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Nikki Haley, daughter of Indian immigrants appointed US Ambassador to the United Nations by President Elect Donald Trump

By: Siva Sivapragasam
For full story at Page 8



Governor Nikki Haley and President-elect Donald Trump

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Mayor Tory's Gardiner, DVP toll good for Toronto, says U of T Expert

Toronto Mayor John Tory announced plans on November 24th to implement a \$2 road toll for the Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway, hoping to generate much-needed income for the city.

The highways carry thousands of commuters in and out of the city each day, but Tory said the tolls would raise \$200 million every year – funds that could then be used for transit costs and expansion projects. With \$33 billion in unfunded capital projects, the city is in need of a new source of revenue, he said.

Tory also proposed a number of cost-cutting measures such as a hotel tax and a 2.6-per-cent reduction in the operating budget of city divisions like police and libraries.

University of Toronto's Institute on Municipal Finance & Governance (IMFG), which is part of the Munk School of Global Affairs, released a paper this week outlining different taxing options for cities like Toronto in order to generate revenue.

U of T News spoke with Enid Slack, IMFG director and co-author of the report about Tory's toll proposal and alternative revenue sources.

Why does Toronto need more sources of revenue?

What we've talked about in our paper is really the demands on municipal expenditures and how they've changed over the last 30 years – so for things like roads and transit, investing in infrastructure that's deteriorating, investing in new infrastructure.

Our cities over the last 30 years are more interested in being more internationally competitive and that means not only providing water, sewer, roads and the traditional services but also making our cities very livable so we can attract young, skilled workers. Frankly, they can go anywhere, but we



DVP at 401– pic: Danielle Scott

want them to come here.

The list goes on and on for the expenditure side of the budget, but when we get to the revenue side and look over the last 30 years, nothing much has changed. Cities in Canada have property taxes, user fees and some provincial and federal transfers so the time has come to think about what other sources of revenue are appropriate for cities.

When we looked at cities around the world – they all have other sources of revenue. They are not reliant on property taxes as their only source of revenue. This is not as bold as you might think. Other cities are doing this, and other cities have tolls on their major roads.

Other than generating income, what are the benefits to introducing road tolls?

The obvious benefit is to reduce congestion so that fewer people will get in their cars – maybe they'll carpool or maybe they'll take transit. It has a lot of time benefits for people and environmental benefits – less pollution, fewer health care costs as a result, fewer ac-

cidents, less policing costs. There are a whole lot of benefits over and above just the revenue.

The point with tolls is that the users of the road are paying for it – whether they live in Toronto or somewhere else. And if the money is put into improving the roads or into transit, everybody benefits as well.

Tory also proposed a hotel tax during today's announcement – an initiative included in the IMFG paper – what can this kind of levy provide for the city?

Hotel tax has advantages because it's a tax on visitors. When visitors come to the city, they use services. They walk on the streets. They use parks and policing services, and they don't pay any taxes in Toronto. A hotel tax is a way to get tourists to pay for some of the services they use when they're in the city. Other cities in Canada have hotel taxes – Vancouver, other B.C. municipalities, Montreal, Charlottetown. When you look around the world, many cities have hotel taxes.

How can Torontonians be convinced that increased taxes or



Mayor John Tory

taxes on more services will benefit them in the long-run?

We shouldn't start the conversation with taxes. We should start the conversation with what's our vision for cities in Canada. What do we want to see? People know what they want. They want good services. They want good transit. They want roads that aren't congested.

They want parks. They want libraries. And we have to pay for them. If they have some understanding that those taxes are paying for these services, that they are getting something for their taxes, I think they're less unwilling to pay taxes.

Some politicians will also need convincing that taxes are a good idea. How can that be done?

If we want a great city, we all have to understand – citizens and politicians – that we will have to pay for it. If we don't, our cities will crumble. Infrastructure will deteriorate. The services won't be very good, and people won't be very happy when that happens.

– Courtesy: U of T news

Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on National Child Day

Ottawa, Ontario - November 20, 2016

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement to mark National Child Day:

"Every day, I am energized by the potential of Canada's young people. I am equally concerned by the challenges they face, and deeply aware that the decisions we make today will shape the world they will one day inherit.

"That is why, on National Child Day, I encourage all Canadians to celebrate our children and youth, and to reflect on the obligation that we have to our children and grandchildren.

"Each child deserves to be raised in an environment that is free of violence, dis-

crimination, and exploitation; to grow up with proper nutrition, health care, and a good education; and to have a voice in matters that affect them, and a real, fair chance to succeed.

"The Government of Canada remains committed to programs that help every child get the best possible start in life and reach their full potential. Here, at home, we are giving Canadian families more money to help with the high cost of raising their kids through the new Canada Child Benefit, which stands to lift about 300,000 children out of poverty. We are also working with our international partners to create environments where all children are treated with dignity and

respect, and given all the opportunities they need to succeed.

"While the world has made significant progress in advancing children's rights since the introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is still a lot of work to do. Millions of children and young people continue to be denied basic human rights – including education, primary health care, and personal security. Many more are forced into early marriages, recruited as child soldiers, or become victims of child labour.

"On this day, Sophie and I invite all Canadians to join us in celebrating National Child Day by speaking to children of all ages about their rights. We also



urge you to visit the National Child Day website for activities and events in your communities marking this special day.

"Canada's future is only as strong and boundless as the dreams and aspirations of our children and youth. We must support them in everything they do and want to be."

- pm.gc.ca

from the publisher's desk

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Happy Holidays 2016: Renewing our Sense of International Solidarity

As the 2016 holiday season is now upon us, it has generally been traversed by a common theme about giving back to those less fortunate. The United Nations, in particular, has been quite vocal on this idea when considering its impact for numerous communities. Marked on December 20, International Human Solidarity Day portrays this.

Solidarity is purported as the backbone of the United Nations, in that it was founded by nation-states coming together to advance peace, human rights, and social and economic development. Furthermore, the notion of collective security among these states views each other as in unity "to maintain international peace and security." A way this has been expressed on an ongoing basis was the establishment of the World Solidarity Fund in February 2003 as part of the United Nations Development Programme. Its goal is to eliminate poverty and, subsequently, promote human development within some of the poorest areas of countries' populations.

Observing the day itself means celebrating our unity in diversity and a day to raise public awareness of the importance of solidarity. This may seem all the more critical given recent events in the United States of America. Ideally, however, with the theme of giving back during the holidays, it aimed to encourage debate on the ways to promote solidarity to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals, such as poverty eradication. In commemorating this day last year, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized a "what does solidarity mean to you?" campaign. Citizens across the globe were asked to create a message, picture, or 15 second video on what cause they supported. Under its 2015 theme of "Shared Progress & Prosperity based on Global Solidarity," this anti-poverty direction became redefined with world governments adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on January 1, 2016. Succeeding the MDGs, it is considered a highly inclusive development agenda for the globe.

Accordingly, from the poor to the middle in-



come to the rich, the SDGs exhort all countries to promote prosperity and protect the planet in a complementary fashion. On the SDGs, in 2015, the now outgoing Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, noted that the Paris Agreement on climate change represents a crucial contribution to our planet's wellbeing. Furthermore, collectively, we must challenge those spreading baseless xenophobic and discriminatory fears of individuals fleeing from violent extremists in their communities. This certainly remains highly relevant as the year of 2016 nears its conclusion.

By 2030, one goal is "to end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round". Another goal is to "empower and promote social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status. To advance this day-to-day means getting involved in public affairs and advancing the very causes that can contribute to these 17 distinct goals. Whether it is participating in local food drives to holiday-gift giving campaigns, it is these small actions at this time of the year and all year round that we can stand in solidarity for human progress.

Contributed by Harrish Thirukumaran



INDEX December 2016

Main News	1
Ads	2
Canada News	3 & 5
Publisher's Info	4
World News	6 - 13
Health & Care	14-17
Special Feature	18-29
Education	30
Science & Technology	31
Business & Finance	32 & 33
Food	34
Community Watch	35-46
Ads	47 & 48



“What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?” - George Eliot (22 November 1819 – 22 December 1880) English novelist, poet and journalist

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

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NDP Leader Andrea Horwath statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

25 November - One third of women around the world will experience violence in their lives, often by someone they know and trust. Half of all women killed will be murdered by intimate partners. Here in Canada, First Nations women and girls face an epidemic of violence, with hundreds missing or murdered.

Around the world, and in our own backyard, women's rights that have been taken for granted for decades are being threatened, putting women's safety in danger.

Women deserve better. Violence against women and girls is a problem that affects everyone, and it will take everyone working together to stop it.

Ontario's New Democrats are committed to working to bring an end to

violence against women. New Democrats want to work alongside all Ontarians to build a province where women and girls are respected,

safe, and given every opportunity to thrive. And we want to build a community and justice system where victims of intimate violence are supported and believed, not re-victimized.

We can be proud of the protections and rights that have been entrenched for women in Canada, but we must never become complacent. Together, let's build a future free from violence against women and girls.



Liberals keep hold of Ottawa - Vanier with convincing win

The provincial riding of Ottawa-Vanier stayed red in a byelection on November 17th, electing Liberal candidate Nathalie Des Rosiers.

Nathalie Des Rosiers is a well known professor of constitutional law expert. She served as the General Counsel for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, (CCLA) a national

organization that acts as a watchdog for the protection of human rights and civil liberties in Canada, from 2009 to 2013.

Although considered a safe Liberal seat, there was concern the riding would be snatched by the Progressive Conservative candidate and former Ontario Ombudsman André Marin.

PC candidate wins Niagara West - Glanbrook

Statement from Ontario PC Leader Patrick Brown:

November 17, 2016

"Today the people of Niagara West—Glanbrook sent a message to Kathleen Wynne. That they're tired of skyrocketing hydro bills and rising wait times. That they're tired of waiting months for surgeries and having less money in their pockets. And that they're tired of life getting harder under the Liberals. "Voters have made it clear that only the Ontario PCs will look out for their interests. Sam Oosterhoff will be a strong advocate for this community at Queen's Park and I welcome him to the PC Caucus."

Statement from Ontario PC Niagara West—Glanbrook MPP-elect Sam Oosterhoff:

"I am humbled by the tremendous support of the people of Niagara West—Glanbrook today. I intend on fighting for them as their representative and I look forward to joining Patrick Brown's PC team at Queen's Park.

"Today, once again the Ontario PCs were chosen over Kathleen Wynne's tired, scandal-plagued Liberal Party. We will work to hold them accountable while building an even stronger party that will be competitive in every region of this province in 2018."

(ontariopc.com)

Ontario Working to Close Gender Wage Gap



New Working Group Will Provide Advice Leading to Positive Change:

Ontario is continuing its work to close the gender wage gap and support higher participation for women in the workforce by establishing a working group to help guide the province's action plan to close the gap.

Nov 24, 2016 – Today on the 30th anniversary of the introduction of Ontario's Pay Equity Act, Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn announced the new working group, including 14 organizations and two community members representing business, labour, human resources and women's advocacy. The group will provide advice and feedback on how government can address specific issues and initiatives identified in the Gender Wage Gap Final Report, including:

- Shared parental leaves
- A gender workplace analysis tool
- A social awareness strategy to help understand the effects of gender bias, the gender wage gap and the impor-

tance of closing the gap

-Reviewing pay equity legislation

Closing the gender wage gap and providing women with equal opportunity in the workforce will bring significant economic benefits, including boosting the Ontario's GDP, increasing personal incomes across the province and boosting performance and competitiveness for local businesses.

This panel is part of Ontario's ongoing work to close the gender wage gap and improve the lives of women and families, which also includes creating 100,000 new licensed child care spaces, ensuring women make up at least 40 per cent of all appointments to provincial boards and agencies by 2019, and making workplaces, campuses and communities safer through the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan.

Supporting women in the workforce is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

- Ontario.ca

New Gormley GO Station to Provide More Transit Options in Richmond Hill

Ontario is opening the new Gormley GO station in Richmond Hill, providing more transit options and improving commutes for families in York Region:

Starting Dec. 5, five morning and five afternoon GO train trips will serve the new station along the Richmond Hill line, near Stouffville Rd. and Highway 404. GO buses will also serve the new station, with two-way midday service between Gormley and Union Station, as well as night-time service from Union.

The station features 850 parking spaces, electric vehicle charging sta-

tions, a bus loop, a kiss-and-ride area, heated shelters, and a platform snow-melt system for customer convenience.

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Cuban Revolutionary dictator Fidel Castro dead

By Siva Sivapragasam

The man from a tiny impoverished country who fought the most powerful nation in the world (USA) and considered that “a revolution is not a bed of roses and that it is a struggle between the future and the past”, has died at age 90.

Mr. Castro taunted 10 successive U.S. presidents, who considered the Cuban leader variously as a blowhard nuisance, a dangerous dictator, a fomenter of revolution around Latin America, a serial human rights abuser or an irrelevant sideshow who somehow hung on after the collapse of communism almost everywhere else.

Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba in 1959 by overthrowing the Batista regime and transformed the country into a communist state while ruling for five decades. His death was announced by his brother Raul Castro over the Cuban radio but no details were given. Castro had been ill during the recent years and rarely gave public appearances. However, the Cuban leader would always laugh off speculation about his health. With an athletic build, and physical stamina that lasted deep into his 70s, it seemed he would continue to rule for many more years.

The Cuban Government never gave details of his illness even when he said

Castro is no more, but the revolution he unleashed persists reflecting aspirations of Africa, Asia and Latin America

he was resigning for health reasons. But it was widely reported he had complications involving diverticulitis, an intestinal ailment common in older people.

Castro once remarked when he stopped smoking cigars “I reached the conclusion long ago that the one last sacrifice I must make for (Cuban) public health is to stop smoking. I haven’t really missed it that much.”

Castro told Indian Prime Minister Nehru that he could not get a hotel room in New York to attend a UN Conference. He had complained to UN Secretary General Dag Hammerskjold about this and said that he would be compelled to stay on the UN compound but then somehow had found himself an accommodation in Harlem.

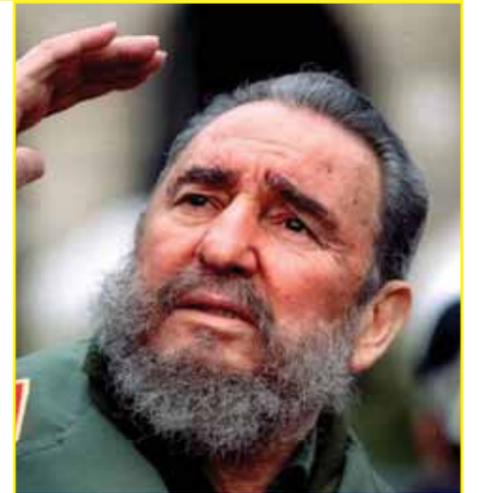
With the death of Fidel Castro, the last of the iconic revolutionary figures of the 20th century is now no more. The word, “revolutionary” is a bit too easily bandied out these days to describe leaders, but there is no better description to encapsulate the 90-year-old Cuban leader’s life and achievements.

The son of a rich landowner, Fidel

— as he has always been called by his compatriots, his fellow Cubans and many in the Third World — began his political career as a militant student leader committed to social justice and the establishment of a corruption-free government in Cuba. Later, he became part of movements that sought to overthrow Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista who came to power in 1952 through a coup.

It is difficult to sum up his life in a few words. With Fidel’s passing away, the era of state-led socialism can now be called to have officially ended. But his ideas on internationalism: a truly democratic world order and solidarity among the people of the third world; a thorough reorientation of the state to promote overall human development; — hold true and important today and for the foreseeable future. The Cuban’s muerte (death) will not just be mourned in his patria (fatherland), but the world over. Fidel is no more, but the revolution he unleashed, persists.

Castro ruled the country for almost half a century and is admired by leftists and some in developing nations who view him as a revolutionary who stood up to the United States during the Cold War. Others, however, viewed the late leader as a dictator who oppressed Cubans and caused economic hardship that sparked an exodus of



Cubans to Florida.

A lieutenant and his squad once captured Castro and some of his comrades. Castro hid his identity for fear of execution at the spot. The soldiers wanted to kill Castro and the guerrillas. The lieutenant walked about calming them down. “You cannot kill ideas.” He repeated, “you cannot kill ideas.”

It was hope and a genuine sense of belief that captured Castro’s personality which can be summed up on what he said in his customary green fatigues at the UN World Conference on Racism in 2001. “I believe in the mobilisation and the struggle of the peoples!” he said. “I believe in the idea of justice! I believe in truth! I believe in man!”

(Picture Courtesy: Reuters)



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Monument of slain Tamil Parliamentarian N. Raviraj unveiled in Sri Lanka North

A monument of late Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarian Nadarajah Raviraj was unveiled in Chavakachcheri, Jaffna on November 20th. TNA members and others paid glowing tribute to the widely respected parliamentarian at the event.

Speaking at the memorial event, TNA Jaffna district Member of Parliament M.A. Sumanthiran said that Raviraj truly believed and functioned in a way to directly explain the people of the majority community on Tamils' demand for equal rights. When our plight is explained and what we ask is equal rights and not a take-over their (majority community's) rights, in an approach of speaking the truth and building goodwill can result in the greater benefit to our quest as equal citizens in this country, 'Maamanithar' Nadarajah Raviraj believed, M.A. Sumanthiran MP emphasized. The greater number of the majority community like all communities are reasonable in their thinking with regard to each other, M.A. Sumanthiran pointed out.

M.A. Sumanthiran recalled his memorial lecture two years ago marking the Death Anniversary of N Raviraj and



pledging to adopt these approaches going forward as "soft power" to win over Tamils' demands. Despite how far we have to go, how far we have come has been made possible by adopting this "soft power", M.A. Sumanthiran asserted. He said now there are positive responses arising from various Tamil commentators about



the proposed solutions that have been submitted on November 19th in the first interim report to the Constitutional Assembly.

A number of ministers including the Minister of Health Rajitha Senarathne, Opposition leader R. Sampanthan, TNA MP Mavai Senathirajah and General Secretary of TULF Anandasangaree

were also in attendance at the ceremony.

Former Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Jaffna District Parliamentarian and Lawyer Nadarajah Raviraj and his Police bodyguard Sgt. Lakshman Lokuwella were gunned down in Sri Lanka's capital city Colombo, in broad daylight ten years ago, on November 10, 2006.

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Around the World

Nikki Haley, daughter of Indian immigrants appointed US Ambassador to the United Nations by President Elect Donald Trump

By Siva Sivapragasam

Nikki Haley, born to Indian immigrants from Punjab as Nimrata Randhawa and currently the South Carolina Governor will become US Ambassador to the United Nations. She will be the first woman and minority in President Elect Donald Trump's Cabinet.

