work in Sri Lanka.

"Clearance of landmines is a necessary precursor to peace and security for all Sri Lankans and is a key component of Sri Lanka's broader plans for reconciliation and resettlement. Canada's support to MAG is playing an important role in helping Sri Lanka meet its objective of being mine-impact free by 2020. Seeing MAG's work today and noting the level of strong and constructive coordination with government at all levels, I am confident that this objective will be met."

less fear for families who'd been living with the daily threat of death and injury. Safe land means people can move around freely and use farmland, which has such a sustained and positive impact on their lives and livelihoods.

"This is the tangible nature of our work, and we very much look forward to the Government of Sri Lanka declaring a status of 'mine impact free' before 2020. Canadian funds have been and remain vital in achieving this."

During 2015, MAG removed 8,776 landmines and unexploded bombs in Sri Lanka. In addition, more than 25 million square metres of land has been released in 2015 – either cleared of danger or deemed to be safe following survey – enabling thousands of people

Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security benefit amounts effective January 1, 2016

Employment and Social Development Canada on December 30th, 2015 announced the benefit amounts for the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) effective January 1, 2016.

CPP benefits will increase by 1.2 percent for those already receiving CPP benefits. For 2016, the maximum CPP retirement benefit for new recipients age 65 will be \$1,092.50 per month, an increase of \$330 for the year compared to the 2015 maximum CPP retirement benefit.

The new CPP rates will be in effect until December 31, 2016. CPP benefits are revised once a year, in January, based on changes over the 12-month period (November 2014 to October 2015) in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is the cost-of-living measure used by Statistics Canada.

OAS benefits, which consist of the basic OAS pension, the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and the Allowances, will increase by 0.1 percent for the first quarter of 2016 (January



to March). As of January 1, 2016, the basic OAS pension will increase from \$569.95 to \$570.52 per month.

OAS benefits are also based on the CPI, but are reviewed quarterly (in January, April, July and October) and revised as required to reflect increases in the cost of living as measured by the CPI. Although OAS and CPP benefits are not indexed at the same time, they are both adjusted with the cost of living over a given year. - news.gc.ca



to rebuild their lives.

High Commissioner Whiting added: "Canada's support builds on the significant work already undertaken in mine clearing in the country by the Government of Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan army and international demining organizations such as MAG.

"The devastating impact of landmines on civilians is without question. It is my hope that the considerable work undertaken by the Government of Sri Lanka with the support of partners such as Canada, will save lives, facilitate returns and lead to eventual accession by Sri Lanka of relevant international treaties aimed at bringing an end to the use of these indiscriminate weapons."

Sri Lanka's 25-year civil war left large areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces heavily contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO).

Following the end of the conflict in 2009, this became a major impediment to the resettlement of thousands of IDPs and was identified as the main priority of the Government of Sri Lanka

during the post-war period.

Mine action agencies, including MAG, were tasked to use all available resources to clear residential areas and their immediate surroundings in order to facilitate safe returns.

By the end of 2012, a total of 467,553 IDPs had come back to the north and east. As the returning population grew, however, people set up home beyond areas that were cleared during the emergency response, in close proximity to hazardous areas.

Now classified as high priority for mine and UXO clearance, these sites include vast areas of agricultural and forested land, on which the majority of returnees are dependent for food, firewood and building materials.

Sri Lanka now considers itself to be in the final phase of demining and significant progress has been made. It is important that momentum continues, and the support for international agencies over the next two years will be critical. (Full Text of Press Release-Mines Advisory Group)



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B.C. Government appoints South Asian lawyer a provincial court judge: Valli Chettiar

The British Columbia government has appointed five new provincial court judges to ensure the court can continue to improve access to justice, Attorney General and Minister of Justice Suzanne Anton announced recently.

The five judges include Valli Chettiar, a Tamil woman of Indian origin.

The appointments of the five judges are effective, as follows:

Judge Valli Chettiar – July 31.

Judge Kathryn Ferriss – July 31.

Judge Christine Lowe – August 4.

Judge Jay Solomon – August 7.

Judge Danny Sudeyko – August 17.

The judges will be assigned to locations determined by the chief judge to meet the needs of the court.

The process to appoint judges involves several steps: Interested lawyers apply and the B.C. Judicial Council, a committee made up of the chief judge, provincial court judges, lawyers and lay people, review the candidates; and the committee recommends potential

judges to the Attorney General, with the final appointment made through a Cabinet order-in-council.

JUDGE Chettiar graduated with her law degree from the University of British Columbia in 1992 and was called to the bar in 1993. She clerked for the Supreme Court of British Columbia. She has more than 20 years' legal experience in a number of areas including: administrative law; civil litigation; mediation and arbitration; corporate and commercial; securities; taxation; wills, estates and trusts; real property; and corporate governance. She has practiced as a sole practitioner, partner of a national law firm, general counsel and in-house corporate counsel for both public and private corporations. She recently served as Vice Chair of the Property Assessment Appeal Board and as Mediator/Arbitrator for the Surface Rights Board. She has also served on the Health Professions Review Board.



Judge Chettiar has served on many other organizations in various roles including the following: Director and Vice-President of the B.C. Council of Administrative Tribunals and Chair of its Conference Committee; Member of the Practice Standards, Credentials and Equity and Diversity Committees of The Law Society of British Columbia; Elected Member of the National and BC Councils of the Canadian Bar Association; Member of the CBA BC Branch Executive Committee; Member of the BC Law Institute's Succession Law Reform Subcommittee, Govern-

ment of BC Asia Pacific Trade Council India Market Advisory Group, and SFU Presidential Advisory Council on India; President of the Canada-India Business Council (BC Chapter); Director of the Canada-India Business Council, BC Council for International Education and St. Jude's Anglican Home; Corporate Director of two BC crown corporations and Chair of their Governance and Human Resources Committee; and Chair of the Investment and Corporate Governance Committee of the Portfolio Management Association of Canada.

Judge Chettiar has lectured extensively and has taught law. She is the recipient of the 2012 CBA Touchstone Award, the 2008 CBA BC Branch Equality and Diversity Award, and the 2004 Pravasi Excellence Award from the NRI Institute for excellence in law and contribution toward socio-economic development of Canada and India. She has been profiled in the 2006 and 2008 Women in the Lead / Femmes de Tête directories and the UBC Peter A. Allard School of Law History Project. She has also been nominated for other awards including the UBC Alumni Achievement Awards – Alumni Award of Distinction, the Vancouver YWCA Women of Distinction Award, and the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

RE/MAX Ace Realty Inc., Brokerage opens new office in Scarborough on January 23rd, 2016

RE/MAX Ace Realty Inc., Brokerage will be opening their new office in Scarborough on January 23rd at 1286, Kennedy Road, Unit 3, Toronto (Phone: 416-270-1111)

The Brokerage is independently owned and operated. The Broker of Record is Rathees Paramalingam and the Manager is Sri Nadarajasundram.

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10 YEARS



Mother Teresa to Be Sainted After 2nd Miracle Declared: Vatican

Mother Teresa, who dedicated her life to helping India's poor, will be made a saint in the Roman Catholic Church, the Vatican said Friday, Dec. 18th.

She will likely be canonized in September to coincide with the 19th anniversary of her death and Pope Francis' Holy Year of Mercy according to an Italian Catholic newspaper report.

The pontiff marked his 79th birthday on Thursday by approving a decree that the nun had performed a second miracle 11 years after her death, the Vatican confirmed in a statement.

She was beatified in 2003 as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta for healing an Indian woman's tumor through divine intervention, but full sainthood requires the declaration of two miracles. Her Missionaries of Charity helped the poor on the streets of the city, now known as Kolkata. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. "We are all absolutely delighted about the news," Sister Ita of the Missionaries of Charity told NBC News from its headquarters in the center of the city. "We are very happy to hear about the canonization and we look forward to hearing more details in due course."

The miracle needed for her canonization involved the curing of a man

in Santos, Brazil, with a serious viral brain infection, according to Father Brian Kolodiejchiuk, a Missionaries of Charity Father who worked closely with Mother Teresa for 20 years and spearheaded the cause of her sainthood. "The patient's wife continuously sought the intercession of the Blessed Mother Teresa for her husband," he said in a statement explaining the event. The unidentified man was in a coma and about to undergo an emergency operation when a neuro surgeon "returned to the operating room and found the patient inexplicably awake and without pain," the statement said. The patient made an immediate and full recovery. Despite tests showing that prolonged drug treatment had made him sterile, he went on to have two children, Kolodiejchiuk said.

Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Macedonia, Mother Teresa died on Sept. 5, 1997, aged 87.

Francis created six new saints in 2014 — two Indians and four Italians — praising their "creative" commitment to helping the poor.

When Mother Teresa is canonized, no fewer than four countries will celebrate her as their own saint. She was born in what is now the Former



Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, and she lived most of her life in India, where she died and was buried. Albania, which still claims her remains, named the airport, a square and a hospital in the capital Tirana after her, has made Oct. 19, the day she was beatified, a

national public holiday. Macedonia has opened a museum containing relics and memories from her early in Skopje, where she lived until she was 18, and built a several-meters high bronze statue of her. Kosovo, meanwhile, named the main street in its capital Pristina in her honor.

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Making rice healthier

From the web portal of – International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) – An Organization which aims to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability of rice farming:

Two billion people suffer from what is known as “hidden hunger,” or micronutrient malnutrition. They get enough macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein, and fat) from their diet, but not enough micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) that are essential to good health.

Hidden hunger can result in more frequent and severe illness and complications during pregnancy, childbirth, infancy, and childhood.

Many people in Asia rely heavily on rice for most or their entire calorie needs because they cannot afford or do not have access to a full range of nutritious food such as fruits, vegetables, and foods from animal sources (e.g., meat, dairy products, and eggs). As a result, lack of iron, zinc, and vitamin A has become prevalent micronutrient deficiencies in rice-



consuming countries. The cost of these deficiencies in terms of lives and quality of life lost is enormous, and women and children are most at risk.

Because rice is the dominant cereal crop in most Asian countries and is the staple food for more than half of the world's population (including many of those living in poverty), even a small increase in the micronutrient content of rice grains could have a significant impact on human health.

Healthier rice varieties have the potential to reach many people because rice is already widely grown and eaten. IRRI is developing rice varieties that have more iron, zinc, and beta carotene content to help people get more of these important micronutrients. These healthier rice varieties can complement current strategies to reduce micronutrient deficiencies.

High-iron rice

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that 2 billion people—or about 30% of the world's population—are anemic, many due to iron deficiency. A July 2013 article published in *The Lancet* confirmed that anemia is a risk factor for maternal death. The condition is exacerbated by hemorrhage, the leading cause (23%) of maternal deaths.

In developing countries, instances of iron deficiency anemia (IDA) are higher.

Certain population groups, particularly women, children, and the elderly, are also more prone to developing IDA. In the Philippines, the National Nutrition Survey of 2008 revealed that IDA affected 19% of the national population. IDA is highest among infants (56%), followed by pregnant women (43%) and the elderly (33%). For women and children, the main cause of IDA is an increased iron requirement coupled with very low dietary iron intake.

IDA not only affects the health of the individual but can also influence the overall productivity of the population. Estimates from WHO suggest that treatment of IDA can boost national productivity levels by up to 20%.

Most of the iron in the rice grain is accumulated in the external part of the grain. Consequently, the iron content of rice drops significantly after polishing. Thus, population groups who eat rice as a staple and consume minimal amounts of iron-rich food are likely to develop iron deficiency.

What IRRI is doing

IRRI is using biotechnology approaches that safely and responsibly deliver additional benefits to farmers and consumers that cannot be achieved through conventional breeding. One of these approaches is the genetic modification of rice to increase the iron concentration in the endosperm (the part of the rice grain retained after polishing). This approach also has the added benefit of simultaneously boosting zinc levels in the endosperm.

IRRI strives to ensure that the development of any genetically modified (GM) rice will be done in full compliance with national and international biosafety regulations. Advanced bioavailability studies will also be conducted prior to the public release of any GM rice variety to verify its effectiveness in reducing a particular micronutrient deficiency.

The potential impact

The potential impact of GM high-iron rice on child and maternal nutrition is very promising and can complement current dietary interventions to alleviate iron deficiency.

Rice is an important staple food and provides as much as 80% of the daily calorie intake of populations in developing countries. The majority of these populations consume rice as polished white grains, which contain low amounts of iron.

Biofortification offers the opportunity to increase the iron content of rice and thus elevate baseline iron levels in a large part of the population, especially those who are at risk of developing iron deficiency.

High-zinc rice

Micronutrients such as zinc, iron, selenium, and vitamin B12 are important for human health. Zinc is involved in more bodily functions than any other mineral, and is thus essential for survival. Zinc deficiency causes stunting and has serious consequences for health, particularly dur-

Celebrations in New York to mark the 60th anniversary of Sri Lanka-UN relations

The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka in New York celebrated on December 14, 2015, the 60th anniversary of the admission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations with an archival photographic exhibition, which was followed by a breakfast reception.

Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was admitted to the United Nations on 14th December, 1955, along with Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Laos, Libya, Nepal, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, following its application to join the Organization in 1948.

The archival photographic exhibition that illustrated the key milestones of Sri Lanka-UN relations since 1955, were held at the Permanent Mission premises with the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the fifteen countries that were admitted to the United Nations along with Sri Lanka sixty years ago, as well as senior UN officials.

Making his welcome remarks at the event, Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Rohan Perera gave a brief account of the excellent relations that Sri Lanka has been maintaining with the United Nations as an active member of the Organization. He elaborated on the significant role that Sri Lanka has been playing since its admission to the United Nations, including as a member of the Security Council and a leading contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping operations, and how the Organization has, in turn, contributed to the socio-economic development in Sri Lanka.

Ambassador Perera also gave an account of the prominent Sri Lankan diplomats who have held many a high position in the United Nations including that of the Presidency of the General Assembly, the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, as well as the important resolutions that Sri Lanka has successfully proposed and piloted through the General Assembly including on the Indian Ocean Peace Zone, International Year for Shelter for Homeless, the inter-



national recognition of the Day of Vesak, and the World Youth Skills Day.

Ambassador Rohan Perera further observed that like in relations among states, the relations between Sri Lanka and the United Nations have also undergone ups and downs over the years, in particular during the past few years. However, with the changes in the Sri Lankan political landscape, Sri Lanka has resolved to positively engage with the United Nations with a renewed vigour to further the existing relations and to resume its position as a responsible member of the international community. He added “we are committed to the ideal of decency and mutual respect in dealings among nations, to the protection and promotion of human rights and preserving the dignity of all people, irrespective of race, gender, colour or creed”.

Ambassador Rohan Perera later participated in a luncheon jointly hosted by the Permanent Representatives of the said sixteen countries in honour of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to mark the 60th anniversary of their joint admission to the United Nations.

A short video documentary on “Sri Lanka's sixty years in the United Nations” produced by the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, was also screened on this occasion.

ing childhood when zinc requirements are highest.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that zinc deficiency is largely related to inadequate intake or absorption of zinc from the diet, although excessive loss of zinc from diarrhea may also contribute.

What IRRI is doing

Within the wide genetic diversity of rice is germplasm that has comparatively higher zinc in the rice grain. This germplasm can be used to breed high-zinc high-yielding rice varieties. With the support of IRRI, the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute was able to develop and release high-zinc rice in Bangladesh.

IRRI is also investigating the bioavailability of zinc in high-zinc rice, in collaboration with institutions from Bangladesh, the University of California-Davis, and other international organizations. IRRI is also leading a collaborative project to develop high-zinc rice for release in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Golden Rice

Vitamin A deficiency is a serious public health problem affecting millions of children and pregnant women globally. Golden Rice is a new type of rice that contains beta carotene, a source of vitamin A. Golden Rice is being developed as a potential new food-based approach to improve vitamin A status. - (irri.org)



Climate change and your food: Ten facts



What a warming world means for agriculture and feeding the planet – via fao.org (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Here are ten facts about how a change climate affects our ability to grow food and feed ourselves. Help spread the word about the implications of climate change for global food security:

1. 75% of the world's poor & food insecure people rely on agriculture & natural resources for their livelihoods

2. FAO estimates that world food production must rise 60% to keep pace with demographic change. Climate Change puts this at risk.

3. According to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, crop yield declines of 10-25% may be widespread by 2050 due to Climate Change

4. Rising temperatures are predicted to reduce catches of the world's main fish species by 40%.

5. Although global emissions from deforestation have dropped, deforestation &

forest degradation account for 10-11% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions from forest degradation (logging & fires) increased from 0.4 to 1.0 gt cO2 per year between 1990 & 2015.

6. Livestock contributes nearly 2/3 of agriculture's greenhouse & 78% of its methane emissions.

7. Climate Change can transfer risks of food-borne diseases from 1 region to another, threatening public health in new ways.

8. FAO estimates that the potential to reduce emissions from livestock production (methane esp.) is about 30% of baseline emissions.

9. Currently, 1/3 of the food we produce is either lost or wasted. The global costs of food wastage ≈\$2.6 trillion/yr, including \$700 billion of environmental costs & \$900 billion of social costs.

10. Global food loss & waste generate about 8% of humankind's annual greenhouse gas emissions.

Powerful El Niño intensifying in Asia and the Pacific region

The ongoing El Niño weather pattern in the Asia and Pacific is likely to be one of the strongest since 1998 and will continue into early 2016, according to a new United Nations advisory, which urges regional cooperation for early warning, in-season mitigation, and long-term adaptation strategies to curb climate risk.

"The impact of the 2015-2016 El Niño could be even more severe in certain locations, such as the uplands of Cambodia, central and southern India, eastern Indonesia, the central and southern Philippines, central and northeast Thailand..." stated the Third Advisory Note on El Niño issued jointly by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES).

While many southeast Asian countries, particularly India and Sri Lanka, expect to face severe flooding caused by heavy rainfalls, some Pacific islands – Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu, among others – have been experiencing a serious drought, causing water shortage and food insecurity, according to the report.

"One of the most significant impacts is on agriculture, which is a key component of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product)

for many Pacific countries," warned the report.

Noting that the current UN climate change conference (COP21) in Paris has discussed and addressed the impacts brought by El Niño, and that

actions are being taken in some countries, the publication provided key guidance in this regard.

Regional cooperation, the note stressed, is of great importance, given the transboundary nature of El Niño risks.

Early warning and monitoring, pre- or in-season mitigation, adaptation and response, as well as long-term risk management should be considered to tackle some shared vulnerabilities and risks.

"Only by coming together in the spirit of cooperation can the Asia-Pacific region hope to become truly disaster resilient and achieve sustainable development in the future," said the guidance.

