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# Monsoon Journal

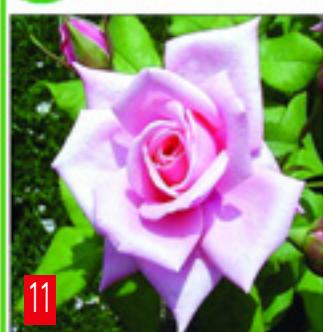
A parfait media publication

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## Troubled Politics in Tamilnadu

By Siva Sivapragasam

Tamilnadu Chief Minister octogenarian Muthuvelu Karunanithi is a troubled man these days.

He is facing an onslaught from his ally, the Congress party and his arch enemy- convent educated cinematic idol, former Chief Minister Jayalalitha .In a recent outburst he has declared "our self-respect is clearer than the crown of thorns that denotes power. We are ready to lose power if our self-respect is under threat". The bone of contention that is rocking his boat is divisive politics, family squabble, Sri Lankan ethnic problem and the question of a successor after him.

When Mu Ka (as he is affectionately known by his party cadres) assumed power, he had no absolute majority in the State Assembly and had to depend on the ruling Congress Party at the center and other minority parties to form the Government. Thus, Jayalalitha Jayaram always pokes fun at him by referring to his Government as the "minority government". Now and then his major allies, the Congress Party and the PMK give him pin-pricks on delicate issues. He also earned the wrath of religious leaders in the North sometime back when he scorned Lord Rama as a mere imaginative epic hero and not of the status of a Hindu God.

Other issues haunting Karunanithi are internal squabble within his family and the problem of a successor after him. Two of his sons-MK. Stalin and MK.Alagiri, born to different mothers are competing for leadership after him. It was Stalin, the



Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M. Karunanidhi

"Thalapathi" who had been groomed by party followers all these years as his legitimate successor. But Stalin lacks lustre and charisma that is a sine-qua-non in Tamilnadu politics. It was film charisma than efficiency that plummeted MGR and Jayalalitha into power. On the other hand Alagiri is a tough-talking "goonda" type politician who rules the roost in Madurai. A third person who has come into the lime-light recently is his sweet smiling daughter, poet Kanimoli .She has been made an M.P. at the centre and perhaps would soon be elevated to the rank of a cabinet minister. She would be the best

choice for Karunanithi specially to oppose Jayalalitha.

But the big problem that is plaguing Karunanithi now is the Sri Lankan ethnic strife and the allegation from his allies and opposition parties about LTTE presence and support in Tamilnadu. Tamil politicians in Tamilnadu like Nedumaran, Thirumalavan and Vaiko Gopalasamy are protesting against the Centre's alleged arms support to the Sri Lankan Government and want Karunanithi to take the issue with the Central Government and suspend any such assistance.

...Continued in Page 3

## British Tamils mark

## Sri Lanka's '60 years of Oppression'

Tamil expatriates in Britain marked Feb 4th, Sri Lanka's independence day with protests and publicity campaigns highlighting '60 years of oppression'. Hundreds of Tamils participated in a lively demonstration outside 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official residence. Another group of expatriates hosted a major photo exhibition of Sri Lanka's post-independence history highlighting the state's repression of the Tamils.

## Media threats hurt Sri Lanka rights - Amnesty

Attacks and threats against Sri Lanka's media are creating a culture of silence and lack of dissent just as abductions, killings and rights abuses rise in the island's civil war, Amnesty International said on Feb 7th.

The rights group said in a report that at least 10 media workers -- mostly from the ethnic Tamil minority -- have been killed in the last two years as a 2002 ceasefire between the government and Tamil Tiger rebels collapsed into all-out war.

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# Canada Newsline

## Immigrants in smaller centres achieve economic integration faster

**Statistics Canada Study: Immigrants in the hinterlands 1992 to 2005**

Immigrants living in small urban centres and in rural areas tend to achieve economic integration much faster than immigrants living in large urban areas, according to a new study.

The study, published recently in *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, shows that the income gap between immigrants and Canadians living in similar areas closed faster over time in smaller centres and rural areas than in large cities.

In very large urban areas, the initial income gap was 37%; after four years, the gap was 22%. In the 12th year, it fell below 10%.

In contrast, in small urban areas the initial gap was only 14%, and in the fourth year, immigrants were earning 2% more than Canadians. This relative advantage increased over time, reaching a peak of 18% during the 11th year.

The income advantage of immigrants was even more pronounced in small towns and rural areas, where the average income of immigrants was 4% higher than that of Canadians after only one year of permanent residence.

Immigrants remained less likely to settle in small urban centres, with 75% of immigrants choosing to live in Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver (compared with 34% of the general population) and less than 3% settling in a small town or rural area (compared with 22% of the general population).

The income gap was widest upon an immigrant's arrival. It declined over time as individuals overcame such hurdles as lack of ability in official languages, unrecognized foreign qualifications,



and lack of information on labour market requirements and employment opportunities. On average, however, immigrants living in large urban centres experienced a slow decline in this income gap.

More vulnerable immigrant groups such as refugees, immigrants with no prior ability in an official language or immigrants with no more than a high school education also experienced more rapid economic integration in small urban centres and rural areas.

Although refugees represented only 5% of immigrants in small towns and rural areas, they integrated very rapidly—so rapidly that, after only one year, their incomes were 10% greater than those of Canadians living in the same type of area.

In contrast, refugees in very large urban areas earned 43% less and, after 13 years of residence, the gap was about 20%.

Only immigrants from the United States (and to a lesser degree from Oceania) integrated more quickly in larger centres than in smaller ones. All other immigrants, especially those from Asia, integrated more rapidly (in economic terms) in smaller cities.

[statscan.ca]

## Valentine's Day Greetings To Our Readers, Advertisers From Monsoon Journal

### Mallikai-Jasmine

By Kuzhanthai Kavignar Azha. Valliyappa

Pearl-like Jasmine Shows all beauty Always dancing daily on the heads of lass

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Pleasing the eyes Its scent mixes with wind while on women's head making them proud

Wear it on our heads we aren't fortunate wonder the men in angst with the jasmine flower -



At a Mayurapathi Flower Shop, Wellawatte, Sri Lanka:  
Pic by Dushyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai

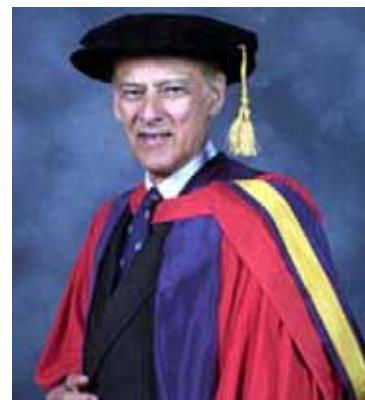
Translated by K.Thirukumaran

## Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery re-opens at the ROM on February 16<sup>th</sup>

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is proud to announce the re-opening of the Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery, named in honour of Sir Christopher Ondaatje, C.B.E., O.C., in appreciation of his generous support of Renaissance ROM and the Royal Ontario Museum. The original gallery, the first in Canada to highlight South Asian culture, opened at the ROM in 2000. The new gallery, located on Level 3 of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, is scheduled to open February 16, 2008.

"This gallery is uniquely Canadian," says Sir Christopher Ondaatje. "While conflict exists in many parts of the world, here in Canada we have created a tremendously diverse South Asian gallery, with Canada's varied South Asian communities and the ROM matching my initial support. What an achievement! It is to this ideal that I pledged a further \$1 million. Canada is the great United Nations experiment, and it is working."

William Thorsell, the ROM's Director and CEO responds, "The ROM is grateful to Sir Christopher Ondaatje, whose ongoing support has again enabled the ROM to bring more of its objects out of its collections areas and into the public eye, where they belong. The ROM's South Asian collection is particularly renowned and, thanks to Sir Christopher, visitors to the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal will delight in old favourites and



Sir Christopher Ondaatje

come to appreciate brand new highlights."

"As inaugural season sponsor, it has been our pleasure to support the ROM as it brings this fascinating Michael Lee-Chin Crystal gallery to the public," states Gerry McCaughey, President and Chief Executive Officer of CIBC. "We are

very proud of our long history of support for this world-class museum, and of this year-long partnership as the ROM enters this exciting new phase in its history."

The Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery presents the ROM's important collection of the artistic and cultural traditions of South Asia. Spanning over 5,000 years, each artifact reveals aspects of South Asia's long and diverse history. Nine thematically organized exhibit areas present the ROM's outstanding collection of South Asian religious objects and sculpture, decorative arts, arms and armour, miniature paintings and textiles, originating from countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet.

[rom.on.ca]

## Troubled politics in Tamil Nadu

Page 1

At the same time, the Congress Party in Tamil Nadu and Jayalalitha are alleging that he is giving a free run to the LTTE in Tamil Nadu, which he has vehemently denied. So, he is caught between the devil and the deep sea.

Against the back drop of complexed problems, the economy in Tamil Nadu is basically sound. The economy is flourishing with foreign investment pouring in and several high-tech and auto industries being setup. The business sector and almost

the entire film world which has a big say in Tamil Nadu politics is backing Karunanithi (as evident in a function held sometime back to felicitate him).

As a seasoned politician and a diplomatic personality, the Kalaignar is bound to emerge unscathed from the vexed and complex issues confronting him. Perhaps, in the evening of his political career he would utter the word "Success" which he penned for his onetime friend Sivaji Ganesan in his legendary success film "Parasakthi".



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"They who are united to the glorious feet of Him who occupies swiftly the flower of the mind, shall flourish in the highest of worlds (heaven)." - Thirukkural #3

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**Layout Design**  
Santosh Kumar K.A

**Graphics Consultant**  
Gnane B. Gnanendran

**Contributing Columnists**

Anand. J  
Harish . G  
K.T. Kumaran  
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Kumar Punithavel  
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## From the Publisher's Desk ...

# Sri Lanka @ 60

We re-produce Harini Sivalingam's article in full here:

### Sri Lanka needs our Leadership

"This year started off with a bang in Sri Lanka. Literally. Not the firecrackers we are accustomed to in Canada, but the sounds of guns and bombs. On Jan. 1, Tamil parliamentarian Thiagarajah Maheswaran, was shot dead while attending a New Year's service at a Hindu temple in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

February 4th, 2008 marked the 60th anniversary of 'Independence' for Sri Lanka from Britain. But 'Nation building' remains unfinished and Tamils particularly face increasing threat to life and mounting rights violations. Instead of redressing Tamil grievances and trying to accommodate legitimate aspirations, the Sri Lankan state is ignoring calls for political solution.

The Monsoon Journal like many others in our communities likes to see Canada play an important diplomatic role in bringing about peace in Sri Lanka.

In an op-ed piece written by Harini Sivalingam - published in the Toronto Sun recently, she says, "Canada certainly has a role to play in the Sri Lankan conflict. Sri Lanka is among the top 10 donor recipients of Canadian development aid. Sri Lanka relies heavily on Canada economically and therefore can be influenced by Canadian condemnation of their human rights record".

In a voice of clarity in precision, she is echoing the minds of those Tamils who had to leave the 'Independent' Sri Lanka for safety and security.

Shortly after this assassination the government of Sri Lanka announced its intentions to withdraw from the 2002 Cease Fire Agreement, igniting a chain of events that will ultimately lead to the full resumption of war and bloodshed. On Jan. 16, the six-year-old ceasefire came to an abrupt end.

This year not only marks the 60th anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence from colonial rule, but also the 25th anniversary of the 1983 anti-Tamil riots. Of these 60 years of independence, 25 years were marred by a bloody civil war that has left more than 70,000 dead.

Over the past several years,

the human rights situation in Sri Lanka has deteriorated. With the collapse of the cease fire, the situation will only get worse. The United Nations, international human rights NGOs and several Western democracies have condemned the gross violations of civil liberties and human rights by the Sri Lankan government.

In the last 18 months we have seen the erosion of all the pillars of democracy in Sri Lanka, from the suppression of the media and free speech to assassinations to erosion of the rule of law.

### OBLIGATION TO ENGAGE

Canada is home to the largest Tamil Diaspora outside of Sri Lanka. It has an obligation to engage with Canadian Tamils. Most of the 200,000 Canadian Tamils have come to Canada as refugees fleeing the ethnic war in their homeland. They have strong emotional and family ties to their homeland.

While Canadian Tamils are grateful to Canada for offering many refugees from Sri Lanka a safe haven, they cannot be expected to simply "leave their baggage behind."

Canadian Tamils should expect

their government would take an interest in a global human rights situation that impacts Canadians.

Canada certainly has a role to play in the Sri Lankan conflict. Sri Lanka is among the top 10 donor recipients of Canadian development aid. Sri Lanka relies heavily on Canada economically and therefore can be influenced by Canadian condemnation of their human rights record.

By using soft diplomacy, Canada can support the call for a United Nations Special Envoy to Sri Lanka to monitor the human rights situation and encourage the negotiation of a peaceful resolution to this crisis.

By taking a more proactive approach to the conflict, Canada can condemn the human rights violations of the Sri Lankan government and impose trade and aid restrictions on Sri Lanka if it continues to fail to abide by its international human rights obligations.

Canada not only has a responsibility, but also a moral and ethical duty to undertake a greater leadership role in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Sri Lanka."

## Letters to Editor & Opinions

### Kanayalai Raina Brampton

We used to play cricket together back home in Kashmir, when we were young. I and a dozen other kids from our school were known players of soft ball cricket. For the record, they are all holding important posts in various Govt. organizations or working in different cities of India and some are business men now and some have even settled abroad just like me.

Rashid a young robust Muslim boy, who was senior to me, was rather good at the game. He batted with a straight bat, bowled a consistent line and fielded without fear of injury. Around the time we were fourteen, Rashid came up with the idea that we should stop hitting the silly green tennis balls around and start playing with a leather ball instead. 'Like real cricketers,' he said. He was tall and the de facto captain of our group. There were no protests when he asked us to contribute ten rupees each towards the leather ball. Things were going well. But one day while we were playing with the leather ball

Rashid's bouncer hit me when I was at the crease. I was lucky not to lose my left eye. But I bled like a halaal goat. After that day my father never allowed me to play cricket with the boys if Rashid was playing too - which was like always - and so I ended up being a score-keeper for both sides whenever cricket was played. Here I forgot to mention that I had also developed a mortal fear of hard leather cricket balls following that accident. "How silly...but whatever..Since then I have been watching cricket mainly on TV / Internet or reading articles published in various newspapers and magazines and at the same time I was wondering why the United States and the erstwhile Soviet Union have never played cricket?

We used to say that cricket is, well a gentle man's game. But now whoever says that cricket is a gentleman's game will have to think again. The recent Sydney cricket Test between India and Australia will strengthen the impression that it is just like any other sport. It is competitive. It is played for money. Gone are the

days when the rules were followed scrupulously. Cricketers no more walk out when they know they are out. It is also a matter of record that before the Second World War there were two categories of cricketers even in England. One consisted of gentlemen who were rich and studied in the best schools. The other included the men whom Marx would describe as proletariat. Although playing for the same team they would walk into the ground through separate gates. This is how cricket was played in a country that is credited with having popularized it wherever it ruled. Over the decades several such incidents have taken place that indicate that cricket can't be elevated to a super status. Umpires have been biased at one point or the other in the history of the game and that is why neutral umpires were appointed. But alas they too did not work out. Not very long ago one of them was exposed to the charge of openly basing his decisions on racism. The moment he stood exposed he had offered to walk out provided he was compensated by the

International Cricket Conference (ICC) and given a golden handshake in lieu of his possible earnings in future!

It is disappointing that a thrilling Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground was overshadowed by controversies and ended in an unfortunate manner. The Australians' approach in the last innings of the match is the reason for the entire controversy. The Aussies, caring little for the spirit of the game, used every trick of the trade to wrest the match from Indians. The match it looks was 'fixed' in favour of Australia as 8 wrong decisions against India and the circumstances of each one of these lapses certainly need a thorough investigation. India had defeated Australia in the 20/20 competition and came near to demolishing them on the first day as Australia lost 6 wickets but then Andrew Symonds was given 'not out' on four occasions [once by the Third Umpire who disregarded the facts on the screen seen by the entire crowd] and predictably made 160 plus!

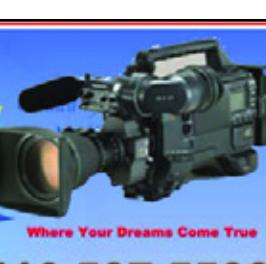
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## Letters to Editor & Opinions

Continued from previous page

Their on-field behaviour was also pathetic and needs to be condemned. But one wonders if all the criticism aimed at the Australians will make them behave any better in future. The media in Australia [vast majority] have commented fairly and are very critical of the umpires as also the Australian Captain and other players.

After all, unsporting behaviour of Australian has become a part and parcel of their larger game plan. If they possibly cannot win matches by playing cricket, they force their opponents into submission by harassing them. Team India has been let down by a biased match referee. Initially, Mr Mike Procter said that umpires did not hear anything objectionable from off-spinner Harbhajan Singh. Subsequently, Mr Procter appears to have been swayed by the persuasive abilities of Australian captain Ricky Ponting and the 'evidence' that the Australian team presented to him.

Mr Procter did not think it prudent to give Harbhajan Singh a fair hearing and accept Sachin Tendulkar's defence of the off-

spinner. Does this mean that the words of one of the leading and best cricketer in the world are not to be trusted? This is insulting and it amounts to practicing racism in its crudest form. Together the Australians have proved that they can also level a rather serious charge of racism and get it established at least *prima facie* in front of an adjudicator who apparently can't distinguish between logic and mob mentality.

That will not solve our problems; however, we should feel delighted instead that Indian "boys" have been at their best behaviour. They have been made to suffer defeats but they have won hearts with their gentlemanly conduct. Their behaviour reminds us of a thinker's observation: Some one has said "It is true that nice guys finish last. Nice guys are winners before the game even starts." Alternatively they can also say: "We are living proof that nice guys always finish last.

More recently we have seen the false charges and the alleged terrorist charges levelled against Dr. Haneef an Indian doctor working in Australia, in the recent past and clearly it seems a racist mind set exists in certain quarters but we should also reflect positively on the legal system in Australia

which investigated the case and ruled in favour of Dr Haneef and his visa has been now restored. The reason I am mentioning this is because we should not condemn or form a wrong opinion about a country or its people by acts committed by a few and the arrogant attitude and alleged threats of Australian players should be ignored. Things however can go out of hand as public anger based on hard facts [TV replays and various newspaper reports] make a mockery of fair play and provocative statements by those involved will make decision making difficult and it would be unfortunate if this were to spill into the political arena.

Every patriotic Indian expects BCCI to stand firm. It is an issue where our sportsmen have been branded "racist". That Harbhajan Singh can play in the series till the ICC reviews his case is hogwash. The ICC and BCCI have bought time by suspending the ban on Singh. Now, the tour will go on as planned and after all the interested parties have made their money, the BCCI and ICC will come to a truce. None should be allowed to play with our national pride.

## Recommendations of APRC and the grim prospects for peace in Sri Lanka

By: Usha S Sri Skanda Rajah

Canadians of Tamil heritage must educate their government and elected representatives of Sri Lanka's All Party Representative Committee's (APRC) recommendations and their bid to revive an out-dated and outmoded concept such as the 13th amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution and present it as a viable solution to end the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. They must do it before the Sri Lankan Government tries to do so by canvassing support for it through its diplomatic channels.

The proposal to bring back provincial councils by giving life to the 13th amendment that had already been relegated and consigned to the dustbin of history is to show a callous disregard for,

and a contemptuous lack of understanding of the legitimate and reasonable aspirations of the Tamil People.

Nadesan Satyendra - QC a distinguished lawyer in the article titled "The thirteenth amendment to the Sri Lanka constitution – devolution or comic opera" compares the proposed provincial councils to "glorified local authorities" clearly setting out the reasons why it falls short of Tamil aspirations. <http://www.tamilnet.com/img/publish/2008/01/satyendraCoopera.pdf>

By not genuinely addressing the Tamil National Question the APRC has only made a permanent political settlement and peace in Sri Lanka a grim prospect.

## From Hudson Solomons

I would like to thank you and the Team for publishing History of Tamil Rulers of the Kandyan Kingdom on page 12 in the January 2008 issue with Beautiful pictures and also the History of Veerapandiya Kattabomman on page 31 with Facts. You have published the Rulers of Eelam History just in two pages but it is priceless. If I recall the Sri Lanka Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe's great ancestors were connected to the last King Sri Wickrama Raja Singhe (1798- 1815). Please keep up the good work and I wish you all the best in success.

# Monsoon Newsline

## RBC OPENS OFFICE IN INDIA

RBC (RY on TSX and NYSE), the largest bank in Canada, today announced that it has entered the Indian market by opening its first (representative) office in the financial hub of Bandra Kurla, Mumbai.

RBC has a three pronged approach to India:

- To provide capital markets products and services including global debt funding to Indian banks and corporations;

- To provide wealth management services for high net worth individuals;

- To provide correspondent banking and trade finance services to Indian financial institutions.

"The strong growth of the Indian economy presents huge opportunities," said Gordon M. Nixon, RBC president and chief executive officer. "RBC is committed to expanding outside North America into areas where we can show competitive strength and India is a natural choice for our strategy in Asia. India is showing an increasing demand for areas in which RBC has competitive strengths – infrastructure and project finance, energy, metals and mining, structured products, currency and bond trading, and wealth management services."

Akhauri Sinha, country head, RBC India, will lead RBC's overall operations in India, while Dipendarra J. Singh will lead RBC's wealth management business with a focus on high net worth individuals, and Vikas Jambotkar will focus on providing RBC services to Indian financial institutions, as well as capital



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Sangeeta Irani,  
Tel: +91 9820060014,  
Email: [sobhagyapr@rediffmail.com](mailto:sobhagyapr@rediffmail.com)

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Worries are growing in export

## Kamal and Disney to produce India's most expensive feature film?

THE NEW FILM WHICH WILL BE JOINTLY PRODUCED BY WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS AND BHARAT BALA IS SLATED TO COST APPROXIMATELY RS 120 CRORE. THE FILM IS SAID TO BE DIRECTED BY KAMAL HAASAN, WHO WILL ALSO PLAY THE LEAD ROLE IN IT.

### ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN I CHENNAI

In what seems to be another feather in the cap of one of India's finest actors, Kamal Haasan will now join forces with none other than Walt Disney Productions, who are slated to produce his forthcoming film Marma Yogi (Mysterious Saint).

According to the buzz, this big-budget spectacle will be co-produced by Bharath Bala, who was responsible for Vande Mataram, the first patriotic music video by A. R. Rahman which made waves several years ago. The new collaboration will see Kamal Haasan and A. R. Rahman coming together after a long gap.

According to sources, Walt Disney Productions, which recently tied up with Yash Raj Films for a full-length animated feature called Roadside Romeo, wanted

to expand its operations across the country. And this is why Marma Yogi was chosen.

The film, which is said to be directed by Kamal Haasan will be his fourth directorial venture. It is a period drama, set in the seventh century, which will also feature him in the lead role. Hema Malini, who worked with Kamal in Hey Ram and Asin who is cast opposite him in Dasavadham have been roped in to play key roles. There is yet another heroine in the film. Co-incidentally, Marma Yogi is the title of one of MGR's legendary blockbusters, which is known to be the first Tamil film to receive an 'A' certificate at the time of its release in 1951. This is the second time that Kamal has adopted the title of an MGR film (after Sathi Leelavathi of 1936).

The new film, which is touted to be the most expensive film ever



made in the country, has an astronomical budget of approximately Rs 120 crore. The movie seems all set to compete against Rajnikanth's recently announced film, Robot in the race to become India's most expensive film to date.

Kamal will shortly go to the US to discuss the production of this film, which is slated to be shot in Thailand. Kamal plans to start shooting for this film in February.

## India's Officials Shrug Off US Economic Slowdown

As worries about a possible slowdown in the United States economy spread across the globe, Indian officials tried to calm fears that the country's strong growth will be hurt.

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram struck a reassuring note. "Fundamentals are very sound; there is no reason at all to allow the worries of the Western world to overwhelm us," he said.

Indian officials say the country's economy is not as dependent on exports as that of China or other East Asian economies, and is driven by strong domestic consumption. They say the near nine per cent growth in recent years will dip only marginally if there is a slowdown in the United States.

However, several economists say India cannot remain isolated from problems in the world's largest economy.

Rajiv Kumar is the director of International Council on International Relations in New Delhi. He says India is now more closely linked with global markets than it was in the 1990s. "If you add up exports, imports of goods and services, merchandise, trade, today they constitute more than 50 per cent of India's GDP. It was less than 20 per cent in 1990. There has been a sea change. We are much more now related to the external world than we were earlier. Just as a rising tide lifts all the boats, a waning tide takes the boats along with it to a lower level," he said.

Worries are growing in export



P Chidambaram

industries because the United States and Europe are India's largest trading partners. For example, most customers of India's information technology industry are American companies, and if their profits fall, the flourishing local software companies could suffer.

There are already signs that tough times lie ahead for information technology companies. One of India's largest software exporters, TCS, says it will slash its staff bonuses because profits have been lower than expected due to a weakening dollar.

And there are concerns that foreign investment into the country could decline if there is a slowdown.

Volatile stock markets are already reflecting the nervousness. Mumbai's main SENSEX stock index has sunk about 16 percent in the past month.

[VOA]

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# Monsoon Newsline

## Convert development process into mass movement: Modi

Development process of the country should be converted into a mass movement, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi said in Chennai recently.

Addressing the 38th anniversary of the Tamil periodical Thuglak, he drew a parallel to how Mahatma Gandhi converted people's urge for Independence into a mass movement.