She will be the first woman tapped for a top-level administration post



during the White House transition so far. As the Permanent Representative to the UN, Haley will be the first woman and non-white appointed to a high-level post in Trump's incoming administration. The move comes as Mr. Trump's advisers are seeking to diversify his ranks and marks his first female appointment to a Cabinet-level post, The Washington Post reported.

Mr. Trump's plan to offer the job to 44-year-old Haley, a rising Republican star and daughter of Indian immigrants, was first reported by The Washington Post and Courier

Haley's parents immigrated to Canada from Amritsar, Punjab after her father received a scholarship offer from the University of British Columbia. After earning his PhD in 1969, Ajit moved his young family to South Carolina to accept a position as a professor at Voorhees College. Her husband is an officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard and was sent on a year-long deployment to Afghanistan in January 2013. The couple have two children, Rena and Nalin.

The Economist described Haley as a politician with high approval ratings and as combination of "fiscal ferocity and a capacity for conciliation,"

For the first time, the House of Representatives has four from the Indo-American community. Ms. Haley, now in her second term as South Carolina governor, would succeed Samantha

Power, who has represented the United States at the United Nations since 2013. The choice of Haley may be aimed at countering criticism of Trump's divisive comments about immigrants and minorities, as well as accusations of sexism during his election campaign.

Announcing the appointment, Trump said, "She will be a great leader representing us on the world stage."

Gov. Nikki Haley issued the following statement after becoming the choice of President-elect Donald J. Trump as America's next Ambassador to the United Nations:

COLUMBIA, S.C. – November 23, 2016 - "Six years ago, South Carolinians bestowed upon me the greatest honor of my life. They took a chance on a little-known, 38-year old, minority, female governor – something our state had never done before. I will be forever grateful, and I expect I will never again receive a higher honor.

"In the six years that followed, our state has reached incredible heights. We made South Carolina's economic development the envy of the nation and brought new jobs to every county. We cut our unemployment rate by more than half, employing more South Carolinians than ever before. We reformed how we fund education, moving more resources to communities in greatest need. We passed landmark ethics reforms that make state government more accountable to our people.

"Our state has also persevered through some of the most difficult times. Nature damaged many of us with the thousand-year flood and Hurricane Matthew. Our hearts were broken for those we lost when tragedy struck Walter Scott's family, Mother Emanuel, and Townville Elementary School. Yet through it all, the great-

As Cuba mourns passing of former President Fidel Castro, Ban offers condolences, UN support



Fidel Castro Ruz, President of Cuba addressing the General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York in 1979. UN Photo/Yutaka Nagata

26 November 2016 – Speaking on behalf of the United Nations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon this morning extended condolences to the Cuban people and to the family of former President Fidel Castro Ruz, who passed away overnight at the age of 90.

"At this time of national mourning, I offer the support of the United Nations to work alongside the people of the island," Mr. Ban told reporters in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, where he is attending the Global Sustainable Transport Conference. He offered his particular condolences to Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz. Fidel Castro served as Cuba's President from 1976 to 2008.

Recalling vividly his meeting with former President Fidel Castro during a visit to Cuba in January 2014, Mr. Ban said the two had held a lively discussion that covered developments around the world, sustainable development and climate change.

ness of our people overcame those tragedies, even coming together to heal the old wounds represented by the Confederate Flag on the Statehouse grounds.

"This month's elections have brought exciting changes to America. Our country faces enormous challenges here at home and internationally. Last week, President-elect Trump asked if I would meet with him to discuss those challenges, which I was happy to do. He has asked that I serve our country as our next Ambassador to the United Nations. Pending confirmation by the U.S. Senate, I have agreed.

"I always expected to finish the remaining two years of my second term as governor. Not doing so is difficult because I love serving South Carolina more than anything. I was moved to accept this new assignment for two reasons.

"Under former President Castro, Cuba made advances in the fields of education literacy and health. I hope that Cuba will continue to advance on a path of reform and greater prosperity," the Secretary-General concluded.

A statement issued later in the day by Mr. Ban's spokesperson in New York noted that former President Castro was an emblematic figure of the Cuban revolution, prominent in Latin America and influential in world affairs.

"As Prime Minister, President, Commander of the Cuban Armed Forces and First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, his role at the helm of Cuba spanned nearly 50 years, during which he left a major imprint on his country and on global politics," the statement said, adding: "His revolutionary ideals left few indifferent. He was a strong voice for social justice in global discussions at the UN General Assembly and international and regional forums."

The first is a sense of duty. When the President believes you have a major contribution to make to the welfare of our nation, and to our nation's standing in the world, that is a calling that is important to heed. The second is a satisfaction with all that we have achieved in our state in the last six years and the knowledge that we are on a very strong footing.

"I will remain as governor until the U.S. Senate acts affirmatively on my nomination. We still have much to do in South Carolina, and my commitment to the people of our state will always remain unbreakable, both while I continue to hold this office, and thereafter.

"In this holiday season, we all have much to be thankful for. Michael and I wish every South Carolinian a joyous Thanksgiving."



Great Heroes Day observed in Sri Lanka North and across the Globe

Great Heroes Day was marked across Sri Lanka North at several locations this year and in numerous cities around the globe on November 27. Observances were held in the week preceding at the University of Jaffna as well.

Mano Ganesan, Minister of National Co-existence, Dialogue and Official Languages in the Sri Lanka cabinet said early in the month of November that people in Sri Lanka North can mark "MaaveerarNaal" (Great Heroes Day) provided it is carried out without a political motive. He added that it is a human right for people to be able to pay homage to their departed loved ones.



Large number of people paid homage at Markham Fair Grounds in Canada



Paying tribute in Sri Lanka North



Paying tribute in Sri Lanka North



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Around the World

International Movement for Tamil Culture Conducted Two-day special conference in Denmark Several Scholars Participated in the International Conference

The International Movement for Tamil Culture (IMTC) in association with European Union IMTC led a special conference on Culture, Art and Literature on November 5 and 6, 2016 in Denmark to discuss the 'Tamil Heritage and Challenges' faced by Tamils in foreign countries.

Tharuman Tharumakulasingam, President of International Movement for Tamil Culture, Denmark, Secretary of IMTC and Organizer of the conference, addressed the media about the success of the IMTC's conference, in Denmark.

He said that several international delegates and scholars participated in the conference including Ryerson University Lecturer Dr. Uthayakaren Thurairajah, Professor Murasu Nedumaran (Malaysia), Dr. Subshini (Germany), Professor Dr. Balasigham Sugumar (Sri Lanka), Actor & Poet Nanarajah Kannapu (London), International Tamil Teacher Sam Vijay (France) and several others from around the world.

The conference was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Honorable Troels Ravan, Minister of Education and Culture and Member of Parliament, Denmark as well as Special Guest Honorable Sathasivam Viyalenderan, Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka.

The conference also featured academic sessions in which scholars and researchers presented papers in Tamil heritage, language, literature, and culture. An exhibition of ancient Tamil

scripts and historical documents displayed during the conference.

Our Science and Technology section contributor, Uthayan Thurairajah made a special speech at the conference and participated several forums including debate forum, poet forum and introduced the heritage and cultural books of Professor Balasunadaram and Rajaratnam to the audience. He explained the extraordinary contributions of both authors and several significant aspects of the cultural books.

Lecturer Uthayan Thurairajah received an appreciation award for "Meritorious Achievement and Prestigious Service for his exceptionally admirable achievement in Research and Education as well as the development of Tamil Anthem and a Remarkable Services to the Tamil Culture, Literature, and Spirituality." He has also conferred a title of "Kavikko Thiruvassagan".

Uthayan's three books and one DVD introduced in the conference. Professor Murasu Nedumaran (Malaysia) Introduced Bilingual book "Tamils' Anthems Among anthems", and a Tamil book "The great Humanness". An actor & poet Nanarajah Kannapu (London) introduced a Tamil book "Let us reach the sky" and a DVD "Thiruvassagathen".

The Tamil scholars joined for a common cause to discuss ways to pass on the legacy of the language and literature to the future generation as well as try to enrich and conserve the cultural heritage around the world.

Participants at the special conference of IMTC, in Denmark, November 5 & 6, 2016 – Photo: Sam Vijay, France



Supercharged Plants Aim to Boost Food Production



By Steve Baragona

WASHINGTON — Scientists have supercharged plant growth by making them more responsive to changes in light and shade. The researchers hope what they have learned by souping up experimental plants will someday help feed a hungry world.

Plants turn sunlight, carbon dioxide and water into food through a process called photosynthesis.

"It is the driving force behind all of life," says University of Illinois plant biologist Steve Long. "Arguably, photosynthesis is the most important process on our planet." But for a process that's so important, it's surprisingly inefficient.

With food demand expected to grow by 70 percent by mid-century on a planet that is rapidly warming, researchers have been looking for ways to improve photosynthesis as a way to squeeze more productivity out of each plant.

"We're kind of forced to push our crops to the limit," says crop scientist Matthew Reynolds at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, known by its Spanish acronym, CIMMYT.

Long's group targeted a system that protects plants from excessive sunlight. When a plant is soaking up more light than it can handle, it gets rid of the energy as heat. But when clouds or leaves shade it, that system stays on for minutes or hours, slowing down the plant's growth.

Long and his colleagues added genes

that shortened that recovery time. Modified plants grew up to 20 percent more than untreated ones.

The study appears in the journal Science.

"It's a very big deal," said Reynolds, who was not involved with the research. Conventional breeding programs are improving yields by about half a percent per year, if that. "A 20 percent increase -- that's a fairly substantial jump."

Other attempts to tinker with the protective systems have hurt the plant, according to Bob Furbank, director of the Center for Translational Photosynthesis Research. He's more optimistic about this one, since it makes the system more responsive rather than turning it down.

However, he adds, "It may be that these protective mechanisms are more important under drought, and under stress. These sorts of plants will have to be tested under a range of stresses to make sure there's no downside."

Long's group used genetic engineering to modify their plants, which can be controversial. But Reynolds, who focuses on conventional plant breeding, says the genetically modified plant can be "a proof of concept so we can start looking for natural variation as well."

Long's group worked in tobacco because it's easy to study. Next they plan to apply the same technique to rice, soybeans and cassava, three critical food crops around the world.

- VOA News



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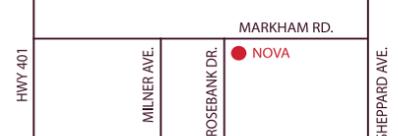
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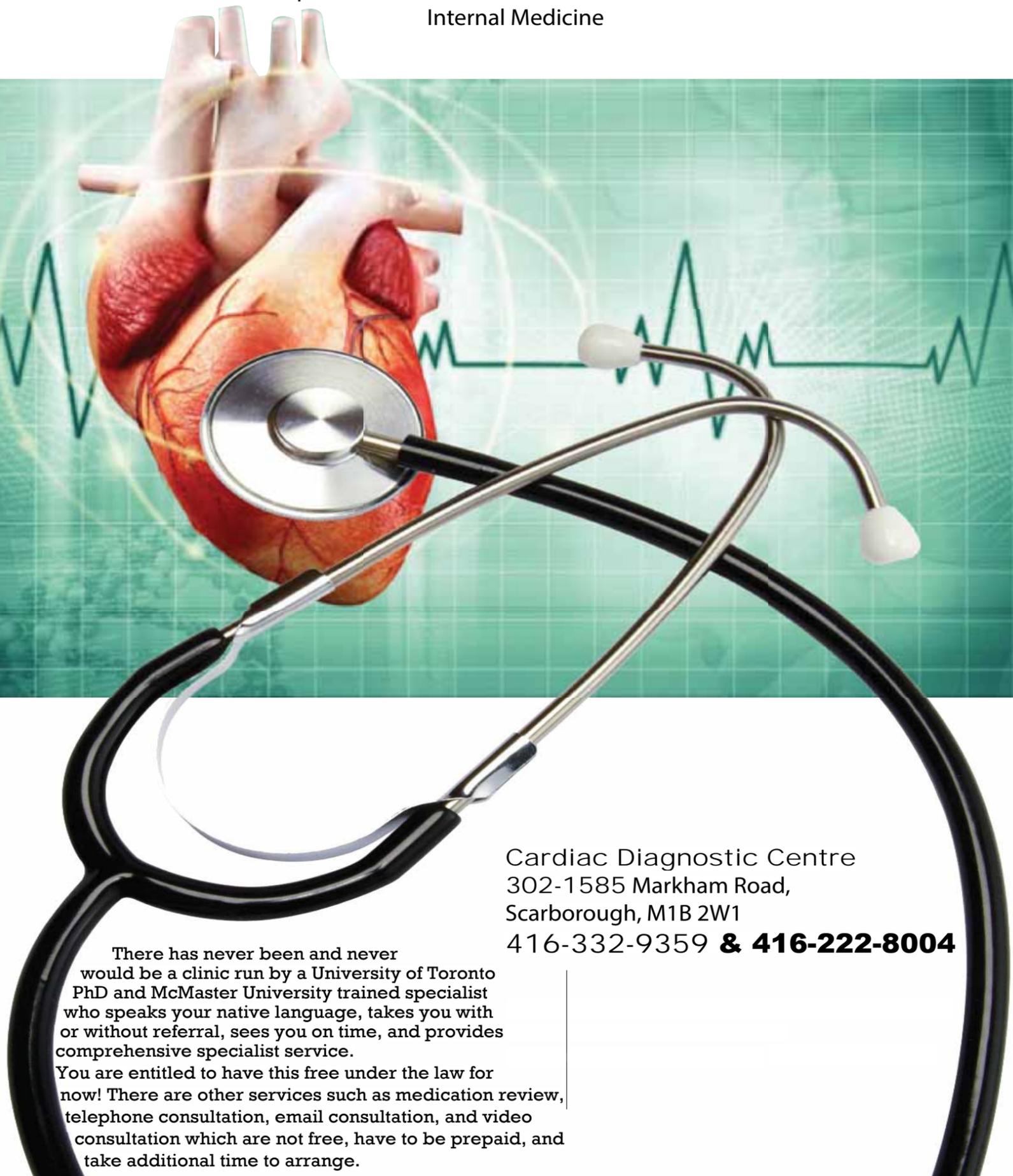
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Providence Healthcare’s President and CEO, Josie Walsh, with partner Barry Monaghan



Board Chair, Providence Healthcare Foundation, Kevin Dougherty (President and CEO of Sun Life Financial Canada)



Kanish A. Thevarasa (left) with Namita Kanishkan and VIP guests



Silver Ball Planning Committee Co-Chairs, Rosie Young (left) and Khadija Somji



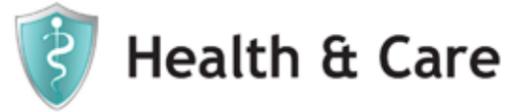
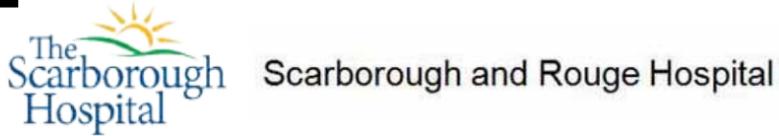
Canadian tenor Christopher Dallo performs the original song called “I Am Providence” written by Livewire Communications for the 23rd annual



Crowd enjoying Live Performance by Canadian singer Christopher Dallo



Headline Performers, Collabro, winners of the 2014 Britain’s Got Talent competition



Homemade dishes with local ingredients now in our cafeteria



Anourishing harvest bowl. A hearty chili. Or some comfort food like mac and cheese. These are just a few of the new dishes made onsite with local ingredients that are now available in the cafeteria at Scarborough and Rouge Hospital's (SRH) General site.

"Marek is excited to offer 'Provincial Plate' options in our weekly menu, with meals featuring local meats and produce cooked from scratch in our kitchen," says Gord Shaw, Director of Retail Food Services at SRH for Marek Hospitality Inc. Marek runs both the cafeteria at SRH's General site, as well as the Tim Hortons locations at both the General and Birchmount sites.

"Meals made from scratch are simply better when the ingredients used in entrees arrive fresh from

local suppliers, and we're proud to be able to work with Marek to deliver more of these delicious dishes to cafeteria customers," adds Tyler Crocker, Director Facilities and Environment at SRH.

The Provincial Plate menu program was rolled out across Canada this fall among all of Marek's retail health care locations. Chicken and beef comes from local butchers in each province and produce from local farmers. In addition, fish arrives fresh and not frozen.

Gord also notes that the chicken served in the cafeteria at TSH is Halal, which can be important for customers within the diverse community of Scarborough. Provincial Plate menu items will be identified with a special logo on the weekly menu posted in the cafeteria.

Minister Issues Final Order for Hospital Integrations

On November 23, 2016, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Dr. Eric Hoskins, issued a final integration order, stating that the Birchmount and General campuses of The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) and the Centenary campus of Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) will be operated by a single hospital corporation. The Ajax-Pickering campus of RVHS will become part of Lakeridge Health (LH). The order endorses the decisions of all three hospital Boards in favour of the integrations and follows the advice of the Central East Local Health Integration Network (Central East LHIN).

The decision paves the way for improved hospital infrastructure and the planning of new acute care facilities in both communities. Scarborough and Durham patients will benefit from integrated health care systems that will provide timely, safe, and appropriate access to care.

"I am encouraged by the Minister's decision to move forward to ensure that the integration occurs in a timely manner," said Andrée Robichaud, President and CEO, RVHS. "This decision provides us with clarity, and I am excited for the opportunity that lies ahead."

"We must acknowledge Minister Hoskins' bold leadership and his support in establishing these two new integrated hospital systems that will be best positioned to serve their respective communities of Durham and Scarborough," said Robert Biron, President and CEO, TSH. "This direction is consistent with the recommendations of the Expert Panel and it sets the stage for a promising future."

"We are excited to be moving forward with integration and will be partnering with Ajax-Pickering on December 1, as we develop a new five-site regional acute care system," said Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, LH. "I know I speak for all the hospitals of Lakeridge Health when I say we are excited to take the next steps in building a system that reflects our commitment to caring for families all across Durham."

The integration order was signed following extensive community engagement, and after receiving input and feedback from patients and families, staff, physicians, and local leaders.

WHAT'S UP WHEEZIE BROADCASTS JOY TO PATIENTS



It's 8:30 a.m. on a warm, sunny morning in late August and Registered Practical Nurse Louise Principe is readying her red, flashing LED light at the nursing station on the CP1 Medicine unit at the General site. It's not the sort of device you'd expect to see in a hospital, but for the staff and patients on CP1, Louise's red light signals the start of a very special part of their day – the What's Up Wheezie message.

Over the last two months, Louise (a.k.a. Wheezie) has been delivering a brief news, sports, and weather report over the P.A. system on CP1.