– UN.org



A mother carries her daughter as they evacuate from Typhoon Koppu-hit town of Laur, Philippines, on 19 October 2015. The ongoing El Niño pattern is likely to be one of the strongest since 1998 and will continue into early 2016. Photo: UNICEF/Jeffrey Maitem

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Around the World

World Tsunami Awareness Day welcome

boost for disaster risk reduction - UN official

The head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction today welcomed the resolution adopted by the General Assembly recognizing 5 November as World Tsunami Awareness Day.

"Many disasters would not happen and many lives and livelihoods would be saved if there was greater public awareness of the threats posed by natural hazards such as tsunamis," Margareta Wahlström, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, said in a statement, welcoming the designation of the day as a "welcome step."

"It will help to focus attention on measures which can be taken to reduce risks from both man-made and natural hazards and to ensure that more people live and work in places which are free from the threat not just of tsunamis but other sudden onset hazards such as earthquakes, floods and storms."

The proposal was first suggested by the Japanese Government after the Third UN Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai in March this year.

Japan has suffered heavy losses as a result of tsunamis, most recently the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsu-

nami of 11 March 2011, which claimed over 15,000 lives, disrupted the nuclear power industry and left many thousands homeless.

"It should be remembered that the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami which claimed some 230,000 lives from countries across the world galvanised political commitment to reducing disaster risk and disaster losses," Ms. Wahlström added.

"The memory of that event helped to ensure the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction this year which sets targets for the first time on reducing mortality, the numbers of people affected, economic losses and damage to critical infrastructure from disasters."

- UN.org

The 2004 - Boxing Day Tsunami Remembrance was held all across Sri Lanka. Pictures here are from Jaffna District parliamentarian M.A. Sumanthiran of the Tamil National Alliance attending the events at Uduthurai in Vadamarachchi East, on December 26, 2015. Relatives paid homage to their loved ones on this day.



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Photo taken in 2013 at Queens Park, when Thesa Theiventhiran's client Vasu, presented his success story in finding a professional job for himself and his wife in Canada.

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- Nima F Says

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- Saghir U Says

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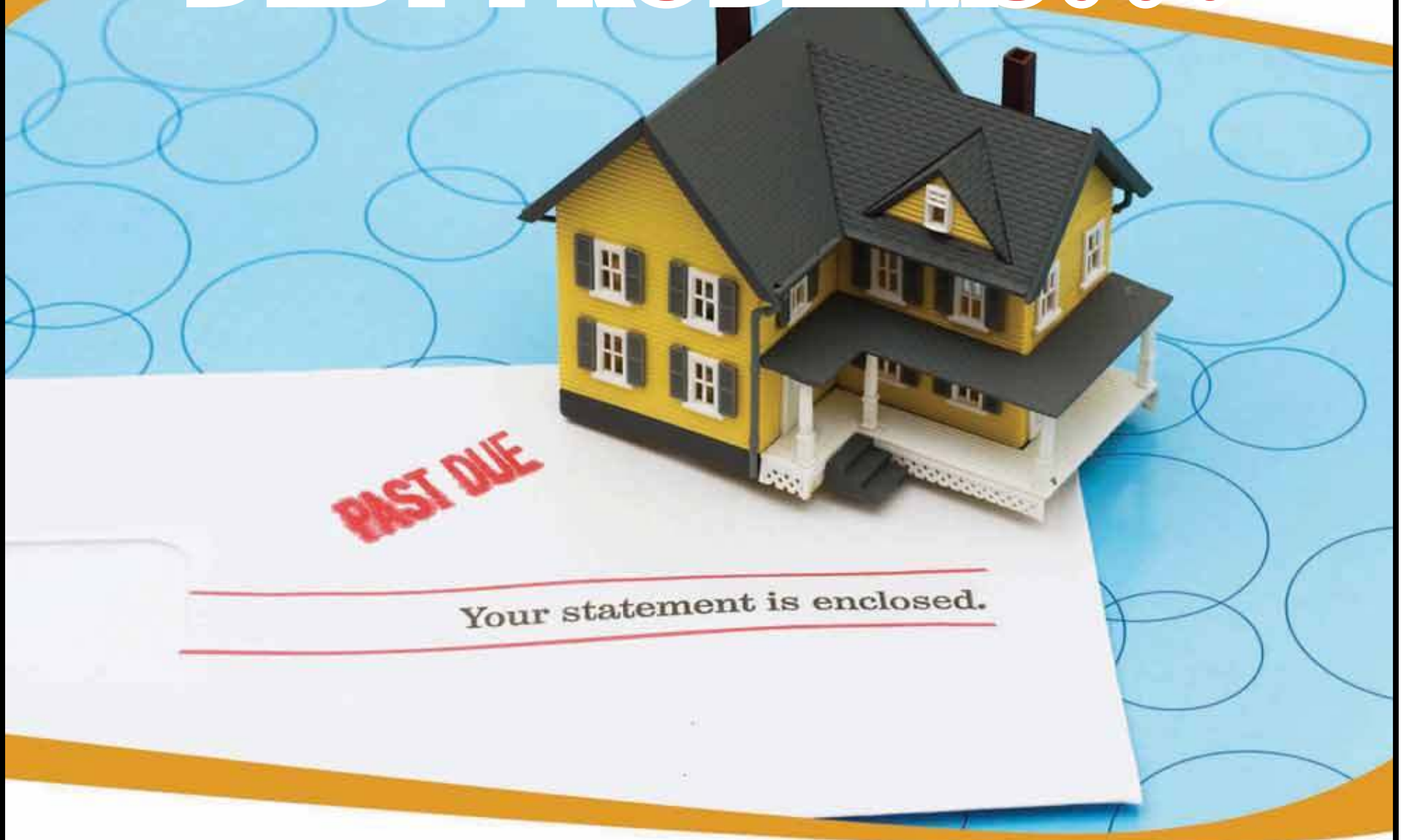



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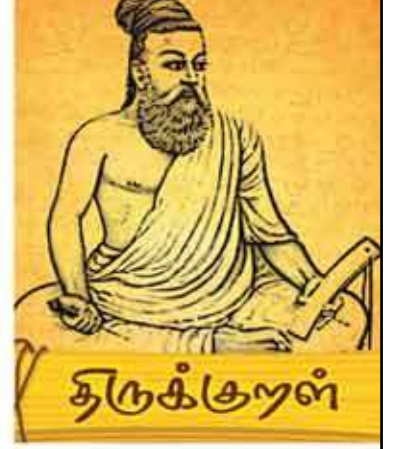
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Tamil Heritage Month Contests

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**Theme: கற்க கசடறக் கற்பவை கற்றபின்
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Grades 10–12: 350 – 500 words (Times New Roman, Size 12 double spaced)

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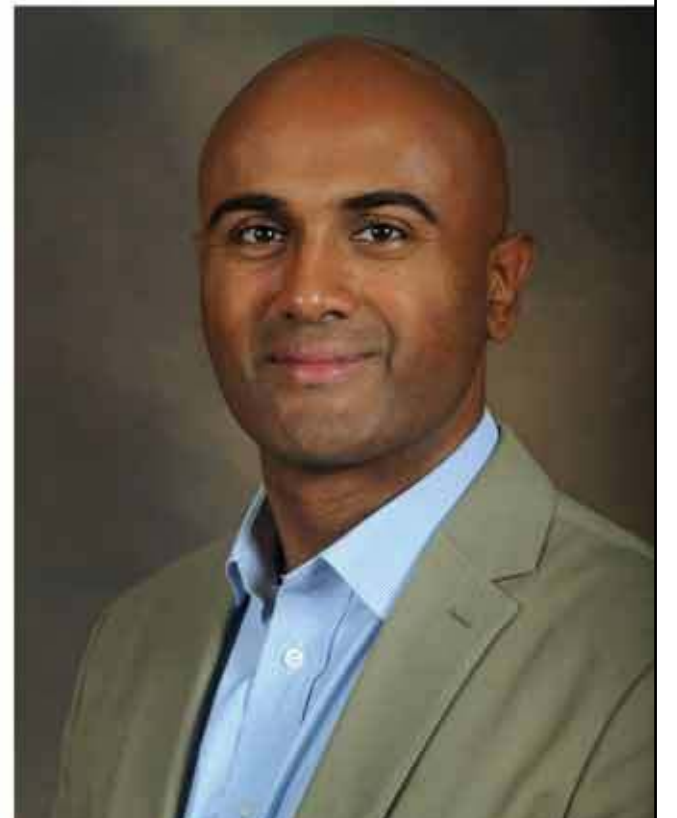
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Rouge Valley named one of Greater Toronto Area's top employers

Recognized for opportunities for learning and advancement for staff

Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) has been recognized as one of Greater Toronto's Top Employers for 2016.

Rouge Valley was one of 100 employers in the Greater Toronto Area that received the honour, out of an applicant pool of 8,000. Managed by Mediacorp Canada Inc., the winners were featured in a special magazine insert in The Globe and Mail yesterday. This is the tenth annual edition, and highlights how various sectors in numerous are competing to hire the best and brightest employees the area has to offer.

"At Rouge Valley, we strive to be a workplace of choice. One of the key ways that we support this is by investing in the development of our employees," says Kathy Gooding, vice president, human resources, RVHS. "We offer tuition assistance for those who wish to pursue higher education; we sponsor professional workshops and lunchtime education events across the organization; and we even hold an annual Celebration of Learning to recognize staff who have earned certificates, diplomas, or degrees each year. We truly have a culture of learning here at Rouge Valley."

Gooding adds, "Early in November this year, we held a nursing fair at Rouge Valley, looking to hire for 50 positions. Within two weeks, we had over 1,600 applicants. People really want to join our

team."

Once again this year, employers were evaluated on the following criteria: physical workplace; work atmosphere and social; health, financial and family benefits; vacation and time-off; employee communications; performance management; training and skills development; and community involvement.

Some of the reasons why RVHS was selected as one of Greater Toronto's Top Employers (2016):

- Tuition assistance for employees that includes subsidies for courses taken and for professional accreditation;

- Workplace wellness initiatives that include implementing the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety Management System framework, providing a healthy workplace series of seminars and supports, as well as offering bibliotherapy (a systematic use of reading materials to help people cope with mental, physical, emotional, developmental or social problems) and exercise and fitness opportunities and discounts;

- Maternity and parental leave top-up payments, with up to 93 per cent of salary for up to 35 weeks with an option to extend their leave into an unpaid leave of absence;

- Retirement planning workshops and phased-in work options to help employees save and prepare for the future.

Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) - The best at what we do.

Rouge Valley Health System is an excellent acute care community hospital with many programs, including 24/7/365 emergency, obstetrics, paediatrics, surgery, mental health and regional cardiac care. Rouge Valley consists of several health sites, including two community hospital campuses: Rouge Valley Centenary in east Toronto; and

Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering in west Durham. Together, a team of physicians, nurses and many other professionals care for a broad spectrum of health conditions.

Working in consultation and partnership with community members, other hospitals, health care organizations, the Central East Local Health Integration Network and the

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Rouge Valley continues to improve its programs and cater to the needs of the growing communities of east Toronto, Pickering,

Ajax and Whitby.

Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto opens two Family Rooms at Rouge Valley Centenary

Partnership creates a retreat within the hospital – and an early holiday present – for families with ill children



Families of seriously ill children at Rouge Valley Centenary hospital now have a much needed new resource to help them cope, thanks to Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) Toronto.

Two RMHC Toronto Family Rooms officially opened their doors today so parents can find a "home away from home" just steps away from where their sick child is being treated. Research shows that parents who stay close to their ill children are able to be more involved in their clinical decision-making and care.

"The Ronald McDonald Family Rooms at Rouge Valley Centenary (RVC) are a core part of our mission to provide an environment that keeps families close so they can heal better together," says Stephanie Karapita, Chief Executive Officer, RMHC Toronto. "The rooms are comforting and relaxing spaces where parents can rest and recharge away from the clinical environment. We are delighted to be able to support more local families than ever before by partnering with the Rouge Valley Health System."

Andrée Robichaud, President and CEO of Rouge Valley Health System, says, "We thank Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto for choosing to partner with us on this initiative for children and families. These two Family Rooms come to us at Rouge Valley as a gift to our community. This is a wonderful enhancement to our hospital – perfectly aligned with our focus on providing quality patient and family-centred care. We also thank our Rouge Valley Health System Foundation for helping nurture the partnership with RMHC Toronto."

The two Ronald McDonald Family Rooms will support families with children in paediatrics and the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at RVC. The NICU and paediatrics provide vital health care services to many families in the community. Last year, 436 babies were cared for in the NICU and 1,260 young patients in paediatrics. The paediatric program encompasses sickle cell care in partnership with The Hospital for Sick Children, can-

cer services delivered in partnership with the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, an allergy and immunology clinic, a day surgery program and clinics, as well as modern birthing facilities at both of its hospital campuses.

The Family Room spaces are equipped with a lounge area and TV, a kitchenette stocked with beverages and snacks, and washrooms with shower facilities. A key feature of each Family Room is a private sleep room and a rest and respite area. Inspired by first-class airline lounges, the Rest and Respite areas include recliners in individual pods with custom-built privacy screens to allow parents and immediate caregivers to rest without distraction.

Since the Family Rooms at RVC first opened on December 1, there already have been close to 300 visits by 30 different families. The spaces are open and staffed every day from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., with the sleep rooms available 24 hours a day.

The two new Family Rooms are the fourth and fifth in RMHC Toronto's growing network of Family Rooms across the GTA. Family Rooms have opened at The Hospital for Sick Children in 2014, at Markham Stouffville Hospital in 2013 and at The Credit Valley Hospital of the Trillium Health Partners in 2012.

About Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto

Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto has been fulfilling its mission since 1981 to provide a "home away from home" for seriously ill children and their families to heal better together. It operates a House for 81 children and their families in downtown Toronto and Family Rooms in four hospitals across the GTA. Last year, 750 families stayed at the House and close to 2,400 families visited our Family Rooms. Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto is an independent charity, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

For more information, visit www.rmhc-toronto.ca.



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Local in Spirit. Global in Care.



By Robert Biron

This past month has been quite an exciting one for everyone here at The Scarborough Hospital (TSH). On November 18 and 19, we marked 90 years of service to the Scarborough community with events to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Birchmount campus, as well as the upcoming 60th anniversary of the General campus in 2016. As much as these events paid tribute to our proud history, they also marked the official launch of TSH's new tagline Local in Spirit. Global in Care, now featured on the hospital's updated logo.

Our 90th anniversary events were truly the perfect place to introduce this new tagline. The words Local in Spirit speak to our deep roots in Scarborough and how proud we are to embody the

strong, tenacious spirit of our community. When Scarborough General Hospital (now our General campus) opened its doors on May 12, 1956, the hospital was surrounded by farmland and Lawrence Avenue and McCowan Road were nothing more than dirt roads. Over the years, Scarborough has evolved into the vibrant, diverse community we know today. And, as Scarborough has continued to transform, so has our hospital along with it.

Global in Care reflects this unwavering focus and passion to understand the unique health care needs of our global community and what makes our corner of Toronto so remarkable. We strive to ensure that every single person who seeks our help – from those who call Scarborough home to those living further afield; from the recently arrived to those who have lived here for generations – receives the highest level of care in a welcoming, inclusive, and healing environment.

Global in Care also signifies our longstanding history of innovation to improve health care locally, within Ontario, and even across Canada and

internationally. Consider just a few of our 'firsts':

- The first burn unit in Canada opened at Scarborough General Hospital in 1968;

- In 1988, we were the first hospital in Ontario to introduce the labour, delivery, recovery, and post-partum model of care, providing all care to new moms in the same hospital room;

- We were the first community hospital to administer "clot-busting drugs" in 30 minutes or less in 1994;

- We pioneered universal screening for Sickle Cell disease for all newborns in 1996 – a process that was ultimately adopted at all Ontario hospitals;

- In 2010, we launched the first formal, non-volunteer based Doula program at an Ontario hospital;

- In 2014, TSH became the first hospital in Canada to deliver Internet-Assisted Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as part of our Mental Health Adult Outpatient Program; and,

- We launched our first-in-Canada Centre for Integrative Medicine with the University of Toronto in 2014, which is focused on helping health care

providers and patients make informed choices about the safe and effective use of complementary therapies alongside Western medicine.

These are just a few examples of the extensive health system leadership we have demonstrated over the years. In recognition of our 90th anniversary, we have launched a special website – tsh-history.ca – that includes a full list of our many historical milestones. The website is also a place where everyone can share their greatest memories of TSH. Those who share their memories with us by May 2016 will be entered into a draw to win a prize.

I often end my messages with a thank you. However, it's quite an exceptional honour to be able to extend these sentiments as President and CEO of TSH during such a momentous point in our organization's history. So, to our staff, physicians, volunteers, patients, donors, and community, thank you for the contributions you have made to our rich history, as well as your continued support that is helping us to build an even brighter future.

The Scarborough Hospital Endorses Recommendations of the Scarborough-West Durham Expert Panel

Independent Panel calls for immediate capital investments in all three Scarborough hospitals, as well as to begin the planning for the construction of a new hospital

The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) welcomes the Report of the Scarborough-West Durham Expert Panel released today. TSH is pleased that the Report addresses three key objectives that will advance health services for the Scarborough community:

- Begin planning for the siting and construction of a new comprehensive acute care hospital in Scarborough;

- Make immediate to short-term capital investments to ensure that existing facilities continue to support quality patient care until new hospital facilities are built in Scarborough; and,

- Create an integrated hospital system under one corporation and one Board of Directors to oversee the three Scarborough hospital sites and the development of a single master plan.

TSH supports the recommendation of the Expert Panel to create one integrated hospital system in Scarborough and one integrated hospital system in Durham as these are distinct communities with very different health care needs.

The Expert Panel recommends that the three hospitals located in Scarborough would be integrated into one sys-

tem, specifically TSH General (located at McCowan / Lawrence), TSH Birchmount (located at Birchmount / Finch), and Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) Centenary (located at Neilson / Ellesmere). TSH believes that establishing this unified Scarborough hospital system is an important first step to fully implementing the Panel's recommendations.

"The recommendations of the Expert Panel put the needs of patients and communities first. If fully implemented, the changes will result in better and more equitable access to care for the Scarborough community – one of the most diverse communities in Canada, but also one with disadvantaged and vulnerable populations," said Janet Dalicandro, Board Chair, TSH.

TSH encourages the government to accept the Expert Panel's recommendations, and to move quickly to implement its recommendations. For example, there is an immediate need to invest in and expand the Birchmount and Centenary Emergency Departments to ensure that existing facilities are better able to serve the community.