In future, "unless and until you have an inclusive growth and development, you cannot change the face of the State".

He emphasised that people should be involved in the development process as that would only ensure an all out growth.

On secularism, Mr. Modi wanted to know whether opposition to terrorism would be regarded as communalism. "If I have to pay the price, I am ready."

He said for him development gave the strongest foundation to secularism and the poorest of the poor, irrespective of religion, should be the focus of the development process.



**Chief Minister Narendra Modi and Thuglak editor Cho S. Ramaswamy at the magazine's anniversary celebrations in Chennai.**

He wanted the ongoing development process in Gujarat to continue so that the State could become the catalyst for the country to achieve the goal of making the 21st century India's century. The reason for the success in Gujarat, he said, was that his regime believed in the principle of "a minimum Government maximum Governance".

He called upon those in power not to aim for winning the next election but aim for winning the hearts of the people.

## Tamil Nadu fishermen protest sea mines

By TN Gopalan  
BBC Tamil Service, Chennai

The government of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu pledged to press the federal government to take up the issue of fishing in the environs of Kacha Theevu.

Senior Tamil Nadu minister Arcot Veerasamy made the remarks after opposition legislators expressed their displeasure over the continued attacks on Tamil Nadu fishermen allegedly by the Lankan Navy.

The legislators expressed support to fishermen's demand that their traditional rights to fish in the Kacha Theevu region be recognised by Sri Lanka.

Minister Veerasamy said the government would appeal to the Centre to intervene and put an end to harassment of the Tamil Nadu fishermen.



TN fishermen say mining in Kacha Theevu endangers their lives

## \$2,500 car turning heads even in relatively prosperous Canada: poll

It may not be available in Canada for years, if ever, but Canadians have already fallen in love with the idea of the Tata Nano, the world's cheapest car.

With a top speed of 105 kilometres an hour, a 33-horsepower engine and the looks of a snub-nosed beagle, the Tata Nano from India is hardly a vehicle that could be described as a "babe magnet."

But the expected \$2,500 price tag is drawing plenty of attention - including from young women - a poll of Canadians suggests. By comparison, inexpensive sub-compacts in Canada can cost upwards of \$12,000.

The Canadian Press Harris/Decima survey of 1,004 adults conducted in late January suggests the Nano would be a hit in Canada if Tata Motors, which expects to start production this fall, decides to export the car.

Tata has said the Nano would be manufactured strictly for the India market for the next two years.

More than one in three respondents (36 per cent) said that someone in their household was either certain or likely to buy one if they could, although 41 per cent said that was unlikely.

As well, 21 per cent said they believe the five-seater will be a big winner around the world over the next 10 years, and 54 per cent said they believed it would be at least a moderate success. The poll has a 95 per cent accuracy probability within a sampling error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

"I think this tells us that as much as we're seeing growth in the luxury car segment, there's still burgeoning demand in the lower end segment, particularly among younger Canadians and those who are not as well off," said Bob Murphy, senior vice-president with the polling firm.

The most likely to say they were open to purchasing the Nano were young Canadians in the 18-34 age group who reported household incomes under \$60,000 a year.

There was almost no difference in appeal between men and women, but politically, supporters of the Green party (51 per cent) were far more favourably disposed to the car than Conservative supporters, at 33 per cent.

That may have to do with the fact that the car, which gets more than 20 kilometres per litre of gas and is regarded as less polluting than other automobiles, is viewed as relatively environmentally friendly, as opposed to other automobiles.

The irony is that the Nano has



also been called an environmental disaster because it is expected to cause an explosion in car use in India, and after it is available for export, other poor, developing countries.

Chief United Nations climate scientist Rajendra Pachauri, who shared last year's Nobel Peace Prize, said last month that "I am having nightmares" thinking about the Nano.

But the idea of the Nano is a sweet dream for many in the developed world, leading at least one other manufacturer to say it, too, plans to jump into the micro-cost car market.

French automaker Renault and its Japanese partner Nissan have announced plans to produce a compact that would sell for less than \$3,000 US.

[Canadian Press]



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# Monsoon Newsline

## UN High Commissioner in firing line as Sri Lanka mounts criticism

Protests in front of the UN compound in Colombo usually call for more assertive action by the world body, but recently it was different: The People's Liberation Front (PLF), the second largest opposition party, held a demonstration calling on UN Human Rights High Commissioner Louise Arbour to mind her own business, and her language.

The PLF's criticism of Arbour stems from comments she made in recent speeches that human rights violators in Sri Lanka, even those in senior government posts, could be charged in international criminal courts.

"The high commissioner warned that violations of these rules by any party could entail individual criminal responsibility under international criminal law, including by those in positions of command," the UN said in a statement on 15 January.

Arbour's statement reflects her concern over the possibility of increased civilian casualties with the end of the ceasefire between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers on 16 January.

The PLF and other groups, including the pro-government National Patriotic Movement (NPM), said they took Arbour's comments as a veiled threat to discourage military operations by government forces to dislodge Tamil Tigers from areas under the latter's control in the north.

"Arbour directly threatens the political and military leaders who are involved in taking measures for national security," the National Patriotic Movement (NPM) said in a statement on 18 January. "What she says in diplomatic language is that if anyone takes steps to liberate the Wanni and Killinochchi areas [under Tiger control] they would be branded as war criminals and brought before international law. This is clearly a threat."

The PLF also came out strongly against Arbour's statement and said it was "international terrorism" to attempt to influence the actions of a democratically elected government.

"If any politician or military offi-

cer is taken before international law for taking decisions on behalf of the motherland," PLF leader Somawansha Amarasinghe said on 16 January, "they would have to take them over our dead bodies."

The NPM warned such statements could endanger the lives of UN staff and requested UN officials to be more careful. "We also call upon all responsible officials of the UN in Sri Lanka, considering the safety of the employees of the UN and its assets, to refrain from making such utter[ly] foolish statements that would enrage the people in this country," it said.

### Government reaction

The government reaction to Arbour's statement has been more measured. Disaster Management and Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said the decision to pull out of the ceasefire was taken after lengthy deliberation and the government would not condone or support rights violations by its forces.

"As in the past, even at the cost of delay in the implementation and successful completion of military operations, the government will take all necessary and meaningful measures to avoid civilian casualties and hardships to civilian populations," Saramasinghe said in a statement on 16 January, adding, "the government is compelled to indicate to the UN high commissioner for human rights that it considers her statement on the end of the CFA [ceasefire agreement] containing warnings on 'individual criminal responsibility' as being untimely, inappropriate and unacceptable."

Sri Lanka's Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva called Arbour's comments gratuitous and biased. "The high commissioner has once again proven one point - how unqualified the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is in monitoring and reporting human rights in Sri Lanka as an independent actor," it said on 17 January.

The government has had a long-running disagreement with



Arbour, who visited Sri Lanka in October 2007, over the latter's proposal to set up a field presence of the high commissioner's office in Sri Lanka to monitor and report on abuse.

### Civic groups speak out

Civic groups in Colombo see the latest attack on the UN official as an extension of recent efforts by political groups and sections of the media to discredit international agencies, including the UN.

A group of 13 national organisations including the Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Law and Society Trust and the Free Media Movement have banded together to defend Arbour and others who have come under criticism for advocating international human rights monitoring. They said attacks like the recent one on Arbour could hamper assistance to the most needy in Sri Lanka and endanger the lives of humanitarian workers even more.

"Where it concerns the war-affected civilian population in the north and east, it is the humanitarian organisations that have often been the main source of institutional solace to the people," they said in a statement on 17 January.

"Over the last two years humanitarian agencies have faced multiple incidents of violence, including killings and disappearances of humanitarian staff, attacks against offices and vehicles, and threats and intimidation, which has made working in Sri Lanka all the more challenging."

[irinnews.org]

## Concerns Rise For Safety Of Journalists in Sri Lanka

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) warns that the safety of journalists in Sri Lanka is in serious jeopardy as several serious attacks and anti-media statements by government officials demonstrate a lack of respect for the value of media freedom in the country.

The IFJ joins the Free Media Movement (FMM), the Sri Lankan

abdomen. On January 26, the chairman of Associated Newspapers of Ceylon had "removed" Kasim from his position as associate editor of the state-controlled Tamil daily Thinakaran.

In an interview published on January 27, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksha openly called for media censorship, the judicial enforcement of criminal



A Newsstand in Sri Lanka

Working Journalists' Association (SLWJA), the Federation of Media Employees Trade Union (FMETU), the Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum (SLMMF) and the Sri Lanka Tamil Journalists' Alliance (SLTJA) in condemning all attacks on journalists in the country.

The IFJ is concerned by a series of recent incidents, including a knife attack on Lal Hemantha Mawalage on January 25. The producer in the news division of the state-controlled Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) was reportedly attacked by two unidentified men on his way home in Athurigiriya, a suburb of Colombo.

The FMM, an affiliate of the IFJ, reported Mawalage had received continuous death threats since speaking on behalf of SLRC employees regarding an aggressive intrusion into SLRC's offices by Labour Minister Mervyn Silva on December 27, 2007. Mawalage's vehicle was intentionally hit by another car on January 23. The FMM said the incidents were believed to be linked to the Minister and Mawalage's public role in the SLRC protest.

On January 28, Suhaib M. Kasim, another journalist working for state-controlled media, was stabbed at his home in Colombo. The FMM reported that five intruders entered Kasim's home, dragged him outside, and stabbed him, seriously injuring his

defamation and the prosecution of two leading media institutions for "critical reportage". The statement, published in Sunday Lankadeepa, is another alarming reflection of the Sri Lankan Government's growing and overt disregard for media freedom and the right of journalists to conduct their work freely.

Rajapaksha, who is the brother of Sri Lanka's President, was reported as saying, "I told the President that we need to exercise press censorship from the beginning. I have been telling him that we need to bring in laws that stipulate harsh punishments for such reporting."

The IFJ said local, national and regional authorities must initiate immediate and impartial investigations into the attacks against journalists and the media community, and ensure that culprits are brought to justice.

"Continuing attacks and harassment are intended to send a message to the media community and to spread fear," IFJ Asia-Pacific Director Jacqueline Park said. "Media freedom requires respect for the right of differing and critical opinions to be voiced, particularly in times of conflict. Freedom of expression is the cornerstone of any civil democracy, but attacks on journalists are eroding Sri Lanka's democratic stability."

[ifj press release]

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# Monsoon Health



## Heart Healthy

By Mithura Anandarajah, PT

As New Year Resolutions are starting to wane, February comes right around the corner. Certainly one thinks of red hearts, valentine chocolates and roses. On a serious and less sentimental note however, it is a great time to ponder healthy heart awareness. February has been designated as the Heart Health Month and it is a perfect time to educate oneself and each other on the primary organ that really makes us tick.

A muscular pump that beats more than 100,000 time a day, the heart along with a whole network of blood vessels, supply blood and nutrients throughout the body. In addition, this system is responsible for removing wastes that are accumulated. With the narrowing of these vessels or the dysfunction of the heart, what results is cardiovascular disease. Heart disease accounts for the most deaths in Canada and so it is an issue that has an impact on every person. Most importantly, it can be managed appropriately. The best way

of managing this disease is by controlling the risk factors. They include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, stress, excessive alcohol consumption, physical inactivity and being overweight. It is important to assess your blood pressure/cholesterol levels regularly.

High blood cholesterol will lead to a buildup of plaque in the artery walls, which will make it harder for blood to flow throughout the body. This buildup of plaque is called atherosclerosis. If blood supply is slow or stopped in the heart muscle, what occurs is a heart attack. Depending on the amount of damage, this affects the heart's ability to effectively pump blood throughout the body.

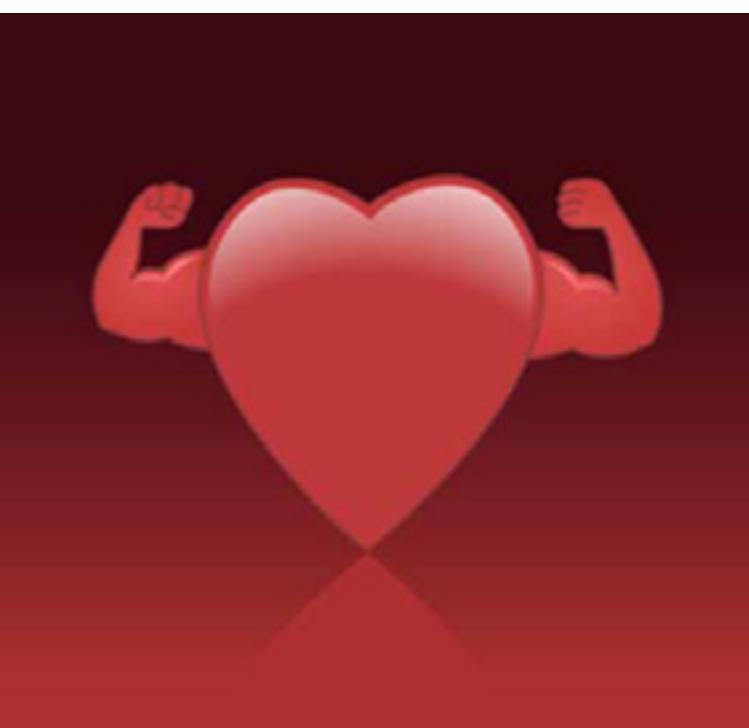
If blood flow is interrupted in the brain, what results is the death of the brain cells in that area, commonly known as a stroke. Depending on the extent of the damage, this can affect a person's ability to walk, talk, eat,

see etc.

Living a health lifestyle is the best way to prevent the impact of heart disease. Making physical activity part of your daily routine for 30 to 60 minutes can lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Find an activity that you enjoy, be it walking, biking or even rock climbing. Moreover, when you feel energized and active, you are more likely to watch your eating habits or avoid smoking. Healthy eating will involve eating foods and snacks with lower salt intake and higher nutritional value. Meet with a dietitian or a Naturopath to further educate yourself on the necessary principles.

To get more information about being heart healthy, discuss with your physician your risk factors and prevention methods. Talk to your physiotherapist/kinesiologist about how you can improve your activity level, safely and effectively. A Naturopath or dietitian in your community could further facilitate healthy eating. Ultimately, educate yourself and those you care about this Heart Healthy Month.

For more information please check the website [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca).



**Mithura Anandarajah, PT, CAFCI**  
Clinical Director/Physiotherapist

**Medical One Rehab & Wellness**  
1525 Bristol Rd. W. Unit 12  
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# Monsoon Newsline

## Controversy over truck-load of UNICEF biscuits ends in Sri Lanka

A UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) consignment of high-protein biscuits impounded by police a week ago on suspicion that it was going to the rebel Tamil Tigers was released on Feb 1st.

The detention of the consignment, destined for malnourished children in northern Sri Lanka, came at a time of heightened security and scrutiny in the north as fighting between government forces and Tamil Tigers intensified.

The container with its driver and his assistant were stopped at Madavachchiya town, 150km from the capital, Colombo on 26 January. The truck driver had no papers to clarify the ownership status or destination of the goods.

"Police sources from Madavachchiya said initial investigations have revealed that high protein biscuits of this kind are used by combatants as rations," the Government Information Department stated in a release on 28 January.

IRIN had established that the 39,000 packets of high protein biscuits (known as BP100 and manufac-

tured by the Norwegian company Compact AS) were being transported by UNICEF to Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka at the request of Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services in Kilinochchi T. Sathyamoorthi.

"All relevant clearance was obtained before they [the biscuits] were moved from Colombo," Sathyamoorthi said. "I can't say why the driver forgot the papers, but the biscuits were for an ongoing programme," Sathyamoorthi said.

Sathyamoorthi said authorisation had been obtained from all the relevant authorities to transport the biscuits, and that the health authorities had been distributing the biscuits in the Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu districts, both of which are under the control of the Tamil Tigers, since June 2007.

The beneficiaries were to be breast-feeding mothers and malnourished children - part of the Nutrition Rehabilitation Programme for Children with Severe Acute Malnutrition in the North and East, according to UNICEF.

The programme was launched in March 2007 by the Ministry of

Healthcare and Nutrition after two surveys in 2006 and 2007 found high malnutrition rates among children in the north and the east.

### Breakdown in communications?

However, security officials in Colombo told IRIN they were unaware of any such programme and of the particular truck transporting the biscuits. "No one had told the police, there were no papers," military spokesperson Brig Udaya Nanayakkara told IRIN. "The biscuits definitely can be used for combat purposes."

The police initially said the biscuits were being transported on behalf of the World Food Programme (WFP), but this has been emphatically denied by WFP, which said the consignment did not belong to it.

"We are very much shocked and appalled by reports in the media, which allege that the truckload of high-protein biscuits taken into custody by the police belonged to the WFP," WFP Sri Lanka country director Mohamed Saleheen, told the media.

"The WFP has nothing to do with this consignment."



High rates of malnutrition

A survey in 2007 of 1,031 children from camps for the displaced found that 24 percent had moderate acute malnutrition, while 4 percent had severe acute undernutrition, according to UNICEF data.

The Ministry of Nation Building requested UNICEF to provide the necessary therapeutic supplements for the programme which initially covered the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaithivu, in the north and Batticaloa in the east.

A review conducted by the Health Ministry in August 2007 found that severe nutrition levels had dropped to 0.8 percent from 6 percent in Batticaloa District, and to 2 percent from 4 percent in Jaffna District, in part due to the nutritional programme. The programme will be extended to two other districts, Anuradhapura and Ampara, later this year, according to the Health Ministry.

### Not first time UNICEF scrutinised

This is not the first time in recent months that UNICEF has faced such scrutiny. In November 2007 a contain-

er of ready-to-eat-meals transported by the agency on behalf of 12 UN and other agencies (including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UN Development Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the WFP), was impounded by customs when concerns were raised in parliament over their possible distribution to the Tamil Tigers.

Neil Buhne, the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Sri Lanka, said soon after the impounding of those goods that such accusations could harm UN operations in Sri Lanka and that the meals were meant for emergency use by staff as per UN requirements.

"The container with the Meals Ready to Eat is still formally sealed [and impounded by the government]" according to Gordon Weiss, chief of communications at UNICEF in Sri Lanka.

This is the second successive week the UN found itself briefly in the crosshairs of its vociferous critics. The incident came only days after Sri Lanka's second largest opposition party, the People's Liberation Front, held a demonstration in front of the UN office in Colombo against recent critical comments made by UN Human Rights High Commissioner Louise Arbour about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

[irinnews]

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Valentine's Day is a holiday celebrated on February 14. It is the traditional day on which lovers express their love for each other; sending Valentine's cards, or gifting candy. It is very common to present flowers on Valentine's Day. The holiday is named after two of the numerous Early Christian martyrs named Valentine. The day became associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer in High Middle Ages, when the tradition of courtly love flourished.

The day is most closely associated with the mutual exchange of love notes in the form of "valentines." Modern Valentine symbols include the heart-shaped outline and the figure of the winged Cupid. Since the 19th century, handwritten notes have largely given way to mass-produced greeting cards.

#### History

Numerous early Christian martyrs were named Valentine. Until 1969, the Catholic Church formally recognized eleven Valentine's Days. The Valentines honoured on February 14 are:

- Valentine of Rome: a priest in Rome who suffered martyrdom about AD 269.
- Valentine of Terni : He became bishop of Interamna (modern Terni) about AD 197 and is said to have been killed during the persecution of Emperor Aurelian).

The Catholic Encyclopedia also speaks of a third saint named Valentine who was mentioned in early martyrologies under date of 14 February. He was martyred in Africa with a number of companions, but nothing more is known about him.

#### The evolving legend

According to legend, St Valentine was persecuted as a Christian and interrogated by Roman Emperor Claudius II in person. Claudius was impressed by Valentine and had a discussion with him, attempting to get him to convert to Roman paganism in order to save his life. Valentine refused and tried to convert Claudius to Christianity instead. Because of this, he was executed. Before his execution, he is reported to have performed a miracle by healing the blind daughter of his jailer.

# Valentine's Day

Raymond Rajabalan



Early Medieval legend about St. Valentine, still providing no connections whatsoever with sentimental love, appropriate lore has been embroidered in modern times to portray Valentine as a priest who refused an unattested law attributed to Roman Emperor Claudius II, allegedly ordering that young men remain single. The Emperor supposedly did this to grow his army, believing that married men did not make for good soldiers. The priest Valentine, however, secretly performed marriage ceremonies for young men. When Claudius found out about this, he had Valentine arrested and thrown in jail. In an embellishment to The Golden Legend, on the evening before Valentine was to be executed, he wrote the first "valentine" himself, addressed to a young girl variously identified as his beloved as

the jailer's daughter whom he had befriended and healed. It was a note that read "From your Valentine."

In another apparently modern embellishment, while Valentine was imprisoned, people would leave him little notes, folded up and hidden in cracks in the rocks around his cell. He would find them and offer prayers for them.

#### Valentine's Day and its equivalents in other cultures

##### In the West

Valentine's Day also has regional traditions in the UK. In Norfolk a character called 'Jack' Valentine knocks on the rear door of houses leaving sweets and presents for children. Although he was leaving treats, many children were scared of this mystical person.

In Wales many people celebrate Dydd Santes Dwynwen (St Dwynwen's Day) on 25 January instead of or as well as St Valentine's Day. The day commemorates St Dwynwen, the patron saint of Welsh lovers.

In France, a traditionally Catholic country, Valentine's Day is known simply as "Saint Valentin", and is celebrated in much the same way as other western countries.

In Denmark & Norway Valentine's Day (14 Feb) is known as Valentinsdag. It is not celebrated to a large extent, but a lot people take time to eat a romantic dinner with their partner, to send a card to a secret love or give a red rose to their loved one. In Sweden it is called Alla hjärtans dag ("All Hearts' Day") and was launched in the 1960s by the flower industry's commercial interests, and due to influence of American culture. It is not an official holiday, but its celebration is recognized and sales of cosmetics and flowers for this holiday are only bested by those for Mother's Day.

In Finland, Valentine's Day is called Ystävänpäivä which translates into "Friend's day". As the name says, this day is more about remembering your friends than your loved ones.

In Slovenia, a proverb says that "St Valentine brings the keys of roots," so on February 14, plants and flowers start to grow. Valentine's Day has been celebrated as the day when the first works in the vineyards and on the fields commence. The day of love is traditionally 12 March, the Saint Gregory's day.

In Romania, the traditional holiday for lovers is Dragobete, which is celebrated on February 24. It is named after a character from Romanian folklore. In recent years, Romania has also started celebrating Valentine's Day, despite already having Dragobete as a traditional holiday. This has drawn backlash from many groups, reputable persons and institutions but also nationalist organizations like Noua Dreaptă, who condemn Valentine's Day for being superficial, com-

mercialist and imported Western kitsch.

In Turkey, Valentine's Day is called Sevgililer Günü which translates into "Sweethearts' Day".

According to Jewish tradition the 15th day of the month of Av - Tu B'Av (usually late August) is the festival of love. In ancient times girls would wear white dresses and dance in the vineyards, where the boys would be waiting for them. In modern Israeli culture this is a popular day to pronounce love, propose marriage and give gifts like cards or flowers.

#### In the Americas

The exchange of chocolates and flowers is traditional on Valentine's Day.

In Brazil, the Dia dos Namorados ("Day of the enamored", or "Boyfriend's/Girlfriend's Day") is celebrated on June 12, when couples exchange gifts, chocolates, cards and flower bouquets. This day was chosen probably because it is the day before the Saint Anthony's day, known there as the marriage saint, when many single women perform popular rituals, called simpatias, in order to find a good husband or a boyfriend.

In Colombia, the Día del amor y la amistad ("Love and Friendship Day") is celebrated on the third Friday and Saturday in September, because of commercial issues. In this country the Amigo secreto ("Secret friend") tradition is quite popular, which consists of randomly assigning to each participant a recipient who is to be given an anonymous gift (similar to the Christmas tradition of Secret Santa).

#### In Asia

Thanks to a concentrated marketing effort, Valentine's Day has emerged in Japan and Korea as a day on which women, and less commonly men, give candy, chocolate or flowers. It has become an obligation for many women to give chocolates to all male co-workers. In Japan this is known as giri-choko, from the words giri ("obligation") and choko, ("chocolate"). This contrasts with honmei-choko ; chocolate given to a loved one. Friends, especially girls, may exchange chocolate referred to as tomo-choko ; from tomo meaning "friend".

By a further marketing effort, a reciprocal day called White Day has emerged. On March 14, men are expected to return the favour to those who gave them chocolates on Valentine's Day. Originally, the return gift was supposed to be white chocolate or marshmallows; hence "White Day". However, lingerie and jewelry have become common gifts.

In South Korea, there is also Pepero Day, celebrated on November 11, when young couples give each other romantic gifts. There is an additional day for single people, Black Day, celebrated on April 14.

In Chinese culture, there is a counterpart to Valentine's Day, called "The Night of Sevens"; according to legend the Cowherd and the Weaver Maid meet in Heaven on the 7th day of the 7th month of the lunar calendar. A slightly different version of this day is celebrated in Japan as Tanabata, on July 7th of the solar calendar.

#### In the Islamic world

In Persian culture (Iran) Sepandarmazgan is a day for love, which is on 29 Bahman in the jalali solar calendar. The corresponding date in the Gregorian calendar is 17 February. Sepandarmazgan were held in the Great Persian Empire in the 20th century BC hundreds of years before its acknowledgement by western world.

This day is currently celebrated in Iran despite some restrictions made by government, and young Persian boys and girls may be seen on this day going out and buying gifts and celebrating.