"A lot of our patients on CP1 have longer stays and I thought this would be a great way to add something different to their day," said Louise.

Louise produces a What's Up Wheezie report for each shift she's working. She searches out interesting, lighthearted news items, and – with the help of her husband – includes the top sports stories. Her broadcast always ends with a song that corresponds to one of the news items.

"For instance, one day I had a story on bees, so I played 'Let it Be' by the Bea-

ties," explains Louise. "Another day, there was a story on tigers so I played 'Eye of the Tiger' by Survivor. And on Father's Day, I played the duet 'Unforgettable' by Nat King Cole and Natalie Cole."

Louise – who has worked at TSH for 35 years and on CP1 for the last 17 – comes in early before the start of her shift to put the finishing touches on her message.

"It's such a bright, cheery message," said CP1 patient Diane Ellis. "There are cute stories and music from when I was growing up."

"I love it," added patient Bob Morgan. "I can't wait for it every morning she's here."

Although she's retiring in February 2017, Louise is considering coming in as a volunteer to continue her What's Up Wheezie messages.

"I've always loved geriatrics and I've learned so much from the people I've cared for over the years," said Louise. "They've taught me everything from gardening to how to take care of my car. What's Up Wheezie is a small way I can give back and provide our patients a positive start to their day."

World Premie Day celebrated at Scarborough and Rouge Hospital



Mom Prem enjoys World Premie Day celebrations at the Centenary site of SRH with her daughters Hannah and Harsha.

The Centenary site of Scarborough and Rouge Hospital (SRH) celebrated premature babies who were born or cared for at the site during their World Prematurity (Premie) Day celebration on Sunday, November 13.

World Premie Day is celebrated annually on November 17. It is a globally-renowned educational event that raises awareness about premature births, while also enhancing and celebrating the lives of "preemies" and their families. Approximately one in 10 babies are born preterm each year worldwide.

Children who were once cared for at the Centenary neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and the special care nursery at Ajax and Pickering were invited, along with their families, to celebrate the day. This event gives families, who in some cases spent weeks together in the NICU or special care nursery area, the opportunity to share experiences, see how well each other's babies are doing, and show appreciation for all who helped them.

U of T awards social work research grant to SRH

Scarborough and Rouge Hospital (SRH) recently announced its Mental Health department has received a \$15,000 research grant from the University of Toronto (U of T). The Mental Health department at SRH's Birchmount site will provide practicum opportunities for first- and second-year Master of Social Work (MSW) students over three years, as well as engage in a research project. U of T's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work will designate \$5,000 from the Bertha Rosenstadt Fund for Health Research to the Mental Health department at SRH's Birchmount site for each year of the grant.

This project will contribute to the growing body of knowledge and literature on the effective use of technology in social work education and practice. Studies indicate that evidence-based online psychotherapy is as effective, if not more effective, than evidence-based, in-person psychotherapy. However, as some clinicians may have a deeper familiarity with the benefits of in-person psychotherapy, they may not understand the benefits of technology in practice.

"Social work students may enter their practicum with a similar perspective, as they have had limited exposure to this therapeutic approach. The research will explore whether, as these students become more familiar with the benefits of online therapy, they will feel more inclined towards online psychotherapy as an effective model of social work intervention," said Faiza Khalid-Khan, Patient Care Director, Mental Health, SRH's Birchmount and General sites. "On behalf of Scarborough and Rouge Hospital and social work staff and clinicians from our Mental Health department, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto for enabling this important research."

During their practicum at SRH, students will deliver evidence-based psychotherapy services to patients in the Adult Outpatient program, as well as complete assessments on the inpatient unit and with the crisis team. Students will use technology to observe and participate in e-therapy, learn about e-therapy clinical platforms, and participate in data collection and analysis. SRH will gather data to determine students' perceptions of online psychotherapy pre- and post-practicum.



"It is evident that the social work team is making significant contributions to the research and education objectives at the hospital all in the service of ensuring exemplary patient care," said Faye Mishna, Dean, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, U of T. "As future professionals, University of Toronto Master of Social Work students who are fulfilling their practicum at Scarborough and Rouge Hospital benefit from this commitment to education. We are honoured to continue our partnership with Scarborough and Rouge Hospital, and delighted that the hospital is a recipient of the Bertha Rosenstadt Trust Fund."

The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work will also appoint SRH social work staff members

who commit to practicum teaching with U of T MSW students for a three-year period as Adjunct Lecturers for that time period. Other social work staff members engaged in teaching will be designated as field instructors.

SRH is a leader in e-therapy work, offering Internet-delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, a first-in-Canada project in a community hospital. SRH's e-therapy research results have been presented at major conferences, including the American Psychiatric Association's Annual Conference (2015). For more information, please visit

<http://www.tsh.to/areas-of-care/mental-health/adult-outpatient-program/>.

Short Story

THE PROMISE

C. Kamalaharan

It was in their respective backyards their love affair began while she was plucking flowers for adorning the pictures in the shrine room and he was watering the plants in his home garden as part of their daily chores. Both the backyards were partitioned by a parapet wall a little below five feet that provided an opportunity for them to glance at each other without straining their necks. Ranjith the teacher lived in front in his ancestral home with his grandma having lost his parents early in life. He was also unfortunate to be without any siblings. Rathi the only daughter who lived behind with her parents in a rented house was deprived of pursuing her studies beyond the A/L as she was groomed to be a good housewife, a familiar set up those days in most orthodox families.

Their love affair began with the exchange of smiles which gradually led to the exchange of greetings. Both being fair and attractive a strong desire triggered between them to communicate with each other. Ranjith took the initiative, showed her a letter placed it on the wall and kept a stone on it to serve as a paper weight. Finding nobody around the place he gestured her to collect it. Brought up in a conservative set up Rathi was flabbergasted at Ranjith's sudden advances. Not knowing what to do she hurriedly left the place and dashed into her house. "Have I hurt her?" Ranjith trembled. "Under the control of a strict father she might have been scared to indulge in such clandestine activities," thought he. At 10.00 p.m he found the letter still lying there. "It's my fault to have mistaken her friendly gesture when she smiled and exchanged formalities," mused he. He decided to get up early the next morning and remove the letter before the father notices it. He was restless the whole night thinking about what was in store for him. He hadn't a wink of sleep the whole night.

The following morning on hearing the pealing of the Murugan temple bell, the time piece of the area he tiptoed to the wall and found the letter missing. He was thrilled but it was short lived as he was not sure as to who took the letter. "Might be her father! or might be Rathi and if she had taken it she might have simply dumped it in the garbage bin or she might have even handed it to her father!" For two days there wasn't any sign of a reply from her or her presence in the backyard. He was restless fearing what the consequences would be. On the third day he was delighted to see a letter on the wall pinned under a stone. Again his mind began to vacillate between hope and despair, whether the reply would be positive or negative. He took the letter inside the house and was elated to read the first sentence. "Me too in love with you. But let this be an understanding between us for the time being as we have a long way to go, a risky way. My father is a very strict person; we have to be careful in our dealings with each other." But as days passed a strong desire to meet and talk blossomed within them. They were not able to restrain themselves. And so one evening at sunset Ranjith once again took the initiative, placed a letter on the wall and gestured her to collect it. She immediately scurried to the wall took the letter tucked it in her waist entered the house and read. "Meet me tonight around 10.30 p.m in your backyard near the wall when the outdoor lights are switched off." As expected both stealthily came out and took up positions opposite to each other on either side of the wall. Both were so excited that they began to blabber, mostly Rathi. To set things on the right track Ranjith began cautiously, "Are you truly in love with me?" Unexpected such a direct question from him she fumbled for a while unable to answer. "It doesn't matter you just tell me," again he asked. Quite hesitatingly she replied, "Yes I love you." Next he asked her the point-blank question, "If that is so will you marry me?" After thinking for a while she answered in the affirmative "Yes". "You won't go back on your words?" "No, not at all." Then



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she asked him, "How about you?" "If at all I marry I will marry you only and not anyone else, take this as my promise," he assured her. After the mutual agreement they met only once a week for fear of being noticed.

A few weeks later Ranjith's sudden absence in the backyard tormented Rathi. The outdoor lights too were not switched on after sunset. Only the light in Ranjith's room shimmering through the crevices of the doors and windows was seen. "He must be there but why is he avoiding me?" thought she. Days weeks and months passed he was not to be seen in the backyard. Ranjith too was restless without meeting her. Something prevented him from going to the backyard. "What's it?"

"What's the reason for you to avoid her?" asked Kumar his neighbour and friend. "Please don't ask me anything." "Any problem?" "For goodness sake leave me alone. I am undergoing the worst mental agony anyone can think of." Rathi knowing that Kumar was a close friend of Ranjith sought Kumar's help to find out the reason for Ranjith's indifference towards her. However much Kumar tried he couldn't extract anything from Ranjith. In desperation Rathi wrote a lengthy emotional letter reminding him of the promise he had made and requested him to give the reason for avoiding her. She placed the letter on the wall hoping that he would collect it. For a couple of days it remained there unremoved. She even posted a letter to his home address but there wasn't any response from him. Unable to contact Ranjith she began to hate him. "What happened to the promise he gave me, all gone with the wind," she lamented. To add insult to injury her father got a transfer to another town in the same district.

"Ranjith! They are vacating the house and moving to a new residence shortly," said Kumar. Ranjith looked dismayed and remained silent. "She is leaving thoroughly disappointed Ranjith!" said Kumar. Ranjith continued to remain silent. It was on a Sunday they left the place. As she left in her father's car she glanced at Ranjith's house to find out whether he was watching. With all hopes crushed and shattered she left bemoaning.

"Ranjith, now that she has left tell me the reason, please. Ranjith held Kumar's hand and wept unabashedly "You don't know my side of the story Kumar. Its terrible mental torture I am experiencing. Not that I hate Rathi or have any ill feeling towards her. I was forced into such a tight situation." "Now tell me what it's all about?" How can I break the promise and divulge all what happened." "Promise! to whom?" "First you promise that you won't reveal this to anybody particularly to Rathi." "Sure Ranjith I won't reveal to anybody." "O.K I trust you Kumar."

One night after the outdoor lights were switched off I was at the backyard near the wall as usual expecting Rathi's arrival. But she didn't turn up. I waited and waited. Just then I heard a low whispering voice, "Son, please give up the affair." I

looked over the wall and was shocked to see Rathi's mother standing. She continued, "There is no way for both of you to get married. She being our only child having enough property and cash in her name her father is making arrangements to find a suitable alliance holding a top position probably a doctor or an engineer. If he comes to know about this he will not hesitate to take drastic action against both of you as he is a hot tempered person. I pray please give up the affair. Please Thamby, I consider you as my son." Having lost his mother when he was an infant the way she addressed him "My Son" stunned Ranjith. He thought for a while realized the genuineness of her stand and particularly the way she addressed him, a motherless person as "My Son." Her earnest pleading stirred his conscience. He thought for awhile and said, "O.K Amma I'll give up the affair from this moment". "Son, promise me that you will stop all dealings you have with her and also that you will not reveal this to anybody particularly to Rathi." "Yes Amma I will do as you say." "Son you will do well in life, May God bless you," saying so she left.

"Now tell me Kumar what am I to do being caught in such a irrevocable situation? Is it my fault?" "No not at all, I am so sorry, what a terrible situation you are in! The stand you took when Rathi's mother told you about the quandary she was in and addressed you as "My Son" is really great. You have completely snapped the strong bondage you had with Rathi and have become the most hated person in her life. She will never forgive you for the rebuff you gave her," saying so he left. Ranjith felt relieved after vomiting everything he had in his heart.

Several years passed when one bright Sunday morning Ranjith was at the Murugan temple to witness the car festival. There was a huge gathering of devotees. While circumambulating the outer corridor of the temple he was in for a rude shock. His heart sank on seeing Rathi with her kids aged 5 and 3 approaching in the opposite direction. He hadn't time to move away. As they came close face to face she in a fit of rage immediately turned her head and briskly went away dragging her kids. Completely devastated Ranjith took a few steps forward to face another shock. Rathi's mother was limping with the support of a walking stick trailing far behind her daughter. As she came closer Ranjith stooped down and began, "How are you Amma?" "Oh son! how are you?" "Fine Amma." "Where are your wife and kids?" "I am still a bachelor." "Why Son!" "Because of the promise." "The promise! you have kept the promise you gave me by severing all connections with my daughter, that's all over. Not that promise I gave you but the other promise." "The other promise! What's it?" "The promise I gave to your daughter that I will never marry anyone other than you," saying so he moved on with tears trickling down his cheeks. Rathi's mother stood thunderstruck for a moment and staggered along.....



The First Generation

By: Andrea Shanmugarajah

The Tamil community in Toronto is undoubtedly an interesting one – as part of a growing global diaspora that was driven out of Sri Lanka largely because of a long-standing civil war, Tamil people have managed remarkably to preserve our culture, even on the opposite side of the world. Tamils have been lucky in that this is a city that tailors itself towards welcoming all cultures with open arms, but even then, it has required a substantial amount of resilience and determination to build a life here and make it into a home. But why were Tamil people who immigrated here so willing to endure the challenges involved in succeeding as an immigrant? Many Tamil people moved here, to a country with a language they could not speak, were forced to take jobs that they were significantly over-qualified for, and had to drag themselves from the ground up to earn the same place in society they once held. But why leave one's own mother country for something entirely foreign, and more importantly, what can we, as children of immigrants, learn from the fortitude the Canadian Tamil community has demonstrated over the last number of years.

I remember even as a young child, hearing of the numerous sacrifices Tamil people have had to make to make a life for themselves and their families here in Canada. I can recall hearing people being described by their former position in Sri Lanka, hearing about people who once held great jobs and high stations, who now worked in labour jobs or for minimum wage. I heard also about people who had their rights to a higher education stripped from them – a lifelong dream crumbling, not because they weren't smart enough, but because of policy outside of their control. But remarkably, as I met people who lived through these situations over the years, I did not find the bitterness and the anger that I was expecting. Even at the time, I found it hard to wrap my mind around the idea that people who had been forced to give up everything because of external forces could be not just content, but actually happy, with their new lives in Canada. In fact, as time has passed, I have only found myself more taken aback by the attitudes of Tamil immigrants. I reflect on everything that I have strived for, and the life I have worked so hard trying to provide myself, and I simply cannot imagine how I would react if I had to give it up. I suspect that the injustice of it would overwhelm me,



Giving back to the community: Food Drive by Senior Tamils' Centre of Ontario - October 2016 (pic via: facebook.com/SeniorTamilsCentreofOntario)

and even as I tried to start again from scratch, my mind would always return to the life I could have had, had things gone to plan. So, I wondered, what allowed the Tamil community to find joy again even after all their hardships, and avoid being consumed by the life they could have, and should have, had?

I have described Tamil immigrants in Canada as resilient, and this word is undoubtedly fitting. But it fits not just because the community has managed to transport its culture, values and traditions across the world. Tamils have shown resiliency in their ability to not take for granted the opportunities they are presented with, regardless of how small. They have shown resilience also, in their willingness to work below their own station so that their kids can one day live comfortably, in a country that accepts the success and the determination of all, regardless of skin colour or ethnicity. Tamil people sacrificed everything they had and everything they worked for to give their children a better shot at life – a shot that was more secure and stable, because Tamils learned early on, as they lost everything, that their wealth was not in their belongings, but in their children. But most of all, in having done all of the above, yet still continuing to find pleasure and contentment from the small joys in life, have Tamil immigrants in Canada shown true resilience.

As someone born and raised in Canada, I know that I have many blessings to count – English is my first language,

I have gone to school here since pre-school, and I have been immersed in Canadian culture for my entire life. However, I count myself even luckier to have been raised as a child of Tamil immigrants. The lessons this community has taught me go deeper than just learning to drape a saree or make the perfect curry, and they are so deeply ingrained in me that I am confident that the path my life takes will be heavily influenced by where I, and my parents, came from. The warmth I have received from the Tamil community is unparalleled, and through my interactions over the years, I have learned to bring kindness and compassion to everything I do, regardless of how my own life is progressing. I have learned also to remain resilient even the face of challenge – being surrounded and raised by people who had to abruptly leave their country and make a life for themselves on the other side of the world, it would be impossible not to believe that anything is possible. The Tamil community has taught me that there is no sacrifice not worth making for the people you love – even the most arduous of hardships can be endured if it means helping your loved ones thrive. And finally, through this community I have learned the importance of always counting your blessings, regardless of how sparse they may seem. Tamil people have so much to lament – they were forced to leave their home country after years of injustices, come to Canada, and find any work they could, just to make ends

meet. Despite this, the Tamil people I know have been perpetually optimistic, not absorbed by their misfortunes, but focused instead on their gratitude for what they do have and how much worse their situation could have been. I keep this attitude in mind as I embark on my own challenges and struggles, knowing that if my parents and their peers could have gone through what they did and still emerge with smiles on their faces, then I have no reason to ever consider myself as anything but lucky.

Andrea Shanmugarajah

Andrea Shanmugarajah is a student at McMaster University, where she is currently studying Medicine. She is involved with the senior community in Toronto, which she became interested in due to her own personal experiences with her grandmother. She hopes to eventually pursue a career in geriatrics, whereby she can help and advocate for the elderly on a daily basis.



Andrea hopes to educate others about the struggles that many elderly people may face in Toronto, and how people of all ages can work towards making the community a more accepting and compassionate place for seniors.



WORDS OF PEACE



Court Clarity

“Peace is within you,” says Prem Rawat, who has been traveling the world for most of his life to deliver a message of peace, hope and understanding. “What you are looking for is within inside of you.”

It’s a message that many who have been called saints or seers have brought to the people of their time, but one that is always fresh. Why? Because, Mr. Rawat says, it’s a message for living people - and that points to something so simple that it’s easy to overlook its profundity.

“It always comes down to that one thing that is the most important,” he says. “You are alive. You exist. So what does that mean?” It means, Mr. Rawat explains, that reality has nothing to do with what family you were born into or how many academic degrees you hold—nor is your reality the cells that make up your body, because none of these things are what’s keeping you alive.

“My reality is that which is puls-

ing inside of me,” he says. “This divinity that touches every single human being has touched me, too—and I am alive. The nature of that divinity is peace. The purer I become—in my sight, in my hearing, in my taking in—then the more I can enjoy that. This is what clarity is.”

The clearer we can be, Mr. Rawat says, the more wonderful our lives will be. If life is a journey, then no matter what happens, that journey can be enjoyable, rich and rewarding.

However, he points out, “The more muddled we are, the worse it’s going to be. Life become a struggle for us when it shouldn’t be a struggle.