"Having a unified hospital system in Scarborough will benefit the entire community," said Robert Biron, President and CEO, TSH. "Patient care will be better coordinated and it will be easier for patients to navigate and access a range of high quality services, close to home."

"We thank the Expert Panel for taking such a thorough and consultative approach," continued Janet Dalicandro,

"and we look forward to working collaboratively with the government, the Central East LHIN, the Scarborough community, patients, staff, union partners, physicians, and RVHS to build a strong, integrated hospital system for the Scarborough community."

The full report can be found on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website. It can also be found on the hospital's website at www.tsh.to.



Receiving Care During the Flu Season

Emergency Departments (ED) in the Greater Toronto Area typically experience higher patient volumes during the winter season. This is partly attributed to the annual flu season, which often peaks during the holidays. This year will be no exception.

The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) would like to remind the community that ED patients are seen on a triaged basis, which means the most serious cases are seen first. If your health care needs are not an emergency, there are other health care providers and options available in the community that may be more appropriate, including:

- Family physicians
- Urgent Care, Walk-in, or After

Hours Clinics

- Telehealth Ontario (call toll-free to speak to a Registered Nurse at 1-866-797-0000

or TTY: 1-866-797-0007)

Visiting Patients at TSH

If you are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough, head ache, muscle pain, sore throat, fatigue, weakness, nasal congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, you should avoid visiting patients at the hospital. Instead, consider sending them a card or email, or give them a call. This will prevent the transmission of your cold/flu symptoms to hospital patients and staff.

Protecting Yourself and Others

The best way to prevent the flu is to get your flu shot, which is available from most family physician offices, community health centres, walk-in clinics, and pharmacies. The flu shot is your best line of defense against the flu, and by getting your shot, you're also helping to protect your family and friends.

Proper hand hygiene goes a long way to help keep yourself and others healthy. Washing with soap and water for at least 15 seconds helps prevent the spread of the flu virus, which can live on your hands for up to three hours. If your hands are not visibly soiled, hand sanitizer is another effective way to keep your hands germ-free.

Using a dime-sized amount of sanitizer, rub your hands together, and continue until the sanitizer is dry.

For more information on health care options and the flu, visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's webpage at www.ontario.ca.



TSH welcomes and is ready to serve Syrian refugees settling in Scarborough

Hospital has a variety of longstanding programs and services available for newcomers; will be participating in information and resource event for Syrian refugees in Scarborough

The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) welcomes Syrian refugees settling in Scarborough and throughout Toronto. The hospital's many well-established programs and services for newcomers are ready to meet their health care needs.

"No matter if you are a newcomer to Canada or have lived here all your life, finding the right health and community services where and when you need them can be challenging. However, our community offers many exceptional supports to its residents and we're proud to count The Scarborough Hospital as one of them, providing world-class health care close to home," said Waheeda Rahman, Director, Organizational Development and Diversity at TSH.

Programs and services at TSH that can assist newcomers include:

- The Global Community Resource Centre at the General campus. The Centre is a partnership with various community agencies in Scarborough to support patients and families with increased health literacy and better access to community services. The unique model of the Centre includes a 'Community Desk', which provides free information and referrals to agencies in the community. In addition, these agencies, along with TSH staff, provide multilingual workshops on a range of topics every second and fourth Wednesday of the month.

- A comprehensive interpretation program to assist patients who encounter language barriers at the hospital, including on-site interpreters at both campuses, telephone interpretation services available 24/7 in over 200 languages, and sign language interpretation upon request.

- Patient materials in multiple languages.

- Many staff members and physicians who can provide care in multiple languages.

- Supporting diverse birth practices by assisting expectant mothers in giving birth their way, according to their preferences, customs, and beliefs. Expectant parents can connect directly with an obstetrician, or one of the two midwifery organizations the hospital partners with, by visiting the TSH website.

TSH's staff, physicians, and volunteers have long shown leadership and passion for delivering outstanding care that is sensitive, respectful, and responsive to the needs of everyone at their hospital. Since 2009, diversity has been embedded in the hospital's Vision "to be recognized as Canada's leader in providing the best health care for a global community."

The recent launch of the hospital's new tagline – Local in Spirit. Global in Care. – has meant a renewed focus and commitment to the Vision and to pursuing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization.

Robert Biron, President and CEO of TSH, explains that "the words Local in Spirit speak to our deep roots in Scarborough and how proud we are to embody the strong, tenacious spirit of our community. Global in Care reflects our efforts to understand the unique health care needs of our global community and what makes our corner of Toronto so remarkable."

Information about TSH programs and services that can assist newcomers, as well as the many others TSH provides, is available on the hospital's website at www.tsh.to.

Faster access to care, less time in hospital leads to better outcomes for stroke and TIA patients in Scarborough

A collaborative relationship between The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) and the Scarborough Stroke Clinic is resulting in better outcomes for patients with transient ischemic attacks (TIA) – often called "mini strokes." The partnership ensures that TIA patients receive high quality, specialized care quickly and has reduced the number of TIA patients admitted to the hospital.

How it works: When TIA patients arrive at the TSH Emergency Department, they are first assessed and then referred to the Scarborough Stroke Clinic. This transfer of care enables patients to be seen by neurologists and a clinical nurse specialist, have diagnostic testing completed swiftly, and receive clinical assessment, treatment, care coordination, patient/family education, and rapid follow-up care.

"This partnership helps stroke and TIA patients get the care they need from neurologists and other medical specialists, without being admitted to the hospital, which is more convenient for patients and their families, and helps reduce the strain on hospital Emergency Departments and acute care units," said Dr. Neal Parekh, TSH Neurologist, and Founder and Medical Director of the Scarborough Stroke Clinic.

Since the partnership began in 2013, TSH has seen a 63 per cent reduction in TIA admissions. For TIA patients who are admitted to the hospital, their acute length of stay at the TSH Stroke Unit has been reduced by 35 per cent. Upon discharge, patients are referred to the Scarborough Stroke Clinic for follow-up, which supports their continuity of care from hospital to home. Additionally, the number of TIA patients readmitted to the hospital within 30 days dropped by 84 per

cent.

The hospital-clinic partnership is a prime example of TSH's ongoing focus on integrated care networks as part of its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan. Integrated care networks, such as this, coordinate health care services so that patients get the care they need, when they need it, in the most appropriate setting.

"I had excellent care at the hospital and the Stroke clinic," said David Baird, a previous TIA patient and Past Chair of TSH's Board of Directors. "When I was discharged, the hospital doctors gave me a medication schedule chart, and at the stroke clinic, the staff helped me understand how to use it. Practical support like this, and the convenience of getting care at the Stroke Clinic, rather than the hospital, continues to be an invaluable part of my recovery."

All TSH stroke patients are referred to the Scarborough Stroke Clinic eventually, and clinic volumes are steadily climbing, currently reaching more than 1,000 patients per year. When inpatients are discharged from the hospital, they are referred to the clinic to receive counselling and stroke education from a clinical nurse specialist, while a neurologist reviews their test results and medicine plan, and recommends follow-up care.

Along with providing specialized care for patients, the Scarborough Stroke Clinic is dedicated to education and research for physicians. Medical residents rotate through to study best practice in evidence-informed TIA and stroke care, and research conducted by the clinic has led to two presentations at Canadian Stroke Congress, a national stroke conference.



Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce®



Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce AWARDS APPLICATION/NOMINATION

The Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce is seeking applications/nominations from Tamil Canadians who have continuously owned a business for the duration of 10, 15, 20, or 25 years.

In order to apply for the awards, applicants/nominees must satisfy the following eligibility requirements:

- Applicant/Nominee must be an owner of a business and/or a professional in good standing with the relevant licensing body
- Applicant/Nominee is of Tamil origin resident in Canada
- Applicant/Nominee cannot be an undischarged bankrupt
- Applicant/Nominee cannot have been previously or currently criminally convicted unless pardon has been received
- Applicant/Nominee cannot have been or is currently a publicly elected member of municipal, provincial or federal government
- Applicant/Nominee is an employee or in recipient of remuneration from the municipal, provincial or federal government
- Applicant/Nominee may only be nominated in one category
- Nominee must have continuously owned the business for the length of the achievement year.

* Special consideration will be given to family owned businesses where child or spouse of original owner has taken over the business

An Award Selection Committee, appointed by the Board will be responsible for the selection of the recipients for these awards.

Application packages are available online on the CTCC website at www.ctcc.ca and must be sent either by post to the CTCC office or by email to info@ctcc.ca. Applications should be received on or before April 29th, 2016 at 5PM.

For further inquiries, contact

Roshan Thavaratnam, Program Director, (416)-561-5733 or by e-mail to info@ctcc.ca



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Fraud against the Elderly

By: Andrea Shanmugarajah



As many people are becoming increasingly aware, members of the elderly population are amongst the most frequently targeted by con artists and scammers.

Unfortunately, many seniors fall prey to scams, because they tend to be more trusting, and less aware of the signs of con artists. As well, because many seniors live alone and often have more access to disposable incomes than younger people, they are often the easiest targets for scammers. It is important that seniors, as well as the members of their family and community, become educated about the types of fraud that most commonly occur, so they can avoid being victimized.

First, it is important to realize that many people, both old and young, have preconceived notions about fraud and con artists that may not necessarily be true. Debunking these myths is critical to developing a better understanding about what to look for when trying to prevent being defrauded. The first myth is about the artists themselves – people often assume that con artists are all men who are clearly recognizable as criminals. This is untrue, as con artists can be either women or men, and they are almost always extremely pleasant and charming – this friendliness is what allows them to build enough trust with people in order to take advantage of them. Another myth is that if the call or mail is from a charitable organization, it cannot be a scam. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Even charities that sound professional, and provide official looking documents may be scams, so always verify that the charity is in fact registered. A final myth is that con artists don't have access to legal or personal information about their victims. This is sadly untrue, as many con artists can either purchase information about people, or find it through phone directories or government statistics. Someone who contacts you and has access to personal or legal information about you is not necessarily a legitimate and trustworthy source, and it is up to you to ensure that the people who contact you are who they claim to be.

While fraud can occur in a multitude of ways, there are certain types of fraud that are particularly common among the elderly population. Many of these scams follow certain trends, so if you are able to recognize these trends,

you have a much greater chance of avoiding fraud. The first type of fraud is that by a supposed bank inspector or teller – this person claims to be associated with a bank, and requires the victim to hand over a large amount of money for a current investigation. Naturally, once the money is transferred, this person is never seen or heard from again. Seniors receive calls like this regularly, and unfortunately, many of them are unaware that their banking information is extremely private and would never be requested over the phone or email. As well, they are unaware that no bank or police institution would use such a method for an investigation. If you or someone you know receives such a call, realize that

discounted price just for seniors. Never agree to such work right away, and demand that you are given some time to think about it. Approach other contractors to determine the market price for such services, and ensure that the 'discount' you are being offered is legitimate. Never be in a rush with such an expensive project, regardless of anything the contractor may tell you, such as the offer being for a limited time only. While many con artists are out there searching for elderly people to take advantage of, being an educated customer is an easy way to avoid becoming a victim.

A similar scam that occurs commonly amongst the elderly is done by people claiming to be public utility

towards the messages telemarketers are sharing. These scams can be in the form of requests from charities, offers from loan companies, and announcements about winning cash or vacation prizes. The general rule for any of these scams is to not rush into anything without having enough information. Never blindly hand your money to someone you have never met for a product or service that you know nothing about. Regardless of how good the deal may sound, do not turn over large amounts of money, because it might be safest to have a family member or friend review the deal as well before you commit to it.

If you are being victimized by someone you suspect is a con artist, inform the police immediately. Many victims



it is entirely fraudulent, and report the phone number of the caller to the police immediately. You may also want to call or otherwise contact your bank, to ensure that your account has not been compromised in any way.

Another type of fraud that seniors unfortunately often fall prey to is home renovation fraud. A renovation company approaches a senior and claims to offer a seniors discount, but then charges the victim with an absurdly high amount considering the renovation they are doing, trusting that the seniors might not be aware of the actual cost of such a service. They generally charge up to 3-4 times as much for seniors that they would otherwise. Because of this, as a senior, you should be wary of people who contact you and volunteer to do renovations for you at a

inspectors. They will assure the victim that they are just doing routine visits to the home, but they are actually thieves, looking for valuables to steal within the home. Because they often look and sound professional, the theft can remain undetected for long periods of time. This can be prevented by demanding some proof of identity from anyone who visits your home, claiming to be from a particular company. As well, never leave the person in the home alone – caution is important when allowing strangers into your home, even if they are there for legitimate reasons.

The final common method of fraud against the elderly is through telemarketing. While many people are instantly wary of telemarketers, elderly people tend to be more sympathetic or trusting

do not inform the police about being defrauded, allowing the scammers to get away scot free, and continue preying upon other members of the elderly community. Similarly, if someone you know, such as a parent, grandparent or friend is becoming involved in something that you believe may be a scam, it is important that you become involved. Talk to the person, get more information, and then inform the police if you feel it is appropriate. A lot of the time, someone who is being defrauded does not realize they are a victim, despite giving up money and getting little in return. Be wary of anything that seems too good to be true, both for yourself and for elderly people that you know, because oftentimes, things seem too good to be true because they are.



WORDS OF PEACE



A Dream Fulfilled

Wish fulfillment is one of man's greatest motivators. Whether it's riches, comfort, pleasure, love, family, security or respect, most people have a long list of things they dream about. "There are so many people in this world, coming up with more and more dreams," says Prem Rawat, who travels the globe speaking to audiences large and small about the possibility of finding peace and joy in their lives. "I think those dreams distract us from the fundamental dream that we have.

"My message is very, very simple: What you are looking for is within you."

Dreaming for something we don't have, he says, implies that we are looking for something. The question is: What is this thing that we are looking for every day of our lives?

You would think, Mr. Rawat says, that people would have an answer for that; that we would be absolutely clear about what it is that we think we need in order to feel fulfilled, "but the reality is, people don't. If people are not looking at themselves, if they don't know who they really are, if they don't even know what they really want, then how are they going to find fulfillment?"

There is a dream of fulfillment within the heart of every living person, he says, but when we don't understand it, we look outside ourselves

for things we think might fulfill that longing. "If I could only make my dreams come true," people think, "I could finally be at peace."

"No!" says Mr. Rawat. "There is an urgency. The priority has to go to the dream that already is there.

"One analogy I can give you is the story of a river. When it starts to make its way through the land, things start to happen. Maybe the first thing is that tiny bits of grass begin growing along its banks. Some seeds are there; they just need a little water, and grass readily starts to grow.

"Next thing you know, there are some bugs that would like to eat that grass. Then there are bigger bugs that would like to eat those bugs. Next there are birds that would like to eat those bugs. Those birds carry with them different kinds of seeds, and those seeds germinate. Finally, there are trees, and there is fruit. All of this exists because there is water. Without water, the whole ecosystem would collapse.

"It's the same way in your life. Everything that you do, all the things you think of as part of your life, are there because of something. Without it, your viewpoint, your vantage point of life, would collapse. Something makes it possible for all of these things to be. Do you know what that is? Life. Life itself makes it all possible."

The common elements that make up a human body—oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, phosphorus, nitrogen—are animated by something that keeps it all glued together, that keeps a human being alive.

That thing, he says, is breath.

Most people don't think anything about it," Mr. Rawat says, "but I think you should, because you have a mission in life. Your mission is to capture every single day—to be, to exist, and to savor and enjoy every moment of this existence.

"Peace cannot be created. Peace is already there inside of every single human being. What does it mean to have peace in your life? What does it mean to feel free? How does it feel to have hope in your existence—to feel good because you're at peace, to feel good because you feel good?

"In you, right now, life is pulsing. You exist. You can experience, you can understand, you can be clear. Go for it! Live, now! Don't wait for tomorrow, because today is all you've got. Stick with it, and be fulfilled."

To learn more about Prem Rawat :

1 877 707 3221

416 431 5000 Tamil

416 264 7700 Hindi

www.wopg.org | www.tprf.org



Why should learning how to spell be more than memorization?

By: Janani Srikantha

We all know the routine. We got a list of words on Monday and had a test on Friday. During the week, we repeatedly said the letters in each word in the hopes of ingraining them to memory. We wrote the words forwards, in spirals, in coloured pencils, and in any other way we could to memorize the sequence of letters. For the most part, this process hasn't changed in the decades since I was in elementary school. We need to acknowledge that by following this process, we have made the skill of memorization the focus. And if that's the case, we could just assign a random sequence of letters and achieve the same purpose.

From my observations, spelling tests are great for children who are already good spellers for the reason that it gives them a self-esteem boost. For children who are not great spellers, a spelling program dependent solely on tests often results in frustration during the week. And, if they are successful at memorization for the test, it's a short-lived achievement because soon after most of the sequences of letters are forgotten. A few weeks later, it is very common to see test words spelt incorrectly in a child's writing, as the goal of getting-it-right-for-the-test is no more.

I'm not saying eliminate the tests. There's a place for them, but they should not be the entire method for learning about words. As we're familiar with spelling tests, let's start with where they are useful. The spelling program should begin with an assessment to show what the child knows, what they're missing, and where their errors are occurring. Also, assessments of some sort are needed periodically to collect data to check for an upward trend.

An accurate analysis of a diagnostic assessment will most likely indicate that not all children of the same age are at the same developmental stage of spelling. Therefore, it is not always beneficial to assign the same list of words to everyone. In my classroom, the children are grouped as per their developmental stage for spelling. Forming small groups of spellers of the same developmental stage, allows me to focus on the areas they need support in. The children sort and categorize the words into patterns they see, identify other words that fit within the pattern, and discuss which words may not fit



into the pattern. Learning spelling is a collaborative process that involves a lot of conversation and analyzing of words. On 'test day', the students can not only spell the words on their list, but because they understand the structure of how the words are formed, they can spell additional words that follow the same pattern. Bonus! Now, I can be more certain that students used the opportunity to learn about words and not just memorize a sequence of letters.

As a parent, it may not be simple to change the list of words that your child brings home from school. So what can you do?

Many of us rely on sounding out words to help children spell. This doesn't always work. Why? In English, there are 44 sounds and hundreds of ways to spell those sounds. For example, a common error is for children to spell 'jumped' as 'junt', because they rely on sounding the word out. Therefore, we need to give children more tools that help them make connections and understand patterns in words.

It's important to notice words in the child's environment - look for words in books, cereal boxes, store signs - there

are words everywhere. And, talk about words with children. Together, be curious, ask questions and explore words. Become Word Detectives with your child. Have a conversation while looking for base words in bigger words. Discuss what can be added to words and how they change the meaning of the word. You don't need to be the expert. Learning together with your child makes the process more engaging.