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# The Backwaters of Kerala

The backwaters are a network of waterways stretching across almost 2,000km of Kerala's lowlands. According to popular legends the warrior sage Parashurama reclaimed the land of Kerala from sea with the power of his characteristic battle-axe. A land of canals and lagoons, lakes and rivers. The Backwaters have become part of the lives of its people and a kaleidoscope for the visitors to see the rural and real life in the heart of Kerala.

Rice barges converted to luxury houseboats are a unique feature of these backwaters. As you cruise along you will see all aspects of Kerala's rural life; people washing their clothes, men fishing, children playing as well as goods being moved along the waterways. The backwaters also offer opportunities for bird watching as water birds, particularly kingfishers, are often seen in the area. These boats were originally used for transporting rice and other goods and are traditionally made of wood, bamboo and coir. They move slowly along the waterways covering approximately 20km per day. The boat is always exclusive to you. The only other people on board will be your crew, normally 3 persons.

Boats have a twin bedroom with separate bathroom with WC, washbasin and shower. As the public areas of the boats have open sides it is only the bedroom which can be air-conditioned.

On board local Kerala dishes will be served. Local wine and beer are available on your houseboat. Spirits can be requested.

Alapuzha is often the starting-point of the boat cruise through these backwaters as one reaches the land of Kuttanad, also known as the rice bowl of Kerala because of its paddy fields.

There are bird sanctuaries to see along the shores and the village life has the attraction of simplicity and old-age world. There are bungalows that have now been converted into heritage hotels. Kochi or Cochin has traditional snake boat races with 130-feet long Chundan boats as its stars that add further value to its backwaters. The most prominent among these races are Nehru Trophy Boat Race and Aranmula Boat Race...



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# Monsoon Living



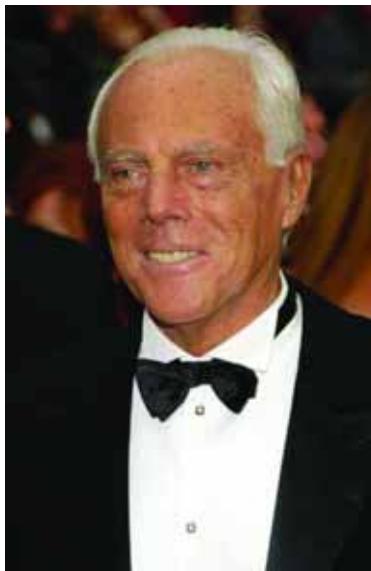
## Designer Profile

### Founder: Giorgio Armani

Born: 1934, Piacenza, Italy

Undeniably one of the most important fashion designers of the twentieth century, Giorgio Armani took his time to enter the fashion world. Born some fifty miles south of Italy's fashion capital Milan, he attended medical school at Milan University for two years, tried his hand at photography, completed national service in the army in 1957, and then worked at a department store La Rinascente as a window dresser. In 1961 Armani entered the fashion world proper, joining textile manufacturer and designer Nino Cerruti as a designer, where he stayed for 9 years. Then in 1970, with the assistance and encouragement of close friend Sergio Galeotti, he went freelance and designed for manufacturers such as Boulevard, Sicons, Montedoro and Gibo. He set up his own menswear label in 1974, destined to become a world leader in menswear design.

The following year Armani's menswear was ingeniously adapted to create a Womenswear line, launched in partnership with Galeotti. It was an immediate hit: timeless, relaxed, unstructured, with exaggerated proportions and yet understated, a perfect selection of fabrics (wool, leather, suede and alpaca), precisely tai-



lored and yet loose-fitting – and widely regarded as the most influential look since Dior's New Look (1947) and Quant's mini skirt.

Armani's signature style was 1980's power-dressing, snapped up by women finding themselves



newly elevated to executive levels. By the late 1980's this wide shouldered look was followed by a more slimmed-down version, still in Armani's favoured muted

eveningwear that would come to dominate Oscar night. Indeed, Armani's close relationship with Hollywood has always given him positive publicity, from dressing Richard Gere in American Gigolo (1980) to Diane Keaton in Annie Hall (1977).

However this is not to dimin-



ish his enduring influence, nor his talent as a famous workaholic and clever businessman (despite the conviction for corruption in May 1996, along with designers such as Gianfranco Ferre).

**continued in next page**

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Continued from previous page



One of the first global household names to come out of the fashion world, Armani perfected the art of lifestyle branding, providing a modern, elegant yet glamorous style for living through thirteen diffusion lines that have brought Armani style to an even broader market, from golf-wear, electrical (phones), jeans and fragrances to the lower-priced Emporio Armani.

Searching for your new spring wardrobe? Don't bother taking a charge card. Forget the discount vouchers and the inspirational pictures you've cut out of fashion mags. When you're out shopping, there's only one must-have you need. Your gay best friend. More flexible than Visa,

more practical than a Marc Jacobs bag and hell of a lot more laughs than a personal shopper, take a gay man shopping and, face it, you get it all, who else is free on Saturday afternoon to deliver emotional counsel, style advice and free portage, followed by dinner and a show tune? And

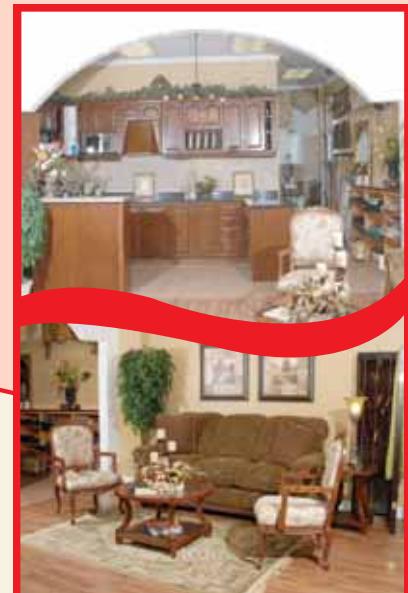
all without once trying to touch you inappropriately. And although he looks great in your arm, you know he actually is only there for one purpose – to make you look good. What more could you ask from a shopping companion?

*continued in next page*

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**continued from previous page**

Consoling cocktails aside, it's in the retail arena that a gay man comes into his own. He'll guard your handbag, keep your place in the fitting-room queue while you search for a medium, and then wait patiently in the lingerie department while you nip to the loo. And will he ever complain? Pah. Unlike a straight man. He never disappears to a bar to watch the basketball while you're trying something on. And when you emerge an opinion, who else is going to give you an honest appraisal? Your

populist, it revolutionizes our thinking and plunders the past and it's as seductive and fickle as sunshine. From the catwalks of Haute Couture to the chain stores in malls, we are all involved, whether we choose to be or not. In the Western world it is impossible to purchase even the most basic items of clothing without adding to the fashion honey pot. The plainest of cardigans will have been modulated according to this season's colours and cut. As fashion expands its source bank further and further (looking to other cultures for inspiration, incorporat-



boyfriend? Like he has a view on sequins before noon. Your mum? If only she could get past seeing you as a five-year-old. And don't even think about asking a girlfriend, or worse a shop assistant how you look. Not unless you can trust that worrying pause as she considers her answer. If you look worse than her, she'll want to keep things that way. If you look amazing, chances are that she'll simply screw up her nose and steer you over to the rack of 70's print crop trousers. Tap into the thought process of a gay man, and you know you're guaranteed a, straight answer. Why? He has no reason to lie. What does he care if hipsters make your bum look like the size of Quebec? In fact, he'll take great pleasure in telling you, in the nicest possible way.

Styling skills aside, never forget that when a gay man goes shopping, he's a valuable envoy from the enemy camp. Despite that rogue gene that means he is not like the other boys, the remaining trillion are identical. So, being in touch with his masculine side means he can impart valuable information on the workings of the male psyche. And here's a secret: Like a gay man, straight guys prefer sexy to slutty; so put those mail-order hot pants back on the rack.

A gay man also offers a different take-a-left-field view that's less about turning you into a drag queen and more about making you think outside your style box. Gay men instinctively want to push things that little bit further; take those necessary risks that most women shy away from. But the best thing about a gay best friend is when the look is spot on; he'll be the first to tell you. If there's one thing every gay man knows it's that, for women, there's no greater aphrodisiac than those four magic words: 'You look fabulous, darling!'

**Cast off those winter blues...**

Whether it's the New Chic or Street Glamour, retro Boho or Sport Luxe, fashion can now incorporate any personality, lifestyle, fantasy or fetish. It's elitist and

ing sports clothes and utility wear into its market) even the most hermetic of consumers cannot avoid its influence. A bit heavy-handed? Perhaps – but it is all in the name of fashion.

Whilst the range of looks from which we can make our choice broadened during the twentieth century, and high style no longer means one particular style, fashion has perhaps become less radical. Imagine the early eighteenth century dresses of the French court, or the ruffs, slit fabrics and stockings of sixteenth century male fashions, and we see that high fashion has become less exclusive, more eclectic and more wearable, but also less extreme. The present is a less revolutionary period than we like to think.

However at the elite end of fashion, in the arenas of high concept and Haute Couture Design, the outrageous persists, from Gaultier's 1991 conical breasts to Galliano's 2000, down-and-out inspired deconstruction of the art of tailoring.

Both frivolous and essential, fashion inspires and gives flesh to every personal fantasy. In those parts of the world fortunate enough to have money to spend more than essentials, fashion filters further through the population than any other art form. Creatively the world's top designers shape the zeitgeist, and economically, as an international industry supporting thousands, it is a business world of considerable power.

by Parthepan Kugadason (PK)

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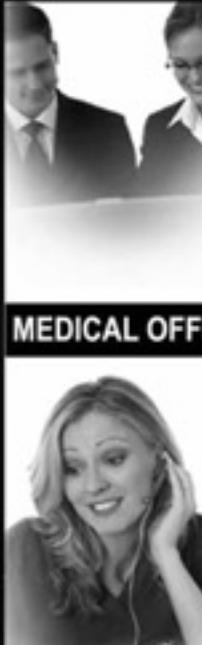
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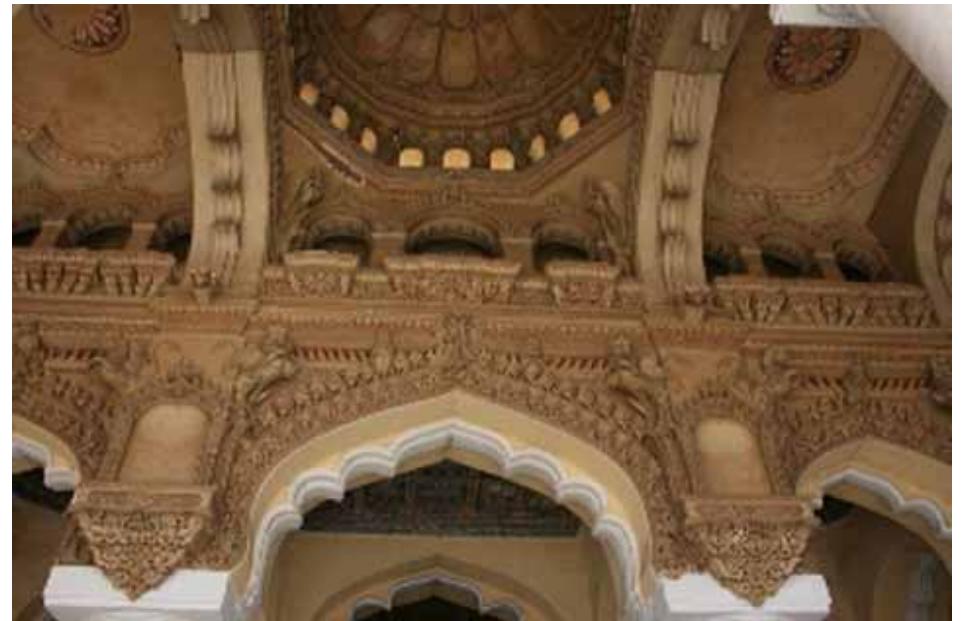
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# Monsoon Arts



## The Most Famous Nayak Regime

Founded in 1336, the empire of Vijayanagar (named for its capital Vijayanagar, "City of Victory," in present-day Karnataka) expanded rapidly toward Madurai in the south and Goa in the west and exerted intermittent control over the east coast and the extreme southwest. Vijayanagara rulers closely followed Chola precedents, especially in collecting agricultural and trade revenues, in giving encouragement to commercial guilds, and in honoring temples with lavish endowments. Vijayanagara empire had established Military and administrative governors called Nayakas to rule in the various territories of the empire. After the demise of the Vijayanagara empire, the local governors declared their inde-

pendence and started their rule. The Nayak of Madurai, Thanjavur Nayak, Gingee (Senji) Nayak, Nayakas of Chitradurga and Kingdom of Mysore were the most prominent of them in Madurai.

Thirumalai Nayak was the most famous Nayak ruler. He patronised art and architecture creating new structures and expanding the existing landmarks in and around Madurai. His landmark buildings are the Meenakshi Temple and its Gopurams and Thirumalai Nayak Palace in Madurai.

### Meenakshi Amman Temple

The Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple (twin temples) is one of the biggest temples in India. The original temple built by Kulasekara Pandyan was

in ruins and almost destroyed by the Muslim invaders. The plan for the current temple structure was laid by Viswanath Naik and was completed by Tirumalai Nayakar.

### Thirumalai Nayak Palace

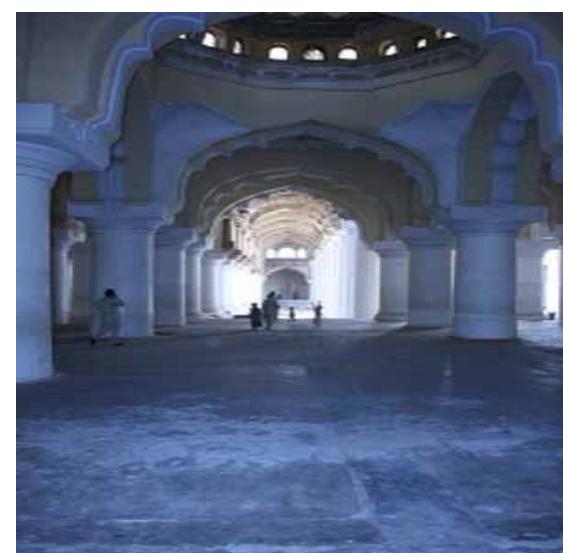
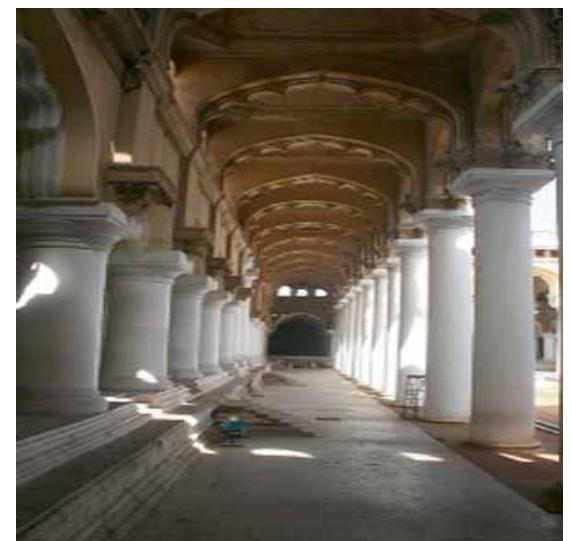
This Palace was built in 1636 by King Thirumalai Nayak with the help of an Italian Architect. The building we see today was the main Palace where the King lived. It contains beautiful domes and arches. One of the domes stands without the support of girder -an architectural feat of everlasting wonder. They must have been an extravagance of stucco in its heyday. The original Palace Complex was four times bigger than the present structure. This palace consisted mainly of two parts, namely Swargavilasa and

### Rangavilasa.

In these two parts, there are royal residence, theatre, shrine, apartments, armoury, palanquin place, royal bandstand, quarters, pond and garden. King Thirumalai Nayak celebrated festivals like, Navarathri, Chithirai festival, Masi festival and the Float festival. He conducted daily dance and music performances in the palace. This palace was destroyed by his grandson Chokkanatha Nayak and the valuables were transferred to other places. During 19th century, Lord Napier, governor of Madras between 1866 and 1872 made several renovation works. Today, only the spacious rectangular courtyard called the Swarga Vilasam and a few adjoining buildings survive, their awesome

scale evoking the grandeur of a vanished era. The courtyard measures 3,900 sq.m and is surrounded by massive circular pillars. To its west lies the Throne Chamber, a vast room with a raised, octagonal dome. This room leads to the Dance Hall. Then the palace was utilized to house some officials of the judiciary and district administration. After independence, this palace was declared as a national monument and is now under the care of the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department.

**Compiled & Photo Courtesy:  
S. Sri Krishnan**



# Monsoon Newsline

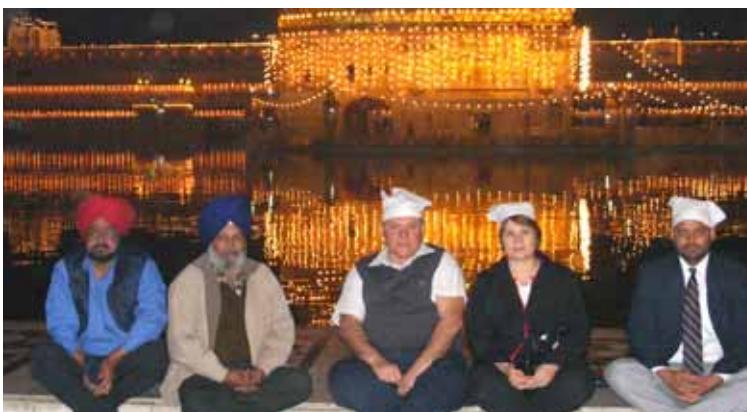
## Karygiannis concludes successful trip to India

The Hon. Jim Karygiannis, Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Agincourt, has concluded a six-day visit to India, during which he explored ways to deepen relations between Canada and India.

"I was very pleased with my trip to India. I had an opportunity to visit and interact with many colleagues – the MLAs, Ministers and MPs of the Lok Sabha and the Raj Sabha. I also had the opportunity to meet with many of the people of India," said Mr. Karygiannis. "It has been very successful visit and is in keeping with my commitment to further strengthen our relationship with India."

Mr. Karygiannis' visit to India included the Punjab, Haryana, and New Delhi.

In the Punjab, Mr. Karygiannis visited a number of cities, towns and villages where he met with a number of politicians, both current and past, including Chief Minister Sardar Parkash Singh Badal. Mr. Karygiannis' discussion with the Chief Minister was wide-ranging, including a discussion on the establishment of a pension plan in India similar to the Canada



Pension Plan. While in the Punjab, Mr. Karygiannis also met with religious leaders at the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

In Haryana, Mr. Karygiannis spoke to students at Jan Nayak Ch. Devi Lal Vidya Peeth University about the close ties between Canada and India. In a general discussion with the students and the University's Director General and eminent scientist Kuldeep Dhindsa, Mr. Karygiannis discussed a number of issues, including global warming and the need to everyone to do their part to ensure the survival of our planet.

Mr. Karygiannis was invited by VICHAR NYAS and its Chairman, D.P. Tripathi, to speak on the sub-

jects of "Indians in Canada" and "Society and Politics in Canada."

"The multicultural makeup of Canada has been enriched by those who have emigrated from India." Mr. Karygiannis commented. "They are taking their place in Canadian society as doctors, lawyers, accountants and, yes, even politicians. The Indian Diaspora in Canada is doing their homeland proud."

In New Delhi, Mr. Karygiannis met with members of the National Congress Party at their headquarters.

For more on Mr. Karygiannis' trip, including photos, please visit:

[http://karygiannismp.com/spip/article.php3?id\\_article=671](http://karygiannismp.com/spip/article.php3?id_article=671)

## ICICI Bank to grow over \$1 bn in Sri Lanka

ICICI Bank has targeted a balance sheet of over one billion dollars within the next 4-5 years as it plans to become the top foreign bank in Sri Lanka. "We started our bank in Sri Lanka with 25 million dollars and today we are the third biggest in the Island country with 280 million dollars," ICICI Sri Lanka country chief Prem Kumar Thampi said recently.

The bank is working with the Securities and Exchange Commission to develop the securitisation market. "This year, other than branch expansion work, we are working with the Central Bank to introduce a Commodity Exchange Centre for commodities," he said.

The bank recently launched a special offer scheme of sanctioning a loan in two days for its customers in Sri Lanka. Loans would be available to both salaried as well as self-employed customers.

The bank is also offering early settlement of loans with a 100% interest rebate and minimal foreclosure charges. [PTI]



NUMERO UNO: Tata Group chairman Ratan Tata announces the launch of Tata Nano, the much-anticipated Rs 1 lakh car, at the Auto Expo in New Delhi on Thursday. The standard version of Nano is priced at Rs 1 lakh before tax while its deluxe variants would cost a bit more when they hit the road. The car will be available in the market the earliest by October. (AP)

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# Monsoon Newsline

## Fear in Sri Lanka - one woman's view

Mannar in north-western Sri Lanka has seen some of the worst of the fighting between government troops and Tamil Tiger rebels in recent months.

Meanwhile life for the residents of this coastal district has become almost intolerable.

A woman who lives in Mannar and who prefers to remain anonymous told the BBC News website about the brutality surrounding her.

"Mannar is a terrible place now. This is what happened to me just the other night."

I was visiting a church for a night service. On our way back we visited the grocery shop when there was a sudden bomb blast



St. Sebastian's Cathedral in Mannar, Sri Lanka - File Pic HumanityAshore.org

So he did that and then he ran away. He went and hid on top of somebody else's house. The police searched for him and finally they shot and killed him.

### Bus blast

[On Tuesday, 11] young children were killed by a claymore mine which exploded near the bus they were on. These claymore mines are everywhere. The army says the Tigers put them there, the Tigers say the army put them there. We can't really tell.

This kind of thing always happens and we are so scared.

We are under government control and I think that is good for now. I would love the government to give us peace. I pray that the president finds a way to grant us Tamil people the peace we need.

### Otherwise we cannot live.

For almost 25 years the Tamils have been suffering people. We suffer because both sides cannot find a way to peace. There is danger from government raids and from Tiger attacks.

### Dawn bombings

People come around in white vans and kidnap people. I am afraid to keep my brothers here. People come and ask for money, they ask for amounts like 60,000 rupees (\$565) - if we had that kind of money to give would we be staying here?

We don't know who these people are. We don't know if they are Tigers or if they are the government-related. They could be anybody.

And everyday there is fighting. At 3am they start the bombing and the firing - I hear it from where I live.

As dawn comes I should be listening to the birds and not to bombs."

[bbc.co.uk]



Bicycle stand at St. Sebastian's Cathedral in Mannar, Sri Lanka

and after that loud gunfire. It was so close and we were so terrified.

My sister, myself and another lady ran to find cover and hide. There was gunfire everywhere. We just stayed down.

After half-an-hour of silence we called out to the policemen who were nearby. I shouted out:

"Son, son, can we go? Is it safe? Can we come?"

A policeman shouted back to

me:

"Aunty, it is safe now! What are you doing on the road at such a time in the night?"

What could I say? We had to go to church. We are Christians and we had to make our prayers.

We think the Tigers put this bomb there to get the police. Some Tigers gave the bomb to a young boy, the son of a local shop owner, they told him to throw it near the police checkpoint.



months back, the state bank provided a Rs 450-million (worth) foreign dollar loan to the Treasury, taken from its own foreign currency account at the Central Bank, making it a near total of \$100 million given to the government. How much more is in the pipeline is anybody's guess," the economist added.

These come on top of the massive \$500 million bond given to the government recently in a deal brokered by three banks including HSBC. This issue was intended to fund infrastructure development but later the Central Bank said it was being used to pay off debt and other borrowings, with analysts saying the money 'evaporated' in 48 hours after it arrived! [SundayTimes.lk]

## Sri Lanka Government borrows again - this time \$50 million through NSB

The National Savings Bank's has borrowed 50 million dollars from ICICI Bank, India's largest private-owned bank, to lend to the government which economists say may be a new Treasury strategy to pass on the foreign-currency fluctuation risk to a middle-party.

"This could be a new strategy to use the NSB to borrow from the foreign market and in turn lend to the government in rupee terms," a senior economist said, adding that unlike the HSBC-led \$500 million bond, the "government doesn't then need to carry the burden of the foreign currency-fluctuation risk", an issue that has drawn public concern among other issues of foreign borrowings. A senior official of the NSB,

the country's biggest state-owned savings bank, confirmed recently that the deal had been done at 5.5 percent interest and was meant to fund state development projects.

The government put forward the same argument when the HSBC-led bond was being negotiated. It was unclear whether the interest rate was what NSB was paying ICICI or getting from the government. "This is a cosy relationship for the government -- high short-term borrowings without foreign currency fluctuation risks which would raise the cost of these loans," the economist said.

This is the second occasion in recent months that the NSB is providing a foreign loan (in rupee terms) to the government. A few

## Humanitarian and economic crisis for Sri Lanka as violence surges

Security has been tightened in major Sri Lankan urban areas with the government anticipating more attacks. Since mid-December the UN and other international agencies limited their work in some areas under Tiger control, after Tiger warnings that their safety could not be guaranteed.

International donors have also expressed fear the violence will lead to further deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation in the country.

"This decision [to pull out of the Cease Fire Agreement] and the current military campaign further deteriorate the country's already difficult situation, including the humanitarian and human rights situation," the European Union said in a statement on 7 January. "Without the CFA, the prospects of negotiating a lasting, peaceful solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka are narrowed further."

If the situation slides further, countries, including EU members,

may impose economic sanctions, Muttukrishna Sarvanthan, a Colombo-based economist said.

"Duty free access of garment exports from Sri Lanka to the EU is up for renewal this year. It is likely it would not be renewed because of the poor human rights record of Sri Lanka in recent years," he told IRIN.