“Every single day, we need to accept the challenge of life itself—to choose beauty, to court clarity every step of the way, because if we don’t have clarity, we will choose the wrong thing. So we have to begin with that.”

Courting clarity isn’t as difficult as it sounds, Mr. Rawat says. “It’s actually relatively easy. There are

two ways to light a path. One is to get thousands of light bulbs and put them along each side of that path. Or there’s another way: Carry a light in your hand.

“People want to light the thousand bulbs. I say, “No, all you need to do is carry the lamp. Lighting a thousand bulbs is complicated. One flashlight in your hand is not. The result is the same: It will light your path.”

In the same way, he says, finding the peace that people everywhere yearn for doesn’t have to be difficult.

“Peace in this world,” he says, “begins with peace in every human being. It’s not about the world. It’s about you. This world has been there for a very long time. It’s going to be there for billions of years yet to come. This is your time, now. This is your moment, now. What do you want it to be? Something sweet? Peace, joy? Or some wallowing and fluttering of unbelievable ideas, causing confusion after confusion after confusion?”

“If it’s peace that you want, peace is there to be discovered. Do you want joy? Joy is there to be discovered. Discovered, not manufactured. The joy that you manufacture, the peace that you manufacture, you will be disappointed with.

“Get some clarity, and enjoy being here. There is no such thing as too much clarity. Get some clarity, and wherever you go, continue to enjoy this life. It’s not about how many days you have. It’s about every day—that you are full every day, that you feel that feeling in your life every day.

“Appreciate being alive, being aware of this life, being aware of that divinity within inside, being aware of that peace that resides within every single human being on the face of the Earth.”

To learn more about Prem Rawat
1 877 707 3221 Toll Free

416 431 5000 Tamil

416 264 7700 Hindi

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The level is not all that matters



By: Janani Srikantha

Recently, report cards went home. Subsequently, there were many children asking about their level. After finding out their level, there were no follow-up questions. However, there were some statements such as “Oh, I’m a bad student.” and “I can’t read.” This is heartbreaking because neither one of these is true.

We have gotten to a point where even our children are very focussed on the numbers that are on report cards. We forget to give importance to the comments or ask questions in order to reflect on progress.

There has been extensive discussion among teachers as to whether levels should be included in report cards, as levels are increasingly being used to label children. Levels were never intended for this purpose, but instead they are a tool for teachers. Teachers use levels to understand whether a child is above or below grade level. The various components of a reading assessment, for example, are analyzed to understand whether the next steps for improvement lie within fluency, summarizing, inferencing, and so on.

The level is part of a teacher’s data collection, and it is not the only piece of information that informs of a child’s progress.

We, as parents and teachers, need to remind students that they are not defined by their level. Students’ self-esteem and their love for school should not be affected by their report cards. Instead, the report card should be used to reflect upon what was achieved over the term, what the next steps are, and to outline an action plan for success. This allows students to see themselves as individuals and that their achievements are not compared to others. Students don’t feel like they are a “bad” student, but instead they learn to understand their strengths and having strategies to scaffold their areas for growth.

Another question that is often asked after report cards is related to reading. I am asked by students whether they should only read books at their level. When I reflect on my own reading practices, I read books at all levels in many different genres. With my students, I encourage them to explore their libraries and book stores. When we choose books together, we talk about what

their interests are, review the books they have read, and investigate what genres they would like to explore. I suggest titles of books, and in return they let me know of books they have enjoyed. (Some of my favourite books are ones that have been suggested to me by students.) When guiding a student to read, I, sometimes, let students read a book at a lower reading level. In fact, picture books are prominent fixtures in my classroom, regardless of the age of the students. We need to get to a point where children want to read. They need to pick up a book every day without being forced to. The only way to foster this is to encourage students to read books that interest them and stories they can engage with. While reading together, encourage students to critically think about the book. Once a student develops a habit of reading, they will automatically begin to choose books closer to their reading level, because their development of critical thinking will steer them towards texts with more in-depth plots.

The levels on a report card, including reading levels, should not define who a student is. Those levels are just markers and tools to be used to

plan the next steps. Instead, it is essential to focus on what a student has done well, and how we can facilitate their next steps towards success. In my opinion, there is no such thing as a “bad” student. There are students who need support to nurture their interests and guidance to find strategies to succeed.

Janani Srikantha is a certified teacher who is experienced with the Ontario curriculum and the International Baccalaureate. She provides academic support using personalized learning plans based on students’ needs. She is currently completing



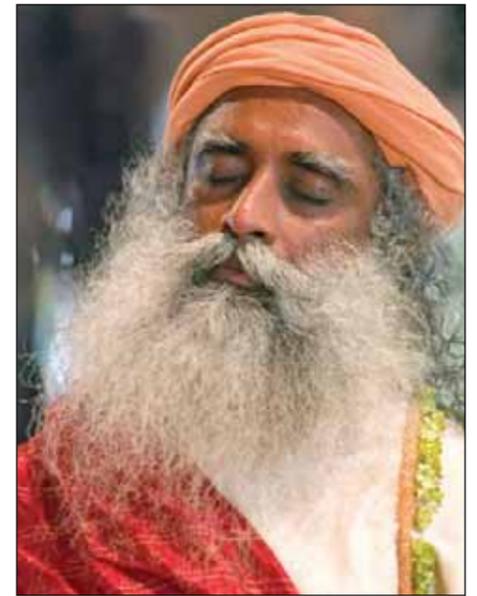
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her graduate studies to further understand how the integration to technology is redefining how a student learns. The education landscape is changing, and she helps parents and families to engage their child in learning. Janani has led workshops for educators and parents on topics that address different facets of education. For more information or queries on how to help your child with learning, please email info@thinkshif.edu or visit Thinkshift Edu on Facebook.



SADHGURU

Washing off the Memories of the Body



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

eyes closed, being conscious of it. Turn both ways, so that the breeze flows over you from front and back. You will feel so much lighter and better.

In the ashram, all the brahmacharis wash their clothes separately. This is because all of them are doing sadhana and everyone has their own specific characteristic – we do not want it all mixed up. Another way to prevent a mix-up is to coat the clothes with soil in every wash. Sadhus and sanyasis always use finely sieved red earth to dye their clothes. The clothes are originally white, but because they are constantly washed with filtered earth, they turn mud color.

Similarly, the buildings in the ashram are painted with soil and a certain adhesive for it to stick like paint. Those who are doing intense sadhana must either wash separately, or coat your clothes with some soil material every time you wash them, so that the only *runanubandha* that you have is with the earth – not with people or things around you. Apart from that, if you wear clothes that are dipped in red earth, in some way, it is a reminder for the body as to where it comes from and where it will go. Another way of doing it is to have a mud bath – the idea of a mud bath is to clear everything.

Sadhguru's new book, *INNER ENGINEERING: A Yogi's Guide to Joy* was recently released on September 20th. In this, Sadhguru presents a sophisticated guide to self-empowerment based on the teaching and principles of classical yoga. This system is a means to create a framework of inner stability, helping those who practice become architects of a joyful life.

To learn more about Sadhguru's Tour visit meetSadhguru.org and to learn more about the book visit InnerEngineering.com/book.

Email: toronto@ishafoundation.org
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Sadhguru elaborates on how the body acquires memory and what are the ways to cleanse the system of the past impressions.

The body has its own memory. Today, there is research happening in this direction. To put it in a simplified way, let us say for example, your father, when he was a child, liked to play with round objects, round pebbles, and things like that, and he developed a certain level of involvement with them. As his child, without knowing why, you will tend to choose similar things. It is proven that these repetitions happen. This is simply because you carry a certain genetic material. *Runanubandha* is the physical memory that you carry within you. This memory can be acquired due to blood relationships or sexual relationships. The body remembers any kind of intimacy – not only with another physical body, but with any physical substance.

There are certain festivals in India

like Pongal or Bhogi that are about clearing up your mental baggage, your emotional baggage, and your *runanubandha*. We are doing *Klesha Nashana Kriya*. You could consider it as a ritual fire wash, which you can make use of if a regular shower is not sufficient to get you clean. *Klesha Nashana Kriya* is a way of burning physical memories that you have picked up – not necessarily because of relationships. Just by coming in touch with people, situations, atmospheres, so many things, the body picks up memory.

There is fire wash, and of course, water wash every day. At the time in my life when I was into a lot of sadhana, I would have somewhere between five and seven showers a day, because your system becomes so sensitive. For example, you sit on a particular cush-

ion, and you are conscious what this cushion is doing to you, so you want to wash it off by at least letting water run over your body. I did not calculate that I must take a shower five or seven times a day – whenever I felt like it. Most yogis have bath at least twice a day, at the minimum. Usually, it is a dip in the river – you dip in flowing water so that you are washed clean.

During certain seasons, like the shift of the Sun from the southern hemisphere to northern hemisphere, and again, from north to south, the winds are strong on the Indian subcontinent. One simple process is to go and stand in the wind so that you get a proper air wash. It will do wonders to you. Try this – when there is a strong breeze, just wear something loose and simply stand there for half an hour, with your



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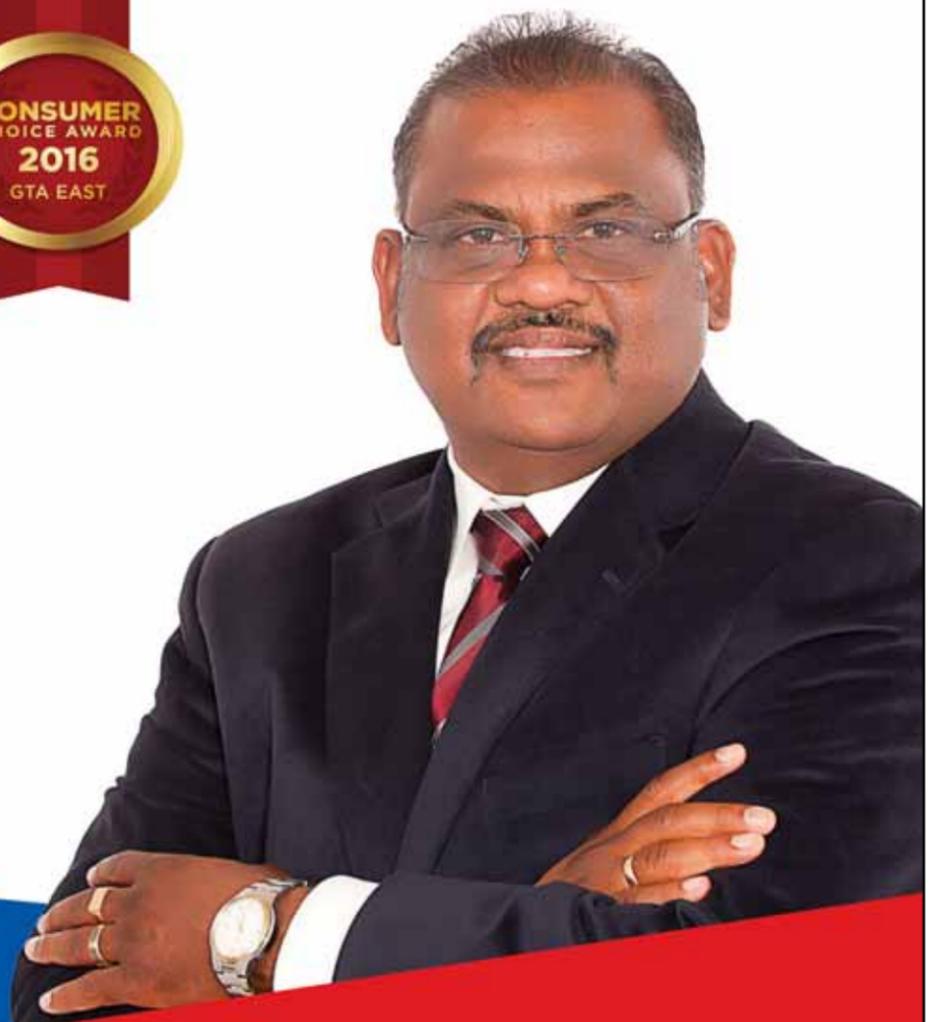
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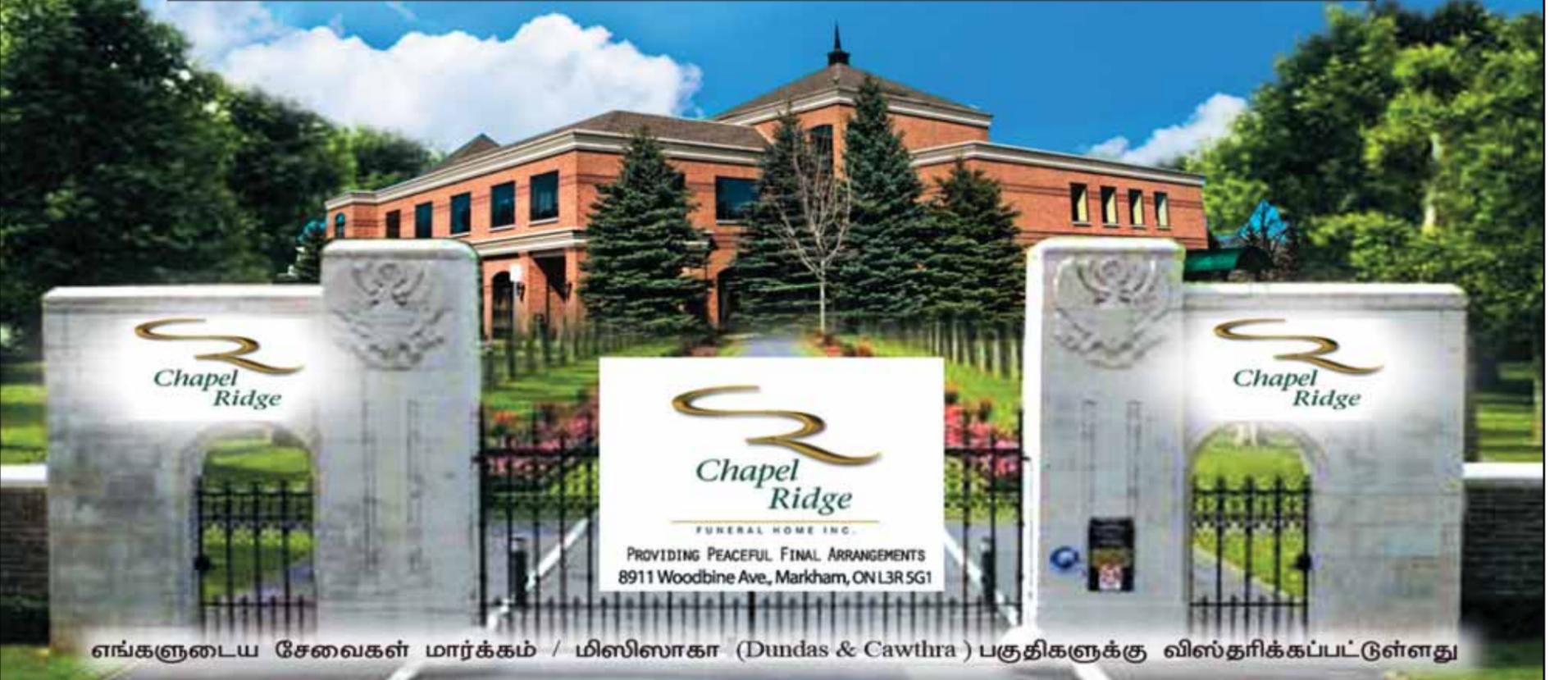
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CLIMATE CHANGE

M. Pushparajah

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLIMATE AND WEATHER:

Weather information is obtained by observing atmospheric variables, such as, air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and direction, solar radiation, atmospheric pressure and precipitation (rain and snow), at a particular time and place. Climate in comparison is the synthesis of weather observations over a long time period to produce a statistical description of conditions covering a large area.

THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING:

Weather monitoring over a long period of time point to definite permanent changes in the climate. As a matter of fact people have started questioning the usefulness of the term climate. This is especially true in the temperate region where recent unpredictable weather patterns are incongruent with the typically defined four seasons usually experienced. The alarming fact is the change is accelerating in recent times and unless contained humanity will face adverse consequences. Climate change is defined in various ways: simply any long-term significant change in the weather patterns of an area. Fluctuations over periods less than a few decades are not considered as climate change.

CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE:

Climate change can be natural or caused by changes people have made to the land or atmosphere. Specific human activities have been identified as significant causes of recent climate change, often referred to as global warming. Human beings release carbon into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide through activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and intensive agriculture. Carbon dioxide is the main contributor to climate change because of its impact on increasing the atmospheric temperature. Since the Industrial Revolution began around 1750, human activities have contributed to climate change by adding CO₂, chlorofluorocarbons and other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Today's atmosphere contains 42 per cent more carbon dioxide than it did before the industrial era. The increase in the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere enhances the greenhouse effect which is creating global warming and consequently climate change. Global warming has already begun. Since 1900, the global average temperature has risen by 0.7 °C, and the northern hemisphere is substantially warmer than at any point during the past 1,000 years.



CLIMATE CHANGE DISBELIEVERS:

Despite the international scientific community's consensus on climate change, a small number of climate change DISBELIEVERS continue to deny that climate change exists or that humans are causing it. Deniers are of the view it is just a state of flux and not a permanent phenomenon! Deniers claim that scientific evidence on climate change is virtually non-existent and it is not a problem. However, these individuals are generally not climate scientists, and their arguments have been discredited by the scientific community at large. The debate is over about whether or not climate change is real. It is now time to act to solve or mitigate the problem!