Using the 'jumped' example, together, find other base words you could add the suffix -ed to for the new word to make sense. This automatically leads to the discussion of verbs and identifying tenses, as a child learns the meaning of the suffix -ed and why it's used.

By engaging in conversations about words, your child is learning spelling and not memorizing spelling. They are learning the meaning of words, where the words came from, and how they are formed. On 'test day' if their memory fails, they have various other tools they can draw upon to determine the spelling of a word. And, they will know so much more than just the letter sequence. By using spelling programs

as an opportunity to learn about words, children are going through the process of acquiring knowledge which is what I believe true learning is.

Janani Srikantha is a teacher with experience of the Ontario curriculum and the International Baccalaureate. The education landscape is changing, and she helps parents and families to engage their child in learning.



She is currently completing her graduate studies to further understand how the integration of technology is redefining how a student learns. Janani has led workshops for educators and parents on topics that address different facets of education. She also provides academic support to students through tutoring. For more information or queries on how to help your child with learning, please contact info@thinkshiftedu.com.



SADHGURU

In this week's post in the Why We Do What We Do series, Sadhguru talks about the contradictions inherent in the Indian way of life – total chaos overlying a deep sense of harmony.

Sadhguru:

India as a culture, with all its apparent disorganization, used to be very organized deep down. It functioned very systematically. Even today the nation has not broken down completely simply because of that deep in-built cultural organization. With all the surface disharmony, there is something deep which holds things together. It is not the government, the law, or the infrastructure which holds society together in India. There is something in people which still keeps things rolling. With the level of poverty that people face in India, still maintaining some sanity, going on with their activities and celebrating their festivals takes a different kind of in-built mechanism which was put in by the culture.

Western organization means everything is so organized. Then everything will happen like a machine – everything will be happening, but no life will be happening.

The beauty of our culture is that it is disorganized. But if you do not find harmony in the disorganization of what it is, then a disharmonious mind, a disharmonious body, and a disharmonious social situation takes away all possibilities from a human being. Let's say you happened to go into your kitchen and everything was mixed up – you do not know where anything is. It may be fun for a day trying to find everything, but if it happens every day and if you have to do it in a certain time-bound way, it takes away a lot of possibilities in you. Just trying to fix your morning coffee becomes a full-time job. That is the kind of situation we have created in the nation. Doing simple things has become a full-time job for intelligent people who could be doing a lot more. In small communities, in certain corporations, industries and businesses, people are getting organized in small ways and in small units. But this organization is coming in a very westernized way, which is again extremely stressful for the human being.

Western organization means everything is so organized. Then everything will happen like a machine – everything will be happening, but no life will be happening. It is very easy to give a hard and fast rule, "Just do this." Everything looks organized but then when life does not happen, people have a huge longing to break the rule. This is what is happening in the West. For no reason, a whole segment of population is striving to somehow break the rules that are working well simply because life feels restricted in the whole process of organization.

Yoga as a science and a practice is such that if people bring this into their lives, they can maintain an inner organization even if the outside situations are going totally crazy.

The spiritual paths in India lived to-

tally disorganized because they did not want anything to be suppressed. Right now, we do not have enough space in the country to be too disorganized. If it was just one person per square kilometer, you could act crazy. But when there are this many people, how you place every step matters. With the kind of population and spaces available around us, I think a little more organization would make life much more saner than what it is right now because if you allow too much life to happen, things will collapse. Maintaining that balance – allowing enough freedom for life to happen freely, but still you are organized enough so that you do not waste the fundamental human potential within yourself has always been the essence of my focus when it comes to people and activity. Yoga as a science and a practice is such that if people bring this into their lives, they can maintain an inner organization even if the outside situations are going totally crazy.

Brahmacharya has always been an integral part of the spiritual process. Sadhguru speaks about what brahmacharya is, and who a brahmachari is.

Sadhguru:

"Brahman" means "the divine" or "ultimate," "charya" means "the path." If you are on the path of the divine, you are a brahmachari. To be on the path of the divine means you have no personal agendas of your own. You simply do what is needed. You have no personal ways of deciding where you should go in your life, what you should do, or what you like and dislike; all these things are simply taken away from you. If you do this unwillingly, it can be an absolute torture. If you do it willingly, it makes your life so wonderful and beautiful because there is nothing to bother you anymore. You simply do what is needed; life is so simple. Once you have given yourself like that, you do not have to bother about the spiritual path or worry about your spirituality. It is taken care of. You do not have to really do anything about it.

People may think a brahmachari is making a great sacrifice and is being denied life. But it is not so at all. If someone is a brahmachari only by dress, yes it is true, life is torture. But for a person who is truly walking the path of the divine, the petty pleasures that the world offers will become totally meaningless. Once you enjoy the inner pleasures of your being, the external pleasures become totally meaningless.

Everyone should become a brahmachari, not necessarily in terms of lifestyle, but internally.

Does it mean everyone should become a brahmachari? Everyone should become a brahmachari, not necessarily in terms of lifestyle, but internally. Everyone should be on the path of the divine. Brahmacharya does not just mean celibacy. That is just one of the aspects that have been taken up as a supportive system. To become a brahmachari means you are ecstatic by your own nature. You can be married and still be a brahmachari. It is

possible because you are joyful by your own nature; you are not trying to extract joy from your husband or wife. This is how it should be. The whole world should be brahmachari. Everyone should be joyful by their own nature. If two people come together, it should be a sharing of joy, not extraction of joy from each other.

An Investment For The Future

Why has a certain order been set up? If one is just seeking realization at the end of his life, it could be taken care of in many different ways. I can fix a date with you for that day! But if one wants to explore, and not only explore, if one wants to be a useful instrument in making it happen to many other people, then brahmacharya becomes significant. Brahmacharies are an investment for the future, to keep spirituality in its pristine purity and transmit it from generation to generation. A small, core group of people are needed. They are initiated in a particular way which turns their energies in a completely different direction. Everyone need not take that step, nor will we take everyone because it is not necessary, and neither can they put in the sadhana that is required or demanded out of them.

All of us have eaten mangoes, but how many of us have planted mango trees, made them grow and then eaten mangoes?

All of us have eaten mangoes, but how many of us have planted mango trees, made them grow and then eaten mangoes? Most people have eaten mangoes because someone else planted the mango trees. In every society, out of a thousand people, at least ten people have to take care to plant mango trees. Similarly with this, a few people have to take the path of brahmacharya. People who are willing to dedicate themselves to other's wellbeing are needed in society. If there is no one thinking about others wellbeing, that society is definitely heading for ruin. That is what has happened to society right now. There are very few people thinking of everyone's wellbeing.

Like A Rocket!

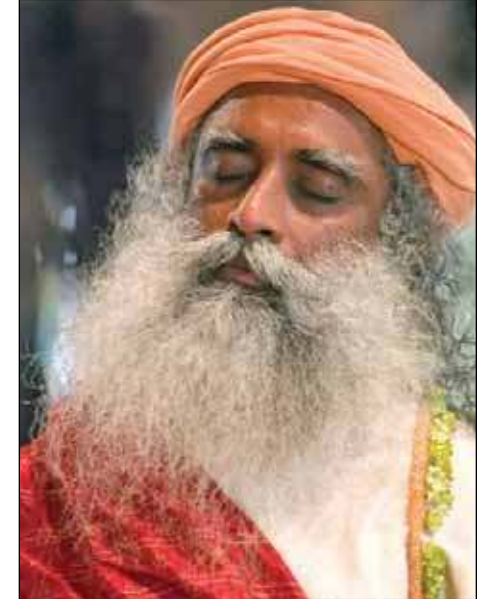
Essentially, this human mechanism is a certain energy system. You can keep it with many openings and transact with the world in a certain way or you can make this into a close-circuit system so that it becomes very integrated. A rocket goes up because it is firing only on one side. Suppose it fires on all the sides, it is not going to go anywhere, it will just dissipate itself. Or it will go somewhere without direction and fall apart. What we are trying to make out of a brahmachari is just that he fires only on one side. One that fires only on one side is going to go straight up and there is a particular purpose to creating such a system.

It is a weapon with which you can bomb the world with a spiritual process.

When you have a close-circuit system like that, it is a powerful instrument. This instrument could be employed or deployed in so many different ways. It is a weapon with which you can bomb the world with a spiritual process.

Monks have been there in every culture because wherever there was a genuine enlightened process, they always wanted some mechanisms to be wired in such a way that they are completely inte-

grated systems. There is no transaction outside. It is totally by itself. Those systems are needed if you want to shake the world in a certain way and want to create certain processes and access certain things. If you want to put a satellite beyond the atmosphere, you need a rocket.



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

If you want to just fly around in the atmosphere, an airplane will do. That's the difference. When you are planning and projecting to do something which is beyond certain limitations, brahmacharies become necessary.

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

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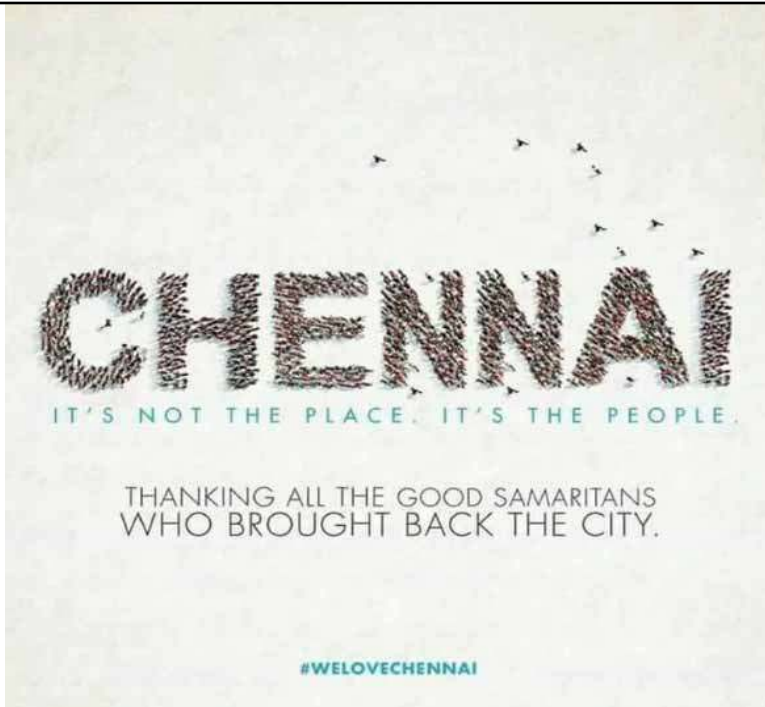
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Chennai experienced the worst floods in history during the month of December, 2015. It started as an anguish remarks on Facebook about their plight and with a hope to reach out to friends to seek out help. I was overwhelmed by the instant outpouring of support. Friends, strangers and film personalities came together to lend a helping hand to our fellow brothers and sisters, who were affected by the monstrous flood that hit Chennai almost after a century. Soon our “Help Chennai” Facebook Team was formed. Most of us worked literally around the clock as the task at hand was so immense. Coordinating resources, delivering basic necessities such as food, water, blankets and clothing became monumental task in flood ravaged city. My sincere thanks to our Help Chennai Team which was made up of dedicated and selfless volunteers :



PART OF THE HELP CHENNAI TEAM LED BY ASWIN



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- Mrs. Suchitra Madhavan from Bangalore
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Century 21 Innovative Realty Inc celebrated its 6th Annual innovative Gala on 13th December at the Scarborough Convention Centre. The Gala was a celebration of their yearly Award and Appreciation ceremony to celebrate the successful completion of six years in business achievement of Grand Centurion Office Award and Chairman's Circle Office Award. The event was well-attended by their agents,

well wishers and friends. Century 21 Innovative Realty, Brokerage serves the Greater Toronto Area residential/commercial market since 2010. With the highest quality of services provided by well trained real estate professionals using latest innovative technology, the company has earned a recognition and reputation. The company is geared to assist customers to realize their real estate goals in a trouble free professional

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Brahmasri N. Veeramani Aiyer

– The Multi-Talented Artiste

By: C. Kamalaharan

(Composer of the immortal devotional song 'Katpahavalli Nin Pothpathangal')

Composing songs is an inborn trait of an individual. The musical training both in vocal and dance received by Veeramani Aiyer at Kalakshetra Chennai groomed him as an outstanding composer. His compositions are simple easily comprehensible and filled with 'bakthi'. They have the power of luring the attention of both the elite and the lay alike. Veeramany Aiyer a gifted artiste had composed songs especially 'kirtanas' in Tamil for which he himself had composed music with technical skill, infusing emotion and religious fervour. He did not follow the western musical trend. Instead he followed the oriental music using oriental tunes carnatic ragas and folk music in his compositions. He had the ability to spontaneously compose hymns songs and dance 'pathams'. Once he commenced writing it was a spontaneous flow of words without making any deletions. While the leading carnatic music celebrity the late Sirkali Govindarajan was performing on stage at the Kannagi Amman temple in Chuddipuram Jaffna Veeramani Aiyer instantly composed a song with appropriate ragas invoking Kannagi Amman and handed it to Sirkali Govindarajan who rendered the song melodiously receiving tremendous applause from the vast gathering. To quote another instance of his ingenuity I invited Veeramani Aiyer along with violinist the late Radhakrishnan of Inuvil for a vocal concert at Nadeswara College for the Vijayathasamy celebrations. Veeramani Aiyer arrived on time but there happened to be a delay in the arrival of Radhakrishnan. Seated in front of the principal Veeramani Aiyer instantly composed the song "Radha ithu unakku gnayama.." (is it fair on your part Radha..) and sang the song to the listening pleasure of the audience.

Veeramani Aiyer had composed songs and Oonjal paddu (swing song) on temples in the North. The songs he composed on Inuvil Pararajasekarar temple was sung by the late Malaysia Vasudevan, on Inuvil Kandasamy temple was sung by Nithiyasiri Mahadevan and on Inuvil Sivagami Amman temple was sung by Mahanadhi Sobhana. He also composed songs on Nallur Murugan temple, Maviddapuram Kandaswami temple, Kondavil Sivagami Amman temple and Karainagar Thikkarai Murugan temple. The other songs composed by Veeramani Aiyer were 'Ninaikatha Neramillai' sung by Madurai Somu, 'Sinna Vayadhinile' sung by Sudharagunathan, Saraswathi Veena a ragamalika sung by Nithiyasiri Mahadevan. 'Enmugam Paarayoh Shanmuga' and a lot of 'Viruththams' sung by the late Maharajapuram Santhanam during his tenure as principal of music



Brahmasri N. Veeramani Aiyer

college Jaffna. Besides these the popular song 'Kalyanavasantham Mandapaththil' composed and sung by Veeramani Aiyer was dedicated to Ponnalai Varatharaja Perumal temple. Furthermore the songs



Aiyer in female costume as a young dancer during a dance presentation

on dance drama and the Thiruchendur 'Kirthanas' were released by the people of Inuvil settled in Canada.

Born in Inuvil a village well known for upholding traditional, cultural, religious and aesthetic values Veermani Aiyer had his primary education at Inuvil Saiva Mahajana Vidyasalai (renamed as Inuvil Central College) and his secondary education at one of the leading educational institutions in the North Manipay Hindu College. Being a hard working and studious student he won the gold medal for the best student in 1947. After passing the S.S.C (G.C.E O/L) exam he left for India to pursue his studies in the field of his liking. Very much attracted towards music dance and drama he studied Bharata Nattiyam under the well known Rukmani Arundale at Kalakshetra Chennai and music under M. D. Ramanathan. Papanasam Sivam was his Sakiththiya Guru. On completing his studies he returned to

Jaffna and assumed duty as teacher in his alma mater Manipay Hindu College. While serving there he had groomed prospective musicians and dramatists. Later he was inducted as visiting lecturer in dance at the Palaly Teachers' College and the Kopay Teachers' College. He was also inducted as visiting lecturer at the Ramanathan Academy of Fine Arts – a division of the Jaffna University.

Veeramany Aiyer rose to prominence with the composition of the immortal song 'Katpagavalli Nin Potpathangal....' very much popular in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu and among the Tamils spread all over the world. It's a Ragamalika devotional song starting with Anandabairavi followed by Kalyani Bagesri and Ranjani sung in praise of the presiding deity at Kapaleeswarar temple Mylapore Chennai. Veeramani Aiyer had beauti-

the late Mr. Sivaprakasapillai and the late Mrs. Angayatkanni of Uduvil. She is a great musician and the Principal of a dance school in U.K. The book was ceremonially released at Kapaleeswarar temple Mylapore by Koththamangalam Subbu.

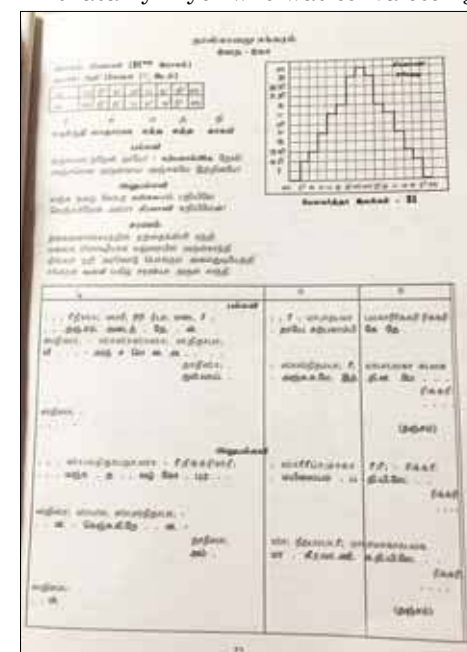
In the book Veeramani Aiyer had graphically represented each raga which none have attempted so far. The innovative book is very much helpful to music and dance students. He was in Chennai for the launching of the book. It was a mere coincidence when I met him at the late Krisnasamy Aiyer's residence at Adyar. As I entered the house I failed to recognise him seated in the hall as I had lost tract of him for more than a decade. Unaware of his presence I went past him into the adjoining room to see the late Krisnasamy Aiyer who was convalescing



The Book on Kabaleeshwarar

fully crafted the song invoking Goddess Katpagavalli through her various names Anandabairavi Kalyani Bagesri and Ranjani which also correspond to the names of the ragas.