Sarvanthan also fears the economy would not be able to withstand an extended conflict. "The year 2008 is going to be extremely challenging for the security, economy and polity of the country," he said. "High defence and public expenditure in general cannot be sustained for long."

The immediate prospects are so dire that some professionals are already looking at leaving the country. "What else to do? The only good option is to go somewhere else," assistant bank manager Sujeevi Jayasuriya told IRIN.

[irinnews]

## Ambassador Blake in Batticaloa: "Compete with the strength of words than the threat of a bullet"

US ambassador Robert O. Blake has expressed doubts if the upcoming local elections in Sri Lanka's eastern Tamil-speaking district of Batticaloa would be free and fair.

"The US does not believe that free and fair elections can be held if some (political) parties are armed," Blake said in Batticaloa at a function organised by USAID, on Jan 23rd.

The function was to open the Marvell Sarvodaya Vocational Training Center, in Batticaloa.

US Ambassador opened his remarks with a quote from former President of USA, John F. Kennedy. "our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education." Ambassador Blake said that President Kennedy's words apply not only to the U.S. but also to Sri Lanka and every other country in today's competitive, globalized world.

He further said that if "paramilitary" groups carrying arms illegally were allowed to intimidate others, it would hamper private investment that is so much needed to develop war-affected Batticaloa.

"United States believes that paramilitaries including the TMVP must not be allowed to carry arms, but should instead compete with the strength of their words rather than the threat of a bullet", he said.

Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal



(TMVP), is headed by breakaway LTTE members Karuna and Pillayan.

Elections to nine local bodies in Batticaloa district are to be held in March, and nominations are being filed now.

The pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which has been "banned" in Batticaloa by the TMVP, had filed a case in the Supreme Court seeking to put off the elections in view of the intimidation.

But the court refused to oblige saying it was not good to cancel elections.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), which is contesting in five councils, has also been complaining about harassment and violence by the TMVP.

The Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), led by cabinet minister Douglas Devananda, has asked the government to disarm the TMVP.

The EPDP call came after a bid to form a Tamil alliance failed due to the TMVP's decision to go it alone in the elections.

# 60 Years After Gandhi's Death, India Ponders His Legacy

By Raymond Thibodeaux  
In Ahmedabad, India

India's Mohandas Gandhi is regarded as one of the most important figures of the 20th century and the father of modern India. But 60 years after his death, many Indians are divided over whether he would have approved of the new India.

Afternoon traffic roars through Gujarat state's financial capital. Business is booming here, as it is in much of India. Ahmedabad's skyline is dotted with luxury hotels and upscale shopping malls.

Mohandas Gandhi's small, square, white house sits on the bank of the Sabarmati River, shaded by neem trees.

One of the home's caretakers says an upscale shopper's paradise is probably not what Gandhi had in mind for his hometown. Eighty-one year old Vijay Bhai says Gandhi promoted "simple living and high

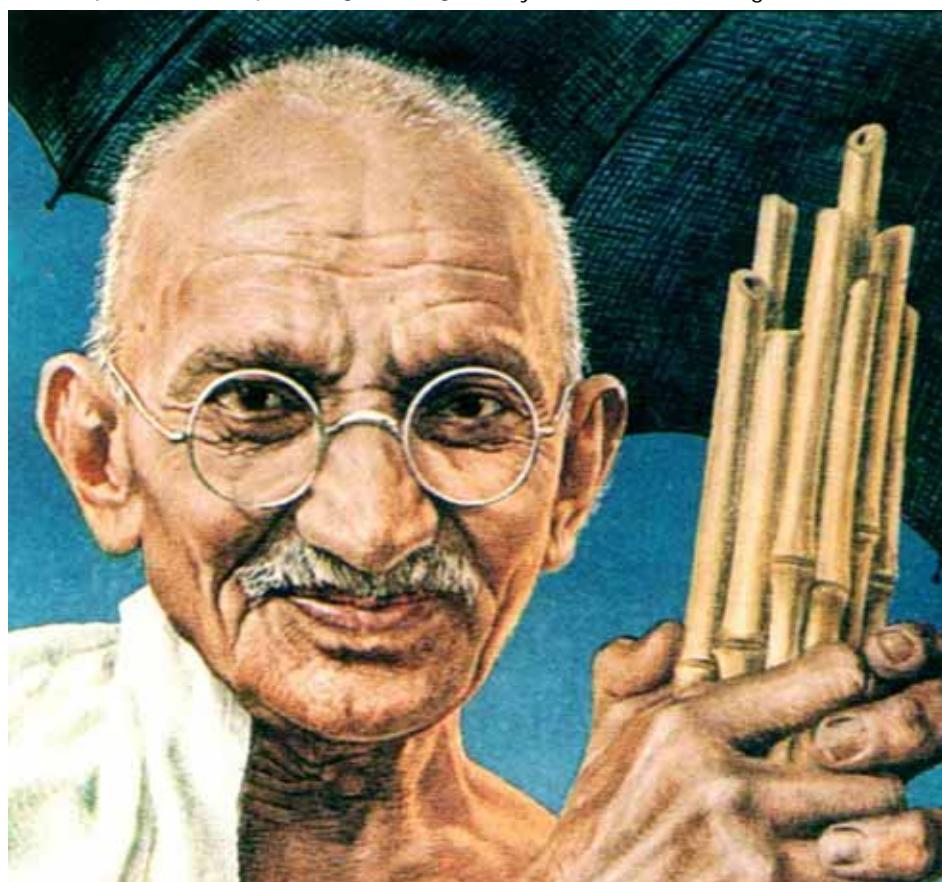
the rural poor appears to be widening.

Isha Vora is a 20-year-old college student having lunch with friends at one of Ahmedabad's trendy new cafes.

"I would probably say that he would be very discouraged by seeing India's position today," Vora said. "He wanted equality among the people, and no disintegration between the rich and the poor. But right now, everywhere, we see that the rich are getting more rich (richer) day by day and no one looks after the poor people, like how are they staying (living) and what are they eating. No one is concerned about them today."

For many, modern shopping malls are a symbol of India's status as an emerging economic superpower. Others say they are a symptom of a nation losing its way.

University Professor N.S.R. Krishnayya says Gandhi's teachings and economic



thinking".

"Gandhi was a qualified lawyer trained in England, but when he saw the poverty in this country he gave up his luxurious life. That's why he only wore a loincloth and had a very simple life," Bhai said. "Have a look in the house, that's how he used to live here. He was promoting village industry and farming. That was his message, you know - less stress. But here, because of all the high living, it puts a lot of stress on people."

Gandhi was shot and killed by a Hindu extremist on January 30, 1948. He was 78 years old.

His campaign of peaceful resistance is credited with freeing India from British rule the year before. His principles of non-violence also inspired Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights movement in the United States and Nelson Mandela's anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

Sixty years later, though, some Indians wonder whether the country is veering away from Gandhi's most-cherished principles, including communal harmony and economic justice.

Although millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in the past two decades as India implemented economic reforms, the gap between the wealthy and

development can peacefully coexist.

"Shopping malls coming and not respecting Gandhiji - they do not go together," Krishnayya said. "We respect Gandhiji equally and we do enjoy whatever shopping malls are coming about. He's not a person that can be replaced by simple, materialistic kinds of things."

Mansi Shah, a 23-year-old banker, agrees.

"We are what we are because of him today. One of the factors is that we are living in a free India right now. People over here and in the whole of India would be thankful to him and what you are seeing right here is because of him, probably," Shah said.

Gandhi's message of tolerance and compassion helped shape human rights and independence movements around the world. Yet even the residents of his home state, Gujarat, struggle to follow his example. Gujarat has suffered some of the worst sectarian violence between India's Hindu majority and Muslim minority. Yet progress has been made - since the early 1990's, the state poverty rate has fallen to about 14 percent of the population, from about 24 percent.

[VOA]

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E&O E

# Specialists reflect commitment to quality and diversity

New physicians meet needs of growing Rouge Valley communities

The latest group of physicians to join Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) exemplifies the hospital's commitment to quality while reflecting the community's rich diversity.

RVHS' commitment to quality health-care and the opportunity to work in an excellent community hospital are among the reasons noted by the new physicians for joining RVHS.

"Our priority is to deliver the highest quality patient care. We value the diversity of our organization and community, and warmly welcome our new physicians," says Rik Ganderton, President and Chief Executive Officer.

#### PAEDIATRICIAN JOINS TEAM

Paediatrician Dr. Sultana Alkon-Mintsopoulos is no stranger to Toronto. When the mother of three earned her undergraduate and medical degrees from the Tashkent Paediatric Medical Institute in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1991, she moved here and joined her large family, originally from Macedonia. Since then, she has worked at State University of New York (SUNY) Health Science Center, where she completed her paediatric training, and most recently, the Alfred A.I. duPont Hospital for Children in Delaware. Dr. Alkon-Mintsopoulos found herself back in Toronto when her husband was offered a position as a paediatric cardiology fellow at the Hospital for Sick Children.

She says the developing RVHS Birthing and Newborn Centre and the group of enthusiastic paediatricians are some of the reasons why she decided to join Rouge Valley. "The opportunity to work in a busy place that provides services to a diverse, growing population are important to me," says Dr. Alkon-Mintsopoulos.

#### INTERNIST JOINS TEAM

For Internist Dr. Zareen Syed, it has been a long journey to come to RVHS. The native of Pakistan came to Canada as a child and grew up in Mississauga. She later returned to Pakistan and earned her Medical degree at Dow Medical College in Pakistan. After completing her residency at Michigan State University, Dr. Syed earned a Geriatric Fellowship at Saint Louis University Hospital. The last leg of her journey took her to Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre in Burin, Newfoundland.

Dr. Syed will be based at Rouge Valley Centenary, and will be providing medical services to geriatric and internal medicine patients. "I wanted an opportunity to work in an ethnically diverse community, such as Scarborough. I'm looking forward to helping to promote internal medicine

and geriatric care at RVHS," says Dr. Syed.

#### GASTROENTEROLOGIST JOINS TEAM

For Gastroenterologist Dr. Jose Nazareno, joining the Rouge Valley Centenary site, and opening his practice in Scarborough, is a homecoming. The Scarborough native grew up not too far from the hospital, and after years of studying and working across the country, he says he's happy to be back. He received his B.Sc. from the University of Toronto, and earned his M.D. at the University of Calgary. Most recently, Dr. Nazareno worked as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Ontario, where he



also completed his training in Gastroenterology and Internal Medicine. Following a locum at Rouge Valley Centenary in August, Dr. Nazareno, who is fluent in Filipino, says he was excited at the prospect of returning as a staff member.

"Being at Rouge Valley Centenary is just like home for me, but this is also a great community hospital. I'm excited to be a part of the Gastroenterology team here," says Dr. Nazareno. He has also received special training in Manometry, the measurement of contractions in the esophagus and the rectum, and has a special interest in the treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

Other physicians who have joined Rouge Valley Centenary (RVC) and Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering (RVAP) hospital campuses during the last year or so include:

- \* Dr. Karim Aref, RVAP Paediatrics
- \* Dr. Dina el-Sahrigy, RVAP Pathology
- \* Dr. Ali el Firjani, RVAP Internist/Nephrologist
- \* Dr. Jason Smith, RVC Orthopaedics
- \* Dr. Hedieh Hooshangi, RVC Anaesthesia
- \* Dr. Olivia Tsai, RVC Anaesthesia
- \* Dr. Hubert Wong, RVC Paediatric Nephrologist
- \* Dr. Ram Vijayaraghavan, RVC Cardiologist

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Rouge Valley continues to improve its programs catering to the needs of the growing communities of east Toronto, Ajax, Pickering and Whitby.

[www.rougevalley.ca](http://www.rougevalley.ca)

For more information, please contact:  
David Brazeau  
Director  
Public Affairs and Community Relations  
Rouge Valley Health System  
416-284-8131 ext. 4010  
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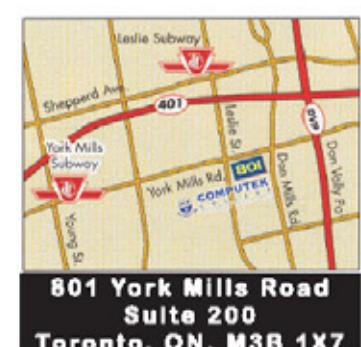
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# Monsoon Features

## My Karma

In the summer of 2007 I was driving along 401, the main Highway in Toronto, and when I took the exit ramp to Markham road I saw a lad holding placard reading; 'My Karma'. He was a typical Canadian youth in his late teens. Seeing this I wondered whether he understood what the words 'my karma' means. In the west some of the Sanskrit words like Guru, Yoga etc, used in Hindu religion had infiltrated into the daily colloquial English language. Some tend to believe it is cool to use these words. But frequently these words are misused in a wrong connotation from its original meaning.

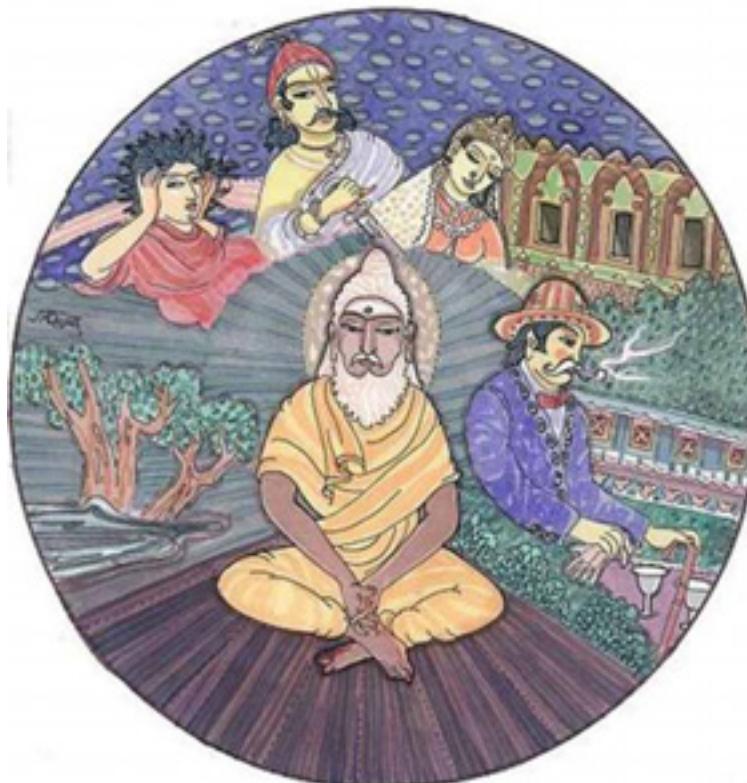
In the west the word Karma has had a bad press: it has been assumed that it refers to deterministic and fatalistic view of life, or to some immutable destiny that we can do nothing to alter. The Sanskrit word karma means 'deed' or 'action' and more broadly names the universal principle of cause and effect, action and reaction which governs all life.

The Newton's third law of motion says: 'For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction'. Similar to this law we have the law of Karma, which says: 'For every action there is an obligatory consequence'. Though this may sound simple, it has profound impact in every being. Like all laws this too was there from the very beginning, though it too took a long time for the humanity to figure it out and realize the truth. It is like the law of gravity and other laws, which were there even before mankind discovered it. This law of karma is well expressed in simple language in Bible. Galatians 6:7 says: 'Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap'. Referring to this law of Karma Mahatma Gandhi in his auto biography says 'Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap'. The law of Karma is inexorable and impossible of evasion. There thus hardly any need for God to interfere. He laid down the law and, as it were, retired.

As mentioned earlier the law, 'For every action there is an obligatory consequence' may sound very simple, but without this many anomalies of the world cannot be reasonably explained. Hindus believed that souls were not created as creation means a combination, which results in certain dissolution. Hence if souls are created then they must die. Further more it is common knowledge that some are born happy, enjoy perfect health with beautiful body, mental vigour, and all wants supplied. Others are born miserable; some without even limbs; others again idiots, and drag on with the life. If they are all created, why does a just and merciful God created some happy

and others unhappy? Why is he so partial? These questions cannot be answered by the concept of creator God. There must have been causes before the birth, to make a man miserable or happy. It is said due to the actions of the past birth which of course in Sanskrit is Karma. To put it in biblical language if they had sown goodness in the previous birth then they will harvest good in this birth and so on. Here we have to understand reincarnation.

The concept of reincarnation is not exclusive to Hindu and Buddhist religions. Among the



ancient Greeks: Socrates, Pythagoras and Plato may be numbered among the eminent ones who made reincarnation an integral part of their teachings. At the end of his life, Socrates said, "I am confident that there truly is such a thing as living again and that the living spring from the dead". Pythagoras claimed he could remember his past lives, and Plato presented detailed accounts of reincarnation in his major works. He stated the pre-existence of the soul in a celestial world and its fall into a human body due to sin. In order to be liberated from its bondage and return to a state of pure being, the soul needs to be purified through reincarnation.

The Jews and Christians too did believe in reincarnation. To quote from Jewish religion 'The Zohar' widely considered the most important work of Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism; 'As long as a person is unsuccessful in his purpose in this world, the Holy One, blessed be He, uproots him and replants him over and over again.

**Kumar Punithavel**

(Zohar 1 186b)'

On the other hand in the Bible there are many references to reincarnation. Jesus asked his disciples: 'Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?' (Matthew 16:13) If not for the fact that reincarnation was generally accepted within the Jewish culture, Lord Jesus would hardly have asked the question. Another famous remark (John 15:27) which ascribed to Jesus, is as follows: 'And you also shall bear witness, because you have been with

It is a fair question to ask if there is tangible evidence in modern life of such reincarnation. In the book 'I have lived before: The true story of Reincarnation of Shanti Devi' It is recorded a detailed study was done and proved beyond reasonable doubt her birth is a case of reincarnation. In it Shanti Devi, a young girl growing up in Delhi in the 1930s, spoke very little till she was four years old. When she did start speaking, she alarmed everyone in her family saying, 'This is not my home! I have a husband and son in Mathura! I must return to them'. She persisted on her claim. One of her teachers at school sent a letter to the address Shanti Devi gave as her 'real home' in Mathura, inquiring if a woman had died there not too many years ago. To everyone's astonishment, he soon received a reply from Shanti Devi's former husband, admitting that his young wife Lungi Devi died little after having child birth.

A thoroughly researched investigation of the case of reincarnation took place. Even Mahatma Gandhi together with many prominent men got involved in the study and was established she couldn't possibly get any information from other sources. Any one interested may read this book.

Frequently raised objection is why then we do not remember about our past. The reason for not remembering of the past was explained well by Swami Vivekananda on his address to the parliament of religions in Chicago on 19th September 1893. He explained: 'There is another suggestion. Taking all these for granted (reincarnation), how is it that I do not remember anything of my past life? This can be easily explained. I am now speaking English. It is not my mother tongue; in fact, no words of mother tongue are now present in my consciousness; but let me try to bring them up, and they rush in. That shows that consciousness is only the surface of the mental ocean, and within its depths is stored up all our experiences. Try and struggle, they would come

up, and you would be conscious even of your past life.

One can easily see that Law of Karma and reincarnation are two sides of the same coin. Karma cannot function without reincarnation and of course Karma is the cause of reincarnation.

There is another important question that arises. If we perform good karma than we will have to be born again and again, may be to have a good life, harvesting the consequence of good actions (karma). When will this birth and death end?

To find the solution to this problem of being born again and again I quote from Gita the solution. In that Lord Krishna says: 'No one, not even for an instant, can exist without acting: all beings are compelled, however unwilling, by the three strands of nature called Gunas'. (Gita 3.5). Then as a solution to the predicament of doing good action and be born again and again The Lord Krishna advises: 'Though the unwise cling to their actions, watching for results, the wise are free of attachments, and act for the well-being of the whole world' (Gita 3. 25). The Lord further says: 'Surrendering all thoughts of outcome, unperturbed, self-reliant, he does nothing at all, even when fully engaged in actions'. (Gita 4.20). So the secret of ending the cycle of birth and death is surrendering all thought of outcome, and free of attachment act for the well-being of the whole world.

In the light of the above discuss let us examine what the youth at the intersection meant by the placard 'My Karma'. It was because of his good Karma in his last birth, that he was born in the best country in the world; Canada! It was his bad Karma that made him not to make use of his education which was provided for him free, and thus harvesting what he sow and ending up pan-handling. If he did do good Karma (actions) in this birth in the next birth the result may be different! He will be born in good country like Canada and make use the opportunity and study to become a useful citizen. However if he perform his actions selflessly without attachment to the results then he would be free and will not take another birth!

To reach Kumar: email to [kumarpunithavel@yahoo.com](mailto:kumarpunithavel@yahoo.com)

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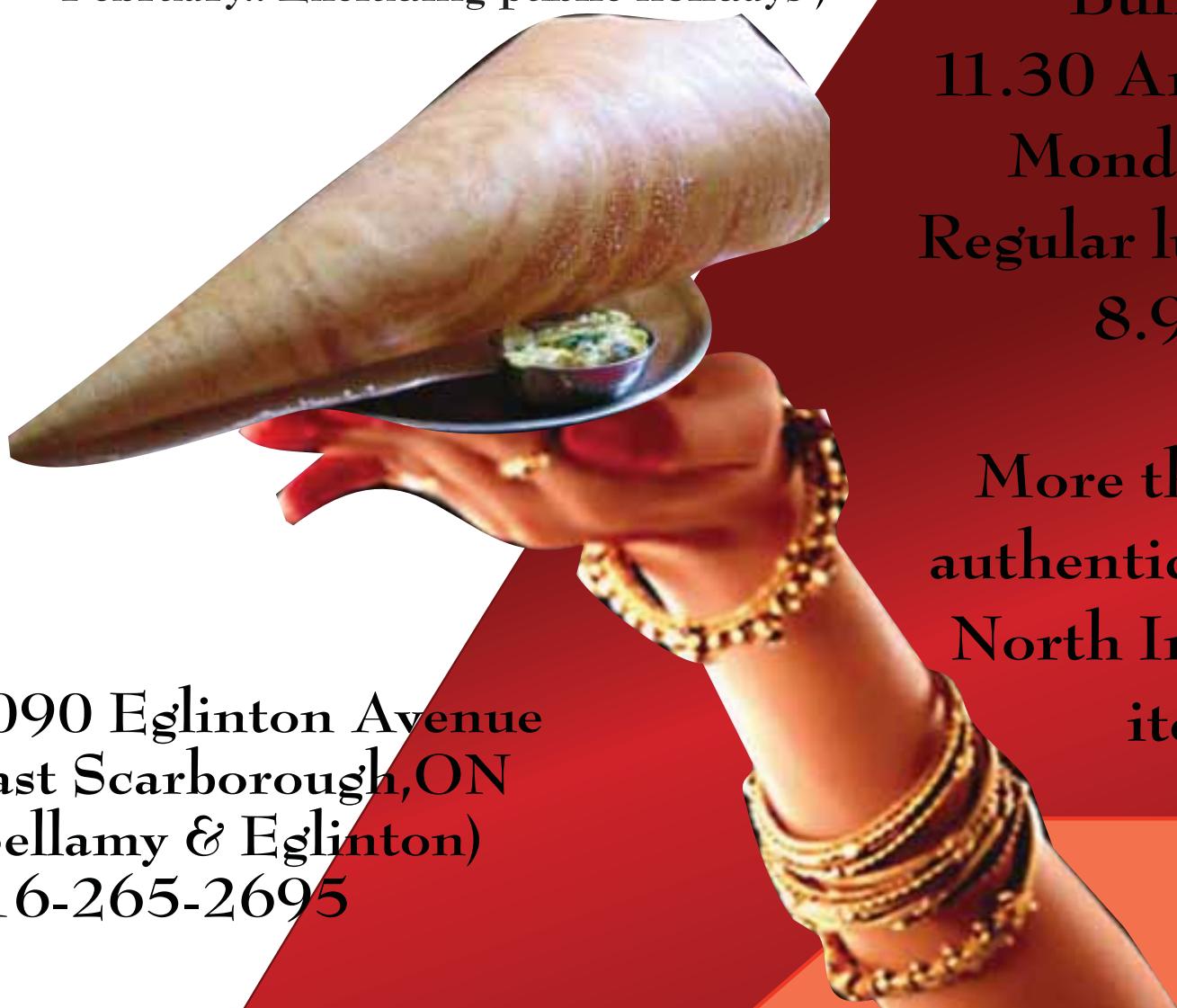


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# Income Tax Changes in 2007 – A. Ariaran, CGA

Does the amount of income tax you paid last year make you shudder? Let us look at what are the major Federal and Provincial changes affecting individuals in 2007 which will make you happy.

Consumer Price Index adjustment increased the taxable income thresholds in all four federal tax brackets by 2.2% in 2007 and Ontario provincial tax brackets were increased by 2.1 per cent. The federal tax rate for the first bracket in 2007 was 15 percent.

Canada employment credit which was introduced in the 2006 federal budget doubled in value from \$500 to \$1,000 in 2007.

**Increase in Threshold Limits for Spousal/Equivalent to Spouse Tax Credit.** The federal budget increased the earnings threshold at which the income of the taxpayer's spouse, common-law spouse, or dependent relative will totally eliminate the spousal or equivalent to spouse non-refundable tax credit. As a result of further changes announced in the October mini-budget, they may now earn up to the same level as the basic personal credit amount—\$9,600 in 2007—before this credit is entirely clawed back.

**Increase in RRSP Annual Contribution Limit.** The annual registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) contribution ceiling was raised to \$19,000 in 2007, from \$18,000 in 2006. It is scheduled to rise to at least \$20,000 in 2008; \$21,000 in 2009, and \$22,000 in 2010, after which the annual maximum contribution rates will be indexed to reflect increases in average wage growth. New Child Tax Credit. The federal budget introduced a new annual non-refundable child tax credit, effective January 1, 2007, that will pay parents \$2,000 for each child under 18 at the end of that taxation year. Any unused portion of this credit, which will be indexed for inflation in future years, is transferable between spousal or common-law partners.