TEN INDICATORS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE IMPACTS:

The trend scientists have seen over the past 50 years is unmistakable.

i) Air temperatures over land are increasing: Globally, average surface temperatures increased 0.6-0.9 °C between 1906 and 2005. However, the disturbing issue is that the rise is nearly twice as fast in the last 50 years alone. It's clear the frequency and severity of droughts and heat waves are increasing leading to intense droughts, destructive wildfires, failed crops, and low water supplies.

ii) Air temperatures over oceans are increasing: Nearly 70 percent of the world is covered by oceans. Oceans evaporate more water as the air right near the surface gets warmer. The impact - more floods, more hurricanes, and more extreme precipitation events.

iii) Arctic sea ice is decreasing: Satellite images show that the area covered by sea ice in the Arctic is shrinking, and it continued a downward trend for the past 30 years.

iv) Glaciers are melting: The disappearance of glaciers is one of the clearest signs of climate change. The people who depend on melting ice for water to support their farming and living needs

are deeply affected.

v) Sea levels are rising: Sea levels have been rising for the past century. The pace is only increasing in recent years as glaciers melt faster and water temperatures increase, causing oceans to expand. You can imagine how this would affect those living in a highly populated coastal area. Consider how many millions of people are at risk as sea levels rise, storms intensify, and more extreme flooding occurs. Additionally, marine life is threatened as salt water intrudes into fresh water aquifers, many of which support human communities and natural ecosystems.

vi) Humidity is increasing: More humidity means more water vapor is in the air, making it feel stickier in hot weather. Water vapor itself is an important part of the water cycle, and it contributes to the earth's natural greenhouse effect. Air conditioners have to work much harder, that means more energy use, which can in turn contribute to more climate change.

vii) Ocean heat content is increasing: The ocean stores and releases heat over long periods of time. This is a natural and important part of stabilizing the climate system. But short-term unusual warming of surface waters has become more common resulting in increased heat content leading to higher sea levels, melting glaciers and stress to marine ecosystems.

viii) Sea surface temperature is increasing: Observations show that water temperatures at the ocean's surface are going up. To some extent, this is a normal pattern however, as the ocean's surface temperature continues to increase over time, more and more heat is released into the atmosphere. This additional heat can lead to stronger and more frequent storms like tropical cyclones and hurricanes.

ix) Snow is decreasing: Satellite imageries show areas covered by snow in the Northern Hemisphere are becoming smaller. Snow is important as it helps control how much of the sun's energy earth absorbs. The snow and

ice loss is replaced by land and ocean which absorbs more solar energy contributing to global warming.

x) Earth's lower atmosphere temperature is increasing: The troposphere is the lowest layer of Earth's atmosphere, starting at earth's surface and goes up to a height of 23,000 to 65,000 feet above sea level. Observations show that this lowest layer of the atmosphere is warming as greenhouse gases build up and trap heat that radiates from the earth's surface. Scientists tell us that human activity, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, caused this increase in atmospheric temperatures.

2015 UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE IN PARIS:

A global agreement on the reduction of climate change was reached by consensus of the representatives of 196 countries attending the Paris Conference in December 2015. The agreement sets a goal of limiting global warming to less than 2 °C compared to pre-industrial levels. The agreement also calls for zero net human-induced greenhouse gas emissions to be reached during the second half of the 21st century. The agreement will enter into force when ratified by at least 55 countries which together represent at least 55 percent of global greenhouse emissions. 174 countries signed the agreement in New York, on the Earth day in 2016, of which 24 countries including USA and China, that together contribute to 40% global green gas emission, have ratified it as at August 2016.

THE CHALLENGE IS IMMENSE:

It's up to each and everyone one of us to do our part and help spread truthful information about climate change to our networks of friends, peers, and family members and ensure that our actions do not contribute to accelerating climate change. Carpooling, using public transit and cycling are considered effective ways to reduce our carbon footprint. Can we succeed in meeting the goal of zero net human-induced greenhouse gas emission by 2050? More than 50 percent of the world's energy currently comes from oil and natural gas. A technology breakthrough is needed to enhance the contribution of renewable energy to independently provide enough affordable and reliable energy to meet the needs of the developed world while also raising the living standards of developing countries. USA & China as the first two large nations to formally accept the Paris Agreement, have set a model for other countries - both developed and developing - around the world to follow.



WHY AMERICANS CHOSE TRUMP AS THEIR NEXT PRESIDENT

AN ANALYSIS

BY: RAYMOND RAJABALAN

It was a day like no other. Nov 08th, the day of the US presidential elections had finally arrived. By evening, the polls were closed and a tensed political drama was about to begin. Millions across the world were glued to their TV sets anxiously waiting for the results of this highly contested election with lots of uncertainty about the outcome. In fact this US Presidential election was being watched with great interest by so many including many influential world leaders. Meanwhile for the ardent supporters of the two rival candidates - Hillary Clinton, the once powerful former US Secretary of State as well as the former First lady and Billionaire Businessman Donald Trump - it was a great nail biter. Even the veteran TV commentators and political analysts were nervously fumbling around with variety of adjectives to describe the outcome. The world media was on the edge preparing alternate articles bracing for any eventuality. In fact, the prestigious NEWSWEEK magazine had already prepared two different cover photos since the outcome was very uncertain. Meanwhile rumors were floating around that the results from Florida might result in a recount battle similar to the aftermath of 2000 presidential elections when the Republican candidate George Bush defeated his rival candidate former US Vice president Al Gore by a wafer thin majority after a grueling 36 day recount battle.

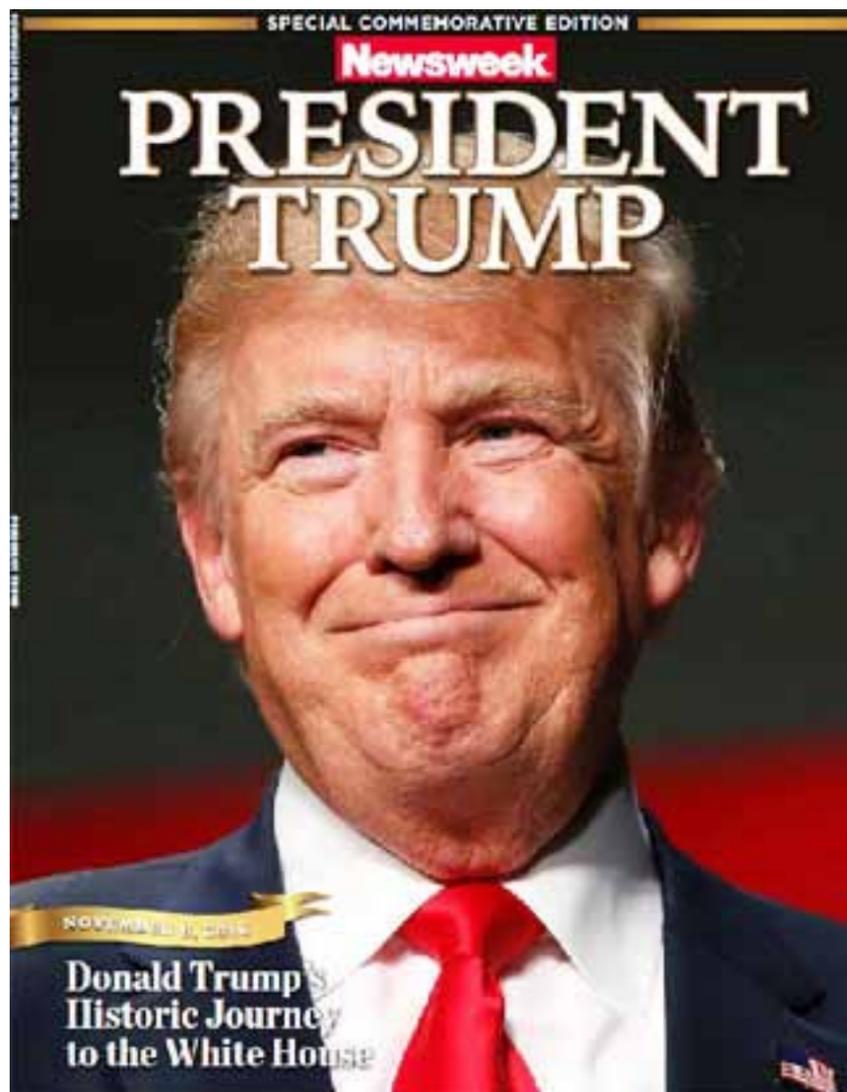
By late night, the results from the various states across the nation were pouring in and the supporters of Hilary Clinton were already in a jubilant mood. However even past midnight nothing was certain and suddenly there were signs of Trump sweeping the polls causing panic among Hilary's supporters. By around 3.00 AM, the unthinkable was about to happen and it was almost obvious the less favoured Trump had trounced defying all odds and was declared President-elect. There was shock and disbelief among millions across the globe while there was panic among many within USA. Yet the unexpected had happened once again proving that change is the only thing that would not change.

HOW THIS UNEXPECTED SITUATION EVOLVED

Soon after this abrupt turn of events, the famous quote "Success has many fathers. Failure is an orphan", a phrase based on a local proverb quoted by Count Galeazzo Ciano son-in law of Mussolini began to surface in the minds of many. The world began to grudgingly accept the reality that they may have to deal with an unpredictable personality. Yes David had actually defeated the proverbial giant Goliath.

Though both the candidates were highly unpopular, it was a case of Hobson's choice for many

voters. Many unwillingly voted for the candidate of their choice since they had no alternative. In the end, the voters began to consider rejecting the seemingly victorious Hillary Clinton who had been hoping to make history by becoming the first ever female US president. However she probably was not aware that the voters had been preparing for a real change and were not ready to hand over an-



other term of office for the Clinton family since the damage caused to the office of US presidency by her husband and former President Bill Clinton had caused 'Clinton fatigue' in the minds of the voters. Even with the active support of President Obama and the first lady Michelle Obama, Hillary was unable to achieve her ambition of moving into the oval office.

While Hillary was actively campaigning, supporters of her rival candidate were busy unearthing everything about her past activities. When her involvement in so many alleged fraudulent activities began to surface, her voter base started cracking and her campaign was heading towards disaster. As per the idiom "The last straw that broke the camel's back", suddenly there an announcement by FBI that Hilary's involvement in using her private email for official communication was about to be investigated.

THE PRIVATE EMAILS

It emerged that while Secretary of State, Mrs. Clinton had been using a vulnerable private email server to send classified information. This was at best reckless, at worst criminally negligent.

In July, the FBI announced it would not recommend criminal charges. While she had been 'extremely careless', it looked as if Mrs. Clinton was in the clear.

Then came the bombshell. Ten days before polling day, FBI director James Comey sent a letter to Congress to say that his bureau was reviewing yet another tranche of Clinton emails related to her use of the private server. Trump's people seized gleefully on this as evidence of poor judgment.

Then, however, Comey said the FBI had given the emails a clean bill of health. But many Democrats felt that by then the damage had been done in the eyes of the voters. The Clinton dream of a White House dynasty was over and there was the death of a dynasty rotten to the core.

The events that lead to the impeachment of Bill Clinton a decade ago was still fresh in the minds of the voters. Meanwhile so many fraudulent activities involving the once powerful couple began to emerge and they were instrumental in swaying the minds of the voters who began to provide their support to Trump.

Finally the series of scandals involving former President Clinton and his ambitious wife Hillary had come to haunt them resulting in their high hopes demolished and their dreams dashed for ever.

Once again the famous quotation "Man proposes but God disposes" has been proved correct and undoubtedly it has been confirmed that God Almighty is the greatest judge who controls every event in the universe.



© Reuters/CORBIS



CHRISTMAS

A HISTORICAL REVIEW

Raymond Rajabalan

For unto you are born this day in the city of David a saviour, who is Christ the Lord

And this shall be sign unto you .Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger
- Luke 2: 11-12

The central theme of Christmas is: Peace on Earth, Good Will towards men as proclaimed by the angels who announced the birth of infant Jesus on the first Christmas.

We are in the midst of Christmas, a festive period concerning the birth of a child that altered the courses of history of mankind, the arrival of angels, three wise men – Gasper, Melchior and Balthazar- who came from the east to Jerusalem and the star of Bethlehem that guided them to the place of birth of Jesus, the son of God. No other holiday boast of such a wealth of traditions and customs.

Christmas, the most widely celebrated festival in the world brings joy, hope and light to mankind in the darkest month of the year. The season is marked by an outpouring of good will on the path of making peace and this is also a time of sharing and generosity.

A collection of interesting information relating this global festival that binds a variety of religions and beliefs across the continents is listed below.

1. Origin of the word “Christmas”:

The word Christmas arose from the old English word *Christes Masses*

2. Christmas Star: It is generally accepted that Christ was born during B.C 5-7

- It is believed that during this period the planets Jupiter and Saturn were on the same orbit and the galaxy of Pisces approached these planets resulting in a blinding light that shone for a brief period. This could have been the Christmas Star (Star of Bethlehem) that guided to the manger where Jesus was born. It was at this time an angel appeared in front of the Shepherds who were guarding their sheep. It was also at this time the first carol was sung by a chorus of angels “Glory to be god in the highest and peace to his people on Earth”

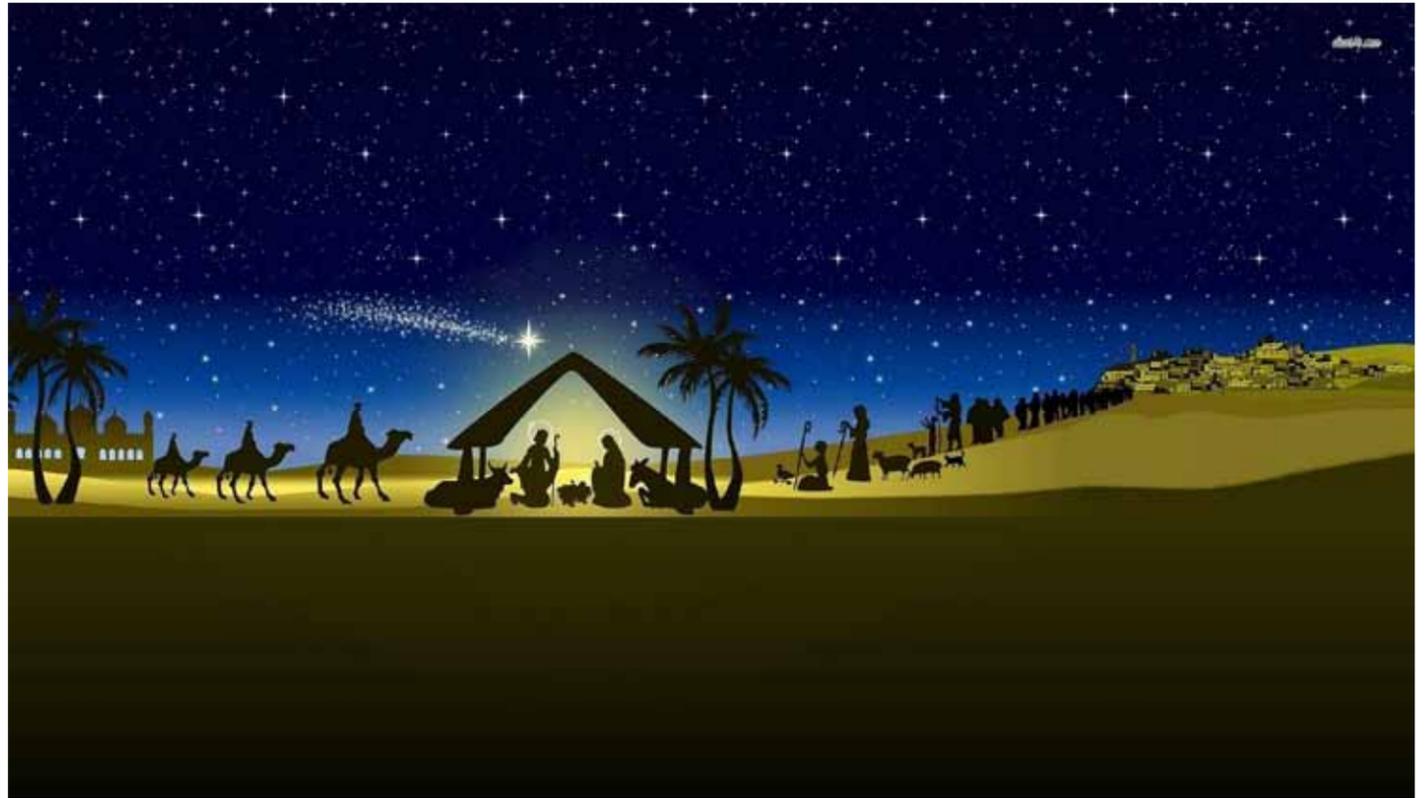
- Another view is that this bright star would have been the comet named Halley that appeared during B.C 11-12 providing a bright glow.

Generally, stars had an important place in the history of Jewish people

- Jesus was often referred to as the descendant of Abraham. The birth of Abraham is indicated by a rising star.

- According to Old Testament, the galaxy of Pisces, Jupiter and Saturn were associated with the life of prophet Moses

3. Why is Christmas celebrated on Dec 25 th?



The year and date of birth of Christ are uncertain and even the place of birth is open to dispute.

According to the Gospel of Mathew, it is stated that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, during the reign of Emperor Herod, who died in year B.C 4. Based on this and various other information, it is believed that Christ was born in the period B.C 4-5

However, until the 4th century, there was some dispute regarding the actual date of birth of Christ. To settle this conflict, an appeal was made to Pope John 1 by Saint Cyril of Jerusalem in 4th century A.D and as a result it was decided that effective A.D 354 Christmas should be celebrated on Dec 25th.

4. Significance of the colours - Red, White and Green

Red: Indicates Charity, Blood and Faith. Out of these three, Blood signifies that throughout the world, mankind is the same.

White: Refers to Purity, Light and Happiness

Green: Symbolizes New Life, Hope and Nature

5. Santa Claus: In 1809 an American writer Washington Irving wrote in an article titled ‘A History of New York’ describing Saint Nicholas, a fourth century Bishop as a chubby and jovial person who used to travel by a sledge pulled by a herd of rein deer. During his life time Saint Nicholas was said to have performed numerous miraculous deeds and brought gifts to countless needy people.

Based on the description of Washington Irving, in 1822, Dr.Clement Moore, a professor of Hebrew and Literature at the University of New York wrote a poetry “The night before Christmas” and read it to his children. In the following year this poem was published in a local magazine *Tory Sentinel* (New York) on Christmas Day.

In 1863, Thomas Nast, a famous political cartoonist drew a rotund elf dressed

in a furry suit and jaunty cap decorated with holly sprigs in a periodical named “Harper’s Weekly” and named the picture as Santa Claus. This picture soon became famous across the continents and today Santa in red robes is one of the most recognizable figures in the world. Santa now colours the language and customs of people every where and wherever he appears he radiates the warmth and good cheer that is Christmas.

6. Origin of the name Santa Claus:

The geographical region presently referred to as Turkey was referred to as Asia Minor in the 4th Century. Saint Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra (a city of Demre located on the south coast of Turkey) lived during this period and because of his helping the needy people, his fame spread northwards towards medieval Europe.

In Holland (present day Netherlands), the name of Saint Nicholas was referred to as “Sinterklass” and in this country Dec 6th is celebrated as a special day of St.Nicholas, the children’s saint.

When a few people from Holland (present day Netherlands) arrived on Christmas day in Manhattan in United States, these Dutch settlers named Saint Nicholas as their patron saint and the first church built by them was dedicated after the saint. As more colonists from Holland began to arrive, they brought their Christmas customs along with them. When British forces gained control of New York in the 17th century, the name Santerklass was anglicized into Santa Claus.

7. How did Christmas tree became part of Christmas celebrations?

Egyptians celebrated mid winter using palm trees having twelve shoots. The number of shoots indicated the number of the year.