His composition 'Thirumayilai Katpagambal Kirthanaigal' set to dance music with Kapaleeswarar as the hero and Katpakambal as the heroine composed in the 'Kuravanji' manner was well received. The language is simple comprehensible appropriate to the theme and filled with 'bakti.' This composition is based on the 72 'Melakartha' ragams. Hitherto none have attempted to delve into these intricacies and this was possible due to the hard work patience and perseverance of Veeramani Aiyer. The composition was published in book form titled '72 Melakartha Thirumayilai Katpahambal Kirthanas' by Veeramani Aiyer's student Srimathy Sivasakthi Sivanesan daughter of popular teachers



Details of a raga with graphical presentation

after treatment. Just then Veeramani Aiyer dashed into the room hugged me and said, "Thamby how are you?" I was flabbergasted on seeing him. After exchanging formalities he presented me a copy of this most valuable and informative book which I will treasure as a gift from a great music composer and a researcher in Music and Bharatanatyam.

Veeramani Aiyer is a simple unassuming gentleman easily accessible to all. He had obliged everyone who approached him for composing songs and for guidance in music and dance. More frequently they had approached him for his assistance in composing 'Nattiya Nadagam' (dance drama). He himself wrote the vibrato. His simplicity and the way he mingled with and entertained everyone will ever be edged in our memory. His demise on the 8th of October 2003 left a void which can never be filled. The Tamils have lost a peerless artiste and well known scholar.



Gregorian Calendar

By: Raymond Rajabalan

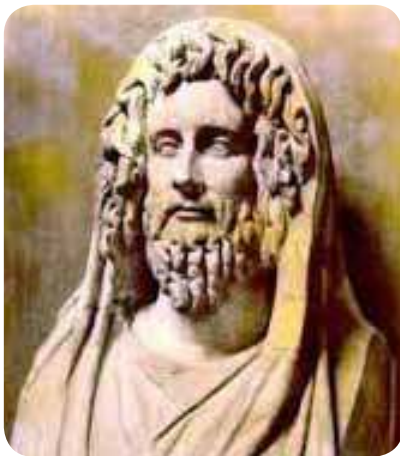


Calendars have become very closely involved in our lives in some form or other. They have become a useful tool for us to remember the important religious days, keeping appointments, planning various events, scheduling holidays etc.

During ancient times men measured time based on the phases of moon and the environmental changes that result from the orbital movements of Sun. With the passage of time, due to the growth of civilization in the various communities throughout the world, a number of improved methods of measuring the time were devised, resulting in the creation of the modern day calendar.

The word calendar owes its origin to the Latin word "Kalends", meaning a ledger or accounts book. During various stages of the history of mankind, calendars were subjected to various forms of reforms by a number of scholars and astronomers resulting in the development of the modern day Gregorian calendar. This calendar having seven day week helps us to accurately measure the time.

EVOLUTION OF GREGORIAN CALENDAR



It is generally believed that the first calendar was developed by Egyptians during 2500 B.C. Later on in 713 B.C., **Numa Pompilius**, the second king of Roman Empire promulgated a calendar reform that adjusted the solar and lunar years and included the months of January and February in the existing 10-month calendar. This reformed 12 month calendar was used as the official calendar throughout Rome.

JULIAN CALENDAR



The Julian calendar a reform of the Roman calendar was introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 BC and came into force in 45 BC. It was chosen after consultation with the astronomer Sosigenes of Alexandria. It has a regular year of 365 days divided into 12 months, and a leap day is added to February every four years. Hence the Julian year is on average 365.25 days long.

The Julian calendar remained in use into the 20th century in some countries as a national calendar, but it has generally been replaced by the modern Gregorian calendar. It is still used by the Berber people of North Africa and by many national Orthodox churches. Those Orthodox Churches that no longer use Julian calendar typically use the Revised Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar.

GREGORIAN CALENDAR

The Gregorian calendar is the most widely used calendar in the world today. It is a reform of the Julian calendar, first proposed by the Calabrian doctor Aloysius Lilius, and decreed by Pope Gregory XIII, for whom it was named, on 24 February 1582 by papal decree. Years in the reformed calendar continued the numbering system of the Julian calendar, which are numbered from the traditional Incarnation year of Jesus, labeled as the "Anno Domini" (AD) era.



The changes made by Pope Gregory also corrected the drift in the civil calendar which arose because the average Julian calendar year was slightly too long. The Gregorian calendar system dealt with the drawbacks in Julian calendar by dropping 10 days to bring the calendar back into synchronization with the seasons, and adopting the following leap year rule:

Every year that is exactly divisible by four is a leap year, except for years that are exactly divisible by 100; the centennial years that are exactly divisible by 400 are still leap years. For example, the year 1900 is not a leap year but the year 2000 is a leap year.

In the Julian calendar, all years exactly divisible by 4 were leap years.

DETERMINING THE LENGTH OF DAY

We measure the length of time from midnight up to the midnight of the following day as one day. But according to astronomers, an indigenous race called Umbri that lived in central Italy during the second century, defined a day as the time period from noon to the following day noon. Hebrews measured the time period from one sunset to the next sunset as a day. Babylonians, Egyptians Chinese and Hindu priests used to measure the time between two consecutive sun rises as a day.

Thus though all the ancient communities agreed that a day included day time and night time, they differed on how to calculate the length of a day.

DEVELOPMENT OF SEVEN DAY WEEK

Jews introduced the system of measuring time by using a seven day week and it was accepted by Greeks. It is believed that this system arose because each the four phases of Moon were seven days long and Babylonians considered seven as their holy number.

In any event, a seven day week based on heavenly luminaries eventually diffused both East and West, to the Romans via the Greeks, and to the Japanese via Indians and Chinese.

Hindu civilization employed a seven-day week, mentioned in the Ramayana, a sacred epic written in Sanskrit about 500 BCE, as Bhanu-vaar meaning Sunday, Soma-vaar meaning Moon-day and so forth.

EVOLUTION OF THE NAMES OF MONTHS

The 12 months in a year have been calculated based on the growth phase of Moon. September, October, November and December were named based on the Latin numbering system. July and August were named after the Roman emperors Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar. January and June derived their names from Greek

Gods Janus and Juno. March was named after Mars, the Roman God of War. February was named after the Latin term februum, which means purification, via the purification ritual Februa held on February 15 in the old Roman calendar.

The derivation of the name (Latin Aprilis) is uncertain. Since most of the Roman months were named in honor of divinities, and as April was sacred to Venus the Goddess of love, it has been suggested that Aprilis was originally her month Aphrilis, from her Greek name Aphrodite. There are no records regarding the origin of the name for the month of May.

HISTORY OF CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF DAYS IN ROMAN-GREGORIAN CALENDARS

- During the region of Romulus, a year consisted of 10 months and 303 days

- In eighth century, Numa Pompilius, the second king of Roman Empire added two more months January and February and created a 12-month calendar consisting of 355 days

- After six more centuries, Julius Caesar paid a visit to Egypt and after consulting some scholars decided to introduce some changes in the existing Roman calendar.

With the advise of astronomer Sosigenes of Alexandria new calendar with 365 days was created It was divided into 12 months, and a leap day added to February every four years.

At the same time the seventh month of the year hitherto known as Quintilis was changed as July in honour of Julius Caesar.

Augustus Caesar who ascended into power after the assassination of Julius Caesar changed the name of the eighth month from Sextilis into August in his honour. Also as per his request one day was reduced from February and added to August. As a result the number of days in February was reduced to 29 while the number for August was increased to 31 days.



THE APPOINTMENT OF REV. JUSTIN BERNARD GNANAPRAGASAM

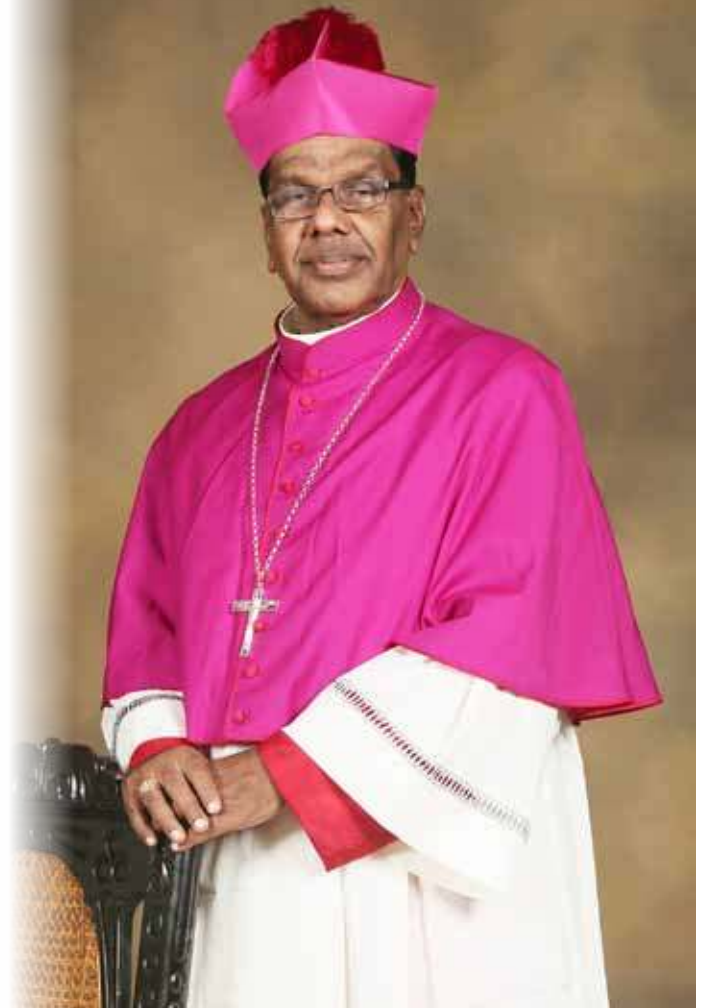
The new Bishop of Jaffna ushers in a new era



Authored by:
Rev.Fr. Ruban Mariampillai
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Jaffna

Revised and Translated by:
Raymond Rajabalan
Monsoon Journal - Features Section
Canada

This article is being published in conjunction with the recent consecration of Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam as the new Bishop of Jaffna diocese at Jaffna St. Mary's Cathedral on Nov 28th 2015.



The appointment of Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Bernard Gnanapragasam as the new Bishop of Jaffna has made not only the Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka but the entire Diaspora Tamils extremely happy. The appointment of the new Bishop followed the retirement of Bishop Emeritus Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam who sent his letter of retirement to Rome in 2013 at the age of 75 years after dedicatedly serving from 1992 till 2015 for 23 years as the Bishop of Jaffna diocese.

A national event of the Catholic church of Sri Lanka

St. Mary's cathedral in Jaffna was colourfully decorated for the historic event that took place on Nov.28th. This was not just only a religious event where the entire population of priests and nuns of the Jaffna Archdiocese and a large segment of the catholic population of Jaffna Diocese converged at the Cathedral. On the contrary, it was a great national event where the Papal representative in Sri Lanka, Cardinal of the Sri Lanka's Catholic Church and all the Bishops in the island gathered for this momentous occasion. In fact it turned out to be an international catholic event of great importance.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam, the newly elected Bishop is a leader with a great personality, tall stature, smiling face, gentle look and measured talk. He is careful in his pastoral duty, adopts a far sighted approach, and courage in facing any situation. As such there is a general feeling that he is a gift by God for the Jaffna diocese at this time of need.

It is just recently that the three decades of violent civil war has been brought to an end in

this country. The normal way of life has slowly begun to develop within the past few months and a good government has just recently started functioning. The feeling of hatred and doubt have slowly begin to disappear and a great understanding seems to be about to develop among the various communities in the island of Sri Lanka. The Tamils have begun to breathe a sigh of relief and the need of this hour is for the people to be strengthened in deep faith and the hundreds of churches in the peninsula that have been damaged during the war have been renovated and rebuilt. A new approach and revolution has to be introduced in the Jaffna diocese and a new vision has to be provided.

From the time when the late Bishop of Jaffna Rt. Rev. Dr. B. Deogupillai thundered at St. Patrick's College during the reign of the then President of Sri Lanka J.R. Jayawardene that the time has come to complain to the United Nations, the Bishops of Jaffna have courageously reported from time to time to the international community about the sufferings of Tamils. Today, the time is ripe for finding a permanent solution for the reasonable expectation of Tamils. At this juncture in order to act with care and dignity and achieve this twin purpose we have to act with speed and intelligence and we immediately need a religious leader with multiple talents and a commanding personality.

The first Bishop who got directly appointed for the Jaffna Diocese

It should be noted that ever since native Bishops were appointed for Jaffna diocese, Rt. Rev. Justin Gnanapragasam has become the very first bishop to receive direct appointment.

In 1949, Very Rev. Dr. Jerome Emilianuspillai OMI was appointed Coadjutor Bishop to the Bishop of Jaffna Very. Rev. Dr. Alfred Jean-Guoyamard (1924-1950) with the right to succession.

In 1950 Very Rev. Dr.J. Emilianuspillai was appointed Bishop of Jaffna. In 1967 Very Rev. B. Deogupillai was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Trincomalee-Batticaloa and in 1972 he became the Bishop of Jaffna.

Rt. Rev. Dr. L.R. Antony was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Jaffna in 1968. He was then appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Trincomalee- Batticaloa in 1972 with the right to succession. Two years late in 1974 he was appointed Bishop of Trincomalee - Batticaloa diocese.

After an interval of nearly 23 years in 1981 Rt. Rev.Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam was appointed Bishop of Mannar diocese. In 1999 he became appointed Bishop of Jaffna until he submitted his resignation in 2015.

The first consecration of a Bishop after 47 Years

The consecration of a bishop is not an occasion that takes place very often in an archdiocese. In 1949 there was a consecration of Very Rev. Dr.J. Emilianuspillai OMI at St.Mary's cathedral. Then in 1968 the consecration of Very Rev Dr.L.R. Antony took place. Then after a long interval of 47 years the consecration of Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam was held in November 2015.

The consecration of Rev Dr.B.Deogupillai took place in Trincomalee - Batticaloa diocese. The consecration of Rt.Rev.Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam was held in 1981 at Madhu shrine in Mannar diocese. Two years later, the consecration ceremony of Rev Dr. Kingsley Swampillai, the

Bishop of Trincomalee - Batticaloa diocese was held in Rome.

The announcement of the appointment of a Bishop is not an act hurriedly approved by the secretariat in Rome, Vatican by the Pope. It is a long procedure that begins when a Bishop turns 75 and sends his letter of retirement to the Pope. Then the further steps involving the appointment of a new Bishop commences. In fact it took two years for the recent appointment of the new Bishop of Jaffna to be finalized.

When Emeritus Bishop of Jaffna Very Rt. Rev. Thomas Savundranayagam became of 75 Years of age in 2013, he sent his letter of retirement to Rome and then retired from service on Nov.28th.2015. Emeritus Bishop Dr. Thomas Savundranayagam Born in Kayts in 1938 was ordained as a priest at the age of 25 years. He was consecrated as Bishop of Mannar in 1981 at the age of 43 years. He served as the first Bishop for Mannar for 11 years (1981-1992) and then served as the Bishop of Jaffna in 23 years (1992-2015) for a total of 34 years as Bishop.

Let us pray for the retiring Bishop be blessed by God with many years of good health.

Dr. Rev. Justin Bernard Gnanapragasam who has completed 40 years service as a priest spent 31 of his years of service to improve the level of education at Ilavalai St. Henry's College and Jaffna St. Patrick's College.

There are nearly 15 lakhs of people in Jaffna district that has an area of 4440 kilometers. Out of these 2 Lakhs and 47,315 of them are Catholics. 162 priests are serving 59 parishes to serve their spiritual needs.

Let us pray for the Bishop to be blessed by God so that he can guide and serve the devotees and the clergy very effectively.



VALLUVAR'S VIEWS: TRUTHFULNESS

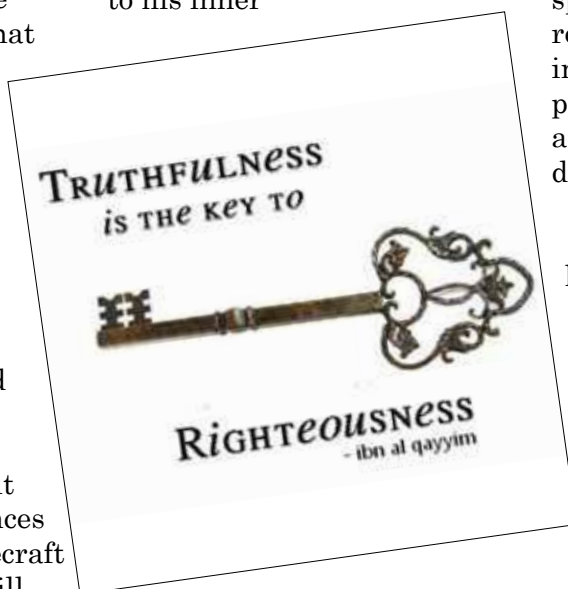


By: JJ Aputharajah

The acid test of truth is its essential harmlessness. If one's speech does not wrong any living creature, while being factually correct, that is harmlessness. The concept of truthfulness is similar to 'sathyam' as preached and practiced by Mahathma Gandhi. Even untruth may attain the value of truth, if it is productive of goodness, without any blemish. Plato mentioned such an untruth in his "republic" where he says that statesmen may use it under certain circumstances as an instrument of statecraft or education and Churchill refers to it as terminological inexactitudes.

Valluvar warns: Do not utter falsehood about what your conscience knows to be true, for later, your own conscience will continue torment you. Hans Gross states that in criminal investigations, circumstances

should be created for the accused to come out with the truth. If one lives true to his inner



mind, he lives in the hearts of all mankind. If one is truthful in thought, word and deed, it is better than doing penance and charity. Valluvar further exhorts, 'all the world praises a truthful man, for whom other virtues follow without any effort'. If one speaks only the truth

and nothing but the truth, he need not seek any other virtues. In the modern world speaking only the truth is required of every witness in the court of law. Water performs external cleanliness and truthfulness is the detergent of the heart.

Valluvar expresses in his characteristic poetic fashion, "Ella villakkum villakalla, sanrorkku poyya villakke villakku". Lamps do not give the light that the righteous men desire, it is the light of truth that lightens their path. Cardin

Newman expresses the same light in his famous hymn- "Lead kindly Light". Valluvar concludes his treatise on truthfulness with the couplet: 'yam meyyay kandavattul illai enaituonrum, vaimaiyin nalla pira'. Of all things confirmed in our experience, there is nothing more precious than truth. In enlightened human experience, there is nothing greater than truth. Truth is indeed the very embodiment of righteousness.

(Kural : 291-300)



"Vaiyathul valvaangu Vaalpavan,
Vaauraiyum theivathul Vaikkpadum".