**Introduction of Ontario Child Benefit** The 2007 provincial budget introduced a new Ontario Child Benefit (OCB), effective July 1, 2007, for each child under 18. The OCB is designed to begin replacing the Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families (OCCS) benefit as well as certain child-related social assistance benefits. The initial OCB payment for 2007 is \$250 (in addition to

social assistance or OCCS payments), reduced by 3.4 per cent of adjusted family net income over \$20,000. That amount will be increased to \$600 on July 1, 2008, reduced by 8 per cent of adjusted family net income in excess of \$20,000. Most child-related social assistance payments, as well as the OCCS, are scheduled to be consolidated with the OCB beginning in 2008.

**Working Income Tax Benefit.** The 2007 federal budget introduced a refundable Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) that provides up to \$500 for individual taxpayers 19 or over without dependants, whose earned income exceeds \$3,000, reduced by 15 per cent of net family income in excess of \$9,500. The WITB is \$1,000 for families, including couples or single parents 19 or over, with earned income in excess of \$3,000, reduced by 15 per cent of net family income in excess of \$14,500. The WITB is calculated at the rate of 20 per cent of each dollar of earned income in excess of \$3,000, therefore reaching a maximum benefit at \$5,500 of earned income for individuals and \$8,000 of earned income for families. Individuals who are not classified as dependants; who are eligible for the disability tax credit (DTC); and have at least \$1,750 in earned income, will also receive an additional disability supplement up to a maximum credit of \$250.

This disability supplement is reduced by 15 per cent of net family income in excess of \$12,833 for single individuals and \$21,167 for families.

**It Pays To Get Fit!** Starting in 2007, you may be able to claim the fees paid for physical fitness programs for your children under the age of 16. The newly proposed children's fitness tax credit provides parents with an annual credit of up to \$500 per child to help cover the cost of their child's physical fitness programs or sporting activities fees.

**Increase in RESP Lifetime Contribution Limit** As a result of the 2007 federal budget, the lifetime contribution limit to registered education savings plans (RESP) was increased to \$50,000, up from \$42,000. The maximum annual Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) was also increased to \$500, (representing 20 per cent of a \$2,500 contribution)



from \$400 (20 per cent of a \$2,000 contribution). The annual contribution limit of \$4,000 was eliminated.

**Pension Income Splitting** Beginning in 2007, senior-citizen taxpayers with a spouse or common-law partner will be allowed to split pension income with their spouse or partner. The first \$2,000 of pension income is eligible for the pension credit.

turned 69 in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) The 2007 federal budget introduced a new registered disability savings plan (RDSP), which is designed to assist parents and others save for the long-term financial security of a child with a disability. Anyone can contribute to an RDSP, for which contributions are limited to a lifetime maximum of \$200,000 with no annual limit. Contributions will be permitted until the end of the year in which the beneficiary reaches 59. Payments from an RDSP will be required to commence by the end of the year in which the beneficiary turns 49.

These are the major changes that will be in effect for 2007 tax. Tax planning should be an important part of your efforts to get the most out of your financial resources. Though you only have to file your tax return once a year, it's the tax planning steps you take throughout the year that will help you save money at tax time.

## CIBC's six principles of Smart Investing

CIBC helps clients make the most of their finances by providing professional financial advice and ensures that you're never alone when it comes to making financial decisions. CIBC offers The Six Principles of Smart Investing:



- 1) Know yourself: We all have different investing goals and different time frames for achieving them. Some are short-term, like saving for a vacation or a car, while others are long-term, like retirement. To better understand yourself as an investor, consider your: risk tolerance, investment knowledge, investment objectives, gross annual income, approximate net worth and investment time horizons.

- 2) Get an early start: Taking advantage of the effects of "compounding" is one of the best ways to make your money work for you. Compounding is money multiplying itself by earning a return on the return.

- 3) Invest regularly: It's generally much easier to come up with a smaller amount to invest on a monthly or weekly basis than to make a large, lump-sum

contribution. A regular investment plan allows you to choose when and how often you make contributions - ensuring you make investing a priority. With a Regular Investment Plan, money will be automatically withdrawn from your account and invested in a range of investment solutions.

- 4) Build a diversified portfolio: Spreading your assets across a wide range of investments is an effective way to reduce risk and increase potential returns over the long term. Holding a mixture of different types of investments will help cushion your portfolio from downturns, as the value of some investments may go up while the value of others may

go down.

- 5) Monitor your portfolio: You should examine your investment portfolio with your advisor, or on your own, at least once a year to ensure that it continues to meet your needs. Market conditions, life events (marriage, children and retirement) and changing goals are cues to review your portfolio.

- 6) Align your investments with your time horizons: The type of investments you choose will depend on whether you're saving for long-term or short-term goals. For your long-term goals, you may want to consider long-term, growth-oriented investments. Your short-term goals call for investments that are more conservative, and more accessible. For example, if you're investing to save for a down payment on a home, you'll want quick and easy access to your funds.

For professional financial advice that allows you to enjoy today while investing for your future talk to a CIBC advisor at your nearest branch or call us at 1-888-490-2422.

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# Make the most of your retirement savings by investing in an RRSP

If you're a New Canadian citizen or resident, you undoubtedly came here with many goals and dreams for your future and the future of your children. You may also have given some thought to your retirement years. But saving for a successful retirement can present challenges financially, especially if you have other financial priorities, like buying a new home or saving for a child education.

The good news is that there are tools that can help; the most important of all is a Registered Retirement Saving Plan (RRSP). An RRSP is a personal savings plan that allows you to build a retirement income for your future while giving you immediate tax benefits today.

In order to take full advantage of an RRSP you will want to begin making contributions as soon as possible, no matter what your age or how close you are to retirement. That's because the money you put in the plan begins to grow on a tax-deferred basis immediately.

The concept is simple, says Shekher Puri, Branch Manager at RBC Royal Bank. You put money into an RRSP and this money, which is invested, grows tax-sheltered until it is withdrawn. The RRSP must be closed and paid out as a retirement income by the end of the year in which you reach age 71. You will then begin paying taxes on the funds. Chances are you may be in a lower tax bracket when you retire, so you may not be as heavily taxed as you would be when you originally made the contribu-



tions and earned income in the plan. Even if not, the years of tax deferral allow you to earn extra income using government money.

But tax deferred growth isn't the only benefit to investing in an RRSP. Contributions to your plan also reduce your current taxable income for the year. For example, someone in Ontario earning \$50,000 a year will get just over \$300 back for a \$1,000 RRSP contribution. That money is in your pocket now.

Investing in an RRSP is a smart, tax-efficient way of saving for retirement, but it's important to remember that an RRSP is not an investment in and of itself. It's simply a special type of savings plan, so you'll need to select the specific investments to hold within it. Here you have many options.

Within your RRSP, you might hold savings deposits, mutual funds, stocks, bonds or any number of other investments, adds Puri. The type of investments you choose will depend on your retirement goals and your investment profile. This is where a financial advisor can help. They will also help you build a plan according to your unique goals and circumstances as a newcomer to Canada.

In order to take full advantage of your RRSP, there are a few things you need to keep in mind:



Whatever your age or personal situation, it's never too early to contribute: In fact, the earlier you start making contributions, the better off you'll be towards achieving your financial goals for retirement.

Make your contributions before the yearly deadline: To claim a deduction on your taxes for the current year, you can make contributions anytime during the year, or up to 60 days into the following year.

Know your RRSP contribution limits: There is a limit on how much you can contribute each year. Your allowable RRSP contribution is the lower of 18 per cent of your earned income from the previous year, or the maximum annual contribution limit for the current year (which, for 2007, is \$19,000), less a pension adjustment if you are a member of a pension plan. Your limit is provided by the Canada Revenue Agency when you file your income tax returns.

To learn more about RRSPs, or to speak with an investment professional, please visit any RBC Royal Bank branch or visit <http://www.rbc.com/firstrrsp>

sidering selling their home to finance their retirement.

Nearly 20% of people who have reached retirement age are considering to continue to work due to lack of income.

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## RRSP

**By: Sritharan Thurairajah**

Some things deserve a little more thinking before acting. This applies to your personal finances as well. RRSP (Registered retirement savings plan) Season is upon us, and before you decide pass on the opportunity to contribute to your plan this year because you simply don't have the cash, consider borrowing to contribute instead.

It is a questionable judgment call to delay saving for retirement.

Canadians have been accumulating RRSP contribution room since 1991. It is not uncommon today to meet someone who has well over \$50,000 of unused RRSP room. This unused contribution room can be carried forward indefinitely. It becomes increasingly difficult to use up that room as you fail to make RRSP contributions.

And don't forget, tax laws can change anytime. This does not

mean that government will soon do away with RRSP carry forwards, but it's not inconceivable that a cap could be placed on the amount of room accumulating if the government ever feels overexposed to potential RRSP deductions in the hands of Canadians.

Time is also a critical factor when saving for retirement.

The longer your money grows, the more you will have later. So it is good sense to use up your RRSP contribution room sooner than later.

### A CLEAR REALITY

Government plans provide approximately 37% of retirement income.

Only 30% of people took advantage of their right to contribute to an RRSP in 2004.

28% of the people between the ages of 42 and 60 have less than \$100,000 in savings.

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# Why we need Black History Month

**February's designation reminds Canada of its multiracial origins, work remaining to be done**

**By Barrington Walker**

Black Americans and black Canadians often bitterly joke that even though we have a month to celebrate our history, "they" only gave us the shortest month of the year. In fact, the choice of February for the celebration of black history in the United States is intimately connected to its founder, the pioneering black historian Carter G. Woodson.

Woodson, the son of former slaves, was one of the most important figures in the emergence of black history as a respected scholarly endeavor. Woodson was deeply troubled by the lack of black history in U.S. textbooks. He was also concerned that when the stories of blacks were conveyed, it was done so in a manner that reaffirmed the demeaning and infantilizing anti-black stereotypes of the dominant culture. White Americans refused to see blacks and their histories as central to the country's historical narratives.

In response to these concerns in 1926, Woodson decided that one month should be devoted to celebrating African-descended people's contributions in the United States. He chose February because the birthdays of two pivotal figures in the history of black America—black abolitionist

Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln—fell during this month.

Black History Month is, essentially, an American import into Canada—albeit one that was slow to receive official recognition by our federal government (not until 1995). The histories of blacks in Canada and the United States are quite different, but they are comparable in important ways that make the recognition of this month relevant in the Canadian context.

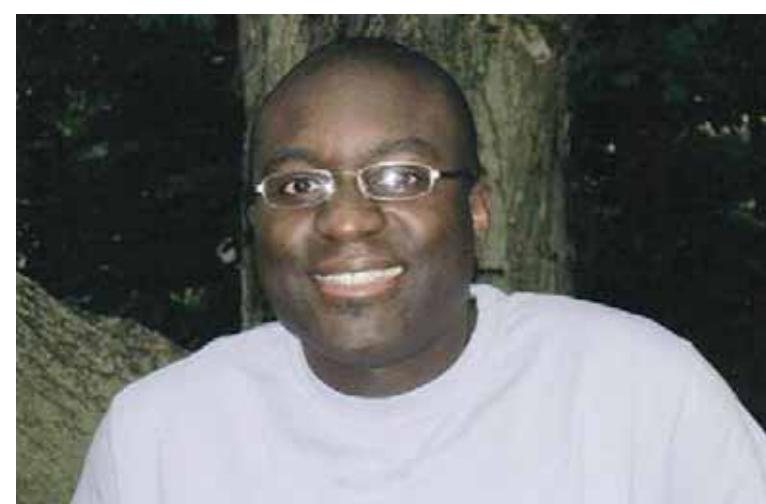
Blacks in the United States and Canada share a history of racially based enslavement and legally supported anti-black discrimination in the post-emancipation period. It's also true, however, that in the United States the study of black peoples is much more evolved than here in Canada. The histories of black peoples, for reasons of geography, demography and an exclusionary "whites only" early 20th-century Canadian immigration policy, are arguably less central here than south of the border.

Nonetheless, there's a disturbing silence that permeates the histories of black peoples in Canada that's problematic given the first arrival of black peoples in what is now Canada dates back to the 17th century.

It's for this reason that Black History Month is important in Canada—to remind ourselves of the multicultural and multiracial origins of our country. Despite the Canadian state's concerted efforts over most of its history to fashion itself as a white settler colony, this project, or fantasy, was never fully realized.

Blackness in Canada isn't only a problem that was dropped on the country's doorstep with the (mainly unwanted) arrival of Caribbean immigration in the late 20th century, but bound up in the country's origins as a colonial outpost of two empires—France and Britain. As slaves, Loyalists, refugees and fugitives, blacks played a pivotal role in shaping Canada's early history. One cannot fully grasp Canada's evolution from colony to nation without having some knowledge of the contributions that black people made to it or the challenges they faced fighting to carve out a place for themselves here, stubbornly refusing the dominant culture's insistence that blackness and Canadianess were mutually exclusive.

Woodson created Black History Month as a way to use history in instrumentalist terms, as part of the broader civil rights



[Barrington Walker is an assistant history professor and diversity advisor to the vice-principal (academic).]

movement of his time. By highlighting black American's contribution to their nation's history, Woodson surely hoped this would compel Americans to recognize their full humanity. These fundamental concerns still exist for black Canadians around the issue of their full inclusion into Canadian society.

Black Canadians have yet to be fully recognized as fully human by the dominant culture. True, black Canadians are no longer slaves. We have equal protection under the laws and a whole Human Rights apparatus to address racism's systemic causes

(ironically, done primarily on a case-by-case basis).

Black Canadians, however, still exist under a state of what Ryerson University sociologist Grace Edward Galabuzi has labelled "Economic Apartheid," characterized by anti-black discrimination in housing, employment and much lower-than-average family incomes. I hope the day comes when a designated month is no longer necessary and looked upon as a quaint historical curiosity. I fear we have a long way to go before that day arrives.

[The Journal, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario]

## African National Congress

On 2nd February 1990 the South African President F.W. De Clark lifted the 30 year ban on African National Congress and released all its leaders from prison. South African political party and black nationalist organization. Founded in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress, it had as its main goal the maintenance of voting rights for Coloureds (persons of mixed race) and black Africans in Cape Province. It was renamed the African National Congress in 1923. From the 1940s it spearheaded the fight to eliminate apartheid, the official South African policy of racial separation and discrimination. The ANC was banned from 1960 to 1990 by the white South African government; during these three decades it operated underground and outside South African territory. The ban was lifted in 1990, and Nelson Mandela, the president of the ANC, was elected in 1994 to head South Africa's first multiethnic government.

In the late 1920s the ANC's leaders split over the issue of cooperation with the Communist Party (founded in 1921), and the ensuing victory of the conservatives left the party small and disorganized through the 1930s. In the 1940s, however, the ANC revived under younger leaders who pressed for a more militant stance against segregation in

South Africa. The ANC Youth League, founded in 1944, attracted such figures as Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and Mandela, who galvanized the movement and challenged the moderate leadership. Under the presidency of Albert Luthuli, the ANC after 1952 began sponsoring nonviolent protests, strikes, boycotts, and marches against the apartheid policies that had been introduced by the National Party government that came to power in 1948. Party membership grew rapidly. A campaign against the pass laws (blacks were required to carry passes indicating their employment status) and other government policies culminated in the Defiance Campaign of 1952. In the process ANC leaders became a target of police harassment: in 1956 many of its leaders were arrested and charged with treason (known as the Treason Trial, 1956–59).

In 1960 the Pan-African Congress (PAC), which had broken away from the ANC in 1959, organized massive demonstrations against the pass laws during which police killed 69 unarmed demonstrators at Sharpeville (south of Johannesburg). At this point the National Party outlawed both the ANC and the PAC. Denied legal avenues for political change, the ANC first turned to sabotage and then began to organize outside of South Africa



Nelson Mandela in 1960

for guerrilla warfare. In 1961 an ANC military organization, Umkhonto we Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation"), with Mandela as its head, was formed to carry out acts of sabotage as part of its campaign against apartheid. Mandela and other ANC leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964 (the Rivonia Trial). Although the ANC's campaign of guerrilla warfare was basically ineffective because of stringent South African internal security measures, surviving ANC cadres kept the organization alive in Tanzania and Zambia under Tambo's leadership. The ANC began to revive inside South Africa toward the end of the 1970s, following the Soweto uprising in 1976, when the police and army killed more than 600 people, many of them children. About 1980 the banned black, green, and gold tricolour flag of the ANC began to be seen inside South Africa.

South Africa descended into



virtual civil war during the 1980s. The administration of F.W. de Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC in 1990, and its leaders were released from prison or allowed to return to South Africa and conduct peaceful political activities. Nelson Mandela, the most important of the ANC's leaders, succeeded Oliver Tambo as president in 1991. Mandela led the ANC in negotiations (1992–93) with the government over transition to a government elected by universal suffrage. In April 1994 the party swept to power in the country's first such election, winning more than 60 percent of the vote for seats in the new National Assembly. Mandela, who headed a government of national unity, was inaugurated as South Africa's first black president on May 10, 1994. After the withdrawal of the National Party from the government in 1996, the ANC entered into an alliance with its previous rival, the Inkatha Freedom Party, led by Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Mandela stepped down as ANC president in 1997, and in June 1999 his successor, Thabo Mbeki, became the second black president of South Africa. The party celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2002 and continued its domination of South African politics.

Signs of dissent began to appear within the ANC leading up to the party's 2007 national conference, where the next president of the ANC—and, most likely, the next president of the country—was to be selected. Although Mbeki was barred by South Africa's constitution from serving a third term as president of the country, securing a third term as party president would have guaranteed him considerable influence in choosing the country's next president in 2009. His bid for leadership of the party was challenged by Jacob Zuma, the former deputy president whom he had dismissed in 2005 amid charges of corruption; the next year Zuma also stood trial for an unrelated charge of rape. He was acquitted of rape in May 2006, and the corruption charges were dropped later that year. Despite repeated allegations of wrongdoing—which his supporters claimed were politically motivated—Zuma remained a popular figure within the ANC and, in what was one of the most contentious leadership battles in the party's history, was selected over Mbeki in December 2007 to be party president.

# Monsoon Features

## "Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan-The Greatest Ceylonese of our times"

- D.S.Senanayake, First Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

### Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam Memorial Oration

On the Occasion of His 155th Birth Anniversary By

Kanaganayagam Kanag-Iswaran, President's Counsel, 9th January 2008

This article is being published in connection with Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam's Birth Anniversary. It is timely when Sri Lanka is celebrating its 60th Independence Day, for the Government and people of Sri Lanka to remember that Sri Lankan Tamils like Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam vehemently fought for Sri Lankan Independence from colonial rule. The writer of this article Mr. K. Kanag-Iswaran, is a well respected President's Counsel Lawyer in Colombo and also the son of well-known former politician and Senator S.R. Kanaganayagam.

My introduction to Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam came about when I was barely eight years or so old. I remember that day very well, for reason that, it was the occasion on which a large portrait of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was hung in my father's Chambers, at our house in Jaffna. This was the third. Of the other two which were already there, one was of my father's mother and the other of Mahatma Gandhi.

I asked my father, whose picture it was, and he replied, that it was Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, a great Tamil Patriot and the brother of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. Sir Pon. Ramanathan was a household name for us, as my father was closely associated with the Ramanathan Trust and we used to visit Ramanathan College for Girls, at Maruthanamadam, where my mother was educated, during the life time of Lady Ramanathan and Hon. S.Natesan who was married to their daughter Sivagamasundari.

Later I was to become acquainted, with Sir Arunachalam Mahadeva, who used to visit our home regularly, which was then the office of the United National Party in Jaffna, when Sir Mahadeva was contesting the Jaffna seat against Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress. Later in my early teens sometimes when my father used to travel to Colombo for the meetings of the Senate, I used to tag along and on occasions we have visited Sir A. Mahadeva at Ponklar.

I am therefore greatly honoured to have been invited by the Chairman and Trustees of the Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam Trust to deliver this year's memorial oration. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam whose 155th birth anniversary we commemorate today was a great public servant

and patriot, in the true sense of these words. He lived in a time of great social change and spearheaded the growth of elite political consciousness, elite politics and constitutional evolution. He more than any other man of his time helped to lay the foundations of the freedoms which we later came to enjoy and take for granted. Those freedoms stand undermined and threatened today.

Born on the 14th of September 1853, he was a leader respected and trusted by all communities, and an inspiration to all who cherish high ideals. The first Ceylonese to enter the then Civil Service through the open door of competition, he held several positions of high responsibility, including judicial posts in various parts of the island. His achievements are too numerous to mention here, but special note should be made of the fact that he has been rightly called the father of the Ceylon University movement which he spearheaded at the very dawn of the 20th century in January 1906, and which eventually led to the establishment of the Ceylon University. In the political field, he convened what was probably the first Political Conference which had met in Ceylon for at least a hundred years, at the Victoria Masonic Hall, on 15th December 1917. It was convened to debate and consider constitutional reforms, and he was elected to Chair the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association.

In his Presidential Address, that day, he spoke thus,

"The time is therefore auspicious.....to win for ourselves as large a measure of constitutional reform as possible. We demand the liberty to take our share in the burden of this responsibility, to manage our own lives, make our own mistakes, gain strength by knowledge and experience, and acquire that self confidence and self respect which are indispensable to national progress and success. We seek to be in our own country what other self-respecting people are in theirs, self-governing, strong, respected at home and abroad, and we ask for the grant at once of a definite measure of progressive advance towards that goal". These words have special meaning for us today.

Two years later, on the 11th of December 1919, in his Presidential Address at the Public Hall, Colombo as the first



Mr. K. Kanag-Iswaran

President of the Ceylon National Congress, espousing the case for Representative Government for Ceylon, when ideas of self-determination were the common currency of political thought, he was overjoyed on that occasion to proclaim -

"we have done once and for all with our petty differences and dissensions.....whatever one's creed, race or caste may be....."

and ended his speech by quoting from the 'Karanya Metta Sutta',

"Let all living beings be joyous and safe,

May it be theirs to dwell in happiness"

But sadly, Ladies and Gentlemen, that was not to be.

Today we might even ponder whether it will ever be?

A misunderstanding, to use an euphemism, soon developed between the Sinhalese and Tamil members of the Congress over the question of representation which caused an estrangement between him and the Congress. He surrendered his office of Presidency of the Ceylon National Congress in October 1920. In order to organize and possibly guide Tamil public opinion he founded the Ceylon Tamil League in 1923, but did not live long enough to guide our fortunes. On a pilgrimage to the sacred shrines of India, in the midst of his devotions he passed away on the 9th of January 1924.

Since then a strange destiny has hung over Sri Lanka and she has ever since been wandering in the desert. We have come a full circle. Death in the midst of devotion. My interest in Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was rekindled when I started my legal career in Sri Lanka in 1966. Soon I came across his treatise - "A Digest of the Laws of Ceylon"



Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam

Volume I, published in 1910. Appendix IV to this book gives extracts from one of his best known judgments, the Adippola Sannas case, from Chilaw, which related to the grant -Sannas - (strip of copper plate) of the tank of Adippola at Chilaw to a 'Suriya Chetti of Telugu Country' by King Buwaneka Bahu of Kotte, in 1247 Saka Era, equal to 1325 of the Christian era. It is a masterly study of the social history of the people of the area.

I was fortunate later to have been able to acquire a copy of this rare book for my library. Searching for his other writings, I was equally fortunate, some six months ago, to be able to acquire his "Sketches of Ceylon History" written in 1906, and "Speeches and Writings of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam" – Volume I, published in 1936.

Reading about him it seems to me, that to him, life was a duty. He loved fair play and justice. He held in contempt the vulgarity of the demagogue. In a world gone mad on race and religion and which has made politics the juggling of race antagonism and religious hatred, it behoves us to remember and emulate Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam's quality of mind, his sacrifice and his unselfishness, in order to preserve the liberties that he won for us, and the understanding that he assiduously propagated, - that liberty and justice are for all. Without exception. But the way

for that, it seems, is not yet smooth. There are now many more wrongs than ever suffered by our peoples in this Island. How easy to divide for ever. New forces are at work among us. We should therefore, as a body politic, seek to achieve what Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam tirelessly worked for all his life to impress upon future generations - that political power is a serious responsibility.

He taught us that responsibility should be recognised as a precarious and extremely frail and perishable good, depending on a whole range of economic, social, political and cultural factors; and that the break down of a single one of them is capable of triggering off destructive chain reactions leading to large scale disintegration and corruption of the sense of responsibility. He showed us that responsibility presupposes the motivation, and the ability and the possibility to choose between alternatives. That it presupposes predictability and accountability. In a pluralistic society such as ours I would add another, sensitivity. One should be sensitive to every group's socio-economic, cultural and ethnic concerns. But if the truth be told there is a yawning gulf of suspicion, hatred and fear.

Any twinge of conscience on account of this, we would seem to soothe with offerings in the name of religion. It is a self evident the truth that you cannot hold any man in the gutter without staying there yourself. The only real help you can give is to get off his back. A whole generation of our youth has been deprived of opportunities of education and normal life during the formative years of their life. They will surely pass into adult population with irremediably stunted powers and narrowed outlooks. Will this not affect the whole quality of the national life? Deprived of all power and responsibility their capacities will be dwarfed and stunted. Forced to live in an atmosphere of inferiority, could they ever rise to the full height to which their manhood is capable of rising? Hypnotized into thinking that they are weak and inferior, no greater disaster can overtake a people. Two nations warring in the bosom of a single state – not of principles, but of race. The lesson to be learnt from the lives of great patriots like Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, is that we still can regain our self-confidence, nothing can daunt us and nothing is beyond us. I truly believe that had Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam been alive today that would be the message he would want conveyed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would conclude with the burden of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam's "A Message to the Country" delivered in 1918, which is that we must spiritualise public life by reverting to the ideals of our forefathers and establishing an aristocracy of intellect, character and self-sacrificing service.