Meanwhile many centuries ago, Romans used to have a lavish mid winter

festival called Saturnalia which was held to honour God Saturn, the god of peace and abundance. During this feast held during January, they lighted pine trees with candles. This festival could have been prelude to Christmas trees.

The first Christmas trees were used in Germany in the town of Alsac, then a region of West Germany. Decorating evergreen trees was begun in 1550. When Martin Luther, a religious leader in Germany tied candles to the branches of fir tree. He wanted the children to watch the candles shining through the dark to remind them of the stable in Bethelhem .In Germany Christmas trees were then called Christbaum.

In 1940, the German born Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria introduced Christmas tree to Britain. Tinsels, garlands, candles and lights were added to these trees as Christmas decorations. In1894 , the prince arranged to have a beautifully decorated tree at Windsor Castle.Since then the Royal family began the practice of taking photographs around the tree each Christmas. A number of people in the country rushed to follow the example set by royals and as a result, the popularity of Christmas trees began to spread throughout the world.

8. Christmas Cards

‘Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year’. Millions of people around the world across express this familiar sentiment using a variety of Christmas cards of every imaginable size, shape and colour.Like gifts, these greeting cards are also a token of friendship and good will. They help to convey the feelings that sometimes are difficult to express.

It is generally believed that the first Christmas Cards were produced by an English businessman Sir Henry Cole. They were designed by Cole’s fiend, an artist named John Calcott Horsley. In 1843 Cole printed 1000 Cards and by 1870 they became popular and now they have become a pleasant part of Christmas festivities.

Don't Panic Go Organic



By: Group - Buy Organic, Grow Organic (B.O.G.O) from Grade 8 Students at Brookside Public School

Did you know that organic food tastes way better than non-organic food? Not only that, but when farmers that grow non-organic food put herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers into their crops, it contaminates the water in the and makes more problems!

Where can you get organic food?

Its pretty easy in the summer: check out your local farmers market, grow them in your backyard or go to a farm and pick your own. What about the winter? In the winter, consider growing your plants indoors by making a garden

Nectarines, Grapes, Spinach, Lettuce, Cucumbers, Blueberries and Potatoes.

Don't Panic, Go Organic

A garden tower is designed for extended growing in the winter. To build a garden tower, you can go on YouTube and type DIY garden tower. Here is a link of a video that we thought would be useful when you start building a garden tower.

<https://youtu.be/n4CeEArY1lg>

These are four tips that will make your garden tower even better in the winter:

1. Place your garden tower near something that has heat (ex: like a building)
 2. Reduce the amount of wind exposure
 3. Buy a breathable covering for the garden tower
 4. Plant plants that are can grow in cool season (ex: herbs)
- Not everyone has the time to make a garden tower. If you're one

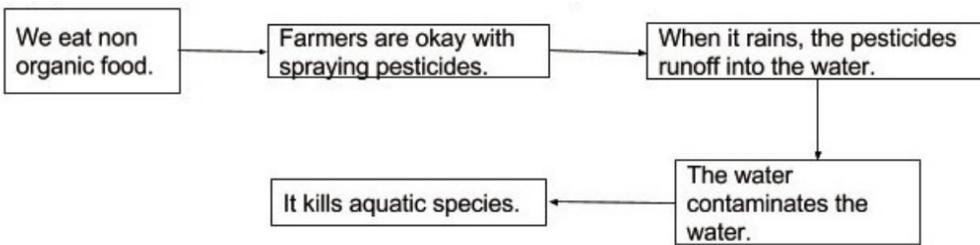
of them, then you can always go to your local grocery store and buy organic food from the organics section.

In the summer, one way you can save money is by buying seeds and planting your own garden. By planting your own fruits and vegetables it will always be there at your convenience.

Did you know cow waste manure also has harmful substances in it that comes from industrial farms? Chemicals such as antibiotics and growth hormones all contaminates the waterways. We also have a solution for this too! Like you guessed it, there are organic meat. Organic meat comes in huge chunks so one thing we suggest doing is to talk to your neighbours and split your meat.

Now that you've got a glimpse of how buying organic food can save our waterways, will you take the next steps to stop this problem?

You have the power to make a change so don't let it go to waste.



That is why we created a group: Brookside's Buy Organic, Grow Organic (B.O.G.O.)

We all need to eat organic food! Not only does it prevent harmful substances from going in the waterways, it has good health benefits and tastes good too!

tower or many local grocery stores also have organic sections! You don't have to buy everything organic, just focus on these foods, they are known as the Dirty Dozen: Apples, Celery, Sweet bell peppers, Peaches, Strawberries,



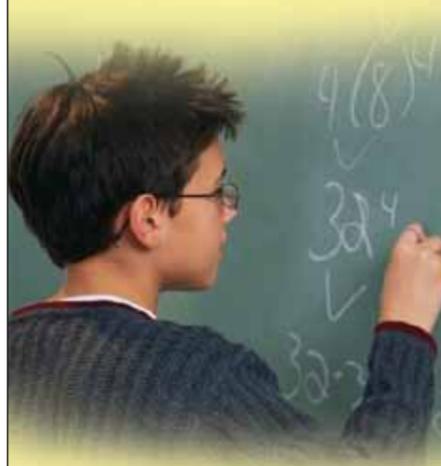
The members of the Group, Buy Organic, Grow Organic (B.O.G.O): Priyesh, Densika, Vaishali, Adrian, Thanusia, Ayesha, Emily and Sinthya.



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THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIRCADIAN LIGHTING REGULATOR

MATHEMATICS FAILS IN HUMAN RESPONSE TO CIRCADIAN LIGHTING

Uthayan Thurairajah

senses optical radiation but does not provide visual sensation. The ipRGC photoreceptor



MONO COLOR

The light is electromagnetic radiation that excites vision and perception. Our circadian system repeats every 24 hours requires daily light exposure to the eye and skin to remain synchronized with the environment. Researchers indicated that all light exposures are not created equal when it comes to the circadian system. This conclusion has significant consequences for studying how lighting influence our body.

According to Mariana Figueiro, short-wavelength blue light, including natural light from the blue sky, is highly effective at stimulating the circadian system. Exposure to other wavelengths of light may necessitate longer exposure times or require higher exposure levels to be as efficient.

Exposure to multiple wavelengths of light concurrently can result in less stimulus to the circadian system than if either color were viewed separately. The multiple wavelengths of light produce a "spectral opponency" in the retina of the eye. As a result, less stimulus to the circadian system. According to the Lighting Research Center scientists, the visual, and non-visual system shares neurons in the retina. Multiple wavelengths of light exhibit spectral opponency and form the foundation for our perception of color, contrast, shadow, depth perception and more.

Experiment:

The LRC researchers exposed ten subjects to three experimental conditions to demonstrate the spectral opponency.

1. Left Eye - one unit of blue light and Right eye - one unit of green light
2. Left Eye - one unit of green light and Right eye - one unit of blue light
3. Both eyes - Half a unit of green light plus half a unit of blue light

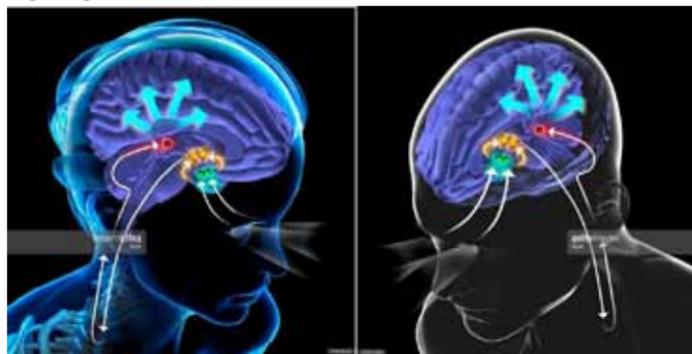
In all three experiment, the melatonin levels were measured. According to professor Figueiro, under the first two conditions, exposure to a single color in each eye did not provide any significant difference in melatonin suppression. From the third experiment, exposure to both colors in both eyes resulted in significantly less melatonin suppression. In all three condition, the amount of light in the eye was the same.

The response of the system was reduced when the two colors of lights were combined in the same eye. It is because of the retinal spectral opponent mechanisms. Therefore, the spectral opponency is a fundamental characteristic of how the human retina converts light into neural signals in the human circadian system. This method can correctly predict the circadian system response demonstrated under each of the three experimental conditions.

Suitable Light at the Suitable Time

The photoreception in the eye leads to vision and also non-visual human physiology, mood, and behavior. The primary evidence for the new photoreceptors, called melanopsin-containing or intrinsic photosensitive retinal ganglion cells (ipRGC). The ground-breaking discovery of a new ipRGC in the human eye that

was played a role in circadian regulation, particularly of the hormone melatonin. We are studying that these photoreceptors influence many other processes as well. In recent years the slogan "Human-Centric Lighting" has come to describe light and lighting that is intended to address all of



CIRCADIAN

these effects.

Scientists, engineers, lighting industry, lighting designers, and other stakeholders have continued to identify various options. The non-visual lighting effects play a critical role in the health and wellbeing of the people. Therefore, the lighting industry, designers, and healthcare professionals are trying to find the way to resolve the non-visual lighting effects issue by providing design solutions and developing new products.

The established knowledge in this field is still infancy. The non-visual effects of light depend on color, intensity, distribution, and spectral power distribution as well as exposure time, duration, and history. The ipRGC photoreceptor and a plan for quantifying the stimulus light for the human visual and non-visual photo reception system is a very complicated challenging task. It has been researched by various scholars around the world recognizing the interaction between all of the photoreceptors.

Identifying the Suitable Light:

The Non-visual responses are subject to complex signal processing in the central nervous system and influenced by as-yet-unresolved interactions of photo receptive units. The misunderstanding of the input-output characteristics of light stimulus and the resulting non-visual response seems to make simple light application for the desired lighting effect impossible. On the other hand, observations in the laboratory and implementation studies show beneficial effects on human health and performance, using lighting systems.

The central philosophy for these observations has been to increase the light levels and change spectral composition during daytime to provide increased amount of light input to the ipRGCs, and reduced

light input (the opposite) in the evening and night. The ipRGCs constitute a separate retinal photoreceptor class to the rods and cones. We have to focus research attention on the knowledge gaps that most obstruct the development of recommendations for indoor and outdoor lighting.

Light therapy

Our body is a susceptible entity, and a single mistake may end up causing an enormous problem, but we can avoid with the help of science and nature. Various treatments have been devised to deal with different types of disorders that our body may get. One of the approaches is the Circadian Lighting Regulator therapy which can be used to treat various diseases. The use of artificial light or natural sunlight may be strange to some people. It is evident that the light therapy is certainty of healing. It has been recorded to be higher as compared to the other methods of treatment.

Circadian Lighting Regulator

The development of Circadian Light regulator emphasizes the use of monochromatic color light to stimulate the circadian rhythm. The required dose limit and the quantification to calculate the "circadian efficacy" of the different light levels and colors for the individual need more research, clinical trials, and validation. Blue light is highly efficient to suppress the melatonin bit it has a problem



LIGHT EXPOSURE

with photo biological safety. Red and amber color lights have less efficient to suppress melatonin. Therefore, It is a good idea to use the monochromatic green light for this



CLR-LIGHT EXPOSURE

Circadian Lighting Regulator.

The model circadian regulator predicts the circadian response to any human subject correctly and can be utilized as a new system of the Circadian Lighting Regulator. The current photo pic light measurement method is based on almost human visual sensitivity but not non-visual sensitivity. The quantification of lighting as a stimulus for the circadian system provide new scientific insights into how the human body processes light and lighting for the circadian system. This process is a complex task, and each person circadian rhythm is little different. Therefore, the light level, time and duration of exposure must be set for the individual. Further study is required the way time of night affects the strength of light exposure. A comprehensive Circadian Lighting Regulator will stimulate and, importantly, do not stimulate the circadian system.

Typically, the nocturnal melatonin produced at night and under conditions of darkness is used as a marker for the circadian clock. Scientific evidence suggests that the interruption of the circadian rhythm may result in increased poor sleep quality, seasonal depression, lack of alertness, malignant tumor growth as well as so many other diseases as a result of immune deficiencies.

Author has found a way of regulating the human circadian rhythm using artificial LED lighting. The Circadian Light Regulator will provide so many benefits to the health and wellbeing of people. This system can be utilized anywhere. His continued research and commitment over the several years have opened the door for this development. Finally, he derived the best method to regulate our circadian rhythm using current advanced LED technology. He thinks that this approach will transform the way of our busy lives.

Summary

In order to get a comprehensive data set, further research is required for testing each human subject for various light exposure condition and the corresponding melatonin suppression. A data sheet will be prepared for the individuals according to their exposure time, duration, color, type and intensity of lighting. This tunable Circadian Lighting Regulator can be used any location. Further study and clinical trials are required to validate this for using all different type of people.

Now, we have this new circadian regulator to regulate our circadian rhythm. The author is under the process of consulting with various individuals and the organization in the possibilities of bringing this system to market. The benefits are enormous when we see the number of diseases developed as a result of melatonin suppression.



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



MANAGING YOUR MONEY

What motivates you to contribute to your RRSP or TFSA?

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

It really doesn't matter what motivates you to contribute to your RRSP

years, fill it up as quickly as possible for maximum long-term tax-deferred growth and additional tax savings. Your RRSP contribution tax deduction can be carried forward to future tax years, which can be useful if you expect a jump in income in the next few years.

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

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

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or TFSA – what matters is that you do make regular contributions. Here's why:

Investment experts agree:

An RRSP is the best retirement savings strategy for most Canadians. Your contributions and all the investment earnings that accumulate in your plan are tax exempt until you start using the money in retirement. Add in the fact that your contributions can be used to reduce taxes and the magic of compounding that enhances RRSP growth over time and it's easy to see why a registered plan makes such good financial sense.

To get the most in immediate tax savings and long-term growth from your RRSP, always make your maximum contribution each year. For 2016 the maximum RRSP contribution is \$25,370 (How much you can contribute can be found on your most recent notice of assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency.) The RRSP contribution deadline for the 2016 tax year is March 1, 2017. If you have any unused contribution room left over from previous

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

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

TFSA's are an excellent and flexible way to save

Every Canadian over the age of 18 is eligible to save in a TFSA and the investments held within the TFSA grow on a tax-free basis. TFSA withdrawals can be made at any time for any reason – and the withdrawn money is tax-free. Almost anyone can benefit from a TFSA – but if you have one, be careful because there is one not-well-understood re-contribution rule that could

cost you an unexpected tax hit. That mistake: Making a withdrawal from your TFSA and replacing the money too early (Provided that you have been maxing out the contribution every year).

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

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

plan.

So where does this leave us? Generally speaking, a TFSA may be better suited for shorter-term goals, such as an emergency fund or saving for a major purchase, since there is no tax on withdrawals and these plan withdrawals are added back into your TFSA contribution room the following year. However, for long-term objectives, RRSPs are generally the vehicle of choice since there are strong incentives to keep your money invested, in the form of taxes and lost contribution room on the withdrawals from an RRSP. The TFSA can also be a powerful retirement savings tool. However due to the ease with which TFSA savings can be accessed (no taxes on withdrawals or loss of contribution room) only a disciplined investor who can resist the temptation to dip into their savings prior to retirement will fully benefit from its potential as a source of retirement income. Remember, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. In fact, there is a multitude of variables that must be taken into consideration. In many cases, the TFSA should be used as a complementary product, along with your RRSPs, as they both have their own advantages. Your personal savings strategy needs to take into account your unique circumstances as well as your short and long-term objectives.

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

Disclaimer:

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



Investing in a Rental Property

Buying rental property can be one of the most secure and fastest ways to build wealth. However, before you begin your entrance into real estate investing you should consider the following pros and cons.

Main advantages:

1. Tax advantages

You can deduct certain expenses from your income – reducing the taxes you owe. Deductions can include mortgage interest, property taxes, insurance, utility bills, maintenance/upgrades and property management fees.

2. You may be able to deduct losses for tax purposes

If your expenses exceed your rental income, you may be able to deduct that loss from any other sources of income you have. This could reduce your total tax bill.

3. You get a regular monthly income

Other kinds of investments may pay out less often or income may be less predictable.

4. Real estate value usually appreciates over time

You may end up with a sizable profit when you sell your property after a few years. However, this is only true as a long term investment.

As a landlord, you can deduct certain property expenses from your in-



come – reducing the taxes you owe. If your expenses exceed your rental income, you may be able to deduct that loss from any other sources of income you have.

Key disadvantages:

1. You take on the responsibilities and challenges of a landlord

Rental units need repair – sometimes on an emergency basis. Dealing with tenants can be challenging, especially if they don't pay their rent on time and cash flow is tight. If you hire a property manager to take care of these things for you, their salary is an added cost.

2. It may be difficult and costly to sell the property later

Real estate is not a liquid investment. That means it can take time to sell, depending on market conditions. It can also be costly to sell due to real estate and legal fees.

3. It may be difficult to finance the purchase

You must have a down payment of at least 20% when you buy a second property. You may need a mortgage. And, you will have high monthly expenses to cover when you own a building. Of course, you hope the income you receive from your tenants will cover

this. Buying and then renting a property is a lot more complicated than investing in stocks and bonds. Talk to an accountant, lawyer, mortgage broker or other financial expert about how it may affect your taxes and financial situation and be sure it is going to be a worthwhile investment for you.

This info is provided by Raj Nadarajah, Sales Representative at RE/MAX Excel Realty Ltd., Brokerage, Tel: 416-3333-6115, E-Mail: nanohomes@gmail.com

For contact info, please visit page 11

Parental Sponsorship applications to re-open in January

2016 is coming to an end rapidly and it is time to prepare the parental sponsorship applications if one is considering filing them. There is only one opportunity in a year to submit such an application. Therefore, one must take advantage of it when the program is open or else they will have to wait another 12 months. Every year, the program is open for a few days in January to take in a pre-determined number of applications and upon receiving the cap, they will close the program for that particular year.

In January of 2016, the new government accepted 10,000 parental sponsorship applications. The years before in a row, they accepted only 5,000 such application. Irrespective of the intake numbers, it is important to prepare a complete application and file as early as possible in the New Year to avoid it being returned after reaching the cap.

The Sponsors must meet the following eligibility criteria in order to submit a parental sponsorship application:

- Be 18 years of age or more
- Be a Canadian citizen or a Perma-

nent Resident of Canada

- Must be resident in Canada
- Making an undertaking of assistance to meet the basic requirements of the parent or parents being sponsored
- Meet the financial test according to the number of family members including the parent or parents sponsored. This test is based on the Low Income Cut-Off rates [LICO].