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TAMIL FESTIVALS IN THE MONTH OF JANUARY

Why we celebrate the Tamil festivals on a particular day according to the solar calendar?

By: Uthayan Thurairajah

Thai-Pongal (Harvest Festival) is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Tamil people. The first day of the Tamil month Thai usually falls on the 14th day of January (on some rare occasions, it would be 15th). Thai Pongal corresponds to Makara Sankranti; the winter harvest festival celebrated throughout the world, and it is referred to in the Hindu astrology, the Suriya Siddhanta.

The month "Thai" is considered an auspicious month by all Tamil speaking people. Tamil Heritage Month also falls on this month. Some people consider this day as Tamil New Year. The first day of the Tamil month called 'Siththirai' (April - May) is preserved as the actual Tamil New Year day according to the Tamil almanacs.

Thai Pongal is a Tamil Harvest Festival



Thai month refers to the name of the tenth month in the Tamil calendar. Thai corresponds to the Winter Solstice when the sun purportedly enters the 10th house of the zodiac Makara or Capricorn. Pongal usually means festivity or celebration; more specifically Pongal is translated as "boiling over" or "overflow." The farmers cook delicious sweet rice called 'Pongal' with the newly harvested rice of the season sanctified to the Sun (Suriyan/Uthayan) on the Pongal day. The Pongal is prepared by cooking fresh raw rice with lentils in milk and jaggery and are ceremonially eaten on this day. The Pongal signifies the gradual heating of the Earth as the Sun travels northward toward the equinox. The origin of the Thai Pongal festival assumed to be more than 1500 years ago.

The previous day, Pogi day is treated as a cleaning day. People gather all useless and unusable items in their homes and abolishing or destroy them. This festival is also significant to demolishing all the wasteful (sinful) thoughts and deeds of yesteryear from our memory and minds and fill them up with fresh, useful thoughts and deeds.

On the Thai Pongal day, all the family members wake up early in the early morning and take a bath and cleansing themselves and wearing new clothes and prepare sweet Pongal rice. First, this sweet food is offered to the Sun God as a token of thanksgiving. Then, the Pongal and other sweets are distributed to all in the family and neighbors.

Why Tamils are thanksgiving to Sun?



Thai Pongal is mainly celebrated to convey thanksgiving to the Sun God for providing the sunlight energy that is vital for agriculture and live support for all the living beings on the earth. It is best to treat the Sun God as the visible form of God and worship him.

Science attributes great importance to the sunlight. The sun is the endless storehouse and the source of light and energy. Without sunlight creatures and vegetation would cease to exist. People will lose their life-sustaining energy. Lack of nutritious substances would lead to the end of creation. That is why the sun existence, and related to the earth movement, and positions in the cosmos are important, and that is why the sun earns our respect, admiration, and reverence.

When the sun enters Aries, the first sign of the zodiac, the solar year begins. Many astrological books are based on solar calculations. The sun is the most important and the most prominent of our stars and the undisputed lord of our planetary system. The sun always comes first. The first day of the week begins on Sunday. The transition of the Sun from Sagittarius to Capricorn during the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere (Uttarayana) is known as Pongal. The sun journeys northward and the days are gradually lengthening in the northern hemisphere.

Why we celebrate the Tamil festival on a particular day according to the solar calendar?



All the north Indian and Chinese festivals are celebrated as per the lunar calendar. From mathematical calculations, the solar year is more scientific than the lunar year. One lunar year has 354 days only

because the moon goes from full moon to full moon or new moon to new moon in 29.5 days. The lunar days increase or decrease according to the stages of the moon location. The solar year has 365.25 days and remains the same. We can notice that there is a difference of 11.25 days between the solar and lunar years. Therefore, an intercalary month is added to the lunar calendar to synchronize roughly the two every 2.5 years. The accurate calculations can be done with the comparatively faster-moving moon. We know that the weather patterns follow the solar calendar, not the lunar. In fact, to make such calculations more precise, the movement of the moon is somewhat off from the circulation of the earth related to the sun. The moon path is divided into 27 'nakshatras' while the movement of earth related to the sun is divided into 12 'rashis.'

The solar calendar itself is quite rigid and constant except for the 0.25 day at the end of 365 (in reality, it is 365.256363 days). This additional 0.006363 day over 365.25 means we slightly over compensate when in a leap year we add February 29. To re-correct for it, we avoid the leap year ending with 00. It gives a reasonably accurate and stable calendar.

The sun enters different zodiacs based on earth rotation with an error of one day depending on how close we are to the leap year. The Makar Sankranti is a unique and goes entirely by the solar calendar system. The fact that Uttarayan is also called Makar Sankranti, or the day on which the sun begins its northward journey.

Does Uttarayan and Makar Sankranti fall on the same day?

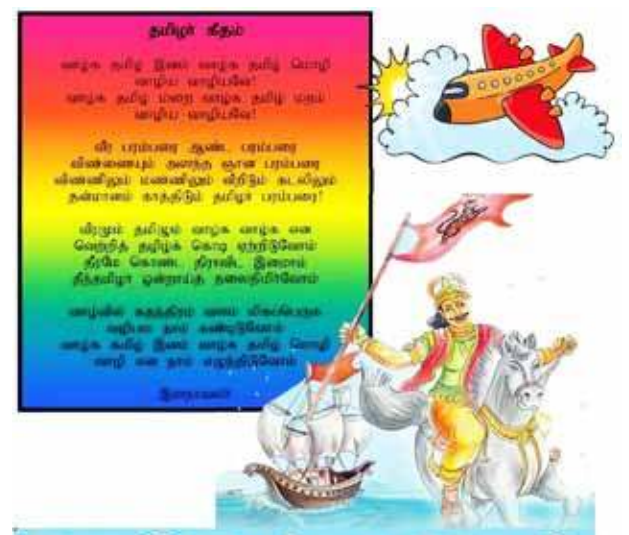
Winter or Summer Solstices are the days on which the sun touches its northernmost and southernmost points. In Sanskrit, the earth journey southwards is called Dakshinayan, and the one northward is called Uttarayan, 'Dakshin' and 'utter' being south and north respectively.

The winter solstice falls on the day of December 21. Uttarayan and Dhanu Sankranti begins on that day but not in the Makara Rashi. During the time of Aryabhata about 1500 years ago, the Uttarayan and Makar Sankranti overlapped. Now, Makar Sankranti

comes on January 14. The summer solstice falls on June 21 when Dakshinayan begins.

Tamil celebrate Uttarayan on Makar Sankranti. There is a minor change in the way the earth rotation axis is aligned with the sun. If we want to celebrate Uttarayan, we can do it on December 21. January 14 is about right if we want to celebrate Makar Sankranti. Parenthetically, the winter is at its peak in January and February. At the time of Aryabhata, winter was at its peak in February and March.

Tamil Heritage Month



Tamil Heritage Month also falls on January. There are several celebration organized throughout of Canada to celebrate the Tamil Heritage. The path to solutions to pressing issues will also become visible when the month of Thai is born (Thai Piranthai Wazhai Pirakkum), is a popular proverb among Tamil community. The Tamil Heritage Anthem sang during these ceremonies and This anthem accepted by the International Tamil Scholars in South Africa during the International Conference on Tamil Culture in 2001. We wish a Happy Thai Pongal and Tamil Heritage Month to all.



Uthayan Thurairajah is a Senior Engineer and Associate at WSP|MMM Group with over twenty years of experience in Electrical Engineering and Lighting field, and he also holds a Lecturer position in the Department of Communication and Design at Ryerson University. Uthayan is a member of several Canadian and international professional association including Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine (AIHM) and Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR). He has worked on multi-disciplinary lighting and electrical projects for the Ministry of Transportation, various Towns, Municipalities, Regions and others. Ha carries out research on the subject of 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 on lighting design & health. He is passionate about integrating science and health into the lighting design.



U.S. Rate Rise, Plunging Canadian Loonie and Widening Gap in US & Canadian Economies

By: Arun Senathirajah
MBA (Banking Mgmt)

Since 2008, under its policy known as quantitative easing, the Federal Reserve has pumped 3.8 trillion dollars into the economy. It created huge pools of new money, in the hope of reviving the economy. There were four stages of quantitative easing known as QE1, QE2, QE3 and QE Infinity. 'Tapering' is a new term that exploded into the financial lexicon on May 22, 2013 when U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke stated in testimony before Congress that that Fed may taper - or reduce - the size of the bond-buying program known as quantitative easing (QE). This would be implanted depending on the economic indicators positive trend. This eventually implemented in December 2013. U.S. Federal Reserve's decision Wednesday, December 18, 2013 to begin tapering its massive bond purchase program in January, taking it as a sign the world's largest US economy is finally on the mend. The announcement sent stock markets higher

point higher to the 0.25 per cent to the 0.5 per cent range. It was the first rate hike since 2006. Wednesday's rate hike was long expected and came amid signs the U.S. economy will keep improving.

The Canadian Loonie

The move puts the U.S. overnight lending rate on par with Canada's 0.5 per cent, but the improved return on U.S. investments sent the U.S. dollar higher against other currencies. That included our dollar which has already fallen 15 per cent against the U.S. dollar this year. The loonie closed at 72.54 cents U.S. One American dollar costs \$1.3785. "It's at an 11-year low and as the greenback strengthens, it's definitely going to get weaker," said Penelope Graham, editor of Ratesupermarket.ca. The already-battered loonie sank further after Wednesday's announcement to 72.54 cents (U.S.). That's bad news for Canadians who want to spend their money in the U.S., but good news for the export sector, which is boosted when the loonie falls. Scott Guitard, a portfolio manager at Fiduciary Trust Canada, said climbing American inter-



Canadian Loonie versus US Dollar

and long-term bond yields lower, which could translate into lower borrowing costs for consumers and businesses in Canada as well as the U.S. Citing falling employment and low inflation, U.S. Fed former Chairman Ben Bernanke said the central bank would begin reducing its monthly bond purchases by \$10 billion (U.S.).

The Fed's new Chairman Janet Yellen now is back again to use traditional money market tools, the pricing of the U.S. Currency - increasing the interest rate in order to curtail the money supply in the economy. "The U.S. economy has shown considerable strength," said Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen. "We decided to move because we feel the conditions - further improvement in the labour market and reasonable confidence that inflation would move back to two per cent in the long term - have been satisfied." The U.S. Federal Reserve (the Fed) raised interest rates Wednesday Dec 16 2015 a quarter-

est rates will likely mean the opposite for the Canadian dollar. Avery Shenfeld, Chief Economist, CIBC World Markets said that the bank expects the dollar will hit the 70 cent U.S. level as early as March, before recovering toward the end of 2016 to 75.75 cents U.S. Climbing U.S. interest rates is good news for the Canadian export sector since they bring in US dollar.

Fixed-rate mortgages

Canadian fixed-rate mortgages are tied to U.S. bond prices through long-term Canadian bonds. So as U.S. interest rates rise, bond prices fall and mortgage rates rise. Five-year fixed mortgage rates could rise. Banks are tied to long-term Canadian bonds, which are ultimately tied to U.S. bond prices. When interest rates rise, bond prices fall. Banks sell bonds to loan money to mortgage holders. And as bond prices fall, the pot of money shrinks, lending tightens and mortgage rates rise. As a result, fixed mortgages



U.S. Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen

rates have historically raised when the Fed makes an interest rate hike announcement.

Gas Prices

We could expect a drop in oil prices results in lower prices for consumers at the pump. But, with the loonie plunging - it was already dropping alongside oil prices imported from the U.S.. The exchange-rate change more than offsetting the decline because imported gas is priced in U.S. dollars. That is helping to keep gas price higher for Canadians.

Canadian interest rates

Canadian interest rates have tended to move higher when the U.S. pushes theirs higher. But most economists say the Canadian economy is performing so poorly that the chances are even the central bank would raise or lower the overnight rate. Our low rate will keep the cost of borrowing low for longer on everything from variable-rate mortgages to lines of credit. Speaking earlier this week, Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz said that Canadian and American interest rate policies will continue to diverge as the gap widens between their relative economic performance. "We just want people to understand that usually we think of the Canadian economy following the U.S. economy fairly closely, and this will be one of those places where it really doesn't," he said, for the Canadian Press.

Canadian Markets & the Economy

In response to the Interest rate announcement, on the equity markets, the S&P/TSX composite index fell 156.15 points to 13,009.93, led lower by the global gold and materials sectors, which declined 5.67 per cent and 3.73 per cent, respectively. Scotia Bank said it expects no significant pick-up in commodity prices at least until late

2016. Low crude oil prices will provide additional headwinds for the Canadian dollar if domestic growth prospects fail to improve in line with the Bank of Canada's expectations, the bank said.

When the financial crisis hit in 2008, sending the U.S. economy into a free fall, the Fed lowered rates to the zero to 0.25 per cent range in the hopes cheap money would stimulate spending. Canada followed with record lows in 2009, which bounced as high as one per cent in 2010 when it appeared the economy was on strong footing, but have since been cut to 0.5 per cent. The move puts the U.S. overnight lending rate on par with Canada's 0.5 per cent, but the improved return on U.S. investments sent the U.S. dollar higher against other currencies. That included our dollar which has already fallen 15 per cent against the U.S. dollar this year. Canada's oil and gas sector is expected to cut capital spending a further 15 per cent in 2016. The economy is expected to begin rebounding in the second half of the year, as oil prices stabilize, markets adjust to the U.S. interest rate cuts, and the benefits of a lower dollar flow through to Canadian exporters.

Most economists believe Canada's central bank is in no rush to raise interest rates even if the Fed continues to hike, given the weakness of the economy, which slipped into recession in the first part of this year. In the U.S., the unemployment rate has fallen to half its recessionary peak and now sits at five per cent, the level considered to be full employment. By contrast, Canada's unemployment rate is 7.1 per cent. The OECD expects 2015 GDP growth of 1.2 per cent for Canada, just half of the 2.5 per cent it expects in the U.S. It projects growth will rise in 2016 to 2 per cent in Canada and 2.5 per cent in the U.S.



MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Year-end tax reminders and tips

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

To be sure you keep your tax bill as low as possible, tax and financial planning should be a year-round activity. Starting early and being diligent about your tax life is important but it's only one aspect of your total financial life. When you have a complete financial plan in place, it's easier to keep everything on track and on target. That's why consulting with your professional advisor will make sure all your tax-reduction strategies and overall financial objectives are in place and working for you.

Capital gains and losses Tax loss selling is a crucial year-end activity for investors, where we realize capital losses on security positions as a means to partially or fully offset realized capital gains in the current tax year, previous years or simply to carry the losses forward. For those of you who do not make a significant number of changes to the portfolio, the degree of realized gains in any given year may be small; however, gains can creep in unexpectedly, such as through mutual fund distributions. Sell money-losing investments by the December 31 settlement date to offset capital gains. If you plan to repurchase the assets you sold at a loss, don't fall afoul of the superficial loss rules which will remove any tax advantage if you repurchase an identical capital property within 30 days after having disposed of it.

RRSP contributions The contribution deadline for 2015 is February 29, 2016. RRSP contribution room can be carried forward indefinitely and you may want to consider deferring a deduction to a future year when you'll be in a higher tax bracket. Always make your maximum contribution each year – you'll get the most in immediate tax savings and in long-term growth. How much you can personally contribute can be found on your most recent notice of assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Each year, the Canada Revenue Agency identifies your unused contribution room for the upcoming tax year on your Notice of Assessment. If however, you are unable to locate your Notice of Assessment, a quick call to the Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-8281 or a visit to www.cra.gc.ca can provide the information you need.

RRSP withdrawals If you intend to withdraw cash from your investments held within an RRSP and expect your income to increase significantly next

year, consider making the withdrawal before year end. If you turn 71 this year and are required to wind up your RRSPs before December 31, it's tax-advantageous to transfer the funds to investments held within a Registered Retirement Income Fund (RRIF) or annuity. You can also continue to make contributions for your spouse until he or she turns 71.

Income-splitting Save on taxes by contributing to investments held within a spousal RRSP, through a pension-income split with a spouse, or by paying a salary to other (eligible) family members.

Home Buyers' Plan (HPB) By delaying a withdrawal from your investments held within an RRSP under HBP until after December 31, you'll extend the time period for purchasing a new home and for the first repayment by an additional year.

Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) If your child is turning 15 this year and you want to ensure he or she will be eligible for the Canadian Education Savings Grant (CESG) in the years the child turns 16 and 17, by the end of the year you must be able to show that you contributed at least \$2,000 to their investments held within an RESP (with zero withdrawals) or you contributed at least \$100 for you child in any four year period (again, with zero withdrawals).

Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) Make a \$5,500 contribution to your investments held with a TFSA. The contribution isn't tax deductible but the money and interest earned inside your TFSA are tax-free and so are withdrawals, which can be made at any time for any purpose.

Tax Deductions and Tax Credit Take full advantage of all that are available to you and make sure the items you claim were paid in the year they are claimed.

These are just a few opportunities for year-end tax savings. Talk to your professional advisor to make sure you're not missing out on others.

Disclaimer:

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

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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 (left in photo) and Rajini Nathan live in London and are of Sri Lankan heritage. Niranjini is a graduate in Human Biology, and has a clear passion for food. You can find more of her recipes on her blog www.ninjaeatsfood.wordpress.com Rajini has a background in psychology and travels the world with her husband Victor and daughter Azaaryah. Their travels are detailed at www.myreluctanttravels.wordpress.com

Cauliflower WINGS



Cauliflower “wings”

We’re at a point where we’re trying to eat more veg, but there are some things that simply cannot be replaced, Chicken wings being one of those; however, this recipe definitely does come a very close second. A lovely alternative starter, or addition to wow your friends and family over the coming weeks.

Ingredients:

1 cauliflower head
Fried chicken seasoning (or make your own simple one using flour and cornflour as a base and adding paprika, cayenne, garlic powder, salt, pepper, parsley, thyme and onion powder to it)
Oil
Water
Buffalo sauce (optional)

Method:

Cut the cauliflower into little florets, making sure the stem is longer than usual. This will help shape the “wing”. Cutting along the floret side will also help form a “wing” shape. Mix the fried chicken seasoning/ homemade seasoning with a little water until it takes the consistency of pancake batter; not too thick, but not too runny. Coat the cauliflower “wings” in this batter very well, dip twice if you have to. Once the oil is hot, fry the cauliflower until golden brown. It can be eaten just as it is, or if you want to take it one step further, cover them in buffalo sauce or any sauce of your choice.

That’s all there is to it for this meat-free version of an all time favourite! As always, we want to see your creations, so don’t forget to use the hashtag #monsoonjournal on Instagram!