I thank you.

# Monsoon Features

## Two Little Soldiers

For some people, life is like a constant struggle. There seems to be an unending battle to resolve conflicts within and find peace and satisfaction. Maharaji looks at this age-old problem from a new perspective. He says that peace isn't the result of resolving conflicts, but is a feeling that anyone can learn to tap into.

"On one hand, you have your responsibilities, your desires, your wants," he says. "On the other hand, you have this whole world telling you what to do. The whole world is telling you what you should wear, what you should eat, where you should be."

In our valiant efforts to meet the demands of the world, he says, we become like "good little soldiers. The world says, 'This is what you should be doing. This is how you should be.' And we say, 'Yes.'"

Inside every human being, Maharaji says, there's another soldier—"a soldier who can never die. That soldier has marched through good and through bad, through right and wrong, through snow and desert, through moun-

tains and rivers.

"Do you know who this second little soldier inside of you is? Your heart. It is that voice that has stayed with you when everything else was ready to abandon you. When everybody said, 'You are a failure,' it was there, saying 'March on. Go on.' When everybody said, 'You are a success,' it was still there, saying 'March on. Move on. Go on.'

"Maybe your quest is to become successful, but the quest of this little soldier within you is to become fulfilled."

Maharaji has been talking to audiences about fulfillment since he was a child, and began traveling internationally when he was thirteen. Since then, he has spoken to more than 10 million people around the world, offering inspiration in the search for personal satisfaction and peace. His presentations are now available in a variety of media in more than 97 countries.

"Are these two soldiers really that different?" Maharaji asks. "Are their goals really that different? Are their wishes really that

different?

"What you want from success is fulfillment. If you want to become rich, you seek to be rich because you think that will fulfill you. If you seek to have higher education, it is because you think that will fulfill you."

"So why fight when the goals are the same?"

The difference, he says, is that the first soldier says, "Go outside, and you will find fulfillment," and the second soldier says, "Go inside, and you will find fulfillment."

The dilemma for many people, Maharaji says, comes from the perception that it's necessary to choose the advice of one soldier or the other.

"People say you can't have both," he says. "I say that's not true, but understand that fulfillment on the outside is very temporary by its nature. If you paint a beautiful painting today, I can assure you somebody will paint a better one tomorrow. If you're the wealthiest person in the world today, tomorrow there will be somebody wealthier than you. If



you have 17 plaques commemorating accomplishments on your wall, tomorrow there will be somebody who will have 18."

"On the other hand, look and examine for a minute the nature of peace. Peace is when this heart is not in duality anymore—when the struggle of the two soldiers has been resolved. Then you and the feeling of fulfillment within walk hand-in-hand, not as enemies."

Maharaji offers encouragement and assistance in finding the fulfillment he talks about.

"I can put you in touch with that peace within you," he says. "You too can experience serenity in your life—and not just feel it,

**Words of Peace**

you can dance with it. You can adore it. You can embrace it. This is what is possible for each one of us."

Do whatever is necessary to find peace in your life and be content. Look for peace, find peace, and enjoy peace. If you can't, I can help. It's as simple as that.

To receive a free DVD by mail to know more about the self-paced process Maharaji offers,

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Toll Free: 1 877 707 3223

e-mail:

[wordsofpeace@sympatico.ca](mailto:wordsofpeace@sympatico.ca)

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## Until the Guns are Silent -

### A Visit to Jaffna, Sri Lanka

I set out to Jaffna recently hoping to report on the situation there. I got back yesterday but am still unable to put down anything on paper as I don't know where to start. Do I start with the little boy I met who saved his baby brother's life by scooping his intestines back into his torn belly and holding him till he was given medical attention? Or do I start with the little girl who saw a man on his knees begging for his life before having his brains blown out on the road in the middle of the morning? Or again should I start with the cousin of the Priest who was abducted, tortured and killed for daring to stand up to authority pleading for medical help for his parishioners? Or better still the wife and five children of the brave young man who shared the same plight as the priest? Or maybe I should begin with the girl whose brother went missing earlier this year and who tried in vain to get a letter across to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights? Can I begin with the plight of people in the people held in the prisons? The hundreds cramped into a tiny space with no proper sanitation facilities sharing

their living space with their 49 cell mates who have contracted chicken-pox? Or the little children who are in lock up with their mothers, unable to play in the sunshine? Or the young girl whose parents were abducted and who was assaulted by the abductors the night before she appeared for the Ordinary Level examination with a bruised and battered body? Maybe I should start with my meeting of the young soldier of the Sri Lankan army who had bought two mangoes and was eagerly waiting for his shift to change so he could go back to camp and write a letter to his family to inform them he would not be able to visit them this new year? Or the plight of the other who was beaten and imprisoned for disobedience when he refused to accept that his leave was not approved? Or the sorrow of the women who send their men to war and who are unable to even give them a decent burial because their bodies have been burnt on the battlefield to downplay the casualties? Or better still should I start with my own dismay when the Representative of the Government of Japan on Peace

Building says that he cannot interfere in the internal affairs of my country? How am I able to tell women and children that they should report instances of abuse despite their traditional belief that outsiders cannot interfere in the affairs of the family when the very person who gives aid to my country tells me he cannot leverage on his standing as a donor to see that those who receive this aid do not abuse their authority? Where do I start? How do I manage to fit in all these cases? Will I miss anyone out? Should I have taken proper notes? But how do I whip out my notepad and pen when they sit by me and cry while they relive their horror? I can't write. I can only hold their hands and cry with them...

Until the Guns are silent (Inspired by the children I met in Jaffna. Follows after the poem 'Until it Snows')

I love the quiet. I love the pure, white finish of funeral shrouds. My world is troubled and noisy. My world is dusty, dirty and very dull since the guns began to fire. It leaves me longing for the silence of death.

Until the guns are silent.



A Sri Lankan Army soldier blocked civilian traffic to clear a road for troop movements past the Nachchi Amman Temple in Jaffna, a key flashpoint in the recently-escalating conflict between the government and Tamil rebels. [Jul '07]-[Pic by J Adam Huggins Courtesy of NYTimes.com]

I long for the peace that death brings. The thought of it helps me think about peaceful things. Like the way we used to laugh and play. My world is not peaceful.

Until the guns are silent.

I loath the memories the guns bring to mind. I cannot see the joy of Christmas in the things falling from the sky. I cannot hear the songs for my crying drowns it out. I cannot see the beauty in the piling up of dead. My world needs joy and laughter. It lacks so much.

Until the guns are silent.

I see the contrast blood brings. We are bathed in it, bombarded from all sides with flashing, brilliant, sparkling lights. Black, white, brown, gray and

blood red limit us. My world is overwhelming.

Until the guns are silent.

I love the "slow" that death brings. My life is harried, rushed and moving too fast through check points and queues outside the grocery store, behind the barbed wire and the bars

Until the guns are silent.

I take nothing for granted. I have no hope of losing myself in having too many choices only want another day of life in peace. I only want not to be afraid. I only want to be able to smile. I want to know my father and mother. But I can't

Until the guns are silent.

Please help silence the guns so that these children can look forward to a normal life.

# Canadian Home Appraisals Inc. celebration on Dec 30, 2007



## Introduction of " PRIZE FIGHTER " Pop -Rock Band from Kitchener-Waterloo



Pop-Rock quintet, PRIZE FIGHTER, from Kitchener-Waterloo, the band is fronted by Zubin Thakkar, (Lead Vocals, Lead Guitar, Lyrics, Compositions) a 24 year old, South Asian Systems Design Engineer from University of Waterloo. Another member of the band, George Carothers (Vocals and Guitar) is also of South Asian descent.

The band has been together since 2003 and are gaining a quite a bit of mainstream and industry exposure. They have played alongside many of Canada's hottest musical acts including Jully Black, Hedley, Kalan Porter, The Trews and more. Recently, they've had one of their songs, 'Hold on Tight', in heavy rotation on a major radio station which services the Tri-Cities, Hamilton, London and parts of the GTA; 91.5 The Beat FM radio (Chorus Entertainment). In addition they've also been featured on 102.1 The Edge's New Music Night at The Horseshoe Tavern - to a packed house. All impressive feats for a band that is 100% independently managed and financed.

In a musical genre where South Asians have had little success in the past, I feel that it is very important to support Prize Fighter by showcasing them to our community.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Hit Single "Hold on Tight" charted in the top 3 on Chorus Radio's 91.5 The Beat
- Independent CD sales of 2000+ units
- Albums available at HMV, iTunes, amazon.com, futureshop.ca, puretracks.com

### UPCOMING SHOWS IN THE GTA:

- February 23rd @ The Hardrock Cafe -Toronto
- March 15th @ Chicopee Ski Resort - Kitchener
- March 27th @ The Rivoli -Toronto
- March 29th @ The Opera House -Toronto
- April 4th @ The Underground - Hamilton
- April 5th @ The Lost Lounge - Mississauga

Report by: Nidhi Thakkar

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# Waterloo News



## Blessing of the Cow during Pongal celebrations

Thai Pongal is celebrated on the first day of the month Thai of the Tamil calendar. The day normally falls between 12th and 15th of the month of January. Thus, Thai is the first month of the Tamil Almanac, and Pongal is a dish of sweet rice. This festival is celebrated by one and all as it is non-relevance to any particular religious faith. The whole Tamil population of the world celebrate it without any differences. Therefore it is widely known as "Tamil Thai Pongal" or the "Festival of the Tamils".

The Tamil festival of Thai Pongal is a thanks giving ceremony in which the farmers celebrate the event to thank the spirits of nature spirit, the Sun and the farm animals for their assistance in providing a successful harvest. The rest of the people celebrate the festival to pay their thanks to the farmers for the production of food. Overall, it is a festival to

encourage social cohesiveness and unite people by bringing them together in a common function.

The Tamil Cultural association of Waterloo Region in keeping with Tamil tradition organised a Mattu Pongal ( Blessing of the Cow ) at Meadow Lee Farms, Roseville in Cambridge on Saturday, January 19th. The third day of Pongal is dedicated to cattle and is called Mattu Pongal. People offer prayers to the bulls, cows and other farm animals. Cows give nourishing milk while bulls and oxen help plough the fields.

The cow was washed by the farmer Paul Perrin and the secretary, Rajivi Nadarajah decorated it with Multi-colored beads, tinkling bells, sheaves of corn and flower garlands are tied around their necks. Indra Logendran, Ramya Dennis and kugan decorated the barn with flowers and Palm leaf.

Ramya and Rajivi drew "Kolams" (Rangoli) marks in front with rice flour paste. The idea is that ants and insects would feed on it and bless the house. Candles were lit in middle of the Kolam. Dharini Sivakumar lit the traditional oil lamp

With Nateshwarem Music, the pongal (sweet rice) boiled during the auspouse time and members made offerings to God. The cow was blessing pooja was conducted by Ganga Athithan and Indra Logendran. Selvan. Vasu Nadarajah fed the cow with pongal and bannana. On completing the ceremony, the members go together for a feast at Roseville Mennonite Church. It was organised by the Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region. It represents the Tamil community of Waterloo Region and City of Guelph. CTV Southwestern TV station offered news coverage and support to the community.



Mrs. Rajivi Nadarajah, the secretary of TCAWR decorates the cow



Dennis and Ramya Loyola, the newly married couple offering sugar



Farmer with the Decorated cow



Mr. Bala Thambypillai, the Treasurer offering the first rice



Tamil community members



Children taking the cow around the pot of pongal during the pooja celebrations

# Waterloo News



## TAMIL CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF WATERLOO REGION

Dear Members and Friends  
Re: "Project Hope" – Fund raising for the Nursery School and IDP facility in Sri Lanka.

Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region (TCAWR) is a not for profit community organization representing the Tamil community in the Waterloo Region and City of Guelph since 1989.

As part of the mandate, the association's global relief fund helps local community as well as helps elevate poverty among the citizens of India and Sri Lanka . Locally, we have taken part in Soup Kitchen for the Homeless at St. John's Church , Kitchener and Operation Christmas Child programs. The Global relief fund has contributed generously during the past few years.

Sri Lanka Shipped cloths to a children's Orphanage in Nunavil, Jaffna .

India Donated Ind. Rs. 25,000 to a Fire victim in Trichy, South India .

TCAWR also helped the Canadian Red Cross to raise \$ 120,000 during Tsunami disaster.

This year, "Project hope", is raising funds for the construction and maintenance of the Nursery school in Batticaloa , Sri Lanka operated by Sri Ramakrishna Mission, a leading NGO in Sri Lanka . The Mission operates 3 children's Orphanages, 3 Nursery schools, Family Health care centre and a refugee shelter (IDP) for internally displaced people. The children are mostly displaced during civil disturbance and Tsunami.

The nursery school lags behind in necessary amenities and equipments. Every time, the nursery hall is needed for an event or as refugee camp the school suffers. Valuable equipments belonging to the school cannot to be stored properly.

IDP facility – It is a tale of shock and grief; crossing swollen rivers, plodding through jungle terrain for days, running through crossfire....; some on foot, others on tractors, leave their homes and head towards the refugee camps. But their harrowing journey does not stop there. There are still many struggles ahead. Refugee sites are hosting people at twice

their actual capacity; the district is facing a potential food shortage, and many families have been separated in flight. These camps find it hard to cope with the demands of shelter, food and sanitation, created by the huge influx of displaced people.

Most refugees are living in open areas, where rows of tents stretch into the distance. Men and women, who do not know each other, are forced to live in the same hut, with least privacy for women. It is hard to imagine the psychological impact of living in a tent, scorching during the day and shivering in the night. Some camps have few common toilets but sometimes it is open air toilets in the bushes that they have to use.

In the wake of a humanitarian crisis with thousands of displaced people on the move, the Tamil Community of Waterloo Region seeks your help to raise donations. We are looking forward for cash donation from the community. Any amount is welcome. All proceeds will be provided with an official receipt. Our goal is to reach a sum of \$2000 and proceeds will be handed over to Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Kallady, Uppodai, Batticaloa.

We are also planning a massive garage sale in early spring in the Beachwood Forest Area, Kitchener to raise awareness of our project and to raise funds. We encourage community members to spread the message and to help us in raising funds.

Please send your cheque in favour of Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region, P.O. Box 25068, Kitchener , Ontario, N2A-4A5. Your compassion today will mean a tomorrow for these vulnerable victims. Together we can make a difference and relieve human suffering.

Please, contact the association by e-mail mail@tamilculturewaterloo.org for further information.

Thank you and soliciting your kind cooperation.

Mr. S. S. Kumar

President - TCAWR

" Love cures people – both the one who gives it and the one who receives it."

Tamils fight pull of Toronto

## Harvest celebration part of effort to get local community growing

GREG MERCER  
RECORD STAFF

The middle of a cold Canadian January might seem like an odd time to celebrate the harvest, at first glance. But two oceans away, on the island of Sri Lanka, millions of Tamils are doing just that, reaping the rewards of their rice-growing season. If you'd walked into a borrowed Lutheran church in Waterloo yesterday afternoon, you would have found dozens of Tamil immigrants doing the same -- giving thanks with songs, poems, music and sweet rice pudding.

Thai Pongal, the Tamil equivalent of Canadian Thanksgiving, drew them here, but so did something else.

For those gathered, the celebration also doubled as a community revival of sorts. Here, while inside the church, the children dressed in bright gowns and were told to speak only in their parents' tongue -- a feat in itself for a generation surrounded everywhere by English.

"We need to have these sort of ceremonies so we can explain to our children what this is, why we are doing this," said Kuna

Kunasekaran, an electrical engineer. "We want them to have the feeling that they are Tamils, and there are other Tamils here. We are creating an environment. . . . But it is hard, it is not easy."

Waterloo Region's Tamils, about 80 families strong, have long struggled to grow their community in the shadow of Toronto's larger cultural draw. Many families head there each weekend to be with relatives, and because of Toronto's temples, cultural centres and grocery stores that they know so well, said Sivendiran Mailvaganam. "That is a problem," he said. "When we get together here, it is always the same 10 families that come."

The local community also recently lost its weekend Tamil language class in Guelph because not enough students were showing up to meet the program's quota. So lacking a common, local forum to celebrate Tamil culture, some families created their own. This fledgling group tries to teach the children of immigrants about the language, customs and culture of a place many of the kids have only visited as tourists. The children are curious about Sri

Lanka, even if they're wary of life there -- like the government checkpoints they must pass through on rare visits with their parents, Mailvaganam said.

Sri Lanka is of course still dealing with a civil war that has lasted more than two decades and killed 70,000 people. "It feels like their parents' home," Mailvaganam said. "They do not want to live there. They want to live here." But the parents here want their kids to know there's more to their cultural homeland than what they see on the news, or watch in movies. So Mailvaganam and others see traditional ceremonies like Thai Pongal as a way to start growing the feeling that Tamil culture is alive in Waterloo Region. With, of course, a few subtle differences from the homeland. In Sri Lanka, they cook the sweet rice and milk mixture for Thai Pongal in their front yards, over wood fires.

"In Canada, doing that in front of your house in January, that is not possible," said Kunasekaran, chuckling.

[gmercerc@therecord.com](mailto:gmercerc@therecord.com)

### give a child a gift of hope

By supporting the "Project Hope" appeal and pledging a small amount you could give a child a new hope in Sri Lanka.

### PROJECT HOPE

Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

Fund raising for Nursery school Building & IDP facility  
Batticaloa, Sri Lanka - Operated by Sri Ramakrishna Mission

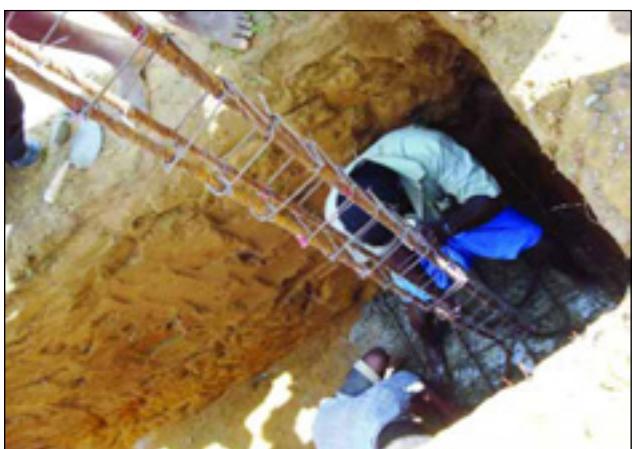


Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region  
Ontario, Canada

visit:  
[www.tamilculturewaterloo.org](http://www.tamilculturewaterloo.org)

# Canada Village in Muzhangavil

These are the photos and info about the "Canada Village" being built in Muzhangavil, Mannar. The total project cost is \$ 625,000. So far the raised amount is \$400,000 (Since July 2007) by conducting several nivarana shows



## INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY 2008 CELEBRATIONS IN CANADA

On the occasion of 59th Republic Day of India, a flag-hoisting ceremony was organized on 26th January at 1000 hours in the Chancery premises. H.E. Mr R.L. Narayan, High Commissioner of India hoisted the National Flag, which was followed by the playing of Indian National Anthem. The High Commissioner then read the President's message to the participating guests, numbering over 150, who included NRIs / Indo-Canadians and friends of India.

The High Commissioner also gave an overview of impressive growth of the Indian economy and upswing in the India-Canada relations during the last year. He mentioned that Prime Minister Mr. Stephen Harper for the first time met the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in November 2007 in Kampala on the side lines of Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting; Mr. Maxime Bernier, Minister for Foreign Affairs also met his counterpart Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Minister for External Affairs twice - first in New York on the sidelines of UNGA meetings in

2007 and during his visit to India on 11-12 January 2008. He mentioned that there have also been other Ministerial exchange of visits between the two countries, and highlighted the increase in the bilateral trade, investment, scientific and educational linkages.

India-Canada Association also celebrated the Republic Day 2008 in the afternoon of 26th January 2008 with High Commissioner as the Chief Guest. The function, inter alia, was attended by His Worship Larry O'Brien, Mayor of City of Ottawa, Mr. Phil McNeely, Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) and a cross-section of the Indian community. In his address, the High Commissioner highlighted the significance of the Republic Day and appreciated the role of approximately one million strong Indian community in Canada in enhancing Indo-Canadian relations. Congratulating the Indo-Canadian community on the occasion, His Worship Larry O'Brien assured that the City of Ottawa would identify a suitable prime location for the proposed installation of Mahatma

Gandhi's bust in Ottawa. Mr. Phil McNeely, Member of the Provincial Parliament, who delivered a congratulatory message from Mr. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, also promised to follow-up the matter with the Premier to ensure speedy installation of Mahatma Gandhi's bust in Ottawa. A cultural programme with participation, among others, from the children/teachers of the Mukul Hindi School was very much appreciated by the audience.

The Government of India has conferred Padma Shri Award to Prof. Joseph J. Hulse for his distinguished service in the field of science and engineering. The Padma Shri Award is one of the highest civilian honors in India. The Awards are awarded annually on the eve of India's Republic Day on 26th January. There will be an Investiture Ceremony at a future date, where a medal and citation will be presented by the President of India. The date and time of the Ceremony will be announced in due course.



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# Monsoon Photo Journal



**"Mind of the flower is the deed, that honey in the heart is our creed"**



A variety of shoe flower [Hibiscus rosa-sinensis] in Habarana. This particular shoe flower hangs down from the tree



Flower arrangement of red Anthuriums at the main entrance of the Queens hotel in Kandy



Dark Pink single petal shoe flower in Kanagambigakulam in Kilinochchi



Flower offerings at on a full moon day at the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi in Anuradhapura



Flower pond with Neelambari at Sri Ponnambalamaweswarar Devasthanam in Colombo 13



Purple Lilly in a pond in Waikkal- North Western Province



Red Rose, in Ramboda



In Jaffna -Ponnuchi, Flower used in offerings to god, garland making



Lotus flowers for worshipping at Sri Venkadeswara Maha Vishnu temple in Nedimala-Dehiwala



Multi petal red shoe flower in Stanley road,Jaffna



Pink shoe flower and bud in Uswetakiyawa



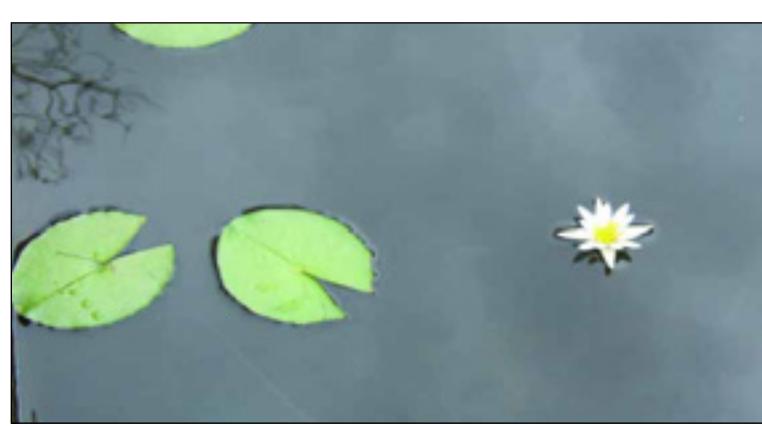
Pomegranate flower in Puttalam



Shoe flower in Bambalapity



This flower is called Sivalingam or Nagalingam in Tamil. Its believed that the flower looks like a Sivalingam in the middle while some believe it looks like a Nagalingam Cobra



White lily in Vakarai

Valentine's Day, February 14th - Humanity's day to love, inspire and cherish life. A day to reinforce that everyone "wants the mind of the flower is the deed, that honey in the heart is our creed"

**Happy Valentine's Day.**

And here are a variety flowers, from many parts of Sri Lanka, speaking the language of love wherever they are, every day.

by Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai

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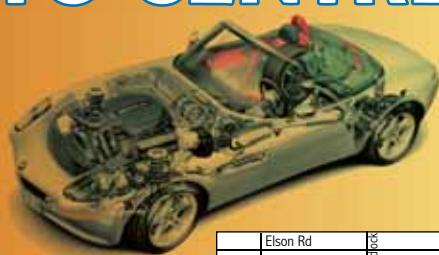
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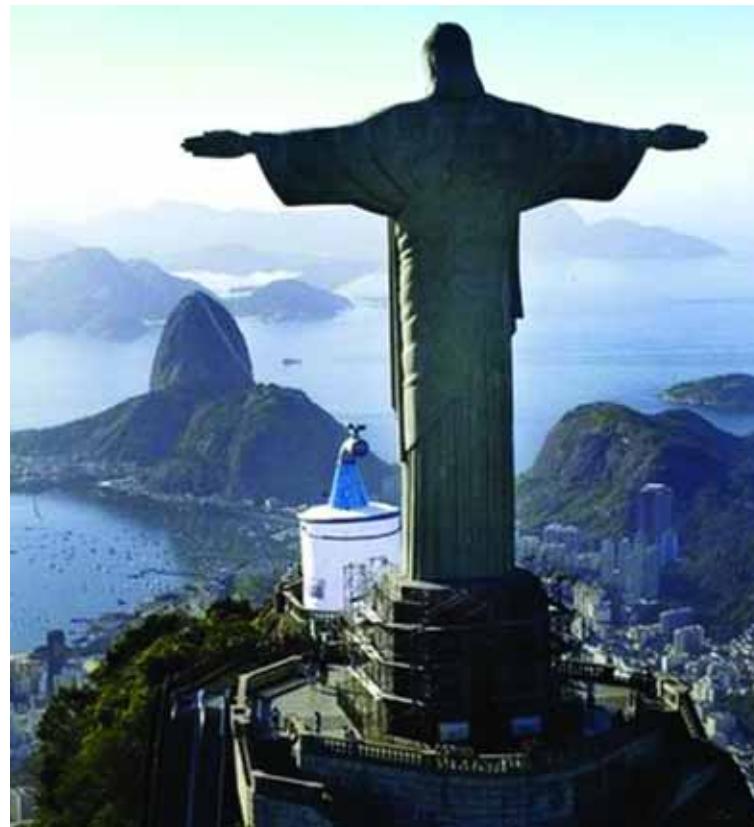
1570, Midland Ave. Unit 12, Scarborough, ON, M1P 3C3

# Monsoon Food Court



## BRASILIAN CUSINE

Brazilian cooking history and cultural background explains the main styles and aliments found in today's Brazilian cuisine. One of the first aliments that were consumed in this country is the corn or the corn porridge, which was developed by the Native Indians, who also brought the cassava meals, sweet potatoes dishes and fish cooking styles. In older times, all meat dishes were smoked and dried before eating. When Portuguese colonized Brazil in the 16th century, coffee, pastries and dried fruit began to be a part of the Brazilian diet. Nowadays, the Brazilian diet includes some elementary aliments, which are constantly found in the authentic Brazilian recipes: beans, coconut, dendé oil, codfish, rice, lemon, shrimp and manioc. Beans, locally called feijao, are found in a wide spectrum of colors and forms: black, brown, pink beans, chick peas and black-eyed peas. Coconut is used in numerous soups, poultices, fish meals and desserts. Dendi oil is a tropical extract of palm and colors the foods in an orange color. The codfish and the shrimp are usually consumed dried in appetizers, main courses and even puddings. The Brazilian style rice is flavored with garlic and black olives or tomatoes and most of the times



served as sautéed. Lemon is found in Brazil as green, very small and tart and the manioc is usually sautéed in butter and served toasted.