If one is on social assistance, has defaulted an immigration loan, a previous undertaking or family support payments, an undischarged bankrupt,

if convicted of a sexual or violent crime against a family member, if ordered removed from Canada or if in jail, they will not qualify to submit a sponsorship application.

Unlike in other family class sponsorships, parental category demands the income test for 3 years. In this regard, the annual income of both spouses, if married or in a common-law relationship will be considered.

The government immigration website provides the following income table:

Federal Income Table for Parents and Grandparents Sponsorship

Size of Family Unit	Minimum Income 2012	Minimum Income 2013	Minimum Income 2014
2 persons	\$38,272	\$37,708	\$36,637
3 persons	\$47,051	\$46,354	\$45,040
4 persons	\$57,125	\$56,280	\$54,685
5 persons	\$64,791	\$63,833	\$62,023
6 persons	\$73,072	\$71,991	\$69,950
7 persons	\$81,355	\$80,153	\$77,879
If more than 7 persons, for each additional person, add	\$8,271	\$8,148	\$7,929

Should you require any assistance with your parental sponsorship application, please do not hesitate to contact Nova Immigration Solutions Inc.

Shani Hanwella, Registered Immigration Consultant/Former Visa Officer, Canadian High Commission Colombo
Nova Immigration Solutions Inc.
 1585 Markham Road, Suite 407, Scarborough, ON.
 416 298 0990, info@novaim.ca www.novaim.ca



For contact details, Please Visit Page 11





GENIE SISTERS SAMAYAL SANTHAI

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

Sisters Niranjini Thirunesan and Rajini Nathan are both food enthusiasts from England. Niranjini, who lives in London, is a trained chef and founder of catering firm Inji Roots. Niranjini has a degree in Human biology and makes it her business to know everything about what she eats, from nutritional value to the source producers. Check out her recipes at www.ninjaeatsfood.wordpress.com and Inji roots can be found on Facebook and Instagram @Inji_roots. Rajini, lives in Toronto and has a background in psychology. Her speciality is in Tamil food from around the world, catch up on her meal ideas on Instagram @tamil_food.

Pumpkin Pie



We thought we'd end this year with a sweet treat for everyone. This recipe is from another member of the Monsoon Journal family, Krishni Narine, who has kindly shared this with us (and Rajini says it tasted amazing!) Plus it's a great way to get rid of all the pumpkin you might have left over from Thanksgiving.

Ingredients:

- ▶ Shop bought pastry shell (You could make your own if you like)
- ▶ 2 cups of mashed cooked pumpkin (poosanikkai)
- ▶ 1 tin of evaporated milk (paal)
- ▶ 2 eggs, whisked (Muttai)
- ▶ ¾ th of a cup of brown sugar (Seeni-tightly packed in the cup)
- ▶ ½ Tsp of ground cinnamon (Kari pattai)
- ▶ ½ Tsp ground ginger (Inji)
- ▶ ½ Tsp ground nutmeg (Jaathikkai)
- ▶ ½ Tsp salt (Uppu)

Method:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

In a large bowl mix the pumpkin, evaporated milk (note not condensed milk) eggs, brown sugar, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, salt and mix, preferably with an electric whisk (or you could just do it by hand the traditional way- free gym session)

Pour into the pie bases and bake for 40 mins. Check that it's done by inserting a knife into the centre, if it comes out clean, your pie is ready. Leave to cool a little and enjoy!

Try making this recipe this month and do hashtag #monsoonjournal on Instagram and send us your pics, comments and feedback. Spread the love (and recipe!)





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Tribute to a music legend

Carnatic music maestro and legendary playback singer
Balamuralikrishna is no more

By Siva Sivapragasam

He burst into the music world as a nine year old child prodigy with his first concert and later became famous among music connoisseurs and laymen alike with his Carnatic classics and melodious playback songs.

Manganapalli Balamuralikrishna, Carnatic singer, composer and playback singer passed away recently in his sleep at the age of eighty-six in Chennai after he had a cup of coffee in the afternoon. He is survived by his wife, four sons and two daughters.

Apart from his Carnatic songs, no music lover can forget his classic playback film song "Oru naal pothuma" in producer AP Nagarajan's blockbuster devotional movie "Thiruvilayadal", sung for the veteran actor TS Balaiah whose gestures made the song an instant hit. Millions around the world were mesmerized by this song. It is said that the music composer KV Mahadevan wanted Seerhali Govindarajan to sing this song but producer AP Nagarajan considered Seerhali's voice for this song a little effeminate and insisted on Balamurali Krishna to give effect to a more deeper

voice displaying arrogance of a proud singer in the film's story.

Balamuralikrishna's music career began when he was a child and had his first music concert was when he was nine years old. In later years he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honour for his contribution towards Indian Art. He was made Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government in 2005.

Balamurali Krishna was born in Sankaraguptam, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh state. His father was a well known musician and could play the flute, violin and the veena and his mother was an excellent veena player. His mother died when he was an infant and Balamuralikrishna was raised by his father and aunt. Observing his penchant for music, his father put him under the tutelage of Parupalli Ramakrishnaya Pantulu, a direct descendant of the shishyaparampara of Tyagaraja. By the age of fifteen he had mastered all the 72 melakarta ragas and had composed krithis. Balamurali Krishna has been invited to give concerts in many countries, including the US, Canada,

UK, Italy, France, Russia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Middle East and many more.

A score of awards and titles have been bestowed upon Balamuralikrishna throughout his career. These include an honorary Ph.D., D.Sc., and D.Lit. certificates from Andhra University, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, and Sri Venkateswara University and an honorary "first citizen" award from Vijayawad. In 1978, Balamuralikrishna was named "Sangeetha Kalanidhi." He received the award as "Wisdom man of the year" in 1992. Four years later, he was named "Naada Maharishi" by the Nrityala Aesthetics Society.

His music appealed to both connoisseurs and laymen alike. In the classical music he was able to give "play acting" to the essence of the lyrics in his song. In the film world, Oru Naal Pothuma, set to ragamalika in Thiruvilayadal, Chinna Kannan Azhaikiran, a reeti-gowla based song in the film Kavikul,



Mounathil Vilayadum Manasatichye in the film Noolveli and abohi raga song Thanga Ratham Vanthathu in the film Kalai Koil continue to enchant generation of music lovers.

Music director Ilaiyaraaja, for whom Balamuralikrishna sang the all-time favourite 'Chinnakannanazhaikiran', said, "There can never be another Balamuralikrishna in this world."

Music legend Balamuralikrishna is no more but his songs which mesmerized and captivated the hearts of millions of music lovers around the world will live for many more years.

Sailan Muslim Foundation of Canada organizes The Islamic History Month Of Canada

The Sailan Muslim Foundation of Canada and its Associate Members organized The Islamic History Month Of Canada at the Islamic Institute of Toronto.

The event took place with celebrations for the fourth year in succession along with an exhibition. IHMC was proclaimed through a motion in the Parliament by Ex Member of Parliament Hon. Mauril Belanger PC, MP for Ottawa-Vanier, initiated by the Canadian Islamic Congress in 2007. Since then it has been adopted by the Muslim Community throughout Canada, giving a golden opportunity to share the rich heritage of the Muslim world, contributions made by Muslim scholars and inventors. Mr. Sameem Mohamed is the President of Sailan Muslim Foundation of Canada.

October is now officially be recognized as Islamic Heritage Month in Ontario as well after the legislature unanimously passed an act Thursday October 6th, 2016. It began as an NDP private members' bill, and party leader Andrea Horwath, MPP says it's an opportunity to celebrate and learn about the history of Islamic culture. The idea of including an exhibition of traditional Sri Lankan costumes worn by the early Muslims of Sri Lanka together with

common household items and artifacts used by them was initiated by Ziard Deen, Trustee of SMFC.

The Sri Lankan participation commenced with the exhibition opening to the public from Thursday the 20th to 22th October and concluding with a grand event and dinner on Saturday the October 22nd, 2016 which included presentations and addresses by scholars, historians, politicians and other leaders in the community.

(Seen here are pictures taken at the event)



Raymond Cho, MPP,
Scarborough-Rouge River



Young Participants



Sameem Mohamed is the President of Sailan Muslim Foundation of Canada



30th Anniversary of Tamil Christian Church of Canada

by JJ Atputharajah

TCCC celebrated its 30th Anniversary recently with a Thanksgiving service presided over by its Pastor-in-Charge, Rev. Dr. Albert Jebanesan. The church was founded in 1986 with a handful of worshipers consisting of immigrants from Sri Lanka. It has now grown into a well organized church with a definitive mission and plan to cater to the devotional interests of the Sri Lankan Tamils and their younger generation. They also organized a music program ('Helping Hands') with ar-

tistes from South India in order to raise funds for the war widows in the Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts in Sri Lanka. Dr. Poopalan, Principal of Colombo Theological Seminary delivered the message at the anniversary service stressing the need for the church to shape its mission in order to win new souls to Christ. A cultural program followed the service and all sections of the church members took part in it. The cultural program consisted of songs, dances, fancy-dress parade and a 'vilu paatu' to entertain the people who participated in the celebration.





Roots and Shoots

(A review by Dr. V. Kandavanam)

A drama festival, organized by the Tamil Writers' Association of Canada, took place on the 16th of October, 2016 at the Periya Sivan Temple cultural hall, Scarborough, ON.

The festival was named 'Roots and Shoots' and it was staged as a New Horizon Program project for Seniors. It was witnessed by a fully packed enthusiastic audience.

Following the welcome address by Dr. Balasundaram, the President of the Association, Mr. Aranka Nedumaran from Tamil Nadu, South India, captured the hearts of the audience by his eloquent speech. Then a souvenir was released by the joint editors Messrs Kuru Aravindan and S. Sivana-

yagamoorthy following which the much anticipated plays were staged.

The plays were of two types. One was traditional and the other, modern.

The traditional, a folk drama entitled 'Veedukku Veedu' meaning 'House to House' was directed by Mr. Mathy Paskaran, an expert in folklore who also composed the lyrics.

Kuperaka Kumaresan, Anoji Sivapatham, Jichayini Kopalapillai, Kapesan Thavaseelan, Vamithra Srinagulan, Jaleen Arulraj were the main actors and the chorus was composed of Saravanapavan Kanthsamy, Than-kavadivel Gopalasingam, Suthrshini Kalingarathnam, Parameswary Mathy Paskaran, Thulasi Mathy Paskaran,

all of whom did their parts extremely well and their performance was punctuated with applause from the enthusiastic audience from time to time.

The other performance was a modern dance drama entitled 'Panamum Paasamum' meaning 'Money and Affection'.

It was beautifully choreographed by the able dancer Mrs. Suryakala Jeevananthan. Lyrics were composed by Kavinayagar V. Kandavanam which were melodiously sung by Meenuja Viswathasan supported by Kanesathasan Mahathevan (Miruthangam) and Suruthi Balamurali (Violin).

The dancers were Virginia Lalkumar, Rakshana Vijayathan, Mithusa

Thangavel, Janisha Niranjana, Jarshini Ravichandran, Bairavi Gnanamano-haran, Vaishnavi Gnanamano-haran and Anjali Easwaramoorthy all of whom did a wonderful job.

The project co ordinator Mr. Sini-niah Sivanesan explained to the audience the purpose of the project and conducted the 'Honouring the Director and Artistes' item of the program.

The colorful Drama Festival came to a conclusion with a vote of thanks by the Secretary of the Project Committee, Mrs. Sivanayani Muhunthan.

On the whole the 'Drama Festival', I would vouch, a success. Congratulations Tamil Writers' Association of Canada!



HUMANS OF NORTHERN SRI LANKA



THULASI MUTTULINGAM

The face Book Community page “Humans of Northern Sri Lanka” is a pictorial page by Thulasi Muttulingam.

Thulasi Muttulingam is a journalist based in the North of Sri Lanka. Having grown up away from her hometown of Jaffna, it is currently her mission to research and document as much of her culture and heritage as she can.

If you are similarly interested, check out more of her work at the facebook page ~ Humans of Northern Sri Lanka:

To follow the updates, “Like” the page at: www.facebook.com/pages/Humans-of-Northern-Sri-Lanka

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

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

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

The following is a recent pictorial that featured in Humans of Northern Sri Lanka:

DREAM HOUSES FOR SRI LANKA’S WAR AFFECTED PEOPLE; INDIA’S GIFT TO SRI LANKA

When the severely war-affected people of Sri Lanka’s North and East made it out of the refugee camps containing them from 2010 onwards, they had a new dilemma to face: where to live?

“We became displaced in 1983 and had been on the move ever since. We thought we’d return in three days, which turned into three weeks and then three years... it was eventually nearly 30 years before we could see our beloved land again.

“When we finally saw our village in 2010, we found our houses destroyed, our wells caved in, and our lands overtaken by forest,” Says K.Palasivarasa (74), a farmer from the country’s war-torn Wanniar region.

Sri Lanka’s long drawn brutal civil war drew to a close in May 2009. Many of those who had made it out alive had battled constant displacements, death and destruction, before finally making it to Sri Lankan Army run territory, where they were then placed in refugee camps. The camps took years to close as the people’s lands had to be cleared of landmines and other hazards first. Some of those lands became demarcated as ‘High Security Zones’ by the Sri Lankan government which left the people of those areas bereft of their lands. There are still people living in refugee camps today seven years after the war ended, waiting for the government to release their lands. Many more languish in refugee camps in Tamil Nadu as well.

Meanwhile the first of those to be released from refugee camps to go back home in early 2010 did not feel particularly fortunate either. “Our lands had been overtaken by jungle shrubs and we found them infested with wild animals. Snakes, wild pigs and elephants were running amok. We did not possess the funds necessary to clear our lands at that time. So we sheltered under trees until aid agencies came to our rescue with temporary shelters



Like

A family returned to their ancestral home in Jaffna from a Tamil Nadu refugee camp. They currently lack the funds to repair it.

for us to live in,” recalls Prema, a single mother of five in Mannar, Northern Province. Prema’s husband died in the last stages of the war in 2009.

A shell piece from an aerial bombardment split his head open and he dropped dead in front of her. She still has nightmares of the incident and is under medication

traumas left behind by war.

The temporary shelters the refugees were first given to settle in, were erected with corrugated iron and tin sheets, meant for only six months’ occupation – yet as it turned out, they have served as homes for the people for three to five years and more now. There are still people living in these shelters



Like

A single mother and her family in front of their new house.

for post traumatic stress. There are many such war widows left behind like her, struggling to bring up their children as single parents in a traditional Tamil community that had not equipped them to be breadwinners, while also still struggling with the

today for lack of anything better, even though the structures have become derelict now.

Dream Houses

It was in these circumstances that the Government of India signed a memorandum of understanding

with the Sri Lankan government to build about 50,000 permanent homes for the war-affected people of Sri Lanka. When the MOU was signed in 2012, people were ecstatic. They had lost all their material assets in the long drawn out war and having a permanent roof over their heads was but a dream – a dream that the Indian Government pledged to deliver.

The project was planned to take an owner-driven approach, with the beneficiaries being responsible for building their own houses – while the Indian Government enlisted the aid of several high profile aid agencies such as UN-Habitat, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Habitat for Humanity and the Sri Lankan government’s National Housing Development Authority as implementing partners in a supervisory capacity.

Unfortunately, the reality of achieving this dream has not been a smooth process. The last four years in the North and East of Sri Lanka have been quite turbulent for the resettled refugees, despite the war being over. Much of their stress could be directly attributed to the houses they were building.

“Imagine planning for something as simple as a family wedding? How many months would you plan in advance to make it go off without a hitch? And even then you would experience some hiccups along the way due to unforeseen and uncharted challenges. Extrapolate that then to what the Indian Government tried to gift the Sri Lankans. Of course some things went awry and we drew a lot of criticism for it,” says A Natarajan, Indian Consul General stationed at Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

The Indian High Commission opened up a consulate in Jaffna in 2010, in order to better promote the Indian Government’s various infrastructure and development activities in these war affected regions of Sri Lanka.



A temporary shelter still in use in the North



A war-disabled man and his family in front of their new house.

However, as Natarajan, Jaffna's Consul General noted, even the most careful planning and goodwill could still go amiss. The Indian Housing Project in the North of Sri Lanka has come to a close now. 41,950 houses (two-bedroom stone house units with attached kitchen and toilet) have been built while a further 1000 part-damaged houses have been repaired. The full grant value of the project is estimated at US\$ 270 million.

Each of the individual housing units however were allocated a cost of only SLR 550,000. "We did a pilot

needs; war widows and the war-disabled. These groups were sure to get a house for their families – but unfortunately the plan did not extend to taking their special needs into account while actually building the house.

"This housing project was designed to suit a family with an able-bodied male as the head of the family, who could help with the construction of the house as well as supplement the grant's shortfall in cash with his own earnings," says J.Nirmala, an aid agency employee and activist working in the Northern Province.

who declined to be named. "In a culture where widows are heavily stigmatized and marginalized, where there would be heavy social repercussions of being seen even talking to men, where they were not equipped to know anything about carpentry and masonry work, where they were not equipped to be breadwinners either but had to pay out significant amounts of money in order to complete the house – what would you expect? The builders robbed them blind, and often tried to take advantage of their vulnerability to gain sexual favours."

"For as long as the project lasted, able bodied men in these areas did not lack for work opportunities. Everybody became masons and carpenters overnight and we were able to earn well with it," notes A.Selvarasa (32), a farm labourer who had taken up masonry work as more profitable.

There are still many people left behind without houses and there are various other projects sponsored by other countries and / or the Sri Lankan government to make up for this shortfall – yet generally the people agree, the Indian Housing Project was the most suitable. The other housing projects have come in for far more criticisms on their lack of suitability for the terrain or the people's needs, or for their lack of transparency and accountability.

A case in point would be the 65000 prefabricated houses of French-Indian steel company ArcelorMittal at a cost of SLR 2.1 million each that is being proposed by the current government. There is a severe backlash against this housing scheme by civil society in general because it is budgeted as being four times pricier than a house funded by the Indian government while using far inferior materials that are not suited to the people's needs or the environment. Whereas the Indian houses are durable and solid structures made of stone and cement, the ArcelorMittal houses are attractive but flimsy pre-fabricated structures.

While beneficiaries of the proposed alternate housing schemes are left blinking therefore, the beneficiaries of the Indian Housing Scheme feel grateful currently. "Nothing worth gaining is gained without stress, sweat and tears," shrugs Palasivarasa, the farmer who returned to his home after 30 years to find it overtaken by jungle.

"For nearly 30 years as we displaced, my family and I were dependant on the goodwill of strangers who would allow us to set up a hut on their lands. To now finally, have this security of my own permanent house on my own land is not something I could have achieved on my own, so soon after the war ended. I'll be paying off debts for quite a while but it is worth it. If this message is going to reach the Indian Government and the Indian people, please tell them we said: Thank You."