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Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada (SAAC)

Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada celebrated its 13th Annual Dinner Dance at Markham Convention Centre on December 05, 2015. Vina Devadas gave his presidential speech. More than 325 guest attended the event including special invited guest from Royal Bank, CPA Ontario, Kanish and Partners, E&Y and local business community and media personnel attended this gala. Secretary Ari Ariaran gave the vote of thanks.

Seen here are some photos from the event.



Vina Devadas,
President of SAAC



Ari Ariaran,
Secretary of SAAC



SAAC Committee



Santa with the children



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Enjoying the dancing



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Partner with SAAC President



Toronto-its attractions and challenges to new comers

By: JJ Atputharajah

Toronto has a number of attractions for newcomers. In the yesterdays, Canada was shunned by many for its extreme weather condition and remoteness. When the British and French colonists started opening out its lands, it was the warmer southern areas were inhabited. With increased scientific advancement and heating facilities against extreme weather conditions people dared to occupy its northern areas too. Canada's natural resources were another attraction that helped in its economic and industrial progress. Its open immigration policies encouraged people from all over the world to rush to Canada for a new lease of life. Persecuted persons from all over the world are given a helping hand by Canada and many from such areas have found their way into Canada. Greece, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Gujarat (India), China, Hong-Kong are some of the examples. Though it is a risk to accommodate some of these persons from the troubled areas of the world, Canada has taken the bold step to help the affected.

A. Support for Refugees and Immigrants:

Canada has a well integrated refugee resettlement program and works with the support of the UNHCR. It resettles refugees to save their lives and to provide stability to those who have no hope of relief. Canada's resettlements programs are respected internationally because of they provide permanent settlement as a long term solution. The Canada refugee system has two parts:-

* The refugee and humanitarian program for people seeking protection from distant lands.

* the in-Canada Asylum Program for people making refugee protection claim from within Canada. Of the world's refugees (19.5 million) Canada takes in roughly one out of every 10 refugees, through government assisted and privately sponsored programs. Canada played a major role in Iraqi resettlement commitment took in 23,000 refugees. It has undertaken to take in 11,300 Syrians in 2017 and 13,500 people through its In Canada Program. Not everyone who makes the claim succeeds. The CIC funds settlement programs under several sections:

1. Language and Training Programs.
2. Information and.
3. Employment Services.
4. Community Canada services.
5. Support Services - to help newcomers to access settlement services.

Canada has helped refugees from

world's most vulnerable countries- even at the risk of health and safety of Canadians.

B. Challenges/Problems of New Immigrants:

Many immigrants come to Canada with great expectations and dreams. However most of them face a variety of challenges. One thing is that they will not be able to get the employment for which they are qualified or experienced. Many got into mental illness or depression as a result of finding it difficult to pay their bills and trying to survive. A community Health Survey found that many newcomers struggle to adapt to the country's economic and social institutions. These challenges can affect their prospects of adjusting to different culture, learning a new language and performing in the labour market. Most of them (university educated recent immigrants) found that they are over educated for the jobs available for them. In the years 2008 and 2009, the prospects for immigrants to find employment declined by 12.9 per cent in comparison with the Canadian workers whose decline level was 2.2 per cent. Skilled immigrants arrive in Canada with a sense of optimism, only to be discouraged most by often insurmountable obstacles to prospective employment. Most of them are faced with feelings of depression as it takes time to get employed, their savings get eroded and the resultant mental health problems can adversely affect a person's ability face the day-to-day challenges of life. Many of them find work as security guards in the private sector. Barriers of citizenship status and similar conditions make their positions hopeless. Many of these immigrants have to face continued periods of stress and frustration. They get a feeling of rejection when they learn that their education is being ignored. The psychological position of men is even worse than that for women. In the source countries, men

are principal wage earners. But on arrival in Canada, they find a reversal of traditional roles where men have little to do and take care of the household chores. The professionals find themselves in a hopeless position when they are rejected by employers because they are over-qualified for ordinary jobs. Hiram Mok, an associate professor of Psychiatry said that depression leads to chemical imbalance, with symptoms of sadness, memory loss, fatigue, poor concentration, low energy levels and lack of ambition. When they select people to Canada, they base it on a point-system. But when these selectees come to Canada, they find it very difficult to find a job right away. Besides the economic anxieties, the physical environment confronts the newcomers with umpteen problems of adjustment. The extreme cold in winter makes them feel utterly cumbersome to wear all sorts of clothing and accessories to cover almost every part of the body. One has to carry extra weight on the body as a result of the difficulties imposed by the weather. The other problem is loneliness. One feels that he is cut off from their kith and kin. They feel that the close community touch that is always present in their homelands is almost absent here. There are vast empty places almost everywhere. One has to travel vast areas to get to another state. Though modern technology and means of transport have greatly compensated for these handicaps, the initial shock for the new immigrants is there.

C. Compensatory Acts of The Canadian Government:-

The government of Canada has done immense work to make Canada attractive to newcomers and compensated them for its shortcomings. Telephone communication is free. The public transport system in many of Canada's cities are almost efficient. Immigrants are given all facilities to find jobs and settle down. Parents of newcomers are



eligible to be sponsored by their children to relocate to Canada, under the family re-union scheme. The family reunion scheme has helped the immigrants immensely as it leads to well-adjusted healthy family living in alien climes. Canada has excellent facilities for early child-care and childhood education. Its colleges and universities are among the best in the world. University education is easily accessible and affordable when compared to the situation in Asian countries. Canada too has excellent facilities for seniors in the form of free health and easily affordable living conditions. The old age security pension available for all seniors who have lived in Canada for more than ten years is another advantage for the older generations. The cost of living is affordable. They are given welfare allowance until they find it convenient to work for their daily living. Toronto's cities have excellent public libraries which are equipped and well stocked with up-to-date resources of every kind. The colleges and universities provide ample opportunities to produce well trained manpower. Programs for early child-care and old-age security are well planned and executed. It has embraced multiculturalism in a great way. Immigrants are given full freedom to practice their indigenous culture. It is studded with cultural features of all countries- temples, mosques, vihares and synagogues etc.. All kinds of cultural activities enrich the life in Canada. One can also be able to taste a variety of cuisines- a rare phenomena not commonly found in any part of the world. Canada is also positive in its invitation to the persecuted and suffering people of the world and bold in its efforts to take risks irrespective of religious or ethnic differences. Canada's political stance is conducive for peaceful living and its democratic way of life is a shining example for the rest of the world.

Annual Carol Service by Tamil Church in Toronto

"Let the spirit of Christmas ignite the sparks within you"- Rev. Ben Manickam

The annual carol service of the Tamil Church of the Living Saviour was held recently in Scarborough. Giving his message at the service Rev. Manickam enthused the participants to allow the spirit of the advent to ignite the sparks within them. Through meaningful carols, lilting music and powerful words, the service led the congregation in a feast of spiritual experience. Pastor Manickam (Principal Wesley College, Colombo) as-

serted that Jesus lowered himself to the level of humanity to lift them up from the bondage of sin. The story of creation showed the faultless plan of divinity but the advent displayed the uncertainty and problems of human life especially in the humble birth of the Jesus in the manger. He also explained the hallucinations of the human mind by referring to the human problems as portrayed in the film 'Madagascar' (computer animated comedy film -2005)-- the feelings of the man left under six feet in the ground without any hope of getting out. Human

weaknesses need divine help in order to find peace and ease. The choir rendered meaningful, sweet carols in both Tamil and English to relate the story of Christmas in an effective manner. The carol - "Panivulum uthaya kaalam" proved to be very meaningful and effective in the style it was presented with solos to provide variety. All in all the service provided soul - satisfying experience to the participants by the faithful teamwork of experienced church stewards like Jeyamany Jeyadeva, Richard Dharmarajah and Karuna Gnanasegaram.

SRI LANKAN K.R. RAVINDRAN HONoured AS ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe appoints Ravindran as Sri Lanka's Special Ambassador to bring in Foreign Investment on completion of his Rotary assignment



K.R. Ravindran

By Siva Sivapragasam

The Hilton Hotel in Sri Lanka was the venue of a special elite gathering last month to felicitate K. R. Ravindran as the Rotary International President – the first Sri Lankan to hold this prestigious office.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was the Chief Guest at the event and led a special gathering inclusive of former President Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, Cabinet Ministers, Parliamentarians, the diplomatic community, captains of Industry, other Business leaders and Rotarians and their families in a special Presidential Banquet to honour Ravindran on this achievement which has brought great honour to Sri Lanka and has raised its public image

throughout the world.

Prime Minister Wickremesinghe announced at the banquet that Ravindran is being appointed as Sri Lanka's special Ambassador to bring in Foreign Investment on completion of his Rotary assignment.

Ravindran is CEO and co-founder of Printcare PLC, Sri Lanka's largest printing and packaging company. It is publicly listed and has won many national and international awards for excellence. It provides design-to-delivery printing, packing, and digital media solutions, and is the No. 1 producer of tea bag tags and sachets in the world. Ravindran insists that his company maintain a focus on environmental sustainability, social responsibility, community engagement, and high ethical standards. Printcare is the winner of national and international awards of excellence.



Mr. Ravindran welcomes Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe

Ravindran has been a featured speaker at several international print and packaging forums.

A member of the Rotary Club of Colombo since 1974, Ravindran has served Rotary International as treasurer, director, and Foundation trustee, as well as in many other offices. K .R. Ravindran – a Rotarian from Sri Lanka has brought great honour to all Sri Lankans by his selection to this high office. He also serves on the boards of several other companies and charitable trusts. He is the founding president of the Rotary-sponsored Sri Lanka Anti Narcotics Association, the largest such agency in Sri Lanka. During the country's civil war, Ravindran was involved in the business community efforts to find peaceful solutions to the conflict and was a featured speaker at the United Nations-sponsored peace conference in New York for the Sri Lankan diaspora in 2002.

Ravindran is married to Vanathy and they have two children. Ravindran is also a Director of Express Newspapers (Cey) LTD, Publishers of Sri Lanka's largest circulated and premier Tamil newspaper "Virakesari". His father Rajabather Krishnamoorthi was also once the Managing Director of Express Newspapers (Cey) Ltd.



Mr. Ravindran and his wife Vanathy

CONFLUENCE OF CULTURES ENRICHES RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND OBSERVANCES



Rev. Dr. Randy Naylor speaking at the annual carol service of the SJCCAA annual carol service - 2015 said that mingling of cultures and traditions enriches religious experience. He asserted that the festival of nine carols and lessons was initially introduced by the Americans, travelled to the East and come back enriched with nuances of carols and music and it has come back to its original home with greater flavor as evidenced in the performance of the choir. The service was held at the Parkwoods



United Church at North York. Eileen Chinniah who introduced the proceedings mentioned the role played by the late Grace Chelliah, former principal of Chundikuli Girls' College who was instrumental in starting the annual carol service of the SJCCAA in Toronto along with her husband. Through Bible lessons and Carols the service presented the story and significance of the birth of Christ. The Tamil orchestra that gave a memorable performance during the offertory interlude and added variety to the



program. The English carols were trained by Sapphire and Jonathan Navaratnarajah and the Tamil carol by Thillairaj Lewis. The carols emphasized the fact that the wonderful name Jesus has revolutionized the minds and activities of the people all over the nooks and corners of the world and that will continue to be a force for the good of the world in the years to come. The organizing committee of the alumni of St. John's and Chundikuli spared no pains to make it a memorable and spiritually ennobling experience.



HINDU WOMEN'S SOCIETY IN SRI LANKA

CELEBRATES 85TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A SPECIAL MUSIC & DANCE PROGRAMME "KONJUMTHAMIL"



Girls in skirt and blouse doing the "Kummi" dance



Harvest dance



"Thattu Madippu" worn by young women



A section of the audience



Alarippu dance recital



The Choir – Isai Sangamam



The half-saree worn by Tamil girls



The saree drapes of the young as in "Konjum Tamil"



The welcoming damsels

The Hindu Women's Society in Sri Lanka celebrated its 85th Anniversary with a special music and dance programme titled "KonjumThamil" – (the caressing language) that enthralled the well-attended audience at the Saraswathy Hall. The dance programme choreographed the history of the Society, the traditions, culture and dress of the Tamils in song, word and dance.

The primary objective of the organizers was to portray all that has been done to fulfill the twin objectives of the Society – namely to foster Hinduism including the culture and the society and the Tamil Language over the past eighty five years.

The whole programme was choreographed beautifully by Sivanandini Duraiswamy and ably assisted by the Kalagam Committee ladies.

Beginning with the Ganesha Stotaram followed by the percussion beat – the students playing on the drums, table, genjara and the gadam – instruments of Carnatic Music giving a wonderful start for the evening.

The Isai Sangamam – the choir of the Vidyalyam was a very special item with 24 students singing with the orchestra – an unusual programme where harmony and melody blended together giving Carnatic Music a difference.

The programme "Mann Vaasanai" – the fragrance of the earth of our homes was depicted by the traditional culture, dress and heritage of the Tamils.

Young debutantes modeled the different dresses of the Tamils from childhood wearing skirt and blouse through older children wearing the thavani, the traditional half saree and young and older women wearing the different drapes each followed by separate dances – the modeling by children and young girls was a novel prelude to the dance.

The Alarippu – a tradition of Bharata Natyam was incorporated into the Thirupugal – "Erumylervilaiyaadumugamonre..." which itself was an unusual combination lending colour to the dances with Lord Murugan's six encampments – "aarupadaiveedu."

The traditional Thillana and the singing of the Mangalam brought the programme to a wonderful end.

(Seen here are some pictures taken at the programme)



Young girls in Kolaatam



THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA

Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple Dec 15, 2015 - Gajamuga Samharam



by: **Kidambi Raj**
Member, Board of Trustees

The annual 21-day festival of reading about Lord Ganesha and His greatness started on Thursday, November 26th this year. On the 20th day was celebrated as "Gajamuga Samharam" by Lord Ganesha. It is the killing of the Asura (demon) called Gajaasura.

Lord Ganesha is great God in Hinduism and Hindus all over the world adore Him. Vigneshwara and Pillaiyaar are two of the several names for Lord Ganesha. Vigneshwara means that He is the God of averting obstacles. Ganesha or Ganapathy means that He is the captain of all good forces. The

trunk of the elephant headed God resembles the Tamil script "OM" and so it is believed that meditating Him would produce favourable results in our daily activity.

As human beings we have to be reminded often about God and His greatness. The annual event of reading about Him reminds us about His greatness and the need to worship Him.

There are several versions as to why Lord Ganesha got the elephant head. It seems there existed an Asura (demon) with all the characteristics and was called "Gajaasura". This demon did lots of penance to Lord Shiva and got whatever gifts he asked for. He wished that he could bring out

fire continually from his own body so that no one could ever dare to approach him and got that wish fulfilled. Next time he told Shiva that he wants Shiva to be in his stomach and Shiva agreed. But Parvati looked everywhere and could find Shiva and finally asked lord Vishnu to find her husband. Vishnu assured her that he will find Him.

Vishnu transformed Nandi (the bull of Shiva) into a dancing bull brought him in front of Gajaasura and at the same time Vishnu appeared as a flutist and the enchanting performance of the bull sent the asura into ecstasies, and he asked the flutist what he desired. Vishnu, the flutist asked the asura if he would give what he

asks and he immediately said that he would. So, the flutist asked him to liberate Shiva from his stomach. After liberating Shiva, the asura asked for one final wish. He said that he had received several wishes, but would like a wish by which everyone would remember him by adoring his head when he is dead. So, Shiva brought his own son and substituted his head with that of Gajaasura. So, that time on in India and everywhere where Hindus are, the tradition is that any action, in order to prosper, must begin with the invoking of Lord Ganesha, who is a remover of obstacles.

So, the Samharam (killing) of the Gajaasura was enacted as part of the festival.



CAREER GUIDANCE WORKSHOP FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The annual Guidance for Higher Studies workshops for High School Students organized by the Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada (ASGC) in partnership with the York Region District School Board (YRDSB), Canadian Tamil Alumni Association (CTAA), Canadian Tamil Medical Association (CTMA) and the Sri Lankan Accountants Association (SAAC) was held on Saturday December 5, 2015 to promote higher education among Tamil youths. This extremely useful event for high school students and their parents were conducted from 10 am till 3 pm at Middlefield Collegiate Institute. This workshop was designed to serve as a forum for dissemination of information, exchange of ideas, and sharing of academic and professional experiences.

The plenary session of the workshop started with the welcome speech by the ASGC President Pon Balendran. Following the welcome

speech, Mr. Cecil Roach, Superintendent of Education spoke about the significance of the workshop and thanked ASGC for organizing this as an annual event. This was followed by an inspirational keynote address made by Dr. Raj Rasanayagam, a child psychiatrist and an assistant professor at the University of Toronto. He emphasized the importance of social IQ in order to be successful in a chosen career and encouraged students to go out of their comfort zone and take risks.

The workshop involved two sessions, one in the morning and other in the afternoon and covered fields of study: Health & Life Sciences, Engineering, IT and Physical Sciences, Social Sciences & Humanities and Business Studies. The sessions were moderated by Dr. Mathangi Arun, Mr. Thiva Kulasingam, Mr. Parasana Balachandran and Mr. Prashanth Srichandramohan. Each fields of study was addressed by 6 or 7 guest speakers, chosen on

the basis of their academic and professional success. The students were able to ask questions and the discussions took place in an informal and friendly atmosphere. They were able to receive vital information about the selection of courses and the career paths of different professions from the young graduates in the Tamil community. A separate session was held for parents. The parents collected very valuable information from a panel of speakers who have been involved with the school administration and parent-school-community issues.

Credit has to be given to the executive committee of ASGC for organizing once again a wonderful workshop. Special mention must be made about the workshop coordinators Dr.V. Mannivanan and Suganya Sinnathamby for an excellent work done in executing a great workshop for the students and parents.



By Dr.K. Theivendirarajah,
ASGC committee member.

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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

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"The adage, "everybody has a story to tell" is especially true of Northern Sri Lanka!"

Cut off for several decades from the South, the people of the North have many unique characteristics and issues that hardly get press coverage!

Here, inspired by Humans of New York, is a small attempt to redress this - dedicated to all lovers of Sri Lanka, including Northern Sri Lanka!"

Here are few recent pictorials that featured in Humans of Northern Sri Lanka:

BY

THULASI MUTTULINGAM

Ashiq Hussain

I was in Pakistan over this week (December 2, 2015) to attend a peace and conflict resolution conference. Met many interesting people and exchanged fascinating stories. We have many warriors campaigning for peace rather than war.