The Brazilian cuisine is equally exotic and diverse as their culture. Despite being influenced by the South American and European cuisines alike, the Brazilian diet has managed to develop unique dishes and com-

pletely new cooking styles. Because of the size of the country and the diversity in climate, terrain and resources, several cuisines developed in different regions of Brazil.

Caruru do Par is a dish that is popular among the Brazilians from the North, although it's starting to spread in other parts of the country. This dish is a combination of dried shrimp, okra,



Onion, tomato, cilantro, and dendé oil. Seafood and shellfish is also very popular with the north-eastern coastal regions of Brazil.

The Central and Central-Western regions have a diet that's mainly based on fish from the important rivers and Beef and Pork from the vast ranches, along with the bounty harvested from the agricultural crops of manioc, corn, rice, and Soybean.

The south and southeastern region, is Brazil's industrial heart and is home to some of the most exotic food recipes in the country's cuisine. Feijoada Completa is one of these dishes and is the very popular in the region's two big cities, Rio and São Paulo. The Feijoada Completa is a dish containing simmered beans and meat, although it can also contain rice, corn or ripened cheeses. Another tasty delicacy from these regions is the cowboy, a sun dried meat grilled on wood fire or prepared as a barbecue.

The Brazilian chefs mainly use fish and other seafood, rice and beans, and several specific condiments to prepare typical dishes.

The national dish however, is the feijoada, a mixture of black beans, Pork, and manioc meal. Among the most used ingredients for a traditional Brazilian dish, the cooks use beans, which are probably the most representative aliments. Other elements include dried shrimp, dried, salted codfish, coconut flakes or coconut milk, dendé oil, rice, toasted manioc meal and lemon. The coastal chefs are specialized in seafood and fish dishes: shrimp and okra entree, shrimp stew, Bahian style, seafood frittata, shrimp stroganoff. Beef is used especially for the roast loin of Pork accompanied by toasted manioc. All these meals require high knowledge, skills and creativity, but also precision, qualities owned by the Brazilian cooks and famous chefs.

### Feijoada



2 lb. black beans  
2 lb. smoked ham hocks  
2 lb. Mexican chorizo,  
1 lb. Chunk of lean Canadian bacon  
1 lb. Smoked pork or beef ribs  
8 strips of smoked bacon  
1 lb. lean pork  
1 lb. lean beef  
3 large onion  
8 garlic cloves  
4 tablespoons of olive or vegetable oil  
3 tablespoon vinegar  
Salt to taste  
Black pepperhot sauce (optional)

Soak black beans overnight in large container. Next morning, cook beans for 4-5 hours at low heat. Place ham hocks, chorizo, ribs and Canadian bacon in deep pan with plenty of water and bring to a boil. Change water and bring to a new

boil, repeating the procedure at least three times to tenderize cured meats and remove excess fat. In a large frying pan sauté, onion and garlic using either vegetable or olive oil (smoked bacon strips optional) for two or three minutes. Toss in cubed pork and beef. Sauté, an additional two-three minutes.

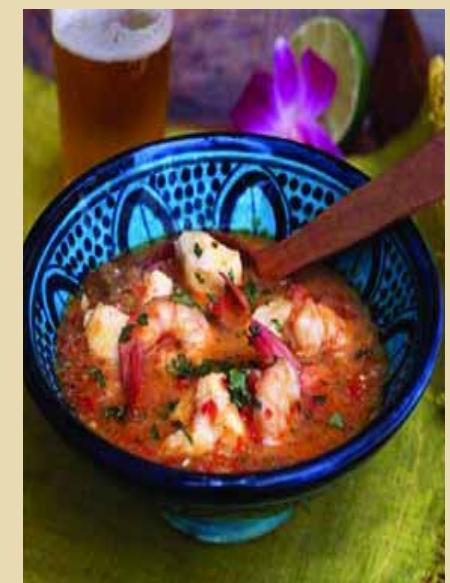
Mash 15 to 20 tablespoons of beans and add to large pot. The resulting paste will thicken sauce. Add two tablespoons of olive oil, three garlic cloves all chopped-up or mashed, along with a tablespoon of white vinegar and a teaspoon of red-hot pepper. Stir, heat over medium fire for two-three minutes, and then transfer to contents of frying pan. Let simmer for 10-15 minutes. Add contents of frying pan(s) to the beans and let boil at medium heat for 1-2 hours. Served over rice.

### Brasilian Fish Stew

2 onion, sliced  
3 garlic clove, sliced  
4 hot chili peppers, seeded and sliced  
2 bay leaf  
3 tsp olive oil  
4 cups water  
2 pound fish steaks or chunks with skin and bones  
3 pound shrimps, shelled and deveined  
1/2 cup Balanced almonds or peanuts, roasted and ground  
1/2 pound dried shrimps, shelled, toasted and ground  
7 cups thin coconut milk  
salt  
Rice flour  
1 cup coconut cream or evaporated milk  
4 tablespoons cornstarch

Sauté onion, garlic, peppers and bay leaf in 1 tablespoons oil.

Add the water, fish, and shrimps. Simmer for 15 minutes or until done. Remove skin and bones, break up fish and shrimps, and strain broth. Simmer ground nuts and dried shrimps in coconut milk for 15 minutes. Strain. Add the fish broth and salt to taste. Bring to boil, and add manioc to make a fairly thick mush. Cook for 30minutes, stirring frequently. Add fish, shrimps and 2 tablespoons oil.

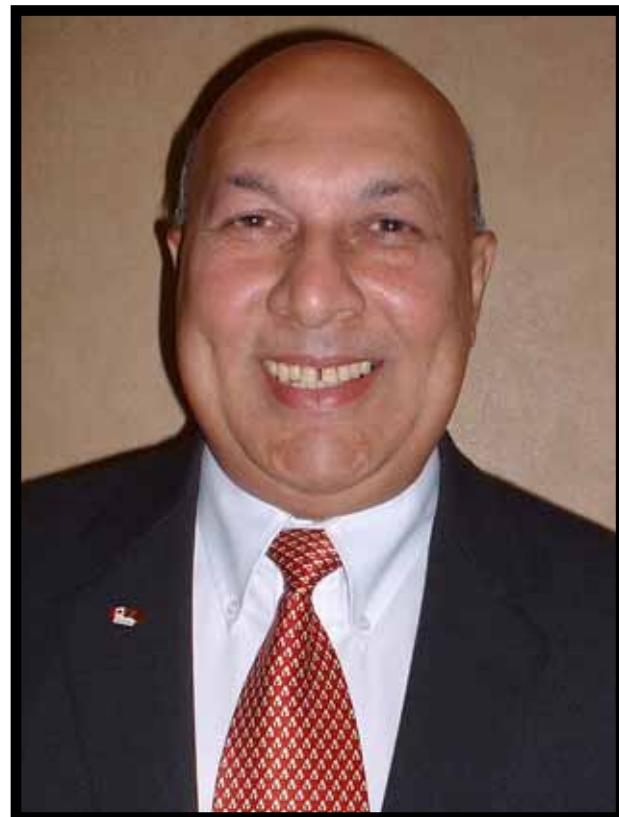


Serve hot with a slice of cold pudding made by thickening the coconut cream with corn starch, adding more salt to taste, and putting aside to cool. Served over rice.

by Chef Nate  
[chef@monsoonjournal.com](mailto:chef@monsoonjournal.com)

## OBITUARY

# Trico Nirantha De Silva passes away



"Now racks a noble heart.  
Good-night sweet Prince. And flights of Angels will sing thee to thy rest"....

It is unbelievable!

He talks and jokes with his friends the previous afternoon and night about his recent trip to Sri Lanka. The morning after, he goes for a short sleep and never wakes again.

Nirantha De Silva passed away suddenly this week amidst a shock to all including his family. The chubby faced portly figure who had a sweet smile to everyone who came his way is no more. Nirantha was one of those few persons who could be seen at almost every community event. He was always a giver and not a taker. He never had a negative reply whenever anyone or an organization approached him for assistance. Help was in his daily vocabulary.

Nirantha had a lucrative employment career back home in Sri Lanka working for the prestigious Automobile Dealers-Car Mart. His colleague and friend Paalitha Wijesekera once told me that Nirantha was always a friend in need and a friend indeed to all his co-workers and colleagues. His outspoken mentality and warm friendship always earned him a wide circle of friends. He left Sri Lanka for the Middle East to take up employment as General Manager of a leading Trading and Property Development Company in UAE. Having been in the Middle East for a period of time, he migrated to Canada. In Canada, he established a Freight Forwarding Company –Trico International Inc. which was soon to become a leading freight forwarder serving the Sri Lankan community. It was a boon to the thousands of Sri Lankans who wanted to send gift parcels to their loved ones back home.

Apart from his Business, Nirantha was involved in community events and activities. At the time of his death, he was holding the post of Vice-President of the Canada Sri Lanka Business Council looking after Finance and Operations. He was also responsible for the successful Awards function of the Council held in 2006.

Nirantha was also an active member of the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce.

Nirantha leaves behind his ever-loving wife Dawn and two beloved sons Hillary and Harsha. He was fifty-nine years of age when he was laid to rest.

- Siva Sivapragasam

*Condolence from Monsoon Journal*

# Monsoon Appreciations

## Remembering the legacy of Ms. Nahammal Kasipillai

The 3rd Annual Nahammal Kasipillai Memorial Oration was delivered on January 16th 2008 at Sivananda Nilayam, Saiva Mangaiyar Kazhagam, Wellawatte.

Deshabandu Nahammal Kasipillai, as Principal dedicated over thirty years in building up one of the finest institutions of learning in Sri Lanka today. She passed away on 8th of December 2005.

The educator is remembered for many of her contributions to learning that span over generations of students, parents and teachers and leaving behind a legacy that is praised of embodying "a purity of purpose, a perseverance of effort, and a passion for service".

The event was chaired by Retired Supreme Court Judge C.V.Wigeswaran and the Memorial oration was delivered by Ms. Sivanandini Duraiswamy.

Aaranie Karthikeyan, recalled the lifelong teacher and matriarch's sound guidance to all those to sought it, in her vote of thanks at the Memorial Oration.

**Full Text of Vote of thanks, delivered by Aaranie Karthikeyan:**

Chairperson Justice C.V. Wigeswaran, Keynote speaker Mrs Sivanandini Duraiswamy, The Principal, Staff and students of Siva Mangaiyar Vidyalayam, President of The Past Pupils Association Ms Sarojini Kanendran, committee members, members of the Alumni and past students, Uncle Thilakan, family members, relatives, friends and well wishers of late Miss.Nahammal Kasipillai.

Good evening,

It is an honour and privilege as a grand niece of Late Ms Kasipillai whom we fondly called Kasi granny/ or Periyamma to propose the vote of thanks today. Before I set I about the task of expressing our sincere thanks to those organising this evening's memorial lecture, I ask that you indulge me in recounting a few cherished memories I have of her.

I would like to quote a particular verse from the Thirukkural Chapter 45 "Periyaarai Thunai

Kodal".

It translates to "it will be the rarest of rare good fortunes if though can secure to thyself the kinship of a worthy person".

Accordingly from a tender age I was always conscious of the rare privilege that was bestowed upon me in the form of Periyamma's close guidance, love and friendship. Her life long commitment to the empowerment of women was apparent to me both in her conversations and the countless per-

**by Dushyanthini Kanagasabapathyillai**

wrote for my Grade 8 Tamil class on the 15th July 2001 titled 'Naan Virumbiya Periyaar'. I don't wish to bore you with the entire contents of the essay, but just an excerpt demonstrating my admiration and appreciation of her personality at that age.

At 13 years of age, these words were a tribute to her virtues of discipline, ethics, and uncompromising stance on perse-

memorial lecture on her 92nd Birthday anniversary today.

I'd like to thank Justice Wigneswaran for chairing today's proceedings. Your thought provoking words on the role of women through South Asian history, and the transition from a community based identity to an individual rights based identity, is a topic that dominates much of the contemporary global discourse on human rights regime.

I'd like to thank Ms. Sivanandini Duraiswamy for her keynote speech. Your keynote address on the multiple roles played by Hindu women from ancient times to date, their potential and capacity which had been given a pride of place in Hinduism, conferring a dignity, respect and freedom for women, the reasons that have led to the deterioration of their status and the need for women to become agents of change-aid us to challenge the status quo, empower ourselves and to chalk out new course based on Hindu values.

You have very succinctly stated how these obstacles could be overcome by the adoption and practice of Hindu values, UN declarations on women and principles of good governance by individuals, society, state and the international community. These words are a personification of the values and principles Ms Kasipillai stood for. You can be assured that your words were reaffirming to most of us here today, of our inherent capabilities and capacities to combat the challenges of our day-to-day lives.

Thank you Mrs Sarojini Kanendran for your welcoming words and nostalgic memories of Ms Kasipillai's time as your teacher and principal.

I'd also like to express our sincere gratitude to Saiva Mangaiyar Kazhagam, the Principal and her staff, Mrs.Sivanandini Duraiswamy, and the Past Pupils Association lead by Sarojini Kanendran and her team who were instrumental in undertaking the necessary arrangements to



[Ms. Nahammal Kasipillai Served as Principal of Saiva Mangaiyar Kazhagam 1937 to 1969, National leader Transcendental meditation-1975 to 1995 and she was honoured with Deshabandu award from President of Sri Lanka, in 1993]

make this event a memorable and successful one.

And last, but not least we appreciate the presence of all those who have participated in today's memorial lecture, despite their heavy daily schedules, particularly during times of great uncertainty and concern due to the prevailing security situation in the country.

I'd like to conclude with a few words from Swami Vivekananda on servant leadership, which I believe articulate, the essence of Ms Kassipillai's legacy.

"One must be a servant of servants and must accommodate a thousand minds. There must not be a shade of jealousy or selfishness, then you are a leader".

Miss. Kassipillai embodied all these and more in her life's work-a purity of purpose, a perseverance of effort, and a passion for service. She was a shining example for every one of us striving to find real value in life. May her blessings be with us.

[Ms. Nahammal Kasipillai Served as Principal of Saiva Mangaiyar Kazhagam 1937 to 1969, National leader Transcendental meditation-1975 to 1995 and she was honoured with Deshabandu award from President of Sri Lanka, in 1993]



[Portrait of Ms. Nahammal Kasipillai, at Sivananda Nilayam, on Jan 16, 2008]

sons who would visit her at her Vivekananda road residence for personal advice, and reassurance. A sound listener in her role as counsellor, she provided non-judgmental and sound guidance to all those to sought it. As a mentor to many, she was quick to identify the talents and capacities of all those who came before her, always encouraging of efforts demonstrating discipline, perseverance and hard work.

She would often quote to me Poet Bharathiyan's words on the role of women in society.

My awe and respect for her life's work took form in an essay I

verance, hard work and honest intention. I am indeed very fortunate to have enjoyed the privilege and benefit of being a member of Ms Kasipillai's intergenerational family. It has enabled me to appreciate and hopefully embody the maturity, wisdom and experience demonstrated by Miss. Kasipillai with regard to the essence of life.

At this juncture I believe it appropriate to express our sincere thanks on behalf of the Kasipillai family to the following persons, who have enabled us to commemorate Miss. Nahammal Kasipillai, by organising this

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# Monsoon Appreciations

## Mrs. Rajaluxmy Sabanayagam:

Pioneering Teacher of English Language at Chavakachcheri Hindu College

A Tribute marking the first anniversary of the passing away of Mrs. Rajaluxmy Sabanayagam, Teacher of English Language at Chavakachcheri Hindu College (CHC), a reputed school in Northern Sri Lanka:

"To me Mrs. Rajaluxmy Sabanayagam was my neighbor in my village Sangaththanai, my first English Teacher at Chavakachcheri Hindu College and above all my last link to my ancestral village Kalvayal where she was married to a cousin of my mother. There were many stories about the village and its people which I have missed after venturing out about half a century ago. Like an exiled prisoner, I used to listen to those stories since she arrived in Vancouver in 1994. To me she was an encyclopedia of my ancestral village- those stories going back 50 to 100 years. Now those stories are no more. Today in this final hour or in this final farewell,

**By V.S.Pillai, B.Sc. (Eng.), M.A.Sc., MICE, P.Eng.**

she lived in her paternal home at Sangaththanai, another village about 3 km from Kalvayal. She lived next to Chavakachcheri Hindu College (CHC) and was associated with CHC for more than half a century, first as a student and then as a teacher. She was a teacher for nearly 40 years, teaching students from all over Sarasalai, Madduvil, Nunavil, Mirusivil, Kodikamam, Meesalai and Chavakachcheri- thousands of them, students from two generations.

I believe I was the first badge of students she taught- her first year of teaching... The year was

bets- always upside down. In response to the teacher's beatings, what I did was to empty my piggy bank at home. On my way to the school, I drop a penny into the till of the Vairava Temple next to the school and pray for the teacher to fall sick and not show up in the class. Invariably, it worked!. I could have been a drop-out in Grade-2!

So finally in Grade-3, it was 1950, a young teacher called Ms Rajaluxmy arrived. She carried no cane or ruler and was not scary. She started teaching English alphabets, she wrote them with clear formation on the blackboard explaining it in a gentle voice. I was fascinated by the new alphabets, a new language and I memorized every bit of it. From then on, I took off like a rocket- no more backbenches and no more visits to the Virava Temple.

Ten years later-1960- I was in the First Year Engineering at the University of Ceylon; another 10 years later-1970-I was at the University of Waterloo, Ontario. Ten years later-1980- I was at BC Hydro in Vancouver, an enviable position-it was a smooth long trajectory. When I look back, it was a lucky winning streak and it was partly prompted by a gentle teacher in Grade-3. Let me thank you for that in this farewell. I mentioned this story of my Grade-1 debacle in an article in the CHC centenary magazine published by the London Group in 2004.

By dedicating to teaching at the same school for almost a half a century, she became half the story of CHC. In the front portico wall of CHC, there was a simple motto with a single word-GOOD- in big letters standing out- Be Good, See Good and Do Good. All her life she lived by that simple motto-Being Good, Seeing Good and Doing Good, earning good virtues and good karma. In return she was blessed with a great family of two girls and six boys, many grand children, many nephews and nieces. Most of them are here today in this final farewell.

Together, with all her friends present here, let us pay the final tributes and pray for her soul rest in peace in heaven. Vanakkam"

Excerpted from an Eulogy rendered by Mr. V.S. Pillai on Feb 27th, 2007

V.Sithamparapillai  
B.Sc. (Eng.), M.A.Sc., MICE, P.Eng.  
772 W.66th Avenue,  
Vancouver, BC, V6P2R5,  
Phone: (604) 324-3609



Mrs. Rajaluxmy Sabanayagam (Aug 24, 1929 - Feb 20, 2007)

let me share a story or two with her.

Many people may not know Kalvayal is a unique village and has a long history going back to about 800 years. People in Kalvayal are strong orthodox Saivites, conservatives and vegetarians. There were too many temples and too many rituals. It is a place everyone is related to everybody else. But often there are quarrels mostly on temple issues. Also there can be minor issues, as well when a mango tree leans over the other man's fence. Parties quarrel and parties would not talk for years.

Although Mrs. Sabanayagam was married to a Kalvayal man,

1950, I managed to get to the back benches of Grade-3 after struggling in Grade-1 and Grade-2 where the teachers carried a 3-ft cane and they were very scary to a young mind. I was writing the Tamil alphabets upside down and I was beaten often. So in Grade-1, I used to cut the class and hide in the Boarding Dining hall (behind Veluppillai's kitchen). But I always showed up for the free lunch-rice and sambar- which was mandated by the government in those days.

In Grade-2, there was a lady teacher who had a sharp ruler and she often beat us on the finger knuckles. None of those made me understand the Tamil alpha-

## Prof. R.S. Thanabalasundaram, A teacher and doctor of commitment and compassion

By S. Ratnapragasam  
Colombo 6, Sri Lanka

I wish to pay a tribute to the memory of Prof. R.S. Thanabalasundaram who passed away on November 15, 2007 at 85 years of age. He was born into a Hindu religious family in Kokuvil, Jaffna on July 16, 1922. His father, R. Selliah, was an Apothecary from Kantharmadam and his mother, Ponnarium hailed from Kokuvil.

Thanabalasundaram had his early education at Kokuvil Hindu English school, the predecessor of Kokuvil Hindu College. His excellent performance in his studies earned the praise of his teachers. Offering English, Mathematics and Natural Science as subjects he passed the special Government University Scholarship examination and proceeded to an English university. Often he was cited as a role model in school by the teachers. He had a brother and six sisters, three of whom are doctors themselves. Perhaps medicine was in their genes.

Following the tradition of his parents, he was an ardent devotee of Veeramakali Amman reigning in Nallur, Jaffna. Like his father before him, the sixth day festival held annually at this temple had regularly been conducted in his name, though he lived in Colombo. When his mother passed away in Kokuvil during the IPKF occupation of Jaffna, he made a big donation to the Maanchavanapathy Temple in Kokuvil. He was thus keen on maintaining his roots in Jaffna.

Dr. Thanabalasundaram had an excellent record in both university and the post-graduate studies and qualified as an M.D. MRCP (Lond). He returned to Sri Lanka in the 1940s and served as consultant physician in the General Hospitals in Jaffna and Colombo. In June 1956 he married Pamathy, daughter of Sivagnanasundaram, a retired district judge from Puloly, Point Pedro.

Pamathy was herself a brilliant scholar. With a First Class Honours in Sanskrit and a Masters Degree, she taught at Ladies' College, Colombo and was also a visiting lecturer in Sanskrit at Aquinas, Colombo. She appreciated the culture, civilisation and philosophy

enshrined in Sanskrit texts. She was most charming and a good musician. Her compassionate, hospitable and loving ways endeared her to everyone and won the respect of all who knew her.

She pre-deceased her husband in January 1978 leaving behind three children, Suchetha, Surangala and Sudharman. She brought them up with great love and devotion to make them the perfect children they are.

When in 1958 Principal S.H. Perinbanayagam approached Dr. Thanabalasundaram for a donation to the Kokuvil Hindu College Building Fund he volunteered with a substantial cash payment. The college in turn, honoured Prof. R. S. Thanabalasundaram and his wife Pamathy as chief guests at the school's annual prize giving held in 1965. As a token of his gratitude to his school he had deposited Rs. 50,000 with the University of Jaffna then to enable them to provide a scholarship annually to a student entering the university from Kokuvil Hindu College. Not so tall but fair and handsome Dr. Thanabalasundaram had a genial and charismatic personality. For well over 10 years from 1985, he served as professor of medicine at the North Colombo Medical College.

His brilliant clinical acumen and the fine method of imparting his knowledge of medicine earned the respect and love of his students in Sri Lanka and others scattered worldwide.

Dr. Thanabalasundaram had been in active practice for well over 60 years till the end. My wife and I had been his patients for well over 30 years and we are grateful to him for helping us maintain our health this long. His meritorious service to the nation was recognised by the president of Sri Lanka with the award of the national honour of Deshabandu in 1998. His memory will persist for generations to come and abide in the hearts of grateful patients - a people with whom he was patient and kind and not conceited or proud nor selfish nor irritable.

May his soul attain the Siva Patham he richly deserves.

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# Monsoon Sports

## Wayne Gretzky

Born Jan. 26, 1961, Brantford, Ont., Can.

Wayne Douglas Gretzky, Canadian ice-hockey player who was considered by many to be the greatest player in the history of the National Hockey League (NHL).