One of the new houses being built. In the backdrop is the temporary shelter the family are living in.

study in the provinces before we launched the project that made us believe that this amount was enough. However, due to later inflation in cement and other prices, many people did struggle to complete their houses within this allocated grant money," explains S. Niranjana, Consul (Development – Cooperation) at the Indian consulate in Jaffna.

Turbulence

From the project's launch in 2012 till its end in early 2016, an agonized people leapt through various hurdles to first gain the housing, and then complete it. The hurdles had not been put there to make life difficult for them but to ensure that they were awarded the housing grant in a transparent manner – which involved the fulfillment of various rigorous criteria that they had to prove; to be genuinely war affected, to be in need of a house, to possess titles to their own land and so on.

Scrambling to get the paperwork secured for all this was not an easy matter. In the meantime the Indian Government prioritized certain groups recognizing their special

"Nuclear families which did have such an able bodied man about the house were able to build the housing with relatively little difficulty – yet most of the families left behind in these regions are those of war-widows and war-disabled men. They were not equipped to put in the bodily labour work needed, or earn the SLR 250,000 that was the shortfall made up by the grant."

Although the grant was originally intended to make up the full cost of the housing, many people found that they could build only 2/3 of their house with it. So they have had to go into debt to complete the housing; debts that most of these war ravaged people being wage labourers, are not equipped to settle easily.

Over the years, it has led to threats of foreclosure of the newly built houses on mortgaged land by banks, along with attempted suicides by the traumatized grantees. In the meantime there have been whispers of far more serious transgressions against the people, aired occasionally and then hushed up again; sexual abuse of the war widows.

"The women were vulnerable," explains an aid agency worker

While people have ready anecdotes to tell, the allegations have mostly not been proven. "Only one Jaffna based paper carried allegations of this sexual abuse. I did not hear of it from any other quarter," refutes A.Natarajan, the Consul-General in Jaffna. "These allegations were taken so seriously however that they were discussed all the way up in the Indian Parliament.

"At the end of the day, we fail to see how the Sri Lankan people could fault the Indian Government even if such transgressions did take place. Our intention was to gift the people with the security of permanent homes after their long years of trial. We planned long and hard and enlisted the very best international housing-aid agencies in the field as well as the active collaboration of the Sri Lankan government. If despite all this strategic care, some women were abused under this project, it is their own fellow Sri Lankan men who are culpable, for which we should not be held answerable."

Closure

Now at the end of the project however, several stone houses dot these regions where only tin shacks once stood. "I had to go into severe debt and contemplated suicide several times during the process of house building," recalls R.Kala (26) a single mother of one. "Now, however, it's finally over. I am still in debt but I am slowly paying it back. It's humiliating to get lambasted by debt collectors when I don't have enough money to pay them back, but at the end of the day, I do have the security of my house to sleep in. It means a lot to me and my son, and I am thankful that the Indian Government facilitated it."

The housing project delivered other associated benefits as well.



THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA : Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple

- Compiled by Kidambi Raj, Member, Board of Trustees

Significance of Kavadi and legend about Palani

The Kavadi Attam:

The Kavadi Attam is a lengthy ecstatic trance-inducing dance ritual done while enduring some form of physical hardship. Generally, the hardship involves carrying heavy weights up a steep hill. The form of kavadi that is of most interest to the body modification world is where a frame is held (supported by the shoulders and/or hips) through which long weighted skewers are passed, which are then pierced into the skin of the back and chest.

Generally, people take a vow to offer the Lord a Kavadi for the sake of tidying over a great calamity. Though this might on the face of it appear mercenary, a moment's reflection will reveal that it contains in it the seed for the supreme love for God. The worldly object is achieved, no doubt, and the devotee takes the Kavadi; but after the ceremony he gets so God-intoxicated that his inner spiritual chamber is opened. This is also a method that ultimately leads to the supreme state of devotion.

Types of Kavadi:

The 'Kavadi' varies in shape and size from the simple shape of a street hawker's storehouse (a wooden stick with two baskets at each end, slung across the shoulder) to the costly palanquin structure, profusely flower-bedecked and decoratively interwoven with peacock feathers. In all cases the Kavadi has a good many brass bells adorning it and announcing it as the Kavadi-bearer draws it along. As, very often, the Kavadi bearer observes silence; the bells are the only eloquent signs of a Kavadi procession.

The two baskets hanging at either end of the Kavadi will contain rice, milk or other articles that the devotee has vowed to offer to Lord Muruga. The more devout among them, and especially those who do it as a 'Sadhana' (meditation), collect these articles by begging. They travel on foot from village to village, and beg from door to door. The villagers offer their articles directly into the basket of the Kavadi.

The Kavadi-Bearer

The Kavadi-bearer is required to observe various rules between the time he takes up the Kavadi and the day of the offering. He has to perform elaborate ceremonies at the time of assuming the Kavadi and at the time of offering it to the Lord. He also puts on the dress of a 'Pandaram', a Shaivite mendicant. It consists of a saffron-coloured cloth, a scarlet conical cap, and a cane silver-capped at both ends. Lord Shiva, the Supreme Pandaram, Himself loves to wear this dress. The Pandaram lives on alms only. The Kavadi-bearer's bare chest is covered with several 'Rudrak-



sha Malas' (rosaries).

The Kavadi-bearer observes celibacy. He takes only pure, Satwic food; he abstains from all sorts of intoxicating drinks and drugs. He continuously thinks of God. Many of the Kavadi-bearers, especially those who do it as a spiritual Sadhana, impose various sorts of self-torture upon themselves.

Agni Kavadi

This is the most difficult Kavadi-offering. With the Kavadi hanging on his shoulders, the devotee walks through a pit of burning coals. The devotees all around the pit sing hymns in praise of the Lord. The beating of the drums and the burning of the incense make the entire atmosphere awe-inspiring. The real devotee gets into a state of ecstasy and easily walks over the fire.

Celebrations:

The Kavadi festival is celebrated at all shrines of Lord Muruga. Dancing in a hypnotic trance to the rhythm of drums, devotees of Muruga carry the Kavadi all the way up the Palani hills to fulfill their vow. Ettukudi Kavadi Festival is a famous festival celebrated during the months of April-May. Devotees from places and villages around this temple come here with Kavadis, milk pots, coconuts, cocks and goats. This is a major crowd pulling festival where one can see the true Tamil culture in its habitat.

Legend about Palani:

Sage Agastya wanted to take two hills -- Sivagiri and Saktigiri -- to his abode in the South and commissioned his asuran disciple Idumban to carry them. Idumban was one of the very few asuran survivors of the suraasuran war between Murugan's forces and those of Surapadman. After surviving the war he had repented and became a devotee of Lord Muruga.

At this stage, Subrahmanya or Muruga had just been outwitted by His brother Ganesha in a contest for going around the world and He was still smarting over the matter. Ganapati had won the prized fruit (the Jnana-



pazham) by simply going around His parents. Long after this, Subrahmanya came seating on His peacock to find that the prize had already been given away. In anger, He vowed to leave His home and family and came down to Tiru Avinankudi at the Adivaaram (meaning 'foot of the Sivagiri Hill'). Siva pacified Him by saying that Subrahmanya Himself was the fruit (pazham) of all wisdom and knowledge. Hence the place was called Pazham-nee ('You are the fruit') or Palani. Later He withdrew to the hill and settled there as a recluse in peace and solitude.

Idumban bore the hills slung across his shoulders in the form of a kavadi, one on each side. When he reached Palani and felt fatigued, he placed the kavadi down to take rest.

When Idumban resumed his journey, he found that he could not lift the hill. Muruga had made it impossible for Idumban to carry it. Upon the hill-top the great asuran spotted a little boy wearing only kaupenam and demanded that he vacate at once so Idumban could proceed with his task. The boy, who was yet in a fighting mood, refused. In the fierce battle which ensued, Idumban was slain but was later restored to life.

Idumban belatedly recognised the boy as none other than his ishta devata Murugan and prayed to Him that: 1) whosoever carried on his shoulders the kavadi, signifying the two hills and visited the temple on a vow should be blessed; and 2) he should be given the privilege of standing sentinel at the entrance to the hill. Hence we have the Idumban shrine half-way up the hill where every pilgrim is expected to offer obeisance to Idumban before entering the temple of Dandayudhapani Swami. Since then, pilgrims to Palani bring their offerings on their shoulders in a kavadi. The custom has spread from Palani to all Muruga shrines.

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THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA : Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple

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Skanda Sashti

Skanda Sashti Celebrations:

It is a six-day Vratam and celebration and commences on Prathamai (the 1st day of the 15-day cycle according to Hindu Calendar) immediately after Amavasya and ending on Sashti (6th day) in the Tamil month of Aippasi (October-November) with Surasamhara. This year the celebrations are from Monday October, 31st to Saturday, November 5th.

The Deity, this celebration is dedicated to:

These are dedicated to the second son of Lord Shiva, Lord Muruga, also known as Subramanya, Shanmuga, Kartikeya to mention a few. On the Sashti day, it is believed that Lord Muruga to have killed the mythical demon, Taraka. This is one of the important festivals in all Saivite and Muruga temples in South India, Sri Lanka, Canada, USA, Malaysia and other countries where there are Tamil speaking Hindus.

How is it celebrated:

During the six days devotees pray

dram in South India events leading to the annihilation of the Asuras are dramatized and enacted. The Offerings of Kavadi on Skanda Sashti is also a very popular form of worship.

The significance of six for Lord Muruga: The Skanda Sashti is celebrated for six days. Lord Muruga has six heads. He has six power houses of energy. He represents our sixth sense and above all his powerful Maha Mantra which is called "Shadakshari" (six syllables). The six syllables are - Sa Ra Va Na Ba va.

To get the full blessings of Lord Muruga during the Homam, they recite the Maha Mantra, Shadakshari along with Trishati chanting of the 300 names of Lord Muruga.

According to Hindu scriptures, the special benefits of praying to Lord Muruga on the six days of Skanda Sashti are: First Day improves business and relationships. Business people, married couple and unmarried youth can particularly benefit during this day. The second, third and fourth days brings



and chant inspiring hymns on Lord Muruga. The inspiring and devotional hymns of Sri Arunagirinathar in the popular religious works called Thirupugazh is chanted by devotees. In addition, the hymns from Kavadihindu and Skanda Sashti kavacham are also recited by devotees on this occasion.

Corresponding to six days of the war over evil forces, devotees under take fast (Vrata), pray sing devotional songs in praise of Lord Muruga. In places like Tiruchendur and Tiruparankun-

relief from health problems and also can bring sudden turn of events leading to positive outcome. Praying on the fifth and sixth days can bring Spiritual bliss, financial benefits and also possible improvement in career/profession.

Aarupadai Veedu refers to the six sacred temples of Lord Muruga. These six temples are located in South India, in the state of Tamil Nadu. Though there are thousands of temples for Lord Muruga around the globe, these six specific temples enjoy unparalleled

demon Tarakasura who has been tormenting you all.

Indra, the chief of gods, asked Cupid to ho with his wife, Rati and his companion Vasanta (the season of spring) to Mount Kailas the abode of Lord Siva. Cupid carried out the instruction and standing behind a tree shot his arrow of passion towards Lord Siva while Parvati was placing flowers in His hands. The moment their hands met, Siva experienced a distracting feeling. He wondered what disturbed His Yoga. He looked around and saw Cupid crouching behind the tree. The Lord opened His "third eye", the inner eye of intuition and Cupid was burnt to ashes by the fire that emanated from it. That is why the god of love is also called "Ananga", which means bodiless.

After burning the Cupid, Lord Siva ascertained by His Yogic vision that the birth of Lord Muruga was absolutely necessary to destroy the demon, Tarakasura. Siva's seed was thrown into the fire, which was unable to retain it and so it was thrown into the Ganges, which in turn threw it into a reed forest. This is where Lord Muruga was born and hence He is called "Saranabhava" (born in reed forest). He was also Skanda, Siva's power chastity preserved through penance. Skanda was raised by six mothers of the divine constellation of Krithigai. Karthikeya divided himself into six babies to be nursed by six mothers. When Parvati came and gathered all six babies, He became Shanmukha, the one with Six faces and One body.

Shanmukha became Kumara, the powerful verile adolescent who was also beautiful and the handsome (Muruga). He was named the General, Deva Senapathy of God's army. In fact in Bhagawad Gita Lord Krishna says, "Of the army generals I am Skanda". Skanda received from His mother Parasakthi an all-powerful Vel (lance). That is why He is called Sakthi Velan. He engaged the armies of Simhamukha, Surapadman and Tarakasura on a six day battle and vanquished them all on the sixth day. That is why the sixth day (Sashti) of Skanda Sashti is celebrated with devotion. It is the true victory of Good over Evil.

According to Swami Sivananda "the Lord spent His childhood in Tiruchendur and took Mahasamadhi at Kathirgamam in Sri Lanka. If anyone goes to Kathirgamam with faith, devotion and piety and stays in the temple for two or three days, the Lord Himself grants His vision to the devotee".

sanctity and popularity among the devotees and deserve a very special mention and they are:

1. Thiruparankundram - Subramanya Swamy Temple,
2. Tiruchendur - Sendhi Aandavar Temple,
3. Swamimalai - Swaminatha Swamy Temple,
4. Palani - Dhnadayudhapani Swamy Temple,
5. Thiruthani - Subramanya Swamy Temple and Pazhamudhircholai - Subramanya Swamy Temple.

These six places are considered to be the battle camps of Lord Muruga (Skanda). The term "padai Veedu" in Tamil means "Battle Camp" and so Aarupadai means six battle camps.

Legend about Skanda Sashti:

It is said that Skanda Sashti is the story of the birth of Skanda (Kumara) and the fulfilment of the purpose of His divine incarnation. Demon (Asura) Tarakasura had been oppressing and tormenting the celestials and drove them out of heaven. All the Gods went to Brahma and appealed for help. Brahma said that he cannot destroy the demon Tarakasura, since the demon had obtained his grace through severe penance. Brahma suggested that they should get the help of a cupid, the God of love and induce him to tempt Lord Siva who remained absorbed in His Yoga Samadhi. Let Lord Siva unite with Goddess Parvati. A powerful son, Lord Muruga (Kartikeya) will be born to them and that Boy will destroy the



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The holidays present an opportunity to showcase your personal style through festive décor. While you may go for more subdued design and colour palette the rest of the year, this is the season to add some flare to your space. From picking the right tree to adding festive touches, Cindy Jardim, Lowe's Canada Styles and Trends Director, has curated looks to help you get started.

Deck the Halls:

A classic Christmas theme never goes out of style. This colour palette includes a classic, rich, winter red with touches of black and blues paired against green for a fresh holiday combination. Add elegant gold finishes in chandeliers, plaids in linens and traditional icons to make your space look chic and sophisticated.

Comfort and Joy:

Rustic charm will make you feel warm and cozy while watching the falling snow out the window in a comfy chair. Cream, red and green accents in plush knits and soft textile throws invite you to curl up by the fire. As the snow may pile up outside, this look will add warmth long after the holidays have ended.

Sweet Noel:

Bring memories of cheerful gatherings from Christmases past with vintage details that add a nostalgic and whimsical feel. Retro

inspired colours of aqua sky, poinsettia red and vivid green pop against a non-traditional tree in white. Dig up those ornaments and décor pieces from your childhood and add new bright coloured small appliances to complete the look.

Cold Spell:

For a modern look, frosty hues along with metallic finishes complement today's sleek interior designs. An icy palette of pale blue, grey and white provide an elegant yet contemporary look. Adding silver accents in lamps and tables, faceted crystals and reflective elements in backslashes complete the look with added sparkle.

Outdoor Décor:

Add some cheeky fun to your outdoor décor this season by filling your space with your favourite holiday characters. Your outdoor space will be transformed into a holiday movie scene with snowmen, reindeer or holiday Minions for a fun family space!

Indoor Heating:

Although it's cold outside, the holidays bring along a feeling of comfort and warmth. Bring holiday joy into your home with a wide selection of electric fireplaces that bring the family together. Gather around the flames in your cozy winter space.

Pair the new fireplace with a mantle that perfectly complements your space. Lowe's Canada understands your style needs and has options

available for everyone. Use the mantle to display decorations, family photos, or your TV to watch your favourite holiday movies.

Lowe's Canada has also teamed up with Canadian bloggers to help create holiday design ideas using the four holiday themes. To find inspiration on decorating your home, visit www.lowes.ca.

Pictures seen here are for Outdoor Decor & Indoor Heating.



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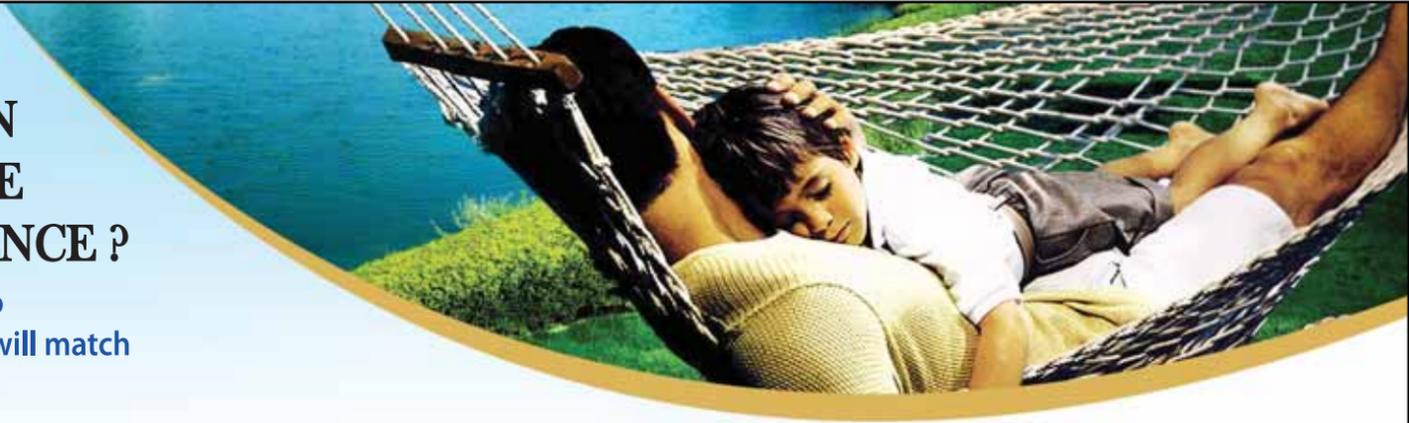
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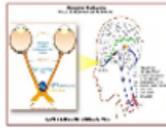
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