Meet Ashiq Hussain, a minority Shia Muslim from Pakistan. In 2012, a bus he was travelling in was stopped by extremist Sunni militants who killed nearly all the Shias on the bus.

"I escaped by hiding my Identity card in my shoe and claiming a false name. They shot or stoned even women and children to death. Ever since then, I have campaigned for peace and understanding in our region.

I don't want to leave my country. I don't want to succumb to hate. I want to promote peace and understanding. Yes, at times it seems almost hopeless. But that doesn't mean we should give up. We have to do what we can to promote peace in places of conflict."



Like

The resourcefulness of the average Tamil. Waste not, want not!

An used tyre being used to grow eggplants. Asked them why and the reasons ranged from:

"Because it was there" to "Because discarded tyres act as receptacles for waste water and the dengue mosquito. Might as well put it to good use." Can't argue with that.



Like

Session Haroon Rashid

One of the highlights of my visits to Pakistan was this session with Haroon Rashid, Pakistani popstar and creator of the award winning animated series, "The Burka Avenger."

In Haroon's words: "I was inspired to create the Burka Avenger Series when I heard of girls' schools being closed in some parts of the country.

I thought of a Lady Teacher

fighting to uphold girls' education, and she became the inspiration for this series. The Burka

Avenger doesn't fight with guns and bullets however, she fights with book and pens - because war doesn't solve anything, Education does."

Seriously, go watch some episodes of Burka Avenger if you haven't already. Its simply amazing. A huge Thumbs UP to Haroon and his team.



Like

Hassan Raza

Another highlight of the Peace and Conflict Resolution conference I attended in Pakistan was the Social Media Session conducted by the admin of 'Humans of Pakistan' - Hassan Raza.

"Growing up, I wanted to be a fighter pilot - because I wanted to bomb India. We kept hearing only one side of the story, where India was our enemy, out to undermine us at every turn. When the internet became accessible, I went on chat forums to curse Indians. There, I was shocked to see that those with another side of the story from that side, hated us equally. And there were yet others, who were sympathetic and humanistic from India too, despite what we had been told. It led me to explore the various information we were getting

through other sources, primarily social media. I think we are able to get a truer picture of what happens through social media.

My parents, who still access only the mainstream Pakistani media are unable to understand my views now. Likewise, the parents of my many Indian friends are unable to believe they have Pakistani friends.

They live in an age brainwashed by their respective national medias which we have broken away from, thanks to access to social media."



Like

I have met many of these Indian returnees over time.

The challenges of living in constrained camp spaces in urban Tamil Nadu as opposed to the relatively vast spaces of the rural North are very different.

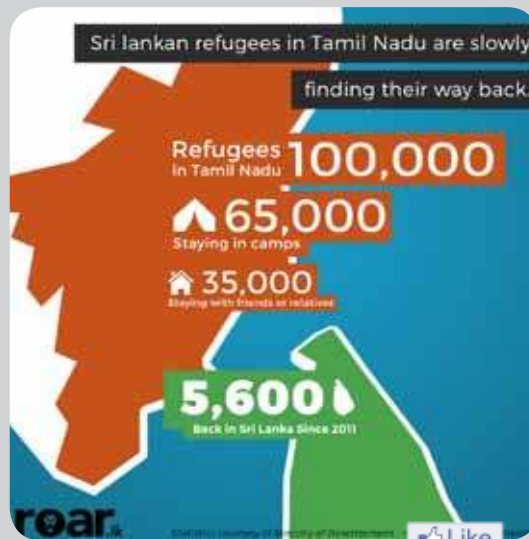
Some are able to regrow roots and manage (or even prosper) while others give up and go back to TN, as that is the only life they know.

I remember the young man who burst into tears when he saw the two acres of land that belonged to him in Kilinochchi.

"Do I own all this land? In Tamil Nadu, we occupied a few square feet per family in camps and felt like usurpers for even that."

This is a good job by www.Roar.lk in attempting to capture the cross-section of people returning, with their hopes and dreams for the future.

They have had a hard life. May their futures at least be better.



Like



The rural countryside is not all green and charm. Well it is green and charming but not ALL green and charming.

Came across this poor mother cow snorting copious tears because she had been separated from her calf. She was tied up or she would have gone running all over the countryside to look for her beloved offspring. The calf was separated from her to keep her milk preserved for humans.

Mercifully I was born into a vegetarian family yet Hindu culture taught me that it was alright to drink the milk of a cow because cows were well looked after by Hindu farmers and had their rights and their calves' rights honoured.

Bullshit! I have been seeing in operation how the cows and the calves are treated and there is very little of compassion in real practice. I once tried to become vegan but gave up because Sri Lanka for all its much vaunted ideals on animal rights via the concepts of Buddhism and Hinduism is not a vegan-friendly place. We are not even particularly a vegetarian friendly place.

Sometimes I really wish we had stronger movements and activists when it comes to animal rights here. The other thing that continues to disturb me is the branding on the cattle.

See the huge ornate Tamil letters branded into her skin? She had that done without anesthesia by local men using hot irons without veterinary supervision. The vets abhor the practice and try to discourage it. They try to encourage a system of tagging instead, far less painful to the cattle yet just as effective at identifying them, but the people are too lazy to take up 'new' ways of doing things.

Like



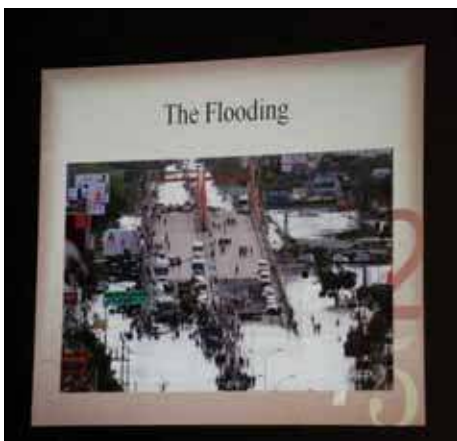
Christmas celebration brings joy to the community

Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region celebrated its annual Christmas celebration on the 19th 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 Mrs. Dharni Sivakumar 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. She further stated 2015 was a mile stone when the annual cultural nite celebrated its 15th anniversary. She invited everyone for Thai Pongal celebrations on the 16th of January in Cambridge.

Mrs. Ramya Joseph, the Secretary did the fundraising for the association's Global Relief fund. The proceeds went towards supporting the victims of Chennai Floods in South India. She thanked the parents of the students of the Waterloo region Tamil language class and their teacher Mrs. Kunamalar for presenting the Tamil Nativity drama program. Concluding the message she wished the gathering a merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

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



Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region
 தமிழ் கலை பண்பாட்டுக் கழகம் வேட்டரிஜா வட்டாரம்

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DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION'S HELPING HEARTS INITIATIVE TO HELP SHALINI NAGARAJ SURVIVE

Shalini Nagaraj a 14-year-old girl from St.Philomena's Girls High School in Bellary - Karnataka, who goes to school with her friend Tanushree, whose mother Mrs.Anuradha Narayanan was my childhood classmate. I have known Anuradha since Grade 6 !

Anuradha's heart broke when she heard Shalini has been diagnosed with CML Chronic Blast which is a type of Blood Cancer. She desperately reached out to all of our friends seeking their support. I decided to join hands with her, to save this child's life through DTA's Helping Hearts Initiative.

Shalini was undergoing Chemotherapy in Kidwai Hospital in Bangalore. As of December 22nd, Shalini is an out-patient at Narayana Hrudayalaya Hospital in Bangalore, where she is being treated by Dr.Sunil Bhat. As per her doctor, Shalini must undergo 2 sessions of Chemotherapy before going through the Bone Marrow Transplant in order to survive. The hospital gave us a quote for the bone marrow transplant which will cost around INR 20 Lakhs, which is around \$ 40,000 CAD. Few tests have been done recently and the doctor will be able to determine the next procedure in a week or two, based on the reports.

Sincere thanks to her school Principal Mrs.Shantha Selvaraj, who spread the plight of Shalini and helped raise around INR 5 Lakhs (CAD \$ 10000). Till now the family has raised about INR 3.5 Lakhs (CAD \$7000). With the generosity of few other, they were able to raise about INR 2 Lakhs (CAD \$ 4000). As Shalini is from a middle class family and personally do not have the resources to fund the cost of prescribed treatment, her family is desperately seeking our support to raise the remaining balance of around \$ 20,000 CAD.

I posted a request to donate funds for Shalini in my Facebook on behalf of Durham Tamil Association, which has earned few donors. I sincerely place my gratitude with heartfelt thanks to the following donors who donated generously.

Date of the surgery will be determined by the doctor and the hospital, based on the time required to reach the fundraising target. We kindly request you open your heart and donate any amount you are able to save this young child's life, at the earliest.

Please feel free to contact me at 9054287007, if you have any questions. Please include Shalini in your prayers.

Uma Suresh

Program Coordinator
Durham Tamil Association



**SHALINI CURRENTLY UNDERGOING CHEMO
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Mrs. Sheila Gadan - \$100 CAD
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Mr. Kaeman - \$100 CAD
Mrs. Thurka Arulendran - \$50 CAD
Mrs. Hariffa - INR Rs.5000
(Which is equal to \$100 CAD deposited in to parent's account directly in Indian Currency)
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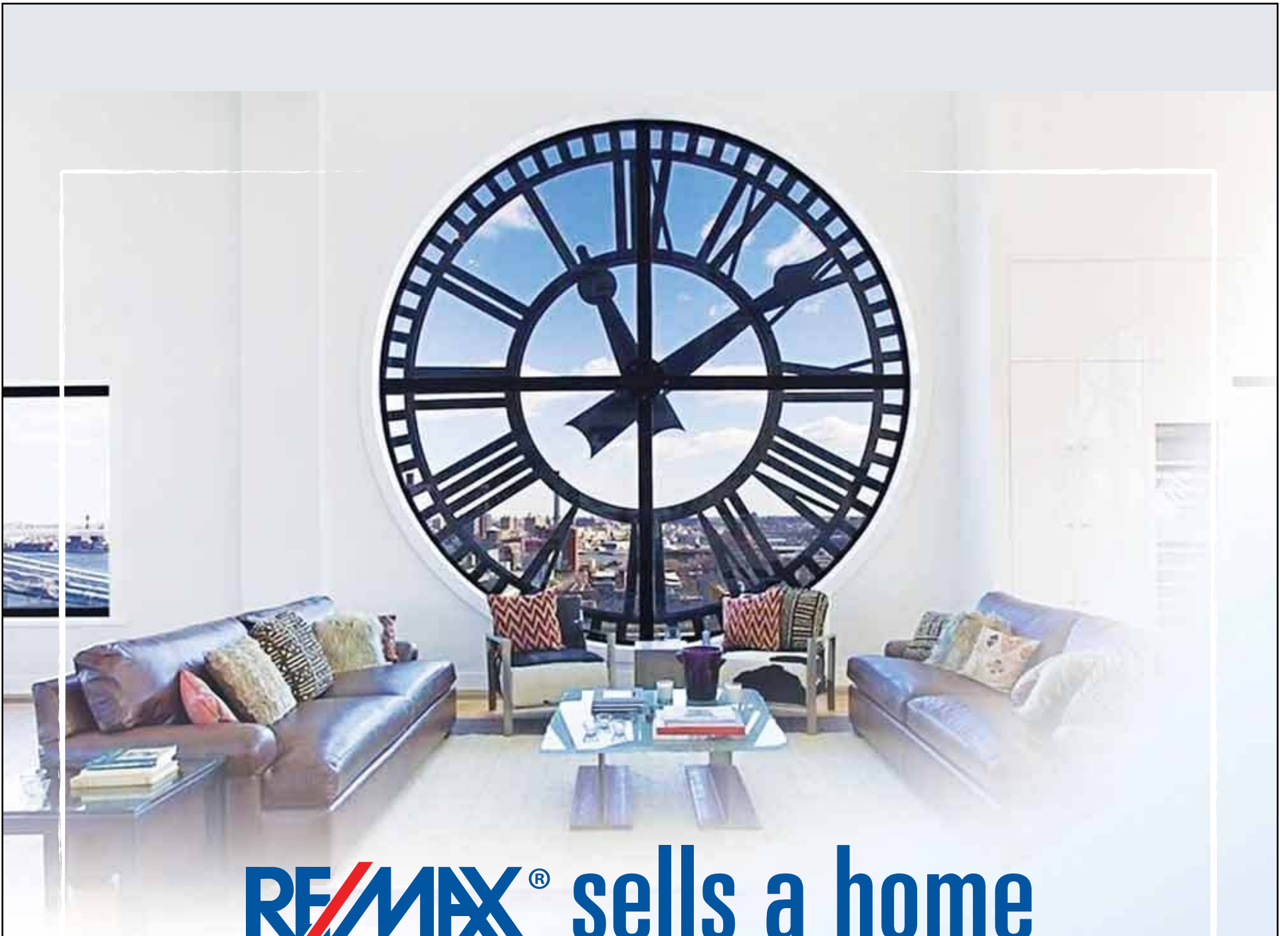
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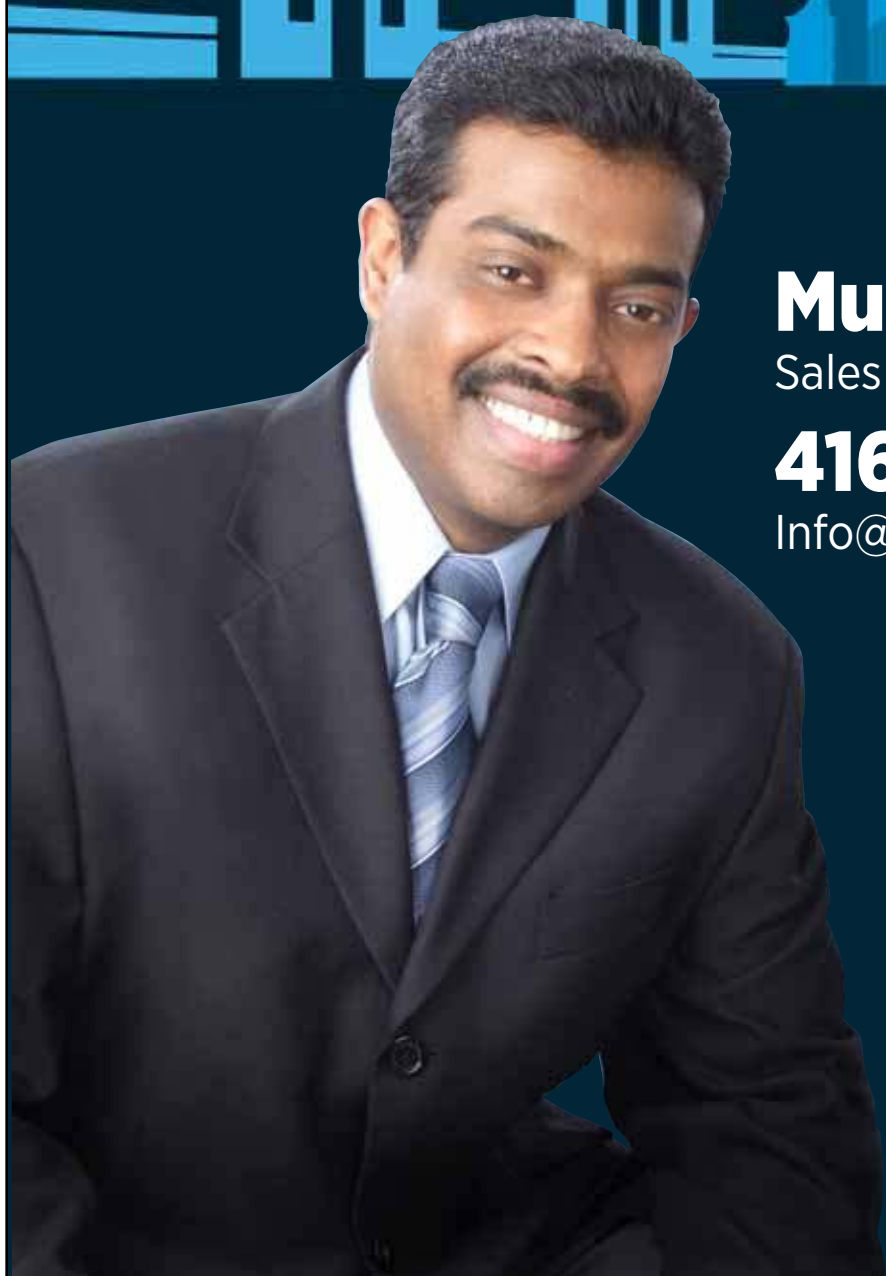
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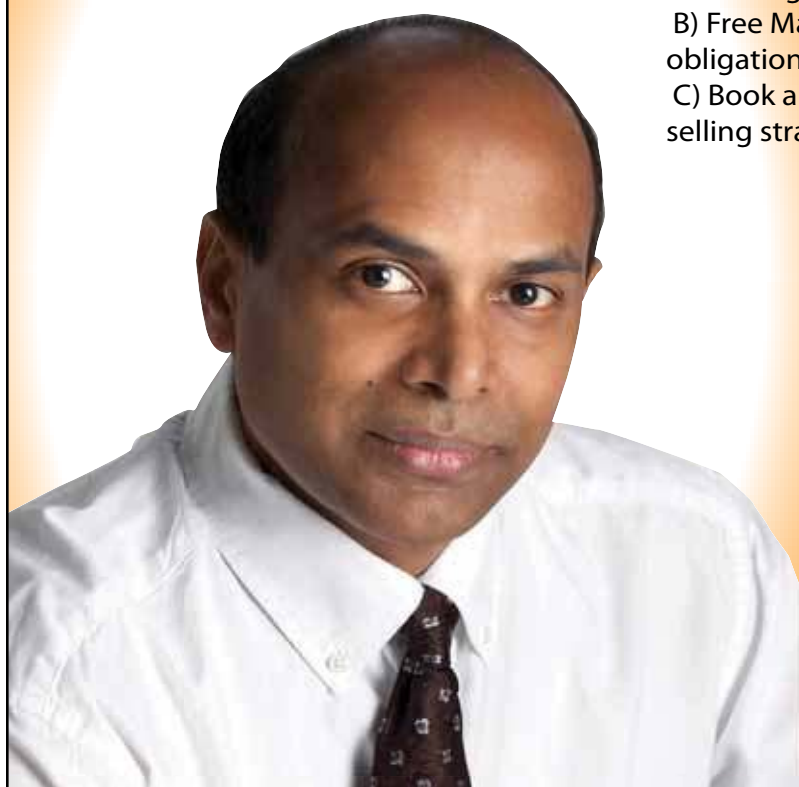
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