Gretzky began skating at age two and a half and was first taught hockey by his father. By age 6 he was playing as an all-star in novice hockey with boys 10 and 11 years old. He progressed through organized age-group hockey, and in 1977 at the Junior World Cup competition, he was the youngest player and the leading scorer. Gretzky turned professional for the 1978–79 season, playing for the Indianapolis Racers in the World Hockey Association (WHA). His contract soon was sold to the Edmonton Oilers, who joined the NHL at the beginning of the 1979–80 season. As centre and team captain, Gretzky led the Oilers to four Stanley Cup victories (in the 1983–84, 1984–85, 1986–87, and 1987–88 seasons). Following the 1987–88 season, he was traded to the Los Angeles Kings.

Gretzky's finesse and speed revolutionized the sport, which had been known for its physical play. In his first season with the Oilers, he scored 51 goals and 86 assists (137 total points). In the 1980–81 season he became the first player in NHL history to average more than two points a game. In the 1981–82 season he

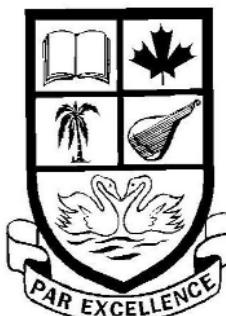


set NHL regular-season scoring records for goals (92), assists (120), and total points (212). (He broke the latter two records in the 1985–86 season with 163 assists and 215 total points.) Gretzky won the Art Ross Memorial Trophy (leading NHL scorer) for seven consecutive years, from the 1980–81 to the 1986–87 season, and won it again in 1989–90, 1990–91, and 1993–94. He was the first player to win the Hart Memorial Trophy, given to the most valuable player each season, for eight consecutive years (from the 1979–80 through the 1986–87 season), and he received it again in 1988–89.

Early in the 1989–90 season Gretzky broke Gordie Howe's NHL all-time scoring record of 1,850

points (the total number of goals and assists), and late in the 1993–94 season he broke Howe's record for career goals (801). In 1996 Gretzky was traded by the Los Angeles Kings to the St. Louis Blues. Later that year he signed with the New York Rangers. With his 1,851st assist, scored in a 1997 game against the Anaheim Mighty Ducks, Gretzky broke yet another record, scoring more assists than any player had scored points in an NHL career.

Gretzky retired from professional play after the 1998–99 season and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1999. His career totals include 2,857 points and 894 goals. The NHL retired his jersey number (99) after his final game.



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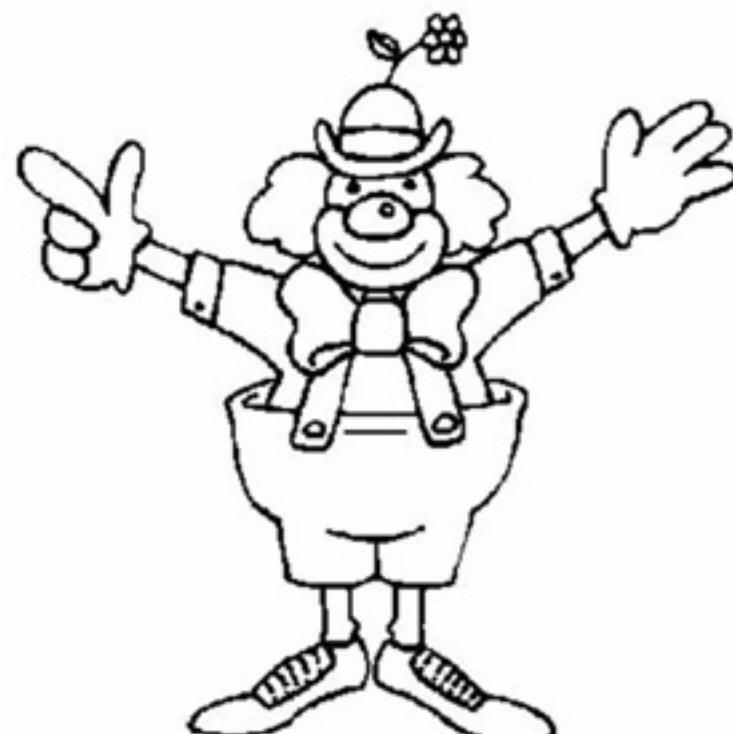
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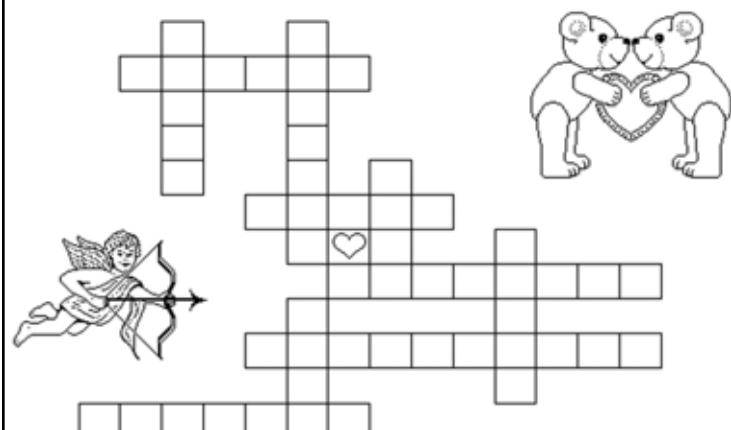
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FLOWERS  
ARROW  
CARD  
FEBRUARY  
CUPID  
LOVE  
FRIENDS**

# RRSPs versus Non-Registered Accounts

By: Bobby Siva

**W**inter is here and it is Holiday Season. Most of us will be indulged in festive moods and will be overlooking a major issue when it comes to personal finance.

In recent years, reductions in the capital gains inclusion rate have resulted in non-registered accounts becoming an attractive option for investors. Investors are now asking when they should invest in RRSPs and when they should invest in non-registered accounts. The following highlights the advantages and disadvantages of both.

The advantages of investing in RRSPs and RRIFs offer unlimited tax deferral until funds are withdrawn. When withdrawn, funds are treated as income and taxed at the full marginal rate at the time of withdrawal. In addition, any withdrawals are taxed as straight income notwithstanding the fact that they may have been the result of Canadian dividends or capital gains earned inside the registered account.

With RRSPs and RRIFs, the annuitant can choose to rebalance his or her portfolio as appropriate. If gains have been realized on some of the investments inside the registered plan, they remain tax sheltered as assets are reallocated from one asset class (e.g., equities) to another (e.g., bonds).

With a non-registered equity investment, generally, no tax is payable until the investment is sold. However, not many investors buy and hold an individual security or mutual fund in a non-registered account for 20 or 30 years. Also, an investor may be reluctant to dispose of a property that has gone up tremendously in value because of the potential for large capital gains tax on such rebalancing. This may have the added effect of discouraging a reallocation of the investment mix where such a reallocation may be the appropriate

choice for the investor as he or she approaches retirement age.

Most importantly, RRSPs offer a tax deduction in respect of contributions made. For example, a \$16,500 RRSP contribution would result in a tax savings for an individual with a marginal tax rate of 45 per cent. The tax refund received from making a contribution can be invested into a non-registered account. Let's see what happens over 15, 25 and 35 years if the investor consistently reinvests the refund into a non-registered account, assuming 8 per cent annual returns.

Over time, the combined after-tax value of the registered and non-registered accounts with reinvested tax refunds will generally surpass the after-tax value of a non-registered account alone, even though income from the registered accounts is fully taxable. Even if not reinvested, the money would at the very least contribute to a better quality of life at some level, whether the investor pays off debts or buys something new with it.

Finally, the RRSP offers many Canadians a psychological motivation to invest for their retirement on a regular basis. If someone invests the legal maximum RRSP contribution limit (18 per cent of their prior year's earned income - generally employment income, etc - up to a maximum of \$16,500 less any pension adjustment), then they will be going a long way towards a financially healthy and secure retirement.

## The advantages of investing in a non-registered account

Now, let's assume that instead of contribution funds to an RRSP each year, the investor deposits the same amount in a non-registered account that holds a mix of equity investments. Upon ultimate disposition, any profits earned on

these investments will result in capital gains to the investor, taxable at only 50 per cent of the investor's marginal tax rate.

There are a few, more specific situations where ceasing to make RRSP contributions makes the most sense. This may be the case for investors who:

- Have already accumulated a significant amount of assets inside their registered plans
- Are approaching the age at which they will begin withdrawing from the plan
- Expect to be in a higher tax bracket when withdrawing the funds than they were when the RRSP deduction was taken.

It's important that investors review their personal situations to determine how much of their assets should be in registered plans and what portion should be in non-registered accounts. The appropriate allocation will depend to a large extent on the factors discussed above.

## Next Step

The preceding is a general overview of some of the issues that need to be considered when choosing between registered and non-registered accounts. All cases should be dealt with on an individual basis and investors should review their portfolio with their financial advisor and/or professional tax specialist when dealing with specific situations.

## Finally Things To Remember

"RRSPs and RRIFs offer unlimited tax deferral until the funds are withdrawn"

"With RRSPs and RRIFs, the annuitant can choose to rebalance his or her portfolio as appropriate."



**Bobby Siva**  
Financial Advisor  
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# Monsoon Features

## A society which values its womenfolk must necessarily reach great heights

"A society which values its womenfolk must necessarily reach great heights in social wellbeing and cohesiveness. And our Hindu tradition has always stressed the importance of women and their wellbeing", Justice C.V. Wigeswaran, at the 3rd Annual Nahammal Kasipillai Memorial Oration held recently at the Sivananda Nilayam, Saiva Mangaiyar Kazhagam, Wellawatte.

As Chair of the Memorial Oration Event, the Retired Judge spoke of the contemporary situations, imbibed in context of Tamil, Hindu, Western heritage and philosophies and spirituality.

Excerpts of remarks by Retired Supreme Court Justice C.V. Wigeswaran, at the The 3rd Annual Nahammal Kasipillai Memorial Oration, on January 16th 2008:

Guru Brahma Gurur Vishnu  
Gurur Devo Maheshwara

Guru Saashat Parabrahma  
Tasmai Shree Guruve Namaha

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Our roles are changed today.  
Mrs. Duraiswamy who chaired the first memorial meeting two years ago has kindly consented to deliver this year's memorial oration. The oration itself has taken on a professional hue during the last two years, in that when I delivered the first Kasipillai memorial oration, we were too close to Miss. Kasipillai's demise that more of her life and achievements were predominant in our minds at that time. Last year Miss. Mathivathani Ponnambalam spoke on her experiences in the Gem industry as well as her experiences during her school days when Miss. Kasipillai was Principal and this year the oration is centered around the theme "The Woman and the Changing World-the Hindu Response".

The role of the Hindu woman in society was a theme close to the heart of Miss. Kasipillai. She was concerned about the Hindu values of the past and the social norms of the present era and strived hard to evolve a happy blending of both standards.

She was aware of the difference in perspectives. The Hindu way of life being steeped in religious thoughts and behaviour looked not at man or woman individually. Man and woman had their roles to play in a wider spectrum of family, society, and mankind in general. The purpose of life was to have a happy childhood (Brahmachariya), HAPPY MARRIED LIFE (Grahastra), happy retreat in life (Vaanaprastha), and

contented meditative life (Sanyasa). In this process male and female had different roles to play to complement each other's life. The wife was to be protected and cherished. She ran the home. The husband and children rallied round her in the home while the wife and children looked upon the man of the house as the pater familias of the family. The respect expected to be given to the man of the house by the lady of the house bordered on obedience. Often there was considerable age difference between husband and wife, and this attitude of mind in a society which respected its elders and valued the ideal of duty was easy for the younger wife who respected and yielded to the husband's wishes and wants.

In retreat or Vaanaprastha life in the woods, the woman had to cater to the needs and comforts of the husband, while he spent most time in study and contemplation. While the husband followed the contemplative path or the path of Gnaana or wisdom, the wife followed the path of Karma Yoga. Neither of the religious paths was greater than the other. Infact by following the path of Karma Yoga some of the women had reached a perceptual dimension of a very high order. You are aware of the story of Vasuki, the wife of Thiruvalluvar.

Sage Konganar had a very vicious temper even though a celebrated Siddhar. While he was in meditation, a stork which flew above him had dropped its faecal excretions his body. The moment he looked at the stork with anger in his eyes, the stork got burnt to ashes.

Such a powerful Siddhar after this incident went to the house of Thiruvalluvar for alms. Vasuki was drawing water for her husband's use in his worship and prayers. She would not discontinue her dutiful service towards her husband merely for the sake of the sage. She was little late in ushering the sage into their house. Konganar was furious and looked at her if to burn her. The lady was calm and dignified. She merely asked him "Oh Sage Konganar! Did you think I am a stork?" - "Kokkendru Ninaiththaayo Konganavaa?" goes in Tamil words used. The Siddhar was surprised that what happened in private at his Ashram was known to this lady doing service to her husband. He understood her greatness, he hailed her as a "Pathivirathai" or chaste wife and went his way. Such was the power of Vasuki who merely did sincere

service to her husband relegated to the Ashram premises.

How was this possible? Just as much as today many of us are able to get the grace of our Gurus like Sathya Sai Baba and others, when we sincerely pray to them, whenever we are in the ancient way of life, the husband was positioned in the role of a Guru and the wife's love and faith in her husband worked wonders on them.

I have often wondered what grace is. I have seen Muslim friends, Christian friends and Hindus often relating many a miraculous incident in their lives which they attribute to Grace of Allah or Lord Jesus Christ or Hindu Gods or Gurus respectively. Even the late Balangoda Ananda Maithri Thera, a Buddhist referred once to the Grace of Sai Baba. Is Grace extraneous or an internal process catalyzed by something extraneous which culminates in miraculous incidents? When so many from different religions speak of their respective Gods or Gurus, there appears to be something internal that takes place within all of us-the working of faith and the consequent rendering of miracles.

It is the faith in us whether we be Hindus, Christians or Muslims which really promotes and sustains miracles. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to relate a story. There was this Guru on this side of the river. He was a little egotistic and assessed himself quite high. A young girl from the other side of the river used to cross the river and bring milk to the Guru. One day the river was in spate. The girl was delayed. The Guru was furious. He scolded her when she finally arrived saying "If you had faith in me, the river would have allowed you to pass unhurt. Your lack of faith has been the cause for your delay". The girl was taken aback. She decided to have full faith in the Guru. The next time a heavy rain brought rush of waters to the river. She simply thought of and prayed to the Guru and walked across the river with faith. The river allowed her access.

The Guru was surprised to see the girl. "How did you come in this inclement weather?" he asked. "I prayed to you; I had faith in you; I simply walked across the river, and here I am", she said. The Guru was pleased. He went to the river and thanked the river for allowing the milkmaid free access and stepped into the water for a similar access across. The river simply knocked him down and dragged him away. The

Guru did not matter. The faith in the girl mattered. The story explains the inner power of faith. The extraneous Guru was not important. The inner working of the mind or heart of the girl was what mattered. So too the husband did not matter. The faith of the wife did matter.

Whatever the shortcomings their respective husbands may have had, the inner faith, their

increased. "I am myself"; "You are yourself"; "This is mine"; "That is yours"-these feelings of the personal self grew and flourished exceedingly. This underlying tendency moved some of the keenest minds in the West to formulate this sense of "I" ness, of "My" ness into an ideal. The ideal of the single, independent man, man in isolation as a self reliant, self independent being the single man standing by himself with a right to exercise all his powers for his own advantage". (unquote)

Jean Jacques Rousseau in his social contract gave form to this ideal of man as an independent being clothed in his rights. "Man is born free. None has any title to his obedience. None may command him without his own consent". These were the ideas that Rousseau put forward to build up his theory of social contract, whereby the free man gave up some of his natural rights in exchange for protection from the society in respect of the rest of his rights.

So the concepts of individuality of man and woman, equal rights between the sexes, emancipation of women and so on came to the forefront. No doubt the mixing of Islamic and Western cultures with the ancient Hindu culture brought in its wake social perspectives foreign to the indigenous way of life. Woman being a complementary unit in an equal partnership picturised by the idea of Artha Naareeswarar was relegated to a position of a slave and an object of lust. Naturally the liberation movements of women the world over became a reaction to the state of being that had crept into society.

Women actually enjoyed a privileged position in society in India in early times. She was protected, cherished and respected because she gave birth to the next generation. If I am not misunderstood let me say that one of the proud boasts few years ago in Jaffna Peninsula, when the present occupation Army from the South had not recaptured the area, was that a young woman can wear her expensive jewellery and walk along any street of Jaffna even after sunset without in any manner being harassed or abused. And this was true. Obviously the Tamil youngsters had understood the values and perspectives of our ancients. A society which values its women-folk must necessarily reach great heights in social wellbeing and cohesiveness. And our Hindu tradition has always stressed the importance of women and their wellbeing.

I thank the Kasipillai family for giving me this opportunity again to be involved in a function which remembers Miss. Nahammal Kasipillai, a unique Hindu woman of yesteryears.



"Arthanareswarar"-half male and half female traditional figure, at Sri Ponnambalawaneswarar Temple [Pic: humanityashore.org]



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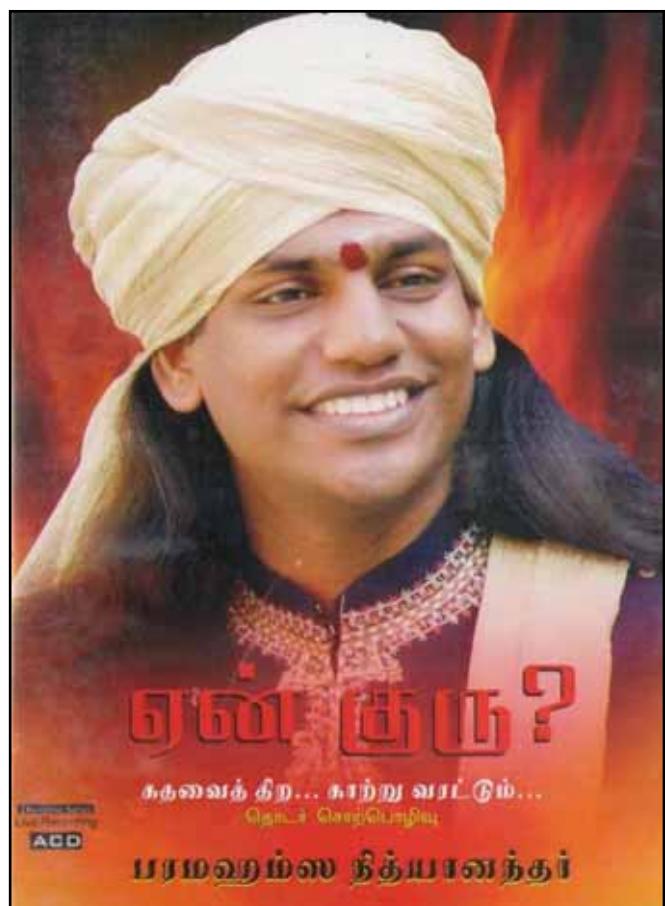
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# Kollywood Film Review

by Anand. J  
**Bheema**

For the makers, artists and technicians who have worked for Bheemaa, and for eager fans of Chiyan Vikram, all of whom have been eagerly awaiting its grand release - the long wait is over. Now, as the movie joins the Pongal blast, it's celebration time for all of them! Does Bheemaa meet fans' expectations? Vehemently, YES!

Chinna (Prakashraj) and Periyavar (Raghavar) are local gangsters who operate separate rowdy groups with a power war between them. Chinna was Periyavar's loyal follower before he was expelled from the group by the then-mighty Periyavar.



Chinna does not forget Periyavar's insults and Periyavar now feels challenged by Chinna's growth that interferes with his hegemony.

Sekhar (Vikram) relocates to the city from Rameshwaram. With the single-minded plan to join Chinna, he bravely kills two men who are on Chinna's hit-list. Curious, Chinna enquires from his close aide (Thalaivasal Vijay) about the bold and baffling killer. Soon Chinna and Sekhar meet each other. Sekhar's flashback reveals the reason for his actions.

In the flashback, Sekhar reveals that Chinna, then a budding rowdy in Rameshwaram, had attacked a goonda who was insulting Sekhar's father (a police constable). While leaving the crime scene, Chinna had handed over the weapon to young Sekhar. Since that day, Sekhar idolized brave Chinna and wanted to follow his footsteps. Chinna immediately appoints Sekhar as his chief subordinate. With Sekhar by his side, Chinna attains great strength, and rights Periyavar's wrongs. Sekhar also unites Chinna with his childhood sweetheart Padma (Lakshmi Gopalswamy).

With blind devotion, Sekhar carries out his allotted agenda of terrorizing, beating and killing.

Gangster politics flare up when Sekhar kills Periyavar's sons and some of his key men. The Commissioner of Police (Ashish Vidyarthi) is the leader of 'Operation Bheemaa' aimed at stopping the two gangster groups terrorizing the city. The Commissioner has a 'shoot at sight' order against all members of these groups.

Sekhar's life takes a sudden turn when he meets Shalini (Trisha). After a string of chance meetings, Shalini and Sekhar begin to like each other. Shalini wants to marry Sekhar at once. But Sekhar sees his profession and family as major minus points. Soon, a decisive moment arrives.

While escorting Chinna to a meeting, Sekhar, smitten by

acting are glowing, as ever. Raghavar appears on screen after a hiatus! He pulls off his role with his usual coolness, to the degree of likeability. Ashish Vidyarthi's performance is impressive. Trisha is glossy and lovely. The highlight of her role is well-delineated when, with her charming romance and a strong poise, she tames the beast, the tough thug Sekhar.

Antony's editing, Rajeevan's art and Harris Jayaraj's music - all shine through cameraman R.D. Rajasekar's lens. Though this is RD's first film with Vikram and Lingusamy, the understanding and planning is evident in each shot. RD has aptly used the action script to display his creative talents too. S. Ramakrishnan's dialogues have a realistic touch. Kanal Kannan's stunts deserve special mention.

'Mudhal Mazhai' and 'Ragasiya Kanavugal' in Harris's music top the charts. 'Rangu Rangamma' is a dance number with glamorous Shirin on a ship, exclusively decorated for the sequence.

Bheemaa is smartly written and stylishly crafted by Lingusamy. It is the outcome of one-and-a-half years of sweat and slog; the result cannot be anything but positive.

Bheema - 'Cool' ma.

## Indiralogathil Na Azhagappan

It is really a shocking and boring experience to every fan of Vadivelu who loves the actor for his non-stop comedy. After watching the film it seems like every one laugh on us! The much publicized and expected film is not only fails to make you laugh, and also becomes a big test for your patience for nearly 3 long hours. For the first time the actor fails to recreate the mass even in a single scene!

Shalini, gets distracted. Feeling guilty, Sekhar confesses his mistake and gives up his job, but not for long. His devotion to Chinna drives him back to Chinna's camp. Sekhar waits for the right moment to quit the life of crime to enable him to unite with Shalini. Before that, he has to vanquish Periyavar and his men, has to intelligently elude the wrath of his own group, and also has to survive the police encounter.

Does Sekhar fulfill his desire to lead a quiet life with his dear Shalini? Does this film have a 'happy ending'? What happens in the final climax? Find out when you watch remarkable Bheemaa on the silver screen!

Bheemaa is a gangster film, dealing with underworld life, but it has a new grittiness and edge to it. It is difficult to imagine any artist other than Vikram in such a powerful role. Vikram breathes life and credibility to the character Sekhar and portrays its contemporary overtones convincingly. We get to see Vikram with a tough look - close-cropped hair, dense beard and small ear studs. His physique and body language communicate the character he portrays - vibrant, tough and unpredictable.

Prakashraj's involvement and

The story is nothing but the entry of a common man Azhagappan (Vadivelu) to the celestial world of Yama and Indiran (also plays by Vadivelu) with the help of Rambha (Yamini) who marries Azhagappan accidentally. If the director and actor tried some different treatment to the same one line, it will become a different comedy fair of the year. But poor script and boring dialogues forced the viewers to curse both the director and actor at the end. Some of the fans leave the theater even before the interval.

Azhagappan (Vadivelu-1) runs his own drama troupe with his set of friends (wasting the experi-

enced Thiyagu, Manobala, Alwa Vasu in these roles) and lives with his loving mom (Sumitra). One day celestial beauties- Urvasi, Rambha and Thilothama, visit earth, Rambha loses her way (!!) and become a statue just because of the curse of Indiran (Vadivelu-2). On a fine day Azhagappan garlands the statue due to a compulsion of his mother to remove



done intelligently, like what Goundamani - Senthil done in Lucky Man (appears as Yaman-Chitraguptan) or Rajini-VKR-Vinu-Cho combo in Adhisaya Piravi.

But the problem with this film is that it hardly raises any laugh and the script is so weak. Sadly you have no words of praise for Vadivel who can't rise above the



his bigamy Dhosham in the horoscope. Immediately the statue of Rambha regains life and later takes him to Indiralokam (heaven). Azhagappan is shocked and distressed to find the conditions prevailing in Yamalokam (hell), just placed near Indralogam and does his best to redeem it from the villain Yama (Vadivelu-3)!

flawed script. He hams it up, is loud, overacts and over-the-top style of delivering dialogues especially in the scenes in hell as Yama. In fact this character recreates the hell to viewers in the hall!

After watching the film, it feels like you've been trapped in there for what seems like a lifetime. None of the songs are shot spectacularly, the sets looks artificial (one could see the satin cloths and waste pieces in the floor which used for the sets in many frames!) and Shriya's much hyped item number is totally unfit in the script (She is coming as a black magician Kodangi Pidary Aatha to cure Vadivelu through her unimpressive item number!).

On the whole, the amateurish, invincible and dry narration of the story makes everyone to feel the hell in the earth!

Indiralogathil – Ore Bore.

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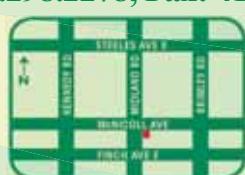
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